

L. M. MONTGOMERY



Ultimate Collection

20 Novels & 170+ Short Stories,
Poetry, Letters and Autobiography

(Including The Complete Anne of Green
Gables Series & Emily Starr Trilogy)

Lucy Maud Montgomery

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Gables Series & Emily Starr Trilogy)

e-artnow, 2016

Contact: info@e-artnow.org

ISBN 978-80-268-6510-0

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Anne of Green Gables Series

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Mrs. Rachel Lynde Is Surprised

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Mrs. Rachel Lynde lived just where the Avonlea main road dipped down into a little hollow, fringed with alders and ladies' eardrops and traversed by a brook that had its source away back in the woods of the old Cuthbert place; it was reputed to be an intricate, headlong brook in its earlier course through those woods, with dark secrets of pool and cascade; but by the time it reached Lynde's Hollow it was a quiet, well-conducted little stream, for not even a brook could run past Mrs. Rachel Lynde's door without due regard for decency and decorum; it probably was conscious that Mrs. Rachel was sitting at her window, keeping a sharp eye on everything that passed, from brooks and children up, and that if she noticed anything odd or out of place she would never rest until she had ferreted out the whys and wherefores thereof.

There are plenty of people in Avonlea and out of it, who can attend closely to their neighbor's business by dint of neglecting their own; but Mrs. Rachel Lynde was one of those capable creatures who can manage their own concerns and those of other folks into the bargain. She was a notable housewife; her work was always done and well done; she "ran" the Sewing Circle, helped run the Sunday-school, and was the strongest prop of the Church Aid Society and Foreign Missions Auxiliary. Yet with all this Mrs. Rachel found abundant time to sit for hours at her kitchen window, knitting "cotton warp" quilts — she had knitted sixteen of them, as Avonlea housekeepers were wont to tell in awed voices — and keeping a sharp eye on the main road that crossed the hollow and wound up the steep red hill beyond. Since Avonlea occupied a little triangular peninsula jutting out into the Gulf of St. Lawrence with water on two sides of it, anybody who went out of it or into it had to pass over that hill road and so run the unseen gauntlet of Mrs. Rachel's all-seeing eye.

She was sitting there one afternoon in early June. The sun was coming in at the window warm and bright; the orchard on the slope below the house was in a bridal flush of pinky-white bloom, hummed over by a myriad of bees. Thomas Lynde — a meek little man whom Avonlea people called “Rachel Lynde’s husband” — was sowing his late turnip seed on the hill field beyond the barn; and Matthew Cuthbert ought to have been sowing his on the big red brook field away over by Green Gables. Mrs. Rachel knew that he ought because she had heard him tell Peter Morrison the evening before in William J. Blair’s store over at Carmody that he meant to sow his turnip seed the next afternoon. Peter had asked him, of course, for Matthew Cuthbert had never been known to volunteer information about anything in his whole life.

And yet here was Matthew Cuthbert, at halfpast three on the afternoon of a busy day, placidly driving over the hollow and up the hill; moreover, he wore a white collar and his best suit of clothes, which was plain proof that he was going out of Avonlea; and he had the buggy and the sorrel mare, which betokened that he was going a considerable distance. Now, where was Matthew Cuthbert going and why was he going there?

Had it been any other man in Avonlea, Mrs. Rachel, deftly putting this and that together, might have given a pretty good guess as to both questions. But Matthew so rarely went from home that it must be something pressing and unusual which was taking him; he was the shyest man alive and hated to have to go among strangers or to any place where he might have to talk. Matthew, dressed up with a white collar and driving in a buggy, was something that didn’t happen often. Mrs. Rachel, ponder as she might, could make nothing of it and her afternoon’s enjoyment was spoiled.

“I’ll just step over to Green Gables after tea and find out from Marilla where he’s gone and why,” the worthy woman finally concluded. “He doesn’t generally go to town this time of year and he NEVER visits; if he’d run out of turnip seed he wouldn’t dress up and take the buggy to go for more; he wasn’t driving fast enough to be going for a doctor. Yet something must have happened since last night to start him off. I’m clean

puzzled, that's what, and I won't know a minute's peace of mind or conscience until I know what has taken Matthew Cuthbert out of Avonlea today."

Accordingly after tea Mrs. Rachel set out; she had not far to go; the big, rambling, orchard-embowered house where the Cuthberts lived was a scant quarter of a mile up the road from Lynde's Hollow. To be sure, the long lane made it a good deal further. Matthew Cuthbert's father, as shy and silent as his son after him, had got as far away as he possibly could from his fellow men without actually retreating into the woods when he founded his homestead. Green Gables was built at the furthest edge of his cleared land and there it was to this day, barely visible from the main road along which all the other Avonlea houses were so sociably situated. Mrs. Rachel Lynde did not call living in such a place *LIVING* at all.

"It's just *STAYING*, that's what," she said as she stepped along the deep-rutted, grassy lane bordered with wild rose bushes. "It's no wonder Matthew and Marilla are both a little odd, living away back here by themselves. Trees aren't much company, though dear knows if they were there'd be enough of them. I'd ruther look at people. To be sure, they seem contented enough; but then, I suppose, they're used to it. A body can get used to anything, even to being hanged, as the Irishman said."

With this Mrs. Rachel stepped out of the lane into the backyard of Green Gables. Very green and neat and precise was that yard, set about on one side with great patriarchal willows and the other with prim Lombardies. Not a stray stick nor stone was to be seen, for Mrs. Rachel would have seen it if there had been. Privately she was of the opinion that Marilla Cuthbert swept that yard over as often as she swept her house. One could have eaten a meal off the ground without overbrimming the proverbial peck of dirt.

Mrs. Rachel rapped smartly at the kitchen door and stepped in when bidden to do so. The kitchen at Green Gables was a cheerful apartment — or would have been cheerful if it had not been so painfully clean as to give it something of the appearance of an unused parlor. Its windows looked east and west; through the west one, looking out on the back yard, came a

flood of mellow June sunlight; but the east one, whence you got a glimpse of the bloom white cherry-trees in the left orchard and nodding, slender birches down in the hollow by the brook, was greened over by a tangle of vines. Here sat Marilla Cuthbert, when she sat at all, always slightly distrustful of sunshine, which seemed to her too dancing and irresponsible a thing for a world which was meant to be taken seriously; and here she sat now, knitting, and the table behind her was laid for supper.

Mrs. Rachel, before she had fairly closed the door, had taken a mental note of everything that was on that table. There were three plates laid, so that Marilla must be expecting some one home with Matthew to tea; but the dishes were everyday dishes and there was only crab-apple preserves and one kind of cake, so that the expected company could not be any particular company. Yet what of Matthew's white collar and the sorrel mare? Mrs. Rachel was getting fairly dizzy with this unusual mystery about quiet, unmysterious Green Gables.

"Good evening, Rachel," Marilla said briskly. "This is a real fine evening, isn't it? Won't you sit down? How are all your folks?"

Something that for lack of any other name might be called friendship existed and always had existed between Marilla Cuthbert and Mrs. Rachel, in spite of — or perhaps because of — their dissimilarity.

Marilla was a tall, thin woman, with angles and without curves; her dark hair showed some gray streaks and was always twisted up in a hard little knot behind with two wire hairpins stuck aggressively through it. She looked like a woman of narrow experience and rigid conscience, which she was; but there was a saving something about her mouth which, if it had been ever so slightly developed, might have been considered indicative of a sense of humor.

"We're all pretty well," said Mrs. Rachel. "I was kind of afraid YOU weren't, though, when I saw Matthew starting off today. I thought maybe he was going to the doctor's."

Marilla's lips twitched understandingly. She had expected Mrs. Rachel up; she had known that the sight of Matthew jaunting off so unaccountably would be too much for her neighbor's curiosity.

“Oh, no, I’m quite well although I had a bad headache yesterday,” she said. “Matthew went to Bright River. We’re getting a little boy from an orphan asylum in Nova Scotia and he’s coming on the train tonight.”

If Marilla had said that Matthew had gone to Bright River to meet a kangaroo from Australia Mrs. Rachel could not have been more astonished. She was actually stricken dumb for five seconds. It was unsupposable that Marilla was making fun of her, but Mrs. Rachel was almost forced to suppose it.

“Are you in earnest, Marilla?” she demanded when voice returned to her.

“Yes, of course,” said Marilla, as if getting boys from orphan asylums in Nova Scotia were part of the usual spring work on any well-regulated Avonlea farm instead of being an unheard of innovation.

Mrs. Rachel felt that she had received a severe mental jolt. She thought in exclamation points. A boy! Marilla and Matthew Cuthbert of all people adopting a boy! From an orphan asylum! Well, the world was certainly turning upside down! She would be surprised at nothing after this! Nothing!

“What on earth put such a notion into your head?” she demanded disapprovingly.

This had been done without her advice being asked, and must perforce be disapproved.

“Well, we’ve been thinking about it for some time — all winter in fact,” returned Marilla. “Mrs. Alexander Spencer was up here one day before Christmas and she said she was going to get a little girl from the asylum over in Hopeton in the spring. Her cousin lives there and Mrs. Spencer has visited here and knows all about it. So Matthew and I have talked it over off and on ever since. We thought we’d get a boy. Matthew is getting up in years, you know — he’s sixty — and he isn’t so spry as he once was. His heart troubles him a good deal. And you know how desperate hard it’s got to be to get hired help. There’s never anybody to be had but those stupid, half-grown little French boys; and as soon as you do get one broke into your ways and taught something he’s up and off to the

lobster canneries or the States. At first Matthew suggested getting a Home boy. But I said 'no' flat to that. 'They may be all right — I'm not saying they're not — but no London street Arabs for me,' I said. 'Give me a native born at least. There'll be a risk, no matter who we get. But I'll feel easier in my mind and sleep sounder at nights if we get a born Canadian.' So in the end we decided to ask Mrs. Spencer to pick us out one when she went over to get her little girl. We heard last week she was going, so we sent her word by Richard Spencer's folks at Carmody to bring us a smart, likely boy of about ten or eleven. We decided that would be the best age — old enough to be of some use in doing chores right off and young enough to be trained up proper. We mean to give him a good home and schooling. We had a telegram from Mrs. Alexander Spencer today — the mailman brought it from the station — saying they were coming on the five-thirty train tonight. So Matthew went to Bright River to meet him. Mrs. Spencer will drop him off there. Of course she goes on to White Sands station herself."

Mrs. Rachel prided herself on always speaking her mind; she proceeded to speak it now, having adjusted her mental attitude to this amazing piece of news.

"Well, Marilla, I'll just tell you plain that I think you're doing a mighty foolish thing — a risky thing, that's what. You don't know what you're getting. You're bringing a strange child into your house and home and you don't know a single thing about him nor what his disposition is like nor what sort of parents he had nor how he's likely to turn out. Why, it was only last week I read in the paper how a man and his wife up west of the Island took a boy out of an orphan asylum and he set fire to the house at night — set it ON PURPOSE, Marilla — and nearly burnt them to a crisp in their beds. And I know another case where an adopted boy used to suck the eggs — they couldn't break him of it. If you had asked my advice in the matter — which you didn't do, Marilla — I'd have said for mercy's sake not to think of such a thing, that's what."

This Job's comforting seemed neither to offend nor to alarm Marilla. She knitted steadily on.

“I don’t deny there’s something in what you say, Rachel. I’ve had some qualms myself. But Matthew was terrible set on it. I could see that, so I gave in. It’s so seldom Matthew sets his mind on anything that when he does I always feel it’s my duty to give in. And as for the risk, there’s risks in pretty near everything a body does in this world. There’s risks in people’s having children of their own if it comes to that — they don’t always turn out well. And then Nova Scotia is right close to the Island. It isn’t as if we were getting him from England or the States. He can’t be much different from ourselves.”

“Well, I hope it will turn out all right,” said Mrs. Rachel in a tone that plainly indicated her painful doubts. “Only don’t say I didn’t warn you if he burns Green Gables down or puts strychnine in the well — I heard of a case over in New Brunswick where an orphan asylum child did that and the whole family died in fearful agonies. Only, it was a girl in that instance.”

“Well, we’re not getting a girl,” said Marilla, as if poisoning wells were a purely feminine accomplishment and not to be dreaded in the case of a boy. “I’d never dream of taking a girl to bring up. I wonder at Mrs. Alexander Spencer for doing it. But there, SHE wouldn’t shrink from adopting a whole orphan asylum if she took it into her head.”

Mrs. Rachel would have liked to stay until Matthew came home with his imported orphan. But reflecting that it would be a good two hours at least before his arrival she concluded to go up the road to Robert Bell’s and tell the news. It would certainly make a sensation second to none, and Mrs. Rachel dearly loved to make a sensation. So she took herself away, somewhat to Marilla’s relief, for the latter felt her doubts and fears reviving under the influence of Mrs. Rachel’s pessimism.

“Well, of all things that ever were or will be!” ejaculated Mrs. Rachel when she was safely out in the lane. “It does really seem as if I must be dreaming. Well, I’m sorry for that poor young one and no mistake. Matthew and Marilla don’t know anything about children and they’ll expect him to be wiser and steadier than his own grandfather, if so be’s he ever had a grandfather, which is doubtful. It seems uncanny to think of a

child at Green Gables somehow; there's never been one there, for Matthew and Marilla were grown up when the new house was built — if they ever WERE children, which is hard to believe when one looks at them. I wouldn't be in that orphan's shoes for anything. My, but I pity him, that's what."

So said Mrs. Rachel to the wild rose bushes out of the fulness of her heart; but if she could have seen the child who was waiting patiently at the Bright River station at that very moment her pity would have been still deeper and more profound.

Matthew Cuthbert Is Surprised

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Matthew Cuthbert and the sorrel mare jogged comfortably over the eight miles to Bright River. It was a pretty road, running along between snug farmsteads, with now and again a bit of balsamy fir wood to drive through or a hollow where wild plums hung out their filmy bloom. The air was sweet with the breath of many apple orchards and the meadows sloped away in the distance to horizon mists of pearl and purple; while

“The little birds sang as if it were

The one day of summer in all the year.”

Matthew enjoyed the drive after his own fashion, except during the moments when he met women and had to nod to them — for in Prince Edward island you are supposed to nod to all and sundry you meet on the road whether you know them or not.

Matthew dreaded all women except Marilla and Mrs. Rachel; he had an uncomfortable feeling that the mysterious creatures were secretly laughing at him. He may have been quite right in thinking so, for he was an odd-looking personage, with an ungainly figure and long iron-gray hair that touched his stooping shoulders, and a full, soft brown beard which he had worn ever since he was twenty. In fact, he had looked at twenty very much as he looked at sixty, lacking a little of the grayness.

When he reached Bright River there was no sign of any train; he thought he was too early, so he tied his horse in the yard of the small Bright River hotel and went over to the station house. The long platform was almost deserted; the only living creature in sight being a girl who was sitting on a pile of shingles at the extreme end. Matthew, barely noting that it WAS a girl, sidled past her as quickly as possible without looking at her. Had he looked he could hardly have failed to notice the tense rigidity and expectation of her attitude and expression. She was sitting there waiting

for something or somebody and, since sitting and waiting was the only thing to do just then, she sat and waited with all her might and main.

Matthew encountered the stationmaster locking up the ticket office preparatory to going home for supper, and asked him if the five-thirty train would soon be along.

“The five-thirty train has been in and gone half an hour ago,” answered that brisk official. “But there was a passenger dropped off for you — a little girl. She’s sitting out there on the shingles. I asked her to go into the ladies’ waiting room, but she informed me gravely that she preferred to stay outside. ‘There was more scope for imagination,’ she said. She’s a case, I should say.”

“I’m not expecting a girl,” said Matthew blankly. “It’s a boy I’ve come for. He should be here. Mrs. Alexander Spencer was to bring him over from Nova Scotia for me.”

The stationmaster whistled.

“Guess there’s some mistake,” he said. “Mrs. Spencer came off the train with that girl and gave her into my charge. Said you and your sister were adopting her from an orphan asylum and that you would be along for her presently. That’s all I know about it — and I haven’t got any more orphans concealed hereabouts.”

“I don’t understand,” said Matthew helplessly, wishing that Marilla was at hand to cope with the situation.

“Well, you’d better question the girl,” said the stationmaster carelessly. “I dare say she’ll be able to explain — she’s got a tongue of her own, that’s certain. Maybe they were out of boys of the brand you wanted.”

He walked jauntily away, being hungry, and the unfortunate Matthew was left to do that which was harder for him than bearding a lion in its den — walk up to a girl — a strange girl — an orphan girl — and demand of her why she wasn’t a boy. Matthew groaned in spirit as he turned about and shuffled gently down the platform towards her.

She had been watching him ever since he had passed her and she had her eyes on him now. Matthew was not looking at her and would not have

seen what she was really like if he had been, but an ordinary observer would have seen this: A child of about eleven, garbed in a very short, very tight, very ugly dress of yellowish-gray wincey. She wore a faded brown sailor hat and beneath the hat, extending down her back, were two braids of very thick, decidedly red hair. Her face was small, white and thin, also much freckled; her mouth was large and so were her eyes, which looked green in some lights and moods and gray in others.

So far, the ordinary observer; an extraordinary observer might have seen that the chin was very pointed and pronounced; that the big eyes were full of spirit and vivacity; that the mouth was sweet-lipped and expressive; that the forehead was broad and full; in short, our discerning extraordinary observer might have concluded that no commonplace soul inhabited the body of this stray woman-child of whom shy Matthew Cuthbert was so ludicrously afraid.

Matthew, however, was spared the ordeal of speaking first, for as soon as she concluded that he was coming to her she stood up, grasping with one thin brown hand the handle of a shabby, old-fashioned carpet-bag; the other she held out to him.

“I suppose you are Mr. Matthew Cuthbert of Green Gables?” she said in a peculiarly clear, sweet voice. “I’m very glad to see you. I was beginning to be afraid you weren’t coming for me and I was imagining all the things that might have happened to prevent you. I had made up my mind that if you didn’t come for me tonight I’d go down the track to that big wild cherry-tree at the bend, and climb up into it to stay all night. I wouldn’t be a bit afraid, and it would be lovely to sleep in a wild cherry-tree all white with bloom in the moonshine, don’t you think? You could imagine you were dwelling in marble halls, couldn’t you? And I was quite sure you would come for me in the morning, if you didn’t tonight.”

Matthew had taken the scrawny little hand awkwardly in his; then and there he decided what to do. He could not tell this child with the glowing eyes that there had been a mistake; he would take her home and let Marilla do that. She couldn’t be left at Bright River anyhow, no matter what

mistake had been made, so all questions and explanations might as well be deferred until he was safely back at Green Gables.

“I’m sorry I was late,” he said shyly. “Come along. The horse is over in the yard. Give me your bag.”

“Oh, I can carry it,” the child responded cheerfully. “It isn’t heavy. I’ve got all my worldly goods in it, but it isn’t heavy. And if it isn’t carried in just a certain way the handle pulls out — so I’d better keep it because I know the exact knack of it. It’s an extremely old carpet-bag. Oh, I’m very glad you’ve come, even if it would have been nice to sleep in a wild cherry-tree. We’ve got to drive a long piece, haven’t we? Mrs. Spencer said it was eight miles. I’m glad because I love driving. Oh, it seems so wonderful that I’m going to live with you and belong to you. I’ve never belonged to anybody — not really. But the asylum was the worst. I’ve only been in it four months, but that was enough. I don’t suppose you ever were an orphan in an asylum, so you can’t possibly understand what it is like. It’s worse than anything you could imagine. Mrs. Spencer said it was wicked of me to talk like that, but I didn’t mean to be wicked. It’s so easy to be wicked without knowing it, isn’t it? They were good, you know — the asylum people. But there is so little scope for the imagination in an asylum — only just in the other orphans. It was pretty interesting to imagine things about them — to imagine that perhaps the girl who sat next to you was really the daughter of a belted earl, who had been stolen away from her parents in her infancy by a cruel nurse who died before she could confess. I used to lie awake at nights and imagine things like that, because I didn’t have time in the day. I guess that’s why I’m so thin — I AM dreadful thin, ain’t I? There isn’t a pick on my bones. I do love to imagine I’m nice and plump, with dimples in my elbows.”

With this Matthew’s companion stopped talking, partly because she was out of breath and partly because they had reached the buggy. Not another word did she say until they had left the village and were driving down a steep little hill, the road part of which had been cut so deeply into the soft soil, that the banks, fringed with blooming wild cherry-trees and slim white birches, were several feet above their heads.

The child put out her hand and broke off a branch of wild plum that brushed against the side of the buggy.

“Isn’t that beautiful? What did that tree, leaning out from the bank, all white and lacy, make you think of?” she asked.

“Well now, I dunno,” said Matthew.

“Why, a bride, of course — a bride all in white with a lovely misty veil. I’ve never seen one, but I can imagine what she would look like. I don’t ever expect to be a bride myself. I’m so homely nobody will ever want to marry me — unless it might be a foreign missionary. I suppose a foreign missionary mightn’t be very particular. But I do hope that some day I shall have a white dress. That is my highest ideal of earthly bliss. I just love pretty clothes. And I’ve never had a pretty dress in my life that I can remember — but of course it’s all the more to look forward to, isn’t it? And then I can imagine that I’m dressed gorgeously. This morning when I left the asylum I felt so ashamed because I had to wear this horrid old wincey dress. All the orphans had to wear them, you know. A merchant in Hopeton last winter donated three hundred yards of wincey to the asylum. Some people said it was because he couldn’t sell it, but I’d rather believe that it was out of the kindness of his heart, wouldn’t you? When we got on the train I felt as if everybody must be looking at me and pitying me. But I just went to work and imagined that I had on the most beautiful pale blue silk dress — because when you ARE imagining you might as well imagine something worth while — and a big hat all flowers and nodding plumes, and a gold watch, and kid gloves and boots. I felt cheered up right away and I enjoyed my trip to the Island with all my might. I wasn’t a bit sick coming over in the boat. Neither was Mrs. Spencer although she generally is. She said she hadn’t time to get sick, watching to see that I didn’t fall overboard. She said she never saw the beat of me for prowling about. But if it kept her from being seasick it’s a mercy I did prowl, isn’t it? And I wanted to see everything that was to be seen on that boat, because I didn’t know whether I’d ever have another opportunity. Oh, there are a lot more cherry-trees all in bloom! This Island is the bloomiest place. I just love it already, and I’m so glad I’m going to live here. I’ve always heard that

Prince Edward Island was the prettiest place in the world, and I used to imagine I was living here, but I never really expected I would. It's delightful when your imaginations come true, isn't it? But those red roads are so funny. When we got into the train at Charlottetown and the red roads began to flash past I asked Mrs. Spencer what made them red and she said she didn't know and for pity's sake not to ask her any more questions. She said I must have asked her a thousand already. I suppose I had, too, but how you going to find out about things if you don't ask questions? And what DOES make the roads red?"

"Well now, I dunno," said Matthew.

"Well, that is one of the things to find out sometime. Isn't it splendid to think of all the things there are to find out about? It just makes me feel glad to be alive — it's such an interesting world. It wouldn't be half so interesting if we know all about everything, would it? There'd be no scope for imagination then, would there? But am I talking too much? People are always telling me I do. Would you rather I didn't talk? If you say so I'll stop. I can STOP when I make up my mind to it, although it's difficult."

Matthew, much to his own surprise, was enjoying himself. Like most quiet folks he liked talkative people when they were willing to do the talking themselves and did not expect him to keep up his end of it. But he had never expected to enjoy the society of a little girl. Women were bad enough in all conscience, but little girls were worse. He detested the way they had of sidling past him timidly, with sidewise glances, as if they expected him to gobble them up at a mouthful if they ventured to say a word. That was the Avonlea type of well-bred little girl. But this freckled witch was very different, and although he found it rather difficult for his slower intelligence to keep up with her brisk mental processes he thought that he "kind of liked her chatter." So he said as shyly as usual:

"Oh, you can talk as much as you like. I don't mind."

"Oh, I'm so glad. I know you and I are going to get along together fine. It's such a relief to talk when one wants to and not be told that children should be seen and not heard. I've had that said to me a million times if I

have once. And people laugh at me because I use big words. But if you have big ideas you have to use big words to express them, haven't you?"

"Well now, that seems reasonable," said Matthew.

"Mrs. Spencer said that my tongue must be hung in the middle. But it isn't — it's firmly fastened at one end. Mrs. Spencer said your place was named Green Gables. I asked her all about it. And she said there were trees all around it. I was gladder than ever. I just love trees. And there weren't any at all about the asylum, only a few poor weeny-teeny things out in front with little whitewashed cagey things about them. They just looked like orphans themselves, those trees did. It used to make me want to cry to look at them. I used to say to them, 'Oh, you POOR little things! If you were out in a great big woods with other trees all around you and little mosses and Junebells growing over your roots and a brook not far away and birds singing in you branches, you could grow, couldn't you? But you can't where you are. I know just exactly how you feel, little trees.' I felt sorry to leave them behind this morning. You do get so attached to things like that, don't you? Is there a brook anywhere near Green Gables? I forgot to ask Mrs. Spencer that."

"Well now, yes, there's one right below the house."

"Fancy. It's always been one of my dreams to live near a brook. I never expected I would, though. Dreams don't often come true, do they? Wouldn't it be nice if they did? But just now I feel pretty nearly perfectly happy. I can't feel exactly perfectly happy because — well, what color would you call this?"

She twitched one of her long glossy braids over her thin shoulder and held it up before Matthew's eyes. Matthew was not used to deciding on the tints of ladies' tresses, but in this case there couldn't be much doubt.

"It's red, ain't it?" he said.

The girl let the braid drop back with a sigh that seemed to come from her very toes and to exhale forth all the sorrows of the ages.

"Yes, it's red," she said resignedly. "Now you see why I can't be perfectly happy. Nobody could who has red hair. I don't mind the other things so much — the freckles and the green eyes and my skinniness. I can

imagine them away. I can imagine that I have a beautiful roseleaf complexion and lovely starry violet eyes. But I CANNOT imagine that red hair away. I do my best. I think to myself, 'Now my hair is a glorious black, black as the raven's wing.' But all the time I KNOW it is just plain red and it breaks my heart. It will be my lifelong sorrow. I read of a girl once in a novel who had a lifelong sorrow but it wasn't red hair. Her hair was pure gold rippling back from her alabaster brow. What is an alabaster brow? I never could find out. Can you tell me?"

"Well now, I'm afraid I can't," said Matthew, who was getting a little dizzy. He felt as he had once felt in his rash youth when another boy had enticed him on the merrygo-round at a picnic.

"Well, whatever it was it must have been something nice because she was divinely beautiful. Have you ever imagined what it must feel like to be divinely beautiful?"

"Well now, no, I haven't," confessed Matthew ingenuously.

"I have, often. Which would you rather be if you had the choice — divinely beautiful or dazzlingly clever or angelically good?"

"Well now, I — I don't know exactly."

"Neither do I. I can never decide. But it doesn't make much real difference for it isn't likely I'll ever be either. It's certain I'll never be angelically good. Mrs. Spencer says — oh, Mr. Cuthbert! Oh, Mr. Cuthbert!! Oh, Mr. Cuthbert!!!"

That was not what Mrs. Spencer had said; neither had the child tumbled out of the buggy nor had Matthew done anything astonishing. They had simply rounded a curve in the road and found themselves in the "Avenue."

The "Avenue," so called by the Newbridge people, was a stretch of road four or five hundred yards long, completely arched over with huge, widespreading apple-trees, planted years ago by an eccentric old farmer. Overhead was one long canopy of snowy fragrant bloom. Below the boughs the air was full of a purple twilight and far ahead a glimpse of painted sunset sky shone like a great rose window at the end of a cathedral aisle.

Its beauty seemed to strike the child dumb. She leaned back in the buggy, her thin hands clasped before her, her face lifted rapturously to the white splendor above. Even when they had passed out and were driving down the long slope to Newbridge she never moved or spoke. Still with rapt face she gazed afar into the sunset west, with eyes that saw visions trooping splendidly across that glowing background. Through Newbridge, a bustling little village where dogs barked at them and small boys hooted and curious faces peered from the windows, they drove, still in silence. When three more miles had dropped away behind them the child had not spoken. She could keep silence, it was evident, as energetically as she could talk.

“I guess you’re feeling pretty tired and hungry,” Matthew ventured to say at last, accounting for her long visitation of dumbness with the only reason he could think of. “But we haven’t very far to go now — only another mile.”

She came out of her reverie with a deep sigh and looked at him with the dreamy gaze of a soul that had been wondering afar, startled.

“Oh, Mr. Cuthbert,” she whispered, “that place we came through — that white place — what was it?”

“Well now, you must mean the Avenue,” said Matthew after a few moments’ profound reflection. “It is a kind of pretty place.”

“Pretty? Oh, PRETTY doesn’t seem the right word to use. Nor beautiful, either. They don’t go far enough. Oh, it was wonderful — wonderful. It’s the first thing I ever saw that couldn’t be improved upon by imagination. It just satisfies me here” — she put one hand on her breast — “it made a queer funny ache and yet it was a pleasant ache. Did you ever have an ache like that, Mr. Cuthbert?”

“Well now, I just can’t recollect that I ever had.”

“I have it lots of time — whenever I see anything royally beautiful. But they shouldn’t call that lovely place the Avenue. There is no meaning in a name like that. They should call it — let me see — the White Way of Delight. Isn’t that a nice imaginative name? When I don’t like the name of a place or a person I always imagine a new one and always think of them

so. There was a girl at the asylum whose name was Hepzibah Jenkins, but I always imagined her as Rosalia DeVere. Other people may call that place the Avenue, but I shall always call it the White Way of Delight. Have we really only another mile to go before we get home? I'm glad and I'm sorry. I'm sorry because this drive has been so pleasant and I'm always sorry when pleasant things end. Something still pleasanter may come after, but you can never be sure. And it's so often the case that it isn't pleasanter. That has been my experience anyhow. But I'm glad to think of getting home. You see, I've never had a real home since I can remember. It gives me that pleasant ache again just to think of coming to a really truly home. Oh, isn't that pretty!"

They had driven over the crest of a hill. Below them was a pond, looking almost like a river so long and winding was it. A bridge spanned it midway and from there to its lower end, where an amber-hued belt of sandhills shut it in from the dark blue gulf beyond, the water was a glory of many shifting hues — the most spiritual shadings of crocus and rose and ethereal green, with other elusive tintings for which no name has ever been found. Above the bridge the pond ran up into fringing groves of fir and maple and lay all darkly translucent in their wavering shadows. Here and there a wild plum leaned out from the bank like a white-clad girl tiptoeing to her own reflection. From the marsh at the head of the pond came the clear, mournfully-sweet chorus of the frogs. There was a little gray house peering around a white apple orchard on a slope beyond and, although it was not yet quite dark, a light was shining from one of its windows.

"That's Barry's pond," said Matthew.

"Oh, I don't like that name, either. I shall call it — let me see — the Lake of Shining Waters. Yes, that is the right name for it. I know because of the thrill. When I hit on a name that suits exactly it gives me a thrill. Do things ever give you a thrill?"

Matthew ruminated.

"Well now, yes. It always kind of gives me a thrill to see them ugly white grubs that spade up in the cucumber beds. I hate the look of them."

“Oh, I don’t think that can be exactly the same kind of a thrill. Do you think it can? There doesn’t seem to be much connection between grubs and lakes of shining waters, does there? But why do other people call it Barry’s pond?”

“I reckon because Mr. Barry lives up there in that house. Orchard Slope’s the name of his place. If it wasn’t for that big bush behind it you could see Green Gables from here. But we have to go over the bridge and round by the road, so it’s near half a mile further.”

“Has Mr. Barry any little girls? Well, not so very little either — about my size.”

“He’s got one about eleven. Her name is Diana.”

“Oh!” with a long indrawing of breath. “What a perfectly lovely name!”

“Well now, I dunno. There’s something dreadful heathenish about it, seems to me. I’d rather Jane or Mary or some sensible name like that. But when Diana was born there was a schoolmaster boarding there and they gave him the naming of her and he called her Diana.”

“I wish there had been a schoolmaster like that around when I was born, then. Oh, here we are at the bridge. I’m going to shut my eyes tight. I’m always afraid going over bridges. I can’t help imagining that perhaps just as we get to the middle, they’ll crumple up like a jack-knife and nip us. So I shut my eyes. But I always have to open them for all when I think we’re getting near the middle. Because, you see, if the bridge DID crumple up I’d want to SEE it crumple. What a jolly rumble it makes! I always like the rumble part of it. Isn’t it splendid there are so many things to like in this world? There we’re over. Now I’ll look back. Good night, dear Lake of Shining Waters. I always say good night to the things I love, just as I would to people. I think they like it. That water looks as if it was smiling at me.”

When they had driven up the further hill and around a corner Matthew said:

“We’re pretty near home now. That’s Green Gables over—”

“Oh, don’t tell me,” she interrupted breathlessly, catching at his partially raised arm and shutting her eyes that she might not see his gesture. “Let me guess. I’m sure I’ll guess right.”

She opened her eyes and looked about her. They were on the crest of a hill. The sun had set some time since, but the landscape was still clear in the mellow afterlight. To the west a dark church spire rose up against a marigold sky. Below was a little valley and beyond a long, gently-rising slope with snug farmsteads scattered along it. From one to another the child’s eyes darted, eager and wistful. At last they lingered on one away to the left, far back from the road, dimly white with blossoming trees in the twilight of the surrounding woods. Over it, in the stainless southwest sky, a great crystal-white star was shining like a lamp of guidance and promise.

“That’s it, isn’t it?” she said, pointing.

Matthew slapped the reins on the sorrel’s back delightedly.

“Well now, you’ve guessed it! But I reckon Mrs. Spencer described it so’s you could tell.”

“No, she didn’t — really she didn’t. All she said might just as well have been about most of those other places. I hadn’t any real idea what it looked like. But just as soon as I saw it I felt it was home. Oh, it seems as if I must be in a dream. Do you know, my arm must be black and blue from the elbow up, for I’ve pinched myself so many times today. Every little while a horrible sickening feeling would come over me and I’d be so afraid it was all a dream. Then I’d pinch myself to see if it was real — until suddenly I remembered that even supposing it was only a dream I’d better go on dreaming as long as I could; so I stopped pinching. But it IS real and we’re nearly home.”

With a sigh of rapture she relapsed into silence. Matthew stirred uneasily. He felt glad that it would be Marilla and not he who would have to tell this waif of the world that the home she longed for was not to be hers after all. They drove over Lynde’s Hollow, where it was already quite dark, but not so dark that Mrs. Rachel could not see them from her window vantage, and up the hill and into the long lane of Green Gables. By the time they arrived at the house Matthew was shrinking from the

approaching revelation with an energy he did not understand. It was not of Marilla or himself he was thinking of the trouble this mistake was probably going to make for them, but of the child's disappointment. When he thought of that rapt light being quenched in her eyes he had an uncomfortable feeling that he was going to assist at murdering something — much the same feeling that came over him when he had to kill a lamb or calf or any other innocent little creature.

The yard was quite dark as they turned into it and the poplar leaves were rustling silkily all round it.

“Listen to the trees talking in their sleep,” she whispered, as he lifted her to the ground. “What nice dreams they must have!”

Then, holding tightly to the carpet-bag which contained “all her worldly goods,” she followed him into the house.

Marilla Cuthbert Is Surprised

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Marilla came briskly forward as Matthew opened the door. But when her eyes fell of the odd little figure in the stiff, ugly dress, with the long braids of red hair and the eager, luminous eyes, she stopped short in amazement.

“Matthew Cuthbert, who’s that?” she ejaculated. “Where is the boy?”

“There wasn’t any boy,” said Matthew wretchedly. “There was only HER.”

He nodded at the child, remembering that he had never even asked her name.

“No boy! But there MUST have been a boy,” insisted Marilla. “We sent word to Mrs. Spencer to bring a boy.”

“Well, she didn’t. She brought HER. I asked the stationmaster. And I had to bring her home. She couldn’t be left there, no matter where the mistake had come in.”

“Well, this is a pretty piece of business!” ejaculated Marilla.

During this dialogue the child had remained silent, her eyes roving from one to the other, all the animation fading out of her face. Suddenly she seemed to grasp the full meaning of what had been said. Dropping her precious carpet-bag she sprang forward a step and clasped her hands.

“You don’t want me!” she cried. “You don’t want me because I’m not a boy! I might have expected it. Nobody ever did want me. I might have known it was all too beautiful to last. I might have known nobody really did want me. Oh, what shall I do? I’m going to burst into tears!”

Burst into tears she did. Sitting down on a chair by the table, flinging her arms out upon it, and burying her face in them, she proceeded to cry stormily. Marilla and Matthew looked at each other deprecatingly across the stove. Neither of them knew what to say or do. Finally Marilla stepped lamely into the breach.

“Well, well, there’s no need to cry so about it.”

“Yes, there IS need!” The child raised her head quickly, revealing a tearstained face and trembling lips. “YOU would cry, too, if you were an orphan and had come to a place you thought was going to be home and found that they didn’t want you because you weren’t a boy. Oh, this is the most TRAGICAL thing that ever happened to me!”

Something like a reluctant smile, rather rusty from long disuse, mellowed Marilla’s grim expression.

“Well, don’t cry any more. We’re not going to turn you out-of-doors tonight. You’ll have to stay here until we investigate this affair. What’s your name?”

The child hesitated for a moment.

“Will you please call me Cordelia?” she said eagerly.

“CALL you Cordelia? Is that your name?”

“No-o-o, it’s not exactly my name, but I would love to be called Cordelia. It’s such a perfectly elegant name.”

“I don’t know what on earth you mean. If Cordelia isn’t your name, what is?”

“Anne Shirley,” reluctantly faltered forth the owner of that name, “but, oh, please do call me Cordelia. It can’t matter much to you what you call me if I’m only going to be here a little while, can it? And Anne is such an unromantic name.”

“Unromantic fiddlesticks!” said the unsympathetic Marilla. “Anne is a real good plain sensible name. You’ve no need to be ashamed of it.”

“Oh, I’m not ashamed of it,” explained Anne, “only I like Cordelia better. I’ve always imagined that my name was Cordelia — at least, I always have of late years. When I was young I used to imagine it was Geraldine, but I like Cordelia better now. But if you call me Anne please call me Anne spelled with an E.”

“What difference does it make how it’s spelled?” asked Marilla with another rusty smile as she picked up the teapot.

“Oh, it makes SUCH a difference. It LOOKS so much nicer. When you hear a name pronounced can’t you always see it in your mind, just as if it was printed out? I can; and A-n-n looks dreadful, but A-n-n-e looks so

much more distinguished. If you'll only call me Anne spelled with an E I shall try to reconcile myself to not being called Cordelia."

"Very well, then, Anne spelled with an E, can you tell us how this mistake came to be made? We sent word to Mrs. Spencer to bring us a boy. Were there no boys at the asylum?"

"Oh, yes, there was an abundance of them. But Mrs. Spencer said **DISTINCTLY** that you wanted a girl about eleven years old. And the matron said she thought I would do. You don't know how delighted I was. I couldn't sleep all last night for joy. Oh," she added reproachfully, turning to Matthew, "why didn't you tell me at the station that you didn't want me and leave me there? If I hadn't seen the White Way of Delight and the Lake of Shining Waters it wouldn't be so hard."

"What on earth does she mean?" demanded Marilla, staring at Matthew.

"She — she's just referring to some conversation we had on the road," said Matthew hastily. "I'm going out to put the mare in, Marilla. Have tea ready when I come back."

"Did Mrs. Spencer bring anybody over besides you?" continued Marilla when Matthew had gone out.

"She brought Lily Jones for herself. Lily is only five years old and she is very beautiful and had nut-brown hair. If I was very beautiful and had nut-brown hair would you keep me?"

"No. We want a boy to help Matthew on the farm. A girl would be of no use to us. Take off your hat. I'll lay it and your bag on the hall table."

Anne took off her hat meekly. Matthew came back presently and they sat down to supper. But Anne could not eat. In vain she nibbled at the bread and butter and pecked at the crab-apple preserve out of the little scalloped glass dish by her plate. She did not really make any headway at all.

"You're not eating anything," said Marilla sharply, eying her as if it were a serious shortcoming. Anne sighed.

"I can't. I'm in the depths of despair. Can you eat when you are in the depths of despair?"

“I’ve never been in the depths of despair, so I can’t say,” responded Marilla.

“Weren’t you? Well, did you ever try to IMAGINE you were in the depths of despair?”

“No, I didn’t.”

“Then I don’t think you can understand what it’s like. It’s very uncomfortable feeling indeed. When you try to eat a lump comes right up in your throat and you can’t swallow anything, not even if it was a chocolate caramel. I had one chocolate caramel once two years ago and it was simply delicious. I’ve often dreamed since then that I had a lot of chocolate caramels, but I always wake up just when I’m going to eat them. I do hope you won’t be offended because I can’t eat. Everything is extremely nice, but still I cannot eat.”

“I guess she’s tired,” said Matthew, who hadn’t spoken since his return from the barn. “Best put her to bed, Marilla.”

Marilla had been wondering where Anne should be put to bed. She had prepared a couch in the kitchen chamber for the desired and expected boy. But, although it was neat and clean, it did not seem quite the thing to put a girl there somehow. But the spare room was out of the question for such a stray waif, so there remained only the east gable room. Marilla lighted a candle and told Anne to follow her, which Anne spiritlessly did, taking her hat and carpet-bag from the hall table as she passed. The hall was fearsomely clean; the little gable chamber in which she presently found herself seemed still cleaner.

Marilla set the candle on a three-legged, three-cornered table and turned down the bedclothes.

“I suppose you have a nightgown?” she questioned.

Anne nodded.

“Yes, I have two. The matron of the asylum made them for me. They’re fearfully skimpy. There is never enough to go around in an asylum, so things are always skimpy — at least in a poor asylum like ours. I hate skimpy nightdresses. But one can dream just as well in them as in lovely trailing ones, with frills around the neck, that’s one consolation.”

“Well, undress as quick as you can and go to bed. I’ll come back in a few minutes for the candle. I daren’t trust you to put it out yourself. You’d likely set the place on fire.”

When Marilla had gone Anne looked around her wistfully. The whitewashed walls were so painfully bare and staring that she thought they must ache over their own bareness. The floor was bare, too, except for a round braided mat in the middle such as Anne had never seen before. In one corner was the bed, a high, old-fashioned one, with four dark, low-turned posts. In the other corner was the aforesaid three-corner table adorned with a fat, red velvet pincushion hard enough to turn the point of the most adventurous pin. Above it hung a little six-by-eight mirror. Midway between table and bed was the window, with an icy white muslin frill over it, and opposite it was the washstand. The whole apartment was of a rigidity not to be described in words, but which sent a shiver to the very marrow of Anne’s bones. With a sob she hastily discarded her garments, put on the skimpy nightgown and sprang into bed where she burrowed face downward into the pillow and pulled the clothes over her head. When Marilla came up for the light various skimpy articles of raiment scattered most untidily over the floor and a certain tempestuous appearance of the bed were the only indications of any presence save her own.

She deliberately picked up Anne’s clothes, placed them neatly on a prim yellow chair, and then, taking up the candle, went over to the bed.

“Good night,” she said, a little awkwardly, but not unkindly.

Anne’s white face and big eyes appeared over the bedclothes with a startling suddenness.

“How can you call it a GOOD night when you know it must be the very worst night I’ve ever had?” she said reproachfully.

Then she dived down into invisibility again.

Marilla went slowly down to the kitchen and proceeded to wash the supper dishes. Matthew was smoking — a sure sign of perturbation of mind. He seldom smoked, for Marilla set her face against it as a filthy habit; but at certain times and seasons he felt driven to it and then Marilla

winked at the practice, realizing that a mere man must have some vent for his emotions.

“Well, this is a pretty kettle of fish,” she said wrathfully. “This is what comes of sending word instead of going ourselves. Richard Spencer’s folks have twisted that message somehow. One of us will have to drive over and see Mrs. Spencer tomorrow, that’s certain. This girl will have to be sent back to the asylum.”

“Yes, I suppose so,” said Matthew reluctantly.

“You SUPPOSE so! Don’t you know it?”

“Well now, she’s a real nice little thing, Marilla. It’s kind of a pity to send her back when she’s so set on staying here.”

“Matthew Cuthbert, you don’t mean to say you think we ought to keep her!”

Marilla’s astonishment could not have been greater if Matthew had expressed a predilection for standing on his head.

“Well, now, no, I suppose not — not exactly,” stammered Matthew, uncomfortably driven into a corner for his precise meaning. “I suppose — we could hardly be expected to keep her.”

“I should say not. What good would she be to us?”

“We might be some good to her,” said Matthew suddenly and unexpectedly.

“Matthew Cuthbert, I believe that child has bewitched you! I can see as plain as plain that you want to keep her.”

“Well now, she’s a real interesting little thing,” persisted Matthew. “You should have heard her talk coming from the station.”

“Oh, she can talk fast enough. I saw that at once. It’s nothing in her favour, either. I don’t like children who have so much to say. I don’t want an orphan girl and if I did she isn’t the style I’d pick out. There’s something I don’t understand about her. No, she’s got to be despatched straightway back to where she came from.”

“I could hire a French boy to help me,” said Matthew, “and she’d be company for you.”

“I’m not suffering for company,” said Marilla shortly. “And I’m not going to keep her.”

“Well now, it’s just as you say, of course, Marilla,” said Matthew rising and putting his pipe away. “I’m going to bed.”

To bed went Matthew. And to bed, when she had put her dishes away, went Marilla, frowning most resolutely. And upstairs, in the east gable, a lonely, heart-hungry, friendless child cried herself to sleep.

Morning at Green Gables

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It was broad daylight when Anne awoke and sat up in bed, staring confusedly at the window through which a flood of cheery sunshine was pouring and outside of which something white and feathery waved across glimpses of blue sky.

For a moment she could not remember where she was. First came a delightful thrill, as something very pleasant; then a horrible remembrance. This was Green Gables and they didn't want her because she wasn't a boy!

But it was morning and, yes, it was a cherry-tree in full bloom outside of her window. With a bound she was out of bed and across the floor. She pushed up the sash — it went up stiffly and creakily, as if it hadn't been opened for a long time, which was the case; and it stuck so tight that nothing was needed to hold it up.

Anne dropped on her knees and gazed out into the June morning, her eyes glistening with delight. Oh, wasn't it beautiful? Wasn't it a lovely place? Suppose she wasn't really going to stay here! She would imagine she was. There was scope for imagination here.

A huge cherry-tree grew outside, so close that its boughs tapped against the house, and it was so thickset with blossoms that hardly a leaf was to be seen. On both sides of the house was a big orchard, one of apple-trees and one of cherry-trees, also showered over with blossoms; and their grass was all sprinkled with dandelions. In the garden below were lilac-trees purple with flowers, and their dizzily sweet fragrance drifted up to the window on the morning wind.

Below the garden a green field lush with clover sloped down to the hollow where the brook ran and where scores of white birches grew, upspringing airily out of an undergrowth suggestive of delightful possibilities in ferns and mosses and woodsy things generally. Beyond it was a hill, green and feathery with spruce and fir; there was a gap in it

where the gray gable end of the little house she had seen from the other side of the Lake of Shining Waters was visible.

Off to the left were the big barns and beyond them, away down over green, low-sloping fields, was a sparkling blue glimpse of sea.

Anne's beauty-loving eyes lingered on it all, taking everything greedily in. She had looked on so many unlovely places in her life, poor child; but this was as lovely as anything she had ever dreamed.

She knelt there, lost to everything but the loveliness around her, until she was startled by a hand on her shoulder. Marilla had come in unheard by the small dreamer.

"It's time you were dressed," she said curtly.

Marilla really did not know how to talk to the child, and her uncomfortable ignorance made her crisp and curt when she did not mean to be.

Anne stood up and drew a long breath.

"Oh, isn't it wonderful?" she said, waving her hand comprehensively at the good world outside.

"It's a big tree," said Marilla, "and it blooms great, but the fruit don't amount to much never — small and wormy."

"Oh, I don't mean just the tree; of course it's lovely — yes, it's **RADIANTLY** lovely — it blooms as if it meant it — but I meant everything, the garden and the orchard and the brook and the woods, the whole big dear world. Don't you feel as if you just loved the world on a morning like this? And I can hear the brook laughing all the way up here. Have you ever noticed what cheerful things brooks are? They're always laughing. Even in winter-time I've heard them under the ice. I'm so glad there's a brook near Green Gables. Perhaps you think it doesn't make any difference to me when you're not going to keep me, but it does. I shall always like to remember that there is a brook at Green Gables even if I never see it again. If there wasn't a brook I'd be **HAUNTED** by the uncomfortable feeling that there ought to be one. I'm not in the depths of despair this morning. I never can be in the morning. Isn't it a splendid thing that there are mornings? But I feel very sad. I've just been imagining

that it was really me you wanted after all and that I was to stay here for ever and ever. It was a great comfort while it lasted. But the worst of imagining things is that the time comes when you have to stop and that hurts.”

“You’d better get dressed and come downstairs and never mind your imaginings,” said Marilla as soon as she could get a word in edgewise. “Breakfast is waiting. Wash your face and comb your hair. Leave the window up and turn your bedclothes back over the foot of the bed. Be as smart as you can.”

Anne could evidently be smart to some purpose for she was downstairs in ten minutes’ time, with her clothes neatly on, her hair brushed and braided, her face washed, and a comfortable consciousness pervading her soul that she had fulfilled all Marilla’s requirements. As a matter of fact, however, she had forgotten to turn back the bedclothes.

“I’m pretty hungry this morning,” she announced as she slipped into the chair Marilla placed for her. “The world doesn’t seem such a howling wilderness as it did last night. I’m so glad it’s a sunshiny morning. But I like rainy mornings real well, too. All sorts of mornings are interesting, don’t you think? You don’t know what’s going to happen through the day, and there’s so much scope for imagination. But I’m glad it’s not rainy today because it’s easier to be cheerful and bear up under affliction on a sunshiny day. I feel that I have a good deal to bear up under. It’s all very well to read about sorrows and imagine yourself living through them heroically, but it’s not so nice when you really come to have them, is it?”

“For pity’s sake hold your tongue,” said Marilla. “You talk entirely too much for a little girl.”

Thereupon Anne held her tongue so obediently and thoroughly that her continued silence made Marilla rather nervous, as if in the presence of something not exactly natural. Matthew also held his tongue, — but this was natural, — so that the meal was a very silent one.

As it progressed Anne became more and more abstracted, eating mechanically, with her big eyes fixed unswervingly and unseeingly on the sky outside the window. This made Marilla more nervous than ever; she

had an uncomfortable feeling that while this odd child's body might be there at the table her spirit was far away in some remote airy cloudland, borne aloft on the wings of imagination. Who would want such a child about the place?

Yet Matthew wished to keep her, of all unaccountable things! Marilla felt that he wanted it just as much this morning as he had the night before, and that he would go on wanting it. That was Matthew's way — take a whim into his head and cling to it with the most amazing silent persistency — a persistency ten times more potent and effectual in its very silence than if he had talked it out.

When the meal was ended Anne came out of her reverie and offered to wash the dishes.

"Can you wash dishes right?" asked Marilla distrustfully.

"Pretty well. I'm better at looking after children, though. I've had so much experience at that. It's such a pity you haven't any here for me to look after."

"I don't feel as if I wanted any more children to look after than I've got at present. YOU'RE problem enough in all conscience. What's to be done with you I don't know. Matthew is a most ridiculous man."

"I think he's lovely," said Anne reproachfully. "He is so very sympathetic. He didn't mind how much I talked — he seemed to like it. I felt that he was a kindred spirit as soon as ever I saw him."

"You're both queer enough, if that's what you mean by kindred spirits," said Marilla with a sniff. "Yes, you may wash the dishes. Take plenty of hot water, and be sure you dry them well. I've got enough to attend to this morning for I'll have to drive over to White Sands in the afternoon and see Mrs. Spencer. You'll come with me and we'll settle what's to be done with you. After you've finished the dishes go upstairs and make your bed."

Anne washed the dishes deftly enough, as Marilla who kept a sharp eye on the process, discerned. Later on she made her bed less successfully, for she had never learned the art of wrestling with a feather tick. But is was

done somehow and smoothed down; and then Marilla, to get rid of her, told her she might go out-of-doors and amuse herself until dinner time.

Anne flew to the door, face alight, eyes glowing. On the very threshold she stopped short, wheeled about, came back and sat down by the table, light and glow as effectually blotted out as if some one had clapped an extinguisher on her.

“What’s the matter now?” demanded Marilla.

“I don’t dare go out,” said Anne, in the tone of a martyr relinquishing all earthly joys. “If I can’t stay here there is no use in my loving Green Gables. And if I go out there and get acquainted with all those trees and flowers and the orchard and the brook I’ll not be able to help loving it. It’s hard enough now, so I won’t make it any harder. I want to go out so much — everything seems to be calling to me, ‘Anne, Anne, come out to us. Anne, Anne, we want a playmate’ — but it’s better not. There is no use in loving things if you have to be torn from them, is there? And it’s so hard to keep from loving things, isn’t it? That was why I was so glad when I thought I was going to live here. I thought I’d have so many things to love and nothing to hinder me. But that brief dream is over. I am resigned to my fate now, so I don’t think I’ll go out for fear I’ll get unresigned again. What is the name of that geranium on the windowsill, please?”

“That’s the apple-scented geranium.”

“Oh, I don’t mean that sort of a name. I mean just a name you gave it yourself. Didn’t you give it a name? May I give it one then? May I call it — let me see — Bonny would do — may I call it Bonny while I’m here? Oh, do let me!”

“Goodness, I don’t care. But where on earth is the sense of naming a geranium?”

“Oh, I like things to have handles even if they are only geraniums. It makes them seem more like people. How do you know but that it hurts a geranium’s feelings just to be called a geranium and nothing else? You wouldn’t like to be called nothing but a woman all the time. Yes, I shall call it Bonny. I named that cherry-tree outside my bedroom window this

morning. I called it Snow Queen because it was so white. Of course, it won't always be in blossom, but one can imagine that it is, can't one?"

"I never in all my life saw or heard anything to equal her," muttered Marilla, beating a retreat down to the cellar after potatoes. "She is kind of interesting as Matthew says. I can feel already that I'm wondering what on earth she'll say next. She'll be casting a spell over me, too. She's cast it over Matthew. That look he gave me when he went out said everything he said or hinted last night over again. I wish he was like other men and would talk things out. A body could answer back then and argue him into reason. But what's to be done with a man who just LOOKS?"

Anne had relapsed into reverie, with her chin in her hands and her eyes on the sky, when Marilla returned from her cellar pilgrimage. There Marilla left her until the early dinner was on the table.

"I suppose I can have the mare and buggy this afternoon, Matthew?" said Marilla.

Matthew nodded and looked wistfully at Anne. Marilla intercepted the look and said grimly:

"I'm going to drive over to White Sands and settle this thing. I'll take Anne with me and Mrs. Spencer will probably make arrangements to send her back to Nova Scotia at once. I'll set your tea out for you and I'll be home in time to milk the cows."

Still Matthew said nothing and Marilla had a sense of having wasted words and breath. There is nothing more aggravating than a man who won't talk back — unless it is a woman who won't.

Matthew hitched the sorrel into the buggy in due time and Marilla and Anne set off. Matthew opened the yard gate for them and as they drove slowly through, he said, to nobody in particular as it seemed:

"Little Jerry Buote from the Creek was here this morning, and I told him I guessed I'd hire him for the summer."

Marilla made no reply, but she hit the unlucky sorrel such a vicious clip with the whip that the fat mare, unused to such treatment, whizzed indignantly down the lane at an alarming pace. Marilla looked back once

as the buggy bounced along and saw that aggravating Matthew leaning over the gate, looking wistfully after them.

Anne's History

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“Do you know,” said Anne confidentially, “I’ve made up my mind to enjoy this drive. It’s been my experience that you can nearly always enjoy things if you make up your mind firmly that you will. Of course, you must make it up FIRMLY. I am not going to think about going back to the asylum while we’re having our drive. I’m just going to think about the drive. Oh, look, there’s one little early wild rose out! Isn’t it lovely? Don’t you think it must be glad to be a rose? Wouldn’t it be nice if roses could talk? I’m sure they could tell us such lovely things. And isn’t pink the most bewitching color in the world? I love it, but I can’t wear it. Redheaded people can’t wear pink, not even in imagination. Did you ever know of anybody whose hair was red when she was young, but got to be another color when she grew up?”

“No, I don’t know as I ever did,” said Marilla mercilessly, “and I shouldn’t think it likely to happen in your case either.”

Anne sighed.

“Well, that is another hope gone. ‘My life is a perfect graveyard of buried hopes.’ That’s a sentence I read in a book once, and I say it over to comfort myself whenever I’m disappointed in anything.”

“I don’t see where the comforting comes in myself,” said Marilla.

“Why, because it sounds so nice and romantic, just as if I were a heroine in a book, you know. I am so fond of romantic things, and a graveyard full of buried hopes is about as romantic a thing as one can imagine isn’t it? I’m rather glad I have one. Are we going across the Lake of Shining Waters today?”

“We’re not going over Barry’s pond, if that’s what you mean by your Lake of Shining Waters. We’re going by the shore road.”

“Shore road sounds nice,” said Anne dreamily. “Is it as nice as it sounds? Just when you said ‘shore road’ I saw it in a picture in my mind,

as quick as that! And White Sands is a pretty name, too; but I don't like it as well as Avonlea. Avonlea is a lovely name. It just sounds like music. How far is it to White Sands?"

"It's five miles; and as you're evidently bent on talking you might as well talk to some purpose by telling me what you know about yourself."

"Oh, what I KNOW about myself isn't really worth telling," said Anne eagerly. "If you'll only let me tell you what I IMAGINE about myself you'll think it ever so much more interesting."

"No, I don't want any of your imaginings. Just you stick to bald facts. Begin at the beginning. Where were you born and how old are you?"

"I was eleven last March," said Anne, resigning herself to bald facts with a little sigh. "And I was born in Bolingbroke, Nova Scotia. My father's name was Walter Shirley, and he was a teacher in the Bolingbroke High School. My mother's name was Bertha Shirley. Aren't Walter and Bertha lovely names? I'm so glad my parents had nice names. It would be a real disgrace to have a father named — well, say Jedediah, wouldn't it?"

"I guess it doesn't matter what a person's name is as long as he behaves himself," said Marilla, feeling herself called upon to inculcate a good and useful moral.

"Well, I don't know." Anne looked thoughtful. "I read in a book once that a rose by any other name would smell as sweet, but I've never been able to believe it. I don't believe a rose WOULD be as nice if it was called a thistle or a skunk cabbage. I suppose my father could have been a good man even if he had been called Jedediah; but I'm sure it would have been a cross. Well, my mother was a teacher in the High school, too, but when she married father she gave up teaching, of course. A husband was enough responsibility. Mrs. Thomas said that they were a pair of babies and as poor as church mice. They went to live in a weeny-teeny little yellow house in Bolingbroke. I've never seen that house, but I've imagined it thousands of times. I think it must have had honeysuckle over the parlor window and lilacs in the front yard and lilies of the valley just inside the gate. Yes, and muslin curtains in all the windows. Muslin curtains give a house such an air. I was born in that house. Mrs. Thomas said I was the

homeliest baby she ever saw, I was so scrawny and tiny and nothing but eyes, but that mother thought I was perfectly beautiful. I should think a mother would be a better judge than a poor woman who came in to scrub, wouldn't you? I'm glad she was satisfied with me anyhow, I would feel so sad if I thought I was a disappointment to her — because she didn't live very long after that, you see. She died of fever when I was just three months old. I do wish she'd lived long enough for me to remember calling her mother. I think it would be so sweet to say 'mother,' don't you? And father died four days afterwards from fever too. That left me an orphan and folks were at their wits' end, so Mrs. Thomas said, what to do with me. You see, nobody wanted me even then. It seems to be my fate. Father and mother had both come from places far away and it was well known they hadn't any relatives living. Finally Mrs. Thomas said she'd take me, though she was poor and had a drunken husband. She brought me up by hand. Do you know if there is anything in being brought up by hand that ought to make people who are brought up that way better than other people? Because whenever I was naughty Mrs. Thomas would ask me how I could be such a bad girl when she had brought me up by hand — reproachful-like.

“Mr. and Mrs. Thomas moved away from Bolingbroke to Marysville, and I lived with them until I was eight years old. I helped look after the Thomas children — there were four of them younger than me — and I can tell you they took a lot of looking after. Then Mr. Thomas was killed falling under a train and his mother offered to take Mrs. Thomas and the children, but she didn't want me. Mrs. Thomas was at HER wits' end, so she said, what to do with me. Then Mrs. Hammond from up the river came down and said she'd take me, seeing I was handy with children, and I went up the river to live with her in a little clearing among the stumps. It was a very lonesome place. I'm sure I could never have lived there if I hadn't had an imagination. Mr. Hammond worked a little sawmill up there, and Mrs. Hammond had eight children. She had twins three times. I like babies in moderation, but twins three times in succession is TOO MUCH. I told

Mrs. Hammond so firmly, when the last pair came. I used to get so dreadfully tired carrying them about.

“I lived up river with Mrs. Hammond over two years, and then Mr. Hammond died and Mrs. Hammond broke up housekeeping. She divided her children among her relatives and went to the States. I had to go to the asylum at Hopeton, because nobody would take me. They didn’t want me at the asylum, either; they said they were overcrowded as it was. But they had to take me and I was there four months until Mrs. Spencer came.”

Anne finished up with another sigh, of relief this time. Evidently she did not like talking about her experiences in a world that had not wanted her.

“Did you ever go to school?” demanded Marilla, turning the sorrel mare down the shore road.

“Not a great deal. I went a little the last year I stayed with Mrs. Thomas. When I went up river we were so far from a school that I couldn’t walk it in winter and there was a vacation in summer, so I could only go in the spring and fall. But of course I went while I was at the asylum. I can read pretty well and I know ever so many pieces of poetry off by heart — ‘The Battle of Hohenlinden’ and ‘Edinburgh after Flodden,’ and ‘Bingen of the Rhine,’ and most of the ‘Lady of the Lake’ and most of ‘The Seasons’ by James Thompson. Don’t you just love poetry that gives you a crinkly feeling up and down your back? There is a piece in the Fifth Reader — ‘The Downfall of Poland’ — that is just full of thrills. Of course, I wasn’t in the Fifth Reader — I was only in the Fourth — but the big girls used to lend me theirs to read.”

“Were those women — Mrs. Thomas and Mrs. Hammond — good to you?” asked Marilla, looking at Anne out of the corner of her eye.

“O-o-o-h,” faltered Anne. Her sensitive little face suddenly flushed scarlet and embarrassment sat on her brow. “Oh, they MEANT to be — I know they meant to be just as good and kind as possible. And when people mean to be good to you, you don’t mind very much when they’re not quite — always. They had a good deal to worry them, you know. It’s very trying to have a drunken husband, you see; and it must be very trying to have

twins three times in succession, don't you think? But I feel sure they meant to be good to me."

Marilla asked no more questions. Anne gave herself up to a silent rapture over the shore road and Marilla guided the sorrel abstractedly while she pondered deeply. Pity was suddenly stirring in her heart for the child. What a starved, unloved life she had had — a life of drudgery and poverty and neglect; for Marilla was shrewd enough to read between the lines of Anne's history and divine the truth. No wonder she had been so delighted at the prospect of a real home. It was a pity she had to be sent back. What if she, Marilla, should indulge Matthew's unaccountable whim and let her stay? He was set on it; and the child seemed a nice, teachable little thing.

"She's got too much to say," thought Marilla, "but she might be trained out of that. And there's nothing rude or slangy in what she does say. She's ladylike. It's likely her people were nice folks."

The shore road was "woodsy and wild and lonesome." On the right hand, scrub firs, their spirits quite unbroken by long years of tussle with the gulf winds, grew thickly. On the left were the steep red sandstone cliffs, so near the track in places that a mare of less steadiness than the sorrel might have tried the nerves of the people behind her. Down at the base of the cliffs were heaps of surf-worn rocks or little sandy coves inlaid with pebbles as with ocean jewels; beyond lay the sea, shimmering and blue, and over it soared the gulls, their pinions flashing silvery in the sunlight.

"Isn't the sea wonderful?" said Anne, rousing from a long, wide-eyed silence. "Once, when I lived in Marysville, Mr. Thomas hired an express wagon and took us all to spend the day at the shore ten miles away. I enjoyed every moment of that day, even if I had to look after the children all the time. I lived it over in happy dreams for years. But this shore is nicer than the Marysville shore. Aren't those gulls splendid? Would you like to be a gull? I think I would — that is, if I couldn't be a human girl. Don't you think it would be nice to wake up at sunrise and swoop down over the water and away out over that lovely blue all day; and then at night

to fly back to one's nest? Oh, I can just imagine myself doing it. What big house is that just ahead, please?"

"That's the White Sands Hotel. Mr. Kirke runs it, but the season hasn't begun yet. There are heaps of Americans come there for the summer. They think this shore is just about right."

"I was afraid it might be Mrs. Spencer's place," said Anne mournfully. "I don't want to get there. Somehow, it will seem like the end of everything."

Marilla Makes Up Her Mind

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Get there they did, however, in due season. Mrs. Spencer lived in a big yellow house at White Sands Cove, and she came to the door with surprise and welcome mingled on her benevolent face.

“Dear, dear,” she exclaimed, “you’re the last folks I was looking for today, but I’m real glad to see you. You’ll put your horse in? And how are you, Anne?”

“I’m as well as can be expected, thank you,” said Anne smilelessly. A blight seemed to have descended on her.

“I suppose we’ll stay a little while to rest the mare,” said Marilla, “but I promised Matthew I’d be home early. The fact is, Mrs. Spencer, there’s been a queer mistake somewhere, and I’ve come over to see where it is. We send word, Matthew and I, for you to bring us a boy from the asylum. We told your brother Robert to tell you we wanted a boy ten or eleven years old.”

“Marilla Cuthbert, you don’t say so!” said Mrs. Spencer in distress. “Why, Robert sent word down by his daughter Nancy and she said you wanted a girl — didn’t she Flora Jane?” appealing to her daughter who had come out to the steps.

“She certainly did, Miss Cuthbert,” corroborated Flora Jane earnestly.

“I’m dreadful sorry,” said Mrs. Spencer. “It’s too bad; but it certainly wasn’t my fault, you see, Miss Cuthbert. I did the best I could and I thought I was following your instructions. Nancy is a terrible flighty thing. I’ve often had to scold her well for her heedlessness.”

“It was our own fault,” said Marilla resignedly. “We should have come to you ourselves and not left an important message to be passed along by word of mouth in that fashion. Anyhow, the mistake has been made and the only thing to do is to set it right. Can we send the child back to the asylum? I suppose they’ll take her back, won’t they?”

“I suppose so,” said Mrs. Spencer thoughtfully, “but I don’t think it will be necessary to send her back. Mrs. Peter Blewett was up here yesterday, and she was saying to me how much she wished she’d sent by me for a little girl to help her. Mrs. Peter has a large family, you know, and she finds it hard to get help. Anne will be the very girl for you. I call it positively providential.”

Marilla did not look as if she thought Providence had much to do with the matter. Here was an unexpectedly good chance to get this unwelcome orphan off her hands, and she did not even feel grateful for it.

She knew Mrs. Peter Blewett only by sight as a small, shrewish-faced woman without an ounce of superfluous flesh on her bones. But she had heard of her. “A terrible worker and driver,” Mrs. Peter was said to be; and discharged servant girls told fearsome tales of her temper and stinginess, and her family of pert, quarrelsome children. Marilla felt a qualm of conscience at the thought of handing Anne over to her tender mercies.

“Well, I’ll go in and we’ll talk the matter over,” she said.

“And if there isn’t Mrs. Peter coming up the lane this blessed minute!” exclaimed Mrs. Spencer, bustling her guests through the hall into the parlor, where a deadly chill struck on them as if the air had been strained so long through dark green, closely drawn blinds that it had lost every particle of warmth it had ever possessed. “That is real lucky, for we can settle the matter right away. Take the armchair, Miss Cuthbert. Anne, you sit here on the ottoman and don’t wiggle. Let me take your hats. Flora Jane, go out and put the kettle on. Good afternoon, Mrs. Blewett. We were just saying how fortunate it was you happened along. Let me introduce you two ladies. Mrs. Blewett, Miss Cuthbert. Please excuse me for just a moment. I forgot to tell Flora Jane to take the buns out of the oven.”

Mrs. Spencer whisked away, after pulling up the blinds. Anne sitting mutely on the ottoman, with her hands clasped tightly in her lap, stared at Mrs. Blewett as one fascinated. Was she to be given into the keeping of this sharp-faced, sharp-eyed woman? She felt a lump coming up in her throat and her eyes smarted painfully. She was beginning to be afraid she couldn’t keep the tears back when Mrs. Spencer returned, flushed and

beaming, quite capable of taking any and every difficulty, physical, mental or spiritual, into consideration and settling it out of hand.

“It seems there’s been a mistake about this little girl, Mrs. Blewett,” she said. “I was under the impression that Mr. and Miss Cuthbert wanted a little girl to adopt. I was certainly told so. But it seems it was a boy they wanted. So if you’re still of the same mind you were yesterday, I think she’ll be just the thing for you.”

Mrs. Blewett darted her eyes over Anne from head to foot.

“How old are you and what’s your name?” she demanded.

“Anne Shirley,” faltered the shrinking child, not daring to make any stipulations regarding the spelling thereof, “and I’m eleven years old.”

“Humph! You don’t look as if there was much to you. But you’re wiry. I don’t know but the wiry ones are the best after all. Well, if I take you you’ll have to be a good girl, you know — good and smart and respectful. I’ll expect you to earn your keep, and no mistake about that. Yes, I suppose I might as well take her off your hands, Miss Cuthbert. The baby’s awful fractious, and I’m clean worn out attending to him. If you like I can take her right home now.”

Marilla looked at Anne and softened at sight of the child’s pale face with its look of mute misery — the misery of a helpless little creature who finds itself once more caught in the trap from which it had escaped. Marilla felt an uncomfortable conviction that, if she denied the appeal of that look, it would haunt her to her dying day. Moreover, she did not fancy Mrs. Blewett. To hand a sensitive, “highstrung” child over to such a woman! No, she could not take the responsibility of doing that!

“Well, I don’t know,” she said slowly. “I didn’t say that Matthew and I had absolutely decided that we wouldn’t keep her. In fact I may say that Matthew is disposed to keep her. I just came over to find out how the mistake had occurred. I think I’d better take her home again and talk it over with Matthew. I feel that I oughtn’t to decide on anything without consulting him. If we make up our mind not to keep her we’ll bring or send her over to you tomorrow night. If we don’t you may know that she is going to stay with us. Will that suit you, Mrs. Blewett?”

“I suppose it’ll have to,” said Mrs. Blewett ungraciously.

During Marilla’s speech a sunrise had been dawning on Anne’s face. First the look of despair faded out; then came a faint flush of hope; her eyes grew deep and bright as morning stars. The child was quite transfigured; and, a moment later, when Mrs. Spencer and Mrs. Blewett went out in quest of a recipe the latter had come to borrow she sprang up and flew across the room to Marilla.

“Oh, Miss Cuthbert, did you really say that perhaps you would let me stay at Green Gables?” she said, in a breathless whisper, as if speaking aloud might shatter the glorious possibility. “Did you really say it? Or did I only imagine that you did?”

“I think you’d better learn to control that imagination of yours, Anne, if you can’t distinguish between what is real and what isn’t,” said Marilla crossly. “Yes, you did hear me say just that and no more. It isn’t decided yet and perhaps we will conclude to let Mrs. Blewett take you after all. She certainly needs you much more than I do.”

“I’d rather go back to the asylum than go to live with her,” said Anne passionately. “She looks exactly like a — like a gimlet.”

Marilla smothered a smile under the conviction that Anne must be reproved for such a speech.

“A little girl like you should be ashamed of talking so about a lady and a stranger,” she said severely. “Go back and sit down quietly and hold your tongue and behave as a good girl should.”

“I’ll try to do and be anything you want me, if you’ll only keep me,” said Anne, returning meekly to her ottoman.

When they arrived back at Green Gables that evening Matthew met them in the lane. Marilla from afar had noted him prowling along it and guessed his motive. She was prepared for the relief she read in his face when he saw that she had at least brought back Anne back with her. But she said nothing, to him, relative to the affair, until they were both out in the yard behind the barn milking the cows. Then she briefly told him Anne’s history and the result of the interview with Mrs. Spencer.

“I wouldn’t give a dog I liked to that Blewett woman,” said Matthew with unusual vim.

“I don’t fancy her style myself,” admitted Marilla, “but it’s that or keeping her ourselves, Matthew. And since you seem to want her, I suppose I’m willing — or have to be. I’ve been thinking over the idea until I’ve got kind of used to it. It seems a sort of duty. I’ve never brought up a child, especially a girl, and I dare say I’ll make a terrible mess of it. But I’ll do my best. So far as I’m concerned, Matthew, she may stay.”

Matthew’s shy face was a glow of delight.

“Well now, I reckoned you’d come to see it in that light, Marilla,” he said. “She’s such an interesting little thing.”

“It’d be more to the point if you could say she was a useful little thing,” retorted Marilla, “but I’ll make it my business to see she’s trained to be that. And mind, Matthew, you’re not to go interfering with my methods. Perhaps an old maid doesn’t know much about bringing up a child, but I guess she knows more than an old bachelor. So you just leave me to manage her. When I fail it’ll be time enough to put your oar in.”

“There, there, Marilla, you can have your own way,” said Matthew reassuringly. “Only be as good and kind to her as you can without spoiling her. I kind of think she’s one of the sort you can do anything with if you only get her to love you.”

Marilla sniffed, to express her contempt for Matthew’s opinions concerning anything feminine, and walked off to the dairy with the pails.

“I won’t tell her tonight that she can stay,” she reflected, as she strained the milk into the creamers. “She’d be so excited that she wouldn’t sleep a wink. Marilla Cuthbert, you’re fairly in for it. Did you ever suppose you’d see the day when you’d be adopting an orphan girl? It’s surprising enough; but not so surprising as that Matthew should be at the bottom of it, him that always seemed to have such a mortal dread of little girls. Anyhow, we’ve decided on the experiment and goodness only knows what will come of it.”

Anne Says Her Prayers

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When Marilla took Anne up to bed that night she said stiffly:

“Now, Anne, I noticed last night that you threw your clothes all about the floor when you took them off. That is a very untidy habit, and I can’t allow it at all. As soon as you take off any article of clothing fold it neatly and place it on the chair. I haven’t any use at all for little girls who aren’t neat.”

“I was so harrowed up in my mind last night that I didn’t think about my clothes at all,” said Anne. “I’ll fold them nicely tonight. They always made us do that at the asylum. Half the time, though, I’d forget, I’d be in such a hurry to get into bed nice and quiet and imagine things.”

“You’ll have to remember a little better if you stay here,” admonished Marilla. “There, that looks something like. Say your prayers now and get into bed.”

“I never say any prayers,” announced Anne.

Marilla looked horrified astonishment.

“Why, Anne, what do you mean? Were you never taught to say your prayers? God always wants little girls to say their prayers. Don’t you know who God is, Anne?”

“‘God is a spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable, in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth,’” responded Anne promptly and glibly.

Marilla looked rather relieved.

“So you do know something then, thank goodness! You’re not quite a heathen. Where did you learn that?”

“Oh, at the asylum Sunday-school. They made us learn the whole catechism. I liked it pretty well. There’s something splendid about some of the words. ‘Infinite, eternal and unchangeable.’ Isn’t that grand? It has

such a roll to it — just like a big organ playing. You couldn't quite call it poetry, I suppose, but it sounds a lot like it, doesn't it?"

"We're not talking about poetry, Anne — we are talking about saying your prayers. Don't you know it's a terrible wicked thing not to say your prayers every night? I'm afraid you are a very bad little girl."

"You'd find it easier to be bad than good if you had red hair," said Anne reproachfully. "People who haven't red hair don't know what trouble is. Mrs. Thomas told me that God made my hair red ON PURPOSE, and I've never cared about Him since. And anyhow I'd always be too tired at night to bother saying prayers. People who have to look after twins can't be expected to say their prayers. Now, do you honestly think they can?"

Marilla decided that Anne's religious training must be begun at once. Plainly there was no time to be lost.

"You must say your prayers while you are under my roof, Anne."

"Why, of course, if you want me to," assented Anne cheerfully. "I'd do anything to oblige you. But you'll have to tell me what to say for this once. After I get into bed I'll imagine out a real nice prayer to say always. I believe that it will be quite interesting, now that I come to think of it."

"You must kneel down," said Marilla in embarrassment.

Anne knelt at Marilla's knee and looked up gravely.

"Why must people kneel down to pray? If I really wanted to pray I'll tell you what I'd do. I'd go out into a great big field all alone or into the deep, deep, woods, and I'd look up into the sky — up — up — up — into that lovely blue sky that looks as if there was no end to its blueness. And then I'd just FEEL a prayer. Well, I'm ready. What am I to say?"

Marilla felt more embarrassed than ever. She had intended to teach Anne the childish classic, "Now I lay me down to sleep." But she had, as I have told you, the glimmerings of a sense of humor — which is simply another name for a sense of fitness of things; and it suddenly occurred to her that that simple little prayer, sacred to white-robed childhood lisping at motherly knees, was entirely unsuited to this freckled witch of a girl who knew and cared nothing about God's love, since she had never had it translated to her through the medium of human love.

“You’re old enough to pray for yourself, Anne,” she said finally. “Just thank God for your blessings and ask Him humbly for the things you want.”

“Well, I’ll do my best,” promised Anne, burying her face in Marilla’s lap. “Gracious heavenly Father — that’s the way the ministers say it in church, so I suppose it’s all right in private prayer, isn’t it?” she interjected, lifting her head for a moment.

“Gracious heavenly Father, I thank Thee for the White Way of Delight and the Lake of Shining Waters and Bonny and the Snow Queen. I’m really extremely grateful for them. And that’s all the blessings I can think of just now to thank Thee for. As for the things I want, they’re so numerous that it would take a great deal of time to name them all so I will only mention the two most important. Please let me stay at Green Gables; and please let me be goodlooking when I grow up. I remain,
“Yours respectfully,
Anne Shirley.

“There, did I do all right?” she asked eagerly, getting up. “I could have made it much more flowery if I’d had a little more time to think it over.”

Poor Marilla was only preserved from complete collapse by remembering that it was not irreverence, but simply spiritual ignorance on the part of Anne that was responsible for this extraordinary petition. She tucked the child up in bed, mentally vowing that she should be taught a prayer the very next day, and was leaving the room with the light when Anne called her back.

“I’ve just thought of it now. I should have said, ‘Amen’ in place of ‘yours respectfully,’ shouldn’t I? — the way the ministers do. I’d forgotten it, but I felt a prayer should be finished off in some way, so I put in the other. Do you suppose it will make any difference?”

“I — I don’t suppose it will,” said Marilla. “Go to sleep now like a good child. Good night.”

“I can only say good night tonight with a clear conscience,” said Anne, cuddling luxuriously down among her pillows.

Marilla retreated to the kitchen, set the candle firmly on the table, and glared at Matthew.

“Matthew Cuthbert, it’s about time somebody adopted that child and taught her something. She’s next door to a perfect heathen. Will you believe that she never said a prayer in her life till tonight? I’ll send her to the manse tomorrow and borrow the Peep of the Day series, that’s what I’ll do. And she shall go to Sunday-school just as soon as I can get some suitable clothes made for her. I foresee that I shall have my hands full. Well, well, we can’t get through this world without our share of trouble. I’ve had a pretty easy life of it so far, but my time has come at last and I suppose I’ll just have to make the best of it.”

Anne's Bringing-Up Is Begun

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For reasons best known to herself, Marilla did not tell Anne that she was to stay at Green Gables until the next afternoon. During the forenoon she kept the child busy with various tasks and watched over her with a keen eye while she did them. By noon she had concluded that Anne was smart and obedient, willing to work and quick to learn; her most serious shortcoming seemed to be a tendency to fall into daydreams in the middle of a task and forget all about it until such time as she was sharply recalled to earth by a reprimand or a catastrophe.

When Anne had finished washing the dinner dishes she suddenly confronted Marilla with the air and expression of one desperately determined to learn the worst. Her thin little body trembled from head to foot; her face flushed and her eyes dilated until they were almost black; she clasped her hands tightly and said in an imploring voice:

“Oh, please, Miss Cuthbert, won’t you tell me if you are going to send me away or not? I’ve tried to be patient all the morning, but I really feel that I cannot bear not knowing any longer. It’s a dreadful feeling. Please tell me.”

“You haven’t scalded the dishcloth in clean hot water as I told you to do,” said Marilla immovably. “Just go and do it before you ask any more questions, Anne.”

Anne went and attended to the dishcloth. Then she returned to Marilla and fastened imploring eyes of the latter’s face. “Well,” said Marilla, unable to find any excuse for deferring her explanation longer, “I suppose I might as well tell you. Matthew and I have decided to keep you — that is, if you will try to be a good little girl and show yourself grateful. Why, child, whatever is the matter?”

“I’m crying,” said Anne in a tone of bewilderment. “I can’t think why. I’m glad as glad can be. Oh, GLAD doesn’t seem the right word at all. I

was glad about the White Way and the cherry blossoms — but this! Oh, it's something more than glad. I'm so happy. I'll try to be so good. It will be uphill work, I expect, for Mrs. Thomas often told me I was desperately wicked. However, I'll do my very best. But can you tell me why I'm crying?"

"I suppose it's because you're all excited and worked up," said Marilla disapprovingly. "Sit down on that chair and try to calm yourself. I'm afraid you both cry and laugh far too easily. Yes, you can stay here and we will try to do right by you. You must go to school; but it's only a fortnight till vacation so it isn't worth while for you to start before it opens again in September."

"What am I to call you?" asked Anne. "Shall I always say Miss Cuthbert? Can I call you Aunt Marilla?"

"No; you'll call me just plain Marilla. I'm not used to being called Miss Cuthbert and it would make me nervous."

"It sounds awfully disrespectful to just say Marilla," protested Anne.

"I guess there'll be nothing disrespectful in it if you're careful to speak respectfully. Everybody, young and old, in Avonlea calls me Marilla except the minister. He says Miss Cuthbert — when he thinks of it."

"I'd love to call you Aunt Marilla," said Anne wistfully. "I've never had an aunt or any relation at all — not even a grandmother. It would make me feel as if I really belonged to you. Can't I call you Aunt Marilla?"

"No. I'm not your aunt and I don't believe in calling people names that don't belong to them."

"But we could imagine you were my aunt."

"I couldn't," said Marilla grimly.

"Do you never imagine things different from what they really are?" asked Anne wide-eyed.

"No."

"Oh!" Anne drew a long breath. "Oh, Miss — Marilla, how much you miss!"

“I don’t believe in imagining things different from what they really are,” retorted Marilla. “When the Lord puts us in certain circumstances He doesn’t mean for us to imagine them away. And that reminds me. Go into the sitting room, Anne — be sure your feet are clean and don’t let any flies in — and bring me out the illustrated card that’s on the mantelpiece. The Lord’s Prayer is on it and you’ll devote your spare time this afternoon to learning it off by heart. There’s to be no more of such praying as I heard last night.”

“I suppose I was very awkward,” said Anne apologetically, “but then, you see, I’d never had any practice. You couldn’t really expect a person to pray very well the first time she tried, could you? I thought out a splendid prayer after I went to bed, just as I promised you I would. It was nearly as long as a minister’s and so poetical. But would you believe it? I couldn’t remember one word when I woke up this morning. And I’m afraid I’ll never be able to think out another one as good. Somehow, things never are so good when they’re thought out a second time. Have you ever noticed that?”

“Here is something for you to notice, Anne. When I tell you to do a thing I want you to obey me at once and not stand stock-still and discourse about it. Just you go and do as I bid you.”

Anne promptly departed for the sitting-room across the hall; she failed to return; after waiting ten minutes Marilla laid down her knitting and marched after her with a grim expression. She found Anne standing motionless before a picture hanging on the wall between the two windows, with her eyes astar with dreams. The white and green light strained through apple trees and clustering vines outside fell over the rapt little figure with a half-unearthly radiance.

“Anne, whatever are you thinking of?” demanded Marilla sharply.

Anne came back to earth with a start.

“That,” she said, pointing to the picture — a rather vivid chromo entitled, “Christ Blessing Little Children”—“and I was just imagining I was one of them — that I was the little girl in the blue dress, standing off by herself in the corner as if she didn’t belong to anybody, like me. She

looks lonely and sad, don't you think? I guess she hadn't any father or mother of her own. But she wanted to be blessed, too, so she just crept shyly up on the outside of the crowd, hoping nobody would notice her — except Him. I'm sure I know just how she felt. Her heart must have beat and her hands must have got cold, like mine did when I asked you if I could stay. She was afraid He mightn't notice her. But it's likely He did, don't you think? I've been trying to imagine it all out — her edging a little nearer all the time until she was quite close to Him; and then He would look at her and put His hand on her hair and oh, such a thrill of joy as would run over her! But I wish the artist hadn't painted Him so sorrowful looking. All His pictures are like that, if you've noticed. But I don't believe He could really have looked so sad or the children would have been afraid of Him."

"Anne," said Marilla, wondering why she had not broken into this speech long before, "you shouldn't talk that way. It's irreverent — positively irreverent."

Anne's eyes marveled.

"Why, I felt just as reverent as could be. I'm sure I didn't mean to be irreverent."

"Well I don't suppose you did — but it doesn't sound right to talk so familiarly about such things. And another thing, Anne, when I send you after something you're to bring it at once and not fall into mooning and imagining before pictures. Remember that. Take that card and come right to the kitchen. Now, sit down in the corner and learn that prayer off by heart."

Anne set the card up against the jugful of apple blossoms she had brought in to decorate the dinnertable — Marilla had eyed that decoration askance, but had said nothing — propped her chin on her hands, and fell to studying it intently for several silent minutes.

"I like this," she announced at length. "It's beautiful. I've heard it before — I heard the superintendent of the asylum Sunday school say it over once. But I didn't like it then. He had such a cracked voice and he prayed it so mournfully. I really felt sure he thought praying was a

disagreeable duty. This isn't poetry, but it makes me feel just the same way poetry does. 'Our Father who art in heaven hallowed be Thy name.' That is just like a line of music. Oh, I'm so glad you thought of making me learn this, Miss — Marilla."

"Well, learn it and hold your tongue," said Marilla shortly.

Anne tipped the vase of apple blossoms near enough to bestow a soft kiss on a pink-cupped bud, and then studied diligently for some moments longer.

"Marilla," she demanded presently, "do you think that I shall ever have a bosom friend in Avonlea?"

"A — a what kind of friend?"

"A bosom friend — an intimate friend, you know — a really kindred spirit to whom I can confide my inmost soul. I've dreamed of meeting her all my life. I never really supposed I would, but so many of my loveliest dreams have come true all at once that perhaps this one will, too. Do you think it's possible?"

"Diana Barry lives over at Orchard Slope and she's about your age. She's a very nice little girl, and perhaps she will be a playmate for you when she comes home. She's visiting her aunt over at Carmody just now. You'll have to be careful how you behave yourself, though. Mrs. Barry is a very particular woman. She won't let Diana play with any little girl who isn't nice and good."

Anne looked at Marilla through the apple blossoms, her eyes aglow with interest.

"What is Diana like? Her hair isn't red, is it? Oh, I hope not. It's bad enough to have red hair myself, but I positively couldn't endure it in a bosom friend."

"Diana is a very pretty little girl. She has black eyes and hair and rosy cheeks. And she is good and smart, which is better than being pretty."

Marilla was as fond of morals as the Duchess in Wonderland, and was firmly convinced that one should be tacked on to every remark made to a child who was being brought up.

But Anne waved the moral inconsequently aside and seized only on the delightful possibilities before it.

“Oh, I’m so glad she’s pretty. Next to being beautiful oneself — and that’s impossible in my case — it would be best to have a beautiful bosom friend. When I lived with Mrs. Thomas she had a bookcase in her sitting room with glass doors. There weren’t any books in it; Mrs. Thomas kept her best china and her preserves there — when she had any preserves to keep. One of the doors was broken. Mr. Thomas smashed it one night when he was slightly intoxicated. But the other was whole and I used to pretend that my reflection in it was another little girl who lived in it. I called her Katie Maurice, and we were very intimate. I used to talk to her by the hour, especially on Sunday, and tell her everything. Katie was the comfort and consolation of my life. We used to pretend that the bookcase was enchanted and that if I only knew the spell I could open the door and step right into the room where Katie Maurice lived, instead of into Mrs. Thomas’ shelves of preserves and china. And then Katie Maurice would have taken me by the hand and led me out into a wonderful place, all flowers and sunshine and fairies, and we would have lived there happy for ever after. When I went to live with Mrs. Hammond it just broke my heart to leave Katie Maurice. She felt it dreadfully, too, I know she did, for she was crying when she kissed me goodbye through the bookcase door. There was no bookcase at Mrs. Hammond’s. But just up the river a little way from the house there was a long green little valley, and the loveliest echo lived there. It echoed back every word you said, even if you didn’t talk a bit loud. So I imagined that it was a little girl called Violetta and we were great friends and I loved her almost as well as I loved Katie Maurice — not quite, but almost, you know. The night before I went to the asylum I said goodbye to Violetta, and oh, her goodbye came back to me in such sad, sad tones. I had become so attached to her that I hadn’t the heart to imagine a bosom friend at the asylum, even if there had been any scope for imagination there.”

“I think it’s just as well there wasn’t,” said Marilla drily. “I don’t approve of such goings-on. You seem to half believe your own

imagination. It will be well for you to have a real live friend to put such nonsense out of your head. But don't let Mrs. Barry hear you talking about your Katie Maurices and your Violettas or she'll think you tell stories."

"Oh, I won't. I couldn't talk of them to everybody — their memories are too sacred for that. But I thought I'd like to have you know about them. Oh, look, here's a big bee just tumbled out of an apple blossom. Just think what a lovely place to live — in an apple blossom! Fancy going to sleep in it when the wind was rocking it. If I wasn't a human girl I think I'd like to be a bee and live among the flowers."

"Yesterday you wanted to be a sea gull," sniffed Marilla. "I think you are very fickle minded. I told you to learn that prayer and not talk. But it seems impossible for you to stop talking if you've got anybody that will listen to you. So go up to your room and learn it."

"Oh, I know it pretty nearly all now — all but just the last line."

"Well, never mind, do as I tell you. Go to your room and finish learning it well, and stay there until I call you down to help me get tea."

"Can I take the apple blossoms with me for company?" pleaded Anne.

"No; you don't want your room cluttered up with flowers. You should have left them on the tree in the first place."

"I did feel a little that way, too," said Anne. "I kind of felt I shouldn't shorten their lovely lives by picking them — I wouldn't want to be picked if I were an apple blossom. But the temptation was IRRESISTIBLE. What do you do when you meet with an irresistible temptation?"

"Anne, did you hear me tell you to go to your room?"

Anne sighed, retreated to the east gable, and sat down in a chair by the window.

"There — I know this prayer. I learned that last sentence coming upstairs. Now I'm going to imagine things into this room so that they'll always stay imagined. The floor is covered with a white velvet carpet with pink roses all over it and there are pink silk curtains at the windows. The walls are hung with gold and silver brocade tapestry. The furniture is mahogany. I never saw any mahogany, but it does sound SO luxurious. This is a couch all heaped with gorgeous silken cushions, pink and blue

and crimson and gold, and I am reclining gracefully on it. I can see my reflection in that splendid big mirror hanging on the wall. I am tall and regal, clad in a gown of trailing white lace, with a pearl cross on my breast and pearls in my hair. My hair is of midnight darkness and my skin is a clear ivory pallor. My name is the Lady Cordelia Fitzgerald. No, it isn't — I can't make THAT seem real."

She danced up to the little looking-glass and peered into it. Her pointed freckled face and solemn gray eyes peered back at her.

"You're only Anne of Green Gables," she said earnestly, "and I see you, just as you are looking now, whenever I try to imagine I'm the Lady Cordelia. But it's a million times nicer to be Anne of Green Gables than Anne of nowhere in particular, isn't it?"

She bent forward, kissed her reflection affectionately, and betook herself to the open window.

"Dear Snow Queen, good afternoon. And good afternoon dear birches down in the hollow. And good afternoon, dear gray house up on the hill. I wonder if Diana is to be my bosom friend. I hope she will, and I shall love her very much. But I must never quite forget Katie Maurice and Violetta. They would feel so hurt if I did and I'd hate to hurt anybody's feelings, even a little bookcase girl's or a little echo girl's. I must be careful to remember them and send them a kiss every day."

Anne blew a couple of airy kisses from her fingertips past the cherry blossoms and then, with her chin in her hands, drifted luxuriously out on a sea of daydreams.

Chapter IX.

Mrs. Rachel Lynde Is Properly Horried

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Anne had been a fortnight at Green Gables before Mrs. Lynde arrived to inspect her. Mrs. Rachel, to do her justice, was not to blame for this. A severe and unseasonable attack of grippe had confined that good lady to her house ever since the occasion of her last visit to Green Gables. Mrs. Rachel was not often sick and had a well-defined contempt for people who were; but grippe, she asserted, was like no other illness on earth and could only be interpreted as one of the special visitations of Providence. As soon as her doctor allowed her to put her foot out-of-doors she hurried up to Green Gables, bursting with curiosity to see Matthew and Marilla's orphan, concerning whom all sorts of stories and suppositions had gone abroad in Avonlea.

Anne had made good use of every waking moment of that fortnight. Already she was acquainted with every tree and shrub about the place. She had discovered that a lane opened out below the apple orchard and ran up through a belt of woodland; and she had explored it to its furthest end in all its delicious vagaries of brook and bridge, fir coppice and wild cherry arch, corners thick with fern, and branching byways of maple and mountain ash.

She had made friends with the spring down in the hollow — that wonderful deep, clear icy-cold spring; it was set about with smooth red sandstones and rimmed in by great palm-like clumps of water fern; and beyond it was a log bridge over the brook.

That bridge led Anne's dancing feet up over a wooded hill beyond, where perpetual twilight reigned under the straight, thick-growing firs and spruces; the only flowers there were myriads of delicate "June bells," those shyest and sweetest of woodland blooms, and a few pale, aerial

starflowers, like the spirits of last year's blossoms. Gossamers glimmered like threads of silver among the trees and the fir boughs and tassels seemed to utter friendly speech.

All these raptured voyages of exploration were made in the odd half hours which she was allowed for play, and Anne talked Matthew and Marilla half-deaf over her discoveries. Not that Matthew complained, to be sure; he listened to it all with a wordless smile of enjoyment on his face; Marilla permitted the "chatter" until she found herself becoming too interested in it, whereupon she always promptly quenched Anne by a curt command to hold her tongue.

Anne was out in the orchard when Mrs. Rachel came, wandering at her own sweet will through the lush, tremulous grasses splashed with ruddy evening sunshine; so that good lady had an excellent chance to talk her illness fully over, describing every ache and pulse beat with such evident enjoyment that Marilla thought even grippe must bring its compensations. When details were exhausted Mrs. Rachel introduced the real reason of her call.

"I've been hearing some surprising things about you and Matthew."

"I don't suppose you are any more surprised than I am myself," said Marilla. "I'm getting over my surprise now."

"It was too bad there was such a mistake," said Mrs. Rachel sympathetically. "Couldn't you have sent her back?"

"I suppose we could, but we decided not to. Matthew took a fancy to her. And I must say I like her myself — although I admit she has her faults. The house seems a different place already. She's a real bright little thing."

Marilla said more than she had intended to say when she began, for she read disapproval in Mrs. Rachel's expression.

"It's a great responsibility you've taken on yourself," said that lady gloomily, "especially when you've never had any experience with children. You don't know much about her or her real disposition, I suppose, and there's no guessing how a child like that will turn out. But I don't want to discourage you I'm sure, Marilla."

“I’m not feeling discouraged,” was Marilla’s dry response, “when I make up my mind to do a thing it stays made up. I suppose you’d like to see Anne. I’ll call her in.”

Anne came running in presently, her face sparkling with the delight of her orchard roving; but, abashed at finding the delight herself in the unexpected presence of a stranger, she halted confusedly inside the door. She certainly was an odd-looking little creature in the short tight wincey dress she had worn from the asylum, below which her thin legs seemed ungracefully long. Her freckles were more numerous and obtrusive than ever; the wind had ruffled her hatless hair into over-brilliant disorder; it had never looked redder than at that moment.

“Well, they didn’t pick you for your looks, that’s sure and certain,” was Mrs. Rachel Lynde’s emphatic comment. Mrs. Rachel was one of those delightful and popular people who pride themselves on speaking their mind without fear or favor. “She’s terrible skinny and homely, Marilla. Come here, child, and let me have a look at you. Lawful heart, did any one ever see such freckles? And hair as red as carrots! Come here, child, I say.”

Anne “came there,” but not exactly as Mrs. Rachel expected. With one bound she crossed the kitchen floor and stood before Mrs. Rachel, her face scarlet with anger, her lips quivering, and her whole slender form trembling from head to foot.

“I hate you,” she cried in a choked voice, stamping her foot on the floor. “I hate you — I hate you — I hate you—” a louder stamp with each assertion of hatred. “How dare you call me skinny and ugly? How dare you say I’m freckled and redheaded? You are a rude, impolite, unfeeling woman!”

“Anne!” exclaimed Marilla in consternation.

But Anne continued to face Mrs. Rachel undauntedly, head up, eyes blazing, hands clenched, passionate indignation exhaling from her like an atmosphere.

“How dare you say such things about me?” she repeated vehemently. “How would you like to have such things said about you? How would you

like to be told that you are fat and clumsy and probably hadn't a spark of imagination in you? I don't care if I do hurt your feelings by saying so! I hope I hurt them. You have hurt mine worse than they were ever hurt before even by Mrs. Thomas' intoxicated husband. And I'll NEVER forgive you for it, never, never!"

Stamp! Stamp!

"Did anybody ever see such a temper!" exclaimed the horrified Mrs. Rachel.

"Anne go to your room and stay there until I come up," said Marilla, recovering her powers of speech with difficulty.

Anne, bursting into tears, rushed to the hall door, slammed it until the tins on the porch wall outside rattled in sympathy, and fled through the hall and up the stairs like a whirlwind. A subdued slam above told that the door of the east gable had been shut with equal vehemence.

"Well, I don't envy you your job bringing THAT up, Marilla," said Mrs. Rachel with unspeakable solemnity.

Marilla opened her lips to say she knew not what of apology or deprecation. What she did say was a surprise to herself then and ever afterwards.

"You shouldn't have twitted her about her looks, Rachel."

"Marilla Cuthbert, you don't mean to say that you are upholding her in such a terrible display of temper as we've just seen?" demanded Mrs. Rachel indignantly.

"No," said Marilla slowly, "I'm not trying to excuse her. She's been very naughty and I'll have to give her a talking to about it. But we must make allowances for her. She's never been taught what is right. And you WERE too hard on her, Rachel."

Marilla could not help tacking on that last sentence, although she was again surprised at herself for doing it. Mrs. Rachel got up with an air of offended dignity.

"Well, I see that I'll have to be very careful what I say after this, Marilla, since the fine feelings of orphans, brought from goodness knows where, have to be considered before anything else. Oh, no, I'm not vexed

— don't worry yourself. I'm too sorry for you to leave any room for anger in my mind. You'll have your own troubles with that child. But if you'll take my advice — which I suppose you won't do, although I've brought up ten children and buried two — you'll do that 'talking to' you mention with a fair-sized birch switch. I should think THAT would be the most effective language for that kind of a child. Her temper matches her hair I guess. Well, good evening, Marilla. I hope you'll come down to see me often as usual. But you can't expect me to visit here again in a hurry, if I'm liable to be flown at and insulted in such a fashion. It's something new in MY experience."

Whereat Mrs. Rachel swept out and away — if a fat woman who always waddled COULD be said to sweep away — and Marilla with a very solemn face betook herself to the east gable.

On the way upstairs she pondered uneasily as to what she ought to do. She felt no little dismay over the scene that had just been enacted. How unfortunate that Anne should have displayed such temper before Mrs. Rachel Lynde, of all people! Then Marilla suddenly became aware of an uncomfortable and rebuking consciousness that she felt more humiliation over this than sorrow over the discovery of such a serious defect in Anne's disposition. And how was she to punish her? The amiable suggestion of the birch switch — to the efficiency of which all of Mrs. Rachel's own children could have borne smarting testimony — did not appeal to Marilla. She did not believe she could whip a child. No, some other method of punishment must be found to bring Anne to a proper realization of the enormity of her offense.

Marilla found Anne face downward on her bed, crying bitterly, quite oblivious of muddy boots on a clean counterpane.

"Anne," she said not ungently.

No answer.

"Anne," with greater severity, "get off that bed this minute and listen to what I have to say to you."

Anne squirmed off the bed and sat rigidly on a chair beside it, her face swollen and tearstained and her eyes fixed stubbornly on the floor.

“This is a nice way for you to behave. Anne! Aren’t you ashamed of yourself?”

“She hadn’t any right to call me ugly and redheaded,” retorted Anne, evasive and defiant.

“You hadn’t any right to fly into such a fury and talk the way you did to her, Anne. I was ashamed of you — thoroughly ashamed of you. I wanted you to behave nicely to Mrs. Lynde, and instead of that you have disgraced me. I’m sure I don’t know why you should lose your temper like that just because Mrs. Lynde said you were redhaired and homely. You say it yourself often enough.”

“Oh, but there’s such a difference between saying a thing yourself and hearing other people say it,” wailed Anne. “You may know a thing is so, but you can’t help hoping other people don’t quite think it is. I suppose you think I have an awful temper, but I couldn’t help it. When she said those things something just rose right up in me and choked me. I HAD to fly out at her.”

“Well, you made a fine exhibition of yourself I must say. Mrs. Lynde will have a nice story to tell about you everywhere — and she’ll tell it, too. It was a dreadful thing for you to lose your temper like that, Anne.”

“Just imagine how you would feel if somebody told you to your face that you were skinny and ugly,” pleaded Anne tearfully.

An old remembrance suddenly rose up before Marilla. She had been a very small child when she had heard one aunt say of her to another, “What a pity she is such a dark, homely little thing.” Marilla was every day of fifty before the sting had gone out of that memory.

“I don’t say that I think Mrs. Lynde was exactly right in saying what she did to you, Anne,” she admitted in a softer tone. “Rachel is too outspoken. But that is no excuse for such behavior on your part. She was a stranger and an elderly person and my visitor — all three very good reasons why you should have been respectful to her. You were rude and saucy and” — Marilla had a saving inspiration of punishment—“you must go to her and tell her you are very sorry for your bad temper and ask her to forgive you.”

“I can never do that,” said Anne determinedly and darkly. “You can punish me in any way you like, Marilla. You can shut me up in a dark, damp dungeon inhabited by snakes and toads and feed me only on bread and water and I shall not complain. But I cannot ask Mrs. Lynde to forgive me.”

“We’re not in the habit of shutting people up in dark damp dungeons,” said Marilla drily, “especially as they’re rather scarce in Avonlea. But apologize to Mrs. Lynde you must and shall and you’ll stay here in your room until you can tell me you’re willing to do it.”

“I shall have to stay here forever then,” said Anne mournfully, “because I can’t tell Mrs. Lynde I’m sorry I said those things to her. How can I? I’m NOT sorry. I’m sorry I’ve vexed you; but I’m GLAD I told her just what I did. It was a great satisfaction. I can’t say I’m sorry when I’m not, can I? I can’t even IMAGINE I’m sorry.”

“Perhaps your imagination will be in better working order by the morning,” said Marilla, rising to depart. “You’ll have the night to think over your conduct in and come to a better frame of mind. You said you would try to be a very good girl if we kept you at Green Gables, but I must say it hasn’t seemed very much like it this evening.”

Leaving this Parthian shaft to rankle in Anne’s stormy bosom, Marilla descended to the kitchen, grievously troubled in mind and vexed in soul. She was as angry with herself as with Anne, because, whenever she recalled Mrs. Rachel’s dumbfounded countenance her lips twitched with amusement and she felt a most reprehensible desire to laugh.

Anne's Apology

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Marilla said nothing to Matthew about the affair that evening; but when Anne proved still refractory the next morning an explanation had to be made to account for her absence from the breakfast table. Marilla told Matthew the whole story, taking pains to impress him with a due sense of the enormity of Anne's behavior.

"It's a good thing Rachel Lynde got a calling down; she's a meddlesome old gossip," was Matthew's consolatory rejoinder.

"Matthew Cuthbert, I'm astonished at you. You know that Anne's behavior was dreadful, and yet you take her part! I suppose you'll be saying next thing that she oughtn't to be punished at all!"

"Well now — no — not exactly," said Matthew uneasily. "I reckon she ought to be punished a little. But don't be too hard on her, Marilla. Recollect she hasn't ever had anyone to teach her right. You're — you're going to give her something to eat, aren't you?"

"When did you ever hear of me starving people into good behavior?" demanded Marilla indignantly. "She'll have her meals regular, and I'll carry them up to her myself. But she'll stay up there until she's willing to apologize to Mrs. Lynde, and that's final, Matthew."

Breakfast, dinner, and supper were very silent meals — for Anne still remained obdurate. After each meal Marilla carried a well-filled tray to the east gable and brought it down later on not noticeably depleted. Matthew eyed its last descent with a troubled eye. Had Anne eaten anything at all?

When Marilla went out that evening to bring the cows from the back pasture, Matthew, who had been hanging about the barns and watching, slipped into the house with the air of a burglar and crept upstairs. As a general thing Matthew gravitated between the kitchen and the little bedroom off the hall where he slept; once in a while he ventured

uncomfortably into the parlor or sitting room when the minister came to tea. But he had never been upstairs in his own house since the spring he helped Marilla paper the spare bedroom, and that was four years ago.

He tiptoed along the hall and stood for several minutes outside the door of the east gable before he summoned courage to tap on it with his fingers and then open the door to peep in.

Anne was sitting on the yellow chair by the window gazing mournfully out into the garden. Very small and unhappy she looked, and Matthew's heart smote him. He softly closed the door and tiptoed over to her.

"Anne," he whispered, as if afraid of being overheard, "how are you making it, Anne?"

Anne smiled wanly.

"Pretty well. I imagine a good deal, and that helps to pass the time. Of course, it's rather lonesome. But then, I may as well get used to that."

Anne smiled again, bravely facing the long years of solitary imprisonment before her.

Matthew recollected that he must say what he had come to say without loss of time, lest Marilla return prematurely. "Well now, Anne, don't you think you'd better do it and have it over with?" he whispered. "It'll have to be done sooner or later, you know, for Marilla's a dreadful determined woman — dreadful determined, Anne. Do it right off, I say, and have it over."

"Do you mean apologize to Mrs. Lynde?"

"Yes — apologize — that's the very word," said Matthew eagerly. "Just smooth it over so to speak. That's what I was trying to get at."

"I suppose I could do it to oblige you," said Anne thoughtfully. "It would be true enough to say I am sorry, because I AM sorry now. I wasn't a bit sorry last night. I was mad clear through, and I stayed mad all night. I know I did because I woke up three times and I was just furious every time. But this morning it was over. I wasn't in a temper anymore — and it left a dreadful sort of goneness, too. I felt so ashamed of myself. But I just couldn't think of going and telling Mrs. Lynde so. It would be so

humiliating. I made up my mind I'd stay shut up here forever rather than do that. But still — I'd do anything for you — if you really want me to—”

“Well now, of course I do. It's terrible lonesome downstairs without you. Just go and smooth things over — that's a good girl.”

“Very well,” said Anne resignedly. “I'll tell Marilla as soon as she comes in I've repented.”

“That's right — that's right, Anne. But don't tell Marilla I said anything about it. She might think I was putting my oar in and I promised not to do that.”

“Wild horses won't drag the secret from me,” promised Anne solemnly. “How would wild horses drag a secret from a person anyhow?”

But Matthew was gone, scared at his own success. He fled hastily to the remotest corner of the horse pasture lest Marilla should suspect what he had been up to. Marilla herself, upon her return to the house, was agreeably surprised to hear a plaintive voice calling, “Marilla” over the banisters.

“Well?” she said, going into the hall.

“I'm sorry I lost my temper and said rude things, and I'm willing to go and tell Mrs. Lynde so.”

“Very well.” Marilla's crispness gave no sign of her relief. She had been wondering what under the canopy she should do if Anne did not give in. “I'll take you down after milking.”

Accordingly, after milking, behold Marilla and Anne walking down the lane, the former erect and triumphant, the latter drooping and dejected. But halfway down Anne's dejection vanished as if by enchantment. She lifted her head and stepped lightly along, her eyes fixed on the sunset sky and an air of subdued exhilaration about her. Marilla beheld the change disapprovingly. This was no meek penitent such as it behooved her to take into the presence of the offended Mrs. Lynde.

“What are you thinking of, Anne?” she asked sharply.

“I'm imagining out what I must say to Mrs. Lynde,” answered Anne dreamily.

This was satisfactory — or should have been so. But Marilla could not rid herself of the notion that something in her scheme of punishment was going askew. Anne had no business to look so rapt and radiant.

Rapt and radiant Anne continued until they were in the very presence of Mrs. Lynde, who was sitting knitting by her kitchen window. Then the radiance vanished. Mournful penitence appeared on every feature. Before a word was spoken Anne suddenly went down on her knees before the astonished Mrs. Rachel and held out her hands beseechingly.

“Oh, Mrs. Lynde, I am so extremely sorry,” she said with a quiver in her voice. “I could never express all my sorrow, no, not if I used up a whole dictionary. You must just imagine it. I behaved terribly to you — and I’ve disgraced the dear friends, Matthew and Marilla, who have let me stay at Green Gables although I’m not a boy. I’m a dreadfully wicked and ungrateful girl, and I deserve to be punished and cast out by respectable people forever. It was very wicked of me to fly into a temper because you told me the truth. It WAS the truth; every word you said was true. My hair is red and I’m freckled and skinny and ugly. What I said to you was true, too, but I shouldn’t have said it. Oh, Mrs. Lynde, please, please, forgive me. If you refuse it will be a lifelong sorrow on a poor little orphan girl, would you, even if she had a dreadful temper? Oh, I am sure you wouldn’t. Please say you forgive me, Mrs. Lynde.”

Anne clasped her hands together, bowed her head, and waited for the word of judgment.

There was no mistaking her sincerity — it breathed in every tone of her voice. Both Marilla and Mrs. Lynde recognized its unmistakable ring. But the former understood in dismay that Anne was actually enjoying her valley of humiliation — was reveling in the thoroughness of her abasement. Where was the wholesome punishment upon which she, Marilla, had plumed herself? Anne had turned it into a species of positive pleasure.

Good Mrs. Lynde, not being overburdened with perception, did not see this. She only perceived that Anne had made a very thorough apology and all resentment vanished from her kindly, if somewhat officious, heart.

“There, there, get up, child,” she said heartily. “Of course I forgive you. I guess I was a little too hard on you, anyway. But I’m such an outspoken person. You just mustn’t mind me, that’s what. It can’t be denied your hair is terrible red; but I knew a girl once — went to school with her, in fact — whose hair was every mite as red as yours when she was young, but when she grew up it darkened to a real handsome auburn. I wouldn’t be a mite surprised if yours did, too — not a mite.”

“Oh, Mrs. Lynde!” Anne drew a long breath as she rose to her feet. “You have given me a hope. I shall always feel that you are a benefactor. Oh, I could endure anything if I only thought my hair would be a handsome auburn when I grew up. It would be so much easier to be good if one’s hair was a handsome auburn, don’t you think? And now may I go out into your garden and sit on that bench under the apple-trees while you and Marilla are talking? There is so much more scope for imagination out there.”

“Laws, yes, run along, child. And you can pick a bouquet of them white June lilies over in the corner if you like.”

As the door closed behind Anne Mrs. Lynde got briskly up to light a lamp.

“She’s a real odd little thing. Take this chair, Marilla; it’s easier than the one you’ve got; I just keep that for the hired boy to sit on. Yes, she certainly is an odd child, but there is something kind of taking about her after all. I don’t feel so surprised at you and Matthew keeping her as I did — nor so sorry for you, either. She may turn out all right. Of course, she has a queer way of expressing herself — a little too — well, too kind of forcible, you know; but she’ll likely get over that now that she’s come to live among civilized folks. And then, her temper’s pretty quick, I guess; but there’s one comfort, a child that has a quick temper, just blaze up and cool down, ain’t never likely to be sly or deceitful. Preserve me from a sly child, that’s what. On the whole, Marilla, I kind of like her.”

When Marilla went home Anne came out of the fragrant twilight of the orchard with a sheaf of white narcissi in her hands.

“I apologized pretty well, didn’t I?” she said proudly as they went down the lane. “I thought since I had to do it I might as well do it thoroughly.”

“You did it thoroughly, all right enough,” was Marilla’s comment. Marilla was dismayed at finding herself inclined to laugh over the recollection. She had also an uneasy feeling that she ought to scold Anne for apologizing so well; but then, that was ridiculous! She compromised with her conscience by saying severely:

“I hope you won’t have occasion to make many more such apologies. I hope you’ll try to control your temper now, Anne.”

“That wouldn’t be so hard if people wouldn’t twit me about my looks,” said Anne with a sigh. “I don’t get cross about other things; but I’m SO tired of being twitted about my hair and it just makes me boil right over. Do you suppose my hair will really be a handsome auburn when I grow up?”

“You shouldn’t think so much about your looks, Anne. I’m afraid you are a very vain little girl.”

“How can I be vain when I know I’m homely?” protested Anne. “I love pretty things; and I hate to look in the glass and see something that isn’t pretty. It makes me feel so sorrowful — just as I feel when I look at any ugly thing. I pity it because it isn’t beautiful.”

“Handsome is as handsome does,” quoted Marilla. “I’ve had that said to me before, but I have my doubts about it,” remarked skeptical Anne, sniffing at her narcissi. “Oh, aren’t these flowers sweet! It was lovely of Mrs. Lynde to give them to me. I have no hard feelings against Mrs. Lynde now. It gives you a lovely, comfortable feeling to apologize and be forgiven, doesn’t it? Aren’t the stars bright tonight? If you could live in a star, which one would you pick? I’d like that lovely clear big one away over there above that dark hill.”

“Anne, do hold your tongue,” said Marilla, thoroughly worn out trying to follow the gyrations of Anne’s thoughts.

Anne said no more until they turned into their own lane. A little gypsy wind came down it to meet them, laden with the spicy perfume of young

dew-wet ferns. Far up in the shadows a cheerful light gleamed out through the trees from the kitchen at Green Gables. Anne suddenly came close to Marilla and slipped her hand into the older woman's hard palm.

"It's lovely to be going home and know it's home," she said. "I love Green Gables already, and I never loved any place before. No place ever seemed like home. Oh, Marilla, I'm so happy. I could pray right now and not find it a bit hard."

Something warm and pleasant welled up in Marilla's heart at touch of that thin little hand in her own — a throb of the maternity she had missed, perhaps. Its very unaccustomedness and sweetness disturbed her. She hastened to restore her sensations to their normal calm by inculcating a moral.

"If you'll be a good girl you'll always be happy, Anne. And you should never find it hard to say your prayers."

"Saying one's prayers isn't exactly the same thing as praying," said Anne meditatively. "But I'm going to imagine that I'm the wind that is blowing up there in those tree tops. When I get tired of the trees I'll imagine I'm gently waving down here in the ferns — and then I'll fly over to Mrs. Lynde's garden and set the flowers dancing — and then I'll go with one great swoop over the clover field — and then I'll blow over the Lake of Shining Waters and ripple it all up into little sparkling waves. Oh, there's so much scope for imagination in a wind! So I'll not talk any more just now, Marilla."

"Thanks be to goodness for that," breathed Marilla in devout relief.

Anne's Impressions of Sunday-School

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“Well, how do you like them?” said Marilla.

Anne was standing in the gable room, looking solemnly at three new dresses spread out on the bed. One was of snuffy colored gingham which Marilla had been tempted to buy from a peddler the preceding summer because it looked so serviceable; one was of black-and-white checkered sateen which she had picked up at a bargain counter in the winter; and one was a stiff print of an ugly blue shade which she had purchased that week at a Carmody store.

She had made them up herself, and they were all made alike — plain skirts fullled tightly to plain waists, with sleeves as plain as waist and skirt and tight as sleeves could be.

“I’ll imagine that I like them,” said Anne soberly.

“I don’t want you to imagine it,” said Marilla, offended. “Oh, I can see you don’t like the dresses! What is the matter with them? Aren’t they neat and clean and new?”

“Yes.”

“Then why don’t you like them?”

“They’re — they’re not — pretty,” said Anne reluctantly.

“Pretty!” Marilla sniffed. “I didn’t trouble my head about getting pretty dresses for you. I don’t believe in pampering vanity, Anne, I’ll tell you that right off. Those dresses are good, sensible, serviceable dresses, without any frills or furbelows about them, and they’re all you’ll get this summer. The brown gingham and the blue print will do you for school when you begin to go. The sateen is for church and Sunday school. I’ll expect you to keep them neat and clean and not to tear them. I should think you’d be grateful to get most anything after those skimpy wincey things you’ve been wearing.”

“Oh, I AM grateful,” protested Anne. “But I’d be ever so much gratefuller if — if you’d made just one of them with puffed sleeves. Puffed sleeves are so fashionable now. It would give me such a thrill, Marilla, just to wear a dress with puffed sleeves.”

“Well, you’ll have to do without your thrill. I hadn’t any material to waste on puffed sleeves. I think they are ridiculous-looking things anyhow. I prefer the plain, sensible ones.”

“But I’d rather look ridiculous when everybody else does than plain and sensible all by myself,” persisted Anne mournfully.

“Trust you for that! Well, hang those dresses carefully up in your closet, and then sit down and learn the Sunday school lesson. I got a quarterly from Mr. Bell for you and you’ll go to Sunday school tomorrow,” said Marilla, disappearing downstairs in high dudgeon.

Anne clasped her hands and looked at the dresses.

“I did hope there would be a white one with puffed sleeves,” she whispered disconsolately. “I prayed for one, but I didn’t much expect it on that account. I didn’t suppose God would have time to bother about a little orphan girl’s dress. I knew I’d just have to depend on Marilla for it. Well, fortunately I can imagine that one of them is of snow-white muslin with lovely lace frills and three-puffed sleeves.”

The next morning warnings of a sick headache prevented Marilla from going to Sunday-school with Anne.

“You’ll have to go down and call for Mrs. Lynde, Anne,” she said. “She’ll see that you get into the right class. Now, mind you behave yourself properly. Stay to preaching afterwards and ask Mrs. Lynde to show you our pew. Here’s a cent for collection. Don’t stare at people and don’t fidget. I shall expect you to tell me the text when you come home.”

Anne started off irreproachable, arrayed in the stiff black-and-white sateen, which, while decent as regards length and certainly not open to the charge of skimpiness, contrived to emphasize every corner and angle of her thin figure. Her hat was a little, flat, glossy, new sailor, the extreme plainness of which had likewise much disappointed Anne, who had permitted herself secret visions of ribbon and flowers. The latter, however,

were supplied before Anne reached the main road, for being confronted halfway down the lane with a golden frenzy of wind-stirred buttercups and a glory of wild roses, Anne promptly and liberally garlanded her hat with a heavy wreath of them. Whatever other people might have thought of the result it satisfied Anne, and she tripped gaily down the road, holding her ruddy head with its decoration of pink and yellow very proudly.

When she had reached Mrs. Lynde's house she found that lady gone. Nothing daunted, Anne proceeded onward to the church alone. In the porch she found a crowd of little girls, all more or less gaily attired in whites and blues and pinks, and all staring with curious eyes at this stranger in their midst, with her extraordinary head adornment. Avonlea little girls had already heard queer stories about Anne. Mrs. Lynde said she had an awful temper; Jerry Buote, the hired boy at Green Gables, said she talked all the time to herself or to the trees and flowers like a crazy girl. They looked at her and whispered to each other behind their quarterlies. Nobody made any friendly advances, then or later on when the opening exercises were over and Anne found herself in Miss Rogerson's class.

Miss Rogerson was a middle-aged lady who had taught a Sunday-school class for twenty years. Her method of teaching was to ask the printed questions from the quarterly and look sternly over its edge at the particular little girl she thought ought to answer the question. She looked very often at Anne, and Anne, thanks to Marilla's drilling, answered promptly; but it may be questioned if she understood very much about either question or answer.

She did not think she liked Miss Rogerson, and she felt very miserable; every other little girl in the class had puffed sleeves. Anne felt that life was really not worth living without puffed sleeves.

"Well, how did you like Sunday school?" Marilla wanted to know when Anne came home. Her wreath having faded, Anne had discarded it in the lane, so Marilla was spared the knowledge of that for a time.

"I didn't like it a bit. It was horrid."

"Anne Shirley!" said Marilla rebukingly.

Anne sat down on the rocker with a long sigh, kissed one of Bonny's leaves, and waved her hand to a blossoming fuchsia.

"They might have been lonesome while I was away," she explained. "And now about the Sunday school. I behaved well, just as you told me. Mrs. Lynde was gone, but I went right on myself. I went into the church, with a lot of other little girls, and I sat in the corner of a pew by the window while the opening exercises went on. Mr. Bell made an awfully long prayer. I would have been dreadfully tired before he got through if I hadn't been sitting by that window. But it looked right out on the Lake of Shining Waters, so I just gazed at that and imagined all sorts of splendid things."

"You shouldn't have done anything of the sort. You should have listened to Mr. Bell."

"But he wasn't talking to me," protested Anne. "He was talking to God and he didn't seem to be very much interested in it, either. I think he thought God was too far off though. There was a long row of white birches hanging over the lake and the sunshine fell down through them, 'way, 'way down, deep into the water. Oh, Marilla, it was like a beautiful dream! It gave me a thrill and I just said, 'Thank you for it, God,' two or three times."

"Not out loud, I hope," said Marilla anxiously.

"Oh, no, just under my breath. Well, Mr. Bell did get through at last and they told me to go into the classroom with Miss Rogerson's class. There were nine other girls in it. They all had puffed sleeves. I tried to imagine mine were puffed, too, but I couldn't. Why couldn't I? It was as easy as could be to imagine they were puffed when I was alone in the east gable, but it was awfully hard there among the others who had really truly puffs."

"You shouldn't have been thinking about your sleeves in Sunday school. You should have been attending to the lesson. I hope you knew it."

"Oh, yes; and I answered a lot of questions. Miss Rogerson asked ever so many. I don't think it was fair for her to do all the asking. There were lots I wanted to ask her, but I didn't like to because I didn't think she was a

kindred spirit. Then all the other little girls recited a paraphrase. She asked me if I knew any. I told her I didn't, but I could recite, 'The Dog at His Master's Grave' if she liked. That's in the Third Royal Reader. It isn't a really truly religious piece of poetry, but it's so sad and melancholy that it might as well be. She said it wouldn't do and she told me to learn the nineteenth paraphrase for next Sunday. I read it over in church afterwards and it's splendid. There are two lines in particular that just thrill me.

“‘Quick as the slaughtered squadrons fell
In Midian's evil day.’

“I don't know what 'squadrons' means nor 'Midian,' either, but it sounds SO tragical. I can hardly wait until next Sunday to recite it. I'll practice it all the week. After Sunday school I asked Miss Rogerson — because Mrs. Lynde was too far away — to show me your pew. I sat just as still as I could and the text was Revelations, third chapter, second and third verses. It was a very long text. If I was a minister I'd pick the short, snappy ones. The sermon was awfully long, too. I suppose the minister had to match it to the text. I didn't think he was a bit interesting. The trouble with him seems to be that he hasn't enough imagination. I didn't listen to him very much. I just let my thoughts run and I thought of the most surprising things.”

Marilla felt helplessly that all this should be sternly reproofed, but she was hampered by the undeniable fact that some of the things Anne had said, especially about the minister's sermons and Mr. Bell's prayers, were what she herself had really thought deep down in her heart for years, but had never given expression to. It almost seemed to her that those secret, unuttered, critical thoughts had suddenly taken visible and accusing shape and form in the person of this outspoken morsel of neglected humanity.

A Solemn Vow and Promise

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It was not until the next Friday that Marilla heard the story of the flower-wreathed hat. She came home from Mrs. Lynde's and called Anne to account.

"Anne, Mrs. Rachel says you went to church last Sunday with your hat rigged out ridiculous with roses and buttercups. What on earth put you up to such a caper? A pretty-looking object you must have been!"

"Oh. I know pink and yellow aren't becoming to me," began Anne.

"Becoming fiddlesticks! It was putting flowers on your hat at all, no matter what color they were, that was ridiculous. You are the most aggravating child!"

"I don't see why it's any more ridiculous to wear flowers on your hat than on your dress," protested Anne. "Lots of little girls there had bouquets pinned on their dresses. What's the difference?"

Marilla was not to be drawn from the safe concrete into dubious paths of the abstract.

"Don't answer me back like that, Anne. It was very silly of you to do such a thing. Never let me catch you at such a trick again. Mrs. Rachel says she thought she would sink through the floor when she saw you come in all rigged out like that. She couldn't get near enough to tell you to take them off till it was too late. She says people talked about it something dreadful. Of course they would think I had no better sense than to let you go decked out like that."

"Oh, I'm so sorry," said Anne, tears welling into her eyes. "I never thought you'd mind. The roses and buttercups were so sweet and pretty I thought they'd look lovely on my hat. Lots of the little girls had artificial flowers on their hats. I'm afraid I'm going to be a dreadful trial to you. Maybe you'd better send me back to the asylum. That would be terrible; I don't think I could endure it; most likely I would go into consumption;

I'm so thin as it is, you see. But that would be better than being a trial to you."

"Nonsense," said Marilla, vexed at herself for having made the child cry. "I don't want to send you back to the asylum, I'm sure. All I want is that you should behave like other little girls and not make yourself ridiculous. Don't cry any more. I've got some news for you. Diana Barry came home this afternoon. I'm going up to see if I can borrow a skirt pattern from Mrs. Barry, and if you like you can come with me and get acquainted with Diana."

Anne rose to her feet, with clasped hands, the tears still glistening on her cheeks; the dish towel she had been hemming slipped unheeded to the floor.

"Oh, Marilla, I'm frightened — now that it has come I'm actually frightened. What if she shouldn't like me! It would be the most tragical disappointment of my life."

"Now, don't get into a fluster. And I do wish you wouldn't use such long words. It sounds so funny in a little girl. I guess Diana'll like you well enough. It's her mother you've got to reckon with. If she doesn't like you it won't matter how much Diana does. If she has heard about your outburst to Mrs. Lynde and going to church with buttercups round your hat I don't know what she'll think of you. You must be polite and well behaved, and don't make any of your startling speeches. For pity's sake, if the child isn't actually trembling!"

Anne WAS trembling. Her face was pale and tense.

"Oh, Marilla, you'd be excited, too, if you were going to meet a little girl you hoped to be your bosom friend and whose mother mightn't like you," she said as she hastened to get her hat.

They went over to Orchard Slope by the short cut across the brook and up the firry hill grove. Mrs. Barry came to the kitchen door in answer to Marilla's knock. She was a tall black-eyed, black-haired woman, with a very resolute mouth. She had the reputation of being very strict with her children.

“How do you do, Marilla?” she said cordially. “Come in. And this is the little girl you have adopted, I suppose?”

“Yes, this is Anne Shirley,” said Marilla.

“Spelled with an E,” gasped Anne, who, tremulous and excited as she was, was determined there should be no misunderstanding on that important point.

Mrs. Barry, not hearing or not comprehending, merely shook hands and said kindly:

“How are you?”

“I am well in body although considerable ruffled up in spirit, thank you ma’am,” said Anne gravely. Then aside to Marilla in an audible whisper, “There wasn’t anything startling in that, was there, Marilla?”

Diana was sitting on the sofa, reading a book which she dropped when the callers entered. She was a very pretty little girl, with her mother’s black eyes and hair, and rosy cheeks, and the merry expression which was her inheritance from her father.

“This is my little girl Diana,” said Mrs. Barry. “Diana, you might take Anne out into the garden and show her your flowers. It will be better for you than straining your eyes over that book. She reads entirely too much —” this to Marilla as the little girls went out — “and I can’t prevent her, for her father aids and abets her. She’s always poring over a book. I’m glad she has the prospect of a playmate — perhaps it will take her more out-of-doors.”

Outside in the garden, which was full of mellow sunset light streaming through the dark old firs to the west of it, stood Anne and Diana, gazing bashfully at each other over a clump of gorgeous tiger lilies.

The Barry garden was a bowery wilderness of flowers which would have delighted Anne’s heart at any time less fraught with destiny. It was encircled by huge old willows and tall firs, beneath which flourished flowers that loved the shade. Prim, right-angled paths neatly bordered with clamshells, intersected it like moist red ribbons and in the beds between old-fashioned flowers ran riot. There were rosy bleeding-hearts and great splendid crimson peonies; white, fragrant narcissi and thorny, sweet

Scotch roses; pink and blue and white columbines and lilac-tinted Bouncing Bets; clumps of southernwood and ribbon grass and mint; purple Adam-and-Eve, daffodils, and masses of sweet clover white with its delicate, fragrant, feathery sprays; scarlet lightning that shot its fiery lances over prim white musk-flowers; a garden it was where sunshine lingered and bees hummed, and winds, beguiled into loitering, purred and rustled.

“Oh, Diana,” said Anne at last, clasping her hands and speaking almost in a whisper, “oh, do you think you can like me a little — enough to be my bosom friend?”

Diana laughed. Diana always laughed before she spoke.

“Why, I guess so,” she said frankly. “I’m awfully glad you’ve come to live at Green Gables. It will be jolly to have somebody to play with. There isn’t any other girl who lives near enough to play with, and I’ve no sisters big enough.”

“Will you swear to be my friend forever and ever?” demanded Anne eagerly.

Diana looked shocked.

“Why it’s dreadfully wicked to swear,” she said rebukingly.

“Oh no, not my kind of swearing. There are two kinds, you know.”

“I never heard of but one kind,” said Diana doubtfully.

“There really is another. Oh, it isn’t wicked at all. It just means vowing and promising solemnly.”

“Well, I don’t mind doing that,” agreed Diana, relieved. “How do you do it?”

“We must join hands — so,” said Anne gravely. “It ought to be over running water. We’ll just imagine this path is running water. I’ll repeat the oath first. I solemnly swear to be faithful to my bosom friend, Diana Barry, as long as the sun and moon shall endure. Now you say it and put my name in.”

Diana repeated the “oath” with a laugh fore and aft. Then she said:

“You’re a queer girl, Anne. I heard before that you were queer. But I believe I’m going to like you real well.”

When Marilla and Anne went home Diana went with them as far as the log bridge. The two little girls walked with their arms about each other. At the brook they parted with many promises to spend the next afternoon together.

“Well, did you find Diana a kindred spirit?” asked Marilla as they went up through the garden of Green Gables.

“Oh yes,” sighed Anne, blissfully unconscious of any sarcasm on Marilla’s part. “Oh Marilla, I’m the happiest girl on Prince Edward Island this very moment. I assure you I’ll say my prayers with a right goodwill tonight. Diana and I are going to build a playhouse in Mr. William Bell’s birch grove tomorrow. Can I have those broken pieces of china that are out in the woodshed? Diana’s birthday is in February and mine is in March. Don’t you think that is a very strange coincidence? Diana is going to lend me a book to read. She says it’s perfectly splendid and tremendously exciting. She’s going to show me a place back in the woods where rice lilies grow. Don’t you think Diana has got very soulful eyes? I wish I had soulful eyes. Diana is going to teach me to sing a song called ‘Nelly in the Hazel Dell.’ She’s going to give me a picture to put up in my room; it’s a perfectly beautiful picture, she says — a lovely lady in a pale blue silk dress. A sewing-machine agent gave it to her. I wish I had something to give Diana. I’m an inch taller than Diana, but she is ever so much fatter; she says she’d like to be thin because it’s so much more graceful, but I’m afraid she only said it to soothe my feelings. We’re going to the shore some day to gather shells. We have agreed to call the spring down by the log bridge the Dryad’s Bubble. Isn’t that a perfectly elegant name? I read a story once about a spring called that. A dryad is sort of a grownup fairy, I think.”

“Well, all I hope is you won’t talk Diana to death,” said Marilla. “But remember this in all your planning, Anne. You’re not going to play all the time nor most of it. You’ll have your work to do and it’ll have to be done first.”

Anne’s cup of happiness was full, and Matthew caused it to overflow. He had just got home from a trip to the store at Carmody, and he

sheepishly produced a small parcel from his pocket and handed it to Anne, with a deprecatory look at Marilla.

“I heard you say you liked chocolate sweeties, so I got you some,” he said.

“Humph,” sniffed Marilla. “It’ll ruin her teeth and stomach. There, there, child, don’t look so dismal. You can eat those, since Matthew has gone and got them. He’d better have brought you peppermints. They’re wholesomer. Don’t sicken yourself eating all them at once now.”

“Oh, no, indeed, I won’t,” said Anne eagerly. “I’ll just eat one tonight, Marilla. And I can give Diana half of them, can’t I? The other half will taste twice as sweet to me if I give some to her. It’s delightful to think I have something to give her.”

“I will say it for the child,” said Marilla when Anne had gone to her gable, “she isn’t stingy. I’m glad, for of all faults I detest stinginess in a child. Dear me, it’s only three weeks since she came, and it seems as if she’d been here always. I can’t imagine the place without her. Now, don’t be looking I told-you-so, Matthew. That’s bad enough in a woman, but it isn’t to be endured in a man. I’m perfectly willing to own up that I’m glad I consented to keep the child and that I’m getting fond of her, but don’t you rub it in, Matthew Cuthbert.”

The Delights of Anticipation

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“It’s time Anne was in to do her sewing,” said Marilla, glancing at the clock and then out into the yellow August afternoon where everything drowsed in the heat. “She stayed playing with Diana more than half an hour more’n I gave her leave to; and now she’s perched out there on the woodpile talking to Matthew, nineteen to the dozen, when she knows perfectly well she ought to be at her work. And of course he’s listening to her like a perfect ninny. I never saw such an infatuated man. The more she talks and the odder the things she says, the more he’s delighted evidently. Anne Shirley, you come right in here this minute, do you hear me!”

A series of staccato taps on the west window brought Anne flying in from the yard, eyes shining, cheeks faintly flushed with pink, unbraided hair streaming behind her in a torrent of brightness.

“Oh, Marilla,” she exclaimed breathlessly, “there’s going to be a Sunday-school picnic next week — in Mr. Harmon Andrews’s field, right near the lake of Shining Waters. And Mrs. Superintendent Bell and Mrs. Rachel Lynde are going to make ice cream — think of it, Marilla — ICE CREAM! And, oh, Marilla, can I go to it?”

“Just look at the clock, if you please, Anne. What time did I tell you to come in?”

“Two o’clock — but isn’t it splendid about the picnic, Marilla? Please can I go? Oh, I’ve never been to a picnic — I’ve dreamed of picnics, but I’ve never—”

“Yes, I told you to come at two o’clock. And it’s a quarter to three. I’d like to know why you didn’t obey me, Anne.”

“Why, I meant to, Marilla, as much as could be. But you have no idea how fascinating Idlewild is. And then, of course, I had to tell Matthew about the picnic. Matthew is such a sympathetic listener. Please can I go?”

“You’ll have to learn to resist the fascination of Idle-whatever-you-call-it. When I tell you to come in at a certain time I mean that time and not half an hour later. And you needn’t stop to discourse with sympathetic listeners on your way, either. As for the picnic, of course you can go. You’re a Sunday-school scholar, and it’s not likely I’d refuse to let you go when all the other little girls are going.”

“But — but,” faltered Anne, “Diana says that everybody must take a basket of things to eat. I can’t cook, as you know, Marilla, and — and — I don’t mind going to a picnic without puffed sleeves so much, but I’d feel terribly humiliated if I had to go without a basket. It’s been preying on my mind ever since Diana told me.”

“Well, it needn’t prey any longer. I’ll bake you a basket.”

“Oh, you dear good Marilla. Oh, you are so kind to me. Oh, I’m so much obliged to you.”

Getting through with her “ohs” Anne cast herself into Marilla’s arms and rapturously kissed her sallow cheek. It was the first time in her whole life that childish lips had voluntarily touched Marilla’s face. Again that sudden sensation of startling sweetness thrilled her. She was secretly vastly pleased at Anne’s impulsive caress, which was probably the reason why she said brusquely:

“There, there, never mind your kissing nonsense. I’d sooner see you doing strictly as you’re told. As for cooking, I mean to begin giving you lessons in that some of these days. But you’re so featherbrained, Anne, I’ve been waiting to see if you’d sober down a little and learn to be steady before I begin. You’ve got to keep your wits about you in cooking and not stop in the middle of things to let your thoughts rove all over creation. Now, get out your patchwork and have your square done before teatime.”

“I do NOT like patchwork,” said Anne dolefully, hunting out her workbasket and sitting down before a little heap of red and white diamonds with a sigh. “I think some kinds of sewing would be nice; but there’s no scope for imagination in patchwork. It’s just one little seam after another and you never seem to be getting anywhere. But of course I’d rather be Anne of Green Gables sewing patchwork than Anne of any other

place with nothing to do but play. I wish time went as quick sewing patches as it does when I'm playing with Diana, though. Oh, we do have such elegant times, Marilla. I have to furnish most of the imagination, but I'm well able to do that. Diana is simply perfect in every other way. You know that little piece of land across the brook that runs up between our farm and Mr. Barry's. It belongs to Mr. William Bell, and right in the corner there is a little ring of white birch trees — the most romantic spot, Marilla. Diana and I have our playhouse there. We call it Idlewild. Isn't that a poetical name? I assure you it took me some time to think it out. I stayed awake nearly a whole night before I invented it. Then, just as I was dropping off to sleep, it came like an inspiration. Diana was ENRAPPED when she heard it. We have got our house fixed up elegantly. You must come and see it, Marilla — won't you? We have great big stones, all covered with moss, for seats, and boards from tree to tree for shelves. And we have all our dishes on them. Of course, they're all broken but it's the easiest thing in the world to imagine that they are whole. There's a piece of a plate with a spray of red and yellow ivy on it that is especially beautiful. We keep it in the parlor and we have the fairy glass there, too. The fairy glass is as lovely as a dream. Diana found it out in the woods behind their chicken house. It's all full of rainbows — just little young rainbows that haven't grown big yet — and Diana's mother told her it was broken off a hanging lamp they once had. But it's nice to imagine the fairies lost it one night when they had a ball, so we call it the fairy glass. Matthew is going to make us a table. Oh, we have named that little round pool over in Mr. Barry's field Willowmere. I got that name out of the book Diana lent me. That was a thrilling book, Marilla. The heroine had five lovers. I'd be satisfied with one, wouldn't you? She was very handsome and she went through great tribulations. She could faint as easy as anything. I'd love to be able to faint, wouldn't you, Marilla? It's so romantic. But I'm really very healthy for all I'm so thin. I believe I'm getting fatter, though. Don't you think I am? I look at my elbows every morning when I get up to see if any dimples are coming. Diana is having a new dress made with elbow sleeves. She is going to wear it to the picnic.

Oh, I do hope it will be fine next Wednesday. I don't feel that I could endure the disappointment if anything happened to prevent me from getting to the picnic. I suppose I'd live through it, but I'm certain it would be a lifelong sorrow. It wouldn't matter if I got to a hundred picnics in after years; they wouldn't make up for missing this one. They're going to have boats on the Lake of Shining Waters — and ice cream, as I told you. I have never tasted ice cream. Diana tried to explain what it was like, but I guess ice cream is one of those things that are beyond imagination."

"Anne, you have talked even on for ten minutes by the clock," said Marilla. "Now, just for curiosity's sake, see if you can hold your tongue for the same length of time."

Anne held her tongue as desired. But for the rest of the week she talked picnic and thought picnic and dreamed picnic. On Saturday it rained and she worked herself up into such a frantic state lest it should keep on raining until and over Wednesday that Marilla made her sew an extra patchwork square by way of steadying her nerves.

On Sunday Anne confided to Marilla on the way home from church that she grew actually cold all over with excitement when the minister announced the picnic from the pulpit.

"Such a thrill as went up and down my back, Marilla! I don't think I'd ever really believed until then that there was honestly going to be a picnic. I couldn't help fearing I'd only imagined it. But when a minister says a thing in the pulpit you just have to believe it."

"You set your heart too much on things, Anne," said Marilla, with a sigh. "I'm afraid there'll be a great many disappointments in store for you through life."

"Oh, Marilla, looking forward to things is half the pleasure of them," exclaimed Anne. "You mayn't get the things themselves; but nothing can prevent you from having the fun of looking forward to them. Mrs. Lynde says, 'Blessed are they who expect nothing for they shall not be disappointed.' But I think it would be worse to expect nothing than to be disappointed."

Marilla wore her amethyst brooch to church that day as usual. Marilla always wore her amethyst brooch to church. She would have thought it rather sacrilegious to leave it off — as bad as forgetting her Bible or her collection dime. That amethyst brooch was Marilla's most treasured possession. A seafaring uncle had given it to her mother who in turn had bequeathed it to Marilla. It was an old-fashioned oval, containing a braid of her mother's hair, surrounded by a border of very fine amethysts. Marilla knew too little about precious stones to realize how fine the amethysts actually were; but she thought them very beautiful and was always pleasantly conscious of their violet shimmer at her throat, above her good brown satin dress, even although she could not see it.

Anne had been smitten with delighted admiration when she first saw that brooch.

"Oh, Marilla, it's a perfectly elegant brooch. I don't know how you can pay attention to the sermon or the prayers when you have it on. I couldn't, I know. I think amethysts are just sweet. They are what I used to think diamonds were like. Long ago, before I had ever seen a diamond, I read about them and I tried to imagine what they would be like. I thought they would be lovely glimmering purple stones. When I saw a real diamond in a lady's ring one day I was so disappointed I cried. Of course, it was very lovely but it wasn't my idea of a diamond. Will you let me hold the brooch for one minute, Marilla? Do you think amethysts can be the souls of good violets?"

Anne's Confession

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On the Monday evening before the picnic Marilla came down from her room with a troubled face.

"Anne," she said to that small personage, who was shelling peas by the spotless table and singing, "Nelly of the Hazel Dell" with a vigor and expression that did credit to Diana's teaching, "did you see anything of my amethyst brooch? I thought I stuck it in my pincushion when I came home from church yesterday evening, but I can't find it anywhere."

"I — I saw it this afternoon when you were away at the Aid Society," said Anne, a little slowly. "I was passing your door when I saw it on the cushion, so I went in to look at it."

"Did you touch it?" said Marilla sternly.

"Y-e-e-s," admitted Anne, "I took it up and I pinned it on my breast just to see how it would look."

"You had no business to do anything of the sort. It's very wrong in a little girl to meddle. You shouldn't have gone into my room in the first place and you shouldn't have touched a brooch that didn't belong to you in the second. Where did you put it?"

"Oh, I put it back on the bureau. I hadn't it on a minute. Truly, I didn't mean to meddle, Marilla. I didn't think about its being wrong to go in and try on the brooch; but I see now that it was and I'll never do it again. That's one good thing about me. I never do the same naughty thing twice."

"You didn't put it back," said Marilla. "That brooch isn't anywhere on the bureau. You've taken it out or something, Anne."

"I did put it back," said Anne quickly — pertly, Marilla thought. "I don't just remember whether I stuck it on the pincushion or laid it in the china tray. But I'm perfectly certain I put it back."

"I'll go and have another look," said Marilla, determining to be just. "If you put that brooch back it's there still. If it isn't I'll know you didn't,

that's all!"

Marilla went to her room and made a thorough search, not only over the bureau but in every other place she thought the brooch might possibly be. It was not to be found and she returned to the kitchen.

"Anne, the brooch is gone. By your own admission you were the last person to handle it. Now, what have you done with it? Tell me the truth at once. Did you take it out and lose it?"

"No, I didn't," said Anne solemnly, meeting Marilla's angry gaze squarely. "I never took the brooch out of your room and that is the truth, if I was to be led to the block for it — although I'm not very certain what a block is. So there, Marilla."

Anne's "so there" was only intended to emphasize her assertion, but Marilla took it as a display of defiance.

"I believe you are telling me a falsehood, Anne," she said sharply. "I know you are. There now, don't say anything more unless you are prepared to tell the whole truth. Go to your room and stay there until you are ready to confess."

"Will I take the peas with me?" said Anne meekly.

"No, I'll finish shelling them myself. Do as I bid you."

When Anne had gone Marilla went about her evening tasks in a very disturbed state of mind. She was worried about her valuable brooch. What if Anne had lost it? And how wicked of the child to deny having taken it, when anybody could see she must have! With such an innocent face, too!

"I don't know what I wouldn't sooner have had happen," thought Marilla, as she nervously shelled the peas. "Of course, I don't suppose she meant to steal it or anything like that. She's just taken it to play with or help along that imagination of hers. She must have taken it, that's clear, for there hasn't been a soul in that room since she was in it, by her own story, until I went up tonight. And the brooch is gone, there's nothing surer. I suppose she has lost it and is afraid to own up for fear she'll be punished. It's a dreadful thing to think she tells falsehoods. It's a far worse thing than her fit of temper. It's a fearful responsibility to have a child in your house you can't trust. Slyness and untruthfulness — that's what she

has displayed. I declare I feel worse about that than about the brooch. If she'd only have told the truth about it I wouldn't mind so much."

Marilla went to her room at intervals all through the evening and searched for the brooch, without finding it. A bedtime visit to the east gable produced no result. Anne persisted in denying that she knew anything about the brooch but Marilla was only the more firmly convinced that she did.

She told Matthew the story the next morning. Matthew was confounded and puzzled; he could not so quickly lose faith in Anne but he had to admit that circumstances were against her.

"You're sure it hasn't fell down behind the bureau?" was the only suggestion he could offer.

"I've moved the bureau and I've taken out the drawers and I've looked in every crack and cranny" was Marilla's positive answer. "The brooch is gone and that child has taken it and lied about it. That's the plain, ugly truth, Matthew Cuthbert, and we might as well look it in the face."

"Well now, what are you going to do about it?" Matthew asked forlornly, feeling secretly thankful that Marilla and not he had to deal with the situation. He felt no desire to put his oar in this time.

"She'll stay in her room until she confesses," said Marilla grimly, remembering the success of this method in the former case. "Then we'll see. Perhaps we'll be able to find the brooch if she'll only tell where she took it; but in any case she'll have to be severely punished, Matthew."

"Well now, you'll have to punish her," said Matthew, reaching for his hat. "I've nothing to do with it, remember. You warned me off yourself."

Marilla felt deserted by everyone. She could not even go to Mrs. Lynde for advice. She went up to the east gable with a very serious face and left it with a face more serious still. Anne steadfastly refused to confess. She persisted in asserting that she had not taken the brooch. The child had evidently been crying and Marilla felt a pang of pity which she sternly repressed. By night she was, as she expressed it, "beat out."

"You'll stay in this room until you confess, Anne. You can make up your mind to that," she said firmly.

“But the picnic is tomorrow, Marilla,” cried Anne. “You won’t keep me from going to that, will you? You’ll just let me out for the afternoon, won’t you? Then I’ll stay here as long as you like AFTERWARDS cheerfully. But I MUST go to the picnic.”

“You’ll not go to picnics nor anywhere else until you’ve confessed, Anne.”

“Oh, Marilla,” gasped Anne.

But Marilla had gone out and shut the door.

Wednesday morning dawned as bright and fair as if expressly made to order for the picnic. Birds sang around Green Gables; the Madonna lilies in the garden sent out whiffs of perfume that entered in on viewless winds at every door and window, and wandered through halls and rooms like spirits of benediction. The birches in the hollow waved joyful hands as if watching for Anne’s usual morning greeting from the east gable. But Anne was not at her window. When Marilla took her breakfast up to her she found the child sitting primly on her bed, pale and resolute, with tight-shut lips and gleaming eyes.

“Marilla, I’m ready to confess.”

“Ah!” Marilla laid down her tray. Once again her method had succeeded; but her success was very bitter to her. “Let me hear what you have to say then, Anne.”

“I took the amethyst brooch,” said Anne, as if repeating a lesson she had learned. “I took it just as you said. I didn’t mean to take it when I went in. But it did look so beautiful, Marilla, when I pinned it on my breast that I was overcome by an irresistible temptation. I imagined how perfectly thrilling it would be to take it to Idlewild and play I was the Lady Cordelia Fitzgerald. It would be so much easier to imagine I was the Lady Cordelia if I had a real amethyst brooch on. Diana and I make necklaces of roseberries but what are roseberries compared to amethysts? So I took the brooch. I thought I could put it back before you came home. I went all the way around by the road to lengthen out the time. When I was going over the bridge across the Lake of Shining Waters I took the brooch off to have another look at it. Oh, how it did shine in the sunlight! And then, when I

was leaning over the bridge, it just slipped through my fingers — so — and went down — down — down, all purply-sparkling, and sank forevermore beneath the Lake of Shining Waters. And that's the best I can do at confessing, Marilla."

Marilla felt hot anger surge up into her heart again. This child had taken and lost her treasured amethyst brooch and now sat there calmly reciting the details thereof without the least apparent compunction or repentance.

"Anne, this is terrible," she said, trying to speak calmly. "You are the very wickedest girl I ever heard of."

"Yes, I suppose I am," agreed Anne tranquilly. "And I know I'll have to be punished. It'll be your duty to punish me, Marilla. Won't you please get it over right off because I'd like to go to the picnic with nothing on my mind."

"Picnic, indeed! You'll go to no picnic today, Anne Shirley. That shall be your punishment. And it isn't half severe enough either for what you've done!"

"Not go to the picnic!" Anne sprang to her feet and clutched Marilla's hand. "But you PROMISED me I might! Oh, Marilla, I must go to the picnic. That was why I confessed. Punish me any way you like but that. Oh, Marilla, please, please, let me go to the picnic. Think of the ice cream! For anything you know I may never have a chance to taste ice cream again."

Marilla disengaged Anne's clinging hands stonily.

"You needn't plead, Anne. You are not going to the picnic and that's final. No, not a word."

Anne realized that Marilla was not to be moved. She clasped her hands together, gave a piercing shriek, and then flung herself face downward on the bed, crying and writhing in an utter abandonment of disappointment and despair.

"For the land's sake!" gasped Marilla, hastening from the room. "I believe the child is crazy. No child in her senses would behave as she does."

If she isn't she's utterly bad. Oh dear, I'm afraid Rachel was right from the first. But I've put my hand to the plow and I won't look back."

That was a dismal morning. Marilla worked fiercely and scrubbed the porch floor and the dairy shelves when she could find nothing else to do. Neither the shelves nor the porch needed it — but Marilla did. Then she went out and raked the yard.

When dinner was ready she went to the stairs and called Anne. A tearstained face appeared, looking tragically over the banisters.

"Come down to your dinner, Anne."

"I don't want any dinner, Marilla," said Anne, sobbingly. "I couldn't eat anything. My heart is broken. You'll feel remorse of conscience someday, I expect, for breaking it, Marilla, but I forgive you. Remember when the time comes that I forgive you. But please don't ask me to eat anything, especially boiled pork and greens. Boiled pork and greens are so unromantic when one is in affliction."

Exasperated, Marilla returned to the kitchen and poured out her tale of woe to Matthew, who, between his sense of justice and his unlawful sympathy with Anne, was a miserable man.

"Well now, she shouldn't have taken the brooch, Marilla, or told stories about it," he admitted, mournfully surveying his plateful of unromantic pork and greens as if he, like Anne, thought it a food unsuited to crises of feeling, "but she's such a little thing — such an interesting little thing. Don't you think it's pretty rough not to let her go to the picnic when she's so set on it?"

"Matthew Cuthbert, I'm amazed at you. I think I've let her off entirely too easy. And she doesn't appear to realize how wicked she's been at all — that's what worries me most. If she'd really felt sorry it wouldn't be so bad. And you don't seem to realize it, neither; you're making excuses for her all the time to yourself — I can see that."

"Well now, she's such a little thing," feebly reiterated Matthew. "And there should be allowances made, Marilla. You know she's never had any bringing up."

"Well, she's having it now" retorted Marilla.

The retort silenced Matthew if it did not convince him. That dinner was a very dismal meal. The only cheerful thing about it was Jerry Buote, the hired boy, and Marilla resented his cheerfulness as a personal insult.

When her dishes were washed and her bread sponge set and her hens fed Marilla remembered that she had noticed a small rent in her best black lace shawl when she had taken it off on Monday afternoon on returning from the Ladies' Aid.

She would go and mend it. The shawl was in a box in her trunk. As Marilla lifted it out, the sunlight, falling through the vines that clustered thickly about the window, struck upon something caught in the shawl — something that glittered and sparkled in facets of violet light. Marilla snatched at it with a gasp. It was the amethyst brooch, hanging to a thread of the lace by its catch!

"Dear life and heart," said Marilla blankly, "what does this mean? Here's my brooch safe and sound that I thought was at the bottom of Barry's pond. Whatever did that girl mean by saying she took it and lost it? I declare I believe Green Gables is bewitched. I remember now that when I took off my shawl Monday afternoon I laid it on the bureau for a minute. I suppose the brooch got caught in it somehow. Well!"

Marilla betook herself to the east gable, brooch in hand. Anne had cried herself out and was sitting dejectedly by the window.

"Anne Shirley," said Marilla solemnly, "I've just found my brooch hanging to my black lace shawl. Now I want to know what that rigmarole you told me this morning meant."

"Why, you said you'd keep me here until I confessed," returned Anne wearily, "and so I decided to confess because I was bound to get to the picnic. I thought out a confession last night after I went to bed and made it as interesting as I could. And I said it over and over so that I wouldn't forget it. But you wouldn't let me go to the picnic after all, so all my trouble was wasted."

Marilla had to laugh in spite of herself. But her conscience pricked her.

"Anne, you do beat all! But I was wrong — I see that now. I shouldn't have doubted your word when I'd never known you to tell a story. Of

course, it wasn't right for you to confess to a thing you hadn't done — it was very wrong to do so. But I drove you to it. So if you'll forgive me, Anne, I'll forgive you and we'll start square again. And now get yourself ready for the picnic."

Anne flew up like a rocket.

"Oh, Marilla, isn't it too late?"

"No, it's only two o'clock. They won't be more than well gathered yet and it'll be an hour before they have tea. Wash your face and comb your hair and put on your gingham. I'll fill a basket for you. There's plenty of stuff baked in the house. And I'll get Jerry to hitch up the sorrel and drive you down to the picnic ground."

"Oh, Marilla," exclaimed Anne, flying to the washstand. "Five minutes ago I was so miserable I was wishing I'd never been born and now I wouldn't change places with an angel!"

That night a thoroughly happy, completely tired-out Anne returned to Green Gables in a state of beatification impossible to describe.

"Oh, Marilla, I've had a perfectly scrumptious time. Scrumptious is a new word I learned today. I heard Mary Alice Bell use it. Isn't it very expressive? Everything was lovely. We had a splendid tea and then Mr. Harmon Andrews took us all for a row on the Lake of Shining Waters — six of us at a time. And Jane Andrews nearly fell overboard. She was leaning out to pick water lilies and if Mr. Andrews hadn't caught her by her sash just in the nick of time she'd fallen in and prob'ly been drowned. I wish it had been me. It would have been such a romantic experience to have been nearly drowned. It would be such a thrilling tale to tell. And we had the ice cream. Words fail me to describe that ice cream. Marilla, I assure you it was sublime."

That evening Marilla told the whole story to Matthew over her stocking basket.

"I'm willing to own up that I made a mistake," she concluded candidly, "but I've learned a lesson. I have to laugh when I think of Anne's 'confession,' although I suppose I shouldn't for it really was a falsehood. But it doesn't seem as bad as the other would have been, somehow, and

anyhow I'm responsible for it. That child is hard to understand in some respects. But I believe she'll turn out all right yet. And there's one thing certain, no house will ever be dull that she's in."

A Tempest in the School Teapot

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“What a splendid day!” said Anne, drawing a long breath. “Isn’t it good just to be alive on a day like this? I pity the people who aren’t born yet for missing it. They may have good days, of course, but they can never have this one. And it’s splendor still to have such a lovely way to go to school by, isn’t it?”

“It’s a lot nicer than going round by the road; that is so dusty and hot,” said Diana practically, peeping into her dinner basket and mentally calculating if the three juicy, toothsome, raspberry tarts reposing there were divided among ten girls how many bites each girl would have.

The little girls of Avonlea school always pooled their lunches, and to eat three raspberry tarts all alone or even to share them only with one’s best chum would have forever and ever branded as “awful mean” the girl who did it. And yet, when the tarts were divided among ten girls you just got enough to tantalize you.

The way Anne and Diana went to school WAS a pretty one. Anne thought those walks to and from school with Diana couldn’t be improved upon even by imagination. Going around by the main road would have been so unromantic; but to go by Lover’s Lane and Willowmere and Violet Vale and the Birch Path was romantic, if ever anything was.

Lover’s Lane opened out below the orchard at Green Gables and stretched far up into the woods to the end of the Cuthbert farm. It was the way by which the cows were taken to the back pasture and the wood hauled home in winter. Anne had named it Lover’s Lane before she had been a month at Green Gables.

“Not that lovers ever really walk there,” she explained to Marilla, “but Diana and I are reading a perfectly magnificent book and there’s a Lover’s Lane in it. So we want to have one, too. And it’s a very pretty name, don’t you think? So romantic! We can’t imagine the lovers into it, you know. I

like that lane because you can think out loud there without people calling you crazy.”

Anne, starting out alone in the morning, went down Lover’s Lane as far as the brook. Here Diana met her, and the two little girls went on up the lane under the leafy arch of maples—”maples are such sociable trees,” said Anne; “they’re always rustling and whispering to you” — until they came to a rustic bridge. Then they left the lane and walked through Mr. Barry’s back field and past Willowmere. Beyond Willowmere came Violet Vale — a little green dimple in the shadow of Mr. Andrew Bell’s big woods. “Of course there are no violets there now,” Anne told Marilla, “but Diana says there are millions of them in spring. Oh, Marilla, can’t you just imagine you see them? It actually takes away my breath. I named it Violet Vale. Diana says she never saw the beat of me for hitting on fancy names for places. It’s nice to be clever at something, isn’t it? But Diana named the Birch Path. She wanted to, so I let her; but I’m sure I could have found something more poetical than plain Birch Path. Anybody can think of a name like that. But the Birch Path is one of the prettiest places in the world, Marilla.”

It was. Other people besides Anne thought so when they stumbled on it. It was a little narrow, twisting path, winding down over a long hill straight through Mr. Bell’s woods, where the light came down sifted through so many emerald screens that it was as flawless as the heart of a diamond. It was fringed in all its length with slim young birches, white stemmed and lissom boughed; ferns and starflowers and wild lilies-of-the-valley and scarlet tufts of pigeonberries grew thickly along it; and always there was a delightful spiciness in the air and music of bird calls and the murmur and laugh of wood winds in the trees overhead. Now and then you might see a rabbit skipping across the road if you were quiet — which, with Anne and Diana, happened about once in a blue moon. Down in the valley the path came out to the main road and then it was just up the spruce hill to the school.

The Avonlea school was a whitewashed building, low in the eaves and wide in the windows, furnished inside with comfortable substantial old-

fashioned desks that opened and shut, and were carved all over their lids with the initials and hieroglyphics of three generations of school children. The schoolhouse was set back from the road and behind it was a dusky fir wood and a brook where all the children put their bottles of milk in the morning to keep cool and sweet until dinner hour.

Marilla had seen Anne start off to school on the first day of September with many secret misgivings. Anne was such an odd girl. How would she get on with the other children? And how on earth would she ever manage to hold her tongue during school hours?

Things went better than Marilla feared, however. Anne came home that evening in high spirits.

“I think I’m going to like school here,” she announced. “I don’t think much of the master, though. He’s all the time curling his mustache and making eyes at Prissy Andrews. Prissy is grown up, you know. She’s sixteen and she’s studying for the entrance examination into Queen’s Academy at Charlottetown next year. Tillie Boulter says the master is DEAD GONE on her. She’s got a beautiful complexion and curly brown hair and she does it up so elegantly. She sits in the long seat at the back and he sits there, too, most of the time — to explain her lessons, he says. But Ruby Gillis says she saw him writing something on her slate and when Prissy read it she blushed as red as a beet and giggled; and Ruby Gillis says she doesn’t believe it had anything to do with the lesson.”

“Anne Shirley, don’t let me hear you talking about your teacher in that way again,” said Marilla sharply. “You don’t go to school to criticize the master. I guess he can teach YOU something, and it’s your business to learn. And I want you to understand right off that you are not to come home telling tales about him. That is something I won’t encourage. I hope you were a good girl.”

“Indeed I was,” said Anne comfortably. “It wasn’t so hard as you might imagine, either. I sit with Diana. Our seat is right by the window and we can look down to the Lake of Shining Waters. There are a lot of nice girls in school and we had scrumptious fun playing at dinnertime. It’s so nice to have a lot of little girls to play with. But of course I like Diana best and

always will. I ADORE Diana. I'm dreadfully far behind the others. They're all in the fifth book and I'm only in the fourth. I feel that it's kind of a disgrace. But there's not one of them has such an imagination as I have and I soon found that out. We had reading and geography and Canadian history and dictation today. Mr. Phillips said my spelling was disgraceful and he held up my slate so that everybody could see it, all marked over. I felt so mortified, Marilla; he might have been politer to a stranger, I think. Ruby Gillis gave me an apple and Sophia Sloane lent me a lovely pink card with 'May I see you home?' on it. I'm to give it back to her tomorrow. And Tillie Boulter let me wear her bead ring all the afternoon. Can I have some of those pearl beads off the old pincushion in the garret to make myself a ring? And oh, Marilla, Jane Andrews told me that Minnie MacPherson told her that she heard Prissy Andrews tell Sara Gillis that I had a very pretty nose. Marilla, that is the first compliment I have ever had in my life and you can't imagine what a strange feeling it gave me. Marilla, have I really a pretty nose? I know you'll tell me the truth."

"Your nose is well enough," said Marilla shortly. Secretly she thought Anne's nose was a remarkable pretty one; but she had no intention of telling her so.

That was three weeks ago and all had gone smoothly so far. And now, this crisp September morning, Anne and Diana were tripping blithely down the Birch Path, two of the happiest little girls in Avonlea.

"I guess Gilbert Blythe will be in school today," said Diana. "He's been visiting his cousins over in New Brunswick all summer and he only came home Saturday night. He's AW'FLY handsome, Anne. And he teases the girls something terrible. He just torments our lives out."

Diana's voice indicated that she rather liked having her life tormented out than not.

"Gilbert Blythe?" said Anne. "Isn't his name that's written up on the porch wall with Julia Bell's and a big 'Take Notice' over them?"

"Yes," said Diana, tossing her head, "but I'm sure he doesn't like Julia Bell so very much. I've heard him say he studied the multiplication table

by her freckles.”

“Oh, don’t speak about freckles to me,” implored Anne. “It isn’t delicate when I’ve got so many. But I do think that writing take-notices up on the wall about the boys and girls is the silliest ever. I should just like to see anybody dare to write my name up with a boy’s. Not, of course,” she hastened to add, “that anybody would.”

Anne sighed. She didn’t want her name written up. But it was a little humiliating to know that there was no danger of it.

“Nonsense,” said Diana, whose black eyes and glossy tresses had played such havoc with the hearts of Avonlea schoolboys that her name figured on the porch walls in half a dozen take-notices. “It’s only meant as a joke. And don’t you be too sure your name won’t ever be written up. Charlie Sloane is DEAD GONE on you. He told his mother — his MOTHER, mind you — that you were the smartest girl in school. That’s better than being good looking.”

“No, it isn’t,” said Anne, feminine to the core. “I’d rather be pretty than clever. And I hate Charlie Sloane, I can’t bear a boy with goggle eyes. If anyone wrote my name up with his I’d never GET over it, Diana Barry. But it IS nice to keep head of your class.”

“You’ll have Gilbert in your class after this,” said Diana, “and he’s used to being head of his class, I can tell you. He’s only in the fourth book although he’s nearly fourteen. Four years ago his father was sick and had to go out to Alberta for his health and Gilbert went with him. They were there three years and Gil didn’t go to school hardly any until they came back. You won’t find it so easy to keep head after this, Anne.”

“I’m glad,” said Anne quickly. “I couldn’t really feel proud of keeping head of little boys and girls of just nine or ten. I got up yesterday spelling ‘ebullition.’ Josie Pye was head and, mind you, she peeped in her book. Mr. Phillips didn’t see her — he was looking at Prissy Andrews — but I did. I just swept her a look of freezing scorn and she got as red as a beet and spelled it wrong after all.”

“Those Pye girls are cheats all round,” said Diana indignantly, as they climbed the fence of the main road. “Gertie Pye actually went and put her

milk bottle in my place in the brook yesterday. Did you ever? I don't speak to her now."

When Mr. Phillips was in the back of the room hearing Prissy Andrews's Latin, Diana whispered to Anne,

"That's Gilbert Blythe sitting right across the aisle from you, Anne. Just look at him and see if you don't think he's handsome."

Anne looked accordingly. She had a good chance to do so, for the said Gilbert Blythe was absorbed in stealthily pinning the long yellow braid of Ruby Gillis, who sat in front of him, to the back of her seat. He was a tall boy, with curly brown hair, roguish hazel eyes, and a mouth twisted into a teasing smile. Presently Ruby Gillis started up to take a sum to the master; she fell back into her seat with a little shriek, believing that her hair was pulled out by the roots. Everybody looked at her and Mr. Phillips glared so sternly that Ruby began to cry. Gilbert had whisked the pin out of sight and was studying his history with the soberest face in the world; but when the commotion subsided he looked at Anne and winked with inexpressible drollery.

"I think your Gilbert Blythe IS handsome," confided Anne to Diana, "but I think he's very bold. It isn't good manners to wink at a strange girl."

But it was not until the afternoon that things really began to happen.

Mr. Phillips was back in the corner explaining a problem in algebra to Prissy Andrews and the rest of the scholars were doing pretty much as they pleased eating green apples, whispering, drawing pictures on their slates, and driving crickets harnessed to strings, up and down aisle. Gilbert Blythe was trying to make Anne Shirley look at him and failing utterly, because Anne was at that moment totally oblivious not only to the very existence of Gilbert Blythe, but of every other scholar in Avonlea school itself. With her chin propped on her hands and her eyes fixed on the blue glimpse of the Lake of Shining Waters that the west window afforded, she was far away in a gorgeous dreamland hearing and seeing nothing save her own wonderful visions.

Gilbert Blythe wasn't used to putting himself out to make a girl look at him and meeting with failure. She SHOULD look at him, that redhaired

Shirley girl with the little pointed chin and the big eyes that weren't like the eyes of any other girl in Avonlea school.

Gilbert reached across the aisle, picked up the end of Anne's long red braid, held it out at arm's length and said in a piercing whisper:

"Carrots! Carrots!"

Then Anne looked at him with a vengeance!

She did more than look. She sprang to her feet, her bright fancies fallen into cureless ruin. She flashed one indignant glance at Gilbert from eyes whose angry sparkle was swiftly quenched in equally angry tears.

"You mean, hateful boy!" she exclaimed passionately. "How dare you!"

And then — thwack! Anne had brought her slate down on Gilbert's head and cracked it — slate not head — clear across.

Avonlea school always enjoyed a scene. This was an especially enjoyable one. Everybody said "Oh" in horrified delight. Diana gasped. Ruby Gillis, who was inclined to be hysterical, began to cry. Tommy Sloane let his team of crickets escape him altogether while he stared open-mouthed at the tableau.

Mr. Phillips stalked down the aisle and laid his hand heavily on Anne's shoulder.

"Anne Shirley, what does this mean?" he said angrily. Anne returned no answer. It was asking too much of flesh and blood to expect her to tell before the whole school that she had been called "carrots." Gilbert it was who spoke up stoutly.

"It was my fault Mr. Phillips. I teased her."

Mr. Phillips paid no heed to Gilbert.

"I am sorry to see a pupil of mine displaying such a temper and such a vindictive spirit," he said in a solemn tone, as if the mere fact of being a pupil of his ought to root out all evil passions from the hearts of small imperfect mortals. "Anne, go and stand on the platform in front of the blackboard for the rest of the afternoon."

Anne would have infinitely preferred a whipping to this punishment under which her sensitive spirit quivered as from a whiplash. With a white,

set face she obeyed. Mr. Phillips took a chalk crayon and wrote on the blackboard above her head.

“Ann Shirley has a very bad temper. Ann Shirley must learn to control her temper,” and then read it out loud so that even the primer class, who couldn’t read writing, should understand it.

Anne stood there the rest of the afternoon with that legend above her. She did not cry or hang her head. Anger was still too hot in her heart for that and it sustained her amid all her agony of humiliation. With resentful eyes and passion-red cheeks she confronted alike Diana’s sympathetic gaze and Charlie Sloane’s indignant nods and Josie Pye’s malicious smiles. As for Gilbert Blythe, she would not even look at him. She would NEVER look at him again! She would never speak to him!!

When school was dismissed Anne marched out with her red head held high. Gilbert Blythe tried to intercept her at the porch door.

“I’m awfully sorry I made fun of your hair, Anne,” he whispered contritely. “Honest I am. Don’t be mad for keeps, now.”

Anne swept by disdainfully, without look or sign of hearing. “Oh how could you, Anne?” breathed Diana as they went down the road half reproachfully, half admiringly. Diana felt that SHE could never have resisted Gilbert’s plea.

“I shall never forgive Gilbert Blythe,” said Anne firmly. “And Mr. Phillips spelled my name without an e, too. The iron has entered into my soul, Diana.”

Diana hadn’t the least idea what Anne meant but she understood it was something terrible.

“You mustn’t mind Gilbert making fun of your hair,” she said soothingly. “Why, he makes fun of all the girls. He laughs at mine because it’s so black. He’s called me a crow a dozen times; and I never heard him apologize for anything before, either.”

“There’s a great deal of difference between being called a crow and being called carrots,” said Anne with dignity. “Gilbert Blythe has hurt my feelings EXCRUCIATINGLY, Diana.”

It is possible the matter might have blown over without more excruciation if nothing else had happened. But when things begin to happen they are apt to keep on.

Avonlea scholars often spent noon hour picking gum in Mr. Bell's spruce grove over the hill and across his big pasture field. From there they could keep an eye on Eben Wright's house, where the master boarded. When they saw Mr. Phillips emerging therefrom they ran for the schoolhouse; but the distance being about three times longer than Mr. Wright's lane they were very apt to arrive there, breathless and gasping, some three minutes too late.

On the following day Mr. Phillips was seized with one of his spasmodic fits of reform and announced before going home to dinner, that he should expect to find all the scholars in their seats when he returned. Anyone who came in late would be punished.

All the boys and some of the girls went to Mr. Bell's spruce grove as usual, fully intending to stay only long enough to "pick a chew." But spruce groves are seductive and yellow nuts of gum beguiling; they picked and loitered and strayed; and as usual the first thing that recalled them to a sense of the flight of time was Jimmy Glover shouting from the top of a patriarchal old spruce "Master's coming."

The girls who were on the ground, started first and managed to reach the schoolhouse in time but without a second to spare. The boys, who had to wriggle hastily down from the trees, were later; and Anne, who had not been picking gum at all but was wandering happily in the far end of the grove, waist deep among the bracken, singing softly to herself, with a wreath of rice lilies on her hair as if she were some wild divinity of the shadowy places, was latest of all. Anne could run like a deer, however; run she did with the impish result that she overtook the boys at the door and was swept into the schoolhouse among them just as Mr. Phillips was in the act of hanging up his hat.

Mr. Phillips's brief reforming energy was over; he didn't want the bother of punishing a dozen pupils; but it was necessary to do something to save his word, so he looked about for a scapegoat and found it in Anne,

who had dropped into her seat, gasping for breath, with a forgotten lily wreath hanging askew over one ear and giving her a particularly rakish and disheveled appearance.

“Anne Shirley, since you seem to be so fond of the boys’ company we shall indulge your taste for it this afternoon,” he said sarcastically. “Take those flowers out of your hair and sit with Gilbert Blythe.”

The other boys snickered. Diana, turning pale with pity, plucked the wreath from Anne’s hair and squeezed her hand. Anne stared at the master as if turned to stone.

“Did you hear what I said, Anne?” queried Mr. Phillips sternly.

“Yes, sir,” said Anne slowly “but I didn’t suppose you really meant it.”

“I assure you I did” — still with the sarcastic inflection which all the children, and Anne especially, hated. It flicked on the raw. “Obey me at once.”

For a moment Anne looked as if she meant to disobey. Then, realizing that there was no help for it, she rose haughtily, stepped across the aisle, sat down beside Gilbert Blythe, and buried her face in her arms on the desk. Ruby Gillis, who got a glimpse of it as it went down, told the others going home from school that she’d “acksually never seen anything like it — it was so white, with awful little red spots in it.”

To Anne, this was as the end of all things. It was bad enough to be singled out for punishment from among a dozen equally guilty ones; it was worse still to be sent to sit with a boy, but that that boy should be Gilbert Blythe was heaping insult on injury to a degree utterly unbearable. Anne felt that she could not bear it and it would be of no use to try. Her whole being seethed with shame and anger and humiliation.

At first the other scholars looked and whispered and giggled and nudged. But as Anne never lifted her head and as Gilbert worked fractions as if his whole soul was absorbed in them and them only, they soon returned to their own tasks and Anne was forgotten. When Mr. Phillips called the history class out Anne should have gone, but Anne did not move, and Mr. Phillips, who had been writing some verses “To Priscilla” before he called the class, was thinking about an obstinate rhyme still and

never missed her. Once, when nobody was looking, Gilbert took from his desk a little pink candy heart with a gold motto on it, "You are sweet," and slipped it under the curve of Anne's arm. Whereupon Anne arose, took the pink heart gingerly between the tips of her fingers, dropped it on the floor, ground it to powder beneath her heel, and resumed her position without deigning to bestow a glance on Gilbert.

When school went out Anne marched to her desk, ostentatiously took out everything therein, books and writing tablet, pen and ink, testament and arithmetic, and piled them neatly on her cracked slate.

"What are you taking all those things home for, Anne?" Diana wanted to know, as soon as they were out on the road. She had not dared to ask the question before.

"I am not coming back to school any more," said Anne. Diana gasped and stared at Anne to see if she meant it.

"Will Marilla let you stay home?" she asked.

"She'll have to," said Anne. "I'll NEVER go to school to that man again."

"Oh, Anne!" Diana looked as if she were ready to cry. "I do think you're mean. What shall I do? Mr. Phillips will make me sit with that horrid Gertie Pye — I know he will because she is sitting alone. Do come back, Anne."

"I'd do almost anything in the world for you, Diana," said Anne sadly. "I'd let myself be torn limb from limb if it would do you any good. But I can't do this, so please don't ask it. You harrow up my very soul."

"Just think of all the fun you will miss," mourned Diana. "We are going to build the loveliest new house down by the brook; and we'll be playing ball next week and you've never played ball, Anne. It's tremendously exciting. And we're going to learn a new song — Jane Andrews is practicing it up now; and Alice Andrews is going to bring a new Pansy book next week and we're all going to read it out loud, chapter about, down by the brook. And you know you are so fond of reading out loud, Anne."

Nothing moved Anne in the least. Her mind was made up. She would not go to school to Mr. Phillips again; she told Marilla so when she got home.

“Nonsense,” said Marilla.

“It isn’t nonsense at all,” said Anne, gazing at Marilla with solemn, reproachful eyes. “Don’t you understand, Marilla? I’ve been insulted.”

“Insulted fiddlesticks! You’ll go to school tomorrow as usual.”

“Oh, no.” Anne shook her head gently. “I’m not going back, Marilla. I’ll learn my lessons at home and I’ll be as good as I can be and hold my tongue all the time if it’s possible at all. But I will not go back to school, I assure you.”

Marilla saw something remarkably like unyielding stubbornness looking out of Anne’s small face. She understood that she would have trouble in overcoming it; but she resolved wisely to say nothing more just then. “I’ll run down and see Rachel about it this evening,” she thought. “There’s no use reasoning with Anne now. She’s too worked up and I’ve an idea she can be awful stubborn if she takes the notion. Far as I can make out from her story, Mr. Phillips has been carrying matters with a rather high hand. But it would never do to say so to her. I’ll just talk it over with Rachel. She’s sent ten children to school and she ought to know something about it. She’ll have heard the whole story, too, by this time.”

Marilla found Mrs. Lynde knitting quilts as industriously and cheerfully as usual.

“I suppose you know what I’ve come about,” she said, a little shamefacedly.

Mrs. Rachel nodded.

“About Anne’s fuss in school, I reckon,” she said. “Tillie Boulter was in on her way home from school and told me about it.” “I don’t know what to do with her,” said Marilla. “She declares she won’t go back to school. I never saw a child so worked up. I’ve been expecting trouble ever since she started to school. I knew things were going too smooth to last. She’s so high strung. What would you advise, Rachel?”

“Well, since you’ve asked my advice, Marilla,” said Mrs. Lynde amiably — Mrs. Lynde dearly loved to be asked for advice—”I’d just humor her a little at first, that’s what I’d do. It’s my belief that Mr. Phillips was in the wrong. Of course, it doesn’t do to say so to the children, you know. And of course he did right to punish her yesterday for giving way to temper. But today it was different. The others who were late should have been punished as well as Anne, that’s what. And I don’t believe in making the girls sit with the boys for punishment. It isn’t modest. Tillie Boulter was real indignant. She took Anne’s part right through and said all the scholars did too. Anne seems real popular among them, somehow. I never thought she’d take with them so well.”

“Then you really think I’d better let her stay home,” said Marilla in amazement.

“Yes. That is I wouldn’t say school to her again until she said it herself. Depend upon it, Marilla, she’ll cool off in a week or so and be ready enough to go back of her own accord, that’s what, while, if you were to make her go back right off, dear knows what freak or tantrum she’d take next and make more trouble than ever. The less fuss made the better, in my opinion. She won’t miss much by not going to school, as far as THAT goes. Mr. Phillips isn’t any good at all as a teacher. The order he keeps is scandalous, that’s what, and he neglects the young fry and puts all his time on those big scholars he’s getting ready for Queen’s. He’d never have got the school for another year if his uncle hadn’t been a trustee — THE trustee, for he just leads the other two around by the nose, that’s what. I declare, I don’t know what education in this Island is coming to.”

Mrs. Rachel shook her head, as much as to say if she were only at the head of the educational system of the Province things would be much better managed.

Marilla took Mrs. Rachel’s advice and not another word was said to Anne about going back to school. She learned her lessons at home, did her chores, and played with Diana in the chilly purple autumn twilights; but when she met Gilbert Blythe on the road or encountered him in Sunday school she passed him by with an icy contempt that was no whit thawed by

his evident desire to appease her. Even Diana's efforts as a peacemaker were of no avail. Anne had evidently made up her mind to hate Gilbert Blythe to the end of life.

As much as she hated Gilbert, however, did she love Diana, with all the love of her passionate little heart, equally intense in its likes and dislikes. One evening Marilla, coming in from the orchard with a basket of apples, found Anne sitting along by the east window in the twilight, crying bitterly.

"Whatever's the matter now, Anne?" she asked.

"It's about Diana," sobbed Anne luxuriously. "I love Diana so, Marilla. I cannot ever live without her. But I know very well when we grow up that Diana will get married and go away and leave me. And oh, what shall I do? I hate her husband — I just hate him furiously. I've been imagining it all out — the wedding and everything — Diana dressed in snowy garments, with a veil, and looking as beautiful and regal as a queen; and me the bridesmaid, with a lovely dress too, and puffed sleeves, but with a breaking heart hid beneath my smiling face. And then bidding Diana goodbye-e-e—" Here Anne broke down entirely and wept with increasing bitterness.

Marilla turned quickly away to hide her twitching face; but it was no use; she collapsed on the nearest chair and burst into such a hearty and unusual peal of laughter that Matthew, crossing the yard outside, halted in amazement. When had he heard Marilla laugh like that before?

"Well, Anne Shirley," said Marilla as soon as she could speak, "if you must borrow trouble, for pity's sake borrow it handier home. I should think you had an imagination, sure enough."

Chapter XVI.

Diana Is Invited to Tea With Tragic Results

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October was a beautiful month at Green Gables, when the birches in the hollow turned as golden as sunshine and the maples behind the orchard were royal crimson and the wild cherry trees along the lane put on the loveliest shades of dark red and bronzy green, while the fields sunned themselves in aftermaths.

Anne reveled in the world of color about her.

“Oh, Marilla,” she exclaimed one Saturday morning, coming dancing in with her arms full of gorgeous boughs, “I’m so glad I live in a world where there are Octobers. It would be terrible if we just skipped from September to November, wouldn’t it? Look at these maple branches. Don’t they give you a thrill — several thrills? I’m going to decorate my room with them.”

“Messy things,” said Marilla, whose aesthetic sense was not noticeably developed. “You clutter up your room entirely too much with out-of-doors stuff, Anne. Bedrooms were made to sleep in.”

“Oh, and dream in too, Marilla. And you know one can dream so much better in a room where there are pretty things. I’m going to put these boughs in the old blue jug and set them on my table.”

“Mind you don’t drop leaves all over the stairs then. I’m going on a meeting of the Aid Society at Carmody this afternoon, Anne, and I won’t likely be home before dark. You’ll have to get Matthew and Jerry their supper, so mind you don’t forget to put the tea to draw until you sit down at the table as you did last time.”

“It was dreadful of me to forget,” said Anne apologetically, “but that was the afternoon I was trying to think of a name for Violet Vale and it crowded other things out. Matthew was so good. He never scolded a bit.

He put the tea down himself and said we could wait awhile as well as not. And I told him a lovely fairy story while we were waiting, so he didn't find the time long at all. It was a beautiful fairy story, Marilla. I forgot the end of it, so I made up an end for it myself and Matthew said he couldn't tell where the join came in."

"Matthew would think it all right, Anne, if you took a notion to get up and have dinner in the middle of the night. But you keep your wits about you this time. And — I don't really know if I'm doing right — it may make you more addleheaded than ever — but you can ask Diana to come over and spend the afternoon with you and have tea here."

"Oh, Marilla!" Anne clasped her hands. "How perfectly lovely! You ARE able to imagine things after all or else you'd never have understood how I've longed for that very thing. It will seem so nice and grown-upish. No fear of my forgetting to put the tea to draw when I have company. Oh, Marilla, can I use the rosebud spray tea set?"

"No, indeed! The rosebud tea set! Well, what next? You know I never use that except for the minister or the Aids. You'll put down the old brown tea set. But you can open the little yellow crock of cherry preserves. It's time it was being used anyhow — I believe it's beginning to work. And you can cut some fruit cake and have some of the cookies and snaps."

"I can just imagine myself sitting down at the head of the table and pouring out the tea," said Anne, shutting her eyes ecstatically. "And asking Diana if she takes sugar! I know she doesn't but of course I'll ask her just as if I didn't know. And then pressing her to take another piece of fruit cake and another helping of preserves. Oh, Marilla, it's a wonderful sensation just to think of it. Can I take her into the spare room to lay off her hat when she comes? And then into the parlor to sit?"

"No. The sitting room will do for you and your company. But there's a bottle half full of raspberry cordial that was left over from the church social the other night. It's on the second shelf of the sitting-room closet and you and Diana can have it if you like, and a cookie to eat with it along in the afternoon, for I daresay Matthew'll be late coming in to tea since he's hauling potatoes to the vessel."

Anne flew down to the hollow, past the Dryad's Bubble and up the spruce path to Orchard Slope, to ask Diana to tea. As a result just after Marilla had driven off to Carmody, Diana came over, dressed in HER second-best dress and looking exactly as it is proper to look when asked out to tea. At other times she was wont to run into the kitchen without knocking; but now she knocked primly at the front door. And when Anne, dressed in her second best, as primly opened it, both little girls shook hands as gravely as if they had never met before. This unnatural solemnity lasted until after Diana had been taken to the east gable to lay off her hat and then had sat for ten minutes in the sitting room, toes in position.

"How is your mother?" inquired Anne politely, just as if she had not seen Mrs. Barry picking apples that morning in excellent health and spirits.

"She is very well, thank you. I suppose Mr. Cuthbert is hauling potatoes to the LILY SANDS this afternoon, is he?" said Diana, who had ridden down to Mr. Harmon Andrews's that morning in Matthew's cart.

"Yes. Our potato crop is very good this year. I hope your father's crop is good too."

"It is fairly good, thank you. Have you picked many of your apples yet?"

"Oh, ever so many," said Anne forgetting to be dignified and jumping up quickly. "Let's go out to the orchard and get some of the Red Sweetings, Diana. Marilla says we can have all that are left on the tree. Marilla is a very generous woman. She said we could have fruit cake and cherry preserves for tea. But it isn't good manners to tell your company what you are going to give them to eat, so I won't tell you what she said we could have to drink. Only it begins with an R and a C and it's bright red color. I love bright red drinks, don't you? They taste twice as good as any other color."

The orchard, with its great sweeping boughs that bent to the ground with fruit, proved so delightful that the little girls spent most of the afternoon in it, sitting in a grassy corner where the frost had spared the green and the mellow autumn sunshine lingered warmly, eating apples and

talking as hard as they could. Diana had much to tell Anne of what went on in school. She had to sit with Gertie Pye and she hated it; Gertie squeaked her pencil all the time and it just made her — Diana's — blood run cold; Ruby Gillis had charmed all her warts away, true's you live, with a magic pebble that old Mary Joe from the Creek gave her. You had to rub the warts with the pebble and then throw it away over your left shoulder at the time of the new moon and the warts would all go. Charlie Sloane's name was written up with Em White's on the porch wall and Em White was AWFUL MAD about it; Sam Boulter had "sassed" Mr. Phillips in class and Mr. Phillips whipped him and Sam's father came down to the school and dared Mr. Phillips to lay a hand on one of his children again; and Mattie Andrews had a new red hood and a blue crossover with tassels on it and the airs she put on about it were perfectly sickening; and Lizzie Wright didn't speak to Mamie Wilson because Mamie Wilson's grownup sister had cut out Lizzie Wright's grownup sister with her beau; and everybody missed Anne so and wished she's come to school again; and Gilbert Blythe —

But Anne didn't want to hear about Gilbert Blythe. She jumped up hurriedly and said suppose they go in and have some raspberry cordial.

Anne looked on the second shelf of the room pantry but there was no bottle of raspberry cordial there. Search revealed it away back on the top shelf. Anne put it on a tray and set it on the table with a tumbler.

"Now, please help yourself, Diana," she said politely. "I don't believe I'll have any just now. I don't feel as if I wanted any after all those apples."

Diana poured herself out a tumblerful, looked at its bright-red hue admiringly, and then sipped it daintily.

"That's awfully nice raspberry cordial, Anne," she said. "I didn't know raspberry cordial was so nice."

"I'm real glad you like it. Take as much as you want. I'm going to run out and stir the fire up. There are so many responsibilities on a person's mind when they're keeping house, isn't there?"

When Anne came back from the kitchen Diana was drinking her second glassful of cordial; and, being entreated thereto by Anne, she offered no particular objection to the drinking of a third. The tumblerfuls were generous ones and the raspberry cordial was certainly very nice.

“The nicest I ever drank,” said Diana. “It’s ever so much nicer than Mrs. Lynde’s, although she brags of hers so much. It doesn’t taste a bit like hers.”

“I should think Marilla’s raspberry cordial would prob’ly be much nicer than Mrs. Lynde’s,” said Anne loyally. “Marilla is a famous cook. She is trying to teach me to cook but I assure you, Diana, it is uphill work. There’s so little scope for imagination in cookery. You just have to go by rules. The last time I made a cake I forgot to put the flour in. I was thinking the loveliest story about you and me, Diana. I thought you were desperately ill with smallpox and everybody deserted you, but I went boldly to your bedside and nursed you back to life; and then I took the smallpox and died and I was buried under those poplar trees in the graveyard and you planted a rosebush by my grave and watered it with your tears; and you never, never forgot the friend of your youth who sacrificed her life for you. Oh, it was such a pathetic tale, Diana. The tears just rained down over my cheeks while I mixed the cake. But I forgot the flour and the cake was a dismal failure. Flour is so essential to cakes, you know. Marilla was very cross and I don’t wonder. I’m a great trial to her. She was terribly mortified about the pudding sauce last week. We had a plum pudding for dinner on Tuesday and there was half the pudding and a pitcherful of sauce left over. Marilla said there was enough for another dinner and told me to set it on the pantry shelf and cover it. I meant to cover it just as much as could be, Diana, but when I carried it in I was imagining I was a nun — of course I’m a Protestant but I imagined I was a Catholic — taking the veil to bury a broken heart in cloistered seclusion; and I forgot all about covering the pudding sauce. I thought of it next morning and ran to the pantry. Diana, fancy if you can my extreme horror at finding a mouse drowned in that pudding sauce! I lifted the mouse out with a spoon and threw it out in the yard and then I washed the spoon in

three waters. Marilla was out milking and I fully intended to ask her when she came in if I'd give the sauce to the pigs; but when she did come in I was imagining that I was a frost fairy going through the woods turning the trees red and yellow, whichever they wanted to be, so I never thought about the pudding sauce again and Marilla sent me out to pick apples. Well, Mr. and Mrs. Chester Ross from Spencervale came here that morning. You know they are very stylish people, especially Mrs. Chester Ross. When Marilla called me in dinner was all ready and everybody was at the table. I tried to be as polite and dignified as I could be, for I wanted Mrs. Chester Ross to think I was a ladylike little girl even if I wasn't pretty. Everything went right until I saw Marilla coming with the plum pudding in one hand and the pitcher of pudding sauce WARMED UP, in the other. Diana, that was a terrible moment. I remembered everything and I just stood up in my place and shrieked out 'Marilla, you mustn't use that pudding sauce. There was a mouse drowned in it. I forgot to tell you before.' Oh, Diana, I shall never forget that awful moment if I live to be a hundred. Mrs. Chester Ross just LOOKED at me and I thought I would sink through the floor with mortification. She is such a perfect housekeeper and fancy what she must have thought of us. Marilla turned red as fire but she never said a word — then. She just carried that sauce and pudding out and brought in some strawberry preserves. She even offered me some, but I couldn't swallow a mouthful. It was like heaping coals of fire on my head. After Mrs. Chester Ross went away, Marilla gave me a dreadful scolding. Why, Diana, what is the matter?"

Diana had stood up very unsteadily; then she sat down again, putting her hands to her head.

"I'm — I'm awful sick," she said, a little thickly. "I — I — must go right home."

"Oh, you mustn't dream of going home without your tea," cried Anne in distress. "I'll get it right off — I'll go and put the tea down this very minute."

"I must go home," repeated Diana, stupidly but determinedly.

“Let me get you a lunch anyhow,” implored Anne. “Let me give you a bit of fruit cake and some of the cherry preserves. Lie down on the sofa for a little while and you’ll be better. Where do you feel bad?”

“I must go home,” said Diana, and that was all she would say. In vain Anne pleaded.

“I never heard of company going home without tea,” she mourned. “Oh, Diana, do you suppose that it’s possible you’re really taking the smallpox? If you are I’ll go and nurse you, you can depend on that. I’ll never forsake you. But I do wish you’d stay till after tea. Where do you feel bad?”

“I’m awful dizzy,” said Diana.

And indeed, she walked very dizzily. Anne, with tears of disappointment in her eyes, got Diana’s hat and went with her as far as the Barry yard fence. Then she wept all the way back to Green Gables, where she sorrowfully put the remainder of the raspberry cordial back into the pantry and got tea ready for Matthew and Jerry, with all the zest gone out of the performance.

The next day was Sunday and as the rain poured down in torrents from dawn till dusk Anne did not stir abroad from Green Gables. Monday afternoon Marilla sent her down to Mrs. Lynde’s on an errand. In a very short space of time Anne came flying back up the lane with tears rolling down her cheeks. Into the kitchen she dashed and flung herself face downward on the sofa in an agony.

“Whatever has gone wrong now, Anne?” queried Marilla in doubt and dismay. “I do hope you haven’t gone and been saucy to Mrs. Lynde again.”

No answer from Anne save more tears and stormier sobs!

“Anne Shirley, when I ask you a question I want to be answered. Sit right up this very minute and tell me what you are crying about.”

Anne sat up, tragedy personified.

“Mrs. Lynde was up to see Mrs. Barry today and Mrs. Barry was in an awful state,” she wailed. “She says that I set Diana DRUNK Saturday and sent her home in a disgraceful condition. And she says I must be a

thoroughly bad, wicked little girl and she's never, never going to let Diana play with me again. Oh, Marilla, I'm just overcome with woe."

Marilla stared in blank amazement.

"Set Diana drunk!" she said when she found her voice. "Anne are you or Mrs. Barry crazy? What on earth did you give her?"

"Not a thing but raspberry cordial," sobbed Anne. "I never thought raspberry cordial would set people drunk, Marilla — not even if they drank three big tumblerfuls as Diana did. Oh, it sounds so — so — like Mrs. Thomas's husband! But I didn't mean to set her drunk."

"Drunk fiddlesticks!" said Marilla, marching to the sitting room pantry. There on the shelf was a bottle which she at once recognized as one containing some of her three-year-old homemade currant wine for which she was celebrated in Avonlea, although certain of the stricter sort, Mrs. Barry among them, disapproved strongly of it. And at the same time Marilla recollected that she had put the bottle of raspberry cordial down in the cellar instead of in the pantry as she had told Anne.

She went back to the kitchen with the wine bottle in her hand. Her face was twitching in spite of herself.

"Anne, you certainly have a genius for getting into trouble. You went and gave Diana currant wine instead of raspberry cordial. Didn't you know the difference yourself?"

"I never tasted it," said Anne. "I thought it was the cordial. I meant to be so — so — hospitable. Diana got awfully sick and had to go home. Mrs. Barry told Mrs. Lynde she was simply dead drunk. She just laughed silly-like when her mother asked her what was the matter and went to sleep and slept for hours. Her mother smelled her breath and knew she was drunk. She had a fearful headache all day yesterday. Mrs. Barry is so indignant. She will never believe but what I did it on purpose."

"I should think she would better punish Diana for being so greedy as to drink three glassfuls of anything," said Marilla shortly. "Why, three of those big glasses would have made her sick even if it had only been cordial. Well, this story will be a nice handle for those folks who are so down on me for making currant wine, although I haven't made any for

three years ever since I found out that the minister didn't approve. I just kept that bottle for sickness. There, there, child, don't cry. I can't see as you were to blame although I'm sorry it happened so."

"I must cry," said Anne. "My heart is broken. The stars in their courses fight against me, Marilla. Diana and I are parted forever. Oh, Marilla, I little dreamed of this when first we swore our vows of friendship."

"Don't be foolish, Anne. Mrs. Barry will think better of it when she finds you're not to blame. I suppose she thinks you've done it for a silly joke or something of that sort. You'd best go up this evening and tell her how it was."

"My courage fails me at the thought of facing Diana's injured mother," sighed Anne. "I wish you'd go, Marilla. You're so much more dignified than I am. Likely she'd listen to you quicker than to me."

"Well, I will," said Marilla, reflecting that it would probably be the wiser course. "Don't cry any more, Anne. It will be all right."

Marilla had changed her mind about it being all right by the time she got back from Orchard Slope. Anne was watching for her coming and flew to the porch door to meet her.

"Oh, Marilla, I know by your face that it's been no use," she said sorrowfully. "Mrs. Barry won't forgive me?"

"Mrs. Barry indeed!" snapped Marilla. "Of all the unreasonable women I ever saw she's the worst. I told her it was all a mistake and you weren't to blame, but she just simply didn't believe me. And she rubbed it well in about my currant wine and how I'd always said it couldn't have the least effect on anybody. I just told her plainly that currant wine wasn't meant to be drunk three tumblerfuls at a time and that if a child I had to do with was so greedy I'd sober her up with a right good spanking."

Marilla whisked into the kitchen, grievously disturbed, leaving a very much distracted little soul in the porch behind her. Presently Anne stepped out bareheaded into the chill autumn dusk; very determinedly and steadily she took her way down through the sere clover field over the log bridge and up through the spruce grove, lighted by a pale little moon hanging low

over the western woods. Mrs. Barry, coming to the door in answer to a timid knock, found a white-lipped eager-eyed suppliant on the doorstep.

Her face hardened. Mrs. Barry was a woman of strong prejudices and dislikes, and her anger was of the cold, sullen sort which is always hardest to overcome. To do her justice, she really believed Anne had made Diana drunk out of sheer malice prepense, and she was honestly anxious to preserve her little daughter from the contamination of further intimacy with such a child.

“What do you want?” she said stiffly.

Anne clasped her hands.

“Oh, Mrs. Barry, please forgive me. I did not mean to — to — intoxicate Diana. How could I? Just imagine if you were a poor little orphan girl that kind people had adopted and you had just one bosom friend in all the world. Do you think you would intoxicate her on purpose? I thought it was only raspberry cordial. I was firmly convinced it was raspberry cordial. Oh, please don’t say that you won’t let Diana play with me any more. If you do you will cover my life with a dark cloud of woe.”

This speech which would have softened good Mrs. Lynde’s heart in a twinkling, had no effect on Mrs. Barry except to irritate her still more. She was suspicious of Anne’s big words and dramatic gestures and imagined that the child was making fun of her. So she said, coldly and cruelly:

“I don’t think you are a fit little girl for Diana to associate with. You’d better go home and behave yourself.”

Anne’s lips quivered.

“Won’t you let me see Diana just once to say farewell?” she implored.

“Diana has gone over to Carmody with her father,” said Mrs. Barry, going in and shutting the door.

Anne went back to Green Gables calm with despair.

“My last hope is gone,” she told Marilla. “I went up and saw Mrs. Barry myself and she treated me very insultingly. Marilla, I do NOT think she is a well-bred woman. There is nothing more to do except to pray and I haven’t much hope that that’ll do much good because, Marilla, I do not

believe that God Himself can do very much with such an obstinate person as Mrs. Barry.”

“Anne, you shouldn’t say such things” rebuked Marilla, striving to overcome that unholy tendency to laughter which she was dismayed to find growing upon her. And indeed, when she told the whole story to Matthew that night, she did laugh heartily over Anne’s tribulations.

But when she slipped into the east gable before going to bed and found that Anne had cried herself to sleep an unaccustomed softness crept into her face.

“Poor little soul,” she murmured, lifting a loose curl of hair from the child’s tearstained face. Then she bent down and kissed the flushed cheek on the pillow.

A New Interest in Life

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The next afternoon Anne, bending over her patchwork at the kitchen window, happened to glance out and beheld Diana down by the Dryad's Bubble beckoning mysteriously. In a trice Anne was out of the house and flying down to the hollow, astonishment and hope struggling in her expressive eyes. But the hope faded when she saw Diana's dejected countenance.

"Your mother hasn't relented?" she gasped.

Diana shook her head mournfully.

"No; and oh, Anne, she says I'm never to play with you again. I've cried and cried and I told her it wasn't your fault, but it wasn't any use. I had ever such a time coaxing her to let me come down and say goodbye to you. She said I was only to stay ten minutes and she's timing me by the clock."

"Ten minutes isn't very long to say an eternal farewell in," said Anne tearfully. "Oh, Diana, will you promise faithfully never to forget me, the friend of your youth, no matter what dearer friends may caress thee?"

"Indeed I will," sobbed Diana, "and I'll never have another bosom friend — I don't want to have. I couldn't love anybody as I love you."

"Oh, Diana," cried Anne, clasping her hands, "do you LOVE me?"

"Why, of course I do. Didn't you know that?"

"No." Anne drew a long breath. "I thought you LIKED me of course but I never hoped you LOVED me. Why, Diana, I didn't think anybody could love me. Nobody ever has loved me since I can remember. Oh, this is wonderful! It's a ray of light which will forever shine on the darkness of a path severed from thee, Diana. Oh, just say it once again."

"I love you devotedly, Anne," said Diana stanchly, "and I always will, you may be sure of that."

“And I will always love thee, Diana,” said Anne, solemnly extending her hand. “In the years to come thy memory will shine like a star over my lonely life, as that last story we read together says. Diana, wilt thou give me a lock of thy jet-black tresses in parting to treasure forevermore?”

“Have you got anything to cut it with?” queried Diana, wiping away the tears which Anne’s affecting accents had caused to flow afresh, and returning to practicalities.

“Yes. I’ve got my patchwork scissors in my apron pocket fortunately,” said Anne. She solemnly clipped one of Diana’s curls. “Fare thee well, my beloved friend. Henceforth we must be as strangers though living side by side. But my heart will ever be faithful to thee.”

Anne stood and watched Diana out of sight, mournfully waving her hand to the latter whenever she turned to look back. Then she returned to the house, not a little consoled for the time being by this romantic parting.

“It is all over,” she informed Marilla. “I shall never have another friend. I’m really worse off than ever before, for I haven’t Katie Maurice and Violetta now. And even if I had it wouldn’t be the same. Somehow, little dream girls are not satisfying after a real friend. Diana and I had such an affecting farewell down by the spring. It will be sacred in my memory forever. I used the most pathetic language I could think of and said ‘thou’ and ‘thee.’ ‘Thou’ and ‘thee’ seem so much more romantic than ‘you.’ Diana gave me a lock of her hair and I’m going to sew it up in a little bag and wear it around my neck all my life. Please see that it is buried with me, for I don’t believe I’ll live very long. Perhaps when she sees me lying cold and dead before her Mrs. Barry may feel remorse for what she has done and will let Diana come to my funeral.”

“I don’t think there is much fear of your dying of grief as long as you can talk, Anne,” said Marilla unsympathetically.

The following Monday Anne surprised Marilla by coming down from her room with her basket of books on her arm and hip and her lips primmed up into a line of determination.

“I’m going back to school,” she announced. “That is all there is left in life for me, now that my friend has been ruthlessly torn from me. In school

I can look at her and muse over days departed.”

“You’d better muse over your lessons and sums,” said Marilla, concealing her delight at this development of the situation. “If you’re going back to school I hope we’ll hear no more of breaking slates over people’s heads and such carryings on. Behave yourself and do just what your teacher tells you.”

“I’ll try to be a model pupil,” agreed Anne dolefully. “There won’t be much fun in it, I expect. Mr. Phillips said Minnie Andrews was a model pupil and there isn’t a spark of imagination or life in her. She is just dull and poky and never seems to have a good time. But I feel so depressed that perhaps it will come easy to me now. I’m going round by the road. I couldn’t bear to go by the Birch Path all alone. I should weep bitter tears if I did.”

Anne was welcomed back to school with open arms. Her imagination had been sorely missed in games, her voice in the singing and her dramatic ability in the perusal aloud of books at dinner hour. Ruby Gillis smuggled three blue plums over to her during testament reading; Ella May MacPherson gave her an enormous yellow pansy cut from the covers of a floral catalogue — a species of desk decoration much prized in Avonlea school. Sophia Sloane offered to teach her a perfectly elegant new pattern of knit lace, so nice for trimming aprons. Katie Boulter gave her a perfume bottle to keep slate water in, and Julia Bell copied carefully on a piece of pale pink paper scalloped on the edges the following effusion:

When twilight drops her curtain down
And pins it with a star
Remember that you have a friend
Though she may wander far.

“It’s so nice to be appreciated,” sighed Anne rapturously to Marilla that night.

The girls were not the only scholars who “appreciated” her. When Anne went to her seat after dinner hour — she had been told by Mr. Phillips to sit with the model Minnie Andrews — she found on her desk a

big luscious “strawberry apple.” Anne caught it up all ready to take a bite when she remembered that the only place in Avonlea where strawberry apples grew was in the old Blythe orchard on the other side of the Lake of Shining Waters. Anne dropped the apple as if it were a red-hot coal and ostentatiously wiped her fingers on her handkerchief. The apple lay untouched on her desk until the next morning, when little Timothy Andrews, who swept the school and kindled the fire, annexed it as one of his perquisites. Charlie Sloane’s slate pencil, gorgeously bedizened with striped red and yellow paper, costing two cents where ordinary pencils cost only one, which he sent up to her after dinner hour, met with a more favorable reception. Anne was graciously pleased to accept it and rewarded the donor with a smile which exalted that infatuated youth straightway into the seventh heaven of delight and caused him to make such fearful errors in his dictation that Mr. Phillips kept him in after school to rewrite it.

But as,

The Caesar’s pageant shorn of Brutus’ bust

Did but of Rome’s best son remind her more,

so the marked absence of any tribute or recognition from Diana Barry who was sitting with Gertie Pye embittered Anne’s little triumph.

“Diana might just have smiled at me once, I think,” she mourned to Marilla that night. But the next morning a note most fearfully and wonderfully twisted and folded, and a small parcel were passed across to Anne.

Dear Anne (ran the former)

Mother says I’m not to play with you or talk to you even in school. It isn’t my fault and don’t be cross at me, because I love you as much as ever. I miss you awfully to tell all my secrets to and I don’t like Gertie Pye one bit. I made you one of the new bookmarkers out of red tissue paper. They are awfully fashionable now and only three girls in school know how to make them. When you look at it remember

Your true friend

Diana Barry.

Anne read the note, kissed the bookmark, and dispatched a prompt reply back to the other side of the school.

My own darling Diana: —

Of course I am not cross at you because you have to obey your mother. Our spirits can commune. I shall keep your lovely present forever. Minnie Andrews is a very nice little girl — although she has no imagination — but after having been Diana's busum friend I cannot be Minnie's. Please excuse mistakes because my spelling isn't very good yet, although much improved.

Yours until death us do part

Anne or Cordelia Shirley.

P.S. I shall sleep with your letter under my pillow tonight. A. OR C.S.

Marilla pessimistically expected more trouble since Anne had again begun to go to school. But none developed. Perhaps Anne caught something of the "model" spirit from Minnie Andrews; at least she got on very well with Mr. Phillips thenceforth. She flung herself into her studies heart and soul, determined not to be outdone in any class by Gilbert Blythe. The rivalry between them was soon apparent; it was entirely good natured on Gilbert's side; but it is much to be feared that the same thing cannot be said of Anne, who had certainly an unpraiseworthy tenacity for holding grudges. She was as intense in her hatreds as in her loves. She would not stoop to admit that she meant to rival Gilbert in schoolwork, because that would have been to acknowledge his existence which Anne persistently ignored; but the rivalry was there and honors fluctuated between them. Now Gilbert was head of the spelling class; now Anne, with a toss of her long red braids, spelled him down. One morning Gilbert had all his sums done correctly and had his name written on the blackboard on the roll of honor; the next morning Anne, having wrestled wildly with decimals the entire evening before, would be first. One awful day they were ties and their names were written up together. It was almost as bad as a take-notice and Anne's mortification was as evident as Gilbert's satisfaction. When the written examinations at the end of each month were held the suspense was terrible. The first month Gilbert came out three

marks ahead. The second Anne beat him by five. But her triumph was marred by the fact that Gilbert congratulated her heartily before the whole school. It would have been ever so much sweeter to her if he had felt the sting of his defeat.

Mr. Phillips might not be a very good teacher; but a pupil so inflexibly determined on learning as Anne was could hardly escape making progress under any kind of teacher. By the end of the term Anne and Gilbert were both promoted into the fifth class and allowed to begin studying the elements of “the branches” — by which Latin, geometry, French, and algebra were meant. In geometry Anne met her Waterloo.

“It’s perfectly awful stuff, Marilla,” she groaned. “I’m sure I’ll never be able to make head or tail of it. There is no scope for imagination in it at all. Mr. Phillips says I’m the worst dunce he ever saw at it. And Gil — I mean some of the others are so smart at it. It is extremely mortifying, Marilla.

“Even Diana gets along better than I do. But I don’t mind being beaten by Diana. Even although we meet as strangers now I still love her with an INEXTINGUISHABLE love. It makes me very sad at times to think about her. But really, Marilla, one can’t stay sad very long in such an interesting world, can one?”

Anne to the Rescue

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All things great are wound up with all things little. At first glance it might not seem that the decision of a certain Canadian Premier to include Prince Edward Island in a political tour could have much or anything to do with the fortunes of little Anne Shirley at Green Gables. But it had.

It was a January the Premier came, to address his loyal supporters and such of his nonsupporters as chose to be present at the monster mass meeting held in Charlottetown. Most of the Avonlea people were on Premier's side of politics; hence on the night of the meeting nearly all the men and a goodly proportion of the women had gone to town thirty miles away. Mrs. Rachel Lynde had gone too. Mrs. Rachel Lynde was a red-hot politician and couldn't have believed that the political rally could be carried through without her, although she was on the opposite side of politics. So she went to town and took her husband — Thomas would be useful in looking after the horse — and Marilla Cuthbert with her. Marilla had a sneaking interest in politics herself, and as she thought it might be her only chance to see a real live Premier, she promptly took it, leaving Anne and Matthew to keep house until her return the following day.

Hence, while Marilla and Mrs. Rachel were enjoying themselves hugely at the mass meeting, Anne and Matthew had the cheerful kitchen at Green Gables all to themselves. A bright fire was glowing in the old-fashioned Waterloo stove and blue-white frost crystals were shining on the windowpanes. Matthew nodded over a FARMERS' ADVOCATE on the sofa and Anne at the table studied her lessons with grim determination, despite sundry wistful glances at the clock shelf, where lay a new book that Jane Andrews had lent her that day. Jane had assured her that it was warranted to produce any number of thrills, or words to that effect, and Anne's fingers tingled to reach out for it. But that would mean Gilbert

Blythe's triumph on the morrow. Anne turned her back on the clock shelf and tried to imagine it wasn't there.

"Matthew, did you ever study geometry when you went to school?"

"Well now, no, I didn't," said Matthew, coming out of his doze with a start.

"I wish you had," sighed Anne, "because then you'd be able to sympathize with me. You can't sympathize properly if you've never studied it. It is casting a cloud over my whole life. I'm such a dunce at it, Matthew."

"Well now, I dunno," said Matthew soothingly. "I guess you're all right at anything. Mr. Phillips told me last week in Blair's store at Carmody that you was the smartest scholar in school and was making rapid progress. 'Rapid progress' was his very words. There's them as runs down Teddy Phillips and says he ain't much of a teacher, but I guess he's all right."

Matthew would have thought anyone who praised Anne was "all right."

"I'm sure I'd get on better with geometry if only he wouldn't change the letters," complained Anne. "I learn the proposition off by heart and then he draws it on the blackboard and puts different letters from what are in the book and I get all mixed up. I don't think a teacher should take such a mean advantage, do you? We're studying agriculture now and I've found out at last what makes the roads red. It's a great comfort. I wonder how Marilla and Mrs. Lynde are enjoying themselves. Mrs. Lynde says Canada is going to the dogs the way things are being run at Ottawa and that it's an awful warning to the electors. She says if women were allowed to vote we would soon see a blessed change. What way do you vote, Matthew?"

"Conservative," said Matthew promptly. To vote Conservative was part of Matthew's religion.

"Then I'm Conservative too," said Anne decidedly. "I'm glad because Gil — because some of the boys in school are Grits. I guess Mr. Phillips is a Grit too because Prissy Andrews's father is one, and Ruby Gillis says that when a man is courting he always has to agree with the girl's mother in religion and her father in politics. Is that true, Matthew?"

"Well now, I dunno," said Matthew.

“Did you ever go courting, Matthew?”

“Well now, no, I dunno’s I ever did,” said Matthew, who had certainly never thought of such a thing in his whole existence.

Anne reflected with her chin in her hands.

“It must be rather interesting, don’t you think, Matthew? Ruby Gillis says when she grows up she’s going to have ever so many beaux on the string and have them all crazy about her; but I think that would be too exciting. I’d rather have just one in his right mind. But Ruby Gillis knows a great deal about such matters because she has so many big sisters, and Mrs. Lynde says the Gillis girls have gone off like hot cakes. Mr. Phillips goes up to see Prissy Andrews nearly every evening. He says it is to help her with her lessons but Miranda Sloane is studying for Queen’s too, and I should think she needed help a lot more than Prissy because she’s ever so much stupider, but he never goes to help her in the evenings at all. There are a great many things in this world that I can’t understand very well, Matthew.”

“Well now, I dunno as I comprehend them all myself,” acknowledged Matthew.

“Well, I suppose I must finish up my lessons. I won’t allow myself to open that new book Jane lent me until I’m through. But it’s a terrible temptation, Matthew. Even when I turn my back on it I can see it there just as plain. Jane said she cried herself sick over it. I love a book that makes me cry. But I think I’ll carry that book into the sitting room and lock it in the jam closet and give you the key. And you must NOT give it to me, Matthew, until my lessons are done, not even if I implore you on my bended knees. It’s all very well to say resist temptation, but it’s ever so much easier to resist it if you can’t get the key. And then shall I run down the cellar and get some russets, Matthew? Wouldn’t you like some russets?”

“Well now, I dunno but what I would,” said Matthew, who never ate russets but knew Anne’s weakness for them.

Just as Anne emerged triumphantly from the cellar with her plateful of russets came the sound of flying footsteps on the icy board walk outside

and the next moment the kitchen door was flung open and in rushed Diana Barry, white faced and breathless, with a shawl wrapped hastily around her head. Anne promptly let go of her candle and plate in her surprise, and plate, candle, and apples crashed together down the cellar ladder and were found at the bottom embedded in melted grease, the next day, by Marilla, who gathered them up and thanked mercy the house hadn't been set on fire.

"Whatever is the matter, Diana?" cried Anne. "Has your mother relented at last?"

"Oh, Anne, do come quick," implored Diana nervously. "Minnie May is awful sick — she's got croup. Young Mary Joe says — and Father and Mother are away to town and there's nobody to go for the doctor. Minnie May is awful bad and Young Mary Joe doesn't know what to do — and oh, Anne, I'm so scared!"

Matthew, without a word, reached out for cap and coat, slipped past Diana and away into the darkness of the yard.

"He's gone to harness the sorrel mare to go to Carmody for the doctor," said Anne, who was hurrying on hood and jacket. "I know it as well as if he'd said so. Matthew and I are such kindred spirits I can read his thoughts without words at all."

"I don't believe he'll find the doctor at Carmody," sobbed Diana. "I know that Dr. Blair went to town and I guess Dr. Spencer would go too. Young Mary Joe never saw anybody with croup and Mrs. Lynde is away. Oh, Anne!"

"Don't cry, Di," said Anne cheerily. "I know exactly what to do for croup. You forget that Mrs. Hammond had twins three times. When you look after three pairs of twins you naturally get a lot of experience. They all had croup regularly. Just wait till I get the ipecac bottle — you mayn't have any at your house. Come on now."

The two little girls hastened out hand in hand and hurried through Lover's Lane and across the crusted field beyond, for the snow was too deep to go by the shorter wood way. Anne, although sincerely sorry for Minnie May, was far from being insensible to the romance of the situation

and to the sweetness of once more sharing that romance with a kindred spirit.

The night was clear and frosty, all ebony of shadow and silver of snowy slope; big stars were shining over the silent fields; here and there the dark pointed firs stood up with snow powdering their branches and the wind whistling through them. Anne thought it was truly delightful to go skimming through all this mystery and loveliness with your bosom friend who had been so long estranged.

Minnie May, aged three, was really very sick. She lay on the kitchen sofa feverish and restless, while her hoarse breathing could be heard all over the house. Young Mary Joe, a buxom, broad-faced French girl from the creek, whom Mrs. Barry had engaged to stay with the children during her absence, was helpless and bewildered, quite incapable of thinking what to do, or doing it if she thought of it.

Anne went to work with skill and promptness.

“Minnie May has croup all right; she’s pretty bad, but I’ve seen them worse. First we must have lots of hot water. I declare, Diana, there isn’t more than a cupful in the kettle! There, I’ve filled it up, and, Mary Joe, you may put some wood in the stove. I don’t want to hurt your feelings but it seems to me you might have thought of this before if you’d any imagination. Now, I’ll undress Minnie May and put her to bed and you try to find some soft flannel cloths, Diana. I’m going to give her a dose of ipecac first of all.”

Minnie May did not take kindly to the ipecac but Anne had not brought up three pairs of twins for nothing. Down that ipecac went, not only once, but many times during the long, anxious night when the two little girls worked patiently over the suffering Minnie May, and Young Mary Joe, honestly anxious to do all she could, kept up a roaring fire and heated more water than would have been needed for a hospital of croupy babies.

It was three o’clock when Matthew came with a doctor, for he had been obliged to go all the way to Spencervale for one. But the pressing need for assistance was past. Minnie May was much better and was sleeping soundly.

“I was awfully near giving up in despair,” explained Anne. “She got worse and worse until she was sicker than ever the Hammond twins were, even the last pair. I actually thought she was going to choke to death. I gave her every drop of ipecac in that bottle and when the last dose went down I said to myself — not to Diana or Young Mary Joe, because I didn’t want to worry them any more than they were worried, but I had to say it to myself just to relieve my feelings—’This is the last lingering hope and I fear, tis a vain one.’ But in about three minutes she coughed up the phlegm and began to get better right away. You must just imagine my relief, doctor, because I can’t express it in words. You know there are some things that cannot be expressed in words.”

“Yes, I know,” nodded the doctor. He looked at Anne as if he were thinking some things about her that couldn’t be expressed in words. Later on, however, he expressed them to Mr. and Mrs. Barry.

“That little redheaded girl they have over at Cuthbert’s is as smart as they make ‘em. I tell you she saved that baby’s life, for it would have been too late by the time I got there. She seems to have a skill and presence of mind perfectly wonderful in a child of her age. I never saw anything like the eyes of her when she was explaining the case to me.”

Anne had gone home in the wonderful, white-frosted winter morning, heavy eyed from loss of sleep, but still talking unweariedly to Matthew as they crossed the long white field and walked under the glittering fairy arch of the Lover’s Lane maples.

“Oh, Matthew, isn’t it a wonderful morning? The world looks like something God had just imagined for His own pleasure, doesn’t it? Those trees look as if I could blow them away with a breath — pouf! I’m so glad I live in a world where there are white frosts, aren’t you? And I’m so glad Mrs. Hammond had three pairs of twins after all. If she hadn’t I mightn’t have known what to do for Minnie May. I’m real sorry I was ever cross with Mrs. Hammond for having twins. But, oh, Matthew, I’m so sleepy. I can’t go to school. I just know I couldn’t keep my eyes open and I’d be so stupid. But I hate to stay home, for Gil — some of the others will get head of the class, and it’s so hard to get up again — although of course the

harder it is the more satisfaction you have when you do get up, haven't you?"

"Well now, I guess you'll manage all right," said Matthew, looking at Anne's white little face and the dark shadows under her eyes. "You just go right to bed and have a good sleep. I'll do all the chores."

Anne accordingly went to bed and slept so long and soundly that it was well on in the white and rosy winter afternoon when she awoke and descended to the kitchen where Marilla, who had arrived home in the meantime, was sitting knitting.

"Oh, did you see the Premier?" exclaimed Anne at once. "What did he look like Marilla?"

"Well, he never got to be Premier on account of his looks," said Marilla. "Such a nose as that man had! But he can speak. I was proud of being a Conservative. Rachel Lynde, of course, being a Liberal, had no use for him. Your dinner is in the oven, Anne, and you can get yourself some blue plum preserve out of the pantry. I guess you're hungry. Matthew has been telling me about last night. I must say it was fortunate you knew what to do. I wouldn't have had any idea myself, for I never saw a case of croup. There now, never mind talking till you've had your dinner. I can tell by the look of you that you're just full up with speeches, but they'll keep."

Marilla had something to tell Anne, but she did not tell it just then for she knew if she did Anne's consequent excitement would lift her clear out of the region of such material matters as appetite or dinner. Not until Anne had finished her saucer of blue plums did Marilla say:

"Mrs. Barry was here this afternoon, Anne. She wanted to see you, but I wouldn't wake you up. She says you saved Minnie May's life, and she is very sorry she acted as she did in that affair of the currant wine. She says she knows now you didn't mean to set Diana drunk, and she hopes you'll forgive her and be good friends with Diana again. You're to go over this evening if you like for Diana can't stir outside the door on account of a bad cold she caught last night. Now, Anne Shirley, for pity's sake don't fly up into the air."

The warning seemed not unnecessary, so uplifted and aerial was Anne's expression and attitude as she sprang to her feet, her face irradiated with the flame of her spirit.

"Oh, Marilla, can I go right now — without washing my dishes? I'll wash them when I come back, but I cannot tie myself down to anything so unromantic as dishwashing at this thrilling moment."

"Yes, yes, run along," said Marilla indulgently. "Anne Shirley — are you crazy? Come back this instant and put something on you. I might as well call to the wind. She's gone without a cap or wrap. Look at her tearing through the orchard with her hair streaming. It'll be a mercy if she doesn't catch her death of cold."

Anne came dancing home in the purple winter twilight across the snowy places. Afar in the southwest was the great shimmering, pearl-like sparkle of an evening star in a sky that was pale golden and ethereal rose over gleaming white spaces and dark glens of spruce. The tinkles of sleigh bells among the snowy hills came like elfin chimes through the frosty air, but their music was not sweeter than the song in Anne's heart and on her lips.

"You see before you a perfectly happy person, Marilla," she announced. "I'm perfectly happy — yes, in spite of my red hair. Just at present I have a soul above red hair. Mrs. Barry kissed me and cried and said she was so sorry and she could never repay me. I felt fearfully embarrassed, Marilla, but I just said as politely as I could, 'I have no hard feelings for you, Mrs. Barry. I assure you once for all that I did not mean to intoxicate Diana and henceforth I shall cover the past with the mantle of oblivion.' That was a pretty dignified way of speaking wasn't it, Marilla?"

"I felt that I was heaping coals of fire on Mrs. Barry's head. And Diana and I had a lovely afternoon. Diana showed me a new fancy crochet stitch her aunt over at Carmody taught her. Not a soul in Avonlea knows it but us, and we pledged a solemn vow never to reveal it to anyone else. Diana gave me a beautiful card with a wreath of roses on it and a verse of poetry:

"If you love me as I love you
Nothing but death can part us two.

“And that is true, Marilla. We’re going to ask Mr. Phillips to let us sit together in school again, and Gertie Pye can go with Minnie Andrews. We had an elegant tea. Mrs. Barry had the very best china set out, Marilla, just as if I was real company. I can’t tell you what a thrill it gave me. Nobody ever used their very best china on my account before. And we had fruit cake and pound cake and doughnuts and two kinds of preserves, Marilla. And Mrs. Barry asked me if I took tea and said ‘Pa, why don’t you pass the biscuits to Anne?’ It must be lovely to be grown up, Marilla, when just being treated as if you were is so nice.”

“I don’t know about that,” said Marilla, with a brief sigh.

“Well, anyway, when I am grown up,” said Anne decidedly, “I’m always going to talk to little girls as if they were too, and I’ll never laugh when they use big words. I know from sorrowful experience how that hurts one’s feelings. After tea Diana and I made taffy. The taffy wasn’t very good, I suppose because neither Diana nor I had ever made any before. Diana left me to stir it while she buttered the plates and I forgot and let it burn; and then when we set it out on the platform to cool the cat walked over one plate and that had to be thrown away. But the making of it was splendid fun. Then when I came home Mrs. Barry asked me to come over as often as I could and Diana stood at the window and threw kisses to me all the way down to Lover’s Lane. I assure you, Marilla, that I feel like praying tonight and I’m going to think out a special brand-new prayer in honor of the occasion.”

Chapter XIX.

A Concert a Catastrophe and a Confession

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“Marilla, can I go over to see Diana just for a minute?” asked Anne, running breathlessly down from the east gable one February evening.

“I don’t see what you want to be traipsing about after dark for,” said Marilla shortly. “You and Diana walked home from school together and then stood down there in the snow for half an hour more, your tongues going the whole blessed time, clickety-clack. So I don’t think you’re very badly off to see her again.”

“But she wants to see me,” pleaded Anne. “She has something very important to tell me.”

“How do you know she has?”

“Because she just signaled to me from her window. We have arranged a way to signal with our candles and cardboard. We set the candle on the window sill and make flashes by passing the cardboard back and forth. So many flashes mean a certain thing. It was my idea, Marilla.”

“I’ll warrant you it was,” said Marilla emphatically. “And the next thing you’ll be setting fire to the curtains with your signaling nonsense.”

“Oh, we’re very careful, Marilla. And it’s so interesting. Two flashes mean, ‘Are you there?’ Three mean ‘yes’ and four ‘no.’ Five mean, ‘Come over as soon as possible, because I have something important to reveal.’ Diana has just signaled five flashes, and I’m really suffering to know what it is.”

“Well, you needn’t suffer any longer,” said Marilla sarcastically. “You can go, but you’re to be back here in just ten minutes, remember that.”

Anne did remember it and was back in the stipulated time, although probably no mortal will ever know just what it cost her to confine the

discussion of Diana's important communication within the limits of ten minutes. But at least she had made good use of them.

"Oh, Marilla, what do you think? You know tomorrow is Diana's birthday. Well, her mother told her she could ask me to go home with her from school and stay all night with her. And her cousins are coming over from Newbridge in a big pung sleigh to go to the Debating Club concert at the hall tomorrow night. And they are going to take Diana and me to the concert — if you'll let me go, that is. You will, won't you, Marilla? Oh, I feel so excited."

"You can calm down then, because you're not going. You're better at home in your own bed, and as for that club concert, it's all nonsense, and little girls should not be allowed to go out to such places at all."

"I'm sure the Debating Club is a most respectable affair," pleaded Anne.

"I'm not saying it isn't. But you're not going to begin gadding about to concerts and staying out all hours of the night. Pretty doings for children. I'm surprised at Mrs. Barry's letting Diana go."

"But it's such a very special occasion," mourned Anne, on the verge of tears. "Diana has only one birthday in a year. It isn't as if birthdays were common things, Marilla. Prissy Andrews is going to recite 'Curfew Must Not Ring Tonight.' That is such a good moral piece, Marilla, I'm sure it would do me lots of good to hear it. And the choir are going to sing four lovely pathetic songs that are pretty near as good as hymns. And oh, Marilla, the minister is going to take part; yes, indeed, he is; he's going to give an address. That will be just about the same thing as a sermon. Please, mayn't I go, Marilla?"

"You heard what I said, Anne, didn't you? Take off your boots now and go to bed. It's past eight."

"There's just one more thing, Marilla," said Anne, with the air of producing the last shot in her locker. "Mrs. Barry told Diana that we might sleep in the spare-room bed. Think of the honor of your little Anne being put in the spare-room bed."

“It’s an honor you’ll have to get along without. Go to bed, Anne, and don’t let me hear another word out of you.”

When Anne, with tears rolling over her cheeks, had gone sorrowfully upstairs, Matthew, who had been apparently sound asleep on the lounge during the whole dialogue, opened his eyes and said decidedly:

“Well now, Marilla, I think you ought to let Anne go.”

“I don’t then,” retorted Marilla. “Who’s bringing this child up, Matthew, you or me?”

“Well now, you,” admitted Matthew.

“Don’t interfere then.”

“Well now, I ain’t interfering. It ain’t interfering to have your own opinion. And my opinion is that you ought to let Anne go.”

“You’d think I ought to let Anne go to the moon if she took the notion, I’ve no doubt” was Marilla’s amiable rejoinder. “I might have let her spend the night with Diana, if that was all. But I don’t approve of this concert plan. She’d go there and catch cold like as not, and have her head filled up with nonsense and excitement. It would unsettle her for a week. I understand that child’s disposition and what’s good for it better than you, Matthew.”

“I think you ought to let Anne go,” repeated Matthew firmly. Argument was not his strong point, but holding fast to his opinion certainly was. Marilla gave a gasp of helplessness and took refuge in silence. The next morning, when Anne was washing the breakfast dishes in the pantry, Matthew paused on his way out to the barn to say to Marilla again:

“I think you ought to let Anne go, Marilla.”

For a moment Marilla looked things not lawful to be uttered. Then she yielded to the inevitable and said tartly:

“Very well, she can go, since nothing else’ll please you.”

Anne flew out of the pantry, dripping dishcloth in hand.

“Oh, Marilla, Marilla, say those blessed words again.”

“I guess once is enough to say them. This is Matthew’s doings and I wash my hands of it. If you catch pneumonia sleeping in a strange bed or

coming out of that hot hall in the middle of the night, don't blame me, blame Matthew. Anne Shirley, you're dripping greasy water all over the floor. I never saw such a careless child."

"Oh, I know I'm a great trial to you, Marilla," said Anne repentantly. "I make so many mistakes. But then just think of all the mistakes I don't make, although I might. I'll get some sand and scrub up the spots before I go to school. Oh, Marilla, my heart was just set on going to that concert. I never was to a concert in my life, and when the other girls talk about them in school I feel so out of it. You didn't know just how I felt about it, but you see Matthew did. Matthew understands me, and it's so nice to be understood, Marilla."

Anne was too excited to do herself justice as to lessons that morning in school. Gilbert Blythe spelled her down in class and left her clear out of sight in mental arithmetic. Anne's consequent humiliation was less than it might have been, however, in view of the concert and the spare-room bed. She and Diana talked so constantly about it all day that with a stricter teacher than Mr. Phillips dire disgrace must inevitably have been their portion.

Anne felt that she could not have borne it if she had not been going to the concert, for nothing else was discussed that day in school. The Avonlea Debating Club, which met fortnightly all winter, had had several smaller free entertainments; but this was to be a big affair, admission ten cents, in aid of the library. The Avonlea young people had been practicing for weeks, and all the scholars were especially interested in it by reason of older brothers and sisters who were going to take part. Everybody in school over nine years of age expected to go, except Carrie Sloane, whose father shared Marilla's opinions about small girls going out to night concerts. Carrie Sloane cried into her grammar all the afternoon and felt that life was not worth living.

For Anne the real excitement began with the dismissal of school and increased therefrom in crescendo until it reached to a crash of positive ecstasy in the concert itself. They had a "perfectly elegant tea;" and then came the delicious occupation of dressing in Diana's little room upstairs.

Diana did Anne's front hair in the new pompadour style and Anne tied Diana's bows with the especial knack she possessed; and they experimented with at least half a dozen different ways of arranging their back hair. At last they were ready, cheeks scarlet and eyes glowing with excitement.

True, Anne could not help a little pang when she contrasted her plain black tam and shapeless, tight-sleeved, homemade gray-cloth coat with Diana's jaunty fur cap and smart little jacket. But she remembered in time that she had an imagination and could use it.

Then Diana's cousins, the Murrays from Newbridge, came; they all crowded into the big pung sleigh, among straw and furry robes. Anne reveled in the drive to the hall, slipping along over the satin-smooth roads with the snow crisping under the runners. There was a magnificent sunset, and the snowy hills and deep-blue water of the St. Lawrence Gulf seemed to rim in the splendor like a huge bowl of pearl and sapphire brimmed with wine and fire. Tinkles of sleigh bells and distant laughter, that seemed like the mirth of wood elves, came from every quarter.

"Oh, Diana," breathed Anne, squeezing Diana's mittened hand under the fur robe, "isn't it all like a beautiful dream? Do I really look the same as usual? I feel so different that it seems to me it must show in my looks."

"You look awfully nice," said Diana, who having just received a compliment from one of her cousins, felt that she ought to pass it on. "You've got the loveliest color."

The program that night was a series of "thrills" for at least one listener in the audience, and, as Anne assured Diana, every succeeding thrill was thrillier than the last. When Prissy Andrews, attired in a new pink-silk waist with a string of pearls about her smooth white throat and real carnations in her hair — rumor whispered that the master had sent all the way to town for them for her — climbed the slimy ladder, dark without one ray of light, Anne shivered in luxurious sympathy; when the choir sang "Far Above the Gentle Daisies" Anne gazed at the ceiling as if it were frescoed with angels; when Sam Sloane proceeded to explain and illustrate "How Sockery Set a Hen" Anne laughed until people sitting near

her laughed too, more out of sympathy with her than with amusement at a selection that was rather threadbare even in Avonlea; and when Mr. Phillips gave Mark Antony's oration over the dead body of Caesar in the most heart-stirring tones — looking at Prissy Andrews at the end of every sentence — Anne felt that she could rise and mutiny on the spot if but one Roman citizen led the way.

Only one number on the program failed to interest her. When Gilbert Blythe recited "Bingen on the Rhine" Anne picked up Rhoda Murray's library book and read it until he had finished, when she sat rigidly stiff and motionless while Diana clapped her hands until they tingled.

It was eleven when they got home, sated with dissipation, but with the exceeding sweet pleasure of talking it all over still to come. Everybody seemed asleep and the house was dark and silent. Anne and Diana tiptoed into the parlor, a long narrow room out of which the spare room opened. It was pleasantly warm and dimly lighted by the embers of a fire in the grate.

"Let's undress here," said Diana. "It's so nice and warm."

"Hasn't it been a delightful time?" sighed Anne rapturously. "It must be splendid to get up and recite there. Do you suppose we will ever be asked to do it, Diana?"

"Yes, of course, someday. They're always wanting the big scholars to recite. Gilbert Blythe does often and he's only two years older than us. Oh, Anne, how could you pretend not to listen to him? When he came to the line,

"THERE'S ANOTHER, not A SISTER,
he looked right down at you."

"Diana," said Anne with dignity, "you are my bosom friend, but I cannot allow even you to speak to me of that person. Are you ready for bed? Let's run a race and see who'll get to the bed first."

The suggestion appealed to Diana. The two little white-clad figures flew down the long room, through the spare-room door, and bounded on the bed at the same moment. And then — something — moved beneath them, there was a gasp and a cry — and somebody said in muffled accents:

"Merciful goodness!"

Anne and Diana were never able to tell just how they got off that bed and out of the room. They only knew that after one frantic rush they found themselves tiptoeing shiveringly upstairs.

“Oh, who was it — WHAT was it?” whispered Anne, her teeth chattering with cold and fright.

“It was Aunt Josephine,” said Diana, gasping with laughter. “Oh, Anne, it was Aunt Josephine, however she came to be there. Oh, and I know she will be furious. It’s dreadful — it’s really dreadful — but did you ever know anything so funny, Anne?”

“Who is your Aunt Josephine?”

“She’s father’s aunt and she lives in Charlottetown. She’s awfully old — seventy anyhow — and I don’t believe she was EVER a little girl. We were expecting her out for a visit, but not so soon. She’s awfully prim and proper and she’ll scold dreadfully about this, I know. Well, we’ll have to sleep with Minnie May — and you can’t think how she kicks.”

Miss Josephine Barry did not appear at the early breakfast the next morning. Mrs. Barry smiled kindly at the two little girls.

“Did you have a good time last night? I tried to stay awake until you came home, for I wanted to tell you Aunt Josephine had come and that you would have to go upstairs after all, but I was so tired I fell asleep. I hope you didn’t disturb your aunt, Diana.”

Diana preserved a discreet silence, but she and Anne exchanged furtive smiles of guilty amusement across the table. Anne hurried home after breakfast and so remained in blissful ignorance of the disturbance which presently resulted in the Barry household until the late afternoon, when she went down to Mrs. Lynde’s on an errand for Marilla.

“So you and Diana nearly frightened poor old Miss Barry to death last night?” said Mrs. Lynde severely, but with a twinkle in her eye. “Mrs. Barry was here a few minutes ago on her way to Carmody. She’s feeling real worried over it. Old Miss Barry was in a terrible temper when she got up this morning — and Josephine Barry’s temper is no joke, I can tell you that. She wouldn’t speak to Diana at all.”

“It wasn’t Diana’s fault,” said Anne contritely. “It was mine. I suggested racing to see who would get into bed first.”

“I knew it!” said Mrs. Lynde, with the exultation of a correct guesser. “I knew that idea came out of your head. Well, it’s made a nice lot of trouble, that’s what. Old Miss Barry came out to stay for a month, but she declares she won’t stay another day and is going right back to town tomorrow, Sunday and all as it is. She’d have gone today if they could have taken her. She had promised to pay for a quarter’s music lessons for Diana, but now she is determined to do nothing at all for such a tomboy. Oh, I guess they had a lively time of it there this morning. The Barrys must feel cut up. Old Miss Barry is rich and they’d like to keep on the good side of her. Of course, Mrs. Barry didn’t say just that to me, but I’m a pretty good judge of human nature, that’s what.”

“I’m such an unlucky girl,” mourned Anne. “I’m always getting into scrapes myself and getting my best friends — people I’d shed my heart’s blood for — into them too. Can you tell me why it is so, Mrs. Lynde?”

“It’s because you’re too heedless and impulsive, child, that’s what. You never stop to think — whatever comes into your head to say or do you say or do it without a moment’s reflection.”

“Oh, but that’s the best of it,” protested Anne. “Something just flashes into your mind, so exciting, and you must out with it. If you stop to think it over you spoil it all. Haven’t you never felt that yourself, Mrs. Lynde?”

No, Mrs. Lynde had not. She shook her head sagely.

“You must learn to think a little, Anne, that’s what. The proverb you need to go by is ‘Look before you leap’ — especially into spare-room beds.”

Mrs. Lynde laughed comfortably over her mild joke, but Anne remained pensive. She saw nothing to laugh at in the situation, which to her eyes appeared very serious. When she left Mrs. Lynde’s she took her way across the crusted fields to Orchard Slope. Diana met her at the kitchen door.

“Your Aunt Josephine was very cross about it, wasn’t she?” whispered Anne.

“Yes,” answered Diana, stifling a giggle with an apprehensive glance over her shoulder at the closed sitting-room door. “She was fairly dancing with rage, Anne. Oh, how she scolded. She said I was the worst-behaved girl she ever saw and that my parents ought to be ashamed of the way they had brought me up. She says she won’t stay and I’m sure I don’t care. But Father and Mother do.”

“Why didn’t you tell them it was my fault?” demanded Anne.

“It’s likely I’d do such a thing, isn’t it?” said Diana with just scorn. “I’m no telltale, Anne Shirley, and anyhow I was just as much to blame as you.”

“Well, I’m going in to tell her myself,” said Anne resolutely.

Diana stared.

“Anne Shirley, you’d never! why — she’ll eat you alive!”

“Don’t frighten me any more than I am frightened,” implored Anne. “I’d rather walk up to a cannon’s mouth. But I’ve got to do it, Diana. It was my fault and I’ve got to confess. I’ve had practice in confessing, fortunately.”

“Well, she’s in the room,” said Diana. “You can go in if you want to. I wouldn’t dare. And I don’t believe you’ll do a bit of good.”

With this encouragement Anne bearded the lion in its den — that is to say, walked resolutely up to the sitting-room door and knocked faintly. A sharp “Come in” followed.

Miss Josephine Barry, thin, prim, and rigid, was knitting fiercely by the fire, her wrath quite unappeased and her eyes snapping through her gold-rimmed glasses. She wheeled around in her chair, expecting to see Diana, and beheld a white-faced girl whose great eyes were brimmed up with a mixture of desperate courage and shrinking terror.

“Who are you?” demanded Miss Josephine Barry, without ceremony.

“I’m Anne of Green Gables,” said the small visitor tremulously, clasping her hands with her characteristic gesture, “and I’ve come to confess, if you please.”

“Confess what?”

“That it was all my fault about jumping into bed on you last night. I suggested it. Diana would never have thought of such a thing, I am sure. Diana is a very ladylike girl, Miss Barry. So you must see how unjust it is to blame her.”

“Oh, I must, hey? I rather think Diana did her share of the jumping at least. Such carryings on in a respectable house!”

“But we were only in fun,” persisted Anne. “I think you ought to forgive us, Miss Barry, now that we’ve apologized. And anyhow, please forgive Diana and let her have her music lessons. Diana’s heart is set on her music lessons, Miss Barry, and I know too well what it is to set your heart on a thing and not get it. If you must be cross with anyone, be cross with me. I’ve been so used in my early days to having people cross at me that I can endure it much better than Diana can.”

Much of the snap had gone out of the old lady’s eyes by this time and was replaced by a twinkle of amused interest. But she still said severely:

“I don’t think it is any excuse for you that you were only in fun. Little girls never indulged in that kind of fun when I was young. You don’t know what it is to be awakened out of a sound sleep, after a long and arduous journey, by two great girls coming bounce down on you.”

“I don’t KNOW, but I can IMAGINE,” said Anne eagerly. “I’m sure it must have been very disturbing. But then, there is our side of it too. Have you any imagination, Miss Barry? If you have, just put yourself in our place. We didn’t know there was anybody in that bed and you nearly scared us to death. It was simply awful the way we felt. And then we couldn’t sleep in the spare room after being promised. I suppose you are used to sleeping in spare rooms. But just imagine what you would feel like if you were a little orphan girl who had never had such an honor.”

All the snap had gone by this time. Miss Barry actually laughed — a sound which caused Diana, waiting in speechless anxiety in the kitchen outside, to give a great gasp of relief.

“I’m afraid my imagination is a little rusty — it’s so long since I used it,” she said. “I dare say your claim to sympathy is just as strong as mine.

It all depends on the way we look at it. Sit down here and tell me about yourself.”

“I am very sorry I can’t,” said Anne firmly. “I would like to, because you seem like an interesting lady, and you might even be a kindred spirit although you don’t look very much like it. But it is my duty to go home to Miss Marilla Cuthbert. Miss Marilla Cuthbert is a very kind lady who has taken me to bring up properly. She is doing her best, but it is very discouraging work. You must not blame her because I jumped on the bed. But before I go I do wish you would tell me if you will forgive Diana and stay just as long as you meant to in Avonlea.”

“I think perhaps I will if you will come over and talk to me occasionally,” said Miss Barry.

That evening Miss Barry gave Diana a silver bangle bracelet and told the senior members of the household that she had unpacked her valise.

“I’ve made up my mind to stay simply for the sake of getting better acquainted with that Anne-girl,” she said frankly. “She amuses me, and at my time of life an amusing person is a rarity.”

Marilla’s only comment when she heard the story was, “I told you so.” This was for Matthew’s benefit.

Miss Barry stayed her month out and over. She was a more agreeable guest than usual, for Anne kept her in good humor. They became firm friends.

When Miss Barry went away she said:

“Remember, you Anne-girl, when you come to town you’re to visit me and I’ll put you in my very sparest spare-room bed to sleep.”

“Miss Barry was a kindred spirit, after all,” Anne confided to Marilla. “You wouldn’t think so to look at her, but she is. You don’t find it right out at first, as in Matthew’s case, but after a while you come to see it. Kindred spirits are not so scarce as I used to think. It’s splendid to find out there are so many of them in the world.”

A Good Imagination Gone Wrong

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Spring had come once more to Green Gables — the beautiful capricious, reluctant Canadian spring, lingering along through April and May in a succession of sweet, fresh, chilly days, with pink sunsets and miracles of resurrection and growth. The maples in Lover's Lane were red budded and little curly ferns pushed up around the Dryad's Bubble. Away up in the barrens, behind Mr. Silas Sloane's place, the Mayflowers blossomed out, pink and white stars of sweetness under their brown leaves. All the school girls and boys had one golden afternoon gathering them, coming home in the clear, echoing twilight with arms and baskets full of flowery spoil.

"I'm so sorry for people who live in lands where there are no Mayflowers," said Anne. "Diana says perhaps they have something better, but there couldn't be anything better than Mayflowers, could there, Marilla? And Diana says if they don't know what they are like they don't miss them. But I think that is the saddest thing of all. I think it would be TRAGIC, Marilla, not to know what Mayflowers are like and NOT to miss them. Do you know what I think Mayflowers are, Marilla? I think they must be the souls of the flowers that died last summer and this is their heaven. But we had a splendid time today, Marilla. We had our lunch down in a big mossy hollow by an old well — such a ROMANTIC spot. Charlie Sloane dared Arty Gillis to jump over it, and Arty did because he wouldn't take a dare. Nobody would in school. It is very FASHIONABLE to dare. Mr. Phillips gave all the Mayflowers he found to Prissy Andrews and I heard him to say 'sweets to the sweet.' He got that out of a book, I know; but it shows he has some imagination. I was offered some Mayflowers too, but I rejected them with scorn. I can't tell you the person's name because I have vowed never to let it cross my lips. We made wreaths of the Mayflowers and put them on our hats; and when the time came to go home we marched in procession down the road, two by two, with our bouquets

and wreaths, singing 'My Home on the Hill.' Oh, it was so thrilling, Marilla. All Mr. Silas Sloane's folks rushed out to see us and everybody we met on the road stopped and stared after us. We made a real sensation."

"Not much wonder! Such silly doings!" was Marilla's response.

After the Mayflowers came the violets, and Violet Vale was empurpled with them. Anne walked through it on her way to school with reverent steps and worshiping eyes, as if she trod on holy ground.

"Somehow," she told Diana, "when I'm going through here I don't really care whether Gil — whether anybody gets ahead of me in class or not. But when I'm up in school it's all different and I care as much as ever. There's such a lot of different Annes in me. I sometimes think that is why I'm such a troublesome person. If I was just the one Anne it would be ever so much more comfortable, but then it wouldn't be half so interesting."

One June evening, when the orchards were pink blossomed again, when the frogs were singing silverly sweet in the marshes about the head of the Lake of Shining Waters, and the air was full of the savor of clover fields and balsamic fir woods, Anne was sitting by her gable window. She had been studying her lessons, but it had grown too dark to see the book, so she had fallen into wide-eyed reverie, looking out past the boughs of the Snow Queen, once more bestarred with its tufts of blossom.

In all essential respects the little gable chamber was unchanged. The walls were as white, the pincushion as hard, the chairs as stiffly and yellowly upright as ever. Yet the whole character of the room was altered. It was full of a new vital, pulsing personality that seemed to pervade it and to be quite independent of schoolgirl books and dresses and ribbons, and even of the cracked blue jug full of apple blossoms on the table. It was as if all the dreams, sleeping and waking, of its vivid occupant had taken a visible although unmaterial form and had tapestried the bare room with splendid filmy tissues of rainbow and moonshine. Presently Marilla came briskly in with some of Anne's freshly ironed school aprons. She hung them over a chair and sat down with a short sigh. She had had one of her headaches that afternoon, and although the pain had gone she felt weak

and “tuckered out,” as she expressed it. Anne looked at her with eyes limpid with sympathy.

“I do truly wish I could have had the headache in your place, Marilla. I would have endured it joyfully for your sake.”

“I guess you did your part in attending to the work and letting me rest,” said Marilla. “You seem to have got on fairly well and made fewer mistakes than usual. Of course it wasn’t exactly necessary to starch Matthew’s handkerchiefs! And most people when they put a pie in the oven to warm up for dinner take it out and eat it when it gets hot instead of leaving it to be burned to a crisp. But that doesn’t seem to be your way evidently.”

Headaches always left Marilla somewhat sarcastic.

“Oh, I’m so sorry,” said Anne penitently. “I never thought about that pie from the moment I put it in the oven till now, although I felt INSTINCTIVELY that there was something missing on the dinner table. I was firmly resolved, when you left me in charge this morning, not to imagine anything, but keep my thoughts on facts. I did pretty well until I put the pie in, and then an irresistible temptation came to me to imagine I was an enchanted princess shut up in a lonely tower with a handsome knight riding to my rescue on a coal-black steed. So that is how I came to forget the pie. I didn’t know I starched the handkerchiefs. All the time I was ironing I was trying to think of a name for a new island Diana and I have discovered up the brook. It’s the most ravishing spot, Marilla. There are two maple trees on it and the brook flows right around it. At last it struck me that it would be splendid to call it Victoria Island because we found it on the Queen’s birthday. Both Diana and I are very loyal. But I’m sorry about that pie and the handkerchiefs. I wanted to be extra good today because it’s an anniversary. Do you remember what happened this day last year, Marilla?”

“No, I can’t think of anything special.”

“Oh, Marilla, it was the day I came to Green Gables. I shall never forget it. It was the turning point in my life. Of course it wouldn’t seem so important to you. I’ve been here for a year and I’ve been so happy. Of

course, I've had my troubles, but one can live down troubles. Are you sorry you kept me, Marilla?"

"No, I can't say I'm sorry," said Marilla, who sometimes wondered how she could have lived before Anne came to Green Gables, "no, not exactly sorry. If you've finished your lessons, Anne, I want you to run over and ask Mrs. Barry if she'll lend me Diana's apron pattern."

"Oh — it's — it's too dark," cried Anne.

"Too dark? Why, it's only twilight. And goodness knows you've gone over often enough after dark."

"I'll go over early in the morning," said Anne eagerly. "I'll get up at sunrise and go over, Marilla."

"What has got into your head now, Anne Shirley? I want that pattern to cut out your new apron this evening. Go at once and be smart too."

"I'll have to go around by the road, then," said Anne, taking up her hat reluctantly.

"Go by the road and waste half an hour! I'd like to catch you!"

"I can't go through the Haunted Wood, Marilla," cried Anne desperately.

Marilla stared.

"The Haunted Wood! Are you crazy? What under the canopy is the Haunted Wood?"

"The spruce wood over the brook," said Anne in a whisper.

"Fiddlesticks! There is no such thing as a haunted wood anywhere. Who has been telling you such stuff?"

"Nobody," confessed Anne. "Diana and I just imagined the wood was haunted. All the places around here are so — so — COMMONPLACE. We just got this up for our own amusement. We began it in April. A haunted wood is so very romantic, Marilla. We chose the spruce grove because it's so gloomy. Oh, we have imagined the most harrowing things. There's a white lady walks along the brook just about this time of the night and wrings her hands and utters wailing cries. She appears when there is to be a death in the family. And the ghost of a little murdered child haunts the corner up by Idlewild; it creeps up behind you and lays its cold fingers on

your hand — so. Oh, Marilla, it gives me a shudder to think of it. And there's a headless man stalks up and down the path and skeletons glower at you between the boughs. Oh, Marilla, I wouldn't go through the Haunted Wood after dark now for anything. I'd be sure that white things would reach out from behind the trees and grab me."

"Did ever anyone hear the like!" ejaculated Marilla, who had listened in dumb amazement. "Anne Shirley, do you mean to tell me you believe all that wicked nonsense of your own imagination?"

"Not believe EXACTLY," faltered Anne. "At least, I don't believe it in daylight. But after dark, Marilla, it's different. That is when ghosts walk."

"There are no such things as ghosts, Anne."

"Oh, but there are, Marilla," cried Anne eagerly. "I know people who have seen them. And they are respectable people. Charlie Sloane says that his grandmother saw his grandfather driving home the cows one night after he'd been buried for a year. You know Charlie Sloane's grandmother wouldn't tell a story for anything. She's a very religious woman. And Mrs. Thomas's father was pursued home one night by a lamb of fire with its head cut off hanging by a strip of skin. He said he knew it was the spirit of his brother and that it was a warning he would die within nine days. He didn't, but he died two years after, so you see it was really true. And Ruby Gillis says—"

"Anne Shirley," interrupted Marilla firmly, "I never want to hear you talking in this fashion again. I've had my doubts about that imagination of yours right along, and if this is going to be the outcome of it, I won't countenance any such doings. You'll go right over to Barry's, and you'll go through that spruce grove, just for a lesson and a warning to you. And never let me hear a word out of your head about haunted woods again."

Anne might plead and cry as she liked — and did, for her terror was very real. Her imagination had run away with her and she held the spruce grove in mortal dread after nightfall. But Marilla was inexorable. She marched the shrinking ghost-seer down to the spring and ordered her to proceed straightaway over the bridge and into the dusky retreats of wailing ladies and headless specters beyond.

“Oh, Marilla, how can you be so cruel?” sobbed Anne. “What would you feel like if a white thing did snatch me up and carry me off?”

“I’ll risk it,” said Marilla unfeelingly. “You know I always mean what I say. I’ll cure you of imagining ghosts into places. March, now.”

Anne marched. That is, she stumbled over the bridge and went shuddering up the horrible dim path beyond. Anne never forgot that walk. Bitterly did she repent the license she had given to her imagination. The goblins of her fancy lurked in every shadow about her, reaching out their cold, fleshless hands to grasp the terrified small girl who had called them into being. A white strip of birch bark blowing up from the hollow over the brown floor of the grove made her heart stand still. The long-drawn wail of two old boughs rubbing against each other brought out the perspiration in beads on her forehead. The swoop of bats in the darkness over her was as the wings of unearthly creatures. When she reached Mr. William Bell’s field she fled across it as if pursued by an army of white things, and arrived at the Barry kitchen door so out of breath that she could hardly gasp out her request for the apron pattern. Diana was away so that she had no excuse to linger. The dreadful return journey had to be faced. Anne went back over it with shut eyes, preferring to take the risk of dashing her brains out among the boughs to that of seeing a white thing. When she finally stumbled over the log bridge she drew one long shivering breath of relief.

“Well, so nothing caught you?” said Marilla unsympathetically.

“Oh, Mar — Marilla,” chattered Anne, “I’ll b-b-be contt-tented with c-c-commonplace places after this.”

A New Departure in Flavorings

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“Dear me, there is nothing but meetings and partings in this world, as Mrs. Lynde says,” remarked Anne plaintively, putting her slate and books down on the kitchen table on the last day of June and wiping her red eyes with a very damp handkerchief. “Wasn’t it fortunate, Marilla, that I took an extra handkerchief to school today? I had a presentiment that it would be needed.”

“I never thought you were so fond of Mr. Phillips that you’d require two handkerchiefs to dry your tears just because he was going away,” said Marilla.

“I don’t think I was crying because I was really so very fond of him,” reflected Anne. “I just cried because all the others did. It was Ruby Gillis started it. Ruby Gillis has always declared she hated Mr. Phillips, but just as soon as he got up to make his farewell speech she burst into tears. Then all the girls began to cry, one after the other. I tried to hold out, Marilla. I tried to remember the time Mr. Phillips made me sit with Gil — with a, boy; and the time he spelled my name without an e on the blackboard; and how he said I was the worst dunce he ever saw at geometry and laughed at my spelling; and all the times he had been so horrid and sarcastic; but somehow I couldn’t, Marilla, and I just had to cry too. Jane Andrews has been talking for a month about how glad she’d be when Mr. Phillips went away and she declared she’d never shed a tear. Well, she was worse than any of us and had to borrow a handkerchief from her brother — of course the boys didn’t cry — because she hadn’t brought one of her own, not expecting to need it. Oh, Marilla, it was heartrending. Mr. Phillips made such a beautiful farewell speech beginning, ‘The time has come for us to part.’ It was very affecting. And he had tears in his eyes too, Marilla. Oh, I felt dreadfully sorry and remorseful for all the times I’d talked in school and drawn pictures of him on my slate and made fun of him and Prissy. I

can tell you I wished I'd been a model pupil like Minnie Andrews. She hadn't anything on her conscience. The girls cried all the way home from school. Carrie Sloane kept saying every few minutes, 'The time has come for us to part,' and that would start us off again whenever we were in any danger of cheering up. I do feel dreadfully sad, Marilla. But one can't feel quite in the depths of despair with two months' vacation before them, can they, Marilla? And besides, we met the new minister and his wife coming from the station. For all I was feeling so bad about Mr. Phillips going away I couldn't help taking a little interest in a new minister, could I? His wife is very pretty. Not exactly regally lovely, of course — it wouldn't do, I suppose, for a minister to have a regally lovely wife, because it might set a bad example. Mrs. Lynde says the minister's wife over at Newbridge sets a very bad example because she dresses so fashionably. Our new minister's wife was dressed in blue muslin with lovely puffed sleeves and a hat trimmed with roses. Jane Andrews said she thought puffed sleeves were too worldly for a minister's wife, but I didn't make any such uncharitable remark, Marilla, because I know what it is to long for puffed sleeves. Besides, she's only been a minister's wife for a little while, so one should make allowances, shouldn't they? They are going to board with Mrs. Lynde until the manse is ready."

If Marilla, in going down to Mrs. Lynde's that evening, was actuated by any motive save her avowed one of returning the quilting frames she had borrowed the preceding winter, it was an amiable weakness shared by most of the Avonlea people. Many a thing Mrs. Lynde had lent, sometimes never expecting to see it again, came home that night in charge of the borrowers thereof. A new minister, and moreover a minister with a wife, was a lawful object of curiosity in a quiet little country settlement where sensations were few and far between.

Old Mr. Bentley, the minister whom Anne had found lacking in imagination, had been pastor of Avonlea for eighteen years. He was a widower when he came, and a widower he remained, despite the fact that gossip regularly married him to this, that, or the other one, every year of his sojourn. In the preceding February he had resigned his charge and

departed amid the regrets of his people, most of whom had the affection born of long intercourse for their good old minister in spite of his shortcomings as an orator. Since then the Avonlea church had enjoyed a variety of religious dissipation in listening to the many and various candidates and “supplies” who came Sunday after Sunday to preach on trial. These stood or fell by the judgment of the fathers and mothers in Israel; but a certain small, redhaired girl who sat meekly in the corner of the old Cuthbert pew also had her opinions about them and discussed the same in full with Matthew, Marilla always declining from principle to criticize ministers in any shape or form.

“I don’t think Mr. Smith would have done, Matthew” was Anne’s final summing up. “Mrs. Lynde says his delivery was so poor, but I think his worst fault was just like Mr. Bentley’s — he had no imagination. And Mr. Terry had too much; he let it run away with him just as I did mine in the matter of the Haunted Wood. Besides, Mrs. Lynde says his theology wasn’t sound. Mr. Gresham was a very good man and a very religious man, but he told too many funny stories and made the people laugh in church; he was undignified, and you must have some dignity about a minister, mustn’t you, Matthew? I thought Mr. Marshall was decidedly attractive; but Mrs. Lynde says he isn’t married, or even engaged, because she made special inquiries about him, and she says it would never do to have a young unmarried minister in Avonlea, because he might marry in the congregation and that would make trouble. Mrs. Lynde is a very farseeing woman, isn’t she, Matthew? I’m very glad they’ve called Mr. Allan. I liked him because his sermon was interesting and he prayed as if he meant it and not just as if he did it because he was in the habit of it. Mrs. Lynde says he isn’t perfect, but she says she supposes we couldn’t expect a perfect minister for seven hundred and fifty dollars a year, and anyhow his theology is sound because she questioned him thoroughly on all the points of doctrine. And she knows his wife’s people and they are most respectable and the women are all good housekeepers. Mrs. Lynde says that sound doctrine in the man and good housekeeping in the woman make an ideal combination for a minister’s family.”

The new minister and his wife were a young, pleasant-faced couple, still on their honeymoon, and full of all good and beautiful enthusiasms for their chosen lifework. Avonlea opened its heart to them from the start. Old and young liked the frank, cheerful young man with his high ideals, and the bright, gentle little lady who assumed the mistress-ship of the manse. With Mrs. Allan Anne fell promptly and wholeheartedly in love. She had discovered another kindred spirit.

“Mrs. Allan is perfectly lovely,” she announced one Sunday afternoon. “She’s taken our class and she’s a splendid teacher. She said right away she didn’t think it was fair for the teacher to ask all the questions, and you know, Marilla, that is exactly what I’ve always thought. She said we could ask her any question we liked and I asked ever so many. I’m good at asking questions, Marilla.”

“I believe you” was Marilla’s emphatic comment.

“Nobody else asked any except Ruby Gillis, and she asked if there was to be a Sunday-school picnic this summer. I didn’t think that was a very proper question to ask because it hadn’t any connection with the lesson — the lesson was about Daniel in the lions’ den — but Mrs. Allan just smiled and said she thought there would be. Mrs. Allan has a lovely smile; she has such EXQUISITE dimples in her cheeks. I wish I had dimples in my cheeks, Marilla. I’m not half so skinny as I was when I came here, but I have no dimples yet. If I had perhaps I could influence people for good. Mrs. Allan said we ought always to try to influence other people for good. She talked so nice about everything. I never knew before that religion was such a cheerful thing. I always thought it was kind of melancholy, but Mrs. Allan’s isn’t, and I’d like to be a Christian if I could be one like her. I wouldn’t want to be one like Mr. Superintendent Bell.”

“It’s very naughty of you to speak so about Mr. Bell,” said Marilla severely. “Mr. Bell is a real good man.”

“Oh, of course he’s good,” agreed Anne, “but he doesn’t seem to get any comfort out of it. If I could be good I’d dance and sing all day because I was glad of it. I suppose Mrs. Allan is too old to dance and sing and of course it wouldn’t be dignified in a minister’s wife. But I can just feel

she's glad she's a Christian and that she'd be one even if she could get to heaven without it."

"I suppose we must have Mr. and Mrs. Allan up to tea someday soon," said Marilla reflectively. "They've been most everywhere but here. Let me see. Next Wednesday would be a good time to have them. But don't say a word to Matthew about it, for if he knew they were coming he'd find some excuse to be away that day. He'd got so used to Mr. Bentley he didn't mind him, but he's going to find it hard to get acquainted with a new minister, and a new minister's wife will frighten him to death."

"I'll be as secret as the dead," assured Anne. "But oh, Marilla, will you let me make a cake for the occasion? I'd love to do something for Mrs. Allan, and you know I can make a pretty good cake by this time."

"You can make a layer cake," promised Marilla.

Monday and Tuesday great preparations went on at Green Gables. Having the minister and his wife to tea was a serious and important undertaking, and Marilla was determined not to be eclipsed by any of the Avonlea housekeepers. Anne was wild with excitement and delight. She talked it all over with Diana Tuesday night in the twilight, as they sat on the big red stones by the Dryad's Bubble and made rainbows in the water with little twigs dipped in fir balsam.

"Everything is ready, Diana, except my cake which I'm to make in the morning, and the baking-powder biscuits which Marilla will make just before teatime. I assure you, Diana, that Marilla and I have had a busy two days of it. It's such a responsibility having a minister's family to tea. I never went through such an experience before. You should just see our pantry. It's a sight to behold. We're going to have jellied chicken and cold tongue. We're to have two kinds of jelly, red and yellow, and whipped cream and lemon pie, and cherry pie, and three kinds of cookies, and fruit cake, and Marilla's famous yellow plum preserves that she keeps especially for ministers, and pound cake and layer cake, and biscuits as aforesaid; and new bread and old both, in case the minister is dyspeptic and can't eat new. Mrs. Lynde says ministers are dyspeptic, but I don't think Mr. Allan has been a minister long enough for it to have had a bad

effect on him. I just grow cold when I think of my layer cake. Oh, Diana, what if it shouldn't be good! I dreamed last night that I was chased all around by a fearful goblin with a big layer cake for a head."

"It'll be good, all right," assured Diana, who was a very comfortable sort of friend. "I'm sure that piece of the one you made that we had for lunch in Idlewild two weeks ago was perfectly elegant."

"Yes; but cakes have such a terrible habit of turning out bad just when you especially want them to be good," sighed Anne, setting a particularly well-balsamed twig afloat. "However, I suppose I shall just have to trust to Providence and be careful to put in the flour. Oh, look, Diana, what a lovely rainbow! Do you suppose the dryad will come out after we go away and take it for a scarf?"

"You know there is no such thing as a dryad," said Diana. Diana's mother had found out about the Haunted Wood and had been decidedly angry over it. As a result Diana had abstained from any further imitative flights of imagination and did not think it prudent to cultivate a spirit of belief even in harmless dryads.

"But it's so easy to imagine there is," said Anne. "Every night before I go to bed, I look out of my window and wonder if the dryad is really sitting here, combing her locks with the spring for a mirror. Sometimes I look for her footprints in the dew in the morning. Oh, Diana, don't give up your faith in the dryad!"

Wednesday morning came. Anne got up at sunrise because she was too excited to sleep. She had caught a severe cold in the head by reason of her dabbling in the spring on the preceding evening; but nothing short of absolute pneumonia could have quenched her interest in culinary matters that morning. After breakfast she proceeded to make her cake. When she finally shut the oven door upon it she drew a long breath.

"I'm sure I haven't forgotten anything this time, Marilla. But do you think it will rise? Just suppose perhaps the baking powder isn't good? I used it out of the new can. And Mrs. Lynde says you can never be sure of getting good baking powder nowadays when everything is so adulterated. Mrs. Lynde says the Government ought to take the matter up, but she says

we'll never see the day when a Tory Government will do it. Marilla, what if that cake doesn't rise?"

"We'll have plenty without it" was Marilla's unimpassioned way of looking at the subject.

The cake did rise, however, and came out of the oven as light and feathery as golden foam. Anne, flushed with delight, clapped it together with layers of ruby jelly and, in imagination, saw Mrs. Allan eating it and possibly asking for another piece!

"You'll be using the best tea set, of course, Marilla," she said. "Can I fix the table with ferns and wild roses?"

"I think that's all nonsense," sniffed Marilla. "In my opinion it's the eatables that matter and not flummery decorations."

"Mrs. Barry had HER table decorated," said Anne, who was not entirely guiltless of the wisdom of the serpent, "and the minister paid her an elegant compliment. He said it was a feast for the eye as well as the palate."

"Well, do as you like," said Marilla, who was quite determined not to be surpassed by Mrs. Barry or anybody else. "Only mind you leave enough room for the dishes and the food."

Anne laid herself out to decorate in a manner and after a fashion that should leave Mrs. Barry's nowhere. Having abundance of roses and ferns and a very artistic taste of her own, she made that tea table such a thing of beauty that when the minister and his wife sat down to it they exclaimed in chorus over its loveliness.

"It's Anne's doings," said Marilla, grimly just; and Anne felt that Mrs. Allan's approving smile was almost too much happiness for this world.

Matthew was there, having been inveigled into the party only goodness and Anne knew how. He had been in such a state of shyness and nervousness that Marilla had given him up in despair, but Anne took him in hand so successfully that he now sat at the table in his best clothes and white collar and talked to the minister not uninterestingly. He never said a word to Mrs. Allan, but that perhaps was not to be expected.

All went merry as a marriage bell until Anne's layer cake was passed. Mrs. Allan, having already been helped to a bewildering variety, declined it. But Marilla, seeing the disappointment on Anne's face, said smilingly:

"Oh, you must take a piece of this, Mrs. Allan. Anne made it on purpose for you."

"In that case I must sample it," laughed Mrs. Allan, helping herself to a plump triangle, as did also the minister and Marilla.

Mrs. Allan took a mouthful of hers and a most peculiar expression crossed her face; not a word did she say, however, but steadily ate away at it. Marilla saw the expression and hastened to taste the cake.

"Anne Shirley!" she exclaimed, "what on earth did you put into that cake?"

"Nothing but what the recipe said, Marilla," cried Anne with a look of anguish. "Oh, isn't it all right?"

"All right! It's simply horrible. Mr. Allan, don't try to eat it. Anne, taste it yourself. What flavoring did you use?"

"Vanilla," said Anne, her face scarlet with mortification after tasting the cake. "Only vanilla. Oh, Marilla, it must have been the baking powder. I had my suspicions of that bak—"

"Baking powder fiddlesticks! Go and bring me the bottle of vanilla you used."

Anne fled to the pantry and returned with a small bottle partially filled with a brown liquid and labeled yellowly, "Best Vanilla."

Marilla took it, uncorked it, smelled it.

"Mercy on us, Anne, you've flavored that cake with ANODYNE LINIMENT. I broke the liniment bottle last week and poured what was left into an old empty vanilla bottle. I suppose it's partly my fault — I should have warned you — but for pity's sake why couldn't you have smelled it?"

Anne dissolved into tears under this double disgrace.

"I couldn't — I had such a cold!" and with this she fairly fled to the gable chamber, where she cast herself on the bed and wept as one who refuses to be comforted.

Presently a light step sounded on the stairs and somebody entered the room.

“Oh, Marilla,” sobbed Anne, without looking up, “I’m disgraced forever. I shall never be able to live this down. It will get out — things always do get out in Avonlea. Diana will ask me how my cake turned out and I shall have to tell her the truth. I shall always be pointed at as the girl who flavored a cake with anodyne liniment. Gil — the boys in school will never get over laughing at it. Oh, Marilla, if you have a spark of Christian pity don’t tell me that I must go down and wash the dishes after this. I’ll wash them when the minister and his wife are gone, but I cannot ever look Mrs. Allan in the face again. Perhaps she’ll think I tried to poison her. Mrs. Lynde says she knows an orphan girl who tried to poison her benefactor. But the liniment isn’t poisonous. It’s meant to be taken internally — although not in cakes. Won’t you tell Mrs. Allan so, Marilla?”

“Suppose you jump up and tell her so yourself,” said a merry voice.

Anne flew up, to find Mrs. Allan standing by her bed, surveying her with laughing eyes.

“My dear little girl, you mustn’t cry like this,” she said, genuinely disturbed by Anne’s tragic face. “Why, it’s all just a funny mistake that anybody might make.”

“Oh, no, it takes me to make such a mistake,” said Anne forlornly. “And I wanted to have that cake so nice for you, Mrs. Allan.”

“Yes, I know, dear. And I assure you I appreciate your kindness and thoughtfulness just as much as if it had turned out all right. Now, you mustn’t cry any more, but come down with me and show me your flower garden. Miss Cuthbert tells me you have a little plot all your own. I want to see it, for I’m very much interested in flowers.”

Anne permitted herself to be led down and comforted, reflecting that it was really providential that Mrs. Allan was a kindred spirit. Nothing more was said about the liniment cake, and when the guests went away Anne found that she had enjoyed the evening more than could have been

expected, considering that terrible incident. Nevertheless, she sighed deeply.

“Marilla, isn’t it nice to think that tomorrow is a new day with no mistakes in it yet?”

“I’ll warrant you’ll make plenty in it,” said Marilla. “I never saw your beat for making mistakes, Anne.”

“Yes, and well I know it,” admitted Anne mournfully. “But have you ever noticed one encouraging thing about me, Marilla? I never make the same mistake twice.”

“I don’t know as that’s much benefit when you’re always making new ones.”

“Oh, don’t you see, Marilla? There must be a limit to the mistakes one person can make, and when I get to the end of them, then I’ll be through with them. That’s a very comforting thought.”

“Well, you’d better go and give that cake to the pigs,” said Marilla. “It isn’t fit for any human to eat, not even Jerry Boute.”

Anne Is Invited Out to Tea

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“And what are your eyes popping out of your head about. Now?” asked Marilla, when Anne had just come in from a run to the post office. “Have you discovered another kindred spirit?” Excitement hung around Anne like a garment, shone in her eyes, kindled in every feature. She had come dancing up the lane, like a windblown sprite, through the mellow sunshine and lazy shadows of the August evening.

“No, Marilla, but oh, what do you think? I am invited to tea at the manse tomorrow afternoon! Mrs. Allan left the letter for me at the post office. Just look at it, Marilla. ‘Miss Anne Shirley, Green Gables.’ That is the first time I was ever called ‘Miss.’ Such a thrill as it gave me! I shall cherish it forever among my choicest treasures.”

“Mrs. Allan told me she meant to have all the members of her Sunday-school class to tea in turn,” said Marilla, regarding the wonderful event very coolly. “You needn’t get in such a fever over it. Do learn to take things calmly, child.”

For Anne to take things calmly would have been to change her nature. All “spirit and fire and dew,” as she was, the pleasures and pains of life came to her with trebled intensity. Marilla felt this and was vaguely troubled over it, realizing that the ups and downs of existence would probably bear hardly on this impulsive soul and not sufficiently understanding that the equally great capacity for delight might more than compensate. Therefore Marilla conceived it to be her duty to drill Anne into a tranquil uniformity of disposition as impossible and alien to her as to a dancing sunbeam in one of the brook shallows. She did not make much headway, as she sorrowfully admitted to herself. The downfall of some dear hope or plan plunged Anne into “depths of affliction.” The fulfillment thereof exalted her to dizzy realms of delight. Marilla had almost begun to despair of ever fashioning this waif of the world into her

model little girl of demure manners and prim deportment. Neither would she have believed that she really liked Anne much better as she was.

Anne went to bed that night speechless with misery because Matthew had said the wind was round northeast and he feared it would be a rainy day tomorrow. The rustle of the poplar leaves about the house worried her, it sounded so like pattering raindrops, and the full, faraway roar of the gulf, to which she listened delightedly at other times, loving its strange, sonorous, haunting rhythm, now seemed like a prophecy of storm and disaster to a small maiden who particularly wanted a fine day. Anne thought that the morning would never come.

But all things have an end, even nights before the day on which you are invited to take tea at the manse. The morning, in spite of Matthew's predictions, was fine and Anne's spirits soared to their highest. "Oh, Marilla, there is something in me today that makes me just love everybody I see," she exclaimed as she washed the breakfast dishes. "You don't know how good I feel! Wouldn't it be nice if it could last? I believe I could be a model child if I were just invited out to tea every day. But oh, Marilla, it's a solemn occasion too. I feel so anxious. What if I shouldn't behave properly? You know I never had tea at a manse before, and I'm not sure that I know all the rules of etiquette, although I've been studying the rules given in the Etiquette Department of the Family Herald ever since I came here. I'm so afraid I'll do something silly or forget to do something I should do. Would it be good manners to take a second helping of anything if you wanted to VERY much?"

"The trouble with you, Anne, is that you're thinking too much about yourself. You should just think of Mrs. Allan and what would be nicest and most agreeable to her," said Marilla, hitting for once in her life on a very sound and pithy piece of advice. Anne instantly realized this.

"You are right, Marilla. I'll try not to think about myself at all."

Anne evidently got through her visit without any serious breach of "etiquette," for she came home through the twilight, under a great, high-sprung sky gloried over with trails of saffron and rosy cloud, in a beatified state of mind and told Marilla all about it happily, sitting on the big red-

sandstone slab at the kitchen door with her tired curly head in Marilla's gingham lap.

A cool wind was blowing down over the long harvest fields from the rims of firry western hills and whistling through the poplars. One clear star hung over the orchard and the fireflies were flitting over in Lover's Lane, in and out among the ferns and rustling boughs. Anne watched them as she talked and somehow felt that wind and stars and fireflies were all tangled up together into something unutterably sweet and enchanting.

"Oh, Marilla, I've had a most FASCINATING time. I feel that I have not lived in vain and I shall always feel like that even if I should never be invited to tea at a manse again. When I got there Mrs. Allan met me at the door. She was dressed in the sweetest dress of pale-pink organdy, with dozens of frills and elbow sleeves, and she looked just like a seraph. I really think I'd like to be a minister's wife when I grow up, Marilla. A minister mightn't mind my red hair because he wouldn't be thinking of such worldly things. But then of course one would have to be naturally good and I'll never be that, so I suppose there's no use in thinking about it. Some people are naturally good, you know, and others are not. I'm one of the others. Mrs. Lynde says I'm full of original sin. No matter how hard I try to be good I can never make such a success of it as those who are naturally good. It's a good deal like geometry, I expect. But don't you think the trying so hard ought to count for something? Mrs. Allan is one of the naturally good people. I love her passionately. You know there are some people, like Matthew and Mrs. Allan that you can love right off without any trouble. And there are others, like Mrs. Lynde, that you have to try very hard to love. You know you OUGHT to love them because they know so much and are such active workers in the church, but you have to keep reminding yourself of it all the time or else you forget. There was another little girl at the manse to tea, from the White Sands Sunday school. Her name was Laurette Bradley, and she was a very nice little girl. Not exactly a kindred spirit, you know, but still very nice. We had an elegant tea, and I think I kept all the rules of etiquette pretty well. After tea Mrs. Allan played and sang and she got Laurretta and me to sing too.

Mrs. Allan says I have a good voice and she says I must sing in the Sunday-school choir after this. You can't think how I was thrilled at the mere thought. I've longed so to sing in the Sunday-school choir, as Diana does, but I feared it was an honor I could never aspire to. Laretta had to go home early because there is a big concert in the White Sands Hotel tonight and her sister is to recite at it. Laretta says that the Americans at the hotel give a concert every fortnight in aid of the Charlottetown hospital, and they ask lots of the White Sands people to recite. Laretta said she expected to be asked herself someday. I just gazed at her in awe. After she had gone Mrs. Allan and I had a heart-to-heart talk. I told her everything — about Mrs. Thomas and the twins and Katie Maurice and Violetta and coming to Green Gables and my troubles over geometry. And would you believe it, Marilla? Mrs. Allan told me she was a dunce at geometry too. You don't know how that encouraged me. Mrs. Lynde came to the manse just before I left, and what do you think, Marilla? The trustees have hired a new teacher and it's a lady. Her name is Miss Muriel Stacy. Isn't that a romantic name? Mrs. Lynde says they've never had a female teacher in Avonlea before and she thinks it is a dangerous innovation. But I think it will be splendid to have a lady teacher, and I really don't see how I'm going to live through the two weeks before school begins. I'm so impatient to see her."

Chapter XXIII.

Anne Comes to Grief in an Affair of Honor

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Anne had to live through more than two weeks, as it happened. Almost a month having elapsed since the liniment cake episode, it was high time for her to get into fresh trouble of some sort, little mistakes, such as absentmindedly emptying a pan of skim milk into a basket of yarn balls in the pantry instead of into the pigs' bucket, and walking clean over the edge of the log bridge into the brook while wrapped in imaginative reverie, not really being worth counting.

A week after the tea at the manse Diana Barry gave a party.

"Small and select," Anne assured Marilla. "Just the girls in our class."

They had a very good time and nothing untoward happened until after tea, when they found themselves in the Barry garden, a little tired of all their games and ripe for any enticing form of mischief which might present itself. This presently took the form of "daring."

Daring was the fashionable amusement among the Avonlea small fry just then. It had begun among the boys, but soon spread to the girls, and all the silly things that were done in Avonlea that summer because the doers thereof were "dared" to do them would fill a book by themselves.

First of all Carrie Sloane dared Ruby Gillis to climb to a certain point in the huge old willow tree before the front door; which Ruby Gillis, albeit in mortal dread of the fat green caterpillars with which said tree was infested and with the fear of her mother before her eyes if she should tear her new muslin dress, nimbly did, to the discomfiture of the aforesaid Carrie Sloane. Then Josie Pye dared Jane Andrews to hop on her left leg around the garden without stopping once or putting her right foot to the ground; which Jane Andrews gamely tried to do, but gave out at the third corner and had to confess herself defeated.

Josie's triumph being rather more pronounced than good taste permitted, Anne Shirley dared her to walk along the top of the board fence which bounded the garden to the east. Now, to "walk" board fences requires more skill and steadiness of head and heel than one might suppose who has never tried it. But Josie Pye, if deficient in some qualities that make for popularity, had at least a natural and inborn gift, duly cultivated, for walking board fences. Josie walked the Barry fence with an airy unconcern which seemed to imply that a little thing like that wasn't worth a "dare." Reluctant admiration greeted her exploit, for most of the other girls could appreciate it, having suffered many things themselves in their efforts to walk fences. Josie descended from her perch, flushed with victory, and darted a defiant glance at Anne.

Anne tossed her red braids.

"I don't think it's such a very wonderful thing to walk a little, low, board fence," she said. "I knew a girl in Marysville who could walk the ridgepole of a roof."

"I don't believe it," said Josie flatly. "I don't believe anybody could walk a ridgepole. YOU couldn't, anyhow."

"Couldn't I?" cried Anne rashly.

"Then I dare you to do it," said Josie defiantly. "I dare you to climb up there and walk the ridgepole of Mr. Barry's kitchen roof."

Anne turned pale, but there was clearly only one thing to be done. She walked toward the house, where a ladder was leaning against the kitchen roof. All the fifth-class girls said, "Oh!" partly in excitement, partly in dismay.

"Don't you do it, Anne," entreated Diana. "You'll fall off and be killed. Never mind Josie Pye. It isn't fair to dare anybody to do anything so dangerous."

"I must do it. My honor is at stake," said Anne solemnly. "I shall walk that ridgepole, Diana, or perish in the attempt. If I am killed you are to have my pearl bead ring."

Anne climbed the ladder amid breathless silence, gained the ridgepole, balanced herself uprightly on that precarious footing, and started to walk

along it, dizzily conscious that she was uncomfortably high up in the world and that walking ridgepoles was not a thing in which your imagination helped you out much. Nevertheless, she managed to take several steps before the catastrophe came. Then she swayed, lost her balance, stumbled, staggered, and fell, sliding down over the sun-baked roof and crashing off it through the tangle of Virginia creeper beneath — all before the dismayed circle below could give a simultaneous, terrified shriek.

If Anne had tumbled off the roof on the side up which she had ascended Diana would probably have fallen heir to the pearl bead ring then and there. Fortunately she fell on the other side, where the roof extended down over the porch so nearly to the ground that a fall therefrom was a much less serious thing. Nevertheless, when Diana and the other girls had rushed frantically around the house — except Ruby Gillis, who remained as if rooted to the ground and went into hysterics — they found Anne lying all white and limp among the wreck and ruin of the Virginia creeper.

“Anne, are you killed?” shrieked Diana, throwing herself on her knees beside her friend. “Oh, Anne, dear Anne, speak just one word to me and tell me if you’re killed.”

To the immense relief of all the girls, and especially of Josie Pye, who, in spite of lack of imagination, had been seized with horrible visions of a future branded as the girl who was the cause of Anne Shirley’s early and tragic death, Anne sat dizzily up and answered uncertainly:

“No, Diana, I am not killed, but I think I am rendered unconscious.”

“Where?” sobbed Carrie Sloane. “Oh, where, Anne?” Before Anne could answer Mrs. Barry appeared on the scene. At sight of her Anne tried to scramble to her feet, but sank back again with a sharp little cry of pain.

“What’s the matter? Where have you hurt yourself?” demanded Mrs. Barry.

“My ankle,” gasped Anne. “Oh, Diana, please find your father and ask him to take me home. I know I can never walk there. And I’m sure I couldn’t hop so far on one foot when Jane couldn’t even hop around the garden.”

Marilla was out in the orchard picking a panful of summer apples when she saw Mr. Barry coming over the log bridge and up the slope, with Mrs. Barry beside him and a whole procession of little girls trailing after him. In his arms he carried Anne, whose head lay limply against his shoulder.

At that moment Marilla had a revelation. In the sudden stab of fear that pierced her very heart she realized what Anne had come to mean to her. She would have admitted that she liked Anne — nay, that she was very fond of Anne. But now she knew as she hurried wildly down the slope that Anne was dearer to her than anything else on earth.

“Mr. Barry, what has happened to her?” she gasped, more white and shaken than the self-contained, sensible Marilla had been for many years.

Anne herself answered, lifting her head.

“Don’t be very frightened, Marilla. I was walking the ridgepole and I fell off. I expect I have sprained my ankle. But, Marilla, I might have broken my neck. Let us look on the bright side of things.”

“I might have known you’d go and do something of the sort when I let you go to that party,” said Marilla, sharp and shrewish in her very relief. “Bring her in here, Mr. Barry, and lay her on the sofa. Mercy me, the child has gone and fainted!”

It was quite true. Overcome by the pain of her injury, Anne had one more of her wishes granted to her. She had fainted dead away.

Matthew, hastily summoned from the harvest field, was straightway dispatched for the doctor, who in due time came, to discover that the injury was more serious than they had supposed. Anne’s ankle was broken.

That night, when Marilla went up to the east gable, where a white-faced girl was lying, a plaintive voice greeted her from the bed.

“Aren’t you very sorry for me, Marilla?”

“It was your own fault,” said Marilla, twitching down the blind and lighting a lamp.

“And that is just why you should be sorry for me,” said Anne, “because the thought that it is all my own fault is what makes it so hard. If I could

blame it on anybody I would feel so much better. But what would you have done, Marilla, if you had been dared to walk a ridgepole?"

"I'd have stayed on good firm ground and let them dare away. Such absurdity!" said Marilla.

Anne sighed.

"But you have such strength of mind, Marilla. I haven't. I just felt that I couldn't bear Josie Pye's scorn. She would have crowed over me all my life. And I think I have been punished so much that you needn't be very cross with me, Marilla. It's not a bit nice to faint, after all. And the doctor hurt me dreadfully when he was setting my ankle. I won't be able to go around for six or seven weeks and I'll miss the new lady teacher. She won't be new any more by the time I'm able to go to school. And Gil — everybody will get ahead of me in class. Oh, I am an afflicted mortal. But I'll try to bear it all bravely if only you won't be cross with me, Marilla."

"There, there, I'm not cross," said Marilla. "You're an unlucky child, there's no doubt about that; but as you say, you'll have the suffering of it. Here now, try and eat some supper."

"Isn't it fortunate I've got such an imagination?" said Anne. "It will help me through splendidly, I expect. What do people who haven't any imagination do when they break their bones, do you suppose, Marilla?"

Anne had good reason to bless her imagination many a time and oft during the tedious seven weeks that followed. But she was not solely dependent on it. She had many visitors and not a day passed without one or more of the schoolgirls dropping in to bring her flowers and books and tell her all the happenings in the juvenile world of Avonlea.

"Everybody has been so good and kind, Marilla," sighed Anne happily, on the day when she could first limp across the floor. "It isn't very pleasant to be laid up; but there is a bright side to it, Marilla. You find out how many friends you have. Why, even Superintendent Bell came to see me, and he's really a very fine man. Not a kindred spirit, of course; but still I like him and I'm awfully sorry I ever criticized his prayers. I believe now he really does mean them, only he has got into the habit of saying them as if he didn't. He could get over that if he'd take a little trouble. I

gave him a good broad hint. I told him how hard I tried to make my own little private prayers interesting. He told me all about the time he broke his ankle when he was a boy. It does seem so strange to think of Superintendent Bell ever being a boy. Even my imagination has its limits, for I can't imagine THAT. When I try to imagine him as a boy I see him with gray whiskers and spectacles, just as he looks in Sunday school, only small. Now, it's so easy to imagine Mrs. Allan as a little girl. Mrs. Allan has been to see me fourteen times. Isn't that something to be proud of, Marilla? When a minister's wife has so many claims on her time! She is such a cheerful person to have visit you, too. She never tells you it's your own fault and she hopes you'll be a better girl on account of it. Mrs. Lynde always told me that when she came to see me; and she said it in a kind of way that made me feel she might hope I'd be a better girl but didn't really believe I would. Even Josie Pye came to see me. I received her as politely as I could, because I think she was sorry she dared me to walk a ridgepole. If I had been killed she would had to carry a dark burden of remorse all her life. Diana has been a faithful friend. She's been over every day to cheer my lonely pillow. But oh, I shall be so glad when I can go to school for I've heard such exciting things about the new teacher. The girls all think she is perfectly sweet. Diana says she has the loveliest fair curly hair and such fascinating eyes. She dresses beautifully, and her sleeve puffs are bigger than anybody else's in Avonlea. Every other Friday afternoon she has recitations and everybody has to say a piece or take part in a dialogue. Oh, it's just glorious to think of it. Josie Pye says she hates it but that is just because Josie has so little imagination. Diana and Ruby Gillis and Jane Andrews are preparing a dialogue, called 'A Morning Visit,' for next Friday. And the Friday afternoons they don't have recitations Miss Stacy takes them all to the woods for a 'field' day and they study ferns and flowers and birds. And they have physical culture exercises every morning and evening. Mrs. Lynde says she never heard of such goings on and it all comes of having a lady teacher. But I think it must be splendid and I believe I shall find that Miss Stacy is a kindred spirit."

“There’s one thing plain to be seen, Anne,” said Marilla, “and that is that your fall off the Barry roof hasn’t injured your tongue at all.”

Miss Stacy and Her Pupils Get Up a Concert

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It was October again when Anne was ready to go back to school — a glorious October, all red and gold, with mellow mornings when the valleys were filled with delicate mists as if the spirit of autumn had poured them in for the sun to drain — amethyst, pearl, silver, rose, and smoke-blue. The dews were so heavy that the fields glistened like cloth of silver and there were such heaps of rustling leaves in the hollows of many-stemmed woods to run crisply through. The Birch Path was a canopy of yellow and the ferns were sear and brown all along it. There was a tang in the very air that inspired the hearts of small maidens tripping, unlike snails, swiftly and willingly to school; and it WAS jolly to be back again at the little brown desk beside Diana, with Ruby Gillis nodding across the aisle and Carrie Sloane sending up notes and Julia Bell passing a “chew” of gum down from the back seat. Anne drew a long breath of happiness as she sharpened her pencil and arranged her picture cards in her desk. Life was certainly very interesting.

In the new teacher she found another true and helpful friend. Miss Stacy was a bright, sympathetic young woman with the happy gift of winning and holding the affections of her pupils and bringing out the best that was in them mentally and morally. Anne expanded like a flower under this wholesome influence and carried home to the admiring Matthew and the critical Marilla glowing accounts of schoolwork and aims.

“I love Miss Stacy with my whole heart, Marilla. She is so ladylike and she has such a sweet voice. When she pronounces my name I feel INSTINCTIVELY that she’s spelling it with an E. We had recitations this afternoon. I just wish you could have been there to hear me recite ‘Mary, Queen of Scots.’ I just put my whole soul into it. Ruby Gillis told me

coming home that the way I said the line, 'Now for my father's arm,' she said, 'my woman's heart farewell,' just made her blood run cold."

"Well now, you might recite it for me some of these days, out in the barn," suggested Matthew.

"Of course I will," said Anne meditatively, "but I won't be able to do it so well, I know. It won't be so exciting as it is when you have a whole schoolful before you hanging breathlessly on your words. I know I won't be able to make your blood run cold."

"Mrs. Lynde says it made HER blood run cold to see the boys climbing to the very tops of those big trees on Bell's hill after crows' nests last Friday," said Marilla. "I wonder at Miss Stacy for encouraging it."

"But we wanted a crow's nest for nature study," explained Anne. "That was on our field afternoon. Field afternoons are splendid, Marilla. And Miss Stacy explains everything so beautifully. We have to write compositions on our field afternoons and I write the best ones."

"It's very vain of you to say so then. You'd better let your teacher say it."

"But she DID say it, Marilla. And indeed I'm not vain about it. How can I be, when I'm such a dunce at geometry? Although I'm really beginning to see through it a little, too. Miss Stacy makes it so clear. Still, I'll never be good at it and I assure you it is a humbling reflection. But I love writing compositions. Mostly Miss Stacy lets us choose our own subjects; but next week we are to write a composition on some remarkable person. It's hard to choose among so many remarkable people who have lived. Mustn't it be splendid to be remarkable and have compositions written about you after you're dead? Oh, I would dearly love to be remarkable. I think when I grow up I'll be a trained nurse and go with the Red Crosses to the field of battle as a messenger of mercy. That is, if I don't go out as a foreign missionary. That would be very romantic, but one would have to be very good to be a missionary, and that would be a stumbling block. We have physical culture exercises every day, too. They make you graceful and promote digestion."

“Promote fiddlesticks!” said Marilla, who honestly thought it was all nonsense.

But all the field afternoons and recitation Fridays and physical culture contortions paled before a project which Miss Stacy brought forward in November. This was that the scholars of Avonlea school should get up a concert and hold it in the hall on Christmas Night, for the laudable purpose of helping to pay for a schoolhouse flag. The pupils one and all taking graciously to this plan, the preparations for a program were begun at once. And of all the excited performers-elect none was so excited as Anne Shirley, who threw herself into the undertaking heart and soul, hampered as she was by Marilla’s disapproval. Marilla thought it all rank foolishness.

“It’s just filling your heads up with nonsense and taking time that ought to be put on your lessons,” she grumbled. “I don’t approve of children’s getting up concerts and racing about to practices. It makes them vain and forward and fond of gadding.”

“But think of the worthy object,” pleaded Anne. “A flag will cultivate a spirit of patriotism, Marilla.”

“Fudge! There’s precious little patriotism in the thoughts of any of you. All you want is a good time.”

“Well, when you can combine patriotism and fun, isn’t it all right? Of course it’s real nice to be getting up a concert. We’re going to have six choruses and Diana is to sing a solo. I’m in two dialogues—’The Society for the Suppression of Gossip’ and ‘The Fairy Queen.’ The boys are going to have a dialogue too. And I’m to have two recitations, Marilla. I just tremble when I think of it, but it’s a nice thrilly kind of tremble. And we’re to have a tableau at the last—’Faith, Hope and Charity.’ Diana and Ruby and I are to be in it, all draped in white with flowing hair. I’m to be Hope, with my hands clasped — so — and my eyes uplifted. I’m going to practice my recitations in the garret. Don’t be alarmed if you hear me groaning. I have to groan heartrendingly in one of them, and it’s really hard to get up a good artistic groan, Marilla. Josie Pye is sulky because she didn’t get the part she wanted in the dialogue. She wanted to be the fairy

queen. That would have been ridiculous, for who ever heard of a fairy queen as fat as Josie? Fairy queens must be slender. Jane Andrews is to be the queen and I am to be one of her maids of honor. Josie says she thinks a redhaired fairy is just as ridiculous as a fat one, but I do not let myself mind what Josie says. I'm to have a wreath of white roses on my hair and Ruby Gillis is going to lend me her slippers because I haven't any of my own. It's necessary for fairies to have slippers, you know. You couldn't imagine a fairy wearing boots, could you? Especially with copper toes? We are going to decorate the hall with creeping spruce and fir mottoes with pink tissue-paper roses in them. And we are all to march in two by two after the audience is seated, while Emma White plays a march on the organ. Oh, Marilla, I know you are not so enthusiastic about it as I am, but don't you hope your little Anne will distinguish herself?"

"All I hope is that you'll behave yourself. I'll be heartily glad when all this fuss is over and you'll be able to settle down. You are simply good for nothing just now with your head stuffed full of dialogues and groans and tableaux. As for your tongue, it's a marvel it's not clean worn out."

Anne sighed and betook herself to the back yard, over which a young new moon was shining through the leafless poplar boughs from an apple-green western sky, and where Matthew was splitting wood. Anne perched herself on a block and talked the concert over with him, sure of an appreciative and sympathetic listener in this instance at least.

"Well now, I reckon it's going to be a pretty good concert. And I expect you'll do your part fine," he said, smiling down into her eager, vivacious little face. Anne smiled back at him. Those two were the best of friends and Matthew thanked his stars many a time and oft that he had nothing to do with bringing her up. That was Marilla's exclusive duty; if it had been his he would have been worried over frequent conflicts between inclination and said duty. As it was, he was free to, "spoil Anne" — Marilla's phrasing — as much as he liked. But it was not such a bad arrangement after all; a little "appreciation" sometimes does quite as much good as all the conscientious "bringing up" in the world.

Matthew Insists on Puffed Sleeves

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Matthew was having a bad ten minutes of it. He had come into the kitchen, in the twilight of a cold, gray December evening, and had sat down in the woodbox corner to take off his heavy boots, unconscious of the fact that Anne and a bevy of her schoolmates were having a practice of “The Fairy Queen” in the sitting room. Presently they came trooping through the hall and out into the kitchen, laughing and chattering gaily. They did not see Matthew, who shrank bashfully back into the shadows beyond the woodbox with a boot in one hand and a bootjack in the other, and he watched them shyly for the aforesaid ten minutes as they put on caps and jackets and talked about the dialogue and the concert. Anne stood among them, bright eyed and animated as they; but Matthew suddenly became conscious that there was something about her different from her mates. And what worried Matthew was that the difference impressed him as being something that should not exist. Anne had a brighter face, and bigger, starrier eyes, and more delicate features than the other; even shy, unobservant Matthew had learned to take note of these things; but the difference that disturbed him did not consist in any of these respects. Then in what did it consist?

Matthew was haunted by this question long after the girls had gone, arm in arm, down the long, hard-frozen lane and Anne had betaken herself to her books. He could not refer it to Marilla, who, he felt, would be quite sure to sniff scornfully and remark that the only difference she saw between Anne and the other girls was that they sometimes kept their tongues quiet while Anne never did. This, Matthew felt, would be no great help.

He had recourse to his pipe that evening to help him study it out, much to Marilla’s disgust. After two hours of smoking and hard reflection

Matthew arrived at a solution of his problem. Anne was not dressed like the other girls!

The more Matthew thought about the matter the more he was convinced that Anne never had been dressed like the other girls — never since she had come to Green Gables. Marilla kept her clothed in plain, dark dresses, all made after the same unvarying pattern. If Matthew knew there was such a thing as fashion in dress it was as much as he did; but he was quite sure that Anne's sleeves did not look at all like the sleeves the other girls wore. He recalled the cluster of little girls he had seen around her that evening — all gay in waists of red and blue and pink and white — and he wondered why Marilla always kept her so plainly and soberly gowned.

Of course, it must be all right. Marilla knew best and Marilla was bringing her up. Probably some wise, inscrutable motive was to be served thereby. But surely it would do no harm to let the child have one pretty dress — something like Diana Barry always wore. Matthew decided that he would give her one; that surely could not be objected to as an unwarranted putting in of his oar. Christmas was only a fortnight off. A nice new dress would be the very thing for a present. Matthew, with a sigh of satisfaction, put away his pipe and went to bed, while Marilla opened all the doors and aired the house.

The very next evening Matthew betook himself to Carmody to buy the dress, determined to get the worst over and have done with it. It would be, he felt assured, no trifling ordeal. There were some things Matthew could buy and prove himself no mean bargainer; but he knew he would be at the mercy of shopkeepers when it came to buying a girl's dress.

After much cogitation Matthew resolved to go to Samuel Lawson's store instead of William Blair's. To be sure, the Cuthberts always had gone to William Blair's; it was almost as much a matter of conscience with them as to attend the Presbyterian church and vote Conservative. But William Blair's two daughters frequently waited on customers there and Matthew held them in absolute dread. He could contrive to deal with them when he knew exactly what he wanted and could point it out; but in such a

matter as this, requiring explanation and consultation, Matthew felt that he must be sure of a man behind the counter. So he would go to Lawson's, where Samuel or his son would wait on him.

Alas! Matthew did not know that Samuel, in the recent expansion of his business, had set up a lady clerk also; she was a niece of his wife's and a very dashing young person indeed, with a huge, drooping pompadour, big, rolling brown eyes, and a most extensive and bewildering smile. She was dressed with exceeding smartness and wore several bangle bracelets that glittered and rattled and tinkled with every movement of her hands. Matthew was covered with confusion at finding her there at all; and those bangles completely wrecked his wits at one fell swoop.

"What can I do for you this evening, Mr. Cuthbert?" Miss Lucilla Harris inquired, briskly and ingratiatingly, tapping the counter with both hands.

"Have you any — any — any — well now, say any garden rakes?" stammered Matthew.

Miss Harris looked somewhat surprised, as well she might, to hear a man inquiring for garden rakes in the middle of December.

"I believe we have one or two left over," she said, "but they're upstairs in the lumber room. I'll go and see." During her absence Matthew collected his scattered senses for another effort.

When Miss Harris returned with the rake and cheerfully inquired: "Anything else tonight, Mr. Cuthbert?" Matthew took his courage in both hands and replied: "Well now, since you suggest it, I might as well — take — that is — look at — buy some — some hayseed."

Miss Harris had heard Matthew Cuthbert called odd. She now concluded that he was entirely crazy.

"We only keep hayseed in the spring," she explained loftily. "We've none on hand just now."

"Oh, certainly — certainly — just as you say," stammered unhappy Matthew, seizing the rake and making for the door. At the threshold he recollected that he had not paid for it and he turned miserably back. While

Miss Harris was counting out his change he rallied his powers for a final desperate attempt.

“Well now — if it isn’t too much trouble — I might as well — that is — I’d like to look at — at — some sugar.”

“White or brown?” queried Miss Harris patiently.

“Oh — well now — brown,” said Matthew feebly.

“There’s a barrel of it over there,” said Miss Harris, shaking her bangles at it. “It’s the only kind we have.”

“I’ll — I’ll take twenty pounds of it,” said Matthew, with beads of perspiration standing on his forehead.

Matthew had driven halfway home before he was his own man again. It had been a gruesome experience, but it served him right, he thought, for committing the heresy of going to a strange store. When he reached home he hid the rake in the tool house, but the sugar he carried in to Marilla.

“Brown sugar!” exclaimed Marilla. “Whatever possessed you to get so much? You know I never use it except for the hired man’s porridge or black fruit cake. Jerry’s gone and I’ve made my cake long ago. It’s not good sugar, either — it’s coarse and dark — William Blair doesn’t usually keep sugar like that.”

“I — I thought it might come in handy sometime,” said Matthew, making good his escape.

When Matthew came to think the matter over he decided that a woman was required to cope with the situation. Marilla was out of the question. Matthew felt sure she would throw cold water on his project at once. Remained only Mrs. Lynde; for of no other woman in Avonlea would Matthew have dared to ask advice. To Mrs. Lynde he went accordingly, and that good lady promptly took the matter out of the harassed man’s hands.

“Pick out a dress for you to give Anne? To be sure I will. I’m going to Carmody tomorrow and I’ll attend to it. Have you something particular in mind? No? Well, I’ll just go by my own judgment then. I believe a nice rich brown would just suit Anne, and William Blair has some new gloria in that’s real pretty. Perhaps you’d like me to make it up for her, too, seeing

that if Marilla was to make it Anne would probably get wind of it before the time and spoil the surprise? Well, I'll do it. No, it isn't a mite of trouble. I like sewing. I'll make it to fit my niece, Jenny Gillis, for she and Anne are as like as two peas as far as figure goes."

"Well now, I'm much obliged," said Matthew, "and — and — I dunno — but I'd like — I think they make the sleeves different nowadays to what they used to be. If it wouldn't be asking too much I — I'd like them made in the new way."

"Puffs? Of course. You needn't worry a speck more about it, Matthew. I'll make it up in the very latest fashion," said Mrs. Lynde. To herself she added when Matthew had gone:

"It'll be a real satisfaction to see that poor child wearing something decent for once. The way Marilla dresses her is positively ridiculous, that's what, and I've ached to tell her so plainly a dozen times. I've held my tongue though, for I can see Marilla doesn't want advice and she thinks she knows more about bringing children up than I do for all she's an old maid. But that's always the way. Folks that has brought up children know that there's no hard and fast method in the world that'll suit every child. But them as never have think it's all as plain and easy as Rule of Three — just set your three terms down so fashion, and the sum'll work out correct. But flesh and blood don't come under the head of arithmetic and that's where Marilla Cuthbert makes her mistake. I suppose she's trying to cultivate a spirit of humility in Anne by dressing her as she does; but it's more likely to cultivate envy and discontent. I'm sure the child must feel the difference between her clothes and the other girls'. But to think of Matthew taking notice of it! That man is waking up after being asleep for over sixty years."

Marilla knew all the following fortnight that Matthew had something on his mind, but what it was she could not guess, until Christmas Eve, when Mrs. Lynde brought up the new dress. Marilla behaved pretty well on the whole, although it is very likely she distrusted Mrs. Lynde's diplomatic explanation that she had made the dress because Matthew was afraid Anne would find out about it too soon if Marilla made it.

“So this is what Matthew has been looking so mysterious over and grinning about to himself for two weeks, is it?” she said a little stiffly but tolerantly. “I knew he was up to some foolishness. Well, I must say I don’t think Anne needed any more dresses. I made her three good, warm, serviceable ones this fall, and anything more is sheer extravagance. There’s enough material in those sleeves alone to make a waist, I declare there is. You’ll just pamper Anne’s vanity, Matthew, and she’s as vain as a peacock now. Well, I hope she’ll be satisfied at last, for I know she’s been hankering after those silly sleeves ever since they came in, although she never said a word after the first. The puffs have been getting bigger and more ridiculous right along; they’re as big as balloons now. Next year anybody who wears them will have to go through a door sideways.”

Christmas morning broke on a beautiful white world. It had been a very mild December and people had looked forward to a green Christmas; but just enough snow fell softly in the night to transfigure Avonlea. Anne peeped out from her frosted gable window with delighted eyes. The firs in the Haunted Wood were all feathery and wonderful; the birches and wild cherry trees were outlined in pearl; the plowed fields were stretches of snowy dimples; and there was a crisp tang in the air that was glorious. Anne ran downstairs singing until her voice reechoed through Green Gables.

“Merry Christmas, Marilla! Merry Christmas, Matthew! Isn’t it a lovely Christmas? I’m so glad it’s white. Any other kind of Christmas doesn’t seem real, does it? I don’t like green Christmases. They’re not green — they’re just nasty faded browns and grays. What makes people call them green? Why — why — Matthew, is that for me? Oh, Matthew!”

Matthew had sheepishly unfolded the dress from its paper swathings and held it out with a deprecatory glance at Marilla, who feigned to be contemptuously filling the teapot, but nevertheless watched the scene out of the corner of her eye with a rather interested air.

Anne took the dress and looked at it in reverent silence. Oh, how pretty it was — a lovely soft brown gloria with all the gloss of silk; a skirt with dainty frills and shirrings; a waist elaborately pintucked in the most

fashionable way, with a little ruffle of filmy lace at the neck. But the sleeves — they were the crowning glory! Long elbow cuffs, and above them two beautiful puffs divided by rows of shirring and bows of brown-silk ribbon.

“That’s a Christmas present for you, Anne,” said Matthew shyly. “Why — why — Anne, don’t you like it? Well now — well now.”

For Anne’s eyes had suddenly filled with tears.

“Like it! Oh, Matthew!” Anne laid the dress over a chair and clasped her hands. “Matthew, it’s perfectly exquisite. Oh, I can never thank you enough. Look at those sleeves! Oh, it seems to me this must be a happy dream.”

“Well, well, let us have breakfast,” interrupted Marilla. “I must say, Anne, I don’t think you needed the dress; but since Matthew has got it for you, see that you take good care of it. There’s a hair ribbon Mrs. Lynde left for you. It’s brown, to match the dress. Come now, sit in.”

“I don’t see how I’m going to eat breakfast,” said Anne rapturously. “Breakfast seems so commonplace at such an exciting moment. I’d rather feast my eyes on that dress. I’m so glad that puffed sleeves are still fashionable. It did seem to me that I’d never get over it if they went out before I had a dress with them. I’d never have felt quite satisfied, you see. It was lovely of Mrs. Lynde to give me the ribbon too. I feel that I ought to be a very good girl indeed. It’s at times like this I’m sorry I’m not a model little girl; and I always resolve that I will be in future. But somehow it’s hard to carry out your resolutions when irresistible temptations come. Still, I really will make an extra effort after this.”

When the commonplace breakfast was over Diana appeared, crossing the white log bridge in the hollow, a gay little figure in her crimson ulster. Anne flew down the slope to meet her.

“Merry Christmas, Diana! And oh, it’s a wonderful Christmas. I’ve something splendid to show you. Matthew has given me the loveliest dress, with SUCH sleeves. I couldn’t even imagine any nicer.”

“I’ve got something more for you,” said Diana breathlessly. “Here — this box. Aunt Josephine sent us out a big box with ever so many things in

it — and this is for you. I'd have brought it over last night, but it didn't come until after dark, and I never feel very comfortable coming through the Haunted Wood in the dark now."

Anne opened the box and peeped in. First a card with "For the Anne-girl and Merry Christmas," written on it; and then, a pair of the daintiest little kid slippers, with beaded toes and satin bows and glistening buckles.

"Oh," said Anne, "Diana, this is too much. I must be dreaming."

"I call it providential," said Diana. "You won't have to borrow Ruby's slippers now, and that's a blessing, for they're two sizes too big for you, and it would be awful to hear a fairy shuffling. Josie Pye would be delighted. Mind you, Rob Wright went home with Gertie Pye from the practice night before last. Did you ever hear anything equal to that?"

All the Avonlea scholars were in a fever of excitement that day, for the hall had to be decorated and a last grand rehearsal held.

The concert came off in the evening and was a pronounced success. The little hall was crowded; all the performers did excellently well, but Anne was the bright particular star of the occasion, as even envy, in the shape of Josie Pye, dared not deny.

"Oh, hasn't it been a brilliant evening?" sighed Anne, when it was all over and she and Diana were walking home together under a dark, starry sky.

"Everything went off very well," said Diana practically. "I guess we must have made as much as ten dollars. Mind you, Mr. Allan is going to send an account of it to the Charlottetown papers."

"Oh, Diana, will we really see our names in print? It makes me thrill to think of it. Your solo was perfectly elegant, Diana. I felt prouder than you did when it was encored. I just said to myself, 'It is my dear bosom friend who is so honored.'"

"Well, your recitations just brought down the house, Anne. That sad one was simply splendid."

"Oh, I was so nervous, Diana. When Mr. Allan called out my name I really cannot tell how I ever got up on that platform. I felt as if a million eyes were looking at me and through me, and for one dreadful moment I

was sure I couldn't begin at all. Then I thought of my lovely puffed sleeves and took courage. I knew that I must live up to those sleeves, Diana. So I started in, and my voice seemed to be coming from ever so far away. I just felt like a parrot. It's providential that I practiced those recitations so often up in the garret, or I'd never have been able to get through. Did I groan all right?"

"Yes, indeed, you groaned lovely," assured Diana.

"I saw old Mrs. Sloane wiping away tears when I sat down. It was splendid to think I had touched somebody's heart. It's so romantic to take part in a concert, isn't it? Oh, it's been a very memorable occasion indeed."

"Wasn't the boys' dialogue fine?" said Diana. "Gilbert Blythe was just splendid. Anne, I do think it's awful mean the way you treat Gil. Wait till I tell you. When you ran off the platform after the fairy dialogue one of your roses fell out of your hair. I saw Gil pick it up and put it in his breast pocket. There now. You're so romantic that I'm sure you ought to be pleased at that."

"It's nothing to me what that person does," said Anne loftily. "I simply never waste a thought on him, Diana."

That night Marilla and Matthew, who had been out to a concert for the first time in twenty years, sat for a while by the kitchen fire after Anne had gone to bed.

"Well now, I guess our Anne did as well as any of them," said Matthew proudly.

"Yes, she did," admitted Marilla. "She's a bright child, Matthew. And she looked real nice too. I've been kind of opposed to this concert scheme, but I suppose there's no real harm in it after all. Anyhow, I was proud of Anne tonight, although I'm not going to tell her so."

"Well now, I was proud of her and I did tell her so 'fore she went upstairs," said Matthew. "We must see what we can do for her some of these days, Marilla. I guess she'll need something more than Avonlea school by and by."

“There’s time enough to think of that,” said Marilla. “She’s only thirteen in March. Though tonight it struck me she was growing quite a big girl. Mrs. Lynde made that dress a mite too long, and it makes Anne look so tall. She’s quick to learn and I guess the best thing we can do for her will be to send her to Queen’s after a spell. But nothing need be said about that for a year or two yet.”

“Well now, it’ll do no harm to be thinking it over off and on,” said Matthew. “Things like that are all the better for lots of thinking over.”

The Story Club Is Formed

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Junior Avonlea found it hard to settle down to humdrum existence again. To Anne in particular things seemed fearfully flat, stale, and unprofitable after the goblet of excitement she had been sipping for weeks. Could she go back to the former quiet pleasures of those faraway days before the concert? At first, as she told Diana, she did not really think she could.

“I’m positively certain, Diana, that life can never be quite the same again as it was in those olden days,” she said mournfully, as if referring to a period of at least fifty years back. “Perhaps after a while I’ll get used to it, but I’m afraid concerts spoil people for everyday life. I suppose that is why Marilla disapproves of them. Marilla is such a sensible woman. It must be a great deal better to be sensible; but still, I don’t believe I’d really want to be a sensible person, because they are so unromantic. Mrs. Lynde says there is no danger of my ever being one, but you can never tell. I feel just now that I may grow up to be sensible yet. But perhaps that is only because I’m tired. I simply couldn’t sleep last night for ever so long. I just lay awake and imagined the concert over and over again. That’s one splendid thing about such affairs — it’s so lovely to look back to them.”

Eventually, however, Avonlea school slipped back into its old groove and took up its old interests. To be sure, the concert left traces. Ruby Gillis and Emma White, who had quarreled over a point of precedence in their platform seats, no longer sat at the same desk, and a promising friendship of three years was broken up. Josie Pye and Julia Bell did not “speak” for three months, because Josie Pye had told Bessie Wright that Julia Bell’s bow when she got up to recite made her think of a chicken jerking its head, and Bessie told Julia. None of the Sloanes would have any dealings with the Bells, because the Bells had declared that the Sloanes had too much to do in the program, and the Sloanes had retorted that the Bells were not capable of doing the little they had to do properly. Finally, Charlie Sloane

fought Moody Spurgeon MacPherson, because Moody Spurgeon had said that Anne Shirley put on airs about her recitations, and Moody Spurgeon was “licked”; consequently Moody Spurgeon’s sister, Ella May, would not “speak” to Anne Shirley all the rest of the winter. With the exception of these trifling frictions, work in Miss Stacy’s little kingdom went on with regularity and smoothness.

The winter weeks slipped by. It was an unusually mild winter, with so little snow that Anne and Diana could go to school nearly every day by way of the Birch Path. On Anne’s birthday they were tripping lightly down it, keeping eyes and ears alert amid all their chatter, for Miss Stacy had told them that they must soon write a composition on “A Winter’s Walk in the Woods,” and it behooved them to be observant.

“Just think, Diana, I’m thirteen years old today,” remarked Anne in an awed voice. “I can scarcely realize that I’m in my teens. When I woke this morning it seemed to me that everything must be different. You’ve been thirteen for a month, so I suppose it doesn’t seem such a novelty to you as it does to me. It makes life seem so much more interesting. In two more years I’ll be really grown up. It’s a great comfort to think that I’ll be able to use big words then without being laughed at.”

“Ruby Gillis says she means to have a beau as soon as she’s fifteen,” said Diana.

“Ruby Gillis thinks of nothing but beaus,” said Anne disdainfully. “She’s actually delighted when anyone writes her name up in a take-notice for all she pretends to be so mad. But I’m afraid that is an uncharitable speech. Mrs. Allan says we should never make uncharitable speeches; but they do slip out so often before you think, don’t they? I simply can’t talk about Josie Pye without making an uncharitable speech, so I never mention her at all. You may have noticed that. I’m trying to be as much like Mrs. Allan as I possibly can, for I think she’s perfect. Mr. Allan thinks so too. Mrs. Lynde says he just worships the ground she treads on and she doesn’t really think it right for a minister to set his affections so much on a mortal being. But then, Diana, even ministers are human and have their besetting sins just like everybody else. I had such an interesting talk with

Mrs. Allan about besetting sins last Sunday afternoon. There are just a few things it's proper to talk about on Sundays and that is one of them. My besetting sin is imagining too much and forgetting my duties. I'm striving very hard to overcome it and now that I'm really thirteen perhaps I'll get on better."

"In four more years we'll be able to put our hair up," said Diana. "Alice Bell is only sixteen and she is wearing hers up, but I think that's ridiculous. I shall wait until I'm seventeen."

"If I had Alice Bell's crooked nose," said Anne decidedly, "I wouldn't — but there! I won't say what I was going to because it was extremely uncharitable. Besides, I was comparing it with my own nose and that's vanity. I'm afraid I think too much about my nose ever since I heard that compliment about it long ago. It really is a great comfort to me. Oh, Diana, look, there's a rabbit. That's something to remember for our woods composition. I really think the woods are just as lovely in winter as in summer. They're so white and still, as if they were asleep and dreaming pretty dreams."

"I won't mind writing that composition when its time comes," sighed Diana. "I can manage to write about the woods, but the one we're to hand in Monday is terrible. The idea of Miss Stacy telling us to write a story out of our own heads!"

"Why, it's as easy as wink," said Anne.

"It's easy for you because you have an imagination," retorted Diana, "but what would you do if you had been born without one? I suppose you have your composition all done?"

Anne nodded, trying hard not to look virtuously complacent and failing miserably.

"I wrote it last Monday evening. It's called 'The Jealous Rival; or In Death Not Divided.' I read it to Marilla and she said it was stuff and nonsense. Then I read it to Matthew and he said it was fine. That is the kind of critic I like. It's a sad, sweet story. I just cried like a child while I was writing it. It's about two beautiful maidens called Cordelia Montmorency and Geraldine Seymour who lived in the same village and

were devotedly attached to each other. Cordelia was a regal brunette with a coronet of midnight hair and duskily flashing eyes. Geraldine was a queenly blonde with hair like spun gold and velvety purple eyes.”

“I never saw anybody with purple eyes,” said Diana dubiously.

“Neither did I. I just imagined them. I wanted something out of the common. Geraldine had an alabaster brow too. I’ve found out what an alabaster brow is. That is one of the advantages of being thirteen. You know so much more than you did when you were only twelve.”

“Well, what became of Cordelia and Geraldine?” asked Diana, who was beginning to feel rather interested in their fate.

“They grew in beauty side by side until they were sixteen. Then Bertram DeVere came to their native village and fell in love with the fair Geraldine. He saved her life when her horse ran away with her in a carriage, and she fainted in his arms and he carried her home three miles; because, you understand, the carriage was all smashed up. I found it rather hard to imagine the proposal because I had no experience to go by. I asked Ruby Gillis if she knew anything about how men proposed because I thought she’d likely be an authority on the subject, having so many sisters married. Ruby told me she was hid in the hall pantry when Malcolm Andres proposed to her sister Susan. She said Malcolm told Susan that his dad had given him the farm in his own name and then said, ‘What do you say, darling pet, if we get hitched this fall?’ And Susan said, ‘Yes — no — I don’t know — let me see’ — and there they were, engaged as quick as that. But I didn’t think that sort of a proposal was a very romantic one, so in the end I had to imagine it out as well as I could. I made it very flowery and poetical and Bertram went on his knees, although Ruby Gillis says it isn’t done nowadays. Geraldine accepted him in a speech a page long. I can tell you I took a lot of trouble with that speech. I rewrote it five times and I look upon it as my masterpiece. Bertram gave her a diamond ring and a ruby necklace and told her they would go to Europe for a wedding tour, for he was immensely wealthy. But then, alas, shadows began to darken over their path. Cordelia was secretly in love with Bertram herself and when Geraldine told her about the engagement she was simply furious,

especially when she saw the necklace and the diamond ring. All her affection for Geraldine turned to bitter hate and she vowed that she should never marry Bertram. But she pretended to be Geraldine's friend the same as ever. One evening they were standing on the bridge over a rushing turbulent stream and Cordelia, thinking they were alone, pushed Geraldine over the brink with a wild, mocking, 'Ha, ha, ha.' But Bertram saw it all and he at once plunged into the current, exclaiming, 'I will save thee, my peerless Geraldine.' But alas, he had forgotten he couldn't swim, and they were both drowned, clasped in each other's arms. Their bodies were washed ashore soon afterwards. They were buried in the one grave and their funeral was most imposing, Diana. It's so much more romantic to end a story up with a funeral than a wedding. As for Cordelia, she went insane with remorse and was shut up in a lunatic asylum. I thought that was a poetical retribution for her crime."

"How perfectly lovely!" sighed Diana, who belonged to Matthew's school of critics. "I don't see how you can make up such thrilling things out of your own head, Anne. I wish my imagination was as good as yours."

"It would be if you'd only cultivate it," said Anne cheerily. "I've just thought of a plan, Diana. Let you and me have a story club all our own and write stories for practice. I'll help you along until you can do them by yourself. You ought to cultivate your imagination, you know. Miss Stacy says so. Only we must take the right way. I told her about the Haunted Wood, but she said we went the wrong way about it in that."

This was how the story club came into existence. It was limited to Diana and Anne at first, but soon it was extended to include Jane Andrews and Ruby Gillis and one or two others who felt that their imaginations needed cultivating. No boys were allowed in it — although Ruby Gillis opined that their admission would make it more exciting — and each member had to produce one story a week.

"It's extremely interesting," Anne told Marilla. "Each girl has to read her story out loud and then we talk it over. We are going to keep them all sacredly and have them to read to our descendants. We each write under a nom-de-plume. Mine is Rosamond Montmorency. All the girls do pretty

well. Ruby Gillis is rather sentimental. She puts too much lovemaking into her stories and you know too much is worse than too little. Jane never puts any because she says it makes her feel so silly when she had to read it out loud. Jane's stories are extremely sensible. Then Diana puts too many murders into hers. She says most of the time she doesn't know what to do with the people so she kills them off to get rid of them. I mostly always have to tell them what to write about, but that isn't hard for I've millions of ideas."

"I think this story-writing business is the foolishhest yet," scoffed Marilla. "You'll get a pack of nonsense into your heads and waste time that should be put on your lessons. Reading stories is bad enough but writing them is worse."

"But we're so careful to put a moral into them all, Marilla," explained Anne. "I insist upon that. All the good people are rewarded and all the bad ones are suitably punished. I'm sure that must have a wholesome effect. The moral is the great thing. Mr. Allan says so. I read one of my stories to him and Mrs. Allan and they both agreed that the moral was excellent. Only they laughed in the wrong places. I like it better when people cry. Jane and Ruby almost always cry when I come to the pathetic parts. Diana wrote her Aunt Josephine about our club and her Aunt Josephine wrote back that we were to send her some of our stories. So we copied out four of our very best and sent them. Miss Josephine Barry wrote back that she had never read anything so amusing in her life. That kind of puzzled us because the stories were all very pathetic and almost everybody died. But I'm glad Miss Barry liked them. It shows our club is doing some good in the world. Mrs. Allan says that ought to be our object in everything. I do really try to make it my object but I forget so often when I'm having fun. I hope I shall be a little like Mrs. Allan when I grow up. Do you think there is any prospect of it, Marilla?"

"I shouldn't say there was a great deal" was Marilla's encouraging answer. "I'm sure Mrs. Allan was never such a silly, forgetful little girl as you are."

“No; but she wasn’t always so good as she is now either,” said Anne seriously. “She told me so herself — that is, she said she was a dreadful mischief when she was a girl and was always getting into scrapes. I felt so encouraged when I heard that. Is it very wicked of me, Marilla, to feel encouraged when I hear that other people have been bad and mischievous? Mrs. Lynde says it is. Mrs. Lynde says she always feels shocked when she hears of anyone ever having been naughty, no matter how small they were. Mrs. Lynde says she once heard a minister confess that when he was a boy he stole a strawberry tart out of his aunt’s pantry and she never had any respect for that minister again. Now, I wouldn’t have felt that way. I’d have thought that it was real noble of him to confess it, and I’d have thought what an encouraging thing it would be for small boys nowadays who do naughty things and are sorry for them to know that perhaps they may grow up to be ministers in spite of it. That’s how I’d feel, Marilla.”

“The way I feel at present, Anne,” said Marilla, “is that it’s high time you had those dishes washed. You’ve taken half an hour longer than you should with all your chattering. Learn to work first and talk afterwards.”

Vanity and Vexation of Spirit

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Marilla, walking home one late April evening from an Aid meeting, realized that the winter was over and gone with the thrill of delight that spring never fails to bring to the oldest and saddest as well as to the youngest and merriest. Marilla was not given to subjective analysis of her thoughts and feelings. She probably imagined that she was thinking about the Aids and their missionary box and the new carpet for the vestry room, but under these reflections was a harmonious consciousness of red fields smoking into pale-purple mists in the declining sun, of long, sharp-pointed fir shadows falling over the meadow beyond the brook, of still, crimson-budded maples around a mirrorlike wood pool, of a wakening in the world and a stir of hidden pulses under the gray sod. The spring was abroad in the land and Marilla's sober, middle-aged step was lighter and swifter because of its deep, primal gladness.

Her eyes dwelt affectionately on Green Gables, peering through its network of trees and reflecting the sunlight back from its windows in several little coruscations of glory. Marilla, as she picked her steps along the damp lane, thought that it was really a satisfaction to know that she was going home to a briskly snapping wood fire and a table nicely spread for tea, instead of to the cold comfort of old Aid meeting evenings before Anne had come to Green Gables.

Consequently, when Marilla entered her kitchen and found the fire black out, with no sign of Anne anywhere, she felt justly disappointed and irritated. She had told Anne to be sure and have tea ready at five o'clock, but now she must hurry to take off her second-best dress and prepare the meal herself against Matthew's return from plowing.

"I'll settle Miss Anne when she comes home," said Marilla grimly, as she shaved up kindlings with a carving knife and with more vim than was strictly necessary. Matthew had come in and was waiting patiently for his

tea in his corner. “She’s gadding off somewhere with Diana, writing stories or practicing dialogues or some such tomfoolery, and never thinking once about the time or her duties. She’s just got to be pulled up short and sudden on this sort of thing. I don’t care if Mrs. Allan does say she’s the brightest and sweetest child she ever knew. She may be bright and sweet enough, but her head is full of nonsense and there’s never any knowing what shape it’ll break out in next. Just as soon as she grows out of one freak she takes up with another. But there! Here I am saying the very thing I was so riled with Rachel Lynde for saying at the Aid today. I was real glad when Mrs. Allan spoke up for Anne, for if she hadn’t I know I’d have said something too sharp to Rachel before everybody. Anne’s got plenty of faults, goodness knows, and far be it from me to deny it. But I’m bringing her up and not Rachel Lynde, who’d pick faults in the Angel Gabriel himself if he lived in Avonlea. Just the same, Anne has no business to leave the house like this when I told her she was to stay home this afternoon and look after things. I must say, with all her faults, I never found her disobedient or untrustworthy before and I’m real sorry to find her so now.”

“Well now, I dunno,” said Matthew, who, being patient and wise and, above all, hungry, had deemed it best to let Marilla talk her wrath out unhindered, having learned by experience that she got through with whatever work was on hand much quicker if not delayed by untimely argument. “Perhaps you’re judging her too hasty, Marilla. Don’t call her untrustworthy until you’re sure she has disobeyed you. Mebbe it can all be explained — Anne’s a great hand at explaining.”

“She’s not here when I told her to stay,” retorted Marilla. “I reckon she’ll find it hard to explain THAT to my satisfaction. Of course I knew you’d take her part, Matthew. But I’m bringing her up, not you.”

It was dark when supper was ready, and still no sign of Anne, coming hurriedly over the log bridge or up Lover’s Lane, breathless and repentant with a sense of neglected duties. Marilla washed and put away the dishes grimly. Then, wanting a candle to light her way down the cellar, she went up to the east gable for the one that generally stood on Anne’s table.

Lighting it, she turned around to see Anne herself lying on the bed, face downward among the pillows.

“Mercy on us,” said astonished Marilla, “have you been asleep, Anne?”

“No,” was the muffled reply.

“Are you sick then?” demanded Marilla anxiously, going over to the bed.

Anne cowered deeper into her pillows as if desirous of hiding herself forever from mortal eyes.

“No. But please, Marilla, go away and don’t look at me. I’m in the depths of despair and I don’t care who gets head in class or writes the best composition or sings in the Sunday-school choir any more. Little things like that are of no importance now because I don’t suppose I’ll ever be able to go anywhere again. My career is closed. Please, Marilla, go away and don’t look at me.”

“Did anyone ever hear the like?” the mystified Marilla wanted to know. “Anne Shirley, whatever is the matter with you? What have you done? Get right up this minute and tell me. This minute, I say. There now, what is it?”

Anne had slid to the floor in despairing obedience.

“Look at my hair, Marilla,” she whispered.

Accordingly, Marilla lifted her candle and looked scrutinizingly at Anne’s hair, flowing in heavy masses down her back. It certainly had a very strange appearance.

“Anne Shirley, what have you done to your hair? Why, it’s GREEN!”

Green it might be called, if it were any earthly color — a queer, dull, bronzy green, with streaks here and there of the original red to heighten the ghastly effect. Never in all her life had Marilla seen anything so grotesque as Anne’s hair at that moment.

“Yes, it’s green,” moaned Anne. “I thought nothing could be as bad as red hair. But now I know it’s ten times worse to have green hair. Oh, Marilla, you little know how utterly wretched I am.”

“I little know how you got into this fix, but I mean to find out,” said Marilla. “Come right down to the kitchen — it’s too cold up here — and tell me just what you’ve done. I’ve been expecting something queer for some time. You haven’t got into any scrape for over two months, and I was sure another one was due. Now, then, what did you do to your hair?”

“I dyed it.”

“Dyed it! Dyed your hair! Anne Shirley, didn’t you know it was a wicked thing to do?”

“Yes, I knew it was a little wicked,” admitted Anne. “But I thought it was worth while to be a little wicked to get rid of red hair. I counted the cost, Marilla. Besides, I meant to be extra good in other ways to make up for it.”

“Well,” said Marilla sarcastically, “if I’d decided it was worth while to dye my hair I’d have dyed it a decent color at least. I wouldn’t have dyed it green.”

“But I didn’t mean to dye it green, Marilla,” protested Anne dejectedly. “If I was wicked I meant to be wicked to some purpose. He said it would turn my hair a beautiful raven black — he positively assured me that it would. How could I doubt his word, Marilla? I know what it feels like to have your word doubted. And Mrs. Allan says we should never suspect anyone of not telling us the truth unless we have proof that they’re not. I have proof now — green hair is proof enough for anybody. But I hadn’t then and I believed every word he said IMPLICITLY.”

“Who said? Who are you talking about?”

“The peddler that was here this afternoon. I bought the dye from him.”

“Anne Shirley, how often have I told you never to let one of those Italians in the house! I don’t believe in encouraging them to come around at all.”

“Oh, I didn’t let him in the house. I remembered what you told me, and I went out, carefully shut the door, and looked at his things on the step. Besides, he wasn’t an Italian — he was a German Jew. He had a big box full of very interesting things and he told me he was working hard to make enough money to bring his wife and children out from Germany. He spoke

so feelingly about them that it touched my heart. I wanted to buy something from him to help him in such a worthy object. Then all at once I saw the bottle of hair dye. The peddler said it was warranted to dye any hair a beautiful raven black and wouldn't wash off. In a trice I saw myself with beautiful raven-black hair and the temptation was irresistible. But the price of the bottle was seventy-five cents and I had only fifty cents left out of my chicken money. I think the peddler had a very kind heart, for he said that, seeing it was me, he'd sell it for fifty cents and that was just giving it away. So I bought it, and as soon as he had gone I came up here and applied it with an old hairbrush as the directions said. I used up the whole bottle, and oh, Marilla, when I saw the dreadful color it turned my hair I repented of being wicked, I can tell you. And I've been repenting ever since."

"Well, I hope you'll repent to good purpose," said Marilla severely, "and that you've got your eyes opened to where your vanity has led you, Anne. Goodness knows what's to be done. I suppose the first thing is to give your hair a good washing and see if that will do any good."

Accordingly, Anne washed her hair, scrubbing it vigorously with soap and water, but for all the difference it made she might as well have been scouring its original red. The peddler had certainly spoken the truth when he declared that the dye wouldn't wash off, however his veracity might be impeached in other respects.

"Oh, Marilla, what shall I do?" questioned Anne in tears. "I can never live this down. People have pretty well forgotten my other mistakes — the liniment cake and setting Diana drunk and flying into a temper with Mrs. Lynde. But they'll never forget this. They will think I am not respectable. Oh, Marilla, 'what a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive.' That is poetry, but it is true. And oh, how Josie Pye will laugh! Marilla, I CANNOT face Josie Pye. I am the unhappiest girl in Prince Edward Island."

Anne's unhappiness continued for a week. During that time she went nowhere and shampooed her hair every day. Diana alone of outsiders knew the fatal secret, but she promised solemnly never to tell, and it may be

stated here and now that she kept her word. At the end of the week Marilla said decidedly:

“It’s no use, Anne. That is fast dye if ever there was any. Your hair must be cut off; there is no other way. You can’t go out with it looking like that.”

Anne’s lips quivered, but she realized the bitter truth of Marilla’s remarks. With a dismal sigh she went for the scissors.

“Please cut it off at once, Marilla, and have it over. Oh, I feel that my heart is broken. This is such an unromantic affliction. The girls in books lose their hair in fevers or sell it to get money for some good deed, and I’m sure I wouldn’t mind losing my hair in some such fashion half so much. But there is nothing comforting in having your hair cut off because you’ve dyed it a dreadful color, is there? I’m going to weep all the time you’re cutting it off, if it won’t interfere. It seems such a tragic thing.”

Anne wept then, but later on, when she went upstairs and looked in the glass, she was calm with despair. Marilla had done her work thoroughly and it had been necessary to shingle the hair as closely as possible. The result was not becoming, to state the case as mildly as may be. Anne promptly turned her glass to the wall.

“I’ll never, never look at myself again until my hair grows,” she exclaimed passionately.

Then she suddenly righted the glass.

“Yes, I will, too. I’d do penance for being wicked that way. I’ll look at myself every time I come to my room and see how ugly I am. And I won’t try to imagine it away, either. I never thought I was vain about my hair, of all things, but now I know I was, in spite of its being red, because it was so long and thick and curly. I expect something will happen to my nose next.”

Anne’s clipped head made a sensation in school on the following Monday, but to her relief nobody guessed the real reason for it, not even Josie Pye, who, however, did not fail to inform Anne that she looked like a perfect scarecrow.

“I didn’t say anything when Josie said that to me,” Anne confided that evening to Marilla, who was lying on the sofa after one of her headaches,

“because I thought it was part of my punishment and I ought to bear it patiently. It’s hard to be told you look like a scarecrow and I wanted to say something back. But I didn’t. I just swept her one scornful look and then I forgave her. It makes you feel very virtuous when you forgive people, doesn’t it? I mean to devote all my energies to being good after this and I shall never try to be beautiful again. Of course it’s better to be good. I know it is, but it’s sometimes so hard to believe a thing even when you know it. I do really want to be good, Marilla, like you and Mrs. Allan and Miss Stacy, and grow up to be a credit to you. Diana says when my hair begins to grow to tie a black velvet ribbon around my head with a bow at one side. She says she thinks it will be very becoming. I will call it a snood — that sounds so romantic. But am I talking too much, Marilla? Does it hurt your head?”

“My head is better now. It was terrible bad this afternoon, though. These headaches of mine are getting worse and worse. I’ll have to see a doctor about them. As for your chatter, I don’t know that I mind it — I’ve got so used to it.”

Which was Marilla’s way of saying that she liked to hear it.

An Unfortunate Lily Maid

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“Of course you must be Elaine, Anne,” said Diana. “I could never have the courage to float down there.”

“Nor I,” said Ruby Gillis, with a shiver. “I don’t mind floating down when there’s two or three of us in the flat and we can sit up. It’s fun then. But to lie down and pretend I was dead — I just couldn’t. I’d die really of fright.”

“Of course it would be romantic,” conceded Jane Andrews, “but I know I couldn’t keep still. I’d be popping up every minute or so to see where I was and if I wasn’t drifting too far out. And you know, Anne, that would spoil the effect.”

“But it’s so ridiculous to have a redheaded Elaine,” mourned Anne. “I’m not afraid to float down and I’d love to be Elaine. But it’s ridiculous just the same. Ruby ought to be Elaine because she is so fair and has such lovely long golden hair — Elaine had ‘all her bright hair streaming down,’ you know. And Elaine was the lily maid. Now, a redhaired person cannot be a lily maid.”

“Your complexion is just as fair as Ruby’s,” said Diana earnestly, “and your hair is ever so much darker than it used to be before you cut it.”

“Oh, do you really think so?” exclaimed Anne, flushing sensitively with delight. “I’ve sometimes thought it was myself — but I never dared to ask anyone for fear she would tell me it wasn’t. Do you think it could be called auburn now, Diana?”

“Yes, and I think it is real pretty,” said Diana, looking admiringly at the short, silky curls that clustered over Anne’s head and were held in place by a very jaunty black velvet ribbon and bow.

They were standing on the bank of the pond, below Orchard Slope, where a little headland fringed with birches ran out from the bank; at its tip was a small wooden platform built out into the water for the

convenience of fishermen and duck hunters. Ruby and Jane were spending the midsummer afternoon with Diana, and Anne had come over to play with them.

Anne and Diana had spent most of their playtime that summer on and about the pond. Idlewild was a thing of the past, Mr. Bell having ruthlessly cut down the little circle of trees in his back pasture in the spring. Anne had sat among the stumps and wept, not without an eye to the romance of it; but she was speedily consoled, for, after all, as she and Diana said, big girls of thirteen, going on fourteen, were too old for such childish amusements as playhouses, and there were more fascinating sports to be found about the pond. It was splendid to fish for trout over the bridge and the two girls learned to row themselves about in the little flat-bottomed dory Mr. Barry kept for duck shooting.

It was Anne's idea that they dramatize Elaine. They had studied Tennyson's poem in school the preceding winter, the Superintendent of Education having prescribed it in the English course for the Prince Edward Island schools. They had analyzed and parsed it and torn it to pieces in general until it was a wonder there was any meaning at all left in it for them, but at least the fair lily maid and Lancelot and Guinevere and King Arthur had become very real people to them, and Anne was devoured by secret regret that she had not been born in Camelot. Those days, she said, were so much more romantic than the present.

Anne's plan was hailed with enthusiasm. The girls had discovered that if the flat were pushed off from the landing place it would drift down with the current under the bridge and finally strand itself on another headland lower down which ran out at a curve in the pond. They had often gone down like this and nothing could be more convenient for playing Elaine.

"Well, I'll be Elaine," said Anne, yielding reluctantly, for, although she would have been delighted to play the principal character, yet her artistic sense demanded fitness for it and this, she felt, her limitations made impossible. "Ruby, you must be King Arthur and Jane will be Guinevere and Diana must be Lancelot. But first you must be the brothers and the father. We can't have the old dumb servitor because there isn't room for

two in the flat when one is lying down. We must pall the barge all its length in blackest samite. That old black shawl of your mother's will be just the thing, Diana."

The black shawl having been procured, Anne spread it over the flat and then lay down on the bottom, with closed eyes and hands folded over her breast.

"Oh, she does look really dead," whispered Ruby Gillis nervously, watching the still, white little face under the flickering shadows of the birches. "It makes me feel frightened, girls. Do you suppose it's really right to act like this? Mrs. Lynde says that all play-acting is abominably wicked."

"Ruby, you shouldn't talk about Mrs. Lynde," said Anne severely. "It spoils the effect because this is hundreds of years before Mrs. Lynde was born. Jane, you arrange this. It's silly for Elaine to be talking when she's dead."

Jane rose to the occasion. Cloth of gold for coverlet there was none, but an old piano scarf of yellow Japanese crepe was an excellent substitute. A white lily was not obtainable just then, but the effect of a tall blue iris placed in one of Anne's folded hands was all that could be desired.

"Now, she's all ready," said Jane. "We must kiss her quiet brows and, Diana, you say, 'Sister, farewell forever,' and Ruby, you say, 'Farewell, sweet sister,' both of you as sorrowfully as you possibly can. Anne, for goodness sake smile a little. You know Elaine 'lay as though she smiled.' That's better. Now push the flat off."

The flat was accordingly pushed off, scraping roughly over an old embedded stake in the process. Diana and Jane and Ruby only waited long enough to see it caught in the current and headed for the bridge before scampering up through the woods, across the road, and down to the lower headland where, as Lancelot and Guinevere and the King, they were to be in readiness to receive the lily maid.

For a few minutes Anne, drifting slowly down, enjoyed the romance of her situation to the full. Then something happened not at all romantic. The

flat began to leak. In a very few moments it was necessary for Elaine to scramble to her feet, pick up her cloth of gold coverlet and pall of blackest samite and gaze blankly at a big crack in the bottom of her barge through which the water was literally pouring. That sharp stake at the landing had torn off the strip of batting nailed on the flat. Anne did not know this, but it did not take her long to realize that she was in a dangerous plight. At this rate the flat would fill and sink long before it could drift to the lower headland. Where were the oars? Left behind at the landing!

Anne gave one gasping little scream which nobody ever heard; she was white to the lips, but she did not lose her selfpossession. There was one chance — just one.

“I was horribly frightened,” she told Mrs. Allan the next day, “and it seemed like years while the flat was drifting down to the bridge and the water rising in it every moment. I prayed, Mrs. Allan, most earnestly, but I didn’t shut my eyes to pray, for I knew the only way God could save me was to let the flat float close enough to one of the bridge piles for me to climb up on it. You know the piles are just old tree trunks and there are lots of knots and old branch stubs on them. It was proper to pray, but I had to do my part by watching out and right well I knew it. I just said, ‘Dear God, please take the flat close to a pile and I’ll do the rest,’ over and over again. Under such circumstances you don’t think much about making a flowery prayer. But mine was answered, for the flat bumped right into a pile for a minute and I flung the scarf and the shawl over my shoulder and scrambled up on a big providential stub. And there I was, Mrs. Allan, clinging to that slippery old pile with no way of getting up or down. It was a very unromantic position, but I didn’t think about that at the time. You don’t think much about romance when you have just escaped from a watery grave. I said a grateful prayer at once and then I gave all my attention to holding on tight, for I knew I should probably have to depend on human aid to get back to dry land.”

The flat drifted under the bridge and then promptly sank in midstream. Ruby, Jane, and Diana, already awaiting it on the lower headland, saw it disappear before their very eyes and had not a doubt but that Anne had

gone down with it. For a moment they stood still, white as sheets, frozen with horror at the tragedy; then, shrieking at the tops of their voices, they started on a frantic run up through the woods, never pausing as they crossed the main road to glance the way of the bridge. Anne, clinging desperately to her precarious foothold, saw their flying forms and heard their shrieks. Help would soon come, but meanwhile her position was a very uncomfortable one.

The minutes passed by, each seeming an hour to the unfortunate lily maid. Why didn't somebody come? Where had the girls gone? Suppose they had fainted, one and all! Suppose nobody ever came! Suppose she grew so tired and cramped that she could hold on no longer! Anne looked at the wicked green depths below her, wavering with long, oily shadows, and shivered. Her imagination began to suggest all manner of gruesome possibilities to her.

Then, just as she thought she really could not endure the ache in her arms and wrists another moment, Gilbert Blythe came rowing under the bridge in Harmon Andrews's dory!

Gilbert glanced up and, much to his amazement, beheld a little white scornful face looking down upon him with big, frightened but also scornful gray eyes.

"Anne Shirley! How on earth did you get there?" he exclaimed.

Without waiting for an answer he pulled close to the pile and extended his hand. There was no help for it; Anne, clinging to Gilbert Blythe's hand, scrambled down into the dory, where she sat, drabbled and furious, in the stern with her arms full of dripping shawl and wet crepe. It was certainly extremely difficult to be dignified under the circumstances!

"What has happened, Anne?" asked Gilbert, taking up his oars. "We were playing Elaine" explained Anne frigidly, without even looking at her rescuer, "and I had to drift down to Camelot in the barge — I mean the flat. The flat began to leak and I climbed out on the pile. The girls went for help. Will you be kind enough to row me to the landing?"

Gilbert obligingly rowed to the landing and Anne, disdaining assistance, sprang nimbly on shore.

“I’m very much obliged to you,” she said haughtily as she turned away. But Gilbert had also sprung from the boat and now laid a detaining hand on her arm.

“Anne,” he said hurriedly, “look here. Can’t we be good friends? I’m awfully sorry I made fun of your hair that time. I didn’t mean to vex you and I only meant it for a joke. Besides, it’s so long ago. I think your hair is awfully pretty now — honest I do. Let’s be friends.”

For a moment Anne hesitated. She had an odd, newly awakened consciousness under all her outraged dignity that the half-shy, half-eager expression in Gilbert’s hazel eyes was something that was very good to see. Her heart gave a quick, queer little beat. But the bitterness of her old grievance promptly stiffened up her wavering determination. That scene of two years before flashed back into her recollection as vividly as if it had taken place yesterday. Gilbert had called her “carrots” and had brought about her disgrace before the whole school. Her resentment, which to other and older people might be as laughable as its cause, was in no whit allayed and softened by time seemingly. She hated Gilbert Blythe! She would never forgive him!

“No,” she said coldly, “I shall never be friends with you, Gilbert Blythe; and I don’t want to be!”

“All right!” Gilbert sprang into his skiff with an angry color in his cheeks. “I’ll never ask you to be friends again, Anne Shirley. And I don’t care either!”

He pulled away with swift defiant strokes, and Anne went up the steep, ferny little path under the maples. She held her head very high, but she was conscious of an odd feeling of regret. She almost wished she had answered Gilbert differently. Of course, he had insulted her terribly, but still — ! Altogether, Anne rather thought it would be a relief to sit down and have a good cry. She was really quite unstrung, for the reaction from her fright and cramped clinging was making itself felt.

Halfway up the path she met Jane and Diana rushing back to the pond in a state narrowly removed from positive frenzy. They had found nobody at Orchard Slope, both Mr. and Mrs. Barry being away. Here Ruby Gillis

had succumbed to hysterics, and was left to recover from them as best she might, while Jane and Diana flew through the Haunted Wood and across the brook to Green Gables. There they had found nobody either, for Marilla had gone to Carmody and Matthew was making hay in the back field.

“Oh, Anne,” gasped Diana, fairly falling on the former’s neck and weeping with relief and delight, “oh, Anne — we thought — you were — drowned — and we felt like murderers — because we had made — you be — Elaine. And Ruby is in hysterics — oh, Anne, how did you escape?”

“I climbed up on one of the piles,” explained Anne wearily, “and Gilbert Blythe came along in Mr. Andrews’s dory and brought me to land.”

“Oh, Anne, how splendid of him! Why, it’s so romantic!” said Jane, finding breath enough for utterance at last. “Of course you’ll speak to him after this.”

“Of course I won’t,” flashed Anne, with a momentary return of her old spirit. “And I don’t want ever to hear the word ‘romantic’ again, Jane Andrews. I’m awfully sorry you were so frightened, girls. It is all my fault. I feel sure I was born under an unlucky star. Everything I do gets me or my dearest friends into a scrape. We’ve gone and lost your father’s flat, Diana, and I have a presentiment that we’ll not be allowed to row on the pond any more.”

Anne’s presentiment proved more trustworthy than presentiments are apt to do. Great was the consternation in the Barry and Cuthbert households when the events of the afternoon became known.

“Will you ever have any sense, Anne?” groaned Marilla.

“Oh, yes, I think I will, Marilla,” returned Anne optimistically. A good cry, indulged in the grateful solitude of the east gable, had soothed her nerves and restored her to her wonted cheerfulness. “I think my prospects of becoming sensible are brighter now than ever.”

“I don’t see how,” said Marilla.

“Well,” explained Anne, “I’ve learned a new and valuable lesson today. Ever since I came to Green Gables I’ve been making mistakes, and each mistake has helped to cure me of some great shortcoming. The affair of

the amethyst brooch cured me of meddling with things that didn't belong to me. The Haunted Wood mistake cured me of letting my imagination run away with me. The liniment cake mistake cured me of carelessness in cooking. Dyeing my hair cured me of vanity. I never think about my hair and nose now — at least, very seldom. And today's mistake is going to cure me of being too romantic. I have come to the conclusion that it is no use trying to be romantic in Avonlea. It was probably easy enough in towered Camelot hundreds of years ago, but romance is not appreciated now. I feel quite sure that you will soon see a great improvement in me in this respect, Marilla."

"I'm sure I hope so," said Marilla skeptically.

But Matthew, who had been sitting mutely in his corner, laid a hand on Anne's shoulder when Marilla had gone out.

"Don't give up all your romance, Anne," he whispered shyly, "a little of it is a good thing — not too much, of course — but keep a little of it, Anne, keep a little of it."

Chapter XXIX.

An Epoch in Anne's Life

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Anne was bringing the cows home from the back pasture by way of Lover's Lane. It was a September evening and all the gaps and clearings in the woods were brimmed up with ruby sunset light. Here and there the lane was splashed with it, but for the most part it was already quite shadowy beneath the maples, and the spaces under the firs were filled with a clear violet dusk like airy wine. The winds were out in their tops, and there is no sweeter music on earth than that which the wind makes in the fir trees at evening.

The cows swung placidly down the lane, and Anne followed them dreamily, repeating aloud the battle canto from MARMION — which had also been part of their English course the preceding winter and which Miss Stacy had made them learn off by heart — and exulting in its rushing lines and the clash of spears in its imagery. When she came to the lines:

The stubborn spearsmen still made good

Their dark impenetrable wood,

she stopped in ecstasy to shut her eyes that she might the better fancy herself one of that heroic ring. When she opened them again it was to behold Diana coming through the gate that led into the Barry field and looking so important that Anne instantly divined there was news to be told. But betray too eager curiosity she would not.

“Isn't this evening just like a purple dream, Diana? It makes me so glad to be alive. In the mornings I always think the mornings are best; but when evening comes I think it's lovelier still.”

“It's a very fine evening,” said Diana, “but oh, I have such news, Anne. Guess. You can have three guesses.”

“Charlotte Gillis is going to be married in the church after all and Mrs. Allan wants us to decorate it,” cried Anne.

“No. Charlotte’s beau won’t agree to that, because nobody ever has been married in the church yet, and he thinks it would seem too much like a funeral. It’s too mean, because it would be such fun. Guess again.”

“Jane’s mother is going to let her have a birthday party?”

Diana shook her head, her black eyes dancing with merriment.

“I can’t think what it can be,” said Anne in despair, “unless it’s that Moody Spurgeon MacPherson saw you home from prayer meeting last night. Did he?”

“I should think not,” exclaimed Diana indignantly. “I wouldn’t be likely to boast of it if he did, the horrid creature! I knew you couldn’t guess it. Mother had a letter from Aunt Josephine today, and Aunt Josephine wants you and me to go to town next Tuesday and stop with her for the Exhibition. There!”

“Oh, Diana,” whispered Anne, finding it necessary to lean up against a maple tree for support, “do you really mean it? But I’m afraid Marilla won’t let me go. She will say that she can’t encourage gadding about. That was what she said last week when Jane invited me to go with them in their double-seated buggy to the American concert at the White Sands Hotel. I wanted to go, but Marilla said I’d be better at home learning my lessons and so would Jane. I was bitterly disappointed, Diana. I felt so heartbroken that I wouldn’t say my prayers when I went to bed. But I repented of that and got up in the middle of the night and said them.”

“I’ll tell you,” said Diana, “we’ll get Mother to ask Marilla. She’ll be more likely to let you go then; and if she does we’ll have the time of our lives, Anne. I’ve never been to an Exhibition, and it’s so aggravating to hear the other girls talking about their trips. Jane and Ruby have been twice, and they’re going this year again.”

“I’m not going to think about it at all until I know whether I can go or not,” said Anne resolutely. “If I did and then was disappointed, it would be more than I could bear. But in case I do go I’m very glad my new coat will be ready by that time. Marilla didn’t think I needed a new coat. She said my old one would do very well for another winter and that I ought to be satisfied with having a new dress. The dress is very pretty, Diana — navy

blue and made so fashionably. Marilla always makes my dresses fashionably now, because she says she doesn't intend to have Matthew going to Mrs. Lynde to make them. I'm so glad. It is ever so much easier to be good if your clothes are fashionable. At least, it is easier for me. I suppose it doesn't make such a difference to naturally good people. But Matthew said I must have a new coat, so Marilla bought a lovely piece of blue broadcloth, and it's being made by a real dressmaker over at Carmody. It's to be done Saturday night, and I'm trying not to imagine myself walking up the church aisle on Sunday in my new suit and cap, because I'm afraid it isn't right to imagine such things. But it just slips into my mind in spite of me. My cap is so pretty. Matthew bought it for me the day we were over at Carmody. It is one of those little blue velvet ones that are all the rage, with gold cord and tassels. Your new hat is elegant, Diana, and so becoming. When I saw you come into church last Sunday my heart swelled with pride to think you were my dearest friend. Do you suppose it's wrong for us to think so much about our clothes? Marilla says it is very sinful. But it is such an interesting subject, isn't it?"

Marilla agreed to let Anne go to town, and it was arranged that Mr. Barry should take the girls in on the following Tuesday. As Charlottetown was thirty miles away and Mr. Barry wished to go and return the same day, it was necessary to make a very early start. But Anne counted it all joy, and was up before sunrise on Tuesday morning. A glance from her window assured her that the day would be fine, for the eastern sky behind the firs of the Haunted Wood was all silvery and cloudless. Through the gap in the trees a light was shining in the western gable of Orchard Slope, a token that Diana was also up.

Anne was dressed by the time Matthew had the fire on and had the breakfast ready when Marilla came down, but for her own part was much too excited to eat. After breakfast the jaunty new cap and jacket were donned, and Anne hastened over the brook and up through the firs to Orchard Slope. Mr. Barry and Diana were waiting for her, and they were soon on the road.

It was a long drive, but Anne and Diana enjoyed every minute of it. It was delightful to rattle along over the moist roads in the early red sunlight that was creeping across the shorn harvest fields. The air was fresh and crisp, and little smoke-blue mists curled through the valleys and floated off from the hills. Sometimes the road went through woods where maples were beginning to hang out scarlet banners; sometimes it crossed rivers on bridges that made Anne's flesh cringe with the old, half-delightful fear; sometimes it wound along a harbor shore and passed by a little cluster of weather-gray fishing huts; again it mounted to hills whence a far sweep of curving upland or misty-blue sky could be seen; but wherever it went there was much of interest to discuss. It was almost noon when they reached town and found their way to "Beechwood." It was quite a fine old mansion, set back from the street in a seclusion of green elms and branching beeches. Miss Barry met them at the door with a twinkle in her sharp black eyes.

"So you've come to see me at last, you Anne-girl," she said. "Mercy, child, how you have grown! You're taller than I am, I declare. And you're ever so much better looking than you used to be, too. But I dare say you know that without being told."

"Indeed I didn't," said Anne radiantly. "I know I'm not so freckled as I used to be, so I've much to be thankful for, but I really hadn't dared to hope there was any other improvement. I'm so glad you think there is, Miss Barry." Miss Barry's house was furnished with "great magnificence," as Anne told Marilla afterward. The two little country girls were rather abashed by the splendor of the parlor where Miss Barry left them when she went to see about dinner.

"Isn't it just like a palace?" whispered Diana. "I never was in Aunt Josephine's house before, and I'd no idea it was so grand. I just wish Julia Bell could see this — she puts on such airs about her mother's parlor."

"Velvet carpet," sighed Anne luxuriously, "and silk curtains! I've dreamed of such things, Diana. But do you know I don't believe I feel very comfortable with them after all. There are so many things in this room and all so splendid that there is no scope for imagination. That is one

consolation when you are poor — there are so many more things you can imagine about.”

Their sojourn in town was something that Anne and Diana dated from for years. From first to last it was crowded with delights.

On Wednesday Miss Barry took them to the Exhibition grounds and kept them there all day.

“It was splendid,” Anne related to Marilla later on. “I never imagined anything so interesting. I don’t really know which department was the most interesting. I think I liked the horses and the flowers and the fancywork best. Josie Pye took first prize for knitted lace. I was real glad she did. And I was glad that I felt glad, for it shows I’m improving, don’t you think, Marilla, when I can rejoice in Josie’s success? Mr. Harmon Andrews took second prize for Gravenstein apples and Mr. Bell took first prize for a pig. Diana said she thought it was ridiculous for a Sunday-school superintendent to take a prize in pigs, but I don’t see why. Do you? She said she would always think of it after this when he was praying so solemnly. Clara Louise MacPherson took a prize for painting, and Mrs. Lynde got first prize for homemade butter and cheese. So Avonlea was pretty well represented, wasn’t it? Mrs. Lynde was there that day, and I never knew how much I really liked her until I saw her familiar face among all those strangers. There were thousands of people there, Marilla. It made me feel dreadfully insignificant. And Miss Barry took us up to the grandstand to see the horse races. Mrs. Lynde wouldn’t go; she said horse racing was an abomination and, she being a church member, thought it her bounden duty to set a good example by staying away. But there were so many there I don’t believe Mrs. Lynde’s absence would ever be noticed. I don’t think, though, that I ought to go very often to horse races, because they ARE awfully fascinating. Diana got so excited that she offered to bet me ten cents that the red horse would win. I didn’t believe he would, but I refused to bet, because I wanted to tell Mrs. Allan all about everything, and I felt sure it wouldn’t do to tell her that. It’s always wrong to do anything you can’t tell the minister’s wife. It’s as good as an extra conscience to have a minister’s wife for your friend. And I was very glad I

didn't bet, because the red horse DID win, and I would have lost ten cents. So you see that virtue was its own reward. We saw a man go up in a balloon. I'd love to go up in a balloon, Marilla; it would be simply thrilling; and we saw a man selling fortunes. You paid him ten cents and a little bird picked out your fortune for you. Miss Barry gave Diana and me ten cents each to have our fortunes told. Mine was that I would marry a dark-complected man who was very wealthy, and I would go across water to live. I looked carefully at all the dark men I saw after that, but I didn't care much for any of them, and anyhow I suppose it's too early to be looking out for him yet. Oh, it was a never-to-be-forgotten day, Marilla. I was so tired I couldn't sleep at night. Miss Barry put us in the spare room, according to promise. It was an elegant room, Marilla, but somehow sleeping in a spare room isn't what I used to think it was. That's the worst of growing up, and I'm beginning to realize it. The things you wanted so much when you were a child don't seem half so wonderful to you when you get them."

Thursday the girls had a drive in the park, and in the evening Miss Barry took them to a concert in the Academy of Music, where a noted prima donna was to sing. To Anne the evening was a glittering vision of delight.

"Oh, Marilla, it was beyond description. I was so excited I couldn't even talk, so you may know what it was like. I just sat in enraptured silence. Madame Selitsky was perfectly beautiful, and wore white satin and diamonds. But when she began to sing I never thought about anything else. Oh, I can't tell you how I felt. But it seemed to me that it could never be hard to be good any more. I felt like I do when I look up to the stars. Tears came into my eyes, but, oh, they were such happy tears. I was so sorry when it was all over, and I told Miss Barry I didn't see how I was ever to return to common life again. She said she thought if we went over to the restaurant across the street and had an ice cream it might help me. That sounded so prosaic; but to my surprise I found it true. The ice cream was delicious, Marilla, and it was so lovely and dissipated to be sitting there eating it at eleven o'clock at night. Diana said she believed she was

born for city life. Miss Barry asked me what my opinion was, but I said I would have to think it over very seriously before I could tell her what I really thought. So I thought it over after I went to bed. That is the best time to think things out. And I came to the conclusion, Marilla, that I wasn't born for city life and that I was glad of it. It's nice to be eating ice cream at brilliant restaurants at eleven o'clock at night once in a while; but as a regular thing I'd rather be in the east gable at eleven, sound asleep, but kind of knowing even in my sleep that the stars were shining outside and that the wind was blowing in the firs across the brook. I told Miss Barry so at breakfast the next morning and she laughed. Miss Barry generally laughed at anything I said, even when I said the most solemn things. I don't think I liked it, Marilla, because I wasn't trying to be funny. But she is a most hospitable lady and treated us royally."

Friday brought going-home time, and Mr. Barry drove in for the girls.

"Well, I hope you've enjoyed yourselves," said Miss Barry, as she bade them goodbye.

"Indeed we have," said Diana.

"And you, Anne-girl?"

"I've enjoyed every minute of the time," said Anne, throwing her arms impulsively about the old woman's neck and kissing her wrinkled cheek. Diana would never have dared to do such a thing and felt rather aghast at Anne's freedom. But Miss Barry was pleased, and she stood on her veranda and watched the buggy out of sight. Then she went back into her big house with a sigh. It seemed very lonely, lacking those fresh young lives. Miss Barry was a rather selfish old lady, if the truth must be told, and had never cared much for anybody but herself. She valued people only as they were of service to her or amused her. Anne had amused her, and consequently stood high in the old lady's good graces. But Miss Barry found herself thinking less about Anne's quaint speeches than of her fresh enthusiasms, her transparent emotions, her little winning ways, and the sweetness of her eyes and lips.

"I thought Marilla Cuthbert was an old fool when I heard she'd adopted a girl out of an orphan asylum," she said to herself, "but I guess

she didn't make much of a mistake after all. If I'd a child like Anne in the house all the time I'd be a better and happier woman."

Anne and Diana found the drive home as pleasant as the drive in — pleasanter, indeed, since there was the delightful consciousness of home waiting at the end of it. It was sunset when they passed through White Sands and turned into the shore road. Beyond, the Avonlea hills came out darkly against the saffron sky. Behind them the moon was rising out of the sea that grew all radiant and transfigured in her light. Every little cove along the curving road was a marvel of dancing ripples. The waves broke with a soft swish on the rocks below them, and the tang of the sea was in the strong, fresh air.

"Oh, but it's good to be alive and to be going home," breathed Anne.

When she crossed the log bridge over the brook the kitchen light of Green Gables winked her a friendly welcome back, and through the open door shone the hearth fire, sending out its warm red glow athwart the chilly autumn night. Anne ran blithely up the hill and into the kitchen, where a hot supper was waiting on the table.

"So you've got back?" said Marilla, folding up her knitting.

"Yes, and oh, it's so good to be back," said Anne joyously. "I could kiss everything, even to the clock. Marilla, a broiled chicken! You don't mean to say you cooked that for me!"

"Yes, I did," said Marilla. "I thought you'd be hungry after such a drive and need something real appetizing. Hurry and take off your things, and we'll have supper as soon as Matthew comes in. I'm glad you've got back, I must say. It's been fearful lonesome here without you, and I never put in four longer days."

After supper Anne sat before the fire between Matthew and Marilla, and gave them a full account of her visit.

"I've had a splendid time," she concluded happily, "and I feel that it marks an epoch in my life. But the best of it all was the coming home."

Chapter XXX.

The Queens Class Is Organized

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Marilla laid her knitting on her lap and leaned back in her chair. Her eyes were tired, and she thought vaguely that she must see about having her glasses changed the next time she went to town, for her eyes had grown tired very often of late.

It was nearly dark, for the full November twilight had fallen around Green Gables, and the only light in the kitchen came from the dancing red flames in the stove.

Anne was curled up Turkfashion on the hearthrug, gazing into that joyous glow where the sunshine of a hundred summers was being distilled from the maple cordwood. She had been reading, but her book had slipped to the floor, and now she was dreaming, with a smile on her parted lips. Glittering castles in Spain were shaping themselves out of the mists and rainbows of her lively fancy; adventures wonderful and enthralling were happening to her in cloudland — adventures that always turned out triumphantly and never involved her in scrapes like those of actual life.

Marilla looked at her with a tenderness that would never have been suffered to reveal itself in any clearer light than that soft mingling of fireshine and shadow. The lesson of a love that should display itself easily in spoken word and open look was one Marilla could never learn. But she had learned to love this slim, grayeyed girl with an affection all the deeper and stronger from its very undemonstrativeness. Her love made her afraid of being unduly indulgent, indeed. She had an uneasy feeling that it was rather sinful to set one's heart so intensely on any human creature as she had set hers on Anne, and perhaps she performed a sort of unconscious penance for this by being stricter and more critical than if the girl had been less dear to her. Certainly Anne herself had no idea how Marilla loved her. She sometimes thought wistfully that Marilla was very hard to please and distinctly lacking in sympathy and understanding. But she

always checked the thought reproachfully, remembering what she owed to Marilla.

“Anne,” said Marilla abruptly, “Miss Stacy was here this afternoon when you were out with Diana.”

Anne came back from her other world with a start and a sigh.

“Was she? Oh, I’m so sorry I wasn’t in. Why didn’t you call me, Marilla? Diana and I were only over in the Haunted Wood. It’s lovely in the woods now. All the little wood things — the ferns and the satin leaves and the crackerberries — have gone to sleep, just as if somebody had tucked them away until spring under a blanket of leaves. I think it was a little gray fairy with a rainbow scarf that came tiptoeing along the last moonlight night and did it. Diana wouldn’t say much about that, though. Diana has never forgotten the scolding her mother gave her about imagining ghosts into the Haunted Wood. It had a very bad effect on Diana’s imagination. It blighted it. Mrs. Lynde says Myrtle Bell is a blighted being. I asked Ruby Gillis why Myrtle was blighted, and Ruby said she guessed it was because her young man had gone back on her. Ruby Gillis thinks of nothing but young men, and the older she gets the worse she is. Young men are all very well in their place, but it doesn’t do to drag them into everything, does it? Diana and I are thinking seriously of promising each other that we will never marry but be nice old maids and live together forever. Diana hasn’t quite made up her mind though, because she thinks perhaps it would be nobler to marry some wild, dashing, wicked young man and reform him. Diana and I talk a great deal about serious subjects now, you know. We feel that we are so much older than we used to be that it isn’t becoming to talk of childish matters. It’s such a solemn thing to be almost fourteen, Marilla. Miss Stacy took all us girls who are in our teens down to the brook last Wednesday, and talked to us about it. She said we couldn’t be too careful what habits we formed and what ideals we acquired in our teens, because by the time we were twenty our characters would be developed and the foundation laid for our whole future life. And she said if the foundation was shaky we could never build anything really worth while on it. Diana and I talked the matter over

coming home from school. We felt extremely solemn, Marilla. And we decided that we would try to be very careful indeed and form respectable habits and learn all we could and be as sensible as possible, so that by the time we were twenty our characters would be properly developed. It's perfectly appalling to think of being twenty, Marilla. It sounds so fearfully old and grown up. But why was Miss Stacy here this afternoon?"

"That is what I want to tell you, Anne, if you'll ever give me a chance to get a word in edgewise. She was talking about you."

"About me?" Anne looked rather scared. Then she flushed and exclaimed:

"Oh, I know what she was saying. I meant to tell you, Marilla, honestly I did, but I forgot. Miss Stacy caught me reading Ben Hur in school yesterday afternoon when I should have been studying my Canadian history. Jane Andrews lent it to me. I was reading it at dinner hour, and I had just got to the chariot race when school went in. I was simply wild to know how it turned out — although I felt sure Ben Hur must win, because it wouldn't be poetical justice if he didn't — so I spread the history open on my desk lid and then tucked Ben Hur between the desk and my knee. I just looked as if I were studying Canadian history, you know, while all the while I was reveling in Ben Hur. I was so interested in it that I never noticed Miss Stacy coming down the aisle until all at once I just looked up and there she was looking down at me, so reproachful-like. I can't tell you how ashamed I felt, Marilla, especially when I heard Josie Pye giggling. Miss Stacy took Ben Hur away, but she never said a word then. She kept me in at recess and talked to me. She said I had done very wrong in two respects. First, I was wasting the time I ought to have put on my studies; and secondly, I was deceiving my teacher in trying to make it appear I was reading a history when it was a storybook instead. I had never realized until that moment, Marilla, that what I was doing was deceitful. I was shocked. I cried bitterly, and asked Miss Stacy to forgive me and I'd never do such a thing again; and I offered to do penance by never so much as looking at Ben Hur for a whole week, not even to see how the chariot race turned out. But Miss Stacy said she wouldn't require that, and she forgave

me freely. So I think it wasn't very kind of her to come up here to you about it after all."

"Miss Stacy never mentioned such a thing to me, Anne, and its only your guilty conscience that's the matter with you. You have no business to be taking storybooks to school. You read too many novels anyhow. When I was a girl I wasn't so much as allowed to look at a novel."

"Oh, how can you call Ben Hur a novel when it's really such a religious book?" protested Anne. "Of course it's a little too exciting to be proper reading for Sunday, and I only read it on weekdays. And I never read ANY book now unless either Miss Stacy or Mrs. Allan thinks it is a proper book for a girl thirteen and three-quarters to read. Miss Stacy made me promise that. She found me reading a book one day called, The Lurid Mystery of the Haunted Hall. It was one Ruby Gillis had lent me, and, oh, Marilla, it was so fascinating and creepy. It just curdled the blood in my veins. But Miss Stacy said it was a very silly, unwholesome book, and she asked me not to read any more of it or any like it. I didn't mind promising not to read any more like it, but it was AGONIZING to give back that book without knowing how it turned out. But my love for Miss Stacy stood the test and I did. It's really wonderful, Marilla, what you can do when you're truly anxious to please a certain person."

"Well, I guess I'll light the lamp and get to work," said Marilla. "I see plainly that you don't want to hear what Miss Stacy had to say. You're more interested in the sound of your own tongue than in anything else."

"Oh, indeed, Marilla, I do want to hear it," cried Anne contritely. "I won't say another word — not one. I know I talk too much, but I am really trying to overcome it, and although I say far too much, yet if you only knew how many things I want to say and don't, you'd give me some credit for it. Please tell me, Marilla."

"Well, Miss Stacy wants to organize a class among her advanced students who mean to study for the entrance examination into Queen's. She intends to give them extra lessons for an hour after school. And she came to ask Matthew and me if we would like to have you join it. What do

you think about it yourself, Anne? Would you like to go to Queen's and pass for a teacher?"

"Oh, Marilla!" Anne straightened to her knees and clasped her hands. "It's been the dream of my life — that is, for the last six months, ever since Ruby and Jane began to talk of studying for the Entrance. But I didn't say anything about it, because I supposed it would be perfectly useless. I'd love to be a teacher. But won't it be dreadfully expensive? Mr. Andrews says it cost him one hundred and fifty dollars to put Prissy through, and Prissy wasn't a dunce in geometry."

"I guess you needn't worry about that part of it. When Matthew and I took you to bring up we resolved we would do the best we could for you and give you a good education. I believe in a girl being fitted to earn her own living whether she ever has to or not. You'll always have a home at Green Gables as long as Matthew and I are here, but nobody knows what is going to happen in this uncertain world, and it's just as well to be prepared. So you can join the Queen's class if you like, Anne."

"Oh, Marilla, thank you." Anne flung her arms about Marilla's waist and looked up earnestly into her face. "I'm extremely grateful to you and Matthew. And I'll study as hard as I can and do my very best to be a credit to you. I warn you not to expect much in geometry, but I think I can hold my own in anything else if I work hard."

"I dare say you'll get along well enough. Miss Stacy says you are bright and diligent." Not for worlds would Marilla have told Anne just what Miss Stacy had said about her; that would have been to pamper vanity. "You needn't rush to any extreme of killing yourself over your books. There is no hurry. You won't be ready to try the Entrance for a year and a half yet. But it's well to begin in time and be thoroughly grounded, Miss Stacy says."

"I shall take more interest than ever in my studies now," said Anne blissfully, "because I have a purpose in life. Mr. Allan says everybody should have a purpose in life and pursue it faithfully. Only he says we must first make sure that it is a worthy purpose. I would call it a worthy

purpose to want to be a teacher like Miss Stacy, wouldn't you, Marilla? I think it's a very noble profession."

The Queen's class was organized in due time. Gilbert Blythe, Anne Shirley, Ruby Gillis, Jane Andrews, Josie Pye, Charlie Sloane, and Moody Spurgeon MacPherson joined it. Diana Barry did not, as her parents did not intend to send her to Queen's. This seemed nothing short of a calamity to Anne. Never, since the night on which Minnie May had had the croup, had she and Diana been separated in anything. On the evening when the Queen's class first remained in school for the extra lessons and Anne saw Diana go slowly out with the others, to walk home alone through the Birch Path and Violet Vale, it was all the former could do to keep her seat and refrain from rushing impulsively after her chum. A lump came into her throat, and she hastily retired behind the pages of her uplifted Latin grammar to hide the tears in her eyes. Not for worlds would Anne have had Gilbert Blythe or Josie Pye see those tears.

"But, oh, Marilla, I really felt that I had tasted the bitterness of death, as Mr. Allan said in his sermon last Sunday, when I saw Diana go out alone," she said mournfully that night. "I thought how splendid it would have been if Diana had only been going to study for the Entrance, too. But we can't have things perfect in this imperfect world, as Mrs. Lynde says. Mrs. Lynde isn't exactly a comforting person sometimes, but there's no doubt she says a great many very true things. And I think the Queen's class is going to be extremely interesting. Jane and Ruby are just going to study to be teachers. That is the height of their ambition. Ruby says she will only teach for two years after she gets through, and then she intends to be married. Jane says she will devote her whole life to teaching, and never, never marry, because you are paid a salary for teaching, but a husband won't pay you anything, and growls if you ask for a share in the egg and butter money. I expect Jane speaks from mournful experience, for Mrs. Lynde says that her father is a perfect old crank, and meaner than second skimmings. Josie Pye says she is just going to college for education's sake, because she won't have to earn her own living; she says of course it is different with orphans who are living on charity — THEY have to

hustle. Moody Spurgeon is going to be a minister. Mrs. Lynde says he couldn't be anything else with a name like that to live up to. I hope it isn't wicked of me, Marilla, but really the thought of Moody Spurgeon being a minister makes me laugh. He's such a funny-looking boy with that big fat face, and his little blue eyes, and his ears sticking out like flaps. But perhaps he will be more intellectual looking when he grows up. Charlie Sloane says he's going to go into politics and be a member of Parliament, but Mrs. Lynde says he'll never succeed at that, because the Sloanes are all honest people, and it's only rascals that get on in politics nowadays."

"What is Gilbert Blythe going to be?" queried Marilla, seeing that Anne was opening her Caesar.

"I don't happen to know what Gilbert Blythe's ambition in life is — if he has any," said Anne scornfully.

There was open rivalry between Gilbert and Anne now. Previously the rivalry had been rather onesided, but there was no longer any doubt that Gilbert was as determined to be first in class as Anne was. He was a foeman worthy of her steel. The other members of the class tacitly acknowledged their superiority, and never dreamed of trying to compete with them.

Since the day by the pond when she had refused to listen to his plea for forgiveness, Gilbert, save for the aforesaid determined rivalry, had evinced no recognition whatever of the existence of Anne Shirley. He talked and jested with the other girls, exchanged books and puzzles with them, discussed lessons and plans, sometimes walked home with one or the other of them from prayer meeting or Debating Club. But Anne Shirley he simply ignored, and Anne found out that it is not pleasant to be ignored. It was in vain that she told herself with a toss of her head that she did not care. Deep down in her wayward, feminine little heart she knew that she did care, and that if she had that chance of the Lake of Shining Waters again she would answer very differently. All at once, as it seemed, and to her secret dismay, she found that the old resentment she had cherished against him was gone — gone just when she most needed its sustaining power. It was in vain that she recalled every incident and emotion of that

memorable occasion and tried to feel the old satisfying anger. That day by the pond had witnessed its last spasmodic flicker. Anne realized that she had forgiven and forgotten without knowing it. But it was too late.

And at least neither Gilbert nor anybody else, not even Diana, should ever suspect how sorry she was and how much she wished she hadn't been so proud and horrid! She determined to "shroud her feelings in deepest oblivion," and it may be stated here and now that she did it, so successfully that Gilbert, who possibly was not quite so indifferent as he seemed, could not console himself with any belief that Anne felt his retaliatory scorn. The only poor comfort he had was that she snubbed Charlie Sloane, unmercifully, continually, and undeservedly.

Otherwise the winter passed away in a round of pleasant duties and studies. For Anne the days slipped by like golden beads on the necklace of the year. She was happy, eager, interested; there were lessons to be learned and honor to be won; delightful books to read; new pieces to be practiced for the Sunday-school choir; pleasant Saturday afternoons at the manse with Mrs. Allan; and then, almost before Anne realized it, spring had come again to Green Gables and all the world was abloom once more.

Studies palled just a wee bit then; the Queen's class, left behind in school while the others scattered to green lanes and leafy wood cuts and meadow byways, looked wistfully out of the windows and discovered that Latin verbs and French exercises had somehow lost the tang and zest they had possessed in the crisp winter months. Even Anne and Gilbert lagged and grew indifferent. Teacher and taught were alike glad when the term was ended and the glad vacation days stretched rosily before them.

"But you've done good work this past year," Miss Stacy told them on the last evening, "and you deserve a good, jolly vacation. Have the best time you can in the out-of-door world and lay in a good stock of health and vitality and ambition to carry you through next year. It will be the tug of war, you know — the last year before the Entrance."

"Are you going to be back next year, Miss Stacy?" asked Josie Pye.

Josie Pye never scrupled to ask questions; in this instance the rest of the class felt grateful to her; none of them would have dared to ask it of

Miss Stacy, but all wanted to, for there had been alarming rumors running at large through the school for some time that Miss Stacy was not coming back the next year — that she had been offered a position in the grade school of her own home district and meant to accept. The Queen's class listened in breathless suspense for her answer.

"Yes, I think I will," said Miss Stacy. "I thought of taking another school, but I have decided to come back to Avonlea. To tell the truth, I've grown so interested in my pupils here that I found I couldn't leave them. So I'll stay and see you through."

"Hurrah!" said Moody Spurgeon. Moody Spurgeon had never been so carried away by his feelings before, and he blushed uncomfortably every time he thought about it for a week.

"Oh, I'm so glad," said Anne, with shining eyes. "Dear Stacy, it would be perfectly dreadful if you didn't come back. I don't believe I could have the heart to go on with my studies at all if another teacher came here."

When Anne got home that night she stacked all her textbooks away in an old trunk in the attic, locked it, and threw the key into the blanket box.

"I'm not even going to look at a schoolbook in vacation," she told Marilla. "I've studied as hard all the term as I possibly could and I've pored over that geometry until I know every proposition in the first book off by heart, even when the letters ARE changed. I just feel tired of everything sensible and I'm going to let my imagination run riot for the summer. Oh, you needn't be alarmed, Marilla. I'll only let it run riot within reasonable limits. But I want to have a real good jolly time this summer, for maybe it's the last summer I'll be a little girl. Mrs. Lynde says that if I keep stretching out next year as I've done this I'll have to put on longer skirts. She says I'm all running to legs and eyes. And when I put on longer skirts I shall feel that I have to live up to them and be very dignified. It won't even do to believe in fairies then, I'm afraid; so I'm going to believe in them with all my whole heart this summer. I think we're going to have a very gay vacation. Ruby Gillis is going to have a birthday party soon and there's the Sunday school picnic and the missionary concert next month. And Mr. Barry says that some evening

he'll take Diana and me over to the White Sands Hotel and have dinner there. They have dinner there in the evening, you know. Jane Andrews was over once last summer and she says it was a dazzling sight to see the electric lights and the flowers and all the lady guests in such beautiful dresses. Jane says it was her first glimpse into high life and she'll never forget it to her dying day."

Mrs. Lynde came up the next afternoon to find out why Marilla had not been at the Aid meeting on Thursday. When Marilla was not at Aid meeting people knew there was something wrong at Green Gables.

"Matthew had a bad spell with his heart Thursday," Marilla explained, "and I didn't feel like leaving him. Oh, yes, he's all right again now, but he takes them spells oftener than he used to and I'm anxious about him. The doctor says he must be careful to avoid excitement. That's easy enough, for Matthew doesn't go about looking for excitement by any means and never did, but he's not to do any very heavy work either and you might as well tell Matthew not to breathe as not to work. Come and lay off your things, Rachel. You'll stay to tea?"

"Well, seeing you're so pressing, perhaps I might as well, stay" said Mrs. Rachel, who had not the slightest intention of doing anything else.

Mrs. Rachel and Marilla sat comfortably in the parlor while Anne got the tea and made hot biscuits that were light and white enough to defy even Mrs. Rachel's criticism.

"I must say Anne has turned out a real smart girl," admitted Mrs. Rachel, as Marilla accompanied her to the end of the lane at sunset. "She must be a great help to you."

"She is," said Marilla, "and she's real steady and reliable now. I used to be afraid she'd never get over her featherbrained ways, but she has and I wouldn't be afraid to trust her in anything now."

"I never would have thought she'd have turned out so well that first day I was here three years ago," said Mrs. Rachel. "Lawful heart, shall I ever forget that tantrum of hers! When I went home that night I says to Thomas, says I, 'Mark my words, Thomas, Marilla Cuthbert'll live to rue the step she's took.' But I was mistaken and I'm real glad of it. I ain't one

of those kind of people, Marilla, as can never be brought to own up that they've made a mistake. No, that never was my way, thank goodness. I did make a mistake in judging Anne, but it weren't no wonder, for an odder, unexpecteder witch of a child there never was in this world, that's what. There was no ciphering her out by the rules that worked with other children. It's nothing short of wonderful how she's improved these three years, but especially in looks. She's a real pretty girl got to be, though I can't say I'm overly partial to that pale, big-eyed style myself. I like more snap and color, like Diana Barry has or Ruby Gillis. Ruby Gillis's looks are real showy. But somehow — I don't know how it is but when Anne and them are together, though she ain't half as handsome, she makes them look kind of common and overdone — something like them white June lilies she calls narcissus alongside of the big, red peonies, that's what."

Where the Brook and River Meet

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Anne had her “good” summer and enjoyed it wholeheartedly. She and Diana fairly lived outdoors, reveling in all the delights that Lover’s Lane and the Dryad’s Bubble and Willowmere and Victoria Island afforded. Marilla offered no objections to Anne’s gypsyings. The Spencervale doctor who had come the night Minnie May had the croup met Anne at the house of a patient one afternoon early in vacation, looked her over sharply, screwed up his mouth, shook his head, and sent a message to Marilla Cuthbert by another person. It was:

“Keep that redheaded girl of yours in the open air all summer and don’t let her read books until she gets more spring into her step.”

This message frightened Marilla wholesomely. She read Anne’s death warrant by consumption in it unless it was scrupulously obeyed. As a result, Anne had the golden summer of her life as far as freedom and frolic went. She walked, rowed, berried, and dreamed to her heart’s content; and when September came she was bright-eyed and alert, with a step that would have satisfied the Spencervale doctor and a heart full of ambition and zest once more.

“I feel just like studying with might and main,” she declared as she brought her books down from the attic. “Oh, you good old friends, I’m glad to see your honest faces once more — yes, even you, geometry. I’ve had a perfectly beautiful summer, Marilla, and now I’m rejoicing as a strong man to run a race, as Mr. Allan said last Sunday. Doesn’t Mr. Allan preach magnificent sermons? Mrs. Lynde says he is improving every day and the first thing we know some city church will gobble him up and then we’ll be left and have to turn to and break in another green preacher. But I don’t see the use of meeting trouble halfway, do you, Marilla? I think it would be better just to enjoy Mr. Allan while we have him. If I were a man I think I’d be a minister. They can have such an influence for good, if their

theology is sound; and it must be thrilling to preach splendid sermons and stir your hearers' hearts. Why can't women be ministers, Marilla? I asked Mrs. Lynde that and she was shocked and said it would be a scandalous thing. She said there might be female ministers in the States and she believed there was, but thank goodness we hadn't got to that stage in Canada yet and she hoped we never would. But I don't see why. I think women would make splendid ministers. When there is a social to be got up or a church tea or anything else to raise money the women have to turn to and do the work. I'm sure Mrs. Lynde can pray every bit as well as Superintendent Bell and I've no doubt she could preach too with a little practice."

"Yes, I believe she could," said Marilla dryly. "She does plenty of unofficial preaching as it is. Nobody has much of a chance to go wrong in Avonlea with Rachel to oversee them."

"Marilla," said Anne in a burst of confidence, "I want to tell you something and ask you what you think about it. It has worried me terribly — on Sunday afternoons, that is, when I think specially about such matters. I do really want to be good; and when I'm with you or Mrs. Allan or Miss Stacy I want it more than ever and I want to do just what would please you and what you would approve of. But mostly when I'm with Mrs. Lynde I feel desperately wicked and as if I wanted to go and do the very thing she tells me I oughtn't to do. I feel irresistibly tempted to do it. Now, what do you think is the reason I feel like that? Do you think it's because I'm really bad and unregenerate?"

Marilla looked dubious for a moment. Then she laughed.

"If you are I guess I am too, Anne, for Rachel often has that very effect on me. I sometimes think she'd have more of an influence for good, as you say yourself, if she didn't keep nagging people to do right. There should have been a special commandment against nagging. But there, I shouldn't talk so. Rachel is a good Christian woman and she means well. There isn't a kinder soul in Avonlea and she never shirks her share of work."

"I'm very glad you feel the same," said Anne decidedly. "It's so encouraging. I shan't worry so much over that after this. But I dare say

there'll be other things to worry me. They keep coming up new all the time — things to perplex you, you know. You settle one question and there's another right after. There are so many things to be thought over and decided when you're beginning to grow up. It keeps me busy all the time thinking them over and deciding what is right. It's a serious thing to grow up, isn't it, Marilla? But when I have such good friends as you and Matthew and Mrs. Allan and Miss Stacy I ought to grow up successfully, and I'm sure it will be my own fault if I don't. I feel it's a great responsibility because I have only the one chance. If I don't grow up right I can't go back and begin over again. I've grown two inches this summer, Marilla. Mr. Gillis measured me at Ruby's party. I'm so glad you made my new dresses longer. That dark-green one is so pretty and it was sweet of you to put on the flounce. Of course I know it wasn't really necessary, but flounces are so stylish this fall and Josie Pye has flounces on all her dresses. I know I'll be able to study better because of mine. I shall have such a comfortable feeling deep down in my mind about that flounce."

"It's worth something to have that," admitted Marilla.

Miss Stacy came back to Avonlea school and found all her pupils eager for work once more. Especially did the Queen's class gird up their loins for the fray, for at the end of the coming year, dimly shadowing their pathway already, loomed up that fateful thing known as "the Entrance," at the thought of which one and all felt their hearts sink into their very shoes. Suppose they did not pass! That thought was doomed to haunt Anne through the waking hours of that winter, Sunday afternoons inclusive, to the almost entire exclusion of moral and theological problems. When Anne had bad dreams she found herself staring miserably at pass lists of the Entrance exams, where Gilbert Blythe's name was blazoned at the top and in which hers did not appear at all.

But it was a jolly, busy, happy swift-flying winter. Schoolwork was as interesting, class rivalry as absorbing, as of yore. New worlds of thought, feeling, and ambition, fresh, fascinating fields of unexplored knowledge seemed to be opening out before Anne's eager eyes.

"Hills peeped o'er hill and Alps on Alps arose."

Much of all this was due to Miss Stacy's tactful, careful, broadminded guidance. She led her class to think and explore and discover for themselves and encouraged straying from the old beaten paths to a degree that quite shocked Mrs. Lynde and the school trustees, who viewed all innovations on established methods rather dubiously.

Apart from her studies Anne expanded socially, for Marilla, mindful of the Spencervale doctor's dictum, no longer vetoed occasional outings. The Debating Club flourished and gave several concerts; there were one or two parties almost verging on grownup affairs; there were sleigh drives and skating frolics galore.

Between times Anne grew, shooting up so rapidly that Marilla was astonished one day, when they were standing side by side, to find the girl was taller than herself.

"Why, Anne, how you've grown!" she said, almost unbelievably. A sigh followed on the words. Marilla felt a queer regret over Anne's inches. The child she had learned to love had vanished somehow and here was this tall, serious-eyed girl of fifteen, with the thoughtful brows and the proudly poised little head, in her place. Marilla loved the girl as much as she had loved the child, but she was conscious of a queer sorrowful sense of loss. And that night, when Anne had gone to prayer meeting with Diana, Marilla sat alone in the wintry twilight and indulged in the weakness of a cry. Matthew, coming in with a lantern, caught her at it and gazed at her in such consternation that Marilla had to laugh through her tears.

"I was thinking about Anne," she explained. "She's got to be such a big girl — and she'll probably be away from us next winter. I'll miss her terrible."

"She'll be able to come home often," comforted Matthew, to whom Anne was as yet and always would be the little, eager girl he had brought home from Bright River on that June evening four years before. "The branch railroad will be built to Carmody by that time."

"It won't be the same thing as having her here all the time," sighed Marilla gloomily, determined to enjoy her luxury of grief uncomfited. "But there — men can't understand these things!"

There were other changes in Anne no less real than the physical change. For one thing, she became much quieter. Perhaps she thought all the more and dreamed as much as ever, but she certainly talked less. Marilla noticed and commented on this also.

“You don’t chatter half as much as you used to, Anne, nor use half as many big words. What has come over you?”

Anne colored and laughed a little, as she dropped her book and looked dreamily out of the window, where big fat red buds were bursting out on the creeper in response to the lure of the spring sunshine.

“I don’t know — I don’t want to talk as much,” she said, denting her chin thoughtfully with her forefinger. “It’s nicer to think dear, pretty thoughts and keep them in one’s heart, like treasures. I don’t like to have them laughed at or wondered over. And somehow I don’t want to use big words any more. It’s almost a pity, isn’t it, now that I’m really growing big enough to say them if I did want to. It’s fun to be almost grown up in some ways, but it’s not the kind of fun I expected, Marilla. There’s so much to learn and do and think that there isn’t time for big words. Besides, Miss Stacy says the short ones are much stronger and better. She makes us write all our essays as simply as possible. It was hard at first. I was so used to crowding in all the fine big words I could think of — and I thought of any number of them. But I’ve got used to it now and I see it’s so much better.”

“What has become of your story club? I haven’t heard you speak of it for a long time.”

“The story club isn’t in existence any longer. We hadn’t time for it — and anyhow I think we had got tired of it. It was silly to be writing about love and murder and elopements and mysteries. Miss Stacy sometimes has us write a story for training in composition, but she won’t let us write anything but what might happen in Avonlea in our own lives, and she criticizes it very sharply and makes us criticize our own too. I never thought my compositions had so many faults until I began to look for them myself. I felt so ashamed I wanted to give up altogether, but Miss Stacy said I could learn to write well if I only trained myself to be my own severest critic. And so I am trying to.”

“You’ve only two more months before the Entrance,” said Marilla. “Do you think you’ll be able to get through?”

Anne shivered.

“I don’t know. Sometimes I think I’ll be all right — and then I get horribly afraid. We’ve studied hard and Miss Stacy has drilled us thoroughly, but we mayn’t get through for all that. We’ve each got a stumbling block. Mine is geometry of course, and Jane’s is Latin, and Ruby and Charlie’s is algebra, and Josie’s is arithmetic. Moody Spurgeon says he feels it in his bones that he is going to fail in English history. Miss Stacy is going to give us examinations in June just as hard as we’ll have at the Entrance and mark us just as strictly, so we’ll have some idea. I wish it was all over, Marilla. It haunts me. Sometimes I wake up in the night and wonder what I’ll do if I don’t pass.”

“Why, go to school next year and try again,” said Marilla unconcernedly.

“Oh, I don’t believe I’d have the heart for it. It would be such a disgrace to fail, especially if Gil — if the others passed. And I get so nervous in an examination that I’m likely to make a mess of it. I wish I had nerves like Jane Andrews. Nothing rattles her.”

Anne sighed and, dragging her eyes from the witcheries of the spring world, the beckoning day of breeze and blue, and the green things upspringing in the garden, buried herself resolutely in her book. There would be other springs, but if she did not succeed in passing the Entrance, Anne felt convinced that she would never recover sufficiently to enjoy them.

The Pass List Is Out

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With the end of June came the close of the term and the close of Miss Stacy's rule in Avonlea school. Anne and Diana walked home that evening feeling very sober indeed. Red eyes and damp handkerchiefs bore convincing testimony to the fact that Miss Stacy's farewell words must have been quite as touching as Mr. Phillips's had been under similar circumstances three years before. Diana looked back at the schoolhouse from the foot of the spruce hill and sighed deeply.

"It does seem as if it was the end of everything, doesn't it?" she said dismally.

"You oughtn't to feel half as badly as I do," said Anne, hunting vainly for a dry spot on her handkerchief. "You'll be back again next winter, but I suppose I've left the dear old school forever — if I have good luck, that is."

"It won't be a bit the same. Miss Stacy won't be there, nor you nor Jane nor Ruby probably. I shall have to sit all alone, for I couldn't bear to have another deskmate after you. Oh, we have had jolly times, haven't we, Anne? It's dreadful to think they're all over."

Two big tears rolled down by Diana's nose.

"If you would stop crying I could," said Anne imploringly. "Just as soon as I put away my hanky I see you brimming up and that starts me off again. As Mrs. Lynde says, 'If you can't be cheerful, be as cheerful as you can.' After all, I dare say I'll be back next year. This is one of the times I KNOW I'm not going to pass. They're getting alarmingly frequent."

"Why, you came out splendidly in the exams Miss Stacy gave."

"Yes, but those exams didn't make me nervous. When I think of the real thing you can't imagine what a horrid cold fluttery feeling comes round my heart. And then my number is thirteen and Josie Pye says it's so

unlucky. I am NOT superstitious and I know it can make no difference. But still I wish it wasn't thirteen."

"I do wish I was going in with you," said Diana. "Wouldn't we have a perfectly elegant time? But I suppose you'll have to cram in the evenings."

"No; Miss Stacy has made us promise not to open a book at all. She says it would only tire and confuse us and we are to go out walking and not think about the exams at all and go to bed early. It's good advice, but I expect it will be hard to follow; good advice is apt to be, I think. Prissy Andrews told me that she sat up half the night every night of her Entrance week and crammed for dear life; and I had determined to sit up AT LEAST as long as she did. It was so kind of your Aunt Josephine to ask me to stay at Beechwood while I'm in town."

"You'll write to me while you're in, won't you?"

"I'll write Tuesday night and tell you how the first day goes," promised Anne.

"I'll be haunting the post office Wednesday," vowed Diana.

Anne went to town the following Monday and on Wednesday Diana haunted the post office, as agreed, and got her letter.

"Dearest Diana" [wrote Anne],

"Here it is Tuesday night and I'm writing this in the library at Beechwood. Last night I was horribly lonesome all alone in my room and wished so much you were with me. I couldn't "cram" because I'd promised Miss Stacy not to, but it was as hard to keep from opening my history as it used to be to keep from reading a story before my lessons were learned.

"This morning Miss Stacy came for me and we went to the Academy, calling for Jane and Ruby and Josie on our way. Ruby asked me to feel her hands and they were as cold as ice. Josie said I looked as if I hadn't slept a wink and she didn't believe I was strong enough to stand the grind of the teacher's course even if I did get through. There are times and seasons even yet when I don't feel that I've made any great headway in learning to like Josie Pye!

“When we reached the Academy there were scores of students there from all over the Island. The first person we saw was Moody Spurgeon sitting on the steps and muttering away to himself. Jane asked him what on earth he was doing and he said he was repeating the multiplication table over and over to steady his nerves and for pity’s sake not to interrupt him, because if he stopped for a moment he got frightened and forgot everything he ever knew, but the multiplication table kept all his facts firmly in their proper place!

“When we were assigned to our rooms Miss Stacy had to leave us. Jane and I sat together and Jane was so composed that I envied her. No need of the multiplication table for good, steady, sensible Jane! I wondered if I looked as I felt and if they could hear my heart thumping clear across the room. Then a man came in and began distributing the English examination sheets. My hands grew cold then and my head fairly whirled around as I picked it up. Just one awful moment — Diana, I felt exactly as I did four years ago when I asked Marilla if I might stay at Green Gables — and then everything cleared up in my mind and my heart began beating again — I forgot to say that it had stopped altogether! — for I knew I could do something with THAT paper anyhow.

“At noon we went home for dinner and then back again for history in the afternoon. The history was a pretty hard paper and I got dreadfully mixed up in the dates. Still, I think I did fairly well today. But oh, Diana, tomorrow the geometry exam comes off and when I think of it it takes every bit of determination I possess to keep from opening my Euclid. If I thought the multiplication table would help me any I would recite it from now till tomorrow morning.

“I went down to see the other girls this evening. On my way I met Moody Spurgeon wandering distractedly around. He said he knew he had failed in history and he was born to be a disappointment to his parents and he was going home on the morning train; and it would be easier to be a carpenter than a minister, anyhow. I cheered him up and persuaded him to stay to the end because it would be unfair to Miss Stacy if he didn’t.

Sometimes I have wished I was born a boy, but when I see Moody Spurgeon I'm always glad I'm a girl and not his sister.

"Ruby was in hysterics when I reached their boardinghouse; she had just discovered a fearful mistake she had made in her English paper. When she recovered we went uptown and had an ice cream. How we wished you had been with us.

"Oh, Diana, if only the geometry examination were over! But there, as Mrs. Lynde would say, the sun will go on rising and setting whether I fail in geometry or not. That is true but not especially comforting. I think I'd rather it didn't go on if I failed!

"Yours devotedly,

"Anne"

The geometry examination and all the others were over in due time and Anne arrived home on Friday evening, rather tired but with an air of chastened triumph about her. Diana was over at Green Gables when she arrived and they met as if they had been parted for years.

"You old darling, it's perfectly splendid to see you back again. It seems like an age since you went to town and oh, Anne, how did you get along?"

"Pretty well, I think, in everything but the geometry. I don't know whether I passed in it or not and I have a creepy, crawly presentiment that I didn't. Oh, how good it is to be back! Green Gables is the dearest, loveliest spot in the world."

"How did the others do?"

"The girls say they know they didn't pass, but I think they did pretty well. Josie says the geometry was so easy a child of ten could do it! Moody Spurgeon still thinks he failed in history and Charlie says he failed in algebra. But we don't really know anything about it and won't until the pass list is out. That won't be for a fortnight. Fancy living a fortnight in such suspense! I wish I could go to sleep and never wake up until it is over."

Diana knew it would be useless to ask how Gilbert Blythe had fared, so she merely said:

"Oh, you'll pass all right. Don't worry."

“I’d rather not pass at all than not come out pretty well up on the list,” flashed Anne, by which she meant — and Diana knew she meant — that success would be incomplete and bitter if she did not come out ahead of Gilbert Blythe.

With this end in view Anne had strained every nerve during the examinations. So had Gilbert. They had met and passed each other on the street a dozen times without any sign of recognition and every time Anne had held her head a little higher and wished a little more earnestly that she had made friends with Gilbert when he asked her, and vowed a little more determinedly to surpass him in the examination. She knew that all Avonlea junior was wondering which would come out first; she even knew that Jimmy Glover and Ned Wright had a bet on the question and that Josie Pye had said there was no doubt in the world that Gilbert would be first; and she felt that her humiliation would be unbearable if she failed.

But she had another and nobler motive for wishing to do well. She wanted to “pass high” for the sake of Matthew and Marilla — especially Matthew. Matthew had declared to her his conviction that she “would beat the whole Island.” That, Anne felt, was something it would be foolish to hope for even in the wildest dreams. But she did hope fervently that she would be among the first ten at least, so that she might see Matthew’s kindly brown eyes gleam with pride in her achievement. That, she felt, would be a sweet reward indeed for all her hard work and patient grubbing among unimaginative equations and conjugations.

At the end of the fortnight Anne took to “haunting” the post office also, in the distracted company of Jane, Ruby, and Josie, opening the Charlottetown dailies with shaking hands and cold, sinkaway feelings as bad as any experienced during the Entrance week. Charlie and Gilbert were not above doing this too, but Moody Spurgeon stayed resolutely away.

“I haven’t got the grit to go there and look at a paper in cold blood,” he told Anne. “I’m just going to wait until somebody comes and tells me suddenly whether I’ve passed or not.”

When three weeks had gone by without the pass list appearing Anne began to feel that she really couldn't stand the strain much longer. Her appetite failed and her interest in Avonlea doings languished. Mrs. Lynde wanted to know what else you could expect with a Tory superintendent of education at the head of affairs, and Matthew, noting Anne's paleness and indifference and the lagging steps that bore her home from the post office every afternoon, began seriously to wonder if he hadn't better vote Grit at the next election.

But one evening the news came. Anne was sitting at her open window, for the time forgetful of the woes of examinations and the cares of the world, as she drank in the beauty of the summer dusk, sweet-scented with flower breaths from the garden below and sibilant and rustling from the stir of poplars. The eastern sky above the firs was flushed faintly pink from the reflection of the west, and Anne was wondering dreamily if the spirit of color looked like that, when she saw Diana come flying down through the firs, over the log bridge, and up the slope, with a fluttering newspaper in her hand.

Anne sprang to her feet, knowing at once what that paper contained. The pass list was out! Her head whirled and her heart beat until it hurt her. She could not move a step. It seemed an hour to her before Diana came rushing along the hall and burst into the room without even knocking, so great was her excitement.

"Anne, you've passed," she cried, "passed the VERY FIRST — you and Gilbert both — you're ties — but your name is first. Oh, I'm so proud!"

Diana flung the paper on the table and herself on Anne's bed, utterly breathless and incapable of further speech. Anne lighted the lamp, oversetting the match safe and using up half a dozen matches before her shaking hands could accomplish the task. Then she snatched up the paper. Yes, she had passed — there was her name at the very top of a list of two hundred! That moment was worth living for.

"You did just splendidly, Anne," puffed Diana, recovering sufficiently to sit up and speak, for Anne, starry eyed and rapt, had not uttered a word.

“Father brought the paper home from Bright River not ten minutes ago — it came out on the afternoon train, you know, and won’t be here till tomorrow by mail — and when I saw the pass list I just rushed over like a wild thing. You’ve all passed, every one of you, Moody Spurgeon and all, although he’s conditioned in history. Jane and Ruby did pretty well — they’re halfway up — and so did Charlie. Josie just scraped through with three marks to spare, but you’ll see she’ll put on as many airs as if she’d led. Won’t Miss Stacy be delighted? Oh, Anne, what does it feel like to see your name at the head of a pass list like that? If it were me I know I’d go crazy with joy. I am pretty near crazy as it is, but you’re as calm and cool as a spring evening.”

“I’m just dazzled inside,” said Anne. “I want to say a hundred things, and I can’t find words to say them in. I never dreamed of this — yes, I did too, just once! I let myself think ONCE, ‘What if I should come out first?’ quakingly, you know, for it seemed so vain and presumptuous to think I could lead the Island. Excuse me a minute, Diana. I must run right out to the field to tell Matthew. Then we’ll go up the road and tell the good news to the others.”

They hurried to the hayfield below the barn where Matthew was coiling hay, and, as luck would have it, Mrs. Lynde was talking to Marilla at the lane fence.

“Oh, Matthew,” exclaimed Anne, “I’ve passed and I’m first — or one of the first! I’m not vain, but I’m thankful.”

“Well now, I always said it,” said Matthew, gazing at the pass list delightedly. “I knew you could beat them all easy.”

“You’ve done pretty well, I must say, Anne,” said Marilla, trying to hide her extreme pride in Anne from Mrs. Rachel’s critical eye. But that good soul said heartily:

“I just guess she has done well, and far be it from me to be backward in saying it. You’re a credit to your friends, Anne, that’s what, and we’re all proud of you.”

That night Anne, who had wound up the delightful evening with a serious little talk with Mrs. Allan at the manse, knelt sweetly by her open

window in a great sheen of moonshine and murmured a prayer of gratitude and aspiration that came straight from her heart. There was in it thankfulness for the past and reverent petition for the future; and when she slept on her white pillow her dreams were as fair and bright and beautiful as maidenhood might desire.

The Hotel Concert

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“Put on your white organdy, by all means, Anne,” advised Diana decidedly.

They were together in the east gable chamber; outside it was only twilight — a lovely yellowish-green twilight with a clear-blue cloudless sky. A big round moon, slowly deepening from her pallid luster into burnished silver, hung over the Haunted Wood; the air was full of sweet summer sounds — sleepy birds twittering, freakish breezes, faraway voices and laughter. But in Anne’s room the blind was drawn and the lamp lighted, for an important toilet was being made.

The east gable was a very different place from what it had been on that night four years before, when Anne had felt its bareness penetrate to the marrow of her spirit with its inhospitable chill. Changes had crept in, Marilla conniving at them resignedly, until it was as sweet and dainty a nest as a young girl could desire.

The velvet carpet with the pink roses and the pink silk curtains of Anne’s early visions had certainly never materialized; but her dreams had kept pace with her growth, and it is not probable she lamented them. The floor was covered with a pretty matting, and the curtains that softened the high window and fluttered in the vagrant breezes were of pale-green art muslin. The walls, hung not with gold and silver brocade tapestry, but with a dainty apple-blossom paper, were adorned with a few good pictures given Anne by Mrs. Allan. Miss Stacy’s photograph occupied the place of honor, and Anne made a sentimental point of keeping fresh flowers on the bracket under it. Tonight a spike of white lilies faintly perfumed the room like the dream of a fragrance. There was no “mahogany furniture,” but there was a white-painted bookcase filled with books, a cushioned wicker rocker, a toilet table befrilled with white muslin, a quaint, gilt-framed mirror with chubby pink Cupids and purple grapes painted over its arched top, that used to hang in the spare room, and a low white bed.

Anne was dressing for a concert at the White Sands Hotel. The guests had got it up in aid of the Charlottetown hospital, and had hunted out all the available amateur talent in the surrounding districts to help it along. Bertha Sampson and Pearl Clay of the White Sands Baptist choir had been asked to sing a duet; Milton Clark of Newbridge was to give a violin solo; Winnie Adella Blair of Carmody was to sing a Scotch ballad; and Laura Spencer of Spencervale and Anne Shirley of Avonlea were to recite.

As Anne would have said at one time, it was “an epoch in her life,” and she was deliciously athrill with the excitement of it. Matthew was in the seventh heaven of gratified pride over the honor conferred on his Anne and Marilla was not far behind, although she would have died rather than admit it, and said she didn’t think it was very proper for a lot of young folks to be gadding over to the hotel without any responsible person with them.

Anne and Diana were to drive over with Jane Andrews and her brother Billy in their double-seated buggy; and several other Avonlea girls and boys were going too. There was a party of visitors expected out from town, and after the concert a supper was to be given to the performers.

“Do you really think the organdy will be best?” queried Anne anxiously.

“I don’t think it’s as pretty as my blue-flowered muslin — and it certainly isn’t so fashionable.”

“But it suits you ever so much better,” said Diana. “It’s so soft and frilly and clinging. The muslin is stiff, and makes you look too dressed up. But the organdy seems as if it grew on you.”

Anne sighed and yielded. Diana was beginning to have a reputation for notable taste in dressing, and her advice on such subjects was much sought after. She was looking very pretty herself on this particular night in a dress of the lovely wildrose pink, from which Anne was forever debarred; but she was not to take any part in the concert, so her appearance was of minor importance. All her pains were bestowed upon Anne, who, she vowed, must, for the credit of Avonlea, be dressed and combed and adorned to the Queen’s taste.

“Pull out that frill a little more — so; here, let me tie your sash; now for your slippers. I’m going to braid your hair in two thick braids, and tie them halfway up with big white bows — no, don’t pull out a single curl over your forehead — just have the soft part. There is no way you do your hair suits you so well, Anne, and Mrs. Allan says you look like a Madonna when you part it so. I shall fasten this little white house rose just behind your ear. There was just one on my bush, and I saved it for you.”

“Shall I put my pearl beads on?” asked Anne. “Matthew brought me a string from town last week, and I know he’d like to see them on me.”

Diana pursed up her lips, put her black head on one side critically, and finally pronounced in favor of the beads, which were thereupon tied around Anne’s slim milk-white throat.

“There’s something so stylish about you, Anne,” said Diana, with unenvious admiration. “You hold your head with such an air. I suppose it’s your figure. I am just a dumpling. I’ve always been afraid of it, and now I know it is so. Well, I suppose I shall just have to resign myself to it.”

“But you have such dimples,” said Anne, smiling affectionately into the pretty, vivacious face so near her own. “Lovely dimples, like little dents in cream. I have given up all hope of dimples. My dimple-dream will never come true; but so many of my dreams have that I mustn’t complain. Am I all ready now?”

“All ready,” assured Diana, as Marilla appeared in the doorway, a gaunt figure with grayer hair than of yore and no fewer angles, but with a much softer face. “Come right in and look at our elocutionist, Marilla. Doesn’t she look lovely?”

Marilla emitted a sound between a sniff and a grunt.

“She looks neat and proper. I like that way of fixing her hair. But I expect she’ll ruin that dress driving over there in the dust and dew with it, and it looks most too thin for these damp nights. Organdy’s the most unserviceable stuff in the world anyhow, and I told Matthew so when he got it. But there is no use in saying anything to Matthew nowadays. Time was when he would take my advice, but now he just buys things for Anne regardless, and the clerks at Carmody know they can palm anything off on

him. Just let them tell him a thing is pretty and fashionable, and Matthew plunks his money down for it. Mind you keep your skirt clear of the wheel, Anne, and put your warm jacket on.”

Then Marilla stalked downstairs, thinking proudly how sweet Anne looked, with that

“One moonbeam from the forehead to the crown”

and regretting that she could not go to the concert herself to hear her girl recite.

“I wonder if it IS too damp for my dress,” said Anne anxiously.

“Not a bit of it,” said Diana, pulling up the window blind. “It’s a perfect night, and there won’t be any dew. Look at the moonlight.”

“I’m so glad my window looks east into the sunrising,” said Anne, going over to Diana. “It’s so splendid to see the morning coming up over those long hills and glowing through those sharp fir tops. It’s new every morning, and I feel as if I washed my very soul in that bath of earliest sunshine. Oh, Diana, I love this little room so dearly. I don’t know how I’ll get along without it when I go to town next month.”

“Don’t speak of your going away tonight,” begged Diana. “I don’t want to think of it, it makes me so miserable, and I do want to have a good time this evening. What are you going to recite, Anne? And are you nervous?”

“Not a bit. I’ve recited so often in public I don’t mind at all now. I’ve decided to give ‘The Maiden’s Vow.’ It’s so pathetic. Laura Spencer is going to give a comic recitation, but I’d rather make people cry than laugh.”

“What will you recite if they encore you?”

“They won’t dream of encoring me,” scoffed Anne, who was not without her own secret hopes that they would, and already visioned herself telling Matthew all about it at the next morning’s breakfast table. “There are Billy and Jane now — I hear the wheels. Come on.”

Billy Andrews insisted that Anne should ride on the front seat with him, so she unwillingly climbed up. She would have much preferred to sit back with the girls, where she could have laughed and chattered to her heart’s content. There was not much of either laughter or chatter in Billy.

He was a big, fat, stolid youth of twenty, with a round, expressionless face, and a painful lack of conversational gifts. But he admired Anne immensely, and was puffed up with pride over the prospect of driving to White Sands with that slim, upright figure beside him.

Anne, by dint of talking over her shoulder to the girls and occasionally passing a sop of civility to Billy — who grinned and chuckled and never could think of any reply until it was too late — contrived to enjoy the drive in spite of all. It was a night for enjoyment. The road was full of buggies, all bound for the hotel, and laughter, silver clear, echoed and reechoed along it. When they reached the hotel it was a blaze of light from top to bottom. They were met by the ladies of the concert committee, one of whom took Anne off to the performers' dressing room which was filled with the members of a Charlottetown Symphony Club, among whom Anne felt suddenly shy and frightened and countrified. Her dress, which, in the east gable, had seemed so dainty and pretty, now seemed simple and plain — too simple and plain, she thought, among all the silks and laces that glistened and rustled around her. What were her pearl beads compared to the diamonds of the big, handsome lady near her? And how poor her one wee white rose must look beside all the hothouse flowers the others wore! Anne laid her hat and jacket away, and shrank miserably into a corner. She wished herself back in the white room at Green Gables.

It was still worse on the platform of the big concert hall of the hotel, where she presently found herself. The electric lights dazzled her eyes, the perfume and hum bewildered her. She wished she were sitting down in the audience with Diana and Jane, who seemed to be having a splendid time away at the back. She was wedged in between a stout lady in pink silk and a tall, scornful-looking girl in a white-lace dress. The stout lady occasionally turned her head squarely around and surveyed Anne through her eyeglasses until Anne, acutely sensitive of being so scrutinized, felt that she must scream aloud; and the white-lace girl kept talking audibly to her next neighbor about the “country bumpkins” and “rustic belles” in the audience, languidly anticipating “such fun” from the displays of local

talent on the program. Anne believed that she would hate that white-lace girl to the end of life.

Unfortunately for Anne, a professional elocutionist was staying at the hotel and had consented to recite. She was a lithe, dark-eyed woman in a wonderful gown of shimmering gray stuff like woven moonbeams, with gems on her neck and in her dark hair. She had a marvelously flexible voice and wonderful power of expression; the audience went wild over her selection. Anne, forgetting all about herself and her troubles for the time, listened with rapt and shining eyes; but when the recitation ended she suddenly put her hands over her face. She could never get up and recite after that — never. Had she ever thought she could recite? Oh, if she were only back at Green Gables!

At this unpropitious moment her name was called. Somehow Anne — who did not notice the rather guilty little start of surprise the white-lace girl gave, and would not have understood the subtle compliment implied therein if she had — got on her feet, and moved dizzily out to the front. She was so pale that Diana and Jane, down in the audience, clasped each other's hands in nervous sympathy.

Anne was the victim of an overwhelming attack of stage fright. Often as she had recited in public, she had never before faced such an audience as this, and the sight of it paralyzed her energies completely. Everything was so strange, so brilliant, so bewildering — the rows of ladies in evening dress, the critical faces, the whole atmosphere of wealth and culture about her. Very different this from the plain benches at the Debating Club, filled with the homely, sympathetic faces of friends and neighbors. These people, she thought, would be merciless critics. Perhaps, like the white-lace girl, they anticipated amusement from her “rustic” efforts. She felt hopelessly, helplessly ashamed and miserable. Her knees trembled, her heart fluttered, a horrible faintness came over her; not a word could she utter, and the next moment she would have fled from the platform despite the humiliation which, she felt, must ever after be her portion if she did so.

But suddenly, as her dilated, frightened eyes gazed out over the audience, she saw Gilbert Blythe away at the back of the room, bending forward with a smile on his face — a smile which seemed to Anne at once triumphant and taunting. In reality it was nothing of the kind. Gilbert was merely smiling with appreciation of the whole affair in general and of the effect produced by Anne's slender white form and spiritual face against a background of palms in particular. Josie Pye, whom he had driven over, sat beside him, and her face certainly was both triumphant and taunting. But Anne did not see Josie, and would not have cared if she had. She drew a long breath and flung her head up proudly, courage and determination tingling over her like an electric shock. She WOULD NOT fail before Gilbert Blythe — he should never be able to laugh at her, never, never! Her fright and nervousness vanished; and she began her recitation, her clear, sweet voice reaching to the farthest corner of the room without a tremor or a break. Selfpossession was fully restored to her, and in the reaction from that horrible moment of powerlessness she recited as she had never done before. When she finished there were bursts of honest applause. Anne, stepping back to her seat, blushing with shyness and delight, found her hand vigorously clasped and shaken by the stout lady in pink silk.

"My dear, you did splendidly," she puffed. "I've been crying like a baby, actually I have. There, they're encoring you — they're bound to have you back!"

"Oh, I can't go," said Anne confusedly. "But yet — I must, or Matthew will be disappointed. He said they would encore me."

"Then don't disappoint Matthew," said the pink lady, laughing.

Smiling, blushing, limpid eyed, Anne tripped back and gave a quaint, funny little selection that captivated her audience still further. The rest of the evening was quite a little triumph for her.

When the concert was over, the stout, pink lady — who was the wife of an American millionaire — took her under her wing, and introduced her to everybody; and everybody was very nice to her. The professional elocutionist, Mrs. Evans, came and chatted with her, telling her that she had a charming voice and "interpreted" her selections beautifully. Even the

white-lace girl paid her a languid little compliment. They had supper in the big, beautifully decorated dining room; Diana and Jane were invited to partake of this, also, since they had come with Anne, but Billy was nowhere to be found, having decamped in mortal fear of some such invitation. He was in waiting for them, with the team, however, when it was all over, and the three girls came merrily out into the calm, white moonshine radiance. Anne breathed deeply, and looked into the clear sky beyond the dark boughs of the firs.

Oh, it was good to be out again in the purity and silence of the night! How great and still and wonderful everything was, with the murmur of the sea sounding through it and the darkling cliffs beyond like grim giants guarding enchanted coasts.

“Hasn’t it been a perfectly splendid time?” sighed Jane, as they drove away. “I just wish I was a rich American and could spend my summer at a hotel and wear jewels and low-necked dresses and have ice cream and chicken salad every blessed day. I’m sure it would be ever so much more fun than teaching school. Anne, your recitation was simply great, although I thought at first you were never going to begin. I think it was better than Mrs. Evans’s.”

“Oh, no, don’t say things like that, Jane,” said Anne quickly, “because it sounds silly. It couldn’t be better than Mrs. Evans’s, you know, for she is a professional, and I’m only a schoolgirl, with a little knack of reciting. I’m quite satisfied if the people just liked mine pretty well.”

“I’ve a compliment for you, Anne,” said Diana. “At least I think it must be a compliment because of the tone he said it in. Part of it was anyhow. There was an American sitting behind Jane and me — such a romantic-looking man, with coal-black hair and eyes. Josie Pye says he is a distinguished artist, and that her mother’s cousin in Boston is married to a man that used to go to school with him. Well, we heard him say — didn’t we, Jane?— ‘Who is that girl on the platform with the splendid Titian hair? She has a face I should like to paint.’ There now, Anne. But what does Titian hair mean?”

“Being interpreted it means plain red, I guess,” laughed Anne. “Titian was a very famous artist who liked to paint redhaired women.”

“DID you see all the diamonds those ladies wore?” sighed Jane. “They were simply dazzling. Wouldn’t you just love to be rich, girls?”

“We ARE rich,” said Anne staunchly. “Why, we have sixteen years to our credit, and we’re happy as queens, and we’ve all got imaginations, more or less. Look at that sea, girls — all silver and shadow and vision of things not seen. We couldn’t enjoy its loveliness any more if we had millions of dollars and ropes of diamonds. You wouldn’t change into any of those women if you could. Would you want to be that white-lace girl and wear a sour look all your life, as if you’d been born turning up your nose at the world? Or the pink lady, kind and nice as she is, so stout and short that you’d really no figure at all? Or even Mrs. Evans, with that sad, sad look in her eyes? She must have been dreadfully unhappy sometime to have such a look. You KNOW you wouldn’t, Jane Andrews!”

“I DON’T know — exactly,” said Jane unconvinced. “I think diamonds would comfort a person for a good deal.”

“Well, I don’t want to be anyone but myself, even if I go uncomforted by diamonds all my life,” declared Anne. “I’m quite content to be Anne of Green Gables, with my string of pearl beads. I know Matthew gave me as much love with them as ever went with Madame the Pink Lady’s jewels.”

A Queen's Girl

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The next three weeks were busy ones at Green Gables, for Anne was getting ready to go to Queen's, and there was much sewing to be done, and many things to be talked over and arranged. Anne's outfit was ample and pretty, for Matthew saw to that, and Marilla for once made no objections whatever to anything he purchased or suggested. More — one evening she went up to the east gable with her arms full of a delicate pale green material.

“Anne, here's something for a nice light dress for you. I don't suppose you really need it; you've plenty of pretty waists; but I thought maybe you'd like something real dressy to wear if you were asked out anywhere of an evening in town, to a party or anything like that. I hear that Jane and Ruby and Josie have got 'evening dresses,' as they call them, and I don't mean you shall be behind them. I got Mrs. Allan to help me pick it in town last week, and we'll get Emily Gillis to make it for you. Emily has got taste, and her fits aren't to be equaled.”

“Oh, Marilla, it's just lovely,” said Anne. “Thank you so much. I don't believe you ought to be so kind to me — it's making it harder every day for me to go away.”

The green dress was made up with as many tucks and frills and shirrings as Emily's taste permitted. Anne put it on one evening for Matthew's and Marilla's benefit, and recited “The Maiden's Vow” for them in the kitchen. As Marilla watched the bright, animated face and graceful motions her thoughts went back to the evening Anne had arrived at Green Gables, and memory recalled a vivid picture of the odd, frightened child in her preposterous yellowish-brown wincey dress, the heartbreak looking out of her tearful eyes. Something in the memory brought tears to Marilla's own eyes.

“I declare, my recitation has made you cry, Marilla,” said Anne gaily stooping over Marilla’s chair to drop a butterfly kiss on that lady’s cheek. “Now, I call that a positive triumph.”

“No, I wasn’t crying over your piece,” said Marilla, who would have scorned to be betrayed into such weakness by any poetry stuff. “I just couldn’t help thinking of the little girl you used to be, Anne. And I was wishing you could have stayed a little girl, even with all your queer ways. You’ve grown up now and you’re going away; and you look so tall and stylish and so — so — different altogether in that dress — as if you didn’t belong in Avonlea at all — and I just got lonesome thinking it all over.”

“Marilla!” Anne sat down on Marilla’s gingham lap, took Marilla’s lined face between her hands, and looked gravely and tenderly into Marilla’s eyes. “I’m not a bit changed — not really. I’m only just pruned down and branched out. The real ME — back here — is just the same. It won’t make a bit of difference where I go or how much I change outwardly; at heart I shall always be your little Anne, who will love you and Matthew and dear Green Gables more and better every day of her life.”

Anne laid her fresh young cheek against Marilla’s faded one, and reached out a hand to pat Matthew’s shoulder. Marilla would have given much just then to have possessed Anne’s power of putting her feelings into words; but nature and habit had willed it otherwise, and she could only put her arms close about her girl and hold her tenderly to her heart, wishing that she need never let her go.

Matthew, with a suspicious moisture in his eyes, got up and went out-of-doors. Under the stars of the blue summer night he walked agitatedly across the yard to the gate under the poplars.

“Well now, I guess she ain’t been much spoiled,” he muttered, proudly. “I guess my putting in my oar occasional never did much harm after all. She’s smart and pretty, and loving, too, which is better than all the rest. She’s been a blessing to us, and there never was a luckier mistake than what Mrs. Spencer made — if it WAS luck. I don’t believe it was any such

thing. It was Providence, because the Almighty saw we needed her, I reckon.”

The day finally came when Anne must go to town. She and Matthew drove in one fine September morning, after a tearful parting with Diana and an untearful practical one — on Marilla’s side at least — with Marilla. But when Anne had gone Diana dried her tears and went to a beach picnic at White Sands with some of her Carmody cousins, where she contrived to enjoy herself tolerably well; while Marilla plunged fiercely into unnecessary work and kept at it all day long with the bitterest kind of heartache — the ache that burns and gnaws and cannot wash itself away in ready tears. But that night, when Marilla went to bed, acutely and miserably conscious that the little gable room at the end of the hall was untenanted by any vivid young life and unstirred by any soft breathing, she buried her face in her pillow, and wept for her girl in a passion of sobs that appalled her when she grew calm enough to reflect how very wicked it must be to take on so about a sinful fellow creature.

Anne and the rest of the Avonlea scholars reached town just in time to hurry off to the Academy. That first day passed pleasantly enough in a whirl of excitement, meeting all the new students, learning to know the professors by sight and being assorted and organized into classes. Anne intended taking up the Second Year work being advised to do so by Miss Stacy; Gilbert Blythe elected to do the same. This meant getting a First Class teacher’s license in one year instead of two, if they were successful; but it also meant much more and harder work. Jane, Ruby, Josie, Charlie, and Moody Spurgeon, not being troubled with the stirrings of ambition, were content to take up the Second Class work. Anne was conscious of a pang of loneliness when she found herself in a room with fifty other students, not one of whom she knew, except the tall, brown-haired boy across the room; and knowing him in the fashion she did, did not help her much, as she reflected pessimistically. Yet she was undeniably glad that they were in the same class; the old rivalry could still be carried on, and Anne would hardly have known what to do if it had been lacking.

“I wouldn’t feel comfortable without it,” she thought. “Gilbert looks awfully determined. I suppose he’s making up his mind, here and now, to win the medal. What a splendid chin he has! I never noticed it before. I do wish Jane and Ruby had gone in for First Class, too. I suppose I won’t feel so much like a cat in a strange garret when I get acquainted, though. I wonder which of the girls here are going to be my friends. It’s really an interesting speculation. Of course I promised Diana that no Queen’s girl, no matter how much I liked her, should ever be as dear to me as she is; but I’ve lots of second-best affections to bestow. I like the look of that girl with the brown eyes and the crimson waist. She looks vivid and red-rosy; there’s that pale, fair one gazing out of the window. She has lovely hair, and looks as if she knew a thing or two about dreams. I’d like to know them both — know them well — well enough to walk with my arm about their waists, and call them nicknames. But just now I don’t know them and they don’t know me, and probably don’t want to know me particularly. Oh, it’s lonesome!”

It was lonelier still when Anne found herself alone in her hall bedroom that night at twilight. She was not to board with the other girls, who all had relatives in town to take pity on them. Miss Josephine Barry would have liked to board her, but Beechwood was so far from the Academy that it was out of the question; so Miss Barry hunted up a boardinghouse, assuring Matthew and Marilla that it was the very place for Anne.

“The lady who keeps it is a reduced gentlewoman,” explained Miss Barry. “Her husband was a British officer, and she is very careful what sort of boarders she takes. Anne will not meet with any objectionable persons under her roof. The table is good, and the house is near the Academy, in a quiet neighborhood.”

All this might be quite true, and indeed, proved to be so, but it did not materially help Anne in the first agony of homesickness that seized upon her. She looked dismally about her narrow little room, with its dull-papered, pictureless walls, its small iron bedstead and empty bookcase; and a horrible choke came into her throat as she thought of her own white

room at Green Gables, where she would have the pleasant consciousness of a great green still outdoors, of sweet peas growing in the garden, and moonlight falling on the orchard, of the brook below the slope and the spruce boughs tossing in the night wind beyond it, of a vast starry sky, and the light from Diana's window shining out through the gap in the trees. Here there was nothing of this; Anne knew that outside of her window was a hard street, with a network of telephone wires shutting out the sky, the tramp of alien feet, and a thousand lights gleaming on stranger faces. She knew that she was going to cry, and fought against it.

"I WON'T cry. It's silly — and weak — there's the third tear splashing down by my nose. There are more coming! I must think of something funny to stop them. But there's nothing funny except what is connected with Avonlea, and that only makes things worse — four — five — I'm going home next Friday, but that seems a hundred years away. Oh, Matthew is nearly home by now — and Marilla is at the gate, looking down the lane for him — six — seven — eight — oh, there's no use in counting them! They're coming in a flood presently. I can't cheer up — I don't WANT to cheer up. It's nicer to be miserable!"

The flood of tears would have come, no doubt, had not Josie Pye appeared at that moment. In the joy of seeing a familiar face Anne forgot that there had never been much love lost between her and Josie. As a part of Avonlea life even a Pye was welcome.

"I'm so glad you came up," Anne said sincerely.

"You've been crying," remarked Josie, with aggravating pity. "I suppose you're homesick — some people have so little self-control in that respect. I've no intention of being homesick, I can tell you. Town's too jolly after that poky old Avonlea. I wonder how I ever existed there so long. You shouldn't cry, Anne; it isn't becoming, for your nose and eyes get red, and then you seem ALL red. I'd a perfectly scrumptious time in the Academy today. Our French professor is simply a duck. His moustache would give you kerwollops of the heart. Have you anything eatable around, Anne? I'm literally starving. Ah, I guessed likely Marilla'd load you up with cake. That's why I called round. Otherwise I'd have gone to

the park to hear the band play with Frank Stockley. He boards same place as I do, and he's a sport. He noticed you in class today, and asked me who the redheaded girl was. I told him you were an orphan that the Cuthberts had adopted, and nobody knew very much about what you'd been before that."

Anne was wondering if, after all, solitude and tears were not more satisfactory than Josie Pye's companionship when Jane and Ruby appeared, each with an inch of Queen's color ribbon — purple and scarlet — pinned proudly to her coat. As Josie was not "speaking" to Jane just then she had to subside into comparative harmlessness.

"Well," said Jane with a sigh, "I feel as if I'd lived many moons since the morning. I ought to be home studying my Virgil — that horrid old professor gave us twenty lines to start in on tomorrow. But I simply couldn't settle down to study tonight. Anne, methinks I see the traces of tears. If you've been crying DO own up. It will restore my self-respect, for I was shedding tears freely before Ruby came along. I don't mind being a goose so much if somebody else is goosey, too. Cake? You'll give me a teeny piece, won't you? Thank you. It has the real Avonlea flavor."

Ruby, perceiving the Queen's calendar lying on the table, wanted to know if Anne meant to try for the gold medal.

Anne blushed and admitted she was thinking of it.

"Oh, that reminds me," said Josie, "Queen's is to get one of the Avery scholarships after all. The word came today. Frank Stockley told me — his uncle is one of the board of governors, you know. It will be announced in the Academy tomorrow."

An Avery scholarship! Anne felt her heart beat more quickly, and the horizons of her ambition shifted and broadened as if by magic. Before Josie had told the news Anne's highest pinnacle of aspiration had been a teacher's provincial license, First Class, at the end of the year, and perhaps the medal! But now in one moment Anne saw herself winning the Avery scholarship, taking an Arts course at Redmond College, and graduating in a gown and mortar board, before the echo of Josie's words had died away.

For the Avery scholarship was in English, and Anne felt that here her foot was on native heath.

A wealthy manufacturer of New Brunswick had died and left part of his fortune to endow a large number of scholarships to be distributed among the various high schools and academies of the Maritime Provinces, according to their respective standings. There had been much doubt whether one would be allotted to Queen's, but the matter was settled at last, and at the end of the year the graduate who made the highest mark in English and English Literature would win the scholarship — two hundred and fifty dollars a year for four years at Redmond College. No wonder that Anne went to bed that night with tingling cheeks!

"I'll win that scholarship if hard work can do it," she resolved. "Wouldn't Matthew be proud if I got to be a B.A.? Oh, it's delightful to have ambitions. I'm so glad I have such a lot. And there never seems to be any end to them — that's the best of it. Just as soon as you attain to one ambition you see another one glittering higher up still. It does make life so interesting."

The Winter at Queen's

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Anne's homesickness wore off, greatly helped in the wearing by her weekend visits home. As long as the open weather lasted the Avonlea students went out to Carmody on the new branch railway every Friday night. Diana and several other Avonlea young folks were generally on hand to meet them and they all walked over to Avonlea in a merry party. Anne thought those Friday evening gypsyings over the autumnal hills in the crisp golden air, with the homelights of Avonlea twinkling beyond, were the best and dearest hours in the whole week.

Gilbert Blythe nearly always walked with Ruby Gillis and carried her satchel for her. Ruby was a very handsome young lady, now thinking herself quite as grown up as she really was; she wore her skirts as long as her mother would let her and did her hair up in town, though she had to take it down when she went home. She had large, bright-blue eyes, a brilliant complexion, and a plump showy figure. She laughed a great deal, was cheerful and good-tempered, and enjoyed the pleasant things of life frankly.

"But I shouldn't think she was the sort of girl Gilbert would like," whispered Jane to Anne. Anne did not think so either, but she would not have said so for the Avery scholarship. She could not help thinking, too, that it would be very pleasant to have such a friend as Gilbert to jest and chatter with and exchange ideas about books and studies and ambitions. Gilbert had ambitions, she knew, and Ruby Gillis did not seem the sort of person with whom such could be profitably discussed.

There was no silly sentiment in Anne's ideas concerning Gilbert. Boys were to her, when she thought about them at all, merely possible good comrades. If she and Gilbert had been friends she would not have cared how many other friends he had nor with whom he walked. She had a genius for friendship; girl friends she had in plenty; but she had a vague

consciousness that masculine friendship might also be a good thing to round out one's conceptions of companionship and furnish broader standpoints of judgment and comparison. Not that Anne could have put her feelings on the matter into just such clear definition. But she thought that if Gilbert had ever walked home with her from the train, over the crisp fields and along the ferny byways, they might have had many and merry and interesting conversations about the new world that was opening around them and their hopes and ambitions therein. Gilbert was a clever young fellow, with his own thoughts about things and a determination to get the best out of life and put the best into it. Ruby Gillis told Jane Andrews that she didn't understand half the things Gilbert Blythe said; he talked just like Anne Shirley did when she had a thoughtful fit on and for her part she didn't think it any fun to be bothering about books and that sort of thing when you didn't have to. Frank Stockley had lots more dash and go, but then he wasn't half as goodlooking as Gilbert and she really couldn't decide which she liked best!

In the Academy Anne gradually drew a little circle of friends about her, thoughtful, imaginative, ambitious students like herself. With the "rose-red" girl, Stella Maynard, and the "dream girl," Priscilla Grant, she soon became intimate, finding the latter pale spiritual-looking maiden to be full to the brim of mischief and pranks and fun, while the vivid, black-eyed Stella had a heartful of wistful dreams and fancies, as aerial and rainbow-like as Anne's own.

After the Christmas holidays the Avonlea students gave up going home on Fridays and settled down to hard work. By this time all the Queen's scholars had gravitated into their own places in the ranks and the various classes had assumed distinct and settled shadings of individuality. Certain facts had become generally accepted. It was admitted that the medal contestants had practically narrowed down to three — Gilbert Blythe, Anne Shirley, and Lewis Wilson; the Avery scholarship was more doubtful, any one of a certain six being a possible winner. The bronze medal for mathematics was considered as good as won by a fat, funny little up-country boy with a bumpy forehead and a patched coat.

Ruby Gillis was the handsomest girl of the year at the Academy; in the Second Year classes Stella Maynard carried off the palm for beauty, with small but critical minority in favor of Anne Shirley. Ethel Marr was admitted by all competent judges to have the most stylish modes of hairdressing, and Jane Andrews — plain, plodding, conscientious Jane — carried off the honors in the domestic science course. Even Josie Pye attained a certain preeminence as the sharpest-tongued young lady in attendance at Queen's. So it may be fairly stated that Miss Stacy's old pupils held their own in the wider arena of the academical course.

Anne worked hard and steadily. Her rivalry with Gilbert was as intense as it had ever been in Avonlea school, although it was not known in the class at large, but somehow the bitterness had gone out of it. Anne no longer wished to win for the sake of defeating Gilbert; rather, for the proud consciousness of a well-won victory over a worthy foeman. It would be worth while to win, but she no longer thought life would be insupportable if she did not.

In spite of lessons the students found opportunities for pleasant times. Anne spent many of her spare hours at Beechwood and generally ate her Sunday dinners there and went to church with Miss Barry. The latter was, as she admitted, growing old, but her black eyes were not dim nor the vigor of her tongue in the least abated. But she never sharpened the latter on Anne, who continued to be a prime favorite with the critical old lady.

"That Anne-girl improves all the time," she said. "I get tired of other girls — there is such a provoking and eternal sameness about them. Anne has as many shades as a rainbow and every shade is the prettiest while it lasts. I don't know that she is as amusing as she was when she was a child, but she makes me love her and I like people who make me love them. It saves me so much trouble in making myself love them."

Then, almost before anybody realized it, spring had come; out in Avonlea the Mayflowers were peeping pinkly out on the sere barrens where snow-wreaths lingered; and the "mist of green" was on the woods and in the valleys. But in Charlottetown harassed Queen's students thought and talked only of examinations.

“It doesn’t seem possible that the term is nearly over,” said Anne. “Why, last fall it seemed so long to look forward to — a whole winter of studies and classes. And here we are, with the exams looming up next week. Girls, sometimes I feel as if those exams meant everything, but when I look at the big buds swelling on those chestnut trees and the misty blue air at the end of the streets they don’t seem half so important.”

Jane and Ruby and Josie, who had dropped in, did not take this view of it. To them the coming examinations were constantly very important indeed — far more important than chestnut buds or Maytime hazes. It was all very well for Anne, who was sure of passing at least, to have her moments of belittling them, but when your whole future depended on them — as the girls truly thought theirs did — you could not regard them philosophically.

“I’ve lost seven pounds in the last two weeks,” sighed Jane. “It’s no use to say don’t worry. I WILL worry. Worrying helps you some — it seems as if you were doing something when you’re worrying. It would be dreadful if I failed to get my license after going to Queen’s all winter and spending so much money.”

“I don’t care,” said Josie Pye. “If I don’t pass this year I’m coming back next. My father can afford to send me. Anne, Frank Stockley says that Professor Tremaine said Gilbert Blythe was sure to get the medal and that Emily Clay would likely win the Avery scholarship.”

“That may make me feel badly tomorrow, Josie,” laughed Anne, “but just now I honestly feel that as long as I know the violets are coming out all purple down in the hollow below Green Gables and that little ferns are poking their heads up in Lovers’ Lane, it’s not a great deal of difference whether I win the Avery or not. I’ve done my best and I begin to understand what is meant by the ‘joy of the strife.’ Next to trying and winning, the best thing is trying and failing. Girls, don’t talk about exams! Look at that arch of pale green sky over those houses and picture to yourself what it must look like over the purply-dark beechwoods back of Avonlea.”

“What are you going to wear for commencement, Jane?” asked Ruby practically.

Jane and Josie both answered at once and the chatter drifted into a side eddy of fashions. But Anne, with her elbows on the window sill, her soft cheek laid against her clasped hands, and her eyes filled with visions, looked out unheedingly across city roof and spire to that glorious dome of sunset sky and wove her dreams of a possible future from the golden tissue of youth’s own optimism. All the Beyond was hers with its possibilities lurking rosily in the oncoming years — each year a rose of promise to be woven into an immortal chaplet.

The Glory and the Dream

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On the morning when the final results of all the examinations were to be posted on the bulletin board at Queen's, Anne and Jane walked down the street together. Jane was smiling and happy; examinations were over and she was comfortably sure she had made a pass at least; further considerations troubled Jane not at all; she had no soaring ambitions and consequently was not affected with the unrest attendant thereon. For we pay a price for everything we get or take in this world; and although ambitions are well worth having, they are not to be cheaply won, but exact their dues of work and self-denial, anxiety and discouragement. Anne was pale and quiet; in ten more minutes she would know who had won the medal and who the Avery. Beyond those ten minutes there did not seem, just then, to be anything worth being called Time.

"Of course you'll win one of them anyhow," said Jane, who couldn't understand how the faculty could be so unfair as to order it otherwise.

"I have not hope of the Avery," said Anne. "Everybody says Emily Clay will win it. And I'm not going to march up to that bulletin board and look at it before everybody. I haven't the moral courage. I'm going straight to the girls' dressing room. You must read the announcements and then come and tell me, Jane. And I implore you in the name of our old friendship to do it as quickly as possible. If I have failed just say so, without trying to break it gently; and whatever you do DON'T sympathize with me. Promise me this, Jane."

Jane promised solemnly; but, as it happened, there was no necessity for such a promise. When they went up the entrance steps of Queen's they found the hall full of boys who were carrying Gilbert Blythe around on their shoulders and yelling at the tops of their voices, "Hurrah for Blythe, Medalist!"

For a moment Anne felt one sickening pang of defeat and disappointment. So she had failed and Gilbert had won! Well, Matthew would be sorry — he had been so sure she would win.

And then!

Somebody called out:

“Three cheers for Miss Shirley, winner of the Avery!”

“Oh, Anne,” gasped Jane, as they fled to the girls’ dressing room amid hearty cheers. “Oh, Anne I’m so proud! Isn’t it splendid?”

And then the girls were around them and Anne was the center of a laughing, congratulating group. Her shoulders were thumped and her hands shaken vigorously. She was pushed and pulled and hugged and among it all she managed to whisper to Jane:

“Oh, won’t Matthew and Marilla be pleased! I must write the news home right away.”

Commencement was the next important happening. The exercises were held in the big assembly hall of the Academy. Addresses were given, essays read, songs sung, the public award of diplomas, prizes and medals made.

Matthew and Marilla were there, with eyes and ears for only one student on the platform — a tall girl in pale green, with faintly flushed cheeks and starry eyes, who read the best essay and was pointed out and whispered about as the Avery winner.

“Reckon you’re glad we kept her, Marilla?” whispered Matthew, speaking for the first time since he had entered the hall, when Anne had finished her essay.

“It’s not the first time I’ve been glad,” retorted Marilla. “You do like to rub things in, Matthew Cuthbert.”

Miss Barry, who was sitting behind them, leaned forward and poked Marilla in the back with her parasol.

“Aren’t you proud of that Anne-girl? I am,” she said.

Anne went home to Avonlea with Matthew and Marilla that evening. She had not been home since April and she felt that she could not wait another day. The apple blossoms were out and the world was fresh and

young. Diana was at Green Gables to meet her. In her own white room, where Marilla had set a flowering house rose on the window sill, Anne looked about her and drew a long breath of happiness.

“Oh, Diana, it’s so good to be back again. It’s so good to see those pointed firs coming out against the pink sky — and that white orchard and the old Snow Queen. Isn’t the breath of the mint delicious? And that tea rose — why, it’s a song and a hope and a prayer all in one. And it’s GOOD to see you again, Diana!”

“I thought you liked that Stella Maynard better than me,” said Diana reproachfully. “Josie Pye told me you did. Josie said you were INFATUATED with her.”

Anne laughed and pelted Diana with the faded “June lilies” of her bouquet.

“Stella Maynard is the dearest girl in the world except one and you are that one, Diana,” she said. “I love you more than ever — and I’ve so many things to tell you. But just now I feel as if it were joy enough to sit here and look at you. I’m tired, I think — tired of being studious and ambitious. I mean to spend at least two hours tomorrow lying out in the orchard grass, thinking of absolutely nothing.”

“You’ve done splendidly, Anne. I suppose you won’t be teaching now that you’ve won the Avery?”

“No. I’m going to Redmond in September. Doesn’t it seem wonderful? I’ll have a brand new stock of ambition laid in by that time after three glorious, golden months of vacation. Jane and Ruby are going to teach. Isn’t it splendid to think we all got through even to Moody Spurgeon and Josie Pye?”

“The Newbridge trustees have offered Jane their school already,” said Diana. “Gilbert Blythe is going to teach, too. He has to. His father can’t afford to send him to college next year, after all, so he means to earn his own way through. I expect he’ll get the school here if Miss Ames decides to leave.”

Anne felt a queer little sensation of dismayed surprise. She had not known this; she had expected that Gilbert would be going to Redmond

also. What would she do without their inspiring rivalry? Would not work, even at a coeducational college with a real degree in prospect, be rather flat without her friend the enemy?

The next morning at breakfast it suddenly struck Anne that Matthew was not looking well. Surely he was much grayer than he had been a year before.

“Marilla,” she said hesitatingly when he had gone out, “is Matthew quite well?”

“No, he isn’t,” said Marilla in a troubled tone. “He’s had some real bad spells with his heart this spring and he won’t spare himself a mite. I’ve been real worried about him, but he’s some better this while back and we’ve got a good hired man, so I’m hoping he’ll kind of rest and pick up. Maybe he will now you’re home. You always cheer him up.”

Anne leaned across the table and took Marilla’s face in her hands.

“You are not looking as well yourself as I’d like to see you, Marilla. You look tired. I’m afraid you’ve been working too hard. You must take a rest, now that I’m home. I’m just going to take this one day off to visit all the dear old spots and hunt up my old dreams, and then it will be your turn to be lazy while I do the work.”

Marilla smiled affectionately at her girl.

“It’s not the work — it’s my head. I’ve got a pain so often now — behind my eyes. Doctor Spencer’s been fussing with glasses, but they don’t do me any good. There is a distinguished oculist coming to the Island the last of June and the doctor says I must see him. I guess I’ll have to. I can’t read or sew with any comfort now. Well, Anne, you’ve done real well at Queen’s I must say. To take First Class License in one year and win the Avery scholarship — well, well, Mrs. Lynde says pride goes before a fall and she doesn’t believe in the higher education of women at all; she says it unfits them for woman’s true sphere. I don’t believe a word of it. Speaking of Rachel reminds me — did you hear anything about the Abbey Bank lately, Anne?”

“I heard it was shaky,” answered Anne. “Why?”

“That is what Rachel said. She was up here one day last week and said there was some talk about it. Matthew felt real worried. All we have saved is in that bank — every penny. I wanted Matthew to put it in the Savings Bank in the first place, but old Mr. Abbey was a great friend of father’s and he’d always banked with him. Matthew said any bank with him at the head of it was good enough for anybody.”

“I think he has only been its nominal head for many years,” said Anne. “He is a very old man; his nephews are really at the head of the institution.”

“Well, when Rachel told us that, I wanted Matthew to draw our money right out and he said he’d think of it. But Mr. Russell told him yesterday that the bank was all right.”

Anne had her good day in the companionship of the outdoor world. She never forgot that day; it was so bright and golden and fair, so free from shadow and so lavish of blossom. Anne spent some of its rich hours in the orchard; she went to the Dryad’s Bubble and Willowmere and Violet Vale; she called at the manse and had a satisfying talk with Mrs. Allan; and finally in the evening she went with Matthew for the cows, through Lovers’ Lane to the back pasture. The woods were all gloried through with sunset and the warm splendor of it streamed down through the hill gaps in the west. Matthew walked slowly with bent head; Anne, tall and erect, suited her springing step to his.

“You’ve been working too hard today, Matthew,” she said reproachfully. “Why won’t you take things easier?”

“Well now, I can’t seem to,” said Matthew, as he opened the yard gate to let the cows through. “It’s only that I’m getting old, Anne, and keep forgetting it. Well, well, I’ve always worked pretty hard and I’d rather drop in harness.”

“If I had been the boy you sent for,” said Anne wistfully, “I’d be able to help you so much now and spare you in a hundred ways. I could find it in my heart to wish I had been, just for that.”

“Well now, I’d rather have you than a dozen boys, Anne,” said Matthew patting her hand. “Just mind you that — rather than a dozen

boys. Well now, I guess it wasn't a boy that took the Avery scholarship, was it? It was a girl — my girl — my girl that I'm proud of."

He smiled his shy smile at her as he went into the yard. Anne took the memory of it with her when she went to her room that night and sat for a long while at her open window, thinking of the past and dreaming of the future. Outside the Snow Queen was mistily white in the moonshine; the frogs were singing in the marsh beyond Orchard Slope. Anne always remembered the silvery, peaceful beauty and fragrant calm of that night. It was the last night before sorrow touched her life; and no life is ever quite the same again when once that cold, sanctifying touch has been laid upon it.

The Reaper Whose Name Is Death

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“Matthew — Matthew — what is the matter? Matthew, are you sick?”

It was Marilla who spoke, alarm in every jerky word. Anne came through the hall, her hands full of white narcissus, — it was long before Anne could love the sight or odor of white narcissus again, — in time to hear her and to see Matthew standing in the porch doorway, a folded paper in his hand, and his face strangely drawn and gray. Anne dropped her flowers and sprang across the kitchen to him at the same moment as Marilla. They were both too late; before they could reach him Matthew had fallen across the threshold.

“He’s fainted,” gasped Marilla. “Anne, run for Martin — quick, quick! He’s at the barn.”

Martin, the hired man, who had just driven home from the post office, started at once for the doctor, calling at Orchard Slope on his way to send Mr. and Mrs. Barry over. Mrs. Lynde, who was there on an errand, came too. They found Anne and Marilla distractedly trying to restore Matthew to consciousness.

Mrs. Lynde pushed them gently aside, tried his pulse, and then laid her ear over his heart. She looked at their anxious faces sorrowfully and the tears came into her eyes.

“Oh, Marilla,” she said gravely. “I don’t think — we can do anything for him.”

“Mrs. Lynde, you don’t think — you can’t think Matthew is — is—” Anne could not say the dreadful word; she turned sick and pallid.

“Child, yes, I’m afraid of it. Look at his face. When you’ve seen that look as often as I have you’ll know what it means.”

Anne looked at the still face and there beheld the seal of the Great Presence.

When the doctor came he said that death had been instantaneous and probably painless, caused in all likelihood by some sudden shock. The secret of the shock was discovered to be in the paper Matthew had held and which Martin had brought from the office that morning. It contained an account of the failure of the Abbey Bank.

The news spread quickly through Avonlea, and all day friends and neighbors thronged Green Gables and came and went on errands of kindness for the dead and living. For the first time shy, quiet Matthew Cuthbert was a person of central importance; the white majesty of death had fallen on him and set him apart as one crowned.

When the calm night came softly down over Green Gables the old house was hushed and tranquil. In the parlor lay Matthew Cuthbert in his coffin, his long gray hair framing his placid face on which there was a little kindly smile as if he but slept, dreaming pleasant dreams. There were flowers about him — sweet old-fashioned flowers which his mother had planted in the homestead garden in her bridal days and for which Matthew had always had a secret, wordless love. Anne had gathered them and brought them to him, her anguished, tearless eyes burning in her white face. It was the last thing she could do for him.

The Barrys and Mrs. Lynde stayed with them that night. Diana, going to the east gable, where Anne was standing at her window, said gently:

“Anne dear, would you like to have me sleep with you tonight?”

“Thank you, Diana.” Anne looked earnestly into her friend’s face. “I think you won’t misunderstand me when I say I want to be alone. I’m not afraid. I haven’t been alone one minute since it happened — and I want to be. I want to be quite silent and quiet and try to realize it. I can’t realize it. Half the time it seems to me that Matthew can’t be dead; and the other half it seems as if he must have been dead for a long time and I’ve had this horrible dull ache ever since.”

Diana did not quite understand. Marilla’s impassioned grief, breaking all the bounds of natural reserve and lifelong habit in its stormy rush, she could comprehend better than Anne’s tearless agony. But she went away kindly, leaving Anne alone to keep her first vigil with sorrow.

Anne hoped that the tears would come in solitude. It seemed to her a terrible thing that she could not shed a tear for Matthew, whom she had loved so much and who had been so kind to her, Matthew who had walked with her last evening at sunset and was now lying in the dim room below with that awful peace on his brow. But no tears came at first, even when she knelt by her window in the darkness and prayed, looking up to the stars beyond the hills — no tears, only the same horrible dull ache of misery that kept on aching until she fell asleep, worn out with the day's pain and excitement.

In the night she awakened, with the stillness and the darkness about her, and the recollection of the day came over her like a wave of sorrow. She could see Matthew's face smiling at her as he had smiled when they parted at the gate that last evening — she could hear his voice saying, "My girl — my girl that I'm proud of." Then the tears came and Anne wept her heart out. Marilla heard her and crept in to comfort her.

"There — there — don't cry so, dearie. It can't bring him back. It — it — isn't right to cry so. I knew that today, but I couldn't help it then. He'd always been such a good, kind brother to me — but God knows best."

"Oh, just let me cry, Marilla," sobbed Anne. "The tears don't hurt me like that ache did. Stay here for a little while with me and keep your arm round me — so. I couldn't have Diana stay, she's good and kind and sweet — but it's not her sorrow — she's outside of it and she couldn't come close enough to my heart to help me. It's our sorrow — yours and mine. Oh, Marilla, what will we do without him?"

"We've got each other, Anne. I don't know what I'd do if you weren't here — if you'd never come. Oh, Anne, I know I've been kind of strict and harsh with you maybe — but you mustn't think I didn't love you as well as Matthew did, for all that. I want to tell you now when I can. It's never been easy for me to say things out of my heart, but at times like this it's easier. I love you as dear as if you were my own flesh and blood and you've been my joy and comfort ever since you came to Green Gables."

Two days afterwards they carried Matthew Cuthbert over his homestead threshold and away from the fields he had tilled and the

orchards he had loved and the trees he had planted; and then Avonlea settled back to its usual placidity and even at Green Gables affairs slipped into their old groove and work was done and duties fulfilled with regularity as before, although always with the aching sense of “loss in all familiar things.” Anne, new to grief, thought it almost sad that it could be so — that they COULD go on in the old way without Matthew. She felt something like shame and remorse when she discovered that the sunrises behind the firs and the pale pink buds opening in the garden gave her the old inrush of gladness when she saw them — that Diana’s visits were pleasant to her and that Diana’s merry words and ways moved her to laughter and smiles — that, in brief, the beautiful world of blossom and love and friendship had lost none of its power to please her fancy and thrill her heart, that life still called to her with many insistent voices.

“It seems like disloyalty to Matthew, somehow, to find pleasure in these things now that he has gone,” she said wistfully to Mrs. Allan one evening when they were together in the manse garden. “I miss him so much — all the time — and yet, Mrs. Allan, the world and life seem very beautiful and interesting to me for all. Today Diana said something funny and I found myself laughing. I thought when it happened I could never laugh again. And it somehow seems as if I oughtn’t to.”

“When Matthew was here he liked to hear you laugh and he liked to know that you found pleasure in the pleasant things around you,” said Mrs. Allan gently. “He is just away now; and he likes to know it just the same. I am sure we should not shut our hearts against the healing influences that nature offers us. But I can understand your feeling. I think we all experience the same thing. We resent the thought that anything can please us when someone we love is no longer here to share the pleasure with us, and we almost feel as if we were unfaithful to our sorrow when we find our interest in life returning to us.”

“I was down to the graveyard to plant a rosebush on Matthew’s grave this afternoon,” said Anne dreamily. “I took a slip of the little white Scotch rosebush his mother brought out from Scotland long ago; Matthew always liked those roses the best — they were so small and sweet on their

thorny stems. It made me feel glad that I could plant it by his grave — as if I were doing something that must please him in taking it there to be near him. I hope he has roses like them in heaven. Perhaps the souls of all those little white roses that he has loved so many summers were all there to meet him. I must go home now. Marilla is all alone and she gets lonely at twilight.”

“She will be lonelier still, I fear, when you go away again to college,” said Mrs. Allan.

Anne did not reply; she said good night and went slowly back to green Gables. Marilla was sitting on the front doorsteps and Anne sat down beside her. The door was open behind them, held back by a big pink conch shell with hints of sea sunsets in its smooth inner convolutions.

Anne gathered some sprays of pale-yellow honeysuckle and put them in her hair. She liked the delicious hint of fragrance, as some aerial benediction, above her every time she moved.

“Doctor Spencer was here while you were away,” Marilla said. “He says that the specialist will be in town tomorrow and he insists that I must go in and have my eyes examined. I suppose I’d better go and have it over. I’ll be more than thankful if the man can give me the right kind of glasses to suit my eyes. You won’t mind staying here alone while I’m away, will you? Martin will have to drive me in and there’s ironing and baking to do.”

“I shall be all right. Diana will come over for company for me. I shall attend to the ironing and baking beautifully — you needn’t fear that I’ll starch the handkerchiefs or flavor the cake with liniment.”

Marilla laughed.

“What a girl you were for making mistakes in them days, Anne. You were always getting into scrapes. I did use to think you were possessed. Do you mind the time you dyed your hair?”

“Yes, indeed. I shall never forget it,” smiled Anne, touching the heavy braid of hair that was wound about her shapely head. “I laugh a little now sometimes when I think what a worry my hair used to be to me — but I don’t laugh MUCH, because it was a very real trouble then. I did suffer

terribly over my hair and my freckles. My freckles are really gone; and people are nice enough to tell me my hair is auburn now — all but Josie Pye. She informed me yesterday that she really thought it was redder than ever, or at least my black dress made it look redder, and she asked me if people who had red hair ever got used to having it. Marilla, I've almost decided to give up trying to like Josie Pye. I've made what I would once have called a heroic effort to like her, but Josie Pye won't BE liked."

"Josie is a Pye," said Marilla sharply, "so she can't help being disagreeable. I suppose people of that kind serve some useful purpose in society, but I must say I don't know what it is any more than I know the use of thistles. Is Josie going to teach?"

"No, she is going back to Queen's next year. So are Moody Spurgeon and Charlie Sloane. Jane and Ruby are going to teach and they have both got schools — Jane at Newbridge and Ruby at some place up west."

"Gilbert Blythe is going to teach too, isn't he?"

"Yes" — briefly.

"What a nice-looking fellow he is," said Marilla absently. "I saw him in church last Sunday and he seemed so tall and manly. He looks a lot like his father did at the same age. John Blythe was a nice boy. We used to be real good friends, he and I. People called him my beau."

Anne looked up with swift interest.

"Oh, Marilla — and what happened? — why didn't you—"

"We had a quarrel. I wouldn't forgive him when he asked me to. I meant to, after awhile — but I was sulky and angry and I wanted to punish him first. He never came back — the Blythes were all mighty independent. But I always felt — rather sorry. I've always kind of wished I'd forgiven him when I had the chance."

"So you've had a bit of romance in your life, too," said Anne softly.

"Yes, I suppose you might call it that. You wouldn't think so to look at me, would you? But you never can tell about people from their outsides. Everybody has forgot about me and John. I'd forgotten myself. But it all came back to me when I saw Gilbert last Sunday."

The Bend in the Road

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Marilla went to town the next day and returned in the evening. Anne had gone over to Orchard Slope with Diana and came back to find Marilla in the kitchen, sitting by the table with her head leaning on her hand. Something in her dejected attitude struck a chill to Anne's heart. She had never seen Marilla sit limply inert like that.

"Are you very tired, Marilla?"

"Yes — no — I don't know," said Marilla wearily, looking up. "I suppose I am tired but I haven't thought about it. It's not that."

"Did you see the oculist? What did he say?" asked Anne anxiously.

"Yes, I saw him. He examined my eyes. He says that if I give up all reading and sewing entirely and any kind of work that strains the eyes, and if I'm careful not to cry, and if I wear the glasses he's given me he thinks my eyes may not get any worse and my headaches will be cured. But if I don't he says I'll certainly be stone-blind in six months. Blind! Anne, just think of it!"

For a minute Anne, after her first quick exclamation of dismay, was silent. It seemed to her that she could NOT speak. Then she said bravely, but with a catch in her voice:

"Marilla, DON'T think of it. You know he has given you hope. If you are careful you won't lose your sight altogether; and if his glasses cure your headaches it will be a great thing."

"I don't call it much hope," said Marilla bitterly. "What am I to live for if I can't read or sew or do anything like that? I might as well be blind — or dead. And as for crying, I can't help that when I get lonesome. But there, it's no good talking about it. If you'll get me a cup of tea I'll be thankful. I'm about done out. Don't say anything about this to any one for a spell yet, anyway. I can't bear that folks should come here to question and sympathize and talk about it."

When Marilla had eaten her lunch Anne persuaded her to go to bed. Then Anne went herself to the east gable and sat down by her window in the darkness alone with her tears and her heaviness of heart. How sadly things had changed since she had sat there the night after coming home! Then she had been full of hope and joy and the future had looked rosy with promise. Anne felt as if she had lived years since then, but before she went to bed there was a smile on her lips and peace in her heart. She had looked her duty courageously in the face and found it a friend — as duty ever is when we meet it frankly.

One afternoon a few days later Marilla came slowly in from the front yard where she had been talking to a caller — a man whom Anne knew by sight as Sadler from Carmody. Anne wondered what he could have been saying to bring that look to Marilla's face.

“What did Mr. Sadler want, Marilla?”

Marilla sat down by the window and looked at Anne. There were tears in her eyes in defiance of the oculist's prohibition and her voice broke as she said:

“He heard that I was going to sell Green Gables and he wants to buy it.”

“Buy it! Buy Green Gables?” Anne wondered if she had heard aright. “Oh, Marilla, you don't mean to sell Green Gables!”

“Anne, I don't know what else is to be done. I've thought it all over. If my eyes were strong I could stay here and make out to look after things and manage, with a good hired man. But as it is I can't. I may lose my sight altogether; and anyway I'll not be fit to run things. Oh, I never thought I'd live to see the day when I'd have to sell my home. But things would only go behind worse and worse all the time, till nobody would want to buy it. Every cent of our money went in that bank; and there's some notes Matthew gave last fall to pay. Mrs. Lynde advises me to sell the farm and board somewhere — with her I suppose. It won't bring much — it's small and the buildings are old. But it'll be enough for me to live on I reckon. I'm thankful you're provided for with that scholarship, Anne.

I'm sorry you won't have a home to come to in your vacations, that's all, but I suppose you'll manage somehow."

Marilla broke down and wept bitterly.

"You mustn't sell Green Gables," said Anne resolutely.

"Oh, Anne, I wish I didn't have to. But you can see for yourself. I can't stay here alone. I'd go crazy with trouble and loneliness. And my sight would go — I know it would."

"You won't have to stay here alone, Marilla. I'll be with you. I'm not going to Redmond."

"Not going to Redmond!" Marilla lifted her worn face from her hands and looked at Anne. "Why, what do you mean?"

"Just what I say. I'm not going to take the scholarship. I decided so the night after you came home from town. You surely don't think I could leave you alone in your trouble, Marilla, after all you've done for me. I've been thinking and planning. Let me tell you my plans. Mr. Barry wants to rent the farm for next year. So you won't have any bother over that. And I'm going to teach. I've applied for the school here — but I don't expect to get it for I understand the trustees have promised it to Gilbert Blythe. But I can have the Carmody school — Mr. Blair told me so last night at the store. Of course that won't be quite as nice or convenient as if I had the Avonlea school. But I can board home and drive myself over to Carmody and back, in the warm weather at least. And even in winter I can come home Fridays. We'll keep a horse for that. Oh, I have it all planned out, Marilla. And I'll read to you and keep you cheered up. You sha'n't be dull or lonesome. And we'll be real cozy and happy here together, you and I."

Marilla had listened like a woman in a dream.

"Oh, Anne, I could get on real well if you were here, I know. But I can't let you sacrifice yourself so for me. It would be terrible."

"Nonsense!" Anne laughed merrily. "There is no sacrifice. Nothing could be worse than giving up Green Gables — nothing could hurt me more. We must keep the dear old place. My mind is quite made up, Marilla. I'm NOT going to Redmond; and I AM going to stay here and teach. Don't you worry about me a bit."

“But your ambitions — and—”

“I’m just as ambitious as ever. Only, I’ve changed the object of my ambitions. I’m going to be a good teacher — and I’m going to save your eyesight. Besides, I mean to study at home here and take a little college course all by myself. Oh, I’ve dozens of plans, Marilla. I’ve been thinking them out for a week. I shall give life here my best, and I believe it will give its best to me in return. When I left Queen’s my future seemed to stretch out before me like a straight road. I thought I could see along it for many a milestone. Now there is a bend in it. I don’t know what lies around the bend, but I’m going to believe that the best does. It has a fascination of its own, that bend, Marilla. I wonder how the road beyond it goes — what there is of green glory and soft, checkered light and shadows — what new landscapes — what new beauties — what curves and hills and valleys further on.”

“I don’t feel as if I ought to let you give it up,” said Marilla, referring to the scholarship.

“But you can’t prevent me. I’m sixteen and a half, ‘obstinate as a mule,’ as Mrs. Lynde once told me,” laughed Anne. “Oh, Marilla, don’t you go pitying me. I don’t like to be pitied, and there is no need for it. I’m heart glad over the very thought of staying at dear Green Gables. Nobody could love it as you and I do — so we must keep it.”

“You blessed girl!” said Marilla, yielding. “I feel as if you’d given me new life. I guess I ought to stick out and make you go to college — but I know I can’t, so I ain’t going to try. I’ll make it up to you though, Anne.”

When it became noised abroad in Avonlea that Anne Shirley had given up the idea of going to college and intended to stay home and teach there was a good deal of discussion over it. Most of the good folks, not knowing about Marilla’s eyes, thought she was foolish. Mrs. Allan did not. She told Anne so in approving words that brought tears of pleasure to the girl’s eyes. Neither did good Mrs. Lynde. She came up one evening and found Anne and Marilla sitting at the front door in the warm, scented summer dusk. They liked to sit there when the twilight came down and the white moths flew about in the garden and the odor of mint filled the dewy air.

Mrs. Rachel deposited her substantial person upon the stone bench by the door, behind which grew a row of tall pink and yellow hollyhocks, with a long breath of mingled weariness and relief.

“I declare I’m getting glad to sit down. I’ve been on my feet all day, and two hundred pounds is a good bit for two feet to carry round. It’s a great blessing not to be fat, Marilla. I hope you appreciate it. Well, Anne, I hear you’ve given up your notion of going to college. I was real glad to hear it. You’ve got as much education now as a woman can be comfortable with. I don’t believe in girls going to college with the men and cramming their heads full of Latin and Greek and all that nonsense.”

“But I’m going to study Latin and Greek just the same, Mrs. Lynde,” said Anne laughing. “I’m going to take my Arts course right here at Green Gables, and study everything that I would at college.”

Mrs. Lynde lifted her hands in holy horror.

“Anne Shirley, you’ll kill yourself.”

“Not a bit of it. I shall thrive on it. Oh, I’m not going to overdo things. As ‘Josiah Allen’s wife,’ says, I shall be ‘mejum’. But I’ll have lots of spare time in the long winter evenings, and I’ve no vocation for fancy work. I’m going to teach over at Carmody, you know.”

“I don’t know it. I guess you’re going to teach right here in Avonlea. The trustees have decided to give you the school.”

“Mrs. Lynde!” cried Anne, springing to her feet in her surprise. “Why, I thought they had promised it to Gilbert Blythe!”

“So they did. But as soon as Gilbert heard that you had applied for it he went to them — they had a business meeting at the school last night, you know — and told them that he withdrew his application, and suggested that they accept yours. He said he was going to teach at White Sands. Of course he knew how much you wanted to stay with Marilla, and I must say I think it was real kind and thoughtful in him, that’s what. Real self-sacrificing, too, for he’ll have his board to pay at White Sands, and everybody knows he’s got to earn his own way through college. So the trustees decided to take you. I was tickled to death when Thomas came home and told me.”

“I don’t feel that I ought to take it,” murmured Anne. “I mean — I don’t think I ought to let Gilbert make such a sacrifice for — for me.”

“I guess you can’t prevent him now. He’s signed papers with the White Sands trustees. So it wouldn’t do him any good now if you were to refuse. Of course you’ll take the school. You’ll get along all right, now that there are no Pyes going. Josie was the last of them, and a good thing she was, that’s what. There’s been some Pye or other going to Avonlea school for the last twenty years, and I guess their mission in life was to keep school teachers reminded that earth isn’t their home. Bless my heart! What does all that winking and blinking at the Barry gable mean?”

“Diana is signaling for me to go over,” laughed Anne. “You know we keep up the old custom. Excuse me while I run over and see what she wants.”

Anne ran down the clover slope like a deer, and disappeared in the firry shadows of the Haunted Wood. Mrs. Lynde looked after her indulgently.

“There’s a good deal of the child about her yet in some ways.”

“There’s a good deal more of the woman about her in others,” retorted Marilla, with a momentary return of her old crispness.

But crispness was no longer Marilla’s distinguishing characteristic. As Mrs. Lynde told her Thomas that night.

“Marilla Cuthbert has got MELLOW. That’s what.”

Anne went to the little Avonlea graveyard the next evening to put fresh flowers on Matthew’s grave and water the Scotch rosebush. She lingered there until dusk, liking the peace and calm of the little place, with its poplars whose rustle was like low, friendly speech, and its whispering grasses growing at will among the graves. When she finally left it and walked down the long hill that sloped to the Lake of Shining Waters it was past sunset and all Avonlea lay before her in a dreamlike afterlight—“a haunt of ancient peace.” There was a freshness in the air as of a wind that had blown over honey-sweet fields of clover. Home lights twinkled out here and there among the homestead trees. Beyond lay the sea, misty and purple, with its haunting, unceasing murmur. The west was a glory of soft mingled hues, and the pond reflected them all in still softer shadings. The

beauty of it all thrilled Anne's heart, and she gratefully opened the gates of her soul to it.

"Dear old world," she murmured, "you are very lovely, and I am glad to be alive in you."

Halfway down the hill a tall lad came whistling out of a gate before the Blythe homestead. It was Gilbert, and the whistle died on his lips as he recognized Anne. He lifted his cap courteously, but he would have passed on in silence, if Anne had not stopped and held out her hand.

"Gilbert," she said, with scarlet cheeks, "I want to thank you for giving up the school for me. It was very good of you — and I want you to know that I appreciate it."

Gilbert took the offered hand eagerly.

"It wasn't particularly good of me at all, Anne. I was pleased to be able to do you some small service. Are we going to be friends after this? Have you really forgiven me my old fault?"

Anne laughed and tried unsuccessfully to withdraw her hand.

"I forgave you that day by the pond landing, although I didn't know it. What a stubborn little goose I was. I've been — I may as well make a complete confession — I've been sorry ever since."

"We are going to be the best of friends," said Gilbert, jubilantly. "We were born to be good friends, Anne. You've thwarted destiny enough. I know we can help each other in many ways. You are going to keep up your studies, aren't you? So am I. Come, I'm going to walk home with you."

Marilla looked curiously at Anne when the latter entered the kitchen.

"Who was that came up the lane with you, Anne?"

"Gilbert Blythe," answered Anne, vexed to find herself blushing. "I met him on Barry's hill."

"I didn't think you and Gilbert Blythe were such good friends that you'd stand for half an hour at the gate talking to him," said Marilla with a dry smile.

"We haven't been — we've been good enemies. But we have decided that it will be much more sensible to be good friends in the future. Were

we really there half an hour? It seemed just a few minutes. But, you see, we have five years' lost conversations to catch up with, Marilla."

Anne sat long at her window that night companioned by a glad content. The wind purred softly in the cherry boughs, and the mint breaths came up to her. The stars twinkled over the pointed firs in the hollow and Diana's light gleamed through the old gap.

Anne's horizons had closed in since the night she had sat there after coming home from Queen's; but if the path set before her feet was to be narrow she knew that flowers of quiet happiness would bloom along it. The joy of sincere work and worthy aspiration and congenial friendship were to be hers; nothing could rob her of her birthright of fancy or her ideal world of dreams. And there was always the bend in the road!

"God's in his heaven, all's right with the world," whispered Anne softly. softly.

ANNE OF AVONLEA

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I. An Irate Neighbor

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A tall, slim girl, “halfpast sixteen,” with serious gray eyes and hair which her friends called auburn, had sat down on the broad red sandstone doorstep of a Prince Edward Island farmhouse one ripe afternoon in August, firmly resolved to construe so many lines of Virgil.

But an August afternoon, with blue hazes scarfing the harvest slopes, little winds whispering elfishly in the poplars, and a dancing splendor of red poppies outflaming against the dark coppice of young firs in a corner of the cherry orchard, was fitter for dreams than dead languages. The Virgil soon slipped unheeded to the ground, and Anne, her chin propped on her clasped hands, and her eyes on the splendid mass of fluffy clouds that were heaping up just over Mr. J. A. Harrison’s house like a great white mountain, was far away in a delicious world where a certain schoolteacher was doing a wonderful work, shaping the destinies of future statesmen, and inspiring youthful minds and hearts with high and lofty ambitions.

To be sure, if you came down to harsh facts ... which, it must be confessed, Anne seldom did until she had to ... it did not seem likely that there was much promising material for celebrities in Avonlea school; but you could never tell what might happen if a teacher used her influence for good. Anne had certain rose-tinted ideals of what a teacher might accomplish if she only went the right way about it; and she was in the midst of a delightful scene, forty years hence, with a famous personage ... just exactly what he was to be famous for was left in convenient haziness, but Anne thought it would be rather nice to have him a college president or a Canadian premier ... bowing low over her wrinkled hand and assuring her that it was she who had first kindled his ambition, and that all his success in life was due to the lessons she had instilled so long ago in Avonlea school. This pleasant vision was shattered by a most unpleasant interruption.

A demure little Jersey cow came scuttling down the lane and five seconds later Mr. Harrison arrived ... if "arrived" be not too mild a term to describe the manner of his irruption into the yard.

He bounced over the fence without waiting to open the gate, and angrily confronted astonished Anne, who had risen to her feet and stood looking at him in some bewilderment. Mr. Harrison was their new righthand neighbor and she had never met him before, although she had seen him once or twice.

In early April, before Anne had come home from Queen's, Mr. Robert Bell, whose farm adjoined the Cuthbert place on the west, had sold out and moved to Charlottetown. His farm had been bought by a certain Mr. J. A. Harrison, whose name, and the fact that he was a New Brunswick man, were all that was known about him. But before he had been a month in Avonlea he had won the reputation of being an odd person ... "a crank," Mrs. Rachel Lynde said. Mrs. Rachel was an outspoken lady, as those of you who may have already made her acquaintance will remember. Mr. Harrison was certainly different from other people ... and that is the essential characteristic of a crank, as everybody knows.

In the first place he kept house for himself and had publicly stated that he wanted no fools of women around his diggings. Feminine Avonlea took its revenge by the gruesome tales it related about his housekeeping and cooking. He had hired little John Henry Carter of White Sands and John Henry started the stories. For one thing, there was never any stated time for meals in the Harrison establishment. Mr. Harrison "got a bite" when he felt hungry, and if John Henry were around at the time, he came in for a share, but if he were not, he had to wait until Mr. Harrison's next hungry spell. John Henry mournfully averred that he would have starved to death if it wasn't that he got home on Sundays and got a good filling up, and that his mother always gave him a basket of "grub" to take back with him on Monday mornings.

As for washing dishes, Mr. Harrison never made any pretence of doing it unless a rainy Sunday came. Then he went to work and washed them all at once in the rainwater hogshead, and left them to drain dry.

Again, Mr. Harrison was “close.” When he was asked to subscribe to the Rev. Mr. Allan’s salary he said he’d wait and see how many dollars’ worth of good he got out of his preaching first ... he didn’t believe in buying a pig in a poke. And when Mrs. Lynde went to ask for a contribution to missions ... and incidentally to see the inside of the house ... he told her there were more heathens among the old woman gossips in Avonlea than anywhere else he knew of, and he’d cheerfully contribute to a mission for Christianizing them if she’d undertake it. Mrs. Rachel got herself away and said it was a mercy poor Mrs. Robert Bell was safe in her grave, for it would have broken her heart to see the state of her house in which she used to take so much pride.

“Why, she scrubbed the kitchen floor every second day,” Mrs. Lynde told Marilla Cuthbert indignantly, “and if you could see it now! I had to hold up my skirts as I walked across it.”

Finally, Mr. Harrison kept a parrot called Ginger. Nobody in Avonlea had ever kept a parrot before; consequently that proceeding was considered barely respectable. And such a parrot! If you took John Henry Carter’s word for it, never was such an unholy bird. It swore terribly. Mrs. Carter would have taken John Henry away at once if she had been sure she could get another place for him. Besides, Ginger had bitten a piece right out of the back of John Henry’s neck one day when he had stooped down too near the cage. Mrs. Carter showed everybody the mark when the luckless John Henry went home on Sundays.

All these things flashed through Anne’s mind as Mr. Harrison stood, quite speechless with wrath apparently, before her. In his most amiable mood Mr. Harrison could not have been considered a handsome man; he was short and fat and bald; and now, with his round face purple with rage and his prominent blue eyes almost sticking out of his head, Anne thought he was really the ugliest person she had ever seen.

All at once Mr. Harrison found his voice.

“I’m not going to put up with this,” he spluttered, “not a day longer, do you hear, miss. Bless my soul, this is the third time, miss ... the third time! Patience has ceased to be a virtue, miss. I warned your aunt the last

time not to let it occur again ... and she's let it ... she's done it ... what does she mean by it, that is what I want to know. That is what I'm here about, miss."

"Will you explain what the trouble is?" asked Anne, in her most dignified manner. She had been practicing it considerably of late to have it in good working order when school began; but it had no apparent effect on the irate J. A. Harrison.

"Trouble, is it? Bless my soul, trouble enough, I should think. The trouble is, miss, that I found that Jersey cow of your aunt's in my oats again, not half an hour ago. The third time, mark you. I found her in last Tuesday and I found her in yesterday. I came here and told your aunt not to let it occur again. She has let it occur again. Where's your aunt, miss? I just want to see her for a minute and give her a piece of my mind ... a piece of J. A. Harrison's mind, miss."

"If you mean Miss Marilla Cuthbert, she is not my aunt, and she has gone down to East Grafton to see a distant relative of hers who is very ill," said Anne, with due increase of dignity at every word. "I am very sorry that my cow should have broken into your oats ... she is my cow and not Miss Cuthbert's ... Matthew gave her to me three years ago when she was a little calf and he bought her from Mr. Bell."

"Sorry, miss! Sorry isn't going to help matters any. You'd better go and look at the havoc that animal has made in my oats ... trampled them from center to circumference, miss."

"I am very sorry," repeated Anne firmly, "but perhaps if you kept your fences in better repair Dolly might not have broken in. It is your part of the line fence that separates your oatfield from our pasture and I noticed the other day that it was not in very good condition."

"My fence is all right," snapped Mr. Harrison, angrier than ever at this carrying of the war into the enemy's country. "The jail fence couldn't keep a demon of a cow like that out. And I can tell you, you redheaded snippet, that if the cow is yours, as you say, you'd be better employed in watching her out of other people's grain than in sitting round reading yellow-

covered novels,” ... with a scathing glance at the innocent tan-colored Virgil by Anne’s feet.

Something at that moment was red besides Anne’s hair ... which had always been a tender point with her.

“I’d rather have red hair than none at all, except a little fringe round my ears,” she flashed.

The shot told, for Mr. Harrison was really very sensitive about his bald head. His anger choked him up again and he could only glare speechlessly at Anne, who recovered her temper and followed up her advantage.

“I can make allowance for you, Mr. Harrison, because I have an imagination. I can easily imagine how very trying it must be to find a cow in your oats and I shall not cherish any hard feelings against you for the things you’ve said. I promise you that Dolly shall never break into your oats again. I give you my word of honor on THAT point.”

“Well, mind you she doesn’t,” muttered Mr. Harrison in a somewhat subdued tone; but he stamped off angrily enough and Anne heard him growling to himself until he was out of earshot.

Grievously disturbed in mind, Anne marched across the yard and shut the naughty Jersey up in the milking pen.

“She can’t possibly get out of that unless she tears the fence down,” she reflected. “She looks pretty quiet now. I daresay she has sickened herself on those oats. I wish I’d sold her to Mr. Shearer when he wanted her last week, but I thought it was just as well to wait until we had the auction of the stock and let them all go together. I believe it is true about Mr. Harrison being a crank. Certainly there’s nothing of the kindred spirit about HIM.”

Anne had always a weather eye open for kindred spirits.

Marilla Cuthbert was driving into the yard as Anne returned from the house, and the latter flew to get tea ready. They discussed the matter at the tea table.

“I’ll be glad when the auction is over,” said Marilla. “It is too much responsibility having so much stock about the place and nobody but that unreliable Martin to look after them. He has never come back yet and he

promised that he would certainly be back last night if I'd give him the day off to go to his aunt's funeral. I don't know how many aunts he has got, I am sure. That's the fourth that's died since he hired here a year ago. I'll be more than thankful when the crop is in and Mr. Barry takes over the farm. We'll have to keep Dolly shut up in the pen till Martin comes, for she must be put in the back pasture and the fences there have to be fixed. I declare, it is a world of trouble, as Rachel says. Here's poor Mary Keith dying and what is to become of those two children of hers is more than I know. She has a brother in British Columbia and she has written to him about them, but she hasn't heard from him yet."

"What are the children like? How old are they?"

"Six past ... they're twins."

"Oh, I've always been especially interested in twins ever since Mrs. Hammond had so many," said Anne eagerly. "Are they pretty?"

"Goodness, you couldn't tell ... they were too dirty. Davy had been out making mud pies and Dora went out to call him in. Davy pushed her headfirst into the biggest pie and then, because she cried, he got into it himself and wallowed in it to show her it was nothing to cry about. Mary said Dora was really a very good child but that Davy was full of mischief. He has never had any bringing up you might say. His father died when he was a baby and Mary has been sick almost ever since."

"I'm always sorry for children that have no bringing up," said Anne soberly. "You know *I* hadn't any till you took me in hand. I hope their uncle will look after them. Just what relation is Mrs. Keith to you?"

"Mary? None in the world. It was her husband ... he was our third cousin. There's Mrs. Lynde coming through the yard. I thought she'd be up to hear about Mary."

"Don't tell her about Mr. Harrison and the cow," implored Anne.

Marilla promised; but the promise was quite unnecessary, for Mrs. Lynde was no sooner fairly seated than she said,

"I saw Mr. Harrison chasing your Jersey out of his oats today when I was coming home from Carmody. I thought he looked pretty mad. Did he make much of a rumpus?"

Anne and Marilla furtively exchanged amused smiles. Few things in Avonlea ever escaped Mrs. Lynde. It was only that morning Anne had said,

“If you went to your own room at midnight, locked the door, pulled down the blind, and SNEEZED, Mrs. Lynde would ask you the next day how your cold was!”

“I believe he did,” admitted Marilla. “I was away. He gave Anne a piece of his mind.”

“I think he is a very disagreeable man,” said Anne, with a resentful toss of her ruddy head.

“You never said a truer word,” said Mrs. Rachel solemnly. “I knew there’d be trouble when Robert Bell sold his place to a New Brunswick man, that’s what. I don’t know what Avonlea is coming to, with so many strange people rushing into it. It’ll soon not be safe to go to sleep in our beds.”

“Why, what other strangers are coming in?” asked Marilla.

“Haven’t you heard? Well, there’s a family of Donnells, for one thing. They’ve rented Peter Sloane’s old house. Peter has hired the man to run his mill. They belong down east and nobody knows anything about them. Then that shiftless Timothy Cotton family are going to move up from White Sands and they’ll simply be a burden on the public. He is in consumption ... when he isn’t stealing ... and his wife is a slack-twisted creature that can’t turn her hand to a thing. She washes her dishes SITTING DOWN. Mrs. George Pye has taken her husband’s orphan nephew, Anthony Pye. He’ll be going to school to you, Anne, so you may expect trouble, that’s what. And you’ll have another strange pupil, too. Paul Irving is coming from the States to live with his grandmother. You remember his father, Marilla ... Stephen Irving, him that jilted Lavendar Lewis over at Grafton?”

“I don’t think he jilted her. There was a quarrel ... I suppose there was blame on both sides.”

“Well, anyway, he didn’t marry her, and she’s been as queer as possible ever since, they say ... living all by herself in that little stone house she calls Echo Lodge. Stephen went off to the States and went into business

with his uncle and married a Yankee. He's never been home since, though his mother has been up to see him once or twice. His wife died two years ago and he's sending the boy home to his mother for a spell. He's ten years old and I don't know if he'll be a very desirable pupil. You can never tell about those Yankees."

Mrs Lynde looked upon all people who had the misfortune to be born or brought up elsewhere than in Prince Edward Island with a decided can-any-good-thing-come-out-of-Nazareth air. They MIGHT be good people, of course; but you were on the safe side in doubting it. She had a special prejudice against "Yankees." Her husband had been cheated out of ten dollars by an employer for whom he had once worked in Boston and neither angels nor principalities nor powers could have convinced Mrs. Rachel that the whole United States was not responsible for it.

"Avonlea school won't be the worse for a little new blood," said Marilla drily, "and if this boy is anything like his father he'll be all right. Steve Irving was the nicest boy that was ever raised in these parts, though some people did call him proud. I should think Mrs. Irving would be very glad to have the child. She has been very lonesome since her husband died."

"Oh, the boy may be well enough, but he'll be different from Avonlea children," said Mrs. Rachel, as if that clinched the matter. Mrs. Rachel's opinions concerning any person, place, or thing, were always warranted to wear. "What's this I hear about your going to start up a Village Improvement Society, Anne?"

"I was just talking it over with some of the girls and boys at the last Debating Club," said Anne, flushing. "They thought it would be rather nice ... and so do Mr. and Mrs. Allan. Lots of villages have them now."

"Well, you'll get into no end of hot water if you do. Better leave it alone, Anne, that's what. People don't like being improved."

"Oh, we are not going to try to improve the PEOPLE. It is Avonlea itself. There are lots of things which might be done to make it prettier. For instance, if we could coax Mr. Levi Boulter to pull down that dreadful old house on his upper farm wouldn't that be an improvement?"

“It certainly would,” admitted Mrs. Rachel. “That old ruin has been an eyesore to the settlement for years. But if you Improvers can coax Levi Boulter to do anything for the public that he isn’t to be paid for doing, may I be there to see and hear the process, that’s what. I don’t want to discourage you, Anne, for there may be something in your idea, though I suppose you did get it out of some rubbishy Yankee magazine; but you’ll have your hands full with your school and I advise you as a friend not to bother with your improvements, that’s what. But there, I know you’ll go ahead with it if you’ve set your mind on it. You were always one to carry a thing through somehow.”

Something about the firm outlines of Anne’s lips told that Mrs. Rachel was not far astray in this estimate. Anne’s heart was bent on forming the Improvement Society. Gilbert Blythe, who was to teach in White Sands but would always be home from Friday night to Monday morning, was enthusiastic about it; and most of the other folks were willing to go in for anything that meant occasional meetings and consequently some “fun.” As for what the “improvements” were to be, nobody had any very clear idea except Anne and Gilbert. They had talked them over and planned them out until an ideal Avonlea existed in their minds, if nowhere else.

Mrs. Rachel had still another item of news.

“They’ve given the Carmody school to a Priscilla Grant. Didn’t you go to Queen’s with a girl of that name, Anne?”

“Yes, indeed. Priscilla to teach at Carmody! How perfectly lovely!” exclaimed Anne, her gray eyes lighting up until they looked like evening stars, causing Mrs. Lynde to wonder anew if she would ever get it settled to her satisfaction whether Anne Shirley were really a pretty girl or not.

II. Selling in Haste and Repenting at Leisure

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Anne drove over to Carmody on a shopping expedition the next afternoon and took Diana Barry with her. Diana was, of course, a pledged member of the Improvement Society, and the two girls talked about little else all the way to Carmody and back.

“The very first thing we ought to do when we get started is to have that hall painted,” said Diana, as they drove past the Avonlea hall, a rather shabby building set down in a wooded hollow, with spruce trees hooding it about on all sides. “It’s a disgraceful looking place and we must attend to it even before we try to get Mr. Levi Boulder to pull his house down. Father says we’ll never succeed in DOING that. Levi Boulter is too mean to spend the time it would take.”

“Perhaps he’ll let the boys take it down if they promise to haul the boards and split them up for him for kindling wood,” said Anne hopefully. “We must do our best and be content to go slowly at first. We can’t expect to improve everything all at once. We’ll have to educate public sentiment first, of course.”

Diana wasn’t exactly sure what educating public sentiment meant; but it sounded fine and she felt rather proud that she was going to belong to a society with such an aim in view.

“I thought of something last night that we could do, Anne. You know that three-cornered piece of ground where the roads from Carmody and Newbridge and White Sands meet? It’s all grown over with young spruce; but wouldn’t it be nice to have them all cleared out, and just leave the two or three birch trees that are on it?”

“Splendid,” agreed Anne gaily. “And have a rustic seat put under the birches. And when spring comes we’ll have a flower-bed made in the middle of it and plant geraniums.”

“Yes; only we’ll have to devise some way of getting old Mrs. Hiram Sloane to keep her cow off the road, or she’ll eat our geraniums up,” laughed Diana. “I begin to see what you mean by educating public sentiment, Anne. There’s the old Boulter house now. Did you ever see such a rookery? And perched right close to the road too. An old house with its windows gone always makes me think of something dead with its eyes picked out.”

“I think an old, deserted house is such a sad sight,” said Anne dreamily. “It always seems to me to be thinking about its past and mourning for its old-time joys. Marilla says that a large family was raised in that old house long ago, and that it was a real pretty place, with a lovely garden and roses climbing all over it. It was full of little children and laughter and songs; and now it is empty, and nothing ever wanders through it but the wind. How lonely and sorrowful it must feel! Perhaps they all come back on moonlit nights ... the ghosts of the little children of long ago and the roses and the songs ... and for a little while the old house can dream it is young and joyous again.”

Diana shook her head.

“I never imagine things like that about places now, Anne. Don’t you remember how cross mother and Marilla were when we imagined ghosts into the Haunted Wood? To this day I can’t go through that bush comfortably after dark; and if I began imagining such things about the old Boulter house I’d be frightened to pass it too. Besides, those children aren’t dead. They’re all grown up and doing well ... and one of them is a butcher. And flowers and songs couldn’t have ghosts anyhow.”

Anne smothered a little sigh. She loved Diana dearly and they had always been good comrades. But she had long ago learned that when she wandered into the realm of fancy she must go alone. The way to it was by an enchanted path where not even her dearest might follow her.

A thunder-shower came up while the girls were at Carmody; it did not last long, however, and the drive home, through lanes where the raindrops sparkled on the boughs and little leafy valleys where the drenched ferns gave out spicy odors, was delightful. But just as they turned into the

Cuthbert lane Anne saw something that spoiled the beauty of the landscape for her.

Before them on the right extended Mr. Harrison's broad, gray-green field of late oats, wet and luxuriant; and there, standing squarely in the middle of it, up to her sleek sides in the lush growth, and blinking at them calmly over the intervening tassels, was a Jersey cow!

Anne dropped the reins and stood up with a tightening of the lips that boded no good to the predatory quadruped. Not a word said she, but she climbed nimbly down over the wheels, and whisked across the fence before Diana understood what had happened.

"Anne, come back," shrieked the latter, as soon as she found her voice. "You'll ruin your dress in that wet grain ... ruin it. She doesn't hear me! Well, she'll never get that cow out by herself. I must go and help her, of course."

Anne was charging through the grain like a mad thing. Diana hopped briskly down, tied the horse securely to a post, turned the skirt of her pretty gingham dress over her shoulders, mounted the fence, and started in pursuit of her frantic friend. She could run faster than Anne, who was hampered by her clinging and drenched skirt, and soon overtook her. Behind them they left a trail that would break Mr. Harrison's heart when he should see it.

"Anne, for mercy's sake, stop," panted poor Diana. "I'm right out of breath and you are wet to the skin."

"I must ... get ... that cow ... out ... before ... Mr. Harrison ... sees her," gasped Anne. "I don't ... care ... if I'm ... drowned ... if we ... can ... only ... do that."

But the Jersey cow appeared to see no good reason for being hustled out of her luscious browsing ground. No sooner had the two breathless girls got near her than she turned and bolted squarely for the opposite corner of the field.

"Head her off," screamed Anne. "Run, Diana, run."

Diana did run. Anne tried to, and the wicked Jersey went around the field as if she were possessed. Privately, Diana thought she was. It was

fully ten minutes before they headed her off and drove her through the corner gap into the Cuthbert lane.

There is no denying that Anne was in anything but an angelic temper at that precise moment. Nor did it soothe her in the least to behold a buggy halted just outside the lane, wherein sat Mr. Shearer of Carmody and his son, both of whom wore a broad smile.

“I guess you’d better have sold me that cow when I wanted to buy her last week, Anne,” chuckled Mr. Shearer.

“I’ll sell her to you now, if you want her,” said her flushed and disheveled owner. “You may have her this very minute.”

“Done. I’ll give you twenty for her as I offered before, and Jim here can drive her right over to Carmody. She’ll go to town with the rest of the shipment this evening. Mr. Reed of Brighton wants a Jersey cow.”

Five minutes later Jim Shearer and the Jersey cow were marching up the road, and impulsive Anne was driving along the Green Gables lane with her twenty dollars.

“What will Marilla say?” asked Diana.

“Oh, she won’t care. Dolly was my own cow and it isn’t likely she’d bring more than twenty dollars at the auction. But oh dear, if Mr. Harrison sees that grain he will know she has been in again, and after my giving him my word of honor that I’d never let it happen! Well, it has taught me a lesson not to give my word of honor about cows. A cow that could jump over or break through our milk-pen fence couldn’t be trusted anywhere.”

Marilla had gone down to Mrs. Lynde’s, and when she returned knew all about Dolly’s sale and transfer, for Mrs. Lynde had seen most of the transaction from her window and guessed the rest.

“I suppose it’s just as well she’s gone, though you DO do things in a dreadful headlong fashion, Anne. I don’t see how she got out of the pen, though. She must have broken some of the boards off.”

“I didn’t think of looking,” said Anne, “but I’ll go and see now. Martin has never come back yet. Perhaps some more of his aunts have died. I think it’s something like Mr. Peter Sloane and the octogenarians. The other evening Mrs. Sloane was reading a newspaper and she said to Mr. Sloane,

‘I see here that another octogenarian has just died. What is an octogenarian, Peter?’ And Mr. Sloane said he didn’t know, but they must be very sickly creatures, for you never heard tell of them but they were dying. That’s the way with Martin’s aunts.”

“Martin’s just like all the rest of those French,” said Marilla in disgust. “You can’t depend on them for a day.” Marilla was looking over Anne’s Carmody purchases when she heard a shrill shriek in the barnyard. A minute later Anne dashed into the kitchen, wringing her hands.

“Anne Shirley, what’s the matter now?”

“Oh, Marilla, whatever shall I do? This is terrible. And it’s all my fault. Oh, will I EVER learn to stop and reflect a little before doing reckless things? Mrs. Lynde always told me I would do something dreadful some day, and now I’ve done it!”

“Anne, you are the most exasperating girl! WHAT is it you’ve done?”

“Sold Mr. Harrison’s Jersey cow ... the one he bought from Mr. Bell ... to Mr. Shearer! Dolly is out in the milking pen this very minute.”

“Anne Shirley, are you dreaming?”

“I only wish I were. There’s no dream about it, though it’s very like a nightmare. And Mr. Harrison’s cow is in Charlottetown by this time. Oh, Marilla, I thought I’d finished getting into scrapes, and here I am in the very worst one I ever was in in my life. What can I do?”

“Do? There’s nothing to do, child, except go and see Mr. Harrison about it. We can offer him our Jersey in exchange if he doesn’t want to take the money. She is just as good as his.”

“I’m sure he’ll be awfully cross and disagreeable about it, though,” moaned Anne.

“I daresay he will. He seems to be an irritable sort of a man. I’ll go and explain to him if you like.”

“No, indeed, I’m not as mean as that,” exclaimed Anne. “This is all my fault and I’m certainly not going to let you take my punishment. I’ll go myself and I’ll go at once. The sooner it’s over the better, for it will be terribly humiliating.”

Poor Anne got her hat and her twenty dollars and was passing out when she happened to glance through the open pantry door. On the table reposed a nut cake which she had baked that morning ... a particularly toothsome concoction iced with pink icing and adorned with walnuts. Anne had intended it for Friday evening, when the youth of Avonlea were to meet at Green Gables to organize the Improvement Society. But what were they compared to the justly offended Mr. Harrison? Anne thought that cake ought to soften the heart of any man, especially one who had to do his own cooking, and she promptly popped it into a box. She would take it to Mr. Harrison as a peace offering.

“That is, if he gives me a chance to say anything at all,” she thought ruefully, as she climbed the lane fence and started on a short cut across the fields, golden in the light of the dreamy August evening. “I know now just how people feel who are being led to execution.”

III. Mr. Harrison at Home

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Mr. Harrison's house was an old-fashioned, low-eaved, whitewashed structure, set against a thick spruce grove.

Mr. Harrison himself was sitting on his vineshaded veranda, in his shirt sleeves, enjoying his evening pipe. When he realized who was coming up the path he sprang suddenly to his feet, bolted into the house, and shut the door. This was merely the uncomfortable result of his surprise, mingled with a good deal of shame over his outburst of temper the day before. But it nearly swept the remnant of her courage from Anne's heart.

"If he's so cross now what will he be when he hears what I've done," she reflected miserably, as she rapped at the door.

But Mr. Harrison opened it, smiling sheepishly, and invited her to enter in a tone quite mild and friendly, if somewhat nervous. He had laid aside his pipe and donned his coat; he offered Anne a very dusty chair very politely, and her reception would have passed off pleasantly enough if it had not been for the telltale of a parrot who was peering through the bars of his cage with wicked golden eyes. No sooner had Anne seated herself than Ginger exclaimed,

"Bless my soul, what's that redheaded snippet coming here for?"

It would be hard to say whose face was the redder, Mr. Harrison's or Anne's.

"Don't you mind that parrot," said Mr. Harrison, casting a furious glance at Ginger. "He's ... he's always talking nonsense. I got him from my brother who was a sailor. Sailors don't always use the choicest language, and parrots are very imitative birds."

"So I should think," said poor Anne, the remembrance of her errand quelling her resentment. She couldn't afford to snub Mr. Harrison under the circumstances, that was certain. When you had just sold a man's Jersey

cow offhand, without his knowledge or consent you must not mind if his parrot repeated uncomplimentary things. Nevertheless, the “redheaded snippet” was not quite so meek as she might otherwise have been.

“I’ve come to confess something to you, Mr. Harrison,” she said resolutely. “It’s ... it’s about ... that Jersey cow.”

“Bless my soul,” exclaimed Mr. Harrison nervously, “has she gone and broken into my oats again? Well, never mind ... never mind if she has. It’s no difference ... none at all, I ... I was too hasty yesterday, that’s a fact. Never mind if she has.”

“Oh, if it were only that,” sighed Anne. “But it’s ten times worse. I don’t ...”

“Bless my soul, do you mean to say she’s got into my wheat?”

“No ... no ... not the wheat. But ...”

“Then it’s the cabbages! She’s broken into my cabbages that I was raising for Exhibition, hey?”

“It’s NOT the cabbages, Mr. Harrison. I’ll tell you everything ... that is what I came for — but please don’t interrupt me. It makes me so nervous. Just let me tell my story and don’t say anything till I get through — and then no doubt you’ll say plenty,” Anne concluded, but in thought only.

“I won’t say another word,” said Mr. Harrison, and he didn’t. But Ginger was not bound by any contract of silence and kept ejaculating, “Redheaded snippet” at intervals until Anne felt quite wild.

“I shut my Jersey cow up in our pen yesterday. This morning I went to Carmody and when I came back I saw a Jersey cow in your oats. Diana and I chased her out and you can’t imagine what a hard time we had. I was so dreadfully wet and tired and vexed — and Mr. Shearer came by that very minute and offered to buy the cow. I sold her to him on the spot for twenty dollars. It was wrong of me. I should have waited and consulted Marilla, of course. But I’m dreadfully given to doing things without thinking — everybody who knows me will tell you that. Mr. Shearer took the cow right away to ship her on the afternoon train.”

“Redheaded snippet,” quoted Ginger in a tone of profound contempt.

At this point Mr. Harrison arose and, with an expression that would have struck terror into any bird but a parrot, carried Ginger's cage into an adjoining room and shut the door. Ginger shrieked, swore, and otherwise conducted himself in keeping with his reputation, but finding himself left alone, relapsed into sulky silence.

"Excuse me and go on," said Mr. Harrison, sitting down again. "My brother the sailor never taught that bird any manners."

"I went home and after tea I went out to the milking pen. Mr. Harrison," ... Anne leaned forward, clasping her hands with her old childish gesture, while her big gray eyes gazed imploringly into Mr. Harrison's embarrassed face ... "I found my cow still shut up in the pen. It was YOUR cow I had sold to Mr. Shearer."

"Bless my soul," exclaimed Mr. Harrison, in blank amazement at this unlooked-for conclusion. "What a VERY extraordinary thing!"

"Oh, it isn't in the least extraordinary that I should be getting myself and other people into scrapes," said Anne mournfully. "I'm noted for that. You might suppose I'd have grown out of it by this time ... I'll be seventeen next March ... but it seems that I haven't. Mr. Harrison, is it too much to hope that you'll forgive me? I'm afraid it's too late to get your cow back, but here is the money for her ... or you can have mine in exchange if you'd rather. She's a very good cow. And I can't express how sorry I am for it all."

"Tut, tut," said Mr. Harrison briskly, "don't say another word about it, miss. It's of no consequence ... no consequence whatever. Accidents will happen. I'm too hasty myself sometimes, miss ... far too hasty. But I can't help speaking out just what I think and folks must take me as they find me. If that cow had been in my cabbages now ... but never mind, she wasn't, so it's all right. I think I'd rather have your cow in exchange, since you want to be rid of her."

"Oh, thank you, Mr. Harrison. I'm so glad you are not vexed. I was afraid you would be."

"And I suppose you were scared to death to come here and tell me, after the fuss I made yesterday, hey? But you mustn't mind me, I'm a

terrible outspoken old fellow, that's all ... awful apt to tell the truth, no matter if it is a bit plain."

"So is Mrs. Lynde," said Anne, before she could prevent herself.

"Who? Mrs. Lynde? Don't you tell me I'm like that old gossip," said Mr. Harrison irritably. "I'm not ... not a bit. What have you got in that box?"

"A cake," said Anne archly. In her relief at Mr. Harrison's unexpected amiability her spirits soared upward feather-light. "I brought it over for you ... I thought perhaps you didn't have cake very often."

"I don't, that's a fact, and I'm mighty fond of it, too. I'm much obliged to you. It looks good on top. I hope it's good all the way through."

"It is," said Anne, gaily confident. "I have made cakes in my time that were NOT, as Mrs. Allan could tell you, but this one is all right. I made it for the Improvement Society, but I can make another for them."

"Well, I'll tell you what, miss, you must help me eat it. I'll put the kettle on and we'll have a cup of tea. How will that do?"

"Will you let me make the tea?" said Anne dubiously.

Mr. Harrison chuckled.

"I see you haven't much confidence in my ability to make tea. You're wrong ... I can brew up as good a jorum of tea as you ever drank. But go ahead yourself. Fortunately it rained last Sunday, so there's plenty of clean dishes."

Anne hopped briskly up and went to work. She washed the teapot in several waters before she put the tea to steep. Then she swept the stove and set the table, bringing the dishes out of the pantry. The state of that pantry horrified Anne, but she wisely said nothing. Mr. Harrison told her where to find the bread and butter and a can of peaches. Anne adorned the table with a bouquet from the garden and shut her eyes to the stains on the tablecloth. Soon the tea was ready and Anne found herself sitting opposite Mr. Harrison at his own table, pouring his tea for him, and chatting freely to him about her school and friends and plans. She could hardly believe the evidence of her senses.

Mr. Harrison had brought Ginger back, averring that the poor bird would be lonesome; and Anne, feeling that she could forgive everybody and everything, offered him a walnut. But Ginger's feelings had been grievously hurt and he rejected all overtures of friendship. He sat moodily on his perch and ruffled his feathers up until he looked like a mere ball of green and gold.

"Why do you call him Ginger?" asked Anne, who liked appropriate names and thought Ginger accorded not at all with such gorgeous plumage.

"My brother the sailor named him. Maybe it had some reference to his temper. I think a lot of that bird though ... you'd be surprised if you knew how much. He has his faults of course. That bird has cost me a good deal one way and another. Some people object to his swearing habits but he can't be broken of them. I've tried ... other people have tried. Some folks have prejudices against parrots. Silly, ain't it? I like them myself. Ginger's a lot of company to me. Nothing would induce me to give that bird up ... nothing in the world, miss."

Mr. Harrison flung the last sentence at Anne as explosively as if he suspected her of some latent design of persuading him to give Ginger up. Anne, however, was beginning to like the queer, fussy, fidgety little man, and before the meal was over they were quite good friends. Mr. Harrison found out about the Improvement Society and was disposed to approve of it.

"That's right. Go ahead. There's lots of room for improvement in this settlement ... and in the people too."

"Oh, I don't know," flashed Anne. To herself, or to her particular cronies, she might admit that there were some small imperfections, easily removable, in Avonlea and its inhabitants. But to hear a practical outsider like Mr. Harrison saying it was an entirely different thing. "I think Avonlea is a lovely place; and the people in it are very nice, too."

"I guess you've got a spice of temper," commented Mr. Harrison, surveying the flushed cheeks and indignant eyes opposite him. "It goes with hair like yours, I reckon. Avonlea is a pretty decent place or I

wouldn't have located here; but I suppose even you will admit that it has SOME faults?"

"I like it all the better for them," said loyal Anne. "I don't like places or people either that haven't any faults. I think a truly perfect person would be very uninteresting. Mrs. Milton White says she never met a perfect person, but she's heard enough about one ... her husband's first wife. Don't you think it must be very uncomfortable to be married to a man whose first wife was perfect?"

"It would be more uncomfortable to be married to the perfect wife," declared Mr. Harrison, with a sudden and inexplicable warmth.

When tea was over Anne insisted on washing the dishes, although Mr. Harrison assured her that there were enough in the house to do for weeks yet. She would dearly have loved to sweep the floor also, but no broom was visible and she did not like to ask where it was for fear there wasn't one at all.

"You might run across and talk to me once in a while," suggested Mr. Harrison when she was leaving. "'Tisn't far and folks ought to be neighborly. I'm kind of interested in that society of yours. Seems to me there'll be some fun in it. Who are you going to tackle first?"

"We are not going to meddle with PEOPLE ... it is only PLACES we mean to improve," said Anne, in a dignified tone. She rather suspected that Mr. Harrison was making fun of the project.

When she had gone Mr. Harrison watched her from the window ... a lithe, girlish shape, tripping lightheartedly across the fields in the sunset afterglow.

"I'm a crusty, lonesome, crabbed old chap," he said aloud, "but there's something about that little girl makes me feel young again ... and it's such a pleasant sensation I'd like to have it repeated once in a while."

"Redheaded snippet," croaked Ginger mockingly.

Mr. Harrison shook his fist at the parrot.

"You ornery bird," he muttered, "I almost wish I'd wrung your neck when my brother the sailor brought you home. Will you never be done getting me into trouble?"

Anne ran home blithely and recounted her adventures to Marilla, who had been not a little alarmed by her long absence and was on the point of starting out to look for her.

“It’s a pretty good world, after all, isn’t it, Marilla?” concluded Anne happily. “Mrs. Lynde was complaining the other day that it wasn’t much of a world. She said whenever you looked forward to anything pleasant you were sure to be more or less disappointed ... perhaps that is true. But there is a good side to it too. The bad things don’t always come up to your expectations either ... they nearly always turn out ever so much better than you think. I looked forward to a dreadfully unpleasant experience when I went over to Mr. Harrison’s tonight; and instead he was quite kind and I had almost a nice time. I think we’re going to be real good friends if we make plenty of allowances for each other, and everything has turned out for the best. But all the same, Marilla, I shall certainly never again sell a cow before making sure to whom she belongs. And I do NOT like parrots!”

IV. Different Opinions

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One evening at sunset, Jane Andrews, Gilbert Blythe, and Anne Shirley were lingering by a fence in the shadow of gently swaying spruce boughs, where a wood cut known as the Birch Path joined the main road. Jane had been up to spend the afternoon with Anne, who walked part of the way home with her; at the fence they met Gilbert, and all three were now talking about the fateful morrow; for that morrow was the first of September and the schools would open. Jane would go to Newbridge and Gilbert to White Sands.

“You both have the advantage of me,” sighed Anne. “You’re going to teach children who don’t know you, but I have to teach my own old schoolmates, and Mrs. Lynde says she’s afraid they won’t respect me as they would a stranger unless I’m very cross from the first. But I don’t believe a teacher should be cross. Oh, it seems to me such a responsibility!”

“I guess we’ll get on all right,” said Jane comfortably. Jane was not troubled by any aspirations to be an influence for good. She meant to earn her salary fairly, please the trustees, and get her name on the School Inspector’s roll of honor. Further ambitions Jane had none. “The main thing will be to keep order and a teacher has to be a little cross to do that. If my pupils won’t do as I tell them I shall punish them.”

“How?”

“Give them a good whipping, of course.”

“Oh, Jane, you wouldn’t,” cried Anne, shocked. “Jane, you COULDN’T!”

“Indeed, I could and would, if they deserved it,” said Jane decidedly.

“I could NEVER whip a child,” said Anne with equal decision. “I don’t believe in it AT ALL. Miss Stacy never whipped any of us and she had perfect order; and Mr. Phillips was always whipping and he had no order at

all. No, if I can't get along without whipping I shall not try to teach school. There are better ways of managing. I shall try to win my pupils' affections and then they will WANT to do what I tell them."

"But suppose they don't?" said practical Jane.

"I wouldn't whip them anyhow. I'm sure it wouldn't do any good. Oh, don't whip your pupils, Jane dear, no matter what they do."

"What do you think about it, Gilbert?" demanded Jane. "Don't you think there are some children who really need a whipping now and then?"

"Don't you think it's a cruel, barbarous thing to whip a child ... ANY child?" exclaimed Anne, her face flushing with earnestness.

"Well," said Gilbert slowly, torn between his real convictions and his wish to measure up to Anne's ideal, "there's something to be said on both sides. I don't believe in whipping children MUCH. I think, as you say, Anne, that there are better ways of managing as a rule, and that corporal punishment should be a last resort. But on the other hand, as Jane says, I believe there is an occasional child who can't be influenced in any other way and who, in short, needs a whipping and would be improved by it. Corporal punishment as a last resort is to be my rule."

Gilbert, having tried to please both sides, succeeded, as is usual and eminently right, in pleasing neither. Jane tossed her head.

"I'll whip my pupils when they're naughty. It's the shortest and easiest way of convincing them."

Anne gave Gilbert a disappointed glance.

"I shall never whip a child," she repeated firmly. "I feel sure it isn't either right or necessary."

"Suppose a boy sauced you back when you told him to do something?" said Jane.

"I'd keep him in after school and talk kindly and firmly to him," said Anne. "There is some good in every person if you can find it. It is a teacher's duty to find and develop it. That is what our School Management professor at Queen's told us, you know. Do you suppose you could find any good in a child by whipping him? It's far more important to influence the

children aright than it is even to teach them the three R's, Professor Rennie says."

"But the Inspector examines them in the three R's, mind you, and he won't give you a good report if they don't come up to his standard," protested Jane.

"I'd rather have my pupils love me and look back to me in after years as a real helper than be on the roll of honor," asserted Anne decidedly.

"Wouldn't you punish children at all, when they misbehaved?" asked Gilbert.

"Oh, yes, I suppose I shall have to, although I know I'll hate to do it. But you can keep them in at recess or stand them on the floor or give them lines to write."

"I suppose you won't punish the girls by making them sit with the boys?" said Jane slyly.

Gilbert and Anne looked at each other and smiled rather foolishly. Once upon a time, Anne had been made to sit with Gilbert for punishment and sad and bitter had been the consequences thereof.

"Well, time will tell which is the best way," said Jane philosophically as they parted.

Anne went back to Green Gables by way of Birch Path, shadowy, rustling, fern-scented, through Violet Vale and past Willowmere, where dark and light kissed each other under the firs, and down through Lover's Lane ... spots she and Diana had so named long ago. She walked slowly, enjoying the sweetness of wood and field and the starry summer twilight, and thinking soberly about the new duties she was to take up on the morrow. When she reached the yard at Green Gables Mrs. Lynde's loud, decided tones floated out through the open kitchen window.

"Mrs. Lynde has come up to give me good advice about tomorrow," thought Anne with a grimace, "but I don't believe I'll go in. Her advice is much like pepper, I think ... excellent in small quantities but rather scorching in her doses. I'll run over and have a chat with Mr. Harrison instead."

This was not the first time Anne had run over and chatted with Mr. Harrison since the notable affair of the Jersey cow. She had been there several evenings and Mr. Harrison and she were very good friends, although there were times and seasons when Anne found the outspokenness on which he prided himself rather trying. Ginger still continued to regard her with suspicion, and never failed to greet her sarcastically as “redheaded snippit.” Mr. Harrison had tried vainly to break him of the habit by jumping excitedly up whenever he saw Anne coming and exclaiming,

“Bless my soul, here’s that pretty little girl again,” or something equally flattering. But Ginger saw through the scheme and scorned it. Anne was never to know how many compliments Mr. Harrison paid her behind her back. He certainly never paid her any to her face.

“Well, I suppose you’ve been back in the woods laying in a supply of switches for tomorrow?” was his greeting as Anne came up the veranda steps.

“No, indeed,” said Anne indignantly. She was an excellent target for teasing because she always took things so seriously. “I shall never have a switch in my school, Mr. Harrison. Of course, I shall have to have a pointer, but I shall use it for pointing ONLY.”

“So you mean to strap them instead? Well, I don’t know but you’re right. A switch stings more at the time but the strap smarts longer, that’s a fact.”

“I shall not use anything of the sort. I’m not going to whip my pupils.”

“Bless my soul,” exclaimed Mr. Harrison in genuine astonishment, “how do you lay out to keep order then?”

“I shall govern by affection, Mr. Harrison.”

“It won’t do,” said Mr. Harrison, “won’t do at all, Anne. ‘Spare the rod and spoil the child.’ When I went to school the master whipped me regular every day because he said if I wasn’t in mischief just then I was plotting it.”

“Methods have changed since your schooldays, Mr. Harrison.”

“But human nature hasn’t. Mark my words, you’ll never manage the young fry unless you keep a rod in pickle for them. The thing is impossible.”

“Well, I’m going to try my way first,” said Anne, who had a fairly strong will of her own and was apt to cling very tenaciously to her theories.

“You’re pretty stubborn, I reckon,” was Mr. Harrison’s way of putting it. “Well, well, we’ll see. Someday when you get riled up ... and people with hair like yours are desperate apt to get riled ... you’ll forget all your pretty little notions and give some of them a whaling. You’re too young to be teaching anyhow ... far too young and childish.”

Altogether, Anne went to bed that night in a rather pessimistic mood. She slept poorly and was so pale and tragic at breakfast next morning that Marilla was alarmed and insisted on making her take a cup of scorching ginger tea. Anne sipped it patiently, although she could not imagine what good ginger tea would do. Had it been some magic brew, potent to confer age and experience, Anne would have swallowed a quart of it without flinching.

“Marilla, what if I fail!”

“You’ll hardly fail completely in one day and there’s plenty more days coming,” said Marilla. “The trouble with you, Anne, is that you’ll expect to teach those children everything and reform all their faults right off, and if you can’t you’ll think you’ve failed.”

V. A Full-fledged Schoolma'am

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When Anne reached the school that morning ... for the first time in her life she had traversed the Birch Path deaf and blind to its beauties ... all was quiet and still. The preceding teacher had trained the children to be in their places at her arrival, and when Anne entered the schoolroom she was confronted by prim rows of “shining morning faces” and bright, inquisitive eyes. She hung up her hat and faced her pupils, hoping that she did not look as frightened and foolish as she felt and that they would not perceive how she was trembling.

She had sat up until nearly twelve the preceding night composing a speech she meant to make to her pupils upon opening the school. She had revised and improved it painstakingly, and then she had learned it off by heart. It was a very good speech and had some very fine ideas in it, especially about mutual help and earnest striving after knowledge. The only trouble was that she could not now remember a word of it.

After what seemed to her a year ... about ten seconds in reality ... she said faintly, “Take your Testaments, please,” and sank breathlessly into her chair under cover of the rustle and clatter of desk lids that followed. While the children read their verses Anne marshalled her shaky wits into order and looked over the array of little pilgrims to the Grownup Land.

Most of them were, of course, quite well known to her. Her own classmates had passed out in the preceding year but the rest had all gone to school with her, excepting the primer class and ten newcomers to Avonlea. Anne secretly felt more interest in these ten than in those whose possibilities were already fairly well mapped out to her. To be sure, they might be just as commonplace as the rest; but on the other hand there MIGHT be a genius among them. It was a thrilling idea.

Sitting by himself at a corner desk was Anthony Pye. He had a dark, sullen little face, and was staring at Anne with a hostile expression in his

black eyes. Anne instantly made up her mind that she would win that boy's affection and discomfit the Pyes utterly.

In the other corner another strange boy was sitting with Arty Sloane... a jolly looking little chap, with a snub nose, freckled face, and big, light blue eyes, fringed with whitish lashes ... probably the DonNELL boy; and if resemblance went for anything, his sister was sitting across the aisle with Mary Bell. Anne wondered what sort of mother the child had, to send her to school dressed as she was. She wore a faded pink silk dress, trimmed with a great deal of cotton lace, soiled white kid slippers, and silk stockings. Her sandy hair was tortured into innumerable kinky and unnatural curls, surmounted by a flamboyant bow of pink ribbon bigger than her head. Judging from her expression she was very well satisfied with herself.

A pale little thing, with smooth ripples of fine, silky, fawn-colored hair flowing over her shoulders, must, Anne thought, be Annetta Bell, whose parents had formerly lived in the Newbridge school district, but, by reason of hauling their house fifty yards north of its old site were now in Avonlea. Three pallid little girls crowded into one seat were certainly Cottons; and there was no doubt that the small beauty with the long brown curls and hazel eyes, who was casting coquettish looks at Jack Gills over the edge of her Testament, was Prillie Rogerson, whose father had recently married a second wife and brought Prillie home from her grandmother's in Grafton. A tall, awkward girl in a back seat, who seemed to have too many feet and hands, Anne could not place at all, but later on discovered that her name was Barbara Shaw and that she had come to live with an Avonlea aunt. She was also to find that if Barbara ever managed to walk down the aisle without falling over her own or somebody else's feet the Avonlea scholars wrote the unusual fact up on the porch wall to commemorate it.

But when Anne's eyes met those of the boy at the front desk facing her own, a queer little thrill went over her, as if she had found her genius. She knew this must be Paul Irving and that Mrs. Rachel Lynde had been right for once when she prophesied that he would be unlike the Avonlea children. More than that, Anne realized that he was unlike other children

anywhere, and that there was a soul subtly akin to her own gazing at her out of the very dark blue eyes that were watching her so intently.

She knew Paul was ten but he looked no more than eight. He had the most beautiful little face she had ever seen in a child ... features of exquisite delicacy and refinement, framed in a halo of chestnut curls. His mouth was delicious, being full without pouting, the crimson lips just softly touching and curving into finely finished little corners that narrowly escaped being dimpled. He had a sober, grave, meditative expression, as if his spirit was much older than his body; but when Anne smiled softly at him it vanished in a sudden answering smile, which seemed an illumination of his whole being, as if some lamp had suddenly kindled into flame inside of him, irradiating him from top to toe. Best of all, it was involuntary, born of no external effort or motive, but simply the outflashing of a hidden personality, rare and fine and sweet. With a quick interchange of smiles Anne and Paul were fast friends forever before a word had passed between them.

The day went by like a dream. Anne could never clearly recall it afterwards. It almost seemed as if it were not she who was teaching but somebody else. She heard classes and worked sums and set copies mechanically. The children behaved quite well; only two cases of discipline occurred. Morley Andrews was caught driving a pair of trained crickets in the aisle. Anne stood Morley on the platform for an hour and ... which Morley felt much more keenly ... confiscated his crickets. She put them in a box and on the way from school set them free in Violet Vale; but Morley believed, then and ever afterwards, that she took them home and kept them for her own amusement.

The other culprit was Anthony Pye, who poured the last drops of water from his slate bottle down the back of Aurelia Clay's neck. Anne kept Anthony in at recess and talked to him about what was expected of gentlemen, admonishing him that they never poured water down ladies' necks. She wanted all her boys to be gentlemen, she said. Her little lecture was quite kind and touching; but unfortunately Anthony remained absolutely untouched. He listened to her in silence, with the same sullen

expression, and whistled scornfully as he went out. Anne sighed; and then cheered herself up by remembering that winning a Pye's affections, like the building of Rome, wasn't the work of a day. In fact, it was doubtful whether some of the Pyes had any affections to win; but Anne hoped better things of Anthony, who looked as if he might be a rather nice boy if one ever got behind his sullenness.

When school was dismissed and the children had gone Anne dropped wearily into her chair. Her head ached and she felt woefully discouraged. There was no real reason for discouragement, since nothing very dreadful had occurred; but Anne was very tired and inclined to believe that she would never learn to like teaching. And how terrible it would be to be doing something you didn't like every day for ... well, say forty years. Anne was of two minds whether to have her cry out then and there, or wait till she was safely in her own white room at home. Before she could decide there was a click of heels and a silken swish on the porch floor, and Anne found herself confronted by a lady whose appearance made her recall a recent criticism of Mr. Harrison's on an overdressed female he had seen in a Charlottetown store. "She looked like a head-on collision between a fashion plate and a nightmare."

The newcomer was gorgeously arrayed in a pale blue summer silk, puffed, frilled, and shirred wherever puff, frill, or shirring could possibly be placed. Her head was surmounted by a huge white chiffon hat, bedecked with three long but rather stringy ostrich feathers. A veil of pink chiffon, lavishly sprinkled with huge black dots, hung like a flounce from the hat brim to her shoulders and floated off in two airy streamers behind her. She wore all the jewelry that could be crowded on one small woman, and a very strong odor of perfume attended her.

"I am Mrs. DonNELL ... Mrs. H. B. DonNELL," announced this vision, "and I have come in to see you about something Clarice Almira told me when she came home to dinner today. It annoyed me EXCESSIVELY."

"I'm sorry," faltered Anne, vainly trying to recollect any incident of the morning connected with the Donnell children.

“Clarice Almira told me that you pronounced our name DONnell. Now, Miss Shirley, the correct pronunciation of our name is DonNELL ... accent on the last syllable. I hope you’ll remember this in future.”

“I’ll try to,” gasped Anne, choking back a wild desire to laugh. “I know by experience that it’s very unpleasant to have one’s name SPELLED wrong and I suppose it must be even worse to have it pronounced wrong.”

“Certainly it is. And Clarice Almira also informed me that you call my son Jacob.”

“He told me his name was Jacob,” protested Anne.

“I might well have expected that,” said Mrs. H. B. Donnell, in a tone which implied that gratitude in children was not to be looked for in this degenerate age. “That boy has such plebeian tastes, Miss Shirley. When he was born I wanted to call him St. Clair ... it sounds SO aristocratic, doesn’t it? But his father insisted he should be called Jacob after his uncle. I yielded, because Uncle Jacob was a rich old bachelor. And what do you think, Miss Shirley? When our innocent boy was five years old Uncle Jacob actually went and got married and now he has three boys of his own. Did you ever hear of such ingratitude? The moment the invitation to the wedding ... for he had the impertinence to send us an invitation, Miss Shirley ... came to the house I said, ‘No more Jacobs for me, thank you.’ From that day I called my son St. Clair and St. Clair I am determined he shall be called. His father obstinately continues to call him Jacob, and the boy himself has a perfectly unaccountable preference for the vulgar name. But St. Clair he is and St. Clair he shall remain. You will kindly remember this, Miss Shirley, will you not? THANK you. I told Clarice Almira that I was sure it was only a misunderstanding and that a word would set it right. Donnell... accent on the last syllable ... and St. Clair ... on no account Jacob. You’ll remember? THANK you.”

When Mrs. H. B. DonNELL had skimmed away Anne locked the school door and went home. At the foot of the hill she found Paul Irving by the Birch Path. He held out to her a cluster of the dainty little wild orchids which Avonlea children called “rice lillies.”

“Please, teacher, I found these in Mr. Wright’s field,” he said shyly, “and I came back to give them to you because I thought you were the kind of lady that would like them, and because ...” he lifted his big beautiful eyes ... “I like you, teacher.”

“You darling,” said Anne, taking the fragrant spikes. As if Paul’s words had been a spell of magic, discouragement and weariness passed from her spirit, and hope upwelled in her heart like a dancing fountain. She went through the Birch Path light-footedly, attended by the sweetness of her orchids as by a benediction.

“Well, how did you get along?” Marilla wanted to know.

“Ask me that a month later and I may be able to tell you. I can’t now ... I don’t know myself ... I’m too near it. My thoughts feel as if they had been all stirred up until they were thick and muddy. The only thing I feel really sure of having accomplished today is that I taught Cliffie Wright that A is A. He never knew it before. Isn’t it something to have started a soul along a path that may end in Shakespeare and Paradise Lost?”

Mrs. Lynde came up later on with more encouragement. That good lady had waylaid the schoolchildren at her gate and demanded of them how they liked their new teacher.

“And every one of them said they liked you splendid, Anne, except Anthony Pye. I must admit he didn’t. He said you ‘weren’t any good, just like all girl teachers.’ There’s the Pye leaven for you. But never mind.”

“I’m not going to mind,” said Anne quietly, “and I’m going to make Anthony Pye like me yet. Patience and kindness will surely win him.”

“Well, you can never tell about a Pye,” said Mrs. Rachel cautiously. “They go by contraries, like dreams, often as not. As for that DonNELL woman, she’ll get no DonNELLing from me, I can assure you. The name is DONnell and always has been. The woman is crazy, that’s what. She has a pug dog she calls Queenie and it has its meals at the table along with the family, eating off a china plate. I’d be afraid of a judgment if I was her. Thomas says Donnell himself is a sensible, hardworking man, but he hadn’t much gumption when he picked out a wife, that’s what.”

VI. All Sorts and Conditions of Men ... and women

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A September day on Prince Edward Island hills; a crisp wind blowing up over the sand dunes from the sea; a long red road, winding through fields and woods, now looping itself about a corner of thick set spruces, now threading a plantation of young maples with great feathery sheets of ferns beneath them, now dipping down into a hollow where a brook flashed out of the woods and into them again, now basking in open sunshine between ribbons of goldenrod and smoke-blue asters; air athrill with the pipings of myriads of crickets, those glad little pensioners of the summer hills; a plump brown pony ambling along the road; two girls behind him, full to the lips with the simple, priceless joy of youth and life.

“Oh, this is a day left over from Eden, isn’t it, Diana?” ... and Anne sighed for sheer happiness. “The air has magic in it. Look at the purple in the cup of the harvest valley, Diana. And oh, do smell the dying fir! It’s coming up from that little sunny hollow where Mr. Eben Wright has been cutting fence poles. Bliss is it on such a day to be alive; but to smell dying fir is very heaven. That’s two thirds Wordsworth and one third Anne Shirley. It doesn’t seem possible that there should be dying fir in heaven, does it? And yet it doesn’t seem to me that heaven would be quite perfect if you couldn’t get a whiff of dead fir as you went through its woods. Perhaps we’ll have the odor there without the death. Yes, I think that will be the way. That delicious aroma must be the souls of the firs ... and of course it will be just souls in heaven.”

“Trees haven’t souls,” said practical Diana, “but the smell of dead fir is certainly lovely. I’m going to make a cushion and fill it with fir needles. You’d better make one too, Anne.”

“I think I shall ... and use it for my naps. I’d be certain to dream I was a dryad or a woodnymph then. But just this minute I’m well content to be

Anne Shirley, Avonlea schoolma'am, driving over a road like this on such a sweet, friendly day."

"It's a lovely day but we have anything but a lovely task before us," sighed Diana. "Why on earth did you offer to canvass this road, Anne? Almost all the cranks in Avonlea live along it, and we'll probably be treated as if we were begging for ourselves. It's the very worst road of all."

"That is why I chose it. Of course Gilbert and Fred would have taken this road if we had asked them. But you see, Diana, I feel myself responsible for the A.V.I.S., since I was the first to suggest it, and it seems to me that I ought to do the most disagreeable things. I'm sorry on your account; but you needn't say a word at the cranky places. I'll do all the talking ... Mrs. Lynde would say I was well able to. Mrs. Lynde doesn't know whether to approve of our enterprise or not. She inclines to, when she remembers that Mr. and Mrs. Allan are in favor of it; but the fact that village improvement societies first originated in the States is a count against it. So she is halting between two opinions and only success will justify us in Mrs. Lynde's eyes. Priscilla is going to write a paper for our next Improvement meeting, and I expect it will be good, for her aunt is such a clever writer and no doubt it runs in the family. I shall never forget the thrill it gave me when I found out that Mrs. Charlotte E. Morgan was Priscilla's aunt. It seemed so wonderful that I was a friend of the girl whose aunt wrote 'Edgewood Days' and 'The Rosebud Garden.'"

"Where does Mrs. Morgan live?"

"In Toronto. And Priscilla says she is coming to the Island for a visit next summer, and if it is possible Priscilla is going to arrange to have us meet her. That seems almost too good to be true — but it's something pleasant to imagine after you go to bed."

The Avonlea Village Improvement Society was an organized fact. Gilbert Blythe was president, Fred Wright vice-president, Anne Shirley secretary, and Diana Barry treasurer. The "Improvers," as they were promptly christened, were to meet once a fortnight at the homes of the members. It was admitted that they could not expect to affect many improvements so late in the season; but they meant to plan the next

summer's campaign, collect and discuss ideas, write and read papers, and, as Anne said, educate the public sentiment generally.

There was some disapproval, of course, and ... which the Improvers felt much more keenly ... a good deal of ridicule. Mr. Elisha Wright was reported to have said that a more appropriate name for the organization would be Courting Club. Mrs. Hiram Sloane declared she had heard the Improvers meant to plough up all the roadsides and set them out with geraniums. Mr. Levi Boulter warned his neighbors that the Improvers would insist that everybody pull down his house and rebuild it after plans approved by the society. Mr. James Spencer sent them word that he wished they would kindly shovel down the church hill. Eben Wright told Anne that he wished the Improvers could induce old Josiah Sloane to keep his whiskers trimmed. Mr. Lawrence Bell said he would whitewash his barns if nothing else would please them but he would NOT hang lace curtains in the cowstable windows. Mr. Major Spencer asked Clifton Sloane, an Improver who drove the milk to the Carmody cheese factory, if it was true that everybody would have to have his milk-stand hand-painted next summer and keep an embroidered centerpiece on it.

In spite of ... or perhaps, human nature being what it is, because of ... this, the Society went gamely to work at the only improvement they could hope to bring about that fall. At the second meeting, in the Barry parlor, Oliver Sloane moved that they start a subscription to reshingle and paint the hall; Julia Bell seconded it, with an uneasy feeling that she was doing something not exactly ladylike. Gilbert put the motion, it was carried unanimously, and Anne gravely recorded it in her minutes. The next thing was to appoint a committee, and Gertie Pye, determined not to let Julia Bell carry off all the laurels, boldly moved that Miss Jane Andrews be chairman of said committee. This motion being also duly seconded and carried, Jane returned the compliment by appointing Gertie on the committee, along with Gilbert, Anne, Diana, and Fred Wright. The committee chose their routes in private conclave. Anne and Diana were told off for the Newbridge road, Gilbert and Fred for the White Sands road, and Jane and Gertie for the Carmody road.

“Because,” explained Gilbert to Anne, as they walked home together through the Haunted Wood, “the Pyes all live along that road and they won’t give a cent unless one of themselves canvasses them.”

The next Saturday Anne and Diana started out. They drove to the end of the road and canvassed homeward, calling first on the “Andrew girls.”

“If Catherine is alone we may get something,” said Diana, “but if Eliza is there we won’t.”

Eliza was there ... very much so ... and looked even grimmer than usual. Miss Eliza was one of those people who give you the impression that life is indeed a vale of tears, and that a smile, never to speak of a laugh, is a waste of nervous energy truly reprehensible. The Andrew girls had been “girls” for fifty odd years and seemed likely to remain girls to the end of their earthly pilgrimage. Catherine, it was said, had not entirely given up hope, but Eliza, who was born a pessimist, had never had any. They lived in a little brown house built in a sunny corner scooped out of Mark Andrew’s beech woods. Eliza complained that it was terrible hot in summer, but Catherine was wont to say it was lovely and warm in winter.

Eliza was sewing patchwork, not because it was needed but simply as a protest against the frivolous lace Catherine was crocheting. Eliza listened with a frown and Catherine with a smile, as the girls explained their errand. To be sure, whenever Catherine caught Eliza’s eye she discarded the smile in guilty confusion; but it crept back the next moment.

“If I had money to waste,” said Eliza grimly, “I’d burn it up and have the fun of seeing a blaze maybe; but I wouldn’t give it to that hall, not a cent. It’s no benefit to the settlement ... just a place for young folks to meet and carry on when they’s better be home in their beds.”

“Oh, Eliza, young folks must have some amusement,” protested Catherine.

“I don’t see the necessity. We didn’t gad about to halls and places when we were young, Catherine Andrews. This world is getting worse every day.”

“I think it’s getting better,” said Catherine firmly.

“YOU think!” Miss Eliza’s voice expressed the utmost contempt. “It doesn’t signify what you THINK, Catherine Andrews. Facts is facts.”

“Well, I always like to look on the bright side, Eliza.”

“There isn’t any bright side.”

“Oh, indeed there is,” cried Anne, who couldn’t endure such heresy in silence. “Why, there are ever so many bright sides, Miss Andrews. It’s really a beautiful world.”

“You won’t have such a high opinion of it when you’ve lived as long in it as I have,” retorted Miss Eliza sourly, “and you won’t be so enthusiastic about improving it either. How is your mother, Diana? Dear me, but she has failed of late. She looks terrible run down. And how long is it before Marilla expects to be stone blind, Anne?”

“The doctor thinks her eyes will not get any worse if she is very careful,” faltered Anne.

Eliza shook her head.

“Doctors always talk like that just to keep people cheered up. I wouldn’t have much hope if I was her. It’s best to be prepared for the worst.”

“But oughtn’t we be prepared for the best too?” pleaded Anne. “It’s just as likely to happen as the worst.”

“Not in my experience, and I’ve fifty-seven years to set against your sixteen,” retorted Eliza. “Going, are you? Well, I hope this new society of yours will be able to keep Avonlea from running any further down hill but I haven’t much hope of it.”

Anne and Diana got themselves thankfully out, and drove away as fast as the fat pony could go. As they rounded the curve below the beech wood a plump figure came speeding over Mr. Andrews’ pasture, waving to them excitedly. It was Catherine Andrews and she was so out of breath that she could hardly speak, but she thrust a couple of quarters into Anne’s hand.

“That’s my contribution to painting the hall,” she gasped. “I’d like to give you a dollar but I don’t dare take more from my egg money for Eliza would find it out if I did. I’m real interested in your society and I believe you’re going to do a lot of good. I’m an optimist. I HAVE to be, living

with Eliza. I must hurry back before she misses me ... she thinks I'm feeding the hens. I hope you'll have good luck canvassing, and don't be cast down over what Eliza said. The world IS getting better ... it certainly is."

The next house was Daniel Blair's.

"Now, it all depends on whether his wife is home or not," said Diana, as they jolted along a deep-rutted lane. "If she is we won't get a cent. Everybody says Dan Blair doesn't dare have his hair cut without asking her permission; and it's certain she's very close, to state it moderately. She says she has to be just before she's generous. But Mrs. Lynde says she's so much 'before' that generosity never catches up with her at all."

Anne related their experience at the Blair place to Marilla that evening.

"We tied the horse and then rapped at the kitchen door. Nobody came but the door was open and we could hear somebody in the pantry, going on dreadfully. We couldn't make out the words but Diana says she knows they were swearing by the sound of them. I can't believe that of Mr. Blair, for he is always so quiet and meek; but at least he had great provocation, for Marilla, when that poor man came to the door, red as a beet, with perspiration streaming down his face, he had on one of his wife's big gingham aprons. 'I can't get this durned thing off,' he said, 'for the strings are tied in a hard knot and I can't bust 'em, so you'll have to excuse me, ladies.' We begged him not to mention it and went in and sat down. Mr. Blair sat down too; he twisted the apron around to his back and rolled it up, but he did look so ashamed and worried that I felt sorry for him, and Diana said she feared we had called at an inconvenient time. 'Oh, not at all,' said Mr. Blair, trying to smile ... you know he is always very polite ... 'I'm a little busy ... getting ready to bake a cake as it were. My wife got a telegram today that her sister from Montreal is coming tonight and she's gone to the train to meet her and left orders for me to make a cake for tea. She writ out the recipe and told me what to do but I've clean forgot half the directions already. And it says, 'flavor according to taste.' What does that mean? How can you tell? And what if my taste doesn't happen to

be other people's taste? Would a tablespoon of vanilla be enough for a small layer cake?"

"I felt sorrier than ever for the poor man. He didn't seem to be in his proper sphere at all. I had heard of henpecked husbands and now I felt that I saw one. It was on my lips to say, 'Mr. Blair, if you'll give us a subscription for the hall I'll mix up your cake for you.' But I suddenly thought it wouldn't be neighborly to drive too sharp a bargain with a fellow creature in distress. So I offered to mix the cake for him without any conditions at all. He just jumped at my offer. He said he'd been used to making his own bread before he was married but he feared cake was beyond him, and yet he hated to disappoint his wife. He got me another apron, and Diana beat the eggs and I mixed the cake. Mr. Blair ran about and got us the materials. He had forgotten all about his apron and when he ran it streamed out behind him and Diana said she thought she would die to see it. He said he could bake the cake all right ... he was used to that ... and then he asked for our list and he put down four dollars. So you see we were rewarded. But even if he hadn't given a cent I'd always feel that we had done a truly Christian act in helping him."

Theodore White's was the next stopping place. Neither Anne nor Diana had ever been there before, and they had only a very slight acquaintance with Mrs. Theodore, who was not given to hospitality. Should they go to the back or front door? While they held a whispered consultation Mrs. Theodore appeared at the front door with an armful of newspapers. Deliberately she laid them down one by one on the porch floor and the porch steps, and then down the path to the very feet of her mystified callers.

"Will you please wipe your feet carefully on the grass and then walk on these papers?" she said anxiously. "I've just swept the house all over and I can't have any more dust tracked in. The path's been real muddy since the rain yesterday."

"Don't you dare laugh," warned Anne in a whisper, as they marched along the newspapers. "And I implore you, Diana, not to look at me, no matter what she says, or I shall not be able to keep a sober face."

The papers extended across the hall and into a prim, fleckless parlor. Anne and Diana sat down gingerly on the nearest chairs and explained their errand. Mrs. White heard them politely, interrupting only twice, once to chase out an adventurous fly, and once to pick up a tiny wisp of grass that had fallen on the carpet from Anne's dress. Anne felt wretchedly guilty; but Mrs. White subscribed two dollars and paid the money down ... "to prevent us from having to go back for it," Diana said when they got away. Mrs. White had the newspapers gathered up before they had their horse untied and as they drove out of the yard they saw her busily wielding a broom in the hall.

"I've always heard that Mrs. Theodore White was the neatest woman alive and I'll believe it after this," said Diana, giving way to her suppressed laughter as soon as it was safe.

"I am glad she has no children," said Anne solemnly. "It would be dreadful beyond words for them if she had."

At the Spencers' Mrs. Isabella Spencer made them miserable by saying something ill-natured about everyone in Avonlea. Mr. Thomas Boulter refused to give anything because the hall, when it had been built, twenty years before, hadn't been built on the site he recommended. Mrs. Esther Bell, who was the picture of health, took half an hour to detail all her aches and pains, and sadly put down fifty cents because she wouldn't be there that time next year to do it ... no, she would be in her grave.

Their worst reception, however, was at Simon Fletcher's. When they drove into the yard they saw two faces peering at them through the porch window. But although they rapped and waited patiently and persistently nobody came to the door. Two decidedly ruffled and indignant girls drove away from Simon Fletcher's. Even Anne admitted that she was beginning to feel discouraged. But the tide turned after that. Several Sloane homesteads came next, where they got liberal subscriptions, and from that to the end they fared well, with only an occasional snub. Their last place of call was at Robert Dickson's by the pond bridge. They stayed to tea here, although they were nearly home, rather than risk offending Mrs. Dickson, who had the reputation of being a very "touchy" woman.

While they were there old Mrs. James White called in.

"I've just been down to Lorenzo's," she announced. "He's the proudest man in Avonlea this minute. What do you think? There's a brand new boy there ... and after seven girls that's quite an event, I can tell you." Anne pricked up her ears, and when they drove away she said.

"I'm going straight to Lorenzo White's."

"But he lives on the White Sands road and it's quite a distance out of our way," protested Diana. "Gilbert and Fred will canvass him."

"They are not going around until next Saturday and it will be too late by then," said Anne firmly. "The novelty will be worn off. Lorenzo White is dreadfully mean but he will subscribe to ANYTHING just now. We mustn't let such a golden opportunity slip, Diana." The result justified Anne's foresight. Mr. White met them in the yard, beaming like the sun upon an Easter day. When Anne asked for a subscription he agreed enthusiastically.

"Certain, certain. Just put me down for a dollar more than the highest subscription you've got."

"That will be five dollars ... Mr. Daniel Blair put down four," said Anne, half afraid. But Lorenzo did not flinch.

"Five it is ... and here's the money on the spot. Now, I want you to come into the house. There's something in there worth seeing ... something very few people have seen as yet. Just come in and pass YOUR opinion."

"What will we say if the baby isn't pretty?" whispered Diana in trepidation as they followed the excited Lorenzo into the house.

"Oh, there will certainly be something else nice to say about it," said Anne easily. "There always is about a baby."

The baby WAS pretty, however, and Mr. White felt that he got his five dollars' worth of the girls' honest delight over the plump little newcomer. But that was the first, last, and only time that Lorenzo White ever subscribed to anything.

Anne, tired as she was, made one more effort for the public weal that night, slipping over the fields to interview Mr. Harrison, who was as usual

smoking his pipe on the veranda with Ginger beside him. Strickly speaking he was on the Carmody road; but Jane and Gertie, who were not acquainted with him save by doubtful report, had nervously begged Anne to canvass him.

Mr. Harrison, however, flatly refused to subscribe a cent, and all Anne's wiles were in vain.

"But I thought you approved of our society, Mr. Harrison," she mourned.

"So I do ... so I do ... but my approval doesn't go as deep as my pocket, Anne."

"A few more experiences such as I have had today would make me as much of a pessimist as Miss Eliza Andrews," Anne told her reflection in the east gable mirror at bedtime.

VII. The Pointing of Duty

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Anne leaned back in her chair one mild October evening and sighed. She was sitting at a table covered with text books and exercises, but the closely written sheets of paper before her had no apparent connection with studies or school work.

“What is the matter?” asked Gilbert, who had arrived at the open kitchen door just in time to hear the sigh.

Anne colored, and thrust her writing out of sight under some school compositions.

“Nothing very dreadful. I was just trying to write out some of my thoughts, as Professor Hamilton advised me, but I couldn’t get them to please me. They seem so still and foolish directly they’re written down on white paper with black ink. Fancies are like shadows ... you can’t cage them, they’re such wayward, dancing things. But perhaps I’ll learn the secret some day if I keep on trying. I haven’t a great many spare moments, you know. By the time I finish correcting school exercises and compositions, I don’t always feel like writing any of my own.”

“You are getting on splendidly in school, Anne. All the children like you,” said Gilbert, sitting down on the stone step.

“No, not all. Anthony Pye doesn’t and WON’T like me. What is worse, he doesn’t respect me ... no, he doesn’t. He simply holds me in contempt and I don’t mind confessing to you that it worries me miserably. It isn’t that he is so very bad ... he is only rather mischievous, but no worse than some of the others. He seldom disobeys me; but he obeys with a scornful air of toleration as if it wasn’t worthwhile disputing the point or he would ... and it has a bad effect on the others. I’ve tried every way to win him but I’m beginning to fear I never shall. I want to, for he’s rather a cute little lad, if he IS a Pye, and I could like him if he’d let me.”

“Probably it’s merely the effect of what he hears at home.”

“Not altogether. Anthony is an independent little chap and makes up his own mind about things. He has always gone to men before and he says girl teachers are no good. Well, we’ll see what patience and kindness will do. I like overcoming difficulties and teaching is really very interesting work. Paul Irving makes up for all that is lacking in the others. That child is a perfect darling, Gilbert, and a genius into the bargain. I’m persuaded the world will hear of him some day,” concluded Anne in a tone of conviction.

“I like teaching, too,” said Gilbert. “It’s good training, for one thing. Why, Anne, I’ve learned more in the weeks I’ve been teaching the young ideas of White Sands than I learned in all the years I went to school myself. We all seem to be getting on pretty well. The Newbridge people like Jane, I hear; and I think White Sands is tolerably satisfied with your humble servant ... all except Mr. Andrew Spencer. I met Mrs. Peter Blewett on my way home last night and she told me she thought it her duty to inform me that Mr. Spencer didn’t approve of my methods.”

“Have you ever noticed,” asked Anne reflectively, “that when people say it is their duty to tell you a certain thing you may prepare for something disagreeable? Why is it that they never seem to think it a duty to tell you the pleasant things they hear about you? Mrs. H. B. DonNELL called at the school again yesterday and told me she thought it HER duty to inform me that Mrs. Harmon Andrew didn’t approve of my reading fairy tales to the children, and that Mr. Rogerson thought Prillie wasn’t coming on fast enough in arithmetic. If Prillie would spend less time making eyes at the boys over her slate she might do better. I feel quite sure that Jack Gillis works her class sums for her, though I’ve never been able to catch him red-handed.”

“Have you succeeded in reconciling Mrs. DonNELL’s hopeful son to his saintly name?”

“Yes,” laughed Anne, “but it was really a difficult task. At first, when I called him ‘St. Clair’ he would not take the least notice until I’d spoken two or three times; and then, when the other boys nudged him, he would look up with such an aggrieved air, as if I’d called him John or Charlie and

he couldn't be expected to know I meant him. So I kept him in after school one night and talked kindly to him. I told him his mother wished me to call him St. Clair and I couldn't go against her wishes. He saw it when it was all explained out ... he's really a very reasonable little fellow ... and he said *I* could call him St. Clair but that he'd 'lick the stuffing' out of any of the boys that tried it. Of course, I had to rebuke him again for using such shocking language. Since then *I* call him St. Clair and the boys call him Jake and all goes smoothly. He informs me that he means to be a carpenter, but Mrs. DonNELL says I am to make a college professor out of him."

The mention of college gave a new direction to Gilbert's thoughts, and they talked for a time of their plans and wishes ... gravely, earnestly, hopefully, as youth loves to talk, while the future is yet an untrodden path full of wonderful possibilities.

Gilbert had finally made up his mind that he was going to be a doctor.

"It's a splendid profession," he said enthusiastically. "A fellow has to fight something all through life ... didn't somebody once define man as a fighting animal? ... and I want to fight disease and pain and ignorance ... which are all members one of another. I want to do my share of honest, real work in the world, Anne ... add a little to the sum of human knowledge that all the good men have been accumulating since it began. The folks who lived before me have done so much for me that I want to show my gratitude by doing something for the folks who will live after me. It seems to me that is the only way a fellow can get square with his obligations to the race."

"I'd like to add some beauty to life," said Anne dreamily. "I don't exactly want to make people KNOW more ... though I know that IS the noblest ambition ... but I'd love to make them have a pleasanter time because of me ... to have some little joy or happy thought that would never have existed if I hadn't been born."

"I think you're fulfilling that ambition every day," said Gilbert admiringly.

And he was right. Anne was one of the children of light by birthright. After she had passed through a life with a smile or a word thrown across it like a gleam of sunshine the owner of that life saw it, for the time being at least, as hopeful and lovely and of good report.

Finally Gilbert rose regretfully.

“Well, I must run up to MacPhersons’. Moody Spurgeon came home from Queen’s today for Sunday and he was to bring me out a book Professor Boyd is lending me.”

“And I must get Marilla’s tea. She went to see Mrs. Keith this evening and she will soon be back.”

Anne had tea ready when Marilla came home; the fire was crackling cheerily, a vase of frost-bleached ferns and ruby-red maple leaves adorned the table, and delectable odors of ham and toast pervaded the air. But Marilla sank into her chair with a deep sigh.

“Are your eyes troubling you? Does your head ache?” queried Anne anxiously.

“No. I’m only tired ... and worried. It’s about Mary and those children ... Mary is worse ... she can’t last much longer. And as for the twins, I don’t know what is to become of them.”

“Hasn’t their uncle been heard from?”

“Yes, Mary had a letter from him. He’s working in a lumber camp and ‘shacking it,’ whatever that means. Anyway, he says he can’t possibly take the children till the spring. He expects to be married then and will have a home to take them to; but he says she must get some of the neighbors to keep them for the winter. She says she can’t bear to ask any of them. Mary never got on any too well with the East Grafton people and that’s a fact. And the long and short of it is, Anne, that I’m sure Mary wants me to take those children ... she didn’t say so but she LOOKED it.”

“Oh!” Anne clasped her hands, all athrill with excitement. “And of course you will, Marilla, won’t you?”

“I haven’t made up my mind,” said Marilla rather tartly. “I don’t rush into things in your headlong way, Anne. Third cousinship is a pretty slim

claim. And it will be a fearful responsibility to have two children of six years to look after ... twins, at that.”

Marilla had an idea that twins were just twice as bad as single children.

“Twins are very interesting ... at least one pair of them,” said Anne. “It’s only when there are two or three pairs that it gets monotonous. And I think it would be real nice for you to have something to amuse you when I’m away in school.”

“I don’t reckon there’d be much amusement in it ... more worry and bother than anything else, I should say. It wouldn’t be so risky if they were even as old as you were when I took you. I wouldn’t mind Dora so much ... she seems good and quiet. But that Davy is a limb.”

Anne was fond of children and her heart yearned over the Keith twins. The remembrance of her own neglected childhood was very vivid with her still. She knew that Marilla’s only vulnerable point was her stern devotion to what she believed to be her duty, and Anne skillfully marshalled her arguments along this line.

“If Davy is naughty it’s all the more reason why he should have good training, isn’t it, Marilla? If we don’t take them we don’t know who will, nor what kind of influences may surround them. Suppose Mrs. Keith’s next door neighbors, the Sprotts, were to take them. Mrs. Lynde says Henry Sprott is the most profane man that ever lived and you can’t believe a word his children say. Wouldn’t it be dreadful to have the twins learn anything like that? Or suppose they went to the Wiggins’. Mrs. Lynde says that Mr. Wiggins sells everything off the place that can be sold and brings his family up on skim milk. You wouldn’t like your relations to be starved, even if they were only third cousins, would you? It seems to me, Marilla, that it is our duty to take them.”

“I suppose it is,” assented Marilla gloomily. “I daresay I’ll tell Mary I’ll take them. You needn’t look so delighted, Anne. It will mean a good deal of extra work for you. I can’t sew a stitch on account of my eyes, so you’ll have to see to the making and mending of their clothes. And you don’t like sewing.”

“I hate it,” said Anne calmly, “but if you are willing to take those children from a sense of duty surely I can do their sewing from a sense of duty. It does people good to have to do things they don’t like ... in moderation.”

VIII. Marilla Adopts Twins

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Mrs. Rachel Lynde was sitting at her kitchen window, knitting a quilt, just as she had been sitting one evening several years previously when Matthew Cuthbert had driven down over the hill with what Mrs. Rachel called “his imported orphan.” But that had been in springtime; and this was late autumn, and all the woods were leafless and the fields sere and brown. The sun was just setting with a great deal of purple and golden pomp behind the dark woods west of Avonlea when a buggy drawn by a comfortable brown nag came down the hill. Mrs. Rachel peered at it eagerly.

“There’s Marilla getting home from the funeral,” she said to her husband, who was lying on the kitchen lounge. Thomas Lynde lay more on the lounge nowadays than he had been used to do, but Mrs. Rachel, who was so sharp at noticing anything beyond her own household, had not as yet noticed this. “And she’s got the twins with her, ... yes, there’s Davy leaning over the dashboard grabbing at the pony’s tail and Marilla jerking him back. Dora’s sitting up on the seat as prim as you please. She always looks as if she’d just been starched and ironed. Well, poor Marilla is going to have her hands full this winter and no mistake. Still, I don’t see that she could do anything less than take them, under the circumstances, and she’ll have Anne to help her. Anne’s tickled to death over the whole business, and she has a real knacky way with children, I must say. Dear me, it doesn’t seem a day since poor Matthew brought Anne herself home and everybody laughed at the idea of Marilla bringing up a child. And now she has adopted twins. You’re never safe from being surprised till you’re dead.”

The fat pony jogged over the bridge in Lynde’s Hollow and along the Green Gables lane. Marilla’s face was rather grim. It was ten miles from East Grafton and Davy Keith seemed to be possessed with a passion for

perpetual motion. It was beyond Marilla's power to make him sit still and she had been in an agony the whole way lest he fall over the back of the wagon and break his neck, or tumble over the dashboard under the pony's heels. In despair she finally threatened to whip him soundly when she got him home. Whereupon Davy climbed into her lap, regardless of the reins, flung his chubby arms about her neck and gave her a bear-like hug.

"I don't believe you mean it," he said, smacking her wrinkled cheek affectionately. "You don't LOOK like a lady who'd whip a little boy just 'cause he couldn't keep still. Didn't you find it awful hard to keep still when you was only 's old as me?"

"No, I always kept still when I was told," said Marilla, trying to speak sternly, albeit she felt her heart waxing soft within her under Davy's impulsive caresses.

"Well, I s'pose that was 'cause you was a girl," said Davy, squirming back to his place after another hug. "You WAS a girl once, I s'pose, though it's awful funny to think of it. Dora can sit still ... but there ain't much fun in it *I* don't think. Seems to me it must be slow to be a girl. Here, Dora, let me liven you up a bit."

Davy's method of "livening up" was to grasp Dora's curls in his fingers and give them a tug. Dora shrieked and then cried.

"How can you be such a naughty boy and your poor mother just laid in her grave this very day?" demanded Marilla despairingly.

"But she was glad to die," said Davy confidentially. "I know, 'cause she told me so. She was awful tired of being sick. We'd a long talk the night before she died. She told me you was going to take me and Dora for the winter and I was to be a good boy. I'm going to be good, but can't you be good running round just as well as sitting still? And she said I was always to be kind to Dora and stand up for her, and I'm going to."

"Do you call pulling her hair being kind to her?"

"Well, I ain't going to let anybody else pull it," said Davy, doubling up his fists and frowning. "They'd just better try it. I didn't hurt her much ... she just cried 'cause she's a girl. I'm glad I'm a boy but I'm sorry I'm a twin. When Jimmy Sprott's sister conterdicks him he just says, 'I'm

oldern you, so of course I know better,’ and that settles HER. But I can’t tell Dora that, and she just goes on thinking diffrent from me. You might let me drive the gee-gee for a spell, since I’m a man.”

Altogether, Marilla was a thankful woman when she drove into her own yard, where the wind of the autumn night was dancing with the brown leaves. Anne was at the gate to meet them and lift the twins out. Dora submitted calmly to be kissed, but Davy responded to Anne’s welcome with one of his hearty hugs and the cheerful announcement, “I’m Mr. Davy Keith.”

At the supper table Dora behaved like a little lady, but Davy’s manners left much to be desired.

“I’m so hungry I ain’t got time to eat p’lately,” he said when Marilla reproved him. “Dora ain’t half as hungry as I am. Look at all the ex’cise I took on the road here. That cake’s awful nice and plummy. We haven’t had any cake at home for ever’n ever so long, ‘cause mother was too sick to make it and Mrs. Sprott said it was as much as she could do to bake our bread for us. And Mrs. Wiggins never puts any plums in HER cakes. Catch her! Can I have another piece?”

Marilla would have refused but Anne cut a generous second slice. However, she reminded Davy that he ought to say “Thank you” for it. Davy merely grinned at her and took a huge bite. When he had finished the slice he said,

“If you’ll give me ANOTHER piece I’ll say thank you for IT.”

“No, you have had plenty of cake,” said Marilla in a tone which Anne knew and Davy was to learn to be final.

Davy winked at Anne, and then, leaning over the table, snatched Dora’s first piece of cake, from which she had just taken one dainty little bite, out of her very fingers and, opening his mouth to the fullest extent, crammed the whole slice in. Dora’s lip trembled and Marilla was speechless with horror. Anne promptly exclaimed, with her best “schoolma’am” air,

“Oh, Davy, gentlemen don’t do things like that.”

“I know they don’t,” said Davy, as soon as he could speak, “but I ain’t a gemplum.”

“But don’t you want to be?” said shocked Anne.

“Course I do. But you can’t be a gemplum till you grow up.”

“Oh, indeed you can,” Anne hastened to say, thinking she saw a chance to sow good seed betimes. “You can begin to be a gentleman when you are a little boy. And gentlemen NEVER snatch things from ladies ... or forget to say thank you ... or pull anybody’s hair.”

“They don’t have much fun, that’s a fact,” said Davy frankly. “I guess I’ll wait till I’m grown up to be one.”

Marilla, with a resigned air, had cut another piece of cake for Dora. She did not feel able to cope with Davy just then. It had been a hard day for her, what with the funeral and the long drive. At that moment she looked forward to the future with a pessimism that would have done credit to Eliza Andrews herself.

The twins were not noticeably alike, although both were fair. Dora had long sleek curls that never got out of order. Davy had a crop of fuzzy little yellow ringlets all over his round head. Dora’s hazel eyes were gentle and mild; Davy’s were as roguish and dancing as an elf’s. Dora’s nose was straight, Davy’s a positive snub; Dora had a “prunes and prisms” mouth, Davy’s was all smiles; and besides, he had a dimple in one cheek and none in the other, which gave him a dear, comical, lopsided look when he laughed. Mirth and mischief lurked in every corner of his little face.

“They’d better go to bed,” said Marilla, who thought it was the easiest way to dispose of them. “Dora will sleep with me and you can put Davy in the west gable. You’re not afraid to sleep alone, are you, Davy?”

“No; but I ain’t going to bed for ever so long yet,” said Davy comfortably.

“Oh, yes, you are.” That was all the much-tried Marilla said, but something in her tone squelched even Davy. He trotted obediently upstairs with Anne.

“When I’m grown up the very first thing I’m going to do is stay up ALL night just to see what it would be like,” he told her confidentially.

In after years Marilla never thought of that first week of the twins’ sojourn at Green Gables without a shiver. Not that it really was so much

worse than the weeks that followed it; but it seemed so by reason of its novelty. There was seldom a waking minute of any day when Davy was not in mischief or devising it; but his first notable exploit occurred two days after his arrival, on Sunday morning ... a fine, warm day, as hazy and mild as September. Anne dressed him for church while Marilla attended to Dora. Davy at first objected strongly to having his face washed.

“Marilla washed it yesterday ... and Mrs. Wiggins scoured me with hard soap the day of the funeral. That’s enough for one week. I don’t see the good of being so awful clean. It’s lots more comfable being dirty.”

“Paul Irving washes his face every day of his own accord,” said Anne astutely.

Davy had been an inmate of Green Gables for little over forty-eight hours; but he already worshipped Anne and hated Paul Irving, whom he had heard Anne praising enthusiastically the day after his arrival. If Paul Irving washed his face every day, that settled it. He, Davy Keith, would do it too, if it killed him. The same consideration induced him to submit meekly to the other details of his toilet, and he was really a handsome little lad when all was done. Anne felt an almost maternal pride in him as she led him into the old Cuthbert pew.

Davy behaved quite well at first, being occupied in casting covert glances at all the small boys within view and wondering which was Paul Irving. The first two hymns and the Scripture reading passed off uneventfully. Mr. Allan was praying when the sensation came.

Lauretta White was sitting in front of Davy, her head slightly bent and her fair hair hanging in two long braids, between which a tempting expanse of white neck showed, encased in a loose lace frill. Lauretta was a fat, placid-looking child of eight, who had conducted herself irreproachably in church from the very first day her mother carried her there, an infant of six months.

Davy thrust his hand into his pocket and produced ... a caterpillar, a furry, squirming caterpillar. Marilla saw and clutched at him but she was too late. Davy dropped the caterpillar down Lauretta’s neck.

Right into the middle of Mr. Allan's prayer burst a series of piercing shrieks. The minister stopped appalled and opened his eyes. Every head in the congregation flew up. Lauretta White was dancing up and down in her pew, clutching frantically at the back of her dress.

"Ow ... mommer ... mommer ... ow ... take it off ... ow ... get it out ... ow ... that bad boy put it down my neck ... ow ... mommer ... it's going further down ... ow ... ow ... ow... ."

Mrs. White rose and with a set face carried the hysterical, writhing Lauretta out of church. Her shrieks died away in the distance and Mr. Allan proceeded with the service. But everybody felt that it was a failure that day. For the first time in her life Marilla took no notice of the text and Anne sat with scarlet cheeks of mortification.

When they got home Marilla put Davy to bed and made him stay there for the rest of the day. She would not give him any dinner but allowed him a plain tea of bread and milk. Anne carried it to him and sat sorrowfully by him while he ate it with an unrepentant relish. But Anne's mournful eyes troubled him.

"I s'pose," he said reflectively, "that Paul Irving wouldn't have dropped a caterpillar down a girl's neck in church, would he?"

"Indeed he wouldn't," said Anne sadly.

"Well, I'm kind of sorry I did it, then," conceded Davy. "But it was such a jolly big caterpillar ... I picked him up on the church steps just as we went in. It seemed a pity to waste him. And say, wasn't it fun to hear that girl yell?"

Tuesday afternoon the Aid Society met at Green Gables. Anne hurried home from school, for she knew that Marilla would need all the assistance she could give. Dora, neat and proper, in her nicely starched white dress and black sash, was sitting with the members of the Aid in the parlor, speaking demurely when spoken to, keeping silence when not, and in every way comporting herself as a model child. Davy, blissfully dirty, was making mud pies in the barnyard.

"I told him he might," said Marilla wearily. "I thought it would keep him out of worse mischief. He can only get dirty at that. We'll have our

teas over before we call him to his. Dora can have hers with us, but I would never dare to let Davy sit down at the table with all the Aids here.”

When Anne went to call the Aids to tea she found that Dora was not in the parlor. Mrs. Jasper Bell said Davy had come to the front door and called her out. A hasty consultation with Marilla in the pantry resulted in a decision to let both children have their teas together later on.

Tea was half over when the dining room was invaded by a forlorn figure. Marilla and Anne stared in dismay, the Aids in amazement. Could that be Dora ... that sobbing nondescript in a drenched, dripping dress and hair from which the water was streaming on Marilla's new coin-spot rug?

“Dora, what has happened to you?” cried Anne, with a guilty glance at Mrs. Jasper Bell, whose family was said to be the only one in the world in which accidents never occurred.

“Davy made me walk the pigpen fence,” wailed Dora. “I didn't want to but he called me a fraid-cat. And I fell off into the pigpen and my dress got all dirty and the pig runned right over me. My dress was just awful but Davy said if I'd stand under the pump he'd wash it clean, and I did and he pumped water all over me but my dress ain't a bit cleaner and my pretty sash and shoes is all spoiled.”

Anne did the honors of the table alone for the rest of the meal while Marilla went upstairs and redressed Dora in her old clothes. Davy was caught and sent to bed without any supper. Anne went to his room at twilight and talked to him seriously ... a method in which she had great faith, not altogether unjustified by results. She told him she felt very badly over his conduct.

“I feel sorry now myself,” admitted Davy, “but the trouble is I never feel sorry for doing things till after I've did them. Dora wouldn't help me make pies, cause she was afraid of messing her clo'es and that made me hopping mad. I s'pose Paul Irving wouldn't have made HIS sister walk a pigpen fence if he knew she'd fall in?”

“No, he would never dream of such a thing. Paul is a perfect little gentleman.”

Davy screwed his eyes tight shut and seemed to meditate on this for a time. Then he crawled up and put his arms about Anne's neck, snuggling his flushed little face down on her shoulder.

"Anne, don't you like me a little bit, even if I ain't a good boy like Paul?"

"Indeed I do," said Anne sincerely. Somehow, it was impossible to help liking Davy. "But I'd like you better still if you weren't so naughty."

"I ... did something else today," went on Davy in a muffled voice. "I'm sorry now but I'm awful scared to tell you. You won't be very cross, will you? And you won't tell Marilla, will you?"

"I don't know, Davy. Perhaps I ought to tell her. But I think I can promise you I won't if you promise me that you will never do it again, whatever it is."

"No, I never will. Anyhow, it's not likely I'd find any more of them this year. I found this one on the cellar steps."

"Davy, what is it you've done?"

"I put a toad in Marilla's bed. You can go and take it out if you like. But say, Anne, wouldn't it be fun to leave it there?"

"Davy Keith!" Anne sprang from Davy's clinging arms and flew across the hall to Marilla's room. The bed was slightly rumpled. She threw back the blankets in nervous haste and there in very truth was the toad, blinking at her from under a pillow.

"How can I carry that awful thing out?" moaned Anne with a shudder. The fire shovel suggested itself to her and she crept down to get it while Marilla was busy in the pantry. Anne had her own troubles carrying that toad downstairs, for it hopped off the shovel three times and once she thought she had lost it in the hall. When she finally deposited it in the cherry orchard she drew a long breath of relief.

"If Marilla knew she'd never feel safe getting into bed again in her life. I'm so glad that little sinner repented in time. There's Diana signaling to me from her window. I'm glad ... I really feel the need of some diversion, for what with Anthony Pye in school and Davy Keith at home my nerves have had about all they can endure for one day."

IX. A Question of Color

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“That old nuisance of a Rachel Lynde was here again today, pestering me for a subscription towards buying a carpet for the vestry room,” said Mr. Harrison wrathfully. “I detest that woman more than anybody I know. She can put a whole sermon, text, comment, and application, into six words, and throw it at you like a brick.”

Anne, who was perched on the edge of the veranda, enjoying the charm of a mild west wind blowing across a newly ploughed field on a gray November twilight and piping a quaint little melody among the twisted firs below the garden, turned her dreamy face over her shoulder.

“The trouble is, you and Mrs. Lynde don’t understand one another,” she explained. “That is always what is wrong when people don’t like each other. I didn’t like Mrs. Lynde at first either; but as soon as I came to understand her I learned to.”

“Mrs. Lynde may be an acquired taste with some folks; but I didn’t keep on eating bananas because I was told I’d learn to like them if I did,” growled Mr. Harrison. “And as for understanding her, I understand that she is a confirmed busybody and I told her so.”

“Oh, that must have hurt her feelings very much,” said Anne reproachfully. “How could you say such a thing? I said some dreadful things to Mrs. Lynde long ago but it was when I had lost my temper. I couldn’t say them DELIBERATELY.”

“It was the truth and I believe in telling the truth to everybody.”

“But you don’t tell the whole truth,” objected Anne. “You only tell the disagreeable part of the truth. Now, you’ve told me a dozen times that my hair was red, but you’ve never once told me that I had a nice nose.”

“I daresay you know it without any telling,” chuckled Mr. Harrison.

“I know I have red hair too ... although it’s MUCH darker than it used to be ... so there’s no need of telling me that either.”

“Well, well, I’ll try and not mention it again since you’re so sensitive. You must excuse me, Anne. I’ve got a habit of being outspoken and folks mustn’t mind it.”

“But they can’t help minding it. And I don’t think it’s any help that it’s your habit. What would you think of a person who went about sticking pins and needles into people and saying, ‘Excuse me, you mustn’t mind it ... it’s just a habit I’ve got.’ You’d think he was crazy, wouldn’t you? And as for Mrs. Lynde being a busybody, perhaps she is. But did you tell her she had a very kind heart and always helped the poor, and never said a word when Timothy Cotton stole a crock of butter out of her dairy and told his wife he’d bought it from her? Mrs. Cotton cast it up to her the next time they met that it tasted of turnips and Mrs. Lynde just said she was sorry it had turned out so poorly.”

“I suppose she has some good qualities,” conceded Mr. Harrison grudgingly. “Most folks have. I have some myself, though you might never suspect it. But anyhow I ain’t going to give anything to that carpet. Folks are everlasting begging for money here, it seems to me. How’s your project of painting the hall coming on?”

“Splendidly. We had a meeting of the A.V.I.S. last Friday night and found that we had plenty of money subscribed to paint the hall and shingle the roof too. MOST people gave very liberally, Mr. Harrison.”

Anne was a sweet-souled lass, but she could instill some venom into innocent italics when occasion required.

“What color are you going to have it?”

“We have decided on a very pretty green. The roof will be dark red, of course. Mr. Roger Pye is going to get the paint in town today.”

“Who’s got the job?”

“Mr. Joshua Pye of Carmody. He has nearly finished the shingling. We had to give him the contract, for every one of the Pyes ... and there are four families, you know ... said they wouldn’t give a cent unless Joshua got it. They had subscribed twelve dollars between them and we thought that was too much to lose, although some people think we shouldn’t have given in to the Pyes. Mrs. Lynde says they try to run everything.”

“The main question is will this Joshua do his work well. If he does I don’t see that it matters whether his name is Pye or Pudding.”

“He has the reputation of being a good workman, though they say he’s a very peculiar man. He hardly ever talks.”

“He’s peculiar enough all right then,” said Mr. Harrison drily. “Or at least, folks here will call him so. I never was much of a talker till I came to Avonlea and then I had to begin in self-defense or Mrs. Lynde would have said I was dumb and started a subscription to have me taught sign language. You’re not going yet, Anne?”

“I must. I have some sewing to do for Dora this evening. Besides, Davy is probably breaking Marilla’s heart with some new mischief by this time. This morning the first thing he said was, ‘Where does the dark go, Anne? I want to know.’ I told him it went around to the other side of the world but after breakfast he declared it didn’t ... that it went down the well. Marilla says she caught him hanging over the wellbox four times today, trying to reach down to the dark.”

“He’s a limb,” declared Mr. Harrison. “He came over here yesterday and pulled six feathers out of Ginger’s tail before I could get in from the barn. The poor bird has been moping ever since. Those children must be a sight of trouble to you folks.”

“Everything that’s worth having is some trouble,” said Anne, secretly resolving to forgive Davy’s next offence, whatever it might be, since he had avenged her on Ginger.

Mr. Roger Pye brought the hall paint home that night and Mr. Joshua Pye, a surly, taciturn man, began painting the next day. He was not disturbed in his task. The hall was situated on what was called “the lower road.” In late autumn this road was always muddy and wet, and people going to Carmody traveled by the longer “upper” road. The hall was so closely surrounded by fir woods that it was invisible unless you were near it. Mr. Joshua Pye painted away in the solitude and independence that were so dear to his unsociable heart.

Friday afternoon he finished his job and went home to Carmody. Soon after his departure Mrs. Rachel Lynde drove by, having braved the mud of

the lower road out of curiosity to see what the hall looked like in its new coat of paint. When she rounded the spruce curve she saw.

The sight affected Mrs. Lynde oddly. She dropped the reins, held up her hands, and said "Gracious Providence!" She stared as if she could not believe her eyes. Then she laughed almost hysterically.

"There must be some mistake ... there must. I knew those Pyes would make a mess of things."

Mrs. Lynde drove home, meeting several people on the road and stopping to tell them about the hall. The news flew like wildfire. Gilbert Blythe, poring over a text book at home, heard it from his father's hired boy at sunset, and rushed breathlessly to Green Gables, joined on the way by Fred Wright. They found Diana Barry, Jane Andrews, and Anne Shirley, despair personified, at the yard gate of Green Gables, under the big leafless willows.

"It isn't true surely, Anne?" exclaimed Gilbert.

"It is true," answered Anne, looking like the muse of tragedy. "Mrs. Lynde called on her way from Carmody to tell me. Oh, it is simply dreadful! What is the use of trying to improve anything?"

"What is dreadful?" asked Oliver Sloane, arriving at this moment with a bandbox he had brought from town for Marilla.

"Haven't you heard?" said Jane wrathfully. "Well, its simply this... Joshua Pye has gone and painted the hall blue instead of green... a deep, brilliant blue, the shade they use for painting carts and wheelbarrows. And Mrs. Lynde says it is the most hideous color for a building, especially when combined with a red roof, that she ever saw or imagined. You could simply have knocked me down with a feather when I heard it. It's heartbreaking, after all the trouble we've had."

"How on earth could such a mistake have happened?" wailed Diana.

The blame of this unmerciful disaster was eventually narrowed down to the Pyes. The Improvers had decided to use Morton-Harris paints and the Morton-Harris paint cans were numbered according to a color card. A purchaser chose his shade on the card and ordered by the accompanying number. Number 147 was the shade of green desired and when Mr. Roger

Pye sent word to the Improvers by his son, John Andrew, that he was going to town and would get their paint for them, the Improvers told John Andrew to tell his father to get 147. John Andrew always averred that he did so, but Mr. Roger Pye as stanchly declared that John Andrew told him 157; and there the matter stands to this day.

That night there was blank dismay in every Avonlea house where an Improver lived. The gloom at Green Gables was so intense that it quenched even Davy. Anne wept and would not be comforted.

“I must cry, even if I am almost seventeen, Marilla,” she sobbed. “It is so mortifying. And it sounds the death knell of our society. We’ll simply be laughed out of existence.”

In life, as in dreams, however, things often go by contraries. The Avonlea people did not laugh; they were too angry. Their money had gone to paint the hall and consequently they felt themselves bitterly aggrieved by the mistake. Public indignation centered on the Pyes. Roger Pye and John Andrew had bungled the matter between them; and as for Joshua Pye, he must be a born fool not to suspect there was something wrong when he opened the cans and saw the color of the paint. Joshua Pye, when thus animadverted upon, retorted that the Avonlea taste in colors was no business of his, whatever his private opinion might be; he had been hired to paint the hall, not to talk about it; and he meant to have his money for it.

The Improvers paid him his money in bitterness of spirit, after consulting Mr. Peter Sloane, who was a magistrate.

“You’ll have to pay it,” Peter told him. “You can’t hold him responsible for the mistake, since he claims he was never told what the color was supposed to be but just given the cans and told to go ahead. But it’s a burning shame and that hall certainly does look awful.”

The luckless Improvers expected that Avonlea would be more prejudiced than ever against them; but instead, public sympathy veered around in their favor. People thought the eager, enthusiastic little band who had worked so hard for their object had been badly used. Mrs. Lynde told them to keep on and show the Pyes that there really were people in the

world who could do things without making a muddle of them. Mr. Major Spencer sent them word that he would clean out all the stumps along the road front of his farm and seed it down with grass at his own expense; and Mrs. Hiram Sloane called at the school one day and beckoned Anne mysteriously out into the porch to tell her that if the “Sassiety” wanted to make a geranium bed at the crossroads in the spring they needn’t be afraid of her cow, for she would see that the marauding animal was kept within safe bounds. Even Mr. Harrison chuckled, if he chuckled at all, in private, and was all sympathy outwardly.

“Never mind, Anne. Most paints fade uglier every year but that blue is as ugly as it can be to begin with, so it’s bound to fade prettier. And the roof is shingled and painted all right. Folks will be able to sit in the hall after this without being leaked on. You’ve accomplished so much anyhow.”

“But Avonlea’s blue hall will be a byword in all the neighboring settlements from this time out,” said Anne bitterly.

And it must be confessed that it was.

X. Davy in Search of a Sensation

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Anne, walking home from school through the Birch Path one November afternoon, felt convinced afresh that life was a very wonderful thing. The day had been a good day; all had gone well in her little kingdom. St. Clair Donnell had not fought any of the other boys over the question of his name; Prillie Rogerson's face had been so puffed up from the effects of toothache that she did not once try to coquette with the boys in her vicinity. Barbara Shaw had met with only ONE accident ... spilling a dipper of water over the floor ... and Anthony Pye had not been in school at all.

"What a nice month this November has been!" said Anne, who had never quite got over her childish habit of talking to herself. "November is usually such a disagreeable month ... as if the year had suddenly found out that she was growing old and could do nothing but weep and fret over it. This year is growing old gracefully ... just like a stately old lady who knows she can be charming even with gray hair and wrinkles. We've had lovely days and delicious twilights. This last fortnight has been so peaceful, and even Davy has been almost well-behaved. I really think he is improving a great deal. How quiet the woods are today ... not a murmur except that soft wind purring in the treetops! It sounds like surf on a faraway shore. How dear the woods are! You beautiful trees! I love every one of you as a friend."

Anne paused to throw her arm about a slim young birch and kiss its cream-white trunk. Diana, rounding a curve in the path, saw her and laughed.

"Anne Shirley, you're only pretending to be grown up. I believe when you're alone you're as much a little girl as you ever were."

"Well, one can't get over the habit of being a little girl all at once," said Anne gaily. "You see, I was little for fourteen years and I've only been

grown-upish for scarcely three. I'm sure I shall always feel like a child in the woods. These walks home from school are almost the only time I have for dreaming ... except the half-hour or so before I go to sleep. I'm so busy with teaching and studying and helping Marilla with the twins that I haven't another moment for imagining things. You don't know what splendid adventures I have for a little while after I go to bed in the east gable every night. I always imagine I'm something very brilliant and triumphant and splendid ... a great prima donna or a Red Cross nurse or a queen. Last night I was a queen. It's really splendid to imagine you are a queen. You have all the fun of it without any of the inconveniences and you can stop being a queen whenever you want to, which you couldn't in real life. But here in the woods I like best to imagine quite different things ... I'm a dryad living in an old pine, or a little brown wood-elf hiding under a crinkled leaf. That white birch you caught me kissing is a sister of mine. The only difference is, she's a tree and I'm a girl, but that's no real difference. Where are you going, Diana?"

"Down to the Dicksons. I promised to help Alberta cut out her new dress. Can't you walk down in the evening, Anne, and come home with me?"

"I might ... since Fred Wright is away in town," said Anne with a rather too innocent face.

Diana blushed, tossed her head, and walked on. She did not look offended, however.

Anne fully intended to go down to the Dicksons' that evening, but she did not. When she arrived at Green Gables she found a state of affairs which banished every other thought from her mind. Marilla met her in the yard ... a wild-eyed Marilla.

"Anne, Dora is lost!"

"Dora! Lost!" Anne looked at Davy, who was swinging on the yard gate, and detected merriment in his eyes. "Davy, do you know where she is?"

"No, I don't," said Davy stoutly. "I haven't seen her since dinner time, cross my heart."

“I’ve been away ever since one o’clock,” said Marilla. “Thomas Lynde took sick all of a sudden and Rachel sent up for me to go at once. When I left here Dora was playing with her doll in the kitchen and Davy was making mud pies behind the barn. I only got home half an hour ago ... and no Dora to be seen. Davy declares he never saw her since I left.”

“Neither I did,” avowed Davy solemnly.

“She must be somewhere around,” said Anne. “She would never wander far away alone ... you know how timid she is. Perhaps she has fallen asleep in one of the rooms.”

Marilla shook her head.

“I’ve hunted the whole house through. But she may be in some of the buildings.”

A thorough search followed. Every corner of house, yard, and outbuildings was ransacked by those two distracted people. Anne roved the orchards and the Haunted Wood, calling Dora’s name. Marilla took a candle and explored the cellar. Davy accompanied each of them in turn, and was fertile in thinking of places where Dora could possibly be. Finally they met again in the yard.

“It’s a most mysterious thing,” groaned Marilla.

“Where can she be?” said Anne miserably

“Maybe she’s tumbled into the well,” suggested Davy cheerfully.

Anne and Marilla looked fearfully into each other’s eyes. The thought had been with them both through their entire search but neither had dared to put it into words.

“She ... she might have,” whispered Marilla.

Anne, feeling faint and sick, went to the wellbox and peered over. The bucket sat on the shelf inside. Far down below was a tiny glimmer of still water. The Cuthbert well was the deepest in Avonlea. If Dora... but Anne could not face the idea. She shuddered and turned away.

“Run across for Mr. Harrison,” said Marilla, wringing her hands.

“Mr. Harrison and John Henry are both away ... they went to town today. I’ll go for Mr. Barry.”

Mr. Barry came back with Anne, carrying a coil of rope to which was attached a clawlike instrument that had been the business end of a grubbing fork. Marilla and Anne stood by, cold and shaken with horror and dread, while Mr. Barry dragged the well, and Davy, astride the gate, watched the group with a face indicative of huge enjoyment.

Finally Mr. Barry shook his head, with a relieved air.

“She can’t be down there. It’s a mighty curious thing where she could have got to, though. Look here, young man, are you sure you’ve no idea where your sister is?”

“I’ve told you a dozen times that I haven’t,” said Davy, with an injured air. “Maybe a tramp come and stole her.”

“Nonsense,” said Marilla sharply, relieved from her horrible fear of the well. “Anne, do you suppose she could have strayed over to Mr. Harrison’s? She has always been talking about his parrot ever since that time you took her over.”

“I can’t believe Dora would venture so far alone but I’ll go over and see,” said Anne.

Nobody was looking at Davy just then or it would have been seen that a very decided change came over his face. He quietly slipped off the gate and ran, as fast as his fat legs could carry him, to the barn.

Anne hastened across the fields to the Harrison establishment in no very hopeful frame of mind. The house was locked, the window shades were down, and there was no sign of anything living about the place. She stood on the veranda and called Dora loudly.

Ginger, in the kitchen behind her, shrieked and swore with sudden fierceness; but between his outbursts Anne heard a plaintive cry from the little building in the yard which served Mr. Harrison as a toolhouse. Anne flew to the door, unhasped it, and caught up a small mortal with a tearstained face who was sitting forlornly on an upturned nail keg.

“Oh, Dora, Dora, what a fright you have given us! How came you to be here?”

“Davy and I came over to see Ginger,” sobbed Dora, “but we couldn’t see him after all, only Davy made him swear by kicking the door. And then

Davy brought me here and run out and shut the door; and I couldn't get out. I cried and cried, I was frightened, and oh, I'm so hungry and cold; and I thought you'd never come, Anne."

"Davy?" But Anne could say no more. She carried Dora home with a heavy heart. Her joy at finding the child safe and sound was drowned out in the pain caused by Davy's behavior. The freak of shutting Dora up might easily have been pardoned. But Davy had told falsehoods ... downright coldblooded falsehoods about it. That was the ugly fact and Anne could not shut her eyes to it. She could have sat down and cried with sheer disappointment. She had grown to love Davy dearly ... how dearly she had not known until this minute ... and it hurt her unbearably to discover that he was guilty of deliberate falsehood.

Marilla listened to Anne's tale in a silence that boded no good Davyward; Mr. Barry laughed and advised that Davy be summarily dealt with. When he had gone home Anne soothed and warmed the sobbing, shivering Dora, got her her supper and put her to bed. Then she returned to the kitchen, just as Marilla came grimly in, leading, or rather pulling, the reluctant, cobwebby Davy, whom she had just found hidden away in the darkest corner of the stable.

She jerked him to the mat on the middle of the floor and then went and sat down by the east window. Anne was sitting limply by the west window. Between them stood the culprit. His back was toward Marilla and it was a meek, subdued, frightened back; but his face was toward Anne and although it was a little shamefaced there was a gleam of comradeship in Davy's eyes, as if he knew he had done wrong and was going to be punished for it, but could count on a laugh over it all with Anne later on.

But no half hidden smile answered him in Anne's gray eyes, as there might have done had it been only a question of mischief. There was something else ... something ugly and repulsive.

"How could you behave so, Davy?" she asked sorrowfully.

Davy squirmed uncomfortably.

"I just did it for fun. Things have been so awful quiet here for so long that I thought it would be fun to give you folks a big scare. It was, too."

In spite of fear and a little remorse Davy grinned over the recollection.

“But you told a falsehood about it, Davy,” said Anne, more sorrowfully than ever.

Davy looked puzzled.

“What’s a falsehood? Do you mean a whopper?”

“I mean a story that was not true.”

“Course I did,” said Davy frankly. “If I hadn’t you wouldn’t have been scared. I HAD to tell it.”

Anne was feeling the reaction from her fright and exertions. Davy’s impenitent attitude gave the finishing touch. Two big tears brimmed up in her eyes.

“Oh, Davy, how could you?” she said, with a quiver in her voice.

“Don’t you know how wrong it was?”

Davy was aghast. Anne crying ... he had made Anne cry! A flood of real remorse rolled like a wave over his warm little heart and engulfed it. He rushed to Anne, hurled himself into her lap, flung his arms around her neck, and burst into tears.

“I didn’t know it was wrong to tell whoppers,” he sobbed. “How did you expect me to know it was wrong? All Mr. Sprott’s children told them REGULAR every day, and cross their hearts too. I s’pose Paul Irving never tells whoppers and here I’ve been trying awful hard to be as good as him, but now I s’pose you’ll never love me again. But I think you might have told me it was wrong. I’m awful sorry I’ve made you cry, Anne, and I’ll never tell a whopper again.”

Davy buried his face in Anne’s shoulder and cried stormily. Anne, in a sudden glad flash of understanding, held him tight and looked over his curly thatch at Marilla.

“He didn’t know it was wrong to tell falsehoods, Marilla. I think we must forgive him for that part of it this time if he will promise never to say what isn’t true again.”

“I never will, now that I know it’s bad,” asseverated Davy between sobs. “If you ever catch me telling a whopper again you can ...” Davy groped mentally for a suitable penance ... “you can skin me alive, Anne.”

“Don’t say ‘whopper,’ Davy ... say ‘falsehood,’” said the schoolma’am.

“Why?” queried Davy, settling comfortably down and looking up with a tearstained, investigating face. “Why ain’t whopper as good as falsehood? I want to know. It’s just as big a word.”

“It’s slang; and it’s wrong for little boys to use slang.”

“There’s an awful lot of things it’s wrong to do,” said Davy with a sigh. “I never s’posed there was so many. I’m sorry it’s wrong to tell whop ... falsehoods, ‘cause it’s awful handy, but since it is I’m never going to tell any more. What are you going to do to me for telling them this time? I want to know.” Anne looked beseechingly at Marilla.

“I don’t want to be too hard on the child,” said Marilla. “I daresay nobody ever did tell him it was wrong to tell lies, and those Spratt children were no fit companions for him. Poor Mary was too sick to train him properly and I presume you couldn’t expect a six-year-old child to know things like that by instinct. I suppose we’ll just have to assume he doesn’t know ANYTHING right and begin at the beginning. But he’ll have to be punished for shutting Dora up, and I can’t think of any way except to send him to bed without his supper and we’ve done that so often. Can’t you suggest something else, Anne? I should think you ought to be able to, with that imagination you’re always talking of.”

“But punishments are so horrid and I like to imagine only pleasant things,” said Anne, cuddling Davy. “There are so many unpleasant things in the world already that there is no use in imagining any more.”

In the end Davy was sent to bed, as usual, there to remain until noon next day. He evidently did some thinking, for when Anne went up to her room a little later she heard him calling her name softly. Going in, she found him sitting up in bed, with his elbows on his knees and his chin propped on his hands.

“Anne,” he said solemnly, “is it wrong for everybody to tell whop ... falsehoods? I want to know?”

“Yes, indeed.”

“Is it wrong for a grownup person?”

“Yes.”

“Then,” said Davy decidedly, “Marilla is bad, for SHE tells them. And she’s worse’n me, for I didn’t know it was wrong but she does.”

“Davy Keith, Marilla never told a story in her life,” said Anne indignantly.

“She did so. She told me last Tuesday that something dreadful WOULD happen to me if I didn’t say my prayers every night. And I haven’t said them for over a week, just to see what would happen ... and nothing has,” concluded Davy in an aggrieved tone.

Anne choked back a mad desire to laugh with the conviction that it would be fatal, and then earnestly set about saving Marilla’s reputation.

“Why, Davy Keith,” she said solemnly, “something dreadful HAS happened to you this very day.”

Davy looked sceptical.

“I s’pose you mean being sent to bed without any supper,” he said scornfully, “but THAT isn’t dreadful. Course, I don’t like it, but I’ve been sent to bed so much since I come here that I’m getting used to it. And you don’t save anything by making me go without supper either, for I always eat twice as much for breakfast.”

“I don’t mean your being sent to bed. I mean the fact that you told a falsehood today. And, Davy,” ... Anne leaned over the footboard of the bed and shook her finger impressively at the culprit ... “for a boy to tell what isn’t true is almost the worst thing that could HAPPEN to him ... almost the very worst. So you see Marilla told you the truth.”

“But I thought the something bad would be exciting,” protested Davy in an injured tone.

“Marilla isn’t to blame for what you thought. Bad things aren’t always exciting. They’re very often just nasty and stupid.”

“It was awful funny to see Marilla and you looking down the well, though,” said Davy, hugging his knees.

Anne kept a sober face until she got downstairs and then she collapsed on the sitting room lounge and laughed until her sides ached.

“I wish you’d tell me the joke,” said Marilla, a little grimly. “I haven’t seen much to laugh at today.”

“You’ll laugh when you hear this,” assured Anne. And Marilla did laugh, which showed how much her education had advanced since the adoption of Anne. But she sighed immediately afterwards.

“I suppose I shouldn’t have told him that, although I heard a minister say it to a child once. But he did aggravate me so. It was that night you were at the Carmody concert and I was putting him to bed. He said he didn’t see the good of praying until he got big enough to be of some importance to God. Anne, I do not know what we are going to do with that child. I never saw his beat. I’m feeling clean discouraged.”

“Oh, don’t say that, Marilla. Remember how bad I was when I came here.”

“Anne, you never were bad ... NEVER. I see that now, when I’ve learned what real badness is. You were always getting into terrible scrapes, I’ll admit, but your motive was always good. Davy is just bad from sheer love of it.”

“Oh, no, I don’t think it is real badness with him either,” pleaded Anne. “It’s just mischief. And it is rather quiet for him here, you know. He has no other boys to play with and his mind has to have something to occupy it. Dora is so prim and proper she is no good for a boy’s playmate. I really think it would be better to let them go to school, Marilla.”

“No,” said Marilla resolutely, “my father always said that no child should be cooped up in the four walls of a school until it was seven years old, and Mr. Allan says the same thing. The twins can have a few lessons at home but go to school they shan’t till they’re seven.”

“Well, we must try to reform Davy at home then,” said Anne cheerfully. “With all his faults he’s really a dear little chap. I can’t help loving him. Marilla, it may be a dreadful thing to say, but honestly, I like Davy better than Dora, for all she’s so good.”

“I don’t know but that I do, myself,” confessed Marilla, “and it isn’t fair, for Dora isn’t a bit of trouble. There couldn’t be a better child and you’d hardly know she was in the house.”

“Dora is too good,” said Anne. “She’d behave just as well if there wasn’t a soul to tell her what to do. She was born already brought up, so she doesn’t need us; and I think,” concluded Anne, hitting on a very vital truth, “that we always love best the people who need us. Davy needs us badly.”

“He certainly needs something,” agreed Marilla. “Rachel Lynde would say it was a good spanking.”

XI. Facts and Fancies

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“Teaching is really very interesting work,” wrote Anne to a Queen’s Academy chum. “Jane says she thinks it is monotonous but I don’t find it so. Something funny is almost sure to happen every day, and the children say such amusing things. Jane says she punishes her pupils when they make funny speeches, which is probably why she finds teaching monotonous. This afternoon little Jimmy Andrews was trying to spell ‘speckled’ and couldn’t manage it. ‘Well,’ he said finally, ‘I can’t spell it but I know what it means.’

“‘What?’ I asked.

“‘St. Clair Donnell’s face, miss.’

“St. Clair is certainly very much freckled, although I try to prevent the others from commenting on it ... for I was freckled once and well do I remember it. But I don’t think St. Clair minds. It was because Jimmy called him ‘St. Clair’ that St. Clair pounded him on the way home from school. I heard of the pounding, but not officially, so I don’t think I’ll take any notice of it.

“Yesterday I was trying to teach Lottie Wright to do addition. I said, ‘If you had three candies in one hand and two in the other, how many would you have altogether?’ ‘A mouthful,’ said Lottie. And in the nature study class, when I asked them to give me a good reason why toads shouldn’t be killed, Benjie Sloane gravely answered, ‘Because it would rain the next day.’

“It’s so hard not to laugh, Stella. I have to save up all my amusement until I get home, and Marilla says it makes her nervous to hear wild shrieks of mirth proceeding from the east gable without any apparent cause. She says a man in Grafton went insane once and that was how it began.

“Did you know that Thomas a Becket was canonized as a SNAKE? Rose Bell says he was ... also that William Tyndale WROTE the New Testament. Claude White says a ‘glacier’ is a man who puts in window frames!

“I think the most difficult thing in teaching, as well as the most interesting, is to get the children to tell you their real thoughts about things. One stormy day last week I gathered them around me at dinner hour and tried to get them to talk to me just as if I were one of themselves. I asked them to tell me the things they most wanted. Some of the answers were commonplace enough ... dolls, ponies, and skates. Others were decidedly original. Hester Boulter wanted ‘to wear her Sunday dress every day and eat in the sitting room.’ Hannah Bell wanted ‘to be good without having to take any trouble about it.’ Marjory White, aged ten, wanted to be a WIDOW. Questioned why, she gravely said that if you weren’t married people called you an old maid, and if you were your husband bossed you; but if you were a widow there’d be no danger of either. The most remarkable wish was Sally Bell’s. She wanted a ‘honeymoon.’ I asked her if she knew what it was and she said she thought it was an extra nice kind of bicycle because her cousin in Montreal went on a honeymoon when he was married and he had always had the very latest in bicycles!

“Another day I asked them all to tell me the naughtiest thing they had ever done. I couldn’t get the older ones to do so, but the third class answered quite freely. Eliza Bell had ‘set fire to her aunt’s carded rolls.’ Asked if she meant to do it she said, ‘not altogether.’ She just tried a little end to see how it would burn and the whole bundle blazed up in a jiffy. Emerson Gillis had spent ten cents for candy when he should have put it in his missionary box. Annetta Bell’s worst crime was ‘eating some blueberries that grew in the graveyard.’ Willie White had ‘slid down the sheephouse roof a lot of times with his Sunday trousers on.’ ‘But I was punished for it ‘cause I had to wear patched pants to Sunday School all summer, and when you’re punished for a thing you don’t have to repent of it,’ declared Willie.

“I wish you could see some of their compositions ... so much do I wish it that I’ll send you copies of some written recently. Last week I told the fourth class I wanted them to write me letters about anything they pleased, adding by way of suggestion that they might tell me of some place they had visited or some interesting thing or person they had seen. They were to write the letters on real note paper, seal them in an envelope, and address them to me, all without any assistance from other people. Last Friday morning I found a pile of letters on my desk and that evening I realized afresh that teaching has its pleasures as well as its pains. Those compositions would atone for much. Here is Ned Clay’s, address, spelling, and grammar as originally penned.

“Miss teacher ShiRley
Green gabels.
p.e. Island can
birds

“Dear teacher I think I will write you a composition about birds. birds is very useful animals. my cat catches birds. His name is William but pa calls him tom. he is oll striped and he got one of his ears froz of last winter. only for that he would be a goodlooking cat. My unkle has adopted a cat. it come to his house one day and woudent go away and unkle says it has forgot more than most people ever knowed. he lets it sleep on his rocking chare and my aunt says he thinks more of it than he does of his children. that is not right. we ought to be kind to cats and give them new milk but we ought not be better to them than to our children. this is oll I can think of so no more at present from

edward blake ClaY.”

“St. Clair Donnell’s is, as usual, short and to the point. St. Clair never wastes words. I do not think he chose his subject or added the postscript out of malice aforethought. It is just that he has not a great deal of tact or imagination.”

“Dear Miss Shirley

““You told us to describe something strange we have seen. I will describe the Avonlea Hall. It has two doors, an inside one and an outside one. It has six windows and a chimney. It has two ends and two sides. It is painted blue. That is what makes it strange. It is built on the lower Carmody road. It is the third most important building in Avonlea. The others are the church and the blacksmith shop. They hold debating clubs and lectures in it and concerts.

““Yours truly,

““Jacob Donnell.

““P.S. The hall is a very bright blue.’”

“Annetta Bell’s letter was quite long, which surprised me, for writing essays is not Annetta’s forte, and hers are generally as brief as St. Clair’s. Annetta is a quiet little puss and a model of good behavior, but there isn’t a shadow of originality in her. Here is her letter. —

““Dearest teacher,

““I think I will write you a letter to tell you how much I love you. I love you with my whole heart and soul and mind ... with all there is of me to love ... and I want to serve you for ever. It would be my highest privilege. That is why I try so hard to be good in school and learn my lessons.

““You are so beautiful, my teacher. Your voice is like music and your eyes are like pansies when the dew is on them. You are like a tall stately queen. Your hair is like rippling gold. Anthony Pye says it is red, but you needn’t pay any attention to Anthony.

““I have only known you for a few months but I cannot realize that there was ever a time when I did not know you ... when you had not come into my life to bless and hallow it. I will always look back to this year as the most wonderful in my life because it brought you to me. Besides, it’s the year we moved to Avonlea from Newbridge. My love for you has made my life very rich and it has kept me from much of harm and evil. I owe this all to you, my sweetest teacher.

““I shall never forget how sweet you looked the last time I saw you in that black dress with flowers in your hair. I shall see you like that for ever,

even when we are both old and gray. You will always be young and fair to me, dearest teacher. I am thinking of you all the time... in the morning and at the noontide and at the twilight. I love you when you laugh and when you sigh ... even when you look disdainful. I never saw you look cross though Anthony Pye says you always look so but I don't wonder you look cross at him for he deserves it. I love you in every dress ... you seem more adorable in each new dress than the last.

“Dearest teacher, good night. The sun has set and the stars are shining ... stars that are as bright and beautiful as your eyes. I kiss your hands and face, my sweet. May God watch over you and protect you from all harm.

“Your afecksionate pupil,

“Annetta Bell.”

“This extraordinary letter puzzled me not a little. I knew Annetta couldn't have composed it any more than she could fly. When I went to school the next day I took her for a walk down to the brook at recess and asked her to tell me the truth about the letter. Annetta cried and 'fessed up freely. She said she had never written a letter and she didn't know how to, or what to say, but there was bundle of love letters in her mother's top bureau drawer which had been written to her by an old 'beau.’

“‘It wasn't father,’ sobbed Annetta, ‘it was someone who was studying for a minister, and so he could write lovely letters, but ma didn't marry him after all. She said she couldn't make out what he was driving at half the time. But I thought the letters were sweet and that I'd just copy things out of them here and there to write you. I put “teacher” where he put “lady” and I put in something of my own when I could think of it and I changed some words. I put “dress” in place of “mood.” I didn't know just what a “mood” was but I s'posed it was something to wear. I didn't s'pose you'd know the difference. I don't see how you found out it wasn't all mine. You must be awful clever, teacher.’

“I told Annetta it was very wrong to copy another person's letter and pass it off as her own. But I'm afraid that all Annetta repented of was being found out.

“‘And I do love you, teacher,’ she sobbed. ‘It was all true, even if the minister wrote it first. I do love you with all my heart.’

“It’s very difficult to scold anybody properly under such circumstances.

“Here is Barbara Shaw’s letter. I can’t reproduce the blots of the original.

“‘Dear teacher,

“‘You said we might write about a visit. I never visited but once. It was at my Aunt Mary’s last winter. My Aunt Mary is a very particular woman and a great housekeeper. The first night I was there we were at tea. I knocked over a jug and broke it. Aunt Mary said she had had that jug ever since she was married and nobody had ever broken it before. When we got up I stepped on her dress and all the gathers tore out of the skirt. The next morning when I got up I hit the pitcher against the basin and cracked them both and I upset a cup of tea on the tablecloth at breakfast. When I was helping Aunt Mary with the dinner dishes I dropped a china plate and it smashed. That evening I fell downstairs and sprained my ankle and had to stay in bed for a week. I heard Aunt Mary tell Uncle Joseph it was a mercy or I’d have broken everything in the house. When I got better it was time to go home. I don’t like visiting very much. I like going to school better, especially since I came to Avonlea.

“‘Yours respectfully,

“‘Barbara Shaw.’”

“Willie White’s began,

“‘Respected Miss,

“‘I want to tell you about my Very Brave Aunt. She lives in Ontario and one day she went out to the barn and saw a dog in the yard. The dog had no business there so she got a stick and whacked him hard and drove him into the barn and shut him up. Pretty soon a man came looking for an inaginary lion’ (Query; — Did Willie mean a menagerie lion?) ‘that had run away from a circus. And it turned out that the dog was a lion and my Very Brave Aunt had druv him into the barn with a stick. It was a wonder she was not et up but she was very brave. Emerson Gillis says if she

thought it was a dog she wasn't any braver than if it really was a dog. But Emerson is jealous because he hasn't got a Brave Aunt himself, nothing but uncles.'

"'I have kept the best for the last. You laugh at me because I think Paul is a genius but I am sure his letter will convince you that he is a very uncommon child. Paul lives away down near the shore with his grandmother and he has no playmates ... no real playmates. You remember our School Management professor told us that we must not have 'favorites' among our pupils, but I can't help loving Paul Irving the best of all mine. I don't think it does any harm, though, for everybody loves Paul, even Mrs. Lynde, who says she could never have believed she'd get so fond of a Yankee. The other boys in school like him too. There is nothing weak or girlish about him in spite of his dreams and fancies. He is very manly and can hold his own in all games. He fought St. Clair Donnell recently because St. Clair said the Union Jack was away ahead of the Stars and Stripes as a flag. The result was a drawn battle and a mutual agreement to respect each other's patriotism henceforth. St. Clair says he can hit the HARDEST but Paul can hit the OFTENEST.'"

"Paul's Letter.

"'My dear teacher,

"'You told us we might write you about some interesting people we knew. I think the most interesting people I know are my rock people and I mean to tell you about them. I have never told anybody about them except grandma and father but I would like to have you know about them because you understand things. There are a great many people who do not understand things so there is no use in telling them.'

"'My rock people live at the shore. I used to visit them almost every evening before the winter came. Now I can't go till spring, but they will be there, for people like that never change ... that is the splendid thing about them. Nora was the first one of them I got acquainted with and so I think I love her the best. She lives in Andrews' Cove and she has black hair and black eyes, and she knows all about the mermaids and the water kelpies. You ought to hear the stories she can tell. Then there are the Twin Sailors.

They don't live anywhere, they sail all the time, but they often come ashore to talk to me. They are a pair of jolly tars and they have seen everything in the world... and more than what is in the world. Do you know what happened to the youngest Twin Sailor once? He was sailing and he sailed right into a moonglade. A moonglade is the track the full moon makes on the water when it is rising from the sea, you know, teacher. Well, the youngest Twin Sailor sailed along the moonglade till he came right up to the moon, and there was a little golden door in the moon and he opened it and sailed right through. He had some wonderful adventures in the moon but it would make this letter too long to tell them.'

“Then there is the Golden Lady of the cave. One day I found a big cave down on the shore and I went away in and after a while I found the Golden Lady. She has golden hair right down to her feet and her dress is all glittering and glistening like gold that is alive. And she has a golden harp and plays on it all day long ... you can hear the music any time along shore if you listen carefully but most people would think it was only the wind among the rocks. I've never told Nora about the Golden Lady. I was afraid it might hurt her feelings. It even hurt her feelings if I talked too long with the Twin Sailors.'

“I always met the Twin Sailors at the Striped Rocks. The youngest Twin Sailor is very good-tempered but the oldest Twin Sailor can look dreadfully fierce at times. I have my suspicions about that oldest Twin. I believe he'd be a pirate if he dared. There's really something very mysterious about him. He swore once and I told him if he ever did it again he needn't come ashore to talk to me because I'd promised grandmother I'd never associate with anybody that swore. He was pretty well scared, I can tell you, and he said if I would forgive him he would take me to the sunset. So the next evening when I was sitting on the Striped Rocks the oldest Twin came sailing over the sea in an enchanted boat and I got in her. The boat was all pearly and rainbowy, like the inside of the mussel shells, and her sail was like moonshine. Well, we sailed right across to the sunset. Think of that, teacher, I've been in the sunset. And what do you suppose it is? The sunset is a land all flowers. We sailed into a great garden, and the

clouds are beds of flowers. We sailed into a great harbor, all the color of gold, and I stepped right out of the boat on a big meadow all covered with buttercups as big as roses. I stayed there for ever so long. It seemed nearly a year but the Oldest Twin says it was only a few minutes. You see, in the sunset land the time is ever so much longer than it is here.'

“‘Your loving pupil Paul Irving.’

“‘P. S. of course, this letter isn't really true, teacher. P.I.’”

XII. A Jonah Day

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It really began the night before with a restless, wakeful vigil of grumbling toothache. When Anne arose in the dull, bitter winter morning she felt that life was flat, stale, and unprofitable.

She went to school in no angelic mood. Her cheek was swollen and her face ached. The schoolroom was cold and smoky, for the fire refused to burn and the children were huddled about it in shivering groups. Anne sent them to their seats with a sharper tone than she had ever used before. Anthony Pye strutted to his with his usual impertinent swagger and she saw him whisper something to his seat-mate and then glance at her with a grin.

Never, so it seemed to Anne, had there been so many squeaky pencils as there were that morning; and when Barbara Shaw came up to the desk with a sum she tripped over the coal scuttle with disastrous results. The coal rolled to every part of the room, her slate was broken into fragments, and when she picked herself up, her face, stained with coal dust, sent the boys into roars of laughter.

Anne turned from the second reader class which she was hearing.

“Really, Barbara,” she said icily, “if you cannot move without falling over something you’d better remain in your seat. It is positively disgraceful for a girl of your age to be so awkward.”

Poor Barbara stumbled back to her desk, her tears combining with the coal dust to produce an effect truly grotesque. Never before had her beloved, sympathetic teacher spoken to her in such a tone or fashion, and Barbara was heartbroken. Anne herself felt a prick of conscience but it only served to increase her mental irritation, and the second reader class remember that lesson yet, as well as the unmerciful infliction of arithmetic that followed. Just as Anne was snapping the sums out St. Clair Donnell arrived breathlessly.

“You are half an hour late, St. Clair,” Anne reminded him frigidly.
“Why is this?”

“Please, miss, I had to help ma make a pudding for dinner ‘cause we’re expecting company and Clarice Almira’s sick,” was St. Clair’s answer, given in a perfectly respectful voice but nevertheless provocative of great mirth among his mates.

“Take your seat and work out the six problems on page eighty-four of your arithmetic for punishment,” said Anne. St. Clair looked rather amazed at her tone but he went meekly to his desk and took out his slate. Then he stealthily passed a small parcel to Joe Sloane across the aisle. Anne caught him in the act and jumped to a fatal conclusion about that parcel.

Old Mrs. Hiram Sloane had lately taken to making and selling “nut cakes” by way of adding to her scanty income. The cakes were specially tempting to small boys and for several weeks Anne had had not a little trouble in regard to them. On their way to school the boys would invest their spare cash at Mrs. Hiram’s, bring the cakes along with them to school, and, if possible, eat them and treat their mates during school hours. Anne had warned them that if they brought any more cakes to school they would be confiscated; and yet here was St. Clair Donnell coolly passing a parcel of them, wrapped up in the blue and white striped paper Mrs. Hiram used, under her very eyes.

“Joseph,” said Anne quietly, “bring that parcel here.”

Joe, startled and abashed, obeyed. He was a fat urchin who always blushed and stuttered when he was frightened. Never did anybody look more guilty than poor Joe at that moment.

“Throw it into the fire,” said Anne.

Joe looked very blank.

“P ... p ... p ... lease, m ... m ... miss,” he began.

“Do as I tell you, Joseph, without any words about it.”

“B ... b ... but m ... m ... miss ... th ... th ... they’re ...” gasped Joe in desperation.

“Joseph, are you going to obey me or are you NOT?” said Anne.

A bolder and more selfpossessed lad than Joe Sloane would have been overawed by her tone and the dangerous flash of her eyes. This was a new Anne whom none of her pupils had ever seen before. Joe, with an agonized glance at St. Clair, went to the stove, opened the big, square front door, and threw the blue and white parcel in, before St. Clair, who had sprung to his feet, could utter a word. Then he dodged back just in time.

For a few moments the terrified occupants of Avonlea school did not know whether it was an earthquake or a volcanic explosion that had occurred. The innocent looking parcel which Anne had rashly supposed to contain Mrs. Hiram's nut cakes really held an assortment of firecrackers and pinwheels for which Warren Sloane had sent to town by St. Clair Donnell's father the day before, intending to have a birthday celebration that evening. The crackers went off in a thunderclap of noise and the pinwheels bursting out of the door spun madly around the room, hissing and spluttering. Anne dropped into her chair white with dismay and all the girls climbed shrieking upon their desks. Joe Sloane stood as one transfixed in the midst of the commotion and St. Clair, helpless with laughter, rocked to and fro in the aisle. Prillie Rogerson fainted and Annetta Bell went into hysterics.

It seemed a long time, although it was really only a few minutes, before the last pinwheel subsided. Anne, recovering herself, sprang to open doors and windows and let out the gas and smoke which filled the room. Then she helped the girls carry the unconscious Prillie into the porch, where Barbara Shaw, in an agony of desire to be useful, poured a pailful of half frozen water over Prillie's face and shoulders before anyone could stop her.

It was a full hour before quiet was restored ... but it was a quiet that might be felt. Everybody realized that even the explosion had not cleared the teacher's mental atmosphere. Nobody, except Anthony Pye, dared whisper a word. Ned Clay accidentally squeaked his pencil while working a sum, caught Anne's eye and wished the floor would open and swallow him up. The geography class were whisked through a continent with a speed that made them dizzy. The grammar class were parsed and analyzed

within an inch of their lives. Chester Sloane, spelling “odoriferous” with two f’s, was made to feel that he could never live down the disgrace of it, either in this world or that which is to come.

Anne knew that she had made herself ridiculous and that the incident would be laughed over that night at a score of tea-tables, but the knowledge only angered her further. In a calmer mood she could have carried off the situation with a laugh but now that was impossible; so she ignored it in icy disdain.

When Anne returned to the school after dinner all the children were as usual in their seats and every face was bent studiously over a desk except Anthony Pye’s. He peered across his book at Anne, his black eyes sparkling with curiosity and mockery. Anne twitched open the drawer of her desk in search of chalk and under her very hand a lively mouse sprang out of the drawer, scampered over the desk, and leaped to the floor.

Anne screamed and sprang back, as if it had been a snake, and Anthony Pye laughed aloud.

Then a silence fell ... a very creepy, uncomfortable silence. Annetta Bell was of two minds whether to go into hysterics again or not, especially as she didn’t know just where the mouse had gone. But she decided not to. Who could take any comfort out of hysterics with a teacher so white-faced and so blazing-eyed standing before one?

“Who put that mouse in my desk?” said Anne. Her voice was quite low but it made a shiver go up and down Paul Irving’s spine. Joe Sloane caught her eye, felt responsible from the crown of his head to the sole of his feet, but stuttered out wildly,

“N ... n ... not m ... m ... me t ... t ... teacher, n ... n ... not m ... m ... me.”

Anne paid no attention to the wretched Joseph. She looked at Anthony Pye, and Anthony Pye looked back unabashed and unashamed.

“Anthony, was it you?”

“Yes, it was,” said Anthony insolently.

Anne took her pointer from her desk. It was a long, heavy hardwood pointer.

“Come here, Anthony.”

It was far from being the most severe punishment Anthony Pye had ever undergone. Anne, even the stormy-souled Anne she was at that moment, could not have punished any child cruelly. But the pointer nipped keenly and finally Anthony’s bravado failed him; he winced and the tears came to his eyes.

Anne, conscience-stricken, dropped the pointer and told Anthony to go to his seat. She sat down at her desk feeling ashamed, repentant, and bitterly mortified. Her quick anger was gone and she would have given much to have been able to seek relief in tears. So all her boasts had come to this ... she had actually whipped one of her pupils. How Jane would triumph! And how Mr. Harrison would chuckle! But worse than this, bitterest thought of all, she had lost her last chance of winning Anthony Pye. Never would he like her now.

Anne, by what somebody has called “a Herculaneum effort,” kept back her tears until she got home that night. Then she shut herself in the east gable room and wept all her shame and remorse and disappointment into her pillows ... wept so long that Marilla grew alarmed, invaded the room, and insisted on knowing what the trouble was.

“The trouble is, I’ve got things the matter with my conscience,” sobbed Anne. “Oh, this has been such a Jonah day, Marilla. I’m so ashamed of myself. I lost my temper and whipped Anthony Pye.”

“I’m glad to hear it,” said Marilla with decision. “It’s what you should have done long ago.”

“Oh, no, no, Marilla. And I don’t see how I can ever look those children in the face again. I feel that I have humiliated myself to the very dust. You don’t know how cross and hateful and horrid I was. I can’t forget the expression in Paul Irving’s eyes ... he looked so surprised and disappointed. Oh, Marilla, I HAVE tried so hard to be patient and to win Anthony’s liking ... and now it has all gone for nothing.”

Marilla passed her hard work-worn hand over the girl’s glossy, tumbled hair with a wonderful tenderness. When Anne’s sobs grew quieter she said, very gently for her,

“You take things too much to heart, Anne. We all make mistakes ... but people forget them. And Jonah days come to everybody. As for Anthony Pye, why need you care if he does dislike you? He is the only one.”

“I can’t help it. I want everybody to love me and it hurts me so when anybody doesn’t. And Anthony never will now. Oh, I just made an idiot of myself today, Marilla. I’ll tell you the whole story.”

Marilla listened to the whole story, and if she smiled at certain parts of it Anne never knew. When the tale was ended she said briskly,

“Well, never mind. This day’s done and there’s a new one coming tomorrow, with no mistakes in it yet, as you used to say yourself. Just come downstairs and have your supper. You’ll see if a good cup of tea and those plum puffs I made today won’t hearten you up.”

“Plum puffs won’t minister to a mind diseased,” said Anne disconsolately; but Marilla thought it a good sign that she had recovered sufficiently to adapt a quotation.

The cheerful supper table, with the twins’ bright faces, and Marilla’s matchless plum puffs ... of which Davy ate four ... did “hearten her up” considerably after all. She had a good sleep that night and awakened in the morning to find herself and the world transformed. It had snowed softly and thickly all through the hours of darkness and the beautiful whiteness, glittering in the frosty sunshine, looked like a mantle of charity cast over all the mistakes and humiliations of the past.

“Every morn is a fresh beginning,
Every morn is the world made new,”
sang Anne, as she dressed.

Owing to the snow she had to go around by the road to school and she thought it was certainly an impish coincidence that Anthony Pye should come ploughing along just as she left the Green Gables lane. She felt as guilty as if their positions were reversed; but to her unspeakable astonishment Anthony not only lifted his cap ... which he had never done before ... but said easily,

“Kind of bad walking, ain’t it? Can I take those books for you, teacher?”

Anne surrendered her books and wondered if she could possibly be awake. Anthony walked on in silence to the school, but when Anne took her books she smiled down at him ... not the stereotyped “kind” smile she had so persistently assumed for his benefit but a sudden outflashing of good comradeship. Anthony smiled ... no, if the truth must be told, Anthony GRINNED back. A grin is not generally supposed to be a respectful thing; yet Anne suddenly felt that if she had not yet won Anthony’s liking she had, somehow or other, won his respect.

Mrs. Rachel Lynde came up the next Saturday and confirmed this.

“Well, Anne, I guess you’ve won over Anthony Pye, that’s what. He says he believes you are some good after all, even if you are a girl. Says that whipping you gave him was ‘just as good as a man’s.’”

“I never expected to win him by whipping him, though,” said Anne, a little mournfully, feeling that her ideals had played her false somewhere. “It doesn’t seem right. I’m sure my theory of kindness can’t be wrong.”

“No, but the Pyes are an exception to every known rule, that’s what,” declared Mrs. Rachel with conviction.

Mr. Harrison said, “Thought you’d come to it,” when he heard it, and Jane rubbed it in rather unmercifully.

XIII. A Golden Picnic

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Anne, on her way to Orchard Slope, met Diana, bound for Green Gables, just where the mossy old log bridge spanned the brook below the Haunted Wood, and they sat down by the margin of the Dryad's Bubble, where tiny ferns were unrolling like curly-headed green pixy folk waking up from a nap.

"I was just on my way over to invite you to help me celebrate my birthday on Saturday," said Anne.

"Your birthday? But your birthday was in March!"

"That wasn't my fault," laughed Anne. "If my parents had consulted me it would never have happened then. I should have chosen to be born in spring, of course. It must be delightful to come into the world with the mayflowers and violets. You would always feel that you were their foster sister. But since I didn't, the next best thing is to celebrate my birthday in the spring. Priscilla is coming over Saturday and Jane will be home. We'll all four start off to the woods and spend a golden day making the acquaintance of the spring. We none of us really know her yet, but we'll meet her back there as we never can anywhere else. I want to explore all those fields and lonely places anyhow. I have a conviction that there are scores of beautiful nooks there that have never really been SEEN although they may have been LOOKED at. We'll make friends with wind and sky and sun, and bring home the spring in our hearts."

"It SOUNDS awfully nice," said Diana, with some inward distrust of Anne's magic of words. "But won't it be very damp in some places yet?"

"Oh, we'll wear rubbers," was Anne's concession to practicalities. "And I want you to come over early Saturday morning and help me prepare lunch. I'm going to have the daintiest things possible ... things that will match the spring, you understand ... little jelly tarts and lady fingers, and drop cookies frosted with pink and yellow icing, and buttercup

cake. And we must have sandwiches too, though they're NOT very poetical."

Saturday proved an ideal day for a picnic ... a day of breeze and blue, warm, sunny, with a little rollicking wind blowing across meadow and orchard. Over every sunlit upland and field was a delicate, flower-starred green.

Mr. Harrison, harrowing at the back of his farm and feeling some of the spring witch-work even in his sober, middle-aged blood, saw four girls, basket laden, tripping across the end of his field where it joined a fringing woodland of birch and fir. Their blithe voices and laughter echoed down to him.

"It's so easy to be happy on a day like this, isn't it?" Anne was saying, with true Anneish philosophy. "Let's try to make this a really golden day, girls, a day to which we can always look back with delight. We're to seek for beauty and refuse to see anything else. 'Begone, dull care!' Jane, you are thinking of something that went wrong in school yesterday."

"How do you know?" gasped Jane, amazed.

"Oh, I know the expression ... I've felt it often enough on my own face. But put it out of your mind, there's a dear. It will keep till Monday ... or if it doesn't so much the better. Oh, girls, girls, see that patch of violets! There's something for memory's picture gallery. When I'm eighty years old ... if I ever am ... I shall shut my eyes and see those violets just as I see them now. That's the first good gift our day has given us."

"If a kiss could be seen I think it would look like a violet," said Priscilla.

Anne glowed.

"I'm so glad you SPOKE that thought, Priscilla, instead of just thinking it and keeping it to yourself. This world would be a much more interesting place ... although it IS very interesting anyhow ... if people spoke out their real thoughts."

"It would be too hot to hold some folks," quoted Jane sagely.

"I suppose it might be, but that would be their own faults for thinking nasty things. Anyhow, we can tell all our thoughts today because we are

going to have nothing but beautiful thoughts. Everybody can say just what comes into her head. THAT is conversation. Here's a little path I never saw before. Let's explore it."

The path was a winding one, so narrow that the girls walked in single file and even then the fir boughs brushed their faces. Under the firs were velvety cushions of moss, and further on, where the trees were smaller and fewer, the ground was rich in a variety of green growing things.

"What a lot of elephant's ears," exclaimed Diana. "I'm going to pick a big bunch, they're so pretty."

"How did such graceful feathery things ever come to have such a dreadful name?" asked Priscilla.

"Because the person who first named them either had no imagination at all or else far too much," said Anne, "Oh, girls, look at that!"

"That" was a shallow woodland pool in the center of a little open glade where the path ended. Later on in the season it would be dried up and its place filled with a rank growth of ferns; but now it was a glimmering placid sheet, round as a saucer and clear as crystal. A ring of slender young birches encircled it and little ferns fringed its margin.

"HOW sweet!" said Jane.

"Let us dance around it like woodnymphs," cried Anne, dropping her basket and extending her hands.

But the dance was not a success for the ground was boggy and Jane's rubbers came off.

"You can't be a woodnymph if you have to wear rubbers," was her decision.

"Well, we must name this place before we leave it," said Anne, yielding to the indisputable logic of facts. "Everybody suggest a name and we'll draw lots. Diana?"

"Birch Pool," suggested Diana promptly.

"Crystal Lake," said Jane.

Anne, standing behind them, implored Priscilla with her eyes not to perpetrate another such name and Priscilla rose to the occasion with "Glimmer-glass." Anne's selection was "The Fairies' Mirror."

The names were written on strips of birch bark with a pencil Schoolma'am Jane produced from her pocket, and placed in Anne's hat. Then Priscilla shut her eyes and drew one. "Crystal Lake," read Jane triumphantly. Crystal Lake it was, and if Anne thought that chance had played the pool a shabby trick she did not say so.

Pushing through the undergrowth beyond, the girls came out to the young green seclusion of Mr. Silas Sloane's back pasture. Across it they found the entrance to a lane striking up through the woods and voted to explore it also. It rewarded their quest with a succession of pretty surprises. First, skirting Mr. Sloane's pasture, came an archway of wild cherry trees all in bloom. The girls swung their hats on their arms and wreathed their hair with the creamy, fluffy blossoms. Then the lane turned at right angles and plunged into a spruce wood so thick and dark that they walked in a gloom as of twilight, with not a glimpse of sky or sunlight to be seen.

"This is where the bad wood elves dwell," whispered Anne. "They are impish and malicious but they can't harm us, because they are not allowed to do evil in the spring. There was one peeping at us around that old twisted fir; and didn't you see a group of them on that big freckly toadstool we just passed? The good fairies always dwell in the sunshiny places."

"I wish there really were fairies," said Jane. "Wouldn't it be nice to have three wishes granted you ... or even only one? What would you wish for, girls, if you could have a wish granted? I'd wish to be rich and beautiful and clever."

"I'd wish to be tall and slender," said Diana.

"I would wish to be famous," said Priscilla. Anne thought of her hair and then dismissed the thought as unworthy.

"I'd wish it might be spring all the time and in everybody's heart and all our lives," she said.

"But that," said Priscilla, "would be just wishing this world were like heaven."

“Only like a part of heaven. In the other parts there would be summer and autumn ... yes, and a bit of winter, too. I think I want glittering snowy fields and white frosts in heaven sometimes. Don’t you, Jane?”

“I ... I don’t know,” said Jane uncomfortably. Jane was a good girl, a member of the church, who tried conscientiously to live up to her profession and believed everything she had been taught. But she never thought about heaven any more than she could help, for all that.

“Minnie May asked me the other day if we would wear our best dresses every day in heaven,” laughed Diana.

“And didn’t you tell her we would?” asked Anne.

“Mercy, no! I told her we wouldn’t be thinking of dresses at all there.”

“Oh, I think we will ... a LITTLE,” said Anne earnestly. “There’ll be plenty of time in all eternity for it without neglecting more important things. I believe we’ll all wear beautiful dresses ... or I suppose RAIMENT would be a more suitable way of speaking. I shall want to wear pink for a few centuries at first ... it would take me that long to get tired of it, I feel sure. I do love pink so and I can never wear it in THIS world.”

Past the spruces the lane dipped down into a sunny little open where a log bridge spanned a brook; and then came the glory of a sunlit beechwood where the air was like transparent golden wine, and the leaves fresh and green, and the wood floor a mosaic of tremulous sunshine. Then more wild cherries, and a little valley of lissome firs, and then a hill so steep that the girls lost their breath climbing it; but when they reached the top and came out into the open the prettiest surprise of all awaited them.

Beyond were the “back fields” of the farms that ran out to the upper Carmody road. Just before them, hemmed in by beeches and firs but open to the south, was a little corner and in it a garden ... or what had once been a garden. A tumbledown stone dyke, overgrown with mosses and grass, surrounded it. Along the eastern side ran a row of garden cherry trees, white as a snowdrift. There were traces of old paths still and a double line of rosebushes through the middle; but all the rest of the space was a sheet of yellow and white narcissi, in their airiest, most lavish, wind-swayed bloom above the lush green grasses.

“Oh, how perfectly lovely!” three of the girls cried. Anne only gazed in eloquent silence.

“How in the world does it happen that there ever was a garden back here?” said Priscilla in amazement.

“It must be Hester Gray’s garden,” said Diana. “I’ve heard mother speak of it but I never saw it before, and I wouldn’t have supposed that it could be in existence still. You’ve heard the story, Anne?”

“No, but the name seems familiar to me.”

“Oh, you’ve seen it in the graveyard. She is buried down there in the poplar corner. You know the little brown stone with the opening gates carved on it and ‘Sacred to the memory of Hester Gray, aged twenty-two.’ Jordan Gray is buried right beside her but there’s no stone to him. It’s a wonder Marilla never told you about it, Anne. To be sure, it happened thirty years ago and everybody has forgotten.”

“Well, if there’s a story we must have it,” said Anne. “Let’s sit right down here among the narcissi and Diana will tell it. Why, girls, there are hundreds of them ... they’ve spread over everything. It looks as if the garden were carpeted with moonshine and sunshine combined. This is a discovery worth making. To think that I’ve lived within a mile of this place for six years and have never seen it before! Now, Diana.”

“Long ago,” began Diana, “this farm belonged to old Mr. David Gray. He didn’t live on it ... he lived where Silas Sloane lives now. He had one son, Jordan, and he went up to Boston one winter to work and while he was there he fell in love with a girl named Hester Murray. She was working in a store and she hated it. She’d been brought up in the country and she always wanted to get back. When Jordan asked her to marry him she said she would if he’d take her away to some quiet spot where she’d see nothing but fields and trees. So he brought her to Avonlea. Mrs. Lynde said he was taking a fearful risk in marrying a Yankee, and it’s certain that Hester was very delicate and a very poor housekeeper; but mother says she was very pretty and sweet and Jordan just worshipped the ground she walked on. Well, Mr. Gray gave Jordan this farm and he built a little house back here and Jordan and Hester lived in it for four years. She never went

out much and hardly anybody went to see her except mother and Mrs. Lynde. Jordan made her this garden and she was crazy about it and spent most of her time in it. She wasn't much of a housekeeper but she had a knack with flowers. And then she got sick. Mother says she thinks she was in consumption before she ever came here. She never really laid up but just grew weaker and weaker all the time. Jordan wouldn't have anybody to wait on her. He did it all himself and mother says he was as tender and gentle as a woman. Every day he'd wrap her in a shawl and carry her out to the garden and she'd lie there on a bench quite happy. They say she used to make Jordan kneel down by her every night and morning and pray with her that she might die out in the garden when the time came. And her prayer was answered. One day Jordan carried her out to the bench and then he picked all the roses that were out and heaped them over her; and she just smiled up at him ... and closed her eyes ... and that," concluded Diana softly, "was the end."

"Oh, what a dear story," sighed Anne, wiping away her tears.

"What became of Jordan?" asked Priscilla.

"He sold the farm after Hester died and went back to Boston. Mr. Jabez Sloane bought the farm and hauled the little house out to the road. Jordan died about ten years after and he was brought home and buried beside Hester."

"I can't understand how she could have wanted to live back here, away from everything," said Jane.

"Oh, I can easily understand THAT," said Anne thoughtfully. "I wouldn't want it myself for a steady thing, because, although I love the fields and woods, I love people too. But I can understand it in Hester. She was tired to death of the noise of the big city and the crowds of people always coming and going and caring nothing for her. She just wanted to escape from it all to some still, green, friendly place where she could rest. And she got just what she wanted, which is something very few people do, I believe. She had four beautiful years before she died... four years of perfect happiness, so I think she was to be envied more than pitied. And

then to shut your eyes and fall asleep among roses, with the one you loved best on earth smiling down at you ... oh, I think it was beautiful!”

“She set out those cherry trees over there,” said Diana. “She told mother she’d never live to eat their fruit, but she wanted to think that something she had planted would go on living and helping to make the world beautiful after she was dead.”

“I’m so glad we came this way,” said Anne, the shining-eyed. “This is my adopted birthday, you know, and this garden and its story is the birthday gift it has given me. Did your mother ever tell you what Hester Gray looked like, Diana?”

“No ... only just that she was pretty.”

“I’m rather glad of that, because I can imagine what she looked like, without being hampered by facts. I think she was very slight and small, with softly curling dark hair and big, sweet, timid brown eyes, and a little wistful, pale face.”

The girls left their baskets in Hester’s garden and spent the rest of the afternoon rambling in the woods and fields surrounding it, discovering many pretty nooks and lanes. When they got hungry they had lunch in the prettiest spot of all ... on the steep bank of a gurgling brook where white birches shot up out of long feathery grasses. The girls sat down by the roots and did full justice to Anne’s dainties, even the unpoetical sandwiches being greatly appreciated by hearty, unspoiled appetites sharpened by all the fresh air and exercise they had enjoyed. Anne had brought glasses and lemonade for her guests, but for her own part drank cold brook water from a cup fashioned out of birch bark. The cup leaked, and the water tasted of earth, as brook water is apt to do in spring; but Anne thought it more appropriate to the occasion than lemonade.

“Look do you see that poem?” she said suddenly, pointing.

“Where?” Jane and Diana stared, as if expecting to see Runic rhymes on the birch trees.

“There ... down in the brook ... that old green, mossy log with the water flowing over it in those smooth ripples that look as if they’d been

combed, and that single shaft of sunshine falling right athwart it, far down into the pool. Oh, it's the most beautiful poem I ever saw."

"I should rather call it a picture," said Jane. "A poem is lines and verses."

"Oh dear me, no." Anne shook her head with its fluffy wild cherry coronal positively. "The lines and verses are only the outward garments of the poem and are no more really it than your ruffles and flounces are YOU, Jane. The real poem is the soul within them ... and that beautiful bit is the soul of an unwritten poem. It is not every day one sees a soul ... even of a poem."

"I wonder what a soul ... a person's soul ... would look like," said Priscilla dreamily.

"Like that, I should think," answered Anne, pointing to a radiance of sifted sunlight streaming through a birch tree. "Only with shape and features of course. I like to fancy souls as being made of light. And some are all shot through with rosy stains and quivers ... and some have a soft glitter like moonlight on the sea ... and some are pale and transparent like mist at dawn."

"I read somewhere once that souls were like flowers," said Priscilla.

"Then your soul is a golden narcissus," said Anne, "and Diana's is like a red, red rose. Jane's is an apple blossom, pink and wholesome and sweet."

"And your own is a white violet, with purple streaks in its heart," finished Priscilla.

Jane whispered to Diana that she really could not understand what they were talking about. Could she?

The girls went home by the light of a calm golden sunset, their baskets filled with narcissus blossoms from Hester's garden, some of which Anne carried to the cemetery next day and laid upon Hester's grave. Minstrel robins were whistling in the firs and the frogs were singing in the marshes. All the basins among the hills were brimmed with topaz and emerald light.

"Well, we have had a lovely time after all," said Diana, as if she had hardly expected to have it when she set out.

“It has been a truly golden day,” said Priscilla.

“I’m really awfully fond of the woods myself,” said Jane.

Anne said nothing. She was looking afar into the western sky and thinking of little Hester Gray.

XIV. A Danger Averted

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Anne, walking home from the post office one Friday evening, was joined by Mrs. Lynde, who was as usual cumbered with all the cares of church and state.

“I’ve just been down to Timothy Cotton’s to see if I could get Alice Louise to help me for a few days,” she said. “I had her last week, for, though she’s too slow to stop quick, she’s better than nobody. But she’s sick and can’t come. Timothy’s sitting there, too, coughing and complaining. He’s been dying for ten years and he’ll go on dying for ten years more. That kind can’t even die and have done with it ... they can’t stick to anything, even to being sick, long enough to finish it. They’re a terrible shiftless family and what is to become of them I don’t know, but perhaps Providence does.”

Mrs. Lynde sighed as if she rather doubted the extent of Providential knowledge on the subject.

“Marilla was in about her eyes again Tuesday, wasn’t she? What did the specialist think of them?” she continued.

“He was much pleased,” said Anne brightly. “He says there is a great improvement in them and he thinks the danger of her losing her sight completely is past. But he says she’ll never be able to read much or do any fine handwork again. How are your preparations for your bazaar coming on?”

The Ladies’ Aid Society was preparing for a fair and supper, and Mrs. Lynde was the head and front of the enterprise.

“Pretty well ... and that reminds me. Mrs. Allan thinks it would be nice to fix up a booth like an old-time kitchen and serve a supper of baked beans, doughnuts, pie, and so on. We’re collecting old-fashioned fixings everywhere. Mrs. Simon Fletcher is going to lend us her mother’s braided rugs and Mrs. Levi Boulter some old chairs and Aunt Mary Shaw will lend

us her cupboard with the glass doors. I suppose Marilla will let us have her brass candlesticks? And we want all the old dishes we can get. Mrs. Allan is specially set on having a real blue willow ware platter if we can find one. But nobody seems to have one. Do you know where we could get one?"

"Miss Josephine Barry has one. I'll write and ask her if she'll lend it for the occasion," said Anne.

"Well, I wish you would. I guess we'll have the supper in about a fortnight's time. Uncle Abe Andrews is prophesying rain and storms for about that time; and that's a pretty sure sign we'll have fine weather."

The said "Uncle Abe," it may be mentioned, was at least like other prophets in that he had small honor in his own country. He was, in fact, considered in the light of a standing joke, for few of his weather predictions were ever fulfilled. Mr. Elisha Wright, who labored under the impression that he was a local wit, used to say that nobody in Avonlea ever thought of looking in the Charlottetown dailies for weather probabilities. No; they just asked Uncle Abe what it was going to be tomorrow and expected the opposite. Nothing daunted, Uncle Abe kept on prophesying.

"We want to have the fair over before the election comes off," continued Mrs. Lynde, "for the candidates will be sure to come and spend lots of money. The Tories are bribing right and left, so they might as well be given a chance to spend their money honestly for once."

Anne was a red-hot Conservative, out of loyalty to Matthew's memory, but she said nothing. She knew better than to get Mrs. Lynde started on politics. She had a letter for Marilla, postmarked from a town in British Columbia.

"It's probably from the children's uncle," she said excitedly, when she got home. "Oh, Marilla, I wonder what he says about them."

"The best plan might be to open it and see," said Marilla curtly. A close observer might have thought that she was excited also, but she would rather have died than show it.

Anne tore open the letter and glanced over the somewhat untidy and poorly written contents.

“He says he can’t take the children this spring ... he’s been sick most of the winter and his wedding is put off. He wants to know if we can keep them till the fall and he’ll try and take them then. We will, of course, won’t we Marilla?”

“I don’t see that there is anything else for us to do,” said Marilla rather grimly, although she felt a secret relief. “Anyhow they’re not so much trouble as they were ... or else we’ve got used to them. Davy has improved a great deal.”

“His MANNERS are certainly much better,” said Anne cautiously, as if she were not prepared to say as much for his morals.

Anne had come home from school the previous evening, to find Marilla away at an Aid meeting, Dora asleep on the kitchen sofa, and Davy in the sitting room closet, blissfully absorbing the contents of a jar of Marilla’s famous yellow plum preserves ... “company jam,” Davy called it ... which he had been forbidden to touch. He looked very guilty when Anne pounced on him and whisked him out of the closet.

“Davy Keith, don’t you know that it is very wrong of you to be eating that jam, when you were told never to meddle with anything in THAT closet?”

“Yes, I knew it was wrong,” admitted Davy uncomfortably, “but plum jam is awful nice, Anne. I just peeped in and it looked so good I thought I’d take just a weeny taste. I stuck my finger in ...” Anne groaned ... “and licked it clean. And it was so much gooder than I’d ever thought that I got a spoon and just SAILED IN.”

Anne gave him such a serious lecture on the sin of stealing plum jam that Davy became conscience stricken and promised with repentant kisses never to do it again.

“Anyhow, there’ll be plenty of jam in heaven, that’s one comfort,” he said complacently.

Anne nipped a smile in the bud.

“Perhaps there will ... if we want it,” she said, “But what makes you think so?”

“Why, it’s in the catechism,” said Davy.

“Oh, no, there is nothing like THAT in the catechism, Davy.”

“But I tell you there is,” persisted Davy. “It was in that question Marilla taught me last Sunday. ‘Why should we love God?’ It says, ‘Because He makes preserves, and redeems us.’ Preserves is just a holy way of saying jam.”

“I must get a drink of water,” said Anne hastily. When she came back it cost her some time and trouble to explain to Davy that a certain comma in the said catechism question made a great deal of difference in the meaning.

“Well, I thought it was too good to be true,” he said at last, with a sigh of disappointed conviction. “And besides, I didn’t see when He’d find time to make jam if it’s one endless Sabbath day, as the hymn says. I don’t believe I want to go to heaven. Won’t there ever be any Saturdays in heaven, Anne?”

“Yes, Saturdays, and every other kind of beautiful days. And every day in heaven will be more beautiful than the one before it, Davy,” assured Anne, who was rather glad that Marilla was not by to be shocked. Marilla, it is needless to say, was bringing the twins up in the good old ways of theology and discouraged all fanciful speculations thereupon. Davy and Dora were taught a hymn, a catechism question, and two Bible verses every Sunday. Dora learned meekly and recited like a little machine, with perhaps as much understanding or interest as if she were one. Davy, on the contrary, had a lively curiosity, and frequently asked questions which made Marilla tremble for his fate.

“Chester Sloane says we’ll do nothing all the time in heaven but walk around in white dresses and play on harps; and he says he hopes he won’t have to go till he’s an old man, ‘cause maybe he’ll like it better then. And he thinks it will be horrid to wear dresses and I think so too. Why can’t men angels wear trousers, Anne? Chester Sloane is interested in those things, ‘cause they’re going to make a minister of him. He’s got to be a minister ‘cause his grandmother left the money to send him to college and he can’t have it unless he is a minister. She thought a minister was such a ‘spectable thing to have in a family. Chester says he doesn’t mind much ...

though he'd rather be a blacksmith ... but he's bound to have all the fun he can before he begins to be a minister, 'cause he doesn't expect to have much afterwards. I ain't going to be a minister. I'm going to be a storekeeper, like Mr. Blair, and keep heaps of candy and bananas. But I'd rather like going to your kind of a heaven if they'd let me play a mouth organ instead of a harp. Do you s'pose they would?"

"Yes, I think they would if you wanted it," was all Anne could trust herself to say.

The A.V.I.S. met at Mr. Harmon Andrews' that evening and a full attendance had been requested, since important business was to be discussed. The A.V.I.S. was in a flourishing condition, and had already accomplished wonders. Early in the spring Mr. Major Spencer had redeemed his promise and had stumped, graded, and seeded down all the road front of his farm. A dozen other men, some prompted by a determination not to let a Spencer get ahead of them, others goaded into action by Improvers in their own households, had followed his example. The result was that there were long strips of smooth velvet turf where once had been unsightly undergrowth or brush. The farm fronts that had not been done looked so badly by contrast that their owners were secretly shamed into resolving to see what they could do another spring. The triangle of ground at the cross roads had also been cleared and seeded down, and Anne's bed of geraniums, unharmed by any marauding cow, was already set out in the center.

Altogether, the Improvers thought that they were getting on beautifully, even if Mr. Levi Boulter, tactfully approached by a carefully selected committee in regard to the old house on his upper farm, did bluntly tell them that he wasn't going to have it meddled with.

At this especial meeting they intended to draw up a petition to the school trustees, humbly praying that a fence be put around the school grounds; and a plan was also to be discussed for planting a few ornamental trees by the church, if the funds of the society would permit of it ... for, as Anne said, there was no use in starting another subscription as long as the hall remained blue. The members were assembled in the Andrews' parlor

and Jane was already on her feet to move the appointment of a committee which should find out and report on the price of said trees, when Gertie Pye swept in, pompadoured and frilled within an inch of her life. Gertie had a habit of being late ... “to make her entrance more effective,” spiteful people said. Gertie’s entrance in this instance was certainly effective, for she paused dramatically on the middle of the floor, threw up her hands, rolled her eyes, and exclaimed, “I’ve just heard something perfectly awful. What DO you think? Mr. Judson Parker IS GOING TO RENT ALL THE ROAD FENCE OF HIS FARM TO A PATENT MEDICINE COMPANY TO PAINT ADVERTISEMENTS ON.”

For once in her life Gertie Pye made all the sensation she desired. If she had thrown a bomb among the complacent Improvers she could hardly have made more.

“It CAN’T be true,” said Anne blankly.

“That’s just what *I* said when I heard it first, don’t you know,” said Gertie, who was enjoying herself hugely. “*I* said it couldn’t be true ... that Judson Parker wouldn’t have the HEART to do it, don’t you know. But father met him this afternoon and asked him about it and he said it WAS true. Just fancy! His farm is side-on to the Newbridge road and how perfectly awful it will look to see advertisements of pills and plasters all along it, don’t you know?”

The Improvers DID know, all too well. Even the least imaginative among them could picture the grotesque effect of half a mile of board fence adorned with such advertisements. All thought of church and school grounds vanished before this new danger. Parliamentary rules and regulations were forgotten, and Anne, in despair, gave up trying to keep minutes at all. Everybody talked at once and fearful was the hubbub.

“Oh, let us keep calm,” implored Anne, who was the most excited of them all, “and try to think of some way of preventing him.”

“I don’t know how you’re going to prevent him,” exclaimed Jane bitterly. “Everybody knows what Judson Parker is. He’d do ANYTHING for money. He hasn’t a SPARK of public spirit or ANY sense of the beautiful.”

The prospect looked rather unpromising. Judson Parker and his sister were the only Parkers in Avonlea, so that no leverage could be exerted by family connections. Martha Parker was a lady of all too certain age who disapproved of young people in general and the Improvers in particular. Judson was a jovial, smooth-spoken man, so uniformly goodnatured and bland that it was surprising how few friends he had. Perhaps he had got the better in too many business transactions... which seldom makes for popularity. He was reputed to be very “sharp” and it was the general opinion that he “hadn’t much principle.”

“If Judson Parker has a chance to ‘turn an honest penny,’ as he says himself, he’ll never lose it,” declared Fred Wright.

“Is there NOBODY who has any influence over him?” asked Anne despairingly.

“He goes to see Louisa Spencer at White Sands,” suggested Carrie Sloane. “Perhaps she could coax him not to rent his fences.”

“Not she,” said Gilbert emphatically. “I know Louisa Spencer well. She doesn’t ‘believe’ in Village Improvement Societies, but she DOES believe in dollars and cents. She’d be more likely to urge Judson on than to dissuade him.”

“The only thing to do is to appoint a committee to wait on him and protest,” said Julia Bell, “and you must send girls, for he’d hardly be civil to boys ... but *I* won’t go, so nobody need nominate me.”

“Better send Anne alone,” said Oliver Sloane. “She can talk Judson over if anybody can.”

Anne protested. She was willing to go and do the talking; but she must have others with her “for moral support.” Diana and Jane were therefore appointed to support her morally and the Improvers broke up, buzzing like angry bees with indignation. Anne was so worried that she didn’t sleep until nearly morning, and then she dreamed that the trustees had put a fence around the school and painted “Try Purple Pills” all over it.

The committee waited on Judson Parker the next afternoon. Anne pleaded eloquently against his nefarious design and Jane and Diana supported her morally and valiantly. Judson was sleek, suave, flattering;

paid them several compliments of the delicacy of sunflowers; felt real bad to refuse such charming young ladies ... but business was business; couldn't afford to let sentiment stand in the way these hard times.

"But I'll tell what I WILL do," he said, with a twinkle in his light, full eyes. "I'll tell the agent he must use only handsome, tasty colors ... red and yellow and so on. I'll tell him he mustn't paint the ads BLUE on any account."

The vanquished committee retired, thinking things not lawful to be uttered.

"We have done all we can do and must simply trust the rest to Providence," said Jane, with an unconscious imitation of Mrs. Lynde's tone and manner.

"I wonder if Mr. Allan could do anything," reflected Diana.

Anne shook her head.

"No, it's no use to worry Mr. Allan, especially now when the baby's so sick. Judson would slip away from him as smoothly as from us, although he HAS taken to going to church quite regularly just now. That is simply because Louisa Spencer's father is an elder and very particular about such things."

"Judson Parker is the only man in Avonlea who would dream of renting his fences," said Jane indignantly. "Even Levi Boulter or Lorenzo White would never stoop to that, tightfisted as they are. They would have too much respect for public opinion."

Public opinion was certainly down on Judson Parker when the facts became known, but that did not help matters much. Judson chuckled to himself and defied it, and the Improvers were trying to reconcile themselves to the prospect of seeing the prettiest part of the Newbridge road defaced by advertisements, when Anne rose quietly at the president's call for reports of committees on the occasion of the next meeting of the Society, and announced that Mr. Judson Parker had instructed her to inform the Society that he was NOT going to rent his fences to the Patent Medicine Company.

Jane and Diana stared as if they found it hard to believe their ears. Parliamentary etiquette, which was generally very strictly enforced in the A.V.I.S., forbade them giving instant vent to their curiosity, but after the Society adjourned Anne was besieged for explanations. Anne had no explanation to give. Judson Parker had overtaken her on the road the preceding evening and told her that he had decided to humor the A.V.I.S. in its peculiar prejudice against patent medicine advertisements. That was all Anne would say, then or ever afterwards, and it was the simple truth; but when Jane Andrews, on her way home, confided to Oliver Sloane her firm belief that there was more behind Judson Parker's mysterious change of heart than Anne Shirley had revealed, she spoke the truth also.

Anne had been down to old Mrs. Irving's on the shore road the preceding evening and had come home by a short cut which led her first over the lowlying shore fields, and then through the beech wood below Robert Dickson's, by a little footpath that ran out to the main road just above the Lake of Shining Waters ... known to unimaginative people as Barry's pond.

Two men were sitting in their buggies, reined off to the side of the road, just at the entrance of the path. One was Judson Parker; the other was Jerry Corcoran, a Newbridge man against whom, as Mrs. Lynde would have told you in eloquent italics, nothing shady had ever been PROVED. He was an agent for agricultural implements and a prominent personage in matters political. He had a finger ... some people said ALL his fingers ... in every political pie that was cooked; and as Canada was on the eve of a general election Jerry Corcoran had been a busy man for many weeks, canvassing the county in the interests of his party's candidate. Just as Anne emerged from under the overhanging beech boughs she heard Corcoran say, "If you'll vote for Amesbury, Parker ... well, I've a note for that pair of harrows you've got in the spring. I suppose you wouldn't object to having it back, eh?"

"We ... ll, since you put it in that way," drawled Judson with a grin, "I reckon I might as well do it. A man must look out for his own interests in these hard times."

Both saw Anne at this moment and conversation abruptly ceased. Anne bowed frostily and walked on, with her chin slightly more tilted than usual. Soon Judson Parker overtook her.

“Have a lift, Anne?” he inquired genially.

“Thank you, no,” said Anne politely, but with a fine, needle-like disdain in her voice that pierced even Judson Parker’s none too sensitive consciousness. His face reddened and he twitched his reins angrily; but the next second prudential considerations checked him. He looked uneasily at Anne, as she walked steadily on, glancing neither to the right nor to the left. Had she heard Corcoran’s unmistakable offer and his own too plain acceptance of it? Confound Corcoran! If he couldn’t put his meaning into less dangerous phrases he’d get into trouble some of these long-come-shorts. And confound redheaded schoolma’ams with a habit of popping out of beechwoods where they had no business to be. If Anne had heard, Judson Parker, measuring her corn in his own half bushel, as the country saying went, and cheating himself thereby, as such people generally do, believed that she would tell it far and wide. Now, Judson Parker, as has been seen, was not overly regardful of public opinion; but to be known as having accepted a bribe would be a nasty thing; and if it ever reached Isaac Spencer’s ears farewell forever to all hope of winning Louisa Jane with her comfortable prospects as the heiress of a well-to-do farmer. Judson Parker knew that Mr. Spencer looked somewhat askance at him as it was; he could not afford to take any risks.

“Ahem ... Anne, I’ve been wanting to see you about that little matter we were discussing the other day. I’ve decided not to let my fences to that company after all. A society with an aim like yours ought to be encouraged.”

Anne thawed out the merest trifle.

“Thank you,” she said.

“And ... and ... you needn’t mention that little conversation of mine with Jerry.”

“I have no intention of mentioning it in any case,” said Anne icily, for she would have seen every fence in Avonlea painted with advertisements

before she would have stooped to bargain with a man who would sell his vote.

“Just so ... just so,” agreed Judson, imagining that they understood each other beautifully. “I didn’t suppose you would. Of course, I was only stringing Jerry ... he thinks he’s so all-fired cute and smart. I’ve no intention of voting for Amesbury. I’m going to vote for Grant as I’ve always done ... you’ll see that when the election comes off. I just led Jerry on to see if he would commit himself. And it’s all right about the fence ... you can tell the Improvers that.”

“It takes all sorts of people to make a world, as I’ve often heard, but I think there are some who could be spared,” Anne told her reflection in the east gable mirror that night. “I wouldn’t have mentioned the disgraceful thing to a soul anyhow, so my conscience is clear on *THAT* score. I really don’t know who or what is to be thanked for this. *I* did nothing to bring it about, and it’s hard to believe that Providence ever works by means of the kind of politics men like Judson Parker and Jerry Corcoran have.”

XV. The Beginning of Vacation

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Anne locked the schoolhouse door on a still, yellow evening, when the winds were purring in the spruces around the playground, and the shadows were long and lazy by the edge of the woods. She dropped the key into her pocket with a sigh of satisfaction. The school year was ended, she had been reengaged for the next, with many expressions of satisfaction... . only Mr. Harmon Andrews told her she ought to use the strap oftener ... and two delightful months of a well-earned vacation beckoned her invitingly. Anne felt at peace with the world and herself as she walked down the hill with her basket of flowers in her hand. Since the earliest mayflowers Anne had never missed her weekly pilgrimage to Matthew's grave. Everyone else in Avonlea, except Marilla, had already forgotten quiet, shy, unimportant Matthew Cuthbert; but his memory was still green in Anne's heart and always would be. She could never forget the kind old man who had been the first to give her the love and sympathy her starved childhood had craved.

At the foot of the hill a boy was sitting on the fence in the shadow of the spruces ... a boy with big, dreamy eyes and a beautiful, sensitive face. He swung down and joined Anne, smiling; but there were traces of tears on his cheeks.

"I thought I'd wait for you, teacher, because I knew you were going to the graveyard," he said, slipping his hand into hers. "I'm going there, too ... I'm taking this bouquet of geraniums to put on Grandpa Irving's grave for grandma. And look, teacher, I'm going to put this bunch of white roses beside Grandpa's grave in memory of my little mother... because I can't go to her grave to put it there. But don't you think she'll know all about it, just the same?"

"Yes, I am sure she will, Paul."

“You see, teacher, it’s just three years today since my little mother died. It’s such a long, long time but it hurts just as much as ever ... and I miss her just as much as ever. Sometimes it seems to me that I just can’t bear it, it hurts so.”

Paul’s voice quivered and his lip trembled. He looked down at his roses, hoping that his teacher would not notice the tears in his eyes.

“And yet,” said Anne, very softly, “you wouldn’t want it to stop hurting

... you wouldn’t want to forget your little mother even if you could.”

“No, indeed, I wouldn’t ... that’s just the way I feel. You’re so good at understanding, teacher. Nobody else understands so well ... not even grandma, although she’s so good to me. Father understood pretty well, but still I couldn’t talk much to him about mother, because it made him feel so bad. When he put his hand over his face I always knew it was time to stop. Poor father, he must be dreadfully lonesome without me; but you see he has nobody but a housekeeper now and he thinks housekeepers are no good to bring up little boys, especially when he has to be away from home so much on business. Grandmothers are better, next to mothers. Someday, when I’m brought up, I’ll go back to father and we’re never going to be parted again.”

Paul had talked so much to Anne about his mother and father that she felt as if she had known them. She thought his mother must have been very like what he was himself, in temperament and disposition; and she had an idea that Stephen Irving was a rather reserved man with a deep and tender nature which he kept hidden scrupulously from the world.

“Father’s not very easy to get acquainted with,” Paul had said once. “I never got really acquainted with him until after my little mother died. But he’s splendid when you do get to know him. I love him the best in all the world, and Grandma Irving next, and then you, teacher. I’d love you next to father if it wasn’t my DUTY to love Grandma Irving best, because she’s doing so much for me. YOU know, teacher. I wish she would leave the lamp in my room till I go to sleep, though. She takes it right out as soon as she tucks me up because she says I mustn’t be a coward. I’m NOT scared,

but I'd RATHER have the light. My little mother used always to sit beside me and hold my hand till I went to sleep. I expect she spoiled me. Mothers do sometimes, you know."

No, Anne did not know this, although she might imagine it. She thought sadly of HER "little mother," the mother who had thought her so "perfectly beautiful" and who had died so long ago and was buried beside her boyish husband in that unvisited grave far away. Anne could not remember her mother and for this reason she almost envied Paul.

"My birthday is next week," said Paul, as they walked up the long red hill, basking in the June sunshine, "and father wrote me that he is sending me something that he thinks I'll like better than anything else he could send. I believe it has come already, for Grandma is keeping the bookcase drawer locked and that is something new. And when I asked her why, she just looked mysterious and said little boys mustn't be too curious. It's very exciting to have a birthday, isn't it? I'll be eleven. You'd never think it to look at me, would you? Grandma says I'm very small for my age and that it's all because I don't eat enough porridge. I do my very best, but Grandma gives such generous platefuls ... there's nothing mean about Grandma, I can tell you. Ever since you and I had that talk about praying going home from Sunday School that day, teacher ... when you said we ought to pray about all our difficulties ... I've prayed every night that God would give me enough grace to enable me to eat every bit of my porridge in the mornings. But I've never been able to do it yet, and whether it's because I have too little grace or too much porridge I really can't decide. Grandma says father was brought up on porridge, and it certainly did work well in his case, for you ought to see the shoulders he has. But sometimes," concluded Paul with a sigh and a meditative air "I really think porridge will be the death of me."

Anne permitted herself a smile, since Paul was not looking at her. All Avonlea knew that old Mrs. Irving was bringing her grandson up in accordance with the good, old-fashioned methods of diet and morals.

"Let us hope not, dear," she said cheerfully. "How are your rock people coming on? Does the oldest Twin still continue to behave himself?"

“He HAS to,” said Paul emphatically. “He knows I won’t associate with him if he doesn’t. He is really full of wickedness, I think.”

“And has Nora found out about the Golden Lady yet?”

“No; but I think she suspects. I’m almost sure she watched me the last time I went to the cave. *I* don’t mind if she finds out ... it is only for HER sake I don’t want her to ... so that her feelings won’t be hurt. But if she is DETERMINED to have her feelings hurt it can’t be helped.”

“If I were to go to the shore some night with you do you think I could see your rock people too?”

Paul shook his head gravely.

“No, I don’t think you could see MY rock people. I’m the only person who can see them. But you could see rock people of your own. You’re one of the kind that can. We’re both that kind. YOU know, teacher,” he added, squeezing her hand chummily. “Isn’t it splendid to be that kind, teacher?”

“Splendid,” Anne agreed, gray shining eyes looking down into blue shining ones. Anne and Paul both knew

“How fair the realm

Imagination opens to the view,”

and both knew the way to that happy land. There the rose of joy bloomed immortal by dale and stream; clouds never darkened the sunny sky; sweet bells never jangled out of tune; and kindred spirits abounded. The knowledge of that land’s geography ... “east o’ the sun, west o’ the moon” ... is priceless lore, not to be bought in any market place. It must be the gift of the good fairies at birth and the years can never deface it or take it away. It is better to possess it, living in a garret, than to be the inhabitant of palaces without it.

The Avonlea graveyard was as yet the grass-grown solitude it had always been. To be sure, the Improvers had an eye on it, and Priscilla Grant had read a paper on cemeteries before the last meeting of the Society. At some future time the Improvers meant to have the lichened, wayward old board fence replaced by a neat wire railing, the grass mown and the leaning monuments straightened up.

Anne put on Matthew's grave the flowers she had brought for it, and then went over to the little poplar shaded corner where Hester Gray slept. Ever since the day of the spring picnic Anne had put flowers on Hester's grave when she visited Matthew's. The evening before she had made a pilgrimage back to the little deserted garden in the woods and brought therefrom some of Hester's own white roses.

"I thought you would like them better than any others, dear," she said softly.

Anne was still sitting there when a shadow fell over the grass and she looked up to see Mrs. Allan. They walked home together.

Mrs. Allan's face was not the face of the girlbride whom the minister had brought to Avonlea five years before. It had lost some of its bloom and youthful curves, and there were fine, patient lines about eyes and mouth. A tiny grave in that very cemetery accounted for some of them; and some new ones had come during the recent illness, now happily over, of her little son. But Mrs. Allan's dimples were as sweet and sudden as ever, her eyes as clear and bright and true; and what her face lacked of girlish beauty was now more than atoned for in added tenderness and strength.

"I suppose you are looking forward to your vacation, Anne?" she said, as they left the graveyard.

Anne nodded.

"Yes... I could roll the word as a sweet morsel under my tongue. I think the summer is going to be lovely. For one thing, Mrs. Morgan is coming to the Island in July and Priscilla is going to bring her up. I feel one of my old 'thrills' at the mere thought."

"I hope you'll have a good time, Anne. You've worked very hard this past year and you have succeeded."

"Oh, I don't know. I've come so far short in so many things. I haven't done what I meant to do when I began to teach last fall. I haven't lived up to my ideals."

"None of us ever do," said Mrs. Allan with a sigh. "But then, Anne, you know what Lowell says, 'Not failure but low aim is crime.' We must have ideals and try to live up to them, even if we never quite succeed. Life

would be a sorry business without them. With them it's grand and great. Hold fast to your ideals, Anne."

"I shall try. But I have to let go most of my theories," said Anne, laughing a little. "I had the most beautiful set of theories you ever knew when I started out as a schoolma'am, but every one of them has failed me at some pinch or another."

"Even the theory on corporal punishment," teased Mrs. Allan.

But Anne flushed.

"I shall never forgive myself for whipping Anthony."

"Nonsense, dear, he deserved it. And it agreed with him. You have had no trouble with him since and he has come to think there's nobody like you. Your kindness won his love after the idea that a 'girl was no good' was rooted out of his stubborn mind."

"He may have deserved it, but that is not the point. If I had calmly and deliberately decided to whip him because I thought it a just punishment for him I would not feel over it as I do. But the truth is, Mrs. Allan, that I just flew into a temper and whipped him because of that. I wasn't thinking whether it was just or unjust ... even if he hadn't deserved it I'd have done it just the same. That is what humiliates me."

"Well, we all make mistakes, dear, so just put it behind you. We should regret our mistakes and learn from them, but never carry them forward into the future with us. There goes Gilbert Blythe on his wheel ... home for his vacation too, I suppose. How are you and he getting on with your studies?"

"Pretty well. We plan to finish the Virgil tonight ... there are only twenty lines to do. Then we are not going to study any more until September."

"Do you think you will ever get to college?"

"Oh, I don't know." Anne looked dreamily afar to the opal-tinted horizon. "Marilla's eyes will never be much better than they are now, although we are so thankful to think that they will not get worse. And then there are the twins ... somehow I don't believe their uncle will ever really send for them. Perhaps college may be around the bend in the road, but I

haven't got to the bend yet and I don't think much about it lest I might grow discontented."

"Well, I should like to see you go to college, Anne; but if you never do, don't be discontented about it. We make our own lives wherever we are, after all ... college can only help us to do it more easily. They are broad or narrow according to what we put into them, not what we get out. Life is rich and full here ... everywhere ... if we can only learn how to open our whole hearts to its richness and fulness."

"I think I understand what you mean," said Anne thoughtfully, "and I know I have so much to feel thankful for ... oh, so much ... my work, and Paul Irving, and the dear twins, and all my friends. Do you know, Mrs. Allan, I'm so thankful for friendship. It beautifies life so much."

"True friendship is a very helpful thing indeed," said Mrs. Allan, "and we should have a very high ideal of it, and never sully it by any failure in truth and sincerity. I fear the name of friendship is often degraded to a kind of intimacy that has nothing of real friendship in it."

"Yes ... like Gertie Pye's and Julia Bell's. They are very intimate and go everywhere together; but Gertie is always saying nasty things of Julia behind her back and everybody thinks she is jealous of her because she is always so pleased when anybody criticizes Julia. I think it is desecration to call that friendship. If we have friends we should look only for the best in them and give them the best that is in us, don't you think? Then friendship would be the most beautiful thing in the world."

"Friendship IS very beautiful," smiled Mrs. Allan, "but some day ..."

Then she paused abruptly. In the delicate, white-browed face beside her, with its candid eyes and mobile features, there was still far more of the child than of the woman. Anne's heart so far harbored only dreams of friendship and ambition, and Mrs. Allan did not wish to brush the bloom from her sweet unconsciousness. So she left her sentence for the future years to finish.

XVI. The Substance of Things Hoped For

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“Anne,” said Davy appealingly, scrambling up on the shiny, leather-covered sofa in the Green Gables kitchen, where Anne sat, reading a letter, “Anne, I’m AWFUL hungry. You’ve no idea.”

“I’ll get you a piece of bread and butter in a minute,” said Anne absently. Her letter evidently contained some exciting news, for her cheeks were as pink as the roses on the big bush outside, and her eyes were as starry as only Anne’s eyes could be.

“But I ain’t bread and butter hungry,” said Davy in a disgusted tone. “I’m plum cake hungry.”

“Oh,” laughed Anne, laying down her letter and putting her arm about Davy to give him a squeeze, “that’s a kind of hunger that can be endured very comfortably, Davy-boy. You know it’s one of Marilla’s rules that you can’t have anything but bread and butter between meals.”

“Well, gimme a piece then ... please.”

Davy had been at last taught to say “please,” but he generally tacked it on as an afterthought. He looked with approval at the generous slice Anne presently brought to him. “You always put such a nice lot of butter on it, Anne. Marilla spreads it pretty thin. It slips down a lot easier when there’s plenty of butter.”

The slice “slipped down” with tolerable ease, judging from its rapid disappearance. Davy slid head first off the sofa, turned a double somersault on the rug, and then sat up and announced decidedly,

“Anne, I’ve made up my mind about heaven. I don’t want to go there.”

“Why not?” asked Anne gravely.

“Cause heaven is in Simon Fletcher’s garret, and I don’t like Simon Fletcher.”

“Heaven in ... Simon Fletcher’s garret!” gasped Anne, too amazed even to laugh. “Davy Keith, whatever put such an extraordinary idea into your head?”

“Milty Boulter says that’s where it is. It was last Sunday in Sunday School. The lesson was about Elijah and Elisha, and I up and asked Miss Rogerson where heaven was. Miss Rogerson looked awful offended. She was cross anyhow, because when she’d asked us what Elijah left Elisha when he went to heaven Milty Boulter said, ‘His old clo’es,’ and us fellows all laughed before we thought. I wish you could think first and do things afterwards, ‘cause then you wouldn’t do them. But Milty didn’t mean to be disrespectful. He just couldn’t think of the name of the thing. Miss Rogerson said heaven was where God was and I wasn’t to ask questions like that. Milty nudged me and said in a whisper, ‘Heaven’s in Uncle Simon’s garret and I’ll esplain about it on the road home.’ So when we was coming home he esplained. Milty’s a great hand at esplaining things. Even if he don’t know anything about a thing he’ll make up a lot of stuff and so you get it esplained all the same. His mother is Mrs. Simon’s sister and he went with her to the funeral when his cousin, Jane Ellen, died. The minister said she’d gone to heaven, though Milty says she was lying right before them in the coffin. But he s’posed they carried the coffin to the garret afterwards. Well, when Milty and his mother went upstairs after it was all over to get her bonnet he asked her where heaven was that Jane Ellen had gone to, and she pointed right to the ceiling and said, ‘Up there.’ Milty knew there wasn’t anything but the garret over the ceiling, so that’s how HE found out. And he’s been awful scared to go to his Uncle Simon’s ever since.”

Anne took Davy on her knee and did her best to straighten out this theological tangle also. She was much better fitted for the task than Marilla, for she remembered her own childhood and had an instinctive understanding of the curious ideas that seven-year-olds sometimes get about matters that are, of course, very plain and simple to grown up people. She had just succeeded in convincing Davy that heaven was NOT in Simon Fletcher’s garret when Marilla came in from the garden, where

she and Dora had been picking peas. Dora was an industrious little soul and never happier than when “helping” in various small tasks suited to her chubby fingers. She fed chickens, picked up chips, wiped dishes, and ran errands galore. She was neat, faithful and observant; she never had to be told how to do a thing twice and never forgot any of her little duties. Davy, on the other hand, was rather heedless and forgetful; but he had the born knack of winning love, and even yet Anne and Marilla liked him the better.

While Dora proudly shelled the peas and Davy made boats of the pods, with masts of matches and sails of paper, Anne told Marilla about the wonderful contents of her letter.

“Oh, Marilla, what do you think? I’ve had a letter from Priscilla and she says that Mrs. Morgan is on the Island, and that if it is fine Thursday they are going to drive up to Avonlea and will reach here about twelve. They will spend the afternoon with us and go to the hotel at White Sands in the evening, because some of Mrs. Morgan’s American friends are staying there. Oh, Marilla, isn’t it wonderful? I can hardly believe I’m not dreaming.”

“I daresay Mrs. Morgan is a lot like other people,” said Marilla drily, although she did feel a trifle excited herself. Mrs. Morgan was a famous woman and a visit from her was no commonplace occurrence. “They’ll be here to dinner, then?”

“Yes; and oh, Marilla, may I cook every bit of the dinner myself? I want to feel that I can do something for the author of ‘The Rosebud Garden,’ if it is only to cook a dinner for her. You won’t mind, will you?”

“Goodness, I’m not so fond of stewing over a hot fire in July that it would vex me very much to have someone else do it. You’re quite welcome to the job.”

“Oh, thank you,” said Anne, as if Marilla had just conferred a tremendous favor, “I’ll make out the menu this very night.”

“You’d better not try to put on too much style,” warned Marilla, a little alarmed by the high-flown sound of ‘menu.’ “You’ll likely come to grief if you do.”

“Oh, I’m not going to put on any ‘style,’ if you mean trying to do or have things we don’t usually have on festal occasions,” assured Anne. “That would be affectation, and, although I know I haven’t as much sense and steadiness as a girl of seventeen and a schoolteacher ought to have, I’m not so silly as THAT. But I want to have everything as nice and dainty as possible. Davy-boy, don’t leave those peapods on the back stairs ... someone might slip on them. I’ll have a light soup to begin with ... you know I can make lovely cream-of-onion soup ... and then a couple of roast fowls. I’ll have the two white roosters. I have real affection for those roosters and they’ve been pets ever since the gray hen hatched out just the two of them ... little balls of yellow down. But I know they would have to be sacrificed sometime, and surely there couldn’t be a worthier occasion than this. But oh, Marilla, *I cannot kill them ... not even for Mrs. Morgan’s sake. I’ll have to ask John Henry Carter to come over and do it for me.*”

“I’ll do it,” volunteered Davy, “if Marilla’ll hold them by the legs, ‘cause I guess it’d take both my hands to manage the axe. It’s awful jolly fun to see them hopping about after their heads are cut off.”

“Then I’ll have peas and beans and creamed potatoes and a lettuce salad, for vegetables,” resumed Anne, “and for dessert, lemon pie with whipped cream, and coffee and cheese and lady fingers. I’ll make the pies and lady fingers tomorrow and do up my white muslin dress. And I must tell Diana tonight, for she’ll want to do up hers. Mrs. Morgan’s heroines are nearly always dressed in white muslin, and Diana and I have always resolved that that was what we would wear if we ever met her. It will be such a delicate compliment, don’t you think? Davy, dear, you mustn’t poke peapods into the cracks of the floor. I must ask Mr. and Mrs. Allan and Miss Stacy to dinner, too, for they’re all very anxious to meet Mrs. Morgan. It’s so fortunate she’s coming while Miss Stacy is here. Davy dear, don’t sail the peapods in the water bucket ... go out to the trough. Oh, I do hope it will be fine Thursday, and I think it will, for Uncle Abe said last night when he called at Mr. Harrison’s, that it was going to rain most of this week.”

“That’s a good sign,” agreed Marilla.

Anne ran across to Orchard Slope that evening to tell the news to Diana, who was also very much excited over it, and they discussed the matter in the hammock swung under the big willow in the Barry garden.

“Oh, Anne, mayn’t I help you cook the dinner?” implored Diana. “You know I can make splendid lettuce salad.”

“Indeed you, may” said Anne unselfishly. “And I shall want you to help me decorate too. I mean to have the parlor simply a BOWER of blossoms ... and the dining table is to be adorned with wild roses. Oh, I do hope everything will go smoothly. Mrs. Morgan’s heroines NEVER get into scrapes or are taken at a disadvantage, and they are always so selfpossessed and such good housekeepers. They seem to be BORN good housekeepers. You remember that Gertrude in ‘Edgewood Days’ kept house for her father when she was only eight years old. When I was eight years old I hardly knew how to do a thing except bring up children. Mrs. Morgan must be an authority on girls when she has written so much about them, and I do want her to have a good opinion of us. I’ve imagined it all out a dozen different ways ... what she’ll look like, and what she’ll say, and what I’ll say. And I’m so anxious about my nose. There are seven freckles on it, as you can see. They came at the A.V.I S. picnic, when I went around in the sun without my hat. I suppose it’s ungrateful of me to worry over them, when I should be thankful they’re not spread all over my face as they once were; but I do wish they hadn’t come ... all Mrs. Morgan’s heroines have such perfect complexions. I can’t recall a freckled one among them.”

“Yours are not very noticeable,” comforted Diana. “Try a little lemon juice on them tonight.”

The next day Anne made her pies and lady fingers, did up her muslin dress, and swept and dusted every room in the house ... a quite unnecessary proceeding, for Green Gables was, as usual, in the apple pie order dear to Marilla’s heart. But Anne felt that a fleck of dust would be a desecration in a house that was to be honored by a visit from Charlotte E. Morgan. She even cleaned out the “catch-all” closet under the stairs,

although there was not the remotest possibility of Mrs. Morgan's seeing its interior.

"But I want to FEEL that it is in perfect order, even if she isn't to see it," Anne told Marilla. "You know, in her book 'Golden Keys,' she makes her two heroines Alice and Louisa take for their motto that verse of Longfellow's,

'In the elder days of art
Builders wrought with greatest care
Each minute and unseen part,
For the gods see everywhere,'

and so they always kept their cellar stairs scrubbed and never forgot to sweep under the beds. I should have a guilty conscience if I thought this closet was in disorder when Mrs. Morgan was in the house. Ever since we read 'Golden Keys,' last April, Diana and I have taken that verse for our motto too."

That night John Henry Carter and Davy between them contrived to execute the two white roosters, and Anne dressed them, the usually distasteful task glorified in her eyes by the destination of the plump birds.

"I don't like picking fowls," she told Marilla, "but isn't it fortunate we don't have to put our souls into what our hands may be doing? I've been picking chickens with my hands but in imagination I've been roaming the Milky Way."

"I thought you'd scattered more feathers over the floor than usual," remarked Marilla.

Then Anne put Davy to bed and made him promise that he would behave perfectly the next day.

"If I'm as good as good can be all day tomorrow will you let me be just as bad as I like all the next day?" asked Davy.

"I couldn't do that," said Anne discreetly, "but I'll take you and Dora for a row in the flat right to the bottom of the pond, and we'll go ashore on the sandhills and have a picnic."

"It's a bargain," said Davy. "I'll be good, you bet. I meant to go over to Mr. Harrison's and fire peas from my new popgun at Ginger but another

day'll do as well. I expect it will be just like Sunday, but a picnic at the shore'll make up for THAT."

XVII. A Chapter of Accidents

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Anne woke three times in the night and made pilgrimages to her window to make sure that Uncle Abe's prediction was not coming true. Finally the morning dawned pearly and lustrous in a sky full of silver sheen and radiance, and the wonderful day had arrived.

Diana appeared soon after breakfast, with a basket of flowers over one arm and HER muslin dress over the other ... for it would not do to don it until all the dinner preparations were completed. Meanwhile she wore her afternoon pink print and a lawn apron fearfully and wonderfully ruffled and frilled; and very neat and pretty and rosy she was.

"You look simply sweet," said Anne admiringly.

Diana sighed.

"But I've had to let out every one of my dresses AGAIN. I weigh four pounds more than I did in July. Anne, WHERE will this end? Mrs. Morgan's heroines are all tall and slender."

"Well, let's forget our troubles and think of our mercies," said Anne gaily. "Mrs. Allan says that whenever we think of anything that is a trial to us we should also think of something nice that we can set over against it. If you are slightly too plump you've got the dearest dimples; and if I have a freckled nose the SHAPE of it is all right. Do you think the lemon juice did any good?"

"Yes, I really think it did," said Diana critically; and, much elated, Anne led the way to the garden, which was full of airy shadows and wavering golden lights.

"We'll decorate the parlor first. We have plenty of time, for Priscilla said they'd be here about twelve or half past at the latest, so we'll have dinner at one."

There may have been two happier and more excited girls somewhere in Canada or the United States at that moment, but I doubt it. Every snip of

the scissors, as rose and peony and bluebell fell, seemed to chirp, “Mrs. Morgan is coming today.” Anne wondered how Mr. Harrison COULD go on placidly mowing hay in the field across the lane, just as if nothing were going to happen.

The parlor at Green Gables was a rather severe and gloomy apartment, with rigid horsehair furniture, stiff lace curtains, and white antimacassars that were always laid at a perfectly correct angle, except at such times as they clung to unfortunate people’s buttons. Even Anne had never been able to infuse much grace into it, for Marilla would not permit any alterations. But it is wonderful what flowers can accomplish if you give them a fair chance; when Anne and Diana finished with the room you would not have recognized it.

A great blue bowlful of snowballs overflowed on the polished table. The shining black mantelpiece was heaped with roses and ferns. Every shelf of the whatnot held a sheaf of bluebells; the dark corners on either side of the grate were lighted up with jars full of glowing crimson peonies, and the grate itself was aflame with yellow poppies. All this splendor and color, mingled with the sunshine falling through the honeysuckle vines at the windows in a leafy riot of dancing shadows over walls and floor, made of the usually dismal little room the veritable “bower” of Anne’s imagination, and even extorted a tribute of admiration from Marilla, who came in to criticize and remained to praise.

“Now, we must set the table,” said Anne, in the tone of a priestess about to perform some sacred rite in honor of a divinity. “We’ll have a big vaseful of wild roses in the center and one single rose in front of everybody’s plate — and a special bouquet of rosebuds only by Mrs. Morgan’s — an allusion to ‘The Rosebud Garden’ you know.”

The table was set in the sitting room, with Marilla’s finest linen and the best china, glass, and silver. You may be perfectly certain that every article placed on it was polished or scoured to the highest possible perfection of gloss and glitter.

Then the girls tripped out to the kitchen, which was filled with appetizing odors emanating from the oven, where the chickens were

already sizzling splendidly. Anne prepared the potatoes and Diana got the peas and beans ready. Then, while Diana shut herself into the pantry to compound the lettuce salad, Anne, whose cheeks were already beginning to glow crimson, as much with excitement as from the heat of the fire, prepared the bread sauce for the chickens, minced her onions for the soup, and finally whipped the cream for her lemon pies.

And what about Davy all this time? Was he redeeming his promise to be good? He was, indeed. To be sure, he insisted on remaining in the kitchen, for his curiosity wanted to see all that went on. But as he sat quietly in a corner, busily engaged in untying the knots in a piece of herring net he had brought home from his last trip to the shore, nobody objected to this.

At half past eleven the lettuce salad was made, the golden circles of the pies were heaped with whipped cream, and everything was sizzling and bubbling that ought to sizzle and bubble.

“We’d better go and dress now,” said Anne, “for they may be here by twelve. We must have dinner at sharp one, for the soup must be served as soon as it’s done.”

Serious indeed were the toilet rites presently performed in the east gable. Anne peered anxiously at her nose and rejoiced to see that its freckles were not at all prominent, thanks either to the lemon juice or to the unusual flush on her cheeks. When they were ready they looked quite as sweet and trim and girlish as ever did any of “Mrs. Morgan’s heroines.”

“I do hope I’ll be able to say something once in a while, and not sit like a mute,” said Diana anxiously. “All Mrs. Morgan’s heroines converse so beautifully. But I’m afraid I’ll be tonguetied and stupid. And I’ll be sure to say ‘I seen.’ I haven’t often said it since Miss Stacy taught here; but in moments of excitement it’s sure to pop out. Anne, if I were to say ‘I seen’ before Mrs. Morgan I’d die of mortification. And it would be almost as bad to have nothing to say.”

“I’m nervous about a good many things,” said Anne, “but I don’t think there is much fear that I won’t be able to talk.”

And, to do her justice, there wasn’t.

Anne shrouded her muslin glories in a big apron and went down to concoct her soup. Marilla had dressed herself and the twins, and looked more excited than she had ever been known to look before. At half past twelve the Allans and Miss Stacy came. Everything was going well but Anne was beginning to feel nervous. It was surely time for Priscilla and Mrs. Morgan to arrive. She made frequent trips to the gate and looked as anxiously down the lane as ever her namesake in the Bluebeard story peered from the tower casement.

“Suppose they don’t come at all?” she said piteously.

“Don’t suppose it. It would be too mean,” said Diana, who, however, was beginning to have uncomfortable misgivings on the subject.

“Anne,” said Marilla, coming out from the parlor, “Miss Stacy wants to see Miss Barry’s willowware platter.”

Anne hastened to the sitting room closet to get the platter. She had, in accordance with her promise to Mrs. Lynde, written to Miss Barry of Charlottetown, asking for the loan of it. Miss Barry was an old friend of Anne’s, and she promptly sent the platter out, with a letter exhorting Anne to be very careful of it, for she had paid twenty dollars for it. The platter had served its purpose at the Aid bazaar and had then been returned to the Green Gables closet, for Anne would not trust anybody but herself to take it back to town.

She carried the platter carefully to the front door where her guests were enjoying the cool breeze that blew up from the brook. It was examined and admired; then, just as Anne had taken it back into her own hands, a terrific crash and clatter sounded from the kitchen pantry. Marilla, Diana, and Anne fled out, the latter pausing only long enough to set the precious platter hastily down on the second step of the stairs.

When they reached the pantry a truly harrowing spectacle met their eyes ... a guilty looking small boy scrambling down from the table, with his clean print blouse liberally plastered with yellow filling, and on the table the shattered remnants of what had been two brave, becreaméd lemon pies.

Davy had finished ravelling out his herring net and had wound the twine into a ball. Then he had gone into the pantry to put it up on the shelf above the table, where he already kept a score or so of similar balls, which, so far as could be discovered, served no useful purpose save to yield the joy of possession. Davy had to climb on the table and reach over to the shelf at a dangerous angle ... something he had been forbidden by Marilla to do, as he had come to grief once before in the experiment. The result in this instance was disastrous. Davy slipped and came sprawling squarely down on the lemon pies. His clean blouse was ruined for that time and the pies for all time. It is, however, an ill wind that blows nobody good, and the pig was eventually the gainer by Davy's mischance.

"Davy Keith," said Marilla, shaking him by the shoulder, "didn't I forbid you to climb up on that table again? Didn't I?"

"I forgot," whimpered Davy. "You've told me not to do such an awful lot of things that I can't remember them all."

"Well, you march upstairs and stay there till after dinner. Perhaps you'll get them sorted out in your memory by that time. No, Anne, never you mind interceding for him. I'm not punishing him because he spoiled your pies ... that was an accident. I'm punishing him for his disobedience. Go, Davy, I say."

"Ain't I to have any dinner?" wailed Davy.

"You can come down after dinner is over and have yours in the kitchen."

"Oh, all right," said Davy, somewhat comforted. "I know Anne'll save some nice bones for me, won't you, Anne? 'Cause you know I didn't mean to fall on the pies. Say, Anne, since they ARE spoiled can't I take some of the pieces upstairs with me?"

"No, no lemon pie for you, Master Davy," said Marilla, pushing him toward the hall.

"What shall we do for dessert?" asked Anne, looking regretfully at the wreck and ruin.

"Get out a crock of strawberry preserves," said Marilla consolingly. "There's plenty of whipped cream left in the bowl for it."

One o'clock came ... but no Priscilla or Mrs. Morgan. Anne was in an agony. Everything was done to a turn and the soup was just what soup should be, but couldn't be depended on to remain so for any length of time.

"I don't believe they're coming after all," said Marilla crossly.

Anne and Diana sought comfort in each other's eyes.

At half past one Marilla again emerged from the parlor.

"Girls, we **MUST** have dinner. Everybody is hungry and it's no use waiting any longer. Priscilla and Mrs. Morgan are not coming, that's plain, and nothing is being improved by waiting."

Anne and Diana set about lifting the dinner, with all the zest gone out of the performance.

"I don't believe I'll be able to eat a mouthful," said Diana dolefully.

"Nor I. But I hope everything will be nice for Miss Stacy's and Mr. and Mrs. Allan's sakes," said Anne listlessly.

When Diana dished the peas she tasted them and a very peculiar expression crossed her face.

"Anne, did **YOU** put sugar in these peas?"

"Yes," said Anne, mashing the potatoes with the air of one expected to do her duty. "I put a spoonful of sugar in. We always do. Don't you like it?"

"But *I* put a spoonful in too, when I set them on the stove," said Diana.

Anne dropped her masher and tasted the peas also. Then she made a grimace.

"How awful! I never dreamed you had put sugar in, because I knew your mother never does. I happened to think of it, for a wonder ... I'm always forgetting it ... so I popped a spoonful in."

"It's a case of too many cooks, I guess," said Marilla, who had listened to this dialogue with a rather guilty expression. "I didn't think you'd remember about the sugar, Anne, for I'm perfectly certain you never did before ... so *I* put in a spoonful."

The guests in the parlor heard peal after peal of laughter from the kitchen, but they never knew what the fun was about. There were no green

peas on the dinner table that day, however.

“Well,” said Anne, sobering down again with a sigh of recollection, “we have the salad anyhow and I don’t think anything has happened to the beans. Let’s carry the things in and get it over.”

It cannot be said that that dinner was a notable success socially. The Allans and Miss Stacy exerted themselves to save the situation and Marilla’s customary placidity was not noticeably ruffled. But Anne and Diana, between their disappointment and the reaction from their excitement of the forenoon, could neither talk nor eat. Anne tried heroically to bear her part in the conversation for the sake of her guests; but all the sparkle had been quenched in her for the time being, and, in spite of her love for the Allans and Miss Stacy, she couldn’t help thinking how nice it would be when everybody had gone home and she could bury her weariness and disappointment in the pillows of the east gable.

There is an old proverb that really seems at times to be inspired ... “it never rains but it pours.” The measure of that day’s tribulations was not yet full. Just as Mr. Allan had finished returning thanks there arose a strange, ominous sound on the stairs, as of some hard, heavy object bounding from step to step, finishing up with a grand smash at the bottom. Everybody ran out into the hall. Anne gave a shriek of dismay.

At the bottom of the stairs lay a big pink conch shell amid the fragments of what had been Miss Barry’s platter; and at the top of the stairs knelt a terrified Davy, gazing down with wide-open eyes at the havoc.

“Davy,” said Marilla ominously, “did you throw that conch down ON PURPOSE?”

“No, I never did,” whimpered Davy. “I was just kneeling here, quiet as quiet, to watch you folks through the bannisters, and my foot struck that old thing and pushed it off ... and I’m awful hungry ... and I do wish you’d lick a fellow and have done with it, instead of always sending him upstairs to miss all the fun.”

“Don’t blame Davy,” said Anne, gathering up the fragments with trembling fingers. “It was my fault. I set that platter there and forgot all

about it. I am properly punished for my carelessness; but oh, what will Miss Barry say?"

"Well, you know she only bought it, so it isn't the same as if it was an heirloom," said Diana, trying to console.

The guests went away soon after, feeling that it was the most tactful thing to do, and Anne and Diana washed the dishes, talking less than they had ever been known to do before. Then Diana went home with a headache and Anne went with another to the east gable, where she stayed until Marilla came home from the post office at sunset, with a letter from Priscilla, written the day before. Mrs. Morgan had sprained her ankle so severely that she could not leave her room.

"And oh, Anne dear," wrote Priscilla, "I'm so sorry, but I'm afraid we won't get up to Green Gables at all now, for by the time Aunt's ankle is well she will have to go back to Toronto. She has to be there by a certain date."

"Well," sighed Anne, laying the letter down on the red sandstone step of the back porch, where she was sitting, while the twilight rained down out of a dappled sky, "I always thought it was too good to be true that Mrs. Morgan should really come. But there ... that speech sounds as pessimistic as Miss Eliza Andrews and I'm ashamed of making it. After all, it was NOT too good to be true ... things just as good and far better are coming true for me all the time. And I suppose the events of today have a funny side too. Perhaps when Diana and I are old and gray we shall be able to laugh over them. But I feel that I can't expect to do it before then, for it has truly been a bitter disappointment."

"You'll probably have a good many more and worse disappointments than that before you get through life," said Marilla, who honestly thought she was making a comforting speech. "It seems to me, Anne, that you are never going to outgrow your fashion of setting your heart so on things and then crashing down into despair because you don't get them."

"I know I'm too much inclined that, way" agreed Anne ruefully. "When I think something nice is going to happen I seem to fly right up on the wings of anticipation; and then the first thing I realize I drop down to

earth with a thud. But really, Marilla, the flying part IS glorious as long as it lasts ... it's like soaring through a sunset. I think it almost pays for the thud."

"Well, maybe it does," admitted Marilla. "I'd rather walk calmly along and do without both flying and thud. But everybody has her own way of living ... I used to think there was only one right way ... but since I've had you and the twins to bring up I don't feel so sure of it. What are you going to do about Miss Barry's platter?"

"Pay her back the twenty dollars she paid for it, I suppose. I'm so thankful it wasn't a cherished heirloom because then no money could replace it."

"Maybe you could find one like it somewhere and buy it for her."

"I'm afraid not. Platters as old as that are very scarce. Mrs. Lynde couldn't find one anywhere for the supper. I only wish I could, for of course Miss Barry would just as soon have one platter as another, if both were equally old and genuine. Marilla, look at that big star over Mr. Harrison's maple grove, with all that holy hush of silvery sky about it. It gives me a feeling that is like a prayer. After all, when one can see stars and skies like that, little disappointments and accidents can't matter so much, can they?"

"Where's Davy?" said Marilla, with an indifferent glance at the star.

"In bed. I've promised to take him and Dora to the shore for a picnic tomorrow. Of course, the original agreement was that he must be good. But he TRIED to be good ... and I hadn't the heart to disappoint him."

"You'll drown yourself or the twins, rowing about the pond in that flat," grumbled Marilla. "I've lived here for sixty years and I've never been on the pond yet."

"Well, it's never too late to mend," said Anne roguishly. "Suppose you come with us tomorrow. We'll shut Green Gables up and spend the whole day at the shore, daffing the world aside."

"No, thank you," said Marilla, with indignant emphasis. "I'd be a nice sight, wouldn't I, rowing down the pond in a flat? I think I hear Rachel pronouncing on it. There's Mr. Harrison driving away somewhere. Do you

suppose there is any truth in the gossip that Mr. Harrison is going to see Isabella Andrews?"

"No, I'm sure there isn't. He just called there one evening on business with Mr. Harmon Andrews and Mrs. Lynde saw him and said she knew he was courting because he had a white collar on. I don't believe Mr. Harrison will ever marry. He seems to have a prejudice against marriage."

"Well, you can never tell about those old bachelors. And if he had a white collar on I'd agree with Rachel that it looks suspicious, for I'm sure he never was seen with one before."

"I think he only put it on because he wanted to conclude a business deal with Harmon Andrews," said Anne. "I've heard him say that's the only time a man needs to be particular about his appearance, because if he looks prosperous the party of the second part won't be so likely to try to cheat him. I really feel sorry for Mr. Harrison; I don't believe he feels satisfied with his life. It must be very lonely to have no one to care about except a parrot, don't you think? But I notice Mr. Harrison doesn't like to be pitied. Nobody does, I imagine."

"There's Gilbert coming up the lane," said Marilla. "If he wants you to go for a row on the pond mind you put on your coat and rubbers. There's a heavy dew tonight."

XVIII. An Adventure on the Tory Road

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“Anne,” said Davy, sitting up in bed and propping his chin on his hands, “Anne, where is sleep? People go to sleep every night, and of course I know it’s the place where I do the things I dream, but I want to know WHERE it is and how I get there and back without knowing anything about it ... and in my nighty too. Where is it?”

Anne was kneeling at the west gable window watching the sunset sky that was like a great flower with petals of crocus and a heart of fiery yellow. She turned her head at Davy’s question and answered dreamily,

““Over the mountains of the moon,
Down the valley of the shadow.””

Paul Irving would have known the meaning of this, or made a meaning out of it for himself, if he didn’t; but practical Davy, who, as Anne often despairingly remarked, hadn’t a particle of imagination, was only puzzled and disgusted.

“Anne, I believe you’re just talking nonsense.”

“Of course, I was, dear boy. Don’t you know that it is only very foolish folk who talk sense all the time?”

“Well, I think you might give a sensible answer when I ask a sensible question,” said Davy in an injured tone.

“Oh, you are too little to understand,” said Anne. But she felt rather ashamed of saying it; for had she not, in keen remembrance of many similar snubs administered in her own early years, solemnly vowed that she would never tell any child it was too little to understand? Yet here she was doing it ... so wide sometimes is the gulf between theory and practice.

“Well, I’m doing my best to grow,” said Davy, “but it’s a thing you can’t hurry much. If Marilla wasn’t so stingy with her jam I believe I’d grow a lot faster.”

“Marilla is not stingy, Davy,” said Anne severely. “It is very ungrateful of you to say such a thing.”

“There’s another word that means the same thing and sounds a lot better, but I don’t just remember it,” said Davy, frowning intently. “I heard Marilla say she was it, herself, the other day.”

“If you mean ECONOMICAL, it’s a VERY different thing from being stingy. It is an excellent trait in a person if she is economical. If Marilla had been stingy she wouldn’t have taken you and Dora when your mother died. Would you have liked to live with Mrs. Wiggins?”

“You just bet I wouldn’t!” Davy was emphatic on that point. “Nor I don’t want to go out to Uncle Richard neither. I’d far rather live here, even if Marilla is that long-tailed word when it comes to jam, ‘cause YOU’RE here, Anne. Say, Anne, won’t you tell me a story ‘fore I go to sleep? I don’t want a fairy story. They’re all right for girls, I s’pose, but I want something exciting ... lots of killing and shooting in it, and a house on fire, and in’trusting things like that.”

Fortunately for Anne, Marilla called out at this moment from her room.

“Anne, Diana’s signaling at a great rate. You’d better see what she wants.”

Anne ran to the east gable and saw flashes of light coming through the twilight from Diana’s window in groups of five, which meant, according to their old childish code, “Come over at once for I have something important to reveal.” Anne threw her white shawl over her head and hastened through the Haunted Wood and across Mr. Bell’s pasture corner to Orchard Slope.

“I’ve good news for you, Anne,” said Diana. “Mother and I have just got home from Carmody, and I saw Mary Sentner from Spencer vale in Mr. Blair’s store. She says the old Copp girls on the Tory Road have a willowware platter and she thinks it’s exactly like the one we had at the supper. She says they’ll likely sell it, for Martha Copp has never been known to keep anything she COULD sell; but if they won’t there’s a platter

at Wesley Keyson's at Spencervale and she knows they'd sell it, but she isn't sure it's just the same kind as Aunt Josephine's."

"I'll go right over to Spencervale after it tomorrow," said Anne resolutely, "and you must come with me. It will be such a weight off my mind, for I have to go to town day after tomorrow and how can I face your Aunt Josephine without a willowware platter? It would be even worse than the time I had to confess about jumping on the spare room bed."

Both girls laughed over the old memory ... concerning which, if any of my readers are ignorant and curious, I must refer them to Anne's earlier history.

The next afternoon the girls fared forth on their platter hunting expedition. It was ten miles to Spencervale and the day was not especially pleasant for traveling. It was very warm and windless, and the dust on the road was such as might have been expected after six weeks of dry weather.

"Oh, I do wish it would rain soon," sighed Anne. "Everything is so parched up. The poor fields just seem pitiful to me and the trees seem to be stretching out their hands pleading for rain. As for my garden, it hurts me every time I go into it. I suppose I shouldn't complain about a garden when the farmers' crops are suffering so. Mr. Harrison says his pastures are so scorched up that his poor cows can hardly get a bite to eat and he feels guilty of cruelty to animals every time he meets their eyes."

After a wearisome drive the girls reached Spencervale and turned down the "Tory" Road ... a green, solitary highway where the strips of grass between the wheel tracks bore evidence to lack of travel. Along most of its extent it was lined with thickset young spruces crowding down to the roadway, with here and there a break where the back field of a Spencervale farm came out to the fence or an expanse of stumps was aflame with fireweed and goldenrod.

"Why is it called the Tory Road?" asked Anne.

"Mr. Allan says it is on the principle of calling a place a grove because there are no trees in it," said Diana, "for nobody lives along the road except the Copp girls and old Martin Boyer at the further end, who is a

Liberal. The Tory government ran the road through when they were in power just to show they were doing something.”

Diana’s father was a Liberal, for which reason she and Anne never discussed politics. Green Gables folk had always been Conservatives.

Finally the girls came to the old Copp homestead ... a place of such exceeding external neatness that even Green Gables would have suffered by contrast. The house was a very old-fashioned one, situated on a slope, which fact had necessitated the building of a stone basement under one end. The house and outbuildings were all whitewashed to a condition of blinding perfection and not a weed was visible in the prim kitchen garden surrounded by its white paling.

“The shades are all down,” said Diana ruefully. “I believe that nobody is home.”

This proved to be the case. The girls looked at each other in perplexity.

“I don’t know what to do,” said Anne. “If I were sure the platter was the right kind I would not mind waiting until they came home. But if it isn’t it may be too late to go to Wesley Keyson’s afterward.”

Diana looked at a certain little square window over the basement.

“That is the pantry window, I feel sure,” she said, “because this house is just like Uncle Charles’ at Newbridge, and that is their pantry window. The shade isn’t down, so if we climbed up on the roof of that little house we could look into the pantry and might be able to see the platter. Do you think it would be any harm?”

“No, I don’t think so,” decided Anne, after due reflection, “since our motive is not idle curiosity.”

This important point of ethics being settled, Anne prepared to mount the aforesaid “little house,” a construction of lathes, with a peaked roof, which had in times past served as a habitation for ducks. The Copp girls had given up keeping ducks ... “because they were such untidy birds”... and the house had not been in use for some years, save as an abode of correction for setting hens. Although scrupulously whitewashed it had become somewhat shaky, and Anne felt rather dubious as she scrambled up from the vantage point of a keg placed on a box.

“I’m afraid it won’t bear my weight,” she said as she gingerly stepped on the roof.

“Lean on the window sill,” advised Diana, and Anne accordingly leaned. Much to her delight, she saw, as she peered through the pane, a willowware platter, exactly such as she was in quest of, on the shelf in front of the window. So much she saw before the catastrophe came. In her joy Anne forgot the precarious nature of her footing, incautiously ceased to lean on the window sill, gave an impulsive little hop of pleasure ... and the next moment she had crashed through the roof up to her armpits, and there she hung, quite unable to extricate herself. Diana dashed into the duck house and, seizing her unfortunate friend by the waist, tried to draw her down.

“Ow ... don’t,” shrieked poor Anne. “There are some long splinters sticking into me. See if you can put something under my feet ... then perhaps I can draw myself up.”

Diana hastily dragged in the previously mentioned keg and Anne found that it was just sufficiently high to furnish a secure resting place for her feet. But she could not release herself.

“Could I pull you out if I crawled up?” suggested Diana.

Anne shook her head hopelessly.

“No ... the splinters hurt too badly. If you can find an axe you might chop me out, though. Oh dear, I do really begin to believe that I was born under an ill-omened star.”

Diana searched faithfully but no axe was to be found.

“I’ll have to go for help,” she said, returning to the prisoner.

“No, indeed, you won’t,” said Anne vehemently. “If you do the story of this will get out everywhere and I shall be ashamed to show my face. No, we must just wait until the Copp girls come home and bind them to secrecy. They’ll know where the axe is and get me out. I’m not uncomfortable, as long as I keep perfectly still ... not uncomfortable in BODY I mean. I wonder what the Copp girls value this house at. I shall have to pay for the damage I’ve done, but I wouldn’t mind that if I were only sure they would understand my motive in peeping in at their pantry

window. My sole comfort is that the platter is just the kind I want and if Miss Copp will only sell it to me I shall be resigned to what has happened.”

“What if the Copp girls don’t come home until after night ... or till tomorrow?” suggested Diana.

“If they’re not back by sunset you’ll have to go for other assistance, I suppose,” said Anne reluctantly, “but you mustn’t go until you really have to. Oh dear, this is a dreadful predicament. I wouldn’t mind my misfortunes so much if they were romantic, as Mrs. Morgan’s heroines’ always are, but they are always just simply ridiculous. Fancy what the Copp girls will think when they drive into their yard and see a girl’s head and shoulders sticking out of the roof of one of their outhouses. Listen ... is that a wagon? No, Diana, I believe it is thunder.”

Thunder it was undoubtedly, and Diana, having made a hasty pilgrimage around the house, returned to announce that a very black cloud was rising rapidly in the northwest.

“I believe we’re going to have a heavy thunder-shower,” she exclaimed in dismay, “Oh, Anne, what will we do?”

“We must prepare for it,” said Anne tranquilly. A thunderstorm seemed a trifle in comparison with what had already happened. “You’d better drive the horse and buggy into that open shed. Fortunately my parasol is in the buggy. Here ... take my hat with you. Marilla told me I was a goose to put on my best hat to come to the Tory Road and she was right, as she always is.”

Diana untied the pony and drove into the shed, just as the first heavy drops of rain fell. There she sat and watched the resulting downpour, which was so thick and heavy that she could hardly see Anne through it, holding the parasol bravely over her bare head. There was not a great deal of thunder, but for the best part of an hour the rain came merrily down. Occasionally Anne slanted back her parasol and waved an encouraging hand to her friend; But conversation at that distance was quite out of the question. Finally the rain ceased, the sun came out, and Diana ventured across the puddles of the yard.

“Did you get very wet?” she asked anxiously.

“Oh, no,” returned Anne cheerfully. “My head and shoulders are quite dry and my skirt is only a little damp where the rain beat through the lathes. Don’t pity me, Diana, for I haven’t minded it at all. I kept thinking how much good the rain will do and how glad my garden must be for it, and imagining what the flowers and buds would think when the drops began to fall. I imagined out a most interesting dialogue between the asters and the sweet peas and the wild canaries in the lilac bush and the guardian spirit of the garden. When I go home I mean to write it down. I wish I had a pencil and paper to do it now, because I daresay I’ll forget the best parts before I reach home.”

Diana the faithful had a pencil and discovered a sheet of wrapping paper in the box of the buggy. Anne folded up her dripping parasol, put on her hat, spread the wrapping paper on a shingle Diana handed up, and wrote out her garden idyl under conditions that could hardly be considered as favorable to literature. Nevertheless, the result was quite pretty, and Diana was “enraptured” when Anne read it to her.

“Oh, Anne, it’s sweet ... just sweet. DO send it to the ‘Canadian Woman.’”

Anne shook her head.

“Oh, no, it wouldn’t be suitable at all. There is no PLOT in it, you see. It’s just a string of fancies. I like writing such things, but of course nothing of the sort would ever do for publication, for editors insist on plots, so Priscilla says. Oh, there’s Miss Sarah Copp now. PLEASE, Diana, go and explain.”

Miss Sarah Copp was a small person, garbed in shabby black, with a hat chosen less for vain adornment than for qualities that would wear well. She looked as amazed as might be expected on seeing the curious tableau in her yard, but when she heard Diana’s explanation she was all sympathy. She hurriedly unlocked the back door, produced the axe, and with a few skillfull blows set Anne free. The latter, somewhat tired and stiff, ducked down into the interior of her prison and thankfully emerged into liberty once more.

“Miss Copp,” she said earnestly. “I assure you I looked into your pantry window only to discover if you had a willowware platter. I didn’t see anything else — I didn’t LOOK for anything else.”

“Bless you, that’s all right,” said Miss Sarah amiably. “You needn’t worry — there’s no harm done. Thank goodness, we Copps keep our pantries presentable at all times and don’t care who sees into them. As for that old duckhouse, I’m glad it’s smashed, for maybe now Martha will agree to having it taken down. She never would before for fear it might come in handy sometime and I’ve had to whitewash it every spring. But you might as well argue with a post as with Martha. She went to town today — I drove her to the station. And you want to buy my platter. Well, what will you give for it?”

“Twenty dollars,” said Anne, who was never meant to match business wits with a Copp, or she would not have offered her price at the start.

“Well, I’ll see,” said Miss Sarah cautiously. “That platter is mine fortunately, or I’d never dare to sell it when Martha wasn’t here. As it is, I daresay she’ll raise a fuss. Martha’s the boss of this establishment I can tell you. I’m getting awful tired of living under another woman’s thumb. But come in, come in. You must be real tired and hungry. I’ll do the best I can for you in the way of tea but I warn you not to expect anything but bread and butter and some cowcumbers. Martha locked up all the cake and cheese and preserves afore she went. She always does, because she says I’m too extravagant with them if company comes.”

The girls were hungry enough to do justice to any fare, and they enjoyed Miss Sarah’s excellent bread and butter and “cowcumbers” thoroughly. When the meal was over Miss Sarah said,

“I don’t know as I mind selling the platter. But it’s worth twenty-five dollars. It’s a very old platter.”

Diana gave Anne’s foot a gentle kick under the table, meaning, “Don’t agree — she’ll let it go for twenty if you hold out.” But Anne was not minded to take any chances in regard to that precious platter. She promptly agreed to give twenty-five and Miss Sarah looked as if she felt sorry she hadn’t asked for thirty.

“Well, I guess you may have it. I want all the money I can scare up just now. The fact is—” Miss Sarah threw up her head importantly, with a proud flush on her thin cheeks—”I’m going to be married — to Luther Wallace. He wanted me twenty years ago. I liked him real well but he was poor then and father packed him off. I s’pose I shouldn’t have let him go so meek but I was timid and frightened of father. Besides, I didn’t know men were so skurse.”

When the girls were safely away, Diana driving and Anne holding the coveted platter carefully on her lap, the green, rain-freshened solitudes of the Tory Road were enlivened by ripples of girlish laughter.

“I’ll amuse your Aunt Josephine with the ‘strange eventful history’ of this afternoon when I go to town tomorrow. We’ve had a rather trying time but it’s over now. I’ve got the platter, and that rain has laid the dust beautifully. So ‘all’s well that ends well.’”

“We’re not home yet,” said Diana rather pessimistically, “and there’s no telling what may happen before we are. You’re such a girl to have adventures, Anne.”

“Having adventures comes natural to some people,” said Anne serenely. “You just have a gift for them or you haven’t.”

XIX. Just a Happy Day

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“After all,” Anne had said to Marilla once, “I believe the nicest and sweetest days are not those on which anything very splendid or wonderful or exciting happens but just those that bring simple little pleasures, following one another softly, like pearls slipping off a string.”

Life at Green Gables was full of just such days, for Anne’s adventures and misadventures, like those of other people, did not all happen at once, but were sprinkled over the year, with long stretches of harmless, happy days between, filled with work and dreams and laughter and lessons. Such a day came late in August. In the forenoon Anne and Diana rowed the delighted twins down the pond to the sandshore to pick “sweet grass” and paddle in the surf, over which the wind was harping an old lyric learned when the world was young.

In the afternoon Anne walked down to the old Irving place to see Paul. She found him stretched out on the grassy bank beside the thick fir grove that sheltered the house on the north, absorbed in a book of fairy tales. He sprang up radiantly at sight of her.

“Oh, I’m so glad you’ve come, teacher,” he said eagerly, “because Grandma’s away. You’ll stay and have tea with me, won’t you? It’s so lonesome to have tea all by oneself. YOU know, teacher. I’ve had serious thoughts of asking Young Mary Joe to sit down and eat her tea with me, but I expect Grandma wouldn’t approve. She says the French have to be kept in their place. And anyhow, it’s difficult to talk with Young Mary Joe. She just laughs and says, ‘Well, yous do beat all de kids I ever knowed.’ That isn’t my idea of conversation.”

“Of course I’ll stay to tea,” said Anne gaily. “I was dying to be asked. My mouth has been watering for some more of your grandma’s delicious shortbread ever since I had tea here before.”

Paul looked very sober.

“If it depended on me, teacher,” he said, standing before Anne with his hands in his pockets and his beautiful little face shadowed with sudden care, “You should have shortbread with a right good will. But it depends on Mary Joe. I heard Grandma tell her before she left that she wasn’t to give me any shortcake because it was too rich for little boys’ stomachs. But maybe Mary Joe will cut some for you if I promise I won’t eat any. Let us hope for the best.”

“Yes, let us,” agreed Anne, whom this cheerful philosophy suited exactly, “and if Mary Joe proves hard-hearted and won’t give me any shortbread it doesn’t matter in the least, so you are not to worry over that.”

“You’re sure you won’t mind if she doesn’t?” said Paul anxiously.

“Perfectly sure, dear heart.”

“Then I won’t worry,” said Paul, with a long breath of relief, “especially as I really think Mary Joe will listen to reason. She’s not a naturally unreasonable person, but she has learned by experience that it doesn’t do to disobey Grandma’s orders. Grandma is an excellent woman but people must do as she tells them. She was very much pleased with me this morning because I managed at last to eat all my plateful of porridge. It was a great effort but I succeeded. Grandma says she thinks she’ll make a man of me yet. But, teacher, I want to ask you a very important question. You will answer it truthfully, won’t you?”

“I’ll try,” promised Anne.

“Do you think I’m wrong in my upper story?” asked Paul, as if his very existence depended on her reply.

“Goodness, no, Paul,” exclaimed Anne in amazement. “Certainly you’re not. What put such an idea into your head?”

“Mary Joe ... but she didn’t know I heard her. Mrs. Peter Sloane’s hired girl, Veronica, came to see Mary Joe last evening and I heard them talking in the kitchen as I was going through the hall. I heard Mary Joe say, ‘Dat Paul, he is de queeres’ leetle boy. He talks dat queer. I tink dere’s someting wrong in his upper story.’ I couldn’t sleep last night for ever so long, thinking of it, and wondering if Mary Joe was right. I couldn’t bear

to ask Grandma about it somehow, but I made up my mind I'd ask you. I'm so glad you think I'm all right in my upper story."

"Of course you are. Mary Joe is a silly, ignorant girl, and you are never to worry about anything she says," said Anne indignantly, secretly resolving to give Mrs. Irving a discreet hint as to the advisability of restraining Mary Joe's tongue.

"Well, that's a weight off my mind," said Paul. "I'm perfectly happy now, teacher, thanks to you. It wouldn't be nice to have something wrong in your upper story, would it, teacher? I suppose the reason Mary Joe imagines I have is because I tell her what I think about things sometimes."

"It is a rather dangerous practice," admitted Anne, out of the depths of her own experience.

"Well, by and by I'll tell you the thoughts I told Mary Joe and you can see for yourself if there's anything queer in them," said Paul, "but I'll wait till it begins to get dark. That is the time I ache to tell people things, and when nobody else is handy I just HAVE to tell Mary Joe. But after this I won't, if it makes her imagine I'm wrong in my upper story. I'll just ache and bear it."

"And if the ache gets too bad you can come up to Green Gables and tell me your thoughts," suggested Anne, with all the gravity that endeared her to children, who so dearly love to be taken seriously.

"Yes, I will. But I hope Davy won't be there when I go because he makes faces at me. I don't mind VERY much because he is such a little boy and I am quite a big one, but still it is not pleasant to have faces made at you. And Davy makes such terrible ones. Sometimes I am frightened he will never get his face straightened out again. He makes them at me in church when I ought to be thinking of sacred things. Dora likes me though, and I like her, but not so well as I did before she told Minnie May Barry that she meant to marry me when I grew up. I may marry somebody when I grow up but I'm far too young to be thinking of it yet, don't you think, teacher?"

"Rather young," agreed teacher.

“Speaking of marrying, reminds me of another thing that has been troubling me of late,” continued Paul. “Mrs. Lynde was down here one day last week having tea with Grandma, and Grandma made me show her my little mother’s picture ... the one father sent me for my birthday present. I didn’t exactly want to show it to Mrs. Lynde. Mrs. Lynde is a good, kind woman, but she isn’t the sort of person you want to show your mother’s picture to. YOU know, teacher. But of course I obeyed Grandma. Mrs. Lynde said she was very pretty but kind of actressy looking, and must have been an awful lot younger than father. Then she said, ‘Some of these days your pa will be marrying again likely. How will you like to have a new ma, Master Paul?’ Well, the idea almost took my breath away, teacher, but I wasn’t going to let Mrs. Lynde see THAT. I just looked her straight in the face ... like this ... and I said, ‘Mrs. Lynde, father made a pretty good job of picking out my first mother and I could trust him to pick out just as good a one the second time.’ And I CAN trust him, teacher. But still, I hope, if he ever does give me a new mother, he’ll ask my opinion about her before it’s too late. There’s Mary Joe coming to call us to tea. I’ll go and consult with her about the shortbread.”

As a result of the “consultation,” Mary Joe cut the shortbread and added a dish of preserves to the bill of fare. Anne poured the tea and she and Paul had a very merry meal in the dim old sitting room whose windows were open to the gulf breezes, and they talked so much “nonsense” that Mary Joe was quite scandalized and told Veronica the next evening that “de school mees” was as queer as Paul. After tea Paul took Anne up to his room to show her his mother’s picture, which had been the mysterious birthday present kept by Mrs. Irving in the bookcase. Paul’s little low-ceilinged room was a soft whirl of ruddy light from the sun that was setting over the sea and swinging shadows from the fir trees that grew close to the square, deep-set window. From out this soft glow and glamor shone a sweet, girlish face, with tender mother eyes, that was hanging on the wall at the foot of the bed.

“That’s my little mother,” said Paul with loving pride. “I got Grandma to hang it there where I’d see it as soon as I opened my eyes in the

morning. I never mind not having the light when I go to bed now, because it just seems as if my little mother was right here with me. Father knew just what I would like for a birthday present, although he never asked me. Isn't it wonderful how much fathers DO know?"

"Your mother was very lovely, Paul, and you look a little like her. But her eyes and hair are darker than yours."

"My eyes are the same color as father's," said Paul, flying about the room to heap all available cushions on the window seat, "but father's hair is gray. He has lots of it, but it is gray. You see, father is nearly fifty. That's ripe old age, isn't it? But it's only OUTSIDE he's old. INSIDE he's just as young as anybody. Now, teacher, please sit here; and I'll sit at your feet. May I lay my head against your knee? That's the way my little mother and I used to sit. Oh, this is real splendid, I think."

"Now, I want to hear those thoughts which Mary Joe pronounces so queer," said Anne, patting the mop of curls at her side. Paul never needed any coaxing to tell his thoughts ... at least, to congenial souls.

"I thought them out in the fir grove one night," he said dreamily. "Of course I didn't BELIEVE them but I THOUGHT them. YOU know, teacher. And then I wanted to tell them to somebody and there was nobody but Mary Joe. Mary Joe was in the pantry setting bread and I sat down on the bench beside her and I said, 'Mary Joe, do you know what I think? I think the evening star is a lighthouse on the land where the fairies dwell.' And Mary Joe said, 'Well, yous are de queer one. Dare ain't no such ting as fairies.' I was very much provoked. Of course, I knew there are no fairies; but that needn't prevent my thinking there is. You know, teacher. But I tried again quite patiently. I said, 'Well then, Mary Joe, do you know what I think? I think an angel walks over the world after the sun sets ... a great, tall, white angel, with silvery folded wings ... and sings the flowers and birds to sleep. Children can hear him if they know how to listen.' Then Mary Joe held up her hands all over flour and said, 'Well, yous are de queer leetle boy. Yous make me feel scare.' And she really did looked scared. I went out then and whispered the rest of my thoughts to the garden. There was a little birch tree in the garden and it died. Grandma

says the salt spray killed it; but I think the dryad belonging to it was a foolish dryad who wandered away to see the world and got lost. And the little tree was so lonely it died of a broken heart.”

“And when the poor, foolish little dryad gets tired of the world and comes back to her tree HER heart will break,” said Anne.

“Yes; but if dryads are foolish they must take the consequences, just as if they were real people,” said Paul gravely. “Do you know what I think about the new moon, teacher? I think it is a little golden boat full of dreams.”

“And when it tips on a cloud some of them spill out and fall into your sleep.”

“Exactly, teacher. Oh, you DO know. And I think the violets are little snips of the sky that fell down when the angels cut out holes for the stars to shine through. And the buttercups are made out of old sunshine; and I think the sweet peas will be butterflies when they go to heaven. Now, teacher, do you see anything so very queer about those thoughts?”

“No, laddie dear, they are not queer at all; they are strange and beautiful thoughts for a little boy to think, and so people who couldn’t think anything of the sort themselves, if they tried for a hundred years, think them queer. But keep on thinking them, Paul ... some day you are going to be a poet, I believe.”

When Anne reached home she found a very different type of boyhood waiting to be put to bed. Davy was sulky; and when Anne had undressed him he bounced into bed and buried his face in the pillow.

“Davy, you have forgotten to say your prayers,” said Anne rebukingly.

“No, I didn’t forget,” said Davy defiantly, “but I ain’t going to say my prayers any more. I’m going to give up trying to be good, ‘cause no matter how good I am you’d like Paul Irving better. So I might as well be bad and have the fun of it.”

“I don’t like Paul Irving BETTER,” said Anne seriously. “I like you just as well, only in a different way.”

“But I want you to like me the same way,” pouted Davy.

“You can’t like different people the same way. You don’t like Dora and me the same way, do you?”

Davy sat up and reflected.

“No ... o ... o,” he admitted at last, “I like Dora because she’s my sister but I like you because you’re YOU.”

“And I like Paul because he is Paul and Davy because he is Davy,” said Anne gaily.

“Well, I kind of wish I’d said my prayers then,” said Davy, convinced by this logic. “But it’s too much bother getting out now to say them. I’ll say them twice over in the morning, Anne. Won’t that do as well?”

No, Anne was positive it would not do as well. So Davy scrambled out and knelt down at her knee. When he had finished his devotions he leaned back on his little, bare, brown heels and looked up at her.

“Anne, I’m gooder than I used to be.”

“Yes, indeed you are, Davy,” said Anne, who never hesitated to give credit where credit was due.

“I KNOW I’m gooder,” said Davy confidently, “and I’ll tell you how I know it. Today Marilla give me two pieces of bread and jam, one for me and one for Dora. One was a good deal bigger than the other and Marilla didn’t say which was mine. But I give the biggest piece to Dora. That was good of me, wasn’t it?”

“Very good, and very manly, Davy.”

“Of course,” admitted Davy, “Dora wasn’t very hungry and she only et half her slice and then she give the rest to me. But I didn’t know she was going to do that when I give it to her, so I WAS good, Anne.”

In the twilight Anne sauntered down to the Dryad’s Bubble and saw Gilbert Blythe coming down through the dusky Haunted Wood. She had a sudden realization that Gilbert was a schoolboy no longer. And how manly he looked — the tall, frank-faced fellow, with the clear, straightforward eyes and the broad shoulders. Anne thought Gilbert was a very handsome lad, even though he didn’t look at all like her ideal man. She and Diana had long ago decided what kind of a man they admired and their tastes seemed exactly similar. He must be very tall and distinguished looking,

with melancholy, inscrutable eyes, and a melting, sympathetic voice. There was nothing either melancholy or inscrutable in Gilbert's physiognomy, but of course that didn't matter in friendship!

Gilbert stretched himself out on the ferns beside the Bubble and looked approvingly at Anne. If Gilbert had been asked to describe his ideal woman the description would have answered point for point to Anne, even to those seven tiny freckles whose obnoxious presence still continued to vex her soul. Gilbert was as yet little more than a boy; but a boy has his dreams as have others, and in Gilbert's future there was always a girl with big, limpid gray eyes, and a face as fine and delicate as a flower. He had made up his mind, also, that his future must be worthy of its goddess. Even in quiet Avonlea there were temptations to be met and faced. White Sands youth were a rather "fast" set, and Gilbert was popular wherever he went. But he meant to keep himself worthy of Anne's friendship and perhaps some distant day her love; and he watched over word and thought and deed as jealously as if her clear eyes were to pass in judgment on it. She held over him the unconscious influence that every girl, whose ideals are high and pure, wields over her friends; an influence which would endure as long as she was faithful to those ideals and which she would as certainly lose if she were ever false to them. In Gilbert's eyes Anne's greatest charm was the fact that she never stooped to the petty practices of so many of the Avonlea girls — the small jealousies, the little deceits and rivalries, the palpable bids for favor. Anne held herself apart from all this, not consciously or of design, but simply because anything of the sort was utterly foreign to her transparent, impulsive nature, crystal clear in its motives and aspirations.

But Gilbert did not attempt to put his thoughts into words, for he had already too good reason to know that Anne would mercilessly and frostily nip all attempts at sentiment in the bud — or laugh at him, which was ten times worse.

"You look like a real dryad under that birch tree," he said teasingly.

"I love birch trees," said Anne, laying her cheek against the creamy satin of the slim bole, with one of the pretty, caressing gestures that came

so natural to her.

“Then you’ll be glad to hear that Mr. Major Spencer has decided to set out a row of white birches all along the road front of his farm, by way of encouraging the A.V.I.S.,” said Gilbert. “He was talking to me about it today. Major Spencer is the most progressive and public-spirited man in Avonlea. And Mr. William Bell is going to set out a spruce hedge along his road front and up his lane. Our Society is getting on splendidly, Anne. It is past the experimental stage and is an accepted fact. The older folks are beginning to take an interest in it and the White Sands people are talking of starting one too. Even Elisha Wright has come around since that day the Americans from the hotel had the picnic at the shore. They praised our roadsides so highly and said they were so much prettier than in any other part of the Island. And when, in due time, the other farmers follow Mr. Spencer’s good example and plant ornamental trees and hedges along their road fronts Avonlea will be the prettiest settlement in the province.”

“The Aids are talking of taking up the graveyard,” said Anne, “and I hope they will, because there will have to be a subscription for that, and it would be no use for the Society to try it after the hall affair. But the Aids would never have stirred in the matter if the Society hadn’t put it into their thoughts unofficially. Those trees we planted on the church grounds are flourishing, and the trustees have promised me that they will fence in the school grounds next year. If they do I’ll have an arbor day and every scholar shall plant a tree; and we’ll have a garden in the corner by the road.”

“We’ve succeeded in almost all our plans so far, except in getting the old Boulter house removed,” said Gilbert, “and I’ve given THAT up in despair. Levi won’t have it taken down just to vex us. There’s a contrary streak in all the Boulders and it’s strongly developed in him.”

“Julia Bell wants to send another committee to him, but I think the better way will just be to leave him severely alone,” said Anne sagely.

“And trust to Providence, as Mrs. Lynde says,” smiled Gilbert. “Certainly, no more committees. They only aggravate him. Julia Bell thinks you can do anything, if you only have a committee to attempt it.

Next spring, Anne, we must start an agitation for nice lawns and grounds. We'll sow good seed betimes this winter. I've a treatise here on lawns and lawnmaking and I'm going to prepare a paper on the subject soon. Well, I suppose our vacation is almost over. School opens Monday. Has Ruby Gillis got the Carmody school?"

"Yes; Priscilla wrote that she had taken her own home school, so the Carmody trustees gave it to Ruby. I'm sorry Priscilla is not coming back, but since she can't I'm glad Ruby has got the school. She will be home for Saturdays and it will seem like old times, to have her and Jane and Diana and myself all together again."

Marilla, just home from Mrs. Lynde's, was sitting on the back porch step when Anne returned to the house.

"Rachel and I have decided to have our cruise to town tomorrow," she said. "Mr. Lynde is feeling better this week and Rachel wants to go before he has another sick spell."

"I intend to get up extra early tomorrow morning, for I've ever so much to do," said Anne virtuously. "For one thing, I'm going to shift the feathers from my old bedtick to the new one. I ought to have done it long ago but I've just kept putting it off ... it's such a detestable task. It's a very bad habit to put off disagreeable things, and I never mean to again, or else I can't comfortably tell my pupils not to do it. That would be inconsistent. Then I want to make a cake for Mr. Harrison and finish my paper on gardens for the A.V.I.S., and write Stella, and wash and starch my muslin dress, and make Dora's new apron."

"You won't get half done," said Marilla pessimistically. "I never yet planned to do a lot of things but something happened to prevent me."

XX. The Way It Often Happens

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Anne rose betimes the next morning and blithely greeted the fresh day, when the banners of the sunrise were shaken triumphantly across the pearly skies. Green Gables lay in a pool of sunshine, flecked with the dancing shadows of poplar and willow. Beyond the land was Mr. Harrison's wheatfield, a great, windrippled expanse of pale gold. The world was so beautiful that Anne spent ten blissful minutes hanging idly over the garden gate drinking the loveliness in.

After breakfast Marilla made ready for her journey. Dora was to go with her, having been long promised this treat.

"Now, Davy, you try to be a good boy and don't bother Anne," she straitly charged him. "If you are good I'll bring you a striped candy cane from town."

For alas, Marilla had stooped to the evil habit of bribing people to be good!

"I won't be bad on purpose, but s'posen I'm bad zacksidentally?" Davy wanted to know.

"You'll have to guard against accidents," admonished Marilla. "Anne, if Mr. Shearer comes today get a nice roast and some steak. If he doesn't you'll have to kill a fowl for dinner tomorrow."

Anne nodded.

"I'm not going to bother cooking any dinner for just Davy and myself today," she said. "That cold ham bone will do for noon lunch and I'll have some steak fried for you when you come home at night."

"I'm going to help Mr. Harrison haul dulse this morning," announced Davy. "He asked me to, and I guess he'll ask me to dinner too. Mr. Harrison is an awful kind man. He's a real sociable man. I hope I'll be like him when I grow up. I mean BEHAVE like him ... I don't want to LOOK

like him. But I guess there's no danger, for Mrs. Lynde says I'm a very handsome child. Do you s'pose it'll last, Anne? I want to know?"

"I daresay it will," said Anne gravely. "You ARE a handsome boy, Davy,"

... Marilla looked volumes of disapproval ... "but you must live up to it and be just as nice and gentlemanly as you look to be."

"And you told Minnie May Barry the other day, when you found her crying 'cause some one said she was ugly, that if she was nice and kind and loving people wouldn't mind her looks," said Davy discontentedly. "Seems to me you can't get out of being good in this world for some reason or 'nother. You just HAVE to behave."

"Don't you want to be good?" asked Marilla, who had learned a great deal but had not yet learned the futility of asking such questions.

"Yes, I want to be good but not TOO good," said Davy cautiously. "You don't have to be very good to be a Sunday School superintendent. Mr. Bell's that, and he's a real bad man."

"Indeed he's not," said Marilla indignantly.

"He is ... he says he is himself," asseverated Davy. "He said it when he prayed in Sunday School last Sunday. He said he was a vile worm and a miserable sinner and guilty of the blackest 'niquity. What did he do that was so bad, Marilla? Did he kill anybody? Or steal the collection cents? I want to know."

Fortunately Mrs. Lynde came driving up the lane at this moment and Marilla made off, feeling that she had escaped from the snare of the fowler, and wishing devoutly that Mr. Bell were not quite so highly figurative in his public petitions, especially in the hearing of small boys who were always "wanting to know."

Anne, left alone in her glory, worked with a will. The floor was swept, the beds made, the hens fed, the muslin dress washed and hung out on the line. Then Anne prepared for the transfer of feathers. She mounted to the garret and donned the first old dress that came to hand ... a navy blue cashmere she had worn at fourteen. It was decidedly on the short side and as "skimpy" as the notable wincey Anne had worn upon the occasion of

her debut at Green Gables; but at least it would not be materially injured by down and feathers. Anne completed her toilet by tying a big red and white spotted handkerchief that had belonged to Matthew over her head, and, thus accoutred, betook herself to the kitchen chamber, whither Marilla, before her departure, had helped her carry the feather bed.

A cracked mirror hung by the chamber window and in an unlucky moment Anne looked into it. There were those seven freckles on her nose, more rampant than ever, or so it seemed in the glare of light from the unshaded window.

“Oh, I forgot to rub that lotion on last night,” she thought. “I’d better run down to the pantry and do it now.”

Anne had already suffered many things trying to remove those freckles. On one occasion the entire skin had peeled off her nose but the freckles remained. A few days previously she had found a recipe for a freckle lotion in a magazine and, as the ingredients were within her reach, she straightway compounded it, much to the disgust of Marilla, who thought that if Providence had placed freckles on your nose it was your bounden duty to leave them there.

Anne scurried down to the pantry, which, always dim from the big willow growing close to the window, was now almost dark by reason of the shade drawn to exclude flies. Anne caught the bottle containing the lotion from the shelf and copiously anointed her nose therewith by means of a little sponge sacred to the purpose. This important duty done, she returned to her work. Any one who has ever shifted feathers from one tick to another will not need to be told that when Anne finished she was a sight to behold. Her dress was white with down and fluff, and her front hair, escaping from under the handkerchief, was adorned with a veritable halo of feathers. At this auspicious moment a knock sounded at the kitchen door.

“That must be Mr. Shearer,” thought Anne. “I’m in a dreadful mess but I’ll have to run down as I am, for he’s always in a hurry.”

Down flew Anne to the kitchen door. If ever a charitable floor did open to swallow up a miserable, befeathered damsel the Green Gables porch

floor should promptly have engulfed Anne at that moment. On the doorstep were standing Priscilla Grant, golden and fair in silk attire, a short, stout gray-haired lady in a tweed suit, and another lady, tall stately, wonderfully gowned, with a beautiful, highbred face and large, black-lashed violet eyes, whom Anne “instinctively felt,” as she would have said in her earlier days, to be Mrs. Charlotte E. Morgan.

In the dismay of the moment one thought stood out from the confusion of Anne’s mind and she grasped at it as at the proverbial straw. All Mrs. Morgan’s heroines were noted for “rising to the occasion.” No matter what their troubles were, they invariably rose to the occasion and showed their superiority over all ills of time, space, and quantity. Anne therefore felt it was HER duty to rise to the occasion and she did it, so perfectly that Priscilla afterward declared she never admired Anne Shirley more than at that moment. No matter what her outraged feelings were she did not show them. She greeted Priscilla and was introduced to her companions as calmly and composedly as if she had been arrayed in purple and fine linen. To be sure, it was somewhat of a shock to find that the lady she had instinctively felt to be Mrs. Morgan was not Mrs. Morgan at all, but an unknown Mrs. Pendexter, while the stout little gray-haired woman was Mrs. Morgan; but in the greater shock the lesser lost its power. Anne ushered her guests to the spare room and thence into the parlor, where she left them while she hastened out to help Priscilla unharness her horse.

“It’s dreadful to come upon you so unexpectedly as this,” apologized Priscilla, “but I did not know till last night that we were coming. Aunt Charlotte is going away Monday and she had promised to spend today with a friend in town. But last night her friend telephoned to her not to come because they were quarantined for scarlet fever. So I suggested we come here instead, for I knew you were longing to see her. We called at the White Sands Hotel and brought Mrs. Pendexter with us. She is a friend of aunt’s and lives in New York and her husband is a millionaire. We can’t stay very long, for Mrs. Pendexter has to be back at the hotel by five o’clock.”

Several times while they were putting away the horse Anne caught Priscilla looking at her in a furtive, puzzled way.

“She needn’t stare at me so,” Anne thought a little resentfully. “If she doesn’t KNOW what it is to change a feather bed she might IMAGINE it.”

When Priscilla had gone to the parlor, and before Anne could escape upstairs, Diana walked into the kitchen. Anne caught her astonished friend by the arm.

“Diana Barry, who do you suppose is in that parlor at this very moment? Mrs. Charlotte E. Morgan ... and a New York millionaire’s wife ... and here I am like THIS ... and NOT A THING IN THE HOUSE FOR DINNER BUT A COLD HAM BONE, Diana!”

By this time Anne had become aware that Diana was staring at her in precisely the same bewildered fashion as Priscilla had done. It was really too much.

“Oh, Diana, don’t look at me so,” she implored. “YOU, at least, must know that the neatest person in the world couldn’t empty feathers from one tick into another and remain neat in the process.”

“It ... it ... isn’t the feathers,” hesitated Diana. “It’s ... it’s ... your nose, Anne.”

“My nose? Oh, Diana, surely nothing has gone wrong with it!”

Anne rushed to the little looking glass over the sink. One glance revealed the fatal truth. Her nose was a brilliant scarlet!

Anne sat down on the sofa, her dauntless spirit subdued at last.

“What is the matter with it?” asked Diana, curiosity overcoming delicacy.

“I thought I was rubbing my freckle lotion on it, but I must have used that red dye Marilla has for marking the pattern on her rugs,” was the despairing response. “What shall I do?”

“Wash it off,” said Diana practically.

“Perhaps it won’t wash off. First I dye my hair; then I dye my nose. Marilla cut my hair off when I dyed it but that remedy would hardly be practicable in this case. Well, this is another punishment for vanity and I suppose I deserve it ... though there’s not much comfort in THAT. It is

really almost enough to make one believe in ill-luck, though Mrs. Lynde says there is no such thing, because everything is foreordained.”

Fortunately the dye washed off easily and Anne, somewhat consoled, betook herself to the east gable while Diana ran home. Presently Anne came down again, clothed and in her right mind. The muslin dress she had fondly hoped to wear was bobbing merrily about on the line outside, so she was forced to content herself with her black lawn. She had the fire on and the tea steeping when Diana returned; the latter wore HER muslin, at least, and carried a covered platter in her hand.

“Mother sent you this,” she said, lifting the cover and displaying a nicely carved and jointed chicken to Anne’s grateful eyes.

The chicken was supplemented by light new bread, excellent butter and cheese, Marilla’s fruit cake and a dish of preserved plums, floating in their golden syrup as in congealed summer sunshine. There was a big bowlful of pink-and-white asters also, by way of decoration; yet the spread seemed very meager beside the elaborate one formerly prepared for Mrs. Morgan.

Anne’s hungry guests, however, did not seem to think anything was lacking and they ate the simple viands with apparent enjoyment. But after the first few moments Anne thought no more of what was or was not on her bill of fare. Mrs. Morgan’s appearance might be somewhat disappointing, as even her loyal worshippers had been forced to admit to each other; but she proved to be a delightful conversationalist. She had traveled extensively and was an excellent storyteller. She had seen much of men and women, and crystalized her experiences into witty little sentences and epigrams which made her hearers feel as if they were listening to one of the people in clever books. But under all her sparkle there was a strongly felt undercurrent of true, womanly sympathy and kindheartedness which won affection as easily as her brilliancy won admiration. Nor did she monopolize the conversation. She could draw others out as skillfully and fully as she could talk herself, and Anne and Diana found themselves chattering freely to her. Mrs. Pendexter said little; she merely smiled with her lovely eyes and lips, and ate chicken and fruit cake and preserves with such exquisite grace that she conveyed the

impression of dining on ambrosia and honeydew. But then, as Anne said to Diana later on, anybody so divinely beautiful as Mrs. Pendexter didn't need to talk; it was enough for her just to LOOK.

After dinner they all had a walk through Lover's Lane and Violet Vale and the Birch Path, then back through the Haunted Wood to the Dryad's Bubble, where they sat down and talked for a delightful last half hour. Mrs. Morgan wanted to know how the Haunted Wood came by its name, and laughed until she cried when she heard the story and Anne's dramatic account of a certain memorable walk through it at the witching hour of twilight.

"It has indeed been a feast of reason and flow of soul, hasn't it?" said Anne, when her guests had gone and she and Diana were alone again. "I don't know which I enjoyed more ... listening to Mrs. Morgan or gazing at Mrs. Pendexter. I believe we had a nicer time than if we'd known they were coming and been cumbered with much serving. You must stay to tea with me, Diana, and we'll talk it all over."

"Priscilla says Mrs. Pendexter's husband's sister is married to an English earl; and yet she took a second helping of the plum preserves," said Diana, as if the two facts were somehow incompatible.

"I daresay even the English earl himself wouldn't have turned up his aristocratic nose at Marilla's plum preserves," said Anne proudly.

Anne did not mention the misfortune which had befallen HER nose when she related the day's history to Marilla that evening. But she took the bottle of freckle lotion and emptied it out of the window.

"I shall never try any beautifying messes again," she said, darkly resolute. "They may do for careful, deliberate people; but for anyone so hopelessly given over to making mistakes as I seem to be it's tempting fate to meddle with them."

XXI. Sweet Miss Lavendar

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School opened and Anne returned to her work, with fewer theories but considerably more experience. She had several new pupils, six-and seven-year-olds just venturing, round-eyed, into a world of wonder. Among them were Davy and Dora. Davy sat with Milty Boulter, who had been going to school for a year and was therefore quite a man of the world. Dora had made a compact at Sunday School the previous Sunday to sit with Lily Sloane; but Lily Sloane not coming the first day, she was temporarily assigned to Mirabel Cotton, who was ten years old and therefore, in Dora's eyes, one of the "big girls."

"I think school is great fun," Davy told Marilla when he got home that night. "You said I'd find it hard to sit still and I did ... you mostly do tell the truth, I notice ... but you can wriggle your legs about under the desk and that helps a lot. It's splendid to have so many boys to play with. I sit with Milty Boulter and he's fine. He's longer than me but I'm wider. It's nicer to sit in the back seats but you can't sit there till your legs grow long enough to touch the floor. Milty drew a picture of Anne on his slate and it was awful ugly and I told him if he made pictures of Anne like that I'd lick him at recess. I thought first I'd draw one of him and put horns and a tail on it, but I was afraid it would hurt his feelings, and Anne says you should never hurt anyone's feelings. It seems it's dreadful to have your feelings hurt. It's better to knock a boy down than hurt his feelings if you **MUST** do something. Milty said he wasn't scared of me but he'd just as soon call it somebody else to 'blige me, so he rubbed out Anne's name and printed Barbara Shaw's under it. Milty doesn't like Barbara 'cause she calls him a sweet little boy and once she patted him on his head."

Dora said primly that she liked school; but she was very quiet, even for her; and when at twilight Marilla bade her go upstairs to bed she hesitated and began to cry.

“I’m ... I’m frightened,” she sobbed. “I ... I don’t want to go upstairs alone in the dark.”

“What notion have you got into your head now?” demanded Marilla. “I’m sure you’ve gone to bed alone all summer and never been frightened before.”

Dora still continued to cry, so Anne picked her up, cuddled her sympathetically, and whispered,

“Tell Anne all about it, sweetheart. What are you frightened of?”

“Of ... of Mirabel Cotton’s uncle,” sobbed Dora. “Mirabel Cotton told me all about her family today in school. Nearly everybody in her family has died ... all her grandfathers and grandmothers and ever so many uncles and aunts. They have a habit of dying, Mirabel says. Mirabel’s awful proud of having so many dead relations, and she told me what they all died of, and what they said, and how they looked in their coffins. And Mirabel says one of her uncles was seen walking around the house after he was buried. Her mother saw him. I don’t mind the rest so much but I can’t help thinking about that uncle.”

Anne went upstairs with Dora and sat by her until she fell asleep. The next day Mirabel Cotton was kept in at recess and “gently but firmly” given to understand that when you were so unfortunate as to possess an uncle who persisted in walking about houses after he had been decently interred it was not in good taste to talk about that eccentric gentleman to your deskmate of tender years. Mirabel thought this very harsh. The Cottons had not much to boast of. How was she to keep up her prestige among her schoolmates if she were forbidden to make capital out of the family ghost?

September slipped by into a gold and crimson graciousness of October. One Friday evening Diana came over.

“I’d a letter from Ella Kimball today, Anne, and she wants us to go over to tea tomorrow afternoon to meet her cousin, Irene Trent, from town. But we can’t get one of our horses to go, for they’ll all be in use tomorrow, and your pony is lame ... so I suppose we can’t go.”

“Why can’t we walk?” suggested Anne. “If we go straight back through the woods we’ll strike the West Grafton road not far from the Kimball place. I was through that way last winter and I know the road. It’s no more than four miles and we won’t have to walk home, for Oliver Kimball will be sure to drive us. He’ll be only too glad of the excuse, for he goes to see Carrie Sloane and they say his father will hardly ever let him have a horse.”

It was accordingly arranged that they should walk, and the following afternoon they set out, going by way of Lover’s Lane to the back of the Cuthbert farm, where they found a road leading into the heart of acres of glimmering beech and maple woods, which were all in a wondrous glow of flame and gold, lying in a great purple stillness and peace.

“It’s as if the year were kneeling to pray in a vast cathedral full of mellow stained light, isn’t it?” said Anne dreamily. “It doesn’t seem right to hurry through it, does it? It seems irreverent, like running in a church.”

“We MUST hurry though,” said Diana, glancing at her watch. “We’ve left ourselves little enough time as it is.”

“Well, I’ll walk fast but don’t ask me to talk,” said Anne, quickening her pace. “I just want to drink the day’s loveliness in ... I feel as if she were holding it out to my lips like a cup of airy wine and I’ll take a sip at every step.”

Perhaps it was because she was so absorbed in “drinking it in” that Anne took the left turning when they came to a fork in the road. She should have taken the right, but ever afterward she counted it the most fortunate mistake of her life. They came out finally to a lonely, grassy road, with nothing in sight along it but ranks of spruce saplings.

“Why, where are we?” exclaimed Diana in bewilderment. “This isn’t the West Grafton road.”

“No, it’s the base line road in Middle Grafton,” said Anne, rather shamefacedly. “I must have taken the wrong turning at the fork. I don’t know where we are exactly, but we must be all of three miles from Kimballs’ still.”

“Then we can’t get there by five, for it’s half past four now,” said Diana, with a despairing look at her watch. “We’ll arrive after they have had their tea, and they’ll have all the bother of getting ours over again.”

“We’d better turn back and go home,” suggested Anne humbly. But Diana, after consideration, vetoed this.

“No, we may as well go and spend the evening, since we have come this far.”

A few yards further on the girls came to a place where the road forked again.

“Which of these do we take?” asked Diana dubiously.

Anne shook her head.

“I don’t know and we can’t afford to make any more mistakes. Here is a gate and a lane leading right into the wood. There must be a house at the other side. Let us go down and inquire.”

“What a romantic old lane this it,” said Diana, as they walked along its twists and turns. It ran under patriarchal old firs whose branches met above, creating a perpetual gloom in which nothing except moss could grow. On either hand were brown wood floors, crossed here and there by fallen lances of sunlight. All was very still and remote, as if the world and the cares of the world were far away.

“I feel as if we were walking through an enchanted forest,” said Anne in a hushed tone. “Do you suppose we’ll ever find our way back to the real world again, Diana? We shall presently come to a palace with a spellbound princess in it, I think.”

Around the next turn they came in sight, not indeed of a palace, but of a little house almost as surprising as a palace would have been in this province of conventional wooden farmhouses, all as much alike in general characteristics as if they had grown from the same seed. Anne stopped short in rapture and Diana exclaimed, “Oh, I know where we are now. That is the little stone house where Miss Lavendar Lewis lives ... Echo Lodge, she calls it, I think. I’ve often heard of it but I’ve never seen it before. Isn’t it a romantic spot?”

“It’s the sweetest, prettiest place I ever saw or imagined,” said Anne delightedly. “It looks like a bit out of a story book or a dream.”

The house was a low-eaved structure built of undressed blocks of red Island sandstone, with a little peaked roof out of which peered two dormer windows, with quaint wooden hoods over them, and two great chimneys. The whole house was covered with a luxuriant growth of ivy, finding easy foothold on the rough stonework and turned by autumn frosts to most beautiful bronze and wine-red tints.

Before the house was an oblong garden into which the lane gate where the girls were standing opened. The house bounded it on one side; on the three others it was enclosed by an old stone dyke, so overgrown with moss and grass and ferns that it looked like a high, green bank. On the right and left the tall, dark spruces spread their palm-like branches over it; but below it was a little meadow, green with clover aftermath, sloping down to the blue loop of the Grafton River. No other house or clearing was in sight ... nothing but hills and valleys covered with feathery young firs.

“I wonder what sort of a person Miss Lewis is,” speculated Diana as they opened the gate into the garden. “They say she is very peculiar.”

“She’ll be interesting then,” said Anne decidedly. “Peculiar people are always that at least, whatever else they are or are not. Didn’t I tell you we would come to an enchanted palace? I knew the elves hadn’t woven magic over that lane for nothing.”

“But Miss Lavendar Lewis is hardly a spellbound princess,” laughed Diana. “She’s an old maid ... she’s forty-five and quite gray, I’ve heard.”

“Oh, that’s only part of the spell,” asserted Anne confidently. “At heart she’s young and beautiful still ... and if we only knew how to unloose the spell she would step forth radiant and fair again. But we don’t know how ... it’s always and only the prince who knows that ... and Miss Lavendar’s prince hasn’t come yet. Perhaps some fatal mischance has befallen him ... though THAT’S against the law of all fairy tales.”

“I’m afraid he came long ago and went away again,” said Diana. “They say she used to be engaged to Stephan Irving ... Paul’s father ... when they were young. But they quarreled and parted.”

“Hush,” warned Anne. “The door is open.”

The girls paused in the porch under the tendrils of ivy and knocked at the open door. There was a patter of steps inside and a rather odd little personage presented herself ... a girl of about fourteen, with a freckled face, a snub nose, a mouth so wide that it did really seem as if it stretched “from ear to ear,” and two long braids of fair hair tied with two enormous bows of blue ribbon.

“Is Miss Lewis at home?” asked Diana.

“Yes, ma’am. Come in, ma’am. I’ll tell Miss Lavendar you’re here, ma’am. She’s upstairs, ma’am.”

With this the small handmaiden whisked out of sight and the girls, left alone, looked about them with delighted eyes. The interior of this wonderful little house was quite as interesting as its exterior.

The room had a low ceiling and two square, small-paned windows, curtained with muslin frills. All the furnishings were old-fashioned, but so well and daintily kept that the effect was delicious. But it must be candidly admitted that the most attractive feature, to two healthy girls who had just tramped four miles through autumn air, was a table, set out with pale blue china and laden with delicacies, while little golden-hued ferns scattered over the cloth gave it what Anne would have termed “a festal air.”

“Miss Lavendar must be expecting company to tea,” she whispered. “There are six places set. But what a funny little girl she has. She looked like a messenger from pixy land. I suppose she could have told us the road, but I was curious to see Miss Lavendar. S ... s ... sh, she’s coming.”

And with that Miss Lavendar Lewis was standing in the doorway. The girls were so surprised that they forgot good manners and simply stared. They had unconsciously been expecting to see the usual type of elderly spinster as known to their experience ... a rather angular personage, with prim gray hair and spectacles. Nothing more unlike Miss Lavendar could possibly be imagined.

She was a little lady with snow-white hair beautifully wavy and thick, and carefully arranged in becoming puffs and coils. Beneath it was an almost girlish face, pink cheeked and sweet lipped, with big soft brown

eyes and dimples ... actually dimples. She wore a very dainty gown of cream muslin with pale-hued roses on it ... a gown which would have seemed ridiculously juvenile on most women of her age, but which suited Miss Lavendar so perfectly that you never thought about it at all.

“Charlotta the Fourth says that you wished to see me,” she said, in a voice that matched her appearance.

“We wanted to ask the right road to West Grafton,” said Diana. “We are invited to tea at Mr. Kimball’s, but we took the wrong path coming through the woods and came out to the base line instead of the West Grafton road. Do we take the right or left turning at your gate?”

“The left,” said Miss Lavendar, with a hesitating glance at her tea table. Then she exclaimed, as if in a sudden little burst of resolution,

“But oh, won’t you stay and have tea with me? Please, do. Mr. Kimball’s will have tea over before you get there. And Charlotta the Fourth and I will be so glad to have you.”

Diana looked mute inquiry at Anne.

“We’d like to stay,” said Anne promptly, for she had made up her mind that she wanted to know more of this surprising Miss Lavendar, “if it won’t inconvenience you. But you are expecting other guests, aren’t you?”

Miss Lavendar looked at her tea table again, and blushed.

“I know you’ll think me dreadfully foolish,” she said. “I AM foolish ... and I’m ashamed of it when I’m found out, but never unless I AM found out. I’m not expecting anybody ... I was just pretending I was. You see, I was so lonely. I love company ... that is, the right kind of company...but so few people ever come here because it is so far out of the way. Charlotta the Fourth was lonely too. So I just pretended I was going to have a tea party. I cooked for it ... and decorated the table for it... and set it with my mother’s wedding china ... and I dressed up for it.” Diana secretly thought Miss Lavendar quite as peculiar as report had pictured her. The idea of a woman of forty-five playing at having a tea party, just as if she were a little girl! But Anne of the shining eyes exclaimed joyfully, “Oh, do YOU imagine things too?”

That “too” revealed a kindred spirit to Miss Lavendar.

“Yes, I do,” she confessed, boldly. “Of course it’s silly in anybody as old as I am. But what is the use of being an independent old maid if you can’t be silly when you want to, and when it doesn’t hurt anybody? A person must have some compensations. I don’t believe I could live at times if I didn’t pretend things. I’m not often caught at it though, and Charlotta the Fourth never tells. But I’m glad to be caught today, for you have really come and I have tea all ready for you. Will you go up to the spare room and take off your hats? It’s the white door at the head of the stairs. I must run out to the kitchen and see that Charlotta the Fourth isn’t letting the tea boil. Charlotta the Fourth is a very good girl but she WILL let the tea boil.”

Miss Lavendar tripped off to the kitchen on hospitable thoughts intent and the girls found their way up to the spare room, an apartment as white as its door, lighted by the ivy-hung dormer window and looking, as Anne said, like the place where happy dreams grew.

“This is quite an adventure, isn’t it?” said Diana. “And isn’t Miss Lavendar sweet, if she IS a little odd? She doesn’t look a bit like an old maid.”

“She looks just as music sounds, I think,” answered Anne.

When they went down Miss Lavendar was carrying in the teapot, and behind her, looking vastly pleased, was Charlotta the Fourth, with a plate of hot biscuits.

“Now, you must tell me your names,” said Miss Lavendar. “I’m so glad you are young girls. I love young girls. It’s so easy to pretend I’m a girl myself when I’m with them. I do hate” ... with a little grimace ... “to believe I’m old. Now, who are you ... just for convenience’ sake? Diana Barry? And Anne Shirley? May I pretend that I’ve known you for a hundred years and call you Anne and Diana right away?”

“You, may” the girls said both together.

“Then just let’s sit comfily down and eat everything,” said Miss Lavendar happily. “Charlotta, you sit at the foot and help with the chicken. It is so fortunate that I made the sponge cake and doughnuts. Of course, it was foolish to do it for imaginary guests ... I know Charlotta the Fourth

thought so, didn't you, Charlotta? But you see how well it has turned out. Of course they wouldn't have been wasted, for Charlotta the Fourth and I could have eaten them through time. But sponge cake is not a thing that improves with time."

That was a merry and memorable meal; and when it was over they all went out to the garden, lying in the glamor of sunset.

"I do think you have the loveliest place here," said Diana, looking round her admiringly.

"Why do you call it Echo Lodge?" asked Anne.

"Charlotta," said Miss Lavendar, "go into the house and bring out the little tin horn that is hanging over the clock shelf."

Charlotta the Fourth skipped off and returned with the horn.

"Blow it, Charlotta," commanded Miss Lavendar.

Charlotta accordingly blew, a rather raucous, strident blast. There was moment's stillness ... and then from the woods over the river came a multitude of fairy echoes, sweet, elusive, silvery, as if all the "horns of elfland" were blowing against the sunset. Anne and Diana exclaimed in delight.

"Now laugh, Charlotta ... laugh loudly."

Charlotta, who would probably have obeyed if Miss Lavendar had told her to stand on her head, climbed upon the stone bench and laughed loud and heartily. Back came the echoes, as if a host of pixy people were mimicking her laughter in the purple woodlands and along the fir-fringed points.

"People always admire my echoes very much," said Miss Lavendar, as if the echoes were her personal property. "I love them myself. They are very good company ... with a little pretending. On calm evenings Charlotta the Fourth and I often sit out here and amuse ourselves with them. Charlotta, take back the horn and hang it carefully in its place."

"Why do you call her Charlotta the Fourth?" asked Diana, who was bursting with curiosity on this point.

"Just to keep her from getting mixed up with other Charlottas in my thoughts," said Miss Lavendar seriously. "They all look so much alike

there's no telling them apart. Her name isn't really Charlotta at all. It is ... let me see ... what is it? I THINK it's Leonora ... yes, it IS Leonora. You see, it is this way. When mother died ten years ago I couldn't stay here alone ... and I couldn't afford to pay the wages of a grownup girl. So I got little Charlotta Bowman to come and stay with me for board and clothes. Her name really was Charlotta ... she was Charlotta the First. She was just thirteen. She stayed with me till she was sixteen and then she went away to Boston, because she could do better there. Her sister came to stay with me then. Her name was Julietta ... Mrs. Bowman had a weakness for fancy names I think ... but she looked so like Charlotta that I kept calling her that all the time ...and she didn't mind. So I just gave up trying to remember her right name. She was Charlotta the Second, and when she went away Evelina came and she was Charlotta the Third. Now I have Charlotta the Fourth; but when she is sixteen ... she's fourteen now ... she will want to go to Boston too, and what I shall do then I really do not know. Charlotta the Fourth is the last of the Bowman girls, and the best. The other Charlottas always let me see that they thought it silly of me to pretend things but Charlotta the Fourth never does, no matter what she may really think. I don't care what people think about me if they don't let me see it."

"Well," said Diana looking regretfully at the setting sun. "I suppose we must go if we want to get to Mr. Kimball's before dark. We've had a lovely time, Miss Lewis."

"Won't you come again to see me?" pleaded Miss Lavendar.

Tall Anne put her arm about the little lady.

"Indeed we shall," she promised. "Now that we have discovered you we'll wear out our welcome coming to see you. Yes, we must go ... 'we must tear ourselves away,' as Paul Irving says every time he comes to Green Gables."

"Paul Irving?" There was a subtle change in Miss Lavendar's voice. "Who is he? I didn't think there was anybody of that name in Avonlea."

Anne felt vexed at her own heedlessness. She had forgotten about Miss Lavendar's old romance when Paul's name slipped out.

“He is a little pupil of mine,” she explained slowly. “He came from Boston last year to live with his grandmother, Mrs. Irving of the shore road.”

“Is he Stephen Irving’s son?” Miss Lavendar asked, bending over her namesake border so that her face was hidden.

“Yes.”

“I’m going to give you girls a bunch of lavender apiece,” said Miss Lavendar brightly, as if she had not heard the answer to her question. “It’s very sweet, don’t you think? Mother always loved it. She planted these borders long ago. Father named me Lavendar because he was so fond of it. The very first time he saw mother was when he visited her home in East Grafton with her brother. He fell in love with her at first sight; and they put him in the spare room bed to sleep and the sheets were scented with lavender and he lay awake all night and thought of her. He always loved the scent of lavender after that ... and that was why he gave me the name. Don’t forget to come back soon, girls dear. We’ll be looking for you, Charlotta the Fourth and I.”

She opened the gate under the firs for them to pass through. She looked suddenly old and tired; the glow and radiance had faded from her face; her parting smile was as sweet with ineradicable youth as ever, but when the girls looked back from the first curve in the lane they saw her sitting on the old stone bench under the silver poplar in the middle of the garden with her head leaning wearily on her hand.

“She does look lonely,” said Diana softly. “We must come often to see her.”

“I think her parents gave her the only right and fitting name that could possibly be given her,” said Anne. “If they had been so blind as to name her Elizabeth or Nellie or Muriel she must have been called Lavendar just the same, I think. It’s so suggestive of sweetness and old-fashioned graces and ‘silk attire.’ Now, my name just smacks of bread and butter, patchwork and chores.”

“Oh, I don’t think so,” said Diana. “Anne seems to me real stately and like a queen. But I’d like Kerrenhappuch if it happened to be your name. I

think people make their names nice or ugly just by what they are themselves. I can't bear Josie or Gertie for names now but before I knew the Pye girls I thought them real pretty."

"That's a lovely idea, Diana," said Anne enthusiastically. "Living so that you beautify your name, even if it wasn't beautiful to begin with ... making it stand in people's thoughts for something so lovely and pleasant that they never think of it by itself. Thank you, Diana."

XXII. Odds and Ends

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“So you had tea at the stone house with Lavendar Lewis?” said Marilla at the breakfast table next morning. “What is she like now? It’s over fifteen years since I saw her last ... it was one Sunday in Grafton church. I suppose she has changed a great deal. Davy Keith, when you want something you can’t reach, ask to have it passed and don’t spread yourself over the table in that fashion. Did you ever see Paul Irving doing that when he was here to meals?”

“But Paul’s arms are longer’n mine,” brumbled Davy. “They’ve had eleven years to grow and mine’ve only had seven. ‘Sides, I DID ask, but you and Anne was so busy talking you didn’t pay any ‘tention. ‘Sides, Paul’s never been here to any meal escept tea, and it’s easier to be p’lite at tea than at breakfast. You ain’t half as hungry. It’s an awful long while between supper and breakfast. Now, Anne, that spoonful ain’t any bigger than it was last year and I’M ever so much bigger.”

“Of course, I don’t know what Miss Lavendar used to look like but I don’t fancy somehow that she has changed a great deal,” said Anne, after she had helped Davy to maple syrup, giving him two spoonfuls to pacify him. “Her hair is snow-white but her face is fresh and almost girlish, and she has the sweetest brown eyes ... such a pretty shade of woodbrown with little golden glints in them ... and her voice makes you think of white satin and tinkling water and fairy bells all mixed up together.”

“She was reckoned a great beauty when she was a girl,” said Marilla. “I never knew her very well but I liked her as far as I did know her. Some folks thought her peculiar even then. DAVY, if ever I catch you at such a trick again you’ll be made to wait for your meals till everyone else is done, like the French.”

Most conversations between Anne and Marilla in the presence of the twins, were punctuated by these rebukes Davy-ward. In this instance,

Davy, sad to relate, not being able to scoop up the last drops of his syrup with his spoon, had solved the difficulty by lifting his plate in both hands and applying his small pink tongue to it. Anne looked at him with such horrified eyes that the little sinner turned red and said, half shamefacedly, half defiantly,

“There ain’t any wasted that way.”

“People who are different from other people are always called peculiar,” said Anne. “And Miss Lavendar is certainly different, though it’s hard to say just where the difference comes in. Perhaps it is because she is one of those people who never grow old.”

“One might as well grow old when all your generation do,” said Marilla, rather reckless of her pronouns. “If you don’t, you don’t fit in anywhere. Far as I can learn Lavendar Lewis has just dropped out of everything. She’s lived in that out of the way place until everybody has forgotten her. That stone house is one of the oldest on the Island. Old Mr. Lewis built it eighty years ago when he came out from England. Davy, stop joggling Dora’s elbow. Oh, I saw you! You needn’t try to look innocent. What does make you behave so this morning?”

“Maybe I got out of the wrong side of the bed,” suggested Davy. “Milty Boulter says if you do that things are bound to go wrong with you all day. His grandmother told him. But which is the right side? And what are you to do when your bed’s against the wall? I want to know.”

“I’ve always wondered what went wrong between Stephen Irving and Lavendar Lewis,” continued Marilla, ignoring Davy. “They were certainly engaged twenty-five years ago and then all at once it was broken off. I don’t know what the trouble was but it must have been something terrible, for he went away to the States and never come home since.”

“Perhaps it was nothing very dreadful after all. I think the little things in life often make more trouble than the big things,” said Anne, with one of those flashes of insight which experience could not have bettered. “Marilla, please don’t say anything about my being at Miss Lavendar’s to Mrs. Lynde. She’d be sure to ask a hundred questions and somehow I wouldn’t like it ... nor Miss Lavendar either if she knew, I feel sure.”

“I daresay Rachel would be curious,” admitted Marilla, “though she hasn’t as much time as she used to have for looking after other people’s affairs. She’s tied home now on account of Thomas; and she’s feeling pretty downhearted, for I think she’s beginning to lose hope of his ever getting better. Rachel will be left pretty lonely if anything happens to him, with all her children settled out west, except Eliza in town; and she doesn’t like her husband.”

Marilla’s pronouns slandered Eliza, who was very fond of her husband.

“Rachel says if he’d only brace up and exert his will power he’d get better. But what is the use of asking a jellyfish to sit up straight?” continued Marilla. “Thomas Lynde never had any will power to exert. His mother ruled him till he married and then Rachel carried it on. It’s a wonder he dared to get sick without asking her permission. But there, I shouldn’t talk so. Rachel has been a good wife to him. He’d never have amounted to anything without her, that’s certain. He was born to be ruled; and it’s well he fell into the hands of a clever, capable manager like Rachel. He didn’t mind her way. It saved him the bother of ever making up his own mind about anything. Davy, do stop squirming like an eel.”

“I’ve nothing else to do,” protested Davy. “I can’t eat any more, and it’s no fun watching you and Anne eat.”

“Well, you and Dora go out and give the hens their wheat,” said Marilla. “And don’t you try to pull any more feathers out of the white rooster’s tail either.”

“I wanted some feathers for an Injun headdress,” said Davy sulkily. “Milty Boulter has a dandy one, made out of the feathers his mother give him when she killed their old white gobbler. You might let me have some. That rooster’s got ever so many more’n he wants.”

“You may have the old feather duster in the garret,” said Anne, “and I’ll dye them green and red and yellow for you.”

“You do spoil that boy dreadfully,” said Marilla, when Davy, with a radiant face, had followed prim Dora out. Marilla’s education had made great strides in the past six years; but she had not yet been able to rid

herself of the idea that it was very bad for a child to have too many of its wishes indulged.

“All the boys of his class have Indian headdresses, and Davy wants one too,” said Anne. “*I* know how it feels ... I’ll never forget how I used to long for puffed sleeves when all the other girls had them. And Davy isn’t being spoiled. He is improving every day. Think what a difference there is in him since he came here a year ago.”

“He certainly doesn’t get into as much mischief since he began to go to school,” acknowledged Marilla. “I suppose he works off the tendency with the other boys. But it’s a wonder to me we haven’t heard from Richard Keith before this. Never a word since last May.”

“I’ll be afraid to hear from him,” sighed Anne, beginning to clear away the dishes. “If a letter should come I’d dread opening it, for fear it would tell us to send the twins to him.”

A month later a letter did come. But it was not from Richard Keith. A friend of his wrote to say that Richard Keith had died of consumption a fortnight previously. The writer of the letter was the executor of his will and by that will the sum of two thousand dollars was left to Miss Marilla Cuthbert in trust for David and Dora Keith until they came of age or married. In the meantime the interest was to be used for their maintenance.

“It seems dreadful to be glad of anything in connection with a death,” said Anne soberly. “I’m sorry for poor Mr. Keith; but I AM glad that we can keep the twins.”

“It’s a very good thing about the money,” said Marilla practically. “I wanted to keep them but I really didn’t see how I could afford to do it, especially when they grew older. The rent of the farm doesn’t do any more than keep the house and I was bound that not a cent of your money should be spent on them. You do far too much for them as it is. Dora didn’t need that new hat you bought her any more than a cat needs two tails. But now the way is made clear and they are provided for.”

Davy and Dora were delighted when they heard that they were to live at Green Gables, “for good.” The death of an uncle whom they had never

seen could not weigh a moment in the balance against that. But Dora had one misgiving.

“Was Uncle Richard buried?” she whispered to Anne.

“Yes, dear, of course.”

“He ... he ... isn’t like Mirabel Cotton’s uncle, is he?” in a still more agitated whisper. “He won’t walk about houses after being buried, will he, Anne?”

XXIII. Miss Lavendar's Romance

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"I think I'll take a walk through to Echo Lodge this evening," said Anne, one Friday afternoon in December.

"It looks like snow," said Marilla dubiously.

"I'll be there before the snow comes and I mean to stay all night. Diana can't go because she has company, and I'm sure Miss Lavendar will be looking for me tonight. It's a whole fortnight since I was there."

Anne had paid many a visit to Echo Lodge since that October day. Sometimes she and Diana drove around by the road; sometimes they walked through the woods. When Diana could not go Anne went alone. Between her and Miss Lavendar had sprung up one of those fervent, helpful friendships possible only between a woman who has kept the freshness of youth in her heart and soul, and a girl whose imagination and intuition supplied the place of experience. Anne had at last discovered a real "kindred spirit," while into the little lady's lonely, sequestered life of dreams Anne and Diana came with the wholesome joy and exhilaration of the outer existence, which Miss Lavendar, "the world forgetting, by the world forgot," had long ceased to share; they brought an atmosphere of youth and reality to the little stone house. Charlotta the Fourth always greeted them with her very widest smile ... and Charlotta's smiles WERE fearfully wide ... loving them for the sake of her adored mistress as well as for their own. Never had there been such "high jinks" held in the little stone house as were held there that beautiful, late-lingering autumn, when November seemed October over again, and even December aped the sunshine and hazes of summer.

But on this particular day it seemed as if December had remembered that it was time for winter and had turned suddenly dull and brooding, with a windless hush predictive of coming snow. Nevertheless, Anne keenly enjoyed her walk through the great gray maze of the beechlands; though

alone she never found it lonely; her imagination peopled her path with merry companions, and with these she carried on a gay, pretended conversation that was wittier and more fascinating than conversations are apt to be in real life, where people sometimes fail most lamentably to talk up to the requirements. In a “make believe” assembly of choice spirits everybody says just the thing you want her to say and so gives you the chance to say just what YOU want to say. Attended by this invisible company, Anne traversed the woods and arrived at the fir lane just as broad, feathery flakes began to flutter down softly.

At the first bend she came upon Miss Lavendar, standing under a big, broad-branching fir. She wore a gown of warm, rich red, and her head and shoulders were wrapped in a silvery gray silk shawl.

“You look like the queen of the fir wood fairies,” called Anne merrily.

“I thought you would come tonight, Anne,” said Miss Lavendar, running forward. “And I’m doubly glad, for Charlotta the Fourth is away. Her mother is sick and she had to go home for the night. I should have been very lonely if you hadn’t come ... even the dreams and the echoes wouldn’t have been enough company. Oh, Anne, how pretty you are,” she added suddenly, looking up at the tall, slim girl with the soft rose-flush of walking on her face. “How pretty and how young! It’s so delightful to be seventeen, isn’t it? I do envy you,” concluded Miss Lavendar candidly.

“But you are only seventeen at heart,” smiled Anne.

“No, I’m old ... or rather middle-aged, which is far worse,” sighed Miss Lavendar. “Sometimes I can pretend I’m not, but at other times I realize it. And I can’t reconcile myself to it as most women seem to. I’m just as rebellious as I was when I discovered my first gray hair. Now, Anne, don’t look as if you were trying to understand. Seventeen CAN’T understand. I’m going to pretend right away that I am seventeen too, and I can do it, now that you’re here. You always bring youth in your hand like a gift. We’re going to have a jolly evening. Tea first ... what do you want for tea? We’ll have whatever you like. Do think of something nice and indigestible.”

There were sounds of riot and mirth in the little stone house that night. What with cooking and feasting and making candy and laughing and “pretending,” it is quite true that Miss Lavendar and Anne comported themselves in a fashion entirely unsuited to the dignity of a spinster of forty-five and a sedate schoolma’am. Then, when they were tired, they sat down on the rug before the grate in the parlor, lighted only by the soft fireshine and perfumed deliciously by Miss Lavendar’s open rose-jar on the mantel. The wind had risen and was sighing and wailing around the eaves and the snow was thudding softly against the windows, as if a hundred storm sprites were tapping for entrance.

“I’m so glad you’re here, Anne,” said Miss Lavendar, nibbling at her candy. “If you weren’t I should be blue ... very blue ... almost navy blue. Dreams and make-believes are all very well in the daytime and the sunshine, but when dark and storm come they fail to satisfy. One wants real things then. But you don’t know this ... seventeen never knows it. At seventeen dreams DO satisfy because you think the realities are waiting for you further on. When I was seventeen, Anne, I didn’t think forty-five would find me a white-haired little old maid with nothing but dreams to fill my life.”

“But you aren’t an old maid,” said Anne, smiling into Miss Lavendar’s wistful woodbrown eyes. “Old maids are BORN ... they don’t BECOME.”

“Some are born old maids, some achieve old maidenhood, and some have old maidenhood thrust upon them,” parodied Miss Lavendar whimsically.

“You are one of those who have achieved it then,” laughed Anne, “and you’ve done it so beautifully that if every old maid were like you they would come into the fashion, I think.”

“I always like to do things as well as possible,” said Miss Lavendar meditatively, “and since an old maid I had to be I was determined to be a very nice one. People say I’m odd; but it’s just because I follow my own way of being an old maid and refuse to copy the traditional pattern. Anne, did anyone ever tell you anything about Stephen Irving and me?”

“Yes,” said Anne candidly, “I’ve heard that you and he were engaged once.”

“So we were ... twenty-five years ago ... a lifetime ago. And we were to have been married the next spring. I had my wedding dress made, although nobody but mother and Stephen ever knew THAT. We’d been engaged in a way almost all our lives, you might say. When Stephen was a little boy his mother would bring him here when she came to see my mother; and the second time he ever came ... he was nine and I was six ... he told me out in the garden that he had pretty well made up his mind to marry me when he grew up. I remember that I said ‘Thank you’; and when he was gone I told mother very gravely that there was a great weight off my mind, because I wasn’t frightened any more about having to be an old maid. How poor mother laughed!”

“And what went wrong?” asked Anne breathlessly.

“We had just a stupid, silly, commonplace quarrel. So commonplace that, if you’ll believe me, I don’t even remember just how it began. I hardly know who was the more to blame for it. Stephen did really begin it, but I suppose I provoked him by some foolishness of mine. He had a rival or two, you see. I was vain and coquettish and liked to tease him a little. He was a very highstrung, sensitive fellow. Well, we parted in a temper on both sides. But I thought it would all come right; and it would have if Stephen hadn’t come back too soon. Anne, my dear, I’m sorry to say” ... Miss Lavendar dropped her voice as if she were about to confess a predilection for murdering people, “that I am a dreadfully sulky person. Oh, you needn’t smile, ... it’s only too true. I DO sulk; and Stephen came back before I had finished sulking. I wouldn’t listen to him and I wouldn’t forgive him; and so he went away for good. He was too proud to come again. And then I sulked because he didn’t come. I might have sent for him perhaps, but I couldn’t humble myself to do that. I was just as proud as he was ... pride and sulkiness make a very bad combination, Anne. But I could never care for anybody else and I didn’t want to. I knew I would rather be an old maid for a thousand years than marry anybody who wasn’t Stephen Irving. Well, it all seems like a dream now, of course. How

sympathetic you look, Anne ... as sympathetic as only seventeen can look. But don't overdo it. I'm really a very happy, contented little person in spite of my broken heart. My heart did break, if ever a heart did, when I realized that Stephen Irving was not coming back. But, Anne, a broken heart in real life isn't half as dreadful as it is in books. It's a good deal like a bad tooth ... though you won't think THAT a very romantic simile. It takes spells of aching and gives you a sleepless night now and then, but between times it lets you enjoy life and dreams and echoes and peanut candy as if there were nothing the matter with it. And now you're looking disappointed. You don't think I'm half as interesting a person as you did five minutes ago when you believed I was always the prey of a tragic memory bravely hidden beneath external smiles. That's the worst ... or the best ... of real life, Anne. It WON'T let you be miserable. It keeps on trying to make you comfortable ... and succeeding...even when you're determined to be unhappy and romantic. Isn't this candy scrumptious? I've eaten far more than is good for me already but I'm going to keep recklessly on."

After a little silence Miss Lavendar said abruptly,

"It gave me a shock to hear about Stephen's son that first day you were here, Anne. I've never been able to mention him to you since, but I've wanted to know all about him. What sort of a boy is he?"

"He is the dearest, sweetest child I ever knew, Miss Lavendar ... and he pretends things too, just as you and I do."

"I'd like to see him," said Miss Lavendar softly, as if talking to herself. "I wonder if he looks anything like the little dream-boy who lives here with me ... MY little dream-boy."

"If you would like to see Paul I'll bring him through with me sometime," said Anne.

"I would like it ... but not too soon. I want to get used to the thought. There might be more pain than pleasure in it ... if he looked too much like Stephen ... or if he didn't look enough like him. In a month's time you may bring him."

Accordingly, a month later Anne and Paul walked through the woods to the stone house, and met Miss Lavendar in the lane. She had not been expecting them just then and she turned very pale.

“So this is Stephen’s boy,” she said in a low tone, taking Paul’s hand and looking at him as he stood, beautiful and boyish, in his smart little fur coat and cap. “He ... he is very like his father.”

“Everybody says I’m a chip off the old block,” remarked Paul, quite at his ease.

Anne, who had been watching the little scene, drew a relieved breath. She saw that Miss Lavendar and Paul had “taken” to each other, and that there would be no constraint or stiffness. Miss Lavendar was a very sensible person, in spite of her dreams and romance, and after that first little betrayal she tucked her feelings out of sight and entertained Paul as brightly and naturally as if he were anybody’s son who had come to see her. They all had a jolly afternoon together and such a feast of fat things by way of supper as would have made old Mrs. Irving hold up her hands in horror, believing that Paul’s digestion would be ruined for ever.

“Come again, laddie,” said Miss Lavendar, shaking hands with him at parting.

“You may kiss me if you like,” said Paul gravely.

Miss Lavendar stooped and kissed him.

“How did you know I wanted to?” she whispered.

“Because you looked at me just as my little mother used to do when she wanted to kiss me. As a rule, I don’t like to be kissed. Boys don’t. You know, Miss Lewis. But I think I rather like to have you kiss me. And of course I’ll come to see you again. I think I’d like to have you for a particular friend of mine, if you don’t object.”

“I ... I don’t think I shall object,” said Miss Lavendar. She turned and went in very quickly; but a moment later she was waving a gay and smiling goodbye to them from the window.

“I like Miss Lavendar,” announced Paul, as they walked through the beech woods. “I like the way she looked at me, and I like her stone house, and I like Charlotta the Fourth. I wish Grandma Irving had a Charlotta the

Fourth instead of a Mary Joe. I feel sure Charlotta the Fourth wouldn't think I was wrong in my upper story when I told her what I think about things. Wasn't that a splendid tea we had, teacher? Grandma says a boy shouldn't be thinking about what he gets to eat, but he can't help it sometimes when he is real hungry. YOU know, teacher. I don't think Miss Lavendar would make a boy eat porridge for breakfast if he didn't like it. She'd get things for him he did like. But of course" ... Paul was nothing if not fair-minded ... "that mightn't be very good for him. It's very nice for a change though, teacher. YOU know."

XXIV. A Prophet in His Own Country

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One May day Avonlea folks were mildly excited over some “Avonlea Notes,” signed “Observer,” which appeared in the Charlottetown ‘Daily Enterprise.’ Gossip ascribed the authorship thereof to Charlie Sloane, partly because the said Charlie had indulged in similar literary flights in times past, and partly because one of the notes seemed to embody a sneer at Gilbert Blythe. Avonlea juvenile society persisted in regarding Gilbert Blythe and Charlie Sloane as rivals in the good graces of a certain damsel with gray eyes and an imagination.

Gossip, as usual, was wrong. Gilbert Blythe, aided and abetted by Anne, had written the notes, putting in the one about himself as a blind. Only two of the notes have any bearing on this history:

“Rumor has it that there will be a wedding in our village ere the daisies are in bloom. A new and highly respected citizen will lead to the hymeneal altar one of our most popular ladies.

“Uncle Abe, our well-known weather prophet, predicts a violent storm of thunder and lightning for the evening of the twenty-third of May, beginning at seven o’clock sharp. The area of the storm will extend over the greater part of the Province. People traveling that evening will do well to take umbrellas and mackintoshes with them.”

“Uncle Abe really has predicted a storm for sometime this spring,” said Gilbert, “but do you suppose Mr. Harrison really does go to see Isabella Andrews?”

“No,” said Anne, laughing, “I’m sure he only goes to play checkers with Mr. Harrison Andrews, but Mrs. Lynde says she knows Isabella Andrews must be going to get married, she’s in such good spirits this spring.”

Poor old Uncle Abe felt rather indignant over the notes. He suspected that “Observer” was making fun of him. He angrily denied having

assigned any particular date for his storm but nobody believed him.

Life in Avonlea continued on the smooth and even tenor of its way. The “planting” was put in; the Improvers celebrated an Arbor Day. Each Improver set out, or caused to be set out, five ornamental trees. As the society now numbered forty members, this meant a total of two hundred young trees. Early oats greened over the red fields; apple orchards flung great blossoming arms about the farmhouses and the Snow Queen adorned itself as a bride for her husband. Anne liked to sleep with her window open and let the cherry fragrance blow over her face all night. She thought it very poetical. Marilla thought she was risking her life.

“Thanksgiving should be celebrated in the spring,” said Anne one evening to Marilla, as they sat on the front door steps and listened to the silver-sweet chorus of the frogs. “I think it would be ever so much better than having it in November when everything is dead or asleep. Then you have to remember to be thankful; but in May one simply can’t help being thankful ... that they are alive, if for nothing else. I feel exactly as Eve must have felt in the garden of Eden before the trouble began. IS that grass in the hollow green or golden? It seems to me, Marilla, that a pearl of a day like this, when the blossoms are out and the winds don’t know where to blow from next for sheer crazy delight must be pretty near as good as heaven.”

Marilla looked scandalized and glanced apprehensively around to make sure the twins were not within earshot. They came around the corner of the house just then.

“Ain’t it an awful nice-smelling evening?” asked Davy, sniffing delightedly as he swung a hoe in his grimy hands. He had been working in his garden. That spring Marilla, by way of turning Davy’s passion for reveling in mud and clay into useful channels, had given him and Dora a small plot of ground for a garden. Both had eagerly gone to work in a characteristic fashion. Dora planted, weeded, and watered carefully, systematically, and dispassionately. As a result, her plot was already green with prim, orderly little rows of vegetables and annuals. Davy, however, worked with more zeal than discretion; he dug and hoed and raked and

watered and transplanted so energetically that his seeds had no chance for their lives.

“How is your garden coming on, Davy-boy?” asked Anne.

“Kind of slow,” said Davy with a sigh. “I don’t know why the things don’t grow better. Milty Boulter says I must have planted them in the dark of the moon and that’s the whole trouble. He says you must never sow seeds or kill pork or cut your hair or do any ‘portant thing in the wrong time of the moon. Is that true, Anne? I want to know.”

“Maybe if you didn’t pull your plants up by the roots every other day to see how they’re getting on ‘at the other end,’ they’d do better,” said Marilla sarcastically.

“I only pulled six of them up,” protested Davy. “I wanted to see if there was grubs at the roots. Milty Boulter said if it wasn’t the moon’s fault it must be grubs. But I only found one grub. He was a great big juicy curly grub. I put him on a stone and got another stone and smashed him flat. He made a jolly SQUISH I tell you. I was sorry there wasn’t more of them. Dora’s garden was planted same time’s mine and her things are growing all right. It CAN’T be the moon,” Davy concluded in a reflective tone.

“Marilla, look at that apple tree,” said Anne. “Why, the thing is human. It is reaching out long arms to pick its own pink skirts daintily up and provoke us to admiration.”

“Those Yellow Duchess trees always bear well,” said Marilla complacently. “That tree’ll be loaded this year. I’m real glad... they’re great for pies.”

But neither Marilla nor Anne nor anybody else was fated to make pies out of Yellow Duchess apples that year.

The twenty-third of May came ... an unseasonably warm day, as none realized more keenly than Anne and her little beehive of pupils, sweltering over fractions and syntax in the Avonlea schoolroom. A hot breeze blew all the forenoon; but after noon hour it died away into a heavy stillness. At half past three Anne heard a low rumble of thunder. She promptly dismissed school at once, so that the children might get home before the storm came.

As they went out to the playground Anne perceived a certain shadow and gloom over the world in spite of the fact that the sun was still shining brightly. Annetta Bell caught her hand nervously.

“Oh, teacher, look at that awful cloud!”

Anne looked and gave an exclamation of dismay. In the northwest a mass of cloud, such as she had never in all her life beheld before, was rapidly rolling up. It was dead black, save where its curled and fringed edges showed a ghastly, livid white. There was something about it indescribably menacing as it gloomed up in the clear blue sky; now and again a bolt of lightning shot across it, followed by a savage growl. It hung so low that it almost seemed to be touching the tops of the wooded hills.

Mr. Harmon Andrews came clattering up the hill in his truck wagon, urging his team of grays to their utmost speed. He pulled them to a halt opposite the school.

“Guess Uncle Abe’s hit it for once in his life, Anne,” he shouted. “His storm’s coming a leetle ahead of time. Did ye ever see the like of that cloud? Here, all you young ones, that are going my way, pile in, and those that ain’t scoot for the post office if ye’ve more’n a quarter of a mile to go, and stay there till the shower’s over.”

Anne caught Davy and Dora by the hands and flew down the hill, along the Birch Path, and past Violet Vale and Willowmere, as fast as the twins’ fat legs could go. They reached Green Gables not a moment too soon and were joined at the door by Marilla, who had been hustling her ducks and chickens under shelter. As they dashed into the kitchen the light seemed to vanish, as if blown out by some mighty breath; the awful cloud rolled over the sun and a darkness as of late twilight fell across the world. At the same moment, with a crash of thunder and a blinding glare of lightning, the hail swooped down and blotted the landscape out in one white fury.

Through all the clamor of the storm came the thud of torn branches striking the house and the sharp crack of breaking glass. In three minutes every pane in the west and north windows was broken and the hail poured in through the apertures covering the floor with stones, the smallest of which was as big as a hen’s egg. For three quarters of an hour the storm

raged unabated and no one who underwent it ever forgot it. Marilla, for once in her life shaken out of her composure by sheer terror, knelt by her rocking chair in a corner of the kitchen, gasping and sobbing between the deafening thunder peals. Anne, white as paper, had dragged the sofa away from the window and sat on it with a twin on either side. Davy at the first crash had howled, “Anne, Anne, is it the Judgment Day? Anne, Anne, I never meant to be naughty,” and then had buried his face in Anne’s lap and kept it there, his little body quivering. Dora, somewhat pale but quite composed, sat with her hand clasped in Anne’s, quiet and motionless. It is doubtful if an earthquake would have disturbed Dora.

Then, almost as suddenly as it began, the storm ceased. The hail stopped, the thunder rolled and muttered away to the eastward, and the sun burst out merry and radiant over a world so changed that it seemed an absurd thing to think that a scant three quarters of an hour could have effected such a transformation.

Marilla rose from her knees, weak and trembling, and dropped on her rocker. Her face was haggard and she looked ten years older.

“Have we all come out of that alive?” she asked solemnly.

“You bet we have,” piped Davy cheerfully, quite his own man again. “I wasn’t a bit scared either ... only just at the first. It come on a fellow so sudden. I made up my mind quick as a wink that I wouldn’t fight Teddy Sloane Monday as I’d promised; but now maybe I will. Say, Dora, was you scared?”

“Yes, I was a little scared,” said Dora primly, “but I held tight to Anne’s hand and said my prayers over and over again.”

“Well, I’d have said my prayers too if I’d have thought of it,” said Davy; “but,” he added triumphantly, “you see I came through just as safe as you for all I didn’t say them.”

Anne got Marilla a glassful of her potent currant wine ... HOW potent it was Anne, in her earlier days, had had all too good reason to know ... and then they went to the door to look out on the strange scene.

Far and wide was a white carpet, knee deep, of hailstones; drifts of them were heaped up under the eaves and on the steps. When, three or four

days later, those hailstones melted, the havoc they had wrought was plainly seen, for every green growing thing in the field or garden was cut off. Not only was every blossom stripped from the apple trees but great boughs and branches were wrenched away. And out of the two hundred trees set out by the Improvers by far the greater number were snapped off or torn to shreds.

“Can it possibly be the same world it was an hour ago?” asked Anne, dazedly. “It MUST have taken longer than that to play such havoc.”

“The like of this has never been known in Prince Edward Island,” said Marilla, “never. I remember when I was a girl there was a bad storm, but it was nothing to this. We’ll hear of terrible destruction, you may be sure.”

“I do hope none of the children were caught out in it,” murmured Anne anxiously. As it was discovered later, none of the children had been, since all those who had any distance to go had taken Mr. Andrews’ excellent advice and sought refuge at the post office.

“There comes John Henry Carter,” said Marilla.

John Henry came wading through the hailstones with a rather scared grin.

“Oh, ain’t this awful, Miss Cuthbert? Mr. Harrison sent me over to see if yous had come out all right.”

“We’re none of us killed,” said Marilla grimly, “and none of the buildings was struck. I hope you got off equally well.”

“Yas’m. Not quite so well, ma’am. We was struck. The lightning knocked over the kitchen chimbley and come down the flue and knocked over Ginger’s cage and tore a hole in the floor and went into the sular. Yas’m.”

“Was Ginger hurt?” queried Anne.

“Yas’m. He was hurt pretty bad. He was killed.” Later on Anne went over to comfort Mr. Harrison. She found him sitting by the table, stroking Ginger’s gay dead body with a trembling hand.

“Poor Ginger won’t call you any more names, Anne,” he said mournfully.

Anne could never have imagined herself crying on Ginger's account, but the tears came into her eyes.

"He was all the company I had, Anne ... and now he's dead. Well, well, I'm an old fool to care so much. I'll let on I don't care. I know you're going to say something sympathetic as soon as I stop talking ... but don't. If you did I'd cry like a baby. Hasn't this been a terrible storm? I guess folks won't laugh at Uncle Abe's predictions again. Seems as if all the storms that he's been prophesying all his life that never happened came all at once. Beats all how he struck the very day though, don't it? Look at the mess we have here. I must hustle round and get some boards to patch up that hole in the floor."

Avonlea folks did nothing the next day but visit each other and compare damages. The roads were impassable for wheels by reason of the hailstones, so they walked or rode on horseback. The mail came late with ill tidings from all over the province. Houses had been struck, people killed and injured; the whole telephone and telegraph system had been disorganized, and any number of young stock exposed in the fields had perished.

Uncle Abe waded out to the blacksmith's forge early in the morning and spent the whole day there. It was Uncle Abe's hour of triumph and he enjoyed it to the full. It would be doing Uncle Abe an injustice to say that he was glad the storm had happened; but since it had to be he was very glad he had predicted it ... to the very day, too. Uncle Abe forgot that he had ever denied setting the day. As for the trifling discrepancy in the hour, that was nothing.

Gilbert arrived at Green Gables in the evening and found Marilla and Anne busily engaged in nailing strips of oilcloth over the broken windows.

"Goodness only knows when we'll get glass for them," said Marilla. "Mr. Barry went over to Carmody this afternoon but not a pane could he get for love or money. Lawson and Blair were cleaned out by the Carmody people by ten o'clock. Was the storm bad at White Sands, Gilbert?"

"I should say so. I was caught in the school with all the children and I thought some of them would go mad with fright. Three of them fainted,

and two girls took hysterics, and Tommy Blewett did nothing but shriek at the top of his voice the whole time.”

“I only squealed once,” said Davy proudly. “My garden was all smashed flat,” he continued mournfully, “but so was Dora’s,” he added in a tone which indicated that there was yet balm in Gilead.

Anne came running down from the west gable.

“Oh, Gilbert, have you heard the news? Mr. Levi Boulter’s old house was struck and burned to the ground. It seems to me that I’m dreadfully wicked to feel glad over THAT, when so much damage has been done. Mr. Boulter says he believes the A.V.I.S. magicked up that storm on purpose.”

“Well, one thing is certain,” said Gilbert, laughing, “‘Observer’ has made Uncle Abe’s reputation as a weather prophet. ‘Uncle Abe’s storm’ will go down in local history. It is a most extraordinary coincidence that it should have come on the very day we selected. I actually have a half guilty feeling, as if I really had ‘magicked’ it up. We may as well rejoice over the old house being removed, for there’s not much to rejoice over where our young trees are concerned. Not ten of them have escaped.”

“Ah, well, we’ll just have to plant them over again next spring,” said Anne philosophically. “That is one good thing about this world ... there are always sure to be more springs.”

XXV. An Avonlea Scandal

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One blithe June morning, a fortnight after Uncle Abe's storm, Anne came slowly through the Green Gables yard from the garden, carrying in her hands two blighted stalks of white narcissus.

"Look, Marilla," she said sorrowfully, holding up the flowers before the eyes of a grim lady, with her hair coifed in a green gingham apron, who was going into the house with a plucked chicken, "these are the only buds the storm spared ... and even they are imperfect. I'm so sorry ... I wanted some for Matthew's grave. He was always so fond of June lilies."

"I kind of miss them myself," admitted Marilla, "though it doesn't seem right to lament over them when so many worse things have happened... all the crops destroyed as well as the fruit."

"But people have sown their oats over again," said Anne comfortingly, "and Mr. Harrison says he thinks if we have a good summer they will come out all right though late. And my annuals are all coming up again ... but oh, nothing can replace the June lilies. Poor little Hester Gray will have none either. I went all the way back to her garden last night but there wasn't one. I'm sure she'll miss them."

"I don't think it's right for you to say such things, Anne, I really don't," said Marilla severely. "Hester Gray has been dead for thirty years and her spirit is in heaven ... I hope."

"Yes, but I believe she loves and remembers her garden here still," said Anne. "I'm sure no matter how long I'd lived in heaven I'd like to look down and see somebody putting flowers on my grave. If I had had a garden here like Hester Gray's it would take me more than thirty years, even in heaven, to forget being homesick for it by spells."

"Well, don't let the twins hear you talking like that," was Marilla's feeble protest, as she carried her chicken into the house.

Anne pinned her narcissi on her hair and went to the lane gate, where she stood for awhile sunning herself in the June brightness before going in to attend to her Saturday morning duties. The world was growing lovely again; old Mother Nature was doing her best to remove the traces of the storm, and, though she was not to succeed fully for many a moon, she was really accomplishing wonders.

“I wish I could just be idle all day today,” Anne told a bluebird, who was singing and swinging on a willow bough, “but a schoolma’am, who is also helping to bring up twins, can’t indulge in laziness, birdie. How sweet you are singing, little bird. You are just putting the feelings of my heart into song ever so much better than I could myself. Why, who is coming?”

An express wagon was jolting up the lane, with two people on the front seat and a big trunk behind. When it drew near Anne recognized the driver as the son of the station agent at Bright River; but his companion was a stranger ... a scrap of a woman who sprang nimbly down at the gate almost before the horse came to a standstill. She was a very pretty little person, evidently nearer fifty than forty, but with rosy cheeks, sparkling black eyes, and shining black hair, surmounted by a wonderful beflowered and beplumed bonnet. In spite of having driven eight miles over a dusty road she was as neat as if she had just stepped out of the proverbial bandbox.

“Is this where Mr. James A. Harrison lives?” she inquired briskly.

“No, Mr. Harrison lives over there,” said Anne, quite lost in astonishment.

“Well, I DID think this place seemed too tidy ... MUCH too tidy for James A. to be living here, unless he has greatly changed since I knew him,” chirped the little lady. “Is it true that James A. is going to be married to some woman living in this settlement?”

“No, oh no,” cried Anne, flushing so guiltily that the stranger looked curiously at her, as if she half suspected her of matrimonial designs on Mr. Harrison.

“But I saw it in an Island paper,” persisted the Fair Unknown. “A friend sent a marked copy to me ... friends are always so ready to do such

things. James A.'s name was written in over 'new citizen.'"

"Oh, that note was only meant as a joke," gasped Anne. "Mr. Harrison has no intention of marrying ANYBODY. I assure you he hasn't."

"I'm very glad to hear it," said the rosy lady, climbing nimbly back to her seat in the wagon, "because he happens to be married already. *I* am his wife. Oh, you may well look surprised. I suppose he has been masquerading as a bachelor and breaking hearts right and left. Well, well, James A.," nodding vigorously over the fields at the long white house, "your fun is over. I am here ... though I wouldn't have bothered coming if I hadn't thought you were up to some mischief. I suppose," turning to Anne, "that parrot of his is as profane as ever?"

"His parrot ... is dead ... I THINK," gasped poor Anne, who couldn't have felt sure of her own name at that precise moment.

"Dead! Everything will be all right then," cried the rosy lady jubilantly. "I can manage James A. if that bird is out of the way."

With which cryptic utterance she went joyfully on her way and Anne flew to the kitchen door to meet Marilla.

"Anne, who was that woman?"

"Marilla," said Anne solemnly, but with dancing eyes, "do I look as if I were crazy?"

"Not more so than usual," said Marilla, with no thought of being sarcastic.

"Well then, do you think I am awake?"

"Anne, what nonsense has got into you? Who was that woman, I say?"

"Marilla, if I'm not crazy and not asleep she can't be such stuff as dreams are made of ... she must be real. Anyway, I'm sure I couldn't have imagined such a bonnet. She says she is Mr. Harrison's wife, Marilla."

Marilla stared in her turn.

"His wife! Anne Shirley! Then what has he been passing himself off as an unmarried man for?"

"I don't suppose he did, really," said Anne, trying to be just. "He never said he wasn't married. People simply took it for granted. Oh Marilla, what will Mrs. Lynde say to this?"

They found out what Mrs. Lynde had to say when she came up that evening. Mrs. Lynde wasn't surprised! Mrs. Lynde had always expected something of the sort! Mrs. Lynde had always known there was SOMETHING about Mr. Harrison!

"To think of his deserting his wife!" she said indignantly. "It's like something you'd read of in the States, but who would expect such a thing to happen right here in Avonlea?"

"But we don't know that he deserted her," protested Anne, determined to believe her friend innocent till he was proved guilty. "We don't know the rights of it at all."

"Well, we soon will. I'm going straight over there," said Mrs. Lynde, who had never learned that there was such a word as delicacy in the dictionary. "I'm not supposed to know anything about her arrival, and Mr. Harrison was to bring some medicine for Thomas from Carmody today, so that will be a good excuse. I'll find out the whole story and come in and tell you on the way back."

Mrs. Lynde rushed in where Anne had feared to tread. Nothing would have induced the latter to go over to the Harrison place; but she had her natural and proper share of curiosity and she felt secretly glad that Mrs. Lynde was going to solve the mystery. She and Marilla waited expectantly for that good lady's return, but waited in vain. Mrs. Lynde did not revisit Green Gables that night. Davy, arriving home at nine o'clock from the Boulter place, explained why.

"I met Mrs. Lynde and some strange woman in the Hollow," he said, "and gracious, how they were talking both at once! Mrs. Lynde said to tell you she was sorry it was too late to call tonight. Anne, I'm awful hungry. We had tea at Milty's at four and I think Mrs. Boulter is real mean. She didn't give us any preserves or cake ... and even the bread was skurce."

"Davy, when you go visiting you must never criticize anything you are given to eat," said Anne solemnly. "It is very bad manners."

"All right ... I'll only think it," said Davy cheerfully. "Do give a fellow some supper, Anne."

Anne looked at Marilla, who followed her into the pantry and shut the door cautiously.

“You can give him some jam on his bread, I know what tea at Levi Boulter’s is apt to be.”

Davy took his slice of bread and jam with a sigh.

“It’s a kind of disappointing world after all,” he remarked. “Milty has a cat that takes fits ... she’s took a fit regular every day for three weeks. Milty says it’s awful fun to watch her. I went down today on purpose to see her have one but the mean old thing wouldn’t take a fit and just kept healthy as healthy, though Milty and me hung round all the afternoon and waited. But never mind” ... Davy brightened up as the insidious comfort of the plum jam stole into his soul ... “maybe I’ll see her in one sometime yet. It doesn’t seem likely she’d stop having them all at once when she’s been so in the habit of it, does it? This jam is awful nice.”

Davy had no sorrows that plum jam could not cure.

Sunday proved so rainy that there was no stirring abroad; but by Monday everybody had heard some version of the Harrison story. The school buzzed with it and Davy came home, full of information.

“Marilla, Mr. Harrison has a new wife ... well, not ezactly new, but they’ve stopped being married for quite a spell, Milty says. I always s’posed people had to keep on being married once they’d begun, but Milty says no, there’s ways of stopping if you can’t agree. Milty says one way is just to start off and leave your wife, and that’s what Mr. Harrison did. Milty says Mr. Harrison left his wife because she throwed things at him ... HARD things ... and Arty Sloane says it was because she wouldn’t let him smoke, and Ned Clay says it was ‘cause she never let up scolding him. I wouldn’t leave MY wife for anything like that. I’d just put my foot down and say, ‘Mrs. Davy, you’ve just got to do what’ll please ME ‘cause I’m a MAN.’ THAT’D settle her pretty quick I guess. But Annetta Clay says SHE left HIM because he wouldn’t scrape his boots at the door and she doesn’t blame her. I’m going right over to Mr. Harrison’s this minute to see what she’s like.”

Davy soon returned, somewhat cast down.

“Mrs. Harrison was away ... she’s gone to Carmody with Mrs. Rachel Lynde to get new paper for the parlor. And Mr. Harrison said to tell Anne to go over and see him ‘cause he wants to have a talk with her. And say, the floor is scrubbed, and Mr. Harrison is shaved, though there wasn’t any preaching yesterday.”

The Harrison kitchen wore a very unfamiliar look to Anne. The floor was indeed scrubbed to a wonderful pitch of purity and so was every article of furniture in the room; the stove was polished until she could see her face in it; the walls were whitewashed and the window panes sparkled in the sunlight. By the table sat Mr. Harrison in his working clothes, which on Friday had been noted for sundry rents and tatters but which were now neatly patched and brushed. He was sprucely shaved and what little hair he had was carefully trimmed.

“Sit down, Anne, sit down,” said Mr. Harrison in a tone but two degrees removed from that which Avonlea people used at funerals. “Emily’s gone over to Carmody with Rachel Lynde ... she’s struck up a lifelong friendship already with Rachel Lynde. Beats all how contrary women are. Well, Anne, my easy times are over ... all over. It’s neatness and tidiness for me for the rest of my natural life, I suppose.”

Mr. Harrison did his best to speak dolefully, but an irrepressible twinkle in his eye betrayed him.

“Mr. Harrison, you are glad your wife is come back,” cried Anne, shaking her finger at him. “You needn’t pretend you’re not, because I can see it plainly.”

Mr. Harrison relaxed into a sheepish smile.

“Well ... well ... I’m getting used to it,” he conceded. “I can’t say I was sorry to see Emily. A man really needs some protection in a community like this, where he can’t play a game of checkers with a neighbor without being accused of wanting to marry that neighbor’s sister and having it put in the paper.”

“Nobody would have supposed you went to see Isabella Andrews if you hadn’t pretended to be unmarried,” said Anne severely.

“I didn’t pretend I was. If anybody’d have asked me if I was married I’d have said I was. But they just took it for granted. I wasn’t anxious to talk about the matter ... I was feeling too sore over it. It would have been nuts for Mrs. Rachel Lynde if she had known my wife had left me, wouldn’t it now?”

“But some people say that you left her.”

“She started it, Anne, she started it. I’m going to tell you the whole story, for I don’t want you to think worse of me than I deserve ... nor of Emily neither. But let’s go out on the veranda. Everything is so fearful neat in here that it kind of makes me homesick. I suppose I’ll get used to it after awhile but it eases me up to look at the yard. Emily hasn’t had time to tidy it up yet.”

As soon as they were comfortably seated on the veranda Mr. Harrison began his tale of woe.

“I lived in Scottsford, New Brunswick, before I came here, Anne. My sister kept house for me and she suited me fine; she was just reasonably tidy and she let me alone and spoiled me ... so Emily says. But three years ago she died. Before she died she worried a lot about what was to become of me and finally she got me to promise I’d get married. She advised me to take Emily Scott because Emily had money of her own and was a pattern housekeeper. I said, says I, ‘Emily Scott wouldn’t look at me.’ ‘You ask her and see,’ says my sister; and just to ease her mind I promised her I would ... and I did. And Emily said she’d have me. Never was so surprised in my life, Anne ... a smart pretty little woman like her and an old fellow like me. I tell you I thought at first I was in luck. Well, we were married and took a little wedding trip to St. John for a fortnight and then we went home. We got home at ten o’clock at night, and I give you my word, Anne, that in half an hour that woman was at work housecleaning. Oh, I know you’re thinking my house needed it ... you’ve got a very expressive face, Anne; your thoughts just come out on it like print ... but it didn’t, not that bad. It had got pretty mixed up while I was keeping bachelor’s hall, I admit, but I’d got a woman to come in and clean it up before I was married and there’d been considerable painting and fixing

done. I tell you if you took Emily into a brand new white marble palace she'd be into the scrubbing as soon as she could get an old dress on. Well, she cleaned house till one o'clock that night and at four she was up and at it again. And she kept on that way ... far's I could see she never stopped. It was scour and sweep and dust everlasting, except on Sundays, and then she was just longing for Monday to begin again. But it was her way of amusing herself and I could have reconciled myself to it if she'd left me alone. But that she wouldn't do. She'd set out to make me over but she hadn't caught me young enough. I wasn't allowed to come into the house unless I changed my boots for slippers at the door. I darsn't smoke a pipe for my life unless I went to the barn. And I didn't use good enough grammar. Emily'd been a schoolteacher in her early life and she'd never got over it. Then she hated to see me eating with my knife. Well, there it was, pick and nag everlasting. But I s'pose, Anne, to be fair, *I* was cantankerous too. I didn't try to improve as I might have done ... I just got cranky and disagreeable when she found fault. I told her one day she hadn't complained of my grammar when I proposed to her. It wasn't an overly tactful thing to say. A woman would forgive a man for beating her sooner than for hinting she was too much pleased to get him. Well, we bickered along like that and it wasn't exactly pleasant, but we might have got used to each other after a spell if it hadn't been for Ginger. Ginger was the rock we split on at last. Emily didn't like parrots and she couldn't stand Ginger's profane habits of speech. I was attached to the bird for my brother the sailor's sake. My brother the sailor was a pet of mine when we were little tads and he'd sent Ginger to me when he was dying. I didn't see any sense in getting worked up over his swearing. There's nothing I hate worse'n profanity in a human being, but in a parrot, that's just repeating what it's heard with no more understanding of it than I'd have of Chinese, allowances might be made. But Emily couldn't see it that way. Women ain't logical. She tried to break Ginger of swearing but she hadn't any better success than she had in trying to make me stop saying 'I seen' and 'them things.' Seemed as if the more she tried the worse Ginger got, same as me.

“Well, things went on like this, both of us getting raspier, till the CLIMAX came. Emily invited our minister and his wife to tea, and another minister and HIS wife that was visiting them. I’d promised to put Ginger away in some safe place where nobody would hear him ... Emily wouldn’t touch his cage with a ten-foot pole ... and I meant to do it, for I didn’t want the ministers to hear anything unpleasant in my house. But it slipped my mind ... Emily was worrying me so much about clean collars and grammar that it wasn’t any wonder ... and I never thought of that poor parrot till we sat down to tea. Just as minister number one was in the very middle of saying grace, Ginger, who was on the veranda outside the dining room window, lifted up HIS voice. The gobbler had come into view in the yard and the sight of a gobbler always had an unwholesome effect on Ginger. He surpassed himself that time. You can smile, Anne, and I don’t deny I’ve chuckled some over it since myself, but at the time I felt almost as much mortified as Emily. I went out and carried Ginger to the barn. I can’t say I enjoyed the meal. I knew by the look of Emily that there was trouble brewing for Ginger and James A. When the folks went away I started for the cow pasture and on the way I did some thinking. I felt sorry for Emily and kind of fancied I hadn’t been so thoughtful of her as I might; and besides, I wondered if the ministers would think that Ginger had learned his vocabulary from me. The long and short of it was, I decided that Ginger would have to be mercifully disposed of and when I’d druv the cows home I went in to tell Emily so. But there was no Emily and there was a letter on the table ... just according to the rule in story books. Emily writ that I’d have to choose between her and Ginger; she’d gone back to her own house and there she would stay till I went and told her I’d got rid of that parrot.

“I was all riled up, Anne, and I said she might stay till doomsday if she waited for that; and I stuck to it. I packed up her belongings and sent them after her. It made an awful lot of talk ... Scottsford was pretty near as bad as Avonlea for gossip ... and everybody sympathized with Emily. It kept me all cross and cantankerous and I saw I’d have to get out or I’d never have any peace. I concluded I’d come to the Island. I’d been here when I

was a boy and I liked it; but Emily had always said she wouldn't live in a place where folks were scared to walk out after dark for fear they'd fall off the edge. So, just to be contrary, I moved over here. And that's all there is to it. I hadn't ever heard a word from or about Emily till I come home from the back field Saturday and found her scrubbing the floor but with the first decent dinner I'd had since she left me all ready on the table. She told me to eat it first and then we'd talk ... by which I concluded that Emily had learned some lessons about getting along with a man. So she's here and she's going to stay ... seeing that Ginger's dead and the Island's some bigger than she thought. There's Mrs. Lynde and her now. No, don't go, Anne. Stay and get acquainted with Emily. She took quite a notion to you Saturday ... wanted to know who that handsome redhaired girl was at the next house."

Mrs. Harrison welcomed Anne radiantly and insisted on her staying to tea.

"James A. has been telling me all about you and how kind you've been, making cakes and things for him," she said. "I want to get acquainted with all my new neighbors just as soon as possible. Mrs. Lynde is a lovely woman, isn't she? So friendly."

When Anne went home in the sweet June dusk, Mrs. Harrison went with her across the fields where the fireflies were lighting their starry lamps.

"I suppose," said Mrs. Harrison confidentially, "that James A. has told you our story?"

"Yes."

"Then I needn't tell it, for James A. is a just man and he would tell the truth. The blame was far from being all on his side. I can see that now. I wasn't back in my own house an hour before I wished I hadn't been so hasty but I wouldn't give in. I see now that I expected too much of a man. And I was real foolish to mind his bad grammar. It doesn't matter if a man does use bad grammar so long as he is a good provider and doesn't go poking round the pantry to see how much sugar you've used in a week. I feel that James A. and I are going to be real happy now. I wish I knew who

‘Observer’ is, so that I could thank him. I owe him a real debt of gratitude.”

Anne kept her own counsel and Mrs. Harrison never knew that her gratitude found its way to its object. Anne felt rather bewildered over the far-reaching consequences of those foolish “notes.” They had reconciled a man to his wife and made the reputation of a prophet.

Mrs. Lynde was in the Green Gables kitchen. She had been telling the whole story to Marilla.

“Well, and how do you like Mrs. Harrison?” she asked Anne.

“Very much. I think she’s a real nice little woman.”

“That’s exactly what she is,” said Mrs. Rachel with emphasis, “and as I’ve just been sayin’ to Marilla, I think we ought all to overlook Mr. Harrison’s peculiarities for her sake and try to make her feel at home here, that’s what. Well, I must get back. Thomas’ll be wearying for me. I get out a little since Eliza came and he’s seemed a lot better these past few days, but I never like to be long away from him. I hear Gilbert Blythe has resigned from White Sands. He’ll be off to college in the fall, I suppose.”

Mrs. Rachel looked sharply at Anne, but Anne was bending over a sleepy Davy nodding on the sofa and nothing was to be read in her face. She carried Davy away, her oval girlish cheek pressed against his curly yellow head. As they went up the stairs Davy flung a tired arm about Anne’s neck and gave her a warm hug and a sticky kiss.

“You’re awful nice, Anne. Milty Boulter wrote on his slate today and showed it to Jennie Sloane,

“‘Roses red and vi’lets blue,

Sugar’s sweet, and so are you”

and that ‘spresses my feelings for you ezackly, Anne.”

XXVI. Around the Bend

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Thomas Lynde faded out of life as quietly and unobtrusively as he had lived it. His wife was a tender, patient, unwearied nurse. Sometimes Rachel had been a little hard on her Thomas in health, when his slowness or meekness had provoked her; but when he became ill no voice could be lower, no hand more gently skillful, no vigil more uncomplaining.

“You’ve been a good wife to me, Rachel,” he once said simply, when she was sitting by him in the dusk, holding his thin, blanched old hand in her work-hardened one. “A good wife. I’m sorry I ain’t leaving you better off; but the children will look after you. They’re all smart, capable children, just like their mother. A good mother ... a good woman”

He had fallen asleep then, and the next morning, just as the white dawn was creeping up over the pointed firs in the hollow, Marilla went softly into the east gable and wakened Anne.

“Anne, Thomas Lynde is gone ... their hired boy just brought the word. I’m going right down to Rachel.”

On the day after Thomas Lynde’s funeral Marilla went about Green Gables with a strangely preoccupied air. Occasionally she looked at Anne, seemed on the point of saying something, then shook her head and buttoned up her mouth. After tea she went down to see Mrs. Rachel; and when she returned she went to the east gable, where Anne was correcting school exercises.

“How is Mrs. Lynde tonight?” asked the latter.

“She’s feeling calmer and more composed,” answered Marilla, sitting down on Anne’s bed ... a proceeding which betokened some unusual mental excitement, for in Marilla’s code of household ethics to sit on a bed after it was made up was an unpardonable offense. “But she’s very lonely. Eliza had to go home today ... her son isn’t well and she felt she couldn’t stay any longer.”

“When I’ve finished these exercises I’ll run down and chat awhile with Mrs. Lynde,” said Anne. “I had intended to study some Latin composition tonight but it can wait.”

“I suppose Gilbert Blythe is going to college in the fall,” said Marilla jerkily. “How would you like to go too, Anne?”

Anne looked up in astonishment.

“I would like it, of course, Marilla. But it isn’t possible.”

“I guess it can be made possible. I’ve always felt that you should go. I’ve never felt easy to think you were giving it all up on my account.”

“But Marilla, I’ve never been sorry for a moment that I stayed home. I’ve been so happy ... Oh, these past two years have just been delightful.”

“Oh, yes, I know you’ve been contented enough. But that isn’t the question exactly. You ought to go on with your education. You’ve saved enough to put you through one year at Redmond and the money the stock brought in will do for another year ... and there’s scholarships and things you might win.”

“Yes, but I can’t go, Marilla. Your eyes are better, of course; but I can’t leave you alone with the twins. They need so much looking after.”

“I won’t be alone with them. That’s what I meant to discuss with you. I had a long talk with Rachel tonight. Anne, she’s feeling dreadful bad over a good many things. She’s not left very well off. It seems they mortgaged the farm eight years ago to give the youngest boy a start when he went west; and they’ve never been able to pay much more than the interest since. And then of course Thomas’ illness has cost a good deal, one way or another. The farm will have to be sold and Rachel thinks there’ll be hardly anything left after the bills are settled. She says she’ll have to go and live with Eliza and it’s breaking her heart to think of leaving Avonlea. A woman of her age doesn’t make new friends and interests easy. And, Anne, as she talked about it the thought came to me that I would ask her to come and live with me, but I thought I ought to talk it over with you first before I said anything to her. If I had Rachel living with me you could go to college. How do you feel about it?”

“I feel ... as if ... somebody ... had handed me ... the moon ... and I didn’t know ... exactly ... what to do ... with it,” said Anne dazedly. “But as for asking Mrs. Lynde to come here, that is for you to decide, Marilla. Do you think ... are you sure ... you would like it? Mrs. Lynde is a good woman and a kind neighbor, but ... but ...”

“But she’s got her faults, you mean to say? Well, she has, of course; but I think I’d rather put up with far worse faults than see Rachel go away from Avonlea. I’d miss her terrible. She’s the only close friend I’ve got here and I’d be lost without her. We’ve been neighbors for forty-five years and we’ve never had a quarrel ... though we came rather near it that time you flew at Mrs. Rachel for calling you homely and redhaired. Do you remember, Anne?”

“I should think I do,” said Anne ruefully. “People don’t forget things like that. How I hated poor Mrs. Rachel at that moment!”

“And then that ‘apology’ you made her. Well, you were a handful, in all conscience, Anne. I did feel so puzzled and bewildered how to manage you. Matthew understood you better.”

“Matthew understood everything,” said Anne softly, as she always spoke of him.

“Well, I think it could be managed so that Rachel and I wouldn’t clash at all. It always seemed to me that the reason two women can’t get along in one house is that they try to share the same kitchen and get in each other’s way. Now, if Rachel came here, she could have the north gable for her bedroom and the spare room for a kitchen as well as not, for we don’t really need a spare room at all. She could put her stove there and what furniture she wanted to keep, and be real comfortable and independent. She’ll have enough to live on of course...her children’ll see to that...so all I’d be giving her would be house room. Yes, Anne, far as I’m concerned I’d like it.”

“Then ask her,” said Anne promptly. “I’d be very sorry myself to see Mrs. Rachel go away.”

“And if she comes,” continued Marilla, “You can go to college as well as not. She’ll be company for me and she’ll do for the twins what I can’t

do, so there's no reason in the world why you shouldn't go."

Anne had a long meditation at her window that night. Joy and regret struggled together in her heart. She had come at last ... suddenly and unexpectedly ... to the bend in the road; and college was around it, with a hundred rainbow hopes and visions; but Anne realized as well that when she rounded that curve she must leave many sweet things behind... all the little simple duties and interests which had grown so dear to her in the last two years and which she had glorified into beauty and delight by the enthusiasm she had put into them. She must give up her school ... and she loved every one of her pupils, even the stupid and naughty ones. The mere thought of Paul Irving made her wonder if Redmond were such a name to conjure with after all.

"I've put out a lot of little roots these two years," Anne told the moon, "and when I'm pulled up they're going to hurt a great deal. But it's best to go, I think, and, as Marilla says, there's no good reason why I shouldn't. I must get out all my ambitions and dust them."

Anne sent in her resignation the next day; and Mrs. Rachel, after a heart to heart talk with Marilla, gratefully accepted the offer of a home at Green Gables. She elected to remain in her own house for the summer, however; the farm was not to be sold until the fall and there were many arrangements to be made.

"I certainly never thought of living as far off the road as Green Gables," sighed Mrs. Rachel to herself. "But really, Green Gables doesn't seem as out of the world as it used to do ... Anne has lots of company and the twins make it real lively. And anyhow, I'd rather live at the bottom of a well than leave Avonlea."

These two decisions being noised abroad speedily ousted the arrival of Mrs. Harrison in popular gossip. Sage heads were shaken over Marilla Cuthbert's rash step in asking Mrs. Rachel to live with her. People opined that they wouldn't get on together. They were both "too fond of their own way," and many doleful predictions were made, none of which disturbed the parties in question at all. They had come to a clear and distinct

understanding of the respective duties and rights of their new arrangements and meant to abide by them.

“I won’t meddle with you nor you with me,” Mrs. Rachel had said decidedly, “and as for the twins, I’ll be glad to do all I can for them; but I won’t undertake to answer Davy’s questions, that’s what. I’m not an encyclopedia, neither am I a Philadelphia lawyer. You’ll miss Anne for that.”

“Sometimes Anne’s answers were about as queer as Davy’s questions,” said Marilla drily. “The twins will miss her and no mistake; but her future can’t be sacrificed to Davy’s thirst for information. When he asks questions I can’t answer I’ll just tell him children should be seen and not heard. That was how I was brought up, and I don’t know but what it was just as good a way as all these new-fangled notions for training children.”

“Well, Anne’s methods seem to have worked fairly well with Davy,” said Mrs. Lynde smilingly. “He is a reformed character, that’s what.”

“He isn’t a bad little soul,” conceded Marilla. “I never expected to get as fond of those children as I have. Davy gets round you somehow ... and Dora is a lovely child, although she is ... kind of ... well, kind of ...”

“Monotonous? Exactly,” supplied Mrs. Rachel. “Like a book where every page is the same, that’s what. Dora will make a good, reliable woman but she’ll never set the pond on fire. Well, that sort of folks are comfortable to have round, even if they’re not as interesting as the other kind.”

Gilbert Blythe was probably the only person to whom the news of Anne’s resignation brought unmixed pleasure. Her pupils looked upon it as a sheer catastrophe. Annetta Bell had hysterics when she went home. Anthony Pye fought two pitched and unprovoked battles with other boys by way of relieving his feelings. Barbara Shaw cried all night. Paul Irving defiantly told his grandmother that she needn’t expect him to eat any porridge for a week.

“I can’t do it, Grandma,” he said. “I don’t really know if I can eat ANYTHING. I feel as if there was a dreadful lump in my throat. I’d have cried coming home from school if Jake Donnell hadn’t been watching me.

I believe I will cry after I go to bed. It wouldn't show on my eyes tomorrow, would it? And it would be such a relief. But anyway, I can't eat porridge. I'm going to need all my strength of mind to bear up against this, Grandma, and I won't have any left to grapple with porridge. Oh Grandma, I don't know what I'll do when my beautiful teacher goes away. Milty Boulter says he bets Jane Andrews will get the school. I suppose Miss Andrews is very nice. But I know she won't understand things like Miss Shirley."

Diana also took a very pessimistic view of affairs.

"It will be horribly lonesome here next winter," she mourned, one twilight when the moonlight was raining "airy silver" through the cherry boughs and filling the east gable with a soft, dreamlike radiance in which the two girls sat and talked, Anne on her low rocker by the window, Diana sitting Turkfashion on the bed. "You and Gilbert will be gone ... and the Allans too. They are going to call Mr. Allan to Charlottetown and of course he'll accept. It's too mean. We'll be vacant all winter, I suppose, and have to listen to a long string of candidates ... and half of them won't be any good."

"I hope they won't call Mr. Baxter from East Grafton here, anyhow," said Anne decidedly. "He wants the call but he does preach such gloomy sermons. Mr. Bell says he's a minister of the old school, but Mrs. Lynde says there's nothing whatever the matter with him but indigestion. His wife isn't a very good cook, it seems, and Mrs. Lynde says that when a man has to eat sour bread two weeks out of three his theology is bound to get a kink in it somewhere. Mrs. Allan feels very badly about going away. She says everybody has been so kind to her since she came here as a bride that she feels as if she were leaving lifelong friends. And then, there's the baby's grave, you know. She says she doesn't see how she can go away and leave that ... it was such a little mite of a thing and only three months old, and she says she is afraid it will miss its mother, although she knows better and wouldn't say so to Mr. Allan for anything. She says she has slipped through the birch grove back of the manse nearly every night to the graveyard and sung a little lullaby to it. She told me all about it last

evening when I was up putting some of those early wild roses on Matthew's grave. I promised her that as long as I was in Avonlea I would put flowers on the baby's grave and when I was away I felt sure that ..."

"That I would do it," supplied Diana heartily. "Of course I will. And I'll put them on Matthew's grave too, for your sake, Anne."

"Oh, thank you. I meant to ask you to if you would. And on little Hester Gray's too? Please don't forget hers. Do you know, I've thought and dreamed so much about little Hester Gray that she has become strangely real to me. I think of her, back there in her little garden in that cool, still, green corner; and I have a fancy that if I could steal back there some spring evening, just at the magic time 'twixt light and dark, and tiptoe so softly up the beech hill that my footsteps could not frighten her, I would find the garden just as it used to be, all sweet with June lilies and early roses, with the tiny house beyond it all hung with vines; and little Hester Gray would be there, with her soft eyes, and the wind ruffling her dark hair, wandering about, putting her fingertips under the chins of the lilies and whispering secrets with the roses; and I would go forward, oh, so softly, and hold out my hands and say to her, 'Little Hester Gray, won't you let me be your playmate, for I love the roses too?' And we would sit down on the old bench and talk a little and dream a little, or just be beautifully silent together. And then the moon would rise and I would look around me ... and there would be no Hester Gray and no little vine-hung house, and no roses ... only an old waste garden starred with June lilies amid the grasses, and the wind sighing, oh, so sorrowfully in the cherry trees. And I would not know whether it had been real or if I had just imagined it all." Diana crawled up and got her back against the headboard of the bed. When your companion of twilight hour said such spooky things it was just as well not to be able to fancy there was anything behind you.

"I'm afraid the Improvement Society will go down when you and Gilbert are both gone," she remarked dolefully.

"Not a bit of fear of it," said Anne briskly, coming back from dreamland to the affairs of practical life. "It is too firmly established for that, especially since the older people are becoming so enthusiastic about

it. Look what they are doing this summer for their lawns and lanes. Besides, I'll be watching for hints at Redmond and I'll write a paper for it next winter and send it over. Don't take such a gloomy view of things, Diana. And don't grudge me my little hour of gladness and jubilation now. Later on, when I have to go away, I'll feel anything but glad."

"It's all right for you to be glad ... you're going to college and you'll have a jolly time and make heaps of lovely new friends."

"I hope I shall make new friends," said Anne thoughtfully. "The possibilities of making new friends help to make life very fascinating. But no matter how many friends I make they'll never be as dear to me as the old ones ... especially a certain girl with black eyes and dimples. Can you guess who she is, Diana?"

"But there'll be so many clever girls at Redmond," sighed Diana, "and I'm only a stupid little country girl who says 'I seen' sometimes... though I really know better when I stop to think. Well, of course these past two years have really been too pleasant to last. I know SOMEBODY who is glad you are going to Redmond anyhow. Anne, I'm going to ask you a question ... a serious question. Don't be vexed and do answer seriously. Do you care anything for Gilbert?"

"Ever so much as a friend and not a bit in the way you mean," said Anne calmly and decidedly; she also thought she was speaking sincerely.

Diana sighed. She wished, somehow, that Anne had answered differently.

"Don't you mean EVER to be married, Anne?"

"Perhaps ... some day ... when I meet the right one," said Anne, smiling dreamily up at the moonlight.

"But how can you be sure when you do meet the right one?" persisted Diana.

"Oh, I should know him ... SOMETHING would tell me. You know what my ideal is, Diana."

"But people's ideals change sometimes."

"Mine won't. And I COULDN'T care for any man who didn't fulfill it."

“What if you never meet him?”

“Then I shall die an old maid,” was the cheerful response. “I daresay it isn’t the hardest death by any means.”

“Oh, I suppose the dying would be easy enough; it’s the living an old maid I shouldn’t like,” said Diana, with no intention of being humorous. “Although I wouldn’t mind being an old maid VERY much if I could be one like Miss Lavendar. But I never could be. When I’m forty-five I’ll be horribly fat. And while there might be some romance about a thin old maid there couldn’t possibly be any about a fat one. Oh, mind you, Nelson Atkins proposed to Ruby Gillis three weeks ago. Ruby told me all about it. She says she never had any intention of taking him, because any one who married him will have to go in with the old folks; but Ruby says that he made such a perfectly beautiful and romantic proposal that it simply swept her off her feet. But she didn’t want to do anything rash so she asked for a week to consider; and two days later she was at a meeting of the Sewing Circle at his mother’s and there was a book called ‘The Complete Guide to Etiquette,’ lying on the parlor table. Ruby said she simply couldn’t describe her feelings when in a section of it headed, ‘The Department of Courtship and Marriage,’ she found the very proposal Nelson had made, word for word. She went home and wrote him a perfectly scathing refusal; and she says his father and mother have taken turns watching him ever since for fear he’ll drown himself in the river; but Ruby says they needn’t be afraid; for in the Department of Courtship and Marriage it told how a rejected lover should behave and there’s nothing about drowning in THAT. And she says Wilbur Blair is literally pining away for her but she’s perfectly helpless in the matter.”

Anne made an impatient movement.

“I hate to say it ... it seems so disloyal ... but, well, I don’t like Ruby Gillis now. I liked her when we went to school and Queen’s together ... though not so well as you and Jane of course. But this last year at Carmody she seems so different ... so ... so ...”

“I know,” nodded Diana. “It’s the Gillis coming out in her ... she can’t help it. Mrs. Lynde says that if ever a Gillis girl thought about anything

but the boys she never showed it in her walk and conversation. She talks about nothing but boys and what compliments they pay her, and how crazy they all are about her at Carmody. And the strange thing is, they ARE, too ...” Diana admitted this somewhat resentfully. “Last night when I saw her in Mr. Blair’s store she whispered to me that she’d just made a new ‘mash.’ I wouldn’t ask her who it was, because I knew she was dying to BE asked. Well, it’s what Ruby always wanted, I suppose. You remember even when she was little she always said she meant to have dozens of beaus when she grew up and have the very gayest time she could before she settled down. She’s so different from Jane, isn’t she? Jane is such a nice, sensible, ladylike girl.”

“Dear old Jane is a jewel,” agreed Anne, “but,” she added, leaning forward to bestow a tender pat on the plump, dimpled little hand hanging over her pillow, “there’s nobody like my own Diana after all. Do you remember that evening we first met, Diana, and ‘swore’ eternal friendship in your garden? We’ve kept that ‘oath,’ I think ... we’ve never had a quarrel nor even a coolness. I shall never forget the thrill that went over me the day you told me you loved me. I had had such a lonely, starved heart all through my childhood. I’m just beginning to realize how starved and lonely it really was. Nobody cared anything for me or wanted to be bothered with me. I should have been miserable if it hadn’t been for that strange little dream-life of mine, wherein I imagined all the friends and love I craved. But when I came to Green Gables everything was changed. And then I met you. You don’t know what your friendship meant to me. I want to thank you here and now, dear, for the warm and true affection you’ve always given me.”

“And always, always will,” sobbed Diana. “I shall NEVER love anybody ... any GIRL ... half as well as I love you. And if I ever do marry and have a little girl of my own I’m going to name her ANNE.”

XXVII. An Afternoon at the Stone House

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“Where are you going, all dressed up, Anne?” Davy wanted to know. “You look bully in that dress.”

Anne had come down to dinner in a new dress of pale green muslin ... the first color she had worn since Matthew’s death. It became her perfectly, bringing out all the delicate, flowerlike tints of her face and the gloss and burnish of her hair.

“Davy, how many times have I told you that you mustn’t use that word,” she rebuked. “I’m going to Echo Lodge.”

“Take me with you,” entreated Davy.

“I would if I were driving. But I’m going to walk and it’s too far for your eight-year-old legs. Besides, Paul is going with me and I fear you don’t enjoy yourself in his company.”

“Oh, I like Paul lots better’n I did,” said Davy, beginning to make fearful inroads into his pudding. “Since I’ve got pretty good myself I don’t mind his being gooder so much. If I can keep on I’ll catch up with him some day, both in legs and goodness. ‘Sides, Paul’s real nice to us second primer boys in school. He won’t let the other big boys meddle with us and he shows us lots of games.”

“How came Paul to fall into the brook at noon hour yesterday?” asked Anne. “I met him on the playground, such a dripping figure that I sent him promptly home for clothes without waiting to find out what had happened.”

“Well, it was partly a zacksident,” explained Davy. “He stuck his head in on purpose but the rest of him fell in zacksidentally. We was all down at the brook and Prillie Rogerson got mad at Paul about something ... she’s awful mean and horrid anyway, if she IS pretty ... and said that his grandmother put his hair up in curl rags every night. Paul wouldn’t have

mind what she said, I guess, but Gracie Andrews laughed, and Paul got awful red, 'cause Gracie's his girl, you know. He's CLEAN GONE on her ... brings her flowers and carries her books as far as the shore road. He got as red as a beet and said his grandmother didn't do any such thing and his hair was born curly. And then he laid down on the bank and stuck his head right into the spring to show them. Oh, it wasn't the spring we drink out of ..." seeing a horrified look on Marilla's face ... "it was the little one lower down. But the bank's awful slippery and Paul went right in. I tell you he made a bully splash. Oh, Anne, Anne, I didn't mean to say that ... it just slipped out before I thought. He made a SPLENDID splash. But he looked so funny when he crawled out, all wet and muddy. The girls laughed more'n ever, but Gracie didn't laugh. She looked sorry. Gracie's a nice girl but she's got a snub nose. When I get big enough to have a girl I won't have one with a snub nose ... I'll pick one with a pretty nose like yours, Anne."

"A boy who makes such a mess of syrup all over his face when he is eating his pudding will never get a girl to look at him," said Marilla severely.

"But I'll wash my face before I go courting," protested Davy, trying to improve matters by rubbing the back of his hand over the smears. "And I'll wash behind my ears too, without being told. I remembered to this morning, Marilla. I don't forget half as often as I did. But ..." and Davy sighed ... "there's so many corners about a fellow that it's awful hard to remember them all. Well, if I can't go to Miss Lavendar's I'll go over and see Mrs. Harrison. Mrs. Harrison's an awful nice woman, I tell you. She keeps a jar of cookies in her pantry a-purpose for little boys, and she always gives me the scrapings out of a pan she's mixed up a plum cake in. A good many plums stick to the sides, you see. Mr. Harrison was always a nice man, but he's twice as nice since he got married over again. I guess getting married makes folks nicer. Why don't YOU get married, Marilla? I want to know."

Marilla's state of single blessedness had never been a sore point with her, so she answered amiably, with an exchange of significant looks with

Anne, that she supposed it was because nobody would have her.

“But maybe you never asked anybody to have you,” protested Davy.

“Oh, Davy,” said Dora primly, shocked into speaking without being spoken to, “it’s the MEN that have to do the asking.”

“I don’t know why they have to do it ALWAYS,” grumbled Davy.

“Seems to me everything’s put on the men in this world. Can I have some more pudding, Marilla?”

“You’ve had as much as was good for you,” said Marilla; but she gave him a moderate second helping.

“I wish people could live on pudding. Why can’t they, Marilla? I want to know.”

“Because they’d soon get tired of it.”

“I’d like to try that for myself,” said skeptical Davy. “But I guess it’s better to have pudding only on fish and company days than none at all. They never have any at Milty Boulter’s. Milty says when company comes his mother gives them cheese and cuts it herself ... one little bit apiece and one over for manners.”

“If Milty Boulter talks like that about his mother at least you needn’t repeat it,” said Marilla severely.

“Bless my soul,” ... Davy had picked this expression up from Mr. Harrison and used it with great gusto ... “Milty meant it as a compellent. He’s awful proud of his mother, cause folks say she could scratch a living on a rock.”

“I ... I suppose them pesky hens are in my pansy bed again,” said Marilla, rising and going out hurriedly.

The slandered hens were nowhere near the pansy bed and Marilla did not even glance at it. Instead, she sat down on the cellar hatch and laughed until she was ashamed of herself.

When Anne and Paul reached the stone house that afternoon they found Miss Lavendar and Charlotta the Fourth in the garden, weeding, raking, clipping, and trimming as if for dear life. Miss Lavendar herself, all gay and sweet in the frills and laces she loved, dropped her shears and ran joyously to meet her guests, while Charlotta the Fourth grinned cheerfully.

“Welcome, Anne. I thought you’d come today. You belong to the afternoon so it brought you. Things that belong together are sure to come together. What a lot of trouble that would save some people if they only knew it. But they don’t ... and so they waste beautiful energy moving heaven and earth to bring things together that DON’T belong. And you, Paul ... why, you’ve grown! You’re half a head taller than when you were here before.”

“Yes, I’ve begun to grow like pigweed in the night, as Mrs. Lynde says,” said Paul, in frank delight over the fact. “Grandma says it’s the porridge taking effect at last. Perhaps it is. Goodness knows ...” Paul sighed deeply ... “I’ve eaten enough to make anyone grow. I do hope, now that I’ve begun, I’ll keep on till I’m as tall as father. He is six feet, you know, Miss Lavendar.”

Yes, Miss Lavendar did know; the flush on her pretty cheeks deepened a little; she took Paul’s hand on one side and Anne’s on the other and walked to the house in silence.

“Is it a good day for the echoes, Miss Lavendar?” queried Paul anxiously. The day of his first visit had been too windy for echoes and Paul had been much disappointed.

“Yes, just the best kind of a day,” answered Miss Lavendar, rousing herself from her reverie. “But first we are all going to have something to eat. I know you two folks didn’t walk all the way back here through those beechwoods without getting hungry, and Charlotta the Fourth and I can eat any hour of the day ... we have such obliging appetites. So we’ll just make a raid on the pantry. Fortunately it’s lovely and full. I had a presentiment that I was going to have company today and Charlotta the Fourth and I prepared.”

“I think you are one of the people who always have nice things in their pantry,” declared Paul. “Grandma’s like that too. But she doesn’t approve of snacks between meals. I wonder,” he added meditatively, “if I OUGHT to eat them away from home when I know she doesn’t approve.”

“Oh, I don’t think she would disapprove after you have had a long walk. That makes a difference,” said Miss Lavendar, exchanging amused

glances with Anne over Paul's brown curls. "I suppose that snacks ARE extremely unwholesome. That is why we have them so often at Echo Lodge. We... Charlotta the Fourth and I ... live in defiance of every known law of diet. We eat all sorts of indigestible things whenever we happen to think of it, by day or night; and we flourish like green bay trees. We are always intending to reform. When we read any article in a paper warning us against something we like we cut it out and pin it up on the kitchen wall so that we'll remember it. But we never can somehow ... until after we've gone and eaten that very thing. Nothing has ever killed us yet; but Charlotta the Fourth has been known to have bad dreams after we had eaten doughnuts and mince pie and fruit cake before we went to bed."

"Grandma lets me have a glass of milk and a slice of bread and butter before I go to bed; and on Sunday nights she puts jam on the bread," said Paul. "So I'm always glad when it's Sunday night ... for more reasons than one. Sunday is a very long day on the shore road. Grandma says it's all too short for her and that father never found Sundays tiresome when he was a little boy. It wouldn't seem so long if I could talk to my rock people but I never do that because Grandma doesn't approve of it on Sundays. I think a good deal; but I'm afraid my thoughts are worldly. Grandma says we should never think anything but religious thoughts on Sundays. But teacher here said once that every really beautiful thought was religious, no matter what it was about, or what day we thought it on. But I feel sure Grandma thinks that sermons and Sunday School lessons are the only things you can think truly religious thoughts about. And when it comes to a difference of opinion between Grandma and teacher I don't know what to do. In my heart" ... Paul laid his hand on his breast and raised very serious blue eyes to Miss Lavendar's immediately sympathetic face ... "I agree with teacher. But then, you see, Grandma has brought father up HER way and made a brilliant success of him; and teacher has never brought anybody up yet, though she's helping with Davy and Dora. But you can't tell how they'll turn out till they ARE grown up. So sometimes I feel as if it might be safer to go by Grandma's opinions."

“I think it would,” agreed Anne solemnly. “Anyway, I daresay that if your Grandma and I both got down to what we really do mean, under our different ways of expressing it, we’d find out we both meant much the same thing. You’d better go by her way of expressing it, since it’s been the result of experience. We’ll have to wait until we see how the twins do turn out before we can be sure that my way is equally good.” After lunch they went back to the garden, where Paul made the acquaintance of the echoes, to his wonder and delight, while Anne and Miss Lavendar sat on the stone bench under the poplar and talked.

“So you are going away in the fall?” said Miss Lavendar wistfully. “I ought to be glad for your sake, Anne ... but I’m horribly, selfishly sorry. I shall miss you so much. Oh, sometimes, I think it is of no use to make friends. They only go out of your life after awhile and leave a hurt that is worse than the emptiness before they came.”

“That sounds like something Miss Eliza Andrews might say but never Miss Lavendar,” said Anne. “NOTHING is worse than emptiness ... and I’m not going out of your life. There are such things as letters and vacations. Dearest, I’m afraid you’re looking a little pale and tired.”

“Oh ... hoo ... hoo ... hoo,” went Paul on the dyke, where he had been making noises diligently ... not all of them melodious in the making, but all coming back transmuted into the very gold and silver of sound by the fairy alchemists over the river. Miss Lavendar made an impatient movement with her pretty hands.

“I’m just tired of everything ... even of the echoes. There is nothing in my life but echoes ... echoes of lost hopes and dreams and joys. They’re beautiful and mocking. Oh Anne, it’s horrid of me to talk like this when I have company. It’s just that I’m getting old and it doesn’t agree with me. I know I’ll be fearfully cranky by the time I’m sixty. But perhaps all I need is a course of blue pills.” At this moment Charlotta the Fourth, who had disappeared after lunch, returned, and announced that the northeast corner of Mr. John Kimball’s pasture was red with early strawberries, and wouldn’t Miss Shirley like to go and pick some.

“Early strawberries for tea!” exclaimed Miss Lavendar. “Oh, I’m not so old as I thought ... and I don’t need a single blue pill! Girls, when you come back with your strawberries we’ll have tea out here under the silver poplar. I’ll have it all ready for you with home-grown cream.”

Anne and Charlotta the Fourth accordingly betook themselves back to Mr. Kimball’s pasture, a green remote place where the air was as soft as velvet and fragrant as a bed of violets and golden as amber.

“Oh, isn’t it sweet and fresh back here?” breathed Anne. “I just feel as if I were drinking in the sunshine.”

“Yes, ma’am, so do I. That’s just exactly how I feel too, ma’am,” agreed Charlotta the Fourth, who would have said precisely the same thing if Anne had remarked that she felt like a pelican of the wilderness. Always after Anne had visited Echo Lodge Charlotta the Fourth mounted to her little room over the kitchen and tried before her looking glass to speak and look and move like Anne. Charlotta could never flatter herself that she quite succeeded; but practice makes perfect, as Charlotta had learned at school, and she fondly hoped that in time she might catch the trick of that dainty uplift of chin, that quick, starry outflashing of eyes, that fashion of walking as if you were a bough swaying in the wind. It seemed so easy when you watched Anne. Charlotta the Fourth admired Anne wholeheartedly. It was not that she thought her so very handsome. Diana Barry’s beauty of crimson cheek and black curls was much more to Charlotta the Fourth’s taste than Anne’s moonshine charm of luminous gray eyes and the pale, everchanging roses of her cheeks.

“But I’d rather look like you than be pretty,” she told Anne sincerely.

Anne laughed, sipped the honey from the tribute, and cast away the sting. She was used to taking her compliments mixed. Public opinion never agreed on Anne’s looks. People who had heard her called handsome met her and were disappointed. People who had heard her called plain saw her and wondered where other people’s eyes were. Anne herself would never believe that she had any claim to beauty. When she looked in the glass all she saw was a little pale face with seven freckles on the nose thereof. Her mirror never revealed to her the elusive, ever-varying play of

feeling that came and went over her features like a rosy illuminating flame, or the charm of dream and laughter alternating in her big eyes.

While Anne was not beautiful in any strictly defined sense of the word she possessed a certain evasive charm and distinction of appearance that left beholders with a pleasurable sense of satisfaction in that softly rounded girlhood of hers, with all its strongly felt potentialities. Those who knew Anne best felt, without realizing that they felt it, that her greatest attraction was the aura of possibility surrounding her... the power of future development that was in her. She seemed to walk in an atmosphere of things about to happen.

As they picked, Charlotta the Fourth confided to Anne her fears regarding Miss Lavendar. The warmhearted little handmaiden was honestly worried over her adored mistress' condition.

"Miss Lavendar isn't well, Miss Shirley, ma'am. I'm sure she isn't, though she never complains. She hasn't seemed like herself this long while, ma'am ... not since that day you and Paul were here together before. I feel sure she caught cold that night, ma'am. After you and him had gone she went out and walked in the garden for long after dark with nothing but a little shawl on her. There was a lot of snow on the walks and I feel sure she got a chill, ma'am. Ever since then I've noticed her acting tired and lonesome like. She don't seem to take an interest in anything, ma'am. She never pretends company's coming, nor fixes up for it, nor nothing, ma'am. It's only when you come she seems to chirk up a bit. And the worst sign of all, Miss Shirley, ma'am ..." Charlotta the Fourth lowered her voice as if she were about to tell some exceedingly weird and awful symptom indeed ... "is that she never gets cross now when I breaks things. Why, Miss Shirley, ma'am, yesterday I bruk her green and yaller bowl that's always stood on the bookcase. Her grandmother brought it out from England and Miss Lavendar was awful choice of it. I was dusting it just as careful, Miss Shirley, ma'am, and it slipped out, so fashion, afore I could grab holt of it, and bruk into about forty millyun pieces. I tell you I was sorry and scared. I thought Miss Lavendar would scold me awful, ma'am; and I'd ruther she had than take it the way she did. She just come

in and hardly looked at it and said, 'It's no matter, Charlotta. Take up the pieces and throw them away.' Just like that, Miss Shirley, ma'am ... 'take up the pieces and throw them away,' as if it wasn't her grandmother's bowl from England. Oh, she isn't well and I feel awful bad about it. She's got nobody to look after her but me."

Charlotta the Fourth's eyes brimmed up with tears. Anne patted the little brown paw holding the cracked pink cup sympathetically.

"I think Miss Lavendar needs a change, Charlotta. She stays here alone too much. Can't we induce her to go away for a little trip?"

Charlotta shook her head, with its rampant bows, disconsolately.

"I don't think so, Miss Shirley, ma'am. Miss Lavendar hates visiting. She's only got three relations she ever visits and she says she just goes to see them as a family duty. Last time when she come home she said she wasn't going to visit for family duty no more. 'I've come home in love with loneliness, Charlotta,' she says to me, 'and I never want to stray from my own vine and fig tree again. My relations try so hard to make an old lady of me and it has a bad effect on me.' Just like that, Miss Shirley, ma'am. 'It has a very bad effect on me.' So I don't think it would do any good to coax her to go visiting."

"We must see what can be done," said Anne decidedly, as she put the last possible berry in her pink cup. "Just as soon as I have my vacation I'll come through and spend a whole week with you. We'll have a picnic every day and pretend all sorts of interesting things, and see if we can't cheer Miss Lavendar up."

"That will be the very thing, Miss Shirley, ma'am," exclaimed Charlotta the Fourth in rapture. She was glad for Miss Lavendar's sake and for her own too. With a whole week in which to study Anne constantly she would surely be able to learn how to move and behave like her.

When the girls got back to Echo Lodge they found that Miss Lavendar and Paul had carried the little square table out of the kitchen to the garden and had everything ready for tea. Nothing ever tasted so delicious as those strawberries and cream, eaten under a great blue sky all curdled over with fluffy little white clouds, and in the long shadows of the wood with its

lispings and its murmurings. After tea Anne helped Charlotta wash the dishes in the kitchen, while Miss Lavendar sat on the stone bench with Paul and heard all about his rock people. She was a good listener, this sweet Miss Lavendar, but just at the last it struck Paul that she had suddenly lost interest in the Twin Sailors.

“Miss Lavendar, why do you look at me like that?” he asked gravely.

“How do I look, Paul?”

“Just as if you were looking through me at somebody I put you in mind of,” said Paul, who had such occasional flashes of uncanny insight that it wasn’t quite safe to have secrets when he was about.

“You do put me in mind of somebody I knew long ago,” said Miss Lavendar dreamily.

“When you were young?”

“Yes, when I was young. Do I seem very old to you, Paul?”

“Do you know, I can’t make up my mind about that,” said Paul confidentially. “Your hair looks old ... I never knew a young person with white hair. But your eyes are as young as my beautiful teacher’s when you laugh. I tell you what, Miss Lavendar” ... Paul’s voice and face were as solemn as a judge’s ... “I think you would make a splendid mother. You have just the right look in your eyes ... the look my little mother always had. I think it’s a pity you haven’t any boys of your own.”

“I have a little dream boy, Paul.”

“Oh, have you really? How old is he?”

“About your age I think. He ought to be older because I dreamed him long before you were born. But I’ll never let him get any older than eleven or twelve; because if I did some day he might grow up altogether and then I’d lose him.”

“I know,” nodded Paul. “That’s the beauty of dream-people ... they stay any age you want them. You and my beautiful teacher and me myself are the only folks in the world that I know of that have dream-people. Isn’t it funny and nice we should all know each other? But I guess that kind of people always find each other out. Grandma never has dream-people and Mary Joe thinks I’m wrong in the upper story because I have them. But I

think it's splendid to have them. YOU know, Miss Lavendar. Tell me all about your little dream-boy."

"He has blue eyes and curly hair. He steals in and wakens me with a kiss every morning. Then all day he plays here in the garden ... and I play with him. Such games as we have. We run races and talk with the echoes; and I tell him stories. And when twilight comes ..."

"I know," interrupted Paul eagerly. "He comes and sits beside you ... SO ... because of course at twelve he'd be too big to climb into your lap ... and lays his head on your shoulder ... SO ... and you put your arms about him and hold him tight, tight, and rest your cheek on his head ... yes, that's the very way. Oh, you DO know, Miss Lavendar."

Anne found the two of them there when she came out of the stone house, and something in Miss Lavendar's face made her hate to disturb them.

"I'm afraid we must go, Paul, if we want to get home before dark. Miss Lavendar, I'm going to invite myself to Echo Lodge for a whole week pretty soon."

"If you come for a week I'll keep you for two," threatened Miss Lavendar.

XXVIII. The Prince Comes Back to the Enchanted Palace

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The last day of school came and went. A triumphant “semi-annual examination” was held and Anne’s pupils acquitted themselves splendidly. At the close they gave her an address and a writing desk. All the girls and ladies present cried, and some of the boys had it cast up to them later on that they cried too, although they always denied it.

Mrs. Harmon Andrews, Mrs. Peter Sloane, and Mrs. William Bell walked home together and talked things over.

“I do think it is such a pity Anne is leaving when the children seem so much attached to her,” sighed Mrs. Peter Sloane, who had a habit of sighing over everything and even finished off her jokes that way. “To be sure,” she added hastily, “we all know we’ll have a good teacher next year too.”

“Jane will do her duty, I’ve no doubt,” said Mrs. Andrews rather stiffly. “I don’t suppose she’ll tell the children quite so many fairy tales or spend so much time roaming about the woods with them. But she has her name on the Inspector’s Roll of Honor and the Newbridge people are in a terrible state over her leaving.”

“I’m real glad Anne is going to college,” said Mrs. Bell. “She has always wanted it and it will be a splendid thing for her.”

“Well, I don’t know.” Mrs. Andrews was determined not to agree fully with anybody that day. “I don’t see that Anne needs any more education. She’ll probably be marrying Gilbert Blythe, if his infatuation for her lasts till he gets through college, and what good will Latin and Greek do her then? If they taught you at college how to manage a man there might be some sense in her going.”

Mrs. Harmon Andrews, so Avonlea gossip whispered, had never learned how to manage her “man,” and as a result the Andrews household

was not exactly a model of domestic happiness.

“I see that the Charlottetown call to Mr. Allan is up before the Presbytery,” said Mrs. Bell. “That means we’ll be losing him soon, I suppose.”

“They’re not going before September,” said Mrs. Sloane. “It will be a great loss to the community ... though I always did think that Mrs. Allan dressed rather too gay for a minister’s wife. But we are none of us perfect. Did you notice how neat and snug Mr. Harrison looked today? I never saw such a changed man. He goes to church every Sunday and has subscribed to the salary.”

“Hasn’t that Paul Irving grown to be a big boy?” said Mrs. Andrews. “He was such a mite for his age when he came here. I declare I hardly knew him today. He’s getting to look a lot like his father.”

“He’s a smart boy,” said Mrs. Bell.

“He’s smart enough, but” ... Mrs. Andrews lowered her voice ... “I believe he tells queer stories. Gracie came home from school one day last week with the greatest rigmarole he had told her about people who lived down at the shore ... stories there couldn’t be a word of truth in, you know. I told Gracie not to believe them, and she said Paul didn’t intend her to. But if he didn’t what did he tell them to her for?”

“Anne says Paul is a genius,” said Mrs. Sloane.

“He may be. You never know what to expect of them Americans,” said Mrs. Andrews. Mrs. Andrews’ only acquaintance with the word “genius” was derived from the colloquial fashion of calling any eccentric individual “a queer genius.” She probably thought, with Mary Joe, that it meant a person with something wrong in his upper story.

Back in the schoolroom Anne was sitting alone at her desk, as she had sat on the first day of school two years before, her face leaning on her hand, her dewy eyes looking wistfully out of the window to the Lake of Shining Waters. Her heart was so wrung over the parting with her pupils that for a moment college had lost all its charm. She still felt the clasp of Annetta Bell’s arms about her neck and heard the childish wail, “I’ll NEVER love any teacher as much as you, Miss Shirley, never, never.”

For two years she had worked earnestly and faithfully, making many mistakes and learning from them. She had had her reward. She had taught her scholars something, but she felt that they had taught her much more ... lessons of tenderness, self-control, innocent wisdom, lore of childish hearts. Perhaps she had not succeeded in “inspiring” any wonderful ambitions in her pupils, but she had taught them, more by her own sweet personality than by all her careful precepts, that it was good and necessary in the years that were before them to live their lives finely and graciously, holding fast to truth and courtesy and kindness, keeping aloof from all that savored of falsehood and meanness and vulgarity. They were, perhaps, all unconscious of having learned such lessons; but they would remember and practice them long after they had forgotten the capital of Afghanistan and the dates of the Wars of the Roses.

“Another chapter in my life is closed,” said Anne aloud, as she locked her desk. She really felt very sad over it; but the romance in the idea of that “closed chapter” did comfort her a little.

Anne spent a fortnight at Echo Lodge early in her vacation and everybody concerned had a good time.

She took Miss Lavendar on a shopping expedition to town and persuaded her to buy a new organdy dress; then came the excitement of cutting and making it together, while the happy Charlotta the Fourth basted and swept up clippings. Miss Lavendar had complained that she could not feel much interest in anything, but the sparkle came back to her eyes over her pretty dress.

“What a foolish, frivolous person I must be,” she sighed. “I’m wholesomely ashamed to think that a new dress ... even it is a forget-me-not organdy ... should exhilarate me so, when a good conscience and an extra contribution to Foreign Missions couldn’t do it.”

Midway in her visit Anne went home to Green Gables for a day to mend the twins’ stockings and settle up Davy’s accumulated store of questions. In the evening she went down to the shore road to see Paul Irving. As she passed by the low, square window of the Irving sitting room

she caught a glimpse of Paul on somebody's lap; but the next moment he came flying through the hall.

"Oh, Miss Shirley," he cried excitedly, "you can't think what has happened! Something so splendid. Father is here ... just think of that! Father is here! Come right in. Father, this is my beautiful teacher. YOU know, father."

Stephen Irving came forward to meet Anne with a smile. He was a tall, handsome man of middle age, with iron-gray hair, deep-set, dark blue eyes, and a strong, sad face, splendidly modeled about chin and brow. Just the face for a hero of romance, Anne thought with a thrill of intense satisfaction. It was so disappointing to meet someone who ought to be a hero and find him bald or stooped, or otherwise lacking in manly beauty. Anne would have thought it dreadful if the object of Miss Lavendar's romance had not looked the part.

"So this is my little son's 'beautiful teacher,' of whom I have heard so much," said Mr. Irving with a hearty handshake. "Paul's letters have been so full of you, Miss Shirley, that I feel as if I were pretty well acquainted with you already. I want to thank you for what you have done for Paul. I think that your influence has been just what he needed. Mother is one of the best and dearest of women; but her robust, matter-of-fact Scotch common sense could not always understand a temperament like my laddie's. What was lacking in her you have supplied. Between you, I think Paul's training in these two past years has been as nearly ideal as a motherless boy's could be."

Everybody likes to be appreciated. Under Mr. Irving's praise Anne's face "burst flower like into rosy bloom," and the busy, weary man of the world, looking at her, thought he had never seen a fairer, sweeter slip of girlhood than this little "down east" schoolteacher with her red hair and wonderful eyes.

Paul sat between them blissfully happy.

"I never dreamed father was coming," he said radiantly. "Even Grandma didn't know it. It was a great surprise. As a general thing ..." Paul shook his brown curls gravely ... "I don't like to be surprised. You

lose all the fun of expecting things when you're surprised. But in a case like this it is all right. Father came last night after I had gone to bed. And after Grandma and Mary Joe had stopped being surprised he and Grandma came upstairs to look at me, not meaning to wake me up till morning. But I woke right up and saw father. I tell you I just sprang at him."

"With a hug like a bear's," said Mr. Irving, putting his arms around Paul's shoulder smilingly. "I hardly knew my boy, he had grown so big and brown and sturdy."

"I don't know which was the most pleased to see father, Grandma or I," continued Paul. "Grandma's been in kitchen all day making the things father likes to eat. She wouldn't trust them to Mary Joe, she says. That's HER way of showing gladness. *I* like best just to sit and talk to father. But I'm going to leave you for a little while now if you'll excuse me. I must get the cows for Mary Joe. That is one of my daily duties."

When Paul had scampered away to do his "daily duty" Mr. Irving talked to Anne of various matters. But Anne felt that he was thinking of something else underneath all the time. Presently it came to the surface.

"In Paul's last letter he spoke of going with you to visit an old ... friend of mine ... Miss Lewis at the stone house in Grafton. Do you know her well?"

"Yes, indeed, she is a very dear friend of mine," was Anne's demure reply, which gave no hint of the sudden thrill that tingled over her from head to foot at Mr. Irving's question. Anne "felt instinctively" that romance was peeping at her around a corner.

Mr. Irving rose and went to the window, looking out on a great, golden, billowing sea where a wild wind was harping. For a few moments there was silence in the little dark-walled room. Then he turned and looked down into Anne's sympathetic face with a smile, half-whimsical, half-tender.

"I wonder how much you know," he said.

"I know all about it," replied Anne promptly. "You see," she explained hastily, "Miss Lavendar and I are very intimate. She wouldn't tell things of such a sacred nature to everybody. We are kindred spirits."

“Yes, I believe you are. Well, I am going to ask a favor of you. I would like to go and see Miss Lavendar if she will let me. Will you ask her if I may come?”

Would she not? Oh, indeed she would! Yes, this was romance, the very, the real thing, with all the charm of rhyme and story and dream. It was a little belated, perhaps, like a rose blooming in October which should have bloomed in June; but none the less a rose, all sweetness and fragrance, with the gleam of gold in its heart. Never did Anne’s feet bear her on a more willing errand than on that walk through the beechwoods to Grafton the next morning. She found Miss Lavendar in the garden. Anne was fearfully excited. Her hands grew cold and her voice trembled.

“Miss Lavendar, I have something to tell you ... something very important. Can you guess what it is?”

Anne never supposed that Miss Lavendar could GUESS; but Miss Lavendar’s face grew very pale and Miss Lavendar said in a quiet, still voice, from which all the color and sparkle that Miss Lavendar’s voice usually suggested had faded.

“Stephen Irving is home?”

“How did you know? Who told you?” cried Anne disappointedly, vexed that her great revelation had been anticipated.

“Nobody. I knew that must be it, just from the way you spoke.”

“He wants to come and see you,” said Anne. “May I send him word that he may?”

“Yes, of course,” fluttered Miss Lavendar. “There is no reason why he shouldn’t. He is only coming as any old friend might.”

Anne had her own opinion about that as she hastened into the house to write a note at Miss Lavendar’s desk.

“Oh, it’s delightful to be living in a storybook,” she thought gaily. “It will come out all right of course ... it must ... and Paul will have a mother after his own heart and everybody will be happy. But Mr. Irving will take Miss Lavendar away ... and dear knows what will happen to the little stone house ... and so there are two sides to it, as there seems to be to everything in this world.” The important note was written and Anne

herself carried it to the Grafton post office, where she waylaid the mail carrier and asked him to leave it at the Avonlea office.

“It’s so very important,” Anne assured him anxiously. The mail carrier was a rather grumpy old personage who did not at all look the part of a messenger of Cupid; and Anne was none too certain that his memory was to be trusted. But he said he would do his best to remember and she had to be contented with that.

Charlotta the Fourth felt that some mystery pervaded the stone house that afternoon ... a mystery from which she was excluded. Miss Lavendar roamed about the garden in a distracted fashion. Anne, too, seemed possessed by a demon of unrest, and walked to and fro and went up and down. Charlotta the Fourth endured it till patience ceased to be a virtue; then she confronted Anne on the occasion of that romantic young person’s third aimless peregrination through the kitchen.

“Please, Miss Shirley, ma’am,” said Charlotta the Fourth, with an indignant toss of her very blue bows, “it’s plain to be seen you and Miss Lavendar have got a secret and I think, begging your pardon if I’m too forward, Miss Shirley, ma’am, that it’s real mean not to tell me when we’ve all been such chums.”

“Oh, Charlotta dear, I’d have told you all about it if it were my secret ... but it’s Miss Lavendar’s, you see. However, I’ll tell you this much ... and if nothing comes of it you must never breathe a word about it to a living soul. You see, Prince Charming is coming tonight. He came long ago, but in a foolish moment went away and wandered afar and forgot the secret of the magic pathway to the enchanted castle, where the princess was weeping her faithful heart out for him. But at last he remembered it again and the princess is waiting still... because nobody but her own dear prince could carry her off.”

“Oh, Miss Shirley, ma’am, what is that in prose?” gasped the mystified Charlotta.

Anne laughed.

“In prose, an old friend of Miss Lavendar’s is coming to see her tonight.”

“Do you mean an old beau of hers?” demanded the literal Charlotta.

“That is probably what I do mean ... in prose,” answered Anne gravely. “It is Paul’s father ... Stephen Irving. And goodness knows what will come of it, but let us hope for the best, Charlotta.”

“I hope that he’ll marry Miss Lavendar,” was Charlotta’s unequivocal response. “Some women’s intended from the start to be old maids, and I’m afraid I’m one of them, Miss Shirley, ma’am, because I’ve awful little patience with the men. But Miss Lavendar never was. And I’ve been awful worried, thinking what on earth she’d do when I got so big I’d HAVE to go to Boston. There ain’t any more girls in our family and dear knows what she’d do if she got some stranger that might laugh at her pretendings and leave things lying round out of their place and not be willing to be called Charlotta the Fifth. She might get someone who wouldn’t be as unlucky as me in breaking dishes but she’d never get anyone who’d love her better.”

And the faithful little handmaiden dashed to the oven door with a sniff.

They went through the form of having tea as usual that night at Echo Lodge; but nobody really ate anything. After tea Miss Lavendar went to her room and put on her new forget-me-not organdy, while Anne did her hair for her. Both were dreadfully excited; but Miss Lavendar pretended to be very calm and indifferent.

“I must really mend that rent in the curtain tomorrow,” she said anxiously, inspecting it as if it were the only thing of any importance just then. “Those curtains have not worn as well as they should, considering the price I paid. Dear me, Charlotta has forgotten to dust the stair railing AGAIN. I really MUST speak to her about it.”

Anne was sitting on the porch steps when Stephen Irving came down the lane and across the garden.

“This is the one place where time stands still,” he said, looking around him with delighted eyes. “There is nothing changed about this house or garden since I was here twenty-five years ago. It makes me feel young again.”

“You know time always does stand still in an enchanted palace,” said Anne seriously. “It is only when the prince comes that things begin to

happen.”

Mr. Irving smiled a little sadly into her uplifted face, all astar with its youth and promise.

“Sometimes the prince comes too late,” he said. He did not ask Anne to translate her remark into prose. Like all kindred spirits he “understood.”

“Oh, no, not if he is the real prince coming to the true princess,” said Anne, shaking her red head decidedly, as she opened the parlor door. When he had gone in she shut it tightly behind him and turned to confront Charlotta the Fourth, who was in the hall, all “nods and becks and wreathed smiles.”

“Oh, Miss Shirley, ma’am,” she breathed, “I peeked from the kitchen window ... and he’s awful handsome ... and just the right age for Miss Lavendar. And oh, Miss Shirley, ma’am, do you think it would be much harm to listen at the door?”

“It would be dreadful, Charlotta,” said Anne firmly, “so just you come away with me out of the reach of temptation.”

“I can’t do anything, and it’s awful to hang round just waiting,” sighed Charlotta. “What if he don’t propose after all, Miss Shirley, ma’am? You can never be sure of them men. My older sister, Charlotta the First, thought she was engaged to one once. But it turned out HE had a different opinion and she says she’ll never trust one of them again. And I heard of another case where a man thought he wanted one girl awful bad when it was really her sister he wanted all the time. When a man don’t know his own mind, Miss Shirley, ma’am, how’s a poor woman going to be sure of it?”

“We’ll go to the kitchen and clean the silver spoons,” said Anne. “That’s a task which won’t require much thinking fortunately ... for I COULDN’T think tonight. And it will pass the time.”

It passed an hour. Then, just as Anne laid down the last shining spoon, they heard the front door shut. Both sought comfort fearfully in each other’s eyes.

“Oh, Miss Shirley, ma’am,” gasped Charlotta, “if he’s going away this early there’s nothing into it and never will be.” They flew to the window.

Mr. Irving had no intention of going away. He and Miss Lavendar were strolling slowly down the middle path to the stone bench.

“Oh, Miss Shirley, ma’am, he’s got his arm around her waist,” whispered Charlotta the Fourth delightedly. “He must have proposed to her or she’d never allow it.”

Anne caught Charlotta the Fourth by her own plump waist and danced her around the kitchen until they were both out of breath.

“Oh, Charlotta,” she cried gaily, “I’m neither a prophetess nor the daughter of a prophetess but I’m going to make a prediction. There’ll be a wedding in this old stone house before the maple leaves are red. Do you want that translated into prose, Charlotta?”

“No, I can understand that,” said Charlotta. “A wedding ain’t poetry. Why, Miss Shirley, ma’am, you’re crying! What for?”

“Oh, because it’s all so beautiful ... and story bookish ... and romantic ... and sad,” said Anne, winking the tears out of her eyes. “It’s all perfectly lovely ... but there’s a little sadness mixed up in it too, somehow.”

“Oh, of course there’s a risk in marrying anybody,” conceded Charlotta the Fourth, “but, when all’s said and done, Miss Shirley, ma’am, there’s many a worse thing than a husband.”

XXIX. Poetry and Prose

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For the next month Anne lived in what, for Avonlea, might be called a whirl of excitement. The preparation of her own modest outfit for Redmond was of secondary importance. Miss Lavendar was getting ready to be married and the stone house was the scene of endless consultations and plannings and discussions, with Charlotta the Fourth hovering on the outskirts of things in agitated delight and wonder. Then the dressmaker came, and there was the rapture and wretchedness of choosing fashions and being fitted. Anne and Diana spent half their time at Echo Lodge and there were nights when Anne could not sleep for wondering whether she had done right in advising Miss Lavendar to select brown rather than navy blue for her traveling dress, and to have her gray silk made princess.

Everybody concerned in Miss Lavendar's story was very happy. Paul Irving rushed to Green Gables to talk the news over with Anne as soon as his father had told him.

"I knew I could trust father to pick me out a nice little second mother," he said proudly. "It's a fine thing to have a father you can depend on, teacher. I just love Miss Lavendar. Grandma is pleased, too. She says she's real glad father didn't pick out an American for his second wife, because, although it turned out all right the first time, such a thing wouldn't be likely to happen twice. Mrs. Lynde says she thoroughly approves of the match and thinks its likely Miss Lavendar will give up her queer notions and be like other people, now that she's going to be married. But I hope she won't give her queer notions up, teacher, because I like them. And I don't want her to be like other people. There are too many other people around as it is. YOU know, teacher."

Charlotta the Fourth was another radiant person.

"Oh, Miss Shirley, ma'am, it has all turned out so beautiful. When Mr. Irving and Miss Lavendar come back from their tour I'm to go up to

Boston and live with them ... and me only fifteen, and the other girls never went till they were sixteen. Ain't Mr. Irving splendid? He just worships the ground she treads on and it makes me feel so queer sometimes to see the look in his eyes when he's watching her. It beggars description, Miss Shirley, ma'am. I'm awful thankful they're so fond of each other. It's the best way, when all's said and done, though some folks can get along without it. I've got an aunt who has been married three times and says she married the first time for love and the last two times for strictly business, and was happy with all three except at the times of the funerals. But I think she took a resk, Miss Shirley, ma'am."

"Oh, it's all so romantic," breathed Anne to Marilla that night. "If I hadn't taken the wrong path that day we went to Mr. Kimball's I'd never have known Miss Lavendar; and if I hadn't met her I'd never have taken Paul there ... and he'd never have written to his father about visiting Miss Lavendar just as Mr. Irving was starting for San Francisco. Mr. Irving says whenever he got that letter he made up his mind to send his partner to San Francisco and come here instead. He hadn't heard anything of Miss Lavendar for fifteen years. Somebody had told him then that she was to be married and he thought she was and never asked anybody anything about her. And now everything has come right. And I had a hand in bringing it about. Perhaps, as Mrs. Lynde says, everything is foreordained and it was bound to happen anyway. But even so, it's nice to think one was an instrument used by predestination. Yes indeed, it's very romantic."

"I can't see that it's so terribly romantic at all," said Marilla rather crisply. Marilla thought Anne was too worked up about it and had plenty to do with getting ready for college without "traipsing" to Echo Lodge two days out of three helping Miss Lavendar. "In the first place two young fools quarrel and turn sulky; then Steve Irving goes to the States and after a spell gets married up there and is perfectly happy from all accounts. Then his wife dies and after a decent interval he thinks he'll come home and see if his first fancy'll have him. Meanwhile, she's been living single, probably because nobody nice enough came along to want her, and they

meet and agree to be married after all. Now, where is the romance in all that?"

"Oh, there isn't any, when you put it that way," gasped Anne, rather as if somebody had thrown cold water over her. "I suppose that's how it looks in prose. But it's very different if you look at it through poetry ... and *I* think it's nicer ..." Anne recovered herself and her eyes shone and her cheeks flushed ... "to look at it through poetry."

Marilla glanced at the radiant young face and refrained from further sarcastic comments. Perhaps some realization came to her that after all it was better to have, like Anne, "the vision and the faculty divine" ... that gift which the world cannot bestow or take away, of looking at life through some transfiguring ... or revealing? ... medium, whereby everything seemed apparelled in celestial light, wearing a glory and a freshness not visible to those who, like herself and Charlotta the Fourth, looked at things only through prose.

"When's the wedding to be?" she asked after a pause.

"The last Wednesday in August. They are to be married in the garden under the honeysuckle trellis ... the very spot where Mr. Irving proposed to her twenty-five years ago. Marilla, that *IS* romantic, even in prose. There's to be nobody there except Mrs. Irving and Paul and Gilbert and Diana and I, and Miss Lavendar's cousins. And they will leave on the six o'clock train for a trip to the Pacific coast. When they come back in the fall Paul and Charlotta the Fourth are to go up to Boston to live with them. But Echo Lodge is to be left just as it is... only of course they'll sell the hens and cow, and board up the windows ... and every summer they're coming down to live in it. I'm so glad. It would have hurt me dreadfully next winter at Redmond to think of that dear stone house all stripped and deserted, with empty rooms ... or far worse still, with other people living in it. But I can think of it now, just as I've always seen it, waiting happily for the summer to bring life and laughter back to it again."

There was more romance in the world than that which had fallen to the share of the middle-aged lovers of the stone house. Anne stumbled suddenly on it one evening when she went over to Orchard Slope by the

wood cut and came out into the Barry garden. Diana Barry and Fred Wright were standing together under the big willow. Diana was leaning against the gray trunk, her lashes cast down on very crimson cheeks. One hand was held by Fred, who stood with his face bent toward her, stammering something in low earnest tones. There were no other people in the world except their two selves at that magic moment; so neither of them saw Anne, who, after one dazed glance of comprehension, turned and sped noiselessly back through the spruce wood, never stopping till she gained her own gable room, where she sat breathlessly down by her window and tried to collect her scattered wits.

“Diana and Fred are in love with each other,” she gasped. “Oh, it does seem so ... so ... so HOPELESSLY grown up.”

Anne, of late, had not been without her suspicions that Diana was proving false to the melancholy Byronic hero of her early dreams. But as “things seen are mightier than things heard,” or suspected, the realization that it was actually so came to her with almost the shock of perfect surprise. This was succeeded by a queer, little lonely feeling ... as if, somehow, Diana had gone forward into a new world, shutting a gate behind her, leaving Anne on the outside.

“Things are changing so fast it almost frightens me,” Anne thought, a little sadly. “And I’m afraid that this can’t help making some difference between Diana and me. I’m sure I can’t tell her all my secrets after this ... she might tell Fred. And what CAN she see in Fred? He’s very nice and jolly ... but he’s just Fred Wright.”

It is always a very puzzling question ... what can somebody see in somebody else? But how fortunate after all that it is so, for if everybody saw alike ... well, in that case, as the old Indian said, “Everybody would want my squaw.” It was plain that Diana DID see something in Fred Wright, however Anne’s eyes might be holden. Diana came to Green Gables the next evening, a pensive, shy young lady, and told Anne the whole story in the dusky seclusion of the east gable. Both girls cried and kissed and laughed.

“I’m so happy,” said Diana, “but it does seem ridiculous to think of me being engaged.”

“What is it really like to be engaged?” asked Anne curiously.

“Well, that all depends on who you’re engaged to,” answered Diana, with that maddening air of superior wisdom always assumed by those who are engaged over those who are not. “It’s perfectly lovely to be engaged to Fred ... but I think it would be simply horrid to be engaged to anyone else.”

“There’s not much comfort for the rest of us in that, seeing that there is only one Fred,” laughed Anne.

“Oh, Anne, you don’t understand,” said Diana in vexation. “I didn’t mean THAT ... it’s so hard to explain. Never mind, you’ll understand sometime, when your own turn comes.”

“Bless you, dearest of Dianas, I understand now. What is an imagination for if not to enable you to peep at life through other people’s eyes?”

“You must be my bridesmaid, you know, Anne. Promise me that ... wherever you may be when I’m married.”

“I’ll come from the ends of the earth if necessary,” promised Anne solemnly.

“Of course, it won’t be for ever so long yet,” said Diana, blushing. “Three years at the very least ... for I’m only eighteen and mother says no daughter of hers shall be married before she’s twenty-one. Besides, Fred’s father is going to buy the Abraham Fletcher farm for him and he says he’s got to have it two thirds paid for before he’ll give it to him in his own name. But three years isn’t any too much time to get ready for housekeeping, for I haven’t a speck of fancy work made yet. But I’m going to begin crocheting doilies tomorrow. Myra Gillis had thirty-seven doilies when she was married and I’m determined I shall have as many as she had.”

“I suppose it would be perfectly impossible to keep house with only thirty-six doilies,” conceded Anne, with a solemn face but dancing eyes.

Diana looked hurt.

“I didn’t think you’d make fun of me, Anne,” she said reproachfully.

“Dearest, I wasn’t making fun of you,” cried Anne repentantly. “I was only teasing you a bit. I think you’ll make the sweetest little housekeeper in the world. And I think it’s perfectly lovely of you to be planning already for your home o’dreams.”

Anne had no sooner uttered the phrase, “home o’dreams,” than it captivated her fancy and she immediately began the erection of one of her own. It was, of course, tenanted by an ideal master, dark, proud, and melancholy; but oddly enough, Gilbert Blythe persisted in hanging about too, helping her arrange pictures, lay out gardens, and accomplish sundry other tasks which a proud and melancholy hero evidently considered beneath his dignity. Anne tried to banish Gilbert’s image from her castle in Spain but, somehow, he went on being there, so Anne, being in a hurry, gave up the attempt and pursued her aerial architecture with such success that her “home o’dreams” was built and furnished before Diana spoke again.

“I suppose, Anne, you must think it’s funny I should like Fred so well when he’s so different from the kind of man I’ve always said I would marry ... the tall, slender kind? But somehow I wouldn’t want Fred to be tall and slender ... because, don’t you see, he wouldn’t be Fred then. Of course,” added Diana rather dolefully, “we will be a dreadfully pudgy couple. But after all that’s better than one of us being short and fat and the other tall and lean, like Morgan Sloane and his wife. Mrs. Lynde says it always makes her think of the long and short of it when she sees them together.”

“Well,” said Anne to herself that night, as she brushed her hair before her gilt framed mirror, “I am glad Diana is so happy and satisfied. But when my turn comes ... if it ever does ... I do hope there’ll be something a little more thrilling about it. But then Diana thought so too, once. I’ve heard her say time and again she’d never get engaged any poky commonplace way ... he’d HAVE to do something splendid to win her. But she has changed. Perhaps I’ll change too. But I won’t ... and I’m

determined I won't. Oh, I think these engagements are dreadfully unsettling things when they happen to your intimate friends."

XXX. A Wedding at the Stone House

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The last week in August came. Miss Lavendar was to be married in it. Two weeks later Anne and Gilbert would leave for Redmond College. In a week's time Mrs. Rachel Lynde would move to Green Gables and set up her lares and penates in the erstwhile spare room, which was already prepared for her coming. She had sold all her superfluous household plenishings by auction and was at present reveling in the congenial occupation of helping the Allans pack up. Mr. Allan was to preach his farewell sermon the next Sunday. The old order was changing rapidly to give place to the new, as Anne felt with a little sadness threading all her excitement and happiness.

"Changes ain't totally pleasant but they're excellent things," said Mr. Harrison philosophically. "Two years is about long enough for things to stay exactly the same. If they stayed put any longer they might grow mossy."

Mr. Harrison was smoking on his veranda. His wife had self-sacrificingly told that he might smoke in the house if he took care to sit by an open window. Mr. Harrison rewarded this concession by going outdoors altogether to smoke in fine weather, and so mutual goodwill reigned.

Anne had come over to ask Mrs. Harrison for some of her yellow dahlias. She and Diana were going through to Echo Lodge that evening to help Miss Lavendar and Charlotta the Fourth with their final preparations for the morrow's bridal. Miss Lavendar herself never had dahlias; she did not like them and they would not have suited the fine retirement of her old-fashioned garden. But flowers of any kind were rather scarce in Avonlea and the neighboring districts that summer, thanks to Uncle Abe's storm; and Anne and Diana thought that a certain old cream-colored stone jug, usually kept sacred to doughnuts, brimmed over with yellow dahlias,

would be just the thing to set in a dim angle of the stone house stairs, against the dark background of red hall paper.

“I s’pose you’ll be starting off for college in a fortnight’s time?” continued Mr. Harrison. “Well, we’re going to miss you an awful lot, Emily and me. To be sure, Mrs. Lynde’ll be over there in your place. There ain’t nobody but a substitute can be found for them.”

The irony of Mr. Harrison’s tone is quite untransferable to paper. In spite of his wife’s intimacy with Mrs. Lynde, the best that could be said of the relationship between her and Mr. Harrison even under the new regime, was that they preserved an armed neutrality.

“Yes, I’m going,” said Anne. “I’m very glad with my head ... and very sorry with my heart.”

“I s’pose you’ll be scooping up all the honors that are lying round loose at Redmond.”

“I may try for one or two of them,” confessed Anne, “but I don’t care so much for things like that as I did two years ago. What I want to get out of my college course is some knowledge of the best way of living life and doing the most and best with it. I want to learn to understand and help other people and myself.”

Mr. Harrison nodded.

“That’s the idea exactly. That’s what college ought to be for, instead of for turning out a lot of B.A.’s, so chock full of book-learning and vanity that there ain’t room for anything else. You’re all right. College won’t be able to do you much harm, I reckon.”

Diana and Anne drove over to Echo Lodge after tea, taking with them all the flowery spoil that several predatory expeditions in their own and their neighbors’ gardens had yielded. They found the stone house agog with excitement. Charlotta the Fourth was flying around with such vim and briskness that her blue bows seemed really to possess the power of being everywhere at once. Like the helmet of Navarre, Charlotta’s blue bows waved ever in the thickest of the fray.

“Praise be to goodness you’ve come,” she said devoutly, “for there’s heaps of things to do ... and the frosting on that cake WON’T harden ...

and there's all the silver to be rubbed up yet ... and the horsehair trunk to be packed ... and the roosters for the chicken salad are running out there beyant the henhouse yet, crowing, Miss Shirley, ma'am. And Miss Lavendar ain't to be trusted to do a thing. I was thankful when Mr. Irving came a few minutes ago and took her off for a walk in the woods. Courting's all right in its place, Miss Shirley, ma'am, but if you try to mix it up with cooking and scouring everything's spoiled. That's MY opinion, Miss Shirley, ma'am."

Anne and Diana worked so heartily that by ten o'clock even Charlotta the Fourth was satisfied. She braided her hair in innumerable plaits and took her weary little bones off to bed.

"But I'm sure I shan't sleep a blessed wink, Miss Shirley, ma'am, for fear that something'll go wrong at the last minute ... the cream won't whip ... or Mr. Irving'll have a stroke and not be able to come."

"He isn't in the habit of having strokes, is he?" asked Diana, the dimpled corners of her mouth twitching. To Diana, Charlotta the Fourth was, if not exactly a thing of beauty, certainly a joy forever.

"They're not things that go by habit," said Charlotta the Fourth with dignity. "They just HAPPEN ... and there you are. ANYBODY can have a stroke. You don't have to learn how. Mr. Irving looks a lot like an uncle of mine that had one once just as he was sitting down to dinner one day. But maybe everything'll go all right. In this world you've just got to hope for the best and prepare for the worst and take whatever God sends."

"The only thing I'm worried about is that it won't be fine tomorrow," said Diana. "Uncle Abe predicted rain for the middle of the week, and ever since the big storm I can't help believing there's a good deal in what Uncle Abe says."

Anne, who knew better than Diana just how much Uncle Abe had to do with the storm, was not much disturbed by this. She slept the sleep of the just and weary, and was roused at an unearthly hour by Charlotta the Fourth.

"Oh, Miss Shirley, ma'am, it's awful to call you so early," came wailing through the keyhole, "but there's so much to do yet ... and oh,

Miss Shirley, ma'am, I'm skeered it's going to rain and I wish you'd get up and tell me you think it ain't." Anne flew to the window, hoping against hope that Charlotta the Fourth was saying this merely by way of rousing her effectually. But alas, the morning did look unpropitious. Below the window Miss Lavendar's garden, which should have been a glory of pale virgin sunshine, lay dim and windless; and the sky over the firs was dark with moody clouds.

"Isn't it too mean!" said Diana.

"We must hope for the best," said Anne determinedly. "If it only doesn't actually rain, a cool, pearly gray day like this would really be nicer than hot sunshine."

"But it will rain," mourned Charlotta, creeping into the room, a figure of fun, with her many braids wound about her head, the ends, tied up with white thread, sticking out in all directions. "It'll hold off till the last minute and then pour cats and dogs. And all the folks will get sopping ... and track mud all over the house ... and they won't be able to be married under the honeysuckle ... and it's awful unlucky for no sun to shine on a bride, say what you will, Miss Shirley, ma'am. *I* knew things were going too well to last."

Charlotta the Fourth seemed certainly to have borrowed a leaf out of Miss Eliza Andrews' book.

It did not rain, though it kept on looking as if it meant to. By noon the rooms were decorated, the table beautifully laid; and upstairs was waiting a bride, "adorned for her husband."

"You do look sweet," said Anne rapturously.

"Lovely," echoed Diana.

"Everything's ready, Miss Shirley, ma'am, and nothing dreadful has happened YET," was Charlotta's cheerful statement as she betook herself to her little back room to dress. Out came all the braids; the resultant rampant crinkliness was plaited into two tails and tied, not with two bows alone, but with four, of brand-new ribbon, brightly blue. The two upper bows rather gave the impression of overgrown wings sprouting from Charlotta's neck, somewhat after the fashion of Raphael's cherubs. But

Charlotta the Fourth thought them very beautiful, and after she had rustled into a white dress, so stiffly starched that it could stand alone, she surveyed herself in her glass with great satisfaction ... a satisfaction which lasted until she went out in the hall and caught a glimpse through the spare room door of a tall girl in some softly clinging gown, pinning white, starlike flowers on the smooth ripples of her ruddy hair.

“Oh, I’ll NEVER be able to look like Miss Shirley,” thought poor Charlotta despairingly. “You just have to be born so, I guess ... don’t seem’s if any amount of practice could give you that AIR.”

By one o’clock the guests had come, including Mr. and Mrs. Allan, for Mr. Allan was to perform the ceremony in the absence of the Grafton minister on his vacation. There was no formality about the marriage. Miss Lavendar came down the stairs to meet her bridegroom at the foot, and as he took her hand she lifted her big brown eyes to his with a look that made Charlotta the Fourth, who intercepted it, feel queerer than ever. They went out to the honeysuckle arbor, where Mr. Allan was awaiting them. The guests grouped themselves as they pleased. Anne and Diana stood by the old stone bench, with Charlotta the Fourth between them, desperately clutching their hands in her cold, tremulous little paws.

Mr. Allan opened his blue book and the ceremony proceeded. Just as Miss Lavendar and Stephen Irving were pronounced man and wife a very beautiful and symbolic thing happened. The sun suddenly burst through the gray and poured a flood of radiance on the happy bride. Instantly the garden was alive with dancing shadows and flickering lights.

“What a lovely omen,” thought Anne, as she ran to kiss the bride. Then the three girls left the rest of the guests laughing around the bridal pair while they flew into the house to see that all was in readiness for the feast.

“Thanks be to goodness, it’s over, Miss Shirley, ma’am,” breathed Charlotta the Fourth, “and they’re married safe and sound, no matter what happens now. The bags of rice are in the pantry, ma’am, and the old shoes are behind the door, and the cream for whipping is on the sullar steps.”

At half past two Mr. and Mrs. Irving left, and everybody went to Bright River to see them off on the afternoon train. As Miss Lavendar ... I beg

her pardon, Mrs. Irving ... stepped from the door of her old home Gilbert and the girls threw the rice and Charlotta the Fourth hurled an old shoe with such excellent aim that she struck Mr. Allan squarely on the head. But it was reserved for Paul to give the prettiest send-off. He popped out of the porch ringing furiously a huge old brass dinner bell which had adorned the dining room mantel. Paul's only motive was to make a joyful noise; but as the clangor died away, from point and curve and hill across the river came the chime of "fairy wedding bells," ringing clearly, sweetly, faintly and more faint, as if Miss Lavendar's beloved echoes were bidding her greeting and farewell. And so, amid this benediction of sweet sounds, Miss Lavendar drove away from the old life of dreams and make-believes to a fuller life of realities in the busy world beyond.

Two hours later Anne and Charlotta the Fourth came down the lane again. Gilbert had gone to West Grafton on an errand and Diana had to keep an engagement at home. Anne and Charlotta had come back to put things in order and lock up the little stone house. The garden was a pool of late golden sunshine, with butterflies hovering and bees booming; but the little house had already that indefinable air of desolation which always follows a festivity.

"Oh dear me, don't it look lonesome?" sniffed Charlotta the Fourth, who had been crying all the way home from the station. "A wedding ain't much cheerfuller than a funeral after all, when it's all over, Miss Shirley, ma'am."

A busy evening followed. The decorations had to be removed, the dishes washed, the uneaten delicacies packed into a basket for the delectation of Charlotta the Fourth's young brothers at home. Anne would not rest until everything was in apple-pie order; after Charlotta had gone home with her plunder Anne went over the still rooms, feeling like one who trod alone some banquet hall deserted, and closed the blinds. Then she locked the door and sat down under the silver poplar to wait for Gilbert, feeling very tired but still unweariedly thinking "long, long thoughts."

“What are you thinking of, Anne?” asked Gilbert, coming down the walk. He had left his horse and buggy out at the road.

“Of Miss Lavendar and Mr. Irving,” answered Anne dreamily. “Isn’t it beautiful to think how everything has turned out ... how they have come together again after all the years of separation and misunderstanding?”

“Yes, it’s beautiful,” said Gilbert, looking steadily down into Anne’s uplifted face, “but wouldn’t it have been more beautiful still, Anne, if there had been NO separation or misunderstanding ... if they had come hand in hand all the way through life, with no memories behind them but those which belonged to each other?”

For a moment Anne’s heart fluttered queerly and for the first time her eyes faltered under Gilbert’s gaze and a rosy flush stained the paleness of her face. It was as if a veil that had hung before her inner consciousness had been lifted, giving to her view a revelation of unsuspected feelings and realities. Perhaps, after all, romance did not come into one’s life with pomp and blare, like a gay knight riding down; perhaps it crept to one’s side like an old friend through quiet ways; perhaps it revealed itself in seeming prose, until some sudden shaft of illumination flung athwart its pages betrayed the rhythm and the music, perhaps ... perhaps ... love unfolded naturally out of a beautiful friendship, as a golden-hearted rose slipping from its green sheath.

Then the veil dropped again; but the Anne who walked up the dark lane was not quite the same Anne who had driven gaily down it the evening before. The page of girlhood had been turned, as by an unseen finger, and the page of womanhood was before her with all its charm and mystery, its pain and gladness.

Gilbert wisely said nothing more; but in his silence he read the history of the next four years in the light of Anne’s remembered blush. Four years of earnest, happy work ... and then the guerdon of a useful knowledge gained and a sweet heart won.

Behind them in the garden the little stone house brooded among the shadows. It was lonely but not forsaken. It had not yet done with dreams and laughter and the joy of life; there were to be future summers for the

little stone house; meanwhile, it could wait. And over the river in purple
durance the echoes bided their time.

ANNE OF THE ISLAND

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The Shadow of Change

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“Harvest is ended and summer is gone,” quoted Anne Shirley, gazing across the shorn fields dreamily. She and Diana Barry had been picking apples in the Green Gables orchard, but were now resting from their labors in a sunny corner, where airy fleets of thistledown drifted by on the wings of a wind that was still summer-sweet with the incense of ferns in the Haunted Wood.

But everything in the landscape around them spoke of autumn. The sea was roaring hollowly in the distance, the fields were bare and sere, scarfed with golden rod, the brook valley below Green Gables overflowed with asters of ethereal purple, and the Lake of Shining Waters was blue — blue — blue; not the changeful blue of spring, nor the pale azure of summer, but a clear, steadfast, serene blue, as if the water were past all moods and tenses of emotion and had settled down to a tranquility unbroken by fickle dreams.

“It has been a nice summer,” said Diana, twisting the new ring on her left hand with a smile. “And Miss Lavendar’s wedding seemed to come as a sort of crown to it. I suppose Mr. and Mrs. Irving are on the Pacific coast now.”

“It seems to me they have been gone long enough to go around the world,” sighed Anne.

“I can’t believe it is only a week since they were married. Everything has changed. Miss Lavendar and Mr. and Mrs. Allan gone — how lonely the manse looks with the shutters all closed! I went past it last night, and it made me feel as if everybody in it had died.”

“We’ll never get another minister as nice as Mr. Allan,” said Diana, with gloomy conviction. “I suppose we’ll have all kinds of supplies this winter, and half the Sundays no preaching at all. And you and Gilbert gone — it will be awfully dull.”

“Fred will be here,” insinuated Anne slyly.

“When is Mrs. Lynde going to move up?” asked Diana, as if she had not heard Anne’s remark.

“Tomorrow. I’m glad she’s coming — but it will be another change. Marilla and I cleared everything out of the spare room yesterday. Do you know, I hated to do it? Of course, it was silly — but it did seem as if we were committing sacrilege. That old spare room has always seemed like a shrine to me. When I was a child I thought it the most wonderful apartment in the world. You remember what a consuming desire I had to sleep in a spare room bed — but not the Green Gables spare room. Oh, no, never there! It would have been too terrible — I couldn’t have slept a wink from awe. I never WALKED through that room when Marilla sent me in on an errand — no, indeed, I tiptoed through it and held my breath, as if I were in church, and felt relieved when I got out of it. The pictures of George Whitefield and the Duke of Wellington hung there, one on each side of the mirror, and frowned so sternly at me all the time I was in, especially if I dared peep in the mirror, which was the only one in the house that didn’t twist my face a little. I always wondered how Marilla dared houseclean that room. And now it’s not only cleaned but stripped bare. George Whitefield and the Duke have been relegated to the upstairs hall. ‘So passes the glory of this world,’” concluded Anne, with a laugh in which there was a little note of regret. It is never pleasant to have our old shrines desecrated, even when we have outgrown them.

“I’ll be so lonesome when you go,” moaned Diana for the hundredth time. “And to think you go next week!”

“But we’re together still,” said Anne cheerily. “We mustn’t let next week rob us of this week’s joy. I hate the thought of going myself — home and I are such good friends. Talk of being lonesome! It’s I who should groan. YOU’LL be here with any number of your old friends — AND Fred! While I shall be alone among strangers, not knowing a soul!”

“EXCEPT Gilbert — AND Charlie Sloane,” said Diana, imitating Anne’s italics and slyness.

“Charlie Sloane will be a great comfort, of course,” agreed Anne sarcastically; whereupon both those irresponsible damsels laughed. Diana knew exactly what Anne thought of Charlie Sloane; but, despite sundry confidential talks, she did not know just what Anne thought of Gilbert Blythe. To be sure, Anne herself did not know that.

“The boys may be boarding at the other end of Kingsport, for all I know,” Anne went on. “I am glad I’m going to Redmond, and I am sure I shall like it after a while. But for the first few weeks I know I won’t. I shan’t even have the comfort of looking forward to the weekend visit home, as I had when I went to Queen’s. Christmas will seem like a thousand years away.”

“Everything is changing — or going to change,” said Diana sadly. “I have a feeling that things will never be the same again, Anne.”

“We have come to a parting of the ways, I suppose,” said Anne thoughtfully. “We had to come to it. Do you think, Diana, that being grownup is really as nice as we used to imagine it would be when we were children?”

“I don’t know — there are SOME nice things about it,” answered Diana, again caressing her ring with that little smile which always had the effect of making Anne feel suddenly left out and inexperienced. “But there are so many puzzling things, too. Sometimes I feel as if being grownup just frightened me — and then I would give anything to be a little girl again.”

“I suppose we’ll get used to being grownup in time,” said Anne cheerfully. “There won’t be so many unexpected things about it by and by — though, after all, I fancy it’s the unexpected things that give spice to life. We’re eighteen, Diana. In two more years we’ll be twenty. When I was ten I thought twenty was a green old age. In no time you’ll be a staid, middle-aged matron, and I shall be nice, old maid Aunt Anne, coming to visit you on vacations. You’ll always keep a corner for me, won’t you, Di darling? Not the spare room, of course — old maids can’t aspire to spare rooms, and I shall be as ‘umble as Uriah Heep, and quite content with a little over-the-porch or off-the-parlor cubby hole.”

“What nonsense you do talk, Anne,” laughed Diana. “You’ll marry somebody splendid and handsome and rich — and no spare room in Avonlea will be half gorgeous enough for you — and you’ll turn up your nose at all the friends of your youth.”

“That would be a pity; my nose is quite nice, but I fear turning it up would spoil it,” said Anne, patting that shapely organ. “I haven’t so many good features that I could afford to spoil those I have; so, even if I should marry the King of the Cannibal Islands, I promise you I won’t turn up my nose at you, Diana.”

With another gay laugh the girls separated, Diana to return to Orchard Slope, Anne to walk to the Post Office. She found a letter awaiting her there, and when Gilbert Blythe overtook her on the bridge over the Lake of Shining Waters she was sparkling with the excitement of it.

“Priscilla Grant is going to Redmond, too,” she exclaimed. “Isn’t that splendid? I hoped she would, but she didn’t think her father would consent. He has, however, and we’re to board together. I feel that I can face an army with banners — or all the professors of Redmond in one fell phalanx — with a chum like Priscilla by my side.”

“I think we’ll like Kingsport,” said Gilbert. “It’s a nice old burg, they tell me, and has the finest natural park in the world. I’ve heard that the scenery in it is magnificent.”

“I wonder if it will be — can be — any more beautiful than this,” murmured Anne, looking around her with the loving, enraptured eyes of those to whom “home” must always be the loveliest spot in the world, no matter what fairer lands may lie under alien stars.

They were leaning on the bridge of the old pond, drinking deep of the enchantment of the dusk, just at the spot where Anne had climbed from her sinking Dory on the day Elaine floated down to Camelot. The fine, empurpling dye of sunset still stained the western skies, but the moon was rising and the water lay like a great, silver dream in her light. Remembrance wove a sweet and subtle spell over the two young creatures.

“You are very quiet, Anne,” said Gilbert at last.

“I’m afraid to speak or move for fear all this wonderful beauty will vanish just like a broken silence,” breathed Anne.

Gilbert suddenly laid his hand over the slender white one lying on the rail of the bridge. His hazel eyes deepened into darkness, his still boyish lips opened to say something of the dream and hope that thrilled his soul. But Anne snatched her hand away and turned quickly. The spell of the dusk was broken for her.

“I must go home,” she exclaimed, with a rather overdone carelessness. “Marilla had a headache this afternoon, and I’m sure the twins will be in some dreadful mischief by this time. I really shouldn’t have stayed away so long.”

She chattered ceaselessly and inconsequently until they reached the Green Gables lane. Poor Gilbert hardly had a chance to get a word in edgewise. Anne felt rather relieved when they parted. There had been a new, secret self-consciousness in her heart with regard to Gilbert, ever since that fleeting moment of revelation in the garden of Echo Lodge. Something alien had intruded into the old, perfect, schoolday comradeship — something that threatened to mar it.

“I never felt glad to see Gilbert go before,” she thought, half-resentfully, half-sorrowfully, as she walked alone up the lane. “Our friendship will be spoiled if he goes on with this nonsense. It mustn’t be spoiled — I won’t let it. Oh, WHY can’t boys be just sensible!”

Anne had an uneasy doubt that it was not strictly “sensible” that she should still feel on her hand the warm pressure of Gilbert’s, as distinctly as she had felt it for the swift second his had rested there; and still less sensible that the sensation was far from being an unpleasant one — very different from that which had attended a similar demonstration on Charlie Sloane’s part, when she had been sitting out a dance with him at a White Sands party three nights before. Anne shivered over the disagreeable recollection. But all problems connected with infatuated swains vanished from her mind when she entered the homely, unsentimental atmosphere of the Green Gables kitchen where an eight-year-old boy was crying grievously on the sofa.

“What is the matter, Davy?” asked Anne, taking him up in her arms. “Where are Marilla and Dora?”

“Marilla’s putting Dora to bed,” sobbed Davy, “and I’m crying ‘cause Dora fell down the outside cellar steps, heels over head, and scraped all the skin off her nose, and—”

“Oh, well, don’t cry about it, dear. Of course, you are sorry for her, but crying won’t help her any. She’ll be all right tomorrow. Crying never helps any one, Davy-boy, and—”

“I ain’t crying ‘cause Dora fell down cellar,” said Davy, cutting short Anne’s wellmeant preachment with increasing bitterness. “I’m crying, cause I wasn’t there to see her fall. I’m always missing some fun or other, seems to me.”

“Oh, Davy!” Anne choked back an unholy shriek of laughter. “Would you call it fun to see poor little Dora fall down the steps and get hurt?”

“She wasn’t MUCH hurt,” said Davy, defiantly. “‘Course, if she’d been killed I’d have been real sorry, Anne. But the Keiths ain’t so easy killed. They’re like the Blewetts, I guess. Herb Blewett fell off the hayloft last Wednesday, and rolled right down through the turnip chute into the box stall, where they had a fearful wild, cross horse, and rolled right under his heels. And still he got out alive, with only three bones broke. Mrs. Lynde says there are some folks you can’t kill with a meat-axe. Is Mrs. Lynde coming here tomorrow, Anne?”

“Yes, Davy, and I hope you’ll be always very nice and good to her.”

“I’ll be nice and good. But will she ever put me to bed at nights, Anne?”

“Perhaps. Why?”

“‘Cause,” said Davy very decidedly, “if she does I won’t say my prayers before her like I do before you, Anne.”

“Why not?”

“‘Cause I don’t think it would be nice to talk to God before strangers, Anne. Dora can say hers to Mrs. Lynde if she likes, but *I* won’t. I’ll wait till she’s gone and then say ‘em. Won’t that be all right, Anne?”

“Yes, if you are sure you won’t forget to say them, Davy-boy.”

“Oh, I won’t forget, you bet. I think saying my prayers is great fun. But it won’t be as good fun saying them alone as saying them to you. I wish you’d stay home, Anne. I don’t see what you want to go away and leave us for.”

“I don’t exactly WANT to, Davy, but I feel I ought to go.”

“If you don’t want to go you needn’t. You’re grown up. When I’m grown up I’m not going to do one single thing I don’t want to do, Anne.”

“All your life, Davy, you’ll find yourself doing things you don’t want to do.”

“I won’t,” said Davy flatly. “Catch me! I have to do things I don’t want to now ‘cause you and Marilla’ll send me to bed if I don’t. But when I grow up you can’t do that, and there’ll be nobody to tell me not to do things. Won’t I have the time! Say, Anne, Milty Boulter says his mother says you’re going to college to see if you can catch a man. Are you, Anne? I want to know.”

For a second Anne burned with resentment. Then she laughed, reminding herself that Mrs. Boulter’s crude vulgarity of thought and speech could not harm her.

“No, Davy, I’m not. I’m going to study and grow and learn about many things.”

“What things?”

“‘Shoes and ships and sealing wax
And cabbages and kings,’”

quoted Anne.

“But if you DID want to catch a man how would you go about it? I want to know,” persisted Davy, for whom the subject evidently possessed a certain fascination.

“You’d better ask Mrs. Boulter,” said Anne thoughtlessly. “I think it’s likely she knows more about the process than I do.”

“I will, the next time I see her,” said Davy gravely.

“Davy! If you do!” cried Anne, realizing her mistake.

“But you just told me to,” protested Davy aggrieved.

“It’s time you went to bed,” decreed Anne, by way of getting out of the scrape.

After Davy had gone to bed Anne wandered down to Victoria Island and sat there alone, curtailed with fine-spun, moonlit gloom, while the water laughed around her in a duet of brook and wind. Anne had always loved that brook. Many a dream had she spun over its sparkling water in days gone by. She forgot lovelorn youths, and the cayenne speeches of malicious neighbors, and all the problems of her girlish existence. In imagination she sailed over storied seas that wash the distant shining shores of “faery lands forlorn,” where lost Atlantis and Elysium lie, with the evening star for pilot, to the land of Heart’s Desire. And she was richer in those dreams than in realities; for things seen pass away, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

Garlands of Autumn

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The following week sped swiftly, crowded with innumerable “last things,” as Anne called them. Goodbye calls had to be made and received, being pleasant or otherwise, according to whether callers and called-upon were heartily in sympathy with Anne’s hopes, or thought she was too much puffed-up over going to college and that it was their duty to “take her down a peg or two.”

The A.V.I.S. gave a farewell party in honor of Anne and Gilbert one evening at the home of Josie Pye, choosing that place, partly because Mr. Pye’s house was large and convenient, partly because it was strongly suspected that the Pye girls would have nothing to do with the affair if their offer of the house for the party was not accepted. It was a very pleasant little time, for the Pye girls were gracious, and said and did nothing to mar the harmony of the occasion — which was not according to their wont. Josie was unusually amiable — so much so that she even remarked condescendingly to Anne,

“Your new dress is rather becoming to you, Anne. Really, you look ALMOST PRETTY in it.”

“How kind of you to say so,” responded Anne, with dancing eyes. Her sense of humor was developing, and the speeches that would have hurt her at fourteen were becoming merely food for amusement now. Josie suspected that Anne was laughing at her behind those wicked eyes; but she contented herself with whispering to Gertie, as they went downstairs, that Anne Shirley would put on more airs than ever now that she was going to college — you’d see!

All the “old crowd” was there, full of mirth and zest and youthful lightheartedness. Diana Barry, rosy and dimpled, shadowed by the faithful Fred; Jane Andrews, neat and sensible and plain; Ruby Gillis, looking her handsomest and brightest in a cream silk blouse, with red geraniums in her

golden hair; Gilbert Blythe and Charlie Sloane, both trying to keep as near the elusive Anne as possible; Carrie Sloane, looking pale and melancholy because, so it was reported, her father would not allow Oliver Kimball to come near the place; Moody Spurgeon MacPherson, whose round face and objectionable ears were as round and objectionable as ever; and Billy Andrews, who sat in a corner all the evening, chuckled when any one spoke to him, and watched Anne Shirley with a grin of pleasure on his broad, freckled countenance.

Anne had known beforehand of the party, but she had not known that she and Gilbert were, as the founders of the Society, to be presented with a very complimentary “address” and “tokens of respect” — in her case a volume of Shakespeare’s plays, in Gilbert’s a fountain pen. She was so taken by surprise and pleased by the nice things said in the address, read in Moody Spurgeon’s most solemn and ministerial tones, that the tears quite drowned the sparkle of her big gray eyes. She had worked hard and faithfully for the A.V.I.S., and it warmed the cockles of her heart that the members appreciated her efforts so sincerely. And they were all so nice and friendly and jolly — even the Pye girls had their merits; at that moment Anne loved all the world.

She enjoyed the evening tremendously, but the end of it rather spoiled all. Gilbert again made the mistake of saying something sentimental to her as they ate their supper on the moonlit verandah; and Anne, to punish him, was gracious to Charlie Sloane and allowed the latter to walk home with her. She found, however, that revenge hurts nobody quite so much as the one who tries to inflict it. Gilbert walked airily off with Ruby Gillis, and Anne could hear them laughing and talking gaily as they loitered along in the still, crisp autumn air. They were evidently having the best of good times, while she was horribly bored by Charlie Sloane, who talked unbrokenly on, and never, even by accident, said one thing that was worth listening to. Anne gave an occasional absent “yes” or “no,” and thought how beautiful Ruby had looked that night, how very goggly Charlie’s eyes were in the moonlight — worse even than by daylight — and that the

world, somehow, wasn't quite such a nice place as she had believed it to be earlier in the evening.

"I'm just tired out — that is what is the matter with me," she said, when she thankfully found herself alone in her own room. And she honestly believed it was. But a certain little gush of joy, as from some secret, unknown spring, bubbled up in her heart the next evening, when she saw Gilbert striding down through the Haunted Wood and crossing the old log bridge with that firm, quick step of his. So Gilbert was not going to spend this last evening with Ruby Gillis after all!

"You look tired, Anne," he said.

"I am tired, and, worse than that, I'm disgruntled. I'm tired because I've been packing my trunk and sewing all day. But I'm disgruntled because six women have been here to say goodbye to me, and every one of the six managed to say something that seemed to take the color right out of life and leave it as gray and dismal and cheerless as a November morning."

"Spiteful old cats!" was Gilbert's elegant comment.

"Oh, no, they weren't," said Anne seriously. "That is just the trouble. If they had been spiteful cats I wouldn't have minded them. But they are all nice, kind, motherly souls, who like me and whom I like, and that is why what they said, or hinted, had such undue weight with me. They let me see they thought I was crazy going to Redmond and trying to take a B.A., and ever since I've been wondering if I am. Mrs. Peter Sloane sighed and said she hoped my strength would hold out till I got through; and at once I saw myself a hopeless victim of nervous prostration at the end of my third year; Mrs. Eben Wright said it must cost an awful lot to put in four years at Redmond; and I felt all over me that it was unpardonable of me to squander Marilla's money and my own on such a folly. Mrs. Jasper Bell said she hoped I wouldn't let college spoil me, as it did some people; and I felt in my bones that the end of my four Redmond years would see me a most insufferable creature, thinking I knew it all, and looking down on everything and everybody in Avonlea; Mrs. Elisha Wright said she understood that Redmond girls, especially those who belonged to

Kingsport, were 'dreadful dressy and stuck-up,' and she guessed I wouldn't feel much at home among them; and I saw myself, a snubbed, dowdy, humiliated country girl, shuffling through Redmond's classic halls in coppertoned boots."

Anne ended with a laugh and a sigh commingled. With her sensitive nature all disapproval had weight, even the disapproval of those for whose opinions she had scant respect. For the time being life was savorless, and ambition had gone out like a snuffed candle.

"You surely don't care for what they said," protested Gilbert. "You know exactly how narrow their outlook on life is, excellent creatures though they are. To do anything THEY have never done is anathema maranatha. You are the first Avonlea girl who has ever gone to college; and you know that all pioneers are considered to be afflicted with moonstruck madness."

"Oh, I know. But FEELING is so different from KNOWING. My common sense tells me all you can say, but there are times when common sense has no power over me. Common nonsense takes possession of my soul. Really, after Mrs. Elisha went away I hardly had the heart to finish packing."

"You're just tired, Anne. Come, forget it all and take a walk with me — a ramble back through the woods beyond the marsh. There should be something there I want to show you."

"Should be! Don't you know if it is there?"

"No. I only know it should be, from something I saw there in spring. Come on. We'll pretend we are two children again and we'll go the way of the wind."

They started gaily off. Anne, remembering the unpleasantness of the preceding evening, was very nice to Gilbert; and Gilbert, who was learning wisdom, took care to be nothing save the schoolboy comrade again. Mrs. Lynde and Marilla watched them from the kitchen window.

"That'll be a match some day," Mrs. Lynde said approvingly.

Marilla winced slightly. In her heart she hoped it would, but it went against her grain to hear the matter spoken of in Mrs. Lynde's gossipy

matter-of-fact way.

“They’re only children yet,” she said shortly.

Mrs. Lynde laughed goodnaturedly.

“Anne is eighteen; I was married when I was that age. We old folks, Marilla, are too much given to thinking children never grow up, that’s what. Anne is a young woman and Gilbert’s a man, and he worships the ground she walks on, as any one can see. He’s a fine fellow, and Anne can’t do better. I hope she won’t get any romantic nonsense into her head at Redmond. I don’t approve of them coeducational places and never did, that’s what. I don’t believe,” concluded Mrs. Lynde solemnly, “that the students at such colleges ever do much else than flirt.”

“They must study a little,” said Marilla, with a smile.

“Precious little,” sniffed Mrs. Rachel. “However, I think Anne will. She never was flirtatious. But she doesn’t appreciate Gilbert at his full value, that’s what. Oh, I know girls! Charlie Sloane is wild about her, too, but I’d never advise her to marry a Sloane. The Sloanes are good, honest, respectable people, of course. But when all’s said and done, they’re SLOANES.”

Marilla nodded. To an outsider, the statement that Sloanes were Sloanes might not be very illuminating, but she understood. Every village has such a family; good, honest, respectable people they may be, but SLOANES they are and must ever remain, though they speak with the tongues of men and angels.

Gilbert and Anne, happily unconscious that their future was thus being settled by Mrs. Rachel, were sauntering through the shadows of the Haunted Wood. Beyond, the harvest hills were basking in an amber sunset radiance, under a pale, aerial sky of rose and blue. The distant spruce groves were burnished bronze, and their long shadows barred the upland meadows. But around them a little wind sang among the fir tassels, and in it there was the note of autumn.

“This wood really is haunted now — by old memories,” said Anne, stooping to gather a spray of ferns, bleached to waxen whiteness by frost. “It seems to me that the little girls Diana and I used to be play here still,

and sit by the Dryad's Bubble in the twilights, trysting with the ghosts. Do you know, I can never go up this path in the dusk without feeling a bit of the old fright and shiver? There was one especially horrifying phantom which we created — the ghost of the murdered child that crept up behind you and laid cold fingers on yours. I confess that, to this day, I cannot help fancying its little, furtive footsteps behind me when I come here after nightfall. I'm not afraid of the White Lady or the headless man or the skeletons, but I wish I had never imagined that baby's ghost into existence. How angry Marilla and Mrs. Barry were over that affair," concluded Anne, with reminiscent laughter.

The woods around the head of the marsh were full of purple vistas, threaded with gossamers. Past a dour plantation of gnarled spruces and a maple-fringed, sunwarm valley they found the "something" Gilbert was looking for.

"Ah, here it is," he said with satisfaction.

"An apple tree — and away back here!" exclaimed Anne delightedly.

"Yes, a veritable apple-bearing apple tree, too, here in the very midst of pines and beeches, a mile away from any orchard. I was here one day last spring and found it, all white with blossom. So I resolved I'd come again in the fall and see if it had been apples. See, it's loaded. They look good, too — tawny as russets but with a dusky red cheek. Most wild seedlings are green and uninviting."

"I suppose it sprang years ago from some chance-sown seed," said Anne dreamily. "And how it has grown and flourished and held its own here all alone among aliens, the brave determined thing!"

"Here's a fallen tree with a cushion of moss. Sit down, Anne — it will serve for a woodland throne. I'll climb for some apples. They all grow high — the tree had to reach up to the sunlight."

The apples proved to be delicious. Under the tawny skin was a white, white flesh, faintly veined with red; and, besides their own proper apple taste, they had a certain wild, delightful tang no orchard-grown apple ever possessed.

“The fatal apple of Eden couldn’t have had a rarer flavor,” commented Anne. “But it’s time we were going home. See, it was twilight three minutes ago and now it’s moonlight. What a pity we couldn’t have caught the moment of transformation. But such moments never are caught, I suppose.”

“Let’s go back around the marsh and home by way of Lover’s Lane. Do you feel as disgruntled now as when you started out, Anne?”

“Not I. Those apples have been as manna to a hungry soul. I feel that I shall love Redmond and have a splendid four years there.”

“And after those four years — what?”

“Oh, there’s another bend in the road at their end,” answered Anne lightly. “I’ve no idea what may be around it — I don’t want to have. It’s nicer not to know.”

Lover’s Lane was a dear place that night, still and mysteriously dim in the pale radiance of the moonlight. They loitered through it in a pleasant chummy silence, neither caring to talk.

“If Gilbert were always as he has been this evening how nice and simple everything would be,” reflected Anne.

Gilbert was looking at Anne, as she walked along. In her light dress, with her slender delicacy, she made him think of a white iris.

“I wonder if I can ever make her care for me,” he thought, with a pang of self-distrust.

Greeting and Farewell

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Charlie Sloane, Gilbert Blythe and Anne Shirley left Avonlea the following Monday morning. Anne had hoped for a fine day. Diana was to drive her to the station and they wanted this, their last drive together for some time, to be a pleasant one. But when Anne went to bed Sunday night the east wind was moaning around Green Gables with an ominous prophecy which was fulfilled in the morning. Anne awoke to find raindrops pattering against her window and shadowing the pond's gray surface with widening rings; hills and sea were hidden in mist, and the whole world seemed dim and dreary. Anne dressed in the cheerless gray dawn, for an early start was necessary to catch the boat train; she struggled against the tears that WOULD well up in her eyes in spite of herself. She was leaving the home that was so dear to her, and something told her that she was leaving it forever, save as a holiday refuge. Things would never be the same again; coming back for vacations would not be living there. And oh, how dear and beloved everything was — that little white porch room, sacred to the dreams of girlhood, the old Snow Queen at the window, the brook in the hollow, the Dryad's Bubble, the Haunted Woods, and Lover's Lane — all the thousand and one dear spots where memories of the old years bided. Could she ever be really happy anywhere else?

Breakfast at Green Gables that morning was a rather doleful meal. Davy, for the first time in his life probably, could not eat, but blubbered shamelessly over his porridge. Nobody else seemed to have much appetite, save Dora, who tucked away her rations comfortably. Dora, like the immortal and most prudent Charlotte, who "went on cutting bread and butter" when her frenzied lover's body had been carried past on a shutter, was one of those fortunate creatures who are seldom disturbed by anything. Even at eight it took a great deal to ruffle Dora's placidity. She was sorry Anne was going away, of course, but was that any reason why

she should fail to appreciate a poached egg on toast? Not at all. And, seeing that Davy could not eat his, Dora ate it for him.

Promptly on time Diana appeared with horse and buggy, her rosy face glowing above her raincoat. The goodbyes had to be said then somehow. Mrs. Lynde came in from her quarters to give Anne a hearty embrace and warn her to be careful of her health, whatever she did. Marilla, brusque and tearless, pecked Anne's cheek and said she supposed they'd hear from her when she got settled. A casual observer might have concluded that Anne's going mattered very little to her — unless said observer had happened to get a good look in her eyes. Dora kissed Anne primly and squeezed out two decorous little tears; but Davy, who had been crying on the back porch step ever since they rose from the table, refused to say goodbye at all. When he saw Anne coming towards him he sprang to his feet, bolted up the back stairs, and hid in a clothes closet, out of which he would not come. His muffled howls were the last sounds Anne heard as she left Green Gables.

It rained heavily all the way to Bright River, to which station they had to go, since the branch line train from Carmody did not connect with the boat train. Charlie and Gilbert were on the station platform when they reached it, and the train was whistling. Anne had just time to get her ticket and trunk check, say a hurried farewell to Diana, and hasten on board. She wished she were going back with Diana to Avonlea; she knew she was going to die of homesickness. And oh, if only that dismal rain would stop pouring down as if the whole world were weeping over summer vanished and joys departed! Even Gilbert's presence brought her no comfort, for Charlie Sloane was there, too, and Sloanishness could be tolerated only in fine weather. It was absolutely insufferable in rain.

But when the boat steamed out of Charlottetown harbor things took a turn for the better. The rain ceased and the sun began to burst out goldenly now and again between the rents in the clouds, burnishing the gray seas with copper-hued radiance, and lighting up the mists that curtained the Island's red shores with gleams of gold foretokening a fine day after all.

Besides, Charlie Sloane promptly became so seasick that he had to go below, and Anne and Gilbert were left alone on deck.

“I am very glad that all the Sloanes get seasick as soon as they go on water,” thought Anne mercilessly. “I am sure I couldn’t take my farewell look at the ‘ould sod’ with Charlie standing there pretending to look sentimentally at it, too.”

“Well, we’re off,” remarked Gilbert unsentimentally.

“Yes, I feel like Byron’s ‘Childe Harold’ — only it isn’t really my ‘native shore’ that I’m watching,” said Anne, winking her gray eyes vigorously. “Nova Scotia is that, I suppose. But one’s native shore is the land one loves the best, and that’s good old P.E.I. for me. I can’t believe I didn’t always live here. Those eleven years before I came seem like a bad dream. It’s seven years since I crossed on this boat — the evening Mrs. Spencer brought me over from Hopetown. I can see myself, in that dreadful old wincey dress and faded sailor hat, exploring decks and cabins with enraptured curiosity. It was a fine evening; and how those red Island shores did gleam in the sunshine. Now I’m crossing the strait again. Oh, Gilbert, I do hope I’ll like Redmond and Kingsport, but I’m sure I won’t!”

“Where’s all your philosophy gone, Anne?”

“It’s all submerged under a great, swamping wave of loneliness and homesickness. I’ve longed for three years to go to Redmond — and now I’m going — and I wish I weren’t! Never mind! I shall be cheerful and philosophical again after I have just one good cry. I MUST have that, ‘as a went’ — and I’ll have to wait until I get into my boardinghouse bed tonight, wherever it may be, before I can have it. Then Anne will be herself again. I wonder if Davy has come out of the closet yet.”

It was nine that night when their train reached Kingsport, and they found themselves in the blue-white glare of the crowded station. Anne felt horribly bewildered, but a moment later she was seized by Priscilla Grant, who had come to Kingsport on Saturday.

“Here you are, beloved! And I suppose you’re as tired as I was when I got here Saturday night.”

“Tired! Priscilla, don’t talk of it. I’m tired, and green, and provincial, and only about ten years old. For pity’s sake take your poor, broken-down chum to some place where she can hear herself think.”

“I’ll take you right up to our boardinghouse. I’ve a cab ready outside.”

“It’s such a blessing you’re here, Prissy. If you weren’t I think I should just sit down on my suitcase, here and now, and weep bitter tears. What a comfort one familiar face is in a howling wilderness of strangers!”

“Is that Gilbert Blythe over there, Anne? How he has grown up this past year! He was only a schoolboy when I taught in Carmody. And of course that’s Charlie Sloane. HE hasn’t changed — couldn’t! He looked just like that when he was born, and he’ll look like that when he’s eighty. This way, dear. We’ll be home in twenty minutes.”

“Home!” groaned Anne. “You mean we’ll be in some horrible boardinghouse, in a still more horrible hall bedroom, looking out on a dingy back yard.”

“It isn’t a horrible boardinghouse, Anne-girl. Here’s our cab. Hop in — the driver will get your trunk. Oh, yes, the boardinghouse — it’s really a very nice place of its kind, as you’ll admit tomorrow morning when a good night’s sleep has turned your blues rosy pink. It’s a big, old-fashioned, gray stone house on St. John Street, just a nice little constitutional from Redmond. It used to be the ‘residence’ of great folk, but fashion has deserted St. John Street and its houses only dream now of better days. They’re so big that people living in them have to take boarders just to fill up. At least, that is the reason our landladies are very anxious to impress on us. They’re delicious, Anne — our landladies, I mean.”

“How many are there?”

“Two. Miss Hannah Harvey and Miss Ada Harvey. They were born twins about fifty years ago.”

“I can’t get away from twins, it seems,” smiled Anne. “Wherever I go they confront me.”

“Oh, they’re not twins now, dear. After they reached the age of thirty they never were twins again. Miss Hannah has grown old, not too gracefully, and Miss Ada has stayed thirty, less gracefully still. I don’t

know whether Miss Hannah can smile or not; I've never caught her at it so far, but Miss Ada smiles all the time and that's worse. However, they're nice, kind souls, and they take two boarders every year because Miss Hannah's economical soul cannot bear to 'waste room space' — not because they need to or have to, as Miss Ada has told me seven times since Saturday night. As for our rooms, I admit they are hall bedrooms, and mine does look out on the back yard. Your room is a front one and looks out on Old St. John's graveyard, which is just across the street."

"That sounds gruesome," shivered Anne. "I think I'd rather have the back yard view."

"Oh, no, you wouldn't. Wait and see. Old St. John's is a darling place. It's been a graveyard so long that it's ceased to be one and has become one of the sights of Kingsport. I was all through it yesterday for a pleasure exertion. There's a big stone wall and a row of enormous trees all around it, and rows of trees all through it, and the queerest old tombstones, with the queerest and quaintest inscriptions. You'll go there to study, Anne, see if you don't. Of course, nobody is ever buried there now. But a few years ago they put up a beautiful monument to the memory of Nova Scotian soldiers who fell in the Crimean War. It is just opposite the entrance gates and there's 'scope for imagination' in it, as you used to say. Here's your trunk at last — and the boys coming to say good night. Must I really shake hands with Charlie Sloane, Anne? His hands are always so cold and fishy-feeling. We must ask them to call occasionally. Miss Hannah gravely told me we could have 'young gentlemen callers' two evenings in the week, if they went away at a reasonable hour; and Miss Ada asked me, smiling, please to be sure they didn't sit on her beautiful cushions. I promised to see to it; but goodness knows where else they CAN sit, unless they sit on the floor, for there are cushions on EVERYTHING. Miss Ada even has an elaborate Battenburg one on top of the piano."

Anne was laughing by this time. Priscilla's gay chatter had the intended effect of cheering her up; homesickness vanished for the time being, and did not even return in full force when she finally found herself alone in her little bedroom. She went to her window and looked out. The

street below was dim and quiet. Across it the moon was shining above the trees in Old St. John's, just behind the great dark head of the lion on the monument. Anne wondered if it could have been only that morning that she had left Green Gables. She had the sense of a long passage of time which one day of change and travel gives.

“I suppose that very moon is looking down on Green Gables now,” she mused. “But I won't think about it — that way homesickness lies. I'm not even going to have my good cry. I'll put that off to a more convenient season, and just now I'll go calmly and sensibly to bed and to sleep.”

Chapter IV.

April's Lady

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Kingsport is a quaint old town, harking back to early Colonial days, and wrapped in its ancient atmosphere, as some fine old dame in garments fashioned like those of her youth. Here and there it sprouts out into modernity, but at heart it is still unspoiled; it is full of curious relics, and haloed by the romance of many legends of the past. Once it was a mere frontier station on the fringe of the wilderness, and those were the days when Indians kept life from being monotonous to the settlers. Then it grew to be a bone of contention between the British and the French, being occupied now by the one and now by the other, emerging from each occupation with some fresh scar of battling nations branded on it.

It has in its park a martello tower, autographed all over by tourists, a dismantled old French fort on the hills beyond the town, and several antiquated cannon in its public squares. It has other historic spots also, which may be hunted out by the curious, and none is more quaint and delightful than Old St. John's Cemetery at the very core of the town, with streets of quiet, old-time houses on two sides, and busy, bustling, modern thoroughfares on the others. Every citizen of Kingsport feels a thrill of possessive pride in Old St. John's, for, if he be of any pretensions at all, he has an ancestor buried there, with a queer, crooked slab at his head, or else sprawling protectively over the grave, on which all the main facts of his history are recorded. For the most part no great art or skill was lavished on those old tombstones. The larger number are of roughly chiselled brown or gray native stone, and only in a few cases is there any attempt at ornamentation. Some are adorned with skull and cross-bones, and this grizzly decoration is frequently coupled with a cherub's head. Many are prostrate and in ruins. Into almost all Time's tooth has been gnawing, until some inscriptions have been completely effaced, and others can only be deciphered with difficulty. The graveyard is very full and very bowery, for

it is surrounded and intersected by rows of elms and willows, beneath whose shade the sleepers must lie very dreamlessly, forever crooned to by the winds and leaves over them, and quite undisturbed by the clamor of traffic just beyond.

Anne took the first of many rambles in Old St. John's the next afternoon. She and Priscilla had gone to Redmond in the forenoon and registered as students, after which there was nothing more to do that day. The girls gladly made their escape, for it was not exhilarating to be surrounded by crowds of strangers, most of whom had a rather alien appearance, as if not quite sure where they belonged.

The "freshettes" stood about in detached groups of two or three, looking askance at each other; the "freshies," wiser in their day and generation, had banded themselves together on the big staircase of the entrance hall, where they were shouting out glees with all the vigor of youthful lungs, as a species of defiance to their traditional enemies, the Sophomores, a few of whom were prowling loftily about, looking properly disdainful of the "unlicked cubs" on the stairs. Gilbert and Charlie were nowhere to be seen.

"Little did I think the day would ever come when I'd be glad of the sight of a Sloane," said Priscilla, as they crossed the campus, "but I'd welcome Charlie's goggle eyes almost ecstatically. At least, they'd be familiar eyes."

"Oh," sighed Anne. "I can't describe how I felt when I was standing there, waiting my turn to be registered — as insignificant as the teeniest drop in a most enormous bucket. It's bad enough to feel insignificant, but it's unbearable to have it grained into your soul that you will never, can never, be anything but insignificant, and that is how I did feel — as if I were invisible to the naked eye and some of those Sophs might step on me. I knew I would go down to my grave unwept, unhonored and unsung."

"Wait till next year," comforted Priscilla. "Then we'll be able to look as bored and sophisticated as any Sophomore of them all. No doubt it is rather dreadful to feel insignificant; but I think it's better than to feel as big and awkward as I did — as if I were sprawled all over Redmond."

That's how I felt — I suppose because I was a good two inches taller than any one else in the crowd. I wasn't afraid a Soph might walk over me; I was afraid they'd take me for an elephant, or an overgrown sample of a potato-fed Islander."

"I suppose the trouble is we can't forgive big Redmond for not being little Queen's," said Anne, gathering about her the shreds of her old cheerful philosophy to cover her nakedness of spirit. "When we left Queen's we knew everybody and had a place of our own. I suppose we have been unconsciously expecting to take life up at Redmond just where we left off at Queen's, and now we feel as if the ground had slipped from under our feet. I'm thankful that neither Mrs. Lynde nor Mrs. Elisha Wright know, or ever will know, my state of mind at present. They would exult in saying 'I told you so,' and be convinced it was the beginning of the end. Whereas it is just the end of the beginning."

"Exactly. That sounds more Anneish. In a little while we'll be acclimated and acquainted, and all will be well. Anne, did you notice the girl who stood alone just outside the door of the coeds' dressing room all the morning — the pretty one with the brown eyes and crooked mouth?"

"Yes, I did. I noticed her particularly because she seemed the only creature there who LOOKED as lonely and friendless as I FELT. I had YOU, but she had no one."

"I think she felt pretty all-by-herselfish, too. Several times I saw her make a motion as if to cross over to us, but she never did it — too shy, I suppose. I wished she would come. If I hadn't felt so much like the aforesaid elephant I'd have gone to her. But I couldn't lumber across that big hall with all those boys howling on the stairs. She was the prettiest freshette I saw today, but probably favor is deceitful and even beauty is vain on your first day at Redmond," concluded Priscilla with a laugh.

"I'm going across to Old St. John's after lunch," said Anne. "I don't know that a graveyard is a very good place to go to get cheered up, but it seems the only get-at-able place where there are trees, and trees I must have. I'll sit on one of those old slabs and shut my eyes and imagine I'm in the Avonlea woods."

Anne did not do that, however, for she found enough of interest in Old St. John's to keep her eyes wide open. They went in by the entrance gates, past the simple, massive, stone arch surmounted by the great lion of England.

“‘And on Inkerman yet the wild bramble is gory,
And those bleak heights henceforth shall be famous in story,’”

quoted Anne, looking at it with a thrill. They found themselves in a dim, cool, green place where winds were fond of purring. Up and down the long grassy aisles they wandered, reading the quaint, voluminous epitaphs, carved in an age that had more leisure than our own.

“‘Here lieth the body of Albert Crawford, Esq.,’” read Anne from a worn, gray slab, “‘for many years Keeper of His Majesty's Ordnance at Kingsport. He served in the army till the peace of 1763, when he retired from bad health. He was a brave officer, the best of husbands, the best of fathers, the best of friends. He died October 29th, 1792, aged 84 years.’ There's an epitaph for you, Prissy. There is certainly some ‘scope for imagination’ in it. How full such a life must have been of adventure! And as for his personal qualities, I'm sure human eulogy couldn't go further. I wonder if they told him he was all those best things while he was alive.”

“Here's another,” said Priscilla. “Listen —

‘To the memory of Alexander Ross, who died on the 22nd of September, 1840, aged 43 years. This is raised as a tribute of affection by one whom he served so faithfully for 27 years that he was regarded as a friend, deserving the fullest confidence and attachment.’”

“A very good epitaph,” commented Anne thoughtfully. “I wouldn't wish a better. We are all servants of some sort, and if the fact that we are faithful can be truthfully inscribed on our tombstones nothing more need be added. Here's a sorrowful little gray stone, Prissy—’to the memory of a favorite child.’ And here is another ‘erected to the memory of one who is buried elsewhere.’ I wonder where that unknown grave is. Really, Pris, the graveyards of today will never be as interesting as this. You were right — I shall come here often. I love it already. I see we're not alone here — there's a girl down at the end of this avenue.”

“Yes, and I believe it’s the very girl we saw at Redmond this morning. I’ve been watching her for five minutes. She has started to come up the avenue exactly half a dozen times, and half a dozen times has she turned and gone back. Either she’s dreadfully shy or she has got something on her conscience. Let’s go and meet her. It’s easier to get acquainted in a graveyard than at Redmond, I believe.”

They walked down the long grassy arcade towards the stranger, who was sitting on a gray slab under an enormous willow. She was certainly very pretty, with a vivid, irregular, bewitching type of prettiness. There was a gloss as of brown nuts on her satin-smooth hair and a soft, ripe glow on her round cheeks. Her eyes were big and brown and velvety, under oddly-pointed black brows, and her crooked mouth was rose-red. She wore a smart brown suit, with two very modish little shoes peeping from beneath it; and her hat of dull pink straw, wreathed with golden-brown poppies, had the indefinable, unmistakable air which pertains to the “creation” of an artist in millinery. Priscilla had a sudden stinging consciousness that her own hat had been trimmed by her village store milliner, and Anne wondered uncomfortably if the blouse she had made herself, and which Mrs. Lynde had fitted, looked VERY countrified and homemade besides the stranger’s smart attire. For a moment both girls felt like turning back.

But they had already stopped and turned towards the gray slab. It was too late to retreat, for the browneyed girl had evidently concluded that they were coming to speak to her. Instantly she sprang up and came forward with outstretched hand and a gay, friendly smile in which there seemed not a shadow of either shyness or burdened conscience.

“Oh, I want to know who you two girls are,” she exclaimed eagerly. “I’ve been DYING to know. I saw you at Redmond this morning. Say, wasn’t it AWFUL there? For the time I wished I had stayed home and got married.”

Anne and Priscilla both broke into unconstrained laughter at this unexpected conclusion. The browneyed girl laughed, too.

“I really did. I COULD have, you know. Come, let’s all sit down on this gravestone and get acquainted. It won’t be hard. I know we’re going to adore each other — I knew it as soon as I saw you at Redmond this morning. I wanted so much to go right over and hug you both.”

“Why didn’t you?” asked Priscilla.

“Because I simply couldn’t make up my mind to do it. I never can make up my mind about anything myself — I’m always afflicted with indecision. Just as soon as I decide to do something I feel in my bones that another course would be the correct one. It’s a dreadful misfortune, but I was born that way, and there is no use in blaming me for it, as some people do. So I couldn’t make up my mind to go and speak to you, much as I wanted to.”

“We thought you were too shy,” said Anne.

“No, no, dear. Shyness isn’t among the many failings — or virtues — of Philippa Gordon — Phil for short. Do call me Phil right off. Now, what are your handles?”

“She’s Priscilla Grant,” said Anne, pointing.

“And SHE’S Anne Shirley,” said Priscilla, pointing in turn.

“And we’re from the Island,” said both together.

“I hail from Bolingbroke, Nova Scotia,” said Philippa.

“Bolingbroke!” exclaimed Anne. “Why, that is where I was born.”

“Do you really mean it? Why, that makes you a Bluenose after all.”

“No, it doesn’t,” retorted Anne. “Wasn’t it Dan O’Connell who said that if a man was born in a stable it didn’t make him a horse? I’m Island to the core.”

“Well, I’m glad you were born in Bolingbroke anyway. It makes us kind of neighbors, doesn’t it? And I like that, because when I tell you secrets it won’t be as if I were telling them to a stranger. I have to tell them. I can’t keep secrets — it’s no use to try. That’s my worst failing — that, and indecision, as aforesaid. Would you believe it? — it took me half an hour to decide which hat to wear when I was coming here — HERE, to a graveyard! At first I inclined to my brown one with the feather; but as soon as I put it on I thought this pink one with the floppy brim would be

more becoming. When I got IT pinned in place I liked the brown one better. At last I put them close together on the bed, shut my eyes, and jabbed with a hat pin. The pin speared the pink one, so I put it on. It is becoming, isn't it? Tell me, what do you think of my looks?"

At this naive demand, made in a perfectly serious tone, Priscilla laughed again. But Anne said, impulsively squeezing Philippa's hand, "We thought this morning that you were the prettiest girl we saw at Redmond."

Philippa's crooked mouth flashed into a bewitching, crooked smile over very white little teeth.

"I thought that myself," was her next astounding statement, "but I wanted some one else's opinion to bolster mine up. I can't decide even on my own appearance. Just as soon as I've decided that I'm pretty I begin to feel miserably that I'm not. Besides, have a horrible old great-aunt who is always saying to me, with a mournful sigh, 'You were such a pretty baby. It's strange how children change when they grow up.' I adore aunts, but I detest great-aunts. Please tell me quite often that I am pretty, if you don't mind. I feel so much more comfortable when I can believe I'm pretty. And I'll be just as obliging to you if you want me to — I CAN be, with a clear conscience."

"Thanks," laughed Anne, "but Priscilla and I are so firmly convinced of our own good looks that we don't need any assurance about them, so you needn't trouble."

"Oh, you're laughing at me. I know you think I'm abominably vain, but I'm not. There really isn't one spark of vanity in me. And I'm never a bit grudging about paying compliments to other girls when they deserve them. I'm so glad I know you folks. I came up on Saturday and I've nearly died of homesickness ever since. It's a horrible feeling, isn't it? In Bolingbroke I'm an important personage, and in Kingsport I'm just nobody! There were times when I could feel my soul turning a delicate blue. Where do you hang out?"

"Thirty-eight St. John's Street."

“Better and better. Why, I’m just around the corner on Wallace Street. I don’t like my boardinghouse, though. It’s bleak and lonesome, and my room looks out on such an unholy back yard. It’s the ugliest place in the world. As for cats — well, surely ALL the Kingsport cats can’t congregate there at night, but half of them must. I adore cats on hearth rugs, snoozing before nice, friendly fires, but cats in back yards at midnight are totally different animals. The first night I was here I cried all night, and so did the cats. You should have seen my nose in the morning. How I wished I had never left home!”

“I don’t know how you managed to make up your mind to come to Redmond at all, if you are really such an undecided person,” said amused Priscilla.

“Bless your heart, honey, I didn’t. It was father who wanted me to come here. His heart was set on it — why, I don’t know. It seems perfectly ridiculous to think of me studying for a B.A. degree, doesn’t it? Not but what I can do it, all right. I have heaps of brains.”

“Oh!” said Priscilla vaguely.

“Yes. But it’s such hard work to use them. And B.A.’s are such learned, dignified, wise, solemn creatures — they must be. No, *I* didn’t want to come to Redmond. I did it just to oblige father. He *IS* such a duck. Besides, I knew if I stayed home I’d have to get married. Mother wanted that — wanted it decidedly. Mother has plenty of decision. But I really hated the thought of being married for a few years yet. I want to have heaps of fun before I settle down. And, ridiculous as the idea of my being a B.A. is, the idea of my being an old married woman is still more absurd, isn’t it? I’m only eighteen. No, I concluded I would rather come to Redmond than be married. Besides, how could I ever have made up my mind which man to marry?”

“Were there so many?” laughed Anne.

“Heaps. The boys like me awfully — they really do. But there were only two that mattered. The rest were all too young and too poor. I must marry a rich man, you know.”

“Why must you?”

“Honey, you couldn’t imagine ME being a poor man’s wife, could you? I can’t do a single useful thing, and I am VERY extravagant. Oh, no, my husband must have heaps of money. So that narrowed them down to two. But I couldn’t decide between two any easier than between two hundred. I knew perfectly well that whichever one I chose I’d regret all my life that I hadn’t married the other.”

“Didn’t you — love — either of them?” asked Anne, a little hesitatingly. It was not easy for her to speak to a stranger of the great mystery and transformation of life.

“Goodness, no. *I* couldn’t love anybody. It isn’t in me. Besides I wouldn’t want to. Being in love makes you a perfect slave, *I* think. And it would give a man such power to hurt you. I’d be afraid. No, no, Alec and Alonzo are two dear boys, and I like them both so much that I really don’t know which I like the better. That is the trouble. Alec is the best looking, of course, and I simply couldn’t marry a man who wasn’t handsome. He is good-tempered too, and has lovely, curly, black hair. He’s rather too perfect — I don’t believe I’d like a perfect husband — somebody I could never find fault with.”

“Then why not marry Alonzo?” asked Priscilla gravely.

“Think of marrying a name like Alonzo!” said Phil dolefully. “I don’t believe I could endure it. But he has a classic nose, and it WOULD be a comfort to have a nose in the family that could be depended on. I can’t depend on mine. So far, it takes after the Gordon pattern, but I’m so afraid it will develop Byrne tendencies as I grow older. I examine it every day anxiously to make sure it’s still Gordon. Mother was a Byrne and has the Byrne nose in the Byrnest degree. Wait till you see it. I adore nice noses. Your nose is awfully nice, Anne Shirley. Alonzo’s nose nearly turned the balance in his favor. But ALONZO! No, I couldn’t decide. If I could have done as I did with the hats — stood them both up together, shut my eyes, and jabbed with a hatpin — it would have been quite easy.”

“What did Alec and Alonzo feel like when you came away?” queried Priscilla.

“Oh, they still have hope. I told them they’d have to wait till I could make up my mind. They’re quite willing to wait. They both worship me, you know. Meanwhile, I intend to have a good time. I expect I shall have heaps of beaux at Redmond. I can’t be happy unless I have, you know. But don’t you think the freshmen are fearfully homely? I saw only one really handsome fellow among them. He went away before you came. I heard his chum call him Gilbert. His chum had eyes that stuck out THAT FAR. But you’re not going yet, girls? Don’t go yet.”

“I think we must,” said Anne, rather coldly. “It’s getting late, and I’ve some work to do.”

“But you’ll both come to see me, won’t you?” asked Philippa, getting up and putting an arm around each. “And let me come to see you. I want to be chummy with you. I’ve taken such a fancy to you both. And I haven’t quite disgusted you with my frivolity, have I?”

“Not quite,” laughed Anne, responding to Phil’s squeeze, with a return of cordiality.

“Because I’m not half so silly as I seem on the surface, you know. You just accept Philippa Gordon, as the Lord made her, with all her faults, and I believe you’ll come to like her. Isn’t this graveyard a sweet place? I’d love to be buried here. Here’s a grave I didn’t see before — this one in the iron railing — oh, girls, look, see — the stone says it’s the grave of a middy who was killed in the fight between the Shannon and the Chesapeake. Just fancy!”

Anne paused by the railing and looked at the worn stone, her pulses thrilling with sudden excitement. The old graveyard, with its overarching trees and long aisles of shadows, faded from her sight. Instead, she saw the Kingsport Harbor of nearly a century ago. Out of the mist came slowly a great frigate, brilliant with “the meteor flag of England.” Behind her was another, with a still, heroic form, wrapped in his own starry flag, lying on the quarter deck — the gallant Lawrence. Time’s finger had turned back his pages, and that was the Shannon sailing triumphant up the bay with the Chesapeake as her prize.

“Come back, Anne Shirley — come back,” laughed Philippa, pulling her arm. “You’re a hundred years away from us. Come back.”

Anne came back with a sigh; her eyes were shining softly.

“I’ve always loved that old story,” she said, “and although the English won that victory, I think it was because of the brave, defeated commander I love it. This grave seems to bring it so near and make it so real. This poor little middy was only eighteen. He ‘died of desperate wounds received in gallant action’ — so reads his epitaph. It is such as a soldier might wish for.”

Before she turned away, Anne unpinned the little cluster of purple pansies she wore and dropped it softly on the grave of the boy who had perished in the great sea-duel.

“Well, what do you think of our new friend?” asked Priscilla, when Phil had left them.

“I like her. There is something very lovable about her, in spite of all her nonsense. I believe, as she says herself, that she isn’t half as silly as she sounds. She’s a dear, kissable baby — and I don’t know that she’ll ever really grow up.”

“I like her, too,” said Priscilla, decidedly. “She talks as much about boys as Ruby Gillis does. But it always enrages or sickens me to hear Ruby, whereas I just wanted to laugh goodnaturedly at Phil. Now, what is the why of that?”

“There is a difference,” said Anne meditatively. “I think it’s because Ruby is really so CONSCIOUS of boys. She plays at love and lovemaking. Besides, you feel, when she is boasting of her beaux that she is doing it to rub it well into you that you haven’t half so many. Now, when Phil talks of her beaux it sounds as if she was just speaking of chums. She really looks upon boys as good comrades, and she is pleased when she has dozens of them tagging round, simply because she likes to be popular and to be thought popular. Even Alex and Alonzo — I’ll never be able to think of those two names separately after this — are to her just two playfellows who want her to play with them all their lives. I’m glad we met her, and

I'm glad we went to Old St. John's. I believe I've put forth a tiny soul-root into Kingsport soil this afternoon. I hope so. I hate to feel transplanted."

Letters From Home

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For the next three weeks Anne and Priscilla continued to feel as strangers in a strange land. Then, suddenly, everything seemed to fall into focus — Redmond, professors, classes, students, studies, social doings. Life became homogeneous again, instead of being made up of detached fragments. The Freshmen, instead of being a collection of unrelated individuals, found themselves a class, with a class spirit, a class yell, class interests, class antipathies and class ambitions. They won the day in the annual “Arts Rush” against the Sophomores, and thereby gained the respect of all the classes, and an enormous, confidence-giving opinion of themselves. For three years the Sophomores had won in the “rush”; that the victory of this year perched upon the Freshmen’s banner was attributed to the strategic generalship of Gilbert Blythe, who marshalled the campaign and originated certain new tactics, which demoralized the Sophs and swept the Freshmen to triumph. As a reward of merit he was elected president of the Freshman Class, a position of honor and responsibility — from a Fresh point of view, at least — coveted by many. He was also invited to join the “Lambs” — Redmondese for Lambda Theta — a compliment rarely paid to a Freshman. As a preparatory initiation ordeal he had to parade the principal business streets of Kingsport for a whole day wearing a sunbonnet and a voluminous kitchen apron of gaudily flowered calico. This he did cheerfully, doffing his sunbonnet with courtly grace when he met ladies of his acquaintance. Charlie Sloane, who had not been asked to join the Lambs, told Anne he did not see how Blythe could do it, and HE, for his part, could never humiliate himself so.

“Fancy Charlie Sloane in a ‘caliker’ apron and a ‘sunbunnit,’” giggled Priscilla. “He’d look exactly like his old Grandmother Sloane. Gilbert, now, looked as much like a man in them as in his own proper habiliments.”

Anne and Priscilla found themselves in the thick of the social life of Redmond. That this came about so speedily was due in great measure to Philippa Gordon. Philippa was the daughter of a rich and well-known man, and belonged to an old and exclusive “Bluenose” family. This, combined with her beauty and charm — a charm acknowledged by all who met her — promptly opened the gates of all cliques, clubs and classes in Redmond to her; and where she went Anne and Priscilla went, too. Phil “adored” Anne and Priscilla, especially Anne. She was a loyal little soul, crystal-free from any form of snobbishness. “Love me, love my friends” seemed to be her unconscious motto. Without effort, she took them with her into her ever widening circle of acquaintanceship, and the two Avonlea girls found their social pathway at Redmond made very easy and pleasant for them, to the envy and wonderment of the other freshettes, who, lacking Philippa’s sponsorship, were doomed to remain rather on the fringe of things during their first college year.

To Anne and Priscilla, with their more serious views of life, Phil remained the amusing, lovable baby she had seemed on their first meeting. Yet, as she said herself, she had “heaps” of brains. When or where she found time to study was a mystery, for she seemed always in demand for some kind of “fun,” and her home evenings were crowded with callers. She had all the “beaux” that heart could desire, for nine-tenths of the Freshmen and a big fraction of all the other classes were rivals for her smiles. She was naively delighted over this, and gleefully recounted each new conquest to Anne and Priscilla, with comments that might have made the unlucky lover’s ears burn fiercely.

“Alec and Alonzo don’t seem to have any serious rival yet,” remarked Anne, teasingly.

“Not one,” agreed Philippa. “I write them both every week and tell them all about my young men here. I’m sure it must amuse them. But, of course, the one I like best I can’t get. Gilbert Blythe won’t take any notice of me, except to look at me as if I were a nice little kitten he’d like to pat. Too well I know the reason. I owe you a grudge, Queen Anne. I really ought to hate you and instead I love you madly, and I’m miserable if I

don't see you every day. You're different from any girl I ever knew before. When you look at me in a certain way I feel what an insignificant, frivolous little beast I am, and I long to be better and wiser and stronger. And then I make good resolutions; but the first nice-looking mannie who comes my way knocks them all out of my head. Isn't college life magnificent? It's so funny to think I hated it that first day. But if I hadn't I might never got really acquainted with you. Anne, please tell me over again that you like me a little bit. I yearn to hear it."

"I like you a big bit — and I think you're a dear, sweet, adorable, velvety, clawless, little — kitten," laughed Anne, "but I don't see when you ever get time to learn your lessons."

Phil must have found time for she held her own in every class of her year. Even the grumpy old professor of Mathematics, who detested coeds, and had bitterly opposed their admission to Redmond, couldn't floor her. She led the freshettes everywhere, except in English, where Anne Shirley left her far behind. Anne herself found the studies of her Freshman year very easy, thanks in great part to the steady work she and Gilbert had put in during those two past years in Avonlea. This left her more time for a social life which she thoroughly enjoyed. But never for a moment did she forget Avonlea and the friends there. To her, the happiest moments in each week were those in which letters came from home. It was not until she had got her first letters that she began to think she could ever like Kingsport or feel at home there. Before they came, Avonlea had seemed thousands of miles away; those letters brought it near and linked the old life to the new so closely that they began to seem one and the same, instead of two hopelessly segregated existences. The first batch contained six letters, from Jane Andrews, Ruby Gillis, Diana Barry, Marilla, Mrs. Lynde and Davy. Jane's was a copperplate production, with every "t" nicely crossed and every "i" precisely dotted, and not an interesting sentence in it. She never mentioned the school, concerning which Anne was avid to hear; she never answered one of the questions Anne had asked in her letter. But she told Anne how many yards of lace she had recently crocheted, and the kind of weather they were having in Avonlea, and how she intended to have her

new dress made, and the way she felt when her head ached. Ruby Gillis wrote a gushing epistle deploring Anne's absence, assuring her she was horribly missed in everything, asking what the Redmond "fellows" were like, and filling the rest with accounts of her own harrowing experiences with her numerous admirers. It was a silly, harmless letter, and Anne would have laughed over it had it not been for the postscript. "Gilbert seems to be enjoying Redmond, judging from his letters," wrote Ruby. "I don't think Charlie is so stuck on it."

So Gilbert was writing to Ruby! Very well. He had a perfect right to, of course. Only — !! Anne did not know that Ruby had written the first letter and that Gilbert had answered it from mere courtesy. She tossed Ruby's letter aside contemptuously. But it took all Diana's breezy, newsy, delightful epistle to banish the sting of Ruby's postscript. Diana's letter contained a little too much Fred, but was otherwise crowded and crossed with items of interest, and Anne almost felt herself back in Avonlea while reading it. Marilla's was a rather prim and colorless epistle, severely innocent of gossip or emotion. Yet somehow it conveyed to Anne a whiff of the wholesome, simple life at Green Gables, with its savor of ancient peace, and the steadfast abiding love that was there for her. Mrs. Lynde's letter was full of church news. Having broken up housekeeping, Mrs. Lynde had more time than ever to devote to church affairs and had flung herself into them heart and soul. She was at present much worked up over the poor "supplies" they were having in the vacant Avonlea pulpit.

"I don't believe any but fools enter the ministry nowadays," she wrote bitterly. "Such candidates as they have sent us, and such stuff as they preach! Half of it ain't true, and, what's worse, it ain't sound doctrine. The one we have now is the worst of the lot. He mostly takes a text and preaches about something else. And he says he doesn't believe all the heathen will be eternally lost. The idea! If they won't all the money we've been giving to Foreign Missions will be clean wasted, that's what! Last Sunday night he announced that next Sunday he'd preach on the axe-head that swam. I think he'd better confine himself to the Bible and leave sensational subjects alone. Things have come to a pretty pass if a minister

can't find enough in Holy Writ to preach about, that's what. What church do you attend, Anne? I hope you go regularly. People are apt to get so careless about churchgoing away from home, and I understand college students are great sinners in this respect. I'm told many of them actually study their lessons on Sunday. I hope you'll never sink that low, Anne. Remember how you were brought up. And be very careful what friends you make. You never know what sort of creatures are in them colleges. Outwardly they may be as whited sepulchers and inwardly as ravening wolves, that's what. You'd better not have anything to say to any young man who isn't from the Island.

"I forgot to tell you what happened the day the minister called here. It was the funniest thing I ever saw. I said to Marilla, 'If Anne had been here wouldn't she have had a laugh?' Even Marilla laughed. You know he's a very short, fat little man with bow legs. Well, that old pig of Mr. Harrison's — the big, tall one — had wandered over here that day again and broke into the yard, and it got into the back porch, unbeknowns to us, and it was there when the minister appeared in the doorway. It made one wild bolt to get out, but there was nowhere to bolt to except between them bow legs. So there it went, and, being as it was so big and the minister so little, it took him clean off his feet and carried him away. His hat went one way and his cane another, just as Marilla and I got to the door. I'll never forget the look of him. And that poor pig was near scared to death. I'll never be able to read that account in the Bible of the swine that rushed madly down the steep place into the sea without seeing Mr. Harrison's pig careering down the hill with that minister. I guess the pig thought he had the Old Boy on his back instead of inside of him. I was thankful the twins weren't about. It wouldn't have been the right thing for them to have seen a minister in such an undignified predicament. Just before they got to the brook the minister jumped off or fell off. The pig rushed through the brook like mad and up through the woods. Marilla and I run down and helped the minister get up and brush his coat. He wasn't hurt, but he was mad. He seemed to hold Marilla and me responsible for it all, though we told him the pig didn't belong to us, and had been pestering us all summer. Besides,

what did he come to the back door for? You'd never have caught Mr. Allan doing that. It'll be a long time before we get a man like Mr. Allan. But it's an ill wind that blows no good. We've never seen hoof or hair of that pig since, and it's my belief we never will.

"Things is pretty quiet in Avonlea. I don't find Green Gables as lonesome as I expected. I think I'll start another cotton warp quilt this winter. Mrs. Silas Sloane has a handsome new apple-leaf pattern.

"When I feel that I must have some excitement I read the murder trials in that Boston paper my niece sends me. I never used to do it, but they're real interesting. The States must be an awful place. I hope you'll never go there, Anne. But the way girls roam over the earth now is something terrible. It always makes me think of Satan in the Book of Job, going to and fro and walking up and down. I don't believe the Lord ever intended it, that's what.

"Davy has been pretty good since you went away. One day he was bad and Marilla punished him by making him wear Dora's apron all day, and then he went and cut all Dora's aprons up. I spanked him for that and then he went and chased my rooster to death.

"The MacPhersons have moved down to my place. She's a great housekeeper and very particular. She's rooted all my June lilies up because she says they make a garden look so untidy. Thomas set them lilies out when we were married. Her husband seems a nice sort of a man, but she can't get over being an old maid, that's what.

"Don't study too hard, and be sure and put your winter underclothes on as soon as the weather gets cool. Marilla worries a lot about you, but I tell her you've got a lot more sense than I ever thought you would have at one time, and that you'll be all right."

Davy's letter plunged into a grievance at the start.

"Dear anne, please write and tell marilla not to tie me to the rale of the bridge when I go fishing the boys make fun of me when she does. Its awful lonesome here without you but grate fun in school. Jane andrews is crosser than you. I scared mrs. lynde with a jacky lantern last nite. She was offel mad and she was mad cause I chased her old rooster round the yard till he

fell down ded. I didn't mean to make him fall down ded. What made him die, anne, I want to know. mrs. lynde threw him into the pig pen she mite of sold him to mr. blair. mr. blair is giving 50 sense apeace for good ded roosters now. I herd mrs. lynde asking the minister to pray for her. What did she do that was so bad, anne, I want to know. I've got a kite with a magnificent tail, anne. Milty bolter told me a grate story in school yesterday. it is troo. old Joe Mosey and Leon were playing cards one nite last week in the woods. The cards were on a stump and a big black man bigger than the trees come along and grabbed the cards and the stump and disapered with a noys like thunder. Ill bet they were skared. Milty says the black man was the old harry. was he, anne, I want to know. Mr. kimball over at spenservale is very sick and will have to go to the hospitable. please excuse me while I ask marilla if thats spelled rite. Marilla says its the silem he has to go to not the other place. He thinks he has a snake inside of him. whats it like to have a snake inside of you, anne. I want to know. mrs. lawrence bell is sick to. mrs. lynde says that all that is the matter with her is that she thinks too much about her insides."

"I wonder," said Anne, as she folded up her letters, "what Mrs. Lynde would think of Philippa."

Chapter VI.

In the Park

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“What are you going to do with yourselves today, girls?” asked Philippa, popping into Anne’s room one Saturday afternoon.

“We are going for a walk in the park,” answered Anne. “I ought to stay in and finish my blouse. But I couldn’t sew on a day like this. There’s something in the air that gets into my blood and makes a sort of glory in my soul. My fingers would twitch and I’d sew a crooked seam. So it’s ho for the park and the pines.”

“Does ‘we’ include any one but yourself and Priscilla?”

“Yes, it includes Gilbert and Charlie, and we’ll be very glad if it will include you, also.”

“But,” said Philippa dolefully, “if I go I’ll have to be gooseberry, and that will be a new experience for Philippa Gordon.”

“Well, new experiences are broadening. Come along, and you’ll be able to sympathize with all poor souls who have to play gooseberry often. But where are all the victims?”

“Oh, I was tired of them all and simply couldn’t be bothered with any of them today. Besides, I’ve been feeling a little blue — just a pale, elusive azure. It isn’t serious enough for anything darker. I wrote Alec and Alonzo last week. I put the letters into envelopes and addressed them, but I didn’t seal them up. That evening something funny happened. That is, Alec would think it funny, but Alonzo wouldn’t be likely to. I was in a hurry, so I snatched Alec’s letter — as I thought — out of the envelope and scribbled down a postscript. Then I mailed both letters. I got Alonzo’s reply this morning. Girls, I had put that postscript to his letter and he was furious. Of course he’ll get over it — and I don’t care if he doesn’t — but it spoiled my day. So I thought I’d come to you darlings to get cheered up. After the football season opens I won’t have any spare Saturday afternoons. I adore football. I’ve got the most gorgeous cap and sweater

striped in Redmond colors to wear to the games. To be sure, a little way off I'll look like a walking barber's pole. Do you know that that Gilbert of yours has been elected Captain of the Freshman football team?"

"Yes, he told us so last evening," said Priscilla, seeing that outraged Anne would not answer. "He and Charlie were down. We knew they were coming, so we painstakingly put out of sight or out of reach all Miss Ada's cushions. That very elaborate one with the raised embroidery I dropped on the floor in the corner behind the chair it was on. I thought it would be safe there. But would you believe it? Charlie Sloane made for that chair, noticed the cushion behind it, solemnly fished it up, and sat on it the whole evening. Such a wreck of a cushion as it was! Poor Miss Ada asked me today, still smiling, but oh, so reproachfully, why I had allowed it to be sat upon. I told her I hadn't — that it was a matter of predestination coupled with inveterate Sloanishness and I wasn't a match for both combined."

"Miss Ada's cushions are really getting on my nerves," said Anne. "She finished two new ones last week, stuffed and embroidered within an inch of their lives. There being absolutely no other cushionless place to put them she stood them up against the wall on the stair landing. They topple over half the time and if we come up or down the stairs in the dark we fall over them. Last Sunday, when Dr. Davis prayed for all those exposed to the perils of the sea, I added in thought 'and for all those who live in houses where cushions are loved not wisely but too well!' There! we're ready, and I see the boys coming through Old St. John's. Do you cast in your lot with us, Phil?"

"I'll go, if I can walk with Priscilla and Charlie. That will be a bearable degree of gooseberry. That Gilbert of yours is a darling, Anne, but why does he go around so much with Goggle-eyes?"

Anne stiffened. She had no great liking for Charlie Sloane; but he was of Avonlea, so no outsider had any business to laugh at him.

"Charlie and Gilbert have always been friends," she said coldly. "Charlie is a nice boy. He's not to blame for his eyes."

"Don't tell me that! He is! He must have done something dreadful in a previous existence to be punished with such eyes. Pris and I are going to

have such sport with him this afternoon. We'll make fun of him to his face and he'll never know it."

Doubtless, "the abandoned P's," as Anne called them, did carry out their amiable intentions. But Sloane was blissfully ignorant; he thought he was quite a fine fellow to be walking with two such coeds, especially Philippa Gordon, the class beauty and belle. It must surely impress Anne. She would see that some people appreciated him at his real value.

Gilbert and Anne loitered a little behind the others, enjoying the calm, still beauty of the autumn afternoon under the pines of the park, on the road that climbed and twisted round the harbor shore.

"The silence here is like a prayer, isn't it?" said Anne, her face upturned to the shining sky. "How I love the pines! They seem to strike their roots deep into the romance of all the ages. It is so comforting to creep away now and then for a good talk with them. I always feel so happy out here."

"And so in mountain solitudes o'ertaken
As by some spell divine,
Their cares drop from them like the needles shaken
From out the gusty pine,'"
quoted Gilbert.

"They make our little ambitions seem rather petty, don't they, Anne?"

"I think, if ever any great sorrow came to me, I would come to the pines for comfort," said Anne dreamily.

"I hope no great sorrow ever will come to you, Anne," said Gilbert, who could not connect the idea of sorrow with the vivid, joyous creature beside him, unwitting that those who can soar to the highest heights can also plunge to the deepest depths, and that the natures which enjoy most keenly are those which also suffer most sharply.

"But there must — sometime," mused Anne. "Life seems like a cup of glory held to my lips just now. But there must be some bitterness in it — there is in every cup. I shall taste mine some day. Well, I hope I shall be strong and brave to meet it. And I hope it won't be through my own fault that it will come. Do you remember what Dr. Davis said last Sunday

evening — that the sorrows God sent us brought comfort and strength with them, while the sorrows we brought on ourselves, through folly or wickedness, were by far the hardest to bear? But we mustn't talk of sorrow on an afternoon like this. It's meant for the sheer joy of living, isn't it?"

"If I had my way I'd shut everything out of your life but happiness and pleasure, Anne," said Gilbert in the tone that meant "danger ahead."

"Then you would be very unwise," rejoined Anne hastily. "I'm sure no life can be properly developed and rounded out without some trial and sorrow — though I suppose it is only when we are pretty comfortable that we admit it. Come — the others have got to the pavilion and are beckoning to us."

They all sat down in the little pavilion to watch an autumn sunset of deep red fire and pallid gold. To their left lay Kingsport, its roofs and spires dim in their shroud of violet smoke. To their right lay the harbor, taking on tints of rose and copper as it stretched out into the sunset. Before them the water shimmered, satin smooth and silver gray, and beyond, clean shaven William's Island loomed out of the mist, guarding the town like a sturdy bulldog. Its lighthouse beacon flared through the mist like a baleful star, and was answered by another in the far horizon.

"Did you ever see such a strong-looking place?" asked Philippa. "I don't want William's Island especially, but I'm sure I couldn't get it if I did. Look at that sentry on the summit of the fort, right beside the flag. Doesn't he look as if he had stepped out of a romance?"

"Speaking of romance," said Priscilla, "we've been looking for heather — but, of course, we couldn't find any. It's too late in the season, I suppose."

"Heather!" exclaimed Anne. "Heather doesn't grow in America, does it?"

"There are just two patches of it in the whole continent," said Phil, "one right here in the park, and one somewhere else in Nova Scotia, I forget where. The famous Highland Regiment, the Black Watch, camped here one year, and, when the men shook out the straw of their beds in the spring, some seeds of heather took root."

“Oh, how delightful!” said enchanted Anne.

“Let’s go home around by Spofford Avenue,” suggested Gilbert. “We can see all ‘the handsome houses where the wealthy nobles dwell.’ Spofford Avenue is the finest residential street in Kingsport. Nobody can build on it unless he’s a millionaire.”

“Oh, do,” said Phil. “There’s a perfectly killing little place I want to show you, Anne. IT wasn’t built by a millionaire. It’s the first place after you leave the park, and must have grown while Spofford Avenue was still a country road. It DID grow — it wasn’t built! I don’t care for the houses on the Avenue. They’re too brand new and plateglassy. But this little spot is a dream — and its name — but wait till you see it.”

They saw it as they walked up the pine-fringed hill from the park. Just on the crest, where Spofford Avenue petered out into a plain road, was a little white frame house with groups of pines on either side of it, stretching their arms protectingly over its low roof. It was covered with red and gold vines, through which its green-shuttered windows peeped. Before it was a tiny garden, surrounded by a low stone wall. October though it was, the garden was still very sweet with dear, old-fashioned, unworldly flowers and shrubs — sweet may, southernwood, lemon verbena, alyssum, petunias, marigolds and chrysanthemums. A tiny brick wall, in herringbone pattern, led from the gate to the front porch. The whole place might have been transplanted from some remote country village; yet there was something about it that made its nearest neighbor, the big lawn-encircled palace of a tobacco king, look exceedingly crude and showy and illbred by contrast. As Phil said, it was the difference between being born and being made.

“It’s the dearest place I ever saw,” said Anne delightedly. “It gives me one of my old, delightful funny aches. It’s dearer and quainter than even Miss Lavendar’s stone house.”

“It’s the name I want you to notice especially,” said Phil. “Look — in white letters, around the archway over the gate. ‘Patty’s Place.’ Isn’t that killing? Especially on this Avenue of Pinehursts and Elmwolds and Cedarcrofts? ‘Patty’s Place,’ if you please! I adore it.”

“Have you any idea who Patty is?” asked Priscilla.

“Patty Spofford is the name of the old lady who owns it, I’ve discovered. She lives there with her niece, and they’ve lived there for hundreds of years, more or less — maybe a little less, Anne. Exaggeration is merely a flight of poetic fancy. I understand that wealthy folk have tried to buy the lot time and again — it’s really worth a small fortune now, you know — but ‘Patty’ won’t sell upon any consideration. And there’s an apple orchard behind the house in place of a back yard — you’ll see it when we get a little past — a real apple orchard on Spofford Avenue!”

“I’m going to dream about ‘Patty’s Place’ tonight,” said Anne. “Why, I feel as if I belonged to it. I wonder if, by any chance, we’ll ever see the inside of it.”

“It isn’t likely,” said Priscilla.

Anne smiled mysteriously.

“No, it isn’t likely. But I believe it will happen. I have a queer, creepy, crawly feeling — you can call it a presentiment, if you like — that ‘Patty’s Place’ and I are going to be better acquainted yet.”

Home Again

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Those first three weeks at Redmond had seemed long; but the rest of the term flew by on wings of wind. Before they realized it the Redmond students found themselves in the grind of Christmas examinations, emerging therefrom more or less triumphantly. The honor of leading in the Freshman classes fluctuated between Anne, Gilbert and Philippa; Priscilla did very well; Charlie Sloane scraped through respectably, and comported himself as complacently as if he had led in everything.

“I can’t really believe that this time tomorrow I’ll be in Green Gables,” said Anne on the night before departure. “But I shall be. And you, Phil, will be in Bolingbroke with Alec and Alonzo.”

“I’m longing to see them,” admitted Phil, between the chocolate she was nibbling. “They really are such dear boys, you know. There’s to be no end of dances and drives and general jamborees. I shall never forgive you, Queen Anne, for not coming home with me for the holidays.”

“‘Never’ means three days with you, Phil. It was dear of you to ask me — and I’d love to go to Bolingbroke some day. But I can’t go this year — I MUST go home. You don’t know how my heart longs for it.”

“You won’t have much of a time,” said Phil scornfully. “There’ll be one or two quilting parties, I suppose; and all the old gossips will talk you over to your face and behind your back. You’ll die of lonesomeness, child.”

“In Avonlea?” said Anne, highly amused.

“Now, if you’d come with me you’d have a perfectly gorgeous time. Bolingbroke would go wild over you, Queen Anne — your hair and your style and, oh, everything! You’re so DIFFERENT. You’d be such a success — and I would bask in reflected glory—’not the rose but near the rose.’ Do come, after all, Anne.”

“Your picture of social triumphs is quite fascinating, Phil, but I’ll paint one to offset it. I’m going home to an old country farmhouse, once green, rather faded now, set among leafless apple orchards. There is a brook below and a December fir wood beyond, where I’ve heard harps swept by the fingers of rain and wind. There is a pond nearby that will be gray and brooding now. There will be two oldish ladies in the house, one tall and thin, one short and fat; and there will be two twins, one a perfect model, the other what Mrs. Lynde calls a ‘holy terror.’ There will be a little room upstairs over the porch, where old dreams hang thick, and a big, fat, glorious feather bed which will almost seem the height of luxury after a boardinghouse mattress. How do you like my picture, Phil?”

“It seems a very dull one,” said Phil, with a grimace.

“Oh, but I’ve left out the transforming thing,” said Anne softly. “There’ll be love there, Phil — faithful, tender love, such as I’ll never find anywhere else in the world — love that’s waiting for me. That makes my picture a masterpiece, doesn’t it, even if the colors are not very brilliant?”

Phil silently got up, tossed her box of chocolates away, went up to Anne, and put her arms about her.

“Anne, I wish I was like you,” she said soberly.

Diana met Anne at the Carmody station the next night, and they drove home together under silent, star-sown depths of sky. Green Gables had a very festal appearance as they drove up the lane. There was a light in every window, the glow breaking out through the darkness like flame-red blossoms swung against the dark background of the Haunted Wood. And in the yard was a brave bonfire with two gay little figures dancing around it, one of which gave an unearthly yell as the buggy turned in under the poplars.

“Davy means that for an Indian war-whoop,” said Diana. “Mr. Harrison’s hired boy taught it to him, and he’s been practicing it up to welcome you with. Mrs. Lynde says it has worn her nerves to a frazzle. He creeps up behind her, you know, and then lets go. He was determined to have a bonfire for you, too. He’s been piling up branches for a fortnight and pestering Marilla to be let pour some kerosene oil over it before

setting it on fire. I guess she did, by the smell, though Mrs. Lynde said up to the last that Davy would blow himself and everybody else up if he was let.”

Anne was out of the buggy by this time, and Davy was rapturously hugging her knees, while even Dora was clinging to her hand.

“Isn’t that a bully bonfire, Anne? Just let me show you how to poke it — see the sparks? I did it for you, Anne, ‘cause I was so glad you were coming home.”

The kitchen door opened and Marilla’s spare form darkened against the inner light. She preferred to meet Anne in the shadows, for she was horribly afraid that she was going to cry with joy — she, stern, repressed Marilla, who thought all display of deep emotion unseemly. Mrs. Lynde was behind her, sonsy, kindly, matronly, as of yore. The love that Anne had told Phil was waiting for her surrounded her and enfolded her with its blessing and its sweetness. Nothing, after all, could compare with old ties, old friends, and old Green Gables! How starry Anne’s eyes were as they sat down to the loaded supper table, how pink her cheeks, how silver-clear her laughter! And Diana was going to stay all night, too. How like the dear old times it was! And the rosebud tea-set graced the table! With Marilla the force of nature could no further go.

“I suppose you and Diana will now proceed to talk all night,” said Marilla sarcastically, as the girls went upstairs. Marilla was always sarcastic after any self-betrayal.

“Yes,” agreed Anne gaily, “but I’m going to put Davy to bed first. He insists on that.”

“You bet,” said Davy, as they went along the hall. “I want somebody to say my prayers to again. It’s no fun saying them alone.”

“You don’t say them alone, Davy. God is always with you to hear you.”

“Well, I can’t see Him,” objected Davy. “I want to pray to somebody I can see, but I WON’T say them to Mrs. Lynde or Marilla, there now!”

Nevertheless, when Davy was garbed in his gray flannel nighty, he did not seem in a hurry to begin. He stood before Anne, shuffling one bare foot over the other, and looked undecided.

“Come, dear, kneel down,” said Anne.

Davy came and buried his head in Anne’s lap, but he did not kneel down.

“Anne,” he said in a muffled voice. “I don’t feel like praying after all. I haven’t felt like it for a week now. I — I DIDN’T pray last night nor the night before.”

“Why not, Davy?” asked Anne gently.

“You — you won’t be mad if I tell you?” implored Davy.

Anne lifted the little gray-flannelled body on her knee and cuddled his head on her arm.

“Do I ever get ‘mad’ when you tell me things, Davy?”

“No-o-o, you never do. But you get sorry, and that’s worse. You’ll be awful sorry when I tell you this, Anne — and you’ll be ‘shamed of me, I s’pose.”

“Have you done something naughty, Davy, and is that why you can’t say your prayers?”

“No, I haven’t done anything naughty — yet. But I want to do it.”

“What is it, Davy?”

“I — I want to say a bad word, Anne,” blurted out Davy, with a desperate effort. “I heard Mr. Harrison’s hired boy say it one day last week, and ever since I’ve been wanting to say it ALL the time — even when I’m saying my prayers.”

“Say it then, Davy.”

Davy lifted his flushed face in amazement.

“But, Anne, it’s an AWFUL bad word.”

“SAY IT!”

Davy gave her another incredulous look, then in a low voice he said the dreadful word. The next minute his face was burrowing against her.

“Oh, Anne, I’ll never say it again — never. I’ll never WANT to say it again. I knew it was bad, but I didn’t s’pose it was so — so — I didn’t s’pose it was like THAT.”

“No, I don’t think you’ll ever want to say it again, Davy — or think it, either. And I wouldn’t go about much with Mr. Harrison’s hired boy if I

were you.”

“He can make bully war-whoops,” said Davy a little regretfully.

“But you don’t want your mind filled with bad words, do you, Davy — words that will poison it and drive out all that is good and manly?”

“No,” said Davy, owleyed with introspection.

“Then don’t go with those people who use them. And now do you feel as if you could say your prayers, Davy?”

“Oh, yes,” said Davy, eagerly wriggling down on his knees, “I can say them now all right. I ain’t scared now to say ‘if I should die before I wake,’ like I was when I was wanting to say that word.”

Probably Anne and Diana did empty out their souls to each other that night, but no record of their confidences has been preserved. They both looked as fresh and bright-eyed at breakfast as only youth can look after unlawful hours of revelry and confession. There had been no snow up to this time, but as Diana crossed the old log bridge on her homeward way the white flakes were beginning to flutter down over the fields and woods, russet and gray in their dreamless sleep. Soon the faraway slopes and hills were dim and wraithlike through their gauzy scarfing, as if pale autumn had flung a misty bridal veil over her hair and was waiting for her wintry bridegroom. So they had a white Christmas after all, and a very pleasant day it was. In the forenoon letters and gifts came from Miss Lavendar and Paul; Anne opened them in the cheerful Green Gables kitchen, which was filled with what Davy, sniffing in ecstasy, called “pretty smells.”

“Miss Lavendar and Mr. Irving are settled in their new home now,” reported Anne. “I am sure Miss Lavendar is perfectly happy — I know it by the general tone of her letter — but there’s a note from Charlotta the Fourth. She doesn’t like Boston at all, and she is fearfully homesick. Miss Lavendar wants me to go through to Echo Lodge some day while I’m home and light a fire to air it, and see that the cushions aren’t getting moldy. I think I’ll get Diana to go over with me next week, and we can spend the evening with Theodora Dix. I want to see Theodora. By the way, is Ludovic Speed still going to see her?”

“They say so,” said Marilla, “and he’s likely to continue it. Folks have given up expecting that that courtship will ever arrive anywhere.”

“I’d hurry him up a bit, if I was Theodora, that’s what,” said Mrs. Lynde. And there is not the slightest doubt but that she would.

There was also a characteristic scrawl from Philippa, full of Alec and Alonzo, what they said and what they did, and how they looked when they saw her.

“But I can’t make up my mind yet which to marry,” wrote Phil. “I do wish you had come with me to decide for me. Some one will have to. When I saw Alec my heart gave a great thump and I thought, ‘He might be the right one.’ And then, when Alonzo came, thump went my heart again. So that’s no guide, though it should be, according to all the novels I’ve ever read. Now, Anne, YOUR heart wouldn’t thump for anybody but the genuine Prince Charming, would it? There must be something radically wrong with mine. But I’m having a perfectly gorgeous time. How I wish you were here! It’s snowing today, and I’m rapturous. I was so afraid we’d have a green Christmas and I loathe them. You know, when Christmas is a dirty grayey-browney affair, looking as if it had been left over a hundred years ago and had been in soak ever since, it is called a GREEN Christmas! Don’t ask me why. As Lord Dundreary says, ‘there are thome thingth no fellow can underthtand.’

“Anne, did you ever get on a street car and then discover that you hadn’t any money with you to pay your fare? I did, the other day. It’s quite awful. I had a nickel with me when I got on the car. I thought it was in the left pocket of my coat. When I got settled down comfortably I felt for it. It wasn’t there. I had a cold chill. I felt in the other pocket. Not there. I had another chill. Then I felt in a little inside pocket. All in vain. I had two chills at once.

“I took off my gloves, laid them on the seat, and went over all my pockets again. It was not there. I stood up and shook myself, and then looked on the floor. The car was full of people, who were going home from the opera, and they all stared at me, but I was past caring for a little thing like that.

“But I could not find my fare. I concluded I must have put it in my mouth and swallowed it inadvertently.

“I didn’t know what to do. Would the conductor, I wondered, stop the car and put me off in ignominy and shame? Was it possible that I could convince him that I was merely the victim of my own absentmindedness, and not an unprincipled creature trying to obtain a ride upon false pretenses? How I wished that Alec or Alonzo were there. But they weren’t because I wanted them. If I HADN’T wanted them they would have been there by the dozen. And I couldn’t decide what to say to the conductor when he came around. As soon as I got one sentence of explanation mapped out in my mind I felt nobody could believe it and I must compose another. It seemed there was nothing to do but trust in Providence, and for all the comfort that gave me I might as well have been the old lady who, when told by the captain during a storm that she must put her trust in the Almighty exclaimed, ‘Oh, Captain, is it as bad as that?’

“Just at the conventional moment, when all hope had fled, and the conductor was holding out his box to the passenger next to me, I suddenly remembered where I had put that wretched coin of the realm. I hadn’t swallowed it after all. I meekly fished it out of the index finger of my glove and poked it in the box. I smiled at everybody and felt that it was a beautiful world.”

The visit to Echo Lodge was not the least pleasant of many pleasant holiday outings. Anne and Diana went back to it by the old way of the beech woods, carrying a lunch basket with them. Echo Lodge, which had been closed ever since Miss Lavendar’s wedding, was briefly thrown open to wind and sunshine once more, and firelight glimmered again in the little rooms. The perfume of Miss Lavendar’s rose bowl still filled the air. It was hardly possible to believe that Miss Lavendar would not come tripping in presently, with her brown eyes a-star with welcome, and that Charlotta the Fourth, blue of bow and wide of smile, would not pop through the door. Paul, too, seemed hovering around, with his fairy fancies.

“It really makes me feel a little bit like a ghost revisiting the old time glimpses of the moon,” laughed Anne. “Let’s go out and see if the echoes are at home. Bring the old horn. It is still behind the kitchen door.”

The echoes were at home, over the white river, as silver-clear and multitudinous as ever; and when they had ceased to answer the girls locked up Echo Lodge again and went away in the perfect half hour that follows the rose and saffron of a winter sunset.

Anne's First Proposal

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The old year did not slip away in a green twilight, with a pinky-yellow sunset. Instead, it went out with a wild, white bluster and blow. It was one of the nights when the storm-wind hurtles over the frozen meadows and black hollows, and moans around the eaves like a lost creature, and drives the snow sharply against the shaking panes.

“Just the sort of night people like to cuddle down between their blankets and count their mercies,” said Anne to Jane Andrews, who had come up to spend the afternoon and stay all night. But when they were cuddled between their blankets, in Anne’s little porch room, it was not her mercies of which Jane was thinking.

“Anne,” she said very solemnly, “I want to tell you something. May I”

Anne was feeling rather sleepy after the party Ruby Gillis had given the night before. She would much rather have gone to sleep than listen to Jane’s confidences, which she was sure would bore her. She had no prophetic inkling of what was coming. Probably Jane was engaged, too; rumor averred that Ruby Gillis was engaged to the Spencervale schoolteacher, about whom all the girls were said to be quite wild.

“I’ll soon be the only fancy-free maiden of our old quartet,” thought Anne, drowsily. Aloud she said, “Of course.”

“Anne,” said Jane, still more solemnly, “what do you think of my brother Billy?”

Anne gasped over this unexpected question, and floundered helplessly in her thoughts. Goodness, what DID she think of Billy Andrews? She had never thought ANYTHING about him — round-faced, stupid, perpetually smiling, goodnatured Billy Andrews. Did ANYBODY ever think about Billy Andrews?

“I — I don’t understand, Jane,” she stammered. “What do you mean — exactly?”

“Do you like Billy?” asked Jane bluntly.

“Why — why — yes, I like him, of course,” gasped Anne, wondering if she were telling the literal truth. Certainly she did not DISlike Billy. But could the indifferent tolerance with which she regarded him, when he happened to be in her range of vision, be considered positive enough for liking? WHAT was Jane trying to elucidate?

“Would you like him for a husband?” asked Jane calmly.

“A husband!” Anne had been sitting up in bed, the better to wrestle with the problem of her exact opinion of Billy Andrews. Now she fell flatly back on her pillows, the very breath gone out of her. “Whose husband?”

“Yours, of course,” answered Jane. “Billy wants to marry you. He’s always been crazy about you — and now father has given him the upper farm in his own name and there’s nothing to prevent him from getting married. But he’s so shy he couldn’t ask you himself if you’d have him, so he got me to do it. I’d rather not have, but he gave me no peace till I said I would, if I got a good chance. What do you think about it, Anne?”

Was it a dream? Was it one of those nightmare things in which you find yourself engaged or married to some one you hate or don’t know, without the slightest idea how it ever came about? No, she, Anne Shirley, was lying there, wide awake, in her own bed, and Jane Andrews was beside her, calmly proposing for her brother Billy. Anne did not know whether she wanted to writhe or laugh; but she could do neither, for Jane’s feelings must not be hurt.

“I — I couldn’t marry Bill, you know, Jane,” she managed to gasp. “Why, such an idea never occurred to me — never!”

“I don’t suppose it did,” agreed Jane. “Billy has always been far too shy to think of courting. But you might think it over, Anne. Billy is a good fellow. I must say that, if he is my brother. He has no bad habits and he’s a great worker, and you can depend on him. ‘A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.’ He told me to tell you he’d be quite willing to wait till you got through college, if you insisted, though he’d RATHER get married this

spring before the planting begins. He'd always be very good to you, I'm sure, and you know, Anne, I'd love to have you for a sister."

"I can't marry Billy," said Anne decidedly. She had recovered her wits, and was even feeling a little angry. It was all so ridiculous. "There is no use thinking of it, Jane. I don't care anything for him in that way, and you must tell him so."

"Well, I didn't suppose you would," said Jane with a resigned sigh, feeling that she had done her best. "I told Billy I didn't believe it was a bit of use to ask you, but he insisted. Well, you've made your decision, Anne, and I hope you won't regret it."

Jane spoke rather coldly. She had been perfectly sure that the enamored Billy had no chance at all of inducing Anne to marry him. Nevertheless, she felt a little resentment that Anne Shirley, who was, after all, merely an adopted orphan, without kith or kin, should refuse her brother — one of the Avonlea Andrews. Well, pride sometimes goes before a fall, Jane reflected ominously.

Anne permitted herself to smile in the darkness over the idea that she might ever regret not marrying Billy Andrews.

"I hope Billy won't feel very badly over it," she said nicely.

Jane made a movement as if she were tossing her head on her pillow.

"Oh, he won't break his heart. Billy has too much good sense for that. He likes Nettie Blewett pretty well, too, and mother would rather he married her than any one. She's such a good manager and saver. I think, when Billy is once sure you won't have him, he'll take Nettie. Please don't mention this to any one, will you, Anne?"

"Certainly not," said Anne, who had no desire whatever to publish abroad the fact that Billy Andrews wanted to marry her, preferring her, when all was said and done, to Nettie Blewett. Nettie Blewett!

"And now I suppose we'd better go to sleep," suggested Jane.

To sleep went Jane easily and speedily; but, though very unlike MacBeth in most respects, she had certainly contrived to murder sleep for Anne. That proposed-to damsel lay on a wakeful pillow until the wee sma's, but her meditations were far from being romantic. It was not,

however, until the next morning that she had an opportunity to indulge in a good laugh over the whole affair. When Jane had gone home — still with a hint of frost in voice and manner because Anne had declined so ungratefully and decidedly the honor of an alliance with the House of Andrews — Anne retreated to the porch room, shut the door, and had her laugh out at last.

“If I could only share the joke with some one!” she thought. “But I can’t. Diana is the only one I’d want to tell, and, even if I hadn’t sworn secrecy to Jane, I can’t tell Diana things now. She tells everything to Fred — I know she does. Well, I’ve had my first proposal. I supposed it would come some day — but I certainly never thought it would be by proxy. It’s awfully funny — and yet there’s a sting in it, too, somehow.”

Anne knew quite well wherein the sting consisted, though she did not put it into words. She had had her secret dreams of the first time some one should ask her the great question. And it had, in those dreams, always been very romantic and beautiful: and the “some one” was to be very handsome and dark-eyed and distinguished-looking and eloquent, whether he were Prince Charming to be enraptured with “yes,” or one to whom a regretful, beautifully worded, but hopeless refusal must be given. If the latter, the refusal was to be expressed so delicately that it would be next best thing to acceptance, and he would go away, after kissing her hand, assuring her of his unalterable, lifelong devotion. And it would always be a beautiful memory, to be proud of and a little sad about, also.

And now, this thrilling experience had turned out to be merely grotesque. Billy Andrews had got his sister to propose for him because his father had given him the upper farm; and if Anne wouldn’t “have him” Nettie Blewett would. There was romance for you, with a vengeance! Anne laughed — and then sighed. The bloom had been brushed from one little maiden dream. Would the painful process go on until everything became prosaic and humdrum?

Chapter IX.

An Unwelcome Lover and a Welcome Friend

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The second term at Redmond sped as quickly as had the first—"actually whizzed away," Philippa said. Anne enjoyed it thoroughly in all its phases — the stimulating class rivalry, the making and deepening of new and helpful friendships, the gay little social stunts, the doings of the various societies of which she was a member, the widening of horizons and interests. She studied hard, for she had made up her mind to win the Thorburn Scholarship in English. This being won, meant that she could come back to Redmond the next year without trenching on Marilla's small savings — something Anne was determined she would not do.

Gilbert, too, was in full chase after a scholarship, but found plenty of time for frequent calls at Thirty-eight, St. John's. He was Anne's escort at nearly all the college affairs, and she knew that their names were coupled in Redmond gossip. Anne raged over this but was helpless; she could not cast an old friend like Gilbert aside, especially when he had grown suddenly wise and wary, as behooved him in the dangerous proximity of more than one Redmond youth who would gladly have taken his place by the side of the slender, redhaired coed, whose gray eyes were as alluring as stars of evening. Anne was never attended by the crowd of willing victims who hovered around Philippa's conquering march through her Freshman year; but there was a lanky, brainy Freshie, a jolly, little, round Sophomore, and a tall, learned Junior who all liked to call at Thirty-eight, St. John's, and talk over 'ologies and 'isms, as well as lighter subjects, with Anne, in the becushioned parlor of that domicile. Gilbert did not love any of them, and he was exceedingly careful to give none of them the advantage over him by any untimely display of his real feelings Anne-ward. To her he had become again the boy-comrade of Avonlea days, and

as such could hold his own against any smitten swain who had so far entered the lists against him. As a companion, Anne honestly acknowledged nobody could be so satisfactory as Gilbert; she was very glad, so she told herself, that he had evidently dropped all nonsensical ideas — though she spent considerable time secretly wondering why.

Only one disagreeable incident marred that winter. Charlie Sloane, sitting bolt upright on Miss Ada's most dearly beloved cushion, asked Anne one night if she would promise "to become Mrs. Charlie Sloane some day." Coming after Billy Andrews' proxy effort, this was not quite the shock to Anne's romantic sensibilities that it would otherwise have been; but it was certainly another heartrending disillusion. She was angry, too, for she felt that she had never given Charlie the slightest encouragement to suppose such a thing possible. But what could you expect of a Sloane, as Mrs. Rachel Lynde would ask scornfully? Charlie's whole attitude, tone, air, words, fairly reeked with Sloanishness. "He was conferring a great honor — no doubt whatever about that. And when Anne, utterly insensible to the honor, refused him, as delicately and considerately as she could — for even a Sloane had feelings which ought not to be unduly lacerated — Sloanishness still further betrayed itself. Charlie certainly did not take his dismissal as Anne's imaginary rejected suitors did. Instead, he became angry, and showed it; he said two or three quite nasty things; Anne's temper flashed up mutinously and she retorted with a cutting little speech whose keenness pierced even Charlie's protective Sloanishness and reached the quick; he caught up his hat and flung himself out of the house with a very red face; Anne rushed upstairs, falling twice over Miss Ada's cushions on the way, and threw herself on her bed, in tears of humiliation and rage. Had she actually stooped to quarrel with a Sloane? Was it possible anything Charlie Sloane could say had power to make her angry? Oh, this was degradation, indeed — worse even than being the rival of Nettie Blewett!

"I wish I need never see the horrible creature again," she sobbed vindictively into her pillows.

She could not avoid seeing him again, but the outraged Charlie took care that it should not be at very close quarters. Miss Ada's cushions were henceforth safe from his depredations, and when he met Anne on the street, or in Redmond's halls, his bow was icy in the extreme. Relations between these two old schoolmates continued to be thus strained for nearly a year! Then Charlie transferred his blighted affections to a round, rosy, snub-nosed, blue-eyed, little Sophomore who appreciated them as they deserved, whereupon he forgave Anne and condescended to be civil to her again; in a patronizing manner intended to show her just what she had lost.

One day Anne scurried excitedly into Priscilla's room.

"Read that," she cried, tossing Priscilla a letter. "It's from Stella — and she's coming to Redmond next year — and what do you think of her idea? I think it's a perfectly splendid one, if we can only carry it out. Do you suppose we can, Pris?"

"I'll be better able to tell you when I find out what it is," said Priscilla, casting aside a Greek lexicon and taking up Stella's letter. Stella Maynard had been one of their chums at Queen's Academy and had been teaching school ever since.

"But I'm going to give it up, Anne dear," she wrote, "and go to college next year. As I took the third year at Queen's I can enter the Sophomore year. I'm tired of teaching in a back country school. Some day I'm going to write a treatise on 'The Trials of a Country Schoolmarm.' It will be a harrowing bit of realism. It seems to be the prevailing impression that we live in clover, and have nothing to do but draw our quarter's salary. My treatise shall tell the truth about us. Why, if a week should pass without some one telling me that I am doing easy work for big pay I would conclude that I might as well order my ascension robe 'immediately and to onct.' 'Well, you get your money easy,' some ratepayer will tell me, condescendingly. 'All you have to do is to sit there and hear lessons.' I used to argue the matter at first, but I'm wiser now. Facts are stubborn things, but as some one has wisely said, not half so stubborn as fallacies. So I only smile loftily now in eloquent silence. Why, I have nine grades in my school and I have to teach a little of everything, from investigating the

interiors of earthworms to the study of the solar system. My youngest pupil is four — his mother sends him to school to ‘get him out of the way’ — and my oldest twenty — it ‘suddenly struck him’ that it would be easier to go to school and get an education than follow the plough any longer. In the wild effort to cram all sorts of research into six hours a day I don’t wonder if the children feel like the little boy who was taken to see the biograph. ‘I have to look for what’s coming next before I know what went last,’ he complained. I feel like that myself.

“And the letters I get, Anne! Tommy’s mother writes me that Tommy is not coming on in arithmetic as fast as she would like. He is only in simple reduction yet, and Johnny Johnson is in fractions, and Johnny isn’t half as smart as her Tommy, and she can’t understand it. And Susy’s father wants to know why Susy can’t write a letter without misspelling half the words, and Dick’s aunt wants me to change his seat, because that bad Brown boy he is sitting with is teaching him to say naughty words.

“As to the financial part — but I’ll not begin on that. Those whom the gods wish to destroy they first make country schoolmarms!

“There, I feel better, after that growl. After all, I’ve enjoyed these past two years. But I’m coming to Redmond.

“And now, Anne, I’ve a little plan. You know how I loathe boarding. I’ve boarded for four years and I’m so tired of it. I don’t feel like enduring three years more of it.

“Now, why can’t you and Priscilla and I club together, rent a little house somewhere in Kingsport, and board ourselves? It would be cheaper than any other way. Of course, we would have to have a housekeeper and I have one ready on the spot. You’ve heard me speak of Aunt Jamesina? She’s the sweetest aunt that ever lived, in spite of her name. She can’t help that! She was called Jamesina because her father, whose name was James, was drowned at sea a month before she was born. I always call her Aunt Jimsie. Well, her only daughter has recently married and gone to the foreign mission field. Aunt Jamesina is left alone in a great big house, and she is horribly lonesome. She will come to Kingsport and keep house for

us if we want her, and I know you'll both love her. The more I think of the plan the more I like it. We could have such good, independent times.

"Now, if you and Priscilla agree to it, wouldn't it be a good idea for you, who are on the spot, to look around and see if you can find a suitable house this spring? That would be better than leaving it till the fall. If you could get a furnished one so much the better, but if not, we can scare up a few sticks of finiture between us and old family friends with attics. Anyhow, decide as soon as you can and write me, so that Aunt Jamesina will know what plans to make for next year."

"I think it's a good idea," said Priscilla.

"So do I," agreed Anne delightedly. "Of course, we have a nice boardinghouse here, but, when all's said and done, a boardinghouse isn't home. So let's go house-hunting at once, before exams come on."

"I'm afraid it will be hard enough to get a really suitable house," warned Priscilla. "Don't expect too much, Anne. Nice houses in nice localities will probably be away beyond our means. We'll likely have to content ourselves with a shabby little place on some street whereon live people whom to know is to be unknown, and make life inside compensate for the outside."

Accordingly they went house-hunting, but to find just what they wanted proved even harder than Priscilla had feared. Houses there were galore, furnished and unfurnished; but one was too big, another too small; this one too expensive, that one too far from Redmond. Exams were on and over; the last week of the term came and still their "house o'dreams," as Anne called it, remained a castle in the air.

"We shall have to give up and wait till the fall, I suppose," said Priscilla wearily, as they rambled through the park on one of April's darling days of breeze and blue, when the harbor was creaming and shimmering beneath the pearl-hued mists floating over it. "We may find some shack to shelter us then; and if not, boardinghouses we shall have always with us."

"I'm not going to worry about it just now, anyway, and spoil this lovely afternoon," said Anne, gazing around her with delight. The fresh chill air

was faintly charged with the aroma of pine balsam, and the sky above was crystal clear and blue — a great inverted cup of blessing. “Spring is singing in my blood today, and the lure of April is abroad on the air. I’m seeing visions and dreaming dreams, Pris. That’s because the wind is from the west. I do love the west wind. It sings of hope and gladness, doesn’t it? When the east wind blows I always think of sorrowful rain on the eaves and sad waves on a gray shore. When I get old I shall have rheumatism when the wind is east.”

“And isn’t it jolly when you discard furs and winter garments for the first time and sally forth, like this, in spring attire?” laughed Priscilla. “Don’t you feel as if you had been made over new?”

“Everything is new in the spring,” said Anne. “Springs themselves are always so new, too. No spring is ever just like any other spring. It always has something of its own to be its own peculiar sweetness. See how green the grass is around that little pond, and how the willow buds are bursting.”

“And exams are over and gone — the time of Convocation will come soon — next Wednesday. This day next week we’ll be home.”

“I’m glad,” said Anne dreamily. “There are so many things I want to do. I want to sit on the back porch steps and feel the breeze blowing down over Mr. Harrison’s fields. I want to hunt ferns in the Haunted Wood and gather violets in Violet Vale. Do you remember the day of our golden picnic, Priscilla? I want to hear the frogs singing and the poplars whispering. But I’ve learned to love Kingsport, too, and I’m glad I’m coming back next fall. If I hadn’t won the Thorburn I don’t believe I could have. I COULDN’T take any of Marilla’s little hoard.”

“If we could only find a house!” sighed Priscilla. “Look over there at Kingsport, Anne — houses, houses everywhere, and not one for us.”

“Stop it, Pris. ‘The best is yet to be.’ Like the old Roman, we’ll find a house or build one. On a day like this there’s no such word as fail in my bright lexicon.”

They lingered in the park until sunset, living in the amazing miracle and glory and wonder of the springtide; and they went home as usual, by

way of Spofford Avenue, that they might have the delight of looking at Patty's Place.

"I feel as if something mysterious were going to happen right away —'by the pricking of my thumbs,'" said Anne, as they went up the slope. "It's a nice story-bookish feeling. Why — why — why! Priscilla Grant, look over there and tell me if it's true, or am I seein' things?"

Priscilla looked. Anne's thumbs and eyes had not deceived her. Over the arched gateway of Patty's Place dangled a little, modest sign. It said "To Let, Furnished. Inquire Within."

"Priscilla," said Anne, in a whisper, "do you suppose it's possible that we could rent Patty's Place?"

"No, I don't," averred Priscilla. "It would be too good to be true. Fairy tales don't happen nowadays. I won't hope, Anne. The disappointment would be too awful to bear. They're sure to want more for it than we can afford. Remember, it's on Spofford Avenue."

"We must find out anyhow," said Anne resolutely. "It's too late to call this evening, but we'll come tomorrow. Oh, Pris, if we can get this darling spot! I've always felt that my fortunes were linked with Patty's Place, ever since I saw it first."

Chapter X.

Patty's Place

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The next evening found them treading resolutely the herringbone walk through the tiny garden. The April wind was filling the pine trees with its roundelay, and the grove was alive with robins — great, plump, saucy fellows, strutting along the paths. The girls rang rather timidly, and were admitted by a grim and ancient handmaiden. The door opened directly into a large livingroom, where by a cheery little fire sat two other ladies, both of whom were also grim and ancient. Except that one looked to be about seventy and the other fifty, there seemed little difference between them. Each had amazingly big, light-blue eyes behind steel-rimmed spectacles; each wore a cap and a gray shawl; each was knitting without haste and without rest; each rocked placidly and looked at the girls without speaking; and just behind each sat a large white china dog, with round green spots all over it, a green nose and green ears. Those dogs captured Anne's fancy on the spot; they seemed like the twin guardian deities of Patty's Place.

For a few minutes nobody spoke. The girls were too nervous to find words, and neither the ancient ladies nor the china dogs seemed conversationally inclined. Anne glanced about the room. What a dear place it was! Another door opened out of it directly into the pine grove and the robins came boldly up on the very step. The floor was spotted with round, braided mats, such as Marilla made at Green Gables, but which were considered out of date everywhere else, even in Avonlea. And yet here they were on Spofford Avenue! A big, polished grandfather's clock ticked loudly and solemnly in a corner. There were delightful little cupboards over the mantelpiece, behind whose glass doors gleamed quaint bits of china. The walls were hung with old prints and silhouettes. In one corner the stairs went up, and at the first low turn was a long window with an inviting seat. It was all just as Anne had known it must be.

By this time the silence had grown too dreadful, and Priscilla nudged Anne to intimate that she must speak.

“We — we — saw by your sign that this house is to let,” said Anne faintly, addressing the older lady, who was evidently Miss Patty Spofford.

“Oh, yes,” said Miss Patty. “I intended to take that sign down today.”

“Then — then we are too late,” said Anne sorrowfully. “You’ve let it to some one else?”

“No, but we have decided not to let it at all.”

“Oh, I’m so sorry,” exclaimed Anne impulsively. “I love this place so. I did hope we could have got it.”

Then did Miss Patty lay down her knitting, take off her specs, rub them, put them on again, and for the first time look at Anne as at a human being. The other lady followed her example so perfectly that she might as well have been a reflection in a mirror.

“You LOVE it,” said Miss Patty with emphasis. “Does that mean that you really LOVE it? Or that you merely like the looks of it? The girls nowadays indulge in such exaggerated statements that one never can tell what they DO mean. It wasn’t so in my young days. THEN a girl did not say she LOVED turnips, in just the same tone as she might have said she loved her mother or her Savior.”

Anne’s conscience bore her up.

“I really do love it,” she said gently. “I’ve loved it ever since I saw it last fall. My two college chums and I want to keep house next year instead of boarding, so we are looking for a little place to rent; and when I saw that this house was to let I was so happy.”

“If you love it, you can have it,” said Miss Patty. “Maria and I decided today that we would not let it after all, because we did not like any of the people who have wanted it. We don’t HAVE to let it. We can afford to go to Europe even if we don’t let it. It would help us out, but not for gold will I let my home pass into the possession of such people as have come here and looked at it. YOU are different. I believe you do love it and will be good to it. You can have it.”

“If — if we can afford to pay what you ask for it,” hesitated Anne.

Miss Patty named the amount required. Anne and Priscilla looked at each other. Priscilla shook her head.

"I'm afraid we can't afford quite so much," said Anne, choking back her disappointment. "You see, we are only college girls and we are poor."

"What were you thinking you could afford?" demanded Miss Patty, ceasing not to knit.

Anne named her amount. Miss Patty nodded gravely.

"That will do. As I told you, it is not strictly necessary that we should let it at all. We are not rich, but we have enough to go to Europe on. I have never been in Europe in my life, and never expected or wanted to go. But my niece there, Maria Spofford, has taken a fancy to go. Now, you know a young person like Maria can't go globetrotting alone."

"No — I — I suppose not," murmured Anne, seeing that Miss Patty was quite solemnly in earnest.

"Of course not. So I have to go along to look after her. I expect to enjoy it, too; I'm seventy years old, but I'm not tired of living yet. I daresay I'd have gone to Europe before if the idea had occurred to me. We shall be away for two years, perhaps three. We sail in June and we shall send you the key, and leave all in order for you to take possession when you choose. We shall pack away a few things we prize especially, but all the rest will be left."

"Will you leave the china dogs?" asked Anne timidly.

"Would you like me to?"

"Oh, indeed, yes. They are delightful."

A pleased expression came into Miss Patty's face.

"I think a great deal of those dogs," she said proudly. "They are over a hundred years old, and they have sat on either side of this fireplace ever since my brother Aaron brought them from London fifty years ago. Spofford Avenue was called after my brother Aaron."

"A fine man he was," said Miss Maria, speaking for the first time. "Ah, you don't see the like of him nowadays."

"He was a good uncle to you, Maria," said Miss Patty, with evident emotion. "You do well to remember him."

“I shall always remember him,” said Miss Maria solemnly. “I can see him, this minute, standing there before that fire, with his hands under his coat-tails, beaming on us.”

Miss Maria took out her handkerchief and wiped her eyes; but Miss Patty came resolutely back from the regions of sentiment to those of business.

“I shall leave the dogs where they are, if you will promise to be very careful of them,” she said. “Their names are Gog and Magog. Gog looks to the right and Magog to the left. And there’s just one thing more. You don’t object, I hope, to this house being called Patty’s Place?”

“No, indeed. We think that is one of the nicest things about it.”

“You have sense, I see,” said Miss Patty in a tone of great satisfaction. “Would you believe it? All the people who came here to rent the house wanted to know if they couldn’t take the name off the gate during their occupation of it. I told them roundly that the name went with the house. This has been Patty’s Place ever since my brother Aaron left it to me in his will, and Patty’s Place it shall remain until I die and Maria dies. After that happens the next possessor can call it any fool name he likes,” concluded Miss Patty, much as she might have said, “After that — the deluge.” “And now, wouldn’t you like to go over the house and see it all before we consider the bargain made?”

Further exploration still further delighted the girls. Besides the big livingroom, there was a kitchen and a small bedroom downstairs. Upstairs were three rooms, one large and two small. Anne took an especial fancy to one of the small ones, looking out into the big pines, and hoped it would be hers. It was papered in pale blue and had a little, old-timey toilet table with sconces for candles. There was a diamond-paned window with a seat under the blue muslin frills that would be a satisfying spot for studying or dreaming.

“It’s all so delicious that I know we are going to wake up and find it a fleeting vision of the night,” said Priscilla as they went away.

“Miss Patty and Miss Maria are hardly such stuff as dreams are made of,” laughed Anne. “Can you fancy them ‘globetrotting’ — especially in

those shawls and caps?”

“I suppose they’ll take them off when they really begin to trot,” said Priscilla, “but I know they’ll take their knitting with them everywhere. They simply couldn’t be parted from it. They will walk about Westminster Abbey and knit, I feel sure. Meanwhile, Anne, we shall be living in Patty’s Place — and on Spofford Avenue. I feel like a millionairess even now.”

“I feel like one of the morning stars that sang for joy,” said Anne.

Phil Gordon crept into Thirty-eight, St. John’s, that night and flung herself on Anne’s bed.

“Girls, dear, I’m tired to death. I feel like the man without a country — or was it without a shadow? I forget which. Anyway, I’ve been packing up.”

“And I suppose you are worn out because you couldn’t decide which things to pack first, or where to put them,” laughed Priscilla.

“Ezackly. And when I had got everything jammed in somehow, and my landlady and her maid had both sat on it while I locked it, I discovered I had packed a whole lot of things I wanted for Convocation at the very bottom. I had to unlock the old thing and poke and dive into it for an hour before I fished out what I wanted. I would get hold of something that felt like what I was looking for, and I’d yank it up, and it would be something else. No, Anne, I did NOT swear.”

“I didn’t say you did.”

“Well, you looked it. But I admit my thoughts verged on the profane. And I have such a cold in the head — I can do nothing but sniffle, sigh and sneeze. Isn’t that alliterative agony for you? Queen Anne, do say something to cheer me up.”

“Remember that next Thursday night, you’ll be back in the land of Alec and Alonzo,” suggested Anne.

Phil shook her head dolefully.

“More alliteration. No, I don’t want Alec and Alonzo when I have a cold in the head. But what has happened you two? Now that I look at you closely you seem all lighted up with an internal iridescence. Why, you’re actually SHINING! What’s up?”

“We are going to live in Patty’s Place next winter,” said Anne triumphantly. “Live, mark you, not board! We’ve rented it, and Stella Maynard is coming, and her aunt is going to keep house for us.”

Phil bounced up, wiped her nose, and fell on her knees before Anne.

“Girls — girls — let me come, too. Oh, I’ll be so good. If there’s no room for me I’ll sleep in the little doghouse in the orchard — I’ve seen it. Only let me come.”

“Get up, you goose.”

“I won’t stir off my marrow bones till you tell me I can live with you next winter.”

Anne and Priscilla looked at each other. Then Anne said slowly, “Phil dear, we’d love to have you. But we may as well speak plainly. I’m poor — Pris is poor — Stella Maynard is poor — our housekeeping will have to be very simple and our table plain. You’d have to live as we would. Now, you are rich and your boardinghouse fare attests the fact.”

“Oh, what do I care for that?” demanded Phil tragically. “Better a dinner of herbs where your chums are than a stalled ox in a lonely boardinghouse. Don’t think I’m ALL stomach, girls. I’ll be willing to live on bread and water — with just a LEETLE jam — if you’ll let me come.”

“And then,” continued Anne, “there will be a good deal of work to be done. Stella’s aunt can’t do it all. We all expect to have our chores to do. Now, you—”

“Toil not, neither do I spin,” finished Philippa. “But I’ll learn to do things. You’ll only have to show me once. I CAN make my own bed to begin with. And remember that, though I can’t cook, I CAN keep my temper. That’s something. And I NEVER growl about the weather. That’s more. Oh, please, please! I never wanted anything so much in my life — and this floor is awfully hard.”

“There’s just one more thing,” said Priscilla resolutely. “You, Phil, as all Redmond knows, entertain callers almost every evening. Now, at Patty’s Place we can’t do that. We have decided that we shall be at home to our friends on Friday evenings only. If you come with us you’ll have to abide by that rule.”

“Well, you don’t think I’ll mind that, do you? Why, I’m glad of it. I knew I should have had some such rule myself, but I hadn’t enough decision to make it or stick to it. When I can shuffle off the responsibility on you it will be a real relief. If you won’t let me cast in my lot with you I’ll die of the disappointment and then I’ll come back and haunt you. I’ll camp on the very doorstep of Patty’s Place and you won’t be able to go out or come in without falling over my spook.”

Again Anne and Priscilla exchanged eloquent looks.

“Well,” said Anne, “of course we can’t promise to take you until we’ve consulted with Stella; but I don’t think she’ll object, and, as far as we are concerned, you may come and glad welcome.”

“If you get tired of our simple life you can leave us, and no questions asked,” added Priscilla.

Phil sprang up, hugged them both jubilantly, and went on her way rejoicing.

“I hope things will go right,” said Priscilla soberly.

“We must MAKE them go right,” avowed Anne. “I think Phil will fit into our ‘appy little ‘ome very well.”

“Oh, Phil’s a dear to rattle round with and be chums. And, of course, the more there are of us the easier it will be on our slim purses. But how will she be to live with? You have to summer and winter with any one before you know if she’s LIVABLE or not.”

“Oh, well, we’ll all be put to the test, as far as that goes. And we must quit us like sensible folk, living and let live. Phil isn’t selfish, though she’s a little thoughtless, and I believe we will all get on beautifully in Patty’s Place.”

The Round of Life

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Anne was back in Avonlea with the luster of the Thorburn Scholarship on her brow. People told her she hadn't changed much, in a tone which hinted they were surprised and a little disappointed she hadn't. Avonlea had not changed, either. At least, so it seemed at first. But as Anne sat in the Green Gables pew, on the first Sunday after her return, and looked over the congregation, she saw several little changes which, all coming home to her at once, made her realize that time did not quite stand still, even in Avonlea. A new minister was in the pulpit. In the pews more than one familiar face was missing forever. Old "Uncle Abe," his prophesying over and done with, Mrs. Peter Sloane, who had sighed, it was to be hoped, for the last time, Timothy Cotton, who, as Mrs. Rachel Lynde said "had actually managed to die at last after practicing at it for twenty years," and old Josiah Sloane, whom nobody knew in his coffin because he had his whiskers neatly trimmed, were all sleeping in the little graveyard behind the church. And Billy Andrews was married to Nettie Blewett! They "appeared out" that Sunday. When Billy, beaming with pride and happiness, showed his beplumed and be-silked bride into the Harmon Andrews' pew, Anne dropped her lids to hide her dancing eyes. She recalled the stormy winter night of the Christmas holidays when Jane had proposed for Billy. He certainly had not broken his heart over his rejection. Anne wondered if Jane had also proposed to Nettie for him, or if he had mustered enough spunk to ask the fateful question himself. All the Andrews family seemed to share in his pride and pleasure, from Mrs. Harmon in the pew to Jane in the choir. Jane had resigned from the Avonlea school and intended to go West in the fall.

"Can't get a beau in Avonlea, that's what," said Mrs. Rachel Lynde scornfully. "SAYS she thinks she'll have better health out West. I never heard her health was poor before."

“Jane is a nice girl,” Anne had said loyally. “She never tried to attract attention, as some did.”

“Oh, she never chased the boys, if that’s what you mean,” said Mrs. Rachel. “But she’d like to be married, just as much as anybody, that’s what. What else would take her out West to some forsaken place whose only recommendation is that men are plenty and women scarce? Don’t you tell me!”

But it was not at Jane, Anne gazed that day in dismay and surprise. It was at Ruby Gillis, who sat beside her in the choir. What had happened to Ruby? She was even handsomer than ever; but her blue eyes were too bright and lustrous, and the color of her cheeks was hectically brilliant; besides, she was very thin; the hands that held her hymnbook were almost transparent in their delicacy.

“Is Ruby Gillis ill?” Anne asked of Mrs. Lynde, as they went home from church.

“Ruby Gillis is dying of galloping consumption,” said Mrs. Lynde bluntly. “Everybody knows it except herself and her FAMILY. They won’t give in. If you ask THEM, she’s perfectly well. She hasn’t been able to teach since she had that attack of congestion in the winter, but she says she’s going to teach again in the fall, and she’s after the White Sands school. She’ll be in her grave, poor girl, when White Sands school opens, that’s what.”

Anne listened in shocked silence. Ruby Gillis, her old school-chum, dying? Could it be possible? Of late years they had grown apart; but the old tie of schoolgirl intimacy was there, and made itself felt sharply in the tug the news gave at Anne’s heartstrings. Ruby, the brilliant, the merry, the coquettish! It was impossible to associate the thought of her with anything like death. She had greeted Anne with gay cordiality after church, and urged her to come up the next evening.

“I’ll be away Tuesday and Wednesday evenings,” she had whispered triumphantly. “There’s a concert at Carmody and a party at White Sands. Herb Spencer’s going to take me. He’s my LATEST. Be sure to come up

tomorrow. I'm dying for a good talk with you. I want to hear all about your doings at Redmond."

Anne knew that Ruby meant that she wanted to tell Anne all about her own recent flirtations, but she promised to go, and Diana offered to go with her.

"I've been wanting to go to see Ruby for a long while," she told Anne, when they left Green Gables the next evening, "but I really couldn't go alone. It's so awful to hear Ruby rattling on as she does, and pretending there is nothing the matter with her, even when she can hardly speak for coughing. She's fighting so hard for her life, and yet she hasn't any chance at all, they say."

The girls walked silently down the red, twilit road. The robins were singing vespers in the high treetops, filling the golden air with their jubilant voices. The silver fluting of the frogs came from marshes and ponds, over fields where seeds were beginning to stir with life and thrill to the sunshine and rain that had drifted over them. The air was fragrant with the wild, sweet, wholesome smell of young raspberry copses. White mists were hovering in the silent hollows and violet stars were shining blueely on the brooklands.

"What a beautiful sunset," said Diana. "Look, Anne, it's just like a land in itself, isn't it? That long, low back of purple cloud is the shore, and the clear sky further on is like a golden sea."

"If we could sail to it in the moonshine boat Paul wrote of in his old composition — you remember? — how nice it would be," said Anne, rousing from her reverie. "Do you think we could find all our yesterdays there, Diana — all our old springs and blossoms? The beds of flowers that Paul saw there are the roses that have bloomed for us in the past?"

"Don't!" said Diana. "You make me feel as if we were old women with everything in life behind us."

"I think I've almost felt as if we were since I heard about poor Ruby," said Anne. "If it is true that she is dying any other sad thing might be true, too."

“You don’t mind calling in at Elisha Wright’s for a moment, do you?” asked Diana. “Mother asked me to leave this little dish of jelly for Aunt Atossa.”

“Who is Aunt Atossa?”

“Oh, haven’t you heard? She’s Mrs. Samson Coates of Spencervale — Mrs. Elisha Wright’s aunt. She’s father’s aunt, too. Her husband died last winter and she was left very poor and lonely, so the Wrights took her to live with them. Mother thought we ought to take her, but father put his foot down. Live with Aunt Atossa he would not.”

“Is she so terrible?” asked Anne absently.

“You’ll probably see what she’s like before we can get away,” said Diana significantly. “Father says she has a face like a hatchet — it cuts the air. But her tongue is sharper still.”

Late as it was Aunt Atossa was cutting potato sets in the Wright kitchen. She wore a faded old wrapper, and her gray hair was decidedly untidy. Aunt Atossa did not like being “caught in a kilter,” so she went out of her way to be disagreeable.

“Oh, so you’re Anne Shirley?” she said, when Diana introduced Anne. “I’ve heard of you.” Her tone implied that she had heard nothing good. “Mrs. Andrews was telling me you were home. She said you had improved a good deal.”

There was no doubt Aunt Atossa thought there was plenty of room for further improvement. She ceased not from cutting sets with much energy.

“Is it any use to ask you to sit down?” she inquired sarcastically. “Of course, there’s nothing very entertaining here for you. The rest are all away.”

“Mother sent you this little pot of rhubarb jelly,” said Diana pleasantly. “She made it today and thought you might like some.”

“Oh, thanks,” said Aunt Atossa sourly. “I never fancy your mother’s jelly — she always makes it too sweet. However, I’ll try to worry some down. My appetite’s been dreadful poor this spring. I’m far from well,” continued Aunt Atossa solemnly, “but still I keep a-doing. People who can’t work aren’t wanted here. If it isn’t too much trouble will you be

condescending enough to set the jelly in the pantry? I'm in a hurry to get these spuds done tonight. I suppose you two LADIES never do anything like this. You'd be afraid of spoiling your hands."

"I used to cut potato sets before we rented the farm," smiled Anne.

"I do it yet," laughed Diana. "I cut sets three days last week. Of course," she added teasingly, "I did my hands up in lemon juice and kid gloves every night after it."

Aunt Atossa sniffed.

"I suppose you got that notion out of some of those silly magazines you read so many of. I wonder your mother allows you. But she always spoiled you. We all thought when George married her she wouldn't be a suitable wife for him."

Aunt Atossa sighed heavily, as if all forebodings upon the occasion of George Barry's marriage had been amply and darkly fulfilled.

"Going, are you?" she inquired, as the girls rose. "Well, I suppose you can't find much amusement talking to an old woman like me. It's such a pity the boys ain't home."

"We want to run in and see Ruby Gillis a little while," explained Diana.

"Oh, anything does for an excuse, of course," said Aunt Atossa, amiably. "Just whip in and whip out before you have time to say how-do decently. It's college airs, I s'pose. You'd be wiser to keep away from Ruby Gillis. The doctors say consumption's catching. I always knew Ruby'd get something, gadding off to Boston last fall for a visit. People who ain't content to stay home always catch something."

"People who don't go visiting catch things, too. Sometimes they even die," said Diana solemnly.

"Then they don't have themselves to blame for it," retorted Aunt Atossa triumphantly. "I hear you are to be married in June, Diana."

"There is no truth in that report," said Diana, blushing.

"Well, don't put it off too long," said Aunt Atossa significantly. "You'll fade soon — you're all complexion and hair. And the Wrights are terrible fickle. You ought to wear a hat, MISS SHIRLEY. Your nose is

freckling scandalous. My, but you ARE redheaded! Well, I s'pose we're all as the Lord made us! Give Marilla Cuthbert my respects. She's never been to see me since I come to Avonlea, but I s'pose I oughtn't to complain. The Cuthberts always did think themselves a cut higher than any one else round here."

"Oh, isn't she dreadful?" gasped Diana, as they escaped down the lane.

"She's worse than Miss Eliza Andrews," said Anne. "But then think of living all your life with a name like Atossa! Wouldn't it sour almost any one? She should have tried to imagine her name was Cordelia. It might have helped her a great deal. It certainly helped me in the days when I didn't like ANNE."

"Josie Pye will be just like her when she grows up," said Diana.

"Josie's mother and Aunt Atossa are cousins, you know. Oh, dear, I'm glad that's over. She's so malicious — she seems to put a bad flavor in everything. Father tells such a funny story about her. One time they had a minister in Spencervale who was a very good, spiritual man but very deaf. He couldn't hear any ordinary conversation at all. Well, they used to have a prayer meeting on Sunday evenings, and all the church members present would get up and pray in turn, or say a few words on some Bible verse. But one evening Aunt Atossa bounced up. She didn't either pray or preach. Instead, she lit into everybody else in the church and gave them a fearful raking down, calling them right out by name and telling them how they all had behaved, and casting up all the quarrels and scandals of the past ten years. Finally she wound up by saying that she was disgusted with Spencervale church and she never meant to darken its door again, and she hoped a fearful judgment would come upon it. Then she sat down out of breath, and the minister, who hadn't heard a word she said, immediately remarked, in a very devout voice, 'amen! The Lord grant our dear sister's prayer!' You ought to hear father tell the story."

"Speaking of stories, Diana," remarked Anne, in a significant, confidential tone, "do you know that lately I have been wondering if I could write a short story — a story that would be good enough to be published?"

“Why, of course you could,” said Diana, after she had grasped the amazing suggestion. “You used to write perfectly thrilling stories years ago in our old Story Club.”

“Well, I hardly meant one of that kind of stories,” smiled Anne. “I’ve been thinking about it a little of late, but I’m almost afraid to try, for, if I should fail, it would be too humiliating.”

“I heard Priscilla say once that all Mrs. Morgan’s first stories were rejected. But I’m sure yours wouldn’t be, Anne, for it’s likely editors have more sense nowadays.”

“Margaret Burton, one of the Junior girls at Redmond, wrote a story last winter and it was published in the Canadian Woman. I really do think I could write one at least as good.”

“And will you have it published in the Canadian Woman?”

“I might try one of the bigger magazines first. It all depends on what kind of a story I write.”

“What is it to be about?”

“I don’t know yet. I want to get hold of a good plot. I believe this is very necessary from an editor’s point of view. The only thing I’ve settled on is the heroine’s name. It is to be AVERIL LESTER. Rather pretty, don’t you think? Don’t mention this to any one, Diana. I haven’t told anybody but you and Mr. Harrison. HE wasn’t very encouraging — he said there was far too much trash written nowadays as it was, and he’d expected something better of me, after a year at college.”

“What does Mr. Harrison know about it?” demanded Diana scornfully.

They found the Gillis home gay with lights and callers. Leonard Kimball, of Spencervale, and Morgan Bell, of Carmody, were glaring at each other across the parlor. Several merry girls had dropped in. Ruby was dressed in white and her eyes and cheeks were very brilliant. She laughed and chattered incessantly, and after the other girls had gone she took Anne upstairs to display her new summer dresses.

“I’ve a blue silk to make up yet, but it’s a little heavy for summer wear. I think I’ll leave it until the fall. I’m going to teach in White Sands, you know. How do you like my hat? That one you had on in church

yesterday was real dinky. But I like something brighter for myself. Did you notice those two ridiculous boys downstairs? They've both come determined to sit each other out. I don't care a single bit about either of them, you know. Herb Spencer is the one I like. Sometimes I really do think he's MR. RIGHT. At Christmas I thought the Spencervale schoolmaster was that. But I found out something about him that turned me against him. He nearly went insane when I turned him down. I wish those two boys hadn't come tonight. I wanted to have a nice good talk with you, Anne, and tell you such heaps of things. You and I were always good chums, weren't we?"

Ruby slipped her arm about Anne's waist with a shallow little laugh. But just for a moment their eyes met, and, behind all the luster of Ruby's, Anne saw something that made her heart ache.

"Come up often, won't you, Anne?" whispered Ruby. "Come alone — I want you."

"Are you feeling quite well, Ruby?"

"Me! Why, I'm perfectly well. I never felt better in my life. Of course, that congestion last winter pulled me down a little. But just see my color. I don't look much like an invalid, I'm sure."

Ruby's voice was almost sharp. She pulled her arm away from Anne, as if in resentment, and ran downstairs, where she was gayer than ever, apparently so much absorbed in bantering her two swains that Diana and Anne felt rather out of it and soon went away.

“Averil’s Atonement”

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“What are you dreaming of, Anne?”

The two girls were loitering one evening in a fairy hollow of the brook. Ferns nodded in it, and little grasses were green, and wild pears hung finely-scented, white curtains around it.

Anne roused herself from her reverie with a happy sigh.

“I was thinking out my story, Diana.”

“Oh, have you really begun it?” cried Diana, all alight with eager interest in a moment.

“Yes, I have only a few pages written, but I have it all pretty well thought out. I’ve had such a time to get a suitable plot. None of the plots that suggested themselves suited a girl named AVERIL.”

“Couldn’t you have changed her name?”

“No, the thing was impossible. I tried to, but I couldn’t do it, any more than I could change yours. AVERIL was so real to me that no matter what other name I tried to give her I just thought of her as AVERIL behind it all. But finally I got a plot that matched her. Then came the excitement of choosing names for all my characters. You have no idea how fascinating that is. I’ve lain awake for hours thinking over those names. The hero’s name is PERCEVAL DALRYMPLE.”

“Have you named ALL the characters?” asked Diana wistfully. “If you hadn’t I was going to ask you to let me name one — just some unimportant person. I’d feel as if I had a share in the story then.”

“You may name the little hired boy who lived with the LESTERS,” conceded Anne. “He is not very important, but he is the only one left unnamed.”

“Call him RAYMOND FITZOSBORNE,” suggested Diana, who had a store of such names laid away in her memory, relics of the old “Story

Club,” which she and Anne and Jane Andrews and Ruby Gillis had had in their schooldays.

Anne shook her head doubtfully.

“I’m afraid that is too aristocratic a name for a chore boy, Diana. I couldn’t imagine a Fitzosborne feeding pigs and picking up chips, could you?”

Diana didn’t see why, if you had an imagination at all, you couldn’t stretch it to that extent; but probably Anne knew best, and the chore boy was finally christened ROBERT RAY, to be called BOBBY should occasion require.

“How much do you suppose you’ll get for it?” asked Diana.

But Anne had not thought about this at all. She was in pursuit of fame, not filthy lucre, and her literary dreams were as yet untainted by mercenary considerations.

“You’ll let me read it, won’t you?” pleaded Diana.

“When it is finished I’ll read it to you and Mr. Harrison, and I shall want you to criticize it SEVERELY. No one else shall see it until it is published.”

“How are you going to end it — happily or unhappily?”

“I’m not sure. I’d like it to end unhappily, because that would be so much more romantic. But I understand editors have a prejudice against sad endings. I heard Professor Hamilton say once that nobody but a genius should try to write an unhappy ending. And,” concluded Anne modestly, “I’m anything but a genius.”

“Oh I like happy endings best. You’d better let him marry her,” said Diana, who, especially since her engagement to Fred, thought this was how every story should end.

“But you like to cry over stories?”

“Oh, yes, in the middle of them. But I like everything to come right at last.”

“I must have one pathetic scene in it,” said Anne thoughtfully. “I might let ROBERT RAY be injured in an accident and have a death scene.”

“No, you mustn’t kill BOBBY off,” declared Diana, laughing. “He belongs to me and I want him to live and flourish. Kill somebody else if you have to.”

For the next fortnight Anne writhed or reveled, according to mood, in her literary pursuits. Now she would be jubilant over a brilliant idea, now despairing because some contrary character would NOT behave properly. Diana could not understand this.

“MAKE them do as you want them to,” she said.

“I can’t,” mourned Anne. “Averil is such an unmanageable heroine. She WILL do and say things I never meant her to. Then that spoils everything that went before and I have to write it all over again.”

Finally, however, the story was finished, and Anne read it to Diana in the seclusion of the porch gable. She had achieved her “pathetic scene” without sacrificing ROBERT RAY, and she kept a watchful eye on Diana as she read it. Diana rose to the occasion and cried properly; but, when the end came, she looked a little disappointed.

“Why did you kill MAURICE LENNOX?” she asked reproachfully.

“He was the villain,” protested Anne. “He had to be punished.”

“I like him best of them all,” said unreasonable Diana.

“Well, he’s dead, and he’ll have to stay dead,” said Anne, rather resentfully. “If I had let him live he’d have gone on persecuting AVERIL and PERCEVAL.”

“Yes — unless you had reformed him.”

“That wouldn’t have been romantic, and, besides, it would have made the story too long.”

“Well, anyway, it’s a perfectly elegant story, Anne, and will make you famous, of that I’m sure. Have you got a title for it?”

“Oh, I decided on the title long ago. I call it AVERIL’S ATONEMENT. Doesn’t that sound nice and alliterative? Now, Diana, tell me candidly, do you see any faults in my story?”

“Well,” hesitated Diana, “that part where AVERIL makes the cake doesn’t seem to me quite romantic enough to match the rest. It’s just what anybody might do. Heroines shouldn’t do cooking, *I* think.”

“Why, that is where the humor comes in, and it’s one of the best parts of the whole story,” said Anne. And it may be stated that in this she was quite right.

Diana prudently refrained from any further criticism, but Mr. Harrison was much harder to please. First he told her there was entirely too much description in the story.

“Cut out all those flowery passages,” he said unfeelingly.

Anne had an uncomfortable conviction that Mr. Harrison was right, and she forced herself to expunge most of her beloved descriptions, though it took three rewritings before the story could be pruned down to please the fastidious Mr. Harrison.

“I’ve left out ALL the descriptions but the sunset,” she said at last. “I simply COULDN’T let it go. It was the best of them all.”

“It hasn’t anything to do with the story,” said Mr. Harrison, “and you shouldn’t have laid the scene among rich city people. What do you know of them? Why didn’t you lay it right here in Avonlea — changing the name, of course, or else Mrs. Rachel Lynde would probably think she was the heroine.”

“Oh, that would never have done,” protested Anne. “Avonlea is the dearest place in the world, but it isn’t quite romantic enough for the scene of a story.”

“I daresay there’s been many a romance in Avonlea — and many a tragedy, too,” said Mr. Harrison drily. “But your folks ain’t like real folks anywhere. They talk too much and use too high-flown language. There’s one place where that DALRYMPLE chap talks even on for two pages, and never lets the girl get a word in edgewise. If he’d done that in real life she’d have pitched him.”

“I don’t believe it,” said Anne flatly. In her secret soul she thought that the beautiful, poetical things said to AVERIL would win any girl’s heart completely. Besides, it was gruesome to hear of AVERIL, the stately, queen-like AVERIL, “pitching” any one. AVERIL “declined her suitors.”

“Anyhow,” resumed the merciless Mr. Harrison, “I don’t see why MAURICE LENNOX didn’t get her. He was twice the man the other is. He

did bad things, but he did them. Perceval hadn't time for anything but mooning."

"Mooning." That was even worse than "pitching!"

"MAURICE LENNOX was the villain," said Anne indignantly. "I don't see why every one likes him better than PERCEVAL."

"Perceval is too good. He's aggravating. Next time you write about a hero put a little spice of human nature in him."

"AVERIL couldn't have married MAURICE. He was bad."

"She'd have reformed him. You can reform a man; you can't reform a jellyfish, of course. Your story isn't bad — it's kind of interesting, I'll admit. But you're too young to write a story that would be worth while. Wait ten years."

Anne made up her mind that the next time she wrote a story she wouldn't ask anybody to criticize it. It was too discouraging. She would not read the story to Gilbert, although she told him about it.

"If it is a success you'll see it when it is published, Gilbert, but if it is a failure nobody shall ever see it."

Marilla knew nothing about the venture. In imagination Anne saw herself reading a story out of a magazine to Marilla, entrapping her into praise of it — for in imagination all things are possible — and then triumphantly announcing herself the author.

One day Anne took to the Post Office a long, bulky envelope, addressed, with the delightful confidence of youth and inexperience, to the very biggest of the "big" magazines. Diana was as excited over it as Anne herself.

"How long do you suppose it will be before you hear from it?" she asked.

"It shouldn't be longer than a fortnight. Oh, how happy and proud I shall be if it is accepted!"

"Of course it will be accepted, and they will likely ask you to send them more. You may be as famous as Mrs. Morgan some day, Anne, and then how proud I'll be of knowing you," said Diana, who possessed, at

least, the striking merit of an unselfish admiration of the gifts and graces of her friends.

A week of delightful dreaming followed, and then came a bitter awakening. One evening Diana found Anne in the porch gable, with suspicious-looking eyes. On the table lay a long envelope and a crumpled manuscript.

“Anne, your story hasn’t come back?” cried Diana incredulously.

“Yes, it has,” said Anne shortly.

“Well, that editor must be crazy. What reason did he give?”

“No reason at all. There is just a printed slip saying that it wasn’t found acceptable.”

“I never thought much of that magazine, anyway,” said Diana hotly. “The stories in it are not half as interesting as those in the Canadian Woman, although it costs so much more. I suppose the editor is prejudiced against any one who isn’t a Yankee. Don’t be discouraged, Anne. Remember how Mrs. Morgan’s stories came back. Send yours to the Canadian Woman.”

“I believe I will,” said Anne, plucking up heart. “And if it is published I’ll send that American editor a marked copy. But I’ll cut the sunset out. I believe Mr. Harrison was right.”

Out came the sunset; but in spite of this heroic mutilation the editor of the Canadian Woman sent Averil’s Atonement back so promptly that the indignant Diana declared that it couldn’t have been read at all, and vowed she was going to stop her subscription immediately. Anne took this second rejection with the calmness of despair. She locked the story away in the garret trunk where the old Story Club tales reposed; but first she yielded to Diana’s entreaties and gave her a copy.

“This is the end of my literary ambitions,” she said bitterly.

She never mentioned the matter to Mr. Harrison, but one evening he asked her bluntly if her story had been accepted.

“No, the editor wouldn’t take it,” she answered briefly.

Mr. Harrison looked sidewise at the flushed, delicate profile.

“Well, I suppose you’ll keep on writing them,” he said encouragingly.

“No, I shall never try to write a story again,” declared Anne, with the hopeless finality of nineteen when a door is shut in its face.

“I wouldn’t give up altogether,” said Mr. Harrison reflectively. “I’d write a story once in a while, but I wouldn’t pester editors with it. I’d write of people and places like I knew, and I’d make my characters talk everyday English; and I’d let the sun rise and set in the usual quiet way without much fuss over the fact. If I had to have villains at all, I’d give them a chance, Anne — I’d give them a chance. There are some terrible bad men in the world, I suppose, but you’d have to go a long piece to find them — though Mrs. Lynde believes we’re all bad. But most of us have got a little decency somewhere in us. Keep on writing, Anne.”

“No. It was very foolish of me to attempt it. When I’m through Redmond I’ll stick to teaching. I can teach. I can’t write stories.”

“It’ll be time for you to be getting a husband when you’re through Redmond,” said Mr. Harrison. “I don’t believe in putting marrying off too long — like I did.”

Anne got up and marched home. There were times when Mr. Harrison was really intolerable. “Pitching,” “mooning,” and “getting a husband.” Ow!!

The Way of Transgressors

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Davy and Dora were ready for Sunday School. They were going alone, which did not often happen, for Mrs. Lynde always attended Sunday School. But Mrs. Lynde had twisted her ankle and was lame, so she was staying home this morning. The twins were also to represent the family at church, for Anne had gone away the evening before to spend Sunday with friends in Carmody, and Marilla had one of her headaches.

Davy came downstairs slowly. Dora was waiting in the hall for him, having been made ready by Mrs. Lynde. Davy had attended to his own preparations. He had a cent in his pocket for the Sunday School collection, and a five-cent piece for the church collection; he carried his Bible in one hand and his Sunday School quarterly in the other; he knew his lesson and his Golden Text and his catechism question perfectly. Had he not studied them — perforce — in Mrs. Lynde's kitchen, all last Sunday afternoon? Davy, therefore, should have been in a placid frame of mind. As a matter of fact, despite text and catechism, he was inwardly as a ravening wolf.

Mrs. Lynde limped out of her kitchen as he joined Dora.

“Are you clean?” she demanded severely.

“Yes — all of me that shows,” Davy answered with a defiant scowl.

Mrs. Rachel sighed. She had her suspicions about Davy's neck and ears. But she knew that if she attempted to make a personal examination Davy would likely take to his heels and she could not pursue him today.

“Well, be sure you behave yourselves,” she warned them. “Don't walk in the dust. Don't stop in the porch to talk to the other children. Don't squirm or wriggle in your places. Don't forget the Golden Text. Don't lose your collection or forget to put it in. Don't whisper at prayer time, and don't forget to pay attention to the sermon.”

Davy deigned no response. He marched away down the lane, followed by the meek Dora. But his soul seethed within. Davy had suffered, or

thought he had suffered, many things at the hands and tongue of Mrs. Rachel Lynde since she had come to Green Gables, for Mrs. Lynde could not live with anybody, whether they were nine or ninety, without trying to bring them up properly. And it was only the preceding afternoon that she had interfered to influence Marilla against allowing Davy to go fishing with the Timothy Cottons. Davy was still boiling over this.

As soon as he was out of the lane Davy stopped and twisted his countenance into such an unearthly and terrific contortion that Dora, although she knew his gifts in that respect, was honestly alarmed lest he should never in the world be able to get it straightened out again.

“Darn her,” exploded Davy.

“Oh, Davy, don’t swear,” gasped Dora in dismay.

“‘Darn’ isn’t swearing — not real swearing. And I don’t care if it is,” retorted Davy recklessly.

“Well, if you MUST say dreadful words don’t say them on Sunday,” pleaded Dora.

Davy was as yet far from repentance, but in his secret soul he felt that, perhaps, he had gone a little too far.

“I’m going to invent a swear word of my own,” he declared.

“God will punish you if you do,” said Dora solemnly.

“Then I think God is a mean old scamp,” retorted Davy. “Doesn’t He know a fellow must have some way of ‘spressing his feelings?’”

“Davy!!!” said Dora. She expected that Davy would be struck down dead on the spot. But nothing happened.

“Anyway, I ain’t going to stand any more of Mrs. Lynde’s bossing,” spluttered Davy. “Anne and Marilla may have the right to boss me, but SHE hasn’t. I’m going to do every single thing she told me not to do. You watch me.”

In grim, deliberate silence, while Dora watched him with the fascination of horror, Davy stepped off the green grass of the roadside, ankle deep into the fine dust which four weeks of rainless weather had made on the road, and marched along in it, shuffling his feet viciously until he was enveloped in a hazy cloud.

“That’s the beginning,” he announced triumphantly. “And I’m going to stop in the porch and talk as long as there’s anybody there to talk to. I’m going to squirm and wriggle and whisper, and I’m going to say I don’t know the Golden Text. And I’m going to throw away both of my collections RIGHT NOW.”

And Davy hurled cent and nickel over Mr. Barry’s fence with fierce delight.

“Satan made you do that,” said Dora reproachfully.

“He didn’t,” cried Davy indignantly. “I just thought it out for myself. And I’ve thought of something else. I’m not going to Sunday School or church at all. I’m going up to play with the Cottons. They told me yesterday they weren’t going to Sunday School today, ‘cause their mother was away and there was nobody to make them. Come along, Dora, we’ll have a great time.”

“I don’t want to go,” protested Dora.

“You’ve got to,” said Davy. “If you don’t come I’ll tell Marilla that Frank Bell kissed you in school last Monday.”

“I couldn’t help it. I didn’t know he was going to,” cried Dora, blushing scarlet.

“Well, you didn’t slap him or seem a bit cross,” retorted Davy. “I’ll tell her THAT, too, if you don’t come. We’ll take the short cut up this field.”

“I’m afraid of those cows,” protested poor Dora, seeing a prospect of escape.

“The very idea of your being scared of those cows,” scoffed Davy. “Why, they’re both younger than you.”

“They’re bigger,” said Dora.

“They won’t hurt you. Come along, now. This is great. When I grow up I ain’t going to bother going to church at all. I believe I can get to heaven by myself.”

“You’ll go to the other place if you break the Sabbath day,” said unhappy Dora, following him sorely against her will.

But Davy was not scared — yet. Hell was very far off, and the delights of a fishing expedition with the Cottons were very near. He wished Dora

had more spunk. She kept looking back as if she were going to cry every minute, and that spoiled a fellow's fun. Hang girls, anyway. Davy did not say "darn" this time, even in thought. He was not sorry — yet — that he had said it once, but it might be as well not to tempt the Unknown Powers too far on one day.

The small Cottons were playing in their back yard, and hailed Davy's appearance with whoops of delight. Pete, Tommy, Adolphus, and Mirabel Cotton were all alone. Their mother and older sisters were away. Dora was thankful Mirabel was there, at least. She had been afraid she would be alone in a crowd of boys. Mirabel was almost as bad as a boy — she was so noisy and sunburned and reckless. But at least she wore dresses.

"We've come to go fishing," announced Davy.

"Whoop," yelled the Cottons. They rushed away to dig worms at once, Mirabel leading the van with a tin can. Dora could have sat down and cried. Oh, if only that hateful Frank Bell had never kissed her! Then she could have defied Davy, and gone to her beloved Sunday School.

They dared not, of course, go fishing on the pond, where they would be seen by people going to church. They had to resort to the brook in the woods behind the Cotton house. But it was full of trout, and they had a glorious time that morning — at least the Cottons certainly had, and Davy seemed to have it. Not being entirely bereft of prudence, he had discarded boots and stockings and borrowed Tommy Cotton's overalls. Thus accoutered, bog and marsh and undergrowth had no terrors for him. Dora was frankly and manifestly miserable. She followed the others in their peregrinations from pool to pool, clasping her Bible and quarterly tightly and thinking with bitterness of soul of her beloved class where she should be sitting that very moment, before a teacher she adored. Instead, here she was roaming the woods with those half-wild Cottons, trying to keep her boots clean and her pretty white dress free from rents and stains. Mirabel had offered the loan of an apron but Dora had scornfully refused.

The trout bit as they always do on Sundays. In an hour the transgressors had all the fish they wanted, so they returned to the house, much to Dora's relief. She sat primly on a hencoop in the yard while the

others played an uproarious game of tag; and then they all climbed to the top of the pighouse roof and cut their initials on the saddleboard. The flat-roofed henhouse and a pile of straw beneath gave Davy another inspiration. They spent a splendid half hour climbing on the roof and diving off into the straw with whoops and yells.

But even unlawful pleasures must come to an end. When the rumble of wheels over the pond bridge told that people were going home from church Davy knew they must go. He discarded Tommy's overalls, resumed his own rightful attire, and turned away from his string of trout with a sigh. No use to think of taking them home.

"Well, hadn't we a splendid time?" he demanded defiantly, as they went down the hill field.

"I hadn't," said Dora flatly. "And I don't believe you had — really — either," she added, with a flash of insight that was not to be expected of her.

"I had so," cried Davy, but in the voice of one who doth protest too much. "No wonder you hadn't — just sitting there like a — like a mule."

"I ain't going to, 'sociate with the Cottons," said Dora loftily.

"The Cottons are all right," retorted Davy. "And they have far better times than we have. They do just as they please and say just what they like before everybody. *I'm* going to do that, too, after this."

"There are lots of things you wouldn't dare say before everybody," averred Dora.

"No, there isn't."

"There is, too. Would you," demanded Dora gravely, "would you say 'tomcat' before the minister?"

This was a staggerer. Davy was not prepared for such a concrete example of the freedom of speech. But one did not have to be consistent with Dora.

"Of course not," he admitted sulkily.

"'Tomcat' isn't a holy word. I wouldn't mention such an animal before a minister at all."

"But if you had to?" persisted Dora.

“I’d call it a Thomas pussy,” said Davy.

“*I* think ‘gentleman cat’ would be more polite,” reflected Dora.

“YOU thinking!” retorted Davy with withering scorn.

Davy was not feeling comfortable, though he would have died before he admitted it to Dora. Now that the exhilaration of truant delights had died away, his conscience was beginning to give him salutary twinges. After all, perhaps it would have been better to have gone to Sunday School and church. Mrs. Lynde might be bossy; but there was always a box of cookies in her kitchen cupboard and she was not stingy. At this inconvenient moment Davy remembered that when he had torn his new school pants the week before, Mrs. Lynde had mended them beautifully and never said a word to Marilla about them.

But Davy’s cup of iniquity was not yet full. He was to discover that one sin demands another to cover it. They had dinner with Mrs. Lynde that day, and the first thing she asked Davy was,

“Were all your class in Sunday School today?”

“Yes’m,” said Davy with a gulp. “All were there—’cept one.”

“Did you say your Golden Text and catechism?”

“Yes’m.”

“Did you put your collection in?”

“Yes’m.”

“Was Mrs. Malcolm MacPherson in church?”

“I don’t know.” This, at least, was the truth, thought wretched Davy.

“Was the Ladies’ Aid announced for next week?”

“Yes’m” — quakingly.

“Was prayer-meeting?”

“I — I don’t know.”

“YOU should know. You should listen more attentively to the announcements. What was Mr. Harvey’s text?”

Davy took a frantic gulp of water and swallowed it and the last protest of conscience together. He glibly recited an old Golden Text learned several weeks ago. Fortunately Mrs. Lynde now stopped questioning him; but Davy did not enjoy his dinner.

He could only eat one helping of pudding.

“What’s the matter with you?” demanded justly astonished Mrs. Lynde. “Are you sick?”

“No,” muttered Davy.

“You look pale. You’d better keep out of the sun this afternoon,” admonished Mrs. Lynde.

“Do you know how many lies you told Mrs. Lynde?” asked Dora reproachfully, as soon as they were alone after dinner.

Davy, goaded to desperation, turned fiercely.

“I don’t know and I don’t care,” he said. “You just shut up, Dora Keith.”

Then poor Davy betook himself to a secluded retreat behind the woodpile to think over the way of transgressors.

Green Gables was wrapped in darkness and silence when Anne reached home. She lost no time going to bed, for she was very tired and sleepy. There had been several Avonlea jollifications the preceding week, involving rather late hours. Anne’s head was hardly on her pillow before she was half asleep; but just then her door was softly opened and a pleading voice said, “Anne.”

Anne sat up drowsily.

“Davy, is that you? What is the matter?”

A white-clad figure flung itself across the floor and on to the bed.

“Anne,” sobbed Davy, getting his arms about her neck. “I’m awful glad you’re home. I couldn’t go to sleep till I’d told somebody.”

“Told somebody what?”

“How mis’rubul I am.”

“Why are you miserable, dear?”

“‘Cause I was so bad today, Anne. Oh, I was awful bad — badder’n I’ve ever been yet.”

“What did you do?”

“Oh, I’m afraid to tell you. You’ll never like me again, Anne. I couldn’t say my prayers tonight. I couldn’t tell God what I’d done. I was ‘shamed to have Him know.”

“But He knew anyway, Davy.”

“That’s what Dora said. But I thought p’raps He mightn’t have noticed just at the time. Anyway, I’d rather tell you first.”

“WHAT is it you did?”

Out it all came in a rush.

“I run away from Sunday School — and went fishing with the Cottons — and I told ever so many whoppers to Mrs. Lynde — oh! ‘most half a dozen — and — and — I — I said a swear word, Anne — a pretty near swear word, anyhow — and I called God names.”

There was silence. Davy didn’t know what to make of it. Was Anne so shocked that she never would speak to him again?

“Anne, what are you going to do to me?” he whispered.

“Nothing, dear. You’ve been punished already, I think.”

“No, I haven’t. Nothing’s been done to me.”

“You’ve been very unhappy ever since you did wrong, haven’t you?”

“You bet!” said Davy emphatically.

“That was your conscience punishing you, Davy.”

“What’s my conscience? I want to know.”

“It’s something in you, Davy, that always tells you when you are doing wrong and makes you unhappy if you persist in doing it. Haven’t you noticed that?”

“Yes, but I didn’t know what it was. I wish I didn’t have it. I’d have lots more fun. Where is my conscience, Anne? I want to know. Is it in my stomach?”

“No, it’s in your soul,” answered Anne, thankful for the darkness, since gravity must be preserved in serious matters.

“I s’pose I can’t get clear of it then,” said Davy with a sigh. “Are you going to tell Marilla and Mrs. Lynde on me, Anne?”

“No, dear, I’m not going to tell any one. You are sorry you were naughty, aren’t you?”

“You bet!”

“And you’ll never be bad like that again.”

“No, but—” added Davy cautiously, “I might be bad some other way.”

“You won’t say naughty words, or run away on Sundays, or tell falsehoods to cover up your sins?”

“No. It doesn’t pay,” said Davy.

“Well, Davy, just tell God you are sorry and ask Him to forgive you.”

“Have YOU forgiven me, Anne?”

“Yes, dear.”

“Then,” said Davy joyously, “I don’t care much whether God does or not.”

“Davy!”

“Oh — I’ll ask Him — I’ll ask Him,” said Davy quickly, scrambling off the bed, convinced by Anne’s tone that he must have said something dreadful. “I don’t mind asking Him, Anne. — Please, God, I’m awful sorry I behaved bad today and I’ll try to be good on Sundays always and please forgive me. — There now, Anne.”

“Well, now, run off to bed like a good boy.”

“All right. Say, I don’t feel mis’rubul any more. I feel fine. Good night.”

“Good night.”

Anne slipped down on her pillows with a sigh of relief. Oh — how sleepy — she was! In another second —

“Anne!” Davy was back again by her bed. Anne dragged her eyes open.

“What is it now, dear?” she asked, trying to keep a note of impatience out of her voice.

“Anne, have you ever noticed how Mr. Harrison spits? Do you s’pose, if I practice hard, I can learn to spit just like him?”

Anne sat up.

“Davy Keith,” she said, “go straight to your bed and don’t let me catch you out of it again tonight! Go, now!”

Davy went, and stood not upon the order of his going.

The Summons

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Anne was sitting with Ruby Gillis in the Gillis' garden after the day had crept lingeringly through it and was gone. It had been a warm, smoky summer afternoon. The world was in a splendor of outflowering. The idle valleys were full of hazes. The woodways were pranked with shadows and the fields with the purple of the asters.

Anne had given up a moonlight drive to the White Sands beach that she might spend the evening with Ruby. She had so spent many evenings that summer, although she often wondered what good it did any one, and sometimes went home deciding that she could not go again.

Ruby grew paler as the summer waned; the White Sands school was given up—"her father thought it better that she shouldn't teach till New Year's" — and the fancy work she loved oftener and oftener fell from hands grown too weary for it. But she was always gay, always hopeful, always chattering and whispering of her beaux, and their rivalries and despairs. It was this that made Anne's visits hard for her. What had once been silly or amusing was gruesome, now; it was death peering through a wilful mask of life. Yet Ruby seemed to cling to her, and never let her go until she had promised to come again soon. Mrs. Lynde grumbled about Anne's frequent visits, and declared she would catch consumption; even Marilla was dubious.

"Every time you go to see Ruby you come home looking tired out," she said.

"It's so very sad and dreadful," said Anne in a low tone. "Ruby doesn't seem to realize her condition in the least. And yet I somehow feel she needs help — craves it — and I want to give it to her and can't. All the time I'm with her I feel as if I were watching her struggle with an invisible foe — trying to push it back with such feeble resistance as she has. That is why I come home tired."

But tonight Anne did not feel this so keenly. Ruby was strangely quiet. She said not a word about parties and drives and dresses and “fellows.” She lay in the hammock, with her untouched work beside her, and a white shawl wrapped about her thin shoulders. Her long yellow braids of hair — how Anne had envied those beautiful braids in old schooldays! — lay on either side of her. She had taken the pins out — they made her head ache, she said. The hectic flush was gone for the time, leaving her pale and childlike.

The moon rose in the silvery sky, empearling the clouds around her. Below, the pond shimmered in its hazy radiance. Just beyond the Gillis homestead was the church, with the old graveyard beside it. The moonlight shone on the white stones, bringing them out in clear-cut relief against the dark trees behind.

“How strange the graveyard looks by moonlight!” said Ruby suddenly. “How ghostly!” she shuddered. “Anne, it won’t be long now before I’ll be lying over there. You and Diana and all the rest will be going about, full of life — and I’ll be there — in the old graveyard — dead!”

The surprise of it bewildered Anne. For a few moments she could not speak.

“You know it’s so, don’t you?” said Ruby insistently.

“Yes, I know,” answered Anne in a low tone. “Dear Ruby, I know.”

“Everybody knows it,” said Ruby bitterly. “I know it — I’ve known it all summer, though I wouldn’t give in. And, oh, Anne” — she reached out and caught Anne’s hand pleadingly, impulsively—“I don’t want to die. I’m AFRAID to die.”

“Why should you be afraid, Ruby?” asked Anne quietly.

“Because — because — oh, I’m not afraid but that I’ll go to heaven, Anne. I’m a church member. But — it’ll be all so different. I think — and think — and I get so frightened — and — and — homesick. Heaven must be very beautiful, of course, the Bible says so — but, Anne, IT WON’T BE WHAT I’VE BEEN USED TO.”

Through Anne’s mind drifted an intrusive recollection of a funny story she had heard Philippa Gordon tell — the story of some old man who had

said very much the same thing about the world to come. It had sounded funny then — she remembered how she and Priscilla had laughed over it. But it did not seem in the least humorous now, coming from Ruby's pale, trembling lips. It was sad, tragic — and true! Heaven could not be what Ruby had been used to. There had been nothing in her gay, frivolous life, her shallow ideals and aspirations, to fit her for that great change, or make the life to come seem to her anything but alien and unreal and undesirable. Anne wondered helplessly what she could say that would help her. Could she say anything? "I think, Ruby," she began hesitatingly — for it was difficult for Anne to speak to any one of the deepest thoughts of her heart, or the new ideas that had vaguely begun to shape themselves in her mind, concerning the great mysteries of life here and hereafter, superseding her old childish conceptions, and it was hardest of all to speak of them to such as Ruby Gillis—"I think, perhaps, we have very mistaken ideas about heaven — what it is and what it holds for us. I don't think it can be so very different from life here as most people seem to think. I believe we'll just go on living, a good deal as we live here — and be OURSELVES just the same — only it will be easier to be good and to — follow the highest. All the hindrances and perplexities will be taken away, and we shall see clearly. Don't be afraid, Ruby."

"I can't help it," said Ruby pitifully. "Even if what you say about heaven is true — and you can't be sure — it may be only that imagination of yours — it won't be JUST the same. It CAN'T be. I want to go on living HERE. I'm so young, Anne. I haven't had my life. I've fought so hard to live — and it isn't any use — I have to die — and leave EVERYTHING I care for." Anne sat in a pain that was almost intolerable. She could not tell comforting falsehoods; and all that Ruby said was so horribly true. She WAS leaving everything she cared for. She had laid up her treasures on earth only; she had lived solely for the little things of life — the things that pass — forgetting the great things that go onward into eternity, bridging the gulf between the two lives and making of death a mere passing from one dwelling to the other — from twilight to unclouded day. God would take care of her there — Anne believed — she would learn —

but now it was no wonder her soul clung, in blind helplessness, to the only things she knew and loved.

Ruby raised herself on her arm and lifted up her bright, beautiful blue eyes to the moonlit skies.

“I want to live,” she said, in a trembling voice. “I want to live like other girls. I — I want to be married, Anne — and — and — have little children. You know I always loved babies, Anne. I couldn’t say this to any one but you. I know you understand. And then poor Herb — he — he loves me and I love him, Anne. The others meant nothing to me, but HE does — and if I could live I would be his wife and be so happy. Oh, Anne, it’s hard.”

Ruby sank back on her pillows and sobbed convulsively. Anne pressed her hand in an agony of sympathy — silent sympathy, which perhaps helped Ruby more than broken, imperfect words could have done; for presently she grew calmer and her sobs ceased.

“I’m glad I’ve told you this, Anne,” she whispered. “It has helped me just to say it all out. I’ve wanted to all summer — every time you came. I wanted to talk it over with you — but I COULDN’T. It seemed as if it would make death so SURE if I SAID I was going to die, or if any one else said it or hinted it. I wouldn’t say it, or even think it. In the daytime, when people were around me and everything was cheerful, it wasn’t so hard to keep from thinking of it. But in the night, when I couldn’t sleep — it was so dreadful, Anne. I couldn’t get away from it then. Death just came and stared me in the face, until I got so frightened I could have screamed.

“But you won’t be frightened any more, Ruby, will you? You’ll be brave, and believe that all is going to be well with you.”

“I’ll try. I’ll think over what you have said, and try to believe it. And you’ll come up as often as you can, won’t you, Anne?”

“Yes, dear.”

“It — it won’t be very long now, Anne. I feel sure of that. And I’d rather have you than any one else. I always liked you best of all the girls I went to school with. You were never jealous, or mean, like some of them were. Poor Em White was up to see me yesterday. You remember Em and I

were such chums for three years when we went to school? And then we quarrelled the time of the school concert. We've never spoken to each other since. Wasn't it silly? Anything like that seems silly NOW. But Em and I made up the old quarrel yesterday. She said she'd have spoken years ago, only she thought I wouldn't. And I never spoke to her because I was sure she wouldn't speak to me. Isn't it strange how people misunderstand each other, Anne?"

"Most of the trouble in life comes from misunderstanding, I think," said Anne. "I must go now, Ruby. It's getting late — and you shouldn't be out in the damp."

"You'll come up soon again."

"Yes, very soon. And if there's anything I can do to help you I'll be so glad."

"I know. You HAVE helped me already. Nothing seems quite so dreadful now. Good night, Anne."

"Good night, dear."

Anne walked home very slowly in the moonlight. The evening had changed something for her. Life held a different meaning, a deeper purpose. On the surface it would go on just the same; but the deeps had been stirred. It must not be with her as with poor butterfly Ruby. When she came to the end of one life it must not be to face the next with the shrinking terror of something wholly different — something for which accustomed thought and ideal and aspiration had unfitted her. The little things of life, sweet and excellent in their place, must not be the things lived for; the highest must be sought and followed; the life of heaven must be begun here on earth.

That good night in the garden was for all time. Anne never saw Ruby in life again. The next night the A.V.I.S. gave a farewell party to Jane Andrews before her departure for the West. And, while light feet danced and bright eyes laughed and merry tongues chattered, there came a summons to a soul in Avonlea that might not be disregarded or evaded. The next morning the word went from house to house that Ruby Gillis was dead. She had died in her sleep, painlessly and calmly, and on her face was

a smile — as if, after all, death had come as a kindly friend to lead her over the threshold, instead of the grisly phantom she had dreaded.

Mrs. Rachel Lynde said emphatically after the funeral that Ruby Gillis was the handsomest corpse she ever laid eyes on. Her loveliness, as she lay, white-clad, among the delicate flowers that Anne had placed about her, was remembered and talked of for years in Avonlea. Ruby had always been beautiful; but her beauty had been of the earth, earthy; it had had a certain insolent quality in it, as if it flaunted itself in the beholder's eye; spirit had never shone through it, intellect had never refined it. But death had touched it and consecrated it, bringing out delicate modelings and purity of outline never seen before — doing what life and love and great sorrow and deep womanhood joys might have done for Ruby. Anne, looking down through a mist of tears, at her old playfellow, thought she saw the face God had meant Ruby to have, and remembered it so always.

Mrs. Gillis called Anne aside into a vacant room before the funeral procession left the house, and gave her a small packet.

"I want you to have this," she sobbed. "Ruby would have liked you to have it. It's the embroidered centerpiece she was working at. It isn't quite finished — the needle is sticking in it just where her poor little fingers put it the last time she laid it down, the afternoon before she died."

"There's always a piece of unfinished work left," said Mrs. Lynde, with tears in her eyes. "But I suppose there's always some one to finish it."

"How difficult it is to realize that one we have always known can really be dead," said Anne, as she and Diana walked home. "Ruby is the first of our schoolmates to go. One by one, sooner or later, all the rest of us must follow."

"Yes, I suppose so," said Diana uncomfortably. She did not want to talk of that. She would have preferred to have discussed the details of the funeral — the splendid white velvet casket Mr. Gillis had insisted on having for Ruby—"the Gillises must always make a splurge, even at funerals," quoth Mrs. Rachel Lynde — Herb Spencer's sad face, the uncontrolled, hysteric grief of one of Ruby's sisters — but Anne would not

talk of these things. She seemed wrapped in a reverie in which Diana felt lonesomely that she had neither lot nor part.

“Ruby Gillis was a great girl to laugh,” said Davy suddenly. “Will she laugh as much in heaven as she did in Avonlea, Anne? I want to know.”

“Yes, I think she will,” said Anne.

“Oh, Anne,” protested Diana, with a rather shocked smile.

“Well, why not, Diana?” asked Anne seriously. “Do you think we’ll never laugh in heaven?”

“Oh — I — I don’t know” floundered Diana. “It doesn’t seem just right, somehow. You know it’s rather dreadful to laugh in church.”

“But heaven won’t be like church — all the time,” said Anne.

“I hope it ain’t,” said Davy emphatically. “If it is I don’t want to go. Church is awful dull. Anyway, I don’t mean to go for ever so long. I mean to live to be a hundred years old, like Mr. Thomas Blewett of White Sands. He says he’s lived so long ‘cause he always smoked tobacco and it killed all the germs. Can I smoke tobacco pretty soon, Anne?”

“No, Davy, I hope you’ll never use tobacco,” said Anne absently.

“What’ll you feel like if the germs kill me then?” demanded Davy.

A Dream Turned Upside Down

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“Just one more week and we go back to Redmond,” said Anne. She was happy at the thought of returning to work, classes and Redmond friends. Pleasing visions were also being woven around Patty’s Place. There was a warm pleasant sense of home in the thought of it, even though she had never lived there.

But the summer had been a very happy one, too — a time of glad living with summer suns and skies, a time of keen delight in wholesome things; a time of renewing and deepening of old friendships; a time in which she had learned to live more nobly, to work more patiently, to play more heartily.

“All life lessons are not learned at college,” she thought. “Life teaches them everywhere.”

But alas, the final week of that pleasant vacation was spoiled for Anne, by one of those impish happenings which are like a dream turned upside down.

“Been writing any more stories lately?” inquired Mr. Harrison genially one evening when Anne was taking tea with him and Mrs. Harrison.

“No,” answered Anne, rather crisply.

“Well, no offense meant. Mrs. Hiram Sloane told me the other day that a big envelope addressed to the Rollings Reliable Baking Powder Company of Montreal had been dropped into the post office box a month ago, and she suspicioned that somebody was trying for the prize they’d offered for the best story that introduced the name of their baking powder. She said it wasn’t addressed in your writing, but I thought maybe it was you.”

“Indeed, no! I saw the prize offer, but I’d never dream of competing for it. I think it would be perfectly disgraceful to write a story to advertise

a baking powder. It would be almost as bad as Judson Parker's patent medicine fence."

So spake Anne loftily, little dreaming of the valley of humiliation awaiting her. That very evening Diana popped into the porch gable, bright-eyed and rosy cheeked, carrying a letter.

"Oh, Anne, here's a letter for you. I was at the office, so I thought I'd bring it along. Do open it quick. If it is what I believe it is I shall just be wild with delight." Anne, puzzled, opened the letter and glanced over the typewritten contents.

Miss Anne Shirley,
Green Gables,
Avonlea, P.E. Island.

"DEAR MADAM: We have much pleasure in informing you that your charming story 'Averil's Atonement' has won the prize of twenty-five dollars offered in our recent competition. We enclose the check herewith. We are arranging for the publication of the story in several prominent Canadian newspapers, and we also intend to have it printed in pamphlet form for distribution among our patrons. Thanking you for the interest you have shown in our enterprise, we remain,

"Yours very truly,

"THE ROLLINGS RELIABLE

"BAKING POWDER Co."

"I don't understand," said Anne, blankly.

Diana clapped her hands.

"Oh, I KNEW it would win the prize — I was sure of it. *I* sent your story into the competition, Anne."

"Diana — Barry!"

"Yes, I did," said Diana gleefully, perching herself on the bed. "When I saw the offer I thought of your story in a minute, and at first I thought I'd ask you to send it in. But then I was afraid you wouldn't — you had so little faith left in it. So I just decided I'd send the copy you gave me, and say nothing about it. Then, if it didn't win the prize, you'd never know and

you wouldn't feel badly over it, because the stories that failed were not to be returned, and if it did you'd have such a delightful surprise."

Diana was not the most discerning of mortals, but just at this moment it struck her that Anne was not looking exactly overjoyed. The surprise was there, beyond doubt — but where was the delight?

"Why, Anne, you don't seem a bit pleased!" she exclaimed.

Anne instantly manufactured a smile and put it on.

"Of course I couldn't be anything but pleased over your unselfish wish to give me pleasure," she said slowly. "But you know — I'm so amazed — I can't realize it — and I don't understand. There wasn't a word in my story about — about—" Anne choked a little over the word—"baking powder."

"Oh, *I* put that in," said Diana, reassured. "It was as easy as wink — and of course my experience in our old Story Club helped me. You know the scene where Averil makes the cake? Well, I just stated that she used the Rollings Reliable in it, and that was why it turned out so well; and then, in the last paragraph, where PERCEVAL clasps AVERIL in his arms and says, 'Sweetheart, the beautiful coming years will bring us the fulfilment of our home of dreams,' I added, 'in which we will never use any baking powder except Rollings Reliable.'"

"Oh," gasped poor Anne, as if some one had dashed cold water on her.

"And you've won the twenty-five dollars," continued Diana jubilantly. "Why, I heard Priscilla say once that the Canadian Woman only pays five dollars for a story!"

Anne held out the hateful pink slip in shaking fingers.

"I can't take it — it's yours by right, Diana. You sent the story in and made the alterations. I — I would certainly never have sent it. So you must take the check."

"I'd like to see myself," said Diana scornfully. "Why, what I did wasn't any trouble. The honor of being a friend of the prizewinner is enough for me. Well, I must go. I should have gone straight home from the post office for we have company. But I simply had to come and hear the news. I'm so glad for your sake, Anne."

Anne suddenly bent forward, put her arms about Diana, and kissed her cheek.

“I think you are the sweetest and truest friend in the world, Diana,” she said, with a little tremble in her voice, “and I assure you I appreciate the motive of what you’ve done.”

Diana, pleased and embarrassed, got herself away, and poor Anne, after flinging the innocent check into her bureau drawer as if it were blood-money, cast herself on her bed and wept tears of shame and outraged sensibility. Oh, she could never live this down — never!

Gilbert arrived at dusk, brimming over with congratulations, for he had called at Orchard Slope and heard the news. But his congratulations died on his lips at sight of Anne’s face.

“Why, Anne, what is the matter? I expected to find you radiant over winning Rollings Reliable prize. Good for you!”

“Oh, Gilbert, not you,” implored Anne, in an ET-TU BRUTE tone. “I thought YOU would understand. Can’t you see how awful it is?”

“I must confess I can’t. WHAT is wrong?”

“Everything,” moaned Anne. “I feel as if I were disgraced forever. What do you think a mother would feel like if she found her child tattooed over with a baking powder advertisement? I feel just the same. I loved my poor little story, and I wrote it out of the best that was in me. And it is SACRILEGE to have it degraded to the level of a baking powder advertisement. Don’t you remember what Professor Hamilton used to tell us in the literature class at Queen’s? He said we were never to write a word for a low or unworthy motive, but always to cling to the very highest ideals. What will he think when he hears I’ve written a story to advertise Rollings Reliable? And, oh, when it gets out at Redmond! Think how I’ll be teased and laughed at!”

“That you won’t,” said Gilbert, wondering uneasily if it were that confounded Junior’s opinion in particular over which Anne was worried. “The Reds will think just as I thought — that you, being like nine out of ten of us, not overburdened with worldly wealth, had taken this way of earning an honest penny to help yourself through the year. I don’t see that

there's anything low or unworthy about that, or anything ridiculous either. One would rather write masterpieces of literature no doubt — but meanwhile board and tuition fees have to be paid.”

This commonsense, matter-of-fact view of the case cheered Anne a little. At least it removed her dread of being laughed at, though the deeper hurt of an outraged ideal remained.

Adjusted Relationships

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“It’s the homiest spot I ever saw — it’s homier than home,” avowed Philippa Gordon, looking about her with delighted eyes. They were all assembled at twilight in the big livingroom at Patty’s Place — Anne and Priscilla, Phil and Stella, Aunt Jamesina, Rusty, Joseph, the Sarah-Cat, and Gog and Magog. The firelight shadows were dancing over the walls; the cats were purring; and a huge bowl of hothouse chrysanthemums, sent to Phil by one of the victims, shone through the golden gloom like creamy moons.

It was three weeks since they had considered themselves settled, and already all believed the experiment would be a success. The first fortnight after their return had been a pleasantly exciting one; they had been busy setting up their household goods, organizing their little establishment, and adjusting different opinions.

Anne was not over-sorry to leave Avonlea when the time came to return to college. The last few days of her vacation had not been pleasant. Her prize story had been published in the Island papers; and Mr. William Blair had, upon the counter of his store, a huge pile of pink, green and yellow pamphlets, containing it, one of which he gave to every customer. He sent a complimentary bundle to Anne, who promptly dropped them all in the kitchen stove. Her humiliation was the consequence of her own ideals only, for Avonlea folks thought it quite splendid that she should have won the prize. Her many friends regarded her with honest admiration; her few foes with scornful envy. Josie Pye said she believed Anne Shirley had just copied the story; she was sure she remembered reading it in a paper years before. The Sloanes, who had found out or guessed that Charlie had been “turned down,” said they didn’t think it was much to be proud of; almost any one could have done it, if she tried. Aunt Atossa told Anne she was very sorry to hear she had taken to writing

novels; nobody born and bred in Avonlea would do it; that was what came of adopting orphans from goodness knew where, with goodness knew what kind of parents. Even Mrs. Rachel Lynde was darkly dubious about the propriety of writing fiction, though she was almost reconciled to it by that twenty-five dollar check.

“It is perfectly amazing, the price they pay for such lies, that’s what,” she said, half-proudly, half-severely.

All things considered, it was a relief when going-away time came. And it was very jolly to be back at Redmond, a wise, experienced Soph with hosts of friends to greet on the merry opening day. Pris and Stella and Gilbert were there, Charlie Sloane, looking more important than ever a Sophomore looked before, Phil, with the Alec-and-Alonzo question still unsettled, and Moody Spurgeon MacPherson. Moody Spurgeon had been teaching school ever since leaving Queen’s, but his mother had concluded it was high time he gave it up and turned his attention to learning how to be a minister. Poor Moody Spurgeon fell on hard luck at the very beginning of his college career. Half a dozen ruthless Sophs, who were among his fellow-boarders, swooped down upon him one night and shaved half of his head. In this guise the luckless Moody Spurgeon had to go about until his hair grew again. He told Anne bitterly that there were times when he had his doubts as to whether he was really called to be a minister.

Aunt Jamesina did not come until the girls had Patty’s Place ready for her. Miss Patty had sent the key to Anne, with a letter in which she said Gog and Magog were packed in a box under the spare-room bed, but might be taken out when wanted; in a postscript she added that she hoped the girls would be careful about putting up pictures. The living room had been newly papered five years before and she and Miss Maria did not want any more holes made in that new paper than was absolutely necessary. For the rest she trusted everything to Anne.

How those girls enjoyed putting their nest in order! As Phil said, it was almost as good as getting married. You had the fun of homemaking without the bother of a husband. All brought something with them to adorn or make comfortable the little house. Pris and Phil and Stella had knick-

knacks and pictures galore, which latter they proceeded to hang according to taste, in reckless disregard of Miss Patty's new paper.

"We'll putty the holes up when we leave, dear — she'll never know," they said to protesting Anne.

Diana had given Anne a pine needle cushion and Miss Ada had given both her and Priscilla a fearfully and wonderfully embroidered one. Marilla had sent a big box of preserves, and darkly hinted at a hamper for Thanksgiving, and Mrs. Lynde gave Anne a patchwork quilt and loaned her five more.

"You take them," she said authoritatively. "They might as well be in use as packed away in that trunk in the garret for moths to gnaw."

No moths would ever have ventured near those quilts, for they reeked of mothballs to such an extent that they had to be hung in the orchard of Patty's Place a full fortnight before they could be endured indoors. Verily, aristocratic Spofford Avenue had rarely beheld such a display. The gruff old millionaire who lived "next door" came over and wanted to buy the gorgeous red and yellow "tulip-pattern" one which Mrs. Rachel had given Anne. He said his mother used to make quilts like that, and by Jove, he wanted one to remind him of her. Anne would not sell it, much to his disappointment, but she wrote all about it to Mrs. Lynde. That highly-gratified lady sent word back that she had one just like it to spare, so the tobacco king got his quilt after all, and insisted on having it spread on his bed, to the disgust of his fashionable wife.

Mrs. Lynde's quilts served a very useful purpose that winter. Patty's Place for all its many virtues, had its faults also. It was really a rather cold house; and when the frosty nights came the girls were very glad to snuggle down under Mrs. Lynde's quilts, and hoped that the loan of them might be accounted unto her for righteousness. Anne had the blue room she had coveted at sight. Priscilla and Stella had the large one. Phil was blissfully content with the little one over the kitchen; and Aunt Jamesina was to have the downstairs one off the livingroom. Rusty at first slept on the doorstep.

Anne, walking home from Redmond a few days after her return, became aware that the people that she met surveyed her with a covert,

indulgent smile. Anne wondered uneasily what was the matter with her. Was her hat crooked? Was her belt loose? Craning her head to investigate, Anne, for the first time, saw Rusty.

Trotting along behind her, close to her heels, was quite the most forlorn specimen of the cat tribe she had ever beheld. The animal was well past kittenhood, lank, thin, disreputable looking. Pieces of both ears were lacking, one eye was temporarily out of repair, and one jowl ludicrously swollen. As for color, if a once black cat had been well and thoroughly singed the result would have resembled the hue of this waif's thin, draggled, unsightly fur.

Anne "shooed," but the cat would not "shoo." As long as she stood he sat back on his haunches and gazed at her reproachfully out of his one good eye; when she resumed her walk he followed. Anne resigned herself to his company until she reached the gate of Patty's Place, which she coldly shut in his face, fondly supposing she had seen the last of him. But when, fifteen minutes later, Phil opened the door, there sat the rusty-brown cat on the step. More, he promptly darted in and sprang upon Anne's lap with a half-pleading, half-triumphant "miaow."

"Anne," said Stella severely, "do you own that animal?"

"No, I do NOT," protested disgusted Anne. "The creature followed me home from somewhere. I couldn't get rid of him. Ugh, get down. I like decent cats reasonably well; but I don't like beasties of your complexion."

Pussy, however, refused to get down. He coolly curled up in Anne's lap and began to purr.

"He has evidently adopted you," laughed Priscilla.

"I won't BE adopted," said Anne stubbornly.

"The poor creature is starving," said Phil pityingly. "Why, his bones are almost coming through his skin."

"Well, I'll give him a square meal and then he must return to whence he came," said Anne resolutely.

The cat was fed and put out. In the morning he was still on the doorstep. On the doorstep he continued to sit, bolting in whenever the door was opened. No coolness of welcome had the least effect on him; of

nobody save Anne did he take the least notice. Out of compassion the girls fed him; but when a week had passed they decided that something must be done. The cat's appearance had improved. His eye and cheek had resumed their normal appearance; he was not quite so thin; and he had been seen washing his face.

"But for all that we can't keep him," said Stella. "Aunt Jimsie is coming next week and she will bring the Sarah-cat with her. We can't keep two cats; and if we did this Rusty Coat would fight all the time with the Sarah-cat. He's a fighter by nature. He had a pitched battle last evening with the tobacco-king's cat and routed him, horse, foot and artillery."

"We must get rid of him," agreed Anne, looking darkly at the subject of their discussion, who was purring on the hearth rug with an air of lamb-like meekness. "But the question is — how? How can four unprotected females get rid of a cat who won't be got rid of?"

"We must chloroform him," said Phil briskly. "That is the most humane way."

"Who of us knows anything about chloroforming a cat?" demanded Anne gloomily.

"I do, honey. It's one of my few — sadly few — useful accomplishments. I've disposed of several at home. You take the cat in the morning and give him a good breakfast. Then you take an old burlap bag — there's one in the back porch — put the cat on it and turn over him a wooden box. Then take a two-ounce bottle of chloroform, uncork it, and slip it under the edge of the box. Put a heavy weight on top of the box and leave it till evening. The cat will be dead, curled up peacefully as if he were asleep. No pain — no struggle."

"It sounds easy," said Anne dubiously.

"It IS easy. Just leave it to me. I'll see to it," said Phil reassuringly.

Accordingly the chloroform was procured, and the next morning Rusty was lured to his doom. He ate his breakfast, licked his chops, and climbed into Anne's lap. Anne's heart misgave her. This poor creature loved her — trusted her. How could she be a party to this destruction?

"Here, take him," she said hastily to Phil. "I feel like a murderess."

“He won’t suffer, you know,” comforted Phil, but Anne had fled.

The fatal deed was done in the back porch. Nobody went near it that day. But at dusk Phil declared that Rusty must be buried.

“Pris and Stella must dig his grave in the orchard,” declared Phil, “and Anne must come with me to lift the box off. That’s the part I always hate.”

The two conspirators tiptoed reluctantly to the back porch. Phil gingerly lifted the stone she had put on the box. Suddenly, faint but distinct, sounded an unmistakable mew under the box.

“He — he isn’t dead,” gasped Anne, sitting blankly down on the kitchen doorstep.

“He must be,” said Phil incredulously.

Another tiny mew proved that he wasn’t. The two girls stared at each other.

“What will we do?” questioned Anne.

“Why in the world don’t you come?” demanded Stella, appearing in the doorway. “We’ve got the grave ready. ‘What silent still and silent all?’” she quoted teasingly.

““Oh, no, the voices of the dead Sound like the distant torrent’s fall,”” promptly counter-quoted Anne, pointing solemnly to the box.

A burst of laughter broke the tension.

“We must leave him here till morning,” said Phil, replacing the stone. “He hasn’t mewed for five minutes. Perhaps the mews we heard were his dying groan. Or perhaps we merely imagined them, under the strain of our guilty consciences.”

But, when the box was lifted in the morning, Rusty bounded at one gay leap to Anne’s shoulder where he began to lick her face affectionately. Never was there a cat more decidedly alive.

“Here’s a knot hole in the box,” groaned Phil. “I never saw it. That’s why he didn’t die. Now, we’ve got to do it all over again.”

“No, we haven’t,” declared Anne suddenly. “Rusty isn’t going to be killed again. He’s my cat — and you’ve just got to make the best of it.”

“Oh, well, if you’ll settle with Aunt Jimsie and the Sarah-cat,” said Stella, with the air of one washing her hands of the whole affair.

From that time Rusty was one of the family. He slept o' nights on the scrubbing cushion in the back porch and lived on the fat of the land. By the time Aunt Jamesina came he was plump and glossy and tolerably respectable. But, like Kipling's cat, he "walked by himself." His paw was against every cat, and every cat's paw against him. One by one he vanquished the aristocratic felines of Spofford Avenue. As for human beings, he loved Anne and Anne alone. Nobody else even dared stroke him. An angry spit and something that sounded much like very improper language greeted any one who did.

"The airs that cat puts on are perfectly intolerable," declared Stella.

"Him was a nice old pussens, him was," vowed Anne, cuddling her pet defiantly.

"Well, I don't know how he and the Sarah-cat will ever make out to live together," said Stella pessimistically. "Cat-fights in the orchard o' nights are bad enough. But cat-fights here in the livingroom are unthinkable." In due time Aunt Jamesina arrived. Anne and Priscilla and Phil had awaited her advent rather dubiously; but when Aunt Jamesina was enthroned in the rocking chair before the open fire they figuratively bowed down and worshipped her.

Aunt Jamesina was a tiny old woman with a little, softly-triangular face, and large, soft blue eyes that were alight with unquenchable youth, and as full of hopes as a girl's. She had pink cheeks and snow-white hair which she wore in quaint little puffs over her ears.

"It's a very old-fashioned way," she said, knitting industriously at something as dainty and pink as a sunset cloud. "But *I* am old-fashioned. My clothes are, and it stands to reason my opinions are, too. I don't say they're any the better of that, mind you. In fact, I daresay they're a good deal the worse. But they've worn nice and easy. New shoes are smarter than old ones, but the old ones are more comfortable. I'm old enough to indulge myself in the matter of shoes and opinions. I mean to take it real easy here. I know you expect me to look after you and keep you proper, but I'm not going to do it. You're old enough to know how to behave if you're ever going to be. So, as far as I am concerned," concluded Aunt Jamesina,

with a twinkle in her young eyes, “you can all go to destruction in your own way.”

“Oh, will somebody separate those cats?” pleaded Stella, shudderingly.

Aunt Jamesina had brought with her not only the Sarah-cat but Joseph. Joseph, she explained, had belonged to a dear friend of hers who had gone to live in Vancouver.

“She couldn’t take Joseph with her so she begged me to take him. I really couldn’t refuse. He’s a beautiful cat — that is, his disposition is beautiful. She called him Joseph because his coat is of many colors.”

It certainly was. Joseph, as the disgusted Stella said, looked like a walking rag-bag. It was impossible to say what his ground color was. His legs were white with black spots on them. His back was gray with a huge patch of yellow on one side and a black patch on the other. His tail was yellow with a gray tip. One ear was black and one yellow. A black patch over one eye gave him a fearfully rakish look. In reality he was meek and inoffensive, of a sociable disposition. In one respect, if in no other, Joseph was like a lily of the field. He toiled not neither did he spin or catch mice. Yet Solomon in all his glory slept not on softer cushions, or feasted more fully on fat things.

Joseph and the Sarah-cat arrived by express in separate boxes. After they had been released and fed, Joseph selected the cushion and corner which appealed to him, and the Sarah-cat gravely sat herself down before the fire and proceeded to wash her face. She was a large, sleek, gray-and-white cat, with an enormous dignity which was not at all impaired by any consciousness of her plebian origin. She had been given to Aunt Jamesina by her washerwoman.

“Her name was Sarah, so my husband always called puss the Sarah-cat,” explained Aunt Jamesina. “She is eight years old, and a remarkable mouser. Don’t worry, Stella. The Sarah-cat NEVER fights and Joseph rarely.”

“They’ll have to fight here in self-defense,” said Stella.

At this juncture Rusty arrived on the scene. He bounded joyously half way across the room before he saw the intruders. Then he stopped short;

his tail expanded until it was as big as three tails. The fur on his back rose up in a defiant arch; Rusty lowered his head, uttered a fearful shriek of hatred and defiance, and launched himself at the Sarah-cat.

The stately animal had stopped washing her face and was looking at him curiously. She met his onslaught with one contemptuous sweep of her capable paw. Rusty went rolling helplessly over on the rug; he picked himself up dazedly. What sort of a cat was this who had boxed his ears? He looked dubiously at the Sarah-cat. Would he or would he not? The Sarah-cat deliberately turned her back on him and resumed her toilet operations. Rusty decided that he would not. He never did. From that time on the Sarah-cat ruled the roost. Rusty never again interfered with her.

But Joseph rashly sat up and yawned. Rusty, burning to avenge his disgrace, swooped down upon him. Joseph, pacific by nature, could fight upon occasion and fight well. The result was a series of drawn battles. Every day Rusty and Joseph fought at sight. Anne took Rusty's part and detested Joseph. Stella was in despair. But Aunt Jamesina only laughed.

"Let them fight it out," she said tolerantly. "They'll make friends after a bit. Joseph needs some exercise — he was getting too fat. And Rusty has to learn he isn't the only cat in the world."

Eventually Joseph and Rusty accepted the situation and from sworn enemies became sworn friends. They slept on the same cushion with their paws about each other, and gravely washed each other's faces.

"We've all got used to each other," said Phil. "And I've learned how to wash dishes and sweep a floor."

"But you needn't try to make us believe you can chloroform a cat," laughed Anne.

"It was all the fault of the knothole," protested Phil.

"It was a good thing the knothole was there," said Aunt Jamesina rather severely. "Kittens HAVE to be drowned, I admit, or the world would be overrun. But no decent, grownup cat should be done to death — unless he sucks eggs."

"You wouldn't have thought Rusty very decent if you'd seen him when he came here," said Stella. "He positively looked like the Old Nick."

“I don’t believe Old Nick can be so very, ugly” said Aunt Jamesina reflectively. “He wouldn’t do so much harm if he was. *I* always think of him as a rather handsome gentleman.”

A Letter From Davy

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“It’s beginning to snow, girls,” said Phil, coming in one November evening, “and there are the loveliest little stars and crosses all over the garden walk. I never noticed before what exquisite things snowflakes really are. One has time to notice things like that in the simple life. Bless you all for permitting me to live it. It’s really delightful to feel worried because butter has gone up five cents a pound.”

“Has it?” demanded Stella, who kept the household accounts.

“It has — and here’s your butter. I’m getting quite expert at marketing. It’s better fun than flirting,” concluded Phil gravely.

“Everything is going up scandalously,” sighed Stella.

“Never mind. Thank goodness air and salvation are still free,” said Aunt Jamesina.

“And so is laughter,” added Anne. “There’s no tax on it yet and that is well, because you’re all going to laugh presently. I’m going to read you Davy’s letter. His spelling has improved immensely this past year, though he is not strong on apostrophes, and he certainly possesses the gift of writing an interesting letter. Listen and laugh, before we settle down to the evening’s study-grind.”

“Dear Anne,” ran Davy’s letter, “I take my pen to tell you that we are all pretty well and hope this will find you the same. It’s snowing some today and Marilla says the old woman in the sky is shaking her feather beds. Is the old woman in the sky God’s wife, Anne? I want to know.

“Mrs. Lynde has been real sick but she is better now. She fell down the cellar stairs last week. When she fell she grabbed hold of the shelf with all the milk pails and stewpans on it, and it gave way and went down with her and made a splendid crash. Marilla thought it was an earthquake at first.

“One of the stewpans was all dinged up and Mrs. Lynde straned her ribs. The doctor came and gave her medicine to rub on her ribs but she

didn't understand him and took it all inside instead. The doctor said it was a wonder it didn't kill her but it didn't and it cured her ribs and Mrs. Lynde says doctors don't know much anyhow. But we couldn't fix up the stewpan. Marilla had to throw it out. Thanksgiving was last week. There was no school and we had a great dinner. I ate mince pie and roasted turkey and fruit cake and donuts and cheese and jam and chocolate cake. Marilla said I'd die but I didn't. Dora had earache after it, only it wasn't in her ears it was in her stomach. I didn't have earache anywhere.

"Our new teacher is a man. He does things for jokes. Last week he made all us third-class boys write a composition on what kind of a wife we'd like to have and the girls on what kind of a husband. He laughed fit to kill when he read them. This was mine. I thought you'd like to see it.

"The kind of a wife I'd like to have.

"She must have good manners and get my meals on time and do what I tell her and always be very polite to me. She must be fifteen years old. She must be good to the poor and keep her house tidy and be good tempered and go to church regularly. She must be very handsome and have curly hair. If I get a wife that is just what I like I'll be an awful good husband to her. I think a woman ought to be awful good to her husband. Some poor women haven't any husbands.

"THE END."

"I was at Mrs. Isaac Wright's funeral at White Sands last week. The husband of the corpse felt real sorry. Mrs. Lynde says Mrs. Wright's grandfather stole a sheep but Marilla says we mustn't speak ill of the dead. Why mustn't we, Anne? I want to know. It's pretty safe, isn't it?

"Mrs. Lynde was awful mad the other day because I asked her if she was alive in Noah's time. I didn't mean to hurt her feelings. I just wanted to know. Was she, Anne?

"Mr. Harrison wanted to get rid of his dog. So he hanged him once but he came to life and scooted for the barn while Mr. Harrison was digging the grave, so he hanged him again and he stayed dead that time. Mr. Harrison has a new man working for him. He's awful awkward. Mr. Harrison says he is left handed in both his feet. Mr. Barry's hired man is

lazy. Mrs. Barry says that but Mr. Barry says he aint lazy exactly only he thinks it easier to pray for things than to work for them.

“Mrs. Harmon Andrews prize pig that she talked so much of died in a fit. Mrs. Lynde says it was a judgment on her for pride. But I think it was hard on the pig. Milty Boulter has been sick. The doctor gave him medicine and it tasted horrid. I offered to take it for him for a quarter but the Boulders are so mean. Milty says he’d rather take it himself and save his money. I asked Mrs. Boulter how a person would go about catching a man and she got awful mad and said she didnt know, shed never chased men.

“The A.V.I.S. is going to paint the hall again. They’re tired of having it blue.

“The new minister was here to tea last night. He took three pieces of pie. If I did that Mrs. Lynde would call me piggy. And he et fast and took big bites and Marilla is always telling me not to do that. Why can ministers do what boys can’t? I want to know.

“I haven’t any more news. Here are six kisses. xxxxxx. Dora sends one. Heres hers. x.

“Your loving friend DAVID KEITH”

“P.S. Anne, who was the devils father? I want to know.”

Miss Josephine Remembers the Anne-Girl

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When Christmas holidays came the girls of Patty's Place scattered to their respective homes, but Aunt Jamesina elected to stay where she was.

"I couldn't go to any of the places I've been invited and take those three cats," she said. "And I'm not going to leave the poor creatures here alone for nearly three weeks. If we had any decent neighbors who would feed them I might, but there's nothing except millionaires on this street. So I'll stay here and keep Patty's Place warm for you."

Anne went home with the usual joyous anticipations — which were not wholly fulfilled. She found Avonlea in the grip of such an early, cold, and stormy winter as even the "oldest inhabitant" could not recall. Green Gables was literally hemmed in by huge drifts. Almost every day of that ill-starred vacation it stormed fiercely; and even on fine days it drifted unceasingly. No sooner were the roads broken than they filled in again. It was almost impossible to stir out. The A.V.I.S. tried, on three evenings, to have a party in honor of the college students, and on each evening the storm was so wild that nobody could go, so they gave up the attempt in despair. Anne, despite her love of and loyalty to Green Gables, could not help thinking longingly of Patty's Place, its cosy open fire, Aunt Jamesina's mirthful eyes, the three cats, the merry chatter of the girls, the pleasantness of Friday evenings when college friends dropped in to talk of grave and gay.

Anne was lonely; Diana, during the whole of the holidays, was imprisoned at home with a bad attack of bronchitis. She could not come to Green Gables and it was rarely Anne could get to Orchard Slope, for the old way through the Haunted Wood was impassable with drifts, and the long way over the frozen Lake of Shining Waters was almost as bad. Ruby

Gillis was sleeping in the white-heaped graveyard; Jane Andrews was teaching a school on western prairies. Gilbert, to be sure, was still faithful, and waded up to Green Gables every possible evening. But Gilbert's visits were not what they once were. Anne almost dreaded them. It was very disconcerting to look up in the midst of a sudden silence and find Gilbert's hazel eyes fixed upon her with a quite unmistakable expression in their grave depths; and it was still more disconcerting to find herself blushing hotly and uncomfortably under his gaze, just as if — just as if — well, it was very embarrassing. Anne wished herself back at Patty's Place, where there was always somebody else about to take the edge off a delicate situation. At Green Gables Marilla went promptly to Mrs. Lynde's domain when Gilbert came and insisted on taking the twins with her. The significance of this was unmistakable and Anne was in a helpless fury over it.

Davy, however, was perfectly happy. He reveled in getting out in the morning and shoveling out the paths to the well and henhouse. He gloried in the Christmastide delicacies which Marilla and Mrs. Lynde vied with each other in preparing for Anne, and he was reading an enthralling tale, in a school library book, of a wonderful hero who seemed blessed with a miraculous faculty for getting into scrapes from which he was usually delivered by an earthquake or a volcanic explosion, which blew him high and dry out of his troubles, landed him in a fortune, and closed the story with proper ECLAT.

"I tell you it's a bully story, Anne," he said ecstatically. "I'd ever so much rather read it than the Bible."

"Would you?" smiled Anne.

Davy peered curiously at her.

"You don't seem a bit shocked, Anne. Mrs. Lynde was awful shocked when I said it to her."

"No, I'm not shocked, Davy. I think it's quite natural that a nine-year-old boy would sooner read an adventure story than the Bible. But when you are older I hope and think that you will realize what a wonderful book the Bible is."

“Oh, I think some parts of it are fine,” conceded Davy. “That story about Joseph now — it’s bully. But if I’d been Joseph *I* wouldn’t have forgive the brothers. No, siree, Anne. I’d have cut all their heads off. Mrs. Lynde was awful mad when I said that and shut the Bible up and said she’d never read me any more of it if I talked like that. So I don’t talk now when she reads it Sunday afternoons; I just think things and say them to Milty Boulter next day in school. I told Milty the story about Elisha and the bears and it scared him so he’s never made fun of Mr. Harrison’s bald head once. Are there any bears on P.E. Island, Anne? I want to know.”

“Not nowadays,” said Anne, absently, as the wind blew a scud of snow against the window. “Oh, dear, will it ever stop storming.”

“God knows,” said Davy airily, preparing to resume his reading.

Anne WAS shocked this time.

“Davy!” she exclaimed reproachfully.

“Mrs. Lynde says that,” protested Davy. “One night last week Marilla said ‘Will Ludovic Speed and Theodora Dix EVER get married?’ and Mrs. Lynde said, “‘God knows’ — just like that.”

“Well, it wasn’t right for her to say it,” said Anne, promptly deciding upon which horn of this dilemma to empale herself. “It isn’t right for anybody to take that name in vain or speak it lightly, Davy. Don’t ever do it again.”

“Not if I say it slow and solemn, like the minister?” queried Davy gravely.

“No, not even then.”

“Well, I won’t. Ludovic Speed and Theodora Dix live in Middle Grafton and Mrs. Rachel says he has been courting her for a hundred years. Won’t they soon be too old to get married, Anne? I hope Gilbert won’t court YOU that long. When are you going to be married, Anne? Mrs. Lynde says it’s a sure thing.”

“Mrs. Lynde is a—” began Anne hotly; then stopped. “Awful old gossip,” completed Davy calmly. “That’s what every one calls her. But is it a sure thing, Anne? I want to know.”

“You’re a very silly little boy, Davy,” said Anne, stalking haughtily out of the room. The kitchen was deserted and she sat down by the window in the fast falling wintry twilight. The sun had set and the wind had died down. A pale chilly moon looked out behind a bank of purple clouds in the west. The sky faded out, but the strip of yellow along the western horizon grew brighter and fiercer, as if all the stray gleams of light were concentrating in one spot; the distant hills, rimmed with priest-like firs, stood out in dark distinctness against it. Anne looked across the still, white fields, cold and lifeless in the harsh light of that grim sunset, and sighed. She was very lonely; and she was sad at heart; for she was wondering if she would be able to return to Redmond next year. It did not seem likely. The only scholarship possible in the Sophomore year was a very small affair. She would not take Marilla’s money; and there seemed little prospect of being able to earn enough in the summer vacation.

“I suppose I’ll just have to drop out next year,” she thought drearily, “and teach a district school again until I earn enough to finish my course. And by that time all my old class will have graduated and Patty’s Place will be out of the question. But there! I’m not going to be a coward. I’m thankful I can earn my way through if necessary.”

“Here’s Mr. Harrison wading up the lane,” announced Davy, running out. “I hope he’s brought the mail. It’s three days since we got it. I want to see what them pesky Grits are doing. I’m a Conservative, Anne. And I tell you, you have to keep your eye on them Grits.”

Mr. Harrison had brought the mail, and merry letters from Stella and Priscilla and Phil soon dissipated Anne’s blues. Aunt Jamesina, too, had written, saying that she was keeping the hearth-fire alight, and that the cats were all well, and the house plants doing fine.

“The weather has been real cold,” she wrote, “so I let the cats sleep in the house — Rusty and Joseph on the sofa in the livingroom, and the Sarah-cat on the foot of my bed. It’s real company to hear her purring when I wake up in the night and think of my poor daughter in the foreign field. If it was anywhere but in India I wouldn’t worry, but they say the snakes out there are terrible. It takes all the Sarah-cats’s purring to drive

away the thought of those snakes. I have enough faith for everything but the snakes. I can't think why Providence ever made them. Sometimes I don't think He did. I'm inclined to believe the Old Harry had a hand in making THEM."

Anne had left a thin, typewritten communication till the last, thinking it unimportant. When she had read it she sat very still, with tears in her eyes.

"What is the matter, Anne?" asked Marilla.

"Miss Josephine Barry is dead," said Anne, in a low tone.

"So she has gone at last," said Marilla. "Well, she has been sick for over a year, and the Barrys have been expecting to hear of her death any time. It is well she is at rest for she has suffered dreadfully, Anne. She was always kind to you."

"She has been kind to the last, Marilla. This letter is from her lawyer. She has left me a thousand dollars in her will."

"Gracious, ain't that an awful lot of money," exclaimed Davy. "She's the woman you and Diana lit on when you jumped into the spare room bed, ain't she? Diana told me that story. Is that why she left you so much?"

"Hush, Davy," said Anne gently. She slipped away to the porch gable with a full heart, leaving Marilla and Mrs. Lynde to talk over the news to their hearts' content.

"Do you s'pose Anne will ever get married now?" speculated Davy anxiously. "When Dorcas Sloane got married last summer she said if she'd had enough money to live on she'd never have been bothered with a man, but even a widower with eight children was better'n living with a sister-in-law."

"Davy Keith, do hold your tongue," said Mrs. Rachel severely. "The way you talk is scandalous for a small boy, that's what."

Chapter XIX.

An Interlude

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“To think that this is my twentieth birthday, and that I’ve left my teens behind me forever,” said Anne, who was curled up on the hearthrug with Rusty in her lap, to Aunt Jamesina who was reading in her pet chair. They were alone in the living room. Stella and Priscilla had gone to a committee meeting and Phil was upstairs adorning herself for a party.

“I suppose you feel kind of, sorry” said Aunt Jamesina. “The teens are such a nice part of life. I’m glad I’ve never gone out of them myself.”

Anne laughed.

“You never will, Aunt. You’ll be eighteen when you should be a hundred. Yes, I’m sorry, and a little dissatisfied as well. Miss Stacy told me long ago that by the time I was twenty my character would be formed, for good or evil. I don’t feel that it’s what it should be. It’s full of flaws.”

“So’s everybody’s,” said Aunt Jamesina cheerfully. “Mine’s cracked in a hundred places. Your Miss Stacy likely meant that when you are twenty your character would have got its permanent bent in one direction or ‘tother, and would go on developing in that line. Don’t worry over it, Anne. Do your duty by God and your neighbor and yourself, and have a good time. That’s my philosophy and it’s always worked pretty well. Where’s Phil off to tonight?”

“She’s going to a dance, and she’s got the sweetest dress for it — creamy yellow silk and cobwebby lace. It just suits those brown tints of hers.”

“There’s magic in the words ‘silk’ and ‘lace,’ isn’t there?” said Aunt Jamesina. “The very sound of them makes me feel like skipping off to a dance. And YELLOW silk. It makes one think of a dress of sunshine. I always wanted a yellow silk dress, but first my mother and then my husband wouldn’t hear of it. The very first thing I’m going to do when I get to heaven is to get a yellow silk dress.”

Amid Anne's peal of laughter Phil came downstairs, trailing clouds of glory, and surveyed herself in the long oval mirror on the wall.

"A flattering looking glass is a promoter of amiability," she said. "The one in my room does certainly make me green. Do I look pretty nice, Anne?"

"Do you really know how pretty you are, Phil?" asked Anne, in honest admiration.

"Of course I do. What are looking glasses and men for? That wasn't what I meant. Are all my ends tucked in? Is my skirt straight? And would this rose look better lower down? I'm afraid it's too high — it will make me look lopsided. But I hate things tickling my ears."

"Everything is just right, and that southwest dimple of yours is lovely."

"Anne, there's one thing in particular I like about you — you're so ungrudging. There isn't a particle of envy in you."

"Why should she be envious?" demanded Aunt Jamesina. "She's not quite as goodlooking as you, maybe, but she's got a far handsomer nose."

"I know it," conceded Phil.

"My nose always has been a great comfort to me," confessed Anne.

"And I love the way your hair grows on your forehead, Anne. And that one wee curl, always looking as if it were going to drop, but never dropping, is delicious. But as for noses, mine is a dreadful worry to me. I know by the time I'm forty it will be Byrney. What do you think I'll look like when I'm forty, Anne?"

"Like an old, matronly, married woman," teased Anne.

"I won't," said Phil, sitting down comfortably to wait for her escort. "Joseph, you calico beastie, don't you dare jump on my lap. I won't go to a dance all over cat hairs. No, Anne, I WON'T look matronly. But no doubt I'll be married."

"To Alec or Alonzo?" asked Anne.

"To one of them, I suppose," sighed Phil, "if I can ever decide which."

"It shouldn't be hard to decide," scolded Aunt Jamesina.

"I was born a see-saw Aunty, and nothing can ever prevent me from teetering."

“You ought to be more levelheaded, Philippa.”

“It’s best to be levelheaded, of course,” agreed Philippa, “but you miss lots of fun. As for Alec and Alonzo, if you knew them you’d understand why it’s difficult to choose between them. They’re equally nice.”

“Then take somebody who is nicer” suggested Aunt Jamesina. “There’s that Senior who is so devoted to you — Will Leslie. He has such nice, large, mild eyes.”

“They’re a little bit too large and too mild — like a cow’s,” said Phil cruelly.

“What do you say about George Parker?”

“There’s nothing to say about him except that he always looks as if he had just been starched and ironed.”

“Marr Holworthy then. You can’t find a fault with him.”

“No, he would do if he wasn’t poor. I must marry a rich man, Aunt Jamesina. That — and good looks — is an indispensable qualification. I’d marry Gilbert Blythe if he were rich.”

“Oh, would you?” said Anne, rather viciously.

“We don’t like that idea a little bit, although we don’t want Gilbert ourselves, oh, no,” mocked Phil. “But don’t let’s talk of disagreeable subjects. I’ll have to marry sometime, I suppose, but I shall put off the evil day as long as I can.”

“You mustn’t marry anybody you don’t love, Phil, when all’s said and done,” said Aunt Jamesina.

““Oh, hearts that loved in the good old way
Have been out o’ the fashion this many a day.””

trilled Phil mockingly. “There’s the carriage. I fly — Bi-bi, you two old-fashioned darlings.”

When Phil had gone Aunt Jamesina looked solemnly at Anne.

“That girl is pretty and sweet and goodhearted, but do you think she is quite right in her mind, by spells, Anne?”

“Oh, I don’t think there’s anything the matter with Phil’s mind,” said Anne, hiding a smile. “It’s just her way of talking.”

Aunt Jamesina shook her head.

“Well, I hope so, Anne. I do hope so, because I love her. But *I* can’t understand her — she beats me. She isn’t like any of the girls I ever knew, or any of the girls I was myself.”

“How many girls were you, Aunt Jimsie?”

“About half a dozen, my dear.”

Chapter XX.

Gilbert Speaks

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“This has been a dull, prosy day,” yawned Phil, stretching herself idly on the sofa, having previously dispossessed two exceedingly indignant cats.

Anne looked up from Pickwick Papers. Now that spring examinations were over she was treating herself to Dickens.

“It has been a prosy day for us,” she said thoughtfully, “but to some people it has been a wonderful day. Some one has been rapturously happy in it. Perhaps a great deed has been done somewhere today — or a great poem written — or a great man born. And some heart has been broken, Phil.”

“Why did you spoil your pretty thought by tagging that last sentence on, honey?” grumbled Phil. “I don’t like to think of broken hearts — or anything unpleasant.”

“Do you think you’ll be able to shirk unpleasant things all your life, Phil?”

“Dear me, no. Am I not up against them now? You don’t call Alec and Alonzo pleasant things, do you, when they simply plague my life out?”

“You never take anything seriously, Phil.”

“Why should I? There are enough folks who do. The world needs people like me, Anne, just to amuse it. It would be a terrible place if EVERYBODY were intellectual and serious and in deep, deadly earnest. MY mission is, as Josiah Allen says, ‘to charm and allure.’ Confess now. Hasn’t life at Patty’s Place been really much brighter and pleasanter this past winter because I’ve been here to leaven you?”

“Yes, it has,” owned Anne.

“And you all love me — even Aunt Jamesina, who thinks I’m stark mad. So why should I try to be different? Oh, dear, I’m so sleepy. I was awake until one last night, reading a harrowing ghost story. I read it in bed, and after I had finished it do you suppose I could get out of bed to put the

light out? No! And if Stella had not fortunately come in late that lamp would have burned good and bright till morning. When I heard Stella I called her in, explained my predicament, and got her to put out the light. If I had got out myself to do it I knew something would grab me by the feet when I was getting in again. By the way, Anne, has Aunt Jamesina decided what to do this summer?"

"Yes, she's going to stay here. I know she's doing it for the sake of those blessed cats, although she says it's too much trouble to open her own house, and she hates visiting."

"What are you reading?"

"Pickwick."

"That's a book that always makes me hungry," said Phil. "There's so much good eating in it. The characters seem always to be reveling on ham and eggs and milk punch. I generally go on a cupboard rummage after reading Pickwick. The mere thought reminds me that I'm starving. Is there any tidbit in the pantry, Queen Anne?"

"I made a lemon pie this morning. You may have a piece of it."

Phil dashed out to the pantry and Anne betook herself to the orchard in company with Rusty. It was a moist, pleasantly-odorous night in early spring. The snow was not quite all gone from the park; a little dingy bank of it yet lay under the pines of the harbor road, screened from the influence of April suns. It kept the harbor road muddy, and chilled the evening air. But grass was growing green in sheltered spots and Gilbert had found some pale, sweet arbutus in a hidden corner. He came up from the park, his hands full of it.

Anne was sitting on the big gray boulder in the orchard looking at the poem of a bare, birchen bough hanging against the pale red sunset with the very perfection of grace. She was building a castle in air — a wondrous mansion whose sunlit courts and stately halls were steeped in Araby's perfume, and where she reigned queen and chatelaine. She frowned as she saw Gilbert coming through the orchard. Of late she had managed not to be left alone with Gilbert. But he had caught her fairly now; and even Rusty had deserted her.

Gilbert sat down beside her on the boulder and held out his Mayflowers.

“Don’t these remind you of home and our old schoolday picnics, Anne?”

Anne took them and buried her face in them.

“I’m in Mr. Silas Sloane’s barrens this very minute,” she said rapturously.

“I suppose you will be there in reality in a few days?”

“No, not for a fortnight. I’m going to visit with Phil in Bolingbroke before I go home. You’ll be in Avonlea before I will.”

“No, I shall not be in Avonlea at all this summer, Anne. I’ve been offered a job in the Daily News office and I’m going to take it.”

“Oh,” said Anne vaguely. She wondered what a whole Avonlea summer would be like without Gilbert. Somehow she did not like the prospect.

“Well,” she concluded flatly, “it is a good thing for you, of course.”

“Yes, I’ve been hoping I would get it. It will help me out next year.”

“You mustn’t work too HARD,” said Anne, without any very clear idea of what she was saying. She wished desperately that Phil would come out.

“You’ve studied very constantly this winter. Isn’t this a delightful evening? Do you know, I found a cluster of white violets under that old twisted tree over there today? I felt as if I had discovered a gold mine.”

“You are always discovering gold mines,” said Gilbert — also absently.

“Let us go and see if we can find some more,” suggested Anne eagerly. “I’ll call Phil and—”

“Never mind Phil and the violets just now, Anne,” said Gilbert quietly, taking her hand in a clasp from which she could not free it. “There is something I want to say to you.”

“Oh, don’t say it,” cried Anne, pleadingly. “Don’t — PLEASE, Gilbert.”

“I must. Things can’t go on like this any longer. Anne, I love you. You know I do. I — I can’t tell you how much. Will you promise me that some day you’ll be my wife?”

“I — I can’t,” said Anne miserably. “Oh, Gilbert — you — you’ve spoiled everything.”

“Don’t you care for me at all?” Gilbert asked after a very dreadful pause, during which Anne had not dared to look up.

“Not — not in that way. I do care a great deal for you as a friend. But I don’t love you, Gilbert.”

“But can’t you give me some hope that you will — yet?”

“No, I can’t,” exclaimed Anne desperately. “I never, never can love you — in that way — Gilbert. You must never speak of this to me again.”

There was another pause — so long and so dreadful that Anne was driven at last to look up. Gilbert’s face was white to the lips. And his eyes — but Anne shuddered and looked away. There was nothing romantic about this. Must proposals be either grotesque or — horrible? Could she ever forget Gilbert’s face?

“Is there anybody else?” he asked at last in a low voice.

“No — no,” said Anne eagerly. “I don’t care for any one like THAT — and I LIKE you better than anybody else in the world, Gilbert. And we must — we must go on being friends, Gilbert.”

Gilbert gave a bitter little laugh.

“Friends! Your friendship can’t satisfy me, Anne. I want your love — and you tell me I can never have that.”

“I’m sorry. Forgive me, Gilbert,” was all Anne could say. Where, oh, where were all the gracious and graceful speeches wherewith, in imagination, she had been wont to dismiss rejected suitors?

Gilbert released her hand gently.

“There isn’t anything to forgive. There have been times when I thought you did care. I’ve deceived myself, that’s all. Goodbye, Anne.”

Anne got herself to her room, sat down on her window seat behind the pines, and cried bitterly. She felt as if something incalculably precious had gone out of her life. It was Gilbert’s friendship, of course. Oh, why must she lose it after this fashion?

“What is the matter, honey?” asked Phil, coming in through the moonlit gloom.

Anne did not answer. At that moment she wished Phil were a thousand miles away.

“I suppose you’ve gone and refused Gilbert Blythe. You are an idiot, Anne Shirley!”

“Do you call it idiotic to refuse to marry a man I don’t love?” said Anne coldly, goaded to reply.

“You don’t know love when you see it. You’ve tricked something out with your imagination that you think love, and you expect the real thing to look like that. There, that’s the first sensible thing I’ve ever said in my life. I wonder how I managed it?”

“Phil,” pleaded Anne, “please go away and leave me alone for a little while. My world has tumbled into pieces. I want to reconstruct it.”

“Without any Gilbert in it?” said Phil, going.

A world without any Gilbert in it! Anne repeated the words drearily. Would it not be a very lonely, forlorn place? Well, it was all Gilbert’s fault. He had spoiled their beautiful comradeship. She must just learn to live without it.

Roses of Yesterday

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The fortnight Anne spent in Bolingbroke was a very pleasant one, with a little under current of vague pain and dissatisfaction running through it whenever she thought about Gilbert. There was not, however, much time to think about him. “Mount Holly,” the beautiful old Gordon homestead, was a very gay place, overrun by Phil’s friends of both sexes. There was quite a bewildering succession of drives, dances, picnics and boating parties, all expressively lumped together by Phil under the head of “jamborees”; Alec and Alonzo were so constantly on hand that Anne wondered if they ever did anything but dance attendance on that will-o’-the-wisp of a Phil. They were both nice, manly fellows, but Anne would not be drawn into any opinion as to which was the nicer.

“And I depended so on you to help me make up my mind which of them I should promise to marry,” mourned Phil.

“You must do that for yourself. You are quite expert at making up your mind as to whom other people should marry,” retorted Anne, rather caustically.

“Oh, that’s a very different thing,” said Phil, truly.

But the sweetest incident of Anne’s sojourn in Bolingbroke was the visit to her birthplace — the little shabby yellow house in an out-of-the-way street she had so often dreamed about. She looked at it with delighted eyes, as she and Phil turned in at the gate.

“It’s almost exactly as I’ve pictured it,” she said. “There is no honeysuckle over the windows, but there is a lilac tree by the gate, and — yes, there are the muslin curtains in the windows. How glad I am it is still painted yellow.”

A very tall, very thin woman opened the door.

“Yes, the Shirleys lived here twenty years ago,” she said, in answer to Anne’s question. “They had it rented. I remember ‘em. They both died of

fever at onct. It was turrible sad. They left a baby. I guess it's dead long ago. It was a sickly thing. Old Thomas and his wife took it — as if they hadn't enough of their own."

"It didn't die," said Anne, smiling. "I was that baby."

"You don't say so! Why, you have grown," exclaimed the woman, as if she were much surprised that Anne was not still a baby. "Come to look at you, I see the resemblance. You're complected like your pa. He had red hair. But you favor your ma in your eyes and mouth. She was a nice little thing. My darter went to school to her and was nigh crazy about her. They was buried in the one grave and the School Board put up a tombstone to them as a reward for faithful service. Will you come in?"

"Will you let me go all over the house?" asked Anne eagerly.

"Laws, yes, you can if you like. 'Twon't take you long — there ain't much of it. I keep at my man to build a new kitchen, but he ain't one of your hustlers. The parlor's in there and there's two rooms upstairs. Just prowl about yourselves. I've got to see to the baby. The east room was the one you were born in. I remember your ma saying she loved to see the sunrise; and I mind hearing that you was born just as the sun was rising and its light on your face was the first thing your ma saw."

Anne went up the narrow stairs and into that little east room with a full heart. It was as a shrine to her. Here her mother had dreamed the exquisite, happy dreams of anticipated motherhood; here that red sunrise light had fallen over them both in the sacred hour of birth; here her mother had died. Anne looked about her reverently, her eyes with tears. It was for her one of the jeweled hours of life that gleam out radiantly forever in memory.

"Just to think of it — mother was younger than I am now when I was born," she whispered.

When Anne went downstairs the lady of the house met her in the hall. She held out a dusty little packet tied with faded blue ribbon.

"Here's a bundle of old letters I found in that closet upstairs when I came here," she said. "I dunno what they are — I never bothered to look in 'em, but the address on the top one is 'Miss Bertha Willis,' and that was your ma's maiden name. You can take 'em if you'd keer to have 'em."

“Oh, thank you — thank you,” cried Anne, clasping the packet rapturously.

“That was all that was in the house,” said her hostess. “The furniture was all sold to pay the doctor bills, and Mrs. Thomas got your ma’s clothes and little things. I reckon they didn’t last long among that drove of Thomas youngsters. They was destructive young animals, as I mind ‘em.”

“I haven’t one thing that belonged to my mother,” said Anne, chokily. “I — I can never thank you enough for these letters.”

“You’re quite welcome. Laws, but your eyes is like your ma’s. She could just about talk with hers. Your father was sorter homely but awful nice. I mind hearing folks say when they was married that there never was two people more in love with each other — Pore creatures, they didn’t live much longer; but they was awful happy while they was alive, and I s’pose that counts for a good deal.”

Anne longed to get home to read her precious letters; but she made one little pilgrimage first. She went alone to the green corner of the “old” Bolingbroke cemetery where her father and mother were buried, and left on their grave the white flowers she carried. Then she hastened back to Mount Holly, shut herself up in her room, and read the letters. Some were written by her father, some by her mother. There were not many — only a dozen in all — for Walter and Bertha Shirley had not been often separated during their courtship. The letters were yellow and faded and dim, blurred with the touch of passing years. No profound words of wisdom were traced on the stained and wrinkled pages, but only lines of love and trust. The sweetness of forgotten things clung to them — the far-off, fond imaginings of those long-dead lovers. Bertha Shirley had possessed the gift of writing letters which embodied the charming personality of the writer in words and thoughts that retained their beauty and fragrance after the lapse of time. The letters were tender, intimate, sacred. To Anne, the sweetest of all was the one written after her birth to the father on a brief absence. It was full of a proud young mother’s accounts of “baby” — her cleverness, her brightness, her thousand sweetnesses.

“I love her best when she is asleep and better still when she is awake,” Bertha Shirley had written in the postscript. Probably it was the last sentence she had ever penned. The end was very near for her.

“This has been the most beautiful day of my life,” Anne said to Phil that night. “I’ve FOUND my father and mother. Those letters have made them REAL to me. I’m not an orphan any longer. I feel as if I had opened a book and found roses of yesterday, sweet and beloved, between its leaves.”

Spring and Anne Return to Green Gables

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The firelight shadows were dancing over the kitchen walls at Green Gables, for the spring evening was chilly; through the open east window drifted in the subtly sweet voices of the night. Marilla was sitting by the fire — at least, in body. In spirit she was roaming olden ways, with feet grown young. Of late Marilla had thus spent many an hour, when she thought she should have been knitting for the twins.

“I suppose I’m growing old,” she said.

Yet Marilla had changed but little in the past nine years, save to grow something thinner, and even more angular; there was a little more gray in the hair that was still twisted up in the same hard knot, with two hairpins — WERE they the same hairpins? — still stuck through it. But her expression was very different; the something about the mouth which had hinted at a sense of humor had developed wonderfully; her eyes were gentler and milder, her smile more frequent and tender.

Marilla was thinking of her whole past life, her cramped but not unhappy childhood, the jealously hidden dreams and the blighted hopes of her girlhood, the long, gray, narrow, monotonous years of dull middle life that followed. And the coming of Anne — the vivid, imaginative, impetuous child with her heart of love, and her world of fancy, bringing with her color and warmth and radiance, until the wilderness of existence had blossomed like the rose. Marilla felt that out of her sixty years she had lived only the nine that had followed the advent of Anne. And Anne would be home tomorrow night.

The kitchen door opened. Marilla looked up expecting to see Mrs. Lynde. Anne stood before her, tall and starry-eyed, with her hands full of Mayflowers and violets.

“Anne Shirley!” exclaimed Marilla. For once in her life she was surprised out of her reserve; she caught her girl in her arms and crushed her and her flowers against her heart, kissing the bright hair and sweet face warmly. “I never looked for you till tomorrow night. How did you get from Carmody?”

“Walked, dearest of Marillas. Haven’t I done it a score of times in the Queen’s days? The mailman is to bring my trunk tomorrow; I just got homesick all at once, and came a day earlier. And oh! I’ve had such a lovely walk in the May twilight; I stopped by the barrens and picked these Mayflowers; I came through Violet-Vale; it’s just a big bowlful of violets now — the dear, sky-tinted things. Smell them, Marilla — drink them in.”

Marilla sniffed obligingly, but she was more interested in Anne than in drinking violets.

“Sit down, child. You must be real tired. I’m going to get you some supper.”

“There’s a darling moonrise behind the hills tonight, Marilla, and oh, how the frogs sang me home from Carmody! I do love the music of the frogs. It seems bound up with all my happiest recollections of old spring evenings. And it always reminds me of the night I came here first. Do you remember it, Marilla?”

“Well, yes,” said Marilla with emphasis. “I’m not likely to forget it ever.”

“They used to sing so madly in the marsh and brook that year. I would listen to them at my window in the dusk, and wonder how they could seem so glad and so sad at the same time. Oh, but it’s good to be home again! Redmond was splendid and Bolingbroke delightful — but Green Gables is HOME.”

“Gilbert isn’t coming home this summer, I hear,” said Marilla.

“No.” Something in Anne’s tone made Marilla glance at her sharply, but Anne was apparently absorbed in arranging her violets in a bowl. “See, aren’t they sweet?” she went on hurriedly. “The year is a book, isn’t it, Marilla? Spring’s pages are written in Mayflowers and violets, summer’s in roses, autumn’s in red maple leaves, and winter in holly and evergreen.”

“Did Gilbert do well in his examinations?” persisted Marilla.

“Excellently well. He led his class. But where are the twins and Mrs. Lynde?”

“Rachel and Dora are over at Mr. Harrison’s. Davy is down at Boulders’. I think I hear him coming now.”

Davy burst in, saw Anne, stopped, and then hurled himself upon her with a joyful yell.

“Oh, Anne, ain’t I glad to see you! Say, Anne, I’ve grown two inches since last fall. Mrs. Lynde measured me with her tape today, and say, Anne, see my front tooth. It’s gone. Mrs. Lynde tied one end of a string to it and the other end to the door, and then shut the door. I sold it to Milty for two cents. Milty’s collecting teeth.”

“What in the world does he want teeth for?” asked Marilla.

“To make a necklace for playing Indian Chief,” explained Davy, climbing upon Anne’s lap. “He’s got fifteen already, and everybody’s else’s promised, so there’s no use in the rest of us starting to collect, too. I tell you the Boulders are great business people.”

“Were you a good boy at Mrs. Boulter’s?” asked Marilla severely.

“Yes; but say, Marilla, I’m tired of being good.”

“You’d get tired of being bad much sooner, Davy-boy,” said Anne.

“Well, it’d be fun while it lasted, wouldn’t it?” persisted Davy. “I could be sorry for it afterwards, couldn’t I?”

“Being sorry wouldn’t do away with the consequences of being bad, Davy. Don’t you remember the Sunday last summer when you ran away from Sunday School? You told me then that being bad wasn’t worth while. What were you and Milty doing today?”

“Oh, we fished and chased the cat, and hunted for eggs, and yelled at the echo. There’s a great echo in the bush behind the Boulter barn. Say, what is echo, Anne; I want to know.”

“Echo is a beautiful nymph, Davy, living far away in the woods, and laughing at the world from among the hills.”

“What does she look like?”

“Her hair and eyes are dark, but her neck and arms are white as snow. No mortal can ever see how fair she is. She is fleeter than a deer, and that mocking voice of hers is all we can know of her. You can hear her calling at night; you can hear her laughing under the stars. But you can never see her. She flies afar if you follow her, and laughs at you always just over the next hill.”

“Is that true, Anne? Or is it a whopper?” demanded Davy staring.

“Davy,” said Anne despairingly, “haven’t you sense enough to distinguish between a fairytale and a falsehood?”

“Then what is it that sasses back from the Boulter bush? I want to know,” insisted Davy.

“When you are a little older, Davy, I’ll explain it all to you.”

The mention of age evidently gave a new turn to Davy’s thoughts for after a few moments of reflection, he whispered solemnly:

“Anne, I’m going to be married.”

“When?” asked Anne with equal solemnity.

“Oh, not until I’m grownup, of course.”

“Well, that’s a relief, Davy. Who is the lady?”

“Stella Fletcher; she’s in my class at school. And say, Anne, she’s the prettiest girl you ever saw. If I die before I grow up you’ll keep an eye on her, won’t you?”

“Davy Keith, do stop talking such nonsense,” said Marilla severely.

“‘Tisn’t nonsense,” protested Davy in an injured tone. “She’s my promised wife, and if I was to die she’d be my promised widow, wouldn’t she? And she hasn’t got a soul to look after her except her old grandmother.”

“Come and have your supper, Anne,” said Marilla, “and don’t encourage that child in his absurd talk.”

Paul Cannot Find the Rock People

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Life was very pleasant in Avonlea that summer, although Anne, amid all her vacation joys, was haunted by a sense of “something gone which should be there.” She would not admit, even in her inmost reflections, that this was caused by Gilbert’s absence. But when she had to walk home alone from prayer meetings and A.V.I.S. powwows, while Diana and Fred, and many other gay couples, loitered along the dusky, starlit country roads, there was a queer, lonely ache in her heart which she could not explain away. Gilbert did not even write to her, as she thought he might have done. She knew he wrote to Diana occasionally, but she would not inquire about him; and Diana, supposing that Anne heard from him, volunteered no information. Gilbert’s mother, who was a gay, frank, lighthearted lady, but not overburdened with tact, had a very embarrassing habit of asking Anne, always in a painfully distinct voice and always in the presence of a crowd, if she had heard from Gilbert lately. Poor Anne could only blush horribly and murmur, “not very lately,” which was taken by all, Mrs. Blythe included, to be merely a maidenly evasion.

Apart from this, Anne enjoyed her summer. Priscilla came for a merry visit in June; and, when she had gone, Mr. and Mrs. Irving, Paul and Charlotta the Fourth came “home” for July and August.

Echo Lodge was the scene of gaieties once more, and the echoes over the river were kept busy mimicking the laughter that rang in the old garden behind the spruces.

“Miss Lavendar” had not changed, except to grow even sweeter and prettier. Paul adored her, and the companionship between them was beautiful to see.

“But I don’t call her ‘mother’ just by itself,” he explained to Anne. “You see, THAT name belongs just to my own little mother, and I can’t give it to any one else. You know, teacher. But I call her ‘Mother

Lavendar' and I love her next best to father. I — I even love her a LITTLE better than you, teacher."

"Which is just as it ought to be," answered Anne.

Paul was thirteen now and very tall for his years. His face and eyes were as beautiful as ever, and his fancy was still like a prism, separating everything that fell upon it into rainbows. He and Anne had delightful rambles to wood and field and shore. Never were there two more thoroughly "kindred spirits."

Charlotta the Fourth had blossomed out into young ladyhood. She wore her hair now in an enormous pompadour and had discarded the blue ribbon bows of auld lang syne, but her face was as freckled, her nose as snubbed, and her mouth and smiles as wide as ever.

"You don't think I talk with a Yankee accent, do you, Miss Shirley, ma'am?" she demanded anxiously.

"I don't notice it, Charlotta."

"I'm real glad of that. They said I did at home, but I thought likely they just wanted to aggravate me. I don't want no Yankee accent. Not that I've a word to say against the Yankees, Miss Shirley, ma'am. They're real civilized. But give me old P.E. Island every time."

Paul spent his first fortnight with his grandmother Irving in Avonlea. Anne was there to meet him when he came, and found him wild with eagerness to get to the shore — Nora and the Golden Lady and the Twin Sailors would be there. He could hardly wait to eat his supper. Could he not see Nora's elfin face peering around the point, watching for him wistfully? But it was a very sober Paul who came back from the shore in the twilight.

"Didn't you find your Rock People?" asked Anne.

Paul shook his chestnut curls sorrowfully.

"The Twin Sailors and the Golden Lady never came at all," he said.

"Nora was there — but Nora is not the same, teacher. She is changed."

"Oh, Paul, it is you who are changed," said Anne. "You have grown too old for the Rock People. They like only children for playfellows. I am afraid the Twin Sailors will never again come to you in the pearly,

enchanted boat with the sail of moonshine; and the Golden Lady will play no more for you on her golden harp. Even Nora will not meet you much longer. You must pay the penalty of growing-up, Paul. You must leave fairyland behind you.”

“You two talk as much foolishness as ever you did,” said old Mrs. Irving, half-indulgently, half-reprovingly.

“Oh, no, we don’t,” said Anne, shaking her head gravely. “We are getting very, very wise, and it is such a pity. We are never half so interesting when we have learned that language is given us to enable us to conceal our thoughts.”

“But it isn’t — it is given us to exchange our thoughts,” said Mrs. Irving seriously. She had never heard of Tallyrand and did not understand epigrams.

Anne spent a fortnight of halcyon days at Echo Lodge in the golden prime of August. While there she incidentally contrived to hurry Ludovic Speed in his leisurely courting of Theodora Dix, as related duly in another chronicle of her history.(1) Arnold Sherman, an elderly friend of the Irvings, was there at the same time, and added not a little to the general pleasantness of life.

(1 Chronicles of Avonlea.)

“What a nice playtime this has been,” said Anne. “I feel like a giant refreshed. And it’s only a fortnight more till I go back to Kingsport, and Redmond and Patty’s Place. Patty’s Place is the dearest spot, Miss Lavendar. I feel as if I had two homes — one at Green Gables and one at Patty’s Place. But where has the summer gone? It doesn’t seem a day since I came home that spring evening with the Mayflowers. When I was little I couldn’t see from one end of the summer to the other. It stretched before me like an unending season. Now, ‘tis a handbreadth, ‘tis a tale.”

“Anne, are you and Gilbert Blythe as good friends as you used to be?” asked Miss Lavendar quietly.

“I am just as much Gilbert’s friend as ever I was, Miss Lavendar.”
Miss Lavendar shook her head.

“I see something’s gone wrong, Anne. I’m going to be impertinent and ask what. Have you quarrelled?”

“No; it’s only that Gilbert wants more than friendship and I can’t give him more.”

“Are you sure of that, Anne?”

“Perfectly sure.”

“I’m very, very sorry.”

“I wonder why everybody seems to think I ought to marry Gilbert Blythe,” said Anne petulantly.

“Because you were made and meant for each other, Anne — that is why. You needn’t toss that young head of yours. It’s a fact.”

Enter Jonas

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“PROSPECT POINT, “August 20th.

“Dear Anne — spelled — with — an — E,” wrote Phil, “I must prop my eyelids open long enough to write you. I’ve neglected you shamefully this summer, honey, but all my other correspondents have been neglected, too. I have a huge pile of letters to answer, so I must gird up the loins of my mind and hoe in. Excuse my mixed metaphors. I’m fearfully sleepy. Last night Cousin Emily and I were calling at a neighbor’s. There were several other callers there, and as soon as those unfortunate creatures left, our hostess and her three daughters picked them all to pieces. I knew they would begin on Cousin Emily and me as soon as the door shut behind us. When we came home Mrs. Lilly informed us that the aforesaid neighbor’s hired boy was supposed to be down with scarlet fever. You can always trust Mrs. Lilly to tell you cheerful things like that. I have a horror of scarlet fever. I couldn’t sleep when I went to bed for thinking of it. I tossed and tumbled about, dreaming fearful dreams when I did snooze for a minute; and at three I wakened up with a high fever, a sore throat, and a raging headache. I knew I had scarlet fever; I got up in a panic and hunted up Cousin Emily’s ‘doctor book’ to read up the symptoms. Anne, I had them all. So I went back to bed, and knowing the worst, slept like a top the rest of the night. Though why a top should sleep sounder than anything else I never could understand. But this morning I was quite well, so it couldn’t have been the fever. I suppose if I did catch it last night it couldn’t have developed so soon. I can remember that in daytime, but at three o’clock at night I never can be logical.

“I suppose you wonder what I’m doing at Prospect Point. Well, I always like to spend a month of summer at the shore, and father insists that I come to his second-cousin Emily’s ‘select boardinghouse’ at Prospect Point. So a fortnight ago I came as usual. And as usual old ‘Uncle

Mark Miller' brought me from the station with his ancient buggy and what he calls his 'generous purpose' horse. He is a nice old man and gave me a handful of pink peppermints. Peppermints always seem to me such a religious sort of candy — I suppose because when I was a little girl Grandmother Gordon always gave them to me in church. Once I asked, referring to the smell of peppermints, 'Is that the odor of sanctity?' I didn't like to eat Uncle Mark's peppermints because he just fished them loose out of his pocket, and had to pick some rusty nails and other things from among them before he gave them to me. But I wouldn't hurt his dear old feelings for anything, so I carefully sowed them along the road at intervals. When the last one was gone, Uncle Mark said, a little rebukingly, 'Ye shouldn't a'et all them candies to onct, Miss Phil. You'll likely have the stummick-ache.'

"Cousin Emily has only five boarders besides myself — four old ladies and one young man. My righthand neighbor is Mrs. Lilly. She is one of those people who seem to take a gruesome pleasure in detailing all their many aches and pains and sicknesses. You cannot mention any ailment but she says, shaking her head, 'Ah, I know too well what that is' — and then you get all the details. Jonas declares he once spoke of locomotor ataxia in hearing and she said she knew too well what that was. She suffered from it for ten years and was finally cured by a traveling doctor.

"Who is Jonas? Just wait, Anne Shirley. You'll hear all about Jonas in the proper time and place. He is not to be mixed up with estimable old ladies.

"My left-hand neighbor at the table is Mrs. Phinney. She always speaks with a wailing, dolorous voice — you are nervously expecting her to burst into tears every moment. She gives you the impression that life to her is indeed a vale of tears, and that a smile, never to speak of a laugh, is a frivolity truly reprehensible. She has a worse opinion of me than Aunt Jamesina, and she doesn't love me hard to atone for it, as Aunt J. does, either.

"Miss Maria Grimsby sits caticorner from me. The first day I came I remarked to Miss Maria that it looked a little like rain — and Miss Maria

laughed. I said the road from the station was very pretty — and Miss Maria laughed. I said there seemed to be a few mosquitoes left yet — and Miss Maria laughed. I said that Prospect Point was as beautiful as ever — and Miss Maria laughed. If I were to say to Miss Maria, ‘My father has hanged himself, my mother has taken poison, my brother is in the penitentiary, and I am in the last stages of consumption,’ Miss Maria would laugh. She can’t help it — she was born so; but is very sad and awful.

“The fifth old lady is Mrs. Grant. She is a sweet old thing; but she never says anything but good of anybody and so she is a very uninteresting conversationalist.

“And now for Jonas, Anne.

“That first day I came I saw a young man sitting opposite me at the table, smiling at me as if he had known me from my cradle. I knew, for Uncle Mark had told me, that his name was Jonas Blake, that he was a Theological Student from St. Columbia, and that he had taken charge of the Point Prospect Mission Church for the summer.

“He is a very ugly young man — really, the ugliest young man I’ve ever seen. He has a big, loose-jointed figure with absurdly long legs. His hair is tow-color and lank, his eyes are green, and his mouth is big, and his ears — but I never think about his ears if I can help it.

“He has a lovely voice — if you shut your eyes he is adorable — and he certainly has a beautiful soul and disposition.

“We were good chums right way. Of course he is a graduate of Redmond, and that is a link between us. We fished and boated together; and we walked on the sands by moonlight. He didn’t look so homely by moonlight and oh, he was nice. Niceness fairly exhaled from him. The old ladies — except Mrs. Grant — don’t approve of Jonas, because he laughs and jokes — and because he evidently likes the society of frivolous me better than theirs.

“Somehow, Anne, I don’t want him to think me frivolous. This is ridiculous. Why should I care what a tow-haired person called Jonas, whom I never saw before thinks of me?

“Last Sunday Jonas preached in the village church. I went, of course, but I couldn’t realize that Jonas was going to preach. The fact that he was a minister — or going to be one — persisted in seeming a huge joke to me.

“Well, Jonas preached. And, by the time he had preached ten minutes, I felt so small and insignificant that I thought I must be invisible to the naked eye. Jonas never said a word about women and he never looked at me. But I realized then and there what a pitiful, frivolous, small-souled little butterfly I was, and how horribly different I must be from Jonas’ ideal woman. SHE would be grand and strong and noble. He was so earnest and tender and true. He was everything a minister ought to be. I wondered how I could ever have thought him ugly — but he really is! — with those inspired eyes and that intellectual brow which the roughly-falling hair hid on week days.

“It was a splendid sermon and I could have listened to it forever, and it made me feel utterly wretched. Oh, I wish I was like YOU, Anne.

“He caught up with me on the road home, and grinned as cheerfully as usual. But his grin could never deceive me again. I had seen the REAL Jonas. I wondered if he could ever see the REAL PHIL — whom NOBODY, not even you, Anne, has ever seen yet.

“‘Jonas,’ I said — I forgot to call him Mr. Blake. Wasn’t it dreadful? But there are times when things like that don’t matter—’ Jonas, you were born to be a minister. You COULDN’T be anything else.’

“‘No, I couldn’t,’ he said soberly. ‘I tried to be something else for a long time — I didn’t want to be a minister. But I came to see at last that it was the work given me to do — and God helping me, I shall try to do it.’

“His voice was low and reverent. I thought that he would do his work and do it well and nobly; and happy the woman fitted by nature and training to help him do it. SHE would be no feather, blown about by every fickle wind of fancy. SHE would always know what hat to put on. Probably she would have only one. Ministers never have much money. But she wouldn’t mind having one hat or none at all, because she would have Jonas.

“Anne Shirley, don’t you dare to say or hint or think that I’ve fallen in love with Mr. Blake. Could I care for a lank, poor, ugly theologian — named Jonas? As Uncle Mark says, ‘It’s impossible, and what’s more it’s improbable.’

“Good night, PHIL.”

“P.S. It is impossible — but I am horribly afraid it’s true. I’m happy and wretched and scared. HE can NEVER care for me, I know. Do you think I could ever develop into a passable minister’s wife, Anne? And WOULD they expect me to lead in prayer? P G.”

Enter Prince Charming

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“I’m contrasting the claims of indoors and out,” said Anne, looking from the window of Patty’s Place to the distant pines of the park.

“I’ve an afternoon to spend in sweet doing nothing, Aunt Jimsie. Shall I spend it here where there is a cosy fire, a plateful of delicious russets, three purring and harmonious cats, and two impeccable china dogs with green noses? Or shall I go to the park, where there is the lure of gray woods and of gray water lapping on the harbor rocks?”

“If I was as young as you, I’d decide in favor of the park,” said Aunt Jamesina, tickling Joseph’s yellow ear with a knitting needle.

“I thought that you claimed to be as young as any of us, Aunty,” teased Anne.

“Yes, in my soul. But I’ll admit my legs aren’t as young as yours. You go and get some fresh air, Anne. You look pale lately.”

“I think I’ll go to the park,” said Anne restlessly. “I don’t feel like tame domestic joys today. I want to feel alone and free and wild. The park will be empty, for every one will be at the football match.”

“Why didn’t you go to it?”

“‘Nobody axed me, sir, she said’ — at least, nobody but that horrid little Dan Ranger. I wouldn’t go anywhere with him; but rather than hurt his poor little tender feelings I said I wasn’t going to the game at all. I don’t mind. I’m not in the mood for football today somehow.”

“You go and get some fresh air,” repeated Aunt Jamesina, “but take your umbrella, for I believe it’s going to rain. I’ve rheumatism in my leg.”

“Only old people should have rheumatism, Aunty.”

“Anybody is liable to rheumatism in her legs, Anne. It’s only old people who should have rheumatism in their souls, though. Thank goodness, I never have. When you get rheumatism in your soul you might as well go and pick out your coffin.”

It was November — the month of crimson sunsets, parting birds, deep, sad hymns of the sea, passionate wind-songs in the pines. Anne roamed through the pineland alleys in the park and, as she said, let that great sweeping wind blow the fogs out of her soul. Anne was not wont to be troubled with soul fog. But, somehow, since her return to Redmond for this third year, life had not mirrored her spirit back to her with its old, perfect, sparkling clearness.

Outwardly, existence at Patty's Place was the same pleasant round of work and study and recreation that it had always been. On Friday evenings the big, firelighted livingroom was crowded by callers and echoed to endless jest and laughter, while Aunt Jamesina smiled beamingly on them all. The "Jonas" of Phil's letter came often, running up from St. Columbia on the early train and departing on the late. He was a general favorite at Patty's Place, though Aunt Jamesina shook her head and opined that divinity students were not what they used to be.

"He's VERY nice, my dear," she told Phil, "but ministers ought to be graver and more dignified."

"Can't a man laugh and laugh and be a Christian still?" demanded Phil.

"Oh, MEN — yes. But I was speaking of MINISTERS, my dear," said Aunt Jamesina rebukingly. "And you shouldn't flirt so with Mr. Blake — you really shouldn't."

"I'm not flirting with him," protested Phil.

Nobody believed her, except Anne. The others thought she was amusing herself as usual, and told her roundly that she was behaving very badly.

"Mr. Blake isn't of the Alec-and-Alonzo type, Phil," said Stella severely. "He takes things seriously. You may break his heart."

"Do you really think I could?" asked Phil. "I'd love to think so."

"Philippa Gordon! I never thought you were utterly unfeeling. The idea of you saying you'd love to break a man's heart!"

"I didn't say so, honey. Quote me correctly. I said I'd like to think I COULD break it. I would like to know I had the POWER to do it."

“I don’t understand you, Phil. You are leading that man on deliberately — and you know you don’t mean anything by it.”

“I mean to make him ask me to marry him if I can,” said Phil calmly.

“I give you up,” said Stella hopelessly.

Gilbert came occasionally on Friday evenings. He seemed always in good spirits, and held his own in the jests and repartee that flew about. He neither sought nor avoided Anne. When circumstances brought them in contact he talked to her pleasantly and courteously, as to any newly-made acquaintance. The old camaraderie was gone entirely. Anne felt it keenly; but she told herself she was very glad and thankful that Gilbert had got so completely over his disappointment in regard to her. She had really been afraid, that April evening in the orchard, that she had hurt him terribly and that the wound would be long in healing. Now she saw that she need not have worried. Men have died and the worms have eaten them but not for love. Gilbert evidently was in no danger of immediate dissolution. He was enjoying life, and he was full of ambition and zest. For him there was to be no wasting in despair because a woman was fair and cold. Anne, as she listened to the ceaseless badinage that went on between him and Phil, wondered if she had only imagined that look in his eyes when she had told him she could never care for him.

There were not lacking those who would gladly have stepped into Gilbert’s vacant place. But Anne snubbed them without fear and without reproach. If the real Prince Charming was never to come she would have none of a substitute. So she sternly told herself that gray day in the windy park.

Suddenly the rain of Aunt Jamesina’s prophecy came with a swish and rush. Anne put up her umbrella and hurried down the slope. As she turned out on the harbor road a savage gust of wind tore along it. Instantly her umbrella turned wrong side out. Anne clutched at it in despair. And then — there came a voice close to her.

“Pardon me — may I offer you the shelter of my umbrella?”

Anne looked up. Tall and handsome and distinguished-looking — dark, melancholy, inscrutable eyes — melting, musical, sympathetic voice —

yes, the very hero of her dreams stood before her in the flesh. He could not have more closely resembled her ideal if he had been made to order.

“Thank you,” she said confusedly.

“We’d better hurry over to that little pavillion on the point,” suggested the unknown. “We can wait there until this shower is over. It is not likely to rain so heavily very long.”

The words were very commonplace, but oh, the tone! And the smile which accompanied them! Anne felt her heart beating strangely.

Together they scurried to the pavilion and sat breathlessly down under its friendly roof. Anne laughingly held up her false umbrella.

“It is when my umbrella turns inside out that I am convinced of the total depravity of inanimate things,” she said gaily.

The raindrops sparkled on her shining hair; its loosened rings curled around her neck and forehead. Her cheeks were flushed, her eyes big and starry. Her companion looked down at her admiringly. She felt herself blushing under his gaze. Who could he be? Why, there was a bit of the Redmond white and scarlet pinned to his coat lapel. Yet she had thought she knew, by sight at least, all the Redmond students except the Freshmen. And this courtly youth surely was no Freshman.

“We are schoolmates, I see,” he said, smiling at Anne’s colors. “That ought to be sufficient introduction. My name is Royal Gardner. And you are the Miss Shirley who read the Tennyson paper at the Philomathic the other evening, aren’t you?”

“Yes; but I cannot place you at all,” said Anne, frankly. “Please, where DO you belong?”

“I feel as if I didn’t belong anywhere yet. I put in my Freshman and Sophomore years at Redmond two years ago. I’ve been in Europe ever since. Now I’ve come back to finish my Arts course.”

“This is my Junior year, too,” said Anne.

“So we are classmates as well as collegemates. I am reconciled to the loss of the years that the locust has eaten,” said her companion, with a world of meaning in those wonderful eyes of his.

The rain came steadily down for the best part of an hour. But the time seemed really very short. When the clouds parted and a burst of pale November sunshine fell athwart the harbor and the pines Anne and her companion walked home together. By the time they had reached the gate of Patty's Place he had asked permission to call, and had received it. Anne went in with cheeks of flame and her heart beating to her fingertips. Rusty, who climbed into her lap and tried to kiss her, found a very absent welcome. Anne, with her soul full of romantic thrills, had no attention to spare just then for a crop-eared pussy cat.

That evening a parcel was left at Patty's Place for Miss Shirley. It was a box containing a dozen magnificent roses. Phil pounced impertinently on the card that fell from it, read the name and the poetical quotation written on the back.

"Royal Gardner!" she exclaimed. "Why, Anne, I didn't know you were acquainted with Roy Gardner!"

"I met him in the park this afternoon in the rain," explained Anne hurriedly. "My umbrella turned inside out and he came to my rescue with his."

"Oh!" Phil peered curiously at Anne. "And is that exceedingly commonplace incident any reason why he should send us longstemmed roses by the dozen, with a very sentimental rhyme? Or why we should blush divinest rosy-red when we look at his card? Anne, thy face betrayeth thee."

"Don't talk nonsense, Phil. Do you know Mr. Gardner?"

"I've met his two sisters, and I know of him. So does everybody worthwhile in Kingsport. The Gardners are among the richest, bluest, of Bluenoses. Roy is adorably handsome and clever. Two years ago his mother's health failed and he had to leave college and go abroad with her — his father is dead. He must have been greatly disappointed to have to give up his class, but they say he was perfectly sweet about it. Fee — fi — fo — fum, Anne. I smell romance. Almost do I envy you, but not quite. After all, Roy Gardner isn't Jonas."

“You goose!” said Anne loftily. But she lay long awake that night, nor did she wish for sleep. Her waking fancies were more alluring than any vision of dreamland. Had the real Prince come at last? Recalling those glorious dark eyes which had gazed so deeply into her own, Anne was very strongly inclined to think he had.

Enter Christine

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The girls at Patty's Place were dressing for the reception which the Juniors were giving for the Seniors in February. Anne surveyed herself in the mirror of the blue room with girlish satisfaction. She had a particularly pretty gown on. Originally it had been only a simple little slip of cream silk with a chiffon overdress. But Phil had insisted on taking it home with her in the Christmas holidays and embroidering tiny rosebuds all over the chiffon. Phil's fingers were deft, and the result was a dress which was the envy of every Redmond girl. Even Allie Boone, whose frocks came from Paris, was wont to look with longing eyes on that rosebud concoction as Anne trailed up the main staircase at Redmond in it.

Anne was trying the effect of a white orchid in her hair. Roy Gardner had sent her white orchids for the reception, and she knew no other Redmond girl would have them that night — when Phil came in with admiring gaze.

“Anne, this is certainly your night for looking handsome. Nine nights out of ten I can easily outshine you. The tenth you blossom out suddenly into something that eclipses me altogether. How do you manage it?”

“It's the dress, dear. Fine feathers.”

“‘Tisn't. The last evening you flamed out into beauty you wore your old blue flannel shirtwaist that Mrs. Lynde made you. If Roy hadn't already lost head and heart about you he certainly would tonight. But I don't like orchids on you, Anne. No; it isn't jealousy. Orchids don't seem to BELONG to you. They're too exotic — too tropical — too insolent. Don't put them in your hair, anyway.”

“Well, I won't. I admit I'm not fond of orchids myself. I don't think they're related to me. Roy doesn't often send them — he knows I like flowers I can live with. Orchids are only things you can visit with.”

“Jonas sent me some dear pink rosebuds for the evening — but — he isn’t coming himself. He said he had to lead a prayer-meeting in the slums! I don’t believe he wanted to come. Anne, I’m horribly afraid Jonas doesn’t really care anything about me. And I’m trying to decide whether I’ll pine away and die, or go on and get my B.A. and be sensible and useful.”

“You couldn’t possibly be sensible and useful, Phil, so you’d better pine away and die,” said Anne cruelly.

“Heartless Anne!”

“Silly Phil! You know quite well that Jonas loves you.”

“But — he won’t TELL me so. And I can’t MAKE him. He LOOKS it, I’ll admit. But speak-to-me-only-with-thine-eyes isn’t a really reliable reason for embroidering doilies and hemstitching tablecloths. I don’t want to begin such work until I’m really engaged. It would be tempting Fate.”

“Mr. Blake is afraid to ask you to marry him, Phil. He is poor and can’t offer you a home such as you’ve always had. You know that is the only reason he hasn’t spoken long ago.”

“I suppose so,” agreed Phil dolefully. “Well” — brightening up—“if he WON’T ask me to marry him I’ll ask him, that’s all. So it’s bound to come right. I won’t worry. By the way, Gilbert Blythe is going about constantly with Christine Stuart. Did you know?”

Anne was trying to fasten a little gold chain about her throat. She suddenly found the clasp difficult to manage. WHAT was the matter with it — or with her fingers?

“No,” she said carelessly. “Who is Christine Stuart?”

“Ronald Stuart’s sister. She’s in Kingsport this winter studying music. I haven’t seen her, but they say she’s very pretty and that Gilbert is quite crazy over her. How angry I was when you refused Gilbert, Anne. But Roy Gardner was foreordained for you. I can see that now. You were right, after all.”

Anne did not blush, as she usually did when the girls assumed that her eventual marriage to Roy Gardner was a settled thing. All at once she felt

rather dull. Phil's chatter seemed trivial and the reception a bore. She boxed poor Rusty's ears.

"Get off that cushion instantly, you cat, you! Why don't you stay down where you belong?"

Anne picked up her orchids and went downstairs, where Aunt Jamesina was presiding over a row of coats hung before the fire to warm. Roy Gardner was waiting for Anne and teasing the Sarah-cat while he waited. The Sarah-cat did not approve of him. She always turned her back on him. But everybody else at Patty's Place liked him very much. Aunt Jamesina, carried away by his unfailing and deferential courtesy, and the pleading tones of his delightful voice, declared he was the nicest young man she ever knew, and that Anne was a very fortunate girl. Such remarks made Anne restive. Roy's wooing had certainly been as romantic as girlish heart could desire, but — she wished Aunt Jamesina and the girls would not take things so for granted. When Roy murmured a poetical compliment as he helped her on with her coat, she did not blush and thrill as usual; and he found her rather silent in their brief walk to Redmond. He thought she looked a little pale when she came out of the coeds' dressing room; but as they entered the reception room her color and sparkle suddenly returned to her. She turned to Roy with her gayest expression. He smiled back at her with what Phil called "his deep, black, velvety smile." Yet she really did not see Roy at all. She was acutely conscious that Gilbert was standing under the palms just across the room talking to a girl who must be Christine Stuart.

She was very handsome, in the stately style destined to become rather massive in middle life. A tall girl, with large dark-blue eyes, ivory outlines, and a gloss of darkness on her smooth hair.

"She looks just as I've always wanted to look," thought Anne miserably. "Roseleaf complexion — starry violet eyes — raven hair — yes, she has them all. It's a wonder her name isn't Cordelia Fitzgerald into the bargain! But I don't believe her figure is as good as mine, and her nose certainly isn't."

Anne felt a little comforted by this conclusion.

Mutual Confidences

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March came in that winter like the meekest and mildest of lambs, bringing days that were crisp and golden and tingling, each followed by a frosty pink twilight which gradually lost itself in an elfland of moonshine.

Over the girls at Patty's Place was falling the shadow of April examinations. They were studying hard; even Phil had settled down to text and notebooks with a doggedness not to be expected of her.

"I'm going to take the Johnson Scholarship in Mathematics," she announced calmly. "I could take the one in Greek easily, but I'd rather take the mathematical one because I want to prove to Jonas that I'm really enormously clever."

"Jonas likes you better for your big brown eyes and your crooked smile than for all the brains you carry under your curls," said Anne.

"When I was a girl it wasn't considered ladylike to know anything about Mathematics," said Aunt Jamesina. "But times have changed. I don't know that it's all for the better. Can you cook, Phil?"

"No, I never cooked anything in my life except a gingerbread and it was a failure — flat in the middle and hilly round the edges. You know the kind. But, Aunt, when I begin in good earnest to learn to cook don't you think the brains that enable me to win a mathematical scholarship will also enable me to learn cooking just as well?"

"Maybe," said Aunt Jamesina cautiously. "I am not decrying the higher education of women. My daughter is an M.A. She can cook, too. But I taught her to cook BEFORE I let a college professor teach her Mathematics."

In mid-March came a letter from Miss Patty Spofford, saying that she and Miss Maria had decided to remain abroad for another year.

"So you may have Patty's Place next winter, too," she wrote. "Maria and I are going to run over Egypt. I want to see the Sphinx once before I

die.”

“Fancy those two dames ‘running over Egypt’! I wonder if they’ll look up at the Sphinx and knit,” laughed Priscilla.

“I’m so glad we can keep Patty’s Place for another year,” said Stella. “I was afraid they’d come back. And then our jolly little nest here would be broken up — and we poor callow nestlings thrown out on the cruel world of boardinghouses again.”

“I’m off for a tramp in the park,” announced Phil, tossing her book aside. “I think when I am eighty I’ll be glad I went for a walk in the park tonight.”

“What do you mean?” asked Anne.

“Come with me and I’ll tell you, honey.”

They captured in their ramble all the mysteries and magics of a March evening. Very still and mild it was, wrapped in a great, white, brooding silence — a silence which was yet threaded through with many little silvery sounds which you could hear if you hearkened as much with your soul as your ears. The girls wandered down a long pineland aisle that seemed to lead right out into the heart of a deep-red, overflowing winter sunset.

“I’d go home and write a poem this blessed minute if I only knew how,” declared Phil, pausing in an open space where a rosy light was staining the green tips of the pines. “It’s all so wonderful here — this great, white stillness, and those dark trees that always seem to be thinking.”

“‘The woods were God’s first temples,’” quoted Anne softly. “One can’t help feeling reverent and adoring in such a place. I always feel so near Him when I walk among the pines.”

“Anne, I’m the happiest girl in the world,” confessed Phil suddenly.

“So Mr. Blake has asked you to marry him at last?” said Anne calmly.

“Yes. And I sneezed three times while he was asking me. Wasn’t that horrid? But I said ‘yes’ almost before he finished — I was so afraid he might change his mind and stop. I’m besottedly happy. I couldn’t really believe before that Jonas would ever care for frivolous me.”

“Phil, you’re not really frivolous,” said Anne gravely. “Way down underneath that frivolous exterior of yours you’ve got a dear, loyal, womanly little soul. Why do you hide it so?”

“I can’t help it, Queen Anne. You are right — I’m not frivolous at heart. But there’s a sort of frivolous skin over my soul and I can’t take it off. As Mrs. Poyser says, I’d have to be hatched over again and hatched different before I could change it. But Jonas knows the real me and loves me, frivolity and all. And I love him. I never was so surprised in my life as I was when I found out I loved him. I’d never thought it possible to fall in love with an ugly man. Fancy me coming down to one solitary beau. And one named Jonas! But I mean to call him Jo. That’s such a nice, crisp little name. I couldn’t nickname Alonzo.”

“What about Alec and Alonzo?”

“Oh, I told them at Christmas that I never could marry either of them. It seems so funny now to remember that I ever thought it possible that I might. They felt so badly I just cried over both of them — howled. But I knew there was only one man in the world I could ever marry. I had made up my own mind for once and it was real easy, too. It’s very delightful to feel so sure, and know it’s your own sureness and not somebody else’s.”

“Do you suppose you’ll be able to keep it up?”

“Making up my mind, you mean? I don’t know, but Jo has given me a splendid rule. He says, when I’m perplexed, just to do what I would wish I had done when I shall be eighty. Anyhow, Jo can make up his mind quickly enough, and it would be uncomfortable to have too much mind in the same house.”

“What will your father and mother say?”

“Father won’t say much. He thinks everything I do right. But mother WILL talk. Oh, her tongue will be as Byrney as her nose. But in the end it will be all right.”

“You’ll have to give up a good many things you’ve always had, when you marry Mr. Blake, Phil.”

“But I’ll have HIM. I won’t miss the other things. We’re to be married a year from next June. Jo graduates from St. Columbia this spring, you

know. Then he's going to take a little mission church down on Patterson Street in the slums. Fancy me in the slums! But I'd go there or to Greenland's icy mountains with him."

"And this is the girl who would NEVER marry a man who wasn't rich," commented Anne to a young pine tree.

"Oh, don't cast up the follies of my youth to me. I shall be poor as gaily as I've been rich. You'll see. I'm going to learn how to cook and make over dresses. I've learned how to market since I've lived at Patty's Place; and once I taught a Sunday School class for a whole summer. Aunt Jamesina says I'll ruin Jo's career if I marry him. But I won't. I know I haven't much sense or sobriety, but I've got what is ever so much better — the knack of making people like me. There is a man in Bolingbroke who lisps and always testifies in prayer-meeting. He says, 'If you can't thine like an electric thtar thine like a candlethtick.' I'll be Jo's little candlestick."

"Phil, you're incorrigible. Well, I love you so much that I can't make nice, light, congratulatory little speeches. But I'm heart-glad of your happiness."

"I know. Those big gray eyes of yours are brimming over with real friendship, Anne. Some day I'll look the same way at you. You're going to marry Roy, aren't you, Anne?"

"My dear Philippa, did you ever hear of the famous Betty Baxter, who 'refused a man before he'd axed her'? I am not going to emulate that celebrated lady by either refusing or accepting any one before he 'axes' me."

"All Redmond knows that Roy is crazy about you," said Phil candidly. "And you DO love him, don't you, Anne?"

"I — I suppose so," said Anne reluctantly. She felt that she ought to be blushing while making such a confession; but she was not; on the other hand, she always blushed hotly when any one said anything about Gilbert Blythe or Christine Stuart in her hearing. Gilbert Blythe and Christine Stuart were nothing to her — absolutely nothing. But Anne had given up trying to analyze the reason of her blushes. As for Roy, of course she was

in love with him — madly so. How could she help it? Was he not her ideal? Who could resist those glorious dark eyes, and that pleading voice? Were not half the Redmond girls wildly envious? And what a charming sonnet he had sent her, with a box of violets, on her birthday! Anne knew every word of it by heart. It was very good stuff of its kind, too. Not exactly up to the level of Keats or Shakespeare — even Anne was not so deeply in love as to think that. But it was very tolerable magazine verse. And it was addressed to HER — not to Laura or Beatrice or the Maid of Athens, but to her, Anne Shirley. To be told in rhythmical cadences that her eyes were stars of the morning — that her cheek had the flush it stole from the sunrise — that her lips were redder than the roses of Paradise, was thrillingly romantic. Gilbert would never have dreamed of writing a sonnet to her eyebrows. But then, Gilbert could see a joke. She had once told Roy a funny story — and he had not seen the point of it. She recalled the chummy laugh she and Gilbert had had together over it, and wondered uneasily if life with a man who had no sense of humor might not be somewhat uninteresting in the long run. But who could expect a melancholy, inscrutable hero to see the humorous side of things? It would be flatly unreasonable.

A June Evening

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“I wonder what it would be like to live in a world where it was always June,” said Anne, as she came through the spice and bloom of the twilight orchard to the front door steps, where Marilla and Mrs. Rachel were sitting, talking over Mrs. Samson Coates’ funeral, which they had attended that day. Dora sat between them, diligently studying her lessons; but Davy was sitting tailor-fashion on the grass, looking as gloomy and depressed as his single dimple would let him.

“You’d get tired of it,” said Marilla, with a sigh.

“I daresay; but just now I feel that it would take me a long time to get tired of it, if it were all as charming as today. Everything loves June. Davy-boy, why this melancholy November face in blossom-time?”

“I’m just sick and tired of living,” said the youthful pessimist.

“At ten years? Dear me, how sad!”

“I’m not making fun,” said Davy with dignity. “I’m dis — dis — discouraged” — bringing out the big word with a valiant effort.

“Why and wherefore?” asked Anne, sitting down beside him.

“‘Cause the new teacher that come when Mr. Holmes got sick give me ten sums to do for Monday. It’ll take me all day tomorrow to do them. It isn’t fair to have to work Saturdays. Milty Boulter said he wouldn’t do them, but Marilla says I’ve got to. I don’t like Miss Carson a bit.”

“Don’t talk like that about your teacher, Davy Keith,” said Mrs. Rachel severely. “Miss Carson is a very fine girl. There is no nonsense about her.”

“That doesn’t sound very attractive,” laughed Anne. “I like people to have a little nonsense about them. But I’m inclined to have a better opinion of Miss Carson than you have. I saw her in prayer-meeting last night, and she has a pair of eyes that can’t always look sensible. Now, Davy-boy, take heart of grace. ‘Tomorrow will bring another day’ and I’ll

help you with the sums as far as in me lies. Don't waste this lovely hour 'twixt light and dark worrying over arithmetic."

"Well, I won't," said Davy, brightening up. "If you help me with the sums I'll have 'em done in time to go fishing with Milt. I wish old Aunt Atossa's funeral was tomorrow instead of today. I wanted to go to it 'cause Milt said his mother said Aunt Atossa would be sure to rise up in her coffin and say sarcastic things to the folks that come to see her buried. But Marilla said she didn't."

"Poor Atossa laid in her coffin peaceful enough," said Mrs. Lynde solemnly. "I never saw her look so pleasant before, that's what. Well, there weren't many tears shed over her, poor old soul. The Elisha Wrights are thankful to be rid of her, and I can't say I blame them a mite."

"It seems to me a most dreadful thing to go out of the world and not leave one person behind you who is sorry you are gone," said Anne, shuddering.

"Nobody except her parents ever loved poor Atossa, that's certain, not even her husband," averred Mrs. Lynde. "She was his fourth wife. He'd sort of got into the habit of marrying. He only lived a few years after he married her. The doctor said he died of dyspepsia, but I shall always maintain that he died of Atossa's tongue, that's what. Poor soul, she always knew everything about her neighbors, but she never was very well acquainted with herself. Well, she's gone anyhow; and I suppose the next excitement will be Diana's wedding."

"It seems funny and horrible to think of Diana's being married," sighed Anne, hugging her knees and looking through the gap in the Haunted Wood to the light that was shining in Diana's room.

"I don't see what's horrible about it, when she's doing so well," said Mrs. Lynde emphatically. "Fred Wright has a fine farm and he is a model young man."

"He certainly isn't the wild, dashing, wicked, young man Diana once wanted to marry," smiled Anne. "Fred is extremely good."

"That's just what he ought to be. Would you want Diana to marry a wicked man? Or marry one yourself?"

“Oh, no. I wouldn’t want to marry anybody who was wicked, but I think I’d like it if he COULD be wicked and WOULDN’T. Now, Fred is HOPELESSLY good.”

“You’ll have more sense some day, I hope,” said Marilla.

Marilla spoke rather bitterly. She was grievously disappointed. She knew Anne had refused Gilbert Blythe. Avonlea gossip buzzed over the fact, which had leaked out, nobody knew how. Perhaps Charlie Sloane had guessed and told his guesses for truth. Perhaps Diana had betrayed it to Fred and Fred had been indiscreet. At all events it was known; Mrs. Blythe no longer asked Anne, in public or private, if she had heard lately from Gilbert, but passed her by with a frosty bow. Anne, who had always liked Gilbert’s merry, young-hearted mother, was grieved in secret over this. Marilla said nothing; but Mrs. Lynde gave Anne many exasperated digs about it, until fresh gossip reached that worthy lady, through the medium of Moody Spurgeon MacPherson’s mother, that Anne had another “beau” at college, who was rich and handsome and good all in one. After that Mrs. Rachel held her tongue, though she still wished in her inmost heart that Anne had accepted Gilbert. Riches were all very well; but even Mrs. Rachel, practical soul though she was, did not consider them the one essential. If Anne “liked” the Handsome Unknown better than Gilbert there was nothing more to be said; but Mrs. Rachel was dreadfully afraid that Anne was going to make the mistake of marrying for money. Marilla knew Anne too well to fear this; but she felt that something in the universal scheme of things had gone sadly awry.

“What is to be, will be,” said Mrs. Rachel gloomily, “and what isn’t to be happens sometimes. I can’t help believing it’s going to happen in Anne’s case, if Providence doesn’t interfere, that’s what.” Mrs. Rachel sighed. She was afraid Providence wouldn’t interfere; and she didn’t dare to.

Anne had wandered down to the Dryad’s Bubble and was curled up among the ferns at the root of the big white birch where she and Gilbert had so often sat in summers gone by. He had gone into the newspaper office again when college closed, and Avonlea seemed very dull without

him. He never wrote to her, and Anne missed the letters that never came. To be sure, Roy wrote twice a week; his letters were exquisite compositions which would have read beautifully in a memoir or biography. Anne felt herself more deeply in love with him than ever when she read them; but her heart never gave the queer, quick, painful bound at sight of his letters which it had given one day when Mrs. Hiram Sloane had handed her out an envelope addressed in Gilbert's black, upright handwriting. Anne had hurried home to the east gable and opened it eagerly — to find a typewritten copy of some college society report — "only that and nothing more." Anne flung the harmless screed across her room and sat down to write an especially nice epistle to Roy.

Diana was to be married in five more days. The gray house at Orchard Slope was in a turmoil of baking and brewing and boiling and stewing, for there was to be a big, old-timey wedding. Anne, of course, was to be bridesmaid, as had been arranged when they were twelve years old, and Gilbert was coming from Kingsport to be best man. Anne was enjoying the excitement of the various preparations, but under it all she carried a little heartache. She was, in a sense, losing her dear old chum; Diana's new home would be two miles from Green Gables, and the old constant companionship could never be theirs again. Anne looked up at Diana's light and thought how it had beamed to her for many years; but soon it would shine through the summer twilights no more. Two big, painful tears welled up in her gray eyes.

"Oh," she thought, "how horrible it is that people have to grow up — and marry — and CHANGE!"

Diana's Wedding

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“After all, the only real roses are the pink ones,” said Anne, as she tied white ribbon around Diana’s bouquet in the westward-looking gable at Orchard Slope. “They are the flowers of love and faith.”

Diana was standing nervously in the middle of the room, arrayed in her bridal white, her black curls frosted over with the film of her wedding veil. Anne had draped that veil, in accordance with the sentimental compact of years before.

“It’s all pretty much as I used to imagine it long ago, when I wept over your inevitable marriage and our consequent parting,” she laughed. “You are the bride of my dreams, Diana, with the ‘lovely misty veil’; and I am YOUR bridesmaid. But, alas! I haven’t the puffed sleeves — though these short lace ones are even prettier. Neither is my heart wholly breaking nor do I exactly hate Fred.”

“We are not really parting, Anne,” protested Diana. “I’m not going far away. We’ll love each other just as much as ever. We’ve always kept that ‘oath’ of friendship we swore long ago, haven’t we?”

“Yes. We’ve kept it faithfully. We’ve had a beautiful friendship, Diana. We’ve never marred it by one quarrel or coolness or unkind word; and I hope it will always be so. But things can’t be quite the same after this. You’ll have other interests. I’ll just be on the outside. But ‘such is life’ as Mrs. Rachel says. Mrs. Rachel has given you one of her beloved knitted quilts of the ‘tobacco stripe’ pattern, and she says when I am married she’ll give me one, too.”

“The mean thing about your getting married is that I won’t be able to be your bridesmaid,” lamented Diana.

“I’m to be Phil’s bridesmaid next June, when she marries Mr. Blake, and then I must stop, for you know the proverb ‘three times a bridesmaid, never a bride,’” said Anne, peeping through the window over the pink and

snow of the blossoming orchard beneath. "Here comes the minister, Diana."

"Oh, Anne," gasped Diana, suddenly turning very pale and beginning to tremble. "Oh, Anne — I'm so nervous — I can't go through with it — Anne, I know I'm going to faint."

"If you do I'll drag you down to the rainwater hogshed and drop you in," said Anne unsympathetically. "Cheer up, dearest. Getting married can't be so very terrible when so many people survive the ceremony. See how cool and composed I am, and take courage."

"Wait till your turn comes, Miss Anne. Oh, Anne, I hear father coming upstairs. Give me my bouquet. Is my veil right? Am I very pale?"

"You look just lovely. Di, darling, kiss me goodbye for the last time. Diana Barry will never kiss me again."

"Diana Wright will, though. There, mother's calling. Come."

Following the simple, old-fashioned way in vogue then, Anne went down to the parlor on Gilbert's arm. They met at the top of the stairs for the first time since they had left Kingsport, for Gilbert had arrived only that day. Gilbert shook hands courteously. He was looking very well, though, as Anne instantly noted, rather thin. He was not pale; there was a flush on his cheek that had burned into it as Anne came along the hall towards him, in her soft, white dress with lilies-of-the-valley in the shining masses of her hair. As they entered the crowded parlor together a little murmur of admiration ran around the room. "What a fine-looking pair they are," whispered the impressible Mrs. Rachel to Marilla.

Fred ambled in alone, with a very red face, and then Diana swept in on her father's arm. She did not faint, and nothing untoward occurred to interrupt the ceremony. Feasting and merrymaking followed; then, as the evening waned, Fred and Diana drove away through the moonlight to their new home, and Gilbert walked with Anne to Green Gables.

Something of their old comradeship had returned during the informal mirth of the evening. Oh, it was nice to be walking over that well-known road with Gilbert again!

The night was so very still that one should have been able to hear the whisper of roses in blossom — the laughter of daisies — the piping of grasses — many sweet sounds, all tangled up together. The beauty of moonlight on familiar fields irradiated the world.

“Can’t we take a ramble up Lovers’ Lane before you go in?” asked Gilbert as they crossed the bridge over the Lake of Shining Waters, in which the moon lay like a great, drowned blossom of gold.

Anne assented readily. Lovers’ Lane was a veritable path in a fairyland that night — a shimmering, mysterious place, full of wizardry in the white-woven enchantment of moonlight. There had been a time when such a walk with Gilbert through Lovers’ Lane would have been far too dangerous. But Roy and Christine had made it very safe now. Anne found herself thinking a good deal about Christine as she chatted lightly to Gilbert. She had met her several times before leaving Kingsport, and had been charmingly sweet to her. Christine had also been charmingly sweet. Indeed, they were a most cordial pair. But for all that, their acquaintance had not ripened into friendship. Evidently Christine was not a kindred spirit.

“Are you going to be in Avonlea all summer?” asked Gilbert.

“No. I’m going down east to Valley Road next week. Esther Haythorne wants me to teach for her through July and August. They have a summer term in that school, and Esther isn’t feeling well. So I’m going to substitute for her. In one way I don’t mind. Do you know, I’m beginning to feel a little bit like a stranger in Avonlea now? It makes me sorry — but it’s true. It’s quite appalling to see the number of children who have shot up into big boys and girls — really young men and women — these past two years. Half of my pupils are grown up. It makes me feel awfully old to see them in the places you and I and our mates used to fill.”

Anne laughed and sighed. She felt very old and mature and wise — which showed how young she was. She told herself that she longed greatly to go back to those dear merry days when life was seen through a rosy mist of hope and illusion, and possessed an indefinable something that had passed away forever. Where was it now — the glory and the dream?

““So wags the world away,”” quoted Gilbert practically, and a trifle absently. Anne wondered if he were thinking of Christine. Oh, Avonlea was going to be so lonely now — with Diana gone!

Chapter XXX.

Mrs. Skinner's Romance

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Anne stepped off the train at Valley Road station and looked about to see if any one had come to meet her. She was to board with a certain Miss Janet Sweet, but she saw no one who answered in the least to her preconception of that lady, as formed from Esther's letter. The only person in sight was an elderly woman, sitting in a wagon with mail bags piled around her. Two hundred would have been a charitable guess at her weight; her face was as round and red as a harvest-moon and almost as featureless. She wore a tight, black, cashmere dress, made in the fashion of ten years ago, a little dusty black straw hat trimmed with bows of yellow ribbon, and faded black lace mits.

"Here, you," she called, waving her whip at Anne. "Are you the new Valley Road schoolma'am?"

"Yes."

"Well, I thought so. Valley Road is noted for its goodlooking schoolma'ams, just as Millersville is noted for its humly ones. Janet Sweet asked me this morning if I could bring you out. I said, 'Sartin I kin, if she don't mind being scrunched up some. This rig of mine's kinder small for the mail bags and I'm some heftier than Thomas!' Just wait, miss, till I shift these bags a bit and I'll tuck you in somehow. It's only two miles to Janet's. Her next-door neighbor's hired boy is coming for your trunk tonight. My name is Skinner — Amelia Skinner."

Anne was eventually tucked in, exchanging amused smiles with herself during the process.

"Jog along, black mare," commanded Mrs. Skinner, gathering up the reins in her pudgy hands. "This is my first trip on the mail rowte. Thomas wanted to hoe his turnips today so he asked me to come. So I jest sot down and took a standing-up snack and started. I sorter like it. O' course it's rather tejus. Part of the time I sits and thinks and the rest I jest sits. Jog

along, black mare. I want to git home airly. Thomas is terrible lonesome when I'm away. You see, we haven't been married very long."

"Oh!" said Anne politely.

"Just a month. Thomas courted me for quite a spell, though. It was real romantic." Anne tried to picture Mrs. Skinner on speaking terms with romance and failed.

"Oh?" she said again.

"Yes. Y'see, there was another man after me. Jog along, black mare. I'd been a widder so long folks had given up expecting me to marry again. But when my darter — she's a schoolma'am like you — went out West to teach I felt real lonesome and wasn't nowise sot against the idea. Bime-by Thomas began to come up and so did the other feller — William Obadiah Seaman, his name was. For a long time I couldn't make up my mind which of them to take, and they kep' coming and coming, and I kep' worrying. Y'see, W.O. was rich — he had a fine place and carried considerable style. He was by far the best match. Jog along, black mare."

"Why didn't you marry him?" asked Anne.

"Well, y'see, he didn't love me," answered Mrs. Skinner, solemnly.

Anne opened her eyes widely and looked at Mrs. Skinner. But there was not a glint of humor on that lady's face. Evidently Mrs. Skinner saw nothing amusing in her own case.

"He'd been a widder-man for three yers, and his sister kept house for him. Then she got married and he just wanted some one to look after his house. It was worth looking after, too, mind you that. It's a handsome house. Jog along, black mare. As for Thomas, he was poor, and if his house didn't leak in dry weather it was about all that could be said for it, though it looks kind of pictureaskew. But, y'see, I loved Thomas, and I didn't care one red cent for W.O. So I argued it out with myself. 'Sarah Crowe,' say I — my first was a Crowe—'you can marry your rich man if you like but you won't be happy. Folks can't get along together in this world without a little bit of love. You'd just better tie up to Thomas, for he loves you and you love him and nothing else ain't going to do you.' Jog along, black mare. So I told Thomas I'd take him. All the time I was getting ready I

never dared drive past W.O.'s place for fear the sight of that fine house of his would put me in the swithers again. But now I never think of it at all, and I'm just that comfortable and happy with Thomas. Jog along, black mare."

"How did William Obadiah take it?" queried Anne.

"Oh, he rumpussed a bit. But he's going to see a skinny old maid in Millersville now, and I guess she'll take him fast enough. She'll make him a better wife than his first did. W.O. never wanted to marry her. He just asked her to marry him 'cause his father wanted him to, never dreaming but that she'd say 'no.' But mind you, she said 'yes.' There was a predicament for you. Jog along, black mare. She was a great housekeeper, but most awful mean. She wore the same bonnet for eighteen years. Then she got a new one and W.O. met her on the road and didn't know her. Jog along, black mare. I feel that I'd a narrer escape. I might have married him and been most awful miserable, like my poor cousin, Jane Ann. Jane Ann married a rich man she didn't care anything about, and she hasn't the life of a dog. She come to see me last week and says, says she, 'Sarah Skinner, I envy you. I'd rather live in a little hut on the side of the road with a man I was fond of than in my big house with the one I've got.' Jane Ann's man ain't such a bad sort, nuther, though he's so contrary that he wears his fur coat when the thermometer's at ninety. The only way to git him to do anything is to coax him to do the opposite. But there ain't any love to smooth things down and it's a poor way of living. Jog along, black mare. There's Janet's place in the hollow—'Wayside,' she calls it. Quite pictureaskew, ain't it? I guess you'll be glad to git out of this, with all them mail bags jamming round you."

"Yes, but I have enjoyed my drive with you very much," said Anne sincerely.

"Git away now!" said Mrs. Skinner, highly flattered. "Wait till I tell Thomas that. He always feels dretful tickled when I git a compliment. Jog along, black mare. Well, here we are. I hope you'll git on well in the school, miss. There's a short cut to it through the ma'sh back of Janet's. If you take that way be awful keerful. If you once got stuck in that black mud

you'd be sucked right down and never seen or heard tell of again till the day of judgment, like Adam Palmer's cow. Jog along, black mare."

Anne to Philippa

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“Anne Shirley to Philippa Gordon, greeting.

“Well-beloved, it’s high time I was writing you. Here am I, installed once more as a country ‘schoolma’am’ at Valley Road, boarding at ‘Wayside,’ the home of Miss Janet Sweet. Janet is a dear soul and very nicelooking; tall, but not over-tall; stoutish, yet with a certain restraint of outline suggestive of a thrifty soul who is not going to be overlavish even in the matter of avoirdupois. She has a knot of soft, crimped, brown hair with a thread of gray in it, a sunny face with rosy cheeks, and big, kind eyes as blue as forget-me-nots. Moreover, she is one of those delightful, old-fashioned cooks who don’t care a bit if they ruin your digestion as long as they can give you feasts of fat things.

“I like her; and she likes me — principally, it seems, because she had a sister named Anne who died young.

“‘I’m real glad to see you,’ she said briskly, when I landed in her yard. ‘My, you don’t look a mite like I expected. I was sure you’d be dark — my sister Anne was dark. And here you’re redheaded!’

“For a few minutes I thought I wasn’t going to like Janet as much as I had expected at first sight. Then I reminded myself that I really must be more sensible than to be prejudiced against any one simply because she called my hair red. Probably the word ‘auburn’ was not in Janet’s vocabulary at all.

“‘Wayside’ is a dear sort of little spot. The house is small and white, set down in a delightful little hollow that drops away from the road. Between road and house is an orchard and flower-garden all mixed up together. The front door walk is bordered with quahog clamshells — ‘cowhawks,’ Janet calls them; there is Virginia Creeper over the porch and moss on the roof. My room is a neat little spot ‘off the parlor’ — just big enough for the bed and me. Over the head of my bed there is a picture

of Robby Burns standing at Highland Mary's grave, shadowed by an enormous weeping willow tree. Robby's face is so lugubrious that it is no wonder I have bad dreams. Why, the first night I was here I dreamed I COULDN'T LAUGH.

"The parlor is tiny and neat. Its one window is so shaded by a huge willow that the room has a grotto-like effect of emerald gloom. There are wonderful tidies on the chairs, and gay mats on the floor, and books and cards carefully arranged on a round table, and vases of dried grass on the mantelpiece. Between the vases is a cheerful decoration of preserved coffin plates — five in all, pertaining respectively to Janet's father and mother, a brother, her sister Anne, and a hired man who died here once! If I go suddenly insane some of these days 'know all men by these presents' that those coffin-plates have caused it.

"But it's all delightful and I said so. Janet loved me for it, just as she detested poor Esther because Esther had said so much shade was unhygienic and had objected to sleeping on a feather bed. Now, I glory in feather-beds, and the more unhygienic and feathery they are the more I glory. Janet says it is such a comfort to see me eat; she had been so afraid I would be like Miss Haythorne, who wouldn't eat anything but fruit and hot water for breakfast and tried to make Janet give up frying things. Esther is really a dear girl, but she is rather given to fads. The trouble is that she hasn't enough imagination and HAS a tendency to indigestion.

"Janet told me I could have the use of the parlor when any young men called! I don't think there are many to call. I haven't seen a young man in Valley Road yet, except the next-door hired boy — Sam Toliver, a very tall, lank, tow-haired youth. He came over one evening recently and sat for an hour on the garden fence, near the front porch where Janet and I were doing fancywork. The only remarks he volunteered in all that time were, 'Hev a peppermint, miss! Dew now-fine thing for carARRH, peppermints,' and, 'Powerful lot o' jump-grasses round here ternight. Yep.'

"But there is a love affair going on here. It seems to be my fortune to be mixed up, more or less actively, with elderly love affairs. Mr. and Mrs. Irving always say that I brought about their marriage. Mrs. Stephen Clark

of Carmody persists in being most grateful to me for a suggestion which somebody else would probably have made if I hadn't. I do really think, though, that Ludovic Speed would never have got any further along than placid courtship if I had not helped him and Theodora Dix out.

“In the present affair I am only a passive spectator. I've tried once to help things along and made an awful mess of it. So I shall not meddle again. I'll tell you all about it when we meet.”

Tea With Mrs. Douglas

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On the first Thursday night of Anne's sojourn in Valley Road Janet asked her to go to prayer-meeting. Janet blossomed out like a rose to attend that prayer-meeting. She wore a pale-blue, pansy-sprinkled muslin dress with more ruffles than one would ever have supposed economical Janet could be guilty of, and a white leghorn hat with pink roses and three ostrich feathers on it. Anne felt quite amazed. Later on, she found out Janet's motive in so arraying herself — a motive as old as Eden.

Valley Road prayer-meetings seemed to be essentially feminine. There were thirty-two women present, two half-grown boys, and one solitary man, beside the minister. Anne found herself studying this man. He was not handsome or young or graceful; he had remarkably long legs — so long that he had to keep them coiled up under his chair to dispose of them — and he was stoop-shouldered. His hands were big, his hair wanted barbering, and his moustache was unkempt. But Anne thought she liked his face; it was kind and honest and tender; there was something else in it, too — just what, Anne found it hard to define. She finally concluded that this man had suffered and been strong, and it had been made manifest in his face. There was a sort of patient, humorous endurance in his expression which indicated that he would go to the stake if need be, but would keep on looking pleasant until he really had to begin squirming.

When prayer-meeting was over this man came up to Janet and said, "May I see you home, Janet?"

Janet took his arm—"as primly and shyly as if she were no more than sixteen, having her first escort home," Anne told the girls at Patty's Place later on.

"Miss Shirley, permit me to introduce Mr. Douglas," she said stiffly.

Mr. Douglas nodded and said, "I was looking at you in prayer-meeting, miss, and thinking what a nice little girl you were."

Such a speech from ninety-nine people out of a hundred would have annoyed Anne bitterly; but the way in which Mr. Douglas said it made her feel that she had received a very real and pleasing compliment. She smiled appreciatively at him and dropped obligingly behind on the moonlit road.

So Janet had a beau! Anne was delighted. Janet would make a paragon of a wife — cheery, economical, tolerant, and a very queen of cooks. It would be a flagrant waste on Nature's part to keep her a permanent old maid.

"John Douglas asked me to take you up to see his mother," said Janet the next day. "She's bed-ridden a lot of the time and never goes out of the house. But she's powerful fond of company and always wants to see my boarders. Can you go up this evening?"

Anne assented; but later in the day Mr. Douglas called on his mother's behalf to invite them up to tea on Saturday evening.

"Oh, why didn't you put on your pretty pansy dress?" asked Anne, when they left home. It was a hot day, and poor Janet, between her excitement and her heavy black cashmere dress, looked as if she were being broiled alive.

"Old Mrs. Douglas would think it terrible frivolous and unsuitable, I'm afraid. John likes that dress, though," she added wistfully.

The old Douglas homestead was half a mile from "Wayside" cresting a windy hill. The house itself was large and comfortable, old enough to be dignified, and girdled with maple groves and orchards. There were big, trim barns behind it, and everything bespoke prosperity. Whatever the patient endurance in Mr. Douglas' face had meant it hadn't, so Anne reflected, meant debts and duns.

John Douglas met them at the door and took them into the sitting-room, where his mother was enthroned in an armchair.

Anne had expected old Mrs. Douglas to be tall and thin, because Mr. Douglas was. Instead, she was a tiny scrap of a woman, with soft pink cheeks, mild blue eyes, and a mouth like a baby's. Dressed in a beautiful, fashionably-made black silk dress, with a fluffy white shawl over her

shoulders, and her snowy hair surmounted by a dainty lace cap, she might have posed as a grandmother doll.

“How do you do, Janet dear?” she said sweetly. “I am so glad to see you again, dear.” She put up her pretty old face to be kissed. “And this is our new teacher. I’m delighted to meet you. My son has been singing your praises until I’m half jealous, and I’m sure Janet ought to be wholly so.”

Poor Janet blushed, Anne said something polite and conventional, and then everybody sat down and made talk. It was hard work, even for Anne, for nobody seemed at ease except old Mrs. Douglas, who certainly did not find any difficulty in talking. She made Janet sit by her and stroked her hand occasionally. Janet sat and smiled, looking horribly uncomfortable in her hideous dress, and John Douglas sat without smiling.

At the tea table Mrs. Douglas gracefully asked Janet to pour the tea. Janet turned redder than ever but did it. Anne wrote a description of that meal to Stella.

“We had cold tongue and chicken and strawberry preserves, lemon pie and tarts and chocolate cake and raisin cookies and pound cake and fruit cake — and a few other things, including more pie — caramel pie, I think it was. After I had eaten twice as much as was good for me, Mrs. Douglas sighed and said she feared she had nothing to tempt my appetite.

“‘I’m afraid dear Janet’s cooking has spoiled you for any other,’ she said sweetly. ‘Of course nobody in Valley Road aspires to rival HER. WON’T you have another piece of pie, Miss Shirley? You haven’t eaten ANYTHING.’

“Stella, I had eaten a helping of tongue and one of chicken, three biscuits, a generous allowance of preserves, a piece of pie, a tart, and a square of chocolate cake!”

After tea Mrs. Douglas smiled benevolently and told John to take “dear Janet” out into the garden and get her some roses. “Miss Shirley will keep me company while you are out — won’t you?” she said plaintively. She settled down in her armchair with a sigh.

“I am a very frail old woman, Miss Shirley. For over twenty years I’ve been a great sufferer. For twenty long, weary years I’ve been dying by

inches.”

“How painful!” said Anne, trying to be sympathetic and succeeding only in feeling idiotic.

“There have been scores of nights when they’ve thought I could never live to see the dawn,” went on Mrs. Douglas solemnly. “Nobody knows what I’ve gone through — nobody can know but myself. Well, it can’t last very much longer now. My weary pilgrimage will soon be over, Miss Shirley. It is a great comfort to me that John will have such a good wife to look after him when his mother is gone — a great comfort, Miss Shirley.”

“Janet is a lovely woman,” said Anne warmly.

“Lovely! A beautiful character,” assented Mrs. Douglas. “And a perfect housekeeper — something I never was. My health would not permit it, Miss Shirley. I am indeed thankful that John has made such a wise choice. I hope and believe that he will be happy. He is my only son, Miss Shirley, and his happiness lies very near my heart.”

“Of course,” said Anne stupidly. For the first time in her life she was stupid. Yet she could not imagine why. She seemed to have absolutely nothing to say to this sweet, smiling, angelic old lady who was patting her hand so kindly.

“Come and see me soon again, dear Janet,” said Mrs. Douglas lovingly, when they left. “You don’t come half often enough. But then I suppose John will be bringing you here to stay all the time one of these days.” Anne, happening to glance at John Douglas, as his mother spoke, gave a positive start of dismay. He looked as a tortured man might look when his tormentors gave the rack the last turn of possible endurance. She felt sure he must be ill and hurried poor blushing Janet away.

“Isn’t old Mrs. Douglas a sweet woman?” asked Janet, as they went down the road.

“M — m,” answered Anne absently. She was wondering why John Douglas had looked so.

“She’s been a terrible sufferer,” said Janet feelingly. “She takes terrible spells. It keeps John all worried up. He’s scared to leave home for fear his mother will take a spell and nobody there but the hired girl.”

“He Just Kept Coming and Coming”

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Three days later Anne came home from school and found Janet crying. Tears and Janet seemed so incongruous that Anne was honestly alarmed.

“Oh, what is the matter?” she cried anxiously.

“I’m — I’m forty today,” sobbed Janet.

“Well, you were nearly that yesterday and it didn’t hurt,” comforted Anne, trying not to smile.

“But — but,” went on Janet with a big gulp, “John Douglas won’t ask me to marry him.”

“Oh, but he will,” said Anne lamely. “You must give him time, Janet

“Time!” said Janet with indescribable scorn. “He has had twenty years. How much time does he want?”

“Do you mean that John Douglas has been coming to see you for twenty years?”

“He has. And he has never so much as mentioned marriage to me. And I don’t believe he ever will now. I’ve never said a word to a mortal about it, but it seems to me I’ve just got to talk it out with some one at last or go crazy. John Douglas begun to go with me twenty years ago, before mother died. Well, he kept coming and coming, and after a spell I begun making quilts and things; but he never said anything about getting married, only just kept coming and coming. There wasn’t anything I could do. Mother died when we’d been going together for eight years. I thought he maybe would speak out then, seeing as I was left alone in the world. He was real kind and feeling, and did everything he could for me, but he never said marry. And that’s the way it has been going on ever since. People blame ME for it. They say I won’t marry him because his mother is so sickly and I don’t want the bother of waiting on her. Why, I’d LOVE to wait on John’s mother! But I let them think so. I’d rather they’d blame me than pity me!

It's so dreadful humiliating that John won't ask me. And WHY won't he? Seems to me if I only knew his reason I wouldn't mind it so much."

"Perhaps his mother doesn't want him to marry anybody," suggested Anne.

"Oh, she does. She's told me time and again that she'd love to see John settled before her time comes. She's always giving him hints — you heard her yourself the other day. I thought I'd ha' gone through the floor."

"It's beyond me," said Anne helplessly. She thought of Ludovic Speed. But the cases were not parallel. John Douglas was not a man of Ludovic's type.

"You should show more spirit, Janet," she went on resolutely. "Why didn't you send him about his business long ago?"

"I couldn't," said poor Janet pathetically. "You see, Anne, I've always been awful fond of John. He might just as well keep coming as not, for there was never anybody else I'd want, so it didn't matter."

"But it might have made him speak out like a man," urged Anne.

Janet shook her head.

"No, I guess not. I was afraid to try, anyway, for fear he'd think I meant it and just go. I suppose I'm a poor-spirited creature, but that is how I feel. And I can't help it."

"Oh, you COULD help it, Janet. It isn't too late yet. Take a firm stand. Let that man know you are not going to endure his shillyshallying any longer. I'LL back you up."

"I dunno," said Janet hopelessly. "I dunno if I could ever get up enough spunk. Things have drifted so long. But I'll think it over."

Anne felt that she was disappointed in John Douglas. She had liked him so well, and she had not thought him the sort of man who would play fast and loose with a woman's feelings for twenty years. He certainly should be taught a lesson, and Anne felt vindictively that she would enjoy seeing the process. Therefore she was delighted when Janet told her, as they were going to prayer-meeting the next night, that she meant to show some "sperrit."

"I'll let John Douglas see I'm not going to be trodden on any longer."

“You are perfectly right,” said Anne emphatically.

When prayer-meeting was over John Douglas came up with his usual request. Janet looked frightened but resolute.

“No, thank you,” she said icily. “I know the road home pretty well alone. I ought to, seeing I’ve been traveling it for forty years. So you needn’t trouble yourself, MR. Douglas.”

Anne was looking at John Douglas; and, in that brilliant moonlight, she saw the last twist of the rack again. Without a word he turned and strode down the road.

“Stop! Stop!” Anne called wildly after him, not caring in the least for the other dumbfounded onlookers. “Mr. Douglas, stop! Come back.”

John Douglas stopped but he did not come back. Anne flew down the road, caught his arm and fairly dragged him back to Janet.

“You must come back,” she said imploringly. “It’s all a mistake, Mr. Douglas — all my fault. I made Janet do it. She didn’t want to — but it’s all right now, isn’t it, Janet?”

Without a word Janet took his arm and walked away. Anne followed them meekly home and slipped in by the back door.

“Well, you are a nice person to back me up,” said Janet sarcastically.

“I couldn’t help it, Janet,” said Anne repentantly. “I just felt as if I had stood by and seen murder done. I HAD to run after him.”

“Oh, I’m just as glad you did. When I saw John Douglas making off down that road I just felt as if every little bit of joy and happiness that was left in my life was going with him. It was an awful feeling.”

“Did he ask you why you did it?” asked Anne.

“No, he never said a word about it,” replied Janet dully.

John Douglas Speaks at Last

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Anne was not without a feeble hope that something might come of it after all. But nothing did. John Douglas came and took Janet driving, and walked home from prayer-meeting with her, as he had been doing for twenty years, and as he seemed likely to do for twenty years more. The summer waned. Anne taught her school and wrote letters and studied a little. Her walks to and from school were pleasant. She always went by way of the swamp; it was a lovely place — a boggy soil, green with the greenest of mossy hillocks; a silvery brook meandered through it and spruces stood erectly, their boughs a-trail with gray-green mosses, their roots overgrown with all sorts of woodland lovelinesses.

Nevertheless, Anne found life in Valley Road a little monotonous. To be sure, there was one diverting incident.

She had not seen the lank, tow-headed Samuel of the peppermints since the evening of his call, save for chance meetings on the road. But one warm August night he appeared, and solemnly seated himself on the rustic bench by the porch. He wore his usual working habiliments, consisting of varipatched trousers, a blue jean shirt, out at the elbows, and a ragged straw hat. He was chewing a straw and he kept on chewing it while he looked solemnly at Anne. Anne laid her book aside with a sigh and took up her doily. Conversation with Sam was really out of the question.

After a long silence Sam suddenly spoke.

“I’m leaving over there,” he said abruptly, waving his straw in the direction of the neighboring house.

“Oh, are you?” said Anne politely.

“Yep.”

“And where are you going now?”

“Wall, I’ve been thinking some of gitting a place of my own. There’s one that’d suit me over at Millersville. But ef I rents it I’ll want a woman.”

“I suppose so,” said Anne vaguely.

“Yep.”

There was another long silence. Finally Sam removed his straw again and said,

“Will yeh hev me?”

“Wh — a — t!” gasped Anne.

“Will yeh hev me?”

“Do you mean — MARRY you?” queried poor Anne feebly.

“Yep.”

“Why, I’m hardly acquainted with you,” cried Anne indignantly.

“But yeh’d git acquainted with me after we was married,” said Sam.

Anne gathered up her poor dignity.

“Certainly I won’t marry you,” she said haughtily.

“Wall, yeh might do worse,” expostulated Sam. “I’m a good worker and I’ve got some money in the bank.”

“Don’t speak of this to me again. Whatever put such an idea into your head?” said Anne, her sense of humor getting the better of her wrath. It was such an absurd situation.

“Yeh’re a likely-looking girl and hev a right-smart way o’ stepping,” said Sam. “I don’t want no lazy woman. Think it over. I won’t change my mind yit awhile. Wall, I must be gitting. Gotter milk the cows.”

Anne’s illusions concerning proposals had suffered so much of late years that there were few of them left. So she could laugh wholeheartedly over this one, not feeling any secret sting. She mimicked poor Sam to Janet that night, and both of them laughed immoderately over his plunge into sentiment.

One afternoon, when Anne’s sojourn in Valley Road was drawing to a close, Alec Ward came driving down to “Wayside” in hot haste for Janet.

“They want you at the Douglas place quick,” he said. “I really believe old Mrs. Douglas is going to die at last, after pretending to do it for twenty

years.”

Janet ran to get her hat. Anne asked if Mrs. Douglas was worse than usual.

“She’s not half as bad,” said Alec solemnly, “and that’s what makes me think it’s serious. Other times she’d be screaming and throwing herself all over the place. This time she’s lying still and mum. When Mrs. Douglas is mum she is pretty sick, you bet.”

“You don’t like old Mrs. Douglas?” said Anne curiously.

“I like cats as IS cats. I don’t like cats as is women,” was Alec’s cryptic reply.

Janet came home in the twilight.

“Mrs. Douglas is dead,” she said wearily. “She died soon after I got there. She just spoke to me once—’I suppose you’ll marry John now?’ she said. It cut me to the heart, Anne. To think John’s own mother thought I wouldn’t marry him because of her! I couldn’t say a word either — there were other women there. I was thankful John had gone out.”

Janet began to cry drearily. But Anne brewed her a hot drink of ginger tea to her comforting. To be sure, Anne discovered later on that she had used white pepper instead of ginger; but Janet never knew the difference.

The evening after the funeral Janet and Anne were sitting on the front porch steps at sunset. The wind had fallen asleep in the pinelands and lurid sheets of heat-lightning flickered across the northern skies. Janet wore her ugly black dress and looked her very worst, her eyes and nose red from crying. They talked little, for Janet seemed faintly to resent Anne’s efforts to cheer her up. She plainly preferred to be miserable.

Suddenly the gate-latch clicked and John Douglas strode into the garden. He walked towards them straight over the geranium bed. Janet stood up. So did Anne. Anne was a tall girl and wore a white dress; but John Douglas did not see her.

“Janet,” he said, “will you marry me?”

The words burst out as if they had been wanting to be said for twenty years and MUST be uttered now, before anything else.

Janet's face was so red from crying that it couldn't turn any redder, so it turned a most unbecoming purple.

"Why didn't you ask me before?" she said slowly.

"I couldn't. She made me promise not to — mother made me promise not to. Nineteen years ago she took a terrible spell. We thought she couldn't live through it. She implored me to promise not to ask you to marry me while she was alive. I didn't want to promise such a thing, even though we all thought she couldn't live very long — the doctor only gave her six months. But she begged it on her knees, sick and suffering. I had to promise."

"What had your mother against me?" cried Janet.

"Nothing — nothing. She just didn't want another woman — ANY woman — there while she was living. She said if I didn't promise she'd die right there and I'd have killed her. So I promised. And she's held me to that promise ever since, though I've gone on my knees to her in my turn to beg her to let me off."

"Why didn't you tell me this?" asked Janet chokingly. "If I'd only KNOWN! Why didn't you just tell me?"

"She made me promise I wouldn't tell a soul," said John hoarsely. "She swore me to it on the Bible; Janet, I'd never have done it if I'd dreamed it was to be for so long. Janet, you'll never know what I've suffered these nineteen years. I know I've made you suffer, too, but you'll marry me for all, won't you, Janet? Oh, Janet, won't you? I've come as soon as I could to ask you."

At this moment the stupefied Anne came to her senses and realized that she had no business to be there. She slipped away and did not see Janet until the next morning, when the latter told her the rest of the story.

"That cruel, relentless, deceitful old woman!" cried Anne.

"Hush — she's dead," said Janet solemnly. "If she wasn't — but she IS. So we mustn't speak evil of her. But I'm happy at last, Anne. And I wouldn't have minded waiting so long a bit if I'd only known why."

"When are you to be married?"

“Next month. Of course it will be very quiet. I suppose people will talk terrible. They’ll say I made enough haste to snap John up as soon as his poor mother was out of the way. John wanted to let them know the truth but I said, ‘No, John; after all she was your mother, and we’ll keep the secret between us, and not cast any shadow on her memory. I don’t mind what people say, now that I know the truth myself. It don’t matter a mite. Let it all be buried with the dead’ says I to him. So I coaxed him round to agree with me.”

“You’re much more forgiving than I could ever be,” Anne said, rather crossly.

“You’ll feel differently about a good many things when you get to be my age,” said Janet tolerantly. “That’s one of the things we learn as we grow older — how to forgive. It comes easier at forty than it did at twenty.”

The Last Redmond Year Opens

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“Here we are, all back again, nicely sunburned and rejoicing as a strong man to run a race,” said Phil, sitting down on a suitcase with a sigh of pleasure. “Isn’t it jolly to see this dear old Patty’s Place again — and Aunty — and the cats? Rusty has lost another piece of ear, hasn’t he?”

“Rusty would be the nicest cat in the world if he had no ears at all,” declared Anne loyally from her trunk, while Rusty writhed about her lap in a frenzy of welcome.

“Aren’t you glad to see us back, Aunty?” demanded Phil.

“Yes. But I wish you’d tidy things up,” said Aunt Jamesina plaintively, looking at the wilderness of trunks and suitcases by which the four laughing, chattering girls were surrounded. “You can talk just as well later on. Work first and then play used to be my motto when I was a girl.”

“Oh, we’ve just reversed that in this generation, Aunty. OUR motto is play your play and then dig in. You can do your work so much better if you’ve had a good bout of play first.”

“If you are going to marry a minister,” said Aunt Jamesina, picking up Joseph and her knitting and resigning herself to the inevitable with the charming grace that made her the queen of housemothers, “you will have to give up such expressions as ‘dig in.’”

“Why?” moaned Phil. “Oh, why must a minister’s wife be supposed to utter only prunes and prisms? I shan’t. Everybody on Patterson Street uses slang — that is to say, metaphorical language — and if I didn’t they would think me insufferably proud and stuck up.”

“Have you broken the news to your family?” asked Priscilla, feeding the Sarah-cat bits from her lunchbasket.

Phil nodded.

“How did they take it?”

“Oh, mother rampaged. But I stood rockfirm — even I, Philippa Gordon, who never before could hold fast to anything. Father was calmer. Father’s own daddy was a minister, so you see he has a soft spot in his heart for the cloth. I had Jo up to Mount Holly, after mother grew calm, and they both loved him. But mother gave him some frightful hints in every conversation regarding what she had hoped for me. Oh, my vacation pathway hasn’t been exactly strewn with roses, girls dear. But — I’ve won out and I’ve got Jo. Nothing else matters.”

“To you,” said Aunt Jamesina darkly.

“Nor to Jo, either,” retorted Phil. “You keep on pitying him. Why, pray? I think he’s to be envied. He’s getting brains, beauty, and a heart of gold in ME.”

“It’s well we know how to take your speeches,” said Aunt Jamesina patiently. “I hope you don’t talk like that before strangers. What would they think?”

“Oh, I don’t want to know what they think. I don’t want to see myself as others see me. I’m sure it would be horribly uncomfortable most of the time. I don’t believe Burns was really sincere in that prayer, either.”

“Oh, I daresay we all pray for some things that we really don’t want, if we were only honest enough to look into our hearts,” owned Aunt Jamesina candidly. “I’ve a notion that such prayers don’t rise very far. *I* used to pray that I might be enabled to forgive a certain person, but I know now I really didn’t want to forgive her. When I finally got that I DID want to I forgave her without having to pray about it.”

“I can’t picture you as being unforgiving for long,” said Stella.

“Oh, I used to be. But holding spite doesn’t seem worth while when you get along in years.”

“That reminds me,” said Anne, and told the tale of John and Janet.

“And now tell us about that romantic scene you hinted so darkly at in one of your letters,” demanded Phil.

Anne acted out Samuel’s proposal with great spirit. The girls shrieked with laughter and Aunt Jamesina smiled.

“It isn’t in good taste to make fun of your beaux,” she said severely; “but,” she added calmly, “I always did it myself.”

“Tell us about your beaux, Aunty,” entreated Phil. “You must have had any number of them.”

“They’re not in the past tense,” retorted Aunt Jamesina. “I’ve got them yet. There are three old widowers at home who have been casting sheep’s eyes at me for some time. You children needn’t think you own all the romance in the world.”

“Widowers and sheep’s eyes don’t sound very romantic, Aunty.”

“Well, no; but young folks aren’t always romantic either. Some of my beaux certainly weren’t. I used to laugh at them scandalous, poor boys. There was Jim Elwood — he was always in a sort of daydream — never seemed to sense what was going on. He didn’t wake up to the fact that I’d said ‘no’ till a year after I’d said it. When he did get married his wife fell out of the sleigh one night when they were driving home from church and he never missed her. Then there was Dan Winston. He knew too much. He knew everything in this world and most of what is in the next. He could give you an answer to any question, even if you asked him when the Judgment Day was to be. Milton Edwards was real nice and I liked him but I didn’t marry him. For one thing, he took a week to get a joke through his head, and for another he never asked me. Horatio Reeve was the most interesting beau I ever had. But when he told a story he dressed it up so that you couldn’t see it for frills. I never could decide whether he was lying or just letting his imagination run loose.”

“And what about the others, Aunty?”

“Go away and unpack,” said Aunt Jamesina, waving Joseph at them by mistake for a needle. “The others were too nice to make fun of. I shall respect their memory. There’s a box of flowers in your room, Anne. They came about an hour ago.”

After the first week the girls of Patty’s Place settled down to a steady grind of study; for this was their last year at Redmond and graduation honors must be fought for persistently. Anne devoted herself to English, Priscilla pored over classics, and Philippa pounded away at Mathematics.

Sometimes they grew tired, sometimes they felt discouraged, sometimes nothing seemed worth the struggle for it. In one such mood Stella wandered up to the blue room one rainy November evening. Anne sat on the floor in a little circle of light cast by the lamp beside her, amid a surrounding snow of crumpled manuscript.

“What in the world are you doing?”

“Just looking over some old Story Club yarns. I wanted something to cheer AND inebriate. I’d studied until the world seemed azure. So I came up here and dug these out of my trunk. They are so drenched in tears and tragedy that they are excruciatingly funny.”

“I’m blue and discouraged myself,” said Stella, throwing herself on the couch. “Nothing seems worthwhile. My very thoughts are old. I’ve thought them all before. What is the use of living after all, Anne?”

“Honey, it’s just brain fag that makes us feel that way, and the weather. A pouring rainy night like this, coming after a hard day’s grind, would squelch any one but a Mark Tapley. You know it IS worthwhile to live.”

“Oh, I suppose so. But I can’t prove it to myself just now.”

“Just think of all the great and noble souls who have lived and worked in the world,” said Anne dreamily. “Isn’t it worthwhile to come after them and inherit what they won and taught? Isn’t it worthwhile to think we can share their inspiration? And then, all the great souls that will come in the future? Isn’t it worthwhile to work a little and prepare the way for them — make just one step in their path easier?”

“Oh, my mind agrees with you, Anne. But my soul remains doleful and uninspired. I’m always grubby and dingy on rainy nights.”

“Some nights I like the rain — I like to lie in bed and hear it pattering on the roof and drifting through the pines.”

“I like it when it stays on the roof,” said Stella. “It doesn’t always. I spent a gruesome night in an old country farmhouse last summer. The roof leaked and the rain came pattering down on my bed. There was no poetry in THAT. I had to get up in the ‘mirk midnight’ and chivy round to pull the bedstead out of the drip — and it was one of those solid, old-fashioned beds that weigh a ton — more or less. And then that drip-drop, drip-drop

kept up all night until my nerves just went to pieces. You've no idea what an eerie noise a great drop of rain falling with a mushy thud on a bare floor makes in the night. It sounds like ghostly footsteps and all that sort of thing. What are you laughing over, Anne?"

"These stories. As Phil would say they are killing — in more senses than one, for everybody died in them. What dazzlingly lovely heroines we had — and how we dressed them!

"Silks — satins — velvets — jewels — laces — they never wore anything else. Here is one of Jane Andrews' stories depicting her heroine as sleeping in a beautiful white satin nightdress trimmed with seed pearls."

"Go on," said Stella. "I begin to feel that life is worth living as long as there's a laugh in it."

"Here's one I wrote. My heroine is disporting herself at a ball 'glittering from head to foot with large diamonds of the first water.' But what booted beauty or rich attire? 'The paths of glory lead but to the grave.' They must either be murdered or die of a broken heart. There was no escape for them."

"Let me read some of your stories."

"Well, here's my masterpiece. Note its cheerful title—'My Graves.' I shed quarts of tears while writing it, and the other girls shed gallons while I read it. Jane Andrews' mother scolded her frightfully because she had so many handkerchiefs in the wash that week. It's a harrowing tale of the wanderings of a Methodist minister's wife. I made her a Methodist because it was necessary that she should wander. She buried a child every place she lived in. There were nine of them and their graves were severed far apart, ranging from Newfoundland to Vancouver. I described the children, pictured their several death beds, and detailed their tombstones and epitaphs. I had intended to bury the whole nine but when I had disposed of eight my invention of horrors gave out and I permitted the ninth to live as a hopeless cripple."

While Stella read *My Graves*, punctuating its tragic paragraphs with chuckles, and Rusty slept the sleep of a just cat who has been out all night

curled up on a Jane Andrews tale of a beautiful maiden of fifteen who went to nurse in a leper colony — of course dying of the loathsome disease finally — Anne glanced over the other manuscripts and recalled the old days at Avonlea school when the members of the Story Club, sitting under the spruce trees or down among the ferns by the brook, had written them. What fun they had had! How the sunshine and mirth of those olden summers returned as she read. Not all the glory that was Greece or the grandeur that was Rome could weave such wizardry as those funny, tearful tales of the Story Club. Among the manuscripts Anne found one written on sheets of wrapping paper. A wave of laughter filled her gray eyes as she recalled the time and place of its genesis. It was the sketch she had written the day she fell through the roof of the Cobb duckhouse on the Tory Road.

Anne glanced over it, then fell to reading it intently. It was a little dialogue between asters and sweetpeas, wild canaries in the lilac bush, and the guardian spirit of the garden. After she had read it, she sat, staring into space; and when Stella had gone she smoothed out the crumpled manuscript.

“I believe I will,” she said resolutely.

The Gardners' Call

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“Here is a letter with an Indian stamp for you, Aunt Jimsie,” said Phil.

“Here are three for Stella, and two for Pris, and a glorious fat one for me from Jo. There’s nothing for you, Anne, except a circular.”

Nobody noticed Anne’s flush as she took the thin letter Phil tossed her carelessly. But a few minutes later Phil looked up to see a transfigured Anne.

“Honey, what good thing has happened?”

“The Youth’s Friend has accepted a little sketch I sent them a fortnight ago,” said Anne, trying hard to speak as if she were accustomed to having sketches accepted every mail, but not quite succeeding.

“Anne Shirley! How glorious! What was it? When is it to be published? Did they pay you for it?”

“Yes; they’ve sent a check for ten dollars, and the editor writes that he would like to see more of my work. Dear man, he shall. It was an old sketch I found in my box. I rewrote it and sent it in — but I never really thought it could be accepted because it had no plot,” said Anne, recalling the bitter experience of Averil’s Atonement.

“What are you going to do with that ten dollars, Anne? Let’s all go up town and get drunk,” suggested Phil.

“I AM going to squander it in a wild soulless revel of some sort,” declared Anne gaily. “At all events it isn’t tainted money — like the check I got for that horrible Reliable Baking Powder story. I spent IT usefully for clothes and hated them every time I put them on.”

“Think of having a real live author at Patty’s Place,” said Priscilla.

“It’s a great responsibility,” said Aunt Jamesina solemnly.

“Indeed it is,” agreed Pris with equal solemnity. “Authors are kittle cattle. You never know when or how they will break out. Anne may make copy of us.”

“I meant that the ability to write for the Press was a great responsibility,” said Aunt Jamesina severely, “and I hope Anne realizes, it. My daughter used to write stories before she went to the foreign field, but now she has turned her attention to higher things. She used to say her motto was ‘Never write a line you would be ashamed to read at your own funeral.’ You’d better take that for yours, Anne, if you are going to embark in literature. Though, to be sure,” added Aunt Jamesina perplexedly, “Elizabeth always used to laugh when she said it. She always laughed so much that I don’t know how she ever came to decide on being a missionary. I’m thankful she did — I prayed that she might — but — I wish she hadn’t.”

Then Aunt Jamesina wondered why those giddy girls all laughed.

Anne’s eyes shone all that day; literary ambitions sprouted and budded in her brain; their exhilaration accompanied her to Jennie Cooper’s walking party, and not even the sight of Gilbert and Christine, walking just ahead of her and Roy, could quite subdue the sparkle of her starry hopes. Nevertheless, she was not so rapt from things of earth as to be unable to notice that Christine’s walk was decidedly ungraceful.

“But I suppose Gilbert looks only at her face. So like a man,” thought Anne scornfully.

“Shall you be home Saturday afternoon?” asked Roy.

“Yes.”

“My mother and sisters are coming to call on you,” said Roy quietly.

Something went over Anne which might be described as a thrill, but it was hardly a pleasant one. She had never met any of Roy’s family; she realized the significance of his statement; and it had, somehow, an irrevocableness about it that chilled her.

“I shall be glad to see them,” she said flatly; and then wondered if she really would be glad. She ought to be, of course. But would it not be something of an ordeal? Gossip had filtered to Anne regarding the light in which the Gardners viewed the “infatuation” of son and brother. Roy must have brought pressure to bear in the matter of this call. Anne knew she would be weighed in the balance. From the fact that they had consented to

call she understood that, willingly or unwillingly, they regarded her as a possible member of their clan.

“I shall just be myself. I shall not TRY to make a good impression,” thought Anne loftily. But she was wondering what dress she would better wear Saturday afternoon, and if the new style of high hairdressing would suit her better than the old; and the walking party was rather spoiled for her. By night she had decided that she would wear her brown chiffon on Saturday, but would do her hair low.

Friday afternoon none of the girls had classes at Redmond. Stella took the opportunity to write a paper for the Philomathic Society, and was sitting at the table in the corner of the livingroom with an untidy litter of notes and manuscript on the floor around her. Stella always vowed she never could write anything unless she threw each sheet down as she completed it. Anne, in her flannel blouse and serge skirt, with her hair rather blown from her windy walk home, was sitting squarely in the middle of the floor, teasing the Sarah-cat with a wishbone. Joseph and Rusty were both curled up in her lap. A warm plummy odor filled the whole house, for Priscilla was cooking in the kitchen. Presently she came in, enshrouded in a huge work-apron, with a smudge of flour on her nose, to show Aunt Jamesina the chocolate cake she had just iced.

At this auspicious moment the knocker sounded. Nobody paid any attention to it save Phil, who sprang up and opened it, expecting a boy with the hat she had bought that morning. On the doorstep stood Mrs. Gardner and her daughters.

Anne scrambled to her feet somehow, emptying two indignant cats out of her lap as she did so, and mechanically shifting her wishbone from her right hand to her left. Priscilla, who would have had to cross the room to reach the kitchen door, lost her head, wildly plunged the chocolate cake under a cushion on the inglenook sofa, and dashed upstairs. Stella began feverishly gathering up her manuscript. Only Aunt Jamesina and Phil remained normal. Thanks to them, everybody was soon sitting at ease, even Anne. Priscilla came down, apronless and smudgeless, Stella reduced

her corner to decency, and Phil saved the situation by a stream of ready small talk.

Mrs. Gardner was tall and thin and handsome, exquisitely gowned, cordial with a cordiality that seemed a trifle forced. Aline Gardner was a younger edition of her mother, lacking the cordiality. She endeavored to be nice, but succeeded only in being haughty and patronizing. Dorothy Gardner was slim and jolly and rather tomboyish. Anne knew she was Roy's favorite sister and warmed to her. She would have looked very much like Roy if she had had dreamy dark eyes instead of roguish hazel ones. Thanks to her and Phil, the call really went off very well, except for a slight sense of strain in the atmosphere and two rather untoward incidents. Rusty and Joseph, left to themselves, began a game of chase, and sprang madly into Mrs. Gardner's silken lap and out of it in their wild career. Mrs. Gardner lifted her lorgnette and gazed after their flying forms as if she had never seen cats before, and Anne, choking back slightly nervous laughter, apologized as best she could.

"You are fond of cats?" said Mrs. Gardner, with a slight intonation of tolerant wonder.

Anne, despite her affection for Rusty, was not especially fond of cats, but Mrs. Gardner's tone annoyed her. Inconsequently she remembered that Mrs. John Blythe was so fond of cats that she kept as many as her husband would allow.

"They ARE adorable animals, aren't they?" she said wickedly.

"I have never liked cats," said Mrs. Gardner remotely.

"I love them," said Dorothy. "They are so nice and selfish. Dogs are TOO good and unselfish. They make me feel uncomfortable. But cats are gloriously human."

"You have two delightful old china dogs there. May I look at them closely?" said Aline, crossing the room towards the fireplace and thereby becoming the unconscious cause of the other accident. Picking up Magog, she sat down on the cushion under which was secreted Priscilla's chocolate cake. Priscilla and Anne exchanged agonized glances but could do nothing.

The stately Aline continued to sit on the cushion and discuss china dogs until the time of departure.

Dorothy lingered behind a moment to squeeze Anne's hand and whisper impulsively.

"I KNOW you and I are going to be chums. Oh, Roy has told me all about you. I'm the only one of the family he tells things to, poor boy — nobody COULD confide in mamma and Aline, you know. What glorious times you girls must have here! Won't you let me come often and have a share in them?"

"Come as often as you like," Anne responded heartily, thankful that one of Roy's sisters was likable. She would never like Aline, so much was certain; and Aline would never like her, though Mrs. Gardner might be won. Altogether, Anne sighed with relief when the ordeal was over.

"Of all sad words of tongue or pen

The saddest are it might have been,"

quoted Priscilla tragically, lifting the cushion. "This cake is now what you might call a flat failure. And the cushion is likewise ruined. Never tell me that Friday isn't unlucky."

"People who send word they are coming on Saturday shouldn't come on Friday," said Aunt Jamesina.

"I fancy it was Roy's mistake," said Phil. "That boy isn't really responsible for what he says when he talks to Anne. Where IS Anne?"

Anne had gone upstairs. She felt oddly like crying. But she made herself laugh instead. Rusty and Joseph had been TOO awful! And Dorothy WAS a dear.

Full-Fledged B.A.'s

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“I wish I were dead, or that it were tomorrow night,” groaned Phil.

“If you live long enough both wishes will come true,” said Anne calmly.

“It’s easy for you to be serene. You’re at home in Philosophy. I’m not — and when I think of that horrible paper tomorrow I quail. If I should fail in it what would Jo say?”

“You won’t fail. How did you get on in Greek today?”

“I don’t know. Perhaps it was a good paper and perhaps it was bad enough to make Homer turn over in his grave. I’ve studied and mulled over notebooks until I’m incapable of forming an opinion of anything. How thankful little Phil will be when all this examining is over.”

“Examining? I never heard such a word.”

“Well, haven’t I as good a right to make a word as any one else?” demanded Phil.

“Words aren’t made — they grow,” said Anne.

“Never mind — I begin faintly to discern clear water ahead where no examination breakers loom. Girls, do you — can you realize that our Redmond Life is almost over?”

“I can’t,” said Anne, sorrowfully. “It seems just yesterday that Pris and I were alone in that crowd of Freshmen at Redmond. And now we are Seniors in our final examinations.”

“‘Potent, wise, and reverend Seniors,’” quoted Phil. “Do you suppose we really are any wiser than when we came to Redmond?”

“You don’t act as if you were by times,” said Aunt Jamesina severely.

“Oh, Aunt Jimsie, haven’t we been pretty good girls, take us by and large, these three winters you’ve mothered us?” pleaded Phil.

“You’ve been four of the dearest, sweetest, goodest girls that ever went together through college,” averred Aunt Jamesina, who never spoiled a

compliment by misplaced economy.

“But I mistrust you haven’t any too much sense yet. It’s not to be expected, of course. Experience teaches sense. You can’t learn it in a college course. You’ve been to college four years and I never was, but I know heaps more than you do, young ladies.”

“‘There are lots of things that never go by rule,
There’s a powerful pile o’ knowledge
That you never get at college,
There are heaps of things you never learn at school,’”
quoted Stella.

“Have you learned anything at Redmond except dead languages and geometry and such trash?” queried Aunt Jamesina.

“Oh, yes. I think we have, Aunty,” protested Anne.

“We’ve learned the truth of what Professor Woodleigh told us last Philomathic,” said Phil. “He said, ‘Humor is the spiciest condiment in the feast of existence. Laugh at your mistakes but learn from them, joke over your troubles but gather strength from them, make a jest of your difficulties but overcome them.’ Isn’t that worth learning, Aunt Jimsie?”

“Yes, it is, dearie. When you’ve learned to laugh at the things that should be laughed at, and not to laugh at those that shouldn’t, you’ve got wisdom and understanding.”

“What have you got out of your Redmond course, Anne?” murmured Priscilla aside.

“I think,” said Anne slowly, “that I really have learned to look upon each little hindrance as a jest and each great one as the foreshadowing of victory. Summing up, I think that is what Redmond has given me.”

“I shall have to fall back on another Professor Woodleigh quotation to express what it has done for me,” said Priscilla. “You remember that he said in his address, ‘There is so much in the world for us all if we only have the eyes to see it, and the heart to love it, and the hand to gather it to ourselves — so much in men and women, so much in art and literature, so much everywhere in which to delight, and for which to be thankful.’ I think Redmond has taught me that in some measure, Anne.”

“Judging from what you all, say” remarked Aunt Jamesina, “the sum and substance is that you can learn — if you’ve got natural gumption enough — in four years at college what it would take about twenty years of living to teach you. Well, that justifies higher education in my opinion. It’s a matter I was always dubious about before.”

“But what about people who haven’t natural gumption, Aunt Jimsie?”

“People who haven’t natural gumption never learn,” retorted Aunt Jamesina, “neither in college nor life. If they live to be a hundred they really don’t know anything more than when they were born. It’s their misfortune not their fault, poor souls. But those of us who have some gumption should duly thank the Lord for it.”

“Will you please define what gumption is, Aunt Jimsie?” asked Phil.

“No, I won’t, young woman. Any one who has gumption knows what it is, and any one who hasn’t can never know what it is. So there is no need of defining it.”

The busy days flew by and examinations were over. Anne took High Honors in English. Priscilla took Honors in Classics, and Phil in Mathematics. Stella obtained a good all-round showing. Then came Convocation.

“This is what I would once have called an epoch in my life,” said Anne, as she took Roy’s violets out of their box and gazed at them thoughtfully. She meant to carry them, of course, but her eyes wandered to another box on her table. It was filled with lilies-of-the-valley, as fresh and fragrant as those which bloomed in the Green Gables yard when June came to Avonlea. Gilbert Blythe’s card lay beside it.

Anne wondered why Gilbert should have sent her flowers for Convocation. She had seen very little of him during the past winter. He had come to Patty’s Place only one Friday evening since the Christmas holidays, and they rarely met elsewhere. She knew he was studying very hard, aiming at High Honors and the Cooper Prize, and he took little part in the social doings of Redmond. Anne’s own winter had been quite gay socially. She had seen a good deal of the Gardners; she and Dorothy were very intimate; college circles expected the announcement of her

engagement to Roy any day. Anne expected it herself. Yet just before she left Patty's Place for Convocation she flung Roy's violets aside and put Gilbert's lilies-of-the-valley in their place. She could not have told why she did it. Somehow, old Avonlea days and dreams and friendships seemed very close to her in this attainment of her long-cherished ambitions. She and Gilbert had once pictured out merrily the day on which they should be capped and gowned graduates in Arts. The wonderful day had come and Roy's violets had no place in it. Only her old friend's flowers seemed to belong to this fruition of old-blossoming hopes which he had once shared.

For years this day had beckoned and allured to her; but when it came the one single, keen, abiding memory it left with her was not that of the breathless moment when the stately president of Redmond gave her cap and diploma and hailed her B.A.; it was not of the flash in Gilbert's eyes when he saw her lilies, nor the puzzled pained glance Roy gave her as he passed her on the platform. It was not of Aline Gardner's condescending congratulations, or Dorothy's ardent, impulsive good wishes. It was of one strange, unaccountable pang that spoiled this long-expected day for her and left in it a certain faint but enduring flavor of bitterness.

The Arts graduates gave a graduation dance that night. When Anne dressed for it she tossed aside the pearl beads she usually wore and took from her trunk the small box that had come to Green Gables on Christmas day. In it was a thread-like gold chain with a tiny pink enamel heart as a pendant. On the accompanying card was written, "With all good wishes from your old chum, Gilbert." Anne, laughing over the memory the enamel heart conjured up the fatal day when Gilbert had called her "Carrots" and vainly tried to make his peace with a pink candy heart, had written him a nice little note of thanks. But she had never worn the trinket. Tonight she fastened it about her white throat with a dreamy smile.

She and Phil walked to Redmond together. Anne walked in silence; Phil chattered of many things. Suddenly she said,

"I heard today that Gilbert Blythe's engagement to Christine Stuart was to be announced as soon as Convocation was over. Did you hear anything of it?"

“No,” said Anne.

“I think it’s true,” said Phil lightly.

Anne did not speak. In the darkness she felt her face burning. She slipped her hand inside her collar and caught at the gold chain. One energetic twist and it gave way. Anne thrust the broken trinket into her pocket. Her hands were trembling and her eyes were smarting.

But she was the gayest of all the gay revellers that night, and told Gilbert unregretfully that her card was full when he came to ask her for a dance. Afterwards, when she sat with the girls before the dying embers at Patty’s Place, removing the spring chilliness from their satin skins, none chatted more blithely than she of the day’s events.

“Moody Spurgeon MacPherson called here tonight after you left,” said Aunt Jamesina, who had sat up to keep the fire on. “He didn’t know about the graduation dance. That boy ought to sleep with a rubber band around his head to train his ears not to stick out. I had a beau once who did that and it improved him immensely. It was I who suggested it to him and he took my advice, but he never forgave me for it.”

“Moody Spurgeon is a very serious young man,” yawned Priscilla. “He is concerned with graver matters than his ears. He is going to be a minister, you know.”

“Well, I suppose the Lord doesn’t regard the ears of a man,” said Aunt Jamesina gravely, dropping all further criticism of Moody Spurgeon. Aunt Jamesina had a proper respect for the cloth even in the case of an unfledged parson.

False Dawn

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“Just imagine — this night week I’ll be in Avonlea — delightful thought!” said Anne, bending over the box in which she was packing Mrs. Rachel Lynde’s quilts. “But just imagine — this night week I’ll be gone forever from Patty’s Place — horrible thought!”

“I wonder if the ghost of all our laughter will echo through the maiden dreams of Miss Patty and Miss Maria,” speculated Phil.

Miss Patty and Miss Maria were coming home, after having trotted over most of the habitable globe.

“We’ll be back the second week in May” wrote Miss Patty. “I expect Patty’s Place will seem rather small after the Hall of the Kings at Karnak, but I never did like big places to live in. And I’ll be glad enough to be home again. When you start traveling late in life you’re apt to do too much of it because you know you haven’t much time left, and it’s a thing that grows on you. I’m afraid Maria will never be contented again.”

“I shall leave here my fancies and dreams to bless the next comer,” said Anne, looking around the blue room wistfully — her pretty blue room where she had spent three such happy years. She had knelt at its window to pray and had bent from it to watch the sunset behind the pines. She had heard the autumn raindrops beating against it and had welcomed the spring robins at its sill. She wondered if old dreams could haunt rooms — if, when one left forever the room where she had joyed and suffered and laughed and wept, something of her, intangible and invisible, yet nonetheless real, did not remain behind like a voiceful memory.

“I think,” said Phil, “that a room where one dreams and grieves and rejoices and lives becomes inseparably connected with those processes and acquires a personality of its own. I am sure if I came into this room fifty years from now it would say ‘Anne, Anne’ to me. What nice times we’ve had here, honey! What chats and jokes and good chummy jamborees! Oh,

dear me! I'm to marry Jo in June and I know I will be rapturously happy. But just now I feel as if I wanted this lovely Redmond life to go on forever."

"I'm unreasonable enough just now to wish that, too," admitted Anne. "No matter what deeper joys may come to us later on we'll never again have just the same delightful, irresponsible existence we've had here. It's over forever, Phil."

"What are you going to do with Rusty?" asked Phil, as that privileged pussy padded into the room.

"I am going to take him home with me and Joseph and the Sarah-cat," announced Aunt Jamesina, following Rusty. "It would be a shame to separate those cats now that they have learned to live together. It's a hard lesson for cats and humans to learn."

"I'm sorry to part with Rusty," said Anne regretfully, "but it would be no use to take him to Green Gables. Marilla detests cats, and Davy would tease his life out. Besides, I don't suppose I'll be home very long. I've been offered the principalship of the Summerside High School."

"Are you going to accept it?" asked Phil.

"I — I haven't decided yet," answered Anne, with a confused flush.

Phil nodded understandingly. Naturally Anne's plans could not be settled until Roy had spoken. He would soon — there was no doubt of that. And there was no doubt that Anne would say "yes" when he said "Will you please?" Anne herself regarded the state of affairs with a seldom-ruffled complacency. She was deeply in love with Roy. True, it was not just what she had imagined love to be. But was anything in life, Anne asked herself wearily, like one's imagination of it? It was the old diamond disillusion of childhood repeated — the same disappointment she had felt when she had first seen the chill sparkle instead of the purple splendor she had anticipated. "That's not my idea of a diamond," she had said. But Roy was a dear fellow and they would be very happy together, even if some indefinable zest was missing out of life. When Roy came down that evening and asked Anne to walk in the park every one at Patty's Place

knew what he had come to say; and every one knew, or thought they knew, what Anne's answer would be.

"Anne is a very fortunate girl," said Aunt Jamesina.

"I suppose so," said Stella, shrugging her shoulders. "Roy is a nice fellow and all that. But there's really nothing in him."

"That sounds very like a jealous remark, Stella Maynard," said Aunt Jamesina rebukingly.

"It does — but I am not jealous," said Stella calmly. "I love Anne and I like Roy. Everybody says she is making a brilliant match, and even Mrs. Gardner thinks her charming now. It all sounds as if it were made in heaven, but I have my doubts. Make the most of that, Aunt Jamesina."

Roy asked Anne to marry him in the little pavilion on the harbor shore where they had talked on the rainy day of their first meeting. Anne thought it very romantic that he should have chosen that spot. And his proposal was as beautifully worded as if he had copied it, as one of Ruby Gillis' lovers had done, out of a Department of Courtship and Marriage. The whole effect was quite flawless. And it was also sincere. There was no doubt that Roy meant what he said. There was no false note to jar the symphony. Anne felt that she ought to be thrilling from head to foot. But she wasn't; she was horribly cool. When Roy paused for his answer she opened her lips to say her fateful yes. And then — she found herself trembling as if she were reeling back from a precipice. To her came one of those moments when we realize, as by a blinding flash of illumination, more than all our previous years have taught us. She pulled her hand from Roy's.

"Oh, I can't marry you — I can't — I can't," she cried, wildly.

Roy turned pale — and also looked rather foolish. He had — small blame to him — felt very sure.

"What do you mean?" he stammered.

"I mean that I can't marry you," repeated Anne desperately. "I thought I could — but I can't."

"Why can't you?" Roy asked more calmly.

"Because — I don't care enough for you."

A crimson streak came into Roy's face.

"So you've just been amusing yourself these two years?" he said slowly.

"No, no, I haven't," gasped poor Anne. Oh, how could she explain? She COULDN'T explain. There are some things that cannot be explained. "I did think I cared — truly I did — but I know now I don't."

"You have ruined my life," said Roy bitterly.

"Forgive me," pleaded Anne miserably, with hot cheeks and stinging eyes.

Roy turned away and stood for a few minutes looking out seaward. When he came back to Anne, he was very pale again.

"You can give me no hope?" he said.

Anne shook her head mutely.

"Then — goodbye," said Roy. "I can't understand it — I can't believe you are not the woman I've believed you to be. But reproaches are idle between us. You are the only woman I can ever love. I thank you for your friendship, at least. Goodbye, Anne."

"Goodbye," faltered Anne. When Roy had gone she sat for a long time in the pavilion, watching a white mist creeping subtly and remorselessly landward up the harbor. It was her hour of humiliation and self-contempt and shame. Their waves went over her. And yet, underneath it all, was a queer sense of recovered freedom.

She slipped into Patty's Place in the dusk and escaped to her room. But Phil was there on the window seat.

"Wait," said Anne, flushing to anticipate the scene. "Wait til you hear what I have to say. Phil, Roy asked me to marry him-and I refused."

"You — you REFUSED him?" said Phil blankly.

"Yes."

"Anne Shirley, are you in your senses?"

"I think so," said Anne wearily. "Oh, Phil, don't scold me. You don't understand."

"I certainly don't understand. You've encouraged Roy Gardner in every way for two years — and now you tell me you've refused him. Then

you've just been flirting scandalously with him. Anne, I couldn't have believed it of YOU."

"I WASN'T flirting with him — I honestly thought I cared up to the last minute — and then — well, I just knew I NEVER could marry him."

"I suppose," said Phil cruelly, "that you intended to marry him for his money, and then your better self rose up and prevented you."

"I DIDN'T. I never thought about his money. Oh, I can't explain it to you any more than I could to him."

"Well, I certainly think you have treated Roy shamefully," said Phil in exasperation. "He's handsome and clever and rich and good. What more do you want?"

"I want some one who BELONGS in my life. He doesn't. I was swept off my feet at first by his good looks and knack of paying romantic compliments; and later on I thought I MUST be in love because he was my dark-eyed ideal."

"I am bad enough for not knowing my own mind, but you are worse," said Phil.

"*I DO* know my own mind," protested Anne. "The trouble is, my mind changes and then I have to get acquainted with it all over again."

"Well, I suppose there is no use in saying anything to you."

"There is no need, Phil. I'm in the dust. This has spoiled everything backwards. I can never think of Redmond days without recalling the humiliation of this evening. Roy despises me — and you despise me — and I despise myself."

"You poor darling," said Phil, melting. "Just come here and let me comfort you. I've no right to scold you. I'd have married Alec or Alonzo if I hadn't met Jo. Oh, Anne, things are so mixed-up in real life. They aren't clear-cut and trimmed off, as they are in novels."

"I hope that NO one will ever again ask me to marry him as long as I live," sobbed poor Anne, devoutly believing that she meant it.

Deals With Weddings

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Anne felt that life partook of the nature of an anticlimax during the first few weeks after her return to Green Gables. She missed the merry comradeship of Patty's Place. She had dreamed some brilliant dreams during the past winter and now they lay in the dust around her. In her present mood of self-disgust, she could not immediately begin dreaming again. And she discovered that, while solitude with dreams is glorious, solitude without them has few charms.

She had not seen Roy again after their painful parting in the park pavilion; but Dorothy came to see her before she left Kingsport.

"I'm awfully sorry you won't marry Roy," she said. "I did want you for a sister. But you are quite right. He would bore you to death. I love him, and he is a dear sweet boy, but really he isn't a bit interesting. He looks as if he ought to be, but he isn't."

"This won't spoil OUR friendship, will it, Dorothy?" Anne had asked wistfully.

"No, indeed. You're too good to lose. If I can't have you for a sister I mean to keep you as a chum anyway. And don't fret over Roy. He is feeling terribly just now — I have to listen to his outpourings every day — but he'll get over it. He always does."

"Oh — ALWAYS?" said Anne with a slight change of voice. "So he has 'got over it' before?"

"Dear me, yes," said Dorothy frankly. "Twice before. And he raved to me just the same both times. Not that the others actually refused him — they simply announced their engagements to some one else. Of course, when he met you he vowed to me that he had never really loved before — that the previous affairs had been merely boyish fancies. But I don't think you need worry."

Anne decided not to worry. Her feelings were a mixture of relief and resentment. Roy had certainly told her she was the only one he had ever loved. No doubt he believed it. But it was a comfort to feel that she had not, in all likelihood, ruined his life. There were other goddesses, and Roy, according to Dorothy, must needs be worshipping at some shrine. Nevertheless, life was stripped of several more illusions, and Anne began to think drearily that it seemed rather bare.

She came down from the porch gable on the evening of her return with a sorrowful face.

“What has happened to the old Snow Queen, Marilla?”

“Oh, I knew you’d feel bad over that,” said Marilla. “I felt bad myself. That tree was there ever since I was a young girl. It blew down in the big gale we had in March. It was rotten at the core.”

“I’ll miss it so,” grieved Anne. “The porch gable doesn’t seem the same room without it. I’ll never look from its window again without a sense of loss. And oh, I never came home to Green Gables before that Diana wasn’t here to welcome me.”

“Diana has something else to think of just now,” said Mrs. Lynde significantly.

“Well, tell me all the Avonlea news,” said Anne, sitting down on the porch steps, where the evening sunshine fell over her hair in a fine golden rain.

“There isn’t much news except what we’ve wrote you,” said Mrs. Lynde. “I suppose you haven’t heard that Simon Fletcher broke his leg last week. It’s a great thing for his family. They’re getting a hundred things done that they’ve always wanted to do but couldn’t as long as he was about, the old crank.”

“He came of an aggravating family,” remarked Marilla.

“Aggravating? Well, rather! His mother used to get up in prayer-meeting and tell all her children’s shortcomings and ask prayers for them. ‘Course it made them mad, and worse than ever.”

“You haven’t told Anne the news about Jane,” suggested Marilla.

“Oh, Jane,” sniffed Mrs. Lynde. “Well,” she conceded grudgingly, “Jane Andrews is home from the West — came last week — and she’s going to be married to a Winnipeg millionaire. You may be sure Mrs. Harmon lost no time in telling it far and wide.”

“Dear old Jane — I’m so glad,” said Anne heartily. “She deserves the good things of life.”

“Oh, I ain’t saying anything against Jane. She’s a nice enough girl. But she isn’t in the millionaire class, and you’ll find there’s not much to recommend that man but his money, that’s what. Mrs. Harmon says he’s an Englishman who has made money in mines but *I* believe he’ll turn out to be a Yankee. He certainly must have money, for he has just showered Jane with jewelry. Her engagement ring is a diamond cluster so big that it looks like a plaster on Jane’s fat paw.”

Mrs. Lynde could not keep some bitterness out of her tone. Here was Jane Andrews, that plain little plodder, engaged to a millionaire, while Anne, it seemed, was not yet bespoken by any one, rich or poor. And Mrs. Harmon Andrews did brag insufferably.

“What has Gilbert Blythe been doing to at college?” asked Marilla. “I saw him when he came home last week, and he is so pale and thin I hardly knew him.”

“He studied very hard last winter,” said Anne. “You know he took High Honors in Classics and the Cooper Prize. It hasn’t been taken for five years! So I think he’s rather run down. We’re all a little tired.”

“Anyhow, you’re a B.A. and Jane Andrews isn’t and never will be,” said Mrs. Lynde, with gloomy satisfaction.

A few evenings later Anne went down to see Jane, but the latter was away in Charlottetown—“getting sewing done,” Mrs. Harmon informed Anne proudly. “Of course an Avonlea dressmaker wouldn’t do for Jane under the circumstances.”

“I’ve heard something very nice about Jane,” said Anne.

“Yes, Jane has done pretty well, even if she isn’t a B.A.,” said Mrs. Harmon, with a slight toss of her head. “Mr. Inglis is worth millions, and they’re going to Europe on their wedding tour. When they come back

they'll live in a perfect mansion of marble in Winnipeg. Jane has only one trouble — she can cook so well and her husband won't let her cook. He is so rich he hires his cooking done. They're going to keep a cook and two other maids and a coachman and a man-of-all-work. But what about YOU, Anne? I don't hear anything of your being married, after all your college-going."

"Oh," laughed Anne, "I am going to be an old maid. I really can't find any one to suit me." It was rather wicked of her. She deliberately meant to remind Mrs. Andrews that if she became an old maid it was not because she had not had at least one chance of marriage. But Mrs. Harmon took swift revenge.

"Well, the over-particular girls generally get left, I notice. And what's this I hear about Gilbert Blythe being engaged to a Miss Stuart? Charlie Sloane tells me she is perfectly beautiful. Is it true?"

"I don't know if it is true that he is engaged to Miss Stuart," replied Anne, with Spartan composure, "but it is certainly true that she is very lovely."

"I once thought you and Gilbert would have made a match of it," said Mrs. Harmon. "If you don't take care, Anne, all of your beaux will slip through your fingers."

Anne decided not to continue her duel with Mrs. Harmon. You could not fence with an antagonist who met rapier thrust with blow of battle axe.

"Since Jane is away," she said, rising haughtily, "I don't think I can stay longer this morning. I'll come down when she comes home."

"Do," said Mrs. Harmon effusively. "Jane isn't a bit proud. She just means to associate with her old friends the same as ever. She'll be real glad to see you."

Jane's millionaire arrived the last of May and carried her off in a blaze of splendor. Mrs. Lynde was spitefully gratified to find that Mr. Inglis was every day of forty, and short and thin and grayish. Mrs. Lynde did not spare him in her enumeration of his shortcomings, you may be sure.

"It will take all his gold to gild a pill like him, that's what," said Mrs. Rachel solemnly.

“He looks kind and goodhearted,” said Anne loyally, “and I’m sure he thinks the world of Jane.”

“Humph!” said Mrs. Rachel.

Phil Gordon was married the next week and Anne went over to Bolingbroke to be her bridesmaid. Phil made a dainty fairy of a bride, and the Rev. Jo was so radiant in his happiness that nobody thought him plain.

“We’re going for a lovers’ saunter through the land of Evangeline,” said Phil, “and then we’ll settle down on Patterson Street. Mother thinks it is terrible — she thinks Jo might at least take a church in a decent place. But the wilderness of the Patterson slums will blossom like the rose for me if Jo is there. Oh, Anne, I’m so happy my heart aches with it.”

Anne was always glad in the happiness of her friends; but it is sometimes a little lonely to be surrounded everywhere by a happiness that is not your own. And it was just the same when she went back to Avonlea. This time it was Diana who was bathed in the wonderful glory that comes to a woman when her firstborn is laid beside her. Anne looked at the white young mother with a certain awe that had never entered into her feelings for Diana before. Could this pale woman with the rapture in her eyes be the little black-curved, rosy-cheeked Diana she had played with in vanished schooldays? It gave her a queer desolate feeling that she herself somehow belonged only in those past years and had no business in the present at all.

“Isn’t he perfectly beautiful?” said Diana proudly.

The little fat fellow was absurdly like Fred — just as round, just as red. Anne really could not say conscientiously that she thought him beautiful, but she vowed sincerely that he was sweet and kissable and altogether delightful.

“Before he came I wanted a girl, so that I could call her ANNE,” said Diana. “But now that little Fred is here I wouldn’t exchange him for a million girls. He just COULDN’T have been anything but his own precious self.”

“Every little baby is the sweetest and the best,” quoted Mrs. Allan gaily. “If little Anne HAD come you’d have felt just the same about her.”

Mrs. Allan was visiting in Avonlea, for the first time since leaving it. She was as gay and sweet and sympathetic as ever. Her old girl friends had welcomed her back rapturously. The reigning minister's wife was an estimable lady, but she was not exactly a kindred spirit.

"I can hardly wait till he gets old enough to talk," sighed Diana. "I just long to hear him say 'mother.' And oh, I'm determined that his first memory of me shall be a nice one. The first memory I have of my mother is of her slapping me for something I had done. I am sure I deserved it, and mother was always a good mother and I love her dearly. But I do wish my first memory of her was nicer."

"I have just one memory of my mother and it is the sweetest of all my memories," said Mrs. Allan. "I was five years old, and I had been allowed to go to school one day with my two older sisters. When school came out my sisters went home in different groups, each supposing I was with the other. Instead I had run off with a little girl I had played with at recess. We went to her home, which was near the school, and began making mud pies. We were having a glorious time when my older sister arrived, breathless and angry.

"'You naughty girl' she cried, snatching my reluctant hand and dragging me along with her. 'Come home this minute. Oh, you're going to catch it! Mother is awful cross. She is going to give you a good whipping.'

"I had never been whipped. Dread and terror filled my poor little heart. I have never been so miserable in my life as I was on that walk home. I had not meant to be naughty. Phemy Cameron had asked me to go home with her and I had not known it was wrong to go. And now I was to be whipped for it. When we got home my sister dragged me into the kitchen where mother was sitting by the fire in the twilight. My poor wee legs were trembling so that I could hardly stand. And mother — mother just took me up in her arms, without one word of rebuke or harshness, kissed me and held me close to her heart. 'I was so frightened you were lost, darling,' she said tenderly. I could see the love shining in her eyes as she looked down on me. She never scolded or reproached me for what I had done — only told me I must never go away again without asking

permission. She died very soon afterwards. That is the only memory I have of her. Isn't it a beautiful one?"

Anne felt lonelier than ever as she walked home, going by way of the Birch Path and Willowmere. She had not walked that way for many moons. It was a darkly-purple bloomy night. The air was heavy with blossom fragrance — almost too heavy. The cloyed senses recoiled from it as from an overfull cup. The birches of the path had grown from the fairy saplings of old to big trees. Everything had changed. Anne felt that she would be glad when the summer was over and she was away at work again. Perhaps life would not seem so empty then.

“I've tried the world — it wears no more
The coloring of romance it wore,”

sighed Anne — and was straightway much comforted by the romance in the idea of the world being denuded of romance!

A Book of Revelation

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The Irvings came back to Echo Lodge for the summer, and Anne spent a happy three weeks there in July. Miss Lavendar had not changed; Charlotta the Fourth was a very grownup young lady now, but still adored Anne sincerely.

“When all’s said and done, Miss Shirley, ma’am, I haven’t seen any one in Boston that’s equal to you,” she said frankly.

Paul was almost grown up, too. He was sixteen, his chestnut curls had given place to close-cropped brown locks, and he was more interested in football than fairies. But the bond between him and his old teacher still held. Kindred spirits alone do not change with changing years.

It was a wet, bleak, cruel evening in July when Anne came back to Green Gables. One of the fierce summer storms which sometimes sweep over the gulf was ravaging the sea. As Anne came in the first raindrops dashed against the panes.

“Was that Paul who brought you home?” asked Marilla. “Why didn’t you make him stay all night. It’s going to be a wild evening.”

“He’ll reach Echo Lodge before the rain gets very heavy, I think. Anyway, he wanted to go back tonight. Well, I’ve had a splendid visit, but I’m glad to see you dear folks again. ‘East, west, hame’s best.’ Davy, have you been growing again lately?”

“I’ve growed a whole inch since you left,” said Davy proudly. “I’m as tall as Milty Boulter now. Ain’t I glad. He’ll have to stop crowing about being bigger. Say, Anne, did you know that Gilbert Blythe is dying?” Anne stood quite silent and motionless, looking at Davy. Her face had gone so white that Marilla thought she was going to faint.

“Davy, hold your tongue,” said Mrs. Rachel angrily. “Anne, don’t look like that — DON’T LOOK LIKE THAT! We didn’t mean to tell you so suddenly.”

“Is — it — true?” asked Anne in a voice that was not hers.

“Gilbert is very ill,” said Mrs. Lynde gravely. “He took down with typhoid fever just after you left for Echo Lodge. Did you never hear of it?”

“No,” said that unknown voice.

“It was a very bad case from the start. The doctor said he’d been terribly run down. They’ve a trained nurse and everything’s been done. DON’T look like that, Anne. While there’s life there’s hope.”

“Mr. Harrison was here this evening and he said they had no hope of him,” reiterated Davy.

Marilla, looking old and worn and tired, got up and marched Davy grimly out of the kitchen.

“Oh, DON’T look so, dear,” said Mrs. Rachel, putting her kind old arms about the pallid girl. “I haven’t given up hope, indeed I haven’t. He’s got the Blythe constitution in his favor, that’s what.”

Anne gently put Mrs. Lynde’s arms away from her, walked blindly across the kitchen, through the hall, up the stairs to her old room. At its window she knelt down, staring out unseeingly. It was very dark. The rain was beating down over the shivering fields. The Haunted Woods was full of the groans of mighty trees wrung in the tempest, and the air throbbed with the thunderous crash of billows on the distant shore. And Gilbert was dying!

There is a book of Revelation in every one’s life, as there is in the Bible. Anne read hers that bitter night, as she kept her agonized vigil through the hours of storm and darkness. She loved Gilbert — had always loved him! She knew that now. She knew that she could no more cast him out of her life without agony than she could have cut off her right hand and cast it from her. And the knowledge had come too late — too late even for the bitter solace of being with him at the last. If she had not been so blind — so foolish — she would have had the right to go to him now. But he would never know that she loved him — he would go away from this life thinking that she did not care. Oh, the black years of emptiness stretching before her! She could not live through them — she could not! She cowered down by her window and wished, for the first time in her gay young life,

that she could die, too. If Gilbert went away from her, without one word or sign or message, she could not live. Nothing was of any value without him. She belonged to him and he to her. In her hour of supreme agony she had no doubt of that. He did not love Christine Stuart — never had loved Christine Stuart. Oh, what a fool she had been not to realize what the bond was that had held her to Gilbert — to think that the flattered fancy she had felt for Roy Gardner had been love. And now she must pay for her folly as for a crime.

Mrs. Lynde and Marilla crept to her door before they went to bed, shook their heads doubtfully at each other over the silence, and went away. The storm raged all night, but when the dawn came it was spent. Anne saw a fairy fringe of light on the skirts of darkness. Soon the eastern hilltops had a fire-shot ruby rim. The clouds rolled themselves away into great, soft, white masses on the horizon; the sky gleamed blue and silvery. A hush fell over the world.

Anne rose from her knees and crept downstairs. The freshness of the rain-wind blew against her white face as she went out into the yard, and cooled her dry, burning eyes. A merry rollicking whistle was lilting up the lane. A moment later Pacifique Buote came in sight.

Anne's physical strength suddenly failed her. If she had not clutched at a low willow bough she would have fallen. Pacifique was George Fletcher's hired man, and George Fletcher lived next door to the Blythes. Mrs. Fletcher was Gilbert's aunt. Pacifique would know if — if — Pacifique would know what there was to be known.

Pacifique strode sturdily on along the red lane, whistling. He did not see Anne. She made three futile attempts to call him. He was almost past before she succeeded in making her quivering lips call, "Pacifique!"

Pacifique turned with a grin and a cheerful good morning.

"Pacifique," said Anne faintly, "did you come from George Fletcher's this morning?"

"Sure," said Pacifique amiably. "I got de word las' night dat my fader, he was seeck. It was so stormy dat I couldn't go den, so I start vair early dis mornin'. I'm goin' troo de woods for short cut."

“Did you hear how Gilbert Blythe was this morning?” Anne’s desperation drove her to the question. Even the worst would be more endurable than this hideous suspense.

“He’s better,” said Pacifique. “He got de turn las’ night. De doctor say he’ll be all right now dis soon while. Had close shave, dough! Dat boy, he jus’ keel himself at college. Well, I mus’ hurry. De old man, he’ll be in hurry to see me.”

Pacifique resumed his walk and his whistle. Anne gazed after him with eyes where joy was driving out the strained anguish of the night. He was a very lank, very ragged, very homely youth. But in her sight he was as beautiful as those who bring good tidings on the mountains. Never, as long as she lived, would Anne see Pacifique’s brown, round, black-eyed face without a warm remembrance of the moment when he had given to her the oil of joy for mourning.

Long after Pacifique’s gay whistle had faded into the phantom of music and then into silence far up under the maples of Lover’s Lane Anne stood under the willows, tasting the poignant sweetness of life when some great dread has been removed from it. The morning was a cup filled with mist and glamor. In the corner near her was a rich surprise of new-blown, crystal-dewed roses. The trills and trickles of song from the birds in the big tree above her seemed in perfect accord with her mood. A sentence from a very old, very true, very wonderful Book came to her lips,

“Weeping may endure for a night but joy cometh in the morning.”

Love Takes Up the Glass of Time

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“I’ve come up to ask you to go for one of our old-time rambles through September woods and ‘over hills where spices grow,’ this afternoon,” said Gilbert, coming suddenly around the porch corner. “Suppose we visit Hester Gray’s garden.”

Anne, sitting on the stone step with her lap full of a pale, filmy, green stuff, looked up rather blankly.

“Oh, I wish I could,” she said slowly, “but I really can’t, Gilbert. I’m going to Alice Penhallow’s wedding this evening, you know. I’ve got to do something to this dress, and by the time it’s finished I’ll have to get ready. I’m so sorry. I’d love to go.”

“Well, can you go tomorrow afternoon, then?” asked Gilbert, apparently not much disappointed.

“Yes, I think so.”

“In that case I shall hie me home at once to do something I should otherwise have to do tomorrow. So Alice Penhallow is to be married tonight. Three weddings for you in one summer, Anne — Phil’s, Alice’s, and Jane’s. I’ll never forgive Jane for not inviting me to her wedding.”

“You really can’t blame her when you think of the tremendous Andrews connection who had to be invited. The house could hardly hold them all. I was only bidden by grace of being Jane’s old chum — at least on Jane’s part. I think Mrs. Harmon’s motive for inviting me was to let me see Jane’s surpassing gorgeousness.”

“Is it true that she wore so many diamonds that you couldn’t tell where the diamonds left off and Jane began?”

Anne laughed.

“She certainly wore a good many. What with all the diamonds and white satin and tulle and lace and roses and orange blossoms, prim little

Jane was almost lost to sight. But she was VERY happy, and so was Mr. Inglis — and so was Mrs. Harmon.”

“Is that the dress you’re going to wear tonight?” asked Gilbert, looking down at the fluffs and frills.

“Yes. Isn’t it pretty? And I shall wear starflowers in my hair. The Haunted Wood is full of them this summer.”

Gilbert had a sudden vision of Anne, arrayed in a frilly green gown, with the virginal curves of arms and throat slipping out of it, and white stars shining against the coils of her ruddy hair. The vision made him catch his breath. But he turned lightly away.

“Well, I’ll be up tomorrow. Hope you’ll have a nice time tonight.”

Anne looked after him as he strode away, and sighed. Gilbert was friendly — very friendly — far too friendly. He had come quite often to Green Gables after his recovery, and something of their old comradeship had returned. But Anne no longer found it satisfying. The rose of love made the blossom of friendship pale and scentless by contrast. And Anne had again begun to doubt if Gilbert now felt anything for her but friendship. In the common light of common day her radiant certainty of that rapt morning had faded. She was haunted by a miserable fear that her mistake could never be rectified. It was quite likely that it was Christine whom Gilbert loved after all. Perhaps he was even engaged to her. Anne tried to put all unsettling hopes out of her heart, and reconcile herself to a future where work and ambition must take the place of love. She could do good, if not noble, work as a teacher; and the success her little sketches were beginning to meet with in certain editorial sanctums augured well for her budding literary dreams. But — but — Anne picked up her green dress and sighed again.

When Gilbert came the next afternoon he found Anne waiting for him, fresh as the dawn and fair as a star, after all the gaiety of the preceding night. She wore a green dress — not the one she had worn to the wedding, but an old one which Gilbert had told her at a Redmond reception he liked especially. It was just the shade of green that brought out the rich tints of her hair, and the starry gray of her eyes and the iris-like delicacy of her

skin. Gilbert, glancing at her sideways as they walked along a shadowy woodpath, thought she had never looked so lovely. Anne, glancing sideways at Gilbert, now and then, thought how much older he looked since his illness. It was as if he had put boyhood behind him forever.

The day was beautiful and the way was beautiful. Anne was almost sorry when they reached Hester Gray's garden, and sat down on the old bench. But it was beautiful there, too — as beautiful as it had been on the faraway day of the Golden Picnic, when Diana and Jane and Priscilla and she had found it. Then it had been lovely with narcissus and violets; now golden rod had kindled its fairy torches in the corners and asters dotted it blue. The call of the brook came up through the woods from the valley of birches with all its old allurements; the mellow air was full of the purr of the sea; beyond were fields rimmed by fences bleached silvery gray in the suns of many summers, and long hills scarfed with the shadows of autumnal clouds; with the blowing of the west wind old dreams returned.

"I think," said Anne softly, "that 'the land where dreams come true' is in the blue haze yonder, over that little valley."

"Have you any unfulfilled dreams, Anne?" asked Gilbert.

Something in his tone — something she had not heard since that miserable evening in the orchard at Patty's Place — made Anne's heart beat wildly. But she made answer lightly.

"Of course. Everybody has. It wouldn't do for us to have all our dreams fulfilled. We would be as good as dead if we had nothing left to dream about. What a delicious aroma that low-descending sun is extracting from the asters and ferns. I wish we could see perfumes as well as smell them. I'm sure they would be very beautiful."

Gilbert was not to be thus sidetracked.

"I have a dream," he said slowly. "I persist in dreaming it, although it has often seemed to me that it could never come true. I dream of a home with a hearth-fire in it, a cat and dog, the footsteps of friends — and YOU!"

Anne wanted to speak but she could find no words. Happiness was breaking over her like a wave. It almost frightened her.

“I asked you a question over two years ago, Anne. If I ask it again today will you give me a different answer?”

Still Anne could not speak. But she lifted her eyes, shining with all the love-rapture of countless generations, and looked into his for a moment. He wanted no other answer.

They lingered in the old garden until twilight, sweet as dusk in Eden must have been, crept over it. There was so much to talk over and recall — things said and done and heard and thought and felt and misunderstood.

“I thought you loved Christine Stuart,” Anne told him, as reproachfully as if she had not given him every reason to suppose that she loved Roy Gardner.

Gilbert laughed boyishly.

“Christine was engaged to somebody in her home town. I knew it and she knew I knew it. When her brother graduated he told me his sister was coming to Kingsport the next winter to take music, and asked me if I would look after her a bit, as she knew no one and would be very lonely. So I did. And then I liked Christine for her own sake. She is one of the nicest girls I’ve ever known. I knew college gossip credited us with being in love with each other. I didn’t care. Nothing mattered much to me for a time there, after you told me you could never love me, Anne. There was nobody else — there never could be anybody else for me but you. I’ve loved you ever since that day you broke your slate over my head in school.”

“I don’t see how you could keep on loving me when I was such a little fool,” said Anne.

“Well, I tried to stop,” said Gilbert frankly, “not because I thought you what you call yourself, but because I felt sure there was no chance for me after Gardner came on the scene. But I couldn’t — and I can’t tell you, either, what it’s meant to me these two years to believe you were going to marry him, and be told every week by some busybody that your engagement was on the point of being announced. I believed it until one blessed day when I was sitting up after the fever. I got a letter from Phil Gordon — Phil Blake, rather — in which she told me there was really

nothing between you and Roy, and advised me to ‘try again.’ Well, the doctor was amazed at my rapid recovery after that.”

Anne laughed — then shivered.

“I can never forget the night I thought you were dying, Gilbert. Oh, I knew — I KNEW then — and I thought it was too late.”

“But it wasn’t, sweetheart. Oh, Anne, this makes up for everything, doesn’t it? Let’s resolve to keep this day sacred to perfect beauty all our lives for the gift it has given us.”

“It’s the birthday of our happiness,” said Anne softly. “I’ve always loved this old garden of Hester Gray’s, and now it will be dearer than ever.”

“But I’ll have to ask you to wait a long time, Anne,” said Gilbert sadly. “It will be three years before I’ll finish my medical course. And even then there will be no diamond sunbursts and marble halls.”

Anne laughed.

“I don’t want sunbursts and marble halls. I just want YOU. You see I’m quite as shameless as Phil about it. Sunbursts and marble halls may be all very well, but there is more ‘scope for imagination’ without them. And as for the waiting, that doesn’t matter. We’ll just be happy, waiting and working for each other — and dreaming. Oh, dreams will be very sweet now.”

Gilbert drew her close to him and kissed her. Then they walked home together in the dusk, crowned king and queen in the bridal realm of love, along winding paths fringed with the sweetest flowers that ever bloomed, and over haunted meadows where winds of hope and memory blew.

ANNE OF WINDY POPLARS

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The First Year

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Chapter I

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(Letter from Anne Shirley, B.A., Principal of Summerside High School, to Gilbert Blythe, medical student at Redmond College, Kingsport.)

“Windy Poplars,
“Spook’s Lane,
“S’side, P. E. I.,
“Monday, September 12th.

“DEAREST:

“Isn’t that an address! Did you ever hear anything so delicious? Windy Poplars is the name of my new home and I love it. I also love Spook’s Lane, which has no legal existence. It should be Trent Street but it is never called Trent Street except on the rare occasions when it is mentioned in the *Weekly Courier* ... and then people look at each other and say, ‘Where on earth is that?’ Spook’s Lane it is ... although for what reason I cannot tell you. I have already asked Rebecca Dew about it, but all she can say is that it has always been Spook’s Lane and there was some old yarn years ago of its being haunted. But *she* has never seen anything worse-looking than herself in it.

“However, I mustn’t get ahead of my story. You don’t know Rebecca Dew yet. But you will, oh, yes, you will. I foresee that Rebecca Dew will figure largely in my future correspondence.

“It’s dusk, dearest. (In passing, isn’t ‘dusk’ a lovely word? I like it better than twilight. It sounds so velvety and shadowy and ... and ... *dusky*.) In daylight I belong to the world ... in the night to sleep and eternity. But in the dusk I’m free from both and belong only to myself ... and *you*. So I’m going to keep this hour sacred to writing to you. Though *this* won’t be a love-letter. I have a scratchy pen and I can’t write love-letters with a scratchy pen ... or a sharp pen ... or a stub pen. So you’ll

only get *that* kind of letter from me when I have exactly the right kind of pen. Meanwhile, I'll tell you about my new domicile and its inhabitants. Gilbert, they're such *dears*.

"I came up yesterday to look for a boardinghouse. Mrs. Rachel Lynde came with me, ostensibly to do some shopping but really, I know, to choose a boardinghouse for me. In spite of my Arts course and my B.A., Mrs. Lynde still thinks I am an inexperienced young thing who must be guided and directed and overseen.

"We came by train and oh, Gilbert, I had the funniest adventure. You know I've always been one to whom adventures came unsought. I just seem to attract them, as it were.

"It happened just as the train was coming to a stop at the station. I got up and, stooping to pick up Mrs. Lynde's suitcase (she was planning to spend Sunday with a friend in Summerside), I leaned my knuckles heavily on what I thought was the shiny arm of a seat. In a second I received a violent crack across them that nearly made me howl. Gilbert, what I had taken for the arm of a seat was a man's bald head. He was glaring fiercely at me and had evidently just waked up. I apologized abjectly and got off the train as quickly as possible. The last I saw of him he was still glaring. Mrs. Lynde was horrified and my knuckles are sore yet!

"I did not expect to have much trouble in finding a boardinghouse, for a certain Mrs. Tom Pringle has been boarding the various principals of the High School for the last fifteen years. But, for some unknown reason, she has grown suddenly tired of 'being bothered' and wouldn't take me. Several other desirable places had some polite excuse. Several other places *weren't* desirable. We wandered about the town the whole afternoon and got hot and tired and blue and headachy ... at least *I* did. I was ready to give up in despair ... and then, Spook's Lane just happened!

"We had dropped in to see Mrs. Braddock, an old crony of Mrs. Lynde's. And Mrs. Braddock said she thought 'the widows' might take me in.

"I've heard they want a boarder to pay Rebecca Dew's wages. They can't afford to keep Rebecca any longer unless a little extra money comes

in. And if Rebecca goes, *who* is to milk that old red cow?’

“Mrs. Braddock fixed me with a stern eye as if she thought *I* ought to milk the red cow but wouldn’t believe me on oath if I claimed I could.

“‘What widows are you talking about?’ demanded Mrs. Lynde.

“‘Why, Aunt Kate and Aunt Chatty,’ said Mrs. Braddock, as if everybody, even an ignorant B.A., ought to know that. ‘Aunt Kate is Mrs. Amasa MacComber (she’s the Captain’s widow) and Aunt Chatty is Mrs. Lincoln MacLean, just a plain widow. But every one calls them “aunt.” They live at the end of Spook’s Lane.’

“Spook’s Lane! That settled it. I knew I just had to board with the widows.

“‘Let’s go and see them at once,’ I implored Mrs. Lynde. It seemed to me if we lost a moment Spook’s Lane would vanish back into fairyland.

“‘You can see them, but it’ll be Rebecca who’ll really decide whether they’ll take you or not. Rebecca Dew rules the roost at Windy Poplars, I can tell you.’

“Windy Poplars! It couldn’t be true ... no it couldn’t. I must be dreaming. And Mrs. Rachel Lynde was actually saying it was a funny name for a place.

“‘Oh, Captain MacComber called it that. It was his house, you know. He planted all the poplars round it and was mighty proud of it, though he was seldom home and never stayed long. Aunt Kate used to say that was inconvenient, but we never got it figured out whether she meant his staying such a little time or his coming back at all. Well, Miss Shirley, I hope you’ll get there. Rebecca Dew’s a good cook and a genius with cold potatoes. If she takes a notion to you you’ll be in clover. If she doesn’t ... well, she won’t, that’s all. I hear there’s a new banker in town looking for a boardinghouse and she may prefer him. It’s kind of funny Mrs. Tom Pringle wouldn’t take you. Summerside is full of Pringles and half Pringles. They’re called “The Royal Family” and you’ll have to get on their good side, Miss Shirley, or you’ll never get along in Summerside High. They’ve always ruled the roost hereabouts ... there’s a street called after old Captain Abraham Pringle. There’s a regular clan of them, but the

two old ladies at Maplehurst boss the tribe. I did hear they were down on you.'

"‘Why should they be?’ I exclaimed. ‘I’m a total stranger to them.’

"‘Well, a third cousin of theirs applied for the Principalship and they all think he should have got it. When your application was accepted the whole kit and boodle of them threw back their heads and howled. Well, people are like that. We have to take them as we find them, you know. They’ll be as smooth as cream to you but they’ll work against you every time. I’m not wanting to discourage you but forewarned is forearmed. I hope you’ll make good just to spite them. If the widows take you, you won’t mind eating with Rebecca Dew, will you? She isn’t a *servant*, you know. She’s a far-off cousin of the Captain’s. She doesn’t come to the table when there’s company ... she knows her place *then* ... but if you were boarding there she wouldn’t consider you company, of course.’

"I assured the anxious Mrs. Braddock that I’d love eating with Rebecca Dew and dragged Mrs. Lynde away. I *must* get ahead of the banker.

"Mrs. Braddock followed us to the door.

"‘And don’t hurt Aunt Chatty’s feelings, will you? Her feelings are so easily hurt. She’s so sensitive, poor thing. You see, she hasn’t *quite* as much money as Aunt Kate ... though Aunt Kate hasn’t any too much either. And then Aunt Kate liked her husband real well ... her own husband, I mean ... but Aunt Chatty didn’t ... didn’t like hers, I mean. Small wonder! Lincoln MacLean was an old crank ... but she thinks people hold it against her. It’s lucky this is Saturday. If it was Friday Aunt Chatty wouldn’t even consider taking you. You’d think Aunt Kate would be the superstitious one, wouldn’t you? Sailors are kind of like that. But it’s Aunt Chatty ... although *her* husband was a carpenter. She was very pretty in her day, poor thing.’

"I assured Mrs. Braddock that Aunt Chatty’s feelings would be sacred to me, but she followed us down the walk.

"‘Kate and Chatty won’t explore your belongings when you’re out. They’re very conscientious. Rebecca Dew may, but she won’t tell on you. And I wouldn’t go to the front door if I was you. They only use it for

something real important. I don't think it's been opened since Amasa's funeral. Try the side door. They keep the key under the flower-pot on the windowsill, so if nobody's home just unlock the door and go in and wait. And whatever you do, don't praise the cat, because Rebecca Dew doesn't like him.'

"I promised I wouldn't praise the cat and we actually got away. Erelong we found ourselves in Spook's Lane. It is a very short side street, leading out to open country, and far away a blue hill makes a beautiful backdrop for it. On one side there are no houses at all and the land slopes down to the harbor. On the other side there are only three. The first one is just a house ... nothing more to be said of it. The next one is a big, imposing, gloomy mansion of stone-trimmed red brick, with a mansard roof warty with dormer-windows, an iron railing around the flat top and so many spruces and firs crowding about it that you can hardly see the house. It must be frightfully dark inside. And the third and last is Windy Poplars, right on the corner, with the grass-grown street on the front and a real country road, beautiful with tree shadows, on the other side.

"I fell in love with it at once. You know there are houses which impress themselves upon you at first sight for some reason you can hardly define. Windy Poplars is like that. I may describe it to you as a white frame house ... very white ... with green shutters ... very green ... with a 'tower' in the corner and a dormer-window on either side, a low stone wall dividing it from the street, with aspen poplars growing at intervals along it, and a big garden at the back where flowers and vegetables are delightfully jumbled up together ... but all this can't convey its charm to you. In short, it is a house with a delightful personality and has something of the flavor of Green Gables about it.

"'This is the spot for me ... it's been foreordained,' I said rapturously.

"Mrs. Lynde looked as if she didn't quite trust foreordination.

"'It'll be a long walk to school,' she said dubiously.

"'I don't mind that. It will be good exercise. Oh, look at that lovely birch and maple grove across the road.'

"Mrs. Lynde looked but all she said was,

“‘I hope you won’t be pestered with mosquitoes.’

“I hoped so, too. I detest mosquitoes. One mosquito can keep me ‘awaker’ than a bad conscience.

“I was glad we didn’t have to go in by the front door. It looked so forbidding ... a big, double-leaved, grained-wood affair, flanked by panels of red, flowered glass. It doesn’t seem to belong to the house at all. The little green side door, which we reached by a darling path of thin, flat sandstones sunk at intervals in the grass, was much more friendly and inviting. The path was edged by very prim, well-ordered beds of ribbon grass and bleeding-heart and tiger-lilies and sweet-William and southernwood and bride’s bouquet and red-and-white daisies and what Mrs. Lynde calls ‘pinies.’ Of course they weren’t all in bloom at this season, but you could see they had bloomed at the proper time and done it well. There was a rose plot in a far corner and between Windy Poplars and the gloomy house next a brick wall all overgrown with Virginia creeper, with an arched trellis above a faded green door in the middle of it. A vine ran right across it, so it was plain it hadn’t been opened for some time. It was really only half a door, for its top half is merely an open oblong through which we could catch a glimpse of a jungly garden on the other side.

“Just as we entered the gate of the garden of Windy Poplars I noticed a little clump of clover right by the path. Some impulse led me to stoop down and look at it. Would you believe it, Gilbert? There, right before my eyes, were *three* four-leafed clovers! Talk about omens! Even the Pringles can’t contend against that. And I felt sure the banker hadn’t an earthly chance.

“The side door was open so it was evident somebody was at home and we didn’t have to look under the flower-pot. We knocked and Rebecca Dew came to the door. We knew it was Rebecca Dew because it couldn’t have been any one else in the whole wide world. And she couldn’t have had any other name.

“Rebecca Dew is ‘around forty’ and if a tomato had black hair racing away from its forehead, little twinkling black eyes, a tiny nose with a

knobby end and a slit of a mouth, it would look exactly like her. Everything about her is a little too short ... arms and legs and neck and nose ... everything but her smile. It is long enough to reach from ear to ear.

“But we didn’t see her smile just then. She looked very grim when I asked if I could see Mrs. MacComber.

“‘You mean Mrs. *Captain* MacComber?’ she said rebukingly, as if there were at least a dozen Mrs. MacCombers in the house.

“‘Yes,’ I said meekly. And we were forthwith ushered into the parlor and left there. It was rather a nice little room, a bit cluttered up with antimacassars but with a quiet, friendly atmosphere about it that I liked. Every bit of furniture had its own particular place which it had occupied for years. How that furniture shone! No bought polish ever produced that mirrorlike gloss. I knew it was Rebecca Dew’s elbow grease. There was a full-rigged ship in a bottle on the mantelpiece which interested Mrs. Lynde greatly. She couldn’t imagine how it ever got into the bottle ... but she thought it gave the room ‘a nautical air.’

“‘The widows’ came in. I liked them at once. Aunt Kate was tall and thin and gray, and a little austere ... Marilla’s type exactly: and Aunt Chatty was short and thin and gray, and a little wistful. She may have been very pretty once but nothing is now left of her beauty except her eyes. *They* are lovely ... soft and big and brown.

“I explained my errand and the widows looked at each other.

“‘We must consult Rebecca Dew,’ said Aunt Chatty.

“‘Undoubtedly,’ said Aunt Kate.

“Rebecca Dew was accordingly summoned from the kitchen. The cat came in with her ... a big fluffy Maltese, with a white breast and a white collar. I should have liked to stroke him, but, remembering Mrs. Braddock’s warning, I ignored him.

“Rebecca gazed at me without the glimmer of a smile.

“‘Rebecca,’ said Aunt Kate, who, I have discovered, does not waste words, ‘Miss Shirley wishes to board here. I don’t think we can take her.’

“‘Why not?’ said Rebecca Dew.

“‘It would be too much trouble for you, I am afraid,’ said Aunt Chatty.

“‘I’m well used to trouble,’ said Rebecca Dew. You *can’t* separate those names, Gilbert. It’s impossible ... though the widows do it. They call her Rebecca when they speak to her. I don’t know how they manage it.

“‘We are rather old to have young people coming and going,’ persisted Aunt Chatty.

“‘Speak for yourself,’ retorted Rebecca Dew. ‘I’m only forty-five and I still have the use of my faculties. And *I* think it would be nice to have a young person sleeping in the house. A girl would be better than a boy any time. *He’d* be smoking day *and* night ... burn us in our beds. If you must take a boarder, *my* advice would be to take *her*. But of course it’s your house.’

“She said and vanished ... as Homer was so fond of remarking. I knew the whole thing was settled but Aunt Chatty said I must go up and see if I was suited with my room.

“‘We will give you the tower room, dear. It’s not quite as large as the spare room, but it has a stovepipe hole for a stove in winter and a much nicer view. You can see the old graveyard from it.’

“I knew I would love the room ... the very name, ‘tower room,’ thrilled me. I felt as if we were living in that old song we used to sing in Avonlea School about the maiden who ‘dwelt in a high tower beside a gray sea.’ It proved to be the dearest place. We ascended to it by a little flight of corner steps leading up from the stair-landing. It was rather small ... but not nearly as small as that dreadful hall bedroom I had my first year at Redmond. It had two windows, a dormer one looking west and a gable one looking north, and in the corner formed by the tower another three-sided window with casements opening outward and shelves underneath for my books. The floor was covered with round, braided rugs, the big bed had a canopy top and a ‘wild-goose’ quilt and looked so perfectly smooth and level that it seemed a shame to spoil it by sleeping in it. And, Gilbert, it is so high that I have to climb into it by a funny little movable set of steps which in daytime are stowed away under it. It seems Captain MacComber bought the whole contraption in some ‘foreign’ place and brought it home.

“There was a dear little corner cupboard with shelves trimmed with white scalloped paper and bouquets painted on its door. There was a round blue cushion on the window-seat ... a cushion with a button deep in the center, making it look like a fat blue doughnut. And there was a sweet washstand with two shelves ... the top one just big enough for a basin and jug of robin’s-egg blue and the under one for a soap dish and hot water pitcher. It had a little brass-handled drawer full of towels and on a shelf over it a white china lady sat, with pink shoes and gilt sash and a red china rose in her golden china hair.

“The whole place was engoldened by the light that came through the corn-colored curtains and there was the rarest tapestry on the whitewashed walls where the shadow patterns of the aspens outside fell ... living tapestry, always changing and quivering. Somehow, it seemed such a *happy* room. I felt as if I were the richest girl in the world.

“‘You’ll be safe there, that’s what,’ said Mrs. Lynde, as we went away.

“‘I expect I’ll find some things a bit cramping after the freedom of Patty’s Place,’ I said, just to tease her.

“‘Freedom!’ Mrs. Lynde sniffed. ‘Freedom! Don’t talk like a Yankee, Anne.’

“I came up today, bag and baggage. Of course I hated to leave Green Gables. No matter how often and long I’m away from it, the minute a vacation comes I’m part of it again as if I had never been away, and my heart is torn over leaving it. But I know I’ll like it here. And it likes me. I always know whether a house likes me or not.

“The views from my windows are lovely ... even the old graveyard, which is surrounded by a row of dark fir trees and reached by a winding, dyke-bordered lane. From my west window I can see all over the harbor to distant, misty shores, with the dear little sailboats I love and the ships outward bound ‘for ports unknown’ ... fascinating phrase! Such ‘scope for imagination’ in it! From the north window I can see into the grove of birch and maple across the road. You know I’ve always been a tree worshiper. When we studied Tennyson in our English course at Redmond I was always sorrowfully at one with poor Enone, mourning her ravished pines.

“Beyond the grove and the graveyard is a lovable valley with the glossy red ribbon of a road winding through it and white houses dotted along it. Some valleys *are* lovable ... you can’t tell why. Just to look at them gives you pleasure. And beyond it again is my blue hill. I’m naming it Storm King ... the ruling passion, *etc.*

“I can be so *alone* up here when I want to be. You know it’s lovely to be alone once in a while. The winds will be my friends. They’ll wail and sigh and croon around my tower ... the white winds of winter ... the green winds of spring ... the blue winds of summer ... the crimson winds of autumn ... and the wild winds of all seasons ... ‘stormy wind fulfilling his word.’ How I’ve always thrilled to that Bible verse ... as if each and every wind had a message for me. I’ve always envied the boy who flew with the north wind in that lovely old story of George MacDonald’s. Some night, Gilbert, I’ll open my tower casement and just step into the arms of the wind ... and Rebecca Dew will never know why my bed wasn’t slept in that night.

“I hope when we find our ‘house of dreams,’ dearest, that there will be winds around it. I wonder where it is ... that unknown house. Shall I love it best by moonlight or dawn? That home of the future where we will have love and friendship and work ... and a few funny adventures to bring laughter in our old age. Old age! Can we ever be old, Gilbert? It seems impossible.

“From the left window in the tower I can see the roofs of the town ... this place where I am to live for at least a year. People are living in those houses who will be my friends, though I don’t know them yet. And perhaps my enemies. For the ilk of Pye are found everywhere, under all kinds of names, and I understand the Pringles are to be reckoned with. School begins tomorrow. I shall have to teach geometry! Surely that can’t be any worse than learning it. I pray heaven there are no mathematical geniuses among the Pringles.

“I’ve been here only for half a day, but I feel as if I had known the widows and Rebecca Dew all my life. They’ve asked me to call them

‘aunt’ already and I’ve asked them to call me Anne. I called Rebecca Dew ‘Miss Dew’ ... once.

“‘Miss What?’ quoth she.

“‘Dew,’ I said meekly. ‘Isn’t that your name?’

“‘Well, yes, it is, but I ain’t been called Miss Dew for so long it gave me quite a turn. You’d better not do it any more, Miss Shirley, me not being used to it.’

“‘I’ll remember, Rebecca ... Dew,’ I said, trying my hardest to leave off the Dew but not succeeding.

“Mrs. Braddock was quite right in saying Aunt Chatty was sensitive. I discovered that at suppertime. Aunt Kate had said something about ‘Chatty’s sixty-sixth birthday.’ Happening to glance at Aunt Chatty I saw that she had ... no, not *burst* into tears. That is entirely too explosive a term for her performance. She just overflowed. The tears welled up in her big brown eyes and brimmed over, effortlessly and silently.

“‘What’s the matter now, Chatty?’ asked Aunt Kate rather dourly.

“‘It ... it was only my sixty-fifth birthday,’ said Aunt Chatty.

“‘I beg your pardon, Charlotte,’ said Aunt Kate ... and all was sunshine again.

“The cat is a lovely big Tommy-cat with golden eyes, an elegant coat of dusty Maltese and irreproachable linen. Aunts Kate and Chatty call him Dusty Miller, because that is his name, and Rebecca Dew calls him That Cat because she resents him and resents the fact that she has to give him a square inch of liver every morning and evening, clean his hairs off the parlor armchair seat with an old toothbrush whenever he has sneaked in and hunt him up if he is out late at night.

“‘Rebecca Dew has always hated cats,’ Aunt Chatty tells me, ‘and she hates Dusty especially. Old Mrs. Campbell’s dog ... she kept a dog then ... brought him here two years ago in his mouth. I suppose he thought it was no use to take him to Mrs. Campbell. Such a poor miserable little kitten, all wet and cold, with its poor little bones almost sticking through its skin. A heart of stone couldn’t have refused it shelter. So Kate and I adopted it, but Rebecca Dew has never really forgiven us. We were not diplomatic

that time. We should have refused to take it in. I don't know if you've noticed ...' Aunt Chatty looked cautiously around at the door between the dining-room and kitchen ... 'how we manage Rebecca Dew.'

"I *had* noticed it ... and it was beautiful to behold. Summerside and Rebecca Dew may think she rules the roost but the widows know differently.

"'We didn't want to take the banker ... a young man would have been so unsettling and we would have had to worry so much if he didn't go to church regularly. But we pretended we did and Rebecca Dew simply wouldn't hear of it. I'm so glad we have you, dear. I feel sure you'll be a very nice person to cook for. I hope you'll like us all. Rebecca Dew has some very fine qualities. She was not so tidy when she came fifteen years ago as she is now. Once Kate had to write her name ... "Rebecca Dew" ... right across the parlor mirror to show the dust. But she never had to do it again. Rebecca Dew can take a hint. I hope you'll find your room comfortable, dear. You may have the window open at night. Kate does not approve of night air but she knows boarders must have privileges. She and I sleep together and we have arranged it so that one night the window is shut for her and the next it is open for me. One can always work out little problems like that, don't you think? Where there is a will there is always a way. Don't be alarmed if you hear Rebecca prowling a good deal in the night. She is always hearing noises and getting up to investigate them. I think that is why she didn't want the banker. She was afraid she might run into him in her nightgown. I hope you won't mind Kate not talking much. It's just her way. And she must have so many things to talk of ... she was all over the world with Amasa MacComber in her young days. I wish I had the subjects for conversation she has, but I've never been off P. E. Island. I've often wondered why things should be arranged so ... me loving to talk and with nothing to talk about and Kate with everything and hating to talk. But I suppose Providence knows best.'

"Although Aunt Chatty is a talker all right, she didn't say all this without a break. I interjected remarks at suitable intervals, but they were of no importance.

“They keep a cow which is pastured at Mr. James Hamilton’s up the road and Rebecca Dew goes there to milk her. There is any amount of cream and every morning and evening I understand Rebecca Dew passes a glass of new milk through the opening in the wall gate to Mrs. Campbell’s ‘Woman.’ It is for ‘little Elizabeth,’ who must have it under doctor’s orders. Who the Woman is, or who little Elizabeth is, I have yet to discover. Mrs. Campbell is the inhabitant and owner of the fortress next door ... which is called The Evergreens.

“I don’t expect to sleep tonight ... I never do sleep my first night in a strange bed and *this* is the very strangest bed I’ve ever seen. But I won’t mind. I’ve always loved the night and I’ll like lying awake and thinking over everything in life, past, present and to come. Especially *to come*.

“This is a merciless letter, Gilbert. I won’t inflict such a long one on you again. But I wanted to tell you everything, so that you could picture my new surroundings for yourself. It has come to an end now, for far up the harbor the moon is ‘sinking into shadowland.’ I must write a letter to Marilla yet. It will reach Green Gables the day after tomorrow and Davy will bring it home from the postoffice, and he and Dora will crowd around Marilla while she opens it and Mrs. Lynde will have both ears open... . Ow ... w ...w! That has made me homesick. Goodnight, dearest, from one who is now and ever will be,

“Fondestly yours,

“ANNE SHIRLEY.”

Chapter II

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(Extracts from various letters from the same to the same.)

“September 26th.

“Do you know where I go to read your letters? Across the road into the grove. There is a little dell there where the sun dapples the ferns. A brook meanders through it; there is a twisted mossy tree-trunk on which I sit, and the most delightful row of young sister birches. After this, when I have a dream of a certain kind ... a golden-green, crimson-veined dream ... a very dream of dreams ... I shall please my fancy with the belief that it came from my secret dell of birches and was born of some mystic union between the slenderest, airiest of the sisters and the crooning brook. I love to sit there and listen to the silence of the grove. Have you ever noticed how many different silences there are, Gilbert? The silence of the woods ... of the shore ... of the meadows ... of the night ... of the summer afternoon. All different because all the undertones that thread them are different. I’m sure if I were totally blind and insensitive to heat and cold I could easily tell just where I was by the quality of the silence about me.

“School has been ‘keeping’ for two weeks now and I’ve got things pretty well organized. But Mrs. Braddock was right ... the Pringles are my problem. And as yet I don’t see exactly how I’m going to solve it in spite of my lucky clovers. As Mrs. Braddock says, they are as smooth as cream ... and as slippery.

“The Pringles are a kind of clan who keeps tabs on each other and fight a good bit among themselves but stand shoulder to shoulder in regard to any outsider. I have come to the conclusion that there are just two kinds of people in Summerside ... those who are Pringles and those who aren’t.

“My room is full of Pringles and a good many students who bear another name have Pringle blood in them. The ring-leader of them seems to be Jen Pringle, a green-eyed bantling who looks as *Becky Sharp* must

have looked at fourteen. I believe she is deliberately organizing a subtle campaign of insubordination and disrespect, with which I am going to find it hard to cope. She has a knack of making irresistibly comic faces and when I hear a smothered ripple of laughter running over the room behind my back I know perfectly well what has caused it, but so far I haven't been able to catch her out in it. She has brains, too ... the little wretch! ... can write compositions that are fourth cousins to literature and is quite brilliant in mathematics ... woe is me! There is a certain *sparkle* in everything she says or does and she has a sense of humorous situations which would be a bond of kinship between us if she hadn't started out by hating me. As it is, I fear it will be a long time before Jen and I can laugh *together* over anything.

"Myra Pringle, Jen's cousin, is the beauty of the school ... and apparently stupid. She does perpetrate some amusing howlers ... as, for instance, when she said today in history class that the Indians thought Champlain and his men were gods or 'something inhuman.'

"Socially the Pringles are what Rebecca Dew calls 'the e-light' of Summerside. Already I have been invited to two Pringle homes for supper ... because it is the proper thing to invite a new teacher to supper and the Pringles are not going to omit the required gestures. Last night I was at James Pringle's ... the father of the aforesaid Jen. He looks like a college professor but is in reality stupid and ignorant. He talked a great deal about 'discipline,' tapping the tablecloth with a finger the nail of which was not impeccable and occasionally doing dreadful things to grammar. The Summerside High had always required a firm hand ... an experienced teacher, male preferred. He was afraid I was a *leetle* too young ... 'a fault which time will cure all too soon,' he said sorrowfully. I didn't say anything because if I had said anything I might have said too much. So I was as smooth and creamy as any Pringle of them all could have been and contented myself with looking limpidly at him and saying inside of myself, 'You cantankerous, prejudiced old creature!'

"Jen must have got her brains from her mother ... whom I found myself liking. Jen, in her parents' presence, was a model of decorum. But

though her words were polite her tone was insolent. Every time she said ‘Miss Shirley’ she contrived to make it sound like an insult. And every time she looked at my hair I felt that it was just plain carrotty red. No Pringle, I am certain, would ever admit it was auburn.

“I liked the Morton Pringles much better ... though Morton Pringle never really listens to anything you say. He says something to you and then, while you’re replying, he is busy thinking out his next remark.

“Mrs. Stephen Pringle ... the Widow Pringle ... Summerside abounds in widows ... wrote me a letter yesterday ... a nice, polite, poisonous letter. Millie has too much home work ... Millie is a delicate child and must not be overworked. Mr. Bell *never* gave her home work. She is a sensitive child that must be *understood*. Mr. Bell understood her so well! Mrs. Stephen is sure I will, too, if I try!

“I do not doubt Mrs. Stephen thinks I made Adam Pringle’s nose bleed in class today by reason of which he had to go home. And I woke up last night and couldn’t go to sleep again because I remembered an *i* I hadn’t dotted in a question I wrote on the board. I’m certain Jen Pringle would notice it and a whisper will go around the clan about it.

“Rebecca Dew says that all the Pringles will invite me to supper, except the old ladies at Maplehurst, and then ignore me forever afterwards. As they are the ‘e-light,’ this may mean that socially I may be banned in Summerside. Well, we’ll see. The battle is on but is not yet either won or lost. Still, I feel rather unhappy over it all. You can’t reason with prejudice. I’m still just as I used to be in my childhood ... I can’t bear to have people not liking me. It isn’t pleasant to think that the families of half my pupils hate me. And for no fault of my own. It is the *injustice* that stings me. There go more italics! But a few italics really do relieve your feelings.

“Apart from the Pringles I like my pupils very much. There are some clever, ambitious, hardworking ones who are really interested in getting an education. Lewis Allen is paying for his board by doing *housework* at his boardinghouse and isn’t a bit ashamed of it. And Sophy Sinclair rides bareback on her father’s old gray mare six miles in and six miles out every

day. There's pluck for you! If I can help a girl like that, am I to mind the Pringles?

"The trouble is ... if I can't win the Pringles I won't have much chance of helping anybody.

"But I love Windy Poplars. It isn't a boardinghouse ... it's a home! And they like me ... even Dusty Miller likes me, though he sometimes disapproves of me and shows it by deliberately sitting with his back turned towards me, occasionally cocking a golden eye over his shoulder at me to see how I'm taking it. I don't pet him much when Rebecca Dew is around because it really does irritate her. By day he is a homely, comfortable, meditative animal ... but he is decidedly a weird creature at night. Rebecca says it is because he is never allowed to stay out after dark. She hates to stand in the back yard and call him. She says the neighbors will all be laughing at her. She calls in such fierce, stentorian tones that she really can be heard all over the town on a still night shouting for 'Puss ... *puss* ... PUSS!' The widows would have a conniption if Dusty Miller wasn't in when they went to bed. 'Nobody knows what I've gone through on account of That Cat... *nobody*,' Rebecca has assured me.

"The widows are going to wear well. Every day I like them better. Aunt Kate doesn't believe in reading novels, but informs me that she does not propose to censor my reading-matter. Aunt Chatty loves novels. She has a 'hidy-hole' where she keeps them ... she smuggles them in from the town library ... together with a pack of cards for solitaire and anything else she doesn't want Aunt Kate to see. It is in a chair seat which nobody but Aunt Chatty knows is more than a chair seat. She has shared the secret with me, because, I strongly suspect, she wants me to aid and abet her in the aforesaid smuggling. There shouldn't really be any need for hidy-holes at Windy Poplars, for I never saw a house with so many mysterious cupboards. Though to be sure, Rebecca Dew won't let them *be* mysterious. She is always cleaning them out ferociously. 'A house can't keep itself clean,' she says sorrowfully when either of the widows protests. I am sure she would make short work of a novel or a pack of cards if she found them. They are both a horror to her orthodox soul. Rebecca Dew says cards

are the devil's books and novels even worse. The only things Rebecca ever reads, apart from her Bible, are the society columns of the Montreal *Guardian*. She loves to pore over the houses and furniture and doings of millionaires.

“‘Just fancy soaking in a golden bathtub, Miss Shirley,’ she said wistfully.

“But she's really an old duck. She has produced from somewhere a comfortable old wing chair of faded brocade that just fits my kinks and says, ‘This is *your* chair. We'll keep it for *you*.’ And she won't let Dusty Miller sleep on it lest I get hairs on my school skirt and give the Pringles something to talk about.

“The whole three are very much interested in my circlet of pearls ... and what it signifies. Aunt Kate showed me her engagement ring (she can't wear it because it has grown too small) set with turquoises. But poor Aunt Chatty owned to me with tears in her eyes that she had never had an engagement ring ... her husband thought it ‘an unnecessary expenditure.’ She was in my room at the time, giving her face a bath in buttermilk. She does it every night to preserve her complexion, and has sworn me to secrecy because she doesn't want Aunt Kate to know it.

“‘She would think it ridiculous vanity in a woman of my age. And I am sure Rebecca Dew thinks that no Christian woman should try to be beautiful. I used to slip down to the kitchen to do it after Kate had gone to sleep but I was always afraid of Rebecca Dew coming down. She has ears like a cat's even when she is asleep. If I could just slip in here every night and do it ... oh, thank you, my dear.’

“I have found out a little about our neighbors at The Evergreens. Mrs. Campbell (who was a Pringle!) is eighty. I haven't seen her but from what I can gather she is a very grim old lady. She has a maid, Martha Monkman, almost as ancient and grim as herself, who is generally referred to as ‘Mrs. Campbell's Woman.’ And she has her great-granddaughter, little Elizabeth Grayson, living with her. Elizabeth ... on whom I have never laid eyes in spite of my two weeks' sojourn ... is eight years old and goes to the public school by ‘the back way’ ... a short cut through the back yards ... so I

never encounter her, going or coming. Her mother, who is dead, was a granddaughter of Mrs. Campbell, who brought her up also ... *Her* parents being dead. She married a certain Pierce Grayson, a 'Yankee,' as Mrs. Rachel Lynde would say. She died when Elizabeth was born and as Pierce Grayson had to leave America at once to take charge of a branch of his firm's business in Paris, the baby was sent home to old Mrs. Campbell. The story goes that he 'couldn't bear the sight of her' because she had cost her mother's life, and has never taken any notice of her. This of course may be sheer gossip because neither Mrs. Campbell nor the Woman ever opens her lips about him.

"Rebecca Dew says they are far too strict with little Elizabeth and she hasn't much of a time of it with them.

"She isn't like other children ... far too old for eight years. The things that she says sometimes! "Rebecca," she sez to me one day, "suppose just as you were ready to get into bed you felt your ankle *nipped*?" No wonder she's afraid to go to bed in the dark. And they make her do it. Mrs. Campbell says there are to be no cowards in *her* house. They watch her like two cats watching a mouse, and boss her within an inch of her life. If she makes a speck of noise they nearly pass out. It's "hush, hush" all the time. I tell you that child is being hush-hushed to death. And what is to be done about it?"

"What, indeed?"

"I feel that I'd like to see her. She seems to me a bit pathetic. Aunt Kate says she is well looked after from a physical point of view ... what Aunt Kate really said was, 'They feed and dress her well' ... but a child can't live by bread alone. I can never forget what my own life was before I came to Green Gables.

"I'm going home next Friday evening to spend two beautiful days in Avonlea. The only drawback will be that everybody I see will ask me how I like teaching in Summerside.

"But think of Green Gables now, Gilbert ... the Lake of Shining Waters with a blue mist on it ... the maples across the brook beginning to turn scarlet ... the ferns golden brown in the Haunted Wood ... and the sunset

shadows in Lover's Lane, darling spot. I find it in my heart to wish I were there now with ... with ... guess whom?

"Do you know, Gilbert, there are times when I strongly suspect that I love you!"

"Windy Poplars,

"Spook's Lane,

"S'side,

"October 10th.

"HONORED AND RESPECTED SIR: —

"That is how a love letter of Aunt Chatty's grandmother began. Isn't it delicious? What a thrill of superiority it must have given the grandfather! Wouldn't you really prefer it to 'Gilbert darling, etc.'? But, on the whole, I think I'm glad you're not the grandfather ... or A grandfather. It's wonderful to think we're young and have our whole lives before us ... *together ... isn't it?*"

(Several pages omitted. Anne's pen being evidently neither sharp, stub nor rusty.)

"I'm sitting on the window seat in the tower looking out into the trees waving against an amber sky and beyond them to the harbor. Last night I had such a lovely walk with myself. I really had to go somewhere for it was just a trifle dismal at Windy Poplars. Aunt Chatty was crying in the sitting-room because her feelings had been hurt and Aunt Kate was crying in her bedroom because it was the anniversary of Captain Amasa's death and Rebecca Dew was crying in the kitchen for no reason that I could discover. I've never seen Rebecca Dew cry before. But when I tried tactfully to find out what was wrong she pettishly wanted to know if a body couldn't enjoy a cry when she felt like it. So I folded my tent and stole away, leaving her to her enjoyment.

"I went out and down the harbor road. There was such a nice frosty, Octobery smell in the air, blent with the delightful odor of newly plowed fields. I walked on and on until twilight had deepened into a moonlit autumn night. I was alone but not lonely. I held a series of imaginary

conversations with imaginary comrades and thought out so many epigrams that I was agreeably surprised at myself. I couldn't help enjoying myself in spite of my Pringle worries.

"The spirit moves me to utter a few yowls regarding the Pringles. I hate to admit it but things are not going any too well in Summerside High. There is no doubt that a cabal has been organized against me.

"For one thing, home work is never done by any of the Pringles or half Pringles. And there is no use in appealing to the parents. They are suave, polite, evasive. I know all the pupils who are not Pringles like me but the Pringle virus of disobedience is undermining the morale of the whole room. One morning I found my desk turned inside out and upside down. Nobody knew who did it, of course. And no one could or would tell who left on it another day the box out of which popped an artificial snake when I opened it. But every Pringle in the school screamed with laughter over my face. I suppose I did look wildly startled.

"Jen Pringle comes late for school half the time, always with some perfectly watertight excuse, delivered politely, with an insolent tilt to her mouth. She passes notes in class under my very nose. I found a peeled onion in the pocket of my coat when I put it on today. I should love to lock that girl up on bread and water until she learned how to behave herself.

"The worst thing to date was the caricature of myself I found on the blackboard one morning ... done in white chalk with *scarlet* hair. Everybody denied doing it, Jen among the rest, but I knew Jen was the only pupil in the room who could draw like that. It *was* done well. My nose ... which, as you know, has always been my one pride and joy ... was humpbacked and my mouth was the mouth of a vinegary spinster who had been teaching a school full of Pringles for thirty years. But it was *me*. I woke up at three o'clock that night and writhed over the recollection. Isn't it queer that the things we writhe over at night are seldom wicked things? Just humiliating ones.

"All sorts of things are being said. I am accused of 'marking down' Hattie Pringle's examination papers just because she is a Pringle. I am said to 'laugh when the children make mistakes.' (Well, I *did* laugh when Fred

Pringle defined a centurion as ‘a man who had lived a hundred years.’ I couldn’t help it.)

“James Pringle is saying, ‘There is no discipline in the school ... no discipline whatever.’ And a report is being circulated that I am a ‘foundling.’

“I am beginning to encounter the Pringle antagonism in other quarters. Socially as well as educationally, Summerside seems to be under the Pringle thumb. No wonder they are called the Royal Family. I wasn’t invited to Alice Pringle’s walking party last Friday. And when Mrs. Frank Pringle got up a tea in aid of a church project (Rebecca Dew informs me that the ladies are going to ‘build’ the new spire!), I was the only girl in the Presbyterian church who was not asked to take a table. I have heard that the minister’s wife, who is a newcomer in Summerside, suggested asking me to sing in the choir and was informed that all the Pringles would drop out of it if she did. That would leave such a skeleton that the choir simply couldn’t carry on.

“Of course I’m not the only one of the teachers who has trouble with pupils. When the other teachers send theirs up to me to be ‘disciplined’ ... how I hate that word! ... half of them are Pringles. But there is never any complaint made about *them*.

“Two evenings ago I kept Jen in after school to do some work she had deliberately left undone. Ten minutes later the carriage from Maplehurst drew up before the school house and Miss Ellen was at the door ... a beautifully dressed, sweetly smiling old lady, with elegant black lace mitts and a fine hawk-like nose, looking as if she had just stepped out of an 1840 bandbox. She was so sorry but could she have Jen? She was going to visit friends in Lowvale and had promised to take Jen. Jen went off triumphantly and I realized afresh the forces arrayed against me.

“In my pessimistic moods I think the Pringles are a compound of Sloanes and Pyes. But I know they’re not. I feel that I could like them if they were not my enemies. They are, for the most part, a frank, jolly, loyal set. I could even like Miss Ellen. I’ve never seen Miss Sarah. Miss Sarah has not left Maplehurst for ten years.

“‘Too delicate ... or thinks she is,’ says Rebecca Dew with a sniff. ‘But there ain’t anything the matter with her pride. All the Pringles are proud but those two old girls pass everything. You should hear them talk about their ancestors. Well, their old father, Captain Abraham Pringle, was a fine old fellow. His brother Myrom wasn’t quite so fine, but you don’t hear the Pringles talking much about *him*. But I’m desprit afraid you’re going to have a hard time with them all. When they make up their mind about anything or anybody they’ve never been known to change it. But keep your chin up, Miss Shirley ... keep your chin up.’

“‘I wish I could get Miss Ellen’s recipe for pound cake,’ sighed Aunt Chatty. ‘She’s promised it to me time and again but it never comes. It’s an old English family recipe. They’re so exclusive about their recipes.’

“In wild fantastic dreams I see myself compelling Miss Ellen to hand that recipe over to Aunt Chatty on bended knee and make Jen mind her *p*’s and *q*’s. The maddening thing is that I could easily make Jen do it myself if her whole clan weren’t backing her up in her deviltry.”

(Two pages omitted.)

“Your obedient servant,

“ANNE SHIRLEY.

“P.S. That was how Aunt Chatty’s grandmother signed her love letters.”

“October 15th.

“We heard today that there had been a burglary at the other end of the town last night. A house was entered and some money and a dozen silver spoons stolen. So Rebecca Dew has gone up to Mr. Hamilton’s to see if she can borrow a dog. She will tie him on the back veranda and she advises me to lock up my engagement ring!

“By the way, I found out why Rebecca Dew cried. It seems there had been a domestic convulsion. Dusty Miller had ‘misbehaved again’ and Rebecca Dew told Aunt Kate she would really have to do something about That Cat. He was wearing her to a fiddle-string. It was the third time in a year and she knew he did it on purpose. And Aunt Kate said that if

Rebecca Dew would always let the cat out when he meowed there would be no danger of his misbehaving.

“‘Well, this *is* the last straw,’ said Rebecca Dew.

“Consequently, tears!

“The Pringle situation grows a little more acute every week.

Something very impertinent was written across one of my books yesterday and Homer Pringle turned handsprings all the way down the aisle when leaving school. Also, I got an anonymous letter recently full of nasty innuendoes. Somehow, I don’t blame Jen for either the book or the letter. Imp as she is, there are things she wouldn’t stoop to. Rebecca Dew is furious and I shudder to think what she would do to the Pringles if she had them in her power. Nero’s wish isn’t to be compared to it. I really don’t blame her, for there are times when I feel myself that I could cheerfully hand any and all of the Pringles a poisoned philter of Borgia brewing.

“I don’t think I’ve told you much about the other teachers. There are two, you know ... the Vice-principal, Katherine Brooke of the Junior Room, and George MacKay of the Prep. Of George I have little to say. He is a shy, goodnatured lad of twenty, with a slight, delicious Highland accent suggestive of low shielings and misty islands ... his grandfather ‘was Isle of Skye’ ... and does very well with the Preps. So far as I know him I like him. But I’m afraid I’m going to have a hard time liking Katherine Brooke.

“Katherine is a girl of, I think, about twenty-eight, though she looks thirty-five. I have been told she cherished hopes of promotion to the Principalship and I suppose she resents my getting it, especially when I am considerably her junior. She is a good teacher ... a bit of a martinet ... but she is not popular with any one. And doesn’t worry over it! She doesn’t seem to have any friends or relations and boards in a gloomy-looking house on grubby little Temple Street. She dresses very dowdily, never goes out socially and is said to be ‘mean.’ She is very sarcastic and her pupils dread her biting remarks. I am told that her way of raising her thick black eyebrows and drawling at them reduces them to a pulp. I wish I could

work it on the Pringles. But I really shouldn't like to govern by fear as she does. I want my pupils to love me.

"In spite of the fact that she has apparently no trouble in making them toe the line she is constantly sending some of them up to me ... especially Pringles. I know she does it purposely and I feel miserably certain that she exults in my difficulties and would be glad to see me worsted.

"Rebecca Dew says that no one can make friends with her. The widows have invited her several times to Sunday supper ... the dear souls are always doing that for lonely people, and always have the most delicious chicken salad for them ... but she never came. So they have given it up because, as Aunt Kate says, 'there are limits.'

"There are rumors that she is very clever and can sing and recite ... 'elocute,' *a la* Rebecca Dew ... but will not do either. Aunt Chatty once asked her to recite at a church supper.

"'We thought she refused very ungraciously,' said Aunt Kate.

"'Just growled,' said Rebecca Dew.

"Katherine has a deep throaty voice ... almost a man's voice ... and it does sound like a growl when she isn't in good humor.

"She isn't pretty but she might make more of herself. She is dark and swarthy, with magnificent black hair always dragged back from her high forehead and coiled in a clumsy knot at the base of her neck. Her eyes don't match her hair, being a clear, light amber under her black brows. She has ears she needn't be ashamed to show and the most beautiful hands I've ever seen. Also, she has a well-cut mouth. But she dresses terribly. Seems to have a positive genius for getting the colors and lines she should not wear. Dull dark greens and drab grays, when she is too sallow for greens and grays, and stripes which make her tall, lean figure even taller and leaner. And her clothes always look as if she'd slept in them.

"Her manner is very repellent ... as Rebecca Dew would say, she always has a chip on her shoulder. Every time I pass her on the stairs I feel that she is thinking horrid things about me. Every time I speak to her she makes me feel I've said the wrong thing. And yet I'm very sorry for her ... though I know she would resent my pity furiously. And I can't do anything

to help her because she doesn't want to be helped. She is really hateful to me. One day, when we three teachers were all in the staff room, I did something which, it seems, transgressed one of the unwritten laws of the school, and Katherine said cuttingly, 'Perhaps you think *you* are above rules, Miss Shirley.' At another time, when I was suggesting some changes which I thought would be for the good of the school, she said with a scornful smile, 'I'm not interested in fairy tales.' Once, when I said some nice things about her work and methods, she said, 'And what is to be the pill in all this jam?'

"But the thing that annoyed me most ... well, one day when I happened to pick up a book of hers in the staff room and glanced at the flyleaf I said,

"‘I'm glad you spell your name with a K. Katherine is so much more alluring than Catherine, just as K is ever so much gypsier a letter than smug C.’

"She made no response, but the next note she sent up was signed 'Catherine Brooke'!

"I sneezed all the way home.

"I really would give up trying to be friends with her if I hadn't a queer, unaccountable feeling that under all her brusqueness and aloofness she is actually starved for companionship.

"Altogether, what with Katherine's antagonism and the Pringle attitude, I don't know just what I'd do if it wasn't for dear Rebecca Dew and your letters ... and little Elizabeth.

"Because I've got acquainted with little Elizabeth. And she is a darling.

"Three nights ago I took the glass of milk to the wall door and little Elizabeth herself was there to get it instead of the Woman, her head just coming above the solid part of the door, so that her face was framed in the ivy. She is small, pale, golden and wistful. Her eyes, looking at me through the autumn twilight, are large and golden-hazel. Her silver-gold hair was parted in the middle, sleeked plainly down over her head with a circular comb, and fell in waves on her shoulders. She wore a pale blue gingham dress and the expression of a princess of elfland. She had what Rebecca

Dew calls ‘a delicate air,’ and gave me the impression of a child who was more or less undernourished ... not in body, but in soul. More of a moonbeam than a sunbeam.

“‘And this is Elizabeth?’ I said.

“‘Not tonight,’ she answered gravely. ‘This is my night for being Betty because I love everything in the world tonight. I was Elizabeth last night and tomorrow night I’ll prob’ly be Beth. It all depends on how I feel.’

“‘There was the touch of the kindred spirit for you. I thrilled to it at once.

“‘How very nice to have a name you can change so easily and still feel it’s your own.’

“‘Little Elizabeth nodded.

“‘I can make so many names out of it. Elsie and Betty and Bess and Elisa and Lisbeth and Beth ... but not Lizzie. I never can feel like Lizzie.’

“‘Who could?’ I said.

“‘Do you think it silly of me, Miss Shirley? Grandmother and the Woman do.’

“‘Not silly at all ... very wise and very delightful,’ I said..

“‘Little Elizabeth made saucer eyes at me over the rim of her glass. I felt that I was being weighed in some secret spiritual balance and presently I realized thankfully that I had not been found wanting. For little Elizabeth asked a favor of me ... and little Elizabeth does not ask favors of people she does not like.

“‘Would you mind lifting up the cat and letting me pat him?’ she asked shyly.

“‘Dusty Miller was rubbing against my legs. I lifted him and little Elizabeth put out a tiny hand and stroked his head delightedly.

“‘I like kittens better than babies,’ she said, looking at me with an odd little air of defiance, as if she knew I would be shocked but tell the truth she must.

“‘I suppose you’ve never had much to do with babies, so you don’t know how sweet they are,’ I said, smiling. ‘Have you a kitten of your own?’

“Elizabeth shook her head.

““Oh, no; Grandmother doesn’t like cats. And the Woman hates them. The Woman is out tonight, so that is why I could come for the milk. I love coming for the milk because Rebecca Dew is such an agree’ble person.’

““Are you sorry she didn’t come tonight?’ I laughed.

“Little Elizabeth shook her head.

““No. You are very agree’ble, too. I’ve been wanting to get ‘quainted with you but I was afraid it mightn’t happen before Tomorrow comes.’

“We stood there and talked while Elizabeth sipped her milk daintily and she told me all about Tomorrow. The Woman had told her that Tomorrow never comes, but Elizabeth knows better. It *will* come sometime. Some beautiful morning she will just wake up and find it is Tomorrow. Not Today but Tomorrow. And then things will happen ... wonderful things. She may even have a day to do exactly as she likes in, with nobody watching her ... though I think Elizabeth feels *that* is too good to happen even in Tomorrow. Or she may find out what is at the end of the harbor road ... that wandering, twisting road like a nice red snake, that leads, so Elizabeth thinks, to the end of the world. Perhaps the Island of Happiness is there. Elizabeth feels sure there is an Island of Happiness somewhere where all the ships that never come back are anchored, and she will find it when Tomorrow comes.

““And when Tomorrow comes,’ said Elizabeth, ‘I will have a million dogs and forty-five cats. I told Grandmother that when she wouldn’t let me have a kitten, Miss Shirley, and she was angry and said, “I’m not ‘customed to be spoken to like that, Miss Impert’nence.” I was sent to bed without supper ... but I didn’t mean to be impert’nent. And I couldn’t sleep, Miss Shirley, because the Woman told me that she knew a child once that died in her sleep after being impert’nent.’

“When Elizabeth had finished her milk there came a sharp tapping at some unseen window behind the spruces. I think we had been watched all the time. My elf-maiden ran, her golden head glimmering along the dark spruce aisle until she vanished.

“‘She’s a fanciful little creature,’ said Rebecca Dew when I told her of my adventure ... really, it somehow had the quality of an adventure, Gilbert. ‘One day she said to me, “Are you scared of lions, Rebecca Dew?” “I never met any so I can’t tell you,” sez I. “There will be any amount of lions in Tomorrow,” sez she, “but they will be nice friendly lions.” “Child, you’ll turn into eyes if you look like that,” sez I. She was looking clean through me at something she saw in that Tomorrow of hers. “I’m thinking deep thoughts, Rebecca Dew,” she sez. The trouble with that child is she doesn’t laugh enough.’

“I remembered Elizabeth had never laughed once during our talk. I feel that she hasn’t learned how. The great house is so still and lonely and laughterless. It looks dull and gloomy even now when the world is a riot of autumn color. Little Elizabeth is doing too much listening to lost whispers.

“I think one of my missions in Summerside will be to teach her how to laugh.

“Your tenderest, most faithful friend,

“ANNE SHIRLEY.

“P.S. More of Aunt Chatty’s grandmother!”

Chapter III

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“Windy Poplars,
“Spook’s Lane,
“S’side,
“October 25th.

“GILBERT DEAR: —

“What do you think? I’ve been to supper at Maplehurst!

“Miss Ellen herself wrote the invitation. Rebecca Dew was really excited ... she had never believed they would take any notice of me. And she was quite sure it was not out of friendliness.

“‘They have some sinister motive, that I’m certain of!’ she exclaimed.

“I really had some such feeling in my own mind.

“‘Be sure you put on your best,’ ordered Rebecca Dew.

“So I put on my pretty cream challis dress with the purple violets in it and did my hair the new way with the dip in the forehead. It’s very becoming.

“The ladies of Maplehurst are positively delightful in their own way, Gilbert. I could love them if they’d let me. Maplehurst is a proud, exclusive house which draws its trees around it and won’t associate with common houses. It has a big, white, wooden woman off the bow of old Captain Abraham’s famous ship, the *Go and Ask Her*, in the orchard and billows of southernwood about the front steps, which was brought out from the old country over a hundred years ago by the first emigrating Pringle. They have another ancestor who fought at the battle of Minden and his sword is hanging on the parlor wall beside Captain Abraham’s portrait. Captain Abraham was their father and they are evidently tremendously proud of him.

“They have stately mirrors over the old, black, fluted mantels, a glass case with wax flowers in it, pictures full of the beauty of the ships of long

ago, a hair-wreath containing the hair of every known Pringle, big conch shells and a quilt on the spare-room bed quilted in infinitesimal fans.

“We sat in the parlor on mahogany Sheraton chairs. It was hung with silver-stripe wallpaper. Heavy brocade curtains at the windows. Marble-topped tables, one bearing a beautiful model of a ship with crimson hull and snow-white sails — the *Go and Ask Her*. An enormous chandelier, all glass and dingle-dangles, suspended from the ceiling. A round mirror with a clock in the center ... something Captain Abraham had brought home from ‘foreign parts.’ It was wonderful. I’d like something like it in our house of dreams.

“The very shadows were eloquent and traditional. Miss Ellen showed me millions ... more or less ... of Pringle photographs, many of them daguerreotypes in leather cases. A big tortoise-shell cat came in, jumped on my knee and was at once whisked out to the kitchen by Miss Ellen. She apologized to me. But I expect she had previously apologized to the cat in the kitchen.

“Miss Ellen did most of the talking. Miss Sarah, a tiny thing in a black silk dress and starched petticoat, with snow-white hair and eyes as black as her dress, thin, veined hands folded on her lap amid fine lace ruffles, sad, lovely, gentle, looked almost too fragile to talk. And yet I got the impression, Gilbert, that every Pringle of the clan, including Miss Ellen herself, danced to her piping.

“We had a delicious supper. The water was cold, the linen beautiful, the dishes and glassware thin. We were waited on by a maid, quite as aloof and aristocratic as themselves. But Miss Sarah pretended to be a little deaf whenever I spoke to her and I thought every mouthful would choke me. All my courage oozed out of me. I felt just like a poor fly caught on fly-paper. Gilbert, I can never, never conquer or win the Royal Family. I can see myself resigning at New Year’s. I haven’t a chance against a clan like that.

“And yet I couldn’t help feeling a little sorry for the old ladies as I looked around their house. It had once *lived* ... people had been born there ... died there ... exulted there ... known sleep, despair, fear, joy, love,

hope, hate. And now it has nothing but the memories by which they live ... and their pride in them.

“Aunt Chatty is much upset because when she unfolded clean sheets for my bed today she found a diamond-shaped crease in the center. She is sure it foretells a death in the household. Aunt Kate is very much disgusted with such superstition. But I believe I rather like superstitious people. They lend color to life. Wouldn't it be a rather drab world if everybody was wise and sensible ... and *good*? What would we find to talk about?

“We had a catastrophe here two nights ago. Dusty Miller stayed out all night, in spite of Rebecca Dew's stentorian shouts of 'Puss' in the back yard. And when he turned up in the morning ... oh, such a looking cat! One eye was closed completely and there was a lump as big as an egg on his jaw. His fur was stiff with mud and one paw was bitten through. But what a triumphant, unrepentant look he had in his one good eye! The widows were horrified but Rebecca Dew said exultantly, 'That Cat has never had a good fight in his life before. And I'll bet the other cat looks far worse than he does!'

“A fog is creeping up the harbor tonight, blotting out the red road that little Elizabeth wants to explore. Weeds and leaves are burning in all the town gardens and the combination of smoke and fog is making Spook's Lane an eerie, fascinating, enchanted place. It is growing late and my bed says, 'I have sleep for you.' I've grown used to climbing a flight of steps into bed ... and climbing down them. Oh, Gilbert, I've never told any one this, but it's too funny to keep any longer. The first morning I woke up in Windy Poplars I forgot all about the steps and made a blithe morning-spring out of bed. I came down like a thousand of brick, as Rebecca Dew would say. Luckily I didn't break any bones, but I was black and blue for a week.

“Little Elizabeth and I are very good friends by now. She comes every evening for her milk because the Woman is laid up with what Rebecca Dew calls 'brownkites.' I always find her at the wall gate, waiting for me, her big eyes full of twilight. We talk with the gate, which has never been

opened for years, between us. Elizabeth sips the glass of milk as slowly as possible in order to spin our conversation out. Always, when the last drop is drained, comes the tap-tap on the window.

“I have found that one of the things that is going to happen in Tomorrow is that she will get a letter from her father. She had never got one. I wonder what the man can be thinking of.

“‘You know, he couldn’t bear the sight of me, Miss Shirley,’ she told me, ‘but he mightn’t mind writing to me.’

“‘Who told you he couldn’t bear the sight of you?’ I asked indignantly.

“‘The Woman.’ (Always when Elizabeth says ‘the Woman,’ I can see her like a great big forbidding ‘W,’ all angles and corners.) ‘And it must be true or he would come to see me sometimes.’

“She was Beth that night ... it is only when she is Beth that she will talk of her father. When she is Betty she makes faces at her grandmother and the Woman behind their backs; but when she turns into Elsie she is sorry for it and thinks she ought to confess, but is scared to. Very rarely she is Elizabeth and then she has the face of one who listens to fairy music and knows what roses and clovers talk about. She’s the quaintest thing, Gilbert ... as sensitive as one of the leaves of the windy poplars, and I love her. It infuriates me to know that those two terrible old women make her go to bed in the dark.

“‘The Woman said I was big enough to sleep without a light. But I feel so small, Miss Shirley, because the night is so big and awful. And there is a stuffed crow in my room and I am afraid of it. The Woman told me it would pick my eyes out if I cried. Of course, Miss Shirley, I don’t believe that, but still I’m scared. Things *whisper* so to each other at night. But in Tomorrow I’ll never be scared of anything ... not even of being kidnaped!’

“‘But there is no danger of your being kidnaped, Elizabeth.’

“‘The Woman said there was if I went anywhere alone or talked to strange persons. But you’re not a strange person, are you, Miss Shirley?’

“‘No, darling. We’ve always known each other in Tomorrow,’ I said.”

Chapter IV

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“Windy Poplars,
“Spook’s Lane,
“S’side,
“November 10th.

“DEAREST:

“It used to be that the person I hated most in the world was the person who spoiled my pen-nib. But I can’t hate Rebecca Dew in spite of her habit of using my pen to copy recipes when I’m in school. She’s been doing it again and as a result you won’t get a long or a loving letter this time. (Belovedest.)

“The last cricket song has been sung. The evenings are so chilly now that I have a small chubby, oblong wood-stove in my room. Rebecca Dew put it up ... I forgive her the pen for it. There’s nothing that woman can’t do; and she always has a fire lighted for me in it when I come home from school. It is the tiniest of stoves ... I could pick it up in my hands. It looks just like a pert little black dog on its four bandy iron legs. But when you fill it with hardwood sticks it blooms rosy red and throws a wonderful heat and you can’t think how cozy it is. I’m sitting before it now, with my feet on its tiny hearth, scribbling to you on my knee.

“Every one else in S’side ... more or less ... is at the Hardy Pringles’ dance. *I* was not invited. And Rebecca Dew is so cross about it that I’d hate to be Dusty Miller. But when I think of Hardy’s daughter Myra, beautiful and brainless, trying to prove in an examination paper that the *angels* at the base of an isosceles triangle are equal, I forgive the entire Pringle clan. And last week she included ‘gallows tree’ quite seriously in a list of trees! But, to be just, all the howlers don’t originate with the Pringles. Blake Fenton defined an alligator recently as ‘a large kind of insect.’ Such are the high lights of a teacher’s life!

“It feels like snow tonight. I like an evening when it feels like snow. The wind is blowing ‘in turret and tree’ and making my cozy room seem even cozier. The last golden leaf will be blown from the aspens tonight.

“I think I’ve been invited to supper everywhere by now ... I mean to the homes of all my pupils, both in town and country. And oh, Gilbert darling, I am so sick of pumpkin preserves! Never, never let us have pumpkin preserves in our house of dreams.

“Almost everywhere I’ve gone for the last month I’ve had P. P. for supper. The first time I had it I loved it ... it was so golden that I felt I was eating preserved sunshine ... and I incautiously raved about it. It got bruited about that I was very fond of P. P. and people had it on purpose for me. Last night I was going to Mr. Hamilton’s and Rebecca Dew assured me that I wouldn’t have to eat P. P. there because none of the Hamiltons liked it. But when we sat down to supper, there on the sideboard was the inevitable cut-glass bowl full of P. P.

“‘I hadn’t any punkin preserves of my own,’ said Mrs. Hamilton, ladling me out a generous dishful, ‘but I heard you was terrible partial to it, so when I was to my cousin’s in Lowvale last Sunday I sez to her, ‘I’m having Miss Shirley to supper this week and she’s terrible partial to punkin preserves. I wish you’d lend me a jar for her.’ So she did and here it is and you can take home what’s left.’

“You should have seen Rebecca Dew’s face when I arrived home from the Hamiltons’ bearing a glass jar two-thirds full of P. P.! Nobody likes it here so we buried it darkly at dead of night in the garden.

“‘You won’t put this in a story, will you?’ she asked anxiously. Ever since Rebecca Dew discovered that I do an occasional bit of fiction for the magazines she has lived in the fear ... or hope, I don’t know which ... that I’ll put everything that happens at Windy Poplars into a story. She wants me to ‘write up the Pringles and blister them.’ But alas, it’s the Pringles that are doing the blistering and between them and my work in school I have scant time for writing fiction.

“There are only withered leaves and frosted stems in the garden now. Rebecca Dew has done the standard roses up in straw and potato bags, and

in the twilight they look exactly like a group of humped-back old men leaning on staffs.

“I got a postcard from Davy today with ten kisses crossed on it and a letter from Priscilla written on some paper that ‘a friend of hers in Japan’ sent her ... silky thin paper with dim cherry blossoms on it like ghosts. I’m beginning to have my suspicions about that friend of hers. But your big fat letter was the purple gift the day gave me. I read it four times over to get every bit of its savor ... like a dog polishing off a plate! *That* certainly isn’t a romantic simile, but it’s the one that just popped into my head. Still, letters, even the nicest, aren’t *satisfactory*. I want to see *you*. I’m glad it’s only five weeks to Christmas holidays.”

Chapter V

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Anne, sitting at her tower window one late November evening, with her pen at her lip and dreams in her eyes, looked out on a twilight world and suddenly thought she would like a walk to the old graveyard. She had never visited it yet, preferring the birch and maple grove or the harbor road for her evening rambles. But there is always a November space after the leaves have fallen when she felt it was almost indecent to intrude on the woods ... for their glory terrestrial had departed and their glory celestial of spirit and purity and whiteness had not yet come upon them. So Anne betook herself to the graveyard instead. She was feeling for the time so dispirited and hopeless that she thought a graveyard would be a comparatively cheerful place. Besides, it was full of Pringles, so Rebecca Dew said. They had buried there for generations, keeping it up in preference to the new graveyard until “no more of them could be squeezed in.” Anne felt that it would be positively encouraging to see how many Pringles were where they couldn’t annoy anybody any more.

In regard to the Pringles Anne felt that she was at the end of her tether. More and more the whole situation was coming to seem like a nightmare. The subtle campaign of insubordination and disrespect which Jen Pringle had organized had at last come to a head. One day, a week previously, she had asked the Seniors to write a composition on “The Most Important Happenings of the Week.” Jen Pringle had written a brilliant one ... the little imp *was* clever ... and had inserted in it a sly insult to her teacher ... one so pointed that it was impossible to ignore it. Anne had sent her home, telling her that she would have to apologize before she would be allowed to come back. The fat was fairly in the fire. It was open warfare now between her and the Pringles. And poor Anne had no doubt on whose banner victory would perch. The school board would back the Pringles up

and she would be given her choice between letting Jen come back or being asked to resign.

She felt very bitter. She had done her best and she knew she could have succeeded if she had had even a fighting chance.

“It’s not my fault,” she thought miserably. “Who *could* succeed against such a phalanx and such tactics?”

But to go home to Green Gables defeated! To endure Mrs. Lynde’s indignation and the Pyes’ exultation! Even the sympathy of friends would be an anguish. And with her Summerside failure bruited abroad she would never be able to get another school.

But at least they had not got the better of her in the matter of the play. Anne laughed a little wickedly and her eyes filled with mischievous delight over the memory.

She had organized a High School Dramatic Club and directed it in a little play hurriedly gotten up to provide some funds for one of her pet schemes ... buying some good engravings for the rooms. She had made herself ask Katherine Brooke to help her because Katherine always seemed so left out of everything. She could not help regretting it many times, for Katherine was even more brusque and sarcastic than usual. She seldom let a practice pass without some corrosive remark and she overworked her eyebrows. Worse still, it was Katherine who had insisted on having Jen Pringle take the part of Mary Queen of Scots.

“There’s no one else in the school who can play it,” she said impatiently. “No one who has the necessary personality.”

Anne was not so sure of this. She rather thought that Sophy Sinclair, who was tall and had hazel eyes and rich chestnut hair, would make a far better Queen Mary than Jen. But Sophy was not even a member of the club and had never taken part in a play.

“We don’t want absolute greenhorns in this. I’m not going to be associated with anything that is not successful,” Katherine had said disagreeably, and Anne had yielded. She could not deny that Jen was very good in the part. She had a natural flair for acting and she apparently threw herself into it wholeheartedly. They practiced four evenings a week and on

the surface things went along very smoothly. Jen seemed to be so interested in her part that she behaved herself as far as the play was concerned. Anne did not meddle with her but left her to Katherine's coaching. Once or twice, though, she surprised a certain look of sly triumph on Jen's face that puzzled her. She could not guess just what it meant.

One afternoon, soon after the practices had begun, Anne found Sophy Sinclair in tears in a corner of the girls' coatroom. At first she had blinked her hazel eyes vigorously and denied it ... then broke down.

"I did so want to be in the play ... to be Queen Mary," she sobbed. "I've never had a chance ... father wouldn't let me join the club because there are dues to pay and every cent counts so much. And of course I haven't had any experience. I've always loved Queen Mary ... her very name just thrills me to my finger tips. I don't believe ... I never will believe she had anything to do with murdering Darnley. It would have been wonderful to fancy I was she for a little while!"

Afterwards Anne concluded that it was her guardian angel who prompted her reply.

"I'll write the part out for you, Sophy, and coach you in it. It will be good training for you. And, as we plan to give the play in other places if it goes well here, it will be just as well to have an understudy in case Jen shouldn't always be able to go. But we'll say nothing about it to any one."

Sophy had the part memorized by the next day. She went home to Windy Poplars with Anne every afternoon when school came out and rehearsed it in the tower. They had a lot of fun together, for Sophy was full of quiet vivacity. The play was to be put on the last Friday in November in the town hall; it was widely advertised and the reserved seats were sold to the last one. Anne and Katherine spent two evenings decorating the hall, the band was hired, and a noted soprano was coming up from Charlottetown to sing between the acts. The dress rehearsal was a success. Jen was really excellent and the whole cast played up to her. Friday morning Jen was not in school; and in the afternoon her mother sent word that Jen was ill with a very sore throat ... they were afraid it was

tonsillitis. Everybody concerned was very sorry, but it was out of the question that she should take part in the play that night.

Katherine and Anne stared at each other, drawn together for once in their common dismay.

“We’ll have to put it off,” said Katherine slowly. “And that means failure. Once we’re into December there’s so much going on. Well, I always thought it was foolish to try to get up a play this time of the year.”

“We are not going to postpone it,” said Anne, her eyes as green as Jen’s own. She was not going to say it to Katherine Brooke, but she knew as well as she had ever known anything in her life that Jen Pringle was in no more danger of tonsillitis than she was. It was a deliberate device, whether any of the other Pringles were a party to it or not, to ruin the play because she, Anne Shirley, had sponsored it.

“Oh, if you feel that way about it!” said Katherine with a nasty shrug. “But what do you intend to do? Get some one to read the part? That would ruin it ... Mary is the whole play.”

“Sophy Sinclair can play the part as well as Jen. The costume will fit her and, thanks be, you made it and have it, not Jen.”

The play was put on that night before a packed audience. A delighted Sophy played Mary ... *was* Mary, as Jen Pringle could never have been ... *looked* Mary in her velvet robes and ruff and jewels. Students of Summerside High, who had never seen Sophy in anything but her plain, dowdy, dark serge dresses, shapeless coat and shabby hats, stared at her in amazement. It was insisted on the spot that she become a permanent member of the Dramatic Club — Anne herself paid the membership fee — and from then on she was one of the pupils who “counted” in Summerside High. But nobody knew or dreamed, Sophy herself least of all, that she had taken the first step that night on a pathway that was to lead to the stars. Twenty years later Sophy Sinclair was to be one of the leading actresses in America. But probably no plaudits ever sounded so sweet in her ears as the wild applause amid which the curtain fell that night in Summerside town hall.

Mrs. James Pringle took a tale home to her daughter Jen which would have turned that damsel's eyes green if they had not been already so. For once, as Rebecca Dew said feelingly, Jen had got her comeuppance. And the eventual result was the insult in the composition on Important Happenings.

Anne went down to the old graveyard along a deep-rutted lane between high, mossy stone dykes, tasseled with frosted ferns. Slim, pointed lombardies, from which November winds had not yet stripped all the leaves, grew along it at intervals, coming out darkly against the amethyst of the far hills; but the old graveyard, with half its tombstones leaning at a drunken slant, was surrounded by a four-square row of tall, somber fir trees. Anne had not expected to find any one there and was a little taken aback when she met Miss Valentine Courtaloe, with her long delicate nose, her thin delicate mouth, her sloping delicate shoulders and her general air of invincible ladylikeness, just inside the gate. She knew Miss Valentine, of course, as did everyone in Summerside. She was "the" local dressmaker and what she didn't know about people, living or dead, was not worth taking into account. Anne had wanted to wander about by herself, read the odd old epitaphs and puzzle out the names of forgotten lovers under the lichens that were growing over them. But she could not escape when Miss Valentine slipped an arm through hers and proceeded to do the honors of the graveyard, where there were evidently as many Courtaloes buried as Pringles. Miss Valentine had not a drop of Pringle blood in her and one of Anne's favorite pupils was her nephew. So it was no great mental strain to be nice to her, except that one must be very careful never to hint that she "sewed for a living." Miss Valentine was said to be very sensitive on that point.

"I'm glad I happened to be here this evening," said Miss Valentine. "I can tell you all about everybody buried here. I always say you have to know the ins and outs of the corpses to find a graveyard real enjoyable. I like a walk here better than in the new. It's only the *old* families that are buried here but every Tom, Dick and Harry is being buried in the new. The

Courtaloes are buried in this corner. My, we've had a terrible lot of funerals in our family."

"I suppose every old family has," said Anne, because Miss Valentine evidently expected her to say something.

"Don't tell me *any* family has ever had as many as ours," said Miss Valentine jealously. "We're *very* consumptive. Most of us died of a cough. This is my Aunt Bessie's grave. She was a saint if ever there was one. But there's no doubt her sister, Aunt Cecilia, was the more interesting to talk to. The last time I ever saw her she said to me, 'Sit down, my dear, sit down. I'm going to die tonight at ten minutes past eleven but that's no reason why we shouldn't have a real good gossip for the last.' The strange thing, Miss Shirley, is that she did die that night at ten minutes past eleven. Can you tell me how she knew it?"

Anne couldn't.

"My Great-great-grandfather Courtaloe is buried *here*. He came out in 1760 and he made spinning-wheels for a living. I've heard he made fourteen hundred in the course of his life. When he died the minister preached from the text, 'Their works do follow them,' and old Myrom Pringle said in that case the road to heaven behind my great-great-grandfather would be choked with spinning-wheels. Do you think such a remark was in good taste, Miss Shirley?"

Had any one but a Pringle said it, Anne might not have remarked so decidedly, "I certainly do not," looking at a gravestone adorned with a skull and cross-bones as if she questioned the good taste of that also.

"My cousin Dora is buried *here*. She had three husbands but they all died very rapidly. Poor Dora didn't seem to have any luck picking a healthy man. Her last one was Benjamin Banning ... *not* buried here ... buried in Lowvale beside *his* first wife ... and he wasn't reconciled to dying. Dora told him he was going to a better world. 'Mebbe, mebbe,' says poor Ben, 'but I'm sorter used to the imperfections of this one.' He took sixty-one different kinds of medicine but in spite of that he lingered for a good while. All Uncle David Courtaloe's family are *here*. There's a cabbage rose planted at the foot of every grave and, my, don't they bloom!

I come here every summer and gather them for my rose-jar. It would be a pity to let them go to waste, don't you think?"

"I ... I suppose so."

"My poor young sister Harriet lies *here*," sighed Miss Valentine. "She had magnificent hair ... about the color of yours ... not so red perhaps. It reached to her knees. She was engaged when she died. They tell me you're engaged. I never much wanted to be married but I think it would have been nice to be engaged. Oh, I've had some chances of course ... perhaps I was too fastidious ... but a Courtaloe couldn't marry *everybody*, could she?"

It did not seem likely she could.

"Frank Digby ... over in that corner under the sumacs ... wanted me. I *did* feel a little regretful over refusing him ... but a Digby, my dear! He married Georgina Troop. She always went to church a little late to show off her clothes. My, she was fond of clothes. She was buried in such a pretty blue dress ... I made it for her to wear to a wedding but in the end she wore it to her own funeral. She had three darling little children. They used to sit in front of me at church and I always gave them candy. Do you think it wrong to give children candy in church, Miss Shirley? Not peppermints ... that would be all right ... there's something *religious* about peppermints, don't you think? But the poor things don't like them."

When the Courtaloe's plots were exhausted Miss Valentine's reminiscences became a bit spicier. It did not make so much difference if you weren't a Courtaloe.

"Old Mrs. Russell Pringle is here. I often wonder if she's in heaven or not."

"But why?" gasped a rather shocked Anne.

"Well, she always hated her sister, Mary Ann, who had died a few months before. 'If Mary Ann is in heaven I won't stay there,' says she. And she was a woman who always kept her word, my dear ... Pringle-like. She was born a Pringle and married her cousin Russell. This is Mrs. Dan Pringle ... Janetta Bird. Seventy to a day when she died. Folks say she would have thought it wrong to die a day older than threescore and ten because that is the Bible limit. People do say such funny things, don't

they? I've heard that dying was the only thing she ever dared do without asking her husband. Do you know, my dear, what he did once when she bought a hat he didn't like?"

"I can't imagine."

"He *et* it," said Miss Valentine solemnly. "Of course it was only a small hat ... lace and flowers ... no feathers. Still, it must have been rather indigestible. I understand he had gnawing pains in his stomach for quite a time. Of course I didn't see him eat it, but I've always been assured the story was true. Do you suppose it was?"

"I'd believe anything of a Pringle," said Anne bitterly.

Miss Valentine pressed her arm sympathetically.

"I feel for you ... indeed I do. It's terrible the way they're treating you. But Summerside isn't *all* Pringle, Miss Shirley."

"Sometimes I think it is," said Anne with a rueful smile.

"No, it isn't. And there are plenty of people would like to see you get the better of them. Don't you give in to them no matter what they do. It's just the old Satan that's got into them. But they hang together so and Miss Sarah did want that cousin of theirs to get the school.

"The Nathan Pringles are *here*. Nathan always believed his wife was trying to poison him but he didn't seem to mind. He said it made life kind of exciting. Once he kind of suspected she'd put arsenic in his porridge. He went out and fed it to a pig. The pig died three weeks afterwards. But he said maybe it was only a coincidence and anyway he couldn't be sure it was the same pig. In the end she died before him and he said she'd always been a real good wife to him except for that one thing. I think it would be charitable to believe that he was mistaken about *it*."

"'Sacred to the memory of *Miss Kinsey*,'" read Anne in amazement. "What an extraordinary inscription! Had she no other name?"

"If she had, nobody ever knew it," said Miss Valentine. "She came from Nova Scotia and worked for the George Pringles for forty years. She gave her name as Miss Kinsey and everybody called her that. She died suddenly and then it was discovered that nobody knew her first name and she had no relations that anybody could find. So they put that on her stone

... the George Pringles buried her very nicely and paid for the monument. She was a faithful, hardworking creature but if you'd ever seen her you'd have thought she was *born* Miss Kinsey. The James Morleys are *here*. I was at their golden wedding. Such a to-do ... gifts and speeches and flowers ... and their children all home and them smiling and bowing and just hating each other as hard as they could."

"Hating each other?"

"Bitterly, my dear. Every one knew it. They had for years and years ... almost all their married life in fact. They quarreled on the way home from church after the wedding. I often wonder how they manage to lie here so peaceably side by side."

Again Anne shivered. How terrible ... sitting opposite each other at table ... lying down beside each other at night ... going to church with their babies to be christened ... and hating each other through it all! Yet they must have loved to begin with. Was it possible she and Gilbert could ever ... nonsense! The Pringles were getting on her nerves.

"Handsome John MacTabb is buried here. He was always suspected of being the reason why Annetta Kennedy drowned herself. The MacTabbs were all handsome but you could never believe a word they said. There used to be a stone here for his Uncle Samuel, who was reported drowned at sea fifty years ago. When he turned up alive the family took the stone down. The man they bought it from wouldn't take it back so Mrs. Samuel used it for a baking-board. Talk about a marble slab for mixing on! That old tombstone was just fine, she said. The MacTabb children were always bringing cookies to school with raised letters and figures on them ... scraps of the epitaph. They gave them away real generous, but I never could bring myself to eat one. I'm peculiar that way. Mr. Harley Pringle is *here*. He had to wheel Peter MacTabb down Main Street once, in a wheelbarrow, wearing a bonnet, for an election bet. All Summerside turned out to see it ... except the Pringles, of course. *They* nearly died of shame. Milly Pringle is *here*. I was very fond of Milly, even if she was a Pringle. She was so pretty and as light-footed as a fairy. Sometimes I think, my dear, on nights like this she must slip out of her grave and dance like she

used to do. But I suppose a Christian shouldn't be harboring such thoughts. This is Herb Pringle's grave. He was one of the jolly Pringles. He always made you laugh. He laughed right out in church once ... when the mouse dropped out of the flowers on Meta Pringle's hat when she bowed in prayer. *I* didn't feel much like laughing. I didn't know where the mouse had gone. I pulled my skirts tight about my ankles and held them there till church was out, but it spoiled the sermon for me. Herb sat behind me and such a shout as he gave. People who couldn't see the mouse thought he'd gone crazy. It seemed to me that laugh of his *couldn't* die. If *he* was alive he'd stand up for you, Sarah or no Sarah. *This*, of course, is Captain Abraham Pringle's monument."

It dominated the whole graveyard. Four receding platforms of stone formed a square pedestal on which rose a huge pillar of marble topped with a ridiculous draped urn beneath which a fat cherub was blowing a horn.

"How ugly!" said Anne candidly.

"Oh, do you think so?" Miss Valentine seemed rather shocked. "It was thought very handsome when it was erected. That is supposed to be Gabriel blowing his trumpet. I think it gives quite a touch of elegance to the graveyard. It cost nine hundred dollars. Captain Abraham was a very fine old man. It is a great pity he is dead. If he was living they wouldn't be persecuting you the way they are. I don't wonder Sarah and Ellen are proud of him, though I think they carry it a bit too far."

At the graveyard gate Anne turned and looked back. A strange, peaceful hush lay over the windless land. Long fingers of moonlight were beginning to pierce the darkling firs, touching a gravestone here and there, and making strange shadows among them. But the graveyard wasn't a sad place after all. Really, the people in it seemed alive after Miss Valentine's tales.

"I've heard you write," said Miss Valentine anxiously, as they went down the lane. "You won't put the things I've told you in your stories, will you?"

"You may be sure I won't," promised Anne.

“Do you think it is really wrong ... or dangerous ... to speak ill of the dead?” whispered Miss Valentine a bit anxiously.

“I don’t suppose it’s exactly either,” said Anne. “Only ... rather unfair ... like hitting those who can’t defend themselves. But you didn’t say anything very dreadful of anybody, Miss Courtaloe.”

“I told you Nathan Pringle thought his wife was trying to poison him ...”

“But you give her the benefit of the doubt ...” and Miss Valentine went her way reassured.

Chapter VI

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“I wended my way to the graveyard this evening,” wrote Anne to Gilbert after she got home. “I think ‘wend your way’ is a lovely phrase and I work it in whenever I can. It sounds funny to say I enjoyed my stroll in the graveyard but I really did. Miss Courtaloe’s stories were so funny. Comedy and tragedy are so mixed up in life, Gilbert. The only thing that haunts me is that tale of the two who lived together fifty years and hated each other all that time. I can’t believe they really did. Somebody has said that ‘hate is only love that has missed its way.’ I feel sure that under the hatred they really loved each other ... just as I really loved you all those years I thought I hated you ... and I think death would show it to them. I’m glad *I* found out in life. And I have found out there *are* some decent Pringles ... dead ones.

“Last night when I went down late for a drink of water I found Aunt Kate buttermilking her face in the pantry. She asked me not to tell Chatty ... she would think it so silly. I promised I wouldn’t.

“Elizabeth still comes for the milk, though the Woman is pretty well over her bronchitis. I wonder they let her, especially since old Mrs. Campbell is a Pringle. Last Saturday night Elizabeth ... she was Betty that night I think ... ran in singing when she left me and I distinctly heard the Woman say to her at the porch door, ‘It’s too near the Sabbath for you to be singing *that* song.’ I am sure that Woman would prevent Elizabeth from singing on any day if she could!

“Elizabeth had on a new dress that night, a dark wine color ... they *do* dress her nicely ... and she said wistfully, ‘I thought I looked a little bit pretty when I put it on tonight, Miss Shirley, and I wished father could see me. Of course he will see me in Tomorrow ... but it sometimes seems so slow in coming. I wish we could hurry time a bit, Miss Shirley.’

“Now, dearest, I must work out some geometrical exercises. Geometry exercises have taken the place of what Rebecca calls my ‘literary efforts.’ The specter that haunts my daily path now is the dread of an exercise popping up in class that I can’t do. And what would the Pringles say then, oh, then ... oh, what would the Pringles say then!

“Meanwhile, as you love me and the cat tribe, pray for a poor brokenhearted, illused Thomas cat. A mouse ran over Rebecca Dew’s foot in the pantry the other day and she has fumed ever since. ‘That Cat does nothing but eat and sleep and let mice overrun everything. This *is* the last straw.’ So she chivies him from pillar to post, routs him off his favorite cushion and ... I know, for I caught her at it ... assists him none too gently with her foot when she lets him out.”

Chapter VII

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One Friday evening, at the end of a mild, sunny December day Anne went out to Lowvale to attend a turkey supper. Wilfred Bryce's home was in Lowvale, where he lived with an uncle, and he had asked her shyly if she would go out with him after school, go to the turkey supper in the church and spend Saturday at his home. Anne agreed, hoping that she might be able to influence the uncle to let Wilfred keep on going to High School. Wilfred was afraid that he would not be able to go back after New Year. He was a clever, ambitious boy and Anne felt a special interest in him.

It could not be said that she enjoyed her visit overmuch, except in the pleasure it gave Wilfred. His uncle and aunt were a rather odd and uncouth pair. Saturday morning was windy and dark, with showers of snow, and at first Anne wondered how she was going to put in the day. She felt tired and sleepy after the late hours of the turkey supper; Wilfred had to help thrash; and there was not even a book in sight. Then she thought of the battered old seaman's chest she had seen in the back of the hall upstairs and recalled Mrs. Stanton's request. Mrs. Stanton was writing a history of Prince County and had asked Anne if she knew of, or could find, any old diaries or documents that might be helpful.

"The Pringles, of course, have lots that I could use," she told Anne. "But I can't ask *them*. You know the Pringles and Stantons have never been friends."

"I can't ask them either, unfortunately," said Anne.

"Oh, I'm not expecting you to. All I want is for you to keep your eyes open when you are visiting round in other people's homes and if you find or hear of any old diaries or maps or anything like that, try to get the loan of them for me. You've no idea what interesting things I've found in old diaries ... little bits of real life that make the old pioneers live again. I

want to get things like that for my book as well as statistics and genealogical tables.”

Anne asked Mrs. Bryce if they had any such old records. Mrs. Bryce shook her head.

“Not as I knows on. In course ...” brightening up ... “there’s old Uncle Andy’s chest up there. There might be something in it. He used to sail with old Captain Abraham Pringle. I’ll go out and ask Duncan if ye kin root in it.”

Duncan sent word back that she could “root” in it all she liked and if she found any “dockymints” she could have them. He’d been meaning to burn the hull contents anyway and take the chest for a tool-box. Anne accordingly rooted, but all she found was an old yellowed diary or “log” which Andy Bryce seemed to have kept all through his years at sea. Anne beguiled the stormy forenoon away by reading it with interest and amusement. Andy was learned in sea lore and had gone on many voyages with Captain Abraham Pringle, whom he evidently admired immensely. The diary was full of ill-spelled, ungrammatical tributes to the Captain’s courage and resourcefulness, especially in one wild enterprise of beating round the Horn. But his admiration had not, it seemed, extended to Abraham’s brother Myrom, who was also a captain but of a different ship.

“Up to Myrom Pringle’s tonight. His wife made him mad and he up and throwed a glass of water in her face.”

“Myrom is home. His ship was burned and they took to the boats. Nearly starved. In the end they et up Jonas Selkirk, who had shot himself. They lived on him till the *Mary G.* picked them up. Myrom told me this himself. Seemed to think it a good joke.”

Anne shivered over this last entry, which seemed all the more horrifying for Andy’s unimpassioned statement of the grim facts. Then she fell into a reverie. There was nothing in the book that could be of any use to Mrs. Stanton, but wouldn’t Miss Sarah and Miss Ellen be interested in it since it contained so much about their adored old father? Suppose she sent it to them? Duncan Bryce had said she could do as she liked with it.

No, she wouldn't. Why should she try to please them or cater to their absurd pride, which was great enough now without any more food? They had set themselves to drive her out of the school and they were succeeding. They and their clan had beaten her.

Wilfred took her back to Windy Poplars that evening, both of them feeling happy. Anne had talked Duncan Bryce into letting Wilfred finish out his year in High School.

"Then I'll manage Queen's for a year and after that teach and educate myself," said Wilfred. "How can I ever repay you, Miss Shirley? Uncle wouldn't have listened to any one else, but he likes you. He said to me out in the barn, 'Redhaired women could always do what they liked with me.' But I don't think it was your hair, Miss Shirley, although it is so beautiful. It was just ... *you*."

At two o'clock that night Anne woke up and decided that she would send Andy Bryce's diary to Maplehurst. After all, she had a bit of liking for the old ladies. And they had so little to make life warm ... only their pride in their father. At three she woke again and decided she wouldn't. Miss Sarah pretending to be deaf, indeed! At four she was in the swithers again. Finally she determined she would send it to them. She wouldn't be petty. Anne had a horror of being petty ... like the Pyes.

Having settled this, Anne went to sleep for keeps, thinking how lovely it was to wake up in the night and hear the first snowstorm of the winter around your tower and then snuggle down in your blankets and drift into dreamland again.

Monday morning she wrapped up the old diary carefully and sent it to Miss Sarah with a little note.

"DEAR MISS PRINGLE:

"I wonder if you would be interested in this old diary. Mr. Bryce gave it to me for Mrs. Stanton, who is writing a history of the county, but I don't think it would be of any use to her and I thought you might like to have it.

"Yours sincerely,

"ANNE SHIRLEY."

“That’s a horribly stiff note,” thought Anne, “but I can’t write naturally to them. And I wouldn’t be a bit surprised if they sent it haughtily back to me.”

In the fine blue of the early winter evening Rebecca Dew got the shock of her life. The Maplehurst carriage drove along Spook’s Lane, over the powdery snow, and stopped at the front gate. Miss Ellen got out of it and then ... to every one’s amazement ... Miss Sarah, who had not left Maplehurst for ten years.

“They’re coming to the front door,” gasped Rebecca Dew, panic-stricken.

“Where else would a Pringle come to?” asked Aunt Kate.

“Of course ... of course ... but it sticks,” said Rebecca tragically. “It *does* stick ... you know it does. And it hasn’t been opened since we housecleaned last spring. This *is* the last straw.”

The front door did stick ... but Rebecca Dew wrenched it open with desperate violence and showed the Maplehurst ladies into the parlor.

“Thank heaven, we’ve had a fire in it today,” she thought, “and all I hope is That Cat hasn’t haired up the sofa. If Sarah Pringle got cat hairs on her dress in our parlor ...”

Rebecca Dew dared not imagine the consequences. She called Anne from the tower room, Miss Sarah having asked if Miss Shirley were in, and then betook herself to the kitchen, half mad with curiosity as to what on earth was bringing the old Pringle girls to see Miss Shirley.

“If there’s any more persecution in the wind ...” said Rebecca Dew darkly.

Anne herself descended with considerable trepidation. Had they come to return the diary with icy scorn?

It was little, wrinkled, inflexible Miss Sarah who rose and spoke without preamble when Anne entered the room.

“We have come to capitulate,” she said bitterly. “We can do nothing else ... of course you knew that when you found that scandalous entry about poor Uncle Myrom. It wasn’t true ... it *couldn’t* be true. Uncle Myrom was just taking a rise out of Andy Bryce ... Andy was so

credulous. But everybody outside of our family will be glad to believe it. You knew it would make us all a laughing stock ... and worse. Oh, you are very clever. We admit *that*. Jen will apologize and behave herself in future ... I, Sarah Pringle, assure you of that. If you will only promise not to tell Mrs. Stanton ... not to tell any one ... we will do anything ... *anything*.”

Miss Sarah wrung her fine lace handkerchief in her little blue-veined hands. She was literally trembling.

Anne stared in amazement ... and horror. The poor old darlings! They thought she had been threatening them!

“Oh, you’ve misunderstood me dreadfully,” she exclaimed, taking Miss Sarah’s poor, piteous hands. “I ... I never dreamed you would think I was trying to ... oh, it was just because I thought you would like to have all those interesting details about your splendid father. I never dreamed of showing or telling that other little item to any one. I didn’t think it was of the least importance. And I never will.”

There was a moment’s silence. Then Miss Sarah freed her hands gently, put her handkerchief to her eyes and sat down, with a faint blush on her fine wrinkled face.

“We ... we *have* misunderstood you, my dear. And we’ve ... we’ve been abominable to you. Will you forgive us?”

Half an hour later ... a half hour which nearly was the death of Rebecca Dew ... the Misses Pringle went away. It had been a half hour of friendly chat and discussion about the non-combustible items of Andy’s diary. At the front door Miss Sarah ... who had not had the least trouble with her hearing during the interview ... turned back for a moment and took a bit of paper, covered with very fine, sharp writing, from her reticule.

“I had almost forgotten ... we promised Mrs. MacLean our recipe for pound cake some time ago. Perhaps you won’t mind handing it to her? And tell her the sweating process is very important ... quite indispensable, indeed. Ellen, your bonnet is slightly over one ear. You had better adjust it before we leave. We ... we were somewhat agitated while dressing.”

Anne told the widows and Rebecca Dew that she had given Andy Bryce's old diary to the ladies of Maplehurst and that they had come to thank her for it. With this explanation they had to be contented, although Rebecca Dew always felt that there was more behind it than that ... much more. Gratitude for an old faded, tobacco-stained diary would never have brought Sarah Pringle to the front door of Windy Poplars. Miss Shirley was deep ... very deep!

"I'm going to open that front door once a day after this," vowed Rebecca. "Just to keep it in practice. I all but went over flat when it *did* give way. Well, we've got the recipe for the pound cake anyway. Thirty-six eggs! If you'd dispose of That Cat and let me keep hens we might be able to afford it once a year."

Whereupon Rebecca Dew marched to the kitchen and got square with fate by giving That Cat milk when she knew he wanted liver.

The Shirley-Pringle feud was over. Nobody outside of the Pringles ever knew why, but Summerside people understood that Miss Shirley, single-handed, had, in some mysterious way, routed the whole clan, who ate out of her hand from then on. Jen came back to school the next day and apologized meekly to Anne before the whole room. She was a model pupil thereafter and every Pringle student followed her lead. As for the adult Pringles, their antagonism vanished like mist before the sun. There were no more complaints regarding "discipline" or home work. No more of the fine, subtle snubs characteristic of the ilk. They fairly fell over one another trying to be nice to Anne. No dance or skating party was complete without her. For, although the fatal diary had been committed to the flames by Miss Sarah herself, memory was memory and Miss Shirley had a tale to tell if she chose to tell it. It would never do to have that nosey Mrs. Stanton know that Captain Myrom Pringle had been a cannibal!

Chapter VIII

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(Extract from letter to Gilbert)

“I am in my tower and Rebecca Dew is caroling *Could I but climb?* in the kitchen. Which reminds me that the minister’s wife has asked me to sing in the choir! Of course the Pringles have told her to do it. I may do it on the Sundays I don’t spend at Green Gables. The Pringles have held out the right hand of fellowship with a vengeance ... accepted me lock, stock and barrel. What a clan!

“I’ve been to three Pringle parties. I set nothing down in malice but I think all the Pringle girls are imitating my style of hairdressing. Well, ‘imitation is the sincerest flattery.’ And, Gilbert, I’m really liking them ... as I always knew I would if they would give me a chance. I’m even beginning to suspect that sooner or later I’ll find myself liking Jen. She can be charming when she wants to be and it is very evident she wants to be.

“Last night I bearded the lion in his den ... in other words, I went boldly up the front steps of The Evergreens to the square porch with the four whitewashed iron urns in its corners, and rang the bell. When Miss Monkman came to the door I asked her if she would lend little Elizabeth to me for a walk. I expected a refusal, but after the Woman had gone in and conferred with Mrs. Campbell, she came back and said dourly that Elizabeth could go but, please, I wasn’t to keep her out late. I wonder if even Mrs. Campbell has got her orders from Miss Sarah.

“Elizabeth came dancing down the dark stairway, looking like a pixy in a red coat and little green cap, and almost speechless for joy.

“‘I feel all squirmy and excited, Miss Shirley,’ she whispered as soon as we got away. ‘I’m Betty ... I’m always Betty when I feel like that.’

“We went as far down the Road that Leads to the End of the World as we dared and then back. Tonight the harbor, lying dark under a crimson

sunset, seemed full of implications of 'fairylands forlorn' and mysterious isles in uncharted seas. I thrilled to it and so did the mite I held by the hand.

"If we ran hard, Miss Shirley, could we get into the sunset?' she wanted to know. I remembered Paul and his fancies about the 'sunset land.'

"We must wait for Tomorrow before we can do that,' I said. 'Look, Elizabeth, at that golden island of cloud just over the harbor mouth. Let's pretend that's your island of Happiness.'

"There is an island down there somewhere,' said Elizabeth dreamily. 'Its name is Flying Cloud. Isn't that a lovely name ... a name just out of Tomorrow? I can see it from the garret windows. It belongs to a gentleman from Boston and he has a summer home there. But I pretend it's mine.'

"At the door I stooped and kissed Elizabeth's cheek before she went in. I shall never forget her eyes. Gilbert, that child is just starved for love.

"Tonight, when she came over for her milk, I saw that she had been crying.

"They ... they made me wash your kiss off, Miss Shirley,' she sobbed. 'I didn't want ever to wash my face again. I *vowed* I wouldn't. Because, you see, I didn't want to wash your kiss off. I got away to school this morning without doing it, but tonight the Woman just took me and *scrubbed* it off.'

"I kept a straight face.

"You couldn't go through life without washing your face occasionally, darling. But never mind about the kiss. I'll kiss you every night when you come for the milk and then it won't matter if it is washed off the next morning.'

"You are the only person who loves me in the world,' said Elizabeth. 'When you talk to me I smell violets.'

"Was anybody ever paid a prettier compliment? But I couldn't quite let the first sentence pass.

"Your grandmother loves you, Elizabeth.'

"She doesn't ... she hates me.'

“‘You’re just a wee bit foolish, darling. Your grandmother and Miss Monkman are both old people and old people are easily disturbed and worried. Of course you annoy them sometimes. And ... of course ... when *they* were young, children were brought up much more strictly than they are now. They cling to the old way.’

“But I felt I was not convincing Elizabeth. After all, they *don’t* love her and she knows it. She looked carefully back at the house to see if the door was shut. Then she said deliberately:

“‘Grandmother and the Woman are just two old tyrants and when Tomorrow comes I’m going to escape them forever.’

“I think she expected I’d die of horror... . I really suspect Elizabeth said it just to make a sensation. I merely laughed and kissed her. I hope Martha Monkman saw it from the kitchen window.

“I can see over Summerside from the left window in the tower. Just now it is a huddle of friendly white roofs ... friendly at last since the Pringles are my friends. Here and there a light is gleaming in gable and dormer. Here and there is a suggestion of gray-ghost smoke. Thick stars are low over it all. It is ‘a dreaming town.’ Isn’t that a lovely phrase? You remember ... ‘Galahad through dreaming towns did go’?

“I feel so happy, Gilbert. I won’t have to go home to Green Gables at Christmas, defeated and discredited. Life is good ... good!

“So is Miss Sarah’s pound cake. Rebecca Dew made one and ‘sweated’ it according to directions ... which simply means that she wrapped it in several thicknesses of brown paper and several more towels and left it for three days. I can recommend it.

“(Are there, or are there not, two ‘c’s’ in recommend’? In spite of the fact that I am a B.A. I can never be certain. Fancy if the Pringles had discovered that before I found Andy’s diary!)”

Chapter IX

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Trix Taylor was curled up in the tower one night in February, while little flurries of snow hissed against the windows and that absurdly tiny stove purred like a red-hot black cat. Trix was pouring out her woes to Anne. Anne was beginning to find herself the recipient of confidences on all sides. She was known to be engaged, so that none of the Summerside girls feared her as a possible rival, and there was something about her that made you feel it was safe to tell her secrets.

Trix had come up to ask Anne to dinner the next evening. She was a jolly, plump little creature, with twinkling brown eyes and rosy cheeks, and did not look as if life weighed too heavily on her twenty years. But it appeared that she had troubles of her own.

“Dr. Lennox Carter is coming to dinner tomorrow night. That is why we want you especially. He is the new Head of the Modern Languages Department at Redmond and dreadfully clever, so we want somebody with brains to talk to him. You know I haven’t any to boast of, nor Pringle either. As for Esme ... well, you know, Anne, Esme is the sweetest thing and she’s really clever, but she’s so shy and timid she can’t even make use of what brains she has when Dr. Carter is around. She’s so terribly in love with him. It’s pitiful. *I’m* very fond of Johnny ... but before I’d dissolve into such a liquid state for him!”

“Are Esme and Dr. Carter engaged?”

“Not yet” ... significantly. “But, oh, Anne, she’s hoping he means to ask her this time. Would he come over to the Island to visit his cousin right in the middle of the term if he didn’t intend to? I hope he will for Esme’s sake, because she’ll just die if he doesn’t. But between you and me and the bedpost I’m not terribly struck on him for a brother-in-law. He’s awfully fastidious, Esme says, and she’s desperately afraid he won’t approve of *us*. If he doesn’t, she thinks he’ll never ask her to marry him.

So you can't imagine how she's hoping everything will go well at the dinner tomorrow night. I don't see why it shouldn't ... Mamma is the most wonderful cook ... and we have a good maid and I've bribed Pringle with half my week's allowance to behave himself. Of course he doesn't like Dr. Carter either ... says he's got swelled head ... but he's fond of Esme. If only Papa won't have a sulky fit on!"

"Have you any reason to fear it?" asked Anne. Every one in Summerside knew about Cyrus Taylor's sulky fits.

"You never can tell when he'll take one," said Trix dolefully. "He was frightfully upset tonight because he couldn't find his new flannel nightshirt. Esme had put it in the wrong drawer. He may be over it by tomorrow night or he may not. If he's not, he'll disgrace us all and Dr. Carter will conclude he can't marry into such a family. At least, that is what Esme says and I'm afraid she may be right. I think, Anne, that Lennox Carter is very fond of Esme ... thinks she would make a 'very suitable wife' for him ... but doesn't want to do anything rash or throw his wonderful self away. I've heard that he told his cousin a man couldn't be too careful what kind of family he married into. He's just at the point where he might be turned either way by a trifle. And, if it comes to that, one of Papa's sulky fits isn't any trifle."

"Doesn't he like Dr. Carter?"

"Oh, he does. He thinks it would be a wonderful match for Esme. But when Father has one of his spells on, *nothing* has any influence over him while it lasts. That's the Pringle for you, Anne. Grandmother Taylor was a Pringle, you know. You just can't imagine what we've gone through as a family. He never goes into rages, you know ... like Uncle George. Uncle George's family don't mind his rages. When he goes into a temper he blows off ... you can hear him roaring three blocks away ... and then he's like a lamb and brings every one a new dress for a peace-offering. But Father just sulks and glowers, and won't say a word to *anybody* at meal times. Esme says that, after all, that's better than cousin Richard Taylor, who is always saying sarcastic things at the table and insulting his wife; but it seems to me *nothing* could be worse than those awful silences of

Papa's. They rattle us and we're terrified to open our mouths. It wouldn't be so bad, of course, if it was only when we are alone. But it's just as apt to be where we have company. Esme and I are simply tired of trying to explain away Papa's insulting silences. She's just sick with fear that he won't have got over the nightshirt before tomorrow night ... and what will Lennox think? And she wants you to wear your blue dress. Her new dress is blue, because Lennox likes blue. But Papa hates it. Yours may reconcile him to hers."

"Wouldn't it be better for her to wear something else?"

"She hasn't anything else fit to wear at a company dinner except the green poplin Father gave her at Christmas. It's a lovely dress in itself ... Father likes us to have pretty dresses ... but you can't think of anything as awful as Esme in green. Pringle says it makes her look as if she was in the last stages of consumption. And Lennox Carter's cousin told Esme he would never marry a delicate person. I'm more than glad Johnny isn't so 'fastidious.'"

"Have you told your father about your engagement to Johnny yet?" asked Anne, who knew all about Trix's love affair.

"No," poor Trix groaned. "I can't summon up the courage, Anne. I know he'll make a frightful scene. Papa has always been so down on Johnny because he's poor. Papa forgets that he was poorer than Johnny when he started out in the hardware business. Of course he'll have to be told soon ... but I want to wait until Esme's affair is settled. I know Papa won't speak to *any* of us for weeks after I tell him, and Mamma will worry so ... she can't *bear* Father's sulky fits. We're all such cowards before Papa. Of course, Mamma and Esme are naturally timid with every one, but Pringle and I have lots of ginger. It's only Papa who can cow us. Sometimes I think if we had any one to back us up ... but we haven't, and we just feel paralyzed. You can't imagine, Anne darling, what a company dinner is like at our place when Papa is sulking. But if he only behaves tomorrow night I'll forgive him for everything. He *can* be very agreeable when he wants to be ... Papa is really just like Longfellow's little girl ...

‘when he’s good he’s very, very good and when he’s bad he’s horrid.’ I’ve seen him the life of the party.”

“He was very nice the night I had dinner with you last month.”

“Oh, he likes you, as I’ve said. That’s one of the reasons why we want you so much. It may have a good influence on him. We’re not neglecting *anything* that may please him. But when he has a really bad fit of sulks on he seems to hate everything and everybody. Anyhow, we’ve got a bang-up dinner planned, with an elegant orange-custard dessert. Mamma wanted pie because she says every man in the world but Papa likes pie for dessert better than anything else ... even Professors of Modern Languages. But Papa doesn’t, so it would never do to take a chance on it tomorrow night, when so much depends on it. Orange custard is Papa’s favorite dessert. As for poor Johnny and me, I suppose I’ll just have to elope with him some day and Papa will never forgive me.

“I believe if you’d just get up enough spunk to tell him and endure his resulting sulks you’d find he’d come round to it beautifully and you’d be saved months of anguish.”

“You don’t know Papa,” said Trix darkly.

“Perhaps I know him better than you do. You’ve lost your perspective.”

“Lost my ... what? Anne darling, remember I’m not a B.A. I only went through the High. I’d have loved to go to college, but Papa doesn’t believe in the Higher Education of women.”

“I only meant that you’re too close to him to understand him. A stranger could very well see him more clearly ... understand him better.”

“I understand that nothing can induce Papa to speak if he has made up his mind not to ... *nothing*. He prides himself on that.”

“Then why don’t the rest of you just go on and talk as if nothing was the matter?”

“We *can’t* ... I’ve told you he paralyzes us. You’ll find it out for yourself tomorrow night if he hasn’t got over the nightshirt. I don’t know how he does it but he does. I don’t believe we’d mind so much how cranky he was if he would only talk. It’s the silence that shatters us. I’ll never forgive Papa if he acts up tomorrow night when so much is at stake.”

“Let’s hope for the best, dear.”

“I’m trying to. And I know it will help to have you there. Mamma thought we ought to have Katherine Brooke too, but I knew it wouldn’t have a good effect on Papa. He hates her. I don’t blame him for *that*, I must say. I haven’t any use for her myself. I don’t see how you can be as nice to her as you are.”

“I’m sorry for her, Trix.”

“Sorry for her! But it’s all her own fault she isn’t liked. Oh, well, it takes all kinds of people to make a world ... but Summerside could spare Katherine Brooke ... glum old cat!”

“She’s an excellent teacher, Trix... .”

“Oh, do I know it? I was in her class. She *did* hammer things into my head ... and flayed the flesh off my bones with sarcasm as well. And the way she dresses! Papa can’t bear to see a woman badly dressed. He says he has no use for dowds and he’s sure God hasn’t either. Mamma would be horrified if she knew I told you that, Anne. She excused it in Papa because he is a man. If that was all we had to excuse in him! And poor Johnny hardly daring to come to the house now because Papa is so rude to him. I slip out on fine nights and we walk round and round the square and get half frozen.”

Anne drew what was something like a breath of relief when Trix had gone, and slipped down to coax a snack out of Rebecca Dew.

“Going to the Taylors for dinner, are you? Well, I hope old Cyrus will be decent. If his family weren’t all so afraid of him in his sulky fits he wouldn’t indulge in them so often, of that I feel certain. I tell you, Miss Shirley, he *enjoys* his sulks. And now I suppose I must warm That Cat’s milk. Pampered animal!”

Chapter X

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When Anne arrived at the Cyrus Taylor house the next evening she felt the chill in the atmosphere as soon as she entered the door. A trim maid showed her up to the guest room but as Anne went up the stairs she caught sight of Mrs. Cyrus Taylor scuttling from the dining-room to the kitchen and Mrs. Cyrus was wiping tears away from her pale, careworn, but still rather sweet face. It was all too clear that Cyrus had not yet “got over” the nightshirt.

This was confirmed by a distressed Trix creeping into the room and whispering nervously,

“Oh, Anne, he’s in a dreadful humor. He seemed pretty amiable this morning and our hopes rose. But Hugh Pringle beat him at a game of checkers this afternoon and Papa can’t *bear* to lose a checker game. And it had to happen today, of course. He found Esme ‘admiring herself in the mirror,’ as he put it, and just walked her out of her room and locked the door. The poor darling was only wondering if he looked nice enough to please Lennox Carter, Ph.D. She hadn’t even a chance to put her pearl string on. And look at me. I didn’t dare curl my hair ... Papa doesn’t like curls that are not natural ... and I look like a fright. Not that it matters about me ... only it just shows you. Papa threw out the flowers Mamma put on the dining-room table and she feels it so ... she took such trouble with them ... and he wouldn’t let her put on her garnet earrings. He hasn’t had such a bad spell since he came home from the west last spring and found Mamma had put red curtains in the sitting-room, when he preferred mulberry. Oh, Anne, do talk as hard as you can at dinner, if he won’t. If you don’t, it will be *too* dreadful.”

“I’ll do my best,” promised Anne, who certainly had never found herself at a loss for something to say. But then never had she found herself in such a situation as presently confronted her.

They were all gathered around the table ... a very pretty and well appointed table in spite of the missing flowers. Timid Mrs. Cyrus, in a gray silk dress, had a face that was grayer than her dress. Esme, the beauty of the family ... a very pale beauty, pale gold hair, pale pink lips, pale forget-me-not eyes ... was so much paler than usual that she looked as if she were going to faint. Pringle, ordinarily a fat, cheerful urchin of fourteen, with round eyes and glasses and hair so fair it looked almost white, looked like a tied dog, and Trix had the air of a terrified schoolgirl.

Dr. Carter, who was undeniably handsome and distinguished-looking, with crisp dark hair, brilliant dark eyes and silver-rimmed glasses, but whom Anne, in the days of his Assistant Professorship at Redmond, had thought a rather pompous young bore, looked ill at ease. Evidently he felt that something was wrong somewhere ... a reasonable conclusion when your host simply stalks to the head of the table and drops into his chair without a word to you or anybody.

Cyrus would not say grace. Mrs. Cyrus, blushing beet-red, murmured almost inaudibly, "For what we are about to receive the Lord make us truly thankful." The meal started badly by nervous Esme dropping her fork on the floor. Everybody except Cyrus jumped, because their nerves were likewise keyed up to the highest pitch. Cyrus glared at Esme out of his bulging blue eyes in a kind of enraged stillness. Then he glared at everybody and froze them into dumbness. He glared at poor Mrs. Cyrus, when she took a helping of horseradish sauce, with a glare that reminded her of her weak stomach. She couldn't eat any of it after that ... and she was so fond of it. She didn't believe it would hurt her. But for that matter she couldn't eat anything, nor could Esme. They only pretended. The meal proceeded in a ghastly silence, broken by spasmodic speeches about the weather from Trix and Anne. Trix implored Anne with her eyes to talk, but Anne found herself for once in her life with absolutely nothing to say. She felt desperately that she *must* talk, but only the most idiotic things came into her head ... things it would be impossible to utter aloud. Was everyone bewitched? It was curious, the effect one sulky, stubborn man had on you. Anne couldn't have believed it possible. And there was no

doubt that he was really quite happy in the knowledge that he had made everybody at his table horribly uncomfortable. What on earth was going on in his mind? Would he jump if any one stuck a pin in him? Anne wanted to slap him ... rap his knuckles ... stand him in a corner ... treat him like the spoiled child he really was, in spite of his spiky gray hair and truculent mustache.

Above all she wanted to make him *speak*. She felt instinctively that nothing in the world would punish him so much as to be tricked into speaking when he was determined not to.

Suppose she got up and deliberately smashed that huge, hideous, old-fashioned vase on the table in the corner ... an ornate thing covered with wreaths of roses and leaves which it was most difficult to dust but which must be kept immaculately clean. Anne knew that the whole family hated it, but Cyrus Taylor would not hear of having it banished to the attic, because it had been his mother's. Anne thought she would do it fearlessly if she really believed that it would make Cyrus explode into vocal anger.

Why didn't Lennox Carter talk? If he would, she, Anne, could talk, too, and perhaps Trix and Pringle would escape from the spell that bound them and some kind of conversation would be possible. But he simply sat there and ate. Perhaps he thought it was really the best thing to do ... perhaps he was afraid of saying something that would still further enrage the evidently already enraged parent of his lady.

"Will you please start the pickles, Miss Shirley?" said Mrs. Taylor faintly.

Something wicked stirred in Anne. She started the pickles ... and something else. Without letting herself stop to think she bent forward, her great, gray-green eyes glimmering limpidly, and said gently,

"Perhaps you would be surprised to hear, Dr. Carter, that Mr. Taylor went deaf very suddenly last week?"

Anne sat back, having thrown her bomb. She could not tell precisely what she expected or hoped. If Dr. Carter got the impression that his host was deaf instead of in a towering rage of silence, it might loosen his tongue. She had *not* told a falsehood ... she had *not* said Cyrus Taylor was

deaf. As for Cyrus Taylor, if she had hoped to make him speak she had failed. He merely glared at her, still in silence.

But Anne's remark had an effect on Trix and Pringle that she had never dreamed of. Trix was in a silent rage herself. She had, the moment before Anne had hurled her rhetorical question, seen Esme furtively wipe away a tear that had escaped from one of her despairing blue eyes. Everything was hopeless ... Lennox Carter would never ask Esme to marry him now ... it didn't matter any more what any one said or did. Trix was suddenly possessed with a burning desire to get square with her brutal father. Anne's speech gave her a weird inspiration, and Pringle, a volcano of suppressed impishness, blinked his white eyelashes for a dazed moment and then promptly followed her lead. Never, as long as they might live, would Anne, Esme or Mrs. Cyrus forget the dreadful quarter of an hour that followed.

"Such an affliction for poor papa," said Trix, addressing Dr. Carter across the table. "And him only sixty-eight."

Two little white dents appeared at the corners of Cyrus Taylor's nostrils when he heard his age advanced six years. But he remained silent.

"It's such a treat to have a decent meal," said Pringle, clearly and distinctly. "What would you think, Dr. Carter, of a man who makes his family live on fruit and eggs ... nothing but fruit and eggs ... just for a fad?"

"Does your father ... ?" began Dr. Carter bewilderedly.

"What would you think of a husband who bit his wife when she put up curtains he didn't like ... deliberately bit her?" demanded Trix.

"Till the blood came," added Pringle solemnly.

"Do you mean to say your father ... ?"

"What would you think of a man who would cut up a silk dress of his wife's just because the way it was made didn't suit him?" said Trix.

"What would you think," said Pringle, "of a man who refuses to let his wife have a dog?"

"When she would so love to have one," sighed Trix.

“What would you think of a man,” continued Pringle, who was beginning to enjoy himself hugely, “who would give his wife a pair of goloshes for a Christmas present ... nothing but a pair of goloshes?”

“Goloshes don’t exactly warm the heart,” admitted Dr. Carter. His eyes met Anne’s and he smiled. Anne reflected that she had never seen him smile before. It changed his face wonderfully for the better. What was Trix saying? Who would have thought she could be such a demon?

“Have you ever wondered, Dr. Carter, how awful it must be to live with a man who thinks nothing ... *nothing* — of picking up the roast, if it isn’t perfectly done, and hurling it at the maid?”

Dr. Carter glanced apprehensively at Cyrus Taylor, as if he feared Cyrus might throw the skeletons of the chickens at somebody. Then he seemed to remember comfortingly that his host was deaf.

“What would you think of a man who believed the earth was flat?” asked Pringle.

Anne thought Cyrus *would* speak then. A tremor seemed to pass over his rubicund face, but no words came. Still, she was sure his mustaches were a little less defiant.

“What would you think of a man who let his aunt ... his only aunt ... go to the poorhouse?” asked Trix.

“And pastured his cow in the graveyard?” said Pringle. “Summerside hasn’t got over that sight yet.”

“What would you think of a man who would write down in his diary every day what he had for dinner?” asked Trix.

“The great Pepys did that,” said Dr. Carter with another smile. His voice sounded as if he would like to laugh. Perhaps after all he was not pompous, thought Anne ... only young and shy and overserious. But she was feeling positively aghast. She had never meant things to go as far as this. She was finding out that it is much easier to start things than finish them. Trix and Pringle were being diabolically clever. They had not said that their father did a single one of these things. Anne could fancy Pringle saying, his round eyes rounder still with pretended innocence, “I just asked those questions of Dr. Carter for *information*.”

“What would you think,” kept on Trix, “of a man who opens and reads his wife’s letters?”

“What would you think of a man who would go to a funeral ... his father’s funeral ... in overalls?” asked Pringle.

What *would* they think of next? Mrs. Cyrus was crying openly and Esme was quite calm with despair. Nothing mattered any more. She turned and looked squarely at Dr. Carter, whom she had lost forever. For once in her life she was stung into saying a really clever thing.

“What,” she asked quietly, “would you think of a man who spent a whole day hunting for the kittens of a poor cat who had been shot, because he couldn’t bear to think of them starving to death?”

A strange silence descended on the room. Trix and Pringle looked suddenly ashamed of themselves. And then Mrs. Cyrus piped up, feeling it her wifely duty to back up Esme’s unexpected defense of her father.

“And he can crochet so beautifully ... he made the loveliest centerpiece for the parlor table last winter when he was laid up with lumbago.”

Every one has some limit of endurance and Cyrus Taylor had reached his. He gave his chair such a furious backward push that it shot instantly across the polished floor and struck the table on which the vase stood. The table went over and the vase broke in the traditional thousand pieces. Cyrus, his bushy white eyebrows fairly bristling with wrath, stood up and exploded at last.

“I don’t crochet, woman! Is one contemptible doily going to blast a man’s reputation forever? I was so bad with that blamed lumbago I didn’t know what I was doing. And I’m deaf, am I, Miss Shirley? I’m deaf?”

“She didn’t *say* you were, Papa,” cried Trix, who was never afraid of her father when his temper was vocal.

“Oh, no, she didn’t say it. None of you said anything! *You* didn’t say I was sixty-eight when I’m only sixty-two, did you? *You* didn’t say I wouldn’t let your mother have a dog! Good Lord, woman, you can have forty thousand dogs if you want to and you know it! When did I ever deny you anything you wanted ... when?”

“Never, Poppa, never,” sobbed Mrs. Cyrus brokenly. “And I never wanted a dog. I never even *thought* of wanting a dog, Poppa.”

“When did I open your letters? When have I ever kept a diary? A diary! When did I ever wear overalls to anybody’s funeral? When did I pasture a cow in the graveyard? What aunt of mine is in the poorhouse? Did I ever throw a roast at anybody? Did I ever make you live on fruit and eggs?”

“Never, Poppa, never,” wept Mrs. Cyrus. “You’ve always been a good provider ... the best.”

“Didn’t you tell me you *wanted* goloshes last Christmas?”

“Yes, oh, yes; of course I did, Poppa. And my feet have been so nice and warm all winter.”

“Well, then!” Cyrus threw a triumphant glance around the room. His eyes encountered Anne’s. Suddenly the unexpected happened. Cyrus chuckled. His cheeks actually dimpled. Those dimples worked a miracle with his whole expression. He brought his chair back to the table and sat down.

“I’ve got a very bad habit of sulking, Dr. Carter. Every one has some bad habit ... that’s mine. The only one. Come, come, Momma, stop crying. I admit I deserved all I got except that crack of yours about crocheting. Esme, my girl, I won’t forget that you were the only one who stood up for me. Tell Maggie to come and clear up that mess ... I know you’re all glad the darn thing is smashed ... and bring on the pudding.”

Anne could never have believed that an evening which began so terribly could end up so pleasantly. Nobody could have been more genial or better company than Cyrus: and there was evidently no aftermath of reckoning, for when Trix came down a few evenings later it was to tell Anne that she had at last scraped up enough courage to tell her father about Johnny.

“Was he very dreadful, Trix?”

“He ... he wasn’t dreadful at all,” admitted Trix sheepishly. “He just snorted and said it was about time Johnny came to the point after hanging around for two years and keeping every one else away. I think he felt he

couldn't go into another spell of sulks so soon after the last one. And you know, Anne, between sulks Papa really is an old duck."

"I think he is a great deal better father to you than you deserve," said Anne, quite in Rebecca Dew's manner. "You were simply outrageous at that dinner, Trix."

"Well, you know you started it," said Trix. "And good old Pringle helped a bit. All's well that ends well ... and thank goodness I'll never have to dust that vase again."

Chapter XI

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(Extract from letter to Gilbert two weeks later.)

“Esme Taylor’s engagement to Dr. Lennox Carter is announced. By all I can gather from various bits of local gossip I think he decided that fatal Friday night that he wanted to protect her, and save her from her father and her family ... and perhaps from her friends! Her plight evidently appealed to his sense of chivalry. Trix persists in thinking I was the means of bringing it about and perhaps I did take a hand, but I don’t think I’ll ever try an experiment like that again. It’s too much like picking up a lightning flash by the tail.

“I really don’t know what got into me, Gilbert. It must have been a hangover from my old detestation of anything savoring of Pringleism. It *does* seem old now. I’ve almost forgotten it. But other folks are still wondering. I hear Miss Valentine Courtaloe says she isn’t at all surprised I have won the Pringles over, because I have ‘such a way with me’; and the minister’s wife thinks it is an answer to the prayer she put up. Well, who knows but that it was?

“Jen Pringle and I walked part of the way home from school yesterday and talked of ‘ships and shoes and sealing wax’ ... of almost everything but geometry. We avoid that subject. Jen knows I don’t know too much about geometry, but my own wee bit of knowledge about Captain Myrom balances that. I lent Jen my Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs*. I hate to lend a book I *love* ... it never seems quite the same when it comes back to me ... but I love Foxe’s *Martyrs* only because dear Mrs. Allan gave it to me for a Sunday-school prize years ago. I don’t like reading about martyrs because they always make me feel petty and ashamed ... ashamed to admit I hate to get out of bed on frosty mornings and shrink from a visit to the dentist!

“Well, I’m glad Esme and Trix are both happy. Since my own little romance is in flower I am all the more interested in other people’s. A *nice*

interest, you know. Not curious or malicious but just glad there's such a lot of happiness spread about.

"It's still February and 'on the convent roof the snows are sparkling to the moon' ... only it isn't a convent ... just the roof of Mr. Hamilton's barn. But I'm beginning to think, 'Only a few more weeks till spring ... and a few more weeks then till summer ... and holidays ... and Green Gables ... and golden sunlight on Avonlea meadows ... and a gulf that will be silver at dawn and sapphire at noon and crimson at sunset ... and *you*.'

"Little Elizabeth and I have no end of plans for spring. We are such good friends. I take her milk every evening and once in so long she is allowed to go for a walk with me. We have discovered that our birthdays are on the same day and Elizabeth flushed 'divinest rosy red' with the excitement of it. She is so sweet when she blushes. Ordinarily she is far too pale and doesn't get any pinker because of the new milk. Only when we come back from our twilight trysts with evening winds does she have a lovely rose color in her little cheeks. Once she asked me gravely, 'Will I have a lovely creamy skin like yours when I grow up, Miss Shirley, if I put buttermilk on my face every night?' Buttermilk seems to be the preferred cosmetic in Spook's Lane. I have discovered that Rebecca Dew uses it. She has bound me over to keep it secret from the widows because they would think it too frivolous for her age. The number of secrets I have to keep at Windy Poplars is aging me before my time. I wonder if I buttermilked my nose if it would banish those seven freckles. By the way, did it ever occur to you, sir, that I had a 'lovely creamy skin'? If it did, you never told me so. And have you realized to the full that I am 'comparatively beautiful'? Because I have discovered that I am.

"'What is it like to be beautiful, Miss Shirley?' asked Rebecca Dew gravely the other day ... when I was wearing my new biscuit-colored voile.

"'I've often wondered,' said I.

"'But you *are* beautiful,' said Rebecca Dew.

"'I never thought you could be sarcastic, Rebecca,' I said reproachfully.

“‘I did not mean to be sarcastic, Miss Shirley. You are beautiful ... comparatively.’

“‘Oh! Comparatively!’ said I.

“‘Look in the sideboard glass,’ said Rebecca Dew, pointing. ‘Compared to *me*, you are.’

“Well, I was!

“But I hadn’t finished with Elizabeth. One stormy evening when the wind was howling along Spook’s Lane, we couldn’t go for a walk, so we came up to my room and drew a map of fairyland. Elizabeth sat on my blue doughnut cushion to make her higher, and looked like a serious little gnome as she bent over the map. (By the way, no phonetic spelling for me! ‘Gnome’ is far eerier and fairy-er than ‘nome.’)

“Our map isn’t completed yet ... every day we think of something more to go in it. Last night we located the house of the Witch of the Snow and drew a triple hill, covered completely with wild cherry trees in bloom, behind it. (By the way, I want some wild cherry trees near our house of dreams, Gilbert.) Of course we have a Tomorrow on the map ... located east of Today and west of Yesterday ... and we have no end of ‘times’ in fairyland. Springtime, long time, short time, new-moon time, goodnight time, next time ... but no last time, because that is too sad a time for fairyland; old time, young time ... because if there is an old time there ought to be a young time, too; mountain time ... because that has such a fascinating sound; night-time and daytime ... but no bedtime or school-time; Christmas-time; no only time, because that also is too sad ... but lost time, because it is so nice to find it; some time, good time, fast time, slow time, halfpast kissing-time, going-home time, and time immemorial ... which is one of the most beautiful phrases in the world. And we have cunning little red arrows everywhere, pointing to the different ‘times.’ I know Rebecca Dew thinks I’m quite childish. But, oh, Gilbert, don’t let’s ever grow too old and wise ... no, not too old and *silly* for fairyland.

“Rebecca Dew, I feel sure, is not quite certain that I am an influence for good in Elizabeth’s life. She thinks I encourage her in being ‘fanciful.’ One evening when I was away Rebecca Dew took the milk to her and

found her already at the gate, looking at the sky so intently that she never heard Rebecca's (anything but) fairy footfalls.

"‘I was *listening*, Rebecca,’ she explained.

"‘You do too much listening,’ said Rebecca disapprovingly.

"Elizabeth smiled, remotely, austere. (Rebecca Dew didn't use those words but I know exactly how Elizabeth smiled.)

"‘You would be surprised, Rebecca, if you knew what I hear sometimes,’ she said, in a way that made Rebecca Dew's flesh creep on her bones ... or so she avers.

"But Elizabeth is always touched with faery and what can be done about it?

"Your Very Anne-est ANNE.

"P.S.1. Never, never, never shall I forget Cyrus Taylor's face when his wife accused him of crocheting. But I shall always like him because he hunted for those kittens. And I like Esme for standing up for her father under the supposed wreck of all her hopes.

"P.S.2. I have put in a new pen. And I love you because you aren't pompous like Dr. Carter ... and I love you because you haven't got sticky-out ears like Johnny. And ... the very best reason of all ... I love you for just being Gilbert!"

Chapter XII

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“Windy Poplars,
“Spook’s Lane,
“May 30th.

“DEAREST-AND-THEN-MORE-DEAR:

“It’s spring!

“Perhaps you, up to your eyes in a welter of exams in Kingsport, don’t know it. But I am aware of it from the crown of my head to the tips of my toes. Summerside is aware of it. Even the most unlovely streets are transfigured by arms of bloom reaching over old board fences and a ribbon of dandelions in the grass that borders the sidewalks. Even the china lady on my shelf is aware of it and I know if I could only wake up suddenly enough some night I’d catch her dancing a *pas seul* in her pink, gilt-heeled shoes.

“Everything is calling ‘spring’ to me ... the little laughing brooks, the blue hazes on the Storm King, the maples in the grove when I go to read your letters, the white cherry trees along Spook’s Lane, the sleek and saucy robins hopping defiance to Dusty Miller in the back yard, the creeper hanging greenly down over the half-door to which little Elizabeth comes for milk, the fir trees preening in new tassel tips around the old graveyard ... even the old graveyard itself, where all sorts of flowers planted at the heads of the graves are budding into leaf and bloom, as if to say, ‘Even here life is triumphant over death.’ I had a really lovely prowling about the graveyard the other night. (I’m sure Rebecca Dew thinks my taste in walks frightfully morbid. ‘I can’t think why you have such a hankering after that unchancy place,’ she says.) I roamed over it in the scented green cat’s light and wondered if Nathan Pringle’s wife really had tried to poison him. Her grave looked so innocent with its new grass and its June lilies that I concluded she had been entirely maligned.

“Just another month and I’ll be home for vacation! I keep thinking of the old orchard at Green Gables with its trees now in full snow ... the old bridge over the Lake of Shining Waters ... the murmur of the sea in your ears ... a summer afternoon in Lover’s Lane ... and *you!*

“I have just the right kind of pen tonight, Gilbert, and so ...

(Two pages omitted.)

“I was around at the Gibsons’ this evening for a call. Marilla asked me some time ago to look them up because she once knew them when they lived in White Sands. Accordingly I looked them up and have been looking them up weekly ever since because Pauline seems to enjoy my visits and I’m so sorry for her. She is simply a slave to her mother ... who is a terrible old woman.

“Mrs. Adoniram Gibson is eighty and spends her days in a wheel-chair. They moved to Summerside fifteen years ago. Pauline, who is forty-five, is the youngest of the family, all her brothers and sisters being married and all of them determined not to have Mrs. Adoniram in their homes. She keeps the house and waits on her mother hand and foot. She is a little pale, fawn-eyed thing with golden-brown hair that is still glossy and pretty. They are quite comfortably off and if it were not for her mother Pauline could have a very pleasant easy life. She just loves church work and would be perfectly happy attending Ladies’ Aids and Missionary Societies, planning for church suppers and Welcome socials, not to speak of exulting proudly in being the possessor of the finest wandering-jew in town. But she can hardly ever get away from the house, even to go to church on Sundays. I can’t see any way of escape for her, for old Mrs. Gibson will probably live to be a hundred. And, while she may not have the use of her legs, there is certainly nothing the matter with her tongue. It always fills me with helpless rage to sit there and hear her making poor Pauline the target for her sarcasm. And yet Pauline has told me that her mother ‘thinks quite highly’ of me and is much nicer to her when I am around. If this be so I shiver to think what she must be when I am not around.

“Pauline dares not do *anything* without asking her mother. She can’t even buy her own clothes ... not so much as a pair of stockings.

Everything has to be sent up for Mrs. Gibson's approval; everything has to be worn until it has been turned twice. Pauline has worn the same hat for four years.

"Mrs. Gibson can't bear any noise in the house or a breath of fresh air. It is said she never smiled in her life... I've never caught her at it, anyway, and when I look at her I find myself wondering what would happen to her face if she did smile. Pauline can't even have a room to herself. She has to sleep in the same room with her mother and be up almost every hour of the night rubbing Mrs. Gibson's back or giving her a pill or getting a hot-water bottle for her ... *hot*, not lukewarm! ... or changing her pillows or seeing what that mysterious noise is in the back yard. Mrs. Gibson does her sleeping in the afternoons and spends her nights devising tasks for Pauline.

"Yet nothing has ever made Pauline bitter. She is sweet and unselfish and patient and I am glad she has a dog to love. The only thing she has ever had her own way about is keeping that dog ... and then only because there was a burglary somewhere in town and Mrs. Gibson thought it would be a protection. Pauline never dares to let her mother see how much she loves the dog. Mrs. Gibson hates him and complains of his bringing bones in but she never actually says he must go, for her own selfish reason.

"But at last I have a chance to give Pauline something and I'm going to do it. I'm going to give her a *day*, though it will mean giving up my next weekend at Green Gables.

"Tonight when I went in I could see that Pauline had been crying. Mrs. Gibson did not long leave me in doubt why.

"'Pauline wants to go and leave me, Miss Shirley,' she said. 'Nice, grateful daughter I've got, haven't I?'

"'Only for a day, Ma,' said Pauline, swallowing a sob and trying to smile.

"'Only for a day,' says she! 'Well, *you* know what my days are like, Miss Shirley ... every one knows what my days are like. But you don't know ... *yet* ... Miss Shirley, and I hope you never will, how long a day can be when you are suffering.'

“I knew Mrs. Gibson didn’t suffer at all now, so I didn’t try to be sympathetic.

“‘I’d get some one to stay with you, of course, Ma,’ said Pauline. ‘You see,’ she explained to me, ‘my cousin Louisa is going to celebrate her silver wedding at White Sands next Saturday week and she wants me to go. I was her bridesmaid when she was married to Maurice Hilton. I *would* like to go so much if Ma would give her consent.’

“‘If I must die alone I must,’ said Mrs. Gibson. ‘I leave it to your conscience, Pauline.’

“I knew Pauline’s battle was lost the moment Mrs. Gibson left it to her conscience. Mrs. Gibson has got her way all her life by leaving things to people’s consciences. I’ve heard that years ago somebody wanted to marry Pauline and Mrs. Gibson prevented it by leaving it to her conscience.

“Pauline wiped her eyes, summoned up a piteous smile and picked up a dress she was making over ... a hideous green and black plaid.

“‘Now don’t sulk, Pauline,’ said Mrs. Gibson. ‘I can’t abide people who sulk. And mind you put a collar on that dress. Would you believe it, Miss Shirley, she actually wanted to make the dress without a collar? She’d wear a low-necked dress, that one, if I’d let her.’

“I looked at poor Pauline with her slender little throat ... which is rather plump and pretty yet ... enclosed in a high, stiff-boned net collar.

“‘Collarless dresses are coming in,’ I said.

“‘Collarless dresses,’ said Mrs. Gibson, ‘are indecent.’

“(Item: — I was wearing a collarless dress.)

“‘Moreover,’ went on Mrs. Gibson, as if it were all of a piece. ‘I never liked Maurice Hilton. His mother was a Crockett. He never had any sense of decorum ... always kissing his wife in the most unsuitable places!’

“(Are you sure you kiss me in suitable places, Gilbert? I’m afraid Mrs. Gibson would think the nape of the neck, for instance, most unsuitable.)

“‘But, Ma, you know that was the day she nearly escaped being trampled by Harvey Wither’s horse running amuck on the church green. It was only natural Maurice should feel a little excited.’

“‘Pauline, please don’t contradict me. I *still* think the church steps were an unsuitable place for any one to be kissed. But of course *my* opinions don’t matter to *any one* any longer. Of course every one wishes I was dead. Well, there’ll be room for me in the grave. I know what a burden I am to you. I might as well die. Nobody wants me.’

“‘Don’t say that, Ma,’ begged Pauline.

“‘I *will* say it. Here you are, determined to go to that silver wedding although you know I’m not willing.’

“‘Ma dear. I’m not going ... I’d never think of going if you weren’t willing. Don’t excite yourself so... .’

“‘Oh, I can’t even have a little excitement, can’t I, to brighten my dull life? Surely you’re not going so soon, Miss Shirley?’

“‘I felt that if I stayed any longer I’d either go crazy or slap Mrs. Gibson’s nutcracker face. So I said I had exam papers to correct.

“‘Ah well, I suppose two old women like us are very poor company for a young girl,’ sighed Mrs. Gibson. ‘Pauline isn’t very cheerful ... are you, Pauline? Not very cheerful. I don’t wonder Miss Shirley doesn’t want to stay long.’

“‘Pauline came out to the porch with me. The moon was shining down on her little garden and sparkling on the harbor. A soft, delightful wind was talking to a white apple tree. It was spring ... spring ... spring! Even Mrs. Gibson can’t stop plum trees from blooming. And Pauline’s soft gray-blue eyes were full of tears.

“‘I *would* like to go to Louie’s wedding so much,’ she said, with a long sigh of despairing resignation.

“‘You are going,’ I said.

“‘Oh, no, dear, I can’t go. Poor Ma will never consent. I’ll just put it out of my mind. Isn’t the moon beautiful tonight?’ she added, in a loud, cheerful tone.

“‘I’ve never heard of any good that came from moon gazing,’ called out Mrs. Gibson from the sitting-room. ‘Stop chirruping there, Pauline, and come in and get my red bedroom slippers with the fur round the tops

for me. These shoes pinch my feet something terrible. But nobody cares how I suffer.'

"I felt that *I* didn't care how much she suffered. Poor darling Pauline! But a day off is certainly coming to Pauline and she is going to have her silver wedding. I, Anne Shirley, have spoken it.

"I told Rebecca Dew and the widows all about it when I came home and we had such fun, thinking up all the lovely, insulting things I might have said to Mrs. Gibson. Aunt Kate does not think I will succeed in getting Mrs. Gibson to let Pauline go but Rebecca Dew has faith in me. 'Anyhow, if *you* can't, nobody can,' she said.

"I was at supper recently with Mrs. Tom Pringle who wouldn't take me to board. (Rebecca says I am the best paying boarder she ever heard of because I am invited out to supper so often.) I'm very glad she didn't. She's nice and purry and her pies praise her in the gates, but her home isn't Windy Poplars and she doesn't live in Spook's Lane and she isn't Aunt Kate and Aunt Chatty and Rebecca Dew. I love them all three and I'm going to board here next year and the year after. My chair is always called 'Miss Shirley's chair' and Aunt Chatty tells me that when I'm not here Rebecca Dew sets my place at the table just the same, so it won't seem so lonesome.' Sometimes Aunt Chatty's feelings have complicated matters a bit but she says she understands me now and knows I would never hurt her intentionally.

"Little Elizabeth and I go out for a walk twice a week now. Mrs. Campbell has agreed to that, but it must not be oftener and *never* on Sundays. Things are better for little Elizabeth in spring. Some sunshine gets into even that grim old house and outwardly it is even beautiful because of the dancing shadows of tree tops. Still, Elizabeth likes to escape from it whenever she can. Once in a while we go up-town so that Elizabeth can see the lighted shop windows. But mostly we go as far as we dare down the Road that Leads to the End of the World, rounding every corner adventurously and expectantly, as if we were going to find Tomorrow behind it, while all the little green evening hills neatly nestle together in the distance. One of the things Elizabeth is going to do in

Tomorrow is 'go to Philadelphia and see the angel in the church.' I haven't told her ... I never will tell her ... that the Philadelphia St. John was writing about was *not* Phila., Pa. We lose our illusions soon enough. And anyhow, if we *could* get into Tomorrow, who knows what we might find there? Angels everywhere, perhaps.

"Sometimes we watch the ships coming up the harbor before a fair wind, over a glistening pathway, through the transparent spring air, and Elizabeth wonders if her father may be on board one of them. She clings to the hope that he may come some day. I can't imagine why he doesn't. I'm sure he would if he knew what a darling little daughter he has here longing for him. I suppose he never realizes she is quite a girl now ... I suppose he still thinks of her as the little baby who cost his wife her life.

"I'll soon have finished my first year in Summerside High. The first term was a nightmare, but the last two have been very pleasant. The Pringles are *delightful people*. How could I ever have compared them to the Pyes? Sid Pringle brought me a bunch of trilliums today. Jen is going to lead her class and Miss Ellen is reported to have said that I am the only teacher who ever *really understood* the child! The only fly in my ointment is Katherine Brooke, who continues unfriendly and distant. I'm going to give up trying to be friends with her. After all, as Rebecca Dew says, there *are* limits.

"Oh, I nearly forgot to tell you... Sally Nelson has asked me to be one of her bridesmaids. She is going to be married the last of June at Bonnyview, Dr. Nelson's summer home down at the jumping-off place. She is marrying Gordon Hill. Then Nora Nelson will be the only one of Dr. Nelson's six girls left unmarried. Jim Wilcox has been going with her for years ... 'off and on' as Rebecca Dew says ... but it never seems to come to anything and nobody thinks it will now. I'm very fond of Sally, but I've never made much headway getting acquainted with Nora. She's a good deal older than I am, of course, and rather reserved and proud. Yet I'd like to be friends with her. She isn't pretty or clever or charming but somehow she's got a *tang*. I've a feeling she'd be worth while.

“Speaking of weddings, Esme Taylor was married to her Ph.D. last month. As it was on Wednesday afternoon I couldn’t go to the church to see her, but every one says she looked very beautiful and happy and Lennox looked as if he knew he had done the right thing and had the approval of his conscience. Cyrus Taylor and I are great friends. He often refers to the dinner which he has come to consider a great joke on everybody. ‘I’ve never dared sulk since,’ he told me. ‘Momma might accuse me of sewing patchwork next time.’ And then he tells me to be sure and give his love to ‘the widows.’ Gilbert, people are delicious and life is delicious and I am

“Forevermore

“*Yours!*

“P.S. Our old red cow down at Mr. Hamilton’s has a spotted calf. We’ve been buying our milk for three months from Lew Hunt. Rebecca says we’ll have cream again now ... and that she has always heard the Hunt well was inexhaustible and now she believes it. Rebecca didn’t want that calf to be born at all. Aunt Kate had to get Mr. Hamilton to tell her that the cow was really too old to have a calf before she would consent.”

Chapter XIII

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“Ah, when you’ve been old and bed-ridden as long as me you’ll have more sympathy,” whined Mrs. Gibson.

“Please don’t think I’m lacking in sympathy, Mrs. Gibson,” said Anne, who, after half an hour’s vain effort, felt like wringing Mrs. Gibson’s neck. Nothing but poor Pauline’s pleading eyes in the background kept her from giving up in despair and going home. “I assure you, you won’t be lonely and neglected. I will be here all day and see that you lack nothing in any way.”

“Oh, I know I’m of no use to any one,” said Mrs. Gibson, apropos of nothing that had been said. “You don’t need to rub that in, Miss Shirley. I’m ready to go any time ... any time. Pauline can gad round all she wants to then. I won’t be here to feel neglected. None of the young people of today have any sense. Giddy ... very giddy.”

Anne didn’t know whether it was Pauline or herself who was the giddy young person without sense, but she tried the last shot in her locker.

“Well, you know, Mrs. Gibson, people will talk so terribly if Pauline doesn’t go to her cousin’s silver wedding.”

“Talk!” said Mrs. Gibson sharply. “What will they talk about?”

“Dear Mrs. Gibson ...” (‘May I be forgiven the adjective!’ thought Anne) “in your long life you have learned, I know, just what idle tongues can say.”

“You needn’t be casting my age up to me,” snapped Mrs. Gibson. “And I don’t need to be told it’s a censorious world. Too well ... too well I know it. And I don’t need to be told that this town is full of tattling toads neither. But I dunno’s I fancy them jabbering about me ... saying, I s’pose, that I’m an old tyrant. *I ain’t* stopping Pauline from going. Didn’t I leave it to her conscience?”

“So few people will believe that,” said Anne, carefully sorrowful.

Mrs. Gibson sucked a peppermint lozenge fiercely for a minute or two. Then she said,

“I hear there’s mumps at White Sands.”

“Ma, dear, you know I’ve had the mumps.”

“There’s folks as takes them twice. You’d be just the one to take them twice, Pauline. You always took everything that come round. The nights I’ve set up with you, not expecting you’d see the morning! Ah me, a mother’s sacrifices ain’t long remembered. Besides, how would you get to White Sands? You ain’t been on a train for years. And there ain’t any train back Saturday night.”

“She could go on the Saturday morning train,” said Anne. “And I’m sure Mr. James Gregor will bring her back.”

“I never liked Jim Gregor. His mother was a Tarbush.”

“He is taking his double-seated buggy and going down Friday, or else he would take her down, too. But she’ll be quite safe on the train, Mrs. Gibson. Just step on at Summerside ... step off at White Sands ... no changing.”

“There’s something behind all this,” said Mrs. Gibson suspiciously. “Why are you so set on her going, Miss Shirley? Just tell me that.”

Anne smiled into the beady-eyed face.

“Because I think Pauline is a good, kind daughter to you, Mrs. Gibson, and needs a day off now and then, just as everybody does.”

Most people found it hard to resist Anne’s smile. Either that, or the fear of gossip vanquished Mrs. Gibson.

“I s’pose it never occurs to any one *I’d* like a day off from this wheel-chair if I could get it. But I can’t ... I just have to bear my affliction patiently. Well, if she must go she must. She’s always been one to get her own way. If she catches mumps or gets poisoned by strange mosquitoes, don’t blame me for it. I’ll have to get along as best I can. Oh, I s’pose you’ll be here, but you ain’t used to my ways as Pauline is. I s’pose I can stand it for one day. If I can’t ... well, I’ve been living on borrowed time many’s the year now so what’s the difference?” Not a gracious assent by any means but still an assent. Anne in her relief and gratitude found

herself doing something she could never have imagined herself doing ... she bent over and kissed Mrs. Gibson's leathery cheek. "Thank you," she said.

"Never mind your wheedling ways," said Mrs. Gibson. "Have a peppermint."

"How can I ever thank you, Miss Shirley?" said Pauline, as she went a little way down the street with Anne.

"By going to White Sands with a light heart and enjoying every minute of the time."

"Oh, I'll do that. You don't know what this means to me, Miss Shirley. It's not only Louisa I want to see. The old Luckley place next to her home is going to be sold and I did so want to see it once more before it passed into the hands of strangers. Mary Luckley ... she's Mrs. Howard Flemming now and lives out west ... was my dearest friend when I was a girl. We were like sisters. I used to be at the Luckley place so much and I loved it so. I've often dreamed of going back. Ma says I'm getting too old to dream. Do you think I am, Miss Shirley?"

"Nobody is ever too old to dream. And dreams never grow old."

"I'm so glad to hear you say that. Oh, Miss Shirley, to think of seeing the gulf again. I haven't seen it for fifteen years. The harbor is beautiful, but it isn't the gulf. I feel as if I was walking on air. And I owe it all to you. It was just because Ma likes you she let me go. You've made me happy ... you are always making people happy. Why, whenever you come into a room, Miss Shirley, the people in it feel happier."

"That's the very nicest compliment I've ever had paid me, Pauline."

"There's just one thing, Miss Shirley ... I've nothing to wear but my old black taffeta. It's too gloomy for a wedding, isn't it? And it's too big for me since I got thin. You see it's six years since I got it."

"We must try to induce your mother to let you have a new dress," said Anne hopefully.

But that proved to be beyond her powers. Mrs. Gibson was adamant. Pauline's black taffeta was plenty good for Louisa Hilton's wedding.

“I paid two dollars a yard for it six years ago and three to Jane Sharp for making it. Jane was a good dressmaker. Her mother was a Smiley. The idea of you wanting something ‘light,’ Pauline Gibson! She’d go dressed in scarlet from head to foot, that one, if she was let, Miss Shirley. She’s just waiting till I’m dead to do it. Ah, well, you’ll soon be shet of all the trouble I am to you, Pauline. Then you can dress as gay and giddy as you like, but as long as I’m alive you’ll be decent. And what’s the matter with your hat? It’s time you wore a bonnet, anyhow.”

Poor Pauline had a lively horror of having to wear a bonnet. She would wear her old hat for the rest of her life before she would do that.

“I’m just going to be glad inside and forget all about my clothes,” she told Anne, when they went out to the garden to pick a bouquet of June lilies and bleeding-heart for the widows.

“I’ve a plan,” said Anne, with a cautious glance to make sure Mrs. Gibson couldn’t hear her, though she was watching from the sitting-room window. “You know that silver-gray poplin of mine? I’m going to lend you that for the wedding.”

Pauline dropped the basket of flowers in her agitation, making a pool of pink and white sweetness at Anne’s feet.

“Oh, my dear, I couldn’t... Ma wouldn’t let me.”

“She won’t know a thing about it. Listen. Saturday morning you’ll put it on under your black taffeta. I know it will fit you. It’s a little long, but I’ll run some tucks in it tomorrow ... tucks are fashionable now. It’s collarless, with elbow sleeves so no one will suspect. As soon as you get to Gull Cove, take off the taffeta. When the day is over you can leave the poplin at Gull Cove and I can get it the next weekend I’m home.”

“But wouldn’t it be too young for me?”

“Not a bit of it. Any age can wear gray.”

“Do you think it would be ... right ... to deceive Ma?” faltered Pauline.

“In this case entirely right,” said Anne shamelessly. “You know, Pauline, it would never do to wear a black dress to a wedding. It might bring the bride bad luck.”

“Oh, I wouldn’t do that for anything. And of course it won’t hurt Ma. I do hope she’ll get through Saturday all right. I’m afraid she won’t eat a bite when I’m away ... she didn’t the time I went to Cousin Matilda’s funeral. Miss Prouty told me she didn’t... . Miss Prouty stayed with her. She was so provoked at Cousin Matilda for dying ... Ma was, I mean.”

“She’ll eat... . I’ll see to that.”

“I know you’ve a great knack of managing her,” conceded Pauline. “And you won’t forget to give her her medicine at the regular times, will you, dear? Oh, perhaps I oughtn’t to go after all.”

“You’ve been out there long enough to pick forty bokays,” called Mrs. Gibson irately. “I dunno what the widows want of your flowers. They’ve plenty of their own. I’d go a long time without flowers if I waited for Rebecca Dew to send me any. I’m dying for a drink of water. But then I’m of no consequence.”

Friday night Pauline telephoned Anne in terrible agitation. She had a sore throat and did Miss Shirley think it could possibly be the mumps? Anne ran down to reassure her, taking the gray poplin in a brown paper parcel. She hid it in the lilac bush and late that night Pauline, in a cold perspiration, managed to smuggle it upstairs to the little room where she kept her clothes and dressed, though she was never permitted to sleep there. Pauline was not quite easy about the dress. Perhaps her sore throat was a judgment on her for deception. But she couldn’t go to Louisa’s silver wedding in that dreadful old black taffeta ... she simply couldn’t.

Saturday morning Anne was at the Gibson house bright and early. Anne always looked her best on a sparkling summer morning such as this. She seemed to sparkle with it and she moved through the golden air like a slender figure on a Grecian urn. The dullest room sparkled, too ... *lived* ... when she came into it.

“Walking as if you owned the earth,” commented Mrs. Gibson sarcastically.

“So I do,” said Anne gayly.

“Ah, you’re very young,” said Mrs. Gibson maddeningly.

“‘I withhold not my heart from any joy,’” quoted Anne. “That is Bible authority for you, Mrs. Gibson.”

“‘Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward.’ That’s in the Bible, too,” retorted Mrs. Gibson. The fact that she had so neatly countered Miss Shirley, B.A., put her in comparatively good humor. “I never was one to flatter, Miss Shirley, but that chip hat of yours with the blue flower kind of sets you. Your hair don’t look so red under it, seems to me. Don’t you admire a fresh young girl like this, Pauline? Wouldn’t you like to be a fresh young girl yourself, Pauline?”

Pauline was too happy and excited to want to be any one but herself just then. Anne went to the upstairs room with her to help her dress.

“It’s so lovely to think of all the pleasant things that must happen today, Miss Shirley. My throat is quite well and Ma is in such a good humor. You mightn’t think so, but I know she is because she is talking, even if she is sarcastic. If she was mad or riled she’d be sulking. I’ve peeled the potatoes and the steak is in the ice-box and Ma’s blanc mange is down cellar. There’s canned chicken for supper and a sponge cake in the pantry. I’m just on tenterhooks Ma’ll change her mind yet. I couldn’t bear it if she did. Oh, Miss Shirley, do you think I’d better wear that gray dress ... really?”

“Put it on,” said Anne in her best school-teacherish manner.

Pauline obeyed and emerged a transformed Pauline. The gray dress fitted her beautifully. It was collarless and had dainty lace ruffles in the elbow sleeves. When Anne had done her hair Pauline hardly knew herself.

“I hate to cover it up with that horrid old black taffeta, Miss Shirley.”

But it had to be. The taffeta covered it very securely. The old hat went on ... but it would be taken off, too, when she got to Louisa’s ... and Pauline had a new pair of shoes. Mrs. Gibson had actually allowed her to get a new pair of shoes, though she thought the heels “scandalous high.” “I’ll make quite a sensation going away on the train *alone*. I hope people won’t think it’s a death. I wouldn’t want Louisa’s silver wedding to be connected in any way with the thought of death. Oh, perfume, Miss Shirley! Apple-blossom! Isn’t that lovely? Just a whiff ... so ladylike, I

always think. Ma won't let me buy any. Oh, Miss Shirley, you won't forget to feed my dog, will you? I've left his bones in the pantry in the covered dish. I do hope" ... dropping her voice to a shamed whisper ... "that he won't ... misbehave ... in the house while you're here."

Pauline had to pass her mother's inspection before leaving. Excitement over her outing and guilt in regard to the hidden poplin combined to give her a very unusual flush. Mrs. Gibson gazed at her discontentedly.

"Oh me, oh my! Going to London to look at the Queen, are we? You've got too much color. People will think you're painted. Are you sure you ain't?"

"Oh, no, Ma ... *no*," in shocked tones.

"Mind your manners now and when you set down, cross your ankles decently. Mind you don't set in a draught or talk too much."

"I won't, Ma," promised Pauline earnestly, with a nervous glance at the clock.

"I'm sending Louisa a bottle of my sarsaparilla wine to drink the toasts in. I never cared for Louisa, but her mother was a Tackaberry. Mind you bring back the bottle and don't let her give you a kitten. Louisa's always giving people kittens."

"I won't, Ma."

"You're sure you didn't leave the soap in the water?"

"Quite sure, Ma," with another anguished glance at the clock.

"Are your shoelaces tied?"

"Yes, Ma."

"You don't smell respectable ... drenched with scent."

"Oh, no, Ma dear ... just a little ... the tiniest bit ..."

"I said drenched and I mean drenched. There isn't, a rip under your arm, is there?"

"Oh, no, Ma."

"Let me see ..." inexorably.

Pauline quaked. Suppose the skirt of the gray dress showed when she lifted her arms!

“Well, go, then.” With a long sigh. “If I ain’t here when you come back, remember that I want to be laid out in my lace shawl and my black satin slippers. And see that my hair is crimped.”

“Do you feel any worse, Ma?” The poplin dress had made Pauline’s conscience very sensitive. “If you do ... I’ll not go ...”

“And waste the money for them shoes! ‘Course you’re going. And mind you don’t slide down the banister.”

But at this the worm turned.

“Ma! Do you think I would?”

“You did at Nancy Parker’s wedding.”

“Thirty-five years ago! Do you think I would do it now?”

“It’s time you were off. What are you jabbering here for? Do you want to miss your train?”

Pauline hurried away and Anne sighed with relief. She had been afraid that old Mrs. Gibson had, at the last moment, been taken with a fiendish impulse to detain Pauline until the train was gone.

“Now for a little peace,” said Mrs. Gibson. “This house is in an awful condition of untidiness, Miss Shirley. I hope you realize it ain’t always so. Pauline hasn’t known which end of her was up these last few days. Will you please set that vase an inch to the left? No, move it back again. That lamp shade is crooked. Well, that’s a *little* straighter. But that blind is an inch lower than the other. I wish you’d fix it.”

Anne unluckily gave the blind too energetic a twist; it escaped her fingers and went whizzing to the top.

“Ah, now you see,” said Mrs. Gibson.

Anne didn’t see but she adjusted the blind meticulously.

“And now wouldn’t you like me to make you a nice cup of tea, Mrs. Gibson?”

“I *do* need something... . I’m clean wore out with all this worry and fuss. My stomach seems to be dropping out of me,” said Mrs. Gibson pathetically. “Kin you make a decent cup of tea? I’d as soon drink mud as the tea some folks make.”

“Marilla Cuthbert taught me how to make tea. You’ll see. But first I’m going to wheel you out to the porch so that you can enjoy the sunshine.”

“I ain’t been out on the porch for years,” objected Mrs. Gibson.

“Oh, it’s so lovely today, it can’t hurt you. I want you to see the crab tree in bloom. You can’t see it unless you go out. And the wind is south today, so you’ll get the clover scent from Norman Johnson’s field. I’ll bring you your tea and we’ll drink it together and then I’ll get my embroidery and we’ll sit there and criticize everybody who passes.”

“I don’t hold with criticizing people,” said Mrs. Gibson virtuously. “It ain’t Christian. Would you mind telling me if that is all your own hair?”

“Every bit,” laughed Anne.

“Pity it’s red. Though red hair seems to be gitting popular now. I sort of like your laugh. That nervous giggle of poor Pauline’s always gits on my nerves. Well, if I’ve got to git out, I s’pose I’ve got to. I’ll likely ketch my death of cold, but the responsibility is yours, Miss Shirley. Remember I’m eighty ... every day of it, though I hear old Davy Ackham has been telling all around Summerside I’m only seventy-nine. His mother was a Watt. The Watts were always jealous.”

Anne moved the wheel-chair deftly out, and proved that she had a knack of arranging pillows. Soon after she brought out the tea and Mrs. Gibson deigned approval.

“Yes, this is drinkable, Miss Shirley. Ah me, for one year I had to live entirely on liquids. They never thought I’d pull through. I often think it might have been better if I hadn’t. Is that the crab tree you was raving about?”

“Yes ... isn’t it lovely ... so white against that deep blue sky?”

“It ain’t poetical,” was Mrs. Gibson’s sole comment. But she became rather mellow after two cups of tea and the forenoon wore away until it was time to think of dinner.

“I’ll go and get it ready and then I’ll bring it out here on a little table.”

“No, you won’t, miss. No crazy monkey-shines like that for me! People would think it awful queer, us eating out here in public. I ain’t denying it’s kind of nice out here ... though the smell of clover always

makes me kind of squalmish ... and the forenoon's passed awful quick to what it mostly does, but I ain't eating my dinner out-of-doors for any one. I ain't a gypsy. Mind you wash your hands clean before you cook the dinner. My, Mrs. Storey must be expecting more company. She's got all the spare-room bedclothes airing on the line. It ain't real hospitality ... just a desire for sensation. Her mother was a Carey."

The dinner Anne produced pleased even Mrs. Gibson.

"I didn't think any one who wrote for the papers could cook. But of course Marilla Cuthbert brought you up. Her mother was a Johnson. I s'pose Pauline will eat herself sick at that wedding. She don't know when she's had enough ... just like her father. I've seen him gorge on strawberries when he knew he'd be doubled up with pain an hour afterwards. Did I ever show you his picture, Miss Shirley? Well, go to the spare-room and bring it down. You'll find it under the bed. Mind you don't go prying into the drawers while you're up there. But take a peep and see if there's any dust curls under the bureau. I don't trust Pauline... . Ah, yes, that's him. His mother was a Walker. There's no men like that nowadays. This is a degenerate age, Miss Shirley."

"Homer said the same thing eight hundred years, B.C.," smiled Anne.

"Some of them Old Testament writers was always croaking," said Mrs. Gibson. "I daresay you're shocked to hear me say so, Miss Shirley, but my husband was very broad in his views. I hear you're engaged ... to a medical student. Medical students mostly drink, I believe ... have to, to stand the dissecting-room. Never marry a man who drinks, Miss Shirley. Nor one who ain't a good provider. Thistledown and moonshine ain't much to live on, I kin tell you. Mind you clean the sink and rinse the dish-towels. I can't abide greasy dish-towels. I s'pose you'll have to feed the dog. He's too fat now, but Pauline just stuffs him. Sometimes I think I'll have to get rid of him."

"Oh, I wouldn't do that, Mrs. Gibson. There are always burglaries, you know ... and your house is lonely, off here by itself. You really do need protection."

“Oh, well, have it your own way. I’d rather do anything than argue with people, ‘specially when I’ve such a queer throbbing in the back of my neck. I s’pose it means I’m going to have a stroke.”

“You need your nap. When you’ve had it you’ll feel better. I’ll tuck you up and lower your chair. Would you like to go out on the porch for your nap?”

“Sleeping in public! That’d be worse than eating. You do have the queerest ideas. You just fix me up right here in the sitting-room and draw the blinds down and shut the door to keep the flies out. I daresay you’d like a quiet spell yourself ... your tongue’s been going pretty steady.”

Mrs. Gibson had a good long nap, but woke up in a bad humor. She would not let Anne wheel her out to the porch again.

“Want me to ketch my death in the night air, I s’pose,” she grumbled, although it was only five o’clock. Nothing suited her. The drink Anne brought her was too cold ... the next one wasn’t cold enough ... of course *anything* would do for *her*. Where was the dog? Misbehaving, no doubt. Her back ached ... her knees ached ... her head ached ... her breastbone ached. Nobody sympathized with her ... nobody knew what she went through. Her chair was too high ... her chair was too low... . She wanted a shawl for her shoulders and an afghan for her knees and a cushion for her feet. And *would* Miss Shirley see where that awful draught was coming from? She could do with a cup of tea, but she didn’t want to be a trouble to any one and she would soon be at rest in her grave. Maybe they might appreciate her when she was gone.

“Be the day short or be the day long, at last it weareth to evening song.” There were moments when Anne thought it never would, but it did. Sunset came and Mrs. Gibson began to wonder why Pauline wasn’t coming. Twilight came ... still no Pauline. Night and moonshine and no Pauline.

“I knew it,” said Mrs. Gibson cryptically.

“You know she can’t come till Mr. Gregor comes and he’s generally the last dog hung,” soothed Anne. “Won’t you let me put you to bed, Mrs.

Gibson? You're tired ... I know it's a bit of a strain having a stranger round instead of some one you're accustomed to."

The little puckery lines about Mrs. Gibson's mouth deepened obstinately.

"I'm not going to bed till that girl comes home. But if you're so anxious to be gone, *go*. I can stay alone ... or die alone."

At half past nine Mrs. Gibson decided that Jim Gregor was not coming home till Monday.

"Nobody could ever depend on Jim Gregor to stay in the same mind twenty-four hours. And he thinks it's wrong to travel on Sunday even to come home. He's on your school board, ain't he? What do you really think of him and his opinions on eddication?"

Anne went wicked. After all, she had endured a good deal at Mrs. Gibson's hands that day.

"I think he's a psychological anachronism," she answered gravely. Mrs. Gibson did not bat an eyelash.

"I agree with you," she said. But she pretended to go to sleep after that.

Chapter XIV

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It was ten o'clock when Pauline came at last ... a flushed, starry-eyed Pauline, looking ten years younger, in spite of the resumed taffeta and the old hat, and carrying a beautiful bouquet which she hurriedly presented to the grim lady in the wheel-chair.

"The bride sent you her bouquet, Ma. Isn't it lovely? Twenty-five white roses."

"Cat's hindfoot! I don't s'pose any one thought of sending me a crumb of wedding-cake. People nowadays don't seem to have any family feeling. Ah, well, I've seen the day ..."

"But they did. I've a great big piece here in my bag. And everybody asked about you and sent you their love, Ma."

"Did you have a nice time?" asked Anne.

Pauline sat down on a hard chair because she knew her mother would resent it if she sat on a soft one.

"Very nice," she said cautiously. "We had a lovely wedding-dinner and Mr. Freeman, the Gull Cove minister, married Louisa and Maurice over again... ."

"I call that sacrilegious... ."

"And then the photographer took all our pictures. The flowers were simply wonderful. The parlor was a bower ..."

"Like a funeral I s'pose ..."

"And, oh, Ma. Mary Luckley was there from the west ... Mrs. Flemming, you know. You remember what friends she and I always were. We used to call each other Polly and Molly... ."

"Very silly names ..."

"And it was so nice to see her again and have a long talk over old times. Her sister Em was there, too, with such a delicious baby."

“You talk as if it was something to eat,” grunted Mrs. Gibson. “Babies are common enough.”

“Oh, no, babies are never common,” said Anne, bringing a bowl of water for Mrs. Gibson’s roses. “Every one is a miracle.”

“Well, I had ten and I never saw much that was miraculous about any of them. Pauline, do sit still if you kin. You fidget me. I notice you ain’t asking how *I* got along. But I s’pose I couldn’t expect it.”

“I can tell how you got along without asking, Ma ... you look so bright and cheerful.” Pauline was still so uplifted by the day that she could be a little arch even with her mother. “I’m sure you and Miss Shirley had a nice time together.”

“We got on well enough. I just let her have her own way. I admit it’s the first time in years I’ve heard some interesting conversation. I ain’t so near the grave as some people would like to make out. Thank heaven I’ve never got deaf or childish. Well, I s’pose the next thing you’ll be off to the moon. And I s’pose they didn’t care for my sarsaparilla wine by any chance?”

“Oh, they did. They thought it delicious.”

“You’ve taken your own time telling me that. Did you bring back the bottle ... or would it be too much to expect you’d remember that?”

“The ... the bottle got broke,” faltered Pauline. “Some one knocked it over in the pantry. But Louisa gave me another just exactly the same, Ma, so you needn’t worry.”

“I’ve had that bottle ever since I started housekeeping. Louisa’s can’t be exactly the same. They don’t make such bottles nowadays. I wish you’d bring me another shawl. I’m sneezing ... I expect I’ve got a terrible cold. You can’t either of you seem to remember not to let the night air git at me. Likely it’ll bring my neuritis back.”

An old neighbor up the street dropped in at this Juncture and Pauline snatched at the chance to go a little way with Anne.

“Good night, Miss Shirley,” said Mrs. Gibson quite graciously. “I’m much obliged to you. If there was more people like you in this town, it would be the better for it.” She grinned toothlessly and pulled Anne down

to her. "I don't care what people say ... I think you're real nice looking," she whispered.

Pauline and Anne walked along the street, through the cool, green night, and Pauline let herself go, as she had not dared do before her mother.

"Oh, Miss Shirley, it was heavenly. How can I ever repay you? I've never spent such a wonderful day ... I'll live on it for years. It was such fun being a bridesmaid again. And Captain Isaac Kent was groomsman. He ... he used to be an old beau of mine ... well, no, hardly a beau ... I don't think he ever had any real intentions but we drove round together ... and he paid me two compliments. He said, 'I remember how pretty you looked at Louisa's wedding in that wine-colored dress.' Wasn't it wonderful his remembering the dress? And he said, 'Your hair looks just as much like molasses taffy as it ever did.' There wasn't anything improper in his saying that, was there, Miss Shirley?"

"Nothing whatever."

"Lou and Molly and I had such a nice supper together after everybody had gone. I was so hungry ... I don't think I've been so hungry for years. It was so nice to eat just what I wanted and nobody to warn me about things that wouldn't agree with my stomach. After supper Mary and I went over to her old home and wandered around the garden, talking over old times. We saw the lilac bushes we planted years ago. We had some beautiful summers together when we were girls. Then when it came sunset we went down to the dear old shore and sat there on a rock in silence. There was a bell ringing down at the harbor and it was lovely to feel the wind from the sea again and see the stars trembling in the water. I had forgotten night on the gulf could be so beautiful. When it got quite dark we went back and Mr. Gregor was ready to start ... and so," concluded Pauline with a laugh, "The Old Woman Got Home That Night."

"I wish ... I wish you didn't have such a hard time at home, Pauline... ."

"Oh, dear Miss Shirley, I won't mind it now," said Pauline quickly. "After all, poor Ma needs me. And it's nice to be needed, my dear."

Yes, it was nice to be needed. Anne thought of this in her tower room, where Dusty Miller, having evaded both Rebecca Dew and the widows, was curled up on her bed. She thought of Pauline trotting back to her bondage but accompanied by “the immortal spirit of one happy day.”

“I hope some one will always need me,” said Anne to Dusty Miller. “And it’s wonderful, Dusty Miller, to be able to give happiness to somebody. It has made me feel so rich, giving Pauline this day. But, oh, Dusty Miller, you don’t think I’ll ever be like Mrs. Adoniram Gibson, even if I live to be eighty? Do you, Dusty Miller?”

Dusty Miller, with rich, throaty purrs, assured her he didn’t.

Chapter XV

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Anne went down to Bonnyview on the Friday night before the wedding. The Nelsons were giving a dinner for some family friends and wedding-guests arriving by the boat train. The big, rambling house which was Dr. Nelson's "summer home" was built among spruces on a long point with the bay on both sides and a stretch of golden-breasted dunes beyond that knew all there was to be known about winds.

Anne liked it the moment she saw it. An old stone house always looks reposeful and dignified. It fears not what rain or wind or changing fashion can do. And on this June evening it was bubbling over with young life and excitement, the laughter of girls, the greetings of old friends, buggies coming and going, children running everywhere, gifts arriving, every one in the delightful turmoil of a wedding, while Dr. Nelson's two black cats, who rejoiced in the names of Barnabas and Saul, sat on the railing of the veranda and watched everything like two imperturbable sable sphinxes.

Sally detached herself from a mob and whisked Anne upstairs.

"We've saved the north gable room for you. Of course you'll have to share it with at least three others. There's a perfect riot here. Father's having a tent put up for the boys down among the spruces and later on we can have cots in the glassed-in porch at the back. And we can pack most of the children in the hayloft of course. Oh, Anne, I'm so excited. It's really no end of fun getting married. My wedding-dress just came from Montreal today. It's a *dream* ... cream corded silk with a lace bertha and pearl embroidery. The loveliest gifts have come. This is your bed. Mamie Gray and Dot Fraser and Sis Palmer have the others. Mother wanted to put Amy Stewart here but I wouldn't let her. Amy hates you because she wanted to be my bridesmaid. But I couldn't have any one so fat and dumpy, could I now? Besides, she looks like somebody seasick in Nile green. Oh, Anne, Aunt Mouser is here. She came just a few minutes ago and we're simply

horror-stricken. Of course we had to invite her, but we never thought of her coming before tomorrow.”

“Who in the world is Aunt Mouser?”

“Dad’s aunt, Mrs. James Kennedy. Oh, of course she’s really Aunt Grace, but Tommy nicknamed her Aunt Mouser because she’s always mousing round pouncing on things we don’t want her to find out. There’s no escaping her. She even gets up early in the morning for fear of missing something and she’s the last to go to bed at night. But that isn’t the worst. If there’s a wrong thing to say she’s certain to say it and she’s never learned that there are questions that mustn’t be asked. Dad calls her speeches ‘Aunt Mouser’s felicities.’ I know she’ll spoil the dinner. Here she comes now.”

The door opened and Aunt Mouser came in ... a fat, brown, pop-eyed little woman, moving in an atmosphere of mothballs and wearing a chronically worried expression. Except for the expression she really did look a good deal like a hunting pussy-cat.

“So you’re the Miss Shirley I’ve always heard so much of. You ain’t a bit like a Miss Shirley I once knew. *She* had such beautiful eyes. Well, Sally, so you’re to be married at last. Poor Nora is the only one left. Well, your mother is lucky to be rid of five of you. Eight years ago I said to her, ‘Jane,’ sez I, ‘do you think you’ll *ever* get all those girls married off?’ Well, a man is nothing but trouble as I sees it and of all the uncertain things marriage is the uncertainest, but what else is there for a woman in this world? That’s what I’ve just been saying to poor Nora. ‘Mark my words, Nora,’ I said to her, ‘there isn’t much fun in being an old maid. What’s Jim Wilcox thinking of?’ I said to her.”

“Oh, Aunt Grace, I wish you hadn’t! Jim and Nora had some sort of a quarrel last January and he’s never been round since.”

“I believe in saying what I think. Things is better said. I’d heard of that quarrel. That’s why I asked her about him. ‘It’s only right,’ I told her, ‘that you should know they say he’s driving Eleanor Pringle.’ She got red and mad and flounced off. What’s Vera Johnson doing here? She ain’t any relation.”

“Vera’s always been a great friend of mine, Aunt Grace. She’s going to play the wedding-march.”

“Oh, she is, is she? Well, all I hope is she won’t make a mistake and play the Dead March like Mrs. Tom Scott did at Dora Best’s wedding. Such a bad omen. I don’t know where you’re going to put the mob you’ve got here for the night. Some of us will have to sleep on the clothesline I reckon.”

“Oh, we’ll find a place for every one, Aunt Grace.”

“Well, Sally, all I hope is you won’t change your mind at the last moment like Helen Summers did. It clutters things up so. Your father is in terrible high spirits. I never was one to go looking for trouble but all I hope is it ain’t the forerunner of a stroke. I’ve seen it happen that way.”

“Oh, Dad’s fine, Aunt Mouser. He’s just a bit excited.”

“Ah, you’re too young, Sally, to know all that can happen. Your mother tells me the ceremony is at high noon tomorrow. The fashions in weddings are changing like everything else and not for the better. When *I* was married it was in the evening and my father laid in twenty gallons of liquor for the wedding. Ah, dear me, times ain’t what they used to be. What’s the matter with Mercy Daniels? I met her on the stairs and her complexion has got terrible muddy.”

““The quality of mercy is not strained,”” giggled Sally, wriggling into her dinner-dress.

“Don’t quote the Bible flippantly,” rebuked Aunt Mouser. “You must excuse her, Miss Shirley. She just ain’t used to getting married. Well, all I hope is the groom won’t have a hunted look like so many of them do. I s’pose they do feel that way, but they needn’t show it so plain. And I hope he won’t forget the ring. Upton Hardy did. Him and Flora had to be married with a ring off one of the curtain poles. Well, I’ll be taking another look at the wedding-presents. You’ve got a lot of nice things, Sally. All I hope is it won’t be as hard to keep the handles of them spoons polished as I think likely.”

Dinner that night in the big, glassed-in porch was a gay affair. Chinese lanterns had been hung all about it, shedding mellow-tinted lights on the

pretty dresses and glossy hair and white, unlined brows of girls. Barnabas and Saul sat like ebony statues on the broad arms of the Doctor's chair, where he fed them tidbits alternately.

"Just about as bad as Parker Pringle," said Aunt Mouser. "*He* has his dog sit at the table with a chair and napkin of his own. Well, sooner or later there'll be a judgment."

It was a large party, for all the married Nelson girls and their husbands were there, besides ushers and bridesmaids; and it was a merry one, in spite of Aunt Mouser's "felicities" ... or perhaps because of them. Nobody took Aunt Mouser very seriously; she was evidently a joke among the young fry. When she said, on being introduced to Gordon Hill, "Well, well, you ain't a bit like I expected. I always thought Sally would pick out a tall handsome man," ripples of laughter ran through the porch. Gordon Hill, who was on the short side and called no more than "pleasant-faced" by his best friends, knew he would never hear the last of it. When she said to Dot Fraser, "Well, well, a new dress every time I see you! All I hope is your father's purse will be able to stand it for a few years yet," Dot could, of course, have boiled her in oil, but some of the other girls found it amusing. And when Aunt Mouser mournfully remarked, apropos of the preparations of the wedding-dinner, "All I hope is everybody will get her teaspoons afterwards. Five were missing after Gertie Paul's wedding. They never turned up," Mrs. Nelson, who had borrowed three dozen and the sisters-in-law she had borrowed them from all looked harried. But Dr. Nelson hawhawed cheerfully.

"We'll make everyone turn out their pockets before they go, Aunt Grace."

"Ah, you may laugh, Samuel. It is no joking-matter to have anything like that happen in the family. *Some one* must have those teaspoons. I never go anywhere but I keep my eyes open for them. I'd know them wherever I saw them, though it was twenty-eight years ago. Poor Nora was just a baby then. You remember you had her there, Jane, in a little white embroidered dress? Twenty-eight years! Ah, Nora, you're getting on, though in this light you don't show your age so much."

Nora did not join in the laugh that followed. She looked as if she might flash lightning at any moment. In spite of her daffodil-hued dress and the pearls in her dark hair, she made Anne think of a black moth. In direct contrast with Sally, who was a cool, snowy blonde, Nora Nelson had magnificent black hair, dusky eyes, heavy black brows and velvety red cheeks. Her nose was beginning to look a trifle hawk-like and she had never been accounted pretty, but Anne felt an odd attraction to her in spite of her sulky, smoldering expression. She felt that she would prefer Nora as a friend to the popular Sally.

They had a dance after dinner and music and laughter came tumbling out of the broad low windows of the old stone house in a flood. At ten Nora had disappeared. Anne was a little tired of the noise and merriment. She slipped through the hall to a back door that opened almost on the bay, and flitted down a flight of rocky steps to the shore, past a little grove of pointed firs. How divine the cool salt air was after the sultry evening! How exquisite the silver patterns of moonlight on the bay! How dreamlike that ship which had sailed at the rising of the moon and was now approaching the harbor bar! It was a night when you might expect to stray into a dance of mermaids.

Nora was hunched up in the grim black shadow of a rock by the water's edge, looking more like a thunderstorm than ever.

"May I sit with you for a while?" asked Anne. "I'm a little tired of dancing and it's a shame to miss this wonderful night. I envy you with the whole harbor for a back yard like this."

"What would you feel like at a time like this if you had no beau?" asked Nora abruptly and sullenly. "Or any likelihood of one," she added still more sullenly.

"I think it must be your own fault if you haven't," said Anne, sitting down beside her. Nora found herself telling Anne her troubles. There was always something about Anne that made people tell her their troubles.

"You're saying that to be polite of course. You needn't. You know as well as I do that I'm not a girl men are likely to fall in love with ... I'm 'the plain Miss Nelson.' It *isn't* my fault that I haven't anybody. I couldn't

stand it in there any longer. I had to come down here and just let myself be unhappy. I'm tired of smiling and being agreeable to every one and pretending not to care when they give me digs about not being married. I'm not going to pretend any longer. I *do* care ... I care horribly. I'm the only one of the Nelson girls left. Five of us are married or will be tomorrow. You heard Aunt Mouser casting my age up to me at the dinnertable. And I heard her telling Mother before dinner that I had 'aged quite a bit' since last summer. Of course I have. I'm twenty-eight. In twelve more years I'll be forty. How will I endure life at forty, Anne, if I haven't got any roots of my own by that time?"

"I wouldn't mind what a foolish old woman said."

"Oh, wouldn't you? You haven't a nose like mine. I'll be as beaky as Father in ten more years. And I suppose you wouldn't care, either, if you'd waited years for a man to propose ... and he just wouldn't?"

"Oh, yes, I think I would care about *that*."

"Well, that's my predicament exactly. Oh, I know you've heard of Jim Wilcox and me. It's such an old story. He's been hanging around me for years ... but he's never said anything about getting married."

"Do you care for him?"

"Of course I care. I've always pretended I didn't but, as I've told you, I'm through with pretending. And he's never been near me since last January. We had a fight ... but we've had hundreds of fights. He always came back before ... but he hasn't come this time ... and he never will. He doesn't want to. Look at his house across the bay, shining in the moonlight. I suppose he's there ... and I'm here ... and all the harbor between us. That's the way it always will be. It ... it's terrible! And I can't do a thing."

"If you sent for him, wouldn't he come back?"

"Send for him! Do you think I'd do *that*? I'd die first. If he wants to come, there's nothing to prevent him coming. If he doesn't, I don't want him to. Yes, I do ... I do! I love Jim ... and I want to get married. I want to have a home of my own and be 'Mrs.' and shut Aunt Mouser's mouth. Oh, I wish I could be Barnabas or Saul for a few moments just to swear at her!"

If she calls me 'poor Nora' again I'll throw a scuttle at her. But after all, she only says what everybody thinks. Mother has despaired long ago of my ever marrying, so she leaves me alone, but the rest rag me. I hate Sally ... of course I'm dreadful ... but I hate her. She's getting a nice husband and a lovely home. It isn't fair she should have everything and I nothing. She isn't better or cleverer or much prettier than me ... only luckier. I suppose you think I'm awful ... not that I care what you think."

"I think you're very, very tired, after all these weeks of preparation and strain, and that things which were always hard have become *too* hard all at once."

"You understand ... oh, yes, I always knew you would. I've wanted to be friends with you, Anne Shirley. I like the way you laugh. I've always wished I could laugh like that. I'm not as sulky as I look ... it's these eyebrows. I really think they're what scare the men away. I never had a real girl friend in my life. But of course I always had Jim. We've been ... friends ... ever since we were kids. Why, I used to put a light up in that little window in the attic whenever I wanted him over particularly and he'd sail across at once. We went everywhere together. No other boy ever had a chance ... not that any one wanted it, I suppose. And now it's all over. He was just tired of me and was glad of the excuse of a quarrel to get free. Oh, won't I hate you tomorrow because I've told you this!"

"Why?"

"We always hate people who surprise our secrets, I suppose," said Nora drearily. "But there's something gets into you at a wedding ... and I just don't care ... I don't care for anything. Oh, Anne Shirley, I'm so miserable! Just let me have a good cry on your shoulder. I've *got* to smile and look happy all day tomorrow. Sally thinks it's because I'm superstitious that I wouldn't be her bridesmaid... . 'Three times a bridesmaid, never a bride,' you know. 'Tisn't! I just couldn't endure to stand there and hear her saying, 'I will,' and know I'd never have a chance to say it for Jim. I'd have flung back my head and howled. I want to be a bride ... and have a trousseau ... and monogrammed linen ... and lovely presents. Even Aunt Mouser's silver butter-dish. She always gives a

butter-dish to every bride ... awful things with tops like the dome of St. Peter's. We could have had it on the breakfast table just for Jim to make fun of. Anne, I think I'm going crazy."

The dance was over when the girls went back to the house, hand in hand. People were being stowed away for the night. Tommy Nelson was taking Barnabas and Saul to the barn. Aunt Mouser was still sitting on a sofa, thinking of all the dreadful things she hoped wouldn't happen on the morrow.

"I hope nobody will get up and give a reason why they shouldn't be joined together. *That* happened at Tillie Hatfield's wedding."

"No such good luck for Gordon as that," said the groomsman. Aunt Mouser fixed him with a stony brown eye.

"Young man, marriage isn't exactly a joke."

"You bet it isn't," said the unrepentant. "Hello, Nora, when are we going to have a chance to dance at your wedding?"

Nora did not answer in words. She went closer up to him and deliberately slapped him, first on one side of his face and then on the other. The slaps were not make-believe ones. Then she went upstairs without looking behind her.

"That girl," said Aunt Mouser, "is overwrought."

Chapter XVI

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The forenoon of Saturday passed in a whirl of last-minute things. Anne, shrouded in one of Mrs. Nelson's aprons, spent it in the kitchen helping Nora with the salads. Nora was all prickles, evidently repenting, as she had foretold, her confidences of the night before.

"We'll be all tired out for a month," she snapped, "and Father can't really afford all this splurge. But Sally was set on having what she calls a 'pretty wedding' and Father gave in. He's always spoiled her."

"Spite and jealousy," said Aunt Mouser, suddenly popping her head out of the pantry, where she was driving Mrs. Nelson frantic with her hopings against hope.

"She's right," said Nora bitterly to Anne. "Quite right. I *am* spiteful and jealous ... I hate the very look of happy people. But all the same I'm not sorry I slapped Jud Taylor's face last night. I'm only sorry I didn't tweak his nose into the bargain. Well, that finishes the salads. They do look pretty. I love fussing things up when I'm normal. Oh, after all, I hope everything will go off nicely for Sally's sake. I suppose I do love her underneath everything, though just now I feel as if I hated every one and Jim Wilcox worst of all."

"Well, all I hope is the groom won't be missing just before the ceremony," floated out from the pantry in Aunt Mouser's lugubrious tones. "Austin Creed was. He just forgot he was to be married that day. The Creeds were always forgetful, but I call that carrying things too far."

The two girls looked at each other and laughed. Nora's whole face changed when she laughed ... lightened ... glowed ... rippled. And then some one came out to tell her that Barnabas had been sick on the stairs ... too many chicken livers probably. Nora rushed off to repair the damage and Aunt Mouser came out of the pantry to hope that the wedding-cake

wouldn't disappear as had happened at Alma Clark's wedding ten years before.

By noon everything was in immaculate readiness ... the table laid, the beds beautifully dressed, baskets of flowers everywhere; and in the big north room upstairs Sally and her three bridesmaids were in quivering splendor. Anne, in her Nile green dress and hat, looked at herself in the mirror, and wished that Gilbert could see her.

"You're wonderful," said Nora half enviously.

"You're looking wonderful yourself, Nora. That smoke-blue chiffon and that picture hat bring out the gloss of your hair and the blue of your eyes."

"There's nobody to care how I look," said Nora bitterly. "Well, watch me grin, Anne. I mustn't be the death's head at the feast, I suppose. I have to play the wedding-march after all ... Vera's got a terrible headache. I feel more like playing the Dead March, as Aunt Mouser foreboded."

Aunt Mouser, who had wandered round all the morning, getting in everybody's way, in a none too clean old kimono and a wilted "boudoir cap," now appeared resplendent in maroon grosgrain and told Sally one of her sleeves didn't fit and she hoped nobody's petticoat would show below her dress as had happened at Annie Crewson's wedding. Mrs. Nelson came in and cried because Sally looked so lovely in her wedding-dress.

"Now, now, don't be sentimental, Jane," soothed Aunt Mouser. "You've still got one daughter left ... and likely to have her by all accounts. Tears ain't lucky at weddings. Well, all I hope is nobody'll drop dead like old Uncle Cromwell at Roberta Pringle's wedding, right in the middle of the ceremony. The bride spent two weeks in bed from shock."

With this inspiring send-off the bridal party went downstairs, to the strains of Nora's wedding-march somewhat stormily played, and Sally and Gordon were married without anybody dropping dead or forgetting the ring. It was a pretty wedding group and even Aunt Mouser gave up worrying about the universe for a few moments. "After all," she told Sally hopefully later on, "even if you ain't very happy married, it's likely you'd be more unhappy not." Nora alone continued to glower from the piano

stool, but she went up to Sally and gave her a fierce hug, wedding-veil and all.

“So that’s finished,” said Nora drearily, when the dinner was over and the bridal party and most of the guests had gone. She glanced around at the room which looked as forlorn and disheveled as rooms always do in the aftermath ... a faded, trampled corsage lying on the floor ... chairs awry ... a torn piece of lace ... two dropped handkerchiefs ... crumbs the children had scattered ... a dark stain on the ceiling where the water from a jug Aunt Mouser had overturned in a guestroom had seeped through.

“I must clear up this mess,” went on Nora savagely. “There’s a lot of young fry waiting for the boat train and some staying over Sunday. They’re going to wind up with a bonfire on the shore and a moonlit rock dance. You can imagine how much I feel like moonlight dancing. *I* want to go to bed and cry.”

“A house after a wedding is over does seem a rather forsaken place,” said Anne. “But I’ll help you clear up and then we’ll have a cup of tea.”

“Anne Shirley, do you think a cup of tea is a panacea for everything? It’s you who ought to be the old maid, not me. Never mind. I don’t want to be horrid, but I suppose it’s my native disposition. I hate the thought of this shore dance more than the wedding. Jim always used to be at our shore dances. Anne, I’ve made up my mind to go and train for a nurse. I know I’ll hate it ... and heaven help my future patients ... but I’m not going to hang around Summerside and be teased about being on the shelf any longer. Well, let’s tackle this pile of greasy plates and look as if we liked it.”

“I do like it ... I’ve always liked washing dishes. It’s fun to make dirty things clean and shining again.”

“Oh, you ought to be in a museum,” snapped Nora.

By moonrise everything was ready for the shore dance. The boys had a huge bonfire of driftwood ablaze on the point, and the waters of the harbor were creaming and shimmering in the moonlight. Anne was expecting to enjoy herself hugely, but a glimpse of Nora’s face, as the latter went down the steps carrying a basket of sandwiches, gave her pause.

“She’s so unhappy. If there was anything I could do!”

An idea popped into Anne’s head. She had always been a prey to impulse. Darting into the kitchen, she snatched up a little hand-lamp alight there, sped up the back stairs and up another flight to the attic. She set the light in the dormer-window that looked out across the harbor. The trees hid it from the dancers.

“He may see it and come. I suppose Nora will be furious with me, but that won’t matter if he only comes. And now to wrap up a bit of wedding-cake for Rebecca Dew.”

Jim Wilcox did not come. Anne gave up looking for him after a while and forgot him in the merriment of the evening. Nora had disappeared and Aunt Mouser had for a wonder gone to bed. It was eleven o’clock when the revelry ceased and the tired moonlighters yawned their way upstairs. Anne was so sleepy, she never thought of the light in the attic. But at two o’clock Aunt Mouser crept into the room and flashed a candle in the girls’ faces.

“Goodness, what’s the matter?” gasped Dot Fraser, sitting up in bed.

“S-s-s-sh,” warned Aunt Mouser, her eyes nearly popping out of her head, “I think there’s some one in the house ... I *know* there is. What is that noise?”

“Sounds like a cat mewling or a dog barking,” giggled Dot.

“Nothing of the sort,” said Aunt Mouser severely. “I know there’s a dog barking in the barn, but that is not what wakened me. It was a bump ... a loud, distinct bump.”

“‘From ghosties and ghoulies and long-legged beasties and things that go bump in the night, good Lord, deliver us,’” murmured Anne.

“Miss Shirley, this ain’t any laughing-matter. There’s burglars in this house. I’m going to call Samuel.”

Aunt Mouser disappeared and the girls looked at each other.

“Do you suppose ... all the wedding-presents are down in the library ...” said Anne.

“I’m going to get up, anyhow,” said Mamie. “Anne, did you ever see anything like Aunt Mouser’s face when she held the candle low and the

shadows fell upward ... and all those wisps of hair hanging about it? Talk of the Witch of Endor!"

Four girls in kimonos slipped out into the hall. Aunt Mouser was coming along it, followed by Dr. Nelson in dressing-gown and slippers. Mrs. Nelson, who couldn't find her kimono, was sticking a terrified face out of her door.

"Oh, Samuel ... don't take any risks ... if it's burglars they may shoot... ."

"Nonsense! I don't believe there's anything," said the Doctor.

"I tell you I heard a bump," quavered Aunt Mouser.

A couple of boys joined the party. They crept cautiously down the stairs with the Doctor at the head and Aunt Mouser, candle in one hand and poker in the other, bringing up the rear.

There were undoubtedly noises in the library. The Doctor opened the door and walked in.

Barnabas, who had contrived to be overlooked in the library when Saul had been taken to the barn, was sitting on the back of the chesterfield, blinking amused eyes. Nora and a young man were standing in the middle of the room, which was dimly lighted by another flickering candle. The young man had his arms around Nora and was holding a large white handkerchief to her face.

"He's chloroforming her!" shrieked Aunt Mouser, letting the poker fall with a tremendous crash.

The young man turned, dropped the handkerchief and looked foolish. Yet he was a rather nicelooking young man, with crinkly russet eyes and crinkly red-brown hair, not to mention a chin that gave the world assurance of a chin.

Nora snatched the handkerchief up and applied it to her face.

"Jim Wilcox, what does this mean?" said the Doctor, with exceeding sternness.

"I don't know what it means," said Jim Wilcox rather sulkily. "All I know is Nora signaled for me. I didn't see the light till I got home at one from a Masonic banquet in Summerside. And I sailed right over."

“I didn’t signal for you,” stormed Nora. “For pity’s sake don’t look like that, Father. I wasn’t asleep ... I was sitting at my window ... I hadn’t undressed ... and I saw a man coming up from the shore. When he got near the house I knew it was Jim, so I ran down. And I ... I ran into the library door and made my nose bleed. He’s just been trying to stop it.”

“I jumped in at the window and knocked over that bench... .”

“I told you I heard a bump,” said Aunt Mouser.

“... and now Nora says she didn’t signal for me, so I’ll just relieve you of my unwelcome presence, with apologies to all concerned.”

“It’s really too bad to have disturbed your night’s rest and brought you all the way over the bay on a wild-goose chase,” said Nora as icily as possible, consistent with hunting for a bloodless spot on Jim’s handkerchief.

“Wild-goose chase is right,” said the Doctor.

“You’d better try a door-key down your back,” said Aunt Mouser.

“It was I who put the light in the window,” said Anne shamefacedly, “and then I forgot ...”

“You dared!” cried Nora, “I’ll never forgive you ...”

“Have you all gone crazy?” said the Doctor irritably. “What’s all this fuss about, anyhow? For heaven’s sake put that window down, Jim ... there’s a wind blowing in fit to chill you to the bone. Nora, hang your head back and your nose will be all right.”

Nora was shedding tears of rage and shame. Mingled with the blood on her face they made her a fearsome sight. Jim Wilcox looked as if he wished the floor would open and gently drop him in the cellar.

“Well,” said Aunt Mouser belligerently, “all you can do now is marry her, Jim Wilcox. She’ll never get a husband if it gets round that she was found here with you at two o’clock at night.”

“Marry her!” cried Jim in exasperation. “What have I wanted all my life but to marry her ... never wanted anything else!”

“Then why didn’t you say so long ago?” demanded Nora, whirling about to face him.

“Say so? You’ve snubbed and frozen and jeered at me for years. You’ve gone out of your way times without number to show me how you despised me. I didn’t think it was the least use to ask you. And last January you said ...”

“You goaded me into saying it ...”

“I goaded you! I like that! You picked a quarrel with me just to get rid of me... .”

“I didn’t ... I ...”

“And yet I was fool enough to tear over here in the dead of night because I thought you’d put our old signal in the window and wanted me! Ask you to marry me! Well, I’ll ask you now and have done with it and you can have the fun of turning me down before all this gang. Nora Edith Nelson, will you marry me?”

“Oh, won’t I ... won’t I!” cried Nora so shamelessly that even Barnabas blushed for her.

Jim gave her one incredulous look ... then sprang at her. Perhaps her nose had stopped bleeding ... perhaps it hadn’t. It didn’t matter.

“I think you’ve all forgotten that this is the Sabbath morn,” said Aunt Mouser, who had just remembered it herself. “I could do with a cup of tea if any one would make it. I ain’t used to demonstrations like this. All I hope is poor Nora has really landed him at last. At least, she has witnesses.”

They went to the kitchen and Mrs. Nelson came down and made tea for them ... all except Jim and Nora, who remained closeted in the library with Barnabas for chaperon. Anne did not see Nora until the morning ... such a different Nora, ten years younger, flushed with happiness.

“I owe this to you, Anne. If you hadn’t set the light ... though just for two and a half minutes last night I could have chewed your ears off!”

“And to think I slept through it all,” moaned Tommy Nelson heartbrokenly.

But the last word was with Aunt Mouser.

“Well, all I hope is it won’t be a case of marrying in haste and repenting at leisure.”

Chapter XVII

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(Extract from letter to Gilbert.)

“School closed today. Two months of Green Gables and dew-wet, spicy ferns ankle-deep along the brook and lazy, dappling shadows in Lover’s Lane and wild strawberries in Mr. Bell’s pasture and the dark loveliness of firs in the Haunted Wood! My very soul has wings.

“Jen Pringle brought me a bouquet of lilies of the valley and wished me a happy vacation. She’s coming down to spend a weekend with me some time. Talk of miracles!

“But little Elizabeth is heartbroken. I wanted her for a visit, too, but Mrs. Campbell did not ‘deem it advisable.’ Luckily, I hadn’t said anything to Elizabeth about it, so she was spared that disappointment.

“‘I believe I’ll be Lizzie all the time you’re away, Miss Shirley,’ she told me. ‘I’ll *feel* like Lizzie anyway.’

“‘But think of the fun we’ll have when I come back,’ I said. ‘Of course you won’t be Lizzie. There’s no such person as Lizzie in you. And I’ll write you every week, little Elizabeth.’

“‘Oh, Miss Shirley, will you! I’ve never had a letter in my life. Won’t it be fun! And I’ll write you if they’ll let me have a stamp. If they don’t, you’ll know I’m thinking of you just the same. I’ve called the chipmunk in the back yard after you ... Shirley. You don’t mind, do you? I thought at first of calling it Anne Shirley ... but then I thought that mightn’t be respectful ... and, anyway, Anne doesn’t sound chipmunky. Besides, it might be a gentleman chipmunk. Chipmunks are such darling things, aren’t they? But the Woman says they eat the rosebush roots.’

“‘She would!’ I said.

“I asked Katherine Brooke where she was going to spend the summer and she briefly answered, ‘Here. Where did you suppose?’

“I felt as if I ought to ask her to Green Gables, but I just couldn’t. Of course I don’t suppose she’d have come, anyway. And she’s such a kill-joy. She’d spoil everything. But when I think of her alone in that cheap boardinghouse all summer, my conscience gives me unpleasant jabs.

“Dusty Miller brought in a live snake the other day and dropped it on the floor of the kitchen. If Rebecca Dew could have turned pale she would have. ‘This *is* really the last straw!’ she said. But Rebecca Dew is just a little peevish these days because she has to spend all her spare time picking big gray-green beetles off the rose trees and dropping them in a can of kerosene. She thinks there are entirely too many insects in the world.

“‘It’s just going to be eaten up by them some day,’ she predicts mournfully.

“Nora Nelson is to be married to Jim Wilcox in September. Very quietly ... no fuss, no guests, no bridesmaids. Nora told me that was the only way to escape Aunt Mouser, and she will *not* have Aunt Mouser to see her married. I’m to be present, however, sort of unofficially. Nora says Jim would never have come back if I hadn’t set that light in the window. He was going to sell his store and go west. Well, when I think of all the matches I’m supposed to have made ...

“Sally says they’ll fight most of their time but that they’ll be happier fighting with each other than agreeing with anybody else. But I don’t think they’ll fight ... much. I think it is just misunderstanding that makes most of the trouble in the world. You and I for so long, now ...

“Good night, belovedest. Your sleep will be sweet if there is any influence in the wishes of

“YOUR OWN.

“P.S. The above sentence is quoted verbatim from a letter of Aunt Chatty’s grandmother.”

The Second Year

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Chapter I

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“Windy Poplars,
“Spook’s Lane,
“September 14th.

“I can hardly reconcile myself to the fact that our beautiful two months are over. They *were* beautiful, weren’t they, dearest? And now it will be only two years before ...

(Several paragraphs omitted.)

“But there has been a good deal of pleasure in coming back to Windy Poplars ... to my own private tower and my own special chair and my own lofty bed ... and even Dusty Miller basking on the kitchen windowsill.

“The widows were glad to see me and Rebecca Dew said frankly, ‘It’s good to have you back.’ Little Elizabeth felt the same way. We had a rapturous meeting at the green gate.

“‘I was a little afraid you might have got into Tomorrow before me,’ said little Elizabeth.

“‘Isn’t this a lovely evening?’ I said.

“‘Where you are it’s always a lovely evening, Miss Shirley,’ said little Elizabeth.

“Talk of compliments!

“‘How have you put in the summer, darling?’ I asked.

“‘Thinking,’ said little Elizabeth softly, ‘of all the lovely things that will happen in Tomorrow.’

“Then we went up to the tower room and read a story about elephants. Little Elizabeth is very much interested in elephants at present.

“‘There is something bewitching about the very name of elephant, isn’t there?’ she said gravely, holding her chin in her small hands after a fashion she has. ‘I expect to meet lots of elephants in Tomorrow.’

“We put an elephant park in our map of fairyland. It is no use looking superior and disdainful, my Gilbert, as I know you will be looking when you read this. Not a bit of use. The world always *will* have fairies. It can’t get along without them. And somebody has to supply them.

“It’s rather nice to be back in school, too. Katherine Brooke isn’t any more companionable but my pupils seemed glad to see me and Jen Pringle wants me to help her make the tin halos for the angels’ heads in a Sunday-school concert.

“I think the course of study this year will be much more interesting than last year. Canadian History has been added to the curriculum. I have to give a little ‘lecturette’ tomorrow on the War of 1812. It seems so strange to read over the stories of those old wars ... things that can never happen again. I don’t suppose any of us will ever have more than an academic interest in ‘battles long ago.’ It’s impossible to think of Canada ever being at war again. I am so thankful that phase of history is over.

“We are going to reorganize the Dramatic Club at once and canvass every family connected with the school for a subscription. Lewis Allen and I are going to take the Dawlish Road as our territory and canvass it next Saturday afternoon. Lewis will try to kill two birds with one stone, as he is competing for a prize offered by *Country Homes* for the best photograph of an attractive farmhouse. The prize is twenty-five dollars and that will mean a badly needed new suit and overcoat for Lewis. He worked on a farm all summer and is doing housework and waiting on the table at his boardinghouse again this year. He must hate it, but he never says a word about it. I do like Lewis ... he is so plucky and ambitious, with a charming grin in place of a smile. And he really isn’t over-strong. I was afraid last year he would break down. But his summer on the farm seems to have built him up a bit. This is his last year in High and then he hopes to achieve a year at Queen’s. The widows are going to ask him to Sunday-night supper as often as possible this winter. Aunt Kate and I have had a conference on ways and means and I persuaded her to let me put up the extras. Of course we didn’t try to persuade Rebecca Dew. I merely asked Aunt Kate in Rebecca’s hearing if I could have Lewis Allen in on

Sunday nights at least twice a month. Aunt Kate said coldly she was afraid they couldn't afford it, in addition to their usual lonely girl.

"Rebecca Dew uttered a cry of anguish.

"This is the last straw. Getting so poor we can't afford a bite now and again to a poor, hardworking, sober boy who is trying to get an education! You pay more for liver for That Cat and him ready to burst. Well, take a dollar off my wages and have him.'

"The gospel according to Rebecca was accepted. Lewis Allen is coming and neither Dusty Miller's liver nor Rebecca Dew's wages will be less. Dear Rebecca Dew!

"Aunt Chatty crept into my room last night to tell me she wanted to get a beaded cape but that Aunt Kate thought she was too old for it and her feelings had been hurt.

"Do you think I am, Miss Shirley? I don't want to be undignified ... but I've always wanted a beaded cape so much. I always thought they were what you might call jaunty ... and now they're in again."

"Too old! Of course you're not too old, dearest,' I assured her. 'Nobody is ever too old to wear just what she wants to wear. You wouldn't *want* to wear it if you were too old.' 'I shall get it and defy Kate,' said Aunt Chatty, anything but defiantly. But I think she will ... and I think I know how to reconcile Aunt Kate.

"I'm alone in my tower. Outside there is a still, still night and the silence is velvety. Not even the poplars are stirring. I have just leaned out of my window and blown a kiss in the direction of somebody not a hundred miles away from Kingsport."

Chapter II

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The Dawlish Road was a meandering sort of road, and the afternoon was made for wanderers ... or so Anne and Lewis thought as they prowled along it, now and then pausing to enjoy a sudden sapphire glimpse of the strait through the trees or to snap a particularly lovely bit of scenery or picturesque little house in a leafy hollow. It was not, perhaps, quite so pleasant to call at the houses themselves and ask for subscriptions for the benefit of the Dramatic Club, but Anne and Lewis took turns doing the talking ... he taking on the women while Anne manipulated the men.

“Take the men if you’re going in that dress and hat,” Rebecca Dew had advised. “I’ve had a good bit of experience in canvassing in my day and it all went to show that the better-dressed and better-looking you are the more money ... or promise of it ... you’ll get, if it’s the men you have to tackle. But if it’s the women, put on the oldest and ugliest things you have.”

“Isn’t a road an interesting thing, Lewis?” said Anne dreamily. “Not a straight road, but one with ends and kinks around which anything of beauty and surprise may be lurking. I’ve always loved bends in roads.”

“Where does this Dawlish Road go to?” asked Lewis practically ... though at the same moment he was reflecting that Miss Shirley’s voice always made him think of spring.

“I might be horrid and school-teacherish, Lewis, and say that it doesn’t go anywhere ... it stays right here. But I won’t. As to where it goes or where it leads to ... who cares? To the end of the world and back, perhaps. Remember what Emerson says ... ‘Oh, what have I to do with time?’ That’s our motto for today. I expect the universe will muddle on if we let it alone for a while. Look at those cloud shadows ... and that tranquillity of green valleys ... and that house with an apple tree at each of its corners. Imagine it in spring. This is one of the days people *feel* alive and every

wind of the world is a sister. I'm glad there are so many clumps of spice ferns along this road ... spice ferns with gossamer webs on them. It brings back the days when I pretended ... or believed ... I think I really did believe ... that gossamer webs were fairies' tablecloths."

They found a wayside spring in a golden hollow and sat down on a moss that seemed made of tiny ferns, to drink from a cup that Lewis twisted out of birch bark.

"You never know the real joy of drinking till you're dry with thirst and find water," he said. "That summer I worked out west on the railroad they were building, I got lost on the prairie one hot day and wandered for hours. I thought I'd die of thirst and then I came to a settler's shack, and he had a little spring like this in a clump of willows. How I drank! I've understood the Bible and its love of good water better ever since."

"We're going to get some water from another quarter," said Anne rather anxiously. "There's a shower coming up and ... Lewis, I love showers, but I've got on my best hat and my second-best dress. And there isn't a house within half a mile."

"There's an old deserted blacksmith's forge over there," said Lewis, "but we'll have to run for it."

Run they did and from its shelter enjoyed the shower as they had enjoyed everything else on that carefree, gypsying afternoon. A veiled hush had fallen over the world. All the young breezes that had been whispering and rustling so importantly along the Dawlish Road had folded their wings and become motionless and soundless. Not a leaf stirred, not a shadow flickered. The maple leaves at the bend of the road turned wrong side out until the trees looked as if they were turning pale from fear. A huge cool shadow seemed to engulf them like a green wave ... the cloud had reached them. Then the rain, with a rush and sweep of wind. The shower pattered sharply down on the leaves, danced along the smoking red road and pelted the roof of the old forge right merrily.

"If this lasts ..." said Lewis.

But it didn't. As suddenly as it had come up, it was over and the sun was shining on the wet, glistening trees. Dazzling glimpses of blue sky

appeared between the torn white clouds. Far away they could see a hill still dim with rain, but below them the cup of the valley seemed to brim over with peach-tinted mists. The woods around were pranked out with a sparkle and glitter as of springtime, and a bird began to sing in the big maple over the forge as if he were cheated into believing it really was springtime, so amazingly fresh and sweet did the world seem all at once.

“Let’s explore this,” said Anne, when they resumed their tramp, looking along a little side road running between old rail fences smothered in goldenrod.

“I don’t think there’s anybody living along that road,” said Lewis doubtfully. “I think it’s only a road running down to the harbor.”

“Never mind ... let’s go along it. I’ve always had a weakness for side roads ... something off the beaten track, lost and green and lonely. Smell the wet grass, Lewis. Besides, I feel in my bones that there *is* a house on it ... a certain kind of house ... a very snappable house.”

Anne’s bones did not deceive her. Soon there was a house ... and a snappable house to boot. It was a quaint, old-fashioned one, low in the eaves, with square, small-paned windows. Big willows stretched patriarchal arms over it and an apparent wilderness of perennials and shrubs crowded all about it. It was weather-gray and shabby, but the big barns beyond it were snug and prosperous-looking, up-to-date in every respect. “I’ve always heard, Miss Shirley, that when a man’s barns are better than his house, it’s a sign that his income exceeds his expenditure,” said Lewis, as they sauntered up the deep-rutted grassy lane.

“I should think it was a sign that he thought more of his horses than of his family,” laughed Anne. “I’m not expecting a subscription to our club here, but that’s the most likely house for a prize contest we’ve encountered yet. It’s grayness won’t matter in a photograph.”

“This lane doesn’t look as if it were much traveled,” said Lewis with a shrug. “Evidently the folks who live here aren’t strongly sociable. I’m afraid we’ll find they don’t even know what a dramatic club is. Anyhow, I’m going to secure my picture before we rouse any of them from their lair.”

The house seemed deserted, but after the picture was taken they opened a little white gate, crossed the yard and knocked on a faded blue kitchen door, the front door evidently being like that of Windy Poplars, more for show than for use ... if a door literally hidden in Virginia creeper could be said to be for show.

They expected at least the civility which they had hitherto met in their calls, whether backed up with generosity or not. Consequently they were decidedly taken aback when the door was jerked open and on the threshold appeared, not the smiling farmer's wife or daughter they had expected to see, but a tall, broad-shouldered man of fifty, with grizzled hair and bushy eyebrows, who demanded unceremoniously,

"What do you want?"

"We have called, hoping to interest you in our High School Dramatic Club," began Anne, rather lamely. But she was spared further effort.

"Never heard of it. Don't want to hear about it. Nothing to do with it," was the uncompromising interruption, and the door was promptly shut in their faces.

"I believe we've been snubbed," said Anne as they walked away.

"Nice amiable gentleman, that," grinned Lewis. "I'm sorry for his wife, if he has one."

"I don't think he can have, or she would civilize him a trifle," said Anne, trying to recover her shattered poise. "I wish Rebecca Dew had the handling of him. But we've got his house, at least, and I've a premonition that it's going to win the prize. Bother! I've just got a pebble in my shoe and I'm going to sit down on my gentleman's stone dyke, with or without his permission, and remove it."

"Luckily it's out of sight of the house," said Lewis.

Anne had just retied her shoelace when they heard something pushing softly through the jungle of shrubbery on their right. Then a small boy about eight years of age came into view and stood surveying them bashfully, with a big apple turnover clasped tightly in his chubby hands. He was a pretty child, with glossy brown curls, big trustful brown eyes and delicately modeled features. There was an air of refinement about him, in

spite of the fact that he was bareheaded and bare-legged, with only a faded blue cotton shirt and a pair of threadbare velvet knickerbockers between head and legs. But he looked like a small prince in disguise.

Just behind him was a big black Newfoundland dog whose head was almost on a level with the lad's shoulder.

Anne looked at him with a smile that always won children's hearts.

"Hello, sonny," said Lewis. "Who belongs to you?"

The boy came forward with an answering smile, holding out his turnover.

"This is for you to eat," he said shyly. "Dad made it for me, but I'd rather give it to you. I've lots to eat."

Lewis, rather tactlessly, was on the point of refusing to take the little chap's snack, but Anne gave him a quick nudge. Taking the hint, he accepted it gravely and handed it to Anne, who, quite as gravely, broke it in two and gave half of it back to him. They knew they must eat it and they had painful doubts as to "Dad's" ability in the cooking line, but the first mouthful reassured them. "Dad" might not be strong on courtesy but he could certainly make turnovers.

"This is delicious," said Anne. "What is your name, dear?"

"Teddy Armstrong," said the small benefactor. "But Dad always calls me Little Fellow. I'm all he has, you know. Dad is awful fond of me and I'm awful fond of Dad. I'm afraid you think my dad is impolite 'cause he shut that door so quick, but he doesn't mean to be. I heard you asking for something to eat." ("We didn't but it doesn't matter," thought Anne.)

"I was in the garden behind the hollyhocks, so I just thought I'd bring you my turnover 'cause I'm always so sorry for poor people who haven't plenty to eat. I have, always. My dad is a splendid cook. You ought to see the rice puddings he can make."

"Does he put raisins in them?" asked Lewis with a twinkle.

"Lots and lots. There's nothing mean about my dad."

"Haven't you any mother, darling?" asked Anne.

"No. My mother is dead. Mrs. Merrill told me once she'd gone to heaven, but my dad says there's no such place and I guess he ought to

know. My dad is an awful wise man. He's read thousands of books. I mean to be just 'zackly like him when I grow up ... only I'll always give people things to eat when they want them. My dad isn't very fond of people, you know, but he's awful good to me."

"Do you go to school?" asked Lewis.

"No. My dad teaches me at home. The trustees told him I'd have to go next year, though. I think I'd like to go to school and have some other boys to play with. 'Course I've got Carlo and Dad himself is splendid to play with when he has time. My dad is pretty busy, you know. He has to run the farm and keep the house clean, too. That's why he can't be bothered having people around, you see. When I get bigger I'll be able to help him lots and then he'll have more time to be polite to folks."

"That turnover was just about right, Little Fellow," said Lewis, swallowing the last crumb.

The Little Fellow's eyes beamed.

"I'm so glad you liked it," he said.

"Would you like to have your picture taken?" said Anne, feeling that it would never do to offer this generous small soul money. "If you would, Lewis will take it."

"Oh, wouldn't I!" said the Little Fellow eagerly. "Carlo, too?"

"Certainly Carlo, too."

Anne posed the two prettily before a background of shrubs, the little lad standing with his arm about his big, curly playmate's neck, both dog and boy seeming equally well pleased, and Lewis took the picture with his last remaining plate.

"If it comes out well I'll send you one by mail," he promised. "How shall I address it?"

"Teddy Armstrong, care of Mr. James Armstrong, Glencove Road," said the Little Fellow. "Oh, won't it be fun to have something coming to me mineself through the postoffice! I tell you I'll feel awful proud. I won't say a word to Dad about it so that it'll be a splendid surprise for him."

"Well, look out for your parcel in two or three weeks," said Lewis, as they bade him good-by. But Anne suddenly stooped and kissed the little

sunburned face. There was something about it that tugged at her heart. He was so sweet ... so gallant ... so motherless!

They looked back at him before a curve in the lane and saw him standing on the dyke, with his dog, waving his hand to them.

Of course Rebecca Dew knew all about the Armstrongs.

“James Armstrong has never got over his wife’s death five years ago,” she said. “He wasn’t so bad before that ... agreeable enough, though a bit of a hermit. Kind of built that way. He was just wrapped up in his bit of a wife ... she was twenty years younger than he was. Her death was an awful shock to him I’ve heard ... just seemed to change his nature completely. He got sour and cranky. Wouldn’t even get a housekeeper ... looked after his house and child himself. He kept bachelor’s hall for years before he was married, so he ain’t a bad hand at it.”

“But it’s no life for the child,” said Aunt Chatty. “His father never takes him to church or anywhere he’d see people.”

“He worships the boy, I’ve heard,” said Aunt Kate.

“‘Thou shalt have no other gods before me,’” quoted Rebecca Dew suddenly.

Chapter III

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It was almost three weeks before Lewis found time to develop his pictures. He brought them up to Windy Poplars the first Sunday night he came to supper. Both the house and the Little Fellow came out splendidly. The Little Fellow smiled up from the picture “as real as life,” said Rebecca Dew.

“Why, he looks like you, Lewis!” exclaimed Anne.

“He does that,” agreed Rebecca Dew, squinting at it judicially. “The minute I saw it, his face reminded me of somebody but I couldn’t think who.”

“Why, the eyes ... the forehead ... the whole expression ... are yours, Lewis,” said Anne.

“It’s hard to believe I was ever such a goodlooking little chap,” shrugged Lewis. “I’ve got a picture of myself somewhere, taken when I was eight. I must hunt it out and compare it. You’d laugh to see it, Miss Shirley. I’m the most sober-eyed kid, with long curls and a lace collar, looking stiff as a ramrod. I suppose I had my head clamped in one of those three-clawed contraptions they used to use. If this picture really resembles me, it must be only a coincidence. The Little Fellow can’t be any relation of mine. I haven’t an relative on the Island ... now.”

“Where were you born?” asked Aunt Kate.

“N. B. Father and Mother died when I was ten and I came over here to live with a cousin of mother’s ... I called her Aunt Ida. She died too, you know ... three years ago.”

“Jim Armstrong came from New Brunswick,” said Rebecca Dew. “*He* ain’t a real islander ... wouldn’t be such a crank if he was. We have our peculiarities but we’re *civilized*.”

“I’m not sure that I want to discover a relation in the amiable Mr. Armstrong,” grinned Lewis, attacking Aunt Chatty’s cinnamon toast.

“However, I think when I get the photograph finished and mounted I’ll take it out to Glencove Road myself and investigate a little. He may be a distant cousin or something. I really know nothing about my mother’s people, if she had any living. I’ve always been under the impression that she hadn’t. Father hadn’t, I know.”

“If you take the picture out in person, won’t the Little Fellow be a bit disappointed over losing his thrill of getting something through the postoffice?” said Anne.

“I’ll make it up to him ... I’ll send him something else by mail.”

The next Saturday afternoon Lewis came driving along Spook’s Lane in an antiquated buggy behind a still more antiquated mare.

“I’m going out to Glencove to take little Teddy Armstrong his picture, Miss Shirley. If my dashing turn-out doesn’t give you heart-failure I’d like to have you come, too. I don’t *think* any of the wheels will fall off.”

“Where on earth did you pick up that relic, Lewis?” demanded Rebecca Dew.

“Don’t poke fun at my gallant steed, Miss Dew. Have some respect for age. Mr. Bender lent me both mare and buggy on condition I’d do an errand for him along the Dawlish Road. I hadn’t time to walk out to Glencove today and back.”

“Time!” said Rebecca Dew. “I could walk there and back myself faster than that animal.”

“And carry a bag of potatoes back for Mr. Bender? You wonderful woman!”

Rebecca Dew’s red cheeks grew even redder.

“It ain’t nice to make fun of your elders,” she said rebukingly. Then, by way of coals of fire ... “Could you do with a few doughnuts afore you start out?”

The white mare, however, developed surprising powers of locomotion when they were once more out in the open. Anne giggled to herself as they jogged along the road. What would Mrs. Gardiner or even Aunt Jamesina say if they could see her now? Well, she didn’t care. It was a wonderful day for a drive through a land that was keeping its old lovely ritual of

autumn, and Lewis was a good companion. Lewis would attain his ambitions. Nobody else of her acquaintance, she reflected, would dream of asking her to go driving in the Bender buggy behind the Bender mare. But it never occurred to Lewis that there was anything odd about it. What difference *how* you traveled as long as you got there? The calm rims of the upland hills were as blue, the roads as red, the maples as gorgeous, no matter what vehicle you rode in. Lewis was a philosopher and cared as little what people might say as he did when some of the High School pupils called him “Sissy” because he did housework for his board. Let them call! Some day the laugh would be on the other side. His pockets might be empty but his head wasn’t. Meanwhile the afternoon was an idyl and they were going to see the Little Fellow again. They told Mr. Bender’s brotherin-law about their errand when he put the bag of potatoes in the back of the buggy.

“Do you mean to say you’ve got a photo of little Teddy Armstrong?” exclaimed Mr. Merrill.

“That I have and a good one.” Lewis unwrapped it and held it proudly out. “I don’t believe a professional photographer could have taken a better.”

Mr. Merrill slapped his leg resoundingly.

“Well, if that don’t beat all! Why, little Teddy Armstrong is dead ...”

“Dead!” exclaimed Anne in horror. “Oh, Mr. Merrill ... no ... don’t tell me ... that dear little boy ...”

“Sorry, miss, but it’s a fact. And his father is just about wild and all the worse that he hasn’t got any kind of a picture of him at all. And now you’ve got a good one. Well, well!”

“It ... it seems impossible,” said Anne, her eyes full of tears. She was seeing the slender little figure waving his farewell from the dyke.

“Sorry to say it’s only too true. He died nearly three weeks ago. Pneumonia. Suffered awful but he was just as brave and patient as any one could be, they say. I dunno what’ll become of Jim Armstrong now. They say he’s like a crazy man — just moping and muttering to himself all the time. ‘If I only had a picture of my Little Fellow,’ he keeps saying.”

“I’m sorry for that man,” said Mrs. Merrill suddenly. She had not hitherto spoken, standing by her husband, a gaunt, square-built gray woman in wind-whipped calico and check apron. “He’s well-to-do and I’ve always felt he looked down on us because we were poor. But we have our boy ... and it don’t never matter how poor you are as long as you’ve got something to love.”

Anne looked at Mrs. Merrill with a new respect. Mrs. Merrill was not beautiful, but as her sunken gray eyes met Anne’s, something of spirit kinship was acknowledged between them. Anne had never seen Mrs. Merrill before and never saw her again, but she always remembered her as a woman who had attained to the ultimate secret of life. You were never poor as long as you had something to love.

The golden day was spoiled for Anne. Somehow, the Little Fellow had won her heart in their brief meeting. She and Lewis drove in silence down the Glencove Road and up the grassy lane. Carlo was lying on the stone before the blue door. He got up and came down over to them, as they descended from the buggy, licking Anne’s hand and looking up at her with big wistful eyes as if asking for news of his little playmate. The door was open and in the dim room beyond they saw a man with his head bowed on the table.

At Anne’s knock he started up and came to the door. She was shocked at the change in him. He was hollow-cheeked, haggard and unshaven, and his deep-set eyes flashed with a fitful fire.

She expected a repulse at first, but he seemed to recognize her, for he said listlessly,

“So you’re back? The Little Fellow said you talked to him and kissed him. He liked you. I was sorry I’d been so churlish to you. What is it you want?”

“We want to show you something,” said Anne gently.

“Will you come in and sit down?” he said drearily.

Without a word Lewis took the Little Fellow’s picture from its wrappings and held it out to him. He snatched it up, gave it one amazed, hungry look, then dropped on his chair and burst into tears and sobs. Anne

had never seen a man weep so before. She and Lewis stood in mute sympathy until he had regained his self-control.

“Oh, you don’t know what this means to me,” he said brokenly at last. “I hadn’t any picture of him. And I’m not like other folks ... I can’t recall a face ... I can’t see faces as most folks can in their mind. It’s been awful since the Little Fellow died... . I couldn’t even remember what he looked like. And now you’ve brought me this ... after I was so rude to you. Sit down ... sit down. I wish I could express my thanks in some way. I guess you’ve saved my reason ... maybe my life. Oh, miss, isn’t it like him? You’d think he was going to speak. My dear Little Fellow! How am I going to live without him? I’ve nothing to live for now. First his mother ... now him.”

“He was a dear little lad,” said Anne tenderly.

“That he was. Little Teddy ... Theodore, his mother named him ... her ‘gift of Gods’ she said he was. And he was so patient and never complained. Once he smiled up in my face and said, ‘Dad, I think you’ve been mistaken in one thing ... just one. I guess there is a heaven, isn’t there? Isn’t there, Dad?’ I said to him, yes, there was... . God forgive me for ever trying to teach him anything else. He smiled again, contented like, and said, ‘Well, Dad, I’m going there and Mother and God are there, so I’ll be pretty well off. But I’m worried about you, Dad. You’ll be so awful lonesome without me. But just do the best you can and be polite to folks and come to us by and by.’ He made me promise I’d try, but when he was gone I couldn’t stand the blankness of it. I’d have gone mad if you hadn’t brought me this. It won’t be so hard now.”

He talked about his Little Fellow for some time, as if he found relief and pleasure in it. His reserve and gruffness seemed to have fallen from him like a garment. Finally Lewis produced the small faded photograph of himself and showed it to him.

“Have you ever seen anybody who looked like that, Mr. Armstrong?” asked Anne.

Mr. Armstrong peered at it in perplexity.

“It’s awful like the Little Fellow,” he said at last. “Whose might it be?”

“Mine,” said Lewis, “when I was seven years old. It was because of the strange resemblance to Teddy that Miss Shirley made me bring it to show you. I thought it possible that you and I or the Little Fellow might be some distant relation. My name is Lewis Allen and my father was George Allen. I was born in New Brunswick.”

James Armstrong shook his head. Then he said,

“What was your mother’s name?”

“Mary Gardiner.”

James Armstrong looked at him for a moment in silence.

“She was my half-sister,” he said at last. “I hardly knew her ... never saw her but once. I was brought up in an uncle’s family after my father’s death. My mother married again and moved away. She came to see me once and brought her little daughter. She died soon after and I never saw my half-sister again. When I came over to the Island to live, I lost all trace of her. You are my nephew and the Little Fellow’s cousin.”

This was surprising news to a lad who had fancied himself alone in the world. Lewis and Anne spent the whole evening with Mr. Armstrong and found him to be a well-read and intelligent man. Somehow, they both took a liking to him. His former inhospitable reception was quite forgotten and they saw only the real worth of the character and temperament below the unpromising shell that had hitherto concealed them.

“Of course the Little Fellow couldn’t have loved his father so much if it hadn’t been so,” said Anne, as she and Lewis drove back to Windy Poplars through the sunset.

When Lewis Allen went the next weekend to see his uncle, the latter said to him,

“Lad, come and live with me. You are my nephew and I can do well for you ... what I’d have done for my Little Fellow if he’d lived. You’re alone in the world and so am I. I need you. I’ll grow hard and bitter again if I live here alone. I want you to help me keep my promise to the Little Fellow. His place is empty. Come you and fill it.”

“Thank you, Uncle; I’ll try,” said Lewis, holding out his hand.

“And bring that teacher of yours here once in a while. I like that girl. The Little Fellow liked her. ‘Dad,’ he said to me, ‘I didn’t think I’d ever like anybody but you to kiss me, but I liked it when she did. There was something in her eyes, Dad.’”

Chapter IV

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“The old porch thermometer says it’s zero and the new side-door one says it’s ten above,” remarked Anne, one frosty December night. “So I don’t know whether to take my muff or not.”

“Better go by the old thermometer,” said Rebecca Dew cautiously. “It’s probably more used to our climate. Where are you going this cold night, anyway?”

“I’m going round to Temple Street to ask Katherine Brooke to spend the Christmas holidays with me at Green Gables.”

“You’ll spoil your holidays, then,” said Rebecca Dew solemnly. “She’d go about snubbing the angels, that one ... that is, if she ever condescended to enter heaven. And the worst of it is, she’s proud of her bad manners ... thinks it shows her strength of mind no doubt!”

“My brain agrees with every word you say but my heart simply won’t,” said Anne. “I feel, in spite of everything, that Katherine Brooke is only a shy, unhappy girl under her disagreeable rind. I can never make any headway with her in Summerside, but if I can get her to Green Gables I believe it will thaw her out.”

“You won’t get her. She won’t go,” predicted Rebecca Dew. “Probably she’ll take it as an insult to be asked ... think you’re offering her charity. We asked her here once to Christmas dinner ... the year afore you came ... you remember, Mrs. MacComber, the year we had two turkeys give us and didn’t know how we was to get ‘em et ... and all she said was, ‘No, thank you. If there’s anything I hate, it’s the word Christmas!’”

“But that is so dreadful ... hating Christmas! Something *has* to be done, Rebecca Dew. I’m going to ask her and I’ve a queer feeling in my thumbs that tells me she will come.”

“Somehow,” said Rebecca Dew reluctantly, “when you say a thing is going to happen, a body believes it will. You haven’t got a second sight,

have you? Captain MacComber's mother had it. Useter give me the creeps."

"I don't think I have anything that need give you creeps. It's only just ... I've had a feeling for some time that Katherine Brooke is almost crazy with loneliness under her bitter outside and that my invitation will come pat to the psychological moment, Rebecca Dew."

"I am not a B.A.," said Rebecca with awful humility, "and I do not deny your right to use words I cannot always understand. Neither do I deny that you can wind people round your little finger. Look how you managed the Pringles. But I do say I pity you if you take that iceberg and nutmeg grater combined home with you for Christmas."

Anne was by no means as confident as she pretended to be during her walk to Temple Street. Katherine Brooke had really been unbearable of late. Again and again Anne, rebuffed, had said, as grimly as Poe's raven, "Nevermore." Only yesterday Katherine had been positively insulting at a staff meeting. But in an unguarded moment Anne had seen something looking out of the older girl's eyes ... a passionate, half-frantic something like a caged creature mad with discontent. Anne spent the first half of the night trying to decide whether to invite Katherine Brooke to Green Gables or not. Finally she fell asleep with her mind irrevocably made up.

Katherine's landlady showed Anne into the parlor and shrugged a fat shoulder when she asked for Miss Brooke.

"I'll tell her you're here but I dunno if she'll come down. She's sulking. I told her at dinner tonight that Mrs. Rawlins says its scandalous the way she dresses, for a teacher in Summerside High, and she took it high and mighty as usual."

"I don't think you should have told Miss Brooke that," said Anne reproachfully.

"But I thought she ought to know," said Mrs. Dennis somewhat waspishly.

"Did you also think she ought to know that the Inspector said she was one of the best teachers in the Maritimes?" asked Anne. "Or didn't you know it?"

“Oh, I heard it. But she’s stuck-up enough now without making her any worse. Proud’s no name for it ... though what she’s got to be proud of, *I* dunno. Of course she was mad anyhow tonight because I’d said she couldn’t have a dog. She’s took a notion into her head she’d like to have a dog. Said she’d pay for his rations and see he was no bother. But what’d I do with him when she was in school? I put my foot down. ‘I’m boarding no dogs,’ sez I.”

“Oh, Mrs. Dennis, won’t you let her have a dog? He wouldn’t bother you ... much. You could keep him in the basement while she was in school. And a dog really is such a protection at night. I wish you would ... *please.*”

There was always something about Anne Shirley’s eyes when she said “please” that people found hard to resist. Mrs. Dennis, in spite of fat shoulders and a meddlesome tongue, was not unkind at heart. Katherine Brooke simply got under her skin at times with her ungracious ways.

“I dunno why you should worry as to her having a dog or not. I didn’t know you were such friends. She hasn’t *any* friends. I never had such an unsociable boarder.”

“I think that is why she wants a dog, Mrs. Dennis. None of us can live without some kind of companionship.”

“Well, it’s the first human thing I’ve noticed about her,” said Mrs. Dennis. “I dunno’s I have any awful objection to a dog, but she sort of vexed me with her sarcastic way of asking ... ‘I s’pose you wouldn’t consent if I asked you if I might have a dog, Mrs. Dennis,’ she sez, haughty like. Set her up with it! ‘You’re s’posing right,’ sez I, as haughty as herself. I don’t like eating my words any more than most people, but you can tell her she can have a dog if she’ll guarantee he won’t misbehave in the parlor.”

Anne did not think the parlor could be much worse if the dog did misbehave. She eyed the dingy lace curtains and the hideous purple roses on the carpet with a shiver.

“I’m sorry for any one who has to spend Christmas in a boardinghouse like this,” she thought. “I don’t wonder Katherine hates the word. I’d like

to give this place a good airing ... it smells of a thousand meals. *Why* does Katherine go on boarding here when she has a good salary?"

"She says you can come up," was the message Mrs. Dennis brought back, rather dubiously, for Miss Brooke had run true to form.

The narrow, steep stair was repellent. It didn't want you. Nobody would go up who didn't have to. The linoleum in the hall was worn to shreds. The little back hall-bedroom where Anne presently found herself was even more cheerless than the parlor. It was lighted by one glaring unshaded gas jet. There was an iron bed with a valley in the middle of it and a narrow, sparsely draped window looking out on a backyard garden where a large crop of tin cans flourished. But beyond it was a marvelous sky and a row of lombardies standing out against long, purple, distant hills.

"Oh, Miss Brooke, look at that sunset," said Anne rapturously from the squeaky, cushionless rocker to which Katherine had ungraciously pointed her.

"I've seen a good many sunsets," said the latter coldly, without moving. ("Condescending to me with your sunsets!" she thought bitterly.)

"You haven't seen this one. No two sunsets are alike. Just sit down here and let us let it sink into our souls," *said* Anne. *Thought* Anne, "Do you ever say anything pleasant?"

"Don't be ridiculous, please."

The most insulting words in the world! With an added edge of insult in Katherine's contemptuous tones. Anne turned from her sunset and looked at Katherine, much more than half inclined to get up and walk out. But Katherine's eyes looked a trifle strange. *Had* she been crying? Surely not ... you couldn't imagine Katherine Brooke crying.

"You don't make me feel very welcome," Anne said slowly.

"I can't pretend things. I haven't *your* notable gift for doing the queen act ... saying exactly the right thing to every one. You're *not* welcome. What sort of room is this to welcome any one to?"

Katherine made a scornful gesture at the faded walls, the shabby bare chairs and the wobbly dressing-table with its petticoat of limp muslin.

“It isn’t a nice room, but why do you stay here if you don’t like it?”

“Oh ... why ... Why? *You* wouldn’t understand. It doesn’t matter. I don’t care what anybody thinks. What brought you here tonight? I don’t suppose you came just to soak in the sunset.”

“I came to ask if you would spend the Christmas holidays with me at Green Gables.”

(“Now,” thought Anne, “for another broadside of sarcasm! I do wish she’d sit down at least. She just stands there as if waiting for me to go.”)

But there was silence for a moment. Then Katherine said slowly,

“Why do you ask me? It isn’t because you like me ... even you couldn’t pretend *that*.”

“It’s because I can’t bear to think of any human being spending Christmas in a place like *this*,” said Anne candidly.

The sarcasm came then.

“Oh, I see. A seasonable outburst of charity. I’m hardly a candidate for that yet, Miss Shirley.”

Anne got up. She was out of patience with this strange, aloof creature. She walked across the room and looked Katherine squarely in the eye.

“Katherine Brooke, whether you know it or not, what *you* want is a good spanking.”

They gazed at each other for a moment.

“It must have relieved you to say that,” said Katherine. But somehow the insulting tone had gone out of her voice. There was even a faint twitch at the corner of her mouth.

“It has,” said Anne. “I’ve been wanting to tell you just that for some time. I didn’t ask you to Green Gables out of charity ... you know that perfectly well. I told you my true reason. *Nobody* ought to spend Christmas here ... the very idea is indecent.”

“You asked me to Green Gables just because you are sorry for me.”

“I *am* sorry for you. Because you’ve shut out life ... and now life is shutting you out. Stop, it, Katherine. Open your doors to life ... and life will come in.”

“The Anne Shirley version of the old bromide, ‘If you bring a smiling visage to the glass you meet a smile,’” said Katherine with a shrug.

“Like all bromides, that’s absolutely true. Now, are you coming to Green Gables or are you not?”

“What would you say if I accepted ... to yourself, not to me?”

“I’d say you were showing the first faint glimmer of common sense I’d ever detected in you,” retorted Anne.

Katherine laughed ... surprisingly. She walked across to the window, scowled at the fiery streak which was all that was left of the scorned sunset and then turned.

“Very well ... I’ll go. Now you can go through the motions of telling me you’re delighted and that we’ll have a jolly time.”

“I *am* delighted. But I don’t know if you’ll have a jolly time or not. That will depend a good deal on yourself, Miss Brooke.”

“Oh, I’ll behave myself decently. You’ll be surprised. You won’t find me a very exhilarating guest, I suppose, but I promise you I won’t eat with my knife or insult people when they tell me it’s a fine day. I tell you frankly that the only reason I’m going is because even I can’t stick the thought of spending the holidays here alone. Mrs. Dennis is going to spend Christmas week with her daughter in Charlottetown. It’s a bore to think of getting my own meals. I’m a rotten cook. So much for the triumph of matter over mind. But will you give me your word of honor that you won’t wish me a merry Christmas? I just don’t want to be merry at Christmas.”

“I won’t. But I can’t answer for the twins.”

“I’m not going to ask you to sit down here ... you’d freeze ... but I see that there’s a very fine moon in place of your sunset and I’ll walk home with you and help you to admire it if you like.”

“I do like,” said Anne, “but I want to impress on your mind that we have *much* finer moons in Avonlea.”

“So she’s going?” said Rebecca Dew as she filled Anne’s hot-water bottle. “Well, Miss Shirley, I hope you’ll never try to induce me to turn Mohammedan ... because you’d likely succeed. Where is That Cat? Out frisking round Summerside and the weather at zero.”

“Not by the new thermometer. And Dusty Miller is curled up on the rocking-chair by my stove in the tower, snoring with happiness.”

“Ah well,” said Rebecca Dew with a little shiver as she shut the kitchen door, “I wish every one in the world was as warm and sheltered as we are tonight.”

Chapter V

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Anne did not know that a wistful little Elizabeth was watching out of one of the mansard windows of The Evergreens as she drove away from Windy Poplars ... an Elizabeth with tears in her eyes who felt as if everything that made life worth living had gone out of her life for the time being and that she was the very Lizziest of Lizzies. But when the livery sleigh vanished from her sight around the corner of Spook's Lane Elizabeth went and knelt down by her bed.

"Dear God," she whispered, "I know it isn't any use to ask You for a merry Christmas for me because Grandmother and The Woman couldn't be merry, but please let my dear Miss Shirley have a merry, merry Christmas and bring her back safe to me when it's over.

"Now," said Elizabeth, getting up from her knees, "I've done all that I can."

Anne was already tasting Christmas happiness. She fairly sparkled as the train left the station. The ugly streets slipped past her ... she was going home ... home to Green Gables. Out in the open country the world was all golden-white and pale violet, woven here and there with the dark magic of spruces and the leafless delicacy of birches. The low sun behind the bare woods seemed rushing through the trees like a splendid god, as the train sped on. Katherine was silent but did not seem ungracious.

"Don't expect me to talk," she had warned Anne curtly.

"I won't. I hope you don't think I'm one of those terrible people who make you feel that you *have* to talk to them all the time. We'll just talk when we feel like it. I admit I'm likely to feel like it a good part of the time, but you're under no obligation to take any notice of what I'm saying."

Davy met them at Bright River with a big two-seated sleigh full of furry robes ... and a bear hug for Anne. The two girls snuggled down in

the back seat. The drive from the station to Green Gables had always been a very pleasant part of Anne's weekends home. She always recalled her first drive home from Bright River with Matthew. That had been in spring and this was December, but everything along the road kept saying to her, "Do you remember?" The snow crisped under the runners; the music of the bells tinkled through the ranks of tall pointed firs, snow-laden. The White Way of Delight had little festoons of stars tangled in the trees. And on the last hill but one they saw the great gulf, white and mystical under the moon but not yet ice-bound.

"There's just one spot on this road where I always feel suddenly ... 'I'm home,' " said Anne. "It's the top of the next hill, where we'll see the lights of Green Gables. I'm just thinking of the supper Marilla will have ready for us. I believe I can smell it here. Oh, it's good ... good ... good to be home again!"

At Green Gables every tree in the yard seemed to welcome her back ... every lighted window was beckoning. And how good Marilla's kitchen smelled as they opened the door. There were hugs and exclamations and laughter. Even Katherine seemed somehow no outsider, but one of them. Mrs. Rachel Lynde had set her cherished parlor lamp on the supper-table and lighted it. It was really a hideous thing with a hideous red globe, but what a warm rosy becoming light it cast over everything! How warm and friendly were the shadows! How pretty Dora was growing! And Davy really seemed almost a man.

There was news to tell. Diana had a small daughter ... Josie Pye actually had a young man ... and Charlie Sloane was said to be engaged. It was all just as exciting as news of empire could have been. Mrs. Lynde's new patchwork quilt, just completed, containing five thousand pieces, was on display and received its meed of praise.

"When you come home, Anne," said Davy, "everything seems to come alive."

"Ah, this is how life should be," purred Dora's kitten.

"I've always found it hard to resist the lure of a moonlight night," said Anne after supper. "How about a snowshoe tramp, Miss Brooke? I think

that I've heard that you snowshoe."

"Yes ... it's the only thing I *can* do ... but I haven't done it for six years," said Katherine with a shrug.

Anne rooted out her snowshoes from the garret and Davy shot over to Orchard Slope to borrow an old pair of Diana's for Katherine. They went through Lover's Lane, full of lovely tree shadows, and across fields where little fir trees fringed the fences and through woods which were full of secrets they seemed always on the point of whispering to you but never did ... and through open glades that were like pools of silver.

They did not talk or want to talk. It was as if they were afraid to talk for fear of spoiling something beautiful. But Anne had never felt so *near* Katherine Brooke before. By some magic of its own the winter night had brought them together ... *almost* together but not quite.

When they came out to the main road and a sleigh flashed by, bells ringing, laughter tinkling, both girls gave an involuntary sigh. It seemed to both that they were leaving behind a world that had nothing in common with the one to which they were returning ... a world where time was not ... which was young with immortal youth ... where souls communed with each other in some medium that needed nothing so crude as words.

"It's been wonderful," said Katherine so obviously to herself that Anne made no response.

They went down the road and up the long Green Gables lane but just before they reached the yard gate, they both paused as by a common impulse and stood in silence, leaning against the old mossy fence and looked at the brooding, motherly old house seen dimly through its veil of trees. How beautiful Green Gables was on a winter night!

Below it the Lake of Shining Waters was locked in ice, patterned around its edges with tree shadows. Silence was everywhere, save for the staccato clip of a horse trotting over the bridge. Anne smiled to recall how often she had heard that sound as she lay in her gable room and pretended to herself that it was the gallop of fairy horses passing in the night.

Suddenly another sound broke the stillness.

"Katherine ... you're ... why, you're not crying!"

Somehow, it seemed impossible to think of Katherine crying. But she was. And her tears suddenly humanized her. Anne no longer felt afraid of her.

“Katherine ... dear Katherine ... what is the matter? Can I help?”

“Oh ... you can’t understand!” gasped Katherine. “Things have always been made easy for *you*. You ... you seem to live in a little enchanted circle of beauty and romance. ‘I wonder what delightful discovery I’ll make today’ ... that seems to be your attitude to life, Anne. As for me, I’ve forgotten how to live ... no, I never knew how. I’m ... I’m like a creature caught in a trap. I can never get out ... and it seems to me that somebody is always poking sticks at me through the bars. And you ... you have more happiness than you know what to do with ... friends everywhere, a lover! Not that I want a lover ... I hate men ... but if I died tonight, not one living soul would miss me. How would you like to be absolutely friendless in the world?”

Katherine’s voice broke in another sob.

“Katherine, you say you like frankness. I’m going to be frank. If you are as friendless as you say, it is your own fault. I’ve wanted to be friends with you. But you’ve been all prickles and stings.”

“Oh, I know ... I know. How I hated you when you came first! Flaunting your circlet of pearls ...”

“Katherine, I didn’t ‘flaunt’ it!”

“Oh, I suppose not. That’s just my natural hatefulness. But it seemed to flaunt itself ... not that I envied you your beau ... I’ve never wanted to be married ... I saw enough of that with father and mother ... but I hated your being over me when you were younger than I ... I was glad when the Pringles made trouble for you. You seemed to have everything I hadn’t ... charm ... friendship ... youth. Youth! I never had anything but starved youth. You know nothing about it. You don’t know ... you haven’t the least idea what it is like not to be wanted by any one ... any one!”

“Oh, haven’t I?” cried Anne.

In a few poignant sentences she sketched her childhood before coming to Green Gables.

“I wish I’d known that,” said Katherine. “It would have made a difference. To me you seemed one of the favorites of fortune. I’ve been eating my heart out with envy of you. You got the position I wanted ... oh, I know you’re better qualified than I am, but there it was. You’re pretty ... at least you make people believe you’re pretty. *My* earliest recollection is of some one saying, ‘What an ugly child!’ You come into a room delightfully ... oh, I remember how you came into school that first morning. But I think the real reason I’ve hated you so is that you always seemed to have some secret delight ... as if every day of life was an adventure. In spite of my hatred there were times when I acknowledged to myself that you might just have come from some far-off star.”

“Really, Katherine, you take my breath with all these compliments. But you don’t hate me any longer, do you? We can be friends now.”

“I don’t know ... I’ve never had a friend of any kind, much less one of anything like my own age. I don’t belong anywhere ... never have belonged. I don’t think I know how to *be* a friend. No, I don’t hate you any longer ... I don’t know how I feel about you ... oh, I suppose it’s your noted charm beginning to work on me. I only know that I feel I’d like to tell you what my life has been like. I could never have told you if you hadn’t told me about your life before you came to Green Gables. I want you to understand what has made me as I am. I don’t know why I should want you to understand ... but I do.”

“Tell me, Katherine dear. I do want to understand you.”

“You *do* know what it is like not to be wanted, I admit ... but not what it is like to know that your father and mother don’t want you. Mine didn’t. They hated me from the moment I was born ... and before ... and they hated each other. Yes, they did. They quarreled continually ... just mean, nagging, petty quarrels. My childhood was a nightmare. They died when I was seven and I went to live with Uncle Henry’s family. *They* didn’t want me either. They all looked down on me because I was ‘living on their charity.’ I remember all the snubs I got ... every one. I can’t remember a single kind word. I had to wear my cousins’ castoff clothes. I remember one hat in particular ... it made me look like a mushroom. And they made

fun of me whenever I put it on. One day I tore it off and threw it on the fire. I had to wear the most awful old tam to church all the rest of the winter. I never even had a dog ... and I wanted one so. I had some brains ... I longed so for a B.A. course ... but naturally I might just as well have yearned for the moon. However, Uncle Henry agreed to put me through Queen's if I would pay him back when I got a school. He paid my board in a miserable third-rate boardinghouse where I had a room over the kitchen that was ice cold in winter and boiling hot in summer, and full of stale cooking smells in all seasons. And the clothes I had to wear to Queen's! But I got my license and I got the second room in Summerside High ... the only bit of luck I've ever had. Even since then I've been pinching and scrimping to pay Uncle Henry ... not only what he spent putting me through Queen's, but what my board through all the years I lived there cost him. I was determined I would not owe him one cent. That is why I've boarded with Mrs. Dennis and dressed shabbily. And I've just finished paying him. For the first time in my life I feel *free*. But meanwhile I've developed the wrong way. I know I'm unsocial ... I know I can never think of the right thing to say. I know it's my own fault that I'm always neglected and overlooked at social functions. I know I've made being disagreeable into a fine art. I know I'm sarcastic. I know I'm regarded as a tyrant by my pupils. I know they hate me. Do you think it doesn't hurt me to know it? They always look afraid of me ... I hate people who look as if they were afraid of me. Oh, Anne ... hate's got to be a disease with me. I do want to be like other people ... and I never can now. *That* is what makes me so bitter."

"Oh, but you can!" Anne put her arm about Katherine. "You can put hate out of your mind ... cure yourself of it. Life is only beginning for you now ... since at last you're quite free and independent. And you never know what may be around the next bend in the road."

"I've heard you say that before ... I've laughed at your 'bend in the road.' But the trouble is there aren't any bends in my road. I can see it stretching straight out before me to the sky-line ... endless monotony. Oh, does life ever *frighten* you, Anne, with its *blankness* ... its swarms of cold,

uninteresting people? No, of course it doesn't. *You* don't have to go on teaching all the rest of your life. And you seem to find *everybody* interesting, even that little round red being you call Rebecca Dew. The truth is, I hate teaching ... and there's nothing else I can do. A schoolteacher is simply a slave of time. Oh, I know you like it ... I don't see how you can. Anne, I want to travel. It's the one thing I've always longed for. I remember the one and only picture that hung on the wall of my attic room at Uncle Henry's ... a faded old print that had been discarded from the other rooms with scorn. It was a picture of palms around a spring in the desert, with a string of camels marching away in the distance. It literally fascinated me. I've always wanted to go and find it ... I want to see the Southern Cross and the Taj Mahal and the pillars of Karnak. I want to *know* ... not just *believe* ... that the world is round. And I can never do it on a teacher's salary. I'll just have to go on forever, prating of King Henry the Eighth's wives and the inexhaustible resources of the Dominion."

Anne laughed. It was safe to laugh now, for the bitterness had gone out of Katherine's voice. It sounded merely rueful and impatient.

"Anyhow, we're going to be friends ... and we're going to have a jolly ten days here to begin our friendship. I've always wanted to be friends with you, Katherine ... spelled with a K! I've always felt that underneath all your prickles was something that would make you worth while as a friend."

"So that is what you've really thought of me? I've often wondered. Well, the leopard will have a go at changing its spots if it's at all possible. Perhaps it is. I can believe almost anything at this Green Gables of yours. It's the first place I've ever been in that felt like a *home*. I should like to be more like other people ... if it isn't too late. I'll even practice a sunny smile for that Gilbert of yours when he arrives tomorrow night. Of course I've forgotten how to talk to young men ... if I ever knew. He'll just think me an old-maid gooseberry. I wonder if, when I go to bed tonight, I'll feel furious with myself for pulling off my mask and letting you see into my shivering soul like this."

“No, you won’t. You’ll think, ‘I’m glad she’s found out I’m human.’ We’re going to snuggle down among the warm fluffy blankets, probably with two hot-water bottles, for likely Marilla and Mrs. Lynde will each put one in for us for fear the other has forgotten it. And you’ll feel deliciously sleepy after this walk in the frosty moonshine ... and first thing you’ll know, it will be morning and you’ll feel as if you were the first person to discover that the sky is blue. And you’ll grow learned in lore of plum puddings because you’re going to help me make one for Tuesday ... a great big plummy one.”

Anne was amazed at Katherine’s good looks when they went in. Her complexion was radiant after her long walk in the keen air and color made all the difference in the world to her.

“Why, Katherine would be handsome if she wore the right kind of hats and dresses,” reflected Anne, trying to imagine Katherine with a certain dark, richly red velvet hat she had seen in a Summerside shop, on her black hair and pulled over her amber eyes. “I’ve simply got to see what can be done about it.”

Chapter VI

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Saturday and Monday were full of gay doings at Green Gables. The plum pudding was concocted and the Christmas tree brought home. Katherine and Anne and Davy and Dora went to the woods for it ... a beautiful little fir to whose cutting down Anne was only reconciled by the fact that it was in a little clearing of Mr. Harrison's which was going to be stumped and plowed in the spring anyhow.

They wandered about, gathering creeping spruce and ground pine for wreaths ... even some ferns that kept green in a certain deep hollow of the woods all winter ... until day smiled back at night over white-bosomed hills and they came back to Green Gables in triumph ... to meet a tall young man with hazel eyes and the beginnings of a mustache which made him look so much older and maturer that Anne had one awful moment of wondering if it were really Gilbert or a stranger.

Katherine, with a little smile that tried to be sarcastic but couldn't quite succeed, left them in the parlor and played games with the twins in the kitchen all the evening. To her amazement she found she was enjoying it. And what fun it was to go down cellar with Davy and find that there were really such things as sweet apples still left in the world.

Katherine had never been in a country cellar before and had no idea what a delightful, spooky, shadowy place it could be by candlelight. Life already seemed *warmer*. For the first time it came home to Katherine that life might be beautiful, even for her.

Davy made enough noise to wake the Seven Sleepers, at an unearthly hour Christmas morning, ringing an old cowbell up and down the stairs. Marilla was horrified at his doing such a thing when there was a guest in the house, but Katherine came down laughing. Somehow, an odd camaraderie had sprung up between her and Davy. She told Anne candidly

that she had no use for the impeccable Dora but that Davy was somehow tarred with her own brush.

They opened the parlor and distributed the gifts before breakfast because the twins, even Dora, couldn't have eaten anything if they hadn't. Katherine, who had not expected anything except, perhaps, a duty gift from Anne, found herself getting presents from every one. A gay, crocheted afghan from Mrs. Lynde ... a sachet of orris root from Dora ... a paper-knife from Davy ... a basketful of tiny jars of jam and jelly from Marilla ... even a little bronze chessy cat for a paper-weight from Gilbert.

And, tied under the tree, curled up on a bit of warm and woolly blanket, a dear little browneyed puppy, with alert, silken ears and an ingratiating tail. A card tied to his neck bore the legend, "From Anne, who dares, after all, to wish you a Merry Christmas."

Katherine gathered his wriggling little body up in her arms and spoke shakily.

"Anne ... he's a darling! But Mrs. Dennis won't let me keep him. I asked her if I might get a dog and she refused."

"I've arranged it all with Mrs. Dennis. You'll find she won't object. And, anyway, Katherine, you're not going to be there long. You *must* find a decent place to live, now that you've paid off what you thought were your obligations. Look at the lovely box of stationery Diana sent me. Isn't it fascinating to look at the blank pages and wonder what will be written on them?"

Mrs. Lynde was thankful it was a white Christmas ... there would be no fat graveyards when Christmas was white ... but to Katherine it seemed a purple and crimson and golden Christmas. And the week that followed was just as beautiful. Katherine had often wondered bitterly just what it would be like to be happy and now she found out. She bloomed out in the most astonishing way. Anne found herself enjoying their companionship.

"To think I was afraid she would spoil my Christmas holiday!" she reflected in amazement.

"To think," said Katherine to herself, "that I was on the verge of refusing to come here when Anne invited me!"

They went for long walks ... through Lover's Lane and the Haunted Wood, where the very silence seemed friendly ... over hills where the light snow whirled in a winter dance of goblins ... through old orchards full of violet shadows ... through the glory of sunset woods. There were no birds to chirp or sing, no brooks to gurgle, no squirrels to gossip. But the wind made occasional music that had in quality what it lacked in quantity.

"One can always find something lovely to look at or listen to," said Anne.

They talked of "cabbages and kings," and hitched their wagons to stars, and came home with appetites that taxed even the Green Gables pantry. One day it stormed and they couldn't go out. The east wind was beating around the eaves and the gray gulf was roaring. But even a storm at Green Gables had charms of its own. It was cozy to sit by the stove and dreamily watch the firelight flickering over the ceiling while you munched apples and candy. How jolly supper was with the storm wailing outside!

One night Gilbert took them to see Diana and her new baby daughter.

"I never held a baby in my life before," said Katherine as they drove home. "For one thing, I didn't want to, and for another I'd have been afraid of it going to pieces in my grasp. You can't imagine how I felt ... so big and clumsy with that tiny, exquisite thing in my arms. I know Mrs. Wright thought I was going to drop it every minute. I could see her striving heroically to conceal her terror. But it did something to me ... the baby I mean ... I haven't decided just what."

"Babies are such fascinating creatures," said Anne dreamily. "They are what I heard somebody at Redmond call 'terrific bundles of potentialities.' Think of it, Katherine ... Homer must have been a baby once ... a baby with dimples and great eyes full of light ... he couldn't have been blind then, of course."

"What a pity his mother didn't know he was to be Homer," said Katherine.

"But I think I'm glad Judas' mother didn't know he was to be Judas," said Anne softly. "I hope she never did know."

There was a concert in the hall one night, with a party at Abner Sloane's after it, and Anne persuaded Katherine to go to both.

"I want you to give us a reading for our program, Katherine. I've heard you read beautifully."

"I used to recite ... I think I rather liked doing it. But the summer before last I recited at a shore concert which a party of summer resorters got up ... and I heard them laughing at me afterwards."

"How do you know they were laughing at you?"

"They must have been. There wasn't anything else to laugh at."

Anne hid a smile and persisted in asking for the reading.

"Give *Genevra* for an encore. I'm told you do that splendidly. Mrs. Stephen Pringle told me she never slept a wink the night after she heard you give it."

"No; I've never liked *Genevra*. It's in the reading, so I try occasionally to show the class how to read it. I really have no patience with *Genevra*. Why didn't she scream when she found herself locked in? When they were hunting everywhere for her, surely somebody would have heard her."

Katherine finally promised the reading but was dubious about the party. "I'll go, of course. But nobody will ask me to dance and I'll feel sarcastic and prejudiced and ashamed. I'm always miserable at parties ... the few I've ever gone to. Nobody seems to think I can dance ... and you know I can fairly well, Anne. I picked it up at Uncle Henry's, because a poor bit of a maid they had wanted to learn, too, and she and I used to dance together in the kitchen at night to the music that went on in the parlor. I think I'd like it ... with the right kind of partner."

"You won't be miserable at this party, Katherine. You won't be outside looking in. There's all the difference in the world, you know, between being inside looking out and outside looking in. You have such lovely hair, Katherine. Do you mind if I try a new way of doing it?"

Katherine shrugged.

"Oh, go ahead. I suppose my hair does look dreadful ... but I've no time to be always primping. I haven't a party dress. Will my green taffeta do?"

“It will have to do ... though green is the one color above all others that you should never wear, my Katherine. But you’re going to wear a red, pintucked chiffon collar I’ve made for you. Yes, you *are*. You ought to have a red dress, Katherine.”

“I’ve always hated red. When I went to live with Uncle Henry, Aunt Gertrude always made me wear aprons of bright Turkey-red. The other children in school used to call out ‘Fire,’ when I came in with one of those aprons on. Anyway, I can’t be bothered with clothes.”

“Heaven grant me patience! Clothes are *very* important,” said Anne severely, as she braided and coiled. Then she looked at her work and saw that it was good. She put her arm about Katherine’s shoulders and turned her to the mirror.

“Don’t you truly think we are a pair of quite goodlooking girls?” she laughed. “And isn’t it really nice to think people will find some pleasure in looking at us? There are so many homely people who would actually look quite attractive if they took a little pains with themselves. Three Sundays ago in church ... you remember the day poor old Mr. Milvain preached and had such a terrible cold in his head that nobody could make out what he was saying? ... well, I passed the time making the people around me beautiful. I gave Mrs. Brent a new nose, I waved Mary Addison’s hair and gave Jane Marden’s a lemon rinse ... I dressed Emma Dill in blue instead of brown ... I dressed Charlotte Blair in stripes instead of checks ... I removed several moles ... and I shaved off Thomas Anderson’s long, sandy Piccadilly weepers. You couldn’t have known them when I got through with them. And, except perhaps for Mrs. Brent’s nose, they could have done everything I did, themselves. Why, Katherine, your eyes are just the color of tea ... amber tea. Now, live up to your name this evening ... a brook should be sparkling ... limpid ... merry.”

“Everything I’m not.”

“Everything you’ve been this past week. So you *can* be it.”

“That’s only the magic of Green Gables. When I go back to Summerside, twelve o’clock will have struck for Cinderella.”

“You’ll take the magic back with you. Look at yourself ... looking for once as you ought to look all the time.”

Katherine gazed at her reflection in the mirror as if rather doubting her identity.

“I do look years younger,” she admitted. “You were right ... clothes *do* do things to you. Oh, I know I’ve been looking older than my age. I didn’t care. Why should I? Nobody else cared. And I’m not like you, Anne. Apparently you were born knowing how to live. And I don’t know anything about it ... not even the A B C. I wonder if it’s too late to learn. I’ve been sarcastic so long, I don’t know if I can be anything else. Sarcasm seemed to me to be the only way I could make any impression on people. And it seems to me, too, that I’ve always been afraid when I was in the company of other people ... afraid of saying something stupid ... afraid of being laughed at.”

“Katherine Brooke, look at yourself in that mirror; carry that picture of yourself with you ... magnificent hair framing your face instead of trying to pull it backward ... eyes sparkling like dark stars ... a little flush of excitement on your cheeks ... and you won’t feel afraid. Come, now. We’re going to be late, but fortunately all the performers have what I heard Dora referring to as ‘preserved’ seats.”

Gilbert drove them to the hall. How like old times it was ... only Katherine was with her in place of Diana. Anne sighed. Diana had so many other interests now. No more running round to concerts and parties for her.

But what an evening it was! What silvery satin roads with a pale green sky in the west after a light snowfall! Orion was treading his stately march across the heavens, and hills and fields and woods lay around them in a pearly silence.

Katherine’s reading captured her audience from the first line, and at the party she could not find dances for all her would-be partners. She suddenly found herself laughing without bitterness. Then home to Green Gables, warming their toes at the sitting-room fire by the light of two friendly candles on the mantel; and Mrs. Lynde tiptoeing into their room, late as it was, to ask them if they’d like another blanket and assure

Katherine that her little dog was snug and warm in a basket behind the kitchen stove.

“I’ve got a new outlook on life,” thought Katherine as she drifted off to slumber. “I didn’t know there were people like this.”

“Come again,” said Marilla when she left.

Marilla never said that to any one unless she meant it.

“Of course she’s coming again,” said Anne. “For weekends ... and for *weeks* in the summer. We’ll build bonfires and hoe in the garden ... and pick apples and go for the cows ... and row on the pond and get lost in the woods. I want to show you Little Hester Gray’s garden, Katherine, and Echo Lodge and Violet Vale when it’s full of violets.”

Chapter VII

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“Windy Poplars,

“January 5th,

“The street where ghosts (should) walk.

“MY ESTEEMED FRIEND:

“That isn’t anything Aunt Chatty’s grandmother wrote. It’s only something she would have written if she’d thought of it.

“I’ve made a New Year resolution to write sensible love-letters. Do you suppose such a thing is possible?

“I have left dear Green Gables but I have returned to dear Windy Poplars. Rebecca Dew had a fire lighted in the tower room for me and a hot-water bottle in the bed.

“I’m so glad I like Windy Poplars. It would be dreadful to live in a place I didn’t like ... that didn’t seem friendly to me ... that didn’t say, ‘I’m glad you’re back.’ Windy Poplars does. It’s a bit old-fashioned and a bit prim, but it likes me.

“And I was glad to see Aunt Kate and Aunt Chatty and Rebecca Dew again. I can’t help seeing their funny sides but I love them well for all that.

“Rebecca Dew said such a nice thing to me yesterday.

“‘Spook’s Lane has been a different place since you came here, Miss Shirley.’

“I’m glad you liked Katherine, Gilbert. She was surprisingly nice to you. It’s amazing to find how nice she can be when she tries. And I think she is just as much amazed at it herself as any one else. She had no idea it would be so easy.

“It’s going to make so much difference in school, having a Vice you can really work with. She is going to change her boardinghouse, and I have already persuaded her to get that velvet hat and have not yet given up hope of persuading her to sing in the choir.

“Mr. Hamilton’s dog came down yesterday and chivied Dusty Miller. ‘This *is* the last straw,’ said Rebecca Dew. And with her red cheeks redder still, her chubby back shaking with anger, and in such a hurry that she put her hat on hinderside before and never knew it, she toddled up the road and gave Mr. Hamilton quite a large piece of her mind. I can just see his foolish, amiable face while he was listening to her.

“‘I do not like That Cat,’ she told me, ‘but he is OURS and no Hamilton dog is going to come here and give him impudence in his own back yard. “He only chased your cat in fun,” said Jabez Hamilton. “The Hamilton ideas of fun are different from the MacComber ideas of fun or the MacLean ideas of fun or, if it comes to that, the Dew ideas of fun,” I told him. “Tut, tut, you must have had cabbage for dinner, Miss Dew,” said he. “No,” I said, “but I *could* have had. Mrs. Captain MacComber didn’t sell all her cabbages last fall and leave her family without any because the price was so good. There are some people,” sez I, “that can’t hear anything because of the jingle in their pocket.” And I left that to sink in. But what could you expect from a Hamilton? Low scum!’

“There is a crimson star hanging low over the white Storm King. I wish you were here to watch it with me. If you were, I really think it would be more than a moment of esteem and friendship.”

“January 12th.

“Little Elizabeth came over two nights ago to find out if I could tell her what peculiar kind of terrible animals Papal bulls were, and to tell me tearfully that her teacher had asked her to sing at a concert the public school is getting up but that Mrs. Campbell put her foot down and said ‘no’ most decidedly. When Elizabeth attempted to plead, Mrs. Campbell said,

“‘Have the goodness not to talk back to me, Elizabeth, if you please.’

“Little Elizabeth wept a few bitter tears in the tower room that night and said she felt it would make her Lizzie forever. She could never be any of her other names again.

“‘Last week I loved God, this week I don’t,’ she said defiantly.

“All her class were taking part in the program and she felt ‘like a leopard.’ I think the sweet thing meant she felt like a leper and that was sufficiently dreadful. Darling Elizabeth must not feel like a leper.

“So I manufactured an errand to The Evergreens next evening. The Woman ... who might really have lived before the flood, she looks so ancient ... gazed at me coldly out of great gray, expressionless eyes, showed me grimly into the drawing-room and went to tell Mrs. Campbell that I had asked for her.

“I don’t think there has been any sunshine in that drawing-room since the house was built. There was a piano, but I’m sure it could never have been played on. Stiff chairs, covered with silk brocade, stood against the wall ... *All* the furniture stood against the wall except a central marble-topped table, and none of it seemed to be acquainted with the rest.

“Mrs. Campbell came in. I had never seen her before. She has a fine, sculptured old face that might have been a man’s, with black eyes and black bushy brows under frosty hair. She has not quite eschewed *all* vain adornment of the body, for she wore large black onyx earrings that reached to her shoulders. She was painfully polite to me and I was painlessly polite to her. We sat and exchanged civilities about the weather for a few moments ... both, as Tacitus remarked a few thousand years ago, ‘with countenances adjusted to the occasion.’ I told her, truthfully, that I had come to see if she would lend me the Rev. James Wallace Campbell’s *Memoirs* for a short time, because I understood there was a good deal about the early history of Prince County in them which I wished to make use of in school.

“Mrs. Campbell thawed quite markedly and summoning Elizabeth, told her to go up to her room and bring down the *Memoirs*. Elizabeth’s face showed signs of tears and Mrs. Campbell condescended to explain that it was because little Elizabeth’s teacher had sent another note begging that she be allowed to sing at the concert, and that she, Mrs. Campbell, had written a very stinging reply which little Elizabeth would have to carry to her teacher the next morning.

“‘I do not approve of children of Elizabeth’s age singing in public,’ said Mrs. Campbell. ‘It tends to make them bold and forward.’

“As if anything could make little Elizabeth bold and forward!

“‘I think perhaps you are wise, Mrs. Campbell,’ I remarked in my most patronizing tone. ‘In any event Mabel Phillips is going to sing, and I am told that her voice is really so wonderful that she will make all the others seem as nothing. No doubt it is *much* better that Elizabeth should not appear in competition with her.’

“Mrs. Campbell’s face was a study. She may be Campbell outside but she is Pringle at the core. She said nothing, however, and I knew the psychological moment for stopping. I thanked her for the *Memoirs* and came away.

“The next evening when little Elizabeth came to the garden gate for her milk, her pale, flowerlike face was literally a-star. She told me that Mrs. Campbell had told her she might sing after all, if she were careful not to let herself get puffed up about it.

“You see, Rebecca Dew had told me that the Phillips and the Campbell clans have always been rivals in the matter of good voices!

“I gave Elizabeth a bit of a picture for Christmas to hang above her bed ... just a light-dappled woodland path leading up a hill to a quaint little house among some trees. Little Elizabeth says she is not so frightened now to go to sleep in the dark, because as soon as she gets into bed she pretends that she is walking up the path to the house and that she goes inside and it is all lighted and her father is there.

“Poor darling! I can’t help detesting that father of hers!”

“January 19th.

“There was a dance at Carry Pringle’s last night. Katherine was there in a dark red silk with the new side flounces and her hair had been done by a hairdresser. Would you believe it, people who had known her ever since she came to teach in Summerside actually asked one another who she was when she came into the room. But I think it was less the dress and hair that made the difference than some indefinable change in herself.

“Always before, when she was out with people, her attitude seemed to be, ‘These people bore me. I expect I bore them and I hope I do.’ But last night it was as if she had set lighted candles in all the windows of her house of life.

“I’ve had a hard time winning Katherine’s friendship. But nothing worth while is ever easy come by and I have always felt that her friendship would be worth while.

“Aunt Chatty has been in bed for two days with a feverish cold and thinks she may have the doctor tomorrow, in case she is taking pneumonia. So Rebecca Dew, her head tied up in a towel, has been cleaning the house madly all day to get it in perfect order before the doctor’s possible visit. Now she is in the kitchen ironing Aunt Chatty’s white cotton nighty with the crochet yoke, so that it will be ready for her to slip over her flannel one. It was spotlessly clean before, but Rebecca Dew thought it was not quite a good color from lying in the bureau drawer.”

“January 28th.

“January so far has been a month of cold gray days, with an occasional storm whirling across the harbor and filling Spook’s Lane with drifts. But last night we had a silver thaw and today the sun shone. My maple grove was a place of unimaginable splendors. Even the commonplaces had been made lovely. Every bit of wire fencing was a wonder of crystal lace.

“Rebecca Dew has been poring this evening over one of my magazines containing an article on ‘Types of Fair Women,’ illustrated by photographs.

“‘Wouldn’t it be lovely, Miss Shirley, if some one could just wave a wand and make everybody beautiful?’ she said wistfully. ‘Just fancy my feelings, Miss Shirley, if I suddenly found myself beautiful! But then’ ... with a sigh ... ‘if we were all beauties who would do the work?’”

Chapter VIII

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“I’m so tired,” sighed Cousin Ernestine Bugle, dropping into her chair at the Windy Poplars supper-table. “I’m afraid sometimes to sit down for fear I’ll never be able to git up again.”

Cousin Ernestine, a cousin three times removed of the late Captain MacComber, but still, as Aunt Kate used to reflect, much too close, had walked in from Lowvale that afternoon for a visit to Windy Poplars. It cannot be said that either of the widows had welcomed her very heartily, in spite of the sacred ties of family. Cousin Ernestine was not an exhilarating person, being one of those unfortunates who are constantly worrying not only about their own affairs but everybody else’s as well and will not give themselves or others any rest at all. The very look of her, Rebecca Dew declared, made you feel that life was a vale of tears.

Certainly Cousin Ernestine was not beautiful and it was extremely doubtful if she ever had been. She had a dry, pinched little face, faded, pale blue eyes, several badly placed moles and a whining voice. She wore a rusty black dress and a decrepit neck-piece of Hudson seal which she would not remove even at the table, because she was afraid of draughts.

Rebecca Dew might have sat at the table with them had she wished, for the widows did not regard Cousin Ernestine as any particular “company.” But Rebecca always declared she couldn’t “savor her victuals” in that old kill-joy’s society. She preferred to “eat her morsel” in the kitchen, but that did not prevent her from saying her say as she waited on the table.

“Likely it’s the spring getting into your bones,” she remarked unsympathetically.

“Ah, I hope it’s only that, Miss Dew. But I’m afraid I’m like poor Mrs. Oliver Gage. She et mushrooms last summer but there must-a been a toadstool among them, for she’s never felt the same since.

“But you can’t have been eating mushrooms as early as this,” said Aunt Chatty.

“No, but I’m afraid I’ve et something else. Don’t try to cheer me up, Charlotte. You mean well, but it ain’t no use. I’ve been through too much. Are you sure there ain’t a spider in that cream jug, Kate? I’m afraid I saw one when you poured my cup.”

“We never have spiders in *our* cream jugs,” said Rebecca Dew ominously, and slammed the kitchen door.

“Mebbe it was only a shadder,” said Cousin Ernestine meekly. “My eyes ain’t what they were. I’m afraid I’ll soon be blind. That reminds me ... I dropped in to see Martha MacKay this afternoon and she was feeling feverish and all out in some kind of a rash. ‘Looks to me as though you had the measles,’ I told her. ‘Likely they’ll leave you almost blind. Your family all have weak eyes.’ I thought she ought to be prepared. Her mother isn’t well either. The doctor says it’s indigestion, but I’m afraid it’s a *growth*. ‘And if you have to have an operation and take chloroform,’ I told her, ‘I’m afraid you’ll never come out of it. Remember you’re a Hillis and the Hillises all had weak hearts. Your father died of heart-failure, you know.’”

“At eighty-seven!” said Rebecca Dew, whisking away a plate.

“And you know three score and ten is the Bible limit,” said Aunt Chatty cheerfully.

Cousin Ernestine helped herself to a third teaspoonful of sugar and stirred her tea sadly.

“So King David said, Charlotte, but I’m afraid David wasn’t a very nice man in some respects.”

Anne caught Aunt Chatty’s eye and laughed before she could help herself.

Cousin Ernestine looked at her disapprovingly.

“I’ve heerd you was a great girl to laugh. Well, I hope it’ll last, but I’m afraid it won’t. I’m afraid you’ll find out all too soon that life’s a melancholy business. Ah well, I was young myself once.”

“Was you really?” inquired Rebecca Dew sarcastically, bringing in the muffins. “Seems to me you must always have been afraid to be young. It takes courage, I can tell you that, Miss Bugle.”

“Rebecca Dew has such an odd way of putting things,” complained Cousin Ernestine. “Not that I mind her of course. And it’s well to laugh when you can, Miss Shirley, but I’m afraid you’re tempting Providence by being so happy. You’re awful like our last minister’s wife’s aunt ... she was always laughing and she died of a parralattic stroke. The third one kills you. I’m afraid our new minister out at Lowvale is inclined to be frivolous. The minute I saw him I sez to Louisy, ‘I’m afraid a man with legs like that must be addicted to dancing.’ I s’pose he’s give it up since he turned minister, but I’m afraid the strain will come out in his family. He’s got a young wife and they say she’s scandalously in love with him. I can’t seem to git over the thought of any one marrying a minister for love. I’m afraid it’s awful irreverent. He preaches pretty fair sermons, but I’m afraid from what he said of Elijah the Tidbit last Sunday that he’s far too liberal in his views of the Bible.”

“I see by the papers that Peter Ellis and Fanny Bugle were married last week,” said Aunt Chatty.

“Ah, yes. I’m afraid that’ll be a case of marrying in haste and repenting at leisure. They’ve only known each other three years. I’m afraid Peter’ll find out that fine feathers don’t always make fine birds. I’m afraid Fanny’s very shiftless. She irons her table napkins on the right side first and only. Not much like her sainted mother. Ah, *she* was a thorough woman if ever there was one. When she was in mourning she always wore black nightgowns. Said she felt as bad in the night as in the day. I was down at Andy Bugle’s, helping them with the cooking, and when I come downstairs on the wedding morning if there wasn’t Fanny eating an egg for her breakfast ... and her gitting married that day. I don’t s’pose you’ll believe that ... I wouldn’t if I hadn’t a-seen it with my own eyes. My poor dead sister never et a thing for three days afore she was married. And after her husband died we was all afraid she was never going to eat again. There are times when I feel I can’t understand the Bugles any longer. There was a

time when you knew where you was with your own connection, but it ain't that way now."

"Is it true that Jean Young is going to be married again?" asked Aunt Kate.

"I'm afraid it is. Of course Fred Young is supposed to be dead, but I'm dreadful afraid he'll turn up yet. You could never trust that man. She's going to marry Ira Roberts. I'm afraid he's only marrying her to make her happy. His Uncle Philip once wanted to marry me, but I sez to him, sez I, 'Bugle I was born and Bugle I will die. Marriage is a leap in the dark,' sez I, 'and I ain't going to be drug into it.' There's been an awful lot of weddings in Lowvale this winter. I'm afraid there'll be funerals all summer to make up for it. Annie Edwards and Chris Hunter were married last month. I'm afraid they won't be as fond of each other in a few years' time as they are now. I'm afraid she was just swept off her feet by his dashing ways. His Uncle Hiram was crazy ... he belieft he was a dog for years."

"If he did his own barking nobody need have grudged him the fun of it," said Rebecca Dew, bringing in the pear preserves and the layer cake.

"I never heerd that he barked," said Cousin Ernestine. "He just gnawed bones and buried them when nobody was looking. His wife felt it."

"Where is Mrs. Lily Hunter this winter?" asked Aunt Chatty.

"She's been spending it with her son in San Francisco and I'm awful afraid there'll be another earthquake afore she gits out of it. If she does, she'll likely try to smuggle and have trouble at the border. If it ain't one thing, it's another when you're traveling. But folks seem to be crazy for it. My cousin Jim Bugle spent the winter in Florida. I'm afraid he's gitting rich and worldly. I said to him afore he went, sez I ... I remember it was the night afore the Colemans' dog died ... or was it? ... yes, it was ...

'Pride goeth afore destruction and a haughty spirit afore a fall,' sez I. His daughter is teaching over in the Bugle Road school and she can't make up her mind which of her beaus to take. 'There's one thing I can assure you of, Mary Annetta,' sez I, 'and that is you'll never git the one you love best. So you'd better take the one as loves you ... if you kin be sure he does.' I

hope she'll make a better choice than Jessie Chipman did. I'm afraid *she's* just going to marry Oscar Green because he was always round. 'Is *that* what you've picked out?' I sez to her. His brother died of galloping consumption. 'And don't be married in May,' sez I, 'for May's awful unlucky for a wedding.'"

"How encouraging you always are!" said Rebecca Dew, bringing in a plate of macaroons.

"Can you tell me," said Cousin Ernestine, ignoring Rebecca Dew and taking a second helping of pears, "if a calceolaria is a flower or a disease?"

"A flower," said Aunt Chatty.

Cousin Ernestine looked a little disappointed.

"Well, whatever it is, Sandy Bugle's widow's got it. I heerd her telling her sister in church last Sunday that she had a calceolaria at last. Your geraniums are dreadful scraggy, Charlotte. I'm afraid you don't fertilize them properly. Mrs. Sandy's gone out of mourning and poor Sandy only dead four years. Ah well, the dead are soon forgot nowadays. My sister wore crape for her husband twenty-five years."

"Did you know your placket was open?" said Rebecca, setting a coconut pie before Aunt Kate.

"I haven't time to be always staring at my face in the glass," said Cousin Ernestine acidly. "What if my placket is open? I've got three petticoats on, haven't I? They tell me the girls nowadays only wear one. I'm afraid the world is gitting dreadful gay and giddy. I wonder if they ever think of the judgment day."

"Do you s'pose they'll ask us at the judgment day how many petticoats we've got on?" asked Rebecca Dew, escaping to the kitchen before any one could register horror. Even Aunt Chatty thought Rebecca Dew really had gone a little too far.

"I s'pose you saw old Alec Crowdy's death last week in the paper," sighed Cousin Ernestine. "His wife died two years ago, lit'rally harried into her grave, poor creetur. They say he's been awful lonely since she died, but I'm afraid that's too good to be true. And I'm afraid they're not

through with their troubles with him yet, even if he is buried. I hear he wouldn't make a will and I'm afraid there'll be awful ructions over the estate. They say Annabel Crowdy is going to marry a jack-of-all-trades. Her mother's first husband was one, so mebbe it's heredit'ry. Annabel's had a hard life of it, but I'm afraid she'll find it's out of the frying-pan into the fire, even if it don't turn out he's got a wife already."

"What is Jane Goldwin doing with herself this winter?" asked Aunt Kate. "She hasn't been in to town for a long time."

"Ah, poor Jane! She's just pining away mysteriously. They don't know what's the matter with her, but I'm afraid it'll turn out to be an alibi. What is Rebecca Dew laughing like a hyenus out in the kitchen for? I'm afraid you'll have her on your hands yet. There's an awful lot of weak minds among the Dews."

"I see Thyra Cooper has a baby," said Aunt Chatty.

"Ah, yes, poor little soul. Only one, thank mercy. I was afraid it would be twins. Twins run so in the Coopers."

"Thyra and Ned are such a nice young couple," said Aunt Kate, as if determined to salvage something from the wreck of the universe.

But Cousin Ernestine would not admit that there was any balm in Gilead much less in Lowvale.

"Ah, she was real thankful to git him at last. There was a time she was afraid he wouldn't come back from the west. I warned her. 'You may be sure he'll disappoint you,' I told her. 'He's always disappointed people. Every one expected him to die afore he was a year old, but you see he's alive yet.' When he bought the Holly place I warned her again. 'I'm afraid that well is full of typhoid,' I told her. 'The Holly hired man died of typhoid there five years ago.' They can't blame *me* if anything happens. Joseph Holly has some misery in his back. He calls it lumbago, but I'm afraid it's the beginning of spinal meningitis."

"Old Uncle Joseph Holly is one of the best men in the world," said Rebecca Dew, bringing in a replenished teapot.

"Ah, he's good," said Cousin Ernestine lugubriously. "Too good! I'm afraid his sons will all go to the bad. You see it like that so often. Seems as

if an average has to be struck. No, thank you, Kate, I won't have any more tea ... well, mebbe a macaroon. They don't lie heavy on the stomach, but I'm afraid I've et far too much. I must be taking French leave, for I'm afraid it'll be dark afore I git home. I don't want to git my feet wet; I'm so afraid of ammonia. I've had something traveling from my arm to my lower limbs all winter. Night after night I've laid awake with it. Ah, nobody knows what I've gone through, but I ain't one of the complaining sort. I was determined I'd git up to see you once more, for I may not be here another spring. But you've both failed terrible, so you may go afore me yet. Ah well, it's best to go while there's some one of your own left to lay you out. Dear me, how the wind is gitting up! I'm afraid our barn roof will blow off if it comes to a gale. We've had so much wind this spring I'm afraid the climate is changing. Thank you, Miss Shirley ..." as Anne helped her into her coat ... "Be careful of yourself. You look awful washed out. I'm afraid people with red hair never have real strong constitutions."

"I think my constitution is all right," smiled Anne, handing Cousin Ernestine an indescribable bit of millinery with a stringy ostrich feather dripping from its back. "I have a touch of sore throat tonight, Miss Bugle, that's all."

"Ah!" Another of Cousin Ernestine's dark forebodings came to her. "You want to watch a sore throat. The symptoms of diptheria and tonsillitis are exactly the same till the third day. But there's one consolation ... you'll be spared an awful lot of trouble if you die young."

Chapter IX

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“Tower Room,
“Windy Poplars,
“April 20th.

“POOR DEAR GILBERT:

“‘I said of laughter, it is mad, and of mirth, what doeth it?’ I’m afraid I’ll turn gray young ... I’m afraid I’ll end up in the poorhouse ... I’m afraid none of my pupils will pass their finals ... Mr. Hamilton’s dog barked at me Saturday night and I’m afraid I’ll have hydrophobia ... I’m afraid my umbrella will turn inside out when I keep a tryst with Katherine tonight ... I’m afraid Katherine likes me so much now that she can’t always like me as much ... I’m afraid my hair isn’t auburn after all ... I’m afraid I’ll have a mole on the end of my nose when I’m fifty ... I’m afraid my school is a fire-trap ... I’m afraid I’ll find a mouse in my bed tonight ... I’m afraid you got engaged to me just because I was always around ... I’m afraid I’ll soon be picking at the counterpane.

“No, dearest, I’m not crazy ... not yet. It’s only that Cousin Ernestine Bugle is catching.

“I know now why Rebecca Dew has always called her ‘Miss Much-afraid.’ The poor soul has borrowed so much trouble, she must be hopelessly in debt to fate.

“There are so many Bugles in the world ... not many quite so far gone in Buglism as Cousin Ernestine, perhaps, but so many kill-joys, afraid to enjoy today because of what tomorrow will bring.

“Gilbert darling, don’t let’s ever be afraid of things. It’s such dreadful slavery. Let’s be daring and adventurous and expectant. Let’s dance to meet life and all it can bring to us, even if it brings scads of trouble and typhoid and twins!

“Today has been a day dropped out of June into April. The snow is all gone and the fawn meadows and golden hills just sing of spring. I know I heard Pan piping in the little green hollow in my maple bush and my Storm King was bannered with the airiest of purple hazes. We’ve had a great deal of rain lately and I’ve loved sitting in my tower in the still, wet hours of the spring twilights. But tonight is a gusty, hurrying night ... even the clouds racing over the sky are in a hurry and the moonlight that gushes out between them is in a hurry to flood the world.

“Suppose, Gilbert, we were walking hand in hand down one of the long roads in Avonlea tonight!

“Gilbert, I’m afraid I’m scandalously in love with you. You don’t think it’s irreverent, do you? But then, you’re not a minister.”

Chapter X

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“I’m so different,” sighed Hazel.

It was really dreadful to be so different from other people ... and yet rather wonderful, too, as if you were a being strayed from another star. Hazel would not have been one of the common herd for *anything* ... no matter what she suffered by reason of her differentness.

“Everybody is different,” said Anne amusedly.

“You are smiling.” Hazel clasped a pair of very white, very dimpled hands and gazed adoringly at Anne. She emphasized at least one syllable in every word she uttered. “You have such a fascinating smile ... such a *haunting* smile. I knew the moment I first saw you that you would understand *everything*. We are on the *same plane*. Sometimes I think I must be *psychic*, Miss Shirley. I always know so *instinctively* the moment I meet any one whether I’m going to like them or not. I felt at once that you were sympathetic ... that you would *understand*. It’s so sweet to be understood. Nobody understands me, Miss Shirley ... *nobody*. But when I saw you, some inner voice whispered to me, ‘*She will understand ... with her you can be your real self.*’ Oh, Miss Shirley, let’s be *real* ... let’s *always* be real. Oh, Miss Shirley, do you love me the leastest, tiniest bit?”

“I think you’re a dear,” said Anne, laughing a little and ruffling Hazel’s golden curls with her slender fingers. It was quite easy to be fond of Hazel.

Hazel had been pouring out her soul to Anne in the tower room, from which they could see a young moon hanging over the harbor and the twilight of a late May evening filling the crimson cups of the tulips below the windows.

“Don’t let’s have any light yet,” Hazel had begged, and Anne had responded,

“No ... it’s lovely here when the dark is your friend, isn’t it? When you turn on the light, it makes the dark your enemy ... and it glowers in at you resentfully.”

“I can *think* things like that but I can never express them so beautifully,” moaned Hazel in an anguish of rapture. “You talk in the language of the violets, Miss Shirley.”

Hazel couldn’t have explained in the least what she meant by that, but it didn’t matter. It sounded so poetic.

The tower room was the only peaceful room in the house. Rebecca Dew had said that morning, with a hunted look, “We *must* get the parlor and spare-room papered before the Ladies’ Aid meets here,” and had forthwith removed all the furniture from both to make way for a paperhanger who then refused to come until the next day. Windy Poplars was a wilderness of confusion, with one sole oasis in the tower room.

Hazel Marr had a notorious “crush” on Anne. The Marrs were newcomers in Summerside, having moved there from Charlottetown during the winter. Hazel was an “October blonde,” as she liked to describe herself, with hair of golden bronze and brown eyes, and, so Rebecca Dew declared, had never been much good in the world since she found out she was pretty. But Hazel was popular, especially among the boys, who found her eyes and curls a quite irresistible combination.

Anne liked her. Earlier in the evening she had been tired and a trifle pessimistic, with the fag that comes with late afternoon in a schoolroom, but she felt rested now; whether as a result of the May breeze, sweet with apple blossom, blowing in at the window, or of Hazel’s chatter, she could not have told. Perhaps both. Somehow, to Anne, Hazel recalled her own early youth, with all its raptures and ideals and romantic visions.

Hazel caught Anne’s hand and pressed her lips to it reverently.

“I *hate* all the people you have loved before me, Miss Shirley. I hate all the other people you love *now*. I want to possess you *exclusively*.”

“Aren’t you a bit unreasonable, honey? *You* love other people besides me. How about Terry, for example?”

“Oh, Miss Shirley! It’s that I want to talk to you about. I can’t endure it in silence any longer ... I *cannot*. I *must* talk to some one about it ... some one who *understands*. I went out the night before last and walked round and round the pond all night ... well, nearly ... till twelve, anyhow. I’ve suffered everything ... *everything*.”

Hazel looked as tragic as a round, pink-and-white face, long-lashed eyes and a halo of curls would let her.

“Why, Hazel dear, I thought you and Terry were so happy ... that everything was settled.”

Anne could not be blamed for thinking so. During the preceding three weeks, Hazel had raved to her about Terry Garland, for Hazel’s attitude was, what was the use of having a beau if you couldn’t talk to some one about him?

“*Everybody* thinks that,” retorted Hazel with great bitterness. “Oh, Miss Shirley, life seems so full of perplexing problems. I feel sometimes as if I wanted to lie down somewhere ... *anywhere* ... and fold my hands and never *think* again.”

“My dear girl, what has gone wrong?”

“Nothing ... and *everything*. Oh, Miss Shirley, *can* I tell you all about it ... *can* I pour out my whole soul to you?”

“Of course, dear.”

“I have really no place to pour out my soul,” said Hazel pathetically. “Except in my journal, of course. Will you let me show you my journal some day, Miss Shirley? It is a self-revelation. And yet I cannot write out what burns in my soul. It ... it *stifles* me!” Hazel clutched dramatically at her throat.

“Of course I’d like to see it if you want me to. But what is this trouble between you and Terry?”

“Oh, Terry!! Miss Shirley, will you believe me when I tell you that Terry seems like a *stranger* to me? A stranger! Some one I’d never seen before,” added Hazel, so that there might be no mistake.

“But, Hazel ... I thought you loved him ... you said ...”

“Oh, I know. I *thought* I loved him, too. But now I know it was all a terrible mistake. Oh, Miss Shirley, you can’t dream how *difficult* my life is ... how *impossible*.”

“I know something about it,” said Anne sympathetically, remembering Roy Gardiner.

“Oh, Miss Shirley, I’m sure I don’t love him enough to marry him. I realize that now ... now that it is too late. I was just moonlighted into thinking I loved him. If it hadn’t been for the moon I’m sure I would have asked for time to think it over. But I was swept off my feet ... I can see that now. Oh, I’ll run away ... I’ll do something desperate!”

“But, Hazel dear, if you feel you’ve made a mistake, why not just tell him ...”

“Oh, Miss Shirley, I couldn’t! It would kill him. He simply adores me. There isn’t any way out of it really. And Terry’s beginning to talk of getting married. Think of it ... a child like me ... I’m only eighteen. All the friends I’ve told about my engagement as a secret are congratulating me ... and it’s such a farce. They think Terry is a great catch because he comes into ten thousand dollars when he is twenty-five. His grandmother left it to him. As if I cared about such a sordid thing as *money*! Oh, Miss Shirley, *why* is it such a mercenary world ... *why*?”

“I suppose it is mercenary in some respects, but not in all, Hazel. And if you feel like this about Terry ... we all make mistakes ... it’s very hard to know our own minds sometimes... .”

“Oh, isn’t it? I *knew* you’d understand. I *did* think I cared for him, Miss Shirley. The first time I saw him I just sat and gazed at him the whole evening. *Waves* went over me when I met his eyes. He was so handsome ... though I thought even then that his hair was *too* curly and his eyelashes too white. *That* should have warned me. But I always put my soul into everything, you know ... I’m so intense. I felt little shivers of ecstasy whenever he came near me. And now I feel nothing ... *nothing*! Oh, I’ve grown old these past few weeks, Miss Shirley ... *old*! I’ve hardly eaten anything since I got engaged. Mother could tell you. I’m *sure* I don’t

love him enough to marry him. Whatever else I may be in doubt about, I know *that*.”

“Then you shouldn’t ...”

“Even that moonlight night he proposed to me, I was thinking of what dress I’d wear to Joan Pringle’s fancy dress party. I thought it would be lovely to go as Queen of the May in pale green, with a sash of darker green and a cluster of pale pink roses in my hair. And a May-pole decked with tiny roses and hung with pink and green ribbons. Wouldn’t it have been fetching? And then Joan’s uncle had to go and die and Joan couldn’t have the party after all, so it all went for nothing. But the point is ... I really couldn’t have loved him when my thoughts were wandering like that, could I?”

“I don’t know ... our thoughts play us curious tricks some times.”

“I really don’t think I ever want to get married at all, Miss Shirley. Do you happen to have an orangewood stick handy? Thanks. My half-moons are getting ragged. I might as well do them while I’m talking. Isn’t it just lovely to be exchanging confidences like this? It’s so seldom one gets the opportunity ... the world intrudes itself so. Well, what was I talking of ... oh, yes, Terry. What am I to do, Miss Shirley? I want your advice. Oh, I feel like a trapped creature!”

“But, Hazel, it’s so very simple ...”

“Oh, it isn’t simple at all, Miss Shirley! It’s dreadfully complicated. Mamma is so outrageously pleased, but Aunt Jean isn’t. *She* doesn’t like Terry, and everybody says she has such good judgment. I don’t want to marry anybody. I’m ambitious ... I want a career. Sometimes I think I’d like to be a nun. Wouldn’t it be wonderful to be the bride of heaven? I think the Catholic church is so picturesque, don’t you? But of course I’m not a Catholic ... and anyway, I suppose you could hardly call it a career. I’ve always felt I’d love to be a nurse. It’s such a romantic profession, don’t you think? Smoothing fevered brows and all that ... and some handsome millionaire patient falling in love with you and carrying you off to spend a honeymoon in a villa on the Riviera, facing the morning sun and the blue Mediterranean. I’ve *seen* myself in it. Foolish dreams,

perhaps, but, oh, so sweet. I *can't* give them up for the prosaic reality of marrying Terry Garland and settling down in *Summerside!*”

Hazel shivered at the very idea and scrutinized a half-moon critically.

“I suppose ...” began Anne.

“We haven’t *anything* in common, you know, Miss Shirley. He doesn’t care for poetry and romance, and they’re my very *life*. Sometimes I think I must be a reincarnation of Cleopatra ... or would it be Helen of Troy? ... one of those languorous, seductive creatures, anyhow. I have such *wonderful* thoughts and feelings ... I don’t know where I get them if that isn’t the explanation. And Terry is so terribly matter-of-fact ... he can’t be a reincarnation of anybody. What he said when I told him about Vera Fry’s quill pen proves that, doesn’t it?”

“But I never heard of Vera Fry’s quill pen,” said Anne patiently.

“Oh, haven’t you? I thought I’d told you. I’ve told you so much. Vera’s fiance gave her a quill pen he’d made out of a feather he’d picked up that had fallen from a crow’s wing. He said to her, ‘Let your spirit soar to heaven with it whenever you use it, like the bird who once bore it.’ Wasn’t that just *wonderful*? But Terry said the pen would wear out very soon, especially if Vera wrote as much as she talked, and anyway he didn’t think crows ever soared to heaven. He just missed the meaning of the whole thing completely ... it’s very essence.”

“What was its meaning?”

“Oh ... why ... why ... *soaring*, you know ... getting away from the clods of earth. Did you notice Vera’s ring? A sapphire. I think sapphires are too dark for engagement rings. I’d rather have your dear, romantic little hoop of pearls. Terry wanted to give me my ring right away ... but I said not yet a while ... it would seem like a fetter ... so *irrevocable*, you know. I wouldn’t have felt like that if I’d really loved him, would I?”

“No, I’m afraid not ...”

“It’s been so *wonderful* to tell somebody what I really feel like. Oh, Miss Shirley, if I could only find myself free again ... free to seek the deeper meaning of life! Terry wouldn’t understand what I meant if I said *that* to him. And I know he has a temper ... all the Garlands have. Oh,

Miss Shirley ... if you would just talk to him ... tell him what I feel like ... he thinks you're wonderful ... he'd be guided by what you say."

"Hazel, my dear little girl, how could I do that?"

"I don't see why not." Hazel finished the last new moon and laid the orangewood stick down tragically. "If you can't, there isn't any help *anywhere*. But I can never, *never*, NEVER marry Terry Garland."

"If you don't love Terry, you ought to go to him and tell him so ... no matter how badly it will make him feel. Some day you'll meet some one you can really love, Hazel dear ... you won't have any doubts then ... you'll *know*."

"I shall never love *anybody* again," said Hazel, stonily calm. "Love brings only sorrow. Young as I am I have learned *that*. This would make a wonderful plot for one of your stories, wouldn't it, Miss Shirley? I must be going ... I'd no idea it was so late. I feel so much better since I've confided in you ... 'touched your soul in shadowland,' as Shakespeare says."

"I think it was Pauline Johnson," said Anne gently.

"Well, I knew it was somebody ... somebody who had *lived*. I think I shall sleep tonight, Miss Shirley. I've hardly slept since I found myself engaged to Terry, without the *least* notion how it had all come about."

Hazel fluffed out her hair and put on her hat, a hat with a rosy lining to its brim and rosy blossoms around it. She looked so distractingly pretty in it that Anne kissed her impulsively. "You're the prettiest thing, darling," she said admiringly.

Hazel stood very still.

Then she lifted her eyes and stared clear through the ceiling of the tower room, clear through the attic above it, and sought the stars.

"I shall never, *never* forget this *wonderful* moment, Miss Shirley," she murmured rapturously. "I feel that my beauty ... if I have any ... has been *consecrated*. Oh, Miss Shirley, you don't know how really terrible it is to have a reputation for beauty and to be always afraid that when people meet you they will not think you as pretty as you were reported to be. It's *torture*. Sometimes I just *die* of mortification because I fancy I can see

they're disappointed. Perhaps it's only my imagination ... I'm so imaginative ... too much so for my own good, I fear. I *imagined* I was in love with Terry, you see. Oh, Miss Shirley, *can* you smell the apple-blossom fragrance?"

Having a nose, Anne could.

"Isn't it just *divine*? I hope heaven will be *all* flowers. One could be good if one lived in a lily, couldn't one?"

"I'm afraid it might be a little confining," said Anne perversely.

"Oh, Miss Shirley, don't ... *don't* be sarcastic with your little adorer. Sarcasm just *shrivels* me up like a leaf."

"I see she hasn't talked you quite to death," said Rebecca Dew, when Anne had come back after seeing Hazel to the end of Spook's Lane. "I don't see how you put up with her."

"I like her, Rebecca, I really do. *I* was a dreadful little chatterbox when I was a child. I wonder if I sounded as silly to the people who had to listen to me as Hazel does sometimes."

"I didn't know you when you was a child but I'm sure you didn't," said Rebecca. "Because you would *mean* what you said no matter how you expressed it and Hazel Marr doesn't. She's nothing but skim milk pretending to be cream."

"Oh, of course she dramatizes herself a bit as most girls do, but I think she means some of the things she says," said Anne, thinking of Terry. Perhaps it was because she had a rather poor opinion of the said Terry that she believed Hazel was quite in earnest in all she said about him. Anne thought Hazel was throwing herself away on Terry in spite of the ten thousand he was "coming into." Anne considered Terry a goodlooking, rather weak youth who would fall in love with the first pretty girl who made eyes at him and would, with equal facility, fall in love with the next one if Number One turned him down or left him alone too long.

Anne had seen a good deal of Terry that spring, for Hazel had insisted on her playing gooseberry frequently; and she was destined to see more of him, for Hazel went to visit friends in Kingsport and during her absence Terry rather attached himself to Anne, taking her out for rides and "seeing

her home” from places. They called each other “Anne” and “Terry,” for they were about the same age, although Anne felt quite motherly towards him. Terry felt immensely flattered that “the clever Miss Shirley” seemed to like his companionship and he became so sentimental the night of May Connelly’s party, in a moonlit garden, where the shadows of the acacias blew crazily about, that Anne amusedly reminded him of the absent Hazel.

“Oh, Hazel!” said Terry. “That child!”

“You’re engaged to ‘that child,’ aren’t you?” said Anne severely.

“Not really engaged ... nothing but some boy-and-girl nonsense. I ... I guess I was just swept off my feet by the moonlight.”

Anne did a bit of rapid thinking. If Terry really cared so little for Hazel as this, the child was far better freed from him. Perhaps this was a heavensent opportunity to extricate them both from the silly tangle they had got themselves into and from which neither of them, taking things with all the deadly seriousness of youth, knew how to escape.

“Of course,” went on Terry, misinterpreting her silence. “I’m in a bit of a predicament, I’ll own. I’m afraid Hazel has taken me a little bit too seriously, and I don’t just know the best way to open her eyes to her mistake.”

Impulsive Anne assumed her most maternal look.

“Terry, you are a couple of children playing at being grown up. Hazel doesn’t really care anything more for you than you do for her. Apparently the moonlight affected both of you. *She* wants to be free but is afraid to tell you so for fear of hurting your feelings. She’s just a bewildered, romantic girl and you’re a boy in love with love, and some day you’ll both have a good laugh at yourselves.”

(“I think I’ve put that very nicely,” thought Anne complacently.)

Terry drew a long breath.

“You’ve taken a weight off my mind, Anne. Hazel’s a sweet little thing, of course, I hated to think of hurting her, but I’ve realized my ... our ... mistake for some weeks. When one meets a *woman* ... *the* woman ... you’re not going in yet, Anne? Is all this good moonlight to be wasted? You look like a white rose in the moonlight ... Anne... .”

But Anne had flown.

Chapter XI

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Anne, correcting examination papers in the tower room one mid-June evening, paused to wipe her nose. She had wiped it so often that evening that it was rosy-red and rather painful. The truth was that Anne was the victim of a very severe and very unromantic cold in the head. It would not allow her to enjoy the soft green sky behind the hemlocks of The Evergreens, the silver-white moon hanging over the Storm King, the haunting perfume of the lilacs below her window or the frosty, blue-penciled irises in the vase on her table. It darkened all her past and overshadowed all her future.

“A cold in the head in June is an immoral thing,” she told Dusty Miller, who was meditating on the windowsill. “But in two weeks from today I’ll be in dear Green Gables instead of stewing here over examination papers full of howlers and wiping a worn-out nose. Think of it, Dusty Miller.”

Apparently Dusty Miller thought of it. He may also have thought that the young lady who was hurrying along Spook’s Lane and down the road and along the perennial path looked angry and disturbed and un-June-like. It was Hazel Marr, only a day back from Kingsport, and evidently a much disturbed Hazel Marr, who, a few minutes later, burst stormily into the tower room without waiting for a reply to her sharp knock.

“Why, Hazel dear ...” (*Kershoo!*) ... “are you back from Kingsport already? I didn’t expect you till next week.”

“No, I suppose you didn’t,” said Hazel sarcastically. “Yes, Miss Shirley, I *am* back. And what do I find? That you have been doing your best to lure Terry away from me ... and all but succeeding.”

“Hazel!” (*Kershoo!*)

“Oh, I know it all! You told Terry I didn’t love him ... that I wanted to break our engagement ... our *sacred* engagement!”

“Hazel ... child!” (*Kershoo!*)

“Oh, yes, sneer at me ... sneer at everything. But don’t try to deny it. You did it ... and you did it *deliberately*.”

“Of course, I did. You asked me to.”

“I ... asked ... you ... to!”

“Here, in this very room. You told me you didn’t love him and could never marry him.”

“Oh, just a mood, I suppose. I never dreamed you’d take me seriously. I thought *you* would understand the artistic temperament. You’re ages older than I am, of course, but even *you* can’t have forgotten the crazy ways girls talk ... feel. *You* who pretended to be my friend!”

“This must be a nightmare,” thought poor Anne, wiping her nose. “Sit down, Hazel ... do.”

“Sit down!” Hazel flew wildly up and down the room. “How can I sit down ... how can *anybody* sit down when her life is in ruins all about her? Oh, if that is what being old does to you ... jealous of younger people’s happiness and determined to wreck it ... I shall pray never to grow old.”

Anne’s hand suddenly tingled to box Hazel’s ears with a strange horrible primitive tingle of desire. She slew it so instantly that she would never believe afterwards that she had really felt it. But she did think a little gentle chastisement was indicated.

“If you can’t sit down and talk sensibly, Hazel, I wish you would go away.” (A very violent *kershoo*.) “I have work to do.” (Sniff ... sniff ... snuffle!)

“I am not going away till I have told you just what I think of you. Oh, I know I’ve only myself to blame ... I should have known ... I *did* know. I felt instinctively the first time I saw you that you were *dangerous*. That red hair and those green eyes! But I never *dreamed* you’d go so far as to make trouble between me and Terry. I thought you were a *Christian* at least. I never *heard* of any one doing such a thing. Well, you’ve broken my heart, if that is any satisfaction to you.”

“You little goose ...”

“I won’t talk to you! Oh, Terry and I were so happy before you spoiled everything. *I* was so happy ... the first girl of my set to be engaged. I even had my wedding all planned out ... four bridesmaids in lovely pale blue silk dresses with black velvet ribbon on the flounces. So chic! Oh, I don’t know if I hate you the most or pity you the most! Oh, how *could* you treat me like this ... after I’ve *loved* you so ... *trusted* you so ... *believed* in you so!”

Hazel’s voice broke ... her eyes filled with tears ... she collapsed on a rocking-chair.

“You can’t have many exclamation points left,” thought Anne, “but no doubt the supply of italics is inexhaustible.”

“This will just about kill poor Momma,” sobbed Hazel. “She was so pleased ... *everybody* was so pleased ... they all thought it an *ideal* match. Oh, can *anything* ever again be like it used to be?”

“Wait till the next moonlight night and try,” said Anne gently.

“Oh, yes, laugh, Miss Shirley ... laugh at my suffering. I have not the least doubt that you find it all very amusing ... very amusing indeed! *You* don’t know what suffering is! It is terrible ... *terrible!*”

Anne looked at the clock and sneezed.

“Then don’t suffer,” she said unpityingly.

“*I will* suffer. My feelings are *very* deep. Of course a *shallow* soul wouldn’t suffer. But I am thankful I am *not* shallow whatever else I am. Have you *any* idea what it means to be in love, Miss Shirley? Really, terribly deeply, *wonderfully* in love? And then to trust and be deceived? I went to Kingsport so happy ... loving all the world! I told Terry to be good to you while I was away ... not to let you be lonesome. I came home last night so happy. And he told me he didn’t love me any longer ... that it was all a mistake ... a *mistake!* ... and that *you* had told him I didn’t care for him any longer, and wanted to be *free!*”

“My intentions were honorable,” said Anne, laughing. Her impish sense of humor had come to her rescue and she was laughing as much at herself as at Hazel.

“Oh, *how* did I live through the night?” said Hazel wildly. “I just walked the floor. And you don’t know ... you can’t even *imagine* what I’ve gone through today. I’ve had to sit and listen ... actually *listen* ... to people talking about Terry’s infatuation for *you*. Oh, people have been watching you! *They* know what you’ve been doing. And why ... *why*! That is what I *cannot* understand. You had your own lover ... why couldn’t you have left me mine? What had you against me? What had I ever *done* to you?”

“I think,” said Anne, thoroughly exasperated, “that you and Terry both need a good spanking. If you weren’t too angry to listen to reason ...”

“Oh, I’m not *angry*, Miss Shirley ... only *hurt* ... terribly hurt,” said Hazel in a voice positively foggy with tears. “I feel that I have been betrayed in *everything* ... in friendship as well as in love. Well, they say after your heart is broken you never suffer any more. I hope it’s true, but I fear it isn’t.”

“What has become of your ambition, Hazel? And what about the millionaire patient and the honeymoon villa on the blue Mediterranean?”

“I’m sure I don’t know what you’re talking about, Miss Shirley. I’m not a bit ambitious ... I’m not one of those dreadful new women. *My* highest ambition was to be a happy wife and make a happy home for my husband. *Was* ... *was*! To think it should be in the past tense! Well, it doesn’t do to trust *any one*. I’ve learned *that*. A bitter, bitter lesson!”

Hazel wiped her eyes and Anne wiped her nose, and Dusty Miller glared at the evening star with the expression of a misanthrope.

“You’d better go, I think, Hazel. I’m really very busy and I can’t see that there is anything to be gained by prolonging this interview.”

Hazel walked to the door with the air of Mary Queen of Scots advancing to the scaffold, and turned there dramatically.

“Farewell, Miss Shirley. I leave you to your conscience.”

Anne, left alone with her conscience, laid down her pen, sneezed three times and gave herself a plain talking-to.

“You may be a B.A., Anne Shirley, but you have a few things to learn yet ... things that even Rebecca Dew could have told you ... *did* tell you. Be honest with yourself, my dear girl, and take your medicine like a

gallant lady. Admit that you were carried off your feet by flattery. Admit that you really liked Hazel's professed adoration for you. Admit you found it pleasant to be worshiped. Admit that you liked the idea of being a sort of *dea ex machina* ... saving people from their own folly when they didn't in the least want to be saved from it. And having admitted all this and feeling wiser and sadder and a few thousand years older, pick up your pen and proceed with your examination papers, pausing to note in passing that Myra Pringle thinks a seraph is 'an animal that abounds in Africa.'"

Chapter XII

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A week later a letter came for Anne, written on pale blue paper edged with silver.

“DEAR MISS SHIRLEY:

“I am writing this to tell you that *all misunderstanding* is cleared away between Terry and me and we are so deeply, intensely, *wonderfully* happy that we have decided we can forgive you. Terry says he was just moonlighted into making love to you but that his heart never *really* swerved in its allegiance to me. He says he really likes *sweet, simple* girls ... that *all men* do ... and has no use for *intriguing, designing ones*. We don't understand why you behaved to us as you did ... we never will understand. Perhaps you just wanted material for a story and thought you could find it in tampering with the first sweet, tremulous love of a girl. But we thank you for *revealing us to ourselves*. Terry says he never realized the deeper meaning of life before. So really it was all for the best. We are so sympathetic ... we can *feel* each other's thoughts. Nobody understands him but me and I want to be a *source of inspiration* to him forever. *I* am not clever like *you* but I feel I can be *that*, for we are *soul-mates* and have vowed eternal *truth and constancy* to each other, no matter how many *jealous people* and *false friends* may try to make trouble between us.

“We are going to be married as soon as I have my trousseau ready. I am going up to Boston to get it. There really isn't *anything* in Summerside. My dress is to be *white moire* and my traveling-suit will be dove gray with hat, gloves and blouse of *delphinium blue*. Of course I'm very young, but I want to be married when I *am* young, before the *bloom* goes off life.

“Terry is all that my *wildest dreams* could picture and every *thought* of my heart is for him alone. I *know* we are going to be *rapturously happy*.

Once I believed all my friends would *rejoice* with me in my happiness, but I have learned a *bitter lesson* in *worldly wisdom* since then.

“Yours *truly*,

“HAZEL MARR.

“P.S. 1. You told me Terry had *such a temper*. Why, he’s a perfect lamb, his sister says.

“H.M.

“P.S. 2. I’ve heard that *lemon juice* will bleach freckles. You might try it on your nose.

“H.M.”

“To quote Rebecca Dew,” remarked Anne to Dusty Miller, “postscript Number Two *is* the last straw.”

Chapter XIII

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Anne went home for her second Summerside vacation with mixed feelings. Gilbert was not to be in Avonlea that summer. He had gone west to work on a new railroad that was being built. But Green Gables was still Green Gables and Avonlea was still Avonlea. The Lake of Shining Waters shone and sparkled as of old. The ferns still grew as thickly over the Dryad's Bubble, and the log-bridge, though it was a little crumblier and mossier every year, still led up to the shadows and silences and wind-songs of the Haunted Wood.

And Anne had prevailed on Mrs. Campbell to let little Elizabeth go home with her for a fortnight ... no more. But Elizabeth, looking forward to two whole weeks with Miss Shirley, asked no more of life.

"I feel like *Miss Elizabeth* today," she told Anne with a sigh of delightful excitement, as they drove away from Windy Poplars. "Will you please call me 'Miss Elizabeth' when you introduce me to your friends at Green Gables? It would make me feel so grown up."

"I will," promised Anne gravely, remembering a small, redheaded damsel who had once begged to be called Cordelia.

Elizabeth's drive from Blight River to Green Gables, over a road which only Prince Edward Island in June can show, was almost as ecstatic a thing for her as it had been for Anne that memorable spring evening so many years ago. The world was beautiful, with windrippled meadows on every hand and surprises lurking around every corner. She was with her beloved Miss Shirley; she would be free from the Woman for two whole weeks; she had a new pink gingham dress and a pair of lovely new brown boots. It was almost as if Tomorrow were already there ... with fourteen Tomorrows to follow. Elizabeth's eyes were shining with dreams when they turned into the Green Gables lane where the pink wild roses grew.

Things seemed to change magically for Elizabeth the moment she got to Green Gables. For two weeks she lived in a world of romance. You couldn't step outside the door without stepping into something romantic. Things were just bound to happen in Avonlea ... if not today, then tomorrow. Elizabeth knew she hadn't *quite* got into Tomorrow yet, but she knew she was on the very fringes of it.

Everything in and about Green Gables seemed to be acquainted with her. Even Marilla's pink rosebud tea-set was like an old friend. The rooms looked at her as if she had always known and loved them; the very grass was greener than grass anywhere else; and the people who lived at Green Gables were the kind of people who lived in Tomorrow. She loved them and was beloved by them. Davy and Dora adored her and spoiled her; Marilla and Mrs. Lynde approved of her. She was neat, she was ladylike, she was polite to her elders. They knew Anne did not like Mrs. Campbell's methods, but it was plain to be seen that she had trained her great-granddaughter properly.

"Oh, I don't want to sleep, Miss Shirley," Elizabeth whispered when they were in bed in the little porch gable, after a rapturous evening. "I don't want to sleep away a single minute of these wonderful two weeks. I wish I could get along without any sleep while I'm here."

For a while she didn't sleep. It was heavenly to lie there and listen to the splendid low thunder Miss Shirley had told her was the sound of the sea. Elizabeth loved it and the sigh of the wind around the eaves as well. Elizabeth had always been "afraid of the night." Who knew what queer thing might jump at you out of it? But now she was afraid no longer. For the first time in her life the night seemed like a friend to her.

They would go to the shore tomorrow, Miss Shirley had promised, and have a dip in those silver-tipped waves they had seen breaking beyond the green dunes of Avonlea when they drove over the last hill. Elizabeth could see them coming in, one after the other. One of them was a great dark wave of sleep ... it rolled right over her ... Elizabeth drowned in it with a delicious sigh of surrender.

“It’s ... so ... easy ... to ... love ... God ... here,” was her last conscious thought.

But she lay awake for a while every night of her stay at Green Gables, long after Miss Shirley had gone to sleep, thinking over things. Why couldn’t life at The Evergreens be like life at Green Gables?

Elizabeth had never lived where she could make a noise if she wanted to. Everybody at The Evergreens had to move softly ... speak softly ... even, so Elizabeth felt, *think* softly. There were times when Elizabeth desired perversely to yell loud and long.

“You may make all the noise you want to here,” Anne had told her. But it was strange ... she no longer wanted to yell, now that there was nothing to prevent her. She liked to go quietly, stepping gently among all the lovely things around her. But Elizabeth learned to laugh during that sojourn at Green Gables. And when she went back to Summerside she carried delightful memories with her and left equally delightful ones behind her. To the Green Gables folks Green Gables seemed for months full of memories of little Elizabeth. For “little Elizabeth” she was to them in spite of the fact that Anne had solemnly introduced her as “Miss Elizabeth.” She was so tiny, so golden, so elf-like, that they couldn’t think of her as anything but little Elizabeth ... little Elizabeth dancing in a twilight garden among the white June lilies ... coiled up on a bough of the big Duchess apple tree reading fairy tales, unlet and unhindered ... little Elizabeth half drowned in a field of buttercups where her golden head seemed just a larger buttercup ... chasing silver-green moths or trying to count the fireflies in Lover’s Lane ... listening to the bumblebees zooming in the canterbury-bells ... being fed strawberries and cream by Dora in the pantry or eating red currants with her in the yard ... “Red currants are such beautiful things, aren’t they, Dora? It’s just like eating jewels, isn’t it?” ... little Elizabeth singing to herself in the haunted dusk of the firs ... with fingers sweet from gathering the big, fat, pink “cabbage roses” ... gazing at the great moon hanging over the brook valley ... “I think the moon has *worried* eyes, don’t you, Mrs. Lynde?” ... crying bitterly because a chapter in the serial story in Davy’s magazine left the hero in a sad predicament ...

“Oh, Miss Shirley, I’m sure he can never live through it!” ... little Elizabeth curled up, all flushed and sweet like a wild rose, for an afternoon nap on the kitchen sofa with Dora’s kittens cuddled about her ... shrieking with laughter to see the wind blowing the dignified old hens’ tails over their backs ... *could* it be little Elizabeth laughing like that? ... helping Anne frost cupcakes, Mrs. Lynde cut the patches for a new “double Irish chain” quilt, and Dora rub the old brass candlesticks till they could see their faces in them ... cutting out tiny biscuits with a thimble under Marilla’s tutelage. Why, the Green Gables folks could hardly look at a place or thing without being reminded of little Elizabeth.

“I wonder if I’ll ever have such a happy fortnight again,” thought little Elizabeth, as she drove away from Green Gables. The road to the station was just as beautiful as it had been two weeks before, but half the time little Elizabeth couldn’t see it for tears.

“I couldn’t have believed I’d miss a child so much,” said Mrs. Lynde.

When little Elizabeth went, Katherine Brooke and her dog came for the rest of the summer. Katherine had resigned from the staff of the High School at the close of the year and meant to go to Redmond in the fall to take a secretarial course at Redmond University. Anne had advised this.

“I know you’d like it and you’ve never liked teaching,” said the latter, as they sat one evening in a ferny corner of a clover field and watched the glories of a sunset sky.

“Life owes me something more than it has paid me and I’m going out to collect it,” said Katherine decidedly. “I feel so much younger than I did this time last year,” she added with a laugh.

“I’m sure it’s the best thing for you to do, but I hate to think of Summerside and the High without you. What will the tower room be like next year without our evenings of confab and argument, and our hours of foolishness, when we turned everybody and everything into a joke?”

The Third Year

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Chapter I

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“Windy Poplars,
“Spook’s Lane,
“September 8th.

“Dearest:

“The summer is over ... the summer in which I have seen you only that weekend in May. And I am back at Windy Poplars for my third and last year in Summerside High. Katherine and I had a delightful time together at Green Gables and I’m going to miss her dreadfully this year. The new Junior teacher is a jolly little personage, chubby and rosy and friendly as a puppy ... but somehow, there’s nothing more to her than that. She has sparkling shallow blue eyes with no thought behind them. I like her ... I’ll always like her ... neither more nor less ... there’s nothing to *discover* in her. There was so much to discover in Katherine, when you once got past her guard.

“There is no change at Windy Poplars ... yes there is. The old red cow has gone to her long home, so Rebecca Dew sadly informed me when I came down to supper Monday night. The widows have decided not to bother with another one but to get milk and cream from Mr. Cherry. This means that little Elizabeth will come no more to the garden gate for her new milk. But Mrs. Campbell seems to have grown reconciled to her coming over here when she wants to, so that does not make so much difference now.

“And another change is brewing. Aunt Kate told me, much to my sorrow, that they have decided to give Dusty Miller away as soon as they can find a suitable home for him. When I protested, she said they were really driven to it for peace’ sake. Rebecca Dew has been constantly complaining about him all summer and there seems to be no other way of

satisfying her. Poor Dusty Miller ... and he is such a nice, prowly, purry darling!

“Tomorrow, being Saturday, I’m going to look after Mrs. Raymond’s twins while she goes to Charlottetown to the funeral of some relative. Mrs. Raymond is a widow who came to our town last winter. Rebecca Dew and the Windy Poplars widows ... really, Summerside is a great place for widows ... think her a ‘little too grand’ for Summerside, but she was really a wonderful help to Katherine and me in our Dramatic Club activities. One good turn deserves another.

“Gerald and Geraldine are eight and are a pair of angelic-looking youngsters, but Rebecca Dew ‘pulled a mouth,’ to use one of her own expressions, when I told her what I was going to do.

“‘But I love children, Rebecca.’

“‘Children, yes, but them’s holy terrors, Miss Shirley. Mrs. Raymond doesn’t believe in punishing children no matter what they do. She says she’s determined they’ll have a “natural” life. They take people in by that saintly look of theirs, but I’ve heard what her neighbors have to say of them. The minister’s wife called one afternoon ... well, Mrs. Raymond was sweet as sugar pie to her, but when she was leaving a shower of Spanish onions came flying down the stairs and one of them knocked her hat off. “Children always behave so abominably when you ‘specially want them to be good,” was all Mrs. Raymond said ... kinder as if she was rather proud of them being so unmanageable. They’re from the States, you know’ ... as if that explained everything. Rebecca has about as much use for ‘Yankees’ as Mrs. Lynde has.”

Chapter II

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Saturday forenoon Anne betook herself to the pretty, old-fashioned cottage on a street that straggled out into the country, where Mrs. Raymond and her famous twins lived. Mrs. Raymond was all ready to depart ... rather gayly dressed for a funeral, perhaps ... especially with regard to the beflowered hat perched on top of the smooth brown waves of hair that flowed around her head ... but looking very beautiful. The eight-year-old twins, who had inherited her beauty, were sitting on the stairs, their delicate faces wreathed with a quite cherubic expression. They had complexions of pink and white, large China-blue eyes and aureoles of fine, fluffy, pale yellow hair.

They smiled with engaging sweetness when their mother introduced them to Anne and told them that dear Miss Shirley had been so kind as to come and take care of them while Mother was away at dear Auntie Ella's funeral, and of course they would be good and not give her one teeny-weeny bit of trouble, wouldn't they, darlings?

The darlings nodded gravely and contrived, though it hadn't seemed possible, to look more angelic than ever.

Mrs. Raymond took Anne down the walk to the gate with her.

"They're all I've got ... now," she said pathetically. "Perhaps I may have spoiled them a little ... I know people say I have ... people always know so much better how you ought to bring up your children than you know yourself, haven't you noticed, Miss Shirley? But *I* think loving is better than spanking any day, don't you, Miss Shirley? I'm sure *you* will have no trouble with them. Children always *know* whom they can play on and whom they can't, don't you think? That poor old Miss Prouty up the street ... I had her to stay with them one day, but the poor darlings couldn't bear her. So of course they teased her a good bit ... *you* know what children are. She has revenged herself by telling the most ridiculous

tales about them all over town. But they'll just love you and I know they'll be angels. Of course, they have high spirits ... but children should have, don't you think? It's so pitiful to see children with a cowed appearance, isn't it? I like them to be natural, don't you? Too good children don't seem natural, *do* they? Don't let them sail their boats in the bathtub or go wading in the pond, will you? I'm so afraid of them catching cold ... their father died of pneumonia."

Mrs. Raymond's large blue eyes looked as if they were going to overflow, but she gallantly blinked the tears away.

"Don't worry if they quarrel a little — children always *do* quarrel, don't you think? But if any outsider attacks them ... my dear!! They really just worship each other, you know. I could have taken *one* of them to the funeral, but they simply wouldn't hear of it. They've never been separated a day in their lives. And I *couldn't* look after twins at a funeral, could I now?"

"Don't worry, Mrs. Raymond," said Anne kindly. "I'm sure Gerald and Geraldine and I will have a beautiful day together. I love children."

"I know it. I felt sure the minute I saw you that you loved children. One can always tell, don't you think? There's *something* about a person who loves children. Poor old Miss Prouty detests them. She looks for the worst in children and so of course she finds it. You can't conceive what a comfort it is to me to reflect that my darlings are under the care of one who loves and understands children. I'm sure I'll quite enjoy the day."

"You might take *us* to the funeral," shrieked Gerald, suddenly sticking his head out of an upstairs window. "We never have any fun like that."

"Oh, they're in the bathroom!" exclaimed Mrs. Raymond tragically. "Dear Miss Shirley, please go and take them out. Gerald darling, you know mother couldn't take you *both* to the funeral. Oh, Miss Shirley, he's got that coyote skin from the parlor floor tied round his neck by the paws again. He'll ruin it. Please make him take it off at once. I *must* hurry or I'll miss the train."

Mrs. Raymond sailed elegantly away and Anne ran upstairs to find that the angelic Geraldine had grasped her brother by the legs and was

apparently trying to hurl him bodily out of the window.

“Miss Shirley, make Gerald stop putting out his tongue at me,” she demanded fiercely.

“Does it hurt you?” asked Anne smilingly.

“Well, he’s not going to put out his tongue at *me*,” retorted Geraldine, darting a baleful look at Gerald, who returned it with interest.

“My tongue’s my own and *you* can’t stop me from putting it out when I like ... can she, Miss Shirley?”

Anne ignored the question.

“Twins dear, it’s just an hour till lunch-time. Shall we go and sit in the garden and play games and tell stories? And, Gerald, won’t you put that coyote skin back on the floor?”

“But I want to play wolf,” said Gerald.

“He wants to play wolf,” cried Geraldine, suddenly aligning herself on her brother’s side.

“We want to play wolf,” they both cried together.

A peal from the doorbell cut the knot of Anne’s dilemma.

“Come on and see who it is,” cried Geraldine. They flew to the stairs and by reason of sliding down the banisters, got to the front door much quicker than Anne, the coyote skin coming unloosed and drifting away in the process.

“We never buy anything from peddlers,” Gerald told the lady standing on the doorstep.

“Can I see your mother?” asked the caller.

“No, you can’t. Mother’s gone to Aunt Ella’s funeral. Miss Shirley’s looking after us. That’s her coming down the stairs. *She’ll* make you scat.”

Anne *did* feel rather like making the caller “scat” when she saw who it was. Miss Pamela Drake was not a popular caller in Summerside. She was always “canvassing” for something and it was generally quite impossible to get rid of her unless you bought it, since she was utterly impervious to snubs and hints and had apparently all the time in the world at her command.

This time she was “taking orders” for an encyclopedia ... something no schoolteacher could afford to be without. Vainly Anne protested that she did not need an encyclopedia ... the High School already possessed a very good one.

“Ten years out of date,” said Miss Pamela firmly. “We’ll just sit down here on this rustic bench, Miss Shirley, and I’ll show you my prospectus.”

“I’m afraid I haven’t time, Miss Drake. I have the children to look after.”

“It won’t take but a few minutes. I’ve been meaning to call on you, Miss Shirley, and I call it real fortunate to find you here. Run away and play, children, while Miss Shirley and I skim over this beautiful prospectus.”

“Mother’s hired Miss Shirley to look after us,” said Geraldine, with a toss of her aerial curls. But Gerald had tugged her backward and they slammed the door shut.

“You see, Miss Shirley, what this encyclopedia *means*. Look at the beautiful paper ... *feel* it ... the splendid engravings ... no other encyclopedia on the market has half the number of engravings ... the wonderful print — a blind man could read it — and all for eighty dollars ... eight dollars down and eight dollars a month till it’s all paid. You’ll never have such another chance ... we’re just doing this to introduce it ... next year it will be a hundred and twenty.”

“But I don’t want an encyclopedia, Miss Drake,” said Anne desperately.

“Of course you want an encyclopedia ... *every one* wants an encyclopedia ... a *National* encyclopedia. *I* don’t know how I lived before I became acquainted with the *National* encyclopedia. *Live!* I didn’t live ... I merely existed. *Look* at that engraving of the cassowary, Miss Shirley. Did you ever really *see* a cassowary before?”

“But, Miss Drake, I ...”

“If you think the terms a little too onerous I feel sure I can make a special arrangement for you, being a schoolteacher ... six a month instead of eight. You simply can’t refuse an offer like that, Miss Shirley.”

Anne almost felt she couldn't. Wouldn't it be worth six dollars a month to get rid of this terrible woman who had so evidently made up her mind not to go until she had got an order? Besides, *what* were the twins doing? They were alarmingly quiet. Suppose they were sailing their boats in the bathtub. Or had sneaked out of the back door and gone wading in the pond.

She made one more pitiful effort to escape.

"I'll think this over, Miss Drake, and let you know ..."

"There's no time like the present," said Miss Drake, briskly getting out her fountain-pen. "You *know* you're going to take the *National*, so you might just as well sign for it now as any other time. Nothing is ever gained by putting things off. The price may go up any moment and then you'd have to pay a hundred and twenty. Sign here, Miss Shirley."

Anne felt the fountain-pen being forced into her hand ... another moment ... and then there was such a bloodcurdling shriek from Miss Drake that Anne dropped the fountain-pen under the clump of golden glow that flanked the rustic seat, and gazed in amazed horror at her companion.

Was *that* Miss Drake ... that indescribable object, hatless, spectacleless, almost hairless? Hat, spectacles, false front were floating in the air above her head halfway up to the bathroom window, out of which two golden heads were hanging. Gerald was grasping a fishing-rod to which were tied two cords ending in fish-hooks. By what magic he had contrived to make a triple catch, only he could have told. Probably it was sheer luck.

Anne flew into the house and upstairs. By the time she reached the bathroom the twins had fled. Gerald had dropped the fishing-rod and a peep from the window revealed a furious Miss Drake retrieving her belongings, including the fountain-pen, and marching to the gate. For once in her life Miss Pamela Drake had failed to land her order.

Anne discovered the twins seraphically eating apples on the back porch. It was hard to know what to do. Certainly, such behavior could not be allowed to pass without a rebuke ... but Gerald had undoubtedly rescued her from a difficult position and Miss Drake *was* an odious creature who needed a lesson. Still ...

“You’ve et a great big worm!” shrieked Gerald. “I saw it disappear down your throat.”

Geraldine laid down her apple and promptly turned sick ... very sick. Anne had her hands full for some time. And when Geraldine was better, it was lunch-hour and Anne suddenly decided to let Gerald off with a very mild reproof. After all, no lasting harm had been done Miss Drake, who would probably hold her tongue religiously about the incident for her own sake.

“Do you think, Gerald,” she said gently, “that what you did was a gentlemanly action?”

“Nope,” said Gerald, “but it was good fun. Gee, I’m some fisherman, ain’t I?”

The lunch was excellent. Mrs. Raymond had prepared it before she left and whatever her shortcomings as a disciplinarian might be, she was a good cook. Gerald and Geraldine, being occupied with gorging, did not quarrel or display worse table manners than the general run of children. After lunch Anne washed the dishes, getting Geraldine to help dry them and Gerald to put them carefully away in the cupboard. They were both quite knacky at it and Anne reflected complacently that all they needed was wise training and a little firmness.

Chapter III

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At two o'clock Mr. James Grand called. Mr. Grand was the chairman of the High School board of trustees and had matters of importance to talk of, which he wished to discuss fully before he left on Monday to attend an educational conference in Kingsport. Could he come to Windy Poplars in the evening? asked Anne. Unfortunately he couldn't.

Mr. Grand was a good sort of man in his own fashion, but Anne had long ago found out that he must be handled with gloves. Moreover, Anne was very anxious to get him on her side in a battle royal over new equipment that was looming up. She went out to the twins.

"Darlings, will you play nicely out in the back yard while I have a little talk with Mr. Grand? I won't be very long ... and then we'll have an afternoon-tea picnic on the banks of the pond ... and I'll teach you to blow soap-bubbles with red dye in them ... the loveliest things!"

"Will you give us a quarter apiece if we behave?" demanded Gerald.

"No, Gerald dear," said Anne firmly, "I'm not going to bribe you. I know you are going to be good, just because I ask you, as a gentleman should."

"We'll be good, Miss Shirley," promised Gerald solemnly.

"Awful good," echoed Geraldine, with equal solemnity.

It is possible they would have kept their promise if Ivy Trent had not arrived almost as soon as Anne was closeted with Mr. Grand in the parlor. But Ivy Trent did arrive and the Raymond twins hated Ivy Trent ... the impeccable Ivy Trent who never did anything wrong and always looked as if she had just stepped out of a bandbox.

On this particular afternoon there was no doubt that Ivy Trent had come over to show off her beautiful new brown boots and her sash and shoulder bows and hair bows of scarlet ribbon. Mrs. Raymond, whatever she lacked in some respects, had fairly sensible ideas about dressing

children. Her charitable neighbors said she put so much money on herself that she had none to spend on the twins ... and Geraldine never had a chance to parade the street in the style of Ivy Trent, who had a dress for every afternoon in the week. Mrs. Trent always arrayed her in “spotless white.” At least, Ivy was always spotless when she left home. If she were not quite so spotless when she returned that, of course, was the fault of the “jealous” children with whom the neighborhood abounded.

Geraldine *was* jealous. She longed for scarlet sash and shoulder bows and white embroidered dresses. What would she not have given for buttoned brown boots like those?

“How do you like my new sash and shoulder bows?” asked Ivy proudly.

“How do you like my new sash and shoulder bows?” mimicked Geraldine tauntingly.

“But you haven’t got shoulder bows,” said Ivy grandly.

“But you haven’t got shoulder bows,” squeaked Geraldine.

Ivy looked puzzled.

“I have so. Can’t you see them?”

“I have so. Can’t you see them?” mocked Geraldine, very happy in this brilliant idea of repeating everything Ivy said scornfully.

“They ain’t paid for,” said Gerald.

Ivy Trent had a temper. It showed itself in her face, which grew as red as her shoulder bows.

“They are, too. *My* mother always pays her bills.”

“*My* mother always pays her bills,” chanted Geraldine.

Ivy was uncomfortable. She didn’t know exactly how to cope with this. So she turned to Gerald, who was undoubtedly the handsomest boy on the street. Ivy had made up her mind about him.

“I came over to tell you I’m going to have you for my beau,” she said, looking eloquently at him out of a pair of brown eyes that, even at seven, Ivy had learned had a devastating effect on most of the small boys of her acquaintance.

Gerald turned crimson.

“I won’t be your beau,” he said.

“But you’ve got to be,” said Ivy serenely.

“But you’ve got to be,” said Geraldine, wagging her head at him.

“I won’t be,” shouted Gerald furiously. “And don’t you give me any more of your lip, Ivy Trent.”

“You have to be,” said Ivy stubbornly.

“You have to be,” said Geraldine.

Ivy glared at her.

“You just shut up, Geraldine Raymond!”

“I guess I can talk in my own yard,” said Geraldine.

“Course she can,” said Gerald. “And if *you* don’t shut up, Ivy Trent, I’ll just go over to your place and dig the eyes out of your doll.”

“My mother would spank you if you did,” cried Ivy.

“Oh, she would, would she? Well, do you know what *my* mother would do to her if she did? She’d just sock her on the nose.”

“Well, anyway, you’ve got to be my beau,” said Ivy, returning calmly to the vital subject.

“I’ll ... I’ll duck your head in the rain-barrel,” yelled the maddened Gerald ... “I’ll rub your face in an ant’s nest ... I’ll ... I’ll tear them bows and sash off you ...” triumphantly, for this at least was feasible.

“Let’s do it,” squealed Geraldine.

They pounced like furies on the unfortunate Ivy, who kicked and shrieked and tried to bite but was no match for the two of them. Together they hauled her across the yard and into the woodshed, where her howls could not be heard.

“Hurry,” gasped Geraldine, “fore Miss Shirley comes out.”

No time was to be lost. Gerald held Ivy’s legs while Geraldine held her wrists with one hand and tore off her hair bow and shoulder bows and sash with the other.

“Let’s paint her legs,” shouted Gerald, his eyes falling on a couple of cans of paint left there by some workmen the previous week. “I’ll hold her and you paint her.”

Ivy shrieked vainly in despair. Her stockings were pulled down and in a few moments her legs were adorned with wide stripes of red and green

paint. In the process a good deal of the paint got spattered over her embroidered dress and new boots. As a finishing touch they filled her curls with burrs.

She was a pitiful sight when they finally released her. The twins howled mirthfully as they looked at her. Long weeks of airs and condescensions from Ivy had been avenged.

“Now you go home,” said Gerald. “This’ll teach you to go ‘round telling people they have to be your beaus.”

“I’ll tell my mother,” wept Ivy. “I’ll go straight home and tell my mother on you, you horrid, horrid, hateful, *ugly* boy!”

“Don’t you call my brother ugly, you stuck-up thing,” cried Geraldine. “You and your shoulder bows! Here, take them with you. *We* don’t want them cluttering up *our* woodshed.”

Ivy, pursued by the bows, which Geraldine pelted after her, ran sobbing out of the yard and down the street.

“Quick ... let’s sneak up the back stairs to the bathroom and clean up ‘fore Miss Shirley sees us,” gasped Geraldine.

Chapter IV

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Mr. Grand had talked himself out and bowed himself away. Anne stood for a moment on the doorstone, wondering uneasily where her charges were. Up the street and in at the gate came a wrathful lady, leading a forlorn and still sobbing atom of humanity by the hand.

“Miss Shirley, where is Mrs. Raymond?” demanded Mrs. Trent.

“Mrs. Raymond is ...”

“I insist on seeing Mrs. Raymond. She shall see with her own eyes what *her* children have done to poor, helpless, innocent Ivy. Look at her, Miss Shirley ... just *look* at her!”

“Oh, Mrs. Trent ... I’m so sorry! It is all my fault. Mrs. Raymond is away ... and I promised to look after them ... but Mr. Grand came ...”

“No, it isn’t your fault, Miss Shirley. I don’t blame *you*. No one can cope with those diabolical children. The whole street knows them. If Mrs. Raymond isn’t here, there is no point in my remaining. I shall take my poor child home. But Mrs. Raymond shall hear of this ... indeed she shall. Listen to *that*, Miss Shirley. Are they tearing each other limb from limb?”

“That” was a chorus of shrieks, howls and yells that came echoing down the stairs. Anne ran upwards. On the hall floor was a twisting, writhing, biting, tearing, scratching mass. Anne separated the furious twins with difficulty and, holding each firmly by a squirming shoulder, demanded the meaning of such behavior.

“She says I’ve got to be Ivy Trent’s beau,” snarled Gerald.

“So he has got to be,” screamed Geraldine.

“I won’t be!”

“You’ve got to be!”

“Children!” said Anne. Something in her tone quelled them. They looked at her and saw a Miss Shirley they had not seen before. For the first time in their young lives they felt the force of authority.

“You, Geraldine,” said Anne quietly, “will go to bed for two hours. You, Gerald, will spend the same length of time in the hall closet. Not a word. You have behaved abominably and you must take your punishment. Your mother left you in my charge and you will obey me.”

“Then punish us *together*,” said Geraldine, beginning to cry.

“Yes ... you’ve no right to sep’rate us ... we’ve never been sep’rated,” muttered Gerald.

“You will be now.” Anne was still very quiet. Meekly Geraldine took off her clothes and got into one of the cots in their room. Meekly Gerald entered the hall closet. It was a large airy closet with a window and a chair and nobody could have called the punishment an unduly severe one. Anne locked the door and sat down with a book by the hall window. At least, for two hours she would know a little peace of mind.

A peep at Geraldine a few minutes later showed her to be sound asleep, looking so lovely in her sleep that Anne almost repented her sternness. Well, a nap would be good for her, anyway. When she wakened she should be permitted to get up, even if the two hours had not expired.

At the end of an hour Geraldine was still sleeping. Gerald had been so quiet that Anne decided that he had taken his punishment like a man and might be forgiven. After all, Ivy Trent was a vain little monkey and had probably been very irritating.

Anne unlocked the closet door and opened it.

There was no Gerald in the closet. The window was open and the roof of the side porch was just beneath it. Anne’s lips tightened. She went downstairs and out into the yard. No sign of Gerald. She explored the woodshed and looked up and down the street. Still no sign.

She ran through the garden and through the gate into the lane that led through a patch of scrub woodland to the little pond in Mr. Robert Creedmore’s field. Gerald was happily poling himself about on it in the small flat Mr. Creedmore kept there. Just as Anne broke through the trees Gerald’s pole, which he had stuck rather deep in the mud, came away with unexpected ease at his third tug and Gerald promptly shot heels over head backward into the water.

Anne gave an involuntary shriek of dismay, but there was no real cause for alarm. The pond at its deepest would not come up to Gerald's shoulders and where he had gone over, it was little deeper than his waist. He had somehow got on his feet and was standing there rather foolishly, with his aureole plastered drippingly down on his head, when Anne's shriek was reechoed behind her, and Geraldine, in her nightgown, tore through the trees and out to the edge of the little wooden platform to which the flat was commonly moored.

With a despairing shriek of "Gerald!" she took a flying leap that landed her with a tremendous splash by Gerald's side and almost gave him another ducking.

"Gerald, are you drowned?" cried Geraldine. "Are you drowned, darling?"

"No ... no ... darling," Gerald assured her through his chattering teeth. They embraced and kissed passionately.

"Children, come in here this minute," said Anne.

They waded to the shore. The September day, warm in the morning, had turned cold and windy in the late afternoon. They shivered terribly ... their faces were blue. Anne, without a word of censure, hurried them home, got off their wet clothes and got them into Mrs. Raymond's bed, with hot-water bottles at their feet. They still continued to shiver. Had they got a chill? Were they headed for pneumonia?

"You should have taken better care of us, Miss Shirley," said Gerald, still chattering.

"Course you should," said Geraldine.

A distracted Anne flew downstairs and telephoned for the doctor. By the time he came the twins had got warm, and he assured Anne that they were in no danger. If they stayed in bed till tomorrow they would be all right.

He met Mrs. Raymond coming up from the station on the way back, and it was a pale, almost hysterical lady who presently rushed in.

"Oh, Miss Shirley, how *could* you have let my little treasures get into such danger!"

“That’s just what we told her, Mother,” chorused the twins.

“I trusted you ... I told you ...”

“I hardly see how I was to blame, Mrs. Raymond,” said Anne, with eyes as cold as gray mist. “You will realize this, I think, when you are calmer. The children are quite all right ... I simply sent for the doctor as a precautionary measure. If Gerald and Geraldine had obeyed me, this would not have happened.”

“I thought a *teacher* would have a little authority over children,” said Mrs. Raymond bitterly.

“Over children perhaps ... but not young demons,” thought Anne. She said only,

“Since you are here, Mrs. Raymond, I think I will go home. I don’t think I can be of any further service and I have some school work to do this evening.”

As one child the twins hurled themselves out of bed and flung their arms around her.

“I hope there’ll be a funeral every week,” cried Gerald. “‘Cause I like you, Miss Shirley, and I hope you’ll come and look after us every time Mother goes away.”

“So do I,” said Geraldine.

“I like you ever so much better than Miss Prouty.”

“Oh, ever so much,” said Geraldine.

“Will you put us in a story?” demanded Gerald.

“Oh, do,” said Geraldine.

“I’m sure you *meant* well,” said Mrs. Raymond tremulously.

“Thank you,” said Anne icily, trying to detach the twins’ clinging arms.

“Oh, don’t let’s quarrel about it,” begged Mrs. Raymond, her enormous eyes filling with tears. “I *can’t* endure quarreling with anybody.”

“Certainly not.” Anne was at her stateliest and Anne *could* be very stately. “I don’t think there is the slightest necessity for quarreling. I think Gerald and Geraldine have quite enjoyed the day, though I don’t suppose poor little Ivy Trent did.”

Anne went home feeling years older.

“To think I ever thought Davy was mischievous,” she reflected.

She found Rebecca in the twilight garden gathering late pansies.

“Rebecca Dew, I used to think the adage, ‘Children should be seen and not heard,’ entirely too harsh. But I see its points now.”

“My poor darling. I’ll get you a nice supper,” said Rebecca Dew. And did *not* say, “I told you so.”

Chapter V

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(Extract from letter to Gilbert.)

“Mrs. Raymond came down last night and, with tears in her eyes, begged me to forgive her for her ‘hasty behavior.’ ‘If you knew a mother’s heart, Miss Shirley, you would not find it hard to forgive.’

“I didn’t find it hard to forgive as it was ... there is really something about Mrs. Raymond I can’t help liking and she was a duck about the Dramatic Club. Just the same I did *not* say, ‘Any Saturday you want to be away, I’ll look after your offspring.’ One learns by experience ... even a person so incorrigibly optimistic and trustful as myself.

“I find that a certain section of Summerside society is at present very much exercised over the loves of Jarvis Morrow and Dovie Westcott ... who, as Rebecca Dew says, have been engaged for over a year but can’t get any ‘forrader.’ Aunt Kate, who is a distant aunt of Dovie’s ... to be exact, I think she’s the aunt of a second cousin of Dovie’s on the mother’s side ... is deeply interested in the affair because she thinks Jarvis is such an excellent match for Dovie ... and also, I suspect, because she hates Franklin Westcott and would like to see him routed, horse, foot and artillery. Not that Aunt Kate would admit she ‘hated’ anybody, but Mrs. Franklin Westcott was a very dear girlhood friend of hers and Aunt Kate solemnly avers that he murdered her.

“*I* am interested in it, partly because I’m very fond of Jarvis and moderately fond of Dovie and partly, I begin to suspect, because I am an inveterate meddler in other people’s business ... always with excellent intentions, of course.

“The situation is briefly this: — Franklin Westcott is a tall, somber, hard-bitten merchant, close and unsociable. He lives in a big, old-fashioned house called Elmcroft just outside the town on the upper harbor road. I have met him once or twice but really know very little about him,

except that he has an uncanny habit of saying something and then going off into a long chuckle of soundless laughter. He has never gone to church since hymns came in and he insists on having all his windows open even in winter storms. I confess to a sneaking sympathy with him in this, but I am probably the only person in Summerside who would. He has got into the habit of being a leading citizen and nothing municipal dares to be done without his approval.

“His wife is dead. It is common report that she was a slave, unable to call her soul her own. Franklin told her, it is said, when he brought her home that he would be master.

“Dovie, whose real name is Sibyl, is his only child ... a very pretty, plump, lovable girl of nineteen, with a red mouth always falling a little open over her small white teeth, glints of chestnut in her brown hair, alluring blue eyes and sooty lashes so long you wonder if they can be real. Jen Pringle says it is her eyes Jarvis is really in love with. Jen and I have actually talked the affair over. Jarvis is her favorite cousin.

“(In passing, you wouldn’t believe how fond Jen is of me ... and I of Jen. She’s really the cutest thing.)

“Franklin Westcott has never allowed Dovie to have any beaus and when Jarvis Morrow began to ‘pay her attention,’ he forbade him the house and told Dovie there was to be no more ‘running round with that fellow.’ But the mischief had been done. Dovie and Jarvis were already fathoms deep in love.

“Everybody in town is in sympathy with the lovers. Franklin Westcott is really unreasonable. Jarvis is a successful young lawyer, of good family, with good prospects, and a very nice, decent lad in himself.

“‘Nothing could be more suitable,’ declares Rebecca Dew. ‘Jarvis Morrow could have *any* girl he wanted in Summerside. Franklin Westcott has just made up his mind that Dovie is to be an old maid. He wants to be sure of a housekeeper when Aunt Maggie dies.’

“‘Isn’t there any one who has any influence with him?’ I asked.

“‘Nobody can argue with Franklin Westcott. He’s too sarcastical. And if you get the better of him he throws a tantrum. I’ve never seen him in

one of his tantrums but I've heard Miss Prouty describe how he acted one time she was there sewing. He got mad over something ... nobody knew what. He just grabbed everything in sight and flung it out of the window. Milton's poems went flying clean over the fence into George Clarke's lily pond. He's always kind of had a grudge at life. Miss Prouty says her mother told her that the yelps of him when he was born passed anything she ever heard. I suppose God has some reason for making men like that, but you'd wonder. No, I can't see any chance for Jarvis and Dovie unless they elope. It's a kind of low-down thing to do, though there's been a terrible lot of romantic nonsense talked about eloping. But this is a case where anybody would excuse it.'

"I don't know what to do but I must do something. I simply can't sit still and see people make a mess of their lives under my very nose, no matter how many tantrums Franklin Westcott takes. Jarvis Morrow is not going to wait forever ... rumor has it that he is getting out of patience already and has been seen savagely cutting Dovie's name out of a tree on which he had cut it. There is an attractive Palmer girl who is reported to be throwing herself at his head, and his sister is said to have said that his mother has said that *her* son has no need to dangle for years at any girl's apron-string.

"Really, Gilbert, I'm quite unhappy about it.

"It's moonlight tonight, beloved ... moonlight on the poplars of the yard ... moonlit dimples all over the harbor where a phantom ship is drifting outwards ... moonlight on the old graveyard ... on my own private valley ... on the Storm King. And it will be moonlight in Lover's Lane and on the Lake of Shining Waters and the old Haunted Wood and Violet Vale. There should be fairy dances on the hills tonight. But, Gilbert dear, moonlight with no one to share it is just ... just *moonshine*.

"I wish I could take little Elizabeth for a walk. She loves a moonlight walk. We had some delightful ones when she was at Green Gables. But at home Elizabeth never sees moonlight except from the window.

"I am beginning to be a little worried about her, too. She is going on ten now and those two old ladies haven't the least idea what she needs,

spiritually and emotionally. As long as she has good food and good clothes, they cannot imagine her needing anything more. And it will be worse with every succeeding year. What kind of girlhood will the poor child have?”

Chapter VI

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Jarvis Morrow walked home from the High School Commencement with Anne and told her his woes.

“You’ll have to run away with her, Jarvis. Everybody says so. As a rule I don’t approve of elopements” (“I said that like a teacher of forty years’ experience,” thought Anne with an unseen grin) “but there are exceptions to all rules.”

“It takes two to make a bargain, Anne. I can’t elope alone. Dovie is so frightened of her father, I can’t get her to agree. And it wouldn’t be an elopement ... really. She’d just come to my sister Julia’s ... Mrs. Stevens, you know ... some evening. I’d have the minister there and we could be married respectably enough to please anybody and go over to spend our honeymoon with Aunt Bertha in Kingsport. Simple as that. But I can’t get Dovie to chance it. The poor darling has been giving in to her father’s whims and crotchets so long, she hasn’t any will-power left.”

“You’ll simply have to make her do it, Jarvis.”

“Great Peter, you don’t suppose I haven’t tried, do you, Anne? I’ve begged till I was black in the face. When she’s with me she’ll almost promise it, but the minute she’s home again she sends me word she can’t. It seems odd, Anne, but the poor child is really fond of her father and she can’t bear the thought of his never forgiving her.”

“You must tell her she has to choose between her father and you.”

“And suppose she chooses him?”

“I don’t think there’s any danger of that.”

“You can never tell,” said Jarvis gloomily. “But something has to be decided soon. I can’t go on like this forever. I’m crazy about Dovie ... everybody in Summerside knows that. She’s like a little red rose just out of reach ... I *must* reach her, Anne.”

“Poetry is a very good thing in its place, but it won’t get you anywhere in this instance, Jarvis,” said Anne coolly. “That sounds like a remark Rebecca Dew would make, but it’s quite true. What you need in this affair is plain, hard common sense. Tell Dovie you’re tired of shillyshallying and that she must take you or leave you. If she doesn’t care enough for you to leave her father for you, it’s just as well for you to realize it.”

Jarvis groaned.

“You haven’t been under the thumb of Franklin Westcott all your life, Anne. You haven’t any realization of what he’s like. Well, I’ll make a last and final effort. As you say, if Dovie really cares for me she’ll come to me ... and if she doesn’t, I might as well know the worst. I’m beginning to feel I’ve made myself rather ridiculous.”

“If you’re beginning to feel like that,” thought Anne, “Dovie would better watch out.”

Dovie herself slipped into Windy Poplars a few evenings later to consult Anne.

“What shall I do, Anne? What *can* I do? Jarvis wants me to elope ... practically. Father is to be in Charlottetown one night next week attending a Masonic banquet ... and it *would* be a good chance. Aunt Maggie would never suspect. Jarvis wants me to go to Mrs. Stevens’ and be married there.”

“And why don’t you, Dovie?”

“Oh, Anne, do you really think I ought to?” Dovie lifted a sweet, coaxing face. “Please, *please* make up my mind for me. I’m just distracted.” Dovie’s voice broke on a tearful note. “Oh, Anne, you don’t know Father. He just hates Jarvis ... I can’t imagine why ... can you? How can *anybody* hate Jarvis? When he called on me the first time, Father forbade him the house and told him he’d set the dog on him if he ever came again ... our big bull. You know they never let go once they take hold. And he’ll never forgive me if I run away with Jarvis.”

“You must choose between them, Dovie.”

“That’s just what Jarvis said,” wept Dovie. “Oh, he was so stern ... I never saw him like that before. And I can’t ... I *can’t* li . . i . . i . . ve

without him, Anne.”

“Then live with him, my dear girl. And don’t call it eloping. Just coming into Summerside and being married among his friends isn’t eloping.”

“Father will call it so,” said Dovie, swallowing a sob. “But I’m going to take your advice, Anne. I’m sure *you* wouldn’t advise me to take any step that was wrong. I’ll tell Jarvis to go ahead and get the license and I’ll come to his sister’s the night Father is in Charlottetown.”

Jarvis told Anne triumphantly that Dovie had yielded at last.

“I’m to meet her at the end of the lane next Tuesday night ... she won’t have me go down to the house for fear Aunt Maggie might see me ... and we’ll just step up to Julia’s and be married in a brace of shakes. All my folks will be there, so it will make the poor darling quite comfortable. Franklin Westcott said I should never get his daughter. I’ll show him he was mistaken.”

Chapter VII

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Tuesday was a gloomy day in late November. Occasional cold, gusty showers drifted over the hills. The world seemed a dreary outlived place, seen through a gray drizzle.

“Poor Dovie hasn’t a very nice day for her wedding,” thought Anne. “Suppose ... suppose ...” she quaked and shivered ... “suppose it doesn’t turn out well, after all. It will be my fault. Dovie would never have agreed to it if I hadn’t advised her to. And suppose Franklin Westcott never forgives her. Anne Shirley, stop this! The weather is all that’s the matter with you.”

By night the rain had ceased but the air was cold and raw and the sky lowering. Anne was in her tower room, correcting school papers, with Dusty Miller coiled up under her stove. There came a thunderous knock at the front door.

Anne ran down. Rebecca Dew poked an alarmed head out of her bedroom door. Anne motioned her back.

“It’s some one at the *front door!*” said Rebecca hollowly.

“It’s all right, Rebecca dear. At least, I’m afraid it’s all wrong ... but, anyway, it’s only Jarvis Morrow. I saw him from the side tower window and I know he wants to see me.”

“Jarvis Morrow!” Rebecca went back and shut her door. “This *is* the last straw.”

“Jarvis, whatever is the matter?”

“Dovie hasn’t come,” said Jarvis wildly. “We’ve waited *hours* ... the minister’s there ... and my friends ... and Julia has supper ready ... and Dovie hasn’t come. I waited for her at the end of the lane till I was half crazy. I didn’t dare go down to the house because I didn’t know what had happened. That old brute of a Franklin Westcott may have come back.

Aunt Maggie may have locked her up. But I've got to *know*. Anne, you must go to Elmcroft and find out why she hasn't come."

"Me?" said Anne incredulously and ungrammatically.

"Yes, you. There's no one else I can trust ... no one else who knows. Oh, Anne, don't fail me now. You've backed us up right along. Dovie says you are the only real friend she has. It isn't late ... only nine. Do go."

"And be chewed up by the bulldog?" said Anne sarcastically.

"That old dog!" said Jarvis contemptuously. "He wouldn't say boo to a tramp. You don't suppose I was afraid of the dog, do you? Besides, he's always shut up at night. I simply don't want to make any trouble for Dovie at home if they've found out. Anne, please!"

"I suppose I'm in for it," said Anne with a shrug of despair.

Jarvis drove her to the long lane of Elmcroft, but she would not let him come further.

"As you say, it might complicate matters for Dovie in case her father has come home."

Anne hurried down the long, tree-bordered lane. The moon occasionally broke through the windy clouds, but for the most part it was gruesomely dark and she was not a little dubious about the dog.

There seemed to be only one light in Elmcroft ... shining from the kitchen window. Aunt Maggie herself opened the side door to Anne. Aunt Maggie was a very old sister of Franklin Westcott's, a little bent, wrinkled woman who had never been considered very bright mentally, though she was an excellent housekeeper.

"Aunt Maggie, is Dovie home?"

"Dovie's in bed," said Aunt Maggie stolidly.

"In bed? Is she sick?"

"Not as I knows on. She seemed to be in a dither all day. After supper she says she was tired and ups and goes to bed."

"I must see her for a moment, Aunt Maggie. I ... I just want a little important information."

"Better go up to her room then. It's the one on the right side as you go up."

Aunt Maggie gestured to the stairs and waddled out to the kitchen.

Dovie sat up as Anne walked in, rather unceremoniously, after a hurried rap. As could be seen by the light of a tiny candle, Dovie was in tears, but her tears only exasperated Anne.

“Dovie Westcott, did you forget that you promised to marry Jarvis Morrow tonight ... *tonight*?”

“No ... no ...” whimpered Dovie. “Oh, Anne, I’m so unhappy ... I’ve put in such a dreadful day. You can never, never know what I’ve gone through.”

“I know what poor Jarvis has gone through, waiting for two hours at that lane in the cold and drizzle,” said Anne mercilessly.

“Is he ... is he very angry, Anne?”

“Just what you could notice” ... bitinglly.

“Oh, Anne, I just got frightened. I never slept one wink last night. I couldn’t go through with it ... I couldn’t. I ... there’s really something disgraceful about eloping, Anne. And I wouldn’t get any nice presents ... well, not many, anyhow. I’ve always wanted to be m ... m ... arried in church ... with lovely decorations ... and a white veil and dress ... and s ... s ... ilver slippers!”

“Dovie Westcott, get right out of that bed ... *at once* ... and get dressed ... and come with me.”

“Anne ... it’s too late now.”

“It isn’t too late. And it’s now or never ... you must know that, Dovie, if you’ve a grain of sense. You must know Jarvis Morrow will never speak to you again if you make a fool of him like this.”

“Oh, Anne, he’ll forgive me when he knows ...”

“He won’t. I know Jarvis Morrow. He isn’t going to let you play indefinitely with his life. Dovie, do you want me to drag you bodily out of bed?”

Dovie shuddered and sighed.

“I haven’t any suitable dress ...”

“You’ve half-a-dozen pretty dresses. Put on your rose taffeta.”

“And I haven’t *any* trousseau. The Morrums will always cast that up to me... .”

“You can get one afterwards. Dovie, didn’t you weigh all these things in the balance before?”

“No ... no ... that’s just the trouble. I only began to think of them last night. And Father ... you don’t know Father, Anne... .”

“Dovie. I’ll give you just ten minutes to get dressed!”

Dovie was dressed in the specified time.

“This dress is g ... g ... getting too tight for me,” she sobbed as Anne hooked her up. “If I get much fatter I don’t suppose Jarvis will l ... l ... love me. I wish I was tall and slim and pale, like you, Anne. Oh, Anne, what if Aunt Maggie hears us!”

“She won’t. She’s shut in the kitchen and you know she’s a little deaf. Here’s your hat and coat and I’ve tumbled a few things into this bag.”

“Oh, my heart is fluttering so. Do I look terrible, Anne?”

“You look lovely,” said Anne sincerely. Dovie’s satin skin was rose and cream and all her tears hadn’t spoiled her eyes. But Jarvis couldn’t see her eyes in the dark and he was just a little annoyed with his adored fair one and rather cool during the drive to town.

“For Heaven’s sake, Dovie, don’t look so scared over having to marry me,” he said impatiently as she came down the stairs of the Stevens house. “And don’t cry ... it will make your nose swell. It’s nearly ten o’clock and we’ve got to catch the eleven o’clock train.”

Dovie was quite all right as soon as she found herself irrevocably married to Jarvis. What Anne rather cattishly described in a letter to Gilbert as “the honeymoon look” was already on her face.

“Anne, darling, we owe it all to you. We’ll never forget it, will we, Jarvis? And, oh, Anne darling, will you do just one more thing for me? Please break the news to Father. He’ll be home early tomorrow evening ... and *somebody* has got to tell him. You can smooth him over if anybody can. Please do your best to get him to forgive me.”

Anne felt she rather needed some smoothing-over herself just then; but she also felt rather uneasily responsible for the outcome of the affair, so

she gave the required promise.

“Of course he’ll be terrible ... simply terrible, Anne ... but he can’t kill you,” said Dovie comfortingly. “Oh, Anne, you don’t know ...you can’t realize ... how *safe* I feel with Jarvis.”

When Anne got home Rebecca Dew had reached the point where she had to satisfy her curiosity or go mad. She followed Anne to the tower room in her nightdress, with a square of flannel wrapped round her head, and heard the whole story.

“Well, I suppose this is what you might call ‘life,’” she said sarcastically. “But I’m real glad Franklin Westcott has got his comeuppance at last, and so will Mrs. Captain MacComber be. But I don’t envy you the job of breaking the news to him. He’ll rage and utter vain things. If I was in your shoes, Miss Shirley, I wouldn’t sleep one blessed wink tonight.”

“I feel that it won’t be a very pleasant experience,” agreed Anne ruefully.

Chapter VIII

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Anne betook herself to Elmcroft the next evening, walking through the dreamlike landscape of a November fog with a rather sinking sensation pervading her being. It was not exactly a delightful errand. As Dovie had said, of course Franklin Westcott wouldn't kill her. Anne did not fear physical violence ... though if all the tales told of him were true, he might throw something at her. Would he gibber with rage? Anne had never seen a man gibbering with rage and she imagined it must be a rather unpleasant sight. But he would probably exercise his noted gift for unpleasant sarcasm, and sarcasm, in man or woman, was the one weapon Anne dreaded. It always hurt her ... raised blisters on her soul that smarted for months.

"Aunt Jamesina used to say, 'Never, if you can help it, be the bringer of ill news,'" reflected Anne. "She was as wise in that as in everything else. Well, here I am."

Elmcroft was an old-fashioned house with towers at every corner and a bulbous cupola on the roof. And at the top of the flight of front steps sat the dog.

"'If they take hold they never let go,'" remembered Anne. Should she try going round to the side door? Then the thought that Franklin Westcott might be watching her from the window braced her up. Never would she give him the satisfaction of seeing that she was afraid of his dog. Resolutely, her head held high, she marched up the steps, past the dog and rang the bell. The dog had not stirred. When Anne glanced at him over her shoulder he was apparently asleep.

Franklin Westcott, it transpired, was not at home but was expected every minute, as the Charlottetown train was due. Aunt Maggie convoyed Anne into what she called the "liberry" and left her there. The dog had got up and followed them in. He came and arranged himself at Anne's feet.

Anne found herself liking the “liberry.” It was a cheerful, shabby room, with a fire glowing cozily in the grate, and bearskin rugs on the worn red carpet of the floor. Franklin Westcott evidently did himself well in regard to books and pipes.

Presently she heard him come in. He hung up his hat and coat in the hall: he stood in the library doorway with a very decided scowl on his brow. Anne recalled that her impression of him the first time she had seen him was that of a rather gentlemanly pirate, and she felt a repetition of it.

“Oh, it’s you, is it?” he said rather gruffly. “Well, and what do you want?”

He had not even offered to shake hands with her. Of the two, Anne thought the dog had decidedly the better manners.

“Mr. Westcott, please hear me through patiently before ...”

“I am patient ... very patient. Proceed!”

Anne decided that there was no use beating about the bush with a man like Franklin Westcott.

“I have come to tell you,” she said steadily, “that Dovie has married Jarvis Morrow.”

Then she waited for the earthquake. None came. Not a muscle of Franklin Westcott’s lean brown face changed. He came in and sat down in the bandy-legged leather chair opposite Anne.

“When?” he said.

“Last night ... at his sister’s,” said Anne.

Franklin Westcott looked at her for a moment out of yellowish brown eyes deeply set under penthouses of grizzled eyebrow. Anne had a moment of wondering what he had looked like when he was a baby. Then he threw back his head and went into one of his spasms of soundless laughter.

“You mustn’t blame Dovie, Mr. Westcott,” said Anne earnestly, recovering her powers of speech now that the awful revelation was over.

“It wasn’t her fault... .”

“I’ll bet it wasn’t,” said Franklin Westcott.

Was he trying to be sarcastic?

“No, it was all mine,” said Anne, simply and bravely. “I advised her to elope ... to be married ... I *made* her do it. So please forgive her, Mr. Westcott.”

Franklin Westcott coolly picked up a pipe and began to fill it.

“If you’ve managed to make Sibyl elope with Jarvis Morrow, Miss Shirley, you’ve accomplished more than I ever thought anybody could. I was beginning to be afraid she’d never have backbone enough to do it. And then I’d have had to back down ... and Lord, how we Westcotts hate backing down! You’ve saved my face, Miss Shirley, and I’m profoundly grateful to you.”

There was a very loud silence while Franklin Westcott tamped his tobacco down and looked with an amused twinkle at Anne’s face. Anne was so much at sea she didn’t know what to say.

“I suppose,” he said, “that you came here in fear and trembling to break the terrible news to me?”

“Yes,” said Anne, a trifle shortly.

Franklin Westcott chuckled soundlessly.

“You needn’t have. You couldn’t have brought me more welcome news. Why, I picked Jarvis Morrow out for Sibyl when they were kids. Soon as the other boys began taking notice of her, I shooed them off. That gave Jarvis his first notion of her. He’d show the old man! But he was so popular with the girls that I could hardly believe the incredible luck when he did really take a genuine fancy to her. Then I laid out my plan of campaign. I knew the Morrows root and branch. You don’t. They’re a good family, but the men don’t want things they can get easily. And they’re determined to get a thing when they’re told they can’t. They always go by contraries. Jarvis’ father broke three girls’ hearts because their families threw them at his head. In Jarvis’ case I knew exactly what would happen. Sibyl would fall head over heels in love with him ... and he’d be tired of her in no time. I knew he wouldn’t keep on wanting her if she was too easy to get. So I forbade him to come near the place and forbade Sibyl to have a word to say to him and generally played the heavy parent to perfection. Talk about the charm of the uncaught! It’s nothing to the charm of the

uncatchable. It all worked out according to schedule, but I struck a snag in Sibyl's spinelessness. She's a nice child but she *is* spineless. I've been thinking she'd never have the pluck to marry him in my teeth. Now, if you've got your breath back, my dear young lady, unbosom yourself of the whole story."

Anne's sense of humor had again come to her rescue. She could never refuse an opportunity for a good laugh, even when it was on herself. And she suddenly felt very well acquainted with Franklin Westcott.

He listened to the tale, taking quiet, enjoyable whiffs of his pipe. When Anne had finished he nodded comfortably.

"I see I'm more in your debt even than I thought. She'd never have got up the courage to do it if it hadn't been for you. And Jarvis Morrow wouldn't have risked being made a fool of twice ... not if I know the breed. Gosh, but I've had a narrow escape! I'm yours to command for life. You're a real brick to come here as you did, believing all the yarns gossip told you. You've been told aplenty, haven't you now?"

Anne nodded. The bulldog had got his head on her lap and was snoring blissfully.

"Every one agreed that you were cranky, crabbed and crusty," she said candidly.

"And I suppose they told you I was a tyrant and made my poor wife's life miserable and ruled my family with a rod of iron?"

"Yes; but I really did take all that with a grain of salt, Mr. Westcott. I felt that Dovie couldn't be as fond of you as she was if you were as dreadful as gossip painted you."

"Sensible gal! My wife was a happy woman, Miss Shirley. And when Mrs. Captain MacComber tells you I bullied her to death, tick her off for me. Excuse my common way. Mollie was pretty ... prettier than Sibyl. Such a pink-and-white skin ... such golden-brown hair ... such dewy blue eyes! She was the prettiest woman in Summerside. Had to be. I couldn't have stood it if a man had walked into church with a handsomer wife than me. I ruled my household as a man should but *not* tyrannically. Oh, of course, I had a spell of temper now and then, but Mollie didn't mind them

after she got used to them. A man has a right to have a row with his wife now and then, hasn't he? Women get tired of monotonous husbands. Besides, I always gave her a ring or a necklace or some such gaud after I calmed down. There wasn't a woman in Summerside had more nice jewelry. I must get it out and give it to Sibyl."

Anne went wicked.

"What about Milton's poems?"

"Milton's poems? Oh, that! It wasn't Milton's poems ... it was Tennyson's. I reverence Milton but I can't abide Alfred. He's too sickly sweet. Those last two lines of *Enoch Arden* made me so mad one night, I did fire the book through the window. But I picked it up the next day for the sake of the *Bugle Song*. I'd forgive anybody anything for that. It *didn't* go into George Clarke's lily pond — that was old Prouty's embroidery. You're not going? Stay and have a bite of supper with a lonely old fellow robbed of his only whelp."

"I'm really sorry I can't, Mr. Westcott, but I have to attend a meeting of the staff tonight."

"Well, I'll be seeing you when Sibyl comes back. I'll have to fling a party for them, no doubt. Good gosh, what a relief this has been to my mind. You've no idea how I'd have hated to have to back down and say, 'Take her.' Now all I have to do is to pretend to be heartbroken and resigned and forgive her sadly for the sake of her poor mother. I'll do it beautifully ... Jarvis must never suspect. Don't *you* give the show away."

"I won't," promised Anne.

Franklin Westcott saw her courteously to the door. The bulldog sat up on his haunches and cried after her.

Franklin Westcott took his pipe out of his mouth at the door and tapped her on the shoulder with it..

"Always remember," he said solemnly, "there's more than one way to skin a cat. It can be done so that the animal'll never know he's lost his hide. Give my love to Rebecca Dew. A nice old puss, if you stroke her the right way. And thank you ... thank you."

Anne betook herself home, through the soft, calm evening. The fog had cleared, the wind had shifted and there was a look of frost in the pale green sky.

“People told me I didn’t know Franklin Westcott,” reflected Anne.
“They were right ... I didn’t. And neither did they.”

“How did he take it?” Rebecca Dew was keen to know. She had been on tenterhooks during Anne’s absence.

“Not so badly after all,” said Anne confidentially . “I *think* he’ll forgive Dovie in time.”

“I never did see the beat of you, Miss Shirley, for talking people round,” said Rebecca Dew admiringly. “You have certainly got a way with you.”

““Something attempted, something done has earned a night’s repose,”” quoted Anne wearily as she climbed the three steps into her bed that night. “But just wait till the next person asks my advice about eloping!”

Chapter IX

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(Extract from letter to Gilbert.)

“I am invited to have supper tomorrow night with a lady of Summerside. I know you won’t believe me, Gilbert, when I tell you her name is Tomgallon ... Miss Minerva Tomgallon. You’ll say I’ve been reading Dickens too long and too late.

“Dearest, aren’t you glad your name is Blythe? I am sure I could never marry you if it were Tomgallon. Fancy ... Anne Tomgallon! No, you can’t fancy it.

“This is the ultimate honor Summerside has to bestow ... an invitation to Tomgallon House. It has no other name. No nonsense about Elms or Chestnuts or Crofts for the Tomgallons.

“I understand they were the ‘Royal Family’ in old days. The Pringles are mushrooms compared to them. And now there is left of them all only Miss Minerva, the sole survivor of six generations of Tomgallons. She lives alone in a huge house on Queen Street ... a house with great chimneys, green shutters and the only stained-glass window in a private house in town. It is big enough for four families and is occupied only by Miss Minerva, a cook and a maid. It is very well kept up, but somehow whenever I walk past it I feel that it is a place which life has forgotten.

“Miss Minerva goes out very little, excepting to the Anglican church, and I had never met her until a few weeks ago, when she came to a meeting of staff and trustees to make a formal gift of her father’s valuable library to the school. She looks exactly as you would expect a Minerva Tomgallon to look ... tall and thin, with a long, narrow white face, a long thin nose and a long thin mouth. That doesn’t sound very attractive, yet Miss Minerva is quite handsome in a stately, aristocratic style and is always dressed with great, though somewhat old-fashioned, elegance. She was quite a beauty when she was young, Rebecca Dew tells me, and her

large black eyes are still full of fire and dark luster. She suffers from no lack of words, and I don't think I ever heard any one enjoy making a presentation speech more.

"Miss Minerva was especially nice to me, and yesterday I received a formal little note inviting me to have supper with her. When I told Rebecca Dew, she opened her eyes as widely as if I had been invited to Buckingham Palace.

"It's a great honor to be asked to Tomgallon House,' she said in a rather awed tone. I never heard of Miss Minerva asking any of the principals there before. To be sure, they were all men, so I suppose it would hardly have been proper. Well, I hope she won't talk you to death, Miss Shirley. The Tomgallons could all talk the hind leg off a cat. And they liked to be in the front of things. Some folks think the reason Miss Minerva lives so retired is because now that she's old she can't take the lead as she used to do and she won't play second fiddle to any one. What are you going to wear, Miss Shirley? I'd like to see you wear your cream silk gauze with your black velvet bows. It's so dressy.'

"I'm afraid it would be rather too "dressy" for a quiet evening out,' I said.

"Miss Minerva would like it, I think. The Tomgallons all liked their company to be nicely arrayed. They say Miss Minerva's grandfather once shut the door in the face of a woman who had been asked there to a ball, because she came in her second-best dress. He told her her best was none too good for the Tomgallons.'

"Nevertheless, I think I'll wear my green voile, and the ghosts of the Tomgallons must make the best of it.

"I'm going to confess something I did last week, Gilbert. I suppose you'll think I'm meddling again in other folks' business. But I *had* to do something. I'll not be in Summerside next year and I can't bear the thought of leaving little Elizabeth to the mercy of those two unloving old women who are growing bitterer and narrower every year. What kind of a girlhood will she have with them in that gloomy old place?

“‘I wonder,’ she said to me wistfully, not long ago, ‘what it would be like to have a grandmother you weren’t afraid of.’

“This is what I did: *I wrote to her father*. He lives in Paris and I didn’t know his address, but Rebecca Dew had heard and remembered the name of the firm whose branch he runs there, so I took a chance and addressed him in care of it. I wrote as diplomatic a letter as I could, but I told him plainly that he ought to take Elizabeth. I told him how she longs for and dreams about him and that Mrs. Campbell was really too severe and strict with her. Perhaps nothing will come of it, but if I hadn’t written I would be forever haunted by the conviction that I ought to have done it.

“What made me think of it was Elizabeth telling me very seriously one day that she had ‘written a letter to God,’ asking Him to bring her father back to her and make him love her. She said she had stopped on the way home from school, in the middle of a vacant lot, and read it, looking up at the sky. I knew she had done something odd, because Miss Prouty had seen the performance and told me about it when she came to sew for the widows next day. She thought Elizabeth was getting ‘queer’ ... ‘talking to the sky like that.’

“I asked Elizabeth about it and she told me.

“‘I thought God might pay more attention to a letter than a prayer,’ she said. ‘I’ve prayed so long. He must get so many prayers.’

“That night I wrote to her father.

“Before I close I must tell you about Dusty Miller. Some time ago Aunt Kate told me that she felt she must find another home for him because Rebecca Dew kept complaining about him so that she felt she really could not endure it any longer. One evening last week when I came home from school there was no Dusty Miller. Aunt Chatty said they had given him to Mrs. Edmonds, who lives on the other side of Summerside from Windy Poplars. I felt sorry, for Dusty Miller and I have been excellent friends. ‘But, at least,’ I thought, ‘Rebecca Dew will be a happy woman.’

“Rebecca was away for the day, having gone to the country to help a relative hook rugs. When she returned at dusk nothing was said, but at

bedtime when she was calling Dusty Miller from the back porch Aunt Kate said quietly:

“‘You needn’t call Dusty Miller, Rebecca. He is not here. We have found a home for him elsewhere. You will not be bothered with him any more.’

“‘If Rebecca Dew could have turned pale she would have done so.

“‘Not here? Found a home for him? Good grief! Isn’t this his home?’

“‘We have given him to Mrs. Edmonds. She has been very lonely since her daughter married and thought a nice cat would be company.’

“‘Rebecca Dew came in and shut the door. She looked very wild.

“‘*This is* the last straw,’ she said. And indeed it seemed to be. I’ve never seen Rebecca Dew’s eyes emit such sparkles of rage. ‘I’ll be leaving at the end of the month, Mrs. MacComber, and sooner if you can be suited.’

“‘But, Rebecca,’ said Aunt Kate in bewilderment, ‘I don’t understand. You’ve always disliked Dusty Miller. Only last week you said ...’

“‘That’s right,’ said Rebecca bitterly. ‘Cast things up to me! Don’t have any regard for my feelings! That poor dear Cat! I’ve waited on him and pampered him and got up nights to let him in. And now he’s been spirited away behind my back without so much as a by-your-leave. And to Sarah Edmonds, who wouldn’t buy a bit of liver for the poor creature if he was dying for it! The only company I had in the kitchen!’

“‘But, Rebecca, you’ve always ...’

“‘Oh, keep on ... keep on! Don’t let *me* get a word in edgewise, Mrs. MacComber. I’ve raised that cat from a kitten ... I’ve looked after his health and his morals ... and what for? That Jane Edmonds should have a well-trained cat for company. Well, I hope she’ll stand out in the frost at nights, as I’ve done, calling that cat for *hours* rather than leave him out to freeze, but I doubt it ... I seriously doubt it. Well, Mrs. MacComber, all I hope is that your conscience won’t trouble you the next time it’s ten below zero. *I* won’t sleep a wink when it happens, but of course *that* doesn’t matter an old shoe to any one.’

“‘Rebecca, if you would only ...’

“‘Mrs. MacComber, I am not a worm, neither am I a doormat. Well, this has been a lesson for me ... a valuable lesson! Never again will I allow my affections to twine themselves around an animal of any kind or description. And if you’d done it open and aboveboard ... but behind my back ... taking advantage of me like that! I never heard of anything so dirt mean! But who am I that I should expect *my* feelings to be considered!’

“‘Rebecca,’ said Aunt Kate desperately, ‘if you want Dusty Miller back we can get him back.’

“‘Why didn’t you say so before then?’ demanded Rebecca Dew. ‘And I doubt it. Jane Edmonds has got her claws in him. Is it likely she’ll give him up?’

“‘I think she will,’ said Aunt Kate, who had apparently reverted to jelly. ‘And if he comes back you won’t leave us, will you, Rebecca?’

“‘I may think it over,’ said Rebecca, with the air of one making a tremendous concession.

“Next day, Aunt Chatty brought Dusty Miller home in a covered basket. I caught a glance exchanged between her and Aunt Kate after Rebecca had carried Dusty Miller out to the kitchen and shut the door. I wonder! Was it all a deep-laid plot on the part of the widows, aided and abetted by Jane Edmonds?

“Rebecca has never uttered a word of complaint about Dusty Miller since and there is a veritable clang of victory in her voice when she shouts for him at bedtime. It sounds as if she wanted all Summerside to know that Dusty Miller is back where he belongs and that she has once more got the better of the widows!”

Chapter X

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It was on a dark, windy March evening, when even the clouds scudding over the sky seemed in a hurry, that Anne skimmed up the triple flight of broad, shallow steps flanked by stone urns and stonier lions, that led to the massive front door of Tomgallon House. Usually, when she had passed it after dark it was somber and grim, with a dim twinkle of light in one or two windows. But now it blazed forth brilliantly, even the wings on either side being lighted up, as if Miss Minerva were entertaining the whole town. Such an illumination in her honor rather overcame Anne. She almost wished she had put on her cream gauze.

Nevertheless she looked very charming in her green voile and perhaps Miss Minerva, meeting her in the hall, thought so, for her face and voice were very cordial. Miss Minerva herself was regal in black velvet, a diamond comb in the heavy coils of her iron-gray hair and a massive cameo brooch surrounded by a braid of some departed Tomgallon's hair. The whole costume was a little outmoded, but Miss Minerva wore it with such a grand air that it seemed as timeless as royalty's.

"Welcome to Tomgallon House, my dear," she said, giving Anne a bony hand, likewise well sprinkled with diamonds. "I am very glad to have you here as my guest."

"I am ..."

"Tomgallon House was always the resort of beauty and youth in the old days. We used to have a great many parties and entertained all the visiting celebrities," said Miss Minerva, leading Anne to the big staircase over a carpet of faded red velvet. "But all is changed now. I entertain very little. I am the last of the Tomgallons. Perhaps it is as well. Our family, my dear, are *under a curse*."

Miss Minerva infused such a gruesome tinge of mystery and horror into her tones that Anne almost shivered. The Curse of the Tomgallons!

What a title for a story!

“This is the stair down which my Great-grandfather Tomgallon fell and broke his neck the night of his house-warming given to celebrate the completion of his new home. This house was consecrated by human blood. He fell *there* ...” Miss Minerva pointed a long white finger so dramatically at a tiger-skin rug in the hall that Anne could almost see the departed Tomgallon dying on it. She really did not know what to say, so said inanely, “Oh!”

Miss Minerva ushered her along a hall, hung with portraits and photographs of faded loveliness, with the famous stained-glass window at its end, into a large, high-ceilinged, very stately guestroom. The high walnut bed, with its huge headboard, was covered with so gorgeous a silken quilt that Anne felt it was a desecration to lay her coat and hat on it.

“You have very beautiful hair, my dear,” said Miss Minerva admiringly. “I always liked red hair. My Aunt Lydia had it ... she was the only redhaired Tomgallon. One night when she was brushing it in the north room it caught fire from her candle and she ran shrieking down the hall wrapped in flames. All part of the Curse, my dear ... all part of the Curse.”

“Was she ...”

“No, she wasn’t burned to death, but she lost all her beauty. She was very handsome and vain. She never went out of the house from that night to the day of her death and she left directions that her coffin was to be shut so that no one might see her scarred face. Won’t you sit down to remove your rubbers, my dear? This is a very comfortable chair. My sister died in it from a stroke. She was a widow and came back home to live after her husband’s death. Her little girl was scalded in our kitchen with a pot of boiling water. Wasn’t that a tragic way for a child to die?”

“Oh, how ...”

“But at least we knew *how* it died. My half-aunt Eliza ... at least, she would have been my half-aunt if she had lived ... just *disappeared* when she was six years old. Nobody ever knew what became of her.”

“But surely ...”

“Every search was made but nothing was ever discovered. It was said that her mother ... my step-grandmother ... had been very cruel to an orphan niece of my grandfather’s who was being brought up here. She locked it up in the closet at the head of the stairs, one hot summer day, for punishment and when she went to let it out she found it ... *dead*. Some people thought it was a judgment on her when her own child vanished. But I think it was just Our Curse.”

“Who put ... ?”

“What a high instep you have, my dear! My instep used to be admired too. It was said a stream of water could run under it ... the test of an aristocrat.”

Miss Minerva modestly poked a slipper from under her velvet skirt and revealed what was undoubtedly a very handsome foot.

“It certainly ...”

“Would you like to see over the house, my dear, before we have supper? It used to be the Pride of Summerside. I suppose everything is very old-fashioned now, but perhaps there are a few things of interest. That sword hanging by the head of the stairs belonged to my great-great-grandfather who was an officer in the British Army and received a grant of land in Prince Edward Island for his services. He never lived in this house, but my great-great-grandmother did for a few weeks. She did not long survive her son’s tragic death.”

Miss Minerva marched Anne ruthlessly over the whole huge house, full of great square rooms ... ballroom, conservatory, billiard-room, three drawing-rooms, breakfast-room, no end of bedrooms and an enormous attic. They were all splendid and dismal.

“Those were my Uncle Ronald and my Uncle Reuben,” said Miss Minerva, indicating two worthies who seemed to be scowling at each other from the opposite sides of a fireplace. “They were twins and they hated each other bitterly from birth. The house rang with their quarrels. It darkened their mother’s whole life. And during their final quarrel in this very room, while a thunderstorm was going on, Reuben was killed by a flash of lightning. Ronald never got over it. He was a *haunted man* from

that day. His wife,” Miss Minerva added reminiscently, “swallowed her wedding-ring.”

“What an ex ...”

“Ronald thought it was very careless and wouldn’t have anything done. A prompt emetic might have ... but it was never heard of again. It spoiled her life. She always felt so *unmarried* without a wedding-ring.”

“What a beautiful ...”

“Oh, yes, that was my Aunt Emilia ... not my aunt really, of course. Just the wife of Uncle Alexander. She was noted for her spiritual look, but she poisoned her husband with a stew of mushrooms ... toadstools really. We always pretended it was an accident, because a murder is such a messy thing to have in a family, but we all knew the truth. Of course she married him against her will. She was a gay young thing and he was far too old for her. December and May, my dear. Still, that did not really justify toadstools. She went into a decline soon afterwards. They are buried together in Charlottetown ... all the Tomgallons bury in Charlottetown. This was my Aunt Louise. She drank laudanum. The doctor pumped it out and saved her, but we all felt we could never trust her again. It was really rather a relief when she died respectably of pneumonia. Of course, some of us didn’t blame her much. You see, my dear, her husband had spanked her.”

“Spanked ...”

“Exactly. There are really some things no gentleman should do, my dear, and one of them is spank his wife. Knock her down ... possibly ... but spank her, never! I would like,” said Miss Minerva, very majestically, “to see the man who would dare to spank *me*.”

Anne felt she would like to see him also. She realized that there are limits to the imagination after all. By no stretch of hers could she imagine a husband spanking Miss Minerva Tomgallon.

“This is the ballroom. Of course it is never used now. But there have been any number of balls here. The Tomgallon balls were famous. People came from all over the Island to them. That chandelier cost my father five hundred dollars. My Great-aunt Patience dropped dead while dancing here

one night ... right there in that corner. She had fretted a great deal over a man who had disappointed her. I cannot imagine any girl breaking her heart over a man. Men,” said Miss Minerva, staring at a photograph of her father ... a person with bristling sidewhiskers and a hawk-like nose ... “have always seemed to me such *trivial* creatures.”

Chapter XI

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The dining-room was in keeping with the rest of the house. There was another ornate chandelier, an equally ornate, gilt-framed mirror over the mantelpiece, and a table beautifully set with silver and crystal and old Crown Derby. The supper, served by a rather grim and ancient maid, was bountiful and exceedingly good, and Anne's healthy young appetite did full justice to it. Miss Minerva kept silence for a time and Anne dared say nothing for fear of starting another avalanche of tragedies. Once a large, sleek black cat came into the room and sat down by Miss Minerva with a hoarse meow. Miss Minerva poured a saucer of cream and set it down before him. She seemed so much more human after this that Anne lost a good deal of her awe of the last of the Tomgallons.

"Do have some more of the peaches, my dear. You've eaten nothing ... positively nothing."

"Oh, Miss Tomgallon, I've enjoyed ..."

"The Tomgallons always set a good table," said Miss Minerva complacently. "My Aunt Sophia made the best sponge-cake I ever tasted. I think the only person my father ever really hated to see come to our house was his sister Mary, because she had such a poor appetite. She just minced and tasted. He took it as a personal insult. Father was a very unrelenting man. He never forgave my brother Richard for marrying against his will. He ordered him out of the house and he was never allowed to enter it again. Father always repeated the Lord's Prayer at family worship every morning, but after Richard flouted him he always left out the sentence, 'Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.' I can see him," said Miss Minerva dreamily, "kneeling there leaving it out."

After supper they went to the smallest of the three drawing-rooms ... which was still rather big and grim ... and spent the evening before the huge fire ... a pleasant, friendly enough fire. Anne crocheted at a set of

intricate doilies and Miss Minerva knitted away at an afghan and kept up what was practically a monologue composed in great part of colorful and gruesome Tomgallon history.

“This is a house of tragical memories, my dear.”

“Miss Tomgallon, didn’t *any* pleasant thing ever happen in this house?” asked Anne, achieving a complete sentence by a mere fluke. Miss Minerva had had to stop talking long enough to blow her nose.

“Oh, I suppose so,” said Miss Minerva, as if she hated to admit it.

“Yes, of course, we used to have gay times here when I was a girl. They tell me you’re writing a book about every one in Summerside, my dear.”

“I’m not ... there isn’t a word of truth ...”

“Oh!” Miss Minerva was plainly a little disappointed. “Well, if ever you do you are at liberty to use any of our stories you like, perhaps with the names disguised. And now what do you say to a game of parchesi?”

“I’m afraid it is time I was going... .”

“Oh, my dear, you can’t go home tonight. It’s pouring cats and dogs ... and listen to the wind. I don’t keep a carriage now ... I have so little use for one ... and you can’t walk half a mile in that deluge. You must be my guest for the night.”

Anne was not sure she wanted to spend a night in Tomgallon House. But neither did she want to walk to Windy Poplars in a March tempest. So they had their game of parchesi ... in which Miss Minerva was so interested that she forgot to talk about horrors ... and then a “bedtime snack.” They ate cinnamon toast and drank cocoa out of old Tomgallon cups of marvelous thinness and beauty.

Finally Miss Minerva took her up to a guestroom which Anne at first was glad to see was not the one where Miss Minerva’s sister had died of a stroke.

“This is Aunt Annabella’s room,” said Miss Minerva, lighting the candles in the silver candlesticks on a rather pretty green dressing-table and turning out the gas. Matthew Tomgallon had blown out the gas one night ... whereupon exit Matthew Tomgallon. “She was the handsomest of all the Tomgallons. That’s her picture above the mirror. Do you notice

what a proud mouth she had? She made that crazy quilt on the bed. I hope you'll be comfortable, my dear. Mary has aired the bed and put two hot bricks in it. And she has aired this nightdress for you ..." pointing to an ample flannel garment hanging over a chair and smelling strongly of moth balls. "I hope it will fit you. It hasn't been worn since poor Mother died in it. Oh, I nearly forgot to tell you ..." Miss Minerva turned back at the door ... "this is the room Oscar Tomgallon came back to life in — after being thought dead for two days. They *didn't want him to*, you know — *that* was the tragedy. I hope you'll sleep well, my dear."

Anne did not know if she could sleep at all or not. Suddenly there seemed something strange and alien in the room ... something a little hostile. But is there not something strange about any room that has been occupied through generations? Death has lurked in it ... love has been rosy red in it ... births have been here ... all the passions ... all the hopes. It is full of wraths.

But this was really rather a terrible old house, full of the ghosts of dead hatreds and heartbreaks, crowded with dark deeds that had never been dragged into light and were still festering in its corners and hidy-holes. Too many women must have wept here. The wind wailed very eerily in the spruces by the window. For a moment Anne felt like running out, storm or no storm.

Then she took herself resolutely in hand and commanded common sense. If tragic and dreadful things had happened here, many shadowy years ago, amusing and lovely things must have happened, too. Gay and pretty girls had danced here and talked over their charming secrets; dimpled babies had been born here; there had been weddings and balls and music and laughter. The sponge-cake lady must have been a comfortable creature and the unforgiven Richard a gallant lover.

"I'll think on these things and go to bed. What a quilt to sleep under! I wonder if I'll be as crazy as it by morning. And this is a spare room! I've never forgotten what a thrill it used to give me to sleep in any one's spare room."

Anne uncoiled and brushed her hair under the very nose of Annabella Tomgallon, who stared down at her with a face in which there were pride and vanity, and something of the insolence of great beauty. Anne felt a little creepy as she looked in the mirror. Who knew what faces might look out of it at her? All the tragic and haunted ladies who had ever looked into it, perhaps. She bravely opened the closet door, half expecting any number of skeletons to tumble out, and hung up her dress. She sat down calmly on a rigid chair, which looked as if it would be insulted if anybody sat on it, and took off her shoes. Then she put on the flannel nightgown, blew out the candles and got into the bed, pleasantly warm from Mary's bricks. For a little while the rain streaming on the panes and the shriek of the wind around the old eaves prevented her from sleeping. Then she forgot all the Tomgallon tragedies in dreamless slumber until she found herself looking at dark fir boughs against a red sunrise.

"I've enjoyed having you so much, my dear," said Miss Minerva when Anne left after breakfast. "We've had a real cheerful visit, haven't we? Though I've lived so long alone I've almost forgotten how to talk. And I need not say what a delight it is to meet a really charming and unspoiled young girl in this frivolous age. I didn't tell you yesterday but it was my birthday, and it was very pleasant to have a bit of youth in the house. There is nobody to remember my birthday now ..." Miss Minerva gave a faint sigh ... "and once there were so many."

"Well, I suppose you heard a pretty grim chronicle," said Aunt Chatty that night.

"Did all those things Miss Minerva told me really happen, Aunt Chatty?"

"Well, the queer thing is, they did," said Aunt Chatty. "It's a curious thing, Miss Shirley, but a lot of awful things did happen to the Tomgallons."

"I don't know that there were many more than happen in any large family in the course of six generations," said Aunt Kate.

"Oh, I think there were. They really did seem under a curse. So many of them died sudden or violent deaths. Of course there is a streak of

insanity in them ... every one knows that. That was curse enough ... but I've heard an old story ... I can't recall the details ... of the carpenter who built the house cursing it. Something about the contract ... old Paul Tomgallon held him to it and it ruined him, it cost so much more than he had figured."

"Miss Minerva seems rather proud of the curse," said Anne.

"Poor old thing, it's all she has," said Rebecca Dew.

Anne smiled to think of the stately Miss Minerva being referred to as a poor old thing. But she went to the tower room and wrote to Gilbert:

"I thought Tomgallon House was a sleepy old place where nothing ever happened. Well, perhaps things don't happen now but evidently they *did*. Little Elizabeth is always talking of Tomorrow. But the old Tomgallon house is Yesterday. I'm glad I don't live in Yesterday ... that Tomorrow is still a friend.

"Of course I think Miss Minerva has all the Tomgallon liking for the spotlight and gets no end of satisfaction out of her tragedies. They are to her what husband and children are to other women. But, oh, Gilbert, no matter how old we get in years to come, don't let's ever see life as *all* tragedy and revel in it. I think I'd hate a house one hundred and twenty years old. I hope when we get our house of dreams it will either be new, ghostless and traditionless, or, if that can't be, at least have been occupied by reasonably happy people. I shall never forget my night at Tomgallon House. And for once in my life I've met a person who could talk me down."

Chapter XII

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Little Elizabeth Grayson had been born expecting things to happen. That they seldom happened under the watchful eyes of Grandmother and the Woman never brightened her expectations in the least. Things were just bound to happen some time ... if not today, then tomorrow.

When Miss Shirley came to live at Windy Poplars Elizabeth felt that Tomorrow must be very close at hand and her visit to Green Gables was like a foretaste of it. But now in the June of Miss Shirley's third and last year in Summerside High, little Elizabeth's heart had descended into the nice buttoned boots Grandmother always got for her to wear. Many children at the school where she went envied little Elizabeth those beautiful buttoned kid boots. But little Elizabeth cared nothing about buttoned boots when she could not tread the way to freedom in them. And now her adored Miss Shirley was going away from her forever. At the end of June she would be leaving Summerside and going back to that beautiful Green Gables. Little Elizabeth simply could not bear the thought of it. It was of no use for Miss Shirley to promise that she would have her down to Green Gables in the summer before she was married. Little Elizabeth knew somehow that Grandmother would not let her go again. Little Elizabeth knew Grandmother had never really approved of her intimacy with Miss Shirley.

"It will be the end of everything, Miss Shirley," she sobbed.

"Let's hope, darling, that it is only a new beginning," said Anne cheerfully. But she felt downcast herself. No word had ever come from little Elizabeth's father. Either her letter had never reached him or he did not care. And, if he did not care, what was to become of Elizabeth? It was bad enough now in her childhood, but what would it be later on?

"Those two old dames will boss her to death," Rebecca Dew had said. Anne felt that there was more truth than elegance in her remark.

Elizabeth knew that she was “bossed.” And she especially resented being bossed by the Woman. She did not like it in Grandmother, of course, but one conceded reluctantly that perhaps a grandmother had a certain right to boss you. But what right had the Woman? Elizabeth always wanted to ask her that right out. She *would* do it some time ... when Tomorrow came. And oh, how she would enjoy the look on the Woman’s face!

Grandmother would never let little Elizabeth go out walking by herself ... for fear, she said, that she might be kidnaped by gypsies. A child had been once, forty years before. It was very seldom gypsies came to the Island now, and little Elizabeth felt that it was only an excuse. But why should Grandmother care whether she were kidnaped or not? Elizabeth knew that Grandmother and the Woman didn’t love her at all. Why, they never even spoke of her by her name if they could help it. It was always “the child.” How Elizabeth hated to be called “the child” just as they might have spoken of “the dog” or “the cat” if there had been one. But when Elizabeth had ventured a protest, Grandmother’s face had grown dark and angry and little Elizabeth had been punished for impertinence, while the Woman looked on, well content. Little Elizabeth often wondered just why the Woman hated her. Why should any one hate you when you were so small? Could you be worth hating? Little Elizabeth did not know that the mother whose life she had cost had been that bitter old woman’s darling and, if she had known, could not have understood what perverted shapes thwarted love can take.

Little Elizabeth hated the gloomy, splendid Evergreens, where everything seemed unacquainted with her although she had lived in it all her life. But after Miss Shirley had come to Windy Poplars everything had changed magically. Little Elizabeth lived in a world of romance after Miss Shirley’s coming. There was beauty wherever you looked. Fortunately Grandmother and the Woman couldn’t prevent you from looking, though Elizabeth had no doubt they would if they could. The short walks along the red magic of the harbor road, which she was all too rarely permitted to share with Miss Shirley, were the high lights in her shadowy life. She loved everything she saw ... the faraway lighthouse painted in odd red and

white rings ... the far, dim blue shores ... the little silvery blue waves ... the range lights that gleamed through the violet dusks ... all gave her so much delight that it hurt. And the harbor with its smoky islands and glowing sunsets! Elizabeth always went up to a window in the mansard roof to watch them through the treetops ... and the ships that sailed at the rising of the moon. Ships that came back ... ships that never came back. Elizabeth longed to go in one of them ... on a voyage to the Island of Happiness. The ships that never came back stayed there, where it was always Tomorrow.

That mysterious red road ran on and on and her feet itched to follow it. Where did it lead to? Sometimes Elizabeth thought she would burst if she didn't find out. When Tomorrow really came she would fare forth on it and perhaps find an island all her own where she and Miss Shirley could live alone and Grandmother and the Woman could never come. They both hated water and would not put foot in a boat for anything. Little Elizabeth liked to picture herself standing on her island and mocking them, as they stood vainly glowering on the mainland shore.

"This is Tomorrow," she would taunt them. "You can't catch me any more. You're only in Today."

What fun it would be! How she would enjoy the look on the Woman's face!

Then one evening in late June an amazing thing happened. Miss Shirley had told Mrs. Campbell that she had an errand next day at Flying Cloud, to see a certain Mrs. Thompson, who was convener of the refreshment committee of the Ladies' Aid, and might she take Elizabeth with her. Grandmother had agreed with her usual dourness ... Elizabeth could never understand why she agreed at all, being completely ignorant of the Pringle horror of a certain bit of information Miss Shirley possessed ... but she had agreed.

"We'll go right down to the harbor mouth," whispered Anne, "after I've done my errand at Flying Cloud."

Little Elizabeth went to bed in such excitement that she didn't expect to sleep a wink. At last she was going to answer the lure of the road that

had called so long. In spite of her excitement, she conscientiously went through her little ritual of retiring. She folded her clothes and cleaned her teeth and brushed her golden hair. She thought she had rather pretty hair, though of course it wasn't like Miss Shirley's lovely redgold with the ripples in it and the little lovelocks that curled around her ears. Little Elizabeth would have given anything to have had hair like Miss Shirley's.

Before she got into bed little Elizabeth opened one of the drawers in the high, black, polished old bureau and took a carefully hidden picture from under a pile of hankies ... a picture of Miss Shirley which she had cut out of a special edition of the *Weekly Courier* that had reproduced a photograph of the High School staff.

"Good night, dearest Miss Shirley." She kissed the picture and returned it to its hiding-place. Then she climbed into bed and cuddled down under the blankets ... for the June night was cool and the breeze of the harbor searching. Indeed, it was more than a breeze tonight. It whistled and banged and shook and thumped, and Elizabeth knew the harbor would be a tossing expanse of waves under the moonlight. What fun it would be to steal down close to it under the moon! But it was only in Tomorrow one could do that.

Where was Flying Cloud? What a name! Out of Tomorrow again. It was maddening to be so near Tomorrow and not be able to get into it. But suppose the wind blew up rain for tomorrow! Elizabeth knew she would never be allowed to go anywhere in rain.

She sat up in bed and clasped her hands.

"Dear God," she said, "I don't like to meddle, but *could* You see that it is fine tomorrow? *Please*, dear God."

The next afternoon was glorious. Little Elizabeth felt as if she had slipped from some invisible shackles when she and Miss Shirley walked away from that house of gloom. She took a huge gulp of freedom, even if the Woman was scowling after them through the red glass of the big front door. How heavenly to be walking through the lovely world with Miss Shirley! It was always so wonderful to be alone with Miss Shirley. What would she do when Miss Shirley had gone? But little Elizabeth put the

thought firmly away. She wouldn't spoil the day by thinking it. Perhaps ... a great perhaps ... she and Miss Shirley would get into Tomorrow this afternoon and then they would never be separated. Little Elizabeth just wanted to walk quietly on towards that blueness at the end of the world, drinking in the beauty around her. Every turn and kink of the road revealed new lovelinesses ... and it turned and kinked interminably, following the windings of a tiny river that seemed to have appeared from nowhere.

On every side were fields of buttercups and clover where bees buzzed. Now and then they walked through a milky way of daisies. Far out the strait laughed at them in silver-tipped waves. The harbor was like watered silk. Little Elizabeth liked it better that way than when it was like pale blue satin. They drank the wind in. It was a very gentle wind. It purred about them and seemed to coax them on.

"Isn't it nice, walking with the wind like this?" said little Elizabeth.

"A nice, friendly, perfumed wind," said Anne, more to herself than Elizabeth. "Such a wind as I used to think a *mistral* was. Mistral *sounds* like that. What a disappointment when I found out it was a rough, disagreeable wind!"

Elizabeth didn't quite understand ... she had never heard of the mistral ... but the music of her beloved's voice was enough for her. The very sky was glad. A sailor with gold rings in his ears ... the very kind of person one would meet in Tomorrow ... smiled as he passed them. Elizabeth thought of a verse she had learned in Sunday-school ... "The little hills rejoice on every side." Had the man who wrote that ever seen hills like those blue ones over the harbor?

"I think this road leads right to God," she said dreamily.

"Perhaps," said Anne. "Perhaps all roads do, little Elizabeth. We turn off here just now. We must go over to that island ... that's Flying Cloud."

Flying Cloud was a long, slender islet, lying about a quarter of a mile from the shore. There were trees on it and a house. Little Elizabeth had always wished she might have an island of her own, with a little bay of silver sand in it.

"How do we get to it?"

“We’ll row out in this flat,” said Miss Shirley, picking up the oars in a small boat tied to a leaning tree.

Miss Shirley could row. Was there anything Miss Shirley couldn’t do? When they reached the island, it proved to be a fascinating place where anything might happen. Of course it was in Tomorrow. Islands like this didn’t happen except in Tomorrow. They had no part or lot in humdrum Today.

A little maid who met them at the door of the house told Anne she would find Mrs. Thompson on the far end of the island, picking wild strawberries. Fancy an island where wild strawberries grew!

Anne went to hunt Mrs. Thompson up, but first she asked if little Elizabeth might wait in the livingroom. Anne was thinking that little Elizabeth looked rather tired after her unaccustomedly long walk and needed a rest. Little Elizabeth didn’t think she did, but Miss Shirley’s lightest wish was law.

It was a beautiful room, with flowers everywhere and wild sea-breezes blowing in. Elizabeth liked the mirror over the mantel which reflected the room so beautifully and, through the open window, a glimpse of harbor and hill and strait.

All at once a man came through the door. Elizabeth felt a moment of dismay and terror. Was he a gypsy? He didn’t look like her idea of a gypsy but of course she had never seen one. He might be one ... and then in a swift flash of intuition Elizabeth decided she didn’t care if he did kidnap her. She liked his crinkly hazel eyes and his crinkly brown hair and his square chin and his smile. For he was smiling.

“Now, who are you?” he asked.

“I’m ... I’m me,” faltered Elizabeth, still a little flustered.

“Oh, to be sure ... you. Popped out of the sea, I suppose ... come up from the dunes ... no name known among mortals.”

Elizabeth felt that she was being made fun of a little. But she didn’t mind. In fact she rather liked it. But she answered a bit primly.

“My name is Elizabeth Grayson.”

There was a silence ... a very queer silence. The man looked at her for a moment without saying anything. Then he politely asked her to sit down.

"I'm waiting for Miss Shirley," she explained. "She's gone to see Mrs. Thompson about the Ladies' Aid Supper. When she comes back we are going down to the end of the world."

Now, if you have any notion of kidnaping me, Mr. Man!

"Of course. But meanwhile you might as well be comfortable. And I must do the honors. What would you like in the way of light refreshment? Mrs. Thompson's cat has probably brought something in."

Elizabeth sat down. She felt oddly happy and at home.

"Can I have just what I like?"

"Certainly."

"Then," said Elizabeth triumphantly, "I'd like some ice-cream with strawberry jam on it."

The man rang a bell and gave an order. Yes, this must be Tomorrow ... no doubt about it. Ice-cream and strawberry jam didn't appear in this magical manner in Today, cats or no cats.

"We'll set a share aside for your Miss Shirley," said the man.

They were good friends right away. The man didn't talk a great deal, but he looked at Elizabeth very often. There was a tenderness in his face ... a tenderness she had never seen before in anybody's face, not even Miss Shirley's. She felt that he liked her. And she knew that she liked him.

Finally he glanced out of the window and stood up.

"I think I must go now," he said. "I see your Miss Shirley coming up the walk, so you'll not be alone."

"Won't you wait and see Miss Shirley?" asked Elizabeth, licking her spoon to get the last vestige of the jam. Grandmother and the Woman would have died of horror had they seen her.

"Not this time," said the man.

Elizabeth knew he hadn't the slightest notion of kidnaping her, and she felt the strangest, most unaccountable sensation of disappointment.

"Good-by and thank you," she said politely. "It is very nice here in Tomorrow."

“Tomorrow?”

“This is Tomorrow,” explained Elizabeth. “I’ve always wanted to get into Tomorrow and now I have.”

“Oh, I see. Well, I’m sorry to say I don’t care much about Tomorrow. *I* would like to get back into Yesterday.”

Little Elizabeth was sorry for him. But how could he be unhappy? How could any one living in Tomorrow be unhappy?

Elizabeth looked longingly back to Flying Cloud as they rowed away. Just as they pushed through the scrub spruces that fringed the shore to the road, she turned for another farewell look at it. A flying team of horses attached to a truck wagon whirled around the bend, evidently quite beyond their driver’s control.

Elizabeth heard Miss Shirley shriek... .

Chapter XIII

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The room went around oddly. The furniture nodded and jiggled. The bed ... how came she to be in bed? Somebody with a white cap on was just going out of the door. What door? How funny one's head felt! There were voices somewhere ... low voices. She could not see who was talking, but somehow she knew it was Miss Shirley and the man.

What were they saying? Elizabeth heard sentences here and there, bobbing out of a confusion of murmuring.

“Are you really ... ?” Miss Shirley's voice sounded so excited..

“Yes ... your letter ... see for myself ... before approaching Mrs. Campbell ... Flying Cloud is the summer home of our General Manager... .”

If that room would only stay put! Really, things behaved rather queerly in Tomorrow. If she could only turn her head and see the talkers ... Elizabeth gave a long sigh.

Then they came over to her bed ... Miss Shirley and the man. Miss Shirley all tall and white, like a lily, looking as if she had been through some terrible experience but with some inner radiance shining behind it all ... a radiance that seemed part of the golden sunset light which suddenly flooded the room. The man was smiling down at her. Elizabeth felt that he loved her very much and that there was some secret, tender and dear, between them which she would learn as soon as she had learned the language spoken in Tomorrow.

“Are you feeling better, darling?” said Miss Shirley.

“Have I been sick?”

“You were knocked down by a team of runaway horses on the mainland road,” said Miss Shirley. “I ... I wasn't quick enough. I thought you were killed. I brought you right back here in the flat and your ... this gentleman telephoned for a doctor and nurse.”

“Will I die?” said little Elizabeth.

“No, indeed, darling. You were only stunned and you will be all right soon. And, Elizabeth darling, this is your father.”

“Father is in France. Am I in France, too?” Elizabeth would not have been surprised at it. Wasn’t this Tomorrow? Besides, things were still a bit wobbly.

“Father is very much here, my sweet.” He had such a delightful voice ... you loved him for his voice. He bent and kissed her. “I’ve come for you. We’ll never be separated anymore.”

The woman in the white cap was coming in again. Somehow, Elizabeth knew whatever she had to say must be said before she got quite in.

“Will we live together?”

“Always,” said Father.

“And will Grandmother and the Woman live with us?”

“They will not,” said Father.

The sunset gold was fading and the nurse was looking her disapproval. But Elizabeth didn’t care.

“I’ve found Tomorrow,” she said, as the nurse looked Father and Miss Shirley out.

“I’ve found a treasure I didn’t know I possessed,” said Father, as the nurse shut the door on him. “And I can never thank you enough for that letter, Miss Shirley.”

“And so,” wrote Anne to Gilbert that night, “little Elizabeth’s road of mystery has led on to happiness and the end of her old world.”

Chapter XIV

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“Windy Poplars,
“Spook’s Lane,
“(For the last time),
“June 27th.

“DEAREST:

“I’ve come to another bend in the road. I’ve written you a good many letters in this old tower room these past three years. I suppose this is the last one I will write you for a long, long time. Because after this there won’t be any need of letters. In just a few weeks now we’ll belong to each other forever ... we’ll be together. Just think of it ... being together ... talking, walking, eating, dreaming, planning together ... sharing each other’s wonderful moments ... making a home out of our house of dreams. *Our* house! Doesn’t that sound ‘mystic and wonderful,’ Gilbert? I’ve been building dream houses all my life and now one of them is going to come true. As to whom I really want to share my house of dreams with ... well, I’ll tell you that at four o’clock next year.

“Three years sounded endless at the beginning, Gilbert. And now they are gone like a watch in the night. They have been very happy years ... except for those first few months with the Pringles. After that, life has seemed to flow by like a pleasant golden river. And my old feud with the Pringles seems like a dream. They like me now for myself ... they have forgotten they ever hated me. Cora Pringle, one of the Widow Pringle’s brood, brought me a bouquet of roses yesterday and twisted round the stems was a bit of paper bearing the legend, ‘To the sweetest teacher in the whole world.’ Fancy that for a Pringle!

“Jen is brokenhearted because I am leaving. I shall watch Jen’s career with interest. She is brilliant and rather unpredictable. One thing is certain

... she will have no commonplace existence. She can't look so much like Becky Sharp for nothing.

"Lewis Allen is going to McGill. Sophy Sinclair is going to Queen's. Then she means to teach until she has saved up enough money to go to the School of Dramatic Expression in Kingsport. Myra Pringle is going to 'enter society' in the fall. She is so pretty that it won't matter a bit that she wouldn't know a past perfect participle if she met it on the street.

"And there is no longer a small neighbor on the other side of the vine-hung gate. Little Elizabeth has gone forever from that sunshineless house ... gone into her Tomorrow. If I were staying on in Summerside I should break my heart, missing her. But as it is, I'm glad. Pierce Grayson took her away with him. He is not going back to Paris but will be living in Boston. Elizabeth cried bitterly at our parting but she is so happy with her father that I feel sure her tears will soon be dried. Mrs. Campbell and the Woman were very dour over the whole affair and put all the blame on me ... which I accept cheerfully and unrepentantly.

"'She has had a good home here,' said Mrs. Campbell majestically.

"'Where she never heard a single word of affection,' I thought but did not say.

"'I think I'll be Betty all the time now, darling Miss Shirley,' were Elizabeth's last words. 'Except,' she called back, 'when I'm lonesome for you, and then I'll be Lizzie.'

"'Don't you ever dare to be Lizzie, no matter what happens,' I said.

"We threw kisses to each other as long as we could see, and I came up to my tower room with tears in my eyes. She's been so sweet, the dear little golden thing. She always seemed to me like a little aeolian harp, so responsive to the tiniest breath of affection that blew her way. It's been an adventure to be her friend. I hope Pierce Grayson realizes what a daughter he has ... and I think he does. He sounded very grateful and repentant.

"'I didn't realize she was no longer a baby,' he said, 'nor how unsympathetic her environment was. Thank you a thousand times for all you have done for her.'

“I had our map of fairyland framed and gave it to little Elizabeth for a farewell keepsake.

“I’m sorry to leave Windy Poplars. Of course, I’m really a bit tired of living in a trunk, but I’ve loved it here ... loved my cool morning hours at my window ... loved my bed into which I have veritably climbed every night ... loved my blue doughnut cushion ... loved all the winds that blew. I’m afraid I’ll never be quite so chummy with the winds again as I’ve been here. And shall I ever have a room again from which I can see both the rising and the setting sun?

“I’ve finished with Windy Poplars and the years that have been linked with it. And I’ve kept the faith. I’ve never betrayed Aunt Chatty’s hidy-hole to Aunt Kate or the buttermilk secret of each to either of the others.

“I think they are all sorry to see me go ... and I’m glad of it. It would be terrible to think they were glad I am going ... or that they would not miss me a little when I’m gone. Rebecca Dew has been making all my favorite dishes for a week now ... she even devoted ten eggs to angel-cake *twice* ... and using the ‘company’ china. And Aunt Chatty’s soft brown eyes brim over whenever I mention my departure. Even Dusty Miller seems to gaze at me reproachfully as he sits about on his little haunches.

“I had a long letter from Katherine last week. She has a gift for writing letters. She has got a position as private secretary to a globetrotting M. P. What a fascinating phrase ‘globetrotting’ is! A person who would say, ‘Let’s go to Egypt,’ as one might say, ‘Let’s go to Charlottetown’ ... and *go!* That life will just suit Katherine.

“She persists in ascribing all her changed outlook and prospects to me. ‘I wish I could tell you what you’ve brought into my life,’ she wrote. I suppose I did help. And it wasn’t easy at first. She seldom said anything without a sting in it, and listened to any suggestion I made in regard to the school work with an air of disdainfully humoring a lunatic. But somehow, I’ve forgotten it all. It was just born of her secret bitterness against life.

“Everybody has been inviting me to supper ... even Pauline Gibson. Old Mrs. Gibson died a few months ago, so Pauline dared do it. And I’ve been to Tomgallon House for another supper with Miss Minerva of that ilk

and another onesided conversation. But I had a very good time, eating the delicious meal Miss Minerva provided, and she had a good time airing a few more tragedies. She couldn't quite hide the fact that she was sorry for any one who was not a Tomgallon, but she paid me several nice compliments and gave me a lovely ring set with an aquamarine ... a moonlight blend of blue and green ... that her father had given her on her eighteenth birthday ... 'when I was young and handsome, dear ... *quite* handsome. I may say that *now*, I suppose.' I was glad it belonged to Miss Minerva and not to the wife of Uncle Alexander. I'm sure I could never have worn it if it had. It is very beautiful. There is a mysterious charm about the jewels of the sea.

"Tomgallon House is certainly very splendid, especially now when its grounds are all a-leaf and a-flower. But I wouldn't give my as yet unfounded house of dreams for Tomgallon House and grounds with the ghosts thrown in.

"Not but what a ghost might be a nice, aristocratic sort of thing to have around. My only quarrel with Spook's Lane is that there are no spooks.

"I went to my old graveyard yesterday evening for a last prowl ... walked all round it and wondered if Herbert Pringle occasionally chuckled to himself in his grave. And I'm saying good-by tonight to the old Storm King, with the sunset on its brow, and my little winding valley full of dusk.

"I'm a wee bit tired after a month of exams and farewells and 'last things.' For a week after I get back to Green Gables I'm going to be lazy ... do absolutely nothing but run free in a green world of summer loveliness. I'll dream by the Dryad's Bubble in the twilight. I'll drift on the Lake of Shining Waters in a shallop shaped from a moonbeam ... or in Mr. Barry's flat, if moonbeam shallops are not in season. I'll gather starflowers and June bells in the Haunted Wood. I'll find plots of wild strawberries in Mr. Harrison's hill pasture. I'll join the dance of fireflies in Lover's Lane and visit Hester Gray's old, forgotten garden ... and sit out on the back doorstep under the stars and listen to the sea calling in its sleep.

“And when the week is ended *you* will be home ... and I won’t want anything else.”

When the time came the next day for Anne to say good-bye to the folks at Windy Poplars, Rebecca Dew was not on hand. Instead, Aunt Kate gravely handed Anne a letter.

“Dear Miss Shirley,” wrote Rebecca Dew, “I am writing this to bid my farewell because I cannot trust myself to say it. For three years you have sojourned under our roof. The fortunate possessor of a cheerful spirit and a natural taste for the gaieties of youth, you have never surrendered yourself to the vain pleasures of the giddy and fickle crowd. You have conducted yourself on all occasions and to every one, especially the one who pens these lines, with the most refined delicacy. You have always been most considerate of my feelings and I find a heavy gloom on my spirits at the thought of your departure. But we must not repine at what Providence has ordained. (First Samuel, 29th and 18th.)

“You will be lamented by all in Summerside who had the privilege of knowing you, and the homage of one faithful though humble heart will ever be yours, and my prayer will ever be for your happiness and welfare in this world and your eternal felicity in that which is to come.

“Something whispers to me that you will not be long ‘Miss Shirley’ but that you will ere long be linked together in a union of souls with the choice of your heart, who, I understand from what I have heard, is a very exceptional young man. The writer, possessed of but few personal charms and beginning to feel her age (not but what I’m good for a good few years yet), has never permitted herself to cherish any matrimonial aspirations. But she does not deny herself the pleasure of an interest in the nuptials of her friends and may I express a fervent wish that your married life will be one of continued and uninterrupted Bliss? (Only do not expect too much of a man.)

“My esteem and, may I say, my affection for you will never lessen, and once in a while when you have nothing better to do will you kindly remember that there is such a person as

“Your obedient servant,

“REBECCA DEW.

“P.S. God bless you.”

Anne’s eyes were misty as she folded the letter up. Though she strongly suspected Rebecca Dew had got most of her phrases out of her favorite “Book of Deportment and Etiquette,” that did not make them any the less sincere, and the P. S. certainly came straight from Rebecca Dew’s affectionate heart.

“Tell dear Rebecca Dew I’ll never forget her and that I’m coming back to see you all every summer.”

“We have memories of you that nothing can take away,” sobbed Aunt Chatty.

“Nothing,” said Aunt Kate, emphatically.

But as Anne drove away from Windy Poplars the last message from it was a large white bath-towel fluttering frantically from the tower window. Rebecca Dew was waving it.

ANNE'S HOUSE OF DREAMS

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Chapter I.

In the Garret of Green Gables

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“Thanks be, I’m done with geometry, learning or teaching it,” said Anne Shirley, a trifle vindictively, as she thumped a somewhat battered volume of Euclid into a big chest of books, banged the lid in triumph, and sat down upon it, looking at Diana Wright across the Green Gables garret, with gray eyes that were like a morning sky.

The garret was a shadowy, suggestive, delightful place, as all garrets should be. Through the open window, by which Anne sat, blew the sweet, scented, sunwarm air of the August afternoon; outside, poplar boughs rustled and tossed in the wind; beyond them were the woods, where Lover’s Lane wound its enchanted path, and the old apple orchard which still bore its rosy harvests munificently. And, over all, was a great mountain range of snowy clouds in the blue southern sky. Through the other window was glimpsed a distant, white-capped, blue sea — the beautiful St. Lawrence Gulf, on which floats, like a jewel, Abegweit, whose softer, sweeter Indian name has long been forsaken for the more prosaic one of Prince Edward Island.

Diana Wright, three years older than when we last saw her, had grown somewhat matronly in the intervening time. But her eyes were as black and brilliant, her cheeks as rosy, and her dimples as enchanting, as in the long-ago days when she and Anne Shirley had vowed eternal friendship in the garden at Orchard Slope. In her arms she held a small, sleeping, black-curved creature, who for two happy years had been known to the world of Avonlea as “Small Anne Cordelia.” Avonlea folks knew why Diana had called her Anne, of course, but Avonlea folks were puzzled by the Cordelia. There had never been a Cordelia in the Wright or Barry connections. Mrs. Harmon Andrews said she supposed Diana had found the name in some trashy novel, and wondered that Fred hadn’t more sense

than to allow it. But Diana and Anne smiled at each other. They knew how Small Anne Cordelia had come by her name.

“You always hated geometry,” said Diana with a retrospective smile. “I should think you’d be real glad to be through with teaching, anyhow.”

“Oh, I’ve always liked teaching, apart from geometry. These past three years in Summerside have been very pleasant ones. Mrs. Harmon Andrews told me when I came home that I wouldn’t likely find married life as much better than teaching as I expected. Evidently Mrs. Harmon is of Hamlet’s opinion that it may be better to bear the ills that we have than fly to others that we know not of.”

Anne’s laugh, as blithe and irresistible as of yore, with an added note of sweetness and maturity, rang through the garret. Marilla in the kitchen below, compounding blue plum preserve, heard it and smiled; then sighed to think how seldom that dear laugh would echo through Green Gables in the years to come. Nothing in her life had ever given Marilla so much happiness as the knowledge that Anne was going to marry Gilbert Blythe; but every joy must bring with it its little shadow of sorrow. During the three Summerside years Anne had been home often for vacations and weekends; but, after this, a bi-annual visit would be as much as could be hoped for.

“You needn’t let what Mrs. Harmon says worry you,” said Diana, with the calm assurance of the four-years matron. “Married life has its ups and downs, of course. You mustn’t expect that everything will always go smoothly. But I can assure you, Anne, that it’s a happy life, when you’re married to the right man.”

Anne smothered a smile. Diana’s airs of vast experience always amused her a little.

“I daresay I’ll be putting them on too, when I’ve been married four years,” she thought. “Surely my sense of humor will preserve me from it, though.”

“Is it settled yet where you are going to live?” asked Diana, cuddling Small Anne Cordelia with the inimitable gesture of motherhood which

always sent through Anne's heart, filled with sweet, unuttered dreams and hopes, a thrill that was half pure pleasure and half a strange, ethereal pain.

"Yes. That was what I wanted to tell you when I 'phoned to you to come down today. By the way, I can't realize that we really have telephones in Avonlea now. It sounds so preposterously up-to-date and modernish for this darling, leisurely old place."

"We can thank the A. V. I. S. for them," said Diana. "We should never have got the line if they hadn't taken the matter up and carried it through. There was enough cold water thrown to discourage any society. But they stuck to it, nevertheless. You did a splendid thing for Avonlea when you founded that society, Anne. What fun we did have at our meetings! Will you ever forget the blue hall and Judson Parker's scheme for painting medicine advertisements on his fence?"

"I don't know that I'm wholly grateful to the A. V. I. S. in the matter of the telephone," said Anne. "Oh, I know it's most convenient — even more so than our old device of signalling to each other by flashes of candlelight! And, as Mrs. Rachel says, 'Avonlea must keep up with the procession, that's what.' But somehow I feel as if I didn't want Avonlea spoiled by what Mr. Harrison, when he wants to be witty, calls 'modern inconveniences.' I should like to have it kept always just as it was in the dear old years. That's foolish — and sentimental — and impossible. So I shall immediately become wise and practical and possible. The telephone, as Mr. Harrison concedes, is 'a buster of a good thing' — even if you do know that probably half a dozen interested people are listening along the line."

"That's the worst of it," sighed Diana. "It's so annoying to hear the receivers going down whenever you ring anyone up. They say Mrs. Harmon Andrews insisted that their 'phone should be put in their kitchen just so that she could listen whenever it rang and keep an eye on the dinner at the same time. Today, when you called me, I distinctly heard that queer clock of the Pyes' striking. So no doubt Josie or Gertie was listening."

"Oh, so that is why you said, 'You've got a new clock at Green Gables, haven't you?' I couldn't imagine what you meant. I heard a vicious click

as soon as you had spoken. I suppose it was the Pye receiver being hung up with profane energy. Well, never mind the Pyes. As Mrs. Rachel says, 'Pyes they always were and Pyes they always will be, world without end, amen.' I want to talk of pleasanter things. It's all settled as to where my new home shall be."

"Oh, Anne, where? I do hope it's near here."

"No-o-o, that's the drawback. Gilbert is going to settle at Four Winds Harbor — sixty miles from here."

"Sixty! It might as well be six hundred," sighed Diana. "I never can get further from home now than Charlottetown."

"You'll have to come to Four Winds. It's the most beautiful harbor on the Island. There's a little village called Glen St. Mary at its head, and Dr. David Blythe has been practicing there for fifty years. He is Gilbert's great-uncle, you know. He is going to retire, and Gilbert is to take over his practice. Dr. Blythe is going to keep his house, though, so we shall have to find a habitation for ourselves. I don't know yet what it is, or where it will be in reality, but I have a little house o'dreams all furnished in my imagination — a tiny, delightful castle in Spain."

"Where are you going for your wedding tour?" asked Diana.

"Nowhere. Don't look horrified, Diana dearest. You suggest Mrs. Harmon Andrews. She, no doubt, will remark condescendingly that people who can't afford wedding 'towers' are real sensible not to take them; and then she'll remind me that Jane went to Europe for hers. I want to spend MY honeymoon at Four Winds in my own dear house of dreams."

"And you've decided not to have any bridesmaid?"

"There isn't any one to have. You and Phil and Priscilla and Jane all stole a march on me in the matter of marriage; and Stella is teaching in Vancouver. I have no other 'kindred soul' and I won't have a bridesmaid who isn't."

"But you are going to wear a veil, aren't you?" asked Diana, anxiously.

"Yes, indeedy. I shouldn't feel like a bride without one. I remember telling Matthew, that evening when he brought me to Green Gables, that I never expected to be a bride because I was so homely no one would ever

want to marry me — unless some foreign missionary did. I had an idea then that foreign missionaries couldn't afford to be finicky in the matter of looks if they wanted a girl to risk her life among cannibals. You should have seen the foreign missionary Priscilla married. He was as handsome and inscrutable as those daydreams we once planned to marry ourselves, Diana; he was the best dressed man I ever met, and he raved over Priscilla's 'ethereal, golden beauty.' But of course there are no cannibals in Japan."

"Your wedding dress is a dream, anyhow," sighed Diana rapturously. "You'll look like a perfect queen in it — you're so tall and slender. How DO you keep so slim, Anne? I'm fatter than ever — I'll soon have no waist at all."

"Stoutness and slimness seem to be matters of predestination," said Anne. "At all events, Mrs. Harmon Andrews can't say to you what she said to me when I came home from Summerside, 'Well, Anne, you're just about as skinny as ever.' It sounds quite romantic to be 'slender,' but 'skinny' has a very different tang."

"Mrs. Harmon has been talking about your trousseau. She admits it's as nice as Jane's, although she says Jane married a millionaire and you are only marrying a 'poor young doctor without a cent to his name.'"

Anne laughed.

"My dresses ARE nice. I love pretty things. I remember the first pretty dress I ever had — the brown gloria Matthew gave me for our school concert. Before that everything I had was so ugly. It seemed to me that I stepped into a new world that night."

"That was the night Gilbert recited 'Bingen on the Rhine,' and looked at you when he said, 'There's another, NOT a sister.' And you were so furious because he put your pink tissue rose in his breast pocket! You didn't much imagine then that you would ever marry him."

"Oh, well, that's another instance of predestination," laughed Anne, as they went down the garret stairs.

The House of Dreams

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There was more excitement in the air of Green Gables than there had ever been before in all its history. Even Marilla was so excited that she couldn't help showing it — which was little short of being phenomenal.

“There's never been a wedding in this house,” she said, half apologetically, to Mrs. Rachel Lynde. “When I was a child I heard an old minister say that a house was not a real home until it had been consecrated by a birth, a wedding and a death. We've had deaths here — my father and mother died here as well as Matthew; and we've even had a birth here. Long ago, just after we moved into this house, we had a married hired man for a little while, and his wife had a baby here. But there's never been a wedding before. It does seem so strange to think of Anne being married. In a way she just seems to me the little girl Matthew brought home here fourteen years ago. I can't realize that she's grown up. I shall never forget what I felt when I saw Matthew bringing in a GIRL. I wonder what became of the boy we would have got if there hadn't been a mistake. I wonder what HIS fate was.”

“Well, it was a fortunate mistake,” said Mrs. Rachel Lynde, “though, mind you, there was a time I didn't think so — that evening I came up to see Anne and she treated us to such a scene. Many things have changed since then, that's what.”

Mrs. Rachel sighed, and then brisked up again. When weddings were in order Mrs. Rachel was ready to let the dead past bury its dead.

“I'm going to give Anne two of my cotton warp spreads,” she resumed. “A tobacco-stripe one and an apple-leaf one. She tells me they're getting to be real fashionable again. Well, fashion or no fashion, I don't believe there's anything prettier for a spare-room bed than a nice apple-leaf spread, that's what. I must see about getting them bleached. I've had them sewed up in cotton bags ever since Thomas died, and no doubt they're an

awful color. But there's a month yet, and dew-bleaching will work wonders."

Only a month! Marilla sighed and then said proudly:

"I'm giving Anne that half dozen braided rugs I have in the garret. I never supposed she'd want them — they're so old-fashioned, and nobody seems to want anything but hooked mats now. But she asked me for them — said she'd rather have them than anything else for her floors. They ARE pretty. I made them of the nicest rags, and braided them in stripes. It was such company these last few winters. And I'll make her enough blue plum preserve to stock her jam closet for a year. It seems real strange. Those blue plum trees hadn't even a blossom for three years, and I thought they might as well be cut down. And this last spring they were white, and such a crop of plums I never remember at Green Gables."

"Well, thank goodness that Anne and Gilbert really are going to be married after all. It's what I've always prayed for," said Mrs. Rachel, in the tone of one who is comfortably sure that her prayers have availed much. "It was a great relief to find out that she really didn't mean to take the Kingsport man. He was rich, to be sure, and Gilbert is poor — at least, to begin with; but then he's an Island boy."

"He's Gilbert Blythe," said Marilla contentedly. Marilla would have died the death before she would have put into words the thought that was always in the background of her mind whenever she had looked at Gilbert from his childhood up — the thought that, had it not been for her own wilful pride long, long ago, he might have been HER son. Marilla felt that, in some strange way, his marriage with Anne would put right that old mistake. Good had come out of the evil of the ancient bitterness.

As for Anne herself, she was so happy that she almost felt frightened. The gods, so says the old superstition, do not like to behold too happy mortals. It is certain, at least, that some human beings do not. Two of that ilk descended upon Anne one violet dusk and proceeded to do what in them lay to prick the rainbow bubble of her satisfaction. If she thought she was getting any particular prize in young Dr. Blythe, or if she imagined that he was still as infatuated with her as he might have been in his salad

days, it was surely their duty to put the matter before her in another light. Yet these two worthy ladies were not enemies of Anne; on the contrary, they were really quite fond of her, and would have defended her as their own young had anyone else attacked her. Human nature is not obliged to be consistent.

Mrs. Inglis — nee Jane Andrews, to quote from the Daily Enterprise — came with her mother and Mrs. Jasper Bell. But in Jane the milk of human kindness had not been curdled by years of matrimonial bickerings. Her lines had fallen in pleasant places. In spite of the fact — as Mrs. Rachel Lynde would say — that she had married a millionaire, her marriage had been happy. Wealth had not spoiled her. She was still the placid, amiable, pink-cheeked Jane of the old quartette, sympathising with her old chum's happiness and as keenly interested in all the dainty details of Anne's trousseau as if it could rival her own silken and bejewelled splendors. Jane was not brilliant, and had probably never made a remark worth listening to in her life; but she never said anything that would hurt anyone's feelings — which may be a negative talent but is likewise a rare and enviable one.

"So Gilbert didn't go back on you after all," said Mrs. Harmon Andrews, contriving to convey an expression of surprise in her tone. "Well, the Blythes generally keep their word when they've once passed it, no matter what happens. Let me see — you're twenty-five, aren't you, Anne? When I was a girl twenty-five was the first corner. But you look quite young. Redheaded people always do."

"Red hair is very fashionable now," said Anne, trying to smile, but speaking rather coldly. Life had developed in her a sense of humor which helped her over many difficulties; but as yet nothing had availed to steel her against a reference to her hair.

"So it is — so it is," conceded Mrs. Harmon. "There's no telling what queer freaks fashion will take. Well, Anne, your things are very pretty, and very suitable to your position in life, aren't they, Jane? I hope you'll be very happy. You have my best wishes, I'm sure. A long engagement

doesn't often turn out well. But, of course, in your case it couldn't be helped."

"Gilbert looks very young for a doctor. I'm afraid people won't have much confidence in him," said Mrs. Jasper Bell gloomily. Then she shut her mouth tightly, as if she had said what she considered it her duty to say and held her conscience clear. She belonged to the type which always has a stringy black feather in its hat and straggling locks of hair on its neck.

Anne's surface pleasure in her pretty bridal things was temporarily shadowed; but the deeps of happiness below could not thus be disturbed; and the little stings of Mesdames Bell and Andrews were forgotten when Gilbert came later, and they wandered down to the birches of the brook, which had been saplings when Anne had come to Green Gables, but were now tall, ivory columns in a fairy palace of twilight and stars. In their shadows Anne and Gilbert talked in lover-fashion of their new home and their new life together.

"I've found a nest for us, Anne."

"Oh, where? Not right in the village, I hope. I wouldn't like that altogether."

"No. There was no house to be had in the village. This is a little white house on the harbor shore, half way between Glen St. Mary and Four Winds Point. It's a little out of the way, but when we get a 'phone in that won't matter so much. The situation is beautiful. It looks to the sunset and has the great blue harbor before it. The sand-dunes aren't very far away — the sea winds blow over them and the sea spray drenches them."

"But the house itself, Gilbert, — OUR first home? What is it like?"

"Not very large, but large enough for us. There's a splendid living room with a fireplace in it downstairs, and a dining room that looks out on the harbor, and a little room that will do for my office. It is about sixty years old — the oldest house in Four Winds. But it has been kept in pretty good repair, and was all done over about fifteen years ago — shingled, plastered and re-floored. It was well built to begin with. I understand that there was some romantic story connected with its building, but the man I rented it from didn't know it."

“He said Captain Jim was the only one who could spin that old yarn now.”

“Who is Captain Jim?”

“The keeper of the lighthouse on Four Winds Point. You’ll love that Four Winds light, Anne. It’s a revolving one, and it flashes like a magnificent star through the twilights. We can see it from our living room windows and our front door.”

“Who owns the house?”

“Well, it’s the property of the Glen St. Mary Presbyterian Church now, and I rented it from the trustees. But it belonged until lately to a very old lady, Miss Elizabeth Russell. She died last spring, and as she had no near relatives she left her property to the Glen St. Mary Church. Her furniture is still in the house, and I bought most of it — for a mere song you might say, because it was all so old-fashioned that the trustees despaired of selling it. Glen St. Mary folks prefer plush brocade and sideboards with mirrors and ornamentations, I fancy. But Miss Russell’s furniture is very good and I feel sure you’ll like it, Anne.”

“So far, good,” said Anne, nodding cautious approval. “But, Gilbert, people cannot live by furniture alone. You haven’t yet mentioned one very important thing. Are there TREES about this house?”

“Heaps of them, oh, dryad! There is a big grove of fir trees behind it, two rows of Lombardy poplars down the lane, and a ring of white birches around a very delightful garden. Our front door opens right into the garden, but there is another entrance — a little gate hung between two firs. The hinges are on one trunk and the catch on the other. Their boughs form an arch overhead.”

“Oh, I’m so glad! I couldn’t live where there were no trees — something vital in me would starve. Well, after that, there’s no use asking you if there’s a brook anywhere near. THAT would be expecting too much.”

“But there IS a brook — and it actually cuts across one corner of the garden.”

“Then,” said Anne, with a long sigh of supreme satisfaction, “this house you have found IS my house of dreams and none other.”

The Land of Dreams Among

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“Have you made up your mind who you’re going to have to the wedding, Anne?” asked Mrs. Rachel Lynde, as she hemstitched table napkins industriously. “It’s time your invitations were sent, even if they are to be only informal ones.”

“I don’t mean to have very many,” said Anne. “We just want those we love best to see us married. Gilbert’s people, and Mr. and Mrs. Allan, and Mr. and Mrs. Harrison.”

“There was a time when you’d hardly have numbered Mr. Harrison among your dearest friends,” said Marilla drily.

“Well, I wasn’t VERY strongly attracted to him at our first meeting,” acknowledged Anne, with a laugh over the recollection. “But Mr. Harrison has improved on acquaintance, and Mrs. Harrison is really a dear. Then, of course, there are Miss Lavendar and Paul.”

“Have they decided to come to the Island this summer? I thought they were going to Europe.”

“They changed their minds when I wrote them I was going to be married. I had a letter from Paul today. He says he MUST come to my wedding, no matter what happens to Europe.”

“That child always idolised you,” remarked Mrs. Rachel.

“That ‘child’ is a young man of nineteen now, Mrs. Lynde.”

“How time does fly!” was Mrs. Lynde’s brilliant and original response.

“Charlotta the Fourth may come with them. She sent word by Paul that she would come if her husband would let her. I wonder if she still wears those enormous blue bows, and whether her husband calls her Charlotta or Leonora. I should love to have Charlotta at my wedding. Charlotta and I were at a wedding long syne. They expect to be at Echo Lodge next week. Then there are Phil and the Reverend Jo — —”

“It sounds awful to hear you speaking of a minister like that, Anne,” said Mrs. Rachel severely.

“His wife calls him that.”

“She should have more respect for his holy office, then,” retorted Mrs. Rachel.

“I’ve heard you criticise ministers pretty sharply yourself,” teased Anne.

“Yes, but I do it reverently,” protested Mrs. Lynde. “You never heard me NICKNAME a minister.”

Anne smothered a smile.

“Well, there are Diana and Fred and little Fred and Small Anne Cordelia — and Jane Andrews. I wish I could have Miss Stacey and Aunt Jamesina and Priscilla and Stella. But Stella is in Vancouver, and Pris is in Japan, and Miss Stacey is married in California, and Aunt Jamesina has gone to India to explore her daughter’s mission field, in spite of her horror of snakes. It’s really dreadful — the way people get scattered over the globe.”

“The Lord never intended it, that’s what,” said Mrs. Rachel authoritatively. “In my young days people grew up and married and settled down where they were born, or pretty near it. Thank goodness you’ve stuck to the Island, Anne. I was afraid Gilbert would insist on rushing off to the ends of the earth when he got through college, and dragging you with him.”

“If everybody stayed where he was born places would soon be filled up, Mrs. Lynde.”

“Oh, I’m not going to argue with you, Anne. *I* am not a B.A. What time of the day is the ceremony to be?”

“We have decided on noon — high noon, as the society reporters say. That will give us time to catch the evening train to Glen St. Mary.”

“And you’ll be married in the parlor?”

“No — not unless it rains. We mean to be married in the orchard — with the blue sky over us and the sunshine around us. Do you know when and where I’d like to be married, if I could? It would be at dawn — a June

dawn, with a glorious sunrise, and roses blooming in the gardens; and I would slip down and meet Gilbert and we would go together to the heart of the beech woods, — and there, under the green arches that would be like a splendid cathedral, we would be married.”

Marilla sniffed scornfully and Mrs. Lynde looked shocked.

“But that would be terrible queer, Anne. Why, it wouldn’t really seem legal. And what would Mrs. Harmon Andrews say?”

“Ah, there’s the rub,” sighed Anne. “There are so many things in life we cannot do because of the fear of what Mrs. Harmon Andrews would say. ‘Tis true, ‘tis pity, and pity ‘tis, ‘tis true.’ What delightful things we might do were it not for Mrs. Harmon Andrews!”

“By times, Anne, I don’t feel quite sure that I understand you altogether,” complained Mrs. Lynde.

“Anne was always romantic, you know,” said Marilla apologetically.

“Well, married life will most likely cure her of that,” Mrs. Rachel responded comfortingly.

Anne laughed and slipped away to Lover’s Lane, where Gilbert found her; and neither of them seemed to entertain much fear, or hope, that their married life would cure them of romance.

The Echo Lodge people came over the next week, and Green Gables buzzed with the delight of them. Miss Lavendar had changed so little that the three years since her last Island visit might have been a watch in the night; but Anne gasped with amazement over Paul. Could this splendid six feet of manhood be the little Paul of Avonlea schooldays?

“You really make me feel old, Paul,” said Anne. “Why, I have to look up to you!”

“You’ll never grow old, Teacher,” said Paul. “You are one of the fortunate mortals who have found and drunk from the Fountain of Youth, — you and Mother Lavendar. See here! When you’re married I WON’T call you Mrs. Blythe. To me you’ll always be ‘Teacher’ — the teacher of the best lessons I ever learned. I want to show you something.”

The “something” was a pocketbook full of poems. Paul had put some of his beautiful fancies into verse, and magazine editors had not been as

unappreciative as they are sometimes supposed to be. Anne read Paul's poems with real delight. They were full of charm and promise.

"You'll be famous yet, Paul. I always dreamed of having one famous pupil. He was to be a college president — but a great poet would be even better. Some day I'll be able to boast that I whipped the distinguished Paul Irving. But then I never did whip you, did I, Paul? What an opportunity lost! I think I kept you in at recess, however."

"You may be famous yourself, Teacher. I've seen a good deal of your work these last three years."

"No. I know what I can do. I can write pretty, fanciful little sketches that children love and editors send welcome cheques for. But I can do nothing big. My only chance for earthly immortality is a corner in your Memoirs."

Charlotta the Fourth had discarded the blue bows but her freckles were not noticeably less.

"I never did think I'd come down to marrying a Yankee, Miss Shirley, ma'am," she said. "But you never know what's before you, and it isn't his fault. He was born that way."

"You're a Yankee yourself, Charlotta, since you've married one."

"Miss Shirley, ma'am, I'm NOT! And I wouldn't be if I was to marry a dozen Yankees! Tom's kind of nice. And besides, I thought I'd better not be too hard to please, for I mightn't get another chance. Tom don't drink and he don't growl because he has to work between meals, and when all's said and done I'm satisfied, Miss Shirley, ma'am."

"Does he call you Leonora?" asked Anne.

"Goodness, no, Miss Shirley, ma'am. I wouldn't know who he meant if he did. Of course, when we got married he had to say, 'I take thee, Leonora,' and I declare to you, Miss Shirley, ma'am, I've had the most dreadful feeling ever since that it wasn't me he was talking to and I haven't been rightly married at all. And so you're going to be married yourself, Miss Shirley, ma'am? I always thought I'd like to marry a doctor. It would be so handy when the children had measles and croup. Tom is only a bricklayer, but he's real good-tempered. When I said to him, says I,

‘Tom, can I go to Miss Shirley’s wedding? I mean to go anyhow, but I’d like to have your consent,’ he just says, ‘Suit yourself, Charlotta, and you’ll suit me.’ That’s a real pleasant kind of husband to have, Miss Shirley, ma’am.”

Philippa and her Reverend Jo arrived at Green Gables the day before the wedding. Anne and Phil had a rapturous meeting which presently simmered down to a cosy, confidential chat over all that had been and was about to be.

“Queen Anne, you’re as queenly as ever. I’ve got fearfully thin since the babies came. I’m not half so goodlooking; but I think Jo likes it. There’s not such a contrast between us, you see. And oh, it’s perfectly magnificent that you’re going to marry Gilbert. Roy Gardner wouldn’t have done at all, at all. I can see that now, though I was horribly disappointed at the time. You know, Anne, you did treat Roy very badly.”

“He has recovered, I understand,” smiled Anne.

“Oh, yes. He is married and his wife is a sweet little thing and they’re perfectly happy. Everything works together for good. Jo and the Bible say that, and they are pretty good authorities.”

“Are Alec and Alonzo married yet?”

“Alec is, but Alonzo isn’t. How those dear old days at Patty’s Place come back when I’m talking to you, Anne! What fun we had!”

“Have you been to Patty’s Place lately?”

“Oh, yes, I go often. Miss Patty and Miss Maria still sit by the fireplace and knit. And that reminds me — we’ve brought you a wedding gift from them, Anne. Guess what it is.”

“I never could. How did they know I was going to be married?”

“Oh, I told them. I was there last week. And they were so interested. Two days ago Miss Patty wrote me a note asking me to call; and then she asked if I would take her gift to you. What would you wish most from Patty’s Place, Anne?”

“You can’t mean that Miss Patty has sent me her china dogs?”

“Go up head. They’re in my trunk this very moment. And I’ve a letter for you. Wait a moment and I’ll get it.”

“Dear Miss Shirley,” Miss Patty had written, “Maria and I were very much interested in hearing of your approaching nuptials. We send you our best wishes. Maria and I have never married, but we have no objection to other people doing so. We are sending you the china dogs. I intended to leave them to you in my will, because you seemed to have sincere affection for them. But Maria and I expect to live a good while yet (D.V.), so I have decided to give you the dogs while you are young. You will not have forgotten that Gog looks to the right and Magog to the left.”

“Just fancy those lovely old dogs sitting by the fireplace in my house of dreams,” said Anne rapturously. “I never expected anything so delightful.”

That evening Green Gables hummed with preparations for the following day; but in the twilight Anne slipped away. She had a little pilgrimage to make on this last day of her girlhood and she must make it alone. She went to Matthew’s grave, in the little poplar-shaded Avonlea graveyard, and there kept a silent tryst with old memories and immortal loves.

“How glad Matthew would be tomorrow if he were here,” she whispered. “But I believe he does know and is glad of it — somewhere else. I’ve read somewhere that ‘our dead are never dead until we have forgotten them.’ Matthew will never be dead to me, for I can never forget him.”

She left on his grave the flowers she had brought and walked slowly down the long hill. It was a gracious evening, full of delectable lights and shadows. In the west was a sky of mackerel clouds — crimson and amber-tinted, with long strips of apple-green sky between. Beyond was the glimmering radiance of a sunset sea, and the ceaseless voice of many waters came up from the tawny shore. All around her, lying in the fine, beautiful country silence, were the hills and fields and woods she had known and loved so long.

“History repeats itself,” said Gilbert, joining her as she passed the Blythe gate. “Do you remember our first walk down this hill, Anne — our first walk together anywhere, for that matter?”

“I was coming home in the twilight from Matthew’s grave — and you came out of the gate; and I swallowed the pride of years and spoke to you.”

“And all heaven opened before me,” supplemented Gilbert. “From that moment I looked forward to tomorrow. When I left you at your gate that night and walked home I was the happiest boy in the world. Anne had forgiven me.”

“I think you had the most to forgive. I was an ungrateful little wretch — and after you had really saved my life that day on the pond, too. How I loathed that load of obligation at first! I don’t deserve the happiness that has come to me.”

Gilbert laughed and clasped tighter the girlish hand that wore his ring. Anne’s engagement ring was a circlet of pearls. She had refused to wear a diamond.

“I’ve never really liked diamonds since I found out they weren’t the lovely purple I had dreamed. They will always suggest my old disappointment.”

“But pearls are for tears, the old legend says,” Gilbert had objected.

“I’m not afraid of that. And tears can be happy as well as sad. My very happiest moments have been when I had tears in my eyes — when Marilla told me I might stay at Green Gables — when Matthew gave me the first pretty dress I ever had — when I heard that you were going to recover from the fever. So give me pearls for our troth ring, Gilbert, and I’ll willingly accept the sorrow of life with its joy.”

But tonight our lovers thought only of joy and never of sorrow. For the morrow was their wedding day, and their house of dreams awaited them on the misty, purple shore of Four Winds Harbor.

The First Bride of Green Gables

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Anne awakened on the morning of her wedding day to find the sunshine winking in at the window of the little porch gable and a September breeze frolicking with her curtains.

“I’m so glad the sun will shine on me,” she thought happily.

She recalled the first morning she had awakened in that little porch room, when the sunshine had crept in on her through the blossom-drift of the old Snow Queen. That had not been a happy waking, for it brought with it the bitter disappointment of the preceding night. But since then the little room had been endeared and consecrated by years of happy childhood dreams and maiden visions. To it she had come back joyfully after all her absences; at its window she had knelt through that night of bitter agony when she believed Gilbert dying, and by it she had sat in speechless happiness the night of her betrothal. Many vigils of joy and some of sorrow had been kept there; and today she must leave it forever. Henceforth it would be hers no more; fifteen-year-old Dora was to inherit it when she had gone. Nor did Anne wish it otherwise; the little room was sacred to youth and girlhood — to the past that was to close today before the chapter of wifehood opened.

Green Gables was a busy and joyous house that forenoon. Diana arrived early, with little Fred and Small Anne Cordelia, to lend a hand. Davy and Dora, the Green Gables twins, whisked the babies off to the garden.

“Don’t let Small Anne Cordelia spoil her clothes,” warned Diana anxiously.

“You needn’t be afraid to trust her with Dora,” said Marilla. “That child is more sensible and careful than most of the mothers I’ve known. She’s really a wonder in some ways. Not much like that other harum-scarum I brought up.”

Marilla smiled across her chicken salad at Anne. It might even be suspected that she liked the harum-scarum best after all.

“Those twins are real nice children,” said Mrs. Rachel, when she was sure they were out of earshot. “Dora is so womanly and helpful, and Davy is developing into a very smart boy. He isn’t the holy terror for mischief he used to be.”

“I never was so distracted in my life as I was the first six months he was here,” acknowledged Marilla. “After that I suppose I got used to him. He’s taken a great notion to farming lately, and wants me to let him try running the farm next year. I may, for Mr. Barry doesn’t think he’ll want to rent it much longer, and some new arrangement will have to be made.”

“Well, you certainly have a lovely day for your wedding, Anne,” said Diana, as she slipped a voluminous apron over her silken array. “You couldn’t have had a finer one if you’d ordered it from Eaton’s.”

“Indeed, there’s too much money going out of this Island to that same Eaton’s,” said Mrs. Lynde indignantly. She had strong views on the subject of octopus-like department stores, and never lost an opportunity of airing them. “And as for those catalogues of theirs, they’re the Avonlea girls’ Bible now, that’s what. They pore over them on Sundays instead of studying the Holy Scriptures.”

“Well, they’re splendid to amuse children with,” said Diana. “Fred and Small Anne look at the pictures by the hour.”

“I amused ten children without the aid of Eaton’s catalogue,” said Mrs. Rachel severely.

“Come, you two, don’t quarrel over Eaton’s catalogue,” said Anne gaily. “This is my day of days, you know. I’m so happy I want every one else to be happy, too.”

“I’m sure I hope your happiness will last, child,” sighed Mrs. Rachel. She did hope it truly, and believed it, but she was afraid it was in the nature of a challenge to Providence to flaunt your happiness too openly. Anne, for her own good, must be toned down a trifle.

But it was a happy and beautiful bride who came down the old, homespun-carpeted stairs that September noon — the first bride of Green

Gables, slender and shining-eyed, in the mist of her maiden veil, with her arms full of roses. Gilbert, waiting for her in the hall below, looked up at her with adoring eyes. She was his at last, this evasive, long-sought Anne, won after years of patient waiting. It was to him she was coming in the sweet surrender of the bride. Was he worthy of her? Could he make her as happy as he hoped? If he failed her — if he could not measure up to her standard of manhood — then, as she held out her hand, their eyes met and all doubt was swept away in a glad certainty. They belonged to each other; and, no matter what life might hold for them, it could never alter that. Their happiness was in each other's keeping and both were unafraid.

They were married in the sunshine of the old orchard, circled by the loving and kindly faces of long-familiar friends. Mr. Allan married them, and the Reverend Jo made what Mrs. Rachel Lynde afterwards pronounced to be the “most beautiful wedding prayer” she had ever heard. Birds do not often sing in September, but one sang sweetly from some hidden bough while Gilbert and Anne repeated their deathless vows. Anne heard it and thrilled to it; Gilbert heard it, and wondered only that all the birds in the world had not burst into jubilant song; Paul heard it and later wrote a lyric about it which was one of the most admired in his first volume of verse; Charlotta the Fourth heard it and was blissfully sure it meant good luck for her adored Miss Shirley. The bird sang until the ceremony was ended and then it wound up with one mad little, glad little trill. Never had the old gray-green house among its enfolding orchards known a blither, merrier afternoon. All the old jests and quips that must have done duty at weddings since Eden were served up, and seemed as new and brilliant and mirth-provoking as if they had never been uttered before. Laughter and joy had their way; and when Anne and Gilbert left to catch the Carmody train, with Paul as driver, the twins were ready with rice and old shoes, in the throwing of which Charlotta the Fourth and Mr. Harrison bore a valiant part. Marilla stood at the gate and watched the carriage out of sight down the long lane with its banks of goldenrod. Anne turned at its end to wave her last goodbye. She was gone — Green Gables was her home no more; Marilla's face looked very gray and old as she turned to the house which

Anne had filled for fourteen years, and even in her absence, with light and life.

But Diana and her small fry, the Echo Lodge people and the Allans, had stayed to help the two old ladies over the loneliness of the first evening; and they contrived to have a quietly pleasant little supper time, sitting long around the table and chatting over all the details of the day. While they were sitting there Anne and Gilbert were alighting from the train at Glen St. Mary.

The Home Coming

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Dr. David Blythe had sent his horse and buggy to meet them, and the urchin who had brought it slipped away with a sympathetic grin, leaving them to the delight of driving alone to their new home through the radiant evening.

Anne never forgot the loveliness of the view that broke upon them when they had driven over the hill behind the village. Her new home could not yet be seen; but before her lay Four Winds Harbor like a great, shining mirror of rose and silver. Far down, she saw its entrance between the bar of sand dunes on one side and a steep, high, grim, red sandstone cliff on the other. Beyond the bar the sea, calm and austere, dreamed in the afterlight. The little fishing village, nestled in the cove where the sand-dunes met the harbor shore, looked like a great opal in the haze. The sky over them was like a jewelled cup from which the dusk was pouring; the air was crisp with the compelling tang of the sea, and the whole landscape was infused with the subtleties of a sea evening. A few dim sails drifted along the darkening, fir-clad harbor shores. A bell was ringing from the tower of a little white church on the far side; mellowly and dreamily sweet, the chime floated across the water blent with the moan of the sea. The great revolving light on the cliff at the channel flashed warm and golden against the clear northern sky, a trembling, quivering star of good hope. Far out along the horizon was the crinkled gray ribbon of a passing steamer's smoke.

"Oh, beautiful, beautiful," murmured Anne. "I shall love Four Winds, Gilbert. Where is our house?"

"We can't see it yet — the belt of birch running up from that little cove hides it. It's about two miles from Glen St. Mary, and there's another mile between it and the lighthouse. We won't have many neighbors, Anne.

There's only one house near us and I don't know who lives in it. Shall you be lonely when I'm away?"

"Not with that light and that loveliness for company. Who lives in that house, Gilbert?"

"I don't know. It doesn't look — exactly — as if the occupants would be kindred spirits, Anne, does it?"

The house was a large, substantial affair, painted such a vivid green that the landscape seemed quite faded by contrast. There was an orchard behind it, and a nicely kept lawn before it, but, somehow, there was a certain bareness about it. Perhaps its neatness was responsible for this; the whole establishment, house, barns, orchard, garden, lawn and lane, was so starkly neat.

"It doesn't seem probable that anyone with that taste in paint could be VERY kindred," acknowledged Anne, "unless it were an accident — like our blue hall. I feel certain there are no children there, at least. It's even neater than the old Copp place on the Tory road, and I never expected to see anything neater than that."

They had not met anybody on the moist, red road that wound along the harbor shore. But just before they came to the belt of birch which hid their home, Anne saw a girl who was driving a flock of snow-white geese along the crest of a velvety green hill on the right. Great, scattered firs grew along it. Between their trunks one saw glimpses of yellow harvest fields, gleams of golden sandhills, and bits of blue sea. The girl was tall and wore a dress of pale blue print. She walked with a certain springiness of step and erectness of bearing. She and her geese came out of the gate at the foot of the hill as Anne and Gilbert passed. She stood with her hand on the fastening of the gate, and looked steadily at them, with an expression that hardly attained to interest, but did not descend to curiosity. It seemed to Anne, for a fleeting moment, that there was even a veiled hint of hostility in it. But it was the girl's beauty which made Anne give a little gasp — a beauty so marked that it must have attracted attention anywhere. She was hatless, but heavy braids of burnished hair, the hue of ripe wheat, were twisted about her head like a coronet; her eyes were blue and starlike; her

figure, in its plain print gown, was magnificent; and her lips were as crimson as the bunch of blood-red poppies she wore at her belt.

“Gilbert, who is the girl we have just passed?” asked Anne, in a low voice.

“I didn’t notice any girl,” said Gilbert, who had eyes only for his bride.

“She was standing by that gate — no, don’t look back. She is still watching us. I never saw such a beautiful face.”

“I don’t remember seeing any very handsome girls while I was here. There are some pretty girls up at the Glen, but I hardly think they could be called beautiful.”

“This girl is. You can’t have seen her, or you would remember her. Nobody could forget her. I never saw such a face except in pictures. And her hair! It made me think of Browning’s ‘cord of gold’ and ‘gorgeous snake’!”

“Probably she’s some visitor in Four Winds — likely some one from that big summer hotel over the harbor.”

“She wore a white apron and she was driving geese.”

“She might do that for amusement. Look, Anne — there’s our house.”

Anne looked and forgot for a time the girl with the splendid, resentful eyes. The first glimpse of her new home was a delight to eye and spirit — it looked so like a big, creamy seashell stranded on the harbor shore. The rows of tall Lombardy poplars down its lane stood out in stately, purple silhouette against the sky. Behind it, sheltering its garden from the too keen breath of sea winds, was a cloudy fir wood, in which the winds might make all kinds of weird and haunting music. Like all woods, it seemed to be holding and enfolding secrets in its recesses, — secrets whose charm is only to be won by entering in and patiently seeking. Outwardly, dark green arms keep them inviolate from curious or indifferent eyes.

The night winds were beginning their wild dances beyond the bar and the fishing hamlet across the harbor was gemmed with lights as Anne and Gilbert drove up the poplar lane. The door of the little house opened, and a warm glow of firelight flickered out into the dusk. Gilbert lifted Anne

from the buggy and led her into the garden, through the little gate between the ruddy-tipped firs, up the trim, red path to the sandstone step.

“Welcome home,” he whispered, and hand in hand they stepped over the threshold of their house of dreams.

Chapter VI.

Captain Jim

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“Old Doctor Dave” and “Mrs. Doctor Dave” had come down to the little house to greet the bride and groom. Doctor Dave was a big, jolly, white-whiskered old fellow, and Mrs. Doctor was a trim rosy-cheeked, silver-haired little lady who took Anne at once to her heart, literally and figuratively.

“I’m so glad to see you, dear. You must be real tired. We’ve got a bite of supper ready, and Captain Jim brought up some trout for you. Captain Jim — where are you? Oh, he’s slipped out to see to the horse, I suppose. Come upstairs and take your things off.”

Anne looked about her with bright, appreciative eyes as she followed Mrs. Doctor Dave upstairs. She liked the appearance of her new home very much. It seemed to have the atmosphere of Green Gables and the flavor of her old traditions.

“I think I would have found Miss Elizabeth Russell a ‘kindred spirit,’” she murmured when she was alone in her room. There were two windows in it; the dormer one looked out on the lower harbor and the sandbar and the Four Winds light.

“A magic casement opening on the foam
Of perilous seas in fairy lands forlorn,”

quoted Anne softly. The gable window gave a view of a little harvest-hued valley through which a brook ran. Half a mile up the brook was the only house in sight — an old, rambling, gray one surrounded by huge willows through which its windows peered, like shy, seeking eyes, into the dusk. Anne wondered who lived there; they would be her nearest neighbors and she hoped they would be nice. She suddenly found herself thinking of the beautiful girl with the white geese.

“Gilbert thought she didn’t belong here,” mused Anne, “but I feel sure she does. There was something about her that made her part of the sea and the sky and the harbor. Four Winds is in her blood.”

When Anne went downstairs Gilbert was standing before the fireplace talking to a stranger. Both turned as Anne entered.

“Anne, this is Captain Boyd. Captain Boyd, my wife.”

It was the first time Gilbert had said “my wife” to anybody but Anne, and he narrowly escaped bursting with the pride of it. The old captain held out a sinewy hand to Anne; they smiled at each other and were friends from that moment. Kindred spirit flashed recognition to kindred spirit.

“I’m right down pleased to meet you, Mistress Blythe; and I hope you’ll be as happy as the first bride was who came here. I can’t wish you no better than THAT. But your husband doesn’t introduce me jest exactly right. ‘Captain Jim’ is my week-a-day name and you might as well begin as you’re sartain to end up — calling me that. You sartainly are a nice little bride, Mistress Blythe. Looking at you sorter makes me feel that I’ve jest been married myself.”

Amid the laughter that followed Mrs. Doctor Dave urged Captain Jim to stay and have supper with them.

“Thank you kindly. ‘Twill be a real treat, Mistress Doctor. I mostly has to eat my meals alone, with the reflection of my ugly old phiz in a looking-glass opposite for company. ‘Tisn’t often I have a chance to sit down with two such sweet, purty ladies.”

Captain Jim’s compliments may look very bald on paper, but he paid them with such a gracious, gentle deference of tone and look that the woman upon whom they were bestowed felt that she was being offered a queen’s tribute in a kingly fashion.

Captain Jim was a high-souled, simple-minded old man, with eternal youth in his eyes and heart. He had a tall, rather ungainly figure, somewhat stooped, yet suggestive of great strength and endurance; a clean-shaven face deeply lined and bronzed; a thick mane of iron-gray hair falling quite to his shoulders, and a pair of remarkably blue, deep-set eyes, which sometimes twinkled and sometimes dreamed, and sometimes looked out

seaward with a wistful quest in them, as of one seeking something precious and lost. Anne was to learn one day what it was for which Captain Jim looked.

It could not be denied that Captain Jim was a homely man. His spare jaws, rugged mouth, and square brow were not fashioned on the lines of beauty; and he had passed through many hardships and sorrows which had marked his body as well as his soul; but though at first sight Anne thought him plain she never thought anything more about it — the spirit shining through that rugged tenement beautified it so wholly.

They gathered gaily around the supper table. The hearth fire banished the chill of the September evening, but the window of the dining room was open and sea breezes entered at their own sweet will. The view was magnificent, taking in the harbor and the sweep of low, purple hills beyond. The table was heaped with Mrs. Doctor's delicacies but the piece de resistance was undoubtedly the big platter of sea trout.

"Thought they'd be sorter tasty after travelling," said Captain Jim. "They're fresh as trout can be, Mistress Blythe. Two hours ago they were swimming in the Glen Pond."

"Who is attending to the light tonight, Captain Jim?" asked Doctor Dave.

"Nephew Alec. He understands it as well as I do. Well, now, I'm real glad you asked me to stay to supper. I'm proper hungry — didn't have much of a dinner today."

"I believe you half starve yourself most of the time down at that light," said Mrs. Doctor Dave severely. "You won't take the trouble to get up a decent meal."

"Oh, I do, Mistress Doctor, I do," protested Captain Jim. "Why, I live like a king gen'rally. Last night I was up to the Glen and took home two pounds of steak. I meant to have a spanking good dinner today."

"And what happened to the steak?" asked Mrs. Doctor Dave. "Did you lose it on the way home?"

"No." Captain Jim looked sheepish. "Just at bedtime a poor, ornery sort of dog came along and asked for a night's lodging. Guess he belonged

to some of the fishermen 'long shore. I couldn't turn the poor cur out — he had a sore foot. So I shut him in the porch, with an old bag to lie on, and went to bed. But somehow I couldn't sleep. Come to think it over, I sorter remembered that the dog looked hungry."

"And you got up and gave him that steak — ALL that steak," said Mrs. Doctor Dave, with a kind of triumphant reproof.

"Well, there wasn't anything else TO give him," said Captain Jim deprecatingly. "Nothing a dog'd care for, that is. I reckon he WAS hungry, for he made about two bites of it. I had a fine sleep the rest of the night but my dinner had to be sorter scanty — potatoes and point, as you might say. The dog, he lit out for home this morning. I reckon HE weren't a vegetarian."

"The idea of starving yourself for a worthless dog!" sniffed Mrs. Doctor.

"You don't know but he may be worth a lot to somebody," protested Captain Jim. "He didn't LOOK of much account, but you can't go by looks in jedging a dog. Like meself, he might be a real beauty inside. The First Mate didn't approve of him, I'll allow. His language was right down forcible. But the First Mate is prejudiced. No use in taking a cat's opinion of a dog. 'Tennyrate, I lost my dinner, so this nice spread in this delightful company is real pleasant. It's a great thing to have good neighbors."

"Who lives in the house among the willows up the brook?" asked Anne.

"Mrs. Dick Moore," said Captain Jim—"and her husband," he added, as if by way of an afterthought.

Anne smiled, and deduced a mental picture of Mrs. Dick Moore from Captain Jim's way of putting it; evidently a second Mrs. Rachel Lynde.

"You haven't many neighbors, Mistress Blythe," Captain Jim went on. "This side of the harbor is mighty thinly settled. Most of the land belongs to Mr. Howard up yander past the Glen, and he rents it out for pasture. The other side of the harbor, now, is thick with folks—'specially MacAllisters. There's a whole colony of MacAllisters you can't throw a stone but you hit

one. I was talking to old Leon Blacquiere the other day. He's been working on the harbor all summer. 'Dey're nearly all MacAllisters over thar,' he told me. 'Dare's Neil MacAllister and Sandy MacAllister and William MacAllister and Alec MacAllister and Angus MacAllister — and I believe dare's de Devil MacAllister.'"

"There are nearly as many Elliotts and Crawfords," said Doctor Dave, after the laughter had subsided. "You know, Gilbert, we folk on this side of Four Winds have an old saying—'From the conceit of the Elliotts, the pride of the MacAllisters, and the vainglory of the Crawfords, good Lord deliver us.'"

"There's a plenty of fine people among them, though," said Captain Jim. "I sailed with William Crawford for many a year, and for courage and endurance and truth that man hadn't an equal. They've got brains over on that side of Four Winds. Mebbe that's why this side is sorter inclined to pick on 'em. Strange, ain't it, how folks seem to resent anyone being born a mite cleverer than they be."

Doctor Dave, who had a forty years' feud with the over-harbor people, laughed and subsided.

"Who lives in that brilliant emerald house about half a mile up the road?" asked Gilbert.

Captain Jim smiled delightedly.

"Miss Cornelia Bryant. She'll likely be over to see you soon, seeing you're Presbyterians. If you were Methodists she wouldn't come at all. Cornelia has a holy horror of Methodists."

"She's quite a character," chuckled Doctor Dave. "A most inveterate man-hater!"

"Sour grapes?" queried Gilbert, laughing.

"No, 't isn't sour grapes," answered Captain Jim seriously. "Cornelia could have had her pick when she was young. Even yet she's only to say the word to see the old widowers jump. She jest seems to have been born with a sort of chronic spite agin men and Methodists. She's got the bitterest tongue and the kindest heart in Four Winds. Wherever there's any trouble, that woman is there, doing everything to help in the tenderest way.

She never says a harsh word about another woman, and if she likes to card us poor scalawags of men down I reckon our tough old hides can stand it.”

“She always speaks well of you, Captain Jim,” said Mrs. Doctor.

“Yes, I’m afraid so. I don’t half like it. It makes me feel as if there must be something sorter unnateral about me.”

The Schoolmaster's Bride

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“Who was the first bride who came to this house, Captain Jim?” Anne asked, as they sat around the fireplace after supper.

“Was she a part of the story I’ve heard was connected with this house?” asked Gilbert. “Somebody told me you could tell it, Captain Jim.”

“Well, yes, I know it. I reckon I’m the only person living in Four Winds now that can remember the schoolmaster’s bride as she was when she come to the Island. She’s been dead this thirty year, but she was one of them women you never forget.”

“Tell us the story,” pleaded Anne. “I want to find out all about the women who have lived in this house before me.”

“Well, there’s jest been three — Elizabeth Russell, and Mrs. Ned Russell, and the schoolmaster’s bride. Elizabeth Russell was a nice, clever little critter, and Mrs. Ned was a nice woman, too. But they weren’t ever like the schoolmaster’s bride.

“The schoolmaster’s name was John Selwyn. He came out from the Old Country to teach school at the Glen when I was a boy of sixteen. He wasn’t much like the usual run of derelicts who used to come out to P.E.I. to teach school in them days. Most of them were clever, drunken critters who taught the children the three R’s when they were sober, and lambasted them when they wasn’t. But John Selwyn was a fine, handsome young fellow. He boarded at my father’s, and he and me were cronies, though he was ten years older’n me. We read and walked and talked a heap together. He knew about all the poetry that was ever written, I reckon, and he used to quote it to me along shore in the evenings. Dad thought it an awful waste of time, but he sorter endured it, hoping it’d put me off the notion of going to sea. Well, nothing could do THAT — mother come of a race of sea-going folk and it was born in me. But I loved to hear John read and

recite. It's almost sixty years ago, but I could repeat yards of poetry I learned from him. Nearly sixty years!"

Captain Jim was silent for a space, gazing into the glowing fire in a quest of the bygones. Then, with a sigh, he resumed his story.

"I remember one spring evening I met him on the sandhills. He looked sorter uplifted — jest like you did, Dr. Blythe, when you brought Mistress Blythe in tonight. I thought of him the minute I seen you. And he told me that he had a sweetheart back home and that she was coming out to him. I wasn't more'n half pleased, ornery young lump of selfishness that I was; I thought he wouldn't be as much my friend after she came. But I'd enough decency not to let him see it. He told me all about her. Her name was Persis Leigh, and she would have come out with him if it hadn't been for her old uncle. He was sick, and he'd looked after her when her parents died and she wouldn't leave him. And now he was dead and she was coming out to marry John Selwyn. 'Twasn't no easy journey for a woman in them days. There weren't no steamers, you must ricollect.

"'When do you expect her?' says I.

"'She sails on the Royal William, the 20th of June,' says he, 'and so she should be here by mid-July. I must set Carpenter Johnson to building me a home for her. Her letter come today. I know before I opened it that it had good news for me. I saw her a few nights ago.'

"I didn't understand him, and then he explained — though I didn't understand THAT much better. He said he had a gift — or a curse. Them was his words, Mistress Blythe — a gift or a curse. He didn't know which it was. He said a great-great-grandmother of his had had it, and they burned her for a witch on account of it. He said queer spells — trances, I think was the name he give 'em — come over him now and again. Are there such things, Doctor?"

"There are people who are certainly subject to trances," answered Gilbert. "The matter is more in the line of psychical research than medical. What were the trances of this John Selwyn like?"

"Like dreams," said the old Doctor skeptically.

"He said he could see things in them," said Captain Jim slowly.

“Mind you, I’m telling you jest what HE said — things that were happening — things that were GOING to happen. He said they were sometimes a comfort to him and sometimes a horror. Four nights before this he’d been in one — went into it while he was sitting looking at the fire. And he saw an old room he knew well in England, and Persis Leigh in it, holding out her hands to him and looking glad and happy. So he knew he was going to hear good news of her.”

“A dream — a dream,” scoffed the old Doctor.

“Likely — likely,” conceded Captain Jim. “That’s what *I* said to him at the time. It was a vast more comfortable to think so. I didn’t like the idea of him seeing things like that — it was real uncanny.

“‘No,’ says he, ‘I didn’t dream it. But we won’t talk of this again. You won’t be so much my friend if you think much about it.’

“I told him nothing could make me any less his friend. But he jest shook his head and says, says he:

“‘Lad, I know. I’ve lost friends before because of this. I don’t blame them. There are times when I feel hardly friendly to myself because of it. Such a power has a bit of divinity in it — whether of a good or an evil divinity who shall say? And we mortals all shrink from too close contact with God or devil.’

“Them was his words. I remember them as if ‘twas yesterday, though I didn’t know jest what he meant. What do you s’pose he DID mean, doctor?”

“I doubt if he knew what he meant himself,” said Doctor Dave testily.

“I think I understand,” whispered Anne. She was listening in her old attitude of clasped lips and shining eyes. Captain Jim treated himself to an admiring smile before he went on with his story.

“Well, purty soon all the Glen and Four Winds people knew the schoolmaster’s bride was coming, and they were all glad because they thought so much of him. And everybody took an interest in his new house — THIS house. He picked this site for it, because you could see the harbor and hear the sea from it. He made the garden out there for his bride, but he didn’t plant the Lombardies. Mrs. Ned Russell planted THEM. But there’s

a double row of rosebushes in the garden that the little girls who went to the Glen school set out there for the schoolmaster's bride. He said they were pink for her cheeks and white for her brow and red for her lips. He'd quoted poetry so much that he sorter got into the habit of talking it, too, I reckon.

"Almost everybody sent him some little present to help out the furnishing of the house. When the Russells came into it they were well-to-do and furnished it real handsome, as you can see; but the first furniture that went into it was plain enough. This little house was rich in love, though. The women sent in quilts and tablecloths and towels, and one man made a chest for her, and another a table and so on. Even blind old Aunt Margaret Boyd wove a little basket for her out of the sweet-scented sandhill grass. The schoolmaster's wife used it for years to keep her handkerchiefs in.

"Well, at last everything was ready — even to the logs in the big fireplace ready for lighting. 'Twasn't exactly THIS fireplace, though 'twas in the same place. Miss Elizabeth had this put in when she made the house over fifteen years ago. It was a big, old-fashioned fireplace where you could have roasted an ox. Many's the time I've sat here and spun yarns, same's I'm doing tonight."

Again there was a silence, while Captain Jim kept a passing tryst with visitants Anne and Gilbert could not see — the folks who had sat with him around that fireplace in the vanished years, with mirth and bridal joy shining in eyes long since closed forever under churchyard sod or heaving leagues of sea. Here on olden nights children had tossed laughter lightly to and fro. Here on winter evenings friends had gathered. Dance and music and jest had been here. Here youths and maidens had dreamed. For Captain Jim the little house was tenanted with shapes entreating remembrance.

"It was the first of July when the house was finished. The schoolmaster began to count the days then. We used to see him walking along the shore, and we'd say to each other, 'She'll soon be with him now.'

"She was expected the middle of July, but she didn't come then. Nobody felt anxious. Vessels were often delayed for days and mebbe

weeks. The Royal William was a week overdue — and then two — and then three. And at last we began to be frightened, and it got worse and worse. Fin'ly I couldn't bear to look into John Selwyn's eyes. D'ye know, Mistress Blythe" — Captain Jim lowered his voice—"I used to think that they looked just like what his old great-great-grandmother's must have been when they were burning her to death. He never said much but he taught school like a man in a dream and then hurried to the shore. Many a night he walked there from dark to dawn. People said he was losing his mind. Everybody had given up hope — the Royal William was eight weeks overdue. It was the middle of September and the schoolmaster's bride hadn't come — never would come, we thought.

"There was a big storm then that lasted three days, and on the evening after it died away I went to the shore. I found the schoolmaster there, leaning with his arms folded against a big rock, gazing out to sea.

"I spoke to him but he didn't answer. His eyes seemed to be looking at something I couldn't see. His face was set, like a dead man's.

"‘John — John,’ I called out — jest like that — jest like a frightened child, ‘wake up — wake up.’

"That strange, awful look seemed to sorter fade out of his eyes.

"He turned his head and looked at me. I've never forgot his face — never will forget it till I ships for my last voyage.

"‘All is well, lad,’ he says. ‘I've seen the Royal William coming around East Point. She will be here by dawn. Tomorrow night I shall sit with my bride by my own hearth-fire.’

"Do you think he did see it?" demanded Captain Jim abruptly.

"God knows," said Gilbert softly. "Great love and great pain might compass we know not what marvels."

"I am sure he did see it," said Anne earnestly.

"Fol-de-rol," said Doctor Dave, but he spoke with less conviction than usual.

"Because, you know," said Captain Jim solemnly, "the Royal William came into Four Winds Harbor at daylight the next morning.

“Every soul in the Glen and along the shore was at the old wharf to meet her. The schoolmaster had been watching there all night. How we cheered as she sailed up the channel.”

Captain Jim’s eyes were shining. They were looking at the Four Winds Harbor of sixty years ago, with a battered old ship sailing through the sunrise splendor.

“And Persis Leigh was on board?” asked Anne.

“Yes — her and the captain’s wife. They’d had an awful passage — storm after storm — and their provisions give out, too. But there they were at last. When Persis Leigh stepped onto the old wharf John Selwyn took her in his arms — and folks stopped cheering and begun to cry. I cried myself, though ‘twas years, mind you, afore I’d admit it. Ain’t it funny how ashamed boys are of tears?”

“Was Persis Leigh beautiful?” asked Anne.

“Well, I don’t know that you’d call her beautiful exactly — I — don’t — know,” said Captain Jim slowly. “Somehow, you never got so far along as to wonder if she was handsome or not. It jest didn’t matter. There was something so sweet and winsome about her that you had to love her, that was all. But she was pleasant to look at — big, clear, hazel eyes and heaps of glossy brown hair, and an English skin. John and her were married at our house that night at early candlelighting; everybody from far and near was there to see it and we all brought them down here afterwards. Mistress Selwyn lighted the fire, and we went away and left them sitting here, jest as John had seen in that vision of his. A strange thing — a strange thing! But I’ve seen a turrible lot of strange things in my time.”

Captain Jim shook his head sagely.

“It’s a dear story,” said Anne, feeling that for once she had got enough romance to satisfy her. “How long did they live here?”

“Fifteen years. I ran off to sea soon after they were married, like the young scalawag I was. But every time I come back from a voyage I’d head for here, even before I went home, and tell Mistress Selwyn all about it. Fifteen happy years! They had a sort of talent for happiness, them two. Some folks are like that, if you’ve noticed. They COULDN’T be unhappy

for long, no matter what happened. They quarrelled once or twice, for they was both high-sperrited. But Mistress Selwyn says to me once, says she, laughing in that pretty way of hers, ‘I felt dreadful when John and I quarrelled, but underneath it all I was very happy because I had such a nice husband to quarrel with and make it up with.’ Then they moved to Charlottetown, and Ned Russell bought this house and brought his bride here. They were a gay young pair, as I remember them. Miss Elizabeth Russell was Alec’s sister. She came to live with them a year or so later, and she was a creature of mirth, too. The walls of this house must be sorter SOAKED with laughing and good times. You’re the third bride I’ve seen come here, Mistress Blythe — and the handsomest.”

Captain Jim contrived to give his sunflower compliment the delicacy of a violet, and Anne wore it proudly. She was looking her best that night, with the bridal rose on her cheeks and the love-light in her eyes; even gruff old Doctor Dave gave her an approving glance, and told his wife, as they drove home together, that that redheaded wife of the boy’s was something of a beauty.

“I must be getting back to the light,” announced Captain Jim. “I’ve enj’yed this evening something tremenjus.”

“You must come often to see us,” said Anne.

“I wonder if you’d give that invitation if you knew how likely I’ll be to accept it,” Captain Jim remarked whimsically.

“Which is another way of saying you wonder if I mean it,” smiled Anne. “I do, ‘cross my heart,’ as we used to say at school.”

“Then I’ll come. You’re likely to be pestered with me at any hour. And I’ll be proud to have you drop down and visit me now and then, too. Gin’rally I haven’t anyone to talk to but the First Mate, bless his sociable heart. He’s a mighty good listener, and has forgot more’n any MacAllister of them all ever knew, but he isn’t much of a conversationalist. You’re young and I’m old, but our souls are about the same age, I reckon. We both belong to the race that knows Joseph, as Cornelia Bryant would say.”

“The race that knows Joseph?” puzzled Anne.

“Yes. Cornelia divides all the folks in the world into two kinds — the race that knows Joseph and the race that don’t. If a person sorter sees eye to eye with you, and has pretty much the same ideas about things, and the same taste in jokes — why, then he belongs to the race that knows Joseph.”

“Oh, I understand,” exclaimed Anne, light breaking in upon her.

“It’s what I used to call — and still call in quotation marks ‘kindred spirits.’”

“Jest so — jest so,” agreed Captain Jim. “We’re it, whatever IT is. When you come in tonight, Mistress Blythe, I says to myself, says I, ‘Yes, she’s of the race that knows Joseph.’ And mighty glad I was, for if it wasn’t so we couldn’t have had any real satisfaction in each other’s company. The race that knows Joseph is the salt of the airth, I reckon.”

The moon had just risen when Anne and Gilbert went to the door with their guests. Four Winds Harbor was beginning to be a thing of dream and glamour and enchantment — a spellbound haven where no tempest might ever ravin. The Lombardies down the lane, tall and sombre as the priestly forms of some mystic band, were tipped with silver.

“Always liked Lombardies,” said Captain Jim, waving a long arm at them. “They’re the trees of princesses. They’re out of fashion now. Folks complain that they die at the top and get ragged-looking. So they do — so they do, if you don’t risk your neck every spring climbing up a light ladder to trim them out. I always did it for Miss Elizabeth, so her Lombardies never got out-at-elbows. She was especially fond of them. She liked their dignity and stand-offishness. THEY don’t hobnob with every Tom, Dick and Harry. If it’s maples for company, Mistress Blythe, it’s Lombardies for society.”

“What a beautiful night,” said Mrs. Doctor Dave, as she climbed into the Doctor’s buggy.

“Most nights are beautiful,” said Captain Jim. “But I ‘low that moonlight over Four Winds makes me sorter wonder what’s left for heaven. The moon’s a great friend of mine, Mistress Blythe. I’ve loved her ever since I can remember. When I was a little chap of eight I fell asleep in the garden one evening and wasn’t missed. I woke up along in the night

and I was most scared to death. What shadows and queer noises there was! I durstn't move. Jest crouched there quaking, poor small mite. Seemed 's if there weren't anyone in the world but meself and it was mighty big. Then all at once I saw the moon looking down at me through the apple boughs, jest like an old friend. I was comforted right off. Got up and walked to the house as brave as a lion, looking at her. Many's the night I've watched her from the deck of my vessel, on seas far away from here. Why don't you folks tell me to take in the slack of my jaw and go home?"

The laughter of the goodnights died away. Anne and Gilbert walked hand in hand around their garden. The brook that ran across the corner dimpled pellucidly in the shadows of the birches. The poppies along its banks were like shallow cups of moonlight. Flowers that had been planted by the hands of the schoolmaster's bride flung their sweetness on the shadowy air, like the beauty and blessing of sacred yesterdays. Anne paused in the gloom to gather a spray.

"I love to smell flowers in the dark," she said. "You get hold of their soul then. Oh, Gilbert, this little house is all I've dreamed it. And I'm so glad that we are not the first who have kept bridal tryst here!"

Miss Cornelia Bryant Comes to Call

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That September was a month of golden mists and purple hazes at Four Winds Harbor — a month of sun-steeped days and of nights that were swimming in moonlight, or pulsating with stars. No storm marred it, no rough wind blew. Anne and Gilbert put their nest in order, rambled on the shores, sailed on the harbor, drove about Four Winds and the Glen, or through the ferny, sequestered roads of the woods around the harbor head; in short, had such a honeymoon as any lovers in the world might have envied them.

“If life were to stop short just now it would still have been richly worth while, just for the sake of these past four weeks, wouldn’t it?” said Anne. “I don’t suppose we will ever have four such perfect weeks again — but we’ve HAD them. Everything — wind, weather, folks, house of dreams — has conspired to make our honeymoon delightful. There hasn’t even been a rainy day since we came here.”

“And we haven’t quarrelled once,” teased Gilbert.

“Well, ‘that’s a pleasure all the greater for being deferred,’” quoted Anne. “I’m so glad we decided to spend our honeymoon here. Our memories of it will always belong here, in our house of dreams, instead of being scattered about in strange places.”

There was a certain tang of romance and adventure in the atmosphere of their new home which Anne had never found in Avonlea. There, although she had lived in sight of the sea, it had not entered intimately into her life. In Four Winds it surrounded her and called to her constantly. From every window of her new home she saw some varying aspect of it. Its haunting murmur was ever in her ears. Vessels sailed up the harbor every day to the wharf at the Glen, or sailed out again through the sunset, bound for ports that might be half way round the globe. Fishing boats went white-winged down the channel in the mornings, and returned laden in the

evenings. Sailors and fisher-folk travelled the red, winding harbor roads, lighthearted and content. There was always a certain sense of things going to happen — of adventures and farings-forth. The ways of Four Winds were less staid and settled and grooved than those of Avonlea; winds of change blew over them; the sea called ever to the dwellers on shore, and even those who might not answer its call felt the thrill and unrest and mystery and possibilities of it.

“I understand now why some men must go to sea,” said Anne. “That desire which comes to us all at times—’to sail beyond the bourne of sunset’ — must be very imperious when it is born in you. I don’t wonder Captain Jim ran away because of it. I never see a ship sailing out of the channel, or a gull soaring over the sandbar, without wishing I were on board the ship or had wings, not like a dove ‘to fly away and be at rest,’ but like a gull, to sweep out into the very heart of a storm.”

“You’ll stay right here with me, Anne-girl,” said Gilbert lazily. “I won’t have you flying away from me into the hearts of storms.”

They were sitting on their red sandstone doorstep in the late afternoon. Great tranquillities were all about them in land and sea and sky. Silvery gulls were soaring over them. The horizons were laced with long trails of frail, pinkish clouds. The hushed air was threaded with a murmurous refrain of minstrel winds and waves. Pale asters were blowing in the sere and misty meadows between them and the harbor.

“Doctors who have to be up all night waiting on sick folk don’t feel very adventurous, I suppose,” Anne said indulgently. “If you had had a good sleep last night, Gilbert, you’d be as ready as I am for a flight of imagination.”

“I did good work last night, Anne,” said Gilbert quietly. “Under God, I saved a life. This is the first time I could ever really claim that. In other cases I may have helped; but, Anne, if I had not stayed at Allonby’s last night and fought death hand to hand, that woman would have died before morning. I tried an experiment that was certainly never tried in Four Winds before. I doubt if it was ever tried anywhere before outside of a hospital. It was a new thing in Kingsport hospital last winter. I could never

have dared try it here if I had not been absolutely certain that there was no other chance. I risked it — and it succeeded. As a result, a good wife and mother is saved for long years of happiness and usefulness. As I drove home this morning, while the sun was rising over the harbor, I thanked God that I had chosen the profession I did. I had fought a good fight and won — think of it, Anne, WON, against the Great Destroyer. It's what I dreamed of doing long ago when we talked together of what we wanted to do in life. That dream of mine came true this morning."

"Was that the only one of your dreams that has come true?" asked Anne, who knew perfectly well what the substance of his answer would be, but wanted to hear it again.

"YOU know, Anne-girl," said Gilbert, smiling into her eyes. At that moment there were certainly two perfectly happy people sitting on the doorstep of a little white house on the Four Winds Harbor shore.

Presently Gilbert said, with a change of tone, "Do I or do I not see a full-rigged ship sailing up our lane?"

Anne looked and sprang up.

"That must be either Miss Cornelia Bryant or Mrs. Moore coming to call," she said.

"I'm going into the office, and if it is Miss Cornelia I warn you that I'll eavesdrop," said Gilbert. "From all I've heard regarding Miss Cornelia I conclude that her conversation will not be dull, to say the least."

"It may be Mrs. Moore."

"I don't think Mrs. Moore is built on those lines. I saw her working in her garden the other day, and, though I was too far away to see clearly, I thought she was rather slender. She doesn't seem very socially inclined when she has never called on you yet, although she's your nearest neighbor."

"She can't be like Mrs. Lynde, after all, or curiosity would have brought her," said Anne. "This caller is, I think, Miss Cornelia."

Miss Cornelia it was; moreover, Miss Cornelia had not come to make any brief and fashionable wedding call. She had her work under her arm in a substantial parcel, and when Anne asked her to stay she promptly took

off her capacious sun-hat, which had been held on her head, despite irreverent September breezes, by a tight elastic band under her hard little knob of fair hair. No hat pins for Miss Cornelia, an it please ye! Elastic bands had been good enough for her mother and they were good enough for HER. She had a fresh, round, pink-and-white face, and jolly brown eyes. She did not look in the least like the traditional old maid, and there was something in her expression which won Anne instantly. With her old instinctive quickness to discern kindred spirits she knew she was going to like Miss Cornelia, in spite of uncertain oddities of opinion, and certain oddities of attire.

Nobody but Miss Cornelia would have come to make a call arrayed in a striped blue-and-white apron and a wrapper of chocolate print, with a design of huge, pink roses scattered over it. And nobody but Miss Cornelia could have looked dignified and suitably garbed in it. Had Miss Cornelia been entering a palace to call on a prince's bride, she would have been just as dignified and just as wholly mistress of the situation. She would have trailed her rose-spattered flounce over the marble floors just as unconcernedly, and she would have proceeded just as calmly to disabuse the mind of the princess of any idea that the possession of a mere man, be he prince or peasant, was anything to brag of.

"I've brought my work, Mrs. Blythe, dearie," she remarked, unrolling some dainty material. "I'm in a hurry to get this done, and there isn't any time to lose."

Anne looked in some surprise at the white garment spread over Miss Cornelia's ample lap. It was certainly a baby's dress, and it was most beautifully made, with tiny frills and tucks. Miss Cornelia adjusted her glasses and fell to embroidering with exquisite stitches.

"This is for Mrs. Fred Proctor up at the Glen," she announced. "She's expecting her eighth baby any day now, and not a stitch has she ready for it. The other seven have wore out all she made for the first, and she's never had time or strength or spirit to make any more. That woman is a martyr, Mrs. Blythe, believe ME. When she married Fred Proctor *I* knew how it would turn out. He was one of your wicked, fascinating men. After he got

married he left off being fascinating and just kept on being wicked. He drinks and he neglects his family. Isn't that like a man? I don't know how Mrs. Proctor would ever keep her children decently clothed if her neighbors didn't help her out."

As Anne was afterwards to learn, Miss Cornelia was the only neighbor who troubled herself much about the decency of the young Proctors.

"When I heard this eighth baby was coming I decided to make some things for it," Miss Cornelia went on. "This is the last and I want to finish it today."

"It's certainly very pretty," said Anne. "I'll get my sewing and we'll have a little thimble party of two. You are a beautiful sewer, Miss Bryant."

"Yes, I'm the best sewer in these parts," said Miss Cornelia in a matter-of-fact tone. "I ought to be! Lord, I've done more of it than if I'd had a hundred children of my own, believe ME! I s'pose I'm a fool, to be putting hand embroidery on this dress for an eighth baby. But, Lord, Mrs. Blythe, dearie, it isn't to blame for being the eighth, and I kind of wished it to have one real pretty dress, just as if it WAS wanted. Nobody's wanting the poor mite — so I put some extra fuss on its little things just on that account."

"Any baby might be proud of that dress," said Anne, feeling still more strongly that she was going to like Miss Cornelia.

"I s'pose you've been thinking I was never coming to call on you," resumed Miss Cornelia. "But this is harvest month, you know, and I've been busy — and a lot of extra hands hanging round, eating more'n they work, just like the men. I'd have come yesterday, but I went to Mrs. Roderick MacAllister's funeral. At first I thought my head was aching so badly I couldn't enjoy myself if I did go. But she was a hundred years old, and I'd always promised myself that I'd go to her funeral."

"Was it a successful function?" asked Anne, noticing that the office door was ajar.

"What's that? Oh, yes, it was a tremendous funeral. She had a very large connection. There was over one hundred and twenty carriages in the procession. There was one or two funny things happened. I thought that die

I would to see old Joe Bradshaw, who is an infidel and never darkens the door of a church, singing ‘Safe in the Arms of Jesus’ with great gusto and fervor. He glories in singing — that’s why he never misses a funeral. Poor Mrs. Bradshaw didn’t look much like singing — all wore out slaving. Old Joe starts out once in a while to buy her a present and brings home some new kind of farm machinery. Isn’t that like a man? But what else would you expect of a man who never goes to church, even a Methodist one? I was real thankful to see you and the young Doctor in the Presbyterian church your first Sunday. No doctor for me who isn’t a Presbyterian.”

“We were in the Methodist church last Sunday evening,” said Anne wickedly.

“Oh, I s’pose Dr. Blythe has to go to the Methodist church once in a while or he wouldn’t get the Methodist practice.”

“We liked the sermon very much,” declared Anne boldly. “And I thought the Methodist minister’s prayer was one of the most beautiful I ever heard.”

“Oh, I’ve no doubt he can pray. I never heard anyone make more beautiful prayers than old Simon Bentley, who was always drunk, or hoping to be, and the drunker he was the better he prayed.”

“The Methodist minister is very fine looking,” said Anne, for the benefit of the office door.

“Yes, he’s quite ornamental,” agreed Miss Cornelia. “Oh, and VERY ladylike. And he thinks that every girl who looks at him falls in love with him — as if a Methodist minister, wandering about like any Jew, was such a prize! If you and the young doctor take MY advice, you won’t have much to do with the Methodists. My motto is — if you ARE a Presbyterian, BE a Presbyterian.”

“Don’t you think that Methodists go to heaven as well as Presbyterians?” asked Anne smilelessly.

“That isn’t for US to decide. It’s in higher hands than ours,” said Miss Cornelia solemnly. “But I ain’t going to associate with them on earth whatever I may have to do in heaven. THIS Methodist minister isn’t married. The last one they had was, and his wife was the silliest, flightiest

little thing I ever saw. I told her husband once that he should have waited till she was grown up before he married her. He said he wanted to have the training of her. Wasn't that like a man?"

"It's rather hard to decide just when people ARE grown up," laughed Anne.

"That's a true word, dearie. Some are grown up when they're born, and others ain't grown up when they're eighty, believe ME. That same Mrs. Roderick I was speaking of never grew up. She was as foolish when she was a hundred as when she was ten."

"Perhaps that was why she lived so long," suggested Anne.

"Maybe 'twas. *I'd* rather live fifty sensible years than a hundred foolish ones."

"But just think what a dull world it would be if everyone was sensible," pleaded Anne.

Miss Cornelia disdained any skirmish of flippant epigram.

"Mrs. Roderick was a Milgrave, and the Milgraves never had much sense. Her nephew, Ebenezer Milgrave, used to be insane for years. He believed he was dead and used to rage at his wife because she wouldn't bury him. *I'd* a-done it."

Miss Cornelia looked so grimly determined that Anne could almost see her with a spade in her hand.

"Don't you know ANY good husbands, Miss Bryant?"

"Oh, yes, lots of them — over yonder," said Miss Cornelia, waving her hand through the open window towards the little graveyard of the church across the harbor.

"But living — going about in the flesh?" persisted Anne.

"Oh, there's a few, just to show that with God all things are possible," acknowledged Miss Cornelia reluctantly. "I don't deny that an odd man here and there, if he's caught young and trained up proper, and if his mother has spanked him well beforehand, may turn out a decent being. YOUR husband, now, isn't so bad, as men go, from all I hear. I s'pose" — Miss Cornelia looked sharply at Anne over her glasses—"you think there's nobody like him in the world."

“There isn’t,” said Anne promptly.

“Ah, well, I heard another bride say that once,” sighed Miss Cornelia. “Jennie Dean thought when she married that there wasn’t anybody like HER husband in the world. And she was right — there wasn’t! And a good thing, too, believe ME! He led her an awful life — and he was courting his second wife while Jennie was dying.

“Wasn’t that like a man? However, I hope YOUR confidence will be better justified, dearie. The young doctor is taking real well. I was afraid at first he mightn’t, for folks hereabouts have always thought old Doctor Dave the only doctor in the world. Doctor Dave hadn’t much tact, to be sure — he was always talking of ropes in houses where someone had hanged himself. But folks forgot their hurt feelings when they had a pain in their stomachs. If he’d been a minister instead of a doctor they’d never have forgiven him. Soul-ache doesn’t worry folks near as much as stomachache. Seeing as we’re both Presbyterians and no Methodists around, will you tell me your candid opinion of OUR minister?”

“Why — really — I — well,” hesitated Anne.

Miss Cornelia nodded.

“Exactly. I agree with you, dearie. We made a mistake when we called HIM. His face just looks like one of those long, narrow stones in the graveyard, doesn’t it? ‘Sacred to the memory’ ought to be written on his forehead. I shall never forget the first sermon he preached after he came. It was on the subject of everyone doing what they were best fitted for — a very good subject, of course; but such illustrations as he used! He said, ‘If you had a cow and an apple tree, and if you tied the apple tree in your stable and planted the cow in your orchard, with her legs up, how much milk would you get from the apple tree, or how many apples from the cow?’ Did you ever hear the like in your born days, dearie? I was so thankful there were no Methodists there that day — they’d never have been done hooting over it. But what I dislike most in him is his habit of agreeing with everybody, no matter what is said. If you said to him, ‘You’re a scoundrel,’ he’d say, with that smooth smile of his, ‘Yes, that’s so.’ A minister should have more backbone. The long and the short of it is,

I consider him a reverend jackass. But, of course, this is just between you and me. When there are Methodists in hearing I praise him to the skies. Some folks think his wife dresses too gay, but *I* say when she has to live with a face like that she needs something to cheer her up. You'll never hear ME condemning a woman for her dress. I'm only too thankful when her husband isn't too mean and miserly to allow it. Not that I bother much with dress myself. Women just dress to please the men, and I'd never stoop to THAT. I have had a real placid, comfortable life, dearie, and it's just because I never cared a cent what the men thought."

"Why do you hate the men so, Miss Bryant?"

"Lord, dearie, I don't hate them. They aren't worth it. I just sort of despise them. I think I'll like YOUR husband if he keeps on as he has begun. But apart from him about the only men in the world I've much use for are the old doctor and Captain Jim."

"Captain Jim is certainly splendid," agreed Anne cordially.

"Captain Jim is a good man, but he's kind of vexing in one way. You CAN'T make him mad. I've tried for twenty years and he just keeps on being placid. It does sort of rile me. And I s'pose the woman he should have married got a man who went into tantrums twice a day."

"Who was she?"

"Oh, I don't know, dearie. I never remember of Captain Jim making up to anybody. He was edging on old as far as my memory goes. He's seventy-six, you know. I never heard any reason for his staying a bachelor, but there must be one, believe ME. He sailed all his life till five years ago, and there's no corner of the earth he hasn't poked his nose into. He and Elizabeth Russell were great cronies, all their lives, but they never had any notion of sweethearting. Elizabeth never married, though she had plenty of chances. She was a great beauty when she was young. The year the Prince of Wales came to the Island she was visiting her uncle in Charlottetown and he was a Government official, and so she got invited to the great ball. She was the prettiest girl there, and the Prince danced with her, and all the other women he didn't dance with were furious about it, because their social standing was higher than hers and they said he shouldn't have

passed them over. Elizabeth was always very proud of that dance. Mean folks said that was why she never married — she couldn't put up with an ordinary man after dancing with a prince. But that wasn't so. She told me the reason once — it was because she had such a temper that she was afraid she couldn't live peaceably with any man. She HAD an awful temper — she used to have to go upstairs and bite pieces out of her bureau to keep it down by times. But I told her that wasn't any reason for not marrying if she wanted to. There's no reason why we should let the men have a monopoly of temper, is there, Mrs. Blythe, dearie?"

"I've a bit of temper myself," sighed Anne.

"It's well you have, dearie. You won't be half so likely to be trodden on, believe ME! My, how that golden glow of yours is blooming! Your garden looks fine. Poor Elizabeth always took such care of it."

"I love it," said Anne. "I'm glad it's so full of old-fashioned flowers. Speaking of gardening, we want to get a man to dig up that little lot beyond the fir grove and set it out with strawberry plants for us. Gilbert is so busy he will never get time for it this fall. Do you know anyone we can get?"

"Well, Henry Hammond up at the Glen goes out doing jobs like that. He'll do, maybe. He's always a heap more interested in his wages than in his work, just like a man, and he's so slow in the uptake that he stands still for five minutes before it dawns on him that he's stopped. His father threw a stump at him when he was small.

"Nice gentle missile, wasn't it? So like a man! Course, the boy never got over it. But he's the only one I can recommend at all. He painted my house for me last spring. It looks real nice now, don't you think?"

Anne was saved by the clock striking five.

"Lord, is it that late?" exclaimed Miss Cornelia. "How time does slip by when you're enjoying yourself! Well, I must betake myself home."

"No, indeed! You are going to stay and have tea with us," said Anne eagerly.

"Are you asking me because you think you ought to, or because you really want to?" demanded Miss Cornelia.

“Because I really want to.”

“Then I’ll stay. YOU belong to the race that knows Joseph.”

“I know we are going to be friends,” said Anne, with the smile that only they of the household of faith ever saw.

“Yes, we are, dearie. Thank goodness, we can choose our friends. We have to take our relatives as they are, and be thankful if there are no penitentiary birds among them. Not that I’ve many — none nearer than second cousins. I’m a kind of lonely soul, Mrs. Blythe.”

There was a wistful note in Miss Cornelia’s voice.

“I wish you would call me Anne,” exclaimed Anne impulsively. “It would seem more HOMEY. Everyone in Four Winds, except my husband, calls me Mrs. Blythe, and it makes me feel like a stranger. Do you know that your name is very near being the one I yearned after when I was a child. I hated ‘Anne’ and I called myself ‘Cordelia’ in imagination.”

“I like Anne. It was my mother’s name. Old-fashioned names are the best and sweetest in my opinion. If you’re going to get tea you might send the young doctor to talk to me. He’s been lying on the sofa in that office ever since I came, laughing fit to kill over what I’ve been saying.”

“How did you know?” cried Anne, too aghast at this instance of Miss Cornelia’s uncanny prescience to make a polite denial.

“I saw him sitting beside you when I came up the lane, and I know men’s tricks,” retorted Miss Cornelia. “There, I’ve finished my little dress, dearie, and the eighth baby can come as soon as it pleases.”

Chapter IX.

An Evening at Four Winds Point

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It was late September when Anne and Gilbert were able to pay Four Winds light their promised visit. They had often planned to go, but something always occurred to prevent them. Captain Jim had “dropped in” several times at the little house.

“I don’t stand on ceremony, Mistress Blythe,” he told Anne. “It’s a real pleasure to me to come here, and I’m not going to deny myself jest because you haven’t got down to see me. There oughtn’t to be no bargaining like that among the race that knows Joseph. I’ll come when I can, and you come when you can, and so long’s we have our pleasant little chat it don’t matter a mite what roof’s over us.”

Captain Jim took a great fancy to Gog and Magog, who were presiding over the destinies of the hearth in the little house with as much dignity and aplomb as they had done at Patty’s Place.

“Aren’t they the cutest little cusses?” he would say delightedly; and he bade them greeting and farewell as gravely and invariably as he did his host and hostess. Captain Jim was not going to offend household deities by any lack of reverence and ceremony.

“You’ve made this little house just about perfect,” he told Anne. “It never was so nice before. Mistress Selwyn had your taste and she did wonders; but folks in those days didn’t have the pretty little curtains and pictures and nicknacks you have. As for Elizabeth, she lived in the past. You’ve kinder brought the future into it, so to speak. I’d be real happy even if we couldn’t talk at all, when I come here — jest to sit and look at you and your pictures and your flowers would be enough of a treat. It’s beautiful — beautiful.”

Captain Jim was a passionate worshipper of beauty. Every lovely thing heard or seen gave him a deep, subtle, inner joy that irradiated his life. He

was quite keenly aware of his own lack of outward comeliness and lamented it.

“Folks say I’m good,” he remarked whimsically upon one occasion, “but I sometimes wish the Lord had made me only half as good and put the rest of it into looks. But there, I reckon He knew what He was about, as a good Captain should. Some of us have to be homely, or the purty ones — like Mistress Blythe here — wouldn’t show up so well.”

One evening Anne and Gilbert finally walked down to the Four Winds light. The day had begun sombrely in gray cloud and mist, but it had ended in a pomp of scarlet and gold. Over the western hills beyond the harbor were amber deeps and crystalline shallows, with the fire of sunset below. The north was a mackerel sky of little, fiery golden clouds. The red light flamed on the white sails of a vessel gliding down the channel, bound to a southern port in a land of palms. Beyond her, it smote upon and incarnadined the shining, white, grassless faces of the sand dunes. To the right, it fell on the old house among the willows up the brook, and gave it for a fleeting space casements more splendid than those of an old cathedral. They glowed out of its quiet and grayness like the throbbing, blood-red thoughts of a vivid soul imprisoned in a dull husk of environment.

“That old house up the brook always seems so lonely,” said Anne. “I never see visitors there. Of course, its lane opens on the upper road — but I don’t think there’s much coming and going. It seems odd we’ve never met the Moores yet, when they live within fifteen minutes’ walk of us. I may have seen them in church, of course, but if so I didn’t know them. I’m sorry they are so unsociable, when they are our only near neighbors.”

“Evidently they don’t belong to the race that knows Joseph,” laughed Gilbert. “Have you ever found out who that girl was whom you thought so beautiful?”

“No. Somehow I have never remembered to ask about her. But I’ve never seen her anywhere, so I suppose she must have been a stranger. Oh, the sun has just vanished — and there’s the light.”

As the dusk deepened, the great beacon cut swathes of light through it, sweeping in a circle over the fields and the harbor, the sandbar and the gulf.

“I feel as if it might catch me and whisk me leagues out to sea,” said Anne, as one drenched them with radiance; and she felt rather relieved when they got so near the Point that they were inside the range of those dazzling, recurrent flashes.

As they turned into the little lane that led across the fields to the Point they met a man coming out of it — a man of such extraordinary appearance that for a moment they both frankly stared. He was a decidedly fine-looking person-tall, broad-shouldered, well-featured, with a Roman nose and frank gray eyes; he was dressed in a prosperous farmer’s Sunday best; in so far he might have been any inhabitant of Four Winds or the Glen. But, flowing over his breast nearly to his knees, was a river of crinkly brown beard; and adown his back, beneath his commonplace felt hat, was a corresponding cascade of thick, wavy, brown hair.

“Anne,” murmured Gilbert, when they were out of earshot, “you didn’t put what Uncle Dave calls ‘a little of the Scott Act’ in that lemonade you gave me just before we left home, did you?”

“No, I didn’t,” said Anne, stifling her laughter, lest the retreating enigma should hear here. “Who in the world can he be?”

“I don’t know; but if Captain Jim keeps apparitions like that down at this Point I’m going to carry cold iron in my pocket when I come here. He wasn’t a sailor, or one might pardon his eccentricity of appearance; he must belong to the over-harbor clans. Uncle Dave says they have several freaks over there.”

“Uncle Dave is a little prejudiced, I think. You know all the over-harbor people who come to the Glen Church seem very nice. Oh, Gilbert, isn’t this beautiful?”

The Four Winds light was built on a spur of red sandstone cliff jutting out into the gulf. On one side, across the channel, stretched the silvery sand shore of the bar; on the other, extended a long, curving beach of red cliffs, rising steeply from the pebbled coves. It was a shore that knew the

magic and mystery of storm and star. There is a great solitude about such a shore. The woods are never solitary — they are full of whispering, beckoning, friendly life. But the sea is a mighty soul, forever moaning of some great, unshareable sorrow, which shuts it up into itself for all eternity. We can never pierce its infinite mystery — we may only wander, awed and spellbound, on the outer fringe of it. The woods call to us with a hundred voices, but the sea has one only — a mighty voice that drowns our souls in its majestic music. The woods are human, but the sea is of the company of the archangels.

Anne and Gilbert found Uncle Jim sitting on a bench outside the lighthouse, putting the finishing touches to a wonderful, full-rigged, toy schooner. He rose and welcomed them to his abode with the gentle, unconscious courtesy that became him so well.

“This has been a purty nice day all through, Mistress Blythe, and now, right at the last, it’s brought its best. Would you like to sit down here outside a bit, while the light lasts? I’ve just finished this bit of a plaything for my little grand nephew, Joe, up at the Glen. After I promised to make it for him I was kinder sorry, for his mother was vexed. She’s afraid he’ll be wanting to go to sea later on and she doesn’t want the notion encouraged in him. But what could I do, Mistress Blythe? I’d PROMISED him, and I think it’s sorter real dastardly to break a promise you make to a child. Come, sit down. It won’t take long to stay an hour.”

The wind was off shore, and only broke the sea’s surface into long, silvery ripples, and sent sheeny shadows flying out across it, from every point and headland, like transparent wings. The dusk was hanging a curtain of violet gloom over the sand dunes and the headlands where gulls were huddling. The sky was faintly filmed over with scarfs of silken vapor. Cloud fleets rode at anchor along the horizons. An evening star was watching over the bar.

“Isn’t that a view worth looking at?” said Captain Jim, with a loving, proprietary pride. “Nice and far from the marketplace, ain’t it? No buying and selling and getting gain. You don’t have to pay anything — all that sea and sky free—’without money and without price.’ There’s going to be a

moonrise purty soon, too — I'm never tired of finding out what a moonrise can be over them rocks and sea and harbor. There's a surprise in it every time."

They had their moonrise, and watched its marvel and magic in a silence that asked nothing of the world or each other. Then they went up into the tower, and Captain Jim showed and explained the mechanism of the great light. Finally they found themselves in the dining room, where a fire of driftwood was weaving flames of wavering, elusive, sea-born hues in the open fireplace.

"I put this fireplace in myself," remarked Captain Jim. "The Government don't give lighthouse keepers such luxuries. Look at the colors that wood makes. If you'd like some driftwood for your fire, Mistress Blythe, I'll bring you up a load some day. Sit down. I'm going to make you a cup of tea."

Captain Jim placed a chair for Anne, having first removed therefrom a huge, orange-colored cat and a newspaper.

"Get down, Matey. The sofa is your place. I must put this paper away safe till I can find time to finish the story in it. It's called A Mad Love. 'Tisn't my favorite brand of fiction, but I'm reading it jest to see how long she can spin it out. It's at the sixty-second chapter now, and the wedding ain't any nearer than when it begun, far's I can see. When little Joe comes I have to read him pirate yarns. Ain't it strange how innocent little creatures like children like the blood-thirstiest stories?"

"Like my lad Davy at home," said Anne. "He wants tales that reek with gore."

Captain Jim's tea proved to be nectar. He was pleased as a child with Anne's compliments, but he affected a fine indifference.

"The secret is I don't skim the cream," he remarked airily. Captain Jim had never heard of Oliver Wendell Holmes, but he evidently agreed with that writer's dictum that "big heart never liked little cream pot."

"We met an odd-looking personage coming out of your lane," said Gilbert as they sipped. "Who was he?"

Captain Jim grinned.

“That’s Marshall Elliott — a mighty fine man with jest one streak of foolishness in him. I s’pose you wondered what his object was in turning himself into a sort of dime museum freak.”

“Is he a modern Nazarite or a Hebrew prophet left over from olden times?” asked Anne.

“Neither of them. It’s politics that’s at the bottom of his freak. All those Elliotts and Crawfords and MacAllisters are dyed-in-the-wool politicians. They’re born Grit or Tory, as the case may be, and they live Grit or Tory, and they die Grit or Tory; and what they’re going to do in heaven, where there’s probably no politics, is more than I can fathom. This Marshall Elliott was born a Grit. I’m a Grit myself in moderation, but there’s no moderation about Marshall. Fifteen years ago there was a specially bitter general election. Marshall fought for his party tooth and nail. He was dead sure the Liberals would win — so sure that he got up at a public meeting and vowed that he wouldn’t shave his face or cut his hair until the Grits were in power. Well, they didn’t go in — and they’ve never got in yet — and you saw the result today for yourselves. Marshall stuck to his word.”

“What does his wife think of it?” asked Anne.

“He’s a bachelor. But if he had a wife I reckon she couldn’t make him break that vow. That family of Elliotts has always been more stubborn than natteral. Marshall’s brother Alexander had a dog he set great store by, and when it died the man actilly wanted to have it buried in the graveyard, ‘along with the other Christians,’ he said. Course, he wasn’t allowed to; so he buried it just outside the graveyard fence, and never darkened the church door again. But Sundays he’d drive his family to church and sit by that dog’s grave and read his Bible all the time service was going on. They say when he was dying he asked his wife to bury him beside the dog; she was a meek little soul but she fired up at THAT. She said SHE wasn’t going to be buried beside no dog, and if he’d rather have his last resting place beside the dog than beside her, jest to say so. Alexander Elliott was a stubborn mule, but he was fond of his wife, so he give in and said, ‘Well, durn it, bury me where you please. But when Gabriel’s trump blows I

expect my dog to rise with the rest of us, for he had as much soul as any durned Elliott or Crawford or MacAllister that ever strutted.’ Them was HIS parting words. As for Marshall, we’re all used to him, but he must strike strangers as right down peculiar-looking. I’ve known him ever since he was ten — he’s about fifty now — and I like him. Him and me was out codfishing today. That’s about all I’m good for now — catching trout and cod occasional. But ‘tweren’t always so — not by no manner of means. I used to do other things, as you’d admit if you saw my life-book.”

Anne was just going to ask what his life-book was when the First Mate created a diversion by springing upon Captain Jim’s knee. He was a gorgeous beastie, with a face as round as a full moon, vivid green eyes, and immense, white, double paws. Captain Jim stroked his velvet back gently.

“I never fancied cats much till I found the First Mate,” he remarked, to the accompaniment of the Mate’s tremendous purrs. “I saved his life, and when you’ve saved a creature’s life you’re bound to love it. It’s next thing to giving life. There’s some turrible thoughtless people in the world, Mistress Blythe. Some of them city folks who have summer homes over the harbor are so thoughtless that they’re cruel. It’s the worst kind of cruelty — the thoughtless kind. You can’t cope with it. They keep cats there in the summer, and feed and pet ‘em, and doll ‘em up with ribbons and collars. And then in the fall they go off and leave ‘em to starve or freeze. It makes my blood boil, Mistress Blythe. One day last winter I found a poor old mother cat dead on the shore, lying against the skin-and-bone bodies of her three little kittens. She’d died trying to shelter ‘em. She had her poor stiff paws around ‘em. Master, I cried. Then I swore. Then I carried them poor little kittens home and fed ‘em up and found good homes for ‘em. I knew the woman who left the cat and when she come back this summer I jest went over the harbor and told her my opinion of her. It was rank meddling, but I do love meddling in a good cause.”

“How did she take it?” asked Gilbert.

“Cried and said she ‘didn’t think.’ I says to her, says I, ‘Do you s’pose that’ll be held for a good excuse in the day of Jedgment, when you’ll have

to account for that poor old mother's life? The Lord'll ask you what He give you your brains for if it wasn't to think, I reckon.' I don't fancy she'll leave cats to starve another time."

"Was the First Mate one of the forsaken?" asked Anne, making advances to him which were responded to graciously, if condescendingly.

"Yes. I found HIM one bitter cold day in winter, caught in the branches of a tree by his durn-fool ribbon collar. He was almost starving. If you could have seen his eyes, Mistress Blythe! He was nothing but a kitten, and he'd got his living somehow since he'd been left until he got hung up. When I loosed him he gave my hand a pitiful swipe with his little red tongue. He wasn't the able seaman you see now. He was meek as Moses. That was nine years ago. His life has been long in the land for a cat. He's a good old pal, the First Mate is."

"I should have expected you to have a dog," said Gilbert.

Captain Jim shook his head.

"I had a dog once. I thought so much of him that when he died I couldn't bear the thought of getting another in his place. He was a FRIEND — you understand, Mistress Blythe? Matey's only a pal. I'm fond of Matey — all the fonder on account of the spice of devilment that's in him — like there is in all cats. But I LOVED my dog. I always had a sneaking sympathy for Alexander Elliott about HIS dog. There isn't any devil in a good dog. That's why they're more lovable than cats, I reckon. But I'm darned if they're as interesting. Here I am, talking too much. Why don't you check me? When I do get a chance to talk to anyone I run on turrible. If you've done your tea I've a few little things you might like to look at — picked 'em up in the queer corners I used to be poking my nose into."

Captain Jim's "few little things" turned out to be a most interesting collection of curios, hideous, quaint and beautiful. And almost every one had some striking story attached to it.

Anne never forgot the delight with which she listened to those old tales that moonlit evening by that enchanted driftwood fire, while the silver sea

called to them through the open window and sobbed against the rocks below them.

Captain Jim never said a boastful word, but it was impossible to help seeing what a hero the man had been — brave, true, resourceful, unselfish. He sat there in his little room and made those things live again for his hearers. By a lift of the eyebrow, a twist of the lip, a gesture, a word, he painted a whole scene or character so that they saw it as it was.

Some of Captain Jim's adventures had such a marvellous edge that Anne and Gilbert secretly wondered if he were not drawing a rather long bow at their credulous expense. But in this, as they found later, they did him injustice. His tales were all literally true. Captain Jim had the gift of the born storyteller, whereby "unhappy, far-off things" can be brought vividly before the hearer in all their pristine poignancy.

Anne and Gilbert laughed and shivered over his tales, and once Anne found herself crying. Captain Jim surveyed her tears with pleasure shining from his face.

"I like to see folks cry that way," he remarked. "It's a compliment. But I can't do justice to the things I've seen or helped to do. I've 'em all jotted down in my life-book, but I haven't got the knack of writing them out properly. If I could hit on jest the right words and string 'em together proper on paper I could make a great book. It would beat *A Mad Love* holler, and I believe Joe'd like it as well as the pirate yarns. Yes, I've had some adventures in my time; and, do you know, Mistress Blythe, I still lust after 'em. Yes, old and useless as I be, there's an awful longing sweeps over me at times to sail out — out — out there — forever and ever."

"Like Ulysses, you would

'Sail beyond the sunset and the baths
Of all the western stars until you die,'"

said Anne dreamily.

"Ulysses? I've read of him. Yes, that's just how I feel — jest how all us old sailors feel, I reckon. I'll die on land after all, I s'pose. Well, what is to be will be. There was old William Ford at the Glen who never went

on the water in his life, 'cause he was afraid of being drowned. A fortune-teller had predicted he would be. And one day he fainted and fell with his face in the barn trough and was drowned. Must you go? Well, come soon and come often. The doctor is to do the talking next time. He knows a heap of things I want to find out. I'm sorter lonesome here by times. It's been worse since Elizabeth Russell died. Her and me was such cronies."

Captain Jim spoke with the pathos of the aged, who see their old friends slipping from them one by one — friends whose place can never be quite filled by those of a younger generation, even of the race that knows Joseph. Anne and Gilbert promised to come soon and often.

"He's a rare old fellow, isn't he?" said Gilbert, as they walked home.

"Somehow, I can't reconcile his simple, kindly personality with the wild, adventurous life he has lived," mused Anne.

"You wouldn't find it so hard if you had seen him the other day down at the fishing village. One of the men of Peter Gautier's boat made a nasty remark about some girl along the shore. Captain Jim fairly scorched the wretched fellow with the lightning of his eyes. He seemed a man transformed. He didn't say much — but the way he said it! You'd have thought it would strip the flesh from the fellow's bones. I understand that Captain Jim will never allow a word against any woman to be said in his presence."

"I wonder why he never married," said Anne. "He should have sons with their ships at sea now, and grandchildren climbing over him to hear his stories — he's that kind of a man. Instead, he has nothing but a magnificent cat."

But Anne was mistaken. Captain Jim had more than that. He had a memory.

Chapter X.

Leslie Moore

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“I’m going for a walk to the outside shore tonight,” Anne told Gog and Magog one October evening. There was no one else to tell, for Gilbert had gone over the harbor. Anne had her little domain in the speckless order one would expect of anyone brought up by Marilla Cuthbert, and felt that she could gad shoreward with a clear conscience. Many and delightful had been her shore rambles, sometimes with Gilbert, sometimes with Captain Jim, sometimes alone with her own thoughts and new, poignantly-sweet dreams that were beginning to span life with their rainbows. She loved the gentle, misty harbor shore and the silvery, wind-haunted sand shore, but best of all she loved the rock shore, with its cliffs and caves and piles of surf-worn boulders, and its coves where the pebbles glittered under the pools; and it was to this shore she hied herself tonight.

There had been an autumn storm of wind and rain, lasting for three days. Thunderous had been the crash of billows on the rocks, wild the white spray and spume that blew over the bar, troubled and misty and tempest-torn the erstwhile blue peace of Four Winds Harbor. Now it was over, and the shore lay clean-washed after the storm; not a wind stirred, but there was still a fine surf on, dashing on sand and rock in a splendid white turmoil — the only restless thing in the great, pervading stillness and peace.

“Oh, this is a moment worth living through weeks of storm and stress for,” Anne exclaimed, delightedly sending her far gaze across the tossing waters from the top of the cliff where she stood. Presently she scrambled down the steep path to the little cove below, where she seemed shut in with rocks and sea and sky.

“I’m going to dance and sing,” she said. “There’s no one here to see me — the seagulls won’t carry tales of the matter. I may be as crazy as I like.”

She caught up her skirt and pirouetted along the hard strip of sand just out of reach of the waves that almost lapped her feet with their spent foam. Whirling round and round, laughing like a child, she reached the little headland that ran out to the east of the cove; then she stopped suddenly, blushing crimson; she was not alone; there had been a witness to her dance and laughter.

The girl of the golden hair and sea-blue eyes was sitting on a boulder of the headland, half-hidden by a jutting rock. She was looking straight at Anne with a strange expression — part wonder, part sympathy, part — could it be? — envy. She was bareheaded, and her splendid hair, more than ever like Browning's "gorgeous snake," was bound about her head with a crimson ribbon. She wore a dress of some dark material, very plainly made; but swathed about her waist, outlining its fine curves, was a vivid girdle of red silk. Her hands, clasped over her knee, were brown and somewhat work-hardened; but the skin of her throat and cheeks was as white as cream. A flying gleam of sunset broke through a lowlying western cloud and fell across her hair. For a moment she seemed the spirit of the sea personified — all its mystery, all its passion, all its elusive charm.

"You — you must think me crazy," stammered Anne, trying to recover her selfpossession. To be seen by this stately girl in such an abandon of childishness — she, Mrs. Dr. Blythe, with all the dignity of the matron to keep up — it was too bad!

"No," said the girl, "I don't."

She said nothing more; her voice was expressionless; her manner slightly repellent; but there was something in her eyes — eager yet shy, defiant yet pleading — which turned Anne from her purpose of walking away. Instead, she sat down on the boulder beside the girl.

"Let's introduce ourselves," she said, with the smile that had never yet failed to win confidence and friendliness. "I am Mrs. Blythe — and I live in that little white house up the harbor shore."

"Yes, I know," said the girl. "I am Leslie Moore — Mrs. Dick Moore," she added stiffly.

Anne was silent for a moment from sheer amazement. It had not occurred to her that this girl was married — there seemed nothing of the wife about her. And that she should be the neighbor whom Anne had pictured as a commonplace Four Winds housewife! Anne could not quickly adjust her mental focus to this astonishing change.

“Then — then you live in that gray house up the brook,” she stammered.

“Yes. I should have gone over to call on you long ago,” said the other. She did not offer any explanation or excuse for not having gone.

“I wish you WOULD come,” said Anne, recovering herself somewhat. “We’re such near neighbors we ought to be friends. That is the sole fault of Four Winds — there aren’t quite enough neighbors. Otherwise it is perfection.”

“You like it?”

“LIKE it! I love it. It is the most beautiful place I ever saw.”

“I’ve never seen many places,” said Leslie Moore, slowly, “but I’ve always thought it was very lovely here. I — I love it, too.”

She spoke, as she looked, shyly, yet eagerly. Anne had an odd impression that this strange girl — the word “girl” would persist — could say a good deal if she chose.

“I often come to the shore,” she added.

“So do I,” said Anne. “It’s a wonder we haven’t met here before.”

“Probably you come earlier in the evening than I do. It is generally late — almost dark — when I come. And I love to come just after a storm — like this. I don’t like the sea so well when it’s calm and quiet. I like the struggle — and the crash — and the noise.”

“I love it in all its moods,” declared Anne. “The sea at Four Winds is to me what Lover’s Lane was at home. Tonight it seemed so free — so untamed — something broke loose in me, too, out of sympathy. That was why I danced along the shore in that wild way. I didn’t suppose anybody was looking, of course. If Miss Cornelia Bryant had seen me she would have forboded a gloomy prospect for poor young Dr. Blythe.”

“You know Miss Cornelia?” said Leslie, laughing. She had an exquisite laugh; it bubbled up suddenly and unexpectedly with something of the delicious quality of a baby’s. Anne laughed, too.

“Oh, yes. She has been down to my house of dreams several times.”

“Your house of dreams?”

“Oh, that’s a dear, foolish little name Gilbert and I have for our home. We just call it that between ourselves. It slipped out before I thought.”

“So Miss Russell’s little white house is YOUR house of dreams,” said Leslie wonderingly. “*I* had a house of dreams once — but it was a palace,” she added, with a laugh, the sweetness of which was marred by a little note of derision.

“Oh, I once dreamed of a palace, too,” said Anne. “I suppose all girls do. And then we settle down contentedly in eight-room houses that seem to fulfill all the desires of our hearts — because our prince is there. YOU should have had your palace really, though — you are so beautiful. You MUST let me say it — it has to be said — I’m nearly bursting with admiration. You are the loveliest thing I ever saw, Mrs. Moore.”

“If we are to be friends you must call me Leslie,” said the other with an odd passion.

“Of course I will. And MY friends call me Anne.”

“I suppose I am beautiful,” Leslie went on, looking stormily out to sea. “I hate my beauty. I wish I had always been as brown and plain as the brownest and plainest girl at the fishing village over there. Well, what do you think of Miss Cornelia?”

The abrupt change of subject shut the door on any further confidences.

“Miss Cornelia is a darling, isn’t she?” said Anne. “Gilbert and I were invited to her house to a state tea last week. You’ve heard of groaning tables.”

“I seem to recall seeing the expression in the newspaper reports of weddings,” said Leslie, smiling.

“Well, Miss Cornelia’s groaned — at least, it creaked — positively. You couldn’t have believed she would have cooked so much for two ordinary people. She had every kind of pie you could name, I think —

except lemon pie. She said she had taken the prize for lemon pies at the Charlottetown Exhibition ten years ago and had never made any since for fear of losing her reputation for them."

"Were you able to eat enough pie to please her?"

"I wasn't. Gilbert won her heart by eating — I won't tell you how much. She said she never knew a man who didn't like pie better than his Bible. Do you know, I love Miss Cornelia."

"So do I," said Leslie. "She is the best friend I have in the world."

Anne wondered secretly why, if this were so, Miss Cornelia had never mentioned Mrs. Dick Moore to her. Miss Cornelia had certainly talked freely about every other individual in or near Four Winds.

"Isn't that beautiful?" said Leslie, after a brief silence, pointing to the exquisite effect of a shaft of light falling through a cleft in the rock behind them, across a dark green pool at its base. "If I had come here — and seen nothing but just that — I would go home satisfied."

"The effects of light and shadow all along these shores are wonderful," agreed Anne. "My little sewing room looks out on the harbor, and I sit at its window and feast my eyes. The colors and shadows are never the same two minutes together."

"And you are never lonely?" asked Leslie abruptly. "Never — when you are alone?"

"No. I don't think I've ever been really lonely in my life," answered Anne. "Even when I'm alone I have real good company — dreams and imaginations and pretendings. I LIKE to be alone now and then, just to think over things and TASTE them. But I love friendship — and nice, jolly little times with people. Oh, WON'T you come to see me — often? Please do. I believe," Anne added, laughing, "that you'd like me if you knew me."

"I wonder if YOU would like ME," said Leslie seriously. She was not fishing for a compliment. She looked out across the waves that were beginning to be garlanded with blossoms of moonlit foam, and her eyes filled with shadows.

"I'm sure I would," said Anne. "And please don't think I'm utterly irresponsible because you saw me dancing on the shore at sunset. No doubt

I shall be dignified after a time. You see, I haven't been married very long. I feel like a girl, and sometimes like a child, yet."

"I have been married twelve years," said Leslie.

Here was another unbelievable thing.

"Why, you can't be as old as I am!" exclaimed Anne. "You must have been a child when you were married."

"I was sixteen," said Leslie, rising, and picking up the cap and jacket lying beside her. "I am twenty-eight now. Well, I must go back."

"So must I. Gilbert will probably be home. But I'm so glad we both came to the shore tonight and met each other."

Leslie said nothing, and Anne was a little chilled. She had offered friendship frankly but it had not been accepted very graciously, if it had not been absolutely repelled. In silence they climbed the cliffs and walked across a pasture-field of which the feathery, bleached, wild grasses were like a carpet of creamy velvet in the moonlight. When they reached the shore lane Leslie turned.

"I go this way, Mrs. Blythe. You will come over and see me some time, won't you?"

Anne felt as if the invitation had been thrown at her. She got the impression that Leslie Moore gave it reluctantly.

"I will come if you really want me to," she said a little coldly.

"Oh, I do — I do," exclaimed Leslie, with an eagerness which seemed to burst forth and beat down some restraint that had been imposed on it.

"Then I'll come. Goodnight — Leslie."

"Goodnight, Mrs. Blythe."

Anne walked home in a brown study and poured out her tale to Gilbert.

"So Mrs. Dick Moore isn't one of the race that knows Joseph?" said Gilbert teasingly.

"No — o — o, not exactly. And yet — I think she WAS one of them once, but has gone or got into exile," said Anne musingly. "She is certainly very different from the other women about here. You can't talk about eggs and butter to HER. To think I've been imagining her a second Mrs. Rachel Lynde! Have you ever seen Dick Moore, Gilbert?"

“No. I’ve seen several men working about the fields of the farm, but I don’t know which was Moore.”

“She never mentioned him. I KNOW she isn’t happy.”

“From what you tell me I suppose she was married before she was old enough to know her own mind or heart, and found out too late that she had made a mistake. It’s a common tragedy enough, Anne.

“A fine woman would have made the best of it. Mrs. Moore has evidently let it make her bitter and resentful.”

“Don’t let us judge her till we know,” pleaded Anne. “I don’t believe her case is so ordinary. You will understand her fascination when you meet her, Gilbert. It is a thing quite apart from her beauty. I feel that she possesses a rich nature, into which a friend might enter as into a kingdom; but for some reason she bars every one out and shuts all her possibilities up in herself, so that they cannot develop and blossom. There, I’ve been struggling to define her to myself ever since I left her, and that is the nearest I can get to it. I’m going to ask Miss Cornelia about her.”

The Story of Leslie Moore

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“Yes, the eighth baby arrived a fortnight ago,” said Miss Cornelia, from a rocker before the fire of the little house one chilly October afternoon. “It’s a girl. Fred was ranting mad — said he wanted a boy — when the truth is he didn’t want it at all. If it had been a boy he’d have ranted because it wasn’t a girl. They had four girls and three boys before, so I can’t see that it made much difference what this one was, but of course he’d have to be cantankerous, just like a man. The baby is real pretty, dressed up in its nice little clothes. It has black eyes and the dearest, tiny hands.”

“I must go and see it. I just love babies,” said Anne, smiling to herself over a thought too dear and sacred to be put into words.

“I don’t say but what they’re nice,” admitted Miss Cornelia. “But some folks seem to have more than they really need, believe ME. My poor cousin Flora up at the Glen had eleven, and such a slave as she is! Her husband suicided three years ago. Just like a man!”

“What made him do that?” asked Anne, rather shocked.

“Couldn’t get his way over something, so he jumped into the well. A good riddance! He was a born tyrant. But of course it spoiled the well. Flora could never abide the thought of using it again, poor thing! So she had another dug and a frightful expense it was, and the water as hard as nails. If he HAD to drown himself there was plenty of water in the harbor, wasn’t there? I’ve no patience with a man like that. We’ve only had two suicides in Four Winds in my recollection. The other was Frank West — Leslie Moore’s father. By the way, has Leslie ever been over to call on you yet?”

“No, but I met her on the shore a few nights ago and we scraped an acquaintance,” said Anne, pricking up her ears.

Miss Cornelia nodded.

“I’m glad, dearie. I was hoping you’d foregather with her. What do you think of her?”

“I thought her very beautiful.”

“Oh, of course. There was never anybody about Four Winds could touch her for looks. Did you ever see her hair? It reaches to her feet when she lets it down. But I meant how did you like her?”

“I think I could like her very much if she’d let me,” said Anne slowly.

“But she wouldn’t let you — she pushed you off and kept you at arm’s length. Poor Leslie! You wouldn’t be much surprised if you knew what her life has been. It’s been a tragedy — a tragedy!” repeated Miss Cornelia emphatically.

“I wish you would tell me all about her — that is, if you can do so without betraying any confidence.”

“Lord, dearie, everybody in Four Winds knows poor Leslie’s story. It’s no secret — the OUTSIDE, that is. Nobody knows the INSIDE but Leslie herself, and she doesn’t take folks into her confidence. I’m about the best friend she has on earth, I reckon, and she’s never uttered a word of complaint to me. Have you ever seen Dick Moore?”

“No.”

“Well, I may as well begin at the beginning and tell you everything straight through, so you’ll understand it. As I said, Leslie’s father was Frank West. He was clever and shiftless — just like a man. Oh, he had heaps of brains — and much good they did him! He started to go to college, and he went for two years, and then his health broke down. The Wests were all inclined to be consumptive. So Frank came home and started farming. He married Rose Elliott from over harbor. Rose was reckoned the beauty of Four Winds — Leslie takes her looks from her mother, but she has ten times the spirit and go that Rose had, and a far better figure. Now you know, Anne, I always take the ground that us women ought to stand by each other. We’ve got enough to endure at the hands of the men, the Lord knows, so I hold we hadn’t ought to clapper-claw one another, and it isn’t often you’ll find me running down another woman. But I never had much use for Rose Elliott. She was spoiled to

begin with, believe ME, and she was nothing but a lazy, selfish, whining creature. Frank was no hand to work, so they were poor as Job's turkey. Poor! They lived on potatoes and point, believe ME. They had two children — Leslie and Kenneth. Leslie had her mother's looks and her father's brains, and something she didn't get from either of them. She took after her Grandmother West — a splendid old lady. She was the brightest, friendliest, merriest thing when she was a child, Anne. Everybody liked her. She was her father's favorite and she was awful fond of him. They were 'chums,' as she used to say. She couldn't see any of his faults — and he WAS a taking sort of man in some ways.

“Well, when Leslie was twelve years old, the first dreadful thing happened. She worshipped little Kenneth — he was four years younger than her, and he WAS a dear little chap. And he was killed one day — fell off a big load of hay just as it was going into the barn, and the wheel went right over his little body and crushed the life out of it. And mind you, Anne, Leslie saw it. She was looking down from the loft. She gave one screech — the hired man said he never heard such a sound in all his life — he said it would ring in his ears till Gabriel's trump drove it out. But she never screeched or cried again about it. She jumped from the loft onto the load and from the load to the floor, and caught up the little bleeding, warm, dead body, Anne — they had to tear it from her before she would let it go. They sent for me — I can't talk of it.”

Miss Cornelia wiped the tears from her kindly brown eyes and sewed in bitter silence for a few minutes.

“Well,” she resumed, “it was all over — they buried little Kenneth in that graveyard over the harbor, and after a while Leslie went back to her school and her studies. She never mentioned Kenneth's name — I've never heard it cross her lips from that day to this. I reckon that old hurt still aches and burns at times; but she was only a child and time is real kind to children, Anne, dearie. After a while she began to laugh again — she had the prettiest laugh. You don't often hear it now.”

“I heard it once the other night,” said Anne. “It IS a beautiful laugh.”

“Frank West began to go down after Kenneth’s death. He wasn’t strong and it was a shock to him, because he was real fond of the child, though, as I’ve said, Leslie was his favorite. He got mopy and melancholy, and couldn’t or wouldn’t work. And one day, when Leslie was fourteen years of age, he hanged himself — and in the parlor, too, mind you, Anne, right in the middle of the parlor from the lamp hook in the ceiling. Wasn’t that like a man? It was the anniversary of his wedding day, too. Nice, tasty time to pick for it, wasn’t it? And, of course, that poor Leslie had to be the one to find him. She went into the parlor that morning, singing, with some fresh flowers for the vases, and there she saw her father hanging from the ceiling, his face as black as a coal. It was something awful, believe ME!”

“Oh, how horrible!” said Anne, shuddering. “The poor, poor child!”

“Leslie didn’t cry at her father’s funeral any more then she had cried at Kenneth’s. Rose whooped and howled for two, however, and Leslie had all she could do trying to calm and comfort her mother. I was disgusted with Rose and so was everyone else, but Leslie never got out of patience. She loved her mother. Leslie is clannish — her own could never do wrong in her eyes. Well, they buried Frank West beside Kenneth, and Rose put up a great big monument to him. It was bigger than his character, believe ME! Anyhow, it was bigger than Rose could afford, for the farm was mortgaged for more than its value. But not long after Leslie’s old grandmother West died and she left Leslie a little money — enough to give her a year at Queen’s Academy. Leslie had made up her mind to pass for a teacher if she could, and then earn enough to put herself through Redmond College. That had been her father’s pet scheme — he wanted her to have what he had lost. Leslie was full of ambition and her head was chock full of brains. She went to Queen’s, and she took two years’ work in one year and got her First; and when she came home she got the Glen school. She was so happy and hopeful and full of life and eagerness. When I think of what she was then and what she is now, I say — drat the men!”

Miss Cornelia snipped her thread off as viciously as if, Nero-like, she was severing the neck of mankind by the stroke.

“Dick Moore came into her life that summer. His father, Abner Moore, kept store at the Glen, but Dick had a sea-going streak in him from his mother; he used to sail in summer and clerk in his father’s store in winter. He was a big, handsome fellow, with a little ugly soul. He was always wanting something till he got it, and then he stopped wanting it — just like a man. Oh, he didn’t growl at the weather when it was fine, and he was mostly real pleasant and agreeable when everything went right. But he drank a good deal, and there were some nasty stories told of him and a girl down at the fishing village. He wasn’t fit for Leslie to wipe her feet on, that’s the long and short of it. And he was a Methodist! But he was clean mad about her — because of her good looks in the first place, and because she wouldn’t have anything to say to him in the second. He vowed he’d have her — and he got her!”

“How did he bring it about?”

“Oh, it was an iniquitous thing! I’ll never forgive Rose West. You see, dearie, Abner Moore held the mortgage on the West farm, and the interest was overdue some years, and Dick just went and told Mrs. West that if Leslie wouldn’t marry him he’d get his father to foreclose the mortgage. Rose carried on terrible — fainted and wept, and pleaded with Leslie not to let her be turned out of her home. She said it would break her heart to leave the home she’d come to as a bride. I wouldn’t have blamed her for feeling dreadful bad over it — but you wouldn’t have thought she’d be so selfish as to sacrifice her own flesh and blood because of it, would you? Well, she was.

“And Leslie gave in — she loved her mother so much she would have done anything to save her pain. She married Dick Moore. None of us knew why at the time. It wasn’t till long afterward that I found out how her mother had worried her into it. I was sure there was something wrong, though, because I knew how she had snubbed him time and again, and it wasn’t like Leslie to turn face — about like that. Besides, I knew that Dick Moore wasn’t the kind of man Leslie could ever fancy, in spite of his good looks and dashing ways. Of course, there was no wedding, but Rose asked me to go and see them married. I went, but I was sorry I did. I’d seen

Leslie's face at her brother's funeral and at her father's funeral — and now it seemed to me I was seeing it at her own funeral. But Rose was smiling as a basket of chips, believe ME!

“Leslie and Dick settled down on the West place — Rose couldn't bear to part with her dear daughter! — and lived there for the winter. In the spring Rose took pneumonia and died — a year too late! Leslie was heartbroken enough over it. Isn't it terrible the way some unworthy folks are loved, while others that deserve it far more, you'd think, never get much affection? As for Dick, he'd had enough of quiet married life — just like a man. He was for up and off. He went over to Nova Scotia to visit his relations — his father had come from Nova Scotia — and he wrote back to Leslie that his cousin, George Moore, was going on a voyage to Havana and he was going too. The name of the vessel was the Four Sisters and they were to be gone about nine weeks.

“It must have been a relief to Leslie. But she never said anything. From the day of her marriage she was just what she is now — cold and proud, and keeping everyone but me at a distance. I won't BE kept at a distance, believe ME! I've just stuck to Leslie as close as I knew how in spite of everything.”

“She told me you were the best friend she had,” said Anne.

“Did she?” exclaimed Miss Cornelia delightedly. “Well, I'm real thankful to hear it. Sometimes I've wondered if she really did want me around at all — she never let me think so. You must have thawed her out more than you think, or she wouldn't have said that much itself to you. Oh, that poor, heartbroken girl! I never see Dick Moore but I want to run a knife clean through him.”

Miss Cornelia wiped her eyes again and having relieved her feelings by her bloodthirsty wish, took up her tale.

“Well, Leslie was left over there alone. Dick had put in the crop before he went, and old Abner looked after it. The summer went by and the Four Sisters didn't come back. The Nova Scotia Moores investigated, and found she had got to Havana and discharged her cargo and took on another and left for home; and that was all they ever found out about her. By degrees

people began to talk of Dick Moore as one that was dead. Almost everyone believed that he was, though no one felt certain, for men have turned up here at the harbor after they'd been gone for years. Leslie never thought he was dead — and she was right. A thousand pities too! The next summer Captain Jim was in Havana — that was before he gave up the sea, of course. He thought he'd poke round a bit — Captain Jim was always meddlesome, just like a man — and he went to inquiring round among the sailors' boarding houses and places like that, to see if he could find out anything about the crew of the Four Sisters. He'd better have let sleeping dogs lie, in my opinion! Well, he went to one out-of-the-way place, and there he found a man he knew at first sight it was Dick Moore, though he had a big beard. Captain Jim got it shaved off and then there was no doubt — Dick Moore it was — his body at least. His mind wasn't there — as for his soul, in my opinion he never had one!"

"What had happened to him?"

"Nobody knows the rights of it. All the folks who kept the boarding house could tell was that about a year before they had found him lying on their doorstep one morning in an awful condition — his head battered to a jelly almost. They supposed he'd got hurt in some drunken row, and likely that's the truth of it. They took him in, never thinking he could live. But he did — and he was just like a child when he got well. He hadn't memory or intellect or reason. They tried to find out who he was but they never could. He couldn't even tell them his name — he could only say a few simple words. He had a letter on him beginning 'Dear Dick' and signed 'Leslie,' but there was no address on it and the envelope was gone. They let him stay on — he learned to do a few odd jobs about the place — and there Captain Jim found him. He brought him home — I've always said it was a bad day's work, though I s'pose there was nothing else he could do. He thought maybe when Dick got home and saw his old surroundings and familiar faces his memory would wake up. But it hadn't any effect. There he's been at the house up the brook ever since. He's just like a child, no more nor less. Takes fractious spells occasionally, but mostly he's just vacant and good humored and harmless. He's apt to run away if he isn't

watched. That's the burden Leslie has had to carry for eleven years — and all alone. Old Abner Moore died soon after Dick was brought home and it was found he was almost bankrupt. When things were settled up there was nothing for Leslie and Dick but the old West farm. Leslie rented it to John Ward, and the rent is all she has to live on. Sometimes in summer she takes a boarder to help out. But most visitors prefer the other side of the harbor where the hotels and summer cottages are. Leslie's house is too far from the bathing shore. She's taken care of Dick and she's never been away from him for eleven years — she's tied to that imbecile for life. And after all the dreams and hopes she once had! You can imagine what it has been like for her, Anne, dearie — with her beauty and spirit and pride and cleverness. It's just been a living death."

"Poor, poor girl!" said Anne again. Her own happiness seemed to reproach her. What right had she to be so happy when another human soul must be so miserable?

"Will you tell me just what Leslie said and how she acted the night you met her on the shore?" asked Miss Cornelia.

She listened intently and nodded her satisfaction.

"YOU thought she was stiff and cold, Anne, dearie, but I can tell you she thawed out wonderful for her. She must have taken to you real strong. I'm so glad. You may be able to help her a good deal. I was thankful when I heard that a young couple was coming to this house, for I hoped it would mean some friends for Leslie; especially if you belonged to the race that knows Joseph. You WILL be her friend, won't you, Anne, dearie?"

"Indeed I will, if she'll let me," said Anne, with all her own sweet, impulsive earnestness.

"No, you must be her friend, whether she'll let you or not," said Miss Cornelia resolutely. "Don't you mind if she's stiff by times — don't notice it. Remember what her life has been — and is — and must always be, I suppose, for creatures like Dick Moore live forever, I understand. You should see how fat he's got since he came home. He used to be lean enough. Just MAKE her be friends — you can do it — you're one of those who have the knack. Only you mustn't be sensitive. And don't mind if she

doesn't seem to want you to go over there much. She knows that some women don't like to be where Dick is — they complain he gives them the creeps. Just get her to come over here as often as she can. She can't get away so very much — she can't leave Dick long, for the Lord knows what he'd do — burn the house down most likely. At nights, after he's in bed and asleep, is about the only time she's free. He always goes to bed early and sleeps like the dead till next morning. That is how you came to meet her at the shore likely. She wanders there considerable."

"I will do everything I can for her," said Anne. Her interest in Leslie Moore, which had been vivid ever since she had seen her driving her geese down the hill, was intensified a thousand fold by Miss Cornelia's narration. The girl's beauty and sorrow and loneliness drew her with an irresistible fascination. She had never known anyone like her; her friends had hitherto been wholesome, normal, merry girls like herself, with only the average trials of human care and bereavement to shadow their girlish dreams. Leslie Moore stood apart, a tragic, appealing figure of thwarted womanhood. Anne resolved that she would win entrance into the kingdom of that lonely soul and find there the comradeship it could so richly give, were it not for the cruel fetters that held it in a prison not of its own making.

"And mind you this, Anne, dearie," said Miss Cornelia, who had not yet wholly relieved her mind, "You mustn't think Leslie is an infidel because she hardly ever goes to church — or even that she's a Methodist. She can't take Dick to church, of course — not that he ever troubled church much in his best days. But you just remember that she's a real strong Presbyterian at heart, Anne, dearie."

Leslie Comes Over

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Leslie came over to the house of dreams one frosty October night, when moonlit mists were hanging over the harbor and curling like silver ribbons along the seaward glens. She looked as if she repented coming when Gilbert answered her knock; but Anne flew past him, pounced on her, and drew her in.

“I’m so glad you picked tonight for a call,” she said gaily. “I made up a lot of extra good fudge this afternoon and we want someone to help us eat it — before the fire — while we tell stories. Perhaps Captain Jim will drop in, too. This is his night.”

“No. Captain Jim is over home,” said Leslie. “He — he made me come here,” she added, half defiantly.

“I’ll say a thank-you to him for that when I see him,” said Anne, pulling easy chairs before the fire.

“Oh, I don’t mean that I didn’t want to come,” protested Leslie, flushing a little. “I — I’ve been thinking of coming — but it isn’t always easy for me to get away.”

“Of course it must be hard for you to leave Mr. Moore,” said Anne, in a matter-of-fact tone. She had decided that it would be best to mention Dick Moore occasionally as an accepted fact, and not give undue morbidity to the subject by avoiding it. She was right, for Leslie’s air of constraint suddenly vanished. Evidently she had been wondering how much Anne knew of the conditions of her life and was relieved that no explanations were needed. She allowed her cap and jacket to be taken, and sat down with a girlish snuggle in the big armchair by Magog. She was dressed prettily and carefully, with the customary touch of color in the scarlet geranium at her white throat. Her beautiful hair gleamed like molten gold in the warm firelight. Her sea-blue eyes were full of soft laughter and allurements. For the moment, under the influence of the little

house of dreams, she was a girl again — a girl forgetful of the past and its bitterness. The atmosphere of the many loves that had sanctified the little house was all about her; the companionship of two healthy, happy, young folks of her own generation encircled her; she felt and yielded to the magic of her surroundings — Miss Cornelia and Captain Jim would scarcely have recognized her; Anne found it hard to believe that this was the cold, unresponsive woman she had met on the shore — this animated girl who talked and listened with the eagerness of a starved soul. And how hungrily Leslie's eyes looked at the bookcases between the windows!

"Our library isn't very extensive," said Anne, "but every book in it is a FRIEND. We've picked our books up through the years, here and there, never buying one until we had first read it and knew that it belonged to the race of Joseph."

Leslie laughed — beautiful laughter that seemed akin to all the mirth that had echoed through the little house in the vanished years.

"I have a few books of father's — not many," she said. "I've read them until I know them almost by heart. I don't get many books. There's a circulating library at the Glen store — but I don't think the committee who pick the books for Mr. Parker know what books are of Joseph's race — or perhaps they don't care. It was so seldom I got one I really liked that I gave up getting any."

"I hope you'll look on our bookshelves as your own," said Anne.

"You are entirely and wholeheartedly welcome to the loan of any book on them."

"You are setting a feast of fat things before me," said Leslie, joyously. Then, as the clock struck ten, she rose, half unwillingly.

"I must go. I didn't realise it was so late. Captain Jim is always saying it doesn't take long to stay an hour. But I've stayed two — and oh, but I've enjoyed them," she added frankly.

"Come often," said Anne and Gilbert. They had risen and stood together in the firelight's glow. Leslie looked at them — youthful, hopeful, happy, typifying all she had missed and must forever miss. The light went out of her face and eyes; the girl vanished; it was the sorrowful, cheated

woman who answered the invitation almost coldly and got herself away with a pitiful haste.

Anne watched her until she was lost in the shadows of the chill and misty night. Then she turned slowly back to the glow of her own radiant hearthstone.

“Isn’t she lovely, Gilbert? Her hair fascinates me. Miss Cornelia says it reaches to her feet. Ruby Gillis had beautiful hair — but Leslie’s is ALIVE — every thread of it is living gold.”

“She is very beautiful,” agreed Gilbert, so heartily that Anne almost wished he were a LITTLE less enthusiastic.

“Gilbert, would you like my hair better if it were like Leslie’s?” she asked wistfully.

“I wouldn’t have your hair any color but just what it is for the world,” said Gilbert, with one or two convincing accompaniments.

You wouldn’t be ANNE if you had golden hair — or hair of any color but” —

“Red,” said Anne, with gloomy satisfaction.

“Yes, red — to give warmth to that milk-white skin and those shining gray-green eyes of yours. Golden hair wouldn’t suit you at all Queen Anne — MY Queen Anne — queen of my heart and life and home.”

“Then you may admire Leslie’s all you like,” said Anne magnanimously.

A Ghostly Evening

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One evening, a week later, Anne decided to run over the fields to the house up the brook for an informal call. It was an evening of gray fog that had crept in from the gulf, swathed the harbor, filled the glens and valleys, and clung heavily to the autumnal meadows. Through it the sea sobbed and shuddered. Anne saw Four Winds in a new aspect, and found it weird and mysterious and fascinating; but it also gave her a little feeling of loneliness. Gilbert was away and would be away until the morrow, attending a medical pow-wow in Charlottetown. Anne longed for an hour of fellowship with some girl friend. Captain Jim and Miss Cornelia were “good fellows” each, in their own way; but youth yearned to youth.

“If only Diana or Phil or Pris or Stella could drop in for a chat,” she said to herself, “how delightful it would be! This is such a GHOSTLY night. I’m sure all the ships that ever sailed out of Four Winds to their doom could be seen tonight sailing up the harbor with their drowned crews on their decks, if that shrouding fog could suddenly be drawn aside. I feel as if it concealed innumerable mysteries — as if I were surrounded by the wraiths of old generations of Four Winds people peering at me through that gray veil. If ever the dear dead ladies of this little house came back to revisit it they would come on just such a night as this. If I sit here any longer I’ll see one of them there opposite me in Gilbert’s chair. This place isn’t exactly canny tonight. Even Gog and Magog have an air of pricking up their ears to hear the footsteps of unseen guests. I’ll run over to see Leslie before I frighten myself with my own fancies, as I did long ago in the matter of the Haunted Wood. I’ll leave my house of dreams to welcome back its old inhabitants. My fire will give them my goodwill and greeting — they will be gone before I come back, and my house will be mine once more. Tonight I am sure it is keeping a tryst with the past.”

Laughing a little over her fancy, yet with something of a creepy sensation in the region of her spine, Anne kissed her hand to Gog and Magog and slipped out into the fog, with some of the new magazines under her arm for Leslie.

“Leslie’s wild for books and magazines,” Miss Cornelia had told her, “and she hardly ever sees one. She can’t afford to buy them or subscribe for them. She’s really pitifully poor, Anne. I don’t see how she makes out to live at all on the little rent the farm brings in. She never even hints a complaint on the score of poverty, but I know what it must be. She’s been handicapped by it all her life. She didn’t mind it when she was free and ambitious, but it must gall now, believe ME. I’m glad she seemed so bright and merry the evening she spent with you. Captain Jim told me he had fairly to put her cap and coat on and push her out of the door. Don’t be too long going to see her either. If you are she’ll think it’s because you don’t like the sight of Dick, and she’ll crawl into her shell again. Dick’s a great, big, harmless baby, but that silly grin and chuckle of his do get on some people’s nerves. Thank goodness, I’ve no nerves myself. I like Dick Moore better now than I ever did when he was in his right senses — though the Lord knows that isn’t saying much. I was down there one day in housecleaning time helping Leslie a bit, and I was frying doughnuts. Dick was hanging round to get one, as usual, and all at once he picked up a scalding hot one I’d just fished out and dropped it on the back of my neck when I was bending over. Then he laughed and laughed. Believe ME, Anne, it took all the grace of God in my heart to keep me from just whisking up that stewpan of boiling fat and pouring it over his head.”

Anne laughed over Miss Cornelia’s wrath as she sped through the darkness. But laughter accorded ill with that night. She was sober enough when she reached the house among the willows. Everything was very silent. The front part of the house seemed dark and deserted, so Anne slipped round to the side door, which opened from the veranda into a little sitting room. There she halted noiselessly.

The door was open. Beyond, in the dimly lighted room, sat Leslie Moore, with her arms flung out on the table and her head bent upon them.

She was weeping horribly — with low, fierce, choking sobs, as if some agony in her soul were trying to tear itself out. An old black dog was sitting by her, his nose resting on his lap, his big doggish eyes full of mute, imploring sympathy and devotion. Anne drew back in dismay. She felt that she could not intermeddle with this bitterness. Her heart ached with a sympathy she might not utter. To go in now would be to shut the door forever on any possible help or friendship. Some instinct warned Anne that the proud, bitter girl would never forgive the one who thus surprised her in her abandonment of despair.

Anne slipped noiselessly from the veranda and found her way across the yard. Beyond, she heard voices in the gloom and saw the dim glow of a light. At the gate she met two men — Captain Jim with a lantern, and another who she knew must be Dick Moore — a big man, badly gone to fat, with a broad, round, red face, and vacant eyes. Even in the dull light Anne got the impression that there was something unusual about his eyes.

“Is this you, Mistress Blythe?” said Captain Jim. “Now, now, you hadn’t oughter be roaming about alone on a night like this. You could get lost in this fog easier than not. Jest you wait till I see Dick safe inside the door and I’ll come back and light you over the fields. I ain’t going to have Dr. Blythe coming home and finding that you walked clean over Cape Leforce in the fog. A woman did that once, forty years ago.

“So you’ve been over to see Leslie,” he said, when he rejoined her.

“I didn’t go in,” said Anne, and told what she had seen. Captain Jim sighed.

“Poor, poor, little girl! She don’t cry often, Mistress Blythe — she’s too brave for that. She must feel terrible when she does cry. A night like this is hard on poor women who have sorrows. There’s something about it that kinder brings up all we’ve suffered — or feared.”

“It’s full of ghosts,” said Anne, with a shiver. “That was why I came over — I wanted to clasp a human hand and hear a human voice.

“There seem to be so many INHUMAN presences about tonight. Even my own dear house was full of them. They fairly elbowed me out. So I fled over here for companionship of my kind.”

“You were right not to go in, though, Mistress Blythe. Leslie wouldn’t have liked it. She wouldn’t have liked me going in with Dick, as I’d have done if I hadn’t met you. I had Dick down with me all day. I keep him with me as much as I can to help Leslie a bit.”

“Isn’t there something odd about his eyes?” asked Anne.

“You noticed that? Yes, one is blue and t’other is hazel — his father had the same. It’s a Moore peculiarity. That was what told me he was Dick Moore when I saw him first down in Cuby. If it hadn’t a-bin for his eyes I mightn’t a-known him, with his beard and fat. You know, I reckon, that it was me found him and brought him home. Miss Cornelia always says I shouldn’t have done it, but I can’t agree with her. It was the RIGHT thing to do — and so ‘twas the only thing. There ain’t no question in my mind about THAT. But my old heart aches for Leslie. She’s only twenty-eight and she’s eaten more bread with sorrow than most women do in eighty years.”

They walked on in silence for a little while. Presently Anne said, “Do you know, Captain Jim, I never like walking with a lantern. I have always the strangest feeling that just outside the circle of light, just over its edge in the darkness, I am surrounded by a ring of furtive, sinister things, watching me from the shadows with hostile eyes. I’ve had that feeling from childhood. What is the reason? I never feel like that when I’m really in the darkness — when it is close all around me — I’m not the least frightened.”

“I’ve something of that feeling myself,” admitted Captain Jim. “I reckon when the darkness is close to us it is a friend. But when we sorter push it away from us — divorce ourselves from it, so to speak, with lantern light — it becomes an enemy. But the fog is lifting.

“There’s a smart west wind rising, if you notice. The stars will be out when you get home.”

They were out; and when Anne reentered her house of dreams the red embers were still glowing on the hearth, and all the haunting presences were gone.

November Days

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The splendor of color which had glowed for weeks along the shores of Four Winds Harbor had faded out into the soft gray-blue of late autumnal hills. There came many days when fields and shores were dim with misty rain, or shivering before the breath of a melancholy seawind — nights, too, of storm and tempest, when Anne sometimes wakened to pray that no ship might be beating up the grim north shore, for if it were so not even the great, faithful light whirling through the darkness unafraid, could avail to guide it into safe haven.

“In November I sometimes feel as if spring could never come again,” she sighed, grieving over the hopeless unsightliness of her frosted and bedraggled flower-plots. The gay little garden of the schoolmaster’s bride was rather a forlorn place now, and the Lombardies and birches were under bare poles, as Captain Jim said. But the firwood behind the little house was forever green and staunch; and even in November and December there came gracious days of sunshine and purple hazes, when the harbor danced and sparkled as blithely as in midsummer, and the gulf was so softly blue and tender that the storm and the wild wind seemed only things of a long-past dream.

Anne and Gilbert spent many an autumn evening at the lighthouse. It was always a cheery place. Even when the east wind sang in minor and the sea was dead and gray, hints of sunshine seemed to be lurking all about it. Perhaps this was because the First Mate always paraded it in panoply of gold. He was so large and effulgent that one hardly missed the sun, and his resounding purrs formed a pleasant accompaniment to the laughter and conversation which went on around Captain Jim’s fireplace. Captain Jim and Gilbert had many long discussions and high converse on matters beyond the ken of cat or king.

“I like to ponder on all kinds of problems, though I can’t solve ‘em,” said Captain Jim. “My father held that we should never talk of things we couldn’t understand, but if we didn’t, doctor, the subjects for conversation would be mighty few. I reckon the gods laugh many a time to hear us, but what matters so long as we remember that we’re only men and don’t take to fancying that we’re gods ourselves, really, knowing good and evil. I reckon our powwows won’t do us or anyone much harm, so let’s have another whack at the whence, why and whither this evening, doctor.”

While they “whacked,” Anne listened or dreamed. Sometimes Leslie went to the lighthouse with them, and she and Anne wandered along the shore in the eerie twilight, or sat on the rocks below the lighthouse until the darkness drove them back to the cheer of the driftwood fire. Then Captain Jim would brew them tea and tell them

“tales of land and sea
And whatsoever might betide
The great forgotten world outside.”

Leslie seemed always to enjoy those lighthouse carousals very much, and bloomed out for the time being into ready wit and beautiful laughter, or glowing-eyed silence. There was a certain tang and savor in the conversation when Leslie was present which they missed when she was absent. Even when she did not talk she seemed to inspire others to brilliancy. Captain Jim told his stories better, Gilbert was quicker in argument and repartee, Anne felt little gushes and trickles of fancy and imagination bubbling to her lips under the influence of Leslie’s personality.

“That girl was born to be a leader in social and intellectual circles, far away from Four Winds,” she said to Gilbert as they walked home one night. “She’s just wasted here — wasted.”

“Weren’t you listening to Captain Jim and yours truly the other night when we discussed that subject generally? We came to the comforting conclusion that the Creator probably knew how to run His universe quite as well as we do, and that, after all, there are no such things as ‘wasted’

lives, saving and except when an individual wilfully squanders and wastes his own life — which Leslie Moore certainly hasn't done. And some people might think that a Redmond B.A., whom editors were beginning to honor, was 'wasted' as the wife of a struggling country doctor in the rural community of Four Winds."

"Gilbert!"

"If you had married Roy Gardner, now," continued Gilbert mercilessly, "YOU could have been 'a leader in social and intellectual circles far away from Four Winds.'"

"Gilbert BLYTHE!"

"You KNOW you were in love with him at one time, Anne."

"Gilbert, that's mean—'pisen mean, just like all the men,' as Miss Cornelia says. I NEVER was in love with him. I only imagined I was. YOU know that. You KNOW I'd rather be your wife in our house of dreams and fulfillment than a queen in a palace."

Gilbert's answer was not in words; but I am afraid that both of them forgot poor Leslie speeding her lonely way across the fields to a house that was neither a palace nor the fulfillment of a dream.

The moon was rising over the sad, dark sea behind them and transfiguring it. Her light had not yet reached the harbor, the further side of which was shadowy and suggestive, with dim coves and rich glooms and jewelling lights.

"How the home lights shine out tonight through the dark!" said Anne. "That string of them over the harbor looks like a necklace. And what a coruscation there is up at the Glen! Oh, look, Gilbert; there is ours. I'm so glad we left it burning. I hate to come home to a dark house. OUR homelight, Gilbert! Isn't it lovely to see?"

"Just one of earth's many millions of homes, Anne — girl — but ours — OURS — our beacon in 'a naughty world.' When a fellow has a home and a dear, little, redhaired wife in it what more need he ask of life?"

"Well, he might ask ONE thing more," whispered Anne happily. "Oh, Gilbert, it seems as if I just COULDN'T wait for the spring."

Christmas at Four Winds

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At first Anne and Gilbert talked of going home to Avonlea for Christmas; but eventually they decided to stay in Four Winds. “I want to spend the first Christmas of our life together in our own home,” decreed Anne.

So it fell out that Marilla and Mrs. Rachel Lynde and the twins came to Four Winds for Christmas. Marilla had the face of a woman who had circumnavigated the globe. She had never been sixty miles away from home before; and she had never eaten a Christmas dinner anywhere save at Green Gables.

Mrs. Rachel had made and brought with her an enormous plum pudding. Nothing could have convinced Mrs. Rachel that a college graduate of the younger generation could make a Christmas plum pudding properly; but she bestowed approval on Anne’s house.

“Anne’s a good housekeeper,” she said to Marilla in the spare room the night of their arrival. “I’ve looked into her bread box and her scrap pail. I always judge a housekeeper by those, that’s what. There’s nothing in the pail that shouldn’t have been thrown away, and no stale pieces in the bread box. Of course, she was trained up with you — but, then, she went to college afterwards. I notice she’s got my tobacco stripe quilt on the bed here, and that big round braided mat of yours before her livingroom fire. It makes me feel right at home.”

Anne’s first Christmas in her own house was as delightful as she could have wished. The day was fine and bright; the first skim of snow had fallen on Christmas Eve and made the world beautiful; the harbor was still open and glittering.

Captain Jim and Miss Cornelia came to dinner. Leslie and Dick had been invited, but Leslie made excuse; they always went to her Uncle Isaac West’s for Christmas, she said.

“She’d rather have it so,” Miss Cornelia told Anne. “She can’t bear taking Dick where there are strangers. Christmas is always a hard time for Leslie. She and her father used to make a lot of it.”

Miss Cornelia and Mrs. Rachel did not take a very violent fancy to each other. “Two suns hold not their courses in one sphere.” But they did not clash at all, for Mrs. Rachel was in the kitchen helping Anne and Marilla with the dinner, and it fell to Gilbert to entertain Captain Jim and Miss Cornelia, — or rather to be entertained by them, for a dialogue between those two old friends and antagonists was assuredly never dull.

“It’s many a year since there was a Christmas dinner here, Mistress Blythe,” said Captain Jim. “Miss Russell always went to her friends in town for Christmas. But I was here to the first Christmas dinner that was ever eaten in this house — and the schoolmaster’s bride cooked it. That was sixty years ago today, Mistress Blythe — and a day very like this — just enough snow to make the hills white, and the harbor as blue as June. I was only a lad, and I’d never been invited out to dinner before, and I was too shy to eat enough. I’ve got all over THAT.”

“Most men do,” said Miss Cornelia, sewing furiously. Miss Cornelia was not going to sit with idle hands, even on Christmas.

Babies come without any consideration for holidays, and there was one expected in a poverty-stricken household at Glen St. Mary. Miss Cornelia had sent that household a substantial dinner for its little swarm, and so meant to eat her own with a comfortable conscience.

“Well, you know, the way to a man’s heart is through his stomach, Cornelia,” explained Captain Jim.

“I believe you — when he HAS a heart,” retorted Miss Cornelia. “I suppose that’s why so many women kill themselves cooking — just as poor Amelia Baxter did. She died last Christmas morning, and she said it was the first Christmas since she was married that she didn’t have to cook a big, twenty-plate dinner. It must have been a real pleasant change for her. Well, she’s been dead a year, so you’ll soon hear of Horace Baxter taking notice.”

“I heard he was taking notice already,” said Captain Jim, winking at Gilbert. “Wasn’t he up to your place one Sunday lately, with his funeral blacks on, and a boiled collar?”

“No, he wasn’t. And he needn’t come neither. I could have had him long ago when he was fresh. I don’t want any secondhand goods, believe ME. As for Horace Baxter, he was in financial difficulties a year ago last summer, and he prayed to the Lord for help; and when his wife died and he got her life insurance he said he believed it was the answer to his prayer. Wasn’t that like a man?”

“Have you really proof that he said that, Cornelia?”

“I have the Methodist minister’s word for it — if you call THAT proof. Robert Baxter told me the same thing too, but I admit THAT isn’t evidence. Robert Baxter isn’t often known to tell the truth.”

“Come, come, Cornelia, I think he generally tells the truth, but he changes his opinion so often it sometimes sounds as if he didn’t.”

“It sounds like it mighty often, believe ME. But trust one man to excuse another. I have no use for Robert Baxter. He turned Methodist just because the Presbyterian choir happened to be singing ‘Behold the bridegroom cometh’ for a collection piece when him and Margaret walked up the aisle the Sunday after they were married. Served him right for being late! He always insisted the choir did it on purpose to insult him, as if he was of that much importance. But that family always thought they were much bigger potatoes than they really were. His brother Eliphalet imagined the devil was always at his elbow — but *I* never believed the devil wasted that much time on him.”

“I — don’t — know,” said Captain Jim thoughtfully. “Eliphalet Baxter lived too much alone — hadn’t even a cat or dog to keep him human. When a man is alone he’s mighty apt to be with the devil — if he ain’t with God. He has to choose which company he’ll keep, I reckon. If the devil always was at Life Baxter’s elbow it must have been because Life liked to have him there.”

“Manlike,” said Miss Cornelia, and subsided into silence over a complicated arrangement of tucks until Captain Jim deliberately stirred

her up again by remarking in a casual way:

“I was up to the Methodist church last Sunday morning.”

“You’d better have been home reading your Bible,” was Miss Cornelia’s retort.

“Come, now, Cornelia, *I* can’t see any harm in going to the Methodist church when there’s no preaching in your own. I’ve been a Presbyterian for seventy-six years, and it isn’t likely my theology will hoist anchor at this late day.”

“It’s setting a bad example,” said Miss Cornelia grimly.

“Besides,” continued wicked Captain Jim, “I wanted to hear some good singing. The Methodists have a good choir; and you can’t deny, Cornelia, that the singing in our church is awful since the split in the choir.”

“What if the singing isn’t good? They’re doing their best, and God sees no difference between the voice of a crow and the voice of a nightingale.”

“Come, come, Cornelia,” said Captain Jim mildly, “I’ve a better opinion of the Almighty’s ear for music than *THAT*.”

“What caused the trouble in our choir?” asked Gilbert, who was suffering from suppressed laughter.

“It dates back to the new church, three years ago,” answered Captain Jim. “We had a fearful time over the building of that church — fell out over the question of a new site. The two sites wasn’t more’n two hundred yards apart, but you’d have thought they was a thousand by the bitterness of that fight. We was split up into three factions — one wanted the east site and one the south, and one held to the old. It was fought out in bed and at board, and in church and at market. All the old scandals of three generations were dragged out of their graves and aired. Three matches was broken up by it. And the meetings we had to try to settle the question! Cornelia, will you ever forget the one when old Luther Burns got up and made a speech? *HE* stated his opinions forcibly.”

“Call a spade a spade, Captain. You mean he got red-mad and raked them all, fore and aft. They deserved it too — a pack of incapables. But what would you expect of a committee of men? That building committee held twenty-seven meetings, and at the end of the twenty-seventh weren’t

no nearer having a church than when they begun — not so near, for a fact, for in one fit of hurrying things along they'd gone to work and tore the old church down, so there we were, without a church, and no place but the hall to worship in."

"The Methodists offered us their church, Cornelia."

"The Glen St. Mary church wouldn't have been built to this day," went on Miss Cornelia, ignoring Captain Jim, "if we women hadn't just started in and took charge. We said WE meant to have a church, if the men meant to quarrel till doomsday, and we were tired of being a laughing-stock for the Methodists. We held ONE meeting and elected a committee and canvassed for subscriptions. We got them, too. When any of the men tried to sass us we told them they'd tried for two years to build a church and it was our turn now. We shut them up close, believe ME, and in six months we had our church. Of course, when the men saw we were determined they stopped fighting and went to work, manlike, as soon as they saw they had to, or quit bossing. Oh, women can't preach or be elders; but they can build churches and scare up the money for them."

"The Methodists allow women to preach," said Captain Jim.

Miss Cornelia glared at him.

"I never said the Methodists hadn't common sense, Captain. What I say is, I doubt if they have much religion."

"I suppose you are in favor of votes for women, Miss Cornelia," said Gilbert.

"I'm not hankering after the vote, believe ME," said Miss Cornelia scornfully. "I know what it is to clean up after the men. But some of these days, when the men realize they've got the world into a mess they can't get it out of, they'll be glad to give us the vote, and shoulder their troubles over on us. That's THEIR scheme. Oh, it's well that women are patient, believe ME!"

"What about Job?" suggested Captain Jim.

"Job! It was such a rare thing to find a patient man that when one was really discovered they were determined he shouldn't be forgotten," retorted Miss Cornelia triumphantly. "Anyhow, the virtue doesn't go with

the name. There never was such an impatient man born as old Job Taylor over harbor.”

“Well, you know, he had a good deal to try him, Cornelia. Even you can’t defend his wife. I always remember what old William MacAllister said of her at her funeral, ‘There’s nae doot she was a Chreestian wumman, but she had the de’il’s own temper.’”

“I suppose she WAS trying,” admitted Miss Cornelia reluctantly, “but that didn’t justify what Job said when she died. He rode home from the graveyard the day of the funeral with my father. He never said a word till they got near home. Then he heaved a big sigh and said, ‘You may not believe it, Stephen, but this is the happiest day of my life!’ Wasn’t that like a man?”

“I s’pose poor old Mrs. Job did make life kinder uneasy for him,” reflected Captain Jim.

“Well, there’s such a thing as decency, isn’t there? Even if a man is rejoicing in his heart over his wife being dead, he needn’t proclaim it to the four winds of heaven. And happy day or not, Job Taylor wasn’t long in marrying again, you might notice. His second wife could manage him. She made him walk Spanish, believe me! The first thing she did was to make him hustle round and put up a tombstone to the first Mrs. Job — and she had a place left on it for her own name. She said there’d be nobody to make Job put up a monument to HER.”

“Speaking of Taylors, how is Mrs. Lewis Taylor up at the Glen, doctor?” asked Captain Jim.

“She’s getting better slowly — but she has to work too hard,” replied Gilbert.

“Her husband works hard too — raising prize pigs,” said Miss Cornelia. “He’s noted for his beautiful pigs. He’s a heap prouder of his pigs than of his children. But then, to be sure, his pigs are the best pigs possible, while his children don’t amount to much. He picked a poor mother for them, and starved her while she was bearing and rearing them. His pigs got the cream and his children got the skim milk.

“There are times, Cornelia, when I have to agree with you, though it hurts me,” said Captain Jim. “That’s just exactly the truth about Lewis Taylor. When I see those poor, miserable children of his, robbed of all children ought to have, it p’isens my own bite and sup for days afterwards.”

Gilbert went out to the kitchen in response to Anne’s beckoning. Anne shut the door and gave him a connubial lecture.

“Gilbert, you and Captain Jim must stop baiting Miss Cornelia. Oh, I’ve been listening to you — and I just won’t allow it.”

‘Anne, Miss Cornelia is enjoying herself hugely. You know she is.’

“Well, never mind. You two needn’t egg her on like that. Dinner is ready now, and, Gilbert, DON’T let Mrs. Rachel carve the geese. I know she means to offer to do it because she doesn’t think you can do it properly. Show her you can.”

“I ought to be able to. I’ve been studying A-B-C-D diagrams of carving for the past month,” said Gilbert. “Only don’t talk to me while I’m doing it, Anne, for if you drive the letters out of my head I’ll be in a worse predicament than you were in old geometry days when the teacher changed them.”

Gilbert carved the geese beautifully. Even Mrs. Rachel had to admit that. And everybody ate of them and enjoyed them. Anne’s first Christmas dinner was a great success and she beamed with housewifely pride. Merry was the feast and long; and when it was over they gathered around the cheer of the red hearth flame and Captain Jim told them stories until the red sun swung low over Four Winds Harbor, and the long blue shadows of the Lombardies fell across the snow in the lane.

“I must be getting back to the light,” he said finally. “I’ll jest have time to walk home before sundown. Thank you for a beautiful Christmas, Mistress Blythe. Bring Master Davy down to the light some night before he goes home.

“I want to see those stone gods,” said Davy with a relish.

New Year's Eve at the Light

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The Green Gables folk went home after Christmas, Marilla under solemn covenant to return for a month in the spring. More snow came before New Year's, and the harbor froze over, but the gulf still was free, beyond the white, imprisoned fields. The last day of the old year was one of those bright, cold, dazzling winter days, which bombard us with their brilliancy, and command our admiration but never our love. The sky was sharp and blue; the snow diamonds sparkled insistently; the stark trees were bare and shameless, with a kind of brazen beauty; the hills shot assaulting lances of crystal. Even the shadows were sharp and stiff and clear-cut, as no proper shadows should be. Everything that was handsome seemed ten times handsomer and less attractive in the glaring splendor; and everything that was ugly seemed ten times uglier, and everything was either handsome or ugly. There was no soft blending, or kind obscurity, or elusive mistiness in that searching glitter. The only things that held their own individuality were the firs — for the fir is the tree of mystery and shadow, and yields never to the encroachments of crude radiance.

But finally the day began to realise that she was growing old. Then a certain pensiveness fell over her beauty which dimmed yet intensified it; sharp angles, glittering points, melted away into curves and enticing gleams. The white harbor put on soft grays and pinks; the faraway hills turned amethyst.

“The old year is going away beautifully,” said Anne.

She and Leslie and Gilbert were on their way to the Four Winds Point, having plotted with Captain Jim to watch the New Year in at the light. The sun had set and in the southwestern sky hung Venus, glorious and golden, having drawn as near to her earth-sister as is possible for her. For the first time Anne and Gilbert saw the shadow cast by that brilliant star of evening, that faint, mysterious shadow, never seen save when there is

white snow to reveal it, and then only with averted vision, vanishing when you gaze at it directly.

“It’s like the spirit of a shadow, isn’t it?” whispered Anne. “You can see it so plainly haunting your side when you look ahead; but when you turn and look at it — it’s gone.”

“I have heard that you can see the shadow of Venus only once in a lifetime, and that within a year of seeing it your life’s most wonderful gift will come to you,” said Leslie. But she spoke rather hardly; perhaps she thought that even the shadow of Venus could bring her no gift of life. Anne smiled in the soft twilight; she felt quite sure what the mystic shadow promised her.

They found Marshall Elliott at the lighthouse. At first Anne felt inclined to resent the intrusion of this long-haired, long-bearded eccentric into the familiar little circle. But Marshall Elliott soon proved his legitimate claim to membership in the household of Joseph. He was a witty, intelligent, well-read man, rivalling Captain Jim himself in the knack of telling a good story. They were all glad when he agreed to watch the old year out with them.

Captain Jim’s small nephew Joe had come down to spend New Year’s with his great-uncle, and had fallen asleep on the sofa with the First Mate curled up in a huge golden ball at his feet.

“Ain’t he a dear little man?” said Captain Jim gloatingly. “I do love to watch a little child asleep, Mistress Blythe. It’s the most beautiful sight in the world, I reckon. Joe does love to get down here for a night, because I have him sleep with me. At home he has to sleep with the other two boys, and he doesn’t like it. Why can’t I sleep with father, Uncle Jim?” says he. ‘Everybody in the Bible slept with their fathers.’ As for the questions he asks, the minister himself couldn’t answer them. They fair swamp me. ‘Uncle Jim, if I wasn’t ME who’d I be?’ and, ‘Uncle Jim, what would happen if God died?’ He fired them two off at me tonight, afore he went to sleep. As for his imagination, it sails away from everything. He makes up the most remarkable yarns — and then his mother shuts him up in the closet for telling stories. And he sits down and makes up another one, and

has it ready to relate to her when she lets him out. He had one for me when he come down tonight. ‘Uncle Jim,’ says he, solemn as a tombstone, ‘I had a ‘venture in the Glen today.’ ‘Yes, what was it?’ says I, expecting something quite startling, but nowise prepared for what I really got. ‘I met a wolf in the street,’ says he, ‘a ‘normous wolf with a big, red mouf and AWFUL long teeth, Uncle Jim.’ ‘I didn’t know there was any wolves up at the Glen,’ says I. ‘Oh, he comed there from far, far away,’ says Joe, ‘and I fought he was going to eat me up, Uncle Jim.’ ‘Were you scared?’ says I. ‘No, ‘cause I had a big gun,’ says Joe, ‘and I shot the wolf dead, Uncle Jim, — solid dead — and then he went up to heaven and bit God,’ says he. Well, I was fair staggered, Mistress Blythe.”

The hours bloomed into mirth around the driftwood fire. Captain Jim told tales, and Marshall Elliott sang old Scotch ballads in a fine tenor voice; finally Captain Jim took down his old brown fiddle from the wall and began to play. He had a tolerable knack of fiddling, which all appreciated save the First Mate, who sprang from the sofa as if he had been shot, emitted a shriek of protest, and fled wildly up the stairs.

“Can’t cultivate an ear for music in that cat nohow,” said Captain Jim. “He won’t stay long enough to learn to like it. When we got the organ up at the Glen church old Elder Richards bounced up from his seat the minute the organist began to play and scuttled down the aisle and out of the church at the rate of no-man’s-business. It reminded me so strong of the First Mate tearing loose as soon as I begin to fiddle that I come nearer to laughing out loud in church than I ever did before or since.”

There was something so infectious in the rollicking tunes which Captain Jim played that very soon Marshall Elliott’s feet began to twitch. He had been a noted dancer in his youth. Presently he started up and held out his hands to Leslie. Instantly she responded. Round and round the firelit room they circled with a rhythmic grace that was wonderful. Leslie danced like one inspired; the wild, sweet abandon of the music seemed to have entered into and possessed her. Anne watched her in fascinated admiration. She had never seen her like this. All the innate richness and color and charm of her nature seemed to have broken loose and

overflowed in crimson cheek and glowing eye and grace of motion. Even the aspect of Marshall Elliott, with his long beard and hair, could not spoil the picture. On the contrary, it seemed to enhance it. Marshall Elliott looked like a Viking of elder days, dancing with one of the blue-eyed, golden-haired daughters of the Northland.

“The purtiest dancing I ever saw, and I’ve seen some in my time,” declared Captain Jim, when at last the bow fell from his tired hand. Leslie dropped into her chair, laughing, breathless.

“I love dancing,” she said apart to Anne. “I haven’t danced since I was sixteen — but I love it. The music seems to run through my veins like quicksilver and I forget everything — everything — except the delight of keeping time to it. There isn’t any floor beneath me, or walls about me, or roof over me — I’m floating amid the stars.”

Captain Jim hung his fiddle up in its place, beside a large frame enclosing several banknotes.

“Is there anybody else of your acquaintance who can afford to hang his walls with banknotes for pictures?” he asked. “There’s twenty ten-dollar notes there, not worth the glass over them. They’re old Bank of P. E. Island notes. Had them by me when the bank failed, and I had ‘em framed and hung up, partly as a reminder not to put your trust in banks, and partly to give me a real luxurious, millionaire feeling. Hullo, Matey, don’t be scared. You can come back now. The music and revelry is over for tonight. The old year has just another hour to stay with us. I’ve seen seventy-six New Years come in over that gulf yonder, Mistress Blythe.”

“You’ll see a hundred,” said Marshall Elliott.

Captain Jim shook his head.

“No; and I don’t want to — at least, I think I don’t. Death grows friendlier as we grow older. Not that one of us really wants to die though, Marshall. Tennyson spoke truth when he said that. There’s old Mrs. Wallace up at the Glen. She’s had heaps of trouble all her life, poor soul, and she’s lost almost everyone she cared about. She’s always saying that she’ll be glad when her time comes, and she doesn’t want to sojourn any longer in this vale of tears. But when she takes a sick spell there’s a fuss!

Doctors from town, and a trained nurse, and enough medicine to kill a dog. Life may be a vale of tears, all right, but there are some folks who enjoy weeping, I reckon.”

They spent the old year’s last hour quietly around the fire. A few minutes before twelve Captain Jim rose and opened the door.

“We must let the New Year in,” he said.

Outside was a fine blue night. A sparkling ribbon of moonlight garlanded the gulf. Inside the bar the harbor shone like a pavement of pearl. They stood before the door and waited — Captain Jim with his ripe, full experience, Marshall Elliott in his vigorous but empty middle life, Gilbert and Anne with their precious memories and exquisite hopes, Leslie with her record of starved years and her hopeless future. The clock on the little shelf above the fireplace struck twelve.

“Welcome, New Year,” said Captain Jim, bowing low as the last stroke died away. “I wish you all the best year of your lives, mates. I reckon that whatever the New Year brings us will be the best the Great Captain has for us — and somehow or other we’ll all make port in a good harbor.”

Chapter XVII.

A Four Winds Winter

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Winter set in vigorously after New Year's. Big, white drifts heaped themselves about the little house, and palms of frost covered its windows. The harbor ice grew harder and thicker, until the Four Winds people began their usual winter travelling over it. The safe ways were "bushed" by a benevolent Government, and night and day the gay tinkle of the sleighbells sounded on it. On moonlit nights Anne heard them in her house of dreams like fairy chimes. The gulf froze over, and the Four Winds light flashed no more. During the months when navigation was closed Captain Jim's office was a sinecure.

"The First Mate and I will have nothing to do till spring except keep warm and amuse ourselves. The last lighthouse keeper used always to move up to the Glen in winter; but I'd rather stay at the Point. The First Mate might get poisoned or chewed up by dogs at the Glen. It's a mite lonely, to be sure, with neither the light nor the water for company, but if our friends come to see us often we'll weather it through."

Captain Jim had an ice boat, and many a wild, glorious spin Gilbert and Anne and Leslie had over the glib harbor ice with him. Anne and Leslie took long snowshoe tramps together, too, over the fields, or across the harbor after storms, or through the woods beyond the Glen. They were very good comrades in their rambles and their fireside communings. Each had something to give the other — each felt life the richer for friendly exchange of thought and friendly silence; each looked across the white fields between their homes with a pleasant consciousness of a friend beyond. But, in spite of all this, Anne felt that there was always a barrier between Leslie and herself — a constraint that never wholly vanished.

"I don't know why I can't get closer to her," Anne said one evening to Captain Jim. "I like her so much — I admire her so much — I WANT to

take her right into my heart and creep right into hers. But I can never cross the barrier.”

“You’ve been too happy all your life, Mistress Blythe,” said Captain Jim thoughtfully. “I reckon that’s why you and Leslie can’t get real close together in your souls. The barrier between you is her experience of sorrow and trouble. She ain’t responsible for it and you ain’t; but it’s there and neither of you can cross it.”

“My childhood wasn’t very happy before I came to Green Gables,” said Anne, gazing soberly out of the window at the still, sad, dead beauty of the leafless tree-shadows on the moonlit snow.

“Mebbe not — but it was just the usual unhappiness of a child who hasn’t anyone to look after it properly. There hasn’t been any TRAGEDY in your life, Mistress Blythe. And poor Leslie’s has been almost ALL tragedy. She feels, I reckon, though mebbe she hardly knows she feels it, that there’s a vast deal in her life you can’t enter nor understand — and so she has to keep you back from it — hold you off, so to speak, from hurting her. You know if we’ve got anything about us that hurts we shrink from anyone’s touch on or near it. It holds good with our souls as well as our bodies, I reckon. Leslie’s soul must be near raw — it’s no wonder she hides it away.”

“If that were really all, I wouldn’t mind, Captain Jim. I would understand. But there are times — not always, but now and again — when I almost have to believe that Leslie doesn’t — doesn’t like me. Sometimes I surprise a look in her eyes that seems to show resentment and dislike — it goes so quickly — but I’ve seen it, I’m sure of that. And it hurts me, Captain Jim. I’m not used to being disliked — and I’ve tried so hard to win Leslie’s friendship.”

“You have won it, Mistress Blythe. Don’t you go cherishing any foolish notion that Leslie don’t like you. If she didn’t she wouldn’t have anything to do with you, much less chumming with you as she does. I know Leslie Moore too well not to be sure of that.”

“The first time I ever saw her, driving her geese down the hill on the day I came to Four Winds, she looked at me with the same expression,”

persisted Anne. "I felt it, even in the midst of my admiration of her beauty. She looked at me resentfully — she did, indeed, Captain Jim."

"The resentment must have been about something else, Mistress Blythe, and you jest come in for a share of it because you happened past. Leslie DOES take sullen spells now and again, poor girl. I can't blame her, when I know what she has to put up with. I don't know why it's permitted. The doctor and I have talked a lot about the origin of evil, but we haven't quite found out all about it yet. There's a vast of onunderstandable things in life, ain't there, Mistress Blythe? Sometimes things seem to work out real proper-like, same as with you and the doctor. And then again they all seem to go catawampus. There's Leslie, so clever and beautiful you'd think she was meant for a queen, and instead she's cooped up over there, robbed of almost everything a woman'd value, with no prospect except waiting on Dick Moore all her life. Though, mind you, Mistress Blythe, I daresay she'd choose her life now, such as it is, rather than the life she lived with Dick before he went away. THAT'S something a clumsy old sailor's tongue mustn't meddle with. But you've helped Leslie a lot — she's a different creature since you come to Four Winds. Us old friends see the difference in her, as you can't. Miss Cornelia and me was talking it over the other day, and it's one of the mighty few p'int's that we see eye to eye on. So jest you throw overboard any idea of her not liking you."

Anne could hardly discard it completely, for there were undoubtedly times when she felt, with an instinct that was not to be combated by reason, that Leslie harbored a queer, indefinable resentment towards her. At times, this secret consciousness marred the delight of their comradeship; at others it was almost forgotten; but Anne always felt the hidden thorn was there, and might prick her at any moment. She felt a cruel sting from it on the day when she told Leslie of what she hoped the spring would bring to the little house of dreams. Leslie looked at her with hard, bitter, unfriendly eyes.

"So you are to have THAT, too," she said in a choked voice. And without another word she had turned and gone across the fields homeward. Anne was deeply hurt; for the moment she felt as if she could never like

Leslie again. But when Leslie came over a few evenings later she was so pleasant, so friendly, so frank, and witty, and winsome, that Anne was charmed into forgiveness and forgetfulness. Only, she never mentioned her darling hope to Leslie again; nor did Leslie ever refer to it. But one evening, when late winter was listening for the word of spring, she came over to the little house for a twilight chat; and when she went away she left a small, white box on the table. Anne found it after she was gone and opened it wonderingly. In it was a tiny white dress of exquisite workmanship — delicate embroidery, wonderful tucking, sheer loveliness. Every stitch in it was handwork; and the little frills of lace at neck and sleeves were of real Valenciennes. Lying on it was a card—”with Leslie’s love.”

“What hours of work she must have put on it,” said Anne. “And the material must have cost more than she could really afford. It is very sweet of her.”

But Leslie was brusque and curt when Anne thanked her, and again the latter felt thrown back upon herself.

Leslie’s gift was not alone in the little house. Miss Cornelia had, for the time being, given up sewing for unwanted, unwelcome eighth babies, and fallen to sewing for a very much wanted first one, whose welcome would leave nothing to be desired. Philippa Blake and Diana Wright each sent a marvellous garment; and Mrs. Rachel Lynde sent several, in which good material and honest stitches took the place of embroidery and frills. Anne herself made many, desecrated by no touch of machinery, spending over them the happiest hours of the happy winter.

Captain Jim was the most frequent guest of the little house, and none was more welcome. Every day Anne loved the simple-souled, true-hearted old sailor more and more. He was as refreshing as a sea breeze, as interesting as some ancient chronicle. She was never tired of listening to his stories, and his quaint remarks and comments were a continual delight to her. Captain Jim was one of those rare and interesting people who “never speak but they say something.” The milk of human kindness and

the wisdom of the serpent were mingled in his composition in delightful proportions.

Nothing ever seemed to put Captain Jim out or depress him in any way.

“I’ve kind of contracted a habit of enj’ying things,” he remarked once, when Anne had commented on his invariable cheerfulness. “It’s got so chronic that I believe I even enj’y the disagreeable things. It’s great fun thinking they can’t last. ‘Old rheumatiz,’ says I, when it grips me hard, ‘you’ve GOT to stop aching sometime. The worse you are the sooner you’ll stop, mebbe. I’m bound to get the better of you in the long run, whether in the body or out of the body.’”

One night, by the fireside at the light Anne saw Captain Jim’s “life-book.” He needed no coaxing to show it and proudly gave it to her to read.

“I writ it to leave to little Joe,” he said. “I don’t like the idea of everything I’ve done and seen being clean forgot after I’ve shipped for my last v’yage. Joe, he’ll remember it, and tell the yarns to his children.”

It was an old leather-bound book filled with the record of his voyages and adventures. Anne thought what a treasure trove it would be to a writer. Every sentence was a nugget. In itself the book had no literary merit; Captain Jim’s charm of storytelling failed him when he came to pen and ink; he could only jot roughly down the outline of his famous tales, and both spelling and grammar were sadly askew. But Anne felt that if anyone possessed of the gift could take that simple record of a brave, adventurous life, reading between the bald lines the tales of dangers staunchly faced and duty manfully done, a wonderful story might be made from it. Rich comedy and thrilling tragedy were both lying hidden in Captain Jim’s “life-book,” waiting for the touch of the master hand to waken the laughter and grief and horror of thousands.

Anne said something of this to Gilbert as they walked home.

“Why don’t you try your hand at it yourself, Anne?”

Anne shook her head.

“No. I only wish I could. But it’s not in the power of my gift. You know what my forte is, Gilbert — the fanciful, the fairylike, the pretty. To write Captain Jim’s life-book as it should be written one should be a

master of vigorous yet subtle style, a keen psychologist, a born humorist and a born tragedian. A rare combination of gifts is needed. Paul might do it if he were older. Anyhow, I'm going to ask him to come down next summer and meet Captain Jim."

"Come to this shore," wrote Anne to Paul. "I am afraid you cannot find here Nora or the Golden Lady or the Twin Sailors; but you will find one old sailor who can tell you wonderful stories."

Paul, however wrote back, saying regretfully that he could not come that year. He was going abroad for two year's study.

"When I return I'll come to Four Winds, dear Teacher," he wrote.

"But meanwhile, Captain Jim is growing old," said Anne, sorrowfully, "and there is nobody to write his life-book."

Spring Days

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The ice in the harbor grew black and rotten in the March suns; in April there were blue waters and a windy, white-capped gulf again; and again the Four Winds light begemmed the twilights.

“I’m so glad to see it once more,” said Anne, on the first evening of its reappearance. “I’ve missed it so all winter. The northwestern sky has seemed blank and lonely without it.”

The land was tender with brand-new, golden-green, baby leaves. There was an emerald mist on the woods beyond the Glen. The seaward valleys were full of fairy mists at dawn.

Vibrant winds came and went with salt foam in their breath. The sea laughed and flashed and preened and allured, like a beautiful, coquettish woman. The herring schooled and the fishing village woke to life. The harbor was alive with white sails making for the channel. The ships began to sail outward and inward again.

“On a spring day like this,” said Anne, “I know exactly what my soul will feel like on the resurrection morning.”

“There are times in spring when I sorter feel that I might have been a poet if I’d been caught young,” remarked Captain Jim. “I catch myself conning over old lines and verses I heard the schoolmaster reciting sixty years ago. They don’t trouble me at other times. Now I feel as if I had to get out on the rocks or the fields or the water and spout them.”

Captain Jim had come up that afternoon to bring Anne a load of shells for her garden, and a little bunch of sweetgrass which he had found in a ramble over the sand dunes.

“It’s getting real scarce along this shore now,” he said. “When I was a boy there was aplenty of it. But now it’s only once in a while you’ll find a plot — and never when you’re looking for it. You jest have to stumble on it — you’re walking along on the sand hills, never thinking of sweetgrass

— and all at once the air is full of sweetness — and there’s the grass under your feet. I favor the smell of sweetgrass. It always makes me think of my mother.”

“She was fond of it?” asked Anne.

“Not that I knows on. Dunno’s she ever saw any sweetgrass. No, it’s because it has a kind of motherly perfume — not too young, you understand — something kind of seasoned and wholesome and dependable — jest like a mother. The schoolmaster’s bride always kept it among her handkerchiefs. You might put that little bunch among yours, Mistress Blythe. I don’t like these boughten scents — but a whiff of sweetgrass belongs anywhere a lady does.”

Anne had not been especially enthusiastic over the idea of surrounding her flower beds with quahog shells; as a decoration they did not appeal to her on first thought. But she would not have hurt Captain Jim’s feelings for anything; so she assumed a virtue she did not at first feel, and thanked him heartily. And when Captain Jim had proudly encircled every bed with a rim of the big, milk-white shells, Anne found to her surprise that she liked the effect. On a town lawn, or even up at the Glen, they would not have been in keeping, but here, in the old-fashioned, sea-bound garden of the little house of dreams, they BELONGED.

“They DO look nice,” she said sincerely.

“The schoolmaster’s bride always had cowhawks round her beds,” said Captain Jim. “She was a master hand with flowers. She LOOKED at ‘em — and touched ‘em — SO — and they grew like mad. Some folks have that knack — I reckon you have it, too, Mistress Blythe.”

“Oh, I don’t know — but I love my garden, and I love working in it. To potter with green, growing things, watching each day to see the dear, new sprouts come up, is like taking a hand in creation, I think. Just now my garden is like faith — the substance of things hoped for. But bide a wee.”

“It always amazes me to look at the little, wrinkled brown seeds and think of the rainbows in ‘em,” said Captain Jim. “When I ponder on them seeds I don’t find it nowise hard to believe that we’ve got souls that’ll live in other worlds. You couldn’t hardly believe there was life in them tiny

things, some no bigger than grains of dust, let alone color and scent, if you hadn't seen the miracle, could you?"

Anne, who was counting her days like silver beads on a rosary, could not now take the long walk to the lighthouse or up the Glen road. But Miss Cornelia and Captain Jim came very often to the little house. Miss Cornelia was the joy of Anne's and Gilbert's existence. They laughed sidesplittingly over her speeches after every visit. When Captain Jim and she happened to visit the little house at the same time there was much sport for the listening. They waged wordy warfare, she attacking, he defending. Anne once reproached the Captain for his baiting of Miss Cornelia.

"Oh, I do love to set her going, Mistress Blythe," chuckled the unrepentant sinner. "It's the greatest amusement I have in life. That tongue of hers would blister a stone. And you and that young dog of a doctor enj'y listening to her as much as I do."

Captain Jim came along another evening to bring Anne some mayflowers. The garden was full of the moist, scented air of a maritime spring evening. There was a milk-white mist on the edge of the sea, with a young moon kissing it, and a silver gladness of stars over the Glen. The bell of the church across the harbor was ringing dreamily sweet. The mellow chime drifted through the dusk to mingle with the soft spring-moan of the sea. Captain Jim's mayflowers added the last completing touch to the charm of the night.

"I haven't seen any this spring, and I've missed them," said Anne, burying her face in them.

"They ain't to be found around Four Winds, only in the barrens away behind the Glen up yander. I took a little trip today to the Land-of-nothing-to-do, and hunted these up for you. I reckon they're the last you'll see this spring, for they're nearly done."

"How kind and thoughtful you are, Captain Jim. Nobody else — not even Gilbert" — with a shake of her head at him — "remembered that I always long for mayflowers in spring."

“Well, I had another errand, too — I wanted to take Mr. Howard back yander a mess of trout. He likes one occasional, and it’s all I can do for a kindness he did me once. I stayed all the afternoon and talked to him. He likes to talk to me, though he’s a highly eddicated man and I’m only an ignorant old sailor, because he’s one of the folks that’s GOT to talk or they’re miserable, and he finds listeners scarce around here. The Glen folks fight shy of him because they think he’s an infidel. He ain’t that far gone exactly — few men is, I reckon — but he’s what you might call a heretic. Heretics are wicked, but they’re mighty int’resting. It’s jest that they’ve got sorter lost looking for God, being under the impression that He’s hard to find — which He ain’t never. Most of ‘em blunder to Him after awhile, I guess. I don’t think listening to Mr. Howard’s arguments is likely to do me much harm. Mind you, I believe what I was brought up to believe. It saves a vast of bother — and back of it all, God is good. The trouble with Mr. Howard is that he’s a leetle TOO clever. He thinks that he’s bound to live up to his cleverness, and that it’s smarter to thrash out some new way of getting to heaven than to go by the old track the common, ignorant folks is travelling. But he’ll get there sometime all right, and then he’ll laugh at himself.”

“Mr. Howard was a Methodist to begin with,” said Miss Cornelia, as if she thought he had not far to go from that to heresy.

“Do you know, Cornelia,” said Captain Jim gravely, “I’ve often thought that if I wasn’t a Presbyterian I’d be a Methodist.”

“Oh, well,” conceded Miss Cornelia, “if you weren’t a Presbyterian it wouldn’t matter much what you were. Speaking of heresy, reminds me, doctor — I’ve brought back that book you lent me — that Natural Law in the Spiritual World — I didn’t read more’n a third of it. I can read sense, and I can read nonsense, but that book is neither the one nor the other.”

“It IS considered rather heretical in some quarters,” admitted Gilbert, “but I told you that before you took it, Miss Cornelia.”

“Oh, I wouldn’t have minded its being heretical. I can stand wickedness, but I can’t stand foolishness,” said Miss Cornelia calmly, and

with the air of having said the last thing there was to say about Natural Law.

“Speaking of books, A Mad Love come to an end at last two weeks ago,” remarked Captain Jim musingly. “It run to one hundred and three chapters. When they got married the book stopped right off, so I reckon their troubles were all over. It’s real nice that that’s the way in books anyhow, isn’t it, even if ‘tistn’t so anywhere else?”

“I never read novels,” said Miss Cornelia. “Did you hear how Geordie Russell was today, Captain Jim?”

“Yes, I called in on my way home to see him. He’s getting round all right — but stewing in a broth of trouble, as usual, poor man.

“‘Course he brews up most of it for himself, but I reckon that don’t make it any easier to bear.”

“He’s an awful pessimist,” said Miss Cornelia.

“Well, no, he ain’t a pessimist exactly, Cornelia. He only jest never finds anything that suits him.”

“And isn’t that a pessimist?”

“No, no. A pessimist is one who never expects to find anything to suit him. Geordie hain’t got THAT far yet.”

“You’d find something good to say of the devil himself, Jim Boyd.”

“Well, you’ve heard the story of the old lady who said he was persevering. But no, Cornelia, I’ve nothing good to say of the devil.”

“Do you believe in him at all?” asked Miss Cornelia seriously.

“How can you ask that when you know what a good Presbyterian I am, Cornelia? How could a Presbyterian get along without a devil?”

“DO you?” persisted Miss Cornelia.

Captain Jim suddenly became grave.

“I believe in what I heard a minister once call ‘a mighty and malignant and INTELLIGENT power of evil working in the universe,’” he said solemnly. “I do THAT, Cornelia. You can call it the devil, or the ‘principle of evil,’ or the Old Scratch, or any name you like. It’s THERE, and all the infidels and heretics in the world can’t argue it away, any more’n they can

argue God away. It's there, and it's working. But, mind you, Cornelia, I believe it's going to get the worst of it in the long run."

"I am sure I hope so," said Miss Cornelia, none too hopefully. "But speaking of the devil, I am positive that Billy Booth is possessed by him now. Have you heard of Billy's latest performance?"

"No, what was that?"

"He's gone and burned up his wife's new, brown broadcloth suit, that she paid twenty-five dollars for in Charlottetown, because he declares the men looked too admiring at her when she wore it to church the first time. Wasn't that like a man?"

"Mistress Booth IS mighty pretty, and brown's her color," said Captain Jim reflectively.

"Is that any good reason why he should poke her new suit into the kitchen stove? Billy Booth is a jealous fool, and he makes his wife's life miserable. She's cried all the week about her suit. Oh, Anne, I wish I could write like you, believe ME. Wouldn't I score some of the men round here!"

"Those Booths are all a mite queer," said Captain Jim. "Billy seemed the sanest of the lot till he got married and then this queer jealous streak cropped out in him. His brother Daniel, now, was always odd."

"Took tantrums every few days or so and wouldn't get out of bed," said Miss Cornelia with a relish. "His wife would have to do all the barn work till he got over his spell. When he died people wrote her letters of condolence; if I'd written anything it would have been one of congratulation. Their father, old Abram Booth, was a disgusting old sot. He was drunk at his wife's funeral, and kept reeling round and hiccuping 'I didn't dri — i — i — nk much but I feel a — a — awfully que — e — e — r.' I gave him a good jab in the back with my umbrella when he came near me, and it sobered him up until they got the casket out of the house. Young Johnny Booth was to have been married yesterday, but he couldn't be because he's gone and got the mumps. Wasn't that like a man?"

"How could he help getting the mumps, poor fellow?"

“I’d poor fellow him, believe ME, if I was Kate Sterns. I don’t know how he could help getting the mumps, but I DO know the wedding supper was all prepared and everything will be spoiled before he’s well again. Such a waste! He should have had the mumps when he was a boy.”

“Come, come, Cornelia, don’t you think you’re a mite unreasonable?”

Miss Cornelia disdained to reply and turned instead to Susan Baker, a grim-faced, kindhearted elderly spinster of the Glen, who had been installed as maid-of-all-work at the little house for some weeks. Susan had been up to the Glen to make a sick call, and had just returned.

“How is poor old Aunt Mandy tonight?” asked Miss Cornelia.

Susan sighed.

“Very poorly — very poorly, Cornelia. I am afraid she will soon be in heaven, poor thing!”

“Oh, surely, it’s not so bad as that!” exclaimed Miss Cornelia, sympathetically.

Captain Jim and Gilbert looked at each other. Then they suddenly rose and went out.

“There are times,” said Captain Jim, between spasms, “when it would be a sin NOT to laugh. Them two excellent women!”

Chapter XIX.

Dawn and Dusk

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In early June, when the sand hills were a great glory of pink wild roses, and the Glen was smothered in apple blossoms, Marilla arrived at the little house, accompanied by a black horsehair trunk, patterned with brass nails, which had reposed undisturbed in the Green Gables garret for half a century. Susan Baker, who, during her few weeks' sojourn in the little house, had come to worship "young Mrs. Doctor," as she called Anne, with blind fervor, looked rather jealously askance at Marilla at first. But as Marilla did not try to interfere in kitchen matters, and showed no desire to interrupt Susan's ministrations to young Mrs. Doctor, the good handmaiden became reconciled to her presence, and told her cronies at the Glen that Miss Cuthbert was a fine old lady and knew her place.

One evening, when the sky's limpid bowl was filled with a red glory, and the robins were thrilling the golden twilight with jubilant hymns to the stars of evening, there was a sudden commotion in the little house of dreams. Telephone messages were sent up to the Glen, Doctor Dave and a white-capped nurse came hastily down, Marilla paced the garden walks between the quahog shells, murmuring prayers between her set lips, and Susan sat in the kitchen with cotton wool in her ears and her apron over her head.

Leslie, looking out from the house up the brook, saw that every window of the little house was alight, and did not sleep that night.

The June night was short; but it seemed an eternity to those who waited and watched.

"Oh, will it NEVER end?" said Marilla; then she saw how grave the nurse and Doctor Dave looked, and she dared ask no more questions. Suppose Anne — but Marilla could not suppose it.

"Do not tell me," said Susan fiercely, answering the anguish in Marilla's eyes, "that God could be so cruel as to take that darling lamb

from us when we all love her so much.”

“He has taken others as well beloved,” said Marilla hoarsely.

But at dawn, when the rising sun rent apart the mists hanging over the sandbar, and made rainbows of them, joy came to the little house. Anne was safe, and a wee, white lady, with her mother’s big eyes, was lying beside her. Gilbert, his face gray and haggard from his night’s agony, came down to tell Marilla and Susan.

“Thank God,” shuddered Marilla.

Susan got up and took the cotton wool out of her ears.

“Now for breakfast,” she said briskly. “I am of the opinion that we will all be glad of a bite and sup. You tell young Mrs. Doctor not to worry about a single thing — Susan is at the helm. You tell her just to think of her baby.”

Gilbert smiled rather sadly as he went away. Anne, her pale face blanched with its baptism of pain, her eyes aglow with the holy passion of motherhood, did not need to be told to think of her baby. She thought of nothing else. For a few hours she tasted of happiness so rare and exquisite that she wondered if the angels in heaven did not envy her.

“Little Joyce,” she murmured, when Marilla came in to see the baby. “We planned to call her that if she were a girlie. There were so many we would have liked to name her for; we couldn’t choose between them, so we decided on Joyce — we can call her Joy for short — Joy — it suits so well. Oh, Marilla, I thought I was happy before. Now I know that I just dreamed a pleasant dream of happiness. THIS is the reality.”

“You mustn’t talk, Anne — wait till you’re stronger,” said Marilla warningly.

“You know how hard it is for me NOT to talk,” smiled Anne.

At first she was too weak and too happy to notice that Gilbert and the nurse looked grave and Marilla sorrowful. Then, as subtly, and coldly, and remorselessly as a sea-fog stealing landward, fear crept into her heart. Why was not Gilbert gladder? Why would he not talk about the baby? Why would they not let her have it with her after that first heavenly — happy hour? Was — was there anything wrong?

“Gilbert,” whispered Anne imploringly, “the baby — is all right — isn’t she? Tell me — tell me.”

Gilbert was a long while in turning round; then he bent over Anne and looked in her eyes. Marilla, listening fearfully outside the door, heard a pitiful, heartbroken moan, and fled to the kitchen where Susan was weeping.

“Oh, the poor lamb — the poor lamb! How can she bear it, Miss Cuthbert? I am afraid it will kill her. She has been that built up and happy, longing for that baby, and planning for it. Cannot anything be done nohow, Miss Cuthbert?”

“I’m afraid not, Susan. Gilbert says there is no hope. He knew from the first the little thing couldn’t live.”

“And it is such a sweet baby,” sobbed Susan. “I never saw one so white — they are mostly red or yellow. And it opened its big eyes as if it was months old. The little, little thing! Oh, the poor, young Mrs. Doctor!”

At sunset the little soul that had come with the dawning went away, leaving heartbreak behind it. Miss Cornelia took the wee, white lady from the kindly but stranger hands of the nurse, and dressed the tiny waxen form in the beautiful dress Leslie had made for it. Leslie had asked her to do that. Then she took it back and laid it beside the poor, broken, tear-blinded little mother.

“The Lord has given and the Lord has taken away, dearie,” she said through her own tears. “Blessed be the name of the Lord.”

Then she went away, leaving Anne and Gilbert alone together with their dead.

The next day, the small white Joy was laid in a velvet casket which Leslie had lined with apple-blossoms, and taken to the graveyard of the church across the harbor. Miss Cornelia and Marilla put all the little love-made garments away, together with the ruffled basket which had been befrilled and belaced for dimpled limbs and downy head. Little Joy was never to sleep there; she had found a colder, narrower bed.

“This has been an awful disappointment to me,” sighed Miss Cornelia. “I’ve looked forward to this baby — and I did want it to be a girl, too.”

“I can only be thankful that Anne’s life was spared,” said Marilla, with a shiver, recalling those hours of darkness when the girl she loved was passing through the valley of the shadow.

“Poor, poor lamb! Her heart is broken,” said Susan.

“I ENVY Anne,” said Leslie suddenly and fiercely, “and I’d envy her even if she had died! She was a mother for one beautiful day. I’d gladly give my life for THAT!”

“I wouldn’t talk like that, Leslie, dearie,” said Miss Cornelia deprecatingly. She was afraid that the dignified Miss Cuthbert would think Leslie quite terrible.

Anne’s convalescence was long, and made bitter for her by many things. The bloom and sunshine of the Four Winds world grated harshly on her; and yet, when the rain fell heavily, she pictured it beating so mercilessly down on that little grave across the harbor; and when the wind blew around the eaves she heard sad voices in it she had never heard before.

Kindly callers hurt her, too, with the wellmeant platitudes with which they strove to cover the nakedness of bereavement. A letter from Phil Blake was an added sting. Phil had heard of the baby’s birth, but not of its death, and she wrote Anne a congratulatory letter of sweet mirth which hurt her horribly.

“I would have laughed over it so happily if I had my baby,” she sobbed to Marilla. “But when I haven’t it just seems like wanton cruelty — though I know Phil wouldn’t hurt me for the world. Oh, Marilla, I don’t see how I can EVER be happy again — EVERYTHING will hurt me all the rest of my life.”

“Time will help you,” said Marilla, who was racked with sympathy but could never learn to express it in other than age-worn formulas.

“It doesn’t seem FAIR,” said Anne rebelliously. “Babies are born and live where they are not wanted — where they will be neglected — where they will have no chance. I would have loved my baby so — and cared for it so tenderly — and tried to give her every chance for good. And yet I wasn’t allowed to keep her.”

“It was God’s will, Anne,” said Marilla, helpless before the riddle of the universe — the WHY of undeserved pain. “And little Joy is better off.”

“I can’t believe THAT,” cried Anne bitterly. Then, seeing that Marilla looked shocked, she added passionately, “Why should she be born at all — why should any one be born at all — if she’s better off dead? I DON’T believe it is better for a child to die at birth than to live its life out — and love and be loved — and enjoy and suffer — and do its work — and develop a character that would give it a personality in eternity. And how do you know it was God’s will? Perhaps it was just a thwarting of His purpose by the Power of Evil. We can’t be expected to be resigned to THAT.”

“Oh, Anne, don’t talk so,” said Marilla, genuinely alarmed lest Anne were drifting into deep and dangerous waters. “We can’t understand — but we must have faith — we MUST believe that all is for the best. I know you find it hard to think so, just now. But try to be brave — for Gilbert’s sake. He’s so worried about you. You aren’t getting strong as fast as you should.”

“Oh, I know I’ve been very selfish,” sighed Anne. “I love Gilbert more than ever — and I want to live for his sake. But it seems as if part of me was buried over there in that little harbor graveyard — and it hurts so much that I’m afraid of life.”

“It won’t hurt so much always, Anne.”

“The thought that it may stop hurting sometimes hurts me worse than all else, Marilla.”

“Yes, I know, I’ve felt that too, about other things. But we all love you, Anne. Captain Jim has been up every day to ask for you — and Mrs. Moore haunts the place — and Miss Bryant spends most of her time, I think, cooking up nice things for you. Susan doesn’t like it very well. She thinks she can cook as well as Miss Bryant.”

“Dear Susan! Oh, everybody has been so dear and good and lovely to me, Marilla. I’m not ungrateful — and perhaps — when this horrible ache grows a little less — I’ll find that I can go on living.”

Lost Margaret

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Anne found that she could go on living; the day came when she even smiled again over one of Miss Cornelia's speeches. But there was something in the smile that had never been in Anne's smile before and would never be absent from it again.

On the first day she was able to go for a drive Gilbert took her down to Four Winds Point, and left her there while he rowed over the channel to see a patient at the fishing village. A rollicking wind was scudding across the harbor and the dunes, whipping the water into whitecaps and washing the sandshore with long lines of silvery breakers.

"I'm real proud to see you here again, Mistress Blythe," said Captain Jim. "Sit down — sit down. I'm afeared it's mighty dusty here today — but there's no need of looking at dust when you can look at such scenery, is there?"

"I don't mind the dust," said Anne, "but Gilbert says I must keep in the open air. I think I'll go and sit on the rocks down there."

"Would you like company or would you rather be alone?"

"If by company you mean yours I'd much rather have it than be alone," said Anne, smiling. Then she sighed. She had never before minded being alone. Now she dreaded it. When she was alone now she felt so dreadfully alone.

"Here's a nice little spot where the wind can't get at you," said Captain Jim, when they reached the rocks. "I often sit here. It's a great place jest to sit and dream."

"Oh — dreams," sighed Anne. "I can't dream now, Captain Jim — I'm done with dreams."

"Oh, no, you're not, Mistress Blythe — oh, no, you're not," said Captain Jim meditatively. "I know how you feel jest now — but if you keep on living you'll get glad again, and the first thing you know you'll be

dreaming again — thank the good Lord for it! If it wasn't for our dreams they might as well bury us. How'd we stand living if it wasn't for our dream of immortality? And that's a dream that's BOUND to come true, Mistress Blythe. You'll see your little Joyce again some day."

"But she won't be my baby," said Anne, with trembling lips. "Oh, she may be, as Longfellow says, 'a fair maiden clothed with celestial grace' — but she'll be a stranger to me."

"God will manage better'n THAT, I believe," said Captain Jim.

They were both silent for a little time. Then Captain Jim said very softly:

"Mistress Blythe, may I tell you about lost Margaret?"

"Of course," said Anne gently. She did not know who "lost Margaret" was, but she felt that she was going to hear the romance of Captain Jim's life.

"I've often wanted to tell you about her," Captain Jim went on.

"Do you know why, Mistress Blythe? It's because I want somebody to remember and think of her sometime after I'm gone. I can't bear that her name should be forgotten by all living souls. And now nobody remembers lost Margaret but me."

Then Captain Jim told the story — an old, old forgotten story, for it was over fifty years since Margaret had fallen asleep one day in her father's dory and drifted — or so it was supposed, for nothing was ever certainly known as to her fate — out of the channel, beyond the bar, to perish in the black thundersquall which had come up so suddenly that long-ago summer afternoon. But to Captain Jim those fifty years were but as yesterday when it is past.

"I walked the shore for months after that," he said sadly, "looking to find her dear, sweet little body; but the sea never give her back to me. But I'll find her sometime, Mistress Blythe — I'll find her sometime. She's waiting for me. I wish I could tell you jest how she looked, but I can't. I've seen a fine, silvery mist hanging over the bar at sunrise that seemed like her — and then again I've seen a white birch in the woods back yander that made me think of her. She had pale, brown hair and a little white,

sweet face, and long slender fingers like yours, Mistress Blythe, only browner, for she was a shore girl. Sometimes I wake up in the night and hear the sea calling to me in the old way, and it seems as if lost Margaret called in it. And when there's a storm and the waves are sobbing and moaning I hear her lamenting among them. And when they laugh on a gay day it's HER laugh — lost Margaret's sweet, roguish, little laugh. The sea took her from me, but some day I'll find her. Mistress Blythe. It can't keep us apart forever."

"I am glad you have told me about her," said Anne. "I have often wondered why you had lived all your life alone."

"I couldn't ever care for anyone else. Lost Margaret took my heart with her — out there," said the old lover, who had been faithful for fifty years to his drowned sweetheart. "You won't mind if I talk a good deal about her, will you, Mistress Blythe? It's a pleasure to me — for all the pain went out of her memory years ago and jest left its blessing. I know you'll never forget her, Mistress Blythe. And if the years, as I hope, bring other little folks to your home, I want you to promise me that you'll tell THEM the story of lost Margaret, so that her name won't be forgotten among humankind."

Barriers Swept Away

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“Anne,” said Leslie, breaking abruptly a short silence, “you don’t know how GOOD it is to be sitting here with you again — working — and talking — and being silent together.”

They were sitting among the blue-eyed grasses on the bank of the brook in Anne’s garden. The water sparkled and crooned past them; the birches threw dappled shadows over them; roses bloomed along the walks. The sun was beginning to be low, and the air was full of woven music. There was one music of the wind in the firs behind the house, and another of the waves on the bar, and still another from the distant bell of the church near which the wee, white lady slept. Anne loved that bell, though it brought sorrowful thoughts now.

She looked curiously at Leslie, who had thrown down her sewing and spoken with a lack of restraint that was very unusual with her.

“On that horrible night when you were so ill,” Leslie went on, “I kept thinking that perhaps we’d have no more talks and walks and WORKS together. And I realised just what your friendship had come to mean to me — just what YOU meant — and just what a hateful little beast I had been.”

“Leslie! Leslie! I never allow anyone to call my friends names.”

“It’s true. That’s exactly what I am — a hateful little beast. There’s something I’ve GOT to tell you, Anne. I suppose it will make you despise me, but I MUST confess it. Anne, there have been times this past winter and spring when I have HATED you.”

“I KNEW it,” said Anne calmly.

“You KNEW it?”

“Yes, I saw it in your eyes.”

“And yet you went on liking me and being my friend.”

“Well, it was only now and then you hated me, Leslie. Between times you loved me, I think.”

“I certainly did. But that other horrid feeling was always there, spoiling it, back in my heart. I kept it down — sometimes I forgot it — but sometimes it would surge up and take possession of me. I hated you because I ENVIED you — oh, I was sick with envy of you at times. You had a dear little home — and love — and happiness — and glad dreams — everything I wanted — and never had — and never could have. Oh, never could have! THAT was what stung. I wouldn’t have envied you, if I had had any HOPE that life would ever be different for me. But I hadn’t — I hadn’t — and it didn’t seem FAIR. It made me rebellious — and it hurt me — and so I hated you at times. Oh, I was so ashamed of it — I’m dying of shame now — but I couldn’t conquer it.

“That night, when I was afraid you mightn’t live — I thought I was going to be punished for my wickedness — and I loved you so then. Anne, Anne, I never had anything to love since my mother died, except Dick’s old dog — and it’s so dreadful to have nothing to love — life is so EMPTY — and there’s NOTHING worse than emptiness — and I might have loved you so much — and that horrible thing had spoiled it—”

Leslie was trembling and growing almost incoherent with the violence of her emotion.

“Don’t, Leslie,” implored Anne, “oh, don’t. I understand — don’t talk of it any more.”

“I must — I must. When I knew you were going to live I vowed that I would tell you as soon as you were well — that I wouldn’t go on accepting your friendship and companionship without telling you how unworthy I was of it. And I’ve been so afraid — it would turn you against me.”

“You needn’t fear that, Leslie.”

“Oh, I’m so glad — so glad, Anne.” Leslie clasped her brown, work-hardened hands tightly together to still their shaking. “But I want to tell you everything, now I’ve begun. You don’t remember the first time I saw you, I suppose — it wasn’t that night on the shore—”

“No, it was the night Gilbert and I came home. You were driving your geese down the hill. I should think I DO remember it! I thought you were so beautiful — I longed for weeks after to find out who you were.”

“I knew who YOU were, although I had never seen either of you before. I had heard of the new doctor and his bride who were coming to live in Miss Russell’s little house. I — I hated you that very moment, Anne.”

“I felt the resentment in your eyes — then I doubted — I thought I must be mistaken — because WHY should it be?”

“It was because you looked so happy. Oh, you’ll agree with me now that I AM a hateful beast — to hate another woman just because she was happy, — and when her happiness didn’t take anything from me! That was why I never went to see you. I knew quite well I ought to go — even our simple Four Winds customs demanded that. But I couldn’t. I used to watch you from my window — I could see you and your husband strolling about your garden in the evening — or you running down the poplar lane to meet him. And it hurt me. And yet in another way I wanted to go over. I felt that, if I were not so miserable, I could have liked you and found in you what I’ve never had in my life — an intimate, REAL friend of my own age. And then you remember that night at the shore? You were afraid I would think you crazy. You must have thought *I* was.”

“No, but I couldn’t understand you, Leslie. One moment you drew me to you — the next you pushed me back.”

“I was very unhappy that evening. I had had a hard day. Dick had been very — very hard to manage that day. Generally he is quite goodnatured and easily controlled, you know, Anne. But some days he is very different. I was so heartsick — I ran away to the shore as soon as he went to sleep. It was my only refuge. I sat there thinking of how my poor father had ended his life, and wondering if I wouldn’t be driven to it some day. Oh, my heart was full of black thoughts! And then you came dancing along the cove like a glad, lighthearted child. I — I hated you more than I’ve ever done since. And yet I craved your friendship. The one feeling swayed me one moment; the other feeling the next. When I got home that night I cried for

shame of what you must think of me. But it's always been just the same when I came over here. Sometimes I'd be happy and enjoy my visit. And at other times that hideous feeling would mar it all. There were times when everything about you and your house hurt me. You had so many dear little things I couldn't have. Do you know — it's ridiculous — but I had an especial spite at those china dogs of yours. There were times when I wanted to catch up Gog and Magog and bang their pert black noses together! Oh, you smile, Anne — but it was never funny to me. I would come here and see you and Gilbert with your books and your flowers, and your household gods, and your little family jokes — and your love for each other showing in every look and word, even when you didn't know it — and I would go home to — you know what I went home to! Oh, Anne, I don't believe I'm jealous and envious by nature. When I was a girl I lacked many things my schoolmates had, but I never cared — I never disliked them for it. But I seem to have grown so hateful—”

“Leslie, dearest, stop blaming yourself. You are NOT hateful or jealous or envious. The life you have to live has warped you a little, perhaps-but it would have ruined a nature less fine and noble than yours. I'm letting you tell me all this because I believe it's better for you to talk it out and rid your soul of it. But don't blame yourself any more.”

“Well, I won't. I just wanted you to know me as I am. That time you told me of your darling hope for the spring was the worst of all, Anne. I shall never forgive myself for the way I behaved then. I repented it with tears. And I DID put many a tender and loving thought of you into the little dress I made. But I might have known that anything I made could only be a shroud in the end.”

“Now, Leslie, that IS bitter and morbid — put such thoughts away.

“I was so glad when you brought the little dress; and since I had to lose little Joyce I like to think that the dress she wore was the one you made for her when you let yourself love me.”

“Anne, do you know, I believe I shall always love you after this. I don't think I'll ever feel that dreadful way about you again. Talking it all out seems to have done away with it, somehow. It's very strange — and I

thought it so real and bitter. It's like opening the door of a dark room to show some hideous creature you've believed to be there — and when the light streams in your monster turns out to have been just a shadow, vanishing when the light comes. It will never come between us again.”

“No, we are real friends now, Leslie, and I am very glad.”

“I hope you won't misunderstand me if I say something else. Anne, I was grieved to the core of my heart when you lost your baby; and if I could have saved her for you by cutting off one of my hands I would have done it. But your sorrow has brought us closer together. Your perfect happiness isn't a barrier any longer. Oh, don't misunderstand, dearest — I'm NOT glad that your happiness isn't perfect any longer — I can say that sincerely; but since it isn't, there isn't such a gulf between us.”

“I DO understand that, too, Leslie. Now, we'll just shut up the past and forget what was unpleasant in it. It's all going to be different. We're both of the race of Joseph now. I think you've been wonderful — wonderful. And, Leslie, I can't help believing that life has something good and beautiful for you yet.”

Leslie shook her head.

“No,” she said dully. “There isn't any hope. Dick will never be better — and even if his memory were to come back — oh, Anne, it would be worse, even worse, than it is now. This is something you can't understand, you happy bride. Anne, did Miss Cornelia ever tell you how I came to marry Dick?”

“Yes.”

“I'm glad — I wanted you to know — but I couldn't bring myself to talk of it if you hadn't known. Anne, it seems to me that ever since I was twelve years old life has been bitter. Before that I had a happy childhood. We were very poor — but we didn't mind. Father was so splendid — so clever and loving and sympathetic. We were chums as far back as I can remember. And mother was so sweet. She was very, very beautiful. I look like her, but I am not so beautiful as she was.”

“Miss Cornelia says you are far more beautiful.”

“She is mistaken — or prejudiced. I think my figure IS better — mother was slight and bent by hard work — but she had the face of an angel. I used just to look up at her in worship. We all worshipped her, — father and Kenneth and I.”

Anne remembered that Miss Cornelia had given her a very different impression of Leslie’s mother. But had not love the truer vision? Still, it WAS selfish of Rose West to make her daughter marry Dick Moore.

“Kenneth was my brother,” went on Leslie. “Oh, I can’t tell you how I loved him. And he was cruelly killed. Do you know how?”

“Yes.”

“Anne, I saw his little face as the wheel went over him. He fell on his back. Anne — Anne — I can see it now. I shall always see it. Anne, all I ask of heaven is that that recollection shall be blotted out of my memory. O my God!”

“Leslie, don’t speak of it. I know the story — don’t go into details that only harrow your soul up unavailingly. It WILL be blotted out.”

After a moment’s struggle, Leslie regained a measure of self-control.

“Then father’s health got worse and he grew despondent — his mind became unbalanced — you’ve heard all that, too?”

“Yes.”

“After that I had just mother to live for. But I was very ambitious. I meant to teach and earn my way through college. I meant to climb to the very top — oh, I won’t talk of that either. It’s no use. You know what happened. I couldn’t see my dear little heartbroken mother, who had been such a slave all her life, turned out of her home. Of course, I could have earned enough for us to live on. But mother COULDN’T leave her home. She had come there as a bride — and she had loved father so — and all her memories were there. Even yet, Anne, when I think that I made her last year happy I’m not sorry for what I did. As for Dick — I didn’t hate him when I married him — I just felt for him the indifferent, friendly feeling I had for most of my schoolmates. I knew he drank some — but I had never heard the story of the girl down at the fishing cove. If I had, I COULDN’T have married him, even for mother’s sake. Afterwards — I DID hate him

— but mother never knew. She died — and then I was alone. I was only seventeen and I was alone. Dick had gone off in the Four Sisters. I hoped he wouldn't be home very much more. The sea had always been in his blood. I had no other hope. Well, Captain Jim brought him home, as you know — and that's all there is to say. You know me now, Anne — the worst of me — the barriers are all down. And you still want to be my friend?"

Anne looked up through the birches, at the white paper-lantern of a half moon drifting downwards to the gulf of sunset. Her face was very sweet.

"I am your friend and you are mine, for always," she said. "Such a friend as I never had before. I have had many dear and beloved friends — but there is a something in you, Leslie, that I never found in anyone else. You have more to offer me in that rich nature of yours, and I have more to give you than I had in my careless girlhood. We are both women — and friends forever."

They clasped hands and smiled at each other through the tears that filled the gray eyes and the blue.

Miss Cornelia Arranges Matters

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Gilbert insisted that Susan should be kept on at the little house for the summer. Anne protested at first.

“Life here with just the two of us is so sweet, Gilbert. It spoils it a little to have anyone else. Susan is a dear soul, but she is an outsider. It won’t hurt me to do the work here.”

“You must take your doctor’s advice,” said Gilbert. “There’s an old proverb to the effect that shoemakers’ wives go barefoot and doctors’ wives die young. I don’t mean that it shall be true in my household. You will keep Susan until the old spring comes back into your step, and those little hollows on your cheeks fill out.”

“You just take it easy, Mrs. Doctor, dear,” said Susan, coming abruptly in. “Have a good time and do not worry about the pantry. Susan is at the helm. There is no use in keeping a dog and doing your own barking. I am going to take your breakfast up to you every morning.”

“Indeed you are not,” laughed Anne. “I agree with Miss Cornelia that it’s a scandal for a woman who isn’t sick to eat her breakfast in bed, and almost justifies the men in any enormities.”

“Oh, Cornelia!” said Susan, with ineffable contempt. “I think you have better sense, Mrs. Doctor, dear, than to heed what Cornelia Bryant says. I cannot see why she must be always running down the men, even if she is an old maid. *I* am an old maid, but you never hear *ME* abusing the men. I like ‘em. I would have married one if I could. Is it not funny nobody ever asked me to marry him, Mrs. Doctor, dear? I am no beauty, but I am as goodlooking as most of the married women you see. But I never had a beau. What do you suppose is the reason?”

“It may be predestination,” suggested Anne, with unearthly solemnity. Susan nodded.

“That is what I have often thought, Mrs. Doctor, dear, and a great comfort it is. I do not mind nobody wanting me if the Almighty decreed it so for His own wise purposes. But sometimes doubt creeps in, Mrs. Doctor, dear, and I wonder if maybe the Old Scratch has not more to do with it than anyone else. I cannot feel resigned THEN. But maybe,” added Susan, brightening up, “I will have a chance to get married yet. I often and often think of the old verse my aunt used to repeat:

There never was a goose so gray but sometime soon or late
Some honest gander came her way and took her for his mate!

A woman cannot ever be sure of not being married till she is buried, Mrs. Doctor, dear, and meanwhile I will make a batch of cherry pies. I notice the doctor favors ‘em, and I DO like cooking for a man who appreciates his victuals.”

Miss Cornelia dropped in that afternoon, puffing a little.

“I don’t mind the world or the devil much, but the flesh DOES rather bother me,” she admitted. “You always look as cool as a cucumber, Anne, dearie. Do I smell cherry pie? If I do, ask me to stay to tea. Haven’t tasted a cherry pie this summer. My cherries have all been stolen by those scamps of Gilman boys from the Glen.”

“Now, now, Cornelia,” remonstrated Captain Jim, who had been reading a sea novel in a corner of the living room, “you shouldn’t say that about those two poor, motherless Gilman boys, unless you’ve got certain proof. Jest because their father ain’t none too honest isn’t any reason for calling them thieves. It’s more likely it’s been the robins took your cherries. They’re turrible thick this year.”

“Robins!” said Miss Cornelia disdainfully. “Humph! Two-legged robins, believe ME!”

“Well, most of the Four Winds robins ARE constructed on that principle,” said Captain Jim gravely.

Miss Cornelia stared at him for a moment. Then she leaned back in her rocker and laughed long and ungrudgingly.

“Well, you HAVE got one on me at last, Jim Boyd, I’ll admit. Just look how pleased he is, Anne, dearie, grinning like a Chessy-cat. As for the robins’ legs if robins have great, big, bare, sunburned legs, with ragged trousers hanging on ‘em, such as I saw up in my cherry tree one morning at sunrise last week, I’ll beg the Gilman boys’ pardon. By the time I got down they were gone. I couldn’t understand how they had disappeared so quick, but Captain Jim has enlightened me. They flew away, of course.”

Captain Jim laughed and went away, regretfully declining an invitation to stay to supper and partake of cherry pie.

“I’m on my way to see Leslie and ask her if she’ll take a boarder,” Miss Cornelia resumed. “I’d a letter yesterday from a Mrs. Daly in Toronto, who boarded a spell with me two years ago. She wanted me to take a friend of hers for the summer. His name is Owen Ford, and he’s a newspaper man, and it seems he’s a grandson of the schoolmaster who built this house. John Selwyn’s oldest daughter married an Ontario man named Ford, and this is her son. He wants to see the old place his grandparents lived in. He had a bad spell of typhoid in the spring and hasn’t got rightly over it, so his doctor has ordered him to the sea. He doesn’t want to go to the hotel — he just wants a quiet home place. I can’t take him, for I have to be away in August. I’ve been appointed a delegate to the W.F.M.S. convention in Kingsport and I’m going. I don’t know whether Leslie’ll want to be bothered with him, either, but there’s no one else. If she can’t take him he’ll have to go over the harbor.”

“When you’ve seen her come back and help us eat our cherry pies,” said Anne. “Bring Leslie and Dick, too, if they can come. And so you’re going to Kingsport? What a nice time you will have. I must give you a letter to a friend of mine there — Mrs. Jonas Blake.”

“I’ve prevailed on Mrs. Thomas Holt to go with me,” said Miss Cornelia complacently. “It’s time she had a little holiday, believe ME. She has just about worked herself to death. Tom Holt can crochet beautifully, but he can’t make a living for his family. He never seems to be able to get up early enough to do any work, but I notice he can always get up early to go fishing. Isn’t that like a man?”

Anne smiled. She had learned to discount largely Miss Cornelia's opinions of the Four Winds men. Otherwise she must have believed them the most hopeless assortment of reprobates and ne'er-do-wells in the world, with veritable slaves and martyrs for wives. This particular Tom Holt, for example, she knew to be a kind husband, a much loved father, and an excellent neighbor. If he were rather inclined to be lazy, liking better the fishing he had been born for than the farming he had not, and if he had a harmless eccentricity for doing fancy work, nobody save Miss Cornelia seemed to hold it against him. His wife was a "hustler," who gloried in hustling; his family got a comfortable living off the farm; and his strapping sons and daughters, inheriting their mother's energy, were all in a fair way to do well in the world. There was not a happier household in Glen St. Mary than the Holts'.

Miss Cornelia returned satisfied from the house up the brook.

"Leslie's going to take him," she announced. "She jumped at the chance. She wants to make a little money to shingle the roof of her house this fall, and she didn't know how she was going to manage it. I expect Captain Jim'll be more than interested when he hears that a grandson of the Selwyns' is coming here. Leslie said to tell you she hankered after cherry pie, but she couldn't come to tea because she has to go and hunt up her turkeys. They've strayed away. But she said, if there was a piece left, for you to put it in the pantry and she'd run over in the cat's light, when prowling's in order, to get it. You don't know, Anne, dearie, what good it did my heart to hear Leslie send you a message like that, laughing like she used to long ago.

"There's a great change come over her lately. She laughs and jokes like a girl, and from her talk I gather she's here real often."

"Every day — or else I'm over there," said Anne. "I don't know what I'd do without Leslie, especially just now when Gilbert is so busy. He's hardly ever home except for a few hours in the wee sma's. He's really working himself to death. So many of the over-harbor people send for him now."

“They might better be content with their own doctor,” said Miss Cornelia. “Though to be sure I can’t blame them, for he’s a Methodist. Ever since Dr. Blythe brought Mrs. Allonby round folks think he can raise the dead. I believe Dr. Dave is a mite jealous — just like a man. He thinks Dr. Blythe has too many new-fangled notions! ‘Well,’ I says to him, ‘it was a new-fangled notion saved Rhoda Allonby. If YOU’D been attending her she’d have died, and had a tombstone saying it had pleased God to take her away.’ Oh, I DO like to speak my mind to Dr. Dave! He’s bossed the Glen for years, and he thinks he’s forgotten more than other people ever knew. Speaking of doctors, I wish Dr. Blythe’d run over and see to that boil on Dick Moore’s neck. It’s getting past Leslie’s skill. I’m sure I don’t know what Dick Moore wants to start in having boils for — as if he wasn’t enough trouble without that!”

“Do you know, Dick has taken quite a fancy to me,” said Anne. “He follows me round like a dog, and smiles like a pleased child when I notice him.”

“Does it make you creepy?”

“Not at all. I rather like poor Dick Moore. He seems so pitiful and appealing, somehow.”

“You wouldn’t think him very appealing if you’d see him on his cantankerous days, believe ME. But I’m glad you don’t mind him — it’s all the nicer for Leslie. She’ll have more to do when her boarder comes. I hope he’ll be a decent creature. You’ll probably like him — he’s a writer.”

“I wonder why people so commonly suppose that if two individuals are both writers they must therefore be hugely congenial,” said Anne, rather scornfully. “Nobody would expect two blacksmiths to be violently attracted toward each other merely because they were both blacksmiths.”

Nevertheless, she looked forward to the advent of Owen Ford with a pleasant sense of expectation. If he were young and likeable he might prove a very pleasant addition to society in Four Winds. The latchstring of the little house was always out for the race of Joseph.

Owen Ford Comes

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One evening Miss Cornelia telephoned down to Anne.

“The writer man has just arrived here. I’m going to drive him down to your place, and you can show him the way over to Leslie’s. It’s shorter than driving round by the other road, and I’m in a mortal hurry. The Reese baby has gone and fallen into a pail of hot water at the Glen, and got nearly scalded to death and they want me right off — to put a new skin on the child, I presume. Mrs. Reese is always so careless, and then expects other people to mend her mistakes. You won’t mind, will you, dearie? His trunk can go down tomorrow.”

“Very well,” said Anne. “What is he like, Miss Cornelia?”

“You’ll see what he’s like outside when I take him down. As for what he’s like inside only the Lord who made him knows THAT. I’m not going to say another word, for every receiver in the Glen is down.”

“Miss Cornelia evidently can’t find much fault with Mr. Ford’s looks, or she would find it in spite of the receivers,” said Anne. “I conclude therefore, Susan, that Mr. Ford is rather handsome than otherwise.”

“Well, Mrs. Doctor, dear, I DO enjoy seeing a well-looking man,” said Susan candidly. “Had I not better get up a snack for him? There is a strawberry pie that would melt in your mouth.”

“No, Leslie is expecting him and has his supper ready. Besides, I want that strawberry pie for my own poor man. He won’t be home till late, so leave the pie and a glass of milk out for him, Susan.”

“That I will, Mrs. Doctor, dear. Susan is at the helm. After all, it is better to give pie to your own men than to strangers, who may be only seeking to devour, and the doctor himself is as well-looking a man as you often come across.”

When Owen Ford came Anne secretly admitted, as Miss Cornelia towed him in, that he was very “well-looking” indeed. He was tall and

broad-shouldered, with thick, brown hair, finely-cut nose and chin, large and brilliant dark-gray eyes.

“And did you notice his ears and his teeth, Mrs. Doctor, dear?” queried Susan later on. “He has got the nicest-shaped ears I ever saw on a man’s head. I am choice about ears. When I was young I was scared that I might have to marry a man with ears like flaps. But I need not have worried, for never a chance did I have with any kind of ears.”

Anne had not noticed Owen Ford’s ears, but she did see his teeth, as his lips parted over them in a frank and friendly smile. Unsmiling, his face was rather sad and absent in expression, not unlike the melancholy, inscrutable hero of Anne’s own early dreams; but mirth and humor and charm lighted it up when he smiled. Certainly, on the outside, as Miss Cornelia said, Owen Ford was a very presentable fellow.

“You cannot realise how delighted I am to be here, Mrs. Blythe,” he said, looking around him with eager, interested eyes. “I have an odd feeling of coming home. My mother was born and spent her childhood here, you know. She used to talk a great deal to me of her old home. I know the geography of it as well as of the one I lived in, and, of course, she told me the story of the building of the house, and of my grandfather’s agonised watch for the Royal William. I had thought that so old a house must have vanished years ago, or I should have come to see it before this.”

“Old houses don’t vanish easily on this enchanted coast,” smiled Anne. “This is a ‘land where all things always seem the same’ — nearly always, at least. John Selwyn’s house hasn’t even been much changed, and outside the rosebushes your grandfather planted for his bride are blooming this very minute.”

“How the thought links me with them! With your leave I must explore the whole place soon.”

“Our latchstring will always be out for you,” promised Anne. “And do you know that the old sea captain who keeps the Four Winds light knew John Selwyn and his bride well in his boyhood? He told me their story the night I came here — the third bride of the old house.”

“Can it be possible? This IS a discovery. I must hunt him up.”

“It won’t be difficult; we are all cronies of Captain Jim. He will be as eager to see you as you could be to see him. Your grandmother shines like a star in his memory. But I think Mrs. Moore is expecting you. I’ll show you our ‘cross-lots’ road.”

Anne walked with him to the house up the brook, over a field that was as white as snow with daisies. A boatload of people were singing far across the harbor. The sound drifted over the water like faint, unearthly music windblown across a starlit sea. The big light flashed and beacons. Owen Ford looked around him with satisfaction.

“And so this is Four Winds,” he said. “I wasn’t prepared to find it quite so beautiful, in spite of all mother’s praises. What colors — what scenery — what charm! I shall get as strong as a horse in no time. And if inspiration comes from beauty, I should certainly be able to begin my great Canadian novel here.”

“You haven’t begun it yet?” asked Anne.

“Alack-a-day, no. I’ve never been able to get the right central idea for it. It lurks beyond me — it allures — and beckons — and recedes — I almost grasp it and it is gone. Perhaps amid this peace and loveliness, I shall be able to capture it. Miss Bryant tells me that you write.”

“Oh, I do little things for children. I haven’t done much since I was married. And — I have no designs on a great Canadian novel,” laughed Anne. “That is quite beyond me.”

Owen Ford laughed too.

“I dare say it is beyond me as well. All the same I mean to have a try at it some day, if I can ever get time. A newspaper man doesn’t have much chance for that sort of thing. I’ve done a good deal of short story writing for the magazines, but I’ve never had the leisure that seems to be necessary for the writing of a book. With three months of liberty I ought to make a start, though — if I could only get the necessary motif for it — the SOUL of the book.”

An idea whisked through Anne’s brain with a suddenness that made her jump. But she did not utter it, for they had reached the Moore house. As they entered the yard Leslie came out on the veranda from the side door,

peering through the gloom for some sign of her expected guest. She stood just where the warm yellow light flooded her from the open door. She wore a plain dress of cheap, cream-tinted cotton voile, with the usual girdle of crimson. Leslie was never without her touch of crimson. She had told Anne that she never felt satisfied without a gleam of red somewhere about her, if it were only a flower. To Anne, it always seemed to symbolise Leslie's glowing, pent-up personality, denied all expression save in that flaming glint. Leslie's dress was cut a little away at the neck and had short sleeves. Her arms gleamed like ivory-tinted marble. Every exquisite curve of her form was outlined in soft darkness against the light. Her hair shone in it like flame. Beyond her was a purple sky, flowering with stars over the harbor.

Anne heard her companion give a gasp. Even in the dusk she could see the amazement and admiration on his face.

"Who is that beautiful creature?" he asked.

"That is Mrs. Moore," said Anne. "She is very lovely, isn't she?"

"I — I never saw anything like her," he answered, rather dazedly. "I wasn't prepared — I didn't expect — good heavens, one DOESN'T expect a goddess for a landlady! Why, if she were clothed in a gown of sea-purple, with a rope of amethysts in her hair, she would be a veritable sea-queen. And she takes in boarders!"

"Even goddesses must live," said Anne. "And Leslie isn't a goddess. She's just a very beautiful woman, as human as the rest of us. Did Miss Bryant tell you about Mr. Moore?"

"Yes, — he's mentally deficient, or something of the sort, isn't he? But she said nothing about Mrs. Moore, and I supposed she'd be the usual hustling country housewife who takes in boarders to earn an honest penny."

"Well, that's just what Leslie is doing," said Anne crisply. "And it isn't altogether pleasant for her, either. I hope you won't mind Dick. If you do, please don't let Leslie see it. It would hurt her horribly. He's just a big baby, and sometimes a rather annoying one."

“Oh, I won’t mind him. I don’t suppose I’ll be much in the house anyhow, except for meals. But what a shame it all is! Her life must be a hard one.”

“It is. But she doesn’t like to be pitied.”

Leslie had gone back into the house and now met them at the front door. She greeted Owen Ford with cold civility, and told him in a businesslike tone that his room and his supper were ready for him. Dick, with a pleased grin, shambled upstairs with the valise, and Owen Ford was installed as an inmate of the old house among the willows.

The Life-Book of Captain Jim

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“I have a little brown cocoon of an idea that may possibly expand into a magnificent moth of fulfilment,” Anne told Gilbert when she reached home. He had returned earlier than she had expected, and was enjoying Susan’s cherry pie. Susan herself hovered in the background, like a rather grim but beneficent guardian spirit, and found as much pleasure in watching Gilbert eat pie as he did in eating it.

“What is your idea?” he asked.

“I sha’n’t tell you just yet — not till I see if I can bring the thing about.”

“What sort of a chap is Ford?”

“Oh, very nice, and quite goodlooking.”

“Such beautiful ears, doctor, dear,” interjected Susan with a relish.

“He is about thirty or thirty-five, I think, and he meditates writing a novel. His voice is pleasant and his smile delightful, and he knows how to dress. He looks as if life hadn’t been altogether easy for him, somehow.”

Owen Ford came over the next evening with a note to Anne from Leslie; they spent the sunset time in the garden and then went for a moonlit sail on the harbor, in the little boat Gilbert had set up for summer outings. They liked Owen immensely and had that feeling of having known him for many years which distinguishes the freemasonry of the house of Joseph. “He is as nice as his ears, Mrs. Doctor, dear,” said Susan, when he had gone. He had told Susan that he had never tasted anything like her strawberry shortcake and Susan’s susceptible heart was his forever.

“He has got a way with him,” she reflected, as she cleared up the relics of the supper. “It is real queer he is not married, for a man like that could have anybody for the asking. Well, maybe he is like me, and has not met the right one yet.”

Susan really grew quite romantic in her musings as she washed the supper dishes.

Two nights later Anne took Owen Ford down to Four Winds Point to introduce him to Captain Jim. The clover fields along the harbor shore were whitening in the western wind, and Captain Jim had one of his finest sunsets on exhibition. He himself had just returned from a trip over the harbor.

“I had to go over and tell Henry Pollack he was dying. Everybody else was afraid to tell him. They expected he’d take on turrible, for he’s been dreadful determined to live, and been making no end of plans for the fall. His wife thought he oughter be told and that I’d be the best one to break it to him that he couldn’t get better. Henry and me are old cronies — we sailed in the Gray Gull for years together. Well, I went over and sat down by Henry’s bed and I says to him, says I, jest right out plain and simple, for if a thing’s got to be told it may as well be told first as last, says I, ‘Mate, I reckon you’ve got your sailing orders this time,’ I was sorter quaking inside, for it’s an awful thing to have to tell a man who hain’t any idea he’s dying that he is. But lo and behold, Mistress Blythe, Henry looks up at me, with those bright old black eyes of his in his wizened face and says, says he, ‘Tell me something I don’t know, Jim Boyd, if you want to give me information. I’ve known THAT for a week.’ I was too astonished to speak, and Henry, he chuckled. ‘To see you coming in here,’ says he, ‘with your face as solemn as a tombstone and sitting down there with your hands clasped over your stomach, and passing me out a blue-mouldy old item of news like that! It’d make a cat laugh, Jim Boyd,’ says he. ‘Who told you?’ says I, stupid like. ‘Nobody,’ says he. ‘A week ago Tuesday night I was lying here awake — and I jest knew. I’d suspicioned it before, but then I KNEW. I’ve been keeping up for the wife’s sake. And I’d LIKE to have got that barn built, for Eben’ll never get it right. But anyhow, now that you’ve eased your mind, Jim, put on a smile and tell me something interesting,’ Well, there it was. They’d been so scared to tell him and he knew it all the time. Strange how nature looks out for us, ain’t it, and lets

us know what we should know when the time comes? Did I never tell you the yarn about Henry getting the fish hook in his nose, Mistress Blythe?"

"No."

"Well, him and me had a laugh over it today. It happened nigh unto thirty years ago. Him and me and several more was out mackerel fishing one day. It was a great day — never saw such a school of mackerel in the gulf — and in the general excitement Henry got quite wild and contrived to stick a fish hook clean through one side of his nose. Well, there he was; there was barb on one end and a big piece of lead on the other, so it couldn't be pulled out. We wanted to take him ashore at once, but Henry was game; he said he'd be jiggered if he'd leave a school like that for anything short of lockjaw; then he kept fishing away, hauling in hand over fist and groaning between times. Fin'ly the school passed and we come in with a load; I got a file and begun to try to file through that hook. I tried to be as easy as I could, but you should have heard Henry — no, you shouldn't either. It was well no ladies were around. Henry wasn't a swearing man, but he'd heard some few matters of that sort along shore in his time, and he fished 'em all out of his recollection and hurled 'em at me. Fin'ly he declared he couldn't stand it and I had no bowels of compassion. So we hitched up and I drove him to a doctor in Charlottetown, thirty-five miles — there weren't none nearer in them days — with that blessed hook still hanging from his nose. When we got there old Dr. Crabb jest took a file and filed that hook jest the same as I'd tried to do, only he weren't a mite particular about doing it easy!"

Captain Jim's visit to his old friend had revived many recollections and he was now in the full tide of reminiscences.

"Henry was asking me today if I remembered the time old Father Chiniquy blessed Alexander MacAllister's boat. Another odd yarn — and true as gospel. I was in the boat myself. We went out, him and me, in Alexander MacAllister's boat one morning at sunrise. Besides, there was a French boy in the boat — Catholic of course. You know old Father Chiniquy had turned Protestant, so the Catholics hadn't much use for him. Well, we sat out in the gulf in the broiling sun till noon, and not a bite did

we get. When we went ashore old Father Chiniquy had to go, so he said in that polite way of his, ‘I’m very sorry I cannot go out with you dis afternoon, Mr. MacAllister, but I leave you my blessing. You will catch a t’ousand dis afternoon. ‘Well, we did not catch a thousand, but we caught exactly nine hundred and ninety-nine — the biggest catch for a small boat on the whole north shore that summer. Curious, wasn’t it? Alexander MacAllister, he says to Andrew Peters, ‘Well, and what do you think of Father Chiniquy now?’ ‘Vell,’ growled Andrew, ‘I t’ink de old devil has got a blessing left yet.’ Laws, how Henry did laugh over that today!”

“Do you know who Mr. Ford is, Captain Jim?” asked Anne, seeing that Captain Jim’s fountain of reminiscence had run out for the present. “I want you to guess.”

Captain Jim shook his head.

“I never was any hand at guessing, Mistress Blythe, and yet somehow when I come in I thought, ‘Where have I seen them eyes before?’ — for I HAVE seen ‘em.”

“Think of a September morning many years ago,” said Anne, softly. “Think of a ship sailing up the harbor — a ship long waited for and despaired of. Think of the day the Royal William came in and the first look you had at the schoolmaster’s bride.”

Captain Jim sprang up.

“They’re Persis Selwyn’s eyes,” he almost shouted. “You can’t be her son — you must be her—”

“Grandson; yes, I am Alice Selwyn’s son.”

Captain Jim swooped down on Owen Ford and shook his hand over again.

“Alice Selwyn’s son! Lord, but you’re welcome! Many’s the time I’ve wondered where the descendants of the schoolmaster were living. I knew there was none on the Island. Alice — Alice — the first baby ever born in that little house. No baby ever brought more joy! I’ve dandled her a hundred times. It was from my knee she took her first steps alone. Can’t I see her mother’s face watching her — and it was near sixty years ago. Is she living yet?”

“No, she died when I was only a boy.”

“Oh, it doesn’t seem right that I should be living to hear that,” sighed Captain Jim. “But I’m heart-glad to see you. It’s brought back my youth for a little while. You don’t know yet what a boon THAT is. Mistress Blythe here has the trick — she does it quite often for me.”

Captain Jim was still more excited when he discovered that Owen Ford was what he called a “real writing man.” He gazed at him as at a superior being. Captain Jim knew that Anne wrote, but he had never taken that fact very seriously. Captain Jim thought women were delightful creatures, who ought to have the vote, and everything else they wanted, bless their hearts; but he did not believe they could write.

“Jest look at A Mad Love,” he would protest. “A woman wrote that and jest look at it — one hundred and three chapters when it could all have been told in ten. A writing woman never knows when to stop; that’s the trouble. The p’int of good writing is to know when to stop.”

“Mr. Ford wants to hear some of your stories, Captain Jim” said Anne. “Tell him the one about the captain who went crazy and imagined he was the Flying Dutchman.”

This was Captain Jim’s best story. It was a compound of horror and humor, and though Anne had heard it several times she laughed as heartily and shivered as fearsomely over it as Mr. Ford did. Other tales followed, for Captain Jim had an audience after his own heart. He told how his vessel had been run down by a steamer; how he had been boarded by Malay pirates; how his ship had caught fire; how he helped a political prisoner escape from a South African republic; how he had been wrecked one fall on the Magdalens and stranded there for the winter; how a tiger had broken loose on board ship; how his crew had mutinied and marooned him on a barren island — these and many other tales, tragic or humorous or grotesque, did Captain Jim relate. The mystery of the sea, the fascination of far lands, the lure of adventure, the laughter of the world — his hearers felt and realised them all. Owen Ford listened, with his head on his hand, and the First Mate purring on his knee, his brilliant eyes fastened on Captain Jim’s rugged, eloquent face.

“Won’t you let Mr. Ford see your life-book, Captain Jim?” asked Anne, when Captain Jim finally declared that yarn-spinning must end for the time.

“Oh, he don’t want to be bothered with THAT,” protested Captain Jim, who was secretly dying to show it.

“I should like nothing better than to see it, Captain Boyd,” said Owen. “If it is half as wonderful as your tales it will be worth seeing.”

With pretended reluctance Captain Jim dug his life-book out of his old chest and handed it to Owen.

“I reckon you won’t care to wrastle long with my old hand o’ write. I never had much schooling,” he observed carelessly. “Just wrote that there to amuse my nephew Joe. He’s always wanting stories. Comes here yesterday and says to me, reproachful-like, as I was lifting a twenty-pound codfish out of my boat, ‘Uncle Jim, ain’t a codfish a dumb animal?’ I’d been atelling him, you see, that he must be real kind to dumb animals, and never hurt ‘em in any way. I got out of the scrape by saying a codfish was dumb enough but it wasn’t an animal, but Joe didn’t look satisfied, and I wasn’t satisfied myself. You’ve got to be mighty careful what you tell them little critters. THEY can see through you.”

While talking, Captain Jim watched Owen Ford from the corner of his eye as the latter examined the life-book; and presently observing that his guest was lost in its pages, he turned smilingly to his cupboard and proceeded to make a pot of tea. Owen Ford separated himself from the life-book, with as much reluctance as a miser wrenches himself from his gold, long enough to drink his tea, and then returned to it hungrily.

“Oh, you can take that thing home with you if you want to,” said Captain Jim, as if the “thing” were not his most treasured possession. “I must go down and pull my boat up a bit on the skids. There’s a wind coming. Did you notice the sky tonight?”

Mackerel skies and mares’ tails
Make tall ships carry short sails.”

Owen Ford accepted the offer of the life-book gladly. On their way home Anne told him the story of lost Margaret.

“That old captain is a wonderful old fellow,” he said. “What a life he has led! Why, the man had more adventures in one week of his life than most of us have in a lifetime. Do you really think his tales are all true?”

“I certainly do. I am sure Captain Jim could not tell a lie; and besides, all the people about here say that everything happened as he relates it. There used to be plenty of his old shipmates alive to corroborate him. He’s one of the last of the old type of P.E. Island sea-captains. They are almost extinct now.”

The Writing of the Book

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Owen Ford came over to the little house the next morning in a state of great excitement. “Mrs. Blythe, this is a wonderful book — absolutely wonderful. If I could take it and use the material for a book I feel certain I could make the novel of the year out of it. Do you suppose Captain Jim would let me do it?”

“Let you! I’m sure he would be delighted,” cried Anne. “I admit that it was what was in my head when I took you down last night. Captain Jim has always been wishing he could get somebody to write his life-book properly for him.”

“Will you go down to the Point with me this evening, Mrs. Blythe? I’ll ask him about that life-book myself, but I want you to tell him that you told me the story of lost Margaret and ask him if he will let me use it as a thread of romance with which to weave the stories of the life-book into a harmonious whole.”

Captain Jim was more excited than ever when Owen Ford told him of his plan. At last his cherished dream was to be realized and his “life-book” given to the world. He was also pleased that the story of lost Margaret should be woven into it.

“It will keep her name from being forgotten,” he said wistfully.

“That’s why I want it put in.”

“We’ll collaborate,” cried Owen delightedly. “You will give the soul and I the body. Oh, we’ll write a famous book between us, Captain Jim. And we’ll get right to work.”

“And to think my book is to be writ by the schoolmaster’s grandson!” exclaimed Captain Jim. “Lad, your grandfather was my dearest friend. I thought there was nobody like him. I see now why I had to wait so long. It couldn’t be writ till the right man come. You BELONG here — you’ve got

the soul of this old north shore in you — you're the only one who COULD write it."

It was arranged that the tiny room off the living room at the lighthouse should be given over to Owen for a workshop. It was necessary that Captain Jim should be near him as he wrote, for consultation upon many matters of seafaring and gulf lore of which Owen was quite ignorant.

He began work on the book the very next morning, and flung himself into it heart and soul. As for Captain Jim, he was a happy man that summer. He looked upon the little room where Owen worked as a sacred shrine. Owen talked everything over with Captain Jim, but he would not let him see the manuscript.

"You must wait until it is published," he said. "Then you'll get it all at once in its best shape."

He delved into the treasures of the life-book and used them freely. He dreamed and brooded over lost Margaret until she became a vivid reality to him and lived in his pages. As the book progressed it took possession of him and he worked at it with feverish eagerness. He let Anne and Leslie read the manuscript and criticise it; and the concluding chapter of the book, which the critics, later on, were pleased to call idyllic, was modelled upon a suggestion of Leslie's.

Anne fairly hugged herself with delight over the success of her idea.

"I knew when I looked at Owen Ford that he was the very man for it," she told Gilbert. "Both humor and passion were in his face, and that, together with the art of expression, was just what was necessary for the writing of such a book. As Mrs. Rachel would say, he was predestined for the part."

Owen Ford wrote in the mornings. The afternoons were generally spent in some merry outing with the Blythes. Leslie often went, too, for Captain Jim took charge of Dick frequently, in order to set her free. They went boating on the harbor and up the three pretty rivers that flowed into it; they had clambakes on the bar and mussel-bakes on the rocks; they picked strawberries on the sand-dunes; they went out codfishing with Captain Jim; they shot plover in the shore fields and wild ducks in the cove — at

least, the men did. In the evenings they rambled in the lowlying, daisied, shore fields under a golden moon, or they sat in the living room at the little house where often the coolness of the sea breeze justified a driftwood fire, and talked of the thousand and one things which happy, eager, clever young people can find to talk about.

Ever since the day on which she had made her confession to Anne Leslie had been a changed creature. There was no trace of her old coldness and reserve, no shadow of her old bitterness. The girlhood of which she had been cheated seemed to come back to her with the ripeness of womanhood; she expanded like a flower of flame and perfume; no laugh was readier than hers, no wit quicker, in the twilight circles of that enchanted summer. When she could not be with them all felt that some exquisite savor was lacking in their intercourse. Her beauty was illumined by the awakened soul within, as some rosy lamp might shine through a flawless vase of alabaster. There were hours when Anne's eyes seemed to ache with the splendor of her. As for Owen Ford, the "Margaret" of his book, although she had the soft brown hair and elfin face of the real girl who had vanished so long ago, "pillowed where lost Atlantis sleeps," had the personality of Leslie Moore, as it was revealed to him in those halcyon days at Four Winds Harbor.

All in all, it was a never-to-be-forgotten summer — one of those summers which come seldom into any life, but leave a rich heritage of beautiful memories in their going — one of those summers which, in a fortunate combination of delightful weather, delightful friends and delightful doings, come as near to perfection as anything can come in this world.

"Too good to last," Anne told herself with a little sigh, on the September day when a certain nip in the wind and a certain shade of intense blue on the gulf water said that autumn was hard by.

That evening Owen Ford told them that he had finished his book and that his vacation must come to an end.

"I have a good deal to do to it yet — revising and pruning and so forth," he said, "but in the main it's done. I wrote the last sentence this

morning. If I can find a publisher for it it will probably be out next summer or fall.”

Owen had not much doubt that he would find a publisher. He knew that he had written a great book — a book that would score a wonderful success — a book that would LIVE. He knew that it would bring him both fame and fortune; but when he had written the last line of it he had bowed his head on the manuscript and so sat for a long time. And his thoughts were not of the good work he had done.

Owen Ford's Confession

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"I'm so sorry Gilbert is away," said Anne. "He had to go — Allan Lyons at the Glen has met with a serious accident. He will not likely be home till very late. But he told me to tell you he'd be up and over early enough in the morning to see you before you left. It's too provoking. Susan and I had planned such a nice little jamboree for your last night here."

She was sitting beside the garden brook on the little rustic seat Gilbert had built. Owen Ford stood before her, leaning against the bronze column of a yellow birch. He was very pale and his face bore the marks of the preceding sleepless night. Anne, glancing up at him, wondered if, after all, his summer had brought him the strength it should. Had he worked too hard over his book? She remembered that for a week he had not been looking well.

"I'm rather glad the doctor is away," said Owen slowly. "I wanted to see you alone, Mrs. Blythe. There is something I must tell somebody, or I think it will drive me mad. I've been trying for a week to look it in the face — and I can't. I know I can trust you — and, besides, you will understand. A woman with eyes like yours always understands. You are one of the folks people instinctively tell things to. Mrs. Blythe, I love Leslie. LOVE her! That seems too weak a word!"

His voice suddenly broke with the suppressed passion of his utterance. He turned his head away and hid his face on his arm. His whole form shook. Anne sat looking at him, pale and aghast. She had never thought of this! And yet — how was it she had never thought of it? It now seemed a natural and inevitable thing. She wondered at her own blindness. But — but — things like this did not happen in Four Winds. Elsewhere in the world human passions might set at defiance human conventions and laws — but not HERE, surely. Leslie had kept summer boarders off and on for ten years, and nothing like this had happened. But perhaps they had not

been like Owen Ford; and the vivid, LIVING Leslie of this summer was not the cold, sullen girl of other years. Oh, SOMEBODY should have thought of this! Why hadn't Miss Cornelia thought of it? Miss Cornelia was always ready enough to sound the alarm where men were concerned. Anne felt an unreasonable resentment against Miss Cornelia. Then she gave a little inward groan. No matter who was to blame the mischief was done. And Leslie — what of Leslie? It was for Leslie Anne felt most concerned.

“Does Leslie know this, Mr. Ford?” she asked quietly.

“No — no, — unless she has guessed it. You surely don't think I'd be cad and scoundrel enough to tell her, Mrs. Blythe. I couldn't help loving her — that's all — and my misery is greater than I can bear.”

“Does SHE care?” asked Anne. The moment the question crossed her lips she felt that she should not have asked it. Owen Ford answered it with overeager protest.

“No — no, of course not. But I could make her care if she were free — I know I could.”

“She does care — and he knows it,” thought Anne. Aloud she said, sympathetically but decidedly:

“But she is not free, Mr. Ford. And the only thing you can do is to go away in silence and leave her to her own life.”

“I know — I know,” groaned Owen. He sat down on the grassy bank and stared moodily into the amber water beneath him. “I know there's nothing to do — nothing but to say conventionally, ‘Goodbye, Mrs. Moore. Thank you for all your kindness to me this summer,’ just as I would have said it to the sonsy, bustling, keen-eyed housewife I expected her to be when I came. Then I'll pay my board money like any honest boarder and go! Oh, it's very simple. No doubt — no perplexity — a straight road to the end of the world!

“And I'll walk it — you needn't fear that I won't, Mrs. Blythe. But it would be easier to walk over red-hot ploughshares.”

Anne flinched with the pain of his voice. And there was so little she could say that would be adequate to the situation. Blame was out of the

question — advice was not needed — sympathy was mocked by the man's stark agony. She could only feel with him in a maze of compassion and regret. Her heart ached for Leslie! Had not that poor girl suffered enough without this?

"It wouldn't be so hard to go and leave her if she were only happy," resumed Owen passionately. "But to think of her living death — to realise what it is to which I do leave her! THAT is the worst of all. I would give my life to make her happy — and I can do nothing even to help her — nothing. She is bound forever to that poor wretch — with nothing to look forward to but growing old in a succession of empty, meaningless, barren years. It drives me mad to think of it. But I must go through my life, never seeing her, but always knowing what she is enduring. It's hideous — hideous!"

"It is very hard," said Anne sorrowfully. "We — her friends here — all know how hard it is for her."

"And she is so richly fitted for life," said Owen rebelliously.

"Her beauty is the least of her dower — and she is the most beautiful woman I've ever known. That laugh of hers! I've angled all summer to evoke that laugh, just for the delight of hearing it. And her eyes — they are as deep and blue as the gulf out there. I never saw such blueness — and gold! Did you ever see her hair down, Mrs. Blythe?"

"No."

"I did — once. I had gone down to the Point to go fishing with Captain Jim but it was too rough to go out, so I came back. She had taken the opportunity of what she expected to be an afternoon alone to wash her hair, and she was standing on the veranda in the sunshine to dry it. It fell all about her to her feet in a fountain of living gold. When she saw me she hurried in, and the wind caught her hair and swirled it all around her — Danae in her cloud. Somehow, just then the knowledge that I loved her came home to me — and realised that I had loved her from the moment I first saw her standing against the darkness in that glow of light. And she must live on here — petting and soothing Dick, pinching and saving for a mere existence, while I spend my life longing vainly for her, and debarred,

by that very fact, from even giving her the little help a friend might. I walked the shore last night, almost till dawn, and thrashed it all out over and over again. And yet, in spite of everything, I can't find it in my heart to be sorry that I came to Four Winds. It seems to me that, bad as everything is, it would be still worse never to have known Leslie. It's burning, searing pain to love her and leave her — but not to have loved her is unthinkable. I suppose all this sounds very crazy — all these terrible emotions always do sound foolish when we put them into our inadequate words. They are not meant to be spoken — only felt and endured. I shouldn't have spoken — but it has helped — some. At least, it has given me strength to go away respectably tomorrow morning, without making a scene. You'll write me now and then, won't you, Mrs. Blythe, and give me what news there is to give of her?"

"Yes," said Anne. "Oh, I'm so sorry you are going — we'll miss you so — we've all been such friends! If it were not for this you could come back other summers. Perhaps, even yet — by-and-by — when you've forgotten, perhaps—"

"I shall never forget — and I shall never come back to Four Winds," said Owen briefly.

Silence and twilight fell over the garden. Far away the sea was lapping gently and monotonously on the bar. The wind of evening in the poplars sounded like some sad, weird, old rune — some broken dream of old memories. A slender shapely young aspen rose up before them against the fine maize and emerald and paling rose of the western sky, which brought out every leaf and twig in dark, tremulous, elfin loveliness.

"Isn't that beautiful?" said Owen, pointing to it with the air of a man who puts a certain conversation behind him.

"It's so beautiful that it hurts me," said Anne softly. "Perfect things like that always did hurt me — I remember I called it 'the queer ache' when I was a child. What is the reason that pain like this seems inseparable from perfection? Is it the pain of finality — when we realise that there can be nothing beyond but retrogression?"

“Perhaps,” said Owen dreamily, “it is the prisoned infinite in us calling out to its kindred infinite as expressed in that visible perfection.”

“You seem to have a cold in the head. Better rub some tallow on your nose when you go to bed,” said Miss Cornelia, who had come in through the little gate between the firs in time to catch Owen’s last remark. Miss Cornelia liked Owen; but it was a matter of principle with her to visit any “highfalutin” language from a man with a snub.

Miss Cornelia personated the comedy that ever peeps around the corner at the tragedy of life. Anne, whose nerves had been rather strained, laughed hysterically, and even Owen smiled. Certainly, sentiment and passion had a way of shrinking out of sight in Miss Cornelia’s presence. And yet to Anne nothing seemed quite as hopeless and dark and painful as it had seemed a few moments before. But sleep was far from her eyes that night.

On the Sand Bar

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Owen Ford left Four Winds the next morning. In the evening Anne went over to see Leslie, but found nobody. The house was locked and there was no light in any window. It looked like a home left soulless. Leslie did not run over on the following day — which Anne thought a bad sign.

Gilbert having occasion to go in the evening to the fishing cove, Anne drove with him to the Point, intending to stay awhile with Captain Jim. But the great light, cutting its swathes through the fog of the autumn evening, was in care of Alec Boyd and Captain Jim was away.

“What will you do?” asked Gilbert. “Come with me?”

“I don’t want to go to the cove — but I’ll go over the channel with you, and roam about on the sand shore till you come back. The rock shore is too slippery and grim tonight.”

Alone on the sands of the bar Anne gave herself up to the eerie charm of the night. It was warm for September, and the late afternoon had been very foggy; but a full moon had in part lessened the fog and transformed the harbor and the gulf and the surrounding shores into a strange, fantastic, unreal world of pale silver mist, through which everything loomed phantom-like. Captain Josiah Crawford’s black schooner sailing down the channel, laden with potatoes for Bluenose ports, was a spectral ship bound for a far uncharted land, ever receding, never to be reached. The calls of unseen gulls overhead were the cries of the souls of doomed seamen. The little curls of foam that blew across the sand were elfin things stealing up from the sea-caves. The big, round-shouldered sand-dunes were the sleeping giants of some old northern tale. The lights that glimmered palely across the harbor were the delusive beacons on some coast of fairyland. Anne pleased herself with a hundred fancies as she wandered through the mist. It was delightful — romantic — mysterious to be roaming here alone on this enchanted shore.

But was she alone? Something loomed in the mist before her — took shape and form — suddenly moved towards her across the wave-rippled sand.

“Leslie!” exclaimed Anne in amazement. “Whatever are you doing — HERE — tonight?”

“If it comes to that, whatever are YOU doing here?” said Leslie, trying to laugh. The effort was a failure. She looked very pale and tired; but the love locks under her scarlet cap were curling about her face and eyes like little sparkling rings of gold.

“I’m waiting for Gilbert — he’s over at the Cove. I intended to stay at the light, but Captain Jim is away.”

“Well, *I* came here because I wanted to walk — and walk — and WALK,” said Leslie restlessly. “I couldn’t on the rock shore — the tide was too high and the rocks prisoned me. I had to come here — or I should have gone mad, I think. I rowed myself over the channel in Captain Jim’s flat. I’ve been here for an hour. Come — come — let us walk. I can’t stand still. Oh, Anne!”

“Leslie, dearest, what is the trouble?” asked Anne, though she knew too well already.

“I can’t tell you — don’t ask me. I wouldn’t mind your knowing — I wish you did know — but I can’t tell you — I can’t tell anyone. I’ve been such a fool, Anne — and oh, it hurts so terribly to be a fool. There’s nothing so painful in the world.”

She laughed bitterly. Anne slipped her arm around her.

“Leslie, is it that you have learned to care for Mr. Ford?”

Leslie turned herself about passionately.

“How did you know?” she cried. “Anne, how did you know? Oh, is it written in my face for everyone to see? Is it as plain as that?”

“No, no. I — I can’t tell you how I knew. It just came into my mind, somehow. Leslie, don’t look at me like that!”

“Do you despise me?” demanded Leslie in a fierce, low tone. “Do you think I’m wicked — unwomanly? Or do you think I’m just plain fool?”

“I don’t think you any of those things. Come, dear, let’s just talk it over sensibly, as we might talk over any other of the great crises of life. You’ve been brooding over it and let yourself drift into a morbid view of it. You know you have a little tendency to do that about everything that goes wrong, and you promised me that you would fight against it.”

“But — oh, it’s so — so shameful,” murmured Leslie. “To love him — unsought — and when I’m not free to love anybody.”

“There’s nothing shameful about it. But I’m very sorry that you have learned to care for Owen, because, as things are, it will only make you more unhappy.”

“I didn’t LEARN to care,” said Leslie, walking on and speaking passionately. “If it had been like that I could have prevented it. I never dreamed of such a thing until that day, a week ago, when he told me he had finished his book and must soon go away. Then — then I knew. I felt as if someone had struck me a terrible blow. I didn’t say anything — I couldn’t speak — but I don’t know what I looked like. I’m so afraid my face betrayed me. Oh, I would die of shame if I thought he knew — or suspected.”

Anne was miserably silent, hampered by her deductions from her conversation with Owen. Leslie went on feverishly, as if she found relief in speech.

“I was so happy all this summer, Anne — happier than I ever was in my life. I thought it was because everything had been made clear between you and me, and that it was our friendship which made life seem so beautiful and full once more. And it WAS, in part — but not all — oh, not nearly all. I know now why everything was so different. And now it’s all over — and he has gone. How can I live, Anne? When I turned back into the house this morning after he had gone the solitude struck me like a blow in the face.”

“It won’t seem so hard by and by, dear,” said Anne, who always felt the pain of her friends so keenly that she could not speak easy, fluent words of comforting. Besides, she remembered how wellmeant speeches had hurt her in her own sorrow and was afraid.

“Oh, it seems to me it will grow harder all the time,” said Leslie miserably. “I’ve nothing to look forward to. Morning will come after morning — and he will not come back — he will never come back. Oh, when I think that I will never see him again I feel as if a great brutal hand had twisted itself among my heartstrings, and was wrenching them. Once, long ago, I dreamed of love — and I thought it must be beautiful — and NOW — its like THIS. When he went away yesterday morning he was so cold and indifferent. He said ‘Goodbye, Mrs. Moore’ in the coldest tone in the world — as if we had not even been friends — as if I meant absolutely nothing to him. I know I don’t — I didn’t want him to care — but he MIGHT have been a little kinder.”

“Oh, I wish Gilbert would come,” thought Anne. She was racked between her sympathy for Leslie and the necessity of avoiding anything that would betray Owen’s confidence. She knew why his goodbye had been so cold — why it could not have the cordiality that their good-comradeship demanded — but she could not tell Leslie.

“I couldn’t help it, Anne — I couldn’t help it,” said poor Leslie.

“I know that.”

“Do you blame me so very much?”

“I don’t blame you at all.”

“And you won’t — you won’t tell Gilbert?”

“Leslie! Do you think I would do such a thing?”

“Oh, I don’t know — you and Gilbert are such CHUMS. I don’t see how you could help telling him everything.”

“Everything about my own concerns — yes. But not my friends’ secrets.”

“I couldn’t have HIM know. But I’m glad YOU know. I would feel guilty if there were anything I was ashamed to tell you. I hope Miss Cornelia won’t find out. Sometimes I feel as if those terrible, kind brown eyes of hers read my very soul. Oh, I wish this mist would never lift — I wish I could just stay in it forever, hidden away from every living being. I don’t see how I can go on with life. This summer has been so full. I never was lonely for a moment. Before Owen came there used to be horrible

moments — when I had been with you and Gilbert — and then had to leave you. You two would walk away together and I would walk away ALONE. After Owen came he was always there to walk home with me — we would laugh and talk as you and Gilbert were doing — there were no more lonely, envious moments for me. And NOW! Oh, yes, I've been a fool. Let's have done talking about my folly. I'll never bore you with it again."

"Here is Gilbert, and you are coming back with us," said Anne, who had no intention of leaving Leslie to wander alone on the sandbar on such a night and in such a mood. "There's plenty of room in our boat for three, and we'll tie the flat on behind."

"Oh, I suppose I must reconcile myself to being the odd one again," said poor Leslie with another bitter laugh. "Forgive me, Anne — that was hateful. I ought to be thankful — and I AM — that I have two good friends who are glad to count me in as a third. Don't mind my hateful speeches. I just seem to be one great pain all over and everything hurts me."

"Leslie seemed very quiet tonight, didn't she?" said Gilbert, when he and Anne reached home. "What in the world was she doing over there on the bar alone?"

"Oh, she was tired — and you know she likes to go to the shore after one of Dick's bad days."

"What a pity she hadn't met and married a fellow like Ford long ago," ruminated Gilbert. "They'd have made an ideal couple, wouldn't they?"

"For pity's sake, Gilbert, don't develop into a matchmaker. It's an abominable profession for a man," cried Anne rather sharply, afraid that Gilbert might blunder on the truth if he kept on in this strain.

"Bless us, Anne-girl, I'm not matchmaking," protested Gilbert, rather surprised at her tone. "I was only thinking of one of the might-have-beens."

"Well, don't. It's a waste of time," said Anne. Then she added suddenly:

"Oh, Gilbert, I wish everybody could be as happy as we are."

Odds and Ends

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“I’ve been reading obituary notices,” said Miss Cornelia, laying down the Daily Enterprise and taking up her sewing.

The harbor was lying black and sullen under a dour November sky; the wet, dead leaves clung drenched and sodden to the window sills; but the little house was gay with firelight and springlike with Anne’s ferns and geraniums.

“It’s always summer here, Anne,” Leslie had said one day; and all who were the guests of that house of dreams felt the same.

“The Enterprise seems to run to obituaries these days,” quoth Miss Cornelia. “It always has a couple of columns of them, and I read every line. It’s one of my forms of recreation, especially when there’s some original poetry attached to them. Here’s a choice sample for you:

She’s gone to be with her Maker,
Never more to roam.
She used to play and sing with joy
The song of Home, Sweet Home.

Who says we haven’t any poetical talent on the Island! Have you ever noticed what heaps of good people die, Anne, dearie? It’s kind of pitiful. Here’s ten obituaries, and every one of them saints and models, even the men. Here’s old Peter Stimson, who has ‘left a large circle of friends to mourn his untimely loss.’ Lord, Anne, dearie, that man was eighty, and everybody who knew him had been wishing him dead these thirty years. Read obituaries when you’re blue, Anne, dearie — especially the ones of folks you know. If you’ve any sense of humor at all they’ll cheer you up, believe ME. I just wish *I* had the writing of the obituaries of some people. Isn’t ‘obituary’ an awful ugly word? This very Peter I’ve been speaking of had a face exactly like one. I never saw it but I thought of the word

OBITUARY then and there. There's only one uglier word that I know of, and that's RELICT. Lord, Anne, dearie, I may be an old maid, but there's this comfort in it — I'll never be any man's 'relict.'"

"It IS an ugly word," said Anne, laughing. "Avonlea graveyard was full of old tombstones 'sacred to the memory of So-and-So, RELICT of the late So-and-So.' It always made me think of something worn out and moth eaten. Why is it that so many of the words connected with death are so disagreeable? I do wish that the custom of calling a dead body 'the remains' could be abolished. I positively shiver when I hear the undertaker say at a funeral, 'All who wish to see the remains please step this way.' It always gives me the horrible impression that I am about to view the scene of a cannibal feast."

"Well, all I hope," said Miss Cornelia calmly, "is that when I'm dead nobody will call me 'our departed sister.' I took a scunner at this sister-and-brothering business five years ago when there was a travelling evangelist holding meetings at the Glen. I hadn't any use for him from the start. I felt in my bones that there was something wrong with him. And there was. Mind you, he was pretending to be a Presbyterian — PresbyTARian, HE called it — and all the time he was a Methodist. He brothered and sistered everybody. He had a large circle of relations, that man had. He clutched my hand fervently one night, and said imploringly, 'My DEAR sister Bryant, are you a Christian?' I just looked him over a bit, and then I said calmly, 'The only brother I ever had, MR. Fiske, was buried fifteen years ago, and I haven't adopted any since. As for being a Christian, I was that, I hope and believe, when you were crawling about the floor in petticoats.' THAT squelched him, believe ME. Mind you, Anne dearie, I'm not down on all evangelists. We've had some real fine, earnest men, who did a lot of good and made the old sinners squirm. But this Fiske-man wasn't one of them. I had a good laugh all to myself one evening. Fiske had asked all who were Christians to stand up. *I* didn't, believe me! I never had any use for that sort of thing. But most of them did, and then he asked all who wanted to be Christians to stand up. Nobody stirred for a spell, so Fiske started up a hymn at the top of his voice. Just

in front of me poor little Ikey Baker was sitting in the Millison pew. He was a home boy, ten years old, and Millison just about worked him to death. The poor little creature was always so tired he fell asleep right off whenever he went to church or anywhere he could sit still for a few minutes. He'd been sleeping all through the meeting, and I was thankful to see the poor child getting a rest, believe ME. Well, when Fiske's voice went soaring skyward and the rest joined in, poor Ikey wakened with a start. He thought it was just an ordinary singing and that everybody ought to stand up, so he scrambled to his feet mighty quick, knowing he'd get a combing down from Maria Millison for sleeping in meeting. Fiske saw him, stopped and shouted, 'Another soul saved! Glory Hallelujah!' And there was poor, frightened Ikey, only half awake and yawning, never thinking about his soul at all. Poor child, he never had time to think of anything but his tired, overworked little body.

"Leslie went one night and the Fiske-man got right after her — oh, he was especially anxious about the souls of the nicelooking girls, believe me! — and he hurt her feelings so she never went again. And then he prayed every night after that, right in public, that the Lord would soften her hard heart. Finally I went to Mr. Leavitt, our minister then, and told him if he didn't make Fiske stop that I'd just rise up the next night and throw my hymn book at him when he mentioned that 'beautiful but unrepentant young woman.' I'd have done it too, believe ME. Mr. Leavitt did put a stop to it, but Fiske kept on with his meetings until Charley Douglas put an end to his career in the Glen. Mrs. Charley had been out in California all winter. She'd been real melancholy in the fall — religious melancholy — it ran in her family. Her father worried so much over believing that he had committed the unpardonable sin that he died in the asylum. So when Rose Douglas got that way Charley packed her off to visit her sister in Los Angeles. She got perfectly well and came home just when the Fiske revival was in full swing. She stepped off the train at the Glen, real smiling and chipper, and the first thing she saw staring her in the face on the black, gable-end of the freight shed, was the question, in big white letters, two feet high, 'Whither goest thou — to heaven or hell?'

That had been one of Fiske's ideas, and he had got Henry Hammond to paint it. Rose just gave a shriek and fainted; and when they got her home she was worse than ever. Charley Douglas went to Mr. Leavitt and told him that every Douglas would leave the church if Fiske was kept there any longer. Mr. Leavitt had to give in, for the Douglasses paid half his salary, so Fiske departed, and we had to depend on our Bibles once more for instructions on how to get to heaven. After he was gone Mr. Leavitt found out he was just a masquerading Methodist, and he felt pretty sick, believe ME. Mr. Leavitt fell short in some ways, but he was a good, sound Presbyterian."

"By the way, I had a letter from Mr. Ford yesterday," said Anne. "He asked me to remember him kindly to you."

"I don't want his remembrances," said Miss Cornelia, curtly.

"Why?" said Anne, in astonishment. "I thought you liked him."

"Well, so I did, in a kind of way. But I'll never forgive him for what he done to Leslie. There's that poor child eating her heart out about him — as if she hadn't had trouble enough — and him ranting round Toronto, I've no doubt, enjoying himself same as ever. Just like a man."

"Oh, Miss Cornelia, how did you find out?"

"Lord, Anne, dearie, I've got eyes, haven't I? And I've known Leslie since she was a baby. There's been a new kind of heartbreak in her eyes all the fall, and I know that writer-man was behind it somehow. I'll never forgive myself for being the means of bringing him here. But I never expected he'd be like he was. I thought he'd just be like the other men Leslie had boarded — conceited young asses, every one of them, that she never had any use for. One of them did try to flirt with her once and she froze him out — so bad, I feel sure he's never got himself thawed since. So I never thought of any danger."

"Don't let Leslie suspect you know her secret," said Anne hurriedly. "I think it would hurt her."

"Trust me, Anne, dearie. *I* wasn't born yesterday. Oh, a plague on all the men! One of them ruined Leslie's life to begin with, and now another

of the tribe comes and makes her still more wretched. Anne, this world is an awful place, believe me.”

“There’s something in the world amiss
Will be unriddled by and by,”

quoted Anne dreamily.

“If it is, it’ll be in a world where there aren’t any men,” said Miss Cornelia gloomily.

“What have the men been doing now?” asked Gilbert, entering.

“Mischief — mischief! What else did they ever do?”

“It was Eve ate the apple, Miss Cornelia.”

“‘Twas a he-creature tempted her,” retorted Miss Cornelia triumphantly.

Leslie, after her first anguish was over, found it possible to go on with life after all, as most of us do, no matter what our particular form of torment has been. It is even possible that she enjoyed moments of it, when she was one of the gay circle in the little house of dreams. But if Anne ever hoped that she was forgetting Owen Ford she would have been undeceived by the furtive hunger in Leslie’s eyes whenever his name was mentioned. Pitiful to that hunger, Anne always contrived to tell Captain Jim or Gilbert bits of news from Owen’s letters when Leslie was with them. The girl’s flush and pallor at such moments spoke all too eloquently of the emotion that filled her being. But she never spoke of him to Anne, or mentioned that night on the sandbar.

One day her old dog died and she grieved bitterly over him.

“He’s been my friend so long,” she said sorrowfully to Anne. “He was Dick’s old dog, you know — Dick had him for a year or so before we were married. He left him with me when he sailed on the Four Sisters. Carlo got very fond of me — and his dog-love helped me through that first dreadful year after mother died, when I was alone. When I heard that Dick was coming back I was afraid Carlo wouldn’t be so much mine. But he never seemed to care for Dick, though he had been so fond of him once. He would snap and growl at him as if he were a stranger. I was glad. It was

nice to have one thing whose love was all mine. That old dog has been such a comfort to me, Anne. He got so feeble in the fall that I was afraid he couldn't live long — but I hoped I could nurse him through the winter. He seemed pretty well this morning. He was lying on the rug before the fire; then, all at once, he got up and crept over to me; he put his head on my lap and gave me one loving look out of his big, soft, dog eyes — and then he just shivered and died. I shall miss him so.”

“Let me give you another dog, Leslie,” said Anne. “I’m getting a lovely Gordon setter for a Christmas present for Gilbert. Let me give you one too.”

Leslie shook her head.

“Not just now, thank you, Anne. I don’t feel like having another dog yet. I don’t seem to have any affection left for another. Perhaps — in time — I’ll let you give me one. I really need one as a kind of protection. But there was something almost human about Carlo — it wouldn’t be DECENT to fill his place too hurriedly, dear old fellow.”

Anne went to Avonlea a week before Christmas and stayed until after the holidays. Gilbert came up for her, and there was a glad New Year celebration at Green Gables, when Barrys and Blythes and Wrights assembled to devour a dinner which had cost Mrs. Rachel and Marilla much careful thought and preparation. When they went back to Four Winds the little house was almost drifted over, for the third storm of a winter that was to prove phenomenally stormy had whirled up the harbor and heaped huge snow mountains about everything it encountered. But Captain Jim had shovelled out doors and paths, and Miss Cornelia had come down and kindled the hearth-fire.

“It’s good to see you back, Anne, dearie! But did you ever see such drifts? You can’t see the Moore place at all unless you go upstairs. Leslie’ll be so glad you’re back. She’s almost buried alive over there. Fortunately Dick can shovel snow, and thinks it’s great fun. Susan sent me word to tell you she would be on hand tomorrow. Where are you off to now, Captain?”

“I reckon I’ll plough up to the Glen and sit a bit with old Martin Strong. He’s not far from his end and he’s lonesome. He hasn’t many friends — been too busy all his life to make any. He’s made heaps of money, though.”

“Well, he thought that since he couldn’t serve God and Mammon he’d better stick to Mammon,” said Miss Cornelia crisply. “So he shouldn’t complain if he doesn’t find Mammon very good company now.”

Captain Jim went out, but remembered something in the yard and turned back for a moment.

“I’d a letter from Mr. Ford, Mistress Blythe, and he says the life-book is accepted and is going to be published next fall. I felt fair uplifted when I got the news. To think that I’m to see it in print at last.”

“That man is clean crazy on the subject of his life-book,” said Miss Cornelia compassionately. “For my part, I think there’s far too many books in the world now.”

Gilbert and Anne Disagree

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Gilbert laid down the ponderous medical tome over which he had been poring until the increasing dusk of the March evening made him desist. He leaned back in his chair and gazed meditatively out of the window. It was early spring — probably the ugliest time of the year. Not even the sunset could redeem the dead, sodden landscape and rotten black harbor ice upon which he looked. No sign of life was visible, save a big black crow winging his solitary way across a leaden field. Gilbert speculated idly concerning that crow. Was he a family crow, with a black but comely crow wife awaiting him in the woods beyond the Glen? Or was he a glossy young buck of a crow on courting thoughts intent? Or was he a cynical bachelor crow, believing that he travels the fastest who travels alone? Whatever he was, he soon disappeared in congenial gloom and Gilbert turned to the cheerier view indoors.

The firelight flickered from point to point, gleaming on the white and green coats of Gog and Magog, on the sleek, brown head of the beautiful setter basking on the rug, on the picture frames on the walls, on the vaseful of daffodils from the window garden, on Anne herself, sitting by her little table, with her sewing beside her and her hands clasped over her knee while she traced out pictures in the fire — Castles in Spain whose airy turrets pierced moonlit cloud and sunset bar-ships sailing from the Haven of Good Hopes straight to Four Winds Harbor with precious burthen. For Anne was again a dreamer of dreams, albeit a grim shape of fear went with her night and day to shadow and darken her visions.

Gilbert was accustomed to refer to himself as “an old married man.” But he still looked upon Anne with the incredulous eyes of a lover. He couldn’t wholly believe yet that she was really his. It MIGHT be only a dream after all, part and parcel of this magic house of dreams. His soul

still went on tip-toe before her, lest the charm be shattered and the dream dispelled.

“Anne,” he said slowly, “lend me your ears. I want to talk with you about something.”

Anne looked across at him through the firelit gloom.

“What is it?” she asked gaily. “You look fearfully solemn, Gilbert. I really haven’t done anything naughty today. Ask Susan.”

“It’s not of you — or ourselves — I want to talk. It’s about Dick Moore.”

“Dick Moore?” echoed Anne, sitting up alertly. “Why, what in the world have you to say about Dick Moore?”

“I’ve been thinking a great deal about him lately. Do you remember that time last summer I treated him for those carbuncles on his neck?”

“Yes — yes.”

“I took the opportunity to examine the scars on his head thoroughly. I’ve always thought Dick was a very interesting case from a medical point of view. Lately I’ve been studying the history of trephining and the cases where it has been employed. Anne, I have come to the conclusion that if Dick Moore were taken to a good hospital and the operation of trephining performed on several places in his skull, his memory and faculties might be restored.”

“Gilbert!” Anne’s voice was full of protest. “Surely you don’t mean it!”

“I do, indeed. And I have decided that it is my duty to broach the subject to Leslie.”

“Gilbert Blythe, you shall NOT do any such thing,” cried Anne vehemently. “Oh, Gilbert, you won’t — you won’t. You couldn’t be so cruel. Promise me you won’t.”

“Why, Anne-girl, I didn’t suppose you would take it like this. Be reasonable—”

“I won’t be reasonable — I can’t be reasonable — I AM reasonable. It is you who are unreasonable. Gilbert, have you ever once thought what it would mean for Leslie if Dick Moore were to be restored to his right

senses? Just stop and think! She's unhappy enough now; but life as Dick's nurse and attendant is a thousand times easier for her than life as Dick's wife. I know — I KNOW! It's unthinkable. Don't you meddle with the matter. Leave well enough alone."

"I HAVE thought over that aspect of the case thoroughly, Anne. But I believe that a doctor is bound to set the sanctity of a patient's mind and body above all other considerations, no matter what the consequences may be. I believe it his duty to endeavor to restore health and sanity, if there is any hope whatever of it."

"But Dick isn't your patient in that respect," cried Anne, taking another tack. "If Leslie had asked you if anything could be done for him, THEN it might be your duty to tell her what you really thought. But you've no right to meddle."

"I don't call it meddling. Uncle Dave told Leslie twelve years ago that nothing could be done for Dick. She believes that, of course."

"And why did Uncle Dave tell her that, if it wasn't true?" cried Anne, triumphantly. "Doesn't he know as much about it as you?"

"I think not — though it may sound conceited and presumptuous to say it. And you know as well as I that he is rather prejudiced against what he calls 'these new-fangled notions of cutting and carving.' He's even opposed to operating for appendicitis."

"He's right," exclaimed Anne, with a complete change of front. "I believe myself that you modern doctors are entirely too fond of making experiments with human flesh and blood."

"Rhoda Allonby would not be a living woman today if I had been afraid of making a certain experiment," argued Gilbert. "I took the risk — and saved her life."

"I'm sick and tired of hearing about Rhoda Allonby," cried Anne — most unjustly, for Gilbert had never mentioned Mrs. Allonby's name since the day he had told Anne of his success in regard to her. And he could not be blamed for other people's discussion of it.

Gilbert felt rather hurt.

“I had not expected you to look at the matter as you do, Anne,” he said a little stiffly, getting up and moving towards the office door. It was their first approach to a quarrel.

But Anne flew after him and dragged him back.

“Now, Gilbert, you are not ‘going off mad.’ Sit down here and I’ll apologise bee-YEW-tifully, I shouldn’t have said that. But — oh, if you knew—”

Anne checked herself just in time. She had been on the very verge of betraying Leslie’s secret.

“Knew what a woman feels about it,” she concluded lamely.

“I think I do know. I’ve looked at the matter from every point of view — and I’ve been driven to the conclusion that it is my duty to tell Leslie that I believe it is possible that Dick can be restored to himself; there my responsibility ends. It will be for her to decide what she will do.”

“I don’t think you’ve any right to put such a responsibility on her. She has enough to bear. She is poor — how could she afford such an operation?”

“That is for her to decide,” persisted Gilbert stubbornly.

“You say you think that Dick can be cured. But are you SURE of it?”

“Certainly not. Nobody could be sure of such a thing. There may have been lesions of the brain itself, the effect of which can never be removed. But if, as I believe, his loss of memory and other faculties is due merely to the pressure on the brain centers of certain depressed areas of bone, then he can be cured.”

“But it’s only a possibility!” insisted Anne. “Now, suppose you tell Leslie and she decides to have the operation. It will cost a great deal. She will have to borrow the money, or sell her little property. And suppose the operation is a failure and Dick remains the same.

“How will she be able to pay back the money she borrows, or make a living for herself and that big helpless creature if she sells the farm?”

“Oh, I know — I know. But it is my duty to tell her. I can’t get away from that conviction.”

“Oh, I know the Blythe stubbornness,” groaned Anne. “But don’t do this solely on your own responsibility. Consult Doctor Dave.”

“I HAVE done so,” said Gilbert reluctantly.

“And what did he say?”

“In brief — as you say — leave well enough alone. Apart from his prejudice against new-fangled surgery, I’m afraid he looks at the case from your point of view — don’t do it, for Leslie’s sake.”

“There now,” cried Anne triumphantly. “I do think, Gilbert, that you ought to abide by the judgment of a man nearly eighty, who has seen a great deal and saved scores of lives himself — surely his opinion ought to weigh more than a mere boy’s.”

“Thank you.”

“Don’t laugh. It’s too serious.”

“That’s just my point. It IS serious. Here is a man who is a helpless burden. He may be restored to reason and usefulness—”

“He was so very useful before,” interjected Anne witheringly.

“He may be given a chance to make good and redeem the past. His wife doesn’t know this. I do. It is therefore my duty to tell her that there is such a possibility. That, boiled down, is my decision.”

“Don’t say ‘decision’ yet, Gilbert. Consult somebody else. Ask Captain Jim what he thinks about it.”

“Very well. But I’ll not promise to abide by his opinion, Anne.

“This is something a man must decide for himself. My conscience would never be easy if I kept silent on the subject.”

“Oh, your conscience!” moaned Anne. “I suppose that Uncle Dave has a conscience too, hasn’t he?”

“Yes. But I am not the keeper of his conscience. Come, Anne, if this affair did not concern Leslie — if it were a purely abstract case, you would agree with me, — you know you would.”

“I wouldn’t,” vowed Anne, trying to believe it herself. “Oh, you can argue all night, Gilbert, but you won’t convince me. Just you ask Miss Cornelia what she thinks of it.”

“You’re driven to the last ditch, Anne, when you bring up Miss Cornelia as a reinforcement. She will say, ‘Just like a man,’ and rage furiously. No matter. This is no affair for Miss Cornelia to settle. Leslie alone must decide it.”

“You know very well how she will decide it,” said Anne, almost in tears. “She has ideals of duty, too. I don’t see how you can take such a responsibility on your shoulders. *I couldn’t.*”

“‘Because right is right to follow right
Were wisdom in the scorn of consequence,’”

quoted Gilbert.

“Oh, you think a couplet of poetry a convincing argument!” scoffed Anne. “That is so like a man.”

And then she laughed in spite of herself. It sounded so like an echo of Miss Cornelia.

“Well, if you won’t accept Tennyson as an authority, perhaps you will believe the words of a Greater than he,” said Gilbert seriously. “‘Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.’ I believe that, Anne, with all my heart. It’s the greatest and grandest verse in the Bible — or in any literature — and the TRUEST, if there are comparative degrees of trueness. And it’s the first duty of a man to tell the truth, as he sees it and believes it.”

“In this case the truth won’t make poor Leslie free,” sighed Anne. “It will probably end in still more bitter bondage for her. Oh, Gilbert, I CAN’T think you are right.”

Chapter XXX.

Leslie Decides

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A sudden outbreak of a virulent type of influenza at the Glen and down at the fishing village kept Gilbert so busy for the next fortnight that he had no time to pay the promised visit to Captain Jim. Anne hoped against hope that he had abandoned the idea about Dick Moore, and, resolving to let sleeping dogs lie, she said no more about the subject. But she thought of it incessantly.

“I wonder if it would be right for me to tell him that Leslie cares for Owen,” she thought. “He would never let her suspect that he knew, so her pride would not suffer, and it MIGHT convince him that he should let Dick Moore alone. Shall I — shall I? No, after all, I cannot. A promise is sacred, and I’ve no right to betray Leslie’s secret. But oh, I never felt so worried over anything in my life as I do over this. It’s spoiling the spring — it’s spoiling everything.”

One evening Gilbert abruptly proposed that they go down and see Captain Jim. With a sinking heart Anne agreed, and they set forth. Two weeks of kind sunshine had wrought a miracle in the bleak landscape over which Gilbert’s crow had flown. The hills and fields were dry and brown and warm, ready to break into bud and blossom; the harbor was laughter-shaken again; the long harbor road was like a gleaming red ribbon; down on the dunes a crowd of boys, who were out smelt fishing, were burning the thick, dry sandhill grass of the preceding summer. The flames swept over the dunes rosily, flinging their cardinal banners against the dark gulf beyond, and illuminating the channel and the fishing village. It was a picturesque scene which would at other times have delighted Anne’s eyes; but she was not enjoying this walk. Neither was Gilbert. Their usual good-comradeship and Josephian community of taste and viewpoint were sadly lacking. Anne’s disapproval of the whole project showed itself in the haughty uplift of her head and the studied politeness of her remarks.

Gilbert's mouth was set in all the Blythe obstinacy, but his eyes were troubled. He meant to do what he believed to be his duty; but to be at outs with Anne was a high price to pay. Altogether, both were glad when they reached the light — and remorseful that they should be glad.

Captain Jim put away the fishing net upon which he was working, and welcomed them joyfully. In the searching light of the spring evening he looked older than Anne had ever seen him. His hair had grown much grayer, and the strong old hand shook a little. But his blue eyes were clear and steady, and the staunch soul looked out through them gallant and unafraid.

Captain Jim listened in amazed silence while Gilbert said what he had come to say. Anne, who knew how the old man worshipped Leslie, felt quite sure that he would side with her, although she had not much hope that this would influence Gilbert. She was therefore surprised beyond measure when Captain Jim, slowly and sorrowfully, but unhesitatingly, gave it as his opinion that Leslie should be told.

"Oh, Captain Jim, I didn't think you'd say that," she exclaimed reproachfully. "I thought you wouldn't want to make more trouble for her."

Captain Jim shook his head.

"I don't want to. I know how you feel about it, Mistress Blythe — just as I feel meself. But it ain't our feelings we have to steer by through life — no, no, we'd make shipwreck mighty often if we did that. There's only the one safe compass and we've got to set our course by that — what it's right to do. I agree with the doctor. If there's a chance for Dick, Leslie should be told of it. There's no two sides to that, in my opinion."

"Well," said Anne, giving up in despair, "wait until Miss Cornelia gets after you two men."

"Cornelia'll rake us fore and aft, no doubt," assented Captain Jim. "You women are lovely critters, Mistress Blythe, but you're just a mite illogical. You're a highly eddicated lady and Cornelia isn't, but you're like as two peas when it comes to that. I dunno's you're any the worse for it. Logic is a sort of hard, merciless thing, I reckon. Now, I'll brew a cup of

tea and we'll drink it and talk of pleasant things, jest to calm our minds a bit."

At least, Captain Jim's tea and conversation calmed Anne's mind to such an extent that she did not make Gilbert suffer so acutely on the way home as she had deliberately intended to do. She did not refer to the burning question at all, but she chatted amiably of other matters, and Gilbert understood that he was forgiven under protest.

"Captain Jim seems very frail and bent this spring. The winter has aged him," said Anne sadly. "I am afraid that he will soon be going to seek lost Margaret. I can't bear to think of it."

"Four Winds won't be the same place when Captain Jim 'sets out to sea,'" agreed Gilbert.

The following evening he went to the house up the brook. Anne wandered dismally around until his return.

"Well, what did Leslie say?" she demanded when he came in.

"Very little. I think she felt rather dazed."

"And is she going to have the operation?"

"She is going to think it over and decide very soon."

Gilbert flung himself wearily into the easy chair before the fire. He looked tired. It had not been an easy thing for him to tell Leslie. And the terror that had sprung into her eyes when the meaning of what he told her came home to her was not a pleasant thing to remember. Now, when the die was cast, he was beset with doubts of his own wisdom.

Anne looked at him remorsefully; then she slipped down on the rug beside him and laid her glossy red head on his arm.

"Gilbert, I've been rather hateful over this. I won't be any more. Please just call me redheaded and forgive me."

By which Gilbert understood that, no matter what came of it, there would be no I-told-you-so's. But he was not wholly comforted. Duty in the abstract is one thing; duty in the concrete is quite another, especially when the doer is confronted by a woman's stricken eyes.

Some instinct made Anne keep away from Leslie for the next three days. On the third evening Leslie came down to the little house and told

Gilbert that she had made up her mind; she would take Dick to Montreal and have the operation.

She was very pale and seemed to have wrapped herself in her old mantle of aloofness. But her eyes had lost the look which had haunted Gilbert; they were cold and bright; and she proceeded to discuss details with him in a crisp, businesslike way. There were plans to be made and many things to be thought over. When Leslie had got the information she wanted she went home. Anne wanted to walk part of the way with her.

“Better not,” said Leslie curtly. “Today’s rain has made the ground damp. Goodnight.”

“Have I lost my friend?” said Anne with a sigh. “If the operation is successful and Dick Moore finds himself again Leslie will retreat into some remote fastness of her soul where none of us can ever find her.”

“Perhaps she will leave him,” said Gilbert.

“Leslie would never do that, Gilbert. Her sense of duty is very strong. She told me once that her Grandmother West always impressed upon her the fact that when she assumed any responsibility she must never shirk it, no matter what the consequences might be. That is one of her cardinal rules. I suppose it’s very old-fashioned.”

“Don’t be bitter, Anne-girl. You know you don’t think it old-fashioned — you know you have the very same idea of sacredness of assumed responsibilities yourself. And you are right. Shirking responsibilities is the curse of our modern life — the secret of all the unrest and discontent that is seething in the world.”

“Thus saith the preacher,” mocked Anne. But under the mockery she felt that he was right; and she was very sick at heart for Leslie.

A week later Miss Cornelia descended like an avalanche upon the little house. Gilbert was away and Anne was compelled to bear the shock of the impact alone.

Miss Cornelia hardly waited to get her hat off before she began.

“Anne, do you mean to tell me it’s true what I’ve heard — that Dr. Blythe has told Leslie Dick can be cured, and that she is going to take him to Montreal to have him operated on?”

“Yes, it is quite true, Miss Cornelia,” said Anne bravely.

“Well, it’s inhuman cruelty, that’s what it is,” said Miss Cornelia, violently agitated. “I did think Dr. Blythe was a decent man. I didn’t think he could have been guilty of this.”

“Dr. Blythe thought it was his duty to tell Leslie that there was a chance for Dick,” said Anne with spirit, “and,” she added, loyalty to Gilbert getting the better of her, “I agree with him.”

“Oh, no, you don’t, dearie,” said Miss Cornelia. “No person with any bowels of compassion could.”

“Captain Jim does.”

“Don’t quote that old ninny to me,” cried Miss Cornelia. “And I don’t care who agrees with him. Think — THINK what it means to that poor hunted, harried girl.”

“We DO think of it. But Gilbert believes that a doctor should put the welfare of a patient’s mind and body before all other considerations.”

“That’s just like a man. But I expected better things of you, Anne,” said Miss Cornelia, more in sorrow than in wrath; then she proceeded to bombard Anne with precisely the same arguments with which the latter had attacked Gilbert; and Anne valiantly defended her husband with the weapons he had used for his own protection. Long was the fray, but Miss Cornelia made an end at last.

“It’s an iniquitous shame,” she declared, almost in tears. “That’s just what it is — an iniquitous shame. Poor, poor Leslie!”

“Don’t you think Dick should be considered a little too?” pleaded Anne.

“Dick! Dick Moore! HE’S happy enough. He’s a better behaved and more reputable member of society now than he ever was before.

“Why, he was a drunkard and perhaps worse. Are you going to set him loose again to roar and to devour?”

“He may reform,” said poor Anne, beset by foe without and traitor within.

“Reform your grandmother!” retorted Miss Cornelia. “Dick Moore got the injuries that left him as he is in a drunken brawl. He DESERVES his

fate. It was sent on him for a punishment. I don't believe the doctor has any business to tamper with the visitations of God."

"Nobody knows how Dick was hurt, Miss Cornelia. It may not have been in a drunken brawl at all. He may have been waylaid and robbed."

"Pigs MAY whistle, but they've poor mouths for it," said Miss Cornelia. "Well, the gist of what you tell me is that the thing is settled and there's no use in talking. If that's so I'll hold my tongue. I don't propose to wear MY teeth out gnawing files. When a thing has to be I give in to it. But I like to make mighty sure first that it HAS to be. Now, I'll devote MY energies to comforting and sustaining Leslie. And after all," added Miss Cornelia, brightening up hopefully, "perhaps nothing can be done for Dick."

The Truth Makes Free

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Leslie, having once made up her mind what to do, proceeded to do it with characteristic resolution and speed. Housecleaning must be finished with first, whatever issues of life and death might await beyond. The gray house up the brook was put into flawless order and cleanliness, with Miss Cornelia's ready assistance. Miss Cornelia, having said her say to Anne, and later on to Gilbert and Captain Jim — sparing neither of them, let it be assured — never spoke of the matter to Leslie. She accepted the fact of Dick's operation, referred to it when necessary in a businesslike way, and ignored it when it was not. Leslie never attempted to discuss it. She was very cold and quiet during these beautiful spring days. She seldom visited Anne, and though she was invariably courteous and friendly, that very courtesy was as an icy barrier between her and the people of the little house. The old jokes and laughter and chumminess of common things could not reach her over it. Anne refused to feel hurt. She knew that Leslie was in the grip of a hideous dread — a dread that wrapped her away from all little glimpses of happiness and hours of pleasure. When one great passion seizes possession of the soul all other feelings are crowded aside. Never in all her life had Leslie Moore shuddered away from the future with more intolerable terror. But she went forward as unswervingly in the path she had elected as the martyrs of old walked their chosen way, knowing the end of it to be the fiery agony of the stake.

The financial question was settled with greater ease than Anne had feared. Leslie borrowed the necessary money from Captain Jim, and, at her insistence, he took a mortgage on the little farm.

“So that is one thing off the poor girl's mind,” Miss Cornelia told Anne, “and off mine too. Now, if Dick gets well enough to work again he'll be able to earn enough to pay the interest on it; and if he doesn't I know Captain Jim'll manage someway that Leslie won't have to. He said

as much to me. ‘I’m getting old, Cornelia,’ he said, ‘and I’ve no chick or child of my own. Leslie won’t take a gift from a living man, but mebbe she will from a dead one.’ So it will be all right as far as THAT goes. I wish everything else might be settled as satisfactorily. As for that wretch of a Dick, he’s been awful these last few days. The devil was in him, believe ME! Leslie and I couldn’t get on with our work for the tricks he’d play. He chased all her ducks one day around the yard till most of them died. And not one thing would he do for us. Sometimes, you know, he’ll make himself quite handy, bringing in pails of water and wood. But this week if we sent him to the well he’d try to climb down into it. I thought once, ‘If you’d only shoot down there headfirst everything would be nicely settled.’”

“Oh, Miss Cornelia!”

“Now, you needn’t Miss Cornelia me, Anne, dearie. ANYBODY would have thought the same. If the Montreal doctors can make a rational creature out of Dick Moore they’re wonders.”

Leslie took Dick to Montreal early in May. Gilbert went with her, to help her, and make the necessary arrangements for her. He came home with the report that the Montreal surgeon whom they had consulted agreed with him that there was a good chance of Dick’s restoration.

“Very comforting,” was Miss Cornelia’s sarcastic comment.

Anne only sighed. Leslie had been very distant at their parting.

But she had promised to write. Ten days after Gilbert’s return the letter came. Leslie wrote that the operation had been successfully performed and that Dick was making a good recovery.

“What does she mean by ‘successfully?’” asked Anne. “Does she mean that Dick’s memory is really restored?”

“Not likely — since she says nothing of it,” said Gilbert. “She uses the word ‘successfully’ from the surgeon’s point of view. The operation has been performed and followed by normal results. But it is too soon to know whether Dick’s faculties will be eventually restored, wholly or in part. His memory would not be likely to return to him all at once. The process will be gradual, if it occurs at all. Is that all she says?”

“Yes — there’s her letter. It’s very short. Poor girl, she must be under a terrible strain. Gilbert Blythe, there are heaps of things I long to say to you, only it would be mean.”

“Miss Cornelia says them for you,” said Gilbert with a rueful smile. “She combs me down every time I encounter her. She makes it plain to me that she regards me as little better than a murderer, and that she thinks it a great pity that Dr. Dave ever let me step into his shoes. She even told me that the Methodist doctor over the harbor was to be preferred before me. With Miss Cornelia the force of condemnation can no further go.”

“If Cornelia Bryant was sick, it would not be Doctor Dave or the Methodist doctor she would send for,” sniffed Susan. “She would have you out of your hard-earned bed in the middle of the night, doctor, dear, if she took a spell of misery, that she would. And then she would likely say your bill was past all reason. But do not mind her, doctor, dear. It takes all kinds of people to make a world.”

No further word came from Leslie for some time. The May days crept away in a sweet succession and the shores of Four Winds Harbor greened and bloomed and purpled. One day in late May Gilbert came home to be met by Susan in the stable yard.

“I am afraid something has upset Mrs. Doctor, doctor, dear,” she said mysteriously. “She got a letter this afternoon and since then she has just been walking round the garden and talking to herself. You know it is not good for her to be on her feet so much, doctor, dear. She did not see fit to tell me what her news was, and I am no pry, doctor, dear, and never was, but it is plain something has upset her. And it is not good for her to be upset.”

Gilbert hurried rather anxiously to the garden. Had anything happened at Green Gables? But Anne, sitting on the rustic seat by the brook, did not look troubled, though she was certainly much excited. Her eyes were their grayest, and scarlet spots burned on her cheeks.

“What has happened, Anne?”

Anne gave a queer little laugh.

“I think you’ll hardly believe it when I tell you, Gilbert. *I* can’t believe it yet. As Susan said the other day, ‘I feel like a fly coming to live in the sun — dazed-like.’ It’s all so incredible. I’ve read the letter a score of times and every time it’s just the same — I can’t believe my own eyes. Oh, Gilbert, you were right — so right. I can see that clearly enough now — and I’m so ashamed of myself — and will you ever really forgive me?”

“Anne, I’ll shake you if you don’t grow coherent. Redmond would be ashamed of you. WHAT has happened?”

“You won’t believe it — you won’t believe it—”

“I’m going to phone for Uncle Dave,” said Gilbert, pretending to start for the house.

“Sit down, Gilbert. I’ll try to tell you. I’ve had a letter, and oh, Gilbert, it’s all so amazing — so incredibly amazing — we never thought — not one of us ever dreamed—”

“I suppose,” said Gilbert, sitting down with a resigned air, “the only thing to do in a case of this kind is to have patience and go at the matter categorically. Whom is your letter from?”

“Leslie — and, oh, Gilbert—”

“Leslie! Whew! What has she to say? What’s the news about Dick?”

Anne lifted the letter and held it out, calmly dramatic in a moment.

“There is NO Dick! The man we have thought Dick Moore — whom everybody in Four Winds has believed for twelve years to be Dick Moore — is his cousin, George Moore, of Nova Scotia, who, it seems, always resembled him very strikingly. Dick Moore died of yellow fever thirteen years ago in Cuba.”

Miss Cornelia Discusses the Affair

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“And do you mean to tell me, Anne, dearie, that Dick Moore has turned out not to be Dick Moore at all but somebody else? Is THAT what you phoned up to me today?”

“Yes, Miss Cornelia. It is very amazing, isn’t it?”

“It’s — it’s — just like a man,” said Miss Cornelia helplessly. She took off her hat with trembling fingers. For once in her life Miss Cornelia was undeniably staggered.

“I can’t seem to sense it, Anne,” she said. “I’ve heard you say it — and I believe you — but I can’t take it in. Dick Moore is dead — has been dead all these years — and Leslie is free?”

“Yes. The truth has made her free. Gilbert was right when he said that verse was the grandest in the Bible.”

“Tell me everything, Anne, dearie. Since I got your phone I’ve been in a regular muddle, believe ME. Cornelia Bryant was never so kerflummuxed before.”

“There isn’t a very great deal to tell. Leslie’s letter was short. She didn’t go into particulars. This man — George Moore — has recovered his memory and knows who he is. He says Dick took yellow fever in Cuba, and the Four Sisters had to sail without him. George stayed behind to nurse him. But he died very shortly afterwards.

“George did not write Leslie because he intended to come right home and tell her himself.”

“And why didn’t he?”

“I suppose his accident must have intervened. Gilbert says it is quite likely that George Moore remembers nothing of his accident, or what led to it, and may never remember it. It probably happened very soon after Dick’s death. We may find out more particulars when Leslie writes again.”

“Does she say what she is going to do? When is she coming home?”

“She says she will stay with George Moore until he can leave the hospital. She has written to his people in Nova Scotia. It seems that George’s only near relative is a married sister much older than himself. She was living when George sailed on the Four Sisters, but of course we do not know what may have happened since. Did you ever see George Moore, Miss Cornelia?”

“I did. It is all coming back to me. He was here visiting his Uncle Abner eighteen years ago, when he and Dick would be about seventeen. They were double cousins, you see. Their fathers were brothers and their mothers were twin sisters, and they did look a terrible lot alike. Of course,” added Miss Cornelia scornfully, “it wasn’t one of those freak resemblances you read of in novels where two people are so much alike that they can fill each other’s places and their nearest and dearest can’t tell between them. In those days you could tell easy enough which was George and which was Dick, if you saw them together and near at hand. Apart, or some distance away, it wasn’t so easy. They played lots of tricks on people and thought it great fun, the two scamps. George Moore was a little taller and a good deal fatter than Dick — though neither of them was what you would call fat — they were both of the lean kind. Dick had higher color than George, and his hair was a shade lighter. But their features were just alike, and they both had that queer freak of eyes — one blue and one hazel. They weren’t much alike in any other way, though. George was a real nice fellow, though he was a scalawag for mischief, and some said he had a liking for a glass even then. But everybody liked him better than Dick. He spent about a month here. Leslie never saw him; she was only about eight or nine then and I remember now that she spent that whole winter over harbor with her grandmother West. Captain Jim was away, too — that was the winter he was wrecked on the Magdalens. I don’t suppose either he or Leslie had ever heard about the Nova Scotia cousin looking so much like Dick. Nobody ever thought of him when Captain Jim brought Dick — George, I should say — home. Of course, we all thought Dick had changed considerable — he’d got so lumpish and fat. But we put that down to what had happened to him, and no doubt that was the reason, for, as I’ve said,

George wasn't fat to begin with either. And there was no other way we could have guessed, for the man's senses were clean gone. I can't see that it is any wonder we were all deceived. But it's a staggering thing. And Leslie has sacrificed the best years of her life to nursing a man who hadn't any claim on her! Oh, drat the men! No matter what they do, it's the wrong thing. And no matter who they are, it's somebody they shouldn't be. They do exasperate me."

"Gilbert and Captain Jim are men, and it is through them that the truth has been discovered at last," said Anne.

"Well, I admit that," conceded Miss Cornelia reluctantly. "I'm sorry I raked the doctor off so. It's the first time in my life I've ever felt ashamed of anything I said to a man. I don't know as I shall tell him so, though. He'll just have to take it for granted. Well, Anne, dearie, it's a mercy the Lord doesn't answer all our prayers. I've been praying hard right along that the operation wouldn't cure Dick. Of course I didn't put it just quite so plain. But that was what was in the back of my mind, and I have no doubt the Lord knew it."

"Well, He has answered the spirit of your prayer. You really wished that things shouldn't be made any harder for Leslie. I'm afraid that in my secret heart I've been hoping the operation wouldn't succeed, and I am wholesomely ashamed of it."

"How does Leslie seem to take it?"

"She writes like one dazed. I think that, like ourselves, she hardly realises it yet. She says, 'It all seems like a strange dream to me, Anne.' That is the only reference she makes to herself."

"Poor child! I suppose when the chains are struck off a prisoner he'd feel queer and lost without them for a while. Anne, dearie, here's a thought keeps coming into my mind. What about Owen Ford? We both know Leslie was fond of him. Did it ever occur to you that he was fond of her?"

"It — did — once," admitted Anne, feeling that she might say so much.

"Well, I hadn't any reason to think he was, but it just appeared to me he MUST be. Now, Anne, dearie, the Lord knows I'm not a matchmaker,

and I scorn all such doings. But if I were you and writing to that Ford man I'd just mention, casual-like, what has happened. That is what *I'd* do."

"Of course I will mention it when I write him," said Anne, a trifle distantly. Somehow, this was a thing she could not discuss with Miss Cornelia. And yet, she had to admit that the same thought had been lurking in her mind ever since she had heard of Leslie's freedom. But she would not desecrate it by free speech.

"Of course there is no great rush, dearie. But Dick Moore's been dead for thirteen years and Leslie has wasted enough of her life for him. We'll just see what comes of it. As for this George Moore, who's gone and come back to life when everyone thought he was dead and done for, just like a man, I'm real sorry for him. He won't seem to fit in anywhere."

"He is still a young man, and if he recovers completely, as seems likely, he will be able to make a place for himself again. It must be very strange for him, poor fellow. I suppose all these years since his accident will not exist for him."

Leslie Returns

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A fortnight later Leslie Moore came home alone to the old house where she had spent so many bitter years. In the June twilight she went over the fields to Anne's, and appeared with ghostlike suddenness in the scented garden.

"Leslie!" cried Anne in amazement. "Where have you sprung from? We never knew you were coming. Why didn't you write? We would have met you."

"I couldn't write somehow, Anne. It seemed so futile to try to say anything with pen and ink. And I wanted to get back quietly and unobserved."

Anne put her arms about Leslie and kissed her. Leslie returned the kiss warmly. She looked pale and tired, and she gave a little sigh as she dropped down on the grasses beside a great bed of daffodils that were gleaming through the pale, silvery twilight like golden stars.

"And you have come home alone, Leslie?"

"Yes. George Moore's sister came to Montreal and took him home with her. Poor fellow, he was sorry to part with me — though I was a stranger to him when his memory first came back. He clung to me in those first hard days when he was trying to realise that Dick's death was not the thing of yesterday that it seemed to him. It was all very hard for him. I helped him all I could. When his sister came it was easier for him, because it seemed to him only the other day that he had seen her last. Fortunately she had not changed much, and that helped him, too."

"It is all so strange and wonderful, Leslie. I think we none of us realise it yet."

"I cannot. When I went into the house over there an hour ago, I felt that it **MUST** be a dream — that Dick must be there, with his childish smile, as he had been for so long. Anne, I seem stunned yet. I'm not glad

or sorry — or ANYTHING. I feel as if something had been torn suddenly out of my life and left a terrible hole. I feel as if I couldn't be *I* — as if I must have changed into somebody else and couldn't get used to it. It gives me a horrible lonely, dazed, helpless feeling. It's good to see you again — it seems as if you were a sort of anchor for my drifting soul. Oh, Anne, I dread it all — the gossip and wonderment and questioning. When I think of that, I wish that I need not have come home at all. Dr. Dave was at the station when I came off the train — he brought me home. Poor old man, he feels very badly because he told me years ago that nothing could be done for Dick. 'I honestly thought so, Leslie,' he said to me today. 'But I should have told you not to depend on my opinion — I should have told you to go to a specialist. If I had, you would have been saved many bitter years, and poor George Moore many wasted ones. I blame myself very much, Leslie.' I told him not to do that — he had done what he thought right. He has always been so kind to me — I couldn't bear to see him worrying over it."

"And Dick — George, I mean? Is his memory fully restored?"

"Practically. Of course, there are a great many details he can't recall yet — but he remembers more and more every day. He went out for a walk on the evening after Dick was buried. He had Dick's money and watch on him; he meant to bring them home to me, along with my letter. He admits he went to a place where the sailors resorted — and he remembers drinking — and nothing else. Anne, I shall never forget the moment he remembered his own name. I saw him looking at me with an intelligent but puzzled expression. I said, 'Do you know me, Dick?' He answered, 'I never saw you before. Who are you? And my name is not Dick. I am George Moore, and Dick died of yellow fever yesterday! Where am I? What has happened to me?' I — I fainted, Anne. And ever since I have felt as if I were in a dream."

"You will soon adjust yourself to this new state of things, Leslie. And you are young — life is before you — you will have many beautiful years yet."

"Perhaps I shall be able to look at it in that way after a while, Anne. Just now I feel too tired and indifferent to think about the future. I'm —

I'm — Anne, I'm lonely. I miss Dick. Isn't it all very strange? Do you know, I was really fond of poor Dick — George, I suppose I should say — just as I would have been fond of a helpless child who depended on me for everything. I would never have admitted it — I was really ashamed of it — because, you see, I had hated and despised Dick so much before he went away. When I heard that Captain Jim was bringing him home I expected I would just feel the same to him. But I never did — although I continued to loathe him as I remembered him before. From the time he came home I felt only pity — a pity that hurt and wrung me. I supposed then that it was just because his accident had made him so helpless and changed. But now I believe it was because there was really a different personality there. Carlo knew it, Anne — I know now that Carlo knew it. I always thought it strange that Carlo shouldn't have known Dick. Dogs are usually so faithful. But HE knew it was not his master who had come back, although none of the rest of us did. I had never seen George Moore, you know. I remember now that Dick once mentioned casually that he had a cousin in Nova Scotia who looked as much like him as a twin; but the thing had gone out of my memory, and in any case I would never have thought it of any importance. You see, it never occurred to me to question Dick's identity. Any change in him seemed to me just the result of the accident.

“Oh, Anne, that night in April when Gilbert told me he thought Dick might be cured! I can never forget it. It seemed to me that I had once been a prisoner in a hideous cage of torture, and then the door had been opened and I could get out. I was still chained to the cage but I was not in it. And that night I felt that a merciless hand was drawing me back into the cage — back to a torture even more terrible than it had once been. I didn't blame Gilbert. I felt he was right. And he had been very good — he said that if, in view of the expense and uncertainty of the operation, I should decide not to risk it, he would not blame me in the least. But I knew how I ought to decide — and I couldn't face it. All night I walked the floor like a mad woman, trying to compel myself to face it. I couldn't, Anne — I thought I couldn't — and when morning broke I set my teeth and resolved

that I WOULDN'T. I would let things remain as they were. It was very wicked, I know. It would have been just punishment for such wickedness if I had just been left to abide by that decision. I kept to it all day. That afternoon I had to go up to the Glen to do some shopping. It was one of Dick's quiet, drowsy days, so I left him alone. I was gone a little longer than I had expected, and he missed me. He felt lonely. And when I got home, he ran to meet me just like a child, with such a pleased smile on his face. Somehow, Anne, I just gave way then. That smile on his poor vacant face was more than I could endure. I felt as if I were denying a child the chance to grow and develop. I knew that I must give him his chance, no matter what the consequences might be. So I came over and told Gilbert. Oh, Anne, you must have thought me hateful in those weeks before I went away. I didn't mean to be — but I couldn't think of anything except what I had to do, and everything and everybody about me were like shadows."

"I know — I understood, Leslie. And now it is all over — your chain is broken — there is no cage."

"There is no cage," repeated Leslie absently, plucking at the fringing grasses with her slender, brown hands. "But — it doesn't seem as if there were anything else, Anne. You — you remember what I told you of my folly that night on the sandbar? I find one doesn't get over being a fool very quickly. Sometimes I think there are people who are fools forever. And to be a fool — of that kind — is almost as bad as being a — a dog on a chain."

"You will feel very differently after you get over being tired and bewildered," said Anne, who, knowing a certain thing that Leslie did not know, did not feel herself called upon to waste overmuch sympathy.

Leslie laid her splendid golden head against Anne's knee.

"Anyhow, I have YOU," she said. "Life can't be altogether empty with such a friend. Anne, pat my head — just as if I were a little girl — MOTHER me a bit — and let me tell you while my stubborn tongue is loosed a little just what you and your comradeship have meant to me since that night I met you on the rock shore."

The Ship O'dreams Comes to Harbor

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One morning, when a windy golden sunrise was billowing over the gulf in waves of light, a certain weary stork flew over the bar of Four Winds Harbor on his way from the Land of Evening Stars. Under his wing was tucked a sleepy, starry-eyed, little creature. The stork was tired, and he looked wistfully about him. He knew he was somewhere near his destination, but he could not yet see it. The big, white lighthouse on the red sandstone cliff had its good points; but no stork possessed of any gumption would leave a new, velvet baby there. An old gray house, surrounded by willows, in a blossomy brook valley, looked more promising, but did not seem quite the thing either. The staring green abode further on was manifestly out of the question. Then the stork brightened up. He had caught sight of the very place — a little white house nestled against a big, whispering firwood, with a spiral of blue smoke winding up from its kitchen chimney — a house which just looked as if it were meant for babies. The stork gave a sigh of satisfaction, and softly alighted on the ridgepole.

Half an hour later Gilbert ran down the hall and tapped on the spare-room door. A drowsy voice answered him and in a moment Marilla's pale, scared face peeped out from behind the door.

"Marilla, Anne has sent me to tell you that a certain young gentleman has arrived here. He hasn't brought much luggage with him, but he evidently means to stay."

"For pity's sake!" said Marilla blankly. "You don't mean to tell me, Gilbert, that it's all over. Why wasn't I called?"

"Anne wouldn't let us disturb you when there was no need. Nobody was called until about two hours ago. There was no 'passage perilous' this time."

"And — and — Gilbert — will this baby live?"

“He certainly will. He weighs ten pounds and — why, listen to him. Nothing wrong with his lungs, is there? The nurse says his hair will be red. Anne is furious with her, and I’m tickled to death.”

That was a wonderful day in the little house of dreams.

“The best dream of all has come true,” said Anne, pale and rapturous. “Oh, Marilla, I hardly dare believe it, after that horrible day last summer. I have had a heartache ever since then — but it is gone now.”

“This baby will take Joy’s place,” said Marilla.

“Oh, no, no, NO, Marilla. He can’t — nothing can ever do that. He has his own place, my dear, wee man-child. But little Joy has hers, and always will have it. If she had lived she would have been over a year old. She would have been toddling around on her tiny feet and lisping a few words. I can see her so plainly, Marilla. Oh, I know now that Captain Jim was right when he said God would manage better than that my baby would seem a stranger to me when I found her Beyond. I’ve learned THAT this past year. I’ve followed her development day by day and week by week — I always shall. I shall know just how she grows from year to year — and when I meet her again I’ll know her — she won’t be a stranger. Oh, Marilla, LOOK at his dear, darling toes! Isn’t it strange they should be so perfect?”

“It would be stranger if they weren’t,” said Marilla crisply. Now that all was safely over, Marilla was herself again.

“Oh, I know — but it seems as if they couldn’t be quite FINISHED, you know — and they are, even to the tiny nails. And his hands — JUST look at his hands, Marilla.”

“They appear to be a good deal like hands,” Marilla conceded.

“See how he clings to my finger. I’m sure he knows me already. He cries when the nurse takes him away. Oh, Marilla, do you think — you don’t think, do you — that his hair is going to be red?”

“I don’t see much hair of any color,” said Marilla. “I wouldn’t worry about it, if I were you, until it becomes visible.”

“Marilla, he HAS hair — look at that fine little down all over his head. Anyway, nurse says his eyes will be hazel and his forehead is exactly like

Gilbert's."

"And he has the nicest little ears, Mrs. Doctor, dear," said Susan. "The first thing I did was to look at his ears. Hair is deceitful and noses and eyes change, and you cannot tell what is going to come of them, but ears is ears from start to finish, and you always know where you are with them. Just look at their shape — and they are set right back against his precious head. You will never need to be ashamed of his ears, Mrs. Doctor, dear."

Anne's convalescence was rapid and happy. Folks came and worshipped the baby, as people have bowed before the kingship of the newborn since long before the Wise Men of the East knelt in homage to the Royal Babe of the Bethlehem manger. Leslie, slowly finding herself amid the new conditions of her life, hovered over it, like a beautiful, golden-crowned Madonna. Miss Cornelia nursed it as knackily as could any mother in Israel. Captain Jim held the small creature in his big brown hands and gazed tenderly at it, with eyes that saw the children who had never been born to him.

"What are you going to call him?" asked Miss Cornelia.

"Anne has settled his name," answered Gilbert.

"James Matthew — after the two finest gentlemen I've ever known — not even saving your presence," said Anne with a saucy glance at Gilbert. Gilbert smiled.

"I never knew Matthew very well; he was so shy we boys couldn't get acquainted with him — but I quite agree with you that Captain Jim is one of the rarest and finest souls God ever clothed in clay. He is so delighted over the fact that we have given his name to our small lad. It seems he has no other namesake."

"Well, James Matthew is a name that will wear well and not fade in the washing," said Miss Cornelia. "I'm glad you didn't load him down with some highfalutin, romantic name that he'd be ashamed of when he gets to be a grandfather. Mrs. William Drew at the Glen has called her baby Bertie Shakespeare. Quite a combination, isn't it? And I'm glad you haven't had much trouble picking on a name. Some folks have an awful time. When the Stanley Flaggs' first boy was born there was so much rivalry as to who

the child should be named for that the poor little soul had to go for two years without a name. Then a brother came along and there it was—'Big Baby' and 'Little Baby.' Finally they called Big Baby Peter and Little Baby Isaac, after the two grandfathers, and had them both christened together. And each tried to see if it couldn't howl the other down. You know that Highland Scotch family of MacNabs back of the Glen? They've got twelve boys and the oldest and the youngest are both called Neil — Big Neil and Little Neil in the same family. Well, I s'pose they ran out of names."

"I have read somewhere," laughed Anne, "that the first child is a poem but the tenth is very prosy prose. Perhaps Mrs. MacNab thought that the twelfth was merely an old tale re-told."

"Well, there's something to be said for large families," said Miss Cornelia, with a sigh. "I was an only child for eight years and I did long for a brother and sister. Mother told me to pray for one — and pray I did, believe ME. Well, one day Aunt Nellie came to me and said, 'Cornelia, there is a little brother for you upstairs in your ma's room. You can go up and see him.' I was so excited and delighted I just flew upstairs. And old Mrs. Flagg lifted up the baby for me to see. Lord, Anne, dearie, I never was so disappointed in my life. You see, I'd been praying for A BROTHER TWO YEARS OLDER THAN MYSELF."

"How long did it take you to get over your disappointment?" asked Anne, amid her laughter.

"Well, I had a spite at Providence for a good spell, and for weeks I wouldn't even look at the baby. Nobody knew why, for I never told. Then he began to get real cute, and held out his wee hands to me and I began to get fond of him. But I didn't get really reconciled to him until one day a school chum came to see him and said she thought he was awful small for his age. I just got boiling mad, and I sailed right into her, and told her she didn't know a nice baby when she saw one, and ours was the nicest baby in the world. And after that I just worshipped him. Mother died before he was three years old and I was sister and mother to him both. Poor little lad, he

was never strong, and he died when he wasn't much over twenty. Seems to me I'd have given anything on earth, Anne, dearie, if he'd only lived."

Miss Cornelia sighed. Gilbert had gone down and Leslie, who had been crooning over the small James Matthew in the dormer window, laid him asleep in his basket and went her way. As soon as she was safely out of earshot, Miss Cornelia bent forward and said in a conspirator's whisper:

"Anne, dearie, I'd a letter from Owen Ford yesterday. He's in Vancouver just now, but he wants to know if I can board him for a month later on. YOU know what that means. Well, I hope we're doing right."

"We've nothing to do with it — we couldn't prevent him from coming to Four Winds if he wanted to," said Anne quickly. She did not like the feeling of matchmaking Miss Cornelia's whispers gave her; and then she weakly succumbed herself.

"Don't let Leslie know he is coming until he is here," she said. "If she found out I feel sure she would go away at once. She intends to go in the fall anyhow — she told me so the other day. She is going to Montreal to take up nursing and make what she can of her life."

"Oh, well, Anne, dearie," said Miss Cornelia, nodding sagely "that is all as it may be. You and I have done our part and we must leave the rest to Higher Hands."

Politics at Four Winds

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When Anne came downstairs again, the Island, as well as all Canada, was in the throes of a campaign preceding a general election. Gilbert, who was an ardent Conservative, found himself caught in the vortex, being much in demand for speech-making at the various county rallies. Miss Cornelia did not approve of his mixing up in politics and told Anne so.

“Dr. Dave never did it. Dr. Blythe will find he is making a mistake, believe ME. Politics is something no decent man should meddle with.”

“Is the government of the country to be left solely to the rogues then?” asked Anne.

“Yes — so long as it’s Conservative rogues,” said Miss Cornelia, marching off with the honors of war. “Men and politicians are all tarred with the same brush. The Grits have it laid on thicker than the Conservatives, that’s all — CONSIDERABLY thicker. But Grit or Tory, my advice to Dr. Blythe is to steer clear of politics. First thing you know, he’ll be running an election himself, and going off to Ottawa for half the year and leaving his practice to go to the dogs.”

“Ah, well, let’s not borrow trouble,” said Anne. “The rate of interest is too high. Instead, let’s look at Little Jem. It should be spelled with a G. Isn’t he perfectly beautiful? Just see the dimples in his elbows. We’ll bring him up to be a good Conservative, you and I, Miss Cornelia.”

“Bring him up to be a good man,” said Miss Cornelia. “They’re scarce and valuable; though, mind you, I wouldn’t like to see him a Grit. As for the election, you and I may be thankful we don’t live over harbor. The air there is blue these days. Every Elliott and Crawford and MacAllister is on the warpath, loaded for bear. This side is peaceful and calm, seeing there’s so few men. Captain Jim’s a Grit, but it’s my opinion he’s ashamed of it, for he never talks politics. There isn’t any earthly doubt that the Conservatives will be returned with a big majority again.”

Miss Cornelia was mistaken. On the morning after the election Captain Jim dropped in at the little house to tell the news. So virulent is the microbe of party politics, even in a peaceable old man, that Captain Jim's cheeks were flushed and his eyes were flashing with all his old-time fire.

"Mistress Blythe, the Liberals are in with a sweeping majority. After eighteen years of Tory mismanagement this downtrodden country is going to have a chance at last."

"I never heard you make such a bitter partisan speech before, Captain Jim. I didn't think you had so much political venom in you," laughed Anne, who was not much excited over the tidings. Little Jem had said "Wow-ga" that morning. What were principalities and powers, the rise and fall of dynasties, the overthrow of Grit or Tory, compared with that miraculous occurrence?

"It's been accumulating for a long while," said Captain Jim, with a deprecating smile. "I thought I was only a moderate Grit, but when the news came that we were in I found out how Gritty I really was."

"You know the doctor and I are Conservatives."

"Ah, well, it's the only bad thing I know of either of you, Mistress Blythe. Cornelia is a Tory, too. I called in on my way from the Glen to tell her the news."

"Didn't you know you took your life in your hands?"

"Yes, but I couldn't resist the temptation."

"How did she take it?"

"Comparatively calm, Mistress Blythe, comparatively calm. She says, says she, 'Well, Providence sends seasons of humiliation to a country, same as to individuals. You Grits have been cold and hungry for many a year. Make haste to get warmed and fed, for you won't be in long.' 'Well, now Cornelia,' I says, 'mebbe Providence thinks Canada needs a real long spell of humiliation.' Ah, Susan, have YOU heard the news? The Liberals are in."

Susan had just come in from the kitchen, attended by the odor of delectable dishes which always seemed to hover around her.

“Now, are they?” she said, with beautiful unconcern. “Well, I never could see but that my bread rose just as light when Grits were in as when they were not. And if any party, Mrs. Doctor, dear, will make it rain before the week is out, and save our kitchen garden from entire ruination, that is the party Susan will vote for. In the meantime, will you just step out and give me your opinion on the meat for dinner? I am fearing that it is very tough, and I think that we had better change our butcher as well as our government.”

One evening, a week later, Anne walked down to the Point, to see if she could get some fresh fish from Captain Jim, leaving Little Jem for the first time. It was quite a tragedy. Suppose he cried? Suppose Susan did not know just exactly what to do for him? Susan was calm and serene.

“I have had as much experience with him as you, Mrs. Doctor, dear, have I not?”

“Yes, with him — but not with other babies. Why, I looked after three pairs of twins, when I was a child, Susan. When they cried, I gave them peppermint or castor oil quite coolly. It’s quite curious now to recall how lightly I took all those babies and their woes.”

“Oh, well, if Little Jem cries, I will just clap a hot water bag on his little stomach,” said Susan.

“Not too hot, you know,” said Anne anxiously. Oh, was it really wise to go?

“Do not you fret, Mrs. Doctor, dear. Susan is not the woman to burn a wee man. Bless him, he has no notion of crying.”

Anne tore herself away finally and enjoyed her walk to the Point after all, through the long shadows of the sunsetting. Captain Jim was not in the living room of the lighthouse, but another man was — a handsome, middle-aged man, with a strong, clean-shaven chin, who was unknown to Anne. Nevertheless, when she sat down, he began to talk to her with all the assurance of an old acquaintance. There was nothing amiss in what he said or the way he said it, but Anne rather resented such a cool taking-for-granted in a complete stranger. Her replies were frosty, and as few as decency required. Nothing daunted, her companion talked on for several

minutes, then excused himself and went away. Anne could have sworn there was a twinkle in his eye and it annoyed her. Who was the creature? There was something vaguely familiar about him but she was certain she had never seen him before.

“Captain Jim, who was that who just went out?” she asked, as Captain Jim came in.

“Marshall Elliott,” answered the captain.

“Marshall Elliott!” cried Anne. “Oh, Captain Jim — it wasn’t — yes, it WAS his voice — oh, Captain Jim, I didn’t know him — and I was quite insulting to him! WHY didn’t he tell me? He must have seen I didn’t know him.”

“He wouldn’t say a word about it — he’d just enjoy the joke. Don’t worry over snubbing him — he’ll think it fun. Yes, Marshall’s shaved off his beard at last and cut his hair. His party is in, you know. I didn’t know him myself first time I saw him. He was up in Carter Flagg’s store at the Glen the night after election day, along with a crowd of others, waiting for the news. About twelve the ‘phone came through — the Liberals were in. Marshall just got up and walked out — he didn’t cheer or shout — he left the others to do that, and they nearly lifted the roof off Carter’s store, I reckon. Of course, all the Tories were over in Raymond Russell’s store. Not much cheering THERE. Marshall went straight down the street to the side door of Augustus Palmer’s barber shop. Augustus was in bed asleep, but Marshall hammered on the door until he got up and come down, wanting to know what all the racket was about.

“Come into your shop and do the best job you ever did in your life, Gus,” said Marshall. “The Liberals are in and you’re going to barber a good Grit before the sun rises.”

“Gus was mad as hops — partly because he’d been dragged out of bed, but more because he’s a Tory. He vowed he wouldn’t shave any man after twelve at night.

“‘You’ll do what I want you to do, sonny,’ said Marshall, ‘or I’ll jest turn you over my knee and give you one of those spankings your mother forgot.’

“He’d have done it, too, and Gus knew it, for Marshall is as strong as an ox and Gus is only a midget of a man. So he gave in and towed Marshall in to the shop and went to work. ‘Now,’ says he, ‘I’ll barber you up, but if you say one word to me about the Grits getting in while I’m doing it I’ll cut your throat with this razor,’ says he. You wouldn’t have thought mild little Gus could be so bloodthirsty, would you? Shows what party politics will do for a man. Marshall kept quiet and got his hair and beard disposed of and went home. When his old housekeeper heard him come upstairs she peeked out of her bedroom door to see whether ‘twas him or the hired boy. And when she saw a strange man striding down the hall with a candle in his hand she screamed blue murder and fainted dead away. They had to send for the doctor before they could bring her to, and it was several days before she could look at Marshall without shaking all over.”

Captain Jim had no fish. He seldom went out in his boat that summer, and his long tramping expeditions were over. He spent a great deal of his time sitting by his seaward window, looking out over the gulf, with his swiftly-whitening head leaning on his hand. He sat there tonight for many silent minutes, keeping some tryst with the past which Anne would not disturb. Presently he pointed to the iris of the West:

“That’s beautiful, isn’t it, Mistress Blythe? But I wish you could have seen the sunrise this morning. It was a wonderful thing — wonderful. I’ve seen all kinds of sunrises come over that gulf. I’ve been all over the world, Mistress Blythe, and take it all in all, I’ve never seen a finer sight than a summer sunrise over the gulf. A man can’t pick his time for dying, Mistress Blythe — jest got to go when the Great Captain gives His sailing orders. But if I could I’d go out when the morning comes across that water. I’ve watched it many a time and thought what a thing it would be to pass out through that great white glory to whatever was waiting beyant, on a sea that ain’t mapped out on any airthly chart. I think, Mistress Blythe, that I’d find lost Margaret there.”

Captain Jim had often talked to Anne of lost Margaret since he had told her the old story. His love for her trembled in every tone — that love

that had never grown faint or forgetful.

“Anyway, I hope when my time comes I’ll go quick and easy. I don’t think I’m a coward, Mistress Blythe — I’ve looked an ugly death in the face more than once without blenching. But the thought of a lingering death does give me a queer, sick feeling of horror.”

“Don’t talk about leaving us, dear, DEAR Captain, Jim,” pleaded Anne, in a choked voice, patting the old brown hand, once so strong, but now grown very feeble. “What would we do without you?”

Captain Jim smiled beautifully.

“Oh, you’d get along nicely — nicely — but you wouldn’t forget the old man altogether, Mistress Blythe — no, I don’t think you’ll ever quite forget him. The race of Joseph always remembers one another. But it’ll be a memory that won’t hurt — I like to think that my memory won’t hurt my friends — it’ll always be kind of pleasant to them, I hope and believe. It won’t be very long now before lost Margaret calls me, for the last time. I’ll be all ready to answer. I jest spoke of this because there’s a little favor I want to ask you. Here’s this poor old Matey of mine” — Captain Jim reached out a hand and poked the big, warm, velvety, golden ball on the sofa. The First Mate uncoiled himself like a spring with a nice, throaty, comfortable sound, half purr, half meow, stretched his paws in air, turned over and coiled himself up again. “HE’ll miss me when I start on the V’yage. I can’t bear to think of leaving the poor critter to starve, like he was left before. If anything happens to me will you give Matey a bite and a corner, Mistress Blythe?”

“Indeed I will.”

“Then that is all I had on my mind. Your Little Jem is to have the few curious things I picked up — I’ve seen to that. And now I don’t like to see tears in those pretty eyes, Mistress Blythe. I’ll mebbe hang on for quite a spell yet. I heard you reading a piece of poetry one day last winter — one of Tennyson’s pieces. I’d sorter like to hear it again, if you could recite it for me.”

Softly and clearly, while the seawind blew in on them, Anne repeated the beautiful lines of Tennyson’s wonderful swan song—”Crossing the

Bar.” The old captain kept time gently with his sinewy hand.

“Yes, yes, Mistress Blythe,” he said, when she had finished, “that’s it, that’s it. He wasn’t a sailor, you tell me — I dunno how he could have put an old sailor’s feelings into words like that, if he wasn’t one. He didn’t want any ‘sadness o’ farewells’ and neither do I, Mistress Blythe — for all will be well with me and mine beyant the bar.”

Beauty for Ashes

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“Any news from Green Gables, Anne?”

“Nothing very especial,” replied Anne, folding up Marilla’s letter.

“Jake Donnell has been there shingling the roof. He is a full-fledged carpenter now, so it seems he has had his own way in regard to the choice of a lifework. You remember his mother wanted him to be a college professor. I shall never forget the day she came to the school and rated me for failing to call him St. Clair.”

“Does anyone ever call him that now?”

“Evidently not. It seems that he has completely lived it down. Even his mother has succumbed. I always thought that a boy with Jake’s chin and mouth would get his own way in the end. Diana writes me that Dora has a beau. Just think of it — that child!”

“Dora is seventeen,” said Gilbert. “Charlie Sloane and I were both mad about you when you were seventeen, Anne.”

“Really, Gilbert, we must be getting on in years,” said Anne, with a half-rueful smile, “when children who were six when we thought ourselves grown up are old enough now to have beaux. Dora’s is Ralph Andrews — Jane’s brother. I remember him as a little, round, fat, white-headed fellow who was always at the foot of his class. But I understand he is quite a fine-looking young man now.”

“Dora will probably marry young. She’s of the same type as Charlotta the Fourth — she’ll never miss her first chance for fear she might not get another.”

“Well; if she marries Ralph I hope he will be a little more up-and-coming than his brother Billy,” mused Anne.

“For instance,” said Gilbert, laughing, “let us hope he will be able to propose on his own account. Anne, would you have married Billy if he had asked you himself, instead of getting Jane to do it for him?”

“I might have.” Anne went off into a shriek of laughter over the recollection of her first proposal. “The shock of the whole thing might have hypnotized me into some such rash and foolish act. Let us be thankful he did it by proxy.”

“I had a letter from George Moore yesterday,” said Leslie, from the corner where she was reading.

“Oh, how is he?” asked Anne interestedly, yet with an unreal feeling that she was inquiring about some one whom she did not know.

“He is well, but he finds it very hard to adapt himself to all the changes in his old home and friends. He is going to sea again in the spring. It’s in his blood, he says, and he longs for it. But he told me something that made me glad for him, poor fellow. Before he sailed on the Four Sisters he was engaged to a girl at home. He did not tell me anything about her in Montreal, because he said he supposed she would have forgotten him and married someone else long ago, and with him, you see, his engagement and love was still a thing of the present. It was pretty hard on him, but when he got home he found she had never married and still cared for him. They are to be married this fall. I’m going to ask him to bring her over here for a little trip; he says he wants to come and see the place where he lived so many years without knowing it.”

“What a nice little romance,” said Anne, whose love for the romantic was immortal. “And to think,” she added with a sigh of self-reproach, “that if I had had my way George Moore would never have come up from the grave in which his identity was buried. How I did fight against Gilbert’s suggestion! Well, I am punished: I shall never be able to have a different opinion from Gilbert’s again! If I try to have, he will squelch me by casting George Moore’s case up to me!”

“As if even that would squelch a woman!” mocked Gilbert. “At least do not become my echo, Anne. A little opposition gives spice to life. I do not want a wife like John MacAllister’s over the harbor. No matter what he says, she at once remarks in that drab, lifeless little voice of hers, ‘That is very true, John, dear me!’”

Anne and Leslie laughed. Anne's laughter was silver and Leslie's golden, and the combination of the two was as satisfactory as a perfect chord in music.

Susan, coming in on the heels of the laughter, echoed it with a resounding sigh.

"Why, Susan, what is the matter?" asked Gilbert.

"There's nothing wrong with little Jem, is there, Susan?" cried Anne, starting up in alarm.

"No, no, calm yourself, Mrs. Doctor, dear. Something has happened, though. Dear me, everything has gone catawampus with me this week. I spoiled the bread, as you know too well — and I scorched the doctor's best shirt bosom — and I broke your big platter. And now, on the top of all this, comes word that my sister Matilda has broken her leg and wants me to go and stay with her for a spell."

"Oh, I'm very sorry — sorry that your sister has met with such an accident, I mean," exclaimed Anne.

"Ah, well, man was made to mourn, Mrs. Doctor, dear. That sounds as if it ought to be in the Bible, but they tell me a person named Burns wrote it. And there is no doubt that we are born to trouble as the sparks fly upward. As for Matilda, I do not know what to think of her. None of our family ever broke their legs before. But whatever she has done she is still my sister, and I feel that it is my duty to go and wait on her, if you can spare me for a few weeks, Mrs. Doctor, dear."

"Of course, Susan, of course. I can get someone to help me while you are gone."

"If you cannot I will not go, Mrs. Doctor, dear, Matilda's leg to the contrary notwithstanding. I will not have you worried, and that blessed child upset in consequence, for any number of legs."

"Oh, you must go to your sister at once, Susan. I can get a girl from the cove, who will do for a time."

"Anne, will you let me come and stay with you while Susan is away?" exclaimed Leslie. "Do! I'd love to — and it would be an act of charity on your part. I'm so horribly lonely over there in that big barn of a house."

There's so little to do — and at night I'm worse than lonely — I'm frightened and nervous in spite of locked doors. There was a tramp around two days ago."

Anne joyfully agreed, and next day Leslie was installed as an inmate of the little house of dreams. Miss Cornelia warmly approved of the arrangement.

"It seems Providential," she told Anne in confidence. "I'm sorry for Matilda Clow, but since she had to break her leg it couldn't have happened at a better time. Leslie will be here while Owen Ford is in Four Winds, and those old cats up at the Glen won't get the chance to meow, as they would if she was living over there alone and Owen going to see her. They are doing enough of it as it is, because she doesn't put on mourning. I said to one of them, 'If you mean she should put on mourning for George Moore, it seems to me more like his resurrection than his funeral; and if it's Dick you mean, I confess *I* can't see the propriety of going into weeds for a man who died thirteen years ago and good riddance then!' And when old Louisa Baldwin remarked to me that she thought it very strange that Leslie should never have suspected it wasn't her own husband *I* said, 'YOU never suspected it wasn't Dick Moore, and you were next-door neighbor to him all his life, and by nature you're ten times as suspicious as Leslie.' But you can't stop some people's tongues, Anne, dearie, and I'm real thankful Leslie will be under your roof while Owen is courting her."

Owen Ford came to the little house one August evening when Leslie and Anne were absorbed in worshipping the baby. He paused at the open door of the living room, unseen by the two within, gazing with greedy eyes at the beautiful picture. Leslie sat on the floor with the baby in her lap, making ecstatic dabs at his fat little hands as he fluttered them in the air.

"Oh, you dear, beautiful, beloved baby," she mumbled, catching one wee hand and covering it with kisses.

"Isn't him ze darlingest itty sing," crooned Anne, hanging over the arm of her chair adoringly. "Dem itty wee pads are ze very tweetest handies in ze whole big world, isn't dey, you darling itty man."

Anne, in the months before Little Jem's coming, had pored diligently over several wise volumes, and pinned her faith to one in especial, "Sir Oracle on the Care and Training of Children." Sir Oracle implored parents by all they held sacred never to talk "baby talk" to their children. Infants should invariably be addressed in classical language from the moment of their birth. So should they learn to speak English undefiled from their earliest utterance. "How," demanded Sir Oracle, "can a mother reasonably expect her child to learn correct speech, when she continually accustoms its impressionable gray matter to such absurd expressions and distortions of our noble tongue as thoughtless mothers inflict every day on the helpless creatures committed to their care? Can a child who is constantly called 'tweet itty wee singie' ever attain to any proper conception of his own being and possibilities and destiny?"

Anne was vastly impressed with this, and informed Gilbert that she meant to make it an inflexible rule never, under any circumstances, to talk "baby talk" to her children. Gilbert agreed with her, and they made a solemn compact on the subject — a compact which Anne shamelessly violated the very first moment Little Jem was laid in her arms. "Oh, the darling itty wee sing!" she had exclaimed. And she had continued to violate it ever since. When Gilbert teased her she laughed Sir Oracle to scorn.

"He never had any children of his own, Gilbert — I am positive he hadn't or he would never have written such rubbish. You just can't help talking baby talk to a baby. It comes natural — and it's RIGHT. It would be inhuman to talk to those tiny, soft, velvety little creatures as we do to great big boys and girls. Babies want love and cuddling and all the sweet baby talk they can get, and Little Jem is going to have it, bless his dear itty heartums."

"But you're the worst I ever heard, Anne," protested Gilbert, who, not being a mother but only a father, was not wholly convinced yet that Sir Oracle was wrong. "I never heard anything like the way you talk to that child."

“Very likely you never did. Go away — go away. Didn’t I bring up three pairs of Hammond twins before I was eleven? You and Sir Oracle are nothing but coldblooded theorists. Gilbert, JUST look at him! He’s smiling at me — he knows what we’re talking about. And oo dest agwees wif evy word muzzer says, don’t oo, angel-lover?”

Gilbert put his arm about them. “Oh you mothers!” he said. “You mothers! God knew what He was about when He made you.”

So Little Jem was talked to and loved and cuddled; and he throve as became a child of the house of dreams. Leslie was quite as foolish over him as Anne was. When their work was done and Gilbert was out of the way, they gave themselves over to shameless orgies of lovemaking and ecstasies of adoration, such as that in which Owen Ford had surprised them.

Leslie was the first to become aware of him. Even in the twilight Anne could see the sudden whiteness that swept over her beautiful face, blotting out the crimson of lip and cheeks.

Owen came forward, eagerly, blind for a moment to Anne.

“Leslie!” he said, holding out his hand. It was the first time he had ever called her by her name; but the hand Leslie gave him was cold; and she was very quiet all the evening, while Anne and Gilbert and Owen laughed and talked together. Before his call ended she excused herself and went upstairs. Owen’s gay spirits flagged and he went away soon after with a downcast air.

Gilbert looked at Anne.

“Anne, what are you up to? There’s something going on that I don’t understand. The whole air here tonight has been charged with electricity. Leslie sits like the muse of tragedy; Owen Ford jokes and laughs on the surface, and watches Leslie with the eyes of his soul. You seem all the time to be bursting with some suppressed excitement. Own up. What secret have you been keeping from your deceived husband?”

“Don’t be a goose, Gilbert,” was Anne’s conjugal reply. “As for Leslie, she is absurd and I’m going up to tell her so.”

Anne found Leslie at the dormer window of her room. The little place was filled with the rhythmic thunder of the sea. Leslie sat with locked hands in the misty moonshine — a beautiful, accusing presence.

“Anne,” she said in a low, reproachful voice, “did you know Owen Ford was coming to Four Winds?”

“I did,” said Anne brazenly.

“Oh, you should have told me, Anne,” Leslie cried passionately. “If I had known I would have gone away — I wouldn’t have stayed here to meet him. You should have told me. It wasn’t fair of you, Anne — oh, it wasn’t fair!”

Leslie’s lips were trembling and her whole form was tense with emotion. But Anne laughed heartlessly. She bent over and kissed Leslie’s upturned reproachful face.

“Leslie, you are an adorable goose. Owen Ford didn’t rush from the Pacific to the Atlantic from a burning desire to see ME. Neither do I believe that he was inspired by any wild and frenzied passion for Miss Cornelia. Take off your tragic airs, my dear friend, and fold them up and put them away in lavender. You’ll never need them again. There are some people who can see through a grindstone when there is a hole in it, even if you cannot. I am not a prophetess, but I shall venture on a prediction. The bitterness of life is over for you. After this you are going to have the joys and hopes — and I daresay the sorrows, too — of a happy woman. The omen of the shadow of Venus did come true for you, Leslie. The year in which you saw it brought your life’s best gift for you — your love for Owen Ford. Now, go right to bed and have a good sleep.”

Leslie obeyed orders in so far that she went to bed: but it may be questioned if she slept much. I do not think she dared to dream wakingly; life had been so hard for this poor Leslie, the path on which she had had to walk had been so strait, that she could not whisper to her own heart the hopes that might wait on the future. But she watched the great revolving light bestarring the short hours of the summer night, and her eyes grew soft and bright and young once more. Nor, when Owen Ford came next day, to ask her to go with him to the shore, did she say him nay.

Miss Cornelia Makes A Startling Announcement

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Miss Cornelia sailed down to the little house one drowsy afternoon, when the gulf was the faint, bleached blue of the August seas, and the orange lilies at the gate of Anne's garden held up their imperial cups to be filled with the molten gold of August sunshine. Not that Miss Cornelia concerned herself with painted oceans or sun-thirsty lilies. She sat in her favorite rocker in unusual idleness. She sewed not, neither did she spin. Nor did she say a single derogatory word concerning any portion of mankind. In short, Miss Cornelia's conversation was singularly devoid of spice that day, and Gilbert, who had stayed home to listen to her, instead of going a-fishing, as he had intended, felt himself aggrieved. What had come over Miss Cornelia? She did not look cast down or worried. On the contrary, there was a certain air of nervous exultation about her.

"Where is Leslie?" she asked — not as if it mattered much either.

"Owen and she went raspberrying in the woods back of her farm," answered Anne. "They won't be back before supper time — if then."

"They don't seem to have any idea that there is such a thing as a clock," said Gilbert. "I can't get to the bottom of that affair. I'm certain you women pulled strings. But Anne, undutiful wife, won't tell me. Will you, Miss Cornelia?"

"No, I shall not. But," said Miss Cornelia, with the air of one determined to take the plunge and have it over, "I will tell you something else. I came today on purpose to tell it. I am going to be married."

Anne and Gilbert were silent. If Miss Cornelia had announced her intention of going out to the channel and drowning herself the thing might have been believable. This was not. So they waited. Of course Miss Cornelia had made a mistake.

“Well, you both look sort of kerflummexed,” said Miss Cornelia, with a twinkle in her eyes. Now that the awkward moment of revelation was over, Miss Cornelia was her own woman again. “Do you think I’m too young and inexperienced for matrimony?”

“You know — it IS rather staggering,” said Gilbert, trying to gather his wits together. “I’ve heard you say a score of times that you wouldn’t marry the best man in the world.”

“I’m not going to marry the best man in the world,” retorted Miss Cornelia. “Marshall Elliott is a long way from being the best.”

“Are you going to marry Marshall Elliott?” exclaimed Anne, recovering her power of speech under this second shock.

“Yes. I could have had him any time these twenty years if I’d lifted my finger. But do you suppose I was going to walk into church beside a perambulating haystack like that?”

“I am sure we are very glad — and we wish you all possible happiness,” said Anne, very flatly and inadequately, as she felt. She was not prepared for such an occasion. She had never imagined herself offering betrothal felicitations to Miss Cornelia.

“Thanks, I knew you would,” said Miss Cornelia. “You are the first of my friends to know it.”

“We shall be so sorry to lose you, though, dear Miss Cornelia,” said Anne, beginning to be a little sad and sentimental.

“Oh, you won’t lose me,” said Miss Cornelia unsentimentally. “You don’t suppose I would live over harbor with all those MacAllisters and Elliotts and Crawfords, do you? ‘From the conceit of the Elliotts, the pride of the MacAllisters and the vainglory of the Crawfords, good Lord deliver us.’ Marshall is coming to live at my place. I’m sick and tired of hired men. That Jim Hastings I’ve got this summer is positively the worst of the species. He would drive anyone to getting married. What do you think? He upset the churn yesterday and spilled a big churning of cream over the yard. And not one whit concerned about it was he! Just gave a foolish laugh and said cream was good for the land. Wasn’t that like a man? I told him I wasn’t in the habit of fertilising my back yard with cream.”

“Well, I wish you all manner of happiness too, Miss Cornelia,” said Gilbert, solemnly; “but,” he added, unable to resist the temptation to tease Miss Cornelia, despite Anne’s imploring eyes, “I fear your day of independence is done. As you know, Marshall Elliott is a very determined man.”

“I like a man who can stick to a thing,” retorted Miss Cornelia. “Amos Grant, who used to be after me long ago, couldn’t. You never saw such a weather-vane. He jumped into the pond to drown himself once and then changed his mind and swum out again. Wasn’t that like a man? Marshall would have stuck to it and drowned.”

“And he has a bit of a temper, they tell me,” persisted Gilbert.

“He wouldn’t be an Elliott if he hadn’t. I’m thankful he has. It will be real fun to make him mad. And you can generally do something with a temperry man when it comes to repenting time. But you can’t do anything with a man who just keeps placid and aggravating.”

“You know he’s a Grit, Miss Cornelia.”

“Yes, he IS,” admitted Miss Cornelia rather sadly. “And of course there is no hope of making a Conservative of him. But at least he is a Presbyterian. So I suppose I shall have to be satisfied with that.”

“Would you marry him if he were a Methodist, Miss Cornelia?”

“No, I would not. Politics is for this world, but religion is for both.”

“And you may be a ‘relict’ after all, Miss Cornelia.”

“Not I. Marshall will live me out. The Elliotts are long-lived, and the Bryants are not.”

“When are you to be married?” asked Anne.

“In about a month’s time. My wedding dress is to be navy blue silk. And I want to ask you, Anne, dearie, if you think it would be all right to wear a veil with a navy blue dress. I’ve always thought I’d like to wear a veil if I ever got married. Marshall says to have it if I want to. Isn’t that like a man?”

“Why shouldn’t you wear it if you want to?” asked Anne.

“Well, one doesn’t want to be different from other people,” said Miss Cornelia, who was not noticeably like anyone else on the face of the earth.

“As I say, I do fancy a veil. But maybe it shouldn’t be worn with any dress but a white one. Please tell me, Anne, dearie, what you really think. I’ll go by your advice.”

“I don’t think veils are usually worn with any but white dresses,” admitted Anne, “but that is merely a convention; and I am like Mr. Elliott, Miss Cornelia. I don’t see any good reason why you shouldn’t have a veil if you want one.”

But Miss Cornelia, who made her calls in calico wrappers, shook her head.

“If it isn’t the proper thing I won’t wear it,” she said, with a sigh of regret for a lost dream.

“Since you are determined to be married, Miss Cornelia,” said Gilbert solemnly, “I shall give you the excellent rules for the management of a husband which my grandmother gave my mother when she married my father.”

“Well, I reckon I can manage Marshall Elliott,” said Miss Cornelia placidly. “But let us hear your rules.”

“The first one is, catch him.”

“He’s caught. Go on.”

“The second one is, feed him well.”

“With enough pie. What next?”

“The third and fourth are — keep your eye on him.”

“I believe you,” said Miss Cornelia emphatically.

Red Roses

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The garden of the little house was a haunt beloved of bees and reddened by late roses that August. The little house folk lived much in it, and were given to taking picnic suppers in the grassy corner beyond the brook and sitting about in it through the twilights when great night moths sailed athwart the velvet gloom. One evening Owen Ford found Leslie alone in it. Anne and Gilbert were away, and Susan, who was expected back that night, had not yet returned.

The northern sky was amber and pale green over the fir tops. The air was cool, for August was nearing September, and Leslie wore a crimson scarf over her white dress. Together they wandered through the little, friendly, flower-crowded paths in silence. Owen must go soon. His holiday was nearly over. Leslie found her heart beating wildly. She knew that this beloved garden was to be the scene of the binding words that must seal their as yet unworded understanding.

“Some evenings a strange odor blows down the air of this garden, like a phantom perfume,” said Owen. “I have never been able to discover from just what flower it comes. It is elusive and haunting and wonderfully sweet. I like to fancy it is the soul of Grandmother Selwyn passing on a little visit to the old spot she loved so well. There should be a lot of friendly ghosts about this little old house.”

“I have lived under its roof only a month,” said Leslie, “but I love it as I never loved the house over there where I have lived all my life.”

“This house was builded and consecrated by love,” said Owen. “Such houses, **MUST** exert an influence over those who live in them. And this garden — it is over sixty years old and the history of a thousand hopes and joys is written in its blossoms. Some of those flowers were actually set out by the schoolmaster’s bride, and she has been dead for thirty years. Yet

they bloom on every summer. Look at those red roses, Leslie — how they queen it over everything else!”

“I love the red roses,” said Leslie. “Anne likes the pink ones best, and Gilbert likes the white. But I want the crimson ones. They satisfy some craving in me as no other flower does.”

“These roses are very late — they bloom after all the others have gone — and they hold all the warmth and soul of the summer come to fruition,” said Owen, plucking some of the glowing, half-opened buds.

“The rose is the flower of love — the world has acclaimed it so for centuries. The pink roses are love hopeful and expectant — the white roses are love dead or forsaken — but the red roses — ah, Leslie, what are the red roses?”

“Love triumphant,” said Leslie in a low voice.

“Yes — love triumphant and perfect. Leslie, you know — you understand. I have loved you from the first. And I KNOW you love me — I don’t need to ask you. But I want to hear you say it — my darling — my darling!”

Leslie said something in a very low and tremulous voice. Their hands and lips met; it was life’s supreme moment for them and as they stood there in the old garden, with its many years of love and delight and sorrow and glory, he crowned her shining hair with the red, red rose of a love triumphant.

Anne and Gilbert returned presently, accompanied by Captain Jim. Anne lighted a few sticks of driftwood in the fireplace, for love of the pixy flames, and they sat around it for an hour of good fellowship.

“When I sit looking at a driftwood fire it’s easy to believe I’m young again,” said Captain Jim.

“Can you read futures in the fire, Captain Jim?” asked Owen.

Captain Jim looked at them all affectionately and then back again at Leslie’s vivid face and glowing eyes.

“I don’t need the fire to read your futures,” he said. “I see happiness for all of you — all of you — for Leslie and Mr. Ford — and the doctor here and Mistress Blythe — and Little Jem — and children that ain’t born

yet but will be. Happiness for you all — though, mind you, I reckon you'll have your troubles and worries and sorrows, too. They're bound to come — and no house, whether it's a palace or a little house of dreams, can bar 'em out. But they won't get the better of you if you face 'em TOGETHER with love and trust. You can weather any storm with them two for compass and pilot."

The old man rose suddenly and placed one hand on Leslie's head and one on Anne's.

"Two good, sweet women," he said. "True and faithful and to be depended on. Your husbands will have honor in the gates because of you — your children will rise up and call you blessed in the years to come."

There was a strange solemnity about the little scene. Anne and Leslie bowed as those receiving a benediction. Gilbert suddenly brushed his hand over his eyes; Owen Ford was rapt as one who can see visions. All were silent for a space. The little house of dreams added another poignant and unforgettable moment to its store of memories.

"I must be going now," said Captain Jim slowly at last. He took up his hat and looked lingeringly about the room.

"Good night, all of you," he said, as he went out.

Anne, pierced by the unusual wistfulness of his farewell, ran to the door after him.

"Come back soon, Captain Jim," she called, as he passed through the little gate hung between the firs.

"Ay, ay," he called cheerily back to her. But Captain Jim had sat by the old fireside of the house of dreams for the last time.

Anne went slowly back to the others.

"It's so — so pitiful to think of him going all alone down to that lonely Point," she said. "And there is no one to welcome him there."

"Captain Jim is such good company for others that one can't imagine him being anything but good company for himself," said Owen. "But he must often be lonely. There was a touch of the seer about him tonight — he spoke as one to whom it had been given to speak. Well, I must be going, too."

Anne and Gilbert discreetly melted away; but when Owen had gone Anne returned, to find Leslie standing by the hearth.

“Oh, Leslie — I know — and I’m so glad, dear,” she said, putting her arms about her.

“Anne, my happiness frightens me,” whispered Leslie. “It seems too great to be real — I’m afraid to speak of it — to think of it. It seems to me that it must just be another dream of this house of dreams and it will vanish when I leave here.”

“Well, you are not going to leave here — until Owen takes you. You are going to stay with me until that time comes. Do you think I’d let you go over to that lonely, sad place again?”

“Thank you, dear. I meant to ask you if I might stay with you. I didn’t want to go back there — it would seem like going back into the chill and dreariness of the old life again. Anne, Anne, what a friend you’ve been to me—’a good, sweet woman — true and faithful and to be depended on’ — Captain Jim summed you up.”

“He said ‘women,’ not ‘woman,’” smiled Anne. “Perhaps Captain Jim sees us both through the rose-colored spectacles of his love for us. But we can try to live up to his belief in us, at least.”

“Do you remember, Anne,” said Leslie slowly, “that I once said — that night we met on the shore — that I hated my good looks? I did — then. It always seemed to me that if I had been homely Dick would never have thought of me. I hated my beauty because it had attracted him, but now — oh, I’m glad that I have it. It’s all I have to offer Owen, — his artist soul delights in it. I feel as if I do not come to him quite empty-handed.”

“Owen loves your beauty, Leslie. Who would not? But it’s foolish of you to say or think that that is all you bring him. HE will tell you that — I needn’t. And now I must lock up. I expected Susan back tonight, but she has not come.”

“Oh, yes, here I am, Mrs. Doctor, dear,” said Susan, entering unexpectedly from the kitchen, “and puffing like a hen drawing rails at that! It’s quite a walk from the Glen down here.”

“I’m glad to see you back, Susan. How is your sister?”

“She is able to sit up, but of course she cannot walk yet. However, she is very well able to get on without me now, for her daughter has come home for her vacation. And I am thankful to be back, Mrs. Doctor, dear. Matilda’s leg was broken and no mistake, but her tongue was not. She would talk the legs off an iron pot, that she would, Mrs. Doctor, dear, though I grieve to say it of my own sister. She was always a great talker and yet she was the first of our family to get married. She really did not care much about marrying James Clow, but she could not bear to disoblige him. Not but what James is a good man — the only fault I have to find with him is that he always starts in to say grace with such an unearthly groan, Mrs. Doctor, dear. It always frightens my appetite clear away. And speaking of getting married, Mrs. Doctor, dear, is it true that Cornelia Bryant is going to be married to Marshall Elliott?”

“Yes, quite true, Susan.”

“Well, Mrs. Doctor, dear, it does NOT seem to me fair. Here is me, who never said a word against the men, and I cannot get married nohow. And there is Cornelia Bryant, who is never done abusing them, and all she has to do is to reach out her hand and pick one up, as it were. It is a very strange world, Mrs. Doctor, dear.”

“There’s another world, you know, Susan.”

“Yes,” said Susan with a heavy sigh, “but, Mrs. Doctor, dear, there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage there.”

Captain Jim Crosses the Bar

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One day in late September Owen Ford's book came at last. Captain Jim had gone faithfully to the Glen post office every day for a month, expecting it. This day he had not gone, and Leslie brought his copy home with hers and Anne's.

"We'll take it down to him this evening," said Anne, excited as a schoolgirl.

The long walk to the Point on that clear, beguiling evening along the red harbor road was very pleasant. Then the sun dropped down behind the western hills into some valley that must have been full of lost sunsets, and at the same instant the big light flashed out on the white tower of the point.

"Captain Jim is never late by the fraction of a second," said Leslie.

Neither Anne nor Leslie ever forgot Captain Jim's face when they gave him the book — HIS book, transfigured and glorified. The cheeks that had been blanched of late suddenly flamed with the color of boyhood; his eyes glowed with all the fire of youth; but his hands trembled as he opened it.

It was called simply The Life-Book of Captain Jim, and on the title page the names of Owen Ford and James Boyd were printed as collaborators. The frontispiece was a photograph of Captain Jim himself, standing at the door of the lighthouse, looking across the gulf. Owen Ford had "snapped" him one day while the book was being written. Captain Jim had known this, but he had not known that the picture was to be in the book.

"Just think of it," he said, "the old sailor right there in a real printed book. This is the proudest day of my life. I'm like to bust, girls. There'll be no sleep for me tonight. I'll read my book clean through before sun-up."

"We'll go right away and leave you free to begin it," said Anne.

Captain Jim had been handling the book in a kind of reverent rapture. Now he decidedly closed it and laid it aside.

“No, no, you’re not going away before you take a cup of tea with the old man,” he protested. “I couldn’t hear to that — could you, Matey? The life-book will keep, I reckon. I’ve waited for it this many a year. I can wait a little longer while I’m enjoying my friends.”

Captain Jim moved about getting his kettle on to boil, and setting out his bread and butter. Despite his excitement he did not move with his old briskness. His movements were slow and halting. But the girls did not offer to help him. They knew it would hurt his feelings.

“You just picked the right evening to visit me,” he said, producing a cake from his cupboard. “Leetle Joe’s mother sent me down a big basket full of cakes and pies today. A blessing on all good cooks, says I. Look at this purty cake, all frosting and nuts. ‘Tain’t often I can entertain in such style. Set in, girls, set in! We’ll ‘tak a cup o’ kindness yet for auld lang syne.’”

The girls “set in” right merrily. The tea was up to Captain Jim’s best brewing. Little Joe’s mother’s cake was the last word in cakes; Captain Jim was the prince of gracious hosts, never even permitting his eyes to wander to the corner where the life-book lay, in all its bravery of green and gold. But when his door finally closed behind Anne and Leslie they knew that he went straight to it, and as they walked home they pictured the delight of the old man poring over the printed pages wherein his own life was portrayed with all the charm and color of reality itself.

“I wonder how he will like the ending — the ending I suggested,” said Leslie.

She was never to know. Early the next morning Anne awakened to find Gilbert bending over her, fully dressed, and with an expression of anxiety on his face.

“Are you called out?” she asked drowsily.

“No. Anne, I’m afraid there’s something wrong at the Point. It’s an hour after sunrise now, and the light is still burning. You know it has

always been a matter of pride with Captain Jim to start the light the moment the sun sets, and put it out the moment it rises.”

Anne sat up in dismay. Through her window she saw the light blinking palely against the blue skies of dawn.

“Perhaps he has fallen asleep over his life-book,” she said anxiously, “or become so absorbed in it that he has forgotten the light.”

Gilbert shook his head.

“That wouldn’t be like Captain Jim. Anyway, I’m going down to see.”

“Wait a minute and I’ll go with you,” exclaimed Anne. “Oh, yes, I must — Little Jem will sleep for an hour yet, and I’ll call Susan. You may need a woman’s help if Captain Jim is ill.”

It was an exquisite morning, full of tints and sounds at once ripe and delicate. The harbor was sparkling and dimpling like a girl; white gulls were soaring over the dunes; beyond the bar was a shining, wonderful sea. The long fields by the shore were dewy and fresh in that first fine, purely-tinted light. The wind came dancing and whistling up the channel to replace the beautiful silence with a music more beautiful still. Had it not been for the baleful star on the white tower that early walk would have been a delight to Anne and Gilbert. But they went softly with fear.

Their knock was not responded to. Gilbert opened the door and they went in.

The old room was very quiet. On the table were the remnants of the little evening feast. The lamp still burned on the corner stand. The First Mate was asleep in a square of sunshine by the sofa.

Captain Jim lay on the sofa, with his hands clasped over the life-book, open at the last page, lying on his breast. His eyes were closed and on his face was a look of the most perfect peace and happiness — the look of one who has long sought and found at last.

“He is asleep?” whispered Anne tremulously.

Gilbert went to the sofa and bent over him for a few moments. Then he straightened up.

“Yes, he sleeps — well,” he added quietly. “Anne, Captain Jim has crossed the bar.”

They could not know precisely at what hour he had died, but Anne always believed that he had had his wish, and went out when the morning came across the gulf. Out on that shining tide his spirit drifted, over the sunrise sea of pearl and silver, to the haven where lost Margaret waited, beyond the storms and calms.

Farewell to the House of Dreams

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Captain Jim was buried in the little over-harbor graveyard, very near to the spot where the wee white lady slept. His relatives put up a very expensive, very ugly “monument” — a monument at which he would have poked sly fun had he seen it in life. But his real monument was in the hearts of those who knew him, and in the book that was to live for generations.

Leslie mourned that Captain Jim had not lived to see the amazing success of it.

“How he would have delighted in the reviews — they are almost all so kindly. And to have seen his life-book heading the lists of the best sellers — oh, if he could just have lived to see it, Anne!”

But Anne, despite her grief, was wiser.

“It was the book itself he cared for, Leslie — not what might be said of it — and he had it. He had read it all through. That last night must have been one of the greatest happiness for him — with the quick, painless ending he had hoped for in the morning. I am glad for Owen’s sake and yours that the book is such a success — but Captain Jim was satisfied — I KNOW.”

The lighthouse star still kept a nightly vigil; a substitute keeper had been sent to the Point, until such time as an all-wise government could decide which of many applicants was best fitted for the place — or had the strongest pull. The First Mate was at home in the little house, beloved by Anne and Gilbert and Leslie, and tolerated by a Susan who had small liking for cats.

“I can put up with him for the sake of Captain Jim, Mrs. Doctor, dear, for I liked the old man. And I will see that he gets bite and sup, and every mouse the traps account for. But do not ask me to do more than that, Mrs. Doctor, dear. Cats is cats, and take my word for it, they will never be anything else. And at least, Mrs. Doctor, dear, do keep him away from the

blessed wee man. Picture to yourself how awful it would be if he was to suck the darling's breath."

"That might be fitly called a CATastrophe," said Gilbert.

"Oh, you may laugh, doctor, dear, but it would be no laughing matter."

"Cats never suck babies' breaths," said Gilbert. "That is only an old superstition, Susan."

"Oh, well, it may be a superstition or it may not, doctor, dear. All that I know is, it has happened. My sister's husband's nephew's wife's cat sucked their baby's breath, and the poor innocent was all but gone when they found it. And superstition or not, if I find that yellow beast lurking near our baby I will whack him with the poker, Mrs. Doctor, dear."

Mr. and Mrs. Marshall Elliott were living comfortably and harmoniously in the green house. Leslie was busy with sewing, for she and Owen were to be married at Christmas. Anne wondered what she would do when Leslie was gone.

"Changes come all the time. Just as soon as things get really nice they change," she said with a sigh.

"The old Morgan place up at the Glen is for sale," said Gilbert, apropos of nothing in especial.

"Is it?" asked Anne indifferently.

"Yes. Now that Mr. Morgan has gone, Mrs. Morgan wants to go to live with her children in Vancouver. She will sell cheaply, for a big place like that in a small village like the Glen will not be very easy to dispose of."

"Well, it's certainly a beautiful place, so it is likely she will find a purchaser," said Anne, absently, wondering whether she should hemstitch or feather-stitch little Jem's "short" dresses. He was to be shortened the next week, and Anne felt ready to cry at the thought of it.

"Suppose we buy it, Anne?" remarked Gilbert quietly.

Anne dropped her sewing and stared at him.

"You're not in earnest, Gilbert?"

"Indeed I am, dear."

"And leave this darling spot — our house of dreams?" said Anne incredulously. "Oh, Gilbert, it's — it's unthinkable!"

“Listen patiently to me, dear. I know just how you feel about it. I feel the same. But we’ve always known we would have to move some day.”

“Oh, but not so soon, Gilbert — not just yet.”

“We may never get such a chance again. If we don’t buy the Morgan place someone else will — and there is no other house in the Glen we would care to have, and no other really good site on which to build. This little house is — well, it is and has been what no other house can ever be to us, I admit, but you know it is out-of-the-way down here for a doctor. We have felt the inconvenience, though we’ve made the best of it. And it’s a tight fit for us now. Perhaps, in a few years, when Jem wants a room of his own, it will be entirely too small.”

“Oh, I know — I know,” said Anne, tears filling her eyes. “I know all that can be said against it, but I love it so — and it’s so beautiful here.”

“You would find it very lonely here after Leslie goes — and Captain Jim has gone too. The Morgan place is beautiful, and in time we would love it. You know you have always admired it, Anne.”

“Oh, yes, but — but — this has all seemed to come up so suddenly, Gilbert. I’m dizzy. Ten minutes ago I had no thought of leaving this dear spot. I was planning what I meant to do for it in the spring — what I meant to do in the garden. And if we leave this place who will get it? It IS out-of-the-way, so it’s likely some poor, shiftless, wandering family will rent it — and overrun it — and oh, that would be desecration. It would hurt me horribly.”

“I know. But we cannot sacrifice our own interests to such considerations, Anne-girl. The Morgan place will suit us in every essential particular — we really can’t afford to miss such a chance. Think of that big lawn with those magnificent old trees; and of that splendid hardwood grove behind it — twelve acres of it. What a play place for our children! There’s a fine orchard, too, and you’ve always admired that high brick wall around the garden with the door in it — you’ve thought it was so like a storybook garden. And there is almost as fine a view of the harbor and the dunes from the Morgan place as from here.”

“You can’t see the lighthouse star from it.”

“Yes, You can see it from the attic window. THERE’S another advantage, Anne-girl — you love big garrets.”

“There’s no brook in the garden.”

“Well, no, but there is one running through the maple grove into the Glen pond. And the pond itself isn’t far away. You’ll be able to fancy you have your own Lake of Shining Waters again.”

“Well, don’t say anything more about it just now, Gilbert. Give me time to think — to get used to the idea.”

“All right. There is no great hurry, of course. Only — if we decide to buy, it would be well to be moved in and settled before winter.”

Gilbert went out, and Anne put away Little Jem’s short dresses with trembling hands. She could not sew any more that day. With tear-wet eyes she wandered over the little domain where she had reigned so happy a queen. The Morgan place was all that Gilbert claimed. The grounds were beautiful, the house old enough to have dignity and repose and traditions, and new enough to be comfortable and up-to-date. Anne had always admired it; but admiring is not loving; and she loved this house of dreams so much. She loved EVERYTHING about it — the garden she had tended, and which so many women had tended before her — the gleam and sparkle of the little brook that crept so roguishly across the corner — the gate between the creaking fir trees — the old red sandstone step — the stately Lombardies — the two tiny quaint glass cupboards over the chimney-piece in the livingroom — the crooked pantry door in the kitchen — the two funny dormer windows upstairs — the little jog in the staircase — why, these things were a part of her! How could she leave them?

And how this little house, consecrated aforetime by love and joy, had been re-consecrated for her by her happiness and sorrow! Here she had spent her bridal moon; here wee Joyce had lived her one brief day; here the sweetness of motherhood had come again with Little Jem; here she had heard the exquisite music of her baby’s cooing laughter; here beloved friends had sat by her fireside. Joy and grief, birth and death, had made sacred forever this little house of dreams.

And now she must leave it. She knew that, even while she had contended against the idea to Gilbert. The little house was outgrown. Gilbert's interests made the change necessary; his work, successful though it had been, was hampered by his location. Anne realised that the end of their life in this dear place drew nigh, and that she must face the fact bravely. But how her heart ached!

"It will be just like tearing something out of my life," she sobbed. "And oh, if I could hope that some nice folk would come here in our place — or even that it would be left vacant. That itself would be better than having it overrun with some horde who know nothing of the geography of dreamland, and nothing of the history that has given this house its soul and its identity. And if such a tribe come here the place will go to rack and ruin in no time — an old place goes down so quickly if it is not carefully attended to. They'll tear up my garden — and let the Lombardies get ragged — and the paling will come to look like a mouth with half the teeth missing — and the roof will leak — and the plaster fall — and they'll stuff pillows and rags in broken window panes — and everything will be out-at-elbows."

Anne's imagination pictured forth so vividly the coming degeneration of her dear little house that it hurt her as severely as if it had already been an accomplished fact. She sat down on the stairs and had a long, bitter cry. Susan found her there and enquired with much concern what the trouble was.

"You have not quarrelled with the doctor, have you now, Mrs. Doctor, dear? But if you have, do not worry. It is a thing quite likely to happen to married couples, I am told, although I have had no experience that way myself. He will be sorry, and you can soon make it up."

"No, no, Susan, we haven't quarrelled. It's only — Gilbert is going to buy the Morgan place, and we'll have to go and live at the Glen. And it will break my heart."

Susan did not enter into Anne's feelings at all. She was, indeed, quite rejoiced over the prospect of living at the Glen. Her one grievance against her place in the little house was its lonesome location.

“Why, Mrs. Doctor, dear, it will be splendid. The Morgan house is such a fine, big one.”

“I hate big houses,” sobbed Anne.

“Oh, well, you will not hate them by the time you have half a dozen children,” remarked Susan calmly. “And this house is too small already for us. We have no spare room, since Mrs. Moore is here, and that pantry is the most aggravating place I ever tried to work in. There is a corner every way you turn. Besides, it is out-of-the-world down here. There is really nothing at all but scenery.”

“Out of your world perhaps, Susan — but not out of mine,” said Anne with a faint smile.

“I do not quite understand you, Mrs. Doctor, dear, but of course I am not well educated. But if Dr. Blythe buys the Morgan place he will make no mistake, and that you may tie to. They have water in it, and the pantries and closets are beautiful, and there is not another such cellar in P. E. Island, so I have been told. Why, the cellar here, Mrs. Doctor, dear, has been a heartbreak to me, as well you know.”

“Oh, go away, Susan, go away,” said Anne forlornly. “Cellars and pantries and closets don’t make a HOME. Why don’t you weep with those who weep?”

“Well, I never was much hand for weeping, Mrs. Doctor, dear. I would rather fall to and cheer people up than weep with them. Now, do not you cry and spoil your pretty eyes. This house is very well and has served your turn, but it is high time you had a better.”

Susan’s point of view seemed to be that of most people. Leslie was the only one who sympathised understandingly with Anne. She had a good cry, too, when she heard the news. Then they both dried their tears and went to work at the preparations for moving.

“Since we must go let us go as soon as we can and have it over,” said poor Anne with bitter resignation.

“You know you will like that lovely old place at the Glen after you have lived in it long enough to have dear memories woven about it,” said Leslie. “Friends will come there, as they have come here — happiness will

glorify it for you. Now, it's just a house to you — but the years will make it a home.”

Anne and Leslie had another cry the next week when they shortened Little Jem. Anne felt the tragedy of it until evening when in his long nightie she found her own dear baby again.

“But it will be rompers next — and then trousers — and in no time he will be grownup,” she sighed.

“Well, you would not want him to stay a baby always, Mrs. Doctor, dear, would you?” said Susan. “Bless his innocent heart, he looks too sweet for anything in his little short dresses, with his dear feet sticking out. And think of the save in the ironing, Mrs. Doctor, dear.”

“Anne, I have just had a letter from Owen,” said Leslie, entering with a bright face. “And, oh! I have such good news. He writes me that he is going to buy this place from the church trustees and keep it to spend our summer vacations in. Anne, are you not glad?”

“Oh, Leslie, ‘glad’ isn’t the word for it! It seems almost too good to be true. I sha’n’t feel half so badly now that I know this dear spot will never be desecrated by a vandal tribe, or left to tumble down in decay. Why, it’s lovely! It’s lovely!”

One October morning Anne awakened to the realisation that she had slept for the last time under the roof of her little house. The day was too busy to indulge regret and when evening came the house was stripped and bare. Anne and Gilbert were alone in it to say farewell. Leslie and Susan and Little Jem had gone to the Glen with the last load of furniture. The sunset light streamed in through the curtainless windows.

“It has all such a heartbroken, reproachful look, hasn’t it?” said Anne. “Oh, I shall be so homesick at the Glen tonight!”

“We have been very happy here, haven’t we, Anne-girl?” said Gilbert, his voice full of feeling.

Anne choked, unable to answer. Gilbert waited for her at the fir-tree gate, while she went over the house and said farewell to every room. She was going away; but the old house would still be there, looking seaward through its quaint windows. The autumn winds would blow around it

mournfully, and the gray rain would beat upon it and the white mists would come in from the sea to enfold it; and the moonlight would fall over it and light up the old paths where the schoolmaster and his bride had walked. There on that old harbor shore the charm of story would linger; the wind would still whistle alluringly over the silver sand-dunes; the waves would still call from the red rock-coves.

“But we will be gone,” said Anne through her tears.

She went out, closing and locking the door behind her. Gilbert was waiting for her with a smile. The lighthouse star was gleaming northward. The little garden, where only marigolds still bloomed, was already hooding itself in shadows.

Anne knelt down and kissed the worn old step which she had crossed as a bride.

“Goodbye, dear little house of dreams,” she said.

ANNE OF INGLESIDE

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Chapter I

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“How white the moonlight is tonight!” said Anne Blythe to herself, as she went up the walk of the Wright garden to Diana Wright’s front door, where little cherry-blossom petals were coming down on the salty, breeze-stirred air.

She paused for a moment to look about her on hills and woods she had loved in olden days and still loved. Dear Avonlea! Glen St. Mary was home to her now and had been home for many years but Avonlea had something that Glen St. Mary could never have. Ghosts of herself met her at every turn ... the fields she had roamed in welcomed her ... unfading echoes of the old sweet life were all about her ... every spot she looked upon had some lovely memory. There were haunted gardens here and there where bloomed all the roses of yesteryear. Anne always loved to come home to Avonlea even when, as now, the reason for her visit had been a sad one. She and Gilbert had come up for the funeral of his father and Anne had stayed for a week. Marilla and Mrs. Lynde could not bear to have her go away too soon.

Her old porch gable room was always kept for her and when Anne had gone to it the night of her arrival she found that Mrs. Lynde had put a big, homey bouquet of spring flowers in it for her ... a bouquet that, when Anne buried her face in it, seemed to hold all the fragrance of unforgotten years. The Anne-who-used-to-be was waiting there for her. Deep, dear old gladnesses stirred in her heart. The gable room was putting its arms around her ... enclosing her ... enveloping her. She looked lovingly at her old bed with the apple-leaf spread Mrs. Lynde had knitted and the spotless pillows trimmed with deep lace Mrs. Lynde had crocheted ... at Marilla’s braided rugs on the floor ... at the mirror that had reflected the face of the little orphan, with her unwritten child’s forehead, who had cried herself to sleep there that first night so long ago. Anne forgot that she was the joyful

mother of five children ... with Susan Baker again knitting mysterious bootees at Ingleside. She was Anne of Green Gables once more.

Mrs. Lynde found her still staring dreamily in the mirror when she came in, bringing clean towels.

"It's real good to have you home again, Anne, that's what. It's nine years since you went away, but Marilla and I can't seem to get over missing you. It's not so lonesome now since Davy got married ... Millie is a real nice little thing ... such pies! ... though she's curious as a chipmunk about everything. But I've always said and always will say that there's nobody like you."

"Ah, but this mirror can't be tricked, Mrs. Lynde. It's telling me plainly, 'You're not as young as you once were,'" said Anne whimsically.

"You've kept your complexion very well," said Mrs. Lynde consolingly. "Of course you never had much colour to lose."

"At any rate, I've never a hint of a second chin yet," said Anne gaily. "And my old room remembers me, Mrs. Lynde. I'm glad ... it would hurt me so if I ever came back and found it had forgotten me. And it's wonderful to see the moon rising over the Haunted Wood again."

"It looks like a great big piece of gold in the sky, doesn't it?" said Mrs. Lynde, feeling that she was taking a wild, poetical flight and thankful that Marilla wasn't there to hear.

"Look at those pointed firs coming out against it ... and the birches in the hollow still holding their arms up to the silver sky. They're big trees now ... they were just baby things when I came here ... that *does* make me feel a bit old."

"Trees are like children," said Mrs. Lynde. "It's dreadful the way they grow up the minute you turn your back on them. Look at Fred Wright ... he's only thirteen but he's nearly as tall as his father. There's a hot chicken pie for supper and I made some of my lemon biscuits for you. You needn't be a mite afraid to sleep in that bed. I aired the sheets today ... and Marilla didn't know I did it and gave them another airing ... and Millie didn't know either of us did and gave them a third. I hope Mary Maria Blythe will get out tomorrow ... she always enjoys a funeral so."

“Aunt Mary Maria ... Gilbert always calls her that although she is only his father’s cousin ... always calls me ‘Annie,’” shuddered Anne. “And the first time she saw me after I was married she said, ‘It’s so strange Gilbert picked you. He could have had so many nice girls.’ Perhaps that’s why I’ve never liked her ... and I know Gilbert doesn’t either, though he’s too clannish to admit it.”

“Will Gilbert be staying up long?”

“No. He has to go back tomorrow night. He left a patient in a very critical condition.”

“Oh, well, I suppose there isn’t much to keep him in Avonlea now, since his mother went last year. Old Mr. Blythe never held up his head after her death ... just hadn’t anything left to live for. The Blythes were always like that ... always set their affections too much on earthly things. It’s real sad to think there are none of them left in Avonlea. They were a fine old stock. But then ... there’s any amount of Sloanes. The Sloanes are still Sloanes, Anne, and will be for ever and ever, world without end, amen.”

“Let there be as many Sloanes as there will, I’m going out after supper to walk all over the old orchard by moonlight. I suppose I’ll have to go to bed finally ... though I’ve always thought sleeping on moonlight nights a waste of time ... but I’m going to wake early to see the first faint morning light steal over the Haunted Wood. The sky will turn to coral and the robins will be strutting around ... perhaps a little grey sparrow will light on the windowsill ... and there’ll be gold and purple pansies to look at ...”

“But the rabbits has et up all the June lily bed,” said Mrs. Lynde sadly, as she waddled downstairs, feeling secretly relieved that there need be no more talk about the moon. Anne had always been a bit queer that way. And there did not any longer seem to be much use in hoping she would outgrow it.

Diana came down the walk to meet Anne. Even in the moonlight you saw that her hair was still black and her cheeks rosy and her eyes bright. But the moonlight could not hide that she was something stouter than in

years ago ... and Diana had never been what Avonlea folks called "skinny."

"Don't worry, darling ... I haven't come to stay... ."

"As if I'd worry over *that*," said Diana reproachfully. "You know I'd far rather spend the evening with you than go to the reception. I feel I haven't seen half enough of you and now you're going back day after tomorrow. But Fred's brother, you know ... we've just got to go."

"Of course you have. And I just ran up for a moment. I came the old way, Di ... past the Dryad's Bubble ... through the Haunted Wood ... past your bowery old garden ... and along by Willowmere. I even stopped to watch the willows upside down in the water as we always used to do. They've grown so."

"Everything has," said Diana with a sigh. "When I look at young Fred! We've all changed so ... except you. You never change, Anne. How *do* you keep so slim? Look at me!"

"A bit matronish of course," laughed Anne. "But you've escaped the middle-aged spread so far, Di. As for my not changing ... well, Mrs. H. B. Donnell agrees with you. She told me at the funeral that I didn't look a day older. But Mrs. Harmon Andrews doesn't. *She* said, 'Dear me, Anne, how you've failed!' It's all in the beholder's eye ... or conscience. The only time I feel I'm getting along a bit is when I look at the pictures in the magazines. The heroes and heroines in them are beginning to look *too young* to me. But never mind, Di ... we're going to be girls again tomorrow. That's what I've come up to tell you. We're going to take an afternoon and evening off and visit all our old haunts ... every one of them. We'll walk over the spring fields and through those ferny old woods. We'll see all the old familiar things we loved and hills where we'll find our youth again. Nothing ever seems impossible in spring, you know. We'll stop feeling parental and responsible and be as giddy as Mrs. Lynde really thinks me still in her heart of hearts. There's really no fun in being sensible *all* the time, Diana."

"My, how like you that sounds! And I'd love to. But ..."

“There aren’t any buts. I know you’re thinking, ‘Who’ll get the men’s supper?’”

“Not exactly. Anne Cordelia can get the men’s supper as well as I can, if she is only eleven,” said Diana proudly. “She was going to, anyway. I was going to the Ladies’ Aid. But I won’t. I’ll go with you. It will be like having a dream come true. You know, Anne, lots of evenings I sit down and just pretend we’re little girls again. I’ll take our supper with us ...”

“And we’ll eat it back in Hester Gray’s garden ... I suppose Hester Gray’s garden is still there?”

“I suppose so,” said Diana doubtfully. “I’ve never been there since I was married. Anne Cordelia explores a lot ... but I always tell her she mustn’t go too far from home. She loves prowling about the woods ... and one day when I scolded her for talking to herself in the garden she said she wasn’t talking to herself ... she was talking to the spirit of the flowers. You know that dolls’ tea-set with the tiny pink rosebuds you sent her for her ninth birthday. There isn’t a piece broken ... she’s so careful. She only uses it when the Three Green People come to tea with her. I can’t get out of her who she thinks *they* are. I declare in some ways, Anne, she’s far more like you than she is like me.”

“Perhaps there’s more in a name than Shakespeare allowed. Don’t grudge Anne Cordelia her fancies, Diana. I’m always sorry for children who don’t spend a few years in fairyland.”

“Olivia Sloane is our teacher now,” said Diana doubtfully. “She’s a B.A., you know, and just took the school for a year to be near her mother. *She* says children should be made to face realities.”

“Have I lived to hear *you* taking up with Sloanishness, Diana Wright?”

“No ... *no* ... NO! I don’t like her a bit ... She has such round staring blue eyes like all that clan. And I don’t mind Anne Cordelia’s fancies. They’re pretty ... just like yours used to be. I guess she’ll get enough ‘reality’ as life goes on.”

“Well, it’s settled then. Come down to Green Gables about two and we’ll have a drink of Marilla’s red currant wine ... she makes it now and

then in spite of the minister and Mrs. Lynde ... just to make us feel real devilish.”

“Do you remember the day you set me drunk on it?” giggled Diana, who did not mind “devilish” as she would if anybody but Anne used it. Everybody knew Anne didn’t really mean things like that. It was just her way.

“We’ll have a real do-you-remember day tomorrow, Diana. I won’t keep you any longer ... there’s Fred coming with the buggy. Your dress is lovely.”

“Fred made me get a new one for the wedding. I didn’t feel we could afford it since we built the new barn, but he said he wasn’t going to have *his* wife looking like someone that was sent for and couldn’t go when everybody else would be dressed within an inch of her life. Wasn’t that just like a man?”

“Oh, you sound just like Mrs. Elliott at the Glen,” said Anne severely. “You want to watch that tendency. Would you like to live in a world where there were no men?”

“It would be horrible,” admitted Diana. “Yes, yes, Fred, I’m coming. Oh, *all* right! Till tomorrow then, Anne.”

Anne paused by the Dryad’s Bubble on her way back. She loved that old brook so. Every trill of her childhood’s laughter that it had ever caught, it had held and now seemed to give out again to her listening ears. Her old dreams ... she could see them reflected in the clear Bubble ... old vows ... old whispers ... the brook kept them all and murmured of them ... but there was no one to listen save the wise old spruces in the Haunted Wood that had been listening so long.

Chapter II

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“Such a lovely day ... made for us,” said Diana. “I’m afraid it’s a pet day, though ... there’ll be rain tomorrow.”

“Never mind. We’ll drink its beauty today, even if its sunshine is gone tomorrow. We’ll enjoy each other’s friendship today even if we are to be parted tomorrow. Look at those long, golden-green hills ... those mist-blue valleys. They’re *ours*, Diana ... I don’t care if that furthest hill is registered in Abner Sloan’s name ... it’s *ours* today. There’s a west wind blowing ... I always feel adventurous when a west wind blows ... and we’re going to have a perfect ramble.”

They had. All the old dear spots were revisited: Lover’s Lane, the Haunted Wood, Idlewild, Violet Vale, the Birch Path, Crystal Lake. There were some changes. The little ring of birch saplings in Idlewild, where they had had a playhouse long ago, had grown into big trees; the Birch Path, long untrodden, was matted with bracken; the Crystal Lake had entirely disappeared, leaving only a damp mossy hollow. But Violet Vale was purple with violets and the seedling apple tree Gilbert had once found far back in the woods was a huge tree peppered over with tiny, crimson-tipped blossom-buds.

They walked bareheaded. Annie’s hair still gleamed like polished mahogany in the sunlight and Diana’s was still glossy black. They exchanged gay and understanding, warm and friendly, glances. Sometimes they walked in silence ... Anne always maintained that two people as sympathetic as she and Diana could *feel* each other’s thoughts. Sometimes they peppered their conversation with do-you-remembers. “Do you remember the day you fell through the Cobb duckhouse on the Tory Road?” ... “Do you remember when we jumped on Aunt Josephine?” ... “Do you remember our Story Club?” ... “Do you remember Mrs. Morgan’s visit when you stained your nose red?” ... “Do you remember how we

signalled to each other from our windows with candles?" ... "Do you remember the fun we had at Miss Lavender's wedding and Charlotta's blue bows?" ... "Do you remember the Improvement Society?" It almost seemed to them they could hear their old peals of laughter echoing down the years.

The A. V. I. S. was, it seemed, dead. It had petered out soon after Anne's marriage.

"They just couldn't keep it up, Anne. The young people in Avonlea now are not what they were in *our* day."

"Don't talk as if 'our day' were ended, Diana. We're only fifteen years old and kindred spirits. The air isn't just full of light ... it *is* light. I'm not sure that I haven't sprouted wings."

"I feel just that way, too," said Diana, forgetting that she had tipped the scale at one hundred and fifty-five that morning. "I often feel that I'd love to be turned into a bird for a little while. It must be wonderful to fly."

Beauty was all around them. Unsuspected tintings glimmered in the dark demesnes of the woods and glowed in their alluring by-ways. The spring sunshine sifted through the young green leaves. Gay trills of song were everywhere. There were little hollows where you felt as if you were bathing in a pool of liquid gold. At every turn some fresh spring scent struck their faces ... spice ferns ... fir balsam ... the wholesome odour of newly ploughed fields. There was a lane curtained with wild-cherry blossoms ... a grassy old field full of tiny spruce trees just starting in life and looking like elvish things that had squatted down among the grasses ... brooks not yet "too broad for leaping" ... starflowers under the firs ... sheets of curly young ferns ... and a birch tree whence some vandal had torn away the white-skin wrapper in several places, exposing the tints of the bark below. Anne looked at it so long that Diana wondered. She did not see what Anne did ... tints ranging from purest creamy white, through exquisite golden tones, growing deeper and deeper until the inmost layer revealed the deepest richest brown as if to tell that all birches, so maiden-like and cool exteriorly, had yet warm-hued feelings.

"The primeval fire of earth at their hearts," murmured Anne.

And finally, after traversing a little wood glen full of toadstools, they found Hester Gray's garden. Not so much changed. It was still very sweet with dear flowers. There were still plenty of June lilies, as Diana called the narcissi. The row of cherry trees had grown older but was a drift of snowy bloom. You could still find the central rose walk, and the old dyke was white with strawberry blossoms and blue with violets and green with baby fern. They ate their picnic supper in a corner of it, sitting on some old mossy stones, with a lilac tree behind them flinging purple banners against a low-hanging sun. Both were hungry and both did justice to their own good cooking.

"How nice things taste out of doors!" sighed Diana comfortably. "That chocolate cake of yours, Anne ... well, words fail me, but I must get the recipe. Fred would adore it. *He* can eat anything and stay thin. I'm always saying I'm *not* going to eat any more cake ... because I'm getting fatter every year. I've such a horror of getting like great-aunt Sarah ... she was so fat she always had to be pulled up when she had sat down. But when I see a cake like that ... and last night at the reception ... well, they would all have been so offended if I didn't eat."

"Did you have a nice time?"

"Oh, yes, in a way. But I fell into Fred's Cousin Henrietta's clutches ... and it's *such* a delight to her to tell all about her operations and her sensations while going through them and how soon her appendix would have burst if she hadn't had it out. 'I had fifteen stitches put in it. Oh, Diana, the agony I suffered!' Well, she enjoyed it if I didn't. And she *has* suffered, so why shouldn't she have the fun of talking about it now? Jim was so funny ... I don't know if Mary Alice liked it altogether... . Well, just one teeny piece ... may as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb, I suppose ... a mere sliver can't make much difference... . One thing he said ... that the very night before the wedding he was so scared he felt he'd have to take the boat-train. He said all grooms felt just the same if they'd be honest about it. You don't suppose Gilbert and Fred felt like that, do you, Anne?"

"I'm sure they didn't."

“That’s what Fred said when I asked him. He said all he was scared of was that I’d change my mind at the last moment like Rose Spencer. But you can never really tell what a man may be thinking. Well, there’s no use worrying over it now. What a lovely time we’ve had this afternoon! We seem to have lived so many old happinesses over. I wish you didn’t have to go tomorrow, Anne.”

“Can’t you come down for a visit to Ingleside sometime this summer, Diana? Before ... well, before I’ll not be wanting visitors for a while.”

“I’d love to. But it seems impossible to get away from home in the summer. There’s always so much to do.”

“Rebecca Dew is coming at long last, of which I’m glad ... and I’m afraid Aunt Mary Maria is, too. She hinted as much to Gilbert. He doesn’t want her any more than I do ... but she is ‘a relation’ and so his latchstring must be always out for her.”

“Perhaps I’ll get down in the winter. I’d love to see Ingleside again. You have a lovely home, Anne ... and a lovely family.”

“Ingleside *is* nice ... and I do love it now. I once thought I would never love it. I hated it when we went there first ... hated it for its very virtues. They were an insult to my dear House of Dreams. I remember saying piteously to Gilbert when we left it, ‘We’ve been so happy here. We’ll never be so happy anywhere else.’ I revelled in a luxury of homesickness for a while. Then ... I found little rootlets of affection for Ingleside beginning to sprout out. I fought against it ... I really did ... but at last I had to give in and admit I loved it. And I’ve loved it better every year since. It isn’t too old a house ... too old houses are sad. And it isn’t too young ... too young houses are crude. It’s just mellow. I love every room in it. Every one has some fault but also some virtue ... something that distinguishes it from all the others ... gives it a personality. I love all those magnificent trees on the lawn. I don’t know who planted them but every time I go upstairs I stop on the landing ... you know that quaint window on the landing with the broad deep seat ... and sit there looking out for a moment and say, ‘God bless the man who planted those trees whoever he

was.’ We’ve really too many trees about the house but we wouldn’t give up one.”

“That’s just like Fred. He worships that big willow south of the house. It spoils the view from the parlour windows, as I’ve told him again and again, but he only says, ‘Would you cut a lovely thing like that down even if it does shut out the view?’ So the willow stays ... and it *is* lovely. That’s why we’ve called our place Lone Willow Farm. I love the name Ingleside. It’s such a nice, homey name.”

“That’s what Gilbert said. We had quite a time deciding on a name. We tried out several but they didn’t seem to *belong*. But when we thought of Ingleside we knew it was the right one. I’m glad we have a nice big roomy house ... we need it with our family. The children love it, too, small as they are.”

“They’re such darlings.” Diana slyly cut herself another “sliver” of the chocolate cake. “I think my own are pretty nice ... but there’s really something about yours ... and your twins! *That* I do envy you. I’ve always wanted twins.”

“Oh, I couldn’t get away from twins ... they’re my destiny. But I’m disappointed mine don’t look alike ... not one bit alike. Nan’s pretty, though, with her brown hair and eyes and her lovely complexion. Di is her father’s favourite, because she has green eyes and red hair ... red hair with a swirl to it. Shirley is the apple of Susan’s eye ... I was ill so long after he was born and she looked after him till I really believe she thinks he is her own. She calls him her ‘little brown boy’ and spoils him shamefully.”

“And he’s still so small you can creep in to find if he has kicked off the clothes and tuck him in again,” said Diana enviously. “Jack’s nine, you know, and he doesn’t want me to do that now. He says he’s too big. And I loved so to do it! Oh, I wish children didn’t grow up so soon.”

“None of mine have got to that stage yet ... though I’ve noticed that since Jem began to go to school he doesn’t want to hold my hand any more when we walk through the village,” said Anne with a sigh. “But he and Walter and Shirley all want me to tuck them in yet. Walter sometimes makes quite a ritual of it.”

“And you don’t have to worry yet over what they’re going to be. Now, Jack is crazy to be a soldier when he grows up ... a soldier! Just fancy!”

“I wouldn’t worry over that. He’ll forget about it when another fancy seizes him. War is a thing of the past. Jem imagines he is going to be a sailor ... like Captain Jim ... and Walter is by way of being a poet. He isn’t like any of the others. But they all love trees and they all love playing in ‘the Hollow,’ as it’s called — a little valley just below Ingleside with fairy paths and a brook. A very ordinary place ... just ‘the Hollow’ to others but to them fairyland. They’ve all got their faults ... but they’re not such a bad little gang ... and luckily there’s always enough love to go round. Oh, I’m glad to think that this time tomorrow night I’ll be back at Ingleside, telling my babies stories at bedtime and giving Susan’s calceolarias and ferns their meed of praise. Susan has ‘luck’ with ferns. No one can grow them like her. I can praise her ferns honestly ... but the calceolarias, Diana! They don’t look like flowers to me at all. But I never hurt Susan’s feeling by telling her so. I always get around it somehow. Providence has never failed yet. Susan is such a duck ... I can’t imagine what I’d do without her. And I remember once calling her ‘an outsider.’ Yes, it’s lovely to think of going home and yet I’m sad to leave Green Gables, too. It’s so beautiful here ... with Marilla ... and *you*. Our friendship has always been a very lovely thing, Diana.”

“Yes ... and we’ve always ... I mean ... I never could say things like you, Anne ... but we *have* kept our old ‘solemn vow and promise,’ haven’t we?”

“Always ... and always will.”

Anne’s hand found its way into Diana’s. They sat for a long time in a silence too sweet for words. Long, still evening shadows fell over the grasses and the flowers and the green reaches of the meadows beyond. The sun went down ... grey-pink shades of sky deepened and paled behind the pensive trees ... the spring twilight took possession of Hester Gray’s garden where nobody ever walked now. Robins were sprinkling the evening air with flute-like whistles. A great star came out over the white cherry trees.

“The first star is always a miracle,” said Anne dreamily.

“I could sit here forever,” said Diana. “I hate the thought of leaving it.”

“So do I ... but after all we’ve only been pretending to be fifteen.

We’ve got to remember our family cares. How those lilacs smell! Has it ever occurred to you, Diana, that there is something not quite ... chaste ... in the scent of lilac blossoms? Gilbert laughs at such a notion ... he loves them ... but to me they always seem to be remembering some secret, *too-sweet* thing.”

“They’re too heavy for the house, I always think,” said Diana. She picked up the plate which held the remainder of the chocolate cake ... looked at it longingly ... shook her head and packed it in the basket with an expression of great nobility and self-denial on her face.

“Wouldn’t it be fun, Diana, if now, as we went home, we were to meet our old selves running along Lover’s Lane?”

Diana gave a little shiver.

“No-o-o, I don’t think that would be funny, Anne. I hadn’t noticed it was getting so dark. It’s all right to fancy things in daylight, but ...”

They went quietly, silently, lovingly home together, with the sunset glory burning on the old hills behind them and their old forgotten love burning in their hearts.

Chapter III

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Anne ended a week that had been full of pleasant days by taking flowers to Matthew's grave the next morning and in the afternoon she took the train from Carmody home. For a time she thought of all the old loved things behind her and then her thoughts ran ahead of her to the loved things before her. Her heart sang all the way because she was going home to a joyous house ... a house where every one who crossed its threshold knew it was a *home* ... a house that was filled all the time with laughter and silver mugs and snapshots and babies ... precious things with curls and chubby knees ... and rooms that would welcome her ... where the chairs waited patiently and the dresses in her closet were expecting her ... where little anniversaries were always being celebrated and little secrets were always being whispered.

"It's lovely to feel you like going home," thought Anne, fishing out of her purse a certain letter from a small son over which she had laughed gaily the night before, reading it proudly to the Green Gables folks ... the first letter she had ever received from any of her children. It was quite a nice little letter for a seven-year-old who had been going to school only a year to write, even though Jem's spelling was a bit uncertain and there was a big blob of ink in one corner.

"Di cryed and cryed all night because Tommy Drew told her he was going to burn her doll at the steak. Susan tells us nice tails at night but she isn't you, mummy. She let me help her sow the beats last night."

"*How* could I have been happy for a whole week away from them all?" thought the chatelaine of Ingleside self-reproachfully.

"How nice to have someone meet you at the end of a journey!" she cried, as she stepped off the train at Glen St. Mary into Gilbert's waiting arms. She could never be sure Gilbert would meet her ... somebody was always dying or being born ... but no homecoming ever seemed just right

to Anne unless he did. And he had on such a nice new light-grey suit!
(How glad I am I put on this frilly eggshell blouse with my brown suit, even if Mrs. Lynde thought I was crazy to wear it travelling. If I hadn't I wouldn't have looked so nice for Gilbert.)

Ingleside was all lighted up, with gay Japanese lanterns hanging on the veranda. Anne ran gaily along the walk bordered by daffodils.

"Ingleside, I'm here!" she called.

They were all around her ... laughing, exclaiming, jesting ... with Susan Baker smiling properly in the background. Everyone of the children had a bouquet picked specially for her, even the two-year-old Shirley.

"Oh, this is a nice welcome home! Everything about Ingleside looks so happy. It's splendid to think my family are so glad to see me."

"If you ever go away from home again, Mummy," said Jem solemnly, "I'll go and take appensitis."

"How do you go about taking it?" asked Walter.

"S-s-sh!" Jem nudged Walter secretly and whispered, "There's a pain somewhere, I know ... but I just want to scare Mummy so she *won't* go away."

Anne wanted to do a hundred things first ... hug everybody ... run out in the twilight and gather some of her pansies ... you found pansies everywhere at Ingleside ... pick up the little well-worn doll lying on the rug ... hear all the juicy tidbits of gossip and news, everyone contributing something. How Nan had got the top off a tube of vaseline up her nose when the doctor was out on a case and Susan had all but gone distracted ... "I assure you it was an anxious time, Mrs. Dr. dear" ... how Mrs. Jud Palmer's cow had eaten fifty-seven wire nails and had to have a vet from Charlottetown ... how absentminded Mrs. Fenner Douglas had gone to church *bareheaded* ... how Dad had dug all the dandelions out of the lawn ... "between babies, Mrs. Dr. dear ... he's had eight while you were away" ... how Mr. Tom Flagg had dyed his moustache ... "and his wife only dead two years" ... how Rose Maxwell of the Harbour Head had jilted Jim Hudson of the Upper Glen and he had sent her a bill for all he had spent on her ... what a splendid turn-out there had been at Mrs. Amasa Warren's

funeral ... how Carter Flagg's cat had had a piece bitten right out of the root of its tail ... how Shirley had been found in a stable standing right under one of the horses ... "Mrs. Dr. dear, never shall I be the same woman again" ... how there was sadly too much reason to fear that the blue plum trees were developing black knot ... how Di had gone about the whole day singing, "Mummy's coming home today, home today, home today" to the tune of "Merrily We Roll Along" ... how the Joe Reeses had a kitten that was cross-eyed because it had been born with its eyes open ... how Jem had inadvertently sat on some fly-paper before he had put his little trousers on ... and how the Shrimp had fallen into the soft-water puncheon.

"He was nearly drowned, Mrs. Dr. dear, but luckily the doctor heard his howls in the nick of time and pulled him out by his hind-legs." (What is the nick of time, Mummy?)

"He seems to have recovered nicely from it," said Anne, stroking the glossy black-and-white curves of a contented pussy with huge jowls, purring on a chair in the firelight. It was never quite safe to sit down on a chair at Ingleside without first making sure there wasn't a cat in it. Susan, who had not cared much for cats to begin with, vowed she had to learn to like them in self-defense. As for the Shrimp, Gilbert had called him that a year ago when Nan had brought the miserable, scrawny kitten home from the village where some boys had been torturing it, and the name clung, though it was very inappropriate now.

"But ... Susan! What has become of Gog and Magog? Oh ... they haven't been broken, have they?"

"No, no, Mrs. Dr. dear," exclaimed Susan, turning a deep brick-red from shame and dashing out of the room. She returned shortly with the two china dogs which always presided at the hearth of Ingleside. "I do not see how I could have forgotten to put them back before you came. You see, Mrs. Dr. dear, Mrs. Charles Day from Charlottetown called here the day after you left ... and you know how very precise and proper she is. Walter thought he ought to entertain her and he started in by pointing out the dogs to her. 'This one is God and this is My God,' he said, poor innocent child. I

was horrified ... though I thought that die I would to see Mrs. Day's face. I explained as best I could, for I did not want her to think us a profane family, but I decided I would just put the dogs away in the china closet, out of sight, till you got back."

"Mummy, can't we have supper soon?" said Jem pathetically. "I've got a gnawful feeling in the pit of my stomach. And oh, Mummy, we've made everybody's favourite dish!"

"We, as the flea said to the elephant, have done that very thing," said Susan with a grin. "We thought that your return should be suitably celebrated, Mrs. Dr. dear. And now where is Walter? It is his week to ring the gong for meals, bless his heart."

Supper was a gala meal ... and putting all the babies to bed afterwards was a delight. Susan even allowed her to put Shirley to bed, seeing what a very special occasion it was.

"This is no common day, Mrs. Dr. dear," she said solemnly.

"Oh, Susan, there is no such thing as a common day. *Every* day has something about it no other day has. Haven't you noticed?"

"How true that is, Mrs. Dr. dear. Even last Friday now, when it rained all day, and was so dull, my big pink geranium showed buds at last after refusing to bloom for three long years. And have you noticed the calceolarias, Mrs. Dr. dear?"

"Noticed them! I never saw such calceolarias in my life, Susan. How do you manage it?" (*There, I've made Susan happy and haven't told a fib. I never did see such calceolarias ... thank heaven!*)

"It is the result of constant care and attention, Mrs. Dr. dear. But there is something I think I ought to speak of. I think Walter *suspects something*. No doubt some of the Glen children have said things to him. So many children nowadays know so much more than is fitting. Walter said to me the other day, very thoughtful-like, 'Susan,' he said, 'are babies *very* expensive?' I was a bit dumfounded, Mrs. Dr. dear, but I kept my head. 'Some folks think they are luxuries,' I said, 'but at Ingleside we think they are necessities.' And I reproached myself with having complained aloud about the shameful price of things in all the Glen stores. I am afraid it

worried the child. But if he says anything to you, Mrs. Dr. dear, you will be prepared.”

“I’m sure you handled the situation beautifully, Susan,” said Anne gravely. “And I think it is time they all knew what we are hoping for.”

But the best of all was when Gilbert came to her, as she stood at her window, watching a fog creeping in from the sea, over the moonlit dunes and the harbour, right into the long narrow valley upon which Ingleside looked down and in which nestled the village of Glen St. Mary.

“To come back at the end of a hard day and find you! Are you happy, Ancest of Ancest?”

“Happy!” Anne bent to sniff a vaseful of apple blossoms Jem had set on her dressing-table. She felt surrounded and encompassed by love.

“Gilbert dear, it’s been lovely to be Anne of Green Gables again for a week, but it’s a hundred times lovelier to come back and be Anne of Ingleside.”

Chapter IV

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“Absolutely not,” said Dr. Blythe, in a tone Jem understood.

Jem knew there was no hope of Dad’s changing his mind or that Mother would try to change it for him. It was plain to be seen that on this point Mother and Dad were as one. Jem’s hazel eyes darkened with anger and disappointment as he looked at his cruel parents ... *glared* at them ... all the more glaringly that they were so maddeningly indifferent to his glares and went on eating their supper as if nothing at all were wrong and out of joint. Of course Aunt Mary Maria noticed his glares ... nothing ever escaped Aunt Mary Maria’s mournful, pale-blue eyes ... but she only seemed amused at them.

Bertie Shakespeare Drew had been up playing with Jem all the afternoon ... Walter having gone down to the old House of Dreams to play with Kenneth and Persis Ford ... and Bertie Shakespeare had told Jem that all the Glen boys were going down to the Harbour Mouth that evening to see Captain Bill Taylor tattoo a snake on his cousin Joe Drew’s arm. He, Bertie Shakespeare, was going and wouldn’t Jem come too? It would be such fun. Jem was at once crazy to go; and now he had been told that it was utterly out of the question.

“For one reason among many,” said Dad, “it’s much too far for you to go down to the Harbour Mouth with those boys. They won’t get back till late and your bedtime is supposed to be at eight, son.”

“I was sent to bed at seven every night of my life when I was a child,” said Aunt Mary Maria.

“You must wait till you are older, Jem, before you go so far away in the evenings,” said Mother.

“You said that last week,” cried Jem indignantly, “and I *am* older now. You’d think I was a baby! Bertie’s going and I’m just as old as him.”

“There’s measles around,” said Aunt Mary Maria darkly. “You might catch measles, James.”

Jem hated to be called James. And she always did it.

“I *want* to catch measles,” he muttered rebelliously. Then, catching Dad’s eye instead, subsided. Dad would never let anyone “talk back” to Aunt Mary Maria. Jem hated Aunt Mary Maria. Aunt Diana and Aunt Marilla were such ducks of aunts but an aunt like Aunt Mary Maria was something wholly new in Jem’s experience.

“All right,” he said defiantly, looking at Mother so that nobody could suppose he was talking to Aunt Mary Maria, “if you don’t *want* to love me you don’t *have* to. But will you like it if I just go away ‘n’ shoot tigers in Africa?”

“There are no tigers in Africa, dear,” said Mother gently.

“Lions, then!” shouted Jem. They were determined to put him in the wrong, were they? They were bound to laugh at him, were they? He’d show them! “You can’t say there’s no lions in Africa. There’s *millions* of lions in Africa. Africa’s just *full* of lions!”

Mother and Father only smiled again, much to Aunt Mary Maria’s disapproval. Impatience in children should never be condoned.

“Meanwhile,” said Susan, torn between her love for and sympathy with Little Jem and her conviction that Dr. and Mrs. Dr. were perfectly right in refusing to let him go away down to the Harbour Mouth with that village gang to that disreputable, drunken old Captain Bill Taylor’s place, “here is your gingerbread and whipped cream, Jem dear.”

Gingerbread and whipped cream was Jem’s favourite dessert. But tonight it had no charm to soothe his stormy soul.

“I don’t want any!” he said sulkily. He got up and marched away from the table, turning at the door to hurl a final defiance.

“I ain’t going to bed till nine o’clock, anyhow. And when I’m grown up I’m *never* going to bed. I’m going to stay up all night ... every night ... and get tattooed *all over*. I’m just going to be as bad as bad can be. You’ll see.”

“‘I’m not’ would be so much better than ‘ain’t,’ dear,” said Mother.

Could *nothing* make them feel?

"I suppose nobody wants *my* opinion, Annie, but if I had talked to my parents like that when I was a child I would have been whipped within an inch of my life," said Aunt Mary Maria. "I think it is a great pity the birch rod is so neglected now in some homes."

"Little Jem is not to blame," snapped Susan, seeing that Dr. and Mrs. Dr. were not going to say anything. But if Mary Maria Blythe was going to get away with that, she, Susan would know the reason why. "Bertie Shakespeare Drew put him up to it, filling him up with what fun it would be to see Joe Drew tatooed. He was here all the afternoon and sneaked into the kitchen and took the best aluminum saucepan to use as a helmet. Said they were playing soldiers. Then they made boats out of shingles and got soaked to the bone sailing them in the Hollow brook. And after that they went hopping about the yard for a solid hour, making the weirdest noises, pretending they were frogs. Frogs! No wonder Little Jem is tired out and not himself. He is the best-behaved child that ever lived when he is not worn to a frazzle, and that you may tie to."

Aunt Mary Maria said nothing aggravatingly. She never talked to Susan Baker at meal-times, thus expressing her disapproval over Susan being allowed to "sit with the family" at all.

Anne and Susan had thrashed that out before Aunt Mary Maria had come. Susan, who "knew her place," never sat or expected to sit with the family when there was company at Ingleside.

"But Aunt Mary Maria isn't company," said Anne. "She's just one of the family ... and so are you, Susan."

In the end Susan gave in, not without a secret satisfaction that Mary Maria Blythe would see that she was no common hired girl. Susan had never met Aunt Mary Maria, but a niece of Susan's, the daughter of her sister Matilda, had worked for her in Charlottetown and had told Susan all about her.

"I am not going to pretend to you, Susan, that I'm overjoyed at the prospect of a visit from Aunt Mary Maria, especially just now," said Anne

frankly. "But she has written Gilbert asking if she may come for a few weeks ... and you know how the doctor is about such things... ."

"As he has a perfect right to be," said Susan staunchly. "What is a man to do but stand by his own flesh and blood? But as for a few weeks ... well, Mrs. Dr. dear, I do not want to look on the dark side of things ... but my sister Matilda's sister-in-law came to visit *her* for a few weeks and stayed for twenty years."

"I don't think we need dread anything like that, Susan," smiled Anne. "Aunt Mary Maria has a very nice home of her own in Charlottetown. But she is finding it very big and lonely. Her mother died two years ago, you know ... she was eighty-five and Aunt Mary Maria was very good to her and misses her very much. Let's make her visit as pleasant as we can, Susan."

"I will do what in me lies, Mrs. Dr. dear. Of course we must put another board in the table, but after all is said and done it is better to be lengthening the table than shortening it down."

"We mustn't have flowers on the table, Susan, because I understand they give her asthma. And pepper makes her sneeze, so we'd better not have it. She is subject to frequent bad headaches, too, so we must really try not to be noisy."

"Good grief! Well, I have never noticed you and the doctor making much noise. And if I want to yell I can go to the middle of the maple bush; but if our poor children have to keep quiet *all* the time because of Mary Maria Blythe's headaches ... you will excuse me for saying I think it is going a little too far, Mrs. Dr. dear."

"It's just for a few weeks, Susan."

"Let us hope so. Oh, well, Mrs. Dr. dear, we just have to take the lean streaks with the fat in this world," was Susan's final word.

So Aunt Mary Maria came, demanding immediately upon her arrival if they had had the chimneys cleaned recently. She had, it appeared, a great dread of fire. "And I've always said that the chimneys of this house aren't nearly tall enough. I hope my bed has been well aired, Annie. Damp bed linen is terrible."

She took possession of the Ingleside guestroom ... and incidentally of all the other rooms in the house except Susan's. Nobody hailed her arrival with frantic delight. Jem, after one look at her, slipped out to the kitchen and whispered to Susan, "Can we laugh while she's here, Susan?" Walter's eyes brimmed with tears at sight of her and he had to be hustled ignominiously out of the room. The twins did not wait to be hustled but ran of their own accord. Even the Shrimp, Susan averred went and had a fit in the back yard. Only Shirley stood his ground, gazing fearlessly at her out of his round brown eyes from the safe anchorage of Susan's lap and arm. Aunt Mary Maria thought the Ingleside children had very bad manners. But what could you expect when they had a mother who "wrote for the papers" and a father who thought they were perfection just because they were *his* children, and a hired girl like Susan Baker who never knew her place? But she, Mary Maria Blythe, would do her best for poor Cousin John's grandchildren as long as she was at Ingleside.

"Your grace is much too short, Gilbert," she said disapprovingly at her first meal. "Would you like me to say grace for you while I am here? It will be a better example to your family."

Much to Susan's horror Gilbert said he would and Aunt Mary Maria said grace at supper. "More like a prayer than a grace," Susan sniffed over her dishes. Susan privately agreed with her niece's description of Mary Maria Blythe. "She always seems to be smelling a bad smell, Aunt Susan. Not an unpleasant odour ... just a bad smell." Gladys had a way of putting things, Susan reflected. And yet, to anyone less prejudiced than Susan Miss Mary Maria Blythe was not ill-looking for a lady of fifty-five. She had what she believed were "aristocratic features," framed by always sleek grey crimps which seemed to insult daily Susan's spiky little knob of grey hair. She dressed very nicely, wore long jet earrings in her ears and fashionably high-boned net collars on her lean throat.

"At least, we do not need to be ashamed of her appearance," reflected Susan. But what Aunt Mary Maria would have thought if she had known Susan was consoling herself on such grounds must be left to the imagination.

Chapter V

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Anne was cutting a vaseful of June lilies for her room and another of Susan's peonies for Gilbert's desk in the library ... the milky-white peonies with the blood-red flecks at their hearts, like a god's kiss. The air was coming alive after the unusually hot June day and one could hardly tell whether the harbour were silver or gold.

"There's going to be a wonderful sunset tonight, Susan," she said, looking in at the kitchen window as she passed it.

"I cannot admire the sunset until I have got my dishes washed, Mrs. Dr. dear," protested Susan.

"It will be gone by that time, Susan. Look at that enormous white cloud towering up over the Hollow, with its rosy-pink top. Wouldn't you like to fly up and light on it?"

Susan had a vision of herself flying up over the glen, dishcloth in hand, to that cloud. It did not appeal to her. But allowances must be made for Mrs. Dr. just now.

"There's a new, vicious kind of bug eating the rosebushes," went on Anne. "I must spray them tomorrow. I'd like to do it tonight ... this is just the kind of evening I love to work in the garden. Things are growing tonight. I hope there'll be gardens in heaven, Susan ... gardens we can work in, I mean, and help things to grow."

"But not bugs surely," protested Susan.

"No-o-o, I suppose not. But a *completed* garden wouldn't really be any fun, Susan. You have to work in a garden yourself or you miss its meaning. I want to weed and dig and transplant and change and plan and prune. And I want the flowers I love in heaven ... I'd rather my own pansies than the asphodel, Susan."

"Why cannot you put in the evening as you want to?" broke in Susan, who thought Mrs. Dr. was really going a little wild.

“Because the doctor wants me to go for a drive with him. He is going to see poor old Mrs. John Paxton. She is dying ... he can’t do her any good ... he has done everything he can ... but she does like to have him drop in.”

“Oh, well, Mrs. Dr. dear, we all know that nobody can die or be born without him hereabouts and it is a nice evening for a drive. I think I will take a walk down to the village myself and replenish our pantry after I put the twins and Shirley to bed and manure Mrs. Aaron Ward. She isn’t blooming as she ought to. Miss Blythe has just gone upstairs, sighing at every step, saying one of her headaches is coming on, so there will be a little peace and quiet for the evening at least.”

“See that Jem goes to bed in good time, will you, Susan?” said Anne as she went away through the evening that was like a cup of fragrance that has spilled over. “He’s really much tireder than he thinks he is. And he never wants to go to bed. Walter is not coming home tonight, Leslie asked if he might stay there.”

Jem was sitting on the steps of the side door, one bare foot hooked over his knee, scowling viciously at things in general and at an enormous moon behind the Glen church spire in particular. Jem didn’t like such big moons.

“Take care your face doesn’t freeze like that,” Aunt Mary Maria had said as she passed him on her way into the house.

Jem scowled more blackly than ever. He didn’t care if his face did freeze like that. He hoped it would. “Go ‘way and don’t come tagging after me all the time,” he told Nan, who had crept out to him after Father and Mother had driven away.

“Crosspatch!” said Nan. But before she trotted off she laid down on the step beside him the red candy lion she had brought out to him.

Jem ignored it. He felt more abused than ever. He wasn’t being used right. Everybody picked on him. Hadn’t Nan that very morning said, “*You* weren’t born at Ingleside like the rest of us.” Di had et his chocolate rabbit that forenoon though she *knew* it was his rabbit. Even Walter had deserted him, going away to dig wells in the sand with Ken and Persis Ford. Great fun that! And he wanted so much to go with Bertie to see the tattooing.

Jem was sure he had never wanted anything so much in his life before. He wanted to see the wonderful, full-rigged ship that Bertie said was always on Captain Bill's mantelpiece. It was a mean shame, that's what it was.

Susan brought him out a big slice of cake covered with maple frosting and nuts, but, "No, thank you," said Jem stonily. Why hadn't she saved some of the gingerbread and cream for him? S'pose the rest of them had et it all. Pigs! He plunged into a deeper gulf of gloom. The gang would be on their way to the Harbour Mouth by now. He just couldn't bear the thought. He'd *got* to do something to get square with folks. S'posin' he sliced Di's sawdust giraffe open on the livingroom rug? That would make old Susan mad ... Susan with her nuts, when she knew he hated nuts in frosting. S'posin' he went and drew a moustache on that picture of the cherub on the calendar in her room? He had always hated that fat, pink, smiling cherub because it looked just like Sissy Flagg who had told round school that Jem Blythe was her beau. Hers! Sissy Flagg! But Susan thought that cherub lovely.

S'posin' he scalped Nan's doll? S'posin' he whacked the nose off Gog or Magog ... or both of them? Maybe that would make Mother see he wasn't a baby any longer. Just wait till next spring! He had brought her mayflowers for years and years and years ... ever since he was four ... but he wouldn't do it next spring. No, sir!

S'posin' he et a lot of the little green apples on the early tree and got nice and sick? Maybe *that* would scare them. S'posin' he never washed behind his ears again? S'posin' he made faces at everybody in church next Sunday? S'posin' he put a caterpillar on Aunt Mary Maria ... a big, striped, woolly caterpillar? S'posin' he ran away to the harbour and hid in Captain David Reese's ship and sailed out of the harbour in the morning on his way to South America? Would they be sorry *then*? S'posin' he never came back? S'posin' he went hunting jagers in Brazil? Would they be sorry *then*? No, he bet they wouldn't. Nobody loved him. There was a hole in his pants pocket. Nobody had mended it. Well, *he* didn't care. He'd just show that hole to everybody in the Glen and let people see how neglected he was. His wrongs surged up and overwhelmed him.

Tick-tack ... tick-tack ... tick-tack ... went the old grandfather clock in the hall that had been brought to Ingleside after Grandfather Blythe's death ... a deliberate old clock dating from the days when there was such a thing as time. Generally Jem loved it ... now he hated it. It seemed to be laughing at him. "Ha, ha, bedtime is coming. The other fellows can go to the Harbour Mouth but you go to bed. Ha, ha ... ha, ha ... ha, ha!"

Why did he have to go to bed every night? Yes, why?

Susan came out on her way to the Glen and looked tenderly at the small, rebellious figure.

"You needn't go to bed till I get back, Little Jem," she said indulgently.

"I ain't going to bed tonight!" said Jem fiercely. "*I'm* going to run away, that's what I'm going to do, old Susan Baker. I'm going to go and jump into the pond, old Susan Baker."

Susan did not enjoy being called old, even by Little Jem. She stalked away in a grim silence. He *did* need a bit of disciplining. The Shrimp, who had followed her out, feeling a yearning for companionship, squatted down on his black haunches before Jem, but got only a glare for his pains. "Clear out! Sitting there on your bottom, staring like Aunt Mary Maria! Scat! Oh, you won't, won't you! Then take that!"

Jem shied Shirley's little tin wheelbarrow that was lying handily near, and the Shrimp fled with a plaintive wowl to the sanctuary of the sweetbriar hedge. Look at that! Even the family cat hated him! What was the use of going on living?

He picked up the candy lion. Nan had eaten the tail and most of the hindquarters but it was still quite a lion. Might as well eat it. It might be the last lion he'd ever eat. By the time Jem had finished the lion and licked his fingers he had made up his mind what he was going to do. It was the only thing a fellow *could* do when a fellow wasn't allowed to do *anything*.

Chapter VI

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“Why in the world is the house lighted up like that?” exclaimed Anne, when she and Gilbert turned in at the gate at eleven o’clock. “Company must have come.”

But there was no company visible when Anne hurried into the house. Nor was anyone else visible. There was a light in the kitchen ... in the livingroom ... in the library ... in the dining-room ... in Susan’s room and the upstairs hall ... but no sign of an occupant.

“What do you suppose,” began Anne ... but she was interrupted by the ringing of the telephone. Gilbert answered ... listened for a moment, ... uttered an ejaculation of horror ... and tore out without even a glance at Anne. Evidently something dreadful had happened and there was no time to be wasted in explanations.

Anne was used to this ... as the wife of a man who waits on life and death must be. With a philosophical shrug she removed her hat and coat. She felt a trifle annoyed with Susan, who really shouldn’t have gone out and left all the lights blazing and all the doors wide open.

“Mrs... . Dr... . dear,” said a voice that could not possibly be Susan’s ... but was.

Anne stared at Susan. Such as Susan ... hatless ... her grey hair full of bits of hay ... her print dress shockingly stained and discoloured. And her face!

“Susan! What has happened? Susan!”

“Little Jem has disappeared.”

“Disappeared!” Anne stared stupidly. “What do you mean? He can’t have disappeared!”

“He has,” gasped Susan, wringing her hands. “He was on the side steps when I went to the Glen. I was back before dark ... and he was not there.

At first ... I was not scared ... but I could not find him anywhere. I have searched every room in the house ... he said he was going to run away ...”

“Nonsense! He wouldn’t do that, Susan. You have worked yourself up unnecessarily. He must be somewhere about ... he has fallen asleep ... he *must* be somewhere around.”

“I have looked everywhere ... everywhere. I have combed the grounds and the outhouses. Look at my dress ... I remembered he always said it would be such fun to sleep in the hayloft. So I went there ... and fell through that hole in the corner into one of the mangers in the stable ... and lit on a nest of eggs. It is a mercy I did not break a leg ... if anything can be a mercy when Little Jem is lost.”

Annie still refused to feel perturbed.

“Do you think he could have gone to the Harbour Mouth with the boys, after all, Susan? He has never disobeyed a command before, but ...”

“No, he did not, Mrs. Dr. dear ... the blessed lamb did not disobey. I rushed down to Drews’ after I had searched everywhere and Bertie Shakespeare had just got home. He said Jem had not gone with them. The pit seemed to drop out of my stomach. You had trusted him to me and ... I phoned Paxtons’ and they said you had been there and gone they did not know where.”

“We drove to Lowbridge to call on the Parkers... .”

“I phoned everywhere I thought you could be. Then I went back to the village ... the men have started out to search ...”

“Oh, Susan, was that necessary?”

“Mrs. Dr. dear, I had looked everywhere ... everywhere that child could be. Oh, what I have gone through this night! And he *said* he was going to jump into the pond... .”

In spite of herself a queer little shiver ran over Anne. Of course Jem wouldn’t jump into the pond ... that was nonsense ... but there was an old dory on it which Carter Flagg used for trouting and Jem might, in his defiant mood of the earlier evening, have tried to row about the pond in it ... he had often wanted to ... he might even have fallen into the pond trying to untie the dory. All at once her fear took terrible shape.

“And I haven’t the slightest idea where Gilbert has gone,” she thought wildly.

“What’s all this fuss about?” demanded Aunt Mary Maria, suddenly appearing on the stairs, her head surrounded by a halo of crimpers and her body encased in a dragon-embroidered dressing-gown. “Can’t a body *ever* get a quiet night’s sleep in this house?”

“Little Jem has disappeared,” said Susan again, too much in the grip of terror to resent Miss Blythe’s tone. “His mother trusted me ...”

Anne had gone to search the house for herself. Jem must be somewhere! He was not in his room ... the bed was undisturbed... . He was not in the twins’ room ... in hers... . He was ... he was nowhere in the house. Anne, after a pilgrimage from garret to cellar, returned to the livingroom in a condition that was suddenly akin to panic.

“I don’t want to make you nervous, Annie,” said Aunt Mary Marie, lowering her voice creepily, “but have you looked in the rainwater hogshead? Little Jack MacGregor was drowned in a rainwater hogshead in town last year.”

“I ... I looked there,” said Susan, with another wring of her hands. “I ... I took a stick ... and poked ...”

Anne’s heart, which had stood still at Aunt Mary Maria’s question, resumed operations. Susan gathered herself together and stopped wringing her hands. She had remembered too late that Mrs. Dr. dear should not be upset.

“Let us calm down and pull together,” she said in a trembling voice. “As you say, Mrs. Dr. dear, he *must* be somewhere about. He *cannot* have dissolved into thin air.”

“Have you looked in the coal-bin? And the clock?” asked Aunt Mary Maria.

Susan *had* looked in the coal-bin but nobody had thought of the clock. It was quite big enough for a small boy to hide in. Anne, not considering the absurdity of supposing that Jem would crouch there for four hours, rushed to it. But Jem was not in the clock.

“I had a *feeling* something was going to happen when I went to bed tonight,” said Aunt Mary Maria, pressing both hands to her temples. “When I read my nightly chapter in the Bible the words, ‘Ye know not what a day may bring forth,’ seemed to stand out from the page as it were. It was a sign. You’d better nerve yourself to bear the worst, Annie. He may have wandered into the marsh. It’s a pity we haven’t a few bloodhounds.”

With a dreadful effort Anne managed a laugh.

“I’m afraid there aren’t any on the Island, Aunty. If we had Gilbert’s old setter Rex, who got poisoned, he would soon find Jem. I feel sure we are all alarming ourselves for nothing ...”

“Tommy Spencer in Carmody disappeared mysteriously forty years ago and was never found ... or was he? Well, if he was, it was only his skeleton. This is no laughing matter, Annie. I don’t know how you can take it so calmly.”

The telephone rang. Anne and Susan looked at each other.

“I can’t ... I *can’t* go to the phone, Susan,” said Anne in a whisper.

“I cannot either,” said Susan flatly. She was to hate herself all her days for showing such weakness before Mary Maria Blythe, but she could not help it. Two hours of terrified searching and distorted imaginations had made Susan a wreck.

Aunt Mary Maria stalked to the telephone and took down the receiver, her crimpers making a horned silhouette on the wall which, Susan reflected, in spite of her anguish, looked like the old Nick himself.

“Carter Flagg says they have searched everywhere but found no sign of him yet,” reported Aunt Mary Maria coolly. “But he says the dory is out in the middle of the pond with no one in it as far as they can ascertain. They are going to drag the pond.”

Susan caught Anne just in time.

“No ... no ... I’m not going to faint, Susan,” said Anne through white lips. “Help me to a chair ... thanks. We *must* find Gilbert ...”

“If James is drowned, Annie, you must remind yourself that he has been spared a lot of trouble in this wretched world,” said Aunt Mary Marie by way of administering further consolation.

“I’m going to get the lantern and search the grounds again,” said Anne, as soon as she could stand up. “Yes, I know you did, Susan ... but let me ... let me. I *cannot* sit still and wait.”

“You must put on a sweater then, Mrs. Dr. dear. There is a heavy dew and the air is damp. I will get your red one ... it is hanging on a chair in the boys’ room. Wait you here till I bring it.”

Susan hurried upstairs. A few moments later something that could only be described as a shriek echoed through Ingleside. Anne and Aunt Mary Maria rushed upstairs, where they found Susan laughing and crying in the hall, nearer to hysterics than Susan Baker had ever been in her life or ever would be again.

“Mrs. Dr. dear ... he’s there! Little Jem is there ... asleep on the window-seat behind the door. I never looked there ... the door hid it ... and when he wasn’t in his bed ...”

Anne, weak with relief and joy, got herself into the room and dropped on her knees by the window-seat. In a little while she and Susan would be laughing over their own foolishness, but now there could be only tears of thankfulness. Little Jem was sound asleep on the window-seat, with an afghan pulled over him, his battered Teddy Bear in his little sunburned hands, and a forgiving Shrimp stretched across his legs. His red curls fell over the cushion. He seemed to be having a pleasant dream and Anne did not mean to waken him. But suddenly he opened his eyes that were like hazel stars and looked at her.

“Jem, darling, why aren’t you in your bed? We’ve ... we’ve been a little alarmed ... we couldn’t find you ... and we never thought of looking here ...”

“I wanted to lie here ‘cause I could see you and Daddy drive in at the gate when you got home. It was so lonesome I just had to go to bed.”

Mother was lifting him in her arms ... carrying him to his own bed. It was so nice to be kissed ... to feel her tucking the sheets about him with those caressing little pats that gave him such a sense of being loved. Who cared about seeing an old snake tattooed, anyhow? Mother was so nice ... the nicest mother anybody ever had. Everybody in the Glen called Bertie

Shakespeare's mother "Mrs. Second Skimmings" because she was so mean, and he knew ... for he'd seen it ... that she slapped Bertie's face for every little thing.

"Mummy," he said sleepily, "of course I'll bring you mayflowers next spring ... every spring. You can depend on me."

"Of course I can, darling," said Mother.

"Well, since everyone is over their fit of the fidgets, I suppose we can draw a peaceful breath and go back to our beds," said Aunt Mary Maria. But there was some shrewish relief in her tone.

"It was very silly of me not to remember the window-seat," said Anne. "The joke is on us and the doctor will not let us forget it, you may be certain. Susan, please phone Mr. Flagg that we've found Jem."

"And a nice laugh he will have on me," said Susan happily. "Not that I care ... he can laugh all he likes since Little Jem is safe."

"I could do with a cup of tea," sighed Aunt Mary Maria plaintively, gathering her dragons about her spare form.

"I will get it in a jiffy," said Susan briskly. "We will all feel the sprightlier for one. Mrs. Dr. dear, when Carter Flagg heard Little Jem was safe he said, 'Thank God.' I shall never say a word against that man again, no matter what his prices are. And don't you think we might have a chicken dinner tomorrow, Mrs. Dr. dear? Just by way of a little celebration, so to speak. And Little Jem shall have his favourite muffins for breakfast."

There was another telephone call ... this time from Gilbert to say that he was taking a badly burned baby from the Harbour Head to the hospital in town and not to look for him till morning.

Anne bent from her window for a thankful goodnight look at the world before going to bed. A cool wind was blowing in from the sea. A sort of moonlit rapture was running through the trees in the Hollow. Anne could even laugh ... with a quiver behind the laughter ... over their panic of an hour ago and Aunt Mary Maria's absurd suggestions and ghoulish memories. Her child was safe ... Gilbert was somewhere battling to save another child's life... . *Dear God, help him and help the mother ... help all*

mothers everywhere. We need so much help, with the little sensitive, loving hearts and minds that look to us for guidance and love and understanding.

The friendly enfolding night took possession of Ingleside, and everybody, even Susan ... who rather felt that she would like to crawl into some nice quiet hole and pull it in after her ... fell on sleep under its sheltering roof.

Chapter VII

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“He’ll have plenty of company ... he won’t be lonesome ... our four ... and my niece and nephew from Montreal are visiting us. What one doesn’t think of the others do.”

Big, sonsy, jolly Mrs. Dr. Parker smiled expansively at Walter ... who returned the smile somewhat aloofly. He wasn’t altogether sure he liked Mrs. Parker in spite of her smiles and jollity. There was too much of her, somehow. Dr. Parker he did like. As for “our four” and the niece and nephew from Montreal, Walter had never seen any of them. Lowbridge, where the Parkers lived, was six miles from the Glen and Walter had never been there, though Dr. and Mrs. Parker and Dr. and Mrs. Blythe visited back and forth frequently. Dr. Parker and Dad were great friends, though Walter had a feeling now and again that Mother could have got along very well without Mrs. Parker. Even at six, Walter, as Anne realized, could see things that other children could not.

Walter was not sure, either, that he really wanted to go to Lowbridge. Some visits were splendid. A trip to Avonlea now ... ah, there was fun for you! And a night spent with Kenneth Ford at the old House of Dreams was more fun still ... though *that* couldn’t really be called visiting, for the House of Dreams always seemed like a second home to the small fry of Ingleside. But to go to Lowbridge for two whole weeks, among strangers, was a very different matter. However, it seemed to be a settled thing. For some reason, which Walter felt but could not understand, Dad and Mummy were pleased over the arrangement. Did they want to get rid of *all* their children, Walter wondered, rather sadly and uneasily. Jem was away, having been taken to Avonlea two days ago, and he had heard Susan making mysterious remarks about “sending the twins to Mrs. Marshall Elliott when the time came.” What time? Aunt Mary Maria seemed very gloomy over something and had been known to say that she “wished it was

all well over.” What was it she wished over? Walter had no idea. But there was something strange in the air at Ingleside.

“I’ll take him over tomorrow,” said Gilbert.

“The youngsters will be looking forward to it,” said Mrs. Parker.

“It’s very kind of you, I’m sure,” said Anne.

“It’s all for the best, no doubt,” Susan told the Shrimp darkly in the kitchen.

“It is very obliging of Mrs. Parker to take Walter off our hands, Annie,” said Aunt Mary Maria, when the Parkers had gone. “She told me she had taken quite a fancy to him. People *do* take such odd fancies, don’t they? Well, perhaps now for at least two weeks I’ll be able to go into the bathroom without tramping on a dead fish.”

“A dead fish, Aunt! You don’t mean ...”

“I mean exactly what I say, Annie. I always do. A dead fish! Did *you* ever step on a dead fish with your bare feet?”

“No-o ... but how ...”

“Walter caught a trout last night and put it in the bathtub to keep it alive, Mrs. Dr. dear,” said Susan airily. “If it had stayed there it would have been all right, but somehow it got out and died in the night. Of course, if people *will* go about on bare feet ...”

“I make it a rule never to quarrel with anyone,” said Aunt Mary Maria, getting up and leaving the room.

“*I* am determined she shall not vex *me*, Mrs. Dr. dear,” said Susan.

“Oh, Susan, she *is* getting on my nerves a bit ... but of course I won’t mind so much when all this is over ... and it *must* be nasty to tramp on a dead fish ...”

“Isn’t a dead fish better than a live one, Mummy? A dead fish wouldn’t squirm,” said Di.

Since the truth must be told at all costs it must be admitted that the mistress and maid of Ingleside both giggled.

So that was that. But Anne wondered to Gilbert that night if Walter would be quite happy at Lowbridge.

“He’s so very sensitive and imaginative,” she said wistfully.

“Too much so,” said Gilbert, who was tired after having had, to quote Susan, three babies that day. “Why, Anne, I believe that child is afraid to go upstairs in the dark. It will do him worlds of good to give and take with the Parker fry for a few days. He’ll come home a different child.”

Anne said nothing more. No doubt Gilbert was quite right. Walter was lonesome without Jem; and in view of what had happened when Shirley was born it would be just as well for Susan to have as little on her hands as possible beyond running the house and enduring Aunt Mary Maria ... whose two weeks had already stretched to four.

Walter was lying awake in his bed trying to escape from the haunting thought that he was to go away next day by giving free rein to fancy. Walter had a very vivid imagination. It was to him a great white charger, like the one in the picture on the wall, on which he could gallop backward or forward in time and space. The Night was coming down ... Night, like a tall, dark, bat-winged angel who lived in Mr. Andrew Taylor’s woods on the south hill. Sometimes Walter welcomed her ... sometimes he pictured her so vividly that he grew afraid of her. Walter dramatized and personified everything in his small world ... the Wind who told him stories at night ... the Frost that nipped the flowers in the garden ... the Dew that fell so silverly and silently ... the Moon which he felt sure he could catch if he could only go to the top of that faraway purple hill ... the Mist that came in from the sea ... the great Sea itself that was always changing and never changed ... the dark, mysterious Tide. They were all entities to Walter. Ingleside and the Hollow and the maple grove and the Marsh and the harbour shore were full of elves and kelpies and dryads and mermaids and goblins. The black plaster-of-Paris cat on the library mantelpiece was a fairy witch. It came alive at night and prowled about the house, grown to enormous size. Walter ducked his head under the bedclothes and shivered. He was always scaring himself with his own fancies.

Perhaps Aunt Mary Maria was right when she said he was “far too nervous and highstrung,” though Susan would never forgive her for it. Perhaps Aunt Kitty MacGregor of the Upper Glen, who was reported to

have “the second sight,” was right when, having once taken a deep look into Walter’s long-lashed, smoky grey eyes, she said he “did be having an old soul in a young body.” It might be that the old soul knew too much for the young brain to understand always.

Walter was told in the morning that Dad would take him to Lowbridge after dinner. He said nothing, but during dinner a choky sensation came over him and he dropped his eyes quickly to hide a sudden mist of tears. Not quickly enough, however.

“You’re not going to *cry*, Walter?” said Aunt Mary Maria, as if a six-year-old mite would be disgraced forever if he cried. “If there’s anything I *do* despise it’s a crybaby. And you haven’t eaten your meat.”

“All but the fat,” said Walter, blinking valiantly but not yet daring to look up. “I don’t like fat.”

“When *I* was a child,” said Aunt Mary Maria, “I was not allowed to have likes and dislikes. Well, Mrs. Dr. Parker will probably cure you of some of your notions. She was a Winter, I think ... or was she a Clark? ... no, she must have been a Campbell. But the Winters and the Campbells are all tarred with the same brush and they don’t put up with any nonsense.”

“Oh, please, Aunt Mary Maria, don’t frighten Walter about his visit to Lowbridge,” said Anne, a little spark kindling far down in her eyes.

“I’m sorry, Annie,” said Aunt Mary Maria with great humility. “I should of course have remembered that *I* have no right to try to teach your children *anything*.”

“Drat her hide,” muttered Susan as she went out for the dessert ... Walter’s favourite Queen pudding.

Anne felt miserably guilty. Gilbert had shot her a slightly reproachful glance as if to imply she might have been more patient with a poor lonely old lady.

Gilbert himself was feeling a bit seedy. The truth, as everyone knew, was that he had been terribly overworked all summer; and perhaps Aunt Mary Maria was more of a strain than he would admit. Anne made up her mind that in the fall, if all was well, she would pack him off willy-nilly for a month’s snipe-shooting in Nova Scotia.

“How is your tea?” she asked Aunt Mary Maria repentantly.

Aunt Mary Maria pursed her lips.

“Too weak. But it doesn’t matter. Who cares whether a poor old woman gets her tea to her liking or not? Some folks, however, think I’m real good company.”

Whatever the connexion between Aunt Mary Maria’s two sentences was, Anne felt she was beyond ferreting it out just then. She had turned very pale.

“I think I’ll go upstairs and lie down,” she said, a trifle faintly, as she rose from the table. “And I think, Gilbert ... perhaps you’d better not stay long in Lowbridge ... and suppose you give Miss Carson a ring.”

She kissed Walter goodbye rather casually and hurriedly ... very much as if she were not thinking about him at all. Walter *would not* cry. Aunt Mary Maria kissed him on the forehead ... Walter hated to be moistly kissed on the forehead ... and said:

“Mind your table manners at Lowbridge, Walter. Mind you ain’t greedy. If you are, a Big Black Man will come along with a big black bag to pop naughty children into.”

It was perhaps as well that Gilbert had gone out to harness Grey Tom and did not hear this. He and Anne had always made a point of never frightening their children with such ideas or allowing anyone else to do it. Susan did hear it as she cleared the table and Aunt Mary Maria never knew what a narrow escape she had of having the gravy boat and its contents flung at her head.

Chapter VIII

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Generally Walter enjoyed a drive with Dad. He loved beauty, and the roads around Glen St. Mary were beautiful. The road to Lowbridge was a double ribbon of dancing buttercups, with here and there the ferny green rim of an inviting grove. But today Dad didn't seem to want to talk much and he drove Grey Tom as Walter never remembered seeing him driven before. When they reached Lowbridge he said a few hurried words aside to Mrs. Parker and rushed out without bidding Walter goodbye. Walter had again hard work to keep from crying. It was only too plain that nobody loved him. Mother and Father used to, but they didn't any longer.

The big, untidy Parker house at Lowbridge did not seem friendly to Walter. But perhaps no house would have seemed that just then. Mrs. Parker took him out to the back yard, where shrieks of noisy mirth were resounding, and introduced him to the children who seemed to fill it. Then she promptly went back to her sewing, leaving them to "get acquainted by themselves" ... a proceeding that worked very well in nine cases out of ten. Perhaps she could not be blamed for failing to see that little Walter Blythe was the tenth. She liked him ... her own children were jolly little tads ... Fred and Opal were inclined to put on Montreal airs, but she felt quite sure they wouldn't be unkind to anyone. Everything would go swimmingly. She was so glad she could help "poor Anne Blythe" out, even if it was only by taking one of her children off her hands. Mrs. Parker hoped "all would go well." Anne's friends were a good deal more worried over her than she was over herself, reminding each other of Shirley's birth.

A sudden hush had fallen over the back yard ... a yard which ran off into a big, bowery apple orchard. Walter stood looking gravely and shyly at the Parker children and their Johnson cousins from Montreal. Bill Parker was ten ... a ruddy, round-faced urchin who "took after" his mother and seemed very old and big in Walter's eyes. Andy Parker was nine and

Lowbridge children could have told you that he was “the nasty Parker one” and was nicknamed “Pig” for reasons good. Walter did not like his looks from the first ... his short-cropped fair bristles, his impish freckled face, his bulging blue eyes. Fred Johnson was Bill’s age and Walter didn’t like him either, though he was a goodlooking chap with tawny curls and black eyes. His nine-year-old sister, Opal, had curls and black eyes, too ... snapping black eyes. She stood with her arm about tow-headed, eight-year-old Cora Parker and they both looked Walter over condescendingly. If it had not been for Alice Parker Walter might very conceivably have turned and fled.

Alice was seven; Alice had the loveliest little ripples of golden curls all over her head; Alice had eyes as blue and soft as the violets in the Hollow; Alice had pink, dimpled cheeks; Alice wore a little frilled yellow dress in which she looked like a dancing buttercup; Alice smiled at him as if she had known him all her life; Alice was a friend.

Fred opened the conversation.

“Hello, sonny,” he said condescendingly.

Walter felt the condescension at once and retreated into himself.

“My name is Walter,” he said distinctly.

Fred turned to the others with a well-done air of amazement. *He’d* show this country lad!

“He says his name is *Walter*,” he told Bill with a comical twist of his mouth.

“He says his name is *Walter*,” Bill told Opal in turn.

“He says his name is *Walter*,” Opal told the delighted Andy.

“He says his name is *Walter*,” Andy told Cora.

“He says his name is *Walter*,” Cora giggled to Alice.

Alice said nothing. She just looked admiringly at Walter and her look enabled him to bear up when all the rest chanted together, “He says his name is *Walter*,” and then burst into shrieks of derisive laughter.

“What fun the dear little folks are having!” thought Mrs. Parker complacently over her shining.

“I heard Mom say you believed in fairies,” Andy said, leering impudently.

Walter gazed levelly at him. He was not going to be downed before Alice.

“There *are* fairies,” he said stoutly.

“There ain’t,” said Andy.

“There *are*,” said Walter.

“He says there are *fairies*,” Andy told Fred.

“He says there are *fairies*,” Fred told Bill ... and they went through the whole performance again.

It was torture to Walter, who had never been made fun of before and couldn’t take it. He bit his lips to keep the tears back. He must not cry before Alice.

“How would you like to be pinched black and blue?” demanded Andy, who had made up his mind that Walter was a sissy and that it would be good fun to tease him.

“Pig, hush!” ordered Alice terribly ... very terribly, although very quietly and sweetly and gently. There was something in her tone that even Andy dared not flout.

“Course I didn’t mean it,” he muttered shamefacedly.

The wind veered a bit in Walter’s favour and they had a fairly amiable game of tag in the orchard. But when they tramped noisily in to supper Walter was again overwhelmed with homesickness. It was so terrible that for one awful moment he was afraid he was going to cry before them all ... even Alice, who, however, gave his arm such a friendly little nudge as they sat down that it helped him. But he could not eat anything ... he simply could not. Mrs. Parker, for whose methods there was certainly something to be said, did not worry him about it, comfortably concluding that his appetite would be better in the morning, and the others were too much occupied in eating and talking to take much notice of him.

Walter wondered why the whole family shouted so at each other, ignorant of the fact that they had not yet had time to get out of the habit since the recent death of a very deaf and sensitive old grandmother. The

noise made his head ache. Oh, at home now they would be eating supper, too. Mother would be smiling from the head of the table, Father would be joking with the twins, Susan would be pouring cream into Shirley's mug of milk, Nan would be sneaking tidbits to the Shrimp. Even Aunt Mary Maria, as part of the home circle, seemed suddenly invested with a soft, tender radiance. Who would have rung the Chinese gong for supper? It was his week to do it and Jem was away. If he could only find a place to cry in! But there seemed to be no place where you could indulge in tears at Lowbridge. Besides ... there was Alice. Walter gulped down a whole glassful of ice-water and found that it helped.

"Our cat takes fits," Andy said suddenly, kicking him under the table.

"So does ours," said Walter. The Shrimp had had two fits. And he wasn't going to have the Lowbridge cats rated higher than the Ingleside cats.

"I'll bet our cat takes fittier fits than yours," taunted Andy.

"I'll bet she doesn't," retorted Walter.

"Now, now, don't let's have any arguments over your cats," said Mrs. Parker, who wanted a quiet evening to write her Institute paper on "Misunderstood Children." "Run out and play. It won't be long before your bedtime."

Bedtime! Walter suddenly realized that he had to stay here all night ... many nights ... two weeks of nights. It was dreadful. He went out to the orchard with clenched fists, to find Bill and Andy in a furious clinch on the grass, kicking, clawing, yelling.

"You give me the wormy apple, Bill Parker!" Andy was howling. "I'll teach you to give me wormy apples! I'll bite off your ears!"

Fights of this sort were an everyday occurrence with the Parkers. Mrs. Parker held that it didn't hurt boys to fight. She said they got a lot of devilment out of their systems that way and were as good friends as ever afterwards. But Walter had never seen anyone fighting before and was aghast.

Fred was cheering them on, Opal and Cora were laughing, but there were tears in Alice's eyes. Walter could not endure that. He hurled himself

between the combatants, who had drawn apart for a moment to snatch breath before joining battle again.

“You stop fighting,” said Walter. “You’re scaring Alice.”

Bill and Andy stared at him in amazement for a moment, until the funny side of this baby interfering in their fight struck them. Both burst into laughter and Bill slapped him on the back.

“It’s got spunk, kids,” he said. “It’s going to be a real boy sometime if you let it grow. Here’s an apple for it ... and no worms either.”

Alice wiped the tears away from her soft pink cheeks and looked so adoringly at Walter that Fred didn’t like it. Of course Alice was only a baby but even babies had no business to be looking adoringly at other boys when he, Fred Johnson of Montreal, was around. This must be dealt with. Fred had been into the house and had heard Aunt Jen, who had been talking over the telephone, say something to Uncle Dick.

“Your mother’s awful sick,” he told Walter.

“She ... she isn’t!” cried Walter.

“She is, too. I heard Aunt Jen telling Uncle Dick ...” Fred had heard his aunt say, “Anne Blythe is sick,” and it was fun to tack in the “awful.” “She’ll likely be dead before you get home.”

Walter looked around with tormented eyes. Again Alice ranged herself by him ... and again the rest gathered around the standard of Fred. They felt something alien about this dark, handsome child ... they felt an urge to tease him.

“If she is sick,” said Walter, “Father will cure her.”

He would ... he must!

“I’m afraid that will be impossible,” said Fred, pulling a long face but winking at Andy.

“Nothing is impossible for Father,” insisted Walter loyally.

“Why, Russ Carter went to Charlottetown just for a day last summer and when he came home his mother was dead as a doornail,” said Bill.

“*And* buried,” said Andy, thinking to add an extra dramatic touch — whether a fact or not didn’t matter. “Russ was awful mad he’d missed the funeral ... funerals are so jolly.”

“And I’ve never seen a single funeral,” said Opal sadly.

“Well, there’ll be lots of chances for you yet,” said Andy. “But you see even Dad couldn’t keep Mrs. Carter alive and he’s a lot better doctor than *your* father.”

“He isn’t ...”

“Yes, he is, and a lot better-looking, too ...”

“He isn’t ...”

“Something *always* happens when you go away from home,” said Opal. “What will you feel like if you find Ingleside burned down when you go home?”

“If your mother dies, likely you children will all be sep’rated,” said Cora cheerfully. “Maybe you’ll come and live here.”

“Yes ... do,” said Alice sweetly.

“Oh, his father would want to keep them,” said Bill. “He’d soon be marrying again. But maybe his father will die too. I heard Dad say Dr. Blythe was working himself to death. Look at him staring. You’ve got girls’ eyes, sonny ... girls’ eyes ... girls’ eyes.”

“Aw, shut up,” said Opal, suddenly tiring of the sport. “You ain’t fooling him. He knows you’re only teasing. Let’s go down to the Park and watch the baseball game. Walter and Alice can stay here. We can’t have kids tagging after us everywhere.”

Walter was not sorry to see them go. Neither apparently was Alice. They sat down on an apple log and looked shyly and contentedly at each other.

“I’ll show you how to play jackstones,” said Alice, “and lend you my plush kangaroo.”

When bedtime came Walter found himself put into the little hall bedroom alone. Mrs. Parker considerately left a candle with him and a warm puff, for the July night was unreasonably cold as even a summer night in the Maritimes sometimes is. It almost seemed as if there might be a frost.

But Walter could not sleep, not even with Alice’s plush kangaroo cuddled to his cheek. Oh, if he were only home in his own room, where the

big window looked out on the Glen and the little window, with a tiny roof all its own, looked out into the Scotch pine! Mother would come in and read poetry to him in her lovely voice ...

"I'm a big boy ... I won't cry ... I wo-o-o-n't ..." The tears came in spite of himself. What good were plush kangaroos? It seemed years since he had left home.

Presently the other children came back from the Park and crowded amiably into the room to sit on the bed and eat apples.

"You've been crying, baby," jeered Andy. "You're nothing but a sweet little girl. Momma's Pet!"

"Have a bite, kid," said Bill proffering a half-gnawed apple. "And cheer up. I wouldn't be surprised if your mother got better ... if she's got a constitution, that is. Dad says Mrs. Stephen Flagg would-a died years ago if she hadn't a constitution. Has your mother got one?"

"Of course she has," said Walter. He had no idea what a constitution was, but if Mrs. Stephen Flagg had one Mother must.

"Mrs. Ab Sawyer died last week and Sam Clark's mother died the week before," said Andy.

"They died in the night," said Cora. "Mother says people mostly die in the night. I hope *I* won't. Fancy going to Heaven in your nightdress!"

"Children! Children! Get off to your beds," called Mrs. Parker.

The boys went, after pretending to smother Walter with a towel. After all, they rather liked the kid. Walter caught Opal's hand as she turned away.

"Opal, it isn't true Mother's sick, is it?" he whispered imploringly. He could not face being left alone with his fear.

Opal was "not a bad-hearted child," as Mrs. Parker said, but she could not resist the thrill one got out of telling bad news.

"She *is* sick. Aunt Jen says so ... she said I wasn't to tell you. But I think you ought to know. Maybe she has a cancer."

"Does *everybody* have to die, Opal?" This was a new and dreadful idea to Walter, who had never thought about death before.

“Of course, silly. Only they don’t die really ... they go to Heaven,” said Opal cheerfully.

“Not all of them,” said Andy ... who was listening outside the door ... in a pig’s whisper.

“Is ... is Heaven farther away than Charlottetown?” asked Walter.

Opal shrilled with laughter.

“Well, you *are* queer! Heaven’s millions of miles away. But I’ll tell you what to do. You pray. Praying’s good. I lost a dime once and I prayed and I found a quarter. That’s how I know.”

“Opal Johnson, did you hear what I said? And put out that candle in Walter’s room. I’m afraid of fire,” called Mrs. Parker from her room. “He should have been asleep long ago.”

Opal blew out the candle and flew. Aunt Jen was easygoing, but when she *did* get riled! Andy stuck his head in at the door for a goodnight benediction.

“Likely them birds in the wallpaper will come alive and pick your eyes out,” he hissed.

After which everybody did really go to bed, feeling that it was the end of a perfect day and Walt Blythe wasn’t a bad little kid and they’d have some more fun teasing him tomorrow.

“Dear little souls,” thought Mrs. Parker sentimentally.

An unwonted quiet descended upon the Parker house and six miles away at Ingleside little Bertha Marilla Blythe was blinking round hazel eyes at the happy faces around her and the world into which she had been ushered on the coldest July night the Maritimes had experienced in eighty-seven years!

Chapter IX

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Walter, alone in the darkness, still found it impossible to sleep. He had never slept alone before in his short life. Always Jem or Ken near him, warm and comforting. The little room became dimly visible as the pale moonlight crept into it, but it was almost worse than darkness. A picture on the wall at the foot of his bed seemed to leer at him ... pictures always looked so *different* by moonlight. You saw things in them you never suspected by daylight. The long lace curtains looked like tall thin women, one on each side of the window, weeping. There were noises about the house ... creaks, sighs, whisperings. Suppose the birds in the wallpaper *were* coming to life and getting ready to pick out his eyes? A creepy fear suddenly possessed Walter ... and then one great fear banished all the others. *Mother was sick*. He had to believe it since Opal had said it was true. Perhaps Mother was dying! *Perhaps mother was dead!* There would be no Mother to go home to. Walter saw Ingleside without Mother!

Suddenly Walter knew he could not bear it. He must go home. Right away — at once. He must see Mother before she ... before she ... died. *This* was what Aunt Mary Maria had meant. *She* had known Mother was going to die. It was no use to think of waking anyone and asking to be taken home. They wouldn't take him ... they would only laugh at him. It was an awful long road home but he would walk all night.

Very quietly he slipped out of bed and put on his clothes. He took his shoes in his hand. He did not know where Mrs. Parker had put his cap, but that did not matter. He must not make any noise ... he must just escape and get to Mother. He was sorry he could not say goodbye to Alice ... she would have understood. Through the dark hall ... down the stairs ... step by step ... hold your breath ... was there no end to the steps? ... the very furniture was listening ... oh, oh!

Walter had dropped one of his shoes! Down the stairs it clattered, bumping from step to step, shot across the hall and brought up against the front door with what seemed to Walter a deafening crash.

Walter huddled in despair against the rail. *Everybody* must have heard that noise ... they would come rushing out ... he wouldn't be let go home ... a sob of despair choked in his throat.

It seemed hours before he dared believe that nobody had wakened up ... before he dared resume his careful passage down the stairs. But it was accomplished at last; he found his shoe and cautiously turned the handle of the front door ... doors were never locked at the Parker place. Mrs. Parker said they hadn't anything worth stealing except children and nobody wanted *them*.

Walter was out ... the door closed behind him. He slipped on his shoes and stole down the street: the house was on the edge of the village and he was soon on the open road. A moment of panic overwhelmed him. The fear of being caught and prevented was past and all his old fears of darkness and solitude returned. He had never been out *alone* in the night before. He was afraid of the *world*. It was such a huge world and he was so terribly small in it. Even the cold raw wind that was coming up from the east seemed blowing in his face as if to push him back.

Mother was going to die! Walter took a gulp and set his face towards home. On and on he went, fighting fear gallantly. It was moonlight but the moonlight let you *see* things ... and nothing looked familiar. Once when he had been out with Dad he had thought he had never seen anything so pretty as a moonlit road crossed by tree shadows. But now the shadows were so black and sharp they might fly up at you. The fields had put on a strangeness. The trees were no longer friendly. They seemed to be watching him ... crowding in before and behind him. Two blazing eyes looked out at him from the ditch and a black cat of unbelievable size ran across the road. *Was it a cat?* Or ... ? The night was cold: he shivered in his thin blouse, but he would not mind the cold if he could only stop being afraid of everything ... of the shadows and the furtive sounds and the nameless things that might be prowling in the strips of woodland he

passed through. He wondered what it would be like not to be afraid of anything ... like Jem.

"I'll ... I'll just pretend I'm not afraid," he said aloud ... and then shuddered with terror over the *lost* sound of his own voice in the great night.

But he went on ... one had to go on when Mother was going to die. Once he fell and bruised and skinned his knee badly on a stone. Once he heard a buggy coming along behind him and hid behind a tree till it passed, terrified lest Dr. Parker had discovered he had gone and was coming after him. Once he stopped in sheer terror of something black and furry sitting on the side of the road. He could not pass it ... he could *not* ... but he did. It was a big black dog ... *Was* it a dog? ... but he was past it. He dared not run lest it chase him. He stole a desperate glance over his shoulder ... it had got up and was loping away in the opposite direction. Walter put his little brown hand up to his face and found it wet with sweat.

A star fell in the sky before him, scattering sparks of flame. Walter remembered hearing old Aunt Kitty say that when a star fell someone died. *Was it mother?* He had just been feeling that his legs would not carry him another step, but at the thought he marched on again. He was so cold now that he had almost ceased to feel afraid. Would he never get home? It must be hours and hours since he had left Lowbridge.

It was three hours. He had stolen out of the Parker house at eleven and it was now two. When Walter found himself on the road that dipped down into the Glen he gave a sob of relief. But as he stumbled through the village the sleeping houses seemed remote and far away. They had forgotten him. A cow suddenly bawled at him over a fence and Walter remembered that Mr. Joe Reese kept a savage bull. He broke into a run of sheer panic that carried him up the hill to the gate of Ingleside. He was home ... oh, he was home!

Then he stopped short, trembling, overcome by a dreadful feeling of desolation. He had been expecting to see the warm, friendly lights of home. And there was not a light at Ingleside!

There really was a light, if he could have seen it, in a back bedroom where the nurse slept with the baby's basket beside her bed. But to all intents and purposes Ingleside was as dark as a deserted house and it broke Walter's spirit. He had never seen, never imagined, Ingleside dark at night.

It meant that mother was dead!

Walter stumbled up the drive, across the grim black shadow of the house on the lawn, to the front door. It was locked. He gave a feeble knock ... he could not reach to the knocker ... but there was no response, nor did he expect any. He listened ... there was not a sound of *living* in the house. He knew Mother was dead and everybody had gone away.

He was by now too chilled and exhausted to cry: but he crept around to the barn and climbed the ladder to the hay-mow. He was past being frightened; he only wanted to get somewhere out of that wind and lie down till morning. Perhaps somebody would come back then after they had buried Mother.

A sleek little tiger kitten someone had given the doctor purred up to him, smelling nicely of clover hay. Walter clutched it gladly ... it was warm and *alive*. But it heard the little mice scampering over the floor and would not stay. The moon looked at him through the cobwebby window but there was no comfort in that far, cold, unsympathetic moon. A light burning in a house down in the Glen was more like a friend. As long as that light shone he could bear up.

He could not sleep. His knee hurt too much and he was cold ... with such a funny feeling in his stomach. Perhaps he was dying, too. He hoped he was, since everyone else was dead or gone away. Did nights ever end? Other nights had always ended but maybe this one wouldn't. He remembered a dreadful story he had heard to the effect that Captain Jack Flagg at the Harbour Mouth had said he wouldn't let the sun come up some morning when he got real mad. Suppose Captain Jack had got real mad at last.

Then the Glen light went out ... and he couldn't bear it. But as the little cry of despair left his lips he realized that it was day.

Chapter X

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Walter climbed down the ladder and went out. Ingleside lay in the strange, timeless light of first dawn. The sky over the birches in the Hollow was showing a faint, silvery-pink radiance. Perhaps he could get in at the side door. Susan sometimes left it open for Dad.

The side door was unlocked. With a sob of thankfulness Walter slipped into the hall. It was still dark in the house and he began stealing softly upstairs. He would go to bed ... his own bed ... and if nobody ever came back he could die there and go to Heaven and find Mother. Only ... Walter remembered what Opal had said ... Heaven was millions of miles away. In the fresh wave of desolation that swept over him Walter forgot to step carefully and set his foot heavily down on the tail of the Shrimp, who was sleeping at the curve of the stairs. The Shrimp's yowl of anguish resounded through the house.

Susan, just dropping off to sleep, was dragged back from slumber by the horrible sound. Susan had gone to bed at twelve, somewhat exhausted after her strenuous afternoon and evening, to which Mary Maria Blythe had contributed by taking "a stitch in her side" just when the tension was greatest. She had to have a hot-water bottle and a rub with liniment, and finished up with a wet cloth over her eyes because "one of her headaches" had come on.

Susan had wakened at three with a very strange feeling that somebody wanted her very badly. She had risen and tiptoed down the hall to the door of Mrs. Blythe's room. All was silence there ... she could hear Anne's soft regular breathing. Susan made the rounds of the house and returned to her bed, convinced that that strange feeling was only the hangover of a nightmare. But for the rest of her life Susan believed she had had what she had always scoffed at and what Abby Flagg, who "went in" for spiritualism, called "a physic experience."

“Walter was calling me and I heard him,” she averred.

Susan got up and went out again, thinking that Ingleside was really possessed that night. She was attired only in a flannel nightdress, which had shrunk in repeated washing till it was well above her bony ankles: but she seemed the most beautiful thing in the world to the white-faced, trembling little creature whose frantic grey eyes stared up at her from the landing.

“Walter Blythe!”

In two steps Susan had him in her arms ... her strong, tender arms.

“Susan ... is Mother dead?” said Walter.

In a very brief time everything had changed. Walter was in bed, warm, fed, comforted. Susan had whisked on a fire, got him a hot cup of milk, a slice of golden-brown toast and a big plateful of his favourite “monkey face” cookies, and then tucked him away with a hot-water bottle at his feet. She had kissed and anointed his little bruised knee. It was such a nice feeling to know that someone was looking after you ... that someone wanted you ... that you were important to someone.

“And you’re *sure*, Susan, that Mother isn’t dead?”

“Your mother is sound asleep and well and happy, my lamb.”

“And wasn’t she sick at all? Opal said ...”

“Well, lamb, she did not feel very well for a while yesterday, but that is all over and she was never in any danger of dying this time. You just wait till you have had a sleep and you will see her ... and something else. If I had hold of those young Satans at Lowbridge! I just cannot believe that you walked all the way home from Lowbridge. Six miles! On such a night!”

“I suffered awful agony of mind, Susan,” said Walter gravely. But it was all over; he was safe and happy; he was ... home ... he was ...

He was asleep.

It was nearly midday before he woke, to see sunshine billowing in through his own windows, and limped in to see Mother. He had begun to think he had been very foolish and maybe Mother would not be pleased with him for running away from Lowbridge. But Mother only put an arm

around him and drew him close to her. She had heard the whole story from Susan and had thought of a few things she intended to say to Jen Parker.

“Oh, Mummy, you’re not going to die ... and you still love me, don’t you?”

“Darling, I’ve no notion of dying ... and I love you so much it hurts. To think that you walked all the way from Lowbridge in the night!”

“And on an empty stomach,” shuddered Susan. “The wonder is he is alive to tell it. The days of miracles are not yet over and that you may tie to.”

“A spunky little lad,” laughed Dad, who had come in with Shirley on his shoulder. He patted Walter’s head and Walter caught his hand and hugged it. There was no one like Dad in the world. But nobody must ever know how scared he had really been.

“I needn’t ever go away from home again, need I, Mummy?”

“Not till you want to,” promised Mother.

“I’ll never,” began Walter ... and then stopped. After all, he wouldn’t mind seeing Alice again.

“Look you here, lamb,” said Susan, ushering in a rosy young lady in a white apron and cap who carried a basket.

Walter looked. A baby! A plump, roly-poly baby, with silky damp curls all over her head and such tiny cunning hands.

“Is she not a beauty?” said Susan proudly. “Look at her eyelashes ... never did I see such long eyelashes on a baby. And her pretty little ears. I always look at their ears first.”

Walter hesitated.

“She’s sweet, Susan ... oh, look at her darling little curly toes! ... but ... isn’t she rather small?”

Susan laughed.

“Eight pounds is not small, lamb. And she has begun to take notice already. That child was not an hour old when she raised her head and *Looked* at the doctor. I have never seen the like of it in all my life.”

“She’s going to have red hair,” said the doctor in a tone of satisfaction. “Lovely redgold hair like her mother’s.”

“And hazel eyes like her father’s,” said the doctor’s wife jubilantly.

“I don’t see why one of us can’t have yellow hair,” said Walter dreamily, thinking of Alice.

“Yellow hair! Like the Drews!” said Susan in measureless contempt.

“She looks so cunning when she is asleep,” crooned the nurse. “I never saw a baby that crinkled its eyes like that when it went to sleep.”

“She is a miracle. All our babies were sweet, Gilbert, but she is the sweetest of them all.”

“Lord love you,” said Aunt Mary Maria with a sniff, “there’s been a few babies in the world before, you know, Annie.”

“*Our* baby has never been in the world before, Aunt Mary Maria,” said Walter proudly. “Susan, may I kiss her ... just once ... please?”

“That you may,” said Susan, glaring after Aunt Mary Maria’s retreating back. “And now I’m going down to make a cherry pie for dinner. Mary Maria Blythe made one yesterday afternoon I wish you could see it, Mrs. Dr. dear. It looks like something the cat dragged in. I shall eat as much of it myself as I can, rather than waste it, but such a pie shall never be set before the doctor as long as I have my health and strength and that you may tie to.”

“It isn’t everybody that has your knack with pastry, you know,” said Anne.

“Mummy,” said Walter, as the door closed behind a gratified Susan, “I think we are a very nice family, don’t you?”

A very nice family, Anne reflected happily as she lay in her bed, with the baby beside her. Soon she would be about with them again, light-footed as of yore, loving them, teaching them, comforting them. They would be coming to her with their little joys and sorrows, their budding hopes, their new fears, their little problems that seemed so big to them and their little heartbreaks that seemed so bitter. She would hold all the threads of the Ingleside life in her hands again to weave into a tapestry of beauty. And Aunt Mary Maria should have no cause to say, as Anne had heard her say two days ago, “You look dreadful tired, Gilbert. Does *anybody* ever look after you?”

Downstairs Aunt Mary Maria was shaking her head despondently and saying, "All newborn infants' legs are crooked, I know, but, Susan, that child's legs are much *too* crooked. Of course we must not say so to poor Annie. Be sure you don't mention it to Annie, Susan."

Susan, for once, was beyond speech.

Chapter XI

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By the end of August Anne was herself again, looking forward to a happy autumn. Small Bertha Marilla grew in beauty day by day and was a centre of worship to adoring brothers and sisters.

“I thought a baby would be something that yelled all the time,” said Jem, rapturously letting the tiny fingers cling around his. “Bertie Shakespeare Drew told me so.”

“I am not doubting that the Drew babies yell all the time, Jem dear,” said Susan. “Yell at the thought of having to be Drews, I presume. But Bertha Marilla is an *Ingleside* baby, Jem dear.”

“I wish I had been born at Ingleside, Susan,” said Jem wistfully. He always felt sorry he hadn’t been. Di cast it up to him at times.

“Don’t you find life here rather dull?” an old Queen’s classmate from Charlottetown had asked Anne rather patronizingly one day.

Dull! Anne almost laughed in her caller’s face. Ingleside dull! With a delicious baby bringing new wonders every day ... with visits from Diana and Little Elizabeth and Rebecca Dew to be planned for ... with Mrs. Sam Ellison of the Upper Glen on Gilbert’s hands with a disease only three people in the world had ever been known to have before ... with Walter starting to school ... with Nan drinking a whole bottle of perfume from Mother’s dressing-table ... they thought it would kill her but she was never a whit the worse ... with a strange black cat having the unheard-of number of ten kittens in the back porch ... with Shirley locking himself in the bathroom and forgetting how to unlock it ... with the Shrimp getting rolled up in a sheet of fly-paper ... with Aunt Mary Maria setting the curtains of her room on fire in the dead of night while prowling with a candle, and rousing the household with appalling screams. Life dull!

For Aunt Mary Maria was still at Ingleside. Occasionally she would say pathetically, “Whenever you are tired of me just let me know ... I’m

used to looking after myself.” There was only one thing to say to that and of course Gilbert always said it. Though he did not say it quite as heartily as at first. Even Gilbert’s “clannishness” was beginning to wear a little thin; he was realizing rather helplessly ... “manlike” as Miss Cornelia sniffed ... that Aunt Mary Maria was by way of becoming a bit of a problem in his household. He *had* ventured one day to give a slight hint as to how houses suffered if left too long without inhabitants; and Aunt Mary Maria agreed with him, calmly remarking that she was thinking of selling her Charlottetown house.

“Not a bad idea,” encouraged Gilbert. “And I know a very nice little cottage in town for sale ... a friend of mine is going to California ... it’s very like that one you admired so much where Mrs. Sarah Newman lives ...”

“But lives *alone*,” sighed Aunt Mary Maria.

“She likes it,” said Anne hopefully.

“There’s something wrong with anyone who likes living alone, Anne,” said Aunt Mary Maria.

Susan repressed a groan with difficulty.

Diana came for a week in September. Then Little Elizabeth came ... Little Elizabeth no longer ... tall, slender, beautiful Elizabeth now. But still with the golden hair and wistful smile. Her father was returning to his office in Paris and Elizabeth was going with him to keep his house. She and Anne took long walks around the storied shores of the old harbour, coming home beneath silent, watchful autumn stars. They relived the old Windy Poplars life and retraced their steps in the map of fairyland which Elizabeth still had and meant to keep forever.

“Hanging on the wall of my room wherever I go,” she said.

One day a wind blew through the Ingleside garden ... the first wind of autumn. That night the rose of the sunset was a trifle austere. All at once the summer had grown old. The turn of the season had come.

“It’s early for fall,” said Aunt Mary Maria in a tone that implied the fall had insulted her.

But the fall was beautiful, too. There was the joy of winds blowing in from a darkly blue gulf and the splendour of harvest moons. There were lyric asters in the Hollow and children laughing in an apple-laden orchard, clear serene evenings on the high hill pastures of the Upper Glen and silvery mackerel skies with dank birds flying across them; and, as the days shortened, little grey mists stealing over the dunes and up the harbour.

With the falling leaves Rebecca Dew came to Ingleside to make a visit promised for years. She came for a week but was prevailed upon to stay two ... none being so urgent as Susan. Susan and Rebecca Dew seemed to discover at first sight that they were kindred spirits ... perhaps because they both loved Anne ... perhaps because they both hated Aunt Mary Maria.

There came an evening in the kitchen when, as the rain dripped down on the dead leaves outside and the wind cried around the eaves and corners of Ingleside, Susan poured out all her woes to sympathetic Rebecca Dew. The doctor and his wife had gone out to make a call, the small fry were all cosy in their beds, and Aunt Mary Maria fortunately out of the way with a headache ... "just like a band of iron round my brain," she had moaned.

"Anyone," remarked Rebecca Dew, opening the oven door and depositing her feet comfortably in the oven, "who eats as much fried mackerel as that woman did for supper *deserves* to have a headache. I do not deny I ate my share ... for I will say, Miss Baker, I never knew anyone who could fry mackerel like you ... but I did *not* eat four pieces."

"Miss Dew dear," said Susan earnestly, laying down her knitting and gazing imploringly into Rebecca's little black eyes, "you have seen something of what Mary Maria Blythe is like in the time you have been here. But you do not know the half ... no, nor yet the quarter. Miss Dew dear, I feel that I can trust you. May I open my heart to you in strict confidence?"

"You may, Miss Baker."

"That woman came here in June and it is my opinion she means to stay here the rest of her life. Everyone in this house detests her ... even the doctor has no use for her now, hide it as he will and does. But he is

clannish and says his father's cousin must not be made to feel unwelcome in his house. I have begged," said Susan, in a tone which seemed to imply she had done it on her knees, "I have begged Mrs. Dr. to put her foot down and say Mary Maria Blythe must go. But Mrs. Dr. is too softhearted ... and so we are helpless, Miss Dew ... completely helpless."

"I wish *I* had the handling of her," said Rebecca Dew, who had smarted considerably herself under some of Aunt Mary Maria's remarks. "I know as well as anyone, Miss Baker, that we must not violate the sacred proprieties of hospitality, but I assure you, Miss Baker, that I would let her have it straight."

"I could handle her if I did not know my place, Miss Dew. *I* never forget that I am not mistress here. Sometimes, Miss Dew, I say solemnly to myself, 'Susan Baker, are you or are you not a doormat?' But you know how my hands are tied. I *cannot* desert Mrs. Dr. and I *must not* add to her troubles by fighting with Mary Maria Blythe. I shall continue to endeavour to do my duty. Because, Miss Dew dear," said Susan solemnly, "I could cheerfully die for either the doctor or his wife. We were such a happy family before she came here, Miss Dew. But she is making our lives miserable and what is to be the outcome I cannot tell, being no prophetess, Miss Dew. Or rather, I *can* tell. We will all be driven into lunatic asylums. It is not any one thing, Miss Dew ... it is scores of them, Miss Dew ... hundreds of them, Miss Dew. You can endure one mosquito, Miss Dew ... but think of millions of them!"

Rebecca Dew thought of them with a mournful shake of her head.

"She is always telling Mrs. Dr. how to run her house and what clothes she should wear. She is always watching me ... and she says she never saw such quarrelsome children. Miss Dew dear, you have seen for yourself that our children *never* quarrel ... well, hardly ever ..."

"They are among the most admirable children I have ever seen, Miss Baker."

"She snoops and pries ..."

"I have caught her at it myself, Miss Baker."

“She’s always getting offended and heartbroken over something but never offended enough to up and leave. She just sits around looking lonely and neglected until poor Mrs. Dr. is almost distracted. Nothing suits her. If a window is open she complains of draughts. If they are all shut she says she *does* like a little fresh air once in a while. She cannot bear onions ... she cannot even bear the smell of them. She says they make her sick. So Mrs. Dr. says we must not use any. Now,” said Susan grandly, “it may be a common taste to like onions, Miss Dew dear, but we all plead guilty to it at Ingleside.”

“I am very partial to onions myself,” admitted Rebecca Dew.

“She cannot bear cats. She says cats give her the creeps. It does not make any difference whether she sees them or not. Just to know there is one about the place is enough for her. So that poor Shrimp hardly dare show his face in the house. I have never altogether liked cats myself, Miss Dew, but I maintain they have a right to wave their own tails. And it is, ‘Susan, never forget that I cannot eat eggs, please,’ or ‘Susan, how often must I tell you I cannot eat cold toast?’ or ‘Susan, *some* people may be able to drink stewed tea but I am not in that fortunate class.’ Stewed tea, Miss Dew! As if I ever offered anyone stewed tea!”

“Nobody could ever suppose it of you, Miss Baker.”

“If there is a question that should not be asked she will ask it. She is jealous because the doctor tells things to his wife before he tells them to her ... and she is always trying to pick news out of him about his patients. Nothing aggravates him so much, Miss Dew. A doctor must know how to hold his tongue, as you are well aware. And her tantrums about fire! ‘Susan Baker,’ she says to me, ‘I hope you never light a fire with coal-oil. Or leave oily rags lying around, Susan. They have been known to cause spontaneous combustion in less than an hour. How would you like to stand and watch this house burn down, Susan, knowing it was your fault?’ Well, Miss Dew dear, I had my laugh on her over *that*. It was that very night she set her curtains on fire and the yells of her are ringing in my ears yet. And just when the poor doctor had got to sleep after having been up for two nights! What infuriates me most, Miss Dew, is that before she goes

anywhere she goes into my pantry and *counts the eggs*. It takes all my philosophy to refrain from saying, ‘Why not count the spoons, too?’ Of course the children hate her. Mrs. Dr. is just about worn out keeping them from showing it. She actually slapped Nan one day when the doctor and Mrs. Dr. were both away ... *slapped* her ... just because Nan called her ‘Mrs Mefusaleh’ ... having heard that imp of a Ken Ford saying it.”

“I’d have slapped *her*,” said Rebecca Dew viciously.

“I told her if she ever did the like again I *would* slap her. ‘An occasional spanking we do have at Ingleside,’ I told her, ‘but slapping never, so put that in pickle.’ She was sulky and offended for a week but at least she has never dared to lay a finger on one of them since. She loves it when their parents punish them, though. ‘If *I* was your mother,’ she says to Little Jem one evening. ‘Oh ho, you won’t ever be anybody’s mother,’ said the poor child ... driven to it, Miss Dew, absolutely driven to it. The doctor sent him to bed without his supper, but who would you suppose, Miss Dew, saw that some was smuggled up to him later on?”

“Ah, now, *who?*” chortled Rebecca Dew, entering into the spirit of the tale.

“It would have broken your heart, Miss Dew, to hear the prayer he put up afterwards ... all off his own bat, ‘O God, please forgive me for being impertinent to Aunt Mary Maria. And O God, please help me to be always very polite to Aunt Mary Maria.’ It brought the tears into my eyes, the poor lamb. I do *not* hold with irreverence or impertinence from youth to age, Miss Dew dear, but I must admit that when Bertie Shakespeare Drew threw a spit-ball at her one day ... it just missed her nose by an inch, Miss Dew ... I waylaid him at the gate on his way home and gave him a bag of doughnuts. Of course I did not tell him why. He was tickled over it ... for doughnuts do not grow on trees, Miss Dew, and Mrs. Second Skimmings never makes them. Nan and Di ... I would not breathe this to a soul but you, Miss Dew ... the doctor and his wife never dream of it or they would put a stop to it ... Nan and Di have named their old china doll with the split head after Aunt Mary Maria and whenever she scolds them they go out and drown her ... the doll I mean ... in the rainwater hogshhead. Many’s

the jolly drowning we have had, I can assure you. But you could not believe what that woman did the other night, Miss Dew.”

“I’d believe anything of her, Miss Baker.”

“She would not eat a bite of supper because her feelings had been hurt over something, but she went into the pantry before she went to bed and *ate up a lunch I had left for the poor doctor* ... every crumb, Miss Dew dear. I hope you will not think me an infidel, Miss Dew, but I cannot understand why the Good Lord does not get tired of some people.”

“You must not allow yourself to lose your sense of humour, Miss Baker,” said Rebecca Dew firmly.

“Oh, I am very well aware that there is a comical side to a toad under a harrow, Miss Dew. But the question is, does the toad see it? I am sorry to have bothered you with all this, Miss Dew dear, but it has been a great relief. I cannot say these things to Mrs. Dr. and I have been feeling lately that if I did not find an outlet I would *burst*.”

“How well I know that feeling, Miss Baker.”

“And now, Miss Dew dear,” said Susan, getting up briskly, “what do you say to a cup of tea before bed? And a cold chicken leg, Miss Dew?”

“I have never denied,” said Rebecca Dew, taking her well-baked feet out of the oven, “that while we should not forget the Higher Things of Life good food is a pleasant thing in moderation.”

Chapter XII

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Gilbert had his two weeks' snipe shooting in Nova Scotia ... not even Anne could persuade him to take a month ... and November closed in on Ingleside. The dark hills, with the darker spruces marching over them, looked grim on early falling nights, but Ingleside bloomed with firelight and laughter, though the winds come in from the Atlantic singing of mournful things.

"Why isn't the wind happy, Mummy?" asked Walter one night.

"Because it is remembering all the sorrow of the world since time began," answered Anne.

"It is moaning just because there is so much dampness in the air," sniffed Aunt Mary Maria, "and my back is killing me."

But some days even the wind blew cheerfully through the silvery grey maple wood and some days there was no wind at all, only mellow Indian summer sunshine and the quiet shadows of the bare trees all over the lawn and frosty stillness at sunset.

"Look at that white evening star over the lombardy in the corner," said Anne. "Whenever I see anything like that I am minded to be just glad I am alive."

"You do say such funny things, Annie. Stars are quite common in P. E. Island," said Aunt Mary Maria ... and thought: "Stars indeed! As if no one ever saw a star before! Didn't Annie know of the terrible waste that was going on in the kitchen every day? Didn't she know of the reckless way Susan Baker threw eggs about and used lard where dripping would do quite as well? Or didn't she care? Poor Gilbert! No wonder he had to keep his nose to the grindstone!"

November went out in greys and browns: but by morning the snow had woven its old white spell and Jem shouted with delight as he rushed down to breakfast.

“Oh, Mummy, it will soon be Christmas now and Santa Claus will be coming!”

“You surely don’t believe in Santa Claus *still*?” said Aunt Mary Maria.

Anne shot a glance of alarm at Gilbert, who said gravely: “We want the children to possess their heritage of fairyland as long as they can, Auntie.”

Luckily Jem had paid no attention to Aunt Mary Maria. He and Walter were too eager to get out into the new wonderful world to which winter had brought its own loveliness. Anne always hated to see the beauty of the untrodden snow marred by footprints; but that couldn’t be helped and there was still beauty and to spare at eventide when the west was aflame over all the whitened hollows in the violet hills and Anne was sitting in the livingroom before a fire of rock maple. Firelight, she thought, was always so lovely. It did such tricky, unexpected things. Parts of the room flashed into being and then out again. Pictures came and went. Shadows lurked and sprang. Outside, through the big unshaded window, the whole scene was elvishly reflected on the lawn with Aunt Mary Maria apparently sitting stark upright ... Aunt Mary Maria never allowed herself to “loll” ... under the Scotch pine.

Gilbert was “lolling” on the couch, trying to forget that he had lost a patient from pneumonia that day. Small Rilla was trying to eat her pink fists in her basket; even the Shrimp, with his white paws curled in under his breast, was daring to purr on the hearthrug, much to Aunt Mary Maria’s disapproval.

“Speaking of cats,” said Aunt Mary Maria pathetically ... though nobody *had* been speaking of them ... “do *all* the cats in the Glen visit us at night? How anyone could have slept through the caterwauling last night *I* really am at a loss to understand. Of course, my room being at the back I suppose I get the full benefit of the free concert.”

Before anyone had to reply Susan entered, saying that she had seen Mrs. Marshall Elliott in Carter Flagg’s store and she was coming up when she had finished her shopping. Susan did not add that Mrs. Elliott had said anxiously, “*What* is the matter with Mrs. Blythe, Susan? I thought last

Sunday in church she looked so tired and worried. I never saw her look like that before.”

“I can tell you what is the matter with Mrs. Blythe,” Susan had answered grimly. “She had got a bad attack of Aunt Mary Maria. And the doctor cannot seem to see it, even though he does worship the ground she walks on.”

“Isn’t that like a man?” said Mrs. Elliott.

“I am glad,” said Anne, springing up to light a lamp. “I haven’t seen Miss Cornelia for so long. Now we’ll catch up with the news.”

“Won’t we!” said Gilbert dryly.

“That woman is an evil-minded gossip,” said Aunt Mary Maria severely.

For the first time in her life, perhaps, Susan bristled up in defence of Miss Cornelia.

“That she is not, Miss Blythe, and Susan Baker will never stand by and hear her so mis-called. Evil-minded, indeed! Did you ever hear, Miss Blythe, of the pot calling the kettle black?”

“Susan ... Susan,” said Anne imploringly.

“I beg your pardon, Mrs. Dr. dear. I admit I have forgotten my place. But there are *some* things not to be endured.”

Whereupon a door was banged as doors were seldom banged at Ingleside.

“You see, Annie?” said Aunt Mary Maria significantly. “But I suppose as long as you are willing to overlook that sort of thing in a servant there is nothing anyone can do.”

Gilbert got up and went to the library where a tired man might count on some peace. And Aunt Mary Maria, who didn’t like Miss Cornelia, betook herself to bed. So that when Miss Cornelia came in she found Anne alone, drooping rather limply over the baby’s basket. Miss Cornelia did not, as usual, start in unloading a budget of gossip. Instead, when she had laid aside her wraps, she sat down beside Anne and took her hand.

“Anne dearie, what is the matter? I know there’s something. Is that jolly old soul of a Mary Maria just tormenting you to death?”

Anne tried to smile.

“Oh, Miss Cornelia ... I know I’m foolish to mind it so much ... but this has been one of the days when it seems I just *cannot* go on enduring her. She ... she’s simply poisoning our life here ...”

“Why don’t you just tell her to go?”

“Oh, we can’t do that, Miss Cornelia. At least, *I* can’t and Gilbert won’t. He says he could never look himself in the face again if he turned his own flesh and blood out of doors.”

“Cat’s hindfoot!” said Miss Cornelia eloquently. “She’s got plenty of money and a good home of her own. How would it be turning her out of doors to tell her she’d better go and live in it?”

“I know ... but Gilbert ... I don’t think he quite realises everything. He’s away so much ... and really ... everything is so little in itself ... I’m ashamed ...”

“I know, dearie. Just those little things that are horribly big. Of course a *man* wouldn’t understand. I know a woman in Charlottetown who knows her well. She says Mary Maria Blythe never had a friend in her life. She says her name should be Blight not Blythe. What you need, dearie, is just enough backbone to say you won’t put up with it any longer.”

“I feel as you do in dreams when you’re trying to run and can only drag your feet,” said Anne drearily. “If it were only now and then ... but it’s every day. Meal times are perfect horrors now. Gilbert says he can’t carve roasts any more.”

“He’d notice *that*,” sniffed Miss Cornelia.

“We can never have any real conversations at meals because she is sure to say something disagreeable every time anyone speaks. She corrects the children for their manners continually and always calls attention to their faults before company. We used to have such pleasant meals ... and now! She resents laughter ... and you know what we are for laughing. Somebody is always seeing a joke ... or used to be. She can’t let anything pass. Today she said, ‘Gilbert, don’t sulk. Have you and Annie quarrelled?’ Just because we were quiet. You know Gilbert is always a little depressed when he loses a patient he thinks ought to have lived. And then she lectured us

on our folly and warned us not to let the sun go down on our wrath. Oh, we laughed at it afterwards ... but just at the time! She and Susan don't get along. And we *can't* keep Susan from muttering asides that are the reverse of polite. She more than muttered when Aunt Mary Maria told her she had never seen such a liar as Walter ... because she heard him telling Di a long tale about meeting the man in the moon and what they said to each other. She wanted to scour his mouth out with soap and water. She and Susan had a battle royal that time. And she is filling the children's minds with all sorts of gruesome ideas. She told Nan about a child who was naughty and died in its sleep and Nan is afraid to go to sleep now. She told Di that if she were always a good girl her parents would come to love her as well as they loved Nan, even if she did have red hair. Gilbert really was very angry when he heard that and spoke to her sharply. I couldn't help hoping she'd take offence and go ... even though I would hate to have anyone leave my home because she was offended. But she just let those big blue eyes of her fill with tears and said she didn't mean any harm. She'd always heard that twins were never loved equally and she'd been thinking we favoured Nan and that poor Di felt it! She cried all night about it and Gilbert felt that he had been a brute ... and *apologized*."

"He would!" said Miss Cornelia.

"Oh, I shouldn't be talking like this, Miss Cornelia. When I 'count my mercies' I feel it's very petty of me to mind these things ... even if they do rub a little bloom off life. And she isn't always hateful ... she is quite nice by spells ..."

"Do you tell me so?" said Miss Cornelia sarcastically.

"Yes ... and kind. She heard me say I wanted an afternoon tea-set and she went to Toronto and got me one ... by mail order! And, oh, Miss Cornelia, it's so ugly!"

Anne gave a laugh that ended in a sob. Then she laughed again.

"Now we won't talk of her any more ... it doesn't seem so bad now that I've blurted this all out ... like a baby. Look at wee Rilla, Miss Cornelia. Aren't her lashes darling when she is asleep? Now let's have a good gab-fest."

Anne was herself again by the time Miss Cornelia had gone. Nevertheless she sat thoughtfully before her fire for some time. She had not told Miss Cornelia all of it. She had never told Gilbert any of it. There were so many little things... .

“So little I can’t complain of them,” thought Anne. “And yet ... it’s the little things that fret the holes in life ... like moths ... and ruin it.”

Aunt Mary Maria with her trick of acting the hostess ... Aunt Mary Maria inviting guests and never saying a word about it till they came... .

“She makes me feel as if I didn’t belong in my own home.” Aunt Mary Maria moving the furniture around when Anne was out. “I hope you don’t mind, Annie; I thought we need the table so much more here than in the library.” Aunt Mary Maria’s insatiable childish curiosity about everything ... her point-blank questions about intimate matters ... *“always coming into my room without knocking ... always smelling smoke ... always plumping up the cushions I’ve crushed ... always implying that I gossip too much with Susan ... always picking at the children We have to be at them all the time to make them behave and then we can’t manage it always.”*

“Ugly old Aunt Maywia,” Shirley had said distinctly one dreadful day. Gilbert had been going to spank him for it, but Susan had risen up in outraged majesty and forbade it.

“We’re cowed,” thought Anne. “This household is beginning to revolve around the question, ‘Will Aunt Mary Maria like it?’ We won’t admit it but it’s true. Anything rather than have her wiping tears nobly away. It just can’t go on.”

Then Anne remembered what Miss Cornelia had said ... that Mary Maria Blythe had never had a friend. How terrible! Out of her own richness of friendships Anne felt a sudden rush of compassion for this woman who had never had a friend ... who had nothing before her but a lonely, restless old age with no one coming to her for shelter or healing, for hope and help, for warmth and love. Surely they could have patience with her. These annoyances were only superficial, after all. They could not poison the deep springs of life.

“I’ve just had a terrible spasm of being sorry for myself, that’s all,” said Anne, picking Rilla out of her basket and thrilling to the little round satin cheek against hers. “It’s over now and I’m wholesomely ashamed of it.”

Chapter XIII

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“We never seem to have old-fashioned winters nowadays, do we, Mummy?” said Walter gloomily.

For the November snow had gone long ago and all through December Glen St. Mary had been a black and sombre land, rimmed in by a grey gulf dotted with curling crests of ice-white foam. There had been only a few sunny days, when the harbour sparkled in the golden arms of the hills: the rest had been dour and hard-bitten. In vain had the Ingleside folks hoped for snow for Christmas: but preparations went steadily on and as the last week drew to a close Ingleside was full of mystery and secrets and whispers and delicious smells. Now on the very day before Christmas everything was ready. The fir tree Walter and Jem had brought up from the Hollow was in the corner of the livingroom, the doors and windows were hung with big green wreaths tied with huge bows of red ribbon. The banisters were twined with creeping spruce and Susan’s pantry was crammed to overflowing. Then, late in the afternoon, when they all had resigned themselves to a dingy “green” Christmas somebody looked out of a window and saw white flakes as big as feathers falling thickly.

“Snow! Snow!! Snow!!!” shouted Jem. “A white Christmas after all, Mummy!”

The Ingleside children went to bed happy. It was so nice to snuggle down warm and cosy and listen to the storm howling outside through the grey snowy night. Anne and Susan went to work to deck the Christmas tree ... “acting like two children themselves,” thought Aunt Mary Maria scornfully. She did not approve of candles on a tree ... “suppose the house caught fire from them.” She did not approve of coloured balls ... “suppose the twins ate them.” But nobody paid any attention to her. They had learned that that was the only condition on which life with Aunt Mary Maria was livable.

“Finished!” cried Anne, as she fastened the great silver star to the top of the proud little fir. “And, oh, Susan, doesn’t it look pretty! Isn’t it nice we can all be children again at Christmas without being ashamed of it! I’m so glad the snow came ... but I hope the storm won’t outlast the night.”

“It’s going to storm all day tomorrow,” said Aunt Mary Maria positively. “I can tell by my poor back.”

Anne went through the hall, opened the big front door, and peered out. The world was lost in a white passion of snowstorm. The windowpanes were grey with drifted snow. The Scotch pine was an enormous sheeted ghost.

“It doesn’t look very promising,” Anne admitted ruefully.

“God manages the weather yet, Mrs. Dr. dear, and not Miss Mary Maria Blythe,” said Susan over her shoulder.

“I hope there won’t be a sick call tonight at least,” said Anne as she turned away. Susan took one parting look into the gloom before she locked out the stormy night.

“Don’t *you* go and have a baby tonight,” she warned darkly in the direction of the Upper Glen where Mrs. George Drew was expecting her fourth.

In spite of Aunt Mary Maria’s back the storm spent itself in the night and morning filled the secret hollow of snow among the hills with the red wine of winter sunrise. All the small fry were up early, looking starry and expectant.

“*Did* Santa get through the storm, Mummy?”

“No. He was sick and didn’t dare try,” said Aunt Mary Maria, who was in a good humour ... for her ... and felt joky.

“Santa Claus got here all right,” said Susan before their eyes had time to blur, “and after you’ve had your breakfast you’ll see what he did to your tree.”

After breakfast Dad mysteriously disappeared, but nobody missed him because they were so taken up with the tree ... the lively tree, all gold and silver bubbles and lighted candles in the still dark room, with parcels in all colours and tied with the loveliest ribbons piled about it. Then Santa

appeared, a gorgeous Santa, all crimson and white fur, with a long white beard and *such* a jolly big stomach ... Susan had stuffed three cushions into the red velveteen cassock Anne had made for Gilbert. Shirley screamed with terror at first, but refused to be taken out, for all that. Santa distributed all the gifts with a funny little speech for everyone in a voice that sounded oddly familiar even through the mask; and then just at the end his beard caught fire from a candle and Aunt Mary Maria had some slight satisfaction out of the incident though not enough to prevent her from sighing mournfully.

“Ah me, Christmas isn’t what it was when I was a child.” She looked with disapproval at the present Little Elizabeth had sent Anne from Paris ... a beautiful little bronze reproduction of Artemis of the Silver Bow.

“What shameless hussy is that?” she inquired sternly.

“The goddess Diana,” said Anne, exchanging a grin with Gilbert.

“Oh, a heathen! Well, that’s different, I suppose. But if I were you, Annie, I wouldn’t leave it where the children can see it. Sometimes I am beginning to think there is no such thing as modesty left in the world. My grandmother,” concluded Aunt Mary Maria, with the delightful inconsequence that characterized so many of her remarks, “never wore less than three petticoats, winter and summer.”

Aunt Mary Maria had knitted “wristers” for all the children out of a dreadful shade of magenta yarn, also a sweater for Anne; Gilbert received a bilious necktie and Susan got a red flannel petticoat. Even Susan considered red flannel petticoats out of date, but she thanked Aunt Mary Maria gallantly.

“Some poor home missionary may be the better of it,” she thought. “Three petticoats, indeed! I flatter myself I am a decent woman and I like that Silver Bow person. She may not have much in the way of clothes on, but if I had a figure like that I do not know that I would want to hide it. But now to see about the turkey stuffing ... not that it will amount to much with no onion in it.”

Ingleside was full of happiness that day, just plain, old-fashioned happiness, in spite of Aunt Mary Maria, who certainly did not like to see

people too happy.

“White meat only, please. (James, eat your soup quietly.) Ah, you are not the carver your father was, Gilbert. *He* could give everyone the bit she liked best. (Twins, older people would like a chance now and then to get a word in edgewise. *I* was brought up by the rule that children should be seen and not heard.) No, thank you, Gilbert, no salad for me. I don’t eat raw food. Yes, Annie, I’ll take a *little* pudding. Mince pies are entirely too indigestible.”

“Susan’s mince pies are poems, just as her apple pies are lyrics,” said the doctor. “Give *me* a piece of both, Anne-girl.”

“Do you really like to be called ‘girl’ at your age, Annie? Walter, you haven’t eaten all your bread and butter. Plenty of poor children would be glad to have it. James dear, blow your nose and have it over with, I *cannot* endure sniffing.”

But it was a gay and lovely Christmas. Even Aunt Mary Maria thawed out a little after dinner, said almost graciously that the presents given her had been quite nice, and even endured the Shrimp with an air of patient martyrdom that made them all feel a little ashamed of loving him.

“I think our little folks have had a nice time,” said Anne happily that night, as she looked at the pattern of trees woven against the white hills and sunset sky, and the children out on the lawn busily scattering crumbs for birds over the snow. The wind was sighing softly in the boughs, sending flurries over the lawn and promising more storm for the morrow, but Ingleside had had its day.

“I suppose they had,” agreed Aunt Mary Maria. “I’m sure they did enough squealing, anyhow. As for what they have eaten ... ah well, you’re only young once and I suppose you have plenty of castor-oil in the house.”

Chapter XIV

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It was what Susan called a streaky winter ... all thaws and freezes that kept Ingleside decorated with fantastic fringes of icicles. The children fed seven bluejays who came regularly to the orchard for their rations and let Jem pick them up, though they flew from everybody else. Anne sat up o' nights to pore over seed catalogues in January and February. Then the winds of March swirled over the dunes and up the harbors and over the hills. Rabbits, said Susan, were laying Easter eggs.

"Isn't March an INCiting month, Mummy?" cried Jem, who was a little brother to all the winds that blew.

They could have spared the "incitement" of Jem scratching his hand on a rusty nail and having a nasty time of it for some days, while Aunt Mary Maria told all the stories of blood-poisoning she had ever heard. But that, Anne reflected when the danger was over, was what you must expect with a small son who was always trying experiments.

And lo, it was April! With the laughter of April rain ... the whisper of April rain ... the trickle, the sweep, the drive, the lash, the dance, the splash of April rain. "Oh, Mummy, hasn't the world got its face washed nice and clean?" cried Di, on the morning sunshine returned.

There were pale spring stars shining over fields of mist, there were pussywillows in the marsh. Even the little twigs on the trees seemed all at once to have lost their clear cold quality and to have become soft and languorous. The first robin was an event; the Hollow was once more a place full of wild free delight; Jem brought his mother the first mayflowers ... rather to Aunt Mary Maria's offence, since she thought they should have been offered to *her*; Susan began sorting over the attic shelves, and Anne, who had hardly had a minute to herself all winter, put on spring gladness as a garment and literally lived in her garden, while the Shrimp showed his spring raptures by writhing all over the paths.

“You care more for that garden than you do for your husband, Annie,” said Aunt Mary Maria.

“My garden is so kind to me,” answered Anne dreamily ... then, realizing the implications that might be taken out of her remark, began to laugh.

“You do say the most extraordinary things, Annie. Of course *I* know you don’t mean that Gilbert isn’t kind ... but what if a stranger heard you say such a thing?”

“Dear Aunt Mary Maria,” said Anne gaily, “I’m really not responsible for the things I say this time of the year. Everybody around here knows that. I’m always a little mad in spring. But it’s such a divine madness. Do you notice those mists over the dunes like dancing witches? And the daffodils? We’ve never had such a show of daffodils at Ingleside before.”

“I don’t care much for daffodils. They are such flaunting things,” said Aunt Mary Maria, drawing her shawl around her and going indoors to protect her back.

“Do you know, Mrs. Dr. dear,” said Susan ominously, “what has become of those new irises you wanted to plant in that shady corner? *She* planted them this afternoon when you were out right in the sunniest part of the back yard.”

“Oh, Susan! And we can’t move them because she’d be so hurt!”

“If you will just give *me* the word, Mrs. Dr. dear ...”

“No, no, Susan, we’ll leave them there for the time being. She cried, you remember, when I hinted that she shouldn’t have pruned the spirea *before* blooming.”

“But sneering at our daffodils, Mrs. Dr. dear ... and them famous all around the harbour ...”

“And deserve to be. Look at them laughing at you for minding Aunt Mary Maria. Susan, the nasturtiums are coming up in this corner, after all. It’s such fun when you’ve given up hope of a thing to find it has suddenly popped up. I’m going to have a little rose garden made in the southwest corner. The very name of rose garden thrills to my toes. Did you ever see such a *blue* blueness of sky before, Susan? And if you listen very carefully

now at night you can hear all the little brooks of the countryside gossiping. I've half a notion to sleep in the Hollow tonight with a pillow of wild violets."

"You would find it very damp," said Susan patiently. Mrs. Dr. was always like this in the spring. It would pass.

"Susan," said Anne coaxingly, "I want to have a birthday party next week."

"Well, and why should you not?" asked Susan. To be sure, none of the family had a birthday the last week in May, but if Mrs. Dr. wanted a birthday party why boggle over that?

"For Aunt Mary Maria," went on Anne, as one determined to get the worst over. "Her birthday is next week. Gilbert says she is fifty-five and I've been thinking."

"Mrs. Dr. dear, do you really mean to get up a party for that ..."

"Count a hundred, Susan ... count a hundred, Susan dear. It would please her so. What has she in life, after all?"

"That is her own fault ..."

"Perhaps so. But, Susan, I really want to do this for her."

"Mrs. Dr. dear," said Susan ominously, "you have always been kind enough to give me a week's vacation whenever I felt I needed it. Perhaps I had better take it next week! I will ask my niece Gladys to come and help you out. And then Miss Mary Maria Blythe can have a dozen birthday parties, for all of me."

"If you feel like that about it, Susan, I'll give up the idea, of course," said Anne slowly.

"Mrs. Dr. dear, that woman has foisted herself upon you and means to stay here forever. She has worried you ... and henpecked the doctor ... and made the children's lives miserable. I say nothing about myself, for who am I? She has scolded and nagged and insinuated and whined ... and now you want to get up a birthday party for her! Well, all I can say is, if you want to do that ... we'll just have to go ahead and have it!"

"Susan, you old duck!"

Plotting and planning followed. Susan, having yielded, was determined that for the honour of Ingleside the party must be something that even Mary Maria Blythe could not find fault with.

“I think we’ll have a luncheon, Susan. Then they’ll be away early enough for me to go to the concert at Lowbridge with the doctor. We’ll keep it a secret and surprise her. She shan’t know a thing about it till the last minute. I’ll invite all the people in the Glen she likes... .”

“And who may *they* be, Mrs. Dr. dear?”

“Well, tolerates, then. And her cousin, Adella Carey from Lowbridge, and some people from town. We’ll have a big plummy birthday cake with fifty-five candles on it ...”

“Which *I* am to make, of course ...”

“Susan, you *know* you make the best fruitcake in P. E. Island ...”

“I know that I am as wax in your hands, Mrs. Dr. dear.”

A mysterious week followed. An air of hush-hush pervaded Ingleside. Everybody was sworn not to give the secret away to Aunt Mary Maria. But Anne and Susan had reckoned without gossip. The night before the party Aunt Mary Maria came home from a call in the Glen to find them sitting rather wearily in the unlighted sun-room.

“All in the dark, Annie? It beats me how anyone can like sitting in the dark. It gives me the blues.”

“It isn’t dark ... it’s twilight ... there has been a love-match between light and dark and beautiful exceedingly is the offspring thereof,” said Anne, more to herself than anybody else.

“I suppose you know what you mean yourself, Annie. And so you’re having a party tomorrow?”

Anne suddenly sat bolt upright. Susan, already sitting so, could not sit any uprighter.

“Why ... why ... Aunty ...”

“You always leave me to hear things from outsiders,” said Aunt Mary Maria, but seemingly more in sorrow than in anger.

“We ... we meant it for a surprise, Aunty ...”

“I don’t know what you want of a party this time of year when you can’t depend on the weather, Annie.”

Anne drew a breath of relief. Evidently Aunt Mary Maria knew only that there was to be a party, not that it had any connexion with her.

“I ... I wanted to have it before the spring flowers were done, Auntie.”

“I shall wear my garnet taffeta. I suppose, Annie, if I had not heard of this in the village I should have been caught by all your fine friends tomorrow in a cotton dress.”

“Oh, no, Auntie. We meant to tell you in time to dress, of course ...”

“Well, if *my* advice means anything to you, Annie ... and sometimes I am almost compelled to think it does not ... I would say that in future it would be better for you not to be *quite so secretive* about things. By the way, are you aware that they are saying in the village that it was Jem who threw the stone through the window of the Methodist church?”

“He did not,” said Anne quietly. “He told me he did not.”

“Are you sure, Annie dear, that he was not fibbing?”

“Annie dear” still spoke quietly.

“Quite sure, Aunt Mary Maria. Jem has never told me an untruth in his life.”

“Well, I thought you ought to know what was being said.”

Aunt Mary Maria stalked off in her usual gracious manner, ostentatiously avoiding the Shrimp, who was lying on his back on the floor entreating someone to tickle his stomach.

Susan and Anne drew a long breath.

“I think I’ll go to bed, Susan. And I do hope it is going to be fine tomorrow. I don’t like the look of that dark cloud over the harbour.”

“It will be fine, Mrs. Dr. dear,” reassured Susan. “The almanack says so.”

Susan had an almanack which foretold the whole year’s weather and was right often enough to keep up its credit.

“Leave the side door unlocked for the doctor, Susan. He may be late getting home from town. He went in for the roses ... fifty-five golden

roses, Susan ... I've heard Aunt Mary Maria say that yellow roses were the only flowers she liked."

Half an hour later, Susan, reading her nightly chapter in her Bible, came across the verse, "Withdraw thy foot from thy neighbour's house lest he weary of thee and hate thee." She put a sprig of southernwood in it to mark the spot. "Even in those days," she reflected.

Anne and Susan were both up early, desiring to complete certain last preparations before Aunt Mary Maria should be about. Anne always liked to get up early and catch that mystical half-hour before sunrise when the world belongs to the fairies and the old gods. She liked to see the morning sky of pale rose and gold behind the church spire, the thin, translucent glow of sunrise spreading over the dunes, the first violet spirals of smoke floating up from the village roofs.

"It's as if we had had a day made to order, Mrs. Dr. dear," said Susan complacently, as she feathered an orange-frosted cake with cocoanut. "I will try my hand at them new-fangled butterballs after breakfast and I will phone Carter Flagg every half-hour to make sure that he will not forget the ice-cream. And there will be time to scrub the verandah steps."

"Is that necessary, Susan?"

"Mrs. Dr. dear, you have invited Mrs. Marshall Elliott, have you not? *She* shall not see *our* verandah steps otherwise than spotless. But you will see to the decorations, Mrs. Dr. dear? I was not born with the gift of arranging flowers."

"Four cakes! Gee!" said Jem.

"When we give a party," said Susan grandly, "we *give* a party."

The guests came in due time and were received by Aunt Mary Maria in garnet taffeta and by Anne in biscuit-coloured voile. Anne thought of putting on her white muslin, for the day was summer-warm, but decided otherwise.

"Very sensible of you, Annie," commented Aunt Mary Maria. "White, I always say, is only for the young."

Everything went according to schedule. The table looked beautiful with Anne's prettiest dishes and the exotic beauty of white and purple iris.

Susan's butterballs made a sensation, nothing like them having been seen in the Glen before; her cream soup was the last word in soups; the chicken salad had been made of Ingleside "chickens that *are* chickens"; the badgered Carter Flagg sent up the ice-cream on the tick of the dot. Finally Susan, bearing the birthday cake with its fifty-five lighted candles as if it were the Baptist's head on a charger, marched in and set it down before Aunt Mary Maria.

Anne, outwardly the smiling serene hostess, had been feeling very uncomfortable for some time. In spite of all outward smoothness she had an ever-deepening conviction that something had gone terribly wrong. On the guests' arrival she had been too much occupied to notice the change that came over Aunt Mary Maria's face when Mrs. Marshall Elliott cordially wished her many happy returns of the day. But when they were all finally seated around the table Anne wakened up to the fact that Aunt Mary Maria was looking anything but pleased. She was actually white ... it *couldn't* be with fury! ... and not one word did she say as the meal progressed, save curt replies to remarks addressed to her. She took only two spoonfuls of soup and three mouthfuls of salad; as for the ice-cream, she behaved to it as if it wasn't there.

When Susan set the birthday cake, with its flickering candles, down before her, Aunt Mary Maria gave a fearful gulp which was not quite successful in swallowing a sob and consequently issued as a strangled whoop.

"Aunty, aren't you feeling well?" cried Anne.

Aunt Mary Maria stared at her icily.

"*Quite* well, Annie. Remarkably well, indeed, for *such an aged person* as myself."

At this auspicious moment the twins popped in, carrying between them the basketful of fifty-five yellow roses, and, amid a suddenly frozen silence, presented it to Aunt Mary Maria, with lisped congratulations and good wishes. A chorus of admiration went up from the table, but Aunt Mary Maria did not join in it.

“The ... the twins will blow out the candles for you, Aunty,” faltered Anne nervously, “and then ... will you cut the birthday cake?”

“Not being quite senile ... yet ... Annie, I can blow the candles out myself.”

Aunt Mary Maria proceeded to blow them out, painstakingly and deliberately. With equal painstaking and deliberation she cut the cake. Then she laid the knife down.

“And now perhaps I may be excused, Annie. *Such an old woman* as I am needs rest after so much excitement.”

Swish went Aunt Mary Maria’s taffeta skirt. Crash went the basket of roses as she swept past it. Click went Aunt Mary Maria’s high heels up the stairs. Bang went Aunt Mary Maria’s door in the distance.

The dumfounded guests ate their slices of birthday cake with such appetite as they could muster, in a strained silence broken only by a story Mrs. Amos Martin told desperately of a doctor in Nova Scotia who had poisoned several patients by injecting diphtheria germs into them. The others, feeling that this might not be in the best of taste, did not back up her laudable effort to “liven things up” and all went away as soon as they decently could.

A distracted Anne rushed to Aunt Mary Maria’s room.

“Aunty, *what* is the matter? ...”

“Was it necessary to advertise my age in public, Annie? And to ask Adella Carey here ... to have her find out how old I am ... she’s been dying to know for years!”

“Aunty, we meant ... we meant ...”

“I don’t know what your purpose was, Annie. That there is something back of all this I know very well ... oh, I can read your mind, dear Annie ... but I shall not try to ferret it out ... I shall leave it between you and your conscience.”

“Aunt Mary Maria, my only intention was to give you a happy birthday. I’m dreadfully sorry... .”

Aunt Mary Maria put her handkerchief to her eyes and smiled bravely.

“Of course I forgive you, Annie. But you must realize that after such a deliberate attempt to injure my feelings I cannot stay here any longer.”

“Amity, won’t you believe ...”

Aunt Mary Maria lifted a long, thin, knobby hand.

“Don’t let us discuss it, Annie. I want peace ... just peace. ‘A wounded spirit who can bear?’”

Anne went to the concert with Gilbert that night, but it could not be said she enjoyed it. Gilbert took the whole matter “just like a man,” as Miss Cornelia might have said.

“I remember she was always a little touchy about her age. Dad used to rag her. I should have warned you ... but it had slipped my memory. If she goes, don’t try to stop her” ... and refrained through clannishness from adding “good riddance!”

“She will not go. No such good luck, Mrs. Dr. dear,” said Susan incredulously.

But for once Susan was wrong. Aunt Mary Maria went away the very next day, forgiving everybody with her parting breath.

“Don’t blame Annie, Gilbert,” she said magnanimously. “I acquit her of all intentional insult. I never minded her having secrets from me ... though to a sensitive mind like mine ... but in spite of everything I’ve always liked poor Annie” ... this with the air of one confessing a weakness. “But Susan Baker is a cat of another colour. My last word to you, Gilbert, is ... put Susan Baker in her place and keep her there.”

Nobody could believe in their good luck at first. Then they woke up to the fact that Aunt Mary Maria had really gone ... that it was possible to laugh again without hurting anyone’s feelings ... open all the windows without anyone complaining of draughts ... eat a meal without anyone telling you that something you specially liked was liable to produce cancer of the stomach.

“I’ve never sped a parting guest so willingly,” thought Anne, half guiltily. “It is nice to call your soul your own again.”

The Shrimp groomed himself meticulously, feeling that, after all, there was some fun in being a cat. The first peony burst into bloom in the

garden.

“The world is just full of poetry, isn’t it, Mummy?” said Walter.

“It is going to be a real nice June,” foretold Susan. “The almanack says so. There are going to be a few brides and most likely at least two funerals. Does it not seem strange to be able to draw a free breath again? When I think that I did all that in me lay to prevent you giving that party, Mrs. Dr. dear, I realize afresh that there *is* an overruling Providence. And don’t you think, Mrs. Dr. dear, that the doctor would relish some onions with his fried steak today?”

Chapter XV

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“I felt I had to come up, dearie,” said Miss Cornelia, “and explain about that telephone. It was all a mistake ... I’m so sorry ... Cousin Sarah isn’t dead, after all.” Anne, smothering a smile, offered Miss Cornelia a chair on the verandah, and Susan, looking up from the collar of Irish-crochet lace she was making for her niece Gladys, uttered a scrupulously polite, “Good-evening, *Mrs. Marshall Elliott*.”

“The word came out from the hospital this morning that she had passed away in the night, and I felt I ought to inform you, since she was the doctor’s patient. But it was another Sarah Chase and Cousin Sarah is living and likely to live, I’m thankful to say. It’s real nice and cool here, Anne. I always say if there’s a breeze to be had anywhere it’s at Ingleside.”

“Susan and I have been enjoying the charm of this starlit evening,” said Anne, laying aside the dress of pink, smocked muslin she was making for Nan and clasping her hands over her knees. An excuse to be idle for a little while was not unwelcome. Neither she nor Susan had many idle moments nowadays.

There was going to be a moonrise and the prophecy of it was even lovelier than the moonrise itself would be. Tiger lilies were “burning bright” along the walk and whiffs of honeysuckle went and came on the wings of the dreaming wind.

“Look at that wave of poppies breaking against the garden wall, Miss Cornelia. Susan and I are very proud of our poppies this year, though we hadn’t a single thing to do with them. Walter spilt a packet of seed there by accident in the spring and this is the result. Every year we have some delightful surprise like that.”

“I’m partial to poppies,” said Miss Cornelia, “though they don’t last long.”

“They have only a day to live,” admitted Anne, “but how imperially, how gorgeous they live it! Isn’t that better than being a stiff horrible zinnia that lasts practically for ever? We have no zinnias at Ingleside. They’re the only flowers we are not friends with. Susan won’t even speak to them.”

“Anybody being murdered in the Hollow?” asked Miss Cornelia. Indeed, the sounds that came drifting up would seem to indicate that someone was being burned at the stake. But Anne and Susan were too accustomed to that to be disturbed.

“Persis and Kenneth have been here all day and they wound up by a banquet in the Hollow. As for Mrs. Chase, Gilbert went to town this morning, so he would know the truth about her. I am glad for everyone’s sake she is doing so well ... the other doctors did not agree with Gilbert’s diagnosis and he was a little worried.”

“Sarah warned us when she went to the hospital that we were not to bury her unless we were sure she was dead,” said Miss Cornelia, fanning herself majestically and wondering how the doctor’s wife always managed to look so cool. “You see, we were always a little afraid her husband was buried alive ... he looked so lifelike. But nobody thought of it until it was too late. He was a brother of this Richard Chase who bought the old Moorside farm and moved there from Lowbridge in the spring. *He’s* a card. Said he came to the country to get some peace ... he had to spend all his time in Lowbridge dodging widows” ... “and old maids,” Miss Cornelia might have added but did not, out of regard for Susan’s feelings.

“I’ve met his daughter Stella ... she comes to choir practice. We’ve taken quite a fancy to each other.”

“Stella *is* a sweet girl ... one of the few girls left that can blush. I’ve always loved her. Her mother and I used to be great cronies. Poor Lisette!”

“She died young?”

“Yes, when Stella was only eight. Richard brought Stella up himself. And him an infidel if he’s anything! He says women are only important biologically ... whatever that may mean. He’s always shooting off some big talk like that.”

“He doesn’t seem to have made such a bad job of bringing her up,” said Anne, who thought Stella Chase one of the most charming girls she had ever met.

“Oh, you couldn’t spoil Stella. And I’m not denying Richard has got a good deal in his headpiece. But he’s a crank about young men ... he has never let poor Stella have a single beau in her life! All the young men who tried to go with her he simply terrified out of their senses with sarcasm. He is the most sarcastic creature you ever heard of. Stella can’t manage him ... her mother before her couldn’t manage him. They didn’t know how. He goes by contraries but neither of them ever seemed to catch on to that.”

“I thought Stella seemed very devoted to her father.”

“Oh, she is. She adores him. He is a most agreeable man when he gets his own way about everything. But he should have more sense about Stella’s marrying. He must know he can’t live forever ... though to hear him talk you’d think he meant to. He isn’t an old man, of course ... he was very young when he was married. But strokes run in that family. And what is Stella to do after he’s gone? Just shrivel up, I suppose.”

Susan looked up from the intricate rose of her Irish crochet long enough to say decidedly:

“I do not hold with old folks spoiling young ones lives in that fashion.”

“Perhaps if Stella really cared for anyone her father’s objections might not weight much with her.”

“That’s where you’re mistaken, Anne dearie. Stella would never marry anyone her father didn’t like. And I can tell you another whose life is going to be spoiled, and that’s Marshall’s nephew, Alden Churchill. Mary is *determined* he shan’t marry as long as she can keep him from it. She’s even more contrary than Richard ... if she was a weather-vane she’d point north when the wind was south. The property is hers till Alden marries and then it goes to him, you know. Every time he’s gone about with a girl she has contrived to put a stop to it somehow.”

“Indeed, is it *all* her doings, Mrs. Marshall Elliott?” queried Susan dryly. “Some folks think that Alden is very changeable. I have heard him

called a flirt.”

“Alden is handsome and the girls chase him,” retorted Miss Cornelia. “I don’t blame him for stringing them along a bit and dropping them when he’s taught them a lesson. But there’s been one or two nice girls he really liked and Mary just blocked it every time. She told me so herself ... told me she went to the Bible ... she’s always ‘going to the Bible’ ... and turned up a verse and every time it was a warning against Alden getting married. I’ve no patience with her and her odd ways. Why can’t she go to church and be a decent creature like the rest of us around Four Winds? But no, she must set up a religion for herself, consisting of ‘going to the Bible.’ Last fall, when that valuable horse took sick ... worth four hundred if a dollar ... instead of sending for the Lowbridge vet she ‘went to the Bible’ and turned up a verse ... ‘The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.’ So send for the vet she would not and the horse died. Fancy applying that verse in such a way, Anne dearie. I call it irreverent. I told her so flat but all the answer I got was a dirty look. And she won’t have the phone put in. ‘Do you think I’m going to talk into a box on the wall?’ she says when anyone broaches it.”

Miss Cornelia paused, rather out of breath. Her sister-in-law’s vagaries always made her impatient.

“Alden isn’t at all like his mother,” said Anne.

“Alden’s like his father ... a finer man never stepped ... as men go. Why he ever married Mary was something the Elliotts could never fathom. Though they were more than glad to get her married off so well ... she always had a screw loose and such a beanpole of a girl. Of course she had lots of money ... her Aunt Mary left her everything ... but that wasn’t the reason, George Churchill was really in love with her. I don’t know how Alden stands his mother’s whims; but he’s been a good son.”

“Do you know what has just occurred to me, Miss Cornelia?” said Anne with an impish smile. “Wouldn’t it be a nice thing if Alden and Stella should fall in love with each other?”

“There isn’t much chance of that and they wouldn’t get anywhere if they did. Mary would tear up the turf and Richard would show a plain

farmer the door in a minute, even if he is a farmer himself now. But Stella isn't the kind of a girl Alden fancies ... he likes the high-coloured laughing ones. And Stella wouldn't care for *his* type. I did hear the new minister at Lowbridge was making sheep's eyes at her."

"Isn't he rather anemic and shortsighted?" asked Anne.

"And his eyes bulge," said Susan. "They must be dreadful when he tries to look sentimental."

"At least he's a Presbyterian," said Miss Cornelia, as if that atoned for much. "Well, I must be going. I find if I'm out in the dew much my neuralgia troubles me."

"I'll walk down to the gate with you."

"You always looked like a queen in that dress, Anne dearie," said Miss Cornelia, admiringly and irrelevantly.

Anne met Owen and Leslie Ford at the gate and brought them back to the verandah. Susan had vanished to get lemonade for the doctor, who had just arrived home, and the children came swarming up from the Hollow sleepy and happy.

"You were making dreadful noise as I drove in," said Gilbert. "The whole countryside must have heard you."

Persis Ford, shaking back her thick honey-tinted curls, stuck out her tongue at him. Persis was a great favourite with "Uncle Gil."

"We were just imitating howling dervishes, so of course we had to howl," explained Kenneth.

"Look at the state your blouse is in," said Leslie rather severely.

"I fell in Di's mud-pie," said Kenneth, with decided satisfaction in his tone. He loathed those starched, spotless blouses Mother made him wear when he came up to the Glen.

"Mother dearwums," said Jem, "can I have those old ostrich feathers in the garret to sew in the back of my pants for a tail? We're going to have a circus tomorrow and I'm to be the ostrich. And we're going to get an elephant."

"Do you know that it costs six hundred dollars a year to feed an elephant?" said Gilbert solemnly.

“An imaginary elephant doesn’t cost anything,” explained Jem patiently.

Anne laughed. “We never need to be economical in our imaginations, thank heaven.”

Walter said nothing. He was a little tired and quite content to sit down beside Mother on the steps and lean his black head against her shoulder. Leslie Ford, looking at him, thought that he had the face of a genius ... the remote, detached look of a soul from another star. Earth was not his habitat.

Everybody was very happy in this golden hour of a golden day. A bell in a church across the harbour rang faintly and sweetly. The moon was making patterns on the water. The dunes shimmered in hazy silver. There was a tang of mint in the air and some unseen roses were unbearably sweet. And Anne, looking dreamily over the lawn with eyes that, in spite of six children, were still very young, thought there was nothing in the world so slim and elfin as a very young lombardy poplar by moonlight.

Then she began to think about Stella Chase and Alden Churchill, until Gilbert offered her a penny for her thoughts.

“I’m thinking seriously of trying my hand at matchmaking,” retorted Anne.

Gilbert looked at the others in mock despair.

“I was afraid it would break out again some day. I’ve done my best, but you can’t reform a born matchmaker. She has a positive passion for it. The number of matches she has made is incredible. I couldn’t sleep o’ nights if I had such responsibilities on my conscience.”

“But they’re all happy,” protested Anne. “I’m really an adept. Think of all the matches I’ve made ... or been accused of making ... Theodora Dix and Ludovic Speed ... Stephen Clark and Prissie Gardner ... Janet Sweet and John Douglas ... Professor Carter and Esme Taylor ... Nora and Jim ... and Dovie and Jarvis ...”

“Oh, I admit it. This wife of mine, Owen, has never lost her sense of expectation. Thistles may, for her, bear figs at any time. I suppose she’ll keep on trying to marry people off until she grows up.”

“I think she had something to do with another match yet,” said Owen, smiling at his wife.

“Not I,” said Anne promptly. “Blame Gilbert for that. I did my best to persuade him not to have that operation performed on George Moore. Talk about sleeping o’ nights ... there are nights when *I* wake up in a cold perspiration dreaming that I succeeded.”

“Well, they say it is only happy women who matchmake, so that is one up for me,” said Gilbert complacently. “What new victims have you in mind now, Anne?”

Anne only grinned at him. Matchmaking is something requiring subtlety and discretion and there are things you do not tell even to your husband.

Chapter XVI

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Anne lay awake for hours that night and several nights thereafter, thinking about Alden and Stella. She had a feeling that Stella thought longingly about marriage ... a home ... babies. She had begged one night to be allowed to give Rilla her bath ... “It’s so delightful to bathe her plump, dimpled little body” ... and again, shyly, “It’s so lovely, Mrs. Blythe, to have little darling velvet arms stretched out to you. Babies are so *right*, aren’t they?” It would be a shame if a grouchy father should prevent the blossoming of those secret hopes.

It would be an ideal marriage. But how could it be brought about, with everybody concerned a bit stubborn and contrary? For the stubbornness and contrariness were not all on the old folks’ side. Anne suspected that both Alden and Stella had a streak of it. This required an entirely different technique from any previous affair. In the nick of time Anne remembered Dovie’s father.

Anne tilted her chin and went at it. Alden and Stella, she considered, were as good as married from that hour.

There was no time to be lost. Alden, who lived at the Harbour Head and went to the Anglican church over the harbour, had not even met Stella Chase as yet ... perhaps had not even seen her. He had not been dangling after any girl for some months, but he might begin at any moment. Mrs. Janet Swift, of the Upper Glen, had a very handsome niece visiting her and Alden was always after the new girls. The first thing to do, then, was to have Alden and Stella meet. How was this to be managed? It must be brought about in some way absolutely innocent in appearance. Anne racked her brains but could think of nothing more original than giving a party and inviting them both. She did not altogether like the idea. It was hot weather for a party ... and the Four Winds young people were such romps. Anne knew Susan would never consent to a party without

practically housecleaning Ingleside from attic to cellar ... and Susan was feeling the heat this summer. But a good cause demands sacrifices. Jen Pringle, B.A., had written that she was coming for a long-promised visit to Ingleside and that would be the very excuse for a party. Luck seemed to be on her side. Jen came ... the invitations were sent out ... Susan gave Ingleside its overhauling ... she and Anne did all the cooking for the party themselves in the heart of a heat-wave.

Anne was woefully tired the night before the party. The heat had been terrible ... Jem was sick in bed with an attack of what Anne secretly feared was appendicitis though Gilbert lightly dismissed it as only green apples ... and the Shrimp had been nearly scalded to death when Jen Pringle, trying to help Susan, knocked a pan of hot water off the stove on him. Every bone in Anne's body ached, her head ached, her feet ached, her eyes ached. Jen had gone with a group of young fry to see the lighthouse, telling Anne to go right to bed; but instead of going to bed she sat out on the verandah in the dampness that followed the afternoon's thunderstorm and talked to Alden Churchill, who had called to get some medicine for his mother's bronchitis but would not go into the house. Anne thought it was a heavensent opportunity, for she wanted very much to have a talk with him. They were quite good friends, since Alden often called on a similar errand.

Alden sat on the verandah step with his bare head thrown back against the post. He was, as Anne always thought, a very handsome fellow ... tall and broad-shouldered, with a marble-white face that never tanned, vivid blue eyes, and a stiff, upstanding brush of inky black hair. He had a laughing voice and a nice, deferential way which women of all ages liked. He had gone to Queen's for three years and had thought of going to Redmond, but his mother refused to let him go, alleging Biblical reasons, and Alden had settled down contentedly enough on the farm. He liked farming, he had told Anne; it was free, out-of-doors, independent work: he had his mother's knack of making money and his father's attractive personality. It was no wonder he was considered something of a matrimonial prize.

“Alden, I want to ask a favour of you,” said Anne winningly. “Will you do it for me?”

“Sure, Mrs. Blythe,” he answered heartily. “Just name it. You know I’d do anything for you.”

Alden was really very fond of Mrs. Blythe and would really have done a good deal for her.

“I’m afraid it will bore you,” said Anne anxiously. “But it’s just this ... I want you to see that Stella Chase has a good time at my party tomorrow night. I’m so afraid she won’t. She doesn’t know many young people around here yet ... most of them are younger than she is ... at least the boys are. Ask her to dance and see that she isn’t left alone and out of things. She’s so shy with strangers. I do want her to have a good time.”

“Oh, I’ll do my best,” said Alden readily.

“But you mustn’t fall in love with her, you know,” warned Anne, laughing carefully.

“Have a heart, Mrs. Blythe. Why not?”

“Well,” confidentially, “I think Mr. Paxton of Lowbridge has taken quite a fancy to her.”

“That conceited young coxcomb?” exploded Alden, with unexpected warmth.

Anne looked mild rebuke.

“Why, Alden, I’m told he is a very nice young man. It’s only that kind of a man who would have any chance with Stella’s father, you know.”

“That so?” said Alden, relapsing into his indifference.

“Yes ... and I don’t know if even he would. I understand Mr. Chase thinks there is nobody good enough for Stella. I’m afraid a plain farmer wouldn’t have a look-in. So I don’t want you to make trouble for yourself falling in love with a girl you could never get. I’m just dropping a friendly warning. I’m sure your mother would think as I do.”

“Oh, thanks ... What sort of a girl is she, anyhow. Looks good?”

“Well, I admit she isn’t a beauty. I like Stella very much ... but she’s a little pale and retiring. Not overly strong ... but I’m told Mr. Paxton has

money of his own. To my thinking it should be an ideal match and I don't want anyone to spoil it."

"Why didn't you invite Mr. Paxton to your spree and tell *him* to give your Stella a good time?" demanded Alden rather truculently.

"You know a minister wouldn't come to a dance, Alden. Now, don't be cranky ... and do see that Stella has a nice time."

"Oh, I'll see that she has a rip-roaring time. Goodnight, Mrs. Blythe."

Alden swung off abruptly. Left alone, Anne laughed. "Now, if I know anything of human nature that boy will sail right in to show the world he can get Stella if he wants her in spite of anybody. He rose right to my bait about the minister. But I suppose I'm in for a bad night with this headache."

She had a bad night, complicated by what Susan called "a crick in the neck," and felt about as brilliant as grey flannel in the morning; but in the evening she was a gay and gallant hostess. The party was a success. Everybody seemed to have a good time. Stella certainly had. Alden saw to that almost too zealously for good form, Anne thought. It was going a bit strong for a first meeting that Alden should whisk Stella off to a dim corner of the verandah after supper and keep her there for an hour. But on the whole Anne was satisfied when she thought things over the next morning. To be sure, the dining-room carpet has been practically ruined by two spilled saucerfuls of ice-cream and a plateful of cake being ground into it; Gilbert's grandmother's Bristol glass candlesticks had been smashed to smithereens; somebody had upset a pitcherful of rainwater in the spare room which had soaked down and discoloured the library ceiling in a tragic fashion; the tassels were half torn off the chesterfield; Susan's big Boston fern, the pride of her heart, had apparently been sat upon by some large and heavy person. But on the credit side of the ledger was the fact that, unless all signs failed, Alden had fallen for Stella. Anne thought the balance was in her favour.

Local gossip within the next few weeks confirmed this view. It became increasingly evident that Alden was hooked. But what about Stella? Anne did not think Stella was the sort of girl to fall too ripely into any man's

outstretched hand. She had a spice of her father's "contrariness," which in her worked out as a charming independence.

Again luck befriended a worried matchmaker. Stella came to see the Ingleside delphiniums one evening and afterwards they sat on the verandah and talked. Stella Chase was a pale, slender thing, rather shy but intensely sweet. She had a soft cloud of pale gold hair and woodbrown eyes. Anne thought it was her eyelashes did the trick, for she was not really pretty. They were unbelievably long and when she lifted them and dropped them it did things to masculine hearts. She had a certain distinction of manner which made her seem a little older than her twenty-four years and a nose that might be decidedly aquiline in later life.

"I've been hearing things about you, Stella," said Anne, shaking a finger at her. "And ... I ... don't ... know ... if ... I ... liked ... them. Will you forgive me for saying that I wonder if Alden Churchill is just the right beau for you?"

Stella turned a startled face.

"Why ... I thought you liked Alden, Mrs. Blythe."

"I do like him. But ... well, you see ... he has the reputation of being very fickle. I'm told no girl can hold him long. A good many have tried ... and failed. I'd hate to see you left like that if his fancy veered."

"I think you are mistaken about Alden, Mrs. Blythe," said Stella slowly.

"I hope so, Stella. If you were a different type now ... bouncing and jolly, like Eileen Swift ..."

"Oh, well ... I must be going home," said Stella vaguely. "Father will be lonely."

When she had gone Anne laughed again.

"I rather think Stella has gone away secretly vowing that she will show meddlesome friends that she can hold Alden and that no Eileen Swift shall ever get her claws on him. That little toss of her head and that sudden flush on her cheeks told me that. So much for the young folks. I'm afraid the older ones will be tougher nuts to crack."

Chapter XVII

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Anne's luck held. The Women's Missionary Auxiliary asked her if she would call on Mrs. George Churchill for her yearly contribution to the society. Mrs. Churchill seldom went to church and was not a member of the Auxiliary, but she "believed in missions" and always gave a generous sum if anyone called and asked her for it. People enjoyed doing this so little that the members had to take their turn at it and this year the turn was Anne's.

She walked down one evening, taking a daisied trail across lots which led over the sweet, cool loveliness of a hilltop to the road where the Churchill farm lay, a mile from the Glen. It was rather a dull road, with grey snake fences running up steep little slopes ... yet it had homelights ... a brook ... the smell of hayfields that run down to the sea ... gardens. Anne stopped to look at every garden she passed. Her interest in gardens was perennial. Gilbert was wont to say that Anne *had* to buy a book if the word "garden" were in the title.

A lazy boat idled down the harbour and far out a vessel was becalmed. Anne always watched an outward bound ship with a little quickening of her pulses. She understood Captain Franklin Drew when she heard him say once, as he went on board his vessel at the wharf, "God, how sorry I am for the folks we leave on shore!"

The big Churchill house, with the grim iron lacework around its flat mansard roof, looked down on the harbour and the dunes. Mrs. Churchill greeted her politely, if none too effusively, and ushered her into a gloomy and splendid parlour, the dark, brown-papered walls of which were hung with innumerable crayons of departed Churchills and Elliotts. Mrs. Churchill sat down on a green plush sofa, folded her long thin hands, and gazed steadily at her caller.

Mary Churchill was tall and gaunt and austere. She had a prominent chin, deep-set blue eyes like Alden's, and a wide, compressed mouth. She never wasted words and she never gossiped. So Anne found it rather difficult to work up to her objective naturally, but she managed it through the medium of the new minister across the harbour whom Mrs. Churchill did not like.

"He is not a spiritual man," said Mrs. Churchill coldly.

"I have heard that his sermons are remarkable," said Anne.

"I heard one and do not wish to hear more. My soul sought food and was given a lecture. He believes the Kingdom of Heaven can be taken by brains. It cannot."

"Speaking of ministers ... they have a very clever one at Lowbridge now. I think he is interested in my young friend, Stella Chase. Gossip says it will be a match."

"Do you mean a marriage?" said Mrs. Churchill.

Anne felt snubbed but reflected that you had to swallow things like that when you were interfering in what didn't concern you.

"I think it would be a very suitable one, Mrs. Churchill. Stella is especially fitted for a minister's wife. I've been telling Alden he mustn't try to spoil it."

"Why?" asked Mrs. Churchill, without the flicker of an eyelid.

"Well ... really ... you know ... I'm afraid Alden would stand no chance whatever. Mr. Chase doesn't think anyone good enough for Stella. All Alden's friends would hate to see him dropped suddenly like an old glove. He's too nice a boy for that."

"No girl ever dropped my son," said Mrs. Churchill, compressing her thin lips. "It was always the other way about. He found them out, for all their curls and giggles, their wriggings and mincings. My son can marry any woman he chooses, Mrs. Blythe ... *any* woman."

"Oh?" said Anne's tongue. Her tone said, "Of course I am too polite to contradict you but you have not changed my opinion." Mary Churchill understood and her white, shrivelled face warmed a little as she went out of the room to get her missionary contribution.

“You have the most wonderful view here,” said Anne, when Mrs. Churchill ushered her to the door.

Mrs. Churchill gave the gulf a glance of disapproval.

“If you felt the bite of the east wind in winter, Mrs. Blythe, you might not think so much of the view. It’s cool enough tonight. I should think you’d be afraid of catching cold in that thin dress. Not but what it’s a pretty one. You are young enough still to care for gauds and vanities. I have ceased to feel any interest in such transitory things.”

Anne felt fairly well satisfied with the interview as she went home through the dim green twilight.

“Of course one can’t count on Mrs. Churchill,” she told a flock of starlings who were holding a parliament in a little field scooped out of the woods, “but I think I worried her a little. I could see she didn’t like having people think Alden *could* be jilted. Well, I’ve done what in me lies with all concerned except Mr. Chase and I don’t see what I can do with him when I don’t even know him. I wonder if he has the slightest notion that Alden and Stella are sweethearting. Not likely. Stella would never dare take Alden to the house, of course. Now, what *am* I to do about Mr. Chase?”

It was really uncanny ... the way things helped her out. One evening Miss Cornelia came along and asked Anne to accompany her to the Chase home.

“I’m going down to ask Richard Chase for a contribution to the new church kitchen stove. Will you come with me, dearie, just as a moral support? I hate to tackle him alone.”

They found Mr. Chase standing on his front steps, looking, with his long legs and his long nose, rather like a meditative crane. He had a few shining strands of hair brushed over the top of his bald head and his little grey eyes twinkled at them. He happened to be thinking that if that was the doctor’s wife with old Cornelia she had a mighty good figure. As for Cousin Cornelia, twice removed, she was a bit too solidly built and had about as much intellect as a grasshopper, but she wasn’t a bad old cat at all if you always rubbed her the right way.

He invited them courteously into his small library, where Miss Cornelia settled into a chair with a little grunt.

“It’s dreadful hot tonight. I’m afraid we’ll have a thunderstorm. Mercy on us, Richard, that cat is bigger than ever!”

Richard Chase had a familiar in the shape of a yellow cat of abnormal size which now climbed up on his knee. He stroked it tenderly.

“Thomas the Rhymer gives the world assurance of a cat,” he said. “Don’t you, Thomas? Look at your Aunt Cornelia, Rhymer. Observe the baleful glances she is casting at you out of orbs created to express only kindness and affection.”

“Don’t you call me that beast’s Aunt Cornelia!” protested Mrs. Elliott sharply. “A joke is a joke but that is carrying things too far.”

“Wouldn’t you rather be the Rhymer’s aunt than Neddy Churchill’s aunt?” queried Richard Chase plaintively. “Neddy is a glutton and a wine-bibber, isn’t he? I’ve heard you giving a catalogue of his sins. Wouldn’t you rather be aunt to a fine upstanding cat like Thomas with a blameless record where whiskey and tabbies are concerned?”

“Poor Ned is a human being,” retorted Miss Cornelia. “I don’t like cats. That is the only fault I have to find with Alden Churchill. He has got the strangest liking for cats, too. Lord knows where he got it ... both his father and mother loathed them.”

“What a sensible young man he must be!”

“Sensible! Well, he’s sensible enough ... except in the matter of cats and his hankering after evolution ... another thing he didn’t inherit from his mother.”

“Do you know, Mrs. Elliott,” said Richard Chase solemnly, “I have a secret leaning towards evolution myself.”

“So you’ve told me before. Well, believe what you want to, Dick Chase ... just like a man. Thank God, nobody could ever make *me* believe that I descended from a monkey.”

“You don’t look it, I confess, you comely woman. I see no simian resemblances in your rosy, comfortable, eminently gracious physiognomy. Still, your great-grandmother a million times removed swung herself from

branch to branch by her tail. Science proves that, Cornelia ... take it or leave it."

"I'll leave it, then. I'm not going to argue with you on that or any point. I've got my own religion and no ape-ancestors figure in it. By the way, Richard, Stella doesn't look so well this summer as I'd like to see her."

"She always feels the hot weather a good deal. She'll pick up when it's cooler."

"I hope so. Lisette picked up every summer but the last, Richard ... don't forget that. Stella has her mother's constitution. It's just as well she isn't likely to marry."

"Why isn't she likely to marry? I ask from curiosity, Cornelia ... rank curiosity. The processes of feminine thought are intensely interesting to me. From what premises or data do you draw the conclusion, in your own delightful offhand way, that Stella is not likely to marry?"

"Well, Richard, to put it plainly, she isn't the kind of girl that is very popular with men. She's a good, sweet girl, but she doesn't take with men."

"She has had admirers. I have spent much of my substance in the purchase and maintenance of shotguns and bulldogs."

"They admired your moneybags, I fancy. They were easily discouraged, weren't they? Just one broadside of sarcasm from you and off they went. If they had really wanted Stella they wouldn't have wilted for that any more than for your imaginary bulldog. No, Richard, you might as well admit the fact that Stella isn't the girl to win desirable beaus. Lisette wasn't, you know. She never had a beau till you came along."

"But wasn't I worth waiting for? Surely Lisette was a wise young woman. You would not have me give my daughter to any Tom, Dick or Harry, would you? My star, who, in spite of your disparaging remarks, is fit to shine in the palaces of kings?"

"We have no kings in Canada," retorted Miss Cornelia. "I'm not saying Stella isn't a lovely girl. I'm only saying the men don't seem to see it and, considering her constitution, I think it is just as well. A good thing for you,

too. You could never get on without her ... you'd be as helpless as a baby. Well, promise us a contribution to the church stove range and we'll be off. I know you're dying to pick up that book of yours."

"Admirable, clear-sighted woman! What a treasure you are for a cousin-in-law! I admit it... . I *am* dying. But no other than yourself would have been perspicacious enough to see it or amiable enough to save my life by acting upon it. How much are you holding me up for?"

"You can afford five dollars."

"I never argue with a lady. Five dollars it is. Ah, going? She never loses time, this unique woman! Once her object is attained she straightway leaves you in peace. They don't hatch her breed of cats nowadays. Good-evening pearl of in-laws."

During the whole call Anne had not uttered one word. Why should she when Mrs. Elliott was doing her work for her so cleverly and unconsciously? But as Richard Chase bowed them out he suddenly bent forward confidentially.

"You've got the finest pair of ankles I've ever seen, Mrs. Blythe, and I've been about a bit in my time."

"Isn't he dreadful?" gasped Miss Cornelia as they went down the lane. "He's always saying outrageous things like that to women. You mustn't mind him, Anne dearie."

Anne didn't. She rather liked Richard Chase.

"I don't think," she reflected, "that he quite liked the idea of Stella not being popular with the men, in spite of the fact that their grandfathers were monkeys. I think he'd like to 'show folks,' too. Well I have done all I can do. I have interested Alden and Stella in each other; and, between us, Miss Cornelia and I have, I think, made Mrs. Churchill and Mr. Chase rather for the match than against it. Now I must just sit tight and see how it turns out."

A month later Stella Chase came to Ingleside and again sat down by Anne on the verandah steps ... thinking, as she did so, that she hoped she would look like Mrs. Blythe some day ... with that *ripened* look ... the look of a woman who has lived fully and graciously.

The cool smoky evening had followed a cool, yellowish-grey day in early September. It was threaded with the gentle moan of the sea.

"The sea is unhappy tonight," Walter would say when he heard that sound.

Stella seemed absentminded and quiet. Presently she said abruptly, looking up at a sorcery of stars that was being woven in the purple night, "Mrs. Blythe, I want to tell you something."

"Yes, dear?"

"I'm engaged to Alden Churchill," said Stella desperately. "We've been engaged ever since last Christmas. We told Father and Mrs. Churchill right away but we've kept it a secret from everyone else just because it was so sweet to have such a secret. We hated to share it with the world. But we are going to be married next month."

Anne gave an excellent imitation of a woman who had been turned to stone. Stella was still staring at the stars, so she did not see the expression on Mrs. Blythe's face. She went on, a little more easily:

"Alden and I met at a party in Lowbridge last November. We ... loved each other from the very first moment. He said he had always dreamed of me ... had always been looking for me. He said to himself, 'There is my wife,' when he saw me come in at the door. And I ... felt just the same. Oh, we are so happy, Mrs. Blythe!"

Still Anne said nothing, several times over.

"The only cloud on my happiness is your attitude about the matter, Mrs. Blythe. Won't you try to approve? You've been such a dear friend to me since I came to Glen St. Mary ... I've felt as if you were an older sister. And I'll feel so badly if I think my marriage is against your wish."

There was a sound of tears in Stella's voice. Anne recovered her powers of speech.

"Dearest, your happiness is all I've wanted. I like Alden ... he's a splendid fellow ... only he *had* the reputation of being a flirt ..."

"But he isn't. He was just looking for the right one, don't you see, Mrs. Blythe? And he couldn't find her."

"How does your father regard it?"

“Oh, Father is greatly pleased. He took to Alden from the start. They used to argue for hours about evolution. Father said he always meant to let me marry when the right man came along. I feel dreadfully about leaving him, but he says young birds have a right to their own nest. Cousin Delia Chase is coming to keep house for him and Father likes her very much.”

“And Alden’s mother?”

“She is quite willing, too. When Alden told her last Christmas that we were engaged she went to the Bible and the very first verse she turned up was, ‘A man shall leave father and mother and cleave unto his wife.’ She said it was perfectly clear then what she ought to do and she consented at once. She is going to go to that little house of hers in Lowbridge.”

“I am glad you won’t have to live with that green plush sofa,” said Anne.

“The sofa? Oh, yes, the furniture is very old-fashioned, isn’t it? But she is taking it with her and Alden is going to refurnish completely. So you see everyone is pleased, Mrs. Blythe, and won’t you give us your good wishes, too?”

Anne leaned forward and kissed Stella’s cool satin cheek.

“I am *very* glad for you. God bless the days that are coming for you, my dear.”

When Stella had gone Anne flew up to her own room to avoid seeing anyone for a few moments. A cynical, lopsided old moon was coming out from behind some shaggy clouds in the east and the fields beyond seemed to wink slyly and impishly at her.

She took stock of all the preceding weeks. She had ruined her dining-room carpet, destroyed two treasured heirlooms and spoiled her library ceiling; she had been trying to use Mrs. Churchill as a cat’s-paw and Mrs. Churchill must have been laughing in her sleeve all the time.

“Who,” asked Anne of the moon, “has been made the biggest fool of in this affair? I know what Gilbert’s opinion will be. All the trouble I’ve gone to, to bring about a marriage between two people who were already engaged? I’m cured of matchmaking then ... absolutely cured. Never will I lift a finger to promote a marriage if nobody in the world ever gets

married again. Well, there is one consolation ... Jen Pringle's letter today saying she is going to marry Lewis Stedman whom she met at my party. The Bristol candlesticks were not sacrificed entirely in vain. Boys ... boys! *Must* you make such unearthly noises down there?"

"We're owls ... we *have* to hoot," Jem's injured voice proclaimed from the dark shrubbery. He knew he was making a very good job of hooting. Jem could mimic the voice of any little wild thing out in the woods. Walter was not so good at it and he presently ceased being an owl and became a rather disillusioned little boy, creeping to Mother for comfort.

"Mummy, I thought crickets *sang* ... and Mr. Carter Flagg said today they don't ... they just make that noise scraping their hind-legs. *Do* they, Mummy?"

"Something like that ... I'm not quite sure of the process. But *that* is their way of singing, you know."

"I don't like it. I'll never like to hear them singing again."

"Oh, yes, you will. You'll forget about the hind-legs in time and just think of their fairy chorus all over the harvest meadows and the autumn hills. Isn't it bedtime, small son?"

"Mummy, will you tell me a bedtime story that will send a cold chill down my spine? And sit beside me afterwards till I go to sleep?"

"What else are mothers for, darling?"

Chapter XVIII

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“‘The time has come the Walrus said to talk of’ ... having a dog,” said Gilbert.

They had not had a dog at Ingleside since old Rex had been poisoned; but boys should have a dog and the doctor decided he would get them one. But he was so busy that fall that he kept putting it off; and finally one November day Jem arrived home from an afternoon spent with a school pal carrying a dog ... a little “yaller” dog with two black ears sticking cockily up.

“Joe Reese gave it to me, Mother. His name is Gyp. Hasn’t he got the cutest tail? I can keep him, can’t I, Mother?”

“What kind of a dog is he, darling?” asked Anne dubiously.

“I ... I think he’s a lot of kinds,” said Jem. “That makes him more int’resting, don’t you think, Mother? More exciting than if he was just one kind. *Please*, Mother.”

“Oh, if your father says yes ...”

Gilbert said “yes” and Jem entered into his heritage. Everybody at Ingleside welcomed Gyp into the family, except the Shrimp, who expressed his opinion without circumlocution. Even Susan took a liking to him and when she spun in the garret on rainy days Gyp, in his master’s absence at school, stayed with her, gloriously hunting imaginary rats in dark corners and uttering a yelp of terror whenever his eagerness brought him too close to the little spinning-wheel. It was never used ... the Morgans had left it there when they moved out ... and sat in its dark corner like a little bent old woman. Nobody could understand Gyp’s fear of it. He did not mind the big wheel at all but sat quite close to it while Susan sent it whirling around with her wheel-pin, and raced back and forward beside her as she paced the length of the garret, twirling the long thread of wool. Susan admitted that a dog could be real company and

thought his trick of lying on his back, waving his forepaws in the air, when he wanted a bone, the cleverest ever. She was as angry as Jem when Bertie Shakespeare sneeringly remarked, "Call that a dog?"

"We *do* call it a dog," said Susan with ominous calm. "Perhaps *you* would call it a hippopotamus." And Bertie had to go home that day without getting a piece of a wonderful concoction Susan called "apple crunch pie" and made regularly for the two boys and their pals. She was not around when Mac Reese asked, "Did the tide bring that in?" but Jem was able to stand up for his own dog and when Nat Flagg said that Gypsy's legs were too long for his size Jem retorted that a dog's legs had to be long enough to reach the ground. Natty was not overbright and that floored him.

November was stingy of its sunshine that year: raw winds blew through the bare, silver-branched maple grove and the Hollow was almost constantly filled with mist ... not a gracious, eerie thing like a fog but what Dad called "dank, dark, depressing, dripping, drizzly mist." The Ingleside fry had to spend most of their playtime in the garret, but they made delightful friends of two partridges that came every evening to a certain huge old apple tree, and five of their gorgeous jays were still faithful, clucking impishly as they ate the food the children put out for them. Only they were greedy and selfish and kept all the other birds away.

Winter set in with December and it snowed ceaselessly for three weeks. The fields beyond Ingleside were unbroken silver pastures, fence and gateposts wore tall white caps, windows whitened with fairy patterns and Ingleside lights bloomed out through the dim, snowy twilights, welcoming all wanderers home. It seemed to Susan that there had never been so many winter babies as there were that year; and when she left "the doctor's bite" in the pantry for him night after night she darkly opined that it would be a miracle if he toughed it out till spring.

"*The* ninth Drew baby! As if there weren't enough Drews in the world already!"

"I suppose Mrs. Drew will think it just the wonder we think Rilla, Susan."

"You *will* have your joke, Mrs. Dr. dear."

But in the library or the big kitchen the children planned out their summer playhouse in the Hollow while storms howled outside, or fluffy white clouds were blown over frosty stars. For blow it high or blow it low there was always at Ingleside glowing fires, comfort, shelter from storm, odours of good cheer, beds for tired little creatures.

Christmas came and went undarkened this year by any shadow of Aunt Mary Maria. There were rabbit trails in the snow to follow and great crusted fields over which you raced with your shadows and glistening hills for coasting and new skates to be tried out on the pond in the chill, rosy world of winter sunset. And always a yellow dog with black ears to run with you or meet you with ecstatic yelps of welcome when you came home, to sleep at the foot of your bed when you slept and lie at your feet while you learned your spellings, to sit close to you at meals and give you occasional reminding nudges with his little paw.

“Mother dearwums, I don’t know how I lived before Gyp came. He can talk, Mother ... he can really ... with his eyes, you know.”

Then ... tragedy! One day Gyp seemed a little dull. He would not eat though Susan tempted him with the spare-rib bone he loved; the next day the Lowbridge vet was sent for and shook his head. It was hard to say ... the dog might have found something poisonous in the woods ... he might recover and he might not. The little dog lay very quietly, taking no notice of anyone except Jem; almost to the last he tried to wag his tail when Jem touched him.

“Mother dearwums, would it be wrong to pray for Gyp?”

“Of course not, dear. We can pray always for anything we love. But I am afraid ... Gyppy is a very sick little dog.”

“Mother, you don’t think Gyppy is going to die!”

Gyp died the next morning. It was the first time death had entered into Jem’s world. No one of us ever forgets the experience of watching something we love die, even if it is “only a little dog.” Nobody at weeping Ingleside used that expression, not even Susan, who wiped a very red nose and muttered:

“I never took up with a dog before ... and I never will again. It hurts too much.”

Susan was not acquainted with Kipling’s poem on the folly of giving your heart to a dog to tear; but if she had been she would, in spite of her contempt for poetry, have thought that for once a poet had uttered sense.

Night was hard for poor Jem. Mother and Father had to be away. Walter had cried himself to sleep and he was alone ... with not even a dog to talk to. The dear brown eyes that had always been lifted to him so trustingly were glazed in death.

“Dear God,” prayed Jem, “please look after my little dog who died today. You’ll know him by the two black ears. Don’t let him be lonesome for me ...”

Jem buried his face in the bedspread to smother a sob. When he put out the light the dark night would be looking through the window at him and there would be no Gyp. The cold winter morning would come and there would be no Gyp. Day would follow day for years and years and there would be no Gyp. He just couldn’t bear it.

Then a tender arm was slipped around him and he was held close in a warm embrace. Oh, there was love left yet in the world, even if Gyppy had gone.

“Mother, will it always be like this?”

“Not always.” Anne did not tell him he would soon forget ... that before long Gyppy would only be a dear memory. “Not always, little Jem. This will heal sometime ... as your burned hand healed though it hurt so much at first.”

“Dad said he would get me another dog. I don’t have to have it, do I? I don’t want another dog, Mother ... not ever.”

“I know, darling.”

Mother knew everything. Nobody had a mother like his. He wanted to do something for her ... and all at once it came to him what he would do. He would get her one of those pearl necklaces in Mr. Flagg’s store. He had heard her say once that she really would like to have a pearl necklace and Dad had said, “When our ship comes in I’ll get you one, Anne-girl.”

Ways and means must be considered: He had an allowance but it was all needed for necessary things and pearl necklaces were not among the items budgeted for. Besides, he wanted to earn the money for it himself. It would be really his gift then. Mother's birthday was in March ... only six weeks away. And the necklace would cost fifty cents!

Chapter XIX

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It was not easy to earn money in the Glen but Jem went at it determinedly. He made tops out of old reels for the boys in school for two cents apiece. He sold three treasured milk teeth for three cents. He sold his slice of apple crunch pie every Saturday afternoon to Bertie Shakespeare Drew. Every night he put what he had earned into the little brass pig Nan had given him for Christmas. Such a nice shiny brass pig with a slit in his back wherein to drop coins. When you had put in fifty coppers the pig would open neatly of his own accord if you twisted his tail and yield you back your wealth. Finally to make up the last eight cents he sold his string of birds' eggs to Mac Reese. It was the finest string in the Glen and it hurt a little to let it go. But the birthday was drawing nearer and the money must be come by. Jem dropped the eight cents into the pig as soon as Mac had paid him and gloated over it.

"Twist his tail and see if he will really open up," said Mac, who didn't believe he would. But Jem refused; he was not going to open it until he was ready to go for the necklace.

The Missionary Auxiliary met at Ingleside the next afternoon and never forgot it. Right in the middle of Mrs. Norman Taylor's prayer ... and Mrs. Norman Taylor was credited with being very proud of her prayers ... a frantic small boy burst into the livingroom.

"My brass pig's gone, Mother... my brass pig's gone!"

Anne hustled him out but Mrs. Norman always considered that her prayer was spoiled and, as she had especially wanted to impress a visiting minister's wife, it was long years before she forgave Jem or would have his father as a doctor again. After the ladies had gone home Ingleside was ransacked from top to bottom for the pig, without result. Jem, between the scolding he had got for his behaviour and his anguish over his loss, could remember just when he had seen it last or where. Mac Reese, telephoned

to, responded that the last he had seen of the pig it was standing on Jem's bureau.

"You don't suppose, Susan, that Mac Reese ..."

"No, Mrs. Dr. dear, I feel quite sure he didn't. The Reeses have their faults ... terrible keen after the money they are, but it has to be honestly come by. *Where* can that blessed pig be?"

"Maybe the rats et it?" said Di. Jem scoffed at the idea but it worried him. Of course rats couldn't eat a brass pig with fifty coppers inside of him. But *could* they?

"No, no, dear. Your pig will turn up," assured Mother.

It hadn't turned up when Jem went to school the next day. News of his loss had reached school before him and many things were said to him, not exactly comforting. But at recess Sissy Flagg sidled up to him ingratiatingly. Sissy Flagg liked Jem and Jem did not like her, in spite of — or perhaps because of — her thick yellow curls and huge brown eyes. Even at eight one may have problems concerning the opposite sex.

"I can tell you who's got your pig."

"Who?"

"You've got to pick me for Clap-in and Clap-out and I'll tell you."

It was a bitter pill but Jem swallowed it. Anything to find that pig! He sat in an agony of blushes beside the triumphant Sissy while they clapped in and clapped out, and when the bell rang he demanded his reward.

"Alice Palmer says Willy Drew told her Bob Russell told him Fred Elliott said he knew where your pig was. Go and ask Fred."

"Cheat!" cried Jem, glaring at her. "*Cheat!*"

Sissy laughed arrogantly. *She* didn't care. Jem Blythe had had to sit with her for once anyhow.

Jem went to Fred Elliott, who at first declared he knew nothing about the old pig and didn't want to. Jem was in despair. Fred Elliott was three years older than he was and a noted bully. Suddenly he had an inspiration. He pointed a grimy forefinger sternly at big, red-faced Fred Elliott.

"You are a transubstantiationist," he said distinctly.

"Here, you, don't you call me names, young Blythe."

“That is more than a name,” said Jem. “That is a hoodoo word. If I say it again and point my finger at you ... so ... you may have bad luck for a week. Maybe your toes will drop off. I’ll count ten and if you haven’t told me before I get to ten I’ll hoodoo you.”

Fred didn’t believe it. But the skating race came off that night and he wasn’t taking chances. Besides, toes were toes. At six he surrendered.

“All right ... all right. Don’t bust your jaws saying that a second time. Mac knows where your pig is ... he said he did.”

Mac was not in school, but when Anne heard Jem’s story she telephoned his mother. Mrs. Reese came up a little later, flushed and apologetic.

“Mac didn’t take the pig, Mrs. Blythe. He just wanted to see if it would open, so when Jem was out of the room he twisted the tail. It fell apart in two pieces and he couldn’t get it together again. So he put the two halves of the pig and the money in one of Jem’s Sunday boots in the closet. He hadn’t ought to have touched it ... and his father has whaled the stuffing out of him ... but he didn’t *steal* it, Mrs. Blythe.”

“What was that word you said to Fred Elliott, Little Jem dear?” asked Susan, when the dismembered pig had been found and the money counted.

“Transubstantiationist,” said Jem proudly. “Walter found it in the dictionary last week ... you know he likes great big *full* words, Susan ... and ... and we both learned how to pronounce it. We said it over to each other twenty-one times in bed before we went to sleep so that we’d remember it.”

Now that the necklace was bought and stowed away in the third box from the top in the middle drawer of Susan’s bureau ... Susan having been privy to the plan all along ... Jem thought the birthday would never come. He gloated over his unconscious mother. Little *she* knew what was hidden in Susan’s bureau drawer ... little *she* knew what her birthday would bring her ... little *she* knew when she sang the twins to sleep with,

*“I saw a ship a-sailing, a-sailing on the sea,
And oh, it was all laden with pretty things for me,”*

what the ship would bring her.

Gilbert had an attack of influenza in early March which almost ran to pneumonia. There were a few anxious days at Ingleside. Anne went about as usual, smoothing out tangles, administering consolation, bending over moonlit beds to see if dear little bodies were warm; but the children missed her laughter.

“What will the world do if Father dies?” whispered Walter, white-lipped.

“He isn’t going to die, darling. He is out of danger now.”

Anne wondered herself what their small world of Four Winds and the Glens and the Harbour Head would do if ... if ... anything had happened to Gilbert. They were all coming to depend on him so. The Upper Glen people especially seemed really to believe that he could raise the dead and only refrained because it would be crossing the purposes of the Almighty. He *had* done it once, they averred ... old Uncle Archibald MacGregor had solemnly assured Susan that Samuel Hewett was dead as a doornail when Dr. Blythe brought him to. However that might be, when living people saw Gilbert’s lean brown face and friendly hazel eyes by their bedside and heard his cheery, “Why, there’s nothing the matter with *you*,” ... well, they believed it until it came true. As for namesakes, he had more than he could count. The whole Four Winds district was peppered with young Gilberts. There was even a tiny Gilbertine.

So Dad was about again and Mother was laughing again, and ... at last, it was the night before the birthday.

“If you go to bed early, Little Jem, tomorrow will come quicker,” assured Susan.

Jem tried it but it didn’t seem to work. Walter fell asleep promptly, but Jem squirmed about. He was afraid to go sleep. Suppose he didn’t waken in time and everybody else had given their presents to Mother? He wanted to be the very first. Why hadn’t he asked Susan to be sure and call him? She had gone out to make a visit somewhere but he would ask her when she came in. If he were sure of hearing her! Well, he’d just go down and lie on the livingroom sofa and then he couldn’t miss her.

Jem crept down and curled up on the chesterfield. He could see over the Glen. The moon was filling the hollows among the white, snowy dunes with magic. The great trees that were so mysterious at night held out their arms about Ingleside. He heard all the night sounds of a house ... a floor creaking ... someone turning in bed ... the crumble and fall of coals in the fireplace ... the scurrying of a little mouse in the china-closet. Was that an avalanche? No, only snow sliding off the roof. It was a little lonesome ... why didn't Susan come? ... if he only had Gyp now ... dear Gyppy. Had he forgotten Gyp? No, not forgotten exactly. But it didn't hurt so much now to think of him ... one *did* think of other things a good deal of the time. Sleep well, dearest of dogs. Perhaps sometime he *would* have another dog, after all. It would be nice if he had one right now ... or Shrimp. But the Shrimp wasn't round. Selfish old cat! Thinking of nothing but his own affairs!

No sign of Susan yet, coming along the long road that wound endlessly on through that strange white moonlit distance that was his own familiar Glen in daytime. Well, he would just have to imagine things to pass the time. Some day he would go to Baffin Land and live with Eskimos. Some day he would sail to far seas and cook a shark for Christmas dinner like Captain Jim. He would go on an expedition to the Congo in search of gorillas. He would be a diver and wander through radiant crystal halls under the sea. He would get Uncle Davy to teach him how to milk into the cat's mouth the next time he went up to Avonlea. Uncle Davy did that so expertly. Perhaps he would be a pirate. Susan wanted him to be a minister. The minister could do the most good but wouldn't a pirate have the most fun? Suppose the little wooden soldier hopped off the mantelpiece and shot off his gun! Suppose the chairs began walking about the room! Suppose the tiger rug came alive! Suppose the "quack beas" which he and Walter "pretended" all over the house when they were very young, really were about! Jem was suddenly frightened. In daytime he did not often forget the difference between romance and reality, but it was different in this endless night. Tick-tack went the clock ... tick-tack ... and for every tick there was a quack bear sitting on a step of the stairs. The stairs were

just *black* with quack bears. They would sit there till daylight ... *gibbering*.

Suppose God forgot to let the sun rise! The thought was so terrible that Jem buried his face in the afghan to shut it out, and there Susan found him sound asleep, when she came home in the fiery orange of a winter sunrise.

“Little Jem!”

Jem uncoiled himself and sat up, yawning. It had been a busy night for Silversmith Frost and the woods were fairyland. A far-off hill was touched with a crimson spear. All the white fields beyond the Glen were a lovely rose-colour. It was Mother’s birthday morning.

“I was waiting for you, Susan ... to tell you to call me ... and you never came ...”

“I went down to see the John Warrens, because their aunt had died, and they asked me to stay and sit up with the corpse,” explained Susan cheerfully. “I didn’t suppose you’d be trying to catch pneumonia, too, the minute my back was turned. Scamper off to your bed and I’ll call you when I hear your mother stirring.”

“Susan, how do you stab sharks?” Jem wanted to know before he went upstairs.

“I do not stab them,” answered Susan.

Mother was up when he went into her room, brushing her long shining hair before the glass. Her eyes when she saw the necklace!

“Jem darling! For me!”

“Now you won’t have to wait till Dad’s ship comes in,” said Jem with a fine nonchalance. What was that gleaming greenly on Mother’s hand? A ring ... Dad’s present. All very well, but rings were common things ... even Sissy Flagg had one. But a pearl necklace!

“A necklace is such a nice birthdayish thing,” said Mother.

Chapter XX

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When Gilbert and Anne went to dinner with friends in Charlottetown one evening in late March Anne put on a new dress of ice-green encrusted with silver around neck and arms; and she wore Gilbert's emerald ring and Jem's necklace.

"Haven't I got a handsome wife, Jem?" asked Dad proudly.

Jem thought Mother was very handsome and her dress very lovely. How pretty the pearls looked on her white throat! He always liked to see Mother dressed up, but he liked it still better when she took off a splendid dress. It had transformed her into an alien. She was not really Mother in it.

After supper Jem went to the village to do an errand for Susan and it was while he was waiting in Mr. Flagg's store ... rather afraid that Sissy might come in as she sometimes did and be entirely too friendly ... that the blow fell ... the shattering blow of disillusionment which is so terrible to a child because so unexpected and so seemingly inescapable.

Two girls were standing before the glass show case where Mr. Carter Flagg kept necklaces and chain bracelets and hair barettes.

"Aren't those pearl strings pretty?" said Abbie Russell.

"You'd almost think they were real," said Leona Reese.

They passed on then, quite unwitting of what they had done to the small boy sitting on the nail-keg. Jem continued to sit there for some time longer. He was incapable of movement.

"What's the matter, sonny?" inquired Mr. Flagg. "You seem kind of low in your mind."

Jem looked at Mr. Flagg with tragic eyes. His mouth was strangely dry.

"Please, Mr. Flagg ... are those ... those necklaces ... they *are* real pearls, aren't they?"

Mr. Flagg laughed.

“No, Jem. I’m afraid you can’t get real pearls for fifty cents, you know. A real pearl necklace like that would cost hundreds of dollars. They’re just pearl beads ... very good ones for the price, too. I got ‘em at a bankrupt sale ... that’s why I can sell ‘em so cheap. Ordin’rily they run to a dollar. Only one left ... they went like hot cakes.”

Jem slid off the keg and went out, totally forgetting what Susan had sent him for. He walked blindly up the frozen road home. Overhead was a hard dark wintry sky; there was what Susan called “a feel” of snow in the air, and a skim of ice over the puddles. The harbour lay black and sullen between its bare banks. Before Jem reached home a snow-squall was whitening over them. He wished it would snow ... and snow ... and snow ... till he was buried and everybody was buried fathoms deep. There was no justice anywhere in the world.

Jem was heartbroken. And let no one scoff at his heartbreak for scorn of its cause. His humiliation was utter and complete. He had given Mother what he and she had supposed was a pearl necklace ... and it was only an old imitation. What would she say ... what would she feel like ... when she knew? For of course she must be told. It never occurred to Jem to think for a moment that she need not be told. Mother must not be “fooled” any longer. She must know that her pearls weren’t real. Poor Mother! She had been so proud of them ... had he not seen the pride shining in her eyes when she had kissed him and thanked him for them?

Jem slipped in by the side door and went straight to bed, where Walter was already sound asleep. But Jem could not sleep; he was awake when Mother came home and slipped in to see that Walter and he were warm.

“Jem, dear, are you awake at this hour? You’re not sick?”

“No, but I’m very unhappy *here*, Mother dearwums,” said Jem, putting his hand on his stomach, fondly believing it to be his heart.

“What is the matter, dear?”

“I ... I ... there is something I must tell you, Mother. You’ll be awfully disappointed, Mother ... but I didn’t mean to deceive you, Mother ... truly I didn’t.”

“I’m sure you didn’t, dear. What is it? Don’t be afraid.”

“Oh, Mother dearwums, those pearls aren’t real pearls ... I thought they were ... I *did* think they were ... *did* ...”

Jem’s eyes were full of tears. He couldn’t go on.

If Anne wanted to smile there was no sign of it on her face. Shirley had bumped his head that day, Nan had sprained her ankle, Di had lost her voice with a cold. Anne had kissed and bandaged and soothed; but this was different ... this needed all the secret wisdom of mothers.

“Jem, I never thought you supposed they were real pearls. I knew they weren’t ... at least in one sense of real. In another, they are the most real things I’ve ever had given me. Because there was love and work and self-sacrifice in them ... and *that* makes them more precious to me than all the gems that divers have fished up from the sea for queens to wear. Darling, I wouldn’t exchange my pretty beads for the necklace I read of last night which some millionaire gave his bride and which cost half a million. So *that* shows you what your gift is worth to me, dearest of dear little sons. Do you feel better now?”

Jem was so happy he was ashamed of it. He was afraid it was babyish to be so happy. “Oh, life is *bearable* again,” he said cautiously.

The tears had vanished from his sparkling eyes. All was well. Mother’s arms were about him ... Mother *did* like her necklace ... nothing else mattered. Some day he would give her one that would cost no mere half but a whole million. Meanwhile, he was tired ... his bed was very warm and cosy ... Mother’s hands smelled like roses ... and he didn’t hate Leona Reese any more.

“Mother dearwums, you do look so sweet in that dress,” he said sleepily. “Sweet and pure ... pure as Epps’ cocoa.”

Anne smiled as she hugged him and thought of a ridiculous thing she had read in a medical journal that day, signed Dr. V. Z. Tomachowsky. “*You must never kiss your little son lest you set up a Jocasta complex.*” She had laughed over it at the time and been a little angry as well. Now she only felt pity for the writer of it. Poor, poor man! For of course V. Z. Tomachowsky was a man. No woman would ever write anything so silly and wicked.

Chapter XXI

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April came tiptoeing in beautifully that year with sunshine and soft winds for a few days; and then a driving northeast snowstorm dropped a white blanket over the world again. "Snow in April is abominable," said Anne. "Like a slap in the face when you expected a kiss." Ingleside was fringed with icicles and for two long weeks the days were raw and the nights hard-bitten. Then the snow grudgingly disappeared and when the news went round that the first robin had been seen in the Hollow Ingleside plucked up heart and ventured to believe that the miracle of spring was really going to happen again.

"Oh, Mummy, it *smells* like spring today," cried Nan, delightedly snuffing the fresh moist air. "Mummy, isn't spring an exciting time!"

Spring was trying out her paces that day ... like an adorable baby just learning to walk. The winter pattern of trees and fields was beginning to be overlaid with hints of green and Jem had again brought in the first mayflowers. But an enormously fat lady, sinking puffingly into one of the Ingleside easy-chairs, sighed and said sadly that the springs weren't so nice as they were when she was young.

"Don't you think perhaps the change is in us ... not in the springs, Mrs. Mitchell?" smiled Anne.

"Mebbe so. I know *I* am changed, all too well. I don't suppose to look at me now you'd think I was once the prettiest girl in these parts."

Anne reflected that she certainly wouldn't. The thin, stringy, mouse-coloured hair under Mrs. Mitchell's crape bonnet and long sweeping "widow's veil" was streaked with grey; her blue, expressionless eyes were faded and hollow; and to call her double chin chinned erred on the side of charity. But Mrs. Anthony Mitchell was feeling quite contented with herself just then for nobody in Four Winds had finer weeds. Her

voluminous black dress was crape to the knees. One wore mourning in those days with a vengeance.

Anne was spared the necessity of saying anything, for Mrs. Mitchell gave her no chance.

“My soft water system went dry this week ... there’s a leak in it ... so I kem down to the village this morning to get Raymond Russell to come and fix it. And thinks I to myself, ‘Now that I’m here I’ll just run up to Ingleside and ask Mrs. Dr. Blythe to write an obitchery for Anthony.’”

“An obituary?” said Anne blankly.

“Yes ... them things they put in the papers about dead people, you know,” explained Mrs. Anthony. “I want Anthony should have a real good one ... something out of the common. You write things, don’t you?”

“Occasionally I do write a little story,” admitted Anne. “But a busy mother hasn’t much time for that. I had wonderful dreams once but now I’m afraid I’ll never be in Who’s Who, Mrs. Mitchell. And I never wrote an obituary in my life.”

“Oh, they can’t be hard to write. Old Uncle Charlie Bates over our way writes most of them for the Lower Glen, but he ain’t a bit poetical and I’ve set my heart on a piece of poetry for Anthony. My, but he was always so fond of poetry. I was up to hear you give that talk on bandages to the Glen Institute last week and thinks I to myself, ‘Anyone who can talk as glib as that can likely write a real poetical obitchery.’ You will do it for me, won’t you, Mrs. Blythe? Anthony would have liked it. He always admired you. He said once that when you come into a room you made all the other women look ‘common and undistinguished.’ He sometimes talked real poetical but he meant well. I’ve been reading a lot of obitcheries ... I have a big scrapbook full of them ... but it didn’t seem to me he’d have liked any of them. He used to laugh at them so much. And it’s time it was done. He’s been dead two months. He died lingering but painless. Coming on spring’s an inconvenient time for anyone to die, Mrs. Blythe, but I’ve made the best of it. I s’pose Uncle Charlie will be hopping mad if I get anyone else to write Anthony’s obitchery but I don’t care. Uncle Charlie has a wonderful flow of language but him and Anthony never hit it off any

too well and the long and short of it is I'm *not* going to have him write Anthony's obituary. I've been Anthony's wife ... his faithful and loving wife for thirty-five years ... thirty-five years, Mrs. Blythe," ... as if she were afraid Anne might think of only thirty-four ... "and I'm going to have an obituary he'd like if it takes a leg. That was what my daughter Seraphine said to me — she's married at Lowbridge, you know ... nice name, Seraphine, isn't it? ... I got it off a gravestone. Anthony didn't like it ... he wanted to call her Judith after his mother. But I said it was too solemn a name and he gave in real kindly. He weren't no hand for arguing ... though he always called her Seraph ... where was I?"

"Your daughter was saying ..."

"Oh, yes, Seraphine said to me, 'Mother, whatever else you have or don't have, have a real nice obituary for Father.' Her and her father were always real thick, though he poked a bit of fun at her now and then, just as he did at me. Now, won't you, Mrs. Blythe?"

"I really don't know a great deal about your husband, Mrs. Mitchell."

"Oh, I can tell you all about him ... if you don't want to know the colour of his eyes. Do you know, Mrs. Blythe, when Seraphine and me was talking things over after the funeral I couldn't tell the colour of his eyes, after living with him thirty-five years. They was kind of soft and dreamy anyhow. He used to look so pleading with them when he was courting me. He had a real hard time to get me, Mrs. Blythe. He was mad about me for years. I was full of bounce then and meant to pick and choose. My life story would be real thrilling if you ever get short of material, Mrs. Blythe. Ah well, them days are gone. I had more beaus than you could shake a stick at. But they kept coming and going ... and Anthony just kept coming. He was kind of goodlooking, too ... such a nice lean man. I never could abide pudgy men ... and he was a cut or two above me ... I'd be the last one to deny that. 'It'll be a step up for a Plummer if you marry a Mitchell,' Ma said ... I was a Plummer, Mrs. Blythe ... John A. Plummer's daughter. And he paid me such nice romantic compliments, Mrs. Blythe. Once he told me I had the ethereal charm of moonlight. I knew it meant something nice though I don't know yet what 'ethereal'

means. I've always been meaning to look it up in the dictionary but I never get around to it. Well, anyway, in the end I passed my word of honour that I would be his bride. That is ... I mean ... I said I'd take him. My, but I wish you could have seen me in my wedding-dress, Mrs. Blythe. They all said I was a picture. Slim as a trout with hair yaller as gold, and such a complexion. Ah, time makes turrible changes in us. *You* haven't come to that yet, Mrs. Blythe. You're real pretty still ... and a highly eddicated woman into the bargain. Ah well, we can't all be clever ... some of us have to do the cooking. That dress you've got on is real handsome, Mrs. Blythe. You never wear black, I notice ... you're right ... you'll have to wear it soon enough. Put it off till you have to, I say. Well, where was I?"

"You were ... trying to tell me something about Mr. Mitchell."

"Oh, yes. Well, we were married. There was a big comet that night ... I remember seeing it as we drove home. It's a real pity you couldn't have seen that comet, Mrs. Blythe. It was simply pretty. I don't suppose you could work it into the obitchery, could you?"

"It ... might be rather difficult ..."

"Well," Mrs. Mitchell surrendered the comet with a sigh, "you'll have to do the best you can. He hadn't a very exciting life. He got drunk once ... he said he just wanted to see what it was like for once ... he was always of an inquiring turn of mind. But of course you couldn't put that in an obitchery. Nothing much else ever happened to him. Not to complain, but just to state facts he was a bit shiftless and easygoing. He would sit for an hour looking into a hollyhock. My, but he was fond of flowers ... hated to mow down the buttercups. No matter if the wheat crop failed as long as there was farewell-summers and goldenrod. And trees ... that orchard of his ... I always told him, joking like, that he cared more for his trees than for me. And his farm ... my, but he loved his bit of land. He seemed to think it was a human being. Many's the time I've heard him say, 'I think I'll go out and have a little talk to my farm.' When we got old I wanted him to sell, seeing as we had no boys, and retire to Lowbridge, but he would say, 'I can't sell my farm ... I can't sell my heart.' Ain't men funny? Not long before he died he took a notion to have a boiled hen for

dinner, 'cooked in that way you have,' says he. He was always partial to my cooking, if I do say it. The only thing he couldn't abide was my lettuce salad with nuts in it. He said the nuts was so durned unexpected. But there wasn't a hen to spare ... they was all laying good ... and there was only one rooster left and of course I couldn't kill him. My, but I like to see the roosters strutting round. Ain't anything much handsomer than a fine rooster, do you think, Mrs. Blythe? Well, where was I?"

"You were saying your husband wanted you to cook a hen for him."

"Oh, yes. And I've been so sorry ever since I didn't. I wake up in the night and think of it. But I didn't know he was going to die, Mrs. Blythe. He never complained much and always said he was better. And interested in things to the last. If I'd a-known he was going to die, Mrs. Blythe, I'd have cooked a hen for him, eggs or no eggs."

Mrs. Mitchell removed her rusty black lace mitts and wiped her eyes with a handkerchief, black-bordered a full two inches.

"He'd have enjoyed it," she sobbed. "He had his own teeth to the last, poor dear. Well, anyway" ... folding the handkerchief and putting on the mitts, "he was sixty-five, so he weren't far from the allotted span. And I've got another coffin-plate. Mary Martha Plummer and me started collecting coffin-plates at the same time but she soon got ahead of me ... so many of her relation died, not to speak of her three children. She's got more coffin-plates than anyone in these parts. I didn't seem to have much luck but I've got a full mantelpiece at last. My cousin, Thomas Bates, was buried last week and I wanted his wife to give me the coffin-plate, but she had it buried with him. Said collecting coffin-plates was a relic of barbarism. She was a Hampson and the Hampsons were always odd. Well, where was I?"

Anne really could not tell Mrs. Mitchell where she was this time. The coffin-plates had dazed her.

"Oh, well, anyway poor Anthony died. 'I go gladly and in quietness,' was all that he said but he smiled just at the last ... at the ceiling, not at me nor Seraphine. I'm so glad he was so happy just afore he died. There were times I used to think perhaps he wasn't quite happy, Mrs. Blythe ...

he was so terrible highstrung and sensitive. But he looked real noble and sublime in his coffin. We had a grand funeral. It was just a lovely day. He was buried with loads of flowers. I took a sinking spell at the last but otherwise everything went off very well. We buried him in the Lower Glen graveyard though all his family were buried in Lowbridge. But he picked out his graveyard long ago ... said he wanted to be buried near his farm and where he could hear the sea and the wind in the trees ... there's trees around three sides of that graveyard, you know. I was glad, too ... I always thought it was such a cosy little graveyard and we can keep geraniums growing on his grave. He was a good man ... he's likely in Heaven now, so that needn't trouble you. I always think it must be some chore to write an obichery when you *don't* know where the departed is. I can depend on you, then, Mrs. Blythe?"

Anne consented, feeling that Mrs. Mitchell would stay there and talk until she did consent. Mrs. Mitchell, with another sigh of relief, heaved herself out of her chair.

"I must be stepping. I'm expecting a hatching of turkey poults today. I've enjoyed my conversation with you and I wish I could have stayed longer. It's lonesome being a widow woman. A man mayn't amount to an awful lot but you sort of miss him when he goes."

Anne politely saw her down the walk. The children were stalking robins on the lawn and daffodil tips were poking up everywhere.

"You've got a nice proud house here ... a real nice proud house, Mrs. Blythe. I've always felt I'd like a big house. But with only us and Seraphine ... and where was the money to come from? ... and, anyway, Anthony'd never hear of it. He had an awful affection for that old house. I'm meaning to sell if I get a fair offer and live either in Lowbridge or Mowbray Narrows, whichever I decide would be the best place to be a widow in. Anthony's insurance will come in handy. Say what you like it's easier to bear a full sorrow than an empty one. You'll find that out when you're a widow yourself ... though I hope that'll be a good few years yet. How is the doctor getting on? It's been a real sickly winter so he ought to have done pretty well. My, what a nice little family you've got! Three

girls! Nice now, but wait you till they come to the boy-crazy age. Not that I'd much trouble with Seraphine. She was quiet ... like her father ... and stubborn like him. When she fell in love with John Whitaker, have him she would in spite of all I could say. A rowan tree? Whyn't you have it planted by the front door? It would keep the fairies out."

"But who would want to keep the fairies out, Mrs. Mitchell?"

"Now you're talking like Anthony. I was only joking. O' course I don't believe in fairies ... but if they did happen to exist I've heard they were pesky mischievous. Well, goodbye, Mrs. Blythe. I'll call round next week for the obitchery."

Chapter XXII

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“You’ve let yourself in for it, Mrs. Dr. dear,” said Susan, who had overheard most of the conversation as she polished her silver in the pantry.

“Haven’t I? But, Susan, I really do want to write that ‘obituary.’ I liked Anthony Mitchell ... what little I’ve seen of him ... and I feel sure that he’d turn over in his grave if his obituary was like the run of the mill in the *Daily Enterprise*. Anthony had an inconvenient sense of humour.”

“Anthony Mitchell was a real nice fellow when he was young, Mrs. Dr. dear. Though a bit dreamy they said. He didn’t hustle enough to suit Bessy Plummer, but he made a decent living and paid his debts. Of course he married the last girl he should have. But although Bessy Plummer looks like a comic valentine now she was pretty as a picture then. Some of us, Mrs. Dr. dear,” concluded Susan with a sigh, “haven’t even that much to remember.”

“Mummy,” said Walter, “the snack-dragons are coming up thick all around the back porch. And a pair of robins are beginning to build a nest on the pantry windowsill. You’ll let them, won’t you, Mummy? You won’t open the window and scare them away?”

Anne had met Anthony Mitchell once or twice, though the little grey house between the spruce woods and the sea, with the great big willow tree over it like a huge umbrella, where he lived, was in the Lower Glen and the doctor from Mowbray Narrows attended most of the people there. But Gilbert had bought hay from him now and then and once when he had brought a load Anne had taken him all over her garden and they had found out that they talked the same language. She had liked him ... his lean, lined, friendly face, his brave, shrewd, yellowish-hazel eyes that had never faltered or been hoodwinked ... save once, perhaps, when Bessy Plummer’s shallow and fleeting beauty had tricked him into a foolish marriage. Yet he never seemed unhappy or unsatisfied. As long as he could

plough and garden and reap he was as contented as a sunny old pasture. His black hair was but lightly frosted with silver and a ripe, serene spirit revealed itself in his rare but sweet smiles. His old fields had given him bread and delight, joy of conquest and comfort in sorrow. Anne was satisfied because he was buried near them. He might have “gone gladly” but he had lived gladly, too. The Mowbray Narrows doctor had said that when he told Anthony Mitchell he could hold out to him no hope of recovery Anthony had smiled and replied, “Well, life is a trifle monotonous at times now I’m getting old. Death will be something of a change. I’m real curious about it, doctor.” Even Mrs. Anthony, among all her rambling absurdities, had dropped a few things that revealed the real Anthony. Anne wrote “The Old Man’s Grave” a few evenings later by her room window and read it over with a sense of satisfaction.

*“Make it where the winds may sweep
Through the pine boughs soft and deep,
And the murmur of the sea
Come across the orient lea,
And the falling raindrops sing
Gently to his slumbering.*

*“Make it where the meadows wide
Greenly lie on every side,
Harvest fields he reaped and trod,
Westering slopes of clover sod,
Orchard lands where bloom and blow
Trees he planted long ago.*

*“Make it where the starshine dim
May be always close to him,
And the sunrise glory spread
Lavishly around his bed,
And the dewy grasses creep
Tenderly above his sleep.*

“Since these things to him were dear

*Through full many a well-spent year,
It is surely meet their grace
Should be on his resting place,
And the murmur of the sea
Be his dirge eternally."*

"I think Anthony Mitchell would have liked that," said Anne, flinging her window open to lean out to the spring. Already there were crooked little rows of young lettuce in the children's garden; the sunset was soft and pink behind the maple grove; the Hollow rang with the faint, sweet laughter of children.

"Spring is so lovely I hate to go to sleep and miss any of it," said Anne.

Mrs. Anthony Mitchell came up to get her "obitchery" one afternoon the next week. Anne read it to her with a secret bit of pride; but Mrs. Anthony's face did not express unmixed satisfaction.

"My, I call that real sprightly. You do put things so well. But ... but ... you didn't say a word about him being in heaven. Weren't you *sure* he is there?"

"So sure that it wasn't necessary to mention it, Mrs. Mitchell."

"Well, *some* people might doubt. He ... he didn't go to church as often as he might ... though he was a member in good standing. And it doesn't tell his age ... nor mention the flowers. Why, you just couldn't count the wreaths on the coffin. Flowers are poetical enough, I should think!"

"I'm sorry ..."

"Oh, I don't blame you ... not a mite do I blame you. You've done your best and it sounds beautiful. What do I owe you?"

"Why ... why ... *nothing*, Mrs. Mitchell. I couldn't think of such a thing."

"Well, I thought likely you'd say that, so I brung you up a bottle of my dandelion wine. It sweetens the stomach if you're ever bothered with gas. I'd have brung a bottle of my yarb tea, too, only I was afraid the doctor

mightn't approve. But if you'd like some and think you can smuggle it in unbeknownst to him you've only to say the word."

"No, no, thank you," said Anne rather flatly. She had not yet quite recovered from "sprightly."

"Just as you like. You'd be welcome to it. I'll not be needing any more medicine myself this spring. When my second cousin, Malachi Plummer, died in the winter I asked his widow to give me the three bottles of medicine there was left over ... they got it by the dozen. She was going to throw them out but I was always one that could never bear to waste anything. I couldn't take more than one bottle myself but I made our hired man take the other two. 'If it doesn't do you any good it won't do you any harm,' I told him. I won't say I'm not rather relieved you didn't want any cash for the obituary for I'm rather short of ready money just now. A funeral is so expensive though D. B. Martin is about the cheapest undertaker in these parts. I haven't even got my black paid for yet. I won't feel I'm really in mourning till it is. Luckily I hadn't to get a new bunnit. This was the bunnit I had made for Mother's funeral ten years ago. It's kind of fortunate black becomes me, ain't it? If you'd see Malachi Plummer's widow now, with her sailer face! Well, I must be stepping. And I'm much obliged to you, Mrs. Blythe, even if ... but I feel sure you did your best and it's lovely poetry."

"Won't you stay and have supper with us?" asked Anne. "Susan and I are all alone ... the doctor is away and the children are having their first picnic supper in the Hollow."

"I don't mind," said Mrs. Anthony, slipping willingly back into her chair. "I'll be glad to set a spell longer. Somehow it takes so long to get rested when you get old. And," she added, with a smile of dreamy beatitude on her pink face, "didn't I smell fried parsnips?"

Anne almost grudged the fried parsnips when the *Daily Enterprise* came out the next week. There, in the obituary column, was "The Old Man's Grave" ... with five verses instead of the original four! And the fifth verse was:

*“A wonderful husband, companion and aid,
One who was better the Lord never made,
A wonderful husband, tender and true,
One in a million, dear Anthony, was you.”*

“! ! !” said Ingleside.

“I hope you didn’t mind me tacking on another verse,” said Mrs. Mitchell to Anne at the next Institute meeting. “I just wanted to praise Anthony a little more ... and my nephew, Johnny Plummer, writ it. He just sot down and scribbled it off quick as a wink. He’s like you ... he doesn’t look clever but he can poetize. He got it through his mother ... she was a Wickford. The Plummers haven’t a speck of poetry in them ... not a speck.”

“What a pity you didn’t think of getting him to write Mr. Mitchell’s ‘obitchery’ in the first place,” said Anne coldly.

“Yes, isn’t it? But I didn’t know he could write poetry and I’d set my heart on it for Anthony’s send-off. Then his mother showed me a poem he’d writ on a squirrel drowned in a pail of maple syrup ... a really touching thing. But yours was real nice, too, Mrs. Blythe. I think the two combined together made something out of the common, don’t you?”

“I do,” said Anne.

Chapter XXIII

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The Ingleside children were having bad luck with pets. The wriggly curly little black pup Dad brought home from Charlottetown one day just walked out the next week and disappeared into the blue. Nothing was ever seen or heard of him again, and though there were whispers of a sailor from the Harbour Head having been seen taking a small black pup on board his ship the night she sailed, his fate remained one of the deep and dark unsolved mysteries of the Ingleside chronicles. Walter took it harder than Jem, who had not yet quite forgotten his anguish over Gyp's death and was not ever again going to let himself love a dog not wisely but too well. Then Tiger Tom, who lived in the barn and was never allowed in the house because of his thievish propensities but got a good deal of petting for all that, was found stark and stiff on the barn floor and had to be buried with pomp and circumstance in the Hollow. Finally Jem's rabbit, Bun, which he had bought from Joe Russell for a quarter, sickened and died. Perhaps its death was hastened by a dose of patent medicine Jem gave him, perhaps not. Joe had advised it and Joe ought to know. But Jem felt as if he had murdered Bun.

"Is there a curse on Ingleside?" he demanded gloomily, when Bun had been laid to rest beside Tiger Tom. Walter wrote an epitaph for him and he and Jem and the twins wore black ribbons tied round their arms for a week, to the horror of Susan who deemed it sacrilege. Susan was not inconsolable for the loss of Bun, who had got out once and worked havoc in her garden. Still less did she approve of two toads Walter brought in and put in the cellar. She put one of them out when evening came but could not find the other and Walter lay awake and worried.

"Maybe they were husband and wife," he thought. "Maybe they're awful lonely and unhappy now they're separated. It was the little one Susan put out, so I guess she was the lady toad and maybe she's frightened

to death all alone in that big yard without anyone to protect her ... just like a widow.”

Walter couldn't endure thinking about the widow's woes, so he slipped down to the cellar to hunt for the gentleman toad, but only succeeded in knocking down a pile of Susan's discarded tinware with a resulting racket that might have wakened the dead. It woke only Susan, however, who came marching down with a candle, the fluttering flame of which cast the weirdest shadows on her gaunt face.

“Walter Blythe, whatever are you doing?”

“Susan, I've got to find that toad,” said Walter desperately. “Susan, just think how you would feel without your husband, if you had one.”

“What on earth are you talking about?” demanded the justifiably mystified Susan.

At this point the gentleman toad, who had evidently given himself up for lost when Susan appeared on the scene, hopped out into the open from behind Susan's cask of dill pickles. Walter pounced on him and slipped him out through the window, where it is to be hoped he rejoined his supposed love and lived happily ever afterwards.

“You know you shouldn't have brought those creatures into the cellar,” said Susan sternly. “What would they live on?”

“Of course I meant to catch insects for them,” said Walter, aggrieved. “I wanted to *study* them.”

“There is simply no being up to them,” moaned Susan, as she followed an indignant young Blythe up the stairs. And did not mean the toads.

They had better luck with their robin. They had found him, little more than a baby, on the doorstep after a June night storm of wind and rain. He had a grey back and a mottled breast and bright eyes, and from the first he seemed to have complete confidence in all the Ingleside people, not even excepting the Shrimp, who never attempted to molest him, not even when Cock Robin hopped saucily up to his plate and helped himself. They fed him on worms at first and he had such an appetite that Shirley spent most of his time digging them. He stored the worms in cans and left them around the house, much to Susan's disgust, but she would have endured

more than that for Cock Robin, who lighted so fearlessly on her work-worn finger and chirruped in her very face. Susan had taken a great fancy to Cock Robin and thought it worth mentioning in a letter to Rebecca Dew that his breast was beginning to change to a beautiful rusty red.

“Do not think that my intellect is weakening I beg of you, Miss Dew dear,” she wrote. “I suppose it is very silly to be so fond of a bird but the human heart has its weaknesses. He is not imprisoned like a canary ... something I could never abide, Miss Dew dear ... but ranges at will through house and garden and sleeps on a bow by Walter’s study platform up in the apple tree looking into Rilla’s window. Once when they took him to the Hollow he flew away but returned at eventide to their great joy and I must in all candor add to my own.”

The Hollow was “the Hollow” no longer. Walter had begun to feel that such a delightful spot deserved a name more in keeping with its romantic possibilities. One rainy afternoon they had to play in the garret but the sun broke out in the early evening and flooded the Glen with splendor. “Oh, look at the nithe wainbow!” cried Rilla, who always talked with a charming little lisp.

It was the most magnificent rainbow they had ever seen. One end seemed to rest on the very spire of the Presbyterian church while the other dropped down into the reedy corner of the pond that ran into the upper end of the valley. And Walter then and there named it Rainbow Valley.

Rainbow Valley had become a world in itself to the children of Ingleside. Little winds played there ceaselessly and bird-songs reechoed from dawn to dark. White birches glimmered all over it and from one of them ... the White Lady ... Walter pretended that a little dryad came out every night to talk to them. A maple tree and a spruce tree, growing so closely together that their boughs intertwined, he named “The Tree Lovers” and an old string of sleighbells he had hung upon them made chimes elfin and aerial when the wind shook them. A dragon guarded the stone bridge they had built across the brook. The trees that met over it could be swart Paynims at need and the rich green mosses along the banks were carpets, none finer, from Samarkand. Robin Hood and his merry men

lurked on all sides; three water sprites dwelt in the spring; the deserted old Barclay house at the Glen end, with its grass-grown dyke and its garden overgrown with caraway, was easily transformed into a beleaguered castle. The Crusader's sword had long been rust but the Ingleside butcher-knife was a blade forged in fairyland and whenever Susan missed the cover of her roasting pan she knew that it was serving as a shield for a plumed and glittering knight on high adventure bent in Rainbow Valley.

Sometimes they played pirates, to please Jem, who at ten years was beginning to like a tang of gore in his amusements, but Walter always balked at walking the plank, which Jem thought the best of the performance. Sometimes he wondered if Walter really was enough of a stalwart to be a buccaneer, though he smothered the thought loyally and had more than one pitched and successful battle with boys in school who called Walter "Sissy Blythe" ... or had called him that until they found out it meant a set-to with Jem who had a most disconcerting knack with his fists.

Jem was sometimes allowed now to go down to the Harbour Mouth of an evening to buy fish. It was an errand he delighted in, for it meant that he could sit in Captain Malachi Russell's cabin at the foot of a bent-covered field close to the harbour, and listen to Captain Malachi and his cronies, who had once been daredevil young sea captains, spinning yarns. Every one of them had something to tell when tales were going round. Old Oliver Reese ... who was actually suspected of being a pirate in his youth ... had been taken captive by a cannibal king ... Sam Elliott had been through the San Francisco earthquake ... "Bold William" Macdougall had had a lurid fight with a shark ... Andy Baker had been caught in a waterspout. Moreover, Andy could spit straighter, as he averred, than any man in Four Winds. Hook-nosed, lean-jawed Captain Malachi, with his bristly grey moustache, was Jem's favourite. He had been captain of a brigantine when he was only seventeen, sailing to Buenos Aires with cargoes of lumber. He had an anchor tattooed on each cheek and he had a wonderful old watch you wound with a key. When he was in good humour he let Jem wind it and when he was in very good humour he would take

Jem out codfishing or digging clams at low tide, and when he was in his best humour he would show Jem the many ship models he had carved. Jem thought they were romance itself. Among them was a Viking boat, with a striped square sail and a fearsome dragon in front ... a caravel of Columbus ... the *Mayflower* ... a rakish craft called *The Flying Dutchman* ... and no end of beautiful brigantines and schooners and barques and clipper-ships and timber droghers.

“Will you teach me how to carve ships like that, Captain Malachi?” pleaded Jem.

Captain Malachi shook his head and spat reflectively into the gulf.

“It doesn’t come by teaching, son. Ye’d have to sail the seas for thirty or forty years and then maybe ye’d have enough understanding of ships to do it ... understanding *and* love. Ships are like weemen, son ... they’ve got to be understood and loved or they’ll never give up their secrets. And even at that ye may think ye know a ship from stem to stern, inside *and* out, and ye’ll find she’s still hanging out on ye and keeping her soul shut on you. She’d fly from you like a bird if ye let go your grip on her. There’s one ship I sailed on that I’ve never been able to whittle a model of, times out of mind as I’ve tried. A dour, stubborn vessel she was! And there was one woman ... but it’s time I took in the slack of my jaw. I’ve got a ship all ready to go into a bottle and I’ll let ye into the secret of that, son.”

So Jem never heard anything more of the “woman” and didn’t care, for he was not interested in the sex, apart from Mother and Susan. *They* were not “weemen.” They were just Mother and Susan.

When Gyp had died Jem had felt he never wanted another dog; but time heals amazingly and Jem was beginning to feel doggish again. The puppy wasn’t really a dog ... he was only an incident. Jem had a procession of dogs marching around the walls of his attic den where he kept Captain Jim’s collection of curios ... dogs clipped from magazines ... a lordly mastiff ... a nice jowly bulldog ... a dachshund that looked as if somebody had taken a dog by his head and heels and pulled him out like elastic ... a shaven poodle with a tassel on the end of his tail ... a fox-terrier ... a Russian wolfhound ... Jem wondered if Russian wolfhounds

ever got anything to eat ... a saucy Pom ... a spotted Dalmatian ... a spaniel with appealing eyes. All dogs of high degree but all lacking something in Jem's eyes ... he didn't just know what.

Then the advertisement came out in the *Daily Enterprise*. "For sale, a dog. Apply Roddy Crawford, Harbour Head." Nothing more. Jem could not have told why the advertisement stuck in his mind or why he felt there was a sadness in its very brevity. He found out from Craig Russell who Roddy Crawford was.

"Roddy's father died a month ago and he has to go to live with his aunt in town. His mother died years ago. And Jake Millison has bought the farm. But the house is going to be torn down. Maybe his aunt won't let him keep his dog. It's no great shakes of a dog but Roddy has always had an awful notion of it."

"I wonder how much he wants for it. I've only got a dollar," said Jem.

"I guess what he wants most is a good home for it," said Craig. "But your dad would give you the money for it, wouldn't he?"

"Yes. But I want to buy a dog with my own money," said Jem. "It would feel more like *my* dog then."

Craig shrugged. Those Ingleside kids *were* funny. What did it matter who put up the cash for an old dog?

That evening Dad drove Jem down to the old, thin, rundown Crawford farm, where they found Roddy Crawford and his dog. Roddy was a boy of about Jem's age ... a pale lad, with straight, reddish-brown hair and a crop of freckles; his dog had silky brown ears, a brown nose and tail and the most beautiful soft brown eyes ever seen in a dog's head. The moment Jem saw that darling dog, with the white stripe down his forehead that parted in two between his eyes and framed his nose, he knew he must have him.

"You want to sell your dog?" he asked eagerly.

"I *don't* want to sell him," said Roddy dully. "But Jake says I'll have to or he'll drown him. He says Aunt Vinnie won't have a dog about."

"What do you want for him?" asked Jem, scared that some prohibitive price would be named.

Roddy gave a great gulp. He held out his dog.

“Here, take him,” he said hoarsely. “I ain’t going to sell him ... I ain’t. Money would never pay for Bruno. If you’ll give him a good home ... and be kind to him ...”

“Oh, I’ll be kind to him,” said Jem eagerly. “But you must take my dollar. I wouldn’t feel he was *my* dog if you didn’t. I won’t *take* him if you don’t.”

He forced the dollar into Roddy’s reluctant hand ... he took Bruno and held him close to his breast. The little dog looked back at his master. Jem could not see his eyes but he could see Roddy’s.

“If you want him so much ...”

“I want him but I can’t have him,” snapped Roddy. “There’s been five people here after him and I wouldn’t let one of them have him ... Jake was awful mad but I don’t care. They weren’t *right*. But you ... I want *you* to have him since *I* can’t ... and take him out of my sight quick!”

Jem obeyed. The little dog was trembling in his arms but he made no protest. Jem held him lovingly all the way back to Ingleside.

“Dad, how did Adam know that a dog was a *dog*?”

“Because a dog couldn’t be anything but a dog,” grinned Dad. “Could he now?”

Jem was too excited to sleep for ever so long that night. He had never seen a dog he liked so much as Bruno. No wonder Roddy hated parting with him. But Bruno would soon forget Roddy and love *him*. They would be pals. He must remember to ask Mother to make sure the butcher sent up the bones.

“I love everybody and everything in the world,” said Jem. “Dear God, bless every cat and dog in the world but specially Bruno.”

Jem fell asleep at last. Perhaps a little dog lying at the foot of the bed with his chin upon his outstretched paws slept, too: and perhaps he did not.

Chapter XXIV

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Cock Robin had ceased to subsist solely on worms and ate rice, corn, lettuce and nasturtium seeds. He had grown to be a huge size ... the “big robin” at Ingleside was becoming locally famous ... and his breast had turned to a beautiful red. He would perch on Susan’s shoulder and watch her knit. He would fly to meet Anne when she returned after an absence and hop before her into the house: he came to Walter’s windowsill every morning for crumbs. He took his daily bath in a basin in the back yard, in the corner of the sweetbriar hedge, and would raise the most unholy fuss if he found no water in it. The doctor complained that his pens and matches were always strewn all over the library, but found nobody to sympathize with him, and even he surrendered when Cock Robin lit fearlessly on his hand one day to pick up a flower seed. Everybody was bewitched by Cock Robin ... except perhaps Jem, who had set his heart on Bruno and was slowly but all too surely learning a bitter lesson ... that you can buy a dog’s body but you cannot buy his love.

At first Jem never suspected this. Of course Bruno would be a bit homesick and lonesome for a time, but that would soon wear off. Jem found it did not. Bruno was the most obedient little dog in the world; he did exactly what he was told and even Susan admitted that a better-behaved animal couldn’t be found. But there was no life in him. When Jem took him out Bruno’s eyes would gleam alertly at first, his tail would wag and he would start off cockily. But after a little while the glow would leave his eyes and he would trot meekly beside Jem with drooping crest. Kindness was showered upon him by all ... the juiciest and meatiest of bones were at his disposal ... not the slightest objection was made to his sleeping at the foot of Jem’s bed every night. But Bruno remained remote ... inaccessible ... a stranger. Sometimes in the night Jem woke and reached down to pat the sturdy little body; but there was never any

answering lick of tongue or thump of tail. Bruno permitted caresses but he would not respond to them.

Jem set his teeth. There was a good bit of determination in James Matthew Blythe and he was not going to be beaten by a dog ... *His* dog whom he had bought fairly and squarely with money hardly saved from his allowance. Bruno would just *have* to get over being homesick for Roddy ... *have* to give up looking at you with the pathetic eyes of a lost creature ... *have* to learn to love him.

Jem had to stand up for Bruno, for the other boys in school, suspecting how he loved the dog, were always trying to “pick on” him.

“Your dog has fleas ... Great Big fleas,” taunted Perry Reese. Jem had to trounce him before Perry would take it back and say Bruno hadn’t a single flea ... not one.

“My pup takes fits once a week,” boasted Rob Russell. “I’ll bet your old pup never had a fit in his life. If I had a dog like that I’d run him through the meat-grinder.”

“We *had* a dog like that once,” said Mike Drew, “but we drowned him.”

“My dog’s an *awful* dog,” said Sam Warren proudly. “He kills the chickens and chews up all the clothes on wash-day. Bet your old dog hasn’t spunk enough for that.”

Jem sorrowfully admitted to himself, if not to Sam, that Bruno hadn’t. He almost wished he had. And it stung when Watty Flagg shouted, “Your dog’s a *good* dog ... he never barks on Sunday,” because Bruno didn’t bark any day.

But with it all he was such a dear, adorable little dog.

“Bruno, *why* won’t you love me?” almost sobbed Jem. “There’s nothing I wouldn’t do for you ... we could have *such* fun together.” But he would not admit defeat to anyone.

Jem hurried home one evening from a mussel-bake at the Harbour Mouth because he knew a storm was coming. The sea moaned so. Things had a sinister, lonely look. There was a long rip and tear of thunder as Jem dashed into Ingleside.

“Where’s Bruno?” he shouted.

It was the first time he had gone anywhere without Bruno. He had thought the long walk to the Harbour Mouth would be too much for a little dog. Jem would not admit to himself that such a long walk with a dog whose heart was not in it would be a little too much for him as well.

It developed that nobody knew where Bruno was. He had not been seen since Jem left after supper. Jem hunted everywhere but he was not to be found. The rain was coming down in floods, the world was drowned in lightning. Was Bruno out in that black night ... *lost*? Bruno was afraid of thunderstorms. The only times he had ever seemed to come near Jem in spirit was when he crept close to him while the sky was riven asunder.

Jem worried so that when the storm was spent Gilbert said:

“I ought to go up to the Head anyway to see how Roy Westcott is getting on. You can come, too, Jem, and we’ll drive round by the old Crawford place on our way home. I’ve an idea Bruno has gone back there.”

“Six miles? He’d never!” said Jem.

But he had. When they got to the old, deserted, lightless Crawford house a shivering bedraggled little creature was huddled forlornly on the wet doorstep, looking at them with tired, unsatisfied eyes. He made no objection when Jem gathered him up in his arms and carried him out to the buggy through the knee-high, tangled grass.

Jem was happy. How the moon was rushing through the sky as the clouds tore past her! How delicious were the smells of the rain-wet woods as they drove along! What a world it was!

“I guess Bruno will be contented at Ingleside after this, Dad.”

“Perhaps,” was all Dad said. He hated to throw cold water but he suspected that a little dog’s heart, losing its last home, was finally broken.

Bruno had never eaten very much but after that night he ate less and less. Came a day when he would not eat at all. The vet was sent for but could find nothing wrong.

“I knew one dog in my experience who died of grief and I think this is another,” he told the doctor aside.

He left a “tonic” which Bruno took obediently and then lay down again, his head on his paws, staring into vacancy. Jem stood looking at him for a long while, his hands in his pockets; then he went into the library to have a talk with Dad.

Gilbert went to town the next day, made some inquiries, and brought Roddy Crawford out to Ingleside. When Roddy came up the verandah steps Bruno, hearing his footfall from the livingroom, lifted his head and cocked his ears. The next moment his emaciated little body hurled itself across the rug towards the pale, brown-eyed lad.

“Mrs. Dr. dear,” Susan said in an awed tone that night, “the dog was *crying* ... he *was*. The tears actually rolled down his nose. I do not blame you if you do not believe it. Never would I have believed it if I had not seen it with my own eyes.”

Roddy held Bruno against his heart and looked half defiantly, half pleadingly at Jem.

“You bought him, I know ... but he belongs to me. Jake told me a lie. Aunt Vinnie says she wouldn’t mind a dog a bit, but I thought I mustn’t ask for him back. Here’s your dollar ... I never spent a cent of it ... I couldn’t.”

For just a moment Jem hesitated. Then he saw Bruno’s eyes. “What a little pig I am!” he thought in disgust with himself. He took the dollar.

Roddy suddenly smiled. The smile changed his sulky face completely but all he could say was a gruff, “Thanks.”

Roddy slept with Jem that night, a replete Bruno stretched between them. But before he went to bed Roddy knelt to say his prayers and Bruno squatted on his haunches beside him, laying his forepaws on the bed. If ever a dog prayed Bruno prayed then ... a prayer of thanksgiving and renewed joy in life.

When Roddy brought him food Bruno ate it eagerly, keeping an eye on Roddy all the time. He pranced friskily after Jem and Roddy when they went down to the Glen. “Such a perked-up dog you never saw,” declared Susan.

But the next evening, after Roddy and Bruno had gone back, Jem sat on the side-door steps in the owl light for a long time. He refused to go digging for pirate hoards in Rainbow Valley with Walter ... Jem felt no longer splendidly bold and buccaneering. He wouldn't even look at the Shrimp who was humped in the mint, lashing his tail like a fierce mountain lion crouching to spring. What business had cats to go on being happy at Ingleside when dogs broke their hearts!

He was even grumpy with Rilla when she brought him her blue velvet elephant. Velvet elephants when Bruno had gone! Nan got as short shrift when she came and suggested they should say what they thought of God in a whisper.

"You don't s'pose I'm blaming God for THIS?" said Jem sternly. "You haven't any sense of proportion, Nan Blythe."

Nan went away quite crushed through she hadn't the least glimmering what Jem meant, and Jem scowled at the embers of the smouldering sunset. Dogs were barking all over the Glen. The Jenkins down the road were out calling theirs ... all of them took turns at it. Everyone, even the Jenkins tribe, could have a dog ... everyone but him. Life stretched before him like a desert where there would be no dogs.

Anne came and sat down on a lower step, carefully not looking at him. Jem *felt* her sympathy.

"Motherest," he said in a choked voice, "*Why* wouldn't Bruno love me when I loved him so much? Am I ... do you think I am the kind of boy dogs don't like?"

"No, darling. Remember how Gyp loved you. It was just that Bruno had only so much love to give ... and he had given it all. There are dogs like that ... one-man dogs."

"Anyhow, Bruno and Roddy are happy," said Jem with grim satisfaction, as he bent over and kissed the top of Mother's smooth ripply head. "But I'll never have another dog."

Anne thought this would pass; he had felt the same when Gyppy died. But it did not. The iron had bitten deeply into Jem's soul. Dogs were to come and go at Ingleside ... dogs that belonged just to the family and were

nice dogs, whom Jem petted and played with as the others did. But there was to be no “Jem’s dog” until a certain “Little Dog Monday” was to take possession of his heart and love him with a devotion passing Bruno’s love ... a devotion that was to make history in the Glen. But that was still many a long year away; and a very lonely boy climbed into Jem’s bed that night.

“I wish I was a girl,” he thought fiercely, “so’s I could cry *and* cry!”

Chapter XXV

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Nan and Di were going to school. They started the last week in August.

“Will we know *everything* by night, Mummy?” asked Di solemnly the first morning.

Now, in early September, Anne and Susan had got used to it, and even took pleasure in seeing the two mites trip off every morning, so tiny and carefree and neat, thinking going to school quite an adventure. They always took an apple in their basket for teacher and they wore frocks of pink and blue ruffled gingham. Since they did not look in the least alike they were never dressed alike. Diana, with her red hair, could not wear pink, but it suited Nan, who was much the prettier of the Ingleside twins. She had brown eyes, brown hair and a lovely complexion, of which she was quite aware even at seven. A certain starriness had gone to the fashioning of her. She held her head proudly, with her little saucy chin a wee bit in evidence, and so was already thought rather “stuck-up.”

“She’ll imitate all her mother’s tricks and poses,” said Mrs. Alec Davies. “She has all her airs and graces already, if you ask me.”

The twins were dissimilar in more than looks. Di, in spite of her physical resemblance to her mother, was very much her father’s child, so far as disposition and qualities went. She had the beginnings of his practical bent, his plain common sense, his twinkling sense of humour. Nan had inherited in full her mother’s gift of imagination and was already making life interesting for herself in her own way. For example, she had had no end of excitement this summer making bargains with God, the gist of the matter being, “If you’ll do such-and-such a thing I’ll do such-and-such a thing.”

All the Ingleside children had been started in life with the old classic, “Now I lay me” ... then promoted to “Our Father” ... then encouraged to make their own small petitions also in whatever language they chose.

What gave Nan the idea that God might be induced to grant her petitions by promises of good behaviour or displays of fortitude would be hard to say. Perhaps a certain rather young and pretty Sunday School teacher was indirectly responsible for it by her frequent admonitions that if they were not good girls God would not do this or that for them. It was easy to turn this idea inside out and come to the conclusion that if you *were* this or that, *did* this or that, you had a right to expect that God would do the things you wanted. Nan's first "bargain" in the spring had been so successful that it outweighed some failures and she had gone on all summer. Nobody knew of it, not even Di. Nan hugged her secret and took to praying at sundry times and in divers places, instead of only at night. Di did not approve of this and said so.

"Don't mix God up with *everything*," she told Nan severely. "You make Him too *common*."

Anne, overhearing this, rebuked her and said, "God *is* in everything, dear. He is the Friend who is always near us to give strength and courage. And Nan is quite right in praying to Him and where she wants to." Though, if Anne had known the truth about her small daughter's devotions, she would have been rather horrified.

Nan had said one night in May, "If you'll make my tooth grow in before Amy Taylor's party next week, dear God, I'll take every dose of castor-oil Susan gives me without a bit of fuss."

The very next day the tooth, whose absence had made such an unsightly and too prolonged gap in Nan's pretty mouth, had appeared and by the day of the party was fully through. What more certain sign could you want than that? Nan kept her side of the compact faithfully and Susan was amazed and delighted whenever she administered castor-oil after that. Nan took it without a grimace or protest, though she sometimes wished she had set a time limit ... say for three months.

God did not always respond. But when she asked Him to send her a special button for her button-string ... collecting buttons had broken out everywhere among the Glen small girls like the measles ... assuring Him that if He did she would never make a fuss when Susan set the chipped

plate for her ... the button came the very next day, Susan having found one on an old dress in the attic. A beautiful red button set with tiny diamonds, or what Nan believed to be diamonds. She was the envied of all because of that elegant button and when Di refused the chipped plate that night Nan said virtuously, "Give it to me, Susan. I'll *always* take it after this." Susan thought she was angelically unselfish and said so. Whereupon Nan both looked and felt smug. She got a fine day for the Sunday School picnic, when everyone predicted rain the night before, by promising to brush her teeth every morning without being told. Her lost ring was restored on the condition that she kept her fingernails scrupulously clean; and when Walter handed over his picture of a flying angel which Nan had long coveted she ate the fat with the lean uncomplainingly at dinner thereafter.

When, however, she asked God to make her battered and patched Teddy Bear young again, promising to keep her bureau drawer tidy, something struck a snag. Teddy did not grow young though Nan looked for the miracle anxiously every morning and wished God would hurry. Finally she resigned herself to Teddy's age. After all, he was a nice old bear and it would be awfully hard to keep that old bureau drawer tidy. When Dad brought her home a new Teddy Bear she didn't really like it and, though with sundry misgivings of her small conscience, decided she need not take any special pains with the bureau drawer. Her faith returned when, having prayed that the missing eye of her china cat would be restored, the eye was in its place next morning, though somewhat askew, giving the cat a rather cross-eyed aspect. Susan had found it when sweeping and stuck it in with glue, but Nan did not know this and cheerfully carried out her promise of walking fourteen times around the barn on all fours. What good walking fourteen times around the barn on all fours could do God or anybody else Nan did not stop to consider. But she hated doing it ... the boys were always wanting her and Di to pretend they were some kind of animals in Rainbow Valley ... and perhaps there was some vague thought in her budding mind that penance might be pleasing to the mysterious Being who gave or withheld at pleasure. At any rate, she thought out several weird

stunts that summer, causing Susan to wonder frequently where on earth children got the notions they did.

“Why do you suppose, Mrs. Dr. dear, that Nan must go twice around the livingroom every day without walking on the floor?”

“Without walking on the floor! How does she manage it, Susan?”

“By jumping from one piece of furniture to the other, including the fender. She slipped on that yesterday and pitched headfirst into the coalscuttle. Mrs. Dr. dear, do you suppose she needs a dose of worm medicine?”

That year was always referred to in the Ingleside chronicles as the one in which Dad *almost* had pneumonia and Mother *had* it. One night, Anne, who already had a nasty cold, went with Gilbert to a party in Charlottetown ... wearing a new and very becoming dress and Jem’s string of pearls. She looked so well in it that all the children who had come in to see her before she left thought it was wonderful to have a mother you could be so proud of.

“Such a nice swishy pettycoat,” sighed Nan. “When I grow up will I have tafty petticoats like that, Mummy?”

“I doubt if girls will be wearing petticoats at all by that time,” said Dad. “I’ll back water, Anne, and admit that dress is a stunner even if I didn’t approve of the sequins. Now, don’t try to vamp me, woman. I’ve paid you all the compliments I’m going to tonight. Remember what we read in the *Medical Journal* today ... ‘Life is nothing more than delicately balanced organic chemistry,’ and let it make you humble and modest. Sequins, indeed! Taffeta petticoat, forsooth. We’re nothing but ‘a fortuitous concatenation of atoms.’ The great Dr. Von Bemburg says so.”

“Don’t quote that horrible Von Bemburg to me. He must have a bad case of chronic indigestion. *He* may be a concatenation of atoms, but *I* am not.”

In a few days thereafter Anne was a very sick “concatenation of atoms” and Gilbert a very anxious one. Susan went about looking harassed and tired, and the trained nurse came and went with an anxious face, and a nameless shadow suddenly swooped and spread and darkened at Ingleside.

The children were not told of the seriousness of their mother's illness and even Jem did not realize it fully. But they all felt the chill and the fear and went softly and unhappily. For once there was no laughter in the maple grove and no games in Rainbow Valley. But the worst of all was that they were not allowed to see Mother. No Mother meeting them with smiles when they came home, no Mother slipping in to kiss them goodnight, no Mother to soothe and sympathize and understand, no Mother to laugh over jokes with ... nobody ever laughed like Mother. It was far worse than when she was away, because then you knew she was coming back ... and now you knew ... just *nothing*. Nobody would tell you anything ... they just put you off.

Nan came home from school very pale over something Amy Taylor had told her.

"Susan, is Mother ... Mother isn't ... she isn't going to *die*, Susan?"

"Of course not," said Susan, too sharply and quickly. Her hands trembled as she poured out Nan's glass of milk. "Who has been talking to you?"

"Amy. She said ... oh, Susan, she said she thought Mother would make such a sweet-looking corpse!"

"Never you mind what she said, my pet. The Taylors all have wagging tongues. Your blessed Mother is sick enough but she is going to pull through and that you may tie to. Do you not know that your father is at the helm?"

"God wouldn't let Mother die, would he, Susan?" asked a white-lipped Walter, looking at her with the grave intentness that made it very hard for Susan to utter her comforting lies. She was terribly afraid they *were* lies. Susan was a badly frightened woman. The nurse had shaken her head that afternoon. The doctor had refused to come down to supper.

"I suppose the Almighty knows what He's about," muttered Susan as she washed the supper dishes ... and broke three of them ... but for the first time in her honest, simple life she doubted it.

Nan wandered unhappily around. Dad was sitting by the library table with his head in his hands. The nurse went in and Nan heard her say she

thought the crisis would come that night.

“What is a crisis?” she asked Di.

“I think it is what a butterfly hatches out of,” said Di cautiously. “Let’s ask Jem.”

Jem knew, and told them before he went upstairs to shut himself in his room. Walter had disappeared ... he was lying face downward under the White Lady in Rainbow Valley ... and Susan had taken Shirley and Rilla off to bed. Nan went out alone and sat down on the steps. Behind her in the house was a terrible unaccustomed quiet. Before her the Glen was brimming with evening sunshine, but the long red road was misty with dust and the bent grasses in the harbour fields were burned white in the drouth. It had not rained for weeks and the flowers drooped in the garden ... the flowers Mother had loved.

Nan was thinking deeply. Now, if ever, was the time to bargain with God. What would she promise to do if He made Mother well? It must be something tremendous ... something that would make it worth His while. Nan remembered what Dicky Drew had said to Stanley Reese in school one day, “I dare you to walk through the graveyard after night.” Nan had shuddered at the time. How could *anybody* walk through the graveyard after night ... how could anyone even *think* of it? Nan had a horror of the graveyard not a soul in Ingleside suspected. Amy Taylor had once told her it was full of dead people ... “and they don’t always *stay* dead,” said Amy darkly and mysteriously. Nan could hardly bring herself to walk past it alone in broad daylight.

Far away the trees on a misty golden hill were touching the sky. Nan had often thought if she could get to that hill she could touch the sky, too. God lived just on the other side of it ... He might hear you better there. But she could not get to that hill ... she must just do the best she could here at Ingleside.

She clasped her little sunburned paws and lifted her tearstained face to the sky.

“Dear God,” she whispered, “if you make Mother get well I’ll *walk through the graveyard after night*. O dear God, *please, please*. And if You

do this I won't bother You for ever so long again."

Chapter XXVI

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It was life, not death, that came at the ghostliest hour of the night to Ingleside. The children, sleeping at last, must have felt even in their sleep that the Shadow had withdrawn as silently and swiftly as it had come. For when they woke, to a day dark with welcome rain, there was sunshine in their eyes. They hardly needed to be told the good news by a Susan who had grown ten years younger. The crisis was past and Mother was going to live.

It was Saturday, so there was no school. They could not stir outside ... even though they loved to be out in the rain. This downpour was too much for them ... and they had to be very quiet inside. But they had never felt happier. Dad, almost sleepless for a week, had flung himself on the spare-room bed for a long deep slumber ... but not before he had sent a long-distance message to a green-gabled house in Avonlea where two old ladies had been trembling every time the telephone rang.

Susan, whose heart of late had not been in her desserts, concocted a glorious “orange shuffle” for dinner, promised a jam roly-poly for supper, and baked a double batch of butterscotch cookies. Cock Robin chirped all over the place. The very chairs looked as if they wanted to dance. The flowers in the garden lifted up their faces bravely again as the dry earth welcomed the rain. And Nan, amid all her happiness, was trying to face the consequences of her bargain with God.

She had no thought of trying to back out of it, but she kept putting it off, hoping she could get a little more courage for it. The very thought of it “made her blood curdle,” as Amy Taylor was so fond of saying. Susan knew there was something the matter with the child and administered castor-oil, with no visible improvement. Nan took the dose quietly, though she could not help thinking that Susan gave her castor-oil much oftener since that earlier bargain. But what was castor-oil compared to walking

through the graveyard after dark? Nan simply did not see how she could ever do it. But she must.

Mother was still so weak that nobody was allowed to see her save for a brief peep. And then she looked so white and thin. Was it because she, Nan, was not keeping her bargain?

“We must give her time,” said Susan.

How could you give anyone time, Nan wondered. But *she* knew why Mother was not getting well faster. Nan set her little pearly teeth. Tomorrow was Saturday again and tomorrow night she would do what she had promised to do.

It rained again all the next forenoon and Nan could not help a feeling of relief. If it was going to be a rainy night, nobody, not even God, could expect her to go prowling about graveyards. By noon the rain had stopped but there came a fog creeping up the harbour and over the Glen, surrounding Ingleside with its eerie magic. So still Nan hoped. If it was foggy she couldn't go either. But at supper time a wind sprang up and the dreamlike landscape of the fog vanished.

“There'll be no moon tonight,” said Susan.

“Oh, Susan, can't you *make* a moon?” cried Nan despairingly. If she had to walk through the graveyard there *must* be a moon.

“Bless the child, nobody can make moons,” said Susan. “I only meant it was going to be cloudy and you could not see the moon. And what difference can it make to you whether there is a moon or not?”

That was just what Nan could not explain and Susan was more worried than ever. *Something* must ail the child ... she had been acting so strangely all the week. She did not eat half enough and she moped. Was she worrying about her mother? She needn't ... Mrs. Dr. dear was coming on nicely.

Yes, but Nan knew that Mother would soon stop coming on nicely if she didn't keep her bargain. At sunset the clouds rolled away and the moon rose. But such a strange moon ... such a huge, blood-red moon. Nan had never seen such a moon. It terrified her. Almost would she have preferred the dark.

The twins went to bed at eight and Nan had to wait until Di had gone to sleep. Di took her time about it. She was feeling too sad and disillusioned to sleep readily. Her chum, Elsie Palmer, had walked home from school with another girl and Di believed that life was practically ended for her. It was nine o'clock before Nan felt it safe to slip out of bed and dress with fingers that trembled so she could hardly cope with her buttons. Then she crept down and out of the side door while Susan set the bread in the kitchen and reflected comfortably that all under her charge were safe in bed except the poor doctor, who had been summoned posthaste to a Harbour Mouth household where a baby had swallowed a tack.

Nan went out and down to Rainbow Valley. She must take the short-cut through it and up the hill pasture. She knew that the sight of an Ingleside twin prowling along the road and through the village would cause wonderment and somebody would likely insist on bringing her home. How cold the late September night was! She had not thought about that and had not put on her jacket. Rainbow Valley by night was not the friendly haunt of daytime. The moon had shrunk to a reasonable size and was no longer red but it cast sinister black shadows. Nan had always been rather frightened of shadows. Was that paddy feet in the darkness of the withered bracken by the brook?

Nan held up her head and stuck out her chin. "I'm not frightened," she said aloud valiantly. "It's only my stomach feels a little queer. I'm being a *heroine*."

The pleasant idea of being a heroine carried her halfway up the hill. Then a strange shadow swept over the world ... a cloud was crossing the moon ... and Nan thought of the Bird. Amy Taylor had once told her such a terrifying tale of a Great Black Bird that swooped down on you in the night and carried you off. Was it the Bird's shadow that had crossed over her? But Mother had said there was no Big Black Bird. "I don't believe Mother could tell me a lie ... not *mother*," said Nan ... and went on until she reached the fence. Beyond was the road ... and across it the graveyard. Nan stopped to get her breath.

Another cloud was over the moon. All around her lay a strange, dim, unknown land. "Oh, the world is too big!" shivered Nan, crowding against the fence. If she were only back in Ingleside! But ... "God is watching me," said the seven-year-old scrap ... and climbed the fence.

She fell off on the other side, skinning her knee and tearing her dress. As she got to her feet a sharp weed-stub pierced completely through her slipper and cut her foot. But she limped across the road to the graveyard gate.

The old graveyard lay in the shadow of the firs at its eastern end. On one side was the Methodist church, on the other the Presbyterian manse, now dark and silent during the minister's absence. The moon broke out suddenly from the cloud and the graveyard was full of shadows ... shadows that shifted and danced ... shadows that would grasp at you if you trusted yourself among them. A newspaper someone had discarded blew along the road, like a dancing old witch, and though Nan knew it for what it was, it was all part and parcel of the uncanniness of the night. Swish, swish, went the night-winds in the firs. A long leaf on the willow by the gate suddenly flicked her cheek like the touch of an elfin hand. For a moment her heart stood still ... yet she put her hand on the hook of the gate.

Suppose a long arm reached out of a grave and dragged you down!

Nan turned. She knew now that, bargain or no bargain, she could *never* walk through that graveyard by night. The grisliest groan suddenly sounded quite close to her. It was only Mrs. Ben Baker's old cow, which she pastured on the road, getting up from behind a clump of spruces. But Nan did not wait to see what it was. In a spasm of uncontrollable panic she tore down the hill, through the village and up the road to Ingleside. Outside of the gate she dashed headlong through what Rilla called a "pud-muddle." But there was home, with the soft, glowing lights in the windows and a moment later she stumbled into Susan's kitchen, mud-spattered, with wet, bleeding feet.

"Good grief!" said Susan blankly.

“I couldn’t walk through the graveyard Susan ... I couldn’t!” gasped Nan.

Susan asked no questions at first. She picked the chilled, distraught Nan up and peeled off her wet slippers and socks. She undressed her and put on her nightgown and carried her to bed. Then she went down to get a “bite” for her. No matter what the child had been up to she couldn’t be let go to bed on an empty stomach.

Nan ate her lunch and sipped her glass of hot milk. How lovely it was to be back in a warm, lighted room, safe in her nice warm bed! But she would not tell Susan one thing about it. “It’s a secret between me and God, Susan.” Susan went to bed vowing she would be a happy woman when Mrs. Dr. dear was up and about again.

“They’re getting beyond *me*,” sighed Susan helplessly.

Mother would certainly die now. Nan woke up with that terrible conviction in her mind. She had not kept her bargain and she could not expect God would. Life was very dreadful for Nan that following week. She could take no pleasure in anything, not even in watching Susan spin in the garret ... something she had always found so fascinating. She would never be able to laugh again. It wouldn’t matter what she did. She gave her sawdust dog, off which Ken Ford had pulled the ears and which she loved even better than old Teddy ... Nan always loved old things best ... to Shirley because Shirley had always wanted it, and she gave her prized house made of shells, which Captain Malachi had brought her all the way from the West Indies, to Rilla, hoping that it would satisfy God: but she feared it would not, and when her new kitten, which she had given to Amy Taylor because Amy wanted it, came back home and persisted in coming back home Nan knew God was not satisfied. Nothing would do Him but walking through the graveyard; and poor haunted Nan knew now she could never do *that*. She was a coward and a sneak. Only sneaks, Jem had said once, tried to get out of bargains.

Anne was allowed to sit up in bed. She was nearly well again after being ill. She would soon be able to keep her house again ... read her books ... lie easily on her pillows ... eat everything she wanted ... sit by

her fireplace ... look to her garden ... see her friends ... listen to juicy bits of gossip ... welcome the days shining like jewels on the necklace of the year ... be again a part of the colourful pageantry of life.

She had had such a nice dinner ... Susan's stuffed leg of lamb had been done to a turn. It was delightful to feel hungry again. She looked about her room at all the things she loved. She must get new curtains for it ... something between spring green and pale gold; and certainly those new cupboards for towels must be put in the bathroom. Then she looked out of the window. There was some magic in the air. She could catch a blue glimpse of the harbour through the maples; the weeping birch on the lawn was a soft rain of falling gold. Vast sky-gardens arched over an opulent land holding autumn in fee ... a land of unbelievable colours, mellow light and lengthening shadows. Cock Robin was tilting crazily on a fir-top; the children were laughing in the orchard as they picked apples. Laughter had come back to Ingleside. "Life is something more than 'delicately balanced organic chemistry,'" she thought happily.

Into the room crept Nan, eyes and nose crimson from crying.

"Mummy, I *have* to tell you ... I can't wait any longer. Mummy, *I've cheated God.*"

Anne thrilled again to the soft touch of a child's little clinging hand ... a child seeking help, and comfort in its bitter little problem. She listened while Nan sobbed out the whole story and managed to keep a straight face. Anne always had contrived to keep a straight face when a straight face was indicated, no matter how crazily she might laugh it over with Gilbert afterwards. She knew Nan's worry was real and dreadful to her; and she also realized that this small daughter's theology needed attention.

"Darling, you're terribly mistaken about it all. God doesn't make bargains. He *gives* . . . gives without asking anything from us in return except love. When you ask Father or me for something you want, *we* don't make bargains with you ... and God is ever and ever so much kinder than we are. And He knows so much better than we do what is good to give."

"And He won't ... He won't make you die, Mummy, because I didn't keep my promise?"

“Certainly not, darling.”

“Mummy, even if I was mistaken about God ... oughtn’t I to keep my bargain when I made it? I *said* I would, you know. Daddy says we should always keep our promises. Won’t I be *disgraced forever* if I don’t?”

“When I get quite well, dear, I’ll go with you some night ... and stay outside the gate ... and I don’t think you’ll be a bit afraid to go through the graveyard then. That will relieve your poor little conscience ... and you won’t make any more foolish bargains with God?”

“No,” promised Nan, with a rather regretful feeling that she was giving up something that, with all its drawbacks, had been pleasantly exciting. But the sparkle had come back to her eyes and a bit of the old ginger to her voice.

“I’ll go and wash my face and then I’ll come back and kiss you, Mummy. And I’ll pick you all the snack-dragons I can find. It’s been *dreadful* without you, Mummy.”

“Oh, Susan,” said Anne when Susan brought in her supper, “what a world it is! What a beautiful, interesting, wonderful world! Isn’t it, Susan?”

“I will go so far,” admitted Susan, recalling the beautiful row of pies she had just left in the pantry, “as to say that it is very tolerable.”

Chapter XXVII

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October was a very happy month at Ingleside that year, full of days when you just *had* to run and sing and whistle. Mother was about again, refusing to be treated as a convalescent any longer, making garden plans, laughing again ... Jem always thought Mother had such a beautiful, joyous laugh ... answering innumerable questions. “Mummy, how far is it from here to the sunset? ... Mummy, why can’t we gather up the spilled moonlight? ... Mummy, do the souls of dead people *really* come back on Hallowe’en? ... Mummy, what causes the cause? ... Mummy, wouldn’t you rather be killed by a rattlesnake than a tiger, because the tiger would mess you up and eat you? ... Mummy, what is a cubby? ... Mummy, is a widow really a woman whose dreams have come true? Wally Taylor said she was... . Mummy, what do little birds do when it rains *hard*? ... Mummy, are we *really* a too romantic family?”

The last from Jem, who had heard in school that Mrs. Alec Davies had said so. Jem did not like Mrs. Alec Davies, because whenever she met him with Mother or Father she invariably dabbed her long forefinger at him and demanded, “Is Jemmy a good boy in school?” Jemmy! Perhaps they *were* a bit romantic. Susan must certainly have thought so when she discovered the boardwalk to the barn lavishly decorated with splotches of crimson paint. “We *had* to have them for our sham battle, Susan,” explained Jem. “They represent gobs of gore.”

At night there might be a line of wild geese flying across a low red moon and Jem when he saw them ached mysteriously to fly far away with them, too ... to unknown shores and bring back monkeys ... leopards ... parrots ... things like that ... to explore the Spanish Main.

Some phrases, like “the Spanish Main,” always sounded irresistibly alluring to Jem ... “secrets of the sea” was another. To be caught in the deadly coils of a python and have a combat with a wounded rhinoceros

was all in the day's work with Jem. And the very word "dragon" gave him a tremendous thrill. His favourite picture, tacked on the wall at the foot of his bed, was of a knight in armour on a beautiful plump white horse, standing on its hind legs while its rider speared a dragon who had a lovely tail flowing behind him in kinks and loops, ending with a fork. A lady in a pink robe knelt peacefully and composedly in the background with clasped hands. There was no doubt in the world that the lady looked a good deal like Maybelle Reese for whose nine-year-old favour lances were already being shattered in the Glen school. Even Susan noticed the resemblance and teased the furiously blushing Jem about it. But the dragon was really a little disappointing ... it looked so small and insignificant under the huge horse. There didn't seem to be any special valour about spearing it. The dragons from which Jem rescued Maybelle in secret dreams were much more dragonish. He *had* rescued her last Monday from old Sarah Palmer's gander. Peradventure ... ah, "peradventure" had a good smack! ... she had noticed the lordly air with which he had caught the hissing creature by its snaky neck and flung it over the fence. But a gander was somehow not nearly so romantic as a dragon.

It was an October of winds ... small winds that purred in the valley and big ones that lashed the mapletops ... winds that howled along the sandshore but crouched when they came to the rocks ... crouched and sprang. The nights, with their sleepy red hunter's moon, were cool enough to make the thought of a warm bed pleasant, the blueberry bushes turned scarlet, the dead ferns were a rich red-brown, sumacs burned behind the barn, green pastures lay here and there like patches on the sere harvest fields of the Upper Glen and there were gold and russet chrysanthemums in the spruce corner of the lawn. There were squirrels chattering joyfully everywhere and cricket fiddlers for fairy dances on a thousand hills. There were apples to be picked, carrots to be dug. Sometimes the boys went digging "cowhawks" with Captain Malachi when the mysterious "tides" permitted ... tides that came in to caress the land but slipped back to their own deep sea. There was a reek of leaf fires all through the Glen, a heap of big yellow pumpkins in the barn, and Susan made the first cranberry pies.

Ingleside rang with laughter from dawn to sunset. Even when the older children were in school Shirley and Rilla were big enough now to keep up the tradition of laughter. Even Gilbert laughed more than usual this fall. "I like a dad who can laugh," Jem reflected. Dr. Bronson of Mowbray Narrows never laughed. He was said to have built up his practice entirely on his owlish look of wisdom; but Dad had a better practice still and people were pretty far gone when they couldn't laugh over one of his jokes.

Anne was busy in her garden every warm day, drinking in colour like wine, where the late sunshine fell on crimson maples, revelling in the exquisite sadness of fleeting beauty. One gold-grey smoky afternoon she and Jem planted all the tulip bulbs, that would have a resurrection of rose and scarlet and purple and gold in June. "Isn't it nice to be preparing for spring when you know you've got to face winter, Jem?" "And it's nice to be making the garden beautiful," said Jem. "Susan says it is God who makes everything beautiful but we can help Him out a bit, can't we, Mums?"

"Always ... always, Jem. He shares that privilege with us."

Still, nothing is ever quite perfect. The Ingleside folks were worried over Cock Robin. They had been told that when the robins went away he would want to go too.

"Keep him shut up till all the rest are gone and the snow comes," advised Captain Malachi. "Then he'll kind of forget about it and be all right till spring."

So Cock Robin was a sort of prisoner. He grew very restless. He flew aimlessly about the house or sat on the windowsill and looked wistfully out at his fellows who were preparing to follow who knew what mysterious call. His appetite failed and even worms and Susan's nuttiest nuts would not tempt him. The children pointed out to him all the dangers he might encounter ... cold, hunger, friendlessness, storms, black nights, cats. But Cock Robin had felt or heard the summons and all his being yearned to answer.

Susan was the last to give in. She was very grim for several days. But finally, "Let him go," she said. "It is against nature to hold him."

They set him free the last day of October, after he had been mewed up for a month. The children kissed him goodbye with tears. He flew joyfully off, returning next morning to Susan's sill for crumbs and then spreading his wings for the long flight. "He may come back to us in the spring, darling," Anne said to the sobbing Rilla. But Rilla was not to be comforted.

"That it's too far away," she sobbed.

Anne smiled and sighed. The seasons that seemed so long to Baby Rilla were beginning to pass all too quickly for her. Another summer was ended, lighted out of life by the ageless gold of Lombardy torches. Soon ... all too soon ... the children of Ingleside would be children no longer. But they were still hers ... hers to welcome when they came home at night ... hers to fill life with wonder and delight ... hers to love and cheer and scold ... a little. For sometimes they were very naughty, even though they hardly deserved to be called by Mrs. Alec Davies "that pack of Ingleside demons" when she heard that Bertie Shakespeare Drew had been slightly scorched while playing the part of a Red Indian burned at the stake in Rainbow Valley. It had taken Jem and Walter a little longer to untie him than they had bargained for. They got slightly singed, too, but nobody pitied *them*.

November was a dismal month that year ... a month of east wind and fog. Some days there was nothing but cold mist driving past or drifting over the grey sea beyond the bar. The shivering poplar trees dropped their last leaves. The garden was dead and all its colour and personality had gone from it ... except the asparagus-bed, which was still a fascinating golden jungle. Walter had to desert his study roost in the maple tree and learn his lessons in the house. It rained ... and rained ... and rained. "Will the world *ever* be dry again?" moaned Di despairingly. Then there was a week steeped in the magic of Indian summer sunshine, and in the cold sharp evenings Mother would touch a match to the kindling in the grate and Susan would have baked potatoes with supper.

The big fireplace was the centre of the home those evenings. It was the high spot of the day when they gathered around it after supper. Anne sewed and planned little winter wardrobes ... “Nan must have a red dress, since she is so set on it” ... and sometimes thought of Hannah, weaving her little coat every year for the small Samuel. Mothers were the same all through the centuries ... a great sisterhood of love and service ... the remembered and the unremembered alike.

Susan heard the children’s spellings and then they amused themselves as they liked. Walter, living in his world of imagination and beautiful dreams, was absorbed in writing a series of letters from the chipmunk who lived in Rainbow Valley to the chipmunk who lived behind the barn. Susan pretended to scoff at them when he read them to her, but she secretly made copies of them and sent them to Rebecca Dew.

“I found these readable, Miss Dew dear, though you may consider them too trivial to peruse. In that case I know you will pardon a *doting old woman* for troubling you with them. He is considered very clever in school and at least these compositions are not poetry. I might also add that Little Jem made *ninety-nine* in his arithmetic examination last week and nobody can understand why the other mark was cut off. Perhaps I should not say so, Miss Dew dear, but it is my conviction that that child is *born for greatness*. We may not live to see it but he may yet be Premier of Canada.”

The Shrimp basked in the glow and Nan’s kitten, Pussywillow, which always suggested some dainty exquisite little lady in black and silver, climbed everybody’s legs impartially. “Two cats, and mouse tracks everywhere in the pantry,” was Susan’s disapproving parenthesis. The children talked over their little adventures together and the wail of the distant ocean came through the cold autumn night.

Sometimes Miss Cornelia dropped in for a short call while her husband exchanged opinions in Carter Flagg’s store. Little pitchers pricked up their long ears then, for Miss Cornelia always had the latest gossip and they always heard the most interesting things about people. It would be such fun next Sunday to sit in church and look at the said people, savouring what you knew about them, prim and proper as they looked.

“My, but you’re cosy here, Anne dearie. It’s a real keen night and starting to snow. Is the doctor out?”

“Yes. I hated to see him go ... but they telephoned from the Harbour Head that Mrs. Brooker Shaw insisted on seeing him,” said Anne, while Susan swiftly and stealthily removed from the hearthrug a huge fishbone the Shrimp had brought in, praying that Miss Cornelia had not noticed it.

“She’s no more sick than I am,” said Susan bitterly. “But I hear she has got a *new lace nightgown* and no doubt she wants her doctor to see her in it. Lace nightgowns!”

“Her daughter Leona brought it home from Boston for her. She came Friday evening, with *four trunks*,” said Miss Cornelia. “I can remember her starting off to the States nine years ago, lugging a broken old Gladstone bag with things oozing out of it. That was when she was feeling pretty blue over Phil Turner’s jilting her. She tried to hide it but everyone *knew*. Now she’s back to ‘nurse her mother,’ so she says. She’ll be trying to flirt with the doctor, I warn you, Anne dearie. But I don’t suppose it will matter to him even if he is a man. And you’re not like Mrs. Dr. Bronson at Mowbray Narrows. She is very jealous of her husband’s female patients, I am told.”

“*And* of the trained nurses,” said Susan.

“Well, some of those trained nurses *are* far too pretty for their job,” said Miss Cornelia. “There’s Janie Arthur now; she’s taking a rest between cases and trying to keep her two young men from finding out about each other.”

“Pretty as she is, she is no spring chicken now,” said Susan firmly, “and it would be far better for her to make a choice and settle down. Look at her Aunt Eudora ... *She* said she didn’t intend to marry till she got through flirting, and behold the result. Even yet she tries to flirt with every man in sight though she is forty-five if she is a day. That is what comes of forming a habit. Did you every hear, Mrs. Dr. dear, what she said to her cousin Fanny when *she* got married? ‘You’re taking my leavings,’ she said. I am informed there was a shower of sparks and they have never spoken since.”

“Life and death are in the power of the tongue,” murmured Anne absently.

“A true word, dear. Speaking of that, I wish Mr. Stanley would be a little more judicious in his sermons. He has offended Wallace Young and Wallace is going to leave the church. Everyone says the sermon last Sunday was preached at him.”

“If a minister preaches a sermon that hits home to some particular individual people always suppose he meant it for that very person,” said Anne. “A hand-me-down cap is bound to fit somebody’s head but it doesn’t follow that it was made for him.”

“Sound sense,” approved Susan. “And I have no use for Wallace Young. He let a firm paint ads on his cows three years ago. That is *too* economical, in my opinion.”

“His brother David is going to be married at last,” said Miss Cornelia. “He’s been a long time making up his mind which was cheaper — marrying or hiring. ‘Ye *can* keep a house without a woman but it’s hard sledding, Cornelia,’ he said to me once after his mother died. I had an idea that he was feeling his way but he got no encouragement from *me*. And at last he’s going to marry Jessie King.”

“Jessie King! But I thought he was supposed to be courting Mary North.”

“*He* says he wasn’t going to marry any woman who eats cabbage. But there’s a story going around that he proposed to her and she boxed his ears. And Jessie King is reported to have said that she would have liked a better looking man but that he’d have to do. Well, of course it is any port in a storm for some folks.”

“I do not think, Mrs. Marshall Elliott, that people in these parts say half the things they are reported to have said,” rebuked Susan. “It is my opinion that Jessie King will make David Young a far better wife than he deserves ... though as far as outward seeming goes I will admit he looks like something that washed in with the tide.”

“Do you know that Alden and Stella have a little daughter?” asked Anne.

“So I understand. I hope Stella will be a little more sensible over it than Lisette was over *her*. Would you believe it, Anne dear, Lisette positively cried because her cousin Dora’s baby walked before Stella did?”

“We mothers are a foolish race,” smiled Anne. “I remember that I felt perfectly murderous when little Bob Taylor, who was the same age as Jem to a day, cut three teeth before Jem cut one.”

“Bob Taylor’s got to have an operation on his tonsils,” said Miss Cornelia.

“Why don’t we ever have operations, Mother?” demanded Walter and Di together in injured tones. They so often said the same thing together. Then they linked their fingers and made a wish. “We think and feel the same about *everything*,” Di was wont to explain earnestly.

“Shall I ever forget Elsie Taylor’s marriage?” said Miss Cornelia reminiscently. “Her best friend, Maisie Millison, was to play the wedding march. She played the Dead March in *Saul* in place of it. Of course she always said she made a mistake because she was so flustered but people had their own opinion. *She* wanted Mac Moorside for herself. A goodlooking rogue with a silver tongue ... always saying to women just what he thought they’d like to hear. He made Elsie’s life miserable. Ah well, Anne dearie, they’ve both passed long since into the Silent Land and Maisie’s been married to Harley Russell for years and everybody has forgotten that he proposed to her expecting her to say ‘No’ and she said ‘Yes’ instead. Harley has forgotten it himself ... just like a man. He thinks he has got the best wife in the world and congratulates himself on being clever enough to get her.”

“Why did he propose to her if he wanted her to say no? It seems to me a very strange proceeding,” said Susan ... immediately adding with crushing humility, “But of course *I* would not be expected to know anything about *that*.”

“His father ordered him to. He didn’t want to, but he thought it was quite safe.... There’s the doctor now.”

As Gilbert came in, a little flurry of snow blew in with him. He threw off his coat and sat gladly down to his own fireside.

“I’m later than I expected to be ...”

“No doubt the new lace nightgown was very attractive,” said Anne, with an impish grin at Miss Cornelia.

“What are you talking about? Some feminine joke beyond my coarse masculine perception, I suppose. I went on to the Upper Glen to see Walter Cooper.”

“It’s a mystery how that man does hang on,” said Miss Cornelia.

“I’ve no patience with him,” smiled Gilbert. “He ought to have been dead long ago. A year ago I gave him two months and here he is ruining my reputation by keeping on living.”

“If you knew the Coopers as well as I do you wouldn’t risk predictions on them. Don’t you know his grandfather came back to life after they’d dug the grave and got the coffin? The undertaker wouldn’t take it back either. However, I understand Walter Cooper is having lots of fun rehearsing his own funeral ... just like a man. Well, there’s Marshall’s bells ... and this jar of pickled pears is for you, Anne dearie.”

They all went to the door to see Miss Cornelia off. Walter’s dark grey eyes peered out into the stormy night.

“I wonder where Cock Robin is tonight and if he misses us,” he said wistfully. Perhaps Cock Robin had gone to that mysterious place Mrs. Elliott was always referring to as the Silent Land.

“Cock Robin is in a southern land of sunshine,” said Anne. “He’ll be back in the spring, I feel quite sure, and that’s only five months away. Chickabids, you should all have been in bed along ago.”

“Susan,” Di was saying in the pantry, “would you like to have a baby? I know where you could get one ... brand-new.”

“Ah now, where?”

“They have a new one at Amy’s. Amy says the angels brought it and she thinks they might have had more sense. They’ve eight children now, not counting it. I heard you say yesterday that it made you lonesome to see Rilla getting so big ... you’d no baby now. I’m sure Mrs. Taylor would give you hers.”

“The things children think of! It runs in the Taylors to have big families. Andrew Taylor’s father never could tell offhand how many children he had ... always had to stop and reckon them up. But I do not think I will take any outside babies on just yet.”

“Susan, Amy Taylor says you are an old maid. Are you, Susan?”

“Such has been the lot an all-wise Providence has ordained for me,” said Susan unflinchingly.

“Do you *like* being an old maid, Susan?”

“I cannot truthfully say I do, my pet. But,” added Susan, remembering the lot of some wives she knew, “I have learned that there are compensations. Now take your father’s apple pie to him and I’ll bring his tea. The poor man must be faint from hunger.”

“Mother, we’ve got the loveliest home in the world, haven’t we?” said Walter as he went sleepily upstairs. “Only ... don’t you think it would improve it if we had a few ghosts?”

“Ghosts?”

“Yes. Jerry Palmer’s house is full of ghosts. He saw one ... a tall lady in white with a skeleton hand. I told Susan about it and she said he was either fibbing or there was something the matter with his stomach.”

“Susan was right. As for Ingleside, nobody but happy people have ever lived here ... so you see we’re not ghostable. Now say your prayers and go to sleep.”

“Mother, I guess I was naughty last night. I said, ‘Give us *tomorrow* our daily bread,’ instead of *today*. It seemed more *logical*. Do you think God minded, Mother?”

Chapter XXVIII

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Cock Robin did come back when Ingleside and Rainbow Valley burned again with the green, evasive flames of spring, and brought a bride with him. The two built a nest in Walter's apple tree and Cock Robin resumed all his old habits, but his bride was shyer or less venturesome and would never let anyone come very near her. Susan thought Cock Robin's return a positive miracle and wrote Rebecca Dew about it that very night.

The spotlight in the little drama of life at Ingleside shifted from time to time, now falling on this one, now on that. They had got through the winter without anything very much out of the way happening to anyone and in June it was Di's turn to have an adventure.

A new girl had begun coming to school ... a girl who said, when the teacher asked her her name, "I am Jenny Penny," as one might say, "I am Queen Elizabeth," or "I am Helen of Troy." You felt the minute she said it that not to know Jenny Penny argued yourself unknown, and not to be condescended to by Jenny Penny meant you didn't exist at all. At least, that was how Diana Blythe felt about it, even if she couldn't have put it into those exact words.

Jenny Penny had nine years to Di's eight but from the first she took rank with the "big girls" of ten and eleven. They found they could not snub or ignore her. She was not pretty but her appearance was striking ... everybody looked at her twice. She had a round creamy face with a soft glossless cloud of soot-black hair about it and enormous dusky blue eyes with long tangled black lashes. When she slowly raised those lashes and looked at you with those scornful eyes you felt that you were a worm honoured in not being stepped on. You liked better to be snubbed by her than courted by any other: and to be selected as a temporary confidante of Jenny Penny's was an honour almost too great to be borne. For Jenny Penny's confidences were exciting. Evidently the Pennys were no common

people. Jenny's Aunt Lina, it appeared, possessed a wonderful gold and garnet necklace which had been given her by an uncle who was a millionaire. One of her cousins had a diamond ring that cost a thousand dollars and another cousin had won a prize in elocution over seventeen hundred competitors. She had an aunt who was a missionary and worked among the leopards in India. In short, the Glen schoolgirls, for a time at least, accepted Jenny Penny at her own valuation, looked up to her with mingled admiration and envy, and talked so much about her at their supper tables that their elders were finally constrained to take notice.

"Who is this little girl Di seems so taken up with, Susan?" asked Anne one evening, after Di had been telling of "the mansion" Jenny lived in, with white wooden lace around its roof, five bay-windows, a wonderful birch grove behind it, and a red marble mantelpiece in the parlor. "Penny is a name I've never heard in Four Winds. Do you know anything about them?"

"They are a new family that have moved to the old Conway farm on the Base Line, Mrs. Dr. dear. Mr. Penny is said to be a carpenter who couldn't make a living carpentering ... being too busy, as I understand, trying to prove there is no God ... and has decided to try farming. From all I can make out they are a queer lot. The young ones do just as they like. He says he was bossed to death when he was a kid and his children are not going to be. That is why this Jenny one is coming to the Glen school. They are nearer the Mowbray Narrows school and the other children go there, but Jenny made up her mind to come to the Glen. Half the Conway farm is in this district, so Mr. Penny pays rates to both schools and, of course, he can send his children to both if he likes. Though it seems this Jenny is his niece, not his daughter. Her father and mother are dead. They say it was George Andrew Penny who put the sheep in the basement of the Baptist church at Mowbray Narrows. I do not say they are not respectable, but they are all so *unkempt*, Mrs. Dr. dear ... and the house is topsy-turvy ... and, if I may presume to advise, you do not want Diana mixed up with a monkey tribe like that."

“I can’t exactly prevent her from associating with Jenny in school, Susan. I don’t really know anything against the child, though I feel sure she draws a long bow in telling of her relatives and adventures. However, Di will probably soon get over this ‘crush’ and we’ll hear no more of Jenny Penny.”

They continued to hear of her, however. Jenny told Di she liked her best of all the girls in the Glen school and Di, feeling that a queen had stooped to her, responded adoringly. They became inseparable at recesses; they wrote notes to each other over the weekends; they gave and received “chews” of gum: they traded buttons and cooperated in dust piles; and finally Jenny asked Di to go home with her from school and stay all night with her.

Mother said, “No,” very decidedly and Di wept copiously.

“You’ve let me stay all night with Persis Ford,” she sobbed.

“That was ... different,” said Anne, a little vaguely. She did not want to make a snob of Di, but all she had heard about the Penny family had made her realize that as friends for the Ingleside children they were quite out of the question and she had been considerably worried of late over the fascination Jenny so evidently possessed for Diana.

“I don’t see any difference,” wailed Di. “Jenny is just as much of a lady as Persis, so there! She *never* chews bought gum. She has a cousin who knows all the rules of etiquette and Jenny has learned them all from her. Jenny says *we* don’t know what etiquette is. And she has had the most exciting adventures.”

“Who says she has?” demanded Susan.

“She told me herself. Her folks aren’t rich but they have got very rich and respectable relatives. Jenny has an uncle who is a judge and a cousin of her mother’s is captain of the biggest vessel in the world. Jenny christened the ship for him when it was launched. We haven’t got an uncle who is a judge or an aunt who is a missionary to leopards either.”

“Lepers, dear, not leopards.”

“Jenny *said* leopards. I guess she ought to know since it is her aunt. And there are so many things at her house I want to see ... her room is

papered with *parrots* ... and their parlour is *full* of stuffed owls ... and they have a hooked rug with a house on it in the hall ... and window blinds just covered with roses ... and a *real house* to play in ... her uncle built it for them ... and her Gammy lives with them and is the oldest person in the world. Jenny says she lived before the flood. I may never have another chance to see a person who lived before the flood.”

“The grandmother is close on a hundred, I am told,” said Susan, “but if your Jenny said she lived before the flood she is fibbing. You would be likely to catch goodness knows what if you went to a place like that.”

“They’ve had everything they could have long ago,” protested Di. “Jenny says they’ve had mumps and measles and whooping-cough and scarlet fever all in one year.”

“I wouldn’t put it past them having the smallpox,” muttered Susan. “Talk of people being bewitched!”

“Jenny has to have her tonsils out,” sobbed Di. “But *that* isn’t catching, is it? Jenny had a cousin who died when she had her tonsils out ... she bled to death without gaining conscious. So it is likely Jenny will too, if it runs in the family. She is delicate ... she fainted three times last week. But she is *quite prepared*. And that is partly why she is so anxious to have me spend a night with her ... so that I’d have it to remember after she passed away. *Please*, Mother. I’ll go without the new hat with ribbon streamers you promise me if you’ll let me.”

But Mother was adamant and Di betook herself to a tearful pillow. Nan had no sympathy for her ... Nan “had no use” for Jenny Penny.

“I don’t know what has got into the child,” said Anne worriedly. “She has never behaved like this before. As you say, that Penny girl seems to have bewitched her.”

“You were quite right in refusing to let her go to a place so far beneath her, Mrs. Dr. dear.”

“Oh, Susan, I don’t want her to feel that anyone is ‘beneath’ her. But we must draw the line somewhere. It’s not Jenny so much ... I think she’s harmless enough apart from her habit of exaggeration ... but I’m told the

boys are really dreadful. The Mowbray Narrows teacher is at her wits'-end with them."

"Do they TRYannize over you like that?" asked Jenny loftily when Di told her she was not to be allowed to go. "*I* wouldn't let anyone use *me* like that. I have too much spirit. Why, I sleep out of doors all night whenever I take the notion. I s'pose you'd never dream of doing that?"

Di looked wistfully at this mysterious girl who had "often slept out all night." How wonderful!

"You don't blame me for not going, Jenny? You know I want to go?"

"Of course I don't blame you. *Some* girls wouldn't put up with it, of course, but I s'pose you just can't help it. We could have had fun. I'd planned we'd go fishing by moonlight in our back brook. We often do. I've caught trout *that* long. And we have the dearest little pigs and a new foal that's just sweet and a litter of puppies. Well, I guess I must ask Sadie Taylor. *Her* father and mother let her call her soul her own."

"My father and mother are very good to me," protested Di loyally. "And my father is the best doctor in P. E. Island. Everyone says so."

"Putting on airs because you have a father and mother and I have none," said Jenny disdainfully. "Why, *my* father has wings and always wears a golden crown. But *I* don't go about with my head in the air on that account, do I? Now, Di, I don't want to quarrel with you but I hate to hear anyone bragging about their folks. It's not etiket. And I have made up my mind to be a lady. When that Persis Ford you're always talking of comes to Four Winds this summer *I* am not going to 'sociate with her. There's something queer about her ma, Aunt Lina says. She was married to a dead man and he come alive."

"Oh, it wasn't like that at all, Jenny. I know ... Mother told me... . Aunt Leslie ..."

"*I* don't want to hear about her. Whatever it is, it's something that'd better not be talked of, Di. There's the bell."

"Are you really going to ask Sadie?" choked Di, her eyes widening with hurt.

“Well, not right at once. I’ll wait and see. Maybe I’ll give you one more chance. But if I do it will be the last.”

A few days later Jenny Penny came to Di at recess.

“I heard Jem saying your pa and ma went away yesterday and wouldn’t be back till tomorrow night?”

“Yes, they went up to Avonlea to see Aunt Marilla.”

“Then it’s *your chance*.”

“My chance?”

“To stay all night with me.”

“Oh, Jenny ... but I couldn’t.”

“Of course you can. Don’t be a ninny. They’ll never know.”

“But Susan wouldn’t let me ...”

“You don’t have to ask her. Just come home with me from school. Nan can tell her where you’ve gone so she won’t be worried. And she won’t tell on you when your pa and ma come back. She’ll be too scared they’d blame her.”

Di stood in an agony of indecision. She knew perfectly well she should not go with Jenny, but the temptation was irresistible. Jenny turned the full battery of her extraordinary eyes upon Di.

“This is your *last chance*,” she said dramatically. “I can’t go on ‘sociating with anyone who thinks herself too good to visit me. If you don’t come we *part forever*.”

That settled it. Di, still in the thrall of Jenny Penny’s fascination, couldn’t face the thought of parting forever. Nan went home alone that afternoon to tell Susan that Di had gone to stay all night with that Jenny Penny.

Had Susan been her usual active self she would have gone straight to the Pennys and brought Di home. But Susan had strained her ankle that morning and while she could make shift to hobble around and get the children’s meals she knew she could never walk a mile down the Base Line road. The Pennys had no telephone and Jem and Walter flatly refused to go. They were invited to a mussel-bake at the lighthouse and nobody would eat Di at the Pennys’. Susan had to resign herself to the inevitable.

Di and Jenny went home across the fields, which made it little more than a quarter of a mile. Di, in spite of her prodding conscience, was happy. They went through so much beauty ... little bays of bracken, elfin haunted, in the bays of deep-green woods, a rustling windy hollow where you waded knee-deep in buttercups, a winding lane under young maples, a brook that was a rainbow scarf of blossom, a sunny pasture field full of strawberries. Di, just wakening to a perception of the loveliness of the world, was enraptured and almost wished Jenny wouldn't talk so much. That was all right at school but here Di wasn't sure she wanted to hear about the time Jenny poisoned herself ... 'zackzidentally of course ... by taking the wrong kind of medicine. Jenny painted her dying agonies finely but was somewhat vague as to the reason she hadn't died after all. She had "lost conscious" but the doctor had managed to pull her back from the brink of the grave.

"Though I've never been the same since. Di Blythe, what *are* you staring at? I don't believe you've been listening at all."

"Oh, yes, I have," said Di guiltily. "I do think you've had the most wonderful life, Jenny. But look at the view."

"The view? What's a view?"

"Why ... why . . . something you're looking at. *That* ..." waving her hand at the panorama of meadow and woodland and cloud-smitten hill before them, with that sapphire dent of sea between the hills.

Jenny sniffed.

"Just a lot of old trees and cows. I've seen it a hundred times. You're awful funny by spells, Di Blythe. I don't want to hurt your feelings, but sometimes I think you're not all there. I really do. But I s'pose you can't help it. They say your ma is always raving like that. Well, there's our place."

Di gazed at the Penny house and lived through her first shock of disillusionment. Was *this* the "mansion" Jenny had talked of? It was big enough, certainly, and had the five bay-windows; but it was wofully in need of painting and much of the "wooden lace" was missing. The verandah had sagged badly and the once lovely old fanlight over the front

door was broken. The blinds were crooked, there were several brown-paper panes and the “beautiful birch grove” behind the house was represented by a few lean sinewy old trees. The barns were in a very tumbledown condition, the yard was full of old rusty machinery and the garden was a perfect jungle of weeds. Di had never seen such a looking place in her life and for the first time it occurred to her to wonder if *all* Jenny’s tales were true. *Could* anyone have so many narrow escapes of her life, even in nine years, as she had claimed to have?

Inside it was not much better. The parlour into which Jenny ushered her was musty and dusty. The ceiling was discoloured and covered with cracks. The famous marble mantelpiece was only painted ... even Di could see that ... and draped with a hideous Japanese scarf, held in place by a row of “moustache” cups. The stringy lace curtains were a bad colour and full of holes. The blinds were of blue paper, much cracked and torn, with a huge basketful of roses depicted on them. As for the parlour being full of stuffed owls, there was a small glass case in one corner containing three rather dishevelled birds, one with its eyes missing entirely. To Di, accustomed to the beauty and dignity of Ingleside, the room looked like something you had seen in a bad dream. The odd thing, however, was that Jenny seemed quite unconscious of any discrepancy between her descriptions and reality. Di wondered if she had just dreamed that Jenny had told her such and such.

It was not so bad outside. The little playhouse Mr. Penny had built in the spruce corner, looking like a real house in miniature, *was* a very interesting place and the little pigs and the new foal were “just sweet.” As for the litter of mongrel puppies they were as woolly and delightful as if they had belonged to the dog caste of Vere de Vere. One was especially adorable, with long brown ears and a white spot on its forehead, a wee pink tongue and white paws. Di was bitterly disappointed to learn that they had all been promised.

‘Though I don’t know as we could give you one even if they weren’t,’ said Jenny. “Uncle’s awful particular where he puts his dogs. We’ve heard

you can't get a dog to stay at Ingleside *at all*. There must be something queer about you. Uncle says dogs *know* things people don't."

"I'm sure they can't know anything nasty about *us!*" cried Di.

"Well, I *hope* not. Is your pa cruel to your ma?"

"No, of course he isn't!"

"Well, I heard that he beat her ... beat her till she *screamed*. But of course I didn't believe *that*. Ain't it awful the lies people tell? Anyway, I've always liked you, Di, and I'll always stand up for you."

Di felt she ought to be very grateful for this, but somehow she was not. She was beginning to feel very much out of place and the glamour with which Jenny had been invested in her eyes was suddenly and irrevocably gone. She did not feel the old thrill when Jenny told her about the time she had been almost drowned falling in a millpond. She *did not believe it* ... Jenny just *imagined* those things. And likely the millionaire uncle and the thousand-dollar diamond ring and the missionary to the leopards had just been imagined too. Di felt as flat as a pricked balloon.

But there was Gammy yet. Surely Gammy was real. When Di and Jenny returned to the house Aunt Lina, a full-breasted, red-cheeked lady in a none-too-fresh cotton print, told them Gammy wanted to see the visitor.

"Gammy's bed-rid," explained Jenny. "We always take everybody who comes in to see her. She gets mad if we don't."

"Mind you don't forget to ask her how her backache is," cautioned Aunt Lina. "She doesn't like it if folks don't remember her back."

"And Uncle John," said Jenny. "Don't forget to ask her how Uncle John is."

"Who is Uncle John?" asked Di.

"A son of hers who died fifty years ago," explained Aunt Lina. "He was sick for years afore he died and Gammy kind of got accustomed to hearing folks ask how he was. She misses it."

At the door of Gammy's room Di suddenly hung back. All at once she was terribly frightened of this incredibly old woman.

"What's the matter?" demanded Jenny. "Nobody's going to bite you!"

"Is she ... did she really live before the flood, Jenny?"

“Of course not. Whoever said she did? She’ll be a hundred, though, if she lives till her next birthday. Come on!”

Di went, gingerly. In a small, badly cluttered bedroom Gammy lay in a huge bed. Her face, unbelievably wrinkled and shrunken, looked like an old monkey’s. She peered at Di with sunken, red-rimmed eyes and said testily:

“Stop staring. Who are you?”

“This is Diana Blythe, Gammy,” said Jenny ... a rather subdued Jenny.

“Humph! A nice high-sounding name! They tell me you’ve got a proud sister.”

“Nan isn’t proud,” cried Di, with a flash of spirit. Had Jenny been running down Nan?

“A little saucy, ain’t you? *I* wasn’t brought up to speak like that to my betters. She *is* proud. Anyone who walks with her head in the air, like Young Jenny tells me she does, *is* proud. One of your hoity-toitys! Don’t contradict *me*.”

Gammy looked so angry that Di hastily enquired how her back was.

“Who says I’ve got a back? Such presumption! My back’s my own business. Come here ... come close to my bed!”

Di went, wishing herself a thousand miles away. What was this dreadful old woman going to do to her?

Gammy hitched herself alertly to the edge of the bed and put a clawlike hand on Di’s hair.

“Sort of carroty but real slick. That’s a pretty dress. Turn it up and show me your petticoat.”

Di obeyed, thankful that she had on her white petticoat with its trimming of Susan’s crocheted lace. But what sort of a family was it where you were made to show your petticoat?

“I always judge a girl by her petticoats,” said Gammy. “Yours’ll pass. Now your drawers.”

Di dared not refuse. She lifted her petticoat.

“Humph! Lace on them too! That’s extravagance. And you’ve never asked after John!”

“How is he?” gasped Di.

“How is he, says she, bold as brass. He might be dead, for all you know. Tell me this. Is it true your mother has a gold thimble ... a solid gold thimble?”

“Yes. Daddy gave it to her her last birthday.”

“Well, I’d never have believed it. Young Jenny told me she had, but you can’t never believe a word Young Jenny says. A solid gold thimble! I never heard the beat of that. Well, you’d better go out and get your suppers. Eating never goes out of fashion. Jenny, pull up your pants. One leg’s hanging below your dress. Let us have decency at least.”

“My pant — drawer leg isn’t hanging down,” said Jenny indignantly.

“Pants for Pennys and drawers for Blythes. That’s the distinction between you and always will be. Don’t contradict *me*.”

The whole Penny family were assembled around the supper table in the big kitchen. Di had not seen any of them before except Aunt Lina, but as she shot a glance around the board she understood why Mother and Susan had not wanted her to come here. The tablecloth was ragged and daubed with ancient gravy stains. The dishes were a nondescript assortment. As for the Pennys ... Di had never sat at table with such company before and she wished herself safely back at Ingleside. But she must go through with it now.

Uncle Ben, as Jenny called him, sat at the head of the table; he had a flaming red beard and a bald, grey-fringed head. His bachelor brother, Parker, lank and unshaven, had arranged himself at an angle convenient for spitting in the woodbox, which he did at frequent intervals. The boys, Curt, twelve, and George Andrew, thirteen, had pale-blue, fishy eyes with a bold stare and bare skin showing through the holes in their ragged shirts. Curt had his hand, which he had cut on a broken bottle, tied up with a bloodstained rag. Annabel Penny, eleven, and “Gert” Penny, ten, were two rather pretty girls with round brown eyes. “Tuppy,” aged two, had delightful curls and rosy cheeks, and the baby, with roguish black eyes, on Aunt Lina’s lap would have been adorable if it had been *clean*.

“Curt, why didn’t you clean your nails when you knew company was coming?” demanded Jenny. “Annabel, don’t speak with your mouth full. I’m the only one who ever tries to teach this family any manners,” she explained aside to Di.

“Shut up,” said Uncle Ben in a great booming voice.

“I won’t shut up ... you can’t make me shut up!” cried Jenny.

“Don’t sass your uncle,” said Aunt Lina placidly. “Come now, girls, behave like ladies. Curt, pass the potatoes to Miss Blythe.”

“Oh, ho, *Miss Blythe*,” sniggered Curt.

But Diana had got at least one thrill. For the first time in her life she had been called Miss Blythe.

For a wonder the food was good and abundant. Di, who was hungry, would have enjoyed the meal ... though she hated drinking out of a chipped cup ... if she had only been sure it was clean ... and if everybody hadn’t quarrelled so. Private fights were going on all the time ... between George Andrew and Curt ... between Curt and Annabel ... between Gert and Jen ... even between Uncle Ben and Aunt Lina. *They* had a terrible fight and hurled the bitterest accusations at each other. Aunt Lina cast up to Uncle Ben all the fine men she might have married and Uncle Ben said he only wished she had married anybody but him.

“Wouldn’t it be dreadful if my father and mother fought like that?” thought Di. “Oh, if I were only back home! Don’t suck your thumb, Tuppy.”

She said that before she thought. They had had *such* a time breaking Rilla of sucking her thumb.

Instantly Curt was red with rage.

“Let him alone!” he shouted. “He can suck his thumb if he likes! *We* ain’t bossed to death like you Ingleside kids are. Who do you think you are?”

“Curt, Curt! Miss Blythe will think you haven’t any manners,” said Aunt Lina. She was quite calm and smiling again and put two teaspoons of sugar in Uncle Ben’s tea. “Don’t mind him, dear. Have another piece of pie.”

Di did not want another piece of pie. She only wanted to go home ... and she did not see how it could be brought about.

“Well,” boomed Uncle Ben, as he drained the last of his tea noisily from the saucer, “that’s so much over. Get up in the morning ... work all day ... eat three meals and go to bed. What a life!”

“Pa loves his little joke,” smiled Aunt Lina.

“Talking of jokes ... I saw the Methodist minister in Flagg’s store today. He tried to contradict me when I said there was no God. ‘You talk on Sunday,’ I told him. ‘It’s my turn now. Prove to me there’s a God,’ I told him. ‘It’s you that’s doing the talking,’ says he. They all laughed like ninnies. Thought he was smart.”

No God! The bottom seemed falling out of Di’s world. She wanted to cry.

Chapter XXIX

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It was worse after supper. Before that she and Jenny had been alone at least. Now there was a mob. George Andrew grabbed her hand and galloped her through a mud-puddle before she could escape him. Di had never been treated like this in her life. Jem and Walter teased her, as did Ken Ford, but she did not know anything about boys like these.

Curt offered her a chew of gum, fresh from his mouth, and was mad when she refused it.

“I’ll put a live mouse on you!” he yelled. “Smartycat! Stuckupitty! Got a sissy for a brother!”

“Walter isn’t a sissy!” said Di. She was half sick from fright but she would not hear Walter called names.

“He is — he writes po’try. Do you know what I’d do if I’d a brother that writ po’try? I’d drown him ... like they do kittens.”

“Talking of kittens, there’s a lot of wild ones in the barn,” said Jen. “Let’s go and hunt them out.”

Di simply would not go hunting kittens with those boys, and said so.

“We’ve got plenty of kittens at home. We’ve got eleven,” she said proudly.

“I don’t believe it!” cried Jen. “You haven’t! Nobody ever had eleven kittens. It wouldn’t be *right* to have eleven kittens.”

“One cat has five and the other six. And I’m not going to the barn anyhow. I fell down off the loft in Amy Taylor’s barn last winter. I’d have been killed if I hadn’t lit on a pile of chaff.”

“Well, I’d have fell off our loft once if Curt hadn’t caught me,” said Jen sulkily. Nobody had any right to be falling off lofts but her. Di Blythe having adventures! The impudence of her!

“You should say ‘I’d *have fallen*,’” said Di; and from that moment everything was over between her and Jenny.

But the night had to be got through somehow. They did not go to bed till late because none of the Pennys ever went to bed early. The big bedroom where Jenny took her at halfpast ten had two beds in it. Annabel and Gert were getting ready for theirs. Di looked at the others. The pillows were very frowsy. The quilt needed washing very badly. The paper ... the famous "parrot" paper ... had been leaked on and even the parrots did not look very parrotly. On the stand by the bed were a granite pitcher and a tin wash-basin half full of dirty water. She could never wash her face in *that*. Well, for once she must go to bed without washing her face. At least the nightgown Aunt Lina had left for her was clean.

When Di got up from saying her prayers Jenny laughed.

"My, but you're old-fashioned. You looked so funny and holy saying your prayers. I didn't know anybody said prayers now. Prayers ain't any good. What do you say them for?"

"I've got to save my soul," said Di, quoting Susan.

"I haven't any soul," mocked Jenny.

"Perhaps not, but *I have*," said Di, drawing herself up.

Jenny looked at her. But the spell of Jenny's eyes was broken. Never again would Di succumb to its magic.

"You're not the girl I thought you were, Diana Blythe," said Jennie sadly, as one much deceived.

Before Di could reply George Andrew and Curt rushed into the room. George Andrew wore a mask ... a hideous thing with an enormous nose. Di screamed.

"Stop squealing like a pig under a gate!" ordered George Andrew.
"You've got to kiss us goodnight."

"If you don't we'll lock you up in that closet ... and it's full of rats," said Curt.

George Andrew advanced towards Di, who shrieked again and retreated before him. The mask paralyzed her with terror. She knew quite well it was only George Andrew behind it and she was not afraid of *him*; but she would die if that awful mask came near her ... she knew she would. Just as it seemed that the dreadful nose was touching her face she tripped over a

stool and fell backward on the floor, striking her head on the sharp edge of Annabel's bed as she fell. For a moment she was dazed and lay with her eyes shut.

"She's gone dead ... she's gone dead!" sniffled Curt, beginning to cry.

"Oh, won't you get a licking if you've killed her, George Andrew!" said Annabel.

"Maybe she's only pretending," said Curt. "Put a worm on her. I've some in this can. If she's only foxing that will bring her to."

Di heard this but was too frightened to open her eyes. (*Perhaps they would go away and leave her alone if they thought her dead. But if they put a worm on her ...*)

"Prick her with a pin. If she bleeds she ain't dead," said Curt.

(*She could stand a pin but not a worm.*)

"She ain't dead ... she *can't* be dead," whispered Jenny. "You've just scared her into a fit. But if she comes to she'll be screeching all over the place and Uncle Ben'll come in and lambast the daylights out of us. I wish I'd never asked her here, the fraid-cat!"

"Do you s'pose we could carry her home before she comes to?" suggested George Andrew.

(*Oh, if they only would!*)

"We couldn't ... not that far," said Jenny.

"It's only a quarter of a mile 'cross lots. We'll each take an arm or leg ... you and Curt and me and Annabel."

Nobody but the Pennys could have conceived such an idea or carried it out if they had. But they were used to doing anything they took it into their heads to do and a "lambasting" from the head of the household was something to be avoided if possible. Dad didn't bother about them up to a certain point but beyond that ... *good-night!*

"If she comes to while we're carrying her we'll just cut and run," said George Andrew.

There wasn't the least danger of Di coming to. She trembled with thankfulness when she felt herself being hoisted up between the four of them. They crept downstairs and out of the house, across the yard and over

the long clover field ... past the woods ... down the hill. Twice they had to lay her down while they rested. They were quite sure now she was dead and all they wanted was to get her home without being seen. If Jenny Penny never prayed in her life before she was praying now ... that nobody in the village would be up. If they could get Di Blythe home they would all swear she had got so homesick at bedtime that she had insisted on going home. What happened after that would be no concern of theirs.

Di ventured to open her eyes once as they plotted this. The sleeping world around looked very strange to her. The fir trees were dark and alien. The stars were laughing at her. (*"I don't like such a big sky. But if I can just hold on a little spell longer I'll be home. If they find out that I'm not dead they'll just leave me here and I'll never get home in the dark alone."*)

When the Pennys dropped Di on the verandah of Ingleside they ran like mad. Di did not dare come back to life too soon, but at last she ventured to open her eyes. Yes, she was home. It seemed almost too good to be true. She had been a very, very naughty girl but she was quite sure she would never be naughty again. She sat up and the Shrimp came stealthily up the steps and rubbed against her, purring. She hugged him to her. How nice and warm and friendly he was! She did not think she would be able to get in ... she knew Susan would have all the doors locked when Dad was away and she dared not wake Susan up at this hour. But she did not mind. The June night was cold enough but she would get into the hammock and cuddle down with the Shrimp, knowing that, near to her, behind those locked doors, were Susan and the boys and Nan ... and *home*.

How strange the world was after dark! Was everyone in it asleep but her? The large white roses on the bush by the steps looked like small human faces in the night. The smell of the mint was like a friend. There was a glint of firefly in the orchard. After all, she would be able to brag that she had "slept out all night."

But it was not to be. Two dark figures came through the gate and up the driveway. Gilbert went around by the back way to force open a kitchen window but Anne came up the steps and stood looking in amazement at the poor mite who sat there, with her armful of cat.

“Mummy ... oh, Mummy!” She was safe in Mother’s arms.

“Di, darling! What does this mean?”

“Oh, Mummy, I was bad ... but I’m so sorry ... and you were right ... and Gammy was so dreadful — but I thought you wouldn’t be back till tomorrow.”

“Daddy got a telephone from Lowbridge ... they have to operate on Mrs. Parker tomorrow and Dr. Parker wanted him to be there. So we caught the evening train and walked up from the station. Now tell me ...”

The whole story was sobbed out by the time Gilbert had got in and opened the front door. He thought he had effected a very silent entrance, but Susan had ears that could hear a bat squeak when the safety of Ingleside was concerned, and she came limping downstairs with a wrapper over her nightgown.

There were exclamations and explanations, but Anne cut them short.

“Nobody is blaming you, Susan dear. Di has been very naughty but she knows it and I think she has had her punishment. I’m sorry we’ve disturbed you ... you must go straight back to bed and the doctor will see to your ankle.”

“I was not asleep, Mrs. Dr. dear. Do you think I could sleep, knowing where that blessed child was? And ankle or no ankle I am going to get you both a cup of tea.”

“Mummy,” said Di, from her own white pillow, “is Daddy ever cruel to you?”

“Cruel! To me? Why, Di ...”

“The Pennys said he was ... said he beat you ...”

“Dear, you know what the Pennys are now, so you know better than to worry your small head over anything they said. There is always a bit of malicious gossip floating round in any place ... people like that *invent* it. You must never bother about it.”

“Are you going to scold me in the morning, Mummy?”

“No. I think you’ve learned your lesson. Now go to sleep, precious.”

“Mummy is so *sensible*,” was Di’s last conscious thought. But Susan, as she stretched out peacefully in bed, with her ankle expertly and

comfortably bandaged, was saying to herself:

“I must hunt up the fine-tooth comb in the morning ... and when I see my fine Miss Jenny Penny I shall give her a ticking off she will not forget.”

Jenny Penny never got the promised ticking off, for she came no more to the Glen school. Instead, she went with the other Pennys to Mowbray Narrows school, whence rumours drifted back of her yarns, among them being one of how Di Blythe, who lived in the “big house” at Glen St. Mary but was always coming down to sleep with her, had fainted one night and had been carried home at midnight pick-a-back, by her, Jenny Penny, alone and unassisted. The Ingleside people had knelt and kissed her hands out of gratitude and the doctor himself had got out his fringed-top buggy and his famous dappled grey span and driven her home. “And if there is ever *anything* I can do for you, Miss Penny, for your kindness to my beloved child you have only to name it. My best heart’s blood would not be enough to repay you. I would go to Equatorial Africa to reward you for what you have done,” the doctor had vowed.

Chapter XXX

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“*I* know something you don’t know ... something *you* don’t know ... something *you* don’t know,” chanted Dovie Johnson, as she teetered back and forth on the very edge of the wharf.

It was Nan’s turn for the spotlight ... Nan’s turn to add a tale to the do-you-remembers of after Ingleside years. Though Nan to the day of her death would blush to be reminded of it. She *had* been so silly.

Nan shuddered to see Dovie teetering ... and yet it had a fascination. She was so sure Dovie would fall off sometime and then what? But Dovie never fell. Her luck always held.

Everything Dovie did, or said she did ... which were, perhaps, two very different things, although Nan, brought up at Ingleside where nobody ever told anything but the truth even as a joke, was too innocent and credulous to know that ... had a fascination for Nan. Dovie, who was eleven and had lived in Charlottetown all her life knew so much more than Nan, who was only eight. Charlottetown, Dovie said, was the only place where people knew anything. What could you know, shut off in a one-horse place like Glen St. Mary?

Dovie was spending part of her vacation with her Aunt Ella in the Glen and she and Nan had struck up a very intimate friendship in spite of the difference in their ages. Perhaps because Nan looked up to Dovie, who seemed to her to be almost grown up, with the adoration we needs must give the highest when we see it ... or think we see it. Dovie liked her humble and adoring little satellite.

“There’s no harm in Nan Blythe ... she’s only a bit soft,” she told Aunt Ella.

The watchful folks at Ingleside could not see anything out of the way about Dovie ... even if, as Anne reflected, her mother was a cousin of the Avonlea Pyes ... and made no objection to Nan’s chumming with her,

though Susan from the first mistrusted those gooseberry-green eyes with their pale golden lashes. But what would you? Dovie was “nice-mannered,” well-dressed, ladylike, and did not talk too much. Susan could not give any reason for her mistrust and held her peace. Dovie would be going home when school opened and in the meantime there was certainly no need of fine-tooth combs in this case.

So Nan and Dovie spent most of their spare time together at the wharf, where there was generally a ship or two with their folded wings, and Rainbow Valley hardly knew Nan that August. The other Ingleside children did not care greatly for Dovie and no love was lost. She had played a practical joke on Walter and Di had been furious and “said things.” Dovie was, it seemed, fond of playing practical jokes. Perhaps that was why none of the Glen girls ever tried to lure her from Nan.

“Oh, please tell me,” pleaded Nan.

But Dovie only winked a wicked eye and said that Nan was far too young to be told such a thing. This was just maddening.

“*Please* tell me, Dovie.”

“Can’t. It was told me as a secret by Aunt Kate and she’s dead. I’m the only person in the world that knows it now. I promised when I heard it that I’d never tell a soul. You’d tell somebody ... you couldn’t help it.”

“I wouldn’t ... I could so!” cried Nan.

“People say you folks at Ingleside tell each other everything. Susan’d pick it out of you in no time.”

“She wouldn’t. I know lots of things I’ve never told Susan. Secrets. I’ll tell mine to you if you’ll tell me yours.”

“Oh, I’m not int’rested in the secrets of a little girl like you,” said Dovie.

A nice insult that! Nan thought her little secrets were lovely ... that one wild cherry trees she had found blooming in the spruce wood away back behind Mr. Taylor’s hay barn ... her dream of a tiny white fairy lying on a lily pad in the marsh ... her fancy of a boat coming up the harbour drawn by swans attached to silver chains ... the romance she was beginning to weave about the beautiful lady at the old MacAllister place.

They were all very wonderful and magical to Nan and she felt glad, when she thought it over, that she did not have to tell them to Dovie after all.

But what *did* Dovie know about *her* that *she* didn't know? The query haunted Nan like a mosquito.

The next day Dovie again referred to her secret knowledge.

"I've been thinking it over, Nan ... perhaps you *ought* to know it since it's about you. Of course what Aunt Kate meant was that I mustn't tell anyone but the person concerned. Look here. If you'll give me that china stag of yours I'll tell you what I know about you."

"Oh, I couldn't give you *that*, Dovie. Susan gave it to me my last birthday. It would hurt her feelings dreadfully."

"*All* right, then. If you'd rather have your old stag than know an important thing about yourself you can keep him. *I* don't care. I'd rather keep it. I always like to know things other girls don't. It makes you *important*. I'll look at you next Sunday in church and I'll think to myself, 'if you just knew what *I* know about you, Nan Blythe.' It'll be fun."

"Is what you know about me *nice*?" queried Nan.

"Oh, it's *very* romantic ... just like something you'd read in a storybook. But never mind, *you* ain't interested and *I* know what I know."

By this time Nan was crazy with curiosity. Life wouldn't be worth living if she couldn't find out what Dovie's mysterious knowledge was. She had a sudden inspiration.

"Dovie, I can't give you my stag, but if you'll tell me what you know about me I'll give you my red parasol."

Dovie's gooseberry eyes gleamed. She had been eaten up by envy of that parasol.

"The new red parasol your mother brought you from town last week?" she bargained.

Nan nodded. Her breath came quickly. Was it ... oh, was it possible that Dovie would really tell her?

"Will your mother let you?" demanded Dovie.

Nan nodded again, but a little uncertainly. She was none too sure of it. Dovie scented the uncertainty.

“You’ll have to have that parasol right here,” she said firmly, “before I can tell you. No parasol, no secret.”

“I’ll bring it tomorrow,” promised Nan hastily. She just *had* to know what Dovie knew about her, that was all there was to it.

“Well, I’ll think it over,” said Dovie doubtfully. “Don’t get your hopes up. I don’t expect I’ll tell you after all. You’re too young ... I’ve told you so often enough.”

“I’m older than I was yesterday,” pleaded Nan. “Oh, come, Dovie, don’t be mean.”

“I guess I’ve got a right to my own knowledge,” said Dovie crushingly. “You’d tell Anne ... that’s your mother ...”

“Of course I know my own mother’s name,” said Nan, a trifle on her dignity. Secrets or no secrets, there were limits. “I told you I wouldn’t tell *anybody* at Ingleside.”

“Will you swear it?”

“Swear it?”

“Don’t be a poll-parrot. Of course I mean just promising solemnly.”

“I promise solemnly.”

“Solemnner than that.”

Nan didn’t see how she could be any solemnner. Her face would set if she was.

“*“Clasp your hands, look at the sky,
Cross your heart and hope to die,”*”

said Dovie.

Nan went through the ritual.

“You’ll bring the parasol tomorrow and we’ll see,” said Dovie. “What did your mother do before she was married, Nan?”

“She taught school ... and taught it well,” said Nan.

“Well, I was just wondering. Mother thinks it was a mistake for your Dad to marry her. Nobody knew anything about her *family*. And the girls he might have had, Mother says. I must be going now. O revor.”

Nan knew that meant “till tomorrow.” She was very proud of having a chum who could talk French. She continued to sit on the wharf long after Dovie had gone home. She liked to sit on the wharf and watch the fishing boats going out and coming in, and sometimes a ship drifting down the harbour, bound to fair lands far away. Like Jem, she often wished she could sail away in a ship ... down the blue harbour, past the bar of shadowy dunes, past the lighthouse point where at night the revolving Four Winds Light became an outpost of mystery, out, out, to the blue mist that was the summer gulf, on, on, to enchanted islands in golden morning seas. Nan flew on the wings of her imagination all over the world as she squatted there on the old sagging wharf.

But this afternoon she was all keyed up over Dovie’s secret. Would Dovie really tell her? What would it be ... what *could* it be? And what about those girls Father might have married? Nan liked to speculate about those girls. One of them might have been her mother. But that was horrible. Nobody could be her mother except Mother. The thing was simply unthinkable.

“I *think* Dovie Johnson is going to tell me a secret,” Nan confided to Mother that night when she was being kissed bye-bye. “Of course I won’t be able to tell even you, Mummy, because I’ve promised I wouldn’t. You won’t mind, will you, Mummy?”

“Not at all,” said Anne, much amused.

When Nan went down to the wharf the next day she took the parasol. It was her parasol, she told herself. It had been given to her, so she had a perfect right to do what she liked with it. Having quieted her conscience with this sophistry she slipped away when nobody could see her. It gave her a pang to think of giving up her dear, gay little parasol, but by this time the craze to find out what Dovie knew had become too strong to be resisted.

“Here’s the parasol, Dovie,” she said breathlessly. “And now tell me the secret.”

Dovie was really taken aback. She had never meant matters to go as far as this ... she had never believed Nan Blythe’s mother would *let* her give

away her red parasol. She pursed her lips.

“I don’t know as that shade of red will suit my complexion, after all. It’s rather *gaudy*. I guess I won’t tell.” Nan had a spirit of her own and Dovie had not yet quite charmed it into blind submission. Nothing roused it more quickly than injustice.

“A bargain is a bargain, Dovie Johnson! You *said* the parasol for the secret. Here is the parasol and you’ve *got* to keep your promise.”

“Oh, very well,” said Dovie in a bored way.

Everything grew very still. The gusts of wind had died away. The water stopped glug-glugging round the piles of the wharf. Nan shivered with delicious ecstasy. She was going to find out at last what Dovie knew.

“You know the Jimmy Thomases down at the Harbour Mouth,” said Dovie. “Six-toed Jimmy Thomas?”

Nan nodded. Of course she knew the Thomases ... at least, knew of them. Six-toed Jimmy sometimes called at Ingleside selling fish. Susan said you never could be sure of getting good ones from him. Nan did not like the look of him. He had a bald head, with a fluff of curly white hair on either side of it, and a red, hooked nose. But what could the Thomases possibly have to do with the matter?

“And you know Cassie Thomas?” went on Dovie.

Nan had seen Cassie Thomas once when Six-toed Jimmy had brought her round with him in his fishwagon. Cassie was just about her own age, with a mop of red curls and bold, greenish-grey eyes. She had stuck her tongue out at Nan.

“Well... . “Dovie drew a long breath ... “this is the *truth* about you. *You* are Cassie Thomas and *she* is Nan Blythe.”

Nan stared at Dovie. She hadn’t the faintest glimmer of Dovie’s meaning. What she had said made no sense.

“I ... I ... what do you mean?”

“It’s plain enough, I should think,” said Dovie with a pitying smile. Since she had been *forced* to tell this she was going to make it worth the telling. “You and her were born the same night. It was when the Thomases lived in the Glen. The nurse took Di’s twin down to Thomas’s and put her

in the cradle and took you back to Di's mother. She didn't dare take Di, too, or she would have. She hated your mother and she took that way of getting even. And that is why you are really Cassie Thomas and you ought to be living down there at the Harbour Mouth and poor Cass ought to be up at Ingleside instead of being banged about by that old stepmother of hers. I feel so sorry for her many's the time."

Nan believed every word of this preposterous yarn. She had never been lied to in her life and not for one moment did she doubt the truth of Dovie's tale. It never occurred to her that anyone, much less her beloved Dovie, would or could make up such a story. She gazed at Dovie with anguished, disillusioned eyes.

"How ... how did your Aunt Kate find it out?" she gasped through dry lips.

"The nurse told her on her deathbed," said Dovie solemnly. "I s'pose her conscience troubled her. Aunt Kate never told anyone but me. When I came to the Glen and saw Cassie Thomas ... Nan Blythe, I mean ... I took a good look at her. She's got red hair and eyes the same colour as your mother's. You've got brown eyes and brown hair. That's why you don't look like Di ... twins *always* look exactly alike. And Cass has just the same kind of ears as your father ... lying so nice and flat against her head. I don't s'pose anything can be done about it now. But I've often thought it wasn't fair, you having such an easy time and being kept like a doll and poor Cass — Nan — in rags, and not even getting enough to eat, many's the time. And old Six-toed beating her when he comes home drunk! ... Why, what are you looking at me like that for?"

Nan's pain was greater than she could bear. All was horribly clear to her now. Folks had always thought it funny she and Di didn't look one bit alike. *This* was why.

"I *hate* you for telling me this, Dovie Johnson!"

Dovie shrugged her fat shoulders.

"I didn't tell you you'd like it, did I? You *made* me tell. Where are you going?"

For Nan, white and dizzy, had risen to her feet.

“Home ... to tell Mother,” she said miserably.

“You mustn’t ... you dassn’t! Remember you swore you wouldn’t tell!” cried Dovie.

Nan stared at her. It was true she had promised not to tell. And Mother always said you mustn’t break a promise.

“I guess I’ll be getting home myself,” said Dovie, not altogether liking the look of Nan.

She snatched up the parasol and ran off, her plump bare legs twinkling along the old wharf. Behind her she left a brokenhearted child, sitting amid the ruins of her small universe. Dovie didn’t care. Soft was no name for Nan. It really wasn’t much fun to fool her. Of course she would tell her mother as soon as she got home and find out she had been hoaxed.

“Just as well I’m going home Sunday,” reflected Dovie.

Nan sat on the wharf for what seemed hours ... blind, crushed, despairing. She wasn’t Mother’s child! She was Six-toed Jimmy’s child ... Six-toed Jimmy of whom she had always had a secret dread simply because of his six toes. She had no business to be living at Ingleside, loved by Mother and Dad. “Oh!” Nan gave a piteous little moan. Mother and Dad wouldn’t love her any more if they knew. All their love would go to Cassie Thomas.

Nan put her hand to her head. “It makes me dizzy,” she said.

Chapter XXXI

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“What is the reason you are not eating anything, pet?” asked Susan at the supper table.

“Were you out in the sun too long, dear?” asked Mother anxiously.

“Does your head ache?”

“Ye-e-s,” said Nan. But it wasn’t her head that ached. Was she telling a lie to Mother? And if so, how many more would she have to tell? For Nan knew she would never be able to eat again ... never so long as this horrible knowledge was hers. And she knew she could never tell Mother. Not so much because of the promise ... hadn’t Susan said once that a bad promise was better broken than kept? ... but because it would hurt Mother.

Somehow, Nan knew beyond any doubt that it would hurt Mother horribly. And Mother mustn’t ... shouldn’t ... be hurt. Nor Dad.

And yet ... there was Cassie Thomas. She *wouldn’t* call her Nan Blythe. It made Nan feel awful beyond description to think of Cassie Thomas as being Nan Blythe. She felt as if it blotted *her* out altogether. If she wasn’t Nan Blythe she wasn’t anybody! She would *not* be Cassie Thomas.

But Cassie Thomas haunted her. For a week Nan was beset by her ... a wretched week during which Anne and Susan were really worried over the child, who wouldn’t eat and wouldn’t play and, as Susan said, “just moped around.” Was it because Dovie Johnson had gone home? Nan said it wasn’t. Nan said it wasn’t *anything*. She just felt tired. Dad looked her over and prescribed a dose which Nan took meekly. It was not so bad as castor-oil but even castor-oil meant nothing now. Nothing meant anything except Cassie Thomas ... and the awful question which had emerged from her confusion of mind and taken possession of her.

Shouldn’t Cassie Thomas have her rights?

Was it fair that she, Nan Blythe ... Nan clung to her identity frantically ... should have all the things Cassie Thomas was denied and which were hers by rights? No, it wasn't fair. Nan was despairingly sure it wasn't fair. Somewhere in Nan there was a very strong sense of justice and fair play. And it became increasingly borne in upon her that it was only fair that Cassie Thomas should be told.

After all, perhaps nobody would care very much. Mother and Dad would be a little upset at first, of course, but as soon as they knew that Cassie Thomas was their own child all their love would go to Cassie and, she, Nan, would be of no account to them. Mother would kiss Cassie Thomas and sing to her in the summer twilights ... sing the song Nan liked best... .

*"I saw a ship a-sailing, a-sailing on the sea,
And oh, it was all laden with pretty things for me."*

Nan and Di had often talked about the day their ship would come in. But now the pretty things ... her share of them anyhow ... would belong to Cassie Thomas. Cassie Thomas would take her part as fairy queen in the forthcoming Sunday School concert and wear *her* dazzling band of tinsel. How Nan had looked forward to that! Susan would make fruit puffs for Cassie Thomas and Pussywillow would purr for her. She would play with Nan's dolls in Nan's moss-carpeted playhouse in the maple grove, and sleep in her bed. Would Di like that? Would Di like Cassie Thomas for a sister?

There came a day when Nan knew she could bear it no longer. She must do what was fair. She would go down to the Harbour Mouth and tell the Thomases the truth. *They* could tell Mother and Dad. Nan felt that she simply could not do *that*.

Nan felt a little better when she had come to this decision, but very, very sad. She tried to eat a little supper because it would be the last meal she would ever eat at Ingleside.

"I'll always call Mother 'Mother,'" thought Nan desperately. "And I *won't* call Six-toed Jimmy 'Father.' I'll just say 'Mr. Thomas' very

respectfully. Surely he won't mind *that*."

But something choked her. Looking up she read castor-oil in Susan's eye. Little Susan thought she wouldn't be here at bedtime to take it. Cassie Thomas would have to swallow it. That was the one thing Nan didn't envy Cassie Thomas.

Nan went off immediately after supper. She must go before it was dark or her courage would fail her. She went in her checked gingham play-dress, not daring to change it, lest Susan or Mother ask why. Besides, all her nice dresses really belonged to Cassie Thomas. But she did put on the new apron Susan had made for her ... such a smart little scalloped apron, the scallops bound in turkey red. Nan loved that apron. Surely Cassie Thomas wouldn't grudge her that much.

She walked down to the village, through the village, past the wharf road, and down the harbour road, a gallant, indomitable little figure. Nan had no idea that she was a heroine. On the contrary she felt very much ashamed of herself because it was so hard to do what was right and fair, so hard to keep from hating Cassie Thomas, so hard to keep from fearing Six-toed Jimmy, so hard to keep from turning round and running back to Ingleside.

It was a lowering evening. Out to sea hung a heavy black cloud, like a great dark bat. Fitful lightning played over the harbour and the wooded hills beyond. The cluster of fishermen's houses at the Harbour Mouth lay flooded in a red light that escaped from under the cloud. Pools of water here and there glowed like great rubies. A ship, silent, white-sailed, was drifting past the dim, misty dunes to the mysterious calling ocean; the gulls were crying strangely.

Nan did not like the smell of the fishing houses or the groups of dirty children who were playing and fighting and yelling on the sands. They looked curiously at Nan when she stopped to ask them which was Six-toed Jimmy's house.

"That one over there," said a boy, pointing. "What's your business with him?"

"Thank you," said Nan, turning away.

“Have ye got no more manners than that?” yelled a girl. “Too stuck-up to answer a civil question!”

The boy got in front of her.

“See that house back of Thomases?” he said. “It’s got a sea-serpent in it and I’ll lock you up in it if you don’t tell me what you want with Six-toed Jimmy.”

“Come now, Miss Proudly,” taunted a big girl. “You’re from the Glen and the glenners all think they’re the cheese. Answer Bill’s question!”

“If you don’t look out,” said another boy, “I’m going to drown some kittens and I’ll quite likely pop you in, too.”

“If you’ve got a dime about you I’ll sell you a tooth,” said a black-browed girl, grinning. “I had one pulled yesterday.”

“I haven’t got a dime and your tooth wouldn’t be of any use to me,” said Nan, plucking up a little spirit. “You let me alone.”

“None of your lip!” said the black-browed.

Nan started to run. The sea-serpent boy stuck out a foot and tripped her up. She fell her length on the tide-rippled sand. The others screamed with laughter.

“You won’t hold your head so high now, I reckon,” said the black-browed. “Strutting about here with your red scallops!”

Then someone exclaimed, “There’s Blue Jack’s boat coming in!” and away they all ran. The black cloud had dropped lower and every ruby pool was grey.

Nan picked herself up. Her dress was plastered with sand and her stockings were soiled. But she was free from her tormentors. Would these be her playmates in the future?

She must not cry ... she must not! She climbed the rickety board steps that led up to Six-toed Jimmy’s door. Like all the Harbour Mouth houses Six-toed Jimmy’s was raised on blocks of wood to be out of the reach of any unusually high tide, and the space underneath it was filled with a medley of broken dishes, empty cans, old lobster traps, and all kinds of rubbish. The door was open and Nan looked into a kitchen the like of which she had never seen in her life. The bare floor was dirty, the ceiling

was stained and smoked, the sink was full of dirty dishes. The remains of a meal were on the rickety old wooden table and horrid big black flies were swarming over it. A woman with an untidy mop of grayish hair was sitting on a rocker nursing a fat lump of a baby ... a baby gray with dirt.

“*My sister,*” thought Nan.

There was no sign of Cassie or Six-toed Jimmy, for which latter fact Nan felt grateful.

“Who are you and what do you want?” said the woman rather ungraciously.

She did not ask Nan in but Nan walked in. It was beginning to rain outside and a peal of thunder made the house shake. Nan knew she must say what she had come to say before her courage failed her, or she would turn and run from that dreadful house and that dreadful baby and those dreadful flies.

“I want to see Cassie, please,” she said. “I have *something important* to tell her.”

“Indeed, now!” said the woman. “It must be important, from the size of you. Well, Cass isn’t home. Her dad took her to the Upper Glen for a ride and with this storm coming up there’s no telling when they’ll be back. Sit down.”

Nan sat down on a broken chair. She had known the Harbour Mouth folks were poor but she had not known any of them were like this. Mrs. Tom Fitch in the Glen was poor but Mrs. Tom Fitch’s house was as neat and tidy as Ingleside. Of course, everyone knew that Six-toed Jimmy drank up everything he made. And this was to be her home henceforth!

“Anyhow, I’ll try to clean it up,” thought Nan forlornly. But her heart was like lead. The flame of high self-sacrifice which had lured her on had gone out.

“What are you wanting to see Cass for?” asked Mrs. Six-toed curiously, as she wiped the baby’s dirty face with a still dirtier apron. “If it’s about that Sunday School concert she can’t go and that’s flat. She hasn’t a decent rag. How can I get her any? I ask you.”

“No, it’s not about the concert,” said Nan drearily. She might as well tell Mrs. Thomas the whole story. She would have to know it anyhow. “I came to tell her ... to tell her that ... that she is me and I’m her!”

Perhaps Mrs. Six-toed might be forgiven for not thinking this very lucid.

“You must be cracked,” she said. “Whatever on earth do you mean?”

Nan lifted her head. The worst was now over.

“I mean that Cassie and I were born the same night and ... and ... the nurse changed us because she had a spite at Mother, and ... and ... Cassie ought to be living at Ingleside ... and having advantages.”

This last phrase was one she had heard her Sunday School teacher use but Nan thought it made a dignified ending to a very lame speech.

Mrs. Six-toed stared at her.

“Am I crazy or are you? What you’ve been saying doesn’t make any sense. Whoever told you such a rigmarole?”

“Dovie Johnson.”

Mrs. Six-toed threw back her tousled head and laughed. She might be dirty and draggled but she had an attractive laugh. “I might have knowed it. I’ve been washing for her aunt all summer and that kid is a pill! My, doesn’t she think it smart to fool people! Well, little Miss What’s-your-name, you’d better not be believing all Dovie’s yarns or she’ll lead you a merry dance.”

“Do you mean it isn’t true?” gasped Nan.

“Not very likely. Good glory, you must be pretty green to fall for anything like that. Cass must be a good year older than you. Who on earth are you, anyhow?”

“I’m Nan Blythe.” Oh, beautiful thought! She *was* Nan Blythe!

“Nan Blythe! One of the Ingleside twins! Why, I remember the night you were born. I happened to call at Ingleside on an errand. I wasn’t married to Six-toed then ... more’s the pity I ever was ... and Cass’s mother was living and healthy, with Cass beginning to walk. You look like your dad’s mother ... she was there that night, too, proud as Punch over

her twin granddaughters. And to think you'd no more sense than to believe a crazy yarn like that."

"I'm in the habit of believing people," said Nan, rising with a slight stateliness of manner, but too deliriously happy to want to snub Mrs. Six-toed very sharply.

"Well, it's a habit you'd better get out of in this kind of a world," said Mrs. Six-toed cynically. "And quit running round with kids who like to fool people. Sit down, child. You can't go home till this shower's over. It's pouring rain and dark as a stack of black cats. Why, she's gone ... the child's gone!"

Nan was already blotted out in the downpour. Nothing but the wild exultation born of Mrs. Six-toed's assurances could have carried her home through that storm. The wind buffeted her, the rain streamed upon her, the appalling thunderclaps made her think the world had burst open. Only the incessant icy-blue glare of the lightning showed her the road. Again and again she slipped and fell. But at last she reeled, dripping, into the hall at Ingleside.

Mother ran and caught her in her arms.

"Darling, what a fright you have given us! Oh, where have you been?"

"I only hope Jem and Walter won't catch their deaths out in that rain searching for you," said Susan, the sharpness of strain in her voice.

Nan had almost had the breath battered out of her. She could only gasp, as she felt Mother's arms enfolding her:

"Oh, Mother, I'm me ... really me. I'm not Cassie Thomas and I'll never be anybody but me again."

"The poor pet is delirious," said Susan. "She must have et something that disagreed with her."

Anne bathed Nan and put her to bed before she would let her talk. Then she heard the whole story.

"Oh, Mummy, am I really your child?"

"Of course, darling. How could you think anything else?"

"I didn't ever think Dovie would tell me a story ... not *Dovie*. Mummy, can you believe *anybody*? Jen Penny told Di awful stories ..."

“They are only two girls out of all the little girls you know, dear. None of your other playmates has ever told you what wasn’t true. There *are* people in the world like that, grownups as well as children. When you are a little older you will be better able to ‘tell the gold from the tinsel.’”

“Mummy, I wish Walter and Jem and Di needn’t know what a silly I was.”

“They needn’t. Di went to Lowbridge with Daddy, and the boys need only know you went too far down the Harbour Road and were caught in the storm. You were foolish to believe Dovie but you were a very fine brave little girl to go and offer what you thought her rightful place to poor little Cassie Thomas. Mother is proud of you.”

The storm was over. The moon was looking down on a cool happy world.

“Oh, I’m so glad I’m *me!*” was Nan’s last thought as she fell on sleep.

Gilbert and Anne came in later to look on the little sleeping faces that were so sweetly close to each other. Diana slept with the corners of her firm little mouth tucked in but Nan had gone to sleep smiling. Gilbert had heard the story and was so angry that it was well for Dovie Johnson that she was a good thirty miles away from him. But Anne was feeling conscience-stricken.

“I should have found out what was troubling her. But I’ve been too much taken up with other things this week ... things that really mattered nothing compared to a child’s unhappiness. Think of what the poor darling has suffered.”

She stooped repentantly, gloatingly over them. They were still hers ... wholly hers, to mother and love and protect. They still came to her with every love and grief of their little hearts. For a few years longer they would be hers ... and then? Anne shivered. Motherhood was very sweet ... but very terrible.

“I wonder what life holds for them,” she whispered.

“At least, let’s hope and trust they’ll each get as good a husband as their mother got,” said Gilbert teasingly.

Chapter XXXII

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“So the Ladies’ Aid is going to have their quilting at Ingleside,” said the doctor. “Bring out all your lordly dishes, Susan, and provide several brooms to sweep up the fragments of reputations afterwards.”

Susan smiled wanly, as a woman tolerant of a man’s lack of all understanding of vital things, but she did not feel like smiling ... at least, until everything concerning the Aid supper had been settled.

“Hot chicken pie,” she went about murmuring, “mashed potatoes and creamed peas for the main course. And it will be such a good chance to use your new lace tablecloth, Mrs. Dr. dear. Such a thing has never been seen in the Glen and I am confident it will make a sensation. I am looking forward to Annabel Clow’s face when she sees it. And will you be using your blue and silver basket for the flowers?”

“Yes, full of pansies and yellow-green ferns from the maple grove. And I want you to put those three magnificent pink geraniums of yours somewhere around ... in the livingroom if we quilt there or on the balustrade of the verandah if it’s warm enough to work out there. I’m glad we have so many flowers left. The garden has never been so beautiful as it has been this summer, Susan. But then I say that every autumn, don’t I?”

There were many things to be settled. Who should sit by whom ... it would never do, for instance, to have Mrs. Simon Millison sit beside Mrs. William McCreery, for they never spoke to each other because of some obscure old feud dating back to schooldays. Then there was the question of whom to invite ... for it was the hostess’ privilege to ask a few guests apart from the members of the Aid.

“I’m going to have Mrs. Best and Mrs. Campbell,” said Anne.

Susan looked doubtful.

“They are newcomers, Mrs. Dr. dear,” ... much as she might have said, “They are crocodiles.”

“The doctor and I were newcomers once, Susan.”

“But the doctor’s uncle was here for years before that. Nobody knows anything about these Bests and Campbells. But it is your house, Mrs. Dr. dear, and whom am I to object to anyone you wish to have? I remember one quilting at Mrs. Carter Flagg’s many years ago when Mrs. Flagg invited a strange woman. She came in *wincey*, Mrs. Dr. dear ... said she didn’t think a Ladies’ Aid worth dressing up for! At least there will be no fear of that with Mrs. Campbell. She is very dressy ... though *I* could never see myself wearing hydrangea blue to church.”

Anne could not either, but she dared not smile.

“I thought that dress was lovely with Mrs. Campbell’s silver hair, Susan. And by the way, she wants your recipe for spiced gooseberry relish. She says she had some of it at the Harvest Home supper and it was delicious.”

“Oh, well, Mrs. Dr. dear, it is not everyone who can make spiced gooseberry ...” and no more disapproval was expressed of hydrangea blue dresses. Mrs. Campbell might henceforth appear in the costume of a Fiji Islander if she chose and Susan would find excuses for it.

The young months had grown old but autumn was still remembering summer and the quilting day was more like June than October. Every member of the Ladies’ Aid who could possibly come came, looking forward pleasurably to a good dish of gossip and an Ingleside supper, besides, possibly, seeing some sweet new thing in fashions since the doctor’s wife had recently been to town.

Susan, unbowed by the culinary cares that were heaped upon her, stalked about, showing the ladies to the guestroom, serene in the knowledge that not one of them possessed an apron trimmed with crochet lace five inches deep made from Number One Hundred thread. Susan had captured first prize at the Charlottetown Exhibition the week before with that lace. She and Rebecca Dew had trysted there and made a day of it, and Susan had come home that night the proudest woman in Prince Edward Island.

Susan's face was perfectly controlled but her thoughts were her own, sometimes spiced with a trifle of mild malice.

"Celia Reese is here, looking for something to laugh at as usual. Well, she will not find it at our supper table and that you may tie to. Myra Murray in red velvet ... a little too sumptuous for a quilting in my opinion but I am not denying she looks well in it. At least it is not wincey. Agatha Drew ... and her glasses tied on with a string as usual. Sarah Taylor ... it may be her last quilting ... she has got a terrible heart, the doctor says, but the spirit of her! Mrs. Donald Reese ... thank the Good Lord she didn't bring Mary Anna with her but no doubt we will hear plenty. Jane Burr from the Upper Glen. She isn't a member of the Aid. Well, I shall count the spoons after supper and that you may tie to. That family were all light-fingered. Candace Crawford ... she doesn't often trouble an Aid meeting but a quilting is a good place to show off her pretty hands and her diamond ring. Emma Pollock with her petticoat showing below her dress, of course ... a pretty woman but flimsy-minded like all that tribe. Tillie MacAllister, don't you go and upset the jelly on the tablecloth like you did at Mrs. Palmer's quilting. Martha Crothers, you will have a decent meal for once. It is too bad your husband could not have come too ... I hear he has to live on nuts or something like that. Mrs. Elder Baxter ... I hear the elder has scared Harold Reese away from Mina at last. Harold always had a wishbone in place of a backbone and faint heart never won fair lady as the Good Book says. Well, we have enough for two quilts and some over to thread needles."

The quilts were set up on the broad verandah and everyone was busy with fingers and tongues. Anne and Susan were deep in preparations for supper in the kitchen, and Walter, who had been kept home from school that day because of a slight sore throat, was squatted on the verandah steps, screened from view of the quilters by a curtain of vines. He always liked to listen to older people talking. They said such surprising, mysterious things ... things you could think over afterwards and weave into the very stuff of drama, things that reflected the colours and shadows,

the comedies and tragedies, the jests and the sorrows, of every Four Winds clan.

Of all the women present Walter liked Mrs. Myra Murray best, with her easy infectious laugh and the jolly little wrinkles round her eyes. She could tell the simplest story and make it seem dramatic and vital; she gladdened life wherever she went; and she did look so pretty in her cherry-red velvet, with the smooth ripples in her black hair, and the little red drops in her ears. Mrs. Tom Chubb, who was thin as a needle, he liked least ... perhaps because he had once heard her calling him “a sickly child.” He thought Mrs. Allan Milgrave looked just like a sleek grey hen and that Mrs. Grant Clow was like nothing so much as a barrel on legs. Young Mrs. David Ransome, with her taffy-coloured hair, was very handsome, “too handsome for a farm,” Susan had said when Dave married her. The young bride, Mrs. Morton MacDougall, looked like a sleepy white poppy. Edith Bailey, the Glen dressmaker, with her misty silvery curls and humorous black eyes, didn’t look as if she should be “an old maid.” He liked Mrs. Meade, the oldest woman there, who had gentle, tolerant eyes and listened far more than she talked, and he did not like Celia Reese, with her sly amused look as if she were laughing at everybody.

The quilters had not really started talking yet ... they were discussing the weather and deciding whether to quilt in fans or diamonds, so Walter was thinking of the beauty of the ripened day, the big lawn with its magnificent trees, and the world that looked as if some great kind Being had put golden arms about it. The tinted leaves were drifting slowly down but the knightly hollyhocks were still gay against the brick wall and the poplars wove sorcery of aspen along the path to the barn. Walter was so absorbed in the loveliness around him that the quilting conversation was in full swing before he was recalled to consciousness of it by Mrs. Simon Millison’s pronouncement.

“That clan were noted for their sensational funerals. Will any of you who were there ever forget what happened at Peter Kirk’s funeral?”

Walter pricked up his ears. This sounded interesting. But much to his disappointment Mrs. Simon did not go on to tell what had happened.

Everybody must either have been at the funeral or heard the story.

("But why are they all looking so uncomfortable about it?")

"There is no doubt that everything Clara Wilson said about Peter was true, but he is in his grave, poor man, so let us leave him there," said Mrs. Tom Chubb self-righteously ... as if somebody had proposed exhuming him.

"Mary Anna is always saying such clever things," said Mrs. Donald Reese. "Do you know what she said the other day when we were starting to Margaret Hollister's funeral? 'Ma,' she said, 'will there be any ice-cream at the funeral?'"

A few women exchanged furtive amused smiles. Most of them ignored Mrs. Donald. It was really the only thing to do when she began dragging Mary Anna into the conversation as she invariably did, in season and out of season. If you gave her the least encouragement she was maddening. "Do you know what Mary Anna said?" was a standing catchword in the Glen.

"Talking of funerals," said Celia Reese, "there was a queer one in Mowbray Narrows when I was a girl. Stanton Lane had gone out West and word came back that he had died. His folks wired to have the body sent home, so it was, but Wallace MacAllister, the undertaker, advised them against opening the casket. The funeral had just got off to a good start when in walked Stanton Lane himself, hale and hearty. It was never found out who the corpse really was."

"What did they do with him?" queried Agatha Drew.

"Oh, they buried him. Wallace said it couldn't be put off. But you couldn't rightly call it a funeral with everyone so happy over Stanton's return. Mr. Dawson changed the last hymn from 'Take Comfort, Christians,' to 'Sometimes a Light Surprises,' but most people thought he'd better have left well enough alone."

"Do you know what Mary Anna said to me the other day? She said, 'Ma, do the ministers know *everything*?'"

"Mr. Dawson always lost his head in a crisis," said Jane Burr. "The Upper Glen was part of his charge then and I remember one Sunday he

dismissed the congregation and then remembered that the collection hadn't been taken up. So what does he do but grab a collection plate and run round the yard with it. To be sure," added Jane, "people gave that day who never gave before or after. They didn't like to refuse the minister. But it was hardly dignified of him."

"What I had against Mr. Dawson," said Miss Cornelia, "was the unmerciful length of his prayers at a funeral. It actually came to such a pass that people said they envied the corpse. He surpassed himself at Letty Grant's funeral. I saw her mother was on the point of fainting so I gave him a good poke in the back with my umbrella and told him he'd prayed long enough."

"He buried my poor Jarvis," said Mrs. George Carr, tears dropping down. She always cried when she spoke of her husband although he had been dead for twenty years.

"His brother was a minister, too," said Christine Marsh. "He was in the Glen when I was a girl. We had a concert in the hall one night and as he was one of the speakers he was sitting on the platform. He was as nervous as his brother and he kept fidgeting his chair further and further back and all at once he went, chair and all, clean over the edge on the bank of flowers and house-plants we had arranged around the base. All that could be seen of him was his feet sticking up above the platform. Somehow, it always spoiled his preaching for me after that. His feet were so big."

"The Lane funeral might have been a disappointment," said Emma Pollock, "but at least it was better than not having any funeral at all. You remember the Cromwell mix-up?"

There was a chorus of reminiscent laughter. "Let us hear the story," said Mrs. Campbell. "Remember, Mrs. Pollock, I'm a stranger here and all the family sagas are quite unknown to me."

Emma didn't know what "sagas" meant but she loved to tell a story.

"Abner Cromwell lived over near Lowbridge on one of the biggest farms in that district and he was an M.P.P. in those days. He was one of the biggest frogs in the Tory puddle and acquainted with everybody of any importance on the Island. He was married to Julie Flagg, whose mother

was a Reese and her grandmother was a Clow so they were connected with almost every family in Four Winds as well. One day a notice came out in the *Daily Enterprise* ... Mr. Abner Cromwell had died suddenly at Lowbridge and his funeral would be held at two o'clock the next afternoon. Somehow the Abner Cromwells missed seeing the notice ... and of course there were no rural telephones in those days. The next morning Abner left for Halifax to attend a Liberal convention. At two o'clock people began arriving for the funeral, coming early to get a good seat, thinking there'd be such a crowd on account of Abner being such a prominent man. And a crowd there was, believe you me. For miles around the roads were just a string of buggies and people kept pouring in till about three. Mrs. Abner was just about crazy trying to make them believe her husband wasn't dead. Some wouldn't believe her at first. She said to me in tears that they seemed to think she'd made away with the corpse. And when they were convinced they acted as if they thought Abner ought to be dead. And they tramped all over the lawn flower-beds she was so proud of. Any number of distant relations arrived, too, expecting supper and beds for the night and she hadn't much cooked ... Julie was never very forehanded, that has to be admitted. When Abner arrived home two days afterwards he found her in bed with nervous prostration and she was months getting over it. She didn't eat a thing for six weeks ... well, hardly anything. I heard she said if there really had been a funeral she couldn't have been more upset. But I never believed she really did say it."

"You can't be sure," said Mrs. William MacCreery. "People do say such awful things. When they're upset the truth pops out. Julie's sister Clarice actually went and sang in the choir as usual the first Sunday after her husband was buried."

"Not even a husband's funeral could damp Clarice down long," said Agatha Drew. "There was nothing *solid* about her. Always dancing and singing."

"I used to dance and sing ... on the shore, where nobody heard me," said Myra Murray.

"Ah, but you've grown wiser since then," said Agatha.

“No-o-o, foolisher,” said Myra Murray slowly. “Too foolish now to dance along the shore.”

“At first,” said Emma, not to be cheated out of a complete story, “they thought the notice had been put in for a joke ... because Abner had lost his election a few days before ... but it turned out it was for an Amasa Cromwell, living away in the back woods the other side of Lowbridge ... no relation at all. He had really died. But it was a long time before people forgave Abner the disappointment, if they ever did.”

“Well, it *was* a little inconvenient driving all that distance, right in planting time, too, and finding you had your journey for your pains,” said Mrs. Tom Chubb defensively.

“And people like funerals as a rule,” said Mrs. Donald Reese with spirit. “We’re all like children, I guess. I took Mary Anna to her uncle Gordon’s funeral and she enjoyed it so. ‘Ma, couldn’t we dig him up and have the fun of burying him over again?’ she said.”

They *did* laugh at this ... everybody except Mrs. Elder Baxter, who primmed up her long thin face and jabbed the quilt mercilessly. Nothing was sacred nowadays. Everyone laughed at everything. But she, an elder’s wife, was not going to countenance any laughter connected with a funeral.

“Speaking of Abner, do you remember the obituary his brother John wrote for *his* wife?” asked Mrs. Allan Milgrave. “It started out with, ‘God, for reasons best known to Himself, has been pleased to take my beautiful bride and leave my cousin William’s ugly wife alive.’ Shall I ever forget the fuss it made!”

“How did such a thing ever come to be printed at all?” asked Mrs. Best.

“Why, he was managing editor of the *Enterprise* then. He worshipped his wife ... Bertha Morris, she was ... and he hated Mrs. William Cromwell because she hadn’t wanted him to marry Bertha. She thought Bertha too flighty.”

“But she was pretty,” said Elizabeth Kirk.

“The prettiest thing I ever saw in my life,” agreed Mrs. Milgrave. “Good looks ran in the Morrisises. But fickle ... fickle as a breeze. Nobody

ever knew how she came to stay in one mind long enough to marry John. They say her mother kept her up to the notch. Bertha was in love with Fred Reese but he was notorious for flirting. ‘A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush,’ Mrs. Morris told her.”

“I’ve heard that proverb all my life,” said Myra Murray, “and I wonder if it’s true. Perhaps the birds in the bush could *sing* and the one in the hand couldn’t.”

Nobody knew just what to say but Mrs. Tom Chubb said it anyhow.

“You’re always so whimsical, Myra.”

“Do you know what Mary Anna said to me the other day?” said Mrs. Donald. “She said, ‘Ma, what will I do if nobody ever asks me to marry him?’”

“*Us* old maids could answer that, couldn’t we?” asked Celia Reese, giving Edith Bailey a nudge with her elbow. Celia disliked Edith because Edith was still rather pretty and not entirely out of the running.

“Gertrude Cromwell *was* ugly,” said Mrs. Grant Clow. “She had a figure like a slat. But a great housekeeper. She washed every curtain she owned every month and if Bertha washed hers once a year it was as much as ever. And her window-shades were *always* crooked. Gertrude said it just gave her the shivers to drive past John Cromwell’s house. And yet John Cromwell worshipped Bertha and William just put up with Gertrude. Men *are* strange. They say William overslept on his wedding morning and dressed in such a tearing hurry he got to the church with old shoes and odd socks on.”

“Well, that was better than Oliver Random,” giggled Mrs. George Carr. “*He* forgot to have a wedding suit made and his old Sunday suit was simply impossible. It had been *patched*. So he borrowed his brother’s best suit. It only fitted him here and there.”

“And at least William and Gertrude did get married,” said Mrs. Simon. “Her sister Caroline *didn’t*. She and Ronny Drew quarrelled over what minister they’d have marry them and never got married at all. Ronny was so mad he went and married Edna Stone before he’d time to cool off.

Caroline went to the wedding. She held her head high but her face was like death.”

“But she held her tongue at least,” said Sarah Taylor. “Philippa Abbey didn’t. When Jim Mowbray jilted her she went to his wedding and said the bitterest things out loud all through the ceremony. They were all Anglicans, of course,” concluded Sarah Taylor, as if that accounted for any vagaries.

“Did she really go to the reception afterwards wearing all the jewelry Jim had given her while they were engaged?” asked Celia Reese.

“No, she didn’t! I don’t know how such stories get around, I’m sure. You’d think some people never did anything but repeat gossip. I daresay Jim Mowbray lived to wish he’d stuck to Philippa. His wife kept him down good and solid ... though he always had a riotous time in her absence.”

“The only time I ever saw Jim Mowbray was the night the junebugs nearly stampeded the congregation at the anniversary service in Lowbridge,” said Christine Crawford. “And what the junebugs left undone Jim Mowbray contributed. It was a hot night and they had all the windows open. The junebugs just poured in and blundered about in hundreds. They picked up eighty-seven dead bugs on the choir platform the next morning. Some of the women got hysterical when the bugs flew too near their faces. Just across the aisles from me the new minister’s wife was sitting ... Mrs. Peter Loring. She had on a big lace hat with willow plumes... .”

“She was always considered far too dressy and extravagant for a minister’s wife,” interpolated Mrs. Elder Baxter.

“‘Watch me flick that bug off Mrs. Preacher’s hat,’ I heard Jim Mowbray whisper ... he was sitting right behind her. He leaned forward and aimed a blow at the bug ... missed it, but sideswiped the hat and sent it skittering down the aisle clean to the communion railing. Jim almost had a conniption. When the minister saw his wife’s hat come sailing through the air he lost his place in his sermon, couldn’t find it again and gave up in despair. The choir sang the last hymn, dabbing at junebugs all the time. Jim went down and brought the hat back to Mrs. Loring. He

expected a calling down, for she was said to be high-spirited. But she just stuck it on her pretty yellow head again and laughed at him. ‘If you hadn’t done that,’ she said, ‘Peter would have gone on for another twenty minutes and we’d all have been stark staring mad.’ Of course, it was nice of her not to be angry but people thought it wasn’t just the thing for her to say of her husband.”

“But you must remember how she was born,” said Martha Crothers.

“Why, *how?*”

“She was Bessy Talbot from up west. Her father’s house caught fire one night and in all the fuss and upheaval Bessy was born ... *out in the garden* ... under the stars.”

“How romantic!” said Myra Murray.

“Romantic! I call it barely *respectable*.”

“But think of being born under the stars!” said Myra dreamily. “Why, she ought to have been a child of the stars ... sparkling ... beautiful ... brave ... true ... with a twinkle in her eyes.”

“She was all that,” said Martha, “whether the stars were accountable for it or not. And a hard time she had in Lowbridge where they thought a minister’s wife should be all prunes and prisms. Why, one of the elders caught her dancing around her baby’s cradle one day and he told her she ought not to rejoice over her son until she found out if he was *elected* or not.”

“Talking of babies, do you know what Mary Anna said the other day, ‘Ma,’ she said, ‘do *queens* have babies?’”

“That must have been Alexander Wilson,” said Mrs. Allan. “A born crab if ever there was one. He wouldn’t allow his family to speak a word at meal-times, I’ve heard. As for laughing ... there never was any done in *his* house.”

“Think of a house without laughter!” said Myra.

“Why, it’s ... *sacrilegious*.”

“Alexander used to take spells when he wouldn’t speak to his wife for three days at a time,” continued Mrs. Allan. “It was such a relief to her,” she added.

“Alexander Wilson was a good honest business man at least,” said Mrs. Grant Clow stiffly. “He said Alexander was her fourth cousin and the Wilsons were clannish. “He left forty thousand dollars when he died.”

“Such a pity he had to *leave* it,” said Celia Reese.

“His brother Jeffry didn’t leave a cent,” said Mrs. Clow. “He was the ne’er-do-well of that family, I must admit. Goodness knows *he* did enough laughing. Spent everything he earned ... hail-fellow-well-met with everyone ... and died penniless. What did *he* get out of life with all his flinging about and laughing?”

“Not much perhaps,” said Myra, “but think of all he put into it. He was always *giving* ... cheer, sympathy, friendliness, even money. He was rich in friends at least and Alexander never had a friend in his life.”

“Jeff’s friends didn’t bury him,” retorted Mrs. Allan. “Alexander had to do that ... and put up a real fine tombstone for him, too. It cost a hundred dollars.”

“But when Jeff asked him for a loan of one hundred to pay for an operation that might have saved his life, didn’t Alexander refuse it?” asked Celia Drew.

“Come, come, we’re getting too uncharitable,” protested Mrs. Carr. “After all, we don’t live in a world of forget-me-nots and daisies and everyone has some faults.”

“Lem Anderson is marrying Dorothy Clark today,” said Mrs. Millison, thinking it was high time the conversation took a more cheerful line. “And it isn’t a year since he swore he would blow out his brains if Jane Elliott wouldn’t marry him.”

“Young men do say such odd things,” said Mrs. Chubb. “They’ve kept it very close ... it never leaked out till three weeks ago that they were engaged. I was talking to his mother last week and she never hinted at a wedding so soon. I am not sure that I care much for a woman who can be such a Spinx.”

“*I* am surprised at Dorothy Clark taking him,” said Agatha Drew. “I thought last spring that she and Frank Clow were going to make a match of it.”

"I heard Dorothy say that Frank was the best match but she really couldn't abide the thought of seeing that nose sticking out over the sheet every morning when she woke up."

Mrs. Elder Baxter gave a spinsterish shudder and refused to join in the laughter.

"You shouldn't say such things before a young girl like Edith," said Celia, winking around the quilt.

"Is Ada Clark engaged yet?" asked Emma Pollock.

"No, not exactly," said Mrs. Milison. "Just hopeful. But she'll land him yet. Those girls all have a knack of picking husbands. Her sister Pauline married the best farm over the harbour."

"Pauline is pretty but she is full of silly notions as ever," said Mrs. Milgrave. "Sometimes I think she'll never learn any sense."

"Oh, yes, she will," said Myra Murray. "Some day she will have children of her own and she will learn wisdom from them ... as you and I did."

"Where are Lem and Dorothy going to live?" asked Mrs. Meade.

"Oh, Lem has bought a farm at the Upper Glen. The old Carey place, you know, where poor Mrs. Roger Carey murdered her husband."

"Murdered her husband!"

"Oh, I'm not saying he didn't deserve it, but everybody thought she went a little too far. Yes — weed-killer in his teacup ... or was it his soup? Everybody knew it but nothing was ever done about it. The spool, please, Celia."

"But do you mean to say, Mrs. Millison, that she was never tried ... or punished?" gasped Mrs. Campbell.

"Well, nobody wanted to get a neighbour into a scrape like that. The Careys were well connected in the Upper Glen. Besides, she was driven to desperation. Of course nobody approves of murder as a habit but if ever a man deserved to be murdered Roger Carey did. She went to the States and married again. She's been dead for years. Her second outlived her. It all happened when I was a girl. They used to say Roger Carey's ghost *walked*."

“Surely nobody believes in ghosts in this enlightened age,” said Mrs. Baxter.

“Why aren’t we to believe in ghosts?” demanded Tillie MacAllister. “Ghosts are interesting. I *know* a man who was haunted by a ghost that always laughed at him ... sneering like. It used to make him so mad. The scissors, please, Mrs. MacDougall.”

The little bride had to be asked for the scissors twice and handed them over blushing deeply. She was not yet used to being called Mrs. MacDougall.

“The old Truax house over harbour was haunted for years ... raps and knocks all over the place ... a most mysterious thing,” said Christine Crawford.

“All the Truaxes had bad stomachs,” said Mrs. Baxter.

“Of course if you don’t believe in ghosts they can’t happen,” said Mrs. MacAllister sulkily. “But my sister worked in a house in Nova Scotia that was haunted by chuckles of laughter.”

“What a jolly ghost!” said Myra. “I shouldn’t mind that.”

“Likely it was owls,” said the determinedly sceptical Mrs. Baxter.

“My mother seen angels around her deathbed,” said Agatha Drew with an air of plaintive triumph.

“Angels ain’t ghosts,” said Mrs. Baxter.

“Speaking of mothers, how is your Uncle Parker, Tillie?” asked Mrs. Chubb.

“Very poorly by spells. We don’t know what is going to come of it. It’s holding us all up ... about our winter clothes, I mean. But I said to my sister the other day when we were talking it over, ‘We’d better get black dresses anyhow,’ I said, ‘and then it’s no matter what happens.’”

“Do you know what Mary Anna said the other day? She said, ‘Ma, I’m going to stop asking God to make my hair curly. I’ve asked Him every night for a week and He hasn’t done a thing.’”

“I’ve been asking Him something for twenty years,” bitterly said Mrs. Bruce Duncan, who had not spoken before or lifted her dark eyes from the quilt. She was noted for her beautiful quilting ... perhaps because she was

never diverted by gossip from setting each stitch precisely where it should be.

A brief hush fell over the circle. They could all guess what she had asked for ... but it was not a thing to be discussed at a quilting. Mrs. Duncan did not speak again.

“Is it true that May Flagg and Billy Carter have broken up and that he is going with one of the over-harbour MacDougalls?” asked Martha Crothers after a decent interval.

“Yes. Nobody knows what happened though.”

“It’s sad ... what little things break off matches sometimes,” said Candace Crawford. “Take Dick Pratt and Lilian MacAllister ... he was just starting to propose to her at a picnic when his nose began to bleed. He had to go to the brook ... and he met a strange girl there who lent him her handkerchief. He fell in love and they were married in two weeks’ time.”

“Did you hear what happened to Big Jim MacAllister last Saturday night in Milt Cooper’s store at the Harbour Head?” asked Mrs. Simon, thinking it time somebody introduced a more cheerful topic than ghosts and jiltings. “He had got into the habit of setting on the stove all summer. But Saturday night was cold and Milt had lit a fire. So when poor Big Jim sat down ... well, he scorched his ...”

Mrs. Simon would not say what he had scorched but she patted a portion of her anatomy silently.

“His bottom,” said Walter gravely, poking his head through the creeper screen. He honestly thought that Mrs. Simon could not remember the right word.

An appalled silence descended on the quilters. Had Walter Blythe been there all the time? Everyone was raking her recollection of the tales told to recall if any of them had been too terribly unfit for the ears of youth. Mrs. Dr. Blythe was said to be so fussy about what her children heard. Before their paralyzed tongues recovered Anne had come out and asked them to come to supper.

“Just ten minutes more, Mrs. Blythe. We’ll have both quilts finished then,” said Elizabeth Kirk.

The quilts were finished, taken out, shaken, held up and admired.

"I wonder who'll sleep under them," said Myra Murray.

"Perhaps a new mother will hold her first baby under one of them," said Anne.

"Or little children cuddle under them on a cold prairie night," said Miss Cornelia unexpectedly.

"Or some poor old rheumatic body be cosier for them," said Mrs. Meade.

"I hope nobody *dies* under them," said Mrs. Baxter sadly.

"Do you know what Mary Anna said before I came?" said Mrs. Donald as they filed into the dining-room. "She said, 'Ma, don't forget you must eat *everything* on your plate.'"

Whereupon they all sat down and ate and drank to the glory of God, for they had done a good afternoon's work and there was very little malice in most of them, after all.

After supper they went home. Jane Burr walked as far as the village with Mrs. Simon Millison.

"I must remember all the fixings to tell ma," said Jane wistfully, not knowing that Susan was counting the spoons. "She never gets out since she's bed-ridden but she loves to hear about things. That table will be a real treat to her."

"It was just like a picture you'd seen in a magazine," agreed Mrs. Simon with a sigh. "I can cook as good a supper as anyone, if I do say it, but I can't fix up a table with a single *prestige* of style. As for that young Walter, I could spank *his* bottom with a relish. Such a turn as he gave me!"

"And I suppose Ingleside is strewn with dead characters?" the doctor was saying.

"I wasn't quilting," said Anne, "so I didn't hear what was said."

"You never do, dearie," said Miss Cornelia, who had lingered to help Susan bind the quilts. "When *you* are at the quilt they never let themselves go. They think you don't approve of gossip."

"It all depends on the kind," said Anne.

“Well, nobody really said anything too terrible today. Most of the people they talked about were dead ... or ought to be,” said Miss Cornelia, recalling the story of Abner Cromwell’s abortive funeral with a grin. “Only Mrs. Millison had to drag in that gruesome old murder story again about Madge Carey and her husband. I remember it all. There wasn’t a vestige of proof that Madge did it ... except that a cat died after eating some of the soup. The animal had been sick for a week. If you ask me, Roger Carey died of appendicitis ... though of course nobody knew they had appendixes then.”

“And indeed I think it is a great pity they ever found out,” said Susan. “The spoons are all intact, Mrs. Dr. dear, and nothing happened to the tablecloth.”

“Well, I must be getting home,” said Miss Cornelia. “I’ll send you up some spare-ribs next week when Marshall kills the pig.”

Walter was again sitting on the steps with eyes full of dreams. Dusk had fallen. Where, he wondered, had it fallen from? Did some great spirit with bat-like wings pour it all over the world from a purple jar? The moon was rising and three wind-twisted old spruces looked like three lean, humpbacked old witches hobbling up a hill against it. Was that a little faun with furry ears crouching in the shadows? Suppose he opened the door in the brick wall *now*, wouldn’t he step, not into the well-known garden but into some strange land of faery, where princesses were waking from enchanted sleeps, where perhaps he might find and follow Echo as he so often longed to do? One dared not speak. Something would vanish if one did.

“Darling,” said Mother coming out, “you mustn’t sit here any longer. It is getting cold. Remember your throat.”

The spoken word *had* broken the spell. Some magic light had gone. The lawn was still a beautiful place but it was no longer fairyland. Walter got up.

“Mother, will you tell me what happened at Peter Kirk’s funeral?”

Anne thought for a moment ... then shivered.

“Not now, dear. Perhaps ... sometime... .”

Chapter XXXIII

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Anne, alone in her room ... for Gilbert had been called out ... sat down at her window for a few minutes of communion with the tenderness of the night and of enjoyment of the eerie charm of her moonlit room. Say what you will, thought Anne, there is always something a little strange about a moonlit room. Its whole personality is changed. It is not so friendly ... so human. It is remote and aloof and wrapped up in itself. Almost it regards you as an intruder.

She was a little tired after her busy day and everything was so beautifully quiet now ... the children asleep, Ingleside restored to order. There was no sound in the house except a faint rhythmic thumping from the kitchen where Susan was setting her bread.

But through the open window came the sounds of the night, every one of which Anne knew and loved. Low laughter drifted up from the harbour on the still air. Someone was singing down in the Glen and it sounded like the haunting notes of some song heard a long ago. There were silvery moonlight paths over the water but Ingleside was hooded in shadow. The trees were whispering “dark sayings of old” and an owl was hooting in Rainbow Valley.

““What a happy summer this has been,” thought Anne ... and then recalled with a little pang something she had heard Aunt Highland Kitty of the Upper Glen say once ... “the same summer will never be coming twice.”

Never quite the same. Another summer would come ... but the children would be a little older and Rilla would be going to school ... “and I’ll have no baby left,” thought Anne sadly. Jem was twelve now and there was already talk of “the Entrance” ... Jem who but yesterday had been a wee baby in the old House of Dreams. Walter was shooting up and that very morning she had heard Nan teasing Di about some “boy” in school;

and Di had actually blushed and tossed her red head. Well, that was life. Gladness and pain ... hope and fear ... and change. Always change! You could not help it. You had to let the old go and take the new to your heart ... learn to love *it* and then let *it* go in turn. Spring, lovely as it was, must yield to summer and summer lose itself in autumn. The birth ... the bridal ... the death... .

Anne suddenly thought of Walter asking to be told what had happened at Peter Kirk's funeral. She had not thought of it for years, but she had not forgotten it. Nobody who had been there, she felt sure, had forgotten it or ever would. Sitting there in the moonlit dusk she recalled it all.

It had been in November ... the first November they had spent at Ingleside ... following a week of Indian summer days. The Kirks lived at Mowbray Narrows but came to the Glen church and Gilbert was their doctor; so he and Anne both went to the funeral.

It had been, she remembered, a mild, calm, pearl-grey day. All around them had been the lonely brown-and-purple landscape of November, with patches of sunlight here and there on upland and slope where the sun shone through a rift in the clouds. "Kirkwynd" was so near the shore that a breath of salt wind blew through the grim firs behind it. It was a big, prosperous-looking house but Anne always thought that the gable of the L looked exactly like a long, narrow, spiteful face.

Anne paused to speak to a little knot of women on the stiff flowerless lawn. They were all good hardworking souls to whom a funeral was a not unpleasant excitement.

"I forgot to bring a handkerchief," Mrs. Bryan Blake was saying plaintively. "Whatever will I do when I cry?"

"Why will you have to cry?" bluntly asked her sister-in-law, Camilla Blake. Camilla had no use for women who cried too easily. "Peter Kirk is no relation to you and you never liked him."

"I think it is *proper* to cry at a funeral," said Mrs. Blake stiffly. "It shows *feeling* when a neighbour has been summoned to his long home."

"If nobody cries at Peter's funeral except those who liked him there won't be many wet eyes," said Mrs. Curtis Rodd dryly. "That is the truth

and why mince it? He was a pious old humbug and I know it if nobody else does. *Who* is that coming at the little gate? Don't ... *don't* tell me it's Clara Wilson."

"It *is*," whispered Mrs. Bryan incredulously.

"Well, you know after Peter's first wife died she told him she would never enter his house again until she came to his funeral and she's kept her word," said Camilla Blake. "She's a sister of Peter's first wife," ... in an explanatory aside to Anne, who looked curiously at Clara Wilson as she swept past them, unseeing, her smouldering topaz eyes staring straight ahead. She was a thin slip of a woman with a dark-browed, tragic face and black hair under one of the absurd bonnets elderly women still wore ... a thing of feathers and "bugles" with a skimpy nose veil. She looked at and spoke to no one, as her long black taffeta skirt swished over the grass and up the verandah steps.

"There's Jed Clinton at the door, putting on his funeral face," said Camilla sarcastically. "He's evidently thinking it is time we went in. It's always been his boast that at *his* funerals everything goes according to schedule. He's never forgiven Winnie Clow for fainting *before* the sermon. It wouldn't have been so bad afterwards. Well, nobody is likely to faint at *this* funeral. Olivia isn't the fainting kind."

"Jed Clinton ... the Lowbridge undertaker," said Mrs. Reese. "Why didn't they have the Glen man?"

"Who? Carter Flagg? Why, woman dear, Peter and him have been at daggers drawn all their lives. Carter wanted Amy Wilson, you know."

"A good many wanted her," said Camilla. "She was a very pretty girl, with her coppery red hair and inky black eyes. Though people thought Clara the handsomer of the two then. It's odd she never married. There's the minister at last ... and the Rev. Mr. Owen of Lowbridge with him. Of course he is Olivia's cousin. All right except that he puts too many 'Oh's' in his prayers. We'd better go in or Jed will have a conniption."

Anne paused to look at Peter Kirk on her way to a chair. She had never liked him. "He has a cruel face," she thought, the first time she had ever seen him. Handsome, yes ... but with cold steely eyes even then becoming

pouchy, and the thin pinched merciless mouth of a miser. He was known to be selfish and arrogant in his dealings with his fellow-men in spite of his profession of piety and his unctuous prayers. "Always feels his importance," she had heard someone say once. Yet, on the whole, he had been respected and looked up to.

He was as arrogant in his death as in his life and there was something about the too-long fingers clasped over his still breast that made Anne shudder. She thought of a woman's heart being held in them and glanced at Olivia Kirk, sitting opposite to her in her mourning. Olivia was a tall, fair, handsome woman with large blue eyes ... "no ugly woman for me," Peter Kirk had said once ... and her face was composed and expressionless. There was no apparent trace of tears ... but, then, Olivia had been a Random and the Randoms were not emotional. At least she sat decorously and the most heartbroken widow in the world could not have worn heavier weeds.

The air was cloyed with the perfume of the flowers that banked the coffin ... for Peter Kirk, who had never known flowers existed. His lodge had sent a wreath, the church had sent one, the Conservative Association had sent one, the school trustees had sent one, the Cheese Board had sent one. His one, long-alienated son had sent nothing, but the Kirk clan at large had sent a huge anchor of white roses with "Harbour At Last" in red rosebuds across it, and there was one from Olivia herself ... a pillow of calla-lilies. Camilla Blake's face twitched as she looked at it and Anne remembered that she had once heard Camilla say that she had been at Kirkwynd soon after Peter's second marriage when Peter had fired out of the window a potted calla-lily which the bride had brought with her. He wasn't, so he said, going to have his house cluttered up with weeds.

Olivia had apparently taken it very coolly and there had been no more calla-lilies at Kirkwynd. Could it be possible that Olivia ... but Anne looked at Mrs. Kirk's placid face and dismissed the suspicion. After all, it was generally the florist who suggested the flowers.

The choir sang "Death like a narrow sea divides that heavenly land from ours" and Anne caught Camilla's eye and knew they were both

wondering just how Peter Kirk would fit into that heavenly land. Anne could almost hear Camilla saying, “Fancy Peter Kirk with a harp and halo if you dare.”

The Rev. Mr. Owen read a chapter and prayed, with many “Oh’s” and many entreaties that sorrowing hearts might be comforted. The Glen minister gave an address which many privately considered entirely too fulsome, even allowing for the fact that you had to say something good of the dead. To hear Peter Kirk called an affectionate father and a tender husband, a kind neighbour and an earnest Christian was, they felt, a misuse of language. Camilla took refuge behind her handkerchief, *not* to shed tears, and Stephen Macdonald cleared his throat once or twice. Mrs. Bryan must have borrowed a handkerchief from someone, for she was weeping into it, but Olivia’s down-dropped blue eyes remained tearless.

Jed Clinton drew a breath of relief. All had gone beautifully. Another hymn ... the customary parade for a last look at “the remains” ... and another successful funeral would be added to his long list.

There was a slight disturbance in a corner of the large room and Clara Wilson made her way through the maze of chairs to the table beside the casket. She turned there and faced the assembly. Her absurd bonnet had slipped a trifle to one side and a loose end of heavy black hair had escaped from its coil and hung down on her shoulder. But nobody thought Clara Wilson looked absurd. Her long sallow face was flushed, her haunted tragic eyes were flaming. She was a woman possessed. Bitterness, like some gnawing incurable disease, seemed to pervade her being.

“You have listened to a pack of lies ... you people who have come here ‘to pay your respects’ ... or glut your curiosity, whichever it was. Now I shall tell you the truth about Peter Kirk. *I* am no hypocrite ... I never feared him living and I do not fear him now that he is dead. Nobody has ever dared to tell the truth about him to his face but it is going to be told now ... here at his funeral where he has been called a good husband and a kind neighbour. A good husband! He married my sister Amy ... my beautiful sister, Amy. You all know how sweet and lovely she was. He made her life a misery to her. He tortured and humiliated her ... he *liked* to

do it. Oh, he went to church regularly ... and made long prayers ... and paid his debts. But he was a tyrant and a bully ... his very dog ran when he heard him coming.

“I told Amy she would repent marrying him. I helped her make her wedding dress ... I’d rather have made her shroud. She was wild about him then, poor thing, but she hadn’t been his wife a week before she knew what he was. His mother had been a slave and he expected his wife to be one. ‘There will be no arguments in *my* household,’ he told her. She hadn’t the spirit to argue ... her heart was broken. Oh, I know what she went through, my poor pretty darling. He crossed her in everything. She couldn’t have a flower-garden ... she couldn’t even have a kitten ... I gave her one and he drowned it. She had to account to him for every cent she spent. Did ever any of you see her in a decent stitch of clothes? He would fault her for wearing her best hat if it looked like rain. Rain couldn’t hurt any hat *she* had, poor soul. Her that loved pretty clothes! He was always sneering at her people. He never laughed in his life ... did any of you ever hear him really laugh? He smiled ... oh yes, he always smiled, calmly and sweetly when he was doing the most maddening things. He smiled when he told her after her little baby was born dead that she might as well have died, too, if she couldn’t have anything but dead brats. She died after ten years of it ... and I was glad she had escaped him. I told him then I’d never enter his house again till I came to his funeral. Some of you heard me. I’ve kept my word and now I’ve come and told the truth about him. It *is* the truth ... *You* know it” ... she pointed fiercely at Stephen Macdonald ... “*You* know it” ... the long finger darted at Camilla Blake ... “*You* know it” ... Olivia Kirk did not move a muscle ... “*You* know it” ... the poor minister himself felt as if that finger stabbed completely through him. “I cried at Peter Kirk’s wedding but I told him I’d laugh at his funeral. And I am going to do it.”

She swished furiously about and bent over the casket. Wrongs that had festered for years had been avenged. She had wreaked her hatred at last. Her whole body vibrated with triumph and satisfaction as she looked down at the cold quiet face of a dead man. Everybody listened for the burst of

vindictive laughter. It did not come. Clara Wilson's angry face suddenly changed ... twisted ... crumpled up like a child's. Clara was ... crying.

She turned, with the tears streaming down her ravaged cheeks, to leave the room. But Olivia Kirk rose before her and laid a hand on her arm. For a moment the two women looked at each other. The room was engulfed in a silence that seemed like a personal presence.

"Thank you, Clara Wilson," said Olivia Kirk. Her face was as inscrutable as ever but there was an undertone in her calm, even voice that made Anne shudder. She felt as if a pit had suddenly opened before her eyes. Clara Wilson might hate Peter Kirk, alive and dead, but Anne felt that her hatred was a pale thing compared to Olivia Kirk's.

Clara went out, weeping, passing an infuriated Jed with a spoiled funeral on his hands. The minister, who had intended to announce for a last hymn, "Asleep in Jesus," thought better of it and simply pronounced a tremulous benediction. Jed did not make the usual announcement that friends and relatives might now take a parting look at "the remains." The only decent thing to do, he felt, was to shut down the cover of the casket at once and bury Peter Kirk out of sight as soon as possible.

Anne drew a long breath as she went down the verandah steps. How lovely the cold fresh air was after that stifling, perfumed room where two women's bitterness had been as their torment.

The afternoon had grown colder and greyer. Little groups here and there on the lawn were discussing the affair with muted voices. Clara Wilson could still be seen crossing a sere pasture field on her way home.

"Well, didn't that beat all?" said Nelson dazedly.

"Shocking ... shocking!" said Elder Baxter.

"Why didn't some of us stop her?" demanded Henry Reese.

"Because you all wanted to hear what she had to say," retorted Camilla.

"It wasn't ... decorous," said Uncle Sandy MacDougall. He had got hold of a word that pleased him and rolled it under his tongue. "Not decorous. A funeral should be decorous whatever else it may be ... decorous."

"Gosh, ain't life funny?" said Augustus Palmer.

“I mind when Peter and Amy began keeping company,” mused old James Porter. “I was courting my woman that same winter. Clara was a fine-looking bit of goods then. And what a cherry pie she could make!”

“She was always a bitter-tongued girl,” said Boyce Warren. “I suspected there’d be dynamite of some kind when I saw her coming but I didn’t dream it would take that form. And Olivia! Would you have thought it? Weemen *are* a queer lot.”

“It will make quite a story for the rest of our lives,” said Camilla. “After all, I suppose if things like this never happened history would be dull stuff.”

A demoralized Jed had got his pallbearers rounded up and the casket carried out. As the hearse drove down the lane, followed by the slow-moving procession of buggies, a dog was heard howling heartbrokenly in the barn. Perhaps, after all, one living creature mourned Peter Kirk.

Stephen Macdonald joined Anne as she waited for Gilbert. He was a tall Upper Glen man with the head of an old Roman emperor. Anne had always liked him.

“Smells like snow,” he said. “It always seems to me that November is a *homesick* time. Does it ever strike you that way, Mrs. Blythe?”

“Yes. The year is looking back sadly to her lost spring.”

“Spring ... spring! Mrs. Blythe, I’m getting old. I find myself imagining that the seasons are changing. Winter isn’t what it was ... I don’t recognize summer ... and spring ... there are *no* springs now. At least, that’s how we feel when folks we used to know don’t come back to share them with us. Poor Clara Wilson now ... what did you think of it all?”

“Oh, it was heartbreaking. Such hatred ...”

“Ye-e-e-s. You see, she was in love with Peter herself long ago ... terribly in love. Clara was the handsomest girl in Mowbray Narrows then ... little dark curls all round her cream-white face ... but Amy was a laughing, liling thing. Peter dropped Clara and took up with Amy. It’s strange the way we’re made, Mrs. Blythe.”

There was an eerie stir in the wind-torn firs behind Kirkwynd; far away a snow-squall whitened over a hill where a row of lombardies stabbed the grey sky. Everybody was hurrying to get away before it reached Mowbray Narrows.

“Have I any right to be so happy when other women are so miserable?” Anne wondered to herself as they drove home, remembering Olivia Kirk’s eyes as she thanked Clara Wilson.

Anne got up from her window. It was nearly twelve years ago now. Clara Wilson was dead and Olivia Kirk had gone to the coast where she had married again. She had been much younger than Peter.

“Time is kinder than we think,” thought Anne. “It’s a dreadful mistake to cherish bitterness for years ... hugging it to our hearts like a treasure. But I think the story of what happened at Peter Kirk’s funeral is one which Walter must never know. It was certainly no story for children.”

Chapter XXXIV

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Rilla sat on the verandah steps at Ingleside with one knee crossed over the other ... such adorable little fat brown knees! ... very busy being unhappy. And if anyone asks why a petted little puss should be unhappy that inquirer must have forgotten her own childhood when things that were the merest trifles to grownups were dark and dreadful tragedies to her. Rilla was lost in deeps of despair because Susan had told her she was going to bake one of her silver-and-gold cakes for the Orphanage social that evening and she, Rilla, must carry it to the church in the afternoon.

Don't ask me why Rilla felt she would rather die than carry a cake through the village to the Glen St. Mary Presbyterian church. Tots get odd notions into their little pates at times and somehow Rilla had got it into hers that it was a shameful and humiliating thing to be seen carrying a cake *anywhere*. Perhaps it was because, one day when she was only five, she had met old Tillie Pake carrying a cake down the street with all the little village boys yelping at her heels and making fun of her. Old Tillie lived down at the Harbour Mouth and was a very dirty ragged old woman.

“Old Tillie Pake

Up and stole a cake

And it give her stomachache,”

chanted the boys.

To be classed with Tillie Pake was something Rilla just could not bear. The idea had become lodged in her mind that you just “couldn't be a lady” and carry cakes about. So this was why she sat disconsolately on the steps and the dear little mouth, with one front tooth missing, was without its usual smile. Instead of looking as if she understood what daffodils were thinking about or as if she shared with the golden rose a secret they alone knew, she looked like one crushed forever. Even her big hazel eyes that

almost shut up when she laughed, were mournful and tormented, instead of being the usual pools of allurement. "It's the fairies that have touched your eyes," Aunt Kitty MacAllister told her once. Her father vowed she was born a charmer and had smiled at Dr. Parker half an hour after she was born. Rilla could, as yet, talk better with her eyes than her tongue, for she had a decided lisp. But she would grow out of that ... she was growing fast. Last year Daddy had measured her by a rosebush; this year it was the phlox; soon it would be the hollyhocks and she would be going to school. Rilla had been very happy and very well-contented with herself until this terrible announcement of Susan's. Really, Rilla told the sky indignantly, Susan had no sense of shame. To be sure, Rilla pronounced it "thenth of thame" but the lovely soft-blue sky looked as if it understood.

Mummy and Daddy had gone to Charlottetown that morning and all the other children were in school, so Rilla and Susan were alone at Ingleside. Ordinarily Rilla would have been delighted under such circumstances. She was never lonely; she would have been glad to sit there on the steps or on her own particular mossy green stone in Rainbow Valley, with a fairy kitten or two for company, and spin fancies about everything she saw ... the corner of the lawn that looked like a merry little land of butterflies ... the poppies floating over the garden ... that great fluffy cloud all alone in the sky ... the big bumblebees booming over the nasturtiums ... the honeysuckle that hung down to touch her red-brown curls with a yellow finger ... the wind that blew ... where did it blow to? ... Cock Robin, who was back again and was strutting importantly along the railing of the verandah, wondering why Rilla would not play with him ... Rilla who could think of nothing but the terrible fact that she must carry a cake ... a *cake* ... through the village to the church for the old social they were getting up for the orphans. Rilla was dimly aware that the Orphanage was at Lowbridge and that poor little children lived there who had no fathers or mothers. She felt terribly sorry for them. But not even for the orphanest of orphans was small Rilla Blythe willing to be seen in public *carrying a cake*.

Perhaps if it rained she wouldn't have to go. It didn't *look* like rain but Rilla clasped her hands together ... there was a dimple at the root of every finger ... and said earnestly:

"Plethe, dear God, make it rain hard. Make it rain pitchforkth. Or elth..." Rilla thought of another saving possibility, "make Thusanth cake burn ... burn to a crithp."

Alas, when dinner time came the cake, done to a turn, filled and iced, was sitting triumphantly on the kitchen table. It was a favourite cake of Rilla's ... "Gold-and-silver cake" did sound so *luxuriant* ... but she felt that never again would she be able to eat a mouthful of it.

Still ... wasn't that thunder rolling over the low hills across the harbour? Perhaps God had heard her prayer ... perhaps there would be an earthquake before it was time to go. Couldn't she take a pain in her stomach if worst came to worst? No. Rilla shuddered. That would mean castor-oil. Better the earthquake!

The rest of the children did not notice that Rilla, sitting in her own dear chair, with the saucy white duck worked in crewels on the back, was very quiet. Thelfith pigth! If Mummy had been home *she* would have noticed it. Mummy had seen right away how troubled she was that dreadful day when Dad's picture had come out in the *Enterprise*. Rilla was crying bitterly in bed when Mummy came in and found out that Rilla thought it was only murderers that had their pictures in the papers. It had not taken Mummy long to put *that* to rights. Would Mummy like to see *her* daughter carrying cake through the Glen like old Tillie Pake?

Rilla found it hard to eat any dinner, though Susan had put down her own lovely blue plate with the wreath of rosebuds on it that Aunt Rachel Lynde had sent her on her last birthday and which she was generally allowed to have only on Sundays. Blue plateth and rothbudth! When you had to do such a shameful thing! Still, the fruit puffs Susan had made for dessert *were* nice.

"Thuthan, can't Nan and Di take the cake after thchool?" she pleaded.

"Di is going home from school with Jessie Reese and Nan has a bone in her leg," said Susan, under the impression that she was being joky.

“Besides it would be too late. The committee wants all the cakes in by three so they can cut them up and arrange the tables before they go home to have their suppers. Why in the world don’t you want to go, Roly-poly? You always think it is such fun to go for the mail.”

Rilla was a bit of a roly-poly but she hated to be called that.

“I don’t want to hurt my feelingth” she explained stiffly.

Susan laughed. Rilla was beginning to say things that made the family laugh. She never could understand why they laughed because she was always in earnest. Only Mummy never laughed; she hadn’t laughed even when she found out that Rilla thought Daddy was a murderer.

“The social is to make money for poor little boys and girls who haven’t any kind fathers or mothers,” explained Susan ... as if she was a baby who didn’t understand!

“I’m next thing to an orphan,” said Rilla. “I’ve only got one father and mother.”

Susan just laughed again. *Nobody* understood.

“You know your mother *promised* the committee that cake, pet. I have not time to take it myself and it *must* go. So put on your blue gingham and toddle off.”

“My doll hath been tookeen ill,” said Rilla desperately. “I mutht put her to bed and thtay with her. Maybe itth ammonia.”

“Your doll will do very well till you get back. You can go and come in half an hour,” was Susan’s heartless response.

There was no hope. Even God had failed her ... there wasn’t a sign of rain. Rilla, too near tears to protest any further, went up and put on her new smocked organdy and her Sunday hat, trimmed with daisies. Perhaps if she looked *respectable* people wouldn’t think she was like old Tillie Pake.

“I think my fathe itth clean if you will kindly look behind my earth,” she told Susan with great stateliness.

She was afraid Susan might scold her for putting on her best dress and hat. But Susan merely inspected her ears, handed her a basket containing

the cake, told her to mind her pretty manners and for goodness' sake not to stop to talk to every cat she met.

Rilla made a rebellious "face" at Gog and Magog and marched away. Susan looked after her tenderly.

"Fancy our baby being old enough to carry a cake all alone to the church," she thought, half proudly, half sorrowfully, as she went back to work, blissfully unaware of the torture she was inflicting on a small mite she would have given her life for.

Rilla had not felt so mortified since the time she had fallen asleep in church and tumbled off the seat. Ordinarily she loved going down to the village; there were so many interesting things to see: but today Mrs. Carter Flagg's fascinating clothesline, with all those lovely quilts on it, did not win a glance from Rilla, and the new cast-iron deer Mr. Augustus Palmer had set up in his yard left her cold. She had never passed it before without wishing they could have one like it on the lawn at Ingleside. But what were cast-iron deer now? Hot sunshine poured along the street like a river and *everybody* was out. Two girls went by, whispering to each other. Was it about *her*? She imagined what they might be saying. A man driving along the road stared at her. He was really wondering if that could be the Blythe baby and by George, what a little beauty she was! But Rilla felt that his eyes pierced the basket and saw the cake. And when Annie Drew drove by with her father Rilla was sure she was laughing at her. Annie Drew was ten and a very big girl in Rilla's eyes.

Then there was a whole crowd of boys and girls on Russell's corner. *She had to walk past them.* It was dreadful to feel that their eyes were all looking at her and then at each other. She marched by, so proudly desperate that they all thought she was stuck-up and had to be brought down a peg or two. *They'd* show that kitten-faced thing! A regular hoity-toity like all those Ingleside girls! Just because they lived up at the big house!

Millie Flagg strutted along behind her, imitating her walk and scuffing up clouds of dust over them both.

"Where's the basket going with the child?" shouted "Slicky" Drew.

“There’s a smudge on your nose, Jam-face,” jeered Bill Palmer.

“Cat got your tongue?” said Sarah Warren.

“Snippet!” sneered Beenie Bentley.

“Keep on your side of the road or I’ll make you eat a junebug,” big Sam Flagg stopped gnawing a raw carrot long enough to say.

“Look at her blushing,” giggled Mamie Taylor.

“Bet you’re taking a cake to the Presbyterian church,” said Charlie Warren. “Half dough like all Susan Baker’s cakes.”

Pride would not let Rilla cry, but there was a limit to what one could bear. After all, an Ingleside cake... .

“The next time any of you are thick I’ll tell my father not to give you any medithine,” she said defiantly.

Then she stared in dismay. That couldn’t be Kenneth Ford coming around the corner of the Harbour road! It couldn’t be! It was!

It was not to be borne. Ken and Walter were pals and Rilla thought in her small heart that Ken was the nicest, handsomest boy in the whole world. He seldom took much notice of her ... though once he had given her a chocolate duck. And one unforgettable day he had sat down beside her on a mossy stone in Rainbow Valley and told her the story of the Three Bears and the Little House in the Wood. But she was content to worship afar. And now this wonderful being had caught her *carrying a cake!*

“‘Lo, Roly-poly! Heat’s something fierce, isn’t it? Hope I’ll get a slice of that cake tonight.”

So he knew it was a cake! Everybody knew it!

Rilla was through the village and thought the worst was over when the worst happened. She looked down a side-road and saw her Sunday School teacher, Miss Emmy Parker, coming along it. Miss Emmy Parker was still quite a distance away but Rilla knew her by her dress ... that frilled organdy dress of pale green with clusters of little white flowers all over it ... the “cherry blossom dress,” Rilla secretly called it. Miss Emmy had it on in Sunday School last Sunday and Rilla had thought it the sweetest dress she had ever seen. But then Miss Emmy always wore such pretty

dresses ... sometimes lacy and frilly, sometimes with the whisper of silk about them.

Rilla worshipped Miss Emmy. She was so pretty and dainty, with her white, white skin and her brown, brown eyes and her sad, sweet smile ... sad, another small girl had whispered to Rilla one day, because the man she was going to marry had died. She was so glad she was in Miss Emmy's class. She would have hated to be in Miss Florrie Flagg's class ... Florrie Flagg was *ugly* and Rilla couldn't bear an ugly teacher.

When Rilla met Miss Emmy away from Sunday School and Miss Emmy smiled and spoke to her it was one of the high moments of life for Rilla. Only to be nodded to on the street by Miss Emmy gave a strange, sudden lift of the heart and when Miss Emmy had invited all her class to a soap-bubble party, where they made the bubbles red with strawberry juice, Rilla had all but died of sheer bliss.

But to meet Miss Emmy, carrying a cake, was just not to be endured and Rilla was not going to endure it. Besides, Miss Emmy was going to get up a dialogue for the next Sunday School concert and Rilla was cherishing secret hopes of being asked to take the fairy's part in it ... a fairy in scarlet with a little peaked green hat. But there would be no use in hoping for that if Miss Emmy saw her *carrying a cake*.

Miss Emmy was not going to see her! Rilla was standing on the little bridge crossing the brook, which was quite deep and creek-like just there. She snatched the cake out of the basket and hurled it into the brook where the alders met over a dark pool. The cake hurtled through the branches and sank with a plop and a gurgle. Rilla felt a wild spasm of relief and freedom and *escape*, as she turned to meet Miss Emmy, who, she now saw, was carrying a big bulgy brown paper parcel.

Miss Emmy smiled down at her, from beneath a little green hat with a tiny orange feather in it.

"Oh, you're beautiful, teacher ... beautiful," gasped Rilla adoringly.

Miss Emmy smiled again. Even when your heart is broken ... and Miss Emmy truly believed hers was ... it is not unpleasant to be given such a sincere compliment.

“It’s the new hat, I expect, dear. Fine feathers, you know. I suppose” ... glancing at the empty basket ... “you’ve been taking your cake up for the social. What a pity you’re not going instead of coming. I’m taking mine ... such a big, gooey chocolate cake.”

Rilla gazed up piteously, unable to utter a word. Miss Emmy was *carrying a cake*, therefore, it could not be a disgraceful thing to carry a cake. And she ... oh, what had she done? She had thrown Susan’s lovely gold-and-silver cake into the brook ... and she had lost the chance of walking up to the church with Miss Emmy, *both* carrying cakes!

After Miss Emmy had gone on Rilla went home with her dreadful secret. She buried herself in Rainbow Valley until supper time, when again nobody noticed that she was very quiet. She was terribly afraid Susan would ask to whom she had given the cake but there were no awkward questions. After supper the others went to play in Rainbow Valley but Rilla sat alone on the steps until the sun went down and the sky was all a windy gold behind Ingleside and the lights sprang up in the village below. Always Rilla liked to watch them blooming out, here and there, all over the Glen, but tonight she was interested in nothing. She had never been so unhappy in her life. She just didn’t see how she could live. The evening deepened to purple and she was still more unhappy. A most delectable odour of maple sugar buns drifted out to her ... Susan had waited for the evening coolness to do the family baking ... but maple sugar buns, like all else, were just vanity. Miserably she climbed the stairs and went to bed under the new, pink-flowered spread she had once been so proud of. But she could not sleep. She was still haunted by the ghost of the cake she had drowned. Mother had promised the committee that cake ... what would they think of Mother for not sending it? And it would have been the prettiest cake there! The wind had such a lonely sound tonight. It was reproaching her. It was saying, “Silly ... silly ... silly,” over and over again.

“What is keeping you awake, pet?” said Susan, coming in with a maple sugar bun.

“Oh, Thuthan, I’m ... I’m jutht tired of being *me*.”

Susan looked troubled. Come to think of it, the child had looked tired at supper.

“And of course the doctor’s away. Doctors’ families die and shoemakers’ wives go barefoot,” she thought. Then aloud:

“I am going to see if you have a temperature, my pet.”

“No, no, Thuthan. It’th jutht ... I’ve done thomething dreadful, Thuthan ... Thatan made me do it ... no, no, he didn’t, Thuthan ... I did it mythelf, I ... I threw the cake into the creek.”

“Land of hope and glory!” said Susan blankly. “Whatever made you do that?”

“Do what?” It was Mother, home from town. Susan retreated gladly, thankful that Mrs. Doctor had the situation in hand. Rilla sobbed out the whole story.

“Darling, I don’t understand. *Why* did you think it was such a dreadful thing to take a cake to the church?”

“I thought it wath jutht like old Tillie Pake, Mummy. And I’ve dithgrathed you! Oh, Mummy, if you’ll forgive me I’ll never be naughty again ... and I’ll tell the committee you *did* thend a cake ...”

“Never mind the committee, darling. They would have more than enough cakes ... they always do. It’s not likely anyone would notice we didn’t send one. We just won’t talk of this to anybody. But always after this, Bertha Marilla Blythe, remember the fact that neither Susan nor Mother would ever ask you to do anything disgraceful.”

Life was sweet again. Daddy came to the door to say, “Goodnight, Kittenkin,” and Susan slipped in to say they were going to have a chicken pie for dinner tomorrow.

“With lotth of gravy, Thuthan?”

“Lashings of it.”

“And may I have a *brown* egg for breakfath, Thuthan. I don’t detherve it ...”

“You shall have two brown eggs if you want them. And now you *must* eat your bun and go to sleep, little pet.”

Rilla ate her bun but before she went to sleep she slipped out of bed and knelt down. Very earnestly she said:

“Dear God, please make me a good and obedient child alwayth, no matter what I’m told to do. And bleth dear Mith Emmy and all the poor orphanth.”

Chapter XXXV

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The Ingleside children played together and walked together and had all kinds of adventures together; and each of them, in addition to this, had his and her own inner life of dream and fancy. Especially Nan, who from the very first had fashioned secret drama for herself out of everything she heard or saw or read and sojourned in realms of wonder and romance quite unsuspected in her household circle. At first she wove patterns of pixy dances and elves in haunted valleys and dryads in birch trees. She and the great willow at the gate had whispered secrets and the old empty Bailey house at the upper end of Rainbow Valley was the ruin of a haunted tower. For weeks she might be a king's daughter imprisoned in a lonely castle by the sea ... for months she was a nurse in a leper colony in India or some land "far, far away." "Far, far away" had always been words of magic to Nan ... like faint music over a windy hill.

As she grew older she built up her drama about the real people she saw in her little life. Especially the people in church. Nan liked to look at the people in church because everyone was so nicely dressed. It was almost miraculous. They looked so different from what they did on week days.

The quiet respectable occupants of the various family pews would have been amazed and perhaps a little horrified if they had known the romances the demure, browneyed maiden in the Ingleside pew was concocting about them. Black-browed, kindhearted Annetta Millison would have been thunderstruck to know that Nan Blythe pictured her as a kidnapper of children, boiling them alive to make potions that would keep her young forever. Nan pictured this so vividly that she was half frightened to death when she met Annetta Millison once in a twilight lane astir with the golden whisper of buttercups. She was positively unable to reply to Annetta's friendly greeting and Annetta reflected that Nan Blythe was really getting to be a proud and saucy little puss and needed a bit of

training in good manners. Pale Mrs. Rod Palmer never dreamed that she had poisoned someone and was dying of remorse. Elder Gordon MacAllister of the solemn face had no notion that a curse had been put on him at birth by a witch, the result being that he could never smile. Dark-moustached Fraser Palmer of a blameless life little knew that when Nan Blythe looked at him she was thinking, "I am sure that man has committed a dark and desperate deed. He looks as if he had some dreadful secret on his conscience." And Archibald Fyfe had no suspicion that when Nan Blythe saw him coming she was busy making up a rhyme as a reply to any remark he might make because he was never to be spoken to except in rhyme. He never did speak to her, being exceedingly afraid of children, but Nan got no end of fun out of desperately and quickly inventing a rhyme.

*"I'm very well, thank you, Mr. Fyfe,
How are you yourself and your wife?"*

or,

*"Yes, it is a very fine day,
Just the right kind for making hay."*

There is no knowing what Mrs. Morton Kirk would have said if she had been told that Nan Blythe would never come to her house ... supposing she had ever been invited ... because there was a *red footprint* on her doorstep; and her sister-in-law, placid, kind, unsought Elizabeth Kirk, did not dream she was an old maid because her lover had dropped dead at the altar just before the wedding ceremony.

It was all very amusing and interesting and Nan never lost her way between fact and fiction until she became possessed with the Lady with the Mysterious Eyes.

It is no use asking how dreams grow. Nan herself could never have told you how it came about. It started with the GLOOMY HOUSE ... Nan saw it always just like that, spelled in capitals. She liked to spin her romances about places as well as people and the GLOOMY HOUSE was the only

place around, except the old Bailey house, which lent itself to romance. Nan had never seen the HOUSE itself ... she only knew that it was there, behind a thick dark spruce on the Lowbridge side-road, and had been vacant from time immemorial, — so Susan said. Nan didn't know what time immemorial was but it was a most fascinating phrase, just suited to gloomy houses.

Nan always ran madly past the lane that led up to the GLOOMY HOUSE when she went along the side-road to visit her chum, Dora Clow. It was a long dark tree-arched lane with thick grass growing between its ruts and ferns waist-high under the spruces. There was a long grey maple bough near the tumbledown gate that looked exactly like a crooked old arm reaching down to encircle her. Nan never knew when it might reach a wee bit further and grab her. It gave her such a thrill to escape it.

One day Nan, to her astonishment, heard Susan saying that Thomasine Fair had come to live in the GLOOMY HOUSE ... or, as Susan unromantically phrased it, the old MacAllister place.

"She will find it rather lonely, I should imagine," Mother had said. "It's so out-of-the-way."

"She will not mind that," said Susan. "She never goes anywhere, not even to church. Has not gone anywhere for years ... though they say she walks in her garden at night. Well, well, to think what she has come to ... her that was so handsome and such a terrible flirt. The hearts she broke in her day! And look at her now! Well, it is a warning and that you may tie to."

Just to whom it was a warning Susan did not explain and nothing more was said, for nobody at Ingleside was very much interested in Thomasine Fair. But Nan, who had grown a little tired of all her old dream lives and was agog for something new, seized on Thomasine Fair in the GLOOMY HOUSE. Bit by bit, day after day, night after night ... one could believe *anything* at night ... she built up a legend about her until the whole thing flowered out unrecognisably and became a dearer dream to Nan than any she had hitherto known. Nothing before had ever seemed so entrancing, so *real*, as this vision of the Lady with the Mysterious Eyes. Great black

velvet eyes ... *hollow* eyes ... *haunted* eyes ... filled with remorse for the hearts she had broken. *Wicked* eyes ... anyone who broke hearts and never went to church must be wicked. Wicked people were so interesting. The Lady was burying herself from the world as a penance for her crimes.

Could she be a princess? No, princesses were too scarce in P. E. Island. But she was tall, slim, remote, icily beautiful like a princess, with long jet-black hair in two thick braids over her shoulders, right to her feet. She would have a clear-cut ivory face, a beautiful Grecian nose, like the nose of Mother's Artemis of the Silver Bow, and white lovely hands which she would wring as she walked in the garden at night, waiting for the one true lover she had disdained and learned too late to love ... you perceive how the legend was growing? ... while her long black velvet skirts trailed over the grass. She would wear a golden girdle and great pearl earrings in her ears and she must live her life of shadow and mystery until the lover came to set her free. Then she would repent of her old wickedness and heartlessness and hold out her beautiful hands to him and bend her proud head in submission at last. They would sit by the fountain ... there was a fountain by this time ... and pledge their vows anew and she would follow him, "over the hills and faraway, beyond their utmost purple rim," just as the Sleeping Princess did in the poem Mother read to her one night from the old volume of Tennyson Father had given her long, long ago. But the lover of the Mysterious Eyed gave her jewels beyond all compare.

The GLOOMY HOUSE would be beautifully furnished, of course, and there would be secret rooms and staircases, and the Lady with the Mysterious Eyes would sleep on a bed made of mother-of-pearl under a canopy of purple velvet. She would be attended by a greyhound ... a brace of them ... a whole retinue of them ... and she would always be listening ... listening ... listening ... for the music of a very far-off harp. But she could not hear it as long as she was wicked until her lover came and forgave her ... and there you were.

Of course it sounds very foolish. Dreams do sound so foolish when they are put into cold brutal words. Ten-year-old Nan never put hers into words ... she only lived them. This dream of the wicked Lady with the

Mysterious Eyes became as real to her as the life that went on around her. It took possession of her. For two years now it had been part of her ... she had somehow come, in some strange way, to believe it. Not for worlds would she have told anyone, not even Mother, about it. It was her own peculiar treasure, her inalienable secret, without which she could no longer imagine life going on. She would rather steal off by herself to dream of the Lady with the Mysterious Eyes than play in Rainbow Valley.

Anne noticed this tendency and worried a little over it. Nan was getting too much that way. Gilbert wanted to send her up to Avonlea for a visit, but Nan, for the first time, pleaded passionately not to be sent. She didn't want to leave home, she said piteously. To herself she said she would just die if she had to go so far away from the strange sad lovely Lady with the Mysterious Eyes. True, the Mysterious Eyed never went out anywhere. But she *might* go out some day and if she, Nan, were away she would miss seeing her. How wonderful it would be to get just a glimpse of her! Why, the very road along which she passed would be forever romantic. The day on which it happened would be different from all other days. She would make a ring around it in the calendar. Nan had got to the point when she greatly desired to see her just once. She knew quite well that much she had imagined about her was nothing but imagination. But she hadn't the slightest doubt that Thomasine Fair was young and lovely and wicked and alluring ... Nan was by this time absolutely certain she had heard Susan say so ... and as long as she was that, Nan could go on imagining things about her forever.

Nan could hardly believe her ears when Susan said to her one morning:

"There is a parcel I want to send up to Thomasine Fair at the old MacAllister place. Your father brought it out from town last night. Will you run up with it this afternoon, pet?"

Just like that! Nan caught her breath. *Would* she? Did dreams really come true in such fashion? She would see the GLOOMY HOUSE ... she would see her beautiful wicked Lady with the Mysterious Eyes. Actually see her ... perhaps hear her speak ... perhaps ... oh, bliss! ... touch her slender white hand. As for the greyhounds and the fountain and so forth,

Nan knew she had only imagined them but surely the reality would be equally wonderful.

Nan watched the clock all the forenoon, seeing the time draw slowly ... oh, so slowly ... nearer and nearer. When a thundercloud rolled up ominously and rain began to fall she could hardly keep the tears back.

"I don't see *how* God could let it rain today," she whispered rebelliously.

But the shower was soon over and the sun shone again. Nan could eat hardly any dinner for excitement.

"Mummy, may I wear my yellow dress?"

"Why do you want to dress up like that to call on a neighbour, child?"

A neighbour! But of course Mother didn't understand ... couldn't understand.

"*Please*, Mummy."

"Very well," said Anne. The yellow dress would be outgrown very soon. May as well let Nan get the good of it.

Nan's legs were fairly trembling as she set off, the precious small parcel in her hand. She took a short-cut through Rainbow Valley, up the hill, to the side-road. The raindrops were still lying on the nasturtium leaves like great pearls; there was a delicious freshness in the air; the bees were buzzing in the white clover that edged the brook; slim blue dragonflies were glittering over the water ... devil's-darning-needles, Susan called them; in the hill pasture the daisies nodded to her ... swayed to her ... waved to her ... laughed to her, with cool gold-and-silver laughter. Everything was so lovely and she was going to see the Wicked Lady with the Mysterious Eyes. What would the Lady say to her? And was it *quite* safe to go to see her? Suppose you stayed a few minutes with her and found that a hundred years had gone by, as in the story she and Walter had read last week?

Chapter XXXVI

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Nan felt a queer tickly sensation in her spine as she turned into the lane. Did the dead maple bough move? No, she had escaped it ... she was past. Aha, old witch, you didn't catch *Me*! She was walking up the lane of which the mud and the ruts had no power to blight her anticipation. Just a few steps more ... the GLOOMY HOUSE was before her, amid and behind those dark dripping trees. She was going to see it at last! She shivered a little ... and did not know that it was because of a secret unadmitted fear of losing her dream. Which is always, for youth or maturity or age, a catastrophe.

She pushed her way through a gap in a wild growth of young spruces that was choking up the end of the lane. Her eyes were shut; could she dare to open them? For a moment sheer terror possessed her and for two pins she would have turned and run. After all ... the Lady *was* wicked. Who knew what she might do to you? She might even be a Witch. How was it that it had never occurred to her before that the Wicked Lady might be a Witch?

Then she resolutely opened her eyes and stared piteously.

Was *this* the GLOOMY HOUSE ... the dark, stately, towered and turreted mansion of her dreams? This!

It was a big house, once white, now a muddy gray. Here and there, broken shutters, once green, were swinging loose. The front steps were broken. A forlorn glassed-in porch had most of its panes shattered. The scrolled trimming around the verandah was broken. Why, it was only a tired old house worn out with living!

Nan looked about desperately. There was no fountain ... no garden ... well, nothing you could really call a garden. The space in front of the house, surrounded by a ragged paling, was full of weeds and knee-high tangled grass. A lank pig rooted beyond the paling. Burdocks grew along

the mid-walk. Straggly clumps of golden-glow were in the corners, but there *was* one splendid clump of militant tiger-lilies and, just by the worn steps, a gay bed of marigolds.

Nan went slowly up the walk to the marigold bed. The GLOOMY HOUSE was gone forever. But the Lady with the Mysterious Eyes remained. Surely *she* was real ... she must be! *What* had Susan really said about her so long ago?

“Laws-a-mercy, ye nearly scared the liver out of me!” said a rather mumbly though friendly voice.

Nan looked at the figure that had suddenly risen up from beside the marigold bed. *Who was it?* It could *not* be ... Nan refused to believe that *this* was Thomasine Fair. It would be just too terrible!

“Why,” thought Nan, heartsick with disappointment, “she ... she’s *old!*”

Thomasine Fair, if Thomasine Fair it was ... and she knew now it was Thomasine Fair ... was certainly old. And fat! She looked like the featherbed with the string tied round its middle to which angular Susan was always comparing stout ladies. She was barefooted, wore a green dress that had faded yellowish, and a man’s old felt hat on her sparse, sandy-grey hair. Her face was round as an O, ruddy and wrinkled, with a snub nose. Her eyes were a faded blue, surrounded by great, jolly-looking crow’s-feet.

Oh, my Lady ... my charming, Wicked Lady with the Mysterious Eyes, where are you? What has become of you? You *did* exist!

“Well now, and what nice little girl are you?” asked Thomasine Fair.

Nan clutched after her manners.

“I’m ... I’m Nan Blythe. I came up to bring you this.”

Thomasine pounced on the parcel joyfully.

“Well, if I ain’t glad to get my specks back!” she said. “I’ve missed ‘em turrible for reading the almanack on Sundays. And you’re one of the Blythe girls? What pretty hair you’ve got! I’ve always wanted to see some of you. I’ve heered your ma was bringing you up scientific. Do you like it?”

“Like ... what?” Oh, wicked, charming Lady, *you* did not read the almanack on Sundays. Nor did you talk of “ma’s.”

“Why, bein’ brought up scientific.”

“I like the way I’m being brought up,” said Nan, trying to smile and barely succeeding.

“Well, your ma is a real fine woman. She’s holding her own. I declare the first time I saw her at Libby Taylor’s funeral I thought she was a bride, she looked so happy. I always think when I see your ma come into a room that everyone perks up as if they expected something to happen. The new fashions set her, too. Most of us just ain’t made to wear ‘em. But come in and set a while ... I’m glad to see someone ... it gets kinder lonesome by spells. I can’t afford a telephone. Flowers is company ... did ye ever see finer merrygolds? And I’ve got a cat.”

Nan wanted to flee to the uttermost parts of the earth, but she felt it would never do to hurt the old lady’s feelings by refusing to go in. Thomasine, her petticoat showing below her skirt, led the way up the sagging steps into a room which was evidently kitchen and livingroom combined. It was scrupulously clean and gay with thrifty house plants. The air was full of the pleasant fragrance of newly cooked bread.

“Set here,” said Thomasine kindly, pushing forward a rocker with a gay patched cushion. “I’ll move that callow-lily out of your way. Wait till I get my lower plate in. I look funny with it out, don’t I? But it hurts me a mite. There, I’ll talk clearer now.”

A spotted cat, uttering all kinds of fancy meows, came forward to greet them. Oh, for the greyhounds of a vanished dream!

“That cat’s a fine ratter,” said Thomasine. “This place is overrun with rats. But it keeps the rain out and I got sick of living round with relations. Couldn’t call my soul my own. Ordered round as if I was dirt. Jim’s wife was the worst. Complained because I was making faces at the moon one night. Well, what if I was? Did it hurt the moon? Says I, ‘I ain’t going to be a pincushion any longer.’ So I come here on my own and here I’ll stay as long as I have use of my legs. Now, what’ll you have? Can I make you an onion sandwich?”

“No ... no, thank you.”

“They’re fine when you have a cold. I’ve been having one ... notice how hoarse I am? But I just tie a piece of red flannel with turpentine and goose-grease on it round my throat when I go to bed. Nothing better.”

Red flannel and goose-grease! Not to speak of turpentine!

“If you won’t have a sandwich ... sure you won’t? ... I’ll see what’s in the cooky box.”

The cookies ... cut in the shape of roosters and ducks ... were surprisingly good and fairly melted in your mouth. Mrs. Fair beamed at Nan out of her round faded eyes.

“Now you’ll like me, won’t you? I like to have little girls like me.”

“I’ll try,” gasped Nan, who at that moment was hating poor Thomasine Fair as we can hate only those who destroy our illusions.

“I’ve got some little grandchildren of my own out West, you know.”

Grandchildren!

“I’ll show you their pictures. Pretty, ain’t they? That’s poor dear Poppa’s picture up there. Twenty years since he died.”

Poor dear Poppa’s picture was a large “crayon” of a bearded man with a curly fringe of white hair surrounding a bald head.

Oh, lover disdained!

“He was a good husband though he was bald at thirty,” said Mrs. Fair fondly. “My, but I had the pick of the beaus when I was a girl. I’m old now but I had a fine time when I was young. The beaus on Sunday nights! Trying to sit each other out! And me holding up my head as haughty as any queen! Poppa was among them from the start but at first I hadn’t nothing to say to him. I liked ‘em a bit more dashing. There was Andrew Metcalf now ... I was as near as no matter running away with him. But I knew ‘twould be unlucky. Don’t you ever run away. It *is* unlucky and don’t let anyone ever tell you different.”

“I ... I won’t ... indeed I won’t.”

“In the end I married Poppa. His patience gin out at last and he give me twenty-four hours to take him or leave him. My pa wanted me to settle down. He got nervous when Jim Hewitt drowned himself because I

wouldn't have him. Poppa and I were real happy when we got used to each other. He said I suited him because I didn't do too much thinking. Poppa held women weren't made for thinking. He said it made 'em dried-up and unnatteral. Baked beans disagreed with him turrible and he had spells of lumbago but my balmagilia balsam always straightened that out. There was a specialist in town said he could cure him permanent but Poppa always said if you got into the hands of them specialists they'd never let you out again ... never. I miss him to feed the pig. He was real fond of pork. I never eat a bit of bacon but I think of him. That picture opposite Poppa is Queen Victoria. Sometimes I say to her, 'If they stripped all them lace and jewels off you, my dear, I doubt if you'd be any better-looking than I am.'

Before she let Nan go she insisted on her taking a bag of peppermints, a pink glass slipper for holding flowers, and a glass of gooseberry jelly.

"That's for your ma. I've always had good luck with my gooseberry jelly. I'm coming down to Ingleside some day. I want to see them chiney dogs of yours. Tell Susan Baker I'm much obliged for that mess of turnip greens she sent me in the spring."

Turnip greens!

"I 'lowed I'd thank her at Jacob Warren's funeral but she got away too quick. I like to take my time at funerals. There hasn't been one for a month. I always think it's a dull old time when there's no funerals going. There's always a fine lot of funerals over Lowbridge way. It don't seem fair. Come again and see me, won't you? You've got something about you ... 'loving favour is better than silver and gold,' the Good Book says and I guess it's right."

She smiled very pleasantly at Nan ... she *had* a sweet smile. In it you saw the pretty Thomasine of long ago. Nan managed another smile herself. Her eyes were stinging. She *must* get away before she cried outright.

"Nice, well-behaved leetle creetur," mused old Thomasine Fair, looking out of her window after Nan. "Hasn't got her ma's gift of gab but maybe none the worse of that. Most of the kids today think they're smart

when they're just being sassy. That little thing's visit has kind of made me feel young again."

Thomasine sighed and went out to finish cutting her marigolds and hoeing up some of the burdocks.

"Thank goodness, I've kept limber," she reflected.

Nan went back to Ingleside the poorer by a lost dream. A dell full of daisies could not lure her ... singing water called to her in vain. She wanted to get home and shut herself away from human eyes. Two girls she met giggled after they passed her. Were they laughing at her? How everybody would laugh if they knew! Silly little Nan Blythe who had spun a romance of cobweb fancies about a pale queen of mystery and found instead poor Poppa's widow and peppermints.

Peppermints!

Nan would not cry. Big girls of ten must not cry. But she felt indescribably dreary. Something precious and beautiful was gone ... lost ... a secret store of joy which, so she believed, could never be hers again. She found Ingleside filled with the delicious smell of spice cookies but she did not go into the kitchen to coax some out of Susan. At supper her appetite was noticeably poor, even though she read castor-oil in Susan's eye. Anne had noticed that Nan had been very quiet ever since her return from the old MacAllister place ... Nan, who sang literally from daylight to dark and after. Had the long walk on a hot day been too much for the child?

"Why that anguished expression, daughter?" she asked casually, when she went into the twins' room at dusk with fresh towels and found Nan curled up on the window-seat, instead of being down stalking tigers in Equatorial jungles with the others in Rainbow Valley.

Nan hadn't meant to tell *anybody* that she had been so silly. But somehow things told themselves to Mother.

"Oh, Mother, is *everything* in life a disappointment?"

"Not everything, dear. Would you like to tell me what disappointed you today?"

"Oh, Mummy, Thomasine Fair is ... is *good*! And her nose turns up!"

“But why,” asked Anne in honest bewilderment, “should you care whether her nose turns up or down?”

It all came out then. Anne listened with her usual serious face, praying that she be not betrayed into a stifled shriek of laughter. She remembered the child she had been at old Green Gables. She remembered the Haunted Wood and two small girls who had been terribly frightened by their own pretending thereof. And she knew the dreadful bitterness of losing a dream.

“You musn’t take the vanishing of your fancies so much to heart, dear.”

“I can’t help it,” said Nan despairingly. “If I had my life to live over again I’d never imagine *anything*. And I never will again.”

“My foolish dear ... my *dear* foolish dear, don’t say that. An imagination is a wonderful thing to have ... but like every gift we must possess it and not let it possess us. You take your imaginings a wee bit too seriously. Oh, it’s delightful ... I know that rapture. But you must learn to keep on this side of the borderline between the real and the unreal. *Then* the power to escape at will into a beautiful world of your own will help you amazingly through the hard places of life. I can always solve a problem more easily after I’ve had a voyage or two to the Islands of Enchantment.”

Nan felt her self-respect coming back to her with these words of comfort and wisdom. Mother did not think it so silly after all. And no doubt there was somewhere in the world a Wicked Beautiful Lady with Mysterious Eyes, even if she did not live in the GLOOMY HOUSE ... which, now that Nan came to think of it, was not such a bad place after all, with its orange marigolds and its friendly spotted cat and its geraniums and poor dear Poppa’s picture. It was really rather a jolly place and perhaps some day she would go and see Thomasine Fair again and get some more of those nice cookies. She did not hate Thomasine any longer.

“What a nice mother you are!” she sighed, in the shelter and sanctuary of those beloved arms.

A violet-grey dusk was coming over the hill. The summer night darkened about them ... a night of velvet and whispers. A star came out

over the big apple tree. When Mrs. Marshall Elliott came and Mother had to go down Nan was happy again. Mother had said she was going to repaper their room with a lovely buttercup-yellow paper and get a new cedar chest for her and Di to keep things in. Only it would not be a cedar chest. It would be an enchanted treasure chest which could not be opened unless certain mystic words were pronounced. One word the Witch of the Snow might whisper to you, the cold and lovely white Witch of the Snow. A wind might tell you another, as it passed you ... a sad grey wind that mourned. Sooner or later you would find all the words and open the chest, to find it filled with pearls and rubies and diamonds galore. Wasn't galore a nice word?

Oh, the old magic had not gone. The world was still full of it.

Chapter XXXVII

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“Can I be your dearest friend this year?” asked Delilah Green, during that afternoon recess.

Delilah had very round, dark-blue eyes, sleek sugar-brown curls, a small rosy mouth, and a thrilling voice with a little quaver in it. Diana Blythe responded to the charm of that voice instantly.

It was known in the Glen school that Diana Blythe was rather at loose ends for a chum. For two years she and Pauline Reese had been cronies but Pauline’s family had moved away and Diana felt very lonely. Pauline had been a good sort. To be sure, she was quite lacking in the mystic charm that the now almost forgotten Jenny Penny had possessed but she was practical, full of fun, *sensible*. That last was Susan’s adjective and was the highest praise Susan could bestow. She had been entirely satisfied with Pauline as a friend for Diana.

Diana looked at Delilah doubtfully, then glanced across the playground at Laura Carr, who was also a new girl. Laura and she had spent the forenoon recess together and had found each other very agreeable. But Laura was rather plain, with freckles and unmanageable sandy hair. She had none of Delilah Green’s beauty and not a spark of her allure.

Delilah understood Diana’s look and a hurt expression crept over her face; her blue eyes seemed ready to brim with tears.

“If you love *her* you can’t love *me*. Choose between us,” said Delilah, holding out her hands dramatically. Her voice was more thrilling than ever ... it positively sent a creep along Diana’s spine. She put her hands in Delilah’s and they looked at each other solemnly, feeling dedicated and sealed. At least, Diana felt that way.

“You’ll love me *forever*, won’t you?” asked Delilah passionately.

“Forever,” vowed Diana with equal passion.

Delilah slipped her arms around Diana's waist and they walked down to the brook together. The rest of the Fourth class understood that an alliance had been concluded. Laura Carr gave a tiny sigh. She had liked Diana Blythe very much. But she knew she could not compete with Delilah.

"I'm so glad you're going to let me love you," Delilah was saying. "I'm so very affectionate ... I just can't help loving people. *Please* be kind to me, Diana. I am a child of sorrow. I was put under a curse at birth. Nobody ... *nobody* loves me."

Delilah somehow contrived to put ages of loneliness and loveliness into that "nobody." Diana tightened her clasp.

"You'll never have to say that after this, Delilah. I will always love you."

"World without end?"

"World without end," answered Diana. They kissed each other, as in a rite. Two boys on the fence whooped derisively, but who cared?

"You'll like me ever so much better than Laura Carr," said Delilah. "Now that we're dear friends I can tell you what I wouldn't have *dreamed* of telling you if you had picked her. *She is deceitful*. Dreadfully deceitful. She pretends to be your friend to your face and behind your back she makes fun of you and says the *meanest* things. A girl I know went to school with her at Mowbray's Narrows and she told me. You've had a narrow escape. *I'm* so different from that ... I am as true as gold, Diana."

"I'm sure you are. But what did you mean by saying you were a child of sorrow, Delilah?"

Delilah's eyes seemed to expand until they were absolutely enormous.

"I have a *stepmother*," she whispered.

"A stepmother?"

"When your mother dies and your father marries again *she* is a stepmother," said Delilah, with still more thrills in her voice. "Now you know it all, Diana. If you knew the way I am treated! But I never complain. I suffer in silence."

If Delilah really suffered in silence it might be wondered where Diana got all the information she showered on the Ingleside folks during the next few weeks. She was in the throes of a wild passion of adoration and sympathy for and with sorrow-laden, persecuted Delilah, and she had to talk about her to anyone who would listen.

“I suppose this new infatuation will run its course in due time,” said Anne. “Who is this Delilah, Susan? I don’t want the children to be little snobs ... but after our experience with Jenny Penny ...”

“The Greens are very respectable, Mrs. Dr. dear. They are well-known at Lowbridge. They moved into the old Hunter place this summer. Mrs. Green is the second wife and has two children of her own. I do not know much about her but she seems to have a slow, kind, easy way with her. I can hardly believe she uses Delilah as Di says.”

“Don’t put too much credence in everything Delilah tells you,” Anne warned Diana. “She may be prone to exaggerate a little. Remember Jenny Penny ...”

“Why, Mother, Delilah isn’t a single bit like Jenny Penny,” said Di indignantly. “Not one bit. She is *scrupulously* truthful. If you only saw her, Mother, you’d know she couldn’t tell a lie. They all pick on her at home because she is so *different*. And she has *such* an affectionate nature. She has been persecuted from her birth. Her stepmother *hates* her. It just breaks my heart to hear of her sufferings. Why, Mother, she doesn’t get enough to eat, truly she doesn’t. She never knows what it is not to be hungry. Mother, they send her to bed without any supper lots of times and she cries herself to sleep. Did *you* ever cry because you were hungry, Mother?”

“Often,” said Mother.

Diana stared at her mother, all the wind taken out of the sails of her rhetorical question.

“I was often very hungry before I came to Green Gables — at the orphanage ... and before. I’ve never cared to talk of those days.”

“Well, you ought to be able to understand Delilah, then,” said Di, rallying her confused wits. “When she is so hungry she just sits down and

imagines things to eat. Just *think* of her imagining things to eat!”

“You and Nan do enough of that yourselves,” said Anne. But Di would not listen.

“Her sufferings are not only physical but *spiritual*. Why, she wants to be a missionary, Mother ... to consecrate her life ... and they *all laugh at her*.”

“Very heartless of them,” agreed Anne. But something in her voice made Di suspicious.

“Mother, *why* will you be so sceptical?” she demanded reproachfully.

“For the second time,” smiled Mother, “I must remind you of Jenny Penny. You believed in her, too.”

“I was only a *child* then and it was easy to fool me,” said Diana in her stateliest manner. She felt that Mother was not her usual sympathetic and understanding self in regard to Delilah Green. After that Diana talked only to Susan about her, since Nan merely nodded when Delilah’s name was mentioned. “Just jealousy,” thought Diana sadly.

Not that Susan was so markedly sympathetic either. But Diana just had to talk to somebody about Delilah and Susan’s derision did not hurt like Mother’s. You wouldn’t expect Susan to understand fully. But Mother had been a girl ... Mother had loved Aunt Diana ... Mother had such a tender heart. How was it that the account of poor darling Delilah’s ill-treatment left her so cold?

“Maybe she’s a little jealous, too, because I love Delilah so much,” reflected Diana sagely. “They say mothers do get like that. Kind of *possessive*.”

“It makes my blood boil to hear of the way her stepmother treats Delilah,” Di told Susan. “She is a *martyr*, Susan. She never has anything but a little porridge for breakfast and supper ... a very little bit of porridge. And she isn’t allowed sugar on the porridge. Susan, I’ve given up taking sugar on mine because it made me feel *guilty*.”

“Oh, so that’s why. Well, sugar has gone up a cent, so maybe it is just as well.”

Diana vowed she wouldn't tell Susan anything more about Delilah, but next evening she was so indignant she couldn't help herself.

"Susan, Delilah's mother chased her last night with a *red-hot teakettle*. Think of it, Susan. Of course Delilah says she doesn't do that very often ... only when she is *greatly exasperated*. Mostly she just locks Delilah in a dark garret ... a *haunted* garret. The ghosts that poor child has seen, Susan! It can't be healthy for her. The last time they shut her in the garret she saw the *weirdest* little black creature sitting on the spinning-wheel, *humming*."

"What kind of a creature," asked Susan gravely. She was beginning to enjoy Delilah's tribulations and Di's italics, and she and Mrs. Dr. laughed over them in secret.

"I don't know ... it was just a *creature*. It almost drove her to suicide. I am really afraid she will be driven to it yet. You know, Susan, she had an uncle who committed suicide *twice*."

"Was not once enough?" asked Susan heartlessly.

Di went off in a huff, but next day she had to come back with another tale of woe.

"Delilah has never had a doll, Susan. She did so hope she would get one in her stocking last Christmas. And what do you think she found instead, Susan? A *switch*! They whip her almost every day, you know. Think of that poor child being whipped, Susan."

"I was whipped several times when I was young and I am none the worse of it now," said Susan, who would have done goodness knows what if anyone had ever tried to whip an Ingleside child.

"When I told Delilah about our Christmas trees, she wept, Susan. She never had a Christmas tree. But she is bound she is going to have one this year. She had found an old umbrella with nothing but the ribs and she is going to set it in a pail and decorate it for a Christmas tree. Isn't that *pathetic*, Susan?"

"Are there not plenty of young spruces handy? The back of the old Hunter place has practically gone spruce of late years," said Susan. "I do

wish that girl was called anything but Delilah. Such a name for a Christian child!”

“Why, it is in the Bible, Susan. Delilah is very proud of her Bible name. Today in school, Susan, I told Delilah we were going to have chicken for dinner tomorrow and she said ... what do you think she said, Susan?”

“I am sure I could never guess,” said Susan emphatically. “And you have no business to be talking in school.”

“Oh, we don’t. Delilah says we must never break any of the rules. Her standards are very high. We write each other letters in our scribblers and exchange them. Well, Delilah said, ‘Could you bring me a bone, Diana?’ It brought tears to my eye. I’m going to take her a bone ... with a lot of meat on it. Delilah *needs* good food. She has to work like a slave ... a *slave*, Susan. She has to do all the housework ... well, nearly all anyway. And if it isn’t done right she is *savagely shaken* ... or made to eat in the kitchen *with the servants*.”

“The Greens have only one little French hired boy.”

“Well, she has to eat with him. And he sits in his sockfeet and eats in his shirtsleeves. Delilah says she doesn’t mind those things now when she has me to love her. She has no one to love her but me, Susan?”

“Awful!” said Susan, with great gravity of countenance.

“Delilah says if she had a million dollars she’d give it all to me, Susan. Of course I wouldn’t take it but it shows how good her heart is.”

“It is as easy to give away a million as a hundred if you have not got either,” was as far as Susan would go.

Chapter XXXVIII

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Diana was overjoyed. After all, Mother wasn't jealous ... Mother wasn't possessive ... Mother did understand.

Mother and Father were going up to Avonlea for the weekend and Mother had told her she could ask Delilah Green to spend Saturday and Saturday night at Ingleside.

"I saw Delilah at the Sunday School picnic," Anne told Susan. "She is a pretty, ladylike little thing ... though of course she *must* exaggerate. Perhaps her stepmother is a little hard on her ... and I've heard her father is rather dour and strict. She probably has some grievances and likes to dramatize them by way of getting sympathy."

Susan was a bit dubious.

"But at least anyone living in Laura Green's house will be clean," she reflected. Fine-tooth combs did not enter into this question.

Diana was full of plans for Delilah's entertainment.

"Can we have a roast chicken, Susan ... with lots of stuffing? And *pie*. You don't know how that poor child longs to taste pie. They never have pies ... her stepmother is too mean."

Susan was very nice about it. Jem and Nan had gone to Avonlea and Walter was down at the House of Dreams with Kenneth Ford. There was nothing to cast a shadow on Delilah's visit and it certainly seemed to go off very well. Delilah arrived Saturday morning very nicely dressed in pink muslin ... at least the stepmother seemed to do her well in the matter of clothes. And she had, as Susan saw at a glance, irreproachable ears and nails.

"This is *the* day of my life," she said solemnly to Diana. "My, what a grand house this is! And them's the china dogs! Oh, they're wonderful!"

Everything was wonderful. Delilah worked the poor word to death. She helped Diana set the table for dinner and picked the little glass basket full

of pink sweetpeas for a centrepiece.

“Oh, you don’t know how I love to do something just because I *like* to do it,” she told Diana. “Isn’t there anything else I can do, *please*?”

“You can crack the nuts for the cake I’m going to make this afternoon,” said Susan, who was herself falling under the spell of Delilah’s beauty and voice. After all, perhaps Laura Green *was* a Tartar. You couldn’t always go by what people seemed like in public. Delilah’s plate was heaped with chicken and stuffing and gravy and she got a second piece of pie without hinting for it.

“I’ve often wondered what it would be like to have all you could eat for once. It is a wonderful sensation,” she told Diana as they left the table.

They had a gay afternoon. Susan had given Diana a box of candy and Diana shared it with Delilah. Delilah admired one of Di’s dolls and Di gave it to her. They cleaned out the pansy bed and dug up a few stray dandelions that had invaded the lawn. They helped Susan polish the silver and assisted her to get supper. Delilah was so efficient and tidy that Susan capitulated completely. Only two things marred the afternoon ... Delilah contrived to spatter her dress with ink and she lost her pearl bead necklace. But Susan took the ink out nicely ... some of the colour coming out too ... with salts of lemon and Delilah said it didn’t matter about the necklace. *Nothing* mattered except that she was at Ingleside with her dearest Diana.

“Aren’t we going to sleep in the spare-room bed?” asked Diana when bedtime came. “We always put company in the spare-room, Susan.”

“Your Aunt Diana is coming with your father and mother tomorrow night,” said Susan. “The spare-room has been made up for her. You can have the Shrimp on your own bed and you couldn’t have him in the spare-room.”

“My, but your sheets smell nice!” said Delilah as they snuggled down.

“Susan always boils them with orris root,” said Diana.

Delilah sighed.

“I wonder if you know what a lucky girl you are, Diana. If *I* had a home like you ... but it’s my lot in life. I just have to bear it.”

Susan, on her nightly round of the house before retiring, came in and told them to stop chattering and go to sleep. She gave them two maple sugar buns apiece.

“I can never forget your kindness, Miss Baker,” said Delilah, her voice quivering with emotion. Susan went to her bed reflecting that a nicer-mannered, more appealing little girl she had never seen. Certainly she had misjudged Delilah Green. Though at that moment it occurred to Susan that, for a child who never got enough to eat, the bones of the said Delilah Green were very well covered!

Delilah went home the next afternoon and Mother and Father and Aunt Diana came at night. On Monday the bolt fell from the proverbial blue. Diana, returning to school at the noon hour, caught her own name as she entered the school porch. Inside the schoolroom Delilah Green was the centre of a group of curious girls.

“I was so disappointed in Ingleside. After the way Di has bragged about her house I expected a *mansion*. Of course it’s big enough, but some of the furniture is shabby. The chairs want to be recovered the *worst* way.”

“Did you see the china dogs?” asked Bessy Palmer.

“They’re nothing wonderful. They haven’t even got hair. I told Diana right on the spot I was disappointed.”

Diana was standing “rooted to the ground” ... or at least to the porch floor. She did not think about eavesdropping ... she was simply too dumfounded to move.

“I’m sorry for Diana,” went on Delilah. “The way her parents neglect their family is something scandalous. Her mother is an awful gadabout. The way she goes off and leaves them young ones is terrible with only that old Susan to look after them ... and she’s half cracked. She’ll land them all in the poorhouse yet. The waste that goes on in her kitchen you wouldn’t believe. The doctor’s wife is too gay and lazy to cook even when she is home, so Susan has it all her own way. She was going to give us our meals *in the kitchen* but I just up and said to her, ‘Am I company or am I not?’ Susan said if I gave her any sass she’d shut me up in the back closet. I said, ‘You don’t dare to,’ and she didn’t. ‘You can overcrowd the Ingleside

children, Susan Baker, but you can't overcrowd *me*,' I said to her. Oh, I tell you I stood up to Susan. I wouldn't let her give Rilla soothing-syrup. 'Don't you know it's poison to children?' I said.

"She took it out on me at meals though. The mean little helpings she gives you! There was chicken but I only got the Pope's nose and nobody even asked me to take the second piece of pie. But Susan would have let me sleep in the spare-room though and Di wouldn't hear to it ... just out of pure meanness. She's so jealous. But still I'm sorry for her. She told me Nan pinches her *something scandalous*. Her arms are black and blue. We slept in her room and a mangy old tomcat was lying on the foot of the bed all night. It wasn't *haygeenic* and I told Di so. And my pearl necklace *disappeared*. Of course I'm not saying Susan took it. I believe she's *honest* ... but it's funny. And Shirley threw an ink-bottle at me. It ruined my dress but I don't care. Ma'll have to get me a new one. Well, anyhow, I dug all the dandelions out of their lawn for them and polished up the silver. You should have seen it. I don't know *when* it has been cleaned before. I tell you Susan takes it easy when the doctor's wife's away. I let her see I saw through her. 'Why don't you ever wash the potato pot, Susan?' I asked her. You should of seen her face. Look at my new ring, girls. A boy I know at Lowbridge give it to me."

"Why, I've seen Diana Blythe wearing that ring often," said Peggy MacAllister contemptuously.

"And I don't believe one single word you've been saying about Ingleside, Delilah Green," said Laura Carr.

Before Delilah could reply Diana, who had recovered her powers of locomotion and speech, dashed into the schoolroom.

"Judas!" she said. Afterwards she thought repentantly that it had not been a very ladylike thing to say. But she had been stung to the heart and when your feelings are all stirred up you can't pick and choose your words.

"I ain't Judas!" muttered Delilah, flushing, probably for the first time in her life.

"You are! There isn't one spark of sincerity in you! Don't you ever speak to me again as long as you live!"

Diana rushed out of the schoolhouse and ran home. She couldn't stay in school that afternoon ... she just couldn't! The Ingleside front door was banged as it had never been banged before.

"Darling, what is the matter?" asked Anne, interrupted in her kitchen conference with Susan by a weeping daughter who flung herself stormily against the maternal shoulder.

The whole story was sobbed out, somewhat disjointedly.

"I've been hurt in all my *finer feelings*, Mother. And I'll never believe in anyone again!"

"My dear, all your friends won't be like this. Pauline wasn't."

"This is *twice*," said Diana bitterly, still smarting under the sense of betrayal and loss. "There isn't going to be any third time."

"I'm sorry Di has lost her faith in humanity," said Anne rather ruefully, when Di had gone upstairs. "This is a real tragedy for her. She *has* been unlucky in some of her chums. Jenny Penny ... and now Delilah Green. The trouble is Di always falls for the girls who can tell interesting stories. And Delilah's martyr pose was very alluring."

"If you ask me, Mrs. Dr. dear, that Green child is a perfect minx," said Susan, all the more implacably because she had been so neatly fooled herself by Delilah's eyes and manners. "The idea of her calling our cats mangy! I am not saying that there are not such things as tomcats, Mrs. Dr. dear, but little girls should not talk of them. I am no lover of cats, but the Shrimp is seven years old and should at least be *respected*. And as for my potato pot ..."

But Susan really couldn't express her feelings about the potato pot.

In her own room Di was reflecting that perhaps it was not too late to be "best friends" with Laura Carr after all. Laura was *true*, even if she wasn't very exciting. Di sighed. Some colour *had* gone out of life with her belief in Delilah's piteous lot.

Chapter XXXIX

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A bitter east wind was snarling around Ingleside like a shrewish old woman. It was one of those chill, drizzly, late August days that take the heart out of you, one of those days when everything goes wrong ... what in old Avonlea days had been called “a Jonah day.” The new pup Gilbert had brought home for the boys had gnawed the enamel off the dining table leg ... Susan had found that the moths had been having a Roman holiday in the blanket closet ... Nan’s new kitten had ruined the choicest fern ... Jem and Bertie Shakespeare had been making the most abominable racket in the garret all the afternoon with tin pails for drums ... Anne herself had broken a painted glass lampshade. But somehow it had done her good just to hear it smash! Rilla had had earache and Shirley had a mysterious rash on his neck, which worried Anne but at which Gilbert only glanced casually and said in an absentminded voice that he didn’t think it meant anything. Of course it didn’t mean anything to *him*! Shirley was only his own son! And it didn’t matter to him either that he had invited the Trents to dinner one evening last week and forgotten to tell Anne until they arrived. She and Susan had had an extra busy day and had planned a pick-up supper. And Mrs. Trent with the reputation of being Charlottetown’s smartest hostess! *Where* were Walter’s stockings with the black tops and the blue toes? “Do you think, Walter, that you could *just for once* put a thing where it belongs? Nan, I *don’t* know where the Seven Seas are. For mercy’s sake, stop asking questions! I don’t wonder they poisoned Socrates. They *ought* to have.”

Walter and Nan stared. Never had they heard their mother speak in such a tone before. Walter’s look annoyed Anne still more.

“Diana, is it necessary to be forever reminding you not to twist your legs around the piano stool? Shirley, if you haven’t got that new magazine

all sticky with jam! And perhaps *somebody* would be kind enough to tell me where the prisms of the hanging lamp have gone!”

Nobody could tell her ... Susan having unhooked them and taken them out to wash them ... and Anne whisked herself upstairs to escape from the grieved eyes of her children. In her own room she paced up and down feverishly. *What* was the matter with her? Was she turning into one of those peevish creatures who had no patience with anybody? Everything annoyed her these days. A little mannerism of Gilbert's she had never minded before got on her nerves. She was sick-and-tired of never-ending, monotonous duties ... sick-and-tired of catering to her family's whims. Once everything she did for her house and household gave her delight. Now she did not seem to care what she did. She felt all the time like a creature in a nightmare, trying to overtake someone with fettered feet.

The worst of it all was that Gilbert never noticed that there was any change in her. He was busy night and day and seemed to care for nothing but his work. The only thing he had said at dinner that day had been “Pass the mustard, please.”

“*I* can talk to the chairs and table, of course,” thought Anne bitterly. “We're just getting to be a sort of *habit* with each other ... nothing else. He never noticed that I had on a new dress last night. And it's so long since he called me ‘Anne-girl’ that I've forgotten when. Well, I suppose all marriages come to this in the end. Probably most women go through this. He just takes me for granted. His work is the only thing that means anything to him now. *Where* is my handkerchief?”

Anne got her handkerchief and sat down in her chair to torture herself luxuriantly. Gilbert didn't love her any more. When he kissed her he kissed her absently ... just “habit.” All the glamour was gone. Old jokes they had laughed together over came up in recollection, charged with tragedy now. How could she ever have thought them funny? Monty Turner who kissed his wife systematically once a week ... made a memorandum to remind him. (“*Would any wife want such kisses?*”) Curtis Ames who met his wife in a new bonnet and didn't know her. Mrs. Clancy Dare who had said, “I don't care an awful lot about my husband but I'd miss him if

he wasn't round." (*"I suppose Gilbert would miss me if I weren't around! Has it come to that with us?"*) Nat Elliott who told his wife after ten years of marriage, "if you must know I'm just tired of being married." (*"And we've been married fifteen years!"*) Well, perhaps all men were like that. Probably Miss Cornelia would say that they were. After a time they were hard to hold. (*"If my husband has to be 'held' I don't want to hold him."*) But there was Mrs. Theodore Clow who had said proudly at a Ladies' Aid, "We've been married twenty years and my husband loves me as much as he did on our wedding day." But perhaps she was deceiving herself or only "keeping face." And she looked every day of her age and more. (*"I wonder if I am beginning to look old."*)

For the first time her years felt like a weight. She went to the mirror and looked at herself critically. There *were* some tiny crow's-feet around her eyes but they were only visible in a strong light. Her chin lines were yet unblurred. She had always been pale. Her hair was thick and wavy without a grey thread. But did anybody *really* like red hair? Her nose was still definitely good. Anne patted it as a friend, recalling certain moments of life when her nose was all that carried her through. But Gilbert just took her nose for granted now. It might be crooked or pug, for all it mattered to him. Likely he had forgotten that she *had* a nose. Like Mrs. Dare, he might miss it if it wasn't there.

"Well, I must go and see to Rilla and Shirley," thought Anne drearily. "At least, *they* need me still, poor darlings. What made me so snappish with them? Oh, I suppose they're all saying behind my back, 'How cranky poor Mother is getting!'"

It continued to rain and the wind continued to wail. The fantasia of tin pans in the garret had stopped but the ceaseless chirping of a solitary cricket in the livingroom nearly drove her mad. The noon mail brought her two letters. One was from Marilla ... but Anne sighed as she folded it up. Marilla's handwriting was getting so frail and shaky. The other letter was from Mrs. Barrett Fowler of Charlottetown whom Anne knew very slightly. And Mrs. Barrett Fowler wanted Dr. and Mrs. Blythe to dine with

her next Tuesday night at seven o'clock "to meet your old friend, Mrs. Andrew Dawson of Winnipeg, *nee* Christine Stuart."

Anne dropped the letter. A flood of old memories poured over her ... some of them decidedly unpleasant. Christine Stuart of Redmond ... the girl to whom people had once said Gilbert was engaged ... the girl of whom she had once been so bitterly jealous ... yes, she admitted it now, twenty years after ... she *had* been jealous ... she had hated Christine Stuart. She had not thought of Christine for years but she remembered her distinctly. A tall, ivory-white girl with great dark-blue eyes and blue-black masses of hair. And a certain air of distinction. But with a long nose ... yes, definitely a long nose. Handsome ... oh, you couldn't deny that Christine had been very handsome. She remembered hearing many years ago that Christine had "married well" and gone West.

Gilbert came in for a hurried bite of supper ... there was an epidemic of measles in the Upper Glen ... and Anne silently handed him Mrs. Fowler's letter.

"Christine Stuart! Of course we'll go. I'd like to see her for old sake's sake," he said, with the first appearance of admiration he had shown for weeks. "Poor girl, she has had her own troubles. She lost her husband four years ago, you know."

Anne didn't know. And how came Gilbert to know? Why had he never told her? And had he forgotten that next Tuesday was the anniversary of their own wedding day? A day on which they had never accepted any invitation but went off on a little bat of their own. Well, *she* wouldn't remind him. He could see his Christine if he wanted to. What had a girl at Redmond once said to her darkly, "There was a good deal more between Gilbert and Christine than you ever knew, Anne." She had merely laughed at it at the time ... Claire Hallett was a spiteful thing. But perhaps there *had* been something in it. Anne suddenly remembered, with a little chill of the spirit, that not long after her marriage she had found a small photograph of Christine in an old pocketbook of Gilbert's. Gilbert had seemed quite indifferent and said he'd wondered where that old snap had got to. But ... was it one of those unimportant things that are significant of

things tremendously important? Was it possible ... had Gilbert ever loved Christine? Was she, Anne, only a second choice? The consolation prize?

“Surely I’m not ... jealous,” thought Anne, trying to laugh. It was all very ridiculous. What more natural than that Gilbert should like the idea of meeting an old Redmond friend? What more natural than that a busy man, married for fifteen years, should forget times and seasons and days and months? Anne wrote to Mrs. Fowler, accepting her invitation ... and then put in the three days before Tuesday hoping desperately that somebody in the Upper Glen would start having a baby Tuesday afternoon about half past five.

Chapter XL

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The hoped for baby arrived too soon. Gilbert was sent for at nine Monday night. Anne wept herself to sleep and wakened at three. It used to be delicious to wake in the night ... to lie and look out of her window at the night's enfolding loveliness ... to hear Gilbert's regular breathing beside her ... to think of the children across the hall and the beautiful new day that was coming. But now! Anne was still awake when the dawn, clear and green as fluor-spar, was in the eastern sky and Gilbert came home at last. "Twins," he said hollowly as he flung himself into bed and was asleep in a minute. Twins, indeed! The dawn of the fifteenth anniversary of your wedding day and all your husband could say to you was "Twins." He didn't even remember it *was* an anniversary.

Gilbert apparently didn't remember it any better when he came down at eleven. For the first time he did not mention it; for the first time he had no gift for her. Very well, *he* shouldn't get his gift either. She had had ready for weeks ... a silver-handled pocket-knife with the date on one side and his initials on the other. Of course he must buy it from her with a cent, lest it cut their love. But since he had forgotten she would forget too, with a vengeance.

Gilbert seemed in a sort of daze all day. He hardly spoke to anyone and moped about the library. Was he lost in glamorous anticipation of seeing his Christine again? Probably he had been hankering after her all these years in the back of his mind. Anne knew quite well this idea was absolutely unreasonable but when was jealousy ever reasonable? It was no use trying to be philosophical. Philosophy had no effect on her mood.

They were going to town on the five-o'clock train. "Can we come in and watch you dreth, Mummy?" asked Rilla.

"Oh, if you want to," said Anne ... then pulled herself up sharply. Why, her voice was getting querulous. "Come along, darling," she added

repentantly.

Rilla had no greater delight than watching Mummy dress. But even Rilla thought Mummy was not getting much fun out of it that night.

Anne took some thought as to what dress she should wear. Not that it mattered, she told herself bitterly, what she put on. Gilbert never noticed now. The mirror was no longer her friend ... she looked pale and tired ... and *unwanted*. But she must not look too countrified and *passé* before Christine. (*"I won't have her sorry for me."*) Was it to be her new apple-green net over a slip with rosebuds in it? Or her cream silk gauze with its Eton jacket of Cluny lace? She tried both of them on and decided on the net. She experimented with several hair-do's and concluded that the new drooping pompadour was very becoming.

"Oh, Mummy, you look beautiful!" gasped Rilla in round-eyed admiration.

Well, children and fools were supposed to tell the truth. Had not Rebecca Dew once told her that she was "comparatively beautiful"? As for Gilbert, he used to pay her compliments in the past but when had he given utterance to one of late months? Anne could not recall a single one.

Gilbert passed through on his way to his dressing closet and said not a word about her new dress. Anne stood for a moment burning with resentment; then she petulantly tore off the dress and flung it on the bed. She would wear her old black ... a thin affair that was considered extremely "smart" in Four Winds circles but which Gilbert had never liked. What should she wear on her neck? Jem's beads, though treasured for years, had long since crumbled. She really hadn't a decent necklace. Well ... she got out the little box containing the pink enamel heart Gilbert had given her at Redmond. She seldom wore it now ... after all, pink didn't go well with her red hair ... but she would put it on tonight. Would Gilbert notice it? There, she was ready. Why wasn't Gilbert? What was keeping him? Oh, no doubt he was shaving *very* carefully! She tapped sharply on the door.

"Gilbert, we're going to miss the train if you don't hurry."

“You sound school-teacherish,” said Gilbert, coming out. “Anything wrong with your metatarsals?”

Oh, he could make a joke of it, could he? She would not let herself think how well he looked in his tails. After all, the modern fashions of men’s clothes were really ridiculous. Entirely lacking in glamour. How gorgeous it must have been in “the spacious days of Great Elizabeth” when men could wear white satin doublets and cloaks of crimson velvet and lace ruffs! Yet they were not effeminate. They were the most wonderful and adventurous men the world had ever seen.

“Well, come along if you’re in such a hurry,” said Gilbert absently. He was always absent now when he spoke to her. She was just a part of the furniture ... yes, just a piece of furniture!

Jem drove them to the station. Susan and Miss Cornelia ... who had come up to ask Susan if they could depend on her as usual for scalloped potatoes for the church supper ... looked after them admiringly.

“Anne is holding her own,” said Miss Cornelia.

“She is,” agreed Susan, “though I have sometimes thought these past few weeks that her liver needed stirring up a bit. But she keeps her looks. And the doctor has got the same nice flat stomach he always had.”

“An ideal couple,” said Miss Cornelia.

The ideal couple said nothing in particular very beautifully all the way to town. Of course Gilbert was too profoundly stirred over the prospect of seeing his old love to talk to his wife! Anne sneezed. She began to be afraid she was taking a cold in the head. How ghastly it would be to sniffle all through dinner under the eyes of Mrs. Andrew Dawson, *nee* Christine Stuart! A spot on her lip stung ... probably a horrible cold-sore was coming on it. Did Juliet ever sneeze? Fancy Portia with chilblains! Or Argive Helen hiccougging! Or Cleopatra with corns!

When Anne came downstairs in the Barrett Fowler residence she stumbled over the bear’s head on the rug in the hall, staggered through the drawing-room door and across the wilderness of overstuffed furniture and gilt fandangoes Mrs. Barrett Fowler called her drawing-room, and fell on the chesterfield, fortunately landing right side up. She looked about in

dismay for Christine, then thankfully realized that Christine had not yet put in an appearance. How awful it would have been had she been sitting there amusedly watching Gilbert Blythe's wife make such a drunken entrance! Gilbert hadn't even asked if she were hurt. He was already deep in conversation with Dr. Fowler and some unknown Dr. Murray, who hailed from New Brunswick and was the author of a notable monograph on tropical diseases which was making a stir in medical circles. But Anne noticed that when Christine came downstairs, heralded by a sniff of heliotrope, the monograph was promptly forgotten. Gilbert stood up with a very evident light of interest in his eyes.

Christine stood for an impressive moment in the doorway. No falling over bears' heads for her. Christine, Anne remembered, had of old that habit of pausing in the doorway to show herself off. And no doubt she regarded this as an excellent chance to show Gilbert what he had lost.

She wore a gown of purple velvet with long flowing sleeves, lined with gold, and a fish-tail train lined with gold lace. A gold bandeau encircled the still dark wings of her hair. A long, thin gold chain, starred with diamonds, hung from her neck. Anne instantly felt frumpy, provincial, unfinished, dowdy, and six months behind the fashion. She wished she had not put on that silly enamel heart.

There was no question that Christine was as handsome as ever. A bit too sleek and well-preserved, perhaps ... yes, considerably stouter. Her nose had assuredly not grown any shorter and her chin was definitely middle-aged. Standing in the doorway like that, you saw that her feet were ... substantial. And wasn't her air of distinction getting a little shopworn? But her cheeks were still like smooth ivory and her great dark-blue eyes still looked out brilliantly from under that intriguing parallel crease that had been considered so fascinating at Redmond. Yes, Mrs. Andrew Dawson was a very handsome woman ... and did not at all convey the impression that her heart had been wholly buried in the said Andrew Dawson's grave.

Christine took possession of the whole room the moment she entered it. Anne felt as if she were not in the picture at all. But she sat up erectly.

Christine should not see any middle-aged sag. She would go into battle with all flags flying. Her grey eyes turned exceedingly green and a faint flush coloured her oval cheek. (*"Remember you have a nose!"*) Dr. Murray, who had not noticed her particularly before, thought in some surprise that Blythe had a very uncommon-looking wife. That posturing Mrs. Dawson looked positively commonplace beside her.

"Why, Gilbert Blythe, you're as handsome as ever," Christine was saying archly ... Christine *arch!* ... "It's so nice to find you haven't changed."

(*"She talks with the same old drawl. How I always hated that velvet voice of hers!"*)

"When I look at you," said Gilbert, "time ceases to have any meaning at all. Where did you learn the secret of immortal youth?"

Christine laughed.

(*"Isn't her laughter a little tinny?"*)

"You could always pay a pretty compliment, Gilbert. You know" ... with an arch glance around the circle ... "Dr. Blythe was an old flame of mine in those days he is pretending to think were of yesterday. And Anne Shirley! You haven't changed as much as I've been told ... though I don't think I'd have known you if we'd just happened to meet on the street. Your hair is a *little* darker than it used to be, isn't it? Isn't it *divine* to meet again like this? I was so afraid your lumbago wouldn't let you come."

"My lumbago!"

"Why, yes; aren't you subject to it? I thought you were ..."

"I must have got things twisted," said Mrs. Fowler apologetically. "Somebody told me you were down with a very severe attack of lumbago...."

"That is Mrs. Dr. Parker of Lowbridge. I have never had lumbago in my life," said Anne in a flat voice.

"How very nice that you haven't got it," said Christine, with something faintly insolent in her tone. "It's *such* a wretched thing. I have an aunt who is a perfect martyr to it."

Her air seemed to relegate Anne to the generation of aunts. Anne managed a smile with her lips, not her eyes. If she could only think of something clever to say! She knew that at three o'clock that night she would probably think of a brilliant retort she might have made but that did not help her now.

"They tell me you have seven children," said Christine, speaking to Anne but looking at Gilbert.

"Only six living," said Anne, wincing. Even yet she could never think of little white Joyce without pain.

"*What* a family!" said Christine.

Instantly it seemed a disgraceful and absurd thing to have a large family.

"You, I think, have none," said Anne.

"I never cared for children, you know." Christine shrugged her remarkably fine shoulders but her voice was a little hard. "I'm afraid I'm not the maternal type. I really never thought that it was woman's sole mission to bring children into an already overcrowded world."

They went in to dinner then. Gilbert took Christine, Dr. Murray took Mrs. Fowler, and Dr. Fowler, a rotund little man, who could not talk to anybody except another doctor, took Anne.

Anne felt that the room was rather stifling. There was a mysterious sickly scent in it. Probably Mrs. Fowler had been burning incense. The menu was good and Anne went through the motions of eating without any appetite and smiled until she felt she was beginning to look like a Cheshire cat. She could not keep her eyes off Christine, who was smiling at Gilbert continuously. Her teeth were beautiful ... almost too beautiful. They looked like a toothpaste advertisement. Christine made very effective play with her hands as she talked. She had lovely hands ... rather large, though.

She was talking to Gilbert about rhythmic speeds for living. What on earth did she mean? Did she know, herself? Then they switched to the Passion Play.

"Have you ever been to Oberammergau?" Christine asked Anne.

When she knew perfectly well Anne hadn't! Why did the simplest question sound insolent when Christine asked it?

"Of course a family ties you down terribly," said Christine. "Oh, whom do you think I saw last month when I was in Halifax? That little friend of yours ... the one who married the ugly minister ... what was his name?"

"Jonas Blake," said Anne. "Philippa Gordon married him. And I never thought he was ugly."

"*Didn't* you? Of course tastes differ. Well, anyway I met them. *Poor* Philippa!"

Christine's use of "poor" was very effective.

"Why poor?" asked Anne. "I think she and Jonas have been very happy."

"Happy! My dear, if you could see the place they live in! A wretched little fishing village where it was an excitement if the pigs broke into the garden! I was told that the Jonas-man had had a good church in Kingsport and had given it up because he thought it his 'duty' to go to the fishermen who 'needed' him. I have no use for such fanatics. 'How *can* you live in such an isolated, out-of-the-way place as this?' I asked Philippa. Do you know what she said?"

Christine threw out her beringed hands expressively.

"Perhaps what I would say of Glen St. Mary," said Anne. "That it was the only place in the world to live in."

"Fancy you being contented there," smiled Christine. ("*That terrible mouthful of teeth!*") "Do you really never feel that you want a broader life? You used to be quite ambitious, if I remember aright. Didn't you write some rather clever little things when you were at Redmond? A bit fantastic and whimsical, of course, but still ..."

"I wrote them for the people who still believe in fairyland. There is a surprising lot of them, you know, and they like to get news from that country."

"And you've quite given it up?"

"Not altogether ... but I'm writing living epistles now," said Anne, thinking of Jem and Co.

Christine stared, not recognizing the quotation. What did Anne Shirley mean? But then, of course, she had been noted at Redmond for her mysterious speeches. She had kept her looks astonishingly but probably she was one of those women who got married and stopped thinking. Poor Gilbert! She had hooked him before he came to Redmond. He had never had the least chance to escape her.

“Does anybody ever eat philopenas now?” asked Dr. Murray, who had just cracked a twin almond. Christine turned to Gilbert.

“Do you remember that philopena we ate once?” she asked.

(“Did a significant look pass between them?”)

“Do you suppose I could forget it?” asked Gilbert.

They plunged into a spate of “do-you-remembers,” while Anne stared at the picture of fish and oranges hanging over the sideboard. She had never thought that Gilbert and Christine had had so many memories in common. “Do you remember our picnic up the Arm? ... Do you remember the night we went to the negro church? ... Do you remember the night we went to the masquerade? ... you were a Spanish lady in a black velvet dress with a lace mantilla and fan.”

Gilbert apparently remembered them all in detail. But he had forgotten his wedding anniversary!

When they went back to the drawing-room Christine glanced out of the window at an eastern sky that was showing pale silver behind the dark poplars.

“Gilbert, let us take a stroll in the garden. I want to learn again the meaning of moonrise in September.”

(“Does moonrise mean anything in September that it doesn’t mean in any other month? And what does she mean by ‘again.’ Did she ever learn it before ... with him?”)

Out they went. Anne felt that she had been very neatly and sweetly brushed aside. She sat down on a chair that commanded a view of the garden ... though she would not admit even to herself that she selected it for that reason. She could see Christine and Gilbert walking down the path. What were they saying to each other? Christine seemed to be doing most

of the talking. Perhaps Gilbert was too dumb with emotion to speak. Was he smiling out there in the moonrise over memories in which she had no share? She recalled nights she and Gilbert had walked in moonlit gardens of Avonlea. Had *he* forgotten?

Christine was looking up at the sky. Of course she knew she was showing off that fine, full white throat of hers when she lifted her face like that. Did ever a moon take so long in rising?

Other guests were dropping in when they finally came back. There was talk, laughter, music. Christine sang ... very well. She had always been "musical." She sang *at* Gilbert ... "the dear dead days beyond recall." Gilbert leaned back in an easy-chair and was uncommonly silent. Was he looking back wistfully to those dear dead days? Was he picturing what his life would have been if he had married Christine? (*"I've always known what Gilbert was thinking of before. My head is beginning to ache. If we don't get away soon I'll be throwing up my head and howling. Thank heaven our train leaves early."*)

When Anne came downstairs Christine was standing in the porch with Gilbert. She reached up and picked a leaf from his shoulder; the gesture was like a caress.

"Are you really well, Gilbert? You look frightfully tired. I *know* you're overdoing it."

A wave of horror swept over Annie. Gilbert *did* look tired ... frightfully tired ... and she hadn't seen it until Christine pointed it out! Never would she forget the humiliation of that moment. (*"I've been taking Gilbert too much for granted and blaming him for doing the same thing."*)

Christine turned to her.

"It's been so nice to meet you again, Anne. Quite like old times."

"Quite," said Anne.

"But I've just been telling Gilbert he looked a little tired. You ought to take better care of him, Anne. There was a time, you know, when I really had quite a fancy for this husband of yours. I believe he really was the nicest beau I ever had. But you must forgive me since I didn't take him from you."

Anne froze up again.

“Perhaps he is pitying himself that you didn’t,” she said, with a certain “queenishness” not unknown to Christine in Redmond days, as she stepped into Dr. Fowler’s carriage for the drive to the station.

“You dear funny thing!” said Christine, with a shrug of her beautiful shoulders. She was looking after them as if something amused her hugely.

Chapter XLI

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“Had a nice evening?” asked Gilbert, more absently than ever as he helped her on the train.

“Oh, lovely,” said Anne ... who felt that she had, in Jane Welsh Carlyle’s splendid phrase, “spent the evening under a harrow.”

“What made you do your hair that way?” said Gilbert still absently.

“It’s the new fashion.”

“Well, it doesn’t suit you. It may be all right for some hair but not for yours.”

“Oh, it is too bad my hair is red,” said Anne icily.

Gilbert thought he was wise in dropping a dangerous subject. Anne, he reflected, had always been a bit sensitive about her hair. He was too tired to talk, anyway. He leaned his head back on the car seat and shut his eyes. For the first time Anne noticed little glints of grey in the hair above his ears. But she hardened her heart.

They walked silently home from the Glen station by the short-cut to Ingleside. The air was filled with the breath of spruce and spice fern. The moon was shining over dew-wet fields. They passed an old deserted house with sad and broken windows that had once danced with light. “Just like my life,” thought Anne. Everything seemed to have for her some dreary meaning now. The dim white moth that fluttered past them on the lawn was, she thought sadly, like a ghost of faded love. Then she caught her foot in a croquet hoop and nearly fell headlong into a clump of phlox. What on earth did the children mean by leaving it there? She would tell them what she thought about it tomorrow!

Gilbert only said, “O-o-o-ps!” and steadied her with a hand. Would he have been so casual about it if it had been Christine who had tripped while they were puzzling out the meaning of moonrises?

Gilbert rushed off to his office the moment they were inside the house and Anne went silently up to their room, where the moonlight was lying on the floor, still and silver and cold. She went to the open window and looked out. It was evidently the Carter Flaggs' dog's night to howl and he was putting his heart into it. The lombardy leaves glistened like silver in the moonlight. The house about her seemed whispering tonight ... whispering sinisterly, as if it were no longer her friend.

Anne felt sick and cold and empty. The gold of life had turned to withered leaves. Nothing had any meaning any longer. Everything seemed remote and unreal.

Far down the tide was keeping its world-old tryst with the shore. She could ... now that Norman Douglas had cut down his spruce bush ... see her little House of Dreams. How happy they had been there ... when it was enough just to be together in their own home, with their visions, their caresses, their silences! All the colour of the morning in their lives ... Gilbert looking at her with that smile in his eyes he kept for her alone ... finding every day a new way of saying, "I love you" ... sharing laughter as they shared sorrow.

And now ... Gilbert had grown tired of her. Men had always been like that ... always would be. She had thought Gilbert was an exception but now she knew the truth. And how was she going to adjust her life to it?

"There are the children, of course," she thought dully. "I must go on living for them. And nobody must know ... *nobody*. I will not be pitied."

What was that? Somebody was coming up the stairs, three steps at a time, as Gilbert used to do long ago in the House of Dreams ... as he had not done for a long time now. It couldn't be Gilbert ... it was!

He burst into the room ... he flung a little packet on the table ... he caught Anne by the waist and waltzed her round and round the room like a crazy schoolboy, coming to rest at last breathlessly in a silver pool of moonlight.

"I was right, Anne ... thank God, I was right! Mrs. Garrow is going to be all right ... the specialist has said so."

"Mrs. Garrow? Gilbert, have you gone crazy?"

“Didn’t I tell you? Surely I told you ... well, I suppose it’s been such a sore subject I just couldn’t talk of it. I’ve been worried to death about it for the past two weeks ... couldn’t think of anything else, waking or sleeping. Mrs. Garrow lives in Lowbridge and was Parker’s patient. He asked me in for a consultation ... I diagnosed her case differently from him ... we almost fought ... I was sure I was right ... I insisted there was a chance ... we sent her to Montreal ... Parker said she’d never come back alive ... her husband was ready to shoot me on sight. When she was gone I went to bits ... perhaps I was mistaken ... perhaps I’d tortured her needlessly. I found the letter in my office when I went in ... I was *right* ... they’ve operated ... she has an excellent chance of living. Anne girl, I could jump over the moon! I’ve shed twenty years.”

Anne had either to laugh or cry ... so she began to laugh. It was lovely to be able to laugh again ... lovely to feel like laughing. Everything was suddenly all right.

“I suppose that is why you forgot this was our anniversary?” she taunted him.

Gilbert released her long enough to pounce on the little packet he had dropped on the table.

“I didn’t forget it. Two weeks ago I sent to Toronto for this. And it didn’t come till tonight. I felt so small this morning when I hadn’t a thing to give you that I didn’t mention the day ... thought you’d forgotten it, too ... hoped you had. When I went into the office there was my present along with Parker’s letter. See how you like it.”

It was a little diamond pendant. Even in the moonlight it sparkled like a living thing.

“Gilbert ... and I ...”

“Try it on. I wish it had come this morning ... then you’d have had something to wear to the dinner besides that old enamel heart. Though it *did* look rather nice snuggling in that pretty white hollow in your throat, darling. Why didn’t you leave on that green dress, Anne? I liked it ... it reminded me of that dress with the rosebuds on it you used to wear at Redmond.”

(“So he had noticed the dress! So he still remembered the old Redmond one he had admired so much!”)

Anne felt like a released bird ... she was flying again. Gilbert’s arms were around her ... his eyes were looking into hers in the moonlight.

“You *do* love me, Gilbert? I’m not just a habit with you? You haven’t *said* you loved me for so long.”

“My dear, dear love! I didn’t think you needed words to know that. I couldn’t live without you. Always you give me strength. There’s a verse somewhere in the Bible that is meant for you ... ‘She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.’”

Life which had seemed so grey and foolish a few moments before was golden and rose and splendidly rainbowed again. The diamond pendant slipped to the floor, unheeded for the moment. It was beautiful ... but there were so many things lovelier ... confidence and peace and delightful work ... laughter and kindness ... that old *safe* feeling of a sure love.

“Oh, if we could keep this moment for ever, Gilbert!”

“We’re going to have some moments. It’s time we had a second honeymoon. Anne, there’s going to be a big medical congress in London next February. We’re going to it ... and after it we’ll see a bit of the Old World. There’s a holiday coming to us. We’ll be nothing but lovers again ... it will be just like being married over again. You haven’t been like yourself for a long time. (*“So he had noticed.”*) You’re tired and overworked ... you need a change. (*“You too, dearest. I’ve been so horribly blind.”*) I’m not going to have it cast up to me that doctors’ wives never get a pill. We’ll come back rested and fresh, with our sense of humour completely restored. Well, try your pendant on and let’s get to bed. I’m half dead for sleep ... haven’t had a decent night’s sleep for weeks, what with twins and worry over Mrs. Garrow.”

“What on earth were you and Christine talking about so long in the garden tonight?” asked Anne, peacocking before the mirror with her diamonds.

Gilbert yawned.

“Oh, I don’t know. Christine just gabbled on. But here is one fact she presented me with. A flea can jump two hundred times its own length. Did you know that, Anne?”

(“*They were talking of fleas when I was writhing with jealousy. What an idiot I’ve been!*”)

“How on earth did you come to be talking of fleas?”

“I can’t remember ... perhaps it was Dobermann pinschers suggested it.”

“Dobermann pinschers! *What* are Dobermann pinschers?”

“A new kind of dog. Christine seems to be a dog connoisseur. I was so obsessed with Mrs. Garrow that I didn’t pay much attention to what she was saying. Now and then I caught a word about complexes and repressions ... that new psychology that’s coming up ... and art ... and gout and politics ... and frogs.”

“Frogs!”

“Some experiments a Winnipeg research man is making. Christine was never very entertaining, but she’s a worse bore than ever. And malicious! She never used to be malicious.”

“What did she say that was so malicious?” asked Anne innocently.

“Didn’t you notice? Oh, I suppose you wouldn’t catch on ... you’re so free from that sort of thing yourself. Well, it doesn’t matter. That laugh of hers got on my nerves a bit. And she’s got fat. Thank goodness, you haven’t got fat, Anne-girl.”

“Oh, I don’t think she is so very fat,” said Anne charitably. “And she certainly is a very handsome woman.”

“So-so. But her face has got hard ... she’s the same age as you but she looks ten years older.”

“And you talking to her about immortal youth!”

Gilbert grinned guiltily.

“One has to say something civil. Civilization can’t exist without a *little* hypocrisy. Oh, well, Christine isn’t a bad old scout, even if she doesn’t belong to the race of Joseph. It’s not her fault that the pinch of salt was left out of her. What’s this?”

“My anniversary remembrance for you. And I want a cent for it ... I’m not taking any risks. Such tortures as I’ve endured this evening! I was eaten up with jealousy of Christine.”

Gilbert looked genuinely astonished. It had never occurred to him that Anne could be jealous of anybody.

“Why, Anne-girl, I never thought you had it in you.”

“Oh, but I have. Why, years ago I was madly jealous of your correspondence with Ruby Gillis.”

“*Did* I ever correspond with Ruby Gillis? I’d forgotten. Poor Ruby! But what about Roy Gardner? The pot mustn’t call the kettle black.”

“Roy Gardner? Philippa wrote me not long ago that she’d seen him and he’d got positively corpulent. Gilbert, Dr. Murray may be a very eminent man in his profession but he looks just like a lath and Dr. Fowler looked like a doughnut. You looked so handsome ... and *finished* ... beside them.”

“Oh, thanks ... thanks. That’s something like a wife should say. By way of returning the compliment I thought you looked unusually well tonight, Anne, in spite of that dress. You had a little colour and your eyes were gorgeous. Ah-h-h, that’s good! No place like bed when you’re all in. There’s another verse in the Bible ... queer how those old verses you learn in Sunday School come back to you through life! ... ‘I will lay me down in peace and sleep.’ In peace ... and sleep ... goo’night.”

Gilbert was asleep almost before he finished the word. Dearest tired Gilbert! Babies might come and babies might go but none should disturb his rest that night. The telephone might ring its head off.

Anne was not sleepy. She was too happy to sleep just yet. She moved softly about the room, putting things away, braiding her hair, looking like a beloved woman. Finally she slipped on a negligee and went across the hall to the boys’ room. Walter and Jem in their bed and Shirley in his cot were all sound asleep. The Shrimp, who had outlived generations of pert kittens and become a family habit, was curled up at Shirley’s feet. Jem had fallen asleep while reading “The Life Book of Captain Jim” ... it was open on the spread. Why, how *long* Jem looked lying under the bedclothes! He would soon be grown up. What a sturdy reliable little chap he was! Walter

was smiling in his sleep as someone who knew a charming secret. The moon was shining on his pillow through the bars of the leaded window ... casting the shadow of a clearly defined cross on the wall above his head. In long after years Annie was to remember that and wonder if it were an omen of Courcelette ... of a cross-marked grave "somewhere in France." But tonight it was only a shadow ... nothing more. The rash had quite gone from Shirley's neck. Gilbert had been right. He was always right.

Nan and Diana and Rilla were in the next room ... Diana with darling little damp red curls all over her head and one little sunburned hand under her cheek, and Nan with long fans of lashes brushing hers. The eyes behind those blue-veined lids were hazel like her father's. And Rilla was sleeping on her stomach. Anne turned her right side up but her buttoned eyes never opened.

They were all growing so fast. In just a few short years they would be all young men and women ... youth tiptoe ... expectant ... a-star with its sweet wild dreams ... little ships sailing out of safe harbour to unknown ports. The boys would go away to their life work and the girls ... ah, the mist-veiled forms of beautiful brides might be seen coming down the old stairs at Ingleside. But they would be still hers for a few years yet ... hers to love and guide ... to sing the songs that so many mothers had sung. Hers ... and Gilbert's.

She went out and down the hall to the oriel window. All her suspicions and jealousies and resentments had gone where old moons go. She felt confident and gay and blithe.

"Blythe! I feel Blythe," she said, laughing at the foolish little pun. "I feel exactly as I did that morning Pacifique told me Gilbert had 'got de turn.'"

Below her was the mystery and loveliness of a garden at night. The faraway hills, dusted with moonlight, were a poem. Before many months she would be seeing moonlight on the far dim hills of Scotland ... over Melrose ... over ruined Kenilworth ... over the church by the Avon where Shakespeare slept ... perhaps even over the Colosseum ... over the Acropolis ... over sorrowful rivers flowing by dead empires.

The night was cool; soon the sharper, cooler nights of autumn would come; then the deep snow ... the deep white snow ... the deep cold snow of winter ... nights wild with wind and storm. But who would care? There would be the magic of firelight in gracious rooms ... hadn't Gilbert spoken not long ago of apple logs he was getting to burn in the fireplace? They would glorify the grey days that were bound to come. What would matter drifted snow and biting wind when love burned clear and bright, with spring beyond? And all the little sweetnesses of life sprinkling the road.

She turned away from the window. In her white gown, with her hair in its two long braids, she looked like the Anne of Green Gables days ... of Redmond days ... of the House of Dreams days. That inward glow was still shining through her. Through the open doorway came the soft sound of children breathing. Gilbert, who seldom snored, was indubitably snoring now. Anne grinned. She thought of something Christine had said. Poor childless Christine, shooting her little arrows of mockery.

"What a family!" Anne repeated exultantly.

RAINBOW VALLEY

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Home Again

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It was a clear, apple-green evening in May, and Four Winds Harbour was mirroring back the clouds of the golden west between its softly dark shores. The sea moaned eerily on the sandbar, sorrowful even in spring, but a sly, jovial wind came piping down the red harbour road along which Miss Cornelia's comfortable, matronly figure was making its way towards the village of Glen St. Mary. Miss Cornelia was rightfully Mrs. Marshall Elliott, and had been Mrs. Marshall Elliott for thirteen years, but even yet more people referred to her as Miss Cornelia than as Mrs. Elliott. The old name was dear to her old friends, only one of them contemptuously dropped it. Susan Baker, the gray and grim and faithful handmaiden of the Blythe family at Ingleside, never lost an opportunity of calling her "Mrs. Marshall Elliott," with the most killing and pointed emphasis, as if to say "You wanted to be Mrs. and Mrs. you shall be with a vengeance as far as I am concerned."

Miss Cornelia was going up to Ingleside to see Dr. and Mrs. Blythe, who were just home from Europe. They had been away for three months, having left in February to attend a famous medical congress in London; and certain things, which Miss Cornelia was anxious to discuss, had taken place in the Glen during their absence. For one thing, there was a new family in the manse. And such a family! Miss Cornelia shook her head over them several times as she walked briskly along.

Susan Baker and the Anne Shirley of other days saw her coming, as they sat on the big veranda at Ingleside, enjoying the charm of the cat's light, the sweetness of sleepy robins whistling among the twilit maples, and the dance of a gusty group of daffodils blowing against the old, mellow, red brick wall of the lawn.

Anne was sitting on the steps, her hands clasped over her knee, looking, in the kind dusk, as girlish as a mother of many has any right to

be; and the beautiful gray-green eyes, gazing down the harbour road, were as full of unquenchable sparkle and dream as ever. Behind her, in the hammock, Rilla Blythe was curled up, a fat, roly-poly little creature of six years, the youngest of the Ingleside children. She had curly red hair and hazel eyes that were now buttoned up after the funny, wrinkled fashion in which Rilla always went to sleep.

Shirley, “the little brown boy,” as he was known in the family “Who’s Who,” was asleep in Susan’s arms. He was brown-haired, browneyed and brown-skinned, with very rosy cheeks, and he was Susan’s especial love. After his birth Anne had been very ill for a long time, and Susan “mothered” the baby with a passionate tenderness which none of the other children, dear as they were to her, had ever called out. Dr. Blythe had said that but for her he would never have lived.

“I gave him life just as much as you did, Mrs. Dr. dear,” Susan was wont to say. “He is just as much my baby as he is yours.” And, indeed, it was always to Susan that Shirley ran, to be kissed for bumps, and rocked to sleep, and protected from well-deserved spankings. Susan had conscientiously spanked all the other Blythe children when she thought they needed it for their souls’ good, but she would not spank Shirley nor allow his mother to do it. Once, Dr. Blythe had spanked him and Susan had been stormily indignant.

“That man would spank an angel, Mrs. Dr. dear, that he would,” she had declared bitterly; and she would not make the poor doctor a pie for weeks.

She had taken Shirley with her to her brother’s home during his parents’ absence, while all the other children had gone to Avonlea, and she had three blessed months of him all to herself. Nevertheless, Susan was very glad to find herself back at Ingleside, with all her darlings around her again. Ingleside was her world and in it she reigned supreme. Even Anne seldom questioned her decisions, much to the disgust of Mrs. Rachel Lynde of Green Gables, who gloomily told Anne, whenever she visited Four Winds, that she was letting Susan get to be entirely too much of a boss and would live to rue it.

“Here is Cornelia Bryant coming up the harbour road, Mrs. Dr. dear,” said Susan. “She will be coming up to unload three months’ gossip on us.”

“I hope so,” said Anne, hugging her knees. “I’m starving for Glen St. Mary gossip, Susan. I hope Miss Cornelia can tell me everything that has happened while we’ve been away — EVERYTHING — who has got born, or married, or drunk; who has died, or gone away, or come, or fought, or lost a cow, or found a beau. It’s so delightful to be home again with all the dear Glen folks, and I want to know all about them. Why, I remember wondering, as I walked through Westminster Abbey which of her two especial beaux Millicent Drew would finally marry. Do you know, Susan, I have a dreadful suspicion that I love gossip.”

“Well, of course, Mrs. Dr. dear,” admitted Susan, “every proper woman likes to hear the news. I am rather interested in Millicent Drew’s case myself. I never had a beau, much less two, and I do not mind now, for being an old maid does not hurt when you get used to it. Millicent’s hair always looks to me as if she had swept it up with a broom. But the men do not seem to mind that.”

“They see only her pretty, piquant, mocking, little face, Susan.”

“That may very well be, Mrs. Dr. dear. The Good Book says that favour is deceitful and beauty is vain, but I should not have minded finding that out for myself, if it had been so ordained. I have no doubt we will all be beautiful when we are angels, but what good will it do us then? Speaking of gossip, however, they do say that poor Mrs. Harrison Miller over harbour tried to hang herself last week.”

“Oh, Susan!”

“Calm yourself, Mrs. Dr. dear. She did not succeed. But I really do not blame her for trying, for her husband is a terrible man. But she was very foolish to think of hanging herself and leaving the way clear for him to marry some other woman. If I had been in her shoes, Mrs. Dr. dear, I would have gone to work to worry him so that he would try to hang himself instead of me. Not that I hold with people hanging themselves under any circumstances, Mrs. Dr. dear.”

“What is the matter with Harrison Miller, anyway?” said Anne impatiently. “He is always driving some one to extremes.”

“Well, some people call it religion and some call it cussedness, begging your pardon, Mrs. Dr. dear, for using such a word. It seems they cannot make out which it is in Harrison’s case. There are days when he growls at everybody because he thinks he is foreordained to eternal punishment. And then there are days when he says he does not care and goes and gets drunk. My own opinion is that he is not sound in his intellect, for none of that branch of the Millers were. His grandfather went out of his mind. He thought he was surrounded by big black spiders. They crawled over him and floated in the air about him. I hope I shall never go insane, Mrs. Dr. dear, and I do not think I will, because it is not a habit of the Bakers. But, if an all-wise Providence should decree it, I hope it will not take the form of big black spiders, for I loathe the animals. As for Mrs. Miller, I do not know whether she really deserves pity or not. There are some who say she just married Harrison to spite Richard Taylor, which seems to me a very peculiar reason for getting married. But then, of course, *I* am no judge of things matrimonial, Mrs. Dr. dear. And there is Cornelia Bryant at the gate, so I will put this blessed brown baby on his bed and get my knitting.”

Chapter II.

Sheer Gossip

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“Where are the other children?” asked Miss Cornelia, when the first greetings — cordial on her side, rapturous on Anne’s, and dignified on Susan’s — were over.

“Shirley is in bed and Jem and Walter and the twins are down in their beloved Rainbow Valley,” said Anne. “They just came home this afternoon, you know, and they could hardly wait until supper was over before rushing down to the valley. They love it above every spot on earth. Even the maple grove doesn’t rival it in their affections.”

“I am afraid they love it too well,” said Susan gloomily. “Little Jem said once he would rather go to Rainbow Valley than to heaven when he died, and that was not a proper remark.”

“I suppose they had a great time in Avonlea?” said Miss Cornelia.

“Enormous. Marilla does spoil them terribly. Jem, in particular, can do no wrong in her eyes.”

“Miss Cuthbert must be an old lady now,” said Miss Cornelia, getting out her knitting, so that she could hold her own with Susan. Miss Cornelia held that the woman whose hands were employed always had the advantage over the woman whose hands were not.

“Marilla is eighty-five,” said Anne with a sigh. “Her hair is snow-white. But, strange to say, her eyesight is better than it was when she was sixty.”

“Well, dearie, I’m real glad you’re all back. I’ve been dreadful lonesome. But we haven’t been dull in the Glen, believe ME. There hasn’t been such an exciting spring in my time, as far as church matters go. We’ve got settled with a minister at last, Anne dearie.”

“The Reverend John Knox Meredith, Mrs. Dr. dear,” said Susan, resolved not to let Miss Cornelia tell all the news.

“Is he nice?” asked Anne interestedly.

Miss Cornelia sighed and Susan groaned.

“Yes, he’s nice enough if that were all,” said the former. “He is VERY nice — and very learned — and very spiritual. But, oh Anne dearie, he has no common sense!

“How was it you called him, then?”

“Well, there’s no doubt he is by far the best preacher we ever had in Glen St. Mary church,” said Miss Cornelia, veering a tack or two. “I suppose it is because he is so moony and absentminded that he never got a town call. His trial sermon was simply wonderful, believe ME. Every one went mad about it — and his looks.”

“He is VERY comely, Mrs. Dr. dear, and when all is said and done,

I DO like to see a well-looking man in the pulpit,” broke in Susan, thinking it was time she asserted herself again.

“Besides,” said Miss Cornelia, “we were anxious to get settled. And Mr. Meredith was the first candidate we were all agreed on. Somebody had some objection to all the others. There was some talk of calling Mr. Folsom. He was a good preacher, too, but somehow people didn’t care for his appearance. He was too dark and sleek.”

“He looked exactly like a great black tomcat, that he did, Mrs. Dr. dear,” said Susan. “I never could abide such a man in the pulpit every Sunday.”

“Then Mr. Rogers came and he was like a chip in porridge — neither harm nor good,” resumed Miss Cornelia. “But if he had preached like Peter and Paul it would have profited him nothing, for that was the day old Caleb Ramsay’s sheep strayed into church and gave a loud ‘ba-a-a’ just as he announced his text. Everybody laughed, and poor Rogers had no chance after that. Some thought we ought to call Mr. Stewart, because he was so well educated. He could read the New Testament in five languages.”

“But I do not think he was any surer than other men of getting to heaven because of that,” interjected Susan.

“Most of us didn’t like his delivery,” said Miss Cornelia, ignoring Susan. “He talked in grunts, so to speak. And Mr. Arnett couldn’t preach AT ALL. And he picked about the worst candidating text there is in the Bible—’Curse ye Meroz.’”

“Whenever he got stuck for an idea, he would bang the Bible and shout very bitterly, ‘Curse ye Meroz.’ Poor Meroz got thoroughly cursed that day, whoever he was, Mrs. Dr. dear,” said Susan.

“The minister who is candidating can’t be too careful what text he chooses,” said Miss Cornelia solemnly. “I believe Mr. Pierson would have got the call if he had picked a different text. But when he announced ‘I will lift my eyes to the hills’ HE was done for. Every one grinned, for every one knew that those two Hill girls from the Harbour Head have been setting their caps for every single minister who came to the Glen for the last fifteen years. And Mr. Newman had too large a family.”

“He stayed with my brotherin-law, James Clow,” said Susan. “‘How many children have you got?’ I asked him. ‘Nine boys and a sister for each of them,’ he said. ‘Eighteen!’ said I. ‘Dear me, what a family!’ And then he laughed and laughed. But I do not know why, Mrs. Dr. dear, and I am certain that eighteen children would be too many for any manse.”

“He had only ten children, Susan,” explained Miss Cornelia, with contemptuous patience. “And ten good children would not be much worse for the manse and congregation than the four who are there now. Though I wouldn’t say, Anne dearie, that they are so bad, either. I like them — everybody likes them. It’s impossible to help liking them. They would be real nice little souls if there was anyone to look after their manners and teach them what is right and proper. For instance, at school the teacher says they are model children. But at home they simply run wild.”

“What about Mrs. Meredith?” asked Anne.

“There’s NO Mrs. Meredith. That is just the trouble. Mr. Meredith is a widower. His wife died four years ago. If we had known that I don’t suppose we would have called him, for a widower is even worse in a congregation than a single man. But he was heard to speak of his children and we all supposed there was a mother, too. And when they came there

was nobody but old Aunt Martha, as they call her. She's a cousin of Mr. Meredith's mother, I believe, and he took her in to save her from the poorhouse. She is seventy-five years old, half blind, and very deaf and very cranky."

"And a very poor cook, Mrs. Dr. dear."

"The worst possible manager for a manse," said Miss Cornelia bitterly. "Mr. Meredith won't get any other housekeeper because he says it would hurt Aunt Martha's feelings. Anne dearie, believe me, the state of that manse is something terrible. Everything is thick with dust and nothing is ever in its place. And we had painted and papered it all so nice before they came."

"There are four children, you say?" asked Anne, beginning to mother them already in her heart.

"Yes. They run up just like the steps of a stair. Gerald's the oldest. He's twelve and they call him Jerry. He's a clever boy. Faith is eleven. She is a regular tomboy but pretty as a picture, I must say."

"She looks like an angel but she is a holy terror for mischief, Mrs. Dr. dear," said Susan solemnly. "I was at the manse one night last week and Mrs. James Millison was there, too. She had brought them up a dozen eggs and a little pail of milk — a VERY little pail, Mrs. Dr. dear. Faith took them and whisked down the cellar with them. Near the bottom of the stairs she caught her toe and fell the rest of the way, milk and eggs and all. You can imagine the result, Mrs. Dr. dear. But that child came up laughing. 'I don't know whether I'm myself or a custard pie,' she said. And Mrs. James Millison was very angry. She said she would never take another thing to the manse if it was to be wasted and destroyed in that fashion."

"Maria Millison never hurt herself taking things to the manse," sniffed Miss Cornelia. "She just took them that night as an excuse for curiosity. But poor Faith is always getting into scrapes. She is so heedless and impulsive."

"Just like me. I'm going to like your Faith," said Anne decidedly.

"She is full of spunk — and I do like spunk, Mrs. Dr. dear," admitted Susan.

“There’s something taking about her,” conceded Miss Cornelia. “You never see her but she’s laughing, and somehow it always makes you want to laugh too. She can’t even keep a straight face in church. Una is ten — she’s a sweet little thing — not pretty, but sweet. And Thomas Carlyle is nine. They call him Carl, and he has a regular mania for collecting toads and bugs and frogs and bringing them into the house.”

“I suppose he was responsible for the dead rat that was lying on a chair in the parlour the afternoon Mrs. Grant called. It gave her a turn,” said Susan, “and I do not wonder, for manse parlours are no places for dead rats. To be sure it may have been the cat who left it, there. HE is as full of the old Nick as he can be stuffed, Mrs. Dr. dear. A manse cat should at least LOOK respectable, in my opinion, whatever he really is. But I never saw such a rakish-looking beast. And he walks along the ridgepole of the manse almost every evening at sunset, Mrs. Dr. dear, and waves his tail, and that is not becoming.”

“The worst of it is, they are NEVER decently dressed,” sighed Miss Cornelia. “And since the snow went they go to school barefooted. Now, you know Anne dearie, that isn’t the right thing for manse children — especially when the Methodist minister’s little girl always wears such nice buttoned boots. And I DO wish they wouldn’t play in the old Methodist graveyard.”

“It’s very tempting, when it’s right beside the manse,” said Anne. “I’ve always thought graveyards must be delightful places to play in.”

“Oh, no, you did not, Mrs. Dr. dear,” said loyal Susan, determined to protect Anne from herself. “You have too much good sense and decorum.”

“Why did they ever build that manse beside the graveyard in the first place?” asked Anne. “Their lawn is so small there is no place for them to play except in the graveyard.”

“It WAS a mistake,” admitted Miss Cornelia. “But they got the lot cheap. And no other manse children ever thought of playing there. Mr. Meredith shouldn’t allow it. But he has always got his nose buried in a book, when he is home. He reads and reads, or walks about in his study in a daydream. So far he hasn’t forgotten to be in church on Sundays, but

twice he has forgotten about the prayer-meeting and one of the elders had to go over to the manse and remind him. And he forgot about Fanny Cooper's wedding. They rang him up on the 'phone and then he rushed right over, just as he was, carpet slippers and all. One wouldn't mind if the Methodists didn't laugh so about it. But there's one comfort — they can't criticize his sermons. He wakes up when he's in the pulpit, believe ME. And the Methodist minister can't preach at all — so they tell me. *I have never heard him, thank goodness.*"

Miss Cornelia's scorn of men had abated somewhat since her marriage, but her scorn of Methodists remained untinged of charity. Susan smiled slyly.

"They do say, Mrs. Marshall Elliott, that the Methodists and Presbyterians are talking of uniting," she said.

"Well, all I hope is that I'll be under the sod if that ever comes to pass," retorted Miss Cornelia. "I shall never have truck or trade with Methodists, and Mr. Meredith will find that he'd better steer clear of them, too. He is entirely too sociable with them, believe ME. Why, he went to the Jacob Drews' silver-wedding supper and got into a nice scrape as a result."

"What was it?"

"Mrs. Drew asked him to carve the roast goose — for Jacob Drew never did or could carve. Well, Mr. Meredith tackled it, and in the process he knocked it clean off the platter into Mrs. Reese's lap, who was sitting next him. And he just said dreamily. 'Mrs. Reese, will you kindly return me that goose?' Mrs. Reese 'returned' it, as meek as Moses, but she must have been furious, for she had on her new silk dress. The worst of it is, she was a Methodist."

"But I think that is better than if she was a Presbyterian," interjected Susan. "If she had been a Presbyterian she would mostly likely have left the church and we cannot afford to lose our members. And Mrs. Reese is not liked in her own church, because she gives herself such great airs, so that the Methodists would be rather pleased that Mr. Meredith spoiled her dress."

“The point is, he made himself ridiculous, and *I*, for one, do not like to see my minister made ridiculous in the eyes of the Methodists,” said Miss Cornelia stiffly. “If he had had a wife it would not have happened.”

“I do not see if he had a dozen wives how they could have prevented Mrs. Drew from using up her tough old gander for the wedding-feast,” said Susan stubbornly.

“They say that was her husband’s doing,” said Miss Cornelia.

“Jacob Drew is a conceited, stingy, domineering creature.”

“And they do say he and his wife detest each other — which does not seem to me the proper way for married folks to get along. But then, of course, I have had no experience along that line,” said Susan, tossing her head.

“And *I* am not one to blame everything on the men. Mrs. Drew is mean enough herself. They say that the only thing she was ever known to give away was a crock of butter made out of cream a rat had fell into. She contributed it to a church social. Nobody found out about the rat until afterwards.”

“Fortunately, all the people the Merediths have offended so far are Methodists,” said Miss Cornelia. “That Jerry went to the Methodist prayer-meeting one night about a fortnight ago and sat beside old William Marsh who got up as usual and testified with fearful groans. ‘Do you feel any better now?’ whispered Jerry when William sat down. Poor Jerry meant to be sympathetic, but Mr. Marsh thought he was impertinent and is furious at him. Of course, Jerry had no business to be in a Methodist prayer-meeting at all. But they go where they like.”

“I hope they will not offend Mrs. Alec Davis of the Harbour Head,” said Susan. “She is a very touchy woman, I understand, but she is very well off and pays the most of any one to the salary. I have heard that she says the Merediths are the worst brought up children she ever saw.”

“Every word you say convinces me more and more that the Merediths belong to the race that knows Joseph,” said Mistress Anne decidedly.

“When all is said and done, they *DO*,” admitted Miss Cornelia. “And that balances everything. Anyway, we’ve got them now and we must just

do the best we can by them and stick up for them to the Methodists. Well, I suppose I must be getting down harbour. Marshall will soon be home — he went over-harbour to-day — and wanting his super, manlike. I'm sorry I haven't seen the other children. And where's the doctor?"

"Up at the Harbour Head. We've only been home three days and in that time he has spent three hours in his own bed and eaten two meals in his own house."

"Well, everybody who has been sick for the last six weeks has been waiting for him to come home — and I don't blame them. When that over-harbour doctor married the undertaker's daughter at Lowbridge people felt suspicious of him. It didn't look well. You and the doctor must come down soon and tell us all about your trip. I suppose you've had a splendid time."

"We had," agreed Anne. "It was the fulfilment of years of dreams. The old world is very lovely and very wonderful. But we have come back very well satisfied with our own land. Canada is the finest country in the world, Miss Cornelia."

"Nobody ever doubted that," said Miss Cornelia, complacently.

"And old P.E.I. is the loveliest province in it and Four Winds the loveliest spot in P.E.I.," laughed Anne, looking adoringly out over the sunset splendour of glen and harbour and gulf. She waved her hand at it. "I saw nothing more beautiful than that in Europe, Miss Cornelia. Must you go? The children will be sorry to have missed you."

"They must come and see me soon. Tell them the doughnut jar is always full."

"Oh, at supper they were planning a descent on you. They'll go soon; but they must settle down to school again now. And the twins are going to take music lessons."

"Not from the Methodist minister's wife, I hope?" said Miss Cornelia anxiously.

"No — from Rosemary West. I was up last evening to arrange it with her. What a pretty girl she is!"

"Rosemary holds her own well. She isn't as young as she once was."

“I thought her very charming. I’ve never had any real acquaintance with her, you know. Their house is so out of the way, and I’ve seldom ever seen her except at church.”

“People always have liked Rosemary West, though they don’t understand her,” said Miss Cornelia, quite unconscious of the high tribute she was paying to Rosemary’s charm. “Ellen has always kept her down, so to speak. She has tyrannized over her, and yet she has always indulged her in a good many ways. Rosemary was engaged once, you know — to young Martin Crawford. His ship was wrecked on the Magdalens and all the crew were drowned. Rosemary was just a child — only seventeen. But she was never the same afterwards. She and Ellen have stayed very close at home since their mother’s death. They don’t often get to their own church at Lowbridge and I understand Ellen doesn’t approve of going too often to a Presbyterian church. To the Methodist she NEVER goes, I’ll say that much for her. That family of Wests have always been strong Episcopalians. Rosemary and Ellen are pretty well off. Rosemary doesn’t really need to give music lessons. She does it because she likes to. They are distantly related to Leslie, you know. Are the Fords coming to the harbour this summer?”

“No. They are going on a trip to Japan and will probably be away for a year. Owen’s new novel is to have a Japanese setting. This will be the first summer that the dear old House of Dreams will be empty since we left it.”

“I should think Owen Ford might find enough to write about in Canada without dragging his wife and his innocent children off to a heathen country like Japan,” grumbled Miss Cornelia. “*The Life Book* was the best book he’s ever written and he got the material for that right here in Four Winds.”

“Captain Jim gave him the most of that, you know. And he collected it all over the world. But Owen’s books are all delightful, I think.”

“Oh, they’re well enough as far as they go. I make it a point to read every one he writes, though I’ve always held, Anne dearie, that reading novels is a sinful waste of time. I shall write and tell him my opinion of

this Japanese business, believe ME. Does he want Kenneth and Persis to be converted into pagans?”

With which unanswerable conundrum Miss Cornelia took her departure. Susan proceeded to put Rilla in bed and Anne sat on the veranda steps under the early stars and dreamed her incorrigible dreams and learned all over again for the hundredth happy time what a moonrise splendour and sheen could be on Four Winds Harbour.

Chapter III.

The Ingleside Children

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In daytime the Blythe children liked very well to play in the rich, soft greens and glooms of the big maple grove between Ingleside and the Glen St. Mary pond; but for evening revels there was no place like the little valley behind the maple grove. It was a fairy realm of romance to them. Once, looking from the attic windows of Ingleside, through the mist and aftermath of a summer thunderstorm, they had seen the beloved spot arched by a glorious rainbow, one end of which seemed to dip straight down to where a corner of the pond ran up into the lower end of the valley.

“Let us call it Rainbow Valley,” said Walter delightedly, and Rainbow Valley thenceforth it was.

Outside of Rainbow Valley the wind might be rollicking and boisterous. Here it always went gently. Little, winding, fairy paths ran here and there over spruce roots cushioned with moss. Wild cherry trees, that in blossom time would be misty white, were scattered all over the valley, mingling with the dark spruces. A little brook with amber waters ran through it from the Glen village. The houses of the village were comfortably far away; only at the upper end of the valley was a little tumbledown, deserted cottage, referred to as “the old Bailey house.” It had not been occupied for many years, but a grass-grown dyke surrounded it and inside was an ancient garden where the Ingleside children could find violets and daisies and June lilies still blooming in season. For the rest, the garden was overgrown with caraway that swayed and foamed in the moonshine of summer eves like seas of silver.

To the south lay the pond and beyond it the ripened distance lost itself in purple woods, save where, on a high hill, a solitary old gray homestead looked down on glen and harbour. There was a certain wild woodsiness

and solitude about Rainbow Valley, in spite of its nearness to the village, which endeared it to the children of Ingleside.

The valley was full of dear, friendly hollows and the largest of these was their favourite stamping ground. Here they were assembled on this particular evening. There was a grove of young spruces in this hollow, with a tiny, grassy glade in its heart, opening on the bank of the brook. By the brook grew a silver birch-tree, a young, incredibly straight thing which Walter had named the “White Lady.” In this glade, too, were the “Tree Lovers,” as Walter called a spruce and maple which grew so closely together that their boughs were inextricably intertwined. Jem had hung an old string of sleighbells, given him by the Glen blacksmith, on the Tree Lovers, and every visitant breeze called out sudden fairy tinkles from it.

“How nice it is to be back!” said Nan. “After all, none of the Avonlea places are quite as nice as Rainbow Valley.”

But they were very fond of the Avonlea places for all that. A visit to Green Gables was always considered a great treat. Aunt Marilla was very good to them, and so was Mrs. Rachel Lynde, who was spending the leisure of her old age in knitting cotton-warp quilts against the day when Anne’s daughters should need a “setting-out.” There were jolly playmates there, too—”Uncle” Davy’s children and “Aunt” Diana’s children. They knew all the spots their mother had loved so well in her girlhood at old Green Gables — the long Lover’s Lane, that was pink-hedged in wildrose time, the always neat yard, with its willows and poplars, the Dryad’s Bubble, lucent and lovely as of yore, the Lake of Shining Waters, and Willowmere. The twins had their mother’s old porch-gable room, and Aunt Marilla used to come in at night, when she thought they were asleep, to gloat over them. But they all knew she loved Jem the best.

Jem was at present busily occupied in frying a mess of small trout which he had just caught in the pond. His stove consisted of a circle of red stones, with a fire kindled in it, and his culinary utensils were an old tin can, hammered out flat, and a fork with only one tine left. Nevertheless, ripping good meals had before now been thus prepared.

Jem was the child of the House of Dreams. All the others had been born at Ingleside. He had curly red hair, like his mother's, and frank hazel eyes, like his father's; he had his mother's fine nose and his father's steady, humorous mouth. And he was the only one of the family who had ears nice enough to please Susan. But he had a standing feud with Susan because she would not give up calling him Little Jem. It was outrageous, thought thirteen-year-old Jem. Mother had more sense.

"I'm NOT little any more, Mother," he had cried indignantly, on his eighth birthday. "I'm AWFUL big."

Mother had sighed and laughed and sighed again; and she never called him Little Jem again — in his hearing at least.

He was and always had been a sturdy, reliable little chap. He never broke a promise. He was not a great talker. His teachers did not think him brilliant, but he was a good, all-round student. He never took things on faith; he always liked to investigate the truth of a statement for himself. Once Susan had told him that if he touched his tongue to a frosty latch all the skin would tear off it. Jem had promptly done it, "just to see if it was so." He found it was "so," at the cost of a very sore tongue for several days. But Jem did not grudge suffering in the interests of science. By constant experiment and observation he learned a great deal and his brothers and sisters thought his extensive knowledge of their little world quite wonderful. Jem always knew where the first and ripest berries grew, where the first pale violets shyly awakened from their winter's sleep, and how many blue eggs were in a given robin's nest in the maple grove. He could tell fortunes from daisy petals and suck honey from red clovers, and grub up all sorts of edible roots on the banks of the pond, while Susan went in daily fear that they would all be poisoned. He knew where the finest spruce-gum was to be found, in pale amber knots on the lichened bark, he knew where the nuts grew thickest in the beechwoods around the Harbour Head, and where the best trouting places up the brooks were. He could mimic the call of any wild bird or beast in Four Winds and he knew the haunt of every wild flower from spring to autumn.

Walter Blythe was sitting under the White Lady, with a volume of poems lying beside him, but he was not reading. He was gazing now at the emerald-misted willows by the pond, and now at a flock of clouds, like little silver sheep, herded by the wind, that were drifting over Rainbow Valley, with rapture in his wide splendid eyes. Walter's eyes were very wonderful. All the joy and sorrow and laughter and loyalty and aspiration of many generations lying under the sod looked out of their dark gray depths.

Walter was a "hop out of kin," as far as looks went. He did not resemble any known relative. He was quite the handsomest of the Ingleside children, with straight black hair and finely modelled features. But he had all his mother's vivid imagination and passionate love of beauty. Frost of winter, invitation of spring, dream of summer and glamour of autumn, all meant much to Walter.

In school, where Jem was a chieftain, Walter was not thought highly of. He was supposed to be "girly" and milk-soppish, because he never fought and seldom joined in the school sports, preferring to herd by himself in out of the way corners and read books — especially "po'try books." Walter loved the poets and pored over their pages from the time he could first read. Their music was woven into his growing soul — the music of the immortals. Walter cherished the ambition to be a poet himself some day. The thing could be done. A certain Uncle Paul — so called out of courtesy — who lived now in that mysterious realm called "the States," was Walter's model. Uncle Paul had once been a little school boy in Avonlea and now his poetry was read everywhere. But the Glen schoolboys did not know of Walter's dreams and would not have been greatly impressed if they had. In spite of his lack of physical prowess, however, he commanded a certain unwilling respect because of his power of "talking book talk." Nobody in Glen St. Mary school could talk like him. He "sounded like a preacher," one boy said; and for this reason he was generally left alone and not persecuted, as most boys were who were suspected of disliking or fearing fisticuffs.

The ten year old Ingleside twins violated twin tradition by not looking in the least alike. Anne, who was always called Nan, was very pretty, with velvety nut-brown eyes and silky nut-brown hair. She was a very blithe and dainty little maiden — Blythe by name and blithe by nature, one of her teachers had said. Her complexion was quite faultless, much to her mother's satisfaction.

"I'm so glad I have one daughter who can wear pink," Mrs. Blythe was wont to say jubilantly.

Diana Blythe, known as Di, was very like her mother, with gray-green eyes that always shone with a peculiar lustre and brilliancy in the dusk, and red hair. Perhaps this was why she was her father's favourite. She and Walter were especial chums; Di was the only one to whom he would ever read the verses he wrote himself — the only one who knew that he was secretly hard at work on an epic, strikingly resembling "Marmion" in some things, if not in others. She kept all his secrets, even from Nan, and told him all hers.

"Won't you soon have those fish ready, Jem?" said Nan, sniffing with her dainty nose. "The smell makes me awfully hungry."

"They're nearly ready," said Jem, giving one a dexterous turn.

"Get out the bread and the plates, girls. Walter, wake up."

"How the air shines tonight," said Walter dreamily. Not that he despised fried trout either, by any means; but with Walter food for the soul always took first place. "The flower angel has been walking over the world to-day, calling to the flowers. I can see his blue wings on that hill by the woods."

"Any angels' wings I ever saw were white," said Nan.

"The flower angel's aren't. They are a pale misty blue, just like the haze in the valley. Oh, how I wish I could fly. It must be glorious."

"One does fly in dreams sometimes," said Di.

"I never dream that I'm flying exactly," said Walter. "But I often dream that I just rise up from the ground and float over the fences and the trees. It's delightful — and I always think, 'This ISN'T a dream like it's

always been before. THIS is real' — and then I wake up after all, and it's heartbreaking."

"Hurry up, Nan," ordered Jem.

Nan had produced the banquet-board — a board literally as well as figuratively — from which many a feast, seasoned as no viands were elsewhere, had been eaten in Rainbow Valley. It was converted into a table by propping it on two large, mossy stones. Newspapers served as tablecloth, and broken plates and handleless cups from Susan's discard furnished the dishes. From a tin box secreted at the root of a spruce tree Nan brought forth bread and salt. The brook gave Adam's ale of unsurpassed crystal. For the rest, there was a certain sauce, compounded of fresh air and appetite of youth, which gave to everything a divine flavour. To sit in Rainbow Valley, steeped in a twilight half gold, half amethyst, rife with the odours of balsam-fir and woodsy growing things in their springtime prime, with the pale stars of wild strawberry blossoms all around you, and with the sough of the wind and tinkle of bells in the shaking tree tops, and eat fried trout and dry bread, was something which the mighty of earth might have envied them.

"Sit in," invited Nan, as Jem placed his sizzling tin platter of trout on the table. "It's your turn to say grace, Jem."

"I've done my part frying the trout," protested Jem, who hated saying grace. "Let Walter say it. He LIKES saying grace. And cut it short, too, Walt. I'm starving."

But Walter said no grace, short or long, just then. An interruption occurred.

"Who's coming down from the manse hill?" said Di.

The Manse Children

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Aunt Martha might be, and was, a very poor housekeeper; the Rev. John Knox Meredith might be, and was, a very absentminded, indulgent man. But it could not be denied that there was something very homelike and lovable about the Glen St. Mary manse in spite of its untidiness. Even the critical housewives of the Glen felt it, and were unconsciously mellowed in judgment because of it. Perhaps its charm was in part due to accidental circumstances — the luxuriant vines clustering over its gray, clap-boarded walls, the friendly acacias and balm-of-gileads that crowded about it with the freedom of old acquaintance, and the beautiful views of harbour and sand-dunes from its front windows. But these things had been there in the reign of Mr. Meredith's predecessor, when the manse had been the primmest, neatest, and dreariest house in the Glen. So much of the credit must be given to the personality of its new inmates. There was an atmosphere of laughter and comradeship about it; the doors were always open; and inner and outer worlds joined hands. Love was the only law in Glen St. Mary manse.

The people of his congregation said that Mr. Meredith spoiled his children. Very likely he did. It is certain that he could not bear to scold them. "They have no mother," he used to say to himself, with a sigh, when some unusually glaring peccadillo forced itself upon his notice. But he did not know the half of their goings-on. He belonged to the sect of dreamers. The windows of his study looked out on the graveyard but, as he paced up and down the room, reflecting deeply on the immortality of the soul, he was quite unaware that Jerry and Carl were playing leap-frog hilariously over the flat stones in that abode of dead Methodists. Mr. Meredith had occasional acute realizations that his children were not so well looked after, physically or morally, as they had been before his wife died, and he had always a dim subconsciousness that house and meals were very

different under Aunt Martha's management from what they had been under Cecilia's. For the rest, he lived in a world of books and abstractions; and, therefore, although his clothes were seldom brushed, and although the Glen housewives concluded, from the ivory-like pallor of his clear-cut features and slender hands, that he never got enough to eat, he was not an unhappy man.

If ever a graveyard could be called a cheerful place, the old Methodist graveyard at Glen St. Mary might be so called. The new graveyard, at the other side of the Methodist church, was a neat and proper and doleful spot; but the old one had been left so long to Nature's kindly and gracious ministries that it had become very pleasant.

It was surrounded on three sides by a dyke of stones and sod, topped by a gray and uncertain paling. Outside the dyke grew a row of tall fir trees with thick, balsamic boughs. The dyke, which had been built by the first settlers of the Glen, was old enough to be beautiful, with mosses and green things growing out of its crevices, violets purpling at its base in the early spring days, and asters and goldenrod making an autumnal glory in its corners. Little ferns clustered companionably between its stones, and here and there a big bracken grew.

On the eastern side there was neither fence nor dyke. The graveyard there straggled off into a young fir plantation, ever pushing nearer to the graves and deepening eastward into a thick wood. The air was always full of the harp-like voices of the sea, and the music of gray old trees, and in the spring mornings the choruses of birds in the elms around the two churches sang of life and not of death. The Meredith children loved the old graveyard.

Blue-eyed ivy, "garden-spruce," and mint ran riot over the sunken graves. Blueberry bushes grew lavishly in the sandy corner next to the fir wood. The varying fashions of tombstones for three generations were to be found there, from the flat, oblong, red sandstone slabs of old settlers, down through the days of weeping willows and clasped hands, to the latest monstrosities of tall "monuments" and draped urns. One of the latter, the biggest and ugliest in the graveyard, was sacred to the memory of a certain

Alec Davis who had been born a Methodist but had taken to himself a Presbyterian bride of the Douglas clan. She had made him turn Presbyterian and kept him toeing the Presbyterian mark all his life. But when he died she did not dare to doom him to a lonely grave in the Presbyterian graveyard over-harbour. His people were all buried in the Methodist cemetery; so Alec Davis went back to his own in death and his widow consoled herself by erecting a monument which cost more than any of the Methodists could afford. The Meredith children hated it, without just knowing why, but they loved the old, flat, bench-like stones with the tall grasses growing rankly about them. They made jolly seats for one thing. They were all sitting on one now. Jerry, tired of leap frog, was playing on a jew's-harp. Carl was lovingly poring over a strange beetle he had found; Una was trying to make a doll's dress, and Faith, leaning back on her slender brown wrists, was swinging her bare feet in lively time to the jew's-harp.

Jerry had his father's black hair and large black eyes, but in him the latter were flashing instead of dreamy. Faith, who came next to him, wore her beauty like a rose, careless and glowing. She had golden-brown eyes, golden-brown curls and crimson cheeks. She laughed too much to please her father's congregation and had shocked old Mrs. Taylor, the disconsolate spouse of several departed husbands, by saucily declaring — in the church-porch at that—"The world ISN'T a vale of tears, Mrs. Taylor. It's a world of laughter."

Little dreamy Una was not given to laughter. Her braids of straight, dead-black hair betrayed no lawless kinks, and her almond-shaped, dark-blue eyes had something wistful and sorrowful in them. Her mouth had a trick of falling open over her tiny white teeth, and a shy, meditative smile occasionally crept over her small face. She was much more sensitive to public opinion than Faith, and had an uneasy consciousness that there was something askew in their way of living. She longed to put it right, but did not know how. Now and then she dusted the furniture — but it was so seldom she could find the duster because it was never in the same place twice. And when the clothes-brush was to be found she tried to brush her

father's best suit on Saturdays, and once sewed on a missing button with coarse white thread. When Mr. Meredith went to church next day every female eye saw that button and the peace of the Ladies' Aid was upset for weeks.

Carl had the clear, bright, dark-blue eyes, fearless and direct, of his dead mother, and her brown hair with its glints of gold. He knew the secrets of bugs and had a sort of freemasonry with bees and beetles. Una never liked to sit near him because she never knew what uncanny creature might be secreted about him. Jerry refused to sleep with him because Carl had once taken a young garter snake to bed with him; so Carl slept in his old cot, which was so short that he could never stretch out, and had strange bedfellows. Perhaps it was just as well that Aunt Martha was half blind when she made that bed. Altogether they were a jolly, lovable little crew, and Cecilia Meredith's heart must have ached bitterly when she faced the knowledge that she must leave them.

"Where would you like to be buried if you were a Methodist?" asked Faith cheerfully.

This opened up an interesting field of speculation.

"There isn't much choice. The place is full," said Jerry. "I'D like that corner near the road, I guess. I could hear the teams going past and the people talking."

"I'd like that little hollow under the weeping birch," said Una. "That birch is such a place for birds and they sing like mad in the mornings."

"I'd take the Porter lot where there's so many children buried. *I* like lots of company," said Faith. "Carl, where'd you?"

"I'd rather not be buried at all," said Carl, "but if I had to be I'd like the ant-bed. Ants are AWF'LY int'resting."

"How very good all the people who are buried here must have been," said Una, who had been reading the laudatory old epitaphs. "There doesn't seem to be a single bad person in the whole graveyard. Methodists must be better than Presbyterians after all."

“Maybe the Methodists bury their bad people just like they do cats,” suggested Carl. “Maybe they don’t bother bringing them to the graveyard at all.”

“Nonsense,” said Faith. “The people that are buried here weren’t any better than other folks, Una. But when anyone is dead you mustn’t say anything of him but good or he’ll come back and ha’nt you. Aunt Martha told me that. I asked father if it was true and he just looked through me and muttered, ‘True? True? What is truth? What IS truth, O jesting Pilate?’ I concluded from that it must be true.”

“I wonder if Mr. Alec Davis would come back and ha’nt me if I threw a stone at the urn on top of his tombstone,” said Jerry.

“Mrs. Davis would,” giggled Faith. “She just watches us in church like a cat watching mice. Last Sunday I made a face at her nephew and he made one back at me and you should have seen her glare. I’ll bet she boxed HIS ears when they got out. Mrs. Marshall Elliott told me we mustn’t offend her on any account or I’d have made a face at her, too!”

“They say Jem Blythe stuck out his tongue at her once and she would never have his father again, even when her husband was dying,” said Jerry. “I wonder what the Blythe gang will be like.”

“I liked their looks,” said Faith. The manse children had been at the station that afternoon when the Blythe small fry had arrived. “I liked Jem’s looks ESPECIALLY.”

“They say in school that Walter’s a sissy,” said Jerry.

“I don’t believe it,” said Una, who had thought Walter very handsome.

“Well, he writes poetry, anyhow. He won the prize the teacher offered last year for writing a poem, Bertie Shakespeare Drew told me. Bertie’s mother thought HE should have got the prize because of his name, but Bertie said he couldn’t write poetry to save his soul, name or no name.”

“I suppose we’ll get acquainted with them as soon as they begin going to school,” mused Faith. “I hope the girls are nice. I don’t like most of the girls round here. Even the nice ones are poky. But the Blythe twins look jolly. I thought twins always looked alike, but they don’t. I think the redhaired one is the nicest.”

“I liked their mother’s looks,” said Una with a little sigh. Una envied all children their mothers. She had been only six when her mother died, but she had some very precious memories, treasured in her soul like jewels, of twilight cuddlings and morning frolics, of loving eyes, a tender voice, and the sweetest, gayest laugh.

“They say she isn’t like other people,” said Jerry.

“Mrs. Elliot says that is because she never really grew up,” said Faith.

“She’s taller than Mrs. Elliott.”

“Yes, yes, but it is inside — Mrs. Elliot says Mrs. Blythe just stayed a little girl inside.”

“What do I smell?” interrupted Carl, sniffing.

They all smelled it now. A most delectable odour came floating up on the still evening air from the direction of the little woodsy dell below the manse hill.

“That makes me hungry,” said Jerry.

“We had only bread and molasses for supper and cold ditto for dinner,” said Una plaintively.

Aunt Martha’s habit was to boil a large slab of mutton early in the week and serve it up every day, cold and greasy, as long as it lasted. To this Faith, in a moment of inspiration, had give the name of “ditto”, and by this it was invariably known at the manse.

“Let’s go and see where that smell is coming from,” said Jerry.

They all sprang up, frolicked over the lawn with the abandon of young puppies, climbed a fence, and tore down the mossy slope, guided by the savory lure that ever grew stronger. A few minutes later they arrived breathlessly in the sanctum sanctorum of Rainbow Valley where the Blythe children were just about to give thanks and eat.

They halted shyly. Una wished they had not been so precipitate: but Di Blythe was equal to that and any occasion. She stepped forward, with a comrade’s smile.

“I guess I know who you are,” she said. “You belong to the manse, don’t you?”

Faith nodded, her face creased by dimples.

“We smelled your trout cooking and wondered what it was.”

“You must sit down and help us eat them,” said Di.

“Maybe you haven’t more than you want yourselves,” said Jerry, looking hungrily at the tin platter.

“We’ve heaps — three apiece,” said Jem. “Sit down.”

No more ceremony was necessary. Down they all sat on mossy stones. Merry was that feast and long. Nan and Di would probably have died of horror had they known what Faith and Una knew perfectly well — that Carl had two young mice in his jacket pocket. But they never knew it, so it never hurt them. Where can folks get better acquainted than over a meal table? When the last trout had vanished, the manse children and the Ingleside children were sworn friends and allies. They had always known each other and always would. The race of Joseph recognized its own.

They poured out the history of their little pasts. The manse children heard of Avonlea and Green Gables, of Rainbow Valley traditions, and of the little house by the harbour shore where Jem had been born. The Ingleside children heard of Maywater, where the Merediths had lived before coming to the Glen, of Una’s beloved, one-eyed doll and Faith’s pet rooster.

Faith was inclined to resent the fact that people laughed at her for petting a rooster. She liked the Blythes because they accepted it without question.

“A handsome rooster like Adam is just as nice a pet as a dog or cat, *I* think,” she said. “If he was a canary nobody would wonder. And I brought him up from a little, wee, yellow chicken. Mrs. Johnson at Maywater gave him to me. A weasel had killed all his brothers and sisters. I called him after her husband. I never liked dolls or cats. Cats are too sneaky and dolls are DEAD.”

“Who lives in that house away up there?” asked Jerry.

“The Miss Wests — Rosemary and Ellen,” answered Nan. “Di and I are going to take music lessons from Miss Rosemary this summer.”

Una gazed at the lucky twins with eyes whose longing was too gentle for envy. Oh, if she could only have music lessons! It was one of the dreams of her little hidden life. But nobody ever thought of such a thing.

“Miss Rosemary is so sweet and she always dresses so pretty,” said Di. “Her hair is just the colour of new molasses taffy,” she added wistfully — for Di, like her mother before her, was not resigned to her own ruddy tresses.

“I like Miss Ellen, too,” said Nan. “She always used to give me candies when she came to church. But Di is afraid of her.”

“Her brows are so black and she has such a great deep voice,” said Di. “Oh, how scared of her Kenneth Ford used to be when he was little! Mother says the first Sunday Mrs. Ford brought him to church Miss Ellen happened to be there, sitting right behind them. And the minute Kenneth saw her he just screamed and screamed until Mrs. Ford had to carry him out.”

“Who is Mrs. Ford?” asked Una wonderingly.

“Oh, the Fords don’t live here. They only come here in the summer. And they’re not coming this summer. They live in that little house ‘way, ‘way down on the harbour shore where father and mother used to lie. I wish you could see Persis Ford. She is just like a picture.”

“I’ve heard of Mrs. Ford,” broke in Faith. “Bertie Shakespeare Drew told me about her. She was married fourteen years to a dead man and then he came to life.”

“Nonsense,” said Nan. “That isn’t the way it goes at all. Bertie Shakespeare can never get anything straight. I know the whole story and I’ll tell it to you some time, but not now, for it’s too long and it’s time for us to go home. Mother doesn’t like us to be out late these damp evenings.”

Nobody cared whether the manse children were out in the damp or not. Aunt Martha was already in bed and the minister was still too deeply lost in speculations concerning the immortality of the soul to remember the

mortality of the body. But they went home, too, with visions of good times coming in their heads.

“I think Rainbow Valley is even nicer than the graveyard,” said Una. “And I just love those dear Blythes. It’s SO nice when you can love people because so often you CAN’T. Father said in his sermon last Sunday that we should love everybody. But how can we? How could we love Mrs. Alec Davis?”

“Oh, father only said that in the pulpit,” said Faith airily.

“He has more sense than to really think it outside.”

The Blythe children went up to Ingleside, except Jem, who slipped away for a few moments on a solitary expedition to a remote corner of Rainbow Valley. Mayflowers grew there and Jem never forgot to take his mother a bouquet as long as they lasted.

The Advent of Mary Vance

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“This is just the sort of day you feel as if things might happen,” said Faith, responsive to the lure of crystal air and blue hills. She hugged herself with delight and danced a hornpipe on old Hezekiah Pollock’s bench tombstone, much to the horror of two ancient maidens who happened to be driving past just as Faith hopped on one foot around the stone, waving the other and her arms in the air.

“And that,” groaned one ancient maiden, “is our minister’s daughter.”

“What else could you expect of a widower’s family?” groaned the other ancient maiden. And then they both shook their heads.

It was early on Saturday morning and the Merediths were out in the dew-drenched world with a delightful consciousness of the holiday. They had never had anything to do on a holiday. Even Nan and Di Blythe had certain household tasks for Saturday mornings, but the daughters of the manse were free to roam from blushing morn to dewy eve if so it pleased them. It DID please Faith, but Una felt a secret, bitter humiliation because they never learned to do anything. The other girls in her class at school could cook and sew and knit; she only was a little ignoramus.

Jerry suggested that they go exploring; so they went lingeringly through the fir grove, picking up Carl on the way, who was on his knees in the dripping grass studying his darling ants. Beyond the grove they came out in Mr. Taylor’s pasture field, sprinkled over with the white ghosts of dandelions; in a remote corner was an old tumbledown barn, where Mr. Taylor sometimes stored his surplus hay crop but which was never used for any other purpose. Thither the Meredith children trooped, and prowled about the ground floor for several minutes.

“What was that?” whispered Una suddenly.

They all listened. There was a faint but distinct rustle in the hayloft above. The Merediths looked at each other.

“There’s something up there,” breathed Faith.

“I’m going up to see what it is,” said Jerry resolutely.

“Oh, don’t,” begged Una, catching his arm.

“I’m going.”

“We’ll all go, too, then,” said Faith.

The whole four climbed the shaky ladder, Jerry and Faith quite dauntless, Una pale from fright, and Carl rather absentmindedly speculating on the possibility of finding a bat up in the loft. He longed to see a bat in daylight.

When they stepped off the ladder they saw what had made the rustle and the sight struck them dumb for a few moments.

In a little nest in the hay a girl was curled up, looking as if she had just wakened from sleep. When she saw them she stood up, rather shakily, as it seemed, and in the bright sunlight that streamed through the cobwebbed window behind her, they saw that her thin, sunburned face was very pale under its tan. She had two braids of lank, thick, tow-coloured hair and very odd eyes—“white eyes,” the manse children thought, as she stared at them half defiantly, half piteously. They were really of so pale a blue that they did seem almost white, especially when contrasted with the narrow black ring that circled the iris. She was barefooted and bareheaded, and was clad in a faded, ragged, old plaid dress, much too short and tight for her. As for years, she might have been almost any age, judging from her wizened little face, but her height seemed to be somewhere in the neighbourhood of twelve.

“Who are you?” asked Jerry.

The girl looked about her as if seeking a way of escape. Then she seemed to give in with a little shiver of despair.

“I’m Mary Vance,” she said.

“Where’d you come from?” pursued Jerry.

Mary, instead of replying, suddenly sat, or fell, down on the hay and began to cry. Instantly Faith had flung herself down beside her and put her arm around the thin, shaking shoulders.

“You stop bothering her,” she commanded Jerry. Then she hugged the waif. “Don’t cry, dear. Just tell us what’s the matter. WE’RE friends.”

“I’m so — so — hungry,” wailed Mary. “I — I hain’t had a thing to eat since Thursday morning, ‘cept a little water from the brook out there.”

The manse children gazed at each other in horror. Faith sprang up.

“You come right up to the manse and get something to eat before you say another word.”

Mary shrank.

“Oh — I can’t. What will your pa and ma say? Besides, they’d send me back.”

“We’ve no mother, and father won’t bother about you. Neither will Aunt Martha. Come, I say.” Faith stamped her foot impatiently. Was this queer girl going to insist on starving to death almost at their very door?

Mary yielded. She was so weak that she could hardly climb down the ladder, but somehow they got her down and over the field and into the manse kitchen. Aunt Martha, muddling through her Saturday cooking, took no notice of her. Faith and Una flew to the pantry and ransacked it for such eatables as it contained — some “ditto,” bread, butter, milk and a doubtful pie. Mary Vance attacked the food ravenously and uncritically, while the manse children stood around and watched her. Jerry noticed that she had a pretty mouth and very nice, even, white teeth. Faith decided, with secret horror, that Mary had not one stitch on her except that ragged, faded dress. Una was full of pure pity, Carl of amused wonder, and all of them of curiosity.

“Now come out to the graveyard and tell us about yourself,” ordered Faith, when Mary’s appetite showed signs of failing her. Mary was now nothing loath. Food had restored her natural vivacity and unloosed her by no means reluctant tongue.

“You won’t tell your pa or anybody if I tell you?” she stipulated, when she was enthroned on Mr. Pollock’s tombstone. Opposite her the manse children lined up on another. Here was spice and mystery and adventure. Something HAD happened.

“No, we won’t.”

“Cross your hearts?”

“Cross our hearts.”

“Well, I’ve run away. I was living with Mrs. Wiley over-harbour.

Do you know Mrs. Wiley?”

“No.”

“Well, you don’t want to know her. She’s an awful woman. My, how I hate her! She worked me to death and wouldn’t give me half enough to eat, and she used to larrup me ‘most every day. Look a-here.”

Mary rolled up her ragged sleeves, and held up her scrawny arms and thin hands, chapped almost to rawness. They were black with bruises. The manse children shivered. Faith flushed crimson with indignation. Una’s blue eyes filled with tears.

“She licked me Wednesday night with a stick,” said Mary, indifferently. “It was ‘cause I let the cow kick over a pail of milk. How’d I know the darn old cow was going to kick?”

A not unpleasant thrill ran over her listeners. They would never dream of using such dubious words, but it was rather titivating to hear someone else use them — and a girl, at that. Certainly this Mary Vance was an interesting creature.

“I don’t blame you for running away,” said Faith.

“Oh, I didn’t run away ‘cause she licked me. A licking was all in the day’s work with me. I was darn well used to it. Nope, I’d meant to run away for a week ‘cause I’d found out that Mrs. Wiley was going to rent her farm and go to Lowbridge to live and give me to a cousin of hers up Charlottetown way. I wasn’t going to stand for THAT. She was a worse sort than Mrs. Wiley even. Mrs. Wiley lent me to her for a month last summer and I’d rather live with the devil himself.”

Sensation number two. But Una looked doubtful.

“So I made up my mind I’d beat it. I had seventy cents saved up that Mrs. John Crawford give me in the spring for planting potatoes for her. Mrs. Wiley didn’t know about it. She was away visiting her cousin when I

planted them. I thought I'd sneak up here to the Glen and buy a ticket to Charlottetown and try to get work there. I'm a hustler, let me tell you. There ain't a lazy bone in MY body. So I lit out Thursday morning 'fore Mrs. Wiley was up and walked to the Glen — six miles. And when I got to the station I found I'd lost my money. Dunno how — dunno where. Anyhow, it was gone. I didn't know what to do. If I went back to old Lady Wiley she'd take the hide off me. So I went and hid in that old barn."

"And what will you do now?" asked Jerry.

"Dunno. I s'pose I'll have to go back and take my medicine. Now that I've got some grub in my stomach I guess I can stand it."

But there was fear behind the bravado in Mary's eyes. Una suddenly slipped from the one tombstone to the other and put her arm about Mary.

"Don't go back. Just stay here with us."

"Oh, Mrs. Wiley'll hunt me up," said Mary. "It's likely she's on my trail before this. I might stay here till she finds me, I s'pose, if your folks don't mind. I was a darn fool ever to think of skipping out. She'd run a weasel to earth. But I was so misrebul."

Mary's voice quivered, but she was ashamed of showing her weakness.

"I hain't had the life of a dog for these four years," she explained defiantly.

"You've been four years with Mrs. Wiley?"

"Yip. She took me out of the asylum over in Hopetown when I was eight."

"That's the same place Mrs. Blythe came from," exclaimed Faith.

"I was two years in the asylum. I was put there when I was six. My ma had hung herself and my pa had cut his throat."

"Holy cats! Why?" said Jerry.

"Booze," said Mary laconically.

"And you've no relations?"

"Not a darn one that I know of. Must have had some once, though. I was called after half a dozen of them. My full name is Mary Martha Lucilla Moore Ball Vance. Can you beat that? My grandfather was a rich

man. I'll bet he was richer than YOUR grandfather. But pa drunk it all up and ma, she did her part. THEY used to beat me, too. Laws, I've been licked so much I kind of like it."

Mary tossed her head. She divined that the manse children were pitying her for her many stripes and she did not want pity. She wanted to be envied. She looked gaily about her. Her strange eyes, now that the dullness of famine was removed from them, were brilliant. She would show these youngsters what a personage she was.

"I've been sick an awful lot," she said proudly. "There's not many kids could have come through what I have. I've had scarlet fever and measles and ersipelas and mumps and whooping cough and pewmonia."

"Were you ever fatally sick?" asked Una.

"I don't know," said Mary doubtfully.

"Of course she wasn't," scoffed Jerry. "If you're fatally sick you die."

"Oh, well, I never died exactly," said Mary, "but I come blamed near it once. They thought I was dead and they were getting ready to lay me out when I up and come to."

"What is it like to be half dead?" asked Jerry curiously.

"Like nothing. I didn't know it for days afterwards. It was when I had the pewmonia. Mrs. Wiley wouldn't have the doctor — said she wasn't going to no such expense for a home girl. Old Aunt Christina MacAllister nursed me with poultices. She brung me round. But sometimes I wish I'd just died the other half and done with it. I'd been better off."

"If you went to heaven I s'pose you would," said Faith, rather doubtfully.

"Well, what other place is there to go to?" demanded Mary in a puzzled voice.

"There's hell, you know," said Una, dropping her voice and hugging Mary to lessen the awfulness of the suggestion.

"Hell? What's that?"

"Why, it's where the devil lives," said Jerry. "You've heard of him — you spoke about him."

“Oh, yes, but I didn’t know he lived anywhere. I thought he just roamed round. Mr. Wiley used to mention hell when he was alive. He was always telling folks to go there. I thought it was some place over in New Brunswick where he come from.”

“Hell is an awful place,” said Faith, with the dramatic enjoyment that is born of telling dreadful things. “Bad people go there when they die and burn in fire for ever and ever and ever.”

“Who told you that?” demanded Mary incredulously.

“It’s in the Bible. And Mr. Isaac Crothers at Maywater told us, too, in Sunday School. He was an elder and a pillar in the church and knew all about it. But you needn’t worry. If you’re good you’ll go to heaven and if you’re bad I guess you’d rather go to hell.”

“I wouldn’t,” said Mary positively. “No matter how bad I was I wouldn’t want to be burned and burned. *I* know what it’s like. I picked up a red hot poker once by accident. What must you do to be good?”

“You must go to church and Sunday School and read your Bible and pray every night and give to missions,” said Una.

“It sounds like a large order,” said Mary. “Anything else?”

“You must ask God to forgive the sins you’ve committed.

“But I’ve never com — committed any,” said Mary. “What’s a sin any way?”

“Oh, Mary, you must have. Everybody does. Did you never tell a lie?”

“Heaps of ‘em,” said Mary.

“That’s a dreadful sin,” said Una solemnly.

“Do you mean to tell me,” demanded Mary, “that I’d be sent to hell for telling a lie now and then? Why, I HAD to. Mr. Wiley would have broken every bone in my body one time if I hadn’t told him a lie. Lies have saved me many a whack, I can tell you.”

Una sighed. Here were too many difficulties for her to solve. She shuddered as she thought of being cruelly whipped. Very likely she would have lied too. She squeezed Mary’s little calloused hand.

“Is that the only dress you’ve got?” asked Faith, whose joyous nature refused to dwell on disagreeable subjects.

“I just put on this dress because it was no good,” cried Mary flushing. “Mrs. Wiley’d bought my clothes and I wasn’t going to be beholden to her for anything. And I’m honest. If I was going to run away I wasn’t going to take what belong to HER that was worth anything. When I grow up I’m going to have a blue sating dress. Your own clothes don’t look so stylish. I thought ministers’ children were always dressed up.”

It was plain that Mary had a temper and was sensitive on some points. But there was a queer, wild charm about her which captivated them all. She was taken to Rainbow Valley that afternoon and introduced to the Blythes as “a friend of ours from over-harbour who is visiting us.” The Blythes accepted her unquestioningly, perhaps because she was fairly respectable now. After dinner — through which Aunt Martha had mumbled and Mr. Meredith had been in a state of semi-unconsciousness while brooding his Sunday sermon — Faith had prevailed on Mary to put on one of her dresses, as well as certain other articles of clothing. With her hair neatly braided Mary passed muster tolerably well. She was an acceptable playmate, for she knew several new and exciting games, and her conversation lacked not spice. In fact, some of her expressions made Nan and Di look at her rather askance. They were not quite sure what their mother would have thought of her, but they knew quite well what Susan would. However, she was a visitor at the manse, so she must be all right.

When bedtime came there was the problem of where Mary should sleep.

“We can’t put her in the spare room, you know,” said Faith perplexedly to Una.

“I haven’t got anything in my head,” cried Mary in an injured tone.

“Oh, I didn’t mean THAT,” protested Faith. “The spare room is all torn up. The mice have gnawed a big hole in the feather tick and made a nest in it. We never found it out till Aunt Martha put the Rev. Mr. Fisher from Charlottetown there to sleep last week. HE soon found it out. Then father had to give him his bed and sleep on the study lounge. Aunt Martha hasn’t had time to fix the spare room bed up yet, so she says; so NOBODY can

sleep there, no matter how clean their heads are. And our room is so small, and the bed so small you can't sleep with us."

"I can go back to the hay in the old barn for the night if you'll lend me a quilt," said Mary philosophically. "It was kind of chilly last night, but 'cept for that I've had worse beds."

"Oh, no, no, you mustn't do that," said Una. "I've thought of a plan, Faith. You know that little trestle bed in the garret room, with the old mattress on it, that the last minister left there? Let's take up the spare room bedclothes and make Mary a bed there. You won't mind sleeping in the garret, will you, Mary? It's just above our room."

"Any place'll do me. Laws, I never had a decent place to sleep in my life. I slept in the loft over the kitchen at Mrs. Wiley's. The roof leaked rain in the summer and the snow druv in in winter. My bed was a straw tick on the floor. You won't find me a mite huffy about where *I* sleep."

The manse garret was a long, low, shadowy place, with one gable end partitioned off. Here a bed was made up for Mary of the dainty hemstitched sheets and embroidered spread which Cecilia Meredith had once so proudly made for her spare-room, and which still survived Aunt Martha's uncertain washings. The good nights were said and silence fell over the manse. Una was just falling asleep when she heard a sound in the room just above that made her sit up suddenly.

"Listen, Faith — Mary's crying," she whispered. Faith replied not, being already asleep. Una slipped out of bed, and made her way in her little white gown down the hall and up the garret stairs. The creaking floor gave ample notice of her coming, and when she reached the corner room all was moonlit silence and the trestle bed showed only a hump in the middle.

"Mary," whispered Una.

There was no response.

Una crept close to the bed and pulled at the spread. "Mary, I know you are crying. I heard you. Are you lonesome?"

Mary suddenly appeared to view but said nothing.

“Let me in beside you. I’m cold,” said Una shivering in the chilly air, for the little garret window was open and the keen breath of the north shore at night blew in.

Mary moved over and Una snuggled down beside her.

“NOW you won’t be lonesome. We shouldn’t have left you here alone the first night.”

“I wasn’t lonesome,” sniffed Mary.

“What were you crying for then?”

“Oh, I just got to thinking of things when I was here alone. I thought of having to go back to Mrs. Wiley — and of being licked for running away — and — and — and of going to hell for telling lies. It all worried me something scandalous.”

“Oh, Mary,” said poor Una in distress. “I don’t believe God will send you to hell for telling lies when you didn’t know it was wrong. He COULDN’T. Why, He’s kind and good. Of course, you mustn’t tell any more now that you know it’s wrong.”

“If I can’t tell lies what’s to become of me?” said Mary with a sob. “YOU don’t understand. You don’t know anything about it. You’ve got a home and a kind father — though it does seem to me that he isn’t more’n about half there. But anyway he doesn’t lick you, and you get enough to eat such as it is — though that old aunt of yours doesn’t know ANYTHING about cooking. Why, this is the first day I ever remember of feeling ‘sif I’d enough to eat. I’ve been knocked about all of my life, ‘cept for the two years I was at the asylum. They didn’t lick me there and it wasn’t too bad, though the matron was cross. She always looked ready to bite my head off a nail. But Mrs. Wiley is a holy terror, that’s what SHE is, and I’m just scared stiff when I think of going back to her.”

“Perhaps you won’t have to. Perhaps we’ll be able to think of a way out. Let’s both ask God to keep you from having to go back to Mrs. Wiley. You say your prayers, don’t you Mary?”

“Oh, yes, I always go over an old rhyme ‘fore I get into bed,” said Mary indifferently. “I never thought of asking for anything in particular though. Nobody in this world ever bothered themselves about me so I

didn't s'pose God would. He MIGHT take more trouble for you, seeing you're a minister's daughter."

"He'd take every bit as much trouble for you, Mary, I'm sure," said Una. "It doesn't matter whose child you are. You just ask Him — and I will, too."

"All right," agreed Mary. "It won't do any harm if it doesn't do much good. If you knew Mrs. Wiley as well as I do you wouldn't think God would want to meddle with her. Anyhow, I won't cry any more about it. This is a big sight better'n last night down in that old barn, with the mice running about. Look at the Four Winds light. Ain't it pretty?"

"This is the only window we can see it from," said Una. "I love to watch it."

"Do you? So do I. I could see it from the Wiley loft and it was the only comfort I had. When I was all sore from being licked I'd watch it and forget about the places that hurt. I'd think of the ships sailing away and away from it and wish I was on one of them sailing far away too — away from everything. On winter nights when it didn't shine, I just felt real lonesome. Say, Una, what makes all you folks so kind to me when I'm just a stranger?"

"Because it's right to be. The bible tells us to be kind to everybody."

"Does it? Well, I guess most folks don't mind it much then. I never remember of any one being kind to me before — true's you live I don't. Say, Una, ain't them shadows on the walls pretty? They look just like a flock of little dancing birds. And say, Una, I like all you folks and them Blythe boys and Di, but I don't like that Nan. She's a proud one."

"Oh, no, Mary, she isn't a bit proud," said Una eagerly. "Not a single bit."

"Don't tell me. Any one that holds her head like that IS proud. I don't like her."

"WE all like her very much."

“Oh, I s’pose you like her better’n me?” said Mary jealously.

“Do you?”

“Why, Mary — we’ve known her for weeks and we’ve only known you a few hours,” stammered Una.

“So you do like her better then?” said Mary in a rage. “All right! Like her all you want to. *I* don’t care. *I* can get along without you.”

She flung herself over against the wall of the garret with a slam.

“Oh, Mary,” said Una, pushing a tender arm over Mary’s uncompromising back, “don’t talk like that. I DO like you ever so much. And you make me feel so bad.”

No answer. Presently Una gave a sob. Instantly Mary squirmed around again and engulfed Una in a bear’s hug.

“Hush up,” she ordered. “Don’t go crying over what I said. I was as mean as the devil to talk that way. I orter to be skinned alive — and you all so good to me. I should think you WOULD like any one better’n me. I deserve every licking I ever got. Hush, now. If you cry any more I’ll go and walk right down to the harbour in this nightdress and drown myself.”

This terrible threat made Una choke back her sobs. Her tears were wiped away by Mary with the lace frill of the spare-room pillow and forger and forgiven cuddled down together again, harmony restored, to watch the shadows of the vine leaves on the moonlit wall until they fell asleep.

And in the study below Rev. John Meredith walked the floor with rapt face and shining eyes, thinking out his message of the morrow, and knew not that under his own roof there was a little forlorn soul, stumbling in darkness and ignorance, beset by terror and compassed about with difficulties too great for it to grapple in its unequal struggle with a big indifferent world.

Mary Stays at the Manse

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The manse children took Mary Vance to church with them the next day. At first Mary objected to the idea.

“Didn’t you go to church over-harbour?” asked Una.

“You bet. Mrs. Wiley never troubled church much, but I went every Sunday I could get off. I was mighty thankful to go to some place where I could sit down for a spell. But I can’t go to church in this old ragged dress.”

This difficulty was removed by Faith offering the loan of her second best dress.

“It’s faded a little and two of the buttons are off, but I guess it’ll do.”

“I’ll sew the buttons on in a jiffy,” said Mary.

“Not on Sunday,” said Una, shocked.

“Sure. The better the day the better the deed. You just gimme a needle and thread and look the other way if you’re squeamish.”

Faith’s school boots, and an old black velvet cap that had once been Cecilia Meredith’s, completed Mary’s costume, and to church she went. Her behaviour was quite conventional, and though some wondered who the shabby little girl with the manse children was she did not attract much attention. She listened to the sermon with outward decorum and joined lustily in the singing. She had, it appeared, a clear, strong voice and a good ear.

“His blood can make the VIOLETS clean,” carolled Mary blithely. Mrs. Jimmy Milgrave, whose pew was just in front of the manse pew, turned suddenly and looked the child over from top to toe. Mary, in a mere superfluity of naughtiness, stuck out her tongue at Mrs. Milgrave, much to Una’s horror.

“I couldn’t help it,” she declared after church. “What’d she want to stare at me like that for? Such manners! I’m GLAD stuck my tongue out at

her. I wish I'd stuck it farther out. Say, I saw Rob MacAllister from over-harbour there. Wonder if he'll tell Mrs. Wiley on me."

No Mrs. Wiley appeared, however, and in a few day the children forgot to look for her. Mary was apparently a fixture at the manse. But she refused to go to school with the others.

"Nope. I've finished my education," she said, when Faith urged her to go. "I went to school four winters since I come to Mrs. Wiley's and I've had all I want of THAT. I'm sick and tired of being everlastingly jawed at 'cause I didn't get my home-lessons done. I'D no time to do home-lessons."

"Our teacher won't jaw you. He is awfully nice," said Faith.

"Well, I ain't going. I can read and write and cipher up to fractions. That's all I want. You fellows go and I'll stay home. You needn't be scared I'll steal anything. I swear I'm honest."

Mary employed herself while the others were at school in cleaning up the manse. In a few days it was a different place. Floors were swept, furniture dusted, everything straightened out. She mended the spare-room bedtick, she sewed on missing buttons, she patched clothes neatly, she even invaded the study with broom and dustpan and ordered Mr. Meredith out while she put it to rights. But there was one department with which Aunt Martha refused to let her interfere. Aunt Martha might be deaf and half blind and very childish, but she was resolved to keep the commissariat in her own hands, in spite of all Mary's wiles and stratagems.

"I can tell you if old Martha'd let ME cook you'd have some decent meals," she told the manse children indignantly. "There'd be no more 'ditto' — and no more lumpy porridge and blue milk either. What DOES she do with all the cream?"

"She gives it to the cat. He's hers, you know," said Faith.

"I'd like to CAT her," exclaimed Mary bitterly. "I've no use for cats anyhow. They belong to the old Nick. You can tell that by their eyes. Well, if old Martha won't, she won't, I s'pose. But it gits on my nerves to see good vittles spoiled."

When school came out they always went to Rainbow Valley. Mary refused to play in the graveyard. She declared she was afraid of ghosts.

“There’s no such thing as ghosts,” declared Jem Blythe.

“Oh, ain’t there?”

“Did you ever see any?”

“Hundreds of ‘em,” said Mary promptly.

“What are they like?” said Carl.

“Awful-looking. Dressed all in white with skellington hands and heads,” said Mary.

“What did you do?” asked Una.

“Run like the devil,” said Mary. Then she caught Walter’s eyes and blushed. Mary was a good deal in awe of Walter. She declared to the manse girls that his eyes made her nervous.

“I think of all the lies I’ve ever told when I look into them,” she said, “and I wish I hadn’t.”

Jem was Mary’s favourite. When he took her to the attic at Ingleside and showed her the museum of curios that Captain Jim Boyd had bequeathed to him she was immensely pleased and flattered. She also won Carl’s heart entirely by her interest in his beetles and ants. It could not be denied that Mary got on rather better with the boys than with the girls. She quarrelled bitterly with Nan Blythe the second day.

“Your mother is a witch,” she told Nan scornfully. “Redhaired women are always witches.” Then she and Faith fell out about the rooster. Mary said its tail was too short. Faith angrily retorted that she guessed God know what length to make a rooster’s tail. They did not “speak” for a day over this. Mary treated Una’s hairless, one-eyed doll with consideration; but when Una showed her other prized treasure — a picture of an angel carrying a baby, presumably to heaven, Mary declared that it looked too much like a ghost for her. Una crept away to her room and cried over this, but Mary hunted her out, hugged her repentantly and implored forgiveness. No one could keep up a quarrel long with Mary — not even Nan, who was rather prone to hold grudges and never quite forgave the insult to her mother. Mary was jolly. She could and did tell the most thrilling ghost

stories. Rainbow Valley seances were undeniably more exciting after Mary came. She learned to play on the jew's-harp and soon eclipsed Jerry.

"Never struck anything yet I couldn't do if I put my mind to it," she declared. Mary seldom lost a chance of tooting her own horn. She taught them how to make "blow-bags" out of the thick leaves of the "live-forever" that flourished in the old Bailey garden, she initiated them into the toothsome qualities of the "sours" that grew in the niches of the graveyard dyke, and she could make the most wonderful shadow pictures on the walls with her long, flexible fingers. And when they all went picking gum in Rainbow Valley Mary always got "the biggest chew" and bragged about it. There were times when they hated her and times when they loved her. But at all times they found her interesting. So they submitted quite meekly to her bossing, and by the end of a fortnight had come to feel that she must always have been with them.

"It's the queerest thing that Mrs. Wiley hain't been after me," said Mary. "I can't understand it."

"Maybe she isn't going to bother about you at all," said Una.

"Then you can just go on staying here."

"This house ain't hardly big enough for me and old Martha," said Mary darkly. "It's a very fine thing to have enough to eat — I've often wondered what it would be like — but I'm p'ticler about my cooking. And Mrs. Wiley'll be here yet. SHE'S got a rod in pickle for me all right. I don't think about it so much in daytime but say, girls, up there in that garret at night I git to thinking and thinking of it, till I just almost wish she'd come and have it over with. I dunno's one real good whipping would be much worse'n all the dozen I've lived through in my mind ever since I run away. Were any of you ever licked?"

"No, of course not," said Faith indignantly. "Father would never do such a thing."

"You don't know you're alive," said Mary with a sigh half of envy, half of superiority. "You don't know what I've come through. And I s'pose the Blythes were never licked either?"

“No-o-o, I guess not. But I THINK they were sometimes spanked when they were small.”

“A spanking doesn’t amount to anything,” said Mary contemptuously. “If my folks had just spanked me I’d have thought they were petting me. Well, it ain’t a fair world. I wouldn’t mind taking my share of wallopings but I’ve had a darn sight too many.”

“It isn’t right to say that word, Mary,” said Una reproachfully.

“You promised me you wouldn’t say it.”

“G’way,” responded Mary. “If you knew some of the words I COULD say if I liked you wouldn’t make such a fuss over darn. And you know very well I hain’t ever told any lies since I come here.”

“What about all those ghosts you said you saw?” asked Faith.

Mary blushed.

“That was diff’runt,” she said defiantly. “I knew you wouldn’t believe them yarns and I didn’t intend you to. And I really did see something queer one night when I was passing the over-harbour graveyard, true’s you live. I dunno whether ‘twas a ghost or Sandy Crawford’s old white nag, but it looked blamed queer and I tell you I scooted at the rate of no man’s business.”

A Fishy Episode

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Rilla Blythe walked proudly, and perhaps a little primly, through the main “street” of the Glen and up the manse hill, carefully carrying a small basketful of early strawberries, which Susan had coaxed into lusciousness in one of the sunny nooks of Ingleside. Susan had charged Rilla to give the basket to nobody except Aunt Martha or Mr. Meredith, and Rilla, very proud of being entrusted with such an errand, was resolved to carry out her instructions to the letter.

Susan had dressed her daintily in a white, starched, and embroidered dress, with sash of blue and beaded slippers. Her long ruddy curls were sleek and round, and Susan had let her put on her best hat, out of compliment to the manse. It was a somewhat elaborate affair, wherein Susan’s taste had had more to say than Anne’s, and Rilla’s small soul gloried in its splendours of silk and lace and flowers. She was very conscious of her hat, and I am afraid she strutted up the manse hill. The strut, or the hat, or both, got on the nerves of Mary Vance, who was swinging on the lawn gate. Mary’s temper was somewhat ruffled just then, into the bargain. Aunt Martha had refused to let her peel the potatoes and had ordered her out of the kitchen.

“Yah! You’ll bring the potatoes to the table with strips of skin hanging to them and half boiled as usual! My, but it’ll be nice to go to your funeral,” shrieked Mary. She went out of the kitchen, giving the door such a bang that even Aunt Martha heard it, and Mr. Meredith in his study felt the vibration and thought absently that there must have been a slight earthquake shock. Then he went on with his sermon.

Mary slipped from the gate and confronted the spick-and-span damsel of Ingleside.

“What you got there?” she demanded, trying to take the basket.

Rilla resisted. “It’th for Mithter Meredith,” she lisped.

“Give it to me. I’LL give it to him,” said Mary.

“No. Thuthan thaid that I wathn’t to give it to anybody but Mithter Mer’dith or Aunt Martha,” insisted Rilla.

Mary eyed her sourly.

“You think you’re something, don’t you, all dressed up like a doll! Look at me. My dress is all rags and *I* don’t care! I’d rather be ragged than a doll baby. Go home and tell them to put you in a glass case. Look at me — look at me — look at me!”

Mary executed a wild dance around the dismayed and bewildered Rilla, flirting her ragged skirt and vociferating “Look at me — look at me” until poor Rilla was dizzy. But as the latter tried to edge away towards the gate Mary pounced on her again.

“You give me that basket,” she ordered with a grimace. Mary was past mistress in the art of “making faces.” She could give her countenance a most grotesque and unearthly appearance out of which her strange, brilliant, white eyes gleamed with weird effect.

“I won’t,” gasped Rilla, frightened but staunch. “You let me go, Mary Vanth.”

Mary let go for a minute and looked around here. Just inside the gate was a small “flake,” on which a half a dozen large codfish were drying. One of Mr. Meredith’s parishioners had presented him with them one day, perhaps in lieu of the subscription he was supposed to pay to the stipend and never did. Mr. Meredith had thanked him and then forgotten all about the fish, which would have promptly spoiled had not the indefatigable Mary prepared them for drying and rigged up the “flake” herself on which to dry them.

Mary had a diabolical inspiration. She flew to the “flake” and seized the largest fish there — a huge, flat thing, nearly as big as herself. With a whoop she swooped down on the terrified Rilla, brandishing her weird missile. Rilla’s courage gave way. To be lambasted with a dried codfish

was such an unheard-of thing that Rilla could not face it. With a shriek she dropped her basket and fled. The beautiful berries, which Susan had so tenderly selected for the minister, rolled in a rosy torrent over the dusty road and were trodden on by the flying feet of pursuer and pursued. The basket and contents were no longer in Mary's mind. She thought only of the delight of giving Rilla Blythe the scare of her life. She would teach HER to come giving herself airs because of her fine clothes.

Rilla flew down the hill and along the street. Terror lent wings to her feet, and she just managed to keep ahead of Mary, who was somewhat hampered by her own laughter, but who had breath enough to give occasional bloodcurdling whoops as she ran, flourishing her codfish in the air. Through the Glen street they swept, while everybody ran to the windows and gates to see them. Mary felt she was making a tremendous sensation and enjoyed it. Rilla, blind with terror and spent of breath, felt that she could run no longer. In another instant that terrible girl would be on her with the codfish. At this point the poor mite stumbled and fell into the mud-puddle at the end of the street just as Miss Cornelia came out of Carter Flagg's store.

Miss Cornelia took the whole situation in at a glance. So did Mary. The latter stopped short in her mad career and before Miss Cornelia could speak she had whirled around and was running up as fast as she had run down. Miss Cornelia's lips tightened ominously, but she knew it was no use to think of chasing her. So she picked up poor, sobbing, dishevelled Rilla instead and took her home. Rilla was heartbroken. Her dress and slippers and hat were ruined and her six year old pride had received terrible bruises.

Susan, white with indignation, heard Miss Cornelia's story of Mary Vance's exploit.

"Oh, the hussy — oh, the littly hussy!" she said, as she carried Rilla away for purification and comfort.

"This thing has gone far enough, Anne dearie," said Miss Cornelia resolutely. "Something must be done. WHO is this creature who is staying

at the manse and where does she come from?”

“I understood she was a little girl from over-harbour who was visiting at the manse,” answered Anne, who saw the comical side of the codfish chase and secretly thought Rilla was rather vain and needed a lesson or two.

“I know all the over-harbour families who come to our church and that imp doesn’t belong to any of them,” retorted Miss Cornelia. “She is almost in rags and when she goes to church she wears Faith Meredith’s old clothes. There’s some mystery here, and I’m going to investigate it, since it seems nobody else will. I believe she was at the bottom of their goings-on in Warren Mead’s spruce bush the other day. Did you hear of their frightening his mother into a fit?”

“No. I knew Gilbert had been called to see her, but I did not hear what the trouble was.”

“Well, you know she has a weak heart. And one day last week, when she was all alone on the veranda, she heard the most awful shrieks of ‘murder’ and ‘help’ coming from the bush — positively frightful sounds, Anne dearie. Her heart gave out at once. Warren heard them himself at the barn, and went straight to the bush to investigate, and there he found all the manse children sitting on a fallen tree and screaming ‘murder’ at the top of their lungs. They told him they were only in fun and didn’t think anyone would hear them. They were just playing Indian ambush. Warren went back to the house and found his poor mother unconscious on the veranda.”

Susan, who had returned, sniffed contemptuously.

“I think she was very far from being unconscious, Mrs. Marshall Elliott, and that you may tie to. I have been hearing of Amelia Warren’s weak heart for forty years. She had it when she was twenty. She enjoys making a fuss and having the doctor, and any excuse will do.”

“I don’t think Gilbert thought her attack very serious,” said Anne.

“Oh, that may very well be,” said Miss Cornelia. “But the matter has made an awful lot of talk and the Meads being Methodists makes it that much worse. What is going to become of those children? Sometimes I can’t sleep at nights for thinking about them, Anne dearie. I really do question if they get enough to eat, even, for their father is so lost in dreams that he doesn’t often remember he has a stomach, and that lazy old woman doesn’t bother cooking what she ought. They are just running wild and now that school is closing they’ll be worse than ever.”

“They do have jolly times,” said Anne, laughing over the recollections of some Rainbow Valley happenings that had come to her ears. “And they are all brave and frank and loyal and truthful.”

“That’s a true word, Anne dearie, and when you come to think of all the trouble in the church those two tattling, deceitful youngsters of the last minister’s made, I’m inclined to overlook a good deal in the Merediths.”

“When all is said and done, Mrs. Dr. dear, they are very nice children,” said Susan. “They have got plenty of original sin in them and that I will admit, but maybe it is just as well, for if they had not they might spoil from over-sweetness. Only I do think it is not proper for them to play in a graveyard and that I will maintain.”

“But they really play quite quietly there,” excused Anne. “They don’t run and yell as they do elsewhere. Such howls as drift up here from Rainbow Valley sometimes! Though I fancy my own small fry bear a valiant part in them. They had a sham battle there last night and had to ‘roar’ themselves, because they had no artillery to do it, so Jem says. Jem is passing through the stage where all boys hanker to be soldiers.”

“Well, thank goodness, he’ll never be a soldier,” said Miss Cornelia. “I never approved of our boys going to that South African fracas. But it’s over, and not likely anything of the kind will ever happen again. I think the world is getting more sensible. As for the Merediths, I’ve said many a time and I say it again, if Mr. Meredith had a wife all would be well.”

“He called twice at the Kirks’ last week, so I am told,” said Susan.

“Well,” said Miss Cornelia thoughtfully, “as a rule, I don’t approve of a minister marrying in his congregation. It generally spoils him. But in this case it would do no harm, for every one likes Elizabeth Kirk and nobody else is hankering for the job of stepmothering those youngsters. Even the Hill girls balk at that. They haven’t been found laying traps for Mr. Meredith. Elizabeth would make him a good wife if he only thought so. But the trouble is, she really is homely and, Anne dearie, Mr. Meredith, abstracted as he is, has an eye for a goodlooking woman, manlike. He isn’t SO other-worldly when it comes to that, believe ME.”

“Elizabeth Kirk is a very nice person, but they do say that people have nearly frozen to death in her mother’s spare-room bed before now, Mrs. Dr. dear,” said Susan darkly. “If I felt I had any right to express an opinion concerning such a solemn matter as a minister’s marriage I would say that I think Elizabeth’s cousin Sarah, over-harbour, would make Mr. Meredith a better wife.”

“Why, Sarah Kirk is a Methodist,” said Miss Cornelia, much as if
Susan had suggested a Hottentot as a manse bride.

“She would likely turn Presbyterian if she married Mr. Meredith,” retorted Susan.

Miss Cornelia shook her head. Evidently with her it was, once a Methodist, always a Methodist.

“Sarah Kirk is entirely out of the question,” she said positively. “And so is Emmeline Drew — though the Drews are all trying to make the match. They are literally throwing poor Emmeline at his head, and he hasn’t the least idea of it.”

“Emmeline Drew has no gumption, I must allow,” said Susan. “She is the kind of woman, Mrs. Dr. dear, who would put a hot-water bottle in your bed on a dog-night and then have her feelings hurt because you were not grateful. And her mother was a very poor housekeeper. Did you ever

hear the story of her dishcloth? She lost her dishcloth one day. But the next day she found it. Oh, yes, Mrs. Dr. dear, she found it, in the goose at the dinnertable, mixed up with the stuffing. Do you think a woman like that would do for a minister's mother-in-law? I do not. But no doubt I would be better employed in mending little Jem's trousers than in talking gossip about my neighbours. He tore them something scandalous last night in Rainbow Valley."

"Where is Walter?" asked Anne.

"He is up to no good, I fear, Mrs. Dr. dear. He is in the attic writing something in an exercise book. And he has not done as well in arithmetic this term as he should, so the teacher tells me. Too well I know the reason why. He has been writing silly rhymes when he should have been doing his sums. I am afraid that boy is going to be a poet, Mrs. Dr. dear."

"He is a poet now, Susan."

"Well, you take it real calm, Mrs. Dr. dear. I suppose it is the best way, when a person has the strength. I had an uncle who began by being a poet and ended up by being a tramp. Our family were dreadfully ashamed of him."

"You don't seem to think very highly of poets, Susan," said Anne, laughing.

"Who does, Mrs. Dr. dear?" asked Susan in genuine astonishment.

"What about Milton and Shakespeare? And the poets of the Bible?"

"They tell me Milton could not get along with his wife, and Shakespeare was no more than respectable by times. As for the Bible, of course things were different in those sacred days — although I never had a high opinion of King David, say what you will. I never knew any good to come of writing poetry, and I hope and pray that blessed boy will outgrow the tendency. If he does not — we must see what emulsion of cod-liver oil will do."

Miss Cornelia Intervenes

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Miss Cornelia descended upon the manse the next day and cross-questioned Mary, who, being a young person of considerable discernment and astuteness, told her story simple and truthfully, with an entire absence of complaint or bravado. Miss Cornelia was more favourably impressed than she had expected to be, but deemed it her duty to be severe.

“Do you think,” she said sternly, “that you showed your gratitude to this family, who have been far too kind to you, by insulting and chasing one of their little friends as you did yesterday?”

“Say, it was rotten mean of me,” admitted Mary easily. “I dunno what possessed me. That old codfish seemed to come in so blamed handy. But I was awful sorry — I cried last night after I went to bed about it, honest I did. You ask Una if I didn’t. I wouldn’t tell her what for ‘cause I was ashamed of it, and then she cried, too, because she was afraid someone had hurt my feelings. Laws, *I* ain’t got any feelings to hurt worth speaking of. What worries me is why Mrs. Wiley hain’t been hunting for me. It ain’t like her.”

Miss Cornelia herself thought it rather peculiar, but she merely admonished Mary sharply not to take any further liberties with the minister’s codfish, and went to report progress at Ingleside.

“If the child’s story is true the matter ought to be looked into,” she said. “I know something about that Wiley woman, believe ME. Marshall used to be well acquainted with her when he lived over-harbour. I heard him say something last summer about her and a home child she had — likely this very Mary-creature. He said some one told him she was working the child to death and not half feeding and clothing it. You know, Anne dearie, it has always been my habit neither to make nor meddle with those over-harbour folks. But I shall send Marshall over tomorrow to find out the rights of this if he can. And THEN I’ll speak to the minister. Mind

you, Anne dearie, the Merediths found this girl literally starving in James Taylor's old hay barn. She had been there all night, cold and hungry and alone. And us sleeping warm in our beds after good suppers."

"The poor little thing," said Anne, picturing one of her own dear babies, cold and hungry and alone in such circumstances. "If she has been illused, Miss Cornelia, she mustn't be taken back to such a place. *I* was an orphan once in a very similar situation."

"We'll have to consult the Hopetown asylum folks," said Miss Cornelia. "Anyway, she can't be left at the manse. Dear knows what those poor children might learn from her. I understand that she has been known to swear. But just think of her being there two whole weeks and Mr Meredith never waking up to it! What business has a man like that to have a family? Why, Anne dearie, he ought to be a monk."

Two evenings later Miss Cornelia was back at Ingleside.

"It's the most amazing thing!" she said. "Mrs. Wiley was found dead in her bed the very morning after this Mary-creature ran away. She has had a bad heart for years and the doctor had warned her it might happen at any time. She had sent away her hired man and there was nobody in the house. Some neighbours found her the next day. They missed the child, it seems, but supposed Mrs. Wiley had sent her to her cousin near Charlottetown as she had said she was going to do. The cousin didn't come to the funeral and so nobody ever knew that Mary wasn't with her. The people Marshall talked to told him some things about the way Mrs. Wiley used this Mary that made his blood boil, so he declares. You know, it puts Marshall in a regular fury to hear of a child being illused. They said she whipped her mercilessly for every little fault or mistake. Some folks talked of writing to the asylum authorities but everybody's business is nobody's business and it was never done."

"I am sorry that Wiley person is dead," said Susan fiercely. "I should like to go over-harbour and give her a piece of my mind. Starving and beating a child, Mrs. Dr. dear! As you know, I hold with lawful spanking, but I go no further. And what is to become of this poor child now, Mrs. Marshall Elliott?"

“I suppose she must be sent back to Hopetown,” said Miss Cornelia. “I think every one hereabouts who wants a home child has one. I’ll see Mr. Meredith tomorrow and tell him my opinion of the whole affair.”

“And no doubt she will, Mrs. Dr. dear,” said Susan, after Miss Cornelia had gone. “She would stick at nothing, not even at shingling the church spire if she took it into her head. But I cannot understand how even Cornelia Bryant can talk to a minister as she does. You would think he was just any common person.”

When Miss Cornelia had gone, Nan Blythe uncurled herself from the hammock where she had been studying her lessons and slipped away to Rainbow Valley. The others were already there. Jem and Jerry were playing quoits with old horseshoes borrowed from the Glen blacksmith. Carl was stalking ants on a sunny hillock. Walter, lying on his stomach among the fern, was reading aloud to Mary and Di and Faith and Una from a wonderful book of myths wherein were fascinating accounts of Prester John and the Wandering Jew, divining rods and tailed men, of Schamir, the worm that split rocks and opened the way to golden treasure, of Fortunate Isles and swan-maidens. It was a great shock to Walter to learn that William Tell and Gelert were myths also; and the story of Bishop Hatto was to keep him awake all that night; but best of all he loved the stories of the Pied Piper and the San Greal. He read them thrillingly, while the bells on the Tree Lovers tinkled in the summer wind and the coolness of the evening shadows crept across the valley.

“Say, ain’t them in’resting lies?” said Mary admiringly when Walter had closed the book.

“They aren’t lies,” said Di indignantly.

“You don’t mean they’re true?” asked Mary incredulously.

“No — not exactly. They’re like those ghost-stories of yours. They weren’t true — but you didn’t expect us to believe them, so they weren’t lies.”

“That yarn about the divining rod is no lie, anyhow,” said Mary. “Old Jake Crawford over-harbour can work it. They send for him from

everywhere when they want to dig a well. And I believe I know the Wandering Jew.”

“Oh, Mary,” said Una, awe-struck.

“I do — true’s you’re alive. There was an old man at Mrs. Wiley’s one day last fall. He looked old enough to be ANYTHING. She was asking him about cedar posts, if he thought they’d last well. And he said, ‘Last well? They’ll last a thousand years. I know, for I’ve tried them twice.’ Now, if he was two thousand years old who was he but your Wandering Jew?”

“I don’t believe the Wandering Jew would associate with a person like Mrs. Wiley,” said Faith decidedly.

“I love the Pied Piper story,” said Di, “and so does mother. I always feel so sorry for the poor little lame boy who couldn’t keep up with the others and got shut out of the mountain. He must have been so disappointed. I think all the rest of his life he’d be wondering what wonderful thing he had missed and wishing he could have got in with the others.”

“But how glad his mother must have been,” said Una softly. “I think she had been sorry all her life that he was lame. Perhaps she even used to cry about it. But she would never be sorry again — never. She would be glad he was lame because that was why she hadn’t lost him.”

“Some day,” said Walter dreamily, looking afar into the sky, “the Pied Piper will come over the hill up there and down Rainbow Valley, piping merrily and sweetly. And I will follow him — follow him down to the shore — down to the sea — away from you all. I don’t think I’ll want to go — Jem will want to go — it will be such an adventure — but I won’t. Only I’ll HAVE to — the music will call and call and call me until I MUST follow.”

“We’ll all go,” cried Di, catching fire at the flame of Walter’s fancy, and half-believing she could see the mocking, retreating figure of the mystic piper in the far, dim end of the valley.

“No. You’ll sit here and wait,” said Walter, his great, splendid eyes full of strange glamour. “You’ll wait for us to come back. And we may not

come — for we cannot come as long as the Piper plays. He may pipe us round the world. And still you'll sit here and wait — and WAIT.”

“Oh, dry up,” said Mary, shivering. “Don’t look like that, Walter Blythe. You give me the creeps. Do you want to set me bawling? I could just see that horrid old Piper going away on, and you boys following him, and us girls sitting here waiting all alone. I dunno why it is — I never was one of the blubbering kind — but as soon as you start your spieling I always want to cry.”

Walter smiled in triumph. He liked to exercise this power of his over his companions — to play on their feelings, waken their fears, thrill their souls. It satisfied some dramatic instinct in him. But under his triumph was a queer little chill of some mysterious dread. The Pied Piper had seemed very real to him — as if the fluttering veil that hid the future had for a moment been blown aside in the starlit dusk of Rainbow Valley and some dim glimpse of coming years granted to him.

Carl, coming up to their group with a report of the doings in ant-land, brought them all back to the realm of facts.

“Ants ARE darned in’resting,” exclaimed Mary, glad to escape the shadowy Piper’s thrall. “Carl and me watched that bed in the graveyard all Saturday afternoon. I never thought there was so much in bugs. Say, but they’re quarrelsome little cusses — some of ‘em like to start a fight ‘thout any reason, far’s we could see. And some of ‘em are cowards. They got so scared they just doubled theirselves up into a ball and let the other fellows bang ‘em. They wouldn’t put up a fight at all. Some of ‘em are lazy and won’t work. We watched ‘em shirking. And there was one ant died of grief ‘cause another ant got killed — wouldn’t work — wouldn’t eat — just died — it did, honest to Go — oodness.”

A shocked silence prevailed. Every one knew that Mary had not started out to say “goodness.” Faith and Di exchanged glances that would have done credit to Miss Cornelia herself. Walter and Carl looked uncomfortable and Una’s lip trembled.

Mary squirmed uncomfortably.

“That slipped out ‘fore I thought — it did, honest to — I mean, true’s you live, and I swallowed half of it. You folks over here are mighty squeamish seems to me. Wish you could have heard the Wileys when they had a fight.”

“Ladies don’t say such things,” said Faith, very primly for her.

“It isn’t right,” whispered Una.

“I ain’t a lady,” said Mary. “What chance’ve I ever had of being a lady? But I won’t say that again if I can help it. I promise you.”

“Besides,” said Una, “you can’t expect God to answer your prayers if you take His name in vain, Mary.”

“I don’t expect Him to answer ‘em anyhow,” said Mary of little faith. “I’ve been asking Him for a week to clear up this Wiley affair and He hasn’t done a thing. I’m going to give up.”

At this juncture Nan arrived breathless.

“Oh, Mary, I’ve news for you. Mrs. Elliott has been over-harbour and what do you think she found out? Mrs. Wiley is dead — she was found dead in bed the morning after you ran away. So you’ll never have to go back to her.”

“Dead!” said Mary stupefied. Then she shivered.

“Do you s’pose my praying had anything to do with that?” she cried imploringly to Una. “If it had I’ll never pray again as long as I live. Why, she may come back and ha’nt me.”

“No, no, Mary,” said Una comfortingly, “it hadn’t. Why, Mrs. Wiley died long before you ever began to pray about it at all.”

“That’s so,” said Mary recovering from her panic. “But I tell you it gave me a start. I wouldn’t like to think I’d prayed anybody to death. I never thought of such a thing as her dying when I was praying. She didn’t seem much like the dying kind. Did Mrs. Elliott say anything about me?”

“She said you would likely have to go back to the asylum.”

“I thought as much,” said Mary drearily. “And then they’ll give me out again — likely to some one just like Mrs. Wiley. Well, I s’pose I can stand it. I’m tough.”

“I’m going to pray that you won’t have to go back,” whispered Una, as she and Mary walked home to the manse.

“You can do as you like,” said Mary decidedly, “but I vow *I* won’t. I’m good and scared of this praying business. See what’s come of it. If Mrs. Wiley HAD died after I started praying it would have been my doings.”

“Oh, no, it wouldn’t,” said Una. “I wish I could explain things better — father could, I know, if you’d talk to him, Mary.”

“Catch me! I don’t know what to make of your father, that’s the long and short of it. He goes by me and never sees me in broad daylight. I ain’t proud — but I ain’t a doormat, neither!”

“Oh, Mary, it’s just father’s way. Most of the time he never sees us, either. He is thinking deeply, that is all. And I AM going to pray that God will keep you in Four Winds — because I like you, Mary.”

“All right. Only don’t let me hear of any more people dying on account of it,” said Mary. “I’d like to stay in Four Winds fine. I like it and I like the harbour and the light house — and you and the Blythes. You’re the only friends I ever had and I’d hate to leave you.”

Una Intervenes

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Miss Cornelia had an interview with Mr. Meredith which proved something of a shock to that abstracted gentleman. She pointed out to him, none too respectfully, his dereliction of duty in allowing a waif like Mary Vance to come into his family and associate with his children without knowing or learning anything about her.

"I don't say there is much harm done, of course," she concluded. "This Mary-creature isn't what you might call bad, when all is said and done. I've been questioning your children and the Blythes, and from what I can make out there's nothing much to be said against the child except that she's slangy and doesn't use very refined language. But think what might have happened if she'd been like some of those home children we know of. You know yourself what that poor little creature the Jim Flaggs' had, taught and told the Flagg children."

Mr. Meredith did know and was honestly shocked over his own carelessness in the matter.

"But what is to be done, Mrs. Elliott?" he asked helplessly. "We can't turn the poor child out. She must be cared for."

"Of course. We'd better write to the Hopetown authorities at once. Meanwhile, I suppose she might as well stay here for a few more days till we hear from them. But keep your eyes and ears open, Mr. Meredith."

Susan would have died of horror on the spot if she had heard Miss Cornelia so admonishing a minister. But Miss Cornelia departed in a warm glow of satisfaction over duty done, and that night Mr. Meredith asked Mary to come into his study with him. Mary obeyed, looking literally ghastly with fright. But she got the surprise of her poor, battered little life. This man, of whom she had stood so terribly in awe, was the kindest, gentlest soul she had ever met. Before she knew what happened Mary found herself pouring all her troubles into his ear and receiving in return

such sympathy and tender understanding as it had never occurred to her to imagine. Mary left the study with her face and eyes so softened that Una hardly knew her.

“Your father’s all right, when he does wake up,” she said with a sniff that just escaped being a sob. “It’s a pity he doesn’t wake up oftener. He said I wasn’t to blame for Mrs. Wiley dying, but that I must try to think of her good points and not of her bad ones. I dunno what good points she had, unless it was keeping her house clean and making first-class butter. I know I ‘most wore my arms out scrubbing her old kitchen floor with the knots in it. But anything your father says goes with me after this.”

Mary proved a rather dull companion in the following days, however. She confided to Una that the more she thought of going back to the asylum the more she hated it. Una racked her small brains for some way of averting it, but it was Nan Blythe who came to the rescue with a somewhat startling suggestion.

“Mrs. Elliott might take Mary herself. She has a great big house and Mr. Elliott is always wanting her to have help. It would be just a splendid place for Mary. Only she’d have to behave herself.”

“Oh, Nan, do you think Mrs. Elliott would take her?”

“It wouldn’t do any harm if you asked her,” said Nan. At first Una did not think she could. She was so shy that to ask a favour of anybody was agony to her. And she was very much in awe of the bustling, energetic Mrs. Elliott. She liked her very much and always enjoyed a visit to her house; but to go and ask her to adopt Mary Vance seemed such a height of presumption that Una’s timid spirit quailed.

When the Hopetown authorities wrote to Mr. Meredith to send Mary to them without delay Mary cried herself to sleep in the manse attic that night and Una found a desperate courage. The next evening she slipped away from the manse to the harbour road. Far down in Rainbow Valley she heard joyous laughter but her way lay not there. She was terribly pale and terribly in earnest — so much so that she took no notice of the people she met — and old Mrs. Stanley Flagg was quite huffed and said Una Meredith would be as absentminded as her father when she grew up.

Miss Cornelia lived half way between the Glen and Four Winds Point, in a house whose original glaring green hue had mellowed down to an agreeable greenish gray. Marshall Elliott had planted trees about it and set out a rose garden and a spruce hedge. It was quite a different place from what it had been in years ago. The manse children and the Ingleside children liked to go there. It was a beautiful walk down the old harbour road, and there was always a well-filled cooky jar at the end.

The misty sea was lapping softly far down on the sands. Three big boats were skimming down the harbour like great white sea-birds. A schooner was coming up the channel. The world of Four Winds was steeped in glowing colour, and subtle music, and strange glamour, and everybody should have been happy in it. But when Una turned in at Miss Cornelia's gate her very legs had almost refused to carry her.

Miss Cornelia was alone on the veranda. Una had hoped Mr. Elliott would be there. He was so big and hearty and twinkly that there would be encouragement in his presence. She sat on the little stool Miss Cornelia brought out and tried to eat the doughnut Miss Cornelia gave her. It stuck in her throat, but she swallowed desperately lest Miss Cornelia be offended. She could not talk; she was still pale; and her big, dark-blue eyes looked so piteous that Miss Cornelia concluded the child was in some trouble.

"What's on your mind, dearie?" she asked. "There's something, that's plain to be seen."

Una swallowed the last twist of doughnut with a desperate gulp.

"Mrs. Elliott, won't you take Mary Vance?" she said beseechingly.

Miss Cornelia stared blankly.

"Me! Take Mary Vance! Do you mean keep her?"

"Yes — keep her — adopt her," said Una eagerly, gaining courage now that the ice was broken. "Oh, Mrs. Elliott, PLEASE do. She doesn't want to go back to the asylum — she cries every night about it. She's so afraid of being sent to another hard place. And she's SO smart — there isn't anything she can't do. I know you wouldn't be sorry if you took her."

"I never thought of such a thing," said Miss Cornelia rather helplessly.

“WON’T you think of it?” implored Una.

“But, dearie, I don’t want help. I’m quite able to do all the work here. And I never thought I’d like to have a home girl if I did need help.”

The light went out of Una’s eyes. Her lips trembled. She sat down on her stool again, a pathetic little figure of disappointment, and began to cry.

“Don’t — dearie — don’t,” exclaimed Miss Cornelia in distress. She could never bear to hurt a child. “I don’t say I WON’T take her — but the idea is so new it has just kerflummuxed me. I must think it over.”

“Mary is SO smart,” said Una again.

“Humph! So I’ve heard. I’ve heard she swears, too. Is that true?”

“I’ve never heard her swear EXACTLY,” faltered Una uncomfortably.

“But I’m afraid she COULD.”

“I believe you! Does she always tell the truth?”

“I think she does, except when she’s afraid of a whipping.”

“And yet you want me to take her!”

“SOME ONE has to take her,” sobbed Una. “SOME ONE has to look after her, Mrs. Elliott.”

“That’s true. Perhaps it IS my duty to do it,” said Miss Cornelia with a sigh. “Well, I’ll have to talk it over with Mr. Elliott. So don’t say anything about it just yet. Take another doughnut, dearie.”

Una took it and ate it with a better appetite.

“I’m very fond of doughnuts,” she confessed “Aunt Martha never makes any. But Miss Susan at Ingleside does, and sometimes she lets us have a plateful in Rainbow Valley. Do you know what I do when I’m hungry for doughnuts and can’t get any, Mrs. Elliott?”

“No, dearie. What?”

“I get out mother’s old cook book and read the doughnut recipe — and the other recipes. They sound SO nice. I always do that when I’m hungry

— especially after we’ve had ditto for dinner. THEN I read the fried chicken and the roast goose recipes. Mother could make all those nice things.”

“Those manse children will starve to death yet if Mr. Meredith doesn’t get married,” Miss Cornelia told her husband indignantly after Una had gone. “And he won’t — and what’s to be done? And SHALL we take this Mary-creature, Marshall?”

“Yes, take her,” said Marshall laconically.

“Just like a man,” said his wife, despairingly. “Take her’ — as if that was all. There are a hundred things to be considered, believe ME.”

“Take her — and we’ll consider them afterwards, Cornelia,” said her husband.

In the end Miss Cornelia did take her and went up to announce her decision to the Ingleside people first.

“Splendid!” said Anne delightedly. “I’ve been hoping you would do that very thing, Miss Cornelia. I want that poor child to get a good home. I was a homeless little orphan just like her once.”

“I don’t think this Mary-creature is or ever will be much like you,” retorted Miss Cornelia gloomily. “She’s a cat of another colour. But she’s also a human being with an immortal soul to save. I’ve got a shorter catechism and a small tooth comb and I’m going to do my duty by her, now that I’ve set my hand to the plough, believe me.”

Mary received the news with chastened satisfaction.

“It’s better luck than I expected,” she said.

“You’ll have to mind your p’s and q’s with Mrs. Elliott,” said Nan.

“Well, I can do that,” flashed Mary. “I know how to behave when

I want to just as well as you, Nan Blythe.”

“You mustn’t use bad words, you know, Mary,” said Una anxiously.

“I s’pose she’d die of horror if I did,” grinned Mary, her white eyes shining with unholy glee over the idea. “But you needn’t worry, Una. Butter won’t melt in my mouth after this. I’ll be all prunes and prisms.”

“Nor tell lies,” added Faith.

“Not even to get off from a whipping?” pleaded Mary.

“Mrs. Elliott will NEVER whip you — NEVER,” exclaimed Di.

“Won’t she?” said Mary skeptically. “If I ever find myself in a place where I ain’t licked I’ll think it’s heaven all right. No fear of me telling lies then. I ain’t fond of telling ‘em — I’d ruther not, if it comes to that.”

The day before Mary’s departure from the manse they had a picnic in her honour in Rainbow Valley, and that evening all the manse children gave her something from their scanty store of treasured things for a keepsake. Carl gave her his Noah’s ark and Jerry his second best jew’s-harp. Faith gave her a little hairbrush with a mirror in the back of it, which Mary had always considered very wonderful. Una hesitated between an old beaded purse and a gay picture of Daniel in the lion’s den, and finally offered Mary her choice. Mary really hankered after the beaded purse, but she knew Una loved it, so she said,

“Give me Daniel. I’d rusher have it ‘cause I’m partial to lions. Only I wish they’d et Daniel up. It would have been more exciting.”

At bedtime Mary coaxed Una to sleep with her.

“It’s for the last time,” she said, “and it’s raining tonight, and I hate sleeping up there alone when it’s raining on account of that graveyard. I don’t mind it on fine nights, but a night like this I can’t see anything but the rain pouring down on them old white stones, and the wind round the window sounds as if them dead people were trying to get in and crying ‘cause they couldn’t.”

“I like rainy nights,” said Una, when they were cuddled down together in the little attic room, “and so do the Blythe girls.”

“I don’t mind ‘em when I’m not handy to graveyards,” said Mary. “If I was alone here I’d cry my eyes out I’d be so lonesome. I feel awful bad to be leaving you all.”

“Mrs. Elliott will let you come up and play in Rainbow Valley quite often I’m sure,” said Una. “And you WILL be a good girl, won’t you, Mary?”

“Oh, I’ll try,” sighed Mary. “But it won’t be as easy for me to be good — inside, I mean, as well as outside — as it is for you. You hadn’t such scalawags of relations as I had.”

“But your people must have had some good qualities as well as bad ones,” argued Una. “You must live up to them and never mind their bad ones.”

“I don’t believe they had any good qualities,” said Mary gloomily. “I never heard of any. My grandfather had money, but they say he was a rascal. No, I’ll just have to start out on my own hook and do the best I can.”

“And God will help you, you know, Mary, if you ask Him.”

“I don’t know about that.”

“Oh, Mary. You know we asked God to get a home for you and He did.”

“I don’t see what He had to do with it,” retorted Mary. “It was you put it into Mrs. Elliott’s head.”

“But God put it into her HEART to take you. All my putting it into her HEAD wouldn’t have done any good if He hadn’t.”

“Well, there may be something in that,” admitted Mary. “Mind you, I haven’t got anything against God, Una. I’m willing to give Him a chance. But, honest, I think He’s an awful lot like your father — just absentminded and never taking any notice of a body most of the time, but sometimes waking up all of a sudden and being awful good and kind and sensible.”

“Oh, Mary, no!” exclaimed horrified Una. “God isn’t a bit like father — I mean He’s a thousand times better and kinder.”

“If He’s as good as your father He’ll do for me,” said Mary. “When your father was talking to me I felt as if I never could be bad any more.”

“I wish you’d talk to father about Him,” sighed Una. “He can explain it all so much better than I can.”

“Why, so I will, next time he wakes up,” promised Mary. “That night he talked to me in the study he showed me real clear that my praying

didn't kill Mrs. Wiley. My mind's been easy since, but I'm real cautious about praying. I guess the old rhyme is the safest. Say, Una, it seems to me if one has to pray to anybody it'd be better to pray to the devil than to God. God's good, anyhow so you say, so He won't do you any harm, but from all I can make out the devil needs to be pacified. I think the sensible way would be to say to HIM, 'Good devil, please don't tempt me. Just leave me alone, please.' Now, don't you?"

"Oh, no, no, Mary. I'm sure it couldn't be right to pray to the devil. And it wouldn't do any good because he's bad. It might aggravate him and he'd be worse than ever."

"Well, as to this God-matter," said Mary stubbornly, "since you and I can't settle it, there ain't no use in talking more about it until we've a chanct to find out the rights of it. I'll do the best I can alone till then."

"If mother was alive she could tell us everything," said Una with a sigh.

"I wisht she was alive," said Mary. "I don't know what's going to become of you youngsters when I'm gone. Anyhow, DO try and keep the house a little tidy. The way people talks about it is scandalous. And the first thing you know your father will be getting married again and then your noses will be out of joint."

Una was startled. The idea of her father marrying again had never presented itself to her before. She did not like it and she lay silent under the chill of it.

"Stepmothers are AWFUL creatures," Mary went on. "I could make your blood run cold if I was to tell you all I know about 'em. The Wilson kids across the road from Wiley's had a stepmother. She was just as bad to 'em as Mrs. Wiley was to me. It'll be awful if you get a stepmother."

"I'm sure we won't," said Una tremulously. "Father won't marry anybody else."

"He'll be hounded into it, I expect," said Mary darkly. "All the old maids in the settlement are after him. There's no being up to them. And the worst of stepmothers is, they always set your father against you. He'd

never care anything about you again. He'd always take her part and her children's part. You see, she'd make him believe you were all bad."

"I wish you hadn't told me this, Mary," cried Una. "It makes me feel so unhappy."

"I only wanted to warn you," said Mary, rather repentantly. "Of course, your father's so absentminded he mightn't happen to think of getting married again. But it's better to be prepared."

Long after Mary slept serenely little Una lay awake, her eyes smarting with tears. Oh, how dreadful it would be if her father should marry somebody who would make him hate her and Jerry and Faith and Carl! She couldn't bear it — she couldn't!

Mary had not instilled any poison of the kind Miss Cornelia had feared into the manse children's minds. Yet she had certainly contrived to do a little mischief with the best of intentions. But she slept dreamlessly, while Una lay awake and the rain fell and the wind wailed around the old gray manse. And the Rev. John Meredith forgot to go to bed at all because he was absorbed in reading a life of St. Augustine. It was gray dawn when he finished it and went upstairs, wrestling with the problems of two thousand years ago. The door of the girls' room was open and he saw Faith lying asleep, rosy and beautiful. He wondered where Una was. Perhaps she had gone over to "stay all night" with the Blythe girls. She did this occasionally, deeming it a great treat. John Meredith sighed. He felt that Una's whereabouts ought not to be a mystery to him. Cecelia would have looked after her better than that.

If only Cecelia were still with him! How pretty and gay she had been! How the old manse up at Maywater had echoed to her songs! And she had gone away so suddenly, taking her laughter and music and leaving silence — so suddenly that he had never quite got over his feeling of amazement. How could SHE, the beautiful and vivid, have died?

The idea of a second marriage had never presented itself seriously to John Meredith. He had loved his wife so deeply that he believed he could never care for any woman again. He had a vague idea that before very long Faith would be old enough to take her mother's place. Until then, he must

do the best he could alone. He sighed and went to his room, where the bed was still unmade. Aunt Martha had forgotten it, and Mary had not dared to make it because Aunt Martha had forbidden her to meddle with anything in the minister's room. But Mr. Meredith did not notice that it was unmade. His last thoughts were of St. Augustine.

Chapter X.

The Manse Girls Clean House

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“Ugh,” said Faith, sitting up in bed with a shiver. “It’s raining. I do hate a rainy Sunday. Sunday is dull enough even when it’s fine.”

“We oughtn’t to find Sunday dull,” said Una sleepily, trying to pull her drowsy wits together with an uneasy conviction that they had overslept.

“But we DO, you know,” said Faith candidly. “Mary Vance says most Sundays are so dull she could hang herself.”

“We ought to like Sunday better than Mary Vance,” said Una remorsefully. “We’re the minister’s children.”

“I wish we were a blacksmith’s children,” protested Faith angrily, hunting for her stockings. “THEN people wouldn’t expect us to be better than other children. JUST look at the holes in my heels. Mary darned them all up before she went away, but they’re as bad as ever now. Una, get up. I can’t get the breakfast alone. Oh, dear. I wish father and Jerry were home. You wouldn’t think we’d miss father much — we don’t see much of him when he is home. And yet EVERYTHING seems gone. I must run in and see how Aunt Martha is.”

“Is she any better?” asked Una, when Faith returned.

“No, she isn’t. She’s groaning with the misery still. Maybe we ought to tell Dr. Blythe. But she says not — she never had a doctor in her life and she isn’t going to begin now. She says doctors just live by poisoning people. Do you suppose they do?”

“No, of course not,” said Una indignantly. “I’m sure Dr. Blythe wouldn’t poison anybody.”

“Well, we’ll have to rub Aunt Martha’s back again after breakfast. We’d better not make the flannels as hot as we did yesterday.”

Faith giggled over the remembrance. They had nearly scalded the skin off poor Aunt Martha’s back. Una sighed. Mary Vance would have known just what the precise temperature of flannels for a misery back should be.

Mary knew everything. They knew nothing. And how could they learn, save by bitter experience for which, in this instance, unfortunate Aunt Martha had paid?

The preceding Monday Mr. Meredith had left for Nova Scotia to spend his short vacation, taking Jerry with him. On Wednesday Aunt Martha was suddenly seized with a recurring and mysterious ailment which she always called “the misery,” and which was tolerably certain to attack her at the most inconvenient times. She could not rise from her bed, any movement causing agony. A doctor she flatly refused to have. Faith and Una cooked the meals and waited on her. The less said about the meals the better — yet they were not much worse than Aunt Martha’s had been. There were many women in the village who would have been glad to come and help, but Aunt Martha refused to let her plight be known.

“You must worry on till I kin git around,” she groaned. “Thank goodness, John isn’t here. There’s a plenty o’ cold biled meat and bread and you kin try your hand at making porridge.”

The girls had tried their hand, but so far without much success. The first day it had been too thin. The next day so thick that you could cut it in slices. And both days it had been burned.

“I hate porridge,” said Faith viciously. “When I have a house of my own I’m NEVER going to have a single bit of porridge in it.”

“What’ll your children do then?” asked Una. “Children have to have porridge or they won’t grow. Everybody says so.”

“They’ll have to get along without it or stay runts,” retorted Faith stubbornly. “Here, Una, you stir it while I set the table. If I leave it for a minute the horrid stuff will burn. It’s half past nine. We’ll be late for Sunday School.”

“I haven’t seen anyone going past yet,” said Una. “There won’t likely be many out. Just see how it’s pouring. And when there’s no preaching the folks won’t come from a distance to bring the children.”

“Go and call Carl,” said Faith.

Carl, it appeared, had a sore throat, induced by getting wet in the Rainbow Valley marsh the previous evening while pursuing dragonflies. He had come home with dripping stockings and boots and had sat out the evening in them. He could not eat any breakfast and Faith made him go back to bed again. She and Una left the table as it was and went to Sunday School. There was no one in the school room when they got there and no one came. They waited until eleven and then went home.

“There doesn’t seem to be anybody at the Methodist Sunday School either,” said Una.

“I’m GLAD,” said Faith. “I’d hate to think the Methodists were better at going to Sunday School on rainy Sundays than the Presbyterians. But there’s no preaching in their Church to-day, either, so likely their Sunday School is in the afternoon.”

Una washed the dishes, doing them quite nicely, for so much had she learned from Mary Vance. Faith swept the floor after a fashion and peeled the potatoes for dinner, cutting her finger in the process.

“I wish we had something for dinner besides ditto,” sighed Una. “I’m so tired of it. The Blythe children don’t know what ditto is. And we NEVER have any pudding. Nan says Susan would faint if they had no pudding on Sundays. Why aren’t we like other people, Faith?”

“I don’t want to be like other people,” laughed Faith, tying up her bleeding finger. “I like being myself. It’s more interesting. Jessie Drew is as good a housekeeper as her mother, but would you want to be as stupid as she is?”

“But our house isn’t right. Mary Vance says so. She says people talk about it being so untidy.”

Faith had an inspiration.

“We’ll clean it all up,” she cried. “We’ll go right to work tomorrow. It’s a real good chance when Aunt Martha is laid up and can’t interfere with us. We’ll have it all lovely and clean when father comes home, just like it was when Mary went away. ANY ONE can sweep and dust and wash windows. People won’t be able to talk about us any more. Jem Blythe says it’s only old cats that talk, but their talk hurts just as much as anybody’s.”

“I hope it will be fine tomorrow,” said Una, fired with enthusiasm. “Oh, Faith, it will be splendid to be all cleaned up and like other people.”

“I hope Aunt Martha’s misery will last over tomorrow,” said Faith. “If it doesn’t we won’t get a single thing done.”

Faith’s amiable wish was fulfilled. The next day found Aunt Martha still unable to rise. Carl, too, was still sick and easily prevailed on to stay in bed. Neither Faith nor Una had any idea how sick the boy really was; a watchful mother would have had a doctor without delay; but there was no mother, and poor little Carl, with his sore throat and aching head and crimson cheeks, rolled himself up in his twisted bedclothes and suffered alone, somewhat comforted by the companionship of a small green lizard in the pocket of his ragged nighty.

The world was full of summer sunshine after the rain. It was a peerless day for housecleaning and Faith and Una went gaily to work.

“We’ll clean the dining-room and the parlour,” said Faith. “It wouldn’t do to meddle with the study, and it doesn’t matter much about the upstairs. The first thing is to take everything out.”

Accordingly, everything was taken out. The furniture was piled on the veranda and lawn and the Methodist graveyard fence was gaily draped with rugs. An orgy of sweeping followed, with an attempt at dusting on Una’s part, while Faith washed the windows of the dining-room, breaking one pane and cracking two in the process. Una surveyed the streaked result dubiously.

“They don’t look right, somehow,” she said. “Mrs. Elliott’s and Susan’s windows just shine and sparkle.”

“Never mind. They let the sunshine through just as well,” said Faith cheerfully. “They **MUST** be clean after all the soap and water I’ve used, and that’s the main thing. Now, it’s past eleven, so I’ll wipe up this mess on the floor and we’ll go outside. You dust the furniture and I’ll shake the

rugs. I'm going to do it in the graveyard. I don't want to send dust flying all over the lawn.

Faith enjoyed the rug shaking. To stand on Hezekiah Pollock's tombstone, flapping and shaking rugs, was real fun. To be sure, Elder Abraham Clow and his wife, driving past in their capacious double-seated buggy, seemed to gaze at her in grim disapproval.

"Isn't that a terrible sight?" said Elder Abraham solemnly.

"I would never have believed it if I hadn't seen it with my own eyes," said Mrs. Elder Abraham, more solemnly still.

Faith waved a door mat cheerily at the Clow party. It did not worry her that the elder and his wife did not return her greeting. Everybody knew that Elder Abraham had never been known to smile since he had been appointed Superintendent of the Sunday School fourteen years previously. But it hurt her that Minnie and Adella Clow did not wave back. Faith liked Minnie and Adella. Next to the Blythes, they were her best friends in school and she always helped Adella with her sums. This was gratitude for you. Her friends cut her because she was shaking rugs in an old graveyard where, as Mary Vance said, not a living soul had been buried for years. Faith flounced around to the veranda, where she found Una grieved in spirit because the Clow girls had not waved to her, either.

"I suppose they're mad over something," said Faith. "Perhaps they're jealous because we play so much in Rainbow Valley with the Blythes. Well, just wait till school opens and Adella wants me to show her how to do her sums! We'll get square then. Come on, let's put the things back in. I'm tired to death and I don't believe the rooms will look much better than before we started — though I shook out pecks of dust in the graveyard. I HATE housecleaning."

It was two o'clock before the tired girls finished the two rooms. They got a dreary bite in the kitchen and intended to wash the dishes at once. But Faith happened to pick up a new storybook Di Blythe had lent her and was lost to the world until sunset. Una took a cup of rank tea up to Carl but found him asleep; so she curled herself up on Jerry's bed and went to sleep

too. Meanwhile, a weird story flew through Glen St. Mary and folks asked each other seriously what was to be done with those manse youngsters.

“That is past laughing at, believe ME,” said Miss Cornelia to her

husband, with a heavy sigh. “I couldn’t believe it at first.

Miranda Drew brought the story home from the Methodist Sunday

School this afternoon and I simply scoffed at it. But Mrs. Elder Abraham says she and the Elder saw it with their own eyes.”

“Saw what?” asked Marshall.

“Faith and Una Meredith stayed home from Sunday School this morning and CLEANED HOUSE,” said Miss Cornelia, in accents of despair. “When Elder Abraham went home from the church — he had stayed behind to straighten out the library books — he saw them shaking rugs in the Methodist graveyard. I can never look a Methodist in the face again. Just think what a scandal it will make!”

A scandal it assuredly did make, growing more scandalous as it spread, until the over-harbour people heard that the manse children had not only cleaned house and put out a washing on Sunday, but had wound up with an afternoon picnic in the graveyard while the Methodist Sunday School was going on. The only household which remained in blissful ignorance of the terrible thing was the manse itself; on what Faith and Una fondly believed to be Tuesday it rained again; for the next three days it rained; nobody came near the manse; the manse folk went nowhere; they might have waded through the misty Rainbow Valley up to Ingleside, but all the Blythe family, save Susan and the doctor, were away on a visit to Avonlea.

“This is the last of our bread,” said Faith, “and the ditto is done. If Aunt Martha doesn’t get better soon WHAT will we do?”

“We can buy some bread in the village and there’s the codfish Mary dried,” said Una. “But we don’t know how to cook it.”

“Oh, that’s easy,” laughed Faith. “You just boil it.”

Boil it they did; but as it did not occur to them to soak it beforehand it was too salty to eat. That night they were very hungry; but by the following day their troubles were over. Sunshine returned to the world; Carl was well and Aunt Martha’s misery left her as suddenly as it had come; the butcher called at the manse and chased famine away. To crown all, the Blythes returned home, and that evening they and the manse children and Mary Vance kept sunset tryst once more in Rainbow Valley, where the daisies were floating upon the grass like spirits of the dew and the bells on the Tree Lovers rang like fairy chimes in the scented twilight.

A Dreadful Discovery

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“Well, you kids have gone and done it now,” was Mary’s greeting, as she joined them in the Valley. Miss Cornelia was up at Ingleside, holding agonized conclave with Anne and Susan, and Mary hoped that the session might be a long one, for it was all of two weeks since she had been allowed to revel with her chums in the dear valley of rainbows.

“Done what?” demanded everybody but Walter, who was daydreaming as usual.

“It’s you manse young ones, I mean,” said Mary. “It was just awful of you. *I* wouldn’t have done such a thing for the world, and *I* weren’t brought up in a manse — weren’t brought up ANYWHERE — just COME up.”

“What have WE done?” asked Faith blankly.

“Done! You’d BETTER ask! The talk is something terrible. I expect it’s ruined your father in this congregation. He’ll never be able to live it down, poor man! Everybody blames him for it, and that isn’t fair. But nothing IS fair in this world. You ought to be ashamed of yourselves.”

“What HAVE we done?” asked Una again, despairingly. Faith said nothing, but her eyes flashed golden-brown scorn at Mary.

“Oh, don’t pretend innocence,” said Mary, witheringly.

“Everybody knows what you have done.”

“*I* don’t,” interjected Jem Blythe indignantly. “Don’t let me catch you making Una cry, Mary Vance. What are you talking about?”

“I s’pose you don’t know, since you’re just back from up west,” said Mary, somewhat subdued. Jem could always manage her. “But everybody else knows, you’d better believe.”

“Knows what?”

“That Faith and Una stayed home from Sunday School last Sunday and CLEANED HOUSE.”

“We didn’t,” cried Faith and Una, in passionate denial.

Mary looked haughtily at them.

“I didn’t suppose you’d deny it, after the way you’ve combed ME down for lying,” she said. “What’s the good of saying you didn’t? Everybody knows you DID. Elder Clow and his wife saw you. Some people say it will break up the church, but *I* don’t go that far. You ARE nice ones.”

Nan Blythe stood up and put her arms around the dazed Faith and Una.

“They were nice enough to take you in and feed you and clothe you when you were starving in Mr. Taylor’s barn, Mary Vance,” she said. “You are VERY grateful, I must say.”

“I AM grateful,” retorted Mary. “You’d know it if you’d heard me standing up for Mr. Meredith through thick and thin. I’ve blistered my tongue talking for him this week. I’ve said again and again that he isn’t to blame if his young ones did clean house on Sunday. He was away — and they knew better.”

“But we didn’t,” protested Una. “It was MONDAY we cleaned house.

Wasn’t it, Faith?”

“Of course it was,” said Faith, with flashing eyes. “We went to Sunday School in spite of the rain — and no one came — not even

Elder Abraham, for all his talk about fair-weather Christians.”

“It was Saturday it rained,” said Mary. “Sunday was as fine as silk. I wasn’t at Sunday School because I had toothache, but every one else was

and they saw all your stuff out on the lawn. And Elder Abraham and Mrs. Elder Abraham saw you shaking rugs in the graveyard.”

Una sat down among the daisies and began to cry.

“Look here,” said Jem resolutely, “this thing must be cleared up. SOMEBODY has made a mistake. Sunday WAS fine, Faith. How could you have thought Saturday was Sunday?”

“Prayer-meeting was Thursday night,” cried Faith, “and Adam flew into the soup-pot on Friday when Aunt Martha’s cat chased him, and spoiled our dinner; and Saturday there was a snake in the cellar and Carl caught it with a forked stick and carried it out, and Sunday it rained. So there!”

“Prayer-meeting was Wednesday night,” said Mary. “Elder Baxter was to lead and he couldn’t go Thursday night and it was changed to Wednesday. You were just a day out, Faith Meredith, and you DID work on Sunday.”

Suddenly Faith burst into a peal of laughter.

“I suppose we did. What a joke!”

“It isn’t much of a joke for your father,” said Mary sourly.

“It’ll be all right when people find out it was just a mistake,” said Faith carelessly. “We’ll explain.”

“You can explain till you’re black in the face,” said Mary, “but a lie like that’ll travel faster’n further than you ever will. I’VE seen more of the world than you and *I* know. Besides, there are plenty of folks won’t believe it was a mistake.”

“They will if I tell them,” said Faith.

“You can’t tell everybody,” said Mary. “No, I tell you you’ve disgraced your father.”

Una’s evening was spoiled by this dire reflection, but Faith refused to be made uncomfortable. Besides, she had a plan that would put everything right. So she put the past with its mistake behind her and gave herself over to enjoyment of the present. Jem went away to fish and Walter came out of his reverie and proceeded to describe the woods of heaven. Mary pricked up her ears and listened respectfully. Despite her awe of Walter she

revelled in his “book talk.” It always gave her a delightful sensation. Walter had been reading his Coleridge that day, and he pictured a heaven where

”There were gardens bright with sinuous rills
Where blossomed many an incense bearing tree,
And there were forests ancient as the hills
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.”

“I didn’t know there was any woods in heaven,” said Mary, with a long breath. “I thought it was all streets — and streets — AND streets.”

“Of course there are woods,” said Nan. “Mother can’t live without trees and I can’t, so what would be the use of going to heaven if there weren’t any trees?”

“There are cities, too,” said the young dreamer, “splendid cities — coloured just like the sunset, with sapphire towers and rainbow domes. They are built of gold and diamonds — whole streets of diamonds, flashing like the sun. In the squares there are crystal fountains kissed by the light, and everywhere the asphodel blooms — the flower of heaven.”

“Fancy!” said Mary. “I saw the main street in Charlottetown once and I thought it was real grand, but I s’pose it’s nothing to heaven. Well, it all sounds gorgeous the way you tell it, but won’t it be kind of dull, too?”

“Oh, I guess we can have some fun when the angels’ backs are turned,” said Faith comfortably.

“Heaven is ALL fun,” declared Di.

“The Bible doesn’t say so,” cried Mary, who had read so much of the Bible on Sunday afternoons under Miss Cornelia’s eye that she now considered herself quite an authority on it.

“Mother says the Bible language is figurative,” said Nan.

“Does that mean that it isn’t true?” asked Mary hopefully.

“No — not exactly — but I think it means that heaven will be just like what you’d like it to be.”

“I’d like it to be just like Rainbow Valley,” said Mary, “with all you kids to gas and play with. THAT’S good enough for me. Anyhow, we can’t

go to heaven till we're dead and maybe not then, so what's the use of worrying? Here's Jem with a string of trout and it's my turn to fry them."

"We ought to know more about heaven than Walter does when we're the minister's family," said Una, as they walked home that night.

"We KNOW just as much, but Walter can IMAGINE," said Faith.

"Mrs. Elliott says he gets it from his mother."

"I do wish we hadn't made that mistake about Sunday," sighed Una.

"Don't worry over that. I've thought of a great plan to explain so that everybody will know," said Faith. "Just wait till tomorrow night."

An Explanation And A Dare

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The Rev. Dr. Cooper preached in Glen St. Mary the next evening and the Presbyterian Church was crowded with people from near and far. The Reverend Doctor was reputed to be a very eloquent speaker; and, bearing in mind the old dictum that a minister should take his best clothes to the city and his best sermons to the country, he delivered a very scholarly and impressive discourse. But when the folks went home that night it was not of Dr. Cooper's sermon they talked. They had completely forgotten all about it.

Dr. Cooper had concluded with a fervent appeal, had wiped the perspiration from his massive brow, had said "Let us pray" as he was famed for saying it, and had duly prayed. There was a slight pause. In Glen St. Mary church the old fashion of taking the collection after the sermon instead of before still held — mainly because the Methodists had adopted the new fashion first, and Miss Cornelia and Elder Clow would not hear of following where Methodists had led. Charles Baxter and Thomas Douglas, whose duty it was to pass the plates, were on the point of rising to their feet. The organist had got out the music of her anthem and the choir had cleared its throat. Suddenly Faith Meredith rose in the manse pew, walked up to the pulpit platform, and faced the amazed audience.

Miss Cornelia half rose in her seat and then sat down again. Her pew was far back and it occurred to her that whatever Faith meant to do or say would be half done or said before she could reach her. There was no use making the exhibition worse than it had to be. With an anguished glance at Mrs. Dr. Blythe, and another at Deacon Warren of the Methodist Church, Miss Cornelia resigned herself to another scandal.

"If the child was only dressed decently itself," she groaned in spirit.

Faith, having spilled ink on her good dress, had serenely put on an old one of faded pink print. A caticornered rent in the skirt had been darned

with scarlet tracing cotton and the hem had been let down, showing a bright strip of unfaded pink around the skirt. But Faith was not thinking of her clothes at all. She was feeling suddenly nervous. What had seemed easy in imagination was rather hard in reality. Confronted by all those staring questioning eyes Faith's courage almost failed her. The lights were so bright, the silence so awesome. She thought she could not speak after all. But she MUST — her father MUST be cleared of suspicion. Only — the words would NOT come.

Una's little pearl-pure face gleamed up at her beseechingly from the manse pew. The Blythe children were lost in amazement. Back under the gallery Faith saw the sweet graciousness of Miss Rosemary West's smile and the amusement of Miss Ellen's. But none of these helped her. It was Bertie Shakespeare Drew who saved the situation. Bertie Shakespeare sat in the front seat of the gallery and he made a derisive face at Faith. Faith promptly made a dreadful one back at him, and, in her anger over being grimaced at by Bertie Shakespeare, forgot her stage fright. She found her voice and spoke out clearly and bravely.

"I want to explain something," she said, "and I want to do it now because everybody will hear it that heard the other. People are saying that Una and I stayed home last Sunday and cleaned house instead of going to Sunday School. Well, we did — but we didn't mean to. We got mixed up in the days of the week. It was all Elder Baxter's fault" — sensation in Baxter's pew—"because he went and changed the prayer-meeting to Wednesday night and then we thought Thursday was Friday and so on till we thought Saturday was Sunday. Carl was laid up sick and so was Aunt Martha, so they couldn't put us right. We went to Sunday School in all that rain on Saturday and nobody came. And then we thought we'd clean house on Monday and stop old cats from talking about how dirty the manse was" — general sensation all over the church—"and we did. I shook the rugs in the Methodist graveyard because it was such a convenient place and not because I meant to be disrespectful of the dead. It isn't the dead folks who have made the fuss over this — it's the living folks. And it isn't right for any of you to blame my father for this, because he was away and didn't

know, and anyhow we thought it was Monday. He's just the best father that ever lived in the world and we love him with all our hearts."

Faith's bravado ebbed out in a sob. She ran down the steps and flashed out of the side door of the church. There the friendly starlit, summer night comforted her and the ache went out of her eyes and throat. She felt very happy. The dreadful explanation was over and everybody knew now that her father wasn't to blame and that she and Una were not so wicked as to have cleaned house knowingly on Sunday.

Inside the church people gazed blankly at each other, but Thomas Douglas rose and walked up the aisle with a set face. HIS duty was clear; the collection must be taken if the skies fell. Taken it was; the choir sang the anthem, with a dismal conviction that it fell terribly flat, and Dr. Cooper gave out the concluding hymn and pronounced the benediction with considerably less unction than usual. The Reverend Doctor had a sense of humour and Faith's performance tickled him. Besides, John Meredith was well known in Presbyterian circles.

Mr. Meredith returned home the next afternoon, but before his coming Faith contrived to scandalize Glen St. Mary again. In the reaction from Sunday evening's intensity and strain she was especially full of what Miss Cornelia would have called "devilment" on Monday. This led her to dare Walter Blythe to ride through Main Street on a pig, while she rode another one.

The pigs in question were two tall, lank animals, supposed to belong to Bertie Shakespeare Drew's father, which had been haunting the roadside by the manse for a couple of weeks. Walter did not want to ride a pig through Glen St. Mary, but whatever Faith Meredith dared him to do must be done. They tore down the hill and through the village, Faith bent double with laughter over her terrified courser, Walter crimson with shame. They tore past the minister himself, just coming home from the station; he, being a little less dreamy and abstracted than usual — owing to having had a talk on the train with Miss Cornelia who always wakened him up temporarily — noticed them, and thought he really must speak to Faith about it and tell her that such conduct was not seemly. But he had

forgotten the trifling incident by the time he reached home. They passed Mrs. Alec Davis, who shrieked in horror, and they passed Miss Rosemary West who laughed and sighed. Finally, just before the pigs swooped into Bertie Shakespeare Drew's back yard, never to emerge therefrom again, so great had been the shock to their nerves — Faith and Walter jumped off, as Dr. and Mrs. Blythe drove swiftly by.

“So that is how you bring up your boys,” said Gilbert with mock severity.

“Perhaps I do spoil them a little,” said Anne contritely, “but, oh, Gilbert, when I think of my own childhood before I came to Green Gables I haven't the heart to be very strict. How hungry for love and fun I was — an unloved little drudge with never a chance to play! They do have such good times with the manse children.”

“What about the poor pigs?” asked Gilbert.

Anne tried to look sober and failed.

“Do you really think it hurt them?” she said. “I don't think anything could hurt those animals. They've been the plague of the neighbourhood this summer and the Drews WON'T shut them up. But I'll talk to Walter — if I can keep from laughing when I do it.”

Miss Cornelia came up to Ingleside that evening to relieve her feelings over Sunday night. To her surprise she found that Anne did not view Faith's performance in quite the same light as she did.

“I thought there was something brave and pathetic in her getting up there before that churchful of people, to confess,” she said. “You could see she was frightened to death — yet she was bound to clear her father. I loved her for it.”

“Oh, of course, the poor child meant well,” sighed Miss Cornelia, “but just the same it was a terrible thing to do, and is making more talk than the housecleaning on Sunday. THAT had begun to die away, and this has started it all up again. Rosemary West is like you — she said last night as she left the church that it was a plucky thing for Faith to do, but it made her feel sorry for the child, too. Miss Ellen thought it all a good joke, and said she hadn't had as much fun in church for years. Of course THEY

don't care — they are Episcopalians. But we Presbyterians feel it. And there were so many hotel people there that night and scores of Methodists. Mrs. Leander Crawford cried, she felt so bad. And Mrs. Alec Davis said the little hussy ought to be spanked.”

“Mrs. Leander Crawford is always crying in church,” said Susan contemptuously. “She cries over every affecting thing the minister says. But you do not often see her name on a subscription list, Mrs. Dr. dear. Tears come cheaper. She tried to talk to me one day about Aunt Martha being such a dirty housekeeper; and I wanted to say, ‘Every one knows that YOU have been seen mixing up cakes in the kitchen wash-pan, Mrs. Leander Crawford!’ But I did not say it, Mrs. Dr. dear, because I have too much respect for myself to condescend to argue with the likes of her. But I could tell worse things than THAT of Mrs. Leander Crawford, if I was disposed to gossip. And as for Mrs. Alec Davis, if she had said that to me, Mrs. Dr. dear, do you know what I would have said? I would have said, ‘I have no doubt you would like to spank Faith, Mrs. Davis, but you will never have the chance to spank a minister’s daughter either in this world or in that which is to come.’”

“If poor Faith had only been decently dressed,” lamented Miss Cornelia again, “it wouldn’t have been quite that bad. But that dress looked dreadful, as she stood there upon the platform.”

“It was clean, though, Mrs. Dr. dear,” said Susan. “They ARE clean children. They may be very heedless and reckless, Mrs. Dr. dear, and I am not saying they are not, but they NEVER forget to wash behind their ears.”

“The idea of Faith forgetting what day was Sunday,” persisted Miss Cornelia. “She will grow up just as careless and impractical as her father, believe ME. I suppose Carl would have known better if he hadn’t been sick. I don’t know what was wrong with him, but I think it very likely he had been eating those blueberries that grew in the graveyard. No wonder they made him sick. If I was a Methodist I’d try to keep my graveyard cleaned up at least.”

“I am of the opinion that Carl only ate the sours that grow on the dyke,” said Susan hopefully. “I do not think ANY minister’s son would eat

blueberries that grew on the graves of dead people. You know it would not be so bad, Mrs. Dr. dear, to eat things that grew on the dyke.”

“The worst of last night’s performance was the face Faith made at somebody in the congregation before she started in,” said Miss Cornelia. “Elder Clow declares she made it at him. And DID you hear that she was seen riding on a pig to-day?”

“I saw her. Walter was with her. I gave him a little — a VERY little — scolding about it. He did not say much, but he gave me the impression that it had been his idea and that Faith was not to blame.”

“I do not not believe THAT, Mrs. Dr. dear,” cried Susan, up in arms. “That is just Walter’s way — to take the blame on himself. But you know as well as I do, Mrs. Dr. dear, that that blessed child would never have thought of riding on a pig, even if he does write poetry.”

“Oh, there’s no doubt the notion was hatched in Faith Meredith’s brain,” said Miss Cornelia. “And I don’t say that I’m sorry that Amos Drew’s old pigs did get their comeuppance for once. But the minister’s daughter!”

“AND the doctor’s son!” said Anne, mimicking Miss Cornelia’s tone. Then she laughed. “Dear Miss Cornelia, they’re only little children. And you KNOW they’ve never yet done anything bad — they’re just heedless and impulsive — as I was myself once. They’ll grow sedate and sober — as I’ve done.”

Miss Cornelia laughed, too.

“There are times, Anne dearie, when I know by your eyes that YOUR soberness is put on like a garment and you’re really aching to do something wild and young again. Well, I feel encouraged. Somehow, a talk with you always does have that effect on me. Now, when I go to see Barbara Samson, it’s just the opposite. She makes me feel that everything’s wrong and always will be. But of course living all your life with a man like Joe Samson wouldn’t be exactly cheering.”

“It is a very strange thing to think that she married Joe Samson after all her chances,” remarked Susan. “She was much sought after when she

was a girl. She used to boast to me that she had twenty-one beaus and Mr. Pethick.”

“What was Mr. Pethick?”

“Well, he was a sort of hanger-on, Mrs. Dr. dear, but you could not exactly call him a beau. He did not really have any intentions. Twenty-one beaus — and me that never had one! But Barbara went through the woods and picked up the crooked stick after all. And yet they say her husband can make better baking powder biscuits than she can, and she always gets him to make them when company comes to tea.”

“Which reminds ME that I have company coming to tea tomorrow and I must go home and set my bread,” said Miss Cornelia. “Mary said she could set it and no doubt she could. But while I live and move and have my being *I* set my own bread, believe me.”

“How is Mary getting on?” asked Anne.

“I’ve no fault to find with Mary,” said Miss Cornelia rather gloomily. “She’s getting some flesh on her bones and she’s clean and respectful — though there’s more in her than *I* can fathom. She’s a sly puss. If you dug for a thousand years you couldn’t get to the bottom of that child’s mind, believe ME! As for work, I never saw anything like her. She EATS it up. Mrs. Wiley may have been cruel to her, but folks needn’t say she made Mary work. Mary’s a born worker. Sometimes I wonder which will wear out first — her legs or her tongue. I don’t have enough to do to keep me out of mischief these days. I’ll be real glad when school opens, for then I’ll have something to do again. Mary doesn’t want to go to school, but I put my foot down and said that go she must. I shall NOT have the Methodists saying that I kept her out of school while I lolled in idleness.”

The House on the Hill

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There was a little unfailing spring, always icy cold and crystal pure, in a certain birch-screened hollow of Rainbow Valley in the lower corner near the marsh. Not a great many people knew of its existence. The manse and Ingleside children knew, of course, as they knew everything else about the magic valley. Occasionally they went there to get a drink, and it figured in many of their plays as a fountain of old romance. Anne knew of it and loved it because it somehow reminded her of the beloved Dryad's Bubble at Green Gables. Rosemary West knew of it; it was her fountain of romance, too. Eighteen years ago she had sat behind it one spring twilight and heard young Martin Crawford stammer out a confession of fervent, boyish love. She had whispered her own secret in return, and they had kissed and promised by the wild wood spring. They had never stood together by it again — Martin had sailed on his fatal voyage soon after; but to Rosemary West it was always a sacred spot, hallowed by that immortal hour of youth and love. Whenever she passed near it she turned aside to hold a secret tryst with an old dream — a dream from which the pain had long gone, leaving only its unforgettable sweetness.

The spring was a hidden thing. You might have passed within ten feet of it and never have suspected its existence. Two generations past a huge old pine had fallen almost across it. Nothing was left of the tree but its crumbling trunk out of which the ferns grew thickly, making a green roof and a lacy screen for the water. A maple-tree grew beside it with a curiously gnarled and twisted trunk, creeping along the ground for a little way before shooting up into the air, and so forming a quaint seat; and September had flung a scarf of pale smoke-blue asters around the hollow.

John Meredith, taking the cross-lots road through Rainbow Valley on his way home from some pastoral visitations around the Harbour head one evening, turned aside to drink of the little spring. Walter Blythe had shown

it to him one afternoon only a few days before, and they had had a long talk together on the maple seat. John Meredith, under all his shyness and aloofness, had the heart of a boy. He had been called Jack in his youth, though nobody in Glen St. Mary would ever have believed it. Walter and he had taken to each other and had talked unreservedly. Mr. Meredith found his way into some sealed and sacred chambers of the lad's soul wherein not even Di had ever looked. They were to be chums from that friendly hour and Walter knew that he would never be frightened of the minister again.

"I never believed before that it was possible to get really acquainted with a minister," he told his mother that night.

John Meredith drank from his slender white hand, whose grip of steel always surprised people who were unacquainted with it, and then sat down on the maple seat. He was in no hurry to go home; this was a beautiful spot and he was mentally weary after a round of rather uninspiring conversations with many good and stupid people. The moon was rising. Rainbow Valley was wind-haunted and star-sentinelled only where he was, but afar from the upper end came the gay notes of children's laughter and voices.

The ethereal beauty of the asters in the moonlight, the glimmer of the little spring, the soft croon of the brook, the wavering grace of the brackens all wove a white magic round John Meredith. He forgot congregational worries and spiritual problems; the years slipped away from him; he was a young divinity student again and the roses of June were blooming red and fragrant on the dark, queenly head of his Cecilia. He sat there and dreamed like any boy. And it was at this propitious moment that Rosemary West stepped aside from the by-path and stood beside him in that dangerous, spell-weaving place. John Meredith stood up as she came in and saw her — REALLY saw her — for the first time.

He had met her in his church once or twice and shaken hands with her abstractedly as he did with anyone he happened to encounter on his way down the aisle. He had never met her elsewhere, for the Wests were Episcopalians, with church affinities in Lowbridge, and no occasion for

calling upon them had ever arisen. Before tonight, if anyone had asked John Meredith what Rosemary West looked like he would not have had the slightest notion. But he was never to forget her, as she appeared to him in the glamour of kind moonlight by the spring.

She was certainly not in the least like Cecilia, who had always been his ideal of womanly beauty. Cecilia had been small and dark and vivacious — Rosemary West was tall and fair and placid, yet John Meredith thought he had never seen so beautiful a woman.

She was bareheaded and her golden hair — hair of a warm gold, “molasses taffy” colour as Di Blythe had said — was pinned in sleek, close coils over her head; she had large, tranquil, blue eyes that always seemed full of friendliness, a high white forehead and a finely shaped face.

Rosemary West was always called a “sweet woman.” She was so sweet that even her highbred, stately air had never gained for her the reputation of being “stuck-up,” which it would inevitably have done in the case of anyone else in Glen St. Mary. Life had taught her to be brave, to be patient, to love, to forgive. She had watched the ship on which her lover went sailing out of Four Winds Harbour into the sunset. But, though she watched long, she had never seen it coming sailing back. That vigil had taken girlhood from her eyes, yet she kept her youth to a marvellous degree. Perhaps this was because she always seemed to preserve that attitude of delighted surprise towards life which most of us leave behind in childhood — an attitude which not only made Rosemary herself seem young, but flung a pleasing illusion of youth over the consciousness of every one who talked to her.

John Meredith was startled by her loveliness and Rosemary was startled by his presence. She had never thought she would find anyone by that remote spring, least of all the recluse of Glen St. Mary manse. She almost dropped the heavy armful of books she was carrying home from the Glen lending library, and then, to cover her confusion, she told one of those small fibs which even the best of women do tell at times.

“I — I came for a drink,” she said, stammering a little, in answer to Mr. Meredith’s grave “good evening, Miss West.” She felt that she was an

unpardonable goose and she longed to shake herself. But John Meredith was not a vain man and he knew she would likely have been as much startled had she met old Elder Clow in that unexpected fashion. Her confusion put him at ease and he forgot to be shy; besides, even the shyest of men can sometimes be quite audacious in moonlight.

“Let me get you a cup,” he said smiling. There was a cup near by, if he had only known it, a cracked, handleless blue cup secreted under the maple by the Rainbow Valley children; but he did not know it, so he stepped out to one of the birch-trees and stripped a bit of its white skin away. Deftly he fashioned this into a three-cornered cup, filled it from the spring, and handed it to Rosemary.

Rosemary took it and drank every drop to punish herself for her fib, for she was not in the least thirsty, and to drink a fairly large cupful of water when you are not thirsty is somewhat of an ordeal. Yet the memory of that draught was to be very pleasant to Rosemary. In after years it seemed to her that there was something sacramental about it. Perhaps this was because of what the minister did when she handed him back the cup. He stooped again and filled it and drank of it himself. It was only by accident that he put his lips just where Rosemary had put hers, and Rosemary knew it. Nevertheless, it had a curious significance for her. They two had drunk of the same cup. She remembered idly that an old aunt of hers used to say that when two people did this their after-lives would be linked in some fashion, whether for good or ill.

John Meredith held the cup uncertainly. He did not know what to do with it. The logical thing would have been to toss it away, but somehow he was disinclined to do this. Rosemary held out her hand for it.

“Will you let me have it?” she said. “You made it so knackily. I never saw anyone make a birch cup so since my little brother used to make them long ago — before he died.”

“I learned how to make them when *I* was a boy, camping out one summer. An old hunter taught me,” said Mr. Meredith. “Let me carry your books, Miss West.”

Rosemary was startled into another fib and said oh, they were not heavy. But the minister took them from her with quite a masterful air and they walked away together. It was the first time Rosemary had stood by the valley spring without thinking of Martin Crawford. The mystic tryst had been broken.

The little by-path wound around the marsh and then struck up the long wooded hill on the top of which Rosemary lived. Beyond, through the trees, they could see the moonlight shining across the level summer fields. But the little path was shadowy and narrow. Trees crowded over it, and trees are never quite as friendly to human beings after nightfall as they are in daylight. They wrap themselves away from us. They whisper and plot furtively. If they reach out a hand to us it has a hostile, tentative touch. People walking amid trees after night always draw closer together instinctively and involuntarily, making an alliance, physical and mental, against certain alien powers around them. Rosemary's dress brushed against John Meredith as they walked. Not even an absentminded minister, who was after all a young man still, though he firmly believed he had outlived romance, could be insensible to the charm of the night and the path and the companion.

It is never quite safe to think we have done with life. When we imagine we have finished our story fate has a trick of turning the page and showing us yet another chapter. These two people each thought their hearts belonged irrevocably to the past; but they both found their walk up that hill very pleasant. Rosemary thought the Glen minister was by no means as shy and tonguetied as he had been represented. He seemed to find no difficulty in talking easily and freely. Glen housewives would have been amazed had they heard him. But then so many Glen housewives talked only gossip and the price of eggs, and John Meredith was not interested in either. He talked to Rosemary of books and music and wide-world doings and something of his own history, and found that she could understand and respond. Rosemary, it appeared, possessed a book which Mr. Meredith had not read and wished to read. She offered to lend it to him and when they reached the old homestead on the hill he went in to get it.

The house itself was an old-fashioned gray one, hung with vines, through which the light in the sitting-room winked in friendly fashion. It looked down the Glen, over the harbour, silvered in the moonlight, to the sand-dunes and the moaning ocean. They walked in through a garden that always seemed to smell of roses, even when no roses were in bloom. There was a sisterhood of lilies at the gate and a ribbon of asters on either side of the broad walk, and a lacery of fir trees on the hill's edge beyond the house.

"You have the whole world at your doorstep here," said John Meredith, with a long breath. "What a view — what an outlook! At times I feel stifled down there in the Glen. You can breathe up here."

"It is calm tonight," said Rosemary laughing. "If there were a wind it would blow your breath away. We get 'a' the airts the wind can blow' up here. This place should be called Four Winds instead of the Harbour."

"I like wind," he said. "A day when there is no wind seems to me DEAD. A windy day wakes me up." He gave a conscious laugh. "On a calm day I fall into day dreams. No doubt you know my reputation, Miss West. If I cut you dead the next time we meet don't put it down to bad manners. Please understand that it is only abstraction and forgive me — and speak to me."

They found Ellen West in the sitting room when they went in. She laid her glasses down on the book she had been reading and looked at them in amazement tinged with something else. But she shook hands amiably with Mr. Meredith and he sat down and talked to her, while Rosemary hunted out his book.

Ellen West was ten years older than Rosemary, and so different from her that it was hard to believe they were sisters. She was dark and massive, with black hair, thick, black eyebrows and eyes of the clear, slaty blue of the gulf water in a north wind. She had a rather stern, forbidding look, but she was in reality very jolly, with a hearty, gurgling laugh and a deep, mellow, pleasant voice with a suggestion of masculinity about it. She had once remarked to Rosemary that she would really like to have a talk with that Presbyterian minister at the Glen, to see if he could find a word to say

to a woman when he was cornered. She had her chance now and she tackled him on world politics. Miss Ellen, who was a great reader, had been devouring a book on the Kaiser of Germany, and she demanded Mr. Meredith's opinion of him.

"A dangerous man," was his answer.

"I believe you!" Miss Ellen nodded. "Mark my words, Mr. Meredith, that man is going to fight somebody yet. He's ACHING to. He is going to set the world on fire."

"If you mean that he will wantonly precipitate a great war I hardly think so," said Mr. Meredith. "The day has gone by for that sort of thing."

"Bless you, it hasn't," rumbled Ellen. "The day never goes by for men and nations to make asses of themselves and take to the fists. The millennium isn't THAT near, Mr. Meredith, and YOU don't think it is any more than I do. As for this Kaiser, mark my words, he is going to make a heap of trouble" — and Miss Ellen prodded her book emphatically with her long finger. "Yes, if he isn't nipped in the bud he's going to make trouble. WE'LL live to see it — you and I will live to see it, Mr. Meredith. And who is going to nip him? England should, but she won't. WHO is going to nip him? Tell me that, Mr. Meredith."

Mr. Meredith couldn't tell her, but they plunged into a discussion of German militarism that lasted long after Rosemary had found the book. Rosemary said nothing, but sat in a little rocker behind Ellen and stroked an important black cat meditatively. John Meredith hunted big game in Europe with Ellen, but he looked oftener at Rosemary than at Ellen, and Ellen noticed it. After Rosemary had gone to the door with him and come back Ellen rose and looked at her accusingly.

"Rosemary West, that man has a notion of courting you."

Rosemary quivered. Ellen's speech was like a blow to her. It rubbed all the bloom off the pleasant evening. But she would not let Ellen see how it hurt her.

"Nonsense," she said, and laughed, a little too carelessly. "You see a beau for me in every bush, Ellen. Why he told me all about his wife

tonight — how much she was to him — how empty her death had left the world.”

“Well, that may be HIS way of courting,” retorted Ellen. “Men have all kinds of ways, I understand. But don’t forget your promise, Rosemary.”

“There is no need of my either forgetting or remembering it,” said Rosemary, a little wearily. “YOU forget that I’m an old maid, Ellen. It is only your sisterly delusion that I am still young and blooming and dangerous. Mr. Meredith merely wants to be a friend — if he wants that much itself. He’ll forget us both long before he gets back to the manse.”

“I’ve no objection to your being friends with him,” conceded Ellen, “but it musn’t go beyond friendship, remember. I’m always suspicious of widowers. They are not given to romantic ideas about friendship. They’re apt to mean business. As for this Presbyterian man, what do they call him shy for? He’s not a bit shy, though he may be absentminded — so absentminded that he forgot to say goodnight to ME when you started to go to the door with him. He’s got brains, too. There’s so few men round here that can talk sense to a body. I’ve enjoyed the evening. I wouldn’t mind seeing more of him. But no philandering, Rosemary, mind you — no philandering.”

Rosemary was quite used to being warned by Ellen from philandering if she so much as talked five minutes to any marriageable man under eighty or over eighteen. She had always laughed at the warning with unfeigned amusement. This time it did not amuse her — it irritated her a little. Who wanted to philander?

“Don’t be such a goose, Ellen,” she said with unaccustomed shortness as she took her lamp. She went upstairs without saying goodnight.

Ellen shook her head dubiously and looked at the black cat.

“What is she so cross about, St. George?” she asked. “When you howl you’re hit, I’ve always heard, George. But she promised, Saint — she promised, and we Wests always keep our word. So it won’t matter if he does want to philander, George. She promised. I won’t worry.”

Upstairs, in her room, Rosemary sat for a long while looking out of the window across the moonlit garden to the distant, shining harbour. She felt

vaguely upset and unsettled. She was suddenly tired of outworn dreams.
And in the garden the petals of the last red rose were scattered by a sudden
little wind. Summer was over — it was autumn.

Mrs. Alec Davis Makes A Call

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John Meredith walked slowly home. At first he thought a little about Rosemary, but by the time he reached Rainbow Valley he had forgotten all about her and was meditating on a point regarding German theology which Ellen had raised. He passed through Rainbow Valley and knew it not. The charm of Rainbow Valley had no potency against German theology. When he reached the manse he went to his study and took down a bulky volume in order to see which had been right, he or Ellen. He remained immersed in its mazes until dawn, struck a new trail of speculation and pursued it like a sleuth hound for the next week, utterly lost to the world, his parish and his family. He read day and night; he forgot to go to his meals when Una was not there to drag him to them; he never thought about Rosemary or Ellen again. Old Mrs. Marshall, over-harbour, was very ill and sent for him, but the message lay unheeded on his desk and gathered dust. Mrs. Marshall recovered but never forgave him. A young couple came to the manse to be married and Mr. Meredith, with unbrushed hair, in carpet slippers and faded dressing gown, married them. To be sure, he began by reading the funeral service to them and got along as far as “ashes to ashes and dust to dust” before he vaguely suspected that something was wrong.

“Dear me,” he said absently, “that is strange — very strange.”

The bride, who was very nervous, began to cry. The bridegroom, who was not in the least nervous, giggled.

“Please, sir, I think you’re burying us instead of marrying us,” he said.

“Excuse me,” said Mr. Meredith, as it did not matter much. He turned up the marriage service and got through with it, but the bride never felt quite properly married for the rest of her life.

He forgot his prayer-meeting again — but that did not matter, for it was a wet night and nobody came. He might even have forgotten his Sunday service if it had not been for Mrs. Alec Davis. Aunt Martha came

in on Saturday afternoon and told him that Mrs. Davis was in the parlour and wanted to see him. Mr. Meredith sighed. Mrs. Davis was the only woman in Glen St. Mary church whom he positively detested.

Unfortunately, she was also the richest, and his board of managers had warned Mr. Meredith against offending her. Mr. Meredith seldom thought of such a worldly matter as his stipend; but the managers were more practical. Also, they were astute. Without mentioning money, they contrived to instil into Mr. Meredith's mind a conviction that he should not offend Mrs. Davis. Otherwise, he would likely have forgotten all about her as soon as Aunt Martha had gone out. As it was, he turned down his Ewald with a feeling of annoyance and went across the hall to the parlour.

Mrs. Davis was sitting on the sofa, looking about her with an air of scornful disapproval.

What a scandalous room! There were no curtains on the window. Mrs. Davis did not know that Faith and Una had taken them down the day before to use as court trains in one of their plays and had forgotten to put them up again, but she could not have accused those windows more fiercely if she had known. The blinds were cracked and torn. The pictures on the walls were crooked; the rugs were awry; the vases were full of faded flowers; the dust lay in heaps — literally in heaps.

"What are we coming to?" Mrs. Davis asked herself, and then primmed up her unbeautiful mouth.

Jerry and Carl had been whooping and sliding down the banisters as she came through the hall. They did not see her and continued whooping and sliding, and Mrs. Davis was convinced they did it on purpose. Faith's pet rooster ambled through the hall, stood in the parlour doorway and looked at her. Not liking her looks, he did not venture in. Mrs. Davis gave a scornful sniff. A pretty manse, indeed, where roosters paraded the halls and stared people out of countenance.

"Shoo, there," commanded Mrs. Davis, poking her flounced, changeable-silk parasol at him.

Adam shooed. He was a wise rooster and Mrs. Davis had wrung the necks of so many roosters with her own fair hands in the course of her

fifty years that an air of the executioner seemed to hang around her. Adam scuttled through the hall as the minister came in.

Mr. Meredith still wore slippers and dressing gown, and his dark hair still fell in uncared-for locks over his high brow. But he looked the gentleman he was; and Mrs. Alec Davis, in her silk dress and beplumed bonnet, and kid gloves and gold chain looked the vulgar, coarse-souled woman she was. Each felt the antagonism of the other's personality. Mr. Meredith shrank, but Mrs. Davis girded up her loins for the fray. She had come to the manse to propose a certain thing to the minister and she meant to lose no time in proposing it. She was going to do him a favour — a great favour — and the sooner he was made aware of it the better. She had been thinking about it all summer and had come to a decision at last. This was all that mattered, Mrs. Davis thought. When she decided a thing it WAS decided. Nobody else had any say in the matter. That had always been her attitude. When she had made her mind up to marry Alec Davis she had married him and that was the end to it. Alec had never known how it happened, but what odds? So in this case — Mrs. Davis had arranged everything to her own satisfaction. Now it only remained to inform Mr. Meredith.

“Will you please shut that door?” said Mrs. Davis, unpriming her mouth slightly to say it, but speaking with asperity. “I have something important to say, and I can't say it with that racket in the hall.”

Mr. Meredith shut the door meekly. Then he sat down before Mrs. Davis. He was not wholly aware of her yet. His mind was still wrestling with Ewald's arguments. Mrs. Davis sensed this detachment and it annoyed her.

“I have come to tell you, Mr. Meredith,” she said aggressively, “that I have decided to adopt Una.”

“To — adopt — Una!” Mr. Meredith gazed at her blankly, not understanding in the least.

“Yes. I've been thinking it over for some time. I have often thought of adopting a child, since my husband's death. But it seemed so hard to get a suitable one. It is very few children I would want to take into MY home. I

wouldn't think of taking a home child — some outcast of the slums in all probability. And there is hardly ever any other child to be got. One of the fishermen down at the harbour died last fall and left six youngsters. They tried to get me to take one, but I soon gave them to understand that I had no idea of adopting trash like that. Their grandfather stole a horse. Besides, they were all boys and I wanted a girl — a quiet, obedient girl that I could train up to be a lady. Una will suit me exactly. She would be a nice little thing if she was properly looked after — so different from Faith. I would never dream of adopting Faith. But I'll take Una and I'll give her a good home, and upbringing, Mr. Meredith, and if she behaves herself I'll leave her all my money when I die. Not one of my own relatives shall have a cent of it in any case, I'm determined on that. It was the idea of aggravating them that set me to thinking of adopting a child as much as anything in the first place. Una shall be well dressed and educated and trained, Mr. Meredith, and I shall give her music and painting lessons and treat her as if she was my own."

Mr. Meredith was wide enough awake by this time. There was a faint flush in his pale cheek and a dangerous light in his fine dark eyes. Was this woman, whose vulgarity and consciousness of money oozed out of her at every pore, actually asking him to give her Una — his dear little wistful Una with Cecilia's own dark-blue eyes — the child whom the dying mother had clasped to her heart after the other children had been led weeping from the room. Cecilia had clung to her baby until the gates of death had shut between them. She had looked over the little dark head to her husband.

"Take good care of her, John," she had entreated. "She is so small — and sensitive. The others can fight their way — but the world will hurt HER. Oh, John, I don't know what you and she are going to do. You both need me so much. But keep her close to you — keep her close to you."

These had been almost her last words except a few unforgettable ones for him alone. And it was this child whom Mrs. Davis had coolly announced her intention of taking from him. He sat up straight and looked at Mrs. Davis. In spite of the worn dressing gown and the frayed slippers

there was something about him that made Mrs. Davis feel a little of the old reverence for “the cloth” in which she had been brought up. After all, there WAS a certain divinity hedging a minister, even a poor, unworldly, abstracted one.

“I thank you for your kind intentions, Mrs. Davis,” said Mr. Meredith with a gentle, final, quite awful courtesy, “but I cannot give you my child.”

Mrs. Davis looked blank. She had never dreamed of his refusing.

“Why, Mr. Meredith,” she said in astonishment. “You must be cr — you can’t mean it. You must think it over — think of all the advantages I can give her.”

“There is no need to think it over, Mrs. Davis. It is entirely out of the question. All the worldly advantages it is in your power to bestow on her could not compensate for the loss of a father’s love and care. I thank you again — but it is not to be thought of.”

Disappointment angered Mrs. Davis beyond the power of old habit to control. Her broad red face turned purple and her voice trembled.

“I thought you’d be only too glad to let me have her,” she sneered.

“Why did you think that?” asked Mr. Meredith quietly.

“Because nobody ever supposed you cared anything about any of your children,” retorted Mrs. Davis contemptuously. “You neglect them scandalously. It is the talk of the place. They aren’t fed and dressed properly, and they’re not trained at all. They have no more manners than a pack of wild Indians. You never think of doing your duty as a father. You let a stray child come here among them for a fortnight and never took any notice of her — a child that swore like a trooper I’m told. YOU wouldn’t have cared if they’d caught smallpox from her. And Faith made an exhibition of herself getting up in preaching and making that speech! And she rid a pig down the street — under your very eyes I understand. The way they act is past belief and you never lift a finger to stop them or try to teach them anything. And now when I offer one of them a good home and good prospects you refuse it and insult me. A pretty father you, to talk of loving and caring for your children!”

“That will do, woman!” said Mr. Meredith. He stood up and looked at Mrs. Davis with eyes that made her quail. “That will do,” he repeated. “I desire to hear no more, Mrs. Davis. You have said too much. It may be that I have been remiss in some respects in my duty as a parent, but it is not for you to remind me of it in such terms as you have used. Let us say good afternoon.”

Mrs. Davis did not say anything half so amiable as good afternoon, but she took her departure. As she swept past the minister a large, plump toad, which Carl had secreted under the lounge, hopped out almost under her feet. Mrs. Davis gave a shriek and in trying to avoid treading on the awful thing, lost her balance and her parasol. She did not exactly fall, but she staggered and reeled across the room in a very undignified fashion and brought up against the door with a thud that jarred her from head to foot. Mr. Meredith, who had not seen the toad, wondered if she had been attacked with some kind of apoplectic or paralytic seizure, and ran in alarm to her assistance. But Mrs. Davis, recovering her feet, waved him back furiously.

“Don’t you dare to touch me,” she almost shouted. “This is some more of your children’s doings, I suppose. This is no fit place for a decent woman. Give me my umbrella and let me go. I’ll never darken the doors of your manse or your church again.”

Mr. Meredith picked up the gorgeous parasol meekly enough and gave it to her. Mrs. Davis seized it and marched out. Jerry and Carl had given up banister sliding and were sitting on the edge of the veranda with Faith. Unfortunately, all three were singing at the tops of their healthy young voices “There’ll be a hot time in the old town tonight.” Mrs. Davis believed the song was meant for her and her only. She stopped and shook her parasol at them.

“Your father is a fool,” she said, “and you are three young varmints that ought to be whipped within an inch of your lives.”

“He isn’t,” cried Faith. “We’re not,” cried the boys. But Mrs. Davis was gone.

“Goodness, isn’t she mad!” said Jerry. “And what is a ‘varmint’ anyhow?”

John Meredith paced up and down the parlour for a few minutes; then he went back to his study and sat down. But he did not return to his German theology. He was too grievously disturbed for that. Mrs. Davis had wakened him up with a vengeance. WAS he such a remiss, careless father as she had accused him of being? HAD he so scandalously neglected the bodily and spiritual welfare of the four little motherless creatures dependent on him? WERE his people talking of it as harshly as Mrs. Davis had declared? It must be so, since Mrs. Davis had come to ask for Una in the full and confident belief that he would hand the child over to her as unconcernedly and gladly as one might hand over a strayed, unwelcome kitten. And, if so, what then?

John Meredith groaned and resumed his pacing up and down the dusty, disordered room. What could he do? He loved his children as deeply as any father could and he knew, past the power of Mrs. Davis or any of her ilk, to disturb his conviction, that they loved him devotedly. But WAS he fit to have charge of them? He knew — none better — his weaknesses and limitations. What was needed was a good woman’s presence and influence and common sense. But how could that be arranged? Even were he able to get such a housekeeper it would cut Aunt Martha to the quick. She believed she could still do all that was meet and necessary. He could not so hurt and insult the poor old woman who had been so kind to him and his. How devoted she had been to Cecilia! And Cecilia had asked him to be very considerate of Aunt Martha. To be sure, he suddenly remembered that Aunt Martha had once hinted that he ought to marry again. He felt she would not resent a wife as she would a housekeeper. But that was out of the question. He did not wish to marry — he did not and could not care for anyone. Then what could he do? It suddenly occurred to him that he would go over to Ingleside and talk over his difficulties with Mrs. Blythe. Mrs. Blythe was one of the few women he never felt shy or tongue-tied with. She was always so sympathetic and refreshing. It might be that she could suggest some solution of his problems. And even if she could not Mr.

Meredith felt that he needed a little decent human companionship after his dose of Mrs. Davis — something to take the taste of her out of his soul.

He dressed hurriedly and ate his supper less abstractedly than usual. It occurred to him that it was a poor meal. He looked at his children; they were rosy and healthy looking enough — except Una, and she had never been very strong even when her mother was alive. They were all laughing and talking — certainly they seemed happy. Carl was especially happy because he had two most beautiful spiders crawling around his supper plate. Their voices were pleasant, their manners did not seem bad, they were considerate of and gentle to one another. Yet Mrs. Davis had said their behaviour was the talk of the congregation.

As Mr. Meredith went through his gate Dr. Blythe and Mrs. Blythe drove past on the road that led to Lowbridge. The minister's face fell. Mrs. Blythe was going away — there was no use in going to Ingleside. And he craved a little companionship more than ever. As he gazed rather hopelessly over the landscape the sunset light struck on a window of the old West homestead on the hill. It flared out rosily like a beacon of good hope. He suddenly remembered Rosemary and Ellen West. He thought that he would relish some of Ellen's pungent conversation. He thought it would be pleasant to see Rosemary's slow, sweet smile and calm, heavenly blue eyes again. What did that old poem of Sir Philip Sidney's say? — "continual comfort in a face" — that just suited her. And he needed comfort. Why not go and call? He remembered that Ellen had asked him to drop in sometimes and there was Rosemary's book to take back — he ought to take it back before he forgot. He had an uneasy suspicion that there were a great many books in his library which he had borrowed at sundry times and in divers places and had forgotten to take back. It was surely his duty to guard against that in this case. He went back into his study, got the book, and plunged downward into Rainbow Valley.

More Gossip

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On the evening after Mrs. Myra Murray of the over-harbour section had been buried Miss Cornelia and Mary Vance came up to Ingleside. There were several things concerning which Miss Cornelia wished to unburden her soul. The funeral had to be all talked over, of course. Susan and Miss Cornelia thrashed this out between them; Anne took no part or delight in such goulsh conversations. She sat a little apart and watched the autumnal flame of dahlias in the garden, and the dreaming, glamorous harbour of the September sunset. Mary Vance sat beside her, knitting meekly. Mary's heart was down in the Rainbow Valley, whence came sweet, distance-softened sounds of children's laughter, but her fingers were under Miss Cornelia's eye. She had to knit so many rounds of her stocking before she might go to the valley. Mary knit and held her tongue, but used her ears.

"I never saw a nicer looking corpse," said Miss Cornelia judicially. "Myra Murray was always a pretty woman — she was a Corey from Lowbridge and the Coreys were noted for their good looks."

"I said to the corpse as I passed it, 'poor woman. I hope you are as happy as you look.'" sighed Susan. "She had not changed much. That dress she wore was the black satin she got for her daughter's wedding fourteen years ago. Her Aunt told her then to keep it for her funeral, but Myra laughed and said, 'I may wear it to my funeral, Aunty, but I will have a good time out of it first.' And I may say she did. Myra Murray was not a woman to attend her own funeral before she died. Many a time afterwards when I saw her enjoying herself out in company I thought to myself, 'You are a handsome woman, Myra Murray, and that dress becomes you, but it will likely be your shroud at last.' And you see my words have come true, Mrs. Marshall Elliott."

Susan sighed again heavily. She was enjoying herself hugely. A funeral was really a delightful subject of conversation.

“I always liked to meet Myra,” said Miss Cornelia. “She was always so gay and cheerful — she made you feel better just by her handshake. Myra always made the best of things.”

“That is true,” asserted Susan. “Her sister-in-law told me that when the doctor told her at last that he could do nothing for her and she would never rise from that bed again, Myra said quite cheerfully, ‘Well, if that is so, I’m thankful the preserving is all done, and I will not have to face the fall housecleaning. I always liked housecleaning in spring,’ she says, ‘but I always hated it in the fall. I will get clear of it this year, thank goodness.’ There are people who would call that levity, Mrs. Marshall Elliott, and I think her sister-in-law was a little ashamed of it. She said perhaps her sickness had made Myra a little light-headed. But I said, ‘No, Mrs. Murray, do not worry over it. It was just Myra’s way of looking at the bright side.’”

“Her sister Luella was just the opposite,” said Miss Cornelia. “There was no bright side for Luella — there was just black and shades of gray. For years she used always to be declaring she was going to die in a week or so. ‘I won’t be here to burden you long,’ she would tell her family with a groan. And if any of them ventured to talk about their little future plans she’d groan also and say, ‘Ah, *I* won’t be here then.’ When I went to see her I always agreed with her and it made her so mad that she was always quite a lot better for several days afterwards. She has better health now but no more cheerfulness. Myra was so different. She was always doing or saying something to make some one feel good. Perhaps the men they married had something to do with it. Luella’s man was a Tartar, believe ME, while Jim Murray was decent, as men go. He looked heartbroken to-day. It isn’t often I feel sorry for a man at his wife’s funeral, but I did feel for Jim Murray.”

“No wonder he looked sad. He will not get a wife like Myra again in a hurry,” said Susan. “Maybe he will not try, since his children are all grown up and Mirabel is able to keep house. But there is no predicting what a widower may or may not do and I, for one, will not try.”

“We’ll miss Myra terrible in church,” said Miss Cornelia. “She was such a worker. Nothing ever stumped HER. If she couldn’t get over a difficulty she’d get around it, and if she couldn’t get around it she’d pretend it wasn’t there — and generally it wasn’t. ‘I’ll keep a stiff upper lip to my journey’s end,’ said she to me once. Well, she has ended her journey.”

“Do you think so?” asked Anne suddenly, coming back from dreamland. “I can’t picture HER journey as being ended. Can YOU think of her sitting down and folding her hands — that eager, asking spirit of hers, with its fine adventurous outlook? No, I think in death she just opened a gate and went through — on — on — to new, shining adventures.”

“Maybe — maybe,” assented Miss Cornelia. “Do you know, Anne dearie, I never was much taken with this everlasting rest doctrine myself — though I hope it isn’t heresy to say so. I want to bustle round in heaven the same as here. And I hope there’ll be a celestial substitute for pies and doughnuts — something that has to be MADE. Of course, one does get awful tired at times — and the older you are the tireder you get. But the very tiredest could get rested in something short of eternity, you’d think — except, perhaps, a lazy man.”

“When I meet Myra Murray again,” said Anne, “I want to see her coming towards me, brisk and laughing, just as she always did here.”

“Oh, Mrs. Dr. dear,” said Susan, in a shocked tone, “you surely do not think that Myra will be laughing in the world to come?”

“Why not, Susan? Do you think we will be crying there?”

“No, no, Mrs. Dr. dear, do not misunderstand me. I do not think we shall be either crying or laughing.”

“What then?”

“Well,” said Susan, driven to it. “it is my opinion, Mrs. Dr. dear, that we shall just look solemn and holy.”

“And do you really think, Susan,” said Anne, looking solemn enough, “that either Myra Murray or I could look solemn and holy all the time — ALL the time, Susan?”

“Well,” admitted Susan reluctantly, “I might go so far as to say that you both would have to smile now and again, but I can never admit that there will be laughing in heaven. The idea seems really irreverent, Mrs. Dr. dear.”

“Well, to come back to earth,” said Miss Cornelia, “who can we get to take Myra’s class in Sunday School? Julia Clow has been teaching it since Myra took ill, but she’s going to town for the winter and we’ll have to get somebody else.”

“I heard that Mrs. Laurie Jamieson wanted it,” said Anne. “The Jamiesons have come to church very regularly since they moved to the Glen from Lowbridge.”

“New brooms!” said Miss Cornelia dubiously. “Wait till they’ve gone regularly for a year.”

“You cannot depend on Mrs. Jamieson a bit, Mrs. Dr. dear,” said Susan solemnly. “She died once and when they were measuring her for her coffin, after laying her out just beautiful, did she not go and come back to life! Now, Mrs. Dr. dear, you know you CANNOT depend on a woman like that.”

“She might turn Methodist at any moment,” said Miss Cornelia. “They tell me they went to the Methodist Church at Lowbridge quite as often as to the Presbyterian. I haven’t caught them at it here yet, but I would not approve of taking Mrs. Jamieson into the Sunday School. Yet we must not offend them. We are losing too many people, by death or bad temper. Mrs. Alec Davis has left the church, no one knows why. She told the managers that she would never pay another cent to Mr. Meredith’s salary. Of course, most people say that the children offended her, but somehow I don’t think so. I tried to pump Faith, but all I could get out of her was that Mrs. Davis had come, seemingly in high good humour, to see her father, and had left in an awful rage, calling them all ‘varmints!’”

“Varmints, indeed!” said Susan furiously. “Does Mrs. Alec Davis forget that her uncle on her mother’s side was suspected of poisoning his wife? Not that it was ever proved, Mrs. Dr. dear, and it does not do to believe all you hear. But if *I* had an uncle whose wife died without any

satisfactory reason, *I* would not go about the country calling innocent children varmints.”

“The point is,” said Miss Cornelia, “that Mrs. Davis paid a large subscription, and how its loss is going to be made up is a problem. And if she turns the other Douglasses against Mr. Meredith, as she will certainly try to do, he will just have to go.”

“I do not think Mrs. Alec Davis is very well liked by the rest of the clan,” said Susan. “It is not likely she will be able to influence them.”

“But those Douglasses all hang together so. If you touch one, you touch all. We can’t do without them, so much is certain. They pay half the salary. They are not mean, whatever else may be said of them. Norman Douglas used to give a hundred a year long ago before he left.”

“What did he leave for?” asked Anne.

“He declared a member of the session cheated him in a cow deal. He hasn’t come to church for twenty years. His wife used to come regular while she was alive, poor thing, but he never would let her pay anything, except one red cent every Sunday. She felt dreadfully humiliated. I don’t know that he was any too good a husband to her, though she was never heard to complain. But she always had a cowed look. Norman Douglas didn’t get the woman he wanted thirty years ago and the Douglasses never liked to put up with second best.”

“Who was the woman he did want.”

“Ellen West. They weren’t engaged exactly, I believe, but they went about together for two years. And then they just broke off — nobody ever know why. Just some silly quarrel, I suppose. And Norman went and married Hester Reese before his temper had time to cool — married her just to spite Ellen, I haven’t a doubt. So like a man! Hester was a nice little thing, but she never had much spirit and he broke what little she had. She was too meek for Norman. He needed a woman who could stand up to him. Ellen would have kept him in fine order and he would have liked her all the better for it. He despised Hester, that is the truth, just because she always gave in to him. I used to hear him say many a time, long ago when he was a young fellow ‘Give me a spunky woman — spunk for me every

time.’ And then he went and married a girl who couldn’t say boo to a goose — manlike. That family of Reeses were just vegetables. They went through the motions of living, but they didn’t LIVE.”

“Russell Reese used his first wife’s wedding-ring to marry his second,” said Susan reminiscently. “That was TOO economical in my opinion, Mrs. Dr. dear. And his brother John has his own tombstone put up in the over-harbour graveyard, with everything on it but the date of death, and he goes and looks at it every Sunday. Most folks would not consider that much fun, but it is plain he does. People do have such different ideas of enjoyment. As for Norman Douglas, he is a perfect heathen. When the last minister asked him why he never went to church he said “Too many ugly women there, parson — too many ugly women!” I should like to go to such a man, Mrs. Dr. dear, and say to him solemnly, ‘There is a hell!’”

“Oh, Norman doesn’t believe there is such a place,” said Miss Cornelia. “I hope he’ll find out his mistake when he comes to die. There, Mary, you’ve knit your three inches and you can go and play with the children for half an hour.”

Mary needed no second bidding. She flew to Rainbow Valley with a heart as light as her heels, and in the course of conversation told Faith Meredith all about Mrs. Alec Davis.

“And Mrs. Elliott says that she’ll turn all the Douglasses against your father and then he’ll have to leave the Glen because his salary won’t be paid,” concluded Mary. “I don’t know what is to be done, honest to goodness. If only old Norman Douglas would come back to church and pay, it wouldn’t be so bad. But he won’t — and the Douglasses will leave — and you all will have to go.”

Faith carried a heavy heart to bed with her that night. The thought of leaving the Glen was unbearable. Nowhere else in the world were there such chums as the Blythes. Her little heart had been wrung when they had left Maywater — she had shed many bitter tears when she parted with Maywater chums and the old manse there where her mother had lived and died. She could not contemplate calmly the thought of such another and

harder wrench. She COULDN'T leave Glen St. Mary and dear Rainbow Valley and that delicious graveyard.

"It's awful to be minister's family," groaned Faith into her pillow. "Just as soon as you get fond of a place you are torn up by the roots. I'll never, never, NEVER marry a minister, no matter how nice he is."

Faith sat up in bed and looked out of the little vine-hung window. The night was very still, the silence broken only by Una's soft breathing. Faith felt terribly alone in the world. She could see Glen St. Mary lying under the starry blue meadows of the autumn night. Over the valley a light shone from the girls' room at Ingleside, and another from Walter's room. Faith wondered if poor Walter had toothache again. Then she sighed, with a little passing sigh of envy of Nan and Di. They had a mother and a settled home — THEY were not at the mercy of people who got angry without any reason and called you a varmint. Away beyond the Glen, amid fields that were very quiet with sleep, another light was burning. Faith knew it shone in the house where Norman Douglas lived. He was reputed to sit up all hours of the night reading. Mary had said if he could only be induced to return to the church all would be well. And why not? Faith looked at a big, low star hanging over the tall, pointed spruce at the gate of the Methodist Church and had an inspiration. She knew what ought to be done and she, Faith Meredith, would do it. She would make everything right. With a sigh of satisfaction, she turned from the lonely, dark world and cuddled down beside Una.

Tit for Tat

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With Faith, to decide was to act. She lost no time in carrying out the idea. As soon as she came home from school the next day she left the manse and made her way down the Glen. Walter Blythe joined her as she passed the post office.

“I’m going to Mrs. Elliott’s on an errand for mother,” he said.

“Where are you going, Faith?”

“I am going somewhere on church business,” said Faith loftily. She did not volunteer any further information and Walter felt rather snubbed. They walked on in silence for a little while. It was a warm, windy evening with a sweet, resinous air. Beyond the sand dunes were gray seas, soft and beautiful. The Glen brook bore down a freight of gold and crimson leaves, like fairy shallops. In Mr. James Reese’s buckwheat stubble-land, with its beautiful tones of red and brown, a crow parliament was being held, whereat solemn deliberations regarding the welfare of crowland were in progress. Faith cruelly broke up the august assembly by climbing up on the fence and hurling a broken rail at it. Instantly the air was filled with flapping black wings and indignant caws.

“Why did you do that?” said Walter reproachfully. “They were having such a good time.”

“Oh, I hate crows,” said Faith airily. “The are so black and sly I feel sure they’re hypocrites. They steal little birds’ eggs out of their nests, you know. I saw one do it on our lawn last spring. Walter, what makes you so pale to-day? Did you have the toothache again last night?”

Walter shivered.

“Yes — a raging one. I couldn’t sleep a wink — so I just paced up and down the floor and imagined I was an early Christian martyr being

tortured at the command of Nero. That helped ever so much for a while — and then I got so bad I couldn't imagine anything."

"Did you cry?" asked Faith anxiously.

"No — but I lay down on the floor and groaned," admitted Walter.

"Then the girls came in and Nan put cayenne pepper in it — and that made it worse — Di made me hold a swallow of cold water in my mouth — and I couldn't stand it, so they called Susan. Susan said it served me right for sitting up in the cold garret yesterday writing poetry trash. But she started up the kitchen fire and got me a hot-water bottle and it stopped the toothache. As soon as I felt better I told Susan my poetry wasn't trash and she wasn't any judge. And she said no, thank goodness she was not and she did not know anything about poetry except that it was mostly a lot of lies. Now you know, Faith, that isn't so. That is one reason why I like writing poetry — you can say so many things in it that are true in poetry but wouldn't be true in prose. I told Susan so, but she said to stop my jawing and go to sleep before the water got cold, or she'd leave me to see if rhyming would cure toothache, and she hoped it would be a lesson to me."

"Why don't you go to the dentist at Lowbridge and get the tooth out?"

Walter shivered again.

"They want me to — but I can't. It would hurt so."

"Are you afraid of a little pain?" asked Faith contemptuously.

Walter flushed.

"It would be a BIG pain. I hate being hurt. Father said he wouldn't insist on my going — he'd wait until I'd made up my own mind to go."

"It wouldn't hurt as long as the toothache," argued Faith, "You've had five spells of toothache. If you'd just go and have it out there'd be no more bad nights. *I* had a tooth out once. I yelled for a moment, but it was all over then — only the bleeding."

"The bleeding is worst of all — it's so ugly," cried Walter. "It just made me sick when Jem cut his foot last summer. Susan said I looked more like fainting than Jem did. But I couldn't hear to see Jem hurt, either. Somebody is always getting hurt, Faith — and it's awful. I just can't

BEAR to see things hurt. It makes me just want to run — and run — and run — till I can't hear or see them."

"There's no use making a fuss over anyone getting hurt," said Faith, tossing her curls. "Of course, if you've hurt yourself very bad, you have to yell — and blood IS messy — and I don't like seeing other people hurt, either. But I don't want to run — I want to go to work and help them. Your father HAS to hurt people lots of times to cure them. What would they do if HE ran away?"

"I didn't say I WOULD run. I said I WANTED to run. That's a different thing. I want to help people, too. But oh, I wish there weren't any ugly, dreadful things in the world. I wish everything was glad and beautiful."

"Well, don't let's think of what isn't," said Faith. "After all, there's lots of fun in being alive. You wouldn't have toothache if you were dead, but still, wouldn't you lots rather be alive than dead? I would, a hundred times. Oh, here's Dan Reese. He's been down to the harbour for fish."

"I hate Dan Reese," said Walter.

"So do I. All us girls do. I'm just going to walk past and never take the least notice of him. You watch me!"

Faith accordingly stalked past Dan with her chin out and an expression of scorn that bit into his soul. He turned and shouted after her.

"Pig-girl! Pig-girl!! Pig-girl!!!" in a crescendo of insult.

Faith walked on, seemingly oblivious. But her lip trembled slightly with a sense of outrage. She knew she was no match for Dan Reese when it came to an exchange of epithets. She wished Jem Blythe had been with her instead of Walter. If Dan Reese had dared to call her a pig-girl in Jem's hearing, Jem would have wiped up the dust with him. But it never occurred to Faith to expect Walter to do it, or blame him for not doing it. Walter, she knew, never fought other boys. Neither did Charlie Clow of the north road. The strange part was that, while she despised Charlie for a coward, it never occurred to her to disdain Walter. It was simply that he seemed to her an inhabitant of a world of his own, where different traditions prevailed. Faith would as soon have expected a starry-eyed young angel to

pummel dirty, freckled Dan Reese for her as Walter Blythe. She would not have blamed the angel and she did not blame Walter Blythe. But she wished that sturdy Jem or Jerry had been there and Dan's insult continued to rankle in her soul.

Walter was pale no longer. He had flushed crimson and his beautiful eyes were clouded with shame and anger. He knew that he ought to have avenged Faith. Jem would have sailed right in and made Dan eat his words with bitter sauce. Ritchie Warren would have overwhelmed Dan with worse "names" than Dan had called Faith. But Walter could not — simply could not—"call names." He knew he would get the worst of it. He could never conceive or utter the vulgar, ribald insults of which Dan Reese had unlimited command. And as for the trial by fist, Walter couldn't fight. He hated the idea. It was rough and painful — and, worst of all, it was ugly. He never could understand Jem's exultation in an occasional conflict. But he wished he COULD fight Dan Reese. He was horribly ashamed because Faith Meredith had been insulted in his presence and he had not tried to punish her insulter. He felt sure she must despise him. She had not even spoken to him since Dan had called her pig-girl. He was glad when they came to the parting of the ways.

Faith, too, was relieved, though for a different reason. She wanted to be alone because she suddenly felt rather nervous about her errand. Impulse had cooled, especially since Dan had bruised her self-respect. She must go through with it, but she no longer had enthusiasm to sustain her. She was going to see Norman Douglas and ask him to come back to church, and she began to be afraid of him. What had seemed so easy and simple up at the Glen seemed very different down here. She had heard a good deal about Norman Douglas, and she knew that even the biggest boys in school were afraid of him. Suppose he called her something nasty — she had heard he was given to that. Faith could not endure being called names — they subdued her far more quickly than a physical blow. But she would go on — Faith Meredith always went on. If she did not her father might have to leave the Glen.

At the end of the long lane Faith came to the house — a big, old-fashioned one with a row of soldierly Lombardies marching past it. On the back veranda Norman Douglas himself was sitting, reading a newspaper. His big dog was beside him. Behind, in the kitchen, where his housekeeper, Mrs. Wilson, was getting supper, there was a clatter of dishes — an angry clatter, for Norman Douglas had just had a quarrel with Mrs. Wilson, and both were in a very bad temper over it. Consequently, when Faith stepped on the veranda and Norman Douglas lowered his newspaper she found herself looking into the choleric eyes of an irritated man.

Norman Douglas was rather a fine-looking personage in his way. He had a sweep of long red beard over his broad chest and a mane of red hair, ungrizzled by the years, on his massive head. His high, white forehead was unwrinkled and his blue eyes could flash still with all the fire of his tempestuous youth. He could be very amiable when he liked, and he could be very terrible. Poor Faith, so anxiously bent on retrieving the situation in regard to the church, had caught him in one of his terrible moods.

He did not know who she was and he gazed at her with disfavour. Norman Douglas liked girls of spirit and flame and laughter. At this moment Faith was very pale. She was of the type to which colour means everything. Lacking her crimson cheeks she seemed meek and even insignificant. She looked apologetic and afraid, and the bully in Norman Douglas's heart stirred.

“Who the dickens are you? And what do you want here?” he demanded in his great resounding voice, with a fierce scowl.

For once in her life Faith had nothing to say. She had never supposed Norman Douglas was like THIS. She was paralyzed with terror of him. He saw it and it made him worse.

“What's the matter with you?” he boomed. “You look as if you wanted to say something and was scared to say it. What's troubling you? Confound it, speak up, can't you?”

No. Faith could not speak up. No words would come. But her lips began to tremble.

“For heaven’s sake, don’t cry,” shouted Norman. “I can’t stand snivelling. If you’ve anything to say, say it and have done. Great Kitty, is the girl possessed of a dumb spirit? Don’t look at me like that — I’m human — I haven’t got a tail! Who are you — who are you, I say?”

Norman’s voice could have been heard at the harbour. Operations in the kitchen were suspended. Mrs. Wilson was listening open-eared and eyed. Norman put his huge brown hands on his knees and leaned forward, staring into Faith’s pallid, shrinking face. He seemed to loom over her like some evil giant out of a fairy tale. She felt as if he would eat her up next thing, body and bones.

“I — am — Faith — Meredith,” she said, in little more than a whisper.

“Meredith, hey? One of the parson’s youngsters, hey? I’ve heard of you — I’ve heard of you! Riding on pigs and breaking the Sabbath! A nice lot! What do you want here, hey? What do you want of the old pagan, hey? I don’t ask favours of parsons — and I don’t give any. What do you want, I say?”

Faith wished herself a thousand miles away. She stammered out her thought in its naked simplicity.

“I came — to ask you — to go to church — and pay — to the salary.”

Norman glared at her. Then he burst forth again.

“You impudent hussy — you! Who put you up to it, jade? Who put you up to it?”

“Nobody,” said poor Faith.

“That’s a lie. Don’t lie to me! Who sent you here? It wasn’t your father — he hasn’t the smeddum of a flea — but he wouldn’t send you to do what he dassn’t do himself. I suppose it was some of them confounded old maids at the Glen, was it — was it, hey?”

“No — I — I just came myself.”

“Do you take me for a fool?” shouted Norman.

“No — I thought you were a gentleman,” said Faith faintly, and certainly without any thought of being sarcastic.

Norman bounced up.

“Mind your own business. I don’t want to hear another word from you. If you wasn’t such a kid I’d teach you to interfere in what doesn’t concern you. When I want parsons or pill-dosers I’ll send for them. Till I do I’ll have no truck with them. Do you understand? Now, get out, cheese-face.”

Faith got out. She stumbled blindly down the steps, out of the yard gate and into the lane. Half way up the lane her daze of fear passed away and a reaction of tingling anger possessed her. By the time she reached the end of the lane she was in such a furious temper as she had never experienced before. Norman Douglas’ insults burned in her soul, kindling a scorching flame. Go home! Not she! She would go straight back and tell that old ogre just what she thought of him — she would show him — oh, wouldn’t she! Cheese-face, indeed!

Unhesitatingly she turned and walked back. The veranda was deserted and the kitchen door shut. Faith opened the door without knocking, and went in. Norman Douglas had just sat down at the supper table, but he still held his newspaper. Faith walked inflexibly across the room, caught the paper from his hand, flung it on the floor and stamped on it. Then she faced him, with her flashing eyes and scarlet cheeks. She was such a handsome young fury that Norman Douglas hardly recognized her.

“What’s brought you back?” he growled, but more in bewilderment than rage.

Unquailingly she glared back into the angry eyes against which so few people could hold their own.

“I have come back to tell you exactly what I think of you,” said Faith in clear, ringing tones. “I am not afraid of you. You are a rude, unjust, tyrannical, disagreeable old man. Susan says you are sure to go to hell, and I was sorry for you, but I am not now. Your wife never had a new hat for ten years — no wonder she died. I am going to make faces at you whenever I see you after this. Every time I am behind you you will know what is happening. Father has a picture of the devil in a book in his study, and I mean to go home and write your name under it. You are an old vampire and I hope you’ll have the Scotch fiddle!”

Faith did not know what a vampire meant any more than she knew what the Scotch fiddle was. She had heard Susan use the expressions and gathered from her tone that both were dire things. But Norman Douglas knew what the latter meant at least. He had listened in absolute silence to Faith's tirade. When she paused for breath, with a stamp of her foot, he suddenly burst into loud laughter. With a mighty slap of hand on knee he exclaimed,

"I vow you've got spunk, after all — I like spunk. Come, sit down — sit down!"

"I will not." Faith's eyes flashed more passionately. She thought she was being made fun of — treated contemptuously. She would have enjoyed another explosion of rage, but this cut deep. "I will not sit down in your house. I am going home. But I am glad I came back here and told you exactly what my opinion of you is."

"So am I — so am I," chuckled Norman. "I like you — you're fine — you're great. Such roses — such vim! Did I call her cheese-face? Why, she never smelt a cheese. Sit down. If you'd looked like that at the first, girl! So you'll write my name under the devil's picture, will you? But he's black, girl, he's black — and I'm red. It won't do — it won't do! And you hope I'll have the Scotch fiddle, do you? Lord love you, girl, I had IT when I was a boy. Don't wish it on me again. Sit down — sit in. We'll tak' a cup o' kindness."

"No, thank you," said Faith haughtily.

"Oh, yes, you will. Come, come now, I apologize, girl — I apologize. I made a fool of myself and I'm sorry. Man can't say fairer. Forget and forgive. Shake hands, girl — shake hands. She won't — no, she won't! But she must! Look-a-here, girl, if you'll shake hands and break bread with me I'll pay what I used to to the salary and I'll go to church the first Sunday in every month and I'll make Kitty Alec hold her jaw. I'm the only one in the clan can do it. Is it a bargain, girl?"

It seemed a bargain. Faith found herself shaking hands with the ogre and then sitting at his board. Her temper was over — Faith's tempers

never lasted very long — but its excitement still sparkled in her eyes and crimsoned her cheeks. Norman Douglas looked at her admiringly.

“Go, get some of your best preserves, Wilson,” he ordered, “and stop sulking, woman, stop sulking. What if we did have a quarrel, woman? A good squall clears the air and briskens things up. But no drizzling and fogging afterwards — no drizzling and fogging, woman. I can’t stand that. Temper in a woman but no tears for me. Here, girl, is some messed up meat and potatoes for you. Begin on that. Wilson has some fancy name for it, but I call lit macanaccady. Anything I can’t analyze in the eating line I call macanaccady and anything wet that puzzles me I call shallamagouslem. Wilson’s tea is shallamagouslem. I swear she makes it out of burdocks. Don’t take any of the ungodly black liquid — here’s some milk for you. What did you say your name was?”

“Faith.”

“No name that — no name that! I can’t stomach such a name. Got any other?”

“No, sir.”

“Don’t like the name, don’t like it. There’s no smeddum to it. Besides, it makes me think of my Aunt Jinny. She called her three girls Faith, Hope, and Charity. Faith didn’t believe in anything — Hope was a born pessimist — and Charity was a miser. You ought to be called Red Rose — you look like one when you’re mad. I’LL call you Red Rose. And you’ve roped me into promising to go to church? But only once a month, remember — only once a month. Come now, girl, will you let me off? I used to pay a hundred to the salary every year and go to church. If I promise to pay two hundred a year will you let me off going to church? Come now!”

“No, no, sir,” said Faith, dimpling roguishly. “I want you to go to church, too.”

“Well, a bargain is a bargain. I reckon I can stand it twelve times a year. What a sensation it’ll make the first Sunday I go! And old Susan Baker says I’m going to hell, hey? Do you

believe

I'll go there — come, now, do you?"

"I hope not, sir," stammered Faith in some confusion.

"WHY do you hope not? Come, now, WHY do you hope not? Give us a reason, girl — give us a reason."

"It — it must be a very — uncomfortable place, sir."

"Uncomfortable? All depends on your taste in comfortable, girl.

I'd soon get tired of angels. Fancy old Susan in a halo, now!"

Faith did fancy it, and it tickled her so much that she had to laugh. Norman eyed her approvingly.

"See the fun of it, hey? Oh, I like you — you're great. About this church business, now — can your father preach?"

"He is a splendid preacher," said loyal Faith.

"He is, hey? I'll see — I'll watch out for flaws. He'd better be careful what he says before ME. I'll catch him — I'll trip him up — I'll keep tabs on his arguments. I'm bound to have some fun out of this church going business. Does he ever preach hell?"

"No — o — o — I don't think so."

"Too bad. I like sermons on that subject. You tell him that if he wants to keep me in good humour to preach a good rip-roaring sermon on hell once every six months — and the more brimstone the better. I like 'em smoking. And think of all the pleasure he'd give the old maids, too. They'd all keep looking at old Norman Douglas and thinking, 'That's for you, you old reprobate. That's what's in store for YOU!' I'll give an extra ten dollars every time you get your father to preach on hell. Here's Wilson and the jam. Like that, hey? IT isn't macanaccady. Taste!"

Faith obediently swallowed the big spoonful Norman held out to her. Luckily it WAS good.

"Best plum jam in the world," said Norman, filling a large saucer and plumping it down before her. "Glad you like it. I'll give you a couple of jars to take home with you. There's nothing mean about me — never was.

The devil can't catch me at THAT corner, anyhow. It wasn't my fault that Hester didn't have a new hat for ten years. It was her own — she pinched on hats to save money to give yellow fellows over in China. *I* never gave a cent to missions in my life — never will. Never you try to bamboozle me into that! A hundred a year to the salary and church once a month — but no spoiling good heathens to make poor Christians! Why, girl, they wouldn't be fit for heaven or hell — clean spoiled for either place — clean spoiled. Hey, Wilson, haven't you got a smile on yet? Beats all how you women can sulk! *I* never sulked in my life — it's just one big flash and crash with me and then — pouf — the squall's over and the sun is out and you could eat out of my hand."

Norman insisted on driving Faith home after supper and he filled the buggy up with apples, cabbages, potatoes and pumpkins and jars of jam.

"There's a nice little tom-pussy out in the barn. I'll give you that too, if you'd like it. Say the word," he said.

"No, thank you," said Faith decidedly. "I don't like cats, and besides, I have a rooster."

"Listen to her. You can't cuddle a rooster as you can a kitten. Who ever heard of petting a rooster? Better take little Tom. I want to find a good home for him."

"No. Aunt Martha has a cat and he would kill a strange kitten."

Norman yielded the point rather reluctantly. He gave Faith an exciting drive home, behind his wild two-year old, and when he had let her out at the kitchen door of the manse and dumped his cargo on the back veranda he drove away shouting,

"It's only once a month — only once a month, mind!"

Faith went up to bed, feeling a little dizzy and breathless, as if she had just escaped from the grasp of a genial whirlwind. She was happy and thankful. No fear now that they would have to leave the Glen and the graveyard and Rainbow Valley. But she fell asleep troubled by a disagreeable subconsciousness that Dan Reese had called her pig-girl and that, having stumbled on such a congenial epithet, he would continue to call her so whenever opportunity offered.

Chapter XVII.

A Double Victory

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Norman Douglas came to church the first Sunday in November and made all the sensation he desired. Mr. Meredith shook hands with him absently on the church steps and hoped dreamily that Mrs. Douglas was well.

“She wasn’t very well just before I buried her ten years ago, but I reckon she has better health now,” boomed Norman, to the horror and amusement of every one except Mr. Meredith, who was absorbed in wondering if he had made the last head of his sermon as clear as he might have, and hadn’t the least idea what Norman had said to him or he to Norman.

Norman intercepted Faith at the gate.

“Kept my word, you see — kept my word, Red Rose. I’m free now till the first Sunday in December. Fine sermon, girl — fine sermon. Your father has more in his head than he carries on his face. But he contradicted himself once — tell him he contradicted himself. And tell him I want that brimstone sermon in December. Great way to wind up the old year — with a taste of hell, you know. And what’s the matter with a nice tasty discourse on heaven for New Year’s? Though it wouldn’t be half as interesting as hell, girl — not half. Only I’d like to know what your father thinks about heaven — he CAN think — rarest thing in the world — a person who can think. But he DID contradict himself. Ha, ha! Here’s a question you might ask him sometime when he’s awake, girl. ‘Can God make a stone so big He couldn’t lift it Himself?’ Don’t forget now. I want to hear his opinion on it. I’ve stumped many a minister with that, girl.”

Faith was glad to escape him and run home. Dan Reese, standing among the crowd of boys at the gate,

looked at her and shaped his mouth into “pig-girl,” but dared not utter it aloud just there. Next day in school was a different matter. At noon

recess Faith encountered Dan in the little spruce plantation behind the school and Dan shouted once more,

“Pig-girl! Pig-girl! ROOSTER-GIRL!”

Walter Blythe suddenly rose from a mossy cushion behind a little clump of firs where he had been reading. He was very pale, but his eyes blazed.

“You hold your tongue, Dan Reese!” he said.

“Oh, hello, Miss Walter,” retorted Dan, not at all abashed. He vaulted airily to the top of the rail fence and chanted insultingly,

”Cowardy, cowardy-custard
Stole a pot of mustard,
Cowardy, cowardy-custard!”

“You are a coincidence!” said Walter scornfully, turning still whiter. He had only a very hazy idea what a coincidence was, but Dan had none at all and thought it must be something peculiarly opprobrious.

“Yah! Cowardy!” he yelled gain. “Your mother writes lies —
lies —
lies! And Faith Meredith is a pig-girl — a — pig-girl — a pig-girl!
And she’s a rooster-girl — a rooster-girl — a rooster-girl! Yah!
Cowardy — cowardy — cust—”

Dan got no further. Walter had hurled himself across the intervening space and knocked Dan off the fence backward with one well-directed blow. Dan’s sudden inglorious sprawl was greeted with a burst of laughter and a clapping of hands from Faith. Dan sprang up, purple with rage, and began to climb the fence. But just then the school-bell rang and Dan knew what happened to boys who were late during Mr. Hazard’s regime.

“We’ll fight this out,” he howled. “Cowardy!”

“Any time you like,” said Walter.

“Oh, no, no, Walter,” protested Faith. “Don’t fight him. *I* don’t mind what he says — I wouldn’t condescend to mind the like of HIM.”

“He insulted you and he insulted my mother,” said Walter, with the same deadly calm. “Tonight after school, Dan.”

“I’ve got to go right home from school to pick taters after the harrows, dad says,” answered Dan sulkily. “But tomorrow night’ll do.”

“All right — here tomorrow night,” agreed Walter.

“And I’ll smash your sissy-face for you,” promised Dan.

Walter shuddered — not so much from fear of the threat as from repulsion over the ugliness and vulgarity of it. But he held his head high and marched into school. Faith followed in a conflict of emotions. She hated to think of Walter fighting that little sneak, but oh, he had been splendid! And he was going to fight for HER — Faith Meredith — to punish her insulter! Of course he would win — such eyes spelled victory.

Faith’s confidence in her champion had dimmed a little by evening, however. Walter had seemed so very quiet and dull the rest of the day in school.

“If it were only Jem,” she sighed to Una, as they sat on Hezekiah Pollock’s tombstone in the graveyard. “HE is such a fighter — he could finish Dan off in no time. But Walter doesn’t know much about fighting.”

“I’m so afraid he’ll be hurt,” sighed Una, who hated fighting and couldn’t understand the subtle, secret exultation she divined in Faith.

“He oughtn’t to be,” said Faith uncomfortably. “He’s every bit as big as Dan.”

“But Dan’s so much older,” said Una. “Why, he’s nearly a year older.”

“Dan hasn’t done much fighting when you come to count up,” said Faith. “I believe he’s really a coward. He didn’t think Walter would fight, or he wouldn’t have called names before him. Oh, if you could just have seen Walter’s face when he looked at him, Una! It made me shiver — with a nice shiver. He looked just like Sir Galahad in that poem father read us on Saturday.”

“I hate the thought of them fighting and I wish it could be stopped,” said Una.

“Oh, it’s got to go on now,” cried Faith. “It’s a matter of honour. Don’t you DARE tell anyone, Una. If you do I’ll never tell you secrets again!”

“I won’t tell,” agreed Una. “But I won’t stay tomorrow to watch the fight. I’m coming right home.”

“Oh, all right. *I* have to be there — it would be mean not to, when Walter is fighting for me. I’m going to tie my colours on his arm — that’s the thing to do when he’s my knight. How lucky Mrs. Blythe gave me that pretty blue hair-ribbon for my birthday! I’ve only worn it twice so it will be almost new. But I wish I was sure Walter would win. It will be so — so HUMILIATING if he doesn’t.”

Faith would have been yet more dubious if she could have seen her champion just then. Walter had gone home from school with all his righteous anger at a low ebb and a very nasty feeling in its place. He had to fight Dan Reese the next night — and he didn’t want to — he hated the thought of it. And he kept thinking of it all the time. Not for a minute could he get away from the thought. Would it hurt much? He was terribly afraid that it would hurt. And would he be defeated and shamed?

He could not eat any supper worth speaking of. Susan had made a big batch of his favourite monkey-faces, but he could choke only one down. Jem ate four. Walter wondered how he could. How could ANYBODY eat? And how could they all talk gaily as they were doing? There was mother, with her shining eyes and pink cheeks. SHE didn’t know her son had to fight next day. Would she be so gay if she knew, Walter wondered darkly. Jem had taken Susan’s picture with his new camera and the result was passed around the table and Susan was terribly indignant over it.

“I am no beauty, Mrs. Dr. dear, and well I know it, and have always known it,” she said in an aggrieved tone, “but that I am as ugly as that picture makes me out I will never, no, never believe.”

Jem laughed over this and Anne laughed again with him. Walter couldn’t endure it. He got up and fled to his room.

“That child has got something on his mind, Mrs. Dr. dear,” said Susan. “He has et next to nothing. Do you suppose he is plotting another poem?”

Poor Walter was very far removed in spirit from the starry realms of poesy just then. He propped his elbow on his open windowsill and leaned his head drearily on his hands.

“Come on down to the shore, Walter,” cried Jem, busting in. “The boys are going to burn the sandhill grass tonight. Father says we can go. Come on.”

At any other time Walter would have been delighted. He gloried in the burning of the sandhill grass. But now he flatly refused to go, and no arguments or entreaties could move him. Disappointed Jem, who did not care for the long dark walk to Four Winds Point alone, retreated to his museum in the garret and buried himself in a book. He soon forgot his disappointment, revelling with the heroes of old romance, and pausing occasionally to picture himself a famous general, leading his troops to victory on some great battlefield.

Walter sat at his window until bedtime. Di crept in, hoping to be told what was wrong, but Walter could not talk of it, even to Di. Talking of it seemed to give it a reality from which he shrank. It was torture enough to think of it. The crisp, withered leaves rustled on the maple trees outside his window. The glow of rose and flame had died out of the hollow, silvery sky, and the full moon was rising gloriously over Rainbow Valley. Afar off, a ruddy woodfire was painting a page of glory on the horizon beyond the hills. It was a sharp, clear evening when faraway sounds were heard distinctly. A fox was barking across the pond; an engine was puffing down at the Glen station; a bluejay was screaming madly in the maple grove; there was laughter over on the manse lawn. How could people laugh? How could foxes and bluejays and engines behave as if nothing were going to happen on the morrow?

“Oh, I wish it was over,” groaned Walter.

He slept very little that night and had hard work choking down his porridge in the morning. Susan WAS rather lavish in her platefuls. Mr. Hazard found him an unsatisfactory pupil that day. Faith Meredith’s wits seemed to be wool-gathering, too. Dan Reese kept drawing surreptitious pictures of girls, with pig or rooster heads, on his slate and holding them

up for all to see. The news of the coming battle had leaked out and most of the boys and many of the girls were in the spruce plantation when Dan and Walter sought it after school. Una had gone home, but Faith was there, having tied her blue ribbon around Walter's arm. Walter was thankful that neither Jem nor Di nor Nan were among the crowd of spectators. Somehow they had not heard of what was in the wind and had gone home, too. Walter faced Dan quite undauntedly now. At the last moment all his fear had vanished, but he still felt disgust at the idea of fighting. Dan, it was noted, was really paler under his freckles than Walter was. One of the older boys gave the word and Dan struck Walter in the face.

Walter reeled a little. The pain of the blow tingled through all his sensitive frame for a moment. Then he felt pain no longer. Something, such as he had never experienced before, seemed to roll over him like a flood. His face flushed crimson, his eyes burned like flame. The scholars of Glen St. Mary school had never dreamed that "Miss Walter" could look like that. He hurled himself forward and closed with Dan like a young wildcat.

There were no particular rules in the fights of the Glen school boys. It was catchas-catch can, and get your blows in anyhow. Walter fought with a savage fury and a joy in the struggle against which Dan could not hold his ground. It was all over very speedily. Walter had no clear consciousness of what he was doing until suddenly the red mist cleared from his sight and he found himself kneeling on the body of the prostrate Dan whose nose — oh, horror! — was spouting blood.

"Have you had enough?" demanded Walter through his clenched teeth.

Dan sulkily admitted that he had.

"My mother doesn't write lies?"

"No."

"Faith Meredith isn't a pig-girl?"

"No."

"Nor a rooster-girl?"

"No."

"And I'm not a coward?"

“No.”

Walter had intended to ask, “And you are a liar?” but pity intervened and he did not humiliate Dan further. Besides, that blood was so horrible.

“You can go, then,” he said contemptuously.

There was a loud clapping from the boys who were perched on the rail fence, but some of the girls were crying. They were frightened. They had seen schoolboy fights before, but nothing like Walter as he had grappled with Dan. There had been something terrifying about him. They thought he would kill Dan. Now that all was over they sobbed hysterically — except Faith, who still stood tense and crimson cheeked.

Walter did not stay for any conqueror’s meed. He sprang over the fence and rushed down the spruce hill to Rainbow Valley. He felt none of the victor’s joy, but he felt a certain calm satisfaction in duty done and honour avenged — mingled with a sickish qualm when he thought of Dan’s gory nose. It had been so ugly, and Walter hated ugliness.

Also, he began to realize that he himself was somewhat sore and battered up. His lip was cut and swollen and one eye felt very strange. In Rainbow Valley he encountered Mr. Meredith, who was coming home from an afternoon call on the Miss Wests. That reverend gentleman looked gravely at him.

“It seems to me that you have been fighting, Walter?”

“Yes, sir,” said Walter, expecting a scolding.

“What was it about?”

“Dan Reese said my mother wrote lies and that that Faith was a pig-girl,” answered Walter bluntly.

“Oh — h! Then you were certainly justified, Walter.”

“Do you think it’s right to fight, sir?” asked Walter curiously.

“Not always — and not often — but sometimes — yes, sometimes,” said John Meredith. “When womenkind are insulted for instance — as in your case. My motto, Walter, is, don’t fight till you’re sure you ought to, and THEN put every ounce of you into it. In spite of sundry discolorations I infer that you came off best.”

“Yes. I made him take it all back.”

“Very good — very good, indeed. I didn’t think you were such a fighter, Walter.”

“I never fought before — and I didn’t want to right up to the last — and then,” said Walter, determined to make a clean breast of it, “I liked it while I was at it.”

The Rev. John’s eyes twinkled.

“You were — a little frightened — at first?”

“I was a whole lot frightened,” said honest Walter. “But I’m not going to be frightened any more, sir. Being frightened of things is worse than the things themselves. I’m going to ask father to take me over to Lowbridge tomorrow to get my tooth out.”

“Right again. ‘Fear is more pain than is the pain it fears.’ Do you know who wrote that, Walter? It was Shakespeare. Was there any feeling or emotion or experience of the human heart that that wonderful man did not know? When you go home tell your mother I am proud of you.”

Walter did not tell her that, however; but he told her all the rest, and she sympathized with him and told him she was glad he had stood up for her and Faith, and she anointed his sore spots and rubbed cologne on his aching head.

“Are all mothers as nice as you?” asked Walter, hugging her.

“You’re WORTH standing up for.”

Miss Cornelia and Susan were in the living room when Anne came downstairs, and listened to the story with much enjoyment. Susan in particular was highly gratified.

“I am real glad to hear he has had a good fight, Mrs. Dr. dear. Perhaps it may knock that poetry nonsense out of him. And I never, no, never could bear that little viper of a Dan Reese. Will you not sit nearer to the fire, Mrs. Marshall Elliott? These November evenings are very chilly.”

“Thank you, Susan, I’m not cold. I called at the manse before I came here and got quite warm — though I had to go to the kitchen to do it, for there was no fire anywhere else. The kitchen looked as if it had been stirred up with a stick, believe ME. Mr. Meredith wasn’t home. I couldn’t find out where he was, but I have an idea that he was up at the Wests’. Do you know, Anne dearie, they say he has been going there frequently all the fall and people are beginning to think he is going to see Rosemary.”

“He would get a very charming wife if he married Rosemary,”
said

Anne, piling driftwood on the fire. “She is one of the most delightful girls I’ve ever known — truly one of the race of Joseph.”

“Ye — s — only she is an Episcopalian,” said Miss Cornelia doubtfully. “Of course, that is better than if she was a Methodist — but I do think Mr. Meredith could find a good enough wife in his own denomination. However, very likely there is nothing in it. It’s only a month ago that I said to him, ‘You ought to marry again, Mr. Meredith.’ He looked as shocked as if I had suggested something improper. ‘My wife is in her grave, Mrs. Elliott,’ he said, in that gentle, saintly way of his. ‘I suppose so,’ I said, ‘or I wouldn’t be advising you to marry again.’ Then he looked more shocked than ever. So I doubt if there is much in this Rosemary story. If a single minister calls twice at a house where there is a single woman all the gossips have it he is courting her.”

“It seems to me — if I may presume to say so — that Mr. Meredith is too shy to go courting a second wife,” said Susan solemnly.

“He ISN’T shy, believe ME,” retorted Miss Cornelia. “Absentminded, — yes — but shy, no. And for all he is so abstracted and dreamy he has a very good opinion of himself, manlike, and when he is really awake he wouldn’t think it much of a chore to ask any woman to have him. No, the trouble is, he’s deluding himself into believing that his heart is buried, while all the time it’s beating away inside of him just like anybody else’s. He may have a notion of Rosemary West and he may not. If he has, we

must make the best of it. She is a sweet girl and a fine housekeeper, and would make a good mother for those poor, neglected children. And,” concluded Miss Cornelia resignedly, “my own grandmother was an Episcopalian.”

Mary Brings Evil Tidings

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Mary Vance, whom Mrs. Elliott had sent up to the manse on an errand, came tripping down Rainbow Valley on her way to Ingleside where she was to spend the afternoon with Nan and Di as a Saturday treat. Nan and Di had been picking spruce gum with Faith and Una in the manse woods and the four of them were now sitting on a fallen pine by the brook, all, it must be admitted, chewing rather vigorously. The Ingleside twins were not allowed to chew spruce gum anywhere but in the seclusion of Rainbow Valley, but Faith and Una were unrestricted by such rules of etiquette and cheerfully chewed it everywhere, at home and abroad, to the very proper horror of the Glen. Faith had been chewing it in church one day; but Jerry had realized the enormity of THAT, and had given her such an older-brotherly scolding that she never did it again.

“I was so hungry I just felt as if I had to chew something,” she protested. “You know well enough what breakfast was like, Jerry Meredith. I COULDN’T eat scorched porridge and my stomach just felt so queer and empty. The gum helped a lot — and I didn’t chew VERY hard. I didn’t make any noise and I never cracked the gum once.”

“You mustn’t chew gum in church, anyhow,” insisted Jerry. “Don’t let me catch you at it again.”

“You chewed yourself in prayer-meeting last week,” cried Faith.

“THAT’S different,” said Jerry loftily. “Prayer-meeting isn’t on Sunday. Besides, I sat away at the back in a dark seat and nobody saw me. You were sitting right up front where every one saw you. And I took the gum out of my mouth for the last hymn and stuck it on the back of the pew right up in front where every one saw you. And I took the gum out of my mouth for the last hymn and stuck it on the back of the pew in front of me. Then I came away and forgot it. I went back to get it next morning, but it was gone. I suppose Rod Warren swiped it. And it was a dandy chew.”

Mary Vance walked down the Valley with her head held high. She had on a new blue velvet cap with a scarlet rosette in it, a coat of navy blue cloth and a little squirrel-fur muff. She was very conscious of her new clothes and very well pleased with herself. Her hair was elaborately crimped, her face was quite plump, her cheeks rosy, her white eyes shining. She did not look much like the forlorn and ragged waif the Merediths had found in the old Taylor barn. Una tried not to feel envious. Here was Mary with a new velvet cap, but she and Faith had to wear their shabby old gray tams again this winter. Nobody ever thought of getting them new ones and they were afraid to ask their father for them for fear that he might be short of money and then he would feel badly. Mary had told them once that ministers were always short of money, and found it “awful hard” to make ends meet. Since then Faith and Una would have gone in rags rather than ask their father for anything if they could help it. They did not worry a great deal over their shabbiness; but it was rather trying to see Mary Vance coming out in such style and putting on such airs about it, too. The new squirrel muff was really the last straw. Neither Faith nor Una had ever had a muff, counting themselves lucky if they could compass mittens without holes in them. Aunt Martha could not see to darn holes and though Una tried to, she made sad cobbling. Somehow, they could not make their greeting of Mary very cordial. But Mary did not mind or notice that; she was not overly sensitive. She vaulted lightly to a seat on the pine tree, and laid the offending muff on a bough. Una saw that it was lined with shirred red satin and had red tassels. She looked down at her own rather purple, chapped, little hands and wondered if she would ever, EVER be able to put them into a muff like that.

“Give us a chew,” said Mary companionably. Nan, Di and Faith all produced an amber-hued knot or two from their pockets and passed them to Mary. Una sat very still. She had four lovely big knots in the pocket of her tight, threadbare little jacket, but she wasn’t going to give one of them to Mary Vance — not one. Let Mary pick her own gum! People with squirrel muffs needn’t expect to get everything in the world.

“Great day, isn’t it?” said Mary, swinging her legs, the better, perhaps, to display new boots with very smart cloth tops. Una tucked HER feet under her. There was a hole in the toe of one of her boots and both laces were much knotted. But they were the best she had. Oh, this Mary Vance! Why hadn’t they left her in the old barn?

Una never felt badly because the Ingleside twins were better dressed than she and Faith were. THEY wore their pretty clothes with careless grace and never seemed to think about them at all. Somehow, they did not make other people feel shabby. But when Mary Vance was dressed up she seemed fairly to exude clothes — to walk in an atmosphere of clothes — to make everybody else feel and think clothes. Una, as she sat there in the honey-tinted sunshine of the gracious December afternoon, was acutely and miserably conscious of everything she had on — the faded tam, which was yet her best, the skimpy jacket she had worn for three winters, the holes in her skirt and her boots, the shivering insufficiency of her poor little undergarments. Of course, Mary was going out for a visit and she was not. But even if she had been she had nothing better to put on and in this lay the sting.

“Say, this is great gum. Listen to me cracking it. There ain’t any gum spruces down at Four Winds,” said Mary. “Sometimes I just hanker after a chew. Mrs. Elliott won’t let me chew gum if she sees me. She says it ain’t ladylike. This lady-business puzzles me. I can’t get on to all its kinks. Say, Una, what’s the matter with you? Cat got your tongue?”

“No,” said Una, who could not drag her fascinated eyes from that squirrel muff. Mary leaned past her, picked it up and thrust it into Una’s hands.

“Stick your paws in that for a while,” she ordered. “They look sorter pinched. Ain’t that a dandy muff? Mrs. Elliott give it to me last week for a birthday present. I’m to get the collar at Christmas. I heard her telling Mr. Elliott that.”

“Mrs. Elliott is very good to you,” said Faith.

“You bet she is. And I’M good to her, too,” retorted Mary. “I work like a nigger to make it easy for her and have everything just as she likes it. We

was made for each other. ‘Tisn’t every one could get along with her as well as I do. She’s pizen neat, but so am I, and so we agree fine.”

“I told you she would never whip you.”

“So you did. She’s never tried to lay a finger on me and I ain’t never told a lie to her — not one, true’s you live. She combs me down with her tongue sometimes though, but that just slips off ME like water off a duck’s back. Say, Una, why didn’t you hang on to the muff?”

Una had put it back on the bough.

“My hands aren’t cold, thank you,” she said stiffly.

“Well, if you’re satisfied, *I* am. Say, old Kitty Alec has come back to church as meek as Moses and nobody knows why. But everybody is saying it was Faith brought Norman Douglas out. His housekeeper says you went there and gave him an awful tongue-lashing. Did you?”

“I went and asked him to come to church,” said Faith uncomfortably.

“Fancy your spunk!” said Mary admiringly. “*I* wouldn’t have dared do that and I’m not so slow. Mrs. Wilson says the two of you jawed something scandalous, but you come off best and then he just turned round and like to eat you up. Say, is your father going to preach here tomorrow?”

“No. He’s going to exchange with Mr. Perry from Charlottetown. Father went to town this morning and Mr. Perry is coming out tonight.”

“I THOUGHT there was something in the wind, though old Martha wouldn’t give me any satisfaction. But I felt sure she wouldn’t have been killing that rooster for nothing.”

“What rooster? What do you mean?” cried Faith, turning pale.

“*I* don’t know what rooster. I didn’t see it. When she took the butter Mrs. Elliott sent up she said she’d been out to the barn killing a rooster for dinner tomorrow.”

Faith sprang down from the pine.

“It’s Adam — we have no other rooster — she has killed Adam.”

“Now, don’t fly off the handle. Martha said the butcher at the Glen had no meat this week and she had to have something and the hens were all laying and too poor.”

“If she has killed Adam—” Faith began to run up the hill.

Mary shrugged her shoulders.

“She’ll go crazy now. She was so fond of that Adam. He ought to have been in the pot long ago — he’ll be as tough as sole leather. But *I* wouldn’t like to be in Martha’s shoes. Faith’s just white with rage; Una, you’d better go after her and try to peacify her.”

Mary had gone a few steps with the Blythe girls when Una suddenly turned and ran after her.

“Here’s some gum for you, Mary,” she said, with a little repentant catch in her voice, thrusting all her four knots into Mary’s hands, “and I’m glad you have such a pretty muff.”

“Why, thanks,” said Mary, rather taken by surprise. To the Blythe girls, after Una had gone, she said, “Ain’t she a queer little mite? But I’ve always said she had a good heart.”

Chapter XIX.

Poor Adam!

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When Una got home Faith was lying face downwards on her bed, utterly refusing to be comforted. Aunt Martha had killed Adam. He was reposing on a platter in the pantry that very minute, trussed and dressed, encircled by his liver and heart and gizzard. Aunt Martha heeded Faith's passion of grief and anger not a whit.

"We had to have something for the strange minister's dinner," she said. "You're too big a girl to make such a fuss over an old rooster. You knew he'd have to be killed sometime."

"I'll tell father when he comes home what you've done," sobbed Faith.

"Don't you go bothering your poor father. He has troubles enough. And I'M housekeeper here."

"Adam was MINE — Mrs. Johnson gave him to me. You had no business to touch him," stormed Faith.

"Don't you get sassy now. The rooster's killed and there's an end of it. I ain't going to set no strange minister down to a dinner of cold b'iled mutton. I was brought up to know better than that, if I have come down in the world."

Faith would not go down to supper that night and she would not go to church the next morning. But at dinner time she went to the table, her eyes swollen with crying, her face sullen.

The Rev. James Perry was a sleek, rubicund man, with a bristling white moustache, bushy white eyebrows, and a shining bald head. He was certainly not handsome and he was a very tiresome, pompous sort of person. But if he had looked like the Archangel Michael and talked with the tongues of men and angels Faith would still have utterly detested him. He carved Adam up dexterously, showing off his plump white hands and

very handsome diamond ring. Also, he made jovial remarks all through the performance. Jerry and Carl giggled, and even Una smiled wanly, because she thought politeness demanded it. But Faith only scowled darkly. The Rev. James thought her manners shockingly bad. Once, when he was delivering himself of an unctuous remark to Jerry, Faith broke in rudely with a flat contradiction. The Rev. James drew his bushy eyebrows together at her.

“Little girls should not interrupt,” he said, “and they should not contradict people who know far more than they do.”

This put Faith in a worse temper than ever. To be called “little girl” as if she were no bigger than chubby Rilla Blythe over at Ingleside! It was insufferable. And how that abominable Mr. Perry did eat! He even picked poor Adam’s bones. Neither Faith nor Una would touch a mouthful, and looked upon the boys as little better than cannibals. Faith felt that if that awful repast did not soon come to an end she would wind it up by throwing something at Mr. Perry’s gleaming head. Fortunately, Mr. Perry found Aunt Martha’s leathery apple pie too much even for his powers of mastication and the meal came to an end, after a long grace in which Mr. Perry offered up devout thanks for the food which a kind and beneficent Providence had provided for sustenance and temperate pleasure.

“God hadn’t a single thing to do with providing Adam for you,” muttered Faith rebelliously under her breath.

The boys gladly made their escape to outdoors, Una went to help Aunt Martha with the dishes — though that rather grumpy old dame never welcomed her timid assistance — and Faith betook herself to the study where a cheerful wood fire was burning in the grate. She thought she would thereby escape from the hated Mr. Perry, who had announced his intention of taking a nap in his room during the afternoon. But scarcely had Faith settled herself in a corner, with a book, when he walked in and, standing before the fire, proceeded to survey the disorderly study with an air of disapproval.

“Your father’s books seem to be in somewhat deplorable confusion, my little girl,” he said severely.

Faith darkled in her corner and said not a word. She would NOT talk to this — this creature.

“You should try to put them in order,” Mr. Perry went on, playing with his handsome watch chain and smiling patronizingly on Faith. “You are quite old enough to attend to such duties. MY little daughter at home is only ten and she is already an excellent little housekeeper and the greatest help and comfort to her mother. She is a very sweet child. I wish you had the privilege of her acquaintance. She could help you in many ways. Of course, you have not had the inestimable privilege of a good mother’s care and training. A sad lack — a very sad lack. I have spoken more than once to your father in this connection and pointed out his duty to him faithfully, but so far with no effect. I trust he may awaken to a realization of his responsibility before it is too late. In the meantime, it is your duty and privilege to endeavour to take your sainted mother’s place. You might exercise a great influence over your brothers and your little sister — you might be a true mother to them. I fear that you do not think of these things as you should. My dear child, allow me to open your eyes in regard to them.”

Mr. Perry’s oily, complacent voice trickled on. He was in his element. Nothing suited him better than to lay down the law, patronize and exhort. He had no idea of stopping, and he did not stop. He stood before the fire, his feet planted firmly on the rug, and poured out a flood of pompous platitudes. Faith heard not a word. She was really not listening to him at all. But she was watching his long black coat-tails with impish delight growing in her brown eyes. Mr. Perry was standing VERY near the fire. His coat-tails began to scorch — his coat-tails began to smoke. He still prosed on, wrapped up in his own eloquence. The coat-tails smoked worse. A tiny spark flew up from the burning wood and alighted in the middle of one. It clung and caught and spread into a smouldering flame. Faith could restrain herself no longer and broke into a stifled giggle.

Mr. Perry stopped short, angered over this impertinence. Suddenly he became conscious that a reek of burning cloth filled the room. He whirled round and saw nothing. Then he clapped his hands to his coat-tails and

brought them around in front of him. There was already quite a hole in one of them — and this was his new suit. Faith shook with helpless laughter over his pose and expression.

“Did you see my coat-tails burning?” he demanded angrily.

“Yes, sir,” said Faith demurely.

“Why didn’t you tell me?” he demanded, glaring at her.

“You said it wasn’t good manners to interrupt, sir,” said Faith, more demurely still.

“If — if I was your father, I would give you a spanking that you would remember all your life, Miss,” said a very angry reverend gentleman, as he stalked out of the study. The coat of Mr. Meredith’s second best suit would not fit Mr. Perry, so he had to go to the evening service with his singed coat-tail. But he did not walk up the aisle with his usual consciousness of the honour he was conferring on the building. He never would agree to an exchange of pulpits with Mr. Meredith again, and he was barely civil to the latter when they met for a few minutes at the station the next morning. But Faith felt a certain gloomy satisfaction. Adam was partially avenged.

Faith Makes A Friend

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Next day in school was a hard one for Faith. Mary Vance had told the tale of Adam, and all the scholars, except the Blythes, thought it quite a joke. The girls told Faith, between giggles, that it was too bad, and the boys wrote sardonic notes of condolence to her. Poor Faith went home from school feeling her very soul raw and smarting within her.

“I’m going over to Ingleside to have a talk with Mrs. Blythe,” she sobbed. “SHE won’t laugh at me, as everybody else does. I’ve just GOT to talk to somebody who understands how bad I feel.”

She ran down through Rainbow Valley. Enchantment had been at work the night before. A light snow had fallen and the powdered firs were dreaming of a spring to come and a joy to be. The long hill beyond was richly purple with leafless beeches. The rosy light of sunset lay over the world like a pink kiss. Of all the airy, fairy places, full of weird, elfin grace, Rainbow Valley that winter evening was the most beautiful. But all its dreamlike loveliness was lost on poor, sore-hearted little Faith.

By the brook she came suddenly upon Rosemary West, who was sitting on the old pine tree. She was on her way home from Ingleside, where she had been giving the girls their music lesson. She had been lingering in Rainbow Valley quite a little time, looking across its white beauty and roaming some by-ways of dream. Judging from the expression of her face, her thoughts were pleasant ones. Perhaps the faint, occasional tinkle from the bells on the Tree Lovers brought the little lurking smile to her lips. Or perhaps it was occasioned by the consciousness that John Meredith seldom failed to spend Monday evening in the gray house on the white wind-swept hill.

Into Rosemary’s dreams burst Faith Meredith full of rebellious bitterness. Faith stopped abruptly when she saw Miss West. She did not know her very well — just well enough to speak to when they met. And

she did not want to see any one just then — except Mrs. Blythe. She knew her eyes and nose were red and swollen and she hated to have a stranger know she had been crying.

“Good evening, Miss West,” she said uncomfortably.

“What is the matter, Faith?” asked Rosemary gently.

“Nothing,” said Faith rather shortly.

“Oh!” Rosemary smiled. “You mean nothing that you can tell to outsiders, don’t you?”

Faith looked at Miss West with sudden interest. Here was a person who understood things. And how pretty she was! How golden her hair was under her plummy hat! How pink her cheeks were over her velvet coat! How blue and companionable her eyes were! Faith felt that Miss West could be a lovely friend — if only she were a friend instead of a stranger!

“I — I’m going up to tell Mrs. Blythe,” said Faith. “She always understands — she never laughs at us. I always talk things over with her. It helps.”

“Dear girlie, I’m sorry to have to tell you that Mrs. Blythe isn’t home,” said Miss West, sympathetically. “She went to Avonlea to-day and isn’t coming back till the last of the week.”

Faith’s lip quivered.

“Then I might as well go home again,” she said miserably.

“I suppose so — unless you think you could bring yourself to talk it over with me instead,” said Miss Rosemary gently. “It IS such a help to talk things over. *I* know. I don’t suppose I can be as good at understanding as Mrs. Blythe — but I promise you that I won’t laugh.”

“You wouldn’t laugh outside,” hesitated Faith. “But you might — inside.”

“No, I wouldn’t laugh inside, either. Why should I? Something has hurt you — it never amuses me to see anybody hurt, no matter what hurts them. If you feel that you’d like to tell me what has hurt you I’ll be glad to listen. But if you think you’d rather not — that’s all right, too, dear.”

Faith took another long, earnest look into Miss West’s eyes. They were very serious — there was no laughter in them, not even far, far back. With

a little sigh she sat down on the old pine beside her new friend and told her all about Adam and his cruel fate.

Rosemary did not laugh or feel like laughing. She understood and sympathized — really, she was almost as good as Mrs. Blythe — yes, quite as good.

“Mr. Perry is a minister, but he should have been a BUTCHER,” said Faith bitterly. “He is so fond of carving things up. He ENJOYED cutting poor Adam to pieces. He just sliced into him as if he were any common rooster.”

“Between you and me, Faith, *I* don’t like Mr. Perry very well myself,” said Rosemary, laughing a little — but at Mr. Perry, not at Adam, as Faith clearly understood. “I never did like him. I went to school with him — he was a Glen boy, you know — and he was a most detestable little prig even then. Oh, how we girls used to hate holding his fat, clammy hands in the ring-around games. But we must remember, dear, that he didn’t know that Adam had been a pet of yours. He thought he WAS just a common rooster. We must be just, even when we are terribly hurt.”

“I suppose so,” admitted Faith. “But why does everybody seem to think it funny that I should have loved Adam so much, Miss West? If it had been a horrid old cat nobody would have thought it queer. When Lottie Warren’s kitten had its legs cut off by the binder everybody was sorry for her. She cried two days in school and nobody laughed at her, not even Dan Reese. And all her chums went to the kitten’s funeral and helped her bury it — only they couldn’t bury its poor little paws with it, because they couldn’t find them. It was a horrid thing to have happen, of course, but I don’t think it was as dreadful as seeing your pet EATEN UP. Yet everybody laughs at ME.”

“I think it is because the name ‘rooster’ seems rather a funny one,” said Rosemary gravely. “There IS something in it that is comical. Now, ‘chicken’ is different. It doesn’t sound so funny to talk of loving a chicken.”

“Adam was the dearest little chicken, Miss West. He was just a little golden ball. He would run up to me and peck out of my hand. And he was

handsome when he grew up, too — white as snow, with such a beautiful curving white tail, though Mary Vance said it was too short. He knew his name and always came when I called him — he was a very intelligent rooster. And Aunt Martha had no right to kill him. He was mine. It wasn't fair, was it, Miss West?"

"No, it wasn't," said Rosemary decidedly. "Not a bit fair. I remember I had a pet hen when I was a little girl. She was such a pretty little thing — all golden brown and speckly. I loved her as much as I ever loved any pet. She was never killed — she died of old age. Mother wouldn't have her killed because she was my pet."

"If MY mother had been living she wouldn't have let Adam be killed," said Faith. "For that matter, father wouldn't have either, if he'd been home and known of it. I'm SURE he wouldn't, Miss West."

"I'm sure, too," said Rosemary. There was a little added flush on her face. She looked rather conscious but Faith noticed nothing.

"Was it VERY wicked of me not to tell Mr. Perry his coat-tails were scorching?" she asked anxiously.

"Oh, terribly wicked," answered Rosemary, with dancing eyes. "But *I* would have been just as naughty, Faith — *I* wouldn't have told him they were scorching — and I don't believe I would ever have been a bit sorry for my wickedness, either."

"Una thought I should have told him because he was a minister."

"Dearest, if a minister doesn't behave as a gentleman we are not bound to respect his coat-tails. I know *I* would just have loved to see Jimmy Perry's coat-tails burning up. It must have been fun."

Both laughed; but Faith ended with a bitter little sigh.

"Well, anyway, Adam is dead and I am NEVER going to love anything again."

"Don't say that, dear. We miss so much out of life if we don't love. The more we love the richer life is — even if it is only some little furry or feathery pet. Would you like a canary, Faith — a little golden bit of a canary? If you would I'll give you one. We have two up home."

“Oh, I WOULD like that,” cried Faith. “I love birds. Only — would Aunt Martha’s cat eat it? It’s so TRAGIC to have your pets eaten. I don’t think I could endure it a second time.”

“If you hang the cage far enough from the wall I don’t think the cat could harm it. I’ll tell you just how to take care of it and I’ll bring it to Ingleside for you the next time I come down.”

To herself, Rosemary was thinking,

“It will give every gossip in the Glen something to talk of, but I WILL not care. I want to comfort this poor little heart.”

Faith was comforted. Sympathy and understanding were very sweet. She and Miss Rosemary sat on the old pine until the twilight crept softly down over the white valley and the evening star shone over the gray maple grove. Faith told Rosemary all her small history and hopes, her likes and dislikes, the ins and outs of life at the manse, the ups and downs of school society. Finally they parted firm friends.

Mr. Meredith was, as usual, lost in dreams when supper began that evening, but presently a name pierced his abstraction and brought him back to reality. Faith was telling Una of her meeting with Rosemary.

“She is just lovely, I think,” said Faith. “Just as nice as Mrs. Blythe — but different. I felt as if I wanted to hug her. She did hug ME — such a nice, velvety hug. And she called me ‘dearest.’ It THRILLED me. I could tell her ANYTHING.”

“So you liked Miss West, Faith?” Mr. Meredith asked, with a rather odd intonation.

“I love her,” cried Faith.

“Ah!” said Mr. Meredith. “Ah!”

The Impossible Word

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John Meredith walked meditatively through the clear crispness of a winter night in Rainbow Valley. The hills beyond glistened with the chill splendid lustre of moonlight on snow. Every little fir tree in the long valley sang its own wild song to the harp of wind and frost. His children and the Blythe lads and lasses were coasting down the eastern slope and whizzing over the glassy pond. They were having a glorious time and their gay voices and gayer laughter echoed up and down the valley, dying away in elfin cadences among the trees. On the right the lights of Ingleside gleamed through the maple grove with the genial lure and invitation which seems always to glow in the beacons of a home where we know there is love and good-cheer and a welcome for all kin, whether of flesh or spirit. Mr. Meredith liked very well on occasion to spend an evening arguing with the doctor by the drift wood fire, where the famous china dogs of Ingleside kept ceaseless watch and ward, as became deities of the hearth, but tonight he did not look that way. Far on the western hill gleamed a paler but more alluring star. Mr. Meredith was on his way to see Rosemary West, and he meant to tell her something which had been slowly blossoming in his heart since their first meeting and had sprung into full flower on the evening when Faith had so warmly voiced her admiration for Rosemary.

He had come to realize that he had learned to care for Rosemary. Not as he had cared for Cecilia, of course. THAT was entirely different. That love of romance and dream and glamour could never, he thought, return. But Rosemary was beautiful and sweet and dear — very dear. She was the best of companions. He was happier in her company than he had ever expected to be again. She would be an ideal mistress for his home, a good mother to his children.

During the years of his widowhood Mr. Meredith had received innumerable hints from brother members of Presbytery and from many

parishioners who could not be suspected of any ulterior motive, as well as from some who could, that he ought to marry again: But these hints never made any impression on him. It was commonly thought he was never aware of them. But he was quite acutely aware of them. And in his own occasional visitations of common sense he knew that the common sensible thing for him to do was to marry. But common sense was not the strong point of John Meredith, and to choose out, deliberately and coldbloodedly, some "suitable" woman, as one might choose a housekeeper or a business partner, was something he was quite incapable of doing. How he hated that word "suitable." It reminded him so strongly of James Perry. "A SUIT able woman of SUIT able age," that unctuous brother of the cloth had said, in his far from subtle hint. For the moment John Meredith had had a perfectly unbelievable desire to rush madly away and propose marriage to the youngest, most unsuitable woman it was possible to discover.

Mrs. Marshall Elliott was his good friend and he liked her. But when she had bluntly told him he should marry again he felt as if she had torn away the veil that hung before some sacred shrine of his innermost life, and he had been more or less afraid of her ever since. He knew there were women in his congregation "of suitable age" who would marry him quite readily. That fact had seeped through all his abstraction very early in his ministry in Glen St. Mary. They were good, substantial, uninteresting women, one or two fairly comely, the others not exactly so and John Meredith would as soon have thought of marrying any one of them as of hanging himself. He had some ideals to which no seeming necessity could make him false. He could ask no woman to fill Cecilia's place in his home unless he could offer her at least some of the affection and homage he had given to his girlish bride. And where, in his limited feminine acquaintance, was such a woman to be found?

Rosemary West had come into his life on that autumn evening bringing with her an atmosphere in which his spirit recognized native air. Across the gulf of strangerhood they clasped hands of friendship. He knew her better in that ten minutes by the hidden spring than he knew Emmeline Drew or Elizabeth Kirk or Amy Annetta Douglas in a year, or could know

them, in a century. He had fled to her for comfort when Mrs. Alec Davis had outraged his mind and soul and had found it. Since then he had gone often to the house on the hill, slipping through the shadowy paths of night in Rainbow Valley so astutely that Glen gossip could never be absolutely certain that he DID go to see Rosemary West. Once or twice he had been caught in the West living room by other visitors; that was all the Ladies' Aid had to go by. But when Elizabeth Kirk heard it she put away a secret hope she had allowed herself to cherish, without a change of expression on her kind plain face, and Emmeline Drew resolved that the next time she saw a certain old bachelor of Lowbridge she would not snub him as she had done at a previous meeting. Of course, if Rosemary West was out to catch the minister she would catch him; she looked younger than she was and MEN thought her pretty; besides, the West girls had money!

"It is to be hoped that he won't be so absentminded as to propose to Ellen by mistake," was the only malicious thing she allowed herself to say to a sympathetic sister Drew. Emmeline bore no further grudge towards Rosemary. When all was said and done, an unencumbered bachelor was far better than a widower with four children. It had been only the glamour of the manse that had temporarily blinded Emmeline's eyes to the better part.

A sled with three shrieking occupants sped past Mr. Meredith to the pond. Faith's long curls streamed in the wind and her laughter rang above that of the others. John Meredith looked after them kindly and longingly. He was glad that his children had such chums as the Blythes — glad that they had so wise and gay and tender a friend as Mrs. Blythe. But they needed something more, and that something would be supplied when he brought Rosemary West as a bride to the old manse. There was in her a quality essentially maternal.

It was Saturday night and he did not often go calling on Saturday night, which was supposed to be dedicated to a thoughtful revision of Sunday's sermon. But he had chosen this night because he had learned that Ellen West was going to be away and Rosemary would be alone. Often as he had spent pleasant evenings in the house on the hill he had never, since that

first meeting at the spring, seen Rosemary alone. Ellen had always been there.

He did not precisely object to Ellen being there. He liked Ellen West very much and they were the best of friends. Ellen had an almost masculine understanding and a sense of humour which his own shy, hidden appreciation of fun found very agreeable. He liked her interest in politics and world events. There was no man in the Glen, not even excepting Dr. Blythe, who had a better grasp of such things.

“I think it is just as well to be interested in things as long as you live,” she had said. “If you’re not, it doesn’t seem to me that there’s much difference between the quick and the dead.”

He liked her pleasant, deep, rumbling voice; he liked the hearty laugh with which she always ended up some jolly and well-told story. She never gave him digs about his children as other Glen women did; she never bored him with local gossip; she had no malice and no pettiness. She was always splendidly sincere. Mr. Meredith, who had picked up Miss Cornelia’s way of classifying people, considered that Ellen belonged to the race of Joseph. Altogether, an admirable woman for a sister-in-law. Nevertheless, a man did not want even the most admirable of women around when he was proposing to another woman. And Ellen was always around. She did not insist on talking to Mr. Meredith herself all the time. She let Rosemary have a fair share of him. Many evenings, indeed, Ellen effaced herself almost totally, sitting back in the corner with St. George in her lap, and letting Mr. Meredith and Rosemary talk and sing and read books together. Sometimes they quite forgot her presence. But if their conversation or choice of duets ever betrayed the least tendency to what Ellen considered philandering, Ellen promptly nipped that tendency in the bud and blotted Rosemary out for the rest of the evening. But not even the grimmest of amiable dragons can altogether prevent a certain subtle language of eye and smile and eloquent silence; and so the minister’s courtship progressed after a fashion.

But if it was ever to reach a climax that climax must come when Ellen was away. And Ellen was so seldom away, especially in winter. She found

her own fireside the pleasantest place in the world, she vowed. Gadding had no attraction for her. She was fond of company but she wanted it at home. Mr. Meredith had almost been driven to the conclusion that he must write to Rosemary what he wanted to say, when Ellen casually announced one evening that she was going to a silver wedding next Saturday night. She had been bridesmaid when the principals were married. Only old guests were invited, so Rosemary was not included. Mr. Meredith pricked up his ears a trifle and a gleam flashed into his dreamy dark eyes. Both Ellen and Rosemary saw it; and both Ellen and Rosemary felt, with a tingling shock, that Mr. Meredith would certainly come up the hill next Saturday night.

“Might as well have it over with, St. George,” Ellen sternly told the black cat, after Mr. Meredith had gone home and Rosemary had silently gone upstairs. “He means to ask her, St. George — I’m perfectly sure of that. So he might as well have his chance to do it and find out he can’t get her, George. She’d rather like to take him, Saint. I know that — but she promised, and she’s got to keep her promise. I’m rather sorry in some ways, St. George. I don’t know of a man I’d sooner have for a brother-in-law if a brother-in-law was convenient. I haven’t a thing against him, Saint — not a thing except that he won’t see and can’t be made to see that the Kaiser is a menace to the peace of Europe. That’s HIS blind spot. But he’s good company and I like him. A woman can say anything she likes to a man with a mouth like John Meredith’s and be sure of not being misunderstood. Such a man is more precious than rubies, Saint — and much rarer, George. But he can’t have Rosemary — and I suppose when he finds out he can’t have her he’ll drop us both. And we’ll miss him, Saint — we’ll miss him something scandalous, George. But she promised, and I’ll see that she keeps her promise!”

Ellen’s face looked almost ugly in its lowering resolution.

Upstairs Rosemary was crying into her pillow.

So Mr. Meredith found his lady alone and looking very beautiful. Rosemary had not made any special toilet for the occasion; she wanted to,

but she thought it would be absurd to dress up for a man you meant to refuse. So she wore her plain dark afternoon dress and looked like a queen in it. Her suppressed excitement coloured her face to brilliancy, her great blue eyes were pools of light less placid than usual.

She wished the interview were over. She had looked forward to it all day with dread. She felt quite sure that John Meredith cared a great deal for her after a fashion — and she felt just as sure that he did not care for her as he had cared for his first love. She felt that her refusal would disappoint him considerably, but she did not think it would altogether overwhelm him. Yet she hated to make it; hated for his sake and — Rosemary was quite honest with herself — for her own. She knew she could have loved John Meredith if — if it had been permissible. She knew that life would be a blank thing if, rejected as lover, he refused longer to be a friend. She knew that she could be very happy with him and that she could make him happy. But between her and happiness stood the prison gate of the promise she had made to Ellen years ago. Rosemary could not remember her father. He had died when she was only three years old. Ellen, who had been thirteen, remembered him, but with no special tenderness. He had been a stern, reserved man many years older than his fair, pretty wife. Five years later their brother of twelve died also; since his death the two girls had always lived alone with their mother. They had never mingled very freely in the social life of the Glen or Lowbridge, though where they went the wit and spirit of Ellen and the sweetness and beauty of Rosemary made them welcome guests. Both had what was called “a disappointment” in their girlhood. The sea had not given up Rosemary’s lover; and Norman Douglas, then a handsome, redhaired young giant, noted for wild driving and noisy though harmless escapades, had quarrelled with Ellen and left her in a fit of pique.

There were not lacking candidates for both Martin’s and Norman’s places, but none seemed to find favour in the eyes of the West girls, who drifted slowly out of youth and bellehood without any seeming regret. They were devoted to their mother, who was a chronic invalid. The three

had a little circle of home interests — books and pets and flowers — which made them happy and contented.

Mrs. West's death, which occurred on Rosemary's twenty-fifth birthday, was a bitter grief to them. At first they were intolerably lonely. Ellen, especially, continued to grieve and brood, her long, moody musings broken only by fits of stormy, passionate weeping. The old Lowbridge doctor told Rosemary that he feared permanent melancholy or worse.

Once, when Ellen had sat all day, refusing either to speak or eat, Rosemary had flung herself on her knees by her sister's side.

"Oh, Ellen, you have me yet," she said imploringly. "Am I nothing to you? We have always loved each other so."

"I won't have you always," Ellen had said, breaking her silence with harsh intensity. "You will marry and leave me. I shall be left all alone. I cannot bear the thought — I CANNOT. I would rather die."

"I will never marry," said Rosemary, "never, Ellen."

Ellen bent forward and looked searchingly into Rosemary's eyes.

"Will you promise me that solemnly?" she said. "Promise it on mother's Bible."

Rosemary assented at once, quite willing to humour Ellen. What did it matter? She knew quite well she would never want to marry any one. Her love had gone down with Martin Crawford to the deeps of the sea; and without love she could not marry any one. So she promised readily, though Ellen made rather a fearsome rite of it. They clasped hands over the Bible, in their mother's vacant room, and both vowed to each other that they would never marry and would always live together.

Ellen's condition improved from that hour. She soon regained her normal cheery poise. For ten years she and Rosemary lived in the old house happily, undisturbed by any thought of marrying or giving in marriage. Their promise sat very lightly on them. Ellen never failed to remind her sister of it whenever any eligible male creature crossed their paths, but she had never been really alarmed until John Meredith came home that night with Rosemary. As for Rosemary, Ellen's obsession regarding that promise had always been a little matter of mirth to her —

until lately. Now, it was a merciless fetter, self-imposed but never to be shaken off. Because of it tonight she must turn her face from happiness.

It was true that the shy, sweet, rosebud love she had given to her boy-lover she could never give to another. But she knew now that she could give to John Meredith a love richer and more womanly. She knew that he touched deeps in her nature that Martin had never touched — that had not, perhaps, been in the girl of seventeen to touch. And she must send him away tonight — send him back to his lonely hearth and his empty life and his heartbreaking problems, because she had promised Ellen, ten years before, on their mother's Bible, that she would never marry.

John Meredith did not immediately grasp his opportunity. On the contrary, he talked for two good hours on the least lover-like of subjects. He even tried politics, though politics always bored Rosemary. The later began to think that she had been altogether mistaken, and her fears and expectations suddenly seemed to her grotesque. She felt flat and foolish. The glow went out of her face and the lustre out of her eyes. John Meredith had not the slightest intention of asking her to marry him.

And then, quite suddenly, he rose, came across the room, and standing by her chair, he asked it. The room had grown terribly still. Even St. George ceased to purr. Rosemary heard her own heart beating and was sure John Meredith must hear it too.

Now was the time for her to say no, gently but firmly. She had been ready for days with her stilted, regretful little formula. And now the words of it had completely vanished from her mind. She had to say no — and she suddenly found she could not say it. It was the impossible word. She knew now that it was not that she COULD have loved John Meredith, but that she DID love him. The thought of putting him from her life was agony.

She must say SOMETHING; she lifted her bowed golden head and asked him stammeringly to give her a few days for — for consideration.

John Meredith was a little surprised. He was not vainer than any man has a right to be, but he had expected that Rosemary West would say yes. He had been tolerably sure she cared for him. Then why this doubt — this hesitation? She was not a school girl to be uncertain as to her own mind.

He felt an ugly shock of disappointment and dismay. But he assented to her request with his unfailing gentle courtesy and went away at once.

“I will tell you in a few days,” said Rosemary, with downcast eyes and burning face.

When the door shut behind him she went back into the room and wrung her hands.

St. George Knows All About It

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At midnight Ellen West was walking home from the Pollock silver wedding. She had stayed a little while after the other guests had gone, to help the gray-haired bride wash the dishes. The distance between the two houses was not far and the road good, so that Ellen was enjoying the walk back home in the moonlight.

The evening had been a pleasant one. Ellen, who had not been to a party for years, found it very pleasant. All the guests had been members of her old set and there was no intrusive youth to spoil the flavour, for the only son of the bride and groom was far away at college and could not be present. Norman Douglas had been there and they had met socially for the first time in years, though she had seen him once or twice in church that winter. Not the least sentiment was awakened in Ellen's heart by their meeting. She was accustomed to wonder, when she thought about it at all, how she could ever have fancied him or felt so badly over his sudden marriage. But she had rather liked meeting him again. She had forgotten how bracing and stimulating he could be. No gathering was ever stagnant when Norman Douglas was present. Everybody had been surprised when Norman came. It was well known he never went anywhere. The Pollocks had invited him because he had been one of the original guests, but they never thought he would come. He had taken his second cousin, Amy Annetta Douglas, out to supper and seemed rather attentive to her. But Ellen sat across the table from him and had a spirited argument with him — an argument during which all his shouting and banter could not fluster her and in which she came off best, flooring Norman so composedly and so completely that he was silent for ten minutes. At the end of which time he had muttered in his ruddy beard—"spunky as ever — spunky as ever" — and began to hector Amy Annetta, who giggled foolishly over his sallies where Ellen would have retorted bitinglly.

Ellen thought these things over as she walked home, tasting them with reminiscent relish. The moonlit air sparkled with frost. The snow crisped under her feet. Below her lay the Glen with the white harbour beyond. There was a light in the manse study. So John Meredith had gone home. Had he asked Rosemary to marry him? And after what fashion had she made her refusal known? Ellen felt that she would never know this, though she was quite curious. She was sure Rosemary would never tell her anything about it and she would not dare to ask. She must just be content with the fact of the refusal. After all, that was the only thing that really mattered.

“I hope he’ll have sense enough to come back once in a while and be friendly,” she said to herself. She disliked so much to be alone that thinking aloud was one of her devices for circumventing unwelcome solitude. “It’s awful never to have a man-body with some brains to talk to once in a while. And like as not he’ll never come near the house again. There’s Norman Douglas, too — I like that man, and I’d like to have a good rousing argument with him now and then. But he’d never dare come up for fear people would think he was courting me again — for fear I’d think it, too, most likely — though he’s more a stranger to me now than John Meredith. It seems like a dream that we could ever have been beaux. But there it is — there’s only two men in the Glen I’d ever want to talk to — and what with gossip and this wretched lovemaking business it’s not likely I’ll ever see either of them again. I could,” said Ellen, addressing the unmoved stars with a spiteful emphasis, “I could have made a better world myself.”

She paused at her gate with a sudden vague feeling of alarm. There was still a light in the livingroom and to and fro across the window-shades went the shadow of a woman walking restlessly up and down. What was Rosemary doing up at this hour of the night? And why was she striding about like a lunatic?

Ellen went softly in. As she opened the hall door Rosemary came out of the room. She was flushed and breathless. An atmosphere of stress and passion hung about her like a garment.

“Why aren’t you in bed, Rosemary?” demanded Ellen.

“Come in here,” said Rosemary intensely. “I want to tell you something.”

Ellen composedly removed her wraps and overshoes, and followed her sister into the warm, firelighted room. She stood with her hand on the table and waited. She was looking very handsome herself, in her own grim, black-browed style. The new black velvet dress, with its train and V-neck, which she had made purposely for the party, became her stately, massive figure. She wore coiled around her neck the rich heavy necklace of amber beads which was a family heirloom. Her walk in the frosty air had stung her cheeks into a glowing scarlet. But her steel-blue eyes were as icy and unyielding as the sky of the winter night. She stood waiting in a silence which Rosemary could break only by a convulsive effort.

“Ellen, Mr. Meredith was here this evening.”

“Yes?”

“And — and — he asked me to marry him.”

“So I expected. Of course, you refused him?”

“No.”

“Rosemary.” Ellen clenched her hands and took an involuntary step forward. “Do you mean to tell me that you accepted him?”

“No — no.”

Ellen recovered her self-command.

“What DID you do then?”

“I — I asked him to give me a few days to think it over.”

“I hardly see why that was necessary,” said Ellen, coldly contemptuous, “when there is only the one answer you can make him.”

Rosemary held out her hands beseechingly.

“Ellen,” she said desperately, “I love John Meredith — I want to be his wife. Will you set me free from that promise?”

“No,” said Ellen, merciless, because she was sick from fear.

“Ellen — Ellen—”

“Listen,” interrupted Ellen. “I did not ask you for that promise. You offered it.”

“I know — I know. But I did not think then that I could ever care for anyone again.”

“You offered it,” went on Ellen unmovably. “You promised it over our mother’s Bible. It was more than a promise — it was an oath. Now you want to break it.”

“I only asked you to set me free from it, Ellen.”

“I will not do it. A promise is a promise in my eyes. I will not do it. Break your promise — be forsworn if you will — but it shall not be with any assent of mine.”

“You are very hard on me, Ellen.”

“Hard on you! And what of me? Have you ever given a thought to what my loneliness would be here if you left me? I could not bear it — I would go crazy. I CANNOT live alone. Haven’t I been a good sister to you? Have I ever opposed any wish of yours? Haven’t I indulged you in everything?”

“Yes — yes.”

“Then why do you want to leave me for this man whom you hadn’t seen a year ago?”

“I love him, Ellen.”

“Love! You talk like a school miss instead of a middle-aged woman. He doesn’t love you. He wants a housekeeper and a governess. You don’t love him. You want to be ‘Mrs.’ — you are one of those weakminded women who think it’s a disgrace to be ranked as an old maid. That’s all there is to it.”

Rosemary quivered. Ellen could not, or would not, understand. There was no use arguing with her.

“So you won’t release me, Ellen?”

“No, I won’t. And I won’t talk of it again. You promised and you’ve got to keep your word. That’s all. Go to bed. Look at the time! You’re all romantic and worked up. Tomorrow you’ll be more sensible. At any rate, don’t let me hear any more of this nonsense. Go.”

Rosemary went without another word, pale and spiritless. Ellen walked stormily about the room for a few minutes, then paused before the chair

where St. George had been calmly sleeping through the whole evening. A reluctant smile overspread her dark face. There had been only one time in her life — the time of her mother's death — when Ellen had not been able to temper tragedy with comedy. Even in that long ago bitterness, when Norman Douglas had, after a fashion, jilted her, she had laughed at herself quite as often as she had cried.

“I expect there'll be some sulking, St. George. Yes, Saint, I expect we are in for a few unpleasant foggy days. Well, we'll weather them through, George. We've dealt with foolish children before, Saint. Rosemary'll sulk a while — and then she'll get over it — and all will be as before, George. She promised — and she's got to keep her promise. And that's the last word on the subject I'll say to you or her or anyone, Saint.”

But Ellen lay savagely awake till morning.

There was no sulking, however. Rosemary was pale and quiet the next day, but beyond that Ellen could detect no difference in her. Certainly, she seemed to bear Ellen no grudge. It was stormy, so no mention was made of going to church. In the afternoon Rosemary shut herself in her room and wrote a note to John Meredith. She could not trust herself to say “no” in person. She felt quite sure that if he suspected she was saying “no” reluctantly he would not take it for an answer, and she could not face pleading or entreaty. She must make him think she cared nothing at all for him and she could do that only by letter. She wrote him the stiffest, coolest little refusal imaginable. It was barely courteous; it certainly left no loophole of hope for the boldest lover — and John Meredith was anything but that. He shrank into himself, hurt and mortified, when he read Rosemary's letter next day in his dusty study. But under his mortification a dreadful realization presently made itself felt. He had thought he did not love Rosemary as deeply as he had loved Cecilia. Now, when he had lost her, he knew that he did. She was everything to him — everything! And he must put her out of his life completely. Even friendship was impossible now. Life stretched before him in intolerable dreariness. He must go on — there was his work — his children — but the heart had gone out of him. He sat alone all that evening in his dark, cold, comfortless study with his

head bowed on his hands. Up on the hill Rosemary had a headache and went early to bed, while Ellen remarked to St. George, purring his disdain of foolish humankind, who did not know that a soft cushion was the only thing that really mattered,

“What would women do if headaches had never been invented,
St.

George? But never mind, Saint. We’ll just wink the other eye for a few weeks. I admit I don’t feel comfortable myself,
George. I feel as if I had drowned a kitten. But she promised,
Saint — and she was the one to offer it, George. Bismillah!”

The Good-Conduct Club

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A light rain had been falling all day — a little, delicate, beautiful spring rain, that somehow seemed to hint and whisper of mayflowers and wakening violets. The harbour and the gulf and the lowlying shore fields had been dim with pearl-gray mists. But now in the evening the rain had ceased and the mists had blown out to sea. Clouds sprinkled the sky over the harbour like little fiery roses. Beyond it the hills were dark against a spendthrift splendour of daffodil and crimson. A great silvery evening star was watching over the bar. A brisk, dancing, new-sprung wind was blowing up from Rainbow Valley, resinous with the odours of fir and damp mosses. It crooned in the old spruces around the graveyard and ruffled Faith's splendid curls as she sat on Hezekiah Pollock's tombstone with her arms round Mary Vance and Una. Carl and Jerry were sitting opposite them on another tombstone and all were rather full of mischief after being cooped up all day.

"The air just SHINES tonight, doesn't it? It's been washed so clean, you see," said Faith happily.

Mary Vance eyed her gloomily. Knowing what she knew, or fancied she knew, Mary considered that Faith was far too lighthearted. Mary had something on her mind to say and she meant to say it before she went home. Mrs. Elliott had sent her up to the manse with some new-laid eggs, and had told her not to stay longer than half an hour. The half hour was nearly up, so Mary uncurled her cramped legs from under her and said abruptly,

"Never mind about the air. Just you listen to me. You manse young ones have just got to behave yourselves better than you've been doing this spring — that's all there is to it. I just come up tonight a-purpose to tell you so. The way people are talking about you is awful."

“What have we been doing now?” cried Faith in amazement, pulling her arm away from Mary. Una’s lips trembled and her sensitive little soul shrank within her. Mary was always so brutally frank. Jerry began to whistle out of bravado. He meant to let Mary see he didn’t care for HER tirades. Their behaviour was no business of HERS anyway. What right had SHE to lecture them on their conduct?

“Doing now! You’re doing ALL the time,” retorted Mary. “Just as soon as the talk about one of your didos fades away you do something else to start it up again. It seems to me you haven’t any idea of how manse children ought to behave!”

“Maybe YOU can tell us,” said Jerry, killingly sarcastic.

Sarcasm was quite thrown away on Mary.

“*I* can tell you what will happen if you don’t learn to behave yourselves. The session will ask your father to resign. There now, Master Jerry-know-it-all. Mrs. Alec Davis said so to Mrs. Elliott. I heard her. I always have my ears pricked up when Mrs. Alec Davis comes to tea. She said you were all going from bad to worse and that though it was only what was to be expected when you had nobody to bring you up, still the congregation couldn’t be expected to put up with it much longer, and something would have to be done. The Methodists just laugh and laugh at you, and that hurts the Presbyterian feelings. SHE says you all need a good dose of birch tonic. Lor’, if that would make folks good *I* oughter be a young saint. I’m not telling you this because I want to hurt YOUR feelings. I’m sorry for you” — Mary was past mistress of the gentle art of condescension.” *I* understand that you haven’t much chance, the way things are. But other people don’t make as much allowance as *I* do. Miss Drew says Carl had a frog in his pocket in Sunday School last Sunday and it hopped out while she was hearing the lesson. She says she’s going to give up the class. Why don’t you keep your insecks home?”

“I popped it right back in again,” said Carl. “It didn’t hurt anybody — a poor little frog! And I wish old Jane Drew WOULD give up our class. I hate her. Her own nephew had a dirty plug of tobacco in his pocket and

offered us fellows a chew when Elder Clow was praying. I guess that's worse than a frog."

"No, 'cause frogs are more unexpected-like. They make more of a sensation. 'Sides, he wasn't caught at it. And then that praying competition you had last week has made a fearful scandal. Everybody is talking about it."

"Why, the Blythes were in that as well as us," cried Faith, indignantly. "It was Nan Blythe who suggested it in the first place. And Walter took the prize."

"Well, you get the credit of it any way. It wouldn't have been so bad if you hadn't had it in the graveyard."

"I should think a graveyard was a very good place to pray in," retorted Jerry.

"Deacon Hazard drove past when YOU were praying," said Mary, "and he saw and heard you, with your hands folded over your stomach, and groaning after every sentence. He thought you were making fun of HIM."

"So I was," declared unabashed Jerry. "Only I didn't know he was going by, of course. That was just a mean accident. *I* wasn't praying in real earnest — I knew I had no chance of winning the prize. So I was just getting what fun I could out of it. Walter Blythe can pray bully. Why, he can pray as well as dad."

"Una is the only one of US who really likes praying," said Faith pensively.

"Well, if praying scandalizes people so much we mustn't do it any more," sighed Una.

"Shucks, you can pray all you want to, only not in the graveyard — and don't make a game of it. That was what made it so bad — that, and having a tea-party on the tombstones."

"We hadn't."

"Well, a soap-bubble party then. You had SOMETHING. The over-harbour people swear you had a tea-party, but I'm willing to take your word. And you used this tombstone as a table."

“Well, Martha wouldn’t let us blow bubbles in the house. She was awful cross that day,” explained Jerry. “And this old slab made such a jolly table.”

“Weren’t they pretty?” cried Faith, her eyes sparkling over the remembrance. “They reflected the trees and the hills and the harbour like little fairy worlds, and when we shook them loose they floated away down to Rainbow Valley.”

“All but one and it went over and bust up on the Methodist spire,” said Carl.

“I’m glad we did it once, anyhow, before we found out it was wrong,” said Faith.

“It wouldn’t have been wrong to blow them on the lawn,” said Mary impatiently. “Seems like I can’t knock any sense into your heads. You’ve been told often enough you shouldn’t play in the graveyard. The Methodists are sensitive about it.”

“We forget,” said Faith dolefully. “And the lawn is so small — and so caterpillary — and so full of shrubs and things. We can’t be in Rainbow Valley all the time — and where are we to go?”

“It’s the things you DO in the graveyard. It wouldn’t matter if you just sat here and talked quiet, same as we’re doing now. Well, I don’t know what is going to come of it all, but I DO know that Elder Warren is going to speak to your pa about it. Deacon Hazard is his cousin.”

“I wish they wouldn’t bother father about us,” said Una.

“Well, people think he ought to bother himself about you a little more. *I* don’t — *I* understand him. He’s a child in some ways himself — that’s what he is, and needs some one to look after him as bad as you do. Well, perhaps he’ll have some one before long, if all tales is true.”

“What do you mean?” asked Faith.

“Haven’t you got any idea — honest?” demanded Mary.

“No, no. What DO you mean?”

“Well, you are a lot of innocents, upon my word. Why, EVERYbody is talking of it. Your pa goes to see Rosemary West. SHE is going to be your step-ma.”

“I don’t believe it,” cried Una, flushing crimson.

“Well, *I* dunno. I just go by what folks say. *I* don’t give it for a fact. But it would be a good thing. Rosemary West’d make you toe the mark if she came here, I’ll bet a cent, for all she’s so sweet and smiley on the face of her. They’re always that way till they’ve caught them. But you need some one to bring you up. You’re disgracing your pa and I feel for him. I’ve always thought an awful lot of your pa ever since that night he talked to me so nice. I’ve never said a single swear word since, or told a lie. And I’d like to see him happy and comfortable, with his buttons on and his meals decent, and you young ones licked into shape, and that old cat of a Martha put in *HER* proper place. The way she looked at the eggs I brought her tonight. ‘I hope they’re fresh,’ says she. I just wished they *WAS* rotten. But you just mind that she gives you all one for breakfast, including your pa. Make a fuss if she doesn’t. That was what they was sent up for — but I don’t trust old Martha. She’s quite capable of feeding ‘em to her cat.”

Mary’s tongue being temporarily tired, a brief silence fell over the graveyard. The manse children did not feel like talking. They were digesting the new and not altogether palatable ideas Mary had suggested to them. Jerry and Carl were somewhat startled. But, after all, what did it matter? And it wasn’t likely there was a word of truth in it. Faith, on the whole, was pleased. Only Una was seriously upset. She felt that she would like to get away and cry.

“Will there be any stars in my crown?” sang the Methodist choir, beginning to practise in the Methodist church.

“*I* want just three,” said Mary, whose theological knowledge had increased notably since her residence with Mrs. Elliott. “Just three — setting up on my head, like a coronet, a big one in the middle and a small one each side.”

“Are there different sizes in souls?” asked Carl.

“Of course. Why, little babies must have smaller ones than big men. Well, it’s getting dark and I must scoot home. Mrs. Elliott doesn’t like me to be out after dark. Laws, when I lived with Mrs. Wiley the dark was just the same as the daylight to me. I didn’t mind it no more’n a gray cat.

Them days seem a hundred years ago. Now, you mind what I've said and try to behave yourselves, for you pa's sake. I'LL always back you up and defend you — you can be dead sure of that. Mrs. Elliott says she never saw the like of me for sticking up for my friends. I was real sassy to Mrs. Alec Davis about you and Mrs. Elliott combed me down for it afterwards. The fair Cornelia has a tongue of her own and no mistake. But she was pleased underneath for all, 'cause she hates old Kitty Alec and she's real fond of you. *I can see through folks.*"

Mary sailed off, excellently well pleased with herself, leaving a rather depressed little group behind her.

"Mary Vance always says something that makes us feel bad when she comes up," said Una resentfully.

"I wish we'd left her to starve in the old barn," said Jerry vindictively.

"Oh, that's wicked, Jerry," rebuked Una.

"May as well have the game as the name," retorted unrepentant Jerry. "If people say we're so bad let's BE bad."

"But not if it hurts father," pleaded Faith.

Jerry squirmed uncomfortably. He adored his father. Through the unshaded study window they could see Mr. Meredith at his desk. He did not seem to be either reading or writing. His head was in his hands and there was something in his whole attitude that spoke of weariness and dejection. The children suddenly felt it.

"I dare say somebody's been worrying him about us to-day," said

Faith. "I wish we COULD get along without making people talk.

Oh — Jem Blythe! How you scared me!"

Jem Blythe had slipped into the graveyard and sat down beside the girls. He had been prowling about Rainbow Valley and had succeeded in finding the first little star-white cluster of arbutus for his mother. The manse children were rather silent after his coming. Jem was beginning to grow

away from them somewhat this spring. He was studying for the entrance examination of Queen's Academy and stayed after school with the older pupils for extra lessons. Also, his evenings were so full of work that he seldom joined the others in Rainbow Valley now. He seemed to be drifting away into grownup land.

"What is the matter with you all tonight?" he asked. "There's no fun in you."

"Not much," agreed Faith dolefully. "There wouldn't be much fun in you either if YOU knew you were disgracing your father and making people talk about you."

"Who's been talking about you now?"

"Everybody — so Mary Vance says." And Faith poured out her troubles to sympathetic Jem. "You see," she concluded dolefully, "we've nobody to bring us up. And so we get into scrapes and people think we're bad."

"Why don't you bring yourselves up?" suggested Jem. "I'll tell you what to do. Form a Good-Conduct Club and punish yourselves every time you do anything that's not right."

"That's a good idea," said Faith, struck by it. "But," she added doubtfully, "things that don't seem a bit of harm to US seem simply dreadful to other people. How can we tell? We can't be bothering father all the time — and he has to be away a lot, anyhow."

"You could mostly tell if you stopped to think a thing over before doing it and ask yourselves what the congregation would say about it," said Jem. "The trouble is you just rush into things and don't think them over at all. Mother says you're all too impulsive, just as she used to be. The Good-Conduct Club would help you to think, if you were fair and honest about punishing yourselves when you broke the rules. You'd have to punish in some way that really HURT, or it wouldn't do any good."

"Whip each other?"

"Not exactly. You'd have to think up different ways of punishment to suit the person. You wouldn't punish each other — you'd punish

YOURSELVES. I read all about such a club in a storybook. You try it and see how it works.”

“Let’s,” said Faith; and when Jem was gone they agreed they would. “If things aren’t right we’ve just got to make them right,” said Faith, resolutely.

“We’ve got to be fair and square, as Jem says,” said Jerry. “This is a club to bring ourselves up, seeing there’s nobody else to do it. There’s no use in having many rules. Let’s just have one and any of us that breaks it has got to be punished hard.”

“But HOW.”

“We’ll think that up as we go along. We’ll hold a session of the club here in the graveyard every night and talk over what we’ve done through the day, and if we think we’ve done anything that isn’t right or that would disgrace dad the one that does it, or is responsible for it, must be punished. That’s the rule. We’ll all decide on the kind of punishment — it must be made to fit the crime, as Mr. Flagg says. And the one that’s, guilty will be bound to carry it out and no shirking. There’s going to be fun in this,” concluded Jerry, with a relish.

“You suggested the soap-bubble party,” said Faith.

“But that was before we’d formed the club,” said Jerry hastily.

“Everything starts from tonight.”

“But what if we can’t agree on what’s right, or what the punishment ought to be? S’pose two of us thought of one thing and two another. There ought to be five in a club like this.”

“We can ask Jem Blythe to be umpire. He is the squarest boy in Glen St. Mary. But I guess we can settle our own affairs mostly. We want to keep this as much of a secret as we can. Don’t breathe a word to Mary Vance. She’d want to join and do the bringing up.”

“I think,” said Faith, “that there’s no use in spoiling every day by dragging punishments in. Let’s have a punishment day.”

“We’d better choose Saturday because there is no school to interfere,” suggested Una.

“And spoil the one holiday in the week,” cried Faith. “Not much! No, let’s take Friday. That’s fish day, anyhow, and we all hate fish. We may as well have all the disagreeable things in one day. Then other days we can go ahead and have a good time.”

“Nonsense,” said Jerry authoritatively. “Such a scheme wouldn’t work at all. We’ll just punish ourselves as we go along and keep a clear slate. Now, we all understand, don’t we? This is a Good-Conduct Club, for the purpose of bringing ourselves up. We agree to punish ourselves for bad conduct, and always to stop before we do anything, no matter what, and ask ourselves if it is likely to hurt dad in any way, and any one who shirks is to be cast out of the club and never allowed to play with the rest of us in Rainbow Valley again. Jem Blythe to be umpire in case of disputes. No more taking bugs to Sunday School, Carl, and no more chewing gum in public, if you please, Miss Faith.”

“No more making fun of elders praying or going to the Methodist prayer meeting,” retorted Faith.

“Why, it isn’t any harm to go to the Methodist prayer meeting,” protested Jerry in amazement.

“Mrs. Elliott says it is, She says manse children have no business to go anywhere but to Presbyterian things.”

“Darn it, I won’t give up going to the Methodist prayer meeting,” cried Jerry. “It’s ten times more fun than ours is.”

“You said a naughty word,” cried Faith. “NOW, you’ve got to punish yourself.”

“Not till it’s all down in black and white. We’re only talking the club over. It isn’t really formed until we’ve written it out and signed it. There’s got to be a constitution and by-laws. And you KNOW there’s nothing wrong in going to a prayer meeting.”

“But it’s not only the wrong things we’re to punish ourselves for, but anything that might hurt father.”

“It won’t hurt anybody. You know Mrs. Elliott is cracked on the subject of Methodists. Nobody else makes any fuss about my going. I always behave myself. You ask Jem or Mrs. Blythe and see what they say. I’ll

abide by their opinion. I'm going for the paper now and I'll bring out the lantern and we'll all sign."

Fifteen minutes later the document was solemnly signed on Hezekiah Pollock's tombstone, on the centre of which stood the smoky manse lantern, while the children knelt around it. Mrs. Elder Clow was going past at the moment and next day all the Glen heard that the manse children had been having another praying competition and had wound it up by chasing each other all over the graves with a lantern. This piece of embroidery was probably suggested by the fact that, after the signing and sealing was completed, Carl had taken the lantern and had walked circumspectly to the little hollow to examine his ant-hill. The others had gone quietly into the manse and to bed.

"Do you think it is true that father is going to marry Miss West?" Una had tremulously asked of Faith, after their prayers had been said.

"I don't know, but I'd like it," said Faith.

"Oh, I wouldn't," said Una, chokingly. "She is nice the way she is. But Mary Vance says it changes people **ALTOGETHER** to be made stepmothers. They get horrid cross and mean and hateful then, and turn your father against you. She says they're sure to do that. She never knew it to fail in a single case."

"I don't believe Miss West would **EVER** try to do that," cried Faith.

"Mary says **ANYBODY** would. She knows **ALL** about stepmothers, Faith — she says she's seen hundreds of them — and you've never seen one. Oh, Mary has told me bloodcurdling things about them. She says she knew of one who whipped her husband's little girls on their bare shoulders till they bled, and then shut them up in a cold, dark coal cellar all night. She says they're **ALL** aching to do things like that."

"I don't believe Miss West would. You don't know her as well as I do, Una. Just think of that sweet little bird she sent me. I love it far more even than Adam."

“It’s just being a stepmother changes them. Mary says they can’t help it. I wouldn’t mind the whippings so much as having father hate us.”

“You know nothing could make father hate us. Don’t be silly, Una. I dare say there’s nothing to worry over. Likely if we run our club right and bring ourselves up properly father won’t think of marrying any one. And if he does, I KNOW Miss West will be lovely to us.”

But Una had no such conviction and she cried herself to sleep.

A Charitable Impulse

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For a fortnight things ran smoothly in the Good-Conduct Club. It seemed to work admirably. Not once was Jem Blythe called in as umpire. Not once did any of the manse children set the Glen gossips by the ears. As for their minor peccadilloes at home, they kept sharp tabs on each other and gamely underwent their self-imposed punishment — generally a voluntary absence from some gay Friday night frolic in Rainbow Valley, or a sojourn in bed on some spring evening when all young bones ached to be out and away. Faith, for whispering in Sunday School, condemned herself to pass a whole day without speaking a single word, unless it was absolutely necessary, and accomplished it. It was rather unfortunate that Mr. Baker from over-harbour should have chosen that evening for calling at the manse, and that Faith should have happened to go to the door. Not one word did she reply to his genial greeting, but went silently away to call her father briefly. Mr. Baker was slightly offended and told his wife when he went home that that the biggest Meredith girl seemed a very shy, sulky little thing, without manners enough to speak when she was spoken to. But nothing worse came of it, and generally their penances did no harm to themselves or anybody else. All of them were beginning to feel quite cocksure that after all, it was a very easy matter to bring yourself up.

“I guess people will soon see that we can behave ourselves properly as well as anybody,” said Faith jubilantly. “It isn’t hard when we put our minds to it.”

She and Una were sitting on the Pollock tombstone. It had been a cold, raw, wet day of spring storm and Rainbow Valley was out of the question for girls, though the manse and the Ingleside boys were down there fishing. The rain had held up, but the east wind blew mercilessly in from the sea, cutting to bone and marrow. Spring was late in spite of its early promise, and there was even yet a hard drift of old snow and ice in the

northern corner of the graveyard. Lida Marsh, who had come up to bring the manse a mess of herring, slipped in through the gate shivering. She belonged to the fishing village at the harbour mouth and her father had, for thirty years, made a practice of sending a mess from his first spring catch to the manse. He never darkened a church door; he was a hard drinker and a reckless man, but as long as he sent those herring up to the manse every spring, as his father had done before him, he felt comfortably sure that his account with the Powers That Govern was squared for the year. He would not have expected a good mackerel catch if he had not so sent the first fruits of the season.

Lida was a mite of ten and looked younger, because she was such a small, wizened little creature. Tonight, as she sidled boldly enough up to the manse girls, she looked as if she had never been warm since she was born. Her face was purple and her pale-blue, bold little eyes were red and watery. She wore a tattered print dress and a ragged woollen comforter, tied across her thin shoulders and under her arms. She had walked the three miles from the harbour mouth barefooted, over a road where there was still snow and slush and mud. Her feet and legs were as purple as her face. But Lida did not mind this much. She was used to being cold, and she had been going barefooted for a month already, like all the other swarming young fry of the fishing village. There was no selfpity in her heart as she sat down on the tombstone and grinned cheerfully at Faith and Una. Faith and Una grinned cheerfully back. They knew Lida slightly, having met her once or twice the preceding summer when they had gone down the harbour with the Blythes.

“Hello!” said Lida, “ain’t this a fierce kind of a night?”

“T’ain’t fit for a dog to be out, is it?”

“Then why are you out?” asked Faith.

“Pa made me bring you up some herring,” returned Lida. She shivered, coughed, and stuck out her bare feet. Lida was not thinking about herself or her feet, and was making no bid for sympathy. She held her feet out instinctively to keep them from the wet grass around the tombstone. But

Faith and Una were instantly swamped with a wave of pity for her. She looked so cold — so miserable.

“Oh, why are you barefooted on such a cold night?” cried Faith.

“Your feet must be almost frozen.”

“Pretty near,” said Lida proudly. “I tell you it was fierce walking up that harbour road.”

“Why didn’t you put on your shoes and stockings?” asked Una.

“Hain’t none to put on. All I had was wore out by the time winter was over,” said Lida indifferently.

For a moment Faith stated in horror. This was terrible. Here was a little girl, almost a neighbour, half frozen because she had no shoes or stockings in this cruel spring weather. Impulsive Faith thought of nothing but the dreadfulness of it. In a moment she was pulling off her own shoes and stockings.

“Here, take these and put them right on,” she said, forcing them into the hands of the astonished Lida. “Quick now. You’ll catch your death of cold. I’ve got others. Put them right on.”

Lida, recovering her wits, snatched at the offered gift, with a sparkle in her dull eyes. Sure she would put them on, and that mighty quick, before any one appeared with authority to recall them. In a minute she had pulled the stockings over her scrawny little legs and slipped Faith’s shoes over her thick little ankles.

“I’m obliged to you,” she said, “but won’t your folks be cross?”

“No — and I don’t care if they are,” said Faith. “Do you think I could see any one freezing to death without helping them if I could? It wouldn’t be right, especially when my father’s a minister.”

“Will you want them back? It’s awful cold down at the harbour mouth — long after it’s warm up here,” said Lida slyly.

“No, you’re to keep them, of course. That is what I meant when I gave them. I have another pair of shoes and plenty of stockings.”

Lida had meant to stay awhile and talk to the girls about many things. But now she thought she had better get away before somebody came and

made her yield up her booty. So she shuffled off through the bitter twilight, in the noiseless, shadowy way she had slipped in. As soon as she was out of sight of the manse she sat down, took off the shoes and stockings, and put them in her herring basket. She had no intention of keeping them on down that dirty harbour road. They were to be kept good for gala occasions. Not another little girl down at the harbour mouth had such fine black cashmere stockings and such smart, almost new shoes. Lida was furnished forth for the summer. She had no qualms in the matter. In her eyes the manse people were quite fabulously rich, and no doubt those girls had slathers of shoes and stockings. Then Lida ran down to the Glen village and played for an hour with the boys before Mr. Flagg's store, splashing about in a pool of slush with the maddest of them, until Mrs. Elliott came along and bade her begone home.

"I don't think, Faith, that you should have done that," said Una, a little reproachfully, after Lida had gone. "You'll have to wear your good boots every day now and they'll soon scuff out."

"I don't care," cried Faith, still in the fine glow of having done a kindness to a fellow creature. "It isn't fair that I should have two pairs of shoes and poor little Lida Marsh not have any. NOW we both have a pair. You know perfectly well, Una, that father said in his sermon last Sunday that there was no real happiness in getting or having — only in giving. And it's true. I feel FAR happier now than I ever did in my whole life before. Just think of Lida walking home this very minute with her poor little feet all nice and warm and comfy."

"You know you haven't another pair of black cashmere stockings," said Una. "Your other pair were so full of holes that Aunt Martha said she couldn't darn them any more and she cut the legs up for stove dusters. You've nothing but those two pairs of striped stockings you hate so."

All the glow and uplift went out of Faith. Her gladness collapsed like a pricked balloon. She sat for a few dismal minutes in silence, facing the consequences of her rash act.

"Oh, Una, I never thought of that," she said dolefully. "I didn't stop to think at all."

The striped stockings were thick, heavy, coarse, ribbed stockings of blue and red which Aunt Martha had knit for Faith in the winter. They were undoubtedly hideous. Faith loathed them as she had never loathed anything before. Wear them she certainly would not. They were still unworn in her bureau drawer.

“You’ll have to wear the striped stockings after this,” said Una. “Just think how the boys in school will laugh at you. You know how they laugh at Mamie Warren for her striped stockings and call her barber pole and yours are far worse.”

“I won’t wear them,” said Faith. “I’ll go barefooted first, cold as it is.”

“You can’t go barefooted to church tomorrow. Think what people would say.”

“Then I’ll stay home.”

“You can’t. You know very well Aunt Martha will make you go.”

Faith did know this. The one thing on which Aunt Martha troubled herself to insist was that they must all go to church, rain or shine. How they were dressed, or if they were dressed at all, never concerned her. But go they must. That was how Aunt Martha had been brought up seventy years ago, and that was how she meant to bring them up.

“Haven’t you got a pair you can lend me, Una?” said poor Faith piteously.

Una shook her head. “No, you know I only have the one black pair. And they’re so tight I can hardly get them on. They wouldn’t go on you. Neither would my gray ones. Besides, the legs of THEM are all darned AND darned.”

“I won’t wear those striped stockings,” said Faith stubbornly.

“The feel of them is even worse than the looks. They make me feel as if my legs were as big as barrels and they’re so SCRATCHY.”

“Well, I don’t know what you’re going to do.”

“If father was home I’d go and ask him to get me a new pair before the store closes. But he won’t be home till too late. I’ll ask him Monday —

and I won't go to church tomorrow. I'll pretend I'm sick and Aunt Martha'll HAVE to let me stay home."

"That would be acting a lie, Faith," cried Una. "You CAN'T do that. You know it would be dreadful. What would father say if he knew? Don't you remember how he talked to us after mother died and told us we must always be TRUE, no matter what else we failed in. He said we must never tell or act a lie — he said he'd TRUST us not to. You CAN'T do it, Faith. Just wear the striped stockings. It'll only be for once. Nobody will notice them in church. It isn't like school. And your new brown dress is so long they won't show much. Wasn't it lucky Aunt Martha made it big, so you'd have room to grow in it, for all you hated it so when she finished it?"

"I won't wear those stockings," repeated Faith. She uncoiled her bare, white legs from the tombstone and deliberately walked through the wet, cold grass to the bank of snow. Setting her teeth, she stepped upon it and stood there.

"What are you doing?" cried Una aghast. "You'll catch your death of cold, Faith Meredith."

"I'm trying to," answered Faith. "I hope I'll catch a fearful cold and be AWFUL sick tomorrow. Then I won't be acting a lie. I'm going to stand here as long as I can bear it."

"But, Faith, you might really die. You might get pneumonia. Please, Faith don't. Let's go into the house and get SOMETHING for your feet. Oh, here's Jerry. I'm so thankful. Jerry, MAKE Faith get off that snow. Look at her feet."

"Holy cats! Faith, what ARE you doing?" demanded Jerry. "Are you crazy?"

"No. Go away!" snapped Faith.

"Then are you punishing yourself for something? It isn't right, if you are. You'll be sick."

"I want to be sick. I'm not punishing myself. Go away."

"Where's her shoes and stockings?" asked Jerry of Una.

“She gave them to Lida Marsh.”

“Lida Marsh? What for?”

“Because Lida had none — and her feet were so cold. And now she wants to be sick so that she won’t have to go to church tomorrow and wear her striped stockings. But, Jerry, she may die.”

“Faith,” said Jerry, “get off that ice-bank or I’ll pull you off.”

“Pull away,” dared Faith.

Jerry sprang at her and caught her arms. He pulled one way and Faith pulled another. Una ran behind Faith and pushed. Faith stormed at Jerry to leave her alone. Jerry stormed back at her not to be a dizzy idiot; and Una cried. They made no end of noise and they were close to the road fence of the graveyard. Henry Warren and his wife drove by and heard and saw them. Very soon the Glen heard that the manse children had been having an awful fight in the graveyard and using most improper language. Meanwhile, Faith had allowed herself to be pulled off the ice because her feet were aching so sharply that she was ready to get off any way. They all went in amiably and went to bed. Faith slept like a cherub and woke in the morning without a trace of a cold. She felt that she couldn’t feign sickness and act a lie, after remembering that long-ago talk with her father. But she was still as fully determined as ever that she would not wear those abominable stockings to church.

Another Scandal and Another “explanation”

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Faith went early to Sunday School and was seated in the corner of her class pew before any one came. Therefore, the dreadful truth did not burst upon any one until Faith left the class pew near the door to walk up to the manse pew after Sunday School. The church was already half filled and all who were sitting near the aisle saw that the minister's daughter had boots on but no stockings!

Faith's new brown dress, which Aunt Martha had made from an ancient pattern, was absurdly long for her, but even so it did not meet her boot-tops. Two good inches of bare white leg showed plainly.

Faith and Carl sat alone in the manse pew. Jerry had gone into the gallery to sit with a chum and the Blythe girls had taken Una with them. The Meredith children were given to “sitting all over the church” in this fashion and a great many people thought it very improper. The gallery especially, where irresponsible lads congregated and were known to whisper and suspected of chewing tobacco during service, was no place, for a son of the manse. But Jerry hated the manse pew at the very top of the church, under the eyes of Elder Clow and his family. He escaped from it whenever he could.

Carl, absorbed in watching a spider spinning its web at the window, did not notice Faith's legs. She walked home with her father after church and he never noticed them. She got on the hated striped stockings before Jerry and Una arrived, so that for the time being none of the occupants of the manse knew what she had done. But nobody else in Glen St. Mary was ignorant of it. The few who had not seen soon heard. Nothing else was talked of on the way home from church. Mrs. Alec Davis said it was only what she expected, and the next thing you would see some of those young

ones coming to church with no clothes on at all. The president of the Ladies' Aid decided that she would bring the matter up at the next Aid meeting, and suggest that they wait in a body on the minister and protest. Miss Cornelia said that she, for her part, gave up. There was no use worrying over the manse fry any longer. Even Mrs. Dr. Blythe felt a little shocked, though she attributed the occurrence solely to Faith's forgetfulness. Susan could not immediately begin knitting stockings for Faith because it was Sunday, but she had one set up before any one else was out of bed at Ingleside the next morning.

"You need not tell me anything but that it was old Martha's fault, Mrs. Dr. dear," she told Anne. "I suppose that poor little child had no decent stockings to wear. I suppose every stocking she had was in holes, as you know very well they generally are. And *I* think, Mrs. Dr. dear, that the Ladies' Aid would be better employed in knitting some for them than in fighting over the new carpet for the pulpit platform. *I* am not a Ladies' Aider, but I shall knit Faith two pairs of stockings, out of this nice black yarn, as fast as my fingers can move and that you may tie to. Never shall I forget my sensations, Mrs. Dr. dear, when I saw a minister's child walking up the aisle of our church with no stockings on. I really did not know what way to look."

"And the church was just full of Methodists yesterday, too," groaned Miss Cornelia, who had come up to the Glen to do some shopping and run into Ingleside to talk the affair over. "I don't know how it is, but just as sure as those manse children do something especially awful the church is sure to be crowded with Methodists. I thought Mrs. Deacon Hazard's eyes would drop out of her head. When she came out of church she said, 'Well, that exhibition was no more than decent. I do pity the Presbyterians.' And we just had to TAKE it. There was nothing one could say."

"There was something *I* could have said, Mrs. Dr. dear, if I had heard her," said Susan grimly. "I would have said, for one thing, that in my opinion clean bare legs were quite as decent as holes. And I would have said, for another, that the Presbyterians did not feel greatly in need of pity seeing that they had a minister who could PREACH and the Methodists

had NOT. I could have squelched Mrs. Deacon Hazard, Mrs. Dr dear, and that you may tie to.”

“I wish Mr. Meredith didn’t preach quite so well and looked after his family a little better,” retorted Miss Cornelia. “He could at least glance over his children before they went to church and see that they were quite properly clothed. I’m tired making excuses for him, believe ME.”

Meanwhile, Faith’s soul was being harrowed up in Rainbow Valley. Mary Vance was there and, as usual, in a lecturing mood. She gave Faith to understand that she had disgraced herself and her father beyond redemption and that she, Mary Vance, was done with her. “Everybody” was talking, and “everybody” said the same thing.

“I simply feel that I can’t associate with you any longer,” she concluded.

“WE are going to associate with her then,” cried Nan Blythe. Nan secretly thought Faith HAD done a awful thing, but she wasn’t going to let Mary Vance run matters in this high-handed fashion. “And if YOU are not you needn’t come any more to Rainbow Valley, MISS Vance.”

Nan and Di both put their arms around Faith and glared defiance at Mary. The latter suddenly crumpled up, sat down on a stump and began to cry.

“It ain’t that I don’t want to,” she wailed. “But if I keep in with Faith people’ll be saying I put her up to doing things. Some are saying it now, true’s you live. I can’t afford to have such things said of me, now that I’m in a respectable place and trying to be a lady. And *I* never went bare-legged in church in my toughest days. I’d never have thought of doing such a thing. But that hateful old Kitty Alec says Faith has never been the same girl since that time I stayed in the manse. She says Cornelia Elliott will live to rue the day she took me in. It hurts my feelings, I tell you. But it’s Mr. Meredith I’m really worried over.”

“I think you needn’t worry about him,” said Di scornfully. “It isn’t likely necessary. Now, Faith darling, stop crying and tell us why you did it.”

Faith explained tearfully. The Blythe girls sympathized with her, and even Mary Vance agreed that it was a hard position to be in. But Jerry, on whom the thing came like a thunderbolt, refused to be placated. So THIS was what some mysterious hints he had got in school that day meant! He marched Faith and Una home without ceremony, and the Good-Conduct Club held an immediate session in the graveyard to sit in judgment on Faith's case.

"I don't see that it was any harm," said Faith defiantly. "Not MUCH of my legs showed. It wasn't WRONG and it didn't hurt anybody."

"It will hurt Dad. You KNOW it will. You know people blame him whenever we do anything queer."

"I didn't think of that," muttered Faith.

"That's just the trouble. You didn't think and you SHOULD have thought. That's what our Club is for — to bring us up and MAKE us think. We promised we'd always stop and think before doing things. You didn't and you've got to be punished, Faith — and real hard, too. You'll wear those striped stockings to school for a week for punishment."

"Oh, Jerry, won't a day do — two days? Not a whole week!"

"Yes, a whole week," said inexorable Jerry. "It is fair — ask Jem Blythe if it isn't."

Faith felt she would rather submit than ask Jem Blythe about such a matter. She was beginning to realize that her offence was a quite shameful one.

"I'll do it, then," she muttered, a little sulkily.

"You're getting off easy," said, Jerry severely. "And no matter how we punish you it won't help father. People will always think you just did it for mischief, and they'll blame father for not stopping it. We can never explain it to everybody."

This aspect of the case weighed on Faith's mind. Her own condemnation she could bear, but it tortured her that her father should be blamed. If people knew the true facts of the case they would not blame

him. But how could she make them known to all the world? Getting up in church, as she had once done, and explaining the matter was out of the question. Faith had heard from Mary Vance how the congregation had looked upon that performance and realized that she must not repeat it. Faith worried over the problem for half a week. Then she had an inspiration and promptly acted upon it. She spent that evening in the garret, with a lamp and an exercise book, writing busily, with flushed cheeks and shining eyes. It was the very thing! How clever she was to have thought of it! It would put everything right and explain everything and yet cause no scandal. It was eleven o'clock when she had finished to her satisfaction and crept down to bed, dreadfully tired, but perfectly happy.

In a few days the little weekly published in the Glen under the name of *The Journal* came out as usual, and the Glen had another sensation. A letter signed "Faith Meredith" occupied a prominent place on the front page and ran as follows: —

"TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

I want to explain to everybody how it was I came to go to church without stockings on, so that everybody will know that father was not to blame one bit for it, and the old gossips need not say he is, because it is not true. I gave my only pair of black stockings to Lida Marsh, because she hadn't any and her poor little feet were awful cold and I was so sorry for her. No child ought to have to go without shoes and stockings in a Christian community before the snow is all gone, and I think the W. F. M. S. ought to have given her stockings. Of course, I know they are sending things to the little heathen children, and that is all right and a kind thing to do. But the little heathen children have lots more warm weather than we have, and I think the women of our church ought to look after Lida and not leave it all to me. When I gave her my stockings I forgot they were the only black pair I had without holes, but I am glad I did give them to her, because my conscience would have been uncomfortable if I hadn't. When she had gone away, looking so proud and happy, the poor little thing, I remembered that all I had to wear were the horrid red and blue things Aunt

Martha knit last winter for me out of some yarn that Mrs. Joseph Burr of Upper Glen sent us. It was dreadfully coarse yarn and all knots, and I never saw any of Mrs. Burr's own children wearing things made of such yarn. But Mary Vance says Mrs. Burr gives the minister stuff that she can't use or eat herself, and thinks it ought to go as part of the salary her husband signed to pay, but never does.

I just couldn't bear to wear those hateful stockings. They were so ugly and rough and felt so scratchy. Everybody would have made fun of me. I thought at first I'd pretend to be sick and not go to church next day, but I decided I couldn't do that, because it would be acting a lie, and father told us after mother died that was something we must never, never do. It is just as bad to act a lie as to tell one, though I know some people, right here in the Glen, who act them, and never seem to feel a bit bad about it. I will not mention any names, but I know who they are and so does father.

Then I tried my best to catch cold and really be sick by standing on the snowbank in the Methodist graveyard with my bare feet until Jerry pulled me off. But it didn't hurt me a bit and so I couldn't get out of going to church. So I just decided I would put my boots on and go that way. I can't see why it was so wrong and I was so careful to wash my legs just as clean as my face, but, anyway, father wasn't to blame for it. He was in the study thinking of his sermon and other heavenly things, and I kept out of his way before I went to Sunday School. Father does not look at people's legs in church, so of course he did not notice mine, but all the gossips did and talked about it, and that is why I am writing this letter to the *Journal* to explain. I suppose I did very wrong, since everybody says so, and I am sorry and I am wearing those awful stockings to punish myself, although father bought me two nice new black pairs as soon as Mr. Flagg's store opened on Monday morning. But it was all my fault, and if people blame father for it after they read this they are not Christians and so I do not mind what they say.

There is another thing I want to explain about before I stop. Mary Vance told me that Mr. Evan Boyd is blaming the Lew Baxters for stealing potatoes out of his field last fall. They did not touch his potatoes. They are

very poor, but they are honest. It was us did it — Jerry and Carl and I. Una was not with us at the time. We never thought it was stealing. We just wanted a few potatoes to cook over a fire in Rainbow Valley one evening to eat with our fried trout. Mr. Boyd's field was the nearest, just between the valley and the village, so we climbed over his fence and pulled up some stalks. The potatoes were awful small, because Mr. Boyd did not put enough fertilizer on them and we had to pull up a lot of stalks before we got enough, and then they were not much bigger than marbles. Walter and Di Blythe helped us eat them, but they did not come along until we had them cooked and did not know where we got them, so they were not to blame at all, only us. We didn't mean any harm, but if it was stealing we are very sorry and we will pay Mr. Boyd for them if he will wait until we grow up. We never have any money now because we are not big enough to earn any, and Aunt Martha says it takes every cent of poor father's salary, even when it is paid up regularly — and it isn't often — to run this house. But Mr. Boyd must not blame the Lew Baxters any more, when they were quite innocent, and give them a bad name. Yours respectfully, FAITH MEREDITH."

Miss Cornelia Gets A New Point Of View

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“Susan, after I’m dead I’m going to come back to earth every time when the daffodils blow in this garden,” said Anne rapturously. “Nobody may see me, but I’ll be here. If anybody is in the garden at the time — I THINK I’ll come on an evening just like this, but it MIGHT be just at dawn — a lovely, pale-pinky spring dawn — they’ll just see the daffodils nodding wildly as if an extra gust of wind had blown past them, but it will be *I*.”

“Indeed, Mrs. Dr. dear, you will not be thinking of flaunting worldly things like daffies after you are dead,” said Susan. “And I do NOT believe in ghosts, seen or unseen.”

“Oh, Susan, I shall not be a ghost! That has such a horrible sound. I shall just be ME. And I shall run around in the twilight, whether it is morn or eve, and see all the spots I love. Do you remember how badly I felt when I left our little House of Dreams, Susan? I thought I could never love Ingleside so well. But I do. I love every inch of the ground and every stick and stone on it.”

“I am rather fond of the place myself,” said Susan, who would have died if she had been removed from it, “but we must not set our affections too much on earthly things, Mrs. Dr. dear. There are such things as fires and earthquakes. We should always be prepared. The Tom MacAllisters over-harbour were burned out three nights ago. Some say Tom MacAllister set the house on fire himself to get the insurance. That may or may not be. But I advise the doctor to have our chimneys seen to at once. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. But I see Mrs. Marshall Elliott coming in at the gate, looking as if she had been sent for and couldn’t go.”

“Anne dearie, have you seen the *Journal* to-day?”

Miss Cornelia's voice was trembling, partly from emotion, partly from the fact that she had hurried up from the store too fast and lost her breath.

Anne bent over the daffodils to hide a smile. She and Gilbert had laughed heartily and heartlessly over the front page of the *Journal* that day, but she knew that to dear Miss Cornelia it was almost a tragedy, and she must not wound her feelings by any display of levity.

"Isn't it dreadful? What IS to be done?" asked Miss Cornelia despairingly. Miss Cornelia had vowed that she was done with worrying over the pranks of the manse children, but she went on worrying just the same.

Anne led the way to the veranda, where Susan was knitting, with Shirley and Rilla conning their primers on either side. Susan was already on her second pair of stockings for Faith. Susan never worried over poor humanity. She did what in her lay for its betterment and serenely left the rest to the Higher Powers.

"Cornelia Elliott thinks she was born to run this world, Mrs. Dr. dear," she had once said to Anne, "and so she is always in a stew over something. I have never thought *I* was, and so I go calmly along. Not but what it has sometimes occurred to me that things might be run a little better than they are. But it is not for us poor worms to nourish such thoughts. They only make us uncomfortable and do not get us anywhere."

"I don't see that anything can be done — now—" said Anne, pulling out a nice, cushiony chair for Miss Cornelia. "But how in the world did Mr. Vickers allow that letter to be printed? Surely he should have known better."

"Why, he's away, Anne dearie — he's been away to New Brunswick for a week. And that young scalawag of a Joe Vickers is editing the *Journal* in his absence. Of course, Mr. Vickers would never have put it in, even if he is a Methodist, but Joe would just think it a good joke. As you say, I don't suppose there is anything to be done now, only live it down. But if I ever get Joe Vickers cornered somewhere I'll give him a talking to he won't forget in a hurry. I wanted Marshall to stop our subscription to the *Journal* instantly, but he only laughed and said that to-day's issue was the only one

that had had anything readable in it for a year. Marshall never will take anything seriously — just like a man. Fortunately, Evan Boyd is like that, too. He takes it as a joke and is laughing all over the place about it. And he's another Methodist! As for Mrs. Burr of Upper Glen, of course she will be furious and they will leave the church. Not that it will be a great loss from any point of view. The Methodists are quite welcome to THEM."

"It serves Mrs. Burr right," said Susan, who had an old feud with the lady in question and had been hugely tickled over the reference to her in Faith's letter. "She will find that she will not be able to cheat the Methodist parson out of HIS salary with bad yarn."

"The worst of it is, there's not much hope of things getting any better," said Miss Cornelia gloomily. "As long as Mr. Meredith was going to see Rosemary West I did hope the manse would soon have a proper mistress. But that is all off. I suppose she wouldn't have him on account of the children — at least, everybody seems to think so."

"I do not believe that he ever asked her," said Susan, who could not conceive of any one refusing a minister.

"Well, nobody knows anything about THAT. But one thing is certain, he doesn't go there any longer. And Rosemary didn't look well all the spring. I hope her visit to Kingsport will do her good. She's been gone for a month and will stay another month, I understand. I can't remember when Rosemary was away from home before. She and Ellen could never bear to be parted. But I understand Ellen insisted on her going this time. And meanwhile Ellen and Norman Douglas are warming up the old soup."

"Is that really so?" asked Anne, laughing. "I heard a rumour of it, but I hardly believed it."

"Believe it! You may believe it all right, Anne, dearie. Nobody is in ignorance of it. Norman Douglas never left anybody in doubt as to his intentions in regard to anything. He always did his courting before the public. He told Marshall that he hadn't thought about Ellen for years, but the first time he went to church last fall he saw her and fell in love with her all over again. He said he'd clean forgot how handsome she was. He hadn't seen her for twenty years, if you can believe it. Of course he never

went to church, and Ellen never went anywhere else round here. Oh, we all know what Norman means, but what Ellen means is a different matter. I shan't take it upon me to predict whether it will be a match or not."

"He jilted her once — but it seems that does not count with some people, Mrs. Dr. dear," Susan remarked rather acidly.

"He jilted her in a fit of temper and repented it all his life," said Miss Cornelia. "That is different from a coldblooded jilting. For my part, I never detested Norman as some folks do. He could never overcrowd ME. I DO wonder what started him coming to church. I have never been able to believe Mrs. Wilsons's story that Faith Meredith went there and bullied him into it. I've always intended to ask Faith herself, but I've never happened to think of it just when I saw her. What influence could SHE have over Norman Douglas? He was in the store when I left, bellowing with laughter over that scandalous letter. You could have heard him at Four Winds Point. 'The greatest girl in the world,' he was shouting. 'She's that full of spunk she's bursting with it. And all the old grannies want to tame her, darn them. But they'll never be able to do it — never! They might as well try to drown a fish. Boyd, see that you put more fertilizer on your potatoes next year. Ho, ho, ho!' And then he laughed till the roof shook."

"Mr. Douglas pays well to the salary, at least," remarked Susan.

"Oh, Norman isn't mean in some ways. He'd give a thousand without blinking a lash, and roar like a Bull of Bashan if he had to pay five cents too much for anything. Besides, he likes Mr. Meredith's sermons, and Norman Douglas was always willing to shell out if he got his brains tickled up. There is no more Christianity about him than there is about a black, naked heathen in Africa and never will be. But he's clever and well read and he judges sermons as he would lectures. Anyhow, it's well he backs up Mr. Meredith and the children as he does, for they'll need friends more than ever after this. I am tired of making excuses for them, believe ME."

"Do you know, dear Miss Cornelia," said Anne seriously, "I think we have all been making too many excuses. It is very foolish and we ought to

stop it. I am going to tell you what I'd LIKE to do. I shan't do it, of course" — Anne had noted a glint of alarm in Susan's eye—"it would be too unconventional, and we must be conventional or die, after we reach what is supposed to be a dignified age. But I'd LIKE to do it. I'd like to call a meeting of the Ladies Aid and W.M.S. and the Girls Sewing Society, and include in the audience all and any Methodists who have been criticizing the Merediths — although I do think if we Presbyterians stopped criticizing and excusing we would find that other denominations would trouble themselves very little about our manse folks. I would say to them, 'Dear Christian friends' — with marked emphasis on 'Christian' — I have something to say to you and I want to say it good and hard, that you may take it home and repeat it to your families. You Methodists need not pity us, and we Presbyterians need not pity ourselves. We are not going to do it any more. And we are going to say, boldly and truthfully, to all critics and sympathizers, 'We are PROUD of our minister and his family. Mr. Meredith is the best preacher Glen St. Mary church ever had. Moreover, he is a sincere, earnest teacher of truth and Christian charity. He is a faithful friend, a judicious pastor in all essentials, and a refined, scholarly, well-bred man. His family are worthy of him. Gerald Meredith is the cleverest pupil in the Glen school, and Mr. Hazard says that he is destined to a brilliant career. He is a manly, honourable, truthful little fellow. Faith Meredith is a beauty, and as inspiring and original as she is beautiful. There is nothing commonplace about her. All the other girls in the Glen put together haven't the vim, and wit, and joyousness and 'spunk' she has. She has not an enemy in the world. Every one who knows her loves her. Of how many, children or grownups, can that be said? Una Meredith is sweetness personified. She will make a most lovable woman. Carl Meredith, with his love for ants and frogs and spiders, will some day be a naturalist whom all Canada — nay, all the world, will delight to honour. Do you know of any other family in the Glen, or out of it, of whom all these things can be said? Away with shamefaced excuses and apologies. We REJOICE in our minister and his splendid boys and girls!"

Anne stopped, partly because she was out of breath after her vehement speech and partly because she could not trust herself to speak further in view of Miss Cornelia's face. That good lady was staring helplessly at Anne, apparently engulfed in billows of new ideas. But she came up with a gasp and struck out for shore gallantly.

"Anne Blythe, I wish you WOULD call that meeting and say just that! You've made me ashamed of myself, for one, and far be it from me to refuse to admit it. OF COURSE, that is how we should have talked — especially to the Methodists. And it's every word of it true — every word. We've just been shutting our eyes to the big worthwhile things and squinting them on the little things that don't really matter a pin's worth. Oh, Anne dearie, I can see a thing when it's hammered into my head. No more apologizing for Cornelia Marshall! *I* shall hold MY head up after this, believe ME — though I MAY talk things over with you as usual just to relieve my feelings if the Merediths do any more startling stunts. Even that letter I felt so bad about — why, it's only a good joke after all, as Norman says. Not many girls would have been cute enough to think of writing it — and all punctuated so nicely and not one word misspelled. Just let me hear any Methodist say one word about it — though all the same I'll never forgive Joe Vickers — believe ME! Where are the rest of your small fry tonight?"

"Walter and the twins are in Rainbow Valley. Jem is studying in the garret."

"They are all crazy about Rainbow Valley. Mary Vance thinks it's the only place in the world. She'd be off up here every evening if I'd let her. But I don't encourage her in gadding. Besides, I miss the creature when she isn't around, Anne dearie. I never thought I'd get so fond of her. Not but what I see her faults and try to correct them. But she has never said one saucy word to me since she came to my house and she is a GREAT help — for when all is said and done, Anne dearie, I am not so young as I once was, and there is no sense denying it. I was fifty-nine my last birthday. I don't FEEL it, but there is no gainsaying the Family Bible."

A Sacred Concert

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In spite of Miss Cornelia's new point of view she could not help feeling a little disturbed over the next performance of the manse children. In public she carried off the situation splendidly, saying to all the gossips the substance of what Anne had said in daffodil time, and saying it so pointedly and forcibly that her hearers found themselves feeling rather foolish and began to think that, after all, they were making too much of a childish prank. But in private Miss Cornelia allowed herself the relief of bemoaning it to Anne.

"Anne dearie, they had a CONCERT IN THE GRAVEYARD last Thursday evening, while the Methodist prayer meeting was going on. There they sat, on Hezekiah Pollock's tombstone, and sang for a solid hour. Of course, I understand it was mostly hymns they sang, and it wouldn't have been quite so bad if they'd done nothing else. But I'm told they finished up with *Polly Wolly Doodle* at full length — and that just when Deacon Baxter was praying."

"I was there that night," said Susan," and, although I did not say anything about it to you, Mrs. Dr. dear, I could not help thinking that it was a great pity they picked that particular evening. It was truly bloodcurdling to hear them sitting there in that abode of the dead, shouting that frivolous song at the tops of their lungs."

"I don't know what YOU were doing in a Methodist prayer meeting," said Miss Cornelia acidly.

"I have never found that Methodism was catching," retorted Susan stiffly. "And, as I was going to say when I was interrupted, badly as I felt, I did NOT give in to the Methodists. When Mrs. Deacon Baxter said, as we came out, 'What a disgraceful exhibition!' I said, looking her fairly in the eye, 'They are all beautiful singers, and none of YOUR choir, Mrs. Baxter, ever bother themselves coming out to your prayer meeting, it seems. Their

voices appear to be in tune only on Sundays!’ She was quite meek and I felt that I had snubbed her properly. But I could have done it much more thoroughly, Mrs. Dr. dear, if only they had left out *Polly Wolly Doodle*. It is truly terrible to think of that being sung in a graveyard.”

“Some of those dead folks sang *Polly Wolly Doodle* when they were living, Susan. Perhaps they like to hear it yet,” suggested Gilbert.

Miss Cornelia looked at him reproachfully and made up her mind that, on some future occasion, she would hint to Anne that the doctor should be admonished not to say such things. They might injure his practice. People might get it into their heads that he wasn’t orthodox. To be sure, Marshall said even worse things habitually, but then HE was not a public man.

“I understand that their father was in his study all the time, with his windows open, but never noticed them at all. Of course, he was lost in a book as usual. But I spoke to him about it yesterday, when he called.”

“How could you dare, Mrs. Marshall Elliott?” asked Susan rebukingly.

“Dare! It’s time somebody dared something. Why, they say he knows nothing about that letter of Faith’s to the JOURNAL because nobody liked to mention it to him. He never looks at a JOURNAL of course. But I thought he ought to know of this to prevent any such performances in future. He said he would ‘discuss it with them.’ But of course he’d never think of it again after he got out of our gate. That man has no sense of humour, Anne, believe ME. He preached last Sunday on ‘How to Bring up Children.’ A beautiful sermon it was, too — and everybody in church thinking ‘what a pity you can’t practise what you preach.’”

Miss Cornelia did Mr. Meredith an injustice in thinking he would soon forget what she had told him. He went home much disturbed and when the children came from Rainbow Valley that night, at a much later hour than they should have been prowling in it, he called them into his study.

They went in, somewhat awed. It was such an unusual thing for their father to do. What could he be going to say to them? They racked their memories for any recent transgression of sufficient importance, but could not recall any. Carl had spilled a saucerful of jam on Mrs. Peter Flagg’s silk dress two evenings before, when, at Aunt Martha’s invitation, she had

stayed to supper. But Mr. Meredith had not noticed it, and Mrs. Flagg, who was a kindly soul, had made no fuss. Besides, Carl had been punished by having to wear Una's dress all the rest of the evening.

Una suddenly thought that perhaps her father meant to tell them that he was going to marry Miss West. Her heart began to beat violently and her legs trembled. Then she saw that Mr. Meredith looked very stern and sorrowful. No, it could not be that.

"Children," said Mr. Meredith, "I have heard something that has pained me very much. Is it true that you sat out in the graveyard all last Thursday evening and sang ribald songs while a prayer meeting was being held in the Methodist church?"

"Great Caesar, Dad, we forgot all about it being their prayer meeting night," exclaimed Jerry in dismay.

"Then it is true — you did do this thing?"

"Why, Dad, I don't know what you mean by ribald songs. We sang hymns — it was a sacred concert, you know. What harm was that? I tell you we never thought about it's being Methodist prayer meeting night. They used to have their meeting Tuesday nights and since they've changed to Thursdays it's hard to remember."

"Did you sing nothing but hymns?"

"Why," said Jerry, turning red, "we DID sing *Polly Wolly Doodle* at the last. Faith said, 'Let's have something cheerful to wind up with.' But we didn't mean any harm, Father — truly we didn't."

"The concert was my idea, Father," said Faith, afraid that Mr. Meredith might blame Jerry too much. "You know the Methodists themselves had a sacred concert in their church three Sunday nights ago. I thought it would be good fun to get one up in imitation of it. Only they had prayers at theirs, and we left that part out, because we heard that people thought it awful for us to pray in a graveyard. YOU were sitting in here all the time," she added, "and never said a word to us."

"I did not notice what you were doing. That is no excuse for me, of course. I am more to blame than you — I realize that. But why did you sing that foolish song at the end?"

“We didn’t think,” muttered Jerry, feeling that it was a very lame excuse, seeing that he had lectured Faith so strongly in the Good-Conduct Club sessions for her lack of thought. “We’re sorry, Father — truly, we are. Pitch into us hard — we deserve a regular combing down.”

But Mr. Meredith did no combing down or pitching into. He sat down and gathered his small culprits close to him and talked a little to them, tenderly and wisely. They were overcome with remorse and shame, and felt that they could never be so silly and thoughtless again.

“We’ve just got to punish ourselves good and hard for this,” whispered Jerry as they crept upstairs. “We’ll have a session of the Club first thing tomorrow and decide how we’ll do it. I never saw father so cut up. But I wish to goodness the Methodists would stick to one night for their prayer meeting and not wander all over the week.”

“Anyhow, I’m glad it wasn’t what I was afraid it was,”
murmured
Una to herself.

Behind them, in the study, Mr. Meredith had sat down at his desk and buried his face in his arms.

“God help me!” he said. “I’m a poor sort of father. Oh, Rosemary! If you had only cared!”

Chapter XXVIII.

A Fast Day

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The Good-Conduct Club had a special session the next morning before school. After various suggestions, it was decided that a fast day would be an appropriate punishment.

“We won’t eat a single thing for a whole day,” said Jerry. “I’m kind of curious to see what fasting is like, anyhow. This will be a good chance to find out.”

“What day will we choose for it?” asked Una, who thought it would be quite an easy punishment and rather wondered that Jerry and Faith had not devised something harder.

“Let’s pick Monday,” said Faith. “We mostly have a pretty FILLING dinner on Sundays, and Mondays meals never amount to much anyhow.”

“But that’s just the point,” exclaimed Jerry. “We mustn’t take the easiest day to fast, but the hardest — and that’s Sunday, because, as you say, we mostly have roast beef that day instead of cold ditto. It wouldn’t be much punishment to fast from ditto. Let’s take next Sunday. It will be a good day, for father is going to exchange for the morning service with the Upper Lowbridge minister. Father will be away till evening. If Aunt Martha wonders what’s got into us, we’ll tell her right up that we’re fasting for the good of our souls, and it is in the Bible and she is not to interfere, and I guess she won’t.”

Aunt Martha did not. She merely said in her fretful mumbling way, “What foolishness are you young ribs up to now?” and thought no more about it. Mr. Meredith had gone away early in the morning before any one was up. He went without his breakfast, too, but that was, of course, of common occurrence. Half of the time he forgot it and there was no one to remind him of it. Breakfast — Aunt Martha’s breakfast — was not a hard meal to miss. Even the hungry “young ribs” did not feel it any great deprivation to abstain from the “lumpy porridge and blue milk” which had

aroused the scorn of Mary Vance. But it was different at dinner time. They were furiously hungry then, and the odor of roast beef which pervaded the manse, and which was wholly delightful in spite of the fact that the roast beef was badly underdone, was almost more than they could stand. In desperation they rushed to the graveyard where they couldn't smell it. But Una could not keep her eyes from the dining room window, through which the Upper Lowbridge minister could be seen, placidly eating.

"If I could only have just a weeny, teeny piece," she sighed.

"Now, you stop that," commanded Jerry. "Of course it's hard — but that's the punishment of it. I could eat a graven image this very minute, but am I complaining? Let's think of something else. We've just got to rise above our stomachs."

At supper time they did not feel the pangs of hunger which they had suffered earlier in the day.

"I suppose we're getting used to it," said Faith. "I feel an awfully queer all-gone sort of feeling, but I can't say I'm hungry."

"My head is funny," said Una. "It goes round and round sometimes."

But she went gamely to church with the others. If Mr. Meredith had not been so wholly wrapped up in and carried away with his subject he might have noticed the pale little face and hollow eyes in the manse pew beneath. But he noticed nothing and his sermon was something longer than usual. Then, just before he gave out the final hymn, Una Meredith tumbled off the seat of the manse pew and lay in a dead faint on the floor.

Mrs. Elder Clow was the first to reach her. She caught the thin little body from the arms of white-faced, terrified Faith and carried it into the vestry. Mr. Meredith forgot the hymn and everything else and rushed madly after her. The congregation dismissed itself as best it could.

"Oh, Mrs. Clow," gasped Faith, "is Una dead? Have we killed her?"

"What is the matter with my child?" demanded the pale father.

"She has just fainted, I think," said Mrs. Clow. "Oh, here's the doctor, thank goodness."

Gilbert did not find it a very easy thing to bring Una back to consciousness. He worked over her for a long time before her eyes opened.

Then he carried her over to the manse, followed by Faith, sobbing hysterically in her relief.

“She is just hungry, you know — she didn’t eat a thing to-day — none of us did — we were all fasting.”

“Fasting!” said Mr. Meredith, and “Fasting?” said the doctor.

“Yes — to punish ourselves for singing *Polly Wolly* in the graveyard,” said Faith.

“My child, I don’t want you to punish yourselves for that,” said Mr. Meredith in distress. “I gave you your little scolding — and you were all penitent — and I forgave you.”

“Yes, but we had to be punished,” explained Faith. “It’s our rule — in our Good-Conduct Club, you know — if we do anything wrong, or anything that is likely to hurt father in the congregation, we HAVE to punish ourselves. We are bringing ourselves up, you know, because there is nobody to do it.”

Mr. Meredith groaned, but the doctor got up from Una’s side with an air of relief.

“Then this child simply fainted from lack of food and all she needs is a good square meal,” he said. “Mrs. Clow, will you be kind enough to see she gets it? And I think from Faith’s story that they all would be the better for something to eat, or we shall have more faintings.”

“I suppose we shouldn’t have made Una fast,” said Faith remorsefully. “When I think of it, only Jerry and I should have been punished. WE got up the concert and we were the oldest.”

“I sang *Polly Wolly* just the same as the rest of you,” said Una’s weak little voice, “so I had to be punished, too.”

Mrs. Clow came with a glass of milk, Faith and Jerry and Carl sneaked off to the pantry, and John Meredith went into his study, where he sat in the darkness for a long time, alone with his bitter thoughts. So his children were bringing themselves up because there was “nobody to do it” — struggling along amid their little perplexities without a hand to guide or a voice to counsel. Faith’s innocently uttered phrase rankled in her father’s

mind like a barbed shaft. There was “nobody” to look after them — to comfort their little souls and care for their little bodies. How frail Una had looked, lying there on the vestry sofa in that long faint! How thin were her tiny hands, how pallid her little face! She looked as if she might slip away from him in a breath — sweet little Una, of whom Cecilia had begged him to take such special care. Since his wife’s death he had not felt such an agony of dread as when he had hung over his little girl in her unconsciousness. He must do something — but what? Should he ask Elizabeth Kirk to marry him? She was a good woman — she would be kind to his children. He might bring himself to do it if it were not for his love for Rosemary West. But until he had crushed that out he could not seek another woman in marriage. And he could not crush it out — he had tried and he could not. Rosemary had been in church that evening, for the first time since her return from Kingsport. He had caught a glimpse of her face in the back of the crowded church, just as he had finished his sermon. His heart had given a fierce throb. He sat while the choir sang the “collection piece,” with his bent head and tingling pulses. He had not seen her since the evening upon which he had asked her to marry him. When he had risen to give out the hymn his hands were trembling and his pale face was flushed. Then Una’s fainting spell had banished everything from his mind for a time. Now, in the darkness and solitude of the study it rushed back. Rosemary was the only woman in the world for him. It was of no use for him to think of marrying any other. He could not commit such a sacrilege even for his children’s sake. He must take up his burden alone — he must try to be a better, a more watchful father — he must tell his children not to be afraid to come to him with all their little problems. Then he lighted his lamp and took up a bulky new book which was setting the theological world by the ears. He would read just one chapter to compose his mind. Five minutes later he was lost to the world and the troubles of the world.

Chapter XXIX.

A Weird Tale

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On an early June evening Rainbow Valley was an entirely delightful place and the children felt it to be so, as they sat in the open glade where the bells rang elfishly on the Tree Lovers, and the White Lady shook her green tresses. The wind was laughing and whistling about them like a leal, glad-hearted comrade. The young ferns were spicy in the hollow. The wild cherry trees scattered over the valley, among the dark firs, were mistily white. The robins were whistling over in the maples behind Ingleside. Beyond, on the slopes of the Glen, were blossoming orchards, sweet and mystic and wonderful, veiled in dusk. It was spring, and young things MUST be glad in spring. Everybody was glad in Rainbow Valley that evening — until Mary Vance froze their blood with the story of Henry Warren's ghost.

Jem was not there. Jem spent his evenings now studying for his entrance examination in the Ingleside garret. Jerry was down near the pond, trouting. Walter had been reading Longfellow's sea poems to the others and they were steeped in the beauty and mystery of the ships. Then they talked of what they would do when they were grown up — where they would travel — the far, fair shores they would see. Nan and Di meant to go to Europe. Walter longed for the Nile moaning past its Egyptian sands, and a glimpse of the sphinx. Faith opined rather dismally that she supposed she would have to be a missionary — old Mrs. Taylor told her she ought to be — and then she would at least see India or China, those mysterious lands of the Orient. Carl's heart was set on African jungles. Una said nothing. She thought she would just like to stay at home. It was prettier here than anywhere else. It would be dreadful when they were all grown up and had to scatter over the world. The very idea made Una feel lonesome and homesick. But the others dreamed on delightedly until Mary Vance arrived and vanished poesy and dreams at one fell swoop.

“Laws, but I’m out of puff,” she exclaimed. “I’ve run down that hill like sixty. I got an awful scare up there at the old Bailey place.”

“What frightened you?” asked Di.

“I dunno. I was poking about under them lilacs in the old garden, trying to see if there was any lilies-of-the-valley out yet. It was dark as a pocket there — and all at once I seen something stirring and rustling round at the other side of the garden, in those cherry bushes. It was WHITE. I tell you I didn’t stop for a second look. I flew over the dyke quicker than quick. I was sure it was Henry Warren’s ghost.”

“Who was Henry Warren?” asked Di.

“And why should he have a ghost?” asked Nan.

“Laws, did you never hear the story? And you brought up in the Glen. Well, wait a minute till I get by breath all back and I’ll tell you.”

Walter shivered delightfully. He loved ghost stories. Their mystery, their dramatic climaxes, their eeriness gave him a fearful, exquisite pleasure. Longfellow instantly grew tame and commonplace. He threw the book aside and stretched himself out, propped upon his elbows to listen wholeheartedly, fixing his great luminous eyes on Mary’s face. Mary wished he wouldn’t look at her so. She felt she could make a better job of the ghost story if Walter were not looking at her. She could put on several frills and invent a few artistic details to enhance the horror. As it was, she had to stick to the bare truth — or what had been told her for the truth.

“Well,” she began, “you know old Tom Bailey and his wife used to live in that house up there thirty years ago. He was an awful old rip, they say, and his wife wasn’t much better. They’d no children of their own, but a sister of old Tom’s died and left a little boy — this Henry Warren — and they took him. He was about twelve when he came to them, and kind of undersized and delicate. They say Tom and his wife used him awful from the start — whipped him and starved him. Folks said they wanted him to die so’s they could get the little bit of money his mother had left for him. Henry didn’t die right off, but he begun having fits — epileps, they called ‘em — and he grew up kind of simple, till he was about eighteen. His uncle used to thrash him in that garden up there ‘cause it was back of the

house where no one could see him. But folks could hear, and they say it was awful sometimes hearing poor Henry plead with his uncle not to kill him. But nobody dared interfere 'cause old Tom was such a reprobate he'd have been sure to get square with 'em some way. He burned the barns of a man at Harbour Head who offended him. At last Henry died and his uncle and aunt give out he died in one of his fits and that was all anybody ever knowed, but everybody said Tom had just up and killed him for keeps at last. And it wasn't long till it got around that Henry WALKED. That old garden was HA'NTED. He was heard there at nights, moaning and crying. Old Tom and his wife got out — went out West and never came back. The place got such a bad name nobody'd buy or rent it. That's why it's all gone to ruin. That was thirty years ago, but Henry Warren's ghost ha'nts it yet."

"Do you believe that?" asked Nan scornfully. "*I don't.*"

"Well, GOOD people have seen him — and heard him." retorted Mary. "They say he appears and grovels on the ground and holds you by the legs and gibbers and moans like he did when he was alive. I thought of that as soon as I seen that white thing in the bushes and thought if it caught me like that and moaned I'd drop down dead on the spot. So I cut and run. It MIGHTN'T have been his ghost, but I wasn't going to take any chances with a ha'nt."

"It was likely old Mrs. Stimson's white calf," laughed Di. "It pastures in that garden — I've seen it."

"Maybe so. But I'M not going home through the Bailey garden any more. Here's Jerry with a big string of trout and it's my turn to cook them. Jem and Jerry both say I'm the best cook in the Glen. And Cornelia told me I could bring up this batch of cookies. I all but dropped them when I saw Henry's ghost."

Jerry hooted when he heard the ghost story — which Mary repeated as she fried the fish, touching it up a trifle or so, since Walter had gone to help Faith to set the table. It made no impression on Jerry, but Faith and Una and Carl had been secretly much frightened, though they would never have given in to it. It was all right as long as the others were with them in the valley: but when the feast was over and the shadows fell they quaked

with remembrance. Jerry went up to Ingleside with the Blythes to see Jem about something, and Mary Vance went around that way home. So Faith and Una and Carl had to go back to the manse alone. They walked very close together and gave the old Bailey garden a wide berth. They did not believe that it was haunted, of course, but they would not go near it for all that.

Chapter XXX.

The Ghost on the Dyke

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Somehow, Faith and Carl and Una could not shake off the hold which the story of Henry Warren's ghost had taken upon their imaginations. They had never believed in ghosts. Ghost tales they had heard aplenty — Mary Vance had told some far more bloodcurdling than this; but those tales were all of places and people and spooks far away and unknown. After the first half-awful, half-pleasant thrill of awe and terror they thought of them no more. But this story came home to them. The old Bailey garden was almost at their very door — almost in their beloved Rainbow Valley. They had passed and repassed it constantly; they had hunted for flowers in it; they had made short cuts through it when they wished to go straight from the village to the valley. But never again! After the night when Mary Vance told them its gruesome tale they would not have gone through or near it on pain of death. Death! What was death compared to the unearthly possibility of falling into the clutches of Henry Warren's grovelling ghost?

One warm July evening the three of them were sitting under the Tree Lovers, feeling a little lonely. Nobody else had come near the valley that evening. Jem Blythe was away in Charlottetown, writing on his entrance examinations. Jerry and Walter Blythe were off for a sail on the harbour with old Captain Crawford. Nan and Di and Rilla and Shirley had gone down the harbour road to visit Kenneth and Persis Ford, who had come with their parents for a flying visit to the little old House of Dreams. Nan had asked Faith to go with them, but Faith had declined. She would never have admitted it, but she felt a little secret jealousy of Persis Ford, concerning whose wonderful beauty and city glamour she had heard a great deal. No, she wasn't going to go down there and play second fiddle to anybody. She and Una took their story books to Rainbow Valley and read, while Carl investigated bugs along the banks of the brook, and all three were happy until they suddenly realized that it was twilight and that the

old Bailey garden was uncomfortably near by. Carl came and sat down close to the girls. They all wished they had gone home a little sooner, but nobody said anything.

Great, velvety, purple clouds heaped up in the west and spread over the valley. There was no wind and everything was suddenly, strangely, dreadfully still. The marsh was full of thousands of fireflies. Surely some fairy parliament was being convened that night. Altogether, Rainbow Valley was not a canny place just then.

Faith looked fearfully up the valley to the old Bailey garden. Then, if anybody's blood ever did freeze, Faith Meredith's certainly froze at that moment. The eyes of Carl and Una followed her entranced gaze and chills began galloping up and down their spines also. For there, under the big tamarack tree on the tumbledown, grass-grown dyke of the Bailey garden, was something white — shapelessly white in the gathering gloom. The three Merediths sat and gazed as if turned to stone.

“It's — it's the — calf,” whispered Una at last.

“It's — too — big — for the calf,” whispered Faith. Her mouth and lips were so dry she could hardly articulate the words.

Suddenly Carl gasped,

“It's coming here.”

The girls gave one last agonized glance. Yes, it was creeping down over the dyke, as no calf ever did or could creep. Reason fled before sudden, overmastering panic. For the moment every one of the trio was firmly convinced that what they saw was Henry Warren's ghost. Carl sprang to his feet and bolted blindly. With a simultaneous shriek the girls followed him. Like mad creatures they tore up the hill, across the road and into the manse. They had left Aunt Martha sewing in the kitchen. She was not there. They rushed to the study. It was dark and tenantless. As with one impulse, they swung around and made for Ingleside — but not across Rainbow Valley. Down the hill and through the Glen street they flew on the wings of their wild terror, Carl in the lead, Una bringing up the rear. Nobody tried to stop them, though everybody who saw them wondered what fresh devilment those manse youngsters were up to now. But at the

gate of Ingleside they ran into Rosemary West, who had just been in for a moment to return some borrowed books.

She saw their ghastly faces and staring eyes. She realized that their poor little souls were wrung with some awful and real fear, whatever its cause. She caught Carl with one arm and Faith with the other. Una stumbled against her and held on desperately.

“Children, dear, what has happened?” she said. “What has frightened you?”

“Henry Warren’s ghost,” answered Carl, through his chattering teeth.

“Henry — Warren’s — ghost!” said amazed Rosemary, who had never heard the story.

“Yes,” sobbed Faith hysterically. “It’s there — on the Bailey dyke — we saw it — and it started to — chase us.”

Rosemary herded the three distracted creatures to the Ingleside veranda. Gilbert and Anne were both away, having also gone to the House of Dreams, but Susan appeared in the doorway, gaunt and practical and unghostlike.

“What is all this rumpus about?” she inquired.

Again the children gasped out their awful tale, while Rosemary held them close to her and soothed them with wordless comfort.

“Likely it was an owl,” said Susan, unstirred.

An owl! The Meredith children never had any opinion of Susan’s intelligence after that!

“It was bigger than a million owls,” said Carl, sobbing — oh, how ashamed Carl was of that sobbing in after days—”and it — it GROVELLED just as Mary said — and it was crawling down over the dyke to get at us. Do owls CRAWL?”

Rosemary looked at Susan.

“They must have seen something to frighten them so,” she said.

“I will go and see,” said Susan coolly. “Now, children, calm yourselves. Whatever you have seen, it was not a ghost. As for poor Henry Warren, I feel sure he would be only too glad to rest quietly in his peaceful grave once he got there. No fear of HIM venturing back, and that you may

tie to. If you can make them see reason, Miss West, I will find out the truth of the matter.”

Susan departed for Rainbow Valley, valiantly grasping a pitchfork which she found leaning against the back fence where the doctor had been working in his little hayfield. A pitchfork might not be of much use against “ha’nts,” but it was a comforting sort of weapon. There was nothing to be seen in Rainbow Valley when Susan reached it. No white visitants appeared to be lurking in the shadowy, tangled old Bailey garden. Susan marched boldly through it and beyond it, and rapped with her pitchfork on the door of the little cottage on the other side, where Mrs. Stimson lived with her two daughters.

Back at Ingleside Rosemary had succeeded in calming the children. They still sobbed a little from shock, but they were beginning to feel a lurking and salutary suspicion that they had made dreadful geese of themselves. This suspicion became a certainty when Susan finally returned.

“I have found out what your ghost was,” she said, with a grim smile, sitting down on a rocker and fanning herself. “Old Mrs. Stimson has had a pair of factory cotton sheets bleaching in the Bailey garden for a week. She spread them on the dyke under the tamarack tree because the grass was clean and short there. This evening she went out to take them in. She had her knitting in her hands so she hung the sheets over her shoulders by way of carrying them. And then she must have dropped one of her needles and find it she could not and has not yet. But she went down on her knees and crept about to hunt for it, and she was at that when she heard awful yells down in the valley and saw the three children tearing up the hill past her. She thought they had been bit by something and it gave her poor old heart such a turn that she could not move or speak, but just crouched there till they disappeared. Then she staggered back home and they have been applying stimulants to her ever since, and her heart is in a terrible condition and she says she will not get over this fright all summer.”

The Merediths sat, crimson with a shame that even Rosemary’s understanding sympathy could not remove. They sneaked off home, met

Jerry at the manse gate and made remorseful confession. A session of the Good-Conduct Club was arranged for next morning.

“Wasn’t Miss West sweet to us tonight?” whispered Faith in bed.

“Yes,” admitted Una. “It is such a pity it changes people so much to be made stepmothers.”

“I don’t believe it does,” said Faith loyally.

Carl Does Penance

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“I don’t see why we should be punished at all,” said Faith, rather sulkily. “We didn’t do anything wrong. We couldn’t help being frightened. And it won’t do father any harm. It was just an accident.”

“You were cowards,” said Jerry with judicial scorn, “and you gave way to your cowardice. That is why you should be punished. Everybody will laugh at you about this, and that is a disgrace to the family.”

“If you knew how awful the whole thing was,” said Faith with a shiver, “you would think we had been punished enough already. I wouldn’t go through it again for anything in the whole world.”

“I believe you’d have run yourself if you’d been there,”
muttered
Carl.

“From an old woman in a cotton sheet,” mocked Jerry. “Ho, ho, ho!”

“It didn’t look a bit like an old woman,” cried Faith. “It was just a great, big, white thing crawling about in the grass just as Mary Vance said Henry Warren did. It’s all very fine for you to laugh, Jerry Meredith, but you’d have laughed on the other side of your mouth if you’d been there. And how are we to be punished? *I* don’t think it’s fair, but let’s know what we have to do, Judge Meredith!”

“The way I look at it,” said Jerry, frowning, “is that Carl was the most to blame. He bolted first, as I understand it. Besides, he was a boy, so he should have stood his ground to protect you girls, whatever the danger was. You know that, Carl, don’t you?”

“I s’pose so,” growled Carl shamefacedly.

“Very well. This is to be your punishment. Tonight you’ll sit on Mr. Hezekiah Pollock’s tombstone in the graveyard alone, until twelve o’clock.”

Carl gave a little shudder. The graveyard was not so very far from the old Bailey garden. It would be a trying ordeal, but Carl was anxious to wipe out his disgrace and prove that he was not a coward after all.

“All right,” he said sturdily. “But how’ll I know when it is twelve?”

“The study windows are open and you’ll hear the clock striking. And mind you that you are not to budge out of that graveyard until the last stroke. As for you girls, you’ve got to go without jam at supper for a week.”

Faith and Una looked rather blank. They were inclined to think that even Carl’s comparatively short though sharp agony was lighter punishment than this long drawn-out ordeal. A whole week of soggy bread without the saving grace of jam! But no shirking was permitted in the club. The girls accepted their lot with such philosophy as they could summon up.

That night they all went to bed at nine, except Carl, who was already keeping vigil on the tombstone. Una slipped in to bid him good night. Her tender heart was wrung with sympathy.

“Oh, Carl, are you much scared?” she whispered.

“Not a bit,” said Carl airily.

“I won’t sleep a wink till after twelve,” said Una. “If you get lonesome just look up at our window and remember that I’m inside, awake, and thinking about you. That will be a little company, won’t it?”

“I’ll be all right. Don’t you worry about me,” said Carl.

But in spite of his dauntless words Carl was a pretty lonely boy when the lights went out in the manse. He had hoped his father would be in the study as he so often was. He would not feel alone then. But that night Mr. Meredith had been summoned to the fishing village at the harbour mouth to see a dying man. He would not likely be back until after midnight. Carl must dree his weird alone.

A Glen man went past carrying a lantern. The mysterious shadows caused by the lantern-light went hurtling madly over the graveyard like a dance of demons or witches. Then they passed and darkness fell again. One by one the lights in the Glen went out. It was a very dark night, with a

cloudy sky, and a raw east wind that was cold in spite of the calendar. Far away on the horizon was the low dim lustre of the Charlottetown lights. The wind wailed and sighed in the old fir-trees. Mr. Alec Davis' tall monument gleamed whitely through the gloom. The willow beside it tossed long, writhing arms spectrally. At times, the gyrations of its boughs made it seem as if the monument were moving, too.

Carl curled himself up on the tombstone with his legs tucked under him. It wasn't precisely pleasant to hang them over the edge of the stone. Just suppose — just suppose — bony hands should reach up out of Mr. Pollock's grave under it and clutch him by the ankles. That had been one of Mary Vance's cheerful speculations one time when they had all been sitting there. It returned to haunt Carl now. He didn't believe those things; he didn't even really believe in Henry Warren's ghost. As for Mr. Pollock, he had been dead sixty years, so it wasn't likely he cared who sat on his tombstone now. But there is something very strange and terrible in being awake when all the rest of the world is asleep. You are alone then with nothing but your own feeble personality to pit against the mighty principalities and powers of darkness. Carl was only ten and the dead were all around him — and he wished, oh, he wished that the clock would strike twelve. Would it NEVER strike twelve? Surely Aunt Martha must have forgotten to wind it.

And then it struck eleven — only eleven! He must stay yet another hour in that grim place. If only there were a few friendly stars to be seen! The darkness was so thick it seemed to press against his face. There was a sound as of stealthy passing footsteps all over the graveyard. Carl shivered, partly with prickling terror, partly with real cold.

Then it began to rain — a chill, penetrating drizzle. Carl's thin little cotton blouse and shirt were soon wet through. He felt chilled to the bone. He forgot mental terrors in his physical discomfort. But he must stay there till twelve — he was punishing himself and he was on his honour. Nothing had been said about rain — but it did not make any difference. When the study clock finally struck twelve a drenched little figure crept stiffly down off Mr. Pollock's tombstone, made its way into the manse and upstairs to

bed. Carl's teeth were chattering. He thought he would never get warm again.

He was warm enough when morning came. Jerry gave one startled look at his crimson face and then rushed to call his father. Mr. Meredith came hurriedly, his own face ivory white from the pallor of his long night vigil by a death bed. He had not got home until daylight. He bent over his little lad anxiously.

"Carl, are you sick?" he said.

"That — tombstone — over here," said Carl, "it's — moving — about — it's coming — at — me — keep it — away — please."

Mr. Meredith rushed to the telephone. In ten minutes Dr. Blythe was at the manse. Half an hour later a wire was sent to town for a trained nurse, and all the Glen knew that Carl Meredith was very ill with pneumonia and that Dr. Blythe had been seen to shake his head.

Gilbert shook his head more than once in the fortnight that followed. Carl developed double pneumonia. There was one night when Mr. Meredith paced his study floor, and Faith and Una huddled in their bedroom and cried, and Jerry, wild with remorse, refused to budge from the floor of the hall outside Carl's door. Dr. Blythe and the nurse never left the bedside. They fought death gallantly until the red dawn and they won the victory. Carl rallied and passed the crisis in safety. The news was phoned about the waiting Glen and people found out how much they really loved their minister and his children.

"I haven't had one decent night's sleep since I heard the child was sick," Miss Cornelia told Anne, "and Mary Vance has cried until those queer eyes of hers looked like burnt holes in a blanket. Is it true that Carl got pneumonia from straying out in the graveyard that wet night for a dare?"

"No. He was staying there to punish himself for cowardice in that affair of the Warren ghost. It seems they have a club for bringing themselves up, and they punish themselves when they do wrong. Jerry told Mr. Meredith all about it."

"The poor little souls," said Miss Cornelia.

Carl got better rapidly, for the congregation took enough nourishing things to the manse to furnish forth a hospital. Norman Douglas drove up every evening with a dozen fresh eggs and a jar of Jersey cream. Sometimes he stayed an hour and belabored arguments on predestination with Mr. Meredith in the study; oftener he drove on up to the hill that overlooked the Glen.

When Carl was able to go again to Rainbow Valley they had a special feast in his honour and the doctor came down and helped them with the fireworks. Mary Vance was there, too, but she did not tell any ghost stories. Miss Cornelia had given her a talking on that subject which Mary would not forget in a hurry.

Two Stubborn People

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Rosemary West, on her way home from a music lesson at Ingleside, turned aside to the hidden spring in Rainbow Valley. She had not been there all summer; the beautiful little spot had no longer any allurement for her. The spirit of her young lover never came to the tryst now; and the memories connected with John Meredith were too painful and poignant. But she had happened to glance backward up the valley and had seen Norman Douglas vaulting as airily as a stripling over the old stone dyke of the Bailey garden and thought he was on his way up the hill. If he overtook her she would have to walk home with him and she was not going to do that. So she slipped at once behind the maples of the spring, hoping he had not seen her and would pass on.

But Norman had seen her and, what was more, was in pursuit of her. He had been wanting for some time to have talk with Rosemary, but she had always, so it seemed, avoided him. Rosemary had never, at any time, liked Norman Douglas very well. His bluster, his temper, his noisy hilarity, had always antagonized her. Long ago she had often wondered how Ellen could possibly be attracted to him. Norman Douglas was perfectly aware of her dislike and he chuckled over it. It never worried Norman if people did not like him. It did not even make him dislike them in return, for he took it as a kind of extorted compliment. He thought Rosemary a fine girl, and he meant to be an excellent, generous brother-in-law to her. But before he could be her brother-in-law he had to have a talk with her, so, having seen her leaving Ingleside as he stood in the doorway of a Glen store, he had straightway plunged into the valley to overtake her.

Rosemary was sitting pensively on the maple seat where John Meredith had been sitting on that evening nearly a year ago. The tiny spring shimmered and dimpled under its fringe of ferns. Ruby-red gleams of sunset fell through the arching boughs. A tall clump of perfect asters

grew at her side. The little spot was as dreamy and witching and evasive as any retreat of fairies and dryads in ancient forests. Into it Norman Douglas bounced, scattering and annihilating its charm in a moment. His personality seemed to swallow the place up. There was simply nothing there but Norman Douglas, big, red-bearded, complacent.

“Good evening,” said Rosemary coldly, standing up.

“‘Evening, girl. Sit down again — sit down again. I want to have a talk with you. Bless the girl, what’s she looking at me like that for? I don’t want to eat you — I’ve had my supper. Sit down and be civil.”

“I can hear what you have to say quite as well here,” said Rosemary.

“So you can, girl, if you use your ears. I only wanted you to be comfortable. You look so durned uncomfortable, standing there. Well, I’LL sit anyway.”

Norman accordingly sat down in the very place John Meredith had once sat. The contrast was so ludicrous that Rosemary was afraid she would go off into a peal of hysterical laughter over it. Norman cast his hat aside, placed his huge, red hands on his knees, and looked up at her with his eyes a-twinkle.

“Come, girl, don’t be so stiff,” he said, ingratiatingly. When he liked he could be very ingratiating. “Let’s have a reasonable, sensible, friendly chat. There’s something I want to ask you. Ellen says she won’t, so it’s up to me to do it.”

Rosemary looked down at the spring, which seemed to have shrunk to the size of a dewdrop. Norman gazed at her in despair.

“Durn it all, you might help a fellow out a bit,” he burst forth.

“What is it you want me to help you say?” asked Rosemary scornfully.

“You know as well as I do, girl. Don’t be putting on your tragedy airs. No wonder Ellen was scared to ask you. Look here, girl, Ellen and I want to marry each other. That’s plain English, isn’t it? Got that? And Ellen says she can’t unless you give her back some tomfool promise she made. Come now, will you do it? Will you do it?”

“Yes,” said Rosemary.

Norman bounced up and seized her reluctant hand.

“Good! I knew you would — I told Ellen you would. I knew it would only take a minute. Now, girl, you go home and tell Ellen, and we’ll have a wedding in a fortnight and you’ll come and live with us. We shan’t leave you to roost on that hilltop like a lonely crow — don’t you worry. I know you hate me, but, Lord, it’ll be great fun living with some one that hates me. Life’ll have some spice in it after this. Ellen will roast me and you’ll freeze me. I won’t have a dull moment.”

Rosemary did not condescend to tell him that nothing would ever induce her to live in his house. She let him go striding back to the Glen, oozing delight and complacency, and she walked slowly up the hill home. She had known this was coming ever since she had returned from Kingsport, and found Norman Douglas established as a frequent evening caller. His name was never mentioned between her and Ellen, but the very avoidance of it was significant. It was not in Rosemary’s nature to feel bitter, or she would have felt very bitter. She was coldly civil to Norman, and she made no difference in any way with Ellen. But Ellen had not found much comfort in her second courtship.

She was in the garden, attended by St. George, when Rosemary came home. The two sisters met in the dahlia walk. St. George sat down on the gravel walk between them and folded his glossy black tail gracefully around his white paws, with all the indifference of a well-fed, well-bred, well-groomed cat.

“Did you ever see such dahlias?” demanded Ellen proudly. “They are just the finest we’ve ever had.”

Rosemary had never cared for dahlias. Their presence in the garden was her concession to Ellen’s taste. She noticed one huge mottled one of crimson and yellow that lorded it over all the others.

“That dahlia,” she said, pointing to it, “is exactly like Norman Douglas. It might easily be his twin brother.”

Ellen's dark-browed face flushed. She admired the dahlia in question, but she knew Rosemary did not, and that no compliment was intended. But she dared not resent Rosemary's speech — poor Ellen dared not resent anything just then. And it was the first time Rosemary had ever mentioned Norman's name to her. She felt that this portended something.

"I met Norman Douglas in the valley," said Rosemary, looking straight at her sister, "and he told me you and he wanted to be married — if I would give you permission."

"Yes? What did you say?" asked Ellen, trying to speak naturally and offhandedly, and failing completely. She could not meet Rosemary's eyes. She looked down at St. George's sleek back and felt horribly afraid. Rosemary had either said she would or she wouldn't. If she would Ellen would feel so ashamed and remorseful that she would be a very uncomfortable bride-elect; and if she wouldn't — well, Ellen had once learned to live without Norman Douglas, but she had forgotten the lesson and felt that she could never learn it again.

"I said that as far as I was concerned you were at full liberty to marry each other as soon as you liked," said Rosemary.

"Thank you," said Ellen, still looking at St. George.

Rosemary's face softened.

"I hope you'll be happy, Ellen," she said gently.

"Oh, Rosemary," Ellen looked up in distress, "I'm so ashamed — I don't deserve it — after all I said to you—"

"We won't speak about that," said Rosemary hurriedly and decidedly.

"But — but," persisted Ellen, "you are free now, too — and it's not too late — John Meredith—"

"Ellen West!" Rosemary had a little spark of temper under all her sweetness and it flashed forth now in her blue eyes. "Have you quite lost your senses in EVERY respect? Do you suppose for an instant that *I* am going to go to John Meredith and say meekly, 'Please, sir, I've changed my mind and please, sir, I hope you haven't changed yours.' Is that what you want me to do?"

"No — no — but a little — encouragement — he would come back—"

“Never. He despises me — and rightly. No more of this, Ellen. I bear you no grudge — marry whom you like. But no meddling in my affairs.”

“Then you must come and live with me,” said Ellen. “I shall not leave you here alone.”

“Do you really think that I would go and live in Norman Douglas’s house?”

“Why not?” cried Ellen, half angrily, despite her humiliation.

Rosemary began to laugh.

“Ellen, I thought you had a sense of humour. Can you see me doing it?”

“I don’t see why you wouldn’t. His house is big enough — you’d have your share of it to yourself — he wouldn’t interfere.”

“Ellen, the thing is not to be thought of. Don’t bring this up again.”

“Then,” said Ellen coldly, and determinedly, “I shall not marry him. I shall not leave you here alone. That is all there is to be said about it.”

“Nonsense, Ellen.”

“It is not nonsense. It is my firm decision. It would be absurd for you to think of living here by yourself — a mile from any other house. If you won’t come with me I’ll stay with you. Now, we won’t argue the matter, so don’t try”

“I shall leave Norman to do the arguing,” said Rosemary.

“I’LL deal with Norman. I can manage HIM. I would never have asked you to give me back my promise — never — but I had to tell Norman why I couldn’t marry him and he said HE would ask you. I couldn’t prevent him. You need not suppose you are the only person in the world who possesses self-respect. I never dreamed of marrying and leaving you here alone. And you’ll find I can be as determined as yourself.”

Rosemary turned away and went into the house, with a shrug of her shoulders. Ellen looked down at St. George, who had never blinked an eyelash or stirred a whisker during the whole interview.

“St. George, this world would be a dull place without the men, I’ll admit, but I’m almost tempted to wish there wasn’t one of ‘em in it. Look at the trouble and bother they’ve made right here, George — torn our

happy old life completely up by the roots, Saint. John Meredith began it and Norman Douglas has finished it. And now both of them have to go into limbo. Norman is the only man I ever met who agrees with me that the Kaiser of Germany is the most dangerous creature alive on this earth — and I can't marry this sensible person because my sister is stubborn and I'm stubborn. Mark my words, St. George, the minister would come back if she raised her little finger. But she won't George — she'll never do it — she won't even crook it — and I don't dare meddle, Saint. I won't sulk, George; Rosemary didn't sulk, so I'm determined I won't either, Saint; Norman will tear up the turf, but the long and short of it is, St. George, that all of us old fools must just stop thinking of marrying. Well, well, 'despair is a free man, hope is a slave,' Saint. So now come into the house, George, and I'll solace you with a saucerful of cream. Then there will be one happy and contented creature on this hill at least."

Carl Is — Not — Whipped

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“There is something I think I ought to tell you,” said Mary Vance mysteriously.

She and Faith and Una were walking arm in arm through the village, having foregathered at Mr. Flagg’s store. Una and Faith exchanged looks which said, “NOW something disagreeable is coming.” When Mary Vance thought she ought to tell them things there was seldom much pleasure in the hearing. They often wondered why they kept on liking Mary Vance — for like her they did, in spite of everything. To be sure, she was generally a stimulating and agreeable companion. If only she would not have those convictions that it was her duty to tell them things!

“Do you know that Rosemary West won’t marry your pa because she thinks you are such a wild lot? She’s afraid she couldn’t bring you up right and so she turned him down.”

Una’s heart thrilled with secret exultation. She was very glad to hear that Miss West would not marry her father. But Faith was rather disappointed.

“How do you know?” she asked.

“Oh, everybody’s saying it. I heard Mrs. Elliott talking it over with Mrs. Doctor. They thought I was too far away to hear, but I’ve got ears like a cat’s. Mrs. Elliott said she hadn’t a doubt that Rosemary was afraid to try stepmothering you because you’d got such a reputation. Your pa never goes up the hill now. Neither does Norman Douglas. Folks say Ellen has jilted him just to get square with him for jilting her ages ago. But Norman is going about declaring he’ll get her yet. And I think you ought to know you’ve spoiled your pa’s match and *I* think it’s a pity, for he’s bound to marry somebody before long, and Rosemary West would have been the best wife *I* know of for him.”

“You told me all stepmothers were cruel and wicked,” said Una.

“Oh — well,” said Mary rather confusedly, “they’re mostly awful cranky, I know. But Rosemary West couldn’t be very mean to any one. I tell you if your pa turns round and marries Emmeline Drew you’ll wish you’d behaved yourselves better and not frightened Rosemary out of it. It’s awful that you’ve got such a reputation that no decent woman’ll marry your pa on account of you. Of course, *I* know that half the yarns that are told about you ain’t true. But give a dog a bad name. Why, some folks are saying that it was Jerry and Carl that threw the stones through Mrs. Stimson’s window the other night when it was really them two Boyd boys. But I’m afraid it was Carl that put the eel in old Mrs. Carr’s buggy, though I said at first I wouldn’t believe it until I’d better proof than old Kitty Alec’s word. I told Mrs. Elliott so right to her face.”

“What did Carl do?” cried Faith.

“Well, they say — now, mind, I’m only telling you what people say — so there’s no use in your blaming me for it — that Carl and a lot of other boys were fishing eels over the bridge one evening last week. Mrs. Carr drove past in that old rattletrap buggy of hers with the open back. And Carl he just up and threw a big eel into the back. When poor old Mrs. Carr was driving up the hill by Ingleside that eel came squirming out between her feet. She thought it was a snake and she just give one awful screech and stood up and jumped clean over the wheels. The horse bolted, but it went home and no damage was done. But Mrs. Carr jarred her legs most terrible, and has had nervous spasms ever since whenever she thinks of the eel. Say, it was a rotten trick to play on the poor old soul. She’s a decent body, if she is as queer as Dick’s hat band.”

Faith and Una looked at each other again. This was a matter for the Good-Conduct Club. They would not talk it over with Mary.

“There goes your pa,” said Mary as Mr. Meredith passed them, “and never seeing us no more’n if we weren’t here. Well, I’m getting so’s I don’t mind it. But there are folks who do.”

Mr. Meredith had not seen them, but he was not walking along in his usual dreamy and abstracted fashion. He strode up the hill in agitation and distress. Mrs. Alec Davis had just told him the story of Carl and the eel.

She had been very indignant about it. Old Mrs. Carr was her third cousin. Mr. Meredith was more than indignant. He was hurt and shocked. He had not thought Carl would do anything like this. He was not inclined to be hard on pranks of heedlessness or forgetfulness, but THIS was different. THIS had a nasty tang in it. When he reached home he found Carl on the lawn, patiently studying the habits and customs of a colony of wasps. Calling him into the study Mr. Meredith confronted him, with a sterner face than any of his children had ever seen before, and asked him if the story were true.

“Yes,” said Carl, flushing, but meeting his father’s eyes bravely.

Mr. Meredith groaned. He had hoped that there had been at least exaggeration.

“Tell me the whole matter,” he said.

“The boys were fishing for eels over the bridge,” said Carl. “Link Drew had caught a whopper — I mean an awful big one — the biggest eel I ever saw. He caught it right at the start and it had been lying in his basket a long time, still as still. I thought it was dead, honest I did. Then old Mrs. Carr drove over the bridge and she called us all young varmints and told us to go home. And we hadn’t said a word to her, father, truly. So when she drove back again, after going to the store, the boys dared me to put Link’s eel in her buggy. I thought it was so dead it couldn’t hurt her and I threw it in. Then the eel came to life on the hill and we heard her scream and saw her jump out. I was awful sorry. That’s all, father.”

It was not quite as bad as Mr. Meredith had feared, but it was quite bad enough. “I must punish you, Carl,” he said sorrowfully.

“Yes, I know, father.”

“I — I must whip you.”

Carl winced. He had never been whipped. Then, seeing how badly his father felt, he said cheerfully,

“All right, father.”

Mr. Meredith misunderstood his cheerfulness and thought him insensible. He told Carl to come to the study after supper, and when the boy had gone out he flung himself into his chair and groaned again. He

dreaded the evening sevenfold more than Carl did. The poor minister did not even know what he should whip his boy with. What was used to whip boys? Rods? Canes? No, that would be too brutal. A timber switch, then? And he, John Meredith, must hie him to the woods and cut one. It was an abominable thought. Then a picture presented itself unbidden to his mind. He saw Mrs. Carr's wizened, nutcracker little face at the appearance of that reviving eel — he saw her sailing witchlike over the buggy wheels. Before he could prevent himself the minister laughed. Then he was angry with himself and angrier still with Carl. He would get that switch at once — and it must not be too limber, after all.

Carl was talking the matter over in the graveyard with Faith and Una, who had just come home. They were horrified at the idea of his being whipped — and by father, who had never done such a thing! But they agreed soberly that it was just.

“You know it was a dreadful thing to do,” sighed Faith. “And you never owned up in the club.”

“I forgot,” said Carl. “Besides, I didn't think any harm came of it. I didn't know she jarred her legs. But I'm to be whipped and that will make things square.”

“Will it hurt — very much?” said Una, slipping her hand into Carl's.

“Oh, not so much, I guess,” said Carl gamely. “Anyhow, I'm not going to cry, no matter how much it hurts. It would make father feel so bad, if I did. He's all cut up now. I wish I could whip myself hard enough and save him doing it.”

After supper, at which Carl had eaten little and Mr. Meredith nothing at all, both went silently into the study. The switch lay on the table. Mr. Meredith had had a bad time getting a switch to suit him. He cut one, then felt it was too slender. Carl had done a really indefensible thing. Then he cut another — it was far too thick. After all, Carl had thought the eel was dead. The third one suited him better; but as he picked it up from the table it seemed very thick and heavy — more like a stick than a switch.

“Hold out your hand,” he said to Carl.

Carl threw back his head and held out his hand unflinchingly. But he was not very old and he could not quite keep a little fear out of his eyes. Mr. Meredith looked down into those eyes — why, they were Cecilia’s eyes — her very eyes — and in them was the selfsame expression he had once seen in Cecilia’s eyes when she had come to him to tell him something she had been a little afraid to tell him. Here were her eyes in Carl’s little, white face — and six weeks ago he had thought, through one endless, terrible night, that his little lad was dying.

John Meredith threw down the switch.

“Go,” he said, “I cannot whip you.”

Carl fled to the graveyard, feeling that the look on his father’s face was worse than any whipping.

“Is it over so soon?” asked Faith. She and Una had been holding hands and setting teeth on the Pollock tombstone.

“He — he didn’t whip me at all,” said Carl with a sob, “and — I wish he had — and he’s in there, feeling just awful.”

Una slipped away. Her heart yearned to comfort her father. As noiselessly as a little gray mouse she opened the study door and crept in. The room was dark with twilight. Her father was sitting at his desk. His back was towards her — his head was in his hands. He was talking to himself — broken, anguished words — but Una heard — heard and understood, with the sudden illumination that comes to sensitive, unmothered children. As silently as she had come in she slipped out and closed the door. John Meredith went on talking out his pain in what he deemed his undisturbed solitude.

Una Visits the Hill

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Una went upstairs. Carl and Faith were already on their way through the early moonlight to Rainbow Valley, having heard therefrom the elfin lilt of Jerry's jews-harp and having guessed that the Blythes were there and fun afoot. Una had no wish to go. She sought her own room first where she sat down on her bed and had a little cry. She did not want anybody to come in her dear mother's place. She did not want a stepmother who would hate her and make her father hate her. But father was so desperately unhappy — and if she could do any anything to make him happier she **MUST** do it. There was only one thing she could do — and she had known the moment she had left the study that she must do it. But it was a very hard thing to do.

After Una cried her heart out she wiped her eyes and went to the spare room. It was dark and rather musty, for the blind had not been drawn up nor the window opened for a long time. Aunt Martha was no fresh-air fiend. But as nobody ever thought of shutting a door in the manse this did not matter so much, save when some unfortunate minister came to stay all night and was compelled to breathe the spare room atmosphere.

There was a closet in the spare room and far back in the closet a gray silk dress was hanging. Una went into the closet and shut the door, went down on her knees and pressed her face against the soft silken folds. It had been her mother's wedding-dress. It was still full of a sweet, faint, haunting perfume, like lingering love. Una always felt very close to her mother there — as if she were kneeling at her feet with head in her lap. She went there once in a long while when life was **TOO** hard.

"Mother," she whispered to the gray silk gown, "*I will never forget you, mother, and I'll ALWAYS love you best. But I have to do it, mother, because father is so very unhappy. I know you wouldn't want him to be*

unhappy. And I will be very good to her, mother, and try to love her, even if she is like Mary Vance said stepmothers always were.”

Una carried some fine, spiritual strength away from her secret shrine. She slept peacefully that night with the tear stains still glistening on her sweet, serious, little face.

The next afternoon she put on her best dress and hat. They were shabby enough. Every other little girl in the Glen had new clothes that summer except Faith and Una. Mary Vance had a lovely dress of white embroidered lawn, with scarlet silk sash and shoulder bows. But to-day Una did not mind her shabbiness. She only wanted to be very neat. She washed her face carefully. She brushed her black hair until it was as smooth as satin. She tied her shoelaces carefully, having first sewed up two runs in her one pair of good stockings. She would have liked to black her shoes, but she could not find any blacking. Finally, she slipped away from the manse, down through Rainbow Valley, up through the whispering woods, and out to the road that ran past the house on the hill. It was quite a long walk and Una was tired and warm when she got there.

She saw Rosemary West sitting under a tree in the garden and stole past the dahlia beds to her. Rosemary had a book in her lap, but she was gazing afar across the harbour and her thoughts were sorrowful enough. Life had not been pleasant lately in the house on the hill. Ellen had not sulked — Ellen had been a brick. But things can be felt that are never said and at times the silence between the two women was intolerably eloquent. All the many familiar things that had once made life sweet had a flavour of bitterness now. Norman Douglas made periodical irruptions also, bullying and coaxing Ellen by turns. It would end, Rosemary believed, by his dragging Ellen off with him some day, and Rosemary felt that she would be almost glad when it happened. Existence would be horribly lonely then, but it would be no longer charged with dynamite.

She was roused from her unpleasant reverie by a timid little touch on her shoulder. Turning, she saw Una Meredith.

“Why, Una, dear, did you walk up here in all this heat?”

“Yes,” said Una, “I came to — I came to—”

But she found it very hard to say what she had come to do. Her voice failed — her eyes filled with tears.

“Why, Una, little girl, what is the trouble? Don’t be afraid to tell me.”

Rosemary put her arm around the thin little form and drew the child close to her. Her eyes were very beautiful — her touch so tender that Una found courage.

“I came — to ask you — to marry father,” she gasped.

Rosemary was silent for a moment from sheer dumbfounderment. She stared at Una blankly.

“Oh, don’t be angry, please, dear Miss West,” said Una, pleadingly.

“You see, everybody is saying that you wouldn’t marry father because we are so bad. He is VERY unhappy about it. So I thought I would come and tell you that we are never bad ON PURPOSE. And if you will only marry father we will all try to be good and do just what you tell us. I’m SURE you won’t have any trouble with us. PLEASE, Miss West.”

Rosemary had been thinking rapidly. Gossiping surmise, she saw, had put this mistaken idea into Una’s mind. She must be perfectly frank and sincere with the child.

“Una, dear,” she said softly. “It isn’t because of you poor little souls that I cannot be your father’s wife. I never thought of such a thing. You are not bad — I never supposed you were. There — there was another reason altogether, Una.”

“Don’t you like father?” asked Una, lifting reproachful eyes. “Oh, Miss West, you don’t know how nice he is. I’m sure he’d make you a GOOD husband.”

Even in the midst of her perplexity and distress Rosemary couldn’t help a twisted, little smile.

“Oh, don’t laugh, Miss West,” Una cried passionately. “Father feels DREADFUL about it.”

“I think you’re mistaken, dear,” said Rosemary.

“I’m not. I’m SURE I’m not. Oh, Miss West, father was going to whip Carl yesterday — Carl had been naughty — and father couldn’t do it because you see he had no PRACTICE in whipping. So when Carl came

out and told us father felt so bad, I slipped into the study to see if I could help him — he LIKES me to comfort him, Miss West — and he didn't hear me come in and I heard what he was saying. I'll tell you, Miss West, if you'll let me whisper it in your ear."

Una whispered earnestly. Rosemary's face turned crimson. So John Meredith still cared. HE hadn't changed his mind. And he must care intensely if he had said that — care more than she had ever supposed he did. She sat still for a moment, stroking Una's hair. Then she said,

"Will you take a little letter from me to your father, Una?"

"Oh, are you going to marry him, Miss West?" asked Una eagerly.

"Perhaps — if he really wants me to," said Rosemary, blushing again.

"I'm glad — I'm glad," said Una bravely. Then she looked up, with quivering lips. "Oh, Miss West, you won't turn father against us — you won't make him hate us, will you?" she said beseechingly.

Rosemary stared again.

"Una Meredith! Do you think I would do such a thing? Whatever put such an idea into your head?"

"Mary Vance said stepmothers were all like that — and that they all hated their stepchildren and made their father hate them — she said they just couldn't help it — just being stepmothers made them like that" —

"You poor child! And yet you came up here and asked me to marry your father because you wanted to make him happy? You're a darling — a heroine — as Ellen would say, you're a brick. Now listen to me, very closely, dearest. Mary Vance is a silly little girl who doesn't know very much and she is dreadfully mistaken about some things. I would never dream of trying to turn your father against you. I would love you all dearly. I don't want to take your own mother's place — she must always have that in your hearts. But neither have I any intention of being a stepmother. I want to be your friend and helper and CHUM. Don't you think that would be nice, Una — if you and Faith and Carl and Jerry could just think of me as a good jolly chum — a big older sister?"

"Oh, it would be lovely," cried Una, with a transfigured face. She flung her arms impulsively round Rosemary's neck. She was so happy that she

felt as if she could fly on wings.

“Do the others — do Faith and the boys have the same idea you had about stepmothers?”

“No. Faith never believed Mary Vance. I was dreadfully foolish to believe her, either. Faith loves you already — she has loved you ever since poor Adam was eaten. And Jerry and Carl will think it is jolly. Oh, Miss West, when you come to live with us, will you — could you — teach me to cook — a little — and sew — and — and — and do things? I don’t know anything. I won’t be much trouble — I’ll try to learn fast.”

“Darling, I’ll teach you and help you all I can. Now, you won’t say a word to anybody about this, will you — not even to Faith, until your father himself tells you you may? And you’ll stay and have tea with me?”

“Oh, thank you — but — but — I think I’d rather go right back and take the letter to father,” faltered Una. “You see, he’ll be glad that much SOONER, Miss West.”

“I see,” said Rosemary. She went to the house, wrote a note and gave it to Una. When that small damsel had run off, a palpitating bundle of happiness, Rosemary went to Ellen, who was shelling peas on the back porch.

“Ellen,” she said, “Una Meredith has just been here to ask me to marry her father.”

Ellen looked up and read her sister’s face.

“And you’re going to?” she said.

“It’s quite likely.”

Ellen went on shelling peas for a few minutes. Then she suddenly put her hands up to her own face. There were tears in her black-browed eyes.

“I — I hope we’ll all be happy,” she said between a sob and a laugh.

Down at the manse Una Meredith, warm, rosy, triumphant, marched boldly into her father’s study and laid a letter on the desk before him. His pale face flushed as he saw the clear, fine handwriting he knew so well. He opened the letter. It was very short — but he shed twenty years as he read it. Rosemary asked him if he could meet her that evening at sunset by the spring in Rainbow Valley.

“Let the Piper Come”

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“And so,” said Miss Cornelia, “the double wedding is to be sometime about the middle of this month.”

There was a faint chill in the air of the early September evening, so Anne had lighted her ever ready fire of driftwood in the big living room, and she and Miss Cornelia basked in its fairy flicker.

“It is so delightful — especially in regard to Mr. Meredith and Rosemary,” said Anne. “I’m as happy in the thought of it, as I was when I was getting married myself. I felt exactly like a bride again last evening when I was up on the hill seeing Rosemary’s trousseau.”

“They tell me her things are fine enough for a princess,” said Susan from a shadowy corner where she was cuddling her brown boy. “I have been invited up to see them also and I intend to go some evening. I understand that Rosemary is to wear white silk and a veil, but Ellen is to be married in navy blue. I have no doubt, Mrs. Dr. dear, that that is very sensible of her, but for my own part I have always felt that if I were ever married *I* would prefer the white and the veil, as being more bride-like.”

A vision of Susan in “white and a veil” presented itself before Anne’s inner vision and was almost too much for her.

“As for Mr. Meredith,” said Miss Cornelia, “even his engagement has made a different man of him. He isn’t half so dreamy and absentminded, believe me. I was so relieved when I heard that he had decided to close the manse and let the children visit round while he was away on his honeymoon. If he had left them and old Aunt Martha there alone for a month I should have expected to wake every morning and see the place burned down.”

“Aunt Martha and Jerry are coming here,” said Anne. “Carl is going to Elder Clow’s. I haven’t heard where the girls are going.”

“Oh, I’m going to take them,” said Miss Cornelia. “Of course, I was glad to, but Mary would have given me no peace till I asked them any way. The Ladies’ Aid is going to clean the manse from top to bottom before the bride and groom come back, and Norman Douglas has arranged to fill the cellar with vegetables. Nobody ever saw or heard anything quite like Norman Douglas these days, believe ME. He’s so tickled that he’s going to marry Ellen West after wanting her all his life. If *I* was Ellen — but then, I’m not, and if she is satisfied I can very well be. I heard her say years ago when she was a schoolgirl that she didn’t want a tame puppy for a husband. There’s nothing tame about Norman, believe ME.”

The sun was setting over Rainbow Valley. The pond was wearing a wonderful tissue of purple and gold and green and crimson. A faint blue haze rested on the eastern hill, over which a great, pale, round moon was just floating up like a silver bubble.

They were all there, squatted in the little open glade — Faith and Una, Jerry and Carl, Jem and Walter, Nan and Di, and Mary Vance. They had been having a special celebration, for it would be Jem’s last evening in Rainbow Valley. On the morrow he would leave for Charlottetown to attend Queen’s Academy. Their charmed circle would be broken; and, in spite of the jollity of their little festival, there was a hint of sorrow in every gay young heart.

“See — there is a great golden palace over there in the sunset,” said Walter, pointing. “Look at the shining tower — and the crimson banners streaming from them. Perhaps a conqueror is riding home from battle — and they are hanging them out to do honour to him.”

“Oh, I wish we had the old days back again,” exclaimed Jem. “I’d love to be a soldier — a great, triumphant general. I’d give EVERYTHING to see a big battle.”

Well, Jem was to be a soldier and see a greater battle than had ever been fought in the world; but that was as yet far in the future; and the mother, whose firstborn son he was, was wont to look on her boys and thank God that the “brave days of old,” which Jem longed for, were gone for ever, and that never would it be necessary for the sons of Canada to

ride forth to battle “for the ashes of their fathers and the temples of their gods.”

The shadow of the Great Conflict had not yet made felt any forerunner of its chill. The lads who were to fight, and perhaps fall, on the fields of France and Flanders, Gallipoli and Palestine, were still roguish schoolboys with a fair life in prospect before them: the girls whose hearts were to be wrung were yet fair little maidens a-star with hopes and dreams.

Slowly the banners of the sunset city gave up their crimson and gold; slowly the conqueror’s pageant faded out. Twilight crept over the valley and the little group grew silent. Walter had been reading again that day in his beloved book of myths and he remembered how he had once fancied the Pied Piper coming down the valley on an evening just like this.

He began to speak dreamily, partly because he wanted to thrill his companions a little, partly because something apart from him seemed to be speaking through his lips.

“The Piper is coming nearer,” he said, “he is nearer than he was that evening I saw him before. His long, shadowy cloak is blowing around him. He pipes — he pipes — and we must follow — Jem and Carl and Jerry and I — round and round the world. Listen — listen — can’t you hear his wild music?”

The girls shivered.

“You know you’re only pretending,” protested Mary Vance, “and I wish you wouldn’t. You make it too real. I hate that old Piper of yours.”

But Jem sprang up with a gay laugh. He stood up on a little hillock, tall and splendid, with his open brow and his fearless eyes. There were thousands like him all over the land of the maple.

“Let the Piper come and welcome,” he cried, waving his hand.

“I’LL follow him gladly round and round the world.”

RILLA OF INGLESIDE

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Glen “Notes” and Other Matters

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It was a warm, golden-cloudy, lovable afternoon. In the big livingroom at Ingleside Susan Baker sat down with a certain grim satisfaction hovering about her like an aura; it was four o'clock and Susan, who had been working incessantly since six that morning, felt that she had fairly earned an hour of repose and gossip. Susan just then was perfectly happy; everything had gone almost uncannily well in the kitchen that day. Dr. Jekyll had not been Mr. Hyde and so had not grated on her nerves; from where she sat she could see the pride of her heart — the bed of peonies of her own planting and culture, blooming as no other peony plot in Glen St. Mary ever did or could bloom, with peonies crimson, peonies silvery pink, peonies white as drifts of winter snow.

Susan had on a new black silk blouse, quite as elaborate as anything Mrs. Marshall Elliott ever wore, and a white starched apron, trimmed with complicated crocheted lace fully five inches wide, not to mention insertion to match. Therefore Susan had all the comfortable consciousness of a well-dressed woman as she opened her copy of the Daily Enterprise and prepared to read the Glen “Notes” which, as Miss Cornelia had just informed her, filled half a column of it and mentioned almost everybody at Ingleside. There was a big, black headline on the front page of the Enterprise, stating that some Archduke Ferdinand or other had been assassinated at a place bearing the weird name of Sarajevo, but Susan tarried not over uninteresting, immaterial stuff like that; she was in quest of something really vital. Oh, here it was—”Jottings from Glen St. Mary.” Susan settled down keenly, reading each one over aloud to extract all possible gratification from it.

Mrs. Blythe and her visitor, Miss Cornelia — alias Mrs. Marshall Elliott — were chatting together near the open door that led to the veranda, through which a cool, delicious breeze was blowing, bringing

whiffs of phantom perfume from the garden, and charming gay echoes from the vine-hung corner where Rilla and Miss Oliver and Walter were laughing and talking. Wherever Rilla Blythe was, there was laughter.

There was another occupant of the livingroom, curled up on a couch, who must not be overlooked, since he was a creature of marked individuality, and, moreover, had the distinction of being the only living thing whom Susan really hated.

All cats are mysterious but Dr. Jekyll-and-Mr. Hyde—"Doc" for short — was trebly so. He was a cat of double personality — or else, as Susan vowed, he was possessed by the devil. To begin with, there had been something uncanny about the very dawn of his existence. Four years previously Rilla Blythe had had a treasured darling of a kitten, white as snow, with a saucy black tip to its tail, which she called Jack Frost. Susan disliked Jack Frost, though she could not or would not give any valid reason therefor.

"Take my word for it, Mrs. Dr. dear," she was wont to say ominously, "that cat will come to no good."

"But why do you think so?" Mrs. Blythe would ask.

"I do not think — I know," was all the answer Susan would vouchsafe.

With the rest of the Ingleside folk Jack Frost was a favourite; he was so very clean and well groomed, and never allowed a spot or stain to be seen on his beautiful white suit; he had endearing ways of purring and snuggling; he was scrupulously honest.

And then a domestic tragedy took place at Ingleside. Jack Frost had kittens!

It would be vain to try to picture Susan's triumph. Had she not always insisted that that cat would turn out to be a delusion and a snare? Now they could see for themselves!

Rilla kept one of the kittens, a very pretty one, with peculiarly sleek glossy fur of a dark yellow crossed by orange stripes, and large, satiny, golden ears. She called it Goldie and the name seemed appropriate enough to the little frolicsome creature which, during its kittenhood, gave no indication of the sinister nature it really possessed. Susan, of course,

warned the family that no good could be expected from any offspring of that diabolical Jack Frost; but Susan's Cassandra-like croakings were unheeded.

The Blythes had been so accustomed to regard Jack Frost as a member of the male sex that they could not get out of the habit. So they continually used the masculine pronoun, although the result was ludicrous. Visitors used to be quite electrified when Rilla referred casually to "Jack and his kitten," or told Goldie sternly, "Go to your mother and get him to wash your fur."

"It is not decent, Mrs. Dr. dear," poor Susan would say bitterly. She herself compromised by always referring to Jack as "it" or "the white beast," and one heart at least did not ache when "it" was accidentally poisoned the following winter.

In a year's time "Goldie" became so manifestly an inadequate name for the orange kitten that Walter, who was just then reading Stevenson's story, changed it to Dr. Jekyll-and-Mr. Hyde. In his Dr. Jekyll mood the cat was a drowsy, affectionate, domestic, cushion-loving puss, who liked petting and gloried in being nursed and patted. Especially did he love to lie on his back and have his sleek, cream-coloured throat stroked gently while he purred in somnolent satisfaction. He was a notable purrer; never had there been an Ingleside cat who purred so constantly and so ecstatically.

"The only thing I envy a cat is its purr," remarked Dr. Blythe once, listening to Doc's resonant melody. "It is the most contented sound in the world."

Doc was very handsome; his every movement was grace; his poses magnificent. When he folded his long, dusky-ringed tail about his feet and sat him down on the veranda to gaze steadily into space for long intervals the Blythes felt that an Egyptian sphinx could not have made a more fitting Deity of the Portal.

When the Mr. Hyde mood came upon him — which it invariably did before rain, or wind — he was a wild thing with changed eyes. The transformation always came suddenly. He would spring fiercely from a reverie with a savage snarl and bite at any restraining or caressing hand.

His fur seemed to grow darker and his eyes gleamed with a diabolical light. There was really an unearthly beauty about him. If the change happened in the twilight all the Ingleside folk felt a certain terror of him. At such times he was a fearsome beast and only Rilla defended him, asserting that he was “such a nice prowly cat.” Certainly he prowled.

Dr. Jekyll loved new milk; Mr. Hyde would not touch milk and growled over his meat. Dr. Jekyll came down the stairs so silently that no one could hear him. Mr. Hyde made his tread as heavy as a man’s. Several evenings, when Susan was alone in the house, he “scared her stiff,” as she declared, by doing this. He would sit in the middle of the kitchen floor, with his terrible eyes fixed unwinkingly upon hers for an hour at a time. This played havoc with her nerves, but poor Susan really held him in too much awe to try to drive him out. Once she had dared to throw a stick at him and he had promptly made a savage leap towards her. Susan rushed out of doors and never attempted to meddle with Mr. Hyde again — though she visited his misdeeds upon the innocent Dr. Jekyll, chasing him ignominiously out of her domain whenever he dared to poke his nose in and denying him certain savoury tidbits for which he yearned.

“‘The many friends of Miss Faith Meredith, Gerald Meredith and James Blythe,’” read Susan, rolling the names like sweet morsels under her tongue, “‘were very much pleased to welcome them home a few weeks ago from Redmond College. James Blythe, who was graduated in Arts in 1913, had just completed his first year in medicine.’”

“Faith Meredith has really got to be the most handsomest creature I ever saw,” commented Miss Cornelia above her filet crochet. “It’s amazing how those children came on after Rosemary West went to the manse. People have almost forgotten what imps of mischief they were once. Anne, dearie, will you ever forget the way they used to carry on? It’s really surprising how well Rosemary got on with them. She’s more like a chum than a stepmother. They all love her and Una adores her. As for that little Bruce, Una just makes a perfect slave of herself to him. Of course, he is a darling. But did you ever see any child look as much like an aunt as he looks like his Aunt Ellen? He’s just as dark and just as emphatic. I can’t

see a feature of Rosemary in him. Norman Douglas always vows at the top of his voice that the stork meant Bruce for him and Ellen and took him to the manse by mistake.”

“Bruce adores Jem,” said Mrs Blythe. “When he comes over here he follows Jem about silently like a faithful little dog, looking up at him from under his black brows. He would do anything for Jem, I verily believe.”

“Are Jem and Faith going to make a match of it?”

Mrs. Blythe smiled. It was well known that Miss Cornelia, who had been such a virulent man-hater at one time, had actually taken to matchmaking in her declining years.

“They are only good friends yet, Miss Cornelia.”

“Very good friends, believe me,” said Miss Cornelia emphatically. “I hear all about the doings of the young fry.”

“I have no doubt that Mary Vance sees that you do, Mrs. Marshall Elliott,” said Susan significantly, “but I think it is a shame to talk about children making matches.”

“Children! Jem is twenty-one and Faith is nineteen,” retorted Miss Cornelia. “You must not forget, Susan, that we old folks are not the only grownup people in the world.”

Outraged Susan, who detested any reference to her age — not from vanity but from a haunting dread that people might come to think her too old to work — returned to her “Notes.”

““Carl Meredith and Shirley Blythe came home last Friday evening from Queen’s Academy. We understand that Carl will be in charge of the school at Harbour Head next year and we are sure he will be a popular and successful teacher.””

“He will teach the children all there is to know about bugs, anyhow,” said Miss Cornelia. “He is through with Queen’s now and Mr. Meredith and Rosemary wanted him to go right on to Redmond in the fall, but Carl has a very independent streak in him and means to earn part of his own way through college. He’ll be all the better for it.”

““Walter Blythe, who has been teaching for the past two years at Lowbridge, has resigned,”” read Susan. ““He intends going to Redmond

this fall.”

“Is Walter quite strong enough for Redmond yet?” queried Miss Cornelia anxiously.

“We hope that he will be by the fall,” said Mrs. Blythe. “An idle summer in the open air and sunshine will do a great deal for him.”

“Typhoid is a hard thing to get over,” said Miss Cornelia emphatically, “especially when one has had such a close shave as Walter had. I think he’d do well to stay out of college another year. But then he’s so ambitious. Are Di and Nan going too?”

“Yes. They both wanted to teach another year but Gilbert thinks they had better go to Redmond this fall.”

“I’m glad of that. They’ll keep an eye on Walter and see that he doesn’t study too hard. I suppose,” continued Miss Cornelia, with a side glance at Susan, “that after the snub I got a few minutes ago it will not be safe for me to suggest that Jerry Meredith is making sheep’s eyes at Nan.”

Susan ignored this and Mrs. Blythe laughed again.

“Dear Miss Cornelia, I have my hands full, haven’t I? — with all these boys and girls sweethearting around me? If I took it seriously it would quite crush me. But I don’t — it is too hard yet to realize that they’re grown up. When I look at those two tall sons of mine I wonder if they can possibly be the fat, sweet, dimpled babies I kissed and cuddled and sang to slumber the other day — only the other day, Miss Cornelia. Wasn’t Jem the dearest baby in the old House of Dreams? and now he’s a B.A. and accused of courting.”

“We’re all growing older,” sighed Miss Cornelia.

“The only part of me that feels old,” said Mrs. Blythe, “is the ankle I broke when Josie Pye dared me to walk the Barry ridgepole in the Green Gables days. I have an ache in it when the wind is east. I won’t admit that it is rheumatism, but it does ache. As for the children, they and the Merediths are planning a gay summer before they have to go back to studies in the fall. They are such a fun-loving little crowd. They keep this house in a perpetual whirl of merriment.”

“Is Rilla going to Queen’s when Shirley goes back?”

“It isn’t decided yet. I rather fancy not. Her father thinks she is not quite strong enough — she has rather outgrown her strength — she’s really absurdly tall for a girl not yet fifteen. I am not anxious to have her go — why, it would be terrible not to have a single one of my babies home with me next winter. Susan and I would fall to fighting with each other to break the monotony.”

Susan smiled at this pleasantry. The idea of her fighting with “Mrs. Dr. dear!”

“Does Rilla herself want to go?” asked Miss Cornelia.

“No. The truth is, Rilla is the only one of my flock who isn’t ambitious. I really wish she had a little more ambition. She has no serious ideals at all — her sole aspiration seems to be to have a good time.”

“And why should she not have it, Mrs. Dr. dear?” cried Susan, who could not bear to hear a single word against anyone of the Ingleside folk, even from one of themselves. “A young girl should have a good time, and that I will maintain. There will be time enough for her to think of Latin and Greek.”

“I should like to see a little sense of responsibility in her, Susan. And you know yourself that she is abominably vain.”

“She has something to be vain about,” retorted Susan. “She is the prettiest girl in Glen St. Mary. Do you think that all those over-harbour MacAllisters and Crawfords and Elliotts could scare up a skin like Rilla’s in four generations? They could not. No, Mrs. Dr. dear, I know my place but I cannot allow you to run down Rilla. Listen to this, Mrs. Marshall Elliott.”

Susan had found a chance to get square with Miss Cornelia for her digs at the children’s love affairs. She read the item with gusto.

“‘Miller Douglas has decided not to go West. He says old P.E.I. is good enough for him and he will continue to farm for his aunt, Mrs. Alec Davis.’”

Susan looked keenly at Miss Cornelia.

“I have heard, Mrs. Marshall Elliott, that Miller is courting Mary Vance.”

This shot pierced Miss Cornelia's armour. Her son's face flushed.

"I won't have Miller Douglas hanging round Mary," she said crisply. "He comes of a low family. His father was a sort of outcast from the Douglasses — they never really counted him in — and his mother was one of those terrible Dillons from the Harbour Head."

"I think I have heard, Mrs. Marshall Elliott, that Mary Vance's own parents were not what you could call aristocratic."

"Mary Vance has had a good bringing up and she is a smart, clever, capable girl," retorted Miss Cornelia. "She is not going to throw herself away on Miller Douglas, believe me! She knows my opinion on the matter and Mary has never disobeyed me yet."

"Well, I do not think you need worry, Mrs. Marshall Elliott, for Mrs. Alec Davis is as much against it as you could be, and says no nephew of hers is ever going to marry a nameless nobody like Mary Vance."

Susan returned to her mutton, feeling that she had got the best of it in this passage of arms, and read another "note."

"We are pleased to hear that Miss Oliver has been engaged as teacher for another year. Miss Oliver will spend her well-earned vacation at her home in Lowbridge."

"I'm so glad Gertrude is going to stay," said Mrs. Blythe. "We would miss her horribly. And she has an excellent influence over Rilla who worships her. They are chums, in spite of the difference in their ages."

"I thought I heard she was going to be married?"

"I believe it was talked of but I understand it is postponed for a year."

"Who is the young man?"

"Robert Grant. He is a young lawyer in Charlottetown. I hope Gertrude will be happy. She has had a sad life, with much bitterness in it, and she feels things with a terrible keenness. Her first youth is gone and she is practically alone in the world. This new love that has come into her life seems such a wonderful thing to her that I think she hardly dares believe in its permanence. When her marriage had to be put off she was quite in despair — though it certainly wasn't Mr. Grant's fault. There were complications in the settlement of his father's estate — his father died last

winter — and he could not marry till the tangles were unravelled. But I think Gertrude felt it was a bad omen and that her happiness would somehow elude her yet.”

“It does not do, Mrs. Dr. dear, to set your affections too much on a man,” remarked Susan solemnly.

“Mr. Grant is quite as much in love with Gertrude as she is with him, Susan. It is not he whom she distrusts — it is fate. She has a little mystic streak in her — I suppose some people would call her superstitious. She has an odd belief in dreams and we have not been able to laugh it out of her. I must own, too, that some of her dreams — but there, it would not do to let Gilbert hear me hinting such heresy. What have you found of much interest, Susan?”

Susan had given an exclamation.

“Listen to this, Mrs. Dr. dear. ‘Mrs. Sophia Crawford has given up her house at Lowbridge and will make her home in future with her niece, Mrs. Albert Crawford.’ Why that is my own cousin Sophia, Mrs. Dr. dear. We quarrelled when we were children over who should get a Sunday-school card with the words ‘God is Love,’ wreathed in rosebuds, on it, and have never spoken to each other since. And now she is coming to live right across the road from us.”

“You will have to make up the old quarrel, Susan. It will never do to be at outs with your neighbours.”

“Cousin Sophia began the quarrel, so she can begin the making up also, Mrs. Dr. dear,” said Susan loftily. “If she does I hope I am a good enough Christian to meet her halfway. She is not a cheerful person and has been a wet blanket all her life. The last time I saw her, her face had a thousand wrinkles — maybe more, maybe less — from worrying and foreboding. She howled dreadful at her first husband’s funeral but she married again in less than a year. The next note, I see, describes the special service in our church last Sunday night and says the decorations were very beautiful.”

“Speaking of that reminds me that Mr. Pryor strongly disapproves of flowers in church,” said Miss Cornelia. “I always said there would be trouble when that man moved here from Lowbridge. He should never have

been put in as elder — it was a mistake and we shall live to rue it, believe me! I have heard that he has said that if the girls continue to ‘mess up the pulpit with weeds’ that he will not go to church.”

“The church got on very well before old Whiskers-on-the-moon came to the Glen and it is my opinion it will get on without him after he is gone,” said Susan.

“Who in the world ever gave him that ridiculous nickname?” asked Mrs. Blythe.

“Why, the Lowbridge boys have called him that ever since I can remember, Mrs. Dr. dear — I suppose because his face is so round and red, with that fringe of sandy whisker about it. It does not do for anyone to call him that in his hearing, though, and that you may tie to. But worse than his whiskers, Mrs. Dr. dear, he is a very unreasonable man and has a great many queer ideas. He is an elder now and they say he is very religious; but I can well remember the time, Mrs. Dr. dear, twenty years ago, when he was caught pasturing his cow in the Lowbridge graveyard. Yes, indeed, I have not forgotten that, and I always think of it when he is praying in meeting. Well, that is all the notes and there is not much else in the paper of any importance. I never take much interest in foreign parts. Who is this Archduke man who has been murdered?”

“What does it matter to us?” asked Miss Cornelia, unaware of the hideous answer to her question which destiny was even then preparing. “Somebody is always murdering or being murdered in those Balkan States. It’s their normal condition and I don’t really think that our papers ought to print such shocking things. The Enterprise is getting far too sensational with its big headlines. Well, I must be getting home. No, Anne dearie, it’s no use asking me to stay to supper. Marshall has got to thinking that if I’m not home for a meal it’s not worth eating — just like a man. So off I go. Merciful goodness, Anne dearie, what is the matter with that cat? Is he having a fit?” — this, as Doc suddenly bounded to the rug at Miss Cornelia’s feet, laid back his ears, swore at her, and then disappeared with one fierce leap through the window.

“Oh, no. He’s merely turning into Mr. Hyde — which means that we shall have rain or high wind before morning. Doc is as good as a barometer.”

“Well, I am thankful he has gone on the rampage outside this time and not into my kitchen,” said Susan. “And I am going out to see about supper. With such a crowd as we have at Ingleside now it behooves us to think about our meals betimes.”

Dew of Morning

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Outside, the Ingleside lawn was full of golden pools of sunshine and plots of alluring shadows. Rilla Blythe was swinging in the hammock under the big Scotch pine, Gertrude Oliver sat at its roots beside her, and Walter was stretched at full length on the grass, lost in a romance of chivalry wherein old heroes and beauties of dead and gone centuries lived vividly again for him.

Rilla was the “baby” of the Blythe family and was in a chronic state of secret indignation because nobody believed she was grown up. She was so nearly fifteen that she called herself that, and she was quite as tall as Di and Nan; also, she was nearly as pretty as Susan believed her to be. She had great, dreamy, hazel eyes, a milky skin dappled with little golden freckles, and delicately arched eyebrows, giving her a demure, questioning look which made people, especially lads in their teens, want to answer it. Her hair was ripely, ruddily brown and a little dent in her upper lip looked as if some good fairy had pressed it in with her finger at Rilla’s christening. Rilla, whose best friends could not deny her share of vanity, thought her face would do very well, but worried over her figure, and wished her mother could be prevailed upon to let her wear longer dresses. She, who had been so plump and roly-poly in the old Rainbow Valley days, was incredibly slim now, in the arms-and-legs period. Jem and Shirley harrowed her soul by calling her “Spider.” Yet she somehow escaped awkwardness. There was something in her movements that made you think she never walked but always danced. She had been much petted and was a wee bit spoiled, but still the general opinion was that Rilla Blythe was a very sweet girl, even if she were not so clever as Nan and Di.

Miss Oliver, who was going home that night for vacation, had boarded for a year at Ingleside. The Blythes had taken her to please Rilla who was fathoms deep in love with her teacher and was even willing to share her

room, since no other was available. Gertrude Oliver was twenty-eight and life had been a struggle for her. She was a striking-looking girl, with rather sad, almond-shaped brown eyes, a clever, rather mocking mouth, and enormous masses of black hair twisted about her head. She was not pretty but there was a certain charm of interest and mystery in her face, and Rilla found her fascinating. Even her occasional moods of gloom and cynicism had allurements for Rilla. These moods came only when Miss Oliver was tired. At all other times she was a stimulating companion, and the gay set at Ingleside never remembered that she was so much older than themselves. Walter and Rilla were her favourites and she was the confidante of the secret wishes and aspirations of both. She knew that Rilla longed to be “out” — to go to parties as Nan and Di did, and to have dainty evening dresses and — yes, there is no mincing matters — beaux! In the plural, at that! As for Walter, Miss Oliver knew that he had written a sequence of sonnets “to Rosamond” — i.e., Faith Meredith — and that he aimed at a Professorship of English literature in some big college. She knew his passionate love of beauty and his equally passionate hatred of ugliness; she knew his strength and his weakness.

Walter was, as ever, the handsomest of the Ingleside boys. Miss Oliver found pleasure in looking at him for his good looks — he was so exactly like what she would have liked her own son to be. Glossy black hair, brilliant dark grey eyes, faultless features. And a poet to his fingertips! That sonnet sequence was really a remarkable thing for a lad of twenty to write. Miss Oliver was no partial critic and she knew that Walter Blythe had a wonderful gift.

Rilla loved Walter with all her heart. He never teased her as Jem and Shirley did. He never called her “Spider.” His pet name for her was “Rilla-my-Rilla” — a little pun on her real name, Marilla. She had been named after Aunt Marilla of Green Gables, but Aunt Marilla had died before Rilla was old enough to know her very well, and Rilla detested the name as being horribly old-fashioned and prim. Why couldn’t they have called her by her first name, Bertha, which was beautiful and dignified, instead of that silly “Rilla”? She did not mind Walter’s version, but nobody else was

allowed to call her that, except Miss Oliver now and then. “Rilla-my-Rilla” in Walter’s musical voice sounded very beautiful to her — like the lilt and ripple of some silvery brook. She would have died for Walter if it would have done him any good, so she told Miss Oliver. Rilla was as fond of italics as most girls of fifteen are — and the bitterest drop in her cup was her suspicion that he told Di more of his secrets than he told her.

“He thinks I’m not grown up enough to understand,” she had once lamented rebelliously to Miss Oliver, “but I am! And I would never tell them to a single soul — not even to you, Miss Oliver. I tell you all my own — I just couldn’t be happy if I had any secret from you, dearest — but I would never betray his. I tell him everything — I even show him my diary. And it hurts me dreadfully when he doesn’t tell me things. He shows me all his poems, though — they are marvellous, Miss Oliver. Oh, I just live in the hope that some day I shall be to Walter what Wordsworth’s sister Dorothy was to him. Wordsworth never wrote anything like Walter’s poems — nor Tennyson, either.”

“I wouldn’t say just that. Both of them wrote a great deal of trash,” said Miss Oliver dryly. Then, repenting, as she saw a hurt look in Rilla’s eye, she added hastily,

“But I believe Walter will be a great poet, too — some day — and you will have more of his confidence as you grow older.”

“When Walter was in the hospital with typhoid last year I was almost crazy,” sighed Rilla, a little importantly. “They never told me how ill he really was until it was all over — father wouldn’t let them. I’m glad I didn’t know — I couldn’t have borne it. I cried myself to sleep every night as it was. But sometimes,” concluded Rilla bitterly — she liked to speak bitterly now and then in imitation of Miss Oliver— “sometimes I think Walter cares more for Dog Monday than he does for me.”

Dog Monday was the Ingleside dog, so called because he had come into the family on a Monday when Walter had been reading Robinson Crusoe. He really belonged to Jem but was much attached to Walter also. He was lying beside Walter now with nose snuggled against his arm, thumping his tail rapturously whenever Walter gave him an absent pat.

Monday was not a collie or a setter or a hound or a Newfoundland. He was just, as Jem said, “plain dog” — very plain dog, uncharitable people added. Certainly, Monday’s looks were not his strong point. Black spots were scattered at random over his yellow carcass, one of them, apparently, blotting out an eye. His ears were in tatters, for Monday was never successful in affairs of honour. But he possessed one talisman. He knew that not all dogs could be handsome or eloquent or victorious, but that every dog could love. Inside his homely hide beat the most affectionate, loyal, faithful heart of any dog since dogs were; and something looked out of his brown eyes that was nearer akin to a soul than any theologian would allow. Everybody at Ingleside was fond of him, even Susan, although his one unfortunate propensity of sneaking into the spare room and going to sleep on the bed tried her affection sorely.

On this particular afternoon Rilla had no quarrel on hand with existing conditions.

“Hasn’t June been a delightful month?” she asked, looking dreamily afar at the little quiet silvery clouds hanging so peacefully over Rainbow Valley. “We’ve had such lovely times — and such lovely weather. It has just been perfect every way.”

“I don’t half like that,” said Miss Oliver, with a sigh. “It’s ominous — somehow. A perfect thing is a gift of the gods — a sort of compensation for what is coming afterwards. I’ve seen that so often that I don’t care to hear people say they’ve had a perfect time. June has been delightful, though.”

“Of course, it hasn’t been very exciting,” said Rilla. “The only exciting thing that has happened in the Glen for a year was old Miss Mead fainting in Church. Sometimes I wish something dramatic would happen once in a while.”

“Don’t wish it. Dramatic things always have a bitterness for some one. What a nice summer all you gay creatures will have! And me moping at Lowbridge!”

“You’ll be over often, won’t you? I think there’s going to be lots of fun this summer, though I’ll just be on the fringe of things as usual, I suppose.

Isn't it horrid when people think you're a little girl when you're not?"

"There's plenty of time for you to be grown up, Rilla. Don't wish your youth away. It goes too quickly. You'll begin to taste life soon enough."

"Taste life! I want to eat it," cried Rilla, laughing. "I want everything — everything a girl can have. I'll be fifteen in another month, and then nobody can say I'm a child any longer. I heard someone say once that the years from fifteen to nineteen are the best years in a girl's life. I'm going to make them perfectly splendid — just fill them with fun."

"There's no use thinking about what you're going to do — you are tolerably sure not to do it."

"Oh, but you do get a lot of fun out of the thinking," cried Rilla.

"You think of nothing but fun, you monkey," said Miss Oliver indulgently, reflecting that Rilla's chin was really the last word in chins. "Well, what else is fifteen for? But have you any notion of going to college this fall?"

"No — nor any other fall. I don't want to. I never cared for all those ologies and isms Nan and Di are so crazy about. And there's five of us going to college already. Surely that's enough. There's bound to be one dunce in every family. I'm quite willing to be a dunce if I can be a pretty, popular, delightful one. I can't be clever. I have no talent at all, and you can't imagine how comfortable it is. Nobody expects me to do anything so I'm never pestered to do it. And I can't be a housewifely, cookly creature, either. I hate sewing and dusting, and when Susan couldn't teach me to make biscuits nobody could. Father says I toil not neither do I spin. Therefore, I must be a lily of the field," concluded Rilla, with another laugh.

"You are too young to give up your studies altogether, Rilla."

"Oh, mother will put me through a course of reading next winter. It will polish up her B.A. degree. Luckily I like reading. Don't look at me so sorrowfully and so disapprovingly, dearest. I can't be sober and serious — everything looks so rosy and rainbowy to me. Next month I'll be fifteen — and next year sixteen — and the year after that seventeen. Could anything be more enchanting?"

“Rap wood,” said Gertrude Oliver, half laughingly, half seriously. “Rap wood, Rilla-my-Rilla.”

Moonlit Mirth

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Rilla, who still buttoned up her eyes when she went to sleep so that she always looked as if she were laughing in her slumber, yawned, stretched, and smiled at Gertrude Oliver. The latter had come over from Lowbridge the previous evening and had been prevailed upon to remain for the dance at the Four Winds lighthouse the next night.

“The new day is knocking at the window. What will it bring us, I wonder.”

Miss Oliver shivered a little. She never greeted the days with Rilla’s enthusiasm. She had lived long enough to know that a day may bring a terrible thing.

“I think the nicest thing about days is their unexpectedness,” went on Rilla. “It’s jolly to wake up like this on a golden-fine morning and wonder what surprise packet the day will hand you. I always daydream for ten minutes before I get up, imagining the heaps of splendid things that may happen before night.”

“I hope something very unexpected will happen today,” said Gertrude. “I hope the mail will bring us news that war has been averted between Germany and France.”

“Oh — yes,” said Rilla vaguely. “It will be dreadful if it isn’t, I suppose. But it won’t really matter much to us, will it? I think a war would be so exciting. The Boer war was, they say, but I don’t remember anything about it, of course. Miss Oliver, shall I wear my white dress tonight or my new green one? The green one is by far the prettier, of course, but I’m almost afraid to wear it to a shore dance for fear something will happen to it. And will you do my hair the new way? None of the other girls in the Glen wear it yet and it will make such a sensation.”

“How did you induce your mother to let you go to the dance?”

“Oh, Walter coaxed her over. He knew I would be heartbroken if I didn’t go. It’s my first really-truly grownup party, Miss Oliver, and I’ve just lain awake at nights for a week thinking it over. When I saw the sun shining this morning I wanted to whoop for joy. It would be simply terrible if it rained tonight. I think I’ll wear the green dress and risk it. I want to look my nicest at my first party. Besides, it’s an inch longer than my white one. And I’ll wear my silver slippers too. Mrs. Ford sent them to me last Christmas and I’ve never had a chance to wear them yet. They’re the dearest things. Oh, Miss Oliver, I do hope some of the boys will ask me to dance. I shall die of mortification — truly I will, if nobody does and I have to sit stuck up against the wall all the evening. Of course Carl and Jerry can’t dance because they’re the minister’s sons, or else I could depend on them to save me from utter disgrace.”

“You’ll have plenty of partners — all the over-harbour boys are coming — there’ll be far more boys than girls.”

“I’m glad I’m not a minister’s daughter,” laughed Rilla. “Poor Faith is so furious because she won’t dare to dance tonight. Una doesn’t care, of course. She has never hankered after dancing. Somebody told Faith there would be a taffy-pull in the kitchen for those who didn’t dance and you should have seen the face she made. She and Jem will sit out on the rocks most of the evening, I suppose. Did you know that we are all to walk down as far as that little creek below the old House of Dreams and then sail to the lighthouse? Won’t it just be absolutely divine?”

“When I was fifteen I talked in italics and superlatives too,” said Miss Oliver sarcastically. “I think the party promises to be pleasant for young fry. I expect to be bored. None of those boys will bother dancing with an old maid like me. Jem and Walter will take me out once out of charity. So you can’t expect me to look forward to it with your touching young rapture.”

“Didn’t you have a good time at your first party, though, Miss Oliver?”

“No. I had a hateful time. I was shabby and homely and nobody asked me to dance except one boy, homelier and shabbier than myself. He was so awkward I hated him — and even he didn’t ask me again. I had no real

girlhood, Rilla. It's a sad loss. That's why I want you to have a splendid, happy girlhood. And I hope your first party will be one you'll remember all your life with pleasure."

"I dreamed last night I was at the dance and right in the middle of things I discovered I was dressed in my kimono and bedroom shoes," sighed Rilla. "I woke up with a gasp of horror."

"Speaking of dreams — I had an odd one," said Miss Oliver absently. "It was one of those vivid dreams I sometimes have — they are not the vague jumble of ordinary dreams — they are as clear cut and real as life."

"What was your dream?"

"I was standing on the veranda steps, here at Ingleside, looking down over the fields of the Glen. All at once, far in the distance, I saw a long, silvery, glistening wave breaking over them. It came nearer and nearer — just a succession of little white waves like those that break on the sandshore sometimes. The Glen was being swallowed up. I thought, 'Surely the waves will not come near Ingleside' — but they came nearer and nearer — so rapidly — before I could move or call they were breaking right at my feet — and everything was gone — there was nothing but a waste of stormy water where the Glen had been. I tried to draw back — and I saw that the edge of my dress was wet with blood — and I woke — shivering. I don't like the dream. There was some sinister significance in it. That kind of vivid dream always 'comes true' with me."

"I hope it doesn't mean there's a storm coming up from the east to spoil the party," murmured Rilla.

"Incorrigible fifteen!" said Miss Oliver dryly. "No, Rilla-my-Rilla, I don't think there is any danger that it foretells anything so awful as that."

There had been an undercurrent of tension in the Ingleside existence for several days. Only Rilla, absorbed in her own budding life, was unaware of it. Dr. Blythe had taken to looking grave and saying little over the daily paper. Jem and Walter were keenly interested in the news it brought. Jem sought Walter out in excitement that evening.

"Oh, boy, Germany has declared war on France. This means that England will fight too, probably — and if she does — well, the Piper of

your old fancy will have come at last.”

“It wasn’t a fancy,” said Walter slowly. “It was a presentiment — a vision — Jem, I really saw him for a moment that evening long ago. Suppose England does fight?”

“Why, we’ll all have to turn in and help her,” cried Jem gaily. “We couldn’t let the ‘old grey mother of the northern sea’ fight it out alone, could we? But you can’t go — the typhoid has done you out of that. Sort of a shame, eh?”

Walter did not say whether it was a shame or not. He looked silently over the Glen to the dimpling blue harbour beyond.

“We’re the cubs — we’ve got to pitch in tooth and claw if it comes to a family row,” Jem went on cheerfully, rumpling up his red curls with a strong, lean, sensitive brown hand — the hand of the born surgeon, his father often thought. “What an adventure it would be! But I suppose Grey or some of those wary old chaps will patch matters up at the eleventh hour. It’ll be a rotten shame if they leave France in the lurch, though. If they don’t, we’ll see some fun. Well, I suppose it’s time to get ready for the spree at the light.”

Jem departed whistling “Wi’ a hundred pipers and a’ and a’,” and Walter stood for a long time where he was. There was a little frown on his forehead. This had all come up with the blackness and suddenness of a thundercloud. A few days ago nobody had even thought of such a thing. It was absurd to think of it now. Some way out would be found. War was a hellish, horrible, hideous thing — too horrible and hideous to happen in the twentieth century between civilized nations. The mere thought of it was hideous, and made Walter unhappy in its threat to the beauty of life. He would not think of it — he would resolutely put it out of his mind. How beautiful the old Glen was, in its August ripeness, with its chain of bowery old homesteads, tilled meadows and quiet gardens. The western sky was like a great golden pearl. Far down the harbour was frosted with a dawning moonlight. The air was full of exquisite sounds — sleepy robin whistles, wonderful, mournful, soft murmurs of wind in the twilit trees, rustle of aspen poplars talking in silvery whispers and shaking their dainty, heart-

shaped leaves, lilting young laughter from the windows of rooms where the girls were making ready for the dance. The world was steeped in maddening loveliness of sound and colour. He would think only of these things and of the deep, subtle joy they gave him. “Anyhow, no one will expect me to go,” he thought. “As Jem says, typhoid has seen to that.”

Rilla was leaning out of her room window, dressed for the dance. A yellow pansy slipped from her hair and fell out over the sill like a falling star of gold. She caught at it vainly — but there were enough left. Miss Oliver had woven a little wreath of them for her pet’s hair.

“It’s so beautifully calm — isn’t that splendid? We’ll have a perfect night. Listen, Miss Oliver — I can hear those old bells in Rainbow Valley quite clearly. They’ve been hanging there for over ten years.”

“Their wind chime always makes me think of the aerial, celestial music Adam and Eve heard in Milton’s Eden,” responded Miss Oliver.

“We used to have such fun in Rainbow Valley when we were children,” said Rilla dreamily.

Nobody ever played in Rainbow Valley now. It was very silent on summer evenings. Walter liked to go there to read. Jem and Faith trysted there considerably; Jerry and Nan went there to pursue uninterruptedly the ceaseless wrangles and arguments on profound subjects that seemed to be their preferred method of sweethearting. And Rilla had a beloved little sylvan dell of her own there where she liked to sit and dream.

“I must run down to the kitchen before I go and show myself off to Susan. She would never forgive me if I didn’t.”

Rilla whirled into the shadowy kitchen at Ingleside, where Susan was prosaically darning socks, and lighted it up with her beauty. She wore her green dress with its little pink daisy garlands, her silk stockings and silver slippers. She had golden pansies in her hair and at her creamy throat. She was so pretty and young and glowing that even Cousin Sophia Crawford was compelled to admire her — and Cousin Sophia Crawford admired few transient earthly things. Cousin Sophia and Susan had made up, or ignored, their old feud since the former had come to live in the Glen, and Cousin Sophia often came across in the evenings to make a neighbourly call.

Susan did not always welcome her rapturously for Cousin Sophia was not what could be called an exhilarating companion. "Some calls are visits and some are visitations, Mrs. Dr. dear," Susan said once, and left it to be inferred that Cousin Sophia's were the latter.

Cousin Sophia had a long, pale, wrinkled face, a long, thin nose, a long, thin mouth, and very long, thin, pale hands, generally folded resignedly on her black calico lap. Everything about her seemed long and thin and pale. She looked mournfully upon Rilla Blythe and said sadly,

"Is your hair all your own?"

"Of course it is," cried Rilla indignantly.

"Ah, well!" Cousin Sophia sighed. "It might be better for you if it wasn't! Such a lot of hair takes from a person's strength. It's a sign of consumption, I've heard, but I hope it won't turn out like that in your case. I s'pose you'll all be dancing tonight — even the minister's boys most likely. I s'pose his girls won't go that far. Ah, well, I never held with dancing. I knew a girl once who dropped dead while she was dancing. How any one could ever dance aga' after a judgment like that I cannot comprehend."

"Did she ever dance again?" asked Rilla pertly.

"I told you she dropped dead. Of course she never danced again, poor creature. She was a Kirke from Lowbridge. You ain't a-going off like that with nothing on your bare neck, are you?"

"It's a hot evening," protested Rilla. "But I'll put on a scarf when we go on the water."

"I knew of a boat load of young folks who went sailing on that harbour forty years ago just such a night as this — just exactly such a night as this," said Cousin Sophia lugubriously, "and they were upset and drowned — every last one of them. I hope nothing like that'll happen to you tonight. Do you ever try anything for the freckles? I used to find plantain juice real good."

"You certainly should be a judge of freckles, Cousin Sophia," said Susan, rushing to Rilla's defence. "You were more speckled than any toad when you was a girl. Rilla's only come in summer but yours stayed put,

season in and season out; and you had not a ground colour like hers behind them neither. You look real nice, Rilla, and that way of fixing your hair is becoming. But you are not going to walk to the harbour in those slippers, are you?"

"Oh, no. We'll all wear our old shoes to the harbour and carry our slippers. Do you like my dress, Susan?"

"It minds me of a dress I wore when I was a girl," sighed Cousin Sophia before Susan could reply. "It was green with pink posies on it, too, and it was flounced from the waist to the hem. We didn't wear the skimpy things girls wear nowadays. Ah me, times has changed and not for the better I'm afraid. I tore a big hole in it that night and someone spilled a cup of tea all over it. Ruined it completely. But I hope nothing will happen to your dress. It orter to be a bit longer I'm thinking — your legs are so terrible long and thin."

"Mrs. Dr. Blythe does not approve of little girls dressing like grownup ones," said Susan stiffly, intending merely a snub to Cousin Sophia. But Rilla felt insulted. A little girl indeed! She whisked out of the kitchen in high dudgeon. Another time she wouldn't go down to show herself off to Susan — Susan, who thought nobody was grown up until she was sixty! And that horrid Cousin Sophia with her digs about freckles and legs! What business had an old — an old beanpole like that to talk of anybody else being long and thin? Rilla felt all her pleasure in herself and her evening clouded and spoiled. The very teeth of her soul were set on edge and she could have sat down and cried.

But later on her spirits rose again when she found herself one of the gay crowd bound for the Four Winds light.

The Blythes left Ingleside to the melancholy music of howls from Dog Monday, who was locked up in the barn lest he make an uninvited guest at the light. They picked up the Merediths in the village, and others joined them as they walked down the old harbour road. Mary Vance, resplendent in blue crepe, with lace overdress, came out of Miss Cornelia's gate and attached herself to Rilla and Miss Oliver who were walking together and who did not welcome her over-warmly. Rilla was not very fond of Mary

Vance. She had never forgotten the humiliating day when Mary had chased her through the village with a dried codfish. Mary Vance, to tell the truth, was not exactly popular with any of her set. Still, they enjoyed her society — she had such a biting tongue that it was stimulating. “Mary Vance is a habit of ours — we can’t do without her even when we are furious with her,” Di Blythe had once said.

Most of the little crowd were paired off after a fashion. Jem walked with Faith Meredith, of course, and Jerry Meredith with Nan Blythe. Di and Walter were together, deep in confidential conversation which Rilla envied.

Carl Meredith was walking with Miranda Pryor, more to torment Joe Milgrave than for any other reason. Joe was known to have a strong hankering for the said Miranda, which shyness prevented him from indulging on all occasions. Joe might summon enough courage to amble up beside Miranda if the night were dark, but here, in this moonlit dusk, he simply could not do it. So he trailed along after the procession and thought things not lawful to be uttered of Carl Meredith. Miranda was the daughter of Whiskers-on-the-moon; she did not share her father’s unpopularity but she was not much run after, being a pale, neutral little creature, somewhat addicted to nervous giggling. She had silvery blonde hair and her eyes were big china blue orbs that looked as if she had been badly frightened when she was little and had never got over it. She would much rather have walked with Joe than with Carl, with whom she did not feel in the least at home. Yet it was something of an honour, too, to have a college boy beside her, and a son of the manse at that.

Shirley Blythe was with Una Meredith and both were rather silent because such was their nature. Shirley was a lad of sixteen, sedate, sensible, thoughtful, full of a quiet humour. He was Susan’s “little brown boy” yet, with his brown hair, brown eyes, and clear brown skin. He liked to walk with Una Meredith because she never tried to make him talk or badgered him with chatter. Una was as sweet and shy as she had been in the Rainbow Valley days, and her large, dark-blue eyes were as dreamy and wistful. She had a secret, carefully-hidden fancy for Walter Blythe that

nobody but Rilla ever suspected. Rilla sympathized with it and wished Walter would return it. She liked Una better than Faith, whose beauty and aplomb rather overshadowed other girls — and Rilla did not enjoy being overshadowed.

But just now she was very happy. It was so delightful to be tripping with her friends down that dark, gleaming road sprinkled with its little spruces and firs, whose balsam made all the air resinous around them. Meadows of sunset afterlight were behind the westerning hills. Before them was the shining harbour. A bell was ringing in the little church over-harbour and the lingering dream-notes died around the dim, amethystine points. The gulf beyond was still silvery blue in the afterlight. Oh, it was all glorious — the clear air with its salt tang, the balsam of the firs, the laughter of her friends. Rilla loved life — its bloom and brilliance; she loved the ripple of music, the hum of merry conversation; she wanted to walk on forever over this road of silver and shadow. It was her first party and she was going to have a splendid time. There was nothing in the world to worry about — not even freckles and overlong legs — nothing except one little haunting fear that nobody would ask her to dance. It was beautiful and satisfying just to be alive — to be fifteen — to be pretty. Rilla drew a long breath of rapture — and caught it midway rather sharply. Jem was telling some story to Faith — something that had happened in the Balkan War.

“The doctor lost both his legs — they were smashed to pulp — and he was left on the field to die. And he crawled about from man to man, to all the wounded men round him, as long as he could, and did everything possible to relieve their sufferings — never thinking of himself — he was tying a bit of bandage round another man’s leg when he went under. They found them there, the doctor’s dead hands still held the bandage tight, the bleeding was stopped and the other man’s life was saved. Some hero, wasn’t he, Faith? I tell you when I read that—”

Jem and Faith moved on out of hearing. Gertrude Oliver suddenly shivered. Rilla pressed her arm sympathetically.

“Wasn’t it dreadful, Miss Oliver? I don’t know why Jem tells such gruesome things at a time like this when we’re all out for fun.”

“Do you think it dreadful, Rilla? I thought it wonderful — beautiful. Such a story makes one ashamed of ever doubting human nature. That man’s action was godlike. And how humanity responds to the ideal of self-sacrifice. As for my shiver, I don’t know what caused it. The evening is certainly warm enough. Perhaps someone is walking over the dark, starshiny spot that is to be my grave. That is the explanation the old superstition would give. Well, I won’t think of that on this lovely night. Do you know, Rilla, that when night-time comes I’m always glad I live in the country. We know the real charm of night here as town dwellers never do. Every night is beautiful in the country — even the stormy ones. I love a wild night storm on this old gulf shore. As for a night like this, it is almost too beautiful — it belongs to youth and dreamland and I’m half afraid of it.”

“I feel as if I were part of it,” said Rilla.

“Ah yes, you’re young enough not to be afraid of perfect things. Well, here we are at the House of Dreams. It seems lonely this summer. The Fords didn’t come?”

“Mr. and Mrs. Ford and Persis didn’t. Kenneth did — but he stayed with his mother’s people over-harbour. We haven’t seen a great deal of him this summer. He’s a little lame, so didn’t go about very much.”

“Lame? What happened to him?”

“He broke his ankle in a football game last fall and was laid up most of the winter. He has limped a little ever since but it is getting better all the time and he expects it will be all right before long. He has been up to Ingleside only twice.”

“Ethel Reese is simply crazy about him,” said Mary Vance. “She hasn’t got the sense she was born with where he is concerned. He walked home with her from the over-harbour church last prayer-meeting night and the airs she has put on since would really make you weary of life. As if a Toronto boy like Ken Ford would ever really think of a country girl like Ethel!”

Rilla flushed. It did not matter to her if Kenneth Ford walked home with Ethel Reese a dozen times — it did not! Nothing that he did mattered to her. He was ages older than she was. He chummed with Nan and Di and Faith, and looked upon her, Rilla, as a child whom he never noticed except to tease. And she detested Ethel Reese and Ethel Reese hated her — always had hated her since Walter had pummelled Dan so notoriously in Rainbow Valley days; but why need she be thought beneath Kenneth Ford's notice because she was a country girl, pray? As for Mary Vance, she was getting to be an out-and-out gossip and thought of nothing but who walked home with people!

There was a little pier on the harbour shore below the House of Dreams, and two boats were moored there. One boat was skippered by Jem Blythe, the other by Joe Milgrave, who knew all about boats and was nothing loth to let Miranda Pryor see it. They raced down the harbour and Joe's boat won. More boats were coming down from the Harbour Head and across the harbour from the western side. Everywhere there was laughter. The big white tower on Four Winds Point was overflowing with light, while its revolving beacon flashed overhead. A family from Charlottetown, relatives of the light's keeper, were summering at the light, and they were giving the party to which all the young people of Four Winds and Glen St. Mary and over-harbour had been invited. As Jem's boat swung in below the lighthouse Rilla desperately snatched off her shoes and donned her silver slippers behind Miss Oliver's screening back. A glance had told her that the rock-cut steps climbing up to the light were lined with boys, and lighted by Chinese lanterns, and she was determined she would not walk up those steps in the heavy shoes her mother had insisted on her wearing for the road. The slippers pinched abominably, but nobody would have suspected it as Rilla tripped smilingly up the steps, her soft dark eyes glowing and questioning, her colour deepening richly on her round, creamy cheeks. The very minute she reached the top of the steps an over-harbour boy asked her to dance and the next moment they were in the pavilion that had been built seaward of the lighthouse for dances. It was a delightful spot, roofed over with fir-boughs and hung with lanterns.

Beyond was the sea in a radiance that glowed and shimmered, to the left the moonlit crests and hollows of the sand-dunes, to the right the rocky shore with its inky shadows and its crystalline coves. Rilla and her partner swung in among the dancers; she drew a long breath of delight; what witching music Ned Burr of the Upper Glen was coaxing from his fiddle — it was really like the magical pipes of the old tale which compelled all who heard them to dance. How cool and fresh the gulf breeze blew; how white and wonderful the moonlight was over everything! This was life — enchanting life. Rilla felt as if her feet and her soul both had wings.

The Piper Pipes

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Rilla's first party was a triumph — or so it seemed at first. She had so many partners that she had to split her dances. Her silver slippers seemed verily to dance of themselves and though they continued to pinch her toes and blister her heels that did not interfere with her enjoyment in the least. Ethel Reese gave her a bad ten minutes by beckoning her mysteriously out of the pavilion and whispering, with a Reese-like smirk, that her dress gaped behind and that there was a stain on the flounce. Rilla rushed miserably to the room in the lighthouse which was fitted up for a temporary ladies' dressing-room, and discovered that the stain was merely a tiny grass smear and that the gap was equally tiny where a hook had pulled loose. Irene Howard fastened it up for her and gave her some over-sweet, condescending compliments. Rilla felt flattered by Irene's condescension. She was an Upper Glen girl of nineteen who seemed to like the society of the younger girls — spiteful friends said because she could queen it over them without rivalry. But Rilla thought Irene quite wonderful and loved her for her patronage. Irene was pretty and stylish; she sang divinely and spent every winter in Charlottetown taking music lessons. She had an aunt in Montreal who sent her wonderful things to wear; she was reported to have had a sad love affair — nobody knew just what, but its very mystery allured. Rilla felt that Irene's compliments crowned her evening. She ran gaily back to the pavilion and lingered for a moment in the glow of the lanterns at the entrance looking at the dancers. A momentary break in the whirling throng gave her a glimpse of Kenneth Ford standing at the other side.

Rilla's heart skipped a beat — or, if that be a physiological impossibility, she thought it did. So he was here, after all. She had concluded he was not coming — not that it mattered in the least. Would he see her? Would he take any notice of her? Of course, he wouldn't ask her

to dance — that couldn't be hoped for. He thought her just a mere child. He had called her "Spider" not three weeks ago when he had been at Ingleside one evening. She had cried about it upstairs afterwards and hated him. But her heart skipped a beat when she saw that he was edging his way round the side of the pavilion towards her. Was he coming to her — was he? — was he? — yes, he was! He was looking for her — he was here beside her — he was gazing down at her with something in his dark grey eyes that Rilla had never seen in them. Oh, it was almost too much to bear! and everything was going on as before — the dancers were spinning round, the boys who couldn't get partners were hanging about the pavilion, canoodling couples were sitting out on the rocks — nobody seemed to realize what a stupendous thing had happened.

Kenneth was a tall lad, very good looking, with a certain careless grace of bearing that somehow made all the other boys seem stiff and awkward by contrast. He was reported to be awesomely clever, with the glamour of a faraway city and a big university hanging around him. He had also the reputation of being a bit of a lady-killer. But that probably accrued to him from his possession of a laughing, velvety voice which no girl could hear without a heartbeat, and a dangerous way of listening as if she were saying something that he had longed all his life to hear.

"Is this Rilla-my-Rilla?" he asked in a low tone.

"Yeth," said Rilla, and immediately wished she could throw herself headlong down the lighthouse rock or otherwise vanish from a jeering world.

Rilla had lisped in early childhood; but she had grown out of it. Only on occasions of stress and strain did the tendency reassert itself. She hadn't lisped for a year; and now at this very moment, when she was so especially desirous of appearing grown up and sophisticated, she must go and lisp like a baby! It was too mortifying; she felt as if tears were going to come into her eyes; the next minute she would be — blubbering — yes, just blubbering — she wished Kenneth would go away — she wished he had never come. The party was spoiled. Everything had turned to dust and ashes.

And he had called her “Rilla-my-Rilla” — not “Spider” or “Kid” or “Puss,” as he had been used to call her when he took any notice whatever of her. She did not at all resent his using Walter’s pet name for her; it sounded beautifully in his low caressing tones, with just the faintest suggestion of emphasis on the “my.” It would have been so nice if she had not made a fool of herself. She dared not look up lest she should see laughter in his eyes. So she looked down; and as her lashes were very long and dark and her lids very thick and creamy, the effect was quite charming and provocative, and Kenneth reflected that Rilla Blythe was going to be the beauty of the Ingleside girls after all. He wanted to make her look up — to catch again that little, demure, questioning glance. She was the prettiest thing at the party, there was no doubt of that.

What was he saying? Rilla could hardly believe her ears.

“Can we have a dance?”

“Yes,” said Rilla. She said it with such a fierce determination not to lisp that she fairly blurted the word out. Then she writhed in spirit again. It sounded so bold — so eager — as if she were fairly jumping at him! What would he think of her? Oh, why did dreadful things like this happen, just when a girl wanted to appear at her best?

Kenneth drew her in among the dancers.

“I think this game ankle of mine is good for one hop around, at least,” he said.

“How is your ankle?” said Rilla. Oh, why couldn’t she think of something else to say? She knew he was sick of inquiries about his ankle. She had heard him say so at Ingleside — heard him tell Di he was going to wear a placard on his breast announcing to all and sundry that the ankle was improving, *etc.* And now she must go and ask this stale question again.

Kenneth was tired of inquiries about his ankle. But then he had not often been asked about it by lips with such an adorable kissable dent just above them. Perhaps that was why he answered very patiently that it was getting on well and didn’t trouble him much, if he didn’t walk or stand too long at a time.

“They tell me it will be as strong as ever in time, but I’ll have to cut football out this fall.”

They danced together and Rilla knew every girl in sight envied her. After the dance they went down the rock steps and Kenneth found a little flat and they rowed across the moonlit channel to the sandshore; they walked on the sand till Kenneth’s ankle made protest and then they sat down among the dunes. Kenneth talked to her as he had talked to Nan and Di. Rilla, overcome with a shyness she did not understand, could not talk much, and thought he would think her frightfully stupid; but in spite of this it was all very wonderful — the exquisite moonlit night, the shining sea, the tiny little wavelets swishing on the sand, the cool and freakish wind of night crooning in the stiff grasses on the crest of the dunes, the music sounding faintly and sweetly over the channel.

“‘A merry lilt o’ moonlight for mermaiden revelry,’” quoted Kenneth softly from one of Walter’s poems.

And just he and she alone together in the glamour of sound and sight! If only her slippers didn’t bite so! and if only she could talk cleverly like Miss Oliver — nay, if she could only talk as she did herself to other boys! But words would not come, she could only listen and murmur little commonplace sentences now and again. But perhaps her dreamy eyes and her dented lip and her slender throat talked eloquently for her. At any rate Kenneth seemed in no hurry to suggest going back and when they did go back supper was in progress. He found a seat for her near the window of the lighthouse kitchen and sat on the sill beside her while she ate her ices and cake. Rilla looked about her and thought how lovely her first party had been. She would never forget it. The room reechoed to laughter and jest. Beautiful young eyes sparkled and shone. From the pavilion outside came the lilt of the fiddle and the rhythmic steps of the dancers.

There was a little disturbance among a group of boys crowded about the door; a young fellow pushed through and halted on the threshold, looking about him rather sombrely. It was Jack Elliott from over-harbour — a McGill medical student, a quiet chap not much addicted to social doings. He had been invited to the party but had not been expected to come

since he had to go to Charlottetown that day and could not be back until late. Yet here he was — and he carried a folded paper in his hand.

Gertrude Oliver looked at him from her corner and shivered again. She had enjoyed the party herself, after all, for she had foregathered with a Charlottetown acquaintance who, being a stranger and much older than most of the guests, felt himself rather out of it, and had been glad to fall in with this clever girl who could talk of world doings and outside events with the zest and vigour of a man. In the pleasure of his society she had forgotten some of her misgivings of the day. Now they suddenly returned to her. What news did Jack Elliott bring? Lines from an old poem flashed unbidden into her mind—”there was a sound of revelry by night”—”Hush! Hark! A deep sound strikes like a rising knell” — why should she think of that now? Why didn’t Jack Elliott speak — if he had anything to tell? Why did he just stand there, glowering importantly?

“Ask him — ask him,” she said feverishly to Allan Daly. But somebody else had already asked him. The room grew very silent all at once. Outside the fiddler had stopped for a rest and there was silence there too. Afar off they heard the low moan of the gulf — the presage of a storm already on its way up the Atlantic. A girl’s laugh drifted up from the rocks and died away as if frightened out of existence by the sudden stillness.

“England declared war on Germany today,” said Jack Elliott slowly. “The news came by wire just as I left town.”

“God help us,” whispered Gertrude Oliver under her breath. “My dream — my dream! The first wave has broken.” She looked at Allan Daly and tried to smile.

“Is this Armageddon?” she asked.

“I am afraid so,” he said gravely.

A chorus of exclamations had arisen round them — light surprise and idle interest for the most part. Few there realized the import of the message — fewer still realized that it meant anything to them. Before long the dancing was on again and the hum of pleasure was as loud as ever. Gertrude and Allan Daly talked the news over in low, troubled tones.

Walter Blythe had turned pale and left the room. Outside he met Jem, hurrying up the rock steps.

“Have you heard the news, Jem?”

“Yes. The Piper has come. Hurrah! I knew England wouldn’t leave France in the lurch. I’ve been trying to get Captain Josiah to hoist the flag but he says it isn’t the proper caper till sunrise. Jack says they’ll be calling for volunteers tomorrow.”

“What a fuss to make over nothing,” said Mary Vance disdainfully as Jem dashed off. She was sitting out with Miller Douglas on a lobster trap which was not only an unromantic but an uncomfortable seat. But Mary and Miller were both supremely happy on it. Miller Douglas was a big, strapping, uncouth lad, who thought Mary Vance’s tongue uncommonly gifted and Mary Vance’s white eyes stars of the first magnitude; and neither of them had the least inkling why Jem Blythe wanted to hoist the lighthouse flag. “What does it matter if there’s going to be a war over there in Europe? I’m sure it doesn’t concern us.”

Walter looked at her and had one of his odd visitations of prophecy.

“Before this war is over,” he said — or something said through his lips — “every man and woman and child in Canada will feel it — you, Mary, will feel it — feel it to your heart’s core. You will weep tears of blood over it. The Piper has come — and he will pipe until every corner of the world has heard his awful and irresistible music. It will be years before the dance of death is over — years, Mary. And in those years millions of hearts will break.”

“Fancy now!” said Mary who always said that when she couldn’t think of anything else to say. She didn’t know what Walter meant but she felt uncomfortable. Walter Blythe was always saying odd things. That old Piper of his — she hadn’t heard anything about him since their playdays in Rainbow Valley — and now here he was bobbing up again. She didn’t like it, and that was the long and short of it.

“Aren’t you painting it rather strong, Walter?” asked Harvey Crawford, coming up just then. “This war won’t last for years — it’ll be over in a month or two. England will just wipe Germany off the map in no time.”

“Do you think a war for which Germany has been preparing for twenty years will be over in a few weeks?” said Walter passionately. “This isn’t a paltry struggle in a Balkan corner, Harvey. It is a death grapple. Germany comes to conquer or to die. And do you know what will happen if she conquers? Canada will be a German colony.”

“Well, I guess a few things will happen before that,” said Harvey shrugging his shoulders. “The British navy would have to be licked for one; and for another, Miller here, now, and I, we’d raise a dust, wouldn’t we, Miller? No Germans need apply for this old country, eh?”

Harvey ran down the steps laughing.

“I declare, I think all you boys talk the craziest stuff,” said Mary Vance in disgust. She got up and dragged Miller off to the rock-shore. It didn’t happen often that they had a chance for a talk together; Mary was determined that this one shouldn’t be spoiled by Walter Blythe’s silly blather about Pipers and Germans and such like absurd things. They left Walter standing alone on the rock steps, looking out over the beauty of Four Winds with brooding eyes that saw it not.

The best of the evening was over for Rilla, too. Ever since Jack Elliott’s announcement, she had sensed that Kenneth was no longer thinking about her. She felt suddenly lonely and unhappy. It was worse than if he had never noticed her at all. Was life like this — something delightful happening and then, just as you were revelling in it, slipping away from you? Rilla told herself pathetically that she felt years older than when she had left home that evening. Perhaps she did — perhaps she was. Who knows? It does not do to laugh at the pangs of youth. They are very terrible because youth has not yet learned that “this, too, will pass away.” Rilla sighed and wished she were home, in bed, crying into her pillow.

“Tired?” said Kenneth, gently but absently — oh, so absently. He really didn’t care a bit whether she were tired or not, she thought.

“Kenneth,” she ventured timidly, “you don’t think this war will matter much to us in Canada, do you?”

“Matter? Of course it will matter to the lucky fellows who will be able to take a hand. I won’t — thanks to this confounded ankle. Rotten luck, I call it.”

“I don’t see why we should fight England’s battles,” cried Rilla. “She’s quite able to fight them herself.”

“That isn’t the point. We are part of the British Empire. It’s a family affair. We’ve got to stand by each other. The worst of it is, it will be over before I can be of any use.”

“Do you mean that you would really volunteer to go if it wasn’t for your ankle? asked Rilla incredulously.

“Sure I would. You see they’ll go by thousands. Jem’ll be off, I’ll bet a cent — Walter won’t be strong enough yet, I suppose. And Jerry Meredith — he’ll go! And I was worrying about being out of football this year!”

Rilla was too startled to say anything. Jem — and Jerry! Nonsense! Why father and Mr. Meredith wouldn’t allow it. They weren’t through college. Oh, why hadn’t Jack Elliott kept his horrid news to himself?

Mark Warren came up and asked her to dance. Rilla went, knowing Kenneth didn’t care whether she went or stayed. An hour ago on the sandshore he had been looking at her as if she were the only being of any importance in the world. And now she was nobody. His thoughts were full of this Great Game which was to be played out on bloodstained fields with empires for stakes — a Game in which womenkind could have no part. Women, thought Rilla miserably, just had to sit and cry at home. But all this was foolishness. Kenneth couldn’t go — he admitted that himself — and Walter couldn’t — thank goodness for that — and Jem and Jerry would have more sense. She wouldn’t worry — she would enjoy herself. But how awkward Mark Warren was! How he bungled his steps! Why, for mercy’s sake, did boys try to dance who didn’t know the first thing about dancing; and who had feet as big as boats? There, he had bumped her into somebody! She would never dance with him again!

She danced with others, though the zest was gone out of the performance and she had begun to realize that her slippers hurt her badly. Kenneth seemed to have gone — at least nothing was to be seen of him.

Her first party was spoiled, though it had seemed so beautiful at one time. Her head ached — her toes burned. And worse was yet to come. She had gone down with some over-harbour friends to the rock-shore where they all lingered as dance after dance went on above them. It was cool and pleasant and they were tired. Rilla sat silent, taking no part in the gay conversation. She was glad when someone called down that the over-harbour boats were leaving. A laughing scramble up the lighthouse rock followed. A few couples still whirled about in the pavilion but the crowd had thinned out. Rilla looked about her for the Glen group. She could not see one of them. She ran into the lighthouse. Still, no sign of anybody. In dismay she ran to the rock steps, down which the over-harbour guests were hurrying. She could see the boats below — where was Jem's — where was Joe's?

"Why, Rilla Blythe, I thought you'd be gone home long ago," said Mary Vance, who was waving her scarf at a boat skimming up the channel, skippered by Miller Douglas.

"Where are the rest?" gasped Rilla.

"Why, they're gone — Jem went an hour ago — Una had a headache. And the rest went with Joe about fifteen minutes ago. See — they're just going around Birch Point. I didn't go because it's getting rough and I knew I'd be seasick. I don't mind walking home from here. It's only a mile and a half. I s'posed you'd gone. Where were you?"

"Down on the rocks with Jem and Mollie Crawford. Oh, why didn't they look for me?"

"They did — but you couldn't be found. Then they concluded you must have gone in the other boat. Don't worry. You can stay all night with me and we'll 'phone up to Ingleside where you are."

Rilla realized that there was nothing else to do. Her lips trembled and tears came into her eyes. She blinked savagely — she would not let Mary Vance see her crying. But to be forgotten like this! To think nobody had thought it worth while to make sure where she was — not even Walter. Then she had a sudden dismayed recollection.

"My shoes," she exclaimed. "I left them in the boat."

“Well, I never,” said Mary. “You’re the most thoughtless kid I ever saw. You’ll have to ask Hazel Lewison to lend you a pair of shoes.”

“I won’t.” cried Rilla, who didn’t like the said Hazel. “I’ll go barefoot first.”

Mary shrugged her shoulders.

“Just as you like. Pride must suffer pain. It’ll teach you to be more careful. Well, let’s hike.”

Accordingly they hiked. But to “hike” along a deep-rutted, pebbly lane in frail, silver-hued slippers with high French heels, is not an exhilarating performance. Rilla managed to limp and totter along until they reached the harbour road; but she could go no farther in those detestable slippers. She took them and her dear silk stockings off and started barefoot. That was not pleasant either; her feet were very tender and the pebbles and ruts of the road hurt them. Her blistered heels smarted. But physical pain was almost forgotten in the sting of humiliation. This was a nice predicament! If Kenneth Ford could see her now, limping along like a little girl with a stone bruise! Oh, what a horrid way for her lovely party to end! She just had to cry — it was too terrible. Nobody cared for her — nobody bothered about her at all. Well, if she caught cold from walking home barefoot on a dew-wet road and went into a decline perhaps they would be sorry. She furtively wiped her tears away with her scarf — handkerchiefs seemed to have vanished like shoes! — but she could not help sniffing. Worse and worse!

“You’ve got a cold, I see,” said Mary. “You ought to have known you would, sitting down in the wind on those rocks. Your mother won’t let you go out again in a hurry I can tell you. It’s certainly been something of a party. The Lewisons know how to do things, I’ll say that for them, though Hazel Lewison is no choice of mine. My, how black she looked when she saw you dancing with Ken Ford. And so did that little hussy of an Ethel Reese. What a flirt he is!”

“I don’t think he’s a flirt,” said Rilla as defiantly as two desperate sniffs would let her.

“You’ll know more about men when you’re as old as I am,” said Mary patronizingly. “Mind you, it doesn’t do to believe all they tell you. Don’t let Ken Ford think that all he has to do to get you on a string is to drop his handkerchief. Have more spirit than that, child.”

To be thus hectored and patronized by Mary Vance was unendurable! And it was unendurable to walk on stony roads with blistered heels and bare feet! And it was unendurable to be crying and have no handkerchief and not to be able to stop crying!

“I’m not thinking” — sniff—”about Kenneth” — sniff—”Ford” — two sniffs—”at all,” cried tortured Rilla.

“There’s no need to fly off the handle, child. You ought to be willing to take advice from older people. I saw how you slipped over to the sands with Ken and stayed there ever so long with him. Your mother wouldn’t like it if she knew.”

“I’ll tell my mother all about it — and Miss Oliver — and Walter,” Rilla gasped between sniffs. “You sat for hours with Miller Douglas on that lobster trap, Mary Vance! What would Mrs. Elliott say to that if she knew?”

“Oh, I’m not going to quarrel with you,” said Mary, suddenly retreating to high and lofty ground. “All I say is, you should wait until you’re grownup before you do things like that.”

Rilla gave up trying to hide the fact that she was crying. Everything was spoiled — even that beautiful, dreamy, romantic, moonlit hour with Kenneth on the sands was vulgarized and cheapened. She loathed Mary Vance.

“Why, whatever’s wrong?” cried mystified Mary. “What are you crying for?”

“My feet — hurt so—” sobbed Rilla clinging to the last shred of her pride. It was less humiliating to admit crying because of your feet than because — because somebody had been amusing himself with you, and your friends had forgotten you, and other people patronized you.

“I daresay they do,” said Mary, not unkindly. “Never mind. I know where there’s a pot of goose-grease in Cornelia’s tidy pantry and it beats

all the fancy cold creams in the world. I'll put some on your heels before you go to bed."

Goose-grease on your heels! So this was what your first party and your first beau and your first moonlit romance ended in!

Rilla gave over crying in sheer disgust at the futility of tears and went to sleep in Mary Vance's bed in the calm of despair. Outside, the dawn came greyly in on wings of storm; Captain Josiah, true to his word, ran up the Union Jack at the Four Winds Light and it streamed on the fierce wind against the clouded sky like a gallant unquenchable beacon.

“The Sound of A Going”

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Rilla ran down through the sunlit glory of the maple grove behind Ingleside, to her favourite nook in Rainbow Valley. She sat down on a green-mossed stone among the fern, propped her chin on her hands and stared unseeingly at the dazzling blue sky of the August afternoon — so blue, so peaceful, so unchanged, just as it had arched over the valley in the mellow days of late summer ever since she could remember.

She wanted to be alone — to think things out — to adjust herself, if it were possible, to the new world into which she seemed to have been transplanted with a suddenness and completeness that left her half bewildered as to her own identity. Was she — could she be — the same Rilla Blythe who had danced at Four Winds Light six days ago — only six days ago? It seemed to Rilla that she had lived as much in those six days as in all her previous life — and if it be true that we should count time by heart-throbs she had. That evening, with its hopes and fears and triumphs and humiliations, seemed like ancient history now. Could she really ever have cried just because she had been forgotten and had to walk home with Mary Vance? Ah, thought Rilla sadly, how trivial and absurd such a cause of tears now appeared to her. She could cry now with a right good will — but she would not — she must not. What was it mother had said, looking, with her white lips and stricken eyes, as Rilla had never seen her mother look before,

“When our women fail in courage,
Shall our men be fearless still?”

Yes, that was it. She must be brave — like mother — and Nan — and Faith — Faith, who had cried with flashing eyes, “Oh, if I were only a man, to go too!” Only, when her eyes ached and her throat burned like this she had to hide herself in Rainbow Valley for a little, just to think things out and

remember that she wasn't a child any longer — she was grownup and women had to face things like this. But it was — nice — to get away alone now and then, where nobody could see her and where she needn't feel that people thought her a little coward if some tears came in spite of her.

How sweet and woodsey the ferns smelled! How softly the great feathery boughs of the firs waved and murmured over her! How elfinly rang the bells of the "Tree Lovers" — just a tinkle now and then as the breeze swept by! How purple and elusive the haze where incense was being offered on many an altar of the hills! How the maple leaves whitened in the wind until the grove seemed covered with pale silvery blossoms! Everything was just the same as she had seen it hundreds of times; and yet the whole face of the world seemed changed.

"How wicked I was to wish that something dramatic would happen!" she thought. "Oh, if we could only have those dear, monotonous, pleasant days back again! I would never, never grumble about them again."

Rilla's world had tumbled to pieces the very day after the party. As they lingered around the dinner table at Ingleside, talking of the war, the telephone had rung. It was a long-distance call from Charlottetown for Jem. When he had finished talking he hung up the receiver and turned around, with a flushed face and glowing eyes. Before he had said a word his mother and Nan and Di had turned pale. As for Rilla, for the first time in her life she felt that every one must hear her heart beating and that something had clutched at her throat.

"They are calling for volunteers in town, father," said Jem. "Scores have joined up already. I'm going in tonight to enlist."

"Oh — Little Jem," cried Mrs. Blythe brokenly. She had not called him that for many years — not since the day he had rebelled against it. "Oh — no — no — Little Jem."

"I must, mother. I'm right — am I not, father?" said Jem.

Dr. Blythe had risen. He was very pale, too, and his voice was husky. But he did not hesitate.

"Yes, Jem, yes — if you feel that way, yes—"

Mrs. Blythe covered her face. Walter stared moodily at his plate. Nan and Di clasped each others' hands. Shirley tried to look unconcerned. Susan sat as if paralysed, her piece of pie half-eaten on her plate. Susan never did finish that piece of pie — a fact which bore eloquent testimony to the upheaval in her inner woman for Susan considered it a cardinal offence against civilized society to begin to eat anything and not finish it. That was wilful waste, hence to the contrary notwithstanding.

Jem turned to the phone again. "I must ring the manse. Jerry will want to go, too."

At this Nan had cried out "Oh!" as if a knife had been thrust into her, and rushed from the room. Di followed her. Rilla turned to Walter for comfort but Walter was lost to her in some reverie she could not share.

"All right," Jem was saying, as coolly as if he were arranging the details of a picnic. "I thought you would — yes, tonight — the seven o'clock — meet me at the station. So long."

"Mrs. Dr. dear," said Susan. "I wish you would wake me up. Am I dreaming — or am I awake? Does that blessed boy realize what he is saying? Does he mean that he is going to enlist as a soldier? You do not mean to tell me that they want children like him! It is an outrage. Surely you and the doctor will not permit it."

"We can't stop him," said Mrs. Blythe, chokingly. "Oh, Gilbert!"

Dr. Blythe came up behind his wife and took her hand gently, looking down into the sweet grey eyes that he had only once before seen filled with such imploring anguish as now. They both thought of that other time — the day years ago in the House of Dreams when little Joyce had died.

"Would you have him stay, Anne — when the others are going — when he thinks it his duty — would you have him so selfish and small-souled?"

"No — no! But — oh — our firstborn son — he's only a lad — Gilbert — I'll try to be brave after a while — just now I can't. It's all come so suddenly. Give me time."

The doctor and his wife went out of the room. Jem had gone — Walter had gone — Shirley got up to go. Rilla and Susan remained staring at each other across the deserted table. Rilla had not yet cried — she was too

stunned for tears. Then she saw that Susan was crying — Susan, whom she had never seen shed a tear before.

“Oh, Susan, will he really go?” she asked.

“It — it — it is just ridiculous, that is what it is,” said Susan.

She wiped away her tears, gulped resolutely and got up.

“I am going to wash the dishes. That has to be done, even if everybody has gone crazy. There now, dearie, do not you cry. Jem will go, most likely — but the war will be over long before he gets anywhere near it. Let us take a brace and not worry your poor mother.”

“In the Enterprise today it was reported that Lord Kitchener says the war will last three years,” said Rilla dubiously.

“I am not acquainted with Lord Kitchener,” said Susan, composedly, “but I dare say he makes mistakes as often as other people. Your father says it will be over in a few months and I have as much faith in his opinion as I have in Lord Anybody’s. So just let us be calm and trust in the Almighty and get this place tidied up. I am done with crying which is a waste of time and discourages everybody.”

Jem and Jerry went to Charlottetown that night and two days later they came back in khaki. The Glen hummed with excitement over it. Life at Ingleside had suddenly become a tense, strained, thrilling thing. Mrs. Blythe and Nan were brave and smiling and wonderful. Already Mrs. Blythe and Miss Cornelia were organizing a Red Cross. The doctor and Mr. Meredith were rounding up the men for a Patriotic Society. Rilla, after the first shock, reacted to the romance of it all, in spite of her heartache. Jem certainly looked magnificent in his uniform. It was splendid to think of the lads of Canada answering so speedily and fearlessly and uncalculatingly to the call of their country. Rilla carried her head high among the girls whose brothers had not so responded. In her diary she wrote:

“He goes to do what I had done
Had Douglas’s daughter been his son,”

and was sure she meant it. If she were a boy of course she would go, too! She hadn't the least doubt of that.

She wondered if it was very dreadful of her to feel glad that Walter hadn't got strong as soon as they had wished after the fever.

"I couldn't bear to have Walter go," she wrote. "I love Jem ever so much but Walter means more to me than anyone in the world and I would die if he had to go. He seems so changed these days. He hardly ever talks to me. I suppose he wants to go, too, and feels badly because he can't. He doesn't go about with Jem and Jerry at all. I shall never forget Susan's face when Jem came home in his khaki. It worked and twisted as if she were going to cry, but all she said was, 'You look almost like a man in that, Jem.' Jem laughed. He never minds because Susan thinks him just a child still. Everybody seems busy but me. I wish there was something I could do but there doesn't seem to be anything. Mother and Nan and Di are busy all the time and I just wander about like a lonely ghost. What hurts me terribly, though, is that mother's smiles, and Nan's, just seem put on from the outside. Mother's eyes never laugh now. It makes me feel that I shouldn't laugh either — that it's wicked to feel laughy. And it's so hard for me to keep from laughing, even if Jem is going to be a soldier. But when I laugh I don't enjoy it either, as I used to do. There's something behind it all that keeps hurting me — especially when I wake up in the night. Then I cry because I am afraid that Kitchener of Khartoum is right and the war will last for years and Jem may be — but no, I won't write it. It would make me feel as if it were really going to happen. The other day Nan said, 'Nothing can ever be quite the same for any of us again.' It made me feel rebellious. Why shouldn't things be the same again — when everything is over and Jem and Jerry are back? We'll all be happy and jolly again and these days will seem just like a bad dream.

"The coming of the mail is the most exciting event of every day now. Father just snatches the paper — I never saw father snatch before — and the rest of us crowd round and look at the headlines over his shoulder. Susan vows she does not and will not believe a word the papers say but she always comes to the kitchen door, and listens and then goes back, shaking

her head. She is terribly indignant all the time, but she cooks up all the things Jem likes especially, and she did not make a single bit of fuss when she found Monday asleep on the spare-room bed yesterday right on top of Mrs. Rachel Lynde's apple-leaf spread. 'The Almighty only knows where your master will be having to sleep before long, you poor dumb beast,' she said as she put him quite gently out. But she never relents towards Doc. She says the minute he saw Jem in khaki he turned into Mr. Hyde then and there and she thinks that ought to be proof enough of what he really is. Susan is funny, but she is an old dear. Shirley says she is one half angel and the other half good cook. But then Shirley is the only one of us she never scolds.

"Faith Meredith is wonderful. I think she and Jem are really engaged now. She goes about with a shining light in her eyes, but her smiles are a little stiff and starched, just like mother's. I wonder if I could be as brave as she is if I had a lover and he was going to the war. It is bad enough when it is your brother. Bruce Meredith cried all night, Mrs. Meredith says, when he heard Jem and Jerry were going. And he wanted to know if the 'K of K.' his father talked about was the King of Kings. He is the dearest kiddy. I just love him — though I don't really care much for children. I don't like babies one bit — though when I say so people look at me as if I had said something perfectly shocking. Well, I don't, and I've got to be honest about it. I don't mind looking at a nice clean baby if somebody else holds it — but I wouldn't touch it for anything and I don't feel a single real spark of interest in it. Gertrude Oliver says she just feels the same. (She is the most honest person I know. She never pretends anything.) She says babies bore her until they are old enough to talk and then she likes them — but still a good ways off. Mother and Nan and Di all adore babies and seem to think I'm unnatural because I don't.

"I haven't seen Kenneth since the night of the party. He was here one evening after Jem came back but I happened to be away. I don't think he mentioned me at all — at least nobody told me he did and I was determined I wouldn't ask — but I don't care in the least. All that matters absolutely nothing to me now. The only thing that does matter is that Jem

has volunteered for active service and will be going to Valcartier in a few more days — my big, splendid brother Jem. Oh, I'm so proud of him!

"I suppose Kenneth would enlist too if it weren't for his ankle. I think that is quite providential. He is his mother's only son and how dreadful she would feel if he went. Only sons should never think of going!"

Walter came wandering through the valley as Rilla sat there, with his head bent and his hands clasped behind him. When he saw Rilla he turned abruptly away; then as abruptly he turned and came back to her.

"Rilla-my-Rilla, what are you thinking of?"

"Everything is so changed, Walter," said Rilla wistfully. "Even you — you're changed. A week ago we were all so happy — and — and — now I just can't find myself at all. I'm lost."

Walter sat down on a neighbouring stone and took Rilla's little appealing hand.

"I'm afraid our old world has come to an end, Rilla. We've got to face that fact."

"It's so terrible to think of Jem," pleaded Rilla. "Sometimes I forget for a little while what it really means and feel excited and proud — and then it comes over me again like a cold wind."

"I envy Jem!" said Walter moodily.

"Envy Jem! Oh, Walter you — you don't want to go too."

"No," said Walter, gazing straight before him down the emerald vistas of the valley, "no, I don't want to go. That's just the trouble. Rilla, I'm afraid to go. I'm a coward."

"You're not!" Rilla burst out angrily. "Why, anybody would be afraid to go. You might be — why, you might be killed."

"I wouldn't mind that if it didn't hurt," muttered Walter. "I don't think I'm afraid of death itself — it's of the pain that might come before death — it wouldn't be so bad to die and have it over — but to keep on dying! Rilla, I've always been afraid of pain — you know that. I can't help it — I shudder when I think of the possibility of being mangled or — or blinded. Rilla, I cannot face that thought. To be blind — never to see the beauty of the world again — moonlight on Four Winds — the stars twinkling

through the fir-trees — mist on the gulf. I ought to go — I ought to want to go — but I don't — I hate the thought of it — I'm ashamed — ashamed."

"But, Walter, you couldn't go anyhow," said Rilla piteously. She was sick with a new terror that Walter would go after all. "You're not strong enough."

"I am. I've felt as fit as ever I did this last month. I'd pass any examination — I know it. Everybody thinks I'm not strong yet — and I'm skulking behind that belief. I — I should have been a girl," Walter concluded in a burst of passionate bitterness.

"Even if you were strong enough, you oughtn't to go," sobbed Rilla. "What would mother do? She's breaking her heart over Jem. It would kill her to see you both go."

"Oh, I'm not going — don't worry. I tell you I'm afraid to go — afraid. I don't mince the matter to myself. It's a relief to own up even to you, Rilla. I wouldn't confess it to anybody else — Nan and Di would despise me. But I hate the whole thing — the horror, the pain, the ugliness. War isn't a khaki uniform or a drill parade — everything I've read in old histories haunts me. I lie awake at night and see things that have happened — see the blood and filth and misery of it all. And a bayonet charge! If I could face the other things I could never face that. It turns me sick to think of it — sicker even to think of giving it than receiving it — to think of thrusting a bayonet through another man." Walter writhed and shuddered. "I think of these things all the time — and it doesn't seem to me that Jem and Jerry ever think of them. They laugh and talk about 'potting Huns'! But it maddens me to see them in the khaki. And they think I'm grumpy because I'm not fit to go."

Walter laughed bitterly. "It is not a nice thing to feel yourself a coward." But Rilla got her arms about him and cuddled her head on his shoulder. She was so glad he didn't want to go — for just one minute she had been horribly frightened. And it was so nice to have Walter confiding his troubles to her — to her, not Di. She didn't feel so lonely and superfluous any longer.

“Don’t you despise me, Rilla-my-Rilla?” asked Walter wistfully. Somehow, it hurt him to think Rilla might despise him — hurt him as much as if it had been Di. He realized suddenly how very fond he was of this adoring kid sister with her appealing eyes and troubled, girlish face.

“No, I don’t. Why, Walter, hundreds of people feel just as you do. You know what that verse of Shakespeare in the old Fifth Reader says—’the brave man is not he who feels no fear.’”

“No — but it is ‘he whose noble soul its fear subdues.’ I don’t do that. We can’t gloss it over, Rilla. I’m a coward.”

“You’re not. Think of how you fought Dan Reese long ago.”

“One spurt of courage isn’t enough for a lifetime.”

“Walter, one time I heard father say that the trouble with you was a sensitive nature and a vivid imagination. You feel things before they really come — feel them all alone when there isn’t anything to help you bear them — to take away from them. It isn’t anything to be ashamed of. When you and Jem got your hands burned when the grass was fired on the sandhills two years ago Jem made twice the fuss over the pain that you did. As for this horrid old war, there’ll be plenty to go without you. It won’t last long.”

“I wish I could believe it. Well, it’s supertime, Rilla. You’d better run. I don’t want anything.”

“Neither do I. I couldn’t eat a mouthful. Let me stay here with you, Walter. It’s such a comfort to talk things over with someone. The rest all think that I’m too much of a baby to understand.”

So they two sat there in the old valley until the evening star shone through a pale-grey, gauzy cloud over the maple grove, and a fragrant dewy darkness filled their little sylvan dell. It was one of the evenings Rilla was to treasure in remembrance all her life — the first one on which Walter had ever talked to her as if she were a woman and not a child. They comforted and strengthened each other. Walter felt, for the time being at least, that it was not such a despicable thing after all to dread the horror of war; and Rilla was glad to be made the confidante of his struggles — to sympathize with and encourage him. She was of importance to somebody.

When they went back to Ingleside they found callers sitting on the veranda. Mr. and Mrs. Meredith had come over from the manse, and Mr. and Mrs. Norman Douglas had come up from the farm. Cousin Sophia was there also, sitting with Susan in the shadowy background. Mrs. Blythe and Nan and Di were away, but Dr. Blythe was home and so was Dr. Jekyll, sitting in golden majesty on the top step. And of course they were all talking of the war, except Dr. Jekyll who kept his own counsel and looked contempt as only a cat can. When two people foregathered in those days they talked of the war; and old Highland Sandy of the Harbour Head talked of it when he was alone and hurled anathemas at the Kaiser across all the acres of his farm. Walter slipped away, not caring to see or be seen, but Rilla sat down on the steps, where the garden mint was dewy and pungent. It was a very calm evening with a dim, golden afterlight irradiating the glen. She felt happier than at any time in the dreadful week that had passed. She was no longer haunted by the fear that Walter would go.

"I'd go myself if I was twenty years younger," Norman Douglas was shouting. Norman always shouted when he was excited. "I'd show the Kaiser a thing or two! Did I ever say there wasn't a hell? Of course there's a hell — dozens of hells — hundreds of hells — where the Kaiser and all his brood are bound for."

"I knew this war was coming," said Mrs. Norman triumphantly. "I saw it coming right along. I could have told all those stupid Englishmen what was ahead of them. I told you, John Meredith, years ago what the Kaiser was up to but you wouldn't believe it. You said he would never plunge the world in war. Who was right about the Kaiser, John? You — or I? Tell me that."

"You were, I admit," said Mr. Meredith.

"It's too late to admit it now," said Mrs. Norman, shaking her head, as if to intimate that if John Meredith had admitted it sooner there might have been no war.

"Thank God, England's navy is ready," said the doctor.

"Amen to that," nodded Mrs. Norman. "Bat-blind as most of them were somebody had foresight enough to see to that."

“Maybe England’ll manage not to get into trouble over it,” said Cousin Sophia plaintively. “I dunno. But I’m much afraid.”

“One would suppose that England was in trouble over it already, up to her neck, Sophia Crawford,” said Susan. “But your ways of thinking are beyond me and always were. It is my opinion that the British Navy will settle Germany in a jiffy and that we are all getting worked up over nothing.”

Susan spat out the words as if she wanted to convince herself more than anybody else. She had her little store of homely philosophies to guide her through life, but she had nothing to buckler her against the thunderbolts of the week that had just passed. What had an honest, hardworking, Presbyterian old maid of Glen St. Mary to do with a war thousands of miles away? Susan felt that it was indecent that she should have to be disturbed by it.

“The British army will settle Germany,” shouted Norman. “Just wait till it gets into line and the Kaiser will find that real war is a different thing from parading round Berlin with your moustaches cocked up.”

“Britain hasn’t got an army,” said Mrs. Norman emphatically. “You needn’t glare at me, Norman. Glaring won’t make soldiers out of timothy stalks. A hundred thousand men will just be a mouthful for Germany’s millions.”

“There’ll be some tough chewing in the mouthful, I reckon,” persisted Norman valiantly. “Germany’ll break her teeth on it. Don’t you tell me one Britisher isn’t a match for ten foreigners. I could polish off a dozen of ‘em myself with both hands tied behind my back!”

“I am told,” said Susan, “that old Mr. Pryor does not believe in this war. I am told that he says England went into it just because she was jealous of Germany and that she did not really care in the least what happened to Belgium.”

“I believe he’s been talking some such rot,” said Norman. “I haven’t heard him. When I do, Whiskers-on-the-moon won’t know what happened to him. That precious relative of mine, Kitty Alec, holds forth to the same effect, I understand. Not before me, though — somehow, folks don’t

indulge in that kind of conversation in my presence. Lord love you, they've a kind of presentiment, so to speak, that it wouldn't be healthy for their complaint."

"I am much afraid that this war has been sent as a punishment for our sins," said Cousin Sophia, unclasping her pale hands from her lap and reclasping them solemnly over her stomach. "'The world is very evil — the times are waxing late.'"

"Parson here's got something of the same idea," chuckled Norman. "Haven't you, Parson? That's why you preached t'other night on the text 'Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins.' I didn't agree with you — wanted to get up in the pew and shout out that there wasn't a word of sense in what you were saying, but Ellen, here, she held me down. I never have any fun sassing parsons since I got married."

"Without shedding of blood there is no anything," said Mr. Meredith, in the gentle dreamy way which had an unexpected trick of convincing his hearers. "Everything, it seems to me, has to be purchased by self-sacrifice. Our race has marked every step of its painful ascent with blood. And now torrents of it must flow again. No, Mrs. Crawford, I don't think the war has been sent as a punishment for sin. I think it is the price humanity must pay for some blessing — some advance great enough to be worth the price — which we may not live to see but which our children's children will inherit."

"If Jerry is killed will you feel so fine about it?" demanded Norman, who had been saying things like that all his life and never could be made to see any reason why he shouldn't. "Now, never mind kicking me in the shins, Ellen. I want to see if Parson meant what he said or if it was just a pulpit frill."

Mr. Meredith's face quivered. He had had a terrible hour alone in his study on the night Jem and Jerry had gone to town. But he answered quietly.

"Whatever I felt, it could not alter my belief — my assurance that a country whose sons are ready to lay down their lives in her defence will win a new vision because of their sacrifice."

“You do mean it, Parson. I can always tell when people mean what they say. It’s a gift that was born in me. Makes me a terror to most parsons, that! But I’ve never caught you yet saying anything you didn’t mean. I’m always hoping I will — that’s what reconciles me to going to church. It’d be such a comfort to me — such a weapon to batter Ellen here with when she tries to civilize me. Well, I’m off over the road to see Ab. Crawford a minute. The gods be good to you all.”

“The old pagan!” muttered Susan, as Norman strode away. She did not care if Ellen Douglas did hear her. Susan could never understand why fire did not descend from heaven upon Norman Douglas when he insulted ministers the way he did. But the astonishing thing was Mr. Meredith seemed really to like his brother-in-law.

Rilla wished they would talk of something besides war. She had heard nothing else for a week and she was really a little tired of it. Now that she was relieved from her haunting fear that Walter would want to go it made her quite impatient. But she supposed — with a sigh — that there would be three or four months of it yet.

Susan, Rilla, and Dog Monday Make A Resolution

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The big livingroom at Ingleside was snowed over with drifts of white cotton. Word had come from Red Cross headquarters that sheets and bandages would be required. Nan and Di and Rilla were hard at work. Mrs. Blythe and Susan were upstairs in the boys' room, engaged in a more personal task. With dry, anguished eyes they were packing up Jem's belongings. He must leave for Valcartier the next morning. They had been expecting the word but it was none the less dreadful when it came.

Rilla was basting the hem of a sheet for the first time in her life. When the word had come that Jem must go she had her cry out among the pines in Rainbow Valley and then she had gone to her mother.

"Mother, I want to do something. I'm only a girl — I can't do anything to win the war — but I must do something to help at home."

"The cotton has come up for the sheets," said Mrs. Blythe. "You can help Nan and Di make them up. And Rilla, don't you think you could organize a Junior Red Cross among the young girls? I think they would like it better and do better work by themselves than if mixed up with the older people."

"But, mother — I've never done anything like that."

"We will all have to do a great many things in the months ahead of us that we have never done before, Rilla."

"Well" — Rilla took the plunge—"I'll try, mother — if you'll tell me how to begin. I have been thinking it all over and I have decided that I must be as brave and heroic and unselfish as I can possibly be."

Mrs. Blythe did not smile at Rilla's italics. Perhaps she did not feel like smiling or perhaps she detected a real grain of serious purpose behind Rilla's romantic pose. So here was Rilla hemming sheets and organizing a

Junior Red Cross in her thoughts as she hemmed; moreover, she was enjoying it — the organizing that is, not the hemming. It was interesting and Rilla discovered a certain aptitude in herself for it that surprised her. Who would be president? Not she. The older girls would not like that. Irene Howard? No, somehow Irene was not quite as popular as she deserved to be. Marjorie Drew? No, Marjorie hadn't enough backbone. She was too prone to agree with the last speaker. Betty Mead — calm, capable, tactful Betty — the very one! And Una Meredith for treasurer; and, if they were very insistent, they might make her, Rilla, secretary. As for the various committees, they must be chosen after the Juniors were organized, but Rilla knew just who should be put on which. They would meet around — and there must be no eats — Rilla knew she would have a pitched battle with Olive Kirk over that — and everything should be strictly businesslike and constitutional. Her minute book should be covered in white with a Red Cross on the cover — and wouldn't it be nice to have some kind of uniform which they could all wear at the concerts they would have to get up to raise money — something simple but smart?

“You have basted the top hem of that sheet on one side and the bottom hem on the other,” said Di.

Rilla picked out her stitches and reflected that she hated sewing. Running the Junior Reds would be much more interesting.

Mrs. Blythe was saying upstairs, “Susan, do you remember that first day Jem lifted up his little arms to me and called me ‘mo’er’ — the very first word he ever tried to say?”

“You could not mention anything about that blessed baby that I do not and will not remember till my dying day,” said Susan drearily.

“Susan, I keep thinking today of once when he cried for me in the night. He was just a few months old. Gilbert didn't want me to go to him — he said the child was well and warm and that it would be fostering bad habits in him. But I went — and took him up — I can feel that tight clinging of his little arms round my neck yet. Susan, if I hadn't gone that night, twenty-one years ago, and taken my baby up when he cried for me I couldn't face tomorrow morning.”

“I do not know how we are going to face it anyhow, Mrs. Dr. dear. But do not tell me that it will be the final farewell. He will be back on leave before he goes overseas, will he not?”

“We hope so but we are not very sure. I am making up my mind that he will not, so that there will be no disappointment to bear. Susan, I am determined that I will send my boy off tomorrow with a smile. He shall not carry away with him the remembrance of a weak mother who had not the courage to send when he had the courage to go. I hope none of us will cry.”

“I am not going to cry, Mrs. Dr. dear, and that you may tie to, but whether I shall manage to smile or not will be as Providence ordains and as the pit of my stomach feels. Have you room there for this fruitcake? And the shortbread? And the mince-pie? That blessed boy shall not starve, whether they have anything to eat in that Quebec place or not. Everything seems to be changing all at once, does it not? Even the old cat at the manse has passed away. He breathed his last at a quarter to ten last night and Bruce is quite heartbroken, they tell me.”

“It’s time that pussy went where good cats go. He must be at least fifteen years old. He has seemed so lonely since Aunt Martha died.”

“I should not have lamented, Mrs. Dr. dear, if that Hyde-beast had died also. He has been Mr. Hyde most of the time since Jem came home in khaki, and that has a meaning I will maintain. I do not know what Monday will do when Jem is gone. The creature just goes about with a human look in his eyes that takes all the good out of me when I see it. Ellen West used to be always railing at the Kaiser and we thought her crazy, but now I see that there was a method in her madness. This tray is packed, Mrs. Dr. dear, and I will go down and put in my best licks preparing supper. I wish I knew when I would cook another supper for Jem but such things are hidden from our eyes.”

Jem Blythe and Jerry Meredith left next morning. It was a dull day, threatening rain, and the clouds lay in heavy grey rolls over the sky; but almost everybody in the Glen and Four Winds and Harbour Head and Upper Glen and over-harbour — except Whiskers-on-the-moon — was

there to see them off. The Blythe family and the Meredith family were all smiling. Even Susan, as Providence did ordain, wore a smile, though the effect was somewhat more painful than tears would have been. Faith and Nan were very pale and very gallant. Rilla thought she would get on very well if something in her throat didn't choke her, and if her lips didn't take such spells of trembling. Dog Monday was there, too. Jem had tried to say goodbye to him at Ingleside but Monday implored so eloquently that Jem relented and let him go to the station. He kept close to Jem's legs and watched every movement of his beloved master.

"I can't bear that dog's eyes," said Mrs. Meredith.

"The beast has more sense than most humans," said Mary Vance. "Well, did we any of us ever think we'd live to see this day? I bawled all night to think of Jem and Jerry going like this. I think they're plumb deranged. Miller got a maggot in his head about going but I soon talked him out of it — likewise his aunt said a few touching things. For once in our lives Kitty Alec and I agree. It's a miracle that isn't likely to happen again. There's Ken, Rilla."

Rilla knew Kenneth was there. She had been acutely conscious of it from the moment he had sprung from Leo West's buggy. Now he came up to her smiling.

"Doing the brave-smiling-sister-stunt, I see. What a crowd for the Glen to muster! Well, I'm off home in a few days myself."

A queer little wind of desolation that even Jem's going had not caused blew over Rilla's spirit.

"Why? You have another month of vacation."

"Yes — but I can't hang around Four Winds and enjoy myself when the world's on fire like this. It's me for little old Toronto where I'll find some way of helping in spite of this bally ankle. I'm not looking at Jem and Jerry — makes me too sick with envy. You girls are great — no crying, no grim endurance. The boys'll go off with a good taste in their mouths. I hope Persis and mother will be as game when my turn comes."

"Oh, Kenneth — the war will be over before your turn cometh."

There! She had lisped again. Another great moment of life spoiled! Well, it was her fate. And anyhow, nothing mattered. Kenneth was off already — he was talking to Ethel Reese, who was dressed, at seven in the morning, in the gown she had worn to the dance, and was crying. What on earth had Ethel to cry about? None of the Reeses were in khaki. Rilla wanted to cry, too — but she would not. What was that horrid old Mrs. Drew saying to mother, in that melancholy whine of hers? “I don’t know how you can stand this, Mrs. Blythe. I couldn’t if it was my pore boy.” And mother — oh, mother could always be depended on! How her grey eyes flashed in her pale face. “It might have been worse, Mrs. Drew. I might have had to urge him to go.” Mrs. Drew did not understand but Rilla did. She flung up her head. Her brother did not have to be urged to go.

Rilla found herself standing alone and listening to disconnected scraps of talk as people walked up and down past her.

“I told Mark to wait and see if they asked for a second lot of men. If they did I’d let him go — but they won’t,” said Mrs. Palmer Burr.

“I think I’ll have it made with a crush girdle of velvet,” said Bessie Clow.

“I’m frightened to look at my husband’s face for fear I’ll see in it that he wants to go too,” said a little over-harbour bride.

“I’m scared stiff,” said whimsical Mrs. Jim Howard. “I’m scared Jim will enlist — and I’m scared he won’t.”

“The war will be over by Christmas,” said Joe Vickers.

“Let them European nations fight it out between them,” said Abner Reese.

“When he was a boy I gave him many a good trouncing,” shouted Norman Douglas, who seemed to be referring to some one high in military circles in Charlottetown. “Yes, sir, I walloped him well, big gun as he is now.”

“The existence of the British Empire is at stake,” said the Methodist minister.

“There’s certainly something about uniforms,” sighed Irene Howard.

“It’s a commercial war when all is said and done and not worth one drop of good Canadian blood,” said a stranger from the shore hotel.

“The Blythe family are taking it easy,” said Kate Drew.

“Them young fools are just going for adventure,” growled Nathan Crawford.

“I have absolute confidence in Kitchener,” said the over-harbour doctor.

In these ten minutes Rilla passed through a dizzying succession of anger, laughter, contempt, depression and inspiration. Oh, people were — funny! How little they understood. “Taking it easy,” indeed — when even Susan hadn’t slept a wink all night! Kate Drew always was a minx.

Rilla felt as if she were in some fantastic nightmare. Were these the people who, three weeks ago, were talking of crops and prices and local gossip?

There — the train was coming — mother was holding Jem’s hand — Dog Monday was licking it — everybody was saying goodbye — the train was in! Jem kissed Faith before everybody — old Mrs. Drew whooped hysterically — the men, led by Kenneth, cheered — Rilla felt Jem seize her hand — “Goodbye, Spider” — somebody kissed her cheek — she believed it was Jerry but never was sure — they were off — the train was pulling out — Jem and Jerry were waving to everybody — everybody was waving back — mother and Nan were smiling still, but as if they had just forgotten to take the smile off — Monday was howling dismally and being forcibly restrained by the Methodist minister from tearing after the train — Susan was waving her best bonnet and hurrahing like a man — had she gone crazy? — the train rounded a curve. They had gone.

Rilla came to herself with a gasp. There was a sudden quiet. Nothing to do now but to go home — and wait. The doctor and Mrs. Blythe walked off together — so did Nan and Faith — so did John Meredith and Rosemary. Walter and Una and Shirley and Di and Carl and Rilla went in a group. Susan had put her bonnet back on her head, hindside foremost, and stalked grimly off alone. Nobody missed Dog Monday at first. When they did Shirley went back for him. He found Dog Monday curled up in one of the

shipping-sheds near the station and tried to coax him home. Dog Monday would not move. He wagged his tail to show he had no hard feelings but no blandishments availed to budge him.

“Guess Monday has made up his mind to wait there till Jem comes back,” said Shirley, trying to laugh as he rejoined the rest. This was exactly what Dog Monday had done. His dear master had gone — he, Monday, had been deliberately and of malice aforethought prevented from going with him by a demon disguised in the garb of a Methodist minister. Wherefore, he, Monday, would wait there until the smoking, snorting monster, which had carried his hero off, carried him back.

Ay, wait there, little faithful dog with the soft, wistful, puzzled eyes. But it will be many a long bitter day before your boyish comrade comes back to you.

The doctor was away on a case that night and Susan stalked into Mrs. Blythe’s room on her way to bed to see if her adored Mrs. Dr. dear were “comfortable and composed.” She paused solemnly at the foot of the bed and solemnly declared,

“Mrs. Dr. dear, I have made up my mind to be a heroine.”

“Mrs. Dr. dear” found herself violently inclined to laugh — which was manifestly unfair, since she had not laughed when Rilla had announced a similar heroic determination. To be sure, Rilla was a slim, white-robed thing, with a flowerlike face and starry young eyes aglow with feeling; whereas Susan was arrayed in a grey flannel nightgown of strait simplicity, and had a strip of red woollen worsted tied around her grey hair as a charm against neuralgia. But that should not make any vital difference. Was it not the spirit that counted? Yet Mrs. Blythe was hard put to it not to laugh.

“I am not,” proceeded Susan firmly, “going to lament or whine or question the wisdom of the Almighty any more as I have been doing lately. Whining and shirking and blaming Providence do not get us anywhere. We have just got to grapple with whatever we have to do whether it is weeding the onion patch, or running the Government. I shall grapple. Those blessed boys have gone to war; and we women, Mrs. Dr. dear, must tarry by the stuff and keep a stiff upper lip.”

A War-Baby And A Soup Tureen

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“Liege and Namur — and now Brussels!” The doctor shook his head. “I don’t like it — I don’t like it.”

“Do not you lose heart, Dr. dear; they were just defended by foreigners,” said Susan superbly. “Wait you till the Germans come against the British; there will be a very different story to tell and that you may tie to.”

The doctor shook his head again, but a little less gravely; perhaps they all shared subconsciously in Susan’s belief that “the thin grey line” was unbreakable, even by the victorious rush of Germany’s ready millions. At any rate, when the terrible day came — the first of many terrible days — with the news that the British army was driven back they stared at each other in blank dismay.

“It — it can’t be true,” gasped Nan, taking a brief refuge in temporary incredulity.

“I felt that there was to be bad news today,” said Susan, “for that cat-creature turned into Mr. Hyde this morning without rhyme or reason for it, and that was no good omen.”

“‘A broken, a beaten, but not a demoralized, army,’” muttered the doctor, from a London dispatch. “Can it be England’s army of which such a thing is said?”

“It will be a long time now before the war is ended,” said Mrs. Blythe despairingly.

Susan’s faith, which had for a moment been temporarily submerged, now reappeared triumphantly.

“Remember, Mrs. Dr. dear, that the British army is not the British navy. Never forget that. And the Russians are on their way, too, though Russians are people I do not know much about and consequently will not tie to.”

“The Russians will not be in time to save Paris,” said Walter gloomily. “Paris is the heart of France — and the road to it is open. Oh, I wish” — he stopped abruptly and went out.

After a paralysed day the Ingleside folk found it was possible to “carry on” even in the face of ever-darkening bad news. Susan worked fiercely in her kitchen, the doctor went out on his round of visits, Nan and Di returned to their Red Cross activities; Mrs. Blythe went to Charlottetown to attend a Red Cross Convention; Rilla after relieving her feelings by a stormy fit of tears in Rainbow Valley and an outburst in her diary, remembered that she had elected to be brave and heroic. And, she thought, it really was heroic to volunteer to drive about the Glen and Four Winds one day, collecting promised Red Cross supplies with Abner Crawford’s old grey horse. One of the Ingleside horses was lame and the doctor needed the other, so there was nothing for it but the Crawford nag, a placid, unhasting, thick-skinned creature with an amiable habit of stopping every few yards to kick a fly off one leg with the foot of the other. Rilla felt that this, coupled with the fact that the Germans were only fifty miles from Paris, was hardly to be endured. But she started off gallantly on an errand fraught with amazing results.

Late in the afternoon she found herself, with a buggy full of parcels, at the entrance to a grassy, deep-rutted lane leading to the harbour shore, wondering whether it was worth while to call down at the Anderson house. The Andersons were desperately poor and it was not likely Mrs. Anderson had anything to give. On the other hand, her husband, who was an Englishman by birth and who had been working in Kingsport when the war broke out, had promptly sailed for England to enlist there, without, it may be said, coming home or sending much hard cash to represent him. So possibly Mrs. Anderson might feel hurt if she were overlooked. Rilla decided to call. There were times afterwards when she wished she hadn’t, but in the long run she was very thankful that she did.

The Anderson house was a small and tumbledown affair, crouching in a grove of battered spruces near the shore as if rather ashamed of itself and anxious to hide. Rilla tied her grey nag to the rickety fence and went to the

door. It was open; and the sight she saw bereft her temporarily of the power of speech or motion.

Through the open door of the small bedroom opposite her, Rilla saw Mrs. Anderson lying on the untidy bed; and Mrs. Anderson was dead. There was no doubt of that; neither was there any doubt that the big, frowzy, redheaded, red-faced, over-fat woman sitting near the doorway, smoking a pipe quite comfortably, was very much alive. She rocked idly back and forth amid her surroundings of squalid disorder, and paid no attention whatever to the piercing wails proceeding from a cradle in the middle of the room.

Rilla knew the woman by sight and reputation. Her name was Mrs. Conover; she lived down at the fishing village; she was a great-aunt of Mrs. Anderson; and she drank as well as smoked.

Rilla's first impulse was to turn and flee. But that would never do. Perhaps this woman, repulsive as she was, needed help — though she certainly did not look as if she were worrying over the lack of it.

"Come in," said Mrs. Conover, removing her pipe and staring at Rilla with her little, rat-like eyes.

"Is — is Mrs. Anderson really dead?" asked Rilla timidly, as she stepped over the sill.

"Dead as a door nail," responded Mrs. Conover cheerfully. "Kicked the bucket half an hour ago. I've sent Jen Conover to 'phone for the undertaker and get some help up from the shore. You're the doctor's miss, ain't ye? Have a cheer?"

Rilla did not see any chair which was not cluttered with something. She remained standing.

"Wasn't it — very sudden?"

"Well, she's been apining ever since that worthless Jim lit out for England — which I say it's a pity as he ever left. It's my belief she was took for death when she heard the news. That young un there was born a fortnight ago and since then she's just gone down and today she up and died, without a soul expecting it."

"Is there anything I can do to — to help?" hesitated Rilla.

“Bless yez, no — unless ye’ve a knack with kids. I haven’t. That young un there never lets up squalling, day or night. I’ve just got that I take no notice of it.”

Rilla tiptoed gingerly over to the cradle and more gingerly still pulled down the dirty blanket. She had no intention of touching the baby — she had no “knack with kids” either. She saw an ugly midget with a red, distorted little face, rolled up in a piece of dingy old flannel. She had never seen an uglier baby. Yet a feeling of pity for the desolate, orphaned mite which had “come out of the everywhere” into such a dubious “here”, took sudden possession of her.

“What is going to become of the baby?” she asked.

“Lord knows,” said Mrs. Conover candidly. “Min worried awful over that before she died. She kept on a-saying ‘Oh, what will become of my pore baby’ till it really got on my nerves. I ain’t a-going to trouble myself with it, I can tell yez. I brung up a boy that my sister left and he skinned out as soon as he got to be some good and won’t give me a mite o’ help in my old age, ungrateful whelp as he is. I told Min it’d have to be sent to an orphan asylum till we’d see if Jim ever came back to look after it. Would yez believe it, she didn’t relish the idee. But that’s the long and short of it.”

“But who will look after it until it can be taken to the asylum?” persisted Rilla. Somehow the baby’s fate worried her.

“S’pose I’ll have to,” grunted Mrs. Conover. She put away her pipe and took an unblushing swig from a black bottle she produced from a shelf near her. “It’s my opinion the kid won’t live long. It’s sickly. Min never had no gimp and I guess it hain’t either. Likely it won’t trouble any one long and good riddance, sez I.”

Rilla drew the blanket down a little farther.

“Why, the baby isn’t dressed!” she exclaimed, in a shocked tone.

“Who was to dress him I’d like to know,” demanded Mrs. Conover truculently. “I hadn’t time — took me all the time there was looking after Min. ‘Sides, as I told yez, I don’t know nithing about kids. Old Mrs. Billy Crawford, she was here when it was born and she washed it and rolled it up

in that flannel, and Jen she's tended it a bit since. The critter is warm enough. This weather would melt a brass monkey."

Rilla was silent, looking down at the crying baby. She had never encountered any of the tragedies of life before and this one smote her to the core of her heart. The thought of the poor mother going down into the valley of the shadow alone, fretting about her baby, with no one near but this abominable old woman, hurt her terribly. If she had only come a little sooner! Yet what could she have done — what could she do now? She didn't know, but she must do something. She hated babies — but she simply could not go away and leave that poor little creature with Mrs. Conover — who was applying herself again to her black bottle and would probably be helplessly drunk before anybody came.

"I can't stay," thought Rilla. "Mr. Crawford said I must be home by suppertime because he wanted the pony this evening himself. Oh, what can I do?"

She made a sudden, desperate, impulsive resolution.

"I'll take the baby home with me," she said. "Can I?"

"Sure, if yez wants to," said Mrs. Conover amiably. "I hain't any objection. Take it and welcome."

"I — I can't carry it," said Rilla. "I have to drive the horse and I'd be afraid I'd drop it. Is there a — a basket anywhere that I could put it in?"

"Not as I knows on. There ain't much here of anything, I kin tell yez. Min was pore and as shiftless as Jim. Ef ye opens that drawer over there yez'll find a few baby clo'es. Best take them along."

Rilla got the clothes — the cheap, sleazy garments the poor mother had made ready as best she could. But this did not solve the pressing problem of the baby's transportation. Rilla looked helplessly round. Oh, for mother — or Susan! Her eyes fell on an enormous blue soup tureen at the back of the dresser.

"May I have this to — to lay him in?" she asked.

"Well, 'tain't mine but I guess yez kin take it. Don't smash it if yez can help — Jim might make a fuss about it if he comes back alive — which he sure will, seein' he ain't any good. He brung that old tureen out from

England with him — said it'd always been in the family. Him and Min never used it — never had enough soup to put in it — but Jim thought the world of it. He was mighty perticuler about some things but didn't worry him none that there weren't much in the way o' eatables to put in the dishes."

For the first time in her life Rilla Blythe touched a baby — lifted it — rolled it in a blanket, trembling with nervousness lest she drop it or — or — break it. Then she put it in the soup tureen.

"Is there any fear of it smothering?" she asked anxiously.

"Not much odds if it do," said Mrs. Conover.

Horried Rilla loosened the blanket round the baby's face a little. The mite had stopped crying and was blinking up at her. It had big dark eyes in its ugly little face.

"Better not let the wind blow on it," admonished Mrs. Conover. "Take its breath if it do."

Rilla wrapped the tattered little quilt around the soup tureen.

"Will you hand this to me after I get into the buggy, please?"

"Sure I will," said Mrs. Conover, getting up with a grunt.

And so it was that Rilla Blythe, who had driven to the Anderson house a self-confessed hater of babies, drove away from it carrying one in a soup tureen on her lap!

Rilla thought she would never get to Ingleside. In the soup tureen there was an uncanny silence. In one way she was thankful the baby did not cry but she wished it would give an occasional squeak to prove that it was alive. Suppose it were smothered! Rilla dared not unwrap it to see, lest the wind, which was now blowing a hurricane, should "take its breath," whatever dreadful thing that might be. She was a thankful girl when at last she reached harbour at Ingleside.

Rilla carried the soup tureen to the kitchen, and set it on the table under Susan's eyes. Susan looked into the tureen and for once in her life was so completely floored that she had not a word to say.

"What in the world is this?" asked the doctor, coming in.

Rilla poured out her story. "I just had to bring it, father," she concluded. "I couldn't leave it there."

"What are you going to do with it?" asked the doctor coolly.

Rilla hadn't exactly expected this kind of question.

"We — we can keep it here for awhile — can't we — until something can be arranged?" she stammered confusedly.

Dr. Blythe walked up and down the kitchen for a moment or two while the baby stared at the white walls of the soup tureen and Susan showed signs of returning animation.

Presently the doctor confronted Rilla.

"A young baby means a great deal of additional work and trouble in a household, Rilla. Nan and Di are leaving for Redmond next week and neither your mother nor Susan is able to assume so much extra care under present conditions. If you want to keep that baby here you must attend to it yourself."

"Me!" Rilla was dismayed into being ungrammatical. "Why — father — I — I couldn't!"

"Younger girls than you have had to look after babies. My advice and Susan's is at your disposal. If you cannot, then the baby must go back to Meg Conover. Its lease of life will be short if it does for it is evident that it is a delicate child and requires particular care. I doubt if it would survive even if sent to an orphans' home. But I cannot have your mother and Susan over-taxed."

The doctor walked out of the kitchen, looking very stern and immovable. In his heart he knew quite well that the small inhabitant of the big soup tureen would remain at Ingleside, but he meant to see if Rilla could not be induced to rise to the occasion.

Rilla sat looking blankly at the baby. It was absurd to think she could take care of it. But — that poor little, frail, dead mother who had worried about it — that dreadful old Meg Conover.

"Susan, what must be done for a baby?" she asked dolefully.

"You must keep it warm and dry and wash it every day, and be sure the water is neither too hot nor too cold, and feed it every two hours. If it has

colic, you put hot things on its stomach,” said Susan, rather feebly and flatly for her.

The baby began to cry again.

“It must be hungry — it has to be fed anyhow,” said Rilla desperately. “Tell me what to get for it, Susan, and I’ll get it.”

Under Susan’s directions a ration of milk and water was prepared, and a bottle obtained from the doctor’s office. Then Rilla lifted the baby out of the soup tureen and fed it. She brought down the old basket of her own infancy from the attic and laid the now sleeping baby in it. She put the soup tureen away in the pantry. Then she sat down to think things over.

The result of her thinking things over was that she went to Susan when the baby woke.

“I’m going to see what I can do, Susan. I can’t let that poor little thing go back to Mrs. Conover. Tell me how to wash and dress it.”

Under Susan’s supervision Rilla bathed the baby. Susan dared not help, other than by suggestion, for the doctor was in the livingroom and might pop in at any moment. Susan had learned by experience that when Dr. Blythe put his foot down and said a thing must be, that thing was. Rilla set her teeth and went ahead. In the name of goodness, how many wrinkles and kinks did a baby have? Why, there wasn’t enough of it to take hold of. Oh, suppose she let it slip into the water — it was so wobbly! If it would only stop howling like that! How could such a tiny morsel make such an enormous noise. Its shrieks could be heard over Ingleside from cellar to attic.

“Am I really hurting it much, Susan, do you suppose?” she asked piteously.

“No, dearie. Most new babies hate like poison to be washed. You are real knacky for a beginner. Keep your hand under its back, whatever you do, and keep cool.”

Keep cool! Rilla was oozing perspiration at every pore. When the baby was dried and dressed and temporarily quieted with another bottle she was as limp as a rag.

“What must I do with it tonight, Susan?”

A baby by day was dreadful enough; a baby by night was unthinkable.

“Set the basket on a chair by your bed and keep it covered. You will have to feed it once or twice in the night, so you would better take the oil heater upstairs. If you cannot manage it call me and I will go, doctor or no doctor.”

“But, Susan, if it cries?”

The baby, however, did not cry. It was surprisingly good — perhaps because its poor little stomach was filled with proper food. It slept most of the night but Rilla did not. She was afraid to go to sleep for fear something would happen to the baby. She prepared its three o’clock ration with a grim determination that she would not call Susan. Oh, was she dreaming? Was it really she, Rilla Blythe, who had got into this absurd predicament? She did not care if the Germans were near Paris — she did not care if they were in Paris — if only the baby wouldn’t cry or choke or smother or have convulsions. Babies did have convulsions, didn’t they? Oh, why had she forgotten to ask Susan what she must do if the baby had convulsions? She reflected rather bitterly that father was very considerate of mother’s and Susan’s health, but what about hers? Did he think she could continue to exist if she never got any sleep? But she was not going to back down now — not she. She would look after this detestable little animal if it killed her. She would get a book on baby hygiene and be beholden to nobody. She would never go to father for advice — she wouldn’t bother mother — and she would only condescend to Susan in dire extremity. They would all see!

Thus it came about that Mrs. Blythe, when she returned home two nights later and asked Susan where Rilla was, was electrified by Susan’s composed reply.

“She’s upstairs, Mrs. Dr. dear, putting her baby to bed.”

Rilla Decides

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Families and individuals alike soon become used to new conditions and accept them unquestioningly. By the time a week had elapsed it seemed as if the Anderson baby had always been at Ingleside. After the first three distracted nights Rilla began to sleep again, waking automatically to attend to her charge on schedule time. She bathed and fed and dressed it as skilfully as if she had been doing it all her life. She liked neither her job nor the baby any the better; she still handled it as gingerly as if it were some kind of a small lizard, and a breakable lizard at that; but she did her work thoroughly and there was not a cleaner, better-cared-for infant in Glen St. Mary. She even took to weighing the creature every day and jotting the result down in her diary; but sometimes she asked herself pathetically why unkind destiny had ever led her down the Anderson lane on that fatal day. Shirley, Nan, and Di did not tease her as much as she had expected. They all seemed rather stunned by the mere fact of Rilla adopting a war-baby; perhaps, too, the doctor had issued instructions. Walter, of course, never had teased her over anything; one day he told her she was a brick.

“It took more courage for you to tackle that five pounds of new infant, Rilla-my-Rilla, than it would be for Jem to face a mile of Germans. I wish I had half your pluck,” he said ruefully.

Rilla was very proud of Walter’s approval; nevertheless, she wrote gloomily in her diary that night: —

“I wish I could like the baby a little bit. It would make things easier. But I don’t. I’ve heard people say that when you took care of a baby you got fond of it — but you don’t — I don’t, anyway. And it’s a nuisance — it interferes with everything. It just ties me down — and now of all times when I’m trying to get the Junior Reds started. And I couldn’t go to Alice Clow’s party last night and I was just dying to. Of course father isn’t really

unreasonable and I can always get an hour or two off in the evening when it's necessary; but I knew he wouldn't stand for my being out half the night and leaving Susan or mother to see to the baby. I suppose it was just as well, because the thing did take colic — or something — about one o'clock. It didn't kick or stiffen out, so I knew that, according to Morgan, it wasn't crying for temper; and it wasn't hungry and no pins were sticking in it. It screamed till it was black in the face; I got up and heated water and put the hot-water bottle on its stomach, and it howled worse than ever and drew up its poor wee thin legs. I was afraid I had burnt it but I don't believe I did. Then I walked the floor with it although 'Morgan on Infants' says that should never be done. I walked miles, and oh, I was so tired and discouraged and mad — yes, I was. I could have shaken the creature if it had been big enough to shake, but it wasn't. Father was out on a case, and mother had had a headache and Susan is squiffy because when she and Morgan differ I insist upon going by what Morgan says, so I was determined I wouldn't call her unless I had to.

“Finally, Miss Oliver came in. She has rooms with Nan now, not me, all because of the baby, and I am brokenhearted about it. I miss our long talks after we went to bed, so much. It was the only time I ever had her to myself. I hated to think the baby's yells had wakened her up, for she has so much to bear now. Mr. Grant is at Valcartier, too, and Miss Oliver feels it dreadfully, though she is splendid about it. She thinks he will never come back and her eyes just break my heart — they are so tragic. She said it wasn't the baby that woke her — she hadn't been able to sleep because the Germans are so near Paris; she took the little wretch and laid it flat on its stomach across her knee and thumped its back gently a few times, and it stopped shrieking and went right off to sleep and slept like a lamb the rest of the night. I didn't — I was too worn out.

“I'm having a perfectly dreadful time getting the Junior Reds started. I succeeded in getting Betty Mead as president, and I am secretary, but they put Jen Vickers in as treasurer and I despise her. She is the sort of girl who calls any clever, handsome, or distinguished people she knows slightly by their first names — behind their backs. And she is sly and two-faced. Una

doesn't mind, of course. She is willing to do anything that comes to hand and never minds whether she has an office or not. She is just a perfect angel, while I am only angelic in spots and demonic in other spots. I wish Walter would take a fancy to her, but he never seems to think about her in that way, although I heard him say once she was like a tea rose. She is too. And she gets imposed upon, just because she is so sweet and willing; but I don't allow people to impose on Rilla Blythe and 'that you may tie to,' as Susan says.

"Just as I expected, Olive was determined we should have lunch served at our meetings. We had a battle royal over it. The majority was against eats and now the minority is sulking. Irene Howard was on the eats side and she has been very cool to me ever since and it makes me feel miserable. I wonder if mother and Mrs. Elliott have problems in the Senior Society too. I suppose they have, but they just go on calmly in spite of everything. I go on — but not calmly — I rage and cry — but I do it all in private and blow off steam in this diary; and when it's over I vow I'll show them. I never sulk. I detest people who sulk. Anyhow, we've got the society started and we're to meet once a week, and we're all going to learn to knit.

"Shirley and I went down to the station again to try to induce Dog Monday to come home but we failed. All the family have tried and failed. Three days after Jem had gone Walter went down and brought Monday home by main force in the buggy and shut him up for three days. Then Monday went on a hunger strike and howled like a Banshee night and day. We had to let him out or he would have starved to death.

"So we have decided to let him alone and father has arranged with the butcher near the station to feed him with bones and scraps. Besides, one of us goes down nearly every day to take him something. He just lies curled up in the shipping-shed, and every time a train comes in he will rush over to the platform, wagging his tail expectantly, and tear around to every one who comes off the train. And then, when the train goes and he realizes that Jem has not come, he creeps dejectedly back to his shed, with his disappointed eyes, and lies down patiently to wait for the next train. Mr.

Gray, the station master, says there are times when he can hardly help crying from sheer sympathy. One day some boys threw stones at Monday and old Johnny Mead, who never was known to take notice of anything before, snatched up a meat axe in the butcher's shop and chased them through the village. Nobody has molested Monday since.

"Kenneth Ford has gone back to Toronto. He came up two evenings ago to say goodbye. I wasn't home — some clothes had to be made for the baby and Mrs. Meredith offered to help me, so I was over at the manse, and I didn't see Kenneth. Not that it matters; he told Nan to say goodbye to Spider for him and tell me not to forget him wholly in my absorbing maternal duties. If he could leave such a frivolous, insulting message as that for me it shows plainly that our beautiful hour on the sandshore meant nothing to him and I am not going to think about him or it again.

"Fred Arnold was at the manse and walked home with me. He is the new Methodist minister's son and very nice and clever, and would be quite handsome if it were not for his nose. It is a really dreadful nose. When he talks of commonplace things it does not matter so much, but when he talks of poetry and ideals the contrast between his nose and his conversation is too much for me and I want to shriek with laughter. It is really not fair, because everything he said was perfectly charming and if somebody like Kenneth had said it I would have been enraptured. When I listened to him with my eyes cast down I was quite fascinated; but as soon as I looked up and saw his nose the spell was broken. He wants to enlist, too, but can't because he is only seventeen. Mrs. Elliott met us as we were walking through the village and could not have looked more horrified if she caught me walking with the Kaiser himself. Mrs. Elliott detests the Methodists and all their works. Father says it is an obsession with her."

About 1st September there was an exodus from Ingleside and the manse. Faith, Nan, Di and Walter left for Redmond; Carl betook himself to his Harbour Head school and Shirley was off to Queen's. Rilla was left alone at Ingleside and would have been very lonely if she had had time to be. She missed Walter keenly; since their talk in Rainbow Valley they had grown very near together and Rilla discussed problems with Walter which

she never mentioned to others. But she was so busy with the Junior Reds and her baby that there was rarely a spare minute for loneliness; sometimes, after she went to bed, she cried a little in her pillow over Walter's absence and Jem at Valcartier and Kenneth's unromantic farewell message, but she was generally asleep before the tears got fairly started.

"Shall I make arrangements to have the baby sent to Hopetown?" the doctor asked one day two weeks after the baby's arrival at Ingleside.

For a moment Rilla was tempted to say "Yes." The baby could be sent to Hopetown — it would be decently looked after — she could have her free days and untrammelled nights back again. But — but — that poor young mother who hadn't wanted it to go to the asylum! Rilla couldn't get that out of her thoughts. And that very morning she discovered that the baby had gained eight ounces since its coming to Ingleside. Rilla had felt such a thrill of pride over this.

"You — you said it mightn't live if it went to Hopetown," she said.

"It mightn't. Somehow, institutional care, no matter how good it may be, doesn't always succeed with delicate babies. But you know what it means if you want it kept here, Rilla."

"I've taken care of it for a fortnight — and it has gained half a pound," cried Rilla. "I think we'd better wait until we hear from its father anyhow. He mightn't want to have it sent to an orphan asylum, when he is fighting the battles of his country."

The doctor and Mrs. Blythe exchanged amused, satisfied smiles behind Rilla's back; and nothing more was said about Hopetown.

Then the smile faded from the doctor's face; the Germans were twenty miles from Paris. Horrible tales were beginning to appear in the papers of deeds done in martyred Belgium. Life was very tense at Ingleside for the older people.

"We eat up the war news," Gertrude Oliver told Mrs. Meredith, trying to laugh and failing. "We study the maps and nip the whole Hun army in a few well-directed strategic moves. But Papa Joffre hasn't the benefit of our advice — and so Paris — must — fall."

“Will they reach it — will not some mighty hand yet intervene?” murmured John Meredith.

“I teach school like one in a dream,” continued Gertrude; “then I come home and shut myself in my room and walk the floor. I am wearing a path right across Nan’s carpet. We are so horribly near this war.”

“Them German men are at Senlis. Nothing nor nobody can save Paris now,” wailed Cousin Sophia. Cousin Sophia had taken to reading the newspapers and had learned more about the geography of northern France, if not about the pronunciation of French names, in her seventy-first year than she had ever known in her schooldays.

“I have not such a poor opinion of the Almighty, or of Kitchener,” said Susan stubbornly. “I see there is a Bernstoff man in the States who says that the war is over and Germany has won — and they tell me Whiskers-on-the-moon says the same thing and is quite pleased about it, but I could tell them both that it is chancy work counting chickens even the day before they are hatched, and bears have been known to live long after their skins were sold.”

“Why ain’t the British navy doing more?” persisted Cousin Sophia.

“Even the British navy cannot sail on dry land, Sophia Crawford. I have not given up hope, and I shall not, Tomascow and Mobbage and all such barbarous names to the contrary notwithstanding. Mrs. Dr. dear, can you tell me if R-h-e-i-m-s is Rimes or Reems or Rames or Rems?”

“I believe it’s really more like ‘Rhangs,’ Susan.”

“Oh, those French names,” groaned Susan.

“They tell me the Germans has about ruined the church there,” sighed Cousin Sophia. “I always thought the Germans was Christians.”

“A church is bad enough but their doings in Belgium are far worse,” said Susan grimly. “When I heard the doctor reading about them bayonetting the babies, Mrs. Dr. dear, I just thought, ‘Oh, what if it were our little Jem!’ I was stirring the soup when that thought came to me and I just felt that if I could have lifted that saucepan full of that boiling soup and thrown it at the Kaiser I would not have lived in vain.”

“Tomorrow — tomorrow — will bring the news that the Germans are in Paris,” said Gertrude Oliver, through her tense lips. She had one of those souls that are always tied to the stake, burning in the suffering of the world around them. Apart from her own personal interest in the war, she was racked by the thought of Paris falling into the ruthless hands of the hordes who had burned Louvain and ruined the wonder of Rheims.

But on the morrow and the next morrow came the news of the miracle of the Marne. Rilla rushed madly home from the office waving the Enterprise with its big red headlines. Susan ran out with trembling hands to hoist the flag. The doctor stalked about muttering “Thank God.” Mrs. Blythe cried and laughed and cried again.

“God just put out His hand and touched them—’thus far — no farther’,” said Mr. Meredith that evening.

Rilla was singing upstairs as she put the baby to bed. Paris was saved — the war was over — Germany had lost — there would soon be an end now — Jem and Jerry would be back. The black clouds had rolled by.

“Don’t you dare have colic this joyful night,” she told the baby. “If you do I’ll clap you back into your soup tureen and ship you off to Hopetown — by freight — on the early train. You have got beautiful eyes — and you’re not quite as red and wrinkled as you were — but you haven’t a speck of hair — and your hands are like little claws — and I don’t like you a bit better than I ever did. But I hope your poor little white mother knows that you’re tucked in a soft basket with a bottle of milk as rich as Morgan allows instead of perishing by inches with old Meg Conover. And I hope she doesn’t know that I nearly drowned you that first morning when Susan wasn’t there and I let you slip right out of my hands into the water. Why will you be so slippery? No, I don’t like you and I never will but for all that I’m going to make a decent, upstanding infant of you. You are going to get as fat as a self-respecting child should be, for one thing. I am not going to have people saying ‘what a puny little thing that baby of Rilla Blythe’s is’ as old Mrs. Drew said at the senior Red Cross yesterday. If I can’t love you I mean to be proud of you at least.”

Doc Has A Misadventure

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“The war will not be over before next spring now,” said Dr. Blythe, when it became apparent that the long battle of the Aisne had resulted in a stalemate.

Rilla was murmuring “knit four, purl one” under her breath, and rocking the baby’s cradle with one foot. Morgan disapproved of cradles for babies but Susan did not, and it was worth while to make some slight sacrifice of principle to keep Susan in good humour. She laid down her knitting for a moment and said, “Oh, how can we bear it so long?” — then picked up her sock and went on. The Rilla of two months before would have rushed off to Rainbow Valley and cried.

Miss Oliver sighed and Mrs. Blythe clasped her hands for a moment. Then Susan said briskly, “Well, we must just gird up our loins and pitch in. Business as usual is England’s motto, they tell me, Mrs. Dr. dear, and I have taken it for mine, not thinking I could easily find a better. I shall make the same kind of pudding today I always make on Saturday. It is a good deal of trouble to make, and that is well, for it will employ my thoughts. I will remember that Kitchener is at the helm and Joffer is doing very well for a Frenchman. I shall get that box of cake off to little Jem and finish that pair of socks today likewise. A sock a day is my allowance. Old Mrs. Albert Mead of Harbour Head manages a pair and a half a day but she has nothing to do but knit. You know, Mrs. Dr. dear, she has been bed-ridden for years and she has been worrying terrible because she was no good to anybody and a dreadful expense, and yet could not die and be out of the way. And now they tell me she is quite chirked up and resigned to living because there is something she can do, and she knits for the soldiers from daylight to dark. Even Cousin Sophia has taken to knitting, Mrs. Dr. dear, and it is a good thing, for she cannot think of quite so many doleful speeches to make when her hands are busy with her needles instead of

being folded on her stomach. She thinks we will all be Germans this time next year but I tell her it will take more than a year to make a German out of me. Do you know that Rick MacAllister has enlisted, Mrs. Dr. dear? And they say Joe Milgrave would too, only he is afraid that if he does that Whiskers-on-the-moon will not let him have Miranda. Whiskers says that he will believe the stories of German atrocities when he sees them, and that it is a good thing that Rangs Cathedral has been destroyed because it was a Roman Catholic church. Now, I am not a Roman Catholic, Mrs. Dr. dear, being born and bred a good Presbyterian and meaning to live and die one, but I maintain that the Catholics have as good a right to their churches as we have to ours and that the Huns had no kind of business to destroy them. Just think, Mrs. Dr. dear,” concluded Susan pathetically, “how we would feel if a German shell knocked down the spire of our church here in the glen, and I’m sure it is every bit as bad to think of Rangs cathedral being hammered to pieces.”

And, meanwhile, everywhere, the lads of the world rich and poor, low and high, white and brown, were following the Piper’s call.

“Even Billy Andrews’ boy is going — and Jane’s only son — and Diana’s little Jack,” said Mrs. Blythe. “Priscilla’s son has gone from Japan and Stella’s from Vancouver — and both the Rev. Jo’s boys. Philippa writes that her boys ‘went right away, not being afflicted with her indecision.’”

“Jem says that he thinks they will be leaving very soon now, and that he will not be able to get leave to come so far before they go, as they will have to start at a few hours’ notice,” said the doctor, passing the letter to his wife.

“That is not fair,” said Susan indignantly. “Has Sir Sam Hughes no regard for our feelings? The idea of whisking that blessed boy away to Europe without letting us even have a last glimpse of him! If I were you, doctor dear, I would write to the papers about it.”

“Perhaps it is as well,” said the disappointed mother. “I don’t believe I could bear another parting from him — now that I know the war will not be over as soon as we hoped when he left first. Oh, if only — but no, I

won't say it! Like Susan and Rilla," concluded Mrs. Blythe, achieving a laugh, "I am determined to be a heroine."

"You're all good stuff," said the doctor, "I'm proud of my women folk. Even Rilla here, my 'lily of the field,' is running a Red Cross Society full blast and saving a little life for Canada. That's a good piece of work. Rilla, daughter of Anne, what are you going to call your war-baby?"

"I'm waiting to hear from Jim Anderson," said Rilla. "He may want to name his own child."

But as the autumn weeks went by no word came from Jim Anderson, who had never been heard from since he sailed from Halifax, and to whom the fate of wife and child seemed a matter of indifference. Eventually Rilla decided to call the baby James, and Susan opined that Kitchener should be added thereto. So James Kitchener Anderson became the possessor of a name somewhat more imposing than himself. The Ingleside family promptly shortened it to Jims, but Susan obstinately called him "Little Kitchener" and nothing else.

"Jims is no name for a Christian child, Mrs. Dr. dear," she said disapprovingly. "Cousin Sophia says it is too flippant, and for once I consider she utters sense, though I would not please her by openly agreeing with her. As for the child, he is beginning to look something like a baby, and I must admit that Rilla is wonderful with him, though I would not pamper pride by saying so to her face. Mrs. Dr. dear, I shall never, no never, forget the first sight I had of that infant, lying in that big soup tureen, rolled up in dirty flannel. It is not often that Susan Baker is flabbergasted, but flabbergasted I was then, and that you may tie to. For one awful moment I thought my mind had given way and that I was seeing visions. Then thinks I, 'No, I never heard of anyone having a vision of a soup tureen, so it must be real at least,' and I plucked up confidence. When I heard the doctor tell Rilla that she must take care of the baby I thought he was joking, for I did not believe for a minute she would or could do it. But you see what has happened and it is making a woman of her. When we have to do a thing, Mrs. Dr. dear, we can do it."

Susan added another proof to this concluding dictum of hers one day in October. The doctor and his wife were away. Rilla was presiding over Jims' afternoon siesta upstairs, purling four and knitting one with ceaseless vim. Susan was seated on the back veranda, shelling beans, and Cousin Sophia was helping her. Peace and tranquility brooded over the Glen; the sky was fleeced over with silvery, shining clouds. Rainbow Valley lay in a soft, autumnal haze of fairy purple. The maple grove was a burning bush of colour and the hedge of sweetbriar around the kitchen yard was a thing of wonder in its subtle tintings. It did not seem that strife could be in the world, and Susan's faithful heart was lulled into a brief forgetfulness, although she had lain awake most of the preceding night thinking of little Jem far out on the Atlantic, where the great fleet was carrying Canada's first army across the ocean. Even Cousin Sophia looked less melancholy than usual and admitted that there was not much fault to be found in the day, although there was no doubt it was a weather-breeder and there would be an awful storm on its heels.

"Things is too calm to last," she said.

As if in confirmation of her assertion, a most unearthly din suddenly arose behind them. It was quite impossible to describe the confused medley of bangs and rattles and muffled shrieks and yowls that proceeded from the kitchen, accompanied by occasional crashes. Susan and Cousin Sophia stared at each other in dismay.

"What upon airth has bruk loose in there?" gasped Cousin Sophia.

"It must be that Hyde-cat gone clean mad at last," muttered Susan. "I have always expected it."

Rilla came flying out of the side door of the livingroom.

"What has happened?" she demanded.

"It is beyond me to say, but that possessed beast of yours is evidently at the bottom of it," said Susan. "Do not go near him, at least. I will open the door and peep in. There goes some more of the crockery. I have always said that the devil was in him and that I will tie to."

"It is my opinion that the cat has hydrophobia," said Cousin Sophia solemnly. "I once heard of a cat that went mad and bit three people — and

they all died a most terrible death, and turned black as ink.”

Undismayed by this, Susan opened the door and looked in. The floor was littered with fragments of broken dishes, for it seemed that the fatal tragedy had taken place on the long dresser where Susan’s array of cooking bowls had been marshalled in shining state. Around the kitchen tore a frantic cat, with his head wedged tightly in an old salmon can. Blindly he careered about with shrieks and profanity commingled, now banging the can madly against anything he encountered, now trying vainly to wrench it off with his paws.

The sight was so funny that Rilla doubled up with laughter. Susan looked at her reproachfully.

“I see nothing to laugh at. That beast has broken your ma’s big blue mixing-bowl that she brought from Green Gables when she was married. That is no small calamity, in my opinion. But the thing to consider now is how to get that can off Hyde’s head.”

“Don’t you dast go touching it,” exclaimed Cousin Sophia, galvanized into animation. “It might be your death. Shut the kitchen up and send for Albert.”

“I am not in the habit of sending for Albert during family difficulties,” said Susan loftily. “That beast is in torment, and whatever my opinion of him may be, I cannot endure to see him suffering pain. You keep away, Rilla, for little Kitchener’s sake, and I will see what I can do.”

Susan stalked undauntedly into the kitchen, seized an old storm coat of the doctor’s and after a wild pursuit and several fruitless dashes and pounces, managed to throw it over the cat and can. Then she proceeded to saw the can loose with a can-opener, while Rilla held the squirming animal, rolled in the coat. Anything like Doc’s shrieks while the process was going on was never heard at Ingleside. Susan was in mortal dread that the Albert Crawfords would hear it and conclude she was torturing the creature to death. Doc was a wrathful and indignant cat when he was freed. Evidently he thought the whole thing was a put-up job to bring him low. He gave Susan a baleful glance by way of gratitude and rushed out of the

kitchen to take sanctuary in the jungle of the sweetbriar hedge, where he sulked for the rest of the day. Susan swept up her broken dishes grimly.

“The Huns themselves couldn’t have worked more havoc here,” she said bitterly. “But when people will keep a Satanic animal like that, in spite of all warnings, they cannot complain when their wedding bowls get broken. Things have come to a pretty pass when an honest woman cannot leave her kitchen for a few minutes without a fiend of a cat rampaging through it with his head in a salmon can.”

Chapter X.

The Troubles of Rilla

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October passed out and the dreary days of November and December dragged by. The world shook with the thunder of contending armies; Antwerp fell — Turkey declared war — gallant little Serbia gathered herself together and struck a deadly blow at her oppressor; and in quiet, hill-girdled Glen St. Mary, thousands of miles away, hearts beat with hope and fear over the varying dispatches from day to day.

“A few months ago,” said Miss Oliver, “we thought and talked in terms of Glen St. Mary. Now, we think and talk in terms of military tactics and diplomatic intrigue.”

There was just one great event every day — the coming of the mail. Even Susan admitted that from the time the mail-courier’s buggy rumbled over the little bridge between the station and the village until the papers were brought home and read, she could not work properly.

“I must take up my knitting then and knit hard till the papers come, Mrs. Dr. dear. Knitting is something you can do, even when your heart is going like a trip-hammer and the pit of your stomach feels all gone and your thoughts are catawampus. Then when I see the headlines, be they good or be they bad, I calm down and am able to go about my business again. It is an unfortunate thing that the mail comes in just when our dinner rush is on, and I think the Government could arrange things better. But the drive on Calais has failed, as I felt perfectly sure it would, and the Kaiser will not eat his Christmas dinner in London this year. Do you know, Mrs. Dr. dear,” — Susan’s voice lowered as a token that she was going to impart a very shocking piece of information,—“I have been told on good authority — or else you may be sure I would not be repeating it when it concerns a minster — that the Rev. Mr. Arnold goes to Charlottetown every week and takes a Turkish bath for his rheumatism. The idea of him doing that when we are at war with Turkey? One of his own deacons has

always insisted that Mr. Arnold's theology was not sound and I am beginning to believe that there is some reason to fear it. Well, I must bestir myself this afternoon and get little Jem's Christmas cake packed up for him. He will enjoy it, if the blessed boy is not drowned in mud before that time."

Jem was in camp on Salisbury Plain and was writing gay, cheery letters home in spite of the mud. Walter was at Redmond and his letters to Rilla were anything but cheerful. She never opened one without a dread tugging at her heart that it would tell her he had enlisted. His unhappiness made her unhappy. She wanted to put her arm round him and comfort him, as she had done that day in Rainbow Valley. She hated everybody who was responsible for Walter's unhappiness.

"He will go yet," she murmured miserably to herself one afternoon, as she sat alone in Rainbow Valley, reading a letter from him, "he will go yet — and if he does I just can't bear it."

Walter wrote that some one had sent him an envelope containing a white feather.

"I deserved it, Rilla. I felt that I ought to put it on and wear it — proclaiming myself to all Redmond the coward I know I am. The boys of my year are going — going. Every day two or three of them join up. Some days I almost make up my mind to do it — and then I see myself thrusting a bayonet through another man — some woman's husband or sweetheart or son — perhaps the father of little children — I see myself lying alone torn and mangled, burning with thirst on a cold, wet field, surrounded by dead and dying men — and I know I never can. I can't face even the thought of it. How could I face the reality? There are times when I wish I had never been born. Life has always seemed such a beautiful thing to me — and now it is a hideous thing. Rilla-my-Rilla, if it weren't for your letters — your dear, bright, merry, funny, comical, believing letters — I think I'd give up. And Una's! Una is really a little brick, isn't she? There's a wonderful fineness and firmness under all that shy, wistful girlishness of her. She hasn't your knack of writing laugh-provoking epistles, but there's something in her letters — I don't know what — that makes me feel at

least while I'm reading them, that I could even go to the front. Not that she ever says a word about my going — or hints that I ought to go — she isn't that kind. It's just the spirit of them — the personality that is in them. Well, I can't go. You have a brother and Una has a friend who is a coward."

"Oh, I wish Walter wouldn't write such things," sighed Rilla. "It hurts me. He isn't a coward — he isn't — he isn't!"

She looked wistfully about her — at the little woodland valley and the grey, lonely fallows beyond. How everything reminded her of Walter! The red leaves still clung to the wild sweetbriars that overhung a curve of the brook; their stems were gemmed with the pearls of the gentle rain that had fallen a little while before. Walter had once written a poem describing them. The wind was sighing and rustling among the frosted brown bracken ferns, then lessening sorrowfully away down the brook. Walter had said once that he loved the melancholy of the autumn wind on a November day. The old Tree Lovers still clasped each other in a faithful embrace, and the White Lady, now a great white-branched tree, stood out beautifully fine, against the grey velvet sky. Walter had named them long ago; and last November, when he had walked with her and Miss Oliver in the Valley, he had said, looking at the leafless Lady, with a young silver moon hanging over her, "A white birch is a beautiful Pagan maiden who has never lost the Eden secret of being naked and unashamed." Miss Oliver had said, "Put that into a poem, Walter," and he had done so, and read it to them the next day — just a short thing with goblin imagination in every line of it. Oh, how happy they had been then!

Well — Rilla scrambled to her feet — time was up. Jims would soon be awake — his lunch had to be prepared — his little slippers had to be ironed — there was a committee meeting of the Junior Reds that night — there was her new knitting bag to finish — it would be the handsomest bag in the Junior Society — handsomer even than Irene Howard's — she must get home and get to work. She was busy these days from morning till night. That little monkey of a Jims took so much time. But he was growing — he was certainly growing. And there were times when Rilla felt sure

that it was not merely a pious hope but an absolute fact that he was getting decidedly better looking. Sometimes she felt quite proud of him; and sometimes she yearned to spank him. But she never kissed him or wanted to kiss him.

“The Germans captured Lodz today,” said Miss Oliver, one December evening, when she, Mrs. Blythe, and Susan were busy sewing or knitting in the cosy livingroom. “This war is at least extending my knowledge of geography. Schoolma’am though I am, three months ago I didn’t know there was such a place in the world such as Lodz. Had I heard it mentioned I would have known nothing about it and cared as little. I know all about it now — its size, its standing, its military significance. Yesterday the news that the Germans have captured it in their second rush to Warsaw made my heart sink into my boots. I woke up in the night and worried over it. I don’t wonder babies always cry when they wake up in the night. Everything presses on my soul then and no cloud has a silver lining.”

“When I wake up in the night and cannot go to sleep again,” remarked Susan, who was knitting and reading at the same time, “I pass the moments by torturing the Kaiser to death. Last night I fried him in boiling oil and a great comfort it was to me, remembering those Belgian babies.”

“If the Kaiser were here and had a pain in his shoulder you’d be the first to run for the liniment bottle to rub him down,” laughed Miss Oliver.

“Would I?” cried outraged Susan. “Would I, Miss Oliver? I would rub him down with coal oil, Miss Oliver — and leave it to blister. That is what I would do and that you may tie to. A pain in his shoulder, indeed! He will have pains all over him before he is through with what he has started.”

“We are told to love our enemies, Susan,” said the doctor solemnly.

“Yes, our enemies, but not King George’s enemies, doctor dear,” retorted Susan crushingly. She was so well pleased with herself over this flattening out of the doctor completely that she even smiled as she polished her glasses. Susan had never given in to glasses before, but she had done so at last in order to be able to read the war news — and not a dispatch got by her. “Can you tell me, Miss Oliver, how to pronounce M-l-a-w-a and B-z-u-r-a and P-r-z-e-m-y-s-l?”

“That last is a conundrum which nobody seems to have solved yet, Susan. And I can make only a guess at the others.”

“These foreign names are far from being decent, in my opinion,” said disgusted Susan.

“I dare say the Austrians and Russians would think Saskatchewan and Musquodoboit about as bad, Susan,” said Miss Oliver. “The Serbians have done wonderfully of late. They have captured Belgrade.”

“And sent the Austrian creatures packing across the Danube with a flea in their ear,” said Susan with a relish, as she settled down to examine a map of Eastern Europe, prodding each locality with the knitting needle to brand it on her memory. “Cousin Sophia said awhile ago that Serbia was done for, but I told her there was still such a thing as an overruling Providence, doubt it who might. It says here that the slaughter was terrible. For all they were foreigners it is awful to think of so many men being killed, Mrs. Dr. dear — for they are scarce enough as it is.”

Rilla was upstairs relieving her over-charged feelings by writing in her diary.

“Things have all ‘gone catawampus,’ as Susan says, with me this week. Part of it was my own fault and part of it wasn’t, and I seem to be equally unhappy over both parts.

“I went to town the other day to buy a new winter hat. It was the first time nobody insisted on coming with me to help me select it, and I felt that mother had really given up thinking of me as a child. And I found the dearest hat — it was simply bewitching. It was a velvet hat, of the very shade of rich green that was made for me. It just goes with my hair and complexion beautifully, bringing out the red-brown shades and what Miss Oliver calls my ‘creaminess’ so well. Only once before in my life have I come across that precise shade of green. When I was twelve I had a little beaver hat of it, and all the girls in school were wild over it. Well, as soon as I saw this hat I felt that I simply must have it — and have it I did. The price was dreadful. I will not put it down here because I don’t want my descendants to know I was guilty of paying so much for a hat, in war-time, too, when everybody is — or should be — trying to be economical.

“When I got home and tried on the hat again in my room I was assailed by qualms. Of course, it was very becoming; but somehow it seemed too elaborate and fussy for church going and our quiet little doings in the Glen — too conspicuous, in short. It hadn’t seemed so at the milliner’s but here in my little white room it did. And that dreadful price tag! And the starving Belgians! When mother saw the hat and the tag she just looked at me. Mother is some expert at looking. Father says she looked him into love with her years ago in Avonlea school and I can well believe it — though I have heard a weird tale of her banging him over the head with a slate at the very beginning of their acquaintance. Mother was a limb when she was a little girl, I understand, and even up to the time when Jem went away she was full of ginger. But let me return to my mutton — that is to say, my new green velvet hat.

“‘Do you think, Rilla,’ mother said quietly — far too quietly—’that it was right to spend so much for a hat, especially when the need of the world is so great?’

“‘I paid for it out of my own allowance, mother,’ I exclaimed.

“‘That is not the point. Your allowance is based on the principle of a reasonable amount for each thing you need. If you pay too much for one thing you must cut off somewhere else and that is not satisfactory. But if you think you did right, Rilla, I have no more to say. I leave it to your conscience.’

“I wish mother would not leave things to my conscience! And anyway, what was I to do? I couldn’t take that hat back — I had worn it to a concert in town — I had to keep it! I was so uncomfortable that I flew into a temper — a cold, calm, deadly temper.

“‘Mother,’ I said haughtily, ‘I am sorry you disapprove of my hat—’

“‘Not of the hat exactly,’ said mother, ‘though I consider it in doubtful taste for so young a girl — but of the price you paid for it.’

“Being interrupted didn’t improve my temper, so I went on, colder and calmer and deadlier than ever, just as if mother had not spoken.

“‘ — but I have to keep it now. However, I promise you that I will not get another hat for three years or for the duration of the war, if it lasts

longer than that. Even you' — oh, the sarcasm I put into the 'you' — 'cannot say that what I paid was too much when spread over at least three years.'

“‘You will be very tired of that hat before three years, Rilla,’ said mother, with a provoking grin, which, being interpreted, meant that I wouldn’t stick it out.

“‘Tired or not, I will wear it that long,’ I said: and then I marched upstairs and cried to think that I had been sarcastic to mother.

“I hate that hat already. But three years or the duration of the war, I said, and three years or the duration of the war it shall be. I vowed and I shall keep my vow, cost what it will.

“That is one of the ‘catawampus’ things. The other is that I have quarrelled with Irene Howard — or she quarrelled with me — or, no, we both quarrelled.

“The Junior Red Cross met here yesterday. The hour of meeting was halfpast two but Irene came at halfpast one, because she got the chance of a drive down from the Upper Glen. Irene hasn’t been a bit nice to me since the fuss about the eats; and besides I feel sure she resents not being president. But I have been determined that things should go smoothly, so I have never taken any notice, and when she came yesterday she seemed so nice and sweet again that I hoped she had got over her huffiness and we could be the chums we used to be.

“But as soon as we sat down Irene began to rub me the wrong way. I saw her cast a look at my new knitting-bag. All the girls have always said Irene was jealous-minded and I would never believe them before. But now I feel that perhaps she is.

“The first thing she did was to pounce on Jims — Irene pretends to adore babies — pick him out of his cradle and kiss him all over his face. Now, Irene knows perfectly well that I don’t like to have Jims kissed like that. It is not hygienic. After she had worried him till he began to fuss, she looked at me and gave quite a nasty little laugh but she said, oh, so sweetly,

“‘Why, Rilla, darling, you look as if you thought I was poisoning the baby.’

“‘Oh, no, I don’t, Irene,’ I said — every bit as sweetly, ‘but you know Morgan says that the only place a baby should be kissed is on its forehead, for fear of germs, and that is my rule with Jims.’

“‘Dear me, am I so full of germs?’ said Irene plaintively. I knew she was making fun of me and I began to boil inside — but outside no sign of a simmer. I was determined I would not scrap with Irene.

“Then she began to bounce Jims. Now, Morgan says bouncing is almost the worst thing that can be done to a baby. I never allow Jims to be bounced. But Irene bounced him and that exasperating child liked it. He smiled — for the very first time. He is four months old and he has never smiled once before. Not even mother or Susan have been able to coax that thing to smile, try as they would. And here he was smiling because Irene Howard bounced him! Talk of gratitude!

“I admit that smile made a big difference in him. Two of the dearest dimples came out in his cheeks and his big brown eyes seemed full of laughter. The way Irene raved over those dimples was silly, I consider. You would have supposed she thought she had really brought them into existence. But I sewed steadily and did not enthuse, and soon Irene got tired of bouncing Jims and put him back in his cradle. He did not like that after being played with, and he began to cry and was fussy the rest of the afternoon, whereas if Irene had only left him alone he would not have been a bit of trouble.

“Irene looked at him and said, ‘Does he often cry like that?’ as if she had never heard a baby crying before.

“I explained patiently that children have to cry so many minutes per day in order to expand their lungs. Morgan says so.

“‘If Jims didn’t cry at all I’d have to make him cry for at least twenty minutes,’ I said.

“‘Oh, indeed!’ said Irene, laughing as if she didn’t believe me. ‘Morgan on the Care of Infants’ was upstairs or I would soon have

convinced her. Then she said Jims didn't have much hair — she had never seen a four months' old baby so bald.

"Of course, I knew Jims hadn't much hair — yet; but Irene said it in a tone that seemed to imply it was my fault that he hadn't any hair. I said I had seen dozens of babies every bit as bald as Jims, and Irene said, Oh very well, she hadn't meant to offend me — when I wasn't offended.

"It went on like that the rest of the hour — Irene kept giving me little digs all the time. The girls have always said she was revengeful like that if she were peeved about anything; but I never believed it before; I used to think Irene just perfect, and it hurt me dreadfully to find she could stoop to this. But I corked up my feelings and sewed away for dear life on a Belgian child's nightgown.

"Then Irene told me the meanest, most contemptible thing that someone had said about Walter. I won't write it down — I can't. Of course, she said it made her furious to hear it and all that — but there was no need for her to tell me such a thing even if she did hear it. She simply did it to hurt me.

"I just exploded. 'How dare you come here and repeat such a thing about my brother, Irene Howard?' I exclaimed. 'I shall never forgive you — never. Your brother hasn't enlisted — hasn't any idea of enlisting.'

"'Why Rilla, dear, I didn't say it,' said Irene. 'I told you it was Mrs. George Burr. And I told her—'

"'I don't want to hear what you told her. Don't you ever speak to me again, Irene Howard.'

"Oh course, I shouldn't have said that. But it just seemed to say itself. Then the other girls all came in a bunch and I had to calm down and act the hostess' part as well as I could. Irene paired off with Olive Kirk all the rest of the afternoon and went away without so much as a look. So I suppose she means to take me at my word and I don't care, for I do not want to be friends with a girl who could repeat such a falsehood about Walter. But I feel unhappy over it for all that. We've always been such good chums and until lately Irene was lovely to me; and now another

illusion has been stripped from my eyes and I feel as if there wasn't such a thing as real true friendship in the world.

"Father got old Joe Mead to build a kennel for Dog Monday in the corner of the shipping-shed today. We thought perhaps Monday would come home when the cold weather came but he wouldn't. No earthly influence can coax Monday away from that shed even for a few minutes. There he stays and meets every train. So we had to do something to make him comfortable. Joe built the kennel so that Monday could lie in it and still see the platform, so we hope he will occupy it.

"Monday has become quite famous. A reporter of the Enterprise came out from town and photographed him and wrote up the whole story of his faithful vigil. It was published in the Enterprise and copied all over Canada. But that doesn't matter to poor little Monday, Jem has gone away — Monday doesn't know where or why — but he will wait until he comes back. Somehow it comforts me: it's foolish, I suppose, but it gives me a feeling that Jem will come back or else Monday wouldn't keep on waiting for him.

"Jims is snoring beside me in his cradle. It is just a cold that makes him snore — not adenoids. Irene had a cold yesterday and I know she gave it to him, kissing him. He is not quite such a nuisance as he was; he has got some backbone and can sit up quite nicely, and he loves his bath now and splashes unsmilingly in the water instead of twisting and shrieking. Oh, shall I ever forget those first two months! I don't know how I lived through them. But here I am and here is Jims and we both are going to 'carry on.' I tickled him a little bit tonight when I undressed him — I wouldn't bounce him but Morgan doesn't mention tickling — just to see if he would smile for me as well as Irene. And he did — and out popped the dimples. What a pity his mother couldn't have seen them!

"I finished my sixth pair of socks today. With the first three I got Susan to set the heel for me. Then I thought that was a bit of shirking, so I learned to do it myself. I hate it — but I have done so many things I hate since 4th of August that one more or less doesn't matter. I just think of Jem joking about the mud on Salisbury Plain and I go at them."

Dark and Bright

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At Christmas the college boys and girls came home and for a little while Ingleside was gay again. But all were not there — for the first time one was missing from the circle round the Christmas table. Jem, of the steady lips and fearless eyes, was far away, and Rilla felt that the sight of his vacant chair was more than she could endure. Susan had taken a stubborn freak and insisted on setting out Jem's place for him as usual, with the twisted little napkin ring he had always had since a boy, and the odd, high Green Gables goblet that Aunt Marilla had once given him and from which he always insisted on drinking.

"That blessed boy shall have his place, Mrs. Dr. dear," said Susan firmly, "and do not you feel over it, for you may be sure he is here in spirit and next Christmas he will be here in the body. Wait you till the Big Push comes in the spring and the war will be over in a jiffy."

They tried to think so, but a shadow stalked in the background of their determined merrymaking. Walter, too, was quiet and dull, all through the holidays. He showed Rilla a cruel, anonymous letter he had received at Redmond — a letter far more conspicuous for malice than for patriotic indignation.

"Nevertheless, all it says is true, Rilla."

Rilla had caught it from him and thrown it into the fire.

"There isn't one word of truth in it," she declared hotly. "Walter, you've got morbid — as Miss Oliver says she gets when she broods too long over one thing."

"I can't get away from it at Redmond, Rilla. The whole college is aflame over the war. A perfectly fit fellow, of military age, who doesn't join up is looked upon as a shirker and treated accordingly. Dr. Milne, the English professor, who has always made a special pet of me, has two sons in khaki; and I can feel the change in his manner towards me."

“It’s not fair — you’re not fit.”

“Physically I am. Sound as a bell. The unfitness is in the soul and it’s a taint and a disgrace. There, don’t cry, Rilla. I’m not going if that’s what you’re afraid of. The Piper’s music rings in my ears day and night — but I cannot follow.”

“You would break mother’s heart and mine if you did,” sobbed Rilla. “Oh, Walter, one is enough for any family.”

The holidays were an unhappy time for her. Still, having Nan and Di and Walter and Shirley home helped in the enduring of things. A letter and book came for her from Kenneth Ford, too; some sentences in the letter made her cheeks burn and her heart beat — until the last paragraph, which sent an icy chill over everything.

“My ankle is about as good as new. I’ll be fit to join up in a couple of months more, Rilla-my-Rilla. It will be some feeling to get into khaki all right. Little Ken will be able to look the whole world in the face then and owe not any man. It’s been rotten lately, since I’ve been able to walk without limping. People who don’t know look at me as much as to say ‘Slacker!’ Well, they won’t have the chance to look it much longer.”

“I hate this war,” said Rilla bitterly, as she gazed out into the maple grove that was a chill glory of pink and gold in the winter sunset.

“Nineteen-fourteen has gone,” said Dr. Blythe on New Year’s Day. “Its sun, which rose fairly, has set in blood. What will nineteen-fifteen bring?”

“Victory!” said Susan, for once laconic.

“Do you really believe we’ll win the war, Susan?” said Miss Oliver drearily. She had come over from Lowbridge to spend the day and see Walter and the girls before they went back to Redmond. She was in a rather blue and cynical mood and inclined to look on the dark side.

“‘Believe’ we’ll win the war!” exclaimed Susan. “No, Miss Oliver, dear, I do not believe — I know. That does not worry me. What does worry me is the trouble and expense of it all. But then you cannot make omelets without breaking eggs, so we must just trust in God and make big guns.”

“Sometimes I think the big guns are better to trust in than God,” said Miss Oliver defiantly.

“No, no, dear, you do not. The Germans had the big guns at the Marne, had they not? But Providence settled them. Do not ever forget that. Just hold on to that when you feel inclined to doubt. Clutch hold of the sides of your chair and sit tight and keep saying, ‘Big guns are good but the Almighty is better, and He is on our side, no matter what the Kaiser says about it.’ I would have gone crazy many a day lately, Miss Oliver, dear, if I had not sat tight and repeated that to myself. My cousin Sophia is, like you, somewhat inclined to despond. ‘Oh, dear me, what will we do if the Germans ever get here,’ she wailed to me yesterday. ‘Bury them,’ said I, just as offhand as that. ‘There is plenty of room for the graves.’ Cousin Sophia said that I was flippant but I was not flippant, Miss Oliver, dear, only calm and confident in the British navy and our Canadian boys. I am like old Mr. William Pollock of the Harbour Head. He is very old and has been ill for a long time, and one night last week he was so low that his daughter-in-law whispered to some one that she thought he was dead. ‘Darn it, I ain’t,’ he called right out — only, Miss Oliver, dear, he did not use so mild a word as ‘darn’ — ‘darn it, I ain’t, and I don’t mean to die until the Kaiser is well licked.’ Now, that, Miss Oliver, dear,” concluded Susan, “is the kind of spirit I admire.”

“I admire it but I can’t emulate it,” sighed Gertrude. “Before this, I have always been able to escape from the hard things of life for a little while by going into dreamland, and coming back like a giant refreshed. But I can’t escape from this.”

“Nor I,” said Mrs. Blythe. “I hate going to bed now. All my life I’ve liked going to bed, to have a gay, mad, splendid half-hour of imagining things before sleeping. Now I imagine them still. But such different things.”

“I am rather glad when the time comes to go to bed,” said Miss Oliver. “I like the darkness because I can be myself in it — I needn’t smile or talk bravely. But sometimes my imagination gets out of hand, too, and I see what you do — terrible things — terrible years to come.”

“I am very thankful that I never had any imagination to speak of,” said Susan. “I have been spared that. I see by this paper that the Crown Prince

is killed again. Do you suppose there is any hope of his staying dead this time? And I also see that Woodrow Wilson is going to write another note. I wonder,” concluded Susan, with the bitter irony she had of late begun to use when referring to the poor President, “if that man’s schoolmaster is alive.”

In January Jims was five months old and Rilla celebrated the anniversary by shortening him.

“He weighs fourteen pounds,” she announced jubilantly. “Just exactly what he should weigh at five months, according to Morgan.”

There was no longer any doubt in anybody’s mind that Jims was getting positively pretty. His little cheeks were round and firm and faintly pink, his eyes were big and bright, his tiny paws had dimples at the root of every finger. He had even begun to grow hair, much to Rilla’s unspoken relief. There was a pale golden fuzz all over his head that was distinctly visible in some lights. He was a good infant, generally sleeping and digesting as Morgan decreed. Occasionally he smiled but he had never laughed, in spite of all efforts to make him. This worried Rilla also, because Morgan said that babies usually laughed aloud from the third to the fifth month. Jims was five months and had no notion of laughing. Why hadn’t he? Wasn’t he normal?

One night Rilla came home late from a recruiting meeting at the Glen where she had been giving patriotic recitations. Rilla had never been willing to recite in public before. She was afraid of her tendency to lisp, which had a habit of reviving if she were doing anything that made her nervous. When she had first been asked to recite at the Upper Glen meeting she had refused. Then she began to worry over her refusal. Was it cowardly? What would Jem think if he knew? After two days of worry Rilla phoned to the president of the Patriotic Society that she would recite. She did, and lisped several times, and lay awake most of the night in an agony of wounded vanity. Then two nights after she recited again at Harbour Head. She had been at Lowbridge and over-harbour since then and had become resigned to an occasional lisp. Nobody except herself seemed to mind it. And she was so earnest and appealing and shining-eyed! More

than one recruit joined up because Rilla's eyes seemed to look right at him when she passionately demanded how could men die better than fighting for the ashes of their fathers and the temples of their gods, or assured her audience with thrilling intensity that one crowded hour of glorious life was worth an age without a name. Even stolid Miller Douglas was so fired one night that it took Mary Vance a good hour to talk him back to sense. Mary Vance said bitterly that if Rilla Blythe felt as bad as she had pretended to feel over Jem's going to the front she wouldn't be urging other girls' brothers and friends to go.

On this particular night Rilla was tired and cold and very thankful to creep into her warm nest and cuddle down between her blankets, though as usual with a sorrowful wonder how Jem and Jerry were faring. She was just getting warm and drowsy when Jims suddenly began to cry — and kept on crying.

Rilla curled herself up in her bed and determined she would let him cry. She had Morgan behind her for justification. Jims was warm, physically comfortable — his cry wasn't the cry of pain — and had his little tummy as full as was good for him. Under such circumstances it would be simply spoiling him to fuss over him, and she wasn't going to do it. He could cry until he got good and tired and ready to go to sleep again.

Then Rilla's imagination began to torment her. Suppose, she thought, I was a tiny, helpless creature only five months old, with my father somewhere in France and my poor little mother, who had been so worried about me, in the graveyard. Suppose I was lying in a basket in a big, black room, without one speck of light, and nobody within miles of me, for all I could see or know. Suppose there wasn't a human being anywhere who loved me — for a father who had never seen me couldn't love me very much, especially when he had never written a word to or about me. Wouldn't I cry, too? Wouldn't I feel just so lonely and forsaken and frightened that I'd have to cry?

Rilla hopped out. She picked Jims out of his basket and took him into her own bed. His hands were cold, poor mite. But he had promptly ceased

to cry. And then, as she held him close to her in the darkness, suddenly Jims laughed — a real, gurgly, chuckly, delighted, delightful laugh.

“Oh, you dear little thing!” exclaimed Rilla. “Are you so pleased at finding you’re not all alone, lost in a huge, big, black room?” Then she knew she wanted to kiss him and she did. She kissed his silky, scented little head, she kissed his chubby little cheek, she kissed his little cold hands. She wanted to squeeze him — to cuddle him, just as she used to squeeze and cuddle her kittens. Something delightful and yearning and brooding seemed to have taken possession of her. She had never felt like this before.

In a few minutes Jims was sound asleep; and, as Rilla listened to his soft, regular breathing and felt the little body warm and contented against her, she realized that — at last — she loved her war-baby.

“He has got to be — such — a — darling,” she thought drowsily, as she drifted off to slumberland herself.

In February Jem and Jerry and Robert Grant were in the trenches and a little more tension and dread was added to the Ingleside life. In March “Yiprez,” as Susan called it, had come to have a bitter significance. The daily list of casualties had begun to appear in the papers and no one at Ingleside ever answered the telephone without a horrible cold shrinking — for it might be the stationmaster phoning up to say a telegram had come from overseas. No one at Ingleside ever got up in the morning without a sudden piercing wonder over what the day might bring.

“And I used to welcome the mornings so,” thought Rilla.

Yet the round of life and duty went steadily on and every week or so one of the Glen lads who had just the other day been a rollicking schoolboy went into khaki.

“It is bitter cold out tonight, Mrs. Dr. dear,” said Susan, coming in out of the clear starlit crispness of the Canadian winter twilight. “I wonder if the boys in the trenches are warm.”

“How everything comes back to this war,” cried Gertrude Oliver. “We can’t get away from it — not even when we talk of the weather. I never go out these dark cold nights myself without thinking of the men in the

trenches — not only our men but everybody's men. I would feel the same if there were nobody I knew at the front. When I snuggle down in my comfortable bed I am ashamed of being comfortable. It seems as if it were wicked of me to be so when many are not."

"I saw Mrs. Meredith down at the store," said Susan, "and she tells me that they are really troubled over Bruce, he takes things so much to heart. He has cried himself to sleep for a week, over the starving Belgians. 'Oh, mother,' he will say to her, so beseeching-like, 'surely the babies are never hungry — oh, not the babies, mother! Just say the babies are not hungry, mother.' And she cannot say it because it would not be true, and she is at her wits' end. They try to keep such things from him but he finds them out and then they cannot comfort him. It breaks my heart to read about them myself, Mrs. Dr. dear, and I cannot console myself with the thought that the tales are not true. When I read a novel that makes me want to weep I just say severely to myself, 'Now, Susan Baker, you know that is all a pack of lies.' But we must carry on. Jack Crawford says he is going to the war because he is tired of farming. I hope he will find it a pleasant change. And Mrs. Richard Elliott over-harbour is worrying herself sick because she used to be always scolding her husband about smoking up the parlour curtains. Now that he has enlisted she wishes she had never said a word to him. You know Josiah Cooper and William Daley, Mrs. Dr. dear. They used to be fast friends but they quarrelled twenty years ago and have never spoken since. Well, the other day Josiah went to William and said right out, 'Let us be friends. 'Tain't any time to be holding grudges.' William was real glad and held out his hand, and they sat down for a good talk. And in less than half an hour they had quarrelled again, over how the war ought to be fought, Josiah holding that the Dardanelles expedition was rank folly and William maintaining that it was the one sensible thing the Allies had done. And now they are madder at each other than ever and William says Josiah is as bad a pro-German as Whiskers-on-the-Moon. Whiskers-on-the-moon vows he is no pro-German but calls himself a pacifist, whatever that may be. It is nothing proper or Whiskers would not be it and that you may tie to. He says that the big British victory at New Chapelle cost more

than it was worth and he has forbid Joe Milgrave to come near the house because Joe ran up his father's flag when the news came. Have you noticed, Mrs. Dr. dear, that the Czar has changed that Prish name to Premysl, which proves that the man had good sense, Russian though he is? Joe Vickers told me in the store that he saw a very queer looking thing in the sky tonight over Lowbridge way. Do you suppose it could have been a Zeppelin, Mrs. Dr. dear?"

"I do not think it very likely, Susan."

"Well, I would feel easier about it if Whiskers-on-the-moon were not living in the Glen. They say he was seen going through strange manoeuvres with a lantern in his back yard one night lately. Some people think he was signalling."

"To whom — or what?"

"Ah, that is the mystery, Mrs. Dr. dear. In my opinion the Government would do well to keep an eye on that man if it does not want us to be all murdered in our beds some night. Now I shall just look over the papers a minute before going to write a letter to little Jem. Two things I never did, Mrs. Dr. dear, were write letters and read politics. Yet here I am doing both regular and I find there is something in politics after all. Whatever Woodrow Wilson means I cannot fathom but I am hoping I will puzzle it out yet."

Susan, in her pursuit of Wilson and politics, presently came upon something that disturbed her and exclaimed in a tone of bitter disappointment,

"That devilish Kaiser has only a boil after all."

"Don't swear, Susan," said Dr. Blythe, pulling a long face.

"'Devilish' is not swearing, doctor, dear. I have always understood that swearing was taking the name of the Almighty in vain?"

"Well, it isn't — ahem — refined," said the doctor, winking at Miss Oliver.

"No, doctor, dear, the devil and the Kaiser — if so be that they are really two different people — are not refined. And you cannot refer to them in a refined way. So I abide by what I said, although you may notice

that I am careful not to use such expressions when young Rilla is about. And I maintain that the papers have no right to say that the Kaiser has pneumonia and raise people's hopes, and then come out and say he has nothing but a boil. A boil, indeed! I wish he was covered with them."

Susan stalked out to the kitchen and settled down to write to Jem; deeming him in need of some home comfort from certain passages in his letter that day.

"We're in an old wine cellar tonight, dad," he wrote, "in water to our knees. Rats everywhere — no fire — a drizzling rain coming down — rather dismal. But it might be worse. I got Susan's box today and everything was in tip-top order and we had a feast. Jerry is up the line somewhere and he says the rations are rather worse than Aunt Martha's ditto used to be. But here they're not bad — only monotonous. Tell Susan I'd give a year's pay for a good batch of her monkey-faces; but don't let that inspire her to send any for they wouldn't keep.

"We have been under fire since the last week in February. One boy — he was a Nova Scotian — was killed right beside me yesterday. A shell burst near us and when the mess cleared away he was lying dead — not mangled at all — he just looked a little startled. It was the first time I'd been close to anything like that and it was a nasty sensation, but one soon gets used to horrors here. We're in an absolutely different world. The only things that are the same are the stars — and they are never in their right places, somehow.

"Tell mother not to worry — I'm all right — fit as a fiddle — and glad I came. There's something across from us here that has got to be wiped out of the world, that's all — an emanation of evil that would otherwise poison life for ever. It's got to be done, dad, however long it takes, and whatever it costs, and you tell the Glen people this for me. They don't realize yet what it is has broken loose — I didn't when I first joined up. I thought it was fun. Well, it isn't! But I'm in the right place all right — make no mistake about that. When I saw what had been done here to homes and gardens and people — well, dad, I seemed to see a gang of Huns marching through Rainbow Valley and the Glen, and the garden at

Ingleside. There were gardens over here — beautiful gardens with the beauty of centuries — and what are they now? Mangled, desecrated things! We are fighting to make those dear old places where we had played as children, safe for other boys and girls — fighting for the preservation and safety of all sweet, wholesome things.

“Whenever any of you go to the station be sure to give Dog Monday a double pat for me. Fancy the faithful little beggar waiting there for me like that! Honestly, dad, on some of these dark cold nights in the trenches, it heartens and braces me up no end to think that thousands of miles away at the old Glen station there is a small spotted dog sharing my vigil.

“Tell Rilla I’m glad her war-baby is turning out so well, and tell Susan that I’m fighting a good fight against both Huns and cooties.”

“Mrs. Dr. dear,” whispered Susan solemnly, “what are cooties?”

Mrs. Blythe whispered back and then said in reply to Susan’s horrified ejaculations, “It’s always like that in the trenches, Susan.”

Susan shook her head and went away in grim silence to re-open a parcel she had sewed up for Jem and slip in a fine tooth comb.

In the Days of Langemarck

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“How can spring come and be beautiful in such a horror,” wrote Rilla in her diary. “When the sun shines and the fluffy yellow catkins are coming out on the willow-trees down by the brook, and the garden is beginning to be beautiful I can’t realize that such dreadful things are happening in Flanders. But they are!

“This past week has been terrible for us all, since the news came of the fighting around Ypres and the battles of Langemarck and St. Julien. Our Canadian boys have done splendidly — General French says they ‘saved the situation,’ when the Germans had all but broken through. But I can’t feel pride or exultation or anything but a gnawing anxiety over Jem and Jerry and Mr. Grant. The casualty lists are coming out in the papers every day — oh, there are so many of them. I can’t bear to read them for fear I’d find Jem’s name — for there have been cases where people have seen their boys’ names in the casualty lists before the official telegram came. As for the telephone, for a day or two I just refused to answer it, because I thought I could not endure the horrible moment that came between saying ‘Hello’ and hearing the response. That moment seemed a hundred years long, for I was always dreading to hear ‘There is a telegram for Dr. Blythe.’ Then, when I had shirked for a while, I was ashamed of leaving it all for mother or Susan, and now I make myself go. But it never gets any easier. Gertrude teaches school and reads compositions and sets examination papers just as she always has done, but I know her thoughts are over in Flanders all the time. Her eyes haunt me.

“And Kenneth is in khaki now, too. He has got a lieutenant’s commission and expects to go overseas in midsummer, so he wrote me. There wasn’t much else in the letter — he seemed to be thinking of nothing but going overseas. I shall not see him again before he goes — perhaps I will never see him again. Sometimes I ask myself if that evening

at Four Winds was all a dream. It might as well be — it seems as if it happened in another life lived years ago — and everybody has forgotten it but me.

“Walter and Nan and Di came home last night from Redmond. When Walter stepped off the train Dog Monday rushed to meet him, frantic with joy. I suppose he thought Jem would be there, too. After the first moment, he paid no attention to Walter and his pats, but just stood there, wagging his tail nervously and looking past Walter at the other people coming out, with eyes that made me choke up, for I couldn’t help thinking that, for all we knew, Monday might never see Jem come off that train again. Then, when all the people were out, Monday looked up at Walter, gave his hand a little lick as if to say, ‘I know it isn’t your fault he didn’t come — excuse me for feeling disappointed,’ and then he trotted back to his shed, with that funny little sidelong waggle of his that always makes it seem that his hind legs are travelling directly away from the point at which his forelegs are aiming.

“We tried to coax him home with us — Di even got down and kissed him between the eyes and said, ‘Monday, old duck, won’t you come up with us just for the evening?’ And Monday said — he did!— ‘I am very sorry but I can’t. I’ve got a date to meet Jem here, you know, and there’s a train goes through at eight.’

“It’s lovely to have Walter back again though he seems quiet and sad, just as he was at Christmas. But I’m going to love him hard and cheer him up and make him laugh as he used to. It seems to me that every day of my life Walter means more to me.

“The other evening Susan happened to say that the mayflowers were out in Rainbow Valley. I chanced to be looking at mother when Susan spoke. Her face changed and she gave a queer little choked cry. Most of the time mother is so spunky and gay you would never guess what she feels inside; but now and then some little thing is too much for her and we see under the surface. ‘Mayflowers!’ she said. ‘Jem brought me mayflowers last year!’ and she got up and went out of the room. I would have rushed off to Rainbow Valley and brought her an armful of

mayflowers, but I knew that wasn't what she wanted. And after Walter got home last night he slipped away to the valley and brought mother home all the mayflowers he could find. Nobody had said a word to him about it — he just remembered himself that Jem used to bring mother the first mayflowers and so he brought them in Jem's place. It shows how tender and thoughtful he is. And yet there are people who send him cruel letters!

"It seems strange that we can go in with ordinary life just as if nothing were happening overseas that concerned us, just as if any day might not bring us awful news. But we can and do. Susan is putting in the garden, and mother and she are housecleaning, and we Junior Reds are getting up a concert in aid of the Belgians. We have been practising for a month and having no end of trouble and bother with cranky people. Miranda Pryor promised to help with a dialogue and when she had her part all learnt her father put his foot down and refused to allow her to help at all. I am not blaming Miranda exactly, but I do think she might have a little more spunk sometimes. If she put her foot down once in a while she might bring her father to terms, for she is all the housekeeper he has and what would he do if she 'struck'? If I were in Miranda's shoes I'd find some way of managing Whiskers-on-the-moon. I would horsewhip him, or bite him, if nothing else would serve. But Miranda is a meek and obedient daughter whose days should be long in the land.

"I couldn't get anyone else to take the part, because nobody liked it, so finally I had to take it myself. Olive Kirk is on the concert committee and goes against me in every single thing. But I got my way in asking Mrs. Channing to come out from town and sing for us, anyhow. She is a beautiful singer and will draw such a crowd that we will make more than we will have to pay her. Olive Kirk thought our local talent good enough and Minnie Clow won't sing at all now in the choruses because she would be so nervous before Mrs. Channing. And Minnie is the only good alto we have! There are times when I am so exasperated that I feel tempted to wash my hands of the whole affair; but after I dance round my room a few times in sheer rage I cool down and have another whack at it. Just at present I am racked with worry for fear the Isaac Reeses are taking

whooping-cough. They have all got a dreadful cold and there are five of them who have important parts in the programme and if they go and develop whooping-cough what shall I do? Dick Reese's violin solo is to be one of our titbits and Kit Reese is in every tableau and the three small girls have the cutest flag-drill. I've been toiling for weeks to train them in it, and now it seems likely that all my trouble will go for nothing.

"Jims cut his first tooth today. I am very glad, for he is nearly nine months old and Mary Vance has been insinuating that he is awfully backward about cutting his teeth. He has begun to creep but doesn't crawl as most babies do. He trots about on all fours and carries things in his mouth like a little dog. Nobody can say he isn't up to schedule time in the matter of creeping anyway — away ahead of it indeed, since ten months is Morgan's average for creeping. He is so cute, it will be a shame if his dad never sees him. His hair is coming on nicely too, and I am not without hope that it will be curly.

"Just for a few minutes, while I've been writing of Jims and the concert, I've forgotten Ypres and the poison gas and the casualty lists. Now it all rushes back, worse than ever. Oh, if we could just know that Jem is all right! I used to be so furious with Jem when he called me Spider. And now, if he would just come whistling through the hall and call out, 'Hello, Spider,' as he used to do, I would think it the loveliest name in the world."

Rilla put away her diary and went out to the garden. The spring evening was very lovely. The long, green, seaward-looking glen was filled with dusk, and beyond it were meadows of sunset. The harbour was radiant, purple here, azure there, opal elsewhere. The maple grove was beginning to be misty green. Rilla looked about her with wistful eyes. Who said that spring was the joy of the year? It was the heartbreak of the year. And the pale-purply mornings and the daffodil stars and the wind in the old pine were so many separate pangs of the heartbreak. Would life ever be free from dread again?

"It's good to see P.E.I. twilight once more," said Walter, joining her. "I didn't really remember that the sea was so blue and the roads so red and

the wood nooks so wild and fairy haunted. Yes, the fairies still abide here. I vow I could find scores of them under the violets in Rainbow Valley.”

Rilla was momentarily happy. This sounded like the Walter of yore. She hoped he was forgetting certain things that had troubled him.

“And isn’t the sky blue over Rainbow Valley?” she said, responding to his mood. “Blue — blue — you’d have to say ‘blue’ a hundred times before you could express how blue it is.”

Susan wandered by, her head tied up with a shawl, her hands full of garden implements. Doc, stealthy and wild-eyed, was shadowing her steps among the spirea bushes.

“The sky may be blue,” said Susan, “but that cat has been Hyde all day so we will likely have rain tonight and by the same token I have rheumatism in my shoulder.”

“It may rain — but don’t think rheumatism, Susan — think violets,” said Walter gaily — rather too gaily, Rilla thought.

Susan considered him unsympathetic.

“Indeed, Walter dear, I do not know what you mean by thinking violets,” she responded stiffly, “and rheumatism is not a thing to be joked about, as you may some day realize for yourself. I hope I am not of the kind that is always complaining of their aches and pains, especially now when the news is so terrible. Rheumatism is bad enough but I realize, and none better, that it is not to be compared to being gassed by the Huns.”

“Oh, my God, no!” exclaimed Walter passionately. He turned and went back to the house.

Susan shook her head. She disapproved entirely of such ejaculations. “I hope he will not let his mother hear him talking like that,” she thought as she stacked the hoes and rake away.

Rilla was standing among the budding daffodils with tear-filled eyes. Her evening was spoiled; she detested Susan, who had somehow hurt Walter; and Jem — had Jem been gassed? Had he died in torture?

“I can’t endure this suspense any longer,” said Rilla desperately.

But she endured it as the others did for another week. Then a letter came from Jem. He was all right.

“I’ve come through without a scratch, dad. Don’t know how I or any of us did it. You’ll have seen all about it in the papers — I can’t write of it. But the Huns haven’t got through — they won’t get through. Jerry was knocked stiff by a shell one time, but it was only the shock. He was all right in a few days. Grant is safe, too.”

Nan had a letter from Jerry Meredith. “I came back to consciousness at dawn,” he wrote. “Couldn’t tell what had happened to me but thought that I was done for. I was all alone and afraid — terribly afraid. Dead men were all around me, lying on the horrible grey, slimy fields. I was woefully thirsty — and I thought of David and the Bethlehem water — and of the old spring in Rainbow Valley under the maples. I seemed to see it just before me — and you standing laughing on the other side of it — and I thought it was all over with me. And I didn’t care. Honestly, I didn’t care. I just felt a dreadful childish fear of loneliness and of those dead men around me, and a sort of wonder how this could have happened to me. Then they found me and carted me off and before long I discovered that there wasn’t really anything wrong with me. I’m going back to the trenches tomorrow. Every man is needed there that can be got.”

“Laughter is gone out of the world,” said Faith Meredith, who had come over to report on her letters. “I remember telling old Mrs. Taylor long ago that the world was a world of laughter. But it isn’t so any longer.”

“It’s a shriek of anguish,” said Gertrude Oliver.

“We must keep a little laughter, girls,” said Mrs. Blythe. “A good laugh is as good as a prayer sometimes — only sometimes,” she added under her breath. She had found it very hard to laugh during the three weeks she had just lived through — she, Anne Blythe, to whom laughter had always come so easily and freshly. And what hurt most was that Rilla’s laughter had grown so rare — Rilla whom she used to think laughed overmuch. Was all the child’s girlhood to be so clouded? Yet how strong and clever and womanly she was growing! How patiently she knitted and sewed and manipulated those uncertain Junior Reds! And how wonderful she was with Jims.

“She really could not do better for that child than if she had raised a baker’s dozen, Mrs. Dr. dear,” Susan had avowed solemnly. “Little did I ever expect it of her on the day she landed here with that soup tureen.”

A Slice of Humble Pie

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“I am very much afraid, Mrs. Dr. dear,” said Susan, who had been on a pilgrimage to the station with some choice bones for Dog Monday, “that something terrible has happened. Whiskers-on-the-moon came off the train from Charlottetown and he was looking pleased. I do not remember that I ever saw him with a smile on in public before. Of course he may have just been getting the better of somebody in a cattle deal but I have an awful presentiment that the Huns have broken through somewhere.”

Perhaps Susan was unjust in connecting Mr. Pryor’s smile with the sinking of the Lusitania, news of which circulated an hour later when the mail was distributed. But the Glen boys turned out that night in a body and broke all his windows in a fine frenzy of indignation over the Kaiser’s doings.

“I do not say they did right and I do not say they did wrong,” said Susan, when she heard of it. “But I will say that I wouldn’t have minded throwing a few stones myself. One thing is certain — Whiskers-on-the-moon said in the post office the day the news came, in the presence of witnesses, that folks who could not stay home after they had been warned deserved no better fate. Norman Douglas is fairly foaming at the mouth over it all. ‘If the devil doesn’t get those men who sunk the Lusitania then there is no use in there being a devil,’ he was shouting in Carter’s store last night. Norman Douglas always has believed that anybody who opposed him was on the side of the devil, but a man like that is bound to be right once in a while. Bruce Meredith is worrying over the babies who were drowned. And it seems he prayed for something very special last Friday night and didn’t get it, and was feeling quite disgruntled over it. But when he heard about the Lusitania he told his mother that he understood now why God didn’t answer his prayer — He was too busy attending to the souls of all the people who went down on the Lusitania.

That child's brain is a hundred years older than his body, Mrs. Dr. dear. As for the Lusitania, it is an awful occurrence, whatever way you look at it. But Woodrow Wilson is going to write a note about it, so why worry? A pretty president!" and Susan banged her pots about wrathfully. President Wilson was rapidly becoming anathema in Susan's kitchen.

Mary Vance dropped in one evening to tell the Ingleside folks that she had withdrawn all opposition to Miller Douglas's enlisting.

"This Lusitania business was too much for me," said Mary brusquely. "When the Kaiser takes to drowning innocent babies it's high time somebody told him where he gets off at. This thing must be fought to a finish. It's been soaking into my mind slow but I'm on now. So I up and told Miller he could go as far as I was concerned. Old Kitty Alec won't be converted though. If every ship in the world was submarined and every baby drowned, Kitty wouldn't turn a hair. But I flatter myself that it was me kept Miller back all along and not the fair Kitty. I may have deceived myself — but we shall see."

They did see. The next Sunday Miller Douglas walked into the Glen Church beside Mary Vance in khaki. And Mary was so proud of him that her white eyes fairly blazed. Joe Milgrave, back under the gallery, looked at Miller and Mary and then at Miranda Pryor, and sighed so heavily that every one within a radius of three pews heard him and knew what his trouble was. Walter Blythe did not sigh. But Rilla, scanning his face anxiously, saw a look that cut into her heart. It haunted her for the next week and made an undercurrent of soreness in her soul, which was externally being harrowed up by the near approach of the Red Cross concert and the worries connected therewith. The Reese cold had not developed into whooping-cough, so that tangle was straightened out. But other things were hanging in the balance; and on the very day before the concert came a regretful letter from Mrs. Channing saying that she could not come to sing. Her son, who was in Kingsport with his regiment, was seriously ill with pneumonia, and she must go to him at once.

The members of the concert committee looked at each other in blank dismay. What was to be done?

“This comes of depending on outside help,” said Olive Kirk, disagreeably.

“We must do something,” said Rilla, too desperate to care for Olive’s manner. “We’ve advertised the concert everywhere — and crowds are coming — there’s even a big party coming out from town — and we were short enough of music as it was. We must get some one to sing in Mrs. Channing’s place.”

“I don’t know who you can get at this late date,” said Olive. “Irene Howard could do it; but it is not likely she will after the way she was insulted by our society.”

“How did our society insult her?” asked Rilla, in what she called her ‘cold-pale tone.’ Its coldness and pallor did not daunt Olive.

“You insulted her,” she answered sharply. “Irene told me all about it — she was literally heartbroken. You told her never to speak to you again — and Irene told me she simply could not imagine what she had said or done to deserve such treatment. That was why she never came to our meetings again but joined in with the Lowbridge Red Cross. I do not blame her in the least, and I, for one, will not ask her to lower herself by helping us out of this scrape.”

“You don’t expect me to ask her?” giggled Amy MacAllister, the other member of the committee. “Irene and I haven’t spoken for a hundred years. Irene is always getting ‘insulted’ by somebody. But she is a lovely singer, I’ll admit that, and people would just as soon hear her as Mrs. Channing.”

“It wouldn’t do any good if you did ask her,” said Olive significantly. “Soon after we began planning this concert, back in April, I met Irene in town one day and asked her if she wouldn’t help us out. She said she’d love to but she really didn’t see how she could when Rilla Blythe was running the programme, after the strange way Rilla had behaved to her. So there it is and here we are, and a nice failure our concert will be.”

Rilla went home and shut herself up in her room, her soul in a turmoil. She would not humiliate herself by apologizing to Irene Howard! Irene had been as much in the wrong as she had been; and she had told such

mean, distorted versions of their quarrel everywhere, posing as a puzzled, injured martyr. Rilla could never bring herself to tell her side of it. The fact that a slur at Walter was mixed up in it tied her tongue. So most people believed that Irene had been badly used, except a few girls who had never liked her and sided with Rilla. And yet — the concert over which she had worked so hard was going to be a failure. Mrs. Channing's four solos were the feature of the whole programme.

"Miss Oliver, what do you think about it?" she asked in desperation.

"I think Irene is the one who should apologize," said Miss Oliver. "But unfortunately my opinion will not fill the blanks in your programme."

"If I went and apologized meekly to Irene she would sing, I am sure," sighed Rilla. "She really loves to sing in public. But I know she'll be nasty about it — I feel I'd rather do anything than go. I suppose I should go — if Jem and Jerry can face the Huns surely I can face Irene Howard, and swallow my pride to ask a favour of her for the good of the Belgians. Just at present I feel that I cannot do it but for all that I have a presentiment that after supper you'll see me meekly trotting through Rainbow Valley on my way to the Upper Glen Road."

Rilla's presentiment proved correct. After supper she dressed herself carefully in her blue, beaded crepe — for vanity is harder to quell than pride and Irene always saw any flaw or shortcoming in another girl's appearance. Besides, as Rilla had told her mother one day when she was nine years old, "It is easier to behave nicely when you have your good clothes on."

Rilla did her hair very becomingly and donned a long raincoat for fear of a shower. But all the while her thoughts were concerned with the coming distasteful interview, and she kept rehearsing mentally her part in it. She wished it were over — she wished she had never tried to get up a Belgian Relief concert — she wished she had not quarreled with Irene. After all, disdainful silence would have been much more effective in meeting the slur upon Walter. It was foolish and childish to fly out as she had done — well, she would be wiser in the future, but meanwhile a large

and very unpalatable slice of humble pie had to be eaten, and Rilla Blythe was no fonder of that wholesome article of diet than the rest of us.

By sunset she was at the door of the Howard house — a pretentious abode, with white scroll-work round the eaves and an eruption of bay-windows on all its sides. Mrs. Howard, a plump, voluble dame, met Rilla gushingly and left her in the parlour while she went to call Irene. Rilla threw off her raincoat and looked at herself critically in the mirror over the mantel. Hair, hat, and dress were satisfactory — nothing there for Miss Irene to make fun of. Rilla remembered how clever and amusing she used to think Irene's biting little comments about other girls. Well, it had come home to her now.

Presently, Irene skimmed down, elegantly gowned, with her pale, straw-coloured hair done in the latest and most extreme fashion, and an over-luscious atmosphere of perfume enveloping her.

"Why how do you do, Miss Blythe?" she said sweetly. "This is a very unexpected pleasure."

Rilla had risen to take Irene's chilly fingertips and now, as she sat down again, she saw something that temporarily stunned her. Irene saw it too, as she sat down, and a little amused, impertinent smile appeared on her lips and hovered there during the rest of the interview.

On one of Rilla's feet was a smart little steel-buckled shoe and a filmy blue silk stocking. The other was clad in a stout and rather shabby boot and black lisle!

Poor Rilla! She had changed, or begun to change her boots and stockings after she had put on her dress. This was the result of doing one thing with your hands and another with your brain. Oh, what a ridiculous position to be in — and before Irene Howard of all people — Irene, who was staring at Rilla's feet as if she had never seen feet before! And once she had thought Irene's manner perfection! Everything that Rilla had prepared to say vanished from her memory. Vainly trying to tuck her unlucky foot under her chair, she blurted out a blunt statement.

"I have come to athk a favour of you, Irene."

There — lisping! Oh, she had been prepared for humiliation but not to this extent! Really, there were limits!

“Yes?” said Irene in a cool, questioning tone, lifting her shallowly-set, insolent eyes to Rilla’s crimson face for a moment and then dropping them again as if she could not tear them from their fascinated gaze at the shabby boot and the gallant shoe.

Rilla gathered herself together. She would not lisp — she would be calm and composed.

“Mrs. Channing cannot come because her son is ill in Kingsport, and I have come on behalf of the committee to ask you if you will be so kind as to sing for us in her place.” Rilla enunciated every word so precisely and carefully that she seemed to be reciting a lesson.

“It’s something of a fiddler’s invitation, isn’t it?” said Irene, with one of her disagreeable smiles.

“Olive Kirk asked you to help when we first thought of the concert and you refused,” said Rilla.

“Why, I could hardly help — then — could I?” asked Irene plaintively. “After you ordered me never to speak to you again? It would have been very awkward for us both, don’t you think?”

Now for the humble pie.

“I want to apologize to you for saying that, Irene.” said Rilla steadily. “I should not have said it and I have been very sorry ever since. Will you forgive me?”

“And sing at your concert?” said Irene sweetly and insultingly.

“If you mean,” said Rilla miserably, “that I would not be apologizing to you if it were not for the concert perhaps that is true. But it is also true that I have felt ever since it happened that I should not have said what I did and that I have been sorry for it all winter. That is all I can say. If you feel you can’t forgive me I suppose there is nothing more to be said.”

“Oh, Rilla dear, don’t snap me up like that,” pleaded Irene. “Of course I’ll forgive you — though I did feel awfully about it — how awfully I hope you’ll never know. I cried for weeks over it. And I hadn’t said or done a thing!”

Rilla choked back a retort. After all, there was no use in arguing with Irene, and the Belgians were starving.

“Don’t you think you can help us with the concert,” she forced herself to say. Oh, if only Irene would stop looking at that boot! Rilla could just hear her giving Olive Kirk an account of it.

“I don’t see how I really can at the last moment like this,” protested Irene. “There isn’t time to learn anything new.”

“Oh, you have lots of lovely songs that nobody in the Glen ever heard before,” said Rilla, who knew Irene had been going to town all winter for lessons and that this was only a pretext. “They will all be new down there.”

“But I have no accompanist,” protested Irene.

“Una Meredith can accompany you,” said Rilla.

“Oh, I couldn’t ask her,” sighed Irene. “We haven’t spoken since last fall. She was so hateful to me the time of our Sunday-school concert that I simply had to give her up.”

Dear, dear, was Irene at feud with everybody? As for Una Meredith being hateful to anybody, the idea was so farcical that Rilla had much ado to keep from laughing in Irene’s very face.

“Miss Oliver is a beautiful pianist and can play any accompaniment at sight,” said Rilla desperately. “She will play for you and you could run over your songs easily tomorrow evening at Ingleside before the concert.”

“But I haven’t anything to wear. My new evening-dress isn’t home from Charlottetown yet, and I simply cannot wear my old one at such a big affair. It is too shabby and old-fashioned.”

“Our concert,” said Rilla slowly, “is in aid of Belgian children who are starving to death. Don’t you think you could wear a shabby dress once for their sake, Irene?”

“Oh, don’t you think those accounts we get of the conditions of the Belgians are very much exaggerated?” said Irene. “I’m sure they can’t be actually starving you know, in the twentieth century. The newspapers always colour things so highly.”

Rilla concluded that she had humiliated herself enough. There was such a thing as self-respect. No more coaxing, concert or no concert. She got up, boot and all.

“I am sorry you can’t help us, Irene, but since you cannot we must do the best we can.”

Now this did not suit Irene at all. She desired exceedingly to sing at that concert, and all her hesitations were merely by way of enhancing the boon of her final consent. Besides, she really wanted to be friends with Rilla again. Rilla’s wholehearted, ungrudging adoration had been very sweet incense to her. And Ingleside was a very charming house to visit, especially when a handsome college student like Walter was home. She stopped looking at Rilla’s feet.

“Rilla, darling, don’t be so abrupt. I really want to help you, if I can manage it. Just sit down and let’s talk it over.”

“I’m sorry, but I can’t. I have to be home soon — Jims has to be settled for the night, you know.”

“Oh, yes — the baby you are bringing up by the book. It’s perfectly sweet of you to do it when you hate children so. How cross you were just because I kissed him! But we’ll forget all that and be chums again, won’t we? Now, about the concert — I dare say I can run into town on the morning train after my dress, and out again on the afternoon one in plenty of time for the concert, if you’ll ask Miss Oliver to play for me. I couldn’t — she’s so dreadfully haughty and supercilious that she simply paralyses poor little me.”

Rilla did not waste time or breath defending Miss Oliver. She coolly thanked Irene, who had suddenly become very amiable and gushing, and got away. She was very thankful the interview was over. But she knew now that she and Irene could never be the friends they had been. Friendly, yes — but friends, no. Nor did she wish it. All winter she had felt under her other and more serious worries, a little feeling of regret for her lost chum. Now it was suddenly gone. Irene was not as Mrs. Elliott would say, of the race that knew Joseph. Rilla did not say or think that she had outgrown Irene. Had the thought occurred to her she would have considered it absurd

when she was not yet seventeen and Irene was twenty. But it was the truth. Irene was just what she had been a year ago — just what she would always be. Rilla Blythe's nature in that year had changed and matured and deepened. She found herself seeing through Irene with a disconcerting clearness — discerning under all her superficial sweetness, her pettiness, her vindictiveness, her insincerity, her essential cheapness. Irene had lost for ever her faithful worshipper.

But not until Rilla had traversed the Upper Glen Road and found herself in the moon-dappled solitude of Rainbow Valley did she fully recover her composure of spirit. Then she stopped under a tall wild plum that was ghostly white and fair in its misty spring bloom and laughed.

“There is only one thing of importance just now — and that is that the Allies win the war,” she said aloud. “Therefore, it follows without dispute that the fact that I went to see Irene Howard with odd shoes and stockings on is of no importance whatever. Nevertheless, I, Bertha Marilla Blythe, swear solemnly with the moon as witness” — Rilla lifted her hand dramatically to the said moon—“that I will never leave my room again without looking carefully at both my feet.”

The Valley of Decision

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Susan kept the flag flying at Ingleside all the next day, in honour of Italy's declaration of war.

“And not before it was time, Mrs. Dr. dear, considering the way things have begun to go on the Russian front. Say what you will, those Russians are kittle cattle, the grand duke Nicholas to the contrary notwithstanding. It is a fortunate thing for Italy that she has come in on the right side, but whether it is as fortunate for the Allies I will not predict until I know more about Italians than I do now. However, she will give that old reprobate of a Francis Joseph something to think about. A pretty Emperor indeed — with one foot in the grave and yet plotting wholesale murder” — and Susan thumped and kneaded her bread with as much vicious energy as she could have expended in punching Francis Joseph himself if he had been so unlucky as to fall into her clutches.

Walter had gone to town on the early train, and Nan offered to look after Jims for the day and so set Rilla free. Rilla was wildly busy all day, helping to decorate the Glen hall and seeing to a hundred last things. The evening was beautiful, in spite of the fact that Mr. Pryor was reported to have said that he “hoped it would rain pitch forks points down,” and to have wantonly kicked Miranda's dog as he said it. Rilla, rushing home from the hall, dressed hurriedly. Everything had gone surprisingly well at the last; Irene was even then downstairs practising her songs with Miss Oliver; Rilla was excited and happy, forgetful even of the Western front for the moment. It gave her a sense of achievement and victory to have brought her efforts of weeks to such a successful conclusion. She knew that there had not lacked people who thought and hinted that Rilla Blythe had not the tact or patience to engineer a concert programme. She had shown them! Little snatches of song bubbled up from her lips as she dressed. She thought she was looking very well. Excitement brought a

faint, becoming pink into her round creamy cheeks, quite drowning out her few freckles, and her hair gleamed with red-brown lustre. Should she wear crab-apple blossoms in it, or her little fillet of pearls? After some agonised wavering she decided on the crab-apple blossoms and tucked the white waxen cluster behind her left ear. Now for a final look at her feet. Yes, both slippers were on. She gave the sleeping Jims a kiss — what a dear little warm, rosy, satin face he had — and hurried down the hill to the hall. Already it was filling — soon it was crowded. Her concert was going to be a brilliant success.

The first three numbers were successfully over. Rilla was in the little dressing-room behind the platform, looking out on the moonlit harbour and rehearsing her own recitations. She was alone, the rest of the performers being in the larger room on the other side. Suddenly she felt two soft bare arms slipping round her waist, then Irene Howard dropped a light kiss on her cheek.

“Rilla, you sweet thing, you’re looking simply angelic tonight. You have spunk — I thought you would feel so badly over Walter’s enlisting that you’d hardly be able to bear up at all, and here you are as cool as a cucumber. I wish I had half your nerve.”

Rilla stood perfectly still. She felt no emotion whatever — she felt nothing. The world of feeling had just gone blank.

“Walter — enlisting” — she heard herself saying — then she heard Irene’s affected little laugh.

“Why, didn’t you know? I thought you did of course, or I wouldn’t have mentioned it. I am always putting my foot in it, aren’t I? Yes, that is what he went to town for to-day — he told me coming out on the train tonight, I was the first person he told. He isn’t in khaki yet — they were out of uniforms — but he will be in a day or two. I always said Walter had as much pluck as anybody. I assure you I felt proud of him, Rilla, when he told me what he’d done. Oh, there’s an end of Rick MacAllister’s reading. I must fly. I promised I’d play for the next chorus — Alice Clow has such a headache.”

She was gone — oh, thank God, she was gone! Rilla was alone again, staring out at the unchanged, dreamlike beauty of moonlit Four Winds. Feeling was coming back to her — a pang of agony so acute as to be almost physical seemed to rend her apart.

“I cannot bear it,” she said. And then came the awful thought that perhaps she could bear it and that there might be years of this hideous suffering before her.

She must get away — she must rush home — she must be alone. She could not go out there and play for drills and give readings and take part in dialogues now. It would spoil half the concert; but that did not matter — nothing mattered. Was this she, Rilla Blythe — this tortured thing, who had been quite happy a few minutes ago? Outside, a quartette was singing “We’ll never let the old flag fall” — the music seemed to be coming from some remote distance. Why couldn’t she cry, as she had cried when Jem told them he must go? If she could cry perhaps this horrible something that seemed to have seized on her very life might let go. But no tears came! Where were her scarf and coat? She must get away and hide herself like an animal hurt to the death.

Was it a coward’s part to run away like this? The question came to her suddenly as if someone else had asked it. She thought of the shambles of the Flanders front — she thought of her brother and her playmate helping to hold those fire-swept trenches. What would they think of her if she shirked her little duty here — the humble duty of carrying the programme through for her Red Cross? But she couldn’t stay — she couldn’t — yet what was it mother had said when Jem went: “When our women fail in courage shall our men be fearless still?” But this — this was unbearable.

Still, she stopped halfway to the door and went back to the window. Irene was singing now; her beautiful voice — the only real thing about her — soared clear and sweet through the building. Rilla knew that the girls’ Fairy Drill came next. Could she go out there and play for it? Her head was aching now — her throat was burning. Oh, why had Irene told her just then, when telling could do no good? Irene had been very cruel. Rilla remembered now that more than once that day she had caught her mother

looking at her with an odd expression. She had been too busy to wonder what it meant. She understood now. Mother had known why Walter went to town but wouldn't tell her until the concert was over. What spirit and endurance mother had!

"I must stay here and see things through," said Rilla, clasping her cold hands together.

The rest of the evening always seemed like a fevered dream to her. Her body was crowded by people but her soul was alone in a torture-chamber of its own. Yet she played steadily for the drills and gave her readings without faltering. She even put on a grotesque old Irish woman's costume and acted the part in the dialogue which Miranda Pryor had not taken. But she did not give her "brogue" the inimitable twist she had given it in the practices, and her readings lacked their usual fire and appeal. As she stood before the audience she saw one face only — that of the handsome, dark-haired lad sitting beside her mother — and she saw that same face in the trenches — saw it lying cold and dead under the stars — saw it pining in prison — saw the light of its eyes blotted out — saw a hundred horrible things as she stood there on the beflagged platform of the Glen hall with her own face whiter than the milky crab-blossoms in her hair. Between her numbers she walked restlessly up and down the little dressing-room. Would the concert never end!

It ended at last. Olive Kirk rushed up and told her exultantly that they had made a hundred dollars. "That's good," Rilla said mechanically. Then she was away from them all — oh, thank God, she was away from them all — Walter was waiting for her at the door. He put his arm through hers silently and they went together down the moonlit road. The frogs were singing in the marshes, the dim, ensilvered fields of home lay all around them. The spring night was lovely and appealing. Rilla felt that its beauty was an insult to her pain. She would hate moonlight for ever.

"You know?" said Walter.

"Yes. Irene told me," answered Rilla chokingly.

"We didn't want you to know till the evening was over. I knew when you came out for the drill that you had heard. Little sister, I had to do it. I

couldn't live any longer on such terms with myself as I have been since the Lusitania was sunk. When I pictured those dead women and children floating about in that pitiless, ice-cold water — well, at first I just felt a sort of nausea with life. I wanted to get out of the world where such a thing could happen — shake its accursed dust from my feet for ever. Then I knew I had to go.”

“There are — plenty — without you.”

“That isn't the point, Rilla-my-Rilla. I'm going for my own sake — to save my soul alive. It will shrink to something small and mean and lifeless if I don't go. That would be worse than blindness or mutilation or any of the things I've feared.”

“You may — be — killed,” Rilla hated herself for saying it — she knew it was a weak and cowardly thing to say — but she had rather gone to pieces after the tension of the evening.

“‘Comes he slow or comes he fast
It is but death who comes at last.’”

quoted Walter. “It's not death I fear — I told you that long ago. One can pay too high a price for mere life, little sister. There's so much hideousness in this war — I've got to go and help wipe it out of the world. I'm going to fight for the beauty of life, Rilla-my-Rilla — that is my duty. There may be a higher duty, perhaps — but that is mine. I owe life and Canada that, and I've got to pay it. Rilla, tonight for the first time since Jem left I've got back my self-respect. I could write poetry,” Walter laughed. “I've never been able to write a line since last August. Tonight I'm full of it. Little sister, be brave — you were so plucky when Jem went.”

“This — is — different,” Rilla had to stop after every word to fight down a wild outburst of sobs. “I loved — Jem — of course — but — when — he went — away — we thought — the war — would soon — be over — and you are — everything to me, Walter.”

“You must be brave to help me, Rilla-my-Rilla. I'm exalted tonight — drunk with the excitement of victory over myself — but there will be other

times when it won't be like this — I'll need your help then."

"When — do — you — go?" She must know the worst at once.

"Not for a week — then we go to Kingsport for training. I suppose we'll go overseas about the middle of July — we don't know."

One week — only one week more with Walter! The eyes of youth did not see how she was to go on living.

When they turned in at the Ingleside gate Walter stopped in the shadows of the old pines and drew Rilla close to him.

"Rilla-my-Rilla, there were girls as sweet and pure as you in Belgium and Flanders. You — even you — know what their fate was. We must make it impossible for such things to happen again while the world lasts. You'll help me, won't you?"

"I'll try, Walter," she said. "Oh, I will try."

As she clung to him with her face pressed against his shoulder she knew that it had to be. She accepted the fact then and there. He must go — her beautiful Walter with his beautiful soul and dreams and ideals. And she had known all along that it would come sooner or later. She had seen it coming to her — coming — coming — as one sees the shadow of a cloud drawing near over a sunny field, swiftly and inescapably. Amid all her pain she was conscious of an odd feeling of relief in some hidden part of her soul, where a little dull, unacknowledged soreness had been lurking all winter. No one — no one could ever call Walter a slacker now.

Rilla did not sleep that night. Perhaps no one at Ingleside did except Jims. The body grows slowly and steadily, but the soul grows by leaps and bounds. It may come to its full stature in an hour. From that night Rilla Blythe's soul was the soul of a woman in its capacity for suffering, for strength, for endurance.

When the bitter dawn came she rose and went to her window. Below her was a big apple-tree, a great swelling cone of rosy blossom. Walter had planted it years ago when he was a little boy. Beyond Rainbow Valley there was a cloudy shore of morning with little ripples of sunrise breaking over it. The far, cold beauty of a lingering star shone above it. Why, in this world of springtime loveliness, must hearts break?

Rilla felt arms go about her lovingly, protectingly. It was mother — pale, large-eyed mother.

“Oh, mother, how can you bear it?” she cried wildly. “Rilla, dear, I’ve known for several days that Walter meant to go. I’ve had time to — to rebel and grow reconciled. We must give him up. There is a Call greater and more insistent than the call of our love — he has listened to it. We must not add to the bitterness of his sacrifice.”

“Our sacrifice is greater than his,” cried Rilla passionately. “Our boys give only themselves. We give them.”

Before Mrs. Blythe could reply Susan stuck her head in at the door, never troubling over such frills of etiquette as knocking. Her eyes were suspiciously red but all she said was,

“Will I bring up your breakfast, Mrs. Dr. dear.”

“No, no, Susan. We will all be down presently. Do you know — that Walter has joined up.”

“Yes, Mrs. Dr. dear. The doctor told me last night. I suppose the Almighty has His own reasons for allowing such things. We must submit and endeavour to look on the bright side. It may cure him of being a poet, at least” — Susan still persisted in thinking that poets and tramps were tarred with the same brush—”and that would be something. But thank God,” she muttered in a lower tone, “that Shirley is not old enough to go.”

“Isn’t that the same thing as thanking Him that some other woman’s son has to go in Shirley’s place?” asked the doctor, pausing on the threshold.

“No, it is not, doctor dear,” said Susan defiantly, as she picked up Jims, who was opening his big dark eyes and stretching up his dimpled paws.

“Do not you put words in my mouth that I would never dream of uttering. I am a plain woman and cannot argue with you, but I do not thank God that anybody has to go. I only know that it seems they do have to go, unless we all want to be Kaiserised — for I can assure you that the Monroe doctrine, whatever it is, is nothing to tie to, with Woodrow Wilson behind it. The Huns, Dr. dear, will never be brought to book by notes. And now,” concluded Susan, tucking Jims in the crook of her gaunt arms and

marching downstairs, “having cried my cry and said my say I shall take a brace, and if I cannot look pleasant I will look as pleasant as I can.”

Until the Day Break

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“The Germans have recaptured Premysl,” said Susan despairingly, looking up from her newspaper, “and now I suppose we will have to begin calling it by that uncivilised name again. Cousin Sophia was in when the mail came and when she heard the news she hove a sigh up from the depths of her stomach, Mrs. Dr. dear, and said, ‘Ah yes, and they will get Petrograd next I have no doubt.’ I said to her, ‘My knowledge of geography is not so profound as I wish it was but I have an idea that it is quite a walk from Premysl to Petrograd.’ Cousin Sophia sighed again and said, ‘The Grand Duke Nicholas is not the man I took him to be.’ ‘Do not let him know that,’ said I. ‘It might hurt his feelings and he has likely enough to worry him as it is. But you cannot cheer Cousin Sophia up, no matter how sarcastic you are, Mrs. Dr. dear. She sighed for the third time and groaned out, ‘But the Russians are retreating fast,’ and I said, ‘Well, what of it? They have plenty of room for retreating, have they not?’ But all the same, Mrs. Dr. dear, though I would never admit it to Cousin Sophia, I do not like the situation on the eastern front.”

Nobody else liked it either; but all summer the Russian retreat went on — a long-drawn-out agony.

“I wonder if I shall ever again be able to await the coming of the mail with feelings of composure — never to speak of pleasure,” said Gertrude Oliver. “The thought that haunts me night and day is — will the Germans smash Russia completely and then hurl their eastern army, flushed with victory, against the western front?”

“They will not, Miss Oliver dear,” said Susan, assuming the role of prophetess.

“In the first place, the Almighty will not allow it, in the second, Grand Duke Nicholas, though he may have been a disappointment to us in some respects, knows how to run away decently and in order, and that is a very

useful knowledge when Germans are chasing you. Norman Douglas declares he is just luring them on and killing ten of them to one he loses. But I am of the opinion he cannot help himself and is just doing the best he can under the circumstances, the same as the rest of us. So do not go so far afield to borrow trouble, Miss Oliver dear, when there is plenty of it already camping on our very doorstep.”

Walter had gone to Kingsport the first of June. Nan, Di and Faith had gone also to do Red Cross work in their vacation. In mid-July Walter came home for a week’s leave before going overseas. Rilla had lived through the days of his absence on the hope of that week, and now that it had come she drank every minute of it thirstily, hating even the hours she had to spend in sleep, they seemed such a waste of precious moments. In spite of its sadness, it was a beautiful week, full of poignant, unforgettable hours, when she and Walter had long walks and talks and silences together. He was all her own and she knew that he found strength and comfort in her sympathy and understanding. It was very wonderful to know she meant so much to him — the knowledge helped her through moments that would otherwise have been unendurable, and gave her power to smile — and even to laugh a little. When Walter had gone she might indulge in the comfort of tears, but not while he was here. She would not even let herself cry at night, lest her eyes should betray her to him in the morning.

On his last evening at home they went together to Rainbow Valley and sat down on the bank of the brook, under the White Lady, where the gay revels of olden days had been held in the cloudless years. Rainbow Valley was roofed over with a sunset of unusual splendour that night; a wonderful grey dusk just touched with starlight followed it; and then came moonshine, hinting, hiding, revealing, lighting up little dells and hollows here, leaving others in dark, velvet shadow.

“When I am ‘somewhere in France,’” said Walter, looking around him with eager eyes on all the beauty his soul loved, “I shall remember these still, dewy, moon-drenched places. The balsam of the fir-trees; the peace of those white pools of moonshine; the ‘strength of the hills’ — what a beautiful old Biblical phrase that is. Rilla! Look at those old hills around

us — the hills we looked up at as children, wondering what lay for us in the great world beyond them. How calm and strong they are — how patient and changeless — like the heart of a good woman. Rilla-my-Rilla, do you know what you have been to me the past year? I want to tell you before I go. I could not have lived through it if it had not been for you, little loving, believing heart.”

Rilla dared not try to speak. She slipped her hand into Walter’s and pressed it hard.

“And when I’m over there, Rilla, in that hell upon earth which men who have forgotten God have made, it will be the thought of you that will help me most. I know you’ll be as plucky and patient as you have shown yourself to be this past year — I’m not afraid for you. I know that no matter what happens, you’ll be Rilla-my-Rilla — no matter what happens.”

Rilla repressed tear and sigh, but she could not repress a little shiver, and Walter knew that he had said enough. After a moment of silence, in which each made an unworded promise to each other, he said, “Now we won’t be sober any more. We’ll look beyond the years — to the time when the war will be over and Jem and Jerry and I will come marching home and we’ll all be happy again.”

“We won’t be — happy — in the same way,” said Rilla.

“No, not in the same way. Nobody whom this war has touched will ever be happy again in quite the same way. But it will be a better happiness, I think, little sister — a happiness we’ve earned. We were very happy before the war, weren’t we? With a home like Ingleside, and a father and mother like ours we couldn’t help being happy. But that happiness was a gift from life and love; it wasn’t really ours — life could take it back at any time. It can never take away the happiness we win for ourselves in the way of duty. I’ve realised that since I went into khaki. In spite of my occasional funks, when I fall to living over things beforehand, I’ve been happy since that night in May. Rilla, be awfully good to mother while I’m away. It must be a horrible thing to be a mother in this war — the mothers and sisters and

wives and sweethearts have the hardest times. Rilla, you beautiful little thing, are you anybody's sweetheart? If you are, tell me before I go."

"No," said Rilla. Then, impelled by a wish to be absolutely frank with Walter in this talk that might be the last they would ever have, she added, blushing wildly in the moonlight, "but if — Kenneth Ford — wanted me to be—"

"I see," said Walter. "And Ken's in khaki, too. Poor little girlie, it's a bit hard for you all round. Well, I'm not leaving any girl to break her heart about me — thank God for that."

Rilla glanced up at the Manse on the hill. She could see a light in Una Meredith's window. She felt tempted to say something — then she knew she must not. It was not her secret: and, anyway, she did not know — she only suspected.

Walter looked about him lingeringly and lovingly. This spot had always been so dear to him. What fun they all had had here lang syne. Phantoms of memory seemed to pace the dappled paths and peep merrily through the swinging boughs — Jem and Jerry, bare-legged, sunburned schoolboys, fishing in the brook and frying trout over the old stone fireplace; Nan and Di and Faith, in their dimpled, fresh-eyed childish beauty; Una the sweet and shy, Carl, poring over ants and bugs, little slangy, sharp-tongued, goodhearted Mary Vance — the old Walter that had been himself lying on the grass reading poetry or wandering through palaces of fancy. They were all there around him — he could see them almost as plainly as he saw Rilla — as plainly as he had once seen the Pied Piper piping down the valley in a vanished twilight. And they said to him, those gay little ghosts of other days, "We were the children of yesterday, Walter — fight a good fight for the children of to-day and tomorrow."

"Where are you, Walter," cried Rilla, laughing a little. "Come back — come back."

Walter came back with a long breath. He stood up and looked about him at the beautiful valley of moonlight, as if to impress on his mind and heart every charm it possessed — the great dark plumes of the firs against

the silvery sky, the stately White Lady, the old magic of the dancing brook, the faithful Tree Lovers, the beckoning, tricky paths.

“I shall see it so in my dreams,” he said, as he turned away.

They went back to Ingleside. Mr. and Mrs. Meredith were there, with Gertrude Oliver, who had come from Lowbridge to say goodbye. Everybody was quite cheerful and bright, but nobody said much about the war being soon over, as they had said when Jem went away. They did not talk about the war at all — and they thought of nothing else. At last they gathered around the piano and sang the grand old hymn:

“Oh God, our help in ages past
Our hope for years to come.
Our shelter from the stormy blast
And our eternal home.”

“We all come back to God in these days of soul-sifting,” said Gertrude to John Meredith. “There have been many days in the past when I didn’t believe in God — not as God — only as the impersonal Great First Cause of the scientists. I believe in Him now — I have to — there’s nothing else to fall back on but God — humbly, starkly, unconditionally.”

“‘Our help in ages past’ — the same yesterday, to-day and for ever,’” said the minister gently. “When we forget God — He remembers us.”

There was no crowd at the Glen Station the next morning to see Walter off. It was becoming a commonplace for a khaki clad boy to board that early morning train after his last leave. Besides his own, only the Manse folk were there, and Mary Vance. Mary had sent her Miller off the week before, with a determined grin, and now considered herself entitled to give expert opinion on how such partings should be conducted.

“The main thing is to smile and act as if nothing was happening,” she informed the Ingleside group. “The boys all hate the sob act like poison. Miller told me I wasn’t to come near the station if I couldn’t keep from bawling. So I got through with my crying beforehand, and at the last I said to him, ‘Good luck, Miller, and if you come back you’ll find I haven’t changed any, and if you don’t come back I’ll always be proud you went,

and in any case don't fall in love with a French girl.' Miller swore he wouldn't, but you never can tell about those fascinating foreign hussies. Anyhow, the last sight he had of me I was smiling to my limit. Gee, all the rest of the day my face felt as if it had been starched and ironed into a smile."

In spite of Mary's advice and example Mrs. Blythe, who had sent Jem off with a smile, could not quite manage one for Walter. But at least no one cried. Dog Monday came out of his lair in the shipping-shed and sat down close to Walter, thumping his tail vigorously on the boards of the platform whenever Walter spoke to him, and looking up with confident eyes, as if to say, "I know you'll find Jem and bring him back to me."

"So long, old fellow," said Carl Meredith cheerfully, when the goodbyes had to be said. "Tell them over there to keep their spirits up — I am coming along presently."

"Me too," said Shirley laconically, proffering a brown paw. Susan heard him and her face turned very grey.

Una shook hands quietly, looking at him with wistful, sorrowful, dark-blue eyes. But then Una's eyes had always been wistful. Walter bent his handsome black head in its khaki cap and kissed her with the warm, comradely kiss of a brother. He had never kissed her before, and for a fleeting moment Una's face betrayed her, if anyone had noticed. But nobody did; the conductor was shouting "all aboard"; everybody was trying to look very cheerful. Walter turned to Rilla; she held his hands and looked up at him. She would not see him again until the day broke and the shadows vanished — and she knew not if that daybreak would be on this side of the grave or beyond it.

"Goodbye," she said.

On her lips it lost all the bitterness it had won through the ages of parting and bore instead all the sweetness of the old loves of all the women who had ever loved and prayed for the beloved.

"Write me often and bring Jims up faithfully, according to the gospel of Morgan," Walter said lightly, having said all his serious things the night before in Rainbow Valley. But at the last moment he took her face between

his hands and looked deep into her gallant eyes. "God bless you, Rilla-my-Rilla," he said softly and tenderly. After all it was not a hard thing to fight for a land that bore daughters like this.

He stood on the rear platform and waved to them as the train pulled out. Rilla was standing by herself, but Una Meredith came to her and the two girls who loved him most stood together and held each other's cold hands as the train rounded the curve of the wooded hill.

Rilla spent an hour in Rainbow Valley that morning about which she never said a word to anyone; she did not even write in her diary about it; when it was over she went home and made rompers for Jims. In the evening she went to a Junior Red Cross committee meeting and was severely businesslike.

"You would never suppose," said Irene Howard to Olive Kirk afterwards, "that Walter had left for the front only this morning. But some people really have no depth of feeling. I often wish I could take things as lightly as Rilla Blythe."

Realism and Romance

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“Warsaw has fallen,” said Dr. Blythe with a resigned air, as he brought the mail in one warm August day.

Gertrude and Mrs. Blythe looked dismally at each other, and Rilla, who was feeding Jims a Morganized diet from a carefully sterilized spoon, laid the said spoon down on his tray, utterly regardless of germs, and said, “Oh, dear me,” in as tragic a tone as if the news had come as a thunderbolt instead of being a foregone conclusion from the preceding week’s dispatches. They had thought they were quite resigned to Warsaw’s fall but now they knew they had, as always, hoped against hope.

“Now, let us take a brace,” said Susan. “It is not the terrible thing we have been thinking. I read a dispatch three columns long in the Montreal Herald yesterday that proved that Warsaw was not important from a military point of view at all. So let us take the military point of view, doctor dear.”

“I read that dispatch, too, and it has encouraged me immensely,” said Gertrude. “I knew then and I know now that it was a lie from beginning to end. But I am in that state of mind where even a lie is a comfort, providing it is a cheerful lie.”

“In that case, Miss Oliver dear, the German official reports ought to be all you need,” said Susan sarcastically. “I never read them now because they make me so mad I cannot put my thoughts properly on my work after a dose of them. Even this news about Warsaw has taken the edge off my afternoon’s plans. Misfortunes never come singly. I spoiled my baking of bread today — and now Warsaw has fallen — and here is little Kitchener bent on choking himself to death.”

Jims was evidently trying to swallow his spoon, germs and all. Rilla rescued him mechanically and was about to resume the operation of

feeding him when a casual remark of her father's sent such a shock and thrill over her that for the second time she dropped that doomed spoon.

"Kenneth Ford is down at Martin West's over-harbour," the doctor was saying. "His regiment was on its way to the front but was held up in Kingsport for some reason, and Ken got leave of absence to come over to the Island."

"I hope he will come up to see us," exclaimed Mrs. Blythe.

"He only has a day or two off, I believe," said the doctor absently.

Nobody noticed Rilla's flushed face and trembling hands. Even the most thoughtful and watchful of parents do not see everything that goes on under their very noses. Rilla made a third attempt to give the long-suffering Jims his dinner, but all she could think of was the question — Would Ken come to see her before he went away? She had not heard from him for a long while. Had he forgotten her completely? If he did not come she would know that he had. Perhaps there was even — some other girl back there in Toronto. Of course there was. She was a little fool to be thinking about him at all. She would not think about him. If he came, well and good. It would only be courteous of him to make a farewell call at Ingleside where he had often been a guest. If he did not come — well and good, too. It did not matter very much. Nobody was going to fret. That was all settled comfortably — she was quite indifferent — but meanwhile Jims was being fed with a haste and recklessness that would have filled the soul of Morgan with horror. Jims himself didn't like it, being a methodical baby, accustomed to swallowing spoonfuls with a decent interval for breath between each. He protested, but his protests availed him nothing. Rilla, as far as the care and feeding of infants was concerned, was utterly demoralized.

Then the telephone-bell rang. There was nothing unusual about the telephone ringing. It rang on an average every ten minutes at Ingleside. But Rilla dropped Jims' spoon again — on the carpet this time — and flew to the 'phone as if life depended on her getting there before anybody else. Jims, his patience exhausted, lifted up his voice and wept.

"Hello, is this Ingleside?"

“Yes.”

“That you, Rilla?” “Yeth — yeth.” Oh, why couldn’t Jims stop howling for just one little minute? Why didn’t somebody come in and choke him?

“Know who’s speaking?”

Oh, didn’t she know! Wouldn’t she know that voice anywhere — at any time?

“It’s Ken — isn’t it?”

“Sure thing. I’m here for a look-in. Can I come up to Ingleside tonight and see you?”

“Of courthe.”

Had he used “you” in the singular or plural sense? Presently she would wring Jims’ neck — oh, what was Ken saying?

“See here, Rilla, can you arrange that there won’t be more than a few dozen people round? Understand? I can’t make my meaning clearer over this bally rural line. There are a dozen receivers down.”

Did she understand! Yes, she understood.

“I’ll try,” she said.

“I’ll be up about eight then. By-by.”

Rilla hung up the ‘phone and flew to Jims. But she did not wring that injured infant’s neck. Instead she snatched him bodily out of his chair, crushed him against her face, kissed him rapturously on his milky mouth, and danced wildly around the room with him in her arms. After this Jims was relieved to find that she returned to sanity, gave him the rest of his dinner properly, and tucked him away for his afternoon nap with the little lullaby he loved best of all. She sewed at Red Cross shirts for the rest of the afternoon and built a crystal castle of dreams, all a-quiver with rainbows. Ken wanted to see her — to see her alone. That could be easily managed. Shirley wouldn’t bother them, father and mother were going to the Manse, Miss Oliver never played gooseberry, and Jims always slept the clock round from seven to seven. She would entertain Ken on the veranda — it would be moonlight — she would wear her white georgette dress and do her hair up — yes, she would — at least in a low knot at the nape of her neck. Mother couldn’t object to that, surely. Oh, how wonderful and

romantic it would be! Would Ken say anything — he must mean to say something or why should he be so particular about seeing her alone? What if it rained — Susan had been complaining about Mr. Hyde that morning! What if some officious Junior Red called to discuss Belgians and shirts? Or, worst of all, what if Fred Arnold dropped in? He did occasionally.

The evening came at last and was all that could be desired in an evening. The doctor and his wife went to the Manse, Shirley and Miss Oliver went they alone knew where, Susan went to the store for household supplies, and Jims went to Dreamland. Rilla put on her georgette gown, knotted up her hair and bound a little double string of pearls around it. Then she tucked a cluster of pale pink baby roses at her belt. Would Ken ask her for a rose for a keepsake? She knew that Jem had carried to the trenches in Flanders a faded rose that Faith Meredith had kissed and given him the night before he left.

Rilla looked very sweet when she met Ken in the mingled moonlight and vine shadows of the big veranda. The hand she gave him was cold and she was so desperately anxious not to lisp that her greeting was prim and precise. How handsome and tall Kenneth looked in his lieutenant's uniform! It made him seem older, too — so much so that Rilla felt rather foolish. Hadn't it been the height of absurdity for her to suppose that this splendid young officer had anything special to say to her, little Rilla Blythe of Glen St. Mary? Likely she hadn't understood him after all — he had only meant that he didn't want a mob of folks around making a fuss over him and trying to lionize him, as they had probably done over-harbour. Yes, of course, that was all he meant — and she, little idiot, had gone and vainly imagined that he didn't want anybody but her. And he would think she had manoeuvred everybody away so that they could be alone together, and he would laugh to himself at her.

"This is better luck than I hoped for," said Ken, leaning back in his chair and looking at her with very unconcealed admiration in his eloquent eyes. "I was sure someone would be hanging about and it was just you I wanted to see, Rilla-my-Rilla."

Rilla's dream castle flashed into the landscape again. This was unmistakable enough certainly — not much doubt as to his meaning here.

"There aren't — so many of us — to poke around as there used to be," she said softly.

"No, that's so," said Ken gently. "Jem and Walter and the girls away — it makes a big blank, doesn't it? But—" he leaned forward until his dark curls almost brushed her hair—"doesn't Fred Arnold try to fill the blank occasionally. I've been told so."

At this moment, before Rilla could make any reply, Jims began to cry at the top of his voice in the room whose open window was just above them — Jims, who hardly ever cried in the evening. Moreover, he was crying, as Rilla knew from experience, with a vim and energy that betokened that he had been already whimpering softly unheard for some time and was thoroughly exasperated. When Jims started in crying like that he made a thorough job of it. Rilla knew that there was no use to sit still and pretend to ignore him. He wouldn't stop; and conversation of any kind was out of the question when such shrieks and howls were floating over your head. Besides, she was afraid Kenneth would think she was utterly unfeeling if she sat still and let a baby cry like that. He was not likely acquainted with Morgan's invaluable volume.

She got up. "Jims has had a nightmare, I think. He sometimes has one and he is always badly frightened by it. Excuse me for a moment."

Rilla flew upstairs, wishing quite frankly that soup tureens had never been invented. But when Jims, at sight of her, lifted his little arms entreatingly and swallowed several sobs, with tears rolling down his cheeks, resentment went out of her heart. After all, the poor darling was frightened. She picked him up gently and rocked him soothingly until his sobs ceased and his eyes closed. Then she essayed to lay him down in his crib. Jims opened his eyes and shrieked a protest. This performance was repeated twice. Rilla grew desperate. She couldn't leave Ken down there alone any longer — she had been away nearly half an hour already. With a resigned air she marched downstairs, carrying Jims, and sat down on the veranda. It was, no doubt, a ridiculous thing to sit and cuddle a contrary

war-baby when your best young man was making his farewell call, but there was nothing else to be done.

Jims was supremely happy. He kicked his little pink-soled feet rapturously out under his white nighty and gave one of his rare laughs. He was beginning to be a very pretty baby; his golden hair curled in silken ringlets all over his little round head and his eyes were beautiful.

“He’s a decorative kiddy all right, isn’t he?” said Ken.

“His looks are very well,” said Rilla, bitterly, as if to imply that they were much the best of him. Jims, being an astute infant, sensed trouble in the atmosphere and realized that it was up to him to clear it away. He turned his face up to Rilla, smiled adorably and said, clearly and beguilingly, “Will — Will.”

It was the very first time he had spoken a word or tried to speak. Rilla was so delighted that she forgot her grudge against him. She forgave him with a hug and kiss. Jims, understanding that he was restored to favour, cuddled down against her just where a gleam of light from the lamp in the livingroom struck across his hair and turned it into a halo of gold against her breast.

Kenneth sat very still and silent, looking at Rilla — at the delicate, girlish silhouette of her, her long lashes, her dented lip, her adorable chin. In the dim moonlight, as she sat with her head bent a little over Jims, the lamplight glinting on her pearls until they glistened like a slender nimbus, he thought she looked exactly like the Madonna that hung over his mother’s desk at home. He carried that picture of her in his heart to the horror of the battlefields of France. He had had a strong fancy for Rilla Blythe ever since the night of the Four Winds dance; but it was when he saw her there, with little Jims in her arms, that he loved her and realized it. And all the while, poor Rilla was sitting, disappointed and humiliated, feeling that her last evening with Ken was spoiled and wondering why things always had to go so contrarily outside of books. She felt too absurd to try to talk. Evidently Ken was completely disgusted, too, since he was sitting there in such stony silence.

Hope revived momentarily when Jims went so thoroughly asleep that she thought it would be safe to lay him down on the couch in the livingroom. But when she came out again Susan was sitting on the veranda, loosening her bonnet strings with the air of one who meant to stay where she was for some time.

“Have you got your baby to sleep?” she asked kindly.

Your baby! Really, Susan might have more tact.

“Yes,” said Rilla shortly.

Susan laid her parcels on the reed table, as one determined to do her duty. She was very tired but she must help Rilla out. Here was Kenneth Ford who had come to call on the family and they were all unfortunately out, and “the poor child” had had to entertain him alone. But Susan had come to her rescue — Susan would do her part no matter how tired she was.

“Dear me, how you have grown up,” she said, looking at Ken’s six feet of khaki uniform without the least awe. Susan had grown used to khaki now, and at sixty-four even a lieutenant’s uniform is just clothes and nothing else. “It is an amazing thing how fast children do grow up. Rilla here, now, is almost fifteen.”

“I’m going on seventeen, Susan,” cried Rilla almost passionately. She was a whole month past sixteen. It was intolerable of Susan.

“It seems just the other day that you were all babies,” said Susan, ignoring Rilla’s protest. “You were really the prettiest baby I ever saw, Ken, though your mother had an awful time trying to cure you of sucking your thumb. Do you remember the day I spanked you?”

“No,” said Ken.

“Oh well, I suppose you would be too young — you were only about four and you were here with your mother and you insisted on teasing Nan until she cried. I had tried several ways of stopping you but none availed, and I saw that a spanking was the only thing that would serve. So I picked you up and laid you across my knee and lambasted you well. You howled at the top of your voice but you left Nan alone after that.”

Rilla was writhing. Hadn't Susan any realization that she was addressing an officer of the Canadian Army? Apparently she had not. Oh, what would Ken think? "I suppose you do not remember the time your mother spanked you either," continued Susan, who seemed to be bent on reviving tender reminiscences that evening. "I shall never, no never, forget it. She was up here one night with you when you were about three, and you and Walter were playing out in the kitchen yard with a kitten. I had a big puncheon of rainwater by the spout which I was reserving for making soap. And you and Walter began quarrelling over the kitten. Walter was at one side of the puncheon standing on a chair, holding the kitten, and you were standing on a chair at the other side. You leaned across that puncheon and grabbed the kitten and pulled. You were always a great hand for taking what you wanted without too much ceremony. Walter held on tight and the poor kitten yelled but you dragged Walter and the kitten half over and then you both lost your balance and tumbled into that puncheon, kitten and all. If I had not been on the spot you would both have been drowned. I flew to the rescue and hauled you all three out before much harm was done, and your mother, who had seen it all from the upstairs window, came down and picked you up, dripping as you were, and gave you a beautiful spanking. Ah," said Susan with a sigh, "those were happy old days at Ingleside."

"Must have been," said Ken. His voice sounded queer and stiff. Rilla supposed he was hopelessly enraged. The truth was he dared not trust his voice lest it betray his frantic desire to laugh.

"Rilla here, now," said Susan, looking affectionately at that unhappy damsel, "never was much spanked. She was a real well-behaved child for the most part. But her father did spank her once. She got two bottles of pills out of his office and dared Alice Clow to see which of them could swallow all the pills first, and if her father had not happened in the nick of time those two children would have been corpses by night. As it was, they were both sick enough shortly after. But the doctor spanked Rilla then and there and he made such a thorough job of it that she never meddled with anything in his office afterwards. We hear a great deal nowadays of

something that is called ‘moral persuasion,’ but in my opinion a good spanking and no nagging afterwards is a much better thing.”

Rilla wondered viciously whether Susan meant to relate all the family spankings. But Susan had finished with the subject and branched off to another cheerful one.

“I remember little Tod MacAllister over-harbour killed himself that very way, eating up a whole box of fruitatives because he thought they were candy. It was a very sad affair. He was,” said Susan earnestly, “the very cutest little corpse I ever laid my eyes on. It was very careless of his mother to leave the fruitatives where he could get them, but she was well-known to be a heedless creature. One day she found a nest of five eggs as she was going across the fields to church with a brand new blue silk dress on. So she put them in the pocket of her petticoat and when she got to church she forgot all about them and sat down on them and her dress was ruined, not to speak of the petticoat. Let me see — would not Tod be some relation of yours? Your great grandmother West was a MacAllister. Her brother Amos was a MacDonaldite in religion. I am told he used to take the jerks something fearful. But you look more like your great grandfather West than the MacAllisters. He died of a paralytic stroke quite early in life.”

“Did you see anybody at the store?” asked Rilla desperately, in the faint hope of directing Susan’s conversation into more agreeable channels.

“Nobody except Mary Vance,” said Susan, “and she was stepping round as brisk as the Irishman’s flea.”

What terrible similes Susan used! Would Kenneth think she acquired them from the family!

“To hear Mary talk about Miller Douglas you would think he was the only Glen boy who had enlisted,” Susan went on. “But of course she always did brag and she has some good qualities I am willing to admit, though I did not think so that time she chased Rilla here through the village with a dried codfish till the poor child fell, heels over head, into the puddle before Carter Flagg’s store.”

Rilla went cold all over with wrath and shame. Were there any more disgraceful scenes in her past that Susan could rake up? As for Ken, he could have howled over Susan's speeches, but he would not so insult the duenna of his lady, so he sat with a preternaturally solemn face which seemed to poor Rilla a haughty and offended one.

"I paid eleven cents for a bottle of ink tonight," complained Susan. "Ink is twice as high as it was last year. Perhaps it is because Woodrow Wilson has been writing so many notes. It must cost him considerable. My cousin Sophia says Woodrow Wilson is not the man she expected him to be — but then no man ever was. Being an old maid, I do not know much about men and have never pretended to, but my cousin Sophia is very hard on them, although she married two of them, which you might think was a fair share. Albert Crawford's chimney blew down in that big gale we had last week, and when Sophia heard the bricks clattering on the roof she thought it was a Zeppelin raid and went into hysterics. And Mrs. Albert Crawford says that of the two things she would have preferred the Zeppelin raid."

Rilla sat limply in her chair like one hypnotized. She knew Susan would stop talking when she was ready to stop and that no earthly power could make her stop any sooner. As a rule, she was very fond of Susan but just now she hated her with a deadly hatred. It was ten o'clock. Ken would soon have to go — the others would soon be home — and she had not even had a chance to explain to Ken that Fred Arnold filled no blank in her life nor ever could. Her rainbow castle lay in ruins round her.

Kenneth got up at last. He realized that Susan was there to stay as long as he did, and it was a three mile walk to Martin West's over-harbour. He wondered if Rilla had put Susan up to this, not wanting to be left alone with him, lest he say something Fred Arnold's sweetheart did not want to hear. Rilla got up, too, and walked silently the length of the veranda with him. They stood there for a moment, Ken on the lower step. The step was half sunk into the earth and mint grew thickly about and over its edge. Often crushed by so many passing feet it gave out its essence freely, and the spicy odour hung round them like a soundless, invisible benediction.

Ken looked up at Rilla, whose hair was shining in the moonlight and whose eyes were pools of allurements. All at once he felt sure there was nothing in that gossip about Fred Arnold.

“Rilla,” he said in a sudden, intense whisper, “you are the sweetest thing.”

Rilla flushed and looked at Susan. Ken looked, too, and saw that Susan’s back was turned. He put his arm about Rilla and kissed her. It was the first time Rilla had ever been kissed. She thought perhaps she ought to resent it but she didn’t. Instead, she glanced timidly into Kenneth’s seeking eyes and her glance was a kiss.

“Rilla-my-Rilla,” said Ken, “will you promise that you won’t let anyone else kiss you until I come back?”

“Yes,” said Rilla, trembling and thrilling.

Susan was turning round. Ken loosened his hold and stepped to the walk.

“Goodbye,” he said casually. Rilla heard herself saying it just as casually. She stood and watched him down the walk, out of the gate, and down the road. When the fir wood hid him from her sight she suddenly said “Oh,” in a choked way and ran down to the gate, sweet blossomy things catching at her skirts as she ran. Leaning over the gate she saw Kenneth walking briskly down the road, over the bars of tree shadows and moonlight, his tall, erect figure grey in the white radiance. As he reached the turn he stopped and looked back and saw her standing amid the tall white lilies by the gate. He waved his hand — she waved hers — he was gone around the turn.

Rilla stood there for a little while, gazing across the fields of mist and silver. She had heard her mother say that she loved turns in roads — they were so provocative and alluring. Rilla thought she hated them. She had seen Jem and Jerry vanish from her around a bend in the road — then Walter — and now Ken. Brothers and playmate and sweetheart — they were all gone, never, it might be, to return. Yet still the Piper piped and the dance of death went on.

When Rilla walked slowly back to the house Susan was still sitting by the veranda table and Susan was sniffing suspiciously.

“I have been thinking, Rilla dear, of the old days in the House of Dreams, when Kenneth’s mother and father were courting and Jem was a little baby and you were not born or thought of. It was a very romantic affair and she and your mother were such chums. To think I should have lived to see her son going to the front. As if she had not had enough trouble in her early life without this coming upon her! But we must take a brace and see it through.”

All Rilla’s anger against Susan had evaporated. With Ken’s kiss still burning on her lips, and the wonderful significance of the promise he had asked thrilling heart and soul, she could not be angry with anyone. She put her slim white hand into Susan’s brown, work-hardened one and gave it a squeeze. Susan was a faithful old dear and would lay down her life for any one of them.

“You are tired, Rilla dear, and had better go to bed,” Susan said, patting her hand. “I noticed you were too tired to talk tonight. I am glad I came home in time to help you out. It is very tiresome trying to entertain young men when you are not accustomed to it.”

Rilla carried Jims upstairs and went to bed, but not before she had sat for a long time at her window reconstructing her rainbow castle, with several added domes and turrets.

“I wonder,” she said to herself, “if I am, or am not, engaged to Kenneth Ford.”

Chapter XVII.

The Weeks Wear By

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Rilla read her first love letter in her Rainbow Valley fir-shadowed nook, and a girl's first love letter, whatever blase, older people may think of it, is an event of tremendous importance in the teens. After Kenneth's regiment had left Kingsport there came a fortnight of dully-aching anxiety and when the congregation sang in Church on Sunday evenings,

“Oh, hear us when we cry to Thee
For those in peril on the sea,”

Rilla's voice always failed her; for with the words came a horribly vivid mind picture of a submarined ship sinking beneath pitiless waves amid the struggles and cries of drowning men. Then word came that Kenneth's regiment had arrived safely in England; and now, at last, here was his letter. It began with something that made Rilla supremely happy for the moment and ended with a paragraph that crimsoned her cheeks with the wonder and thrill and delight of it. Between beginning and ending the letter was just such a jolly, newsy epistle as Ken might have written to anyone; but for the sake of that beginning and ending Rilla slept with the letter under her pillow for weeks, sometimes waking in the night to slip her fingers under and just touch it, and looked with secret pity on other girls whose sweethearts could never have written them anything half so wonderful and exquisite. Kenneth was not the son of a famous novelist for nothing. He “had a way” of expressing things in a few poignant, significant words that seemed to suggest far more than they uttered, and never grew stale or flat or foolish with ever so many scores of readings. Rilla went home from Rainbow Valley as if she flew rather than walked.

But such moments of uplift were rare that autumn. To be sure, there was one day in September when great news came of a big Allied victory in the west and Susan ran out to hoist the flag — the first time she had

hoisted it since the Russian line broke and the last time she was to hoist it for many dismal moons.

“Likely the Big Push has begun at last, Mrs. Dr. dear,” she exclaimed, “and we will soon see the finish of the Huns. Our boys will be home by Christmas now. Hurrah!”

Susan was ashamed of herself for hurrahing the minute she had done it, and apologized meekly for such an outburst of juvenility. “But indeed, Mrs. Dr. dear, this good news has gone to my head after this awful summer of Russian slumps and Gallipoli setbacks.”

“Good news!” said Miss Oliver bitterly. “I wonder if the women whose men have been killed for it will call it good news. Just because our own men are not on that part of the front we are rejoicing as if the victory had cost no lives.”

“Now, Miss Oliver dear, do not take that view of it,” deprecated Susan. “We have not had much to rejoice over of late and yet men were being killed just the same. Do not let yourself slump like poor Cousin Sophia. She said, when the word came, ‘Ah, it is nothing but a rift in the clouds. We are up this week but we will be down the next.’ ‘Well, Sophia Crawford,’ said I, — for I will never give in to her, Mrs. Dr. dear— ‘God himself cannot make two hills without a hollow between them, as I have heard it said, but that is no reason why we should not take the good of the hills when we are on them.’ But Cousin Sophia moaned on. ‘Here is the Gallipolly expedition a failure and the Grand Duke Nicholas sent off, and everyone knows the Czar of Rooshia is a pro-German and the Allies have no ammunition and Bulgaria is going against us. And the end is not yet, for England and France must be punished for their deadly sins until they repent in sackcloth and ashes.’ ‘I think myself,’ I said, ‘that they will do their repenting in khaki and trench mud, and it seems to me that the Huns should have a few sins to repent of also.’ ‘They are instruments in the hands of the Almighty, to purge the garner,’ said Sophia. And then I got mad, Mrs. Dr. dear, and told her I did not and never would believe that the Almighty ever took such dirty instruments in hand for any purpose whatever, and that I did not consider it decent for her to be using the words

of Holy Writ as glibly as she was doing in ordinary conversation. She was not, I told her, a minister or even an elder. And for the time being I squelched her, Mrs. Dr. dear. Cousin Sophia has no spirit. She is very different from her niece, Mrs. Dean Crawford over-harbour. You know the Dean Crawfords had five boys and now the new baby is another boy. All the connection and especially Dean Crawford were much disappointed because their hearts had been set on a girl; but Mrs. Dean just laughed and said, 'Everywhere I went this summer I saw the sign "MEN WANTED" staring me in the face. Do you think I could go and have a girl under such circumstances?' There is spirit for you, Mrs. Dr. dear. But Cousin Sophia would say the child was just so much more cannon fodder."

Cousin Sophia had full range for her pessimism that gloomy autumn, and even Susan, incorrigible old optimist as she was, was hard put to it for cheer. When Bulgaria lined up with Germany Susan only remarked scornfully, "One more nation anxious for a licking," but the Greek tangle worried her beyond her powers of philosophy to endure calmly.

"Constantine of Greece has a German wife, Mrs. Dr. dear, and that fact squelches hope. To think that I should have lived to care what kind of a wife Constantine of Greece had! The miserable creature is under his wife's thumb and that is a bad place for any man to be. I am an old maid and an old maid has to be independent or she will be squashed out. But if I had been a married woman, Mrs. Dr. dear, I would have been meek and humble. It is my opinion that this Sophia of Greece is a minx."

Susan was furious when the news came that Venizelos had met with defeat. "I could spank Constantine and skin him alive afterwards, that I could," she exclaimed bitterly.

"Oh, Susan, I'm surprised at you," said the doctor, pulling a long face. "Have you no regard for the proprieties? Skin him alive by all means but omit the spanking."

"If he had been well spanked in his younger days he might have more sense now," retorted Susan. "But I suppose princes are never spanked, more is the pity. I see the Allies have sent him an ultimatum. I could tell them that it will take more than ultimatums to skin a snake like

Constantine. Perhaps the Allied blockade will hammer sense into his head; but that will take some time I am thinking, and in the meantime what is to become of poor Serbia?"

They saw what became of Serbia, and during the process Susan was hardly to be lived with. In her exasperation she abused everything and everybody except Kitchener, and she fell upon poor President Wilson tooth and claw.

"If he had done his duty and gone into the war long ago we should not have seen this mess in Serbia," she avowed.

"It would be a serious thing to plunge a great country like the United States, with its mixed population, into the war, Susan," said the doctor, who sometimes came to the defence of the President, not because he thought Wilson needed it especially, but from an unholy love of baiting Susan.

"Maybe, doctor dear — maybe! But that makes me think of the old story of the girl who told her grandmother she was going to be married. 'It is a solemn thing to be married,' said the old lady. 'Yes, but it is a solemn thing not to be,' said the girl. And I can testify to that out of my own experience, doctor dear. And I think it is a solemn thing for the Yankees that they have kept out of the war than it would have been if they had gone into it. However, though I do not know much about them, I am of the opinion that we will see them starting something yet, Woodrow Wilson or no Woodrow Wilson, when they get it into their heads that this war is not a correspondence school. They will not," said Susan, energetically waving a saucepan with one hand and a soup ladle with the other, "be too proud to fight then."

On a pale-yellow, windy evening in October Carl Meredith went away. He had enlisted on his eighteenth birthday. John Meredith saw him off with a set face. His two boys were gone — there was only little Bruce left now. He loved Bruce and Bruce's mother dearly; but Jerry and Carl were the sons of the bride of his youth and Carl was the only one of all his children who had Cecilia's very eyes. As they looked lovingly out at him above Carl's uniform the pale minister suddenly remembered the day

when for the first and last time he had tried to whip Carl for his prank with the eel. That was the first time he had realised how much Carl's eyes were like Cecilia's. Now he realised it again once more. Would he ever again see his dead wife's eyes looking at him from his son's face? What a bonny, clean, handsome lad he was! It was — hard — to see him go. John Meredith seemed to be looking at a torn plain strewn with the bodies of "able-bodied men between the ages of eighteen and forty-five." Only the other day Carl had been a little scrap of a boy, hunting bugs in Rainbow Valley, taking lizards to bed with him, and scandalizing the Glen by carrying frogs to Sunday School. It seemed hardly — right — somehow that he should be an "able-bodied man" in khaki. Yet John Meredith had said no word to dissuade him when Carl had told him he must go.

Rilla felt Carl's going keenly. They had always been cronies and playmates. He was only a little older than she was and they had been children in Rainbow Valley together. She recalled all their old pranks and escapades as she walked slowly home alone. The full moon peeped through the scudding clouds with sudden floods of weird illumination, the telephone wires sang a shrill weird song in the wind, and the tall spikes of withered, grey-headed goldenrod in the fence corners swayed and beckoned wildly to her like groups of old witches weaving unholy spells. On such a night as this, long ago, Carl would come over to Ingleside and whistle her out to the gate. "Let's go on a moon-spree, Rilla," he would say, and the two of them would scamper off to Rainbow Valley. Rilla had never been afraid of his beetles and bugs, though she drew a hard and fast line at snakes. They used to talk together of almost everything and were teased about each other at school; but one evening when they were about ten years of age they had solemnly promised, by the old spring in Rainbow Valley, that they would never marry each other. Alice Clow had "crossed out" their names on her slate in school that day, and it came out that "both married." They did not like the idea at all, hence the mutual vow in Rainbow Valley. There was nothing like an ounce of prevention. Rilla laughed over the old memory — and then sighed. That very day a dispatch from some London paper had contained the cheerful announcement that

“the present moment is the darkest since the war began.” It was dark enough, and Rilla wished desperately that she could do something besides waiting and serving at home, as day after day the Glen boys she had known went away. If she were only a boy, speeding in khaki by Carl’s side to the Western front! She had wished that in a burst of romance when Jem had gone, without, perhaps, really meaning it. She meant it now. There were moments when waiting at home, in safety and comfort, seemed an unendurable thing.

The moon burst triumphantly through an especially dark cloud and shadow and silver chased each other in waves over the Glen. Rilla remembered one moonlit evening of childhood when she had said to her mother, “The moon just looks like a sorry, sorry face.” She thought it looked like that still — an agonised, careworn face, as though it looked down on dreadful sights. What did it see on the Western front? In broken Serbia? On shell-swept Gallipoli?

“I am tired,” Miss Oliver had said that day, in a rare outburst of impatience, “of this horrible rack of strained emotions, when every day brings a new horror or the dread of it. No, don’t look reproachfully at me, Mrs. Blythe. There’s nothing heroic about me today. I’ve slumped. I wish England had left Belgium to her fate — I wish Canada had never sent a man — I wish we’d tied our boys to our apron strings and not let one of them go. Oh — I shall be ashamed of myself in half an hour — but at this very minute I mean every word of it. Will the Allies never strike?”

“Patience is a tired mare but she jogs on,” said Susan.

“While the steeds of Armageddon thunder, trampling over our hearts,” retorted Miss Oliver. “Susan, tell me — don’t you ever — didn’t you ever — take spells of feeling that you must scream — or swear — or smash something — just because your torture reaches a point when it becomes unbearable?”

“I have never sworn or desired to swear, Miss Oliver dear, but I will admit,” said Susan, with the air of one determined to make a clean breast of it once and for all, “that I have experienced occasions when it was a relief to do considerable banging.”

“Don’t you think that is a kind of swearing, Susan? What is the difference between slamming a door viciously and saying d — —”

“Miss Oliver dear,” interrupted Susan, desperately determined to save Gertrude from herself, if human power could do it, “you are all tired out and unstrung — and no wonder, teaching those obstreperous youngsters all day and coming home to bad war news. But just you go upstairs and lie down and I will bring you up a cup of hot tea and a bite of toast and very soon you will not want to slam doors or swear.”

“Susan, you’re a good soul — a very pearl of Susans! But, Susan, it would be such a relief — to say just one soft, low, little tiny d—”

“I will bring you a hot-water bottle for the soles of your feet, also,” interposed Susan resolutely, “and it would not be any relief to say that word you are thinking of, Miss Oliver, and that you may tie to.”

“Well, I’ll try the hot-water bottle first,” said Miss Oliver, repenting herself on teasing Susan and vanishing upstairs, to Susan’s intense relief. Susan shook her head ominously as she filled the hot-water bottle. The war was certainly relaxing the standards of behaviour woefully. Here was Miss Oliver admittedly on the point of profanity.

“We must draw the blood from her brain,” said Susan, “and if this bottle is not effective I will see what can be done with a mustard plaster.”

Gertrude rallied and carried on. Lord Kitchener went to Greece, whereat Susan foretold that Constantine would soon experience a change of heart. Lloyd George began to heckle the Allies regarding equipment and guns and Susan said you would hear more of Lloyd George yet. The gallant Anzacs withdrew from Gallipoli and Susan approved the step, with reservations. The siege of Kut-El-Amara began and Susan pored over maps of Mesopotamia and abused the Turks. Henry Ford started for Europe and Susan flayed him with sarcasm. Sir John French was superseded by Sir Douglas Haig and Susan dubiously opined that it was poor policy to swap horses crossing a stream, “though, to be sure, Haig was a good name and French had a foreign sound, say what you might.” Not a move on the great chess-board of king or bishop or pawn escaped Susan, who had once read only Glen St. Mary notes. “There was a time,”

she said sorrowfully, “when I did not care what happened outside of P.E. Island, and now a king cannot have a toothache in Russia or China but it worries me. It may be broadening to the mind, as the doctor said, but it is very painful to the feelings.”

When Christmas came again Susan did not set any vacant places at the festive board. Two empty chairs were too much even for Susan who had thought in September that there would not be one.

“This is the first Christmas that Walter was not home,” Rilla wrote in her diary that night. “Jem used to be away for Christmases up in Avonlea, but Walter never was. I had letters from Ken and him today. They are still in England but expect to be in the trenches very soon. And then — but I suppose we’ll be able to endure it somehow. To me, the strangest of all the strange things since 1914 is how we have all learned to accept things we never thought we could — to go on with life as a matter of course. I know that Jem and Jerry are in the trenches — that Ken and Walter will be soon — that if one of them does not come back my heart will break — yet I go on and work and plan — yes, and even enjoy life by times. There are moments when we have real fun because, just for the moment, we don’t think about things and then — we remember — and the remembering is worse than thinking of it all the time would have been.

“Today was dark and cloudy and tonight is wild enough, as Gertrude says, to please any novelist in search of suitable matter for a murder or elopement. The raindrops streaming over the panes look like tears running down a face, and the wind is shrieking through the maple grove.

“This hasn’t been a nice Christmas Day in any way. Nan had toothache and Susan had red eyes, and assumed a weird and gruesome flippancy of manner to deceive us into thinking she hadn’t; and Jims had a bad cold all day and I’m afraid of croup. He has had croup twice since October. The first time I was nearly frightened to death, for father and mother were both away — father always is away, it seems to me, when any of this household gets sick. But Susan was cool as a fish and knew just what to do, and by morning Jims was all right. That child is a cross between a duck and an imp. He’s a year and four months old, trots about everywhere, and says

quite a few words. He has the cutest little way of calling me “Willa-will.” It always brings back that dreadful, ridiculous, delightful night when Ken came to say goodbye, and I was so furious and happy. Jims is pink and white and big-eyed and curly-haired and every now and then I discover a new dimple in him. I can never quite believe he is really the same creature as that scrawny, yellow, ugly little changeling I brought home in the soup tureen. Nobody has ever heard a word from Jim Anderson. If he never comes back I shall keep Jims always. Everybody here worships and spoils him — or would spoil him if Morgan and I didn’t stand remorselessly in the way. Susan says Jims is the cleverest child she ever saw and can recognize Old Nick when he sees him — this because Jims threw poor Doc out of an upstairs window one day. Doc turned into Mr. Hyde on his way down and landed in a currant bush, spitting and swearing. I tried to console his inner cat with a saucer of milk but he would have none of it, and remained Mr. Hyde the rest of the day. Jims’s latest exploit was to paint the cushion of the big armchair in the sun parlour with molasses; and before anybody found it out Mrs. Fred Clow came in on Red Cross business and sat down on it. Her new silk dress was ruined and nobody could blame her for being vexed. But she went into one of her tempers and said nasty things and gave me such slams about ‘spoiling’ Jims that I nearly boiled over, too. But I kept the lid on till she had waddled away and then I exploded.

“‘The fat, clumsy, horrid old thing,’ I said — and oh, what a satisfaction it was to say it.

“‘She has three sons at the front,’ mother said rebukingly.

“‘I suppose that covers all her shortcomings in manners,’ I retorted. But I was ashamed — for it is true that all her boys have gone and she was very plucky and loyal about it too; and she is a perfect tower of strength in the Red Cross. It’s a little hard to remember all the heroines. Just the same, it was her second new silk dress in one year and that when everybody is — or should be — trying to ‘save and serve.’

“I had to bring out my green velvet hat again lately and begin wearing it. I hung on to my blue straw sailor as long as I could. How I hate the

green velvet hat! It is so elaborate and conspicuous. I don't see how I could ever have liked it. But I vowed to wear it and wear it I will.

"Shirley and I went down to the station this morning to take Little Dog Monday a bang-up Christmas dinner. Dog Monday waits and watches there still, with just as much hope and confidence as ever. Sometimes he hangs around the station house and talks to people and the rest of his time he sits at his little kennel door and watches the track unwinkingly. We never try to coax him home now: we know it is of no use. When Jem comes back, Monday will come home with him; and if Jem — never comes back — Monday will wait there for him as long as his dear dog heart goes on beating.

"Fred Arnold was here last night. He was eighteen in November and is going to enlist just as soon as his mother is over an operation she has to have. He has been coming here very often lately and though I like him so much it makes me uncomfortable, because I am afraid he is thinking that perhaps I could care something for him. I can't tell him about Ken — because, after all, what is there to tell? And yet I don't like to behave coldly and distantly when he will be going away so soon. It is very perplexing. I remember I used to think it would be such fun to have dozens of beaux — and now I'm worried to death because two are too many.

"I am learning to cook. Susan is teaching me. I tried to learn long ago — but no, let me be honest — Susan tried to teach me, which is a very different thing. I never seemed to succeed with anything and I got discouraged. But since the boys have gone away I wanted to be able to make cake and things for them myself and so I started in again and this time I'm getting on surprisingly well. Susan says it is all in the way I hold my mouth and father says my subconscious mind is desirous of learning now, and I dare say they're both right. Anyhow, I can make dandy shortbread and fruitcake. I got ambitious last week and attempted cream puffs, but made an awful failure of them. They came out of the oven flat as flukes. I thought maybe the cream would fill them up again and make them plump but it didn't. I think Susan was secretly pleased. She is past mistress in the art of making cream puffs and it would break her heart if

anyone else here could make them as well. I wonder if Susan tampered — but no, I won't suspect her of such a thing.

“Miranda Pryor spent an afternoon here a few days ago, helping me cut out certain Red Cross garments known by the charming name of ‘vermin shirts.’ Susan thinks that name is not quite decent, so I suggested she call them ‘cootie sarks,’ which is old Highland Sandy’s version of it. But she shook her head and I heard her telling mother later that, in her opinion, ‘cooties’ and ‘sarks’ were not proper subjects for young girls to talk about. She was especially horrified when Jem wrote in his last letter to mother, ‘Tell Susan I had a fine cootie hunt this morning and caught fifty-three!’ Susan positively turned pea-green. ‘Mrs. Dr. dear,’ she said, ‘when I was young, if decent people were so unfortunate as to get — those insects — they kept it a secret if possible. I do not want to be narrow-minded, Mrs. Dr. dear, but I still think it is better not to mention such things.’

“Miranda grew confidential over our vermin shirts and told me all her troubles. She is desperately unhappy. She is engaged to Joe Milgrave and Joe joined up in October and has been training in Charlottetown ever since. Her father was furious when he joined and forbade Miranda ever to have any dealing or communication with him again. Poor Joe expects to go overseas any day and wants Miranda to marry him before he goes, which shows that there have been ‘communications’ in spite of Whiskers-on-the-moon. Miranda wants to marry him but cannot, and she declares it will break her heart.

“‘Why don’t you run away and marry him?’ I said. It didn’t go against my conscience in the least to give her such advice. Joe Milgrave is a splendid fellow and Mr. Pryor fairly beamed on him until the war broke out and I know Mr. Pryor would forgive Miranda very quickly, once it was over and he wanted his housekeeper back. But Miranda shook her silvery head dolefully.

“‘Joe wants me to but I can’t. Mother’s last words to me, as she lay on her dying-bed, were, “Never, never run away, Miranda,” and I promised.’

“Miranda’s mother died two years ago, and it seems, according to Miranda, that her mother and father actually ran away to be married

themselves. To picture Whiskers-on-the-moon as the hero of an elopement is beyond my power. But such was the case and Mrs. Pryor at least lived to repent it. She had a hard life of it with Mr. Pryor, and she thought it was a punishment on her for running away. So she made Miranda promise she would never, for any reason whatever, do it.

“Of course, you cannot urge a girl to break a promise made to a dying mother, so I did not see what Miranda could do unless she got Joe to come to the house when her father was away and marry her there. But Miranda said that couldn’t be managed. Her father seemed to suspect she might be up to something of the sort and he never went away for long at a time, and, of course, Joe couldn’t get leave of absence at an hour’s notice.

“‘No, I shall just have to let Joe go, and he will be killed — I know he will be killed — and my heart will break,’ said Miranda, her tears running down and copiously bedewing the vermin shirts!

“I am not writing like this for lack of any real sympathy with poor Miranda. I’ve just got into the habit of giving things a comical twist if I can, when I’m writing to Jem and Walter and Ken, to make them laugh. I really felt sorry for Miranda who is as much in love with Joe as a china-blue girl can be with anyone and who is dreadfully ashamed of her father’s pro-German sentiments. I think she understood that I did, for she said she had wanted to tell me all about her worries because I had grown so sympathetic this past year. I wonder if I have. I know I used to be a selfish, thoughtless creature — how selfish and thoughtless I am ashamed to remember now, so I can’t be quite so bad as I was.

“I wish I could help Miranda. It would be very romantic to contrive a war-wedding and I should dearly love to get the better of Whiskers-on-the-moon. But at present the oracle has not spoken.”

A War-Wedding

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“I can tell you this Dr. dear,” said Susan, pale with wrath, “that Germany is getting to be perfectly ridiculous.”

They were all in the big Ingleside kitchen. Susan was mixing biscuits for supper. Mrs. Blythe was making shortbread for Jem, and Rilla was compounding candy for Ken and Walter — it had once been “Walter and Ken” in her thoughts but somehow, quite unconsciously, this had changed until Ken’s name came naturally first. Cousin Sophia was also there, knitting. All the boys were going to be killed in the long run, so Cousin Sophia felt in her bones, but they might better die with warm feet than cold ones, so Cousin Sophia knitted faithfully and gloomily.

Into this peaceful scene erupted the doctor, wrathful and excited over the burning of the Parliament Buildings in Ottawa. And Susan became automatically quite as wrathful and excited.

“What will those Huns do next?” she demanded. “Coming over here and burning our Parliament building! Did anyone ever hear of such an outrage?”

“We don’t know that the Germans are responsible for this,” said the doctor — much as if he felt quite sure they were. “Fires do start without their agency sometimes. And Uncle Mark MacAllister’s barn was burnt last week. You can hardly accuse the Germans of that, Susan.”

“Indeed, Dr. dear, I do not know.” Susan nodded slowly and portentously. “Whiskers-on-the-moon was there that very day. The fire broke out half an hour after he was gone. So much is a fact — but I shall not accuse a Presbyterian elder of burning anybody’s barn until I have proof. However, everybody knows, Dr. dear, that both Uncle Mark’s boys have enlisted, and that Uncle Mark himself makes speeches at all the recruiting meetings. So no doubt Germany is anxious to get square with him.”

“I could never speak at a recruiting meeting,” said Cousin Sophia solemnly. “I could never reconcile it to my conscience to ask another woman’s son to go, to murder and be murdered.”

“Could you not?” said Susan. “Well, Sophia Crawford, I felt as if I could ask anyone to go when I read last night that there were no children under eight years of age left alive in Poland. Think of that, Sophia Crawford” — Susan shook a floury finger at Sophia—”not — one — child — under — eight — years — of — age!”

“I suppose the Germans has et ‘em all,” sighed Cousin Sophia.

“Well, no-o-o,” said Susan reluctantly, as if she hated to admit that there was any crime the Huns couldn’t be accused of. “The Germans have not turned cannibal yet — as far as I know. They have died of starvation and exposure, the poor little creatures. There is murdering for you, Cousin Sophia Crawford. The thought of it poisons every bite and sup I take.”

“I see that Fred Carson of Lowbridge has been awarded a Distinguished Conduct Medal,” remarked the doctor, over his local paper.

“I heard that last week,” said Susan. “He is a battalion runner and he did something extra brave and daring. His letter, telling his folks about it, came when his old Grandmother Carson was on her dying-bed. She had only a few minutes more to live and the Episcopal minister, who was there, asked her if she would not like him to pray. ‘Oh yes, yes, you can pray,’ she said impatient-like — she was a Dean, Dr. dear, and the Deans were always high-spirited—’you can pray, but for pity’s sake pray low and don’t disturb me. I want to think over this splendid news and I have not much time left to do it.’ That was Almira Carson all over. Fred was the apple of her eye. She was seventy-five years of age and had not a grey hair in her head, they tell me.”

“By the way, that reminds me — I found a grey hair this morning — my very first,” said Mrs. Blythe.

“I have noticed that grey hair for some time, Mrs. Dr. dear, but I did not speak of it. Thought I to myself, ‘She has enough to bear.’ But now that you have discovered it let me remind you that grey hairs are honourable.”

“I must be getting old, Gilbert.” Mrs. Blythe laughed a trifle ruefully. “People are beginning to tell me I look so young. They never tell you that when you are young. But I shall not worry over my silver thread. I never liked red hair. Gilbert, did I ever tell you of that time, years ago at Green Gables, when I dyed my hair? Nobody but Marilla and I knew about it.”

“Was that the reason you came out once with your hair shingled to the bone?”

“Yes. I bought a bottle of dye from a German Jew pedlar. I fondly expected it would turn my hair black — and it turned it green. So it had to be cut off.”

“You had a narrow escape, Mrs. Dr. dear,” exclaimed Susan. “Of course you were too young then to know what a German was. It was a special mercy of Providence that it was only green dye and not poison.”

“It seems hundreds of years since those Green Gables days,” sighed Mrs. Blythe. “They belonged to another world altogether. Life has been cut in two by the chasm of war. What is ahead I don’t know — but it can’t be a bit like the past. I wonder if those of us who have lived half our lives in the old world will ever feel wholly at home in the new.”

“Have you noticed,” asked Miss Oliver, glancing up from her book, “how everything written before the war seems so far away now, too? One feels as if one was reading something as ancient as the Iliad. This poem of Wordsworth’s — the Senior class have it in their entrance work — I’ve been glancing over it. Its classic calm and repose and the beauty of the lines seem to belong to another planet, and to have as little to do with the present world-welter as the evening star.”

“The only thing that I find much comfort in reading nowadays is the Bible,” remarked Susan, whisking her biscuits into the oven. “There are so many passages in it that seem to me exactly descriptive of the Huns. Old Highland Sandy declares that there is no doubt that the Kaiser is the Anti-Christ spoken of in Revelations, but I do not go as far as that. It would, in my humble opinion, Mrs. Dr. dear, be too great an honour for him.”

Early one morning, several days later, Miranda Pryor slipped up to Ingleside, ostensibly to get some Red Cross sewing, but in reality to talk

over with sympathetic Rilla troubles that were past bearing alone. She brought her dog with her — an overfed, bandy-legged little animal very dear to her heart because Joe Milgrave had given it to her when it was a puppy. Mr. Pryor regarded all dogs with disfavour; but in those days he had looked kindly upon Joe as a suitor for Miranda's hand and so he had allowed her to keep the puppy. Miranda was so grateful that she endeavoured to please her father by naming her dog after his political idol, the great Liberal chieftain, Sir Wilfrid Laurier — though his title was soon abbreviated to Wilfy. Sir Wilfrid grew and flourished and waxed fat; but Miranda spoiled him absurdly and nobody else liked him. Rilla especially hated him because of his detestable trick of lying flat on his back and entreating you with waving paws to tickle his sleek stomach. When she saw that Miranda's pale eyes bore unmistakable testimony of her having cried all night, Rilla asked her to come up to her room, knowing Miranda had a tale of woe to tell, but she ordered Sir Wilfrid to remain below.

"Oh, can't he come, too?" said Miranda wistfully. "Poor Wilfy won't be any bother — and I wiped his paws so carefully before I brought him in. He is always so lonesome in a strange place without me — and very soon he'll be — all — I'll have left — to remind me — of Joe."

Rilla yielded, and Sir Wilfrid, with his tail curled at a saucy angle over his brindled back, trotted triumphantly up the stairs before them.

"Oh, Rilla," sobbed Miranda, when they had reached sanctuary. "I'm so unhappy. I can't begin to tell you how unhappy I am. Truly, my heart is breaking."

Rilla sat down on the lounge beside her. Sir Wilfrid squatted on his haunches before them, with his impertinent pink tongue stuck out, and listened. "What is the trouble, Miranda?"

"Joe is coming home tonight on his last leave. I had a letter from him on Saturday — he sends my letters in care of Bob Crawford, you know, because of father — and, oh, Rilla, he will only have four days — he has to go away Friday morning — and I may never see him again."

"Does he still want you to marry him?" asked Rilla.

“Oh, yes. He implored me in his letter to run away and be married. But I cannot do that, Rilla, not even for Joe. My only comfort is that I will be able to see him for a little while tomorrow afternoon. Father has to go to Charlottetown on business. At least we will have one good farewell talk. But oh — afterwards — why, Rilla, I know father won’t even let me go to the station Friday morning to see Joe off.”

“Why in the world don’t you and Joe get married tomorrow afternoon at home?” demanded Rilla.

Miranda swallowed a sob in such amazement that she almost choked.

“Why — why — that is impossible, Rilla.”

“Why?” briefly demanded the organizer of the Junior Red Cross and the transporter of babies in soup tureens.

“Why — why — we never thought of such a thing — Joe hasn’t a license — I have no dress — I couldn’t be married in black — I — I — we — you — you—” Miranda lost herself altogether and Sir Wilfrid, seeing that she was in dire distress threw back his head and emitted a melancholy yelp.

Rilla Blythe thought hard and rapidly for a few minutes. Then she said, “Miranda, if you will put yourself into my hands I’ll have you married to Joe before four o’clock tomorrow afternoon.”

“Oh, you couldn’t.”

“I can and I will. But you’ll have to do exactly as I tell you.”

“Oh — I — don’t think — oh, father will kill me—”

“Nonsense. He’ll be very angry I suppose. But are you more afraid of your father’s anger than you are of Joe’s never coming back to you?”

“No,” said Miranda, with sudden firmness, “I’m not.”

“Will you do as I tell you then?”

“Yes, I will.”

“Then get Joe on the long-distance at once and tell him to bring out a license and ring tonight.”

“Oh, I couldn’t,” wailed the aghast Miranda, “it — it would be so — so indelicate.”

Rilla shut her little white teeth together with a snap. "Heaven grant me patience," she said under her breath. "I'll do it then," she said aloud, "and meanwhile, you go home and make what preparations you can. When I 'phone down to you to come up and help me sew come at once."

As soon as Miranda, pallid, scared, but desperately resolved, had gone, Rilla flew to the telephone and put in a long-distance call for Charlottetown. She got through with such surprising quickness that she was convinced Providence approved of her undertaking, but it was a good hour before she could get in touch with Joe Milgrave at his camp. Meanwhile, she paced impatiently about, and prayed that when she did get Joe there would be no listeners on the line to carry news to Whiskers-on-the-moon.

"Is that you, Joe? Rilla Blythe is speaking — Rilla — Rilla — oh, never mind. Listen to this. Before you come home tonight get a marriage license — a marriage license — yes, a marriage license — and a wedding-ring. Did you get that? And will you do it? Very well, be sure you do it — it is your only chance."

Flushed with triumph — for her only fear was that she might not be able to locate Joe in time — Rilla rang the Pryor ring. This time she had not such good luck for she drew Whiskers-on-the-moon.

"Is that Miranda? Oh — Mr. Pryor! Well, Mr. Pryor, will you kindly ask Miranda if she can come up this afternoon and help me with some sewing. It is very important, or I would not trouble her. Oh — thank you."

Mr. Pryor had consented somewhat grumpily, but he had consented — he did not want to offend Dr. Blythe, and he knew that if he refused to allow Miranda to do any Red Cross work public opinion would make the Glen too hot for comfort. Rilla went out to the kitchen, shut all the doors with a mysterious expression which alarmed Susan, and then said solemnly, "Susan can you make a wedding-cake this afternoon?"

"A wedding-cake!" Susan stared. Rilla had, without any warning, brought her a war-baby once upon a time. Was she now, with equal suddenness, going to produce a husband?

“Yes, a wedding-cake — a scrumptious wedding-cake, Susan — a beautiful, plummy, eggy, citron-peely wedding-cake. And we must make other things too. I’ll help you in the morning. But I can’t help you in the afternoon for I have to make a wedding-dress and time is the essence of the contract, Susan.”

Susan felt that she was really too old to be subjected to such shocks.

“Who are you going to marry, Rilla?” she asked feebly.

“Susan, darling, I am not the happy bride. Miranda Pryor is going to marry Joe Milgrave tomorrow afternoon while her father is away in town. A war-wedding, Susan — isn’t that thrilling and romantic? I never was so excited in my life.”

The excitement soon spread over Ingleside, infecting even Mrs. Blythe and Susan.

“I’ll go to work on that cake at once,” vowed Susan, with a glance at the clock. “Mrs. Dr. dear, will you pick over the fruit and beat up the eggs? If you will I can have that cake ready for the oven by the evening. Tomorrow morning we can make salads and other things. I will work all night if necessary to get the better of Whiskers-on-the-moon.”

Miranda arrived, tearful and breathless.

“We must fix over my white dress for you to wear,” said Rilla. “It will fit you very nicely with a little alteration.”

To work went the two girls, ripping, fitting, basting, sewing for dear life. By dint of unceasing effort they got the dress done by seven o’clock and Miranda tried it on in Rilla’s room.

“It’s very pretty — but oh, if I could just have a veil,” sighed Miranda. “I’ve always dreamed of being married in a lovely white veil.”

Some good fairy evidently waits on the wishes of war-brides. The door opened and Mrs. Blythe came in, her arms full of a filmy burden.

“Miranda dear,” she said, “I want you to wear my wedding-veil tomorrow. It is twenty-four years since I was a bride at old Green Gables — the happiest bride that ever was — and the wedding-veil of a happy bride brings good luck, they say.”

“Oh, how sweet of you, Mrs. Blythe,” said Miranda, the ready tears starting to her eyes.

The veil was tried on and draped. Susan dropped in to approve but dared not linger.

“I’ve got that cake in the oven,” she said, “and I am pursuing a policy of watchful waiting. The evening news is that the Grand Duke has captured Erzerum. That is a pill for the Turks. I wish I had a chance to tell the Czar just what a mistake he made when he turned Nicholas down.”

Susan disappeared downstairs to the kitchen, whence a dreadful thud and a piercing shriek presently sounded. Everybody rushed to the kitchen — the doctor and Miss Oliver, Mrs. Blythe, Rilla, Miranda in her wedding-veil. Susan was sitting flatly in the middle of the kitchen floor with a dazed, bewildered look on her face, while Doc, evidently in his Hyde incarnation, was standing on the dresser, with his back up, his eyes blazing, and his tail the size of three tails.

“Susan, what has happened?” cried Mrs. Blythe in alarm. “Did you fall? Are you hurt?”

Susan picked herself up.

“No,” she said grimly, “I am not hurt, though I am jarred all over. Do not be alarmed. As for what has happened — I tried to kick that darned cat with both feet, that is what happened.”

Everybody shrieked with laughter. The doctor was quite helpless.

“Oh, Susan, Susan,” he gasped. “That I should live to hear you swear.”

“I am sorry,” said Susan in real distress, “that I used such an expression before two young girls. But I said that beast was darned, and darned it is. It belongs to Old Nick.”

“Do you expect it will vanish some of these days with a bang and the odour of brimstone, Susan?”

“It will go to its own place in due time and that you may tie to,” said Susan dourly, shaking out her raddled bones and going to her oven. “I suppose my plunking down like that has shaken my cake so that it will be as heavy as lead.”

But the cake was not heavy. It was all a bride's cake should be, and Susan iced it beautifully. Next day she and Rilla worked all the forenoon, making delicacies for the wedding-feast, and as soon as Miranda phoned up that her father was safely off everything was packed in a big hamper and taken down to the Pryor house. Joe soon arrived in his uniform and a state of violent excitement, accompanied by his best man, Sergeant Malcolm Crawford. There were quite a few guests, for all the Manse and Ingleside folk were there, and a dozen or so of Joe's relatives, including his mother, "Mrs. Dead Angus Milgrave," so called, cheerfully, to distinguish her from another lady whose Angus was living. Mrs. Dead Angus wore a rather disapproving expression, not caring overmuch for this alliance with the house of Whiskers-on-the-moon.

So Miranda Pryor was married to Private Joseph Milgrave on his last leave. It should have been a romantic wedding but it was not. There were too many factors working against romance, as even Rilla had to admit. In the first place, Miranda, in spite of her dress and veil, was such a flat-faced, commonplace, uninteresting little bride. In the second place, Joe cried bitterly all through the ceremony, and this vexed Miranda unreasonably. Long afterwards she told Rilla, "I just felt like saying to him then and there, 'If you feel so bad over having to marry me you don't have to.' But it was just because he was thinking all the time of how soon he would have to leave me."

In the third place, Jims, who was usually so well-behaved in public, took a fit of shyness and contrariness combined and began to cry at the top of his voice for "Willa." Nobody wanted to take him out, because everybody wanted to see the marriage, so Rilla who was a bridesmaid, had to take him and hold him during the ceremony.

In the fourth place, Sir Wilfrid Laurier took a fit.

Sir Wilfrid was entrenched in a corner of the room behind Miranda's piano. During his seizure he made the weirdest, most unearthly noises. He would begin with a series of choking, spasmodic sounds, continuing into a gruesome gurgle, and ending up with a strangled howl. Nobody could hear a word Mr. Meredith was saying, except now and then, when Sir Wilfrid

stopped for breath. Nobody looked at the bride except Susan, who never dragged her fascinated eyes from Miranda's face — all the others were gazing at the dog. Miranda had been trembling with nervousness but as soon as Sir Wilfrid began his performance she forgot it. All that she could think of was that her dear dog was dying and she could not go to him. She never remembered a word of the ceremony.

Rilla, who in spite of Jims, had been trying her best to look rapt and romantic, as be seemed a war bridesmaid, gave up the hopeless attempt, and devoted her energies to choking down untimely merriment. She dared not look at anybody in the room, especially Mrs. Dead Angus, for fear all her suppressed mirth should suddenly explode in a most un-young-ladylike yell of laughter.

But married they were, and then they had a wedding-supper in the dining-room which was so lavish and bountiful that you would have thought it was the product of a month's labour. Everybody had brought something. Mrs. Dead Angus had brought a large apple-pie, which she placed on a chair in the dining-room and then absently sat down on it. Neither her temper nor her black silk wedding garment was improved thereby, but the pie was never missed at the gay bridal feast. Mrs. Dead Angus eventually took it home with her again. Whiskers-on-the-moon's pacifist pig should not get it, anyhow.

That evening Mr. and Mrs. Joe, accompanied by the recovered Sir Wilfrid, departed for the Four Winds Lighthouse, which was kept by Joe's uncle and in which they meant to spend their brief honeymoon. Una Meredith and Rilla and Susan washed the dishes, tidied up, left a cold supper and Miranda's pitiful little note on the table for Mr. Pryor, and walked home, while the mystic veil of dreamy, haunted winter twilight wrapped itself over the Glen.

"I would really not have minded being a war-bride myself," remarked Susan sentimentally.

But Rilla felt rather flat — perhaps as a reaction to all the excitement and rush of the past thirty-six hours. She was disappointed somehow —

the whole affair had been so ludicrous, and Miranda and Joe so lachrymose and commonplace.

“If Miranda hadn’t given that wretched dog such an enormous dinner he wouldn’t have had that fit,” she said crossly. “I warned her — but she said she couldn’t starve the poor dog — he would soon be all she had left, *etc.* I could have shaken her.”

“The best man was more excited than Joe was,” said Susan. “He wished Miranda many happy returns of the day. She did not look very happy, but perhaps you could not expect that under the circumstances.”

“Anyhow,” thought Rilla, “I can write a perfectly killing account of it all to the boys. How Jem will howl over Sir Wilfrid’s part in it!”

But if Rilla was rather disappointed in the war wedding she found nothing lacking on Friday morning when Miranda said goodbye to her bridegroom at the Glen station. The dawn was white as a pearl, clear as a diamond. Behind the station the balsamy copse of young firs was frost-misted. The cold moon of dawn hung over the westering snow fields but the golden fleeces of sunrise shone above the maples up at Ingleside. Joe took his pale little bride in his arms and she lifted her face to his. Rilla choked suddenly. It did not matter that Miranda was insignificant and commonplace and flat-featured. It did not matter that she was the daughter of Whiskers-on-the-moon. All that mattered was that rapt, sacrificial look in her eyes — that ever-burning, sacred fire of devotion and loyalty and fine courage that she was mutely promising Joe she and thousands of other women would keep alive at home while their men held the Western front. Rilla walked away, realising that she must not spy on such a moment. She went down to the end of the platform where Sir Wilfrid and Dog Monday were sitting, looking at each other.

Sir Wilfrid remarked condescendingly: “Why do you haunt this old shed when you might lie on the hearthrug at Ingleside and live on the fat of the land? Is it a pose? Or a fixed idea?”

Whereat Dog Monday, laconically: “I have a tryst to keep.”

When the train had gone Rilla rejoined the little trembling Miranda. “Well, he’s gone,” said Miranda, “and he may never come back — but I’m

his wife, and I'm going to be worthy of him. I'm going home."

"Don't you think you had better come with me now?" asked Rilla doubtfully. Nobody knew yet how Mr. Pryor had taken the matter.

"No. If Joe can face the Huns I guess I can face father," said Miranda daringly. "A soldier's wife can't be a coward. Come on, Wilfy. I'll go straight home and meet the worst."

There was nothing very dreadful to face, however. Perhaps Mr. Pryor had reflected that housekeepers were hard to get and that there were many Milgrave homes open to Miranda — also, that there was such a thing as a separation allowance. At all events, though he told her grumpily that she had made a nice fool of herself, and would live to regret it, he said nothing worse, and Mrs. Joe put on her apron and went to work as usual, while Sir Wilfrid Laurier, who had a poor opinion of lighthouses for winter residences, went to sleep in his pet nook behind the woodbox, a thankful dog that he was done with war-weddings.

“They Shall Not Pass”

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One cold grey morning in February Gertrude Oliver wakened with a shiver, slipped into Rilla’s room, and crept in beside her.

“Rilla — I’m frightened — frightened as a baby — I’ve had another of my strange dreams. Something terrible is before us — I know.”

“What was it?” asked Rilla.

“I was standing again on the veranda steps — just as I stood in that dream on the night before the lighthouse dance, and in the sky a huge black, menacing thunder cloud rolled up from the east. I could see its shadow racing before it and when it enveloped me I shivered with icy cold. Then the storm broke — and it was a dreadful storm — blinding flash after flash and deafening peal after peal, driving torrents of rain. I turned in panic and tried to run for shelter, and as I did so a man — a soldier in the uniform of a French army officer — dashed up the steps and stood beside me on the threshold of the door. His clothes were soaked with blood from a wound in his breast, he seemed spent and exhausted; but his white face was set and his eyes blazed in his hollow face. ‘They shall not pass,’ he said, in low, passionate tones which I heard distinctly amid all the turmoil of the storm. Then I awakened. Rilla, I’m frightened — the spring will not bring the Big Push we’ve all been hoping for — instead it is going to bring some dreadful blow to France. I am sure of it. The Germans will try to smash through somewhere.”

“But he told you that they would not pass,” said Rilla, seriously. She never laughed at Gertrude’s dreams as the doctor did.

“I do not know if that was prophecy or desperation, Rilla, the horror of that dream holds me yet in an icy grip. We shall need all our courage before long.”

Dr. Blythe did laugh at the breakfast table — but he never laughed at Miss Oliver’s dreams again; for that day brought news of the opening of

the Verdun offensive, and thereafter through all the beautiful weeks of spring the Ingleside family, one and all, lived in a trance of dread. There were days when they waited in despair for the end as foot by foot the Germans crept nearer and nearer to the grim barrier of desperate France.

Susan's deeds were in her spotless kitchen at Ingleside, but her thoughts were on the hills around Verdun. "Mrs. Dr. dear," she would stick her head in at Mrs. Blythe's door the last thing at night to remark, "I do hope the French have hung onto the Crow's Wood today," and she woke at dawn to wonder if Dead Man's Hill — surely named by some prophet — was still held by the "poyloos." Susan could have drawn a map of the country around Verdun that would have satisfied a chief of staff.

"If the Germans capture Verdun the spirit of France will be broken," Miss Oliver said bitterly.

"But they will not capture it," staunchly said Susan, who could not eat her dinner that day for fear lest they do that very thing. "In the first place, you dreamed they would not — you dreamed the very thing the French are saying before they ever said it—'they shall not pass.' I declare to you, Miss Oliver, dear, when I read that in the paper, and remembered your dream, I went cold all over with awe. It seemed to me like Biblical times when people dreamed things like that quite frequently.

"I know — I know," said Gertrude, walking restlessly about. "I cling to a persistent faith in my dream, too — but every time bad news comes it fails me. Then I tell myself 'mere coincidence'—'subconscious memory' and so forth."

"I do not see how any memory could remember a thing before it was ever said at all," persisted Susan, "though of course I am not educated like you and the doctor. I would rather not be, if it makes anything as simple as that so hard to believe. But in any case we need not worry over Verdun, even if the Huns get it. Joffre says it has no military significance."

"That old sop of comfort has been served up too often already when reverses came," retorted Gertrude. "It has lost its power to charm."

"Was there ever a battle like this in the world before?" said Mr. Meredith, one evening in mid-April.

“It’s such a titanic thing we can’t grasp it,” said the doctor. “What were the scraps of a few Homeric handfuls compared to this? The whole Trojan war might be fought around a Verdun fort and a newspaper correspondent would give it no more than a sentence. I am not in the confidence of the occult powers” — the doctor threw Gertrude a twinkle—”but I have a hunch that the fate of the whole war hangs on the issue of Verdun. As Susan and Joffre say, it has no real military significance; but it has the tremendous significance of an Idea. If Germany wins there she will win the war. If she loses, the tide will set against her.”

“Lose she will,” said Mr. Meredith: emphatically. “The Idea cannot be conquered. France is certainly very wonderful. It seems to me that in her I see the white form of civilization making a determined stand against the black powers of barbarism. I think our whole world realizes this and that is why we all await the issue so breathlessly. It isn’t merely the question of a few forts changing hands or a few miles of blood-soaked ground lost and won.”

“I wonder,” said Gertrude dreamily, “if some great blessing, great enough for the price, will be the meed of all our pain? Is the agony in which the world is shuddering the birth-pang of some wondrous new era? Or is it merely a futile

struggle of ants

In the gleam of a million million of suns?

We think very lightly, Mr. Meredith, of a calamity which destroys an ant-hill and half its inhabitants. Does the Power that runs the universe think us of more importance than we think ants?”

“You forget,” said Mr. Meredith, with a flash of his dark eyes, “that an infinite Power must be infinitely little as well as infinitely great. We are neither, therefore there are things too little as well as too great for us to apprehend. To the infinitely little an ant is of as much importance as a mastodon. We are witnessing the birth-pangs of a new era — but it will be born a feeble, wailing life like everything else. I am not one of those who expect a new heaven and a new earth as the immediate result of this war.

That is not the way God works. But work He does, Miss Oliver, and in the end His purpose will be fulfilled.”

“Sound and orthodox — sound and orthodox,” muttered Susan approvingly in the kitchen. Susan liked to see Miss Oliver sat upon by the minister now and then. Susan was very fond of her but she thought Miss Oliver liked saying heretical things to ministers far too well, and deserved an occasional reminder that these matters were quite beyond her province.

In May Walter wrote home that he had been awarded a D.C. Medal. He did not say what for, but the other boys took care that the Glen should know the brave thing Walter had done. “In any war but this,” wrote Jerry Meredith, “it would have meant a V.C. But they can’t make V.C.’s as common as the brave things done every day here.”

“He should have had the V.C.,” said Susan, and was very indignant over it. She was not quite sure who was to blame for his not getting it, but if it were General Haig she began for the first time to entertain serious doubts as to his fitness for being Commander-in-Chief.

Rilla was beside herself with delight. It was her dear Walter who had done this thing — Walter, to whom someone had sent a white feather at Redmond — it was Walter who had dashed back from the safety of the trench to drag in a wounded comrade who had fallen on No-man’s-land. Oh, she could see his white beautiful face and wonderful eyes as he did it! What a thing to be the sister of such a hero! And he hadn’t thought it worth while writing about. His letter was full of other things — little intimate things that they two had known and loved together in the dear old cloudless days of a century ago.

“I’ve been thinking of the daffodils in the garden at Ingleside,” he wrote. “By the time you get this they will be out, blowing there under that lovely rosy sky. Are they really as bright and golden as ever, Rilla? It seems to me that they must be dyed red with blood — like our poppies here. And every whisper of spring will be falling as a violet in Rainbow Valley.

“There is a young moon tonight — a slender, silver, lovely thing hanging over these pits of torment. Will you see it tonight over the maple

grove?

“I’m enclosing a little scrap of verse, Rilla. I wrote it one evening in my trench dug-out by the light of a bit of candle — or rather it came to me there — I didn’t feel as if I were writing it — something seemed to use me as an instrument. I’ve had that feeling once or twice before, but very rarely and never so strongly as this time. That was why I sent it over to the London Spectator. It printed it and the copy came today. I hope you’ll like it. It’s the only poem I’ve written since I came overseas.”

The poem was a short, poignant little thing. In a month it had carried Walter’s name to every corner of the globe. Everywhere it was copied — in metropolitan dailies and little village weeklies — in profound reviews and “agony columns,” in Red Cross appeals and Government recruiting propaganda. Mothers and sisters wept over it, young lads thrilled to it, the whole great heart of humanity caught it up as an epitome of all the pain and hope and pity and purpose of the mighty conflict, crystallized in three brief immortal verses. A Canadian lad in the Flanders trenches had written the one great poem of the war. “The Piper,” by Pte. Walter Blythe, was a classic from its first printing.

Rilla copied it in her diary at the beginning of an entry in which she poured out the story of the hard week that had just passed.

“It has been such a dreadful week,” she wrote, “and even though it is over and we know that it was all a mistake that does not seem to do away with the bruises left by it. And yet it has in some ways been a very wonderful week and I have had some glimpses of things I never realized before — of how fine and brave people can be even in the midst of horrible suffering. I am sure I could never be as splendid as Miss Oliver was.

“Just a week ago today she had a letter from Mr. Grant’s mother in Charlottetown. And it told her that a cable had just come saying that Major Robert Grant had been killed in action a few days before.

“Oh, poor Gertrude! At first she was crushed. Then after just a day she pulled herself together and went back to her school. She did not cry — I never saw her shed a tear — but oh, her face and her eyes!

“‘I must go on with my work,’ she said. ‘That is my duty just now.’

“‘I could never have risen to such a height.

“‘She never spoke bitterly except once, when Susan said something about spring being here at last, and Gertrude said,

“‘Can the spring really come this year?’

“‘Then she laughed — such a dreadful little laugh, just as one might laugh in the face of death, I think, and said,

“‘Observe my egotism. Because I, Gertrude Oliver, have lost a friend, it is incredible that the spring can come as usual. The spring does not fail because of the million agonies of others — but for mine — oh, can the universe go on?’

“‘Don’t feel bitter with yourself, dear,’ mother said gently. ‘It is a very natural thing to feel as if things couldn’t go on just the same when some great blow has changed the world for us. We all feel like that.’

“‘Then that horrid old Cousin Sophia of Susan’s piped up. She was sitting there, knitting and croaking like an old ‘raven of bode and woe’ as Walter used to call her.

“‘You ain’t as bad off as some, Miss Oliver,’ she said, ‘and you shouldn’t take it so hard. There’s some as has lost their husbands; that’s a hard blow; and there’s some as has lost their sons. You haven’t lost either husband or son.’

“‘No,’ said Gertrude, more bitterly still. ‘It’s true I haven’t lost a husband — I have only lost the man who would have been my husband. I have lost no son — only the sons and daughters who might have been born to me — who will never be born to me now.’

“‘It isn’t ladylike to talk like that,’ said Cousin Sophia in a shocked tone; and then Gertrude laughed right out, so wildly that Cousin Sophia was really frightened. And when poor tortured Gertrude, unable to endure it any longer, hurried out of the room, Cousin Sophia asked mother if the blow hadn’t affected Miss Oliver’s mind.

“‘I suffered the loss of two good kind partners,’ she said, ‘but it did not affect me like that.’

“I should think it wouldn’t! Those poor men must have been thankful to die.

“I heard Gertrude walking up and down her room most of the night. She walked like that every night. But never so long as that night. And once I heard her give a dreadful sudden little cry as if she had been stabbed. I couldn’t sleep for suffering with her; and I couldn’t help her. I thought the night would never end. But it did; and then ‘joy came in the morning’ as the Bible says. Only it didn’t come exactly in the morning but well along in the afternoon. The telephone rang and I answered it. It was old Mrs. Grant speaking from Charlottetown, and her news was that it was all a mistake — Robert wasn’t killed at all; he had only been slightly wounded in the arm and was safe in the hospital out of harm’s way for a time anyhow. They hadn’t learned yet how the mistake had happened but supposed there must have been another Robert Grant.

“I hung up the telephone and flew to Rainbow Valley. I’m sure I did fly — I can’t remember my feet ever touching the ground. I met Gertrude on her way home from school in the glade of spruces where we used to play, and I just gasped out the news to her. I ought to have had more sense, of course. But I was so crazy with joy and excitement that I never stopped to think. Gertrude just dropped there among the golden young ferns as if she had been shot. The fright it gave me ought to make me sensible — in this respect at least — for the rest of my life. I thought I had killed her — I remembered that her mother had died very suddenly from heart failure when quite a young woman. It seemed years to me before I discovered that her heart was still beating. A pretty time I had! I never saw anybody faint before, and I knew there was nobody up at the house to help, because everybody else had gone to the station to meet Di and Nan coming home from Redmond. But I knew — theoretically — how people in a faint should be treated, and now I know it practically. Luckily the brook was handy, and after I had worked frantically over her for a while Gertrude came back to life. She never said one word about my news and I didn’t dare to refer to it again. I helped her walk up through the maple grove and up to her room, and then she said, ‘Rob — is — living,’ as if the words

were torn out of her, and flung herself on her bed and cried and cried and cried. I never saw anyone cry so before. All the tears that she hadn't shed all that week came then. She cried most of last night, I think, but her face this morning looked as if she had seen a vision of some kind, and we were all so happy that we were almost afraid.

“Di and Nan are home for a couple of weeks. Then they go back to Red Cross work in the training camp at Kingsport. I envy them. Father says I'm doing just as good work here, with Jims and my Junior Reds. But it lacks the romance theirs must have.

“Kut has fallen. It was almost a relief when it did fall, we had been dreading it so long. It crushed us flat for a day and then we picked up and put it behind us. Cousin Sophia was as gloomy as usual and came over and groaned that the British were losing everywhere.

“‘They're good losers,’ said Susan grimly. ‘When they lose a thing they keep on looking till they find it again! Anyhow, my king and country need me now to cut potato sets for the back garden, so get you a knife and help me, Sophia Crawford. It will divert your thoughts and keep you from worrying over a campaign that you are not called upon to run.’

“Susan is an old brick, and the way she flattens out poor Cousin Sophia is beautiful to behold.

“As for Verdun, the battle goes on and on, and we see-saw between hope and fear. But I know that strange dream of Miss Oliver's foretold the victory of France. ‘They shall not pass.’”

Chapter XX.

Norman Douglas Speaks Out in Meeting

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“Where are you wandering, Anne o’ mine?” asked the doctor, who even yet, after twenty-four years of marriage, occasionally addressed his wife thus when nobody was about. Anne was sitting on the veranda steps, gazing absently over the wonderful bridal world of spring blossom, Beyond the white orchard was a copse of dark young firs and creamy wild cherries, where the robins were whistling madly; for it was evening and the fire of early stars was burning over the maple grove.

Anne came back with a little sigh.

“I was just taking relief from intolerable realities in a dream, Gilbert — a dream that all our children were home again — and all small again — playing in Rainbow Valley. It is always so silent now — but I was imagining I heard clear voices and gay, childish sounds coming up as I used to. I could hear Jem’s whistle and Walter’s yodel, and the twins’ laughter, and for just a few blessed minutes I forgot about the guns on the Western front, and had a little false, sweet happiness.”

The doctor did not answer. Sometimes his work tricked him into forgetting for a few moments the Western front, but not often. There was a good deal of grey now in his still thick curls that had not been there two years ago. Yet he smiled down into the starry eyes he loved — the eyes that had once been so full of laughter, and now seemed always full of unshed tears.

Susan wandered by with a hoe in her hand and her second best bonnet on her head.

“I have just finished reading a piece in the Enterprise which told of a couple being married in an aeroplane. Do you think it would be legal, doctor dear?” she inquired anxiously.

“I think so,” said the doctor gravely.

“Well,” said Susan dubiously, “it seems to me that a wedding is too solemn for anything so giddy as an aeroplane. But nothing is the same as it used to be. Well, it is half an hour yet before prayer-meeting time, so I am going around to the kitchen garden to have a little evening hate with the weeds. But all the time I am strafing them I will be thinking about this new worry in the Trentino. I do not like this Austrian caper, Mrs. Dr. dear.”

“Nor I,” said Mrs. Blythe ruefully. “All the forenoon I preserved rhubarb with my hands and waited for the war news with my soul. When it came I shrivelled. Well, I suppose I must go and get ready for the prayer-meeting, too.”

Every village has its own little unwritten history, handed down from lip to lip through the generations, of tragic, comic, and dramatic events. They are told at weddings and festivals, and rehearsed around winter firesides. And in these oral annals of Glen St. Mary the tale of the union prayer-meeting held that night in the Methodist Church was destined to fill an imperishable place.

The union prayer-meeting was Mr. Arnold’s idea. The county battalion, which had been training all winter in Charlottetown, was to leave shortly for overseas. The Four Winds Harbour boys belonging to it from the Glen and over-harbour and Harbour Head and Upper Glen were all home on their last leave, and Mr. Arnold thought, properly enough, that it would be a fitting thing to hold a union prayer-meeting for them before they went away. Mr. Meredith having agreed, the meeting was announced to be held in the Methodist Church. Glen prayer-meetings were not apt to be too well attended, but on this particular evening the Methodist Church was crowded. Everybody who could go was there. Even Miss Cornelia came — and it was the first time in her life that Miss Cornelia had ever set foot inside a Methodist Church. It took no less than a world conflict to bring that about.

“I used to hate Methodists,” said Miss Cornelia calmly, when her husband expressed surprise over her going, “but I don’t hate them now.

There is no sense in hating Methodists when there is a Kaiser or a Hindenburg in the world.”

So Miss Cornelia went. Norman Douglas and his wife went too. And Whiskers-on-the-moon strutted up the aisle to a front pew, as if he fully realized what a distinction he conferred upon the building. People were somewhat surprised that he should be there, since he usually avoided all assemblages connected in any way with the war. But Mr. Meredith had said that he hoped his session would be well represented, and Mr. Pryor had evidently taken the request to heart. He wore his best black suit and white tie, his thick, tight, iron-grey curls were neatly arranged, and his broad, red round face looked, as Susan most uncharitably thought, more “sanctimonious” than ever.

“The minute I saw that man coming into the Church, looking like that, I felt that mischief was brewing, Mrs. Dr. dear,” she said afterwards. “What form it would take I could not tell, but I knew from face of him that he had come there for no good.”

The prayer-meeting opened conventionally and continued quietly. Mr. Meredith spoke first with his usual eloquence and feeling. Mr. Arnold followed with an address which even Miss Cornelia had to confess was irreproachable in taste and subject-matter.

And then Mr. Arnold asked Mr. Pryor to lead in prayer.

Miss Cornelia had always averred that Mr. Arnold had no gumption. Miss Cornelia was not apt to err on the side of charity in her judgment of Methodist ministers, but in this case she did not greatly overshoot the mark. The Rev. Mr. Arnold certainly did not have much of that desirable, indefinable quality known as gumption, or he would never have asked Whiskers-on-the-moon to lead in prayer at a khaki prayer-meeting. He thought he was returning the compliment to Mr. Meredith, who, at the conclusion of his address, had asked a Methodist deacon to lead.

Some people expected Mr. Pryor to refuse grumpily — and that would have made enough scandal. But Mr. Pryor bounded briskly to his feet, unctuously said, “Let us pray,” and forthwith prayed. In a sonorous voice which penetrated to every corner of the crowded building Mr. Pryor

poured forth a flood of fluent words, and was well on in his prayer before his dazed and horrified audience awakened to the fact that they were listening to a pacifist appeal of the rankest sort. Mr. Pryor had at least the courage of his convictions; or perhaps, as people afterwards said, he thought he was safe in a church and that it was an excellent chance to air certain opinions he dared not voice elsewhere, for fear of being mobbed. He prayed that the unholy war might cease — that the deluded armies being driven to slaughter on the Western front might have their eyes opened to their iniquity and repent while yet there was time — that the poor young men present in khaki, who had been hounded into a path of murder and militarism, should yet be rescued —

Mr. Pryor had got this far without let or hindrance; and so paralysed were his hearers, and so deeply imbued with their born-and-bred conviction that no disturbance must ever be made in a church, no matter what the provocation, that it seemed likely that he would continue unchecked to the end. But one man at least in that audience was not hampered by inherited or acquired reverence for the sacred edifice. Norman Douglas was, as Susan had often vowed crisply, nothing more or less than a “pagan.” But he was a rampantly patriotic pagan, and when the significance of what Mr. Pryor was saying fully dawned on him, Norman Douglas suddenly went berserk. With a positive roar he bounded to his feet in his side pew, facing the audience, and shouted in tones of thunder:

“Stop — stop — STOP that abominable prayer! What an abominable prayer!”

Every head in the church flew up. A boy in khaki at the back gave a faint cheer. Mr. Meredith raised a deprecating hand, but Norman was past caring for anything like that. Eluding his wife’s restraining grasp, he gave one mad spring over the front of the pew and caught the unfortunate Whiskers-on-the-moon by his coat collar. Mr. Pryor had not “stopped” when so bidden, but he stopped now, perforce, for Norman, his long red beard literally bristling with fury, was shaking him until his bones fairly rattled, and punctuating his shakes with a lurid assortment of abusive epithets.

“You blatant beast!” — shake—”You malignant carrion” — shake —”You pig-headed varmint!” — shake—”you putrid pup” — shake—”you pestilential parasite” — shake—”you — Hunnish scum” — shake—”you indecent reptile — you — you—” Norman choked for a moment. Everybody believed that the next thing he would say, church or no church, would be something that would have to be spelt with asterisks; but at that moment Norman encountered his wife’s eye and he fell back with a thud on Holy Writ. “You whited sepulchre!” he bellowed, with a final shake, and cast Whiskers-on-the-moon from him with a vigour which impelled that unhappy pacifist to the very verge of the choir entrance door. Mr. Pryor’s once ruddy face was ashen. But he turned at bay. “I’ll have the law on you for this,” he gasped.

“Do — do,” roared Norman, making another rush. But Mr. Pryor was gone. He had no desire to fall a second time into the hands of an avenging militarist. Norman turned to the platform for one graceless, triumphant moment.

“Don’t look so flabbergasted, parsons,” he boomed. “You couldn’t do it — nobody would expect it of the cloth — but somebody had to do it. You know you’re glad I threw him out — he couldn’t be let go on yammering and yodelling and yawping sedition and treason. Sedition and treason — somebody had to deal with it. I was born for this hour — I’ve had my innings in church at last. I can sit quiet for another sixty years now! Go ahead with your meeting, parsons. I reckon you won’t be troubled with any more pacifist prayers.”

But the spirit of devotion and reverence had fled. Both ministers realized it and realized that the only thing to do was to close the meeting quietly and let the excited people go. Mr. Meredith addressed a few earnest words to the boys in khaki — which probably saved Mr. Pryor’s windows from a second onslaught — and Mr. Arnold pronounced an incongruous benediction, at least he felt it was incongruous, for he could not at once banish from his memory the sight of gigantic Norman Douglas shaking the fat, pompous little Whiskers-on-the-moon as a huge mastiff might shake an overgrown puppy. And he knew that the same picture was

in everybody's mind. Altogether the union prayer-meeting could hardly be called an unqualified success. But it was remembered in Glen St. Mary when scores of orthodox and undisturbed assemblies were totally forgotten.

"You will never, no, never, Mrs. Dr. dear, hear me call Norman Douglas a pagan again," said Susan when she reached home. "If Ellen Douglas is not a proud woman this night she should be."

"Norman Douglas did a wholly indefensible thing," said the doctor. "Pryor should have been let severely alone until the meeting was over. Then later on, his own minister and session should deal with him. That would have been the proper procedure. Norman's performance was utterly improper and scandalous and outrageous; but, by George," — the doctor threw back his head and chuckled, "by George, Anne-girl, it was satisfying."

“Love Affairs Are Horrible”

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Ingleside

20th June 1916

“We have been so busy, and day after day has brought such exciting news, good and bad, that I haven’t had time and composure to write in my diary for weeks. I like to keep it up regularly, for father says a diary of the years of the war should be a very interesting thing to hand down to one’s children. The trouble is, I like to write a few personal things in this blessed old book that might not be exactly what I’d want my children to read. I feel that I shall be a far greater stickler for propriety in regard to them than I am for myself!

“The first week in June was another dreadful one. The Austrians seemed just on the point of overrunning Italy: and then came the first awful news of the Battle of Jutland, which the Germans claimed as a great victory. Susan was the only one who carried on. ‘You need never tell me that the Kaiser has defeated the British Navy,’ she said, with a contemptuous sniff. ‘It is all a German lie and that you may tie to.’ And when a couple of days later we found out that she was right and that it had been a British victory instead of a British defeat, we had to put up with a great many ‘I told you so’s,’ but we endured them very comfortably.

“It took Kitchener’s death to finish Susan. For the first time I saw her down and out. We all felt the shock of it but Susan plumbed the depths of despair. The news came at night by ‘phone but Susan wouldn’t believe it until she saw the Enterprise headline the next day. She did not cry or faint or go into hysterics; but she forgot to put salt in the soup, and that is something Susan never did in my recollection. Mother and Miss Oliver and I cried but Susan looked at us in stony sarcasm and said, ‘The Kaiser and his six sons are all alive and thriving. So the world is not left wholly

desolate. Why cry, Mrs. Dr. dear?’ Susan continued in this stony, hopeless condition for twenty-four hours, and then Cousin Sophia appeared and began to condole with her.

“‘This is terrible news, ain’t it, Susan? We might as well prepare for the worst for it is bound to come. You said once — and well do I remember the words, Susan Baker — that you had complete confidence in God and Kitchener. Ah well, Susan Baker, there is only God left now.’

“Whereat Cousin Sophia put her handkerchief to her eyes pathetically as if the world were indeed in terrible straits. As for Susan, Cousin Sophia was the salvation of her. She came to life with a jerk.

“‘Sophia Crawford, hold your peace!’ she said sternly. ‘You may be an idiot but you need not be an irreverent idiot. It is no more than decent to be weeping and wailing because the Almighty is the sole stay of the Allies now. As for Kitchener, his death is a great loss and I do not dispute it. But the outcome of this war does not depend on one man’s life and now that the Russians are coming on again you will soon see a change for the better.’

“Susan said this so energetically that she convinced herself and cheered up immediately. But Cousin Sophia shook her head.

“‘Albert’s wife wants to call the baby after Brusiloff,’ she said, ‘but I told her to wait and see what becomes of him first. Them Russians has such a habit of petering out.’

“The Russians are doing splendidly, however, and they have saved Italy. But even when the daily news of their sweeping advance comes we don’t feel like running up the flag as we used to do. As Gertrude says, Verdun has slain all exultation. We would all feel more like rejoicing if the victories were on the western front. ‘When will the British strike?’ Gertrude sighed this morning. ‘We have waited so long — so long.’

“Our greatest local event in recent weeks was the route march the county battalion made through the county before it left for overseas. They marched from Charlottetown to Lowbridge, then round the Harbour Head and through the Upper Glen and so down to the St. Mary station. Everybody turned out to see them, except old Aunt Fannie Clow, who is

bedridden and Mr. Pryor, who hadn't been seen out even in church since the night of the Union Prayer Meeting the previous week.

"It was wonderful and heartbreaking to see that battalion marching past. There were young men and middle-aged men in it. There was Laurie McAllister from over-harbour who is only sixteen but swore he was eighteen, so that he could enlist; and there was Angus Mackenzie, from the Upper Glen who is fifty-five if he is a day and swore he was forty-four. There were two South African veterans from Lowbridge, and the three eighteen-year-old Baxter triplets from Harbour Head. Everybody cheered as they went by, and they cheered Foster Booth, who is forty, walking side by side with his son Charley who is twenty. Charley's mother died when he was born, and when Charley enlisted Foster said he'd never yet let Charley go anywhere he daren't go himself, and he didn't mean to begin with the Flanders trenches. At the station Dog Monday nearly went out of his head. He tore about and sent messages to Jem by them all. Mr. Meredith read an address and Reta Crawford recited 'The Piper.' The soldiers cheered her like mad and cried 'We'll follow — we'll follow — we won't break faith,' and I felt so proud to think that it was my dear brother who had written such a wonderful, heart-stirring thing. And then I looked at the khaki ranks and wondered if those tall fellows in uniform could be the boys I've laughed with and played with and danced with and teased all my life. Something seems to have touched them and set them apart. They have heard the Piper's call.

"Fred Arnold was in the battalion and I felt dreadfully about him, for I realized that it was because of me that he was going away with such a sorrowful expression. I couldn't help it but I felt as badly as if I could.

"The last evening of his leave Fred came up to Ingleside and told me he loved me and asked me if I would promise to marry him some day, if he ever came back. He was desperately in earnest and I felt more wretched than I ever did in my life. I couldn't promise him that — why, even if there was no question of Ken, I don't care for Fred that way and never could — but it seemed so cruel and heartless to send him away to the front without any hope of comfort. I cried like a baby; and yet — oh, I am afraid

that there must be something incurably frivolous about me, because, right in the middle of it all, with me crying and Fred looking so wild and tragic, the thought popped into my head that it would be an unendurable thing to see that nose across from me at the breakfast table every morning of my life. There, that is one of the entries I wouldn't want my descendants to read in this journal. But it is the humiliating truth; and perhaps it's just as well that thought did come or I might have been tricked by pity and remorse into giving him some rash assurance. If Fred's nose were as handsome as his eyes and mouth some such thing might have happened. And then what an unthinkable predicament I should have been in!

"When poor Fred became convinced that I couldn't promise him, he behaved beautifully — though that rather made things worse. If he had been nasty about it I wouldn't have felt so heartbroken and remorseful — though why I should feel remorseful I don't know, for I never encouraged Fred to think I cared a bit about him. Yet feel remorseful I did — and do. If Fred Arnold never comes back from overseas, this will haunt me all my life.

"Then Fred said if he couldn't take my love with him to the trenches at least he wanted to feel that he had my friendship, and would I kiss him just once in goodbye before he went — perhaps for ever?

"I don't know how I could ever have imagined that love affairs were delightful, interesting things. They are horrible. I couldn't even give poor heartbroken Fred one little kiss, because of my promise to Ken. It seemed so brutal. I had to tell Fred that of course he would have my friendship, but that I couldn't kiss him because I had promised somebody else I wouldn't.

"He said, 'It is — is it — Ken Ford?'

"I nodded. It seemed dreadful to have to tell it — it was such a sacred little secret just between me and Ken.

"When Fred went away I came up here to my room and cried so long and so bitterly that mother came up and insisted on knowing what was the matter. I told her. She listened to my tale with an expression that clearly said, 'Can it be possible that anyone has been wanting to marry this baby?' But she was so nice and understanding and sympathetic, oh, just so race-

of-Josephy — that I felt indescribably comforted. Mothers are the dearest things.

“‘But oh, mother,’ I sobbed, ‘he wanted me to kiss him goodbye — and I couldn’t — and that hurt me worse than all the rest.’

“‘Well, why didn’t you kiss him?’ asked mother coolly. ‘Considering the circumstances, I think you might have.’

“‘But I couldn’t, mother — I promised Ken when he went away that I wouldn’t kiss anybody else until he came back.’

“This was another high explosive for poor mother. She exclaimed, with the queerest little catch in her voice, ‘Rilla, are you engaged to Kenneth Ford?’

“‘I — don’t — know,’ I sobbed.

“‘You — don’t — know?’ repeated mother.

“Then I had to tell her the whole story, too; and every time I tell it it seems sillier and sillier to imagine that Ken meant anything serious. I felt idiotic and ashamed by the time I got through.

“Mother sat a little while in silence. Then she came over, sat down beside me, and took me in her arms.

“‘Don’t cry, dear little Rilla-my-Rilla. You have nothing to reproach yourself with in regard to Fred; and if Leslie West’s son asked you to keep your lips for him, I think you may consider yourself engaged to him. But — oh, my baby — my last little baby — I have lost you — the war has made a woman of you too soon.’

“I shall never be too much of a woman to find comfort in mother’s hugs. Nevertheless, when I saw Fred marching by two days later in the parade, my heart ached unbearably.

“But I’m glad mother thinks I’m really engaged to Ken!”

Chapter XXII.

Little Dog Monday Knows

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“It is two years tonight since the dance at the light, when Jack Elliott brought us news of the war. Do you remember, Miss Oliver?”

Cousin Sophia answered for Miss Oliver. “Oh, indeed, Rilla, I remember that evening only too well, and you a-prancing down here to show off your party clothes. Didn’t I warn you that we could not tell what was before us? Little did you think that night what was before you.”

“Little did any of us think that,” said Susan sharply, “not being gifted with the power of prophecy. It does not require any great foresight, Sophia Crawford, to tell a body that she will have some trouble before her life is over. I could do as much myself.”

“We all thought the war would be over in a few months then,” said Rilla wistfully. “When I look back it seems so ridiculous that we ever could have supposed it.”

“And now, two years later, it is no nearer the end than it was then,” said Miss Oliver gloomily.

Susan clicked her knitting-needles briskly.

“Now, Miss Oliver, dear, you know that is not a reasonable remark. You know we are just two years nearer the end, whenever the end is appointed to be.”

“Albert read in a Montreal paper today that a war expert gives it as his opinion that it will last five years more,” was Cousin Sophia’s cheerful contribution.

“It can’t,” cried Rilla; then she added with a sigh, “Two years ago we would have said ‘It can’t last two years.’ But five more years of this!”

“If Rumania comes in, as I have strong hopes now of her doing, you will see the end in five months instead of five years,” said Susan.

“I’ve no faith in furriners,” sighed Cousin Sophia.

“The French are foreigners,” retorted Susan, “and look at Verdun. And think of all the Somme victories this blessed summer. The Big Push is on and the Russians are still going well. Why, General Haig says that the German officers he has captured admit that they have lost the war.”

“You can’t believe a word the Germans say,” protested Cousin Sophia. “There is no sense in believing a thing just because you’d like to believe it, Susan Baker. The British have lost millions of men at the Somme and how far have they got? Look facts in the face, Susan Baker, look facts in the face.”

“They are wearing the Germans out and so long as that happens it does not matter whether it is done a few miles east or a few miles west. I am not,” admitted Susan in tremendous humility, “I am not a military expert, Sophia Crawford, but even I can see that, and so could you if you were not determined to take a gloomy view of everything. The Huns have not got all the cleverness in the world. Have you not heard the story of Alistair MacCallum’s son Roderick, from the Upper Glen? He is a prisoner in Germany and his mother got a letter from him last week. He wrote that he was being very kindly treated and that all the prisoners had plenty of food and so on, till you would have supposed everything was lovely. But when he signed his name, right in between Roderick and MacCallum, he wrote two Gaelic words that meant ‘all lies’ and the German censor did not understand Gaelic and thought it was all part of Roddy’s name. So he let it pass, never dreaming how he was diddled. Well, I am going to leave the war to Haig for the rest of the day and make a frosting for my chocolate cake. And when it is made I shall put it on the top shelf. The last one I made I left it on the lower shelf and little Kitchener sneaked in and clawed all the icing off and ate it. We had company for tea that night and when I went to get my cake what a sight did I behold!”

“Has that pore orphan’s father never been heerd from yet?” asked Cousin Sophia.

“Yes, I had a letter from him in July,” said Rilla. “He said that when he got word of his wife’s death and of my taking the baby — Mr. Meredith

wrote him, you know — he wrote right away, but as he never got any answer he had begun to think his letter must have been lost.”

“It took him two years to begin to think it,” said Susan scornfully. “Some people think very slow. Jim Anderson has not got a scratch, for all he has been two years in the trenches. A fool for luck, as the old proverb says.”

“He wrote very nicely about Jims and said he’d like to see him,” said Rilla. “So I wrote and told him all about the wee man, and sent him snapshots. Jims will be two years old next week and he is a perfect duck.”

“You didn’t used to be very fond of babies,” said Cousin Sophia.

“I’m not a bit fonder of babies in the abstract than ever I was,” said Rilla, frankly. “But I do love Jims, and I’m afraid I wasn’t really half as glad as I should have been when Jim Anderson’s letter proved that he was safe and sound.”

“You wasn’t hoping the man would be killed!” cried Cousin Sophia in horrified accents.

“No — no — no! I just hoped he would go on forgetting about Jims, Mrs. Crawford.”

“And then your pa would have the expense of raising him,” said Cousin Sophia reprovingly. “You young creeturs are terrible thoughtless.”

Jims himself ran in at this juncture, so rosy and curly and kissable, that he extorted a qualified compliment even from Cousin Sophia.

“He’s a reel healthy-looking child now, though mebbe his colour is a mite too high — sorter consumptive looking, as you might say. I never thought you’d raise him when I saw him the day after you brung him home. I reely did not think it was in you and I told Albert’s wife so when I got home. Albert’s wife says, says she, ‘There’s more in Rilla Blythe than you’d think for, Aunt Sophia.’ Them was her very words. ‘More in Rilla Blythe than you’d think for.’ Albert’s wife always had a good opinion of you.”

Cousin Sophia sighed, as if to imply that Albert’s wife stood alone in this against the world. But Cousin Sophia really did not mean that. She was quite fond of Rilla in her own melancholy way; but young creeturs

had to be kept down. If they were not kept down society would be demoralized.

“Do you remember your walk home from the light two years ago tonight?” whispered Gertrude Oliver to Rilla, teasingly.

“I should think I do,” smiled Rilla; and then her smile grew dreamy and absent; she was remembering something else — that hour with Kenneth on the sandshore. Where would Ken be tonight? And Jem and Jerry and Walter and all the other boys who had danced and moonlighted on the old Four Winds Point that evening of mirth and laughter — their last joyous unclouded evening. In the filthy trenches of the Somme front, with the roar of the guns and the groans of stricken men for the music of Ned Burr’s violin, and the flash of star shells for the silver sparkles on the old blue gulf. Two of them were sleeping under the Flanders poppies — Alec Burr from the Upper Glen, and Clark Manley of Lowbridge. Others were wounded in the hospitals. But so far nothing had touched the manse and the Ingleside boys. They seemed to bear charmed lives. Yet the suspense never grew any easier to bear as the weeks and months of war went by.

“It isn’t as if it were some sort of fever to which you might conclude they were immune when they hadn’t taken it for two years,” sighed Rilla. “The danger is just as great and just as real as it was the first day they went into the trenches. I know this, and it tortures me every day. And yet I can’t help hoping that since they’ve come this far unhurt they’ll come through. Oh, Miss Oliver, what would it be like not to wake up in the morning feeling afraid of the news the day would bring? I can’t picture such a state of things somehow. And two years ago this morning I woke wondering what delightful gift the new day would give me. These are the two years I thought would be filled with fun.”

“Would you exchange them — now — for two years filled with fun?”

“No,” said Rilla slowly. “I wouldn’t. It’s strange — isn’t it? — They have been two terrible years — and yet I have a queer feeling of thankfulness for them — as if they had brought me something very precious, with all their pain. I wouldn’t want to go back and be the girl I

was two years ago, not even if I could. Not that I think I've made any wonderful progress — but I'm not quite the selfish, frivolous little doll I was then. I suppose I had a soul then, Miss Oliver — but I didn't know it. I know it now — and that is worth a great deal — worth all the suffering of the past two years. And still" — Rilla gave a little apologetic laugh, "I don't want to suffer any more — not even for the sake of more soul growth. At the end of two more years I might look back and be thankful for the development they had brought me, too; but I don't want it now."

"We never do," said Miss Oliver. "That is why we are not left to choose our own means and measure of development, I suppose. No matter how much we value what our lessons have brought us we don't want to go on with the bitter schooling. Well, let us hope for the best, as Susan says; things are really going well now and if Rumania lines up, the end may come with a suddenness that will surprise us all."

Rumania did come in — and Susan remarked approvingly that its king and queen were the finest looking royal couple she had seen pictures of. So the summer passed away. Early in September word came that the Canadians had been shifted to the Somme front and anxiety grew tenser and deeper. For the first time Mrs. Blythe's spirit failed her a little, and as the days of suspense wore on the doctor began to look gravely at her, and veto this or that special effort in Red Cross work.

"Oh, let me work — let me work, Gilbert," she entreated feverishly. "While I'm working I don't think so much. If I'm idle I imagine everything — rest is only torture for me. My two boys are on the frightful Somme front — and Shirley pores day and night over aviation literature and says nothing. But I see the purpose growing in his eyes. No, I cannot rest — don't ask it of me, Gilbert."

But the doctor was inexorable.

"I can't let you kill yourself, Anne-girl," he said. "When the boys come back I want a mother here to welcome them. Why, you're getting transparent. It won't do — ask Susan there if it will do."

"Oh, if Susan and you are both banded together against me!" said Anne helplessly.

One day the glorious news came that the Canadians had taken Courcellette and Martenpuich, with many prisoners and guns. Susan ran up the flag and said it was plain to be seen that Haig knew what soldiers to pick for a hard job. The others dared not feel exultant. Who knew what price had been paid?

Rilla woke that morning when the dawn was beginning to break and went to her window to look out, her thick creamy eyelids heavy with sleep. Just at dawn the world looks as it never looks at any other time. The air was cold with dew and the orchard and grove and Rainbow Valley were full of mystery and wonder. Over the eastern hill were golden deeps and silvery-pink shallows. There was no wind, and Rilla heard distinctly a dog howling in a melancholy way down in the direction of the station. Was it Dog Monday? And if it were, why was he howling like that? Rilla shivered; the sound had something boding and grievous in it. She remembered that Miss Oliver said once, when they were coming home in the darkness and heard a dog howl, "When a dog cries like that the Angel of Death is passing." Rilla listened with a curdling fear at her heart. It was Dog Monday — she felt sure of it. Whose dirge was he howling — to whose spirit was he sending that anguished greeting and farewell?

Rilla went back to bed but she could not sleep. All day she watched and waited in a dread of which she did not speak to anyone. She went down to see Dog Monday and the stationmaster said, "That dog of yours howled from midnight to sunrise something weird. I dunno what got into him. I got up once and went out and hollered at him but he paid no 'tention to me. He was sitting all alone in the moonlight out there at the end of the platform, and every few minutes the poor lonely little beggar'd lift his nose and howl as if his heart was breaking. He never did it afore — always slept in his kennel real quiet and canny from train to train. But he sure had something on his mind last night."

Dog Monday was lying in his kennel. He wagged his tail and licked Rilla's hand. But he would not touch the food she brought for him.

"I'm afraid he's sick," she said anxiously. She hated to go away and leave him. But no bad news came that day — nor the next — nor the next.

Rilla's fear lifted. Dog Monday howled no more and resumed his routine of train meeting and watching. When five days had passed the Ingleside people began to feel that they might be cheerful again. Rilla dashed about the kitchen helping Susan with the breakfast and singing so sweetly and clearly that Cousin Sophia across the road heard her and croaked out to Mrs. Albert,

“‘Sing before eating, cry before sleeping,’ I’ve always heard.”

But Rilla Blythe shed no tears before the nightfall. When her father, his face grey and drawn and old, came to her that afternoon and told her that Walter had been killed in action at Courcellette she crumpled up in a pitiful little heap of merciful unconsciousness in his arms. Nor did she waken to her pain for many hours.

“And So, Goodnight”

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The fierce flame of agony had burned itself out and the grey dust of its ashes was over all the world. Rilla's younger life recovered physically sooner than her mother. For weeks Mrs. Blythe lay ill from grief and shock. Rilla found it was possible to go on with existence, since existence had still to be reckoned with. There was work to be done, for Susan could not do all. For her mother's sake she had to put on calmness and endurance as a garment in the day; but night after night she lay in her bed, weeping the bitter rebellious tears of youth until at last tears were all wept out and the little patient ache that was to be in her heart until she died took their place.

She clung to Miss Oliver, who knew what to say and what not to say. So few people did. Kind, wellmeaning callers and comforters gave Rilla some terrible moments.

“You'll get over it in time,” Mrs. William Reese said, cheerfully. Mrs. Reese had three stalwart sons, not one of whom had gone to the front.

“It's such a blessing it was Walter who was taken and not Jem,” said Miss Sarah Clow. “Walter was a member of the church, and Jem wasn't. I've told Mr. Meredith many a time that he should have spoken seriously to Jem about it before he went away.”

“Pore, pore Walter,” sighed Mrs. Reese.

“Do not you come here calling him poor Walter,” said Susan indignantly, appearing in the kitchen door, much to the relief of Rilla, who felt that she could endure no more just then. “He was not poor. He was richer than any of you. It is you who stay at home and will not let your sons go who are poor — poor and naked and mean and small — pisen poor, and so are your sons, with all their prosperous farms and fat cattle and their souls no bigger than a flea's — if as big.”

“I came here to comfort the afflicted and not to be insulted,” said Mrs. Reese, taking her departure, unregretted by anyone. Then the fire went out of Susan and she retreated to her kitchen, laid her faithful old head on the table and wept bitterly for a time. Then she went to work and ironed Jims’s little rompers. Rilla scolded her gently for it when she herself came in to do it.

“I am not going to have you kill yourself working for any war-baby,” Susan said obstinately.

“Oh, I wish I could just keep on working all the time, Susan,” cried poor Rilla. “And I wish I didn’t have to go to sleep. It is hideous to go to sleep and forget it for a little while, and wake up and have it all rush over me anew the next morning. Do people ever get used to things like this, Susan? And oh, Susan, I can’t get away from what Mrs. Reese said. Did Walter suffer much — he was always so sensitive to pain. Oh, Susan, if I knew that he didn’t I think I could gather up a little courage and strength.”

This merciful knowledge was given to Rilla. A letter came from Walter’s commanding officer, telling them that he had been killed instantly by a bullet during a charge at Courcelette. The same day there was a letter for Rilla from Walter himself.

Rilla carried it unopened to Rainbow Valley and read it there, in the spot where she had had her last talk with him. It is a strange thing to read a letter after the writer is dead — a bitter-sweet thing, in which pain and comfort are strangely mingled. For the first time since the blow had fallen Rilla felt — a different thing from tremulous hope and faith — that Walter, of the glorious gift and the splendid ideals, still lived, with just the same gift and just the same ideals. That could not be destroyed — these could suffer no eclipse. The personality that had expressed itself in that last letter, written on the eve of Courcelette, could not be snuffed out by a German bullet. It must carry on, though the earthly link with things of earth were broken.

“We’re going over the top tomorrow, Rilla-my-Rilla,” wrote Walter. “I wrote mother and Di yesterday, but somehow I feel as if I must write you tonight. I hadn’t intended to do any writing tonight — but I’ve got to. Do

you remember old Mrs. Tom Crawford over-harbour, who was always saying that it was ‘laid on her’ to do such and such a thing? Well, that is just how I feel. It’s ‘laid on me’ to write you tonight — you, sister and chum of mine. There are some things I want to say before — well, before tomorrow.

“You and Ingleside seem strangely near me tonight. It’s the first time I’ve felt this since I came. Always home has seemed so far away — so hopelessly far away from this hideous welter of filth and blood. But tonight it is quite close to me — it seems to me I can almost see you — hear you speak. And I can see the moonlight shining white and still on the old hills of home. It has seemed to me ever since I came here that it was impossible that there could be calm gentle nights and unshattered moonlight anywhere in the world. But tonight somehow, all the beautiful things I have always loved seem to have become possible again — and this is good, and makes me feel a deep, certain, exquisite happiness. It must be autumn at home now — the harbour is a-dream and the old Glen hills blue with haze, and Rainbow Valley a haunt of delight with wild asters blowing all over it — our old “farewell-summers.” I always liked that name better than ‘aster’ — it was a poem in itself.

“Rilla, you know I’ve always had premonitions. You remember the Pied Piper — but no, of course you wouldn’t — you were too young. One evening long ago when Nan and Di and Jem and the Merediths and I were together in Rainbow Valley I had a queer vision or presentiment — whatever you like to call it. Rilla, I saw the Piper coming down the Valley with a shadowy host behind him. The others thought I was only pretending — but I saw him for just one moment. And Rilla, last night I saw him again. I was doing sentry-go and I saw him marching across No-man’s-land from our trenches to the German trenches — the same tall shadowy form, piping weirdly — and behind him followed boys in khaki. Rilla, I tell you I saw him — it was no fancy — no illusion. I heard his music, and then — he was gone. But I had seen him — and I knew what it meant — I knew that I was among those who followed him.

“Rilla, the Piper will pipe me ‘west’ tomorrow. I feel sure of this. And Rilla, I’m not afraid. When you hear the news, remember that. I’ve won my own freedom here — freedom from all fear. I shall never be afraid of anything again — not of death — nor of life, if after all, I am to go on living. And life, I think, would be the harder of the two to face — for it could never be beautiful for me again. There would always be such horrible things to remember — things that would make life ugly and painful always for me. I could never forget them. But whether it’s life or death, I’m not afraid, Rilla-my-Rilla, and I am not sorry that I came. I’m satisfied. I’ll never write the poems I once dreamed of writing — but I’ve helped to make Canada safe for the poets of the future — for the workers of the future — ay, and the dreamers, too — for if no man dreams, there will be nothing for the workers to fulfil — the future, not of Canada only but of the world — when the ‘red rain’ of Langemarck and Verdun shall have brought forth a golden harvest — not in a year or two, as some foolishly think, but a generation later, when the seed sown now shall have had time to germinate and grow. Yes, I’m glad I came, Rilla. It isn’t only the fate of the little sea-born island I love that is in the balance — nor of Canada nor of England. It’s the fate of mankind. That is what we’re fighting for. And we shall win — never for a moment doubt that, Rilla. For it isn’t only the living who are fighting — the dead are fighting too. Such an army cannot be defeated.

“Is there laughter in your face yet, Rilla? I hope so. The world will need laughter and courage more than ever in the years that will come next. I don’t want to preach — this isn’t any time for it. But I just want to say something that may help you over the worst when you hear that I’ve gone ‘west.’ I’ve a premonition about you, Rilla, as well as about myself. I think Ken will go back to you — and that there are long years of happiness for you by-and-by. And you will tell your children of the Idea we fought and died for — teach them it must be lived for as well as died for, else the price paid for it will have been given for nought. This will be part of your work, Rilla. And if you — all you girls back in the homeland — do it, then

we who don't come back will know that you have not 'broken faith' with us.

"I meant to write to Una tonight, too, but I won't have time now. Read this letter to her and tell her it's really meant for you both — you two dear, fine loyal girls. Tomorrow, when we go over the top — I'll think of you both — of your laughter, Rilla-my-Rilla, and the steadfastness in Una's blue eyes — somehow I see those eyes very plainly tonight, too. Yes, you'll both keep faith — I'm sure of that — you and Una. And so — goodnight. We go over the top at dawn."

Rilla read her letter over many times. There was a new light on her pale young face when she finally stood up, amid the asters Walter had loved, with the sunshine of autumn around her. For the moment at least, she was lifted above pain and loneliness.

"I will keep faith, Walter," she said steadily. "I will work — and teach — and learn — and laugh, yes, I will even laugh — through all my years, because of you and because of what you gave when you followed the call."

Rilla meant to keep Walter's letter as a sacred treasure. But, seeing the look on Una Meredith's face when Una had read it and held it back to her, she thought of something. Could she do it? Oh, no, she could not give up Walter's letter — his last letter. Surely it was not selfishness to keep it. A copy would be such a soulless thing. But Una — Una had so little — and her eyes were the eyes of a woman stricken to the heart, who yet must not cry out or ask for sympathy.

"Una, would you like to have this letter — to keep?" she asked slowly.

"Yes — if you can give it to me," Una said dully.

"Then — you may have it," said Rilla hurriedly.

"Thank you," said Una. It was all she said, but there was something in her voice which repaid Rilla for her bit of sacrifice.

Una took the letter and when Rilla had gone she pressed it against her lonely lips. Una knew that love would never come into her life now — it was buried for ever under the bloodstained soil "Somewhere in France." No one but herself — and perhaps Rilla — knew it — would ever know it.

She had no right in the eyes of her world to grieve. She must hide and bear her long pain as best she could — alone. But she, too, would keep faith.

Mary Is Just in Time

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The autumn of 1916 was a bitter season for Ingleside. Mrs. Blythe's return to health was slow, and sorrow and loneliness were in all hearts. Every one tried to hide it from the others and "carry on" cheerfully. Rilla laughed a good deal. Nobody at Ingleside was deceived by her laughter; it came from her lips only, never from her heart. But outsiders said some people got over trouble very easily, and Irene Howard remarked that she was surprised to find how shallow Rilla Blythe really was. "Why, after all her pose of being so devoted to Walter, she doesn't seem to mind his death at all. Nobody has ever seen her shed a tear or heard her mention his name. She has evidently quite forgotten him. Poor fellow — you'd really think his family would feel it more. I spoke of him to Rilla at the last Junior Red meeting — of how fine and brave and splendid he was — and I said life could never be just the same to me again, now that Walter had gone — we were such friends, you know — why I was the very first person he told about having enlisted — and Rilla answered, as coolly and indifferently as if she were speaking of an entire stranger, 'He was just one of many fine and splendid boys who have given everything for their country.' Well, I wish I could take things as calmly — but I'm not made like that. I'm so sensitive — things hurt me terribly — I really never get over them. I asked Rilla right out why she didn't put on mourning for Walter. She said her mother didn't wish it. But every one is talking about it."

"Rilla doesn't wear colours — nothing but white," protested Betty Mead.

"White becomes her better than anything else," said Irene significantly. "And we all know black doesn't suit her complexion at all. But of course I'm not saying that is the reason she doesn't wear it. Only, it's funny. If my brother had died I'd have gone into deep mourning. I

wouldn't have had the heart for anything else. I confess I'm disappointed in Rilla Blythe."

"I am not, then," cried Betty Meade, loyally, "I think Rilla is just a wonderful girl. A few years ago I admit I did think she was rather too vain and gigglesome; but now she is nothing of the sort. I don't think there is a girl in the Glen who is so unselfish and plucky as Rilla, or who has done her bit as thoroughly and patiently. Our Junior Red Cross would have gone on the rocks a dozen times if it hadn't been for her tact and perseverance and enthusiasm — you know that perfectly well, Irene."

"Why, I am not running Rilla down," said Irene, opening her eyes widely. "It was only her lack of feeling I was criticizing. I suppose she can't help it. Of course, she's a born manager — everyone knows that. She's very fond of managing, too — and people like that are very necessary I admit. So don't look at me as if I'd said something perfectly dreadful, Betty, please. I'm quite willing to agree that Rilla Blythe is the embodiment of all the virtues, if that will please you. And no doubt it is a virtue to be quite unmoved by things that would crush most people."

Some of Irene's remarks were reported to Rilla; but they did not hurt her as they would once have done. They didn't matter, that was all. Life was too big to leave room for pettiness. She had a pact to keep and a work to do; and through the long hard days and weeks of that disastrous autumn she was faithful to her task. The war news was consistently bad, for Germany marched from victory to victory over poor Rumania. "Foreigners — foreigners," Susan muttered dubiously. "Russians or Rumanians or whatever they may be, they are foreigners and you cannot tie to them. But after Verdun I shall not give up hope. And can you tell me, Mrs. Dr. dear, if the Dobruja is a river or a mountain range, or a condition of the atmosphere?"

The Presidential election in the United States came off in November, and Susan was red-hot over that — and quite apologetic for her excitement.

"I never thought I would live to see the day when I would be interested in a Yankee election, Mrs. Dr. dear. It only goes to show we can never

know what we will come to in this world, and therefore we should not be proud.”

Susan stayed up late on the evening of the eleventh, ostensibly to finish a pair of socks. But she ‘phoned down to Carter Flagg’s store at intervals, and when the first report came through that Hughes had been elected she stalked solemnly upstairs to Mrs. Blythe’s room and announced it in a thrilling whisper from the foot of the bed.

“I thought if you were not asleep you would be interested in knowing it. I believe it is for the best. Perhaps he will just fall to writing notes, too, Mrs. Dr. dear, but I hope for better things. I never was very partial to whiskers, but one cannot have everything.”

When news came in the morning that after all Wilson was reelected, Susan tacked to catch another breeze of optimism.

“Well, better a fool you know than a fool you do not know, as the old proverb has it,” she remarked cheerfully. “Not that I hold Woodrow to be a fool by any means, though by times you would not think he has the sense he was born with. But he is a good letter writer at least, and we do not know if the Hughes man is even that. All things being considered I commend the Yankees. They have shown good sense and I do not mind admitting it. Cousin Sophia wanted them to elect Roosevelt, and is much disgruntled because they would not give him a chance. I had a hankering for him myself, but we must believe that Providence overrules these matters and be satisfied — though what the Almighty means in this affair of Rumania I cannot fathom — saying it with all reverence.”

Susan fathomed it — or thought she did — when the Asquith ministry went down and Lloyd George became Premier.

“Mrs. Dr. dear, Lloyd George is at the helm at last. I have been praying for this for many a day. Now we shall soon see a blessed change. It took the Rumanian disaster to bring it about, no less, and that is the meaning of it, though I could not see it before. There will be no more shillyshallying. I consider that the war is as good as won, and that I shall tie to, whether Bucharest falls or not.”

Bucharest did fall — and Germany proposed peace negotiations. Whereat Susan scornfully turned a deaf ear and absolutely refused to listen to such proposals. When President Wilson sent his famous December peace note Susan waxed violently sarcastic.

“Woodrow Wilson is going to make peace, I understand. First Henry Ford had a try at it and now comes Wilson. But peace is not made with ink, Woodrow, and that you may tie to,” said Susan, apostrophizing the unlucky President out of the kitchen window nearest the United States. “Lloyd George’s speech will tell the Kaiser what is what, and you may keep your peace screeds at home and save postage.”

“What a pity President Wilson can’t hear you, Susan,” said Rilla slyly.

“Indeed, Rilla dear, it is a pity that he has no one near him to give him good advice, as it is clear he has not, in all those Democrats and Republicans,” retorted Susan. “I do not know the difference between them, for the politics of the Yankees is a puzzle I cannot solve, study it as I may. But as far as seeing through a grindstone goes, I am afraid—” Susan shook her head dubiously, “that they are all tarred with the same brush.”

“I am thankful Christmas is over,” Rilla wrote in her diary during the last week of a stormy December. “We had dreaded it so — the first Christmas since Courcelette. But we had all the Merediths down for dinner and nobody tried to be gay or cheerful. We were all just quiet and friendly, and that helped. Then, too, I was so thankful that Jims had got better — so thankful that I almost felt glad — almost but not quite. I wonder if I shall ever feel really glad over anything again. It seems as if gladness were killed in me — shot down by the same bullet that pierced Walter’s heart. Perhaps some day a new kind of gladness will be born in my soul — but the old kind will never live again.

“Winter set in awfully early this year. Ten days before Christmas we had a big snowstorm — at least we thought it big at the time. As it happened, it was only a prelude to the real performance. It was fine the next day, and Ingleside and Rainbow Valley were wonderful, with the trees all covered with snow, and big drifts everywhere, carved into the most fantastic shapes by the chisel of the northeast wind. Father and mother

went up to Avonlea. Father thought the change would do mother good, and they wanted to see poor Aunt Diana, whose son Jock had been seriously wounded a short time before. They left Susan and me to keep house, and father expected to be back the next day. But he never got back for a week. That night it began to storm again, and it stormed unbrokenly for four days. It was the worst and longest storm that Prince Edward Island has known for years. Everything was disorganized — the roads were completely choked up, the trains blockaded, and the telephone wires put entirely out of commission.

“And then Jims took ill.

“He had a little cold when father and mother went away, and he kept getting worse for a couple of days, but it didn’t occur to me that there was danger of anything serious. I never even took his temperature, and I can’t forgive myself, because it was sheer carelessness. The truth is I had slumped just then. Mother was away, so I let myself go. All at once I was tired of keeping up and pretending to be brave and cheerful, and I just gave up for a few days and spent most of the time lying on my face on my bed, crying. I neglected Jims — that is the hateful truth — I was cowardly and false to what I promised Walter — and if Jims had died I could never have forgiven myself.

“Then, the third night after father and mother went away, Jims suddenly got worse — oh, so much worse — all at once. Susan and I were all alone. Gertrude had been at Lowbridge when the storm began and had never got back. At first we were not much alarmed. Jims has had several bouts of croup and Susan and Morgan and I have always brought him through without much trouble. But it wasn’t very long before we were dreadfully alarmed.

“‘I never saw croup like this before,’ said Susan.

“As for me, I knew, when it was too late, what kind of croup it was. I knew it was not the ordinary croup—‘false croup’ as doctors call it — but the ‘true croup’ — and I knew that it was a deadly and dangerous thing. And father was away and there was no doctor nearer than Lowbridge —

and we could not ‘phone and neither horse nor man could get through the drifts that night.

“Gallant little Jims put up a good fight for his life, — Susan and I tried every remedy we could think of or find in father’s books, but he continued to grow worse. It was heartrending to see and hear him. He gasped so horribly for breath — the poor little soul — and his face turned a dreadful bluish colour and had such an agonized expression, and he kept struggling with his little hands, as if he were appealing to us to help him somehow. I found myself thinking that the boys who had been gassed at the front must have looked like that, and the thought haunted me amid all my dread and misery over Jims. And all the time the fatal membrane in his wee throat grew and thickened and he couldn’t get it up.

“Oh, I was just wild! I never realized how dear Jims was to me until that moment. And I felt so utterly helpless.”

“And then Susan gave up. ‘We cannot save him! Oh, if your father was here — look at him, the poor little fellow! I know not what to do.’

“I looked at Jims and I thought he was dying. Susan was holding him up in his crib to give him a better chance for breath, but it didn’t seem as if he could breathe at all. My little war-baby, with his dear ways and sweet roguish face, was choking to death before my very eyes, and I couldn’t help him. I threw down the hot poultice I had ready in despair. Of what use was it? Jims was dying, and it was my fault — I hadn’t been careful enough!

“Just then — at eleven o’clock at night — the door bell rang. Such a ring — it pealed all over the house above the roar of the storm. Susan couldn’t go — she dared not lay Jims down — so I rushed downstairs. In the hall I paused just a minute — I was suddenly overcome by an absurd dread. I thought of a weird story Gertrude had told me once. An aunt of hers was alone in a house one night with her sick husband. She heard a knock at the door. And when she went and opened it there was nothing there — nothing that could be seen, at least. But when she opened the door a deadly cold wind blew in and seemed to sweep past her right up the stairs, although it was a calm, warm summer night outside. Immediately

she heard a cry. She ran upstairs — and her husband was dead. And she always believed, so Gertrude said, that when she opened that door she let Death in.

“It was so ridiculous of me to feel so frightened. But I was distracted and worn out, and I simply felt for a moment that I dared not open the door — that death was waiting outside. Then I remembered that I had no time to waste — must not be so foolish — I sprang forward and opened the door.

“Certainly a cold wind did blow in and filled the hall with a whirl of snow. But there on the threshold stood a form of flesh and blood — Mary Vance, coated from head to foot with snow — and she brought Life, not Death, with her, though I didn’t know that then. I just stared at her.

“‘I haven’t been turned out,’ grinned Mary, as she stepped in and shut the door. ‘I came up to Carter Flagg’s two days ago and I’ve been stormed-stayed there ever since. But old Abbie Flagg got on my nerves at last, and tonight I just made up my mind to come up here. I thought I could wade this far, but I can tell you it was as much as a bargain. Once I thought I was stuck for keeps. Ain’t it an awful night?’

“I came to myself and knew I must hurry upstairs. I explained as quickly as I could to Mary, and left her trying to brush the snow off. Upstairs I found that Jims was over that paroxysm, but almost as soon as I got back to the room he was in the grip of another. I couldn’t do anything but moan and cry — oh, how ashamed I am when I think of it; and yet what could I do — we had tried everything we knew — and then all at once I heard Mary Vance saying loudly behind me, ‘Why, that child is dying!’

“I whirled around. Didn’t I know he was dying — my little Jims! I could have thrown Mary Vance out of the door or the window — anywhere — at that moment. There she stood, cool and composed, looking down at my baby, with those, weird white eyes of hers, as she might look at a choking kitten. I had always disliked Mary Vance — and just then I hated her.

“‘We have tried everything,’ said poor Susan dully. ‘It is not ordinary croup.’

“‘No, it’s the diphtery croup,’ said Mary briskly, snatching up an apron. ‘And there’s mighty little time to lose — but I know what to do. When I lived over-harbour with Mrs. Wiley, years ago, Will Crawford’s kid died of diphtery croup, in spite of two doctors. And when old Aunt Christina MacAllister heard of it — she was the one brought me round when I nearly died of pneumonia you know — she was a wonder — no doctor was a patch on her — they don’t hatch her breed of cats nowadays, let me tell you — she said she could have saved him with her grandmother’s remedy if she’d been there. She told Mrs. Wiley what it was and I’ve never forgot it. I’ve the greatest memory ever — a thing just lies in the back of my head till the time comes to use it. Got any sulphur in the house, Susan?’

“Yes, we had sulphur. Susan went down with Mary to get it, and I held Jims. I hadn’t any hope — not the least. Mary Vance might brag as she liked — she was always bragging — but I didn’t believe any grandmother’s remedy could save Jims now. Presently Mary came back. She had tied a piece of thick flannel over her mouth and nose, and she carried Susan’s old tin chip pan, half full of burning coals.

“‘You watch me,’ she said boastfully. ‘I’ve never done this, but it’s kill or cure that child is dying anyway.’

“She sprinkled a spoonful of sulphur over the coals; and then she picked up Jims, turned him over, and held him face downward, right over those choking, blinding fumes. I don’t know why I didn’t spring forward and snatch him away. Susan says it was because it was foreordained that I shouldn’t, and I think she is right, because it did really seem that I was powerless to move. Susan herself seemed transfixed, watching Mary from the doorway. Jims writhed in those big, firm, capable hands of Mary — oh yes, she is capable all right — and choked and wheezed — and choked and wheezed — and I felt that he was being tortured to death — and then all at once, after what seemed to me an hour, though it really wasn’t long, he coughed up the membrane that was killing him. Mary turned him over and

laid him back on his bed. He was white as marble and the tears were pouring out of his brown eyes — but that awful livid look was gone from his face and he could breathe quite easily.

“‘Wasn’t that some trick?’ said Mary gaily. ‘I hadn’t any idea how it would work, but I just took a chance. I’ll smoke his throat out again once or twice before morning, just to kill all the germs, but you’ll see he’ll be all right now.’

“Jims went right to sleep — real sleep, not coma, as I feared at first. Mary ‘smoked him,’ as she called it, twice through the night, and at daylight his throat was perfectly clear and his temperature was almost normal. When I made sure of that I turned and looked at Mary Vance. She was sitting on the lounge laying down the law to Susan on some subject about which Susan must have known forty times as much as she did. But I didn’t mind how much law she laid down or how much she bragged. She had a right to brag — she had dared to do what I would never have dared, and had saved Jims from a horrible death. It didn’t matter any more that she had once chased me through the Glen with a codfish; it didn’t matter that she had smeared goose-grease all over my dream of romance the night of the lighthouse dance; it didn’t matter that she thought she knew more than anybody else and always rubbed it in — I would never dislike Mary Vance again. I went over to her and kissed her.

“‘What’s up now?’ she said.

“‘Nothing — only I’m so grateful to you, Mary.’

“‘Well, I think you ought to be, that’s a fact. You two would have let that baby die on your hands if I hadn’t happened along,’ said Mary, just beaming with complacency. She got Susan and me a tip-top breakfast and made us eat it, and ‘bossed the life out of us,’ as Susan says, for two days, until the roads were opened so that she could get home. Jims was almost well by that time, and father turned up. He heard our tale without saying much. Father is rather scornful generally about what he calls ‘old wives’ remedies.’ He laughed a little and said, ‘After this, Mary Vance will expect me to call her in for consultation in all my serious cases.’

“So Christmas was not so hard as I expected it to be; and now the New Year is coming — and we are still hoping for the ‘Big Push’ that will end the war — and Little Dog Monday is getting stiff and rheumatic from his cold vigils, but still he ‘carries on,’ and Shirley continues to read the exploits of the aces. Oh, nineteen-seventeen, what will you bring?”

Shirley Goes

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“No, Woodrow, there will be no peace without victory,” said Susan, sticking her knitting needle viciously through President Wilson’s name in the newspaper column. “We Canadians mean to have peace and victory, too. You, if it pleases you, Woodrow, can have the peace without the victory” — and Susan stalked off to bed with the comfortable consciousness of having got the better of the argument with the President. But a few days later she rushed to Mrs. Blythe in red-hot excitement.

“Mrs. Dr. dear, what do you think? A ‘phone message has just come through from Charlottetown that Woodrow Wilson has sent that German ambassador man to the right about at last. They tell me that means war. So I begin to think that Woodrow’s heart is in the right place after all, wherever his head may be, and I am going to commandeer a little sugar and celebrate the occasion with some fudge, despite the howls of the Food Board. I thought that submarine business would bring things to a crisis. I told Cousin Sophia so when she said it was the beginning of the end for the Allies.”

“Don’t let the doctor hear of the fudge, Susan,” said Anne, with a smile. “You know he has laid down very strict rules for us along the lines of economy the government has asked for.”

“Yes, Mrs. Dr. dear, and a man should be master in his own household, and his women folk should bow to his decrees. I flatter myself that I am becoming quite efficient in economizing” — Susan had taken to using certain German terms with killing effect—“but one can exercise a little gumption on the quiet now and then. Shirley was wishing for some of my fudge the other day — the Susan brand, as he called it — and I said ‘The first victory there is to celebrate I shall make you some.’ I consider this news quite equal to a victory, and what the doctor does not know will

never grieve him. I take the whole responsibility, Mrs. Dr. dear, so do not you vex your conscience.”

Susan spoiled Shirley shamelessly that winter. He came home from Queen’s every weekend, and Susan had all his favourite dishes for him, in so far as she could evade or wheedle the doctor, and waited on him hand and foot. Though she talked war constantly to everyone else she never mentioned it to him or before him, but she watched him like a cat watching a mouse; and when the German retreat from the Bapaume salient began and continued, Susan’s exultation was linked up with something deeper than anything she expressed. Surely the end was in sight — would come now before — anyone else — could go.

“Things are coming our way at last. We have got the Germans on the run,” she boasted. “The United States has declared war at last, as I always believed they would, in spite of Woodrow’s gift for letter writing, and you will see they will go into it with a vim since I understand that is their habit, when they do start. And we have got the Germans on the run, too.”

“The States mean well,” moaned Cousin Sophia, “but all the vim in the world cannot put them on the fighting line this spring, and the Allies will be finished before that. The Germans are just luring them on. That man Simonds says their retreat has put the Allies in a hole.”

“That man Simonds has said more than he will ever live to make good,” retorted Susan. “I do not worry myself about his opinion as long as Lloyd George is Premier of England. He will not be bamboozled and that you may tie to. Things look good to me. The U. S. is in the war, and we have got Kut and Bagdad back — and I would not be surprised to see the Allies in Berlin by June — and the Russians, too, since they have got rid of the Czar. That, in my opinion was a good piece of work.”

“Time will show if it is,” said Cousin Sophia, who would have been very indignant if anyone had told her that she would rather see Susan put to shame as a seer, than a successful overthrow of tyranny, or even the march of the Allies down Unter den Linden. But then the woes of the Russian people were quite unknown to Cousin Sophia, while this aggravating, optimistic Susan was an ever-present thorn in her side.

Just at that moment Shirley was sitting on the edge of the table in the livingroom, swinging his legs — a brown, ruddy, wholesome lad, from top to toe, every inch of him — and saying coolly, “Mother and dad, I was eighteen last Monday. Don’t you think it’s about time I joined up?”

The pale mother looked at him.

“Two of my sons have gone and one will never return. Must I give you too, Shirley?”

The age-old cry—”Joseph is not and Simeon is not; and ye will take Benjamin away.” How the mothers of the Great War echoed the old Patriarch’s moan of so many centuries ago!

“You wouldn’t have me a slacker, mother? I can get into the flying-corps. What say, dad?”

The doctor’s hands were not quite steady as he folded up the powders he was concocting for Abbie Flagg’s rheumatism. He had known this moment was coming, yet he was not altogether prepared for it. He answered slowly, “I won’t try to hold you back from what you believe to be your duty. But you must not go unless your mother says you may.”

Shirley said nothing more. He was not a lad of many words. Anne did not say anything more just then, either. She was thinking of little Joyce’s grave in the old burying-ground over-harbour — little Joyce who would have been a woman now, had she lived — of the white cross in France and the splendid grey eyes of the little boy who had been taught his first lessons of duty and loyalty at her knee — of Jem in the terrible trenches — of Nan and Di and Rilla, waiting — waiting — waiting, while the golden years of youth passed by — and she wondered if she could bear any more. She thought not; surely she had given enough.

Yet that night she told Shirley that he might go.

They did not tell Susan right away. She did not know it until, a few days later, Shirley presented himself in her kitchen in his aviation uniform. Susan didn’t make half the fuss she had made when Jem and Walter had gone. She said stonily, “So they’re going to take you, too.”

“Take me? No. I’m going, Susan — got to.”

Susan sat down by the table, folded her knotted old hands, that had grown warped and twisted working for the Ingleside children to still their shaking, and said:

“Yes, you must go. I did not see once why such things must be, but I can see now.”

“You’re a brick, Susan,” said Shirley. He was relieved that she took it so coolly — he had been a little afraid, with a boy’s horror of “a scene.” He went out whistling gaily; but half an hour later, when pale Anne Blythe came in, Susan was still sitting there.

“Mrs. Dr. dear,” said Susan, making an admission she would once have died rather than make, “I feel very old. Jem and Walter were yours but Shirley is mine. And I cannot bear to think of him flying — his machine crashing down — the life crushed out of his body — the dear little body I nursed and cuddled when he was a wee baby.”

“Susan — don’t,” cried Anne.

“Oh, Mrs. Dr. dear, I beg your pardon. I ought not to have said anything like that out loud. I sometimes forget that I resolved to be a heroine. This — this has shaken me a little. But I will not forget myself again. Only if things do not go as smoothly in the kitchen for a few days I hope you will make due allowance for me. At least,” said poor Susan, forcing a grim smile in a desperate effort to recover lost standing, “at least flying is a clean job. He will not get so dirty and messed up as he would in the trenches, and that is well, for he has always been a tidy child.”

So Shirley went — not radiantly, as to a high adventure, like Jem, not in a white flame of sacrifice, like Walter, but in a cool, businesslike mood, as of one doing something, rather dirty and disagreeable, that had just got to be done. He kissed Susan for the first time since he was five years old, and said, “Goodbye, Susan — mother Susan.”

“My little brown boy — my little brown boy,” said Susan. “I wonder,” she thought bitterly, as she looked at the doctor’s sorrowful face, “if you remember how you spanked him once when he was a baby. I am thankful I have nothing like that on my conscience now.”

The doctor did not remember the old discipline. But before he put on his hat to go out on his round of calls he stood for a moment in the great silent livingroom that had once been full of children's laughter.

"Our last son — our last son," he said aloud. "A good, sturdy, sensible lad, too. Always reminded me of my father. I suppose I ought to be proud that he wanted to go — I was proud when Jem went — even when Walter went — but 'our house is left us desolate.'"

"I have been thinking, doctor," old Sandy of the Upper Glen said to him that afternoon, "that your house will be seeming very big the day."

Highland Sandy's quaint phrase struck the doctor as perfectly expressive. Ingleside did seem very big and empty that night. Yet Shirley had been away all winter except for weekends, and had always been a quiet fellow even when home. Was it because he had been the only one left that his going seemed to leave such a huge blank — that every room seemed vacant and deserted — that the very trees on the lawn seemed to be trying to comfort each other with caresses of freshly-budding boughs for the loss of the last of the little lads who had romped under them in childhood?

Susan worked very hard all day and late into the night. When she had wound the kitchen clock and put Dr. Jekyll out, none too gently, she stood for a little while on the doorstep, looking down the Glen, which lay tranced in faint, silvery light from a sinking young moon. But Susan did not see the familiar hills and harbour. She was looking at the aviation camp in Kingsport where Shirley was that night.

"He called me 'Mother Susan,'" she was thinking. "Well, all our men folk have gone now — Jem and Walter and Shirley and Jerry and Carl. And none of them had to be driven to it. So we have a right to be proud. But pride—" Susan sighed bitterly—"pride is cold company and that there is no gainsaying."

The moon sank lower into a black cloud in the west, the Glen went out in an eclipse of sudden shadow — and thousands of miles away the Canadian boys in khaki — the living and the dead — were in possession of Vimy Ridge.

Vimy Ridge is a name written in crimson and gold on the Canadian annals of the Great War. “The British couldn’t take it and the French couldn’t take it,” said a German prisoner to his captors, “but you Canadians are such fools that you don’t know when a place can’t be taken!”

So the “fools” took it — and paid the price.

Jerry Meredith was seriously wounded at Vimy Ridge — shot in the back, the telegram said.

“Poor Nan,” said Mrs. Blythe, when the news came. She thought of her own happy girlhood at old Green Gables. There had been no tragedy like this in it. How the girls of to-day had to suffer! When Nan came home from Redmond two weeks later her face showed what those weeks had meant to her. John Meredith, too, seemed to have grown old suddenly in them. Faith did not come home; she was on her way across the Atlantic as a V.A.D. Di had tried to wring from her father consent to her going also, but had been told that for her mother’s sake it could not be given. So Di, after a flying visit home, went back to her Red Cross work in Kingsport.

The mayflowers bloomed in the secret nooks of Rainbow Valley. Rilla was watching for them. Jem had once taken his mother the earliest mayflowers; Walter brought them to her when Jem was gone; last spring Shirley had sought them out for her; now, Rilla thought she must take the boys’ place in this. But before she had discovered any, Bruce Meredith came to Ingleside one twilight with his hands full of delicate pink sprays. He stalked up the steps of the veranda and laid them on Mrs. Blythe’s lap.

“Because Shirley isn’t here to bring them,” he said in his funny, shy, blunt way.

“And you thought of this, you darling,” said Anne, her lips quivering, as she looked at the stocky, black-browed little chap, standing before her, with his hands thrust into his pockets.

“I wrote Jem to-day and told him not to worry ‘bout you not getting your mayflowers,” said Bruce seriously, “‘cause I’d see to that. And I told him I would be ten pretty soon now, so it won’t be very long before I’ll be eighteen, and then I’ll go to help him fight, and maybe let him come home

for a rest while I took his place. I wrote Jerry, too. Jerry's getting better, you know."

"Is he? Have you had any good news about him?"

"Yes. Mother had a letter to-day, and it said he was out of danger."

"Oh, thank God," murmured Mrs. Blythe, in a half-whisper.

Bruce looked at her curiously.

"That is what father said when mother told him. But when I said it the other day when I found out Mr. Mead's dog hadn't hurt my kitten — I thought he had shaken it to death, you know — father looked awful solemn and said I must never say that again about a kitten. But I couldn't understand why, Mrs. Blythe. I felt awful thankful, and it must have been God that saved Stripey, because that Mead dog had 'normous jaws, and oh, how it shook poor Stripey. And so why couldn't I thank Him? 'Course," added Bruce reminiscently, "maybe I said it too loud—'cause I was awful glad and excited when I found Stripey was all right. I 'most shouted it, Mrs. Blythe. Maybe if I'd said it sort of whispery like you and father it would have been all right. Do you know, Mrs. Blythe" — Bruce dropped to a "whispery" tone, edging a little nearer to Anne—"what I would like to do to the Kaiser if I could?"

"What would you like to do, laddie?"

"Norman Reese said in school to-day that he would like to tie the Kaiser to a tree and set cross dogs to worrying him," said Bruce gravely. "And Emily Flagg said she would like to put him in a cage and poke sharp things into him. And they all said things like that. But Mrs. Blythe" — Bruce took a little square paw out of his pocket and put it earnestly on Anne's knee—"I would like to turn the Kaiser into a good man — a very good man — all at once if I could. That is what I would do. Don't you think, Mrs. Blythe, that would be the very worstest punishment of all?"

"Bless the child," said Susan, "how do you make out that would be any kind of a punishment for that wicked fiend?"

"Don't you see," said Bruce, looking levelly at Susan, out of his blackly blue eyes, "if he was turned into a good man he would understand how dreadful the things he has done are, and he would feel so terrible

about it that he would be more unhappy and miserable than he could ever be in any other way. He would feel just awful — and he would go on feeling like that forever. Yes” — Bruce clenched his hands and nodded his head emphatically, “yes, I would make the Kaiser a good man — that is what I would do — it would serve him ‘zackly right.”

Susan Has A Proposal Of Marriage

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An aeroplane was flying over Glen St. Mary, like a great bird poised against the western sky — a sky so clear and of such a pale, silvery yellow, that it gave an impression of a vast, wind-freshened space of freedom. The little group on the Ingleside lawn looked up at it with fascinated eyes, although it was by no means an unusual thing to see an occasional hovering plane that summer. Susan was always intensely excited. Who knew but that it might be Shirley away up there in the clouds, flying over to the Island from Kingsport? But Shirley had gone overseas now, so Susan was not so keenly interested in this particular aeroplane and its pilot. Nevertheless, she looked at it with awe.

“I wonder, Mrs. Dr. dear,” she said solemnly, “what the old folks down there in the graveyard would think if they could rise out of their graves for one moment and behold that sight. I am sure my father would disapprove of it, for he was a man who did not believe in new-fangled ideas of any sort. He always cut his grain with a reaping hook to the day of his death. A mower he would not have. What was good enough for his father was good enough for him, he used to say. I hope it is not unfilial to say that I think he was wrong in that point of view, but I am not sure I go so far as to approve of aeroplanes, though they may be a military necessity. If the Almighty had meant us to fly he would have provided us with wings. Since He did not it is plain He meant us to stick to the solid earth. At any rate, you will never see me, Mrs. Dr. dear, cavorting through the sky in an aeroplane.”

“But you won’t refuse to cavort a bit in father’s new automobile when it comes, will you, Susan?” teased Rilla.

“I do not expect to trust my old bones in automobiles, either,” retorted Susan. “But I do not look upon them as some narrow-minded people do. Whiskers-on-the-moon says the Government should be turned out of office

for permitting them to run on the Island at all. He foams at the mouth, they tell me, when he sees one. The other day he saw one coming along that narrow side-road by his wheatfield, and Whiskers bounded over the fence and stood right in the middle of the road, with his pitchfork. The man in the machine was an agent of some kind, and Whiskers hates agents as much as he hates automobiles. He made the car come to a halt, because there was not room to pass him on either side, and the agent could not actually run over him. Then he raised his pitchfork and shouted, 'Get out of this with your devil-machine or I will run this pitchfork clean through you.' And Mrs. Dr. dear, if you will believe me, that poor agent had to back his car clean out to the Lowbridge road, nearly a mile, Whiskers following him every step, shaking his pitchfork and bellowing insults. Now, Mrs. Dr. dear, I call such conduct unreasonable; but all the same," added Susan, with a sigh, "what with aeroplanes and automobiles and all the rest of it, this Island is not what it used to be."

The aeroplane soared and dipped and circled, and soared again, until it became a mere speck far over the sunset hills.

"'With the majesty of pinion Which the Theban eagles bear Sailing with supreme dominion Through the azure fields of air.'"

quoted Anne Blythe dreamily.

"I wonder," said Miss Oliver, "if humanity will be any happier because of aeroplanes. It seems to me that the sum of human happiness remains much the same from age to age, no matter how it may vary in distribution, and that all the 'many inventions' neither lessen nor increase it."

"After all, the 'kingdom of heaven is within you,'" said Mr. Meredith, gazing after the vanishing speck which symbolized man's latest victory in a world-old struggle. "It does not depend on material achievements and triumphs."

"Nevertheless, an aeroplane is a fascinating thing," said the doctor. "It has always been one of humanity's favourite dreams — the dream of flying. Dream after dream comes true — or rather is made true by persevering effort. I should like to have a flight in an aeroplane myself."

“Shirley wrote me that he was dreadfully disappointed in his first flight,” said Rilla. “He had expected to experience the sensation of soaring up from the earth like a bird — and instead he just had the feeling that he wasn’t moving at all, but that the earth was dropping away under him. And the first time he went up alone he suddenly felt terribly homesick. He had never felt like that before; but all at once, he said, he felt as if he were adrift in space — and he had a wild desire to get back home to the old planet and the companionship of fellow creatures. He soon got over that feeling, but he says his first flight alone was a nightmare to him because of that dreadful sensation of ghastly loneliness.”

The aeroplane disappeared. The doctor threw back his head with a sigh.

“When I have watched one of those bird-men out of sight I come back to earth with an odd feeling of being merely a crawling insect. Anne,” he said, turning to his wife, “do you remember the first time I took you for a buggy ride in Avonlea — that night we went to the Carmody concert, the first fall you taught in Avonlea? I had out little black mare with the white star on her forehead, and a shining brand-new buggy — and I was the proudest fellow in the world, barring none. I suppose our grandson will be taking his sweetheart out quite casually for an evening ‘fly’ in his aeroplane.”

“An aeroplane won’t be as nice as little Silverspot was,” said Anne. “A machine is simply a machine — but Silverspot, why she was a personality, Gilbert. A drive behind her had something in it that not even a flight among sunset clouds could have. No, I don’t envy my grandson’s sweetheart, after all. Mr. Meredith is right. ‘The kingdom of Heaven’ — and of love — and of happiness — doesn’t depend on externals.”

“Besides,” said the doctor gravely, “our said grandson will have to give most of his attention to the aeroplane — he won’t be able to let the reins lie on its back while he gazes into his lady’s eyes. And I have an awful suspicion that you can’t run an aeroplane with one arm. No” — the doctor shook his head — “I believe I’d still prefer Silverspot after all.”

The Russian line broke again that summer and Susan said bitterly that she had expected it ever since Kerensky had gone and got married.

“Far be it from me to decry the holy state of matrimony, Mrs. Dr. dear, but I felt that when a man was running a revolution he had his hands full and should have postponed marriage until a more fitting season. The Russians are done for this time and there would be no sense in shutting our eyes to the fact. But have you seen Woodrow Wilson’s reply to the Pope’s peace proposals? It is magnificent. I really could not have expressed the rights of the matter better myself. I feel that I can forgive Wilson everything for it. He knows the meaning of words and that you may tie to. Speaking of meanings, have you heard the latest story about Whiskers-on-the-moon, Mrs. Dr. dear? It seems he was over at the Lowbridge Road school the other day and took a notion to examine the fourth class in spelling. They have the summer term there yet, you know, with the spring and fall vacations, being rather backward people on that road. My niece, Ella Baker, goes to that school and she it was who told me the story. The teacher was not feeling well, having a dreadful headache, and she went out to get a little fresh air while Mr. Pryor was examining the class. The children got along all right with the spelling but when Whiskers began to question them about the meanings of the words they were all at sea, because they had not learned them. Ella and the other big scholars felt terrible over it. They love their teacher so, and it seems Mr. Pryor’s brother, Abel Pryor, who is trustee of that school, is against her and has been trying to turn the other trustees over to his way of thinking. And Ella and the rest were afraid that if the fourth class couldn’t tell Whiskers the meanings of the words he would think the teacher was no good and tell Abel so, and Abel would have a fine handle. But little Sandy Logan saved the situation. He is a Home boy, but he is as smart as a steel trap, and he sized up Whiskers-on-the-moon right off. ‘What does “anatomy” mean?’ Whiskers demanded. ‘A pain in your stomach,’ Sandy replied, quick as a flash and never batting an eyelid. Whiskers-on-the-moon is a very ignorant man, Mrs. Dr. dear; he didn’t know the meaning of the words himself, and he said ‘Very good — very good.’ The class caught right on — at least three or four of the brighter ones did — and they kept up the fun. Jean Blane said that ‘acoustic’ meant ‘a religious squabble,’ and

Muriel Baker said that an ‘agnostic’ was ‘a man who had indigestion,’ and Jim Carter said that ‘acerbity’ meant that ‘you ate nothing but vegetable food,’ and so on all down the list. Whiskers swallowed it all, and kept saying ‘Very good — very good’ until Ella thought that die she would trying to keep a straight face. When the teacher came in, Whiskers complimented her on the splendid understanding the children had of their lesson and said he meant to tell the trustees what a jewel they had. It was ‘very unusual,’ he said, to find a fourth class who could answer up so prompt when it came to explaining what words meant. He went off beaming. But Ella told me this as a great secret, Mrs. Dr. dear, and we must keep it as such, for the sake of the Lowbridge Road teacher. It would likely be the ruin of her chances of keeping the school if Whiskers should ever find out how he had been bamboozled.”

Mary Vance came up to Ingleside that same afternoon to tell them that Miller Douglas, who had been wounded when the Canadians took Hill 70, had had to have his leg amputated. The Ingleside folk sympathized with Mary, whose zeal and patriotism had taken some time to kindle but now burned with a glow as steady and bright as any one’s.

“Some folks have been twitting me about having a husband with only one leg. But,” said Mary, rising to a lofty height, “I would rather Miller with only one leg than any other man in the world with a dozen — unless,” she added as an afterthought, “unless it was Lloyd George. Well, I must be going. I thought you’d be interested in hearing about Miller so I ran up from the store, but I must hustle home for I promised Luke MacAllister I’d help him build his grain stack this evening. It’s up to us girls to see that the harvest is got in, since the boys are so scarce. I’ve got overalls and I can tell you they’re real becoming. Mrs. Alec Douglas says they’re indecent and shouldn’t be allowed, and even Mrs. Elliott kinder looks askance at them. But bless you, the world moves, and anyhow there’s no fun for me like shocking Kitty Alec.”

“By the way, father,” said Rilla, “I’m going to take Jack Flagg’s place in his father’s store for a month. I promised him today that I would, if you didn’t object. Then he can help the farmers get the harvest in. I don’t think

I'd be much use in a harvest myself — though lots of the girls are — but I can set Jack free while I do his work. Jims isn't much bother in the daytime now, and I'll always be home at night."

"Do you think you'll like weighing out sugar and beans, and trafficking in butter and eggs?" said the doctor, twinkling.

"Probably not. That isn't the question. It's just one way of doing my bit." So Rilla went behind Mr. Flagg's counter for a month; and Susan went into Albert Crawford's oatfields.

"I am as good as any of them yet," she said proudly. "Not a man of them can beat me when it comes to building a stack. When I offered to help Albert looked doubtful. 'I am afraid the work will be too hard for you,' he said. 'Try me for a day and see,' said I. 'I will do my darnedest.'"

None of the Ingleside folks spoke for just a moment. Their silence meant that they thought Susan's pluck in "working out" quite wonderful. But Susan mistook their meaning and her sunburned face grew red.

"This habit of swearing seems to be growing on me, Mrs. Dr. dear," she said apologetically. "To think that I should be acquiring it at my age! It is such a dreadful example to the young girls. I am of the opinion it comes of reading the newspapers so much. They are so full of profanity and they do not spell it with stars either, as used to be done in my young days. This war is demoralizing everybody."

Susan, standing on a load of grain, her grey hair whipping in the breeze and her skirt kilted up to her knees for safety and convenience — no overalls for Susan, if you please — neither a beautiful nor a romantic figure; but the spirit that animated her gaunt arms was the selfsame one that captured Vimy Ridge and held the German legions back from Verdun.

It is not the least likely, however, that this consideration was the one which appealed most strongly to Mr. Pryor when he drove past one afternoon and saw Susan pitching sheaves gamely.

"Smart woman that," he reflected. "Worth two of many a younger one yet. I might do worse — I might do worse. If Milgrave comes home alive I'll lose Miranda and hired housekeepers cost more than a wife and are liable to leave a man in the lurch any time. I'll think it over."

A week later Mrs. Blythe, coming up from the village late in the afternoon, paused at the gate of Ingleside in an amazement which temporarily bereft her of the power of motion. An extraordinary sight met her eyes. Round the end of the kitchen burst Mr. Pryor, running as stout, pompous Mr. Pryor had not run in years, with terror imprinted on every lineament — a terror quite justifiable, for behind him, like an avenging fate, came Susan, with a huge, smoking iron pot grasped in her hands, and an expression in her eye that boded ill to the object of her indignation, if she should overtake him. Pursuer and pursued tore across the lawn. Mr. Pryor reached the gate a few feet ahead of Susan, wrenched it open, and fled down the road, without a glance at the transfixed lady of Ingleside.

“Susan,” gasped Anne.

Susan halted in her mad career, set down her pot, and shook her fist after Mr. Pryor, who had not ceased to run, evidently believing that Susan was still full cry after him.

“Susan, what does this mean?” demanded Anne, a little severely.

“You may well ask that, Mrs. Dr. dear,” Susan replied wrathfully. “I have not been so upset in years. That — that — that pacifist has actually had the audacity to come up here and, in my own kitchen, to ask me to marry him. HIM!”

Anne choked back a laugh.

“But — Susan! Couldn’t you have found a — well, a less spectacular method of refusing him? Think what a gossip this would have made if anyone had been going past and had seen such a performance.”

“Indeed, Mrs. Dr. dear, you are quite right. I did not think of it because I was quite past thinking rationally. I was just clean mad. Come in the house and I will tell you all about it.”

Susan picked up her pot and marched into the kitchen, still trembling with wrathful excitement. She set her pot on the stove with a vicious thud. “Wait a moment until I open all the windows to air this kitchen well, Mrs. Dr. dear. There, that is better. And I must wash my hands, too, because I shook hands with Whiskers-on-the-moon when he came in — not that I wanted to, but when he stuck out his fat, oily hand I did not know just what

else to do at the moment. I had just finished my afternoon cleaning and thanks be, everything was shining and spotless; and thought I ‘now that dye is boiling and I will get my rug rags and have them nicely out of the way before supper.’

“Just then a shadow fell over the floor and looking up I saw Whiskers-on-the-moon, standing in the doorway, dressed up and looking as if he had just been starched and ironed. I shook hands with him, as aforesaid, Mrs. Dr. dear, and told him you and the doctor were both away. But he said,

“I have come to see you, Miss Baker.’

“I asked him to sit down, for the sake of my own manners, and then I stood there right in the middle of the floor and gazed at him as contemptuously as I could. In spite of his brazen assurance this seemed to rattle him a little; but he began trying to look sentimental at me out of his little piggy eyes, and all at once an awful suspicion flashed into my mind. Something told me, Mrs. Dr. dear, that I was about to receive my first proposal. I have always thought that I would like to have just one offer of marriage to reject, so that I might be able to look other women in the face, but you will not hear me bragging of this. I consider it an insult and if I could have thought of any way of preventing it I would. But just then, Mrs. Dr. dear, you will see I was at a disadvantage, being taken so completely by surprise. Some men, I am told, consider a little preliminary courting the proper thing before a proposal, if only to give fair warning of their intentions; but Whiskers-on-the-moon probably thought it was any port in a storm for me and that I would jump at him. Well, he is undeceived — yes, he is undeceived, Mrs. Dr. dear. I wonder if he has stopped running yet.”

“I understand that you don’t feel flattered, Susan. But couldn’t you have refused him a little more delicately than by chasing him off the premises in such a fashion?”

“Well, maybe I might have, Mrs. Dr. dear, and I intended to, but one remark he made aggravated me beyond my powers of endurance. If it had not been for that I would not have chased him with my dye-pot. I will tell you the whole interview. Whiskers sat down, as I have said, and right

beside him on another chair Doc was lying. The animal was pretending to be asleep but I knew very well he was not, for he has been Hyde all day and Hyde never sleeps. By the way, Mrs. Dr. dear, have you noticed that that cat is far oftener Hyde than Jekyll now? The more victories Germany wins the Hyder he becomes. I leave you to draw your own conclusions from that. I suppose Whiskers thought he might curry favour with me by praising the creature, little dreaming what my real sentiments towards it were, so he stuck out his pudgy hand and stroked Mr. Hyde's back. 'What a nice cat,' he said. The nice cat flew at him and bit him. Then it gave a fearful yowl, and bounded out of the door. Whiskers looked after it quite amazed. 'That is a queer kind of a varmint,' he said. I agreed with him on that point, but I was not going to let him see it. Besides, what business had he to call our cat a varmint? 'It may be a varmint or it may not,' I said, 'but it knows the difference between a Canadian and a Hun.' You would have thought, would you not, Mrs. Dr. dear, that a hint like that would have been enough for him! But it went no deeper than his skin. I saw him settling back quite comfortable, as if for a good talk, and thought I, 'If there is anything coming it may as well come soon and be done with, for with all these rags to dye before supper I have no time to waste in flirting,' so I spoke right out. 'If you have anything particular to discuss with me, Mr. Pryor, I would feel obliged if you would mention it without loss of time, because I am very busy this afternoon.' He fairly beamed at me out of that circle of red whisker, and said, 'You are a businesslike woman and I agree with you. There is no use in wasting time beating around the bush. I came up here today to ask you to marry me.' So there it was, Mrs. Dr. dear. I had a proposal at last, after waiting sixty-four years for one.

"I just glared at that presumptuous creature and I said, 'I would not marry you if you were the last man on earth, Josiah Pryor. So there you have my answer and you can take it away forthwith.' You never saw a man so taken aback as he was, Mrs. Dr. dear. He was so flabbergasted that he just blurted out the truth. 'Why, I thought you'd be only too glad to get a chance to be married,' he said. That was when I lost my head, Mrs. Dr. dear. Do you think I had a good excuse, when a Hun and a pacifist made

such an insulting remark to me? ‘Go,’ I thundered, and I just caught up that iron pot. I could see that he thought I had suddenly gone insane, and I suppose he considered an iron pot full of boiling dye was a dangerous weapon in the hands of a lunatic. At any rate he went, and stood not upon the order of his going, as you saw for yourself. And I do not think we will see him back here proposing to us again in a hurry. No, I think he has learned that there is at least one single woman in Glen St. Mary who has no hankering to become Mrs. Whiskers-on-the-moon.”

Waiting

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Ingleside,

1st November 1917

“It is November — and the Glen is all grey and brown, except where the Lombardy poplars stand up here and there like great golden torches in the sombre landscape, although every other tree has shed its leaves. It has been very hard to keep our courage alight of late. The Caporetto disaster is a dreadful thing and not even Susan can extract much consolation out of the present state of affairs. The rest of us don’t try. Gertrude keeps saying desperately, ‘They must not get Venice — they must not get Venice,’ as if by saying it often enough she can prevent them. But what is to prevent them from getting Venice I cannot see. Yet, as Susan fails not to point out, there was seemingly nothing to prevent them from getting to Paris in 1914, yet they did not get it, and she affirms they shall not get Venice either. Oh, how I hope and pray they will not — Venice the beautiful Queen of the Adriatic. Although I’ve never seen it I feel about it just as Byron did — I’ve always loved it — it has always been to me ‘a fairy city of the heart.’ Perhaps I caught my love of it from Walter, who worshipped it. It was always one of his dreams to see Venice. I remember we planned once — down in Rainbow Valley one evening just before the war broke out — that some time we would go together to see it and float in a gondola through its moonlit streets.

“Every fall since the war began there has been some terrible blow to our troops — Antwerp in 1914, Serbia in 1915; last fall, Rumania, and now Italy, the worst of all. I think I would give up in despair if it were not for what Walter said in his dear last letter — that ‘the dead as well as the living were fighting on our side and such an army cannot be defeated.’ No

it cannot. We will win in the end. I will not doubt it for one moment. To let myself doubt would be to 'break faith.'

"We have all been campaigning furiously of late for the new Victory Loan. We Junior Reds canvassed diligently and landed several tough old customers who had at first flatly refused to invest. I — even I — tackled Whiskers-on-the-moon. I expected a bad time and a refusal. But to my amazement he was quite agreeable and promised on the spot to take a thousand dollar bond. He may be a pacifist, but he knows a good investment when it is handed out to him. Five and a half per cent is five and a half per cent, even when a militaristic government pays it.

"Father, to tease Susan, says it was her speech at the Victory Loan Campaign meeting that converted Mr. Pryor. I don't think that at all likely, since Mr. Pryor has been publicly very bitter against Susan ever since her quite unmistakable rejection of his lover-like advances. But Susan did make a speech — and the best one made at the meeting, too. It was the first time she ever did such a thing and she vows it will be the last. Everybody in the Glen was at the meeting, and quite a number of speeches were made, but somehow things were a little flat and no especial enthusiasm could be worked up. Susan was quite dismayed at the lack of zeal, because she had been burningly anxious that the Island should go over the top in regard to its quota. She kept whispering viciously to Gertrude and me that there was 'no ginger' in the speeches; and when nobody went forward to subscribe to the loan at the close Susan 'lost her head.' At least, that is how she describes it herself. She bounded to her feet, her face grim and set under her bonnet — Susan is the only woman in Glen St. Mary who still wears a bonnet — and said sarcastically and loudly, 'No doubt it is much cheaper to talk patriotism than it is to pay for it. And we are asking charity, of course — we are asking you to lend us your money for nothing! No doubt the Kaiser will feel quite downcast when he hears of this meeting!'"

"Susan has an unshaken belief that the Kaiser's spies — presumably represented by Mr. Pryor — promptly inform him of every happening in our Glen.

“Norman Douglas shouted out ‘Hear! Hear!’ and some boy at the back said, ‘What about Lloyd George?’ in a tone Susan didn’t like. Lloyd George is her pet hero, now that Kitchener is gone.

“‘I stand behind Lloyd George every time,’ retorted Susan.

“‘I suppose that will hearten him up greatly,’ said Warren Mead, with one of his disagreeable ‘hawhaws.’

“Warren’s remark was spark to powder. Susan just ‘sailed in’ as she puts it, and ‘said her say.’ She said it remarkably well, too. There was no lack of ‘ginger’ in her speech, anyhow. When Susan is warmed up she has no mean powers of oratory, and the way she trimmed those men down was funny and wonderful and effective all at once. She said it was the likes of her, millions of her, that did stand behind Lloyd George, and did hearten him up. That was the keynote of her speech. Dear old Susan! She is a perfect dynamo of patriotism and loyalty and contempt for slackers of all kinds, and when she let it loose on that audience in her one grand outburst she electrified it. Susan always vows she is no suffragette, but she gave womanhood its due that night, and she literally made those men cringe. When she finished with them they were ready to eat out of her hand. She wound up by ordering them — yes, ordering them — to march up to the platform forthwith and subscribe for Victory Bonds. And after wild applause most of them did it, even Warren Mead. When the total amount subscribed came out in the Charlottetown dailies the next day we found that the Glen led every district on the Island — and certainly Susan has the credit for it. She, herself, after she came home that night was quite ashamed and evidently feared that she had been guilty of unbecoming conduct: she confessed to mother that she had been ‘rather unladylike.’

“We were all — except Susan — out for a trial ride in father’s new automobile tonight. A very good one we had, too, though we did get ingloriously ditched at the end, owing to a certain grim old dame — to wit, Miss Elizabeth Carr of the Upper Glen — who wouldn’t rein her horse out to let us pass, honk as we might. Father was quite furious; but in my heart I believe I sympathized with Miss Elizabeth. If I had been a spinster lady, driving along behind my own old nag, in maiden meditation fancy free, I

wouldn't have lifted a rein when an obstreperous car hooted blatantly behind me. I should just have sat up as dourly as she did and said 'Take the ditch if you are determined to pass.'

"We did take the ditch — and got up to our axles in sand — and sat foolishly there while Miss Elizabeth clucked up her horse and rattled victoriously away.

"Jem will have a laugh when I write him this. He knows Miss Elizabeth of old.

"But — will — Venice — be — saved?"

19th November 1917

"It is not saved yet — it is still in great danger. But the Italians are making a stand at last on the Piave line. To be sure military critics say they cannot possibly hold it and must retreat to the Adige. But Susan and Gertrude and I say they must hold it, because Venice must be saved, so what are the military critics to do?

"Oh, if I could only believe that they can hold it!

"Our Canadian troops have won another great victory — they have stormed the Passchendaele Ridge and held it in the face of all counter attacks. None of our boys were in the battle — but oh, the casualty list of other people's boys! Joe Milgrave was in it but came through safe. Miranda had some bad days until she got word from him. But it is wonderful how Miranda has bloomed out since her marriage. She isn't the same girl at all. Even her eyes seem to have darkened and deepened — though I suppose that is just because they glow with the greater intensity that has come to her. She makes her father stand round in a perfectly amazing fashion; she runs up the flag whenever a yard of trench on the western front is taken; and she comes up regularly to our Junior Red Cross; and she does — yes, she does — put on funny little 'married woman' airs that are quite killing. But she is the only war-bride in the Glen and surely nobody need grudge her the satisfaction she gets out of it.

"The Russian news is bad, too — Kerensky's government has fallen and Lenin is dictator of Russia. Somehow, it is very hard to keep up courage in the dull hopelessness of these grey autumn days of suspense

and boding news. But we are beginning to ‘get in a low,’ as old Highland Sandy says, over the approaching election. Conscription is the real issue at stake and it will be the most exciting election we ever had. All the women ‘who have got de age’ — to quote Jo Poirier, and who have husbands, sons, and brothers at the front, can vote. Oh, if I were only twenty-one! Gertrude and Susan are both furious because they can’t vote.

“‘It is not fair,’ Gertrude says passionately. ‘There is Agnes Carr who can vote because her husband went. She did everything she could to prevent him from going, and now she is going to vote against the Union Government. Yet I have no vote, because my man at the front is only my sweetheart and not my husband!’”

“As for Susan, when she reflects that she cannot vote, while a rank old pacifist like Mr. Pryor can — and will — her comments are sulphurous.

“I really feel sorry for the Elliotts and Crawfords and MacAllisters over-harbour. They have always lined up in clearly divided camps of Liberal and Conservative, and now they are torn from their moorings — I know I’m mixing my metaphors dreadfully — and set hopelessly adrift. It will kill some of those old Grits to vote for Sir Robert Borden’s side — and yet they have to because they believe the time has come when we must have conscription. And some poor Conservatives who are against conscription must vote for Laurier, who always has been anathema to them. Some of them are taking it terribly hard. Others seem to be in much the same attitude as Mrs. Marshall Elliott has come to be regarding Church Union.

“She was up here last night. She doesn’t come as often as she used to. She is growing too old to walk this far — dear old ‘Miss Cornelia.’ I hate to think of her growing old — we have always loved her so and she has always been so good to us Ingleside young fry.

“She used to be so bitterly opposed to Church Union. But last night, when father told her it was practically decided, she said in a resigned tone, ‘Well, in a world where everything is being rent and torn what matters one more rending and tearing? Anyhow, compared with Germans even Methodists seem attractive to me.’”

“Our Junior R.C. goes on quite smoothly, in spite of the fact that Irene has come back to it — having fallen out with the Lowbridge society, I understand. She gave me a sweet little jab last meeting — about knowing me across the square in Charlottetown ‘by my green velvet hat.’ Everybody knows me by that detestable and detested hat. This will be my fourth season for it. Even mother wanted me to get a new one this fall; but I said, ‘No.’ As long as the war lasts so long do I wear that velvet hat in winter.”

23rd November 1917

“The Piave line still holds — and General Byng has won a splendid victory at Cambrai. I did run up the flag for that — but Susan only said ‘I shall set a kettle of water on the kitchen range tonight. I notice little Kitchener always has an attack of croup after any British victory. I do hope he has no pro-German blood in his veins. Nobody knows much about his father’s people.’

“Jims has had a few attacks of croup this fall — just the ordinary croup — not that terrible thing he had last year. But whatever blood runs in his little veins it is good, healthy blood. He is rosy and plump and curly and cute; and he says such funny things and asks such comical questions. He likes very much to sit in a special chair in the kitchen; but that is Susan’s favourite chair, too, and when she wants it, out Jims must go. The last time she put him out of it he turned around and asked solemnly, ‘When you are dead, Susan, can I sit in that chair?’ Susan thought it quite dreadful, and I think that was when she began to feel anxiety about his possible ancestry. The other night I took Jims with me for a walk down to the store. It was the first time he had ever been out so late at night, and when he saw the stars he exclaimed, ‘Oh, Willa, see the big moon and all the little moons!’ And last Wednesday morning, when he woke up, my little alarm clock had stopped because I had forgotten to wind it up. Jims bounded out of his crib and ran across to me, his face quite aghast above his little blue flannel pyjamas. ‘The clock is dead,’ he gasped, ‘oh Willa, the clock is dead.’

“One night he was quite angry with both Susan and me because we would not give him something he wanted very much. When he said his

prayers he plumped down wrathfully, and when he came to the petition 'Make me a good boy' he tacked on emphatically, 'and please make Willa and Susan good, 'cause they're not.'

"I don't go about quoting Jims's speeches to all I meet. That always bores me when other people do it! I just enshrine them in this old hotch-potch of a journal!

"This very evening as I put Jims to bed he looked up and asked me gravely, 'Why can't yesterday come back, Willa?'

"Oh, why can't it, Jims? That beautiful 'yesterday' of dreams and laughter — when our boys were home — when Walter and I read and rambled and watched new moons and sunsets together in Rainbow Valley. If it could just come back! But yesterdays never come back, little Jims — and the todays are dark with clouds — and we dare not think about the tomorrows."

11th December 1917

"Wonderful news came today. The British troops captured Jerusalem yesterday. We ran up the flag and some of Gertrude's old sparkle came back to her for a moment.

"'After all,' she said, 'it is worth while to live in the days which see the object of the Crusades attained. The ghosts of all the Crusaders must have crowded the walls of Jerusalem last night, with Coeur-de-lion at their head.'

"Susan had cause for satisfaction also.

"'I am so thankful I can pronounce Jerusalem and Hebron,' she said. 'They give me a real comfortable feeling after Przemysl and Brest-Litovsk! Well, we have got the Turks on the run, at least, and Venice is safe and Lord Lansdowne is not to be taken seriously; and I see no reason why we should be downhearted.'

"Jerusalem! The 'meteor flag of England!' floats over you — the Crescent is gone. How Walter would have thrilled over that!"

18th December 1917

"Yesterday the election came off. In the evening mother and Susan and Gertrude and I forgathered in the livingroom and waited in breathless

suspense, father having gone down to the village. We had no way of hearing the news, for Carter Flagg's store is not on our line, and when we tried to get it Central always answered that the line 'was busy' — as no doubt it was, for everybody for miles around was trying to get Carter's store for the same reason we were.

"About ten o'clock Gertrude went to the 'phone and happened to catch someone from over-harbour talking to Carter Flagg. Gertrude shamelessly listened in and got for her comforting what eavesdroppers are proverbially supposed to get — to wit, unpleasant hearing; the Union Government had 'done nothing' in the West.

"We looked at each other in dismay. If the Government had failed to carry the West, it was defeated.

"'Canada is disgraced in the eyes of the world,' said Gertrude bitterly.

"'If everybody was like the Mark Crawfords over-harbour this would not have happened,' groaned Susan. 'Yhey locked their Uncle up in the barn this morning and would not let him out until he promised to vote Union. That is what I call effective argument, Mrs. Dr. dear.'

"Gertrude and I couldn't rest after all that. We walked the floor until our legs gave out and we had to sit down perforce. Mother knitted away as steadily as clockwork and pretended to be calm and serene — pretended so well that we were all deceived and envious until the next day, when I caught her ravelling out four inches of her sock. She had knit that far past where the heel should have begun!

"It was twelve before father came home. He stood in the doorway and looked at us and we looked at him. We did not dare ask him what the news was. Then he said that it was Laurier who had 'done nothing' in the West, and that the Union Government was in with a big majority. Gertrude clapped her hands. I wanted to laugh and cry, mother's eyes flashed with their old-time starriness and Susan emitted a queer sound between a gasp and a whoop.

"This will not comfort the Kaiser much,' she said.

"Then we went to bed, but were too excited to sleep. Really, as Susan said solemnly this morning, 'Mrs. Dr. dear, I think politics are too

strenuous for women.’”

31st December 1917

“Our fourth War Christmas is over. We are trying to gather up some courage wherewith to face another year of it. Germany has, for the most part, been victorious all summer. And now they say she has all her troops from the Russian front ready for a ‘big push’ in the spring. Sometimes it seems to me that we just cannot live through the winter waiting for that.

“I had a great batch of letters from overseas this week. Shirley is at the front now, too, and writes about it all as coolly and matter-of-factly as he used to write of football at Queen’s. Carl wrote that it had been raining for weeks and that nights in the trenches always made him think of the night of long ago when he did penance in the graveyard for running away from Henry Warren’s ghost. Carl’s letters are always full of jokes and bits of fun. They had a great rat-hunt the night before he wrote — spearing rats with their bayonets — and he got the best bag and won the prize. He has a tame rat that knows him and sleeps in his pocket at night. Rats don’t worry Carl as they do some people — he was always chummy with all little beasts. He says he is making a study of the habits of the trench rat and means to write a treatise on it some day that will make him famous.

“Ken wrote a short letter. His letters are all rather short now — and he doesn’t often slip in those dear little sudden sentences I love so much. Sometimes I think he has forgotten all about the night he was here to say goodbye — and then there will be just a line or a word that makes me think he remembers and always will remember. For instance to-day’s letter hadn’t a thing in it that mightn’t have been written to any girl, except that he signed himself ‘Your Kenneth,’ instead of ‘Yours, Kenneth,’ as he usually does. Now, did he leave that ‘s’ off intentionally or was it only carelessness? I shall lie awake half the night wondering. He is a captain now. I am glad and proud — and yet Captain Ford sounds so horribly far away and high up. Ken and Captain Ford seem like two different persons. I may be practically engaged to Ken — mother’s opinion on that point is my stay and bulwark — but I can’t be to Captain Ford!

“And Jem is a lieutenant now — won his promotion on the field. He sent me a snapshot, taken in his new uniform. He looked thin and old — old — my boy-brother Jem. I can’t forget mother’s face when I showed it to her. ‘That — my little Jem — the baby of the old House of Dreams?’ was all she said.

“There was a letter from Faith, too. She is doing V.A.D. work in England and writes hopefully and brightly. I think she is almost happy — she saw Jem on his last leave and she is so near him she could go to him, if he were wounded. That means so much to her. Oh, if I were only with her! But my work is here at home. I know Walter wouldn’t have wanted me to leave mother and in everything I try to ‘keep faith’ with him, even to the little details of daily life. Walter died for Canada — I must live for her. That is what he asked me to do.”

28th January 1918

“‘I shall anchor my storm-tossed soul to the British fleet and make a batch of bran biscuits,’ said Susan today to Cousin Sophia, who had come in with some weird tale of a new and all-conquering submarine, just launched by Germany. But Susan is a somewhat disgruntled woman at present, owing to the regulations regarding cookery. Her loyalty to the Union Government is being sorely tried. It surmounted the first strain gallantly. When the order about flour came Susan said, quite cheerfully, ‘I am an old dog to be learning new tricks, but I shall learn to make war bread if it will help defeat the Huns.’

“But the later suggestions went against Susan’s grain. Had it not been for father’s decree I think she would have snapped her fingers at Sir Robert Borden.

“‘Talk about trying to make bricks without straw, Mrs. Dr. dear! How am I to make a cake without butter or sugar? It cannot be done — not cake that is cake. Of course one can make a slab, Mrs. Dr. dear. And we cannot even camooflash it with a little icing! To think that I should have lived to see the day when a government at Ottawa should step into my kitchen and put me on rations!’

“Susan would give the last drop of her blood for her ‘king and country,’ but to surrender her beloved recipes is a very different and much more serious matter.

“I had letters from Nan and Di too — or rather notes. They are too busy to write letters, for exams are looming up. They will graduate in Arts this spring. I am evidently to be the dunce of the family. But somehow I never had any hankering for a college course, and even now it doesn’t appeal to me. I’m afraid I’m rather devoid of ambition. There is only one thing I really want to be — and I don’t know if I’ll be it or not. If not — I don’t want to be anything. But I shan’t write it down. It is all right to think it; but, as Cousin Sophia would say, it might be brazen to write it down.

“I will write it down. I won’t be cowed by the conventions and Cousin Sophia! I want to be Kenneth Ford’s wife! There now!

“I’ve just looked in the glass, and I hadn’t the sign of a blush on my face. I suppose I’m not a properly constructed damsel at all.

“I was down to see little Dog Monday today. He has grown quite stiff and rheumatic but there he sat, waiting for the train. He thumped his tail and looked pleadingly into my eyes. ‘When will Jem come?’ he seemed to say. Oh, Dog Monday, there is no answer to that question; and there is, as yet, no answer to the other which we are all constantly asking ‘What will happen when Germany strikes again on the western front — her one great, last blow for victory!’”

1st March 1918

“‘What will spring bring?’ Gertrude said today. ‘I dread it as I never dreaded spring before. Do you suppose there will ever again come a time when life will be free from fear? For almost four years we have lain down with fear and risen up with it. It has been the unbidden guest at every meal, the unwelcome companion at every gathering.’

“‘Hindenburg says he will be in Paris on 1st April,’ sighed Cousin Sophia.

“‘Hindenburg!’ There is no power in pen and ink to express the contempt which Susan infused into that name. ‘Has he forgotten what day the first of April is?’

“‘Hindenburg has kept his word hitherto,’ said Gertrude, as gloomily as Cousin Sophia herself could have said it.

“‘Yes, fighting against the Russians and Rumanians,’ retorted Susan. ‘Wait you till he comes up against the British and French, not to speak of the Yankees, who are getting there as fast as they can and will no doubt give a good account of themselves.’

“‘You said just the same thing before Mons, Susan,’ I reminded her.

“‘Hindenburg says he will spend a million lives to break the Allied front,’ said Gertrude. ‘At such a price he must purchase some successes and how can we live through them, even if he is baffled in the end. These past two months when we have been crouching and waiting for the blow to fall have seemed as long as all the preceding months of the war put together. I work all day feverishly and waken at three o’clock at night to wonder if the iron legions have struck at last. It is then I see Hindenburg in Paris and Germany triumphant. I never see her so at any other time than that accursed hour.’

“Susan looked dubious over Gertrude’s adjective, but evidently concluded that the ‘a’ saved the situation.

“‘I wish it were possible to take some magic draught and go to sleep for the next three months — and then waken to find Armageddon over,’ said mother, almost impatiently.

“It is not often that mother slumps into a wish like that — or at least the verbal expression of it. Mother has changed a great deal since that terrible day in September when we knew that Walter would not come back; but she has always been brave and patient. Now it seemed as if even she had reached the limit of her endurance.

“Susan went over to mother and touched her shoulder.

“‘Do not you be frightened or downhearted, Mrs. Dr. dear,’ she said gently. ‘I felt somewhat that way myself last night, and I rose from my bed and lighted my lamp and opened my Bible; and what do you think was the first verse my eyes lighted upon? It was ‘And they shall fight against thee but they shall not prevail against thee, for I am with thee, saith the Lord of Hosts, to deliver thee.’ I am not gifted in the way of dreaming, as Miss

Oliver is, but I knew then and there, Mrs. Dr. dear, that it was a manifest leading, and that Hindenburg will never see Paris. So I read no further but went back to my bed and I did not waken at three o'clock or at any other hour before morning.'

"I say that verse Susan read over and over again to myself. The Lord of Hosts is with us — and the spirits of all just men made perfect — and even the legions and guns that Germany is massing on the western front must break against such a barrier. This is in certain uplifted moments; but when other moments come I feel, like Gertrude, that I cannot endure any longer this awful and ominous hush before the coming storm."

23rd March 1918

"Armageddon has begun!—'the last great fight of all!' Is it, I wonder? Yesterday I went down to the post office for the mail. It was a dull, bitter day. The snow was gone but the grey, lifeless ground was frozen hard and a biting wind was blowing. The whole Glen landscape was ugly and hopeless.

"Then I got the paper with its big black headlines. Germany struck on the twenty-first. She makes big claims of guns and prisoners taken. General Haig reports that 'severe fighting continues.' I don't like the sound of that last expression.

"We all find we cannot do any work that requires concentration of thought. So we all knit furiously, because we can do that mechanically. At least the dreadful waiting is over — the horrible wondering where and when the blow will fall. It has fallen — but they shall not prevail against us!

"Oh, what is happening on the western front tonight as I write this, sitting here in my room with my journal before me? Jims is asleep in his crib and the wind is wailing around the window; over my desk hangs Walter's picture, looking at me with his beautiful deep eyes; the Mona Lisa he gave me the last Christmas he was home hangs on one side of it, and on the other a framed copy of "The Piper." It seems to me that I can hear Walter's voice repeating it — that little poem into which he put his soul, and which will therefore live for ever, carrying Walter's name on

through the future of our land. Everything about me is calm and peaceful and ‘homey.’ Walter seems very near me — if I could just sweep aside the thin wavering little veil that hangs between, I could see him — just as he saw the Pied Piper the night before Courcelette.

“Over there in France tonight — does the line hold?”

Chapter XXVIII.

Black Sunday

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In March of the year of grace 1918 there was one week into which must have crowded more of searing human agony than any seven days had ever held before in the history of the world. And in that week there was one day when all humanity seemed nailed to the cross; on that day the whole planet must have been agroan with universal convulsion; everywhere the hearts of men were failing them for fear.

It dawned calmly and coldly and greyly at Ingleside. Mrs. Blythe and Rilla and Miss Oliver made ready for church in a suspense tempered by hope and confidence. The doctor was away, having been summoned during the wee sma's to the Marwood household in Upper Glen, where a little war-bride was fighting gallantly on her own battleground to give life, not death, to the world. Susan announced that she meant to stay home that morning — a rare decision for Susan.

“But I would rather not go to church this morning, Mrs. Dr. dear,” she explained. “If Whiskers-on-the-moon were there and I saw him looking holy and pleased, as he always looks when he thinks the Huns are winning, I fear I would lose my patience and my sense of decorum and hurl a Bible or hymnbook at him, thereby disgracing myself and the sacred edifice. No, Mrs. Dr. dear, I shall stay home from church till the tide turns and pray hard here.”

“I think I might as well stay home, too, for all the good church will do me today,” Miss Oliver said to Rilla, as they walked down the hard-frozen red road to the church. “I can think of nothing but the question, ‘Does the line still hold?’”

“Next Sunday will be Easter,” said Rilla. “Will it herald death or life to our cause?”

Mr. Meredith preached that morning from the text, “He that endureth to the end shall be saved,” and hope and confidence rang through his

inspiring sentences. Rilla, looking up at the memorial tablet on the wall above their pew, “sacred to the memory of Walter Cuthbert Blythe,” felt herself lifted out of her dread and filled anew with courage. Walter could not have laid down his life for naught. His had been the gift of prophetic vision and he had foreseen victory. She would cling to that belief — the line would hold.

In this renewed mood she walked home from church almost gaily. The others, too, were hopeful, and all went smiling into Ingleside. There was no one in the livingroom, save Jims, who had fallen asleep on the sofa, and Doc, who sat “hushed in grim repose” on the hearthrug, looking very Hydeish indeed. No one was in the dining-room either — and, stranger still, no dinner was on the table, which was not even set. Where was Susan?

“Can she have taken ill?” exclaimed Mrs. Blythe anxiously. “I thought it strange that she did not want to go to church this morning.”

The kitchen door opened and Susan appeared on the threshold with such a ghastly face that Mrs. Blythe cried out in sudden panic.

“Susan, what is it?”

“The British line is broken and the German shells are falling on Paris,” said Susan dully.

The three women stared at each other, stricken.

“It’s not true — it’s not,” gasped Rilla.

“The thing would be — ridiculous,” said Gertrude Oliver — and then she laughed horribly.

“Susan, who told you this — when did the news come?” asked Mrs. Blythe.

“I got it over the long-distance phone from Charlottetown half an hour ago,” said Susan. “The news came to town late last night. It was Dr. Holland phoned it out and he said it was only too true. Since then I have done nothing, Mrs. Dr. dear. I am very sorry dinner is not ready. It is the first time I have been so remiss. If you will be patient I will soon have something for you to eat. But I am afraid I let the potatoes burn.”

“Dinner! Nobody wants any dinner, Susan,” said Mrs. Blythe wildly. “Oh, this thing is unbelievable — it must be a nightmare.”

“Paris is lost — France is lost — the war is lost,” gasped Rilla, amid the utter ruins of hope and confidence and belief.

“Oh God — Oh God,” moaned Gertrude Oliver, walking about the room and wringing her hands, “Oh — God!”

Nothing else — no other words — nothing but that age old plea — the old, old cry of supreme agony and appeal, from the human heart whose every human staff has failed it.

“Is God dead?” asked a startled little voice from the doorway of the livingroom. Jims stood there, flushed from sleep, his big brown eyes filled with dread, “Oh Willa — oh, Willa, is God dead?”

Miss Oliver stopped walking and exclaiming, and stared at Jims, in whose eyes tears of fright were beginning to gather. Rilla ran to his comforting, while Susan bounded up from the chair upon which she had dropped.

“No,” she said briskly, with a sudden return of her real self. “No, God isn’t dead — nor Lloyd George either. We were forgetting that, Mrs. Dr. dear. Don’t cry, little Kitchener. Bad as things are, they might be worse. The British line may be broken but the British navy is not. Let us tie to that. I will take a brace and get up a bite to eat, for strength we must have.”

They made a pretence of eating Susan’s “bite,” but it was only a pretence. Nobody at Ingleside ever forgot that black afternoon. Gertrude Oliver walked the floor — they all walked the floor; except Susan, who got out her grey war sock.

“Mrs. Dr. dear, I must knit on Sunday at last. I have never dreamed of doing it before for, say what might be said, I have considered it was a violation of the third commandment. But whether it is or whether it is not I must knit today or I shall go mad.”

“Knit if you can, Susan,” said Mrs. Blythe restlessly. “I would knit if I could — but I cannot — I cannot.”

“If we could only get fuller information,” moaned Rilla. “There might be something to encourage us — if we knew all.”

“We know that the Germans are shelling Paris,” said Miss Oliver bitterly. “In that case they must have smashed through everywhere and be at the very gates. No, we have lost — let us face the fact as other peoples in the past have had to face it. Other nations, with right on their side, have given their best and bravest — and gone down to defeat in spite of it. Ours is ‘but one more To baffled millions who have gone before.’”

“I won’t give up like that,” cried Rilla, her pale face suddenly flushing. “I won’t despair. We are not conquered — no, if Germany overruns all France we are not conquered. I am ashamed of myself for this hour of despair. You won’t see me slump again like that, I’m going to ring up town at once and ask for particulars.”

But town could not be got. The long-distance operator there was submerged by similar calls from every part of the distracted country. Rilla finally gave up and slipped away to Rainbow Valley. There she knelt down on the withered grey grasses in the little nook where she and Walter had had their last talk together, with her head bowed against the mossy trunk of a fallen tree. The sun had broken through the black clouds and drenched the valley with a pale golden splendour. The bells on the Tree Lovers twinkled elfinly and fitfully in the gusty March wind.

“Oh God, give me strength,” Rilla whispered. “Just strength — and courage.” Then like a child she clasped her hands together and said, as simply as Jims could have done, “Please send us better news tomorrow.”

She knelt there a long time, and when she went back to Ingleside she was calm and resolute. The doctor had arrived home, tired but triumphant, little Douglas Haig Marwood having made a safe landing on the shores of time. Gertrude was still pacing restlessly but Mrs. Blythe and Susan had reacted from the shock, and Susan was already planning a new line of defence for the channel ports.

“As long as we can hold them,” she declared, “the situation is saved. Paris has really no military significance.”

“Don’t,” said Gertrude sharply, as if Susan had run something into her. She thought the old worn phrase ‘no military significance’ nothing short of ghastly mockery under the circumstances, and more terrible to endure than the voice of despair would have been.

“I heard up at Marwood’s of the line being broken,” said the doctor, “but this story of the Germans shelling Paris seems to be rather incredible. Even if they broke through they were fifty miles from Paris at the nearest point and how could they get their artillery close enough to shell it in so short a time? Depend upon it, girls, that part of the message can’t be true. I’m going to try to try a long-distance call to town myself.”

The doctor was no more successful than Rilla had been, but his point of view cheered them all a little, and helped them through the evening. And at nine o’clock a long-distance message came through at last, that helped them through the night.

“The line broke only in one place, before St. Quentin,” said the doctor, as he hung up the receiver, “and the British troops are retreating in good order. That’s not so bad. As for the shells that are falling on Paris, they are coming from a distance of seventy miles — from some amazing long-range gun the Germans have invented and sprung with the opening offensive. That is all the news to date, and Dr. Holland says it is reliable.”

“It would have been dreadful news yesterday,” said Gertrude, “but compared to what we heard this morning it is almost like good news. But still,” she added, trying to smile, “I am afraid I will not sleep much tonight.”

“There is one thing to be thankful for at any rate, Miss Oliver, dear,” said Susan, “and that is that Cousin Sophia did not come in today. I really could not have endured her on top of all the rest.”

“Wounded and Missing”

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“Battered but Not Broken” was the headline in Monday’s paper, and Susan repeated it over and over to herself as she went about her work. The gap caused by the St. Quentin disaster had been patched up in time, but the Allied line was being pushed relentlessly back from the territory they had purchased in 1917 with half a million lives. On Wednesday the headline was “British and French Check Germans”; but still the retreat went on. Back — and back — and back! Where would it end? Would the line break again — this time disastrously?

On Saturday the headline was “Even Berlin Admits Offensive Checked,” and for the first time in that terrible week the Ingleside folk dared to draw a long breath.

“Well, we have got one week over — now for the next,” said Susan staunchly.

“I feel like a prisoner on the rack when they stopped turning it,” Miss Oliver said to Rilla, as they went to church on Easter morning. “But I am not off the rack. The torture may begin again at any time.”

“I doubted God last Sunday,” said Rilla, “but I don’t doubt him today. Evil cannot win. Spirit is on our side and it is bound to outlast flesh.”

Nevertheless her faith was often tried in the dark spring that followed. Armageddon was not, as they had hoped, a matter of a few days. It stretched out into weeks and months. Again and again Hindenburg struck his savage, sudden blows, with alarming, though futile success. Again and again the military critics declared the situation extremely perilous. Again and again Cousin Sophia agreed with the military critics.

“If the Allies go back three miles more the war is lost,” she wailed.

“Is the British navy anchored in those three miles?” demanded Susan scornfully.

“It is the opinion of a man who knows all about it,” said Cousin Sophia solemnly.

“There is no such person,” retorted Susan. “As for the military critics, they do not know one blessed thing about it, any more than you or I. They have been mistaken times out of number. Why do you always look on the dark side, Sophia Crawford?”

“Because there ain’t any bright side, Susan Baker.”

“Oh, is there not? It is the twentieth of April, and Hindy is not in Paris yet, although he said he would be there by April first. Is that not a bright spot at least?”

“It is my opinion that the Germans will be in Paris before very long and more than that, Susan Baker, they will be in Canada.”

“Not in this part of it. The Huns shall never set foot in Prince Edward Island as long as I can handle a pitchfork,” declared Susan, looking, and feeling quite equal to routing the entire German army single-handed. “No, Sophia Crawford, to tell you the plain truth I am sick and tired of your gloomy predictions. I do not deny that some mistakes have been made. The Germans would never have got back Passchendaele if the Canadians had been left there; and it was bad business trusting to those Portuguese at the Lys River. But that is no reason why you or anyone should go about proclaiming the war is lost. I do not want to quarrel with you, least of all at such a time as this, but our morale must be kept up, and I am going to speak my mind out plainly and tell you that if you cannot keep from such croaking your room is better than your company.”

Cousin Sophia marched home in high dudgeon to digest her affront, and did not reappear in Susan’s kitchen for many weeks. Perhaps it was just as well, for they were hard weeks, when the Germans continued to strike, now here, now there, and seemingly vital points fell to them at every blow. And one day in early May, when wind and sunshine frolicked in Rainbow Valley and the maple grove was golden-green and the harbour all blue and dimpled and white-capped, the news came about Jem.

There had been a trench raid on the Canadian front — a little trench raid so insignificant that it was never even mentioned in the dispatches

and when it was over Lieutenant James Blythe was reported “wounded and missing.”

“I think this is even worse than the news of his death would have been,” moaned Rilla through her white lips, that night.

“No — no—’missing’ leaves a little hope, Rilla,” urged Gertrude Oliver.

“Yes — torturing, agonized hope that keeps you from ever becoming quite resigned to the worst,” said Rilla. “Oh, Miss Oliver — must we go for weeks and months — not knowing whether Jem is alive or dead? Perhaps we will never know. I — I cannot bear it — I cannot. Walter — and now Jem. This will kill mother — look at her face, Miss Oliver, and you will see that. And Faith — poor Faith — how can she bear it?”

Gertrude shivered with pain. She looked up at the pictures hanging over Rilla’s desk and felt a sudden hatred of Mona Lisa’s endless smile.

“Will not even this blot it off your face?” she thought savagely.

But she said gently, “No, it won’t kill your mother. She’s made of finer mettle than that. Besides, she refuses to believe Jem is dead; she will cling to hope and we must all do that. Faith, you may be sure, will do it.”

“I cannot,” moaned Rilla, “Jem was wounded — what chance would he have? Even if the Germans found him — we know how they have treated wounded prisoners. I wish I could hope, Miss Oliver — it would help, I suppose. But hope seems dead in me. I can’t hope without some reason for it — and there is no reason.”

When Miss Oliver had gone to her own room and Rilla was lying on her bed in the moonlight, praying desperately for a little strength, Susan stepped in like a gaunt shadow and sat down beside her.

“Rilla, dear, do not you worry. Little Jem is not dead.”

“Oh, how can you believe that, Susan?”

“Because I know. Listen you to me. When that word came this morning the first thing I thought of was Dog Monday. And tonight, as soon as I got the supper dishes washed and the bread set, I went down to the station. There was Dog Monday, waiting for the train, just as patient as usual. Now, Rilla, dear, that trench raid was four days ago — last Monday — and I said

to the station-agent, 'Can you tell me if that dog howled or made any kind of a fuss last Monday night?' He thought it over a bit, and then he said, 'No, he did not.' 'Are you sure?' I said. 'There's more depends on it than you think!' 'Dead sure,' he said. 'I was up all night last Monday night because my mare was sick, and there was never a sound out of him. I would have heard if there had been, for the stable door was open all the time and his kennel is right across from it!' Now Rilla dear, those were the man's very words. And you know how that poor little dog howled all night after the battle of Courcellette. Yet he did not love Walter as much as he loved Jem. If he mourned for Walter like that, do you suppose he would sleep sound in his kennel the night after Jem had been killed? No, Rilla dear, little Jem is not dead, and that you may tie to. If he were, Dog Monday would have known, just as he knew before, and he would not be still waiting for the trains."

It was absurd — and irrational — and impossible. But Rilla believed it, for all that; and Mrs. Blythe believed it; and the doctor, though he smiled faintly in pretended derision, felt an odd confidence replace his first despair; and foolish and absurd or not, they all plucked up heart and courage to carry on, just because a faithful little dog at the Glen station was still watching with unbroken faith for his master to come home. Common sense might scorn — incredulity might mutter "Mere superstition" — but in their hearts the folk of Ingleside stood by their belief that Dog Monday knew.

Chapter XXX.

The Turning of the Tide

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Susan was very sorrowful when she saw the beautiful old lawn of Ingleside ploughed up that spring and planted with potatoes. Yet she made no protest, even when her beloved peony bed was sacrificed. But when the Government passed the Daylight Saving law Susan balked. There was a Higher Power than the Union Government, to which Susan owed allegiance.

“Do you think it right to meddle with the arrangements of the Almighty?” she demanded indignantly of the doctor. The doctor, quite unmoved, responded that the law must be observed, and the Ingleside clocks were moved on accordingly. But the doctor had no power over Susan’s little alarm.

“I bought that with my own money, Mrs. Dr. dear,” she said firmly, “and it shall go on God’s time and not Borden’s time.”

Susan got up and went to bed by “God’s time,” and regulated her own goings and comings by it. She served the meals, under protest, by Borden’s time, and she had to go to church by it, which was the crowning injury. But she said her prayers by her own clock, and fed the hens by it; so that there was always a furtive triumph in her eye when she looked at the doctor. She had got the better of him by so much at least.

“Whiskers-on-the-moon is very much delighted with this daylight saving business,” she told him one evening. “Of course he naturally would be, since I understand that the Germans invented it. I hear he came near losing his entire wheat-crop lately. Warren Mead’s cows broke into the field one day last week — it was the very day the Germans captured the Chemang-de-dam, which may have been a coincidence or may not — and were making fine havoc of it when Mrs. Dick Clow happened to see them from her attic window. At first she had no intention of letting Mr. Pryor know. She told me she had just gloated over the sight of those cows

pasturing on his wheat. She felt it served him exactly right. But presently she reflected that the wheat-crop was a matter of great importance and that 'save and serve' meant that those cows must be routed out as much as it meant anything. So she went down and phoned over to Whiskers about the matter. All the thanks she got was that he said something queer right out to her. She is not prepared to state that it was actually swearing for you cannot be sure just what you hear over the phone; but she has her own opinion, and so have I, but I will not express it for here comes Mr. Meredith, and Whiskers is one of his elders, so we must be discreet."

"Are you looking for the new star?" asked Mr. Meredith, joining Miss Oliver and Rilla, who were standing among the blossoming potatoes gazing skyward.

"Yes — we have found it — see, it is just above the tip of the tallest old pine."

"It's wonderful to be looking at something that happened three thousand years ago, isn't it?" said Rilla. "That is when astronomers think the collision took place which produced this new star. It makes me feel horribly insignificant," she added under her breath.

"Even this event cannot dwarf into what may be the proper perspective in star systems the fact that the Germans are again only one leap from Paris," said Gertrude restlessly.

"I think I would like to have been an astronomer," said Mr. Meredith dreamily, gazing at the star.

"There must be a strange pleasure in it," agreed Miss Oliver, "an unearthly pleasure, in more senses than one. I would like to have a few astronomers for my friends."

"Fancy talking the gossip of the hosts of heaven," laughed Rilla.

"I wonder if astronomers feel a very deep interest in earthly affairs?" said the doctor. "Perhaps students of the canals of Mars would not be so keenly sensitive to the significance of a few yards of trenches lost or won on the western front."

"I have read somewhere," said Mr. Meredith, "that Ernest Renan wrote one of his books during the siege of Paris in 1870 and 'enjoyed the writing

of it very much.' I suppose one would call him a philosopher."

"I have read also," said Miss Oliver, "that shortly before his death he said that his only regret in dying was that he must die before he had seen what that 'extremely interesting young man, the German Emperor,' would do in his life. If Ernest Renan 'walked' today and saw what that interesting young man had done to his beloved France, not to speak of the world, I wonder if his mental detachment would be as complete as it was in 1870."

"I wonder where Jem is tonight," thought Rilla, in a sudden bitter inrush of remembrance.

It was over a month since the news had come about Jem. Nothing had been discovered concerning him, in spite of all efforts. Two or three letters had come from him, written before the trench raid, and since then there had been only unbroken silence. Now the Germans were again at the Marne, pressing nearer and nearer Paris; now rumours were coming of another Austrian offensive against the Piave line. Rilla turned away from the new star, sick at heart. It was one of the moments when hope and courage failed her utterly — when it seemed impossible to go on even one more day. If only they knew what had happened to Jem — you can face anything you know. But a beleaguerment of fear and doubt and suspense is a hard thing for the morale. Surely, if Jem were alive, some word would have come through. He must be dead. Only — they would never know — they could never be quite sure; and Dog Monday would wait for the train until he died of old age. Monday was only a poor, faithful, rheumatic little dog, who knew nothing more of his master's fate than they did.

Rilla had a "white night" and did not fall asleep until late. When she wakened Gertrude Oliver was sitting at her window leaning out to meet the silver mystery of the dawn. Her clever, striking profile, with the masses of black hair behind it, came out clearly against the pallid gold of the eastern sky. Rilla remembered Jem's admiration of the curve of Miss Oliver's brow and chin, and she shuddered. Everything that reminded her of Jem was beginning to give intolerable pain. Walter's death had inflicted on her heart a terrible wound. But it had been a clean wound and had healed slowly, as such wounds do, though the scar must remain for ever. But the

torture of Jem's disappearance was another thing: there was a poison in it that kept it from healing. The alternations of hope and despair, the endless watching each day for the letter that never came — that might never come — the newspaper tales of ill-usage of prisoners — the bitter wonder as to Jem's wound — all were increasingly hard to bear.

Gertrude Oliver turned her head. There was an odd brilliancy in her eyes.

“Rilla, I've had another dream.”

“Oh, no — no,” cried Rilla, shrinking. Miss Oliver's dreams had always foretold coming disaster.

“Rilla, it was a good dream. Listen — I dreamed just as I did four years ago, that I stood on the veranda steps and looked down the Glen. And it was still covered by waves that lapped about my feet. But as I looked the waves began to ebb — and they ebbed as swiftly as, four years ago, they rolled in — ebbed out and out, to the gulf; and the Glen lay before me, beautiful and green, with a rainbow spanning Rainbow Valley — a rainbow of such splendid colour that it dazzled me — and I woke. Rilla — Rilla Blythe — the tide has turned.”

“I wish I could believe it,” sighed Rilla.

“Sooth was my prophecy of fear
Believe it when it augurs cheer,”

quoted Gertrude, almost gaily. “I tell you I have no doubt.”

Yet, in spite of the great Italian victory at the Piave that came a few days later, she had doubt many a time in the hard month that followed; and when in mid-July the Germans crossed the Marne again despair came sickeningly. It was idle, they all felt, to hope that the miracle of the Marne would be repeated. But it was: again, as in 1914, the tide turned at the Marne. The French and the American troops struck their sudden smashing blow on the exposed flank of the enemy and, with the almost inconceivable rapidity of a dream, the whole aspect of the war changed.

“The Allies have won two tremendous victories,” said the doctor on 20th July.

“It is the beginning of the end — I feel it — I feel it,” said Mrs. Blythe.

“Thank God,” said Susan, folding her trembling old hands, Then she added, under her breath, “but it won’t bring our boys back.”

Nevertheless she went out and ran up the flag, for the first time since the fall of Jerusalem. As it caught the breeze and swelled gallantly out above her, Susan lifted her hand and saluted it, as she had seen Shirley do. “We’ve all given something to keep you flying,” she said. “Four hundred thousand of our boys gone overseas — fifty thousand of them killed. But — you are worth it!” The wind whipped her grey hair about her face and the gingham apron that shrouded her from head to foot was cut on lines of economy, not of grace; yet, somehow, just then Susan made an imposing figure. She was one of the women — courageous, unquailing, patient, heroic — who had made victory possible. In her, they all saluted the symbol for which their dearest had fought. Something of this was in the doctor’s mind as he watched her from the door.

“Susan,” he said, when she turned to come in, “from first to last of this business you have been a brick!”

Mrs. Matilda Pittman

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Rilla and Jims were standing on the rear platform of their car when the train stopped at the little Millward siding. The August evening was so hot and close that the crowded cars were stifling. Nobody ever knew just why trains stopped at Millward siding. Nobody was ever known to get off there or get on. There was only one house nearer to it than four miles, and it was surrounded by acres of blueberry barrens and scrub spruce-trees.

Rilla was on her way into Charlottetown to spend the night with a friend and the next day in Red Cross shopping; she had taken Jims with her, partly because she did not want Susan or her mother to be bothered with his care, partly because of a hungry desire in her heart to have as much of him as she could before she might have to give him up forever. James Anderson had written to her not long before this; he was wounded and in the hospital; he would not be able to go back to the front and as soon as he was able he would be coming home for Jims.

Rilla was heavy-hearted over this, and worried also. She loved Jims dearly and would feel deeply giving him up in any case; but if Jim Anderson were a different sort of a man, with a proper home for the child, it would not be so bad. But to give Jims up to a roving, shiftless, irresponsible father, however kind and goodhearted he might be — and she knew Jim Anderson was kind and goodhearted enough — was a bitter prospect to Rilla. It was not even likely Anderson would stay in the Glen; he had no ties there now; he might even go back to England. She might never see her dear, sunshiny, carefully brought-up little Jims again. With such a father what might his fate be? Rilla meant to beg Jim Anderson to leave him with her, but, from his letter, she had not much hope that he would.

“If he would only stay in the Glen, where I could keep an eye on Jims and have him often with me I wouldn’t feel so worried over it,” she

reflected. “But I feel sure he won’t — and Jims will never have any chance. And he is such a bright little chap — he has ambition, wherever he got it — and he isn’t lazy. But his father will never have a cent to give him any education or start in life. Jims, my little war-baby, whatever is going to become of you?”

Jims was not in the least concerned over what was to become of him. He was gleefully watching the antics of a striped chipmunk that was frisking over the roof of the little siding. As the train pulled out Jims leaned eagerly forward for a last look at Chippy, pulling his hand from Rilla’s. Rilla was so engrossed in wondering what was to become of Jims in the future that she forgot to take notice of what was happening to him in the present. What did happen was that Jims lost his balance, shot headlong down the steps, hurtled across the little siding platform, and landed in a clump of bracken fern on the other side.

Rilla shrieked and lost her head. She sprang down the steps and jumped off the train.

Fortunately, the train was still going at a comparatively slow speed; fortunately also, Rilla retained enough sense to jump the way it was going; nevertheless, she fell and sprawled helplessly down the embankment, landing in a ditch full of a rank growth of goldenrod and fireweed.

Nobody had seen what had happened and the train whisked briskly away round a curve in the barrens. Rilla picked herself up, dizzy but unhurt, scrambled out of the ditch, and flew wildly across the platform, expecting to find Jims dead or broken in pieces. But Jims, except for a few bruises, and a big fright, was quite uninjured. He was so badly scared that he didn’t even cry, but Rilla, when she found that he was safe and sound, burst into tears and sobbed wildly.

“Nasty old twain,” remarked Jims in disgust. “And nasty old God,” he added, with a scowl at the heavens.

A laugh broke into Rilla’s sobbing, producing something very like what her father would have called hysterics. But she caught herself up before the hysteria could conquer her.

“Rilla Blythe, I’m ashamed of you. Pull yourself together immediately. Jims, you shouldn’t have said anything like that.”

“God frew me off the twain,” declared Jims defiantly. “Somebody frew me; you didn’t frow me; so it was God.”

“No, it wasn’t. You fell because you let go of my hand and bent too far forward. I told you not to do that. So that it was your own fault.”

Jims looked to see if she meant it; then glanced up at the sky again.

“Excuse me, then, God,” he remarked airily.

Rilla scanned the sky also; she did not like its appearance; a heavy thundercloud was appearing in the northwest. What in the world was to be done? There was no other train that night, since the nine o’clock special ran only on Saturdays. Would it be possible for them to reach Hannah Brewster’s house, two miles away, before the storm broke? Rilla thought she could do it alone easily enough, but with Jims it was another matter. Were his little legs good for it?

“We’ve got to try it,” said Rilla desperately. “We might stay in the siding until the thunderstorm is over; but it may keep on raining all night and anyway it will be pitch dark. If we can get to Hannah’s she will keep us all night.”

Hannah Brewster, when she had been Hannah Crawford, had lived in the Glen and gone to school with Rilla. They had been good friends then, though Hannah had been three years the older. She had married very young and had gone to live in Millward. What with hard work and babies and a ne’er-do-well husband, her life had not been an easy one, and Hannah seldom revisited her old home. Rilla had visited her once soon after her marriage, but had not seen her or even heard of her for years; she knew, however, that she and Jims would find welcome and harbourage in any house where rosy-faced, open-hearted, generous Hannah lived.

For the first mile they got on very well but the second one was harder. The road, seldom used, was rough and deep-rutted. Jims grew so tired that Rilla had to carry him for the last quarter. She reached the Brewster house, almost exhausted, and dropped Jims on the walk with a sigh of thankfulness. The sky was black with clouds; the first heavy drops were

beginning to fall; and the rumble of thunder was growing very loud. Then she made an unpleasant discovery. The blinds were all down and the doors locked. Evidently the Brewsters were not at home. Rilla ran to the little barn. It, too, was locked. No other refuge presented itself. The bare whitewashed little house had not even a veranda or porch.

It was almost dark now and her plight seemed desperate.

“I’m going to get in if I have to break a window,” said Rilla resolutely. “Hannah would want me to do that. She’d never get over it if she heard I came to her house for refuge in a thunderstorm and couldn’t get in.”

Luckily she did not have to go to the length of actual housebreaking. The kitchen window went up quite easily. Rilla lifted Jims in and scrambled through herself, just as the storm broke in good earnest.

“Oh, see all the little pieces of thunder,” cried Jims in delight, as the hail danced in after them. Rilla shut the window and with some difficulty found and lighted a lamp. They were in a very snug little kitchen. Opening off it on one side was a trim, nicely furnished parlour, and on the other a pantry, which proved to be well stocked.

“I’m going to make myself at home,” said Rilla. “I know that is just what Hannah would want me to do. I’ll get a little snack for Jims and me, and then if the rain continues and nobody comes home I’ll just go upstairs to the spare room and go to bed. There is nothing like acting sensibly in an emergency. If I had not been a goose when I saw Jims fall off the train I’d have rushed back into the car and got some one to stop it. Then I wouldn’t have been in this scrape. Since I am in it I’ll make the best of it.

“This house,” she added, looking around, “is fixed up much nicer than when I was here before. Of course Hannah and Ted were just beginning housekeeping then. But somehow I’ve had the idea that Ted hasn’t been very prosperous. He must have done better than I’ve been led to believe, when they can afford furniture like this. I’m awfully glad for Hannah’s sake.”

The thunderstorm passed, but the rain continued to fall heavily. At eleven o’clock Rilla decided that nobody was coming home. Jims had fallen asleep on the sofa; she carried him up to the spare room and put him

to bed. Then she undressed, put on a nightgown she found in the washstand drawer, and scrambled sleepily in between very nice lavender-scented sheets. She was so tired, after her adventures and exertions, that not even the oddity of her situation could keep her awake; she was sound asleep in a few minutes.

Rilla slept until eight o'clock the next morning and then awakened with startling suddenness. Somebody was saying in a harsh, gruff voice, "Here, you two, wake up. I want to know what this means."

Rilla did wake up, promptly and effectually. She had never in all her life awakened up so thoroughly before. Standing in the room were three people, one of them a man, who were absolute strangers to her. The man was a big fellow with a bushy black beard and an angry scowl. Beside him was a woman — a tall, thin, angular person, with violently red hair and an indescribable hat. She looked even crosser and more amazed than the man, if that were possible. In the background was another woman — a tiny old lady who must have been at least eighty. She was, in spite of her tinyness, a very striking-looking personage; she was dressed in unrelieved black, had snow-white hair, a dead-white face, and snapping, vivid, coal-black eyes. She looked as amazed as the other two, but Rilla realized that she didn't look cross.

Rilla also was realizing that something was wrong — fearfully wrong. Then the man said, more gruffly than ever, "Come now. Who are you and what business have you here?"

Rilla raised herself on one elbow, looking and feeling hopelessly bewildered and foolish. She heard the old black-and-white lady in the background chuckle to herself. "She must be real," Rilla thought. "I can't be dreaming her." Aloud she gasped,

"Isn't this Theodore Brewster's place?"

"No," said the big woman, speaking for the first time, "this place belongs to us. We bought it from the Brewsters last fall. They moved to Greenvale. Our name is Chapley."

Poor Rilla fell back on her pillow, quite overcome.

“I beg your pardon,” she said. “I — I — thought the Brewsters lived here. Mrs. Brewster is a friend of mine. I am Rilla Blythe — Dr. Blythe’s daughter from Glen St. Mary. I — I was going to town with my — my — this little boy — and he fell off the train — and I jumped off after him — and nobody knew of it. I knew we couldn’t get home last night and a storm was coming up — so we came here and when we found nobody at home — we — we — just got in through the window and — and — made ourselves at home.”

“So it seems,” said the woman sarcastically.

“A likely story,” said the man.

“We weren’t born yesterday,” added the woman.

Madam Black-and-White didn’t say anything; but when the other two made their pretty speeches she doubled up in a silent convulsion of mirth, shaking her head from side to side and beating the air with her hands.

Rilla, stung by the disagreeable attitude of the Chapleys, regained her selfpossession and lost her temper. She sat up in bed and said in her haughtiest voice, “I do not know when you were born, or where, but it must have been somewhere where very peculiar manners were taught. If you will have the decency to leave my room — er — this room — until I can get up and dress I shall not transgress upon your hospitality” — Rilla was killingly sarcastic—”any longer. And I shall pay you amply for the food we have eaten and the night’s lodging I have taken.”

The black-and-white apparition went through the motion of clapping her hands, but not a sound did she make. Perhaps Mr. Chapley was cowed by Rilla’s tone — or perhaps he was appeased at the prospect of payment; at all events, he spoke more civilly.

“Well, that’s fair. If you pay up it’s all right.”

“She shall do no such thing as pay you,” said Madam Black-and-White in a surprisingly clear, resolute, authoritative tone of voice. “If you haven’t got any shame for yourself, Robert Chapley, you’ve got a mother-in-law who can be ashamed for you. No strangers shall be charged for room and lodging in any house where Mrs. Matilda Pitman lives. Remember that, though I may have come down in the world, I haven’t

quite forgot all decency for all that. I knew you was a skinflint when Amelia married you, and you've made her as bad as yourself. But Mrs. Matilda Pitman has been boss for a long time, and Mrs. Matilda Pitman will remain boss. Here you, Robert Chapley, take yourself out of here and let that girl get dressed. And you, Amelia, go downstairs and cook a breakfast for her."

Never, in all her life, had Rilla seen anything like the abject meekness with which those two big people obeyed that mite. They went without word or look of protest. As the door closed behind them Mrs. Matilda Pitman laughed silently, and rocked from side to side in her merriment.

"Ain't it funny?" she said. "I mostly lets them run the length of their tether, but sometimes I has to pull them up, and then I does it with a jerk. They don't dast aggravate me, because I've got considerable hard cash, and they're afraid I won't leave it all to them. Neither I will. I'll leave 'em some, but some I won't, just to vex 'em. I haven't made up my mind where I will leave it but I'll have to, soon, for at eighty a body is living on borrowed time. Now, you can take your time about dressing, my dear, and I'll go down and keep them mean scallawags in order. That's a handsome child you have there. Is he your brother?"

"No, he's a little war-baby I've been taking care of, because his mother died and his father was overseas," answered Rilla in a subdued tone.

"War-baby! Humph! Well, I'd better skin out before he wakes up or he'll likely start crying. Children don't like me — never did. I can't recollect any youngster ever coming near me of its own accord. Never had any of my own. Amelia was my step-daughter. Well, it's saved me a world of bother. If kids don't like me I don't like them, so that's an even score. But that certainly is a handsome child."

Jims chose this moment for waking up. He opened his big brown eyes and looked at Mrs. Matilda Pitman unblinkingly. Then he sat up, dimpled deliciously, pointed to her and said solemnly to Rilla, "Pwitty lady, Willa, pwitty lady."

Mrs. Matilda Pitman smiled. Even eighty-odd is sometimes vulnerable in vanity. "I've heard that children and fools tell the truth," she said. "I

was used to compliments when I was young — but they're scarcer when you get as far along as I am. I haven't had one for years. It tastes good. I s'pose now, you monkey, you wouldn't give me a kiss."

Then Jims did a quite surprising thing. He was not a demonstrative youngster and was chary with kisses even to the Ingleside people. But without a word he stood up in bed, his plump little body encased only in his undershirt, ran to the footboard, flung his arms about Mrs. Matilda Pitman's neck, and gave her a bear hug, accompanied by three or four hearty, ungrudging smacks.

"Jims," protested Rilla, aghast at this liberty.

"You leave him be," ordered Mrs. Matilda Pitman, setting her bonnet straight.

"Laws I like to see some one that isn't skeered of me. Everybody is — you are, though you're trying to hide it. And why? Of course Robert and Amelia are because I make 'em skeered on purpose. But folks always are — no matter how civil I be to them. Are you going to keep this child?"

"I'm afraid not. His father is coming home before long."

"Is he any good — the father, I mean?"

"Well — he's kind and nice — but he's poor — and I'm afraid he always will be," faltered Rilla.

"I see — shiftless — can't make or keep. Well, I'll see — I'll see. I have an idea. It's a good idea, and besides it will make Robert and Amelia squirm. That's its main merit in my eyes, though I like that child, mind you, because he ain't skeered of me. He's worth some bother. Now, you get dressed, as I said before, and come down when you're good and ready."

Rilla was stiff and sore after her tumble and walk of the night before but she was not long in dressing herself and Jims. When she went down to the kitchen she found a smoking hot breakfast on the table. Mr. Chapley was nowhere in sight and Mrs. Chapley was cutting bread with a sulky air. Mrs. Matilda Pitman was sitting in an armchair, knitting a grey army sock. She still wore her bonnet and her triumphant expression.

"Set right in, dears, and make a good breakfast," she said.

“I am not hungry,” said Rilla almost pleadingly. “I don’t think I can eat anything. And it is time I was starting for the station. The morning train will soon be along. Please excuse me and let us go — I’ll take a piece of bread and butter for Jims.”

Mrs. Matilda Pitman shook a knitting-needle playfully at Rilla.

“Sit down and take your breakfast,” she said. “Mrs. Matilda Pitman commands you. Everybody obeys Mrs. Matilda Pitman — even Robert and Amelia. You must obey her too.”

Rilla did obey her. She sat down and, such was the influence of Mrs. Matilda Pitman’s mesmeric eye, she ate a tolerable breakfast. The obedient Amelia never spoke; Mrs. Matilda Pitman did not speak either; but she knitted furiously and chuckled. When Rilla had finished, Mrs. Matilda Pitman rolled up her sock.

“Now you can go if you want to,” she said, “but you don’t have to go. You can stay here as long as you want to and I’ll make Amelia cook your meals for you.”

The independent Miss Blythe, whom a certain clique of Junior Red Cross girls accused of being domineering and “bossy,” was thoroughly cowed.

“Thank you,” she said meekly, “but we must really go.”

“Well, then,” said Mrs. Matilda Pitman, throwing open the door, “your conveyance is ready for you. I told Robert he must hitch up and drive you to the station. I enjoy making Robert do things. It’s almost the only sport I have left. I’m over eighty and most things have lost their flavour except bossing Robert.”

Robert sat before the door on the front seat of a trim, double-seated, rubber-tired buggy. He must have heard every word his mother-in-law said but he gave no sign.

“I do wish,” said Rilla, plucking up what little spirit she had left, “that you would let me — oh — ah—” then she quailed again before Mrs. Matilda Pitman’s eye—”recompense you for — for—”

“Mrs. Matilda Pitman said before — and meant it — that she doesn’t take pay for entertaining strangers, nor let other people where she lives do

it, much as their natural meanness would like to do it. You go along to town and don't forget to call the next time you come this way. Don't be scared. Not that you are scared of much, I reckon, considering the way you sassed Robert back this morning. I like your spunk. Most girls nowadays are such timid, skeery creeturs. When I was a girl I wasn't afraid of nothing nor nobody. Mind you take good care of that boy. He ain't any common child. And make Robert drive round all the puddles in the road. I won't have that new buggy splashed."

As they drove away Jims threw kisses at Mrs. Matilda Pitman as long as he could see her, and Mrs. Matilda Pitman waved her sock back at him. Robert spoke no word, either good or bad, all the way to the station, but he remembered the puddles. When Rilla got out at the siding she thanked him courteously. The only response she got was a grunt as Robert turned his horse and started for home.

"Well" — Rilla drew a long breath—"I must try to get back into Rilla Blythe again. I've been somebody else these past few hours — I don't know just who — some creation of that extraordinary old person's. I believe she hypnotized me. What an adventure this will be to write the boys."

And then she sighed. Bitter remembrance came that there were only Jerry, Ken, Carl and Shirley to write it to now. Jem — who would have appreciated Mrs. Matilda Pitman keenly — where was Jem?

Word From Jem

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4th August 1918

“It is four years tonight since the dance at the lighthouse — four years of war. It seems like three times four. I was fifteen then. I am nineteen now. I expected that these past four years would be the most delightful years of my life and they have been years of war — years of fear and grief and worry — but I humbly hope, of a little growth in strength and character as well.

“Today I was going through the hall and I heard mother saying something to father about me. I didn’t mean to listen — I couldn’t help hearing her as I went along the hall and upstairs — so perhaps that is why I heard what listeners are said never to hear — something good of myself. And because it was mother who said it I’m going to write it here in my journal, for my comforting when days of discouragement come upon me, in which I feel that I am vain and selfish and weak and that there is no good thing in me.

“‘Rilla has developed in a wonderful fashion these past four years. She used to be such an irresponsible young creature. She has changed into a capable, womanly girl and she is such a comfort to me. Nan and Di have grown a little away from me — they have been so little at home — but Rilla has grown closer and closer to me. We are chums. I don’t see how I could have got through these terrible years without her, Gilbert.’

“There, that is just what mother said — and I feel glad — and sorry — and proud — and humble! It’s beautiful to have my mother think that about me — but I don’t deserve it quite. I’m not as good and strong as all that. There are heaps of times when I have felt cross and impatient and woeful and despairing. It is mother and Susan who have been this family’s backbone. But I have helped a little, I believe, and I am so glad and thankful.

“The war news has been good right along. The French and Americans are pushing the Germans back and back and back. Sometimes I am afraid it is too good to last — after nearly four years of disasters one has a feeling that this constant success is unbelievable. We don’t rejoice noisily over it. Susan keeps the flag up but we go softly. The price paid has been too high for jubilation. We are just thankful that it has not been paid in vain.

“No word has come from Jem. We hope — because we dare not do anything else. But there are hours when we all feel — though we never say so — that such hoping is foolishness. These hours come more and more frequently as the weeks go by. And we may never know. That is the most terrible thought of all. I wonder how Faith is bearing it. To judge from her letters she has never for a moment given up hope, but she must have had her dark hours of doubt like the rest of us.”

20th August 1918

“The Canadians have been in action again and Mr. Meredith had a cable today saying that Carl had been slightly wounded and is in the hospital. It did not say where the wound was, which is unusual, and we all feel worried. There is news of a fresh victory every day now.”

30th August 1918

“The Merediths had a letter from Carl today. His wound was “only a slight one” — but it was in his right eye and the sight is gone for ever!

““One eye is enough to watch bugs with,’ Carl writes cheerfully. And we know it might have been oh so much worse! If it had been both eyes! But I cried all the afternoon after I saw Carl’s letter. Those beautiful, fearless blue eyes of his!

“There is one comfort — he will not have to go back to the front. He is coming home as soon as he is out of the hospital — the first of our boys to return. When will the others come?

“And there is one who will never come. At least we will not see him if he does. But, oh, I think he will be there — when our Canadian soldiers return there will be a shadow army with them — the army of the fallen. We will not see them — but they will be there!”

1st September 1918

“Mother and I went into Charlottetown yesterday to see the moving picture, “Hearts of the World.” I made an awful goose of myself — father will never stop teasing me about it for the rest of my life. But it all seemed so horribly real — and I was so intensely interested that I forgot everything but the scenes I saw enacted before my eyes. And then, quite near the last came a terribly exciting one. The heroine was struggling with a horrible German soldier who was trying to drag her away. I knew she had a knife — I had seen her hide it, to have it in readiness — and I couldn’t understand why she didn’t produce it and finish the brute. I thought she must have forgotten it, and just at the tensest moment of the scene I lost my head altogether. I just stood right up on my feet in that crowded house and shrieked at the top of my voice—’The knife is in your stocking — the knife is in your stocking!’

“I created a sensation!

“The funny part was, that just as I said it, the girl did snatch out the knife and stab the soldier with it!

“Everybody in the house laughed. I came to my senses and fell back in my seat, overcome with mortification. Mother was shaking with laughter. I could have shaken her. Why hadn’t she pulled me down and choked me before I had made such an idiot of myself. She protests that there wasn’t time.

“Fortunately the house was dark, and I don’t believe there was anybody there who knew me. And I thought I was becoming sensible and self-controlled and womanly! It is plain I have some distance to go yet before I attain that devoutly desired consummation.”

20th September 1918

“In the east Bulgaria has asked for peace, and in the west the British have smashed the Hindenburg line; and right here in Glen St. Mary little Bruce Meredith has done something that I think wonderful — wonderful because of the love behind it. Mrs. Meredith was here tonight and told us about it — and mother and I cried, and Susan got up and clattered the things about the stove.

“Bruce always loved Jem very devotedly, and the child has never forgotten him in all these years. He has been as faithful in his way as Dog Monday was in his. We have always told him that Jem would come back. But it seems that he was in Carter Flagg’s store last night and he heard his Uncle Norman flatly declaring that Jem Blythe would never come back and that the Ingleside folk might as well give up hoping he would. Bruce went home and cried himself to sleep. This morning his mother saw him going out of the yard, with a very sorrowful and determined look, carrying his pet kitten. She didn’t think much more about it until later on he came in, with the most tragic little face, and told her, his little body shaking with sobs, that he had drowned Stripey.

“‘Why did you do that?’ Mrs. Meredith exclaimed.

“‘To bring Jem back,’ sobbed Bruce. ‘I thought if I sacrificed Stripey God would send Jem back. So I drowned him — and, oh mother, it was awful hard — but surely God will send Jem back now, ‘cause Stripey was the dearest thing I had. I just told God I would give Him Stripey if He would send Jem back. And He will, won’t He, mother?’

“Mrs. Meredith didn’t know what to say to the poor child. She just could not tell him that perhaps his sacrifice wouldn’t bring Jem back — that God didn’t work that way. She told him that he mustn’t expect it right away — that perhaps it would be quite a long time yet before Jem came back.

“But Bruce said, ‘It oughtn’t to take longer’n a week, mother. Oh, mother, Stripey was such a nice little cat. He purred so pretty. Don’t you think God ought to like him enough to let us have Jem?’

“Mr. Meredith is worried about the effect on Bruce’s faith in God, and Mrs. Meredith is worried about the effect on Bruce himself if his hope isn’t fulfilled. And I feel as if I must cry every time I think of it. It was so splendid — and sad — and beautiful. The dear devoted little fellow! He worshipped that kitten. And if it all goes for nothing — as so many sacrifices seem to go for nothing — he will be brokenhearted, for he isn’t old enough to understand that God doesn’t answer our prayers just as we

hope — and doesn't make bargains with us when we yield something we love up to Him."

24th September 1918

"I have been kneeling at my window in the moonshine for a long time, just thanking God over and over again. The joy of last night and today has been so great that it seemed half pain — as if our hearts weren't big enough to hold it.

"Last night I was sitting here in my room at eleven o'clock writing a letter to Shirley. Every one else was in bed, except father, who was out. I heard the telephone ring and I ran out to the hall to answer it, before it should waken mother. It was long-distance calling, and when I answered it said 'This is the telegraph Company's office in Charlottetown. There is an overseas cable for Dr. Blythe.'

"I thought of Shirley — my heart stood still — and then I heard him saying, 'It's from Holland.'

"The message was,

'Just arrived. Escaped from Germany. Quite well. Writing.
James Blythe.'

"I didn't faint or fall or scream. I didn't feel glad or surprised. I didn't feel anything. I felt numb, just as I did when I heard Walter had enlisted. I hung up the receiver and turned round. Mother was standing in her doorway. She wore her old rose kimono, and her hair was hanging down her back in a long thick braid, and her eyes were shining. She looked just like a young girl.

"'There is word from Jem?' she said.

"How did she know? I hadn't said a word at the phone except 'Yes — yes — yes.' She says she doesn't know how she knew, but she did know. She was awake and she heard the ring and she knew that there was word from Jem.

"'He's alive — he's well — he's in Holland,' I said.

"Mother came out into the hall and said, 'I must get your father on the 'phone and tell him. He is in the Upper Glen.'

“She was very calm and quiet — not a bit like I would have expected her to be. But then I wasn’t either. I went and woke up Gertrude and Susan and told them. Susan said ‘Thank God,’ firstly, and secondly she said ‘Did I not tell you Dog Monday knew?’ and thirdly, ‘I’ll go down and make a cup of tea’ — and she stalked down in her nightdress to make it. She did make it — and made mother and Gertrude drink it — but I went back to my room and shut my door and locked it, and I knelt by my window and cried — just as Gertrude did when her great news came.

“I think I know at last exactly what I shall feel like on the resurrection morning.”

4th October 1918

“Today Jem’s letter came. It has been in the house only six hours and it is almost read to pieces. The postmistress told everybody in the Glen it had come, and everybody came up to hear the news.

“Jem was badly wounded in the thigh — and he was picked up and taken to prison, so delirious with fever that he didn’t know what was happening to him or where he was. It was weeks before he came to his senses and was able to write. Then he did write — but it never came. He wasn’t treated at all badly at his camp — only the food was poor. He had nothing to eat but a little black bread and boiled turnips and now and then a little soup with black peas in it. And we sat down every one of those days to three good square luxurious meals! He wrote us as often as he could but he was afraid we were not getting his letters because no reply came. As soon as he was strong enough he tried to escape, but was caught and brought back; a month later he and a comrade made another attempt and succeeded in reaching Holland.

“Jem can’t come home right away. He isn’t quite so well as his cable said, for his wound has not healed properly and he has to go into a hospital in England for further treatment. But he says he will be all right eventually, and we know he is safe and will be back home sometime, and oh, the difference it makes in everything!

“I had a letter from Jim Anderson today, too. He has married an English girl, got his discharge, and is coming right home to Canada with

his bride. I don't know whether to be glad or sorry. It will depend on what kind of a woman she is. I had a second letter also of a somewhat mysterious tenor. It is from a Charlottetown lawyer, asking me to go in to see him at my earliest convenience in regard to a certain matter connected with the estate of the 'late Mrs. Matilda Pitman.'

"I read a notice of Mrs. Pitman's death — from heart failure — in the Enterprise a few weeks ago. I wonder if this summons has anything to do with Jims."

5th October 1918

"I went into town this morning and had an interview with Mrs. Pitman's lawyer — a little thin, wispy man, who spoke of his late client with such a profound respect that it is evident that he as was much under her thumb as Robert and Amelia were. He drew up a new will for her a short time before her death. She was worth thirty thousand dollars, the bulk of which was left to Amelia Chapley. But she left five thousand to me in trust for Jims. The interest is to be used as I see fit for his education, and the principal is to be paid over to him on his twentieth birthday. Certainly Jims was born lucky. I saved him from slow extinction at the hands of Mrs. Conover — Mary Vance saved him from death by diptheritic croup — his star saved him when he fell off the train. And he tumbled not only into a clump of bracken, but right into this nice little legacy.

"Evidently, as Mrs. Matilda Pitman said, and as I have always believed, he is no common child and he has no common destiny in store for him.

"At all events he is provided for, and in such a fashion that Jim Anderson can't squander his inheritance if he wanted to. Now, if the new English stepmother is only a good sort I shall feel quite easy about the future of my war-baby.

"I wonder what Robert and Amelia think of it. I fancy they will nail down their windows when they leave home after this!"

Victory!

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“A day ‘of chilling winds and gloomy skies,’” Rilla quoted one Sunday afternoon — the sixth of October to be exact. It was so cold that they had lighted a fire in the livingroom and the merry little flames were doing their best to counteract the outside dourness. “It’s more like November than October — November is such an ugly month.”

Cousin Sophia was there, having again forgiven Susan, and Mrs. Martin Clow, who was not visiting on Sunday but had dropped in to borrow Susan’s cure for rheumatism — that being cheaper than getting one from the doctor. “I’m afeared we’re going to have an airy winter,” foreboded Cousin Sophia. “The muskrats are building awful big houses round the pond, and that’s a sign that never fails. Dear me, how that child has grown!” Cousin Sophia sighed again, as if it were an unhappy circumstance that a child should grow. “When do you expect his father?”

“Next week,” said Rilla.

“Well, I hope the stepmother won’t abuse the pore child,” sighed Cousin Sophia, “but I have my doubts — I have my doubts. Anyhow, he’ll be sure to feel the difference between his usage here and what he’ll get anywhere else. You’ve spoiled him so, Rilla, waiting on him hand and foot the way you’ve always done.”

Rilla smiled and pressed her cheek to Jims’ curls. She knew sweet-tempered, sunny, little Jims was not spoiled. Nevertheless her heart was anxious behind her smile. She, too, thought much about the new Mrs. Anderson and wondered uneasily what she would be like.

“I can’t give Jims up to a woman who won’t love him,” she thought rebelliously.

“I b’lieve it’s going to rain,” said Cousin Sophia. “We have had an awful lot of rain this fall already. It’s going to make it awful hard for people to get their roots in. It wasn’t so in my young days. We gin’rally

had beautiful Octobers then. But the seasons is altogether different now from what they used to be.” Clear across Cousin Sophia’s doleful voice cut the telephone bell. Gertrude Oliver answered it. “Yes — what? What? Is it true — is it official? Thank you — thank you.”

Gertrude turned and faced the room dramatically, her dark eyes flashing, her dark face flushed with feeling. All at once the sun broke through the thick clouds and poured through the big crimson maple outside the window. Its reflected glow enveloped her in a weird immaterial flame. She looked like a priestess performing some mystic, splendid rite.

“Germany and Austria are suing for peace,” she said.

Rilla went crazy for a few minutes. She sprang up and danced around the room, clapping her hands, laughing, crying.

“Sit down, child,” said Mrs. Clow, who never got excited over anything, and so had missed a tremendous amount of trouble and delight in her journey through life.

“Oh,” cried Rilla, “I have walked the floor for hours in despair and anxiety in these past four years. Now let me walk in joy. It was worth living long dreary years for this minute, and it would be worth living them again just to look back to it. Susan, let’s run up the flag — and we must phone the news to every one in the Glen.”

“Can we have as much sugar as we want to now?” asked Jims eagerly.

It was a never-to-be-forgotten afternoon. As the news spread excited people ran about the village and dashed up to Ingleside. The Merediths came over and stayed to supper and everybody talked and nobody listened. Cousin Sophia tried to protest that Germany and Austria were not to be trusted and it was all part of a plot, but nobody paid the least attention to her.

“This Sunday makes up for that one in March,” said Susan.

“I wonder,” said Gertrude dreamily, apart to Rilla, “if things won’t seem rather flat and insipid when peace really comes. After being fed for four years on horrors and fears, terrible reverses, amazing victories, won’t anything less be tame and uninteresting? How strange — and blessed — and dull it will be not to dread the coming of the mail every day.”

“We must dread it for a little while yet, I suppose,” said Rilla. “Peace won’t come — can’t come — for some weeks yet. And in those weeks dreadful things may happen. My excitement is over. We have won the victory — but oh, what a price we have paid!”

“Not too high a price for freedom,” said Gertrude softly. “Do you think it was, Rilla?”

“No,” said Rilla, under her breath. She was seeing a little white cross on a battlefield of France. “No — not if those of us who live will show ourselves worthy of it — if we ‘keep faith.’”

“We will keep faith,” said Gertrude. She rose suddenly. A silence fell around the table, and in the silence Gertrude repeated Walter’s famous poem “The Piper.” When she finished Mr. Meredith stood up and held up his glass. “Let us drink,” he said, “to the silent army — to the boys who followed when the Piper summoned. ‘For our tomorrow they gave their today’ — theirs is the victory!”

Mr. Hyde Goes To His Own Place And Susan Takes A Honeymoon

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Early in November Jims left Ingleside. Rilla saw him go with many tears but a heart free from boding. Mrs. Jim Anderson, Number Two, was such a nice little woman that one was rather inclined to wonder at the luck which bestowed her on Jim. She was rosy-faced and blue-eyed and wholesome, with the roundness and trigness of a geranium leaf. Rilla saw at first glance that she was to be trusted with Jims.

“I’m fond of children, miss,” she said heartily. “I’m used to them — I’ve left six little brothers and sisters behind me. Jims is a dear child and I must say you’ve done wonders in bringing him up so healthy and handsome. I’ll be as good to him as if he was my own, miss. And I’ll make Jim toe the line all right. He’s a good worker — all he needs is some one to keep him at it, and to take charge of his money. We’ve rented a little farm just out of the village, and we’re going to settle down there. Jim wanted to stay in England but I says ‘No.’ I hankered to try a new country and I’ve always thought Canada would suit me.”

“I’m so glad you are going to live near us. You’ll let Jims come here often, won’t you? I love him dearly.”

“No doubt you do, miss, for a lovable child I never did see. We understand, Jim and me, what you’ve done for him, and you won’t find us ungrateful. He can come here whenever you want him and I’ll always be glad of any advice from you about his bringing up. He is more your baby than anyone else’s I should say, and I’ll see that you get your fair share of him, miss.”

So Jims went away — with the soup tureen, though not in it. Then the news of the Armistice came, and even Glen St. Mary went mad. That night the village had a bonfire, and burned the Kaiser in effigy. The fishing

village boys turned out and burned all the sandhills off in one grand glorious conflagration that extended for seven miles. Up at Ingleside Rilla ran laughing to her room.

“Now I’m going to do a most unladylike and inexcusable thing,” she said, as she pulled her green velvet hat out of its box. “I’m going to kick this hat about the room until it is without form and void; and I shall never as long as I live wear anything of that shade of green again.”

“You’ve certainly kept your vow pluckily,” laughed Miss Oliver.

“It wasn’t pluck — it was sheer obstinacy — I’m rather ashamed of it,” said Rilla, kicking joyously. “I wanted to show mother. It’s mean to want to show your own mother — most unfilial conduct! But I have shown her. And I’ve shown myself a few things! Oh, Miss Oliver, just for one moment I’m really feeling quite young again — young and frivolous and silly. Did I ever say November was an ugly month? Why it’s the most beautiful month in the whole year. Listen to the bells ringing in Rainbow Valley! I never heard them so clearly. They’re ringing for peace — and new happiness — and all the dear, sweet, sane, homey things that we can have again now, Miss Oliver. Not that I am sane just now — I don’t pretend to be. The whole world is having a little crazy spell today. Soon we’ll sober down — and ‘keep faith’ — and begin to build up our new world. But just for today let’s be mad and glad.”

Susan came in from the outdoor sunlight looking supremely satisfied.

“Mr. Hyde is gone,” she announced.

“Gone! Do you mean he is dead, Susan?”

“No, Mrs. Dr. dear, that beast is not dead. But you will never see him again. I feel sure of that.”

“Don’t be so mysterious, Susan. What has happened to him?”

“Well, Mrs. Dr. dear, he was sitting out on the back steps this afternoon. It was just after the news came that the Armistice had been signed and he was looking his Hydest. I can assure you he was an awesome looking beast. All at once, Mrs. Dr. dear, Bruce Meredith came around the corner of the kitchen walking on his stilts. He has been learning to walk on them lately and came over to show me how well he could do it. Mr. Hyde

just took a look and one bound carried him over the yard fence. Then he went tearing through the maple grove in great leaps with his ears laid back. You never saw a creature so terrified, Mrs. Dr. dear. He has never returned.”

“Oh, he’ll come back, Susan, probably chastened in spirit by his fright.”

“We will see, Mrs. Dr. dear — we will see. Remember, the Armistice has been signed. And that reminds me that Whiskers-on-the-moon had a paralytic stroke last night. I am not saying it is a judgment on him, because I am not in the counsels of the Almighty, but one can have one’s own thoughts about it. Neither Whiskers-on-the-moon or Mr. Hyde will be much more heard of in Glen St. Mary, Mrs. Dr. dear, and that you may tie to.”

Mr. Hyde certainly was heard of no more. As it could hardly have been his fright that kept him away the Ingleside folk decided that some dark fate of shot or poison had descended on him — except Susan, who believed and continued to affirm that he had merely “gone to his own place.” Rilla lamented him, for she had been very fond of her stately golden pussy, and had liked him quite as well in his weird Hyde moods as in his tame Jekyll ones.

“And now, Mrs. Dr. dear,” said Susan, “since the fall housecleaning is over and the garden truck is all safe in cellar, I am going to take a honeymoon to celebrate the peace.”

“A honeymoon, Susan?”

“Yes, Mrs. Dr. dear, a honeymoon,” repeated Susan firmly. “I shall never be able to get a husband but I am not going to be cheated out of everything and a honeymoon I intend to have. I am going to Charlottetown to visit my married brother and his family. His wife has been ailing all the fall, but nobody knows whether she is going to die not. She never did tell anyone what she was going to do until she did it. That is the main reason why she was never liked in our family. But to be on the safe side I feel that I should visit her. I have not been in town for over a day for twenty years and I have a feeling that I might as well see one of those moving pictures

there is so much talk of, so as not to be wholly out of the swim. But have no fear that I shall be carried away with them, Mrs. Dr. dear. I shall be away a fortnight if you can spare me so long.”

“You certainly deserve a good holiday, Susan. Better take a month — that is the proper length for a honeymoon.”

“No, Mrs. Dr. dear, a fortnight is all I require. Besides, I must be home for at least three weeks before Christmas to make the proper preparations. We will have a Christmas that is a Christmas this year, Mrs. Dr. dear. Do you think there is any chance of our boys being home for it?”

“No, I think not, Susan. Both Jem and Shirley write that they don’t expect to be home before spring — it may be even midsummer before Shirley comes. But Carl Meredith will be home, and Nan and Di, and we will have a grand celebration once more. We’ll set chairs for all, Susan, as you did our first war Christmas — yes, for all — for my dear lad whose chair must always be vacant, as well as for the others, Susan.”

“It is not likely I would forget to set his place, Mrs. Dr. dear,” said Susan, wiping her eyes as she departed to pack up for her “honeymoon.”

“Rilla-My-Rilla!”

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Carl Meredith and Miller Douglas came home just before Christmas and Glen St. Mary met them at the station with a brass band borrowed from Lowbridge and speeches of home manufacture. Miller was brisk and beaming in spite of his wooden leg; he had developed into a broad-shouldered, imposing looking fellow and the D. C. Medal he wore reconciled Miss Cornelia to the shortcomings of his pedigree to such a degree that she tacitly recognized his engagement to Mary.

The latter put on a few airs — especially when Carter Flagg took Miller into his store as head clerk — but nobody grudged them to her.

“Of course farming’s out of the question for us now,” she told Rilla, “but Miller thinks he’ll like storekeeping fine once he gets used to a quiet life again, and Carter Flagg will be a more agreeable boss than old Kitty. We’re going to be married in the fall and live in the old Mead house with the bay windows and the mansard roof. I’ve always thought that the handsomest house in the Glen, but never did I dream I’d ever live there. We’re only renting it, of course, but if things go as we expect and Carter Flagg takes Miller into partnership we’ll own it some day. Say, I’ve got on some in society, haven’t I, considering what I come from? I never aspired to being a storekeeper’s wife. But Miller’s real ambitious and he’ll have a wife that’ll back him up. He says he never saw a French girl worth looking at twice and that his heart beat true to me every moment he was away.”

Jerry Meredith and Joe Milgrave came back in January, and all winter the boys from the Glen and its environs came home by twos and threes. None of them came back just as they went away, not even those who had been so fortunate as to escape injury.

One spring day, when the daffodils were blowing on the Ingleside lawn, and the banks of the brook in Rainbow Valley were sweet with white and purple violets, the little, lazy afternoon accommodation train pulled

into the Glen station. It was very seldom that passengers for the Glen came by that train, so nobody was there to meet it except the new station agent and a small black-and-yellow dog, who for four and a half years had met every train that had steamed into Glen St. Mary. Thousands of trains had Dog Monday met and never had the boy he waited and watched for returned. Yet still Dog Monday watched on with eyes that never quite lost hope. Perhaps his dog-heart failed him at times; he was growing old and rheumatic; when he walked back to his kennel after each train had gone his gait was very sober now — he never trotted but went slowly with a drooping head and a depressed tail that had quite lost its old saucy uplift.

One passenger stepped off the train — a tall fellow in a faded lieutenant's uniform, who walked with a barely perceptible limp. He had a bronzed face and there were some grey hairs in the ruddy curls that clustered around his forehead. The new station agent looked at him anxiously. He was used to seeing the khaki-clad figures come off the train, some met by a tumultuous crowd, others, who had sent no word of their coming, stepping off quietly like this one. But there was a certain distinction of bearing and features in this soldier that caught his attention and made him wonder a little more interestedly who he was.

A black-and-yellow streak shot past the station agent. Dog Monday stiff? Dog Monday rheumatic? Dog Monday old? Never believe it. Dog Monday was a young pup, gone clean mad with rejuvenating joy.

He flung himself against the tall soldier, with a bark that choked in his throat from sheer rapture. He flung himself on the ground and writhed in a frenzy of welcome. He tried to climb the soldier's khaki legs and slipped down and groveled in an ecstasy that seemed as if it must tear his little body in pieces. He licked his boots and when the lieutenant had, with laughter on his lips and tears in his eyes, succeeded in gathering the little creature up in his arms Dog Monday laid his head on the khaki shoulder and licked the sunburned neck, making queer sounds between barks and sobs.

The station agent had heard the story of Dog Monday. He knew now who the returned soldier was. Dog Monday's long vigil was ended. Jem

Blythe had come home.

“We are all very happy — and sad — and thankful,” wrote Rilla in her diary a week later, “though Susan has not yet recovered — never will recover, I believe — from the shock of having Jem come home the very night she had, owing to a strenuous day, prepared a ‘pick up’ supper. I shall never forget the sight of her, tearing madly about from pantry to cellar, hunting out stored away goodies. Just as if anybody cared what was on the table — none of us could eat, anyway. It was meat and drink just to look at Jem. Mother seemed afraid to take her eyes off him lest he vanish out of her sight. It is wonderful to have Jem back — and little Dog Monday. Monday refuses to be separated from Jem for a moment. He sleeps on the foot of his bed and squats beside him at meal-times. And on Sunday he went to church with him and insisted on going right into our pew, where he went to sleep on Jem’s feet. In the middle of the sermon he woke up and seemed to think he must welcome Jem all over again, for he bounded up with a series of barks and wouldn’t quiet down until Jem took him up in his arms. But nobody seemed to mind, and Mr. Meredith came and patted his head after the service and said, “‘Faith and affection and loyalty are precious things wherever they are found. That little dog’s love is a treasure, Jem.’

“One night when Jem and I were talking things over in Rainbow Valley, I asked him if he had ever felt afraid at the front.

“Jem laughed.

“‘Afraid! I was afraid scores of times — sick with fear — I who used to laugh at Walter when he was frightened. Do you know, Walter was never frightened after he got to the front. Realities never scared him — only his imagination could do that. His colonel told me that Walter was the bravest man in the regiment. Rilla, I never realized that Walter was dead till I came back home. You don’t know how I miss him now — you folks here have got used to it in a sense — but it’s all fresh to me. Walter and I grew up together — we were chums as well as brothers — and now here, in this old valley we loved when we were children, it has come home to me that I’m not to see him again.’

“Jem is going back to college in the fall and so are Jerry and Carl. I suppose Shirley will, too. He expects to be home in July. Nan and Di will go on teaching. Faith doesn’t expect to be home before September. I suppose she will teach then too, for she and Jem can’t be married until he gets through his course in medicine. Una Meredith has decided, I think, to take a course in Household Science at Kingsport — and Gertrude is to be married to her Major and is frankly happy about it—’shamelessly happy’ she says; but I think her attitude is very beautiful. They are all talking of their plans and hopes — more soberly than they used to do long ago, but still with interest, and a determination to carry on and make good in spite of lost years.

“‘We’re in a new world,’ Jem says, ‘and we’ve got to make it a better one than the old. That isn’t done yet, though some folks seem to think it ought to be. The job isn’t finished — it isn’t really begun. The old world is destroyed and we must build up the new one. It will be the task of years. I’ve seen enough of war to realize that we’ve got to make a world where wars can’t happen. We’ve given Prussianism its mortal wound but it isn’t dead yet and it isn’t confined to Germany either. It isn’t enough to drive out the old spirit — we’ve got to bring in the new.’

“I’m writing down those words of Jem’s in my diary so that I can read them over occasionally and get courage from them, when moods come when I find it not so easy to ‘keep faith.’”

Rilla closed her journal with a little sigh. Just then she was not finding it easy to keep faith. All the rest seemed to have some special aim or ambition about which to build up their lives — she had none. And she was very lonely, horribly lonely. Jem had come back — but he was not the laughing boy-brother who had gone away in 1914 and he belonged to Faith. Walter would never come back. She had not even Jims left. All at once her world seemed wide and empty — that is, it had seemed wide and empty from the moment yesterday when she had read in a Montreal paper a fortnight-old list of returned soldiers in which was the name of Captain Kenneth Ford.

So Ken was home — and he had not even written her that he was coming. He had been in Canada two weeks and she had not had a line from him. Of course he had forgotten — if there was ever anything to forget — a handclasp — a kiss — a look — a promise asked under the influence of a passing emotion. It was all absurd — she had been a silly, romantic, inexperienced goose. Well, she would be wiser in the future — very wise — and very discreet — and very contemptuous of men and their ways.

“I suppose I’d better go with Una and take up Household Science too,” she thought, as she stood by her window and looked down through a delicate emerald tangle of young vines on Rainbow Valley, lying in a wonderful lilac light of sunset. There did not seem anything very attractive just then about Household Science, but, with a whole new world waiting to be built, a girl must do something.

The door bell rang, Rilla turned reluctantly stairwards. She must answer it — there was no one else in the house; but she hated the idea of callers just then. She went downstairs slowly, and opened the front door.

A man in khaki was standing on the steps — a tall fellow, with dark eyes and hair, and a narrow white scar running across his brown cheek. Rilla stared at him foolishly for a moment. Who was it?

She ought to know him — there was certainly something very familiar about him—”Rilla-my-Rilla,” he said.

“Ken,” gasped Rilla. Of course, it was Ken — but he looked so much older — he was so much changed — that scar — the lines about his eyes and lips — her thoughts went whirling helplessly.

Ken took the uncertain hand she held out, and looked at her. The slim Rilla of four years ago had rounded out into symmetry. He had left a school girl, and he found a woman — a woman with wonderful eyes and a dented lip, and rose-bloom cheek — a woman altogether beautiful and desirable — the woman of his dreams.

“Is it Rilla-my-Rilla?” he asked, meaningly.

Emotion shook Rilla from head to foot. Joy — happiness — sorrow — fear — every passion that had wrung her heart in those four long years seemed to surge up in her soul for a moment as the deeps of being were

stirred. She had tried to speak; at first voice would not come. Then
—”Yeth,” said Rilla.

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EMILY OF NEW MOON

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The House in the Hollow

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The house in the hollow was “a mile from anywhere” — so Maywood people said. It was situated in a grassy little dale, looking as if it had never been built like other houses but had grown up there like a big, brown mushroom. It was reached by a long, green lane and almost hidden from view by an encircling growth of young birches. No other house could be seen from it although the village was just over the hill. Ellen Greene said it was the loneliest place in the world and vowed that she wouldn’t stay there a day if it wasn’t that she pitied the child.

Emily didn’t know she was being pitied and didn’t know what loneliness meant. She had plenty of company. There was Father — and Mike — and Saucy Sal. The Wind Woman was always around; and there were the trees — Adam-and-Eve, and the Rooster Pine, and all the friendly lady-birches.

And there was “the flash,” too. She never knew when it might come, and the possibility of it kept her athrill and expectant.

Emily had slipped away in the chilly twilight for a walk. She remembered that walk very vividly all her life — perhaps because of a certain eerie beauty that was in it — perhaps because “the flash” came for the first time in weeks — more likely because of what happened after she came back from it.

It had been a dull, cold day in early May, threatening to rain but never raining. Father had lain on the sitting-room lounge all day. He had coughed a good deal and he had not talked much to Emily, which was a very unusual thing for him. Most of the time he lay with his hands clasped under his head and his large, sunken, dark-blue eyes fixed dreamily and unseeingly on the cloudy sky that was visible between the boughs of the two big spruces in the front yard — Adam-and-Eve, they always called those spruces, because of a whimsical resemblance Emily had traced

between their position, with reference to a small apple-tree between them, and that of Adam and Eve and the Tree of Knowledge in an old-fashioned picture in one of Ellen Greene's books. The Tree of Knowledge looked exactly like the squat little apple-tree, and Adam and Eve stood up on either side as stiffly and rigidly as did the spruces.

Emily wondered what Father was thinking of, but she never bothered him with questions when his cough was bad. She only wished she had somebody to talk to. Ellen Greene wouldn't talk that day either. She did nothing but grunt, and grunts meant that Ellen was disturbed about something. She had grunted last night after the doctor had whispered to her in the kitchen, and she had grunted when she gave Emily a bedtime snack of bread and molasses. Emily did not like bread and molasses, but she ate it because she did not want to hurt Ellen's feelings. It was not often that Ellen allowed her anything to eat before going to bed, and when she did it meant that for some reason or other she wanted to confer a special favour.

Emily expected the grunting attack would wear off over night, as it generally did; but it had not, so no company was to be found in Ellen. Not that there was a great deal to be found at any time. Douglas Starr had once, in a fit of exasperation, told Emily that "Ellen Greene was a fat, lazy old thing of no importance," and Emily, whenever she looked at Ellen after that, thought the description fitted her to a hair. So Emily had curled herself up in the ragged, comfortable old wing-chair and read *The Pilgrim's Progress* all the afternoon. Emily loved *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Many a time had she walked the straight and narrow path with Christian and Christiana — although she never liked Christiana's adventures half as well as Christian's. For one thing, there was always such a crowd with Christiana. She had not half the fascination of that solitary, intrepid figure who faced all alone the shadows of the Dark Valley and the encounter with Apollyon. Darkness and hobgoblins were nothing when you had plenty of company. But to be alone — ah, Emily shivered with the delicious horror of it!

When Ellen announced that supper was ready Douglas Starr told Emily to go out to it.

“I don’t want anything tonight. I’ll just lie here and rest. And when you come in again we’ll have a real talk, Elfkin.”

He smiled up at her his old, beautiful smile, with the love behind it, that Emily always found so sweet. She ate her supper quite happily — though it wasn’t a good supper. The bread was soggy and her egg was underdone, but for a wonder she was allowed to have both Saucy Sal and Mike sitting, one on each side of her, and Ellen only grunted when Emily fed them wee bits of bread and butter.

Mike had such a cute way of sitting up on his haunches and catching the bits in his paws, and Saucy Sal had her trick of touching Emily’s ankle with an almost human touch when her turn was too long in coming. Emily loved them both, but Mike was her favourite. He was a handsome, dark-grey cat with huge owl-like eyes, and he was so soft and fat and fluffy. Sal was always thin; no amount of feeding put any flesh on her bones. Emily liked her, but never cared to cuddle or stroke her because of her thinness. Yet there was a sort of weird beauty about her that appealed to Emily. She was grey-and-white — very white and very sleek, with a long, pointed face, very long ears and very green eyes. She was a redoubtable fighter, and strange cats were vanquished in one round. The fearless little spitfire would even attack dogs and rout them utterly.

Emily loved her pussies. She had brought them up herself, as she proudly said. They had been given to her when they were kittens by her Sunday-school teacher.

“A living present is so nice,” she told Ellen, “because it keeps on getting nicer all the time.”

But she worried considerably because Saucy Sal didn’t have kittens.

“I don’t know why she doesn’t,” she complained to Ellen Greene.

“Most cats seem to have more kittens than they know what to do with.”

After supper Emily went in and found that her father had fallen asleep. She was very glad of this; she knew he had not slept much for two nights; but she was a little disappointed that they were not going to have that “real

talk.” “Real” talks with Father were always such delightful things. But next best would be a walk — a lovely all-by-your-lonesome walk through the grey evening of the young spring. It was so long since she had had a walk.

“You put on your hood and mind you scoot back if it starts to rain,” warned Ellen. “You can’t monkey with colds the way some kids can.”

“Why can’t I?” Emily asked rather indignantly. Why must she be debarred from “monkeying with colds” if other children could? It wasn’t fair.

But Ellen only grunted. Emily muttered under her breath for her own satisfaction, “You are a fat old thing of no importance!” and slipped upstairs to get her hood — rather reluctantly, for she loved to run bareheaded. She put the faded blue hood on over her long, heavy braid of glossy, jet-black hair, and smiled chummily at her reflection in the little greenish glass. The smile began at the corners of her lips and spread over her face in a slow, subtle, very wonderful way, as Douglas Starr often thought. It was her dead mother’s smile — the thing that had caught and held him long ago when he had first seen Juliet Murray. It seemed to be Emily’s only physical inheritance from her mother. In all else, he thought, she was like the Starrs — in her large, purplish-grey eyes with their very long lashes and black brows, in her high, white forehead — too high for beauty — in the delicate modelling of her pale oval face and sensitive mouth, in the little ears that were pointed just a wee bit to show that she was kin to tribes of elfland.

“I’m going for a walk with the Wind Woman, dear,” said Emily. “I wish I could take you, too. Do you ever get out of that room, I wonder. The Wind Woman is going to be out in the fields tonight. She is tall and misty, with thin, grey, silky clothes blowing all about her — and wings like a bat’s — only you can see through them — and shining eyes like stars looking through her long, loose hair. She can fly — but tonight she will walk with me all over the fields. She’s a great friend of mine — the Wind Woman is. I’ve known her ever since I was six. We’re old, old friends —

but not quite so old as you and I, little Emily-in-the-glass. We've been friends always, haven't we?"

With a blown kiss to little Emily-in-the-glass, Emily-out-of-the-glass was off.

The Wind Woman was waiting for her outside — ruffling the little spears of striped grass that were sticking up stiffly in the bed under the sitting-room window — tossing the big boughs of Adam-and-Eve — whispering among the misty green branches of the birches — teasing the “Rooster Pine” behind the house — it really did look like an enormous, ridiculous rooster, with a huge, bunchy tail and a head thrown back to crow.

It was so long since Emily had been out for a walk that she was half crazy with the joy of it. The winter had been so stormy and the snow so deep that she was never allowed out; April had been a month of rain and wind; so on this May evening she felt like a released prisoner. Where should she go? Down the brook — or over the fields to the spruce barrens? Emily chose the latter.

She loved the spruce barrens, away at the further end of the long, sloping pasture. That was a place where magic was made. She came more fully into her fairy birthright there than in any other place. Nobody who saw Emily skimming over the bare field would have envied her. She was little and pale and poorly clad; sometimes she shivered in her thin jacket; yet a queen might have gladly given a crown for her visions — her dreams of wonder. The brown, frosted grasses under her feet were velvet piles. The old mossy, gnarled half-dead spruce-tree, under which she paused for a moment to look up into the sky, was a marble column in a palace of the gods; the far dusky hills were the ramparts of a city of wonder. And for companions she had all the fairies of the countryside — for she could believe in them here — the fairies of the white clover and satin catkins, the little green folk of the grass, the elves of the young fir-trees, sprites of wind and wild fern and thistledown. Anything might happen there — everything might come true.

And the barrens were such a splendid place in which to play hide and seek with the Wind Woman. She was so very real there; if you could just spring quickly enough around a little cluster of spruces — only you never could — you would see her as well as feel her and hear her. There she was — that was the sweep of her grey cloak — no, she was laughing up in the very top of the taller trees — and the chase was on again — till, all at once, it seemed as if the Wind Woman were gone — and the evening was bathed in a wonderful silence — and there was a sudden rift in the curdled clouds westward, and a lovely, pale, pinky-green lake of sky with a new moon in it.

Emily stood and looked at it with clasped hands and her little black head upturned. She must go home and write down a description of it in the yellow account-book, where the last thing written had been, “Mike’s Biography.” It would hurt her with its beauty until she wrote it down. Then she would read it to Father. She must not forget how the tips of the trees on the hill came out like fine black lace across the edge of the pinky-green sky.

And then, for one glorious, supreme moment, came “the flash.”

Emily called it that, although she felt that the name didn’t exactly describe it. It couldn’t be described — not even to Father, who always seemed a little puzzled by it. Emily never spoke of it to any one else.

It had always seemed to Emily, ever since she could remember, that she was very, very near to a world of wonderful beauty. Between it and herself hung only a thin curtain; she could never draw the curtain aside — but sometimes, just for a moment, a wind fluttered it and then it was as if she caught a glimpse of the enchanting realm beyond — only a glimpse — and heard a note of unearthly music.

This moment came rarely — went swiftly, leaving her breathless with the inexpressible delight of it. She could never recall it — never summon it — never pretend it; but the wonder of it stayed with her for days. It never came twice with the same thing. Tonight the dark boughs against that far-off sky had given it. It had come with a high, wild note of wind in the night, with a shadow wave over a ripe field, with a greybird lighting on

her windowsill in a storm, with the singing of “Holy, holy, holy” in church, with a glimpse of the kitchen fire when she had come home on a dark autumn night, with the spiritlike blue of ice palms on a twilit pane, with a felicitous new word when she was writing down a “description” of something. And always when the flash came to her Emily felt that life was a wonderful, mysterious thing of persistent beauty.

She scuttled back to the house in the hollow, through the gathering twilight, all agog to get home and write down her “description” before the memory picture of what she had seen grew a little blurred. She knew just how she would begin it — the sentence seemed to shape itself in her mind: “The hill called to me and something in me called back to it.”

She found Ellen Greene waiting for her on the sunken front-doorstep. Emily was so full of happiness that she loved everything at that moment, even fat things of no importance. She flung her arms around Ellen’s knees and hugged them. Ellen looked down gloomily into the rapt little face, where excitement had kindled a faint wildrose flush, and said, with a ponderous sigh:

“Do you know that your pa has only a week or two more to live?”

A Watch in the Night

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Emily stood quite still and looked up at Ellen's broad, red face — as still as if she had been suddenly turned to stone. She felt as if she had. She was as stunned as if Ellen had struck her a physical blow. The colour faded out of her little face and her pupils dilated until they swallowed up the irises and turned her eyes into pools of blackness. The effect was so startling that even Ellen Greene felt uncomfortable.

“I’m telling you this because I think it’s high time you was told,” she said. “I’ve been at your pa for months to tell you, but he’s kept putting it off and off. I says to him, says I, ‘You know how hard she takes things, and if you drop off suddent some day it’ll most kill her if she hasn’t been prepared. It’s your duty to prepare her,’ and he says, says he, ‘There’s time enough yet, Ellen.’ But he’s never said a word, and when the doctor told me last night that the end might come any time now, I just made up my mind that I’d do what was right and drop a hint to prepare you. Laws-a-massy, child, don’t look like that! You’ll be looked after. Your ma’s people will see to that — on account of the Murray pride, if for no other reason. They won’t let one of their own blood starve or go to strangers — even if they have always hated your pa like p’isen. You’ll have a good home — better’n you’ve ever had here. You needn’t worry a mite. As for your pa, you ought to be thankful to see him at rest. He’s been dying by inches for the last five years. He’s kept it from you, but he’s been a great sufferer. Folks say his heart broke when your ma died — it came on him so suddent-like — she was only sick three days. That’s why I want you to know what’s coming, so’s you won’t be all upset when it happens. For mercy’s sake, Emily Byrd Starr, don’t stand there staring like that! You give me the creeps! You ain’t the first child that’s been left an orphan and you won’t be the last. Try and be sensible. And don’t go pestering your pa

about what I've told you, mind that. Come you in now, out of the damp, and I'll give you a cooky 'fore you go to bed."

Ellen stepped 'down as if to take the child's hand. The power of motion returned to Emily — she must scream if Ellen even touched her now. With one sudden, sharp, bitter little cry she avoided Ellen's hand, darted through the door and fled up the dark staircase.

Ellen shook her head and waddled back to her kitchen. "Anyhow, I've done my duty," she reflected. "He'd have just kept saying 'time enough' and put it off till he was dead and then there'd have been no managing her. She'll have time now to get used to it, and she'll brace up in a day or two. I will say for her she's got spunk — which is lucky, from all I've heard of the Murrays. They won't find it easy to overcrow her. She's got a streak of their pride, too, and that'll help her through. I wish I dared send some of the Murrays word that he's dying, but I don't dast go that far. There's no telling what he'd do. Well, I've stuck on here to the last and I ain't sorry. Not many women would 'a' done it, living as they do here. It's a shame the way that child's been brought up — never even sent to school. Well, I've told him often enough what I've thought of it — it ain't on my conscience, that's one comfort. Here, you Sal-thing, you git out! Where's Mike, too?"

Ellen could not find Mike for the very good reason that he was upstairs with Emily, held tightly in her arms, as she sat in the darkness on her little cot-bed. Amid her agony and desolation there was a certain comfort in the feel of his soft fur and round velvety head.

Emily was not crying; she stared straight into the darkness, trying to face the awful thing Ellen had told her. She did not doubt it — something told her it was true. Why couldn't she die, too? She couldn't go on living without Father.

"If I was God I wouldn't let things like this happen," she said.

She felt it was very wicked of her to say such a thing — Ellen had told her once that it was the wickest thing any one could do to find fault with God. But she didn't care. Perhaps if she were wicked enough God would strike her dead and then she and Father could keep on being together.

But nothing happened — only Mike got tired of being held so tightly and squirmed away. She was all alone now, with this terrible burning pain that seemed all over her and yet was not of the body. She could never get rid of it. She couldn't help it by writing about it in the old yellow account-book. She had written there about her Sunday-school teacher going away, and of being hungry when she went to bed, and Ellen telling her she must be half-crazy to talk of Wind Women and flashes; and after she had written down all about them these things hadn't hurt her any more. But this couldn't be written about. She could not even go to Father for comfort, as she had gone when she burned her hand so badly, picking up the red-hot poker by mistake. Father had held her in his arms all that night and told her stories and helped her to bear the pain. But Father, so Ellen had said, was going to die in a week or two. Emily felt as if Ellen had told her this years and years ago. It surely couldn't be less than an hour since she had been playing with the Wind Woman in the barrens and looking at the new moon in the pinky-green sky.

“The flash will never come again — it can't,” she thought.

But Emily had inherited certain things from her fine old ancestors — the power to fight — to suffer, — to pity — to love very deeply — to rejoice — to endure. These things were all in her and looked out at you through her purplish-grey eyes. Her heritage of endurance came to her aid now and bore her up. She must not let Father know what Ellen had told her — it might hurt him. She must keep it all to herself and love Father, oh, so much, in the little while she could yet have him. She heard him cough in the room below: she must be in bed when he came up; she undressed as swiftly as her cold fingers permitted and crept into the little cot-bed which stood across the open window. The voices of the gentle spring night called to her all unheeded — unheard the Wind Woman whistled by the eaves. For the fairies dwell only in the kingdom of Happiness; having no souls they cannot enter the kingdom of Sorrow.

She lay there cold and tearless and motionless when her father came into the room. How very slowly he walked — how very slowly he took off his clothes. How was it she had never noticed these things before? But he

was not coughing at all. Oh, what if Ellen were mistaken? — what if — a wild hope shot through her aching heart. She gave a little gasp.

Douglas Starr came over to her bed. She felt his dear nearness as he sat down on the chair beside her, in his old red dressing-gown. Oh, how she loved him! There was no other Father like him in all the world — there never could have been — so tender, so understanding, so wonderful! They had always been such chums — they had loved each other so much — it couldn't be that they were to be separated.

“Winkums, are you asleep?”

“No,” whispered Emily.

“Are you sleepy, small dear?”

“No — no — not sleepy.”

Douglas Starr took her hand and held it tightly.

“Then we'll have our talk, honey. I can't sleep either. I want to tell you something.”

“Oh — I know it — I know it!” burst out Emily. “Oh, Father, I know it! Ellen told me.”

Douglas Starr was silent for a moment. Then he said under his breath, “The old fool — the fat old fool!” — as if Ellen's fatness was an added aggravation of her folly. Again, for the last time, Emily hoped. Perhaps it was all a dreadful mistake — just some more of Ellen's fat foolishness.

“It — it isn't true, is it, Father?” she whispered.

“Emily, child,” said her father, “I can't lift you up — I haven't the strength — but climb up and sit on my knee — in the old way.”

Emily slipped out of bed and got on her father's knee. He wrapped the old dressing-gown about her and held her close with his face against hers.

“Dear little child — little beloved Emilykin, it is quite true,” he said. “I meant to tell you myself tonight. And now the old absurdity of an Ellen has told you — brutally I suppose — and hurt you dreadfully. She has the brain of a hen and the sensibility of a cow. May jackals sit on her grandmother's grave! I wouldn't have hurt you, dear.”

Emily fought something down that wanted to choke her.

“Father, I can't — I can't bear it.”

“Yes, you can and will. You will live because there is something for you to do, I think. You have my gift — along with something I never had. You will succeed where I failed, Emily. I haven’t been able to do much for you, sweetheart, but I’ve done what I could. I’ve taught you something, I think — in spite of Ellen Greene. Emily, do you remember your mother?”

“Just a little — here and there — like lovely bits of dreams.”

“You were only four when she died. I’ve never talked much to you about her — I couldn’t. But I’m going to tell you all about her tonight. It doesn’t hurt me to talk of her now — I’ll see her so soon again. You don’t look like her, Emily — only when you smile. For the rest, you’re like your namesake, my mother. When you were born I wanted to call you Juliet, too. But your mother wouldn’t. She said if we called you Juliet then I’d soon take to calling her ‘Mother’ to distinguish between you, and she couldn’t endure that. She said her Aunt Nancy had once said to her, ‘The first time your husband calls you “Mother” the romance of life is over.’ So we called you after my mother — her maiden name was Emily Byrd. Your mother thought Emily the prettiest name in the world — it was quaint and arch and delightful, she said. Emily, your mother was the sweetest woman ever made.”

His voice trembled and Emily snuggled close.

“I met her twelve years ago, when I was sub-editor of the Enterprise up in Charlottetown and she was in her last year at Queen’s. She was tall and fair and blue-eyed. She looked a little like your Aunt Laura, but Laura was never so pretty. Their eyes were very much alike — and their voices. She was one of the Murrays from Blair Water. I’ve never told you much about your mother’s people, Emily. They live up on the old north shore at Blair Water on New Moon Farm — always have lived there since the first Murray came out from the Old Country in 1790. The ship he came on was called the New Moon and he named his farm after her.”

“It’s a nice name — the new moon is such a pretty thing,” said Emily, interested for a moment.

“There’s been a Murray ever since at New Moon Farm. They’re a proud family — the Murray pride is a byword along the north shore,

Emily. Well, they had some things to be proud of, that cannot be denied — but they carried it too far. Folks call them ‘the chosen people’ up there.

“They increased and multiplied and scattered all over, but the old stock at New Moon Farm is pretty well run out. Only your aunts, Elizabeth and Laura, live there now, and their cousin, Jimmy Murray. They never married — could not find any one good enough for a Murray, so it used to be said. Your Uncle Oliver and your Uncle Wallace live in Summerside, your Aunt Ruth in Shrewsbury, and your Great-Aunt Nancy at Priest Pond.”

“Priest Pond — that’s an interesting name — not a pretty name like New Moon and Blair Water — but interesting,” said Emily. Feeling Father’s arm around her the horror had momentarily shrunk away. For just a little while she ceased to believe it.

Douglas Starr tucked the dressing-gown a little more closely around her, kissed her black head, and went on.

“Elizabeth and Laura and Wallace and Oliver and Ruth were old Archibald Murray’s children. His first wife was their mother. When he was sixty he married again — a young slip of a girl — who died when your mother was born. Juliet was twenty years younger than her half-family, as she used to call them. She was very pretty and charming and they all loved and petted her and were very proud of her. When she fell in love with me, a poor young journalist, with nothing in the world but his pen and his ambition, there was a family earthquake. The Murray pride couldn’t tolerate the thing at all. I won’t rake it all up — but things were said I could never forget or forgive. Your mother married me, Emily — and the New Moon people would have nothing more to do with her. Can you believe that, in spite of it, she was never sorry for marrying me?”

Emily put up her hand and patted her father’s hollow cheek.

“Of course she wouldn’t be sorry. Of course she’d rather have you than all the Murrays of any kind of a moon.”

Father laughed a little — and there was just a note of triumph in his laugh.

“Yes, she seemed to feel that way about it. And we were so happy — oh, Emilykin, there never were two happier people in the world. You were the child of that happiness. I remember the night you were born in the little house in Charlottetown. It was in May and a west wind was blowing silvery clouds over the moon. There was a star or two here and there. In our tiny garden — everything we had was small except our love and our happiness — it was dark and blossomy. I walked up and down the path between the beds of violets your mother had planted — and prayed. The pale east was just beginning to glow like a rosy pearl when someone came and told me I had a little daughter. I went in — and your mother, white and weak, smiled just that dear, slow, wonderful smile I loved, and said, ‘We’ve — got — the — only — baby — of any importance — in — the — world, dear. Just — think — of that!’”

“I wish people could remember from the very moment they’re born,” said Emily. “It would be so very interesting.”

“I dare say we’d have a lot of uncomfortable memories,” said her father, laughing a little. “It can’t be very pleasant getting used to living — no pleasanter than getting used to stopping it. But you didn’t seem to find it hard, for you were a good wee kidlet, Emily. We had four more happy years, and then — do you remember the time your mother died, Emily?”

“I remember the funeral, Father — I remember it distinctly. You were standing in the middle of a room, holding me in your arms, and Mother was lying just before us in a long, black box. And you were crying — and I couldn’t think why — and I wondered why Mother looked so white and wouldn’t open her eyes. And I leaned down and touched her cheek — and oh, it was so cold. It made me shiver. And somebody in the room said, ‘Poor little thing!’ and I was frightened and put my face down on your shoulder.”

“Yes, I recall that. Your mother died very suddenly. I don’t think we’ll talk about it. The Murrays all came to her funeral. The Murrays have certain traditions and they live up to them very strictly. One of them is that nothing but candles shall be burned for light at New Moon — and another is that no quarrel must be carried past the grave. They came when she was

dead — they would have come when she was ill if they had known, I will say that much for them. And they behaved very well — oh, very well indeed. They were not the Murrays of New Moon for nothing. Your Aunt Elizabeth wore her best black satin dress to the funeral. For any funeral but a Murray's the second best one would have done; and they made no serious objection when I said your mother would be buried in the Starr plot in Charlottetown cemetery. They would have liked to take her back to the old Murray burying-ground in Blair Water — they had their own private burying-ground, you know — no indiscriminate graveyard for them. But your Uncle Wallace handsomely admitted that a woman should belong to her husband's family in death as in life. And then they offered to take you and bring you up — to 'give you your mother's place.' I refused to let them have you — then. Did I do right, Emily?"

"Yes — yes — yes!" whispered Emily, with a hug at every "yes."

"I told Oliver Murray — it was he who spoke to me about you — that as long as I lived I would not be parted from my child. He said, 'If you ever change your mind, let us know.' But I did not change my mind — not even three years later when my doctor told me I must give up work. 'If you don't, I give you a year,' he said, 'if you do, and live out-of-doors all you can, I give you three — or possibly four.' He was a good prophet. I came out here and we've had four lovely years together, haven't we, small dear one?"

"Yes — oh, yes!"

"Those years and what I've taught you in them are the only legacy I can leave you, Emily. We've been living on a tiny income I have from a life interest that was left me in an old uncle's estate — an uncle who died before I was married. The estate goes to a charity now, and this little house is only a rented one. From a worldly point of view I've certainly been a failure. But your mother's people will care for you — I know that. The Murray pride will guarantee so much, if nothing else. And they can't help loving you. Perhaps I should have sent for them before — perhaps I ought to do it yet. But I have pride of a kind, too — the Starrs are not entirely traditionless — and the Murrays said some very bitter things to me when I

married your mother. Will I send to New Moon and ask them to come, Emily?"

"No!" said Emily, almost fiercely.

She did not want any one to come between her and Father for the few precious days left. The thought was horrible to her. It would be bad enough if they had to come — afterwards. But she would not mind anything much — then.

"We'll stay together to the very end, then, little Emily-child. We won't be parted for a minute. And I want you to be brave. You mustn't be afraid of anything, Emily. Death isn't terrible. The universe is full of love — and spring comes everywhere — and in death you open and shut a door. There are beautiful things on the other side of the door. I'll find your mother there — I've doubted many things, but I've never doubted that. Sometimes I've been afraid that she would get so far ahead of me in the ways of eternity that I'd never catch up. But I feel now that she's waiting for me. And we'll wait for you — we won't hurry — we'll loiter and linger till you catch up with us."

"I wish you — could take me right through the door with you," whispered Emily.

"After a little while you won't wish that. You have yet to learn how kind time is. And life has something for you — I feel it. Go forward to meet it fearlessly, dear. I know you don't feel like that just now — but you will remember my words by and by."

"I feel just now," said Emily, who couldn't bear to hide anything from Father, "that I don't like God any more."

Douglas Starr laughed — the laugh Emily liked best. It was such a dear laugh — she caught her breath over the dearness of it. She felt his arms tightening round her.

"Yes, you do, honey. You can't help liking God. He is Love itself, you know. You mustn't mix Him up with Ellen Greene's God, of course."

Emily didn't know exactly what Father meant. But all at once she found that she wasn't afraid any longer — and the bitterness had gone out of her sorrow, and the unbearable pain out of her heart. She felt as if love

was all about her and around her, breathed out from some great, invisible, hovering Tenderness. One couldn't be afraid or bitter where love was — and love was everywhere. Father was going through the door — no, he was going to lift a curtain — she liked that thought better, because a curtain wasn't as hard and fast as a door — and he would slip into that world of which the flash had given her glimpses. He would be there in its beauty — never very far away from her. She could bear anything if she could only feel that Father wasn't very far away from her — just beyond that wavering curtain.

Douglas Starr held her until she fell asleep; and then in spite of his weakness he managed to lay her down in her little bed.

“She will love deeply — she will suffer terribly — she will have glorious moments to compensate — as I have had. As her mother's people deal with her, so may God deal with them,” he murmured brokenly.

A Hop Out of Kin

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Douglas Starr lived two weeks more. In after years when the pain had gone out of their recollection, Emily thought they were the most precious of her memories. They were beautiful weeks — beautiful and not sad. And one night, when he was lying on the couch in the sitting-room, with Emily beside him in the old wing-chair, he went past the curtain — went so quietly and easily that Emily did not know he was gone until she suddenly felt the strange stillness of the room — there was no breathing in it but her own.

“Father — Father!” she cried. Then she screamed for Ellen.

Ellen Greene told the Murrays when they came that Emily had behaved real well, when you took everything into account. To be sure, she had cried all night and hadn’t slept a wink; none of the Maywood people who came flocking kindly in to help could comfort her; but when morning came her tears were all shed. She was pale and quiet and docile.

“That’s right, now,” said Ellen, “that’s what comes of being properly prepared. Your pa was so mad at me for warning you that he wasn’t rightly civil to me since — and him a dying man. But I don’t hold any grudge against him. I did my duty. Mrs Hubbard’s fixing up a black dress for you, and it’ll be ready by suppertime. Your ma’s people will be here tonight, so they’ve telegraphed, and I’m bound they’ll find you looking respectable. They’re well off and they’ll provide for you. Your pa hasn’t left a cent but there ain’t any debts, I’ll say that for him. Have you been in to see the body?”

“Don’t call him that,” cried Emily, wincing. It was horrible to hear Father called that.

“Why not? If you ain’t the queerest child! He makes a better-looking corpse than I thought he would, what with being so wasted and all. He was always a pretty man, though too thin.”

“Ellen Greene,” said Emily, suddenly, “if you say any more of — those things — about Father, I will put the black curse on you!”

Ellen Greene stared.

“I don’t know what on earth you mean. But that’s no way to talk to me, after all I’ve done for you. You’d better not let the Murrays’ hear you talking like that or they won’t want much to do with you. The black curse indeed! Well, here’s gratitude!”

Emily’s eyes smarted. She was just a lonely, solitary little creature and she felt very friendless. But she was not at all remorseful for what she had said to Ellen and she was not going to pretend she was.

“Come you here and help me wash these dishes,” ordered Ellen. “It’ll do you good to have something to take up your mind and then you won’t be after putting curses on people who have worked their fingers to the bone for you.”

Emily, with an eloquent glance at Ellen’s hands, went and got a dish-towel.

“Your hands are fat and pudgy,” she said. “The bones don’t show at all.”

“Never mind sassing back! It’s awful, with your poor pa dead in there. But if your Aunt Ruth takes you she’ll soon cure you of that.”

“Is Aunt Ruth going to take me?”

“I don’t know, but she ought to. She’s a widow with no chick or child, and well-to-do.”

“I don’t think I want Aunt Ruth to take me,” said Emily, deliberately, after a moment’s reflection.

“Well, you won’t have the choosing likely. You ought to be thankful to get a home anywhere. Remember you’re not of much importance.”

“I am important to myself,” cried Emily proudly.

“It’ll be some chore to bring you up,” muttered Ellen. “Your Aunt Ruth is the one to do it, in my opinion. She won’t stand no nonsense. A fine woman she is and the neatest housekeeper on P. E. Island. You could eat off her floor.”

“I don’t want to eat off her floor. I don’t care if a floor is dirty as long as the tablecloth is clean.”

“Well, her tablecloths are clean too, I reckon. She’s got an elegant house in Shrewsbury with bow windows and wooden lace all round the roof. It’s very stylish. It would be a fine home for you. She’d learn you some sense and do you a world of good.”

“I don’t want to learn sense and be done a world of good to,” cried Emily with a quivering lip. “I — I want somebody to love me.”

“Well, you’ve got to behave yourself if you want people to like you. You’re not to blame so much — your pa has spoiled you. I told him so often enough, but he just laughed. I hope he ain’t sorry for it now. The fact is, Emily Starr, you’re queer, and folks don’t care for queer children.”

“How am I queer?” demanded Emily.

“You talk queer — and you act queer — and at times you look queer. And you’re too old for your age — though that ain’t your fault. It comes of never mixing with other children. I’ve always threaped at your father to send you to school — learning at home ain’t the same thing — but he wouldn’t listen to me, of course. I don’t say but what you are as far along in book learning as you need to be, but what you want is to learn how to be like other children. In one way it would be a good thing if your Uncle Oliver would take you, for he’s got a big family. But he’s not as well off as the rest, so it ain’t likely he will. Your Uncle Wallace might, seeing as he reckons himself the head of the family. He’s only got a grownup daughter. But his wife’s delicate — or fancies she is.”

“I wish Aunt Laura would take me,” said Emily. She remembered that Father had said Aunt Laura was something like her mother.

“Aunt Laura! She won’t have no say in it — Elizabeth’s boss at New Moon. Jimmy Murray runs the farm, but he ain’t quite all there, I’m told —”

“What part of him isn’t there?” asked Emily curiously.

“Laws, it’s something about his mind, child. He’s a bit simple — some accident or other when he was a youngster, I’ve heard. It addled his head, kind of. Elizabeth was mixed up in it some way — I’ve never heard the

rights of it. I don't reckon the New Moon people will want to be bothered with you. They're awful set in their ways. You take my advice and try to please your Aunt Ruth. Be polite — and well-behaved — mebbe she'll take a fancy to you. There, that's all the dishes. You'd better go upstairs and be out of the way."

"Can I take Mike and Saucy Sal?" asked Emily.

"No, you can't."

"They'd be company for me," pleaded Emily.

"Company or no company, you can't have them. They're outside and they'll stay outside. I ain't going to have them tracking all over the house. The floor's been scrubbed."

"Why didn't you scrub the floor when Father was alive?" asked Emily. "He liked things to be clean. You hardly ever scrubbed it then. Why do you do it now?"

"Listen to her! Was I to be always scrubbing floors with my rheumatiz? Get off upstairs and you'd better lie down awhile."

"I'm going upstairs, but I'm not going to lie down," said Emily. "I've got a lot of thinking to do."

"There's one thing I'd advise you to do," said Ellen, determined to lose no chance of doing her duty, "and that is to kneel down and pray to God to make you a good and respectful and grateful child."

Emily paused at the foot of the stairs and looked back.

"Father said I wasn't to have anything to do with your God," she said gravely.

Ellen gasped foolishly, but could not think of any reply to this heathenish statement. She appealed to the universe.

"Did any one ever hear the like!"

"I know what your God is like," said Emily. "I saw His picture in that Adam-and-Eve book of yours. He has whiskers and wears a nightgown. I don't like Him. But I like Father's God."

"And what is your father's God like, if I may ask?" demanded Ellen sarcastically.

Emily hadn't any idea what Father's God was like, but she was determined not to be posed by Ellen.

"He is clear as the moon, fair as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners," she said triumphantly.

"Well, you're bound to have the last word, but the Murrays will teach you what's what," said Ellen, giving up the argument. "They're strict Presbyterians and won't hold by any of your father's awful notions. Get off upstairs."

Emily went up to the south room, feeling very desolate.

"There isn't anybody in the world who loves me now," she said, as she curled up on her bed by the window. But she was determined she would not cry. The Murrays, who had hated her father, should not see her crying. She felt that she detested them all — except perhaps Aunt Laura. How very big and empty the world had suddenly become. Nothing was interesting any more. It did not matter that the little squat apple-tree between Adam-and-Eve had become a thing of rose-and-snow beauty — that the hills beyond the hollow were of green silk, purple-misted — that the daffodils were out in the garden — that the birches were hung all over with golden tassels — that the Wind Woman was blowing white young clouds across the sky. None of these things had any charm or consolation for her now. In her inexperience she believed they never would have again.

"But I promised Father I'd be brave," she whispered, clenching her little fists, "and I will. And I won't let the Murrays see I'm afraid of them — I won't be afraid of them!"

When the far-off whistle of the afternoon train blew beyond the hills, Emily's heart began to beat. She clasped her hands and lifted her face.

"Please help me, Father's God — not Ellen's God," she said. "Help me to be brave and not cry before the Murrays."

Soon after there was the sound of wheels below — and voices — loud, decided voices. Then Ellen came puffing up the stairs with the black dress — a sleazy thing of cheap merino.

"Mrs Hubbard just got it done in time, thanks be. I wouldn't 'a' had the Murrays see you not in black for the world. They can't say I haven't done

my duty. They're all here — the New Moon people and Oliver and his wife, your Aunt Addie, and Wallace and his wife, your Aunt Eva, and Aunt Ruth — Mrs Dutton, her name is. There, you're ready now. Come along."

"Can't I put my Venetian beads on?" asked Emily.

"Did ever any mortal! Venetian beads with a mourning dress! Shame on you! Is this a time to be thinking of vanity?"

"It isn't vanity!" cried Emily. "Father gave me those beads last Christmas — and I want to show the Murrays that I've got something!"

"No more of your nonsense! Come along, I say! Mind your manners — there's a good deal depends on the impression you make on them."

Emily walked rigidly downstairs before Ellen and into the parlour. Eight people were sitting around it — and she instantly felt the critical gaze of sixteen stranger eyes. She looked very pale and plain in her black dress; the purple shadows left by weeping made her large eyes look too large and hollow. She was desperately afraid, and she knew it — but she would not let the Murrays see it. She held up her head and faced the ordeal before her gallantly.

"This," said Ellen, turning her around by the shoulder, "is your Uncle Wallace."

Emily shuddered and put out a cold hand. She did not like Uncle Wallace — she knew that at once — he was black and grim and ugly, with frowning, bristly brows and a stern, un pitying mouth. He had big pouches under his eyes, and carefully-trimmed black sidewhiskers. Emily decided then and there that she did not admire sidewhiskers.

"How do you do, Emily?" he said coldly — and just as coldly he bent forward and kissed her cheek.

A sudden wave of indignation swept over Emily's soul. How dared he kiss her — he had hated her father and disowned her mother! She would have none of his kisses! Flash-quick, she snatched her handkerchief from her pocket and wiped her outraged cheek.

"Well — well!" exclaimed a disagreeable voice from the other side of the room.

Uncle Wallace looked as if he would like to say a great many things but couldn't think of them. Ellen, with a grunt of despair, propelled Emily to the next sitter.

"Your Aunt Eva," she said.

Aunt Eva was sitting huddled up in a shawl. She had the fretful face of the imaginary invalid. She shook hands with Emily and said nothing. Neither did Emily.

"Your Uncle Oliver," announced Ellen.

Emily rather liked Uncle Oliver's appearance. He was big and fat and rosy and jolly-looking. She thought she would not mind so much if he kissed her, in spite of his bristly white moustache. But Uncle Oliver had learned Uncle Wallace's lesson.

"I'll give you a quarter for a kiss," he whispered genially. A joke was Uncle Oliver's idea of being kind and sympathetic, but Emily did not know this, and resented it.

"I don't sell my kisses," she said, lifting her head as haughtily as any Murray of them all could do.

Uncle Oliver chuckled and seemed infinitely amused and not a bit offended. But Emily heard a sniff across the room.

Aunt Addie was next. She was as fat and rosy and jolly-looking as her husband and she gave Emily's cold hand a nice, gentle squeeze.

"How are you, dear?" she said.

That "dear" touched Emily and thawed her a trifle. But the next in turn froze her up instantly again. It was Aunt Ruth — Emily knew it was Aunt Ruth before Ellen said so, and she knew it was Aunt Ruth who had "well — welled" and sniffed. She knew the cold, grey eyes, the prim, dull brown hair, the short, stout figure, the thin, pinched, merciless mouth.

Aunt Ruth held out the tips of her fingers, but Emily did not take them.

"Shake hands with your Aunt," said Ellen in an angry whisper.

"She does not want to shake hands with me," said Emily, distinctly, "and so I am not going to do it."

Aunt Ruth folded her scorned hands back on her black silk lap.

“You are a very illbred child,” she said; “but of course it was only what was to be expected.”

Emily felt a sudden compunction. Had she cast a reflection on her father by her behaviour? Perhaps after all she should have shaken hands with Aunt Ruth. But it was too late now — Ellen had already jerked her on.

“This is your Cousin, Mr James Murray,” said Ellen, in the disgusted tone of one who gives up something as a bad job and is only anxious to be done with it.

“Cousin Jimmy — Cousin Jimmy,” said that individual. Emily looked steadily at him, and liked him at once without any reservations.

He had a little, rosy, elfish face with a forked grey beard; his hair curled over his head in a most un-Murray-like mop of glossy brown; and his large, brown eyes were as kind and frank as a child’s. He gave Emily a hearty handshake, though he looked askance at the lady across from him while doing it.

“Hello, pussy!” he said.

Emily began to smile at him, but her smile was, as always, so slow in developing that Ellen had whisked her on before it was in full flower, and it was Aunt Laura who got the benefit of it. Aunt Laura started and paled.

“Juliet’s smile!” she said, half under her breath. And again Aunt Ruth sniffed.

Aunt Laura did not look like anyone else in the room. She was almost pretty, with her delicate features and the heavy coils of pale, sleek, fair hair, faintly greyed, pinned closely all around her head. But it was her eyes that won Emily. They were such round blue, blue eyes. One never quite got over the shock of their blueness. And when she spoke it was in a beautiful, soft voice.

“You poor, dear, little child,” she said, and put her arm around Emily for a gentle hug.

Emily returned the hug and had a narrow escape then from letting the Murrays see her cry. All that saved her was the fact that Ellen suddenly pushed her on into the corner by the window.

“And this is your Aunt Elizabeth.”

Yes, this was Aunt Elizabeth. No doubt about that — and she had on a stiff, black satin dress, so stiff and rich that Emily felt sure it must be her very best. This pleased Emily. Whatever Aunt Elizabeth thought of her father, at least she had paid him the respect of her best dress. And Aunt Elizabeth was quite fine looking in a tall, thin, austere style, with clear-cut features and a massive coronet of iron-grey hair under her black lace cap. But her eyes, though steel-blue, were as cold as Aunt Ruth’s, and her long, thin mouth was compressed severely. Under her cool, appraising glance Emily retreated into herself and shut the door of her soul. She would have liked to please Aunt Elizabeth — who was “boss” at New Moon — but she felt she could not do it.

Aunt Elizabeth shook hands and said nothing — the truth being that she did not know exactly what to say. Elizabeth Murray would not have felt “put about” before King or Governor-General. The Murray pride would have carried her through there; but she did feel disturbed in the presence of this alien, level-gazing child who had already shown that she was anything but meek and humble. Though Elizabeth Murray would never have admitted it, she did not want to be snubbed as Wallace and Ruth had been.

“Go and sit on the sofa,” ordered Ellen.

Emily sat on the sofa with her eyes cast down, a slight, black, indomitable little figure. She folded her hands on her lap and crossed her ankles. They should see she had manners.

Ellen had retreated to the kitchen, thanking her stars that that was over. Emily did not like Ellen but she felt deserted when Ellen had gone. She was alone now before the bar of Murray opinion. She would have given anything to be out of the room. Yet in the back of her mind a design was forming of writing all about it in the old account-book. It would be interesting. She could describe them all — she knew she could. She had the very word for Aunt Ruth’s eyes—”stone-grey.” They were just like stones — as hard and cold and relentless. Then a pang tore through her heart. Father could never again read what she wrote in the account-book.

Still — she felt that she would rather like to write it all out. How could she best describe Aunt Laura's eyes? They were such beautiful eyes — just to call them "blue" meant nothing — hundreds of people had blue eyes — oh, she had it—"wells of blue" — that was the very thing.

And then the flash came!

It was the first time since the dreadful night when Ellen had met her on the doorstep. She had thought it could never come again — and now in this most unlikely place and time it had come — she had seen, with other eyes than those of sense, the wonderful world behind the veil. Courage and hope flooded her cold little soul like a wave of rosy light. She lifted her head and looked about her undauntedly—"brazenly" Aunt Ruth afterwards declared.

"Yes, she would write them all out in the account-book — describe every last one of them — sweet Aunt Laura, nice Cousin Jimmy, grim old Uncle Wallace, and moon-faced Uncle Oliver, stately Aunt Elizabeth and detestable Aunt Ruth.

"She's a delicate-looking child," said Aunt Eva, suddenly, in her fretful, colourless voice.

"Well, what else could you expect?" said Aunt Addie, with a sigh that seemed to Emily to hold some dire significance. "She's too pale — if she had a little colour she wouldn't be bad-looking."

"I don't know who she looks like," said Uncle Oliver, staring at Emily.

"She is not a Murray, that is plain to be seen," said Aunt Elizabeth, decidedly and disapprovingly.

"They are talking about me just as if I wasn't here," thought Emily, her heart swelling with indignation over the indecency of it.

"I wouldn't call her a Starr either," said Uncle Oliver. "Seems to me she's more like the Byrds — she's got her grandmother's hair and eyes."

"She's got old George Byrd's nose," said Aunt Ruth, in a tone that left no doubt as to her opinion of George's nose.

"She's got her father's forehead," said Aunt Eva, also disapprovingly.

"She has her mother's smile," said Aunt Laura, but in such a low tone that nobody heard her.

“And Juliet’s long lashes — hadn’t Juliet very long lashes?” said Aunt Addie.

Emily had reached the limit of her endurance.

“You make me feel as if I was made up of scraps and patches!” she burst out indignantly.

The Murrays stared at her. Perhaps they felt some compunction — for, after all, none of them were ogres and all were human, more or less. Apparently nobody could think of anything to say, but the shocked silence was broken by a chuckle from Cousin Jimmy — a low chuckle, full of mirth and free from malice.

“That’s right, puss,” he said. “Stand up to them — take your own part.”

“Jimmy!” said Aunt Ruth.

Jimmy subsided.

Aunt Ruth looked at Emily.

“When I was a little girl,” she said, “I never spoke until I was spoken to.”

“But if nobody ever spoke until they were spoken to there would be no conversation,” said Emily argumentatively.

“I never answered back,” Aunt Ruth went on severely. “In those days little girls were trained properly. We were polite and respectful to our elders. We were taught our place and we kept it.”

“I don’t believe you ever had much fun,” said Emily — and then gasped in horror. She hadn’t meant to say that out loud — she had only meant to think it. But she had such an old habit of thinking aloud to Father.

“Fun!” said Aunt Ruth, in a shocked tone. “I did not think of fun when I was a little girl.”

“No, I know,” said Emily gravely. Her voice and manner were perfectly respectful, for she was anxious to atone for her involuntary lapse. Yet Aunt Ruth looked as if she would like to box her ears. This child was pitying her — insulting her by being sorry for her — because of her prim, impeccable childhood. It was unendurable — especially in a Starr. And that abominable Jimmy was chuckling again! Elizabeth should suppress him!

Fortunately Ellen Greene appeared at this juncture and announced supper.

“You’ve got to wait,” she whispered to Emily. “There ain’t room for you at the table.”

Emily was glad. She knew she could not eat a bite under the Murray eyes. Her aunts and uncles filed out stiffly without looking at her — all except Aunt Laura, who turned at the door and blew her a tiny, furtive kiss. Before Emily could respond Ellen Greene had shut the door.

Emily was left all alone in the room that was filling with twilight shadows. The pride that had sustained her in the presence of the Murrays suddenly failed her and she knew that tears were coming. She went straight to the closed door at the end of the parlour, opened it, and went in. Her father’s coffin stood in the centre of the small room which had been a bedroom. It was heaped with flowers — the Murrays had done the proper thing in that as in all else. The great anchor of white roses Uncle Wallace had brought stood up aggressively on the small table at the head. Emily could not see her father’s face for Aunt Ruth’s heavily-fragrant pillow of white hyacinths lying on the glass, and she dared not move it. But she curled herself up on the floor and laid her cheek against the polished side of the casket. They found her there asleep when they came in after supper. Aunt Laura lifted her up and said,

“I’m going to take the poor child up to bed — she’s worn right out.”

Emily opened her eyes and looked drowsily about her.

“Can I have Mike?” she said.

“Who is Mike?”

“My cat — my big grey cat.”

“A cat!” exclaimed Aunt Elizabeth in a shocked tone. “You must not have a cat in your bedroom!”

“Why not — for once?” pleaded Laura.

“Certainly not!” said Aunt Elizabeth. “A cat is a most unwholesome thing in a sleeping compartment. I’m surprised at you, Laura! Take the child up to bed and see that there are plenty of bedclothes. It’s a cold night — but let me hear no more talk of sleeping with cats.”

“Mike is a clean cat,” said Emily. “He washes himself — every day.”

“Take her up to bed, Laura!” said Aunt Elizabeth, ignoring Emily.

Aunt Laura yielded meekly. She carried Emily upstairs, helped her undress, and tucked her into bed. Emily was very sleepy. But before she was wholly asleep she felt something, soft and warm and purry and companionable, snuggling down by her shoulder. Aunt Laura had sneaked down, found Mike and brought him up to her. Aunt Elizabeth never knew and Ellen Greene dared not say a word in protest — for was not Laura a Murray of New Moon?

A Family Conclave

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Emily wakened at daylight the next morning. Through her low, uncurtained window the splendour of the sunrise was coming in, and one faint, white star was still lingering in the crystal-green sky over the Rooster Pine. A fresh sweet wind of lawn was blowing around the eaves. Ellen Greene was sleeping in the big bed and snoring soundly. Except for that the little house was very still. It was the chance for which Emily had waited.

Very carefully she slipped from her bed, tiptoed across the room and opened the door. Mike uncoiled himself from the mat on the middle of the floor and followed her, rubbing his warm sides against her chilly little ankles. Almost guiltily she crept down the bare, dark staircase. How the steps creaked — surely it would waken everybody! But nobody appeared and Emily got down and slipped into the parlour, drawing a long breath of relief as she closed the door. She almost ran across the room to the other door.

Aunt Ruth's floral pillow still covered the glass of the casket. Emily, with a tightening of the lips that gave her face an odd resemblance to Aunt Elizabeth, lifted up the pillow and set it on the floor.

"Oh, Father — Father!" she whispered, putting her hand to her throat to keep something down. She stood there, a little shivering, white-clad figure, and looked at her father. This was to be her goodbye; she must say it when they were alone together — she would not say it before the Murrays.

Father looked so beautiful. All the lines of pain had vanished — his face looked almost like a boy's except for the silver hair above it. And he was smiling — such a nice, whimsical, wise little smile, as if he had suddenly discovered something lovely and unexpected and surprising. She had seen many nice smiles on his face in life but never one just like this.

“Father, I didn’t cry before them,” she whispered. “I’m sure I didn’t disgrace the Starrs. Not shaking hands with Aunt Ruth wasn’t disgracing the Starrs, was it? Because she didn’t really want me to — oh, Father, I don’t think any of them like me, unless perhaps Aunt Laura does a little. And I’m going to cry a little bit now, Father, because I can’t keep it back all the time.”

She laid her face on the cold glass and sobbed bitterly but briefly. She must say goodbye before any one found her. Raising her head she looked long and earnestly at the beloved face.

“Goodbye, dearest darling,” she whispered chokingly.

Dashing away her blinding tears she replaced Aunt Ruth’s pillow, hiding her father’s face from her for ever. Then she slipped out, intent on speedily regaining her room. At the door she almost fell over Cousin Jimmy, who was sitting on a chair before it, swathed in a huge, checked dressing-gown, and nursing Mike.

“S-s-h!” he whispered, patting her on the shoulder. “I heard you coming down and followed you. I knew what you wanted. I’ve been sitting here to keep them out if any of them came after you. Here, take this and hurry back to your bed, small pussy.”

“This” was a roll of peppermint lozenges. Emily clutched it and fled, overcome with shame at being seen by Cousin Jimmy in her nightgown. She hated peppermints and never ate them, but the fact of Cousin Jimmy Murray’s kindness in giving them to her sent a thrill of delight to her heart. And he called her “small pussy,” too — she liked that. She had thought nobody would ever call her nice pet names again. Father had had so many of them for her—“sweetheart” and “darling” and “Emily-child” and “dear wee kidlet” and “honey” and “elfkin.” He had a pet name for every mood and she had loved them all. As for Cousin Jimmy, he was nice. Whatever part of him was missing it wasn’t his heart. She felt so grateful to him that after she was safely in her bed again she forced herself to eat one of the lozenges, though it took all her grit to worry it down.

The funeral was held that forenoon. For once the lonesome little house in the hollow was filled. The coffin was taken into the parlour and the

Murrays as mourners sat stiffly and decorously all round it, Emily among them, pale and prim in her black dress. She sat between Aunt Elizabeth and Uncle Wallace and dared not move a muscle. No other Starr was present. Her father had no near living relatives. The Maywood people came and looked at his dead face with a freedom and insolent curiosity they would never have presumed on in life. Emily hated to have them looking at her father like that. They had no right — they hadn't been friendly to him while he was alive — they had said harsh things of him — Ellen Greene had sometimes repeated them. Every glance that fell on him hurt Emily; but she sat still and gave no outward sign. Aunt Ruth said afterwards that she had never seen a child so absolutely devoid of all natural feeling.

When the service was over the Murrays rose and marched around the coffin for a dutiful look of farewell. Aunt Elizabeth took Emily's hand and tried to draw her along with them, but Emily pulled it back and shook her head. She had said her goodbye already. Aunt Elizabeth seemed for a moment to be on the point of insisting; then she grimly swept onward, alone, looking every inch a Murray. No scene must be made at a funeral.

Douglas Starr was to be taken to Charlottetown for burial beside his wife. The Murrays were all going but Emily was not to go. She watched the funeral procession as it wound up the long, grassy hill, through the light grey rain that was beginning to fall. Emily was glad it was raining; many a time she had heard Ellen Greene say that happy was the corpse the rain fell on; and it was easier to see Father go away in that soft, kind, grey mist than through sparkling, laughing sunshine.

"Well, I must say the funeral went off fine," said Ellen Greene at her shoulder. "Everything's been done regardless. If your father was looking down from heaven at it, Emily, I'm sure he'd be pleased."

"He isn't in heaven," said Emily.

"Good gracious! Of all the children!" Ellen could say no more.

"He isn't there yet. He's only on the way. He said he'd wait around and go slow until I died, too, so that I could catch up with him. I hope I'll die soon."

“That’s a wicked, wicked thing to wish,” rebuked Ellen.

When the last buggy had disappeared Emily went back to the sitting-room, got a book out of the bookcase, and buried herself in the wing-chair. The women who were tidying up were glad she was quiet and out of the way.

“It’s well she can read,” said Mrs Hubbard gloomily. “Some little girls couldn’t be so composed — Jennie Hood just screamed and shrieked after they carried her mother out — the Hoods are all such a feeling people.”

Emily was not reading. She was thinking. She knew the Murrays would be back in the afternoon; and she knew her fate would probably be settled then. “We’ll talk the matter over when we come back,” she had heard Uncle Wallace saying that morning after breakfast. Some instinct told her just what “the matter” was; and she would have given one of her pointed ears to hear the discussion with the other. But she knew very well she would be sent out of the way. So she was not surprised when Ellen came to her in the twilight and said:

“You’d better go upstairs, Emily. Your aunts and uncles are coming in here to talk over the business.”

“Can’t I help to get supper?” asked Emily, who thought that if she were going and coming around the kitchen she might catch a word or two.

“No. You’d be more bother than help. March, now.”

Ellen waddled out to the kitchen, without waiting to see if Emily marched. Emily got up reluctantly. How could she sleep tonight if she did not know what was going to happen to her? And she felt quite sure she would not be told till morning, if then.

Her eyes fell on the oblong table in the centre of the room. Its cloth was of generous proportions, falling in heavy folds to the floor. There was a flash of black stockings across the rug, a sudden disturbance of drapery, and then — silence. Emily, on the floor under the table, arranged her legs comfortably and sat triumphant. She would hear what was decided and nobody would be any the wiser.

She had never been told that it was not considered strictly honourable to eavesdrop, no occasion for such instruction ever having arisen in her

life with her father; and she considered that it was a bit of pure luck that she had thought of hiding under the table. She could even see dimly through the cloth. Her heart beat so loudly in her excitement that she was afraid they would hear it; there was no other sound save the soft, faraway singing of frogs through the rain, that sounded through the open window.

In they came; down they sat around the room; Emily held her breath; for a few minutes nobody spoke, though Aunt Eva sighed long and heavily. Then Uncle Wallace cleared his throat and said,

“Well, what is to be done with the child?”

Nobody was in a hurry to answer. Emily thought they would never speak. Finally Aunt Eva said with a whine,

“She’s such a difficult child — so odd. I can’t understand her at all.”

“I think,” said Aunt Laura timidly, “that she has what one might call an artistic temperament.”

“She’s a spoiled child,” said Aunt Ruth very decidedly. “There’s work ahead to straighten out her manners, if you ask me.”

(The little listener under the table turned her head and shot a scornful glance at Aunt Ruth through the tablecloth. “I think that your own manners have a slight curve.” Emily did not dare even to murmur the words under her breath, but she shaped them with her mouth; this was a great relief and satisfaction.)

“I agree with you,” said Aunt Eva, “and I for one do not feel equal to the task.”

(Emily understood that this meant Uncle Wallace didn’t mean to take her and she rejoiced thereat.)

“The truth is,” said Uncle Wallace, “Aunt Nancy ought to take her. She has more of this world’s goods than any of us.”

“Aunt Nancy would never dream of taking her and you know it well enough!” said Uncle Oliver. “Besides, she’s entirely too old to have the bringing up of a child — her and that old witch Caroline. Upon my soul, I don’t believe either of them is human. I would like to take Emily — but I feel that I can hardly do it. I’ve a large family to provide for.”

“She’ll not likely live long to bother anyone,” said Aunt Elizabeth crisply. “She’ll probably die of consumption same as her father did.”

(“I won’t — I won’t!” exclaimed Emily — at least she thought it with such vim that it almost seemed that she exclaimed it. She forgot that she had wanted to die soon, so that she could overtake Father. She wanted to live now, just to put the Murrays in the wrong. “I haven’t any intention of dying. I’m going to live — for ages — and be a famous authoress — you’ll just see if I don’t, Aunt Elizabeth Murray!”)

“She is a weedy-looking child,” acknowledged Uncle Wallace.

(Emily relieved her outraged feelings by making a face at Uncle Wallace through the tablecloth. “If I ever possess a pig I am going to name it after you,” she thought — and then felt quite satisfied with her revenge.)

“Somebody has to look after her as long as she’s alive though, you know,” said Uncle Oliver.

(“It would serve you all right if I did die and you suffered terrible remorse for it all the rest of your lives,” Emily thought. Then in the pause that happened to follow, she dramatically pictured out her funeral, selected her pallbearers, and tried to choose the hymn verse that she wanted engraved on her tombstone. But before she could settle this Uncle Wallace began again.)

“Well, we are not getting anywhere. We have to look after the child—”

(“I wish you wouldn’t call me ‘the child,’” thought Emily bitterly.)

“ — and some of us must give her a home. Juliet’s daughter must not be left to the mercy of strangers. Personally, I feel that Eva’s health is not equal to the care and training of a child—”

“Of such a child,” said Aunt Eva.

(Emily stuck out her tongue at Aunt Eva.)

“Poor little soul,” said Aunt Laura gently.

(Something frozen in Emily’s heart melted at that moment. She was pitifully pleased over being called “poor little soul” so tenderly.)

“I do not think you need pity her overmuch, Laura,” said Uncle Wallace decidedly. “It is evident that she has very little feeling. I have not seen her shed a tear since we came here.”

“Did you notice that she would not even take a last look at her father?” said Aunt Elizabeth.

Cousin Jimmy suddenly whistled at the ceiling.

“She feels so much that she has to hide it,” said Aunt Laura.

Uncle Wallace snorted.

“Don’t you think we might take her, Elizabeth?” Laura went on timidly.

Aunt Elizabeth stirred restlessly.

“I don’t suppose she’d be contented at New Moon, with three old people like us.”

(“I would — I would!” thought Emily.)

“Ruth, what about you?” said Uncle Wallace. “You’re all alone in that big house. It would be a good thing for you to have some company.”

“I don’t like her,” said Aunt Ruth sharply. “She is as sly as a snake.”

(“I’m not!” thought Emily.)

“With wise and careful training many of her faults may be cured,” said Uncle Wallace, pompously.

(“I don’t want them cured!” Emily was getting angrier and angrier all the time under the table. “I like my faults better than I do your — your—” she fumbled mentally for a word — then triumphantly recalled a phrase of her father’s—“your abominable virtues!”)

“I doubt it,” said Aunt Ruth, in a biting tone. “What’s bred in the bone comes out in the flesh. As for Douglas Starr, I think that it was perfectly disgraceful for him to die and leave that child without a cent.”

“Did he do it on purpose?” asked Cousin Jimmy blandly. It was the first time he had spoken.

“He was a miserable failure,” snapped Aunt Ruth.

“He wasn’t — he wasn’t!” screamed Emily, suddenly sticking her head out under the tablecloth, between the end legs of the table.

For a moment the Murrys sat silent and motionless as if her outburst had turned them to stone. Then Aunt Ruth rose, stalked to the table, and lifted the cloth, behind which Emily had retired in dismay, realizing what she had done.

“Get up and come out of that, Em’ly Starr!” said Aunt Ruth.

“Em’ly Starr” got up and came out. She was not specially frightened — she was too angry to be that. Her eyes had gone black and her cheeks crimson.

“What a little beauty — what a regular little beauty!” said Cousin Jimmy. But nobody heard him. Aunt Ruth had the floor.

“You shameless little eavesdropper!” she said. “There’s the Starr blood coming out — a Murray would never have done such a thing. You ought to be whipped!”

“Father wasn’t a failure!” cried Emily, choking with anger. “You had no right to call him a failure. Nobody who was loved as much as he was could be a failure. I don’t believe anybody ever loved you. So it’s you, that’s a failure. And I’m not going to die of consumption.”

“Do you realize what a shameful thing you have been guilty of?” demanded Aunt Ruth, cold with anger.

“I wanted to hear what was going to become of me,” cried Emily. “I didn’t know it was such a dreadful thing to do — I didn’t know you were going to say such horrid things about me.”

“Listeners never hear any good of themselves,” said Aunt Elizabeth impressively. “Your mother would never have done that, Emily.”

The bravado all went out of poor Emily. She felt guilty and miserable — oh, so miserable. She hadn’t known — but it seemed she had committed a terrible sin.

“Go upstairs,” said Aunt Ruth.

Emily went, without a protest. But before going she looked around the room.

“While I was under the table,” she said, “I made a face at Uncle Wallace and stuck my tongue out at Aunt Eva.”

She said it sorrowfully, desiring to make a clean breast of her transgressions; but so easily do we misunderstand each other that the Murrays actually thought that she was indulging in a piece of gratuitous impertinence. When the door had closed behind her they all — except Aunt Laura and Cousin Jimmy — shook their heads and groaned.

Emily went upstairs in a state of bitter humiliation. She felt that she had done something that gave the Murrys the right to despise her, and they thought it was the Starr coming out in her — and she had not even found out what her fate was to be.

She looked dismally at little Emily-in-the-glass.

“I didn’t know — I didn’t know,” she whispered. “But I’ll know after this,” she added with sudden vim, “and I’ll never, never do it again.”

For a moment she thought she would throw herself on her bed and cry. She couldn’t bear all the pain and shame that was burning in her heart. Then her eyes fell on the old yellow account-book on her little table. A minute later Emily was curled up on her bed, Turkfashion, writing eagerly in the old book with her little stubby lead-pencil. As her fingers flew over the faded lines her cheeks flushed and her eyes shone. She forgot the Murrys although she was writing about them — she forgot her humiliation — although she was describing what had happened; for an hour she wrote steadily by the wretched light of her smoky little lamp, never pausing, save now and then, to gaze out of the window into the dim beauty of the misty night, while she hunted through her consciousness for a certain word she wanted; when she found it she gave a happy sigh and fell to again.

When she heard the Murrys coming upstairs she put her book away. She had finished; she had written a description of the whole occurrence and of that conclave ring of Murrys, and she had wound up by a pathetic description of her own deathbed, with the Murrys standing around imploring her forgiveness. At first she depicted Aunt Ruth as doing it on her knees in an agony of remorseful sobs. Then she suspended her pencil — “Aunt Ruth couldn’t ever feel as bad as that over anything,” she thought — and drew her pencil through the line.

In the writing, pain and humiliation had passed away. She only felt tired and rather happy. It had been fun, finding words to fit Uncle Wallace; and what exquisite satisfaction it had been to describe Aunt Ruth as “a dumpy little woman.”

“I wonder what my uncles and aunts would say if they knew what I really think of them,” she murmured as she got into bed.

Diamond Cut Diamond

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Emily, who had been pointedly ignored by the Murrays at breakfast, was called into the parlour when the meal was over.

They were all there — the whole phalanx of them — and it occurred to Emily as she looked at Uncle Wallace, sitting in the spring sunshine, that she had not just found the exact word after all to express his peculiar quality of grimness.

Aunt Elizabeth stood unsmilingly by the table with slips of paper in her hand.

“Emily,” she said, “last night we could not decide who should take you. I may say that none of us feel very much like doing so, for you have behaved very badly in many respects—”

“Oh, Elizabeth—” protested Laura. “She — she is our sister’s child.” Elizabeth lifted a hand regally.

“I am doing this, Laura. Have the goodness not to interrupt me. As I was saying, Emily, we could not decide as to who should have the care of you. So we have agreed to Cousin Jimmy’s suggestion that we settle the matter by lot. I have our names here, written on these slips of paper. You will draw one and the one whose name is on it will give you a home.”

Aunt Elizabeth held out the slips of paper. Emily trembled so violently that at first she could not draw one. This was terrible — it seemed as if she must blindly settle her own fate.

“Draw,” said Aunt Elizabeth.

Emily set her teeth, threw back her head with the air of one who challenges destiny, and drew. Aunt Elizabeth took the slip from the little shaking hand and held it up. On it was her own name—“Elizabeth Murray.” Laura Murray suddenly put her handkerchief to her eyes.

“Well, that’s settled,” said Uncle Wallace, getting up with an air of relief. “And if I’m going to catch that train I’ve got to hurry. Of course, as

far as the matter of expense goes, Elizabeth, I'll do my share."

"We are not paupers at New Moon," said Aunt Elizabeth rather coldly. "Since it has fallen to me to take her, I shall do all that is necessary, Wallace. I do not shirk my duty."

"I am her duty," thought Emily. "Father said nobody ever liked a duty. So Aunt Elizabeth will never like me."

"You've got more of the Murray pride than all the rest of us put together, Elizabeth," laughed Uncle Wallace.

They all followed him out — all except Aunt Laura. She came up to Emily, standing alone in the middle of the room, and drew her into her arms.

"I'm so glad, Emily — I'm so glad," she whispered. "Don't fret, dear child. I love you already — and New Moon is a nice place, Emily."

"It has — a pretty name," said Emily, struggling for self-control. "I've — always hoped — I could go with you, Aunt Laura. I think I am going to cry — but it's not because I'm sorry I'm going there. My manners are not as bad as you may think, Aunt Laura — and I wouldn't have listened last night if I'd known it was wrong."

"Of course you wouldn't," said Aunt Laura.

"But I'm not a Murray, you know."

Then Aunt Laura said a queer thing — for a Murray.

"Thank heaven for that!" said Aunt Laura.

Cousin Jimmy followed Emily out and overtook her in the little hall. Looking carefully around to ensure privacy, he whispered.

"Your Aunt Laura is a great hand at making an apple turnover, pussy."

Emily thought apple turnover sounded nice, though she did not know what it was. She whispered back a question which she would never have dared ask Aunt Elizabeth or even Aunt Laura.

"Cousin Jimmy, when they make a cake at New Moon, will they let me scrape out the mixing-bowl and eat the scrapings?"

"Laura will — Elizabeth won't," whispered Cousin Jimmy solemnly.

"And put my feet in the oven when they get cold? And have a cooky before I go to bed?"

“Answer same as before,” said Cousin Jimmy. “I’ll recite my poetry to you. It’s very few people I do that for. I’ve composed a thousand poems. They’re not written down — I carry them here.” Cousin Jimmy tapped his forehead.

“Is it very hard to write poetry?” asked Emily, looking with new respect at Cousin Jimmy.

“Easy as rolling off a log if you can find enough rhymes,” said Cousin Jimmy.

They all went away that morning except the New Moon people. Aunt Elizabeth announced that they would stay until the next day to pack up and take Emily with them.

“Most of the furniture belongs to the house,” she said, “so it won’t take us long to get ready. There are only Douglas Starr’s books and his few personal belongings to pack.”

“How shall I carry my cats?” asked Emily anxiously.

Aunt Elizabeth stared.

“Cats! You’ll take no cats, miss.”

“Oh, I must take Mike and Saucy Sal!” cried Emily wildly. “I can’t leave them behind. I can’t live without a cat.”

“Nonsense! There are barn cats at New Moon, but they are never allowed in the house.”

“Don’t you like cats?” asked Emily wonderingly.

“No, I do not.”

“Don’t you like the feel of a nice, soft, fat cat?” persisted Emily.

“No; I would as soon touch a snake.”

“There’s a lovely old wax doll of your mother’s up there,” said Aunt Laura. “I’ll dress it up for you.”

“I don’t like dolls — they can’t talk,” exclaimed Emily.

“Neither can cats.”

“Oh, can’t they! Mike and Saucy Sal can. Oh, I must take them. Oh, please, Aunt Elizabeth. I love those cats. And they’re the only things left in the world that love me. Please!”

“What’s a cat more or less on two hundred acres?” said Cousin Jimmy, pulling his forked beard. “Take ‘em along, Elizabeth.”

Aunt Elizabeth considered for a moment. She couldn’t understand why anybody should want a cat. Aunt Elizabeth was one of those people who never do understand anything unless it is told them in plain language and hammered into their heads. And then they understand it only with their brains and not with their hearts.

“You may take one of your cats,” she said at last, with the air of a person making a great concession. “One — and no more. No, don’t argue. You may as well learn first as last, Emily, that when I say a thing I mean it. That’s enough, Jimmy.”

Cousin Jimmy bit off something he had tried to say, stuck his hands in his pockets, and whistled at the ceiling.

“When she won’t, she won’t — Murray-like. We’re all born with that kink in us, small pussy, and you’ll have to put up with it — more by token that you’re full of it yourself, you know. Talk about your not being Murray! The Starr is only skin deep with you.”

“It isn’t — I’m all Starr — I want to be,” cried Emily. “And, oh, how can I choose between Mike and Saucy Sal?”

This was indeed a problem. Emily wrestled with it all day, her heart bursting. She liked Mike best — there was no doubt of that; but she couldn’t leave Saucy Sal to Ellen’s tender mercies. Ellen had always hated Sal; but she rather liked Mike and she would be good to him. Ellen was going back to her own little house in Maywood village and she wanted a cat. At last in the evening, Emily made her bitter decision. She would take Saucy Sal.

“Better take the Tom,” said Cousin Jimmy. “Not so much bother with kittens you know, Emily.”

“Jimmy!” said Aunt Elizabeth sternly. Emily wondered over the sternness. Why weren’t kittens to be spoken of? But she didn’t like to hear Mike called “the Tom.” It sounded insulting, somehow.

And she didn’t like the bustle and commotion of packing up. She longed for the old quiet and the sweet, remembered talks with her father.

She felt as if he had been thrust far away from her by this influx of Murrays.

“What’s this?” said Aunt Elizabeth suddenly, pausing for a moment in her packing. Emily looked up and saw with dismay that Aunt Elizabeth had in her hands the old account-book — that she was opening it — that she was reading in it. Emily sprang across the floor and snatched the book.

“You mustn’t read that, Aunt Elizabeth,” she cried indignantly, “that’s mine — my own private property.”

“Hoity-toity, Miss Starr,” said Aunt Elizabeth, staring at her, “let me tell you that I have a right to read your books. I am responsible for you now. I am not going to have anything hidden or underhanded, understand that. You have evidently something there that you are ashamed to have seen and I mean to see it. Give me that book.”

“I’m not ashamed of it,” cried Emily, backing away, hugging her precious book to her breast. “But I won’t let you — or anybody — see it.”

Aunt Elizabeth followed.

“Emily Starr, do you hear what I say? Give me that book — at once.”

“No — no!” Emily turned and ran. She would never let Aunt Elizabeth see that book. She fled to the kitchen stove — she whisked off a cover — she crammed the book into the glowing fire. It caught and blazed merrily. Emily watched it in agony. It seemed as if part of herself were burning there. But Aunt Elizabeth should never see it — see all the little things she had written and read to Father — all her fancies about the Wind Woman — and Emily-in-the-glass — all her little cat dialogues — all the things she had said in it last night about the Murrays. She watched the leaves shrivel and shudder, as if they were sentient things, and then turn black. A line of white writing came out vividly on one. “Aunt Elizabeth is very cold and hawty.” What if Aunt Elizabeth had seen that? What if she were seeing it now! Emily glanced apprehensively over her shoulder. No, Aunt Elizabeth had gone back to the room and shut the door with what, in anybody but a Murray, would have been called a bang. The account-book was a little heap of white film on the glowing coals. Emily sat down by the stove and cried. She felt as if she had lost something incalculably precious. It was terrible

to think that all those dear things were gone. She could never write them again — not just the same; and if she could she wouldn't dare — she would never dare to write anything again, if Aunt Elizabeth must see everything. Father never insisted on seeing them. She liked to read them to him — but if she hadn't wanted to do it he would never have made her. Suddenly Emily, with tears glistening on her cheeks, wrote a line in an imaginary account-book.

“Aunt Elizabeth is cold and hawty; and she is not fair.”

Next morning, while Cousin Jimmy was tying the boxes at the back of the double-seated buggy, and Aunt Elizabeth was giving Ellen her final instructions, Emily said goodbye to everything — to the Rooster Pine and Adam-and-Eve—“they'll miss me so when I'm gone; there won't be any one here to love them,” she said wistfully — to the spider crack in the kitchen window — to the old wing-chair — to the bed of striped grass — to the silver birch-ladies. Then she went upstairs to the window of her own old room. That little window had always seemed to Emily to open on a world of wonder. In the burned account-book there had been one piece of which she was especially proud. “A deskripshun of the vew from my Window.” She had sat there and dreamed; at night she used to kneel there and say her little prayers. Sometimes the stars shone through it — sometimes the rain beat against it — sometimes the little greybirds and swallows visited it — sometimes airy fragrances floated in from apple and lilac blossom — sometimes the Wind Woman laughed and sighed and sang and whistled round it — Emily had heard her there in the dark nights and in wild, white winter storms. She did not say goodbye to the Wind Woman, for she knew the Wind Woman would be at New Moon, too; but she said goodbye to the little window and the green hill she had loved, and to her fairy-haunted barrens and to little Emily-in-the-glass. There might be another Emily-in-the-glass at New Moon, but she wouldn't be the same one. And she unpinned from the wall and stowed away in her pocket the picture of the ball dress she had cut from a fashion sheet. It was such a wonderful dress — all white lace and wreaths of rosebuds, with a long, long train of lace flounces that must reach clear across a room. Emily had

pictured herself a thousand times wearing that dress, sweeping, a queen of beauty, across a ballroom door.

Downstairs they were waiting for her. Emily said goodbye to Ellen Greene rather indifferently — she had never liked Ellen Greene at any time, and since the night Ellen had told her her father was going to die she had hated and feared her.

Ellen amazed Emily by bursting into tears and hugging her — begging her not to forget her — asking her to write to her — calling her “my blessed child.”

“I am not your blessed child,” said Emily, “but I will write to you. And will you be very good to Mike?”

“I b’lieve you feel worse over leaving that cat than you do over leaving me,” sniffed Ellen.

“Why, of course I do,” said Emily, amazed that there could be any question about it.

It took all her resolution not to cry when she bade farewell to Mike, who was curled up on the sunwarm grass at the back door.

“Maybe I’ll see you again sometime,” she whispered as she hugged him. “I’m sure good pussy cats go to heaven.”

Then they were off in the double-seated buggy with its fringed canopy, always affected by the Murrys of New Moon. Emily had never driven in anything so splendid before. She had never had many drives. Once or twice her father had borrowed Mr Hubbard’s old buckboard and grey pony and driven to Charlottetown. The buckboard was rattly and the pony slow, but Father had talked to her all the way and made the road a wonder.

Cousin Jimmy and Aunt Elizabeth sat in front, the latter very imposing in black lace bonnet and mantle. Aunt Laura and Emily occupied the seat behind, with Saucy Sal between them in a basket, shrieking piteously.

Emily glanced back as they drove up the grassy lane, and thought the little, old, brown house in the hollow had a brokenhearted look. She longed to run back and comfort it. In spite of her resolution, the tears came into her eyes; but Aunt Laura put a kid-gloved hand across Sal’s basket and caught Emily’s in a close, understanding squeeze.

“Oh, I just love you, Aunt Laura,” whispered Emily.
And Aunt Laura’s eyes were very, very blue and deep and kind.

New Moon

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Emily found the drive through the blossomy June world pleasant. Nobody talked much; even Saucy Sal had subsided into the silence of despair; now and then Cousin Jimmy made a remark, more to himself, as it seemed, than to anybody else. Sometimes Aunt Elizabeth answered it, sometimes not. She always spoke crisply and used no unnecessary words.

They stopped in Charlottetown and had dinner. Emily, who had had no appetite since her father's death, could not eat the roast beef which the boardinghouse waitress put before her. Whereupon Aunt Elizabeth whispered mysteriously to the waitress who went away and presently returned with a plateful of delicate cold chicken — fine white slices, beautifully trimmed with lettuce frills.

"Can you eat that?" said Aunt Elizabeth sternly, as to a culprit at the bar.

"I'll — try," whispered Emily.

She was too frightened just then to say more, but by the time she had forced down some of the chicken she had made up her small mind that a certain matter must be put right.

"Aunt Elizabeth," she said.

"Hey, what?" said Aunt Elizabeth, directing her steel-blue eyes straight at her niece's troubled ones.

"I would like you to understand," said Emily, speaking very primly and precisely so that she would be sure to get things right, "that it was not because I did not like the roast beef I did not eat it. I was not hungry at all; and I just et some of the chicken to oblige you, not because I liked it any better."

"Children should eat what is put before them and never turn up their noses at good, wholesome food," said Aunt Elizabeth severely. So Emily

felt that Aunt Elizabeth had not understood after all and she was unhappy about it.

After dinner Aunt Elizabeth announced to Aunt Laura that they would do some shopping.

“We must get some things for the child,” she said.

“Oh, please don’t call me ‘the child,’” exclaimed Emily. “It makes me feel as if I didn’t belong anywhere. Don’t you like my name, Aunt Elizabeth? Mother thought it so pretty. And I don’t need any ‘things.’ I have two whole sets of underclothes — only one is patched—”

“S-s-sh!” said Cousin Jimmy, gently kicking Emily’s shins under the table.

Cousin Jimmy only meant that it would be better if she let Aunt Elizabeth buy “things” for her when she was in the humour for it; but Emily thought he was rebuking her for mentioning such matters as underclothes and subsided in scarlet confusion. Aunt Elizabeth went on talking to Laura as if she had not heard.

“She must not wear that cheap black dress in Blair Water. You could sift oatmeal through it. It is nonsense expecting a child of ten to wear black at all. I shall get her a nice white dress with a black sash for good, and some black-and-white-check gingham for school. Jimmy, we’ll leave the child with you. Look after her.”

Cousin Jimmy’s method of looking after her was to take her to a restaurant down street and fill her up with ice-cream. Emily had never had many chances at ice-cream and she needed no urging, even with lack of appetite, to eat two saucerfuls. Cousin Jimmy eyed her with satisfaction.

“No use my getting anything for you that Elizabeth could see,” he said. “But she can’t see what is inside of you. Make the most of your chance, for goodness alone knows when you’ll get any more.”

“Do you never have ice-cream at New Moon?”

Cousin Jimmy shook his head.

“Your Aunt Elizabeth doesn’t like new-fangled things. In the house, we belong to fifty years ago, but on the farm she has to give way. In the house

— candles; in the dairy, her grandmother's big pans to set the milk in. But, pussy, New Moon is a pretty good place after all. You'll like it some day."

"Are there any fairies there?" asked Emily, wistfully.

"The woods are full of 'em," said Cousin Jimmy. "And so are the columbines in the old orchard. We grow columbines there on purpose for the fairies."

Emily sighed. Since she was eight she had known there were no fairies anywhere nowadays; yet she hadn't quite given up the hope that one or two might linger in old-fashioned, out-of-the-way spots. And where so likely as at New Moon?"

"Really-truly fairies?" she questioned.

"Why, you know, if a fairy was really-truly it wouldn't be a fairy," said Cousin Jimmy seriously. "Could it, now?"

Before Emily could think this out the aunts returned and soon they were all on the road again. It was sunset when they came to Blair Water — a rosy sunset that flooded the long, sandy sea-coast with colour and brought red road and fir-darkened hill out in fleeting clearness of outline. Emily looked about her on her new environment and found it good. She saw a big house peering whitely through a veil of tall old trees — no mushroom growth of yesterday's birches but trees that had loved and been loved by three generations — a glimpse of silver water glistening through the dark spruces — that was the Blair Water itself, she knew — and a tall, golden-white church spire shooting up above the maple woods in the valley below. But it was none of these that brought her the flash — that came with the sudden glimpse of the dear, friendly, little dormer window peeping through vines on the roof — and right over it, in the opalescent sky, a real new moon, golden and slender. Emily was tingling all over with it as Cousin Jimmy lifted her from the buggy and carried her into the kitchen.

She sat on a long wooden bench that was satin-smooth with age and scrubbing, and watched Aunt Elizabeth lighting candles here and there, in great, shining, brass candlesticks — on the shelf between the windows, on the high dresser where the row of blue and white plates began to wink her

a friendly welcome, on the long table in the corner. And as she lighted them, elvish “rabbits’ candles” flashed up amid the trees outside the windows.

Emily had never seen a kitchen like this before. It had dark wooden walls and low ceiling, with black rafters crossing it, from which hung hams and sides of bacon and bunches of herbs and new socks and mittens, and many other things, the names and uses of which Emily could not imagine. The sanded floor was spotlessly white, but the boards had been scrubbed away through the years until the knots in them stuck up all over in funny little bosses, and in front of the stove they had sagged, making a queer, shallow little hollow. In one corner of the ceiling was a large square hole which looked black and spookish in the candlelight, and made her feel creepy. Something might pop down out of a hole like that if one hadn’t behaved just right, you know. And candles cast such queer wavering shadows. Emily didn’t know whether she liked the New Moon kitchen or not. It was an interesting place — and she rather thought she would like to describe it in the old account-book, if it hadn’t been burned — but Emily suddenly found herself trembling on the verge of tears.

“Cold?” said Aunt Laura kindly. “These June evenings are chilly yet. Come into the sitting-room — Jimmy has kindled a fire in the stove there.”

Emily, fighting desperately for self-control, went into the sitting-room. It was much more cheerful than the kitchen. The floor was covered with gay-striped homespun, the table had a bright crimson cloth, the walls were hung with pretty, diamond-patterned paper, the curtains were of wonderful palered damask with a design of white ferns scattered all over them. They looked very rich and imposing and Murray-like. Emily had never seen such curtains before. But best of all were the friendly gleams and flickers from the jolly hardwood fire in the open stove that mellowed the ghostly candlelight with something warm and rosy-golden. Emily toasted her toes before it and felt reviving interest in her surroundings. What lovely little leaded glass doors closed the china closets on either side of the high, black, polished mantel! What a funny, delightful shadow the carved

ornament on the sideboard cast on the wall behind it — just like a negro's side-face, Emily decided. What mysteries might lurk behind the chintz-lined glass doors of the bookcase! Books were Emily's friends wherever she found them. She flew over to the bookcase and opened the door. But before she could see more than the backs of rather ponderous volumes, Aunt Elizabeth came in, with a mug of milk and a plate whereon lay two little oatmeal cakes.

"Emily," said Aunt Elizabeth sternly, "shut that door. Remember that after this you are not to meddle with things that don't belong to you."

"I thought books belonged to everybody," said Emily.

"Ours don't," said Aunt Elizabeth, contriving to convey the impression that New Moon books were in a class by themselves. "Here is your supper, Emily. We are all so tired that we are just having a lunch. Eat it and then we will go to bed."

Emily drank the milk and worried down the oatcakes, still gazing about her. How pretty the wallpaper was, with the garland of roses inside the gilt diamond! Emily wondered if she could "see it in the air." She tried — yes, she could — there it hung, a yard from her eyes, a little fairy pattern, suspended in mid-air like a screen. Emily had discovered that she possessed this odd knack when she was six. By a certain movement of the muscles of her eyes, which she could never describe, she could produce a tiny replica of the wallpaper in the air before her — could hold it there and look at it as long as she liked — could shift it back and forth, to any distance she chose, making it larger or smaller as it went farther away or came nearer. It was one of her secret joys when she went into a new room anywhere to "see the paper in the air." And this New Moon paper made the prettiest fairy paper she had ever seen.

"What are you staring at nothing in that queer way for?" demanded Aunt Elizabeth, suddenly returning.

Emily shrank into herself. She couldn't explain to Aunt Elizabeth — Aunt Elizabeth would be like Ellen Greene and say she was "crazy."

"I — I wasn't staring at anything."

“Don’t contradict. I say you were,” retorted Aunt Elizabeth. “Don’t do it again. It gives your face an unnatural expression. Come now — we will go upstairs. You are to sleep with me.”

Emily gave a gasp of dismay. She had hoped it might be with Aunt Laura. Sleeping with Aunt Elizabeth seemed a very formidable thing. But she dared not protest. They went up to Aunt Elizabeth’s big, sombre bedroom where there was dark, grim wallpaper that could never be transformed into a fairy curtain, a high black bureau, topped with a tiny swing-mirror, so far above her that there could be no Emily-in-the-glass, tightly closed windows with dark-green curtains, a high bedstead with a dark-green canopy, and a huge, fat, smothering featherbed, with high, hard pillows.

Emily stood still, gazing about her.

“Why don’t you get undressed?” asked Aunt Elizabeth.

“I — I don’t like to undress before you,” faltered Emily.

Aunt Elizabeth looked at Emily through her cold, spectacled eyes.

“Take off your clothes, at once,” she said.

Emily obeyed, tingling with anger and shame. It was abominable — taking off her clothes while Aunt Elizabeth stood and watched her. The outrage of it was unspeakable. It was even harder to say her prayers before Aunt Elizabeth. Emily felt that it was not much good to pray under such circumstances. Father’s God seemed very far away and she suspected that Aunt Elizabeth’s was too much like Ellen Greene’s.

“Get into bed,” said Aunt Elizabeth, turning down the clothes.

Emily glanced at the shrouded window.

“Aren’t you going to open the window, Aunt Elizabeth?”

Aunt Elizabeth looked at Emily as if the latter had suggested removing the roof.

“Open the window — and let in the night air!” she exclaimed.

“Certainly not!”

“Father and I always had our window open,” cried Emily.

“No wonder he died of consumption,” said Aunt Elizabeth. “Night air is poison.”

“What air is there at night but night air?” asked Emily.

“Emily,” said Aunt Elizabeth icily, “get — into — bed.”

Emily got in.

But it was utterly impossible to sleep, lying there in that engulfing bed that seemed to swallow her up, with that cloud of blackness above her and not a gleam of light anywhere — and Aunt Elizabeth lying beside her, long and stiff and bony.

“I feel as if I was in bed with a griffin,” thought Emily. “Oh — oh — oh — I’m going to cry — I know I am.”

Desperately and vainly she strove to keep the tears back — they would come. She felt utterly alone and lonely — there in that darkness, with an alien, hostile world all around her — for it seemed hostile now. And there was such a strange, mysterious, mournful sound in the air — far away, yet clear. It was the murmur of the sea, but Emily did not know that and it frightened her. Oh, for her little bed at home — oh, for Father’s soft breathing in the room — oh, for the dancing friendliness of well-known stars shining down through her open window! She must go back — she couldn’t stay here — she would never be happy here! But there wasn’t any “back” to go to — no home — no father — . A great sob burst from her — another followed and then another. It was no use to clench her hands and set her teeth — and chew the inside of her cheeks — nature conquered pride and determination and had her way.

“What are you crying for?” asked Aunt Elizabeth.

To tell the truth Aunt Elizabeth felt quite as uncomfortable and disjointed as Emily did. She was not used to a bedfellow; she didn’t want to sleep with Emily any more than Emily wanted to sleep with her. But she considered it quite impossible that the child should be put off by herself in one of the big, lonely New Moon rooms; and Laura was a poor sleeper, easily disturbed; children always kicked, Elizabeth Murray had heard. So there was nothing to do but take Emily in with her; and when she had sacrificed comfort and inclination to do her unwelcome duty this ungrateful and unsatisfactory child was not contented.

“I asked you what you were crying for, Emily?” she repeated.

“I’m — homesick, I guess,” sobbed Emily.

Aunt Elizabeth was annoyed.

“A nice home you had to be homesick for,” she said sharply.

“It — it wasn’t as elegant — as New Moon,” sobbed Emily, “but — Father was there. I guess I’m Fathersick, Aunt Elizabeth. Didn’t you feel awfully lonely when your father died?”

Elizabeth Murray involuntarily remembered the ashamed, smothered feeling of relief when old Archibald Murray had died — the handsome, intolerant, autocratic old man who had ruled his family with a rod of iron all his life and had made existence at New Moon miserable with the petulant tyranny of the five years of invalidism that had closed his career. The surviving Murrays had behaved impeccably, and wept decorously, and printed a long and flattering obituary. But had one genuine feeling of regret followed Archibald Murray to his tomb? Elizabeth did not like the memory and was angry with Emily for evoking it.

“I was resigned to the will of Providence,” she said coldly. “Emily, you must understand right now that you are to be grateful and obedient and show your appreciation of what is being done for you. I won’t have tears and repining. What would you have done if you had no friends to take you in? Answer me that.”

“I suppose I would have starved to death,” admitted Emily — instantly beholding a dramatic vision of herself lying dead, looking exactly like the pictures she had seen in one of Ellen Greene’s missionary magazines depicting the victims of an Indian famine.

“Not exactly — but you would have been sent to some orphanage where you would have been half-starved, probably. You little know what you have escaped. You have come to a good home where you will be cared for and educated properly.”

Emily did not altogether like the sound of being “educated properly.” But she said humbly,

“I know it was very good of you to bring me to New Moon, Aunt Elizabeth. And I won’t bother you long, you know. I’ll soon be grownup

and able to earn my own living. What do you think is the earliest age a person can be called grownup, Aunt Elizabeth?”

“You needn’t think about that,” said Aunt Elizabeth shortly. “The Murray women have never been under any necessity for earning their own living. All we require of you is to be a good and contented child and to conduct yourself with becoming prudence and modesty.”

This sounded terribly hard.

“I will be,” said Emily, suddenly determining to be heroic, like the girl in the stories she had read. “Perhaps it won’t be so very hard after all, Aunt Elizabeth,” — Emily happened at this point to recall a speech she had heard her father use once, and thought this a good opportunity to work it in — “because, you know, God is good and the devil might be worse.”

Poor Aunt Elizabeth! To have a speech like that fired at her in the darkness of the night from that unwelcome little interloper into her orderly life and peaceful bed! Was it any wonder that for a moment or so she was too paralysed to reply! Then she exclaimed in tones of horror, “Emily, never say that again!”

“All right,” said Emily meekly. “But,” she added defiantly under her breath, “I’ll go on thinking it.”

“And now,” said Aunt Elizabeth, “I want to say that I am not in the habit of talking all night if you are. I tell you to go to sleep, and I expect you to obey me. Good night.”

The tone of Aunt Elizabeth’s good night would have spoiled the best night in the world. But Emily lay very still and sobbed no more, though the noiseless tears trickled down her cheeks in the darkness for some time. She lay so still that Aunt Elizabeth imagined she was asleep and went to sleep herself.

“I wonder if anybody in the world is awake but me,” thought Emily, feeling a sickening loneliness. “If I only had Saucy Sal here! She isn’t so cuddly as Mike but she’d be better than nothing. I wonder where she is. I wonder if they gave her any supper.”

Aunt Elizabeth had handed Sal’s basket to Cousin Jimmy with an impatient, “Here — look to this cat,” and Jimmy had carried it off. Where

had he put it? Perhaps Saucy Sal would get out and go home — Emily had heard cats always went back home. She wished she could get out and go home — she pictured herself and her cat running eagerly along the dark, starlit roads to the little house in the hollow — back to the birches and Adam-and-Eve and Mike, and the old wing-chair and her dear little cot and the open window where the Wind Woman sang to her and at dawn one could see the blue of the mist on the homeland hills.

“Will it ever be morning?” thought Emily. “Perhaps things won’t be so bad in the morning.”

And then — she heard the Wind Woman at the window — she heard the little, low, whispering murmur of the June night breeze — cooing, friendly, lovesome.

“Oh, you’re out there, are you, dearest one?” she whispered, stretching out her arms. “Oh, I’m so glad to hear you. You’re such company, Wind Woman. I’m not lonesome any more. And the flash came, too! I was afraid it might never come at New Moon.”

Her soul suddenly escaped from the bondage of Aunt Elizabeth’s stuffy featherbed and gloomy canopy and sealed windows. She was out in the open with the Wind Woman and the other gipsies of the night — the fireflies, the moths, the brooks, the clouds. Far and wide she wandered in enchanted reverie until she coasted the shore of dreams and fell soundly asleep on the fat, hard pillow, while the Wind Woman sang softly and luringly in the vines that clustered over New Moon.

The Book of Yesterday

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That first Saturday and Sunday at New Moon always stood out in Emily's memory as a very wonderful time, so crowded was it with new and generally delightful impressions. If it be true that we "count time by heart throbs" Emily lived two years in it instead of two days. Everything was fascinating from the moment she came down the long, polished staircase into the square hall that was filled with a soft, rosy light coming through the red glass panes of the front door. Emily gazed through the panes delightedly. What a strange, fascinating, red world she beheld, with a weird red sky that looked, she thought, as if it belonged to the Day of Judgment.

There was a certain charm about the old house which Emily felt keenly and responded to, although she was too young to understand it. It was a house which aforetime had had vivid brides and mothers and wives, and the atmosphere of their loves and lives still hung around it, not yet banished by the old-maidishness of the regime of Elizabeth and Laura.

"Why — I'm going to love New Moon," thought Emily, quite amazed at the idea.

Aunt Laura was setting the breakfast table in the kitchen, which seemed quite bright and jolly in the glow of morning sunshine. Even the black hole in the ceiling had ceased to be spookish and become only a commonplace entrance to the kitchen loft. And on the red-sandstone doorstep Saucy Sal was sitting, preening her fur as contentedly as if she had lived at New Moon all her life. Emily did not know it, but Sal had already drunk deep the delight of battle with her peers that morning and taught the barn cats their place once and for all. Cousin Jimmy's big yellow Tom had got a fearful drubbing, and was minus several bits of his anatomy, while a stuck-up, black lady-cat, who fancied herself considerably, had made up her mind that if that grey-and-white, narrow-

faced interloper from goodness knew where was going to stay at New Moon, she was not.

Emily gathered Sal up in her arms and kissed her joyously, to the horror of Aunt Elizabeth, who was coming across the platform from the cookhouse with a plate of sizzling bacon in her hands.

“Don’t ever let me see you kissing a cat again,” she ordered.

“Oh, all right,” agreed Emily cheerfully, “I’ll only kiss her when you don’t see me after this.”

“I don’t want any of your pertness, miss. You are not to kiss cats at all.”

“But Aunt Elizabeth, I didn’t kiss her on her mouth, of course. I just kissed her between her ears. It’s nice — won’t you just try it for once and see for yourself?”

“That will do, Emily. You have said quite enough.” And Aunt Elizabeth sailed on into the kitchen majestically, leaving Emily momentarily wretched. She felt that she had offended Aunt Elizabeth, and she hadn’t the least notion why or how.

But the scene before her was too interesting to worry long about Aunt Elizabeth. Delicious smells were coming from the cookhouse — a little, slant-roofed building at the corner where the big cooking-stove was placed in summer. It was thickly overgrown with hop vines, as most of the New Moon buildings were. To the right was the “new” orchard, very wonderful now in blossom, but a rather commonplace spot after all, since Cousin Jimmy cultivated it in most up-to-date fashion and had grain growing in the wide spaces between the straight rows of trees that looked all alike. But on the other side of the barn lane, just behind the well, was the “old orchard,” where Cousin Jimmy said the columbines grew and which seemed to be a delightful place where trees had come up at their own sweet will, and grown into individual shapes and sizes, where blue-eyed ivy twined about their roots and wild-briar roses rioted over the grey paling fence. Straight ahead, closing the vista between the orchards, was a little slope covered with huge white birches, among which were the big New Moon barns, and beyond the new orchard a little, lovable red road

looped lightly up and up, over a hill, until it seemed to touch the vivid blue of the sky.

Cousin Jimmy came down from the barns, carrying brimming pails of milk, and Emily ran with him to the dairy behind the cookhouse. Such a delightful spot she had never seen or imagined. It was a snow-white little building in a clump of tall balm-of-gileads. Its grey roof was dotted over with cushions of moss like fat green-velvet mice. You went down six sandstone steps with ferns crowding about them, and opened a white door with a glass panel in it, and went down three more steps. And then you were in a clean, earthy-smelling, damp, cool place with an earthen floor and windows screened by the delicate emerald of young hop vines, and broad wooden shelves all around, whereon stood wide, shallow pans of glossy brown ware, full of milk coated over with cream so rich that it was positively yellow.

Aunt Laura was waiting for them and she strained the milk into empty pans and then skimmed some of the full ones. Emily thought skimming was a lovely occupation and longed to try her hand at it. She also longed to sit right down and write a description of that dear dairy; but alas, there was no account-book; still, she could write it in her head. She squatted down on a little three-legged stool in a dim corner and proceeded to do it, sitting so still that Jimmy and Laura forgot her and went away and later had to hunt for her a quarter of an hour. This delayed breakfast and made Aunt Elizabeth very cross. But Emily had found just the right sentence to define the clear yet dim green light that filled the dairy and was so happy over it that she didn't mind Aunt Elizabeth's black looks a bit.

After breakfast Aunt Elizabeth informed Emily that henceforth it would be one of her duties to drive the cows to pasture every morning.

"Jimmy has no hired man just now and it will save him a few minutes."

"And don't be afraid," added Aunt Laura, "the cows know the way so well they'll go of themselves. You have only to follow and shut the gates."

"I'm not afraid," said Emily.

But she was. She knew nothing about cows; still, she was determined that the Murrys should not suspect a Starr was scared. So, her heart beating like a trip-hammer, she sallied valiantly forth and found that what Aunt Laura had said was true and cows were not such ferocious animals after all. They went gravely on ahead and she had only to follow, through the old orchard and then through the scrub maple growth beyond, along a twisted ferny path where the Wind Woman was purring and peeping around the maple clumps.

Emily loitered by the pasture gate until her eager eyes had taken in all the geography of the landscape. The old pasture ran before her in a succession of little green bosoms right down to the famous Blair Water — an almost perfectly round pond, with grassy, sloping, treeless margins. Beyond it was the Blair Water valley, filled with homesteads, and further out the great sweep of the white-capped gulf. It seemed to Emily's eyes a charming land of green shadows, and blue waters. Down in one corner of the pasture, walled off by an old stone dyke, was the little private graveyard where the dead-and-gone Murrys were buried. Emily wanted to go and explore it, but was afraid to trust herself in the pasture.

"I'll go as soon as I get better acquainted with the cows," she resolved.

Off to the right, on the crest of a steep little hill, covered with young birches and firs, was a house that puzzled and intrigued Emily. It was grey and weather-worn, but it didn't look old. It had never been finished; the roof was shingled but the sides were not, and the windows were boarded over. Why had it never been finished? And it was meant to be such a pretty little house — a house you could love — a house where there would be nice chairs and cosy fires and bookcases and lovely, fat, purry cats and unexpected corners; then and there she named it the Disappointed House, and many an hour thereafter did she spend finishing that house, furnishing it as it should be furnished, and inventing the proper people and animals to live in it.

To the left of the pasture-field was another house of a quite different type — a big, old house, tangled over with vines, flat-roofed, with mansard windows, and a general air of indifference and neglect about it. A

large, untidy lawn, overgrown with unpruned shrubs and trees, straggled right down to the pond, where enormous willows drooped over the water. Emily decided that she would ask Cousin Jimmy about these houses when she got a good chance.

She felt that, before she went back, she must slip along the pasture fence and explore a certain path which she saw entering the grove of spruce and maple further down. She did — and found that it led straight into Fairyland — along the bank of a wide, lovely brook — a wild, dear, little path with lady-ferns beckoning and blowing along it, the shyest of elfin Junebells under the firs, and little whims of loveliness at every curve. She breathed in the tang of fir-balsam and saw the shimmer of gossamers high up in the boughs, and everywhere the frolic of elfin lights and shadows. Here and there the young maple branches interlaced as if to make a screen for dryad faces — Emily knew all about dryads, thanks to her father — and the great sheets of moss under the trees were meet for Titania's couch.

“This is one of the places where dreams grow,” said Emily happily.

She wished the path might go on forever, but presently it veered away from the brook, and when she had scrambled over a mossy, old board fence she found herself in the “front garden” of New Moon, where Cousin Jimmy was pruning some spirea bushes.

“Oh, Cousin Jimmy, I've found the dearest little road,” said Emily breathlessly.

“Coming up through Lofty John's bush?”

“Isn't it our bush?” asked Emily, rather disappointed.

“No, but it ought to be. Fifty years ago Uncle Archibald sold that jog of land to Lofty John's father — old Mike Sullivan. He built a little house down near the pond and lived there till he quarrelled with Uncle Archibald — which wasn't long, of course. Then he moved his house across the road — and Lofty John lives there now. Elizabeth has tried to buy the land back from him — she's offered him far more than it's worth — but Lofty John won't sell — just for spite, seeing that he has a good farm of his own and this piece isn't much good to him. He only pastures a few young cattle on

it through the summer, and what was cleared is all growing up with scrub maple. It's a thorn in Elizabeth's side and likely to be as long as Lofty John nurses his spite."

"Why is he called Lofty John?"

"Because he's a high and lofty fellow. But never mind him. I want to show you round my garden, Emily. It's mine. Elizabeth bosses the farm; but she lets me run the garden — to make up for pushing me into the well."

"Did she do that?"

"Yes. She didn't mean to, of course. We were just children — I was here on a visit — and the men were putting a new hood on the well and cleaning it. It was open — and we were playing tag around it. I made Elizabeth mad — forget what I said—'twasn't hard to make her mad you understand — and she made to give me a bang on the head. I saw it coming — and stepped back to get out of the way — and down I went, head first. Don't remember anything more about it. There was nothing but mud at the bottom — but my head struck the stones at the side. I was took up for dead — my head all cut up. Poor Elizabeth was—" Cousin Jimmy shook his head, as if to intimate that it was impossible to describe how or what poor Elizabeth was. "I got about after a while, though — pretty near as good as new. Folks say I've never been quite right since — but they only say that because I'm a poet, and because nothing ever worries me. Poets are so scarce in Blair Water folks don't understand them, and most people worry so much, they think you're not right if you don't worry."

"Won't you recite some of your poetry to me, Cousin Jimmy?" asked Emily eagerly.

"When the spirit moves me I will. It's no use to ask me when the spirit don't move me."

"But how am I to know when the spirit moves you, Cousin Jimmy?"

"I'll begin of my own accord to recite my compositions. But I'll tell you this — the spirit generally moves me when I'm boiling the pigs' potatoes in the fall. Remember that and be around."

"Why don't you write your poetry down?"

“Paper’s too scarce at New Moon. Elizabeth has some pet economies and writing-paper of any kind is one of them.

“But haven’t you any money of your own, Cousin Jimmy?”

“Oh, Elizabeth pays me good wages. But she puts all my money in the bank and just doles out a few dollars to me once in a while. She says I’m not fit to be trusted with money. When I came here to work for her she paid me my wages at the end of the month and I started for Shrewsbury to put it in the bank. Met a tramp on the road — a poor, forlorn creature without a cent. I gave him the money. Why not? I had a good home and a steady job and clothes enough to do me for years. I s’pose it was the foolishhest thing I ever did — and the nicest. But Elizabeth never got over it. She’s managed my money ever since. But come you now, and I’ll show you my garden before I have to go and sow turnips.”

The garden was a beautiful place, well worthy Cousin Jimmy’s pride. It seemed like a garden where no frost could wither or rough wind blow — a garden remembering a hundred vanished summers. There was a high hedge of clipped spruce all around it, spaced at intervals by tall Lombardies. The north side was closed in by a thick grove of spruce against which a long row of peonies grew, their great red blossoms splendid against its darkness. One big spruce grew in the centre of the garden and underneath it was a stone bench, made of flat shore stones worn smooth by long polish of wind and wave. In the southeast corner was an enormous clump of lilacs, trimmed into the semblance of one large drooping-boughed tree, gloried over with purple. An old summer-house, covered with vines, filled the southwest corner. And in the northwest corner there was a sundial of grey stone, placed just where the broad red walk that was bordered with striped grass, and picked out with pink conchs, ran off into Lofty John’s bush. Emily had never seen a sundial before and hung over it enraptured.

“Your great-great-grandfather, Hugh Murray, had that brought out from the Old Country,” said Cousin Jimmy. “There isn’t as fine a one in the Maritime Provinces. And Uncle George Murray brought those conchs from the Indies. He was a sea-captain.”

Emily looked about her with delight. The garden was lovely and the house quite splendid to her childish eyes. It had a big front porch with Grecian columns. These were thought very elegant in Blair Water, and went far to justify the Murray pride. A schoolmaster had said they gave the house a classical air. To be sure, the classical effect was just now rather smothered in hop-vines that rioted over the whole porch and hung in pale-green festoons above the rows of potted scarlet geraniums that flanked the steps.

Emily's heart swelled with pride.

"It's a noble house," she said.

"And what about my garden?" demanded Cousin Jimmy jealously.

"It's fit for a queen," said Emily, gravely and sincerely.

Cousin Jimmy nodded, well pleased, and then a strange sound crept into his voice and an odd look into his eyes.

"There is a spell woven round this garden. The blight shall spare it and the green worm pass it by. Drought dares not invade it and the rain comes here gently."

Emily took an involuntary step backward — she almost felt like running away. But now Cousin Jimmy was himself again.

"Isn't this grass about the sundial like green velvet? I've taken some pains with it, I can tell you. You make yourself at home in this garden." Cousin Jimmy made a splendid gesture. "I confer the freedom of it upon you. Good-luck to you, and may you find the Lost Diamond."

"The Lost Diamond?" said Emily wonderingly. What fascinating thing was this?

"Never hear the story? I'll tell it tomorrow — Sunday's lazy day at New Moon. I must get off to my turnips now or I'll have Elizabeth out looking at me. She won't say anything — she'll just look. Ever seen the real Murray look?"

"I guess I saw it when Aunt Ruth pulled me out from under the table," said Emily ruefully.

"No — no. That was the Ruth Dutton look — spite and malice and all uncharitableness. I hate Ruth Dutton. She laughs at my poetry — not that

she ever hears any of it. The spirit never moves when Ruth is around. Dunno where they got her. Elizabeth is a crank but she's sound as a nut, and Laura's a saint. But Ruth's worm-eaten. As for the Murray look, you'll know it when you see it. It's as well known as the Murray pride. We're a darn queer lot — but we're the finest people ever happened. I'll tell you all about us tomorrow."

Cousin Jimmy kept his promise while the aunts were away at church. It had been decided in family conclave that Emily was not to go to church that day.

"She has nothing suitable to wear," said Aunt Elizabeth. "By next Sunday we will have her white dress ready."

Emily was disappointed that she was not to go to church. She had always found church very interesting on the rare occasions when she got there. It had been too far at Maywood for her father to walk but sometimes Ellen Greene's brother had taken her and Ellen.

"Do you think, Aunt Elizabeth," she said wistfully, "that God would be much offended if I wore my black dress to church? Of course it's cheap — I think Ellen Greene paid for it herself — but it covers me all up."

"Little girls who do not understand things should hold their tongues," said Aunt Elizabeth. "I do not choose that Blair Water people should see my niece in such a dress as that wretched black merino. And if Ellen Greene paid for it we must repay her. You should have told us that before we came away from Maywood. No, you are not going to church to-day. You can wear the black dress to school tomorrow. We can cover it up with an apron."

Emily resigned herself with a sigh of disappointment to staying home; but it was very pleasant after all. Cousin Jimmy took her for a walk to the pond, showed her the graveyard and opened the book of yesterday for her.

"Why are all the Murrys buried here?" asked Emily. "Is it really because they are too good to be buried with common people?"

"No — no, pussy. We don't carry our pride as far as that. When old Hugh Murray settled at New Moon there was nothing much but woods for miles and no graveyards nearer than Charlottetown. That's why the old

Murrays were buried here — and later on we kept it up because we wanted to lie with our own, here on the green, green banks of the old Blair Water.”

“That sounds like a line out of a poem, Cousin Jimmy,” said Emily.

“So it is — out of one of my poems.”

“I kind of like the idea of a ‘sclusive burying-ground like this,” said Emily decidedly, looking around her approvingly at the velvet grass sloping down to the fairy-blue pond, the neat walks, the well-kept graves.

Cousin Jimmy chuckled.

“And yet they say you ain’t a Murray,” he said. “Murray and Byrd and Starr — and a dash of Shipley to boot, or Cousin Jimmy Murray is much mistaken.”

“Shipley?”

“Yes — Hugh Murray’s wife — your great-great-grandmother — was a Shipley — an Englishwoman. Ever hear of how the Murrays came to New Moon?”

“No.”

“They were bound for Quebec — hadn’t any notion of coming to P. E. I. They had a long rough voyage and water got scarce, so the captain of the New Moon put in here to get some. Mary Murray had nearly died of seasickness coming but — never seemed to get her sea-legs — so the captain, being sorry for her, told her she could go ashore with the men and feel solid ground under her for an hour or so. Very gladly she went and when she got to shore she said, ‘Here I stay.’ And stay she did; nothing could budge her; old Hugh — he was young Hugh then, of course, coaxed and stormed and raged and argued — and even cried, I’ve been told — but Mary wouldn’t be moved. In the end he gave in and had his belongings landed and stayed, too. So that is how the Murrays came to P. E. Island.”

“I’m glad it happened like that,” said Emily.

“So was old Hugh in the long run. And yet it rankled, Emily — it rankled. He never forgave his wife with a whole heart. Her grave is over there in the corner — that one with the flat red stone. Go you and look at what he had put on it.”

Emily ran curiously over. The big flat stone was inscribed with one of the long, discursive epitaphs of an older day. But beneath the epitaph was no scriptural verse or pious psalm. Clear and distinct, in spite of age and lichen, ran the line, "Here I stay."

"That's how he got even with her," said Cousin Jimmy. "He was a good husband to her — and she was a good wife and bore him a fine family — and he never was the same after her death. But that rankled in him until it had to come out."

Emily gave a little shiver. Somehow, the idea of that grim old ancestor with his undying grudge against his nearest and dearest was rather terrifying.

"I'm glad I'm only half Murray," she said to herself. Aloud—"Father told me it was a Murray tradition not to carry spite past the grave."

"So 'tis now — but it took its rise from this very thing. His family were so horrified at it, you see. It made considerable of a scandal. Some folks twisted it round to mean that Old Hugh didn't believe in the resurrection, and there was talk of the session taking it up, but after a while the talk died away."

Emily skipped over to another lichen-grown stone.

"Elizabeth Burnley — who was she, Cousin Jimmy?"

"Old William Murray's wife. He was Hugh's brother, and came out here five years after Hugh did. His wife was a great beauty and had been a belle in the Old Country. She didn't like the P. E. Island woods. She was homesick, Emily — scandalous homesick. For weeks after she came here she wouldn't take off her bonnet — just walked the floor in it, demanding to be taken back home."

"Didn't she take it off when she went to bed?" asked Emily.

"Dunno if she did go to bed. Anyway, William wouldn't take her back home so in time she took off her bonnet and resigned herself. Her daughter married Hugh's son, so Elizabeth was your great-great-grandmother."

Emily looked down at the sunken green grave and wondered if any homesick dreams haunted Elizabeth Burnley's slumber of a hundred years.

"It's dreadful to be homesick — I know," she thought sympathetically.

“Little Stephen Murray is buried over there,” said Cousin Jimmy. “His was the first marble stone in the burying-ground. He was your grandfather’s brother — died when he was twelve. He has,” said Cousin Jimmy solemnly, “became a Murray tradition.”

“Why?”

“He was so beautiful and clever and good. He hadn’t a fault — so of course he couldn’t live. They say there never was such a handsome child in the connection. And lovable — everybody loved him. He has been dead for ninety years — not a Murray living to-day ever saw him — and yet we talk about him at family gatherings — he’s more real than lots of living people. So you see, Emily, he must have been an extraordinary child — but it ended in that—” Cousin Jimmy waved his hand towards the grassy grave and the white, prim headstone.

“I wonder,” thought Emily, “if anyone will remember me ninety years after I’m dead.”

“This old yard is nearly full,” reflected Cousin Jimmy. “There’s just room in yonder corner for Elizabeth and Laura — and me. None for you, Emily.”

“I don’t want to be buried here,” flashed Emily. “I think it’s splendid to have a graveyard like this in the family — but I am going to be buried in Charlottetown graveyard with Father and Mother. But there’s one thing worries me Cousin Jimmy, do you think I’m likely to die of consumption?”

Cousin Jimmy looked judicially down into her eyes.

“No,” he said, “no, Miss Puss. You’ve got enough life in you to carry you far. You aren’t meant for death.”

“I feel that, too,” said Emily, nodding. “And now, Cousin Jimmy, why is that house over there disappointed?”

“Which one? — oh, Fred Clifford’s house. Fred Clifford began to build that house thirty years ago. He was to be married and his lady picked out the plan. And when the house was just as far along as you see she jilted him, Emily — right in the face of day she jilted him. Never another nail was driven in the house. Fred went out to British Columbia. He’s living

there yet — married and happy. But he won't sell that lot to anyone — so I reckon he feels the sting yet."

"I'm so sorry for that house. I wish it had been finished. It wants to be — even yet it wants to be."

"Well, I reckon it never will. Fred had a bit of Shipley in him, too, you see. One of old Hugh's girls was his grandmother. And Doctor Burnley up there in the big grey house has more than a bit."

"Is he a relation of ours, too, Cousin Jimmy?"

"Forty-second cousin. Way back he had a cousin of Mary Shipley's for a great-something. That was in the Old Country — his forebears came out here after we did. He's a good doctor but an odd stick — odder by far than I am, Emily, and yet nobody ever says he's not all there. Can you account for that? He doesn't believe in God — and I am not such a fool as that."

"Not in any God?"

"Not in any God. He's an infidel, Emily. And he's bringing his little girl up the same way, which I think is a shame, Emily," said Cousin Jimmy confidentially.

"Doesn't her mother teach her things?"

"Her mother is — dead," answered Cousin Jimmy, with a little odd hesitation. "Dead these ten years," he added in a firmer tone. "Ilse Burnley is a great girl — hair like daffodils and eyes like yellow diamonds."

"Oh, Cousin Jimmy, you promised you'd tell me about the Lost Diamond," cried Emily eagerly.

"To be sure — to be sure. Well, it's there — somewhere in or about the old summer-house, Emily. Fifty years ago Edward Murray and his wife came here from Kingsport for a visit. A great lady she was, and wearing silks and diamonds like a queen, though no beauty. She had a ring on with a stone in it that cost two hundred pounds, Emily. That was a big lot of money to be wearing on one wee woman-finger, wasn't it? It sparkled on her white hand as she held her dress going up the steps of the summer-house; but when she came down the steps it was gone."

"And was it never found?" asked Emily breathlessly.

“Never — and for no lack of searching. Edward Murray wanted to have the house pulled down — but Uncle Archibald wouldn’t hear of it — because he had built it for his bride. The two brothers quarrelled over it and were never good friends again. Everybody in the connection has taken a spell hunting for the diamond. Most folks think it fell out of the summer-house among the flowers or shrubs. But I know better, Emily. I know Miriam Murray’s diamond is somewhere about that old house yet. On moonlit nights, Emily, I’ve seen it glinting — glinting and beckoning. But never in the same place — and when you go to it — it’s gone, and you see it laughing at you from somewhere else.”

Again there was that eerie, indefinable something in Cousin Jimmy’s voice or look that gave Emily a sudden crinkly feeling in her spine. But she loved the way he talked to her, as if she were grownup; and she loved the beautiful land around her; and, in spite of the ache for her father and the house in the hollow which persisted all the time and hurt her so much at night that her pillow was wet with secret tears, she was beginning to be a little glad again in sunset and bird song and early white stars, in moonlit nights and singing winds. She knew life was going to be wonderful here — wonderful and interesting, what with outdoor cookhouses and cream-girdled dairies and pond paths and sundials, and Lost Diamonds, and Disappointed Houses and men who didn’t believe in any God — not even Ellen Greene’s God. Emily hoped she would soon see Dr Burnley. She was very curious to see what an infidel looked like. And she had already quite made up her mind that she would find the Lost Diamond.

Trial by Fire

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Aunt Elizabeth drove Emily to school the next morning. Aunt Laura had thought that, since there was only a month before vacation, it was not worth while for Emily to “start school.” But Aunt Elizabeth did not yet feel comfortable with a small niece skipping around New Moon, poking into everything insatiably, and was resolved that Emily must go to school to get her out of the way. Emily herself, always avid for new experiences, was quite keen to go, but for all that she was seething with rebellion as they drove along. Aunt Elizabeth had produced a terrible gingham apron and an equally terrible gingham sunbonnet from somewhere in the New Moon garret, and made Emily put them on. The apron was a long sack-like garment, high in the neck, with sleeves. Those sleeves were the crowning indignity. Emily had never seen any little girl wearing an apron with sleeves. She rebelled to the point of tears over wearing it, but Aunt Elizabeth was not going to have any nonsense. Emily saw the Murray look then; and when she saw it she buttoned her rebellious feeling tightly up in her soul and let Aunt Elizabeth put the apron on her.

“It was one of your mother’s aprons when she was a little girl, Emily,” said Aunt Laura comfortingly, and rather sentimentally.

“Then,” said Emily, uncomforted and unsentimental, “I don’t wonder she ran away with Father when she grew up.”

Aunt Elizabeth finished buttoning the apron and gave Emily a none too gentle push away from her.

“Put on your sunbonnet,” she ordered.

“Oh, please, Aunt Elizabeth, don’t make me wear that horrid thing.”

Aunt Elizabeth, wasting no further words, picked up the bonnet and tied it on Emily’s head. Emily had to yield. But from the depths of the sunbonnet issued a voice, defiant though tremulous.

“Anyway, Aunt Elizabeth, you can’t boss God,” it said.

Aunt Elizabeth was too cross to speak all the way to the schoolhouse. She introduced Emily to Miss Brownell, and drove away. School was already “in,” so Emily hung her sunbonnet on the porch nail and went to the desk Miss Brownell assigned her. She had already made up her mind that she did not like Miss Brownell and never would like her.

Miss Brownell had the reputation in Blair Water of being a fine teacher — due mainly to the fact that she was a strict disciplinarian and kept excellent “order.” She was a thin, middle-aged person with a colourless face, prominent teeth, most of which she showed when she laughed, and cold, watchful grey eyes — colder even than Aunt Ruth’s. Emily felt as if those merciless agate eyes saw clean through her to the core of her sensitive little soul. Emily could be fearless enough on occasion; but in the presence of a nature which she instinctively felt to be hostile to hers she shrank away in something that was more repulsion than fear.

She was a target for curious glances all the morning. The Blair Water school was large and there were at least twenty little girls of about her own age. Emily looked back curiously at them all and thought the way they whispered to each other behind hands and books when they looked at her very ill-mannered. She felt suddenly unhappy and homesick and lonesome — she wanted her father and her old home and the dear things she loved.

“The New Moon girl is crying,” whispered a black-eyed girl across the aisle. And then came a cruel little giggle.

“What is the matter with you, Emily?” said Miss Brownell suddenly and accusingly.

Emily was silent. She could not tell Miss Brownell what was the matter with her — especially when Miss Brownell used such a tone.

“When I ask one of my pupils a question, Emily, I am accustomed to having an answer. Why are you crying?”

There was another giggle from across the aisle. Emily lifted miserable eyes and in her extremity fell back on a phrase of her father’s.

“It is a matter that concerns only myself,” she said.

A red spot suddenly appeared in Miss Brownell’s sallow cheek. Her eyes gleamed with cold fire.

“You will remain in during recess as a punishment for your impertinence,” she said — but she left Emily alone the rest of the day.

Emily did not in the least mind staying in at recess, for, acutely sensitive to her environment as she was, she realized that, for some reason she could not fathom, the atmosphere of the school was antagonistic. The glances cast at her were not only curious but ill-natured. She did not want to go out to the playground with those girls. She did not want to go to school in Blair Water. But she would not cry any more. She sat erect and kept her eyes on her book. Suddenly a soft, malignant hiss came across the aisle.

“Miss Pridey — Miss Pridey!”

Emily looked across at the girl. Large, steady, purplish-grey eyes gazed into beady, twinkling, black ones — gazed unquailingly — with something in them that cowed and compelled. The black eyes wavered and fell, their owner covering her retreat with another giggle and toss of her short braid of hair.

“I can master her,” thought Emily, with a thrill of triumph.

But there is strength in numbers and at noon hour Emily found herself standing alone on the playground facing a crowd of unfriendly faces. Children can be the most cruel creatures alive. They have the herd instinct of prejudice against any outsider, and they are merciless in its indulgence. Emily was a stranger and one of the proud Murrays — two counts against her. And there was about her, small and ginghamed and sunbonneted as she was, a certain reserve and dignity and fineness that they resented. And they resented the level way she looked at them, with that disdainful face under cloudy black hair, instead of being shy and drooping as became an interloper on probation.

“You are a proud one,” said Blackeyes. “Oh, my, you may have buttoned boots, but you are living on charity.”

Emily had not wanted to put on the buttoned boots. She wanted to go barefoot as she had always done in summer. But Aunt Elizabeth had told her that no child from New Moon had ever gone barefoot to school.

“Oh, just look at the baby apron,” laughed another girl, with a head of chestnut curls.

Now Emily flushed. This was indeed the vulnerable point in her armour. Delighted at her success in drawing blood the curled one tried again.

“Is that your grandmother’s sunbonnet?”

There was a chorus of giggles.

“Oh, she wears a sunbonnet to save her complexion,” said a bigger girl. “That’s the Murray pride. The Murrays are rotten with pride, my mother says.”

“You’re awful ugly,” said a fat, squat little miss, nearly as broad as she was long. “Your ears look like a cat’s.”

“You needn’t be so proud,” said Blackeyes. “Your kitchen ceiling isn’t plastered even.”

“And your Cousin Jimmy is an idiot,” said Chestnut-curls.

“He isn’t!” cried Emily. “He has more sense than any of you. You can say what you like about me but you are not going to insult my family. If you say one more word about them I’ll look you over with the evil eye.”

Nobody understood what this threat meant, but that made it all the more effective. It produced a brief silence. Then the baiting began again in a different form.

“Can you sing?” asked a thin, freckled girl, who yet contrived to be very pretty in spite of thinness and freckles.

“No,” said Emily.

“Can you dance?”

“No.”

“Can you sew?”

“No.”

“Can you cook?”

“No.”

“Can you knit lace?”

“No.”

“Can you crochet?”

“No.”

“Then what can you do?” said the Freckled-one in a contemptuous tone.

“I can write poetry,” said Emily, without in the least meaning to say it. But at that instant she knew she could write poetry. And with this queer unreasonable conviction came — the flash! Right there, surrounded by hostility and suspicion, fighting alone for her standing, without backing or advantage, came the wonderful moment when soul seemed to cast aside the bonds of flesh and spring upward to the stars. The rapture and delight on Emily’s face amazed and enraged her foes. They thought it a manifestation of Murray pride in an uncommon accomplishment.

“You lie,” said Blackeyes bluntly.

“A Starr does not lie,” retorted Emily. The flash was gone, but its uplift remained. She looked them all over with a cool detachment that quelled them temporarily.

“Why don’t you like me?” she asked directly.

There was no reply. Emily looked straight at Chestnut-curls and repeated her question. Chestnut-curls felt herself compelled to answer it.

“Because you ain’t a bit like us,” she muttered.

“I wouldn’t want to be,” said Emily scornfully.

“Oh, my, you are one of the Chosen People,” mocked Blackeyes.

“Of course I am,” retorted Emily.

She walked away to the schoolhouse, conqueror in that battle.

But the forces against her were not so easily cowed. There was much whispering and plotting after she had gone in, a conference with some of the boys, and a handing over of bedizened pencils and chews of gum for value received.

An agreeable sense of victory and the afterglow of the flash carried Emily through the afternoon in spite of the fact that Miss Brownell ridiculed her for her mistakes in spelling. Miss Brownell was very fond of ridiculing her pupils. All the girls in the class giggled except one who had not been there in the morning and was consequently at the tail. Emily had been wondering who she was. She was as unlike the rest of the girls as

Emily herself, but in a totally different style. She was tall, oddly dressed in an overlong dress of faded, striped print, and barefooted. Her thick hair, cut short, fluffed out all around her head in a bushy wave that seemed to be of brilliant spun gold; and her glowing eyes were of a brown so light and translucent as to be almost amber. Her mouth was large, and she had a saucy, pronounced chin. Pretty she might not be called, but her face was so vivid and mobile that Emily could not drag her fascinated eyes from it. And she was the only girl in class who did not, sometime through the lesson, get a barb of sarcasm from Miss Brownell, though she made as many mistakes as the rest of them.

At recess one of the girls came up to Emily with a box in her hand. Emily knew that she was Rhoda Stuart and thought her very pretty and sweet. Rhoda had been in the crowd around her at the noon hour but she had not said anything. She was dressed in crispy pink gingham; she had smooth, lustrous braids of sugar-brown hair, big blue eyes, a rosebud mouth, doll-like features and a sweet voice. If Miss Brownell could be said to have a favourite it was Rhoda Stuart, and she seemed generally popular in her own set and much petted by the older girls.

“Here is a present for you,” she said sweetly.

Emily took the box unsuspectingly. Rhoda’s smile would have disarmed any suspicion. For a moment Emily was happily anticipant as she removed the cover. Then with a shriek she flung the box from her, and stood pale and trembling from head to foot. There was a snake in the box — whether dead or alive she did not know and did not care. For any snake Emily had a horror and repulsion she could not overcome. The very sight of one almost paralysed her.

A chorus of giggles ran around the porch. “Who’d be so scared of an old dead snake?” scoffed Blackeyes.

“Can you write poetry about that?” giggled Chestnut-curls.

“I hate you — I hate you!” cried Emily. “You are mean, hateful girls!”

“Calling names isn’t ladylike,” said the Freckled-one. “I thought a Murray would be too grand for that.”

“If you come to school tomorrow, Miss Starr,” said Blackeyes deliberately, “we are going to take that snake and put it around your neck.”

“Let me see you do it!” cried a clear, ringing voice. Into their midst with a bound came the girl with amber eyes and short hair. “Just let me see you do it, Jennie Strang!”

“This isn’t any of your business, Ilse Burnley,” muttered Jennie, sullenly.

“Oh, isn’t it? Don’t you sass me, Piggy-eyes.” Ilse walked up to the retreating Jennie and shook a sunburned fist in her face. “If I catch you teasing Emily Starr tomorrow with that snake again I’ll take it by the tail and you by your tail, and slash you across the face with it. Mind that, Piggy-eyes. Now you go and pick up that precious snake of yours and throw it down on the ash pile.”

Jennie actually went and did it. Ilse faced the others.

“Clear out, all of you, and leave the New Moon girl alone after this,” she said. “If I hear of any more meddling and sneaking I’ll slit your throats, and rip out your hearts and tear your eyes out. Yes, and I’ll cut off your ears and wear them pinned on my dress!”

Cowed by these ferocious threats, or by something in Ilse’s personality, Emily’s persecutors drifted away. Ilse turned to Emily.

“Don’t mind them,” she said contemptuously. “They’re jealous of you, that’s all — jealous because you live at New Moon and ride in a fringed-top buggy and wear buttoned boots. You smack their mugs if they give you any more of their jaw.”

Ilse vaulted the fence and tore off into the maple bush without another glance at Emily. Only Rhoda Stuart remained.

“Emily, I’m awful sorry,” she said, rolling her big blue eyes appealingly. “I didn’t know there was a snake in that box, cross my heart I didn’t. The girls just told me it was a present for you. You’re not mad at me, are you? Because I like you.”

Emily had been “mad” and hurt and outraged. But this little bit of friendliness melted her instantly. In a moment she and Rhoda had their arms around each other, parading across the playground.

“I’m going to ask Miss Brownell to let you sit with me,” said Rhoda. “I used to sit with Annie Gregg but she’s moved away. You’d like to sit with me, wouldn’t you?”

“I’d love it,” said Emily warmly. She was as happy as she had been miserable. Here was the friend of her dreams. Already she worshipped Rhoda.

“We ought to sit together,” said Rhoda importantly. “We belong to the two best families in Blair Water. Do you know that if my father had his rights he would be on the throne of England?”

“England!” said Emily, too amazed to be anything but an echo.

“Yes. We are descended from the kings of Scotland,” said Rhoda. “So of course we don’t ‘sociate with everybody. My father keeps store and I’m taking music lessons. Is your Aunt Elizabeth going to give you music lessons?”

“I don’t know.”

“She ought to. She is very rich, isn’t she?”

“I don’t know,” said Emily again. She wished Rhoda would not ask such questions. Emily thought it was hardly good manners. But surely a descendant of the Stuart kings ought to know the rules of breeding, if anybody did.

“She’s got an awful temper, hasn’t she?” asked Rhoda.

“No, she hasn’t!” cried Emily.

“Well, she nearly killed your Cousin Jimmy in one of her rages,” said Rhoda. “That’s true — Mother told me. Why doesn’t your Aunt Laura get married? Has she got a beau? What wages does your Aunt Elizabeth pay your Cousin Jimmy?”

“I don’t know.”

“Well,” said Rhoda, rather disappointedly. “I suppose you haven’t been at New Moon long enough to find things out. But it must be very different from what you’ve been used to, I guess. Your father was as poor as a church mouse, wasn’t he?”

“My father was a very, very rich man,” said Emily deliberately.

Rhoda stared.

“I thought he hadn’t a cent.”

“Neither he had. But people can be rich without money.”

“I don’t see how. But anyhow, you’ll be rich some day — your Aunt Elizabeth will likely leave you all her money, Mother says. So I don’t care if you are living on charity — I love you and I’m going to stick up for you. Have you got a beau, Emily?”

“No,” cried Emily, blushing violently and quite scandalized at the idea. “Why, I’m only eleven.”

“Oh, everybody in our class has a beau. Mine is Teddy Kent. I shook hands with him after I’d counted nine stars for nine nights without missing a night. If you do that the first boy you shake hands with afterwards is to be your beau. But it’s awful hard to do. It took me all winter. Teddy wasn’t in school to-day — he’s been sick all June. He’s the best-looking boy in Blair Water. You’ll have to have a beau, too, Emily.”

“I won’t,” declared Emily angrily. “I don’t know a thing about beaux and I won’t have one.”

Rhoda tossed her head.

“Oh, I s’pose you think there’s nobody good enough for you, living at New Moon. Well, you won’t be able to play Clap-in-and-clap-out if you haven’t a beau.”

Emily knew nothing of the mysteries of Clap-in-and-clap-out, and didn’t care. Anyway, she wasn’t going to have a beau and she repeated this in such decided tones that Rhoda deemed it wise to drop the subject.

Emily was rather glad when the bell rang. Miss Brownell granted Rhoda’s request quite graciously and Emily transferred her goods and chattels to Rhoda’s seat. Rhoda whispered a good deal during the last hour and Emily got scolded for it but did not mind.

“I’m going to have a birthday party the first week in July, and I’m going to invite you, if your aunts will let you come. I’m not going to have Ilse Burnley though.”

“Don’t you like her?”

“No. She’s an awful tomboy. And then her father is an infidel. And so’s she. She always spells ‘God’ with a little ‘g’ in her dictation. Miss

Brownell scolds her for it, but she does it right along. Miss Brownell won't whip her because she's setting her cap for Dr Burnley. But Ma says she won't get him because he hates women. I don't think it's proper to 'sociate with such people. Ilse is an awful wild queer girl and has an awful temper. So has her father. She doesn't chum with anybody. Isn't it ridic'lus the way she wears her hair? You ought to have a bang, Emily. They're all the rage and you'd look well with one because you've such a high forehead. It would make a real beauty of you. My, but you have lovely hair, and your hands are just lovely. All the Murrays have pretty hands. And you have the sweetest eyes, Emily."

Emily had never received so many compliments in her life. Rhoda laid flattery on with a trowel. Her head was quite turned and she went home from school determined to ask Aunt Elizabeth to cut her hair in a bang. If it would make a beauty of her it must be compassed somehow. And she would also ask Aunt Elizabeth if she might wear her Venetian beads to school next day.

"The other girls may respect me more then," she thought.

She was alone from the crossroads, where she had parted company with Rhoda, and she reviewed the events of the day with a feeling that, after all, she had kept the Starr flag flying, except for a temporary reverse in the matter of the snake. School was very different from what she had expected it to be, but that was the way in life, she had heard Ellen Greene say, and you just had to make the best of it. Rhoda was a darling; and there was something about Ilse Burnley that one liked; and as for the rest of the girls Emily got square with them by pretending she saw them all being hanged in a row for frightening her to death with a snake, and felt no more resentment towards them, although some of the things that had been said to her rankled bitterly in her heart for many a day. She had no father to tell them to, and no account-book to write them out in, so she could not exorcise them.

She had no speedy chance to ask for a bang, for there was company at New Moon and her aunts were busy getting ready an elaborate supper. But

when the preserves were brought on Emily snatched the opportunity of a lull in the older conversation.

“Aunt Elizabeth,” she said, “can I have a bang?”

Aunt Elizabeth looked her disdain.

“No,” she said, “I do not approve of bangs. Of all the silly fashions that have come in nowadays, bangs are the silliest.”

“Oh, Aunt Elizabeth, do let me have a bang. It would make a beauty of me — Rhoda says so.”

“It would take a good deal more than a bang to do that, Emily. We will not have bangs at New Moon — except on the Molly cows. They are the only creatures that should wear bangs.”

Aunt Elizabeth smiled triumphantly around the table — Aunt Elizabeth did smile sometimes when she thought she had silenced some small person by exquisite ridicule. Emily understood that it was no use to hope for bangs. Loveliness did not lie that way for her. It was mean of Aunt Elizabeth — mean. She heaved a sigh of disappointment and dismissed the idea for the present. There was something else she wanted to know.

“Why doesn’t Ilse Burnley’s father believe in God?” she asked.

“‘Cause of the trick her mother played him,” said Mr Slade, with a chuckle. Mr Slade was a fat, jolly-looking old man with bushy hair and whiskers. He had already said some things Emily could not understand and which had seemed greatly to embarrass his very ladylike wife.

“What trick did Ilse’s mother play?” asked Emily, all agog with interest.

Now Aunt Laura looked at Aunt Elizabeth and Aunt Elizabeth looked at Aunt Laura. Then the latter said: “Run out and feed the chickens, Emily.”

Emily rose with dignity.

“You might just as well tell me that Ilse’s mother isn’t to be talked about and I will obey you. I understand perfectly what you mean,” she said as she left the table.

A Special Providence

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Emily was sure on that first day at school that she would never like it. She must go, she knew, in order to get an education and be ready to earn her own living; but it would always be what Ellen Greene solemnly called “a cross.” Consequently Emily felt quite astonished when, after going to school a few days, it dawned upon her that she was liking it. To be sure, Miss Brownell did not improve on acquaintance; but the other girls no longer tormented her — indeed, to her amazement, they seemed suddenly to forget all that had happened and hailed her as one of themselves. She was admitted to the fellowship of the pack and, although in some occasional tiff she got a dig about baby aprons and Murray pride, there was no more hostility, veiled or open. Besides, Emily was quite able to give “digs” herself, as she learned more about the girls and their weak points, and she could give them with such merciless lucidity and irony that the others soon learned not to provoke them. Chestnut-curls, whose name was Grace Wells, and the Freckled-one, whose name was Carrie King, and Jennie Strang became quite chummy with her, and Jennie sent chews of gum and tissue thumb-papers across the aisle instead of giggles. Emily allowed them all to enter the outer court of her temple of friendship but only Rhoda was admitted to the inner shrine. As for Ilse Burnley, she did not appear after that first day. Ilse, so Rhoda said, came to school or not, just as she liked. Her father never bothered about her. Emily always felt a certain hankering to know more of Ilse, but it did not seem likely to be gratified.

Emily was insensibly becoming happy again. Already she felt as if she belonged to this old cradle of her family. She thought a great deal about the old Murrays; she liked to picture them revisiting the glimpses of New Moon — Great-grandmother rubbing up her candlesticks and making cheeses; Great-aunt Miriam stealing about looking for her lost treasure;

homesick Great-great-aunt Elizabeth stalking about in her bonnet; Captain George, the dashing, bronzed sea-captain, coming home with the spotted shells of the Indies; Stephen, the beloved of all, smiling from its windows; her own mother dreaming of Father — they all seemed as real to her as if she had known them in life.

She still had terrible hours when she was overwhelmed by grief for her father and when all the splendours of New Moon could not stifle the longing for the shabby little house in the hollow where they had loved each other so. Then Emily fled to some secret corner and cried her heart out, emerging with red eyes that always seemed to annoy Aunt Elizabeth. Aunt Elizabeth had become used to having Emily at New Moon but she had not drawn any nearer to the child. This hurt Emily always; but Aunt Laura and Cousin Jimmy loved her and she had Saucy Sal and Rhoda, fields creamy with clover, soft dark trees against amber skies, and the madcap music the Wind Woman made in the firs behind the barns when she blew straight up from the gulf; her days became vivid and interesting, full of little pleasures and delights, like tiny, opening, golden buds on the tree of life. If she could only have had her old yellow account-book, or some equivalent, she could have been fully content. She missed it next to her father, and its enforced burning was something for which she held Aunt Elizabeth responsible and for which she felt she could never wholly forgive her. It did not seem possible to get any substitute. As Cousin Jimmy had said, writing-paper of any kind was scarce at New Moon. Letters were seldom written, and when they were a sheet of notepaper sufficed. Emily dared not ask Aunt Elizabeth for any. There were times when she felt she would burst if she couldn't write out some of the things that came to her. She found a certain safety valve in writing on her slate in school; but these scribblings had to be rubbed off sooner or later — which left Emily with a sense of loss — and there was always the danger that Miss Brownell would see them. That, Emily felt, would be unendurable. No stranger eyes must behold these sacred productions. Sometimes she let Rhoda read them, though Rhoda rasped her by giggling over her finest

flights. Emily thought Rhoda as near perfection as a human being could be, but giggling was her fault.

But there is a destiny which shapes the ends of young misses who are born with the itch for writing tingling in their baby fingertips, and in the fullness of time this destiny gave to Emily the desire of her heart — gave it to her, too, on the very day when she most needed it. That was the day, the ill-starred day, when Miss Brownell elected to show the fifth class, by example as well as precept, how the Bugle Song should be read.

Standing on the platform Miss Brownell, who was not devoid of a superficial, elocutionary knack, read those three wonderful verses. Emily, who should have been doing a sum in long division, dropped her pencil and listened entranced. She had never heard the Bugle Song before — but now she heard it — and saw it — the rose-red splendour falling on those storied, snowy summits and ruined castles — the lights that never were on land or sea streaming over the lakes — she heard the wild echoes flying through the purple valleys and the misty passes — the mere sound of the words seemed to make an exquisite echo in her soul — and when Miss Brownell came to “Horns of elfland faintly blowing” Emily trembled with delight. She was snatched out of herself. She forgot everything but the magic of that unequalled line — she sprang from her seat, knocking her slate to the floor with a clatter, she rushed up the aisle, she caught Miss Brownell’s arm.

“Oh, teacher,” she cried with passionate earnestness, “read that line over again — oh, read that line over again!”

Miss Brownell, thus suddenly halted in her elocutionary display, looked down into a rapt, uplifted face where great purplish-grey eyes were shining with the radiance of a divine vision — and Miss Brownell was angry. Angry with this breach of her strict discipline — angry with this unseemly display of interest in a third-class atom whose attention should have been focused on long division. Miss Brownell shut her book and shut her lips and gave Emily a resounding slap on her face.

“Go right back to your seat and mind your own business, Emily Starr,” said Miss Brownell, her cold eyes malignant with her fury.

Emily, thus dashed to earth, moved back to her seat in a daze. Her smitten cheek was crimson, but the wound was in her heart. One moment ago in the seventh heaven — and now this — pain, humiliation, misunderstanding! She could not bear it. What had she done to deserve it? She had never been slapped in her life before. The degradation and the injustice ate into her soul. She could not cry — this was “a grief too deep for tears” — she went home from school in a suppressed anguish of bitterness and shame and resentment — an anguish that had no outlet, for she dared not tell her story at New Moon. Aunt Elizabeth, she felt sure, would say that Miss Brownell had done quite right, and even Aunt Laura, kind and sweet as she was, would not understand. She would be grieved because Emily had misbehaved in school and had had to be punished.

“Oh, if I could only tell Father all about it!” thought Emily.

She could not eat any supper — she did not think she would ever be able to eat again. And oh, how she hated that unjust, horrid Miss Brownell! She could never forgive her — never! If there were only some way in which she could get square with Miss Brownell! Emily, sitting small and pale and quiet at the New Moon supper-table, was a seething volcano of wounded feeling and misery and pride — ay, pride! Worse even than the injustice was the sting of humiliation over this thing that had happened. She, Emily Byrd Starr, on whom no hand had ever before been ungently laid, had been slapped like a naughty baby before the whole school. Who could endure this and live?

Then destiny stepped in and drew Aunt Laura to the sitting-room bookcase to look in its lower compartment for a certain letter she wanted to see. She took Emily with her to show her a curious old snuff-box that had belonged to Hugh Murray, and in rummaging for it lifted out a big, flat bundle of dusty paper — paper of a deep pink colour in oddly long and narrow sheets.

“It’s time these old letterbills were burned,” she said. “What a pile of them! They’ve been here gathering dust for years and they are no earthly good. Father once kept the postoffice here at New Moon, you know, Emily. The mail came only three times a week then, and each day there was one

of these long red ‘letterbills,’ as they were called. Mother always kept them, though when once used they were of no further use. But I’m going to burn them right away.”

“Oh, Aunt Laura,” gasped Emily, so torn between desire and fear that she could hardly speak. “Oh, don’t do that — give them to me — please give them to me.”

“Why, child, what ever do you want of them?”

“Oh, Aunt, they have such lovely blank backs for writing on. Please, Aunt Laura, it would be a sin to burn those letterbills.”

“You can have them, dear. Only you’d better not let Elizabeth see them.”

“I won’t — I won’t,” breathed Emily.

She gathered her precious booty into her arms and fairly ran upstairs — and then upstairs again into the garret, where she already had her “favourite haunt,” in which her uncomfortable habit of thinking of things thousands of miles away could not vex Aunt Elizabeth. This was the quiet corner of the dormer-window, where shadows always moved about, softly and swingingly, and beautiful mosaics patterned the bare floor. From it one could see over the treetops right down to the Blair Water. The walls were hung around with great bundles of soft fluffy rolls, all ready for spinning, and hanks of untwisted yarn. Sometimes Aunt Laura spun on the great wheel at the other end of the garret and Emily loved the whirl of it.

In the recess of the dormer-window she crouched — breathlessly she selected a letterbill and extracted a lead-pencil from her pocket. An old sheet of cardboard served as a desk; she began to write feverishly.

“Dear Father” — and then she poured out her tale of the day — of her rapture and her pain — writing heedlessly and intently until the sunset faded into dim, starlitten twilight. The chickens went unfed — Cousin Jimmy had to go himself for the cows — Saucy Sal got no new milk — Aunt Laura had to wash the dishes — what mattered it? Emily, in the delightful throes of literary composition, was lost to all worldly things.

When she had covered the backs of four letterbills she could see to write no more. But she had emptied out her soul and it was once more free

from evil passions. She even felt curiously indifferent to Miss Brownell. Emily folded up her letterbills and wrote clearly across the packet.

Mr Douglas Starr,
On the Road to Heaven.

Then she stepped softly across to an old, worn-out sofa in a far corner and knelt down, stowing away her letter and her “letterbills” snugly on a little shelf formed by a board nailed across it underneath. Emily had discovered this one day when playing in the garret and had noted it as a lovely hiding-place for secret documents. Nobody would ever come across them there. She had writing-paper enough to last for months — there must be hundreds of those jolly old letterbills.

“Oh,” cried Emily, dancing down the garret stairs, “I feel as if I was made out of star-dust.”

Thereafter few evenings passed on which Emily did not steal up to the garret and write a letter, long or short, to her father. The bitterness died out of her grief. Writing to him seemed to bring him so near; and she told him everything, with a certain honesty of confession that was characteristic of her — her triumphs, her failures, her joys, her sorrows, everything went down on the letterbills of a Government which had not been so economical of paper as it afterwards became. There was fully half a yard of paper in each bill and Emily wrote a small hand and made the most of every inch.

“I like New Moon. It’s so stately and splendid here,” she told her father. “And it seems as if we must be very aristokratik when we have a sun dial. I can’t help feeling proud of it all. I am afraid I have too much pride and so I ask God every night to take most of it away but not quite all. It is very easy to get a reputation for pride in Blair Water school. If you walk straight and hold your head up you are a proud one. Rhoda is proud, too, because her father ought to be King of England. I wonder how Queen Victoria would feel if she knew that. It’s very wonderful to have a friend who would be a princess if every one had their rites. I love Rhoda with all my heart. She is so sweet and kind. But I don’t like her giggles. And when I told her I could see the school wallpaper small in the air she said You lie.

It hurt me awfully to have my dearest friend say that to me. And it hurt me worse when I woke up in the night and thought about it. I had to stay awake ever so long, too, because I was tired lying on one side and I was afraid to turn over because Aunt Elizabeth would think I was figitting.

“I didn’t dare tell Rhoda about the Wind Woman because I suppose that really is a kind of lie, though she seems so real to me. I hear her now singing up on the roof around the big chimneys. I have no Emily-in-the-glass here. The looking-glasses are all too high up in the rooms I’ve been in. I’ve never been in the lookout. It is always locked. It was Mother’s room and Cousin Jimmy says her father locked it up after she ran away with you and Aunt Elizabeth keeps it locked still out of respect to his memory, though Cousin Jimmy says Aunt Elizabeth used to fight with her father something scandalus when he was alive though no outsider knew of it because of the Murray pride. I feel that way myself. When Rhoda asked me if Aunt Elizabeth burned candles because she was old-fashioned I answered hawtily no, it was a Murray tradishun. Cousin Jimmy has told me all the tradishuns of the Murrays. Saucy Sal is very well and bosses the barns but still she will not have kittens and I can’t understand it. I asked Aunt Elizabeth about it and she said nice little girls didn’t talk about such things but I cannot see why kittens are improper. When Aunt Elizabeth is away Aunt Laura and I smuggle Sal into the house but when Aunt Elizabeth comes back I always feel guilty and wish I hadn’t. But the next time I do it again. I think that very strange. I never hear about dear Mike. I wrote Ellen Greene and asked about him and she replied and never mentioned Mike but told me all about her roomatism. As if I cared about her roomatism.

“Rhoda is going to have a birthday party and she is going to invite me. I am so excited. You know I never was to a party before. I think about it a great deal and picture it out. Rhoda is not going to invite all the girls but only a favered few. I hope Aunt Elizabeth will let me ware my white dress and good hat. Oh, Father, I pinned that lovely picture of the lace ball dress up on the wall of Aunt Elizabeth’s room, just like I had it at home and Aunt Elizabeth took it down and burned it and skolded me for making pin

marks in the paper. I said Aunt Elizabeth you should not have burned that picture. I wanted to have it when I grow up to have a dress made like it for balls. And Aunt Elizabeth said Do you expect to attend many balls if I may ask and I said Yes when I am rich and famus and Aunt Elizabeth said Yes when the moon is made of green cheese.

“I saw Dr Burnley yesterday when he came over to buy some eggs from Aunt Elizabeth. I was disappointed because he looks just like other people. I thought a man who didn’t believe in God would look queer in some way. He did not sware either and I was sorry for I have never heard any one sware and I am very angshus to. He has big yellow eyes like Ilse and a loud voice and Rhoda says when he gets mad you can hear him yelling all over Blair Water. There is some mystery about Ilse’s mother which I cannot fathom. Dr Burnley and Ilse live alone. Rhoda says Dr Burnley says he will have no devils of women in that house. That speech is wikked but striking. Old Mrs Simms goes over and cooks dinner and supper for them and then vamooses and they get their own breakfast. The doctor sweeps out the house now and then and Ilse never does anything but run wild. The doctor never smiles so Rhoda says. He must be like King Henry the Second.

“I would like to get akwanted with Ilse. She isn’t as sweet as Rhoda but I like her looks, too. But she doesn’t come to school much and Rhoda says I mustn’t have any chum but her or she will cry her eyes out. Rhoda loves me as much as I love her. We are both going to pray that we may live together all our lives and die the same day.

“Aunt Elizabeth always puts up my school dinner for me. She won’t give me anything but plain bread and butter but she cuts good thick slices and the butter is thick too and never has the horrid taste Ellen Greene’s butter used to have. And Aunt Laura slips in a cooky or an apple turnover when Aunt Elizabeth’s back is turned. Aunt Elizabeth says apple turnovers are not helthy for me. Why is it that the nicest things never are helthy, Father? Ellen Greene used to say that too.

“My teacher’s name is Miss Brownell. I don’t like the cut of her jib. (That is a naughtical frays that Cousin Jimmy uses. I know frays is not

spelled right but there is no dixonary at New Moon but that is the sound of it.) She is too sarkastik and she likes to make you rediklus. Then she laughs at you in a disagreeable, snorting way. But I forgave her for slapping me and I took a bouquet to her to school next day to make up. She receeved it very coldly and let it fade on her desk. In a story she would have wepped on my neck. I don't know whether it is any use forgiving people or not. Yes, it is, it makes you feel more comfortable yourself. You never had to ware baby aprons and sunbonnets because you were a boy so you can't understand how I feel about it. And the aprons are made of such good stuff that they will never ware out and it will be years before I grow out of them. But I have a white dress for church with a black silk sash and a white leghorn hat with black bows and black kid slippers, and I feel very elegant in them. I wish I could have a bang but Aunt Elizabeth will not hear of it. Rhoda told me I had beautiful eyes. I wish she hadn't. I have always suspekted my eyes were beautiful but I was not sure. Now that I know they are I'm afraid I'll always be wondering if people notis it. I have to go to bed at half past eight and I don't like it but I sit up in bed and look out of the window till it gets dark, so I get square with Aunt Elizabeth that way, and I listen to the sound the sea makes. I like it now though it always makes me feel sorrowful, but it's a kind of a nice sorrow. I have to sleep with Aunt Elizabeth and I don't like that either because if I move ever so little she says I figit but she admits that I don't kick. And she won't let me put the window up. She doesn't like fresh air or light in the house. The parlour is dark as a toomb. I went in one day and rolled up all the blinds and Aunt Elizabeth was horrified and called me a little hussy and gave me the Murray look. You would suppose I had committed a crime. I felt so insulted that I came up to the garret and wrote a deskription of myself being drowned on a letterbill and then I felt better. Aunt Elizabeth said I was never to go into the parlour again without permission but I don't want to. I am afraid of the parlour. All the walls are hung over with pictures of our ancestors and there is not one goodlooking person among them except Grandfather Murray who looks handsome but very cross. The spare-room is upstairs and is just as gloomy as the parlour. Aunt Elizabeth only lets

distingwished people sleep there. I like the kitchen in daytime, and the garret and the cookhouse and the sitting-room and the hall because of the lovely red front door and I love the dairy, but I don't like the other New Moon rooms. Oh, I forgot the cellar cubbord. I love to go down there and look at the beautiful rows of jam and jelly pots. Cousin Jimmy says it is a New Moon tradishun that the jam pots must never be empty. What a lot of tradishuns New Moon has. It is a very spashus house, and the trees are lovely. I have named the three lombardys at the garden gate the Three Princesses and I have named the old summer house Emily's Bower, and the big apple-tree by the old orchard gate the Praying Tree because it holds up its long boughs exactly as Mr Dare holds up his arms in church when he prays.

"Aunt Elizabeth has given me the little right hand top burow drawer to keep my things in.

"Oh, Father dear, I have made a great diskoverry. I wish I had made it when you were alive for I think you'd have liked to know. I can write poetry. Perhaps I could have written it long ago if I'd tried. But after that first day in school I felt I was bound in honnour to try and it is so easy. There is a little curly black-covered book in Aunt Elizabeth's bookcase called Thompson's Seasons and I decided I would write a poem on a season and the first three lines are,

Now Autumn comes ripe with the peeche and pear,
The sportsman's horn is heard throughout the land,
And the poor partridge fluttering falls dead.

"Of course there are no peeches in P. E. Island and I never heard a sportsman's horn here either, but you don't have to stick too close to facts in poetry. I filled a whole letterbill with it and then I ran and read it to Aunt Laura. I thought she would be overjoyed to find she had a niece who could write poetry but she took it very coolly and said it didn't sound much like poetry. It's blank verse I cried. Very blank said Aunt Elizabeth sarkastically though I hadn't asked her opinion. But I think I will write ryming poetry after this so that there will be no mistake about it and I

intend to be a poetess when I grow up and become famus. I hope also that I will be silph-like. A poetess should be silph-like. Cousin Jimmy makes poetry too. He has made over 1000 pieces but he never writes any down but carries them in his head. I offered to give him some of my letterbills — for he is very kind to me — but he said he was too old to learn new habits. I haven't heard any of his poetry yet because the spirit hasn't moved him but I am very angshus to and I am sorry they don't fatten the pigs till the fall. I like Cousin Jimmy more and more all the time, except when he takes his queer spells of looking and talking. Then he fritens me but they never last long. I have read a good many of the books in the New Moon bookcase. A history of the reformation in France, very relijus and sad. A little fat book deskribing the months in England and the afoursaid Thompson's Seasons. I like to read them because they have so many pretty words in them, but I don't like the feel of them. The paper is so rough and thick it makes me creepy. Travels in Spain, very fassinating, with lovely smooth shiny paper, a missionary book on the Pacific Islands, pictures very interesting because of the way the heathen chiefs arrange their hair. After they became Christians they cut it off which I think was a pity. Mrs Hemans Poems. I am passhunately fond of poetry, also of stories about desert islands. Rob Roy, a novel, but I only read a little of it when Aunt Elizabeth said I must stop because I must not read novels. Aunt Laura says to read it on the sly. I don't see why it wouldn't be all right to obey Aunt Laura but I have a queer feeling about it and I haven't yet. A lovely Tiger-book, full of pictures and stories of tigers that make me feel so nice and shivery. The Royal Road, also relijus but some fun in it so very good for Sundays. Reuben and Grace, a story but not a novel, because Reuben and Grace are brother and sister and there is no getting married. Little Katy and Jolly Jim, same as above but not so exciting and traggic. Nature's Mighty Wonders which is good and improving. Alice in Wonderland, which is perfectly lovely, and the Memoirs of Anzonetta B. Peters who was converted at seven and died at twelve. When anybody asked for a question she answered with a hymn verse. That is after she was converted. Before that she spoke English. Aunt Elizabeth told me I ought to try to be

like Anzonetta. I think I might be an Alice under more favorable circumstances but I am sure I can never be as good as Anzonetta was and I don't believe I want to be because she never had any fun. She got sick as soon as she was converted and suffered agonies for years. Besides I am sure that if I talked hymns to people it would excite ridicule. I tried it once. Aunt Laura asked me the other day if I would like blue stripes better than red in my next winter's stockings and I answered just as Anzonetta did when asked a similar question, only different, about a sack,

Jesus Thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress.

And Aunt Laura said I was crazy and Aunt Elizabeth said I was irreverent. So I know it wouldn't work. Besides, Anzonetta couldn't eat anything for years having ulcers in her stomach and I am pretty fond of good eating.

"Old Mr Wales on the Derry Pond Road is dying of cancer. Jennie Strang says his wife has her morning all ready.

"I wrote a biography of Saucy Sal to-day and a description of the road in Lofty John's bush. I will pin them to this letter so you can read them too. Good night my beloved Father.

"Yours most obedient humble servant,

"Emily B. Starr.

"P. S. I think Aunt Laura loves me. I like to be loved, Father dear.

"E. B. S."

Growing Pains

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There was a great deal of suppressed excitement in school during the last week in June, the cause thereof being Rhoda Stuart's birthday party, which was to take place early in July. The amount of heart-burning was incredible. Who was to be invited? That was the great question. There were some who knew they wouldn't and some who knew they would; but there were more who were in truly horrible suspense. Everybody paid court to Emily because she was Rhoda's dearest friend and might conceivably have some voice in the selection of guests. Jennie Strang even went as far as bluntly to offer Emily a beautiful white box with a gorgeous picture of Queen Victoria on the cover, to keep her pencils in, if she would procure her an invitation. Emily refused the bribe and said grandly that she could not interfere in such a delicate matter. Emily really did put on some airs about it. She was sure of her invitation. Rhoda had told her about the party weeks before and had talked it all over with her. It was to be a very grand affair — a birthday cake covered with pink icing and adorned with ten tall pink candles — ice-cream and oranges — and written invitations on pink, gilt-edged notepaper sent through the postoffice — this last being an added touch of exclusiveness. Emily dreamed about that party day and night and had her present all ready for Rhoda — a pretty hair-ribbon which Aunt Laura had brought from Shrewsbury.

On the first Sunday in July Emily found herself sitting beside Jennie Strang in Sunday-school for the opening exercises. Generally she and Rhoda sat together, but now Rhoda was sitting three seats ahead with a strange little girl — a very gay and gorgeous little girl, dressed in blue silk, with a large, flower-wreathed leghorn hat on her elaborately curled hair, white lacework stockings on her pudgy legs and a bang that came clean down to her eyes. Not all her fine feathers could make a really fine

bird of her, however; she was not in the least pretty and her expression was cross and contemptuous.

“Who is the girl sitting with Rhoda?” whispered Emily.

“Oh, she’s Muriel Porter,” answered Jennie. “She’s a towny, you know. She’s come out to spend her vacation with her aunt, Jane Beatty. I hate her. If I was her I’d never dream of wearing blue with a skin as dark as hers. But the Porters are rich and Muriel thinks she’s a wonder. They say Rhoda and her have been awful thick since she came out — Rhoda’s always chasing after anybody she thinks is up in the world.”

Emily stiffened up. She was not going to listen to disparaging remarks about her friends. Jennie felt the stiffening and changed her note.

“Anyway, I’m glad I’m not invited to Rhoda’s old party. I wouldn’t want to go when Muriel Porter will be there, putting on her airs.”

“How do you know you are not invited?” wondered Emily.

“Why, the invitations went out yesterday. Didn’t you get yours?”

“No — o — o.”

“Did you get your mail?”

“Yes — Cousin Jimmy got it.”

“Well, maybe Mrs Beecher forgot to give it to him. Likely you’ll get it tomorrow.”

Emily agreed that it was likely. But a queer cold sensation of dismay had invaded her being, which was not removed by the fact that after Sunday-school Rhoda strutted away with Muriel Porter without a glance at any one else. On Monday Emily herself went to the postoffice, but there was no pink envelope for her. She cried herself to sleep that night, but did not quite give up hope until Tuesday had passed. Then she faced the terrible truth — that she — she, Emily Byrd Starr, of New Moon — had not been invited to Rhoda’s party. The thing was incredible. There must be a mistake somewhere. Had Cousin Jimmy lost the invitation on the road home? Had Rhoda’s grownup sister who wrote the invitations overlooked her name? Had — Emily’s unhappy doubts were for ever resolved into bitter certainty by Jennie, who joined her as she left the postoffice. There was a malicious light in Jennie’s beady eyes. Jennie liked Emily quite well

by now, in spite of their passage-at-arms on the day of their first meeting, but she liked to see her pride humbled for all that.

“So you’re not invited to Rhoda’s party after all.”

“No,” admitted Emily.

It was a very bitter moment for her. The Murray pride was sorely wrung — and, beneath the Murray pride, something else had been grievously wounded but was not yet quite dead.

“Well, I call it dirt mean,” said Jennie, quite honestly sympathetic in spite of her secret satisfaction. “After all the fuss she’s made over you, too! But that’s Rhoda Stuart all over. Deceitful is no name for her.”

“I don’t think she’s deceitful,” said Emily, loyal to the last ditch. “I believe there’s some mistake about my not being invited.”

Jennie stared.

“Then you don’t know the reason? Why, Beth Beatty told me the whole story. Muriel Porter hates you and she just up and told Rhoda that she would not go to her party if you were invited. And Rhoda was so crazy to have a town girl there that she promised she wouldn’t invite you.”

“Muriel Porter doesn’t know me,” gasped Emily. “How can she hate me?”

Jennie grinned impishly.

“I can tell you. She’s dead struck on Fred Stuart and Fred knows it and he teased her by praising you up to her — told her you were the sweetest girl in Blair Water and he meant to have you for his girl when you were a little older. And Muriel was so mad and jealous she made Rhoda leave you out. I wouldn’t care if I was you. A Murray of New Moon is away above such trash. As for Rhoda not being deceitful, I can tell you she is. Why, she told you that she didn’t know that snake was in the box, when it was her thought of doing it in the first place.”

Emily was too crushed to reply. She was glad that Jennie had to switch off down her own lane and leave her alone. She hurried home, afraid that she could not keep the tears back until she got there. Disappointment about the party — humiliation over the insult — all were swallowed up in the anguish of a faith betrayed and a trust outraged. Her love of Rhoda was

quite dead now and Emily smarted to the core of her soul with the pain of the blow that had killed it. It was a child's tragedy — and all the more bitter for that, since there was no one to understand. Aunt Elizabeth told her that birthday parties were all nonsense and that the Stuarts were not a family that the Murrays had ever associated with. And even Aunt Laura, though she petted and comforted, did not realize how deep and grievous the hurt had been — so deep and grievous that Emily could not even write about it to her father, and had no outlet for the violence of emotion that racked her being.

The next Sunday Rhoda was alone in Sunday-school, Muriel Porter having been suddenly summoned back to town by her father's illness; and Rhoda looked sweetly towards Emily. But Emily sailed past her with a head held very high and scorn on every lineament. She would never have anything to do with Rhoda Stuart again — she couldn't. She despised Rhoda more than ever for trying to get back with her, now that the town girl for whom she had sacrificed her was gone. It was not for Rhoda she mourned — it was for the friendship that had been so dear to her. Rhoda had been dear and sweet on the surface at least, and Emily had found intense happiness in their companionship. Now it was gone and she could never, never love or trust anybody again. There lay the sting.

It poisoned everything. Emily was of a nature which even as a child, did not readily recover from or forget such a blow. She moped about New Moon, lost her appetite and grew thin. She hated to go to Sunday-school because she thought the other girls exulted in her humiliation and her estrangement from Rhoda. Some slight feeling of the kind there was, perhaps, but Emily morbidly exaggerated it. If two girls whispered or giggled together she thought she was being discussed and laughed at. If one of them walked home with her she thought it was out of condescending pity because she was friendless. For a month Emily was the most unhappy little being in Blair Water.

"I think I must have been put under a curse at birth," she reflected disconsolately.

Aunt Elizabeth had a more prosaic idea to account for Emily's langour and lack of appetite. She had come to the conclusion that Emily's heavy masses of hair "took from her strength" and that she would be much stronger and better if it were cut off. With Aunt Elizabeth to decide was to act. One morning she coolly informed Emily that her hair was to be "shingled."

Emily could not believe her ears.

"You don't mean that you are going to cut off my hair, Aunt Elizabeth," she exclaimed.

"Yes, I mean exactly that," said Aunt Elizabeth firmly. "You have entirely too much hair especially for hot weather. I feel sure that is why you have been so miserable lately. Now, I don't want any crying."

But Emily could not keep the tears back.

"Don't cut it all off," she pleaded. "Just cut a good big bang. Lots of the girls have their hair banged clean from the crown of their heads. That would take half my hair off and the rest won't take too much strength."

"There will be no bangs here," said Aunt Elizabeth. "I've told you so often enough. I'm going to shingle your hair close all over your head for the hot weather. You'll be thankful to me some day for it."

Emily felt anything but thankful just then.

"It's my one beauty," she sobbed, "it and my lashes. I suppose you want to cut off my lashes too."

Aunt Elizabeth did distrust those long, upcurled fringes of Emily's, which were an inheritance from the girlish stepmother, and too un-Murray-like to be approved; but she had no designs against them. The hair must go, however, and she curtly bade Emily wait there, without any fuss, until she got the scissors.

Emily waited — quite hopelessly. She must lose her lovely hair — the hair her father had been so proud of. It might grow again in time — if Aunt Elizabeth let it — but that would take years, and meanwhile what a fright she would be! Aunt Laura and Cousin Jimmy were out; she had no one to back her up; this horrible thing must happen.

Aunt Elizabeth returned with the scissors; they clicked suggestively as she opened them; that click, as if by magic, seemed to loosen something — some strange formidable power in Emily's soul. She turned deliberately around and faced her aunt. She felt her brows drawing together in an unaccustomed way — she felt an uprush as from unknown depths of some irresistible surge of energy.

“Aunt Elizabeth,” she said, looking straight at the lady with the scissors, “my hair is not going to be cut off. Let me hear no more of this.”

An amazing thing happened to Aunt Elizabeth. She turned pale — she laid the scissors down — she looked aghast for one moment at the transformed or possessed child before her — and then for the first time in her life Elizabeth Murray turned tail and fled — literally fled — to the kitchen.

“What is the matter, Elizabeth?” cried Laura, coming in from the cookhouse.

“I saw — Father — looking from her face,” gasped Elizabeth, trembling. “And she said, ‘Let me hear no more of this’ — just as he always said it — his very words.”

Emily overheard her and ran to the sideboard mirror. She had had, while she was speaking, an uncanny feeling of wearing somebody else's face instead of her own. It was vanishing now — but Emily caught a glimpse of it as it left — the Murray look, she supposed. No wonder it had frightened Aunt Elizabeth — it frightened herself — she was glad that it had gone. She shivered — she fled to her garret retreat and cried; but somehow, she knew that her hair would not be cut.

Nor was it; Aunt Elizabeth never referred to the matter again. But several days passed before she meddled much with Emily.

It was a rather curious fact that from that day Emily ceased to grieve over her lost friend. The matter had suddenly become of small importance. It was as if it had happened so long ago that nothing, save the mere emotionless memory of it, remained. Emily speedily regained appetite and animation, resumed her letters to her father and found that life tasted good again, marred only by a mysterious prescience that Aunt Elizabeth had it

in for her in regard to her defeat in the matter of her hair and would get even sooner or later.

Aunt Elizabeth “got even” within the week. Emily was to go on an errand to the shop. It was a broiling day and she had been allowed to go barefooted at home; but now she must put on boots and stockings. Emily rebelled — it was too hot — it was too dusty — she couldn’t walk that long half-mile in buttoned boots. Aunt Elizabeth was inexorable. No Murray must be seen barefooted away from home — and on they went. But the minute Emily was outside the New Moon gate she deliberately sat down, took them off, stowed them in a hole in the dyke, and pranced away barefooted.

She did her errand and returned with an untroubled conscience. How beautiful the world was — how softly blue was the great, round Blair Water — how glorious that miracle of buttercups in the wet field below Lofty John’s bush! At sight of it Emily stood stock still and composed a verse of poetry.

Buttercup, flower of the yellow dye,
I see thy cheerful face
Greeting and nodding everywhere
Careless of time and place.

In boggy field or public road
Or cultured garden’s pale
You sport your petals satin-soft,
And down within the vale.

So far, so good. But Emily wanted another verse to round the poem off properly and the divine afflatus seemed gone. She walked dreamily home, and by the time she reached New Moon she had got her verse and was reciting it to herself with an agreeable sense of completion.

You cast your loveliness around
Where’er you chance to be,

And you shall always, buttercup,
Be a flower dear to me.

Emily felt very proud. This was her third poem and undoubtedly her best. Nobody could say it was very blank. She must hurry up to the garret and write it on a letterbill. But Aunt Elizabeth was confronting her on the steps.

“Emily, where are your boots and stockings?”

Emily came back from cloudland with a disagreeable jolt. She had forgotten all about boots and stockings.

“In the hole by the gate,” she said flatly.

“You went to the store barefooted?”

“Yes.”

“After I had told you not to?”

This seemed to Emily a superfluous question and she did not answer it. But Aunt Elizabeth’s turn had come.

Ilse

Emily was locked in the spare-room and told that she must stay there until bedtime. She had pleaded against such a punishment in vain. She had tried to give the Murray look but it seemed that — in her case at any rate — it did not come at will.

“Oh, don’t shut me up alone there, Aunt Elizabeth,” she implored. “I know I was naughty — but don’t put me in the spare-room.”

Aunt Elizabeth was inexorable. She knew that it was a cruel thing to shut an over-sensitive child like Emily in that gloomy room. But she thought she was doing her duty. She did not realize and would not have for a moment believed that she was really wreaking her own smothered resentment with Emily for her defeat and fright on the day of the threatened hair-cutting. Aunt Elizabeth believed she had been stampeded on that occasion by a chance family resemblance coming out under stress, and she was ashamed of it. The Murray pride had smarted under that

humbling, and the smart ceased to annoy her only when she turned the key of the spare-room on the white-faced culprit.

Emily, looking very small and lost and lonely, her eyes full of such fear as should have no place in a child's eyes, shrank close against the door of the spare-room. It was better that way. She could not imagine things behind her then. And the room was so big and dim that a dreadful number of things could be imagined in it. Its bigness and dimness filled her with a terror against which she could not strive. Ever since she could remember she had had a horror of being shut up alone in semi-darkness. She was not frightened of twilight out-of-doors, but this shadowy, walled gloom made of the spare-room a place of dread.

The window was hung with heavy, dark-green material, reinforced by drawn slat blinds. The big canopied bed, jutting out from the wall into the middle of the floor, was high and rigid and curtained also with dark draperies. Anything might jump at her out of such a bed. What if some great black hand should suddenly reach out of it — reach right across the floor — and pluck at her? The walls, like those of the parlour, were adorned with pictures of departed relatives. There was such a large connection of dead Murrys. The glasses of their frames gave out weird reflections of the spectral threads of light struggling through the slat blinds. Worst of all, right across the room from her, high up on the top of the black wardrobe, was a huge, stuffed white Arctic owl, staring at her with uncanny eyes. Emily shrieked aloud when she saw it, and then cowered down in her corner aghast at the sound she had made in the great, silent, echoing room. She wished that something would jump out of the bed and put an end to her.

"I wonder what Aunt Elizabeth would feel like if I was found here dead," she thought, vindictively.

In spite of her fright she began to dramatize it and felt Aunt Elizabeth's remorse so keenly that she decided only to be unconscious and come back to life when everybody was sufficiently scared and penitent. But people had died in this room — dozens of them. According to Cousin Jimmy it was a New Moon tradition that when any member of the family

was near death he or she was promptly removed to the spare-room, to die amid surroundings of proper grandeur. Emily could see them dying, in that terrible bed. She felt that she was going to scream again, but she fought the impulse down. A Starr must not be a coward. Oh, that owl! Suppose, when she looked away from it and then looked back she would find that it had silently hopped down from the wardrobe and was coming towards her. Emily dared not look at it for fear that was just what had happened. Didn't the bed curtains stir and waver! She felt beads of cold perspiration on her forehead.

Then something did happen. A beam of sunlight struck through a small break in one of the slats of the blind and fell directly athwart the picture of Grandfather Murray hanging over the mantelpiece. It was a crayon "enlargement" copied from an old daguerreotype in the parlour below. In that gleam of light his face seemed veritably to leap out of the gloom at Emily with its grim frown strangely exaggerated. Emily's nerve gave way completely. In an ungovernable spasm of panic she rushed madly across the room to the window, dashed the curtains aside, and caught up the slat blind. A blessed flood of sunshine burst in. Outside was a wholesome, friendly, human world. And, of all wonders, there, leaning right against the windowsill was a ladder! For a moment Emily almost believed that a miracle had been worked for her escape.

Cousin Jimmy had tripped that morning over the ladder, lying lost among the burdocks under the balm-of-gileads behind the dairy. It was very rotten and he decided it was time it was disposed of. He had shouldered it up against the house so that he would be sure to see it on his return from the hayfield.

In less time than it takes to write of it Emily had got the window up, climbed out on the sill, and backed down the ladder. She was too intent on escaping from that horrible room to be conscious of the shakiness of the rotten rungs. When she reached the ground she bolted through the balm-of-gileads and over the fence into Lofty John's bush, nor did she stop running till she reached the path by the brook.

Then she paused for breath, exultant. She was full of a fearful joy with an elfin delight running through it. Sweet was the wind of freedom that was blowing over the ferns. She had escaped from the spare-room and its ghosts — she had got the better of mean old Aunt Elizabeth.

“I feel as if I was a little bird that had just got out of a cage,” she told herself; and then she danced with joy of it all along her fairy path to the very end, where she found Ilse Burnley huddled up on the top of a fence panel, her pale-gold head making a spot of brilliance against the dark young firs that crowded around her. Emily had not seen her since that first day of school and again she thought she had never seen or pretended anybody just like Ilse.

“Well, Emily of New Moon,” said Ilse, “where are you running to?”

“I’m running away,” said Emily, frankly. “I was bad — at least, I was a little bad — and Aunt Elizabeth locked me in the spare-room. I hadn’t been bad enough for that — it wasn’t fair — so I got out of the window and down the ladder.”

“You little cuss! I didn’t think you’d gimp enough for that,” said Ilse.

Emily gasped. It seemed very dreadful to be called a little cuss. But Ilse had said it quite admiringly.

“I don’t think it was gimp,” said Emily, too honest to take a compliment she didn’t deserve. “I was too scared to stay in that room.”

“Well, where are you going now?” asked Ilse. “You’ll have to go somewhere — you can’t stay outdoors. There’s a thunderstorm coming up.”

So there was. Emily did not like thunderstorms. And her conscience smote her.

“Oh,” she said, “do you suppose God is bringing up that storm to punish me because I’ve run away?”

“No,” said Ilse scornfully. “If there is any God He wouldn’t make such a fuss over nothing.”

“Oh, Ilse, don’t you believe there is a God?”

“I don’t know. Father says there isn’t. But in that case how did things happen? Some days I believe there’s a God and some days I don’t. You’d

better come home with me. There's nobody there. I was so dodgastedly lonesome I took to the bush."

Ilse sprang down and held out her sunburned paw to Emily. Emily took it and they ran together over Lofty John's pasture to the old Burnley house which looked like a huge grey cat basking in the warm late sunshine, that had not yet been swallowed up by the menacing thunder-heads. Inside, it was full of furniture that must have been quite splendid once; but the disorder was dreadful and the dust lay thickly over everything. Nothing was in the right place apparently, and Aunt Laura would certainly have fainted with horror if she had seen the kitchen. But it was a good place to play. You didn't have to be careful not to mess things up. Ilse and Emily had a glorious game of hide and seek all over the house until the thunder got so heavy and the lightning so bright that Emily felt she must huddle on the sofa and nurse her courage.

"Aren't you ever afraid of thunder?" she asked Ilse.

"No, I ain't afraid of anything except the devil," said Ilse.

"I thought you didn't believe in the devil either — Rhoda said you didn't."

"Oh, there's a devil all right, Father says. It's only God he doesn't believe in. And if there is a devil and no God to keep him in order, is it any wonder I'm scared of him? Look here, Emily Byrd Starr, I like you — heaps. I've always liked you. I knew you'd soon be good and sick of that little, white-livered lying sneak of a Rhoda Stuart. I never tell lies. Father told me once he'd kill me if he ever caught me telling a lie. I want you for my chum. I'd go to school regular if I could sit with you."

"All right," said Emily offhandedly. No more sentimental Rhodian vows of eternal devotion for her. That phase was over.

"And you'll tell me things — nobody ever tells me things. And let me tell you things — I haven't anybody to tell things to," said Ilse. "And you won't be ashamed of me because my clothes are always queer and because I don't believe in God?"

"No. But if you knew Father's God you'd believe in Him."

"I wouldn't. Besides, there's only one God if there is any at all."

“I don’t know,” said Emily perplexedly. “No, it can’t be like that. Ellen Greene’s God isn’t a bit like Father’s, and neither is Aunt Elizabeth’s. I don’t think I’d like Aunt Elizabeth’s, but He is a dignified God at least, and Ellen’s isn’t. And I’m sure Aunt Laura’s is another one still — nice and kind but not wonderful like Father’s.”

“Well never mind — I don’t like talking about God,” said Ilse uncomfortably.

“I do,” said Emily. “I think God is a very interesting subject, and I’m going to pray for you, Ilse, that you can believe in Father’s God.”

“Don’t you dast!” shouted Ilse, who for some mysterious reason did not like the idea. “I won’t be prayed for!”

“Don’t you ever pray yourself, Ilse?”

“Oh, now and then — when I feel lonesome at night — or when I’m in a scrape. But I don’t want any one else to pray for me. If I catch you doing it, Emily Starr, I’ll tear your eyes out. And don’t you go sneaking and praying for me behind my back either.”

“All right, I won’t,” said Emily sharply, mortified at the failure of her wellmeant offer. “I’ll pray for every single soul I know, but I’ll leave you out.”

For a moment Ilse looked as if she didn’t like this either. Then she laughed and gave Emily a volcanic hug.

“Well, anyway, please like me. Nobody likes me, you know.”

“Your father must like you, Ilse.”

“He doesn’t,” said Ilse positively. “Father doesn’t care a hoot about me. I think there’s times when he hates the sight of me. I wish he did like me because he can be awful nice when he likes any one. Do you know what I’m going to be when I grow up? I’m going to be an elo-cu-tionist.”

“What’s that?”

“A woman who recites at concerts. I can do it dandy. What are you going to be?”

“A poetess.”

“Golly!” said Ilse, apparently overcome. “I don’t believe you can write poetry,” she added.

“I can so, true,” cried Emily. “I’ve written three pieces—‘Autumn’ and ‘Lines to Rhoda’ — only I burned that — and ‘An Address to a Buttercup.’ I composed it to-day and it is my — my masterpiece.”

“Let’s hear it,” ordered Ilse.

Nothing loath, Emily proudly repeated her lines. Somehow she did not mind letting Ilse hear them.

“Emily Byrd Starr, you didn’t make that out of your own head?”

“I did.”

“Cross your heart?”

“Cross my heart.”

“Well” — Ilse drew a long breath—”I guess you are a poetess all right.”

It was a very proud moment for Emily — one of the great moments of life, in fact. Her world had conceded her standing. But now other things had to be thought of. The storm was over and the sun had set. It was twilight — it would soon be dark. She must get home and back into the spare-room before her absence was discovered. It was dreadful to think of going back but she must do it lest a worse thing come upon her at Aunt Elizabeth’s hands. Just now, under the inspiration of Ilse’s personality, she was full of Dutch courage. Besides, it would soon be her bedtime and she would be let out. She trotted home through Lofty John’s bush, that was full of the wandering, mysterious lamps of the fireflies, dodged cautiously through the balm-of-gileads — and stopped short in dismay. The ladder was gone!

Emily went around to the kitchen door, feeling that she was going straight to her doom. But for once the way of the transgressor was made sinfully easy. Aunt Laura was alone in the kitchen.

“Emily dear, where on earth did you come from?” she exclaimed. “I was just going up to let you out. Elizabeth said I might — she’s gone to prayer-meeting.”

Aunt Laura did not say that she had tiptoed several times to the spare-room door and had been racked with anxiety over the silence behind it. Was the child unconscious from fright? Not even while the thunderstorm

was going on would relentless Elizabeth allow that door to be opened. And here was Miss Emily walking unconcernedly in out of the twilight after all this agony. For a moment even Aunt Laura was annoyed. But when she heard Emily's tale her only feeling was thankfulness that Juliet's child had not broken her neck on that rotten ladder.

Emily felt that she had got off better than she deserved. She knew Aunt Laura would keep the secret; and Aunt Laura let her give Saucy Sal a whole cupful of strippings, and gave her a big plummy cooky and put her to bed with kisses.

"You oughtn't to be so good to me because I was bad to-day," Emily said, between delicious mouthfuls. "I suppose I disgraced the Murrays going barefoot."

"If I were you I'd hide my boots every time I went out of the gate," said Aunt Laura. "But I wouldn't forget to put them on before I came back. What Elizabeth doesn't know will never hurt her."

Emily reflected over this until she had finished her cooky. Then she said,

"That would be nice, but I don't mean to do it any more. I guess I must obey Aunt Elizabeth because she's the head of the family."

"Where do you get such notions?" said Aunt Laura.

"Out of my head. Aunt Laura, Ilse Burnley and I are going to be chums. I like her — I've always felt I'd like her if I had the chance. I don't believe I can ever love any girl again, but I like her."

"Poor Ilse!" said Aunt Laura, sighing.

"Yes, her father doesn't like her. Isn't it dreadful?" said Emily. "Why doesn't he?"

"He does — really. He only thinks he doesn't."

"But why does he think it?"

"You are too young to understand, Emily."

Emily hated to be told she was too young to understand. She felt that she could understand perfectly well if only people would take the trouble to explain things to her and not be so mysterious.

“I wish I could pray for her. It wouldn’t be fair, though, when I know how she feels about it. But I’ve always asked God to bless all my friends so she’ll be in that and maybe some good will come of it. Is ‘golly’ a proper word to say, Aunt Laura?”

“No — no!”

“I’m sorry for that,” said Emily, seriously, “because it’s very striking.”

The Tansy Patch

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Emily and Ilse had a splendid fortnight of fun before their first fight. It was really quite a terrible fight, arising out of a simple argument as to whether they would or would not have a parlour in the playhouse they were building in Lofty John's bush. Emily wanted a parlour and Ilse didn't. Ilse lost her temper at once, and went into a true Burnley tantrum. She was very fluent in her rages and the volley of abusive "dictionary words" which she hurled at Emily would have staggered most of the Blair Water girls. But Emily was too much at home with words to be floored so easily; she grew angry too, but in the cool, dignified, Murray way which was more exasperating than violence. When Ilse had to pause for breath in her diatribes, Emily, sitting on a big stone with her knees crossed, her eyes black and her cheeks crimson, interjected little sarcastic retorts that infuriated Ilse still further. Ilse was crimson, too, and her eyes were pools of scintillating, tawny fire. They were both so pretty in their fury that it was almost a pity they couldn't have been angry all the time.

"You needn't suppose, you little puling, snivelling chit, that you are going to boss me, just because you live at New Moon," shrieked Ilse, as an ultimatum, stamping her foot.

"I'm not going to boss you — I'm not going to associate with you ever again," retorted Emily, disdainfully.

"I'm glad to be rid of you — you proud, stuck-up, conceited, top-lofty biped," cried Ilse. "Never you speak to me again. And don't you go about Blair Water saying things about me, either."

This was unbearable to a girl who never "said things" about her friends or once-friends.

"I'm not going to say things about you," said Emily deliberately. "I'm just going to think them."

This was far more aggravating than speech and Emily knew it. Ilse was driven quite frantic by it. Who knew what unearthly things Emily might be thinking about her any time she took the notion to? Ilse had already discovered what a fertile imagination Emily had.

“Do you suppose I care what you think, you insignificant serpent? Why, you haven’t any sense.”

“I’ve got something then that’s far better,” said Emily, with a maddening superior smile. “Something that you can never have, Ilse Burnley.”

Ilse doubled her fists as if she would like to demolish Emily by physical force.

“If I couldn’t write better poetry than you, I’d hang myself,” she derided.

“I’ll lend you a dime to buy a rope,” said Emily.

Ilse glared at her, vanquished.

“You can go to the devil!” she said.

Emily got up and went, not to the devil, but back to New Moon. Ilse relieved her feelings by knocking the boards of their china closet down, and kicking their “moss gardens” to pieces, and departed also.

Emily felt exceedingly badly. Here was another friendship destroyed — a friendship, too, that had been very delightful and satisfying. Ilse had been a splendid chum — there was no doubt about that. After Emily had cooled down she went to the dormer-window and cried.

“Wretched, wretched me!” she sobbed, dramatically, but very sincerely.

Yet the bitterness of her break with Rhoda was not present. This quarrel was fair and open and aboveboard. She had not been stabbed in the back. But of course she and Ilse would never be chums again. You couldn’t be chums with a person who called you a chit and a biped, and a serpent, and told you to go to the devil. The thing was impossible. And besides, Ilse could never forgive her — for Emily was honest enough to admit to herself that she had been very aggravating, too.

Yet, when Emily went to the playhouse next morning, bent on retrieving her share of broken dishes and boards, there was Ilse, skipping around, hard at work, with all the shelves back in place, the moss garden re-made, and a beautiful parlour laid out and connected with the livingroom by a spruce arch.

“Hello, you. Here’s your parlour and I hope you’ll be satisfied now,” she said gaily. “What’s kept you so long? I thought you were never coming.”

This rather posed Emily after her tragic night, wherein she had buried her second friendship and wept over its grave. She was not prepared for so speedy a resurrection. As far as Ilse was concerned it seemed as if no quarrel had ever taken place.

“Why, that was yesterday,” she said in amazement, when Emily, rather distantly, referred to it. Yesterday and to-day were two entirely different things in Ilse’s philosophy. Emily accepted it — she found she had to. Ilse, it transpired, could no more help flying into tantrums now and then than she could help being jolly and affectionate between them. What amazed Emily, in whom things were bound to rankle for a time, was the way in which Ilse appeared to forget a quarrel the moment it was over. To be called a serpent and a crocodile one minute and hugged and darlined the next was somewhat disconcerting until time and experience took the edge off it.

“Aren’t I nice enough between times to make up for it?” demanded Ilse. “Dot Payne never flies into tempers, but would you like her for a chum?”

“No, she’s too stupid,” admitted Emily.

“And Rhoda Stuart is never out of temper, but you got enough of her. Do you think I’d ever treat you as she did?”

No, Emily had no doubt on this point. Whatever Ilse was or was not, she was loyal and true.

And certainly Rhoda Stuart and Dot Payne compared to Ilse were “as moonlight unto sunlight and as water unto wine” — or would have been if

Emily had as yet known anything more of her Tennyson than the Bugle Song.

“You can’t have everything,” said Ilse. “I’ve got Dad’s temper and that’s all there is to it. Wait till you see him in one of his rages.”

Emily had not seen this so far. She had often been down in the Burnley’s house but on the few occasions when Dr Burnley had been home he had ignored her save for a curt nod. He was a busy man, for, whatever his shortcomings were, his skill was unquestioned and the bounds of his practice extended far. By the sick-bed he was as gentle and sympathetic as he was brusque and sarcastic away from it. As long as you were ill there was nothing Dr Burnley would not do for you; once you were well he had apparently no further use for you. He had been absorbed all through July trying to save Teddy Kent’s life up at the Tansy Patch. Teddy was out of danger now and able to be up, but his improvement was not speedy enough to satisfy Dr Burnley. One day he held up Emily and Ilse, who were heading through the lawn to the pond, with fishing-hooks and a can of fat, abominable worms — the latter manipulated solely by Ilse — and ordered them to betake themselves up to the Tansy Patch and play with Teddy Kent.

“He’s lonesome and moping. Go and cheer him up,” said the doctor.

Ilse was rather loath to go. She liked Teddy, but it seemed she did not like his mother. Emily was secretly not averse. She had seen Teddy Kent but once, at Sunday-school the day before he was taken seriously ill, and she had liked his looks. It had seemed that he liked hers, too, for she caught him staring shyly at her over the intervening pews several times. He was very handsome, Emily decided. She liked his thick, dark-brown hair and his black-browed blue eyes, and for the first time it occurred to her that it might be rather nice to have a boy playmate, too. Not a “beau” of course. Emily hated the school jargon that called a boy your “beau” if he happened to give you a pencil or an apple and picked you out frequently for his partner in the games.

“Teddy’s nice but his mother is queer,” Ilse told her on their way to the Tansy Patch. “She never goes out anywhere — not even to church — but I

guess it's because of the scar on her face. They're not Blair Water people — they've only been living at the Tansy Patch since last fall. They're poor and proud and not many people visit them. But Teddy is awfully nice, so if his mother gives us some black looks we needn't mind."

Mrs Kent gave them no black looks, though her reception was rather distant. Perhaps she, too, had received some orders from the doctor. She was a tiny creature, with enormous masses of dull, soft, silky, fawn hair, dark, mournful eyes, and a broad scar running slantwise across her pale face. Without the scar she must have been pretty, and she had a voice as soft and uncertain as the wind in the tansy. Emily, with her instinctive faculty of sizing up people she met, felt that Mrs Kent was not a happy woman.

The Tansy Patch was east of the Disappointed House, between the Blair Water and the sand-dunes. Most people considered it a bare, lonely, neglected place, but Emily thought it was fascinating. The little clap-boarded house topped a small hill, over which tansy grew in a hard, flaunting, aromatic luxuriance, rising steeply and abruptly from a main road. A straggling rail fence, almost smothered in wild rosebushes, bounded the domain, and a sagging, illused little gate gave ingress from the road. Stones were let into the side of the hill for steps up to the front door. Behind the house was a tumbledown little barn, and a field of flowering buckwheat, creamy green, sloping down to the Blair Water. In front was a crazy veranda around which a brilliant band of red poppies held up their enchanted cups.

Teddy was unfeignedly glad to see them, and they had a happy afternoon together. There was some colour in Teddy's clear olive skin when it ended and his dark-blue eyes were brighter. Mrs Kent took in these signs greedily and asked the girls to come back, with an eagerness that was yet not cordiality. But they had found the Tansy Patch a charming place and were glad to go again. For the rest of the vacation there was hardly a day when they did not go up to it — preferably in the long, smoky, delicious August evenings when the white moths sailed over the tansy plantation and the golden twilight faded into dusk and purple over the

green slopes beyond and fireflies lighted their goblin torches by the pond. Sometimes they played games in the tansy patch, when Teddy and Emily somehow generally found themselves on the same side and then no more than a match for agile, quick-witted Ilse; sometimes Teddy took them to the barn loft and showed them his little collection of drawings. Both girls thought them very wonderful without knowing in the least how wonderful they really were. It seemed like magic to see Teddy take a pencil and bit of paper and with a few quick strokes of his slim brown fingers bring out a sketch of Ilse or Emily or Smoke or Buttercup, that looked ready to speak — or meow.

Smoke and Buttercup were the Tansy Patch cats. Buttercup was a chubby, yellow, delightful creature hardly out of kittenhood. Smoke was a big Maltese and an aristocrat from the tip of his nose to the tip of his tail. There was no doubt whatever that he belonged to the cat caste of Vere de Vere. He had emerald eyes and a coat of plush. The only white thing about him was an adorable dicky.

Emily thought of all the pleasant hours spent at the Tansy Patch the pleasantest were those, when, tired with play, they all three sat on the crazy veranda steps in the mystery and enchantment of the borderland 'tween light and dark when the little clump of spruce behind the barn looked like beautiful, dark, phantom trees. The clouds of the west faded into grey and a great round yellow moon rose over the fields to be reflected brokenly in the pond, where the Wind Woman was making wonderful, woven lights and shadows.

Mrs Kent never joined them, though Emily had a creepy conviction that she was watching them stealthily from behind the kitchen blind. Teddy and Ilse sang school ditties, and Ilse recited, and Emily told stories; or they sat in happy silence, each anchored in some secret port of dreams, while the cats chased each other madly over the hill and through the tansy, tearing round and round the house like possessed creatures. They would spring up at the children with sudden pounces and spring as suddenly away. Their eyes gleamed like jewels, their tails swayed like plumes. They were palpitating with nervous, stealthy life.

“Oh, isn’t it good to be alive — like this?” Emily said once. “Wouldn’t it be dreadful if one had never lived?”

Still, existence was not wholly unclouded — Aunt Elizabeth took care of that. Aunt Elizabeth only permitted the visits to the Tansy Patch under protest, and because Dr Burnley had ordered them.

“Aunt Elizabeth does not approve of Teddy,” Emily wrote in one of her letters to her father — which epistles were steadily multiplying on the old garret sofa shelf. “The first time I asked her if I might go and play with Teddy she looked at me severely and said, Who is this Teddy person. We do not know anything about these Kents. Remember, Emily, the Murrays do not associate with every one. I said I am a Starr — I am not a Murray, you said so yourself. Dear Father I did not mean to be impertnent but Aunt Elizabeth said I was and would not speak to me the rest of the day. She seemed to think that was a very bad punishment but I did not mind it much only it is rather unpleasant to have your own family preserve a disdaneful silence towards you. But since then she lets me go to the Tansy Patch because Dr Burnley came and told her to. Dr Burnley has a strange inflewence over Aunt Elizabeth. I do not understand it. Rhoda said once that Aunt Elizabeth hoped Dr Burnley and Aunt Laura would make a match of it — which, you know means get married — but that is not so. Mrs Thomas Anderson was here one afternoon to tea. (Mrs Thomas Anderson is a big fat woman and her grandmother was a Murray and there is nothing else to say about her.) She asked Aunt Elizabeth if she thought Dr Burnley would marry again and Aunt Elizabeth said no, he would not and she did not think it right for people to marry a second time. Mrs Anderson said Sometimes I have thought he would take Laura. Aunt Elizabeth just swept her a hawty glance. There is no use in denying it, there are times when I am very proud of Aunt Elizabeth, even if I do not like her.

“Teddy is a very nice boy, Father. I think you would aprove of him. Should there be two p’s in aprove? He can make splendid pictures and he is going to be a famus artist some day, and then he is going to paint my portrate. He keeps his pictures in the barn loft because his mother doesn’t

like to see them. He can whistle just like a bird. The Tansy Patch is a very quante place — espesially at night. I love the twilight there. We always have such fun in the twilight. The Wind Woman makes herself small in the tansy just like a tiny, tiny fairy and the cats are so queer and creepy and delightful then. They belong to Mrs Kent and Teddy is afraid to pet them much for fear she will drown them. She drowned a kitten once because she thought he liked it better than her. But he didn't because Teddy is very much attatched to his mother. He washes the dishes for her and helps her in all the house work. Ilse says the boys in school call him sissy for that but I think it is noble and manley of him. Teddy wishes she would let him have a dog but she wont. I have thought Aunt Elizabeth was tirannical but Mrs Kent is far worse in some ways. But then she loves Teddy and Aunt Elizabeth does not love me.

“But Mrs Kent doesn't like Ilse or me. She never says so but we feel it. She never asks us to stay to tea — and we've always been so polite to her. I believe she is jellus of us because Teddy likes us. Teddy gave me the sweetest picture of the Blair Water he had painted on a big white cowhawk shell but he said I mustn't let his mother know about it because she would cry. Mrs Kent is a very misterious person, very like some people you read of in books. I like misterious people but not too close. Her eyes always look hungry though she has plenty to eat. She never goes anywhere because she has a scar on her face where she was burned with a lamp exploding. It made my blood run cold, dear Father. How thankful I am that Aunt Elizabeth only burns candles. Some of the Murray tradishuns are very sensible. Mrs Kent is very relijus — what she calls relijus. She prays even in the middle of the day. Teddy says that before he was born into this world he lived in another one where there were two suns, one red and one blue. The days were red and the nights blue. I don't know where he got the idea but it sounds attractive to me. And he says the brooks run honey instead of water. But what did you do when you were thirsty, I said. Oh, we were never thirsty there. But I think I would like to be thirsty because then cold water tastes so good. I would like to live in the moon. It must be such a nice silvery place.

“Ilse says Teddy ought to like her best because there is more fun in her than in me but that is not true. There is just as much fun in me when my conscience doesn’t bother me. I guess Ilse wants Teddy to like her best but she is not a jellus girl.

“I am glad to say that Aunt Elizabeth and Aunt Laura both approve of my friendship with Ilse. It is so seldom they approve of the same thing. I am getting used to fighting with Ilse now and don’t mind it much. Besides I can fight pretty well myself when my blood is up. We fight about once a week but we make up right away and Ilse says things would be dull if there was never a row. I would like it better without rows but you can never tell what will make Ilse mad. She never gets mad twice over the same thing. She calls me dreadful names. Yesterday she called me a lousy lizard and a toothless viper. But somehow I didn’t mind it much because I knew I wasn’t lousy or toothless and she knew it too. I don’t call her names because that is unladylike but I smile and that makes Ilse far madder than if I skowled and stamped as she does, and that is why I do it. Aunt Laura says I must be careful not to pick up the words Ilse uses and try to set her a good example because the poor child has no one to look after her properly. I wish I could use some of her words because they are so striking. She gets them from her father. I think my aunts are too particular. One night when the Rev. Mr Dare was here to tea I used the word bull in my conversashun. I said Ilse and I were afraid to go through Mr James Lee’s pasture where the old well was because he had a cross bull there. After Mr Dare had gone Aunt Elizabeth gave me an awful skolding and told me I was never to use that word again. But she had been talking of tigers at tea — in connexshun with missionaries — and I can’t understand why it is more disgraceful to talk about bulls than tigers. Of course bulls are feroshus animals but so are tigers. But Aunt Elizabeth says I am always disgracing them when they have company. When Mrs Lockwood was here from Shrewsbury last week they were talking about Mrs Foster Beck, who is a bride, and I said Dr Burnley thought she was devilishly pretty. Aunt Elizabeth said EMILY in an awful tone. She was pale with rath. Dr Burnley said it, I cried, I am only kwoting. And Dr Burnley did

say it the day I stayed to dinner with Ilse and Dr Jameson was there from Shrewsbury. I saw Dr Burnley in one of his rages that afternoon over something Mrs Simms had done in his office. It was a groosome sight. His big yellow eyes blazed and he tore about and kicked over a chair and threw a mat at the wall and fired a vase out of the window and said terrible things. I sat on the sofa and stared at him like one fassinated. It was so interesting I was sorry when he cooled down which he soon did because he is like Ilse and never stays mad long. He never gets mad at Ilse though. Ilse says she wishes he would — it would be better than being taken no notis of. She is as much of an orfan as I am, poor child. Last Sunday she went to church with her old faded blue dress on. There was a tare right in front of it. Aunt Laura wepped when she came home and then spoke to Mrs Simms about it because she did not dare speak to Dr Burnley. Mrs Simms was cross and said it was not her place to look after Ilses close but she said she had got Dr Burnley to get Ilse a nice sprigged muslin dress and Ilse had got egg stane on it, and when Mrs Simms skolded her for being so careless Ilse flew into a rage and went upstairs and tore the muslin dress to pieces, and Mrs Simms said she wasn't going to bother her head again about a child like that and there was nothing for her to ware but her old blue but Mrs Simms didn't know it was tore. So I sneaked Ilses dress over to New Moon and Aunt Laura mended it neetly and hid the tare with a pocket. Ilse said she tore up her muslin dress one of the days she didn't believe in God and didn't care what she did. Ilse found a mouse in her bed one night and she just shook it out and jumped in. Oh, how brave. I could never be as brave as that. It is not true that Dr Burnley never smiles. I have seen him do it but not often. He just smiles with his lips but not his eyes and it makes me feel uncomfortable. Mostly he laughs in a horrid sarkastic way like Jolly Jim's uncle.

“We had barley soup for dinner that day — very watery.

“Aunt Laura is giving me five cents a week for washing the dishes. I can only spend one cent of it and the other four have to be put in the toad bank in the sitting-room on the mantel. The toad is made of brass and sits on top of the bank and you put the cents in his mouth one at a time. He

swallows them and they drop into the bank. It's very fascinating (I should not write fascinating again because you told me I must not use the same word too often but I can't think of any other that describes my feelings so well). The toad bank is Aunt Laura's but she said I could use it. I just hugged her. Of course I never hug Aunt Elizabeth. She is too rigid and bony. She does not approve of Aunt Laura paying me for washing dishes. I tremble to think what she would say if she knew Cousin Jimmy gave me a whole dollar on the sly last week.

"I wish he had not given me so much. It worries me. It is an awful responsibility. It will be so difficult to spend it wisely also without Aunt Elizabeth finding out about it. I hope I shall never have a million dollars. I am sure it would crush me utterly. I keep my dollar hid on the shelf with my letters and I put it in an old envelope and wrote on it Cousin Jimmy Murray gave me this so that if I died suddenly and Aunt Elizabeth found it she would know I came by it honestly.

"Now that the days are getting cool Aunt Elizabeth makes me wear my thick flannel petticoat. I hate it. It makes me so bunched. But Aunt Elizabeth says I must wear it because you died of consumption. I wish I could be both graceful and healthy. I read the story of Red Riding Hood to-day. I think the wolf was the most interesting character in it. Red Riding Hood was a stupid little thing so easily fooled.

"I wrote two poems yesterday. One was short and entitled Lines Addressed to a blue-eyed-grass flower gathered in the Old Orchard. Here it is,

Sweet little flower thy modest face
Is ever lifted towards the sky
And a reflex-shun of its face
Is caught within thine own blue eye.
The meadow queens are tall and fair
The columbines are lovely too.
But the poor talent I possess
Shall laurel thee my flower of blue.

“The other poem was long and I wrote it on a letterbill. It is called The Monark of the Forest. The Monark is the big birch in Lofty John’s bush. I love that bush so much it hurts. Do you understand that kind of hurting. Ilse likes it too and we play there most of the time when we are not at the Tansy Patch. We have three paths in it. We call them the To-day Road, the Yesterday Road and the Tomorrow Road. The To-day Road is by the brook and we call it that because it is lovely now. The Yesterday Road is out in the stumps where Lofty John cut some trees down and we call it that because it used to be lovely. The Tomorrow Road is just a tiny path in the maple clearing and we call it that because it is going to be lovely some day, when the maples grow bigger. But oh Father dear I haven’t forgotten the dear old trees down home. I always think of them after I go to bed. But I am happy here. It isn’t wrong to be happy, is it Father. Aunt Elizabeth says I got over being homesick very quick but I am often homesick inside. I have got akwanted with Lofty John. Ilse is a great friend of his and often goes there to watch him working in his carpenter shop. He says he has made enough ladders to get to heaven without the priest but that is just his joke. He is really a very devowt Catholic and goes to the chapel at White Cross every Sunday. I go with Ilse though perhaps I ought not to when he is an enemy of my family. He is of stately baring and refined manners — very sivil to me but I don’t always like him. When I ask him a serius question he always winks over my head when he ansers. That is insulting. Of course I never ask any questions on relijus subjects but Ilse does. She likes him but she says he would burn us all at the stake if he had the power. She asked him right out if he wouldn’t and he winked at me and said Oh, we wouldn’t burn nice pretty little Protestants like you. We would only burn the old ugly ones. That was a frivellus reply. Mrs Lofty John is a nice woman and not at all proud. She looks just like a little rosy rinkled apple.

“On rainy days we play at Ilses. We can slide down the bannisters and do what we like. Nobody cares only when the doctor is home we have to be quiet because he cant bear any noise in the house except what he makes himself. The roof is flat and we can get out on it through a door in the

garret ceiling. It is very exciting to be up on the roof of a house. We had a yelling contest there the other night to see which could yell the loudest. To my surprise I found I could. You never can tell what you can do till you try. But too many people heard us and Aunt Elizabeth was very angry. She asked me what made me do such a thing. That is an awkward question because often I can't tell what makes me do things. Sometimes I do them just to find out what I feel like doing them. And sometimes I do them because I want to have some exciting things to tell my grandchildren. Is it improper to talk about having grandchildren. I have discovered that it is improper to talk about having children. One evening when people were here Aunt Laura said to me quite kindly What are you thinking so earnestly about, Emily, and I said I am picking names for my children. I mean to have ten. And after the company had gone Aunt Elizabeth said to Aunt Laura icily I think it will be better in the future Laura if you do not ask that child what she is thinking of. If Aunt Laura doesn't I shall be sorry because when I have an interesting thought I like to tell it.

"School begins again next week. Ilse is going to ask Miss Brownell if I can sit with her. I intend to act as if Rhoda was not there at all. Teddy is going too. Dr Burnley says he is well enough to go though his mother doesn't like the idea. Teddy says she never likes to have him go to school but she is glad that he hates Miss Brownell. Aunt Laura says the right way to end a letter to a dear friend is yours affectionately.

"So I am yours very affectionately.

"Emily Byrd Starr.

"P. S. Because you are my very dearest friend still, Father. Ilse says she loves me best of anything in the world and her red leather boots that Mrs Simms gave her next."

A Daughter of Eve

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New moon was noted for its apples and on that first autumn of Emily's life there both the "old" and the "new" orchards bore a bumper crop. In the new were the titled and pedigreed apples; and in the old the seedlings, unknown to catalogues, that yet had a flavour wildly sweet and all their own. There was no taboo on any apple and Emily was free to eat all she wanted of each and every kind — the only prohibition being that she must not take any to bed with her. Aunt Elizabeth, very properly, did not want her bed messed up with apple seeds; and Aunt Laura had a horror of anyone eating apples in the dark lest they might eat an apple worm into the bargain. Emily, therefore, should have been able fully to satisfy her appetite for apples at home; but there is a certain odd kink in human nature by reason of which the flavour of the apples belonging to somebody else is always vastly superior to our own — as the crafty serpent of Eden very well knew. Emily, like most people, possessed this kink, and consequently thought that nowhere were there such delicious apples as those belonging to Lofty John. He was in the habit of keeping a long row of apples on one of the beams in his workshop and it was understood that she and Ilse might help themselves freely whenever they visited that charming, dusty, shaving-carpeted spot. Three varieties of Lofty John's apples were their especial favourites — the "scabby apples," that looked as if they had leprosy but were of unsurpassed deliciousness under their queerly blotched skins; the "little red apples," scarcely bigger than a crab, deep crimson all over and glossy as satin, that had such a sweet, nutty flavour; and the big green "sweet apples" that children usually thought the best of all. Emily considered that day wasted whose low descending sun had not beheld her munching one of Lofty John's big green sweets.

In the back of her mind Emily knew quite well that she should not be going to Lofty John's at all. To be sure, she had never been forbidden to go

— simply because it had never occurred to her aunts that an inmate of New Moon could so forget the beloved old family feud between the houses of Murray and Sullivan belonging to two generations back. It was an inheritance that any proper Murray would live up to as a matter of course. But when Emily was off with that wild little Ishmaelite of an Ilse, traditions lost their power under the allurements of Lofty John's "reds" and "scabs."

She wandered rather lonesomely into his workshop one September evening at twilight. She had been alone since she came from school; her aunts and Cousin Jimmy had gone to Shrewsbury, promising to be back by sunset. Ilse was away also, her father, prodded thereto by Mrs Simms, having taken her to Charlottetown to get her a winter coat. Emily liked being alone very well at first. She felt quite important over being in charge of New Moon. She ate the supper Aunt Laura had left on the cookhouse dresser for her and she went into the dairy and skimmed six lovely big pans of milk. She had no business at all to do this but she had always hankered to do it and this was too good a chance to be missed. She did it beautifully and nobody ever knew — each aunt supposing the other had done it — and so she was never scolded for it. This does not point any particular moral, of course; in a proper yarn Emily should either have been found out and punished for disobedience or been driven by an uneasy conscience to confess; but I am sorry — or ought to be — to have to state that Emily's conscience never worried her about the matter at all. Still, she was doomed to suffer enough that night from an entirely different cause, to balance all her little peccadillos.

By the time the cream was skimmed and poured into the big stone crock and well stirred — Emily didn't forget that, either — it was after sunset and still nobody had come home. Emily didn't like the idea of going alone into the big, dusky, echoing house; so she hied her to Lofty John's shop, which she found unoccupied, though the plane halted midway on a board indicated that Lofty John had been working there quite recently and would probably return. Emily sat down on a round section of a huge log and looked around to see what she could get to eat. There was a row of

“reds” and “scabs” clean across the side of the shop but no “sweet” among them; and Emily felt that what she needed just then was a “sweet” and nothing else.

Then she spied one — a huge one — the biggest “sweet” Emily had ever seen, all by itself on one of the steps of the stair leading up to the loft. She climbed up, possessed herself of it and ate it out of hand. She was gnawing happily at the core when Lofty John came in. He nodded to her with a seemingly careless glance around.

“Just been in to get my supper,” he said. “The wife’s away so I had to get it myself.”

He fell to planing in silence. Emily sat on the stairs, counting the seeds of the big “sweet” — you told your fortunes by the seeds — listening to the Wind Woman whistling elfishly through a knot hole in the loft, and composing a “Deskriphun of Lofty John’s Carpenter Shop By Lantern Light,” to be written later on a letterbill. She was lost in a mental hunt for an accurate phrase to picture the absurd elongated shadow of Lofty John’s nose on the opposite wall when Lofty John whirled about, so suddenly that the shadow of his nose shot upward like a huge spear to the ceiling, and demanded in a startled voice,

“What’s become av that big sweet apple that was on that stair?”

“Why — I — I et it,” stammered Emily.

Lofty John dropped his plane, threw up his hands and looked at Emily with a horrified face.

“The saints preserve us, child. Ye never et that apple — don’t tell me ye’ve gone and et that apple!”

“Yes, I did,” said Emily uncomfortably. “I didn’t think it was any harm — I—”

“Harm! Listen to her, will you? That apple was poisoned for the rats! They’ve been plaguing me life out here and I had me mind made up to finish their fun. And now you’ve et the apple — it would kill a dozen av ye in a brace of shakes.”

Lofty John saw a white face and a gingham apron flash through the workshop and out into the dark. Emily’s first wild impulse was to get

home at once — before she dropped dead. She tore across the field through the bush and the garden and dashed into the house. It was still silent and dark — nobody was home yet. Emily gave a bitter little shriek of despair — when they came they would find her stiff and cold, black in the face likely, everything in this dear world ended for her for ever, all because she had eaten an apple which she thought she was perfectly welcome to eat. It wasn't fair — she didn't want to die.

But she must. She only hoped desperately that some one would come before she was dead. It would be so terrible to die there all alone in that great, big, empty New Moon. She dared not try to go anywhere for help. It was too dark now and she would likely drop dead on the way. To die out there — alone — in the dark — oh, that would be too dreadful. It did not occur to her that anything could be done for her; she thought if you once swallowed poison that was the end of you.

With hands shaking in panic she got a candle lighted. It wasn't quite so bad then — you could face things in the light. And Emily, pale, terrified, alone, was already deciding that this must be faced bravely. She must not shame the Starrs and the Murrays. She clenched her cold hands and tried to stop trembling. How long would it be before she died, she wondered. Lofty John had said the apple would kill her in a “brace of shakes.” What did that mean? How long was a brace of shakes? Would it hurt her to die? She had a vague idea that poison did hurt you awfully. Oh; and just a little while ago she had been so happy! She had thought she was going to live for years and write great poems and be famous like Mrs Hemans. She had had a fight with Ilse the night before and hadn't made it up yet — never could make it up now. And Ilse would feel so terribly. She must write her a note and forgive her. Was there time for that much? Oh, how cold her hands were! Perhaps that meant she was dying already. She had heard or read that your hands turned cold when you were dying. She wondered if her face was turning black. She grasped her candle and hurried up the stairs to the spare-room. There was a looking-glass there — the only one in the house hung low enough for her to see her reflection if she tipped the bottom of it back. Ordinarily Emily would have been frightened to death at

the mere thought of going into that spare-room by dim, flickering candlelight. But the one great terror had swallowed up all lesser ones. She looked at her reflection, amid the sleek, black flow of her hair, in the upward-striking light on the dark background of the shadowy room. Oh, she was pale as the dead already. Yes, that was a dying face — there could be no doubt of it.

Something rose up in Emily and took possession of her — some inheritance from the good old stock behind her. She ceased to tremble — she accepted her fate — with bitter regret, but calmly.

“I don’t want to die but since I have to I’ll die as becomes a Murray,” she said. She had read a similar sentence in a book and it came pat to the moment. And now she must hurry. That letter to Ilse must be written. Emily went to Aunt Elizabeth’s room first, to assure herself that her righthand top bureau drawer was quite tidy; then she flitted up the garret stairs to her dormer corner. The great place was full of lurking, pouncing shadows that crowded about the little island of faint candlelight, but they had no terrors for Emily now.

“And to think I was feeling so bad to-day because my petticoat was bunchy,” she thought, as she got one of her dear letterbills — the last she would ever write on. There was no need to write to Father — she would see him soon — but Ilse must have her letter — dear, loving, jolly, hot-tempered Ilse, who, just the day before had shrieked insulting epithets after her and who would be haunted by remorse all her life for it.

“Dearest Ilse,” wrote Emily, her hand shaking a little but her lips firmly set. “I am going to die. I have been poisoned by an apple Lofty John had put for rats. I will never see you again, but I am writing this to tell you I love you and you are not to feel bad because you called me a skunk and a bloodthirsty mink yesterday. I forgive you, so do not worry over it. And I am sorry I told you that you were beneath contempt because I didn’t mean a word of it. I leave you all my share of the broken dishes in our playhouse and please tell Teddy goodbye for me. He will never be able to teach me how to put worms on a fish-hook now. I promised him I would learn because I did not want him to think I was a coward but I am glad I did not

for I know what the worm feels like now. I do not feel sick yet but I don't know what the symptoms of poisoning are and Lofty John said there was enough to kill a dozen of me so I can't have long to live. If Aunt Elizabeth is willing you can have my necklace of Venetian beads. It is the only valuable possession I have. Don't let anybody do anything to Lofty John because he did not mean to poison me and it was all my own fault for being so greedy. Perhaps people will think he did it on purpose because I am a Protestant but I feel sure he did not and please tell him not to be haunted by remorse. I think I feel a pain in my stomach now so I guess that the end draws nigh. Fare well and remember her who died so young.

"Your own devoted,
"Emily."

As Emily folded up her letterbill she heard the sound of wheels in the yard below. A moment later Elizabeth and Laura Murray were confronted in the kitchen by a tragic-faced little creature, grasping a guttering candle in one hand and a red letterbill in the other.

"Emily, what is the matter?" cried Aunt Laura.

"I'm dying," said Emily solemnly. "I ate an apple Lofty John had poisoned for rats. I have only a few minutes to live, Aunt Laura."

Laura Murray dropped down on the black bench with her hand at her heart. Elizabeth turned as pale as Emily herself.

"Emily, is this some play-acting of yours?" she demanded sternly.

"No," cried Emily, quite indignantly. "It's the truth. Do you suppose a dying person would be play-acting? And oh, Aunt Elizabeth, please will you give this letter to Ilse — and please forgive me for being naughty — though I wasn't always naughty when you thought I was — and don't let any one see after I'm dead if I turn black — especially Rhoda Stuart."

By this time Aunt Elizabeth was herself again.

"How long ago is it since you ate that apple, Emily?"

"About an hour."

"If you'd eaten a poisoned apple an hour ago you'd be dead or sick by now—"

“Oh,” cried Emily transformed in a second. A wild, sweet hope sprang up in her heart — was there a chance for her after all? Then she added despairingly, “But I felt another pain in my stomach just as I came downstairs.”

“Laura,” said Aunt Elizabeth, “take this child out to the cookhouse and give her a good dose of mustard and water at once. It will do no harm and may do some good, if there’s anything in this yarn of hers. I’m going down to the doctor’s — he may be back — but I’ll see Lofty John on the way.”

Aunt Elizabeth went out — and Aunt Elizabeth went out very quickly — if it had been any one else it might have been said she ran. As for Emily — well, Aunt Laura gave her that emetic in short order and two minutes later Emily had no doubt at all that she was dying then and there — and the sooner the better. When Aunt Elizabeth returned Emily was lying on the sofa in the kitchen, as white as the pillow under her head, and as limp as a faded lily.

“Wasn’t the doctor home?” cried Aunt Laura desperately.

“I don’t know — there’s no need of the doctor. I didn’t think there was from the first. It was just one of Lofty John’s jokes. He thought he’d give Emily a fright — just for fun — his idea of fun. March you off to bed, Miss Emily. You deserve all you’ve got for going over there to Lofty John’s at all and I don’t pity you a particle. I haven’t had such a turn for years.”

“I did have a pain in my stomach,” wailed Emily, in whom fright and mustard-and-water combined had temporarily extinguished all spirit.

“Any one who eats apples from dawn to dark must expect a few pains in her stomach. You won’t have any more tonight, I reckon — the mustard will remedy that. Take your candle and go.”

“Well,” said Emily, getting unsteadily to her feet. “I hate that dodgasted Lofty John.”

“Emily!” said both aunts together.

“He deserves it,” said Emily vindictively.

“Oh, Emily — that dreadful word you used!” Aunt Laura seemed curiously upset about something.

“Why, what’s the matter with dodgasted?” said Emily, quite mystified. “Cousin Jimmy uses it often, when things vex him. He used it to-day — he said that dodgasted heifer had broken out of the graveyard pasture again.”

“Emily,” said Aunt Elizabeth, with the air of one impaling herself on the easiest horn of a dilemma, “your Cousin Jimmy is a man — and men sometimes use expressions, in the heat of anger, that are not proper for little girls.”

“But what is the matter with dodgasted?” persisted Emily. “It isn’t a swear word, is it? And if it isn’t, why can’t I use it?”

“It isn’t a — a ladylike word,” said Aunt Laura.

“Well, then, I won’t use it any more,” said Emily resignedly, “but Lofty John is dodgasted.”

Aunt Laura laughed so much after Emily had gone upstairs that Aunt Elizabeth told her a woman of her age should have more sense.

“Elizabeth, you know it was funny,” protested Laura.

Emily being safely out of sight, Elizabeth permitted herself a somewhat grim smile.

“I told Lofty John a few plain truths — he’ll not go telling children they’re poisoned again in a hurry. I left him fairly dancing with rage.”

Worn out, Emily fell asleep as soon as she was in bed; but an hour later she awakened. Aunt Elizabeth had not yet come to bed so the blind was still up and Emily saw a dear, friendly star winking down at her. Far away the sea moaned alluringly. Oh, it was nice just to be alone and to be alive. Life tasted good to her again—“tasted like more,” as Cousin Jimmy said. She could have a chance to write more letterbills, and poetry — Emily already saw a yard of verses entitled “Thoughts of One Doomed to Sudden Death” — and play with Ilse and Teddy — scour the barns with Saucy Sal, watch Aunt Laura skim cream in the dairy and help Cousin Jimmy garden — read books in Emily’s Bower and trot along the To-day Road — but not visit Lofty John’s workshop. She determined that she would never have anything to do with Lofty John again after his diabolical cruelty. She felt so indignant with him for frightening her — after they had been such good friends, too — that she could not go to sleep until she had composed an

account of her death by poison, of Lofty John being tried for her murder and condemned to death, and of his being hanged on a gibbet as lofty as himself, Emily being present at the dreadful scene, in spite of the fact that she was dead by his act. When she had finally cut him down and buried him with obloquy — the tears streaming down her face out of sympathy for Mrs Lofty John — she forgave him. Very likely he was not dodgasted after all.

She wrote it all down on a letterbill in the garret the next day.

Fancy Fed

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In October Cousin Jimmy began to boil the pigs' potatoes — unromantic name for a most romantic occupation — or so it appeared to Emily, whose love of the beautiful and picturesque was satisfied as it had never yet been on those long, cool, starry twilights of the waning year at New Moon.

There was a clump of spruce-trees in a corner of the old orchard, and under them an immense iron pot was hung over a circle of large stones — a pot so big that an ox could have been comfortably stewed in it. Emily thought it must have come down from the days of fairy tales and been some giant's porridge pot; but Cousin Jimmy told her that it was only a hundred years old and old Hugh Murray had had it sent out from England.

"We've used it ever since to boil the potatoes for the New Moon pigs," he said. "Blair Water folks think it old-fashioned; they've all got boiler-houses now, with built-in boilers; but as long as Elizabeth's boss at New Moon we'll use this."

Emily was sure no built-in boiler could have the charm of the big pot. She helped Cousin Jimmy fill it full of potatoes, after she came from school; then, when supper was over, Cousin Jimmy lighted the fire under it and pottered about it all the evening. Sometimes he poked the fire — Emily loved that part of the performance — sending glorious streams of rosy sparks upward into the darkness; sometimes he stirred the potatoes with a long pole, looking, with his queer, forked grey beard and belted "jumper," just like some old gnome or troll of northland story mixing the contents of a magical cauldron; and sometimes he sat beside Emily on the grey granite boulder near the pot and recited his poetry for her. Emily liked this best of all, for Cousin Jimmy's poetry was surprisingly good — at least in spots — and Cousin Jimmy had "fit audience though few" in this slender little maiden with her pale eager face and rapt eyes.

They were an odd couple and they were perfectly happy together. Blair Water people thought Cousin Jimmy a failure and a mental weakling. But he dwelt in an ideal world of which none of them knew anything. He had recited his poems a hundred times thus, as he boiled the pigs' potatoes; the ghosts of a score of autumns haunted the clump of spruces for him. He was an odd, ridiculous figure enough, bent and wrinkled and unkempt, gesticulating awkwardly as he recited. But it was his hour; he was no longer "simple Jimmy Murray" but a prince in his own realm. For a little while he was strong and young and splendid and beautiful, accredited master of song to a listening, enraptured world. None of his prosperous, sensible Blair Water neighbours ever lived through such an hour. He would not have exchanged places with one of them. Emily, listening to him, felt vaguely that if it had not been for that unlucky push into the New Moon well, this queer little man beside her might have stood in the presence of kings.

But Elizabeth had pushed him into the New Moon well and as a consequence he boiled pigs' potatoes and recited poetry to Emily — Emily, who wrote poetry too, and loved these evenings so much that she could not sleep after she went to bed until she had composed a minute description of them. The flash came almost every evening over something or other. The Wind Woman swooped or purred in the tossing boughs above them — Emily had never been so near to seeing her; the sharp air was full of the pleasant tang of the burning spruce cones Cousin Jimmy shovelled under the pot; Emily's furry kitten, Mike II, frisked and scampered about like a small, charming demon of the night; the fire glowed with beautiful redness and allure through the gloom; there were nice whispery sounds everywhere; the "great big dark" lay spread around them full of mysteries that daylight never revealed; and over all a purple sky powdered with stars.

Ilse and Teddy came, too, on some evenings. Emily always knew when Teddy was coming, for when he reached the old orchard he whistled his "call" — the one he used just for her — a funny, dear little call, like three clear bird notes, the first just medium pitch, the second higher, the third

dropping away into lowness and sweetness long-drawn out — like the echoes in the Bugle Song that went clearer and further in their dying. That call always had an odd effect on Emily; it seemed to her that it fairly drew the heart out of her body — and she had to follow it. She thought Teddy could have whistled her clear across the world with those three magic notes. Whenever she heard it she ran quickly through the orchard and told Teddy whether Cousin Jimmy wanted him or not, because it was only on certain nights that Cousin Jimmy wanted anybody but her. He would never recite his poetry to Ilse or Teddy; but he told them fairy stories, and tales about the old dead-and-gone Murrays in the pond graveyard that were as queer, sometimes, as the fairy stories; and Ilse would recite too, doing better there than she ever did anywhere else; and sometimes Teddy lay sprawled out on the ground beside the big pot and drew pictures by the light of the fire — pictures of Cousin Jimmy stirring the potatoes — pictures of Ilse and Emily dancing hand in hand around it like two small witches, pictures of Mike's cunning, little, whiskered face peering around the old boulder, pictures of weird, vague faces crowding in the darkness outside their enchanted circle. They had very wonderful evenings there, those four children.

“Oh, don't you like the world at night, Ilse?” Emily once said rapturously.

Ilse glanced happily around her — poor little neglected Ilse, who found in Emily's companionship what she had hungered for all her short life and who was, even now, being led by love into something of her rightful heritage.

“Yes,” she said. “And I always believe there is a God when I'm here like this.”

Then the potatoes were done — and Cousin Jimmy gave each of them one before he mixed in the bran; they broke them in pieces on plates of birchbark, sprinkled them with salt which Emily had cached in a small box under the roots of the biggest spruce, and ate them with gusto. No banquet of gods was ever as delicious as those potatoes. Then finally came Aunt Laura's kind, silvery voice calling through the frosty dark; Ilse and Teddy

scampered homewards; and Emily captured Mike II and shut him up safely for the night in the New Moon doghouse which had held no dog for years, but was still carefully preserved and whitewashed every spring. Emily's heart would have broken if anything had happened to Mike II.

"Old Kelly," the tin pedlar, had given him to her. Old Kelly had come round through Blair Water every fortnight from May to November for thirty years, perched on the seat of a bright red pedlar's waggon and behind a dusty, ambling, red pony of that peculiar gait and appearance pertaining to the ponies of country pedlars — a certain placid, unhasting leanness as of a nag that has encountered troubles of his own and has lived them down by sheer patience and staying power. From the bright red waggon proceeded a certain metallic rumbling and clinking as it bowled along, and two huge nests of tin pans on its flat, rope-encircled roof, flashed back the sunlight so dazzlingly that Old Kelly seemed the beaming sun of a little planetary system all his own. A new broom, sticking up aggressively at each of the four corners gave the waggon a resemblance to a triumphal chariot. Emily hankered secretly for a ride in Old Kelly's waggon. She thought it must be very delightful.

Old Kelly and she were great friends. She liked his red, clean-shaven face under his plug hat, his nice, twinkly, blue eyes, his brush of upstanding, sandy hair, and his comical pursed-up mouth, the shape of which was partly due to nature and partly to much whistling. He always had a little three-cornered paper bag of "lemon drops" for her, or a candy stick of many colours, which he smuggled into her pocket when Aunt Elizabeth wasn't looking. And he never forgot to tell her that he supposed she'd soon be thinking of getting married — for Old Kelly thought that the surest way to please a female creature of any age was to tease her about getting married.

One day, instead of candy, he produced a plump grey kitten from the back drawer of his waggon and told her it was for her. Emily received the gift rapturously, but after Old Kelly had rattled and clattered away Aunt Elizabeth told her they did not want any more cats at New Moon.

“Oh, please let me keep it, Aunt Elizabeth,” Emily begged. “It won’t be a bit of bother to you. I have had experience in bringing up cats. And I’m so lonesome for a kitten. Saucy Sal is getting so wild running with the barn cats that I can’t ‘sociate with her like I used to do — and she never was nice to cuddle. Please, Aunt Elizabeth.”

Aunt Elizabeth would not and did not please. She was in a very bad humour that day, anyhow — nobody knew just why. In such a mood she was entirely unreasonable. She would not listen to anybody — Laura and Cousin Jimmy had to hold their tongues, and Cousin Jimmy was bidden to take the grey kitten down to the Blair Water and drown it. Emily burst into tears over this cruel command, and this aggravated Aunt Elizabeth still further. She was so cross that Cousin Jimmy dared not smuggle the kitten up to the barn as he had at first planned to do.

“Take that beast down to the pond and throw it in and come back and tell me you’ve done it,” said Elizabeth angrily. “I mean to be obeyed — New Moon is not going to be made a dumping-ground for Old Jock Kelly’s superfluous cats.”

Cousin Jimmy did as he was told and Emily would not eat any dinner. After dinner she stole mournfully away through the old orchard down the pasture to the pond. Just why she went she could not have told, but she felt that go she must. When she reached the bank of the little creek where Lofty John’s brook ran into Blair Water, she heard piteous shrieks; and there, marooned on a tiny islet of sere marsh grass in the creek, was an unhappy, little beast, its soaking fur plastered against, its sides, shivering and trembling in the wind of the sharp autumnal day. The old oat-bag in which Cousin Jimmy had imprisoned it was floating out into the pond.

Emily did not stop to think, or look for a board, or count the consequences. She plunged in the creek up to her knees, she waded out to the clump of grass and caught the kitten up. She was so hot with indignation that she did not feel the cold of the water or the chill of the wind as she ran back to New Moon. A suffering or tortured animal always filled her with such a surge of sympathy that it lifted her clean out of

herself. She burst into the cookhouse where Aunt Elizabeth was frying doughnuts.

“Aunt Elizabeth,” she cried, “the kitten wasn’t drowned after all — and I am going to keep it.”

“You’re not,” said Aunt Elizabeth.

Emily looked her aunt in the face. Again she felt that odd sensation that had come when Aunt Elizabeth brought the scissors to cut her hair.

“Aunt Elizabeth, this poor little kitten is cold and starving, and oh, so miserable. It has been suffering for hours. It shall not be drowned again.”

Archibald Murray’s look was on her face and Archibald Murray’s tone was in her voice. This happened only when the deeps of her being were stirred by some peculiarly poignant emotion. Just now she was in an agony of pity and anger.

When Elizabeth Murray saw her father looking at her out of Emily’s little white face, she surrendered without a struggle, rage at herself as she might afterwards for her weakness. It was her one vulnerable point. The thing might not have been so uncanny if Emily had resembled the Murrays. But to see the Murray look suddenly superimposed like a mask over alien features, was such a shock to her nerves that she could not stand up against it. A ghost from the grave could not have cowed her more speedily.

She turned her back on Emily in silence but Emily knew that she had won her second victory. The grey kitten stayed at New Moon and waxed fat and lovable, and Aunt Elizabeth never took the slightest notice of its existence, save to sweep it out of the house when Emily was not about. But it was weeks before Emily was really forgiven and she felt uncomfortable enough over it. Aunt Elizabeth could be a not ungenerous conqueror but she was very disagreeable in defeat. It was really just as well that Emily could not summon the Murray look at will.

Various Tragedies

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Emily, obedient to Aunt Elizabeth's command, had eliminated the word "bull" from her vocabulary. But to ignore the existence of bulls was not to do away with them — and specifically with Mr James Lee's English bull, who inhabited the big windy pasture west of Blair Water and who bore a dreadful reputation. He was certainly an awesome looking creature and Emily sometimes had fearful dreams of being chased by him and being unable to move. And one sharp November day these dreams came true.

There was a certain well at the far end of the pasture concerning which Emily felt a curiosity, because Cousin Jimmy had told her a dreadful tale about it. The well had been dug sixty years ago by two brothers who lived in a little house which was built down near the shore. It was a very deep well, which was considered a curious thing in that lowlying land near pond and sea; the brothers had gone ninety feet before they found a spring. Then the sides of the well had been stoned up — but the work never went farther. Thomas and Silas Lee had quarrelled over some trivial difference of opinion as to what kind of a hood should be put over it; and in the heat of his anger Silas had struck Thomas on the head with his hammer and killed him.

The well-house was never built. Silas Lee was sent to prison for manslaughter and died there. The farm passed to another brother — Mr James Lee's father — who moved the house to the other end of it and planked the well over. Cousin Jimmy added that Tom Lee's ghost was supposed to haunt the scene of his tragic death but he couldn't vouch for that, though he had written a poem on it. A very eerie poem it was, too, and made Emily's blood run cold with a fearful joy when he recited it to her one misty night by the big potato pot. Ever since she had wanted to see the old well.

Her chance came one Saturday when she was prowling alone in the old graveyard. Beyond it lay the Lee pasture and there was apparently not a sign of a bull in or about it. Emily decided to pay a visit to the old well and went skimming down the field against the sweep of the north wind racing across the gulf. The Wind Woman was a giantess that day and a mighty swirl she was stirring up along the shore; but as Emily drew near the big sand-dunes they made a little harbour of calmness around the old well.

Emily coolly lifted up one of the planks, knelt on the others and peered down. Fortunately the planks were strong and comparatively new — otherwise the small maiden of New Moon might have explored the well more thoroughly than she desired to do. As it was, she could see little of it; huge ferns grew thickly out of the crevices among the stones of its sides and reached across it, shutting out the view of its gloomy depths. Rather disappointed, Emily replaced the plank and started homeward. She had not gone ten steps before she stopped. Mr James Lee's bull was coming straight towards her and was less than twenty yards away.

The shore fence was not far behind Emily, and she might possibly have reached it in time had she run. But she was incapable of running; as she wrote that night in her letter to her father she was "parralised" with terror and could no more move than she could in her dreams of this very occurrence. It is quite conceivable that a dreadful thing might have happened then and there had not a certain boy been sitting on the shore fence. He had been sitting there unnoticed all the time Emily had been peering into the well, now he sprang down.

Emily saw, or sensed, a sturdy body dashing past her. The owner thereof ran to within ten feet of the bull, hurled a stone squarely into the monster's hairy face, then sped off at right angles towards the side fence. The bull, thus insulted, turned with a menacing rumble and lumbered off after this intruder.

"Run now!" screamed the boy over his shoulder to Emily.

Emily did not run. Terrified as she was, there was something in her that would not let her run until she saw whether her gallant rescuer made good

his escape. He reached his fence in the nick of time. Then and not till then Emily ran too, and scrambled over the shore fence just as the bull started back across the pasture, evidently determined to catch somebody. Trembling, she made her way through the spiky grass of the sandhills and met the boy at the corner. They stood and looked at each other for a moment.

The boy was a stranger to Emily. He had a cheery, impudent, clean-cut face, with keen, grey eyes and plenty of tawny curls. He wore as few clothes as decency permitted and had only the pretence of a hat. Emily liked him; there was nothing of Teddy's subtle charm in him but he had a certain forceful attraction of his own and he had just saved her from a terrible death.

"Thank you," said Emily shyly, looking up at him with great grey eyes that looked blue under her long lashes. It was a very effective look which lost nothing of effectiveness from being wholly unconscious. Nobody had as yet told Emily how very winsome that shy, sudden, up-glance of hers was.

"Isn't he a rip-snorter?" said the boy easily. He thrust his hands into his ragged pockets and stared at Emily so fixedly that she dropped her eyes in confusion — thereby doing further damage with those demure lids and silken fringes.

"He's dreadful," she said with a shudder. "And I was so scared."

"Were you now? And me thinking you were full of grit to be standing there like that looking at him cool as a cucumber. What's it like to be afraid?"

"Weren't you ever afraid?" asked Emily.

"No — don't know what it's like," said the boy carelessly, and a bit boastfully. "What's your name?"

"Emily Byrd Starr."

"Live round here?"

"I live at New Moon."

"Where Simple Jimmy Murray lives?"

"He isn't simple," cried Emily indignantly.

“Oh, all right. I don’t know him. But I’m going to. I’m going to hire with him for chore boy for the winter.”

“I didn’t know,” said Emily, surprised. “Are you really?”

“Yep. I didn’t know it myself till just this minute. He was asking Aunt Tom about me last week but I didn’t mean to hire out then. Now I guess I will. Want to know my name?”

“Of course.”

“Perry Miller. I live with my old beast of an Aunt Tom down at Stovepipe Town. Dad was a sea captain and I uster sail with him when he was alive — sailed everywhere. Go to school?”

“Yes.”

“I don’t — never did. Aunt Tom lives so far away. Anyhow, I didn’t think I’d like it. Guess I’ll go now, though.”

“Can’t you read?” asked Emily wonderingly.

“Yes — some — and figger. Dad learned me some when he was alive. I hain’t bothered with it since — I’d ruther be down round the harbour. Great fun there. But if I make up my mind to go to school I’ll learn like thunder. I s’pose you’re awful clever.”

“No — not very. Father said I was a genius, but Aunt Elizabeth says I’m just queer.”

“What’s a genius?”

“I’m not sure. Sometimes it’s a person who writes poetry. I write poetry.”

Perry stared at her.

“Golly. I’ll write poetry too, then.”

“I don’t believe you could write poetry,” said Emily — a little disdainfully, it must be admitted. “Teddy can’t — and he’s very clever.”

“Who’s Teddy?”

“A friend of mine.” There was just a trace of stiffness in Emily’s voice.

“Then,” said Perry, folding his arms across his breast and scowling, “I’m going to punch this friend of yours’ head for him.”

“You’re not,” cried Emily. She was very indignant and quite forgot for the moment that Perry had rescued her from the bull. She tossed her own

head and started homeward. Perry turned too.

“May as well go up and see Jimmy Murray about hiring ‘fore I go home,” he said. “Don’t be mad, now. If you don’t want anybody’s head punched I won’t punch it. Only you’ve gotter like me, too.”

“Why, of course I’ll like you,” said Emily, as if there could be no question about it. She smiled her slow, blossoming smile at Perry and thereby reduced him to hopeless bondage.

Two days later Perry Miller was installed as chore boy at New Moon and in a fortnight’s time Emily felt as if he must have been there always.

“Aunt Elizabeth didn’t want Cousin Jimmy to hire him,” she wrote to her father, “because he was one of the boys who did a dreadful thing one night last fall. They changed all the horses that were tied to the fence one Sunday night when preaching was going on and when folks came out the confushun was awful. Aunt Elizabeth said it wouldn’t be safe to have him round the place. But Cousin Jimmy said it was awful hard to get a chore boy and that we owe Perry something for saving my life from the bull. So Aunt Elizabeth gave in and lets him sit at the table with us but he has to stay in the kitchen in the evenings. The rest of us are in the sitting-room, but I am allowed to go out and help Perry with his lessons. He can only have one candle and the light is very dim. It keeps us snuffing it all the time. It is great fun to snuff candles. Perry is head of his class in school already. He is only in the third book although he is nearly twelve. Miss Brownell said something sarkastik to him the first day in school and he just threw back his head and laughed loud and long. Miss Brownell gave him a whipping for it but she has never been sarkastik to him again. She does not like to be laughed at I can see. Perry isn’t afraid of anything. I thought he might not go to school any more when she whipped him but he says a little thing like that isn’t going to keep him from getting an educashun since he has made up his mind to it. He is very determined.

“Aunt Elizabeth is determined too. But she says Perry is stubborn. I am teaching Perry grammar. He says he wants to learn to speak properly. I told him he should not call his Aunt Tom an old beast but he said he had to because she wasn’t a young beast. He says the place he lives in is called

Stovepipe Town because the houses have no chimneys, only pipes sticking out of the roof, but he would live in a manshun some day. Aunt Elizabeth says I ought not to be so friendly with a hired boy. But he is a nice boy though his manners are crood. Aunt Laura says they are crood. I don't know what it means but I guess it means he always says what he thinks right out and eats beans with his knife. I like Perry but in a different way from Teddy. Isn't it funny, dear Father, how many kinds of ways of liking there are? I don't think Ilse likes him. She makes fun of his ignerance and turns up her nose at him because his close are patched though her own close are queer enough. Teddy doesn't like him much and he drew such a funny picture of Perry hanging by his heels from a gallos. The face looked like Perrys and still it didn't. Cousin Jimmy said it was a carrycachure and laughed at it but I dared not show it to Perry for fear he would punch Teddys head. I showed it to Ilse and she got mad and tore it in two. I cant imagine why.

"Perry says he can recite as well as Ilse and could draw pictures too if he put his mind to it. I can see he doesnt like to think anybody can do anything he cant. But he cant see the wallpaper in the air like I can though he tries until I fear he will strane his eyes. He can make better speeches than any of us. He says he used to mean to be a sailer like his father but now he thinks he will be a lawyer when he grows up and go to parlament. Teddy is going to be an artist if his mother will let him, and Ilse is going to be a concert reciter — there is another name but I don't know how it is spelled — and I am going to be a poetess. I think we are a tallented crowd. Perhaps that is a vane thing to say, dear Father.

"A very terrible thing happened the day before yesterday. On Saturday morning we were at family prayers, all kneeling quite solemn around the kitchen. I just looked at Perry once and he made such a funny face at me that I laughed right out loud before I could help it. (That was not the terrible thing.) Aunt Elizabeth was very angry. I would not tell that it was Perry made me laugh because I was afraid he might be sent away if I did. So Aunt Elizabeth said I was to be punished and I was not let go to Jennie Strangs party in the afternoon. (It was a dreadful disappointment but it was

not the terrible thing either.) Perry was away with Cousin Jimmy all day and when he came home at night he said to me, very fierce, Who has been making you cry. I said I had been crying — a little but not much — because I was not let go to the party because I had laughed at prayers. And Perry marched right up to Aunt Elizabeth and told her it was all his fault that I laughed. Aunt Elizabeth said I should not have laughed anyhow, but Aunt Laura was grievously upset and said my punishment had been far too severe; and she said that she would let me wear her pearl ring to school Monday to make up for it. I was enraptured for it is a lovely ring and no other girl has one. As soon as roll call was over Monday morning I put up my hand to ask Miss Brownell a question but really to show off my ring. That was wicked pride and I was punished. At recess Cora Lee, one of the big girls in the sixth class came and asked me to let her wear the ring for a while. I didn't want to but she said if I didn't she would get all the girls in my class to send me to Coventry (which is a dreadful thing, dear Father, and makes you feel like an outcast). So I let her and she kept it on till the afternoon recess and then she came and told me she had lost it in the brook. (This was the terrible thing.) Oh, Father dear, I was nearly wild. I dared not go home and face Aunt Laura. I had promised her I would be so careful with the ring. I thought I might earn money to get her another ring but when I figured it out on my slate I knew I would have to wash dishes for twenty years to do it. I wept in my despair. Perry saw me and after school he marched up to Cora Lee and said You fork over that ring or I'll tell Miss Brownell about it. And Cora Lee forked it over, very meek and said I was going to give it to her anyhow. I was just playing a joke and Perry said, Don't you play any more jokes on Emily or I'll joke you. It is very comforting to have such a champion! I tremble to think what it would have been like if I had had to go home and tell Aunt Laura I had lost her ring. But it was cruel of Cora Lee to tell me she had lost it when she had not and harrow up my mind so. I could not be so cruel to an orphan girl.

“When I got home I looked in the glass to see if my hair had turned white. I am told that sometimes happens. But it hadn't.

“Perry knows more geograffy than any of us because he has been nearly everywhere in the world with his father. He tells me such fassinating stories after his lessons are done. He talks till the candle is burned to the last inch and then he uses that to go to bed with up the black hole into the kitchen loft because Aunt Elizabeth will not let him have more than one candle a night.

“Ilse and I had a fight yesterday about which we’d rather be Joan of Arc or Frances Willard. We didn’t begin it as a fight but just as an argewment but it ended that way. I would rather be Frances Willard because she is alive.

“We had the first snow yesterday. I made a poem on it. This is it.

Along the snow the sunbeams glide,
Earth is a peerless, gleaming bride,
Dripping with diamonds, clad in traling white,
No bride was ever half so fair and bright.

“I read it to Perry and he said he could make poetry just as good and he said right off,

Mike has made a long row
of tracks across the snow.

Now isnt that as good as yours. I didnt think it was because you could say it just as well in prose. But when you talk of peerless gleaming brides in prose it sounds funny. Mike did make a row of little tracks right across the barn field and they looked so pretty, but not so pretty as the mice tracks in some flour Cousin Jimmy spilled on the granary floor. They are the dearest little things. They look like poetry.

“I am sorry winter has come because Ilse and I cant play in our house in Lofty Johns bush any more till spring or outside at the Tansy Patch. Sometimes we play indoors at the Tansy Patch but Mrs Kent makes us feel queer. She sits and watches us all the time. So we dont go only when Teddy coaxes very hard. And the pigs have been killed, poor things, so Cousin Jimmy doesnt boil for them any more. But there is one consolashun I do

not have to wear a sunbonnet to school now. Aunt Laura made me such a pretty red hood with ribbons on it at which Aunt Elizabeth looked scornfully saying it was extravagant. I like school here better every day but I can't like Miss Brownell. She isn't fair. She told us she would give the one who wrote the best composition a pink ribbon to wear from Friday night to Monday. I wrote The Brooks Story about the brook in Lofty John's bush — all its adventures and thoughts — and Miss Brownell said I must have copied it and Rhoda Stuart got the ribbon. Aunt Elizabeth said You waste enough time writing trash I think you might have won that ribbon. She was mortified (I think) because I had disgraced New Moon by not getting it but I did not tell her what had happened. Teddy says a good sport never whines over losing. I want to be a good sport. Rhoda is so hateful to me now. She says she is surprised that a New Moon girl should have a hired boy for a bow. That is very silly because Perry is not my bow. Perry told her she had more gab than sense. That was not polite but it is true. One day in class Rhoda said the moon was situated east of Canada. Perry laughed right out and Miss Brownell made him stay in at recess but she never said anything to Rhoda for saying such a ridiculous thing. But the meanest thing Rhoda said was that she had forgiven me for the way I had used her. That made my blood boil when I hadn't done anything to be forgiven for. The idea.

“We have begun to eat the big beef ham that hung in the southwest corner of the kitchen.

“The other Wednesday night Perry and I helped Cousin Jimmy pick a road through the turnips in the first cellar. We have to go through it to the second cellar because the outside hatch is banked up now. It was great fun. We had a candle stuck up in a hole in the wall and it made such lovely shadows and we could eat all the apples we wanted from the big barrel in the corner and the spirit moved Cousin Jimmy to recite some of his poetry as he threw the turnips.

“I am reading The Alhambra. It belongs to our book case. Aunt Elizabeth does not like to say it isn't fit for me to read because it was one of her father's books, but I don't believe she approves because she knits very

furiously and looks black at me over her glasses. Teddy lent me Hans Andersons stories. I love them — only I always think of a different end for the Ice Maiden and save Rudy.

“They say Mrs John Killegrew has swallowed her wedding-ring. I wonder what she did that for.

“Cousin Jimmy says there is to be an eklips of the sun in December. I hope it wont interfear with Christmas.

“My hands are chapped. Aunt Laura rubs mutton tallow on them every night when I go to bed. It is hard to write poetry with chapped hands. I wonder if Mrs Hemans ever had chapped hands. It does not mention anything like that in her biograffy.

“Jimmy Ball has to be a minister when he grows up. His mother told Aunt Laura that she consekrated him to it in his cradle. I wonder how she did it.

“We have brekfast by candlelight now and I like it.

“Ilse was up here Sunday afternoon and we went up in the garret and talked about God, because that is propper on Sundays. We have to be very careful what we do on Sundays. It is a traddishun of New Moon to keep Sundays very holy. Grandfather Murray was very strikt. Cousin Jimmy told me a story about him. They always cut the wood for Sunday on Saturday night, but one time they forgot and there was no wood on Sunday to cook the dinner, so Grandfather Murray said you must not cut wood on Sundays, boys, but just break a little with the back of the axe. Ilse is very curious about God although she doesnt believe in Him most of the time and doesnt like to talk about Him but still wants to find out about Him. She says she thinks she might like Him if she knew Him. She spells his name with a Capital G now because it is best to be on the safe side. I think God is just like my flash, only it lasts only a second and He lasts always. We talked so long we got hungry and I went down to the sitting-room cubbord and got two donuts. I forgot Aunt Elizabeth had told me I could not have donuts between meals. It was not stealing it was just forgetting. But Ilse got mad at the last and said I was a she jakobite (whatever that is) and a thief and that no Christian would steal donuts from her poor old

aunt. So I went and confessed to Aunt Elizabeth and she said I was not to have a donut at supper. It was hard to see the others eating them. I thought Perry et his very quick but after supper he bekoned me out doors and gave me half his donut which he had kept for me. He had rapped it in his hangkerchief which was not very clean but I et it because I did not want to hurt his feelings.

“Aunt Laura says Ilse has a nice smile. I wonder if I have a nice smile. I looked at the glass in Ilse’s room and smiled but it did not seem to me very nice.

“Now the nights have got cold Aunt Elizabeth always puts a gin jar full of hot water in the bed. I like to put my toes against it. That is all we use the gin jar for nowadays. But Grandfather Murray used to keep real gin in it.

“Now that the snow has come Cousin Jimmy cant work in his garden any more and he is very lonesome. I think the garden is just as pretty in winter as in summer. There are such pretty dimples and baby hills where the snow has covered up the flower beds. And in the evenings it is all pink and rosy at sunset and by moonlight it is like dreamland. I like to look out of the sitting-room window at it and watch the rabbits candles floting in the air above it and wonder what all the little roots and seeds are thinking of down under the snow. And it gives me a lovely creepy feeling to look at it through the red glass in the front door.

“There is a beautiful fringe of isikles along the cookhouse roof. But there will be much more beautiful things in heaven. I was reading about Anzonetta to-day and it made me feel relijus. Good night, my dearest of fathers.

“Emily.

“P. S. That doesnt mean that I have any other Father. It is just a way of saying very very dear.

“E. B. S.”

Check for Miss Brownell

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Emily and Ilse were sitting out on the side bench of Blair Water school writing poetry on their slates — at least, Emily was writing poetry and Ilse was reading it as she wrote and occasionally suggesting a rhyme when Emily was momentarily stuck for one. It may as well be admitted here and now that they had no business whatever to be doing this. They should have been “doing sums,” as Miss Brownell supposed they were. But Emily never did sums when she took it into her black head to write poetry, and Ilse hated arithmetic on general principles. Miss Brownell was hearing the geography class at the other side of the room, the pleasant sunshine was showering in over them through the big window, and everything seemed propitious for a flight with the muses. Emily began to write a poem about the view from the school window.

It was quite a long time since she had been allowed to sit out on the side bench. This was a boon reserved for those pupils who had found favour in Miss Brownell’s cold eyes — and Emily had never been one of those. But this afternoon Ilse had asked for both herself and Emily, and Miss Brownell had let both go, not being able to think of any valid reason for permitting Ilse and refusing Emily — as she would have liked to do, for she had one of those petty natures which never forget or forgive any offence. Emily, on her first day of school, had, so Miss Brownell believed, been guilty of impertinence and defiance — and successful defiance at that. This rankled in Miss Brownell’s mind still and Emily felt its venom in a score of subtle ways. She never received any commendation — she was a target for Miss Brownell’s sarcasm continually — and the small favours that other girls received never came her way. So this opportunity to sit on the side bench was a pleasing novelty.

There were points about sitting on the side bench. You could see all over the school without turning your head — and Miss Brownell could not

sneak up behind you and look over your shoulder to see what you were up to; but in Emily's eyes the finest thing about it was that you could look right down into the "school bush," and watch the old spruces where the Wind Woman played, the long, grey-green trails of moss hanging from the branches, like banners of Elfland, the little red squirrels running along the fence, and the wonderful white aisles of snow where splashes of sunlight fell like pools of golden wine; and there was one little opening in the trees through which you could see right over the Blair Water valley to the sandhills and the gulf beyond. To-day the sandhills were softly rounded and gleaming white under the snow, but beyond them the gulf was darkly, deeply blue with dazzling white masses of ice like baby icebergs, floating about in it. Just to look at it thrilled Emily with a delight that was unutterable but which she yet must try to utter. She began her poem. Fractions were utterly forgotten — what had numerators and denominators to do with those curving bosoms of white snow — that heavenly blue — those crossed dark fir tips against the pearly skies — those ethereal woodland aisles of pearl and gold? Emily was lost to her world — so lost that she did not know the geography class had scattered to their respective seats and that Miss Brownell, catching sight of Emily's entranced gaze skywards as she searched for a rhyme, was stepping softly towards her. Ilse was drawing a picture on her slate and did not see her or she would have warned Emily. The latter suddenly felt her slate drawn out of her hand and heard Miss Brownell saying:

"I suppose you have finished those sums, Emily?"

Emily had not finished even one sum — she had only covered her slate with verses — verses that Miss Brownell must not see — must not see! Emily sprang to her feet and clutched wildly after her slate. But Miss Brownell, with a smile of malicious enjoyment on her thin lips, held it beyond her reach.

"What is this? It does not look — exactly — like fractions. 'Lines on the View — v-e-w — from the Window of Blair Water School.' Really, children, we seem to have a budding poet among us."

The words were harmless enough, but — oh, the hateful sneer that ran through the tone — the contempt, the mockery that was in it! It seared Emily's soul like a whiplash. Nothing was more terrible to her than the thought of having her beloved "poems" read by stranger eyes — cold, unsympathetic, derisive, stranger eyes.

"Please — please, Miss Brownell," she stammered miserably, "don't read it — I'll rub it off — I'll do my sums right away. Only please don't read it. It — it isn't anything."

Miss Brownell laughed cruelly.

"You are too modest, Emily. It is a whole slateful of — poetry — think of that, children — poetry. We have a pupil in this school who can write — poetry. And she does not want us to read this — poetry. I am afraid Emily is selfish. I am sure we should all enjoy this — poetry."

Emily cringed every time Miss Brownell said "poetry" with that jeering emphasis and that hateful pause before it. Many of the children giggled, partly because they enjoyed seeing a "Murray of New Moon" grilled, partly because they realized that Miss Brownell expected them to giggle. Rhoda Stuart giggled louder than any one else; but Jennie Strang, who had tormented Emily on her first day at school, refused to giggle and scowled blackly at Miss Brownell instead.

Miss Brownell held up the slate and read Emily's poem aloud, in a sing-song nasal voice, with absurd intonations and gestures that made it seem a very ridiculous thing. The lines Emily had thought the finest seemed the most ridiculous. The other pupils laughed more than ever and Emily felt that the bitterness of the moment could never go out of her heart. The little fancies that had been so beautiful when they came to her as she wrote were shattered and bruised now, like torn and mangled butterflies—"vistas in some fairy dream," chanted Miss Brownell, shutting her eyes and wagging her head from side to side. The giggles became shouts of laughter.

"Oh," thought Emily, clenching her hands, "I wish — I wish the bears that ate the naughty children in the Bible would come and eat you."

There were no nice, retributive bears in the school bush, however, and Miss Brownell read the whole “poem” through. She was enjoying herself hugely. To ridicule a pupil always gave her pleasure and when that pupil was Emily of New Moon, in whose heart and soul she had always sensed something fundamentally different from her own, the pleasure was exquisite.

When she reached the end she handed the slate back to the crimson-cheeked Emily.

“Take your — poetry, Emily,” she said.

Emily snatched the slate. No slate “rag” was handy but Emily gave the palm of her hand a fierce lick and one side of the slate was wiped off. Another lick — and the rest of the poem went. It had been disgraced — degraded — it must be blotted out of existence. To the end of her life Emily never forgot the pain and humiliation of that experience.

Miss Brownell laughed again.

“What a pity to obliterate such — poetry, Emily,” she said. “Suppose you do those sums now. They are not — poetry, but I am in this school to teach arithmetic and I am not here to teach the art of writing — poetry. Go to your own seat. Yes, Rhoda?”

For Rhoda Stuart was holding up her hand and snapping her fingers.

“Please, Miss Brownell,” she said, with distinct triumph in her tones, “Emily Starr has a whole bunch of poetry in her desk. She was reading it to Ilse Burnley this morning while you thought they were learning history.”

Perry Miller turned around and a delightful missile, compounded of chewed paper and known as a “spit pill,” flew across the room and struck Rhoda squarely in the face. But Miss Brownell was already at Emily’s desk, having reached it one jump before Emily herself.

“Don’t touch them — you have no right!” gasped Emily frantically.

But Miss Brownell had the “bunch of poetry” in her hands. She turned and walked up to the platform. Emily followed. Those poems were very dear to her. She had composed them during the various stormy recesses when it had been impossible to play out of doors and written them down

on disreputable scraps of paper borrowed from her mates. She had meant to take them home that very evening and copy them on letterbills. And now this horrible woman was going to read them to the whole jeering, giggling school.

But Miss Brownell realized that the time was too short for that. She had to content herself with reading over the titles, with some appropriate comments.

Meanwhile Perry Miller was relieving his feelings by bombarding Rhoda Stuart with spit pills, so craftily timed that Rhoda had no idea from what quarter of the room they were coming and so could not “tell” on any one. They greatly interfered with her enjoyment of Emily’s scrape, however. As for Teddy Kent, who did not wage war with spit pills but preferred subtler methods of revenge, he was busy drawing something on a sheet of paper. Rhoda found the sheet on her desk the next morning; on it was depicted a small, scrawny monkey, hanging by its tail from a branch; and the face of the monkey was as the face of Rhoda Stuart. Whereat Rhoda Stuart waxed wrath, but for the sake of her own vanity tore the sketch to tatters and kept silence regarding it. She did not know that Teddy had made a similar sketch, with Miss Brownell figuring as a vampirish-looking bat, and thrust it into Emily’s hand as they left school.

“‘The Lost Dimond — a Romantic Tale,’” read Miss Brownell. “‘Lines on a Birch Tree’ — looks to me more like lines on a very dirty piece of paper, Emily—’Lines Written on a Sundial in our Garden’ — ditto —’Lines to my Favourite Cat” — another romantic tail, I presume—’Ode to Ilse’—’Thy neck is of a wondrous pearly sheen’ — hardly that, I should say. Ilse’s neck is very sunburned—’A Deskriphun of Our Parlour,’ ‘The Violets Spell’ — I hope the violet spells better than you do, Emily—’The Disappointed House’ —

“Lilies lifted up white cups
For the bees to dr — r — i — i — nk.”

“I didn’t write it that way!” cried tortured Emily.

“‘Lines to a Piece of Brocade in Aunt Laura’s Burow Drawer,’
‘Farewell on Leaving Home,’ ‘Lines to a Spruce Tree’—’It keeps off heat
and sun and glare, Tis a goodly tree I ween’ — are you quite sure that you
know what ‘ween’ means, Emily?—’Poem on Mr Tom Bennet’s
Field’—’Poem on the View from Aunt Elizabeth’s Window’ — you are
strong on ‘v-e-w-s,’ Emily—’Epitaff on a Drowned Kitten,’ ‘Meditashuns
at the tomb of my great great grandmother’ — poor lady—’To my
Northern Birds’—’Lines composed on the bank of Blair Water gazing at
the stars’ — h’m — h’m —

“Crusted with uncounted gems,
Those stars so distant, cold and true,

Don’t try to pass those lines off as your own, Emily. You couldn’t have
written them.”

“I did — I did!” Emily was white with sense of outrage. “And I’ve
written lots far better.”

Miss Brownell suddenly crumpled the ragged little papers up in her
hand.

“We have wasted enough time over this trash,” she said. “Go to your
seat, Emily.”

She moved towards the stove. For a moment Emily did not realize her
purpose. Then, as Miss Brownell opened the stove door, Emily understood
and bounded forward. She caught at the papers and tore them from Miss
Brownell’s hand before the latter could tighten her grasp.

“You shall not burn them — you shall not have them,” gasped Emily.
She crammed the poems into the pocket of her “baby apron” and faced
Miss Brownell in a kind of calm rage. The Murray look was on her face —
and although Miss Brownell was not so violently affected by it as Aunt
Elizabeth had been, it nevertheless gave her an unpleasant sensation, as of
having roused forces with which she dared not tamper further. This
tormented child looked quite capable of flying at her, tooth and claw.

“Give me those papers, Emily,” — but she said it rather uncertainly.

“I will not,” said Emily stormily. “They are mine. You have no right to them. I wrote them at recesses — I didn’t break any rules. You” — Emily looked defiantly into Miss Brownell’s cold eyes—”You are an unjust, tyrannical person.”

Miss Brownell turned to her desk.

“I am coming up to New Moon tonight to tell your Aunt Elizabeth of this,” she said.

Emily was at first too much excited over saving her precious poetry to pay much heed to this threat. But as her excitement ebbed cold dread flowed in. She knew she had an unpleasant time ahead of her. But at all events they should not get her poems — not one of them, no matter what they did to her. As soon as she got home from school she flew to the garret and secreted them on the shelf of the old sofa.

She wanted terribly to cry but she would not. Miss Brownell was coming and Miss Brownell should not see her with red eyes. But her heart burned within her. Some sacred temple of her being had been desecrated and shamed. And more was yet to come, she felt wretchedly sure. Aunt Elizabeth was certain to side with Miss Brownell. Emily shrank from the impending ordeal with all the dread of a sensitive, fine strung nature facing humiliation. She would not have been afraid of justice; but she knew at the bar of Aunt Elizabeth and Miss Brownell she would not have justice.

“And I can’t write Father about it,” she thought, her little breast heaving. The shame of it all was too deep and intimate to be written out, and so she could find no relief for her pain.

They did not have supper at New Moon in winter time until Cousin Jimmy had finished his chores and was ready to stay in for the night. So Emily was left undisturbed in the garret.

From the dormer-window she looked down on a dreamland scene that would ordinarily have delighted her. There was a red sunset behind the white, distant hills, shining through the dark trees like a great fire; there was a delicate blue tracery of bare branch shadows all over the crusted garden; there was a pale, ethereal alpen-glow all over the southeastern sky;

and presently there was a little, lovely new moon in the silvery arch over Lofty John's bush. But Emily found no pleasure in any of them.

Presently she saw Miss Brownell coming up the lane, under the white arms of the birches, with her mannish stride.

"If my father was alive," said Emily, looking down at her, "you would go away from this place with a flea in your ear."

The minutes passed, each seeming very long to Emily. At last Aunt Laura came up.

"Your Aunt Elizabeth wants you to come down to the kitchen, Emily."

Aunt Laura's voice was kind and sad. Emily fought down a sob. She hated to have Aunt Laura think she had been naughty, but she could not trust herself to explain. Aunt Laura would sympathize and sympathy would break her down. She went silently down the two long flights of stairs before Aunt Laura and out to the kitchen.

The supper-table was set and the candles were lighted. The big black-raftered kitchen looked spookish and weird, as it always did by candlelight. Aunt Elizabeth sat rigidly by the table and her face was very hard. Miss Brownell sat in the rocking-chair, her pale eyes glittering with triumphant malice. There seemed something baleful and poisonous in her very glance. Also her nose was very red — which did not add to her charm.

Cousin Jimmy, in his grey jumper, was perched on the edge of the woodbox, whistling at the ceiling, and looking more gnome-like than ever. Perry was nowhere to be seen. Emily was sorry for this. The presence of Perry, who was on her side, would have been a great moral support.

"I am sorry to say, Emily, that I have been hearing some very bad things about your behaviour in school to-day," said Aunt Elizabeth.

"No, I don't think you are sorry," said Emily, gravely.

Now that the crisis had come she found herself able to confront it coolly — nay, more, to take a curious interest in it under all her secret fear and shame, as if some part of her had detached itself from the rest and was interestedly absorbing impressions and analysing motives and describing settings. She felt that when she wrote about this scene later on she must

not forget to describe the odd shadows the candle under Aunt Elizabeth's nose cast upward on her face, producing a rather skelemonic effect. As for Miss Brownell, could she ever have been a baby — a dimpled, fat, laughing baby? The thing was unbelievable.

"Don't speak impertinently to me," said Aunt Elizabeth.

"You see," said Miss Brownell, significantly.

"I don't mean to be impertinent, but you are not sorry," persisted Emily. "You are angry because you think I have disgraced New Moon, but you are a little glad that you have got someone to agree with you that I'm bad."

"What a grateful child," said Miss Brownell — flashing her eyes up at the ceiling — where they encountered a surprising sight. Perry Miller's head — and no more of him — was stuck down out of the "black hole" and on Perry Miller's upside-down face was a most disrespectful and impish grimace. Face and head disappeared in a flash, leaving Miss Brownell staring foolishly at the ceiling.

"You have been behaving disgracefully in school," said Aunt Elizabeth, who had not seen this by-play. "I am ashamed of you."

"It was not as bad as that, Aunt Elizabeth," said Emily steadily. "You see it was this way—"

"I don't want to hear anything more about it," said Aunt Elizabeth.

"But you must," cried Emily. "It isn't fair to listen only to her side. I was a little bad — but not so bad as she says—"

"Not another word! I have heard the whole story," said Aunt Elizabeth grimly.

"You heard a pack of lies," said Perry, suddenly sticking his head down through the black hole again.

Everybody jumped — even Aunt Elizabeth, who at once became angrier than ever because she had jumped.

"Perry Miller, come down out of that loft instantly!" she commanded.

"Can't," said Perry laconically.

"At once, I say!"

"Can't," repeated Perry, winking audaciously at Miss Brownell.

“Perry Miller, come down! I will be obeyed. I am mistress here yet.”

“Oh, all right,” said Perry cheerfully. “If I must.”

He swung himself down until his toes touched the ladder. Aunt Laura gave a little shriek. Everybody also seemed to be stricken dumb.

“I’ve just got my wet duds off,” Perry was saying cheerfully, waving his legs about to get a foothold on the ladder while he hung to the sides of the black hole with his elbows. “Fell into the brook when I was watering the cows. Was going to put on dry ones — but just as you say—”

“Jimmy,” implored poor Elizabeth Murray, surrendering at discretion. She could not cope with the situation.

“Perry, get back into that loft and get your clothes on this minute!” ordered Cousin Jimmy.

The bare legs shot up and disappeared. There was a chuckle as mirthful and malicious as an owl’s beyond the black hole. Aunt Elizabeth gave a convulsive gasp of relief and turned to Emily. She was determined to regain ascendancy and Emily must be thoroughly humbled.

“Emily, kneel down here before Miss Brownell and ask her pardon for your conduct to-day,” she said.

Into Emily’s pale cheek came a scarlet protest. She could not do this — she would ask pardon of Miss Brownell but not on her knees. To kneel to this cruel woman who had hurt her so — she could not — would not do it. Her whole nature rose up in protest against such a humiliation.

“Kneel down,” repeated Aunt Elizabeth.

Miss Brownell looked pleased and expectant. It would be very satisfying to see this child who had defied her kneeling before her as a penitent. Never again, Miss Brownell felt, would Emily be able to look levelly at her with those dauntless eyes that bespoke a soul untamable and free, no matter what punishment might be inflicted upon body or mind. The memory of this moment would always be with Emily — she could never forget that she had knelt in abasement. Emily felt this as clearly as Miss Brownell did and remained stubbornly on her feet.

“Aunt Elizabeth, please let me tell my side of the story,” she pleaded.

“I have heard all I wish to hear of the matter. You will do as I say, Emily, or you will be outcast in this house until you do. No one will talk to you — play with you — eat with you — have anything to do with you until you have obeyed me.”

Emily shuddered. That was a punishment she could not face. To be cut off from her world — she knew it would bring her to terms before long. She might as well yield at once — but, ah, the bitterness, the shame of it!

“A human being should not kneel to any one but God,” said Cousin Jimmy, unexpectedly, still staring at the ceiling.

A sudden strange change came over Elizabeth Murray’s proud, angry face. She stood very still, looking at Cousin Jimmy — stood so long that Miss Brownell made a motion of petulant impatience.

“Emily,” said Aunt Elizabeth in a different tone. “I was wrong — I shall not ask you to kneel. But you must apologize to your teacher — and I shall punish you later on.”

Emily put her hands behind her and looked straight into Miss Brownell’s eyes again.

“I am sorry for anything I did to-day that was wrong,” she said, “and I ask your pardon for it.”

Miss Brownell got on her feet. She felt herself cheated of a legitimate triumph. Whatever Emily’s punishment would be she would not have the satisfaction of seeing it. She could have shaken “Simple Jimmy Murray” with a right good will. But it would hardly do to show all she felt.

Elizabeth Murray was not a trustee but she was the heaviest ratepayer in New Moon and had great influence with the School Board.

“I shall excuse your conduct if you behave yourself in future, Emily,” she said coldly. “I feel that I have only done my duty in putting the matter before your Aunt. No, thank you, Miss Murray, I cannot stay to supper — I want to get home before it is too dark.”

“God speed all travellers,” said Perry cheerfully, climbing down his ladder — this time with his clothes on.

Aunt Elizabeth ignored him — she was not going to have a scene with a hired boy before Miss Brownell. The latter switched herself out and Aunt

Elizabeth looked at Emily.

“You will eat your supper alone tonight, Emily, in the pantry — you will have bread and milk only. And you will not speak one word to any one until tomorrow morning.”

“But you won’t forbid me to think?” said Emily anxiously.

Aunt Elizabeth made no reply but sat haughtily down at the supper-table. Emily went into the pantry and ate her bread and milk, with the odour of delicious sausages the others were eating for savour. Emily liked sausages, and New Moon sausages were the last word in sausages. Elizabeth Burnley had brought the recipe out from the Old Country and its secret was carefully guarded. And Emily was hungry. But she had escaped the unbearable, and things might be worse. It suddenly occurred to her that she would write an epic poem in imitation of *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*. Cousin Jimmy had read *The Lay* to her last Saturday. She would begin the first canto right off. When Laura Murray came into the pantry, Emily, her bread and milk only half eaten, was leaning her elbows on the dresser, gazing into space, with faintly moving lips and the light that never was on land or sea in her young eyes. Even the aroma of sausages was forgotten — was she not drinking from a fount of Castaly?

“Emily,” said Aunt Laura, shutting the door, and looking very lovingly upon Emily out of her kind blue eyes, “you can talk to me all you want to. I don’t like Miss Brownell and I don’t think you were altogether in the wrong — although of course you shouldn’t be writing poetry when you have sums to do. And there are some ginger cookies in that box.”

“I don’t want to talk to any one, dear Aunt Laura — I’m too happy,” said Emily dreamily. “I’m composing an epic — it is to be called *The White Lady*, and I’ve got twenty lines of it made already — and two of them are thrilling. The heroine wants to go into a convent and her father warns her that if she does she will never be able to

Come back to the life you gave
With all its pleasures to the grave.

Oh, Aunt Laura, when I composed those lines the flash came to me. And ginger cookies are nothing to me any more.”

Aunt Laura smiled again.

“Not just now perhaps, dear. But when the moment of inspiration has passed it will do no harm to remember that the cookies in the box have not been counted and that they are as much mine as Elizabeth’s.”

Living Epistles

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“DEAR FATHER:

“Oh, I have such an exiting thing to tell you. I have been the heroin of an adventure. One day last week Ilse asked me if I would go and stay all night with her because her father was away and wouldn’t be home till very late and Ilse said she wasn’t fritened but very lonesome. So I asked Aunt Elizabeth if I could. I hardly dared hope, dear Father, that she would let me, for she doesn’t aprove of little girls being away from home at night but to my surprise she said I could go very kindly. And then I heard her say in the pantry to Aunt Laura It is a shame the way the doctor leaves that poor child so much alone at nights. It is wikked of him. And Aunt Laura said The poor man is warped. You know he was not a bit like that before his wife — and then just as it was getting intresting Aunt Elizabeth gave Aunt Laura a nudge and said s-s-s-h, little pitchers have big ears. I knew she meant me though my ears are not big, only pointed. I do wish I could find out what Ilse’s mother did. It worrys me after I go to bed. I lie awake for ever so long thinking about it. Ilse has no idea. Once she asked her father and he told her (in a voice of thunder) never to mention that woman to him again. And there is something else that worrys me too. I keep thinking of Silas Lee who killed his brother at the old well. How dreadful the poor man must have felt. And what is it to be warped.

“I went over to Ilses and we played in the garret. I like playing there because we dont have to be careful and tidy like we do in our garret. Ilses garret is very untidy and cant have been dusted for years. The rag room is worse than the rest. It is boarded off at one end of the garret and it is full of old close and bags of rags and broken furniture. I dont like the smell of it. The kitchen chimney goes up through it and things hang round it (or did). For all this is in the past now, dear Father.

“When we got tired playing we sat down on an old chest and talked. This is splendid in daytime I said but it must be awful queer at night. Mice, said Ilse — and spiders and gots. I dont believe in gots I said skornfully. There isnt any such thing. (But maybe there is for all that, dear Father.) I believe this garret is hawnted, said Ilse. They say garrets always are. Nonsense I said. You know dear Father it would not do for a New Moon person to believe in gots. But I felt very queer. Its easy to talk said Ilse beginning to be mad (though I wasnt trying to run down her garret) but you wouldnt stay here alone at night. I wouldnt mind it a bit I said. Then I dare you to do it said Ilse. I dare you to come up here at bedtime and sleep here all night. Then I saw I was in an awful skrape Father dear. It is a foolish thing to bost. I knew not what to do. It was dreadful to think of sleeping alone in that garret but if I didn’t Ilse would always cast it up to me whenever we fought and worse than that she would tell Teddy and he would think me a coward. So I said proudly Ill do it Ilse Burnley and Im not afraid either. (But oh I was — inside.) The mice will run over you said Ilse. O I wouldnt be you for the world. It was mean of Ilse to make things worse than they were. But I could feel she admired me too and that helped me a great deal. We dragged an old feather bed out of the rag room and Ilse gave me a pillow and half her close. It was dark by this time and Ilse wouldnt go up into the garret again. So I said my prayers very carefully and then I took a lamp and started up. I am so used to candles now that the lamp made me nervus. Ilse said I looked scared to death. My knees shook dear Father but for the honnor of the Starrs (and the Murrays too) I went on. I had undressed in Ilses room, so I got right into bed and blew out the lamp. But I couldnt go to sleep for a long time. The moonlight made the garret look weerd. I don’t know exactly what weerd means but I feel the garret was it. The bags and old close hanging from the beams looked like creatures. I thought I need not be fritened. The angels are here. But then I felt as if I would be as much fritened of angels as of anything else. And I could hear rats and mice scrambling over things. I thought What if a rat was to run over me, and then I thought that next day I would write out a descriphon of the garret by moonlight and my feelings. At last I heard the

doctor driving in and then I heard him knocking round in the kitchen and I felt better and before very long I went to sleep and dreamed a dreadful dream. I dreamed the door of the rag room opened and a big newspaper came out and chased me all around the garret. And then it went on fire and I could smell the smoke plain as plain and it was just on me when I skreamed and woke up. I was sitting right up in bed and the newspaper was gone but I could smell smoke still. I looked at the rag room door and smoke was coming out under it and I saw firelight through the cracks of the boards. I just yelled at the top of my voice and tore down to Ilse's room and she rushed across the hall and woke her father. He said dam but he got right up and then all three of us kept running up and down the garret stairs with pails of water and we made an awful mess but we got the fire out. It was just the bags of wool that had been hanging close to the chimney that had caught fire. When all was over the doctor wiped the perspiration from his manly brow and said That was a close call. A few minutes later would have been too late. I put on a fire when I came in to make a cup of tea and I suppose those bags must have caught fire from a spark. I see there's a hole here where the plaster has tumbled out. I must have this whole place cleaned out. How in the world did you come to discover the fire, Emily. I was sleeping in the garret I said. Sleeping in the garret said the doctor, what in — what the — what were you doing there. Ilse dared me I said. She said I'd be too scared to stay there and I said I wouldn't. I fell asleep and woke up and smelled smoke. You little devil, said the doctor. I suppose it was a dreadful thing to be called a devil but the doctor looked at me so admiringly that I felt as if he was paying me a compliment. He has queer ways of talking. Ilse says the only time he ever said a kind thing to her was once when she had a sore throat he called her "a poor little animal" and looked as if he was sorry for her. I feel sure Ilse feels dreadfully bad because her father doesn't like her though she pretends she doesn't care. But oh dear Father there is more to tell. Yesterday the Shrewsbury Weekly Times came and in the Blair Notes it told all about the fire at the doctors and said it had been fortunately discovered in time by

Miss Emily Starr. I cant tell you what I felt like when I saw my name in the paper. I felt famus. And I never was called Miss in ernest before.

“Last Saturday Aunt Elizabeth and Aunt Laura went to Shrewsbury for the day and left Cousin Jimmy and me to keep house. We had such fun and Cousin Jimmy let me skim all the milk pans. But after dinner unexpected company came and there was no cake in the house. That was a dreadful thing. It never happened before in the annels of New Moon. Aunt Elizabeth had toothache all day yesterday and Aunt Laura was away at Priest Pond visiting Great Aunt Nancy, so no cake was made. I prayed about it and then I went to work and made a cake by Aunt Laura’s receet and it turned out all right. Cousin Jimmy helped me set the table and get supper, and I poured the tea and never slopped any over in the saucers. You would have been proud of me Father. Mrs Lewis took a second piece of cake and said I would know Elizabeth Murray’s cake if I found it in central Africa. I said not a word for the honour of the family. But I felt very proud. I had saved the Murrays from disgrace. When Aunt Elizabeth came home and heard the tale she looked grim and tasted a piece that was left and then she said Well, you have got some Murray in you anyway. That is the first time Aunt Elizabeth has ever praised me. She had three teeth out so they will not ache any more. I am glad for her sake. Before I went to bed I got the cookbook and picked out all the things Id like to make. Queen Pudding, Sea-foam Sauce, Blackeyed Susans, Pigs In Blankets. They sound just lovely.

“I can see such beautiful fluffy white clouds over Lofty Johns bush. I wish I could sore up and drop right into them. I cant believe they would be wet and messy like Teddy says. Teddy cut my initials and his together on the Monark of The Forest but somebody has cut them out. I don’t know whether it was Perry or Ilse.

“Miss Brownell hardly ever gives me good deportment marks now and Aunt Elizabeth is much displeased on Friday nights but Aunt Laura understands. I wrote an account of the afternoon when Miss Brownell made fun of my poems and put it in an old envelope and wrote Aunt Elizabeths name on it and put it among my papers. If I die of consumption

Aunt Elizabeth will find it and know the rites of it and mourn that she was so unjust to me. But I dont think I will die because Im getting much fatter and Ilse told me she heard her father tell Aunt Laura I would be handsome if I had more color. Is it wrong to want to be handsome, dearest Father. Aunt Elizabeth says it is and when I said to her Wouldnt you like to be handsome, Aunt Elizabeth, she seemed anoyed about something.

“Miss Brownell has had a spite at Perry ever since that evening and treats him very mean but he is meek and says he wont kick up any fuss in school because he wants to learn and get ahead. He keeps saying his rymes are as good as mine and I know they are not and it exassperates me. If I do not pay attention all the time in school Miss Brownell says I suppose you are composing — poetry Emily and then everybody laughs. No not everybody. I must not exaggerate. Teddy and Perry and Ilse and Jennie never laugh. It is funny that I like Jennie so well now and I hated her so that first day in school. Her eyes are not piggy after all. They are small but they are jolly and twinkly. She is quite poplar in school. I do hate Frank Barker. He took my new reader and wrote in a big sprawly way all over the front page

Steal not this book for fear of shame
For on it is the owners name
And when you die the Lord will say
Where is the book you stole away
And when you say you do not know
The Lord will say go down below.

“That is not a refined poem and besides it is not the rite way to speak about God. I tore out the leaf and burned it and Aunt Elizabeth was angry and even when I explained why her rath was not apeased. Ilse says she is going to call God Alla after this. I think it is a nicer name myself. It is so soft and doesn’t sound so stern. But I fear its not relijus enough.

MAY 20.

“Yesterday was my birthday dear Father. It will soon be a year since I came to New Moon. I feel as if I had always lived here. I have grown two

inches. Cousin Jimmy measured me by a mark on the dairy door. My birthday was very nice. Aunt Laura made a lovely cake and gave me a beautiful new white pettycoat with an embroidered flounce. She had run a blue ribbon through it but Aunt Elizabeth made her pull it out. Aunt Laura also gave me that piece of pink satin brocade in her bureau drawer. I have longed for it ever since I saw it but never hoped to possess it. Ilse asked me what I meant to do with it but I don't mean to do anything with it. Only keep it up here in the garret with my treasures and look at it because it is beautiful. Aunt Elizabeth gave me a dictionary. That was a useful present. I feel I ought to like it. You will soon notice an improvement in my spelling, I hope. The only trouble is when I am writing something interesting I get so excited it is just awful to have to stop and hunt up a word to see how it is spelled. I looked up ween in it and Miss Brownell was right. I did not know what it really meant. It rhymed so well with sheen and I thought it meant to behold or see but it means to think. Cousin Jimmy gave me a big thick blank book. I am so proud of it. It will be so nice to write pieces in. But I will still use the letterbills to write to you, dear Father, because I can fold each one up by itself and address it like a real letter. Teddy gave me a picture of myself. He painted it in water colors and called it The Smiling Girl. I look as if I was listening to something that made me very happy. Ilse says it flatters me. It does make me better looking than I am but not any better than I would be if I could have a bang. Teddy says he is going to paint a real big picture of me when he grows up. Perry walked all the way to Shrewsbury to get me a necklace of pearl beads and lost it. He had no more money so he went home to Stovepipe Town and got a young hen from his Aunt Tom and gave me that. He is a very persistent boy. I am to have all the eggs the hen lays to sell the pedler for myself. Ilse gave me a box of candy. I am only going to eat one piece a day to make it last a long time. I wanted Ilse to eat some but she said she wouldn't because it would be mean to help eat a present you had given and I insisted and then we fought over it and Ilse said I was a caterwauling quadruped (which was ridiculous) and didn't know enough to come in when

it rained. And I said I knew enough to have some manners at least. Ilse got so mad she went home but she cooled off soon and came back for supper.

“It is raining tonight and it sounds like fairies feet dancing over the garret roof. If it had not rained Teddy was going to come down and help me look for the Lost Dimond. Wouldnt it be splendid if we could find it.

“Cousin Jimmy is fixing up the garden. He lets me help him and I have a little flower bed of my own. I always run out first thing every morning to see how much the things have grown since yesterday. Spring is such a happyfying time isnt it, Father. The little Blue People are all out round the summer-house. That is what Cousin Jimmy calls the violets and I think it is lovely. He has names like that for all the flowers. The roses are the Queens and the June lilies are the Snow Ladies and the tulips are the Gay Folk and the daffodils are the Golden Ones and the China Asters are My Pink Friends.

“Mike II is here with me, sitting on the windowsill. Mike is a smee cat. Smee is not in the dictionary. It is a word I invented myself. I could not think of any English word which just describes Mike II so I made this up. It means sleek and glossy and soft and fluffy all in one and something else besides that I cant express.

“Aunt Laura is teaching me to sew. She says I must learn to make a hem on muslin that cant be seen (tradishun). I hope she will teach me how to make point lace some day. All the Murrays of New Moon have been noted for making point lace (I mean all the women Murrays). None of the girls in school can make point lace. Aunt Laura says she will make me a point lace hangkerchief when I get married. All the New Moon brides had point lace hangkerchiefs except my mother who ran away. But you didnt mind her not having one did you Father. Aunt Laura talks a good bit about my mother to me but not when Aunt Elizabeth is around. Aunt Elizabeth never mentions her name. Aunt Laura wants to show me Mothers room but she has never been able to find the key yet because Aunt Elizabeth keeps it hid. Aunt Laura says Aunt Elizabeth loved my mother very much. You would think she would love her daughter some wouldnt you. But she doesnt. She is just bringing me up as a duty.

“JUNE 1.

“DEAR FATHER:

“This has been a very important day. I wrote my first letter. I mean the first letter that was really to go in the mail. It was to Great-Aunt Nancy who lives at Priest Pond and is very old. She wrote Aunt Elizabeth and said I might write now and then to a poor old woman. My heart was touched and I wanted to. Aunt Elizabeth said We might as well let her. And she said to me You must be careful to write a nice letter and I will read it over when it is written. If you make a good impression on Aunt Nancy she may do something for you. I wrote the letter very carefully but it didnt sound a bit like me when it was finished. I couldn’t write a good letter when I knew Aunt Elizabeth was going to read it. I felt paralyzed.

“JUNE 7.

“Dear Father, my letter did not make a good impression on Great-Aunt Nancy. She did not answer it but she wrote Aunt Elizabeth that I must be a very stupid child to write such a stupid letter. I feel insulted because I am not stupid. Perry says he feels like going to Priest Pond and knocking the daylights out of Great-Aunt Nancy. I told him he must not talk like that about my family, and anyhow I dont see how knocking the daylights out of Great-Aunt Nancy would make her change her opinion about me being stupid. (I wonder what daylights are and how you knock them out of people.)

“I have three cantos of The White Lady finished. I have the heroin imured in a convent and I don’t know how to get her out because I am not a Catholic. I suppose it would have been better if I had a Protestant heroin but there were no Protestants in the days of shivalry. I might have asked Lofty John last year but this year I cant because I’ve never spoken to him since he played that horrid joke on me about the apple.

“When I meet him on the road I lok straight ahead just as lofty as he does. I have called my pig after him to get square. Cousin Jimmy has given me a little pig for my own. When it is sold I am to have the money. I mean to give some for missionaries and put the rest in the bank to go to my educashun. And I thought if I ever had a pig I would call it Uncle

Wallace. But now it does not seem to me proper to call pigs after your uncles even if you dont like them.

“Teddy and Perry and Ilse and I play we are living in the days of shivalry and Ilse and I are distressed damsels reskued by galant knites. Teddy made a splendid suit of armour out of old barrel staves and then Perry made a better one out of old tin boilers hammered flat with a broken saucepan for a helmit. Sometimes we play at the Tansy Patch. I have a queer feeling that Teddy’s mother hates me this summer. Last summer she just didnt like me. Smoke and Buttercup are not there now. They disappeared misteriously in the winter. Teddy says he feels sure his mother poisoned them because she thought he was getting too fond of them. Teddy is teaching me to whistle but Aunt Laura says it is unladylike. So many jolly things seem to be unladylike. Sometimes I almost wish my aunts were infidels like Dr Burnley. He never bothers whether Ilse is unladylike or not. But no, it would not be good manners to be an infidel. It would not be a New Moon tradishun.

“To-day I taught Perry that he must not eat with his knife. He wants to learn all the rules of etiket. And I am helping him learn a recitation for school examination day. I wanted Ilse to do it but she was mad because he asked me first and she wouldnt. But she should because she is a far better reciter than I am. I am too nervus.

“JUNE 14.

“Dear Father, we have composition in school now and I learned to-day that you put things in like this ‘ ‘ when you write anything anybody has said. I didnt know that before. I must go over all my letters to you and put them in. And after a question you must put a mark like this ? and when a letter is left out a postroffe which is a comma up in the air. Miss Brownell is sarkastic but she does teach you things. I am putting that down because I want to be fair even if I do hate her. And she is interesting although she is not nice. I have written a descriphun of her on a letterbill. I like writing about people I don’t like better than about those I do like. Aunt Laura is nicer to live with than Aunt Elizabeth, but Aunt Elizabeth is nicer to write about. I can deskribe her fawlts but I feel wikked and ungrateful if I say

anything that is not compementary about dear Aunt Laura. Aunt Elizabeth has locked your books away and says I'm not to have them till I'm grown up. Just as if I wouldn't be careful of them, dear Father. She says I wouldn't because she found that when I was reading one of them I put a tiny pencil dot under every beautiful word. It didn't hurt the book a bit, dear Father. Some of the words were dingles, pearled, musk, dappled, intervalles, glen, bosky, piping, shimmer, crisp, beechen, ivory. I think those are all lovely words, Father.

"Aunt Laura lets me read her copy of A Pilgrims Progress on Sundays. I call the big hill on the road to White Cross the Delectable Mountain because it is such a beautiful one.

"Teddy lent me 3 books of poetry. One of them was Tennyson and I have learned The Bugle Song off by heart so I will always have it. One was Mrs Browning. She is lovely. I would like to meet her. I suppose I will when I die but that may be a long time away. The other was just one poem called Sohrab and Rustum. After I went to bed I cried over it. Aunt Elizabeth said "what are you sniffing about?" I wasn't sniffing — I was weeping sore. She made me tell her and then she said "You must be crazy." But I couldn't go to sleep until I had thought out a different end for it — a happy one.

"JUNE 25.

DEAR FATHER:

"There has been a dark shadow over this day. I dropped my cent in church. It made a dreadful noise. I felt as if everybody looked at me. Aunt Elizabeth was much annoyed. Perry dropped his too soon after. He told me after church he did it on purpose because he thought it would make me feel better but it didn't because I was afraid the people would think it was me dropping mine again. Boys do such queer things. I hope the minister did not hear because I am beginning to like him. I never liked him much before last Tuesday. His family are all boys and I suppose he doesn't understand little girls very well. Then he called at New Moon. Aunt Laura and Aunt Elizabeth were both away and I was in the kitchen alone. Mr Dare came in and sat down on Saucy Sal who was asleep in the rocking-

chair. He was comfortable but Saucy Sal wasn't. He didn't sit on her stomach. If he had I suppose he would have killed her. He just sat on her legs and tail. Sal yowled but Mr Dare is a little deaf and didn't hear her and I was too shy to tell him. But Cousin Jimmy came in just as he was asking me if I knew my catechism and said "Catechism, is it? Lawful heart, man, listen to that poor dum beast. Get up if you're a Christian." So Mr Dare got up and said, "Dear me, this is very remarkable. I thought I felt something moving."

"I thought I would write this to you, dear Father, because it struck me as humerus.

"When Mr Dare finished asking me questions I thought it was my turn and I would ask him some about some things I've wanted to know for years. I asked him if he thought God was very perticular about every little thing I did and if he thought my cats would go to heaven. He said he hoped I never did wrong things and that animals had no souls. And I asked him why we shouldn't put new wine in old bottles. Aunt Elizabeth does with her dandelion wine and the old bottles do just as well as new ones. He explained quite kindly that the Bible bottles were made of skins and got rotten when they were old. It made it quite clear to me. Then I told him I was worried because I knew I ought to love God better than anything but there were things I loved better than God. He said "What things?" and I said flowers and stars and the Wind Woman and the Three Princesses and things like that. And he smiled and said "But they are just a part of God, Emily — every beautiful thing is." And all at once I liked him ever so much and didn't feel shy with him any more. He preeched a sermon on heaven last Sunday. It seemed like a dull place. I think it must be more exciting than that. I wonder what I will do when I go to heaven since I cant sing. I wonder if they will let me write poetry. But I think church is interesting. Aunt Elizabeth and Aunt Laura always read their Bibles before the servis begins but I like to stare around and see everybody and wonder what they are thinking of. It's so nice to hear the silk dresses swishing up the isles. Bustles are very fashunable now but Aunt Elizabeth will not wear

them. I think Aunt Elizabeth would look funny with a bustle. Aunt Laura wears a very little one.

“Your lovingest daughter,

“Emily B. Starr.

“P. S. Dear Father, it is lovely to write to you. But O, I never get an answer back.

“E. B. S.”

Father Cassidy

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Consternation reigned at New Moon. Everybody was desperately unhappy. Aunt Laura cried. Aunt Elizabeth was so cantankerous that there was no living with her. Cousin Jimmy went about as one distracted and Emily gave up worrying about Ilse's mother and Silas Lee's remorseful ghost after she went to bed, and worried over this new trouble. For it had all originated in her disregard of New Moon tradition in making calls on Lofty John, and Aunt Elizabeth did not mince matters in telling her so. If she, Emily Byrd Starr, had never gone to Lofty John's she would never have eaten the Big Sweet apple, and if she had never eaten the Big Sweet apple Lofty John would not have played a joke on her and if he had not played a joke on her Aunt Elizabeth would never have gone and said bitter, Murray-like things to him; and if Aunt Elizabeth had never said bitter Murray-like things to him Lofty John would not have become offended and revengeful; and if Lofty John had not become offended and revengeful he would never have taken it into his lofty head to cut down the beautiful grove to the north of New Moon.

For this was exactly where this house-that-jack-built progression had landed them all. Lofty John had announced publicly in the Blair Water blacksmith shop that he was going to cut down the bush as soon as harvest was over — every last tree and sapling was to be laid low. The news was promptly carried to New Moon and upset the inhabitants thereof as they had not been upset for years. In their eyes it was nothing short of a catastrophe.

Elizabeth and Laura could hardly bring themselves to believe it. The thing was incredible. That big, thick, protecting bush of spruce and hardwood had always been there; it belonged to New Moon morally; even Lofty John Sullivan would not dare to cut it down. But Lofty John had an

uncomfortable reputation for doing what he said he would do; that was a part of his loftiness; and if he did — if he did —

“New Moon will be ruined,” wailed poor Aunt Laura. “It will look dreadful — all its beauty will go — and we will be left open to the north wind and the sea storms — we have always been so warm and sheltered here. And Jimmy’s garden will be ruined too.”

“This is what comes of bringing Emily here,” said Aunt Elizabeth.

It was a cruel thing to say, even when all allowances were made — cruel and unjust, since her own sharp tongue and Murray sarcasm had had quite as much to do with it as Emily. But she said it and it pierced Emily to the heart with a pang that left a scar for years. Poor Emily did not feel as if she needed any additional anguish. She was already feeling so wretched that she could not eat or sleep. Elizabeth Murray, angry and unhappy as she was, slept soundly at nights; but beside her in the darkness, afraid to move or turn, lay a slender little creature whose tears, stealing silently down her cheeks, could not ease her breaking heart. For Emily thought her heart was breaking; she couldn’t go on living and suffering like this. Nobody could.

Emily had lived long enough at New Moon for it to get pretty thoroughly into her blood. Perhaps it had even been born there. At any rate, when she came to it she fitted into its atmosphere as a hand into a glove. She loved it as well as if she had lived there all her short life — loved every stick and stone and tree and blade of grass about it — every nail in the old, kitchen floor, every cushion of green moss on the dairy roof, every pink and white columbine that grew in the old orchard, every “tradition” of its history. To think of its beauty being in a large measure reft from it was agony to her. And to think of Cousin Jimmy’s garden being ruined! Emily loved that garden almost as much as he did; why, it was the pride of Cousin Jimmy’s life that he could grow there plants and shrubs that would winter nowhere else in P. E. Island; if the northern shelter were removed they would die. And to think of that beautiful bush itself being cut down — the To-day Road and the Yesterday Road and the Tomorrow Road being swept out of existence — the stately Monarch of

the Forest discrowned — the little playhouse where she and Ilse had such glorious hours destroyed — the whole lovely, ferny, intimate place torn out of her life at one fell swoop.

Oh, Lofty John had chosen and timed his vengeance well!

When would the blow fall? Every morning Emily listened miserably as she stood on the sandstone doorstep of the kitchen, for the sound of axe blows on the clear September air. Every evening when she returned from school she dreaded to see that the work of destruction had begun. She pined and fretted. There were times when it seemed to her she couldn't bear her life any longer. Every day Aunt Elizabeth said something imputing the whole blame to her and the child grew morbidly sensitive about it. Almost she wished Lofty John would begin and be done with it. If Emily had ever heard the classic story of Damocles she would have heartily sympathized with him. If she had had any hope that it would do any good she would have swallowed Murray pride and Starr pride and every other kind of pride and gone on her knees to Lofty John to entreat him to hold his revengeful hand. But she believed it would not. Lofty John had left no doubt in anybody's mind as to his bitter determination in the matter. There was much talk about it in Blair Water and some were very well pleased at this blow to New Moon pride and prestige, and some held that it was low and unclean behaviour on Lofty John's part, and all agreed that this was what they had prophesied all along as bound to happen some day when the old Murray-Sullivan feud of three generations should have come to its inevitable head. The only surprising thing was that Lofty John hadn't done it long ago. He had always hated Elizabeth Murray since their schooldays, when her tongue had not spared him.

One day by the banks of Blair Water Emily sat down and wept. She had been sent to trim the dead blossoms off the rosebushes on Grandmother Murray's grave; having finished her task she had not the heart to go back to the house where Aunt Elizabeth was making everybody miserable because she was herself so unhappy. Perry had reported that Lofty John had stated the day before at the blacksmith's that he was going to begin cutting down the big bush on Monday morning.

“I can’t bear it,” sobbed Emily to the rosebushes.

A few late roses nodded at her; the Wind Woman combed and waved and stirred the long green grasses on the graves where proud Murrays, men and women, slept calmly, unstirred by old feuds and passions; the September sunlight shone beyond on old harvest fields mellowly bright and serene, and very softly against its green, shrub-hung bank, purred and lapped the blue Blair Water.

“I don’t see why God doesn’t stop Lofty John,” said Emily passionately. Surely the New Moon Murrays had a right to expect that much from Providence.

Teddy came whistling down the pasture, the notes of his tune blowing across the Blair Water like elfin drops of sound, vaulted the graveyard fence and perched his lean, graceful body irreverently on the “Here I stay” of Great-Grandrnother Murray’s flat tombstone.

“What’s the matter?” he said.

“Everything’s the matter,” said Emily, a little crossly. Teddy had no business to be looking so cheerful. She was used to more sympathy from Teddy and it aggravated her not to find it. “Don’t you know Lofty John is going to begin cutting down the bush Monday?”

Teddy nodded.

“Yep. Ilse told me. But look here, Emily, I’ve thought of something. Lofty John wouldn’t dare cut down that bush if the priest told him not to, would he?”

“Why?”

“Because the Catholics have to do just what their priests tell them to, haven’t they?”

“I don’t know — I don’t know anything about them. We are Presbyterians.”

Emily gave her head a little toss. Mrs Kent was known to be an “English Church” woman and though Teddy went to the Presbyterian Sunday-school, that fact gave him scanty standing among bred-in-the-bone Presbyterian circles.

“If your Aunt Elizabeth went to Father Cassidy at White Cross and asked him to stop Lofty John, maybe he’d do it,” persisted Teddy.

“Aunt Elizabeth would never do that,” said Emily positively. “I’m sure of it. She’s too proud.”

“Not even to save the bush?”

“Not even for that.”

“Then I guess nothing can be done,” said Teddy rather crestfallen.

“Look here — see what I’ve made. This is a picture of Lofty John in purgatory, with three little devils sticking red-hot pitchforks into him. I copied some of it out of one of Mother’s books — Dante’s *Infernal*, I think it was — but I put Lofty John in place of the man in the book. You can have it.”

“I don’t want it.” Emily uncoiled her legs and got up. She was past the stage when inflicting imaginary torments on Lofty John could comfort her. She had already slain him in several agonizing ways during her night vigils. But an idea had come to her — a daring, breathless idea. “I must go home now, Teddy — it’s suppertime.”

Teddy pocketed his despised sketch — which was really a wonderful bit of work if either of them had had the sense to know it: the expression of anguish in Lofty John’s face as a merry little devil touched him up with a pitchfork would have been the despair of many a trained artist. He went home wishing he could help Emily; it was all wrong that a creature like Emily — with soft purple-gray eyes and a smile that made you think of all sorts of wonderful things you couldn’t put into words — should be unhappy. Teddy felt so worried about it that he added a few more devils to his sketch of Lofty John in purgatory and lengthened the prongs of their pitchforks quite considerably.

Emily went home with a determined twist to her mouth. She ate as much supper as she could — which wasn’t much, for Aunt Elizabeth’s face would have destroyed her appetite if she had had any — and then sneaked out of the house by the front door. Cousin Jimmy was working in his garden but he did not call her. Cousin Jimmy was always very sorrowful now. Emily stood a moment on the Grecian porch and looked at Lofty

John's bush — green-bosomed, waving, all lovely. Would it be a desecrated waste of stumps by Monday night? Goaded by the thought Emily cast fear and hesitation to the winds and started briskly off down the lane. When she reached the gate she turned to the left on the long red road of mystery that ran up the Delectable Mountain. She had never been on that road before; it ran straight to White Cross; Emily was going to the parish house there to interview Father Cassidy. It was two miles to White Cross and Emily walked it all too soon — not because it was a beautiful road of wind and wild fern, haunted by little rabbits — but because she dreaded what awaited her at the end. She had been trying to think what she should say — how she should say it; but her invention failed her. She had no acquaintance with Catholic priests, and couldn't imagine how you should talk to them at all. They were even more mysterious and unknowable than ministers. Suppose Father Cassidy should be dreadfully angry at her daring to come there and ask a favour. Perhaps it was a dreadful thing to do from every point of view. And very likely it would do no good. Very likely Father Cassidy would refuse to interfere with Lofty John, who was a good Catholic, while she was, in his opinion, a heretic. But for any chance, even the faintest, of averting the calamity impending over New Moon, Emily would have faced the entire Sacred College. Horribly frightened, miserably nervous as she was, the idea of turning back never occurred to her. She was only sorry that she hadn't put on her Venetian beads. They might have impressed Father Cassidy.

Although Emily had never been to White Cross she knew the parish house when she saw it — a fine, tree-embowered residence near the big white chapel with the flashing gilt cross on its spire and the four gilt angels, one on each of the little spires at the corners. Emily thought them very beautiful as they gleamed in the light of the lowering sun, and wished they could have some on the plain white church at Blair Water. She couldn't understand why Catholics should have all the angels. But there was not time to puzzle over this, for the door was opening and the trim little maid was looking a question.

"Is — Father Cassidy — at — home?" asked Emily, rather jerkily.

“Yes.”

“Can — I — see — him?”

“Come in,” said the little maid. Evidently there was no difficulty about seeing Father Cassidy — no mysterious ceremonies such as Emily had half expected, even if she were allowed to see him at all. She was shown into a book-lined room and left there, while the maid went to call Father Cassidy, who, she said, was working in the garden. That sounded quite natural and encouraging. If Father Cassidy worked in a garden, he could not be so very terrible.

Emily looked about her curiously. She was in a very pretty room — with cosy chairs, and pictures and flowers. Nothing alarming or uncanny about it — except a huge black cat who was sitting on the top of one of the bookcases. It was really an enormous creature. Emily adored cats and had always felt at home with any of them. But she had never seen such a cat as this. What with its size and its insolent, gold-hued eyes, set like living jewels in its black velvet face, it did not seem to belong to the same species as nice, cuddly, respectable kittens at all. Mr Dare would never have had such a beast about his manse. All Emily’s dread of Father Cassidy returned.

And then in came Father Cassidy, with the friendliest smile in the world. Emily took him in with her level glance as was her habit — or gift — and never again in the world was she the least bit afraid of Father Cassidy. He was big and broad-shouldered, with brown eyes and brown hair; and his very face was so deeply tanned from his inveterate habit of going about bareheaded in merciless sunshine, that it was brown, too. Emily thought he looked just like a big nut — a big, brown, wholesome nut.

Father Cassidy looked at her as he shook hands; Emily had one of her visitations of beauty just then. Excitement had brought a wildrose hue to her face, the sunlight brought out the watered-silk gloss of her black hair; her eyes were softly dark and limpid; but it was at her ears Father Cassidy suddenly bent to look. Emily had a moment of agonized wonder if they were clean.

“She’s got pointed ears,” said Father Cassidy, in a thrilling whisper. “Pointed ears! I knew she came straight from fairyland the minute I saw her. Sit down, Elf — if elves do sit — sit down and give me the latest news av Titania’s court.”

Emily’s foot was now on her native heath. Father Cassidy talked her language, and he talked it in such a mellow, throaty voice, slurring his “ofs” ever so softly as became a proper Irishman. But she shook her head a little sadly. With the burden of her errand on her soul she could not play the part of ambassadress from Elfland.

“I’m only Emily Starr of New Moon,” she said; and then gasped hurriedly, because there must be no deception — no sailing under false colours, “and I’m a Protestant.”

“And a very nice little Protestant you are,” said Father Cassidy. “But for sure I’m a bit disappointed. I’m used to Protestants — the woods hereabouts being full av them — but it’s a hundred years since the last elf called on me.”

Emily stared. Surely Father Cassidy wasn’t a hundred years old. He didn’t look more than fifty. Perhaps, though, Catholic priests did live longer than other people. She didn’t know exactly what to say so she said, a bit lamely,

“I see you have a cat.”

“Wrong.” Father Cassidy shook his head and groaned dismally. “A cat has me.”

Emily gave up trying to understand Father Cassidy. He was nice but ununderstandable. She let it go at that. And she must get on with her errand.

“You are a kind of minister, aren’t you?” she asked timidly. She didn’t know whether Father Cassidy would like being called a minister.

“Kind av,” he agreed amiably. “And you see ministers and priests can’t do their own swearing. They have to keep cats to do it for them. I never knew any cat that could swear as genteelly and effectively as the B’y.”

“Is that what you call him?” asked Emily, looking at the black cat in some awe. It seemed hardly safe to discuss him right before his face.

“That’s what he calls himself. My mother doesn’t like him because he steals the cream. Now, I don’t mind his doing that; no, it’s his way av licking his jaws after it that I can’t stand. Oh, B’y, we’ve a fairy calling on us. Be excited for once, I implore you — there’s a duck av a cat.”

The B’y refused to be excited. He winked an insolent eye at Emily.

“Have you any idea what goes on in the head av a cat, elf?”

What queer questions Father Cassidy asked. Yet Emily thought she would like his questions if she were not so worried. Suddenly Father Cassidy leaned across the table and said,

“Now, just what’s bothering you?”

“I’m so unhappy,” said Emily piteously.

“So are lots av other people. Everybody is unhappy by spells, But creatures who have pointed ears shouldn’t be unhappy. It’s only mortals who should be that.”

“Oh, please — please—” Emily wondered what she should call him. Would it offend him if a Protestant called him “Father”? But she had to risk it—“please, Father Cassidy, I’m in such trouble and I’ve come to ask a great favour of you.”

Emily told him the whole tale from beginning to end — the old Murray-Sullivan feud, her erstwhile friendship with Lofty John, the Big Sweet apple, the unhappy consequence, and Lofty John’s threatened revenge. The B’y and Father Cassidy listened with equal gravity until she had finished. Then the B’y winked at her, but Father Cassidy put his long brown fingers together.

“Humph,” he said.

(“That’s the first time,” reflected Emily, “that I’ve ever heard anyone outside of a book say ‘Humph.’”)

“Humph,” said Father Cassidy again. “And you want me to put a stop to this nefarious deed?”

“If you can,” said Emily. “Oh, it would be so splendid if you could. Will you — will you?”

Father Cassidy fitted his fingers still more carefully together.

“I’m afraid I can hardly invoke the power av the keys to prevent Lofty John from disposing as he wishes av his own lawful property, you know, elf.”

Emily didn’t understand the allusion to the keys but she did understand that Father Cassidy was declining to bring the lever of the Church to bear on Lofty John. There was no hope, then. She could not keep the tears of disappointment out of her eyes.

“Oh, come now, darling, don’t cry,” implored Father Cassidy. “Elves never cry — they can’t. It would break my heart to discover you weren’t av the Green Folk. You may call yourself av New Moon and av any religion you like, but the fact remains that you belong to the Golden Age and the old gods. That’s why I must save your precious bit av greenwood for you.”

Emily stared.

“I think it can be done,” Father Cassidy went on. “I think if I go to Lofty John and have a heart-to-heart talk with him I can make him see reason. Lofty John and I are very good friends. He’s a reasonable creature, if you know how to take him — which means to flatter his vanity judiciously. I’ll put it to him, not as priest to parishioner, but as man to man, that no decent Irishman carries on a feud with women and that no sensible person is going to destroy for nothing but a grudge those fine old trees that have taken half a century to grow and can never be replaced. Why the man who cuts down such a tree except when it is really necessary should be hanged as high as Haman on a gallows made from the wood av it.”

(Emily thought she would write that last sentence of Father Cassidy’s down in Cousin Jimmy’s blank book when she got home.)

“But I won’t say that to Lofty John,” concluded Father Cassidy. “Yes, Emily av New Moon, I think we can consider it a settled thing that your bush will not be cut down.”

Suddenly Emily felt very happy. Somehow she had entire confidence in Father Cassidy. She was sure he would twist Lofty John around his little finger.

“Oh, I can never thank you enough!” she said earnestly.

“That’s true, so don’t waste breath trying. And now tell me things. Are there any more av you? And how long have you been yourself?”

“I’m twelve years old — I haven’t any brothers or sisters. And I think I’d better be going home.”

“Not till you’ve had a bite av lunch.”

“Oh, thank you, I’ve had my supper.”

“Two hours ago and a two-mile walk since. Don’t tell me. I’m sorry I haven’t any nectar and ambrosia on hand — such food as elves eat — and not even a saucer av moonshine — but my mother makes the best plum cake av any woman in P. E. Island. And we keep a cream cow. Wait here a bit. Don’t be afraid av the B’y. He eats tender little Protestants sometimes, but he never meddles with leprechauns.”

When Father Cassidy came back his mother came with him, carrying a tray. Emily had expected to see her big and brown too, but she was the tiniest woman imaginable, with snow-white, silky hair, mild blue eyes, and pink cheeks.

“Isn’t she the sweetest thing in the way av mothers?” asked Father Cassidy. “I keep her to look at. Av course—” Father Cassidy dropped his voice to a pig’s whisper—“there’s something odd about her. I’ve known that woman to stop right in the middle av housecleaning, and go off and spend an afternoon in the woods. Like yourself, I’m thinking she has some truck with fairies.”

Mrs Cassidy smiled, kissed Emily, said she must go out and finish her preserving, and trotted off.

“Now you sit right down here, Elf, and be human for ten minutes and we’ll have a friendly snack.”

Emily was hungry — a nice comfortable feeling she hadn’t experienced for a fortnight. Mrs Cassidy’s plum cake was all her reverend son claimed, and the cream cow seemed to be no myth.

“What do you think av me now?” asked Father Cassidy suddenly, finding Emily’s eyes fixed on him speculatively.

Emily blushed. She had been wondering if she dared ask another favour of Father Cassidy.

“I think you are awfully good,” she said.

“I am awfully good,” agreed Father Cassidy. “I’m so good that I’ll do what you want me to do — for I feel there’s something else you want me to do.”

“I’m in a scrape and I’ve been in it all summer. You see” — Emily was very sober—“I am a poetess.”

“Holy Mike! That is serious. I don’t know if I can do much for you. How long have you been that way?”

“Are you making fun of me?” asked Emily gravely.

Father Cassidy swallowed something besides plum cake.

“The saints forbid! It’s only that I’m rather overcome. To be after entertaining a lady av New Moon — and an elf — and a poetess all in one is a bit too much for a humble praste like meself. Have another slice av cake and tell me all about it.”

“It’s like this — I’m writing an epic.”

Father Cassidy suddenly leaned over and gave Emily’s wrist a little pinch.

“I just wanted to see if you were real,” he explained. “Yes — yes, you’re writing an epic — go on. I think I’ve got my second wind now.”

“I began it last spring. I called it *The White Lady* first but now I’ve changed it to *The Child of the Sea*. Don’t you think that’s a better title?”

“Much better.”

“I’ve got three cantos done, and I can’t get any further because there’s something I don’t know and can’t find out. I’ve been so worried about it.”

“What is it?”

“My epic,” said Emily, diligently devouring plum cake, “is about a very beautiful high-born girl who was stolen away from her real parents when she was a baby and brought up in a woodcutter’s hut.”

“One av the seven original plots in the world,” murmured Father Cassidy.

“What?”

“Nothing. Just a bad habit av thinking aloud. Go on.”

“She had a lover of high degree but his family did not want him to marry her because she was only a woodcutter’s daughter—”

“Another of the seven plots — excuse me.”

“ — so they sent him away to the Holy Land on a crusade and word came back that he was killed and then Editha — her name was Editha — went into a convent—”

Emily paused for a bite of plum cake and Father Cassidy took up the strain.

“And now her lover comes back very much alive, though covered with Paynim scars, and the secret av her birth is discovered through the dying confession av the old nurse and the birthmark on her arm.”

“How did you know?” gasped Emily in amazement.

“Oh, I guessed it — I’m a good guesser. But where’s your bother in all this?”

“I don’t know how to get her out of the convent,” confessed Emily. “I thought perhaps you would know how it could be done.”

Again Father Cassidy fitted his fingers.

“Let us see, now. It’s no light matter you’ve undertaken, young lady. How stands the case? Editha has taken the veil, not because she has a religious vocation but because she imagines her heart is broken. The Catholic Church does not release its nuns from their vows because they happen to think they’ve made a little mistake av that sort. No, no — we must have a better reason. Is this Editha the sole child av her real parents?”

“Yes.”

“Oh, then the way is clear. If she had had any brothers or sisters you would have had to kill them off, which is a messy thing to do. Well, then, she is the sole daughter and heiress av a noble family who have for years been at deadly feud with another noble family — the family av the lover. Do you know what a feud is?”

“Of course,” said Emily disdainfully. “And I’ve got all that in the poem already.”

“So much the better. This feud has rent the kingdom in twain and can only be healed by an alliance between Capulet and Montague.”

“Those aren’t their names.”

“No matter. This, then, is a national affair, with far-reaching issues, therefore an appeal to the Supreme Pontiff is quite in order. What you want,” Father Cassidy nodded solemnly, “is a dispensation from Rome.”

“Dispensation is a hard word to work into a poem,” said Emily.

“Undoubtedly. But young ladies who will write epic poems and who will lay the scenes thereof amid times and manners av hundreds av years ago, and will choose heroines of a religion quite unknown to them, must expect to run up against a few snags.”

“Oh, I think I’ll be able to work it in,” said Emily cheerfully. “And I’m so much obliged to you. You don’t know what a relief it is to my mind. I’ll finish the poem right up now in a few weeks. I haven’t done a thing at it all summer. But then of course I’ve been busy. Ilse Burnley and I have been making a new language.”

“Making a — new — excuse me. Did you say language?”

“Yes.”

“What’s the matter with English? Isn’t it good enough for you, you incomprehensible little being?”

“Oh, yes. That isn’t why we’re making a new one. You see in the spring, Cousin Jimmy got a lot of French boys to help plant the potatoes. I had to help too, and Ilse came to keep me company. And it was so annoying to hear those boys talking French when we couldn’t understand a word of it. They did it just to make us mad. Such jabbering! So Ilse and I just made up our minds we’d invent a new language that they couldn’t understand. We’re getting on fine and when the potato picking time comes we’ll be able to talk to each other and those boys won’t be able to understand a word we’re saying. Oh, it will be great fun!”

“I haven’t a doubt. But two girls who will go to all the trouble av inventing a new language just to get square with some poor little French boys — you’re beyond me,” said Father Cassidy, helplessly. “Goodness

knows what you'll be doing when you grow up. You'll be Red Revolutionists. I tremble for Canada."

"Oh, it isn't a trouble — it's fun. And all the girls in school are just wild because they hear us talking in it and can't make it out. We can talk secrets right before them."

"Human nature being what it is, I can see where the fun comes in all right. Let's hear a sample av your language."

"Nat millan O ste dolman bote ta Shrewsbury fernas ta poo litanos," said Emily glibly. "That means, 'Next summer I am going to Shrewsbury woods to pick strawberries.' I yelled that across the playground to Ilse the other day at recess and oh, how everybody stared."

"Staring, is it? I should say so. My own poor old eyes are all but dropping out av me head. Let's hear a bit more av it."

"Mo tral li dead seb ad li mo trene. Mo bertral seb mo bertrene das sten dead e ting setra. That means 'My father is dead and so is my mother. My grandfather and grandmother have been dead a long time.' We haven't invented a word for 'dead' yet. I think I will soon be able to write my poems in our language and then Aunt Elizabeth will not be able to read them if she finds them."

"Have you written any other poetry besides your epic?"

"Oh, yes — but just short pieces — dozens of them."

"H'm. Would you be so kind as to let me hear one av them?"

Emily was greatly flattered. And she did not mind letting Father Cassidy hear her precious stuff.

"I'll recite my last poem," she said, clearing her throat importantly. "It's called Evening Dreams."

Father Cassidy listened attentively. After the first verse a change came over his big brown face, and he began patting his finger tips together. When Emily finished she hung down her lashes and waited tremblingly. What if Father Cassidy said it was no good? No, he wouldn't be so impolite — but if he bantered her as he had done about her epic — she would know what that meant.

Father Cassidy did not speak all at once. The prolonged suspense was terrible to Emily. She was afraid he could not praise and did not want to hurt her feelings by dispraise. All at once her “Evening Dreams” seemed trash and she wondered how she could ever have been silly enough to repeat it to Father Cassidy.

Of course, it was trash. Father Cassidy knew that well enough. All the same, for a child like this — and rhyme and rhythm were flawless — and there was one line — just one line—”the light of faintly golden stars” — for the sake of that line Father Cassidy suddenly said,

“Keep on — keep on writing poetry.”

“You mean — ?” Emily was breathless.

“I mean you’ll be able to do something by and by. Something — I don’t know how much — but keep on — keep on.”

Emily was so happy she wanted to cry. It was the first word of commendation she had ever received except from her father — and a father might have too high an opinion of one. This was different. To the end of her struggle for recognition Emily never forgot Father Cassidy’s “Keep on” and the tone in which he said it.

“Aunt Elizabeth scolds me for writing poetry,” she said wistfully. “She says people will think I’m as simple as Cousin Jimmy.”

“The path of genius never did run smooth. But have another piece of cake — do, just to show there’s something human about you.”

“Ve, merry ti. O del re dolman cosey aman ri sen ritter. That means, ‘No, thank you. I must be going home before it gets dark.’”

“I’ll drive you home.”

“Oh, no, no. It’s very kind of you” — the English language was quite good enough for Emily now, “but I’d rather walk. “It’s — it’s — such good exercise.”

“Meaning,” said Father Cassidy with a twinkle in his eye, “that we must keep it from the old lady? Goodbye, and may you always see a happy face in your looking-glass!”

Emily was too happy to be tired on the way home. There seemed to be a bubble of joy in her heart — a shimmering, prismatic bubble. When she

came to the top of the big hill and looked across to New Moon, her eyes were satisfied and loving. How beautiful it was, lying embowered in the twilight of the old trees; the tips of the loftiest spruces came out in purple silhouette against the northwestern sky of rose and amber; down behind it the Blair Water dreamed in silver; the Wind Woman had folded her misty bat-wings in a valley of sunset and stillness lay over the world like a blessing. Emily felt sure everything would be all right. Father Cassidy would manage it in some way.

And he had told her to “keep on.”

Friends Again

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Emily listened very anxiously on Monday morning, but “no sound of axe, no ponderous hammer rang” in Lofty John’s bush. That evening on her way home from school, Lofty John himself overtook her in his buggy and for the first time since the night of the apple stopped and accosted her.

“Will ye take a lift, Miss Emily av New Moon?” he asked affably.

Emily climbed in, feeling a little bit foolish. But Lofty John looked quite friendly as he clucked to his horse.

“So you’ve clean wiled the heart out av Father Cassidy’s body, ‘The sweetest scrap av a girl I’ve iver seen,’ says he to me. Sure an’ ye might lave the poor prastes alone.”

Emily looked at Lofty John out of the corner of her eye. He did not seem angry.

“Ye’ve put me in a nice tight fix av it,” he went on. “I’m as proud as any New Moon Murray av ye all and your Aunt Elizabeth said a number av things that got under my skin. I’ve many an old score to settle with her. So I thought I’d get square by cutting av the bush down. And you had to go and quare me wid me praste bekase av it and now I make no doubt I’ll not be after daring to cut a stick av kindling to warm me shivering carcase without asking lave av the Pope.”

“Oh, Mr Sullivan, are you going to leave the bush alone?” said Emily breathlessly.

“It all rests with yourself, Miss Emily av New Moon. Ye can’t be after expecting a Lofty John to be too humble. I didn’t come by the name bekase av me makeness.”

“What do you want me to do?”

“First, then, I’m wanting you to let bygones be bygones in that matter av the apple. And be token av the same come over and talk to me now and then as ye did last summer. Sure now, and I’ve missed ye — ye and that

spitfire av an Ilse who's never come aither bekase she thinks I mistrated you."

"I'll come of course," said Emily doubtfully, "if only Aunt Elizabeth will let me."

"Tell her if she don't the bush'll be cut down — ivery last stick av it. That'll fetch her. And there's wan more thing. Ye must ask me rale make and polite to do ye the favour av not cutting down the bush. If ye do it pretty enough sure niver a tree will I touch. But if ye don't down they go, praste or no praste," concluded Lofty John.

Emily summoned all her wiles to her aid. She clasped her hands, she looked up through her lashes at Lofty John, she smiled as slowly and seductively as she knew how — and Emily had considerable native knowledge of that sort. "Please, Mr Lofty John," she coaxed, "won't you leave me the dear bush I love?"

Lofty John swept off his crumpled old felt hat. "To be sure an' I will. A proper Irishman always does what a lady asks him. Sure an' it's been the ruin av us. We're at the mercy av the petticoats. If ye'd come and said that to me afore ye'd have had no need av your walk to White Cross. But mind ye keep the rest av the bargain. The reds are ripe and the scabs soon will be — and all the rats have gone to glory."

Emily flew into the New Moon kitchen like a slim whirlwind.

"Aunt Elizabeth, Lofty John isn't going to cut down the bush — he told me he wouldn't — but I have to go and see him sometimes — if you don't object."

"I suppose it wouldn't make much difference to you if I did," said Aunt Elizabeth. But her voice was not so sharp as usual. She would not confess how much Emily's announcement relieved her; but it mellowed her attitude considerably. "There's a letter here for you. I want to know what it means."

Emily took the letter. It was the first time she had ever received a real letter through the mail and she tingled with the delight of it. It was addressed in a heavy black hand to "Miss Emily Starr, New Moon, Blair Water." But —

“You opened it!” she cried indignantly.

“Of course I did. You are not going to receive letters I am not to see, Miss. What I want to know is — how comes Father Cassidy to be writing to you — and writing such nonsense?”

“I went to see him Saturday,” confessed Emily, realizing that the cat was out of the bag. “And I asked him if he couldn’t prevent Lofty John from cutting down the bush.”

“Emily — Byrd — Starr!”

“I told him I was a Protestant,” cried Emily. “He understands all about it. And he was just like anybody else. I like him better than Mr Dare.”

Aunt Elizabeth did not say much more. There did not seem to be much she could say. Besides the bush wasn’t going to be cut down. The bringer of good news is forgiven much. She contented herself with glaring at Emily — who was too happy and excited to mind glares. She carried her letter off to the garret dormer and gloated over the stamp and the superscription a bit before she took out the enclosure.

“Dear Pearl of Emilys,” wrote Father Cassidy. “I’ve seen our lofty friend and I feel sure your green outpost of fairyland will be saved for your moonlit revels. I know you do dance there by light o’ moon when mortals are snoring. I think you’ll have to go through the form of asking Mr Sullivan to spare those trees, but you’ll find him quite reasonable. It’s all in the knowing how and the time of the moon. How goes the epic and the language? I hope you’ll have no trouble in freeing the Child of the Sea from her vows. Continue to be the friend of all good elves, and of

“Your admiring friend,

“James Cassidy.

“P.S. The B’y sends respects. What word have you for ‘cat’ in your language? Sure and you can’t get anything cattier than ‘cat’ can you, now?”

Lofty John spread the story of Emily’s appeal to Father Cassidy far and wide, enjoying it as a good joke on himself. Rhoda Stuart said she always knew Emily Starr was a bold thing and Miss Brownell said she would be surprised at nothing Emily Starr would do, and Dr Burnley called her a

Little Devil more admiringly than ever, and Perry said she had pluck and Teddy took credit for suggesting it, and Aunt Elizabeth endured, and Aunt Laura thought it might have been worse. But Cousin Jimmy made Emily feel very happy.

“It would have spoiled the garden and broken my heart, Emily,” he told her. “You’re a little darling girl to have prevented it.”

One day a month later, when Aunt Elizabeth had taken Emily to Shrewsbury to fit her out with a winter coat, they met Father Cassidy in a store. Aunt Elizabeth bowed with great stateliness, but Emily put out a slender paw.

“What about the dispensation from Rome?” whispered Father Cassidy.

One Emily was quite horrified lest Aunt Elizabeth should overhear and think she was having sly dealings with the Pope, such as no good Presbyterian half-Murray of New Moon should have. The other Emily thrilled to her toes with the dramatic delight of a secret understanding of mystery and intrigue. She nodded gravely, her eyes eloquent with satisfaction.

“I got it without any trouble,” she whispered back.

“Fine,” said Father Cassidy. “I wish you good luck, and I wish it hard. Goodbye.”

“Farewell,” said Emily, thinking it a word more in keeping with dark secrets than goodbye. She tasted the flavour of that half-stolen interview all the way home, and felt quite as if she were living in an epic herself. She did not see Father Cassidy again for years — he was soon afterwards removed to another parish; but she always thought of him as a very agreeable and understanding person.

By Aerial Post

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“DEAREST FATHER:

“My heart is very sore tonight. Mike died this morning. Cousin Jimmy says he must have been poisoned. Oh, Father dear, I felt so bad. He was such a lovely cat. I cried and cried and cried. Aunt Elizabeth was disgusted. She said, ‘You did not make half so much fuss when your father died.’ What a crewel speech. Aunt Laura was nicer but when she said, ‘Don’t cry, dear. I will get you another kitten,’ I saw she didn’t understand either. I don’t want another kitten. If I had millions of kittens they wouldn’t make up for Mike.

“Ilse and I buried him in Lofty John’s bush. I am so thankful the ground wasn’t frozen yet. Aunt Laura gave me a shoe box for a coffin, and some pink tissue paper to wrap his poor little body in. And we put a stone over the grave and I said ‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.’ When I told Aunt Laura about it she was horrified and said, ‘Oh, Emily, that was a dreadful thing. You should not have said that over a cat.’ And Cousin Jimmy said, ‘Don’t you think, Laura, that an innocent little dum creature has a share in God? Emily loved him and all love is part of God.’ And Aunt Laura said, ‘Maybe you are right, Jimmy. But I am thankful Elizabeth did not hear her.’

“Cousin Jimmy may not be all there, but what is there is very nice.

“But oh, Father, I am so lonesome for Mike tonight. Last night he was here playing with me, so cunning and pretty and smee, and now he is cold and dead in Lofty John’s bush.

“December 18.

“DEAR FATHER:

“I am here in the garret. The Wind Woman is very sorry about something tonight. She is sying so sadly around the window. And yet the first time I heard her tonight the flash came — I felt as if I had just seen

something that happened long, long ago — something so lovely that it hurt me.

“Cousin Jimmy says there will be a snow storm tonight. I am glad. I like to hear a storm at night. It’s so cosy to snuggle down among the blankets and feel it can’t get at you. Only when I snuggle Aunt Elizabeth says I skwirm. The idea of any one not knowing the difference between snuggling and skwirming.

“I am glad we will have snow for Christmas. The Murray dinner is to be at New Moon this year. It is our turn. Last year it was at Uncle Oliver’s but Cousin Jimmy had grippe and couldn’t go so I stayed home with him. I will be right in the thick of it this year and it excites me. I will write you all about it after it is over, dearest.

“I want to tell you something, Father. I am ashamed of it, but I think I’ll feel better if I tell you all about it. Last Saturday Ella Lee had a birthday party and I was invited. Aunt Elizabeth let me put on my new blue cashmere dress. It is a very pretty dress. Aunt Elizabeth wanted to get a dark brown but Aunt Laura insisted on blue. I looked at myself in my glass and I remembered that Ilse had told me her father told her I would be handsome if I had more colour. So I pinched my cheeks to make them red. I looked ever so much nicer but it didn’t last. Then I took an old red velvet flower that had once been in Aunt Laura’s bonnet and wet it and then rubbed the red on my cheeks. I went to the party and the girls all looked at me but nobody said anything, only Rhoda Stuart giggled and giggled. I meant to come home and wash the red off before Aunt Elizabeth saw me. But she took a notion to call for me on her way home from the store. She did not say anything there but when we got home she said, ‘What have you been doing to your face, Emily?’ I told her and I expected an awful scolding, but all she said was, ‘Don’t you know that you have made yourself cheap?’ I did know it, too. I had felt that all along although I couldn’t think of the right word for it before. ‘I will never do such a thing again, Aunt Elizabeth,’ I said. ‘You’d better not,’ she said. ‘Go and wash your face this instant.’ I did and I was not half so pretty but I felt ever so much better. Strange to relate, dear Father, I heard Aunt Elizabeth

laughing about it in the pantry to Aunt Laura afterwards. You never can tell what will make Aunt Elizabeth laugh. I am sure it was ever so much funnier when Saucy Sal followed me to prayer-meeting last Wednesday night, but Aunt Elizabeth never laughed a bit then. I don't often go to prayer-meeting but Aunt Laura couldn't go that night so Aunt Elizabeth took me because she doesn't like to go alone. I didn't know Sal was following us till just as we got to the church I saw her. I shooed her away but after we went in I suppose Sal sneaked in when some one opened the door and got upstairs into the galery. And just as soon as Mr Dare began to pray Sal began to yowl. It sounded awful up in that big empty galery. I felt so guilty and miserable. I did not need to paint my face. It was just burning red and Aunt Elizabeth's eyes glittered feendishly. Mr Dare prayed a long time. He is deaf, so he did not hear Sal any more than when he sat on her. But every one else did and the boys giggled. After the prayer Mr Morris went up to the galery and chased Sal out. We could hear her skrambling over the seats and Mr Morris after her. I was wild for fear he'd hurt her. I ment to spank her myself with a shingle next day but I did not want her to be kicked. After a long time he got her out of the galery and she tore down the stairs and into the church, up one isle and down the other two or three times, as fast as she could go and Mr Morris after her with a broom. It is awfully funny to think of it now but I did not think it so funny at the time I was so ashamed and so afraid Sal would be hurt.

"Mr Morris chased her out at last. When he sat down I made a face at him behind my hymnbook. Coming home Aunt Elizabeth said, 'I hope you have disgraced us enough tonight, Emily Starr. I shall never take you to prayer-meeting again.' I am sorry I disgraced the Murrays but I don't see how I was to blame and anyway I don't like prayer-meeting because it is dull.

"But it wasn't dull that night, dear Father.

"Do you notice how my spelling is improved? I have thought of such a good plan. I write my letter first and then I look up all the words I'm not sure of and correct them. Sometimes though I think a word is all right when it isn't.

“Ilse and I have given up our language. We fought over the verbs. Ilse didn’t want to have any tenses for the verbs. She just wanted to have a different word altogether for every tense. I said if I was going to make a language it was going to be a proper one and Ilse got mad and said she had enough bother with grammar in English and I could go and make my old language by myself. But that is no fun so I let it go too. I was sorry because it was very interesting and it was such fun to puzzle the other girls in school. We weren’t able to get square with the French boys after all for Ilse had sore throat all through potato-picking time and couldn’t come over. It seems to me that life is full of disappointments.

“We had examinations in school this week. I did pretty well in all except arithmetic. Miss Brownell explained something about the questions but I was busy composing a story in my mind and did not hear her so I got poor marks. The story is called Madge MacPherson’s Secret. I am going to buy four sheets of foolscap with my egg money and sew them into a book and write the story in it. I can do what I like with my egg money. I think maybe I’ll write novels when I grow up as well as poetry. But Aunt Elizabeth won’t let me read any novels so how can I find out how to write them? Another thing that worries me, if I do grow up and write a wonderful poem, perhaps people won’t see how wonderful it is.

“Cousin Jimmy says that a man in Priest Pond says the end of the world is coming soon. I hope it won’t come till I’ve seen everything in it.

“Poor Elder MacKay has the mumps.

“I was over sleeping with Ilse the other night because her father was away. Ilse says her prayers now and she said she’d bet me anything she could pray longer than me. I said she couldn’t and I prayed ever so long about everything I could think of and when I couldn’t think of anything more I thought at first I’d begin over again. Then I thought, ‘No, that would not be honorable. A Starr must be honorable.’ So I got up and said ‘You win’ and Ilse never answered. I went around the bed and there she was asleep on her knees. When I woke her up she said we’d have to call the bet off because she could have gone on praying for ever so long if she hadn’t fell asleep.

“After we got into bed I told her a lot of things I wished afterwards I hadn’t. Secrets.

“The other day in history class Miss Brownell read that Sir Walter Raleigh had to lie in the Tower for fourteen years. Perry said, ‘Wouldn’t they let him get up sometimes?’ Then Miss Brownell punished him for impertinence, but Perry was in earnest. Ilse was mad at Miss Brownell for whipping Perry and mad at Perry for asking such a fool question as if he didn’t know anything. But Perry says he is going to write a history book some day that won’t have such puzzling things in it.”

“I am finishing the Disappointed House in my mind. I’m furnishing the rooms like flowers. I’ll have a rose room all pink and a lily room all white and silver and a pansy room, blue and gold. I wish the Disappointed House could have a Christmas. It never has any Christmases.

“Oh, Father, I’ve just thought of something nice. When I grow up and write a great novel and make lots of money, I will buy the Disappointed House and finish it. Then it won’t be Disappointed any more.

“Ilse’s Sunday-school teacher, Miss Willeson, gave her a Bible for learnig 200 verses. But when she took it home her father laid it on the floor and kicked it out in the yard. Mrs Simms says a judgment will come on him but nothing has happened yet. The poor man is warped. That is why he did such a wicked thing.

“Aunt Laura took me to old Mrs Mason’s funeral last Wednesday. I like funerals. They are so dramatic.

“My pig died last week. It was a great finanshul loss to me. Aunt Elizabeth says Cousin Jimmy fed it too well. I suppose I should not have called it after Lofty John.

“We have maps to draw in school now. Rhoda Stuart always gets the most marks. Miss Brownell doesn’t know that Rhoda just puts the map up against a window pane and the paper over it and copies it off. I like drawing maps. Norway and Sweden look like a tiger with mountains for stripes and Ireland looks like a little dog with its back turned on England, and its paws held up against its breast, and Africa looks like a big pork ham. Australia is a lovely map to draw.

“Ilse is getting on real well in school now. She says she isn’t going to have me beating her. She can learn like the dickens as Perry says, when she tries, and she has won the silver medal for Queen’s County. The W.C.T.U. in Charlottetown gave it for the best reciter. They had the contest in Shrewsbury and Aunt Laura took Ilse because Dr Burnley wouldn’t and Ilse won it. Aunt Laura told Dr Burnley when he was here one day that he ought to give Ilse a good education. He said, ‘I’m not going to waste money educating any she-thing.’ And he looked black as a thunder cloud. Oh, I wish Dr Burnley would love Ilse. I’m so glad you loved me, Father.

“DEC. 22.

“Dear Father: We had our school examination to-day. It was a great occasion. Almost everybody was there except Dr Burnley and Aunt Elizabeth. All the girls wore their best dresses but me. I knew Ilse had nothing to wear but her shabby old last winter’s plaid that is too short for her, so to keep her from feeling bad, I put on my old brown dress, too. Aunt Elizabeth did not want to let me do it at first because New Moon Murrays should be well dressed but when I explained about Ilse she looked at Aunt Laura and then said I might.

“Rhoda Stuart made fun of Ilse and me but I heaped coals of fire on her head. (That is what is called a figure of speech.) She got stuck in her recitation. She had left the book home and nobody else knew the piece but me. At first I looked at her triumphantly. But then a queer feeling came into me and I thought ‘What would I feel like if I was stuck before a big crowd of people like this? And besides the honour of the school is at stake,’ so I whispered it to her because I was quite close. She got through the rest all right. The strange thing is, dear Father, that now I don’t feel any more as if I hated her. I feel quite kindly to her and it is much nicer. It is uncomfortable to hate people.

“DEC. 28.

“DEAR FATHER:

“Christmas is over. It was pretty nice. I never saw so many good things cooked all at once. Uncle Wallace and Aunt Eva and Uncle Oliver and Aunt Addie and Aunt Ruth were here. Uncle Oliver didn’t bring any of his

children and I was much disappointed. We had Dr Burnley and Ilse too. Every one was dressed up. Aunt Elizabeth wore her black satin dress with a pointed lace collar and cap. She looked quite handsome and I was proud of her. You like your relations to look well even if you don't like them. Aunt Laura wore her brown silk and Aunt Ruth had on a grey dress. Aunt Eva was very elegant. Her dress had a train. But it smelled of moth balls.

"I had on my blue cashmere and wore my hair tied with blue ribbons, and Aunt Laura let me wear mother's blue silk sash with the pink daisies on it that she had when she was a little girl at New Moon. Aunt Ruth sniffed when she saw me. She said, 'You have grown a good deal, Em'ly. I hope you are a better girl.'

"But she didn't hope it (really). I saw that quite plain. Then she told me my bootlace was untyed.

"She looks better,' said Uncle Oliver. 'I wouldn't wonder if she grew up into a strong, healthy girl after all.'

"Aunt Eva sighed and shook her head. Uncle Wallace didn't say anything but shook hands with me. His hand was as cold as a fish. When we went out to the sitting-room for dinner I stepped on Aunt Eva's train and I could hear some stitches rip somewhere. Aunt Eva pushed me away and Aunt Ruth said, 'What a very awkward child you are, Em'ly.' I stepped behind Aunt Ruth and stuck out my tongue at her. Uncle Oliver makes a noise eating his soup. We had all the good silver spoons out. Cousin Jimmy carved the turkeys and he gave me two slices of the breast because he knows I like the white meat best. Aunt Ruth said 'When I was a little girl the wing was good enough for me,' and Cousin Jimmy put another white slice on my plate. Aunt Ruth didn't say anything more then till the carving was done, and then she said, 'I saw your school teacher in Shrewsbury last Saturday, Em'ly, and she did not give me a very good account of you. If you were my daughter I would expect a different report.'

"I am very glad I am not your daughter,' I said in my mind. I didn't say it out loud of course but Aunt Ruth said, 'Please do not look so sulky when I speak to you, Em'ly.' And Uncle Wallace said, 'It is a pity she has such an unattractive expression.'

“‘You are conceited and domineering and stingy,’ I said, still in my mind. ‘I heard Dr Burnley say you were.’

“‘I see there is an inkstain on her finger,’ said Aunt Ruth. (I had been writing a poem before dinner.)

“And then a most surprising thing happened. Relations are always surprising you. Aunt Elizabeth spoke up and said, ‘I do wish, Ruth, that you and Wallace would leave that child alone.’ I could hardly believe my ears. Aunt Ruth looked annoyed but she did leave me alone after that and only sniffed when Cousin Jimmy slipped a bit more white meat on my plate.

“After that the dinner was nice. And when they got as far as the pudding they all began to talk and it was splendid to listen to. They told stories and jokes about the Murrays. Even Uncle Wallace laughed and Aunt Ruth told some things about Great-Aunt Nancy. They were sarcastic but they were interesting. Aunt Elizabeth opened Grandfather Murray’s desk and took out an old poem that had been written to Aunt Nancy by a lover when she was young and Uncle Oliver read it. Great-Aunt Nancy must have been very beautiful. I wonder if anyone will ever write a poem to me. If I could have a bang somebody might. I said, ‘Was Great-Aunt Nancy really as pretty as that?’ and Uncle Oliver said, ‘They say she was seventy years ago’ and Uncle Wallace said, ‘She hangs on well — she’ll see the century mark yet,’ and Uncle Oliver said, ‘Oh, she’s got so in the habit of living she’ll never die.’

“Dr Burnley told a story I didn’t understand. Uncle Wallace hawhawed right out and Uncle Oliver put his napkin up to his face. Aunt Addie and Aunt Eva looked at each other sidewise and then at their plates and smiled a little bit. Aunt Ruth seemed offended and Aunt Elizabeth looked coldly at Dr Burnley and said, ‘I think you forget that there are children present.’ Dr Burnley said, ‘I beg your pardon, Elizabeth,’ very politely. He can speak with a grand air when he likes. He is very handsome when he is dressed up and shaved. Ilse says she is proud of him even if he hates her.

“After dinner was over the presents were given. That is a Murray tradishun. We never have stockings or trees but a big bran pie is passed all

around with the presents buried in it and ribbons hanging out with names on them. It was fun. My relations all give me useful presents except Aunt Laura. She gave me a bottle of perfume. I love it. I love nice smells. Aunt Elizabeth does not approve of perfumes. She gave me a new apron but I am thankful to say not a baby one. Aunt Ruth gave me a New Testament and said ‘Em’ly, I hope you will read a portion of that every day until you have read it through,’ and I said, ‘Why, Aunt Ruth, I’ve read the whole New Testament a dozen times (and so I have.) I love Revelations.’ (And I do. When I read the verse ‘and the twelve gates were twelve pearls,’ I just saw them and the flash came.) ‘The Bible is not to be read as a storybook,’ Aunt Ruth said coldly. Uncle Wallace and Aunt Eva gave me a pair of black mits and Uncle Oliver and Aunt Addie gave me a whole dollar in nice new silver dimes and Cousin Jimmy gave me a hair-ribbon. Perry had left a silk bookmark for me. He had to go home to spend Christmas day with his Aunt Tom at Stovepipe Town but I saved a lot of nuts and raisins for him. I gave him and Teddy handkerchiefs (Teddy’s was a little the nicest) and I gave Ilse a hair-ribbon. I bought them myself out of my egg money. (I will not have any more egg money for a long time because my hen has stopped laying.) Everybody was happy and once Uncle Wallace smiled right at me. I did not think him so ugly when he smiled.

“After dinner Ilse and I played games in the kitchen and Cousin Jimmy helped us make taffy. We had a big supper but nobody could eat much because they had had such a dinner. Aunt Eva’s head ached and Aunt Ruth said she didn’t see why Elizabeth made the sausages so rich. But the rest were good humoured and Aunt Laura kept things pleasant. She is good at making things pleasant. And after it was all over Uncle Wallace said (this is another Murray tradishun) ‘Let us think for a few moments of those who have gone before.’ I liked the way he said it — very solemnly and kind. It was one of the times when I am glad the blood of the Murrays flows in my veins. And I thought of you, darling Father, and Mother and poor little Mike and Great-great-Grandmother Murray, and of my old account-book that Aunt Elizabeth burned, because it seemed just like a person to me. And then we all joined hands and sung ‘For Auld Lang Syne’ before they

went home. I didn't feel like a stranger among the Murrays any more. Aunt Laura and I stood out on the porch to watch them go. Aunt Laura put her arm around me and said, 'Your mother and I used to stand like this long ago, Emily, to watch the Christmas guests go away.' The snow creaked and the bells rang back through the trees and the frost on the pighouse roof sparkled in the moonlight. And it was all so lovely (the bells and the frost and the big shining white night) that the flash came and that was best of all."

“Romantic But Not Comfortable”

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A certain thing happened at New Moon because Teddy Kent paid Ilse Burnley a compliment one day and Emily Starr didn't altogether like it. Empires have been overturned for the same reason.

Teddy was skating on Blair Water and taking Ilse and Emily out in turns for “slides.” Neither Ilse nor Emily had skates. Nobody was sufficiently interested in Ilse to buy skates for her, and as for Emily, Aunt Elizabeth did not approve of girls skating. New Moon girls had never skated. Aunt Laura had a revolutionary idea that skating would be good exercise for Emily and would, moreover, prevent her from wearing out the soles of her boots sliding. But neither of these arguments was sufficient to convince Aunt Elizabeth, in spite of the thrifty streak that came to her from the Burnleys. The latter, however, caused her to issue an edict that Emily was not to “slide.” Emily took this very hardly. She moped about in a woebegone fashion and she wrote to her father, “I hate Aunt Elizabeth. She is so unjust. She never plays fair.” But one day Dr Burnley stuck his head in at the door of the New Moon kitchen and said gruffly, “What's this I hear about you not letting Emily slide, Elizabeth?”

“She wears out the soles of her boots,” said Elizabeth.

“Boots be —— —” the doctor remembered that ladies were present just in time. “Let the creature slide all she wants to. She ought to be in the open air all the time. She ought” — the doctor stared at Elizabeth ferociously—“she ought to sleep out of doors.”

Elizabeth trembled lest the doctor should go on to insist on this unheard-of proceeding. She knew he had absurd ideas about the proper treatment of consumptives and those who might become such. She was glad to appease him by letting Emily stay out of doors in daytime and do what seemed good to her, if only he would say no more about staying out all night too.

“He is much more concerned about Emily than he is about his own child,” she said bitterly to Laura.

“Ilse is too healthy,” said Aunt Laura with a smile. “If she were a delicate child Allan might forgive her for — for being her mother’s daughter.”

“S — s — h,” said Aunt Elizabeth. But she “s — s — s — h’d” too late. Emily, coming into the kitchen, had heard Aunt Laura and puzzled over what she had said all day in school. Why had Ilse to be forgiven for being her mother’s daughter? Everybody was her mother’s daughter, wasn’t she? Wherein did the crime consist? Emily worried over it so much that she was inattentive to her lessons and Miss Brownell raked her fore and aft with sarcasm.

It is time we got back to Blair Water where Teddy was just bringing Emily in from a glorious spin clear round the great circle of ice. Ilse was waiting for her turn, on the bank. Her golden cloud of hair aureoled her face and fell in a shimmering wave over her forehead under the faded, little red tam she wore. Ilse’s clothes were always faded. The stinging kiss of the wind had crimsoned her cheeks and her eyes were glowing like amber pools with fire in their hearts. Teddy’s artistic perception saw her beauty and rejoiced in it.

“Isn’t Ilse handsome?” he said.

Emily was not jealous. It never hurt her to hear Ilse praised. But somehow she did not like this. Teddy was looking at Ilse altogether too admiringly. It was all, Emily believed, due to that shimmering fringe on Ilse’s white brows.

“If I had a bang Teddy might think me handsome too,” she thought resentfully. “Of course, black hair isn’t as pretty as gold. But my forehead is too high — everybody says so. And I did look nice in Teddy’s picture because he drew some curls over it.”

The matter rankled. Emily thought of it as she went home over the sheen of the crusted snow-field slanting to the light of the winter sunset, and she could not eat her supper because she did not have a bang. All her long hidden yearning for a bang seemed to come to a head at once. She

knew there was no use in coaxing Aunt Elizabeth for one. But when she was getting ready for bed that night she stood on a chair so that she could see little Emily-in-the-glass, then lifted the curling ends of her long braid and laid them over her forehead. The effect, in Emily's eyes at least, was very alluring. She suddenly thought — what if she cut a bang herself? It would take only a minute. And once done what could Aunt Elizabeth do? She would be very angry and doubtless inflict some kind of punishment. But the bang would be there — at least until it grew out long.

Emily, her lips set, went for the scissors. She unbraided her hair and parted the front tresses. Snip — snip — went the scissors. Glistening locks fell at her feet. In a minute Emily had her long-desired bang. Straight across her brows fell the lustrous, softly curving fringe. It changed the whole character of her face. It made it arch, provocative, elusive. For one brief moment Emily gazed at her reflection in triumph.

And then — sheer terror seized her. Oh, what had she done? How angry Aunt Elizabeth would be! Conscience suddenly awoke and added its pang also. She had been wicked. It was wicked to cut a bang when Aunt Elizabeth had forbidden it. Aunt Elizabeth had given her a home at New Moon — hadn't Rhoda Stuart that very day in school twitted her again with "living on charity?" And she was repaying her by disobedience and ingratitude. A Starr should not have done that. In a panic of fear and remorse Emily snatched the scissors and cut the bang off — cut it close against the hair-line. Worse and worse! Emily beheld the result in dismay. Any one could see that a bang had been cut, so Aunt Elizabeth's anger was still to face. And she had made a terrible fright of herself. Emily burst into tears, snatched up the fallen locks and crammed them into the wastebasket, blew out her candle and sprang into bed, just as Aunt Elizabeth came in.

Emily burrowed face downward in the pillows, and pretended to be asleep. She was afraid Aunt Elizabeth would ask her some question and insist on her looking up while she answered it. That was a Murray tradition — you looked people in the face when you spoke to them. But Aunt Elizabeth undressed in silence and came to bed. The room was in darkness

— thick darkness. Emily sighed and turned over. There was a hot gin-jar in the bed, she knew, and her feet were cold. But she did not think she ought to have the privilege of the gin-jar. She was too wicked — too ungrateful.

“Do stop squirming,” said Aunt Elizabeth.

Emily squirmed no more — physically at least. Mentally she continued to squirm. She could not sleep. Her feet or her conscience — or both — kept her awake. And fear, also. She dreaded the morning. Aunt Elizabeth would see then what had happened. If it were only over — if the revelation were only over. Emily forgot and squirmed.

“What makes you so restless tonight?” demanded Aunt Elizabeth, in high displeasure. “Are you taking a cold?”

“No, ma’am.”

“Then go to sleep. I can’t bear such wriggling. One might as well have an eel in bed — O — W!”

Aunt Elizabeth, in squirming a bit herself, had put her own foot against Emily’s icy ones.

“Goodness, child, your feet are like snow. Here, put them on the gin-jar.”

Aunt Elizabeth pushed the gin-jar over against Emily’s feet. How lovely and warm and comforting it was!

Emily worked her toes against it like a cat. But she suddenly knew she could not wait for morning.

“Aunt Elizabeth, I’ve got something to confess.”

Aunt Elizabeth was tired and sleepy and did not want confessions just then. In no very gracious tone she said:

“What have you been doing?”

“I — I cut a bang, Aunt Elizabeth.”

“A bang?”

Aunt Elizabeth sat up in bed.

“But I cut it off again,” cried Emily hurriedly. “Right off — close to my head.”

Aunt Elizabeth got out of bed, lit a candle, and looked Emily over.

“Well you have made a sight of yourself,” she said grimly. “I never saw any one as ugly as you are this minute. And you have behaved in a most underhanded fashion.”

This was one of the times Emily felt compelled to agree with Aunt Elizabeth.

“I’m sorry,” she said, lifting pleading eyes.

“You will eat your supper in the pantry for a week,” said Aunt Elizabeth. “And you will not go to Uncle Oliver’s next week when I go. I had promised to take you. But I shall take no one who looks as you do anywhere with me.”

This was hard. Emily had looked forward to that visit to Uncle Oliver’s. But on the whole she was relieved. The worst was over and her feet were getting warm. But there was one thing yet. She might as well unburden her heart completely while she was at it.

“There’s another thing I feel I ought to tell you.”

Aunt Elizabeth got into bed again with a grunt. Emily took it for permission.

“Aunt Elizabeth, you remember that book I found in Dr Burnley’s bookcase and brought home and asked you if I could read it? It was called The History of Henry Esmond. You looked at it and said you had no objections to my reading history. So I read it. But, Aunt Elizabeth, it wasn’t history — it was a novel. And I knew it when I brought it home.”

“You know that I have forbidden you to read novels, Emily Starr. They are wicked books and have ruined many souls.”

“It was very dull,” pleaded Emily, as if dullness and wickedness were quite incompatible. “And it made me feel unhappy. Everybody seemed to be in love with the wrong person. I have made up my mind, Aunt Elizabeth, that I will never fall in love. It makes too much trouble.”

“Don’t talk of things you can’t understand, and that are not fit for children to think about. This is the result of reading novels. I shall tell Dr Burnley to lock his bookcase up.”

“Oh, don’t do that, Aunt Elizabeth,” exclaimed Emily. “There are no more novels in it. But I’m reading such an interesting book over there. It

tells about everything that's inside of you. I've got as far along as the liver and its diseases. The pictures are so interesting. Please let me finish it." This was worse than novels. Aunt Elizabeth was truly horrified. Things that were inside of you were not to be read about.

"Have you no shame, Emily Starr? If you have not I am ashamed for you. Little girls do not read books like that."

"But, Aunt Elizabeth, why not? I have a liver, haven't I — and heart and lungs — and stomach — and—"

"That will do, Emily. Not another word."

Emily went to sleep unhappily. She wished she had never said a word about "Esmond." And she knew she would never have a chance to finish that other fascinating book. Nor had she. Dr Burnley's bookcase was locked thereafter and the doctor gruffly ordered her and Ilse to keep out of his office. He was in a very bad humour about it for he had words with Elizabeth Murray over the matter.

Emily was not allowed to forget her bang. She was twitted and teased in school about it and Aunt Elizabeth looked at it whenever she looked at Emily and the contempt in her eyes burned Emily like a flame. Nevertheless, as the mistreated hair grew out and began to curl in soft little ringlets, Emily found consolation. The bang was tacitly permitted, and she felt that her looks were greatly improved thereby. Of course, as soon as it grew long enough she knew Aunt Elizabeth would make her brush it back. But for the time being she took comfort in her added beauty.

The bang was just about at its best when the letter came from Great-Aunt Nancy.

It was written to Aunt Laura — Great-Aunt Nancy and Aunt Elizabeth were not overfond of each other — and in it Great-Aunt Nancy said, "If you have a photograph of that child Emily send it along. I don't want to see her; she's stupid — I know she's stupid. But I want to see what Juliet's child looks like. Also the child of that fascinating young man, Douglas Starr. He was fascinating. What fools you all were to make such a fuss about Juliet running away with him. If you and Elizabeth had both run

away with somebody in your running days it would have been better for you.”

This letter was not shown to Emily. Aunt Elizabeth and Aunt Laura had a long secret consultation and then Emily was told that she was to be taken to Shrewsbury to have her picture taken for Aunt Nancy. Emily was much excited over this. She was dressed in her blue cashmere and Aunt Laura put a point lace collar on it and hung her Venetian beads over it. And new buttoned boots were got for the occasion.

“I’m so glad this has happened while I still have my bang,” thought Emily happily.

But in the photographer’s dressing-room, Aunt Elizabeth grimly proceeded to brush back her bang and pin it with hairpins.

“Oh, please, Aunt Elizabeth, let me have it down,” Emily begged. “Just for the picture. After this I’ll brush it back.”

Aunt Elizabeth was inexorable. The bang was brushed back and the photograph taken. When Aunt Elizabeth saw the finished result she was satisfied.

“She looks sulky; but she is neat; and there is a resemblance to the Murrays I never noticed before,” she told Aunt Laura. “That will please Aunt Nancy. She is very clannish under all her oddness.”

Emily would have liked to throw every one of the photographs in the fire. She hated them. They made her look hideous. Her face seemed to be all forehead. If they sent Aunt Nancy that Aunt Nancy would think her stupider than ever. When Aunt Elizabeth did the photograph up in cardboard and told Emily to take it to the office Emily already knew what she meant to do. She went straight to the garret and took out of her box the water-colour Teddy had made of her. It was just the same size as the photograph. Emily removed the latter from its wrappings, spurning it aside with her foot.

“That isn’t me,” she said. “I looked sulky because I felt sulky about the bang. But I hardly ever look sulky, so it isn’t fair.”

She wrapped Teddy’s sketch up in the cardboard and then sat down and wrote a letter.

“DEAR GREAT-AUNT NANCY:

“Aunt Elizabeth had my picture taken to send you but I don’t like it because it makes me look too ugly and I am putting another picture in instead. An artist friend made it for me. It is just like me when I am smiling and have a bang. I am only lending it to you, not giving it, because I value it very highly.

“Your obedient grand niece,

“EMILY BYRD STARR.

“P.S. I am not so stupid as you think.

“E. B. S.

“P. S. No. 2. I am not stupid at all.”

Emily put her letter in with the picture — thereby unconsciously cheating the postoffice — and slipped out of the house to mail it. Once it was safely in the postoffice she drew a breath of relief. She found the walk home very enjoyable. It was a bland day in early April and spring was looking at you round the corners. The Wind Woman was laughing and whistling over the wet sweet fields; freebooting crows held conferences in the treetops; little pools of sunshine lay in the mossy hollows; the sea was a blaze of sapphire beyond the golden dunes; the maples in Lofty John’s bush were talking about red buds. Everything Emily had ever read of dream and myth and legend seemed a part of the charm of that bush. She was filled to her fingertips with a rapture of living.

“Oh, I smell spring!” she cried as she danced along the brook path.

Then she began to compose a poem on it. Everybody who has ever lived in the world and could string two rhymes together has written a poem on spring. It is the most be-rhymed subject in the world — and always will be, because it is poetry incarnate itself. You can never be a real poet if you haven’t made at least one poem about spring.

Emily was wondering whether she would have elves dancing on the brookside by moonlight, or pixies sleeping in a bed of ferns in her poem, when something confronted her at a bend in the path which was neither elf nor pixy, but seemed odd and weird enough to belong to some of the tribes

of Little People. Was it a witch? Or an elderly fay of evil intentions — the bad fairy of all christening tales?

“I’m the b’y’s Aunt Tom,” said the appearance, seeing that Emily was too amazed to do anything but stand and stare.

“Oh!” Emily gasped in relief. She was no longer frightened. But what a very peculiar looking lady Perry’s Aunt Tom was. Old — so old that it seemed quite impossible that she could ever have been young; a bright red hood over crnelike, fluttering grey locks; a little face seamed by a thousand fine, criss-cross wrinkles; a long nose with a knob on the end of it; little twinkling, eager, grey eyes under bristly brows; a ragged man’s coat covering her from neck to feet; a basket in one hand and a black knobby stick in the other.

“Staring wasn’t thought good breeding in my time,” said Aunt Tom.

“Oh!” said Emily again. “Excuse me — How do you do!” she added, with a vague grasp after her manners.

“Polite — and not too proud,” said Aunt Tom, peering curiously at her. “I’ve been up to the big house with a pair of socks for the b’y but ‘twas yourself I wanted to see.”

“Me?” said Emily blankly.

“Yis. The b’y has been talking a bit of you and a plan kem into my head. Thinks I to myself it’s no bad notion. But I’ll make sure before I waste my bit o’ money. Emily Byrd Starr is your name and Murray is your nature. If I give the b’y an eddication will ye marry him when ye grow up?”

“Me!” said Emily again. It seemed to be all she could say. Was she dreaming? She must be.

“Yis — you. You’re half Murray and it’ll be a great step up f’r the b’y. He’s smart and he’ll be a rich man some day and boss the country. But divil a cent will I spend on him unless you promise.”

“Aunt Elizabeth wouldn’t let me,” cried Emily, too frightened of this odd old body to refuse on her own account.

“If you’ve got any Murray in you you’ll do your own choosing,” said Aunt Tom, thrusting her face so close to Emily’s that her bushy eyebrows

tickled Emily's nose. "Say you'll marry the b'y and to college he goes."

Emily seemed to be rendered speechless. She could think of nothing to say — oh, if she could only wake up! She could not even run.

"Say it!" insisted Aunt Tom, thumping her stick sharply on a stone in the path.

Emily was so horrified that she might have said something — anything — to escape. But at this moment Perry bounded out of the spruce copse, his face white with rage, and seized his Aunt Tom most disrespectfully by the shoulder.

"You go home!" he said furiously.

"Now, b'y dear," quavered Aunt Tom deprecatingly. "I was only trying to do you a good turn. I was asking her to marry ye after a bit an—"

"I'll do my own asking!" Perry was angrier than ever. "You've likely spoiled everything. Go home — go home, I say!"

Aunt Tom hobbled off muttering, "Then I'll know better than to waste me bit o' money. No Murray, no money, me b'y."

When she had disappeared down the brook path Perry turned to Emily. From white he had gone very red.

"Don't mind her — she's cracked," he said. "Of course, when I grow up I mean to ask you to marry me but—"

"I couldn't — Aunt Elizabeth—"

"Oh, she will then. I'm going to be premier of Canada some day."

"But I wouldn't want — I'm sure I wouldn't—"

"You will when you grow up. Ilse is better looking of course, and I don't know why I like you best but I do."

"Don't you ever talk to me like this again!" commanded Emily, beginning to recover her dignity.

"Oh, I won't — not till we grow up. I'm as ashamed of it as you are," said Perry with a sheepish grin. "Only I had to say something after Aunt Tom butted in like that. I ain't to blame for it so don't you hold it against me. But just you remember that I'm going to ask you some day. And I believe Teddy Kent is too."

Emily was walking haughtily away but she turned at this to say coolly over her shoulder.

“If he does I’ll marry him.”

“If you do I’ll knock his head off,” shouted Perry in a prompt rage.

But Emily walked steadily on home and went to the garret to think things over.

“It has been romantic but not comfortable,” was her conclusion. And that particular poem on spring was never finished.

Wyther Grange

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No reply or acknowledgment came from Great-Aunt-Nancy Priest regarding Emily's picture. Aunt Elizabeth and Aunt Laura, knowing Great-Aunt Nancy's ways tolerably well, were not surprised at this, but Emily felt rather worried over it. Perhaps Great-Aunt Nancy did not approve of what she had done; or perhaps she still thought her too stupid to bother with.

Emily did not like to lie under the imputation of stupidity. She wrote a scathing epistle to Great-Aunt Nancy on a letterbill in which she did not mince her opinions as to that ancient lady's knowledge of the rules of epistolary etiquette; the letter was folded up and stowed away on the little shelf under the sofa but it served its purpose in blowing off steam and Emily had ceased to think about the matter when a letter came from Great-Aunt Nancy in July.

Elizabeth and Laura talked the matter over in the cookhouse, forgetful or ignorant of the fact that Emily was sitting on the kitchen doorstep just outside. Emily was imagining herself attending a drawing-room of Queen Victoria. Robed in white, with ostrich plumes, veil, and court train, she had just bent to kiss the Queen's hand when Aunt Elizabeth's voice shattered her dream as a pebble thrown into a pool scatters the fairy reflection.

"What is your opinion, Laura," Aunt Elizabeth was saying, "of letting Emily visit Aunt Nancy?"

Emily pricked up her ears. What was in the wind now?

"From her letter she seems very anxious to have the child," said Laura. Elizabeth sniffed.

"A whim — a whim. You know what her whims are. Likely by the time Emily got there she'd be quite over it and have no use for her."

“Yes, but on the other hand if we don’t let her go she will be dreadfully offended and never forgive us — or Emily. Emily should have her chance.”

“I don’t know that her chance is worth much. If Aunt Nancy really has any money beyond her annuity — and that’s what neither you nor I nor any living soul knows, unless it’s Caroline — she’ll likely leave it all to some of the Priests — Leslie Priest’s a favourite of hers, I understand. Aunt Nancy always liked her husband’s family better than her own, even though she’s always slurring at them. Still — she might take a fancy to Emily — they’re both so odd they might suit each other — but you know the way she talks — she and that abominable old Caroline.”

“Emily is too young to understand,” said Aunt Laura.

“I understand more than you think,” cried Emily indignantly.

Aunt Elizabeth jerked open the cookhouse door.

“Emily Starr, haven’t you learned by this time not to listen?”

“I wasn’t listening. I thought you knew I was sitting here — I can’t help my ears hearing. Why didn’t you whisper? When you whisper I know you’re talking secrets and I don’t try to hear them. Am I going to Great-Aunt Nancy’s for a visit?”

“We haven’t decided,” said Aunt Elizabeth coldly, and that was all the satisfaction Emily got for a week. She hardly knew herself whether she wanted to go or not. Aunt Elizabeth had begun making cheese — New Moon was noted for its cheeses — and Emily found the whole process absorbing, from the time the rennet was put in the warm new milk till the white curds were packed away in the hoop and put under the press in the old orchard, with the big, round, grey “cheese” stone to weight it down as it had weighed down New Moon cheeses for a hundred years. And then she and Ilse and Teddy and Perry were absorbed heart and soul in “playing out” the Midsummer Night’s Dream in Lofty John’s bush and it was very fascinating. When they entered Lofty John’s bush they went out of the realm of daylight and things known into the realm of twilight and mystery and enchantment. Teddy had painted wonderful scenery on old boards and pieces of sails, which Perry had got at the Harbour. Ilse had fashioned

delightful fairy wings from tissue paper and tinsel, and Perry had made an ass's head for Bottom out of an old calfskin that was very realistic. Emily had toiled happily for many weeks copying out the different parts and adapting them to circumstances. She had "cut" the play after a fashion that would have harrowed Shakespeare's soul, but after all the result was quite pretty and coherent. It did not worry them that four small actors had to take six times as many parts. Emily was Titania and Hermia and a job lot of fairies besides, Ilse was Hippolyta and Helena, plus some more fairies, and the boys were anything that the dialogue required. Aunt Elizabeth knew nothing of it all; she would promptly have put a stop to the whole thing, for she thought play-acting exceedingly wicked; but Aunt Laura was privy to the plot, and Cousin Jimmy and Lofty John had already attended a moonlight rehearsal.

To go away and leave all this, even for a time, would be a hard wrench, but on the other hand Emily had a burning curiosity to see Great-Aunt Nancy and Wyther Grange, her quaint, old house at Priest Pond with the famous stone dogs on the gateposts. On the whole, she thought she would like to go; and when she saw Aunt Laura doing up her starched white petticoats and Aunt Elizabeth grimly dusting off a small, black, nail-studded trunk in the garret she knew, before she was told, that the visit to Priest Pond was going to come off; so she took out the letter she had written to Aunt Nancy and added an apologetic postscript.

Ilse chose to be disgruntled because Emily was going for a visit. In reality Ilse felt appalled at the lonely prospects of a month or more without her inseparable chum. No more jolly evenings of play-acting in Lofty John's bush, no more pungent quarrels. Besides, Ilse herself had never been anywhere for a visit in her whole life and she felt sore over this fact.

"I wouldn't go to Wyther Grange for anything," said Ilse. "It's haunted."

"'Tisn't."

"Yes! It's haunted by a ghost you can feel and hear but never see. Oh, I wouldn't be you for the world! Your Great-Aunt Nancy is an awful crank,

and the old woman who lives with her is a witch. She'll put a spell on you. You'll pine away and die."

"I won't — she isn't!"

"Is! Why, she makes the stone dogs on the gateposts howl every night if any one comes near the place. They go, 'Wo-or-oo-oo.'"

Ilse was not a born elocutionist for nothing. Her "wo-or-oo-oo" was extremely gruesome. But it was daylight, and Emily was as brave as a lion in daylight.

"You're jealous," she said, and walked off.

"I'm not, you blithering centipede," Ilse yelled after her. "Putting on airs because your aunt has stone dogs on her gateposts! Why, I know a woman in Shrewsbury who has dogs on her posts that are ten times stonier than your aunt's!"

But next morning Ilse was over to bid Emily goodbye and entreat her to write every week. Emily was going to drive to Priest Pond with Old Kelly. Aunt Elizabeth was to have driven her but Aunt Elizabeth was not feeling well that day and Aunt Laura could not leave her. Cousin Jimmy had to work at the hay. It looked as if she could not go, and this was rather serious, for Aunt Nancy had been told to expect her that day and Aunt Nancy did not like to be disappointed. If Emily did not turn up at Priest Pond on the day set Great-Aunt Nancy was quite capable of shutting the door in her face when she did appear and telling her to go back home. Nothing less than this conviction would have induced Aunt Elizabeth to fall in with Old Kelly's suggestion that Emily should ride to Priest Pond with him. His home was on the other side of it and he was going straight there.

Emily was quite delighted. She liked Old Kelly and thought that a drive on his fine red waggon would be quite an adventure. Her little black box was hoisted to the roof and tied there and they went clinking and glittering down the New Moon lane in fine style. The tins in the bowels of the waggon behind them rumbled like a young earthquake.

"Get up, my nag, get up," said Old Kelly. "Sure, an' I always like to drive the pretty gurrlls. An' when is the wedding to be?"

“Whose wedding?”

“The slyness av her? Your own, av coorse.”

“I have no intention of being married — immediately,” said Emily, in a very good imitation of Aunt Elizabeth’s tone and manner.

“Sure, and ye’re a chip av the ould block. Miss Elizabeth herself couldn’t have said it better. Get up, my nag, get up.”

“I only meant,” said Emily, fearing that she had insulted Old Kelly, “that I am too young to be married.”

“The younger the better — the less mischief ye’ll be after working with them come-hither eyes. Get up, my nag, get up. The baste is tired. So we’ll let him go at his own swate will. Here’s a bag av swaties for ye. Ould Kelly always trates the ladies. Come now, tell me all about him.”

“About whom?” — but Emily knew quite well.

“Your beau, av coorse.”

“I haven’t any beau. Mr Kelly, I wish you wouldn’t talk to me about such things.”

“Sure, and I won’t if ‘tis a sore subject. Don’t ye be minding if ye haven’t got one — there’ll be scads av them after a while. And if the right one doesn’t know what’s good for him, just ye come to Ould Kelly and get some toad ointment.”

Toad ointment! It sounded horrible. Emily shivered. But she would rather talk about toad ointment than beaux.

“What is that for?”

“It’s a love charm,” said Old Kelly mysteriously. “Put a li’l smootch on his eyelids and he’s yourn for life with never a squint at any other gurrl.”

“It doesn’t sound very nice,” said Emily. “How do you make it?”

“You bile four toads alive till they’re good and soft and then mash—”

“Oh, stop, stop!” implored Emily, putting her hands to her ears. “I don’t want to hear any more — you couldn’t be so cruel!”

“Cruel is it? You were after eating lobsters this day that were biled alive—”

“I don’t believe it. I don’t. If it’s true I’ll never, never eat one again. Oh, Mr Kelly, I thought you were a nice kind man — but those poor toads!”

“Gurrl dear, it was only me joke. An’ you won’t be nading toad ointment to win your lad’s love. Wait you now — I’ve something in the till behind me for a prisent for you.”

Old Kelly fished out a box which he put into Emily’s lap. She found a dainty little hairbrush in it.

“Look at the back av it,” said Old Kelly. “You’ll see something handsome — all the love charm ye’ll ever nade.”

Emily turned it over. Her own face looked back at her from a little inset mirror surrounded by a scroll of painted roses.

“Oh, Mr Kelly — how pretty — I mean the roses and the glass,” she cried. “Is it really for me? Oh, thank you, thank you! Now, I can have Emily-in-the-glass whenever I want her. Why, I can carry her round with me. And you were really only in fun about the toads!”

“Av coorse. Get up, my nag, get up. An’ so ye’re going to visit the ould lady over at Praste Pond? Ever been there?”

“No.”

“It’s full of Prastes. Ye can’t throw a stone but ye hit one. And hit one — hit all. They’re as proud and lofty as the Murrays themselves. The only wan I know is Adam Praste — the others hold too high. He’s the black shape and quite sociable. But if ye want to see how the world looked on the morning after the flood, go into his barnyard on a rainy day. Look a-here, gurrl dear” — Old Kelly lowered his voice mysteriously—”don’t ye ever marry a Praste.”

“Why not?” asked Emily, who had never thought of marrying a Priest but was immediately curious as to why she shouldn’t.

“They’re ill to marry — ill to live with. The wives die young. The ould lady of the Grange fought her man out and buried him but she had the Murray luck. I wouldn’t trust it too far. The only dacent Praste among them is the wan they call Jarback Praste and he’s too auld for you.”

“Why do they call him Jarback?”

“Wan av his shoulders is a l’il bit higher than the other. He’s got a bit of money and doesn’t be after having to work. A book worrum, I’m belaving. Have ye got a bit av cold iron about you?”

“No; why?”

“Ye should have. Old Caroline Praste at the Grange is a witch if ever there was one.”

“Why, that’s what Ilse said. But there are no such thing as witches really, Mr Kelly.”

“Maybe that’s thrue but it’s better to be on the safe side. Here, put this horseshoe-nail in your pocket and don’t cross her if ye can help it. Ye don’t mind if I have a bit av a smoke, do ye?”

Emily did not mind at all. It left her free to follow her own thoughts, which were more agreeable than Old Kelly’s talk of toads and witches. The road from Blair Water to, Priest Pond was a very lovely one, winding along the gulf shore, crossing fir-fringed rivers and inlets, and coming ever and anon on one of the ponds for which that part of the north shore was noted — Blair Water, Derry Pond, Long Pond, Three Ponds where three blue lakelets were strung together like three great sapphires held by a silver thread; and then Priest Pond, the largest of all, almost as round as Blair Water. As they drove down towards it Emily drank the scene in with avid eyes — as soon as possible she must write a description of it; she had packed the Jimmy blank book in her box for just such purposes.

The air seemed to be filled with opal dust over the great pond and the bowery summer homesteads around it. A western sky of smoky red was arched over the big Malvern Bay beyond. Little grey sails were drifting along by the fir-fringed shores. A sequestered side road, fringed thickly with young maples and birches, led down to Wyther Grange. How damp and cool the air was in the hollows! And how the ferns did smell! Emily was sorry when they reached Wyther Grange and climbed in between the gateposts whereon the big stone dogs sat very stonily, looking grim enough in the twilight.

The wide hall door was open and a flood of light streamed out over the lawn. A little old woman was standing in it. Old Kelly seemed suddenly in

something of a hurry. He swung Emily and her box to the ground, shook hands hastily and whispered, “Don’t lose that bit av a nail. Goodbye. I wish ye a cool head and a warm heart,” and was off before the little old woman could reach them.

“So this is Emily of New Moon!” Emily heard a rather shrill, cracked voice saying. She felt a thin, clawlike hand grasp hers and draw her towards the door. There were no witches, Emily knew — but she thrust her hand into her pocket and touched the horseshoe-nail.

Deals with Ghosts

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“Your aunt is in the back parlour,” said Caroline Priest. “Come this way. Are you tired?”

“No,” said Emily, following Caroline and taking her in thoroughly. If Caroline were a witch she was a very small one. She was really no taller than Emily herself. She wore a black silk dress and a little string cap of black net edged with black ruching on her yellowish white hair. Her face was more wrinkled than Emily had ever supposed a face could be and she had the peculiar grey-green eyes which, as Emily afterwards discovered, “ran” in the Priest clan.

“You may be a witch,” thought Emily, “but I think I can manage you.”

They went through the spacious hall, catching glimpses on either side of large, dim, splendid rooms, then through the kitchen end out of it into an odd little back hall. It was long and narrow and dark. On one side was a row of four, square, small-paned windows, on the other were cupboards, reaching from floor to ceiling, with doors of black shining wood. Emily felt like one of the heroines in Gothic romance, wandering at midnight through a subterranean dungeon, with some unholy guide. She had read *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and *The Romance of the Forest* before the taboo had fallen on Dr Burnley’s bookcase. She shivered. It was awful but interesting.

At the end of the hall a flight of four steps led up to a door. Beside the steps was an immense black grandfather’s clock reaching almost to the ceiling.

“We shut little girls up in that when they’re bad,” whispered Caroline, nodding at Emily, as she opened the door that led into the back parlour.

“I’ll take good care you won’t shut me up in it,” thought Emily.

The back parlour was a pretty, quaint old room where a table was laid for supper. Caroline led Emily through it and knocked at another door,

using a quaint old brass knocker that was fashioned like a chessy-cat, with such an irresistible grin that you wanted to grin, too, when you saw it. Somebody said, “Come in,” and they went down another four steps — was there ever such a funny house? — into a bedroom. And here at last was Great-Aunt Nancy Priest, sitting in her armchair, with her black stick leaning against her knee, and her tiny white hands, still pretty, and sparkling with fine rings, lying on her purple silk apron.

Emily felt a distinct shock of disappointment. After hearing that poem in which Nancy Murray’s beauty of nut-brown hair and starry brown eyes and cheek of satin rose had been be-rhymed she had somehow expected Great-Aunt Nancy, in spite of her ninety years, to be beautiful still. But Aunt Nancy was white-haired and yellow-skinned and wrinkled and shrunken, though her brown eyes were still bright and shrewd. Somehow, she looked like an old fairy — an impish, tolerant old fairy, who might turn suddenly malevolent if you rubbed her the wrong way — only fairies never wore long, gold-tasselled earrings that almost touched their shoulders, or white lace caps with purple pansies in them.

“So this is Juliet’s girl!” she said, giving Emily one of her sparkling hands. “Don’t look so startled, child. I’m not going to kiss you. I never held with inflicting kisses on defenceless creatures simply because they were so unlucky as to be my relatives. Now, who does she look like, Caroline?”

Emily made a mental grimace. Now for another ordeal of comparisons, wherein dead-and-gone noses and eyes and foreheads would be dragged out and fitted on her. She was thoroughly tired of having her looks talked over in every gathering of the clans.

“Not much like the Murrays,” said Caroline, peering so closely into her face that Emily involuntarily drew back. “Not so handsome as the Murrays.”

“Nor the Starrs either. Her father was a handsome man — so handsome that I’d have run away with him myself if I’d been fifty years younger. There’s nothing of Juliet in her that I can see. Juliet was pretty. You are not as goodlooking as that picture made you out but I didn’t expect you would

be. Pictures and epitaphs are never to be trusted. Where's your bang gone, Emily?"

"Aunt Elizabeth combed it back."

"Well, you comb it down again while you're in my house. There's something of your Grandfather Murray about your eyebrows. Your grandfather was a handsome man — and a darned bad-tempered one — almost as bad-tempered as the Priests — hey, Caroline?"

"If you please, Great-Aunt Nancy," said Emily deliberately, "I don't like to be told I look like other people. I look just like myself."

Aunt Nancy chuckled.

"Spunk, I see. Good. I never cared for meek youngsters. So you're not stupid, eh?"

"No, I'm not."

Great-Aunt Nancy grinned this time. Her false teeth looked uncannily white and young in her old, brown face.

"Good. If you've brains it's better than beauty — brains last, beauty doesn't. Me, for example. Caroline here, now, never had either brains nor beauty, had you, Caroline? Come, let's go to supper. Thank goodness, my stomach has stood by me if my good looks haven't."

Great-Aunt Nancy hobbled, by the aid of her stick, up the steps and over to the table. She sat at one end, Caroline at the other, Emily between, feeling rather uncomfortable. But the ruling passion was still strong in her and she was already composing a description of them for the blank book.

"I wonder if anybody will be sorry when you die," she thought, looking intently at Caroline's wizened old face.

"Come now, tell me," said Aunt Nancy. "If you're not stupid, why did you write me such a stupid letter that first time. Lord, but it was stupid! I read it over to Caroline to punish her whenever she is naughty."

"I couldn't write any other kind of a letter because Aunt Elizabeth said she was going to read it."

"Trust Elizabeth for that. Well, you can write what you like here — and say what you like — and do what you like. Nobody will interfere with you or try to bring you up. I asked you for a visit, not for discipline. Thought

likely you'd have enough of that at New Moon. You can have the run of the house and pick a beau to your liking from the Priest boys — not that the young fry are what they were in my time."

"I don't want a beau," retorted Emily. She felt rather disgusted. Old Kelly had ranted about beaux half the way over and here was Aunt Nancy beginning on the same unnecessary subject.

"Don't you tell me," said Aunt Nancy, laughing till her gold tassels shook. "There never was a Murray of New Moon that didn't like a beau. When I was your age I had half a dozen. All the little boys in Blair Water were fighting about me. Caroline here now never had a beau in her life, had you, Caroline?"

"Never wanted one," snapped Caroline.

"Eighty and twelve say the same thing and both lie," said Aunt Nancy. "What's the use of being hypocrites among ourselves? I don't say it isn't well enough when men are about. Caroline, do you notice what a pretty hand Emily has? As pretty as mine when I was young. And an elbow like a cat's. Cousin Susan Murray had an elbow like that. It's odd — she has more Murray points than Starr points and yet she looks like the Starrs and not like the Murrays. What odd sums in addition we all are — the answer is never what you'd expect. Caroline, what a pity Jarback isn't home. He'd like Emily — I have a feeling he'd like Emily. Jarback's the only Priest that'll ever go to heaven, Emily. Let's have a look at your ankles, puss."

Emily rather unwillingly put out her foot. Aunt Nancy nodded her satisfaction.

"Mary Shipley's ankle. Only one in a generation has it. I had it. The Murray ankles are thick. Even your mother's ankles were thick. Look at that instep, Caroline. Emily, you're not a beauty but if you learn to use your eyes and hands and feet properly you'll pass for one. The men are easily fooled and if the women say you're not 'twill be held for jealousy."

Emily decided that this was a good opportunity to find out something that had puzzled her.

"Old Mr Kelly said I had come-hither eyes, Aunt Nancy. Have I? And what are come-hither eyes?"

“Jock Kelly’s an old ass. You haven’t come-hither eyes — it wouldn’t be a Murray tradish.” Aunt Nancy laughed. “The Murrays have keep-your-distance eyes — and so have you — though your lashes contradict them a bit. But sometimes eyes like that — combined with certain other points — are quite as effective as come-hither eyes. Men go by contraries oftener than not — if you tell them to keep off they’ll come on. My own Nathaniel now — the only way to get him to do anything was to coax him to do the opposite. Remember, Caroline? Have another cooky, Emily?”

“I haven’t had one yet,” said Emily, rather resentfully.

Those cookies looked very tempting and she had been wishing they might be passed. She didn’t know why Aunt Nancy and Caroline both laughed. Caroline’s laugh was unpleasant — a dry, rusty sort of laugh — “no juice in it,” Emily decided. She thought she would write in her description that Caroline had a “thin, rattling laugh.”

“What do you think of us?” demanded Aunt Nancy. “Come now, what do you think of us?”

Emily was dreadfully embarrassed. She had just been thinking of writing that Aunt Nancy looked “withered and shrivelled;” but one couldn’t say that — one couldn’t.

“Tell the truth and shame the devil,” said Aunt Nancy.

“That isn’t a fair question,” cried Emily.

“You think,” said Aunt Nancy, grinning, “that I’m a hideous old hag and that Caroline isn’t quite human. She isn’t. She never was — but you should have seen me seventy years ago. I was handsomest of all the handsome Murrays. The men were mad about me. When I married Nat Priest his three brothers could have cut his throat. One cut his own. Oh, I played havoc in my time. All I regret is I can’t live it over. ‘Twas a grand life while it lasted. I queened it over them. The women hated me, of course — all but Caroline here. You worshipped me, didn’t you, Caroline? And you worship me yet, don’t you, Caroline? Caroline, I wish you didn’t have a wart on your nose.”

“I wish you had one on your tongue,” said Caroline waspishly.

Emily was beginning to feel tired and bewildered. It was interesting — and Aunt Nancy was kind enough in her queer way; but at home Ilse and Perry and Teddy would be foregathering in Lofty John's bush for their evening revel, and Saucy Sal would be sitting on the dairy steps, waiting for Cousin Jimmy to give her the froth. Emily suddenly realized that she was as homesick for New Moon as she had been for Maywood her first night at New Moon.

"The child's tired," said Aunt Nancy. "Take her to bed, Caroline. Put her in the Pink Room."

Emily followed Caroline through the back hall, through the kitchen, through the front hall, up the stairs, down a long hall, through a long side hall. Where on earth was she being taken? Finally they reached a large room. Caroline set down the lamp, and asked Emily if she had a nightgown.

"Of course I have. Do you suppose Aunt Elizabeth would have let me come without one?"

Emily was quite indignant.

"Nancy says you can sleep as long as you like in the morning," said Caroline. "Good night. Nancy and I sleep in the old wing, of course, and the rest of us sleep well in our graves."

With this cryptic remark Caroline trotted out and shut the door.

Emily sat down on an embroidered ottoman and looked about her. The window curtains were of faded pink brocade and the walls were hung with pink paper decorated with diamonds of rose chains. It made a very pretty fairy paper, as Emily found by cocking her eyes at it. There was a green carpet on the floor, so lavishly splashed with big pink roses that Emily was almost afraid to walk on it. She decided that the room was a very splendid one.

"But I have to sleep here alone, so I must say my prayers very carefully," she reflected.

She undressed rather hastily, blew out the light and got into bed. She covered herself up to her chin and lay there, staring at the high, white ceiling. She had grown so used to Aunt Elizabeth's curtained bed that she

felt curiously unsheltered in this low, modern one. But at least the window was wide open — evidently Aunt Nancy did not share Aunt Elizabeth's horror of night air. Through it Emily could see summer fields lying in the magic of a rising yellow moon. But the room was big and ghostly. She felt horribly far away from everybody. She was lonesome — homesick. She thought of Old Kelly and his toad ointment. Perhaps he did boil the toads alive after all. This hideous thought tormented her. It was awful to think of toads — or anything — being boiled alive. She had never slept alone before. Suddenly she was frightened. How the window rattled. It sounded terribly as if somebody — or something — were trying to get in. She thought of Ilse's ghost — a ghost you couldn't see but could hear and feel was something especially spooky in the way of ghosts — she thought of the stone dogs that went “Wo — or — oo — oo” at midnight. A dog did begin to howl somewhere. Emily felt a cold perspiration on her brow. What had Caroline meant about the rest of them sleeping well in their graves? The floor creaked. Wasn't there somebody — or something — tiptoeing round outside the door? Did something move in the corner? There were mysterious sounds in the long hall.

“I won't be scared,” said Emily. “I won't think of those things, and tomorrow I'll write down all about how I feel now.”

And then — she did hear something — right behind the wall at the head of her bed. There was no mistake about it. It was not imagination. She heard distinctly strange uncanny rustles — as if stiff silk dresses were rubbing against each other — as if fluttering wings fanned the air — and there were soft, low, muffled sounds like tiny children's cries or moans. They lasted — they kept on. Now and then they would die away — then start up again.

Emily cowered under the bedclothes, cold with real terror. Before, her fright had been only on the surface — she had known there was nothing to fear, even while she feared. Something in her braced her to endure. But this was no mistake — no imagination. The rustles and flutterings and cries and moans were all too real. Wyther Grange suddenly became a dreadful, uncanny place. Ilse was right — it was haunted. And she was all

alone here, with miles of rooms and halls between her and any human being. It was cruel of Aunt Nancy to put her in a haunted room. Aunt Nancy must have known it was haunted — cruel old Aunt Nancy with her ghoulish pride in men who had killed themselves for her. Oh, if she were back in dear New Moon, with Aunt Elizabeth beside her. Aunt Elizabeth was not an ideal bedfellow but she was flesh-and-blood. And if the windows were hermetically sealed they kept out spooks as well as night air.

“Perhaps it won’t be so bad if I say my prayers over again,” thought Emily.

But even this didn’t help much.

To the end of her life Emily never forgot that first horrible night at Wyther Grange. She was so tired that sometimes she dozed fitfully off only to be awakened in a few minutes in panic horror, by the rustling and muffled moans behind her bed. Every ghost and groan, every tortured spirit and bleeding nun of the books she had read came into her mind.

“Aunt Elizabeth was right — novels aren’t fit to read,” she thought. “Oh, I will die here — of fright — I know I will. I know I’m a coward — I can’t be brave.”

When morning came the room was bright with sunshine and free from mysterious sounds. Emily got up, dressed and found her way to the old wing. She was pale, with black-ringed eyes, but resolute.

“Well, and how did you sleep?” asked Aunt Nancy graciously.

Emily ignored the question.

“I want to go home to-day,” she said.

Aunt Nancy stared.

“Home? Nonsense! Are you such a homesick baby as that?”

“I’m not homesick — not very — but I must go home.”

“You can’t — there’s no one here to take you. You don’t expect Caroline can drive you to Blair Water, do you?”

“Then I will walk.”

Aunt Nancy thumped her stick angrily on the floor.

“You will stay right here until I’m ready for you to go, Miss Puss. I never tolerate any whims but my own. Caroline knows that, don’t you, Caroline? Sit down to your breakfast — and eat — eat.”

Aunt Nancy glared at Emily.

“I won’t stay here,” said Emily. “I won’t stay another night in that horrible haunted room. It was cruel of you to put me there. If—” Emily gave Aunt Nancy glare for glare—“if I was Salome I’d ask for your head on a charger.”

“Hoity-toity! What nonsense is this about a haunted room? We’ve no ghosts at Wyther Grange. Have we, Caroline? We don’t consider them hygienic.”

“You have something dreadful in that room — it rustled and moaned and cried all night long right in the wall behind my bed. I won’t stay — I won’t—”

Emily’s tears came in spite of her efforts to repress them. She was so unstrung nervously that she couldn’t help crying. It lacked but little of hysterics with her already.

Aunt Nancy looked at Caroline and Caroline looked back at Aunt Nancy.

“We should have told her, Caroline. It’s all our fault. I clean forgot — it’s so long since any one slept in the Pink Room. No wonder she was frightened. Emily, you poor child, it was a shame. It would serve me right to have my head on a charger, you vindictive scrap. We should have told you.”

“Told me — what?”

“About the swallows in the chimney. That was what you heard. The big central chimney goes right up through the walls behind your bed. It is never used now since the fireplaces were built in. The swallows nest there — hundreds of them. They do make an uncanny noise — fluttering and quarrelling as they do.”

Emily felt foolish and ashamed — much more ashamed than she needed to feel, for her experience had really been a very trying one, and older folk than she had been woefully frightened o’ nights in the Pink

Room at Wyther Grange. Nancy Priest had put people into that room sometimes expressly to scare them. But to do her justice she really had forgotten in Emily's case and was sorry.

Emily said no more about going home; Caroline and Aunt Nancy were both very kind to her that day; she had a good nap in the afternoon; and when the second night came she went straight to the Pink Room and slept soundly the night through. The rustles and cries were as distinct as ever but swallows and spectres were two entirely different things.

“After all, I think I'll like Wyther Grange,” said Emily.

A Different Kind of Happiness

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“JULY 20TH.

“DEAR FATHER:

“I have been a fortnight at Wyther Grange and I have not written to you once. But I thought of you every day. I had to write to Aunt Laura and Ilse and Teddy and Cousin Jimmy and Perry and between times I am having such fun. The first night I was here I did not think I was going to be happy. But I am — only it’s a different kind from New Moon happiness.

“Aunt Nancy and Caroline are very good to me and let me do exactly as I like. This is very agreeable. They are very sarcastic to each other. But I think they are a good bit like Ilse and me — they fight quite frequently but love each other very hard between times. I am sure Caroline isn’t a witch but I would like to know what she thinks of when she is all alone by herself. Aunt Nancy is not pretty any longer but she is very aristocratic looking. She doesn’t walk much because of her roomatism, so she sits mostly in her back parlour and reads and knits lace or plays cards with Caroline. I talk to her a great deal because she says it amuses her and I have told her a great many things but I have never told her that I write poetry. If I did I know she would make me recite it to her and I feel she is not the right person to recite your poetry to. And I do not talk about you or Mother to her, though she tries to make me. I told her all about Lofty John and his bush and going to Father Cassidy. She chuckled over that and said she always liked to talk to the Catholic Priests because they were the only men in the world a woman could talk to for more than ten minutes without other women saying she was throwing herself at their heads.

“Aunt Nancy says a great many things like that. She and Caroline talk a great deal to each other about things that happened in the Priest and Murray families. I like to sit and listen. They don’t stop just as things are getting interesting the way Aunt Elizabeth and Aunt Laura do. A good

many things I don't understand but I will remember them and will find out about them sometime. I have written descriptions of Aunt Nancy and Caroline in my Jimmy-book. I keep the book hid behind the wardrobe in my room because I found Caroline rummidging in my trunk one day. I must not call Aunt Nancy Great-Aunt. She says it makes her feel like Methoosaleh. She tells me all about the men who were in love with her. It seems to me they all behaved pretty much the same. I don't think that was exciting but she says it was. She tells me about all the parties and dances they used to have here long ago. Wyther Grange is bigger than New Moon and the furniture is much handsomer but it is harder to feel acquainted with it.

"There are many interesting things in this house. I love to look at them. There is a Jakobite glass on a stand in the parlour. It was a glass an old ancestor of the Priests had long ago in Scotland and it has a thistle and a rose on it and they used it to drink Prince Charlie's health with and for no other purpose. It is a very valewable airloom and Aunt Nancy prizes it highly. And she has a pickled snake in a big glass jar in the china cabinet. It is hideous but fascinating. I shiver when I see it but yet I go to look at it every day. Something seems to drag me to it. Aunt Nancy has a bureau in her room with glass knobs and a vase shaped like a green fish sitting up on end and a Chinese draggon with a curly tail, and a case of sweet little stuffed hummingbirds and a sand-glass for boiling eggs by and a framed wreath made out of the hair of all the dead Priests and lots of old dagerrotipes. But the thing I like the best of all is a great silvery shining ball hanging from the lamp in the parlour. It reflects everything like a little fairy world. Aunt Nancy calls it a gazing-ball, and says that when she is dead I am to have it. I wish she hadn't said that because I want the ball so much that I can't help wondering when she will die and that makes me feel wicked. I am to have the chessy-cat door knocker and her gold earrings, too. These are Murray airlooms. Aunt Nancy says the Priest airlooms must go to the Priests. I will like the chessy-cat but I don't want the earrings. I'd rather not have people notice my ears.

“I have to sleep alone. I feel frightened but I think if I could get over being frightened I’d like it. I don’t mind the swallows now. It’s just being alone so far away from any one. But it is lovely to be able to stretch out your legs just as you like and not have anybody scold you for skwirming. And when I wake up in the night and think of a splendid line of poetry (because the things that you think of like that always seem the best) I can get right out of bed and write it down in my Jimmy-book. I couldn’t do that at home and then by morning I’d likely forget it. I thought of such a nice line last night. “Lilies lifted pearly chaluses (a chalus is a kind of cup only more poetical) where bees were drowned in sweetness” and I felt happy because I was sure they were two better lines than any I had composed yet.

“I am allowed to go into the kitchen and help Caroline cook. Caroline is a good cook but sometimes she makes a mistake and this vexes Aunt Nancy because she likes nice things to eat. The other day Caroline made the barley soup far too thick and when Aunt Nancy looked at her plate she said ‘Lord, is this a dinner or a poltis?’ Caroline said ‘It is good enough for a Priest and what is good enough for a Priest is good enough for a Murray,’ and Aunt Nancy said ‘Woman, the Priests eat of the crumbs that fall from the Murrays’ tables,’ and Caroline was so mad she cried. And Aunt Nancy said to me ‘Emily, never marry a Priest’ — just like Old Kelly, when I have no notion of marrying one of them. I don’t like any of them I’ve seen very much but they seem to me a good deal like other people. Jim is the best of them but impident.

“I like the Wyther Grange breakfasts better than the New Moon breakfasts. We have toast and bacon and marmalade — nicer than porridge.

“Sunday is more amusing here than at New Moon but not so holy. Nice for a change. Aunt Nancy can’t go to church or knit lace so she and Caroline play cards all day but she says I must never do it — that she is just a bad example. I love to look at Aunt Nancy’s big parlour Bible because there are so many interesting things in it — pieces of dresses and

hair and poetry and old tintypes and accounts of deaths and weddings. I found a piece about my own birth and it gave me a queer feeling.

“In the afternoon some of the Priests come to see Aunt Nancy and to stay to supper. Leslie Priest always comes. He is Aunt Nancy’s favourite neffew, so Jim says. I think that is because he pays her compliments. But I saw him wink at Isaac Priest once when he paid her one. I don’t like him. He treats me as if I were a meer child. Aunt Nancy says terrible things to them all but they just laugh. When they go away Aunt Nancy makes fun of them to Caroline. Caroline doesn’t like it, because she is a Priest and so she and Aunt Nancy always quarrel Sunday evening and don’t speak again till Monday morning.

“I can read all the books in Aunt Nancy’s bookcase except the row on the top shelf. I wonder why I can’t read them. Aunt Nancy said they were French novels but I just peeped into one and it was English. I wonder if Aunt Nancy tells lies.

“The place I love best is down at bay shore. Some parts of the shore are very steep and there are such nice, woodsy, unexpected places all along it. I wander there and compose poetry. I miss Ilse and Teddy and Perry and Saucy Sal a great deal. I had a letter from Ilse to-day. She wrote me that they couldn’t do anything more about the Midsummer Night’s Dream till I got back. It is nice to feel so necessary.

“Aunt Nancy doesn’t like Aunt Elizabeth. She called her a ‘tyrant’ one day and then she said ‘Jimmy Murray was a very clever boy. Elizabeth Murray killed his intellect in her temper — and nothing was done to her. If she had killed his body she would have been a murderess. The other was worse, if you ask me.’ I do not like Aunt Elizabeth at times myself but I felt, dear Father, that I must stand up for my family and I said ‘I do not want to hear such things said of my Aunt Elizabeth.’

“And I just gave Aunt Nancy a look. She said ‘Well, Saucebox, my brother Archibald will never be dead as long as you’re alive. If you don’t want to hear things don’t hang around when Caroline and I are talking. I notice there are plenty of things you like to hear.’

“This was sarcasm, dear Father, but still I feel Aunt Nancy likes me but perhaps she will not like me very long. Jim Priest says she is fickle and never liked any one, even her husband, very long. But after she had been sarcastic to me she always tells Caroline to give me a piece of pie so I don’t mind the sarcasm. She lets me have real tea, too. I like it. At New Moon Aunt Elizabeth won’t give me anything but cambric tea because it is best for my health. Aunt Nancy says the way to be healthy is to eat just what you want and never think about your stomach. But then she was never threatened with consumption. She says I needn’t be a bit frightened of dying of consumption because I have too much ginger in me. That is a comfortable thought. The only time I don’t like Aunt Nancy is when she begins talking about the different parts of me and the effect they will have on the men. It makes me feel so silly.

“I will write you oftener after this, dear Father. I feel I have been neglecting you.

“P. S. I am afraid there are some mistakes in spelling in this letter. I forgot to bring my dictionary with me.

“JULY 22.

“Oh, dear Father, I am in a dreadful scrape. I don’t know what I am to do. Oh, Father, I have broken Aunt Nancy’s Jakobite glass. It seems to me like a dreadful dream.

“I went into the parlour to-day to look at the pickled snake and just as I was turning away my sleeve caught the Jakobite glass and over it went on the harth and shattered into fragments. At first I rushed out and left them there but afterwards I went back and carefully gathered them up and hid them in a box behind the sofa. Aunt Nancy never goes into the parlour now and Caroline not very often and perhaps they may not miss the glass until I go home. But it haunts me. I keep thinking of it all the time and I cannot enjoy anything. I know Aunt Nancy will be furious and never forgive me if she finds out. I could not sleep all night for worrying about it. Jim Priest came down to play with me today but he said there was no fun in me and went home. The Priests mostly say what they think. Of course there was no fun in me. How could there be? I wonder if it would do any good to pray

about it. I don't feel as if it would be right to pray because I am deceiving Aunt Nancy.

"JULY 24.

"Dear Father, this is a very strange world. Nothing ever turns out just like what you expect. Last night I couldn't sleep again. I was so worried. I thought I was a coward, and doing an underhanded thing and not living up to my tradishuns. At last it got so bad I couldn't stand it. I can bear it when other people have a bad opinion of me but it hurts too much when I have a bad opinion of myself. So I got out of bed and went right back through all those halls to the back parlour. Aunt Nancy was still there all alone playing Solitaire. She said what on earth was I out of bed for at such an hour. I just said, short and quick to get the worst over, 'I broke your Jakobite glass yesterday and hid the pieces behind the sofa.' Then I waited for the storm to burst. Aunt Nancy said 'What a blessing. I've often wanted to smash it but never had the courage. All the Priest clan are waiting for me to die to get that glass and quarrel over it and I'm tickled to think none of them can have it now and yet can't pick a fuss with me over smashing it. Get off to bed and get your beauty sleep.' I said 'And you aren't mad at all, Aunt Nancy?' 'If it had been a Murray airloom I'd have torn up the turf' Aunt Nancy said. 'But I don't care a hoot about the Priest things.'

"So I went back to bed, dear Father, and felt very much releaved, but not so heroyik.

"I had a letter from Ilse to-day. She says Saucy Sal has had kittens at last. I feel that I ought to be home to see about them. Likely Aunt Elizabeth will have them all drowned before I get back. I had a letter from Teddy too, not much of a letter but all filled with dear little pictures of Ilse and Perry and the Tansy Patch and Lofty John's bush. They made me feel homesick.

"JULY 28.

"Oh, Father dear, I have found out all about the mistery of Ilse's mother. It is so terrible I can't write it down even to you. I cannot believe it but Aunt Nancy says it is true. I did not think there could be such

terrible things in the world. No, I can't believe it and I won't believe it no matter who says it is true. I know Ilse's mother couldn't have done anything like that. There must have been a fearful mistake somewhere. I am so unhappy and feel as if I could never be happy any more. Last night I wept on my pillow, like the heroines in Aunt Nancy's books do."

“She Couldn’t Have Done It”

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Great-aunt Nancy and Caroline Priest were wont to colour their grey days with the remembered crimsons of old, long-past delights and merrymakings, but they went further than this and talked over any number of old family histories before Emily with a total disregard of her youth. Loves, births, deaths, scandals, tragedies — anything that came into their old heads. Nor did they spare details. Aunt Nancy revelled in details. She forgot nothing, and sins and weaknesses that death had covered and time shown mercy to were ruthlessly dragged out and dissected by this ghoulis old lady.

Emily was not quite certain whether she really liked it or not. It was fascinating — it fed some dramatic hunger in her — but it made her feel unhappy somehow, as if something very ugly were concealed in the darkness of the pit they opened before her innocent eyes. As Aunt Laura had said, her youth protected her to some extent, but it could not save her from a dreadful understanding of the pitiful story of Ilse’s mother on the afternoon when it seemed good to Aunt Nancy to resurrect that tale of anguish and shame.

Emily was curled up on the sofa in the back parlour, reading *The Scottish Chiefs* because it was a breathlessly hot July afternoon — too hot to haunt the bay shore. Emily was feeling very happy. The Wind Woman was ruffling over the big maple grove behind the Grange, turning the leaves until every tree seemed to be covered with strange, pale, silvery blossoms; fragrances drifted in from the garden; the world was lovely; she had had a letter from Aunt Laura saying that one of Saucy Sal’s kittens had been saved for her. Emily had felt when Mike II died that she would never want another cat. But now she found she did. Everything suited her very well; she was so happy that she should have sacrificed her dearest

possession to the jealous gods if she had known anything about the old pagan belief.

Aunt Nancy was tired of playing solitaire. She pushed the cards away and took up her knitting.

“Emily,” she said, “has your Aunt Laura any notion of marrying Dr Burnley?”

Emily, recalled thus abruptly from the field of Bannockburn, looked bored. Blair Water gossip had often asked or hinted this question; and now it met her in Priest Pond.

“No, I’m sure she hasn’t,” she said. “Why, Aunt Nancy, Dr Burnley hates women.”

Aunt Nancy chuckled.

“Thought perhaps he’d got over that. It’s eleven years now since his wife ran away. Few men hold to one idea for anything like eleven years. But Allan Burnley always was stubborn in anything — love or hate. He still loves his wife — and that is why he hates her memory and all other women.”

“I never heard the rights of that story,” said Caroline. “Who was his wife?”

“Beatrice Mitchell — one of the Shrewsbury Mitchells. She was only eighteen when Allan married her. He was thirty-five. Emily, never you be fool enough to marry a man much older than yourself.”

Emily said nothing. The Scottish Chiefs was forgotten. Her fingertips were growing cold as they always did in excitement, her eyes turning black. She felt that she was on the verge of solving the mystery that had so long worried and puzzled her. She was desperately afraid that Aunt Nancy would branch off to something else.

“I’ve heard she was a great beauty,” said Caroline.

Aunt Nancy sniffed.

“Depends on your taste in style. Oh, she was pretty — one of your golden-haired dolls. She had a little birthmark over her left eyebrow — just like a tiny red heart — I never could see anything but that mark when I looked at her. But her flatterers told her it was a beauty spot—the Ace of

Hearts' they called her. Allan was mad about her. She had been a flirt before her marriage. But I will say — for justice among women is a rare thing, Caroline — you, for instance, are an unjust old hag — that she didn't flirt after marrying — openly, at least. She was a sly puss — always laughing and singing and dancing — no wife for Allan Burnley if you ask me. And he could have had Laura Murray. But between a fool and a sensible woman did a man ever hesitate? The fool wins every time, Caroline. That's why you never got a husband. You were too sensible. I got mine by pretending to be a fool. Emily, you remember that. You have brains — hide them. Your ankles will do more for you than your brains ever will."

"Never mind Emily's ankles," said Caroline, keen on a scandal hunt. "Go on about the Burnleys."

"Well, there was a cousin of hers — Leo Mitchell from Shrewsbury. You remember the Mitchells, don't you, Caroline? This Leo was a handsome fellow — a sea-captain. He had been in love with Beatrice, so gossip ran. Some said Beatrice wanted him but that her people made her marry Allan Burnley because he was the better match. Who knows? Gossip lies nine times and tells a half truth the tenth. She pretended to be in love with Allan anyhow, and he believed it. When Leo came home from a voyage and found Beatrice married he took it coolly enough. But he was always over at Blair Water. Beatrice had plenty of excuses. Leo was her cousin — they had been brought up together — they were like brother and sister — she was so lonesome in Blair Water after living in a town — he had no home except with a brother. Allan took it all down — he was so infatuated with her she could have made him believe anything. She and Leo were always together there when Allan was away seeing his patients. Then came the night Leo's vessel — The Lady of Winds — was to sail from Blair Harbour for South America. He went — and my Lady Beatrice went with him."

A queer little strangled sound came from Emily's corner. If Aunt Nancy or Caroline had looked at her they would have seen that the child

was white as the dead, with wide, horror-filled eyes. But they did not look. They knitted and gossiped on, enjoying themselves hugely.

“How did the doctor take it?” asked Caroline.

“Take it — take it — nobody knows. Everybody knows what kind of a man he’s been ever since, though. He came home that night at dusk. The baby was asleep in its crib and the servant girl was watching it. She told Allan that Mrs Burnley had gone to the harbour with her cousin for a goodbye walk and would be back at ten. Allan waited for her easily enough — he never doubted her — but she didn’t come back. She had never intended to come back. In the morning the Lady of Winds was gone — had sailed out of the harbour at dark the night before. Beatrice had gone on board with him — that was all anybody knew. Allan Burnley said nothing, beyond forbidding her name ever to be mentioned in his hearing again. But The Lady of Winds was lost with all on board off Hatteras and that was the end of that elopement, and the end of Beatrice with her beauty and her laughter and her Ace of Hearts.”

“But not the end of the shame and wretchedness she brought to her home,” said Caroline shrewishly. “I’d tar and feather such a woman.”

“Nonsense — if a man can’t look after his wife — if he blinds his own eyes — Mercy on us, child, what is the matter?”

For Emily was standing up, holding out her hands as if pushing some loathly thing from her.

“I don’t believe it,” she cried, in a high, unnatural voice. “I don’t believe Ilse’s mother did that. She didn’t — she couldn’t have — not Ilse’s mother.”

“Catch her, Caroline!” cried Aunt Nancy.

But Emily, though the back parlour had whirled about her for a second, had recovered herself.

“Don’t touch me!” she cried passionately. “Don’t touch me! You — you — you liked hearing that story!”

She rushed out of the room. Aunt Nancy looked ashamed for a moment. For the first time it occurred to her that her scandal-loving old tongue had done a black thing. Then she shrugged her shoulders.

“She can’t go through life in cotton-wool. Might as well learn spades are spades now as ever. I would have thought she’d have heard it all long ago if Blair Water gossip is what it used to be. If she goes home and tells this I’ll have the indignant virgins of New Moon coming down on me in holy horror as a corrupter of youth. Caroline, don’t you ask me to tell you any more family horrors before my niece, you scandalous old woman. At your age! I’m surprised at you!”

Aunt Nancy and Caroline returned to their knitting and their spicy reminiscences, and upstairs in the Pink Room Emily lay face downwards on her bed and cried for hours. It was so horrible — Ilse’s mother had run away and left her little baby. To Emily that was the awful thing — the strange, cruel, heartless thing that Ilse’s mother had done. She could not bring herself to believe it — there was some mistake somewhere — there was.

“Perhaps she was kidnapped,” said Emily, trying desperately to explain it. “She just went on board to look around — and he weighed anchor and carried her off. She couldn’t have gone away of her own accord and left her dear little baby.”

The story haunted Emily in good earnest. She could think of nothing else for days. It took possession of her and worried and gnawed at her with an almost physical pain. She dreaded going back to New Moon and meeting Ilse with this consciousness of a dark secret which she must hide from her. Ilse knew nothing. She had asked Ilse once where her mother was buried and Ilse had said, “Oh, I don’t know. At Shrewsbury, I guess — that’s where all the Mitchells are buried.”

Emily wrung her slim hands together. She was as sensitive to ugliness and pain as she was to beauty and pleasure, and this thing was both hideous and agonizing. Yet she could not keep from thinking about it, day and night. Life at Wyther Grange suddenly went stale. Aunt Nancy and Caroline all at once gave up talking family history, even harmless history, before her. And as it was painful repression for them, they did not encourage her hanging round. Emily began to feel that they were glad when she was out of hearing, so she kept away and spent most of her days

wandering on the bay shore. She could not compose any poetry — she could not write in her Jimmy-book — she could not even write to her father. Something seemed to hang between her and her old delights. There was a drop of poison in every cup. Even the filmy shadows on the great bay, the charm of its fir-hung cliffs and its little purple islets that looked like outposts of fairyland, could not bring to her the old “fine, careless rapture.” She was afraid she could never be happy again — so intense had been her reaction to her first revelation of the world’s sin and sorrow. And under it all, persisted the same incredulity — Ilse’s mother couldn’t have done it — and the same helpless longing to prove she couldn’t have done it. But how could it be proved? It couldn’t. She had solved one “mystery” but she had stumbled into a darker one — the reason why Beatrice Burnley had never come back on that summer twilight of long ago. For, all the evidence of facts to the contrary notwithstanding, Emily persisted in her secret belief that whatever the reason was, it was not that she had gone away in *The Lady of Winds* when that doomed ship sailed out into the starlit wonder of the gulf beyond Blair Harbour.

On the Bay Shore

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“I wonder,” thought Emily, “how much longer I have to live.”

She had prowled that evening farther down the bay shore than she had ever gone before. It was a warm, windy evening, the air was resinous and sweet; the bay a misty turquoise. That part of the shore whereon she found herself seemed as lonely and virgin as if no human foot had ever trodden it, save for a tiny, tricky path, slender as red thread and bordered by great, green, velvety sheets of moss, that wound in and out of the big firs and scrub spruces. The banks grew steeper and rockier as she went on and finally the little path vanished altogether in a plot of bracken. Emily was just turning to go back when she caught sight of a magnificent spray of farewell-summer, growing far out on the edge of the bank. She must get it — she had never seen farewell-summers of so dark and rich a purple. She stepped out to reach them — the treacherous mossy soil gave way under her feet and slid down the steep slope. Emily made a frantic attempt to scramble back but the harder she tried, the faster went the landslide, carrying her with it. In a moment it would pass the slope and go over the brink of the rocks, straight to the boulder-strewn shore thirty feet below. Emily had one dreadful moment of terror and despair; and then she found that the clump of mossy earth which had broken away had held on a narrow ledge of rock, half hanging over it; and she was lying on the clump. It seemed to her that the slightest movement on her part would send it over, straight to the cruel boulders underneath.

She lay very still, trying to think — trying not to be afraid. She was far, far away from any house — nobody could hear her if she screamed. And she did not even dare to scream lest the motion of her body dislodge the fragment on which she lay. How long could she lie there motionless? Night was coming on. Aunt Nancy would grow anxious when the dark fell and would send Caroline to look for her. But Caroline would never find her

here. Nobody would ever think of looking here for her, so far away from the Grange, in the spruce barrens of the Lower Bay. To lie there alone all night — to fancy the earth was slipping over — waiting for help that would never come — Emily could hardly restrain a shudder that might have been ruinous.

She had faced death once before, or thought she had, on the night when Lofty John had told her she had eaten a poisoned apple — but this was even harder. To die here, all alone, far away from home! They might never know what had become of her — never find her. The crows or the gulls would pick her eyes out. She dramatized the thing so vividly that she almost screamed with the horror of it. She would just disappear from the world as Ilse's mother had disappeared.

What had become of Ilse's mother? Even in her own desperate plight Emily asked herself that question. And she would never see dear New Moon again and Teddy and the dairy and the Tansy Patch and Lofty John's bush and the mossy old sundial and her precious little heap of manuscripts on the sofa shelf in the garret.

"I must be very brave and patient," she thought. "My only chance is to lie still. And I can pray in my mind — I'm sure God can hear thoughts as well as words. It is nice to think He can hear me if nobody else can. O God — Father's God — please work a miracle and save my life, because I don't think I'm fit to die yet. Excuse my not being on my knees — You see I can't move. And if I die please don't let Aunt Elizabeth find my letterbills ever. Please let Aunt Laura find them. And please don't let Caroline move out the wardrobe when she housecleans because then she would find my Jimmy-book and read what I wrote about her. Please forgive all my sins, especially not being grateful enough and cutting a bang, and please don't let Father be very far away. Amen."

Then, characteristically she thought of a postscript. "And oh, please let somebody find out that Ilse's mother didn't do that."

She lay very still. The light on the water began to turn warm gold and rose. A great pine on a bluff in front of her overflowed in a crest of dark boughs against the amber splendour behind it — a part of the beauty of the

beautiful world that was slipping away from her. The chill of the evening gulf breeze began to creep over her. Once a bit of earth broke off at her side and went down — Emily heard the thud of the little pebbles in it on the boulders below. The portion upon which one of her legs lay was quite loose and pendent also. She knew it might break off, too, at any moment. It would be very dreadful to be there when it got dark. She could see the big spray of farewell-summer that had lured her to her doom, waving unplucked above her, wonderfully purple and lovely.

Then, beside it, she saw a man's face looking down at her!

She heard him say, "My God!" softly to himself. She saw that he was slight and that one shoulder was a trifle higher than the other. This must be Dean Priest — Jarback Priest. Emily dared not call to him. She lay still and her great, grey-purple eyes said, "Save me."

"How can I help you?" said Dean Priest hoarsely, as if to himself. "I cannot reach you — and it looks as if the slightest touch or jar would send that broken earth over the brink. I must go for a rope — and to leave you here alone — like this. Can you wait, child?"

"Yes," breathed Emily. She smiled at him to encourage him — the little soft smile that began at the corners of her mouth and spread over her face. Dean Priest never forgot that smile — and the steadfast child-eyes looking out through it from the little face that seemed so perilously near the brink.

"I'll be as quick as I can," he said. "I can't go very fast — I'm a bit lame, you see. But don't be frightened — I'll save you. I'll leave my dog to keep you company. Here, Tweed."

He whistled — a great, tawny-gold dog came in sight.

"Sit right there, Tweed, till I come back. Don't stir a paw — don't wag a tail — talk to her only with your eyes."

Tweed sat down obediently and Dean Priest disappeared.

Emily lay there and dramatized the whole incident for her Jimmy-book. She was a little frightened still, but not too frightened to see herself writing it all out the next day. It would be quite a thrilling bit.

She liked to know the big dog was there. She was not so learned in lore of dogs as in lore of cats. But he looked very human and trusty watching her with great kindly eyes. A grey kitten was an adorable thing — but a grey kitten would not have sat there and encouraged her. “I believe,” thought Emily, “that a dog is better than a cat when you’re in trouble.”

It was half an hour before Dean Priest returned.

“Thank God you haven’t gone over,” he muttered. “I hadn’t to go as far as I feared — I found a rope in an empty boat upshore and took it. And now — if I drop the rope down to you, are you strong enough to hold it while the earth goes and then hang on while I pull you up?”

“I’ll try,” said Emily.

Dean Priest knotted a loop at the end and slid it down to her. Then he wound the rope around the trunk of a heavy fir.

“Now,” he said.

Emily said inwardly, “Dear God, please—” and caught the swaying loop. The next moment the full weight of her body swung from it, for at her first movement the broken soil beneath her slipped down — slipped over. Dean Priest sickened and shivered. Could she cling to the rope while he drew her up?

Then he saw she had got a little knee-hold on the narrow shelf. Carefully he drew on the rope. Emily, full of pluck, helped him by digging her toes into the crumbling bank. In a moment she was within his reach. He grasped her arms and pulled her up beside him into safety. As he lifted her past the farewell-summer Emily reached out her hand and broke off the spray.

“I’ve got it, anyhow,” she said jubilantly. Then she remembered her manners. “I’m much obliged to you. You saved my life. And — and — I think I’ll sit down a moment. My legs feel funny and trembly.”

Emily sat down, all at once more shaky than she had been through all the danger. Dean Priest leaned against the gnarled old fir. He seemed “trembly” too. He wiped his forehead with his handkerchief. Emily looked curiously at him. She had learned a good deal about him from Aunt Nancy’s casual remarks — not always goodnatured remarks, for Aunt

Nancy did not wholly like him, it seemed. She always called him “Jarback” rather contemptuously, while Caroline scrupulously called him Dean. Emily knew he had been to college, that he was thirty-six years old — which to Emily seemed a venerable age — and well-off; that he had a malformed shoulder and limped slightly; that he cared for nothing save books nor ever had; that he lived with an older brother and travelled a great deal; and that the whole Priest clan stood somewhat in awe of his ironic tongue. Aunt Nancy had called him a “cynic.” Emily did not know what a cynic was but it sounded interesting. She looked him over carefully and saw that he had delicate, pale features and tawny-brown hair. His lips were thin and sensitive, with a whimsical curve. She liked his mouth. Had she been older she would have known why — because it connoted strength and tenderness and humour.

In spite of his twisted shoulder there was about him a certain aloof dignity of presence which was characteristic of many of the Priests and which was often mistaken for pride. The green Priest eyes, that were peering and uncanny in Caroline’s face and impudent in Jim Priest’s, were remarkably dreamy and attractive in his.

“Well, do you think me handsome?” he said, sitting down on another stone and smiling at her. His voice was beautiful — musical and caressing.

Emily blushed. She knew staring was not etiquette, and she did not think him at all handsome, so she was very thankful that he did not press his question, but asked another.

“Do you know who your knightly rescuer is?”

“I think you must be Jar — Mr Dean Priest.” Emily flushed again with vexation. She had come so near to making another terrible hole in her manners.

“Yes, Jarback Priest. You needn’t mind the nickname. I’ve heard it often enough. It’s a Priest idea of humour.” He laughed rather unpleasantly. “The reason for it is obvious enough, isn’t it? I never got anything else at school. How came you to slide over that cliff?”

“I wanted this,” said Emily, waving her farewell-summer.

“And you have it! Do you always get what you go after, even with death slipping a thin wedge between? I think you’re born lucky. I see the signs. If that big aster lured you into danger it saved you as well, for it was through stepping over to investigate it that I saw you. Its size and colour caught my eye. Otherwise I should have gone on and you — what would have become of you? Whom do you belong to that you are let risk your life on these dangerous banks? What is your name — if you have a name! I begin to doubt you — I see you have pointed ears. Have I been tricked into meddling with fairies, and will I discover presently that twenty years have passed and that I am an old man long since lost to the living world with nothing but the skeleton of my dog for company?”

“I am Emily Byrd Starr of New Moon,” said Emily, rather coldly. She was beginning to be sensitive about her ears. Father Cassidy had remarked on them — and now Jarback Priest. Was there really something uncanny about them?

And yet there was a flavour about the said Jarback that she liked — liked decidedly. Emily never was long in doubt about anyone she met. In a few minutes she always knew whether she liked, disliked, or was indifferent to them. She had a queer feeling that she had known Jarback Priest for years — perhaps because it seemed so long when she was lying on that crumbling earth waiting for him to return. He was not handsome but she liked that lean, clever face of his with its magnetic green eyes.

“So you’re the young lady visitor at the Grange!” said Dean Priest, in some astonishment. “Then my dear Aunt Nancy should look after you better — my very dear Aunt Nancy.”

“You don’t like Aunt Nancy, I see,” said Emily coolly.

“What is the use of liking a lady who won’t like me? You have probably discovered by this time that my Lady Aunt detests me.”

“Oh, I don’t think it’s as bad as that,” said Emily. “She must have some good opinions about you — she says you’re the only Priest who will ever go to heaven.”

“She doesn’t mean that as a compliment, whatever you in your innocence believe it to be. And you are Douglas Starr’s daughter? I knew

your father. We were boys together at Queen's Academy — we drifted apart after we left it — he went into journalism, I to McGill. But he was the only friend I had at school — the only boy who would bother himself about Jarback Priest, who was lame and hunchbacked and couldn't play football or hockey. Emily Byrd Starr — Starr should be your first name. You look like a star — you have a radiant sort of personality shining through you — your proper habitat should be the evening sky just after sunset — or the morning sky just before sunrise. Yes. You'd be more at home in the morning sky. I think I shall call you Star."

"Do you mean that you think me pretty?" asked Emily directly.

"Why, it hadn't occurred to me to wonder whether you were pretty or not. Do you think a star should be pretty?"

Emily reflected.

"No," she said finally, "the word doesn't suit a star."

"I perceive you are an artist in words. Of course it doesn't. Stars are prismatic — palpitating — elusive. It is not often we find one made of flesh and blood. I think I'll wait for you."

"Oh, I'm ready to go now," said Emily, standing up.

"H'm. That wasn't what I meant. Never mind. Come along, Star — if you don't mind walking a bit slowly. I'll take you back from the wilderness at least — I don't know that I'll venture to Wyther Grange tonight. I don't want Aunt Nancy to take the edge off you. And so you don't think me handsome?"

"I didn't say so," cried Emily.

"Not in words. But I can read your thoughts, Star — it won't ever do to think anything you don't want me to know. The gods gave me that gift — when they kept back everything else I wanted. You don't think me handsome but you think me nice. Do you think you are pretty yourself?"

"A little — since Aunt Nancy lets me wear my bang," said Emily frankly.

Jarback Priest made a grimace.

"Don't call it by such a name. It's a worse name even than bustle. Bangs and bustles — they hurt me. I like that black wave breaking on your

white brows — but don't call it a bang — ever again."

"It is a very ugly word. I never use it in my poetry, of course."

Whereby Dean Priest discovered that Emily wrote poetry. He also discovered pretty nearly everything else about her in that charming walk back to Priest Pond in the fir-scented dusk, with Tweed walking between them, his nose touching his master's hand softly every now and then, while the robins in the trees above them whistled blithely in the afterlight.

With nine out of ten people Emily was secretive and reserved, but Dean Priest was sealed of her tribe and she divined it instantly. He had a right to the inner sanctuary and she yielded it unquestionably. She talked to him freely.

Besides, she felt alive again — she felt the wonderful thrill of living again, after that dreadful space when she had seemed to hang between life and death. She felt, as she wrote to her father afterwards, "as if a little bird was singing in my heart." And oh, how good the green sod felt under her feet!

She told him all about herself and her doings and beings. Only one thing she did not tell him — her worry over Ilse's mother. That she could not speak of to any one. Aunt Nancy need not have been frightened that she would carry tales to New Moon.

"I wrote a whole poem yesterday when it rained and I couldn't get out," she said. "It began,

I sit by the western window
That looks on Malvern Bay—"

"Am I not to hear the whole of it?" asked Dean, who knew perfectly well that Emily was hoping that he would ask it.

Emily delightedly repeated the whole poem. When she came to the two lines she liked best in it,

Perhaps in those wooded islands
That gem the proud bay's breast —

she looked up sidewise at him to see if he admired them. But he was walking with eyes cast down and an absent expression on his face. She felt a little disappointed.

“H’m,” he said when she had finished. “You’re twelve, didn’t you say? When you’re ten years older I shouldn’t wonder — but let’s not think of it.”

“Father Cassidy told me to keep on,” cried Emily.

“There was no need of it. You would keep on anyhow — you have the itch for writing born in you. It’s quite incurable. What are you going to do with it?”

“I think I shall be either a great poetess or a distinguished novelist,” said Emily reflectively.

“Having only to choose,” remarked Dean dryly. “Better be a novelist — I hear it pays better.”

“What worries me about writing novels,” confided Emily “is the love talk in them. I’m sure I’ll never be able to write it. I’ve tried,” she concluded candidly, “and I can’t think of anything to say.”

“Don’t worry about that. I’ll teach you some day,” said Dean.

“Will you — will you really?” Emily was very eager. “I’ll be so obliged if you will. I think I could manage everything else very nicely.”

“It’s a bargain then — don’t forget it. And don’t go looking for another teacher, mind. What do you find to do at the Grange besides writing poetry? Are you never lonesome with only those two old survivals?”

“No. I enjoy my own company,” said Emily gravely.

“You would. Stars are said to dwell apart, anyhow, sufficient unto themselves — ensphered in their own light. Do you really like Aunt Nancy?”

“Yes, indeed. She is very kind to me. She doesn’t make me wear sunbonnets and she lets me go barefooted in the forenoons. But I have to wear my buttoned boots in the afternoons, and I hate buttoned boots.”

“Naturally. You should be shod with sandals of moonshine and wear a scarf of sea-mist with a few fireflies caught in it over your hair. Star, you

don't look like your father, but you suggest him in several ways. Do you look like your mother? I never saw her."

All at once Emily smiled demurely. A real sense of humour was born in her at that moment. Never again was she to feel quite so unmixedly tragic over anything.

"No," she said, "it's only my eyelashes and smile that are like Mother's. But I've got Father's forehead, and Grandma Starr's hair and eyes, and Great-Uncle George's nose, and Aunt Nancy's hands, and Cousin Susan's elbows, and Great-great-Grandmother Murray's ankles, and Grandfather Murray's eyebrows."

Dean Priest laughed.

"A rag-bag — as we all are," he said. "But your soul is your own, and fire-new, I'll swear to that."

"Oh, I'm so glad I like you," said Emily impulsively. "It would be hateful to think any one I didn't like had saved my life. I don't mind your saving it a bit."

"That's good. Because you see your life belongs to me henceforth. Since I saved it it's mine. Never forget that."

Emily felt an odd sensation of rebellion. She didn't fancy the idea of her life belonging to anybody but herself — not even to anybody she liked as much as she liked Dean Priest. Dean, watching her, saw it and smiled his whimsical smile that always seemed to have so much more in it than mere smiling.

"That doesn't quite suit you? Ah, you see one pays a penalty when one reaches out for something beyond the ordinary. One pays for it in bondage of some kind or other. Take your wonderful aster home and keep it as long as you can. It has cost you your freedom."

He was laughing — he was only joking, of course — yet Emily felt as if a cobweb fetter had been flung round her. Yielding to a sudden impulse she flung the big aster on the ground and set her foot on it.

Dean Priest looked on amusedly. His strange eyes were very kindly as he met hers.

“You rare thing — you vivid thing — you starry thing! We are going to be good friends — we are good friends. I’m coming up to Wyther Grange tomorrow to see those descriptions you’ve written of Caroline and my venerable Aunt in your Jimmy-book. I feel sure they’re delicious. Here’s your path — don’t go roaming again so far from civilization. Goodnight, My Star of the Morning.”

He stood at the crossroad and watched her out of sight.

“What a child!” he muttered. “I’ll never forget her eyes as she lay there on the edge of death — the dauntless little soul — and I’ve never seen a creature who seemed so full of sheer joy in existence. She is Douglas Starr’s child — he never called me Jarback.”

He stooped and picked up the broken aster. Emily’s heel had met it squarely and it was badly crushed. But he put it away that night between the leaves of an old volume of Jane Eyre, where he had marked a verse,

All glorious rose upon my sight
That child of shower and gleam.

The Vow of Emily

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In Dean Priest Emily found, for the first time since her father had died, a companion who could fully sympathize. She was always at her best with him, with a delightful feeling of being understood. To love is easy and therefore common — but to understand — how rare it is! They roamed wonderlands of fancy together in the magic August days that followed upon Emily's adventure on the bay shore, talked together of exquisite, immortal things, and were at home with "nature's old felicities" of which Wordsworth so happily speaks.

Emily showed him all the poetry and "descriptions" in her "Jimmy-book" and he read them gravely, and, exactly as Father had done, made little criticisms that did not hurt her because she knew they were just. As for Dean Priest, a certain secret well-spring of fancy that had long seemed dry bubbled up in him sparkingly again.

"You make me believe in fairies, whether I will or no," he told her, "and that means youth. As long as you believe in fairies you can't grow old."

"But I can't believe in fairies myself," protested Emily sorrowfully. "I wish I could."

"But you are a fairy yourself — or you wouldn't be able to find fairyland. You can't buy a ticket there, you know. Either the fairies themselves give you your passport at your christening — or they don't. That is all there is to it."

"Isn't 'Fairyland' the loveliest word?" said Emily dreamily.

"Because it means everything the human heart desires," said Dean.

When he talked to her Emily felt as if she were looking into some enchanted mirror where her own dreams and secret hopes were reflected back to her with added charm. If Dean Priest were a cynic he showed no cynicism to Emily. But in her company he was not a cynic; he had shed his

years and became a boy again with a boy's untainted visions. She loved him for the world he opened to her view.

There was such fun in him, too — such sly, surprising fun. He told her jokes — he made her laugh. He told her strange old tales of forgotten gods who were very beautiful — of court festivals and the bridals of kings. He seemed to have the history of the whole world at his fingers' ends. He described things to her in unforgettable phrases as they walked by the bay shore or sat in the overgrown, shadowy old garden of Wyther Grange. When he spoke of Athens as “the City of the Violet Crown” Emily realized afresh what magic is made when the right words are wedded; and she loved to think of Rome as “the City of the Seven Hills.” Dean had been in Rome and Athens — and almost everywhere else.

“I didn't know any one ever talked as you do except in books,” she told him.

Dean laughed — with a little note of bitterness that was so often present in his laughter — though less often with Emily than with other people. It was really his laughter that had won Dean his reputation for cynicism. People so often felt that he was laughing at them instead of with them.

“I've had only books for companions most of my life,” he said. “Is it any wonder I talk like them?”

“I'm sure I'll like studying history after this,” said Emily; “except Canadian History. I'll never like it — it's so dull. Not just at the first, when we belonged to France and there was plenty of fighting, but after that it's nothing but politics.”

“The happiest countries, like the happiest women, have no history,” said Dean.

“I hope I'll have a history,” cried Emily. “I want a thrilling career.”

“We all do, foolish one. Do you know what makes history? Pain — and shame — and rebellion — and bloodshed and heartache. Star, ask yourself how many hearts ached — and broke — to make those crimson and purple pages in history that you find so enthralling. I told you the story of Leonidas and his Spartans the other day. They had mothers, sisters and

sweethearts. If they could have fought a bloodless battle at the polls wouldn't it have been better — if not so dramatic.”

“I — can't — feel — that way,” said Emily confusedly. She was not old enough to think or say, as she would say ten years later, “The heroes of Thermopylae have been an inspiration to humanity for centuries. What squabble around a ballot-box will ever be that?”

“And, like all female creatures, you form your opinions by your feelings. Well, hope for your thrilling career — but remember that if there is to be drama in your life somebody must pay the piper in the coin of suffering. If not you — then someone else.”

“Oh, no, I wouldn't like that.”

“Then be content with fewer thrills. What about your tumble over the bank down there? That came near being a tragedy. What if I hadn't found you?”

“But you did find me,” cried Emily. “I like near escapes — after they're over,” she added. “If everybody had always been happy there'd be nothing to read about.”

Tweed made a third in their rambles and Emily grew very fond of him, without losing any of her loyalty to the pussy folk.

“I like cats with one part of my mind and dogs with another part,” she said.

“I like cats but I never keep one,” Dean said. “They're too exacting — they ask too much. Dogs want only love but cats demand worship. They have never got over the Bubastis habit of godship.”

Emily understood this — he had told her all about old Egypt and the goddess Pasht — but she did not quite agree with him.

“Kittens don't want to be worshipped,” she said. “They just want to be cuddled.”

“By their priestesses — yes. If you had been born on the banks of the Nile five thousand years ago, Emily, you would have been a priestess of Pasht — an adorable, slim, brown creature with a fillet of gold around your black hair and bands of silver on those ankles Aunt Nancy admires,

with dozens of sacred little godlings frisking around you under the palms of the temple court.”

“Oh,” gasped Emily rapturously, “that gave me the flash. And,” she added wonderingly, “just for a moment it made me homesick, too. Why?”

“Why? Because I haven’t a doubt you were just such a priestess in a former incarnation and my words reminded your soul of it. Do you believe in the doctrine of the transmigration of souls, Star? But of course not — brought up by the true-blue Calvinists of New Moon.”

“What does it mean?” asked Emily, and when Dean explained it to her she thought it a very delightful belief but was quite sure Aunt Elizabeth would not approve of it.

“So I won’t believe it — yet,” she said gravely.

Then it all came to an end quite suddenly. It had been taken for granted by all concerned that Emily was to stay at Wyther Grange until the end of August. But in mid-August Aunt Nancy said suddenly to her one day:

“Go home, Emily. I’m tired of you. I like you very well — you’re not stupid and you’re passably pretty and you’ve behaved exceedingly well — tell Elizabeth you do the Murrays credit — but I’m tired of you. Go home.”

Emily’s feelings were mixed. It hurt her to be told Aunt Nancy was tired of her — it would hurt any one. It rankled in her for several days until she thought of a sharp answer she might have made Aunt Nancy and wrote it down in her Jimmy-book. She felt quite as relieved then as if she had really said it.

And she was sorry to leave Wyther Grange; she had grown to love the old beautiful house, with its flavour of hidden secrets — a flavour that was wholly a trick of its architecture, for there had never been anything in it but the simple tale of births and deaths and marriages and everyday living that most houses have. She was sorry to leave the bay shore and the quaint garden and the gazing-ball and the chessy-cat and the Pink Room bed of freedom; and most of all she was sorry to leave Dean Priest. But on the other hand it was delightful to think of going back to New Moon and all the loved ones there — Teddy and his dear whistle, Ilse and her

stimulating comradeship, Perry with his determined reaching up for higher things, Saucy Sal and the new kitten that must be needing proper training now, and the fairy world of the Midsummer Night's Dream. Cousin Jimmy's garden would be in its prime of splendour, the August apples would be ripe. Suddenly, Emily was very ready to go. She packed her little black box jubilantly and found it an excellent chance to work in neatly a certain line from a poem Dean had recently read to her which had captured her fancy.

"Goodbye, proud world, I'm going home," she declaimed feelingly, standing at the top of the long, dark, shining staircase and apostrophizing the row of grim Priest photographs hanging on the wall.

But she was much annoyed over one thing. Aunt Nancy would not give her back the picture Teddy had painted.

"I'm going to keep it," Aunt Nancy said, grinning and shaking her gold tassels. "Some day that picture will be worth something as the early effort of a famous artist."

"I only lent it to you — I told you I only lent it to you," said Emily indignantly.

"I'm an unscrupulous old demon," said Aunt Nancy coolly. "That is what the Priests all call me behind my back. Don't they, Caroline? May as well have the game as the name. I happen to have a fancy for that picture, that's all. I'm going to frame it and hang it here in my parlour. But I'll leave it to you in my will — that and the chessy-cat and the gazing-ball and my gold earrings. Nothing else — I'm not going to leave you a cent of my money — never count on that."

"I don't want it," said Emily loftily. "I'm going to earn heaps of money for myself. But it isn't fair of you to keep my picture. It was given to me."

"I never was fair," said Aunt Nancy. "Was I, Caroline?"

"No," said Caroline shrewishly.

"You see. Now don't make a fuss, Emily. You've been a very good child but I feel that I've done my duty by you for this year. Go back to New Moon and when Elizabeth won't let you do things tell her I always let you. I don't know if it will do any good but try it. Elizabeth, like every one

else related to me, is always wondering what I'm going to do with my money."

Cousin Jimmy came over for Emily. How glad she was to see his kind face with its gentle, elfish eyes and forked beard again! But she felt very badly when she turned to Dean.

"If you like I'll kiss you goodbye," she said chokily.

Emily did not like kissing people. She did not really want to kiss Dean but she liked him so much she thought she ought to extend all the courtesies to him.

Dean looked down smiling into her face, so young, so pure, so softly curved.

"No, I don't want you to kiss me — yet. And our first kiss mustn't have the flavour of goodbye. It would be a bad omen. Star o' Morning, I'm sorry you're going. But I'll see you again before long. My oldest sister lives in Blair Water, you know, and I feel a sudden access[???] of brotherly affection towards her. I seem to see myself visiting her very often henceforth. In the meantime remember you have promised to write me every week. And I'll write you."

"Nice fat letters," coaxed Emily. "I love fat letters."

"Fat! They'll be positively corpulent, Star. Now, I'm not even going to say goodbye. Let's make a pact, Star. We'll never say goodbye to each other. We'll just smile and go."

Emily made a gallant effort — smiled — and went. Aunt Nancy and Caroline returned to the back parlour and their cribbage. Dean Priest whistled for Tweed and went to the bay shore. He was so lonely that he laughed at himself.

Emily and Cousin Jimmy had so much to talk of that the drive home seemed very short.

New Moon was white in the evening sunshine which also lay with exceeding mellowness on the grey old barns. The Three Princesses, shooting up against the silvery sky, were as remote and princessly as ever. The old gulf was singing away down over the fields.

Aunt Laura came running out to meet them, her lovely blue eyes shining with pleasure. Aunt Elizabeth was in the cookhouse preparing supper and only shook hands with Emily, but looked a trifle less grim and stately than usual, and she had made Emily's favourite cream-puffs for supper. Perry was hanging about barefooted and sunburned, to tell her all the gossip of kittens and calves and little pigs and the new foal. Ilse came swooping over, and Emily discovered she had forgotten how vivid Ilse was — how brilliant her amber eyes, how golden her mane of spun-silk hair, looking more golden than ever under the bright blue silk tam Mrs Simms had bought her in Shrewsbury. As an article of dress, that loud tam made Laura Murray's eyes and sensibilities ache, but its colour certainly did set off Ilse's wonderful hair. She engulfed Emily in a rapturous embrace and quarrelled bitterly with her ten minutes later over the fact that Emily refused to give her Saucy Sal's sole surviving kitten.

"I ought to have it, you doddering hyena," stormed Ilse. "It's as much mine as yours, pig! Our old barn cat is its father."

"Such talk is not decent," said Aunt Elizabeth, pale with horror. "And if you two children are going to quarrel over that kitten I'll have it drowned — remember that."

Ilse was finally appeased by Emily's offering to let her name the kitten and have a half-interest in it. Ilse named it Daffodil. Emily did not think this suitable, since, from the fact of Cousin Jimmy referring to it as Little Tommy, she suspected it was of the sterner sex. But rather than again provoke Aunt Elizabeth's wrath by discussing tabooed subjects, she agreed.

"I can call it Daff," she thought. "That sounds more masculine."

The kitten was a delicate bit of striped greyness that reminded Emily of her dear lost Mikes. And it smelled so nice — of warmth and clean furriness, with whiffs of the clover hay where Saucy Sal had made her mother-nest.

After supper she heard Teddy's whistle in the old orchard — the same enchanting call. Emily flew out to greet him — after all, there was nobody just like Teddy in the world. They had an ecstatic scamper up to the Tansy

Patch to see a new puppy that Dr Burnley had given Teddy. Mrs Kent did not seem very glad to see Emily — she was colder and more remote than ever, and she sat and watched the two children playing with the chubby little pup with a smouldering fire in her dark eyes that made Emily vaguely uncomfortable whenever she happened to glance up and encounter it. Never before had she sensed Mrs Kent's dislike for her so keenly as that night.

"Why doesn't your mother like me?" she asked Teddy bluntly, when they carried little Leo to the barn for the night.

"Because I do," said Teddy briefly. "She doesn't like anything I like. I'm afraid she'll poison Leo very soon. I — I wish she wasn't so fond of me," he burst out, in the beginning of a revolt against this abnormal jealousy of love, which he felt rather than understood to be a fetter that was becoming galling. "She says she won't let me take up Latin and Algebra this year — you know Miss Brownell said I might — because I'm not to go to college. She says she can't bear to part from me — ever. I don't care about the Latin and stuff — but I want to learn to be an artist — I want to go away some day to the schools where they teach that. She won't let me — she hates my pictures now because she thinks I like them better than her. I don't — I love Mother — she's awful sweet and good to me every other way. But she thinks I do — and she's burned some of them. I know she has. They're missing from the barn wall and I can't find them anywhere. If she does anything to Leo — I'll — I'll hate her."

"Tell her that," said Emily coolly, with some of the Murray shrewdness coming uppermost in her. "She doesn't know that you know she poisoned Smoke and Buttercup. Tell her you do know it and that if she does anything to Leo you won't love her any more. She'll be so frightened of your not loving her that she won't meddle with Leo — I know. Tell her gently — don't hurt her feelings — but tell her. It will," concluded Emily, with a killing imitation of Aunt Elizabeth delivering an ultimatum, "be better for all concerned."

"I believe I will," said Teddy, much impressed. "I can't have Leo disappear like my cats did — he's the only dog I've ever had and I've

always wanted a dog. Oh, Emily, I'm glad you're back!"

It was very nice to be told this — especially by Teddy. Emily went home to New Moon happily. In the old kitchen the candles were lighted and their flames were dancing in the winds of the August night blowing through door and window.

"I suppose you'll not like candles very well, Emily, after being used to lamps at Wyther Grange," said Aunt Laura with a little sigh. It was one of the bitter, small things in Laura Murray's life that Elizabeth's tyranny extended to candles.

Emily looked around her thoughtfully. One candle sputtered and bobbed at her as if greeting her. One, with a long wick, glowed and smouldered like a sulky little demon. One had a tiny flame — a sly, meditative candle. One swayed with a queer fiery grace in the draught from the door. One burned with a steady upright flame like a faithful soul.

"I — don't know — Aunt Laura," she answered slowly. "You can be — friends — with candles. I believe I like the candles best after all."

Aunt Elizabeth, coming in from the cookhouse, heard her. Something like pleasure gleamed in her gulf-blue eyes.

"You have some sense in you," she said.

"That's the second compliment she has paid me," thought Emily.

"I think Emily has grown taller since she went to Wyther Grange," Aunt Laura said, looking at her rather wistfully.

Aunt Elizabeth, snuffing the candles, glanced sharply over her glasses.

"I can't see it," she said. "Her dress is just the same length on her."

"I'm sure she has," persisted Laura.

Cousin Jimmy, to settle the dispute, measured Emily by the sitting-room door. She just touched the former mark.

"You see," said Aunt Elizabeth triumphantly, liking to be right even in this small matter.

"She looks — different," said Laura with a sigh.

Laura, after all, was right. Emily had grown, taller and older, in soul, if not in body. It was this change which Laura felt, as close and tender affection swiftly feels. The Emily who returned from Wyther Grange was

not the Emily who had gone there. She was no longer wholly the child. Aunt Nancy's family histories over which she had pondered, her enduring anguish over the story of Ilse's mother, that terrible hour when she had lain cheek by jowl with death on the cliffs of the bay shore, her association with Dean Priest, all had combined to mature her intelligence and her emotions. When she went to the garret next morning and pulled out her precious little bundle of manuscripts to read them lovingly over she was amazed and rather grieved to find that they were not half so good as she had believed they were. Some of them were positively silly, she thought; she was ashamed of them — so ashamed that she smuggled them down to the cookhouse stove and burned them, much to Aunt Elizabeth's annoyance when she came to prepare dinner and found the fire-box all choked up with charred paper.

Emily no longer wondered that Miss Brownell had made fun of them — though this did not mellow her bitterness of remembrance in regard to that lady in any degree. The rest she put back on the sofa shelf, including "The Child of the Sea," which still impressed her as fairly good, though not just the wonderful composition she had once deemed it. She felt that many passages could be rewritten to their advantage. Then she immediately began writing a new poem, "On Returning Home After Weeks' Absence." As everything and everybody connected with New Moon had to be mentioned in this poem it promised to be quite long and to furnish agreeable occupation for spare minutes in many weeks to come. It was very good to be home again.

"There is no place just like dear New Moon," thought Emily.

One thing that marked her return — one of those little household "epochs" that make a keener impression on the memory and imagination than perhaps their real importance warrants — was the fact that she was given a room of her own. Aunt Elizabeth had found her unshared slumber too sweet a thing to be again surrendered. She decided that she could not put up any longer with a squirming bedfellow who asked unearthly questions at any hour of the night she took it into her head to do so.

So, after a long conference with Laura, it was settled that Emily was to have her mother's room — the "lookout" as it was called, though it was not really a lookout. But it occupied the place in New Moon, looking over the front door to the garden, that the real lookouts did in other Blair Water houses, so it went by that name. It had been prepared for Emily's occupancy in her absence and when bedtime came on the first evening of her return Aunt Elizabeth curtly told her that henceforth she was to have her mother's room.

"All to myself?" exclaimed Emily.

"Yes. We will expect you to take care of it yourself and keep it very tidy."

"It has never been slept in since the night before your mother — went away," said Aunt Laura, with a queer sound in her voice — a sound of which Aunt Elizabeth disapproved.

"Your mother," she said, looking coldly at Emily over the flame of the candle — an attitude that gave a rather gruesome effect to her aquiline features— "ran away — flouted her family and broke her father's heart. She was a silly, ungrateful, disobedient girl. I hope you will never disgrace your family by such conduct."

"Oh, Aunt Elizabeth," said Emily breathlessly, "when you hold the candle down like that it makes your face look just like a corpse! Oh, it's so interesting."

Aunt Elizabeth turned and led the way upstairs in grim silence. There was no use in wasting perfectly good admonitions on a child like this.

Left alone in her lookout, lighted dimly by the one small candle, Emily gazed about her with keen and thrilling interest. She could not get into bed until she had explored every bit of it. The room was very old-fashioned, like all New Moon rooms. The walls were papered with a design of slender gilt diamonds enclosing golden stars and hung with worked woollen mottoes and pictures that had been "supplements" in the girlhood of her aunts. One of them, hanging over the head of the bed, represented two guardian angels. In its day this had been much admired but Emily looked at it with distaste.

“I don’t like feather wings on angels,” she said decidedly. “Angels should have rainbowy wings.”

On the floor was a pretty homespun carpet and round braided rugs. There was a high black bedstead with carved posts, a fat featherbed, and an Irish chain quilt, but, as Emily was glad to see, no curtains. A little table, with funny claw-feet and brass-knobbed drawers, stood by the window, which was curtained with muslin frills; one of the windowpanes contorted the landscape funnily, making a hill where no hill was. Emily liked this — she couldn’t have told why, but it was really because it gave the pane an individuality of its own. An oval mirror in a tarnished gilt frame hung above the table; Emily was delighted to find she could see herself in it — “all but my boots” — without craning or tipping it. “And it doesn’t twist my face or turn my complexion green,” she thought happily. Two high-backed, black chairs with horsehair seats, a little washstand with a blue basin and pitcher, and a faded ottoman with woollen roses cross-stitched on it, completed the furnishing. On the little mantel were vases full of dried and coloured grasses and a fascinating pot-bellied bottle filled with West Indian shells. On either side were lovable little cupboards with leaded-glass doors like those in the sitting-room. Underneath was a small fireplace.

“I wonder if Aunt Elizabeth will ever let me have a little fire here,” thought Emily.

The room was full of that indefinable charm found in all rooms where the pieces of furniture, whether old or new, are well acquainted with each other and the walls and floors are on good terms. Emily felt it all over her as she flitted about examining everything. This was her room — she loved it already — she felt perfectly at home.

“I belong here,” she breathed happily.

She felt deliciously near to her mother — as if Juliet Starr had suddenly become real to her. It thrilled her to think that her mother had probably crocheted the lace cover on the round pincushion on the table. And that flat, black jar of potpourri on the mantel — her mother must have compounded it. When Emily lifted the lid a faint spicy odour floated out.

The souls of all the roses that had bloomed through many olden summers at New Moon seemed to be prisoned there in a sort of flower purgatory. Something in the haunting, mystical, elusive odour gave Emily the flash — and her room had received its consecration.

There was a picture of her mother hanging over the mantel — a large daguerreotype taken when she was a little girl. Emily looked at it lovingly. She had the picture of her mother which her father had left, taken after their marriage. But when Aunt Elizabeth had brought that from Maywood to New Moon she had hung it in the parlour where Emily seldom saw it. This picture, in her bedroom, of the golden-haired, rose-cheeked girl, was all her own. She could look at it — talk to it at will.

“Oh, Mother,” she said, “what did you think of when you were a little girl here like me? I wish I could have known you then. And to think nobody has ever slept here since that last night you did before you ran away with Father. Aunt Elizabeth says you were wicked to do it but I don’t think you were. It wasn’t as if you were running away with a stranger. Anyway, I’m glad you did, because if you hadn’t there wouldn’t have been any me.”

Emily, very glad that there was an Emily, opened her lookout window as high as it would go, got into bed and drifted off to sleep, feeling a happiness that was so deep as to be almost pain as she listened to the sonorous sweep of the night wind among the great trees in Lofty John’s bush. When she wrote to her father a few days later she began the letter, “Dear Father and Mother.”

“And I’ll always write the letter to you as well as Father after this, Mother. I’m sorry I left you out so long. But you didn’t seem real till that night I came home. I made the bed beautifully next morning — Aunt Elizabeth didn’t find a bit of fault with it — and I dusted everything — and when I went out I knelt down and kissed the doorstep. I didn’t think Aunt Elizabeth saw me but she did and said had I gone crazy. Why does Aunt Elizabeth think any one is crazy who does something she never does? I said ‘No, it’s only because I love my room so much’ and she sniffed and said ‘You’d better love your God.’ But so I do, dear Father — and Mother

— and I love Him better than ever since I have my dear room. I can see all over the garden from it and into Lofty John's bush and one little bit of the Blair Water through the gap in the trees where the Yesterday Road runs. I like to go to bed early now. I love to lie all alone in my own room and make poetry and think out descriptions of things while I look through the open window at the stars and the nice, big, kind, quiet trees in Lofty John's bush.

“Oh, Father dear and Mother, we are going to have a new teacher. Miss Brownell is not coming back. She is going to be married and Ilse says that when her father heard it he said ‘God help the man.’ And the new teacher is a Mr Carpenter. Ilse saw him when he came to see her father about the school — because Dr Burnley is a trustee this year — and she says he has bushy grey hair and whiskers. He is married, too, and is going to live in that little old house down in the hollow below the school. It seems so funny to think of a teacher having a wife and whiskers.

“I am glad to be home. But I miss Dean and the gazing-ball. Aunt Elizabeth looked very cross when she saw my bang but didn't say anything. Aunt Laura says just to keep quiet and go on wearing it. But I don't feel comfortable going against Aunt Elizabeth so I have combed it all back except a little fringe. I don't feel quite comfortable about it even yet, but I have to put up with being a little uncomfortable for the sake of my looks. Aunt Laura says bustles are going out of style so I'll never be able to have one but I don't care because I think they're ugly. Rhoda Stuart will be cross because she was just longing to be old enough to wear a bustle. I hope I'll be able to have a gin-jar all to myself when the weather gets cold. There is a row of gin-jars on the high shelf in the cookhouse.

“Teddy and I had the nicest adventure yesterday evening. We are going to keep it a secret from everybody — partly because it was so nice, and partly because we think we'd get a fearful scolding for one thing we did.

“We went up to the Disappointed House, and we found one of the boards on the windows loose. So we pried it off and crawled in and went all over the house. It is lathed but not plastered, and the shavings are lying all over the floors just as the carpenters left them years ago. It seemed

more disappointed than ever. I just felt like crying. There was a dear little fireplace in one room so we went to work and kindled a fire in it with shavings and pieces of boards (this is the thing we would be scolded for, likely) and then sat before it on an old carpenter's bench and talked. We decided that when we grew up we would buy the Disappointed House and live here together. Teddy said he supposed we'd have to get married, but I thought maybe we could find a way to manage without going to all that bother. Teddy will paint pictures and I will write poetry and we will have toast and bacon and marmalade every morning for breakfast — just like Wyther Grange — but never porridge. And we'll always have lots of nice things to eat in the pantry and I'll make lots of jam and Teddy is always going to help me wash the dishes and we'll hang the gazing-ball from the middle of the ceiling in the fireplace room — because likely Aunt Nancy will be dead by then.

“When the fire burned out we jammed the board into place in the window and came away. Every now and then to-day Teddy would say to me “Toast and bacon and marmalade” in the most mysterious tones and Ilse and Perry are wild because they can't find out what he means.

“Cousin Jimmy has got Jimmy Joe Belle to help with the harvest. Jimmy Joe Belle comes from over Derry Pond way. There are a great many French there and when a French girl marries they call her mostly by her husband's first name instead of Mrs like the English do. If a girl named Mary marries a man named Leon she will always be called Mary Leon after that. But in Jimmy Joe Belle's case, it is the other way and he is called by his wife's names. I asked Cousin Jimmy why, and he said it was because Jimmy Joe was a poor stick of a creature and Belle wore the britches. But still I don't understand. Jimmy Joe wears britches himself — that means trousers — and why should he be called Jimmy Joe Bell instead of her being called Belle Jimmy Joe just because she wears them too! I won't rest till I find out.

“Cousin Jimmy's garden is splendid now. The tiger lilies are out. I am trying to love them because nobody seems to like them at all but deep

down in my heart I know I love the late roses best. You just can't help loving the roses best.

"Ilse and I hunted all over the old orchard to-day for a four-leaved clover and couldn't find one. Then I found one in a clump of clover by the dairy steps tonight when I was straining the milk and never thinking of clovers. Cousin Jimmy says that is the way luck always comes, and it is no use to look for it.

"It is lovely to be with Ilse again. We have only fought twice since I came home. I am going to try not to fight with Ilse any more because I don't think it is dignified, although quite interesting. But it is hard not to because even when I keep quiet and don't say a word Ilse thinks that's a way of fighting and gets madder and says worse things than ever. Aunt Elizabeth says it always takes two to make a quarrel but she doesn't know Ilse as I do. Ilse called me a sneaking albatross to-day. I wonder how many animals are left to call me. She never repeats the same one twice. I wish she wouldn't clapper-claw Perry so much. (Clapper-claw is a word I learnt from Aunt Nancy. Very striking, I think.) It seems as if she couldn't bear him. He dared Teddy to jump from the henhouse roof across to the pighouse roof. Teddy wouldn't. He said he would try it if it had to be done or would do anybody any good but he wasn't going to do it just to show off. Perry did it and landed safe. If he hadn't he might have broken his neck. Then he bragged about it and said Teddy was afraid and Ilse turned red as a beet and told him to shut up or she would bite his snout off. She can't bear to have anything said against Teddy, but I guess he can take care of himself.

"Ilse can't study for the Entrance either. Her father won't let her. But she says she doesn't care. She says she's going to run away when she gets a little older and study for the stage. That sounds wicked, but interesting.

"I felt very queer and guilty when I saw Ilse first, because I knew about her mother. I don't know why I felt guilty because I had nothing to do with it. The feeling is wearing away a little now but I am so unhappy by spells over it. I wish I could either forget it altogether or find out the rights of it. Because I am sure nobody knows them.

“I had a letter from Dean to-day. He writes lovely letters — just as if I was grown up. He sent me a little poem he had cut out of a paper called The Fringed Gentian. He said it made him think of me. It is all lovely but I like the last verse best of all. This is it:

Then whisper, blossom, in thy sleep
How I may upward climb
The Alpine Path, so hard, so steep,
That leads to heights sublime.
How I may reach that far-off goal
Of true and honoured fame
And write upon its shining scroll
A woman’s humble name.

“When I read that the flash came, and I took a sheet of paper — I forgot to tell you Cousin Jimmy gave me a little box of paper and envelopes — on the sly — and I wrote on it:

I, Emily Byrd Starr, do solemnly vow this day that I will climb the Alpine Path and write my name on the scroll of fame.

“Then I put it in the envelope and sealed it up and wrote on it The Vow of Emily Byrd Starr, aged 12 years and 3 months, and put it away on the sofa shelf in the garret.

“I am writing a murder story now and I am trying to feel how a man would feel who was a murderer. It is creepy, but thrilling. I almost feel as if I had murdered somebody.

“Good night, dear Father and Mother.

“Your lovingest daughter, Emily,

“P.S. I have been wondering how I’ll sign my name when I grow up and print my pieces. I don’t know which would be best — Emily Byrd Starr in full or Emily B. Starr, or E. B. Starr, or E. Byrd Starr. Sometimes I think I’ll have a nom-de-plume — that is, another name you pick for yourself. It’s in my dictionary among the “French phrases” at the back. If I did that then I could hear people talking of my pieces right before me,

never suspecting, and say just what they really thought of them. That would be interesting but perhaps not always comfortable. I think I'll be,
"E. Byrd Starr."

A Weaver of Dreams

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It took Emily several weeks to make up her mind whether she liked Mr Carpenter or not. She knew she did not dislike him, not even though his first greeting, shot at her on the opening day of school in a gruff voice, accompanied by a startling lift of his spiky grey brows was, “So you’re the girl that writes poetry, eh? Better stick to your needle and duster. Too many fools in the world trying to write poetry and failing. I tried it myself once. Got better sense now.”

“You don’t keep your nails clean,” thought Emily.

But he upset every kind of school tradition so speedily and thoroughly that Ilse, who gloried in upsetting things and hated routine, was the only scholar that liked him from the start. Some never liked him — the Rhoda Stuart type for example — but most of them came to it after they got used to never being used to anything. And Emily finally decided that she liked him tremendously.

Mr Carpenter was somewhere between forty and fifty — a tall man, with an upstanding shock of bushy grey hair, bristling grey moustache and eyebrows, a truculent beard, bright blue eyes out of which all his wild life had not yet burned the fire, and a long, lean, greyish face, deeply lined. He lived in a little two-roomed house below the school with a shy mouse of a wife. He never talked of his past or offered any explanation of the fact that at his age he had no better profession than teaching a district school for a pittance of salary, but the truth leaked out after a while; for Prince Edward Island is a small province and everybody in it knows something about everybody else. So eventually Blair Water people, and even the school children, understood that Mr Carpenter had been a brilliant student in his youth and had had his eye on the ministry. But at college he had got in with a “fast set” — Blair Water people nodded heads slowly and whispered the dreadful phrase portentously — and the fast set had ruined him. He

“took to drink” and went to the dogs generally. And the upshot of it all was that Francis Carpenter, who had led his class in his first and second years at McGill, and for whom his teachers had predicted a great career, was a country schoolteacher at forty-five with no prospect of ever being anything else. Perhaps he was resigned to it — perhaps not. Nobody ever knew, not even the brown mouse of a wife. Nobody in Blair Water cared — he was a good teacher, and that was all that mattered. Even if he did go on occasional “sprees” he always took Saturday for them and was sober enough by Monday. Sober, and especially dignified, wearing a rusty black frock-coat which he never put on any other day of the week. He did not invite pity and he did not pose as a tragedy. But sometimes, when Emily looked at his face, bent over the arithmetic problems of Blair Water School, she felt horribly sorry for him without in the least understanding why.

He had an explosive temper which generally burst into flame at least once a day, and then he would storm about wildly for a few minutes, tugging at his beard, imploring heaven to grant him patience, abusing everybody in general and the luckless object of his wrath in particular. But these tempers never lasted long. In a few minutes Mr Carpenter would be smiling as graciously as a sun bursting through a storm-cloud on the very pupil he had been rating. Nobody seemed to cherish any grudge because of his scoldings. He never said any of the biting things Miss Brownell was wont to say, which rankled and festered for weeks; his hail of words fell alike on just and unjust and rolled off harmlessly.

He could take a joke on himself in perfect good nature. “Do you hear me? Do you hear me, sirrah?” he bellowed to Perry Miller one day. “Of course I hear you,” retorted Perry coolly, “they could hear you in Charlottetown.” Mr Carpenter stared for a moment, then broke into a great, jolly laugh.

His methods of teaching were so different from Miss Brownell’s that the Blair Water pupils at first felt as if he had stood them on their heads. Miss Brownell had been a martinet for order. Mr Carpenter never tried to keep order apparently. But somehow he kept the children so busy that they

had no time to do mischief. He taught history tempestuously for a month, making his pupils play the different characters and enact the incidents. He never bothered any one to learn dates — but the dates stuck in the memory just the same. If, as Mary Queen of Scots, you were beheaded by the school axe, kneeling blindfolded at the doorstep, with Perry Miller, wearing a mask made out of a piece of Aunt Laura's old black silk, for executioner, wondering what would happen if he brought the axe down too hard, you did not forget the year it happened; and if you fought the battle of Waterloo all over the school playground, and heard Teddy Kent shouting, "Up, Guards and at 'em!" as he led the last furious charge you remembered 1815 without half trying to.

Next month history would be thrust aside altogether and geography would take its place, when school and playground were mapped out into countries and you dressed up as the animals inhabiting them or traded in various commodities over their rivers and cities. When Rhoda Stuart had cheated you in a bargain in hides, you remembered that she had bought the cargo from the Argentine Republic, and when Perry Miller would not drink any water for a whole hot summer day because he was crossing the Arabian Desert with a caravan of camels and could not find an oasis, and then drank so much that he took terrible cramps and Aunt Laura had to be up all night with him — you did not forget where the said desert was. The trustees were quite scandalized over some of the goings on and felt sure that the children were having too good a time to be really learning anything.

If you wanted to learn Latin and French you had to do it by talking your exercises, not writing them, and on Friday afternoons all lessons were put aside and Mr Carpenter made the children recite poems, make speeches and declaim passages from Shakespeare and the Bible. This was the day Ilse loved. Mr Carpenter pounced on her gift like a starving dog on a bone and drilled her without mercy. They had endless fights and Ilse stamped her foot and called him names while the other pupils wondered why she was not punished for it but at last had to give in and do as he willed. Ilse went to school regularly — something she had never done

before. Mr Carpenter had told her that if she were absent for a day without good excuse she could take no part in the Friday “exercises” and this would have killed her.

One day Mr Carpenter had picked up Teddy’s slate and found a sketch of himself on it, in one of his favourite if not exactly beautiful attitudes. Teddy had labelled it “The Black Death” — half of the pupils of the school having died that day of the Great Plague, and having been carried out on stretchers to the Potter’s Field by the terrified survivors.

Teddy expected a roar of denunciation, for the day before Garrett Marshall had been ground into figurative pulp on being discovered with the picture of a harmless cow on his slate — at least, Garrett said he meant it for a cow. But now this amazing Mr Carpenter only drew his beetling brows together, looked earnestly at Teddy’s slate, put it down on the desk, looked at Teddy, and said,

“I don’t know anything about drawing — I can’t help you, but, by gad, I think hereafter you’d better give up those extra arithmetic problems in the afternoon and draw pictures.”

Whereupon Garrett Marshall went home and told his father that “old Carpenter” wasn’t fair and “made favourites” over Teddy Kent.

Mr Carpenter went up to the Tansy Patch that evening and saw the sketches in Teddy’s old barn-loft studio. Then he went into the house and talked to Mrs Kent. What he said and what she said nobody ever knew. But Mr Carpenter went away looking grim, as if he had met an unexpected match. He took great pains with Teddy’s general school work after that and procured from somewhere certain elementary textbooks on drawing which he gave him, telling him not to take them home — a caution Teddy did not require. He knew quite well that if he did they would disappear as mysteriously as his cats had done. He had taken Emily’s advice and told his mother he would not love her if anything happened to Leo, and Leo flourished and waxed fat and doggy. But Teddy was too gentle at heart and too fond of his mother to make such a threat more than once. He knew she had cried all that night after Mr Carpenter had been there, and prayed on her knees in her little bedroom most of the next day, and looked at him

with bitter, haunting eyes for a week. He wished she was more like other fellows' mothers but they loved each other very much and had dear hours together in the little grey house on the tansy hill. It was only when other people were about that Mrs Kent was queer and jealous.

"She's always lovely when we're alone," Teddy had told Emily.

As for the other boys, Perry Miller was the only one Mr Carpenter bothered much with in the way of speeches — and he was as merciless with him as with Ilse. Perry worked hard to please him and practised his speeches in barn and field — and even by nights in the kitchen loft — until Aunt Elizabeth put a stop to that. Emily could not understand why Mr Carpenter would smile amiably and say, "Very good," when Neddy Gray rattled off a speech glibly, without any expression whatever, and then rage at Perry and denounce him as a dunce and a nincompoop, by gad, because he had failed to give just the proper emphasis on a certain word, or had timed his gesture a fraction of a second too soon.

Neither could she understand why he made red pencil corrections all over her compositions and rated her for split infinitives and too lavish adjectives and strode up and down the aisle and hurled objurgations at her because she didn't know "a good place to stop when she saw it, by gad," and then told Rhoda Stuart and Nan Lee that their compositions were very pretty and gave them back without so much as a mark on them. Yet, in spite of it all, she liked him more and more as time went on and autumn passed and winter came with its beautiful bare-limbed trees, and soft pearl-grey skies that were slashed with rifts of gold in the afternoons, and cleared to a jewelled pageantry of stars over the wide white hills and valleys around New Moon.

Emily shot up so that winter that Aunt Laura had to let down the tucks of her dresses. Aunt Ruth, who had come for a week's visit, said she was outgrowing her strength — consumptive children always did.

"I am not consumptive," Emily said. "The Starrs are tall," she added, with a touch of subtle malice hardly to be looked for in near-thirteen.

Aunt Ruth, who was sensitive in regard to her dumpiness, sniffed.

“It would be well if that were the only thing in which you resemble them,” she said. “How are you getting on in school?”

“Very well. I am the smartest scholar in my class,” answered Emily composedly.

“You conceited child!” said Aunt Ruth.

“I’m not conceited.” Emily looked scornful indignation. “Mr Carpenter said it and he doesn’t flatter. Besides, I can’t help seeing it myself.”

“Well, it is to be hoped you have some brains, because you haven’t much in the way of looks,” said Aunt Ruth. “You’ve no complexion to speak of — and that inky hair around your white face is startling. I see you’re going to be a plain girl.”

“You wouldn’t say that to a grownup person’s face,” said Emily with a deliberate gravity which always exasperated Aunt Ruth because she could not understand it in a child. “I don’t think it would hurt you to be as polite to me as you are to other people.”

“I’m telling you your faults so you may correct them,” said Aunt Ruth frigidly.

“It isn’t my fault that my face is pale and my hair black,” protested Emily. “I can’t correct that.”

“If you were a different girl,” said Aunt Ruth, “I would—”

“But I don’t want to be a different girl,” said Emily decidedly. She had no intention of lowering the Starr flag to Aunt Ruth. “I wouldn’t want to be anybody but myself even if I am plain. Besides,” she added impressively as she turned to go out of the room, “though I may not be very goodlooking now, when I go to heaven I believe I’ll be very beautiful.”

“Some people think Emily quite pretty,” said Aunt Laura, but she did not say it until Emily was out of hearing. She was Murray enough for that.

“I don’t know where they see it,” said Aunt Ruth. “She’s vain and pert and says things to be thought smart. You heard her just now. But the thing I dislike most in her is that she is unchildlike — and deep as the sea. Yes, she is, Laura — deep as the sea. You’ll find it out to your cost one day if

you disregard my warning. She's capable of anything. Sly is no word for it. You and Elizabeth don't keep a tight enough rein over her."

"I've done my best," said Elizabeth stiffly. She herself did think she had been much too lenient with Emily — Laura and Jimmy were two to one — but it nettled her to have Ruth say so.

Uncle Wallace also had an attack of worrying over Emily that winter.

He looked at her one day when he was at New Moon and remarked that she was getting to be a big girl.

"How old are you, Emily?" He asked her that every time he came to New Moon.

"Thirteen in May."

"H'm. What are you going to do with her, Elizabeth?"

"I don't know what you mean," said Aunt Elizabeth coldly — or as coldly as is possible to speak when one is pouring melted tallow into candle-moulds.

"Why, she'll soon be grown up. She can't expect you to provide for her indefinitely—"

"I don't," Emily whispered resentfully under her breath.

"— and it's time we decided what is best to be done for her."

"The Murray women have never had to work out for a living," said Aunt Elizabeth, as if that disposed of the matter.

"Emily is only half Murray," said Wallace. "Besides, times are changing. You and Laura will not live for ever, Elizabeth, and when you are gone New Moon goes to Oliver's Andrew. In my opinion Emily should be fitted to support herself if necessary."

Emily did not like Uncle Wallace but she was very grateful to him at that moment. Whatever his motives were he was proposing the very thing she secretly yearned for.

"I would suggest," said Uncle Wallace, "that she be sent to Queen's Academy to get a teacher's licence. Teaching is a genteel, ladylike occupation. I will do my share in providing for the expense of it."

A blind person might have seen that Uncle Wallace thought this very splendid of himself.

“If you do,” thought Emily, “I’ll pay every cent back to you as soon as I’m able to earn it.”

But Aunt Elizabeth was adamant.

“I do not believe in girls going out into the world,” she said. “I don’t mean Emily to go to Queen’s. I told Mr Carpenter so when he came to see me about her taking up the Entrance work. He was very rude — schoolteachers knew their place better in my father’s time. But I made him understand, I think. I’m rather surprised at you, Wallace. You did not send your own daughter out to work.”

“My daughter had parents to provide for her,” retorted Uncle Wallace pompously. “Emily is an orphan. I imagined from what I had heard about her that she would prefer earning her own living to living on charity.”

“So I would,” cried out Emily. “So I would, Uncle Wallace. Oh, Aunt Elizabeth, please let me study for the Entrance. Please! I’ll pay you back every cent you spend on it — I will indeed. I pledge you my word of honour.”

“It does not happen to be a question of money,” said Aunt Elizabeth in her stateliest manner. “I undertook to provide for you, Emily, and I will do it. When you are older I may send you to the High School in Shrewsbury for a couple of years. I am not decrying education. But you are not going to be a slave to the public — no Murray girl ever was that.”

Emily realizing the uselessness of pleading, went out in the same bitter disappointment she had felt after Mr Carpenter’s visit. Then Aunt Elizabeth looked at Wallace.

“Have you forgotten what came of sending Juliet to Queen’s?” she asked significantly.

If Emily was not allowed to take up the Entrance classes, Perry had no one to say him nay and he went at them with the same dogged determination he showed in all other matters. Perry’s status at New Moon had changed subtly and steadily. Aunt Elizabeth had ceased to refer scornfully to him as “a hired boy.” Even she recognized that though he was still undubitably a hired boy he was not going to remain one, and she no longer objected to Laura’s patching up his ragged bits of clothing, or to

Emily's helping him with his lessons in the kitchen after supper, nor did she growl when Cousin Jimmy began to pay him a certain small wage — though older boys than Perry were still glad to put in the winter months choring for board and lodging in some comfortable home. If a future premier was in the making at New Moon Aunt Elizabeth wanted to have some small share in the making. It was credible and commendable that a boy should have ambitions. A girl was an entirely different matter. A girl's place was at home.

Emily helped Perry work out algebra problems and heard his lessons in French and Latin. She picked up more thus than Aunt Elizabeth would have approved and more still when the Entrance pupils talked those languages in school. It was quite an easy matter for a girl who had once upon a time invented a language of her own. When George Bates, by way of showing off, asked her one day in French — his French, of which Mr Carpenter had once said doubtfully that perhaps God might understand it — "Have you the ink of my grandmother and the shoebrush of my cousin and the umbrella of my aunt's husband in your desk?" Emily retorted quite as glibly and quite as Frenchily, "No, but I have the pen of your father and the cheese of the innkeeper and the towel of your uncle's maidservant in my basket."

To console herself for her disappointment in regard to the Entrance class Emily wrote more poetry than ever. It was especially delightful to write poetry on a winter evening when the storm winds howled without and heaped the garden and orchard with big ghostly drifts, starred over with rabbits' candles. She also wrote several stories — desperate love affairs wherein she struggled heroically against the difficulties of affectionate dialogue; tales of bandits and pirates — Emily liked these because there was no necessity for bandits and pirates to converse lovingly; tragedies of earls and countesses whose conversation she dearly loved to pepper with scraps of French; and a dozen other subjects she didn't know anything about. She also meditated beginning a novel but decided it would be too hard to get enough paper for it. The letterbills were all done now and the Jimmy-books were not big enough, though a

new one always appeared mysteriously in her school basket when the old one was almost full. Cousin Jimmy seemed to have an uncanny prescience of the proper time — that was part of his Jimmyness.

Then one night, as she lay in her lookout bed and watched a full moon gleaming lustroously from a cloudless sky across the valley, she had a sudden dazzling idea.

She would send her latest poem to the Charlottetown Enterprise.

The Enterprise had a Poet's Corner where "original" verses were frequently printed. Privately Emily thought her own were quite as good — as probably they were, for most of the Enterprise "poems" were sad trash.

Emily was so excited over the idea that she could not sleep for the greater part of the night — and didn't want to. It was glorious to lie there, thrilling in the darkness, and picture the whole thing out. She saw her verses in print signed E. Byrd Starr — she saw Aunt Laura's eyes shining with pride — she saw Mr Carpenter pointing them out to strangers—"the work of a pupil of mine, by gad" — she saw all her schoolmates envying her or admiring, according to type — she saw herself with one foot at least firmly planted on the ladder of fame — one hill at least of the Alpine Path crested, with a new and glorious prospect opening therefrom.

Morning came. Emily went to school, so absentminded because of her secret that she did badly in everything and was raged at by Mr Carpenter. But it all slipped off her like the proverbial water off a duck's back. Her body was in Blair Water school but her spirit was in kingdoms empyreal.

As soon as school was out she betook herself to the garret with half a sheet of bluelined notepaper. Very painstakingly she copied down the poem, being especially careful to dot every i and cross every t. She wrote it on both sides of the paper, being in blissful ignorance of any taboo thereon. Then she read it aloud delightedly, not omitting the title Evening Dreams. There was one line in it she tasted two or three times:

The haunting elfin music of the air.

"I think that line is very good," said Emily. "I wonder now how I happened to think of it."

She mailed her poem the next day and lived in a delicious mystic rapture until the following Saturday. When the Enterprise came she opened it with tremulous eagerness and ice-cold fingers, and turned to the Poet's Corner. Now for her great moment!

There was not a sign of an Evening Dream about it!

Emily threw down the Enterprise and fled to the garret dormer where, face downward on the old hair-cloth sofa, she wept out her bitterness of disappointment. She drained the draught of failure to the very dregs. It was horribly real and tragic to her. She felt exactly as if she had been slapped in the face. She was crushed in the very dust of humiliation and was sure she could never rise again.

How thankful she was that she hadn't told Teddy anything about it — she had been so strongly tempted to, and only refrained because she didn't want to spoil the dramatic surprise of the moment when she would show him the verses with her name signed to them. She had told Perry, and Perry was furious when he saw her tearstained face later on in the dairy, as they strained the milk together. Ordinarily Emily loved this, but tonight the savour had gone out of the world. Even the milky splendour of the still, mild winter evening and the purple bloom over the hillside woods that presaged a thaw could not give her the accustomed soul-thrill.

"I'm going to Charlottetown if I have to walk and I'll bust that Enterprise editor's head," said Perry, with the expression which, thirty years later, warned the members of his party to scatter for cover.

"That wouldn't be any use," said Emily drearily. "He didn't think it good enough to print — that is what hurts me so, Perry — he didn't think it any good. Busting his head wouldn't change that."

It took her a week to recover from the blow. Then she wrote a story in which the editor of the Enterprise played the part of a dark and desperate villain who found lodging eventually behind prison bars. This got the venom out of her system and she forgot all about him in the delight of writing a poem addressed to "Sweet Lady April." But I question if she ever really forgave him — even when she discovered eventually that you must not write on both sides of the paper — even when she read over Evening

Dreams a year later and wondered how she could ever have thought it any good.

This sort of thing was happening frequently now. Every time she read her little hoard of manuscripts over she found some of which the fairy gold had unaccountably turned to withered leaves, fit only for the burning. Emily burned them — but it hurt her a little. Outgrowing things we love is never a pleasant process.

Sacrilege

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There had been several clashes between Aunt Elizabeth and Emily that winter and spring. Generally Aunt Elizabeth came out victorious; there was that in her that would not be denied the satisfaction of having her own way even in trifling matters. But once in a while she came up against that curious streak of granite in Emily's composition which was unyielding and unbendable and unbreakable. Mary Murray, of a hundred years ago, had been, so family chronicle ran, a gentle and submissive creature generally; but she had that same streak in her, as her "Here I Stay" abundantly testified. When Aunt Elizabeth tried conclusions with that element in Emily she always got the worst of it. Yet she did not learn wisdom therefrom but pursued her policy of repression all the more rigorously; for it occasionally came home to her, as Laura let down tucks, that Emily was on the verge of beginning to grow up and that various breakers and reefs loomed ahead, ominously magnified in the mist of unseen years, Emily must not be allowed to get out of hand now, lest later on she make shipwreck as her mother had done — or as Elizabeth Murray firmly believed she had done. There were, in short, to be no more elopements from New Moon.

One of the things they fell out about was the fact that Emily, as Aunt Elizabeth discovered one day, was in the habit of using more of her egg money to buy paper than Aunt Elizabeth approved of. What did Emily do with so much paper? They had a fuss over this and eventually Aunt Elizabeth discovered that Emily was writing stories. Emily had been writing stories all winter under Aunt Elizabeth's very nose and Aunt Elizabeth had never suspected it. She had fondly supposed that Emily was writing school compositions. Aunt Elizabeth knew in a vague way that Emily wrote silly rhymes which she called "poetry" but this did not worry her especially. Jimmy made up a lot of similar trash. It was foolish but

harmless and Emily would doubtless outgrow it. Jimmy had not outgrown it, to be sure, but then his accident — Elizabeth always went a little sick in soul when she remembered it — had made him more or less a child for life.

But writing stories was a very different thing and Aunt Elizabeth was horrified. Fiction of any kind was an abominable thing. Elizabeth Murray had been trained up in this belief in her youth and in her age she had not departed from it. She honestly thought that it was a wicked and sinful thing in any one to play cards, dance, or go to the theatre, read or write novels, and in Emily's case there was a worse feature — it was the Starr coming out in her — Douglas Starr especially. No Murray of New Moon had ever been guilty of writing "stories" or of ever wanting to write them. It was an alien growth that must be pruned off ruthlessly. Aunt Elizabeth applied the pruning shears; and found no pliant, snippable root but that same underlying streak of granite. Emily was respectful and reasonable and aboveboard; she bought no more paper with egg money; but she told Aunt Elizabeth that she could not give up writing stories and she went right on writing them, on pieces of brown wrapping paper and the blank backs of circulars which agricultural machinery firms sent Cousin Jimmy.

"Don't you know that it is wicked to write novels?" demanded Aunt Elizabeth.

"Oh, I'm not writing novels — yet," said Emily. "I can't get enough paper. These are just short stories. And it isn't wicked — Father liked novels."

"Your father—" began Aunt Elizabeth, and stopped. She remembered that Emily had "acted up" before now when anything derogatory was said of her father. But the very fact that she felt mysteriously compelled to stop annoyed Elizabeth, who had said what seemed good to her all her life at New Moon without much regard for other people's feelings.

"You will not write any more of this stuff," Aunt Elizabeth contemptuously flourished "The Secret of the Castle" under Emily's nose, "I forbid you — remember, I forbid you."

“Oh, I must write, Aunt Elizabeth,” said Emily gravely, folding her slender, beautiful hands on the table and looking straight into Aunt Elizabeth’s angry face with the steady, unblinking gaze which Aunt Ruth called unchildlike. “You see, it’s this way. It is in me. I can’t help it. And Father said I was always to keep on writing. He said I would be famous some day. Wouldn’t you like to have a famous niece, Aunt Elizabeth?”

“I am not going to argue the matter,” said Aunt Elizabeth.

“I’m not arguing — only explaining.” Emily was exasperatingly respectful. “I just want you to understand how it is that I have to go on writing stories, even though I am so very sorry you don’t approve.”

“If you don’t give up this — this worse than nonsense, Emily, I’ll — I’ll—”

Aunt Elizabeth stopped, not knowing what to say she would do. Emily was too big now to be slapped or shut up; and it was no use to say, as she was tempted to, “I’ll send you away from New Moon,” because Elizabeth Murray knew perfectly well she would not send Emily away from New Moon — could not send her away, indeed, though this knowledge was as yet only in her feelings and had not been translated into her intellect. She only felt that she was helpless and it angered her; but Emily was mistress of the situation and calmly went on writing stories. If Aunt Elizabeth had asked her to give up crocheting lace or making molasses taffy, or eating Aunt Laura’s delicious drop cookies, Emily would have done so wholly and cheerfully, though she loved these things. But to give up writing stories — why, Aunt Elizabeth might as well have asked her to give up breathing. Why couldn’t she understand? It seemed so simple and indisputable to Emily.

“Teddy can’t help making pictures and Ilse can’t help reciting, and I can’t help writing. Don’t you see, Aunt Elizabeth?”

“I see that you are an ungrateful and disobedient child,” said Aunt Elizabeth.

This hurt Emily horribly, but she could not give in; and there continued to be a sense of soreness and disapproval between her and Aunt Elizabeth in all the little details of daily life that poisoned existence more or less for

the child, who was so keenly sensitive to her environment and to the feelings with which her kindred regarded her. Emily felt it all the time — except when she was writing her stories. Then she forgot everything, roaming in some enchanted country between the sun and moon, where she saw wonderful beings whom she tried to describe and wonderful deeds which she tried to record, coming back to the candle-lit kitchen with a somewhat dazed sense of having been years in No-Man's Land.

She did not even have Aunt Laura to back her up in the matter. Aunt Laura thought Emily ought to yield in such an unimportant matter and please Aunt Elizabeth.

"But it's not unimportant," said Emily despairingly. "It's the most important thing in the world to me, Aunt Laura. Oh, I thought you would understand."

"I understand that you like to do it, dear, and I think it's a harmless enough amusement. But it seems to annoy Elizabeth some way and I do think you might give it up on that account. It is not as if it was anything that mattered much — it is really a waste of time."

"No — no," said distressed Emily. "Why, some day, Aunt Laura, I'll write real books — and make lots of money," she added, sensing that the businesslike Murrays measured the nature of most things on a cash basis.

Aunt Laura smiled indulgently.

"I'm afraid you'll never grow rich that way, dear. It would be wiser to employ your time preparing yourself for some useful work."

It was maddening to be condescended to like this — maddening that nobody could see that she had to write — maddening to have Aunt Laura so sweet and loving and stupid about it.

"Oh," thought Emily bitterly, "if that hateful Enterprise editor had printed my piece they'd have believed then."

"At any rate," advised Aunt Laura, "don't let Elizabeth see you writing them."

But somehow Emily could not take this prudent advice. There had been occasions when she had connived with Aunt Laura to hoodwink Aunt Elizabeth on some little matter, but she found she could not do it in this.

This had to be open and aboveboard. She must write stories — and Aunt Elizabeth must know it — that was the way it had to be. She could not be false to herself in this — she could not pretend to be false.

She wrote her father all about it — poured out her bitterness and perplexity to him in what, though she did not suspect it at the time, was the last letter she was to write him. There was a large bundle of letters by now on the old sofa shelf in the garret — for Emily had written many letters to her father besides those which have been chronicled in this history. There were a great many paragraphs about Aunt Elizabeth in them, most of them very uncomplimentary and some of them, as Emily herself would have owned when her first bitterness was past, overdrawn and exaggerated. They had been written in moments when her hurt and angry soul demanded some outlet for its emotion and barbed her pen with venom. Emily was mistress of a subtly malicious style when she chose to be. After she had written them the hurt had ceased and she thought no more about them. But they remained.

And one spring day, Aunt Elizabeth, housecleaning in the garret while Emily played happily with Teddy at the Tansy Patch, found the bundle of letters on the sofa shelf, sat down, and read them all.

Elizabeth Murray would never have read any writing belonging to a grown person. But it never occurred to her that there was anything dishonourable in reading the letters wherein Emily, lonely and — sometimes — misunderstood, had poured out her heart to the father she had loved and been loved by, so passionately and understandingly. Aunt Elizabeth thought she had a right to know everything that this pensioner on her bounty did, said, or thought. She read the letters and she found out what Emily thought of her — of her, Elizabeth Murray, autocrat unchallenged, to whom no one had ever dared to say anything uncomplimentary. Such an experience is no pleasanter at sixty than at sixteen. As Elizabeth Murray folded up the last letter her hands trembled — with anger, and something underneath it that was not anger.

“Emily, your Aunt Elizabeth wants to see you in the parlour,” said Aunt Laura, when Emily returned from the Tansy Patch, driven home by

the thin grey rain that had begun to drift over the greening fields. Her tone — her sorrowful look — warned Emily that mischief was in the wind. Emily had no idea what mischief — she could not recall anything she had done recently that should bring her up before the tribunal Aunt Elizabeth occasionally held in the parlour. It must be serious when it was in the parlour. For reasons best known to herself Aunt Elizabeth held super-serious interviews like this in the parlour. Possibly it was because she felt obscurely that the photographs of the Murrays on the walls gave her a backing she needed when dealing with this hop-out-of-kin; for the same reason Emily detested a trial in the parlour. She always felt on such occasions like a very small mouse surrounded by a circle of grim cats.

Emily skipped across the big hall, pausing, in spite of her alarm, to glance at the charming red world through the crimson glass; then pushed open the parlour door. The room was dim, for only one of the slat blinds was partially raised. Aunt Elizabeth was sitting bolt upright in Grandfather Murray's black horsehair chair. Emily looked at her stern, angry face first — and then at her lap.

Emily understood.

The first thing she did was to retrieve her precious letters. With the quickness of light she sprang to Aunt Elizabeth, snatched up the bundle and retreated to the door; there she faced Aunt Elizabeth, her face blazing with indignation and outrage. Sacrilege had been committed — the most sacred shrine of her soul had been profaned.

"How dare you?" she said. "How dare you touch my private papers, Aunt Elizabeth?"

Aunt Elizabeth had not expected this. She had looked for confusion — dismay — shame — fear — for anything but this righteous indignation, as if she, forsooth, were the guilty one. She rose.

"Give me those letters, Emily."

"No, I will not," said Emily, white with anger, as she clasped her hands around the bundle. "They are mine and Father's — not yours. You had no right to touch them. I will never forgive you!"

This was turning the tables with a vengeance. Aunt Elizabeth was so dumbfounded that she hardly knew what to say or do. Worst of all, a most unpleasant doubt of her own conduct suddenly assailed her — driven home perhaps by the intensity and earnestness of Emily's accusation. For the first time in her life it occurred to Elizabeth Murray to wonder if she had done rightly. For the first time in her life she felt ashamed; and the shame made her furious. It was intolerable that she should be made to feel ashamed.

For the moment they faced each other, not as aunt and niece, not as child and adult, but as two human beings each with hatred for the other in her heart — Elizabeth Murray, tall and austere and thin-lipped; Emily Starr, white of face, her eyes pools of black flame, her trembling arms hugging her letters.

"So this is your gratitude," said Aunt Elizabeth. "You were a penniless orphan — I took you to my home — I have given you shelter and food and education and kindness — and this is my thanks."

As yet Emily's tempest of anger and resentment prevented her from feeling the sting of this.

"You did not want to take me," she said. "You made me draw lots and you took me because the lot fell to you. You knew some of you had to take me because you were the proud Murrays and couldn't let a relation go to an orphan asylum. Aunt Laura loves me now but you don't. So why should I love you?"

"Ungrateful, thankless child!"

"I'm not thankless. I've tried to be good — I've tried to obey you and please you — I do all the chores I can to help pay for my keep. And you had no business to read my letters to Father."

"They are disgraceful letters — and must be destroyed," said Aunt Elizabeth.

"No," Emily clasped them tighter. "I'd sooner burn myself. You shall not have them, Aunt Elizabeth."

She felt her brows drawing together — she felt the Murray look on her face — she knew she was conquering.

Elizabeth Murray turned paler, if that were possible. There were times when she could give the Murray look herself; it was not that which dismayed her — it was the uncanny something which seemed to peer out behind the Murray look that always broke her will. She trembled — faltered — yielded.

“Keep your letters,” she said bitterly, “and scorn the old woman who opened her home to you.”

She went out of the parlour. Emily was left mistress of the field. And all at once her victory turned to dust and ashes in her mouth.

She went up to her own room, hid her letters in the cupboard over the mantel, and then crept up on her bed, huddling down in a little heap with her face buried in her pillow. She was still sore with a sense of outrage — but underneath another pain was beginning to ache terribly.

Something in her was hurt because she had hurt Aunt Elizabeth — for she felt that Aunt Elizabeth, under all her anger, was hurt. This surprised Emily. She would have expected Aunt Elizabeth to be angry, of course, but she would never have supposed it would affect her in any other way. Yet she had seen something in Aunt Elizabeth’s eyes when she had flung that last stinging sentence at her — something that spoke of bitter hurt.

“Oh! Oh!” gasped Emily. She began to cry chokingly into her pillow. She was so wretched that she could not get out of herself and watch her own suffering with a sort of enjoyment in its drama — set her mind to analyse her feelings — and when Emily was as wretched as that she was very wretched indeed and wholly comfortless. Aunt Elizabeth would not keep her at New Moon after a poisonous quarrel like this. She would send her away, of course. Emily believed this. Nothing was too horrible to believe just then. How could she live away from dear New Moon?

“And I may have to live eighty years,” Emily moaned.

But worse even than this was the remembrance of that look in Aunt Elizabeth’s eyes.

Her own sense of outrage and sacrilege ebbed away under the remembrance. She thought of all the things she had written her father about Aunt Elizabeth — sharp, bitter things, some of them just, some of

them unjust. She began to feel that she should not have written them. It was true enough that Aunt Elizabeth had not loved her — had not wanted to take her to New Moon. But she had taken her and though it had been done in duty, not in love, the fact remained. It was no use for her to tell herself that it wasn't as if the letters were written to any one living, to be seen and read by others. While she was under Aunt Elizabeth's roof — while she owed the food she ate and the clothes she wore to Aunt Elizabeth — she should not say, even to her father, harsh things of her. A Starr should not have done it.

"I must go and ask Aunt Elizabeth to forgive me," thought Emily at last, all the passion gone out of her and only regret and repentance left. "I suppose she never will — she'll hate me always now. But I must go."

She turned herself about — and then the door opened and Aunt Elizabeth entered. She came across the room and stood at the side of the bed, looking down at the grieved little face on the pillow — a face that in the dim, rainy twilight, with its tearstains and black shadowed eyes, looked strangely mature and chiselled.

Elizabeth Murray was still austere and cold. Her voice sounded stern; but she said an amazing thing:

"Emily, I had no right to read your letters. I admit I was wrong. Will you forgive me?"

"Oh!" The word was almost a cry. Aunt Elizabeth had at last discerned the way to conquer Emily. The latter lifted herself up, flung her arms about Aunt Elizabeth, and said chokingly:

"Oh — Aunt Elizabeth — I'm sorry — I'm sorry — I shouldn't have written those things — but I wrote them when I was vexed — and I didn't mean them all — truly, I didn't mean the worst of them. Oh, you'll believe that, won't you, Aunt Elizabeth?"

"I'd like to believe it, Emily." An odd quiver passed through the tall, rigid form. "I — don't like to think you — hate me — my sister's child — little Juliet's child."

"I don't — oh, I don't," sobbed Emily. "And I'll love you, Aunt Elizabeth, if you'll let me — if you want me to. I didn't think you cared."

Dear Aunt Elizabeth.”

Emily gave Aunt Elizabeth a fierce hug and a passionate kiss on the white, fine-wrinkled cheek. Aunt Elizabeth kissed her gravely on the brow in return and then said, as if closing the door on the whole incident,

“You’d better wash your face and come down to supper.”

But there was yet something to be cleared up.

“Aunt Elizabeth,” whispered Emily. “I can’t burn those letters, you know — they belong to Father. But I’ll tell you what I will do. I’ll go over them all and put a star by anything I said about you and then I’ll add an explanatory footnote saying that I was mistaken.”

Emily spent her spare time for several days putting in her “explanatory footnotes,” and then her conscience had rest. But when she again tried to write a letter to her father she found that it no longer meant anything to her. The sense of reality — nearness — of close communion had gone. Perhaps she had been outgrowing it gradually, as childhood began to merge into girlhood — perhaps the bitter scene with Aunt Elizabeth had only shaken into dust something out of which the spirit had already departed. But, whatever the explanation, it was not possible to write such letters any more. She missed them terribly but she could not go back to them. A certain door of life was shut behind her and could not be reopened.

When the Curtain Lifted

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It would be pleasant to be able to record that after the reconciliation in the lookout Emily and Aunt Elizabeth lived in entire amity and harmony. But the truth was that things went on pretty much the same as before. Emily went softly, and tried to mingle serpent's wisdom and dove's harmlessness in practical proportions, but their points of view were so different that there were bound to be clashes; they did not speak the same language, so there was bound to be misunderstanding.

And yet there was a difference — a very vital difference. Elizabeth Murray had learned an important lesson — that there was not one law of fairness for children and another for grownups. She continued to be as autocratic as ever — but she did not do or say to Emily anything she would not have done or said to Laura had occasion called for it.

Emily, on her side, had discovered the fact that, under all her surface coldness and sternness, Aunt Elizabeth really had an affection for her; and it was wonderful what a difference this made. It took the sting out of Aunt Elizabeth's "ways" and words and healed entirely a certain little half-conscious sore spot that had been in Emily's heart ever since the incident of the drawn slips at Maywood.

"I don't believe I'm a duty to Aunt Elizabeth any more," she thought exultantly.

Emily grew rapidly that summer in body, mind and soul. Life was delightful, growing richer every hour, like an unfolding rose. Forms of beauty filled her imagination and were transferred as best she could to paper, though they were never so lovely there, and Emily had the heartbreaking moments of the true artist who discovers that

Never on painter's canvas lives
The charm of his fancy's dream.

Much of her “old stuff” she burned; even the Child of the Sea was reduced to ashes. But the little pile of manuscripts in the mantel cupboard of the lookout was growing steadily larger. Emily kept her scribblings there now; the sofa shelf in the garret was desecrated; and, besides, she felt somehow that Aunt Elizabeth would never meddle with her “private papers” again, no matter where they were kept. She did not go now to the garret to read or write or dream; her own dear lookout was the best place for that. She loved that quaint, little old room intensely; it was almost like a living thing to her — a sharer in gladness — a comforter in sorrow.

Ilse was growing, too, blossoming out into strange beauty and brilliance, knowing no law but her own pleasure, recognizing no authority but her own whim. Aunt Laura worried over her.

“She will be a woman so soon — and who will look after her? Allan won’t.”

“I’ve no patience with Allan,” said Aunt Elizabeth grimly. “He is always ready to hector and advise other people. He’d better look at home. He’ll come over here and order me to do this or that, or not to do it, for Emily; but if I say one word to him about Ilse he blows the roof off. The idea of a man turning against his daughter and neglecting her as he has neglected Ilse simply because her mother wasn’t all she ought to be — as if the poor child was to blame for that.”

“S-s-sh,” said Aunt Laura, as Emily crossed the sitting-room on her way upstairs.

Emily smiled sadly to herself. Aunt Laura needn’t be “s-s-sh’ing.” There was nothing left for her to find out about Ilse’s mother — nothing, except the most important thing of all, which neither she nor anybody else living knew. For Emily had never surrendered her conviction that the whole truth about Beatrice Burnley was not known. She often worried about it when she lay curled up in her black walnut bed o’ nights, listening to the moan of the gulf and the Wind Woman singing in the trees, and drifted into sleep wishing intensely that she could solve the dark old mystery and dissolve its legend of shame and bitterness.

Emily went rather languidly upstairs to the lookout. She meant to write some more of her story, *The Ghost of the Well*, wherein she was weaving the old legend of the well in the Lee field; but somehow interest was lacking; she put the manuscript back into the mantel cupboard; she read over a letter from Dean Priest which had come that day, one of his fat, jolly, whimsical, delightful letters wherein he had told her that he was coming to stay a month with his sister at Blair Water. She wondered why this announcement did not excite her more. She was tired — her head was aching. Emily couldn't remember ever having had a headache before. Since she could not write she decided to lie down and be Lady Trevanion for awhile. Emily was Lady Trevanion very often that summer, in one of the dream lives she had begun to build up for herself. Lady Trevanion was the wife of an English earl and, besides being a famous novelist, was a member of the British House of Commons — where she always appeared in black velvet with a stately coronet of pearls on her dark hair. She was the only woman in the House and, as this was before the days of the suffragettes, she had to endure many sneers and innuendoes and insults from the ungallant males around her. Emily's favourite dream scene was where she rose to make her first speech — a wonderfully thrilling event. As Emily found it difficult to do justice to the scene in any ideas of her own, she always fell back on "Pitt's reply to Walpole," which she had found in her Royal Reader, and declaimed it, with suitable variations. The insolent speaker who had provoked Lady Trevanion into speech had sneered at her as a woman, and Lady Trevanion, a magnificent creature in her velvet and pearls, rose to her feet, amid hushed and dramatic silence, and said,

"The atrocious crime of being a woman which the honourable member has, with such spirit and decency, charged upon me, I shall attempt neither to palliate nor deny, but shall content myself with wishing that I may be one of those whose follies cease with their sex and not one of that number who are ignorant in spite of manhood and experience."

(Here she was always interrupted by thunders of applause.)

But the savour was entirely lacking in this scene to-day and by the time Emily had reached the line, "But womanhood, Sir, is not my only crime" — she gave up in disgust and fell to worrying over Ilse's mother again, mixed up with some uneasy speculations regarding the climax of her story about the ghost of the well, mingled with her unpleasant physical sensations.

Her eyes hurt her when she moved them. She was chilly, although the July day was hot. She was still lying there when Aunt Elizabeth came up to ask why she hadn't gone to bring the cows home from the pasture.

"I — I didn't know it was so late," said Emily confusedly. "I — my head aches, Aunt Elizabeth."

Aunt Elizabeth rolled up the white cotton blind and looked at Emily. She noted her flushed face — she felt her pulse. Then she bade her shortly to stay where she was, went down, and sent Perry for Dr Burnley.

"Probably she's got the measles," said the doctor as gruffly as usual. Emily was not yet sick enough to be gentle over. "There's an outbreak of them at Derry Pond. Has she had any chance to catch them?"

"Jimmy Joe Belle's two children were here one afternoon, about ten days ago. She played with them — she's always playing round with people she's no business to associate with. I haven't heard that they were or have been sick though."

Jimmy Joe Belle, when asked plainly, confessed that his "young ones" had come out with measles the very day after they had been at New Moon. There was therefore not much doubt as to Emily's malady.

"It's a bad kind of measles apparently," the doctor said. "Quite a number of the Derry Pond children have died of it. Mostly French though — the kids would be out of bed when they had no business to be and caught cold. I don't think you need worry about Emily. She might as well have measles and be done with it. Keep her warm and keep the room dark. I'll run over in the morning."

For three or four days nobody was much alarmed. Measles was a disease everybody had to have. Aunt Elizabeth looked after Emily well and slept on a sofa which had been moved into the lookout. She even left

the window open at night. In spite of this — perhaps Aunt Elizabeth thought because of it — Emily grew steadily sicker, and on the fifth day a sharp change for the worse took place. Her fever went up rapidly, delirium set in; Dr Burnley came, looked anxious, scowled, changed the medicine.

“I’m sent for to a bad case of pneumonia at White Cross,” he said, “and I have to go to Charlottetown in the morning to be present at Mrs Jackwell’s operation. I promised her I would go. I’ll be back in the evening. Emily is very restless — that highstrung system of hers is evidently very sensitive to fever. What’s that nonsense she’s talking about the Wind Woman?”

“Oh, I don’t know,” said Aunt Elizabeth worriedly. “She’s always talking nonsense like that, even when she’s well. Allan, tell me plainly — is there any danger?”

“There’s always danger in this type of measles. I don’t like these symptoms — the eruption should be out by now and there’s no sign of it. Her fever is very high — but I don’t think we need be alarmed yet. If I thought otherwise I wouldn’t go to town. Keep her as quiet as possible — humour her whims if you can — I don’t like that mental disturbance. She looks terribly distressed — seems to be worrying over something. Has she had anything on her mind of late?”

“Not that I know of,” said Aunt Elizabeth. She had a sudden bitter realization that she really did not know much about the child’s mind. Emily would never have come to her with any of her little troubles and worries.

“Emily, what is bothering you?” asked Dr Burnley softly — very softly. He took the hot, tossing, little hand gently, oh, so gently, in his big one.

Emily looked up with wild, fever-bright eyes.

“She couldn’t have done it — she couldn’t have done it.”

“Of course she couldn’t,” said the doctor cheerily. “Don’t worry — she didn’t do it.”

His eyes telegraphed, “What does she mean?” to Elizabeth, but Elizabeth shook her head.

“Who are you talking about — dear?” she asked Emily. It was the first time she had called Emily “dear.”

But Emily was off on another track. The well in Mr Lee’s field was open, she declared. Some one would be sure to fall into it. Why didn’t Mr Lee shut it up? Dr Burnley left Aunt Elizabeth trying to reassure Emily on that point and hurried away to White Cross.

At the door he nearly fell over Perry who was curled up on the sandstone slab, hugging his sunburned legs desperately. “How is Emily?” he demanded, grasping the skirt of the doctor’s coat.

“Don’t bother me — I’m in a hurry,” growled the doctor.

“You tell me how Emily is or I’ll hang on to your coat till the seams go,” said Perry stubbornly. “I can’t get one word of sense out of them old maids. You tell me.”

“She’s a sick child but I’m not seriously alarmed about her yet.” The doctor gave his coat another tug — but Perry held on for a last word.

“You’ve got to cure her,” he said. “If anything happens to Emily I’ll drown myself in the pond — mind that.”

He let go so suddenly that Dr Burnley nearly went headlong on the ground. Then Perry curled up on the doorstep again. He watched there until Laura and Cousin Jimmy had gone to bed and then he sneaked through the house and sat on the stairs, where he could hear any sound in Emily’s room. He sat there all night, with his fists clenched, as if keeping guard against an unseen foe.

Elizabeth Murray watched by Emily until two o’clock and then Laura took her place.

“She has raved a great deal,” said Aunt Elizabeth. “I wish I knew what is worrying her — there is something, I feel sure. It isn’t all mere delirium. She keeps repeating ‘She couldn’t have done it’ in such imploring tones. I wonder oh, Laura, you remember the time I read her letters? Do you think she means me?”

Laura shook her head. She had never seen Elizabeth so moved.

“If the child — doesn’t get — better—” said Aunt Elizabeth.

She said no more but went quickly out of the room.

Laura sat down by the bed. She was pale and drawn with her own worry and fatigue — for she had not been able to sleep. She loved Emily as her own child and the awful dread that had possessed her heart would not lift for an instant. She sat there and prayed mutely. Emily fell into a troubled slumber which lasted until the grey dawn crept into the lookout. Then she opened her eyes and looked at Aunt Laura — looked through her — looked beyond her.

“I see her coming over the fields,” she said in a high, clear voice. “She is coming so gladly — she is singing — she is thinking of her baby — oh, keep her back — keep her back — she doesn’t see the well — it’s so dark she doesn’t see it — oh, she’s gone into it — she’s gone into it!”

Emily’s voice rose in a piercing shriek which penetrated to Aunt Elizabeth’s room and brought her flying across the hall in her flannel nightgown.

“What is wrong, Laura?” she gasped.

Laura was trying to soothe Emily, who was struggling to sit up in bed. Her cheeks were crimson and her eyes had still the same far, wild look.

“Emily — Emily, darling, you’ve just had a bad dream. The old Lee well isn’t open — nobody has fallen into it.”

“Yes, somebody has,” said Emily shrilly. “She has — I saw her — I saw her — with the ace of hearts on her forehead. Do you think I don’t know her?”

She fell back on her pillow, moaned, and tossed the hands which Laura Murray had loosened in her surprise.

The two ladies of New Moon looked at each other across her bed in dismay — and something like terror.

“Who did you see, Emily?” asked Aunt Elizabeth.

“Ilse’s mother — of course. I always knew she didn’t do that dreadful thing. She fell into the old well — she’s there now — go — go and get her out, Aunt Laura. Please.”

“Yes — yes, of course we’ll get her out, darling,” said Aunt Laura, soothingly.

Emily sat up in bed and looked at Aunt Laura again. This time she did not look through her — she looked into her. Laura Murray felt that those burning eyes read her soul.

“You are lying to me,” cried Emily. “You don’t mean to try to get her out. You are only saying it to put me off. Aunt Elizabeth,” she suddenly turned and caught Aunt Elizabeth’s hand, “you’ll do it for me, won’t you? You’ll go and get her out of the old well, won’t you?”

Elizabeth remembered that Dr Burnley had said that Emily’s whims must be humoured. She was terrified by the child’s condition.

“Yes, I’ll get her out if she is in there,” she said.

Emily released her hand and sank down. The wild glare left her eyes. A great sudden calm fell over her anguished little face.

“I know you’ll keep your word,” she said. “You are very hard — but you never lie, Aunt Elizabeth.”

Elizabeth Murray went back to her own room and dressed herself with her shaking fingers. A little later, when Emily had fallen into a quiet sleep, Laura went downstairs and heard Elizabeth giving Cousin Jimmy some orders in the kitchen.

“Elizabeth, you don’t really mean to have that old well searched?”

“I do,” said Elizabeth resolutely. “I know it’s nonsense as well as you do. But I had to promise it to quiet her down — and I’ll keep my promise. You heard what she said — she believed I wouldn’t lie to her. Nor will I. Jimmy, you will go over to James Lee’s after breakfast and ask him to come here.”

“How has she heard the story?” said Laura.

“I don’t know — oh, some one has told her, of course — perhaps that old demon of a Nancy Priest. It doesn’t matter who. She has heard it and the thing is to keep her quiet. It isn’t so much of a job to put ladders in the well and get some one to go down it. The thing that matters is the absurdity of it.”

“We’ll be laughed at for a pair of fools,” protested Laura, whose share of Murray pride was in hot revolt. “And besides, it will open up all the old scandal again.”

“No matter. I’ll keep my word to the child,” said Elizabeth stubbornly.

Allan Burnley came to New Moon at sunset, on his way home from town. He was tired, for he had been going night and day for over a week; he was more worried than he had admitted over Emily; he looked old and rather desolate as he stepped into the New Moon kitchen.

Only Cousin Jimmy was there. Cousin Jimmy did not seem to have much to do, although it was a good hay-day and Jimmy Joe Belle and Perry were hauling in the great fragrant, sun-dried loads. He sat by the western window with a strange expression on his face.

“Hello, Jimmy, where are the girls? And how is Emily?”

“Emily is better,” said Cousin Jimmy. “The rash is out and her fever has gone down. I think she’s asleep.”

“Good. We couldn’t afford to lose that little girl, could we, Jimmy?”

“No,” said Jimmy. But he did not seem to want to talk about it. “Laura and Elizabeth are in the sitting-room. They want to see you.” He paused a minute and then added in an eerie way. “There is nothing hidden that shall not be revealed.”

It occurred to Allan Burnley that Jimmy was acting mysteriously. And if Laura and Elizabeth wanted to see him why didn’t they come out? It wasn’t like them to stand on ceremony in this fashion. He pushed open the sitting-room door impatiently.

Laura Murray was sitting on the sofa, leaning her head on its arm. He could not see her face but he felt that she was crying. Elizabeth was sitting bolt upright on a chair. She wore her second-best black silk and her second-best lace cap. And she, too, had been crying. Dr Burnley never attached much importance to Laura’s tears, easy as those of most women, but that Elizabeth Murray should cry — had he ever seen her cry before?

The thought of Ilse flashed into his mind — his little neglected daughter. Had anything happened to Ilse? In one dreadful moment Allan Burnley paid the price of his treatment of his child.

“What is wrong?” he exclaimed in his gruffest manner.

“Oh, Allan,” said Elizabeth Murray. “God forgive us — God forgive us all!”

“It — is — Ilse,” said Dr Burnley, dully.

“No — no — not Ilse.”

Then she told him — she told him what had been found at the bottom of the old Lee well — she told him what had been the real fate of the lovely, laughing young wife whose name for twelve bitter years had never crossed his lips.

It was not until the next evening that Emily saw the doctor. She was lying in bed, weak and limp, red as a beet with the measles rash, but quite herself again. Allan Burnley stood by the bed and looked down at her.

“Emily — dear little child — do you know what you have done for me? God knows how you did it.”

“I thought you didn’t believe in God,” said Emily, wonderingly.

“You have given me back my faith in Him, Emily.”

“Why, what have I done?”

Dr Burnley saw that she had no remembrance of her delirium. Laura had told him that she had slept long and soundly after Elizabeth’s promise and had awakened with fever gone and the eruption fast coming out. She had asked nothing and they had said nothing.

“When you are better we will tell you all,” he said, smiling down at her. There was something very sorrowful in the smile — and yet something very sweet.

“He is smiling with his eyes as well as his mouth now,” thought Emily.

“How — how did she know?” whispered Laura Murray to him when he went down. “I — can’t understand it, Allan.”

“Nor I. These things are beyond us, Laura,” he answered gravely. “I only know this child has given Beatrice back to me, stainless and beloved. It can be explained rationally enough perhaps. Emily has evidently been told about Beatrice and worried over it — her repeated ‘she couldn’t have done it’ shows that. And the tales of the old Lee well naturally made a deep impression on the mind of a sensitive child keenly alive to dramatic values. In her delirium she mixed this all up with the well-known fact of Jimmy’s tumble into the New Moon well — and the rest was coincidence.

I would have explained it all so myself once — but now — now, Laura, I only say humbly, ‘A little child shall lead them.’”

“Our stepmother’s mother was a Highland Scotswoman. They said she had the second sight,” said Elizabeth. “I never believed in it — before.”

The excitement of Blair Water had died away before Emily was deemed strong enough to hear the story. That which had been found in the old Lee well had been buried in the Mitchell plot at Shrewsbury and a white marble shaft, “Sacred to the memory of Beatrice Burnley, beloved wife of Allan Burnley,” had been erected. The sensation caused by Dr Burnley’s presence every Sunday in the old Burnley pew had died away. On the first evening that Emily was allowed to sit up Aunt Laura told her the whole story. Her manner of telling stripped it for ever of the taint and innuendo left by Aunt Nancy.

“I knew Ilse’s mother couldn’t have done it,” said Emily triumphantly.

“We blame ourselves now for our lack of faith,” said Aunt Laura. “We should have known too — but it did seem black against her at the time, Emily. She was a bright, beautiful, merry creature — we thought her close friendship with her cousin natural and harmless. We know now it was so — but all these years since her disappearance we have believed differently. Mr James Lee remembers clearly that the well was open the night of Beatrice’s disappearance. His hired man had taken the old rotten planks off it that evening, intending to put the new ones on at once. Then Robert Greerson’s house caught fire and he ran with everybody else to help save it. By the time it was out it was too dark to finish the well, and the man said nothing about it until the morning. Mr Lee was angry with him — he said it was a scandalous thing to leave a well uncovered like that. He went right down and put the new planks in place himself. He did not look down in the well — had he looked he could have seen nothing, for the ferns growing out from the sides screened the depths. It was just after harvest. No one was in the field again before the next spring. He never connected Beatrice’s disappearance with the open well — he wonders now that he didn’t. But you see — dear — there had been much malicious gossip —

and Beatrice was known to have gone on board The Lady of Winds. It was taken for granted she never came off again. But she did — and went to her death in the old Lee field. It was a dreadful ending to her bright young life — but not so dreadful, after all, as what we believed. For twelve years we have wronged the dead. But — Emily — how could you know?”

“I — don’t — know. When the doctor came in that day I couldn’t remember anything — but now it seems to me that I remember something — just as if I’d dreamed it — of seeing Ilse’s mother coming over the fields, singing. It was dark — and yet I could see the ace of hearts — oh, Aunt, I don’t know — I don’t like to think of it, some way.”

“We won’t talk of it again,” said Aunt Laura gently. “It is one of the things best not talked of — one of God’s secrets.”

“And Ilse — does her father love her now?” asked Emily eagerly.

“Love her! He can’t love her enough. It seems as if he were pouring out on her at once all the shut-up love of those twelve years.”

“He’ll likely spoil her now as much with indulgence as he did before with neglect,” said Elizabeth, coming in with Emily’s supper in time to hear Laura’s reply.

“It will take a lot of love to spoil Ilse,” laughed Laura. “She’s drinking it up like a thirsty sponge. And she loves him wildly in return. There isn’t a trace of grudge in her over his long neglect.”

“All the same,” said Elizabeth grimly, tucking pillows behind Emily’s back with a very gentle hand, oddly in contrast with her severe expression, “he won’t get off so easily. Ilse has run wild for twelve years. He won’t find it so easy to make her behave properly now — if he ever does.”

“Love will do wonders,” said Aunt Laura softly. “Of course, Ilse is dying to come and see you, Emily. But she must wait until there is no danger of infection. I told her she might write — but when she found I would have to read it because of your eyes she said she’d wait till you could read it yourself. Evidently” — Laura laughed again — “evidently Ilse has much of importance to tell you.”

“I didn’t know anybody could be so happy as I am now,” said Emily. “And oh, Aunt Elizabeth, it is so nice to feel hungry again and to have

something to chew.”

Emily's Great Moment

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Emily's convalescence was rather slow. Physically she recovered with normal celerity but a certain spiritual and emotional langour persisted for a time. One cannot go down to the depths of hidden things and escape the penalty. Aunt Elizabeth said she "moped." But Emily was too happy and contented to mope. It was just that life seemed to have lost its savour for a time, as if some spring of vital energy had been drained out of it and refilled slowly.

She had, just then, no one to play with. Perry, Ilse and Teddy had all come down with measles the same day. Mrs Kent at first declared bitterly that Teddy had caught them at New Moon, but all three had contracted them at a Sunday-school picnic where Derry Pond children had been. That picnic infected all Blair Water. There was a perfect orgy of measles. Teddy and Ilse were only moderately ill, but Perry, who had insisted on going home to Aunt Tom at the first symptoms, nearly died. Emily was not allowed to know his danger until it had passed, lest it worry her too much. Even Aunt Elizabeth worried over it. She was surprised to discover how much they missed Perry round the place.

It was fortunate for Emily that Dean Priest was in Blair Water during this forlorn time. His companionship was just what she needed and helped her wonderfully on the road to complete recovery. They went for long walks together all over Blair Water, with Tweed woofing around them, and explored places and roads Emily had never seen before. They watched a young moon grow old, night by night; they talked in dim scented chambers of twilight over long red roads of mystery; they followed the lure of hill winds; they saw the stars rise and Dean told her all about them — the great constellations of the old myths. It was a wonderful month; but on the first day of Teddy's convalescence Emily was off to the Tansy Patch for the afternoon and Jarback Priest walked — if he walked at all — alone.

Aunt Elizabeth was extremely polite to him, though she did not like the Priests of Priest Pond overmuch, and never felt quite comfortable under the mocking gleam of “Jarback’s” green eyes and the faint derision of his smile, which seemed to make Murray pride and Murray traditions seem much less important than they really were.

“He has the Priest flavour,” she told Laura, “though it isn’t as strong in him as in most of them. And he’s certainly helping Emily — she has begun to spunk up since he came.”

Emily continued to “spunk up” and by September, when the measles epidemic was spent and Dean Priest had gone on one of his sudden swoops over to Europe for the autumn, she was ready for school again — a little taller, a little thinner, a little less childlike, with great grey shadowy eyes that had looked into death and read the riddle of a buried thing, and henceforth would hold in them some haunting, elusive remembrance of that world behind the veil. Dean Priest had seen it — Mr Carpenter saw it when she smiled at him across her desk at school.

“She’s left the childhood of her soul behind, though she is still a child in body,” he muttered.

One afternoon amid the golden days and hazes of October he asked her gruffly to let him see some of her verses.

“I never meant to encourage you in it,” he said. “I don’t mean it now. Probably you can’t write a line of real poetry and never will. But let me see your stuff. If it’s hopelessly bad I’ll tell you so. I won’t have you wasting years striving for the unattainable — at least I won’t have it on my conscience if you do. If there’s any promise in it, I’ll tell you so just as honestly. And bring some of your stories, too — they’re trash yet, that’s certain, but I’ll see if they show just and sufficient cause for going on.”

Emily spent a very solemn hour that evening, weighing, choosing, rejecting. To the little bundle of verse she added one of her Jimmy-books which contained, as she thought, her best stories. She went to school next day, so secret and mysterious that Ilse took offence, started in to call her names — and then stopped. Ilse had promised her father that she would try to break herself of the habit of calling names. She was making fairly good

headway and her conversation, if less vivid, was beginning to approximate to New Moon standards.

Emily made a sad mess of her lessons that day. She was nervous and frightened. She had a tremendous respect for Mr Carpenter's opinion. Father Cassidy had told her to keep on — Dean Priest had told her that some day she might really write — but perhaps they were only trying to be encouraging because they liked her and didn't want to hurt her feelings. Emily knew Mr Carpenter would not do this. No matter if he did like her he would nip her aspirations mercilessly if he thought the root of the matter was not in her. If, on the contrary, he bade her Godspeed, she would rest content with that against the world and never lose heart in the face of any future criticism. No wonder the day seemed fraught with tremendous issues to Emily.

When school was out Mr Carpenter asked her to remain. She was so white and tense that the other pupils thought she must have been found out by Mr Carpenter in some especially dreadful behaviour and knew she was going to "catch it." Rhoda Stuart flung her a significantly malicious smile from the porch — which Emily never even saw. She was, indeed, at a momentous bar, with Mr Carpenter as supreme judge, and her whole future career — so she believed — hanging on his verdict.

The pupils disappeared and a mellow, sunshiny stillness settled over the old schoolroom. Mr Carpenter took the little packet she had given him in the morning out of his desk, came down the aisle and sat in the seat before her, facing her. Very deliberately he settled his glasses astride his hooked nose, took out her manuscripts and began to read — or rather to glance over them, flinging scraps of comments, mingled with grunts, sniffs and hoots, at her as he glanced. Emily folded her cold hands on her desk and braced her feet against the legs of it to keep her knees from trembling. This was a very terrible experience. She wished she had never given her verses to Mr Carpenter. They were no good — of course they were no good. Remember the editor of the Enterprise.

"Humph!" said Mr Carpenter. "Sunset — Lord, how many poems have been written on 'Sunset' —

The clouds are massed in splendid state
At heaven's unbarred western gate
Where troops of star-eyed spirits wait —

By gad, what does that mean?"

"I — I — don't know," faltered startled Emily, whose wits had been scattered by the sudden swoop of his spiked glance.

Mr Carpenter snorted.

"For heaven's sake, girl, don't write what you can't understand yourself. And this — To Life—'Life, as thy gift I ask no rainbow joy' — is that sincere? Is it, girl? Stop and think. Do you ask 'no rainbow joy' of life?"

He transfixed her with another glare. But Emily was beginning to pick herself up a bit. Nevertheless, she suddenly felt oddly ashamed of the very elevated and unselfish desires expressed in that sonnet.

"No — o," she answered reluctantly, "I do want rainbow joy — lots of it."

"Of course you do. We all do. We don't get it — you won't get it — but don't be hypocrite enough to pretend you don't want it, even in a sonnet. Lines to a Mountain Cascade—'On its dark rocks like the whiteness of a veil around a bride' — Where did you see a mountain cascade in Prince Edward Island?"

"Nowhere — there's a picture of one in Dr Burnley's library."

"A Wood Stream —

The threading sunbeams quiver,
The bending bushes shiver,
O'er the little shadowy river —

There's only one more rhyme that occurs to me and that's 'liver.' Why did you leave it out?"

Emily writhed.

"Wind Song —

I have shaken the dew in the meadows
From the clover's creamy gown —

Pretty, but weak. June — June, for heaven's sake, girl, don't write poetry on June. It's the sickliest subject in the world. It's been written to death."

"No, June is immortal," cried Emily suddenly, a mutinous sparkle replacing the strained look in her eyes. She was not going to let Mr Carpenter have it all his own way.

But Mr Carpenter had tossed June aside without reading a line of it.

"‘I weary of the hungry world’ — what do you know of the hungry world? — you in your New Moon seclusion of old trees and old maids — but it is hungry. Ode to Winter — the seasons are a sort of disease all young poets must have, it seems — ha! ‘Spring will not forget’ — that's a good line — the only good line in it. H'm'm — Wanderings —

I've heard the secret of the rune
That the somber pines on the hillside croon —

Have you — have you learned that secret?"

"I think I've always known it," said Emily dreamily. That flash of unimaginable sweetness that sometimes surprised her had just come and gone. "Aim and Endeavour — too didactic — too didactic. You've no right to try to teach until you're old — and then you won't want to —

Her face was like a star all pale and fair —

Were you looking in the glass when you composed that line?"

"No—" indignantly.

"‘When the morning light is shaken like a banner on the hill’ — a good line — a good line —

Oh, on such a golden morning
To be living is delight —

Too much like a faint echo of Wordsworth. The Sea in September—'blue and austere' — 'austere' — child, how can you marry the

right adjectives like that? Morning—'all the secret fears that haunt the night' — what do you know of the fears that haunt the night?"

"I know something," said Emily decidedly, remembering her first night at Wyther Grange.

"To a Dead Day —

With the chilly calm on her brow
That only the dead may wear —

Have you even seen the chilly calm on the brow of the dead, Emily?"

"Yes," said Emily softly, recalling that grey dawn in the old house in the hollow.

"I thought so — otherwise you couldn't have written that — and even as it is — how old are you, jade?"

"Thirteen, last May."

"Humph! Lines to Mrs George Irving's Infant Son — you should study the art of titles, Emily — there's a fashion in them as in everything else. Your titles are as out of date as the candles of New Moon —

Soundly he sleeps with his red lips pressed
Like a beautiful blossom close to her breast —

The rest isn't worth reading. September — is there a month you've missed?—'Windy meadows harvest-deep' — good line. Blair Water by Moonlight — gossamer, Emily, nothing but gossamer. The Garden of New Moon —

Beguiling laughter and old song
Of merry maids and men —

Good line — I suppose New Moon is full of ghosts. 'Death's fell minion well fulfilled its part' — that might have passed in Addison's day but not now — not now, Emily —

Your azure dimples are the graves
Where million buried sunbeams play —

Atrocious, girl — atrocious. Graves aren't playgrounds. How much would you play if you were buried?"

Emily writhed and blushed again. Why couldn't she have seen that herself? Any goose could have seen it.

"Sail onward, ships — white wings, sail on,
Till past the horizon's purple bar
You drift from sight. — In flush of dawn
Sail on, and 'neath the evening star —

Trash — trash — and yet there's a picture in it —

Lap softly, purple waves. I dream,
And dreams are sweet — I'll wake no more —

Ah, but you'll have to wake if you want to accomplish anything. Girl, you've used purple twice in the same poem.

Buttercups in a golden frenzy —
'a golden frenzy' — girl, I see the wind shaking the buttercups,
From the purple gates of the west I come —
You're too fond of purple, Emily."
"It's such a lovely word," said Emily.
"Dreams that seem too bright to die —
Seem but never are, Emily —
The luring voice of the echo, fame —

So you've heard it, too? It is a lure and for most of us only an echo. And that's the last of the lot."

Mr Carpenter swept the little sheets aside, folded his arms on the desk, and looked over his glasses at Emily.

Emily looked back at him mutely, nervelessly. All the life seemed to have been drained out of her body and concentrated in her eyes.

"Ten good lines out of four hundred, Emily — comparatively good, that is — and all the rest balderdash — balderdash, Emily."

"I — suppose so," said Emily faintly.

Her eyes brimmed with tears — her lips quivered. She could not help it. Pride was hopelessly submerged in the bitterness of her disappointment. She felt exactly like a candle that somebody had blown out.

“What are you crying for?” demanded Mr Carpenter.

Emily blinked away the tears and tried to laugh.

“I — I’m sorry — you think it’s no good—” she said.

Mr Carpenter gave the desk a mighty thump.

“No good! Didn’t I tell you there were ten good lines? Jade, for ten righteous men Sodom had been spared.”

“Do you mean — that — after all—” The candle was being relighted again.

“Of course, I mean. If at thirteen you can write ten good lines, at twenty you’ll write ten times ten — if the gods are kind. Stop messing over months, though — and don’t imagine you’re a genius either, if you have written ten decent lines. I think there’s something trying to speak through you — but you’ll have to make yourself a fit instrument for it. You’ve got to work hard and sacrifice — by gad, girl, you’ve chosen a jealous goddess. And she never lets her votaries go — even when she shuts her ears for ever to their plea. What have you there?”

Emily, her heart thrilling, handed him her Jimmy-book. She was so happy that it shone through her whole being with a positive radiance. She saw her future, wonderful, brilliant — oh, her goddess would listen to her — “Emily B. Starr, the distinguished poet” — “E. Byrd Starr, the rising young novelist.”

She was recalled from her enchanting reverie by a chuckle from Mr Carpenter. Emily wondered a little uneasily what he was laughing at. She didn’t think there was anything funny in that book. It contained only three or four of her latest stories — The Butterfly Queen, a little fairy tale; The Disappointed House, wherein she had woven a pretty dream of hopes come true after long years; The Secret of the Glen, which, in spite of its title, was a fanciful little dialogue between the Spirit of the Snow, the Spirit of the Grey Rain, the Spirit of Mist, and the Spirit of Moonshine.

“So you think I am not beautiful when I say my prayers?” said Mr Carpenter.

Emily gasped — realized what had happened — made a frantic grab at her Jimmy-book — missed it. Mr Carpenter held it up beyond her reach and mocked at her.

She had given him the wrong Jimmy-book! And this one, oh, horrors, what was in it? Or rather, what wasn't in it? Sketches of every one in Blair Water — and a full — a very full — description of Mr Carpenter himself. Intent on describing him exactly, she had been as mercilessly lucid as she always was, especially in regard to the odd faces he made on mornings when he opened the school day with a prayer. Thanks to her dramatic knack of word painting, Mr Carpenter lived in that sketch. Emily did not know it, but he did — he saw himself as in a glass and the artistry of it pleased him so that he cared for nothing else. Besides, she had drawn his good points quite as clearly as his bad ones. And there were some sentences in it—”He looks as if he knew a great deal that can never be any use to him”—”I think he wears the black coat Mondays because it makes him feel that he hasn't been drunk at all.” Who or what had taught the little jade these things? Oh, her goddess would not pass Emily by!

“I'm — sorry,” said Emily, crimson with shame all over her dainty paleness.

“Why, I wouldn't have missed this for all the poetry you've written or ever will write! By gad, its literature — literature — and you're only thirteen. But you don't know what's ahead of you — the stony hills — the steep ascents — the buffets — the discouragements. Stay in the valley if you're wise. Emily, why do you want to write? Give me your reason.”

“I want to be famous and rich,” said Emily coolly.

“Everybody does. Is that all?”

“No. I just love to write.”

“A better reason — but not enough — not enough. Tell me this — if you knew you would be poor as a church mouse all your life — if you knew you'd never have a line published — would you still go on writing — would you?”

“Of course I would,” said Emily disdainfully. “Why, I have to write — I can’t help it at times — I’ve just got to.”

“Oh — then I’d waste my breath giving advice at all. If it’s in you to climb you must — there are those who must lift their eyes to the hills — they can’t breathe properly in the valleys. God help them if there’s some weakness in them that prevents their climbing. You don’t understand a word I’m saying — yet. But go on — climb! There, take your book and go home. Thirty years from now I will have a claim to distinction in the fact that Emily Byrd Starr was once a pupil of mine. Go — go — before I remember what a disrespectful baggage you are to write such stuff about me and be properly enraged.”

Emily went, still a bit scared but oddly exultant behind her fright. She was so happy that her happiness seemed to irradiate the world with its own splendour. All the sweet sounds of nature around her seemed like the broken words of her own delight. Mr Carpenter watched her out of sight from the old worn threshold.

“Wind — and flame — and sea!” he muttered. “Nature is always taking us by surprise. This child has — what I have never had and would have made any sacrifice to have. But ‘the gods don’t allow us to be in their debt’ — she will pay for it — she will pay.”

At sunset Emily sat in the lookout room. It was flooded with soft splendour. Outside, in sky and trees, were delicate tintings and aerial sounds. Down in the garden Daffy was chasing dead leaves along the red walks. The sight of his sleek, striped sides, the grace of his movements, gave her pleasure — as did the beautiful, even, glossy furrows of the ploughed fields beyond the lane, and the first faint white star in the crystal-green sky.

The wind of the autumn night was blowing trumpets of fairyland on the hills; and over in Lofty John’s bush was laughter — like the laughter of fauns. Ilse and Perry and Teddy were waiting there for her — they had made a tryst for a twilight romp. She would go to them — presently — not yet. She was so full of rapture that she must write it out before she went back from her world of dreams to the world of reality. Once she would

have poured it into a letter to her father. She could no longer do that. But on the table before her lay a brand-new Jimmy-book. She pulled it towards her, took up her pen, and on its first virgin page she wrote,

New moon,
Blair water,
P. E. island.

October 8th.

I am going to write a diary, that it may be published when I die.

EMILY CLIMBS

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Writing Herself Out

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Emily Byrd Starr was alone in her room, in the old New Moon farmhouse at Blair Water, one stormy night in a February of the olden years before the world turned upside down. She was at that moment as perfectly happy as any human being is ever permitted to be. Aunt Elizabeth, in consideration of the coldness of the night, had allowed her to have a fire in her little fireplace — a rare favour. It was burning brightly and showering a red-golden light over the small, immaculate room, with its old-time furniture and deep-set, wide-silled windows, to whose frosted, blue-white panes the snowflakes clung in little wreaths. It lent depth and mystery to the mirror on the wall which reflected Emily as she sat coiled on the ottoman before the fire, writing, by the light of two tall, white candles — which were the only approved means of illumination at New Moon — in a brand-new, glossy, black “Jimmy-book” which Cousin Jimmy had given her that day. Emily had been very glad to get it, for she had filled the one he had given her the preceding autumn, and for over a week she had suffered acute pangs of suppression because she could not write in a nonexistent “diary.”

Her diary had become a dominant factor in her young, vivid life. It had taken the place of certain “letters” she had written in her childhood to her dead father, in which she had been wont to “write out” her problems and worries — for even in the magic years when one is almost fourteen one has problems and worries, especially when one is under the strict and wellmeant but not over-tender governance of an Aunt Elizabeth Murray. Sometimes Emily felt that if it were not for her diary she would have flown into little bits by reason of consuming her own smoke. The fat, black “Jimmy-book” seemed to her like a personal friend and a safe confidant for certain matters which burned for expression and yet were too combustible to be trusted to the ears of any living being. Now blank books

of any sort were not easy to come by at New Moon, and if it had not been for Cousin Jimmy, Emily might never have had one. Certainly Aunt Elizabeth would not give her one — Aunt Elizabeth thought Emily wasted far too much time “over her scribbling nonsense” as it was — and Aunt Laura did not dare to go contrary to Aunt Elizabeth in this — more by token that Laura herself really thought Emily might be better employed. Aunt Laura was a jewel of a woman, but certain things were holden from her eyes.

Now Cousin Jimmy was never in the least frightened of Aunt Elizabeth, and when the notion occurred to him that Emily probably wanted another “blank book,” that blank book materialized straightway, in defiance of Aunt Elizabeth’s scornful glances. He had gone to Shrewsbury that very day, in the teeth of the rising storm, for no other reason than to get it. So Emily was happy, in her subtle and friendly firelight, while the wind howled and shrieked through the great old trees to the north of New Moon, sent huge, spectral wreaths of snow whirling across Cousin Jimmy’s famous garden, drifted the sundial completely over, and whistled eerily through the Three Princesses — as Emily always called the three tall Lombardies in the corner of the garden.

“I love a storm like this at night when I don’t have to go out in it,” wrote Emily. “Cousin Jimmy and I had a splendid evening planning out our garden and choosing our seeds and plants in the catalogue. Just where the biggest drift is making, behind the summer-house, we are going to have a bed of pink asters, and we are going to give the Golden Ones — who are dreaming under four feet of snow — a background of flowering almond. I love to plan out summer days like this, in the midst of a storm. It makes me feel as if I were winning a victory over something ever so much bigger than myself, just because I have a brain and the storm is nothing but blind, white force — terrible, but blind. I have the same feeling when I sit here cosily by my own dear fire, and hear it raging all around me, and laugh at it. And that is just because over a hundred years ago great-great-grandfather Murray built this house and built it well. I

wonder if, a hundred years from now, anybody will win a victory over anything because of something I left or did. It is an inspiring thought.

“I drew that line of italics before I thought. Mr. Carpenter says I use far too many italics. He says it is an Early Victorian obsession, and I must strive to cast it off. I concluded I would when I looked in the dictionary, for it is evidently not a nice thing to be obsessed, though it doesn’t seem quite so bad as to be possessed. There I go again: but I think the italics are all right this time.

“I read the dictionary for a whole hour — till Aunt Elizabeth got suspicious and suggested that it would be much better for me to be knitting my ribbed stockings. She couldn’t see exactly why it was wrong for me to be poring over the dictionary but she felt sure it must be because she never wants to do it. I love reading the dictionary. (Yes, those italics are necessary, Mr. Carpenter. An ordinary ‘love’ wouldn’t express my feeling at all!) Words are such fascinating things. (I caught myself at the first syllable that time!) The very sound of some of them — ‘haunted’ — ‘mystic’ — for example, gives me the flash. (Oh, dear! But I have to italicize the flash. It isn’t ordinary — it’s the most extraordinary and wonderful thing in my whole life. When it comes I feel as if a door had swung open in a wall before me and given me a glimpse of — yes, of heaven. More italics! Oh, I see why Mr. Carpenter scolds! I must break myself of the habit.)

“Big words are never beautiful — ‘incriminating’ — ‘obstreperous’ — ‘international’ — ‘unconstitutional.’ They make me think of those horrible big dahlias and chrysanthemums Cousin Jimmy took me to see at the exhibition in Charlottetown last fall. We couldn’t see anything lovely in them, though some people thought them wonderful. Cousin Jimmy’s little yellow ‘mums, like pale, fairylike stars shining against the fir copse in the northwest corner of the garden, were ten times more beautiful. But I am wandering from my subject — also a bad habit of mine, according to Mr. Carpenter. He says I must (the italics are his this time!) learn to concentrate — another big word and a very ugly one.

“But I had a good time over that dictionary — much better than I had over the ribbed stockings. I wish I could have a pair — just one pair — of silk stockings. Ilse has three. Her father gives her everything she wants, now that he has learned to love her. But Aunt Elizabeth says silk stockings are immoral. I wonder why — any more than silk dresses.

“Speaking of silk dresses, Aunt Janey Milburn, at Derry Pond — she isn’t any relation really, but everybody calls her that — has made a vow that she will never wear a silk dress until the whole heathen world is converted to Christianity. That is very fine. I wish I could be as good as that, but I couldn’t — I love silk too much. It is so rich and sheeny. I would like to dress in it all the time, and if I could afford to I would — though I suppose every time I thought of dear old Aunt Janey and the unconverted heathen I would feel conscience-stricken. However, it will be years, if ever, before I can afford to buy even one silk dress, and meanwhile I give some of my egg money every month to missions. (I have five hens of my own now, all descended from the gray pullet Perry gave me on my twelfth birthday.) If ever I can buy that one silk dress I know what it is going to be like. Not black or brown or navy blue — sensible, serviceable colours, such as New Moon Murrays always wear — oh, dear, no! It is to be of shot silk, blue in one light, silver in others, like a twilight sky, glimpsed through a frosted windowpane — with a bit of lace-foam here and there, like those little feathers of snow clinging to my windowpane. Teddy says he will paint me in it and call it ‘The Ice Maiden,’ and Aunt Laura smiles and says, sweetly and condescendingly, in a way I hate even in dear Aunt Laura,

“‘What use would such a dress be to you, Emily?’

“It mightn’t be of any use, but I would feel in it as if it were a part of me — that it grew on me and wasn’t just bought and put on. I want one dress like that in my lifetime. And a silk petticoat underneath it — and silk stockings!

“Ilse has a silk dress now — a bright pink one. Aunt Elizabeth says Dr. Burnley dresses Ilse far too old and rich for a child. But he wants to make up for all the years he didn’t dress her at all. (I don’t mean she went naked,

but she might have as far as Dr. Burnley was concerned. Other people had to see to her clothes.) He does everything she wants him to do now, and gives her her own way in everything. Aunt Elizabeth says it is very bad for her, but there are times when I envy Ilse a little. I know it is wicked, but I cannot help it.

“Dr. Burnley is going to send Ilse to Shrewsbury High School next fall, and after that to Montreal to study elocution. That is why I envy her — not because of the silk dress. I wish Aunt Elizabeth would let me go to Shrewsbury, but I fear she never will. She feels she can’t trust me out of her sight because my mother eloped. But she need not be afraid I will ever elope. I have made up my mind that I will never marry. I shall be wedded to my art.

“Teddy wants to go to Shrewsbury next fall, but his mother won’t let him go, either. Not that she is afraid of his eloping, but because she loves him so much she can’t part with him. Teddy wants to be an artist, and Mr. Carpenter says he has genius and should have his chance, but everybody is afraid to say anything to Mrs. Kent. She is a little bit of a woman — no taller than I am, really, quiet and shy — and yet every one is afraid of her. I am — dreadfully afraid. I’ve always known she didn’t like me — ever since those days long ago when Ilse and I first went up to the Tansy Patch, to play with Teddy. But now she hates me — I feel sure of it — just because Teddy likes me. She can’t bear to have him like anybody or anything but her. She is even jealous of his pictures. So there is not much chance of his getting to Shrewsbury. Perry is going. He hasn’t a cent, but he is going to work his way through. That is why he thinks he will go to Shrewsbury in place of Queen’s Academy. He thinks it will be easier to get work to do in Shrewsbury, and board is cheaper there.

“‘My old beast of an Aunt Tom has a little money,’ he told me, ‘but she won’t give me any of it — unless — unless—’

“Then he looked at me significantly.

“I blushed because I couldn’t help it, and then I was furious with myself for blushing, and with Perry — because he referred to something I didn’t want to hear about — that time ever so long ago when his Aunt Tom

met me in Lofty John's bush and nearly frightened me to death by demanding that I promise to marry Perry when we grew up, in which case she would educate him. I never told anybody about it — being ashamed — except Ilse, and she said,

“‘The idea of old Aunt Tom aspiring to a Murray for Perry!’

“But then, Ilse is awfully hard on Perry and quarrels with him half the time, over things I only smile at. Perry never likes to be outdone by anyone in anything. When we were at Amy Moore's party last week, her uncle told us a story of some remarkable freak calf he had seen, with three legs, and Perry said,

“‘Oh, that's nothing to a duck I saw once in Norway.’

“(Perry really was in Norway. He used to sail everywhere with his father when he was little. But I don't believe one word about that duck. He wasn't lying — he was just romancing. Dear Mr. Carpenter, I can't get along without italics.)

“Perry's duck had four legs, according to him — two where a proper duck's legs should be, and two sprouting from its back. And when it got tired of walking on its ordinary pair it flopped over on its back and walked on the other pair!

“Perry told this yarn with a sober face, and everybody laughed, and Amy's uncle said, ‘Go up head, Perry.’ But Ilse was furious and wouldn't speak to him all the way home. She said he had made a fool of himself, trying to ‘show off’ with a silly story like that, and that no gentleman would act so.

“Perry said: ‘I'm no gentleman, yet, only a hired boy, but some day, Miss Ilse, I'll be a finer gentleman than anyone you know.’

“‘Gentlemen,’ said Ilse in a nasty voice, ‘have to be born. They can't be made, you know.’

“Ilse has almost given up calling names, as she used to do when she quarrelled with Perry or me, and taken to saying cruel, cutting things. They hurt far worse than the names used to, but I don't really mind them — much — or long — because I know Ilse doesn't mean them and really loves me as much as I love her. But Perry says they stick in his crop. They

didn't speak to each other the rest of the way home, but next day Ilse was at him again about using bad grammar and not standing up when a lady enters the room.

"Of course you couldn't be expected to know that,' she said in her nastiest voice, 'but I am sure Mr. Carpenter has done his best to teach you grammar.'

"Perry didn't say one word to Ilse, but he turned to me.

"Will you tell me my faults?' he said. 'I don't mind you doing it — it will be you that will have to put up with me when we're grown up, not Ilse.'

"He said that to make Ilse angry, but it made me angrier still, for it was an allusion to a forbidden topic. So we neither of us spoke to him for two days and he said it was a good rest from Ilse's slams anyway.

"Perry is not the only one who gets into disgrace at New Moon. I said something silly yesterday evening which makes me blush to recall it. The Ladies' Aid met here and Aunt Elizabeth gave them a supper and the husbands of the Aid came to it. Ilse and I waited on the table, which was set in the kitchen because the dining-room table wasn't long enough. It was exciting at first and then, when every one was served, it was a little dull and I began to compose some poetry in my mind as I stood by the window looking out on the garden. It was so interesting that I soon forgot everything else until suddenly I heard Aunt Elizabeth say, 'Emily,' very sharply, and then she looked significantly at Mr. Johnson, our new minister. I was confused and I snatched up the teapot and exclaimed,

"Oh, Mr. Cup, will you have your Johnson filled?"

"Everybody roared and Aunt Elizabeth looked disgusted and Aunt Laura ashamed, and I felt as if I would sink through the floor. I couldn't sleep half the night for thinking over it. The strange thing was that I do believe I felt worse and more ashamed than I would have felt if I had done something really wrong. This is the 'Murray pride' of course, and I suppose it is very wicked. Sometimes I am afraid Aunt Ruth Dutton is right in her opinion of me after all.

"No, she isn't!

“But it is a tradition of New Moon that its women should be equal to any situation and always be graceful and dignified. Now, there was nothing graceful or dignified in asking such a question of the new minister. I am sure he will never see me again without thinking of it and I will always writhe when I catch his eye upon me.

“But now that I have written it out in my diary I don’t feel so badly over it. Nothing ever seems as big or as terrible — oh, nor as beautiful and grand, either, alas! — when it is written out, as it does when you are thinking or feeling about it. It seems to shrink directly you put it into words. Even the line of poetry I had made just before I asked that absurd question won’t seem half as fine when I write it down:

“Where the velvet feet of darkness softly go.

“It doesn’t. Some bloom seems gone from it. And yet, while I was standing there, behind all those chattering, eating people, and saw darkness stealing so softly over the garden and the hills, like a beautiful woman robed in shadows, with stars for eyes, the flash came and I forgot everything but that I wanted to put something of the beauty I felt into the words of my poem. When that line came into my mind it didn’t seem to me that I composed it at all — it seemed as if Something Else were trying to speak through me — and it was that Something Else that made the line seem wonderful — and now when it is gone the words seem flat and foolish and the picture I tried to draw in them not so wonderful after all.

“Oh, if I could only put things into words as I see them! Mr. Carpenter says, ‘Strive — strive — keep on — words are your medium — make them your slaves — until they will say for you what you want them to say.’ That is true — and I do try — but it seems to me there is something beyond words — any words — all words — something that always escapes you when you try to grasp it — and yet leaves something in your hand which you wouldn’t have had if you hadn’t reached for it.

“I remember one day last fall when Dean and I walked over the Delectable Mountain to the woods beyond it — fir woods mostly, but with one corner of splendid old pines. We sat under them and Dean read Peveril

of the Peak and some of Scott's poems to me; and then he looked up into the big, plummy boughs and said,

"‘The gods are talking in the pines — gods of the old northland — of the viking sagas. Star, do you know Emerson's lines?'

"And then he quoted them — I've remembered and loved them ever since.

"The gods talk in the breath of the wold,
They talk in the shaken pine,
And they fill the reach of the old seashore
With dialogue divine;
And the poet who overhears
One random word they say
Is the fated man of men
Whom the ages must obey.

"Oh, that 'random word' — that is the Something that escapes me. I'm always listening for it — I know I can never hear it — my ear isn't attuned to it — but I am sure I hear at times a little, faint, far-off echo of it — and it makes me feel a delight that is like pain and a despair of ever being able to translate its beauty into any words I know.

"Still, it is a pity I made such a goose of myself immediately after that wonderful experience.

"If I had just floated up behind Mr. Johnson, as velvet-footedly as darkness herself, and poured his tea gracefully from Great-grandmother Murray's silver teapot, like my shadow-woman pouring night into the white cup of Blair Valley, Aunt Elizabeth would be far better pleased with me than if I could write the most wonderful poem in the world.

"Cousin Jimmy is so different. I recited my poem to him this evening after we had finished with the catalogue and he thought it was beautiful. (He couldn't know how far it fell short of what I had seen in my mind.) Cousin Jimmy composes poetry himself. He is very clever in spots. And in other spots, where his brain was hurt when Aunt Elizabeth pushed him into our New Moon well, he isn't anything. There's just blankness there. So

people call him simple, and Aunt Ruth dares to say he hasn't sense enough to shoo a cat from cream. And yet if you put all his clever spots together there isn't anybody in Blair Water has half as much real cleverness as he has — not even Mr. Carpenter. The trouble is you can't put his clever spots together — there are always those gaps between. But I love Cousin Jimmy and I'm never in the least afraid of him when his queer spells come on him. Everybody else is — even Aunt Elizabeth, though perhaps it is remorse with her, instead of fear — except Perry. Perry always brags that he is never afraid of anything — doesn't know what fear is. I think that is very wonderful. I wish I could be so fearless. Mr. Carpenter says fear is a vile thing, and is at the bottom of almost every wrong and hatred of the world.

“‘Cast it out, Jade,’ he says—‘cast it out of your heart. Fear is a confession of weakness. What you fear is stronger than you, or you think it is, else you wouldn't be afraid of it. Remember your Emerson—”always do what you are afraid to do.””

“But that is a counsel of perfection, as Dean says, and I don't believe I'll ever be able to attain to it. To be honest, I am afraid of a good many things, but there are only two people in the world I'm truly afraid of. One is Mrs. Kent, and the other is Mad Mr. Morrison. I'm terribly afraid of him and I think almost every one is. His home is in Derry Pond, but he hardly ever stays there — he roams over the country looking for his lost bride. He was married only a few weeks when his young wife died, many years ago, and he has never been right in his mind since. He insists she is not dead, only lost, and that he will find her some time. He has grown old and bent, looking for her, but to him she is still young and fair.

“He was here one day last summer, but would not come in — just peered into the kitchen wistfully and said, ‘Is Annie here?’ He was quite gentle that day, but sometimes he is very wild and violent. He declares he always hears Annie calling to him — that her voice flits on before him — always before him, like my random word. His face is wrinkled and shrivelled and he looks like an old, old monkey. But the thing I hate most about him is his right hand — it is a deep blood-red all over —

birthmarked. I can't tell why, but that hand fills me with horror. I could not bear to touch it. And sometimes he laughs to himself very horribly. The only living thing he seems to care for is his old black dog that always is with him. They say he will never ask for a bite of food for himself. If people do not offer it to him he goes hungry, but he will beg for his dog.

"Oh, I am terribly afraid of him, and I was so glad he didn't come into the house that day. Aunt Elizabeth looked after him, as he went away with his long, gray hair streaming in the wind, and said,

"'Fairfax Morrison was once a fine, clever, young man, with excellent prospects. Well, God's ways are very mysterious.'

"'That is why they are interesting,' I said.

"But Aunt Elizabeth frowned and told me not to be irreverent, as she always does when I say anything about God. I wonder why. She won't let Perry and me talk about Him, either, though Perry is really very much interested in Him and wants to find out all about Him. Aunt Elizabeth overheard me telling Perry one Sunday afternoon what I thought God was like, and she said it was scandalous.

"It wasn't! The trouble is, Aunt Elizabeth and I have different Gods, that is all. Everybody has a different God, I think. Aunt Ruth's, for instance, is one that punishes her enemies — sends 'judgments' on them. That seems to me to be about all the use He really is to her. Jim Cosgrain uses his to swear by. But Aunt Janey Milburn walks in the light of her God's countenance, every day, and shines with it.

"I have written myself out for tonight, and am going to bed. I know I have 'wasted words' in this diary — another of my literary faults, according to Mr. Carpenter.

"'You waste words, Jade — you spill them about too lavishly. Economy and restraint — that's what you need.

"He's right, of course, and in my essays and stories I try to practise what he preaches. But in my diary, which nobody sees but myself, or ever will see until after I'm dead, I like just to let myself go."



Emily looked at her candle — it, too, was almost burned out. She knew she could not have another that night — Aunt Elizabeth's rules were as those of Mede and Persian: she put away her diary in the little righthand cupboard above the mantel, covered her dying fire, undressed and blew out her candle. The room slowly filled with the faint, ghostly snow-light of a night when a full moon is behind the driving storm-clouds. And just as Emily was ready to slip into her high black bedstead a sudden inspiration came — a splendid new idea for a story. For a minute she shivered reluctantly: the room was getting cold. But the idea would not be denied. Emily slipped her hand between the feather tick of her bed and the chaff mattress and produced a half-burned candle, secreted there for just such an emergency.

It was not, of course, a proper thing to do. But then I have never pretended, nor ever will pretend, that Emily was a proper child. Books are not written about proper children. They would be so dull nobody would read them.

She lighted her candle, put on her stockings and a heavy coat, got out another half-filled Jimmy-book, and began to write by the single, uncertain candle which made a pale oasis of light in the shadows of the room. In that oasis Emily wrote, her black head bent over her book, as the hours of night crept away and the other occupants of New Moon slumbered soundly; she grew chill and cramped, but she was quite unconscious of it. Her eyes burned — her cheeks glowed — words came like troops of obedient genii to the call of her pen. When at last her candle went out with a splutter and a hiss in its little pool of melted tallow, she came back to reality with a sigh and a shiver. It was two, by the clock, and she was very tired and very cold; but she had finished her story and it was the best she had ever written. She crept into her cold nest with a sense of completion and victory, born of the working out of her creative impulse, and fell asleep to the lullaby of the waning storm.

Salad Days

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This book is not going to be wholly, or even mainly, made up of extracts from Emily's diary; but, by way of linking up matters unimportant enough for a chapter in themselves, and yet necessary for a proper understanding of her personality and environment, I am going to include some more of them. Besides, when one has material ready to hand, why not use it? Emily's "diary," with all its youthful crudities and italics, really gives a better interpretation of her and of her imaginative and introspective mind, in that, her fourteenth spring, than any biographer, however sympathetic, could do. So let us take another peep into the yellowed pages of that old "Jimmy-book," written long ago in the "lookout" of New Moon.

* * *

"February 15, 19 —

"I have decided that I will write down, in this journal, every day, all my good deeds and all my bad ones. I got the idea out of a book, and it appeals to me. I mean to be as honest about it as I can. It will be easy, of course, to write down the good deeds, but not so easy to record the bad ones.

"I did only one bad thing to-day — only one thing I think bad, that is. I was impertinent to Aunt Elizabeth. She thought I took too long washing the dishes. I didn't suppose there was any hurry and I was composing a story called *The Secret of the Mill*. Aunt Elizabeth looked at me and then at the clock, and said in her most disagreeable way,

"'Is the snail your sister, Emily?'

"'No! Snails are no relation to me,' I said haughtily.

"It was not what I said, but the way I said it that was impertinent. And I meant it to be. I was very angry — sarcastic speeches always aggravate

me. Afterwards I was very sorry that I had been in a temper — but I was sorry because it was foolish and undignified, not because it was wicked. So I suppose that was not true repentance.

“As for my good deeds, I did two to-day. I saved two little lives. Saucy Sal had caught a poor snowbird and I took it from her. It flew off quite briskly, and I am sure it felt wonderfully happy. Later on I went down to the cellar cupboard and found a mouse caught in a trap by its foot. The poor thing lay there, almost exhausted from struggling, with such a look in its black eyes. I couldn’t endure it so I set it free, and it managed to get away quite smartly in spite of its foot. I do not feel sure about this deed. I know it was a good one from the mouse’s point of view, but what about Aunt Elizabeth’s?

“This evening Aunt Laura and Aunt Elizabeth read and burned a boxful of old letters. They read them aloud and commented on them, while I sat in a corner and knitted my stockings. The letters were very interesting and I learned a great deal about the Murrays I had never known before. I feel that it is quite wonderful to belong to a family like this. No wonder the Blair Water folks call us ‘the Chosen People’ — though they don’t mean it as a compliment. I feel that I must live up to the traditions of my family.

“I had a long letter from Dean Priest to-day. He is spending the winter in Algiers. He says he is coming home in April and is going to take rooms with his sister, Mrs. Fred Evans, for the summer. I am so glad. It will be splendid to have him in Blair Water all summer. Nobody ever talks to me as Dean does. He is the nicest and most interesting old person I know. Aunt Elizabeth says he is selfish, as all the Priests are. But then she does not like the Priests. And she always calls him Jarback, which somehow sets my teeth on edge. One of Dean’s shoulders is a little higher than the other, but that is not his fault. I told Aunt Elizabeth once that I wished she would not call my friend that, but she only said,

“‘I did not nickname your friend, Emily. His own clan have always called him Jarback. The Priests are not noted for delicacy!’”

“Teddy had a letter from Dean, too, and a book — *The Lives of Great Artists* — Michael Angelo, Raphael, Velasquez, Rembrandt, Titian. He

says he dare not let his mother see him reading it — she would burn it. I am sure if Teddy could only have his chance he would be as great an artist as any of them.

* * *

“February 18, 19 —

“I had a lovely time with myself this evening, after school, walking on the brook road in Lofty John’s bush. The sun was low and creamy and the snow so white and the shadows so slender and blue. I think there is nothing so beautiful as tree shadows. And when I came out into the garden my own shadow looked so funny — so long that it stretched right across the garden. I immediately made a poem of which two lines were,

“If we were as tall as our shadows
How tall our shadows would be.

“I think there is a good deal of philosophy in that.

“Tonight I wrote a story and Aunt Elizabeth knew what I was doing and was very much annoyed. She scolded me for wasting time. But it wasn’t wasted time. I grew in it — I know I did. And there was something about some of the sentences I liked. ‘I am afraid of the grey wood’ — that pleased me very much. And—’white and stately she walked the dark wood like a moonbeam.’ I think that is rather fine. Yet Mr. Carpenter tells me that whenever I think a thing especially fine I am to cut it out. But oh, I can’t cut that out — not yet, at least. The strange part is that about three months after Mr. Carpenter tells me to cut a thing out I come round to his point of view and feel ashamed of it. Mr. Carpenter was quite merciless over my essay to-day. Nothing about it suited him.

“‘Three alas’s in one paragraph, Emily. One would have been too many in this year of grace!’ ‘More irresistible — Emily, for heaven’s sake, write English! That is unpardonable.’

“It was, too. I saw it for myself and I felt shame going all over me from head to foot like a red wave. Then, after Mr. Carpenter had blue-

pencilled almost every sentence and sneered at all my fine phrases and found fault with most of my constructions and told me I was too fond of putting ‘cleverisms’ into everything I wrote, he flung my exercise book down, tore at his hair and said,

“‘You write! Jade, get a spoon and learn to cook!’

“Then he strode off, muttering maledictions ‘not loud but deep.’ I picked up my poor essay and didn’t feel very badly. I can cook already, and I have learned a thing or two about Mr. Carpenter. The better my essays are the more he rages over them. This one must have been quite good. But it makes him so angry and impatient to see where I might have made it still better and didn’t — through carelessness or laziness or indifference — as he thinks. And he can’t tolerate a person who could do better and doesn’t. And he wouldn’t bother with me at all if he didn’t think I may amount to something by and by.

“Aunt Elizabeth does not approve of Mr. Johnson. She thinks his theology is not sound. He said in his sermon last Sunday that there was some good in Buddhism.

“‘He will be saying that there is some good in Popery next,’ said Aunt Elizabeth indignantly at the dinnertable.

“There may be some good in Buddhism. I must ask Dean about it when he comes home.

* * *

“March 2, 19 —

“We were all at a funeral to-day — old Mrs. Sarah Paul. I have always liked going to funerals. When I said that, Aunt Elizabeth looked shocked and Aunt Laura said, ‘Oh, Emily dear!’ I rather like to shock Aunt Elizabeth, but I never feel comfortable if I worry Aunt Laura — she’s such a darling — so I explained — or tried to. It is sometimes very hard to explain things to Aunt Elizabeth.

“‘Funerals are interesting,’ I said. ‘And humorous, too.’

“I think I only made matters worse by saying that. And yet Aunt Elizabeth knew as well as I did that it was funny to see some of those relatives of Mrs. Paul, who have fought with and hated her for years — she wasn’t amiable, if she is dead! — sitting there, holding their handkerchiefs to their faces and pretending to cry. I knew quite well what each and every one was thinking in his heart. Jake Paul was wondering if the old harridan had by any chance left him anything in her will — and Alice Paul, who knew she wouldn’t get anything, was hoping Jake Paul wouldn’t either. That would satisfy her. And Mrs. Charles Paul was wondering how soon it would be decent to do the house over the way she had always wanted it and Mrs. Paul hadn’t. And Aunt Min was worrying for fear there wouldn’t be enough baked meats for such a mob of fourth cousins that they’d never expected and didn’t want, and Lisette Paul was counting the people and feeling vexed because there wasn’t as large an attendance as there was at Mrs. Henry Lister’s funeral last week. When I told Aunt Laura this, she said gravely,

“‘All this may be true, Emily’ — (she knew it was!)—’but somehow it doesn’t seem quite right for so young a girl as you, to — to — to be able to see these things, in short.’

“However, I can’t help seeing them. Darling Aunt Laura is always so sorry for people that she can’t see their humorous side. But I saw other things too. I saw that little Zack Fritz, whom Mrs. Paul adopted and was very kind to, was almost brokenhearted, and I saw that Martha Paul was feeling sorry and ashamed to think of her bitter old quarrel with Mrs. Paul — and I saw that Mrs. Paul’s face, that looked so discontented and thwarted in life, looked peaceful and majestic and even beautiful — as if Death had satisfied her at last.

“Yes, funerals are interesting.

* * *

“March 5, 19 —

“It is snowing a little tonight. I love to see the snow coming down in slanting lines against the dark trees.

“I think I did a good deed to-day. Jason Merrowby was here helping Cousin Jimmy saw wood — and I saw him sneak into the pighouse, and take a swig from a whisky bottle. But I did not say one word about it to anyone — that is my good deed.

“Perhaps I ought to tell Aunt Elizabeth, but if I did she would never have him again, and he needs all the work he can get, for his poor wife’s and children’s sakes. I find it is not always easy to be sure whether your deeds are good or bad.

* * *

“March 20, 19 —

“Yesterday Aunt Elizabeth was very angry because I would not write an ‘obituary poem’ for old Peter DeGeer who died last week. Mrs. DeGeer came here and asked me to do it. I wouldn’t — I felt very indignant at such a request. I felt it would be a desecration of my art to do such a thing — though of course I didn’t say that to Mrs. DeGeer. For one thing it would have hurt her feelings, and for another she wouldn’t have had the faintest idea what I meant. Even Aunt Elizabeth hadn’t when I told her my reasons for refusing, after Mrs. DeGeer had gone.

“‘You are always writing yards of trash that nobody wants,’ she said. ‘I think you might write something that is wanted. It would have pleased poor old Mary DeGeer. “Desecration of your art” indeed. If you must talk, Emily, why not talk sense?’

“I proceeded to talk sense.

“‘Aunt Elizabeth,’ I said seriously, ‘how could I write that obituary poem for her? I couldn’t write an untruthful one to please anybody. And you know yourself that nothing good and truthful could be said about old Peter DeGeer!’

“Aunt Elizabeth did know it, and it posed her, but she was all the more displeased with me for that. She vexed me so much that I came up to my

room and wrote an ‘obituary poem’ about Peter, just for my own satisfaction. It is certainly great fun to write a truthful obituary of some one you don’t like. Not that I disliked Peter DeGeer; I just despised him as everybody did. But Aunt Elizabeth had annoyed me, and when I am annoyed I can write very sarcastically. And again I felt that Something was writing through me — but a very different Something from the usual one — a malicious, mocking Something that enjoyed making fun of poor, lazy, shiftless, lying, silly, hypocritical, old Peter DeGeer. Ideas — words — rhymes — all seemed to drop into place while that Something chuckled.

“I thought the poem was so clever that I couldn’t resist the temptation to take it to school to-day and show it to Mr Carpenter. I thought he would enjoy it — and I think he did, too, in a way, but after he had read it he laid it down and looked at me.

“‘I suppose there is a pleasure in satirizing a failure,’ he said. ‘Poor old Peter was a failure — and he is dead — and His Maker may be merciful to him, but his fellow creatures will not. When I am dead, Emily, will you write like this about me? You have the power — oh, yes, it’s all here — this is very clever. You can paint the weakness and foolishness and wickedness of a character in a way that is positively uncanny, in a girl of your age. But — is it worth while, Emily?’

“‘No — no,’ I said. I was so ashamed and sorry that I wanted to get away and cry. It was terrible to think Mr. Carpenter imagined I would ever write so about him, after all he has done for me.

“‘It isn’t,’ said Mr. Carpenter. ‘There is a place for satire — there are gangrenes that can only be burned out — but leave the burning to the great geniuses. It’s better to heal than hurt. We failures know that.’

“‘Oh, Mr. Carpenter!’ I began. I wanted to say he wasn’t a failure — I wanted to say a hundred things — but he wouldn’t let me.

“‘There — there, we won’t talk of it, Emily. When I am dead say, “He was a failure, and none knew it more truly or felt it more bitterly than himself.” Be merciful to the failures, Emily. Satirize wickedness if you must — but pity weakness.’

“He stalked off then, and called school in. I’ve felt wretched ever since and I won’t sleep tonight. But here and now I record this vow, most solemnly, in my diary, My pen shall heal, not hurt. And I write it in italics, Early Victorian or not, because I am tremendously in earnest.

“I didn’t tear that poem up, though — I couldn’t — it really was too good to destroy. I put it away in my literary cupboard to read over once in a while for my own enjoyment, but I will never show it to anybody.

“Oh, how I wish I hadn’t hurt Mr. Carpenter!

* * *

“April 1, 19 —

“Something I heard a visitor in Blair Water say today annoyed me very much. Mr. and Mrs. Alec Sawyer, who live in Charlottetown, were in the post office when I was there. Mrs. Sawyer is very handsome and fashionable and condescending. I heard her say to her husband, ‘How do the natives of this sleepy place continue to live here year in and year out? I should go mad. Nothing ever happens here.’

“I would dearly have liked to tell her a few things about Blair Water. I could have been sarcastic with a vengeance. But, of course, New Moon people do not make scenes in public. So I contented myself with bowing very coldly when she spoke to me and sweeping past her. I heard Mr. Sawyer say, ‘Who is that girl?’ and Mrs. Sawyer said, ‘She must be that Starr puss — she has the Murray trick of holding her head, all right.’

“The idea of saying ‘nothing ever happens here’! Why, things are happening right along — thrilling things. I think life here is extremely wonderful. We have always so much to laugh and cry and talk about.

“Look at all the things that have happened in Blair Water in just the last three weeks — comedy and tragedy all mixed up together. James Baxter has suddenly stopped speaking to his wife and nobody knows why. She doesn’t, poor soul, and she is breaking her heart about it. Old Adam Gillian, who hated pretence of any sort, died two weeks ago and his last words were, ‘See that there isn’t any howling and sniffing at my funeral.’

So nobody howled or sniffled. Nobody wanted to, and since he had forbidden it nobody pretended to. There never was such a cheerful funeral in Blair Water. I've seen weddings that were more melancholy — Ella Brice's, for instance. What cast a cloud over hers was that she forgot to put on her white slippers when she dressed, and went down to the parlour in a pair of old, faded, bedroom shoes with holes in the toes. Really, people couldn't have talked more about it if she had gone down without anything on. Poor Ella cried all through the wedding-supper about it.

“Old Robert Scobie and his half-sister have quarrelled, after living together for thirty years without a fuss, although she is said to be a very aggravating woman. Nothing she did or said ever provoked Robert into an outburst, but it seems that there was just one doughnut left from supper one evening recently, and Robert is very fond of doughnuts. He put it away in the pantry for a bedtime snack, and when he went to get it he found that Matilda had eaten it. He went into a terrible rage, pulled her nose, called her a she-deviless, and ordered her out of his house. She has gone to live with her sister at Derry Pond, and Robert is going to bach it. Neither of them will ever forgive the other, Scobie-like, and neither will ever be happy or contented again.

“George Lake was walking home from Derry Pond one moonlit evening two weeks ago, and all at once he saw another very black shadow going along beside his, on the moonlit snow.

“And there was nothing to cast that shadow.

He rushed to the nearest house, nearly dead with fright, and they say he will never be the same man again.

“This is the most dramatic thing that has happened. It makes me shiver as I write of it. Of course George must have been mistaken. But he is a truthful man, and he doesn't drink. I don't know what to think of it.

“Arminius Scobie is a very mean man and always buys his wife's hats for her, lest she pay too much for them. They know this in the Shrewsbury stores, and laugh at him. One day last week he was in Jones and McCallum's, buying her a hat, and Mr. Jones told him that if he would wear the hat from the store to the station he would let him have it for

nothing. Arminius did. It was a quarter of a mile to the station and all the small boys in Shrewsbury ran after him and hooted him. But Arminius didn't care. He had saved three dollars and forty-nine cents.

"And, one evening, right here at New Moon, I dropped a soft-boiled egg on Aunt Elizabeth's second-best cashmere dress. That was a happening. A kingdom might have been upset in Europe, and it wouldn't have made such a commotion at New Moon.

"So, Mistress Sawyer, you are vastly mistaken. Besides, apart from all happenings, the folks here are interesting in themselves. I don't like every one but I find every one interesting — Miss Matty Small, who is forty and wears outrageous colours — she wore an old-rose dress and a scarlet hat to church all last summer — old Uncle Reuben Bascom, who is so lazy that he held an umbrella over himself all one rainy night in bed, when the roof began to leak, rather than get out and move the bed — Elder McCloskey, who thought it wouldn't do to say 'pants' in a story he was telling about a missionary, at prayer-meeting, so always said politely 'the clothes of his lower parts' — Amasa Derry, who carried off four prizes at the Exhibition last fall, with vegetables he stole from Ronnie Bascom's field, while Ronnie didn't get one prize — Jimmy Joe Belle, who came here from Derry Pond yesterday to get some lumber 'to beeld a henhouse for my leetle dog' — old Luke Elliott, who is such a systematic fiend that he even draws up a schedule of the year on New Year's day, and charts down all the days he means to get drunk on — and sticks to it: — they're all interesting and amusing and delightful.

"There, I've proved Mrs. Alex Sawyer to be so completely wrong that I feel quite kindly towards her, even though she did call me a puss.

"Why don't I like being called a puss, when cats are such nice things? And I like being called pussy.

* * *

"April 28, 19 —

“Two weeks ago I sent my very best poem, Wind Song, to a magazine in New York, and to-day it came back with just a little printed slip saying, ‘We regret we cannot use this contribution.’

“I feel dreadfully. I suppose I can’t really write anything that is any good.

“I can. That magazine will be glad to print my pieces some day!

“I didn’t tell Mr. Carpenter I sent it. I wouldn’t get any sympathy from him. He says that five years from now will be time enough to begin pestering editors. But I know that some poems I’ve read in that very magazine were not a bit better than Wind Song.

“I feel more like writing poetry in spring than at any other time. Mr. Carpenter tells me to fight against the impulse. He says spring has been responsible for more trash than anything else in the universe of God.

“Mr. Carpenter’s way of talking has a tang to it.

* * *

“May 1, 19 —

“Dean is home. He came to his sister’s yesterday and this evening he was here and we walked in the garden, up and down the sundial walk, and talked. It was splendid to have him back, with his mysterious green eyes and his nice mouth.

“We had a long conversation. We talked of Algiers and the transmigration of souls and of being cremated and of profiles — Dean says I have a good profile—‘pure Greek.’ I always like Dean’s compliments.

“‘Star o’ Morning, how you have grown!’ he said. ‘I left a child last autumn — and I find a woman!’

“(I will be fourteen in three weeks, and I am tall for my age. Dean seems to be glad of this — quite unlike Aunt Laura who always sighs when she lengthens my dresses, and thinks children grow up too fast.)

“‘So goes time by,’ I said, quoting the motto on the sundial, and feeling quite sophisticated.

“‘You are almost as tall as I am,’ he said; and then added bitterly, ‘to be sure Jarback Priest is of no very stately height.’

“I have always shrunk from referring to his shoulder in any way, but now I said,

“‘Dean, please don’t sneer at yourself like that — not with me, at least. I never think of you as Jarback.’

“Dean took my hand and looked right into my eyes as if he were trying to read my very soul.

“‘Are you sure of that, Emily? Don’t you often wish that I wasn’t lame — and crooked?’

“‘For your sake I do,’ I answered, ‘but as far as I am concerned it doesn’t make a bit of difference — and never will.’

“‘And never will!’ Dean repeated the words emphatically. ‘If I were sure of that, Emily — if I were only sure of that.’

“‘You can be sure of it,’ I declared quite warmly. I was vexed because he seemed to doubt it — and yet something in his expression made me feel a little uncomfortable. It suddenly made me think of the time he rescued me from the cliff on Malvern Bay and told me my life belonged to him since he had saved it. I don’t like the thought of my life belonging to any one but myself — not any one, even Dean, much as I like him. And in some ways I like Dean better than any one in the world.

“When it got darker the stars came out and we studied them through Dean’s splendid new field-glasses. It was very fascinating. Dean knows all about the stars — it seems to me he knows all about everything. But when I said so, he said,

“‘There is one secret I do not know — I would give everything else I do know for it — one secret — perhaps I shall never know it. The way to win — the way to win—’

“‘What?’ I asked curiously.

“‘My heart’s desire,’ said Dean dreamily, looking at a shimmering star that seemed to be hung on the very tip of one of the Three Princesses. ‘It seems now as desirable and unobtainable as that gem-like star, Emily. But — who knows?’

“I wonder what it is Dean wants so much.

* * *

“May 4, 19 —

“Dean brought me a lovely portfolio from Paris, and I have copied my favourite verse from *The Fringed Gentian* on the inside of the cover. I will read it over every day and remember my vow to ‘climb the Alpine Path.’ I begin to see that I will have to do a good bit of scrambling, though I once expected, I think, to soar right up to ‘that far-off goal’ on shining wings. Mr. Carpenter has banished that fond dream.

“‘Dig in your toes and hang on with your teeth — that’s the only way,’ he says.

“Last night in bed I thought out some lovely titles for the books I’m going to write in the future — *A Lady of High Degree*, *True to Faith and Vow*, *Oh, Rare Pale Margaret* (I got that from Tennyson), *The Caste of Vere de Vere* (ditto) and *A Kingdom by the Sea*.

“Now, if I can only get ideas to match the titles!

“I am writing a story called *The House Among the Rowans* — also a very good title, I think. But the love talk still bothers me. Everything of the kind I write seems so stiff and silly the minute I write it down that it infuriates me. I asked Dean if he could teach me how to write it properly because he promised long ago that he would, but he said I was too young yet — said it in that mysterious way of his which always seems to convey the idea that there is so much more in his words than the mere sound of them expresses. I wish I could speak so significantly, because it makes you very interesting.

“This evening after school Dean and I began to read *The Alhambra* over again, sitting on the stone bench in the garden. That book always makes me feel as if I had opened a little door and stepped straight into fairyland.

“‘How I would love to see the Alhambra!’ I said.

“‘We will go to see it sometime — together,’ said Dean.

“‘Oh, that would be lovely,’ I cried. ‘Do you think we can ever manage it, Dean?’

“Before Dean could answer I heard Teddy’s whistle in Lofty John’s bush — the dear little whistle of two short high notes and one long low one, that is our signal.

“‘Excuse me — I must go — Teddy’s calling me,’ I said.

“‘Must you always go when Teddy calls?’ asked Dean.

“I nodded and explained,

“‘He only calls like that when he wants me especially and I have promised I will always go if I possibly can.’

“‘I want you especially!’ said Dean. ‘I came up this evening on purpose to read The Alhambra with you.’

“Suddenly I felt very unhappy. I wanted to stay with Dean dreadfully, and yet I felt as if I must go to Teddy. Dean looked at me piercingly. Then he shut up The Alhambra.

“‘Go,’ he said.

“I went — but things seemed spoiled, somehow.

* * *

“May 10, 19 —

“I have been reading three books Dean lent me this week. One was like a rose garden — very pleasant, but just a little too sweet. And one was like a pine wood on a mountain — full of balsam and tang — I loved it, and yet it filled me with a sort of despair. It was written so beautifully — I can never write like that, I feel sure. And one — it was just like a pigsty. Dean gave me that one by mistake. He was very angry with himself when he found it out — angry and distressed.

“‘Star — Star — I would never have given you a book like that — my confounded carelessness — forgive me. That book is a faithful picture of one world — but not your world, thank God — nor any world you will ever be a citizen of. Star, promise me you will forget that book.’

“‘I’ll forget it if I can,’ I said.

“But I don’t know if I can. It was so ugly. I have not been so happy since I read it. I feel as if my hands were soiled somehow and I couldn’t wash them clean. And I have another queer feeling, as if some gate had been shut behind me, shutting me into a new world I don’t quite understand or like, but through which I must travel.

“Tonight I tried to write a description of Dean in my Jimmy-book of character sketches. But I didn’t succeed. What I wrote seemed like a photograph — not a portrait. There is something in Dean that is beyond me.

“Dean took a picture of me the other day with his new camera, but he wasn’t pleased with it.

“‘It doesn’t look like you,’ he said, ‘but of course one can never photograph starlight.’

“Then he added, quite sharply, I thought,

“‘Tell that young imp of a Teddy Kent to keep your face out of his pictures. He has no business to put you into every one he draws.’

“‘He doesn’t!’ I cried. ‘Why, Teddy never made but the one picture of me — the one Aunt Nancy stole.’

“I said it quite viciously and unashamed, for I’ve never forgiven Aunt Nancy for keeping that picture.

“‘He’s got something of you in every picture,’ said Dean stubbornly — ‘your eyes — the curve of your neck — the tilt of your head — your personality. That’s the worst — I don’t mind your eyes and curves so much, but I won’t have that cub putting a bit of your soul into everything he draws. Probably he doesn’t know he’s doing it — which makes it all the worse.’

“‘I don’t understand you,’ I said, quite haughtily. ‘But Teddy is wonderful — Mr. Carpenter says so.’

“‘And Emily of New Moon echoes it! Oh, the kid has talent — he’ll do something some day if his morbid mother doesn’t ruin his life. But let him keep his pencil and brush off my property.’

“Dean laughed as he said it. But I held my head high. I am not anybody’s ‘property,’ not even in fun. And I never will be.

* * *

“May 12, 19 —

“Aunt Ruth and Uncle Wallace and Uncle Oliver were all here this afternoon. I like Uncle Oliver, but I am not much fonder of Aunt Ruth and Uncle Wallace than I ever was. They held some kind of family conclave in the parlour with Aunt Elizabeth and Aunt Laura. Cousin Jimmy was allowed in but I was excluded, although I feel perfectly certain that it had something to do with me. I think Aunt Ruth didn’t get her own way, either, for she snubbed me continually all through supper, and said I was growing weedy! Aunt Ruth generally snubs me and Uncle Wallace patronizes me. I prefer Aunt Ruth’s snubs because I don’t have to look as if I liked them. I endured them to a certain point, and then the lid flew off. Aunt Ruth said to me,

“‘Em’ly, don’t contradict,’ just as she might have spoken to a mere child. I looked her right in the eyes and said coldly,

“‘Aunt Ruth, I think I am too old to be spoken to in that fashion now.’

“‘You are not too old to be very rude and impertinent,’ said Aunt Ruth, with a sniff, ‘and if I were in Elizabeth’s place I would give you a sound box on the ear, Miss.’

“I hate to be Em’ly’d and Miss’d and sniffed at! It seems to me that Aunt Ruth has all the Murray faults, and none of their virtues.

“Uncle Oliver’s son Andrew came with him and is going to stay for a week. He is four years older than I am.

* * *

“May 19, 19 —

“This is my birthday. I am fourteen years old today. I wrote a letter ‘From myself at fourteen to myself at twenty-four,’ sealed it up and put it away in my cupboard, to be opened on my twenty-fourth birthday. I made some predictions in it. I wonder if they will have come to pass when I open it.

“Aunt Elizabeth gave me back all Father’s books today. I was so glad. It seems to me that a part of Father is in those books. His name is in each one in his own handwriting, and the notes he made on the margins. They seem like little bits of letters from him. I have been looking over them all the evening, and Father seems so near to me again, and I feel both happy and sad.

“One thing spoiled the day for me. In school, when I went up to the blackboard to work a problem, everybody suddenly began to titter. I could not imagine why. Then I discovered that some one had pinned a sheet of foolscap to my back, on which was printed in big, black letters: ‘Emily Byrd Starr, Authoress of The Four-Legged Duck.’ They laughed more than ever when I snatched it off and threw it in the coalscuttle. It infuriates me when anyone ridicules my ambitions like that. I came home angry and sore. But when I had sat on the steps of the summer-house and looked at one of Cousin Jimmy’s big purple pansies for five minutes all my anger went away. Nobody can keep on being angry if she looks into the heart of a pansy for a little while.

“Besides, the time will come when they will not laugh at me!

“Andrew went home yesterday. Aunt Elizabeth asked me how I liked him. She never asked me how I liked anyone before — my likings were not important enough. I suppose she is beginning to realize that I am no longer a child.

“I said I thought he was good and kind and stupid and uninteresting.

“Aunt Elizabeth was so annoyed she would not speak to me the whole evening. Why? I had to tell the truth. And Andrew is.

* * *

“May 21, 19 —

“Old Kelly was here to-day for the first time this spring, with a load of shining new tins. He brought me a bag of candies as usual — and teased me about getting married, also as usual. But he seemed to have something

on his mind, and when I went to the dairy to get him the drink of milk he had asked for, he followed me.

“‘Gurrl dear,’ he said mysteriously. ‘I met Jarback Praste in the lane. Does he be coming here much?’

“I cocked my head at the Murray angle.

“‘If you mean Mr. Dean Priest,’ I said, ‘he comes often. He is a particular friend of mine.’

“Old Kelly shook his head.

“‘Gurrl dear — I warned ye — niver be after saying I didn’t warn ye. I towld ye the day I took ye to Praste Pond niver to marry a Praste. Didn’t I now?’

“‘Mr. Kelly, you’re too ridiculous,’ I said — angry and yet feeling it was absurd to be angry with Old Jock Kelly. ‘I’m not going to marry anybody. Mr. Priest is old enough to be my father, and I am just a little girl he helps in her studies.’

“Old Kelly gave his head another shake.

“‘I know the Prastes, gurrl dear — and when they do be after setting their minds on a thing ye might as well try to turn the wind. This Jarback now — they tell me he’s had his eye on ye iver since he fished ye up from the Malvern rocks — he’s just biding his time till ye get old enough for coorting. They tell me he’s an infidel, and it’s well known that whin he was being christened he rached up and clawed the spectacles off av the minister. So what wud ye ixpect? I nadn’t be telling ye he’s lame and crooked — ye can see that for yerself. Take foolish Ould Kelly’s advice and cut loose while there’s time. Now, don’t be looking at me like the Murrays, gurrl dear. Shure, and it’s for your own good I do be spaking.’

“I walked off and left him. One couldn’t argue with him over such a thing. I wish people wouldn’t put such ideas into my mind. They stick there like burrs. I won’t feel as comfortable with Dean for weeks now, though I know perfectly well every word Old Kelly said was nonsense.

“After Old Kelly went away I came up to my room and wrote a full description of him in a Jimmy-book.

“Ilse has got a new hat trimmed with clouds of blue tulle, and red cherries, with big blue tulle bows under the chin. I did not like it and told her so. She was furious and said I was jealous and hasn’t spoken to me for two days. I thought it all over. I knew I was not jealous, but I concluded I had made a mistake. I will never again tell anyone a thing like that. It was true but it was not tactful.

“I hope Ilse will have forgiven me by tomorrow. I miss her horribly when she is offended with me. She’s such a dear thing and so jolly, and splendid, when she isn’t vexed.

“Teddy is a little squiffy with me, too, just now. I think it is because Geoff North walked home with me from prayer-meeting last Wednesday night. I hope that is the reason. I like to feel that I have that much power over Teddy.

“I wonder if I ought to have written that down. But it’s true.

“If Teddy only knew it, I have been very unhappy and ashamed over that affair. At first, when Geoff singled me out from all the girls, I was quite proud of it. It was the very first time I had had an escort home, and Geoff is a town boy, very handsome and polished, and all the older girls in Blair Water are quite foolish about him. So I sailed away from the church door with him, feeling as if I had grown up all at once. But we hadn’t gone far before I was hating him. He was so condescending. He seemed to think I was a simple little country girl who must be quite overwhelmed with the honour of his company.

“And that was true at first! That was what stung me. To think I had been such a little fool!

“He kept saying, ‘Really, you surprise me,’ in an affected, drawling kind of way, whenever I made a remark. And he bored me. He couldn’t talk sensibly about anything. Or else he wouldn’t try to with me. I was quite savage by the time we got to New Moon. And then that insufferable creature asked me to kiss him!

“I drew myself up — oh, I was Murray clear through at that moment, all right. I felt I was looking exactly like Aunt Elizabeth.

“‘I do not kiss young men,’ I said disdainfully.

“Geoff laughed and caught my hand.

“‘Why, you little goose, what do you suppose I came home with you for?’ he said.

“I pulled my hand away from him, and walked into the house. But before I did that, I did something else.

“I slapped his face!

“Then I came up to my room and cried with shame over being insulted, and having been so undignified in resenting it. Dignity is a tradition of New Moon, and I felt that I had been false to it.

“But I think I ‘surprised’ Geoff North in right good earnest!

* * *

“May 24, 19 —

“Jennie Strang told me to-day that Geoff North told her brother that I was ‘a regular spitfire’ and he had had enough of me.

“Aunt Elizabeth has found out that Geoff came home with me, and told me to-day that I would not be ‘trusted’ to go alone to prayer-meeting again.

* * *

“May 25, 19 —

“I am sitting here in my room at twilight. The window is open and the frogs are singing of something that happened very long ago. All along the middle garden walk the Gay Folk are holding up great fluted cups of ruby and gold and pearl. It is not raining now, but it rained all day — a rain scented with lilacs. I like all kinds of weather and I like rainy days — soft, misty, rainy days when the Wind Woman just shakes the tops of the spruces gently; and wild, tempestuous, streaming rainy days. I like being shut in by the rain — I like to hear it thudding on the roof, and beating on the panes and pouring off the eaves, while the Wind Woman skirls like a mad old witch in the woods, and through the garden.

“Still, if it rains when I want to go anywhere I growl just as much as anybody!

“An evening like this always makes me think of that spring Father died, three years ago, and that dear little, old house down at Maywood. I’ve never been back since. I wonder if anyone is living in it now. And if Adam-and-Eve and the Rooster Pine and the Praying Tree are just the same. And who is sleeping in my old room there, and if anyone is loving the little birches and playing with the Wind Woman in the spruce barrens. Just as I wrote the words ‘spruce barrens’ an old memory came back to me. One spring evening, when I was eight years old, I was running about the barrens playing hide-and-seek with the Wind Woman, and I found a little hollow between two spruces that was just carpeted with tiny, bright-green leaves, when everything else was still brown and faded. They were so beautiful that the flash came as I looked at them — it was the very first time it ever came to me. I suppose that is why I remember those little green leaves so distinctly. No one else remembers them — perhaps no one else ever saw them. I have forgotten other leaves, but I remember them every spring and with each remembrance I feel again the wonder-moment they gave me.”

In the Watches of the Night

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Some of us can recall the exact time in which we reached certain milestones on life's road — the wonderful hour when we passed from childhood to girlhood — the enchanted, beautiful — or perhaps the shattering and horrible — hour when girlhood was suddenly womanhood — the chilling hour when we faced the fact that youth was definitely behind us — the peaceful, sorrowful hour of the realization of age. Emily Starr never forgot the night when she passed the first milestone, and left childhood behind her for ever.

Every experience enriches life and the deeper such an experience, the greater the richness it brings. That night of horror and mystery and strange delight ripened her mind and heart like the passage of years.

It was a night early in July. The day had been one of intense heat. Aunt Elizabeth had suffered so much from it that she decided she would not go to prayer-meeting. Aunt Laura and Cousin Jimmy and Emily went. Before leaving Emily asked and obtained Aunt Elizabeth's permission to go home with Ilse Burnley after meeting, and spend the night. This was a rare treat. Aunt Elizabeth did not approve of all-night absences as a general thing.

But Dr. Burnley had to be away, and his housekeeper was temporarily laid up with a broken ankle. Ilse had asked Emily to come over for the night, and Emily was to be permitted to go. Ilse did not know this — hardly hoped for it, in fact — but was to be informed at prayer-meeting. If Ilse had not been late Emily would have told her before meeting "went in," and the mischances of the night would probably have been averted; but Ilse, as usual, was late, and everything else followed in course.

Emily sat in the Murray pew, near the top of the church by the window that looked out into the grove of fir and maple that surrounded the little white church. This prayer-meeting was not the ordinary weekly sprinkling of a faithful few. It was a "special meeting," held in view of the

approaching communion Sunday, and the speaker was not young, earnest Mr. Johnson, to whom Emily always liked to listen, in spite of her blunder at the Ladies' Aid Supper but an itinerant evangelist lent by Shrewsbury for one night. His fame brought out a churchful of people, but most of the audience declared afterwards that they would much rather have heard their own Mr. Johnson. Emily looked at him with her level, critical gaze, and decided that he was oily and unspiritual. She heard him through a prayer, and thought,

“Giving God good advice, and abusing the devil isn't praying.”

She listened to his discourse for a few minutes and made up her mind that he was blatant and illogical and sensational, and then proceeded, coolly, to shut mind and ears to him and disappear into dreamland — something which she could generally do at will when anxious to escape from discordant realities.

Outside, moonlight was still sifting in a rain of silver through the firs and maples, though an ominous bank of cloud was making up in the northwest, and repeated rumblings of thunder came on the silent air of the hot summer night — a windless night for the most part, though occasionally a sudden breath that seemed more like a sigh than a breeze brushed through the trees, and set their shadows dancing in weird companies. There was something strange about the night in its mingling of placid, accustomed beauty with the omens of rising storm, that intrigued Emily, and she spent half the time of the evangelist's address in composing a mental description of it for her Jimmy-book. The rest of the time she studied such of the audience as were within her range of vision.

This was something that Emily never wearied of, in public assemblages, and the older she grew the more she liked it. It was fascinating to study those varied faces, and speculate on the histories written in mysterious hieroglyphics over them. They had all their inner, secret lives, those men and women, known to no one but themselves and God. Others could only guess at them, and Emily loved this game of guessing. At times it seemed veritably to her that it was more than guessing — that in some intense moments she could pass into their souls

and read therein hidden motives and passions that were, perhaps, a mystery even to their possessors. It was never easy for Emily to resist the temptation to do this when the power came, although she never yielded to it without an uneasy feeling that she was committing trespass. It was quite a different thing from soaring on the wings of fancy into an ideal world of creation — quite different from the exquisite, unearthly beauty of “the flash;” neither of these gave her any moments of pause or doubt. But to slip on tiptoe through some momentarily unlatched door, as it were, and catch a glimpse of masked, unuttered, unutterable things in the hearts and souls of others, was something that always brought, along with its sense of power, a sense of the forbidden — a sense even of sacrilege. Yet Emily did not know if she would ever be able to resist the allure of it — she had always peered through the door and seen the things before she realized that she was doing it. They were nearly always terrible things. Secrets are generally terrible. Beauty is not often hidden — only ugliness and deformity.

“Elder Forsyth would have been a persecutor in old times,” she thought. “He has the face of one. This very minute he is loving the preacher because he is describing hell, and Elder Forsyth thinks all his enemies will go there. Yes, that is why he is looking pleased. I think Mrs. Bowes flies off on a broomstick o’ nights. She looks it. Four hundred years ago she would have been a witch, and Elder Forsyth would have burned her at the stake. She hates everybody — it must be terrible to hate everybody — to have your soul full of hatred. I must try to describe such a person in my Jimmy-book. I wonder if hate has driven all love out of her soul, or if there is a little bit left in it for any one or any thing. If there is it might save her. That would be a good idea for a story. I must jot it down before I go to bed — I’ll borrow a bit of paper from Ilse. No — here’s a bit in my hymnbook. I’ll write it now.

“I wonder what all these people would say if they were suddenly asked what they wanted most, and had to answer truthfully. I wonder how many of these husbands and wives would like a change? Chris Farrar and Mrs. Chris would — everybody knows that. I can’t think why I feel so sure that

James Beatty and his wife would, too. They seem to be quite contented with each other — but once I saw her look at him when she did not know anyone was watching — oh, it seemed to me I saw right into her soul, through her eyes, and she hated him — and feared him. She is sitting there now, beside him, little and thin and dowdy, and her face is grey and her hair is faded — but she, herself, is one red flame of rebellion. What she wants most is to be free from him — or just to strike back once. That would satisfy her.

“There’s Dean — I wonder what brought him to prayer-meeting? His face is very solemn, but his eyes are mocking Mr. Sampson — what’s that Mr. Sampson’s saying? — oh, something about the wise virgins. I hate the wise virgins — I think they were horribly selfish. They might have given the poor foolish ones a little oil. I don’t believe Jesus meant to praise them any more than He meant to praise the unjust steward — I think he was just trying to warn foolish people that they must not be careless, and foolish, because if they were, prudent, selfish folks would never help them out. I wonder if it’s very wicked to feel that I’d rather be outside with the foolish ones trying to help and comfort them, than inside feasting with the wise ones. It would be more interesting, too.

“There’s Mrs. Kent and Teddy. Oh, she wants something terribly — I don’t know what it is but it’s something she can never get, and the hunger for it goads her night and day. That is why she holds Teddy so closely — I know. But I don’t know what it is that makes her so different from other women. I can never get a peep into her soul — she shuts every one out — the door is never unlatched.

“What do I want most? It is to climb the Alpine Path to the very top,

“And write upon its shining scroll
A woman’s humble name.

“We’re all hungry. We all want some bread of life — but Mr. Sampson can’t give it to us. I wonder what he wants most? His soul is so muggy I can’t see into it. He has a lot of sordid wants — he doesn’t want anything enough to dominate him. Mr. Johnson wants to help people and preach

truth — he really does. And Aunt Janey wants most of all to see the whole heathen world Christianized. Her soul hasn't any dark wishes in it. I know what Mr. Carpenter wants — his one lost chance again. Katherine Morris wants her youth back — she hates us younger girls because we are young. Old Malcolm Strang just wants to live — just one more year — always just one more year — just to live — just not to die. It must be horrible to have nothing to live for except just to escape dying. Yet he believes in heaven — he thinks he will go there. If he could see my flash just once he wouldn't hate the thought of dying so, poor old man. And Mary Strang wants to die — before something terrible she is afraid of tortures her to death. They say it's cancer. There's Mad Mr. Morrison up in the gallery — we all know what he wants — to find his Annie. Tom Sibley wants the moon, I think — and knows he can never get it — that's why people say he's not all there. Amy Crabbe wants Max Terry to come back to her — nothing else matters to her.

“I must write all these things down in my Jimmy-book tomorrow. They are fascinating — but, after all, I like writing of beautiful things better. Only — these things have a tang beautiful things don't have some way. Those woods out there — how wonderful they are in their silver and shadow. The moonlight is doing strange things to the tombstones — it makes even the ugly ones beautiful. But it's terribly hot — it is smothering here — and those thunder-growls are coming nearer. I hope Ilse and I will get home before the storm breaks. Oh, Mr. Sampson, Mr. Sampson, God isn't an angry God — you don't know anything about Him if you say that — He's sorrowful, I'm sure, when we're foolish and wicked, but He doesn't fly into tantrums. Your God and Ellen Greene's God are exactly alike. I'd like to get up and tell you so, but it isn't a Murray tradition to sass back in church. You make God ugly — and He's beautiful. I hate you for making God ugly, you fat little man.”

Whereupon Mr. Sampson, who had several times noted Emily's intent, probing gaze, and thought he was impressing her tremendously with a sense of her unsaved condition, finished with a final urgent whoop of entreaty, and sat down. The audience in the close, oppressive atmosphere

of the crowded, lamplit church gave an audible sigh of relief, and scarcely waited for the hymn and benediction before crowding out to purer air. Emily, caught in the current, and parted from Aunt Laura, was swept out by way of the choir door to the left of the pulpit. It was some time before she could disentangle herself from the throng and hurry around to the front where she expected to meet Ilse. Here was another dense, though rapidly thinning crowd, in which she found no trace of Ilse. Suddenly Emily noticed that she did not have her hymnbook. Hastily she dashed back to the choir door. She must have left her hymnbook in the pew — and it would never do to leave it there. In it she had placed for safe-keeping a slip of paper on which she had furtively jotted down some fragmentary notes during the last hymn — a rather biting description of scrawny Miss Potter in the choir — a couple of satiric sentences regarding Mr. Sampson himself — and a few random fancies which she desired most of all to hide because there was in them something of dream and vision which would have made the reading of them by alien eyes a sacrilege.

Old Jacob Banks, the sexton, a little blind and more than a little deaf, was turning out the lamps as she went in. He had reached the two on the wall behind the pulpit. Emily caught her hymnbook from the rack — her slip of paper was not in it. By the faint gleam of light, as Jacob Banks turned out the last lamp, she saw it on the floor, under the seat of the pew in front. She knelt down and reached after it. As she did so Jacob went out and locked the choir door. Emily did not notice his going — the church was still faintly illuminated by the moon that as yet outrode the rapidly climbing thunder-heads. That was not the right slip of paper after all — where could it be? — oh, here, at last. She caught it up and ran to the door which would not open.

For the first time Emily realized that Jacob Banks had gone — that she was alone in the church. She wasted time trying to open the door — then in calling Mr. Banks. Finally she ran down the aisle into the front porch. As she did so she heard the last buggy turn grudgingly at the gate and drive away: at the same time the moon was suddenly swallowed up by the black clouds and the church was engulfed in darkness — close, hot, smothering,

almost tangible darkness. Emily screamed in sudden panic — beat on the door — frantically twisted the handle — screamed again. Oh, everybody could not have gone — surely somebody would hear her! “Aunt Laura” — “Cousin Jimmy” — “Ilse” — then finally in a wail of despair — “Oh, Teddy — Teddy!”

A blue-white stream of lightning swept the porch, followed by a crash of thunder. One of the worst storms in Blair Water annals had begun — and Emily Starr was locked alone in the dark church in the maple woods — she, who had always been afraid of thunderstorms with a reasonless, instinctive fear which she could never banish and only partially control.

She sank, quivering, on a step of the gallery stairs, and huddled there in a heap. Surely some one would come back when it was discovered she was missing. But would it be discovered? Who would miss her? Aunt Laura and Cousin Jimmy would suppose she was with Ilse, as had been arranged. Ilse, who had evidently gone, believing that Emily was not coming with her, would suppose she had gone home to New Moon. Nobody knew where she was — nobody would come back for her. She must stay here in this horrible, lonely, black, echoing place — for now the church she knew so well and loved for its old associations of Sunday-school and song and homely faces of dear friends had become a ghostly, alien place full of haunting terrors. There was no escape. The windows could not be opened. The church was ventilated by transom-like panes near the top of them, which were opened and shut by pulling a wire. She could not get up to them, and she could not have got through them if she had.

She cowered down on the step, shuddering from head to foot. By now the thunder and lightning were almost incessant: rain blew against the windows, not in drops but sheets, and intermittent volleys of hail bombarded them. The wind had risen suddenly with the storm and shrieked around the church. It was not her old dear friend of childhood, the bat-winged, misty “Wind Woman,” but a legion of yelling witches. “The Prince of the Power of the Air rules the wind,” she had heard Mad Mr. Morrison say once. Why should she think of Mad Mr. Morrison now? How

the windows rattled as if demon riders of the storm were shaking them! She had heard a wild tale of some one hearing the organ play in the empty church one night several years ago. Suppose it began playing now! No fancy seemed too grotesque or horrible to come true. Didn't the stairs creak? The blackness between the lightnings was so intense that it looked thick. Emily was frightened of it touching her and buried her face in her lap.

Presently, however, she got a grip on herself and began to reflect that she was not living up to Murray traditions. Murrays were not supposed to go to pieces like this. Murrays were not foolishly panicky in thunderstorms. Those old Murrays sleeping in the private graveyard across the pond would have scorned her as a degenerate descendant. Aunt Elizabeth would have said that it was the Starr coming out in her. She must be brave: after all, she had lived through worse hours than this — the night she had eaten of Lofty John's poisoned apple* — the afternoon she had fallen over the rocks of Malvern Bay. This had come so suddenly on her that she had been in the throes of terror before she could brace herself against it. She must pick up. Nothing dreadful was going to happen to her — nothing worse than staying all night in the church. In the morning she could attract the attention of some one passing. She had been here over an hour now, and nothing had happened to her — unless indeed her hair had turned white, as she understood hair sometimes did. There had been such a funny, crinkly, crawly feeling at the roots of it at times. Emily held out her long braid, ready for the next flash. When it came she saw that her hair was still black. She sighed with relief and began to chirk up. The storm was passing. The thunder-peals were growing fainter and fewer, though the rain continued to fall and the wind to drive and shriek around the church, whining through the big keyhole eerily.

* See Emily of New Moon.

Emily straightened her shoulders and cautiously let down her feet to a lower step. She thought she had better try to get back into the church. If another cloud came up, the steeple might be struck — steeples were always getting struck, she remembered: it might come crashing down on

the, porch right over her. She would go in and sit down in the Murray pew: she would be cool and sensible and collected: she was ashamed of her panic — but it had been terrible.

All around her now was a soft, heavy darkness, still with that same eerie sensation of something you could touch, born perhaps of the heat and humidity of the July night. The porch was so small and narrow — she would not feel so smothered and oppressed in the church.

She put out her hand to grasp a stair rail and pull herself to her cramped feet. Her hand touched — not the stair rail — merciful heavens, what was it? — something hairy — Emily's shriek of horror froze on her lips — padding footsteps passed down the steps beside her; a flash of lightning came and at the bottom of the steps was a huge black dog, which had turned and was looking up at her before he was blotted out in the returning darkness. Even then for a moment she saw his eyes blazing redly at her, like a fiend's.

Emily's hair roots began to crawl and crinkle again — a very large, very cold caterpillar began to creep slowly up her spine. She could not have moved a muscle had life depended on it. She could not even cry out. The only thing she could think of at first was the horrible demon hound of the Manx Castle in Peveril of the Peak. For a few minutes her terror was so great that it turned her physically sick. Then, with an effort which was unchildlike in its determination — I think it was at that moment Emily wholly ceased to be a child — she recovered her self-control. She would not yield to fear — she set her teeth and clenched her trembling hands; she would be brave — sensible. That was only a commonplace Blair Water dog which had followed its owner — some rascal boy — into the gallery, and got itself left behind. The thing had happened before. A flash of lightning showed her that the porch was empty. Evidently the dog had gone into the church. Emily decided that she would stay where she was. She had recovered from her panic, but she did not want to feel the sudden touch of a cold nose or a hairy flank in the darkness. She could never forget the awfulness of the moment when she had touched the creature.

It must be all of twelve o'clock now — it had been ten when the meeting came out. The noise of the storm had for the most part died away. The drive and shriek of the wind came occasionally, but between its gusts there was a silence, broken only by the diminishing raindrops. Thunder still muttered faintly and lightning came at frequent intervals, but of a paler, gentler flame — not the rending glare that had seemed to wrap the very building in intolerable blue radiance, and scorch her eye. Gradually her heart began to beat normally. The power of rational thought returned. She did not like her predicament, but she began to find dramatic possibilities in it. Oh, what a chapter for her diary — or her Jimmy-book — and, beyond it, for that novel she would write some day! It was a situation expressly shaped for the heroine — who must, of course, be rescued by the hero. Emily began constructing the scene — adding to it — intensifying it — hunting for words to express it. This was rather — interesting — after all. Only she wished she knew just where the dog was. How weirdly the pale lightning gleamed on the gravestones which she could see through the porch window opposite her! How strange the familiar valley beyond looked in the recurrent illuminations! How the wind moaned and sighed and complained — but it was her own Wind Woman again. The Wind Woman was one of her childish fancies that she had carried over into maturity, and it comforted her now, with a sense of ancient companionship. The wild riders of the storm were gone — her fairy friend had come back. Emily gave a sigh that was almost of contentment. The worst was over — and really, hadn't she behaved pretty well? She began to feel quite self-respecting again.

All at once Emily knew she was not alone!

How she knew it she could not have told. She had heard nothing — seen nothing — felt nothing: and yet she knew, beyond all doubt or dispute, that there was a Presence in the darkness above her on the stairs.

She turned and looked up. It was horrible to look, but it was less horrible to feel that — Something — was in front of you than that it was behind you. She stared with wildly dilated eyes into the darkness, but she could see nothing. Then — she heard a low laugh above her — a laugh that

almost made her heart stop beating — the very dreadful, inhuman laughter of the unsound in mind. She did not need the lightning flash that came then to tell her that Mad Mr. Morrison was somewhere on the stairs above her. But it came — she saw him — she felt as if she were sinking in some icy gulf of coldness — she could not even scream.

The picture of him, etched on her brain by the lightning, never left her. He was crouched five steps above her, with his gray head thrust forward. She saw the frenzied gleam of his eyes — the fang-like yellow teeth exposed in a horrible smile — the long, thin, blood-red hand outstretched towards her, almost touching her shoulder.

Sheer panic shattered Emily's trance. She bounded to her feet with a piercing scream of terror.

"Teddy! Teddy! Save me!" she shrieked madly.

She did not know why she called for Teddy — she did not even realize that she had called him — she only remembered it afterwards, as one might recall the waking shriek in a nightmare — she only knew that she must have help — that she would die if that awful hand touched her. It must not touch her.

She made a mad spring down the steps, rushed into the church, and up the aisle. She must hide before the next flash came — but not in the Murray pew. He might look for her there. She dived into one of the middle pews and crouched down in its corner on the floor. Her body was bathed in an ice-cold perspiration. She was wholly in the grip of uncontrollable terror. All she could think of was that it must not touch her — that blood-red hand of the mad old man.

Moments passed that seemed like years. Presently she heard footsteps — footsteps that came and went yet seemed to approach her slowly. Suddenly she knew what he was doing. He was going into every pew, not waiting for the lightning, to feel about for her. He was looking for her, then — she had heard that sometimes he followed young girls, thinking they were Annie. If he caught them he held them with one hand and stroked their hair and faces fondly with the other, mumbling foolish, senile endearments. He had never harmed anyone, but he had never let anyone go

until she was rescued by some other person. It was said that Mary Paxton of Derry Pond had never been quite the same again; her nerves never recovered from the shock.

Emily knew that it was only a question of time before he would reach the pew where she crouched — feeling about with those hands! All that kept her senses in her frozen body was the thought that if she lost consciousness those hands would touch her — hold her — caress her. The next lightning flash showed him entering the adjoining pew. Emily sprang up and out and rushed to the other side of the church. She hid again: he would search her out, but she could again elude him: this might go on all night: a madman's strength would outlast hers: at last she might fall exhausted and he would pounce on her.

For what seemed hours to Emily, this mad game of hide-and-seek lasted. It was in reality about half an hour. She was hardly a rational creature at all, any more than her demented pursuer. She was merely a crouching, springing, shrieking thing of horror. Time after time he hunted her out with his cunning, implacable patience. The last time she was near one of the porch doors, and in desperation she sprang through it and slammed it in his face. With the last ounce of her strength she tried to hold the knob from turning in his grasp. And as she strove she heard — was she dreaming? — Teddy's voice calling to her from the steps outside the outer door.

“Emily — Emily — are you there?”

She did not know how he had come — she did not wonder — she only knew he was there!

“Teddy, I'm locked in the church!” she shrieked—”and Mad Mr. Morrison is here — oh — quick — quick — save me — save me!”

“The key of the door is hanging up in there on a nail at the right side!” shouted Teddy. “Can you get it and unlock the door? If you can't I'll smash the porch window.”

The clouds broke at that moment and the porch was filled with moonlight. In it she saw plainly the big key, hanging high on the wall beside the front door. She dashed at it and caught it as Mad Mr. Morrison

wrenched upon the door and sprang into the porch, his dog behind him. Emily unlocked the outer door and stumbled out into Teddy's arms just in time to elude that outstretched, blood-red hand. She heard Mad Mr. Morrison give a wild, eerie shriek of despair as she escaped him.

Sobbing, shaking, she clung to Teddy.

"Oh, Teddy, take me away — take me quick — oh, don't let him touch me, Teddy — don't let him touch me!"

Teddy swung her behind him and faced Mad Mr. Morrison on the stone step.

"How dare you frighten her so?" he demanded angrily.

Mad Mr. Morrison smiled deprecatingly in the moonlight. All at once he was not wild or violent — only a heartbroken old man who sought his own.

"I want Annie," he mumbled. "Where is Annie? I thought I had found her in there. I only wanted to find my beautiful Annie."

"Annie isn't here," said Teddy, tightening his hold on Emily's cold little hand.

"Can you tell me where Annie is?" entreated Mad Mr. Morrison, wistfully. "Can you tell me where my dark-haired Annie is?"

Teddy was furious with Mad Mr. Morrison for frightening Emily, but the old man's piteous entreaty touched him — and the artist in him responded to the values of the picture presented against the background of the white, moonlit church. He thought he would like to paint Mad Mr. Morrison as he stood there, tall and gaunt, in his gray "duster" coat, with his long white hair and beard, and the ageless quest in his hollow, sunken eyes.

"No — no — I don't know where she is," he said gently, "but I think you will find her sometime."

Mad Mr. Morrison sighed.

"Oh, yes. Sometime I will overtake her. Come, my dog, we will seek her."

Followed by his old black dog he went down the steps, across the green and down the long, wet, tree-shadowed road. So going, he passed out of

Emily's life. She never saw Mad Mr. Morrison again. But she looked after him understandingly, and forgave him. To himself he was not the repulsive old man he seemed to her; he was a gallant young lover seeking his lost and lovely bride. The pitiful beauty of his quest intrigued her, even in the shaking reaction from her hour of agony.

"Poor Mr. Morrison," she sobbed, as Teddy half led, half carried her to one of the old flat gravestones at the side of the church.

They sat there until Emily recovered composure and managed to tell her tale — or the outlines of it. She felt she could never tell — perhaps not even write in a Jimmy-book — the whole of its racking horror. That was beyond words.

"And to think," she sobbed, "that the key was there all the time. I never knew it."

"Old Jacob Banks always locks the front door with its big key on the inside, and then hangs it up on that nail," said Teddy. "He locks the choir door with a little key, which he takes home. He has always done that since the time, three years ago, when he lost the big key and was weeks before he found it."

Suddenly Emily awoke to the strangeness of Teddy's coming.

"How did you happen to come, Teddy?"

"Why, I heard you call me," he said. "You did call me, didn't you?"

"Yes," said Emily, slowly, "I called for you when I saw Mad Mr. Morrison first. But, Teddy, you couldn't have heard me — you couldn't. The Tansy Patch is a mile from here."

"I did hear you," said Teddy, stubbornly. "I was asleep and it woke me up. You called 'Teddy, Teddy, save me' — it was your voice as plain as I ever heard it in my life. I got right up and hurried on my clothes and came here as fast as I could."

"How did you know I was here?"

"Why — I don't know," said Teddy confusedly. "I didn't stop to think — I just seemed to know you were in the church when I heard you calling me, and I must get here as quick as I could. It's — it's all — funny," he concluded lamely.

“It’s — it’s — it frightens me a little.” Emily shivered. “Aunt Elizabeth says I have second sight — you remember Ilse’s mother? Mr. Carpenter says I’m psychic — I don’t know just what that means, but think I’d rather not be it.”

She shivered again. Teddy thought she was cold and, having nothing else to put around her, put his arm — somewhat tentatively, since Murray pride and Murray dignity might be outraged. Emily was not cold in body, but a little chill had blown over her soul. Something supernatural — some mystery she could not understand — had brushed too near her in that strange summoning. Involuntarily she nestled a little closer to Teddy, acutely conscious of the boyish tenderness she sensed behind the aloofness of his boyish shyness. Suddenly she knew that she liked Teddy better than anybody — better even than Aunt Laura or Ilse or Dean.

Teddy’s arm tightened a little.

“Anyhow, I’m glad I got here in time,” he said. “If I hadn’t that crazy old man might have frightened you to death.”

They sat so for a few minutes in silence. Everything seemed very wonderful and beautiful — and a little unreal. Emily thought she must be in a dream, or in one of her own wonder tales. The storm had passed, and the moon was shining clearly once more. The cool fresh air was threaded with beguiling voices — the fitful voice of raindrops falling from the shaken boughs of the maple woods behind them — the freakish voice of the Wind Woman around the white church — the far-off, intriguing voice of the sea — and, still finer and rarer, the little, remote, detached voices of the night. Emily heard them all, more with the ears of her soul than of her body, it seemed, as she had never heard them before. Beyond were fields and groves and roads, pleasantly suggestive and elusive, as if brooding over elfish secrets in the moonlight. Silver-white daisies were nodding and swaying all over the graveyard above graves remembered and graves forgotten. An owl laughed delightfully to itself in the old pine. At the magical sound Emily’s mystic flash swept over her, swaying her like a strong wind. She felt as if she and Teddy were all alone in a wonderful new world, created for themselves only out of youth and mystery and delight.

They seemed, themselves, to be part of the faint, cool fragrance of the night, of the owl's laughter, of the daisies blowing in the shadowy air.

As for Teddy, he was thinking that Emily looked very sweet in the pale moonshine, with her fringed, mysterious eyes and the little dark love-curls clinging to her ivory neck. He tightened his arm a little more — and still Murray pride and Murray dignity made not a particle of protest.

“Emily,” whispered Teddy, “you’re the sweetest girl in the world.”

The words have been said so often by so many millions of lads to so many millions of lasses, that they ought to be worn to tatters. But when you hear them for the first time, in some magic hour of your teens, they are as new and fresh and wondrous as if they had just drifted over the hedges of Eden. Madam, whoever you are, and however old you are, be honest, and admit that the first time you heard those words on the lips of some shy sweetheart, was the great moment of your life. Emily thrilled, from the crown of her head to the toes of her slippered feet, with a sensation of hitherto unknown and almost terrifying sweetness — a sensation that was to sense what her “flash” was to spirit. It is quite conceivable and not totally reprehensible that the next thing that happened might have been a kiss. Emily thought Teddy was going to kiss her: Teddy knew he was: and the odds are that he wouldn't have had his face slapped as Geoff North had had.

But it was not to be. A shadow that had slipped in at the gate and drifted across the wet grass, halted beside them, and touched Teddy's shoulder, just as he bent his glossy black head. He looked up, startled. Emily looked up. Mrs. Kent was standing there, bareheaded, her scarred face clear in the moonlight, looking at them tragically.

Emily and Teddy both stood up so suddenly that they seemed veritably to have been jerked to their feet. Emily's fairy world vanished like a dissolving bubble. She was in a different world altogether — an absurd, ridiculous one. Yes, ridiculous. Everything had suddenly become ridiculous. Could anything be more ridiculous than to be caught here with Teddy, by his mother, at two o'clock at night — what was that horrid word she had lately heard for the first time? — oh, yes, spooning — that was it

— spooning on George Horton's eighty-year-old tombstone? That was how other people would look at it. How could a thing be so beautiful one moment and so absurd the next? She was one horrible scorch of shame from head to feet. And Teddy — she knew Teddy was feeling like a fool.

To Mrs. Kent it was not ridiculous — it was dreadful. To her abnormal jealousy the incident had the most sinister significance. She looked at Emily with her hollow, hungry eyes.

“So you are trying to steal my son from me,” she said. “He is all I have and you are trying to steal him.”

“Oh, Mother, for goodness' sake, be sensible!” muttered Teddy.

“He — he tells me to be sensible,” Mrs. Kent echoed tragically to the moon. “Sensible!”

“Yes, sensible,” said Teddy angrily. “There's nothing to make such a fuss about. Emily was locked in the church by accident and Mad Mr. Morrison was there, too, and nearly frightened her to death. I came to let her out and we were sitting here for a few minutes until she got over her fright and was able to walk home. That's all.”

“How did you know she was here?” demanded Mrs. Kent.

How indeed! This was a hard question to answer. The truth sounded like a silly, stupid invention. Nevertheless, Teddy told it.

“She called me,” he said bluntly.

“And you heard her — a mile away. Do you expect me to believe that?” said Mrs. Kent, laughing wildly.

Emily had by this time recovered her poise. At no time in her life was Emily Byrd Starr ever disconcerted for long. She drew herself up proudly and in the dim light, in spite of her Starr features, she looked much as Elizabeth Murray must have looked thirty years before.

“Whether you believe it or not it is true, Mrs. Kent,” she said haughtily. “I am not stealing your son — I do not want him — he can go.”

“I'm going to take you home first, Emily,” said Teddy. He folded his arms and threw back his head and tried to look as stately as Emily. He felt that he was a dismal failure at it, but it imposed on Mrs. Kent. She began to cry.

“Go — go,” she said. “Go to her — desert me.”

Emily was thoroughly angry now. If this irrational woman persisted in making a scene, very well: a scene she should have.

“I won’t let him take me home,” she said, freezingly. “Teddy, go with your mother.”

“Oh, you command him, do you? He must do as you tell him, must he?” cried Mrs. Kent, who now seemed to lose all control of herself. Her tiny form was shaken with violent sobs. She wrung her hands.

“He shall choose for himself,” she cried. “He shall go with you — or come with me. Choose, Teddy, for yourself. You shall not do her bidding. Choose!”

She was fiercely dramatic again, as she lifted her hand and pointed it at poor Teddy.

Teddy was feeling as miserable and impotently angry as any male creature does when two women are quarrelling about him in his presence. He wished himself a thousand miles away. What a mess to be in — and to be made ridiculous like this before Emily! Why on earth couldn’t his mother behave like other boys’ mothers? Why must she be so intense and exacting? He knew Blair Water gossip said she was “a little touched.” He did not believe that. But — but — well, in short here was a mess. You came back to that every time. What on earth was he to do? If he took Emily home he knew his mother would cry and pray for days. On the other hand to desert Emily after her dreadful experience in the church, and leave her to traverse that lonely road alone was unthinkable. But Emily now dominated the situation. She was very angry, with the icy anger of old Hugh Murray that did not dissipate itself in idle bluster, but went straight to the point.

“You are a foolish, selfish woman,” she said, “and you will make your son hate you.”

“Selfish! You call me selfish,” sobbed Mrs. Kent. “I live only for Teddy — he is all I have to live for.”

“You are selfish.” Emily was standing straight: her eyes had gone black: her voice was cutting: “the Murray look” was on her face, and in the

pale moonlight it was a rather fearsome thing. She wondered, as she spoke, how she knew certain things. But she did know them. "You think you love him — it is only yourself you love. You are determined to spoil his life. You won't let him go to Shrewsbury because it will hurt you to let him go away from you. You have let your jealousy of everything he cares for eat your heart out, and master you. You won't bear a little pain for his sake. You are not a mother at all. Teddy has a great talent — every one says so. You ought to be proud of him — you ought to give him his chance. But you won't — and some day he will hate you for it — yes, he will."

"Oh, no, no," moaned Mrs. Kent. She held up her hands as if to ward off a blow and shrank back against Teddy. "Oh, you are cruel — cruel. You don't know what I've suffered — you don't know what ache is always at my heart. He is all I have — all. I have nothing else — not even a memory. You don't understand. I can't — I can't give him up."

"If you let your jealousy ruin his life you will lose him," said Emily inexorably. She had always been afraid of Mrs. Kent. Now she was suddenly no longer afraid of her — she knew she would never be afraid of her again. "You hate everything he cares for — you hate his friends and his dog and his drawing. You know you do. But you can't keep him that way, Mrs. Kent. And you will find out when it is too late. Good night, Teddy. Thank you again for coming to my rescue. Good night, Mrs. Kent."

Emily's good night was very final. She turned and stalked across the green without another glance, holding her head high. Down the wet road she marched — at first very angry — then, as anger ebbed, very tired — oh, horribly tired. She discovered that she was fairly shaking with weariness. The emotions of the night had exhausted her, and now — what to do? She did not like the idea of going home to New Moon. Emily felt that she could never face outraged Aunt Elizabeth if the various scandalous doings of this night should be discovered. She turned in at the gate of Dr. Burnley's house. His doors were never locked. Emily slipped into the front hall as the dawn began to whiten in the sky and curled up on the lounge behind the staircase. There was no use in waking Ilse. She would tell her the whole story in the morning and bind her to secrecy —

all, at least, except one thing Teddy had said, and the episode of Mrs. Kent. One was too beautiful, and the other too disagreeable to be talked about. Of course, Mrs. Kent wasn't like other women and there was no use in feeling too badly about it. Nevertheless, she had wrecked and spoiled a frail, beautiful something — she had blotched with absurdity a moment that should have been eternally lovely. And she had, of course, made poor Teddy feel like an ass. That, in the last analysis, was what Emily really could not forgive.

As she drifted off to sleep she recalled drowsily the events of that bewildering night — her imprisonment in the lonely church — the horror of touching the dog — the worse horror of Mad Mr. Morrison's pursuit — her rapture of relief at Teddy's voice — the brief little moonlit idyll in the graveyard — of all places for an idyll! — the tragi-comic advent of poor morbid, jealous Mrs. Kent.

"I hope I wasn't too hard on her," thought Emily as she drifted into slumber. "If I was I'm sorry. I'll have to write it down as a bad deed in my diary. I feel somehow as if I'd grown up all at once tonight — yesterday seems years away. But what a chapter it will make for my diary. I'll write it all down — all but Teddy's saying I was the sweetest girl in the world. That's too — dear — to write. I'll — just — remember it."

“As Ithers See Us”

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Emily had finished mopping up the kitchen floor at New Moon and was absorbed in sanding it in the beautiful and complicated “herringbone pattern” which was one of the New Moon traditions, having been invented, so it was said, by great-great-grandmother of “Here I stay” fame. Aunt Laura had taught Emily how to do it and Emily was proud of her skill. Even Aunt Elizabeth had condescended to say that Emily sanded the famous pattern very well, and when Aunt Elizabeth praised, further comment was superfluous. New Moon was the only place in Blair Water where the old custom of sanding the floor was kept up; other housewives had long ago begun to use “new-fangled” devices and patent cleaners for making their floors white. But Dame Elizabeth Murray would none of such; as long as she reigned at New Moon so long should candles burn and sanded floors gleam whitely. Aunt Elizabeth had exasperated Emily somewhat by insisting that the latter should put on Aunt Laura’s old “Mother Hubbard” while she was scrubbing the floor. A “Mother Hubbard,” it may be necessary to explain to those of this generation, was a loose and shapeless garment which served principally as a sort of morning gown and was liked in its day because it was cool and easily put on. Aunt Elizabeth, it is quite unnecessary to say, disapproved entirely of Mother Hubbards. She considered them the last word in slovenliness, and Laura was never permitted to have another one. But the old one, though its original pretty lilac tint had faded to a dingy white, was still too “good” to be banished to the rag bag; and it was this which Emily had been told to put on.

Emily detested Mother Hubbards as heartily as Aunt Elizabeth herself did. They were worse, she considered, even than the hated “baby aprons” of her first summer at New Moon. She knew she looked ridiculous in Aunt Laura’s Mother Hubbard, which came to her feet, and hung in loose,

unbeautiful lines from her thin young shoulders; and Emily had a horror of being “ridiculous.” She had once shocked Aunt Elizabeth by coolly telling her that she would “rather be bad than ridiculous.” Emily had scrubbed and sanded with one eye on the door, ready to run if any stranger loomed up while she had on that hideous wrapper.

It was not, as Emily very well knew, a Murray tradition to “run.” At New Moon you stood your ground, no matter what you had on — the presupposition being that you were always neatly and properly habited for the occupation of the moment. Emily recognized the propriety of this, yet was, nevertheless, foolish and young enough to feel that she would die of shame if seen by anyone in Aunt Laura’s Mother Hubbard. It was neat — it was clean — but it was “ridiculous.” There you were!

Just as Emily finished sanding and turned to place her can of sand in the niche under the kitchen mantel, where it had been kept from time immemorial, she heard strange voices in the kitchen yard. A hasty glimpse through the window revealed to her the owners of the voices — Miss Beulah Potter, and Mrs. Ann Cyrilla Potter, calling, no doubt, in regard to the projected Ladies’ Aid Social. They were coming to the back door as was the Blair Water custom when running in to see your neighbours, informally or on business; they were already past the gay platoons of hollyhocks with which Cousin Jimmy had flanked the stone path to the dairy, and of all the people in Blair Water and out of it they were the two whom Emily would least want to see her in any ridiculous plight whatever. Without stopping to think, she darted into the boot closet and shut the door.

Mrs. Ann Cyrilla knocked twice at the kitchen door, but Emily did not budge. She knew Aunt Laura was weaving in the garret — she could hear the dull thud of the treadles overhead — but she thought Aunt Elizabeth was concocting pies in the cookhouse and would see or hear the callers. She would take them into the sitting-room and then Emily could make her escape. And on one thing she was determined — they should not see her in that Mother Hubbard. Miss Potter was a thin, venomous, acidulated gossip who seemed to dislike everybody in general and Emily in particular; and

Mrs. Ann Cyrilla was a plump, pretty, smooth, amiable gossip who, by very reason of her smoothness and amiability, did more real harm in a week than Miss Potter did in a year. Emily distrusted her even while she could not help liking her. She had so often heard Mrs. Ann Cyrilla make smiling fun of people, to whose “faces” she had been very sweet and charming, and Mrs. Ann Cyrilla, who had been one of the “dressy Wallaces” from Derry Pond, was especially fond of laughing over the peculiarities of other people’s clothes.

Again the knock came — Miss Potter’s this time, as Emily knew by the staccato raps. They were getting impatient. Well, they might knock there till the cows come home, vowed Emily. She would not go to the door in the Mother Hubbard. Then she heard Perry’s voice outside explaining that Miss Elizabeth was away in the stumps behind the barn picking raspberries, but that he would go and get her if they would walk in and make themselves at home. To Emily’s despair, this was just what they did. Miss Potter sat down with a creak and Mrs. Ann Cyrilla with a puff, and Perry’s retreating footsteps died away in the yard. Emily realized that she was by way of being in a plight. It was very hot and stuffy in the tiny boot closet — where Cousin Jimmy’s working clothes were kept as well as boots. She hoped earnestly that Perry would not be long in finding Aunt Elizabeth.

“My, but it’s awful hot,” said Mrs. Ann Cyrilla, with a large groan.

Poor Emily — no, no, we must not call her poor Emily; she does not deserve pity — she has been very silly and is served exactly right; Emily, then, already violently perspiring in her close quarters, agreed wholly with her.

“I don’t feel the heat as fat people do,” said Miss Potter. “I hope Elizabeth won’t keep us waiting long. Laura’s weaving — I hear the loom going in the garret. But there would be no use in seeing her — Elizabeth would override anything Laura might promise, just because it wasn’t her arrangement. I see somebody has just finished sanding the floor. Look at those worn boards, will you? You’d think Elizabeth Murray would have a new floor laid down; but she is too mean, of course. Look at that row of

candles on the chimney-piece — all that trouble and poor light because of the little extra coal-oil would cost. Well, she can't take her money with her — she'll have to leave it all behind at the golden gate even if she is a Murray."

Emily experienced a shock. She realized that not only was she being half suffocated in the boot closet, but that she was an eavesdropper — something she had never been since the evening at Maywood when she had hidden under the table to hear her aunts and uncles discussing her fate. To be sure, that had been voluntary, while this was compulsory — at least, the Mother Hubbard had made it compulsory. But that would not make Miss Potter's comments any pleasanter to hear. What business had she to call Aunt Elizabeth mean? Aunt Elizabeth wasn't mean. Emily was suddenly very angry with Miss Potter. She, herself, often criticized Aunt Elizabeth in secret, but it was intolerable that an outsider should do it. And that little sneer at the Murrays! Emily could imagine the shrewish glint in Miss Potter's eye as she uttered it. As for the candles —

"The Murrays can see farther by candlelight than you can by sunlight, Miss Potter," thought Emily disdainfully — or at least as disdainfully as it is possible to think when a river of perspiration is running down your back, and you have nothing to breathe but the aroma of old leather.

"I suppose it's because of the expense that she won't send Emily to school any longer than this year," said Mrs. Ann Cyrilla. "Most folks think she ought to give her a year at Shrewsbury, anyhow — you'd think she would for pride's sake, if nothing else. But I am told she has decided against it."

Emily's heart sank. She hadn't been quite sure till now that Aunt Elizabeth wouldn't send her to Shrewsbury. The tears sprang to her eyes — burning, stinging tears of disappointment.

"Emily ought to be taught something to earn a living by," said Miss Potter. "Her father left nothing."

"He left me," said Emily below her breath, clenching her fists. Anger dried up her tears.

“Oh,” said Mrs. Ann Cyrilla, laughing with tolerant derision, “I hear that Emily is going to make a living by writing stories — not only a living but a fortune, I believe.”

She laughed again. The idea was so exquisitely ridiculous. Mrs. Ann Cyrilla hadn’t heard anything so funny for a long time.

“They say she wastes half her time scribbling trash,” agreed Miss Potter. “If I was her Aunt Elizabeth I would soon cure her of that nonsense.”

“You mightn’t find it so easy. I understand she has always been a difficult girl to manage — so very pig-headed, Murray-like. The whole clamjamfry of them are as stubborn as mules.”

(Emily, wrathfully: “What a disrespectful way to speak of us! Oh, if I only hadn’t on this Mother Hubbard I’d fling this door open and confront them.”)

“She needs a tight rein, if I know anything of human nature,” said Miss Potter. “She’s going to be a flirt — anyone can see that. She’ll be Juliet over again. You’ll see. She makes eyes at every one and her only fourteen!”

(Emily, sarcastically: “I do not! And Mother wasn’t a flirt. She could have been, but she wasn’t. You couldn’t flirt, even if you wanted to — you respectable old female!”)

“She isn’t pretty as poor Juliet was, and she’s very sly — sly and deep. Mrs. Dutton says she’s the slyest child she ever saw. But still there are things I like about poor Emily.”

Mrs. Ann Cyrilla’s tone was very patronizing. “Poor” Emily writhed among the boots.

“The thing I don’t like in her is that she is always trying to be smart,” said Miss Potter decidedly. “She says clever things she has read in books and passes them off as her own—”

(Emily, outraged: “I don’t!”)

“And she’s very sarcastic and touchy, and of course as proud as Lucifer,” concluded Miss Potter.

Mrs. Ann Cyrilla laughed pleasantly and tolerantly again.

“Oh, that goes without saying in a Murray. But their worst fault is that they think nobody can do anything right but themselves, and Emily is full of it. Why, she even thinks she can preach better than Mr. Johnson.”

(Emily: “That is because I said he contradicted himself in one of his sermons — and he did. And I’ve heard you criticize dozens of sermons, Mrs. Ann Cyrilla.”)

“She’s jealous, too,” continued Mrs. Ann Cyrilla. “She can’t bear to be beaten — she wants to be first in everything. I understand she actually shed tears of mortification the night of the concert because Ilse Burnley carried off the honours in the dialogue. Emily did very poorly — she was a perfect stick. And she contradicts older people continually. It would be funny if it weren’t so illbred.”

“It’s odd Elizabeth doesn’t cure her of that. The Murrays think their breeding is a little above the common,” said Miss Potter.

(Emily, wrathfully, to the boots: “It is, too.”)

“Of course,” said Mrs. Ann Cyrilla, “I think a great many of Emily’s faults come from her intimacy with Ilse Burnley. She shouldn’t be allowed to run about with Ilse as she does. Why, they say Ilse is as much an infidel as her father. I have always understood she doesn’t believe in God at all — or the Devil either.”

(Emily: “Which is a far worse thing in your eyes.”)

“Oh, the doctor’s training her a little better now since he found out his precious wife didn’t elope with Leo Mitchell,” sniffed Miss Potter. “He makes her go to Sunday-school. But she’s no fit associate for Emily. She swears like a trooper, I’m told. Mrs. Mark Burns was in the doctor’s office one day and heard Ilse in the parlour say distinctly ‘out, damned Spot!’ probably to the dog.”

“Dear, dear,” moaned Mrs. Ann Cyrilla.

“Do you know what I saw her do one day last week — saw her with my own eyes!” Miss Potter was very emphatic over this. Ann Cyrilla need not suppose that she had been using any other person’s eyes.

“You couldn’t surprise me,” gurgled Mrs. Ann Cyrilla. “Why, they say she was at the charivari at Johnson’s last Tuesday night, dressed as a boy.”

“Quite likely. But this happened in my own front yard. She was there with Jen Strang, who had come to get a root of my Persian rosebush for her mother. I asked Ilse if she could sew and bake and a few other things that I thought she ought to be reminded of. Ilse said ‘No’ to them all, quite brazenly, and then she said — what do you think that girl said?”

“Oh, what?” breathed Mrs. Ann Cyrilla eagerly.

“She said, ‘Can you stand on one foot and lift your other to a level with your eyes, Miss Potter? I can.’ And” — Miss Potter hushed her tone to the proper pitch of horror—”she did it!”

The listener in the closet stifled a spasm of laughter in Cousin Jimmy’s grey juniper. How madcap Ilse did love to shock Miss Potter!

“Good gracious, were there any men around?” entreated Mrs. Ann Cyrilla.

“No — fortunately. But it’s my belief she would have done it just the same no matter who was there. We were close to the road — anybody might have been passing. I felt so ashamed. In my time a young girl would have died before she would have done a thing like that.”

“It’s no worse than her and Emily bathing by moonlight up on the sands without a stitch on,” said Mrs. Ann Cyrilla. “That was the most scandalous thing. Did you hear about it?”

“Oh, yes, that story’s all over Blair Water. Everybody’s heard it but Elizabeth and Laura. I can’t find out how it started. Were they seen?”

“Oh, dear no, not so bad as that. Ilse told it herself. She seemed to think it was quite a matter of course. I think some one ought to tell Laura and Elizabeth.”

“Tell them yourself,” suggested Miss Potter.

“Oh, no, I don’t want to get in wrong with my neighbours. I am not responsible for Emily Starr’s training, thank goodness. If I were I wouldn’t let her have so much to do with Jarback Priest, either. He’s the queerest of all those queer Priests. I’m sure he must have a bad influence over her. Those green eyes of his positively give me the creeps. I can’t find out that he believes in anything.”

(Emily, sarcastically again: “Not even the Devil?”)

“There’s a queer story going around about him and Emily,” said Miss Potter. “I can’t make head or tail of it. They were seen on the big hill last Wednesday evening at sunset, behaving in a most extraordinary fashion. They would walk along with their eyes fixed on the sky — then suddenly stop — grasp each other by the arm and point upward. They did it time and again. Mrs. Price was watching them from the window and she can’t imagine what they were up to. It was too early for stars, and she couldn’t see a solitary thing in the sky. She laid awake all night wondering about it.”

“Well, it all comes to this — Emily Starr needs looking after,” said Mrs. Ann Cyrilla. “I sometimes feel that it would be wiser to stop Muriel and Gladys from going about so much with her.”

(Emily, devoutly: “I wish you would. They are so stupid and silly and they just stick around Ilse and me all the time.”)

“When all is said and done, I pity her,” said Miss Potter. “She’s so foolish and high-minded that she’ll get in wrong with every one, and no decent, sensible man will ever be bothered with her. Geoff North says he went home with her once and that was enough for him.”

(Emily, emphatically: “I believe you! Geoff showed almost human intelligence in that remark.”)

“But then she probably won’t live through her teens. She looks very consumptive. Really, Ann Cyrilla, I do feel sorry for the poor thing.”

This was the proverbial last straw for Emily. She, whole Starr and half Murray to be pitied by Beulah Potter! Mother Hubbard or no Mother Hubbard, it could not be borne! The closet door suddenly opened wide and Emily stood revealed, Mother Hubbard and all, against a background of boots and jumpers. Her cheeks were crimson, her eyes black. The mouths of Mrs. Ann Cyrilla and Miss Beulah Potter fell open and stayed open; their faces turned dull red; they were dumb.

Emily looked at them steadily for a minute of scornful, eloquent silence. Then, with the air of a queen, she swept across the kitchen and vanished through the sitting-room door, just as Aunt Elizabeth came up the sandstone steps with dignified apologies for keeping them waiting. Miss

Potter and Mrs. Ann Cyrilla were so dumbfounded that they were hardly able to talk about the Ladies' Aid, and got themselves confusedly away after a few jerky questions and answers. Aunt Elizabeth did not know what to make of them and thought they must have been unreasonably offended over having to wait. Then she dismissed the matter from her mind. A Murray did not care what Potters thought or did. The open closet door told no tales, and she did not know that up in the lookout chamber Emily was lying face downward across the bed crying passionately for shame and anger and humiliation. She felt degraded and hurt. It had all been the outcome of her own silly vanity in the beginning — she acknowledged that — but her punishment had been too severe.

She did not mind so much what Miss Potter had said, but Mrs. Ann Cyrilla's tiny barbs of malice did sting. She had liked pretty, pleasant Mrs. Ann Cyrilla, who had always seemed kind and friendly and had paid her many compliments. She had thought Mrs. Ann Cyrilla had really liked her. And now to find out that she would talk about her like this!

"Couldn't they have said one good thing of me?" she sobbed. "Oh, I feel soiled, somehow — between my own silliness and their malice — and all dirty and messed-up mentally. Will I ever feel clean again?"

She did not feel "clean" until she had written it all out in her diary. Then she took a less distorted view of it and summoned philosophy to her aid.

"Mr. Carpenter says we should make every experience teach us something," she wrote. "He says every experience, no matter whether it is pleasant or unpleasant, has something for us if we are able to view it dispassionately. 'That,' he added bitterly, 'is one of the pieces of good advice I have kept by me all my life and never been able to make any use of myself.'"

"Very well, I shall try to view this dispassionately! I suppose the way to do it is to consider all that was said of me and decide just what was true and what false, and what merely distorted — which is worse than the false, I think.

“To begin with: hiding in the closet at all, just out of vanity, comes under my heading of bad deeds. And I suppose that appearing as I did, after I had stayed there so long, and covering them with confusion, was another. But if so, I can’t feel it ‘dispassionately’ yet, because I am sinfully glad I did it — yes, even if they did see me in the Mother Hubbard! I shall never forget their faces! Especially Mrs. Ann Cyrilla’s. Miss Potter won’t worry over it long — she will say it served me right — but Mrs. Ann Cyrilla will never, to her dying day, get over being found out like that.

“Now for a review of their criticisms of Emily Byrd Starr and the decision as to whether said Emily Byrd Starr deserved the said criticisms, wholly or in part. Be honest now, Emily, ‘look then into thy heart’ and try to see yourself, not as Miss Potter sees you or as you see yourself, but as you really are.

“(I think I’m going to find this interesting!)

“In the first place, Mrs. Ann Cyrilla said I was pig-headed.

“Am I pig-headed?

“I know I am determined, and Aunt Elizabeth says I am stubborn. But pig-headedness is worse than either of those. Determination is a good quality and even stubbornness has a saving grace in it if you have a little gumption as well. But a pig-headed person is one who is too stupid to see or understand the foolishness of a certain course and insists on taking it — insists, in short, on running full tilt into a stone wall.

“No, I am not pig-headed. I accept stone walls.

“But I take a good deal of convincing that they are stone walls and not cardboard imitations. Therefore, I am a little stubborn.

“Miss Potter said I was a flirt. This is wholly untrue, so I won’t discuss it. But she also said I ‘made eyes.’ Now do I? I don’t mean to — I know that; but it seems you can ‘make eyes’ without being conscious of it, so how am I going to prevent that? I can’t go about all the days of my life with my eyes dropped down. Dean said the other day:

“‘When you look at me like that, Star, there is nothing for me but to do as you ask.’

“And Aunt Elizabeth was quite annoyed last week because she said I was looking ‘improperly’ at Perry when I was coaxing him to go to the Sunday-school picnic. (Perry hates Sunday-school picnics.)

“Now, in both cases I thought I was only looking beseechingly.

“Mrs. Ann Cyrilla said I wasn’t pretty. Is that true?”

Emily laid down her pen, went over to the mirror and took a “dispassionate” stock of her looks. Black of hair — smoke-purple of eye — crimson of lip. So far, not bad. Her forehead was too high, but the new way of doing her hair obviated that defect. Her skin was very white and her cheeks, which had been so pale in childhood, were now as delicately hued as a pink pearl. Her mouth was too large, but her teeth were good. Her slightly pointed ears gave her a fawn-like charm. Her neck had lines that she could not help liking. Her slender, immature figure was graceful; she knew, for Aunt Nancy had told her, that she had the Shipley ankle and instep. Emily looked very earnestly at Emily-in-the-Glass from several angles, and returned to her diary.

“I have decided that I am not pretty,” she wrote. “I think I look quite pretty when my hair is done a certain way, but a really pretty girl would be pretty no matter how her hair was done, so Mrs. Ann Cyrilla was right. But I feel sure that I am not so plain as she implied, either.

“Then she said I was sly — and deep. I don’t think it is any fault to be ‘deep,’ though she spoke as if she thought it was. I would rather be deep than shallow. But am I sly? No. I am not. Then what is it about me that makes people think I am sly? Aunt Ruth always insists that I am. I think it is because I have a habit, when I am bored or disgusted with people, of stepping suddenly into my own world and shutting the door. People resent this — I suppose it is only natural to resent a door being shut in your face. They call it slyness when it is only self-defence. So I won’t worry over that.

“Miss Potter said an abominable thing — that I passed off clever speeches I had read in books, as my own — trying to be smart. That is utterly false. Honestly, I never ‘try to be smart.’ But — I do try often to

see how a certain thing I've thought out sounds when it is put into words. Perhaps this is a kind of showing-off. I must be careful about it.

"Jealous: no, I'm not that. I do like to be first, I admit. But it wasn't because I was jealous of Ilse that I cried that night at the concert. I cried because I felt I had made a mess of my part. I was a stick, just as Mrs. Ann Cyrilla said. I can't act a part somehow. Sometimes a certain part seems to suit me and then I can be it, but if not I'm no good in a dialogue. I only went in it to oblige Mrs. Johnson, and I felt horribly mortified because I knew she was disappointed.

And I suppose my pride suffered a bit, but I never thought of being jealous of Ilse. I was proud of her — she does magnificently in a play.

"Yes, I contradict. I admit that is one of my faults. But people do say such outrageous things! And why isn't it as bad for people to contradict me? They do it continually — and I am right just as often as they are.

"Sarcastic? Yes, I'm afraid that is another of my faults. Touchy — no, I'm not. I'm only sensitive. And proud? Well, yes, I am a little proud — but not nearly as proud as people think me. I can't help carrying my head at a certain angle and I can't help feeling it is a great thing to have a century of good, upright people with fine traditions and considerable brains behind you. Not like the Potters — upstarts of yesterday!

"Oh, how those women garbled things about poor Ilse. We couldn't, I suppose, expect a Potter or the wife of a Potter to recognize the sleep-walking scene from Lady Macbeth. I have told Ilse repeatedly that she ought to see that all doors are shut when she tries it over. She is quite wonderful in it. She never was at that charivari — she only said she'd like to go. And as for the moonlight bathing — that was true enough except that we had some stitches on. There was nothing dreadful about it. It was perfectly beautiful — though now it is all spoiled and degraded by being dragged about in common gossip. I wish Ilse hadn't told about it.

"We had gone away up the sandshore for a walk. It was a moonlit night and the sandshore was wonderful. The Wind Woman was rustling in the grasses on the dunes and there was a long, gentle wash of little gleaming waves on the shore. We wanted to bathe, but at first we thought we

couldn't because we didn't have our bathing dresses. So we sat on the sands and we just talked. The great gulf stretched out before us, silvery, gleaming, alluring, going farther and farther into the mists of the northern sky. It was like an ocean in 'fairylands forlorn.'

"I said:

"'I would like to get into a ship and sail straight out there — out — out — where would I land?'

"'Anticosti, I expect,' said Ilse — a bit too prosaically, I thought.

"'No — no — Ultima Thule, I think,' I said dreamily. 'Some beautiful unknown shore where "the rain never falls, and the wind never blows." Perhaps the country back of the North Wind where Diamond went. One could sail to it over that silver sea on a night like this.'

"'That was heaven, I think,' said Ilse.

"Then we talked about immortality, and Ilse said she was afraid of it — afraid of living for ever and for ever; she said she was sure she would get awfully tired of herself. I said I thought I liked Dean's idea of a succession of lives — I can't make out from him whether he really believes that or not — and Ilse said that might be all very well if you were sure of being born again as a decent person, but how about it if you weren't?

"'Well, you have to take some risk in any kind of immortality,' I said.

"'Anyhow,' said Ilse, 'whether I am myself or somebody else next time, I do hope I won't have such a dreadful temper. If I just go on being myself I'll smash my harp and tear my halo to pieces and pull all the feathers out of the other angels' wings half an hour after getting to heaven. You know I will, Emily. I can't help it. I had a fiendish quarrel with Perry yesterday again. It was all my fault — but of course he vexed me by his boasting. I wish I could control my temper.'

"I don't mind Ilse's rages one bit now — I know she never means anything she says in them. I never say anything back. I just smile at her and if I've a bit of paper handy I jot down the things she says. This infuriates her so that she chokes with anger and can't say anything more. At all other times Ilse is a darling and such good fun.

“‘You can’t control your rages because you like going into them,’ I said.

“Ilse stared at me.

“‘I don’t — I don’t.’

“‘You do. You enjoy them,’ I insisted.

“‘Well, of course,” said Ilse, grinning, “I do have a good time while they last. It’s awfully satisfying to say the most insulting things and call the worst names. I believe you’re right, Emily. I do enjoy them. Queer I never thought of it. I suppose if I really were unhappy in them I wouldn’t go into them. But after they’re over — I’m so remorseful. I cried for an hour yesterday after fighting with Perry.’

“‘Yes, and you enjoyed that, too — didn’t you?’

“Ilse reflected.

“‘I guess so, Emily; you’re an uncanny thing. I won’t talk about it any more. Let’s go bathing. No dresses? What does it matter. There isn’t a soul for miles. I can’t resist those waves. They’re calling me.’

“I felt just as she did, and bathing by moonlight seemed such a lovely, romantic thing — and it is, when the Potters of the world don’t know of it. When they do, they smudge it. We undressed in a little hollow among the dunes — that was like a bowl of silver in the moonlight — but we kept our petticoats on. We had the loveliest time splashing and swimming about in that silver-blue water and those creamy little waves, like mermaids or sea nymphs. It was like living in a poem or a fairy tale. And when we came out I held out my hands to Ilse and said:

“Come unto these yellow sands
Curtseyed when we have and kissed,
The wild winds whist,
Foot it featly here and there
And, sweet sprites, the burden bear.

“Ilse took my hands and we danced in rings over the moonlit sands, and then we went up to the silver bowl and dressed and went home perfectly happy. Only, of course, we had to carry our wet petticoats rolled up under

our arms, so we looked rather slinky, but nobody saw us. And that is what Blair Water is so scandalized about.

“All the same, I hope Aunt Elizabeth won’t hear of it.

“It is too bad Mrs. Price lost so much sleep over Dean and me. We were not performing any weird incantations — we were simply walking over the Delectable Mountain and tracing pictures in the clouds. Perhaps it was childish — but it was great fun. That is one thing I like about Dean — he isn’t afraid of doing something harmless and pleasant just because it’s childish. One cloud he pointed out to me looked exactly like an angel flying along the pale, shining sky and carrying a baby in its arms. There was a filmy blue veil over its head with a faint, first star gleaming through it. Its wings were tipped with gold and its white robe flecked with crimson.

“‘There goes the Angel of the Evening Star with tomorrow in its arms,’ said Dean.

“It was so beautiful that it gave me one of my wonder moments. But ten seconds later it had changed into something that looked like a camel with an exaggerated hump!

“We had a wonderful half hour, even if Mrs. Price, who couldn’t see anything in the sky, did think us quite mad.

“Well, it all comes to this, there’s no use trying to live in other people’s opinions. The only thing to do is to live in your own. After all, I believe in myself. I’m not so bad and silly as they think me, and I’m not consumptive, and I can write. Now that I’ve written it all out I feel differently about it. The only thing that still aggravates me is that Miss Potter pitied me — pitied by a Potter!

“I looked out of my window just now and saw Cousin Jimmy’s nasturtium bed — and suddenly the flash came — and Miss Potter and her pity, and her malicious tongue seemed to matter not at all. Nasturtiums, who coloured you, you wonderful, glowing things? You must have been fashioned out of summer sunsets.

“I help Cousin Jimmy a great deal with his garden this summer. I think I love it as much as he does. Every day we make new discoveries of bud and bloom.

“So Aunt Elizabeth won’t send me to Shrewsbury! Oh, I feel as disappointed as if I’d really hoped she would. Every door in life seems shut to me.

“Still, after all, I’ve lots to be thankful for. Aunt Elizabeth will let me go to school another year here, I think, and Mr. Carpenter can teach me heaps yet; I’m not hideous; moonlight is still a fair thing; I’m going to do something with my pen some day — and I’ve got a lovely, grey, moon-faced cat who has just jumped up on my table and poked my pen with his nose as a signal that I’ve written enough for one sitting.

“The only real cat is a grey cat!”

Half a Loaf

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One late August evening Emily heard Teddy's signal whistle from the Tomorrow Road, and slipped out to join him. He had news — that was evident from his shining eyes.

“Emily,” he cried excitedly, “I’m going to Shrewsbury after all! Mother told me this evening she had made up her mind to let me go!”

Emily was glad — with a queer sorriness underneath, for which she reproached herself. How lonesome it would be at New Moon when her three old pals were gone! She had not realized until that moment how much she had counted on Teddy's companionship. He had always been there in the background of her thoughts of the coming year. She had always taken Teddy for granted. Now there would be nobody — not even Dean, for Dean was going away for the winter as usual — to Egypt or Japan, as he might decide at the last moment. What would she do? Would all the Jimmy-books in the world take the place of her flesh-and-blood chums?

“If you were only going, too!” said Teddy, as they walked along the Tomorrow Road — which was almost a To-day Road now, so fast and so tall had the leafy young maples grown.

“There's no use wishing it — don't speak of it — it makes me unhappy,” said Emily jerkily.

“Well, we'll have weekends anyhow. And it's you I have to thank for going. It was what you said to Mother that night in the graveyard that made her let me go. I know she's been thinking of it ever since, by things she would say every once in a while. One day last week I heard her muttering: ‘It's awful to be a mother — awful to be a mother and suffer like this.’ Yet she called me selfish!’ And another time she said, ‘Is it selfish to want to keep the only thing you have left in the world?’ But she was lovely tonight when she told me I could go. I know folks say Mother

isn't quite right in her mind — and sometimes she is a little queer. But it's only when other people are around. You've no idea, Emily, how nice and dear she is when we're alone. I hate to leave her. But I must get some education!"

"I'm very glad if what I said has made her change her mind, but she will never forgive me for it. She has hated me ever since — you know she has. You know how she looks at me whenever I'm at the Tansy Patch — oh, she's very polite to me. But her eyes, Teddy."

"I know," said Teddy, uncomfortably. "But don't be hard on Mother, Emily. I'm sure she wasn't always like that — though she has been ever since I can remember. I don't know anything of her before that. She never tells me anything — I don't know a thing about my father. She won't talk about him. I don't even know how she got that scar on her face."

"I don't think there's anything the matter with your mother's mind, really," said Emily slowly. "But I think there's something troubling it — always troubling it — something she can't forget or throw off. Teddy, I'm sure your mother is haunted. Of course, I don't mean by a ghost or anything silly like that. But by some terrible thought."

"She isn't happy, I know," said Teddy, "and, of course, we're poor. Mother said tonight she could only send me to Shrewsbury for three years — that was all she could afford. But that will give me a start — I'll get on somehow after that. I know I can. I'll make it up to her yet."

"You will be a great artist some day," said Emily dreamily.

They had come to the end of the Tomorrow Road. Before them was the pond pasture, whitened over with a drift of daisies. Farmers hate the daisies as a pestiferous weed, but a field white with them on a summer twilight is a vision from the Land of Lost Delight. Beneath them Blair Water shone like a great golden lily. Up on the eastern hill the little Disappointed House crouched amid its shadows, dreaming, perhaps, of the false bride that had never come to it. There was no light at the Tansy Patch. Was lonely Mrs. Kent crying there in the darkness, with only her secret, tormenting heart-hunger for companion?

Emily was looking at the sunset sky — her eyes rapt, her face pale and seeking. She felt no longer blue or depressed — somehow she never could feel that way long in Teddy's company. In all the world there was no music like his voice. All good things seemed suddenly possible with him. She could not go to Shrewsbury — but she could work and study at New Moon — oh, how she would work and study. Another year with Mr. Carpenter would do a great deal for her — as much as Shrewsbury, perhaps. She, too, had her Alpine Path to climb — she would climb it, no matter what the obstacles in the way — no matter whether there was any one to help her or not.

“When I am I'll paint you just as you're looking now,” said Teddy, “and call it Joan of Arc — with a face all spirit — listening to her voices.”

In spite of her voices Emily went to bed that night feeling rather downhearted — and woke in the morning with an unaccountable conviction that some good news was coming to her that day — a conviction that did not lessen as the hours passed by in the commonplace fashion of Saturday hours at New Moon — busy hours in which the house was made immaculate for Sunday, and the pantry replenished. It was a cool, damp day when the fogs were coming up from the shore on the east wind, and New Moon and its old garden were veiled in mist.

At twilight a thin, grey rain began to fall, and still the good news had not come. Emily had just finished scouring the brass candlesticks and composing a poem called Rain Song, simultaneously, when Aunt Laura told her that Aunt Elizabeth wanted to see her in the parlour.

Emily's recollections of parlour interviews with Aunt Elizabeth were not especially pleasant. She could not recall any recent deed, done or left undone, which would justify this summons, yet she walked into the parlour quakingly: whatever Aunt Elizabeth was going to say to her it must have some special significance or it would not be said in the parlour. This was just one of Aunt Elizabeth's little ways. Daffy, her big cat, slipped in beside her like a noiseless, grey shadow. She hoped Aunt Elizabeth would not shoo him out: his presence was a certain comfort: a cat is a good backer when he is on your side!

Aunt Elizabeth was knitting; she looked solemn but not offended or angry. She ignored Daff, but thought that Emily seemed very tall in the old, stately, twilit room. How quickly children grew up! It seemed but the other day since fair, pretty Juliet — Elizabeth Murray shut her thoughts off with a click.

“Sit down, Emily,” she said. “I want to have a talk with you.”

Emily sat down. So did Daffy, wreathing his tail comfortably about his paws. Emily suddenly felt that her hands were clammy and her mouth dry. She wished that she had knitting, too. It was nasty to sit there, unoccupied, and wonder what was coming. What did come was the one thing she had never thought of. Aunt Elizabeth, after knitting a deliberate round on her stocking, said directly:

“Emily, would you like to go to Shrewsbury next week?”

Go to Shrewsbury? Had she heard aright?

“Oh, Aunt Elizabeth!” she said.

“I have been talking the matter over with your uncles and aunts,” said Aunt Elizabeth. “They agree with me that you should have some further education. It will be a considerable expense, of course — no, don’t interrupt. I don’t like interruptions — but Ruth will board you for half-price, as her contribution to your upbringing — Emily, I will not be interrupted! Your Uncle Oliver will pay the other half; your Uncle Wallace will provide your books, and I will see to your clothes. You will, of course, help your Aunt Ruth about the house in every way possible as some return for her kindness. You may go to Shrewsbury for three years on a certain condition.”

What was the condition? Emily, who wanted to dance and sing and laugh through the old parlour as no Murray, not even her mother, had ever ventured to dance and laugh before, constrained herself to sit rigidly on her ottoman and ask herself that question. Behind her suspense she felt that the moment was quite dramatic.

“Three years at Shrewsbury,” Aunt Elizabeth went on, “will do as much for you as three at Queen’s — except, of course, that you don’t get a teacher’s licence, which doesn’t matter in your case, as you are not under

the necessity of working for your living. But, as I have said, there is a condition.”

Why didn’t Aunt Elizabeth name the condition? Emily felt that the suspense was unendurable. Could it be possible that Aunt Elizabeth was a little afraid to name it? It was not like her to talk for time. Was it so very terrible?

“You must promise,” said Aunt Elizabeth sternly, “that for the three years you are at Shrewsbury you will give up entirely this writing nonsense of yours — entirely, except in so far as school compositions may be required.”

Emily sat very still — and cold. No Shrewsbury on the one hand — on the other no more poems, no more stories and “studies,” no more delightful Jimmy-books of miscellany. She did not take more than one instant to make up her mind.

“I can’t promise that, Aunt Elizabeth,” she said resolutely.

Aunt Elizabeth dropped her knitting in amazement. She had not expected this. She had thought Emily was so set on going to Shrewsbury that she would do anything that might be asked of her in order to go — especially such a trifling thing as this — which, so Aunt Elizabeth thought, involved only a surrender of stubbornness.

“Do you mean to say you won’t give up your foolish scribbling for the sake of the education you’ve always pretended to want so much?” she demanded.

“Not that I won’t — it’s just that I can’t,” said Emily despairingly. She knew Aunt Elizabeth could not understand — Aunt Elizabeth never had understood this. “I can’t help writing, Aunt Elizabeth. It’s in my blood. There’s no use in asking me. I do want an education — it isn’t pretending — but I can’t give up my writing to get it. I couldn’t keep such a promise — so what use would there be in making it?”

“Then you can stay home,” said Aunt Elizabeth angrily.

Emily expected to see her get up and walk out of the room. Instead, Aunt Elizabeth picked up her stocking and wrathfully resumed her knitting. To tell the truth, Aunt Elizabeth was absurdly taken aback. She

really wanted to send Emily to Shrewsbury. Tradition required so much of her, and all the clan were of opinion she should be sent. This condition had been her own idea. She thought it a good chance to break Emily of a silly un-Murray-like habit of wasting time and paper, and she had never doubted that her plan would succeed, for she knew how much Emily wanted to go. And now this senseless, unreasoning, ungrateful obstinacy — “the Starr coming out,” thought Aunt Elizabeth rancorously, forgetful of the Shipley inheritance! What was to be done? She knew too well from past experience that there would be no moving Emily once she had taken up a position, and she knew that Wallace and Oliver and Ruth, though they thought Emily’s craze for writing as silly and untraditional as she did, would not back her — Elizabeth — up in her demand. Elizabeth Murray foresaw a complete right-about-face before her, and Elizabeth Murray did not like the prospect. She could have shaken, with a right good will, the slim, pale thing sitting before her on the ottoman. The creature was so slight — and young — and indomitable. For over three years Elizabeth Murray had tried to cure Emily of this foolishness of writing and for over three years she, who had never failed in anything before, had failed in this. One couldn’t starve her into submission — and nothing short of it would seem to be efficacious.

Elizabeth knitted furiously in her vexation, and Emily sat motionless, struggling with her bitter disappointment and sense of injustice. She was determined she would not cry before Aunt Elizabeth, but it was hard to keep the tears back. She wished Daff wouldn’t purr with such resounding satisfaction, as if everything were perfectly delicious from a grey cat’s point of view. She wished Aunt Elizabeth would tell her to go. But Aunt Elizabeth only knitted furiously and said nothing. It all seemed rather nightmarish. The wind was rising and the rain began to drive against the pane, and the dead-and-gone Murrays looked down accusingly from their dark frames. They had no sympathy with flashes and Jimmy-books and Alpine paths — with the pursuit of unwon, alluring divinities. Yet Emily couldn’t help thinking, under all her disappointment, what an excellent setting it would make for some tragic scene in a novel.

The door opened and Cousin Jimmy slipped in. Cousin Jimmy knew what was in the wind and had been coolly and deliberately listening outside the door. He knew Emily would never promise such a thing — he had told Elizabeth so at the family council ten days before. He was only simply Jimmy Murray, but he understood what sensible Elizabeth Murray could not understand.

“What is wrong?” he asked, looking from one to the other.

“Nothing is wrong,” said Aunt Elizabeth haughtily. “I have offered Emily an education and she has refused it. She is free to do so, of course.”

“No one can be free who has a thousand ancestors,” said Cousin Jimmy in the eerie tone in which he generally said such things. It always made Elizabeth shiver — she could never forget that his eeriness was her fault. “Emily can’t promise what you want. Can you, Emily?”

“No.” In spite of herself a couple of big tears rolled down Emily’s cheeks.

“If you could,” said Cousin Jimmy, “you would promise it for me, wouldn’t you?”

Emily nodded.

“You’ve asked too much, Elizabeth,” said Cousin Jimmy to the angry lady of the knitting-needles. “You’ve asked her to give up all her writing — now, if you’d just asked her to give up some — Emily, what if she just asked you to give up some? You might be able to do that, mightn’t you?”

“What some?” asked Emily cautiously.

“Well, anything that wasn’t true, for instance.” Cousin Jimmy sidled over to Emily and put a beseeching hand on her shoulder. Elizabeth did not stop knitting, but the needles went more slowly. “Stories, for instance, Emily. She doesn’t like your writing stories, especially. She thinks they’re lies. She doesn’t mind other things so much. Don’t you think, Emily, you could give up writing stories for three years? An education is a great thing. Your grandmother Archibald would have lived on herring tails to get an education — many a time I’ve heard her say it. Come, Emily?”

Emily thought rapidly. She loved writing stories: it would be a hard thing to give them up. But if she could still write air-born fancies in verse

— and weird little Jimmy-book sketches of character — and accounts of everyday events — witty — satirical — tragic — as the humour took her — she might be able to get along.

“Try her — try her,” whispered Cousin Jimmy. “Propitiate her a little. You do owe her a great deal, Emily. Meet her halfway.”

“Aunt Elizabeth,” said Emily tremulously, “if you will send me to Shrewsbury I promise you that for three years I won’t write anything that isn’t true. Will that do? Because it’s all I can promise.”

Elizabeth knitted two rounds before deigning to reply. Cousin Jimmy and Emily thought she was not going to reply at all. Suddenly she folded up her knitting and rose.

“Very well. I will let it go at that. It is, of course, your stories I object to most: as for the rest, I fancy Ruth will see to it that you have not much time to waste on it.”

Aunt Elizabeth swept out, much relieved in her secret heart that she had not been utterly routed, but had been enabled to retreat from a perplexing position with some of the honours of war. Cousin Jimmy patted Emily’s black head.

“That’s good, Emily. Mustn’t be too stubborn, you know. And three years isn’t a lifetime, pussy.”

No: but it seems like one at fourteen. Emily cried herself to sleep when she went to bed — and woke again at three by the clock, of that windy, dark-grey night on the old north shore — rose — lighted a candle — sat down at her table and described the whole scene in her Jimmy-book; being exceedingly careful to write therein no word that was not strictly true!

Shrewsbury Beginnings

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Teddy and Ilse and Perry whooped for joy when Emily told them she was going to Shrewsbury. Emily, thinking it over, was reasonably happy. The great thing was that she was going to High School. She did not like the idea of boarding with Aunt Ruth. This was unexpected. She had supposed Aunt Ruth would never be willing to have her about and that, if Aunt Elizabeth did decide to send her to Shrewsbury, she would board elsewhere — probably with Ilse. Certainly, she would have greatly preferred this. She knew quite well that life would not be very easy under Aunt Ruth's roof. And then she must write no more stories.

To feel within her the creative urge and be forbidden to express it — to tingle with delight in the conception of humorous or dramatic characters, and be forbidden to bring them into existence — to be suddenly seized with the idea of a capital plot and realize immediately afterward that you couldn't develop it. All this was a torture which no one who has not been born with the fatal itch for writing can realize. The Aunt Elizabeths of the world can never understand it. To them, it is merely foolishness.

Those last two weeks of August were busy ones at New Moon. Elizabeth and Laura held long conferences over Emily's clothes. She must have an outfit that would cast no discredit on the Murrays, but common sense and not fashion was to give the casting vote. Emily herself had no say in the matter. Laura and Elizabeth argued "from noon to dewy eve" one day as to whether Emily might have a taffeta silk blouse — Ilse had three — and decided against it, much to Emily's disappointment. But Laura had her way in regard to what she dared not call an "evening dress," since the name would have doomed it in Elizabeth's opinion: it was a pretty crepe thing, of a pinkish-grey — the shade, I think, which was then called ashes-of-roses — and was made collarless — a great concession on Elizabeth's part — with the big puffed sleeves that look very absurd to-

day, but which, like every other fashion, were pretty and piquant when worn by the youth and beauty of their time. It was the prettiest dress Emily had ever had — and the longest, which meant much in those days, when you could not be grown up until you had put on “long” dresses. It came to her pretty ankles.

She put it on one evening, when Laura and Elizabeth were away, because she wanted Dean to see her in it. He had come up to spend the evening with her — he was off the next day, having decided on Egypt — and they walked in the garden. Emily felt quite old and sophisticated because she had to lift her shimmering skirt clear of the ribbon grasses. She had a little greyish-pink scarf wound around her head and looked more like a star than ever, Dean thought. The cats were in attendance — Daffy, sleek and striped, Saucy Sal, who still reigned supreme in the New Moon barns. Cats might come and cats might go, but Saucy Sal went on for ever. They frisked over the grass plots and pounced on each other from flowery jungles and rolled insinuatingly around Emily’s feet. Dean was going to Egypt but he knew that nowhere, even amid the strange charm of forgotten empires, would he see anything he liked better than the pretty picture Emily and her little cats made in the prim, stately, scented old garden of New Moon.

They did not talk as much as usual and the silences did queer things to both of them. Dean had one or two mad impulses to throw up the trip to Egypt and stay home for the winter — go to Shrewsbury perhaps; he shrugged his shoulders and laughed at himself. This child did not need his looking after — the ladies of New Moon were competent guardians. She was only a child yet — in spite of her slim height and her unfathomable eyes. But how perfect the white line of her throat — how kissable the sweet red curve of her mouth. She would be a woman soon — but not for him — not for lame Jarback Priest of her father’s generation. For the hundredth time Dean told himself that he was not going to be a fool. He must be content with what fate had given him — the friendship and affection of this exquisite, starry creature. In the years to come her love would be a wonderful thing — for some other man. No doubt, thought

Dean cynically, she would waste it on some goodlooking young manikin who wasn't half worthy of it.

Emily was thinking how dreadfully she was going to miss Dean — more than she had ever missed him before. They had been such good pals that summer. She had never had a talk with him, even if it were only for a few minutes, without feeling that life was richer. His wise, witty, humorous, satiric sayings were educative. They stimulated — stung — inspired her. And his occasional compliments gave her self-confidence. He had a certain strange fascination for her that no one else in the world possessed. She felt it though she could not analyse it. Teddy, now — she knew perfectly well why she liked Teddy. It was just because of his Teddyness. And Perry — Perry was a jolly, sunburned, outspoken, boastful rogue you couldn't help liking. But Dean was different. Was his charm the allure of the unknown — of experience — of subtle knowledge — of a mind grown wise on bitterness — of things Dean knew that she could never know? Emily couldn't tell. She only knew that everybody tasted a little flat after Dean — even Teddy, though she liked him best.

Oh, yes, Emily never had any doubt at all that she liked Teddy best. And yet Dean seemed to satisfy some part of her subtle and intricate nature that always went hungry without him.

"Thank you for all you've taught me, Dean," she said as they stood by the sundial.

"Do you think you have taught me nothing, Star?"

"How could I? I'm so young — so ignorant—"

"You've taught me how to laugh without bitterness, I hope you'll never realize what a boon that is. Don't let them spoil you at Shrewsbury, Star. You're so pleased over going that I don't want to throw cold water. But you'd be just as well off — better — here at New Moon."

"Dean! I want some education—"

"Education! Education isn't being spoonfed with algebra and second-rate Latin. Old Carpenter could teach you more and better than the college cubs, male and female, in Shrewsbury High School."

“I can’t go to school any more here,” protested Emily. “I’d be all alone. All the pupils of my age are going to Queen’s or Shrewsbury or staying home. I don’t understand you, Dean. I thought you’d be so glad they’re letting me go to Shrewsbury.”

“I am glad — since it pleases you. Only — the lore I wished for you isn’t learned in High Schools or measured by terminal exams. Whatever of worth you get at any school you’ll dig out for yourself. Don’t let them make anything of you but yourself, that’s all. I don’t think they will.”

“No, they won’t,” said Emily decidedly. “I’m like Kipling’s cat — I walk by my wild lone and wave my wild tail where so it pleases me. That’s why the Murrays look askance at me. They think I should only run with the pack. Oh, Dean, you’ll write me often, won’t you? Nobody understands like you. And you’ve got to be such a habit with me I can’t do without you.”

Emily said — and meant — it lightly enough; but Dean’s thin face flushed darkly. They did not say goodbye — that was an old compact of theirs. Dean waved his hand at her.

“May every day be kind to you,” he said.

Emily gave him only her slow, mysterious smile — he was gone. The garden seemed very lonely in the faint blue twilight, with the ghostly blossoms of the white phlox here and there. She was glad when she heard Teddy’s whistle in Lofty John’s Bush.

On her last evening at home she went to see Mr. Carpenter and get his opinion regarding some manuscripts she had left with him for criticism the preceding week. Among them were her latest stories, written before Aunt Elizabeth’s ultimatum. Criticism was something Mr. Carpenter could give with a right good will and he never minced matters; but he was just, and Emily had confidence in his verdicts, even when he said things that raised temporary blisters on her soul.

“This love story is no good,” he said bluntly.

“I know that it isn’t what I wanted to make it,” sighed Emily.

“No story ever is,” said Mr. Carpenter. “You’ll never write anything that really satisfies you though it may satisfy other people. As for love

stories, you can't write them because you can't feel them. Don't try to write anything you can't feel — it will be a failure—'echoes nothing worth.' This other yarn now — about this old woman. It's not bad. The dialogue is clever — the climax simple and effective. And thank the Lord you've got a sense of humour. That's mainly why you're no good at love stories, I believe. Nobody with any real sense of humour can write a love story."

Emily didn't see why this should be. She liked writing love stories — and terribly sentimental, tragical stories they were.

"Shakespeare could," she said defiantly.

"You're hardly in the Shakespeare class," said Mr. Carpenter dryly. Emily blushed scorchingly.

"I know I'm not. But you said nobody."

"And I maintain it. Shakespeare is the exception that proves the rule. Though his sense of humour was certainly in abeyance when he wrote *Romeo and Juliet*. However, let's come back to Emily of New Moon. This story — well, a young person might read it without contamination."

Emily knew by the inflection of Mr. Carpenter's voice that he was not praising her story. She kept silence and Mr. Carpenter went on, flicking her precious manuscripts aside irreverently.

"This one sounds like a weak imitation of Kipling. Been reading him lately?"

"Yes."

"I thought so. Don't try to imitate Kipling. If you must imitate, imitate Laura Jean Libbey. Nothing good about this but its title. A priggish little yarn. And *Hidden Riches* is not a story — it's a machine. It creaks. It never made me forget for one instant that it was a story. Hence it isn't a story."

"I was trying to write something very true to life," protested Emily.

"Ah, that's why. We all see life through an illusion — even the most disillusioned of us. That's why things aren't convincing if they're too true to life. Let me see — *The Madden Family* — another attempt at realism. But it's only photography — not portraiture."

“What a lot of disagreeable things you’ve said,” sighed Emily.

“It might be a nice world if nobody ever said a disagreeable thing, but it would be a dangerous one,” retorted Mr. Carpenter. “You told me you wanted criticism, not taffy. However, here’s a bit of taffy for you. I kept it for the last. Something Different is comparatively good and if I wasn’t afraid of ruining you I’d say it was absolutely good. Ten years from now you can rewrite it and make something of it. Yes, ten years — don’t screw up your face, Jade. You have talent — and you’ve got a wonderful feeling for words — you get the inevitable one every time — that’s a priceless thing. But you have some vile faults, too. Those cursed italics — forswear them, Jade, forswear them. And your imagination needs a curb when you get away from realism.”

“It’s to have one now,” said Emily, gloomily.

She told him of her compact with Aunt Elizabeth. Mr. Carpenter nodded.

“Excellent.”

“Excellent!” echoed Emily blankly.

“Yes. It’s just what you need. It will teach you restraint and economy. Stick to facts for three years and see what you can make of them. Leave the realm of imagination severely alone and confine yourself to ordinary life.”

“There isn’t any such thing as ordinary life,” said Emily.

Mr. Carpenter looked at her for a moment.

“You’re right — there isn’t,” he said slowly. “But one wonders a little how you know it. Well, go on — go on — walk in your chosen path — and ‘thank whatever gods there be’ that you’re free to walk it.”

“Cousin Jimmy says nobody can be free who has a thousand ancestors.”

“And yet people call that man simple,” muttered Mr. Carpenter.

“However, your ancestors don’t seem to have wished any special curse on you. They’ve simply laid it on you to aim for the heights and they’ll give you no peace if you don’t. Call it ambition — aspiration — cacoëthes

scribendi — any name you will. Under its sting — or allure — one has to go on climbing — until one fails — or—”

“Succeeds,” said Emily, flinging back her dark head.

“Amen,” said Mr. Carpenter.

Emily wrote a poem that night — Farewell to New Moon — and shed tears over it. She felt every line of it. It was all very well to be going to school — but to leave dear New Moon! Everything at New Moon was linked with her life and thoughts — was a part of her.

“It’s not only that I love my room and trees and hills — they love me,” she thought.

Her little black trunk was packed. Aunt Elizabeth had seen that everything necessary was in it, and Aunt Laura and Cousin Jimmy had seen that one or two unnecessary things were in it. Aunt Laura had told Emily that she would find a pair of black lace stockings inside her strap slippers — even Laura did not dare go so far as silk stockings — and Cousin Jimmy had given her three Jimmy-books and an envelope with a five-dollar bill in it.

“To get anything you want with, Pussy. I’d have made it ten but five was all Elizabeth would advance me on next month’s wages. I think she suspected.”

“Can I spend a dollar of it for American stamps if I can find a way to get them?” whispered Emily anxiously.

“Anything you like,” repeated Cousin Jimmy loyally — though even to him it did not appear an unaccountable thing that any one should want to buy American stamps. But if dear little Emily wanted American stamps, American stamps she should have.

The next day seemed rather dreamlike to Emily — the bird she heard singing rapturously in Lofty John’s bush when she woke at dawn — the drive to Shrewsbury in the early crisp September morning — Aunt Ruth’s cool welcome — the hours at a strange school — the organization of the “Prep” classes — home to supper — surely it must all have taken more than a day.

Aunt Ruth's house was at the end of a residential side street — almost out in the country. Emily thought it a very ugly house, covered as it was with gingerbread-work of various kinds. But a house with white wooden lace on its roof and its bay windows was the last word of elegance in Shrewsbury. There was no garden — nothing but a bare, prim, little lawn; but one thing rejoiced Emily's eyes. Behind the house was a big plantation of tall, slender fir-trees — the tallest, straightest, slenderest firs she had ever seen, stretching back into long, green, gossamered vistas.

Aunt Elizabeth had spent the day in Shrewsbury and went home after supper. She shook hands with Emily on the doorstep and told her to be a good girl and do exactly as Aunt Ruth bade her. She did not kiss Emily, but her tone was very gentle for Aunt Elizabeth. Emily choked up and stood tearfully on the doorstep to watch Aunt Elizabeth out of sight — Aunt Elizabeth going back to dear New Moon.

“Come in,” said Aunt Ruth, and “please don't slam the door.”

Now, Emily never slammed doors.

“We will wash the supper dishes,” said Aunt Ruth. “You will always do that after this. I will show you where everything is put. I suppose Elizabeth told you I would expect you to do a few chores for your board.”

“Yes,” said Emily briefly.

She did not mind doing chores, any number of them — but it was Aunt Ruth's tone.

“Of course your being here will mean a great deal of extra expense for me,” continued Aunt Ruth. “But it is only fair that we should all contribute something to your bringing up. I think, and I have always thought, that it would have been much better to send you to Queen's to get a teacher's licence.”

“I wanted that, too,” said Emily.

“M — m.” Aunt Ruth pursed her mouth. “So you tell me. In that case I don't see why Elizabeth didn't send you to Queen's. She has pampered you enough in other ways, I'm sure — I would expect her to give in about this, too, if she thought you really wanted it. You will sleep in the kitchen chamber. It is warmer in winter than the other rooms. There is no gas in it

but I could not afford to let you have gas to study by in any case. You must use candles — you can burn two at a time. I shall expect you to keep your room neat and tidy and to be here at my exact hours for meals. I am very particular about that. And there is another thing you might as well understand at once. You must not bring your friends here. I do not propose to entertain them.”

“Not Ilse — or Perry — or Teddy?”

“Well, Ilse is a Burnley and a distant connection. She might come in once in a while — I can’t have her running in at all times. From all I hear of her she isn’t a very suitable companion for you. As for the boys — certainly not. I know nothing of Teddy Kent — and you ought to be too proud to associate with Perry Miller.”

“I’m too proud not to associate with him,” retorted Emily.

“Don’t be pert with me, Em’ly. You might as well understand right away that you are not going to have things all your own way, here, as you had at New Moon. You have been badly spoiled. But I will not have hired boys calling on my niece. I don’t know where you get your low tastes from, I’m sure. Even your father seemed like a gentleman. Go upstairs and unpack your trunk. Then do your lessons. We go to bed at nine o’clock!”

Emily felt very indignant. Even Aunt Elizabeth had never dreamed of forbidding Teddy to come to New Moon. She shut herself in her room and unpacked drearily. The room was such an ugly one. She hated it at sight. The door wouldn’t shut tight; the slanting ceiling was rain stained, and came down so close to the bed that she could touch it with her hand. On the bare floor was a large “hooked” mat which made Emily’s eyes ache. It was not in Murray taste — nor in Ruth Dutton’s taste either, to be just. A country cousin of the deceased Mr. Dutton had given it to her. The centre, of a crude, glaring scarlet, was surrounded by scrolls of militant orange and violent green. In the corners were bunches of purple ferns and blue roses.

The woodwork was painted a hideous chocolate brown, and the walls were covered with paper of still more hideous design. The pictures were in keeping, especially a chromo of Queen Alexandra, gorgeously bedizened

with jewels, hung at such an angle that it seemed the royal lady must certainly fall over on her face. Not even a chromo could make Queen Alexandra ugly or vulgar, but it came piteously near it. On a narrow, chocolate shelf sat a vase filled with paper flowers that had been paper flowers for twenty years. One couldn't believe that anything could be as ugly and depressing as they were.

"This room is unfriendly — it — doesn't want me — I can never feel at home here," said Emily.

She was horribly homesick. She wanted the New Moon candlelights shining out on the birch-trees — the scent of hop-vines in the dew — her purring pussy cats — her own dear room, full of dreams — the silences and shadows of the old garden — the grand anthems of wind and billow in the gulf — that sonorous old music she missed so much in this inland silence. She missed even the little graveyard where slept the New Moon dead.

"I'm not going to cry." Emily clenched her hands. "Aunt Ruth will laugh at me. There's nothing in this room I can ever love. Is there anything out of it?"

She pushed up the window. It looked south into the fir grove and its balsam blew in to her like a caress. To the left there was an opening in the trees like a green, arched window, and one saw an enchanting little moonlit landscape through it. And it would let in the splendour of sunset. To the right was a view of the hillside along which West Shrewsbury straggled: the hill was dotted with lights in the autumn dusk, and had a fairylike loveliness. Somewhere near by there was a drowsy twittering, as of little, sleepy birds swinging on a shadowy bough.

"Oh, this is beautiful," breathed Emily, bending out to drink in the balsam-scented air. "Father told me once that one could find something beautiful to love everywhere. I'll love this."

Aunt Ruth poked her head in at the door, unannounced.

"Em'ly, why did you leave that antimacassar crooked on the sofa in the dining-room?"

“I — don’t — know,” said Emily confusedly. She hadn’t even known she had disarranged the antimacassar. Why did Aunt Ruth ask such a question, as if she suspected her of some dark, deep, sinister design?

“Go down and put it straight.”

As Emily turned obediently Aunt Ruth exclaimed,

“Em’ly Starr, put that window down at once! Are you crazy?”

“The room is so close,” pleaded Emily.

“You can air it in the daytime but never have that window open after sundown. I am responsible for your health now. You must know that consumptives have to avoid night air and draughts.”

“I’m not a consumptive,” cried Emily rebelliously.

“Contradict, of course.”

“And if I were, fresh air any time is the best thing for me. Dr. Burnley says so. I hate being smothered.”

“‘Young people think old people to be fools and old people know young people to be fools.’” Aunt Ruth felt that the proverb left nothing to be said. “Go and straighten that antimacassar, Em’ly.”

“Em’ly” swallowed something and went. The offending antimacassar was mathematically corrected.

Emily stood for a moment and looked about her. Aunt Ruth’s dining-room was much more splendid and “up-to-date” than the “sitting-room” at New Moon where they had “company” meals. Hardwood floor — Wilton rug — Early English oak furniture. But it was not half as “friendly” as the old New Moon room, Emily thought. She was more homesick than ever. She did not believe she was going to like anything in Shrewsbury — living with Aunt Ruth, or going to school. The teachers all seemed flat and insipid after pungent Mr. Carpenter and there was a girl in the Junior class she had hated at sight. And she had thought it would be all so delightful — living in pretty Shrewsbury and going to High School. Well, nothing ever is exactly like what you expect it to be, Emily told herself in temporary pessimism as she went back to her room. Hadn’t Dean told her once that he had dreamed all his life of rowing in a gondola through the canals of

Venice on a moonlit night? And when he did he was almost eaten alive by mosquitoes.

Emily set her teeth as she crept into bed.

“I shall just have to fix my thoughts on the moonlight and romance and ignore the mosquitoes,” she thought. “Only — Aunt Ruth does sting so.”

Potpourri

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“September 20, 19 —

“I have been neglecting my diary of late. One does not have a great deal of spare time at Aunt Ruth’s. But it is Friday night and I couldn’t go home for the weekend so I come to my diary for comforting. I can spend only alternate weekends at New Moon. Aunt Ruth wants me every other Saturday to help ‘houseclean.’ We go over this house from top to bottom whether it needs it or not, as the tramp said when he washed his face every month, and then rest from our labours for Sunday.

“There is a hint of frost in the air tonight. I am afraid the garden at New Moon will suffer. Aunt Elizabeth will begin to think it is time to give up the cookhouse for the season and move the Waterloo back into the kitchen. Cousin Jimmy will be boiling the pigs’ potatoes in the old orchard and reciting his poetry. Likely Teddy and Ilse and Perry — who have all gone home, lucky creatures — will be there and Daff will be prowling about. But I must not think of it. That way homesickness lies.

“I am beginning to like Shrewsbury and Shrewsbury school and Shrewsbury teachers — though Dean was right when he said I would not find anyone here like Mr. Carpenter. The Seniors and Juniors look down on the Preps and are very condescending. Some of them condescended to me, but I do not think they will try it again — except Evelyn Blake, who condescends every time we meet, as we do quite often, because her chum, Mary Carswell, rooms with Ilse at Mrs. Adamson’s boardinghouse.

“I hate Evelyn Blake. There is no doubt at all about that. And there is as little doubt that she hates me. We are instinctive enemies — we looked at each other the first time we met like two strange cats, and that was enough. I never really hated any one before. I thought I did but now I know it was only dislike. Hate is rather interesting for a change. Evelyn is a Junior — tall, clever, rather handsome. Has long, bright, treacherous

brown eyes and talks through her nose. She has literary ambitions, I understand, and considers herself the best dressed girl in High School. Perhaps she is; but somehow her clothes seem to make more impression on you than she does. People criticize Ilse for dressing too richly and too old but she dominates her clothes for all that. Evelyn doesn't. You always think of her clothes before you think of her. The difference seems to be that Evelyn dresses for other people and Ilse dresses for herself. I must write a character sketch of her when I have studied her a little more. What a satisfaction that will be!

"I met her first in Ilse's room and Mary Carswell introduced us. Evelyn looked down at me — she is a little taller, being a year older — and said,

"“Oh, yes, Miss Starr? I've heard my aunt, Mrs. Henry Blake, talking about you.”

Mrs. Henry Blake was once Miss Brownell. I looked straight into Evelyn's eyes and said,

"“No doubt Mrs. Henry Blake painted a very flattering picture of me.”

"Evelyn laughed — with a kind of laugh I don't like. It gives you the feeling that she is laughing at you, not at what you've said.

"“You didn't get on very well with her, did you? I understand you are quite literary. What papers do you write for?”

"She asked the question sweetly but she knew perfectly well that I don't write for any — yet.

"“The Charlottetown Enterprise and the Shrewsbury Weekly Times,’ I said with a wicked grin. ‘I've just made a bargain with them. I'm to get two cents for every news item I send the Enterprise and twenty-five cents a week for a society letter for the Times.’

"My grin worried Evelyn. Preps aren't supposed to grin like that at Juniors. It isn't done.

"“Oh, yes, I understand you are working for your board,’ she said. ‘I suppose every little helps. But I meant real literary periodicals.’

"“The Quill?’ I asked with another grin.

“The Quill is the High School paper, appearing monthly. It is edited by the members of the Skull and Owl, a ‘literary society’ to which only Juniors and Seniors are eligible. The contents of The Quill are written by the students and in theory any student can contribute but in practice hardly anything is ever accepted from a Prep. Evelyn is a Skull and Owlite and her cousin is editor of The Quill. She evidently thought I was waxing sarcastic at her expense and ignored me for the rest of her call, except for one dear little jab when dress came up for discussion.

“‘I want one of the new ties,’ she said. ‘There are some sweet ones at Jones and McCallum’s and they are awfully smart. The little black velvet ribbon you are wearing around your neck, Miss Starr, is rather becoming. I used to wear one myself when they were in style.’

“I couldn’t think of anything clever to say in retort. I can think of clever things so easily when there is no one to say them to. So I said nothing but merely smiled very slowly and disdainfully. That seemed to annoy Evelyn more than speech, for I heard she said afterwards that ‘that Emily Starr’ had a very affected smile.

“Note: — One can do a great deal with appropriate smiles. I must study the subject carefully. The friendly smile — the scornful smile — the detached smile — the entreating smile — the common or garden grin.

“As for Miss Brownell — or rather Mrs. Blake — I met her on the street a few days ago. After she passed she said something to her companion and they both laughed. Very bad manners, I think.

“I like Shrewsbury and I like school but I shall never like Aunt Ruth’s house. It has a disagreeable personality. Houses are like people — some you like and some you don’t like — and once in a while there is one you love. Outside, this house is covered with frippery. I feel like getting a broom and sweeping it off. Inside, its rooms are all square and proper and soulless. Nothing you could put into them would ever seem to belong to them. There are no nice romantic corners in it, as there are at New Moon. My room hasn’t improved on acquaintance, either. The ceiling oppresses me — it comes down so low over my bed — and Aunt Ruth won’t let me move the bed. She looked amazed when I suggested it.

“‘The bed has always been in that corner,’ she said, just as she might have said, ‘The sun has always risen in the east.’

“But the pictures are really the worst thing about this room — chromos of the most aggravated description. Once I turned them all to the wall and of course Aunt Ruth walked in — she never knocks — and noticed them at once.

“‘Em’ly, why have you meddled with the pictures?’

“Aunt Ruth is always asking ‘why’ I do this and that. Sometimes I can explain and sometimes I can’t. This was one of the times I couldn’t. But of course I had to answer Aunt Ruth’s question. No disdainful smile would do here.

“‘Queen Alexandra’s dog collar gets on my nerves,’ I said, ‘and Byron’s expression on his deathbed at Missolonghi hinders me from studying.’

“‘Em’ly,’ said Aunt Ruth, ‘you might try to show a little gratitude.’

“I wanted to say,

“‘To whom — Queen Alexandra or Lord Byron?’ but of course I didn’t. Instead I meekly turned all the pictures right side out again.

“‘You haven’t told me the real reason why you turned those pictures,’ said Aunt Ruth sternly. ‘I suppose you don’t mean to tell me. Deep and sly — deep and sly — I always said you were. The very first time I saw you at Maywood I said you were the slyest child I had ever seen.’

“‘Aunt Ruth, why do you say such things to me?’ I said, in exasperation. ‘Is it because you love me and want to improve me — or hate me and want to hurt me — or just because you can’t help it?’

“‘Miss Impertinence, please remember that this is my house. And you will leave my pictures alone after this. I will forgive you for meddling with them this time but don’t let it happen again. I will find out yet your motive in turning them around, clever as you think yourself.’

“Aunt Ruth stalked out but I know she listened on the landing quite a while to find out if I would begin talking to myself. She is always watching me — even when she says nothing — does nothing — I know she is watching me. I feel like a little fly under a microscope. Not a word

or action escapes her criticism, and, though she can't read my thoughts, she attributes thoughts to me that I never had any idea of thinking. I hate that worse than anything else.

"Can't I say anything good of Aunt Ruth? Of course I can.

"She is honest and virtuous and truthful and industrious and of her pantry she needeth not to be ashamed. But she hasn't any lovable virtues — and she will never give up trying to find out why I turned the pictures. She will never believe that I told her the simple truth.

"Of course, things 'might be worse.' As Teddy says, it might have been Queen Victoria instead of Queen Alexandra.

"I have some pictures of my own pinned up that save me — some lovely sketches of New Moon and the old orchard that Teddy made for me, and an engraving Dean gave me. It is a picture in soft, dim colours of palms around a desert well and a train of camels passing across the sands against a black sky gemmed with stars. It is full of lure and mystery and when I look at it I forget Queen Alexandra's jewellery and Lord Byron's lugubrious face, and my soul slips out — out — through a little gateway into a great, vast world of freedom and dream.

"Aunt Ruth asked me where I got that picture. When I told her she sniffed and said,

"'I can't understand how you have such a liking for Jarback Priest. He's a man I've no use for.'

"I shouldn't think she would have.

"But if the house is ugly and my room unfriendly, the Land of Uprightness is beautiful and saves my soul alive. The Land of Uprightness is the fir grove behind the house. I call it that because the firs are all so exceedingly tall and slender and straight. There is a pool in it, veiled with ferns, with a big grey boulder beside it. It is reached by a little, winding, capricious path so narrow that only one can walk in it. When I'm tired or lonely or angry or too ambitious I go there and sit for a few minutes. Nobody can keep an upset mind looking at those slender, crossed tips against the sky. I go there to study on fine evenings, though Aunt Ruth is suspicious and thinks it is just another manifestation of my slyness. Soon

it will be dark too early to study there and I'll be so sorry. Somehow, my books have a meaning there they never have anywhere else.

"There are so many dear, green corners in the Land of Uprightness, full of the aroma of sun-steeped ferns, and grassy, open spaces where pale asters feather the grass, swaying gently towards each other when the Wind Woman runs among them. And just to the left of my window there is a group of tall old firs that look, in moonlight or twilight, like a group of witches weaving spells of sorcery. When I first saw them, one windy night against the red sunset, with the reflection of my candle, like a weird, signal flame, suspended in the air among their boughs, the flash came — for the first time in Shrewsbury — and I felt so happy that nothing else mattered. I have written a poem about them.

"But oh, I burn to write stories. I knew it would be hard to keep my promise to Aunt Elizabeth but I didn't know it would be so hard. Every day it seems harder — such splendid ideas for plots pop into my mind. Then I have to fall back on character studies of the people I know. I have written several of them. I always feel so strongly tempted to touch them up a bit — deepen the shadows — bring out the highlights a little more vividly. But I remember that I promised Aunt Elizabeth never to write anything that wasn't true so I stay my hand and try to paint them exactly as they are.

"I have written one of Aunt Ruth. Interesting but dangerous. I never leave my Jimmy-book or my diary in my room. I know Aunt Ruth rummages through it when I'm out. So I always carry them in my book-bag.

"Ilse was up this evening and we did our lessons together. Aunt Ruth frowns on this — and, to be strictly just, I don't know that she is wrong. Ilse is so jolly and comical that we laugh more than we study, I'm afraid. We don't do as well in class next day — and besides, this house disapproves of laughter.

"Perry and Teddy like the High School. Perry earns his lodging by looking after the furnace and grounds and his board by waiting on the table. Besides, he gets twenty-five cents an hour for doing odd jobs. I don't

see much of him or Teddy, except in the weekends home, for it is against the school rules for boys and girls to walk together to and from school. Lots do it, though. I had several chances to but I concluded that it would not be in keeping with New Moon traditions to break the rule. Besides, Aunt Ruth asks me every blessed night when I come home from school if I've walked with anybody. I think she's sometimes a little disappointed when I say 'No.'

"Besides, I didn't much fancy any of the boys who wanted to walk with me.

* * *

"October 20, 19 —

"My room is full of boiled cabbage smells tonight but I dare not open my window. Too much night air outside. I would risk it for a little while if Aunt Ruth hadn't been in a very bad humour all day. Yesterday was my Sunday in Shrewsbury and when we went to church I sat in the corner of the pew. I did not know that Aunt Ruth must always sit there but she thought I did it on purpose. She read her Bible all the afternoon. I felt she was reading it at me, though I couldn't imagine why. This morning she asked me why I did it.

"Did what?' I said in bewilderment.

"Em'ly, you know what you did. I will not tolerate this slyness. What was your motive?'

"Aunt Ruth, I haven't the slightest idea what you mean,' I said — quite haughtily, for I felt I was not being treated fairly.

"Em'ly, you sat in the corner of the pew yesterday just to keep me out of it. Why did you do it?'

"I looked down at Aunt Ruth — I am taller than she is now and I can do it. She doesn't like it, either. I was angry and I think I had a little of the Murray look on my face. The whole thing seemed so contemptible to be making a fuss over.

“‘If I did it to keep you out of it, isn’t that why?’ I said as contemptuously as I felt. I picked up my book-bag and stalked to the door. There I stopped. It occurred to me that, whatever the Murrays might or might not do, I was not behaving as a Starr should. Father wouldn’t have approved of my behaviour. So I turned and said, very politely,

“‘I should not have spoken like that, Aunt Ruth, and I beg your pardon. I didn’t mean anything by sitting in the corner. It was just because I happened to go into the pew first. I didn’t know you preferred the corner.’

“Perhaps I overdid the politeness. At any rate, my apology only seemed to irritate Aunt Ruth the more. She sniffed and said,

“‘I will forgive you this time, but don’t let it happen again. Of course I didn’t expect you would tell me your reason. You are too sly for that.’

“Aunt Ruth, Aunt Ruth! If you keep on calling me sly you’ll drive me into being sly in reality and then watch out. If I choose to be sly I can twist you round my finger! It’s only because I’m straightforward that you can manage me at all.

“I have to go to bed every night at nine o’clock—’people who are threatened with consumption require a great deal of sleep.’ When I come from school there are chores to be done and I must study in the evenings. So I haven’t a moment of time for writing anything. I know Aunt Elizabeth and Aunt Ruth have had a conference on the subject. But I have to write. So I get up in the morning as soon as it is daylight, dress, and put on a coat — for the mornings are cold now — sit down and scribble for a priceless hour. I didn’t choose that Aunt Ruth should discover it and call me sly so I told her I was doing it. She gave me to understand that I was mentally unsound and would make a bad end in some asylum, but she didn’t actually forbid me — probably because she thought it would be of no use. It wouldn’t. I’ve got to write, that is all there is to it. That hour in the grey morning is the most delightful one in the day for me.

“Lately, being forbidden to write stories, I’ve been thinking them out. But one day it struck me that I was breaking my compact with Aunt Elizabeth in spirit if not in letter. So I have stopped it.

“I wrote a character study of Ilse to-day. Very fascinating. It is difficult to analyse her. She is so different and unexpectable. (I coined that word myself.) She doesn’t even get mad like anybody else. I enjoy her tantrums. She doesn’t say so many awful things in them as she used to but she is piquant. (Piquant is a new word for me. I like using a new word. I never think I really own a word until I’ve spoken or written it.)

“I am writing by my window. I love to watch the Shrewsbury lights twinkle out in the dusk over that long hill.

“I had a letter from Dean to-day. He is in Egypt — among ruined shrines of old gods and the tombs of old kings. I saw that strange land through his eyes — I seemed to go back with him through the old centuries — I knew the magic of its skies. I was Emily of Karnak or Thebes — not Emily of Shrewsbury at all. That is a trick Dean has.

“Aunt Ruth insisted on seeing his letter and when she read it she said it was impious!

“I should never have thought of that adjective.

* * *

“October 21, 19 —

“I climbed the steep little wooded hill in the Land of Uprightness tonight and had an exultation on its crest. There’s always something satisfying in climbing to the top of a hill. There was a fine tang of frost in the air, the view over Shrewsbury Harbour was very wonderful, and the woods all about me were expecting something to happen soon — at least that is the only way I can describe the effect they had on me. I forgot everything — Aunt Ruth’s stings and Evelyn Blake’s patronage and Queen Alexandra’s dog collar — everything in life that isn’t just right. Lovely thoughts came flying to meet me like birds. They weren’t my thoughts. I couldn’t think anything half so exquisite. They came from somewhere.

“Coming back, on that dark little path, where the air was full of nice, whispering sounds, I heard a chuckle of laughter in a fir copse just behind me. I was startled — and a little bit alarmed. I knew at once it wasn’t

human laughter — it was more like the Puckish mirth of fairy folk, with just a faint hint of malice in it. I can no longer believe in wood elves — alas, one loses so much when one becomes incredulous — so this laughter puzzled me — and, yes, a horrid, crawly feeling began in my spine. Then, suddenly, I thought of owls and knew it for what it was — a truly delightful sound, as if some survival of the Golden Age were chuckling to himself there in the dark. There were two of them, I think, and they were certainly having a good time over some owlish joke. I must write a poem about it — though I'll never be able to put into words half the charm and devilry of it.

“Ilse was up on the carpet in the principal's room yesterday for walking home from school with Guy Lindsay. Something Mr. Hardy said made her so furious that she snatched up a vase of chrysanthemums that was on his desk and hurled it against the wall, where of course it was smashed to pieces.

“‘If I hadn't thrown it at the wall I'd have had to have thrown it at you,’ she told him.

“It would have gone hard with some girls but Mr. Hardy is a friend of Dr. Burnley's. Besides, there is something about those yellow eyes of Ilse's that do things to you. I know exactly how she would look at Mr. Hardy after she had smashed the vase. All her rage would be gone and her eyes would be laughing and daring — impudent, Aunt Ruth would call it. Mr. Hardy merely told her she was acting like a baby and would have to pay for the vase, since it was school property. That rather squelched Ilse; she thought it a tame ending to her heroics.

“I scolded her roundly. Really, somebody has to bring Ilse up and nobody but me seems to feel any responsibility in the matter. Dr. Burnley will just roar with laughter when she tells him. But I might as well have scolded the Wind Woman. Ilse just laughed and hugged me.

“‘Honey, it made such a jolly smash. When I heard it I wasn't a bit mad any more.’

“Ilse recited at our school concert last week and everybody thought her wonderful.

“Aunt Ruth told me to-day that she expected me to be a star pupil. She wasn’t punning on my name — oh, no, Aunt Ruth hasn’t a nodding acquaintance with puns. All the pupils who make ninety per cent average at the Christmas exams and do not fall below eighty in any subject are called ‘Star’ pupils and are given a gold star-pin to wear for the rest of the term. It is a coveted distinction and of course not many win it. If I fail Aunt Ruth will rub it in to the bone. I must not fail.

* * *

“October 30, 19 —

“The November Quill came out to-day. I sent my owl poem in to the editor a week ago but he didn’t use it. And he did use one of Evelyn Blake’s — a silly, simpering little rhyme about Autumn Leaves — very much the sort of thing I wrote three years ago.

“And Evelyn condoled with me before the whole roomful of girls because my poem hadn’t been taken. I suppose Tom Blake had told her about it.

“‘You mustn’t feel badly about it, Miss Starr. Tom said it wasn’t half bad but of course not up to The Quill’s standard. Likely in another year or two you’ll be able to get in. Keep on trying.’

“‘Thanks,’ I said. ‘I’m not feeling badly. Why should I? I didn’t make “beam” rhyme with “green” in my poem. If I had I’d be feeling very badly indeed.’

“Evelyn coloured to her eyes.

“‘Don’t show your disappointment so plainly, child,’ she said.

“But I noticed she dropped the subject after that.

“For my own satisfaction I wrote a criticism of Evelyn’s poem in my Jimmy-book as soon as I came from school. I modelled it on Macaulay’s essay on poor Robert Montgomery, and I got so much fun out of it that I didn’t feel sore and humiliated any more. I must show it to Mr. Carpenter when I go home. He’ll chuckle over it.



“November 6, 19 —

“I noticed this evening in glancing over my journal that I soon gave up recording my good and bad deeds. I suppose it was because so many of my doings were half-and-half. I never could decide in what class they belonged.

“We are expected to answer roll-call with a quotation on Monday mornings. This morning I repeated a verse from my own poem *A Window that Faces the Sea*. When I left Assembly to go down to the Prep classroom Miss Aylmer, the Vice-Principal, stopped me.

“‘Emily, that was a beautiful verse you gave at roll-call. Where did you get it? And do you know the whole poem?’

“I was so elated I could hardly answer,

“‘Yes, Miss Aylmer,’ very demurely.

“‘I would like a copy of it,’ said Miss Aylmer. ‘Could you write me off one? And who is the author?’

“‘The author,’ I said laughing, ‘is Emily Byrd Starr. The truth is, Miss Aylmer, that I forgot to look up a quotation for roll-call and couldn’t think of any in a hurry, so just fell back on a bit of my own.’

“Miss Aylmer didn’t say anything for a moment. She just looked at me. She is a stout, middle-aged woman with a square face and nice, wide, grey eyes.

“‘Do you still want the poem, Miss Aylmer?’ I said, smiling.

“‘Yes,’ she said, still looking at me in that funny way, as if she had never seen me before. ‘Yes — and autograph it, please.’

“I promised and went on down the stairs. At the foot I glanced back. She was still looking after me. Something in her look made me feel glad and proud and happy and humble — and — and — prayerful. Yes, that was just how I felt.

“Oh, this has been a wonderful day. What care I now for *The Quill* or Evelyn Blake?

“This evening Aunt Ruth marched up town to see Uncle Oliver’s Andrew, who is in the bank here now. She made me go along. She gave Andrew lots of good advice about his morals and his meals and his underclothes and asked him to come down for an evening whenever he wished. Andrew is a Murray, you see, and can therefore rush in where Teddy and Perry dare not tread. He is quite goodlooking, with straight, well-groomed, red hair. But he always looks as if he’d just been starched and ironed.

“I thought the evening not wholly wasted, for Mrs. Garden, his landlady, has an interesting cat who made certain advances to me. But when Andrew patted him and called him ‘Poor pussy’ the intelligent animal hissed at him.

“‘You mustn’t be too familiar with a cat,’ I advised Andrew. ‘And you must speak respectfully to and of him.’

“‘Piffle!’ said Aunt Ruth.

“But a cat’s a cat for a’ that.

* * *

“November 8, 19 —

“The nights are cold now. When I came back Monday I brought one of the New Moon gin jars for my comforting. I cuddle down with it in bed and enjoy the contrasting roars of the storm wind outside in the Land of Uprightness, and the rain whirling over the room. Aunt Ruth worries for fear the cork will come out and deluge the bed. That would be almost as bad as what really did happen night before last. I woke up about midnight with the most wonderful idea for a story. I felt that I must rise at once and jot it down in a Jimmy-book before I forgot it. Then I could keep it until my three years are up and I am free to write it.

“I hopped out of bed and, in pawing around my table to find my candle, I upset my ink-bottle. Then of course I went mad and couldn’t find anything! Matches — candles — everything had disappeared. I set the ink-bottle up, but I knew there was a pool of ink on the table. I had ink all over

my fingers and dare not touch anything in the dark and couldn't find anything to wipe it off. And all the time I heard that ink drip-dripping on the floor.

"In desperation I opened the door — with my toes because I dare not touch it with my inky hands — and went downstairs where I wiped my hands on the stove rag and got some matches. But this time, of course, Aunt Ruth was up, demanding whys and motives. She took my matches, lighted her candle, and marched me upstairs. Oh, 'twas a gruesome sight! How could a small stone ink-bottle hold a quart of ink? There must have been a quart to have made the mess it did.

"I felt like the old Scotch emigrant who came home one evening, found his house burned down and his entire family scalped by Indians and said, 'This is pairfectly redeeculous.' The table cover was ruined — the carpet was soaked — even the wallpaper was bespattered. But Queen Alexandra smiled benignly over all and Byron went on dying.

"Aunt Ruth and I had an hour's seance with salt and vinegar. Aunt Ruth wouldn't believe me when I said I got up to jot down the plot of a story. She knew I had some other motive and it was just some more of my deepness and slyness. She also said a few other things which I won't write down. Of course I deserved a scolding for leaving that ink-bottle uncorked; but I didn't deserve all she said. However, I took it all very meekly. For one thing I had been careless: and for another I had my bedroom shoes on. Anyone can overcrow me when I'm wearing bedroom shoes. Then she wound up by saying she would forgive me this time, but it was not to happen again.

"Perry won the mile race in the school sports and broke the record. He bragged too much about it and Ilse raged at him.

* * *

"November 11, 19 —

"Last night Aunt Ruth found me reading David Copperfield and crying over Davy's alienation from his mother, with a black rage against Mr.

Murdstone in my heart. She must know why I was crying and wouldn't believe me when I told her.

“‘Crying over people who never existed!’ said my Aunt Ruth incredulously.

“‘Oh, but they do exist,’ I said. ‘Why, they are as real as you are, Aunt Ruth. Do you mean to say that Miss Betsy Trotwood is a delusion?’

“I thought perhaps I could have real tea when I came to Shrewsbury, but Aunt Ruth says it is not healthy. So I drink cold water for I will not drink cambric tea any longer. As if I were a child!

* * *

“November 30, 19 —

“Andrew was in tonight. He always comes the Friday night I don't go to New Moon. Aunt Ruth left us alone in the parlour and went out to a meeting of the Ladies' Aid. Andrew, being a Murray, can be trusted.

“I don't dislike Andrew. It would be impossible to dislike so harmless a being. He is one of those good, talkative, awkward dears who goad you irresistibly into tormenting them. Then you feel remorseful afterwards because they are so good.

“Tonight, Aunt Ruth being out, I tried to discover how little I could really say to Andrew, while I pursued my own train of thought. I discovered that I could get along with very few words—'Yes'—'No' — in several inflections, with or without a little laugh—'I don't know'—'Really?'—'Well, well'—'How wonderful!' — especially the last. Andrew talked on, and when he stopped for breath I stuck in 'How wonderful.' I did it exactly eleven times. Andrew liked it. I know it gave him a nice, flattering feeling that he was wonderful, and his conversation wonderful. Meanwhile I was living a splendid imaginary dream-life by the River of Egypt in the days of Thotmes I.

“So we were both very happy. I think I'll try it again. Andrew is too stupid to catch me at it.

“When Aunt Ruth came home she asked, ‘Well, how did you and Andrew get along?’

“She asks that every time he comes down. I know why. I know the little scheme that is understood among the Murrays, even though I don’t believe any of them have ever put it into words.

“‘Beautifully,’ I said. ‘Andrew is improving. He said one interesting thing tonight, and he hadn’t so many feet and hands as usual.’

“I don’t know why I say things like that to Aunt Ruth occasionally. It would be so much better for me if I didn’t. But something — whether it’s Murray or Starr or Shipley or Burnley, or just pure cussedness I know not — makes me say them before I’ve time to reflect.

“‘No doubt you would find more congenial company in Stovepipe Town,’ said Aunt Ruth.

Not Proven

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Emily regretfully left the “Booke Shoppe,” where the aroma of books and new magazines was as the savour of sweet incense in her nostrils, and hastened down cold and blustery Prince Street. Whenever possible she slipped into the Booke Shoppe and took hungry dips into magazines she could not afford to buy, avid to learn what kind of stuff they published — especially poetry. She could not see that many of the verses in them were any better than some of her own, yet editors sent hers back religiously. Emily had already used a considerable portion of the American stamps she had bought with Cousin Jimmy’s dollar in paying the homeward way of her fledgelings, accompanied by only the cold comfort of rejection slips. Her Owl’s Laughter had already been returned six times, but Emily had not wholly lost faith in it yet. That very morning she had dropped it again into the letter-box at the Shoppe.

“The seventh time brings luck,” she thought as she turned down the street leading to Ilse’s boardinghouse. She had her examination in English at eleven o’clock and she wanted to glance over Ilse’s notebook before she went for it. The Preps were almost through their terminal examinations, taking them by fits and starts when the classrooms were free from Seniors and Juniors — a thing that always made the Preps furious. Emily felt comfortably certain she would get her star pin. The examinations in her hardest subjects were over and she did not believe she had fallen below eighty in any of them. To-day was English, in which she ought to go well over ninety. Remained only history, which she also loved. Everybody expected her to win the star pin. Cousin Jimmy was intensely excited over it, and Dean had sent her premature congratulations from the top of a pyramid, so sure was he of her success. His letter had come the previous day, along with the packet containing his Christmas gift.

“I send you a little gold necklace that was taken from the mummy of a dead princess of the nineteenth dynasty,” wrote Dean. “Her name was Mena and it said in her epitaph that she was ‘sweet of heart.’ So I think she fared well in the Hall of Judgment and that the dread old gods smiled indulgently upon her. This little amulet lay on her dead breast for thousands of years. I send it to you weighted with centuries of love. I think it must have been a love gift. Else why should it have rested on her heart all this time? It must have been her own choice. Others would have put a finer thing on the neck of a king’s daughter.”

The little trinket intrigued Emily with its charm and mystery, yet she was almost afraid of it. She gave a slight ghostly shudder as she clasped it around her slim white throat and wondered about the royal girl who had worn it in those days of a dead empire. What was its history and its secret?

Naturally Aunt Ruth had disapproved. What business had Emily to be getting Christmas presents from Jarback Priest?

“At least he might have sent you something new if he had to send anything,” she said.

“A souvenir of Cairo, made in Germany,” suggested Emily gravely.

“Something like that,” agreed Aunt Ruth unsuspiciously. “Mrs. Ayers has a handsome, gold-mounted glass paper-weight with a picture of the Sphinx in it that her brother brought her from Egypt. That battered thing looks positively cheap.”

“Cheap! Aunt Ruth, do you realize that this necklace was made by hand and worn by an Egyptian princess before the days of Moses?”

“Oh, well — if you want to believe Jarback Priest’s fairy tales,” said Aunt Ruth, much amused. “I wouldn’t wear it in public if I were you, Em’ly. The Murrays never wear shabby jewellery. You’re not going to leave it on tonight, child?”

“Of course I am. The last time it was worn was probably at the court of Pharaoh in the days of the oppression. Now, it will go to Kit Barrett’s snowshoe dance. What a difference! I hope the ghost of Princess Mena won’t haunt me tonight. She may resent my sacrilege — who knows? But it was not I who rifled her tomb, and somebody would have this if I didn’t

— somebody who mightn't think of the little princess at all. I'm sure she would rather that it was warm and shining about my neck than in some grim museum for thousands of curious, cold eyes to stare at. She was 'sweet of heart,' Dean says — she won't grudge me her pretty pendant. Lady of Egypt, whose kingdom has been poured on the desert sands like spilled wine, I salute you across the gulf of time."

Emily bowed deeply and waved her hand adown the vistas of dead centuries.

"Such highfalutin' language is very foolish," sniffed Aunt Ruth.

"Oh, most of that last sentence was a quotation from Dean's letter," said Emily candidly.

"Sounds like him," was Aunt Ruth's contemptuous agreement. "Well, I think your Venetian beads would be better than that heathenish-looking thing. Now, mind you don't stay too late, Em'ly. Make Andrew bring you home not later than twelve."

Emily was going with Andrew to Kitty Barrett's dance — a privilege quite graciously accorded since Andrew was one of the elect people. Even when she did not get home until one o'clock Aunt Ruth overlooked it. But it left Emily rather sleepy for the day, especially as she had studied late the two previous nights. Aunt Ruth relaxed her rigid rules in examination time and permitted an extra allowance of candles. What she would have said had she known that Emily used some of the extra candlelight to write a poem on Shadows I do not know and cannot record. But no doubt she would have considered it an added proof of slyness. Perhaps it was sly. Remember that I am only Emily's biographer, not her apologist.

Emily found Evelyn Blake in Ilse's room and Evelyn Blake was secretly much annoyed because she had not been invited to the snowshoe dance and Emily Starr had. Therefore Evelyn, sitting on Ilse's table and swinging her high, silken-sheathed instep flauntingly in the face of girls who had no silk stockings, was prepared to be disagreeable.

"I'm glad you've come, trusty and well-beloved," moaned Ilse. "Evelyn has been clapper-clawing me all the morning. Perhaps she'll whirl in at you now and give me a rest."

“I have been telling her that she should learn to control her temper,” said Evelyn virtuously. “Don’t you agree with me, Miss Starr?”

“What have you been doing now, Ilse?” asked Emily.

“Oh, I had a large quarrel with Mrs. Adamson this morning. It was bound to come sooner or later. I’ve been good so long there was an awful lot of wickedness bottled up in me. Mary knew that, didn’t you, Mary? Mary felt quite sure an explosion was due to happen. Mrs. Adamson began it by asking disagreeable questions. She’s always doing that — isn’t she, Mary? After that she started in scolding — and finally she cried. Then I slapped her face.”

“You see,” said Evelyn, significantly.

“I couldn’t help it,” grinned Ilse. “I could have endured her impertinence and her scolding — but when she began to cry — she’s so ugly when she cries — well, I just slapped her.”

“I suppose you felt better after that,” said Emily, determined not to show any disapproval before Evelyn.

Ilse burst out laughing.

“Yes, at first. It stopped her yowling, anyway. But afterwards came remorse. I’ll apologize to her, of course. I do feel real sorry — but I’m quite likely to do it again. If Mary here weren’t so good I wouldn’t be half as bad. I have to even the balance up a bit. Mary is meek and humble and Mrs. Adamson walks all over her. You should hear her scold Mary if Mary goes out more than one evening a week.”

“She is right,” said Evelyn. “It would be much better if you went out less. You’re getting talked about, Ilse.”

“You weren’t out last night, anyhow, were you, dear?” asked Ilse with another unholy grin.

Evelyn coloured and was haughtily silent. Emily buried herself in her notebook and Mary and Ilse went out. Emily wished Evelyn would go, too. But Evelyn had no intention of going.

“Why don’t you make Ilse behave herself?” she began in a hatefully confidential sort of way.

“I have no authority over Ilse,” said Emily coldly. “Besides, I don’t think she misbehaves.”

“Oh, my dear girl — why, you heard her yourself saying she slapped Mrs. Adamson.”

“Mrs. Adamson needed it. She’s an odious woman — always crying when there’s no need in the world for her to cry. There’s nothing more aggravating.”

“Well, Ilse skipped French again yesterday afternoon and went for a walk up-river with Ronnie Gibson. If she does that too often she’s going to get caught.”

“Ilse is very popular with the boys,” said Emily, who knew that Evelyn wanted to be.

“She’s popular in the wrong quarters.” Evelyn was condescending now, knowing by instinct that Emily Starr hated to be condescended to. “She always has a ruck of wild boys after her — the nice ones don’t bother with her, you notice.”

“Ronnie Gibson’s nice, isn’t he?”

“Well, what do you say to Marshall Orde?”

“Ilse has nothing to do with Marshall Orde.”

“Oh, hasn’t she! She was driving with him till twelve o’clock last Tuesday night — and he was drunk when he got the horse from the livery stable.”

“I don’t believe a word of it! Ilse never went driving with Marsh Orde.” Emily was white-lipped with indignation.

“I was told by a person who saw them. Ilse is being talked about everywhere. Perhaps you have no authority over her but surely you have some influence. Though you do foolish things yourself sometimes, don’t you? Not meaning any harm perhaps. That time you went bathing on the Blair Water sands without any clothes on, for instance? That’s known all through the school. I heard Marsh’s brother laughing about it. Now, wasn’t that foolish, my dear?”

Emily blushed with anger and shame — though quite as much over being my-deared by Evelyn Blake as anything else. That beautiful bathing

by moonlight — what a thing of desecration it had been made by the world! She would not discuss it with Evelyn — she would not even tell Evelyn they had their petticoats on. Let her think what she would.

“I don’t think you quite understand some things, Miss Blake,” she said, with a certain fine, detached irony of tone and manner which made very commonplace words seem charged, with meanings unutterable.

“Oh, you belong to the Chosen People, don’t you?” Evelyn laughed her malicious little laugh.

“I do,” said Emily calmly, refusing to withdraw her eyes from her notebook.

“Well, don’t get so vexed, dear. I only spoke because I thought it a pity to see poor Ilse getting in wrong everywhere. I rather like her, poor soul. And I wish she would tone down her taste in colours a bit. That scarlet evening dress she wore at the Prep concert — really, you know, it’s weird.”

“She looked like a tall golden lily in a scarlet sheath, I thought,” said Emily.

“What a loyal friend you are, dear. I wonder if Ilse would stand up for you like that. Well, I suppose I ought to let you study. You have English at ten, haven’t you? Mr. Scoville is going to watch the room — Mr. Travers is sick. Don’t you think Mr. Scoville’s hair is wonderful? Speaking of hair, dear, why don’t you dress yours low enough at the sides to hide your ears — the tips, anyway? I think it would become you so much better.”

Emily decided that if Evelyn Blake called her “dear” again she would throw an ink-bottle at her. Why didn’t she go away and let her study?

Evelyn had another shot in her locker.

“That callow young friend of yours from Stovepipe Town has been trying to get into The Quill. He sent in a patriotic poem. Tom showed it to me. It was a scream. One line especially was delicious—‘Canada, like a maiden, welcomes back her sons.’ You should have heard Tom howl.”

Emily could hardly help smiling herself, though she was horribly annoyed with Perry for making such a target of himself. Why couldn’t he learn his limitations and understand that the slopes of Parnassus were not for him?

“I do not think the editor of The Quill has any business to show rejected contributions to outsiders,” she said coldly.

“Oh, Tom doesn’t look on me as an outsider. And that really was too good to keep. Well, I think I’ll run down to the Shoppe.”

Emily sighed with relief as Evelyn took her departure. Presently Ilse returned.

“Evelyn gone? Sweet temper she was in this morning. I can’t understand what Mary sees in her. Mary’s a decent sort though she isn’t exciting.”

“Ilse,” said Emily seriously. “Were you out driving with Marsh Orde one night last week?”

Ilse stared.

“No, you dear young ass, I wasn’t. I can guess where you heard that yarn. I don’t know who the girl was.”

“But you cut French and went up-river with Ronnie Gibson?”

“Peccavi.”

“Ilse — you shouldn’t — really—”

“Now, don’t make me mad, Emily!” said Ilse shortly. “You’re getting too smug — something ought to be done to cure you before it gets chronic. I hate prunes and prisms. I’m off — I want to run round to the Shoppe before I go to the school.”

Ilse gathered up her books pettishly and flounced out. Emily yawned and decided she was through with the notebook. She had half an hour yet before it was necessary to go to the school. She would lie down on Ilse’s bed for just a moment.

It seemed the next minute when she found herself sitting up, staring with dismayed face at Mary Carswell’s clock. Five minutes to eleven — five minutes to cover a quarter of a mile and be at her desk for examination. Emily flung on coat and cap, caught up her notebooks and fled. She arrived at the High School out of breath, with a nasty subconsciousness that people had looked at her queerly as she tore through the streets, hung up her wraps without a glance at the mirror, and hurried into the classroom.

A stare of amazement followed by a ripple of laughter went over the room. Mr. Scoville, tall, slim, elegant, was giving out the examination papers. He laid one down before Emily and said gravely,

“Did you look in your mirror before you came to class, Miss Starr?”

“No,” said Emily resentfully, sensing something fearfully wrong somewhere.

“I — think — I would look — now — if I were — you.” Mr. Scoville seemed to be speaking with difficulty.

Emily got up and went back to the girls’ dressing-room. She met Principal Hardy in the Hall and Principal Hardy stared at her. Why Principal Hardy stared — why the Preps had laughed — Emily understood when she confronted the dressing-room looking-glass.

Drawn skilfully and blackly across her upper lip and her cheeks was a moustache — a flamboyant, very black moustache, with fantastically curled ends. For a moment Emily gaped at herself in blank horror — why — what — who had done it?

She whirled furiously about. Evelyn Blake had just entered the room.

“You — you did this!” panted Emily.

Evelyn stared for a moment — then went off into a peal of laughter.

“Emily Starr! You look like a nightmare. Do you mean to tell me you went into class with that on your face?”

Emily clenched her hands.

“You did it,” she said again.

Evelyn drew herself up very haughtily.

“Really, Miss Starr, I hope you don’t think I’d stoop to such a trick. I suppose your dear friend Ilse thought she’d play a joke on you — she was chuckling over something when she came in a few minutes ago.”

“Ilse never did it,” cried Emily.

Evelyn shrugged her shoulders.

“I’d wash it off first and find out who did it afterward,” she said with a twitching face as she went out

Emily, trembling from head to foot with anger, shame and the most intense humiliation she had ever suffered, washed the moustache off her

face. Her first impulse was to go home — she could not face that roomful of Preps again. Then she set her teeth and went back, holding her black head very high as she walked down the aisle to her desk. Her face was burning and her spirit was aflame. In the corner she saw Ilse's yellow head bent over her paper. The others were smiling and tittering. Mr. Scoville was insultingly grave. Emily took up her pen but her hand shook over her paper.

If she could have had a good cry there and then her shame and anger would have found a saving vent. But that was impossible. She would not cry. She would not let them see the depths of her humiliation. If Emily could have laughed off the malicious joke it would have been better for her. Being Emily — and being one of the proud Murrays — she could not. She resented the indignity to the very core of her passionate soul.

As far as the English paper was concerned she might almost as well have gone home. She had lost twenty minutes already. It was ten minutes more before she could steady her hand sufficiently to write. Her thoughts she could not command at all. The paper was a difficult one, as Mr. Travers' papers always were. Her mind seemed a chaos of jostling ideas spinning around a fixed point of torturing shame. When she handed in her paper and left the classroom she knew she had lost her star. That paper would be no more than a pass, if it were that. But in her turmoil of feeling she did not care. She hurried home to her unfriendly room, thankful that Aunt Ruth was out, threw herself on the bed and wept. She felt sore, beaten, bruised — and under all her pain was a horrible, teasing little doubt.

Did Ilse do it — no, she didn't — she couldn't have. Who then? Mary? The idea was absurd. It must have been Evelyn — Evelyn had come back and played that cruel trick on her out of spite and pique. Yet she had denied it, with seemingly insulted indignation, and eyes that were perhaps a shade too innocent. What had Ilse said—"You are getting positively smug — something ought to be done to cure you before it gets chronic." Had Ilse taken that abominable way of curing her?

“No — no — no!” Emily sobbed fiercely into her pillow. But the doubt persisted.

Aunt Ruth had no doubt. Aunt Ruth was calling on her friend, Mrs. Ball, and her friend, Mrs. Ball, had a daughter who was a Prep. Anita Ball came home with the tale that had been well laughed over in Prep and Junior and Senior classes, and Anita Ball said that Evelyn Blake had said Ilse Burnley had done the deed.

“Well,” said Aunt Ruth, invading Emily’s room on her return home, “I hear Ilse Burnley decorated you beautifully to-day. I hope you realize what she is now.”

“Ilse didn’t do it,” said Emily.

“Have you asked her?”

“No. I wouldn’t insult her with such a question.”

“Well, I believe she did do it. And she is not to come here again. Understand that.”

“Aunt Ruth—”

“You’ve heard what I said, Em’ly. Ilse Burnley is no fit associate for you. I’ve heard too many tales about her lately. But this is unpardonable.”

“Aunt Ruth, if I ask Ilse if she did it and she says she did not, won’t you believe her?”

“No, I wouldn’t believe any girl brought up as Ilse Burnley was. It’s my belief she’d do anything and say anything. Don’t let me see her in my house again.”

Emily stood up and tried to summon the Murray look into a face distorted by weeping.

“Of course, Aunt Ruth,” she said coldly, “I won’t bring Ilse here if she is not welcome. But I shall go to see her. And if you forbid me — I’ll — I’ll go home to New Moon. I feel as if I wanted to go anyhow now. Only — I won’t let Evelyn Blake drive me away.”

Aunt Ruth knew quite well that the New Moon folks would not agree to a complete divorce between Emily and Ilse. They were too good friends with the doctor for that. Mrs. Dutton had never liked Dr. Burnley. She had to be content with the excuse for keeping Ilse away from her house, for

which she had long hankered. Her own annoyance over the matter was not born out of any sympathy with Emily but solely from anger at a Murray being made ridiculous.

“I would have thought you’d had enough of going to see Ilse. As for Evelyn Blake, she is too clever and sensible a girl to have played a silly trick like that. I know the Blakes. They are an excellent family and Evelyn’s father is well-to-do. Now, stop crying. A pretty face you’ve got. What sense is there in crying?”

“None at all,” agreed Emily drearily, “only I can’t help it. I can’t bear to be made ridiculous. I can endure anything but that. Oh, Aunt Ruth, please leave me alone. I can’t eat any supper.”

“You’ve got yourself all worked up — Starr-like. We Murrays conceal our feelings.”

“I don’t believe you’ve any to conceal — some of you,” thought Emily rebelliously.

“Keep away from Ilse Burnley after this, and you’ll not be so likely to be publicly disgraced,” was Aunt Ruth’s parting advice.

Emily, after a sleepless night — during which it seemed to her that if she couldn’t push that ceiling farther from her face she would surely smother — went to see Ilse the next day and reluctantly told her what Aunt Ruth had said. Ilse was furious — but Emily noted with a pang that she did not assert any innocence of the crayon trick.

“Ilse, you — you didn’t really do that?” she faltered. She knew Ilse hadn’t — she was sure of it — but she wanted to hear her say so. To her surprise, a sudden blush swept over Ilse’s face.

“Is thy servant a dog?” she said, rather confusedly. It was very unlike straightforward, outspoken Ilse to be so confused. She turned her face away and began fumbling aimlessly with her book-bag. “You don’t suppose I’d do anything like that to you, Emily?”

“No, of course not,” said Emily, slowly. The subject was dropped. But the little doubt and distrust at the bottom of Emily’s mind came out of its lurking-place and declared itself. Even yet she couldn’t believe Ilse could do such a thing — and lie about it afterward. But why was she so confused

and shamefaced? Would not an innocent Ilse have stormed about according to form, berated Emily, roundly, for mere suspicion, and aired the subject generally until all the venom had been blown out of it?

It was not referred to again. But the shadow was there and spoiled, to a certain extent, the Christmas holidays at New Moon. Outwardly, the girls were the friends they had always been, but Emily was acutely conscious of a sudden rift between them. Strive as she would she could not bridge it. The seeming unconsciousness of any such severance on Ilse's part served to deepen it. Hadn't Ilse cared enough for her and her friendship to feel the chill that had come over it? Could she be so shallow and indifferent as not to perceive it? Emily brooded and grew morbid over it. A thing like that — a dim, poisonous thing that lurked in shadow and dared not come into the open — always played havoc with her sensitive and passionate temperament. No open quarrel with Ilse could have affected her like this — she had quarrelled with Ilse scores of times and made up the next minute with no bitterness or backward glance. This was different. The more Emily brooded over it the more monstrous it grew. She was unhappy, absent, restless. Aunt Laura and Cousin Jimmy noticed it but attributed it to her disappointment over the star pin. She had told them she was sure she would not win. But Emily had ceased to care about the star pin.

To be sure, she had a bad time of it, when she went back to High School and the examination results were announced. She was not one of the envied four who flaunted star pins and Aunt Ruth rubbed it in for weeks. Aunt Ruth felt that she had lost family prestige in Emily's failure and she was very bitter about it. Altogether Emily felt that the New Year had come in very inauspiciously for her. The first month of it was a time she never liked to recall. She was very lonely. Ilse could not come to see her, and though she made herself go to see Ilse the subtle little rift between them was slowly widening. Ilse still gave no sign of feeling it; but then, somehow, she was seldom alone with Ilse now. The room was always filled with girls, and there was a good deal of noise and laughter and jokes and school gossip — all very harmless and even jolly, but very different from the old intimacy and understanding comradeship with Ilse. Formerly it

used to be a chummy jest between them that they could walk or sit for hours together and say no word and yet feel that they had had a splendid time. There were no such silences now: when they did happen to be alone together they both chattered gaily and shallowly, as if each were secretly afraid that there might come a moment for the silence that betrays.

Emily's heart ached over their lost friendship: every night her pillow was wet with tears. Yet there was nothing she could do: she could not, try as she would, banish the doubt that possessed her. She made many an honest effort to do so. She told herself every day that Ilse Burnley could never have played that trick — that she was constitutionally incapable of it — and went straightway to Ilse with the firm determination to be just what she had always been to her. With the result that she was unnaturally cordial and friendly — even gushing — and no more like her real self than she was like Evelyn Blake. Ilse was just as cordial and friendly — and the rift was wider still.

"Ilse never goes into a tantrum with me now," Emily reflected sadly.

It was quite true. Ilse was always good-tempered with Emily, presenting a baffling front of politeness unbroken by a single flash of her old wild spirit. Emily felt that nothing could have been more welcome than one of Ilse's stormy rages. It might break the ice that was forming so relentlessly between them, and release the pent-up flood of old affection.

One of the keenest stings in the situation was that Evelyn Blake was quite well aware of the state of affairs between Ilse and Emily. The mockery of her long brown eyes and the hidden sneer in her casual sentences betrayed her knowledge and her enjoyment of it. This was gall and wormwood to Emily, who felt that she had no defence against it. Evelyn was a girl whom intimacies between other girls annoyed, and the friendship between Ilse and Emily had annoyed her especially. It had been so complete — so absorbing. There had been no place in it for anyone else. And Evelyn did not like to feel that she was barred out — that there was some garden enclosed, into which she might not enter. She was therefore hugely delighted to think that this vexingly beautiful friendship between two girls she secretly hated was at an end.

A Supreme Moment

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Emily came downstairs laggingly, feeling that all the colour and music had somehow gone out of life, and that it stretched before her in unbroken greyness. Ten minutes later she was encompassed by rainbows and the desert of her future had blossomed like the rose.

The cause of this miracle of transformation was a thin letter which Aunt Ruth handed to her with an Aunt Ruthian sniff. There was a magazine, too, but Emily did not at first regard it. She saw the address of a floral firm on the corner of the envelope, and sensed at touch the promising thinness of it — so different from the plump letters full of rejected verses.

Her heart beat violently as she tore it open and glanced over the typewritten sheet.

MISS EMILY B. STARR,
Shrewsbury, P.E. Island,
Can.

DEAR MISS STARR:

It gives us great pleasure to tell you that your poem, Owl's Laughter has been found available for use in Garden and Woodland. It appears in the current issue of our magazine, a copy of which we are sending you. Your verses have the true ring and we shall be glad to see more of your work.

It is not our custom to pay cash for our contributions but you may select two dollars' worth of seeds or plants from our catalogue to be sent to your address prepaid.

Thanking you,
We remain,
Yours truly,
THOS. E. CARLTON & CO.

Emily dropped the letter and seized upon the magazine with trembling fingers. She grew dizzy — the letters danced before her eyes — she felt a curious sensation of choking — for there on the front page, in a fine border of curlicues, was her poem — Owl's Laughter, by Emily Byrd Starr.

It was the first sweet bubble on the cup of success and we must not think her silly if it intoxicated her. She carried the letter and magazine off to her room to gloat over it, blissfully unconscious that Aunt Ruth was doing an extra deal of sniffing. Aunt Ruth felt very suspicious of suddenly crimsoned cheek and glowing eye and general air of rapture and detachment from earth.

In her room Emily sat down and read her poem as if she had never seen it before. There was, to be sure, a printer's error in it that made the flesh creep on her bones — it was awful to have hunter's moon come out as hunter's moan — but it was her poem — hers — accepted by and printed in a real magazine.

And paid for! To be sure a cheque would have been more acceptable — two dollars all her own, earned by her own pen, would have seemed like riches to Emily. But what fun she and Cousin Jimmy would have selecting the seeds! She could see in imagination that beautiful flower-bed next summer in the New Moon garden — a glory of crimson and purple and blue and gold.

And what was it the letter said?

"Your verses have the true ring and we shall be glad to see more of your work."

Oh, bliss — oh, rapture! The world was hers — the Alpine Path was as good as climbed — what signified a few more scrambles to the summit?

Emily could not remain in that dark little room with its oppressive ceiling and unfriendly furniture. Lord Byron's funereal expression was an insult to her happiness. She threw on her wraps and hurried out to the Land of Uprightness.

As she went through the kitchen, Aunt Ruth, naturally more suspicious than ever, inquired with markedly bland sarcasm,

"Is the house on fire? Or the harbour?"

“Neither. It’s my soul that’s on fire,” said Emily with an inscrutable smile. She shut the door behind her and at once forgot Aunt Ruth and every other disagreeable thing and person. How beautiful the world was — how beautiful life was — how wonderful the Land of Uprightness was! The young firs along the narrow path were lightly powdered with snow, as if, thought Emily, a veil of aerial lace had been tricksily flung over austere young Druid priestesses foresworn to all such frivolities of vain adornment. Emily decided she would write that sentence down in her Jimmy-book when she went back. On and on she flitted to the crest of the hill. She felt as if she were flying — her feet couldn’t really be touching the earth. On the hill she paused and stood, a rapt, ecstatic figure with clasped hands and eyes of dream. It was just after sunset. Out, over the ice-bound harbour, great clouds piled themselves up in dazzling, iridescent masses. Beyond were gleaming white hills with early stars over them. Between the dark trunks of the old fir trees to her right, far away through the crystal evening air, rose a great, round, full moon.

“‘It has the true ring,’” murmured Emily, tasting the incredible words anew. “They want to see more of my work! Oh, if only Father could see my verses in print!”

Years before, in the old house at Maywood, her father, bending over her as she slept had said, “She will love deeply — suffer terribly — she will have glorious moments to compensate.”

This was one of her glorious moments. She felt a wonderful lightness of spirit — a soul-stirring joy in mere existence. The creative faculty, dormant through the wretched month just passed, suddenly burned in her soul again like a purifying flame. It swept away all morbid, poisonous, rankling things. All at once Emily knew that Ilse had never done that. She laughed joyously — amusedly.

“What a little fool I’ve been! Oh, such a little fool! Of course, Ilse never did it. There’s nothing between us now — it’s gone — gone — gone. I’ll go right to her and tell her so.”

Emily hurried back adown her little path. The Land of Uprightness lay all about her, mysterious in the moonlight, wrapped in the exquisite

reticence of winter woods. She seemed one with its beauty and charm and mystery. With a sudden sigh of the Wind Woman through the shadowy aisles came “the flash” and Emily went dancing to Ilse with the afterglow of it in her soul.

She found Ilse alone — threw her arms around her — hugged her fiercely.

“Ilse, do forgive me,” she cried. “I shouldn’t have doubted you — I did doubt you — but now I know — I know. You will forgive me?”

“You young goat,” said Ilse.

Emily loved to be called a young goat. This was the old Ilse — her Ilse.

“Oh, Ilse, I’ve been so unhappy.”

“Well, don’t bawl over it,” said Ilse. “I haven’t been very hilarious myself. Look here, Emily, I’ve got something to tell you. Shut up and listen. That day I met Evelyn at the Shoppe and we went back for some book she wanted and we found you sound asleep — so sound asleep that you never stirred when I pinched your cheek. Then, just for devilment I picked up a black crayon and said, ‘I’m going to draw a moustache on her’ — shut up! Evelyn pulled a long face and said, ‘Oh, no! that would be mean, don’t you think?’ I hadn’t had the slightest intention of doing it — I’d only spoken in fun — but that shrimp Evelyn’s ungodly affectation of righteousness made me so mad that I decided I would do it — shut up! — I meant to wake you right up and hold a glass before you, that was all. But before I could do it Kate Errol came in and wanted us to go along with her and I threw down the chalk and went out. That’s all, Emily, honest to Caesar. But it made me feel ashamed and silly later on — I’d say a bit conscience-stricken if I had such a thing as a conscience, because I felt that I must have put the idea into the head of whoever did do it, and so was responsible in a way. And then I saw you distrusted me — and that made me mad — not tempery-mad, you see, but a nasty, cold, inside sort of madness. I thought you had no business even to suspect that I could have done such a thing as let you go to class like that. And I thought, since you

did, you could go on doing it — I wouldn't say one word to put matters straight. Golly, but I'm glad you're through with seein' things."

"Do you think Evelyn Blake did it?"

"No. Oh, she's quite capable of it, of course, but I don't see how it could have been she. She went to the Shoppe with Kate and me and we left her there. She was in class fifteen minutes later, so I don't think she'd have had time to go back and do it. I really think it was that little devil of a May Hilson. She'd do anything and she was in the hall when I was flourishing the crayon. She'd 'take the suggestion as a cat laps milk.' But it couldn't have been Evelyn."

Emily retained her belief that it could have been and was. But the only thing that mattered now was the fact that Aunt Ruth still believed Ilse guilty and would continue so to believe.

"Well, that's a rotten shame," said Ilse. "We can't have any real chum-talks here — Mary always has such a mob in and E. B. pervades the place."

"I'll find out who did it yet," said Emily darkly, "and make Aunt Ruth give in."

On the next afternoon Evelyn Blake found Ilse and Emily in a beautiful row. At least Ilse was rowing while Emily sat with her legs crossed and a bored, haughty expression in her insolently half-shut eyes. It should have been a welcome sight to a girl who disliked the intimacies of other girls. But Evelyn Blake was not rejoiced. Ilse was quarrelling with Emily again — ergo, Ilse and Emily were on good terms once more.

"I'm so glad to see you've forgiven Ilse for that mean trick," she said sweetly to Emily the next day. "Of course, it was just pure thoughtlessness on her part — I've always insisted on that — she never stopped to think what ridicule she was letting you in for. Poor Ilse is like that. You know I tried to stop her — I didn't tell you this before, of course — I didn't want to make any more trouble than there was — but I told her it was a horribly mean thing to do to a friend. I thought I had put her off. It's sweet of you to forgive her, Emily dear. You are better-hearted than I am. I'm afraid I could never pardon anyone who had made me such a laughing-stock."

“Why didn’t you slay her in her tracks?” said Ilse when she heard of it from Emily.

“I simply half-shut my eyes and looked at her like a Murray,” said Emily, “and that was more bitter than death.”

The Madness of an Hour

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The High School concert in aid of the school library was an annual event in Shrewsbury, coming off in early April, before it was necessary to settle down to hard study for spring examinations. This year it was at first intended to have the usual programme of music and readings with a short dialogue. Emily was asked to take part in the latter and agreed, after securing Aunt Ruth's very grudging consent, which would probably never have been secured if Miss Aylmer had not come in person to plead for it. Miss Aylmer was a granddaughter of Senator Aylmer and Aunt Ruth yielded to family what she would have yielded to nothing else. Then Miss Aylmer suggested cutting out most of the music and all of the readings and having a short play instead. This found favour in the eyes of the students and the change was made forthwith. Emily was cast for a part that suited her, so she became keenly interested in the matter and enjoyed the practices, which were held in the school building two evenings of the week under the chaperonage of Miss Aylmer.

The play created quite a stir in Shrewsbury. Nothing so ambitious had been undertaken by the High School students before: it became known that many of the Queen's Academy students were coming up from Charlottetown on the evening train to see it. This drove the performers half wild. The Queen's students were old hands at putting on plays. Of course they came to criticize. It became a fixed obsession with each member of the cast to make the play as good as any of the Queen's Academy plays had been, and every nerve was strained to that end. Kate Errol's sister, who was a graduate of a school of oratory, coached them and when the evening of the performance arrived there was burning excitement in the various homes and boardinghouses of Shrewsbury.

Emily, in her small, candlelighted room, looked at Emily-in-the-Glass with considerable satisfaction — a satisfaction that was quite justifiable.

The scarlet flush of her cheeks, the deepening darkness of her grey eyes, came out brilliantly above the ashes-of-roses gown, and the little wreath of silver leaves, twisted around her black hair, made her look like a young dryad. She did not, however, feel like a dryad. Aunt Ruth had made her take off her lace stockings and put on cashmere ones — had tried, indeed, to make her put on woollen ones, but had gone down in defeat on that point, retrieving her position, however, by insisting on a flannel petticoat.

“Horrid bunchy thing,” thought Emily resentfully — meaning the petticoat, of course. But the skirts of the day were full and Emily’s slenderness could carry even a thick flannel petticoat.

She was just fastening her Egyptian chain around her neck when Aunt Ruth stalked in.

One glance was sufficient to reveal that Aunt Ruth was very angry.

“Em’ly, Mrs. Ball has just called. She told me something that amazed me. Is this a play you’re taking part in tonight?”

“Of course it’s a play, Aunt Ruth. Surely you knew that.”

“When you asked my permission to take part in this concert you told me it was a dialogue,” said Aunt Ruth icily.

“O-o-h — but Miss Aylmer decided to have a little play in place of it. I thought you knew, Aunt Ruth — truly I did. I thought I mentioned it to you.”

“You didn’t think anything of the kind, Em’ly — you deliberately kept me in ignorance because you knew I wouldn’t have allowed you to take part in a play.”

“Indeed, no, Aunt Ruth,” pleaded Emily, gravely. “I never thought of hiding it. Of course, I didn’t feel like talking much to you about it because I knew you didn’t approve of the concert at all.”

When Emily spoke gravely Aunt Ruth always thought she was impudent.

“This crowns all, Em’ly. Sly as I’ve always known you to be I wouldn’t have believed you could be as sly as this.”

“There was nothing of the kind about it, Aunt Ruth!” said Emily impatiently. “It would have been silly of me to try to hide the fact that we

were getting up a play when all Shrewsbury is talking of it. I don't see how you could help hearing of it."

"You knew I wasn't going anywhere because of my bronchitis. Oh, I see through it all, Em'ly. You cannot deceive me."

"I haven't tried to deceive you. I thought you knew — that is all there is to it. I thought the reason you never spoke of it was because you were opposed to the whole thing. That is the truth, Aunt Ruth. What difference is there between a dialogue and a play?"

"There is every difference," said Aunt Ruth. "Plays are wicked."

"But this is such a little one," pleaded Emily despairingly — and then laughed because it sounded so ridiculously like the nursemaid's excuse in *Midshipman Easy*. Her sense of humour was untimely; her laughter infuriated Aunt Ruth.

"Little or big, you are not going to take part in it."

Emily stared again, paling a little.

"Aunt Ruth — I must — why, the play would be ruined."

"Better a play ruined than a soul ruined," retorted Aunt Ruth.

Emily dared not smile. The issue at stake was too serious.

"Don't be so — so — indignant, Aunt Ruth" — she had nearly said unjust. "I am sorry you don't approve of plays — I won't take part in any more — but you can see I must do it tonight."

"Oh, my dear Em'ly, I don't think you are quite as indispensable as all that."

Certainly Aunt Ruth was very maddening. How disagreeable the word "dear" could be! Still was Emily patient.

"I really am — tonight. You see, they couldn't get a substitute at the last moment. Miss Aylmer would never forgive me."

"Do you care more about Miss Aylmer's forgiveness than God's?" demanded Aunt Ruth with the air of one stating a decisive position.

"Yes — than your God's," muttered Emily, unable to keep her patience under such insensate questions.

"Have you no respect for your forefathers?" was Aunt Ruth's next relevant query. "Why, if they knew a descendant of theirs was play-acting

they would turn over in their graves!”

Emily favoured Aunt Ruth with a sample of the Murray look.

“It would be excellent exercise for them. I am going to take my part in the play tonight, Aunt Ruth.”

Emily spoke quietly, looking down from her young height with resolute eyes. Aunt Ruth felt a nasty sense of helplessness: there was no lock to Emily’s door — and she couldn’t detain her by physical force.

“If you go, you needn’t come back here tonight,” she said, pale with rage. “This house is locked at nine o’clock.”

“If I don’t come back here tonight, I won’t come at all.” Emily was too angry over Aunt Ruth’s unreasonable attitude to care for consequences. “If you lock me out I’ll go back to New Moon. They know all about the play there — even Aunt Elizabeth was willing for me to take part.”

She caught up her coat and jammed the little red-feather hat, which Uncle Oliver’s wife had given her at Christmas, down on her head. Aunt Addie’s taste was not approved at New Moon but the hat was very becoming and Emily loved it. Aunt Ruth suddenly realized that Emily looked oddly mature and grownup in it. But the knowledge did not as yet dampen her anger. Em’ly was gone — Em’ly had dared to defy her and disobey her — sly, underhand Em’ly — Em’ly must be taught a lesson.

At nine o’clock a stubborn, outraged Aunt Ruth locked all the doors and went to bed.

The play was a big success. Even the Queen’s students admitted that and applauded generously. Emily threw herself into her part with a fire and energy generated by her encounter with Aunt Ruth, which swept away all hampering consciousness of flannel petticoats and agreeably astonished Miss Errol, whose one criticism of Emily’s acting had been that she was rather cold and reserved in a part that called for more abandon. Emily was showered with compliments at the close of the performance. Even Evelyn Blake said graciously,

“Really, dear, you are quite wonderful — a star actress — a poet — a budding novelist — what surprise will you give us next?”

Thought Emily, “Condescending, insufferable creature!”

Said Emily, "Thank you!"

There was a happy, triumphant walk home with Teddy, a gay good night at the gate, and then — the locked door.

Emily's anger, which had been sublimated during the evening into energy and ambition, suddenly flared up again, sweeping everything before it. It was unbearable to be treated thus. She had endured enough at Aunt Ruth's hands — this was the proverbial last straw. One could not put up with everything, even to get an education. One owed something to one's dignity and self-respect.

There were three things she could do. She could thump the old-fashioned brass knocker on the door until Aunt Ruth came down and let her in, as she had done once before — and then endure weeks of slurs because of it. She could fly up-street and down-street to Ilse's boardinghouse — the girls wouldn't be in bed yet — as she had likewise done once before, and as no doubt Aunt Ruth would expect her to do now; and then Mary Carswell would tell Evelyn Blake and Evelyn Blake would laugh maliciously and tell it all through the school. Emily had no intention of doing either of these things; she knew from the moment she found the door locked just what she would do. She would walk to New Moon — and stay there! Months of suppressed chafing under Aunt Ruth's perpetual stings burst into a conflagration of revolt. Emily marched out of the gate, slammed it shut behind her with no Murray dignity but plenty of Starr passion, and started on her seven-mile walk through the midnight. Had it been three times seven she would have started just the same.

So angry was she, and so angry she continued to be, that the walk did not seem long, nor, though she had no wrap save her cloth coat, did she feel the cold of the sharp April night.

The winter's snow had gone but the bare road was hard-frozen and rough — no dainty footing for the thin kid slippers of Cousin Jimmy's Christmas box. Emily reflected with what she considered a grim, sarcastic laugh that it was well, after all, that Aunt Ruth had insisted on cashmere stockings and flannel petticoat.

There was a moon that night, but the sky was covered with curdled grey clouds, and the harsh, bleak landscape lay dourly in the pallid grey light. The wind came across it in sudden, moaning gusts. Emily felt with considerable dramatic satisfaction that the night harmonized with her stormy, tragic mood.

She would never go back to Aunt Ruth's that was certain. No matter what Aunt Elizabeth might say — and she would say aplenty, no doubt of that — no matter what anyone would say. If Aunt Elizabeth would not let her go anywhere else to board she would give up school altogether. She knew it would cause a tremendous upheaval at New Moon. Never mind. In her very reckless mood upheavals seemed welcome things. It was time somebody upheaved. She would not humiliate herself another day — that she would not! Aunt Ruth had gone too far at last. You could not safely drive a Starr to desperation.

"I have done with Ruth Dutton for ever," vowed Emily, feeling a tremendous satisfaction in leaving off the "Aunt."

As she drew near home the clouds cleared away suddenly, and when she turned into the New Moon lane the austere beauty of the three tall Lombardies against the moonlit sky made her catch her breath. Oh, how wonderful! For a moment she almost forgot her wrongs and Aunt Ruth. Then bitterness rushed over her soul again — not even the magic of the Three Princesses could charm it away.

There was a light shining out of the New Moon kitchen window, falling on the tall, white birches in Lofty John's bush with spectral effect. Emily wondered who could be up at New Moon: she had expected to find it in darkness and had meant to slip in by the front door and up to her own dear room, leaving explanations to the morning. Aunt Elizabeth always locked and barred the kitchen door every night with great ceremony before retiring, but the front door was never locked. Tramps and burglars would surely never be so ill-mannered as to come to the front door of New Moon.

Emily crossed the garden and peeped through the kitchen window. Cousin Jimmy was there alone, sitting by the table, with two candles for company. On the table was a stoneware crock and just as Emily looked in

he absently put his hand into it and drew out a chubby doughnut. Cousin Jimmy's eyes were fixed on a big beef ham hanging from the ceiling and Cousin Jimmy's lips moved soundlessly. There was no reasonable doubt that Cousin Jimmy was composing poetry, though why he was doing it at that hour o' night was a puzzle.

Emily slipped around the house, opened the kitchen door gently, and walked in. Poor Cousin Jimmy in his amazement tried to swallow half a doughnut whole and then couldn't speak for several seconds. Was this Emily — or an apparition? Emily in a dark-blue coat, an enchanting little red-feather hat — Emily with windblown night-black hair and tragic eyes — Emily with tattered kid slippers on her feet — Emily in this plight at New Moon when she should have been sound asleep on her maiden couch in Shrewsbury?

Cousin Jimmy seized the cold hands Emily held out to him.

"Emily, dear child, what has happened?"

"Well, just to jump into the middle of things — I've left Aunt Ruth's and I'm not going back."

Cousin Jimmy didn't say anything for a few moments. But he did a few things. First he tiptoed across the kitchen and carefully shut the sitting-room door; then he gently filled the stove up with wood, drew a chair up to it, pushed Emily into it and lifted her cold, ragged feet to the hearth. Then he lighted two more candles and put them on the chimney-piece. Finally he sat down in his chair again and put his hands on his knees.

"Now, tell me all about it."

Emily, still in the throes of rebellion and indignation, told it pretty fully.

As soon as Cousin Jimmy got an inkling of what had really happened he began to shake his head slowly — continued to shake it — shook it so long and gravely that Emily began to feel an uncomfortable conviction that instead of being a wronged, dramatic figure she was by way of being a bit of a little fool. The longer Cousin Jimmy shook his head the smaller grew her heroics. When she had finished her story with a defiant,

conclusive “I’m not going back to Aunt Ruth’s, anyhow,” Cousin Jimmy gave a final wag to his head and pushed the crock across the table.

“Have a doughnut, pussy.”

Emily hesitated. She was very fond of doughnuts — and it had been a long time since she had her supper. But doughnuts seemed out of keeping with rebellion and tumult. They were decidedly reactionary in their tendencies. Some vague glimmering of this made Emily refuse the doughnut.

Cousin Jimmy took one himself.

“So you’re not going back to Shrewsbury?”

“Not to Aunt Ruth’s,” said Emily.

“It’s the same thing,” said Cousin Jimmy.

Emily knew it was. She knew it was of no use to hope that Aunt Elizabeth would let her board elsewhere.

“And you walked all the way home over those roads.” Cousin Jimmy shook his head. “Well, you have spunk. Heaps of it,” he added meditatively between bites.

“Do you blame me?” demanded Emily passionately — all the more passionately because she felt some inward support had been shaken away by Cousin Jimmy’s head.

“No-o-o, it was a durn mean shame to lock you out — just like Ruth Dutton.”

“And you see — don’t you — that I can’t go back after such an insult?”

Cousin Jimmy nibbled at the doughnut cautiously, as if bent on trying to see how near he could nibble to the hole without actually breaking through.

“I don’t think any of your grandmothers would have given up a chance for an education so easily,” he said. “Not on the Murray side, anyhow,” he added after a moment’s reflection, which apparently reminded him that he knew too little about the Starrs to dogmatize concerning them.

Emily sat very still. As Teddy would have said in cricket parlance, Cousin Jimmy had got her middle wicket with the first ball. She felt at

once that when Cousin Jimmy, in that diabolical fit of inspiration, dragged her grandmothers in, everything was over but the precise terms of surrender. She could see them all around her — the dear, dead ladies of New Moon — Mary Shipley and Elizabeth Burnley, and all the rest — mild, determined, restrained, looking down with something of contemptuous pity on her, their foolish, impulsive descendant. Cousin Jimmy appeared to think there might be some weakness on the Starr side. Well, there wasn't — she would show him!

She had expected more sympathy from Cousin Jimmy. She had known Aunt Elizabeth would condemn her and even Aunt Laura would look disappointed question. But she had counted on Cousin Jimmy taking her part. He always had before.

"My grandmothers never had to put up with Aunt Ruth," she flung at him.

"They had to put up with your grandfathers." Cousin Jimmy appeared to think that this was conclusive — as anyone who had known Archibald and Hugh Murray might have very well thought.

"Cousin Jimmy, do you think I ought to go back and accept Aunt Ruth's scolding and go on as if this had never happened?"

"What do you think about it?" asked Cousin Jimmy. "Do take a doughnut, pussy."

This time Emily took the doughnut. She might as well have some comfort. Now, you can't eat doughnuts and remain dramatic. Try it.

Emily slipped from her peak of tragedy to the valley of petulance.

"Aunt Ruth has been abominable these past two months — ever since her bronchitis has prevented her from going out. You don't know what it's been like."

"Oh, I do — I do. Ruth Dutton never made anyone feel better pleased with herself. Feet getting warm, Emily?"

"I hate her," cried Emily, still grasping after self-justification. "It's horrible to live in the same house with anyone you hate—"

"Poisonous," agreed Cousin Jimmy.

“And it isn’t my fault. I have tried to like her — tried to please her — she’s always twitting me — she attributes mean motives to everything I do or say — or don’t do or say. I’ve never heard the last of sitting in the corner of the pew — and failing to get a star pin. She’s always hinting insults to my father and mother. And she’s always forgiving me for things I haven’t done — or that don’t need forgiveness.”

“Aggravating — very,” conceded Cousin Jimmy.

“Aggravating — you’re right. I know if I go back she’ll say ‘I’ll forgive you this time, but don’t let it happen again.’ And she will sniff — oh, Aunt Ruth’s sniff is the hatefulest sound in the world!”

“Ever hear a dull knife sawing through thick cardboard?” murmured Cousin Jimmy.

Emily ignored him and swept on.

“I can’t be always in the wrong — but Aunt Ruth thinks I am — and says she has ‘to make allowances’ for me. She doses me with cod-liver oil — she never lets me go out in the evening if she can help it — ‘consumptives should never be out after eight o’clock.’ If she is cold, I must put on an extra petticoat. She is always asking disagreeable questions and refusing to believe my answers. She believes and always will believe that I kept this play a secret from her because of slyness. I never thought of such a thing. Why, the Shrewsbury Times referred to it last week. Aunt Ruth doesn’t often miss anything in the Times. She twitted me for days because she found a composition of mine that I had signed ‘Emilie.’

‘Better try to spell your name after some unheard-of-twist,’ she sneered!”

“Well, wasn’t it a bit silly, pussy?”

“Oh, I suppose my grandmothers wouldn’t have done it! But Aunt Ruth needn’t have kept it up as she did. That is what is so dreadful — if she’d speak her mind on a thing and have done with it. Why, I got a little spot of iron-rust on my white petticoat and Aunt Ruth harped on it for weeks. She was determined to find out when it was rusted and how — and I hadn’t the least idea. Really, Cousin Jimmy, when this had gone on for three weeks I thought I’d have to scream if she mentioned it again.”

“Any proper person would feel the same,” said Cousin Jimmy to the beef ham.

“Oh, any one of these things is only a pin-prick, I know — and you think I’m silly to mind it — but—”

“No, no. A hundred pin-pricks would be harder to put up with than a broken leg. I’d sooner be knocked on the head and be done with it.”

“Yes, that’s it — nothing but pin-pricks all the time. She won’t let Ilse come to the house — or Teddy, or Perry — nobody but that stupid Andrew. I’m so tired of him. She wouldn’t let me go to the Prep dance. They had a sleigh drive and supper at the Brown Teapot Inn and a little dance — everybody went but me — it was the event of the winter. If I go for a walk in the Land of Uprightness at sunset she is sure there is something sinister in it — she never wants to walk in the Land of Uprightness, so why should I? She says I have got too high an opinion of myself. I haven’t — have I, Cousin Jimmy?”

“No,” said Cousin Jimmy thoughtfully. “High — but not too high.”

“She says I’m always displacing things — if I look out of a window she’ll trot across the room and mathematically match the corners of the curtains again. And it’s ‘Why — why — why’ — all the time, all the time, Cousin Jimmy.”

“I know you feel a lot better now that you’ve got all that out of your system,” said Cousin Jimmy. “‘Nother doughnut?”

Emily, with a sigh of surrender, took her feet off the stove and moved over to the table. The crock of doughnuts was between her and Cousin Jimmy. She was very hungry.

“Ruth give you enough to eat?” queried Cousin Jimmy anxiously.

“Oh, yes. Aunt Ruth keeps up one New Moon tradish at least. She has a good table. But there are no snacks.”

“And you always liked a tasty bite at bedtime, didn’t you? But you took a box back last time you were home?”

“Aunt Ruth confiscated it. That is, she put it in the pantry and served its contents up at meal times. These doughnuts are good. And there is

always something exciting and lawless about eating at unearthly hours like this, isn't there? How did you happen to be up, Cousin Jimmy?"

"A sick cow. Thought I'd better sit up and look after her."

"It was lucky for me you were. Oh, I'm in my proper senses again, Cousin Jimmy. Of course, I know you think I've been a little fool."

"Everybody's a fool in some particular," said Cousin Jimmy.

"Well, I'll go back and bite the sour apple without a grimace."

"Lie down on the sofa and have a nap. I'll hitch up the grey mare and drive you back as soon as it begins to be daylight."

"No, that won't do at all. Several reasons. In the first place, the roads aren't fit for wheels or runners. In the second place we couldn't drive away from here without Aunt Elizabeth hearing us, and then she'd find out all about it and I don't want her to. We'll keep my foolishness a dark and deadly secret between you and me, Cousin Jimmy."

"Then how are you going to get back to Shrewsbury?"

"Walk."

"Walk? To Shrewsbury? At this hour of the night?"

"Haven't I just walked from Shrewsbury at this hour? I can do it again and it won't be any harder than bumping over those awful roads behind the grey mare. Of course, I'll put something on my feet that will be a little more protection than kid slippers. I've ruined your Christmas present in my brainstorm. There is a pair of my old boots in the closet there. I'll put them on — and my old ulster. I'll be back in Shrewsbury by daylight. I'll start as soon as we finish the doughnuts. Let's lick the platter clean, Cousin Jimmy."

Cousin Jimmy yielded. After all, Emily was young and wiry, the night was fine, and the less Elizabeth knew about some things the better for all concerned. With a sigh of relief that the affair had turned out so well — he had really been afraid at first that Emily's underlying "stubbornness" had been reached and then, whew! — Cousin Jimmy settled down to doughnuts.

"How's the writing coming on?" he asked.

“I’ve written a good deal lately — though it’s pretty cold in my room mornings, but I love it so — it’s my dearest dream to do something worth while some day.”

“So you will. You haven’t been pushed down a well,” said Cousin Jimmy.

Emily patted his hand. None realized better than she what Cousin Jimmy might have done if he had not been pushed down a well.

When the doughnuts were finished Emily donned her old boots and ulster. It was a very shabby garment but her young-moon beauty shone over it like a star in the old, dim, candlelight room.

Cousin Jimmy looked up at her. He thought that she was a gifted, beautiful, joyous creature and that some things were a shame.

“Tall and stately — tall and stately like all our women,” he murmured dreamily. “Except Aunt Ruth,” he added.

Emily laughed — and “made a face.”

“Aunt Ruth will make the most of her inches in our forthcoming interview. This will last her the rest of the year. But don’t worry, Cousin darling, I won’t do any more foolish things for quite a long time now. This has cleared the air. Aunt Elizabeth will think it was dreadful of you to eat a whole crockful of doughnuts yourself, you greedy Cousin Jimmy.”

“Do you want another blank-book?”

“Not yet. The last one you gave me is only half-full yet. A blank-book lasts me quite a while when I can’t write stories. Oh, I wish I could, Cousin Jimmy.”

“The time will come — the time will come,” said Cousin Jimmy encouragingly. “Wait a while — just wait a while. If we don’t chase things — sometimes the things following us can catch up. ‘Through wisdom is an house builded, and by understanding is it established. And by knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches’ — all precious and pleasant riches, Emily. Proverbs twenty-fourth, third and fifth.”

He let Emily out and bolted the door. He put out all the candles but one. He glared at it for a few moments, then, satisfied that Elizabeth could

not hear him, Cousin Jimmy said fervently,

“Ruth Dutton can go to — to — to—” Cousin Jimmy’s courage failed him, “ — to heaven!”

Emily went back to Shrewsbury through the clear moonlight. She had expected the walk to be dreary and weary, robbed of the impetus anger and rebellion had given. But she found that it had become transmuted into a thing of beauty — and Emily was one of “the eternal slaves of beauty,” of whom Carman sings, who are yet “masters of the world.” She was tired, but her tiredness showed itself in a certain exaltation of feeling and imagination such as she often experienced when over-fatigued. Thought was quick and active. She had a series of brilliant imaginary conversations and thought out so many epigrams that she was agreeably surprised at herself. It was good to feel vivid and interesting and all-alive once more. She was alone but not lonely.

As she walked along she dramatized the night. There was about it a wild, lawless charm that appealed to a certain wild, lawless strain hidden deep in Emily’s nature — a strain that wished to walk where it would with no guidance but its own — the strain of the gypsy and the poet, the genius and the fool.

The big fir-trees, released from their burden of snow, were tossing their arms freely and wildly and gladly across the moonlit fields. Was ever anything so beautiful as the shadows of those grey, clean-limbed maples on the road at her feet? The houses she passed were full of intriguing mystery. She liked to think of the people who lay there dreaming and saw in sleep what waking life denied them — of little children’s dear hands folded in exquisite slumber — of hearts that, perhaps, kept sorrowful, wakeful vigils — of lonely arms that reached out in the emptiness of the night — all while she, Emily, flitted by like a shadowy wraith of the small hours.

And it was easy to think, too, that other things were abroad — things that were not mortal or human. She always lived on the edge of fairyland and now she stepped right over it. The Wind Woman was really whistling eerily in the reeds of the swamp — she was sure she heard the dear,

diabolical chuckles of owls in the spruce copses — something frisked across her path — it might be a rabbit or it might be a Little Grey Person; the trees put on half-pleasing, half-terrifying shapes they never wore by day. The dead thistles of last year were goblin groups along the fences: that shaggy, old yellow birch was some satyr of the woodland: the footsteps of the old gods echoed around her: those gnarled stumps on the hill field were surely Pan piping through moonlight and shadow with his troop of laughing fauns. It was delightful to believe they were.

“One loses so much when one becomes incredulous,” said Emily — and then thought that was a rather clever remark and wished she had a Jimmy-book to write it down.

So, having washed her soul free from bitterness in the aerial bath of the spring night and tingling from head to foot with the wild, strange, sweet life of the spirit, she came to Aunt Ruth’s when the faint, purplish hills east of the harbour were growing clear under a whitening sky. She had expected to find the door still locked; but the knob turned as she tried it and she went in.

Aunt Ruth was up and was lighting the kitchen fire.

On the way from New Moon Emily had thought over a dozen different ways of saying what she meant to say — and now she used not one of them. At the last moment an impish inspiration came to her. Before Aunt Ruth could — or would — speak Emily said,

“Aunt Ruth, I’ve come back to tell you that I forgive you, but that this must not happen again.”

To tell the truth, Mistress Ruth Dutton was considerably relieved that Emily had come back. She had been afraid of Elizabeth and Laura — Murray family rows were bitter things — and truly a little afraid of the results to Emily herself if she had really gone to New Moon in those thin shoes and that insufficient coat. For Ruth Dutton was not a fiend — only a rather stupid, stubborn little barnyard fowl trying to train up a skylark. She was honestly afraid that Emily might catch a cold and go into consumption. And if Emily took it into her head not to come back to Shrewsbury — well, that would “make talk” and Ruth Dutton hated “talk”

when she or her doings was the subject. So, all things considered, she decided to ignore the impertinence of Emily's greeting.

"Did you spend the night on the streets?" she asked grimly.

"Oh, dear no — I went out to New Moon — had a chat with Cousin Jimmy and some lunch — then walked back."

"Did Elizabeth see you? Or Laura?"

"No. They were asleep."

Mrs. Dutton reflected that this was just as well.

"Well," she said coldly, "you have been guilty of great ingratitude, Em'ly, but I'll forgive you this time" — then stopped abruptly. Hadn't that been said already this morning? Before she could think of a substitute remark Emily had vanished upstairs. Mistress Ruth Dutton was left with the unpleasant sensation that, somehow or other, she had not come out of the affair quite as triumphantly as she should have.

Heights and Hollows

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“April 28, 19 —

“This was my weekend at New Moon and I came back this morning. Consequently this is blue Monday and I’m homesick. Aunt Ruth, too, is always a little more unliveable on Mondays — or seems so by contrast with Aunt Laura and Aunt Elizabeth. Cousin Jimmy wasn’t quite so nice this weekend as he usually is. He had several of his queer spells and was a bit grumpy for two reasons: in the first place, several of his young apple-trees are dying because they were girdled by mice in the winter; and in the second place he can’t induce Aunt Elizabeth to try the new creamers that every one else is using. For my own part I am secretly glad that she won’t. I don’t want our beautiful old dairy and the glossy brown milk pans to be improved out of existence. I can’t think of New Moon without a dairy.

“When I could get Cousin Jimmy’s mind off his grievances we explored the Carlton catalogue and discussed the best selections to make for my two dollars’ worth of owl’s laughter. We planned a dozen different combinations and beds, and got several hundred dollars’ worth of fun out of it, but finally settled on a long, narrow bed full of asters — lavender down the middle, white around it and a border of pale pink, with clumps of deep purple for sentinels at the four corners. I am sure it will be beautiful: and I shall look at its September loveliness and think, ‘This came out of my head!’

“I have taken another step in the Alpine Path. Last week the Ladies’ Own Journal accepted my poem, The Wind Woman, and gave me two subscriptions to the Journal for it. No cash — but that may come yet. I must make enough money before very long to pay Aunt Ruth every cent my living with her has cost her. Then she won’t be able to twit me with the expense I am to her. She hardly misses a day without some hint of it—’No, Mrs. Beatty, I feel I can’t give quite as much to missions this year as usual

— my expenses have been much heavier, you know’—’Oh, no, Mr. Morrison, your new goods are beautiful but I can’t afford a silk dress this spring’—’This davenport should really be upholstered again — it’s getting fearfully shabby — but it’s out of the question now for a year or two.’ So it goes.

“But my soul doesn’t belong to Aunt Ruth.

“Owl’s Laughter was copied in the Shrewsbury Times—’hunter’s moan’ and all. Evelyn Blake, I understand, says she doesn’t believe I wrote it at all — she’s sure she read something exactly like it somewhere some years ago.

“Dear Evelyn!

“Aunt Elizabeth said nothing at all about it, but Cousin Jimmy told me she cut it out and put it in the Bible she keeps on the stand by her bed. When I told her I was to get two dollars’ worth of seeds for it she said I’d likely find when I sent for them that the firm had gone bankrupt!

“I have a notion to send that little story about the child that Mr. Carpenter liked to Golden Hours. I wish I could get it typewritten, but that is impossible, so I shall have to write it very plainly. I wonder if I dare. They would surely pay for a story.

“Dean will soon be home. How glad I will be to see him! I wonder if he will think I have changed much. I have certainly grown taller. Aunt Laura says I will soon have to have really long dresses and put my hair up, but Aunt Elizabeth says fifteen is too young for that. She says girls are not so womanly at fifteen nowadays as they were in her time. Aunt Elizabeth is really frightened, I know, that if she lets me grow up I’ll be eloping —’like Juliet.’ But I’m in no hurry to grow up. It’s nicer to be just like this — betwixt-and-between. Then, if I want to be childish I can be, none daring to make me ashamed; and if I want to behave maturely I have the authority of my extra inches.

“It’s a gentle, rainy evening tonight. There are pussy willows out in the swamp and some young birches in the Land of Uprightness have cast a veil of transparent purple over their bare limbs. I think I will write a poem on A Vision of Spring.



“May 5, 19 —

“There has been quite an outbreak of spring poetry in High School. Evelyn has one in the May Quill on Flowers. Very wobbly rhymes.

“And Perry! He also felt the annual spring urge, as Mr. Carpenter calls it, and wrote a dreadful thing called The Old Farmer Sows His Seed. He sent it to The Quill and The Quill actually printed it — in the ‘jokes’ column. Perry is quite proud of it and doesn’t realize that he has made an ass of himself. Ilse turned pale with fury when she read it and hasn’t spoken to him since. She says he isn’t fit to associate with. Ilse is far too hard on Perry. And yet, when I read the thing, especially the verse,

“I’ve ploughed and harrowed and sown —
I’ve done my best,
Now I’ll leave the crop alone
And let God do the rest.

I wanted to murder him myself. Perry can’t understand what is wrong with it.

“‘It rhymes, doesn’t it?’

“Oh, yes, it rhymes!

“Ilse has also been raging at Perry lately because he has been coming to school with all but one button off his coat. I couldn’t endure it myself, so when we came out of class I whispered to Perry to meet me for five minutes by the Fern Pool at sunset. I slipped out with needle, thread and buttons and sewed them on. He didn’t see why it wouldn’t have done to wait till Friday night and have Aunt Tom sew them on. I said,

“‘Why didn’t you sew them on yourself, Perry?’

“‘I’ve no buttons and no money to buy any,’ he said, ‘but never mind, some day I will have gold buttons if I want them.’

“Aunt Ruth saw me coming in with thread and scissors, etc., and of course wanted to know where, what and why. I told her the whole tale and she said,

“‘You’d better let Perry Miller’s friends sew his buttons on for him.’

“I’m the best friend he’s got,” I said.

“‘I don’t know where you get your low tastes from,’ said Aunt Ruth.

* * *

“May 7, 19 —

“This afternoon after school Teddy rowed Ilse and me across the harbour to pick Mayflowers in the spruce barrens up the Green River. We got basketfuls, and spent a perfect hour wandering about the barrens with the friendly murmur of the little fir-trees all around us. As somebody said of strawberries so say I of Mayflowers, ‘God might have made a sweeter blossom, but never did.’

“When we left for home a thick white fog had come in over the bar and filled the harbour. But Teddy rowed in the direction of the train whistles, so we hadn’t any trouble really and I thought the experience quite wonderful. We seemed to be floating over a white sea in an unbroken calm. There was no sound save the faint moan of the bar, the deep-sea call beyond, and the low dip of the oars in the glassy water. We were alone in a world of mist on a veiled, shoreless sea. Now and then, for just a moment, a cool air current lifted the mist curtain and dim coasts loomed phantom-like around us. Then the blank whiteness shut down again. It was as though we sought some strange, enchanted shore that ever receded farther and farther. I was really sorry when we got to the wharf, but when I reached home I found Aunt Ruth all worked up on account of the fog.

“‘I knew I shouldn’t have allowed you to go,’ she said.

“‘There wasn’t any danger really, Aunt Ruth,’ I protested, ‘and look at my lovely Mayflowers.’

“Aunt Ruth wouldn’t look at the Mayflowers.

“‘No danger — in a white fog! Suppose you had got lost and a wind had come up before you reached land?’

“‘How could one get lost on little Shrewsbury harbour, Aunt Ruth?’ I said. ‘The fog was wonderful — wonderful. It just seemed as if we were

voyaging over the planet's rim into the depth of space.'

"I spoke enthusiastically and I suppose I looked a bit wild with mist drops on my hair, for Aunt Ruth said coldly, pityingly,

"It is unfortunate that you are so excitable, Emily.'

"It is maddening to be frozen and pitied, so I answered recklessly,

"But think of the fun you miss when you're non-excitable, Aunt Ruth. There is nothing more wonderful than dancing around a blazing fire. What matter if it end in ashes?'

"When you are as old as I am,' said Aunt Ruth, you will have more sense than to go into ecstasies over white fogs.'

"It seems to me impossible that I shall either grow old or die. I know I will, of course, but I don't believe it. I didn't make any answer to Aunt Ruth, so she started on another tack.

"I was watching Ilse go past. Em'ly, does that girl wear any petticoats?'

"Her clothing is silk and purple,' I murmured, quoting the Bible verse simply because there is something in it that charms me. One couldn't imagine a finer or simpler description of a gorgeously dressed woman. I don't think Aunt Ruth recognized the quotation: she thought I was just trying to be smart.

"If you mean that she wears a purple silk petticoat, Em'ly, say so in plain English. Silk petticoats, indeed. If I had anything to do with her I'd silk petticoat her.'

"Some day I am going to wear silk petticoats,' I said.

"Oh, indeed, miss. And may I ask what you have got to get silk petticoats with?'

"I've got a future,' I said, as proudly as the Murrayest of all Murrays could have said it.

"Aunt Ruth sniffed.

"I have filled my room with Mayflowers and even Lord Byron looks as if there might be a chance of recovery.

* * *

“May 13, 19 —

“I have made the plunge and sent my story *Something Different* to *Golden Hours*. I actually trembled as I dropped it into the box at the Shoppe. Oh, if it should be accepted!

“Perry has set the school laughing again. He said in class that France exported fashions. Ilse walked up to him when class came out and said, ‘You spawn!’ She hasn’t spoken to him since.

“Evelyn continues to say sweet cutting things and laugh. I might forgive her the cutting things but never the laugh.

* * *

“May 15, 19 —

“We had our Prep ‘pow-wow’ last night. It always comes off in May. We had it in the Assembly room of the school and when we got there we found we couldn’t light the gas. We didn’t know what was the matter but suspected the Juniors. (To-day we discovered they had cut off the gas in the basement and locked the basement doors.) At first we didn’t know what to do: then I remembered that Aunt Elizabeth had brought Aunt Ruth a big box of candles last week for my use. I tore home and got them — Aunt Ruth being out — and we stuck them all around the room. So we had our Pow-wow after all and it was a brilliant success. We had such fun improvising candle holders that we got off to a good start, and somehow the candlelight was so much more friendly and inspiring than gas. We all seemed to be able to think of wittier things to say. Everybody was supposed to make a speech on any subject he or she wished. Perry made the speech of the evening. He had prepared a speech on ‘Canadian History’ — very sensible and, I suspect, dull; but at the last minute he changed his mind and spoke on ‘candles’ — just making it up as he went along, telling of all the candles he saw in different lands when he was a little boy sailing with his father. It was so witty and interesting that we sat enthralled and I

think the students will forget about French fashions and the old farmer who left the hoeing and weeding to God.

“Aunt Ruth hasn’t found out about the candles yet, as the old box isn’t quite empty. When I go to New Moon tomorrow night I’ll coax Aunt Laura to give me another box — I know she will — and I’ll bring them to Aunt Ruth.

* * *

“May 22, 19 —

“To-day there was a hateful, long, fat envelope for me in the mail. Golden Hours had sent my story back. The accompanying rejection slip said:

“We have read your story with interest, and regret to say that we cannot accept it for publication at the present time.

“At first I tried to extract a little comfort from the fact that they had read it with ‘keen interest.’ Then it came home to me that the rejection slip was a printed one, so of course it is just what they send with all rejected manuscripts.

“The worst of it was that Aunt Ruth had seen the packet before I got home from school and had opened it. It was humiliating to have her know of my failure.

“‘I hope this will convince you that you’d better waste no more stamps on such nonsense, Em’ly. The idea of your thinking you could write a story fit to be published.’

“‘I’ve had two poems published,’ I cried.

“Aunt Ruth sniffed.

“‘Oh, poems. Of course they have to have something to fill up the corners.’

“Perhaps it’s so. I felt very flat as I crawled off to my room with my poor story. I was quite ‘content to fill a little space’ then. You could have packed me in a thimble.

“My story is all dog-eared and smells of tobacco. I’ve a notion to burn it.

“No, I wont!! I’ll copy it out again and try somewhere else. I will succeed!

“I think, from glancing over the recent pages of this journal, that I am beginning to be able to do without italics. But sometimes they are necessary.

* * *

“New Moon, Blair Water.

“May 24, 19 —

“‘For lo, the winter is past: the rain is over and gone: the flowers appear on the earth: the time of the singing of birds has come.’

“I’m sitting on the sill of my open window in my own dear room. It’s so lovely to get back to it every now and then. Out there, over Lofty John’s bush, is a soft yellow sky and one very white little star is just visible where the pale yellow shades off into paler green. Far off, down in the south ‘in regions mild of calm and serene air’ are great cloud-palaces of rosy marble. Leaning over the fence is a choke-cherry tree that is a mass of blossoms like creamy caterpillars. Everything is so lovely—the eye is not satisfied with seeing nor the ear with hearing.’

“Sometimes I think it really isn’t worth while to try to write anything when everything is already so well expressed in the Bible. That verse I’ve just quoted for instance — it makes me feel like a pigmy in the presence of a giant. Only twelve simple words — yet a dozen pages couldn’t have better expressed the feeling one has in spring.

“This afternoon Cousin Jimmy and I sowed our aster bed. The seeds came promptly. Evidently the firm has not gone bankrupt yet. But Aunt Elizabeth thinks they are old stock and won’t grow.

“Dean is home; he was down to see me last night — dear old Dean. He hasn’t changed a bit. His green eyes are as green as ever and his nice

mouth as nice as ever and his interesting face as interesting as ever. He took both my hands and looked earnestly at me.

“‘You have changed, Star,’ he said. ‘You look more like spring than ever. But don’t grow any taller,’ he went on. ‘I don’t want to have you looking down on me.’

“I don’t want to, either. I’d hate to be taller than Dean. It wouldn’t seem right at all.

“Teddy is an inch taller than I am. Dean says he has improved greatly in his drawing this past year. Mrs. Kent still hates me. I met her tonight, when I was out for a walk with myself in the spring twilight, and she would not even stop to speak to me — just slipped by me like a shadow in the twilight. She looked at me for a second as she passed me, and her eyes were pools of hatred. I think she grows more unhappy every year.

“In my walk I went and said good evening to the Disappointed House. I am always so sorry for it — it is a house that has never lived — that has not fulfilled its destiny. Its blind windows seem peering wistfully from its face as if seeking vainly for what they cannot find. No homelight has ever gleamed through them in summer dusk or winter darkness. And yet I feel, somehow, that the little house has kept its dream and that sometime it will come true.

“I wish I owned it.

“I dandered around all my old haunts tonight — Lofty John’s bush — Emily’s Bower — the old orchard — the pond graveyard — the To-day Road — I love that little road. It’s like a personal friend to me.

“I think ‘dandering’ is a lovely word of its kind — not in itself exactly, like some words, but because it is so perfectly expressive of its own meaning. Even if you’d never heard it before you’d know exactly what it meant — dandering could mean only dandering.

“The discovery of beautiful and interesting words always gives me joy. When I find a new, charming word I exult as a jewel-seeker and am unhappy until I’ve set it in a sentence.



“May 29, 19 —

“Tonight Aunt Ruth came home with a portentous face.

“‘Em’ly, what does this story mean that is all over Shrewsbury — that you were seen standing on Queen-street last night with a man’s arms around you, kissing him?’

“I knew in a minute what had happened. I wanted to stamp — I wanted to laugh — I wanted to tear my hair. The whole thing was so absurd and ludicrous. But I had to keep a grave face and explain to Aunt Ruth.

“This is the dark, unholy tale.

“Ilse and I were ‘dandering’ along Queen-street last night at dusk. Just by the old Taylor house we met a man. I do not know the man — not likely I shall ever know him. I do not know if he was tall or short, old or young, handsome or ugly, black or white, Jew or Gentile, bond or free. But I do know he hadn’t shaved that day!

“He was walking at a brisk pace. Then something happened which passed in the wink of an eye, but takes several seconds to describe. I stepped aside to let him pass — he stepped in the same direction — I darted the other way — so did he — then I thought I saw a chance of getting past and I made a wild dash — he made a dash — with the result that I ran full tilt against him. He had thrown out his arms when he realized a collision was unavoidable — I went right between them — and in the shock of the encounter they involuntarily closed around me for a moment while my nose came into violent contact with his chin.

“‘I — I — beg your pardon,’ the poor creature gasped, dropped me as if I were a hot coal, and tore off around the corner.

“Ilse was in fits. She said she had never seen anything so funny in her life. It had all passed so quickly that to a bystander it looked exactly as if that man and I had stopped, gazed at each other for a moment, and then rushed madly into each other’s arms.

“My nose ached for blocks. Ilse said she saw Miss Taylor peering from the window just as it happened. Of course that old gossip has spread the

story with her own interpretation of it.

“I explained all this to Aunt Ruth, who remained incredulous and seemed to consider it a very limping tale indeed.

“‘It’s a very strange thing that on a sidewalk twelve feet wide you couldn’t get past a man without embracing him,’ she said.

“‘Come now, Aunt Ruth,’ I said, ‘I know you think me sly and deep and foolish and ungrateful. But you know I am half Murray, and do you think anyone with any Murray in her would embrace a gentleman friend on the public street?’

“‘Oh, I did think you could hardly be so brazen,’ admitted Aunt Ruth. ‘But Miss Taylor said she saw it. Every one has heard it. I do not like to have one of my family talked about like that. It would not have occurred if you had not been out with Ilse Burnley in defiance of my advice. Don’t let anything like this happen again.’

“‘Things like that don’t happen,’ I said. ‘They are foreordained.’

* * *

“June 3, 19 —

“The Land of Uprightness is a thing of beauty. I can go to the Fern Pool to write again. Aunt Ruth is very suspicious of this performance. She has never forgotten that I ‘met Perry’ there one evening. The pool is very lovely now under its new young ferns. I look into it and imagine it is the legendary pool in which one could see the future. I picture myself tiptoeing to it at midnight by full o’ moon — casting something precious into it — then looking timidly at what I saw.

“What would it show me? The Alpine Path gloriously climbed? Or failure?

“No, never failure!

* * *

“June 9, 19 —

“Last week Aunt Ruth had a birthday and I gave her a centrepiece which I had embroidered. She thanked me rather stiffly and didn’t seem to care anything about it.

“Tonight I was sitting in the bay window recess of the dining-room, doing my algebra by the last light. The folding-doors were open and Aunt Ruth was talking to Mrs. Ince in the parlour. I thought they knew I was in the bay, but I suppose the curtains hid me. All at once I heard my name. Aunt Ruth was showing the centrepiece to Mrs. Ince — quite proudly.

“‘My niece Em’ly gave me this on my birthday. See how beautifully it is done — she is very skilful with her needle.’

“Could this be Aunt Ruth? I was so petrified with amazement that I could neither move nor speak.

“‘She is clever with more than her needle,’ said Mrs. Ince. ‘I hear Principal Hardy expects her to head her class in the terminal examinations.’

“‘Her mother — my sister Juliet — was a very clever girl,’ said Aunt Ruth.

“‘And she’s quite pretty, too,” said Mrs. Ince.

“‘Her father, Douglas Starr, was a remarkably handsome man,’ said Aunt Ruth.

“They went out then. For once an eavesdropper heard something good of herself!

“But from Aunt Ruth!!

* * *

“June 17, 19 —

“My ‘candle goeth not out by night’ now — at least not until quite late. Aunt Ruth lets me sit up because the terminal examinations are on. Perry infuriated Mr. Travers by writing at the end of his algebra paper, Matthew 7:5. When Mr. Travers turned it up he read: ‘Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye.’ Mr. Travers is credited with knowing

much less about mathematics than he pretends to. So he was furious and threw Perry's paper out 'as a punishment for impertinence.' The truth is poor Perry made a mistake. He meant to write Matthew 5:7. 'Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy.' He went and explained to Mr. Travers but Mr. Travers wouldn't listen. Then Ilse bearded the lion in his den — that is, went to Principal Hardy, told him the tale and induced him to intercede with Mr. Travers. As a result Perry got his marks, but was warned not to juggle with Scripture texts again.

* * *

"June 28, 19 —

"School's out. I have won my star pin. It has been a great old year of fun and study and stings. And now I'm going back to dear New Moon for two splendid months of freedom and happiness.

"I'm going to write a Garden Book in vacation. The idea has been sizzling in my brain for some time and since I can't write stories I shall try my hand at a series of essays on Cousin Jimmy's garden, with a poem for a tail-piece to each essay. It will be good practice and will please Cousin Jimmy."

At the Sign of the Haystack

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“Why do you want to do a thing like that?” said Aunt Ruth — sniffing, of course. A sniff may always be taken for granted with each of Aunt Ruth’s remarks, even when the present biographer omits mention of it.

“To poke some dollars into my slim purse,” said Emily.

Holidays were over — the Garden Book had been written and read in instalments to Cousin Jimmy, in the dusks of July and August, to his great delight; and now it was September, with its return to school and studies, the Land of Uprightness, and Aunt Ruth. Emily, with skirts a fraction longer and her hair clubbed up so high in the “Cadogan Braid” of those days, that it really was almost “up,” was back in Shrewsbury for her Junior year; and she had just told Aunt Ruth what she meant to do on her Shrewsbury Saturdays, for the autumn.

The editor of the Shrewsbury Times was planning a special illustrated Shrewsbury edition and Emily was going to canvass as much of the country as she could cover for subscriptions to it. She had wrung a rather reluctant consent from Aunt Elizabeth — a consent which could never have been extorted if Aunt Elizabeth had been paying all Emily’s expenses at school. But there was Wallace paying for her books and tuition fees, and occasionally hinting to Elizabeth that he was a very fine, generous fellow to do so. Elizabeth, in her secret heart, was not overfond of her brother Wallace and resented his splendid airs over the little help he was extending to Emily. So, when Emily pointed out that she could easily earn, during the fall, at least half enough to pay for her books for the whole year, Elizabeth yielded. Wallace would have been offended, if she, Elizabeth, had insisted on paying Emily’s expenses when he took a notion to do it, but he could not reasonably resent Emily earning part for herself. He was always preaching that girls should be self-reliant, and able to earn their own way in life.

Aunt Ruth could not refuse when Elizabeth had assented, but she did not approve.

“The idea of your wandering over the country alone!”

“Oh, I’ll not be alone. Ilse is going with me,” said Emily.

Aunt Ruth did not seem to consider this much of an improvement.

“We’re going to begin Thursday,” said Emily. “There is no school Friday, owing to the death of Principal Hardy’s father, and our classes are over at three on Thursday afternoon. We are going to canvass the Western Road that evening.”

“May I ask if you intend to camp on the side of the road?”

“Oh, no. We’ll spend the night with Ilse’s aunt at Wiltney. Then, on Friday, we’ll cut back to the Western Road, finish it that day and spend Friday night with Mary Carswell’s people at St. Clair — then work home Saturday by the River Road.”

“It’s perfectly absurd,” said Aunt Ruth. “No Murray ever did such a thing. I’m surprised at Elizabeth. It simply isn’t decent for two young girls like you and Ilse to be wandering alone over the country for three days.”

“What do you suppose could happen to us?” asked Emily.

“A good many things might happen,” said Aunt Ruth severely.

She was right. A good many things might — and did — happen in that excursion; but Emily and Ilse set off in high spirits Thursday afternoon, two graceless schoolgirls with an eye for the funny side of everything and a determination to have a good time. Emily especially was feeling uplifted. There had been another thin letter in the mail that day, with the address of a third-rate magazine in the corner, offering her three subscriptions to the said magazine for her poem *Night in the Garden*, which had formed the conclusion of her *Garden Book* and was considered both by herself and Cousin Jimmy to be the gem of the volume. Emily had left the *Garden Book* locked up in the mantel cupboard of her room at New Moon, but she meant to send copies of its “tail pieces” to various publications during the fall. It augured well that the first one sent had been accepted so promptly.

“Well, we’re off,” she said, “‘over the hills and far away’ — what an alluring old phrase! Anything may be beyond those hills ahead of us.”

“I hope we’ll get lots of material for our essays,” said Ilse practically.

Principal Hardy had informed the Junior English class that he would require several essays from them during the fall term and Emily and Ilse had decided that one at least of their essays should recount their experiences in canvassing for subscriptions, from their separate points of view. Thus they had two strings to their bow.

“I suggest we work along the Western Road and its branches as far as Hunter’s Creek, tonight,” said Emily. “We ought to get there by sunset. Then we can hit the gypsy trail across the country, through the Malvern woods and come out on the other side of them, quite near Wiltney. It’s only half an hour’s walk, while around by the Malvern Road it’s an hour. What a lovely afternoon this is!”

It was a lovely afternoon — such an afternoon as only September can produce when summer has stolen back for one more day of dream and glamour. Harvest fields drenched in sunshine lay all around them: the austere charm of northern firs made wonderful the ways over which they walked: goldenrod beribboned the fences and the sacrificial fires of willow-herb were kindled on all the burnt lands along the sequestered roads back among the hills. But they soon discovered that canvassing for subscriptions was not all fun — though, to be sure, as Ilse said, they found plenty of human nature for their essays.

There was the old man who said “Humph” at the end of every remark Emily made. When finally asked for a subscription he gruffly said “No.”

“I’m glad you didn’t say ‘Humph’ this time,” said Emily. “It was getting monotonous.”

The old fellow stared — then chuckled.

“Are ye any relation to the proud Murrays? I worked at a place they call New Moon when I was young and one of the Murray gals — Elizabeth her name was — had a sort of high-and-lofty way o’ looking at ye, just like yours.”

“My mother was a Murray.”

“I was thinkin’ so — ye bear the stamp of the breed. Well, here’s two dollars an’ ye kin put my name down. I’d ruther see the special edition ‘fore I subscribe. I don’t favour buying bearskins afore I see the bear. But it’s worth two dollars to see a proud Murray coming down to askin’ old Billy Scott fer a subscription.”

“Why didn’t you slay him with a glance?” asked Ilse as they walked away.

Emily was walking savagely, with her head held high and her eyes snapping.

“I’m out to get subscriptions, not to make widows. I didn’t expect it would be all plain sailing.”

There was another man who growled all the way through Emily’s explanations — and then, when she was primed for refusal, gave her five subscriptions.

“He likes to disappoint people,” she told Ilse, as they went down the lane. “He would rather disappoint them agreeably than not at all.”

One man swore volubly—”not at anything in particular, but just at large,” as Ilse said; and another old man was on the point of subscribing when his wife interfered.

“I wouldn’t if I was you, Father. The editor of that paper is an infidel.”

“Very impident of him, to be sure,” said “Father,” and put his money back in his wallet.

“Delicious!” murmured Emily when she was out of earshot. “I must jot that down in my Jimmy-book.” As a rule the women received them more politely than the men, but the men gave them more subscriptions. Indeed, the only woman who subscribed, was an elderly dame whose heart Emily won by listening sympathetically to a long account of the beauty and virtues of the said elderly lady’s deceased pet Thomas-cat — though it must be admitted that she whispered aside to Ilse at its conclusion,

“Charlottetown papers please copy.”

Their worst experience was with a man who treated them to a tirade of abuse because his politics differed from the politics of the Times and he

seemed to hold them responsible for it. When he halted for breath Emily stood up.

“Kick the dog — then you’ll feel better,” she said calmly, as she stalked out. Ilse was white with rage. “Could you have believed people could be so detestable?” she exploded. “To rate us as if we were responsible for the politics of the Times! Well — Human Nature from a Canvasser’s Point of View is to be the subject of my essay. I’ll describe that man and picture myself telling him all the things I wanted to and didn’t!”

Emily broke into laughter — and found her temper again.

“You can. I can’t even take that revenge — my promise to Aunt Elizabeth binds me. I shall have to stick to facts. Come, let’s not think of the brute. After all, we’ve got quite a lot of subscriptions already — and there’s a clump of white birches in which it is reasonably certain a dryad lives — and that cloud over the firs looks like the faint, golden ghost of a cloud.”

“Nevertheless, I should have liked to reduce that old vampire to powder,” said Ilse.

At the next place of call, however, their experience was pleasant and they were asked to stay for supper. By sunset they had done reasonably well in the matter of subscriptions and had accumulated enough private jokes and bywords to furnish fun for many moons of reminiscence. They decided to canvass no more that night. They had not got quite as far as Hunter’s Creek but Emily thought it would be safe to make a cross-cut from where they were. The Malvern woods were not so very extensive and no matter where they came out on the northern side of them, they would be able to see Wiltney.

They climbed a fence, went up across a hill pasture-field feathered with asters, and were swallowed up by the Malvern woods, crossed and recrossed by dozens of trails. The world disappeared behind them and they were alone in a realm of wild beauty. Emily thought the walk through the woods all too short, though tired Ilse, whose foot had turned on a pebble earlier in the day, found it unpleasantly long. Emily liked everything about

it — she liked to see that shining gold head of Ilse's slipping through the grey-green trunks, under the long, swaying boughs — she liked the faint dreamlike notes of sleepy birds — she liked the little wandering, whispering, tricky wind o' dusk among the tree crests — she liked the incredibly delicate fragrance of wood flowers and growths — she liked the little ferns that brushed Ilse's silken ankles — she liked that slender, white, tantalizing thing which gleamed out for a moment adown the dim vista of a winding path — was it a birch or a woodnymph? No matter — it had given her that stab of poignant rapture she called "the flash" — her priceless thing whose flitting, uncalculated moments were worth cycles of mere existence. Emily wandered on, thinking all of the loveliness of the road and nothing of the road itself, absently following limping Ilse, until at last the trees suddenly fell away before them and they found themselves in the open, with a wild sort of little pasture before them, and beyond, in the clear afterlight, a long, sloping valley, rather bare and desolate, where the farmsteads had no great appearance of thrift or comfort.

"Why — where are we?" said Ilse blankly. "I don't see anything like Wiltney."

Emily came abruptly out of her dreams and tried to get her bearings. The only landmark visible was a tall spire on a hill ten miles away.

"Why, there's the spire of the Catholic church at Indian Head," she said flatly. "And that must be Hardscrabble Road down there. We must have taken a wrong turning somewhere, Ilse — we've come out on the east side of the woods instead of the north."

"Then we're five miles from Wiltney," said Ilse despairingly. "I can never walk that far — and we can't go back through those woods — it will be pitch dark in a quarter of an hour. What on earth can we do?"

"Admit we're lost and make a beautiful thing of it," said Emily, coolly.

"Oh, we're lost all right, to all intents and purposes," moaned Ilse, climbing feebly up on the tumbledown fence and sitting there, "but I don't see how we're going to make it beautiful. We can't stay here all night. The only thing to do is to go down and see if they'll put us up at any of those houses. I don't like the idea. If that's Hardscrabble Road the people are all

poor — and dirty. I've heard Aunt Net tell weird tales of Hardscrabble Road."

"Why can't we stay here all night?" said Emily. Ilse looked at Emily to see if she meant it — saw that she did.

"Where can we sleep? Hang ourselves over this fence?"

"Over on that haystack," said Emily. "It's only half finished — Hardscrabble fashion. The top is flat — there's a ladder leaning against it — the hay is dry and clean — the night is summer warm — there are no mosquitoes this time of year — we can put our raincoats over us to keep off the dew. Why not?"

Ilse looked at the haystack in the corner of the little pasture — and began to laugh assentingly.

"What will Aunt Ruth say?"

"Aunt Ruth need never know it. I'll be sly for once with a vengeance. Besides, I've always longed to sleep out in the open. It's been one of the secret wishes I believed were for ever unattainable, hedged about as I am with aunts. And now it has tumbled into my lap like a gift thrown down by the gods. It's really such good luck as to be uncanny."

"Suppose it rains," said Ilse, who, nevertheless, found the idea very alluring

"It won't rain — there isn't a cloud in sight except those great fluffy rose-and-white ones piling up over Indian Head. They're the kind of clouds that always make me feel that I'd love to soar up on wings as eagles and swoop right down into the middle of them."

It was easy to ascend the little haystack. They sank down on its top with sighs of content, realizing that they were tired than they had thought. The stack was built of the wild, fragrant grasses of the little pasture, and yielded an indescribably alluring aroma, such as no cultivated clover can give. They could see nothing but a great sky of faint rose above them, pricked with early stars, and the dim fringe of treetops around the field. Bats and swallows swooped darkly above them against the paling western gold — delicate fragrances exhaled from the mosses and ferns just over the fence under the trees — a couple of aspen poplars in the corner

talked in silvery whispers, of the gossip of the woods. They laughed together in sheer lawless pleasure. An ancient enchantment was suddenly upon them, and the white magic of the sky and the dark magic of the woods wove the final spell of a potent incantation.

“Such loveliness as this doesn’t seem real,” murmured Emily. “It’s so wonderful it hurts me. I’m afraid to speak out loud for fear it will vanish. Were we vexed with that horrid old man and his beastly politics to-day, Ilse? Why, he doesn’t exist — not in this world, anyway. I hear the Wind Woman running with soft, soft footsteps over the hill. I shall always think of the wind as a personality. She is a shrew when she blows from the north — a lonely seeker when she blows from the east — a laughing girl when she comes from the west — and tonight from the south a little grey fairy.”

“How do you think of such things?” asked Ilse. This was a question which, for some mysterious reason, always annoyed Emily.

“I don’t think of them — they come,” she answered rather shortly. Ilse resented the tone.

“For heaven’s sake, Emily, don’t be such a crank!” she exclaimed.

For a second the wonderful world in which Emily was at the moment living, trembled and wavered like a disturbed reflection in water. Then —

“Don’t let’s quarrel here,” she implored. “One of us might push the other off the haystack.”

Ilse burst out laughing. Nobody can really laugh and keep angry. So their night under the stars was not spoiled by a fight. They talked for a while in whispers, of schoolgirl secrets and dreams and fears. They even talked of getting married some time in the future. Of course they shouldn’t have, but they did. Ilse, it appeared, was slightly pessimistic in regard to her matrimonial chances.

“The boys like me as a pal but I don’t believe any one will ever really fall in love with me.”

“Nonsense,” said Emily reassuringly. “Nine out of ten men will fall in love with you.”

“But it will be the tenth I’ll want,” persisted Ilse gloomily.

And then they talked of almost everything else in the world. Finally, they made a solemn compact that whichever one of them died first was to come back to the other if it were possible. How many such compacts have been made! And has even one ever been kept?

Then Ilse grew drowsy and fell asleep. But Emily did not sleep — did not want to sleep. It was too dear a night to go to sleep, she felt. She wanted to lie awake for the pleasure of it and think over a thousand things.

Emily always looked back to that night spent under the stars as a sort of milestone. Everything in it and of it ministered to her. It filled her with its beauty, which she must later give to the world. She wished that she could coin some magic word that might express it.

The round moon rose. Did an old witch in a high-crowned hat ride past it on a broomstick? No, it was only a bat and the little tip of a hemlock-tree by the fence. She made a poem on it at once, the lines singing themselves through her consciousness without effort. With one side of her nature she liked writing prose best — with the other she liked writing poetry. This side was uppermost tonight and her very thoughts ran into rhyme. A great, pulsating star hung low in the sky over Indian Head. Emily gazed on it and recalled Teddy's old fancy of his previous existence in a star. The idea seized on her imagination and she spun a dream-life, lived in some happy planet circling round that mighty, far-off sun. Then came the northern lights — drifts of pale fire over the sky — spears of light, as of empyrean armies — pale, elusive hosts retreating and advancing. Emily lay and watched them in rapture. Her soul was washed pure in that great bath of splendour. She was a high priestess of loveliness assisting at the divine rites of her worship — and she knew her goddess smiled.

She was glad Ilse was asleep. Any human companionship, even the dearest and most perfect, would have been alien to her then. She was sufficient unto herself, needing not love nor comradeship nor any human emotion to round out her felicity. Such moments come rarely in any life, but when they do come they are inexpressibly wonderful — as if the finite were for a second infinity — as if humanity were for a space uplifted into

divinity — as if all ugliness had vanished, leaving only flawless beauty. Oh — beauty — Emily shivered with the pure ecstasy of it. She loved it — it filled her being tonight as never before. She was afraid to move or breathe lest she break the current of beauty that was flowing through her. Life seemed like a wonderful instrument on which to play supernal harmonies.

“Oh, God, make me worthy of it — oh, make me worthy of it,” she prayed. Could she ever be worthy of such a message — could she dare try to carry some of the loveliness of that “dialogue divine” back to the everyday world of sordid marketplace and clamorous street? She must give it — she could not keep it to herself. Would the world listen — understand — feel? Only if she were faithful to the trust and gave out that which was committed to her, careless of blame or praise. High priestess of beauty — yes, she would serve at no other shrine!

She fell asleep in this rapt mood — dreamed that she was Sappho springing from the Leucadian rock — woke to find herself at the bottom of the haystack with Ilse’s startled face peering down at her. Fortunately so much of the stack had slipped down with her that she was able to say cautiously,

“I think I’m all in one piece still.”

Haven

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When you have fallen asleep listening to the hymns of the gods it is something of an anticlimax to be awakened by an ignominious tumble from a haystack. But at least it had aroused them in time to see the sunrise over Indian Head, which was worth the sacrifice of several hours of inglorious ease.

“Besides, I might never have known what an exquisite thing a spider’s web beaded with dew is,” said Emily. “Look at it — swung between those two tall, plummy grasses.”

“Write a poem on it,” jeered Ilse, whose alarm made her fleetingly cross.

“How’s your foot?”

“Oh, it’s all right. But my hair is sopping wet with dew.”

“So is mine. We’ll carry our hats for a while and the sun will soon dry us. It’s just as well to get an early start. We can get back to civilization by the time it’s safe for us to be seen. Only we’ll have to breakfast on the crackers in my bag. It won’t do for us to be looking for breakfast, with no rational account to give of where we spent the night. Ilse, swear you’ll never mention this escapade to a living soul. It’s been beautiful — but it will remain beautiful just as long as only we two know of it. Remember the result of your telling about our moonlit bath.”

“People have such beastly minds,” grumbled Ilse, sliding down the stack.

“Oh, look at Indian Head. I could be a sun worshipper this very moment.”

Indian Head was a flaming mount of splendour. The far-off hills turned beautifully purple against the radiant sky. Even the bare, ugly Hardscrabble Road was transfigured and luminous in hazes of silver. The fields and woods were very lovely in the faint pearly lustre.

“The world is always young again for just a few moments at the dawn,” murmured Emily.

Then she pulled her Jimmy-book out of her bag and wrote the sentence down!

They had the usual experiences of canvassers the world over that day. Some people refused to subscribe, ungraciously: some subscribed graciously: some refused to subscribe so pleasantly that they left an agreeable impression: some consented to subscribe so unpleasantly that Emily wished they had refused. But on the whole they enjoyed the forenoon, especially when an excellent early dinner in a hospitable farmhouse on the Western Road filled up the aching void left by a few crackers and a night on a haystack.

“S’pose you didn’t come across any stray children to-day?” asked their host.

“No. Have any been lost?”

“Little Allan Bradshaw — Will Bradshaw’s son, down-river at Malvern Point — has been missing ever since Tuesday morning. He walked out of the house that morning, singing, and hasn’t been seen or heard of since.”

Emily and Ilse exchanged shocked glances.

“How old was he?”

“Just seven — and an only child. They say his poor ma is plumb distracted. All the Malvern Point men have been s’arching for him for two days, and not a trace of him kin they discover.”

“What can have happened to him!” said Emily, pale with horror.

“It’s a mystery. Some think he fell off the wharf at the Point — it was only about a quarter of a mile from the house and he used to like sitting there and watching the boats. But nobody saw anything of him ‘round the wharf or the bridge that morning. There’s a lot of marshland west of the Bradshaw farm, full of bogs and pools. Some think he must have wandered there and got lost and perished — ye remember Tuesday night was terrible cold. That’s where his mother thinks he is — and if you ask me, she’s

right. If he'd been anywhere else he'd have been found by the s'arching parties. They've combed the country."

The story haunted Emily all the rest of the day and she walked under its shadow. Anything like that always took almost a morbid hold on her. She could not bear the thought of the poor mother at Malvern Point. And the little lad — where was he? Where had he been the previous night when she had lain in the ecstasy of wild, free hours? That night had not been cold — but Wednesday night had. And she shuddered as she recalled Tuesday night, when a bitter autumnal windstorm had raged till dawn, with showers of hail and stinging rain. Had he been out in that — the poor lost baby?

"Oh, I can't bear it!" she moaned.

"It's dreadful," agreed Ilse, looking rather sick, "but we can't do anything. There's no use in thinking of it. Oh" — suddenly Ilse stamped her foot—"I believe Father used to be right when he didn't believe in God. Such a hideous thing as this — how could it happen if there is a God — a decent God, anyway?"

"God hadn't anything to do with this," said Emily. "You know the Power that made last night couldn't have brought about this monstrous thing."

"Well, He didn't prevent it," retorted Ilse — who was suffering so keenly that she wanted to arraign the universe at the bar of her pain.

"Little Allan Bradshaw may be found yet — he must be," exclaimed Emily.

"He won't be found alive," stormed Ilse. "No, don't talk to me about God. And don't talk to me of this. I've got to forget it — I'll go crazy if I don't."

Ilse put the matter out of her mind with another stamp of her foot and Emily tried to. She could not quite succeed but she forced herself to concentrate superficially on the business of the day, though she knew the horror lurked in the back of her consciousness. Only once did she really forget it — when they came around a point on the Malvern River Road and saw a little house built in the cup of a tiny bay, with a steep grassy hill

rising behind it. Scattered over the hill were solitary, beautifully shaped young fir-trees like little green, elongated pyramids. No other house was in sight. All about it was a lovely autumnal solitude of grey, swift-running, windy river, and red, spruce-fringed points.

“That house belongs to me,” said Emily.

Ilse stared.

“To you?”

“Yes. Of course, I don’t own it. But haven’t you sometimes seen houses that you knew belonged to you no matter who owned them?”

No, Ilse hadn’t. She hadn’t the least idea what Emily meant.

“I know who owns that house,” she said. “It’s Mr. Scobie of Kingsport. He built it for a summer cottage. I heard Aunt Net talking of it the last time I was in Wiltney. It was finished a few weeks ago. It’s a pretty little house, but too small for me. I like a big house — I don’t want to feel cramped and crowded — especially in summer.”

“It’s hard for a big house to have any personality,” said Emily thoughtfully. “But little houses almost always have. That house is full of it. There isn’t a line or a corner that isn’t eloquent, and those casement windows are lovable — especially that little one high up under the eaves over the front door. It’s absolutely smiling at me. Look at it glowing like a jewel in the sunshine out of the dark shingle setting. The little house is greeting us. You dear friendly thing, I love you — I understand you. As Old Kelly would say, ‘may niver a tear be shed under your roof.’ The people who are going to live in you must be nice people or they would never have thought you. If I lived in you, beloved, I’d always stand at that western window at evening to wave to some one coming home. That is just exactly what that window was built for — a frame for love and welcome.”

“When you get through with talking to your house we’d better hurry on,” warned Ilse. “There’s a storm coming up. See those clouds — and those seagulls. Gulls never come up this far except before a storm. It’s going to rain any minute. We’ll not sleep on a haystack tonight, Friend Emily.”

Emily loitered past the little house and looked at it lovingly as long as she could. It was such a dear little place with its dubbed-off gables and rich, brown shingle tints, and its general intimate air of sharing mutual jokes and secrets. She turned around half a dozen times to look upon it, as they climbed the steep hill, and when at last it dipped below sight she sighed.

“I hate to leave it. I have the oddest feeling, Ilse, that it’s calling to me — that I ought to go back to it.”

“Don’t be silly,” said Ilse impatiently. “There — it’s sprinkling now! If you hadn’t poked so long looking at your blessed little hut we’d have been out on the main road now, and near shelter. Wow, but it’s cold!”

“It’s going to be a dreadful night,” said Emily in a low voice. “Oh, Ilse, where is that poor little lost boy tonight? I wish I knew if they had found him.”

“Don’t!” said Ilse savagely, “Don’t say another word about him. It’s awful — it’s hideous — but what can we do?”

“Nothing. That’s the dreadful thing about it. It seems wicked to go on about our own business, asking for subscriptions, when that child is not found.”

By this time they had reached the main road. The rest of the afternoon was not pleasant. Stinging showers came at intervals: between them the world was raw and damp and cold, with a moaning wind that came in ominous sighing gusts under a leaden sky. At every house where they called they were reminded of the lost baby, for there were only women to give or refuse subscriptions. The men were all away searching for him.

“Though it isn’t any use now,” said one woman gloomily, “except that they may find his little body. He can’t have lived this long. I jest can’t eat or cook for thinking of his poor mother. They say she’s nigh crazy — I don’t wonder.”

“They say old Margaret McIntyre is taking it quite calmly,” said an older woman, who was piecing a log-cabin quilt by the window. “I’d have thought she’d be wild, too. She seemed real fond of little Allan.”

“Oh, Margaret McIntyre has never got worked up about anything for the past five years — ever since her own son Neil was frozen to death in the Klondyke. Seems as if her feelings were frozen then, too — she’s been a little mad ever since. She won’t worry none over this — she’ll just smile and tell you she spanked the King.”

Both women laughed. Emily, with the storyteller’s nose, scented a story instantly, but though she would fain have lingered to hunt it down Ilse hustled her away.

“We must get on, Emily, or we’ll never reach St. Clair before night.”

They soon realized that they were not going to reach it. At sunset St. Clair was still three miles away and there was every indication of a wild evening.

“We can’t get to St. Clair, that’s certain,” said Ilse. “It’s going to settle down for a steady rain and it’ll be as black as a million black cats in a quarter of an hour. We’d better go to that house over there and ask if we can stay all night. It looks snug and respectable — though it certainly is the jumping-off place.”

The house at which Ilse pointed — an old whitewashed house with a grey roof — was set on the face of a hill amid bright green fields of clover aftermath. A wet red road wound up the hill to it. A thick grove of spruces shut it off from the gulf shore, and beyond the grove a tiny dip in the land revealed a triangular glimpse of misty, white-capped, grey sea. The near brook valley was filled with young spruces, dark-green in the rain. The grey clouds hung heavily over it. Suddenly the sun broke through the clouds in the west for one magical moment. The hill of clover meadows flashed instantly into incredibly vivid green. The triangle of sea shimmered into violet. The old house gleamed like white marble against the emerald of its hilly background, and the inky black sky over and around it.

“Oh,” gasped Emily, “I never saw anything so wonderful!”

She groped wildly in her bag and clutched her Jimmy-book. The post of a field-gate served as a desk — Emily licked a stubborn pencil and wrote feverishly. Ilse squatted on a stone in a fence corner and waited with

ostentatious patience. She knew that when a certain look appeared on Emily's face she was not to be dragged away until she was ready to go. The sun had vanished and the rain was beginning to fall again when Emily put her Jimmy-book back into her bag, with a sigh of satisfaction.

"I had to get it, Ilse."

"Couldn't you have waited till you got to dry land and wrote it down from memory?" grumbled Ilse, uncoiling herself from her stone.

"No — I'd have missed some of the flavour then. I've got it all now — and in just exactly the right words. Come on — I'll race you to the house. Oh, smell that wind — there's nothing in all the world like a salt seawind — a savage salt seawind. After all, there's something delightful in a storm. There's always something — deep down in me — that seems to rise and leap out to meet a storm — wrestle with it."

"I feel that way sometimes — but not tonight," said Ilse. "I'm tired — and that poor baby—"

"Oh!" Emily's triumph and exultation went from her in a cry of pain. "Oh — Ilse — I'd forgotten for a moment — how could I! Where can he be?"

"Dead," said Ilse harshly. "It's better to think so — than to think of him alive still — out tonight. Come, we've got to get in somewhere. The storm is on for good now — no more showers."

An angular woman panoplied in a white apron so stiffly starched that it could easily have stood alone, opened the door of the house on the hill and bade them enter.

"Oh, yes, you can stay here, I reckon," she said, not inhospitably, "if you'll excuse things being a bit upset. They're in sad trouble here."

"Oh — I'm sorry," stammered Emily. "We won't intrude — we'll go somewhere else."

"Oh, we don't mind you, if you don't mind us. There's a spare room. You're welcome. You can't go on in a storm like this — there isn't another house for some ways. I advise you to stop here. I'll get you a bit of supper — I don't live here — I'm just a neighbour come to help 'em out a bit.

Hollinger's my name — Mrs. Julia Hollinger. Mrs. Bradshaw ain't good for anything — you've heard of her little boy mebbe."

"Is this where — and — he — hasn't — been found?"

"No — never will be. I'm not mentioning it to her" — with a quick glance over her shoulder along the hall—"but it's my opinion he got in the quicksands down by the bay. That's what I think. Come in and lay off your things. I s'pose you don't mind eating in the kitchen. The room is cold — we haven't the stove up in it yet. It'll have to be put up soon if there's a funeral. I s'pose there won't be if he's in the quicksand. You can't have a funeral without a body, can you?"

All this was very gruesome. Emily and Ilse would fain have gone elsewhere — but the storm had broken in full fury and darkness seemed to pour in from the sea over the changed world. They took off their drenched hats and coats and followed their hostess to the kitchen, a clean, old-fashioned spot which seemed cheerful enough in lamplight and fire-glow.

"Sit up to the fire. I'll poke it a bit. Don't mind Grandfather Bradshaw — Grandfather, here's two young ladies that want to stay all night."

Grandfather stared stonily at them out of little, hazy, blue eyes and said not a word.

"Don't mind him" — in a pig's whisper—"he's over ninety and he never was much of a talker. Clara — Mrs. Bradshaw — is in there" — nodding towards the door of what seemed a small bedroom off the kitchen. "Her brother's with her — Dr. McIntyre from Charlottetown. We sent for him yesterday. He's the only one that can do anything with her. She's been walking the floor all day but we've got her persuaded to lie down a bit. Her husband's out looking for little Allan."

"A child can't be lost in the nineteenth century," said Grandfather Bradshaw, with uncanny suddenness and positiveness.

"There, there now, Grandfather, I advise you not to get worked up. And this is the twentieth century now. He's still living back there. His memory stopped a few years ago. What might your names be? Burnley? Starr? From Blair Water? Oh, then you'll know the Murrays? Niece? Oh!"

Mrs. Julia Hollinger's "Oh" was subtly eloquent. She had been setting dishes and food down at a rapid rate on the clean oilcloth on the table. Now she swept them aside, extracted a tablecloth from a drawer of the cupboard, got silver forks and spoons out of another drawer, and a handsome pair of salt and pepper shakers from the shelves.

"Don't go to any trouble for us," pleaded Emily.

"Oh, it's no trouble. If all was well here you'd find Mrs. Bradshaw real glad to have you. She's a very kind woman, poor soul. It's awful hard to see her in such trouble. Allan was all the child she had, you see."

"A child can't be lost in the nineteenth century, I tell you," repeated Grandfather Bradshaw, with an irritable shift of emphasis.

"No — no," soothingly, "of course not, Grandfather. Little Allan'll turn up all right yet. Here's a hot cup o' tea for you. I advise you to drink it. That'll keep him quiet for a bit. Not that he's ever very fussy — only everybody's a bit upset — except old Mrs. McIntyre. Nothing ever upsets her. It's just as well, only it seems to me real unfeeling. 'Course, she isn't just right. Come, sit in and have a bite, girls. Listen to that rain, will you? The men will be soaked. They can't search much longer tonight — Will will soon be home. I sorter dread it — Clara'll go wild again when he comes home without little Allan. We had a terrible time with her last night, pore thing."

"A child can't be lost in the nineteenth century," said Grandfather Bradshaw — and choked over his hot drink in his indignation.

"No — nor in the twentieth neither," said Mrs. Hollinger, patting him on the back. "I advise you to go to bed, Grandfather. You're tired."

"I am not tired and I will go to bed when I choose, Julia Hollinger."

"Oh, very well, Grandfather. I advise you not to get worked up. I think I'll take a cup o' tea in to Clara. Perhaps she'll take it now. She hasn't eaten or drunk since Tuesday night. How can a woman stand that — I put it to you?"

Emily and Ilse ate their supper with what appetite they could summon up, while Grandfather Bradshaw watched them suspiciously, and sorrowful sounds reached them from the little inner room.

“It is wet and cold tonight — where is he — my little son?” moaned a woman’s voice, with an undertone of agony that made Emily writhe as if she felt it herself.

“They’ll find him soon, Clara,” said Mrs. Hollinger, in a sprightly tone of artificial comfort. “Just you be patient — take a sleep, I advise you — they’re bound to find him soon.”

“They’ll never find him.” The voice was almost a scream, now. “He is dead — he is dead — he died that bitter cold Tuesday night so long ago. O God, have mercy! He was such a little fellow! And I’ve told him so often not to speak until he was spoken to — he’ll never speak to me again. I wouldn’t let him have a light after he went to bed — and he died in the dark, alone and cold. I wouldn’t let him have a dog — he wanted one so much. But he wants nothing now — only a grave and a shroud.”

“I can’t endure this,” muttered Emily. “I can’t, Ilse. I feel as if I’d go mad with horror. I’d rather be out in the storm.”

Lank Mrs. Hollinger, looking at once sympathetic and important, came out of the bedroom and shut the door.

“Awful, isn’t it! She’ll go on like that all night. Would you like to go to bed? Its quite airy, but mebbe you’re tired an’ ‘ud ruther be where you can’t hear her, pore soul. She wouldn’t take the tea — she’s scared the doctor put a sleeping pill in it. She doesn’t want to sleep till he’s found, dead or alive. If he’s in the quicksands o’ course he never will be found.”

“Julia Hollinger, you are a fool and the daughter of a fool, but surely even you must see that a child can’t be lost in the nineteenth century,” said Grandfather Bradshaw.

“Well, if it was anybody but you called me a fool, Grandfather, I’d be mad,” said Mrs. Hollinger, a trifle tartly. She lighted a lamp and took the girls upstairs. “I hope you’ll sleep. I advise you to get in between the blankets though there’s sheets on the bed. They wuz all aired to-day, blankets and sheets. I thought it’d be better to air ‘em in case there was a funeral. I remember the New Moon Murrays wuz always particular about airing their beds, so I thought I’d mention it. Listen to that wind. We’ll likely hear of awful damage from this storm. I wouldn’t wonder if the roof

blew off this house tonight. Troubles never come singly. I advise you not to git upset if you hear a noise through the night. If the men bring the body home Clara'll likely act like all possessed, pore thing. Mebbe you'd better turn the key in the lock. Old Mrs. McIntyre wanders round a bit sometimes. She's quite harmless and mostly sane enough but it gives folks a start."

The girls felt relieved as the door closed behind Mrs. Hollinger. She was a good soul, doing her neighbourly duty as she conceived it, faithfully, but she was not exactly cheerful company. They found themselves in a tiny, meticulously neat "spare room" under the sloping eaves. Most of the space in it was occupied by a big comfortable bed that looked as if it were meant to be slept in, and not merely to decorate the room. A little four-paned window, with a spotless white muslin frill, shut them in from the cold, stormy night that was on the sea.

"Ugh," shivered Ilse, and got into the bed as speedily as possible. Emily followed her more slowly, forgetting about the key. Ilse, tired out, fell asleep almost immediately, but Emily could not sleep. She lay and suffered, straining her ears for the sound of footsteps. The rain dashed against the window, not in drops, but sheets, the wind snarled and shrieked. Down below the hill she heard the white waves ravaging along the dark shore. Could it be only twenty-four hours since that moonlit, summery glamour of the haystack and the ferny pasture? Why, that must have been in another world.

Where was that poor lost child? In one of the pauses of the storm she fancied she heard a little whimper overhead in the dark as if some lonely little soul, lately freed from the body, were trying to find its way to kin. She could discover no way of escape from her pain: her gates of dream were shut against her: she could not detach her mind from her feelings and dramatize them. Her nerves grew strained and tense. Painfully she sent her thoughts out into the storm, seeking, striving to pierce the mystery of the child's whereabouts. He must be found — she clenched her hands — he must. That poor mother!

“O God, let him be found, safe — let him be found, safe,” Emily prayed desperately and insistently, over and over again — all the more desperately and insistently because it seemed a prayer so impossible of fulfilment. But she reiterated it to bar out of her mind terrible pictures of swamp and quicksand and river, until at last she was so weary that mental torture could no longer keep her awake, and she fell into a troubled slumber, while the storm roared on and the baffled searchers finally gave up their vain quest.

The Woman Who Spanked the King

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The wet dawn came up from the gulf in the wake of the spent storm and crept greyly into the little spare room of the whitewashed house on the hill. Emily woke with a start from a troubled dream of seeking — and finding — the lost boy. But where she had found him she could not now remember. Ilse was still asleep at the back of the bed, her pale-gold curls lying in a silken heap on the pillow. Emily, her thoughts still tangled in the cobweb meshes of her dream, looked around the room — and thought she must be dreaming still.

By the tiny table, covered with its white, lace-trimmed cloth, a woman was sitting — a tall, stout, old woman, wearing over her thick grey hair a spotless white widow's cap, such as the old Highland Scotch-women still wore in the early years of the century. She had on a dress of plum-coloured drugget with a large, snowy apron, and she wore it with the air of a queen. A neat blue shawl was folded over her breast. Her face was curiously white and deeply wrinkled but Emily, with her gift for seeing essentials, saw instantly the strength and vivacity which still characterized every feature. She saw, too, that the beautiful, clear blue eyes looked as if their owner had been dreadfully hurt sometime. This must be the old Mrs. McIntyre of whom Mrs. Hollinger had spoken. And if so, then old Mrs. McIntyre was a very dignified personage indeed.

Mrs. McIntyre sat with her hands folded on her lap, looking steadily at Emily with a gaze in which there was something hard to define — something just a little strange. Emily recalled the fact that Mrs. McIntyre was supposed to be not “quite right.” She wondered a little uneasily what she should do. Ought she to speak? Mrs. McIntyre saved her the trouble of deciding.

“You will be having Highlandmen for your forefathers?” she said, in an unexpectedly rich, powerful voice, full of the delightful Highland accent.

“Yes,” said Emily.

“And you will be Presbyterian?”

“Yes.”

“They will be the only decent things to be,” remarked Mrs. McIntyre in a tone of satisfaction. “And will you please be telling me what your name is? Emily Starr! That will be a fery pretty name. I will be telling you mine — it iss Mistress Margaret McIntyre. I am no common person — I am the woman who spanked the King.”

Again Emily, now thoroughly awake, thrilled with the storyteller’s instinct. But Ilse, awakening at the moment, gave a low exclamation of surprise. Mistress McIntyre lifted her head with a quite regal gesture.

“You will not be afraid of me, my dear. I will not be hurting you although I will be the woman who spanked the King. That iss what the people say of me — oh, yess — as I walk into the church. ‘She iss the woman who spanked the King.’”

“I suppose,” said Emily hesitatingly, “that we’d better be getting up.”

“You will not be rising until I haf told you my tale,” said Mistress McIntyre firmly. “I will be knowing as soon as I saw you that you will be the one to hear it. You will not be having fery much colour and I will not be saying that you are fery pretty — oh, no. But you will be having the little hands and the little ears — they will be the ears of the fairies, I am thinking. The girl with you there, she iss a fery nice girl and will make a fery fine wife for a handsome man — she is clefer, oh, yes — but you haf the way and it is to you I will be telling my story.”

“Let her tell it,” whispered Ilse. “I’m dying of curiosity to hear about the King being spanked.”

Emily, who realized that there was no “letting” in the case, only a matter of lying still and listening to whatever it seemed good to Mistress McIntyre to say, nodded.

“You will not be having the twa talks? I will be meaning the Gaelic.”

Spellbound, Emily shook her black head.

“That iss a pity, for my story will not be sounding so well in the English — oh, no. You will be saying to yourself the old woman iss having

a dream, but you will be wrong, for it iss the true story I will be telling you — oh, yess. I spanked the King. Of course he would not be the King then — he would be only a little prince and no more than nine years old — just the same age as my little Alec. But it iss at the beginning I must be or you will not be understanding the matter at all at all. It wass all a long, long time ago, before ever we left the Old Country. My husband would be Alistair McIntyre and he would be a shepherd near the Balmoral Castle. Alistair was a fery handsome man and we were fery happy. It wass not that we did not quarrel once in a while — oh, no, that would be fery monotonous. But when we made up it is more loving than ever we would be. And I would be fery goodlooking myself. I will be getting fatter and fatter all the time now but I wass fery slim and peautiful then — oh, yess, it iss the truth I will be telling you though I will be seeing that you are laughing in your sleeves at me. When you will be eighty you will be knowing more about it.

“You will be remembering maybe that Queen Victoria and Prince Albert would be coming up to Balmoral efery summer and bringing their children with them, and they would not be bringing any more servants than they could help, for they would not be wanting fuss and pother, but just a quiet, nice time like common folks. On Sundays they would be walking down sometimes to the church in the glen to be hearing Mr. Donald MacPherson preach. Mr. Donald MacPherson wass fery gifted in prayer and he would not be liking it when people would come in when he wass praying. He would be apt to be stopping and saying, ‘O Lord, we will be waiting until Sandy Big Jim hass taken his seat’ — oh, yes. I would be hearing the Queen laugh the next day — at Sandy Big Jim, you will be knowing, not at the minister.

“When they will be needing some more help at the Castle, they just sent for me and Janet Jardine. Janet’s husband was a gillie on the estate. She would be always saying to me, ‘Good-morning, Mistress McIntyre’ when we would be meeting and I would be saying, ‘Good-morning, Janet,’ just to be showing the superiority of the McIntyres over the Jardines. But

she wass a fery good creature in her place and we would be getting on fery well together when she would not be forgetting it.

“I wass fery good friends with the Queen — oh, yess. She wass not a proud woman whatefer. She would be sitting in my house at times and drinking a cup of tea and she would be talking to me of her children. She wass not fery handsome, oh, no, but she would be having a fery pretty hand. Prince Albert wass fery fine looking, so people would be saying, but to my mind Alistair wass far the handsomer man. They would be fery fine people, whatefer, and the little princes and princesses would be playing about with my children efery day. The Queen would be knowing they were in good company and she would be easier in her mind about them than I wass — for Prince Bertie wass the daring lad if efer there wass one — oh, yess, and the tricky one — and I would be worrying all the time for the fear he and Alec would be getting into a scrape. They would be playing every day together — and quarrelling, too. And it would not always be Alec’s fault either. But it wass Alec that would be getting the scolding, poor lad. Somebody would haf to be scolded and you will be knowing that I could not be scolding the prince, my dear.

“There wass one great worry I will be having — the burn behind the house in the trees. It wass fery deep and swift in places and if a child should be falling in he would be drowned. I would be telling Prince Bertie and Alec time after time that they must nefer be going near the banks of the burn. They would be doing it once or twice for all that and I would be punishing Alec for it, though he would be telling me that he did not want to go and Prince Bertie would be saying, ‘Oh, come on, there will not be any danger, do not be a coward,’ and Alec, he would be going because he would be thinking he had to do what Prince Bertie wanted, and not liking fery well either to be called a coward, and him a McIntyre. I would be worrying so much over it that I would not be sleeping at nights. And then, my dear, one day Prince Bertie would be falling right into the deep pool and Alec would be trying to pull him out and falling in after him. And they would haf been drowned together if I had not been hearing the skirls of them when I would be coming home from the Castle after taking some

buttermilk up for the Queen. Oh, yess, it is quick I will be taking in what had happened and running to the burn and it will not be long before I wass fishing them out, fery frightened and dripping. I will be knowing something had to be done and I wass tired of blaming poor Alec, and besides it will be truth, my dear, that I wass fery, fery mad and I wass not thinking of princes and kings, but just of two fery bad little boys. Oh, it iss the quick temper I will be always having — oh, yess. I will be picking up Prince Bertie and turning him over my knee: and I will be giving him a sound spanking on the place the Good Lord will be making for spanks in princes as well as in common children. I will be spanking him first because he wass a prince. Then I spanked Alec and they made music together, for it wass fery angry I was and I will be doing what my hands will be finding to do with all my might, as the Good Book says.

“Then when Prince Bertie had gone home — fery mad — I will be cooling off and feeling a bit frightened. For I will not be knowing just how the Queen will be taking it, and I will not be liking the thought of Janet Jardine triumphing over me. But it iss a sensible woman Queen Victoria wass and she will be telling me next day that I did right: and Prince Albert will be smiling and joking to me about the laying on of hands. And Prince Bertie would not be disobeying me again about going to the burn — oh, no — and he could not be sitting down fery easy for some time. As for Alistair, I had been thinking he would be fery cross with me, but it will always be hard telling what a man will think of anything — oh, yess — for he would be laughing over it, too, and telling me that a day would come when I could be boasting that I had spanked the King. It wass all a long time ago now, but nefer will I be forgetting it. She would be dying two years ago and Prince Bertie would be the king at last. When Alistair and I came to Canada the Queen will be giving me a silk petticoat. It wass a very fine petticoat of the Victoria tartan. I haf nefer worn it, but I will be wearing it once — in my coffin, oh, yess. I will be keeping it in the chest in my room and they will be knowing what it iss for. I will be wishing Janet Jardine could have known that I wass to be buried in a petticoat of

the Victoria tartan, but she has been dead for a long while. She was a fery good sort of creature, although she was not a McIntyre.”

Mistress McIntyre folded her hands and held her peace. Having told her story she was content. Emily had listened avidly. Now she said:

“Mrs. McIntyre, will you let me write that story down, and publish it?”

Mistress McIntyre leaned forward. Her white, shrivelled face warmed a little, her deep-set eyes shone.

“Will you be meaning that it will be printed in a paper?”

“Yes.”

Mistress McIntyre rearranged her shawl over her breast with hands that trembled a little.

“It iss strange how our wishes will be coming true at times. It iss a pity that the foolish people who will be saying there iss no God could not be hearing of this. You will be writing it out and you will be putting it into proud words—”

“No, no,” said Emily quickly. “I will not do that. I may have to make a few changes and write a framework, but most of it I shall write exactly as you told it. I could not better it by a syllable.”

Mistress McIntyre looked doubtful for a moment — then gratified.

“It iss only a poor, ignorant body I am, and I will not be choosing my words fery well, but maybe you will be knowing best. You haf listened to me fery nicely and it is sorry I am to have kept you so long with my old tales. I will be going now and letting you get up.”

“Have they found the lost child?” asked Ilse eagerly.

Mistress McIntyre shook her head, composedly.

“Oh, no. It is not finding him in a hurry they will be. I will be hearing Clara skirling in the night. She iss the daughter of my son Angus. He will be marrying a Wilson and the Wilsons will always be making a stramash over eferthing. The poor thing will be worrying that she was not good enough to the little lad, but it would always be spoiling him she wass, and him that full of mischief. I will not be of much use to her — I haf not the second sight. You will be having a bit of that yourself, I am thinking, oh, yess.”

“No — no,” said Emily, hurriedly. She could not help recalling a certain incident of her childhood at New Moon, of which she somehow never liked to think.

Old Mistress McIntyre nodded sagely and smoothed her white apron.

“It will not be right for you to be denying it, my dear, for it iss a great gift and my Cousin Helen four times removed will be having it, oh, yess. But they will not be finding little Allan, oh, no. Clara will be loving him too much. It iss not a fery good thing to be loving any one too much. God will be a jealous God, oh, yess; it is Margaret McIntyre who knows it. I will be having six sons once, all fery fine men and the youngest would be Neil. He was six-feet-two in hiss stockings and there would be none of the others like him at all. There would be such fun in him — he would always be laughing, oh, yess, and the wiling tongue of him would be coaxing the birds off the bushes. He will be going to the Klondyke and he will be getting frozen to death out there one night, oh, yess. He will be dying while I wass praying for him. I haf not been praying since. Clara will be feeling like that now — she will be saying God does not hear. It iss a fery strange thing to be a woman, my dears, and to be loving so much for nothing. Little Allan was a fery pretty baby. He will be having a fat little brown face and fery big blue eyes, and it is a pity he will not be turning up, though they will not be finding my Neil in time, oh, no. I will be leaving Clara alone and not vexing her with comforting. I wass always the great hand to leave people alone — without it would be when I spanked the King. It iss Julia Hollinger who will be darkening council by words without knowledge. It iss the foolish woman she iss. She would be leaving her husband because he will not be giving up a dog he liked. I am thinking he wass wise in sticking to the dog. But I will always be getting on well with Julia because I will have learned to suffer fools gladly. She will enjoy giving advice so much and it will not be hurting me whatefer because I will never be taking it. I will be saying goodbye to you now, my dears, and it iss fery glad I am to haf seen you and I will be wishing that trouble may nefer sit on your hearthstones. And I will not be forgetting either that you

listened to me very polite, oh, yess. I will not be of much importance to anybody now — but once I spanked the King.”

“The Thing That Couldn’t”

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When the door had closed behind Mistress McIntyre, the girls got up and dressed rather laggingly. Emily thought of the day before her with some distaste. The fine flavour of adventure and romance with which they had started out had vanished, and canvassing a country road for subscriptions had suddenly become irksome. Physically, they were both tireder than they thought.

“It seems like an age since we left Shrewsbury,” grumbled Ilse as she pulled on her stockings.

Emily had an even stronger feeling of a long passage of time. Her wakeful, enraptured night under the moon had seemed in itself like a year of some strange soul-growth. And this past night had been wakeful also, in a very different way, and she had roused from her brief sleep at its close with an odd, rather unpleasant sensation of some confused and troubled journey — a sensation which old Mistress McIntyre’s story had banished for a time, but which now returned as she brushed her hair.

“I feel as if I had been wandering — somewhere — for hours,” she said. “And I dreamed I found little Allan — but I don’t know where. It was horrible to wake up feeling that I had known just immediately before I woke and had forgotten.”

“I slept like a log,” said Ilse, yawning. “I didn’t even dream. Emily, I want to get away from this house and this place as soon as I can. I feel as if I were in a nightmare — as if something horrible were pressing me down and I couldn’t escape from it. It would be different if I could do anything — help in any way. But since I can’t, I just want to escape from it. I forgot it for a few minutes while the old lady was telling her story — heartless old thing! She wasn’t worrying one bit about poor little lost Allan.”

“I think she stopped worrying long ago,” said Emily dreamily. “That’s what people mean when they say she isn’t right. People who don’t worry a little never are right — like Cousin Jimmy. But that was a great story. I’m going to write it for my first essay — and later on I’ll see about having it printed. I’m sure it would make a splendid sketch for some magazine, if I can only catch the savour and vivacity she put into it. I think I’ll jot down some of her expressions right away in my Jimmy-book before I forget them.”

“Oh, drat your Jimmy-book!” said Ilse. “Let’s get down — and eat breakfast if we have to — and get away.”

But Emily, revelling again in her storyteller’s paradise, had temporarily forgotten everything else.

“Where is my Jimmy-book?” she said impatiently. “It isn’t in my bag — I know it was here last night. Surely I didn’t leave it on that gatepost!”

“Isn’t that it over on the table?” asked Ilse.

Emily gazed blankly at it.

“It can’t be — it is — how did it get there? I know I didn’t take it out of the bag last night.”

“You must have,” said Ilse indifferently.

Emily walked over to the table with a puzzled expression. The Jimmy-book was lying open on it, with her pencil beside it. Something on the page caught her eye suddenly. She bent over it.

“Why don’t you hurry and finish your hair?” demanded Ilse a few minutes later. “I’m ready now — for pity’s sake, tear yourself from that blessed Jimmy-book for long enough to get dressed!”

Emily turned around, holding the Jimmy-book in her hands. She was very pale and her eyes were dark with fear and mystery.

“Ilse, look at this,” she said in a trembling voice.

Ilse went over and looked at the page of the Jimmy-book which Emily held out to her. On it was a pencil sketch, exceedingly well done, of the little house on the river shore to which Emily had been so attracted on the preceding day. A black cross was marked on a small window over the front

door and opposite it, on the margin of the Jimmy-book, beside another cross, was written:

“Allan Bradshaw is here.”

“‘What does it mean?’” gasped Ilse. “Who did it?”

“I — don’t know,” stammered Emily. “The writing — is mine.”

Ilse looked at Emily and drew back a little.

“You must have drawn it in your sleep,” she said dazedly.

“I can’t draw,” said Emily.

“Who else could have done it? Mistress McIntyre couldn’t — you know she couldn’t. Emily, I never heard of such a strange thing. Do you think — do you think — he can be there?”

“How could he? The house must be locked up — there’s no one working at it now. Besides, they must have searched all around there — he would be looking out of the window — it wasn’t shuttered, you remember — calling — they would have seen — heard — him. I suppose I must have drawn that picture in my sleep — though I can’t understand how I did it — because my mind was so filled with the thought of little Allan. It’s so strange — it frightens me.”

“You’ll have to show it to the Bradshaws,” said Ilse.

“I suppose so — and yet I hate to. It may fill them with a cruel false hope again — and there can’t be anything in it. But I daren’t risk not showing it. You show it — I can’t, somehow. The thing has upset me — I feel frightened — childish — I could sit down and cry. If he should have been there — since Tuesday — he would be dead of starvation.”

“Well, they’d know — I’ll show it, of course. If it should turn out — Emily, you’re an uncanny creature.”

“Don’t talk of it — I can’t bear it,” said Emily, shuddering.

There was no one in the kitchen when then entered it, but presently a young man came in — evidently the Dr. McIntyre of whom Mrs. Hollinger had spoken. He had a pleasant, clever face, with keen eyes behind his glasses, but he looked tired and sad.

“Good-morning,” he said. “I hope you had a good rest and were not disturbed in any way. We are all sadly upset here, of course.”

“They haven’t found the little boy?” asked Ilse.

Dr. McIntyre shook his head.

“No. They have given up the search. He cannot be living yet — after Tuesday night and last night. The swamp will not give up its dead — I feel sure that is where he is. My poor sister is brokenhearted. I am sorry your visit should have happened at such a sorrowful time, but I hope Mrs. Hollinger has made you comfortable. Grandmother McIntyre would be quite offended if you lacked for anything. She was very famous for her hospitality in her day. I suppose you haven’t seen her. She does not often show herself to strangers.”

“Oh, we have seen her,” said Emily absently. “She came into our room this morning and told us how she spanked the King.”

Dr. McIntyre laughed a little.

“Then you have been honoured. It is not to every one Grandmother tells that tale. She’s something of an Ancient Mariner and knows her predestined listeners. She is a little bit strange. A few years ago her favourite son, my Uncle Neil, met his death in the Klondyke under sad circumstances. He was one of the Lost Patrol. Grandmother never recovered from the shock. She has never felt anything since — feeling seems to have been killed in her. She neither loves nor hates nor fears nor hopes — she lives entirely in the past and experiences only one emotion — a great pride in the fact that she once spanked the King. But I am keeping you from your breakfast — here comes Mrs. Hollinger to scold me.”

“Wait a moment please, Dr. McIntyre,” said Ilse hurriedly. “I — you — we — there is something I want to show you.”

Dr. McIntyre bent a puzzled face over the Jimmy-book.

“What is this? I don’t understand—”

“We don’t understand it, either — Emily drew it in her sleep.”

“In her sleep?” Dr. McIntyre was too bewildered to be anything but an echo.

“She must have. There was nobody else — unless your Grandmother can draw.”

“Not she. And she never saw this house — it’s the Scobie cottage below Malvern Bridge, isn’t it?”

“Yes. We saw it yesterday.”

“But Allan can’t be there — it’s been locked for a month — the carpenters went away in August.”

“Oh — I know,” stammered Emily. “I was thinking so much of Allan before I went to sleep — I suppose it’s only a dream — I don’t understand it at all — but we had to show it to you.”

“Of course. Well, I won’t say anything to Will or Clara about it. I’ll get Rob Mason from over the hill and we’ll run down and have a look around the cottage. It would be odd if — but it couldn’t possibly be. I don’t see how we can get into the cottage. It’s locked and the windows are shuttered.”

“This one — over the front door — isn’t.”

“No — but that’s a closet window at the end of the upstairs hall. I was over the house one day in August when the painters were at work in it. The closet shuts with a spring lock, so I suppose that is why they didn’t put a shutter on that window. It’s high up, close to the ceiling, I remember. Well, I’ll slip over to Rob’s and see about this. It won’t do to leave any stone unturned.”

Emily and Ilse ate what breakfast they could, thankful that Mrs. Hollinger let them alone, save for a few passing remarks as she came and went at work.

“Terrible night last night — but the rain is over. I never closed an eye. Pore Clara didn’t either, but she’s quieter now — sorter despairing. I’m skeered for her mind — her Grandmother never was right after she heard of her son’s death. When Clara heard they weren’t going to search no more she screamed once and laid down on the bed with her face to the wall — hain’t stirred since. Well, the world has to go on for other folks. Help yourselves to the toast. I’d advise ye not to be in too much of a hurry starting out till the wind dries the mud a bit.”

“I’m not going to go until we find out if—” whispered Ilse inconclusively.

Emily nodded. She could not eat, and if Aunt Elizabeth or Aunt Ruth had seen her they would have sent her to bed at once with orders to stay there — and they would have been quite right. She had almost reached her breaking-point. The hour that passed after Dr. McIntyre's departure seemed interminable. Suddenly they heard Mrs. Hollinger, who was washing milk-pails at the bench outside the kitchen door, give a sharp exclamation. A minute later she rushed into the kitchen, followed by Dr. McIntyre, breathless from his mad run from Malvern Bridge.

"Clara must be told first," he said. "It is her right."

He disappeared into the inner room. Mrs. Hollinger dropped into a chair, laughing and crying.

"They've found him — they've found little Allan — on the floor of the hall closet — in the Scobie cottage!"

"Is — he — living?" gasped Emily.

"Yes, but no more — he couldn't even speak — but he'll come round with care, the doctor says. They carried him to the nearest house — that's all the doctor had time to tell me."

A wild cry of joy came from the bedroom — and Clara Bradshaw, with dishevelled hair and pallid lips, but with the light of rapture shining in her eyes, rushed through the kitchen — out and over the hill. Mrs. Hollinger caught up a coat and ran after her. Dr. McIntyre sank into a chair.

"I couldn't stop her — and I'm not fit for another run yet — but joy doesn't kill. It would have been cruel to stop her, even if I could."

"Is little Allan all right?" asked Ilse.

"He will be. The poor kid was at the point of exhaustion, naturally. He wouldn't have lasted for another day. We carried him right up to Dr. Matheson at the Bridge and left him in his charge. He won't be fit to be brought home before tomorrow."

"Have you any idea how he came to be there?"

"Well, he couldn't tell us anything, of course, but I think I know how it happened. We found a cellar window about half an inch open. I fancy that Allan was poking about the house, boy fashion, and found that this window hadn't been fastened. He must have got entrance by it, pushed it almost

shut behind him and then explored the house. He had pulled the closet door tight in some way and the spring lock made him a prisoner. The window was too high for him to reach or he might have attracted attention from it. The white plaster of the closet wall is all marked and scarred with his vain attempts to get up to the window. Of course, he must have shouted, but nobody has ever been near enough the house to hear him. You know, it stands in that bare little cove with nothing near it where a child could be hidden, so I suppose the searchers did not pay much attention to it. They didn't search the river banks until yesterday, anyhow, because it was never thought he would have gone away down there alone, and by yesterday he was past calling for help."

"I'm so — happy — since he's found," said Ilse, winking back tears of relief.

Grandfather Bradshaw suddenly poked his head out of the sitting-room doorway.

"I told ye a child couldn't be lost in the nineteenth century," he chuckled.

"He was lost, though," said Dr. McIntyre, "and he wouldn't have been found — in time — if it were not for this young lady. It's a very extraordinary thing."

"Emily is — psychic," said Ilse, quoting Mr. Carpenter.

"Psychic! Humph! Well, it's curious — very. I don't pretend to understand it. Grandmother would say it was second sight, of course. Naturally, she's a firm believer in that, like all the Highland folk."

"Oh — I'm sure I haven't second sight," protested Emily. "I must just have dreamed it — and got up in my sleep — but, then, I can't draw."

"Something used you as an instrument then," said Dr. McIntyre. "After all, Grandmother's explanation of second sight is just as reasonable as anything else, when one is compelled to believe an unbelievable thing."

"I'd rather not talk of it," said Emily, with a shiver. "I'm so glad Allan has been found — but please don't tell people about my part in it. Let them think it just occurred to you to search inside the Scobie house. I — I couldn't bear to have this talked of all over the country."

When they left the little white house on the windy hill the sun was breaking through the clouds and the harbour waters were dancing madly in it. The landscape was full of the wild beauty that comes in the wake of a spent storm and the Western Road stretched before them in loop and hill and dip of wet, red allurements; but Emily turned away from it.

"I'm going to leave it for my next trip," she said. "I can't go canvassing to-day, somehow. Friend of my heart, let's go to Malvern Bridge and take the morning train to Shrewsbury."

"It — was — awfully funny — about your dream," said Ilse. "It makes me a little afraid of you, Emily — somehow."

"Oh, don't be afraid of me," implored Emily. "It was only a coincidence. I was thinking of him so much — and the house took possession of me yesterday—"

"Remember how you found out about Mother?" said Ilse, in a low tone. "You have some power the rest of us haven't."

"Perhaps I'll grow out of it," said Emily desperately. "I hope so — I don't want to have any such power — you don't know how I feel about it, Ilse. It seems to me a terrible thing — as if I were marked out in some uncanny way — I don't feel human. When Dr. McIntyre spoke about something using me as an instrument, I went cold all over. It seemed to me that while I was asleep some other intelligence must have taken possession of my body and drawn that picture."

"It was your writing," said Ilse.

"Oh, I'm not going to talk of it — or think of it. I'm going to forget it. Don't ever speak of it to me again, Ilse."

Driftwood

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“Shrewsbury,

“October 3, 19 —

“I have finished canvassing my allotted portion of our fair province — I have the banner list of all the canvassers — and I have made almost enough out of my commissions to pay for my books for my whole Junior year. When I told Aunt Ruth this she did not sniff. I consider that a fact worth recording.

“To-day my story, The Sands of Time, came back from Merton’s Magazine. But the rejection slip was typewritten, not printed. Typewriting doesn’t seem quite as insulting as print, some way.

“We have read your story with interest, and regret to say that we cannot accept it for publication at the present time.

“If they meant that ‘with interest,’ it is a little encouragement. But were they only trying to soften the blow?

“Ilse and I were notified recently that there were nine vacancies in the Skull and Owl and that we had been put on the list of those who might apply for membership. So we did. It is considered a great thing in school to be a Skull and Owl.

“The Junior year is in full swing now, and I find the work very interesting. Mr. Hardy has several of our classes, and I like him as a teacher better than anyone since Mr. Carpenter. He was very much interested in my essay, The Woman Who Spanked the King. He gave it first place and commented on it specially in his class criticisms. Evelyn Blake is sure, naturally, that I copied it out of something, and feels certain she has read it somewhere before. Evelyn is wearing her hair in the new pompadour style this year and I think it is very unbecoming to her. But then, of course, the only part of Evelyn’s anatomy I like is her back.

“I understand that the Martin clan are furious with me. Sally Martin was married last week in the Anglican church here, and the Times editor asked me to report it. Of course, I went — though I hate reporting weddings. There are so many things I’d like to say sometimes that can’t be said. But Sally’s wedding was pretty and so was she, and I sent in quite a nice report of it, I thought, especially mentioning the bride’s beautiful bouquet of ‘roses and orchids’ — the first bridal bouquet of orchids ever seen in Shrewsbury. I wrote as plain as print and there was no excuse whatever for that wretched typesetter on the Times turning ‘orchids’ into sardines. Of course, anybody with any sense would have known that it was only a printer’s error. But the Martin clan have taken into their heads the absurd notion that I wrote sardines on purpose for a silly joke — because, it seems, it has been reported to them that I said once I was tired of the conventional reports of weddings and would like to write just one along different lines. I did say it — but my craving for originality would hardly lead me to report the bride as carrying a bouquet of sardines! Nevertheless, the Martins do think it, and Stella Martin didn’t invite me to her thimble party — and Aunt Ruth says she doesn’t wonder at it — and Aunt Elizabeth says I shouldn’t have been so careless. I! Heaven grant me patience!

* * *

“October 5, 19 —

“Mrs. Will Bradshaw came to see me this evening.

Luckily Aunt Ruth was out — I say luckily, for I don’t want Aunt Ruth to find out about my dream and its part in finding little Allan Bradshaw. This may be ‘sly,’ as Aunt Ruth would say, but the truth is that, sly or not sly, I could not bear to have Aunt Ruth sniffing and wondering and pawing over the incident.

“Mrs. Bradshaw came to thank me. It embarrassed me — because, after all, what had I to do with it? I don’t want to think of or talk of it at all. Mrs. Bradshaw says little Allan is all right again, now, though it was a

week after they found him before he could sit up. She was very pale and earnest.

“‘He would have died there if you hadn’t come, Miss Starr — and I would have died. I couldn’t have gone on living — not knowing — oh, I shall never forget the horror of those days. I had to come and try to utter a little of my gratitude — you were gone when I came back that morning — I felt that I had been very inhospitable—’

“She broke down and cried — and so did I — and we had a good howl together. I am very glad and thankful that Allan was found, but I shall never like to think of the way it happened.

* * *

“New Moon,

“October 7, 19 —

“I had a lovely walk and prowl this evening in the pond graveyard. Not exactly a cheerful place for an evening’s ramble, one might suppose. But I always like to wander over that little westward slope of graves in the gentle melancholy of a fine autumn evening. I like to read the names on the stones and note the ages and think of all the loves and hates and hopes and fears that lie buried there. It was beautiful — and not sad. And all around were the red ploughed fields and the frosted, ferny woodsides and all the old familiar things I have loved — and love more and more it seems to me, the older I grow. Every weekend I come home to New Moon these things seem dearer to me — more a part of me. I love things just as much as people. I think Aunt Elizabeth is like this, too. That is why she will not have anything changed at New Moon. I am beginning to understand her better. I believe she likes me now, too. I was only a duty at first, but now I am something more.

“I stayed in the graveyard until a dull gold twilight came down and made a glimmering spectral place of it. Then Teddy came for me and we walked together up the field and through the Tomorrow Road. It is really a To-day Road now, for the trees along it are above our heads, but we still

call it the Tomorrow Road — partly out of habit and partly because we talk so much on it of our tomorrows and what we hope to do in them.

Somehow, Teddy is the only person I like to talk to about my tomorrows and my ambitions. There is no one else. Perry scoffs at my literary aspirations. He says, when I say anything about writing books, ‘What is the good of that sort of thing?’ And of course if a person can’t see ‘the good’ for himself you can’t explain it to him. I can’t even talk to Dean about them — not since he said so bitterly one evening, ‘I hate to hear of your tomorrows — they cannot be my tomorrows.’ I think in a way Dean doesn’t like to think of my growing up — I think he has a little of the Priest jealousy of sharing anything, especially friendship, with anyone else — or with the world. I feel thrown back on myself. Somehow, it has seemed to me lately that Dean isn’t interested any longer in my writing ambitions. He even, it seems to me, ridicules them slightly. For instance, Mr. Carpenter was delighted with my *Woman Who Spanked the King*, and told me it was excellent; but when Dean read it he smiled and said, ‘It will do very well for a school essay, but—’ and then he smiled again. It was not the smile I liked, either. It had ‘too much Priest in it,’ as Aunt Elizabeth would say. I felt — and feel — horribly cast down about it. It seemed to say, ‘You can scribble amusingly, my dear, and have a pretty knack of phrase-turning; but I should be doing you an unkindness if I let you think that such a knack meant a very great deal.’ If this is true — and it very likely is, for Dean is so clever and knows so much — then I can never accomplish anything worth while. I won’t try to accomplish anything — I won’t be just a ‘pretty scribbler.’

“But it’s different with Teddy.”

“Teddy was wildly elated tonight — and so was I when I heard his news. He showed two of his pictures at the Charlottetown exhibition in September, and Mr. Lewes, of Montreal, has offered him fifty dollars apiece for them. That will pay his board in Shrewsbury for the winter and make it easier for Mrs. Kent. Although she wasn’t glad when he told her. She said, ‘Oh, yes, you think you are independent of me now’ — and cried. Teddy was hurt, because he had never thought of such a thing. Poor Mrs.

Kent. She must be very lonely. There is some strange barrier between her and her kind. I haven't been to the Tansy Patch for a long, long time. Once in the summer I went with Aunt Laura, who had heard Mrs. Kent was ill. Mrs. Kent was able to be up and she talked to Aunt Laura, but she never spoke to me, only looked at me now and then with a queer, smouldering fire in her eyes. But when we rose to come away, she spoke once — and said,

“‘You are very tall. You will soon be a woman — and stealing some other woman's son from her.’

“Aunt Laura said, as we walked home, that Mrs. Kent had always been strange, but was growing stranger.

“‘Some people think her mind is affected,’ she said.

“‘I don't think the trouble is in her mind. She has a sick soul,’ I said.

“‘Emily, dear, that is a dreadful thing to say,’ said Aunt Laura.

“I don't see why. If bodies and minds can be sick, can't souls be, too? There are times when I feel as certain as if I had been told it that Mrs. Kent got some kind of terrible soul-wound some time, and it has never healed. I wish she didn't hate me. It hurts me to have Teddy's mother hate me. I don't know why this is. Dean is just as dear a friend as Teddy, yet I wouldn't care if all the rest of the Priest clan hated me.

* * *

“October 19, 19 —

“Ilse and the other seven applicants were elected Skulls and Owls. I was black-beaned. We were notified to that effect Monday.

“Of course, I know it was Evelyn Blake who did it. There is nobody else who would do it. Ilse was furious: she tore into pieces the notification of her election and sent the scraps back to the secretary with a scathing repudiation of the Skull and Owl and all its works.

“Evelyn met me in the cloakroom to-day and assured me that she had voted for both Ilse and me.

“‘Has anyone been saying you did not?’ I asked, in my best Aunt Elizabethan manner.

“‘Yes — Ilse has,’ said Evelyn peevishly. ‘She was very insolent to me about it. Do you want to know who I think put the black bean in?’

“I looked Evelyn straight in the eyes.

“‘No, it is not necessary. I know who put it in’ — and I turned and left her.

“Most of the Skulls and Owls are very angry about it — especially the Skulls. One or two Owls, I have heard, hoot that it is a good pill for the Murray pride. And, of course, several Seniors and Juniors who were not among the favoured nine are either gloatingly rejoiced or odiously sympathetic.

“Aunt Ruth heard of it to-day and wanted to know why I was black-beaned.

* * *

“New Moon,

“November 5, 19 —

“Aunt Laura and I spent this afternoon, the one teaching, the other learning, a certain New Moon tradition — to wit, how to put pickles into glass jars in patterns. We stowed away the whole big crockful of new pickles, and when Aunt Elizabeth came to look them over she admitted she could not tell those which Aunt Laura had done from mine.

“This evening was very delightful. I had a good time with myself, out in the garden. It was lovely there tonight with the eerie loveliness of a fine November evening. At sunset there had been a wild little shower of snow, but it had cleared off, leaving the world just lightly covered, and the air clear and tingling. Almost all the flowers, including my wonderful asters, which were a vision all through the fall, were frozen black two weeks ago, but the beds still had white drifts of alyssum all around them. A big, smoky-red hunter’s moon was just rising above the treetops. There was a yellow-red glow in the west behind the white hills on which a few dark

trees grew. The snow had banished all the strange deep sadness of a dead landscape on a late fall evening, and the slopes and meadows of old New Moon farm were transformed into a wonderland in the faint, early moonlight. The old house had a coating of sparkling snow on its roof. Its lighted windows glowed like jewels. It looked exactly like a picture on a Christmas card. There was just a suggestion of grey-blue chimney smoke over the kitchen. A nice reek of burning autumn leaves came from Cousin Jimmy's smouldering bonfires in the lane. My cats were there, too, stealthy, goblin-eyed, harmonizing with the hour and the place. The twilight — appropriately called the cats' light — is the only time when a cat really reveals himself. Saucy Sal was thin and gleaming, like the silvery ghost of a pussy. Daff was like a dark-grey, skulking tiger. He certainly gives the world assurance of a cat: he doesn't condescend to every one — and he never talks too much. They pounced at my feet and tore off and frisked back and rolled each other over — and were all so a part of the night and the haunted place that they didn't disturb my thoughts at all. I walked up and down the paths and around the dial and the summer-house in exhilaration. Air such as I breathed then always makes me a little drunk, I verily believe. I laughed at myself for feeling badly over not being elected an Owl. An Owl! Why, I felt like a young eagle, soaring sunward. All the world was before me to see and learn, and I exulted in it. The future was mine — and the past, too. I felt as if I had been alive here always — as if I shared in all the loves and lives of the old house. I felt as if I would live always — always — always — I was sure of immortality then. I didn't just believe it — I felt it.

“Dean found me there: he was close beside me before I was aware of his presence.

“‘You are smiling,’ said Dean. ‘I like to see a woman smiling to herself. Her thoughts must be innocent and pleasant. Has the day been kind to you, dear lady?’

“‘Very kind — and this evening is its best gift. I'm so happy tonight, Dean — just to be alive makes me happy. I feel as if I were driving a team of stars. I wish such a mood could last, I feel so sure of myself tonight —

so sure of my future. I'm not afraid of anything. At life's banquet of success I may not be the guest of honour, but I'll be among those present.'

"'You looked like a seeress gazing into the future as I came down the walk,' said Dean, 'standing here in the moonlight, white and rapt. Your skin is like a narcissus petal. You could dare to hold a white rose against your face — very few women can dare that. You aren't really very pretty, you know, Star, but your face makes people think of beautiful things — and that is a far rarer gift than mere beauty.'

"I like Dean's compliments. They are always different from anybody else's. And I like to be called a woman.

"'You'll make me vain,' I said.

"'Not with your sense of humour,' said Dean. 'A woman with a sense of humour is never vain. The most malevolent bad fairy in the world couldn't bestow two such drawbacks on the same christened babe.'

"'Do you call a sense of humour a drawback?' I asked.

"'To be sure it is. A woman who has a sense of humour possesses no refuge from the merciless truth about herself. She cannot think herself misunderstood. She cannot revel in selfpity. She cannot comfortably damn anyone who differs from her. No, Emily, the woman with a sense of humour isn't to be envied.'

"This view of it hadn't occurred to me. We sat down on the stone bench and thrashed it out. Dean is not going away this winter. I am glad — I would miss him horribly. If I can't have a good spiel with Dean at least once a fortnight, life seems faded. There's so much colour in our talks; and then at times he can be so eloquently quiet. Part of the time tonight he was like that: we just sat there in the dream and dusk and quiet of the old garden and heard each other's thoughts. Part of the time he told me tales of old lands and the gorgeous bazaars of the East. Part of the time he asked me about myself, and my studies and my doings. I like a man who gives me a chance now and then to talk about myself.

"'What have you been reading lately?' he asked.

"'This afternoon, after I finished the pickles, I read several of Mrs. Browning's poems. We have her in our English work this year, you know.

My favourite poem is The Lay of the Brown Rosary — and I am much more in sympathy with Onora than Mrs. Browning was.’

“‘You would be,’ said Dean. ‘That is because you are a creature of emotion yourself. You would barter heaven for love, just as Onora did.’

“‘I will not love — to love is to be a slave,’ I said.

“And the minute I said it I was ashamed of saying it — because I knew I had just said it to sound clever. I don’t really believe that to love is to be a slave — not with Murrays, anyhow. But Dean took me quite seriously.

“‘Well, one must be a slave to something in this kind of a world,’ he said. ‘No one is free. Perhaps, after all, O daughter of the Stars, love is the easiest master — easier than hate — or fear — or necessity — or ambition — or pride. By the way, how are you getting on with the lovemaking parts of your stories?’

“‘You forget — I can’t write stories just now. When I can — well, you know long ago you promised you would teach me how to make love artistically.’

“I said it in a teasing way, just for a joke. But Dean seemed suddenly to become very much in earnest.

“‘Are you ready for the teaching?’ he said, bending forward.

“For one crazy moment I really thought he was going to kiss me. I drew back — I felt myself flushing — all at once I thought of Teddy. I didn’t know what to say — I picked up Daff — buried my face in his beautiful fur — listened to his inner purring. At that opportune moment Aunt Elizabeth came to the front door and wanted to know if I had my rubbers on. I hadn’t — so I went in — and Dean went home. I watched him from my window, limping down the lane. He seemed very lonely, and all at once I felt terribly sorry for him. When I’m with Dean he’s such good company, and we have such good times that I forget there must be another side to his life. I can fill only such a little corner of it. The rest must be very empty.

* * *

“November 14, 19 —

“There is a fresh scandal about Emily of New Moon plus Ilse of Blair Water. I have just had an unpleasant interview with Aunt Ruth and must write it all out to rid my soul of bitterness. Such a tempest in a teapot over nothing! But Ilse and I do have the worst luck.

“I spent last Thursday evening with Ilse studying our English literature together. We did an evening of honest work and I left for home at nine. Ilse came out to the gate with me. It was a soft, dark, gentle, starry night. Ilse’s new boardinghouse is the last house on Cardigan-street, and beyond it the road veers over the little creek bridge into the park. We could see the park, dim and luring, in the starlight.

“‘Let’s go for a walk around it before you go home,’ proposed Ilse.

“We went: of course, I shouldn’t have: I should have come right home to bed, like any good consumptive. But I had just completed my autumnal course of cod-liver emulsion — ugh! — and thought I might defy the night air for once. So — we went. And it was delightful. Away over the harbour we heard the windy music of the November hills, but among the trees of the park it was calm and still. We left the road and wandered up a little side trail through the spicy fragrant evergreens on the hill. The firs and pines are always friendly, but they tell you no secrets as maples and poplars do: they never reveal their mysteries — never betray their long-guarded lore — and so, of course, they are more interesting than any other trees.

“The whole hillside was full of nice, elfish sounds and cool, elusive night smells — balsam and frosted fern. We seemed to be in the very heart of a peaceful hush. The night put her arms around us like a mother and drew us close together. We told each other everything. Of course, next day I repented me of this — though Ilse is a very satisfactory confidante and never betrays anything, even in her rages. But then it is not a Murray tradition to turn your soul inside out, even to your dearest friend. But darkness and fir balsam make people do such things. And we had lots of fun, too — Ilse is such an exhilarating companion. You’re never dull a moment in her company. Altogether we had a lovely walk and came out of

the park feeling dearer to each other than ever, with another beautiful memory to share. Just at the bridge we met Teddy and Perry coming off the Western Road. They'd been out for a constitutional hike. It happens to be one of the times Ilse and Perry are on speaking terms, so we all walked across the bridge together and then they went their way and we went ours. I was in bed and asleep by ten o'clock.

"But somebody saw us walking across the bridge. Next day it was all through the school: day after that all through the town: that Ilse and I had been prowling in the park with Teddy Kent and Perry Miller till twelve o'clock at night. Aunt Ruth heard it and summoned me to the bar of judgment tonight. I told her the whole story, but of course she didn't believe it.

"You know I was home at a quarter to ten last Thursday night, Aunt Ruth,' I said.

"I suppose the time was exaggerated,' admitted Aunt Ruth. 'But there must have been something to start such a story. There's no smoke without some fire. Emily, you are treading in your mother's footsteps.'

"Suppose we leave my mother out of the question — she's dead,' I said. 'The point is, Aunt Ruth, do you believe me or do you not?'

"I don't believe it was as bad as the report,' Aunt Ruth said reluctantly. 'But you have got yourself talked about. Of course, you must expect that, as long as you run with Ilse Burnley and off-scourings of the gutter like Perry Miller. Andrew wanted you to go for a walk in the park last Friday evening and you refused — I heard you. That would have been too respectable, of course.'

"Exactly,' I said. 'That was the very reason. There's no fun in anything that's too respectable.'

"Impertinence, Miss, is not wit,' said Aunt Ruth.

"I didn't mean to be impertinent, but it does annoy me to have Andrew flung in my teeth like that. Andrew is going to be one of my problems. Dean thinks it's great fun — he knows what is in the wind as well as I do. He is always teasing me about my redheaded young man — my r.h.y.m. for short.

“‘He’s almost a rhyme,’ said Dean.

“‘But never a poem,’ said I.

“Certainly poor, good, dear Andrew is the stodgiest of prose. Yet I’d like him well enough if the whole Murray clan weren’t literally throwing him at my head. They want to get me safely engaged before I’m old enough to elope, and who so safe as Andrew Murray?

“Oh, as Dean says, nobody is free — never, except just for a few brief moments now and then, when the flash comes, or when, as on my haystack night, the soul slips over into eternity for a little space. All the rest of our years we are slaves to something — traditions — conventions — ambitions — relations. And sometimes, as tonight, I think that last is the hardest bondage of all.

* * *

“New Moon,

“December 3, 19 —

“I am here in my own dear room, with a fire in my little fireplace by the grace of Aunt Elizabeth. An open fire is always lovely, but it is ten times lovelier on a stormy night. I watched the storm from my window until darkness fell. There is a singular charm in snow coming gently down in slanting lines against dark trees. I wrote a description of it in my Jimmy-book as I watched. A wind has come up since and now my room is full of the soft forlorn sigh of snow, driving through Lofty John’s spruce wood. It is one of the loveliest sounds in the world. Some sounds are so exquisite — far more exquisite than anything seen. Daff’s purr there on my rug, for instance — and the snap and crackle of the fire — and the squeaks and scrambles of mice that are having a jamboree behind the wainscot. I love to be alone in my room like this. I like to think even the mice are having a good time. And I get so much pleasure out of all my little belongings. They have a meaning for me they have for no one else. I have never for one moment felt at home in my room at Aunt Ruth’s, but as

soon as I come here I enter into my kingdom. I love to read here — dream here — sit by the window and shape some airy fancy into verse.

“I’ve been reading one of Father’s books tonight. I always feel so beautifully near to Father when I read his books — as if I might suddenly look over my shoulder and see him. And so often I come across his pencilled notes on the margin and they seem like a message from him. The book I’m reading tonight is a wonderful one — wonderful in plot and conception — wonderful in its grasp of motives and passions. As I read it I feel humbled and insignificant — which is good for me. I say to myself, ‘You poor, pitiful, little creature, did you ever imagine you could write? If so, your delusion is now stripped away from you for ever and you behold yourself in your naked paltriness.’ But I shall recover from this state of mind — and believe again that I can write a little — and go on cheerfully producing sketches and poems until I can do better. In another year and a half my promise to Aunt Elizabeth will be out and I can write stories again. Meanwhile — patience! To be sure, I get a bit weary at times of saying ‘patience and perseverance.’ It is hard not to see all at once the results of those estimable virtues. Sometimes I feel that I want to tear around and be as impatient as I like. But not tonight. Tonight I feel as contented as a cat on a rug. I would purr if I knew how.

* * *

“December 9, 19 —

“This was Andrew-night. He came, all beautifully groomed up, as usual. Of course, I like a boy who gets himself up well, but Andrew really carries it too far. He always seems as if he had just been starched and ironed and was afraid to move or laugh for fear he’d crack. When I come to think of it, I’ve never heard Andrew give a hearty laugh yet. And I know he never hunted pirate gold when he was a boy. But he’s good and sensible and tidy, and his nails are always clean, and the bank manager thinks a great deal of him. And he likes cats — in their place! Oh, I don’t deserve such a cousin!”



“January 5, 19 —

“Holidays are over. I had a beautiful two weeks at old white-hooded New Moon. The day before Christmas I had five acceptances. I wonder I didn’t go crazy. Three of them were from magazines who don’t pay anything, but subscriptions, for contributions. But the others were accompanied by cheques — one for two dollars for a poem and one for ten dollars for my Sands of Time, which has been taken at last — my first story acceptance. Aunt Elizabeth looked at the cheques and said wonderingly:

“‘Do you suppose the bank will really pay you money for those?’

“She could hardly believe it, even after Cousin Jimmy took them to Shrewsbury and cashed them.

“Of course, the money goes to my Shrewsbury expenses. But I had no end of fun planning how I would have spent it if I had been free to spend.

“Perry is on the High School team who will debate with the Queen’s Academy boys in February. Good for Perry — it’s a great honour to be chosen on that team. The debate is a yearly occurrence and Queen’s has won for three years. Ilse offered to coach Perry on the elocution of his speech and she is taking no end of trouble with him — especially in preventing him from saying ‘devilopment’ when he means ‘development.’ It’s awfully good of her, for she really doesn’t like him. I do hope Shrewsbury will win.

“We have The Idylls of the King in English class this term. I like some things in them, but I detest Tennyson’s Arthur. If I had been Guinevere I’d have boxed his ears — but I wouldn’t have been unfaithful to him for Lancelot, who was just as odious in a different way. As for Geraint, if I had been Enid I’d have bitten him. These ‘patient Griseldas’ deserve all they get. Lady Enid, if you had been a Murray of New Moon you would have kept your husband in better order and he would have liked you all the better for it.

“I read a story tonight. It ended unhappily. I was wretched until I had invented a happy ending for it. I shall always end my stories happily. I don’t care whether it’s ‘true to life’ or not. It’s true to life as it should be and that’s a better truth than the other.

“Speaking of books. I read an old one of Aunt Ruth’s the other day — *The Children of the Abbey*. The heroine fainted in every chapter and cried quarts if any one looked at her. But as for the trials and persecutions she underwent, in spite of her delicate frame, their name was Legion and no fair maiden of these degenerate days could survive half of them — not even the newest of new women. I laughed over the book until I amazed Aunt Ruth, who thought it a very sad volume. It is the only novel in Aunt Ruth’s house. One of her beaux gave it to her when she was young. It seems impossible to think that Aunt Ruth ever had beaux. Uncle Dutton seems an unreality, and even his picture on the crepe-draped easel in the parlour cannot convince me of his existence.

* * *

“January 21, 19 —

“Friday night the debate between Shrewsbury High and Queen’s came off. The Queen’s boys came up believing they were going to come, see and conquer — and went home like the proverbial dogs with carefully adjusted tails. It was really Perry’s speech that won the debate. He was a wonder. Even Aunt Ruth admitted for the first time that there was something in him. After it was over he came rushing up to Ilse and me in the corridor.

“‘Didn’t I do great, Emily?’ he demanded. ‘I knew it was in me, but I didn’t know if I could get it out. When I got up at first I felt tonguetied — and then I saw you, looking at me as if you said, ‘You can — you must’ — and I went ahead full steam. You won that debate, Emily.’

“Now wasn’t that a nice thing to say before Ilse, who had worked for hours with him and drilled and slaved? Never a word of tribute to her — everything to me who hadn’t done a thing except look interested.

“‘Perry, you’re an ungrateful barbarian,’ I said — and left him there, with his jaw dropping. Ilse was so furious she cried. She has never spoken to him since — and that ass of a Perry can’t understand why.

“‘What’s she peeved about now? I thanked her for all her trouble at our last practice,’ he says.

“Certainly, Stovepipe Town has its limitations.

* * *

“February 2, 19 —

“Last night Mrs. Rogers invited Aunt Ruth and me to dinner to meet her sister and brother-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Herbert. Aunt Ruth had her Sunday scallops in her hair and wore her brown velvet dress that reeked of mothballs and her big oval brooch with Uncle Dutton’s hair in it; and I put on my ashes-of-roses and Princess Mena’s necklace and went, quivering with excitement, for Mr. Herbert is a member of the Dominion Cabinet and a man who stands in the presence of kings. He has a massive, silver head and eyes that have looked into people’s thoughts so long that you have an uncanny feeling that they can see right into your soul and read motives you don’t dare avow even to yourself. His face is a most interesting one. There is so much in it. All the varied experiences of his full, wonderful life had written it over. One could tell at sight that he was a born leader. Mrs. Rogers let me sit beside him at dinner. I was afraid to speak — afraid I’d say something stupid — afraid I’d make some ludicrous mistake. So I just sat quiet as a mouse and listened adoringly. Mrs. Rogers told me to-day that Mr. Herbert said, after we had left,

“‘That little Starr girl of New Moon is the best conversationalist of any girl of her age I ever met.’

“So even great statesmen — but there — I won’t be horrid.

“And he was splendid: he was wise and witty and humorous. I felt as if I were drinking in some rare, stimulating, mental wine. I forgot even Aunt Ruth’s mothballs. What an event it is to meet such a man and take a peep through his wise eyes at the fascinating game of empire building!

“Perry went to the station to-day to get a glimpse of Mr. Herbert. Perry says he will be just as great a man some day. But, no. Perry can — and I believe will — go far — climb high. But he will be only a successful politician — never a statesman. Ilse flew into me when I said this.

“‘I hate Perry Miller,’ she fumed, ‘but I hate snobbery worse. You’re a snob, Emily Starr. You think just because Perry comes from Stovepipe Town that he can never be a great man. If he had been one of the sacred Murrays you would see no limits to his attainments!’

“I thought Ilse was unfair, and I lifted my head haughtily.

“‘After all,’ I said, ‘there is a difference between New Moon and Stovepipe Town.’”

* * *

If a Body Kiss a Body

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It was halfpast ten o'clock and Emily realized with a sigh that she must go to bed. When she had come in at halfpast nine from Alice Kennedy's thimble party, she had asked permission of Aunt Ruth to sit up an hour later to do some special studying. Aunt Ruth had consented reluctantly and suspiciously and had gone to bed herself, with sundry warnings regarding candles and matches. Emily had studied diligently for forty-five minutes and written poetry for fifteen. The poem burned for completion, but Emily resolutely pushed her portfolio away.

At that moment she remembered that she had left her Jimmy-book in her school-bag in the dining-room. This would never do. Aunt Ruth would be down before her in the morning and would inevitably examine the book-bag, find the Jimmy-book and read it. There were things in that Jimmy-book it was well Aunt Ruth should not see. She must slip down and bring it up.

Very quietly she opened her door and tiptoed downstairs, in anguish at every creaking step. Aunt Ruth, who slept in the big front bedroom at the other end of the hall, would surely hear those creaks. They were enough to waken the dead. They did not waken Aunt Ruth, however, and Emily reached the dining-room, found her book-bag, and was just going to return when she happened to glance at the mantelpiece. There, propped up against the clock, was a letter for her which had evidently come by the evening mail — a nice thin letter with the address of a magazine in the corner. Emily set her candle on the table, tore open the letter, found the acceptance of a poem and a cheque for three dollars. Acceptances — especially acceptances with cheque — were still such rare occurrences with our Emily that they always made her a little crazy. She forgot Aunt Ruth — she forgot that it was nearing eleven o'clock: she stood there entranced, reading over and over the brief editorial note — brief, but, oh,

how sweet! “Your charming poem”—“we would like to see more of your work” — oh, yes, indeed, they should see more of it.

Emily turned with a start. Was that a tap at the door? No — at the window. Who? What? The next moment she was aware that Perry was standing on the side veranda, grinning at her through the window.

She was at it in a flash and without pausing to think, still in the exhilaration of her acceptance, she slipped the catch and pushed the window up. She knew where Perry had been and was dying to know how he had got along. He had been invited to dinner with Dr. Hardy, in the fine Queen-street house. This was considered a great honour and very few students ever received it. Perry owed the invitation to his brilliant speech at the inter-school debate. Dr. Hardy had heard it and decided that here was a coming man.

Perry had been enormously proud of the invitation and had bragged of it to Teddy and Emily — not to Ilse, who had not yet forgiven him for his tactlessness on the night of the debate. Emily had been pleased, but had warned Perry that he would need to watch his step at Dr. Hardy’s. She felt some qualms in regard to his etiquette, but Perry had felt none. He would be all right, he loftily declared. Perry perched himself on the window-pill and Emily sat down on the corner of the sofa, reminding herself that it could be only for a minute.

“Saw the light in the window as I went past,” said Perry. “So I thought I’d just take a sneak round to the side and see if it was you. Wanted to tell you the tale while it was fresh. Say, Emily, you were right — r-i-g-h-t! I should smile. I wouldn’t go through this evening again for a hundred dollars.”

“How did you get along?” asked Emily anxiously. In a sense, she felt responsible for Perry’s manners. Such as he had he had acquired at New Moon.

Perry grinned.

“It’s a heartrending tale. I’ve had a lot of conceit taken out of me. I suppose you’ll say that’s a good thing.”

“You could spare some,” said Emily coolly.

Perry shrugged his shoulders.

“Well, I’ll tell you all about it if you won’t tell Ilse or Teddy. I’m not going to have them laughing at me. I went to Queen-street at the proper time — I remembered all you’d said about boots and tie and nails and handkerchief and I was all right outside. When I got to the house my troubles began. It was so big and splendid I felt queer — not afraid — I wasn’t afraid then — but just a bit as if I was ready to jump — like a strange cat when you try to pat it. I rang the bell; of course, it stuck and kept on ringing like mad. I could hear it away down the hall, and thinks I, ‘They’ll think I don’t know any better than to keep on ringing it till somebody comes,’ and that rattled me. The maid rattled me still more. I didn’t know whether I ought to shake hands with her or not.”

“Oh, Perry!”

“Well, I didn’t. I never was to a house where there was a maid like that before, all dolled up with a cap and finicky little apron. She made me feel like thirty cents.”

“Did you shake hands with her?”

“No.”

Emily gave a sigh of relief.

“She held the door open and I went in. I didn’t know what to do then. Guess I’d have stood there till I took root, only Dr. Hardy himself come — came — through the hall. He shook hands and showed me where to put my hat and coat and then he took me into the parlour to meet his wife. The floor was as slippery as ice — and just as I stepped on the rug inside the parlour door it went clean from under me and down I went and slid across the floor, feet foremost, right to Mrs. Hardy. I was on my back, not on my stomach, or it would have been quite the proper Oriental caper, wouldn’t it?”

Emily couldn’t laugh.

“Oh, Perry!”

“Great snakes, Emily, it wasn’t my fault. All the etiquette in the world couldn’t have prevented it. Of course, I felt like a fool, but I got up and laughed. Nobody else laughed. They were all decent. Mrs. Hardy was

smooth as wax — hoped I hadn't hurt myself, and Dr. Hardy said he had slipped the same way more than once after they had given up their good old carpets and taken to rugs and hardwood. I was scared to move, so I sat down in the nearest chair, and there was a dog on it — Mrs. Hardy's Peke. Oh, I didn't kill it — I got the worst scare of the two. By the time I had made port in another chair the sw — perspiration was just pouring down my face. Some more folks arrived just then, so that kind of took the edge off me, and I had time to get my bearings. I found I had about ten pairs of hands and feet. And my boots were too big and coarse. Then I found myself with my hands in my pockets, whistling."

Emily began to say, "Oh, Perry," but bit it off and swallowed it. What was the use of saying anything?

"I knew that wasn't proper, so I stopped and took my hands out — and began to bite my nails. Finally, I put my hands underneath me and sat on 'em. I doubled my feet back under my chair, and I sat like that till we went out to dinner — sat like that when a fat old lady waddled in and all the other fellows stood up. I didn't — didn't see any reason for it — there was plenty of chairs. But later on it occurred to me that it was some etiquette stunt and I ought to have got up, too. Should I?"

"Of course," said Emily, wearily. "Don't you remember how Ilse used to rag you about that very thing?"

"Oh, I'd forgotten — Ilse was always jawing about something. But live and learn. I won't forget again, you bet. There were three or four other boys there — the new French teacher and a couple of bankers — and some ladies. I got out to dinner without falling over the floor and got into a chair between Miss Hardy and the aforesaid old lady. I gave one look over that table — and then, Emily, I knew what it was to be afraid at last, all right. I never knew it before, honest. It's an awful feeling. I was in a regular funk. I used to think you carried fierce style at New Moon when you had company, but I never saw anything like that table — and everything so dazzling and glittering, and enough forks and spoons and things at one place to fit everybody out. There was a piece of bread folded in my napkin and it fell out and went skating over the floor. I could feel myself turning

red all over my face and neck. I s'pose you call it blushing. I never blushed afore — before — that I remember. I didn't know whether I ought to get up and go and pick it up or not. Then the maid brought me another one. I used the wrong spoon to eat my soup with, but I tried to remember what your Aunt Laura said about the proper way to eat soup. I'd get on all right for a few spoonfuls — then I'd get interested in something somebody was saying — and go gulp."

"Did you tilt your plate to get the last spoonful?" asked Emily despairingly.

"No, I was just going to when I remembered it wasn't proper. I hated to lose it, too. It was awful good soup and I was hungry. The good old dowager next to me did. I got on pretty well with the meat and vegetables, except once. I had packed a load of meat and potatoes on my fork and just as I lifted it I saw Mrs. Hardy eyeing it, and I remembered I oughtn't to have loaded up my fork like that — and I jumped — and it all fell off in my napkin. I didn't know whether it would be etiquette to scrape it up and put it back on my plate so I left it there. The pudding was all right — only I et it with a spoon — my soup spoon — and every one else et theirs with a fork. But it tasted just as good one way as another and I was getting reckless. You always use spoons at New Moon to eat pudding."

"Why didn't you watch what the others did and imitate them?"

"Too rattled. But I'll say this — for all the style, the eats weren't a bit better than you have at New Moon — no, nor as good, by a jugful. Your Aunt Elizabeth's cooking would knock the spots off the Hardys' every time — and they didn't give you too much of anything! After the dinner was over we went back to the parlour — they called it livingroom — and things weren't so bad. I didn't do anything out of the way except knock over a bookcase."

"Perry!"

"Well, it was wobbly. I was leaning against it talking to Mr. Hardy, and I suppose I leaned too hard, for the blooming thing went over. But, righting it and getting the books back seemed to loosen me up and I wasn't so tonguetied after that. I got on not too bad — only every once in a long

while I'd let slip a bit of slang, before I could catch it. I tell you, I wished I'd taken your advice about talking slang. Once the fat old lady agreed with something I'd said — she had sense if she did have three chins — and I was so tickled to find her on my side that I got excited and said to her, 'You bet your boots' before I thought. And I guess I bragged a bit. Do I brag too much, Emily?"

This question had never presented itself to Perry before.

"You do," said Emily candidly, "and it's very bad form."

"Well, I felt kind of cheap after I'd done it. I guess I've got an awful lot to learn yet, Emily. I'm going to buy a book on etiquette and learn it off by heart. No more evenings like this for me. But it was better at the last. Jim Hardy took me off to the den and we played checkers and I licked him dizzy. Nothing wrong with my checker etiquette, I tell you. And Mrs. Hardy said my speech at the debate was the best she had ever heard for a boy of my age, and she wanted to know what I meant to go in for. She's a great little dame and has the social end of things down fine. That is one reason I want you to marry me when the times comes, Emily — I've got to have a wife with brains."

"Don't talk nonsense, Perry," said Emily, haughtily.

"'Tisn't nonsense," said Perry, stubbornly. "And it's time we settled something. You needn't turn up your nose at me because you're a Murray. I'll be worth marrying some day — even for a Murray. Come, put me out of my misery."

Emily rose disdainfully. She had her dreams, as all girls have, the rose-red one of love among them, but Perry Miller had no share in those dreams.

"I'm not a Murray — and I'm going upstairs. Good night."

"Wait half a second," said Perry, with a grin. "When the clock strikes eleven I'm going to kiss you."

Emily did not for a moment believe that Perry had the slightest notion of doing anything of the kind — which was foolish of her, for Perry had a habit of always doing what he said he was going to do. But, then, he had never been sentimental. She ignored his remark, but lingered a moment to

ask another question about the Hardy dinner. Perry did not answer the question: the clock began to strike eleven as she asked it — he flung his legs over the windowsill and stepped into the room. Emily realized too late that he meant what he said. She had only time to duck her head and Perry's hearty, energetic smack — there was nothing subtle about Perry's kisses — fell on her ear instead of her cheek.

At the very moment Perry kissed her and before her indignant protest could rush to her lips two things happened. A gust of wind swept in from the veranda and blew the little candle out, and the dining-room door opened and Aunt Ruth appeared in the doorway, robed in a pink flannel nightgown and carrying another candle, the light of which struck upward with gruesome effect on her set face with its halo of crimping-pins.

This is one of the places where a conscientious biographer feels that, in the good old phrase, her pen cannot do justice to the scene.

Emily and Perry stood as if turned to stone. So, for a moment, did Aunt Ruth. Aunt Ruth had expected to find Emily there, writing, as she had done one night a month previously when Emily had had an inspiration at bedtime and had slipped down to the warm dining-room to jot it down in a Jimmy-book. But this! I must admit it did look bad. Really, I think we can hardly blame Aunt Ruth for righteous indignation.

Aunt Ruth looked at the unlucky pair.

"What are you doing here?" she asked Perry.

Stovepipe Town made a mistake.

"Oh, looking for a round square," said Perry offhandedly, his eyes suddenly becoming limpid with mischief and lawless roguery.

Perry's "impudence" — Aunt Ruth called it that, and, really, I think he was impudent — naturally made a bad matter worse. Aunt Ruth turned to Emily.

"Perhaps you can explain how you came to be here, at this hour, kissing this fellow in the dark?"

Emily flinched from the crude vulgarity of the question as if Aunt Ruth had struck her. She forgot how much appearances justified Aunt

Ruth, and let a perverse spirit enter into and possess her. She lifted her head haughtily.

“I have no explanation to give to such a question, Aunt Ruth.”

“I didn’t think you would have.”

Aunt Ruth gave a very disagreeable laugh, through which a thin, discordant note of triumph sounded. One might have thought that, under all her anger, something pleased Aunt Ruth. It is pleasant to be justified in the opinion we have always entertained of anybody. “Well, perhaps you will be so good as to answer some questions. How did this fellow get here?”

“Window,” said Perry laconically, seeing that Emily was not going to answer.

“I was not asking you, sir. Go,” said Aunt Ruth, pointing dramatically to the window.

“I’m not going to stir a step out of this room until I see what you’re going to do to Emily,” said Perry stubbornly.

“I,” said Aunt Ruth, with an air of terrible detachment, “am not going to do anything to Emily.”

“Mrs. Dutton, be a good sport,” implored Perry coaxingly. “It’s all my fault — honest! Emily wasn’t one bit to blame. You see, it was this way —”

But Perry was too late.

“I have asked my niece for an explanation and she has refused to give it. I do not choose to listen to yours.”

“But—” persisted Perry.

“You had better go, Perry,” said Emily, whose face was flying danger signals. She spoke quietly, but the Murrayest of all Murrays could not have expressed a more definite command. There was a quality in it Perry dared not disregard. He meekly scrambled out of the window into the night. Aunt Ruth stepped forward and shut the window. Then, ignoring Emily utterly, she marched her pink flanneled little figure back upstairs.

Emily did not sleep much that night — nor, I admit, did she deserve to. After her sudden anger died away, shame cut her like a whip. She realized

that she had behaved very foolishly in refusing an explanation to Aunt Ruth. Aunt Ruth had a right to it, when such a situation developed in her own house, no matter how hateful and disagreeable she made her method of demanding it. Of course, she would not have believed a word of it; but Emily, if she had given it, would not have further complicated her false position.

Emily fully expected she would be sent home to New Moon in disgrace. Aunt Ruth would stonily decline to keep such a girl any longer in her house — Aunt Elizabeth would agree with her — Aunt Laura would be heartbroken. Would even Cousin Jimmy's loyalty stand the strain? It was a very bitter prospect. No wonder Emily spent a white night. She was so unhappy that every beat of her heart seemed to hurt her. And again I say, most unequivocally, she deserved it. I haven't one word of pity or excuse for her.

Circumstantial Evidence

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At the Saturday morning breakfast-table Aunt Ruth preserved a stony silence, but she smiled cruelly to herself as she buttered and ate her toast. Anyone might have seen clearly that Aunt Ruth was enjoying herself — and, with equal clearness, that Emily was not. Aunt Ruth passed Emily the toast and marmalade with killing politeness, as if to say,

“I will not abate one jot or tittle of the proper thing. I may turn you out of my house, but it will be your own fault if you go without your breakfast.”

After breakfast Aunt Ruth went uptown. Emily suspected that she had gone to telephone to Dr. Burnley a message for New Moon. She expected when Aunt Ruth returned to be told to pack her trunk. But still Aunt Ruth spoke not. In the middle of the afternoon Cousin Jimmy arrived with the double-seated box-sleigh. Aunt Ruth went out and conferred with him. Then she came in and at last broke her silence.

“Put on your wraps,” she said. “We are going to New Moon.”

Emily obeyed mutely. She got into the back seat of the sleigh and Aunt Ruth sat beside Cousin Jimmy in front. Cousin Jimmy looked back at Emily over the collar of his fur coat and said, “Hello, Pussy,” with just a shade too much of cheerful encouragement. Evidently Cousin Jimmy believed something very serious had happened, though he didn’t know what.

It was not a pleasant drive through the beautiful greys and smokes and pearls of the winter afternoon. The arrival at New Moon was not pleasant. Aunt Elizabeth looked stern — Aunt Laura looked apprehensive.

“I have brought Emily here,” said Aunt Ruth, “because I do not feel that I can deal with her alone. You and Laura, Elizabeth, must pass judgment on her behaviour yourselves.”

So it was to be a domestic court, with her, Emily, at the bar of justice. Justice — would she get justice? Well, she would make a fight for it. She flung up her head and the colour rushed back into her face.

They were all in the sitting-room when she came down from her room. Aunt Elizabeth sat by the table. Aunt Laura was on the sofa ready to cry. Aunt Ruth was standing on the rug before the fire, looking peevishly at Cousin Jimmy, who, instead of going to the barn as he should have done, had tied the horse to the orchard fence and had seated himself back in the corner, determined, like Perry, to see what was going to be done to Emily. Ruth was annoyed. She wished Elizabeth would not always insist on admitting Jimmy to family conclaves when he desired to be present. It was absurd to suppose that a grownup child like Jimmy had any right there.

Emily did not sit down. She went and stood by the window, where her black head came out against the crimson curtain as softly and darkly clear as a pine-tree against a sunset of spring. Outside a white, dead world lay in the chilly twilight of early March. Past the garden and the Lombardy poplars the fields of New Moon looked very lonely and drear, with the intense red streak of lingering sunset beyond them. Emily shivered.

“Well,” said Cousin Jimmy, “let’s begin and get it over. Emily must want her supper.”

“When you know what I know about her, you will think she needs something besides supper,” said Mrs. Dutton tartly.

“I know all anyone need know about Emily,” retorted Cousin Jimmy.

“Jimmy Murray, you are an ass,” said Aunt Ruth, angrily.

“Well, we’re cousins,” agreed Cousin Jimmy pleasantly.

“Jimmy, be silent,” said Elizabeth, majestically. “Ruth, let us hear what you have to say.”

Aunt Ruth told the whole story. She stuck to facts, but her manner of telling them made them seem even blacker than they were. She really contrived to make a very ugly story of it, and Emily shivered again as she listened. As the telling proceeded Aunt Elizabeth’s face became harder and colder, Aunt Laura began to cry, and Cousin Jimmy began to whistle.

“He was kissing her neck,” concluded Aunt Ruth. Her tone implied that, bad as it was to kiss on ordinary places for kissing, it was a thousand-fold more scandalous and disgraceful to kiss the neck.

“It was my ear, really,” murmured Emily, with a sudden impish grin she could not check in time. Under all her discomfort and dread, there was Something that was standing back and enjoying this — the drama, the comedy of it. But this outbreak of it was most unfortunate. It made her appear flippant and unashamed.

“Now, I ask you,” said Aunt Ruth, throwing out her pudgy hands, “if you can expect me to keep a girl like her any longer in my house?”

“No, I don’t think we can,” said Elizabeth slowly.

Aunt Laura began to sob wildly. Cousin Jimmy brought down the front legs of his chair with a bang.

Emily turned from the window and faced them all.

“I want to explain what happened, Aunt Elizabeth.”

“I think we have heard enough about it,” said Aunt Elizabeth icily — all the more icily because of a certain bitter disappointment that was filling her soul. She had been gradually becoming very fond and proud of Emily, in her reserved, undemonstrative Murray way: to find her capable of such conduct as this was a terrible blow to Aunt Elizabeth. Her very pain made her the more merciless.

“No, that won’t do now, Aunt Elizabeth,” said Emily quietly. “I’m too old to be treated like that. You must hear my side of the story.”

The Murray look was on her face — the look Elizabeth knew and remembered so well of old. She wavered.

“You had your chance to explain last night,” snapped Aunt Ruth, “and you wouldn’t do it.”

“Because I was hurt and angry over your thinking the worst of me,” said Emily. “Besides, I knew you wouldn’t believe me.”

“I would have believed you if you had told the truth,” said Aunt Ruth. “The reason you wouldn’t explain last night was because you couldn’t think up an excuse for your conduct on the spur of the moment. You’ve had time to invent something since, I suppose.”

“Did you ever know Emily to tell a lie?” demanded Cousin Jimmy.

Mrs. Dutton opened her lips to say “Yes.” Then closed them again. Suppose Jimmy should demand a specific instance? She felt sure Emily had told her — fibs — a score of times, but what proof had she of it?

“Did you?” persisted that abominable Jimmy.

“I am not going to be catechized by you.” Aunt Ruth turned her back on him. “Elizabeth, I’ve always told you that girl was deep and sly, haven’t I?”

“Yes,” admitted poor Elizabeth, rather thankful that there need be no indecision on that point. Ruth had certainly told her so times out of number.

“And doesn’t this show I was right?”

“I’m — afraid — so.” Elizabeth Murray felt that it was a very bitter moment for her.

“Then it is for you to decide what is to be done about the matter,” said Ruth triumphantly.

“Not yet,” interposed Cousin Jimmy resolutely. “You haven’t given Emily the ghost of a chance to explain. That’s no fair trial. Now let her talk for ten minutes without interrupting her once.”

“That is only fair,” said Elizabeth with sudden resolution. She had a mad, irrational hope that, after all, Emily might be able to clear herself.

“Oh — well—” Mrs. Dutton yielded ungraciously and sat herself down with a thud on old Archibald Murray’s chair.

“Now, Emily, tell us what really happened,” said Cousin Jimmy.

“Well, upon my word!” exploded Aunt Ruth. “Do you mean to say I didn’t tell what really happened?”

Cousin Jimmy lifted his hand.

“Now — now — you had your say. Come, Pussy.”

Emily told her story from beginning to end. Something in it carried conviction. Three of her listeners at least believed her and felt an enormous load lifted from their minds. Even Aunt Ruth, deep down in her heart, knew Emily was telling the truth, but she would not admit it.

“A very ingenious tale, upon my word.” she said derisively.

Cousin Jimmy got up and walked across the floor. He bent down before Mrs. Dutton and thrust his rosy face with its forked beard and childlike brown eyes under his shock of grey curls, very close to hers.

“Ruth Murray,” he said, “do you remember the story that got around forty years ago about you and Fred Blair? Do you?”

Aunt Ruth pushed back her chair. Cousin Jimmy followed her.

“Do you remember that you were caught in a scrape that looked far worse than this? Didn’t it?”

Again poor Aunt Ruth pushed back her chair. Again Cousin Jimmy followed.

“Do you remember how mad you were because people wouldn’t believe you? But your father believed you — he had confidence in his own flesh and blood. Hadn’t he?”

Aunt Ruth had reached the wall by this time and had to surrender at discretion.

“I — I — remember well enough,” she said shortly.

Her cheeks were a curdled red. Emily looked at her interestedly. Was Aunt Ruth trying to blush? Ruth Dutton was, in fact, living over some very miserable months in her long past youth. When she was a girl of eighteen she had been trapped in a very ugly situation. And she had been innocent — absolutely innocent. She had been the helpless victim of a most impish combination of circumstances. Her father had believed her story and her own family had backed her up. But her contemporaries had believed the evidence of known facts for years — perhaps believed it yet, if they ever thought about the matter. Ruth Dutton shivered over the remembrance of her suffering under the lash of scandal. She no longer dared to refuse credence to Emily’s story but she could not yield gracefully.

“Jimmy,” she said sharply, “will you be good enough to go away and sit down? I suppose Emily is telling the truth — it’s a pity she took so long deciding to tell it. And I’m sure that creature was making love to her.”

“No, he was only asking me to marry him,” said Emily coolly.

You heard three gasps in the room. Aunt Ruth alone was able to speak.

“Do you intend to, may I ask?”

“No. I’ve told him so half a dozen times.”

“Well, I’m glad you had that much sense. Stovepipe Town, indeed!”

“Stovepipe Town had nothing to do with it. Ten years from now Perry Miller will be a man whom even a Murray would delight to honour. But he doesn’t happen to be the type I fancy, that’s all.”

Could this be Emily — this tall young woman coolly giving her reasons for refusing an offer of marriage — and talking about the “types” she fancied? Elizabeth — Laura — even Ruth looked at her as if they had never seen her before. And there was a new respect in their eyes. Of course they knew that Andrew was — was — well, in short, that Andrew was. But years must doubtless pass before Andrew would — would — well, would! And now the thing had happened already with another suitor — happened “half a dozen times” mark you! At that moment, although they were quite unconscious of it, they ceased to regard her as a child. At a bound she had entered their world and must henceforth be met on equal terms. There could be no more family courts. They felt this, though they did not perceive it. Aunt Ruth’s next remark showed it. She spoke almost as she might have spoken to Laura or Elizabeth, if she had deemed it her duty to admonish them.

“Just suppose, Emily, if anyone passing had seen Perry Miller sitting in that window at that hour of night?”

“Yes, of course. I see your angle of it perfectly, Aunt Ruth. All I want is to get you to see mine. I was foolish to open the window and talk to Perry — I see that now. I simply didn’t think — and then I got so interested in the story of his mishaps at Dr. Hardy’s dinner that I forgot how time was going.”

“Was Perry Miller to dinner at Dr. Hardy’s?” asked Aunt Elizabeth. This was another staggerer for her. The world — the Murray world — must be literally turned upside-down if Stovepipe Town was invited to dinner on Queen Street. At the same moment Aunt Ruth remembered with a pang of horror that Perry Miller had seen her in her pink flannel nightgown. It hadn’t mattered before — he had been only the help-boy at New Moon. Now he was Dr. Hardy’s guest.

“Yes. Dr. Hardy thinks he is a very brilliant debater and says he has a future,” said Emily.

“Well,” snapped Aunt Ruth, “I wish you would stop prowling about my house at all hours, writing novels. If you had been in your bed, as you should have been, this would never have happened.”

“I wasn’t writing novels,” cried Emily. “I’ve never written a word of fiction since I promised Aunt Elizabeth. I wasn’t writing anything. I told you I just went down to get my Jimmy-book.”

“Why couldn’t you have left that where it was till morning?” persisted Aunt Ruth.

“Come, come,” said Cousin Jimmy, “don’t start up another argument. I want my supper. You girls go and get it.”

Elizabeth and Laura left the room as meekly as if old Archibald Murray himself had commanded it. After a moment Ruth followed them. Things had not turned out just as she anticipated; but, after all, she was resigned. It would not have been a nice thing for a scandal like this concerning a Murray to be blown abroad, as must have happened if a verdict of guilty had been found against Emily.

“So that’s settled,” said Cousin Jimmy to Emily as the door closed.

Emily drew a long breath. The quiet, dignified old room suddenly seemed very beautiful and friendly to her.

“Yes, thanks to you,” she said, springing across it to give him an impetuous hug. “Now, scold me, Cousin Jimmy, scold me hard.”

“No, no. But it would have been more prudent not to have opened that window, wouldn’t it now, Pussy?”

“Of course it would. But prudence is such a shoddy virtue at times, Cousin Jimmy. One is ashamed of it — one likes to just go ahead and — and—”

“And hang consequences,” supplied Cousin Jimmy.

“Something like that,” Emily laughed. “I hate to go mincing through life, afraid to take a single long step for fear somebody is watching. I want to ‘wave my wild tail and walk by my wild lone.’ There wasn’t a bit of real harm in my opening that window and talking to Perry. There wasn’t even

any harm in his trying to kiss me. He just did it to tease me. Oh, I hate conventions. As you say — hang consequences.”

“But we can’t hang ‘em, Pussy — that’s just the trouble. They’re more likely to hang us. I put it to you, Pussy — suppose — there’s no harm in supposing it — that you were grown up and married and had a daughter of your age, and you went downstairs one night and found her as Aunt Ruth found you and Perry. Would you like it? Would you be well pleased? Honest, now?”

Emily stared hard at the fire for a moment.

“No, I wouldn’t,” she said at last. “But then — that’s different. I wouldn’t know.”

Cousin Jimmy chuckled.

“That’s the point, Pussy. Other people can’t know. So we’ve got to watch our step. Oh, I’m only simple Jimmy Murray, but I can see we have to watch our step. Pussy, we’re going to have roast spare-ribs for supper.”

A savoury whiff crept in from the kitchen at that very moment — a homely, comfortable odour that had nothing in common with compromising situations and family skeletons. Emily gave Cousin Jimmy another hug.

“Better a dinner of herbs where Cousin Jimmy is than roast spare-ribs and Aunt Ruth therewith,” she said.

“Airy Voices”

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“April 3, 19 —

“There are times when I am tempted to believe in the influence of evil stars or the reality of unlucky days. Otherwise how can such diabolical things happen as do happen to wellmeaning people? Aunt Ruth has only just begun to grow weary of recalling the night she found Perry kissing me in the dining-room, and now I’m in another ridiculous scrape.

“I will be honest. It was not dropping my umbrella which was responsible for it, neither was it the fact that I let the kitchen mirror at New Moon fall last Saturday and crack. It was just my own carelessness.

“St. John’s Presbyterian church here in Shrewsbury became vacant at New Year’s and has been hearing candidates. Mr. Towers of the Times asked me to report the sermons for his paper on such Sundays as I was not in Blair Water. The first sermon was good and I reported it with pleasure. The second one was harmless, very harmless, and I reported it without pain. But the third, which I heard last Sunday, was ridiculous. I said so to Aunt Ruth on the way home from church and Aunt Ruth said, ‘Do you think you are competent to criticize a sermon?’

“Well, yes, I do!

“That sermon was a most inconsistent thing. Mr. Wickham contradicted himself half a dozen times. He mixed his metaphors — he attributed something to St. Paul that belonged to Shakespeare — he committed almost every conceivable literary sin, including the unpardonable one of being deadly dull. However, it was my business to report the sermon, so report it I did. Then I had to do something to get it out of my system, so I wrote, for my own satisfaction, an analysis of it. It was a crazy but delightful deed. I showed up all the inconsistencies, the misquotations, the weaknesses and the wobblings. I enjoyed writing it — I

made it as pointed and satirical and satanical as I could — oh, I admit it was a very vitriolic document.

“Then I handed it into the Times by mistake!

“Mr. Towers passed it over to the typesetter without reading it. He had a touching confidence in my work, which he will never have again. It came out the next day.

“I woke to find myself infamous.

“I expected Mr. Towers would be furious; but he is only mildly annoyed — and a little amused at the back of it. It isn’t as if Mr. Wickham had been a settled minister here, of course. Nobody cared for him or his sermon and Mr. Towers is a Presbyterian, so the St. John’s people can’t accuse him of wanting to insult them. It is poor Emily B. on whom is laid the whole burden of condemnation. It appears most of them think I did it ‘to show off.’ Aunt Ruth is furious, Aunt Elizabeth outraged; Aunt Laura grieved, Cousin Jimmy alarmed. It is such a shocking thing to criticize a minister’s sermon. It is a Murray tradition that ministers’ sermons — Presbyterian Ministers’ especially — are sacrosanct. My presumption and vanity will yet be the ruin of me, so Aunt Elizabeth coldly informs me. The only person who seems pleased is Mr. Carpenter. (Dean is away in New York. I know he would like it, too.) Mr. Carpenter is telling every one that my ‘report’ is the best thing of its kind he ever read. But Mr. Carpenter is suspected of heresy, so his commendation will not go far to rehabilitate me.

“I feel wretched over the affair. My mistakes worry me more than my sins sometimes. And yet, an unholy something, ‘way back in me, is grinning over it all. Every word in that ‘report’ was true. And more than true — appropriate. I didn’t mix my metaphors.

“Now, to live this down!

* * *

“April 20, 19 —

“‘Awake thou north wind and come thou south. Blow upon my garden that the spices thereof may flow out.’

“So chanted I as I went through the Land of Uprightness this evening — only I put ‘woods’ in place of garden. For spring is just around the corner and I have forgotten everything but gladness.

“We had a grey, rainy dawn but sunshine came in the afternoon and a bit of April frost tonight — just enough to make the earth firm. It seemed to me a night when the ancient gods might be met with in the lonely places. But I saw nothing except some sly things back among the fir corses that may have been companies of goblins, if they weren’t merely shadows.

“(I wonder why goblin is such an enchanting word and gobbling such an ugly one. And why is shadowy suggestive of all beauty while umbrageous is so ugly?)

“But I heard all kinds of fairy sounds and each gave me an exquisite vanishing joy as I went up the hill. There is always something satisfying in climbing to the top of a hill. And that is a hilltop I love. When I reached it I stood still and let the loveliness of the evening flow through me like music. How the Wind Woman was singing in the bits of birchland around me — how she whistled in the serrated tops of the trees against the sky! One of the thirteen new silver moons of the year was hanging over the harbour. I stood there and thought of many, many beautiful things — of wild, free brooks running through starlit April fields — of rippled grey-satin seas — of the grace of an elm against the moonlight — of roots stirring and thrilling in the earth — owls laughing in darkness — a curl of foam on a long sandy shore — a young moon setting over a dark hill — the grey of gulf storms.

“I had only seventy-five cents in the world but Paradise isn’t bought with money.

“Then I sat down on an old boulder and tried to put those moments of delicate happiness into a poem. I caught the shape of them fairly well, I think — but not their soul. It escaped me.

“It was quite dark when I came back and the whole character of my Land of Uprightness seemed changed. It was eerie — almost sinister. I would have run if I could have dared. The trees, my old well-known friends, were strange and aloof. The sounds I heard were not the cheery, companionable sounds of daytime — nor the friendly, fairy sounds of the sunset — they were creeping and weird, as if the life of the woods had suddenly developed something almost hostile to me — something at least that was furtive and alien and unacquainted. I could fancy that I heard stealthy footsteps all around me — that strange eyes were watching me through the boughs. When I reached the open space and hopped over the fence into Aunt Ruth’s back yard I felt as if I were escaping from some fascinating but not altogether hallowed locality — a place given over to Paganism and the revels of satyrs. I don’t believe the woods are ever wholly Christian in the darkness. There is always a lurking life in them that dares not show itself to the sun but regains its own with the night.

“‘You should not be out in the damp with that cough of yours,’ said Aunt Ruth.

“But it wasn’t the damp that hurt me — for I was hurt. It was that little fascinating whisper of something unholy. I was afraid of it — and yet I loved it. The beauty I had loved on the hilltop seemed suddenly quite tasteless beside it. I sat down in my room and wrote another poem. When I had written it I felt that I had exorcised something out of my soul and Emily-in-the-Glass seemed no longer a stranger to me.

* * *

“Aunt Ruth has just brought in a dose of hot milk and cayenne pepper for my cough. It is on the table before me — I have to drink it — and it has made both Paradise and Pagan-land seem very foolish and unreal!

* * *

“May 25, 19 —

“Dean came home from New York last Friday and that evening we walked and talked in New Moon garden in a weird, uncanny twilight following a rainy day. I had a light dress on and as Dean came down the path he said,

“‘When I saw you first I thought you were a wild, white cherry-tree — like that’ — and he pointed to one that was leaning and beckoning, ghost-fair in the dusk, from Lofty John’s bush.

“It was such a beautiful thing that just to be distantly compared to it made me feel very well pleased with myself, and it was lovely to have dear old Dean back again. So we had a delightful evening, and picked a big bunch of Cousin Jimmy’s pansies and watched the grey rain-clouds draw together in great purple masses in the east, leaving the western sky all clear and star-powdered.

“‘There is something in your company,’ said Dean, ‘that makes stars seem starrier and pansies purpler.’

“Wasn’t that nice of him! How is it that his opinion of me and Aunt Ruth’s opinion of me are so very different?

“He had a little flat parcel under his arm and when he went away he handed it to me.

“‘I brought you that to counteract Lord Byron,’ he said.

“It was a framed copy of the ‘Portrait of Giovanna Degli Albizzi, wife of Lorenzo Tornabuoni Ghirlanjo’ — a Lady of the Quatro Cento. I brought it to Shrewsbury and have it hanging in my room. I love to look at the Lady Giovanna — that slim, beautiful young thing with her sleek coils of pale gold and her prim little curls and her fine, highbred profile (did the painter flatter her?) and her white neck and open, unshadowed brow, with the indefinable air over it all of saintliness and remoteness and fate — for the Lady Giovanna died young.

“And her embroidered velvet sleeves, slashed and puffed, very beautifully made and fitting the arm perfectly. The Lady Giovanna must have had a good dressmaker and, in spite of her saintliness, one thinks she was quite aware of the fact. I am always wishing that she would turn her head and let me see her full face.

“Aunt Ruth thinks she is queer-looking and evidently doubts the propriety of having her in the same room with the jewelled chromo of Queen Alexandra.

“I doubt it myself.

* * *

“June 10, 19 —

“I do all my studying now by the pool in the Land of Uprightness, among those wonderful, tall, slender trees. I’m a Druidess in the woods — I regard trees with something more than love — worship.

“And then, too, trees, unlike so many humans, always improve on acquaintance. No matter how much you like them at the start you are sure to like them much better further on, and best of all when you have known them for years and enjoyed intercourse with them in all seasons. I know a hundred dear things about these trees in the Land of Uprightness that I didn’t know when I came here two years ago.

“Trees have as much individuality as human beings. Not even two spruces are alike. There is always some kink or curve or bend of bough to single each one out from its fellows. Some trees love to grow sociably together, their branches twining, like Ilse and me with our arms about each other, whispering interminably of their secrets. Then there are more exclusive groups of four or five — clan-Murray trees; and there are hermits of trees who choose to stand apart in solitary state and who hold commune only with the winds of heaven. Yet these trees are often the best worth knowing. One feels it is more of a triumph to win their confidence than that of easier trees. Tonight I suddenly saw a great, pulsating star resting on the very crest of the big fir that stands alone in the eastern corner and I had a sense of two majesties meeting that will abide with me for days and enchant everything — even classroom routine and dishwashing and Aunt Ruth’s Saturday cleaning.

* * *

“June 25, 19 —

“We had our history examination to-day — the Tudor period. I’ve found it very fascinating — but more because of what isn’t in the histories than of what is. They don’t — they can’t tell you what you would really like to know. What did Jane Seymour think of when she was awake in the dark? Of murdered Anne, or of pale, forsaken Katherine? Or just about the fashion of her new ruff? Did she ever think she had paid too high for her crown or was she satisfied with her bargain? And was she happy in those few hours after her little son was born — or did she see a ghostly procession beckoning her onward with them? Was Lady Jane Gray ‘Janie’ to her friends and did she ever have a fit of temper? What did Shakespeare’s wife actually think of him? And was any man ever really in love with Queen Elizabeth? I am always asking questions like this when I study that pageant of kings and queens and geniuses and puppets put down in the school curriculum as ‘The Tudor Period.’

* * *

“July 7, 19 —

“Two years of High School are over. The result of my exams was such as to please even Aunt Ruth, who condescended to say that she always knew I could study if I put my mind to it. In brief, I led my class. And I’m pleased. But I begin to understand what Dean meant when he said real education was what you dug out of life for yourself. After all, the things that have taught me the most these past two years have been my wanderings in the Land of Uprightness, and my night on the haystack, and the Lady Giovanna, and the old woman who spanked the King, and trying to write nothing but facts, and things like that. Even rejection slips and hating Evelyn Blake have taught me something. Speaking of Evelyn — she failed in her exams and will have to take her senior year over again. I am truly sorry.

“That sounds as if I were a most amiable, forgiving creature. Let me be perfectly frank. I am sorry she didn’t pass, because if she had she wouldn’t be in school next year.

* * *

“July, 20, 19 —

“Ilse and I go bathing every day now. Aunt Laura is always very particular about seeing that we have our bathing suits with us. I wonder if she ever heard any faint, far-off echoes of our moonlit petticoatedness.

“But so far our dips have been in the afternoon. And afterwards we have a glorious wallow on sunwarm, golden sands, with the gauzy dunes behind us stretching to the harbour, and the lazy blue sea before us, dotted over with sails that are silver in the magic of the sunlight. Oh, life is good — good — good. In spite of three rejection slips that came to-day. Those very editors will be asking for my work some day! Meanwhile Aunt Laura is teaching me how to make a certain rich and complicated kind of chocolate cake after a recipe which a friend of hers in Virginia sent her thirty years ago. Nobody in Blair Water has ever been able to get it and Aunt Laura made me solemnly promise I would never reveal it.

“The real name of the cake is Devil’s Food, but Aunt Elizabeth will not have it called that.

* * *

“Aug. 2, 19 —

“I was down seeing Mr. Carpenter this evening. He has been laid up with rheumatism and one can see he is getting old. He was very cranky with the scholars last year and there was some protest against keeping him on, but it was done. Most of the Blair Water people have sense enough to realize that with all his crankiness Mr. Carpenter is a teacher in a thousand.

“‘One can’t teach fools amiably,’ he growled, when the trustees told him there were complaints about his harshness.

“Perhaps it was his rheumatism that made Mr. Carpenter rather crusty over the poems I took to him for criticism. When he read the one I had composed that April night on a hilltop he tossed it back to me—’pretty little gossamer thing,’ he said.

“And I had really thought the poem expressed in some measure the enchantment of that evening. How I must have failed!

“Then I gave him the poem I had written after I had come in that night. He read it over twice, then he deliberately tore it into strips.

“‘Now — why?’ I said, rather annoyed. ‘There was nothing wrong about that poem, Mr. Carpenter.’

“‘Not about its body,’ he said. ‘Every line of it, taken by itself, might be read in Sunday-school. But its soul — what mood were you in when you wrote that in heaven’s name?’

“‘The mood of the Golden Age,’ I said.

“‘No — of an age far before that. That poem was sheer Paganism, girl, though I don’t think you realize it. To be sure, from the point of view of literature it’s worth a thousand of your pretty songs. All the same, that way danger lies. Better stick to your own age. You’re part of it and can possess it without its possessing you. Emily, there was a streak of diabolism in that poem. It’s enough to make me believe that poets are inspired — by some spirits outside themselves. Didn’t you feel possessed when you wrote it?’

“‘Yes,’ I said, remembering. I felt rather glad Mr. Carpenter had torn the poem up. I could never have done it myself. I have destroyed a great many of my poems that seemed trash on successive readings, but this one never seemed so and it always brought back the strange charm and terror of that walk. But Mr. Carpenter was right — I feel it.

“He also berated me because I happened to mention I had been reading Mrs. Hemans’ poems. Aunt Laura has a cherished volume, bound in faded blue and gold, with an inscription from an admirer. In Aunt Laura’s youth it was the thing to give your adored a volume of poetry on her birthday. The things Mr. Carpenter said about Mrs. Hemans were not fit to write in a

young lady's diary. I suppose he is right in the main — yet I do like some of her poems. Just here and there comes a line or verse that haunts me for days, delightfully.

“The march of the hosts as Alaric passed
is one — though I can't give any reason for my liking it — one never can give reasons for enchantment — and another is,

“The sounds of the sea and the sounds of the night
Were around Clotilde as she knelt to pray
In a chapel where the mighty lay
On the old Provencal shore.

“That isn't great poetry — but there's a bit of magic in it for all that — concentrated in the last line, I think. I never read it without feeling that I am Clotilde, kneeling there—'on the old Provencal shore' — with the banners of forgotten wars waving over me.

“Mr. Carpenter sneered at my 'liking for slops' and told me to go and read the Elsie books! But when I was coming away he paid me the first personal compliment I ever had from him.

“‘I like that blue dress you've got on. And you know how to wear it. That's good. I can't bear to see a woman badly dressed. It hurts me — and it must hurt God Almighty. I've no use for dowds and I'm sure He hasn't. After all, if you know how to dress yourself it won't matter if you do like Mrs. Hemans.’

“I met Old Kelly on the way home and he stopped and gave me a bag of candy and sent his 'respects to him.’

* * *

“August 15, 19 —

“This is a wonderful year for columbines. The old orchard is full of them — all in lovely white and purple and fairy blue and dreamy pink colour. They are half wild and so have a charm no real tamed garden flower ever has. And what a name — columbine is poetry itself. How

much lovelier the common names of flowers are than the horrid Latiny names the florists stick in their catalogues. Heartsease and Bride's Bouquet, Prince's Feather, Snapdragon, Flora's Paint Brush, Dusty Millers, Bachelor's Buttons, Baby's Breath, Love-in-a-mist — oh, I love them all.

* * *

“September 1, 19 —

“Two things happened to-day. One was a letter from Great-aunt Nancy to Aunt Elizabeth. Aunt Nancy has never taken any notice of my existence since my visit to Priest Pond four years ago. But she is still alive, ninety-four years old, and from all accounts quite lively yet. She wrote some sarcastic things in her letter, about both me and Aunt Elizabeth; but she wound up by offering to pay all my expenses in Shrewsbury next year, including my board to Aunt Ruth.

“I am very glad. In spite of Aunt Nancy's sarcasm I don't mind feeling indebted to her. She has never nagged or patronized me — or did anything for me because she felt it her 'duty.' 'Hang duty,' she said in her letter. 'I'm doing this because it will vex some of the Priests, and because Wallace is putting on too many airs about "helping to educate Emily." I dare say you feel yourself that you've done virtuously. Tell Emily to go back to Shrewsbury and learn all she can — but to hide it and show her ankles.' Aunt Elizabeth was horrified at this and wouldn't show me the letter. But Cousin Jimmy told me what was in it.

“The second thing was that Aunt Elizabeth informed me that, since Aunt Nancy was paying my expenses, she, Aunt Elizabeth, felt that she ought not to hold me any longer to my promise about writing fiction. I was, she told me, free to do as I chose about that matter.

“‘Though I shall never approve of your writing fiction,’ she said, gravely. ‘At least I hope you will not neglect your studies.’

“Oh, no, dear Aunt Elizabeth, I won't neglect them. But I feel like a released prisoner. My fingers tingle to grasp a pen — my brain teems with plots. I've a score of fascinating dream characters I want to write about.

Oh, if there only were not such a chasm between seeing a thing and getting it down on paper!

“‘Ever since you got that cheque for a story last winter Elizabeth’s been wondering if she oughtn’t to let you write,’ Cousin Jimmy told me. ‘But she couldn’t bring herself to back down till Aunt Nancy’s letter gave her the excuse. Money makes the Murray mare go, Emily. Want some more Yankee stamps?’

“Mrs. Kent has told Teddy he can go for another year. After that he doesn’t know what will happen. So we are all going back and I am so happy that I want to write it in Italics.

* * *

“September 10, 19 —

“I have been elected president of the Senior class for this year. And the Skulls and Owls sent me a notice that I had been elected a member of their august fraternity without the formality of an application.

“Evelyn Blake, by the way, is at present laid up with tonsilitis!

“I accepted the presidency — but I wrote a note to the Skull and Owl declining membership with awful politeness.

“After black-beaning me last year, indeed!

* * *

“October 7, 19 —

“There was great excitement to-day in class when Dr. Hardy made a certain announcement. Kathleen Darcy’s uncle, who is a Professor of McGill, is visiting here, and he has taken it into his head to offer a prize for the best poem, written by a pupil of Shrewsbury High School — said prize being a complete set of Parkman. The poems must be handed in by the first of November, and are to be ‘not less than twenty lines, and no more than sixty.’ Sounds as if a tape-measure was the first requisite. I have been wildly hunting through my Jimmy-books tonight and have decided to

send in Wild Grapes. It is my second best poem. A Song of Sixpence is my best, but it has only fifteen lines and to add any more would spoil it. I think I can improve Wild Grapes a bit. There are two or three words in it I've always been dubious about. They don't exactly express fully what I want to say, but I can't find any others that do, either. I wish one could coin words, as I used to do long ago when I wrote letters to Father and just invented a word whenever I wanted one. But then, Father would have understood the words if he had ever seen the letters — while I am afraid the judges in the contest wouldn't.

“Wild Grapes should certainly win the prize. This isn't conceit or vanity or presumption. It's just knowing. If the prize were for mathematics Kath Darcy should win it. If it were for beauty Hazel Ellis would win it. If it were for all round proficiency, Perry Miller — for elocution, Ilse — for drawing, Teddy. But since it is for poetry, E. B. Starr is the one!

“We are studying Tennyson and Keats in Senior Literature this year. I like Tennyson but sometimes he enrages me. He is beautiful — not too beautiful, as Keats is — the Perfect Artist. But he never lets us forget the artist — we are always conscious of it — he is never swept away by some splendid mountain torrent of feeling. Not he — he flows on serenely between well-ordered banks and carefully laid-out gardens. And no matter how much one loves a garden one doesn't want to be cooped up in it all the time — one likes an excursion now and then into the wilderness. At least Emily Byrd Starr does — to the sorrow of her relations.

“Keats is too full of beauty. When I read his poetry I feel stifled in roses and long for a breath of frosty air or the austerity of a chill mountain peak. But, oh, he has some lines —

“Magic casements opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faerylands forlorn —

“When I read them I always feel a sort of despair! What is the use of trying to do what has been done, once and for all?

“But I found some other lines that inspire me — I have written them on the index-page of my new Jimmy-book.

“He ne’er is crowned
With immortality who fears to follow
Where airy voices lead.

“Oh, it’s true. We must follow our ‘airy voices,’ follow them through every discouragement and doubt and disbelief till they lead us to our City of Fulfilment, wherever it may be.

“I had four rejections in the mail to-day, raucously shrieking failure at me. Airy Voices grow faint in such a clamour. But I’ll hear them again. And I will follow — I will not be discouraged. Years ago I wrote a ‘vow’ — I found it the other day in an old packet in my cupboard — that I would ‘climb the Alpine Path and write my name on the scroll of fame.’

“I’ll keep on climbing!

* * *

“October 20, 19 —

“I read my Chronicles of an Old Garden over the other night. I think I can improve it considerably, now that Aunt Elizabeth has lifted the ban. I wanted Mr. Carpenter to read it, but he said,

“‘Lord, girl, I can’t wade through all that stuff. My eyes are bad. What is it — a book? Jade, it will be time ten years from now for you to be writing books.’

“‘I’ve got to practise,’ I said indignantly.

“‘Oh, practise — practise — but don’t try out the results on me. I’m too old — I really am, Jade. I don’t mind a short — a very short story — now and then — but let a poor old devil off the books.’

“I might ask Dean what he thinks of it. But Dean does laugh now at my ambitions — very cautiously and kindly — but he does laugh. And Teddy thinks everything I write perfect, so he’s no use as a critic. I wonder — I wonder if any publisher would accept The Chronicles? I’m sure I’ve seen books of the kind that weren’t much better.



“November 11, 19 —

“This evening I spent “expurgating” a novel for Mr. Towers’ use and behoof. When Mr. Towers was away in August on his vacation the sub-editor, Mr. Grady, began to run a serial in the Times called *A Bleeding Heart*. Instead of getting A. P. A. stuff, as Mr. Towers always does, Mr. Grady simply bought the reprint of a sensational and sentimental English novel at the Shoppe and began publishing it. It was very long and only about half of it has appeared. Mr. Towers saw that it would run all winter in its present form. So he bade me take it and cut out ‘all unnecessary stuff.’ I have followed instruction mercilessly—‘cutting out’ most of the kisses and embraces, two-thirds of the lovemaking and all the descriptions, with the happy results that I have reduced it to about a quarter of its normal length; and all I can say is may heaven have mercy on the soul of the compositor who has to set it in its present mutilated condition.

“Summer and autumn have gone. It seems to me they go more quickly than they used to. The goldenrod has turned white in the corners of the Land of Uprightness and the frost lies like a silver scarf on the ground o’ mornings. The evening winds that go ‘piping down the valleys wild’ are heartbroken searchers, seeking for things loved and lost, calling in vain on elf and fay. For the fairy folk, if they be not all fled afar to the southlands, must be curled up asleep in the hearts of the firs or among the roots of the ferns.

“And every night we have murky red sunsets flaming in smoky crimson across the harbour, with a star above them like a saved soul gazing with compassionate eyes into pits of torment where sinful spirits are being purged from the stains of earthly pilgrimage.

“Would I dare to show the above sentence to Mr. Carpenter? I would not. Therefore there is something fearfully wrong with it.

“I know what’s wrong with it, now that I’ve written it in cold blood. It’s ‘fine writing.’ And yet it’s just what I felt when I stood on the hill

beyond the Land of Uprightness tonight and looked across the harbour.
And who cares what this old journal thinks?

* * *

“December 2, 19 —

“The results of the prize poem competition were announced to-day.
Evelyn Blake is the winner with a poem entitled A Legend of Abegweit.

“There isn’t anything to say — so I say it.

“Besides, Aunt Ruth has said everything!

* * *

“December 15, 19 —

“Evelyn’s prize poem was printed in the Times this week with her photograph and a biographical sketch. The set of Parkman is on exhibition in the windows of the Booke Shoppe.

“A Legend of Abegweit is a fairly good poem. It is in ballad style, and rhythm and rhyme are correct — which could not be said of any other poem of Evelyn’s I’ve ever seen.

“Evelyn Blake has said of everything of mine she ever saw in print that she was sure I copied it from somewhere. I hate to imitate her — but I know that she never wrote that poem. It isn’t any expression of her at all. She might as well have imitated Dr. Hardy’s handwriting and claimed it as her own. Her mincing, copperplate script is as much like Dr. Hardy’s black, forcible scrawl as that poem is like her.

“Besides, though A Legend of Abegweit is fairly good it is not as good as Wild Grapes.

“I am not going to say so to anyone but down it goes in this journal.
Because it’s true.

* * *

“December 20, 19 —

“I showed A Legend of Abegweit and Wild Grapes to Mr. Carpenter. When he had read them both he said, ‘Who were the judges?’

“I told him.

“‘Give them my compliments and tell them they’re asses.’ he said.

“I feel comforted. I won’t tell the judges — or anyone — that they’re asses. But it soothes me to know they are.

“The strange thing is — Aunt Elizabeth asked to see Wild Grapes and when she had read it she said,

“‘I am no judge of poetry, of course, but it seems to me that yours is of a higher order.’

* * *

“Jan. 4, 19 —

“I spent the Christmas week at Uncle Oliver’s. I didn’t like it. It was too noisy. I would have liked it years ago but they never asked me then. I had to eat when I wasn’t hungry — play parchesi when I didn’t want to — talk when I wanted to be silent. I was never alone for one moment all the time I was there. Besides, Andrew is getting to be such a nuisance. And Aunt Addie was odiously kind and motherly. I just felt all the time like a cat who is held on a lap where it doesn’t want to be and gently, firmly stroked. I had to sleep with Jen, who is my first cousin and just my age, and who thinks in her heart I’m not half good enough for Andrew but is going to try, with the blessing of God, to make the best of it. Jen is a nice, sensible girl and she and I are friendish. That is a word of my own coining. Jen and I are more than mere acquaintances but not really friendly. We will always be friendish and never more than friendish. We don’t talk the same language.

“When I got home to dear New Moon I went up to my room and shut the door and revelled in solitude.

“School opened yesterday. To-day in the Booke Shoppe I had an internal laugh. Mrs. Rodney and Mrs. Elder were looking over some books

and Mrs. Elder said,

“That story in the Times — A Bleeding Heart — was the strangest one I ever read. It wandered on, chapter after chapter, for weeks, and never seemed to get anywhere, and then it just finished up in eight chapters lickety-split. I can’t understand it.’

“I could have solved the mystery for her but I didn’t.”

In the Old John House

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When *The Woman Who Spanked the King* was accepted and published by a New York magazine of some standing, quite a sensation was produced in Blair Water and Shrewsbury, especially when the incredible news was whispered from lip to lip that Emily had actually been paid forty dollars for it. For the first time her clan began to take her writing mania with some degree of seriousness and Aunt Ruth gave up, finally and for ever, all slurs over wasted time. The acceptance came at the psychological moment when the sands of Emily's faith were running rather low. All the fall and winter her stuff had been coming back to her, except from two magazines whose editors evidently thought that literature was its own reward and quite independent of degrading monetary considerations. At first she had always felt dreadfully when a poem or story over which she had agonized came back with one of those icy little rejection slips or a few words of faint praise — the "but" rejections, Emily called these, and hated them worse than the printed ones. Tears of disappointment would come. But after a time she got hardened to it and didn't mind — so much. She only gave the editorial slip the Murray look and said "I will succeed." And never at any time had she any real doubt that she would. Down, deep down, something told her that her time would come. So, though she flinched momentarily at each rejection, as from the flick of a whip, she sat down and — wrote another story.

Still, her inner voice had grown rather faint under so many discouragements. The acceptance of *The Woman Who Spanked the King* suddenly raised it into a joyous paeon of certainty again. The cheque meant much, but the storming of that magazine much more. She felt that she was surely winning a foothold. Mr. Carpenter chuckled over it and told her it really was "absolutely good."

“The best in this story belongs to Mistress McIntyre,” said Emily ruefully. “I can’t call it mine.”

“The setting is yours — and what you’ve added harmonizes perfectly with your foundation. And you didn’t polish hers up too much — that shows the artist. Weren’t you tempted to?”

“Yes. There were so many places I thought I could improve it a good deal.”

“But you didn’t try to — that makes it yours,” said Mr. Carpenter — and left her to puzzle his meaning out for herself.

Emily spent thirty-five of her dollars so sensibly that even Aunt Ruth herself couldn’t find fault with her budget. But with the remaining five she bought a set of Parkman. It was a much nicer set than the prize one — which the donor had really picked out of a mailorder list — and Emily felt much prouder of it than if it had been the prize. After all, it was better to earn things for yourself. Emily has those Parkmans yet — somewhat faded and frayed now, but dearer to her than all the other volumes in her library. For a few weeks she was very happy and uplifted. The Murrays were proud of her. Principal Hardy had congratulated her, a local elocutionist of some repute had read her story at a concert in Charlottetown. And, most wonderful of all, a faraway reader in Mexico had written her a letter telling her what pleasure *The Woman Who Spanked the King* had given him. Emily read and re-read that letter until she knew it off by heart, and slept with it under her pillow. No lover’s missive was ever more tenderly treated.

Then the affair of the old John house came up like a thundercloud and darkened all her cerulean sky.

There was a concert and “pie social” at Derry Pond one Friday night and Ilse had been asked to recite. Dr. Burnley took Ilse and Emily and Perry and Teddy over in his big, double-seated sleigh, and they had a gay and merry eight miles’ drive through the soft snow that was beginning to fall. When the concert was half over, Dr. Burnley was summoned out. There was sudden and serious illness in a Derry Pond household. The doctor went, telling Teddy that he must drive the party home. Dr. Burnley

made no bones about it. They might have silly rules about chaperonage in Shrewsbury and Charlottetown, but in Blair Water and Derry Pond they did not obtain. Teddy and Perry were decent boys — Emily was a Murray — Ilse was no fool. The doctor would have summed them up thus tersely if he had thought about it at all.

When the concert was over they left for home. It was snowing very thickly now and the wind was rising rapidly, but the first three miles of the road were through sheltering woods and were not unpleasant. There was a wild, weird beauty in the snow-coated ranks of trees, standing in the pale light of the moon behind the storm-clouds. The sleighbells laughed at the shriek of the wind far overhead. Teddy managed the doctor's team without difficulty. Once or twice Emily had a strong suspicion that he was using only one arm to drive them. She wondered if he had noticed that evening that she wore her hair really "up" for the first time — in a soft ebon "Psyche knot" under her crimson hat. Emily thought again that there was something quite delightful about a storm.

But when they left the woods their troubles began. The storm swooped down on them in all its fury. The winter road went through the fields and wound and twisted and doubled in and out and around corners and spruce groves — a road that would "break a snake's back," as Perry said. The track was already almost obliterated with the drift and the horses plunged to their knees. They had not gone a mile before Perry whistled in dismay.

"We'll never make Blair Water tonight, Ted."

"We've got to make somewhere," shouted Ted. "We can't camp here. And there's no house till we get back to the summer road, past Shaw's hill. Duck under the robes, girls. You'd better get back with Ilse, Emily, and Perry will come here with me."

The transfer was effected, Emily no longer thinking storms quite so delightful. Perry and Teddy were both thoroughly alarmed. They knew the horses could not go much farther in that depth of snow — the summer road beyond Shaw's hill would be blocked with drift — and it was bitterly cold on those high, bleak hills between the valleys of Derry Pond and Blair Water.

“If we can only get to Malcolm Shaw’s we’ll be all right,” muttered Perry.

“We’ll never get that far. Shaw’s hill is filled in by this time to the fence-tops,” said Teddy. “Here’s the old John house. Do you suppose we could stay here?”

“Cold as a barn,” said Perry. “The girls would freeze. We must try to make Malcolm’s.”

When the plunging horses reached the summer road, the boys saw at a glance that Shaw’s hill was a hopeless proposition. All traces of track were obliterated by drifts that were over the fence-tops. Telephone-posts were blown down across the road and a huge, fallen tree blocked the gap where the field road ran out to it.

“Nothing to do but go back to the old John house,” said Perry. “We can’t go wandering over the fields in the teeth of this storm, looking for a way through to Malcolm’s. We’d get stuck and freeze to death.”

Teddy turned the horses. The snow was thicker than ever. Every minute the drift deepened. The track was entirely gone, and if the old John house had been very far away they could never have found it. Fortunately, it was near, and after one last wild flounder through the unbroken drift around it, during which the boys had to get out and scramble along on their own feet, they reached the comparative calm of the little cleared space in the young spruce woods, wherein stood the old John house.

The “old John house” had been old when, forty years before, John Shaw had moved into it with his young bride. It had been a lonely spot even then, far back from the road, and almost surrounded by spruce woods. John Shaw had lived there five years; then his wife died; he had sold the farm to his brother Malcolm and gone West. Malcolm farmed the land and kept the little barn in good repair, but the house had never been occupied since, save for a few weeks in winter when Malcolm’s boys camped there while they “got out” their firewood. It was not even locked. Tramps and burglars were unknown in Derry Pond. Our castaways found easy entrance through the door of the tumbledown porch and drew a breath of relief to find themselves out of the shrieking wind and driving snow.

“We won’t freeze anyhow,” said Perry. “Ted and I’ll have to see if we can get the horses in the barn and then we’ll come back and see if we can’t make ourselves comfortable. I’ve got matches and I’ve never been stumped yet.”

Perry met no great difficulties in making good his boast. His lighted match revealed a couple of half-burned candles in squat tin candlesticks, a cracked and rusty but still quite serviceable old Waterloo stove, three chairs, a bench, a sofa and a table.

“What’s the matter with this?” demanded Perry.

“They’ll be awfully worried about us at home, that’s all,” said Emily, shaking the snow off her wraps.

“Worry won’t kill them in one night,” said Perry. “We’ll get home tomorrow somehow.”

“Meanwhile, this is an adventure,” laughed Emily. “Let’s get all the fun out of it we can.”

Ilse said nothing — which was very odd in Ilse. Emily, looking at her, saw that she was very pale and recalled that she had been unusually quiet ever since they had left the hall.

“Aren’t you feeling all right, Ilse?” she asked anxiously.

“I’m feeling all wrong,” said Ilse, with a ghastly smile. “I’m — I’m sick as a dog,” she added, with more force than elegance.

“Oh, Ilse—”

“Don’t hit the ceiling,” said Ilse impatiently. “I’m not beginning pneumonia or appendicitis. I’m just plain sick. That pie I had at the hall was too rich, I suppose. It’s turned my little tummy upside down. O — w — w.”

“Lie down on the sofa,” urged Emily. “Perhaps you’ll feel better then.”

Ilse, shuddering and abject, cast herself down. A “sick stomach” is not a romantic ailment or a very deadly one, but it certainly takes the ginger out of its victim for the time being.

The boys, finding a box full of wood behind the stove, soon had a roaring fire. Perry took one of the candles and explored the little house. In a small room opening off the kitchen was an old-fashioned wooden

bedstead with a rope mattress. The other room — it had been Almira Shaw's parlour in olden days — was half filled with oat-straw. Upstairs there was nothing but emptiness and dust. But in the little pantry Perry made some finds.

"There's a can of pork and beans here," he announced, "and a tin box half full of crackers. I see our breakfast. I s'pose the Shaw boys left them here. And what's this?"

Perry brought out a small bottle, uncorked and sniffed it solemnly.

"Whisky, as I'm a living sinner. Not much, but enough. Here's your medicine, Ilse. You take it in some hot water and it'll settle your stomach in a jiffy."

"I hate the taste of whisky," moaned Ilse. "Father never uses it — he doesn't believe in it."

"Aunt Tom does," said Perry, as if that settled the matter. "It's a sure cure. Try it and see."

"But there isn't any water," said Ilse.

"You'll have to take it straight, then. There's only about two tablespoons in the bottle. Try it. It won't kill you if it doesn't cure you."

Poor Ilse was really feeling so abjectly wretched that she would have taken anything, short of poison, if she thought there was any chance of its helping her. She crawled off the sofa, sat down on a chair before the fire and swallowed the dose. It was good, strong whisky — Malcolm Shaw could have told you that. And I think there was really more than two tablespoonfuls in the bottle, though Perry always insisted that there wasn't. Ilse sat huddled in her chair for a few minutes longer, then she got up and put her hand uncertainly on Emily's shoulder.

"Do you feel worse?" asked Emily, anxiously.

"I'm — I'm drunk," said Ilse. "Help me back to the sofa, for mercy's sake. My legs are going to double up under me. Who was the Scotchman up at Malvern who said he never got drunk but the whisky always settled in his knees? But mine's in the head too. It's spinning round."

Perry and Teddy both sprang to help her and between them a very wobbly Ilse made safe port on the sofa again.

“Is there anything we can do?” implored Emily.

“Too much has already been done,” said Ilse with preternatural solemnity. She shut her eyes and not another word would she say in response to any entreaty. Finally it was deemed best to let her alone.

“She’ll sleep it off, and, anyway, I guess it’ll settle her stomach,” said Perry.

Emily could not take it so philosophically. Not until Ilse’s quiet breathing half an hour later proved that she was really asleep could Emily begin to taste the flavour of their “adventure.” The wind threshed about the old house and rattled the windows as if in a fury over their escape from it. It was very pleasant to sit before the stove and listen to the wild melody of defeated storm — very pleasant to think about the vanished life of this old dead house, in the years when it had been full of love and laughter — very pleasant to talk of cabbages and kings with Perry and Teddy, in the faint glow of candlelight — very pleasant to sit in occasional silences, staring into the firelight, which flickered alluringly over Emily’s milk-white brow and haunting, shadowy eyes. Once Emily, glancing up suddenly, found Teddy looking at her strangely. For just a moment their eyes met and locked — only a moment — yet Emily was never really to belong to herself again. She wondered dazedly what had happened.

Whence came that wave of unimaginable sweetness that seemed to engulf her, body and spirit? She trembled — she was afraid. It seemed to open such dizzying possibilities of change. The only clear idea that emerged from her confusion of thought was that she wanted to sit with Teddy before a fire like this every night of their lives — and then a fig for the storms! She dared not look at Teddy again, but she thrilled with a delicious sense of his nearness; she was acutely conscious of his tall, boyish straightness, his glossy black hair, his luminous dark-blue eyes. She had always known she liked Teddy better than any other male creature in her ken — but this was something apart from liking altogether — this sense of belonging to him that had come in that significant exchange of glances. All at once she seemed to know why she had always snubbed any of the High School boys who wanted to be her beau.

The delight of the spell that had been suddenly laid on her was so intolerable that she must break it. She sprang up and went over to the window. The little hissing whisper of snow against the blue-white frost crystals on the pane seemed softly to scorn her bewilderment. The three big haystacks, thatched with snow, dimly visible at the corner of the barn, seemed to be shaking their shoulders with laughter over her predicament. The fire in the stove reflected out in the clearing seemed like a mocking goblin bonfire under the firs. Beyond it, through the woods, were unfathomable spaces of white storm. For a moment Emily wished she were out in them — there would be freedom there from this fetter of terrible delight that had so suddenly and inexplicably made her a prisoner — her, who hated bonds.

“Am I falling in love with Teddy?” she thought. “I won’t — I won’t.”

Perry, quite unconscious of all that had happened in the wink of an eye to Teddy and Emily, yawned and stretched.

“Guess we’d better hit the hay — the candles are about done. I guess that straw will make a real good bed for us, Ted. Let’s carry enough out and pile it on the bedstead in there to make a comfortable roost for the girls. With one of the fur rugs over it, it won’t be so bad. We ought to have some high old dreams tonight — Ilse especially. Wonder if she’s sober yet?”

“I’ve a pocket full of dreams to sell,” said Teddy, whimsically, with a new, unaccountable gaiety of voice and manner. “What d’ye lack? What d’ye lack? A dream of success — a dream of adventure — a dream of the sea — a dream of the woodland — any kind of a dream you want at reasonable prices, including one or two unique little nightmares. What will you give me for a dream?”

Emily turned around — stared at him for a moment — then forgot thrills and pells and everything else in a wild longing for a Jimmy-book. As if his question, “What will you give me for a dream?” had been a magic formula opening some sealed chamber in her brain, she saw unrolling before her a dazzling idea for a story — complete even to the

title — A Seller of Dreams. For the rest of that night Emily thought of nothing else.

The boys went off to their straw couch, and Emily, after deciding to leave Ilse, who seemed comfortable, on the sofa as long as she slept, lay down on the bed in the small room. But not to sleep. She had never felt less like sleeping. She did not want to sleep. She had forgotten that she had been falling in love with Teddy — she had forgotten everything but her wonderful idea; chapter by chapter, page by page, it unrolled itself before her in the darkness. Her characters lived and laughed and talked and did and enjoyed and suffered — she saw them on the background of the storm. Her cheeks burned, her heart beat, she tingled from head to foot with the keen rapture of creation — a joy that sprang fountain-like from the depths of being and seemed independent of all earthly things. Ilse had got drunk on Malcolm Shaw's forgotten Scotch whisky, but Emily was intoxicated with immortal wine.

Thicker than Water

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Emily did not sleep until nearly morning. The storm had ceased and the landscape around the old John house had a spectral look in the light of the sinking moon when she finally drifted into slumber, with a delightful sense of accomplishment — for she had finished thinking out her story. Nothing remained now except to jot its outlines down in her Jimmy-book. She would not feel safe until she had them in black and white. She would not try to write it yet — oh, not for years. She must wait until time and experience had made of her pen an instrument capable of doing justice to her conception — for it is one thing to pursue an idea through an ecstatic night and quite another to get it down on paper in a manner that will reproduce a tenth of its original charm and significance.

Emily was wakened by Ilse, who was sitting on the side of her bed, looking rather pale and seedy, but with amber eyes full of unconquerable laughter.

“Well, I’ve slept off my debauch, Emily Starr. And my tummy’s all right this morning. Malcolm’s whisky did settle it — though I think the remedy is worse than the disease. I suppose you wondered why I wouldn’t talk last night.”

“I thought you were too drunk to talk,” said Emily candidly.

Ilse giggled.

“I was too drunk not to talk. When I got to that sofa, Emily, my giddiness passed off and I wanted to talk — oh, golly, but I wanted to talk! And I wanted to say the silliest things and tell everything I ever knew or thought. I’d just enough sense left to know I mustn’t say those things or I’d make a fool of myself for ever — and I felt that if I said one word it would be like taking a cork out of a bottle — everything would gurgle out. So I just buttoned my mouth up and wouldn’t say the one word. It gives me a chill to think of the things I could have said — and before Perry.

You'll never catch your little Ilse going on a spree again. I'm a reformed character from this day forth."

"What I can't understand," said Emily, "is how such a small dose of anything could have turned your head like that."

"Oh, well, you know Mother was a Mitchell. It's a notorious fact that the Mitchells can't take a teaspoonful of booze without toppling. It's one of their family kinks. Well, rise up, my love, my fair one. The boys are getting a fire on and Perry says we can dope up a fair meal from the pork and beans and crackers. I'm hungry enough to eat the cans."

It was while Emily was rummaging in the pantry in search of some salt that she made a great discovery. Far back on the top shelf was a pile of dusty old books — dating back probably to the days of John and Almira Shaw — old, mildewed diaries, almanacs, account books. Emily knocked the pile down and when she was picking it up discovered that one of the books was an old scrapbook. A loose leaf had fallen out of it. As Emily replaced it, her eyes fell on the title of a poem pasted on it. She caught it up, her breath coming quickly. A Legend of Abegweit — the poem with which Evelyn had won the prize! Here it was in this old, yellowed scrapbook of twenty years' vintage — word for word, except that Evelyn had cut out two verses to shorten it to the required length.

"And the two best verses in it," thought Emily, contemptuously. "How like Evelyn! She has simply no literary judgment."

Emily replaced the books on the shelf, but she slipped the loose leaf into her pocket and ate her share of breakfast very absently. By this time men were on the roads breaking out the tracks. Perry and Teddy found a shovel in the barn and soon had a way opened to the road. They got home finally, after a slow but uneventful drive, to find the New Moon folks rather anxious as to their fate and mildly horrified to learn that they had had to spend the night in the old John house.

"You might have caught your deaths of cold," said Elizabeth, severely.

"Well, it was Hobson's choice. It was that or freeze to death in the drifts," said Emily, and nothing more was said about the matter. Since they

had got home safe and nobody had caught cold, what more was there to say? That was the New Moon way of looking at it.

The Shrewsbury way was somewhat different. But the Shrewsbury way did not become apparent immediately. The whole story was over Shrewsbury by Monday night — Ilse told it in school and described her drunken orgy with great spirit and vivacity, amid shrieks of laughter from her classmates. Emily, who had called, for the first time, on Evelyn Blake that evening, found Evelyn looking quite well pleased over something.

“Can’t you stop Ilse from telling that story, my dear?”

“What story?”

“Why, about getting drunk last Friday night — the night you and she spent with Teddy Kent and Perry Miller in that old house up at Derry Pond,” said Evelyn smoothly.

Emily suddenly flushed. There was something in Evelyn’s tone — the innocent fact seemed all at once to take on shades of a sinister significance. Was Evelyn being deliberately insolent?

“I don’t know why she shouldn’t tell the story,” said Emily, coldly. “It was a good joke on her.”

“But you know how people will talk,” said Evelyn, gently. “It’s all rather — unfortunate. Of course, you couldn’t help being caught in the storm — I suppose — but Ilse will only make matters worse. She is so indiscreet — haven’t you any influence over her, Emily?”

“I didn’t come here to discuss that,” said Emily, bluntly. “I came to show you something I found in the old John house.”

She held out the leaf of the scrapbook. Evelyn looked at it blankly for a moment. Then her face turned a curious mottled purple. She made an involuntary movement as if to snatch the paper, but Emily quickly drew it back. Their eyes met. In that moment Emily felt that the score between them was at last even.

She waited for Evelyn to speak. After a moment Evelyn did speak — sullenly:

“Well, what are you going to do about it?”

“I haven’t decided yet,” said Emily.

Evelyn's long, brown, treacherous eyes swept up to Emily's face with a crafty, seeking expression.

"I suppose you mean to take it to Dr. Hardy and disgrace me before the school?"

"Well, you deserve it, don't you?" said Emily, judicially.

"I — I wanted to win that prize because Father promised me a trip to Vancouver next summer if I won it," muttered Evelyn, suddenly crumpling. "I — I was crazy to go. Oh, don't betray me, Emily — Father will be furious. I — I'll give you the Parkman set — I'll do anything — only don't—"

Evelyn began to cry. Emily didn't like the sight.

"I don't want your Parkman," she said, contemptuously, "But there is one thing you must do. You will confess to Aunt Ruth that it was you who drew that moustache on my face the day of the English exam and not Ilse."

Evelyn wiped away her tears and swallowed something.

"That was only a joke," she sobbed.

"It was no joke to lie about it," said Emily, sternly.

"You're so — so — blunt." Evelyn looked for a dry spot on her handkerchief and found one. "It was all a joke. I just ran back from the Shoppe to do it. I thought, of course, you'd look in the glass when you got up. I d-didn't suppose you'd g-go to class like that. And I didn't know your Aunt took it so seriously. Of course — I'll tell her — if you'll — if you'll —"

"Write it out and sign it," said Emily, remorselessly.

Evelyn wrote it out and signed it.

"You'll give me — that," she pleaded, with an entreating gesture towards the scrapbook leaf.

"Oh, no, I'll keep this," said Emily.

"And what assurance have I that you won't tell — some day — after all?" sniffed Evelyn.

"You have the word of a Starr," said Emily, loftily.

She went out with a smile. She had finally conquered in the long duel. And she held in her hand what would finally clear Ilse in Aunt Ruth's eyes.

Aunt Ruth sniffed a good deal over Evelyn's note and was inclined to ask questions as to how it had been extorted. But not getting much satisfaction out of Emily on this score and knowing that Allan Burnley had been sore at her ever since her banishment of his daughter, she secretly welcomed an excuse to recall it.

"Very well, then. I told you Ilse could come here when you could prove to my satisfaction that she had not played that trick on you. You have proved it, and I keep my word. I am a just woman," concluded Aunt Ruth — who was, perhaps, the most unjust woman on the earth at that time.

So far, well. But if Evelyn wanted revenge she tasted it to the full in the next three weeks, without raising a finger or wagging a tongue to secure it. All Shrewsbury burned with gossip about the night of the storm — insinuations, distortions, wholesale fabrications. Emily was so snubbed at Janet Thompson's afternoon tea that she went home white with humiliation. Ilse was furious.

"I wouldn't mind if I had been rip-roaring drunk and had the fun of it," she vowed with a stamp of her foot. "But I wasn't drunk enough to be happy — only just drunk enough to be silly. There are moments, Emily, when I feel that I could have a gorgeous time if I were a cat and these old Shrewsbury dames were mice. But let's keep our smiles pinned on. I really don't care a snap for them. This will soon die out. We'll fight."

"You can't fight insinuations," said Emily, bitterly.

Ilse did not care — but Emily cared horribly. The Murray pride smarted unbearably. And it smarted worse and worse as time went on. A sneer at the night of the storm was published in a rag of a paper that was printed in a town on the mainland and made up of "spicy" notes sent to it from all over the Maritimes. Nobody ever confessed to reading it, but almost everybody knew everything that was in it — except Aunt Ruth, who wouldn't have handled the sheet with the tongs. No names were mentioned, but every one knew who was referred to, and the venomous innuendo of the thing was unmistakable. Emily thought she would die of shame. And the worst sting was that it was so vulgar and ugly — and had made that beautiful night of laughter and revelation and rapturous creation

in the old John house vulgar and ugly. She had thought it would always be one of her most beautiful memories. And now this!

Teddy and Perry saw red and wanted to kill somebody, but whom could they kill? As Emily told them, anything they said or did would only make the matter worse. It was bad enough after the publication of that paragraph. Emily was not invited to Florence Blake's dance the next week — the great social event of the winter. She was left out of Hattie Denoon's skating party. Several of the Shrewsbury matrons did not see her when they met her on the streets. Others set her a thousand miles away by bland, icy politeness. Some young men about town grew oddly familiar in look and manner. One of them, with whom she was totally unacquainted, spoke to her one evening in the Post Office. Emily turned and looked at him. Crushed, humiliated as she was, she was still Archibald Murray's granddaughter. The wretched youth was three blocks away from the Post Office before he came to himself and knew where he was. To this day he has not forgotten how Emily Byrd Starr's eyes looked when she was angry.

But even the Murray look, while it might demolish a concrete offender, could not scotch scandalous stories. Everybody, she felt morbidly, believed them. It was reported to her that Miss Percy of the library said she had always distrusted Emily Starr's smile — she had always felt sure it was deliberately provocative and alluring. Emily felt that she, like poor King Henry, would never smile again. People remembered that old Nancy Priest had been a wild thing seventy years ago — and hadn't there been some scandal about Mrs. Dutton herself in her girlhood? What's bred in the bone, you understand. Her mother had eloped, hadn't she? And Ilse's mother? Of course, she had been killed by falling into the old Lee well, but who knew what she would have done if she hadn't? Then there was that old story of bathing on Blair Water sandshore, *au naturel*. In short, you didn't see ankles like Emily's on proper girls. They simply didn't have them.

Even harmless, unnecessary Andrew had ceased to call on Friday nights. There was a sting in this. Emily thought Andrew a bore and dreaded his Friday nights. She had always meant to send him packing as soon as he gave her an opportunity. But for Andrew to go packing of his

own accord had a very different flavour, mark you. Emily clenched her hands when she thought of it.

A bitter report came to her ears that Principal Hardy had said she ought to resign from the presidency of the Senior Class. Emily threw up her head. Resign? Confess defeat and admit guilt? Not she!

“I could knock that man’s block off,” said Ilse. “Emily Starr, don’t let yourself worry over this. What does it matter what a lot of doddering old donkeys think? I hereby devote them to the infernal gods. They’ll have their maws full of something else in a month and they’ll forget this.”

“I’ll never forget it,” said Emily, passionately. “To my dying day I’ll remember the humiliation of these weeks. And now — Ilse, Mrs. Tolliver has written asking me to give up my stall at the St. John’s bazaar.”

“Emily Starr — she hasn’t!”

“She has. Oh, of course, she cloaks it under an excuse that she’d like a stall for her cousin from New York, who is visiting her — but I understand. And it’s ‘Dear Miss Starr’ — look you — when it was ‘Dearest Emily’ a few weeks ago. Everybody in St. John’s will know why I’ve been asked to step out. And she almost went on her knees to Aunt Ruth to let me take the stall. Aunt Ruth didn’t want to let me.”

“What will your Aunt Ruth say about this?”

“Oh, that’s the worst of it, Ilse. She’ll have to know now. She’s never heard a word of this since she’s been laid up with her sciatica. I’ve lived in dread of her finding out — for I know it will be hideous when she does. She’s getting about now, so of course she’d soon hear it, anyway. And I haven’t the spirit to stand up to her, Ilse. Oh, it all seems like a nightmare.”

“They’ve got such mean, narrow, malicious, beastly little minds in this town,” said Ilse — and was straightway comforted. But Emily could not ease her tortured spirit by a choice assortment of adjectives. Neither could she write out her misery and so rid herself of it. There were no more jottings in her Jimmy-book, no further entries in her journal, no new stories or poems. The flash never came now — never would come again. There would never again be wonderful little secret raptures of insight and

creation which no one could share. Life had grown thin and poor, tarnished and unlovely. There was no beauty in anything — not even in the golden-white March solitudes of New Moon, when she went home for the weekend. She had longed to go home, where no one believed ill of her. No one at New Moon had heard anything of what was being whispered in Shrewsbury. But there very ignorance tortured Emily. Soon they would know; they would be hurt and grieved over the fact that a Murray, even an innocent Murray, had become a target for scandal. And who knew how they would regard Ilse's mishap with Malcolm's Scotch? Emily felt it almost a relief to go back to Shrewsbury.

She imagined slurs in everything Principal Hardy said — covert insults in every remark or look of her schoolmates. Only Evelyn Blake posed as friend and defender, and this was the most unkindest cut of all. Whether alarm or malice was beyond Evelyn's pose, Emily did not know — but she did know that Evelyn's parade of friendship and loyalty and staunch belief in the face of overwhelming evidence, was something that seemed to smirch her more than all the gossip could. Evelyn went about assuring every one that she wouldn't believe one word against "poor dear Emily." Poor dear Emily could have cheerfully watched her drown — or thought she could.

Meanwhile, Aunt Ruth, who had been confined to her house for several weeks with sciatica and had been so crusty with it that neither friends nor enemies had dared to hint anything to her of the gossip concerning her niece, was beginning to take notice. Her sciatica had departed and left her faculties free to concentrate on other things. She recalled that Emily's appetite had been poor for days and Aunt Ruth suspected that she had not been sleeping. The moment this suspicion occurred to Aunt Ruth she took action. Secret worries were not to be tolerated in her house.

"Emily, I want to know what is the matter with you," she demanded, one Saturday afternoon when Emily pale and listless, with purple smudges under her eyes, had eaten next to nothing for dinner.

A little colour came into Emily's face. The hour she had dreaded so was upon her. Aunt Ruth must be told all. And Emily felt miserably that

she had neither the courage to endure the resultant heckling nor the spirit to hold her own against Aunt Ruth's whys and wherefores. She knew so well how it would all be: horror over the John house episode — as if anybody could have helped it: annoyance over the gossip — as if Emily were responsible for it: several assurances that she had always expected something like this: and then intolerable weeks of reminders and slurs. Emily felt a sort of mental nausea at the whole prospect. For a minute she could not speak.

“What have you been doing?” persisted Aunt Ruth.

Emily set her teeth. It was unendurable, but it must be endured. The story had to be told — the only thing to do was to get it told as soon as possible.

“I haven't done anything wrong, Aunt Ruth. I've just done something that has been misunderstood.”

Aunt Ruth sniffed. But she listened without interruption to Emily's story. Emily told it as briefly as possible, feeling as if she were a criminal in the witness box with Aunt Ruth as judge, jury and prosecuting attorney all in one. When she had finished she sat in silence waiting for some characteristic Aunt Ruthian comment.

“And what are they making all the fuss about?” said Aunt Ruth.

Emily didn't know exactly what to say. She stared at Aunt Ruth.

“They — they're thinking — and saying all sorts of horrible things,” she faltered. “You see — down here in sheltered Shrewsbury they didn't realize what a storm it was. And then, of course, every one who repeated the story coloured it a little — we were all drunk by the time it filtered through Shrewsbury.”

“What exasperates me,” said Aunt Ruth, “is to think you told about it in Shrewsbury at all. Why on earth didn't you keep it all quiet?”

“That would have been sly.” Emily's demon suddenly prompted her to say this. Now that the story was out she felt a rebound of spirit that was almost laughter.

“Sly! It would have been common sense,” snorted Aunt Ruth. “But, of course, Ilse couldn't hold her tongue. I've often told you, Emily, that a

fool friend is ten times more dangerous than an enemy. But what are you killing yourself worrying for? Your conscience is clear. This gossip will soon die out.”

“Principal Hardy says I ought to resign from the presidency of the class,” said Emily.

“Jim Hardy! Why, his Father was a hired boy to my Grandfather for years,” said Aunt Ruth in tones of ineffable contempt. “Does Jim Hardy imagine that my niece would behave improperly?”

Emily felt herself all at sea. She thought she really must be dreaming. Was this incredible woman Aunt Ruth? It couldn’t be Aunt Ruth. Emily was up against one of the contradictions of human nature. She was learning that you may fight with your kin — disapprove of them — even hate them, but that there is a bond between you for all that. Somehow, your very nerves and sinews are twisted with theirs. Blood is always thicker than water. Let an outsider attack — that’s all. Aunt Ruth had at least one of the Murray virtues — loyalty to clan.

“Don’t worry over Jim Hardy,” said Aunt Ruth. “I’ll soon settle him. I’ll teach people to keep their tongues off the Murrays.”

“But Mrs. Tolliver has asked me to let her cousin take my stall in the bazaar,” said Emily. “You know what that means.”

“I know that Polly Tolliver is an upstart and a fool,” retorted Aunt Ruth. “Ever since Nat Tolliver married his stenographer, St. John’s Church hasn’t been the same place. Ten years ago she was a barefooted girl running round the back streets of Charlottetown. The cats themselves wouldn’t have brought her in. Now she puts on the airs of a queen and tries to run the church. I’ll soon clip her claws. She was pretty thankful a few weeks ago to have a Murray in her stall. It was a rise in the world for her. Polly Tolliver, forsooth. What is this world coming to?”

Aunt Ruth sailed upstairs, leaving a dazed Emily looking at vanishing bogies. Aunt Ruth came down again, ready for the warpath. She had taken out her crimps, put on her best bonnet, her best black silk, and her new sealskin coat. Thus arrayed she skimmed uptown to the Tolliver residence on the hill. She remained there half an hour closeted with Mrs. Nat

Tolliver. Aunt Ruth was a short, fat, little woman, looking very dowdy and old-fashioned in spite of new bonnet and sealskin coat. Mrs. Nat was the last word in fashion and elegance, with her Paris gown, her lorgnette and her beautifully marcelled hair — marcelled were just coming in then and Mrs. Nat's was the first in Shrewsbury. But the victory of the encounter did not perch on Mrs. Tolliver's standard. Nobody knows just what was said at that notable interview. Certainly Mrs. Tolliver never told. But when Aunt Ruth left the big house Mrs. Tolliver was crushing her Paris gown and her marcel waves among the cushions of her davenport while she wept tears of rage and humiliation; and Aunt Ruth carried a note in her muff to Mrs. Tolliver's "Dear Emily," saying that her cousin was not going to take part in the bazaar and would "Dear Emily" be so kind as to take the stall as at first planned. Dr. Hardy was next interviewed, and again Aunt Ruth went, saw, conquered. The maid in the Hardy household heard and reported one sentence of the confab, though nobody ever believed that Aunt Ruth really said to stately, spectacled Dr. Hardy,

"I know you're a fool, Jim Hardy, but for heaven's sake pretend you're not for five minutes!"

No, the thing was impossible. Of course, the maid invented it.

"You won't have much more trouble, Emily," said Aunt Ruth on her return home. "Polly and Jim have got their craws full. When people see you at the bazaar they'll soon realise what way the wind blows and trim their sails accordingly. I've a few things to say to some other folks when opportunity offers. Matters have come to a pretty pass if decent boys and girls can't escape freezing to death without being slandered for it. Don't you give this thing another thought, Emily. Remember, you've got a family behind you."

Emily went to her glass when Aunt Ruth had gone downstairs. She tilted it at the proper angle and smiled at Emily-in-the-Glass — smiled slowly, provocatively, alluringly.

"I wonder where I put my Jimmy-book," thought Emily. "I must add a few more touches to my sketch of Aunt Ruth."

“Love Me, Love My Dog”

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When Shrewsbury people discovered that Mrs. Dutton was backing her niece, the flame of gossip that had swept over the town died down in an incredibly short time. Mrs. Dutton gave more to the various funds of St. John’s Church than any other member — it was a Murray tradition to support your church becomingly. Mrs. Dutton had lent money to half the business men in town — she held Nat Tolliver’s note for an amount that kept him wakeful o’ nights. Mrs. Dutton had a disconcerting knowledge of family skeletons — to which she had no delicacy in referring. Therefore, Mrs. Dutton was a person to be kept in good humour, and if people had made the mistake of supposing that because she was very strict with her niece, it was safe to snub that niece, why, the sooner they corrected that mistake the better for all concerned.

Emily sold baby jackets and blankets and bootees and bonnets in Mrs. Tolliver’s stall at the big bazaar and wheedled elderly gentlemen into buying them, with her now famous smile; everybody was nice to her and she was happy again, though the experience had left a scar. Shrewsbury folks in after years said that Emily Starr had never really forgiven them for having talked about her — and added that the Murrays never did forgive, you know. But forgiveness did not enter into the matter. Emily had suffered so horribly that henceforth the sight of any one who had been connected with her suffering was hateful to her. When Mrs. Tolliver asked her, a week later, to pour tea at the reception she was giving her cousin, Emily declined politely, without troubling herself to give any excuse. And something in the tilt of her chin, or in the level glance of her eyes, made Mrs. Tolliver feel to her marrow that she was still Polly Riordan of Riordan Alley, and would never be anybody else in the sight of a Murray of New Moon.

But Andrew was welcomed quite sweetly when he somewhat sheepishly called the following Friday night. It may be that he felt a little doubtful of his reception, in spite of the fact that he was sealed of the tribe. But Emily was markedly gracious to him. Perhaps she had her own reasons for it. Again, I call attention to the fact that I am Emily's biographer, not her apologist. If she took a way to get even with Andrew which I may not approve, what can I do but deplore it? For my own satisfaction, however, I may remark in passing that I do think Emily went too far when she told Andrew — after his report of some compliments his manager had paid him — that he was certainly a wonder. I cannot even excuse her by saying that she spoke in sarcastic tones. She did not: she said it most sweetly with an upward glance followed by a downward one that made even Andrew's well-regulated heart skip a beat. Oh, Emily, Emily!

Things went well with Emily that Spring. She had several acceptances and cheques, and was beginning to plume herself on being quite a literary person. Her clan began to take her scribbling mania somewhat seriously. Cheques were unanswerable things.

"Emily has made fifty dollars by her pen since New Year's," Aunt Ruth told Mrs. Drury. "I begin to think the child has an easy way of making a living."

An easy way! Emily, overhearing this as she went through the hall, smiled and sighed. What did Aunt Ruth — what did any one know of the disappointments and failures of the climbers on Alpine Paths? What did she know of the despairs and agonies of one who sees but cannot reach. What did she know of the bitterness of one who conceives a wonderful tale and writes it down, only to find a flat and flavourless manuscript as a reward for all her toil? What did she know of barred doors and impregnable editorial sanctums? Of brutal rejection slips and the awfulness of faint praise? Of hopes deferred and hours of sickening doubt and self-distrust?

Aunt Ruth knew of none of these things, but she took to having fits of indignation when Emily's manuscripts were returned.

“Impudence I call it,” she said. “Don’t send that editor another line. Remember, you’re a Murray!”

“I’m afraid he doesn’t know that,” said Emily, gravely.

“Then why don’t you tell him?” said Aunt Ruth.

Shrewsbury had a mild sensation in May when Janet Royal came home from New York with her wonderful dresses, her brilliant reputation, and her chow dog. Janet was a Shrewsbury girl, but she had never been home since she had “gone to the States” twenty years ago. She was clever and ambitious and she had succeeded. She was the literary editor of a big metropolitan woman’s magazine and one of the readers for a noted publishing house. Emily held her breath when she heard of Miss Royal’s arrival. Oh, if she could only see her — have a talk with her — ask her about a hundred things she wanted to know! When Mr. Towers told her in an offhand manner to go and interview Miss Royal and write it up for the Times, Emily trembled between terror and delight. Here was her excuse. But could she — had she assurance enough? Wouldn’t Miss Royal think her unbearably presumptuous? How could she ask Miss Royal questions about her career and her opinion of the United States’ foreign policy and reciprocity? She could never have the courage.

“We both worship at the same altar — but she is high priestess and I am only the humblest acolyte,” wrote Emily in her journal.

Then she indited a very worshipful letter to Miss Royal, and rewrote it a dozen times, asking permission to interview her. After she had mailed it she could not sleep all night because it occurred to her that she should have signed herself “yours truly” instead of “yours sincerely.” “Yours sincerely” smacked of an acquaintanceship that did not exist. Miss Royal would surely think her presuming.

But Miss Royal sent back a charming letter — Emily has it to this day.

“Ashburn, Monday.

“DEAR MISS STARR: —

“Of course you may come and see me and I’ll tell you everything you want to know for Jimmy Towers (God rest his soul, an’ wasn’t he my first beau!) and everything you want to know for yourself. I think half my

reason for coming back to P. E. I. this spring was because I wanted to see the writer of *The Woman Who Spanked the King*. I read it last winter when it came out in Roche's and I thought it charming. Come and tell me all about yourself and your ambitions. You are ambitious, aren't you? And I think you're going to be able to realize your ambitions, too, and I want to help you if I can. You've got something I never had — real creative ability — but I've heaps of experience and what I've learned from it is yours for the asking. I can help you to avoid some snares and pitfalls, and I'm not without a bit of 'pull' in certain quarters. Come to Ashburn next Friday afternoon when 'school's out' and we'll have a heart-to-heart pow-wow.

"Yours fraternally,

"JANET ROYAL."

Emily thrilled to the ends of her toes when she read this letter. "Yours fraternally" — oh, heavenly! She knelt at her window and looked out with enraptured eyes into the slender firs of the Land of Uprightness and the dewy young clover-fields beyond. Oh, was it possible that some day she would be a brilliant, successful woman like Miss Royal? That letter made it seem possible — made every wonderful dream seem possible. And on Friday — four more days — she was going to see and talk intimately with her high priestess.

Mrs. Angela Royal, who called to see Aunt Ruth that evening, didn't exactly seem to think Janet Royal a high priestess or a wonder. But then, of course, a prophetess is apt to have scant honour in her own country and Mrs. Royal had brought Janet up.

"I don't say but what she's got on well," she confided to Aunt Ruth. "She gets a big salary. But she's an old maid for all that. And as odd in some ways as Dick's hat-band."

Emily, studying Latin in the bay window, went on fire with indignation. This was nothing short of lese-majeste.

"She is very fine looking yet," said Aunt Ruth. "Janet was always a nice girl."

"Oh, yes, she's nice enough. But I was always afraid she was too clever to get married, and I was right. And she's full of foreign notions. She's

never on time for her meals — and it really makes me sick the fuss she makes over that dog of hers — Chu-Chin, she calls it. He rules the house. He does exactly as he likes and nobody dare say a word. My poor cat can't call her soul her own. Janet is so touchy about him. When I complained about him sleeping on the plush davenport she was so vexed she wouldn't speak for a day. That's a thing I don't like about Janet. She gets so high and mighty when she's offended. And she gets offended at things nobody else would dream of minding. And when she's offended with one she's offended with everybody. I hope nothing will upset her before you come on Friday, Emily. If she's out of humour she'll visit it on you. But I will say for her that she doesn't often get vexed and there's nothing mean or grudging about her. She'd work her fingers to the bone to serve a friend."

When Aunt Ruth had gone out to interview the grocer's boy, Mrs. Royal added hurriedly,

"She's greatly interested in you, Emily. She's always fond of having pretty, fresh girls about her — says it keeps her feeling young. She thinks your work shows real talent. If she takes a fancy to you it would be a great thing for you. But, for pity's sake, keep on good terms with that chow! If you offend him, Janet wouldn't have anything to do with you supposing you were Shakespeare himself."

Emily awoke Friday morning with the conviction that this was to be one of the crucial days of her life — a day of dazzling possibilities. She had had a terrible dream of sitting spellbound before Miss Royal, unable to utter one word except "Chu-Chin," which she repeated parrot-like whenever Miss Royal asked her a question.

It poured rain all the forenoon, much to her dismay, but at noon it cleared up brilliantly and the hills across the harbour scarfed themselves in fairy blue. Emily hurried home from school, pale with the solemnity of the occasion. Her toilet was an important rite. She must wear her new navy-blue silk — no question about that. It was positively long and made her look fully grown up. But how should she do her hair? The Psyche knot had more distinction, suited her profile, and showed to better advantage under her hat. Besides, perhaps a bare forehead made her look more

intellectual. But Mrs. Royal had said that Miss Royal liked pretty girls. Pretty, therefore, she must be at all costs. The rich black hair was dressed low on her forehead and crowned by the new spring hat which Emily had dared to buy with her latest cheque, in spite of Aunt Elizabeth's disapproval and Aunt Ruth's unvarnished statement that a fool and her money were soon parted. But Emily was glad now that she had bought the hat. She couldn't have gone to interview Miss Royal in her plain black sailor. This hat was very becoming with its cascade of purple violets that fell from it over the lovely, unbroken waves of hair, just touching the milk-whiteness of her neck. Everything about her was exquisitely neat and dainty: she looked — I like the old phrase — as if she had just stepped from a bandbox. Aunt Ruth, prowling about the hall, saw her coming downstairs and realized, with something of a shock, that Emily was a young woman.

“She carries herself like a Murray,” thought Aunt Ruth.

The force of commendation could no further go, though it was really from the Starrs that Emily had inherited her slim elegance. The Murrays were stately and dignified, but stiff.

It was quite a little walk to Ashburn, which was a fine old white house set far back from the street amid great trees. Emily went up the gravel walk, edged with its fine-fringed shadows of spring, as a worshipper approaching a sacred fane. A fairly large, fluffy white dog was sitting halfway up the gravel walk. Emily looked at him curiously. She had never seen a chow dog. She decided that Chu-Chin was handsome, but not clean. He had evidently been having a glorious time in some mud puddle, for his paws and breast were reeking. Emily hoped he would approve of her, but keep his distance.

Evidently he approved of her, for he turned and trotted up the walk with her, amiably waving a plummy tail — or rather a tail that would have been plummy had it not been wet and muddy. He stood expectantly beside her while she rang the bell, and as soon as the door was opened he made a joyous bound on the lady who stood within, almost knocking her over.

Miss Royal herself had opened the door. She had, as Emily saw at once, no beauty, but unmistakable distinction, from the crown of her gold-bronze hair to the toes of her satin slippers. She was arrayed in some marvellous dress of mauve velvet and she wore pince-nez with tortoiseshell rims, the first of their kind to be seen in Shrewsbury.

Chu-Chin gave one rapturous, slobbery wipe at her face with his tongue, then rushed on into Mrs. Royal's parlour. The beautiful mauve dress was spotted from collar to hem with muddy paw-marks. Emily thought that Chu-Chin fully deserved Mrs. Royal's bad opinion and mentally remarked that if he were her dog he should behave better. But Miss Royal did not reprove him in any way, and perhaps Emily's secret criticism was subconsciously prompted by her instant perception that Miss Royal's greeting, while perfectly courteous, was very cold. From her letter Emily had somehow expected a warmer reception.

"Won't you come in and sit down?" said Miss Royal. She ushered Emily in, waved to a comfortable chair, and sat down on a stiff and uncompromising Chippendale one. Somehow, Emily, sensitive at all times and abnormally so just now, felt that Miss Royal's selection of a chair was ominous. Why hadn't she sunk chummily into the depths of the big velvet morris? But there she sat, a stately, aloof figure, having apparently paid not the slightest attention to the appalling mud-stains on her beautiful dress. Chu-Chin had jumped on the big plush davenport, where he sat, cockily looking from one to the other as if enjoying the situation. It was all too evident that, as Mrs. Royal had foreboded, something had "upset" Miss Royal, and Emily's heart suddenly sank like lead.

"It's — a lovely day," she faltered. She knew it was an incredibly stupid thing to say, but she had to say something when Miss Royal wouldn't say anything. The silence was too awful.

"Very lovely," agreed Miss Royal, not looking at Emily at all but at Chu-Chin, who was thumping a beautiful silk and lace cushion of Mrs. Royal's with his wet tail. Emily hated Chu-Chin. It was a relief to hate him, since as yet she did not dare to hate Miss Royal. But she wished herself a thousand miles away. Oh, if she only hadn't that little bundle of

manuscripts on her lap! It was so evident what it was. She would never dare to show one of them to Miss Royal. Was this outraged empress the writer of that kind, friendly letter? It was impossible to believe it. This must be a nightmare. Her dream was “out” with a vengeance. She felt crude and bread-and-buttery and ignorant and dowdy — and young! Oh, so horribly young!

The moments passed — not so very many, perhaps, but seeming like hours to Emily. Her mouth was dry and parched, her brain paralysed. She couldn’t think of a solitary thing to say. A horrible suspicion flashed across her mind that, since writing her letter, Miss Royal had heard the gossip about the night in the old John house and that her altered attitude was the result.

In her misery Emily squirmed in her chair and her little packet of manuscripts slipped to the floor. Emily stooped to retrieve it. At the same moment Chu-Chin made a flying leap from the davenport at it. His muddy paws caught the spray of violets hanging from Emily’s hat and tore it loose. Emily let go of her packet and clutched her hat. Chu-Chin let go of the violets and pounced on the packet. Then, holding that in his mouth, he bolted out of the open glass door leading to the garden.

“Oh, what a relief it would be to tear my hair,” thought Emily violently.

That diabolical chow had carried off her latest and best story and a number of choice poems. Heaven knew what he would do with them. She supposed she would never see them again. But, at least, there was fortunately now no question of showing them to Miss Royal.

Emily no longer cared whether Miss Royal was in a bad humour or not. She was no longer desirous of pleasing her — a woman who would let her dog behave like that to an invited guest and never reprove him! Nay, she even seemed to be amused at his antics. Emily was sure she had detected a fleeting smile on Miss Royal’s arrogant face as she looked at the ruined violets scattered over the floor.

There suddenly popped into Emily’s mind a story she had heard of Lofty John’s father, who was in the habit of telling his wife,

“When people do be after snubbing you, Bridget, pull up your lip, Bridget, pull up your lip.”

Emily pulled up her lip.

“A very playful dog,” she said sarcastically.

“Very,” agreed Miss Royal composedly.

“Don’t you think a little discipline would improve him?” asked Emily.

“No, I do not think so,” said Miss Royal meditatively.

Chu-Chin returned at this moment, capered about the room, knocked a small glass vase off a taboret with a whisk of his tail, sniffed at the ensuing fragments, then bounded up on the davenport again, where he sat panting. “Oh, what a good dog am I!”

Emily picked up her notebook and pencil.

“Mr. Towers sent me to interview you,” she said.

“So I understand,” said Miss Royal, never taking her eyes off her worshipped chow.

Emily: “May I trouble you to answer a few questions?”

Miss Royal, with exaggerated amiability: “Charmed.”

(Chu-Chin, having saved enough breath, springs from the davenport and rushes through the half-opened folding doors of the dining-room.)

Emily, consulting notebook and recklessly asking the first question jotted down therein: “What do you think will be the result of the Presidential election this fall?”

(Emily, with compressed lips, writes down in her notebook: “She never thinks about it.” Chu-Chin reappears, darts through parlour and out into the garden, carrying a roast chicken in his mouth.)

Miss Royal: “There goes my supper.”

Emily, checking off first questions: “Is there any likelihood that the United States Congress will look favourably on the recent reciprocity proposals of the Canadian Government?”

Miss Royal: “Is the Canadian Government making reciprocity proposals? I never heard of them.”

(Emily writes, “She never heard of them.” Miss Royal refits her pince-nez.)

Emily, thinks: "With a chin and a nose like that you'll look very witchlike when you grow old." Says: "Is it your opinion that the historical novel has had its day?"

Miss Royal, languidly: "I always leave my opinions at home when I take a holiday."

(Emily writes, "She always leaves her opinions home when she takes a holiday," and wishes savagely she could write her own description of this interview, but knows Mr. Towers wouldn't print it. Then consoles herself by remembering that she has a virgin Jimmy-book at home and takes a wicked delight in thinking of the account that will be written in it that night. Chu-Chin enters. Emily wonders if he could have eaten the chicken in that short time. Chu-Chin, evidently feeling the need of some desert, helps himself to one of Mrs. Royal's crocheted tidies, crawls under the piano with it and falls to chewing rapturously.)

Miss Royal, fervently: "Dear dog!"

Emily, suddenly inspired: "What do you think of chow dogs?"

Miss Royal: "The most adorable creatures in the world."

Emily to herself: "So you've brought one opinion with you." To Miss Royal: "I do not admire them."

Miss Royal, with an icy smile: "It is evident that your taste in dogs must be quite different from mine."

Emily, to herself: "I wish Ilse were here to call you names for me."

(A large, motherly grey cat passes across the doorstep outside. Chu-Chin bolts out from under the piano, shoots between the legs of a tall plant stand, and pursues the flying cat. The plant stand has gone over with a crash and Mrs. Royal's beautiful rex begonia lies in ruins on the floor, amid a heap of earth and broken pottery.)

Miss Royal, unsympathetically: "Poor Aunt Angela! Her heart will be broken."

Emily: "But that doesn't matter, does it?"

Miss Royal, gently: "Oh, no; not at all."

Emily, consulting notebook: "Do you find many changes in Shrewsbury?"

Miss Royal: "I find a good many changes in the people. The younger generation does not impress me favourably."

(Emily writes this down. Chu-Chin again reappears, evidently having chased the cat through a fresh mud puddle, and resumes his repast of the tidy, under the piano.)

Emily shut her notebook and rose. Not for any number of Mr. Towers would she prolong this interview. She looked like a young angel, but she was thinking terrible things. And she hated Miss Royal — oh, how she hated her!

"Thank you, that will be all," she said, with a haughtiness quite equal to Miss Royal's. "I'm sorry to have taken so much of your time. Good-afternoon."

She bowed slightly and went out to the hall. Miss Royal followed her to the parlour door.

"Hadn't you better take your dog, Miss Starr?" she asked sweetly.

Emily paused in the act of shutting the outer door and looked at Miss Royal.

"Pardon me."

"I said, hadn't you better take your dog?"

"My dog?"

"Yes. He hasn't quite finished the tidy, to be sure, but you might take it along. It won't be much good to Aunt Angela now."

"He — he — isn't my dog," gasped Emily.

"Not your dog? Whose dog is he then?" said Miss Royal.

"I — I thought he was yours — your chow," said Emily.

An Open Door

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Miss Royal looked at Emily for a moment. Then she seized her wrist, shut the door, drew her back to the parlour, and firmly pushed her down into the morris chair. This done, Miss Royal threw herself on the muddy davenport and began to laugh — long and helplessly. Once or twice she rocked herself forward, gave Emily's knee two wild whacks, then rocked back and continued to laugh. Emily sat, smiling faintly. Her feelings had been too deeply harrowed to permit of Miss Royal's convulsions of mirth, but already there was glimmering in her mind a sketch for her Jimmy-book. Meanwhile, the white dog, having chewed the tidy to tatters, spied the cat again, and again rushed after her.

Finally Miss Royal sat erect and wiped her eyes.

"Oh, this is priceless, Emily Byrd Starr — priceless! When I'm eighty I'll recall this and howl over it. Who will write it up, you or I? But who does own that brute?"

"I'm sure I don't know," said Emily demurely. "I never saw him in my life before."

"Well, let's shut the door before he can return. And now, dear thing, sit here beside me — there's one clean spot here under the cushion. We're going to have our real talk now. Oh, I was so beastly to you when you were trying to ask me questions. I was trying to be beastly. Why didn't you throw something at me, you poor insulted darling?"

"I wanted to. But now I think you let me off very easily, considering the behaviour of my supposed dog."

Miss Royal went off in another convulsion.

"I don't know if I can forgive you for thinking that horrid curly white creature was my glorious redgold chow. I'll take you up to my room before you go and you shall apologize to him. He's asleep on my bed. I locked him there to relieve dear Aunt Angela's mind about her cat. Chu-Chin

wouldn't hurt the cat — he merely wants to play with her, and the foolish old thing runs. Now, you know, when a cat runs, a dog simply can't help chasing her. As Kipling tells us, he wouldn't be a proper dog if he didn't. If only that white fiend had confined himself to chasing the cat!"

"It is too bad about Mrs. Royal's begonia," said Emily, regretfully.

"Yes, that is a pity. Aunt Angela's had it for years. But I'll get her a new one. When I saw you coming up the walk with that dog frisking around you, of course I concluded he was yours. I had put on my favourite dress because it really makes me look almost beautiful — and I wanted you to love me; and when the beast muddied it all over and you never said a word of rebuke or apology, I simply went into one of my cold rages. I do go into them — I can't help it. It's one of my little faults. But I soon thaw out if no fresh aggravation occurs. In this case fresh aggravation occurred every minute. I vowed to myself that if you did not even try to make your dog behave I would not suggest that you should. And I suppose you were indignant because I calmly let my dog spoil your violets and eat your manuscripts?"

"I was."

"It's too bad about the manuscripts. Perhaps we can find them — he can't really have swallowed them, but I suppose he has chewed them to bits."

"It doesn't matter. I have other copies at home."

"And your questions! Emily, you were too delicious. Did you really write down my answers?"

"Word for word. I meant to print them just so, too. Mr. Towers had given me a list of questions for you, but of course I didn't mean to fire them off point-blank like that. I meant to weave them artfully into our conversation as we went along. But here comes Mrs. Royal."

Mrs. Royal came in, smiling. Her face changed as she saw the begonia. But Miss Royal interposed quickly.

"Dearest Aunty, don't weep or faint — at least not before you've told me who around here owns a white, curly, utterly mannerless, devilish dog?"

“Lily Bates,” said Mrs. Royal in a tone of despair. “Oh, has she let that creature out again? I had a most terrible time with him before you came. He’s really just a big puppy and he can’t behave. I told her finally if I caught him over here again I’d poison him. She’s kept him shut up since then. But now — oh, my lovely rex.

“Well, this dog came in with Emily. I supposed he was her dog. Courtesy to a guest implies courtesy to her dog — isn’t there an old proverb that expresses it more concisely? He embraced me fervently upon his entrance, as my dearest dress testifies. He marked up your davenport — he tore off Emily’s violets — he chased your cat — he overturned your begonia — he broke your vase — he ran off with our chicken — ay, groan, Aunt Angela, he did! — and yet I, determinedly composed and courteous, said not a word of protest. I vow my behaviour was worthy of New Moon itself — wasn’t it, Emily?”

“You were just too mad to speak,” said Mrs. Royal ruefully, fingering her wrecked begonia.

Miss Royal stole a sly glance at Emily.

“You see, I can’t put anything over on Aunt Angela. She knows me too well. I admit I was not my usual charming self. But, Auntie darling, I’ll get you a new vase and a new begonia — think of all the fun you’ll have coaxing it along. Anticipation is always so much more interesting than realization.”

“I’ll settle Lily Bates,” said Mrs. Royal, going out of the room to look for a dustpan.

“Now, dear thing. Let’s gab,” said Miss Royal, snuggling down beside Emily.

This was the Miss Royal of the letter. Emily found no difficulty in talking to her. They had a jolly hour and at the end of it Miss Royal made a proposition that took away Emily’s breath.

“Emily, I want you to come back to New York with me in July. There’s a vacancy on the staff of The Ladies’ Own — no great thing in itself. You’ll be sort of general handyman, and all odd jobs will be turned over to you — but you’ll have a chance to work up. And you’ll be in the centre of

things. You can write — I, realized that the moment I read *The Woman Who Spanked the King*. I know the editor of *Roche's* and I found out who you were and where you lived. That's really why I came down this spring — I wanted to get hold of you. You mustn't waste your life here — it would be a crime. Oh, of course, I know New Moon is a dear, quaint, lovely spot — full of poetry and steeped in romance, it was just the place for you to spend your childhood in. But you must have a chance to grow and develop and be yourself. You must have the stimulus of association with great minds — the training that only a great city can give. Come with me. If you do, I promise you that in ten years' time Emily Byrd Starr will be a name to conjure with among the magazines of America."

Emily sat in a maze of bewilderment, too confused and dazzled to think clearly. She had never dreamed of this. It was as if Miss Royal had suddenly put into her hand a key to unlock the door into the world of all her dreams, and hopes, and imaginings. Beyond that door was all she had ever hoped for of success and fame. And yet — and yet — what faint, odd, resentment stirred at the back of all her whirling sensations? Was there a sting in Miss Royal's calm assumption that if Emily did not go with her her name would forever remain unknown? Did the old dead-and-gone Murrays turn over in their graves at the whisper that one of their descendants could never succeed without the help and "pull" of a stranger? Or had Miss Royal's manner been a shade too patronizing? Whatever it was it kept Emily from figuratively flinging herself at Miss Royal's feet.

"Oh, Miss Royal, that would be wonderful," she faltered. "I'd love to go — but I'm afraid Aunt Elizabeth will never consent. She'll say I'm too young."

"How old are you?"

"Seventeen."

"I was eighteen when I went. I didn't know a soul in New York — I had just enough money to keep me for three months. I was a crude, callow little thing — yet I won out. You shall live with me. I'll look after you as well as Aunt Elizabeth herself could do. Tell her I'll guard you like the apple of my eye. I have a dear, cozy, little flat where we'll be as happy as

queens, with my adored and adorable Chu-Chin. You'll love Chu-Chin, Emily."

"I think I'd like a cat better," said Emily firmly.

"Cats! Oh, we couldn't have a cat in a flat. It wouldn't be amenable enough to discipline. You must sacrifice your pussies on the altar of your art. I'm sure you'll like living with me. I'm very kind and amiable, dearest, when I feel like it — and I generally do feel like it — and I never lose my temper. It freezes up occasionally, but, as I told you, it thaws quickly. I bear other people's misfortunes with equanimity. And I never tell any one she has a cold or that she looks tired. Oh, I'd really make an adorable housemate."

"I'm sure you would," said Emily, smiling.

"I never saw a young girl before that I wanted to live with," said Miss Royal. "You have a sort of luminous personality, Emily. You'll give off light in dull places and empurple drab spots. Now, do make up your mind to come with me."

"It is Aunt Elizabeth's mind that must be made up," said Emily ruefully. "If she says I can go I'll—"

Emily found herself stopping suddenly.

"Go," finished Miss Royal joyfully. "Aunt Elizabeth will come around. I'll go and have a talk with her. I'll go out to New Moon with you next Friday night. You must have your chance."

"I can't thank you enough, Miss Royal, so I won't try. But I must go now. I'll think this all over — I'm too dazzled just now to think at all. You don't know what this means to me."

"I think I do," said Miss Royal gently. "I was once a young girl in Shrewsbury, eating my heart out because I had no chance."

"But you made your own chance — and won out," said Emily wistfully.

"Yes — but I had to go away to do it. I could never have got anywhere here. And it was a horribly hard climb at first. It took my youth. I want to save you some of the hardships and discouragements. You will go far beyond what I have done — you can create — I can only build with the

materials others have made. But we builders have our place — we can make temples for our gods and goddesses if nothing else. Come with me, dear Girl Emily, and I will do all I can to help you in every way.”

“Thank you — thank you,” was all Emily could say. Tears of gratitude for this offer of ungrudging help and sympathy were in her eyes. She had not received too much of sympathy or encouragement in her life. It touched her deeply. She went away feeling that she must turn the key and open the magic door beyond which now seemed to lie all the beauty and allurements of life — if only Aunt Elizabeth would let her.

“I can’t do it if she doesn’t approve,” decided Emily.

Halfway home she suddenly stopped and laughed. After all, Miss Royal had forgotten to show her Chu-Chin.

“But it doesn’t matter,” she thought, “because in the first place I can’t believe that, after this, I’ll ever feel any real interest in chow dogs. And in the second place I’ll see him often enough if I go to New York with Miss Royal.”

A Valley of Vision

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Would she go to New York with Miss Royal?

That was the question Emily had now to answer. Or rather, the question Aunt Elizabeth must answer. For on Aunt Elizabeth's answer, as Emily felt, everything depended. And she had no real hope that Aunt Elizabeth would let her go. Emily might look longingly towards those pleasant, far-off, green pastures pictured by Miss Royal, but she was quite sure she could never browse in them. The Murray pride — and prejudice — would be an impassable barrier.

Emily said nothing to Aunt Ruth about Miss Royal's offer. It was Aunt Elizabeth's due to hear it first. She kept her dazzling secret until the next weekend, when Miss Royal came to New Moon, very gracious and pleasant, and the wee-est bit patronizing, to ask Aunt Elizabeth to let Emily go with her.

Aunt Elizabeth listened in silence — a disapproving silence, as Emily felt.

"The Murray women have never had to work out for their living," she said coldly.

"It isn't exactly what you would call 'working out,' dear Miss Murray," said Miss Royal, with the courteous patience one must use to a lady whose viewpoint was that of an outlived generation. "Thousands of women are going into business and professional life, everywhere."

"I suppose it's all right for them if they don't get married," said Aunt Elizabeth.

Miss Royal flushed slightly. She knew that in Blair Water and Shrewsbury she was regarded as an old maid, and therefore a failure, no matter what her income and her standing might be in New York. But she kept her temper and tried another line of attack.

“Emily has an unusual gift for writing,” she said. “I think she can do something really worth while if she gets a chance. She ought to have her chance, Miss Murray. You know there isn’t any chance for that kind of work here.”

“Emily has made ninety dollars this past year with her pen,” said Aunt Elizabeth.

“Heaven grant me patience!” thought Miss Royal. Said Miss Royal,

“Yes, and ten years from now she may be making a few hundreds; whereas, if she comes with me, in ten years’ time her income would probably be as many thousands.”

“I’ll have to think it over,” said Aunt Elizabeth.

Emily felt surprised that Aunt Elizabeth had even consented to think it over. She had expected absolute refusal.

“She’ll come round to it,” whispered Miss Royal, when she went away. “I’m going to get you, darling Emily B. I know the Murrays of old. They always had an eye to the main chance. Aunty will let you come.”

“I’m afraid not,” said Emily ruefully.

When Miss Royal had gone Aunt Elizabeth looked at Emily.

“Would you like to go, Emily?”

“Yes — I think so — if you don’t mind,” faltered Emily. She was very pale — she did not plead or coax. But she had no hope — none.

Aunt Elizabeth took a week to think it over. She called in Ruth and Wallace and Oliver to help her. Ruth said dubiously,

“I suppose we ought to let her go. It’s a splendid chance for her. It’s not as if she were going alone — I’d never agree to that. Janet will look after her.”

“She’s too young — she’s too young,” said Uncle Oliver.

“It seems a good chance for her — Janet Royal has done well, they say,” said Uncle Wallace.

Aunt Elizabeth even wrote to Great-aunt Nancy. The answer came back in Aunt Nancy’s quavering hand:

“Suppose you let Emily decide for herself,” suggested Aunt Nancy.

Aunt Elizabeth folded up Aunt Nancy's letter and called Emily into the parlour.

"If you wish to go with Miss Royal you may," she said. "I feel it would not be right for me to hinder you. We shall miss you — we would rather have you with us for a few years yet. I know nothing about New York. I am told it is a wicked city. But you have been brought up carefully. I leave the decision in your own hands. Laura, what are you crying about?"

Emily felt as if she wanted to cry herself. To her amazement she felt something that was not delight or pleasure. It was one thing to long after forbidden pastures. It seemed to be quite another thing when the bars were flung down and you were told to enter if you would.

Emily did not immediately rush to her room and write a joyous letter to Miss Royal — who was visiting friends in Charlottetown. Instead she went out into the garden and thought very hard — all that afternoon and all Sunday. During the weekend in Shrewsbury she was quiet and thoughtful, conscious that Aunt Ruth was watching her closely. For some reason Aunt Ruth did not discuss the matter with her. Perhaps she was thinking of Andrew. Or perhaps it was an understood thing among the Murrays that Emily's decision was to be entirely uninfluenced.

Emily couldn't understand why she didn't write Miss Royal at once. Of course she would go. Wouldn't it be terribly foolish not to? She would never have such a chance again. It was such a splendid chance — everything made easy — the Alpine Path no more than a smooth and gentle slope — success certain and brilliant and quick. Why, then, did she have to keep telling herself all this — why was she driven to seek Mr. Carpenter's advice the next weekend? And Mr. Carpenter would not help her very much. He was rheumatic and cranky.

"Don't tell me the cats have been hunting again," he groaned.

"No. I haven't any manuscripts this time," said Emily, with a faint smile. "I've come for advice of a different kind."

She told him of her perplexity.

"It's such a splendid chance," she concluded.

“Of course it’s a splendid chance — to go and be Yankeeified,” grunted Mr. Carpenter.

“I wouldn’t get Yankeeified,” said Emily resentfully. “Miss Royal has been twenty years in New York and she isn’t Yankeeified.”

“Isn’t she? I don’t mean by Yankeeified what you think I do,” retorted Mr. Carpenter. “I’m not referring to the silly girls who go up to “the States” to work and come back in six months with an accent that would raise blisters on your skin. Janet Royal is Yankeeified — her outlook and atmosphere and style are all U. S. And I’m not condemning them — they’re all right. But — she isn’t a Canadian any longer — and that’s what I wanted you to be — pure Canadian through and through, doing something as far as in you lay for the literature of your own country, keeping your Canadian tang and flavour. But of course there’s not many dollars in that sort of thing yet.”

“There’s no chance to do anything here,” argued Emily.

“No — no more than there was in Haworth Parsonage,” growled Mr. Carpenter.

“I’m not a Charlotte Bronte,” protested Emily. “She had genius — it can stand alone. I have only talent — it needs help — and — and — guidance.”

“In short, pull,” said Mr. Carpenter.

“So you think I oughtn’t to go,” said Emily anxiously.

“Go if you want to. To be quickly famous we must all stoop a little. Oh, go — go — I’m telling you. I’m too old to argue — go in peace. You’d be a fool not to — only — fools do sometimes attain. There’s a special Providence for them, no doubt.”

Emily went away from the little house in the hollow with her eyes rather black. She met Old Kelly on her way up the hill and he pulled his plump nag and red chariot to a standstill and beckoned to her.

“Gurrl dear, here’s some peppermints for you. And now, ain’t it high time — eh — now, you know—” Old Kelly winked at her.

“Oh, I’m going to be an old maid, Mr. Kelly,” smiled Emily.

Old Kelly shook his head as he gathered up his reins.

“Shure an’ nothing like that will ever be happening to you. You’re one av the folks God really loves — only don’t be taking one av the Prastes now — never one av the Prastes, gurr! dear.”

“Mr. Kelly,” said Emily suddenly, “I’ve been offered a splendid chance — to go to New York and take a place on the staff of a magazine. I can’t make up my mind. What do you think I’d better do?”

As she spoke she thought of the horror of Aunt Elizabeth at the idea of a Murray asking Old Jock Kelly’s advice. She herself was a little ashamed of doing it.

Old Kelly shook his head again.

“What do the b’ys around here be thinking av? But what does the ould lady say?”

“Aunt Elizabeth says I can do as I like.”

“Then I guess we’ll be laving it at that,” said Old Kelly — and drove off without another word. Plainly there was no help to be had in Old Kelly.

“Why should I want help?” thought Emily desperately. “What has got into me that I can’t make up my own mind? Why can’t I say I’ll go? It doesn’t seem to me now that I want to go — I only feel I ought to want to go.”

She wished that Dean were home. But Dean had not got back from his winter in Los Angeles. And somehow she could not talk the matter over with Teddy. Nothing had come of that wonderful moment in the old John house — nothing except a certain constraint that had almost spoiled their old comradeship. Outwardly they were as good friends as ever; but something was gone — and nothing seemed to be taking its place. She would not admit to herself that she was afraid to ask Teddy. Suppose he told her to go? That would hurt unbearably — because it would show that he didn’t care whether she went or stayed. But Emily would not glance at this at all.

“Of course I’ll go,” she said aloud to herself. Perhaps the spoken word would settle things. “What would I do next year if I didn’t? Aunt Elizabeth will certainly never let me go anywhere else alone. Ilse will be away —

and Perry — Teddy too, likely. He says he's bound to go and do something to earn money for his art study. I must go."

She said it fiercely, as if arguing against some invisible opponent. When she reached home in the twilight, no one was there and she went restlessly all over the house. What charm and dignity and fineness the old rooms had, with their candles and their ladder-backed chairs and their braided rugs! How dear and entreating was her own little room with its diamond paper and its guardian angel, its fat black rose-jar and its funny, kinky windowpane! Would Miss Royal's flat be half so wonderful?"

"Of course I'll go," she said again — feeling that if she could only have left off the "of course" the thing would have been settled.

She went out into the garden, lying in the remote, passionless beauty of early spring moonlight, and walked up and down its paths. From afar came the whistle of the Shrewsbury train — like a call from the alluring world beyond — a world full of interest, charm, drama. She paused by the old lichened sundial and traced the motto on its border, "So goes Time by." Time did go by — swiftly, mercilessly, even at New Moon, unspoiled as it was by any haste or rush of modernity. Should she not take the current when it offered? The white June lilies waved in the faint breeze — she could almost see her old friend the Wind-Woman bending over them to tilt their waxen chins. Would the Wind Woman come to her in the crowded city streets? Could she be like Kipling's cat there?

"And I wonder if I'll ever have the flash in New York," she thought wistfully.

How beautiful was this old garden which Cousin Jimmy loved! How beautiful was old New Moon farm! Its beauty had a subtly romantic quality all its own. There was enchantment in the curve of the darkred, dew-wet road beyond — remote, spiritual allurements in the Three Princesses — magic in the orchard — a hint of intriguing devilment in the fir wood. How could she leave this old house that had sheltered and loved her — never tell me houses do not love! — the graves of her kin by the Blair Water pond, the wide fields and haunted woods where her childhood dreams had been dreamed? All at once she knew she could not leave them

— she knew she had never really wanted to leave them. That was why she had gone about desperately asking advice of impossible outsiders. She had really been hoping they would tell her not to go. That was why she had wished so wildly that Dean were home — he would certainly have told her not to go.

“I belong to New Moon — I stay among my own people,” she said.

There was no doubt about this decision — she did not want any one to help her to it. A deep, inner contentment possessed her as she went up the walk and into the old house which no longer looked reproachfully at her. She found Elizabeth and Laura and Cousin Jimmy in the kitchen full of its candle magic.

“I am not going to New York, Aunt Elizabeth,” she said. “I am going to stay here at New Moon with you.”

Aunt Laura gave a little cry of joy. Cousin Jimmy said, “Hurrah!” Aunt Elizabeth knitted a round of her stocking before she said anything. Then —

“I thought a Murray would,” she said.

Emily went straight to Ashburn Monday evening. Miss Royal had returned and greeted her warmly.

“I hope you’ve come to tell me that Miss Murray has decided to be reasonable and let you come with me, honey-sweet.”

“She told me I could decide for myself.”

Miss Royal clapped her hands.

“Oh, goody, goody! Then it’s all settled.”

Emily was pale, but her eyes were black with earnestness and intense feeling.

“Yes, it’s settled — I’m not going,” she said. “I thank you with all my heart, Miss Royal, but I can’t go.”

Miss Royal stared at her — realized in a moment that it was not the slightest use to plead or argue — but began to plead and argue all the same.

“Emily — you can’t mean it? Why can’t you come?”

“I can’t leave New Moon — I love it too much — it means too much to me.”

“I thought you wanted to come with me, Emily,” said Miss Royal reproachfully.

“I did. And part of me wants to yet. But away down under that another part of me will not go. Don’t think me foolish and ungrateful, Miss Royal.”

“Of course I don’t think you’re ungrateful,” said Miss Royal, helplessly, “but I do — yes, I do think you are awfully foolish. You are simply throwing away your chances of a career. What can you ever do here that is worth while, child? You’ve no idea of the difficulties in your path. You can’t get material here — there’s no atmosphere — no—”

“I’ll create my own atmosphere,” said Emily, with a trifle of spirit. After all, she thought, Miss Royal’s viewpoint was the just the same as Mrs. Alec Sawyer’s, and her manner was patronizing. “And as for material — people live here just the same as anywhere else — suffer and enjoy and sin and aspire just as they do in New York.”

“You don’t know a thing about it,” said Miss Royal, rather pettishly. “You’ll never be able to write anything really worth while here — no big thing. There’s no inspiration — you’ll be hampered in every way — the big editors won’t look farther than the address of P. E. Island on your manuscript. Emily, you’re committing literary suicide. You’ll realize that at three of the clock some white night, Emily B. Oh, I suppose, after some years you’ll work up a clientele of Sunday-school and agricultural papers. But will that satisfy you? You know it won’t. And then the petty jealousy of these small prunes-and-prisms places — if you do anything the people you went to school with can’t do some of them will never forgive you. And they’ll all think you’re the heroine of your own stories — especially if you portray her beautiful and charming. If you write a love story they’ll be sure it’s your own. You’ll get so tired of Blair Water — you’ll know all the people in it — what they are and can be — it’ll be like reading a book for the twentieth time. Oh, I know all about it. ‘I was alive before you were borned,’ as I said when I was eight, to a playmate of six. You’ll get

discouraged — the hour of three o'clock will gradually overwhelm you — there's a three o'clock every night, remember — you'll give up — you'll marry that cousin of yours—"

"Never."

"Well, some one like him, then, and 'settle down'—"

"No, I'll never 'settle down,'" said Emily decidedly. "Never as long as I live — what a stodgy condition!"

—"and you'll have a parlour like this of Aunt Angela's," continued Miss Royal relentlessly. "A mantelpiece crowded with photographs — an easel with an 'enlarged' picture in a frame eight inches wide — a red plush album with a crocheted doily on it, a crazy-quilt on your spare-room bed — a hand-painted banner in your hall — and, as a final touch of elegance, an asparagus fern will 'grace the centre of your dining-room table.'"

"No," said Emily gravely, "such things are not among the Murray traditions."

"Well, the spiritual equivalent of them, then. Oh, I can see your whole life, Emily, here in a place like this where people can't see a mile beyond their nose."

"I can see farther than that," said Emily, putting up her chin. "I can see to the stars."

"I was speaking figuratively, my dear."

"So was I. Oh, Miss Royal, I know life is rather cramped here in some ways — but the sky is as much mine as anybody's. I may not succeed here — but, if not, I wouldn't succeed in New York either. Some fountain of living water would dry up in my soul if I left the land I love. I know I'll have difficulties and discouragements here, but people have overcome far worse. You know that story you told me about Parkman — that for years he was unable to write for more than five minutes at a time — that he took three years to write one of his books — six lines per day for three years. I shall always remember that when I get discouraged. It will help me through any number of white nights."

"Well" — Miss Royal threw out her hands—"I give up. I think you're making a terrible mistake, Emily — but if in the years to come I find out

I'm wrong I'll write and admit it. And if you find out you were wrong write me and admit it, and you'll find me as ready to help you as ever. I won't even say 'I told you so.' Send me any of your stories my magazine is fit for, and ask me for any advice I can give. I'm going right back to New York tomorrow. I was only going to wait till July to take you with me. Since you won't come I'm off. I detest living in a place where all they think is that I've played my cards badly, and lost the matrimonial game — where all the young girls — except you — are so abominably respectful to me — and where the old folks keep telling me I look so much like my mother. Mother was ugly. Let's say goodbye and make it snappy."

"Miss Royal," said Emily earnestly, "you do believe — don't you — that I appreciate your kindness? Your sympathy and encouragement have meant more to me — always will mean more to me than you can ever dream."

Miss Royal whisked her handkerchief furtively across her eyes and made an elaborate curtsy.

"Thank you for them kind words, lady," she said solemnly.

Then she laughed a little, put her hands on Emily's shoulders and kissed her cheek.

"All the good wishes ever thought, said, or written go with you," she said. "And I think it would be — nice — if any place could ever mean to me what it is evident New Moon means to you."

At three o'clock that night a wakeful but contented Emily remembered that she had never seen Chu-Chin.

April Love

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“June 10, 19 —

“Yesterday evening Andrew Oliver Murray asked Emily Byrd Starr to marry him.

“The said Emily Byrd Starr told him she wouldn’t.

“I’m glad it’s over. I’ve felt it coming for some time. Every evening Andrew has been here I’ve felt that he was trying to bring the conversation around to some serious subject, but I have never felt quite equal to the interview, and always contrived to sidetrack him with frivolity.

“Yesterday evening I went to the Land of Uprightness for one of the last rambles I shall have in it. I climbed the hill of firs and looked down over the fields of mist and silver in the moonlight. The shadows of the ferns and sweet wild grasses along the edge of the woods were like a dance of sprites. Away beyond the harbour, below the moonlight, was a sky of purple and amber where a sunset had been. But behind me was darkness — a darkness which, with its tang of fir balsam, was like a perfumed chamber where one might dream dreams and see visions. Always when I go into the Land of Uprightness I leave behind the realm of daylight and things known and go into the realm of shadow and mystery and enchantment where anything might happen — anything might come true. I can believe anything there — old myths — legends — dryads — fauns — leprechauns. One of my wonder moments came to me — it seemed to me that I got out of my body and was free — I’m sure I heard an echo of that ‘random word’ of the gods — and I wanted some unused language to express what I saw and felt.

“Enter Andrew, spic and span, prim and gentlemanly.

“Fauns — fairies — wonder moments — random words — fled pell-mell. No new language was needed now.

“‘What a pity sidewhiskers went out with the last generation — they would suit him so,’ I said to myself in good plain English.

“I knew Andrew had come to say something special. Otherwise he would not have followed me into the Land of Uprightness, but have waited decorously in Aunt Ruth’s parlour. I knew it had to come and I made up my mind to get it over and have done with it. The expectant attitude of Aunt Ruth and the New Moon folks has been oppressive lately. I believe they all feel quite sure that the real reason I wouldn’t go to New York was that I couldn’t bear to part with Andrew!

“But I was not going to have Andrew propose to me by moonlight in the Land of Uprightness. I might have been bewitched into accepting him. So when he said, ‘It’s nice here, let’s stay here for a while — after all, I think there is nothing so pretty as nature,’ I said gently but firmly that, though nature must feel highly flattered, it was too damp for a person with a tendency to consumption, and I must go in.

“In we went. I sat down opposite Andrew and stared at a bit of Aunt Ruth’s crochet yarn on the carpet. I shall remember the colour and shape of that yarn to my dying day. Andrew talked jerkily about indifferent things and then began throwing out hints — he would get his managership in two years more — he believed in people marrying young — and, so on. He floundered badly. I suppose I could have made it easier for him but I hardened my heart, remembering how he had kept away in those dreadful weeks of the John house scandal. At last he blurted out,

“‘Emily, let’s get married when — when — as soon as I’m able to.’

“He seemed to feel that he ought to say something more but didn’t know just what — so he repeated ‘just as soon as I’m able to’ and stopped.

“I don’t believe I even went through the motions of a blush.

“‘Why should we get married?’ I said.

“Andrew looked aghast. Evidently this was not the Murray tradition of receiving a proposal.

“‘Why? Why? Because — I’d like it,’ he stammered.

“‘I wouldn’t,’ I said.

“Andrew stared at me for a few moments trying to take in the amazing idea that he was being refused.

“‘But why?’ he asked — exactly in Aunt Ruth’s tone and manner.

“‘Because I don’t love you,’ I said.

“Andrew did blush. I know he thought I was immodest.

“‘I — I — think — they’d all like it,’ he stammered.

“‘I wouldn’t,’ I said again. I said it in a tone even Andrew couldn’t mistake.

“He was so surprised I don’t think he felt anything but surprise — not even disappointment. He didn’t know what to do or say — a Murray couldn’t coax — so he got up and went out without another word. I thought he banged the door but afterwards I discovered it was only the wind. I wish he had banged the door. It would have saved my self-respect. It is mortifying to refuse a man and then discover that his main feeling is bewilderment.

“Next morning Aunt Ruth, evidently suspecting something amiss from the brevity of Andrew’s call, asked me point blank what had happened. There’s nothing subtle about Aunt Ruth. I told her just as point blankly.

“‘What fault have you to find with Andrew?’ she asked icily.

“‘No fault — but he tastes flat. He has all the virtues but the pinch of salt was left out,’ I said, with my nose in the air.

“‘I hope you don’t go farther and fare worse,’ said Aunt Ruth ominously — meaning, as I knew, Stovepipe Town. I could have reassured Aunt Ruth on that point, also, had I chosen. Last week Perry came to tell me that he is going into Mr. Abel’s office in Charlottetown to study law. It’s a splendid chance for him. Mr. Abel heard his speech the night of the inter-school debate and has had his eye on him ever since, I understand. I congratulated him heartily. I really was delighted.

“‘He’ll give me enough to pay my board,’ said Perry, ‘and I guess I can rustle my clothes on some side line. I’ve got to hoe my own row. Aunt Tom won’t help me. You know why.’

“‘I’m sorry, Perry,’ I said, laughing a little.

“‘Won’t you, Emily?’ he said. ‘I’d like this thing settled.’

“‘It is settled,’ I said.

“‘I suppose I’ve made an awful ass of myself about you,’ grumbled Perry.

“‘You have,’ I said comfortingly — but still laughingly. Somehow I’ve never been able to take Perry seriously any more than Andrew. I’ve always got the feeling that he just imagines he’s in love with me.

“‘You won’t get a cleverer man than me in a hurry,’ warned Perry. ‘I’m going to climb high.’

“‘I’m sure you will,’ I said warmly, ‘and nobody will be more pleased than your friend, Emily B.’

“‘Oh, friends,’ said Perry sulkily. ‘It’s not for a friend I want you. But I’ve always heard it was no use to coax a Murray. Will you tell me one thing? It isn’t my funeral — but are you going to marry Andrew Murray?’

“‘It isn’t your funeral — but I’m not,’ I said.

“‘Well,’ said Perry, as he went out, ‘if you ever change your mind, let me know. It will be all right — if I haven’t changed mine.’

“I have written the account of this exactly as it happened. But — I have also written another account of it in my Jimmy-book as it should have happened. I find I am beginning to overcome my old difficulty of getting my dream people to make love fluently. In my imaginary account both Perry and I talked bee-yew-tifully.

“I think Perry really felt a little worse than Andrew did, and I felt sorry about it. I do like Perry so much as a chum and friend. I hate to disappoint him, but I know he will soon get over it.

“So I’ll be the only one left at Blair Water next year. I don’t know how I’ll feel about that. I dare say I’ll feel a little flat by times — perhaps at three o’ the night I’ll wish I had gone with Miss Royal. But I’m going to settle down to hard, serious work. It’s a long climb to the crest of the Alpine Path.

“But I believe in myself, and there is always my world behind the curtain.

* * *

“New Moon,

“June 21, 19 —

“As soon as I arrived home tonight I felt a decided atmosphere of disapproval, and realized that Aunt Elizabeth knew all about Andrew. She was angry and Aunt Laura was sorry; but nobody has said anything. At twilight I talked it over in the garden with Cousin Jimmy. Andrew, it seems, has been feeling quite badly since the numbness of shock wore off. His appetite has failed; and Aunt Addie indignantly wants to know if I expect to marry a prince or a millionaire since her son is not good enough for me.

“Cousin Jimmy thinks I did perfectly right. Cousin Jimmy would think I had done perfectly right if I had murdered Andrew and buried him in the Land of Uprightness. It’s very nice to have one friend like that, though too many wouldn’t be good for you.

* * *

“June 22, 19 —

“I don’t know which is worse — to have somebody you don’t like ask you to marry him or not have some one you do like. Both are rather unpleasant.

“I have decided that I only imagined certain things in the old John house. I’m afraid Aunt Ruth was right when she used to say my imagination needed a curb. This evening I loitered in the garden. In spite of the fact that it was June it was cold and raw, and I felt a little lonely and discouraged and flat — perhaps because two stories of which I had hoped a good deal came back to me to-day. Suddenly I heard Teddy’s signal whistle in the old orchard. Of course I went. It’s always a case of ‘Oh, whistle and I’ll come to you, my lad’ with me — though I would die before I would admit it to any one but my journal. As soon as I saw his face I knew he had some great news.

“He had. He held out a letter, ‘Mr. Frederick Kent.’ I never can remember that Teddy’s name is Frederick — he can never be anything but Teddy to me. He has won a scholarship at the School of Design in Montreal — five hundred dollars for two years. I was instantly as excited as he was — with a queer feeling behind the excitement which was so compounded of fear and hope and expectancy that I couldn’t tell which predominated.

“‘How splendid for you, Teddy!’ I said, a little tremulously. ‘Oh, I’m so glad! But your mother — what does she think of it?’

“‘She’ll let me go — but she’ll be very lonely and unhappy,’ said Teddy, growing very sober instantly. ‘I want her to come with me, but she won’t leave the Tansy Patch. I hate to think of her living there all alone. I — I wish she didn’t feel as she does about you, Emily. If she didn’t — you could be such a comfort to her.’

“I wondered if it occurred to Teddy that I might need a little comforting too. A queer silence fell between us. We walked along the Tomorrow Road — it has grown so beautiful that one wonders if any tomorrow can make it more beautiful — until we reached the fence of the pond-pasture and stood there under the grey-green gloom of the firs. I felt suddenly very happy and in those few minutes part of me planted a garden and laid out beautiful closets and bought a dozen solid silver teaspoons and arranged my attic and hemstitched a double damask tablecloth — and the other part of me just waited. Once I said it was a lovely evening — it wasn’t — and a few minutes later I said it looked like rain — it didn’t.

“But one had to say something.

“‘I’m going to work hard — I’m going to get everything possible out of those two years,’ Teddy said at last, staring at Blair Water and at the sky and at the sandhills, and at the green leisurely meadows, and at everything but me. ‘Then, perhaps, when they’re up I’ll manage to get to Paris. To go abroad — to see the masterpieces of great artists — to live in their atmosphere — to see the scenes their genius immortalized — all I’ve been hungry for all my life. And when I come back—’

“Teddy stopped abruptly and turned to me. From the look in his eyes I thought he was going to kiss me — I really did. I don’t know what I would have done if I couldn’t have shut my own eyes.

“‘And when I come back—’ he repeated — stopped again.

“‘Yes?’ I said. I don’t deny to this my journal that I said it a trifle expectantly.

“‘I’ll make the name of Frederick Kent mean something in Canada!’ said Teddy.

“I opened my eyes.

“Teddy was looking at the dim gold of Blair Water and scowling. Again I had a feeling that night air was not good for me. I shivered, said a few polite commonplaces, and left him there scowling. I wonder if he was too shy to kiss me — or just didn’t want to.

“I could care tremendously for Teddy Kent if I let myself — if he wanted me to. It is evident he doesn’t want me to. He is thinking of nothing but success and ambition and a career. He has forgotten our exchange of glances in the old John house — he has forgotten that he told me three years ago, on George Horton’s tombstone, that I was the sweetest girl in the world. He will meet hundreds of wonderful girls out in the world — he will never think of me again.

“So be it.

“If Teddy doesn’t want me I won’t want him. That is a Murray tradition. But then I’m only half Murray. There is the Starr half to be considered. Luckily I have a career and an ambition also to think about, and a jealous goddess to serve, as Mr. Carpenter once told me. I think she might not tolerate a divided allegiance.

“I am conscious of three sensations.

“On top I am sternly composed and traditional.

“Underneath that, something that would hurt horribly if I let it is being kept down.

“And underneath that again is a queer feeling of relief that I still have my freedom.



“June 26, 19 —

“All Shrewsbury is laughing over Ilse’s last exploit and half Shrewsbury is disapproving. There is a certain very pompous young Senior who acts as usher in St. John’s Church on Sundays, who takes himself very seriously and whom Ilse hates. Last Sunday she dressed herself up as an old woman, borrowing the toggery from a poor relation of Mrs. Adamson’s who boards with her — a long, full, black skirt, bordered with crape, a widow’s bonnet, and a heavy crape widow’s veil. Arrayed thus, she tottered down the street and paused wistfully at the church steps as if she couldn’t possibly climb them. Young Pomposity saw her, and, having some decent instincts behind his pomposity, went gallantly to her assistance. He took her shaking, mittened hand — it was shaking all right — Ilse was in spasms of laughter behind her veil — and assisted her frail, trembling feet up the steps, through the porch, up the aisle and into a pew. Ilse murmured a broken blessing on him, handed him a tract, sat through the service and then tottered home. Next day, of course, the story was all through the school and the poor lad was so gayed by the other boys that all his pomposity oozed out — temporarily at least — under the torture. Perhaps the incident may do him a world of good.

“Of course I scolded Ilse. She is a glad, daring creature and counts no cost. She will always do whatever she takes it into her head to do, even if it were to turn a somersault in the church aisle. I love her — love her — love her; and what I will do without her next year I do not know. Our tomorrows will always be separated after this — and grow apart — and when we meet occasionally it will be as strangers. Oh, I know — I know.

“Ilse was furious over what she called Perry’s ‘presumption’ in thinking I could ever marry him.

“‘Oh, it was not presumption — it was condescension,’ I said, laughing. ‘Perry belongs to the great ducal house of Carabas.’

“‘Oh, he’ll succeed, of course. But there’ll always be a flavour of Stovepipe Town about him,’ retorted Ilse.

“‘Why have you always been so hard on Perry, Ilse?’ I protested.

“‘He’s such a cackling oaf,’ said Ilse morosely.

“‘Oh, well, he’s just at the age when a boy knows everything,’ I said, feeling quite wise and elderly. ‘He will grow more ignorant and endurable after a while,’ I went on, feeling epigrammatic. ‘And he has improved in these Shrewsbury years,’ I concluded, feeling smug.

“‘You talk as if he were a cabbage,’ fumed Ilse. ‘For heaven’s sake, Emily, don’t be so superior and patronizing!’

“There are times when Ilse is good for me. I know I deserved that.

* * *

“June 27, 19 —

“Last night I dreamed I stood in the old summer-house at New Moon and saw the Lost Diamond sparkling on the floor at my feet. I picked it up in delight. It lay in my hand for a moment — then it seemed to elude my grasp, flash through the air, leaving a long, slender trail of brilliance behind it, and become a star in the western sky, just above the edge of the world. ‘It is my star — I must reach it before it sets,’ I thought, and started out. Suddenly Dean was beside me — and he, too, was following the star. I felt I must go slowly because he was lame and could not go fast — and all the time the star sank lower and lower. Yet I felt I couldn’t leave Dean. Then just as suddenly — things do happen like that in dreams — so nice — without a bit of trouble — Teddy was beside me, too, holding out his hands to me, with the look in his eyes I had seen twice before. I put my hands in his — and he drew me towards him — I was holding up my face — then Dean gave a bitter cry, ‘My star has set.’ I turned my head for just a glance — the star was gone — and I woke up in a dull, ugly, rainy dawn with no star — no Teddy — no kiss.

“I wonder what the dream meant — if it meant anything. I must not think it did. It is a Murray tradition not to be superstitious.



“June 28, 19 —

“This is my last night in Shrewsbury. ‘Goodbye, proud world, I’m going home’ — tomorrow, when Cousin Jimmy is coming for me and my trunk in the old express waggon and I will ride back in that chariot of state to New Moon.

“These three Shrewsbury years seemed so long to me when I looked ahead to them. And now, looking back, they seem as yesterday when it has passed. I think I’ve won something in them. I don’t use so many italics — I’ve acquired a little poise and self-control — I’ve got a bit of bitter worldly wisdom — and I’ve learned to smile over a rejection slip. I think that has been the hardest lesson of all to learn — and doubtless the most necessary.

“As I look back over these three years some things stand out so much more clearly and significantly than others, as if they had a special meaning all their own. And not always the things one might expect either. For instance, Evelyn’s enmity and even that horrible moustache incident seem faded and unimportant. But the moment I saw my first poem in Garden and Woodland — oh, that was a moment — my walk to New Moon and back the night of the play — the writing of that queer little poem of mine that Mr. Carpenter tore up — my night on the haystack under the September moon — that splendid old woman who spanked the King — the moment in class when I discovered Keats’ lines about the ‘airy voices’ — and that other moment in the old John house when Teddy looked into my eyes — oh, it seems to me these are the things I will remember in the halls of Eternity when Evelyn Blake’s sneers and the old John house scandal and Aunt Ruth’s nagging and the routine of lessons and examinations have been for ever forgotten. And my promise to Aunt Elizabeth has helped me, as Mr. Carpenter predicted. Not in my diary perhaps — I just let myself go here — one must have a ‘vent’ — but in my stories and Jimmy-books.

“We had our class day exercises this afternoon. I wore my new cream organdy with the violets in it and carried a big bouquet of pink peonies.

Dean, who is in Montreal on his way home, wired the florist here for a bouquet of roses for me — seventeen roses — one for each year of my life — and it was presented to me when I went up for my diploma. That was dear of Dean.

“Perry was class orator and made a fine speech. And he got the medal for general proficiency. It has been a stiff pull between him and Will Morris, but Perry has won out.

“I wrote and read the class day prophecy. It was very amusing and the audience seemed to enjoy it. I had another one in my Jimmy-book at home. It was much more amusing but it wouldn’t have done to read it.

“I wrote my last society letter for Mr. Towers tonight. I’ve always hated that stunt but I wanted the few pennies it brought in and one mustn’t scorn the base degrees by which one ascends young ambition’s ladder.

“I’ve also been packing up. Aunt Ruth came up occasionally and looked at me as I packed but was oddly silent. Finally she said, with a sigh,

“‘I shall miss you awfully, Emily.’

“I never dreamed of her saying and feeling anything like that. And it made me feel uncomfortable. Since Aunt Ruth was so decent about the John house scandal I’ve felt differently towards her. But I couldn’t say I’d miss her.

“Yet something had to be said.

“‘I shall always be very grateful to you, Aunt Ruth, for what you have done for me these past three years.’

“‘I’ve tried to do my duty,’ said Aunt Ruth virtuously.

* * *

“I find I’m oddly sorry to leave this little room I’ve never liked and that has never liked me, and that long hill starred with lights — after all, I’ve had some wonderful moments here. And even poor dying Byron! But by no stretch of sentiment can I regret parting from Queen Alexandra’s chromo, or the vase of paper flowers. Of course, the Lady Giovanna goes

with me. She belongs in my room at New Moon. She has always seemed like an exile here. It hurts me to think I shall never again hear the night wind in the Land of Uprightness. But I'll have my night wind in Lofty John's bush; I think Aunt Elizabeth means to let me have a kerosene lamp to write by — my door at New Moon shuts tight — and I will not have to drink cambric tea. I went at dusk tonight to that little pearly pool which has always been such a witching spot to linger near on spring evenings. Through the trees that fringed it faint hues of rose and saffron from the west stole across it. It was unruffled by a breath and every leaf and branch and fern and blade of grass was mirrored in it. I looked in — and saw my face; and by an odd twist of reflection from a bending bough I seemed to wear a leafy garland on my head — like a laurel crown.

“I took it as a good omen.

“Perhaps Teddy was only shy!”

EMILY'S QUEST

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Chapter I

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I

“No more cambric-tea” had Emily Byrd Starr written in her diary when she came home to New Moon from Shrewsbury, with high school days behind her and immortality before her.

Which was a symbol. When Aunt Elizabeth Murray permitted Emily to drink real tea — as a matter of course and not as an occasional concession — she thereby tacitly consented to let Emily grow up. Emily had been considered grownup by other people for some time, especially by Cousin Andrew Murray and Friend Perry Miller, each of whom had asked her to marry him and been disdainfully refused for his pains. When Aunt Elizabeth found this out she knew it was no use to go on making Emily drink cambric-tea. Though, even then, Emily had no real hope that she would ever be permitted to wear silk stockings. A silk petticoat might be tolerated, being a hidden thing, in spite of its seductive rustle, but silk stockings were immoral.

So Emily, of whom it was whispered somewhat mysteriously by people who knew her to people who didn't know her, “she writes,” was accepted as one of the ladies of New Moon, where nothing had ever changed since her coming there seven years before and where the carved ornament on the sideboard still cast the same queer shadow of an Ethiopian silhouette on exactly the same place on the wall where she had noticed it delightedly on her first evening there. An old house that had lived its life long ago and so was very quiet and wise and a little mysterious. Also a little austere, but very kind. Some of the Blair Water and Shrewsbury people thought it was a dull place and outlook for a young girl and said she had been very foolish to refuse Miss Royal's offer of “a position on a magazine” in New York. Throwing away such a good chance to make something of herself! But Emily, who had very clear-cut ideas of what she was going to make of

herself, did not think life would be dull at New Moon or that she had lost her chance of Alpine climbing because she had elected to stay there.

She belonged by right divine to the Ancient and Noble Order of Storytellers. Born thousands of years earlier she would have sat in the circle around the fires of the tribe and enchanted her listeners. Born in the foremost files of time she must reach her audience through many artificial mediums.

But the materials of story weaving are the same in all ages and all places. Births, deaths, marriages, scandals — these are the only really interesting things in the world. So she settled down very determinedly and happily to her pursuit of fame and fortune — and of something that was neither. For writing, to Emily Byrd Starr, was not primarily a matter of worldly lucre or laurel crown. It was something she had to do. A thing — an idea — whether of beauty or ugliness, tortured her until it was “written out.” Humorous and dramatic by instinct, the comedy and tragedy of life enthralled her and demanded expression through her pen. A world of lost but immortal dreams, lying just beyond the drop-curtain of the real, called to her for embodiment and interpretation — called with a voice she could not — dared not — disobey.

She was filled with youth’s joy in mere existence. Life was for ever luring and beckoning her onward. She knew that a hard struggle was before her; she knew that she must constantly offend Blair Water neighbours who would want her to write obituaries for them and who, if she used an unfamiliar word would say contemptuously that she was “talking big;” she knew there would be rejection slips galore; she knew there would be days when she would feel despairingly that she could not write and that it was of no use to try; days when the editorial phrase, “not necessarily a reflection on its merits,” would get on her nerves to such an extent that she would feel like imitating Marie Bashkirtseff and hurling the taunting, ticking, remorseless sitting-room clock out of the window; days when everything she had done or tried to do would slump — become mediocre and despicable; days when she would be tempted to bitter disbelief in her fundamental conviction that there was as much truth in the

poetry of life as in the prose; days when the echo of that “random word” of the gods, for which she so avidly listened, would only seem to taunt her with its suggestions of unattainable perfection and loveliness beyond the reach of mortal ear or pen.

She knew that Aunt Elizabeth tolerated but never approved her mania for scribbling. In her last two years in Shrewsbury High School Emily, to Aunt Elizabeth’s almost incredulous amazement, had actually earned some money by her verses and stories. Hence the toleration. But no Murray had ever done such a thing before. And there was always that sense, which Dame Elizabeth Murray did not like, of being shut out of something. Aunt Elizabeth really resented the fact that Emily had another world, apart from the world of New Moon and Blair Water, a kingdom starry and illimitable, into which she could enter at will and into which not even the most determined and suspicious of aunts could follow her. I really think that if Emily’s eyes had not so often seemed to be looking at something dreamy and lovely and secretive Aunt Elizabeth might have had more sympathy with her ambitions. None of us, not even self-sufficing Murrays of New Moon, like to be barred out.

II

Those of you who have already followed Emily through her years of New Moon and Shrewsbury* must have a tolerable notion what she looked like. For those of you to whom she comes as a stranger let me draw a portrait of her as she seemed to the outward eye at the enchanted portal of seventeen, walking where the golden chrysanthemums lighted up an old autumnal, maritime garden. A place of peace, that garden of New Moon. An enchanted pleasaunce, full of rich, sensuous colours and wonderful spiritual shadows. Scents of pine and rose were in it; boom of bees, threnody of wind, murmurs of the blue Atlantic gulf; and always the soft sighing of the firs in Lofty John Sullivan’s “bush” to the north of it. Emily loved every flower and shadow and sound in it, every beautiful old tree in and around it, especially her own intimate, beloved trees — a cluster of

wild cherries in the southwest corner, Three Princesses of Lombardy, a certain maiden-like wild plum on the brook path, the big spruce in the centre of the garden, a silver maple and a pine farther on, an aspen in another corner always coquetting with gay little winds, and a whole row of stately white birches in Lofty John's bush.

* See Emily of New Moon and Emily Climbs.

Emily was always glad that she lived where there were many trees — old ancestral trees, planted and tended by hands long dead, bound up with everything of joy and sorrow that visited the lives in their shadows.

A slender, virginal young thing. Hair like black silk. Purplish-grey eyes, with violet shadows under them that always seemed darker and more alluring after Emily had sat up to some unholy and un-Elizabethan hour completing a story or working out the skeleton of a plot; scarlet lips with a Murray-like crease at the corners; ears with Puckish, slightly pointed tips. Perhaps it was the crease and the ears that made certain people think her something of a puss. An exquisite line of chin and neck; a smile with a trick in it; such a slow-blossoming thing with a sudden radiance of fulfilment. And ankles that scandalous old Aunt Nancy Priest of Priest Pond commended. Faint stains of rose in her rounded cheeks that sometimes suddenly deepened to crimson. Very little could bring that transforming flush — a wind off the sea, a sudden glimpse of blue upland, a flame-red poppy, white sails going out of the harbour in the magic of morning, gulf-waters silver under the moon, a Wedgwood-blue columbine in the old orchard. Or a certain whistle in Lofty John's bush.

With all this — pretty? I cannot tell you. Emily was never mentioned when Blair Water beauties were being tabulated. But no one who looked upon her face ever forgot it. No one, meeting Emily the second time ever had to say "Er — your face seems familiar but—" Generations of lovely women were behind her. They had all given her something of personality. She had the grace of running water. Something, too, of its sparkle and limpidity. A thought swayed her like a strong wind. An emotion shook her as a tempest shakes a rose. She was one of those vital creatures of whom, when they do die, we say it seems impossible that they can be dead.

Against the background of her practical, sensible clan she shone like a diamond flame. Many people liked her, many disliked her. No one was ever wholly indifferent to her.

Once, when Emily had been very small, living with her father down in the little old house at Maywood, where he had died, she had started out to seek the rainbow's end. Over long wet fields and hills she ran, hopeful, expectant. But as she ran the wonderful arch was faded — was dim — was gone. Emily was alone in an alien valley, not too sure in which direction lay home. For a moment her lips quivered, her eyes filled. Then she lifted her face and smiled gallantly at the empty sky.

"There will be other rainbows," she said.

Emily was a chaser of rainbows.

III

Life at New Moon had changed. She must adjust herself to it. A certain loneliness must be reckoned with. Ilse Burnley, the madcap pal of seven faithful years, had gone to the School of Literature and Expression in Montreal. The two girls parted with the tears and vows of girlhood. Never to meet on quite the same ground again. For, disguise the fact as we will, when friends, even the closest — perhaps the more because of that very closeness — meet again after a separation there is always a chill, lesser or greater, of change. Neither finds the other quite the same. This is natural and inevitable. Human nature is ever growing or retrogressing — never stationary. But still, with all our philosophy, who of us can repress a little feeling of bewildered disappointment when we realize that our friend is not and never can be just the same as before — even though the change may be by way of improvement? Emily, with the strange intuition which supplied the place of experience, felt this as Ilse did not, and felt that in a sense she was bidding goodbye for ever to the Ilse of New Moon days and Shrewsbury years.

Perry Miller, too, former "hired boy" of New Moon, medalist of Shrewsbury High School, rejected but not quite hopeless suitor of Emily,

butt of Ilse's rages, was gone. Perry was studying law in an office in Charlottetown, with his eye fixed firmly on several glittering legal goals. No rainbow ends — no mythical pots of gold for Perry. He knew what he wanted would stay put and he was going after it. People were beginning to believe he would get it. After all, the gulf between the law clerk in Mr. Abel's office and the Supreme Court Bench of Canada was no wider than the gulf between that same law clerk and the barefoot gamin of Stovepipe Town-by-the-Harbour.

There was more of the rainbow-seeker in Teddy Kent, of the Tansy Patch. He, too, was going. To the School of Design in Montreal. He, too, knew — had known for years — the delight and allurements and despair and anguish of the rainbow quest.

"Even if we never find it," he said to Emily, as they lingered in the New Moon garden under the violet sky of a long, wondrous, northern twilight, on the last evening before he went away, "there's something in the search for it that's better than even the finding would be."

"But we will find it," said Emily, lifting her eyes to a star that glittered over the tip of one of the Three Princesses. Something in Teddy's use of "we" thrilled her with its implications. Emily was always very honest with herself and she never attempted to shut her eyes to the knowledge that Teddy Kent meant more to her than anyone else in the world. Whereas she — what did she mean to him? Little? Much? Or nothing?

She was bareheaded and she had put a starlike cluster of tiny yellow 'mums in her hair. She had thought a good deal about her dress before she decided on her primrose silk. She thought she was looking very well, but what difference did that make if Teddy didn't notice it? He always took her so for granted, she thought a little rebelliously. Dean Priest, now, would have noticed it and paid her some subtle compliment about it.

"I don't know," said Teddy, morosely scowling at Emily's topaz-eyed grey cat, Daffy, who was fancying himself as a skulking tiger in the spirea thicket. "I don't know. Now that I'm really flying the Blue Peter I feel — flat. After all — perhaps I can never do anything worth while. A little

knack of drawing — what does it amount to? Especially when you're lying awake at three o'clock at night?"

"Oh, I know that feeling," agreed Emily. "Last night I mulled over a story for hours and concluded despairingly that I could never write — that it was no use to try — that I couldn't do anything really worth while. I went to bed on that note and drenched my pillow with tears. Woke up at three and couldn't even cry. Tears seemed as foolish as laughter — or ambition. I was quite bankrupt in hope and belief. And then I got up in the chilly grey dawn and began a new story. Don't let a three-o'clock-at-night feeling fog your soul."

"Unfortunately there's a three o'clock every night," said Teddy. "At that ungodly hour I am always convinced that if you want things too much you're not likely ever to get them. And there are two things that I want tremendously. One, of course, is to be a great artist. I never supposed I was a coward, Emily, but I'm afraid now. If I don't make good! Everybody'll laugh at me. Mother will say she knew it. She hates to see me go really, you know. To go and fail! It would be better not to go."

"No, it wouldn't," said Emily passionately, wondering at the same time in the back of her head what was the other thing Teddy wanted so tremendously. "You must not be afraid. Father said I wasn't to be afraid of anything in that talk I had with him the night he died. And isn't it Emerson who said, 'Always do what you are afraid to do?'"

"I'll bet Emerson said that when he'd got through with being afraid of things. It's easy to be brave when you're taking off your harness."

"You know I believe in you, Teddy," said Emily softly.

"Yes, you do. You and Mr. Carpenter. You are the only ones who really do believe in me. Even Ilse thinks that Perry has by far the better chance of bringing home the bacon."

"But you are not going after bacon. You're going after rainbow gold."

"And if I fail to find it — and disappoint you — that will be worst of all."

"You won't fail. Look at that star, Teddy — the one just over the youngest Princess. It's Vega of the Lyre. I've always loved it. It's my

dearest among the stars. Do you remember how, years ago when you and Ilse and I sat out in the orchard on the evenings when Cousin Jimmy was boiling pigs' potatoes, you used to spin us wonderful tales about that star — and of a life you had lived in it before you came to this world. There was no three o'clock in the morning in that star."

"What happy, carefree little shavers we were those times," said Teddy, in the reminiscent voice of a middle-aged, care-oppressed man wistfully recalling youthful irresponsibility.

"I want you to promise me," said Emily, "that whenever you see that star you'll remember that I am believing in you — hard."

"Will you promise me that whenever you look at that star you'll think of me?" said Teddy. "Or rather, let us promise each other that whenever we see that star we'll always think of each other — always. Everywhere and as long as we live."

"I promise," said Emily, thrilled. She loved to have Teddy look at her like that.

A romantic compact. Meaning what? Emily did not know. She only knew that Teddy was going away — that life seemed suddenly very blank and cold — that the wind from the gulf, sighing among the trees in Lofty John's bush was very sorrowful — that summer had gone and autumn had come. And that the pot of gold at the rainbow's end was on some very far-distant hill.

Why had she said that thing about the star? Why did dusk and fir-scent and the afterglow of autumnal sunsets make people say absurd things?

Chapter II

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I

“NEW MOON,

“NOVEMBER 18, 19 —

“To-day the December number of Marchwood’s came with my verses Flying Gold in it. I consider the occasion worthy of mention in my diary because they were given a whole page to themselves and illustrated — the first time ever any poem of mine was so honoured. It is trashy enough in itself, I suppose — Mr. Carpenter only sniffed when I read it to him and refused to make any comment whatever on it. Mr. Carpenter never ‘damns with faint praise’ but he can damn with silence in a most smashing manner. But my poem looked so dignified that a careless reader might fancy there was something in it. Blessings on the good editor who was inspired to have it illustrated. He has bolstered up my self-respect considerably.

“But I did not care overmuch for the illustration itself. The artist did not catch my meaning at all. Teddy would have done better.

“Teddy is doing splendidly at the School of Design. And Vega shines brilliantly every night. I wonder if he really does always think of me when he sees it. Or if he ever does see it. Perhaps the electric lights of Montreal blot it out. He seems to see a good bit of Ilse. It’s awfully nice for them to know each other in that big city of strangers.”

II

“NOVEMBER 26, 19 —

“To-day was a glamorous November afternoon — summer-mild and autumn-sweet. I sat and read a long while in the pond burying-ground. Aunt Elizabeth thinks this a most gruesome place to sit in and tells Aunt

Laura that she is afraid there's a morbid streak in me. I can't see anything morbid about it. It's a beautiful spot where wild, sweet odours are always coming across Blair Water on the wandering winds. And so quiet and peaceful, with the old graves all about me — little green hillocks with small frosted ferns sprinkled over them. Men and women of my house are lying there. Men and women who had been victorious — men and women who had been defeated — and their victory and defeat are now one. I never can feel either much exalted or much depressed there. The sting and the tang alike go out of things. I like the old, old red sandstone slabs, especially the one for Mary Murray with its 'Here I Stay' — the inscription into which her husband put all the concealed venom of a lifetime. His grave is right beside hers and I feel sure they have forgiven each other long ago. And perhaps they come back sometimes in the dark of the moon and look at the inscription and laugh at it. It is growing a little dim with tiny lichens. Cousin Jimmy has given up scraping them away. Some day they will overgrow it so that it will be nothing but a green-and-red-and-silver smear on the old red stone."

"DEC. 20, 19 —

"Something nice happened to-day. I feel pleasantly exhilarated. Madison's took my story, A Flaw in the Indictment!!!! Yes, it deserves some exclamation-points after it to a certainty. If it were not for Mr. Carpenter I would write it in italics. Italics! Nay, I'd use capitals. It is very hard to get in there. Don't I know! Haven't I tried repeatedly and gained nothing for my pains but a harvest of 'we-regrets?' And at last it has opened its doors to me. To be in Madison's is a clear and unmistakable sign that you're getting somewhere on the Alpine path. The dear editor was kind enough to say it was a charming story.

"Nice man!

"He sent me a cheque for fifty dollars. I'll soon be able to begin to repay Aunt Ruth and Uncle Wallace what they spent on me in Shrewsbury. Aunt Elizabeth as usual looked at the cheque suspiciously but for the first time forebore to wonder if the bank would really cash it. Aunt Laura's beautiful blue eyes beamed with pride. Aunt Laura's eyes really do beam.

She is one of the Victorians. Edwardian eyes glitter and sparkle and allure but they never beam. And somehow I do like beaming eyes — especially when they beam over my success.

“Cousin Jimmy says that Madison’s is worth all the other Yankee magazines put together in his opinion.

“I wonder if Dean Priest will like *A Flaw in the Indictment*. And if he will say so. He never praises anything I write nowadays. And I feel such a craving to compel him to. I feel that his is the only commendation, apart from Mr. Carpenter’s, that is worth anything.

“It’s odd about Dean. In some mysterious way he seems to be growing younger. A few years ago I thought of him as quite old. Now he seems only middle-aged. If this keeps up he’ll soon be a mere youth. I suppose the truth is that my mind is beginning to mature a bit and I’m catching up with him. Aunt Elizabeth doesn’t like my friendship with him any more than she ever did. Aunt Elizabeth has a well-marked antipathy to any Priest. But I don’t know what I’d do without Dean’s friendship. It’s the very salt of life.”

“JANUARY 15, 19 —

“To-day was stormy. I had a white night last night after four rejections of MSS. I had thought especially good. As Miss Royal predicted, I felt that I had been an awful idiot not to have gone to New York with her when I had the chance. Oh, I don’t wonder babies always cry when they wake up in the night. So often I want to do it, too. Everything presses on my soul then and no cloud has a silver lining. I was blue and disgruntled all the forenoon and looked forward to the coming of the mail as the one possible rescue from the doldrums. There is always such a fascinating expectancy and uncertainty about the mail. What would it bring me? A letter from Teddy — Teddy writes the most delightful letters. A nice thin envelope with a cheque? A fat one woefully eloquent of more rejected MSS.? One of Ilse’s fascinating scrawls? Nothing of the sort. Merely an irate epistle from Second-cousin-once-removed Beulah Grant of Derry Pond, who is furious because she thinks I ‘put her’ into my story *Fools of Habit*, which has just been copied into a widely circulated Canadian farm paper. She

wrote me a bitterly reproachful letter which I received to-day. She thinks I 'might have spared an old friend who has always wished me well.' She is 'not accustomed to being ridiculed in the newspapers' and will I, in future, be so kind as to refrain from making her the butt of my supposed wit in the public press. Second-cousin-once-removed Beulah wields a facile pen of her own, when it comes to that, and while certain things in her letter hurt me other parts infuriated me. I never once even thought of Cousin Beulah when I wrote that story. The character of Aunt Kate is purely imaginary. And if I had thought of Cousin Beulah I most certainly wouldn't have put her in a story. She is too stupid and commonplace. And she isn't a bit like Aunt Kate, who is, I flattered myself, a vivid, snappy, humorous old lady.

"But Cousin Beulah wrote to Aunt Elizabeth too, and we have had a family ruction. Aunt Elizabeth won't believe I am guiltless — she declares Aunt Kate is an exact picture of Cousin Beulah and she politely requests me — Aunt Elizabeth's polite requests are awesome things — not to caricature my relatives in my future productions.

"'It is not,' said Aunt Elizabeth in her stateliest manner, 'a thing any Murray should do — make money out of the peculiarities of her friends.'

"It was just another of Miss Royal's predictions fulfilled. Oh, was she as right about everything else? If she was —

"But the worst slam of all came from Cousin Jimmy, who had chuckled over Fools of Habit.

"'Never mind old Beulah, pussy,' he whispered. 'That was fine. You certainly did her up brown in Aunt Kate. I recognized her before I'd read a page. Knew her by her nose.' There you are! I unluckily happened to dower Aunt Kate with a 'long, drooping nose.' Nor can it be denied that Cousin Beulah's nose is long and drooping. People have been hanged on no clearer circumstantial evidence. It was of no use to wail despairingly that I had never even thought of Cousin Beulah. Cousin Jimmy just nodded and chuckled again.

"'Of course. Best to keep it quiet. Best to keep anything like that pretty quiet.'

“The worst sting in all this is, that if Aunt Kate is really like Cousin Beulah Grant then I failed egregiously in what I was trying to do.

“However, I feel much better now than when I began this entry. I’ve got quite a bit of resentment and rebellion and discouragement out of my system.

“That’s the chief use of a diary, I believe.”

III

“FEB. 3, 19 —

“This was a ‘big day.’ I had three acceptances. And one editor asked me to send him some stories. To be sure, I hate having an editor ask me to send a story, somehow. It’s far worse than sending them unasked. The humiliation of having them returned after all is far deeper than when one just sends off a MS. to some dim impersonality behind an editorial desk a thousand miles away.

“And I have decided that I can’t write a story ‘to order.’ ‘Tis a diabolical task. I tried to lately. The editor of Young People asked me to write a story along certain lines. I wrote it. He sent it back, pointing out some faults and asking me to rewrite it. I tried to. I wrote and rewrote and altered and interlined until my MS. looked like a crazy patchwork of black and blue and red inks. Finally I lifted one of the covers of the kitchen stove and dumped in the original yarn and all my variations thereof.

“After this I’m just going to write what I want to. And the editors can be — canonized!

“There are northern lights and a misty new moon tonight.”

IV

“FEB. 16, 19 —

“My story What the Jest Was Worth was in The Home Monthly to-day. But I was only one of ‘others’ on the cover. However, to balance that I have been listed by name as ‘one of the well-known and popular

contributors for the coming year' in *Girlhood Days*. Cousin Jimmy has read this editor's foreword over half a dozen times and I heard him murmuring 'well-known and popular' as he split the kindlings. Then he went to the corner store and bought me a new Jimmy-book. Every time I pass a new milestone on the Alpine path Cousin Jimmy celebrates by giving me a new Jimmy-book. I never buy a notebook for myself. It would hurt his feelings. He always looks at the little pile of Jimmy-books on my writing-table with awe and reverence, firmly believing that all sorts of wonderful literature is locked up in the hodge-podge of description and characters and 'bits' they contain.

"I always give Dean my stories to read. I can't help doing it, although he always brings them back with no comment, or, worse than no comment — faint praise. It has become a sort of obsession with me to make Dean admit I can write something worth while in its line. That would be triumph. But unless and until he does, everything will be dust and ashes. Because — he knows."

V

"April 2, 19 —

"The spring has affected a certain youth of Shrewsbury who comes out to New Moon occasionally. He is not a suitor of whom the House of Murray approves. Nor, which is more important, one of whom E. B. Starr approves. Aunt Elizabeth was very grim because I went to a concert with him. She was sitting up when I came home.

"'You see I haven't eloped, Aunt Elizabeth,' I said. 'I promise you I won't. If I ever want to marry any one I'll tell you so and marry him in spite of your teeth.'

"I don't know whether Aunt Elizabeth went to bed with an easier mind or not. Mother eloped — thank goodness! — and Aunt Elizabeth is a firm believer in heredity."

VI

“April 15, 19 —

“This evening I went away up the hill and prowled about the Disappointed House by moonlight. The Disappointed House was built thirty-seven years ago — partly built, at least — for a bride who never came to it. There it has been ever since, boarded up, unfinished, heartbroken, haunted by the timid, forsaken ghosts of things that should have happened but never did. I always feel so sorry for it. For its poor blind eyes that have never seen — that haven’t even memories. No homelight ever shone out through them — only once, long ago, a gleam of firelight. It might have been such a nice little house, snuggled against that wooded hill, pulling little spruces all around it to cover it. A warm, friendly little house. And a goodnatured little house. Not like the new one at the Corner that Tom Semple is putting up. It is a bad-tempered house. Vixenish, with little eyes and sharp elbows. It’s odd how much personality a house can have even before it is ever lived in at all. Once long ago, when Teddy and I were children, we pried a board off the window and climbed in and made a fire in the fireplace. Then we sat there and planned out our lives. We meant to spend them together in that very house. I suppose Teddy has forgotten all about that childish nonsense. He writes often and his letters are full and jolly and Teddy-like. And he tells me all the little things I want to know about his life. But lately they have become rather impersonal, it seems to me. They might just as well have been written to Ilse as to me.

“Poor little Disappointed House. I suppose you will always be disappointed.”

VII

“May 1, 19 —

“Spring again! Young poplars with golden, ethereal leaves. Leagues of rippling gulf beyond the silver-and-lilac sand-dunes.

“The winter has gone with a swiftness incredible, in spite of some terrible, black three-o’clocks and lonely, discouraged twilights. Dean will

soon be home from Florida. But neither Teddy nor Ilse is coming home this summer. This gave me a white night or two recently. Ilse is going to the coast to visit an aunt — a mother's sister who never took any notice of her before. And Teddy has got the chance of illustrating a series of Northwest Mounted Police stories for a New York firm and must spend his holidays making sketches for it in the far North. Of course it's a splendid chance for him and I wouldn't be a bit sorry — if he seemed a bit sorry because he wasn't coming to Blair Water. But he didn't.

“Well, I suppose Blair Water and the old life here are to him as a tale that is told now.

“I didn't realize how much I had been building on Ilse and Teddy being here for the summer or how much the hope of it had helped me through a few bad times in the winter. When I let myself remember that not once this summer will I hear Teddy's signal whistle in Lofty John's bush — not once happen on him in our secret, beautiful haunts of lane and brookside — not once exchange a thrilling, significant glance in a crowd when something happened which had a special meaning for us, all the colour seems to die out of life, leaving it just a drab, faded thing of shreds and patches.

“Mrs. Kent met me at the postoffice yesterday and stopped to speak — something she very rarely does. She hates me as much as ever.

“‘I suppose you have heard that Teddy is not coming home this summer?’

“‘Yes,’ I said briefly.

“There was a certain odd, aching triumph in her eyes as she turned away — a triumph I understood. She is very unhappy because Teddy will not be home for her but she is exultant that he will not be home for me. This shows, she is almost sure, that he cares nothing about me.

“Well, I dare say she is right. Still one can't be altogether gloomy in spring.

“And Andrew is engaged! To a girl of whom Aunt Addie entirely approves. ‘I could not be more pleased with Andrew's choice if I had chosen her myself,’ she said this afternoon to Aunt Elizabeth. To Aunt

Elizabeth and at me. Aunt Elizabeth was coldly glad — or said she was. Aunt Laura cried a little — Aunt Laura always cries a bit when any one she knows is born or dead or married or engaged or come or gone or polling his first vote. She couldn't help feeling a little disappointed. Andrew would have been such a safe husband for me. Certainly there is no dynamite in Andrew."

Chapter III

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I

At first nobody thought Mr. Carpenter's illness serious. He had had a good many attacks of rheumatism in recent years, laying him up for a few days. Then he could hobble back to work, as grim and sarcastic as ever, with a new edge to his tongue. In Mr. Carpenter's opinion teaching in Blair Water School was not what it had been. Nothing there now, he said, but rollicking, soulless young nonentities. Not a soul in the school who could pronounce February or Wednesday.

"I'm tired trying to make soup in a sieve," he said gruffly.

Teddy and Ilse and Perry and Emily were gone — the four pupils who had leavened the school with a saving inspiration. Perhaps Mr. Carpenter was a little tired of — everything. He was not very old, as years go, but he had burned up most of his constitution in a wild youth. The little, timid, faded slip of a woman who had been his wife had died unobtrusively in the preceding autumn. She had never seemed to matter much to Mr. Carpenter; but he had "gone down" rapidly after her funeral. The school children went in awe of his biting tongue and his more frequent spurts of temper. The trustees began to shake their heads and talk of a new teacher when the school year ended.

Mr. Carpenter's illness began as usual with an attack of rheumatism. Then there was heart trouble. Dr. Burnley, who went to see him despite his obstinate refusal to have a doctor, looked grave and talked mysteriously of a lack of "the will to live." Aunt Louisa Drummond of Derry Pond came over to nurse him. Mr. Carpenter submitted to this with a resignation that was a bad omen — as if nothing mattered any more.

"Have your own way. She can potter round if it will ease your consciences. So long as she leaves me alone I don't care what she does. I won't be fed and I won't be coddled and I won't have the sheets changed.

Can't bear her hair, though. Too straight and shiny. Tell her to do something to it. And why does her nose look as if it were always cold?"

Emily ran in every evening to sit awhile with him. She was the only person the old man cared to see. He did not talk a great deal, but he liked to open his eyes every few minutes and exchange a sly smile of understanding with her — as if the two of them were laughing together over some excellent joke of which only they could sample the flavour. Aunt Louisa did not know what to make of this commerce of grins and consequently disapproved of it. She was a kindhearted creature, with much real motherliness in her thwarted maiden breast, but she was all at sea with these cheerful, Puckish, deathbed smiles of her patient. She thought he had much better be thinking of his immortal soul. He was not a member of the church, was he? He would not even let the minister come in to see him. But Emily Starr was welcomed whenever she came. Aunt Louisa had her own secret suspicion of the said Emily Starr. Didn't she write? Hadn't she put her own mother's second-cousin, body and bones, into one of her stories? Probably she was looking for "copy" in this old pagan's deathbed. That explained her interest in it, beyond a doubt. Aunt Louisa looked curiously at this ghoulish young creature. She hoped Emily wouldn't put her in a story.

For a long time Emily had refused to believe that it was Mr. Carpenter's deathbed. He couldn't be so ill as all that. He didn't suffer — he didn't complain. He would be all right as soon as warmer weather came. She told herself this so often that she made herself believe it. She could not let herself think of life in Blair Water without Mr. Carpenter.

One May evening Mr. Carpenter seemed much better. His eyes flashed with their old satiric fire, his voice rang with its old resonance; he joked poor Aunt Louisa — who never could understand his jokes but endured them with Christian patience. Sick people must be humoured. He told a funny story to Emily and laughed with her over it till the little low-raftered room rang. Aunt Louisa shook her head. There were some things she did not know, poor lady, but she did know her own humble, faithful little trade of unprofessional nursing; and she knew that this sudden

rejuvenescence was no good sign. As the Scotch would say, he was “fey.” Emily in her inexperience did not know this. She went home rejoicing that Mr. Carpenter had taken such a turn for the better. Soon he would be all right, back at school, thundering at his pupils, striding absently along the road reading some dog-eared classic, criticizing her manuscripts with all his old trenchant humour. Emily was glad. Mr. Carpenter was a friend she could not afford to lose.

II

Aunt Elizabeth wakened her at two. She had been sent for. Mr. Carpenter was asking for her.

“Is he — worse?” asked Emily, slipping out of her high, black bed with its carved posts.

“Dying,” said Aunt Elizabeth briefly. “Dr. Burnley says he can’t last till morning.”

Something in Emily’s face touched Aunt Elizabeth.

“Isn’t it better for him, Emily,” she said with an unusual gentleness. “He is old and tired. His wife has gone — they will not give him the school another year. His old age would be very lonely. Death is his best friend.”

“I am thinking of myself,” choked Emily.

She went down to Mr. Carpenter’s house, through the dark, beautiful spring night. Aunt Louisa was crying but Emily did not cry. Mr. Carpenter opened his eyes and smiled at her — the same old, sly smile.

“No tears,” he murmured. “I forbid tears at my deathbed. Let Louisa Drummond do the crying out in the kitchen. She might as well earn her money that way as another. There’s nothing more she can do for me.”

“Is there anything I can do?” asked Emily.

“Just sit here where I can see you till I’m gone, that’s all. One doesn’t like to go out — alone. Never liked the thought of dying alone. How many old she-weasels are out in the kitchen waiting for me to die?”

“There are only Aunt Louisa and Aunt Elizabeth,” said Emily, unable to repress a smile.

“Don’t mind my not — talking much. I’ve been talking — all my life. Through now. No breath — left. But if I think of anything — like you to be here.”

Mr. Carpenter closed his eyes and relapsed into silence. Emily sat quietly, her head a soft blur of darkness against the window that was beginning to whiten with dawn. The ghostly hands of a fitful wind played with her hair. The perfume of June lilies stole in from the bed under the open window — a haunting odour, sweeter than music, like all the lost perfumes of old, unutterably dear years. Far off, two beautiful, slender, black firs, of exactly the same height, came out against the silver dawn-lit sky like the twin spires of some Gothic cathedral rising out of a bank of silver mist. Just between them hung a dim old moon, as beautiful as the evening crescent. Their beauty was a comfort and stimulant to Emily under the stress of this strange vigil. Whatever passed — whatever came — beauty like this was eternal.

Now and then Aunt Louisa came in and looked at the old man. Mr. Carpenter seemed unconscious of these visitations but always when she went out he opened his eyes and winked at Emily. Emily found herself winking back, somewhat to her own horror — for she had sufficient Murray in her to be slightly scandalized over deathbed winks. Fancy what Aunt Elizabeth would say.

“Good little sport,” muttered Mr. Carpenter after the second exchange of winks. “Glad — you’re there.”

At three o’clock he grew rather restless. Aunt Louisa came in again.

“He can’t die till the tide goes out, you know,” she explained to Emily in a solemn whisper.

“Get out of this with your superstitious blather,” said Mr. Carpenter loudly and clearly. “I’ll die when I’m d — n well ready, tide or no tide.”

Horried Aunt Louisa excused him to Emily on the ground that he was wandering in his mind and slipped out.

“Excuse my common way, won’t you?” said Mr. Carpenter. “I had to shock her out. Couldn’t have that elderly female person — round watching me die. Given her — a good yarn to tell — the rest of her — life. Awful — warning. And yet — she’s a good soul. So good — she bores me. No evil in her. Somehow — one needs — a spice — of evil — in every personality. It’s the — pinch of — salt — that brings out — the flavour.”

Another silence. Then he added gravely,

“Trouble is — the Cook — makes the pinch — too large — in most cases. Inexperienced Cook — wiser after — a few eternities.”

Emily thought he really was “wandering” now but he smiled at her.

“Glad you’re here — little pal. Don’t mind being — here — do you?”

“No,” said Emily.

“When a Murray says — no — she means it.”

After another silence Mr. Carpenter began again, this time more to himself, as it seemed, than anyone else.

“Going out — out beyond the dawn. Past the morning star. Used to think I’d be frightened. Not frightened. Funny. Think how much I’m going to know — in just a few more minutes, Emily. Wiser than anybody else living. Always wanted to know — to know. Never liked guesses. Done with curiosity — about life. Just curious now — about death. I’ll know the truth, Emily — just a few more minutes and I’ll know the — truth. No more guessing. And if — it’s as I think — I’ll be — young again. You can’t know what — it means. You — who are young — can’t have — the least idea — what it means — to be young — again.”

His voice sank into restless muttering for a time, then rose clearly,

“Emily, promise me — that you’ll never write — to please anybody — but yourself.”

Emily hesitated a moment. Just what did such a promise mean?

“Promise,” whispered Mr. Carpenter insistently.

Emily promised.

“That’s right,” said Mr. Carpenter with a sigh of relief. “Keep that — and you’ll be — all right. No use trying to please everybody. No use trying to please — critics. Live under your own hat. Don’t be — led away — by

those howls about realism. Remember — pine woods are just as real as — pigsties — and a darn sight pleasanter to be in. You'll get there — sometime — you have the root — of the matter — in you. And don't — tell the world — everything. That's what's the — matter — with our — literature. Lost the charm of mystery — and reserve. There's something else I wanted to say — some caution — I can't — seem to remember—”

“Don't try,” said Emily gently. “Don't tire yourself.”

“Not — tired. Feel quite through — with being tired. I'm dying — I'm a failure — poor as a rat. But after all, Emily — I've had a — darned interesting time.”

Mr. Carpenter shut his eyes and looked so deathlike that Emily made an involuntary movement of alarm. He lifted a bleached hand.

“No — don't call her. Don't call that weeping lady back. Just yourself, little Emily of New Moon. Clever little girl, Emily. What was it — I wanted to say to her?”

A moment or two later he opened his eyes and said in a loud, clear voice, “Open the door — open the door. Death must not be kept waiting.”

Emily ran to the little door and set it wide. A strong wind of the grey sea rushed in. Aunt Louisa ran in from the kitchen.

“The tide has turned — he's going out with it — he's gone.”

Not quite. As Emily bent over him the keen, shaggy-brown eyes opened for the last time. Mr. Carpenter essayed a wink but could not compass it.

“I've — thought of it,” he whispered. “Beware — of — italics.”

Was there a little impish chuckle at the end of the words? Aunt Louisa always declared there was. Graceless old Mr. Carpenter had died laughing — saying something about Italians. Of course he was delirious. But Aunt Louisa always felt it had been a very unedifying deathbed. She was thankful that few such had come in her experience.

III

Emily went blindly home and wept for her old friend in the room of her dreams. What a gallant old soul he was — going out into the shadow — or into the sunlight? — with a laugh and a jest. Whatever his faults there had never been anything of the coward about old Mr. Carpenter. Her world, she knew, would be a colder place now that he was gone. It seemed many years since she had left New Moon in the darkness. She felt some inward monition that told her she had come to a certain parting of the ways of life. Mr. Carpenter's death would not make any external difference for her. Nevertheless, it was as a milestone to which in after years she could look back and say,

“After I passed that point everything was different.”

All her life she had grown, as it seemed, by these fits and starts. Going on quietly and changelessly for months and years; then all at once suddenly realizing that she had left some “low-vaulted past” and emerged into some “new temple” of the soul more spacious than all that had gone before. Though always, at first, with a chill of change and a sense of loss.

Chapter IV

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I

The year after Mr. Carpenter's death passed quietly for Emily — quietly, pleasantly — perhaps, though she tried to stifle the thought, a little monotonously. No Ilse — no Teddy — no Mr. Carpenter. Perry only very occasionally. But of course in the summer there was Dean. No girl with Dean Priest for a friend could be altogether lonely. They had always been such good friends, ever since the day, long ago, when she had fallen over the rocky bank of Malvern Bay and been rescued by Dean.* It did not matter in the least that he limped slightly and had a crooked shoulder, or that the dreamy brilliance of his green eyes sometimes gave his face an uncanny look. On the whole, there was no one in all the world she liked quite so well as Dean. When she thought this she always italicized the “liked.” There were some things Mr. Carpenter had not known.

*See Emily of New Moon.

Aunt Elizabeth never quite approved of Dean. But then Aunt Elizabeth had no great love for any Priest.

There seemed to be a temperamental incompatibility between the Murrays and the Priests that was never bridged over, even by the occasional marriages between the clans.

“Priests, indeed,” Aunt Elizabeth was wont to say contemptuously, relegating the whole clan, root and branch, to limbo with one wave of her thin, unbeautiful Murray hand. “Priests, indeed!”

“Murray is Murray and Priest is Priest and never the twain shall meet,” Emily shamelessly mischievously misquoted Kipling once when Dean had asked in pretended despair why none of her aunts liked him.

“Your old Great-aunt Nancy over there at Priest Pond detests me,” he said, with the little whimsical smile that sometimes gave him the look of an amused gnome, “And the Ladies Laura and Elizabeth treat me with the

frosty politeness reserved by the Murrys for their dearest foes. Oh, I think I know why.”

Emily flushed. She, too, was beginning to have an unwelcome suspicion why Aunts Elizabeth and Laura were even more frostily polite to Dean than of yore. She did not want to have it; she thrust it fiercely out and locked the door of thought upon it whenever it intruded there. But the thing whined on her doorstep and would not be banished. Dean, like everything and everybody else, seemed to have changed overnight. And what did the change imply — hint? Emily refused to answer this question. The only answer that suggested itself was too absurd. And too unwelcome.

Was Dean Priest changing from friend to lover? Nonsense. Arrant nonsense. Disagreeable nonsense. For she did not want him as a lover and she did want him madly as a friend. She couldn't lose his friendship. It was too dear, delightful, stimulating, wonderful. Why did such devilish things ever happen? When Emily reached this point in her disconnected musings she always stopped and retraced her mental steps fiercely, terrified to realize that she was almost on the point of admitting that “the something devilish” had already happened or was in process of happening.

In one way it was almost a relief to her when Dean said casually one November evening:

“I suppose I must soon be thinking of my annual migration.”

“Where are you going this year?” asked Emily.

“Japan. I've never been there. Don't want to go now particularly. But what's the use of staying? Would you want to talk to me in the sitting-room all winter with the aunts in hearing?”

“No,” said Emily between a laugh and a shiver. She recalled one fiendish autumn evening of streaming rain and howling wind when they couldn't walk in the garden but had to sit in the room where Aunt Elizabeth was knitting and Aunt Laura crocheting by the table. It had been awful. And again why? Why couldn't they talk as freely and whimsically and intimately then as they did in the garden? The answer to this at least was not to be expressed in any terms of sex. Was it because they talked of so many things Aunt Elizabeth could not understand and so disapproved

of? Perhaps. But whatever the cause Dean might as well have been at the other side of the world for all the real conversation that was possible.

“So I might as well go,” said Dean, waiting for this exquisite, tall, white girl in an old garden to say she would miss him horribly. She had said it every one of his flitting autumns for many years. But she did not say it this time. She found she dared not.

Again, why?

Dean was looking at her with eyes that could be tender or sorrowful or passionate, as he willed, and which now seemed to be a mixture of all three expressions. He must hear her say she would miss him. His true reason for going away again this winter was to make her realize how much she missed him — make her feel that she could not live without him.

“Will you miss me, Emily?”

“That goes without saying,” answered Emily lightly — too lightly. Other years she had been very frank and serious about it. Dean was not altogether regretful for the change. But he could guess nothing of the attitude of mind behind it. She must have changed because she felt something — suspected something, of what he had striven for years to hide and suppress as rank madness. What then? Did this new lightness indicate that she didn’t want to make a too important thing of admitting she would miss him? Or was it only the instinctive defence of a woman against something that implied or evoked too much?

“It will be so dreadful here this winter without you and Teddy and Ilse that I will not let myself think of it at all,” went on Emily. “Last winter was bad. And this — I know somehow — will be worse. But I’ll have my work.”

“Oh, yes, your work,” agreed Dean with the little, tolerant, half-amused inflection in his voice that always came now when he spoke of her “work,” as if it tickled him hugely that she should call her pretty scribblings “work.” Well, one must humour the charming child. He could not have said so more plainly in words. His implications cut across Emily’s sensitive soul like a whiplash. And all at once her work and her ambitions became — momentarily at least — as childish and unimportant

as he considered them. She could not hold her own conviction against him. He must know. He was so clever — so well-educated. He must know. That was the agony of it. She could not ignore his opinion. Emily knew deep down in her heart that she would never be able wholly to believe in herself until Dean Priest admitted that she could do something honestly worth while in its way. And if he never admitted it —

“I shall carry pictures of you wherever I go, Star,” Dean was saying. Star was his old nickname for her — not as a pun on her name but because he said she reminded him of a star. “I shall see you sitting in your room by that old lookout window, spinning your pretty cobwebs — pacing up and down in this old garden — wandering in the Yesterday Road — looking out to sea. Whenever I shall recall a bit of Blair Water loveliness I shall see you in it. After all, all other beauty is only a background for a beautiful woman.”

“Her pretty cobwebs—” ah, there it was. That was all Emily heard. She did not even realize that he was telling her he thought her a beautiful woman.

“Do you think what I write is nothing but cobwebs, Dean?” she asked chokingly.

Dean looked surprised, doing it very well.

“Star, what else is it? What do you think it is yourself? I’m glad you can amuse yourself by writing. It’s a splendid thing to have a little hobby of the kind. And if you can pick up a few shekels by it — well, that’s all very well too in this kind of a world. But I’d hate to have you dream of being a Brontë or an Austen — and wake to find you’d wasted your youth on a dream.”

“I don’t fancy myself a Brontë or an Austen,” said Emily. “But you didn’t talk like that long ago, Dean. You used to think then I could do something some day.”

“We don’t bruise the pretty visions of a child,” said Dean. “But it’s foolish to carry childish dreams over into maturity. Better face facts. You write charming things of their kind, Emily. Be content with that and don’t

waste your best years yearning for the unattainable or striving to reach some height far beyond your grasp.”

II

Dean was not looking at Emily. He was leaning on the old sundial and scowling down at it with the air of a man who was forcing himself to say a disagreeable thing because he felt it was his duty.

“I won’t be just a mere scribbler of pretty stories,” cried Emily rebelliously. He looked into her face. She was as tall as he was — a trifle taller, though he would not admit it.

“You do not need to be anything but what you are,” he said in a low vibrant tone. “A woman such as this old New Moon has never seen before. You can do more with those eyes — that smile — than you can ever do with your pen.”

“You sound like Great-aunt Nancy Priest,” said Emily cruelly and contemptuously.

But had he not been cruel and contemptuous to her? Three o’clock that night found her wide-eyed and anguished. She had lain through sleepless hours face to face with two hateful convictions. One was that she could never do anything worth doing with her pen. The other was that she was going to lose Dean’s friendship. For friendship was all she could give him and it would not satisfy him. She must hurt him. And oh, how could she hurt Dean whom life had used so cruelly? She had said “no” to Andrew Murray and laughed a refusal to Perry Miller without a qualm. But this was an utterly different thing.

Emily sat up in bed in the darkness and moaned in a despair that was none the less real and painful because of the indisputable fact that thirty years later she might be wondering what on earth she had been moaning about.

“I wish there were no such things as lovers and lovemaking in the world,” she said with savage intensity, honestly believing she meant it.

III

Like everybody, in daylight Emily found things much less tragic and more endurable than in the darkness. A nice fat cheque and a kind letter of appreciation with it restored a good deal of her self-respect and ambition. Very likely, too, she had imagined implications into Dean's words and looks that he never meant. She was not going to be a silly goose, fancying that every man, young or old, who liked to talk to her, or even to pay her compliments in shadowy, moonlit gardens, was in love with her. Dean was old enough to be her father.

Dean's unsentimental parting when he went away confirmed her in this comforting assurance and left her free to miss him without any reservations. Miss him she did abominably. The rain in autumn fields that year was a very sorrowful thing and so were the grey ghost-fogs coming slowly in from the gulf. Emily was glad when snow and sparkle came. She was very busy, writing such long hours, often far into the night, that Aunt Laura began to worry over her health and Aunt Elizabeth once or twice remarked protestingly that the price of coal-oil had gone up. As Emily paid for her own coal-oil this hint had no effect on her. She was very keen about making enough money to repay Uncle Wallace and Aunt Ruth what they had spent on her high school years. Aunt Elizabeth thought this was a praiseworthy ambition. The Murrays were an independent folk. It was a clan by-word that the Murrays had a boat of their own at the Flood. No promiscuous Ark for them.

Of course there were still many rejections — which Cousin Jimmy carried home from the postoffice speechless with indignation. But the percentage of acceptances rose steadily. Every new magazine conquered meant a step upward on her Alpine path. She knew she was steadily gaining the mastery over her art. Even the "love talk" that had bothered her so much in the old days came easily now. Had Teddy Kent's eyes taught her so much? If she had taken time to think she might have been very lonely. There were some bad hours. Especially after a letter had come from Ilse full of all her gay doings in Montreal, her triumphs in the School

of Oratory and her pretty new gowns. In the long twilights when she looked shiveringly from the windows of the old farmhouse and thought how very white and cold and solitary were the snow fields on the hill, how darkly remote and tragic the Three Princesses, she lost confidence in her star. She wanted summer; fields of daisies; seas misty with moonrise or purple with sunset; companionship; Teddy. In such moments she always knew she wanted Teddy.

Teddy seemed far away. They still corresponded faithfully, but the correspondence was not what it was. Suddenly in the autumn Teddy's letters had grown slightly colder and more formal. At this first hint of frost the temperature of Emily's dropped noticeably.

IV

But she had hours of rapture and insight that shed a glory backward and forward. Hours when she felt the creative faculty within her, burning like a never-dying flame. Rare, sublime moments when she felt as a god, perfectly happy and undesirous. And there was always her dream-world into which she could escape from monotony and loneliness, and taste strange, sweet happiness unmarred by any cloud or shadow. Sometimes she slipped mentally back into childhood and had delightful adventures she would have been ashamed to tell her adult world.

She liked to prowl about a good deal by herself, especially in twilight or moonlight alone with the stars and the trees, rarest of companions.

"I can't be contented indoors on a moonlight night. I have to be up and away," she told Aunt Elizabeth, who did not approve of prowling. Aunt Elizabeth never lost her uneasy consciousness that Emily's mother had eloped. And anyhow, prowling was odd. None of the other Blair Water girls prowled.

There were walks over the hills in the owl's light when the stars rose — one after another, the great constellations of myth and legend. There were frosty moonrises that hurt her with their beauty; spires of pointed firs against fiery sunsets; spruce copses dim with mystery; paces to and fro

on the Tomorrow Road. Not the Tomorrow Road of June, blossom-misted, tender in young green. Nor yet the Tomorrow Road of October, splendid in crimson and gold. But the Tomorrow Road of a still, snowy winter twilight — a white, mysterious, silent place full of wizardry. Emily loved it better than all her other dear spots. The spirit delight of that dream-haunted solitude never cloyed — its remote charm never palled.

If only there had been a friend to talk things over with! One night she awakened and found herself in tears, with a late moon shining blue and coldly on her through the frosted windowpanes. She had dreamed that Teddy had whistled to her from Lofty John's bush — the old, dear, signal whistle of childhood days; and she had run so eagerly across the garden to the bush. But she could not find Teddy.

"Emily Byrd Starr, if I catch you crying again over a dream!" she said passionately.

Chapter V

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I

Only three dynamic things happened that year to vary the noiseless tenor of Emily's way. In the autumn she had a love affair — as Aunt Laura Victorianly phrased it. Rev. James Wallace, the new, wellmeaning, ladylike young minister at Derry Pond, began making excuses for visiting Blair Water Manse quite often and from there drifted over to New Moon. Soon everybody in Blair Water and Derry Pond knew that Emily Starr had a ministerial beau. Gossip was very rife. It was a foregone conclusion that Emily would jump at him. A minister! Heads were shaken over it. She would never make a suitable minister's wife. Never in the world. But wasn't it always the way? A minister picking on the very last girl he should have.

At New Moon opinion was divided. Aunt Laura, who owned to a Dr. Fell feeling about Mr. Wallace, hoped Emily wouldn't "take" him. Aunt Elizabeth, in her secret soul, was not overfond of him either, but she was dazzled by the idea of a minister. And such a safe lover. A minister would never think of eloping. She thought Emily would be a very lucky girl if she could "get" him.

When it became sadly evident that Mr. Wallace's calls at New Moon had ceased, Aunt Elizabeth gloomily asked Emily the reason and was horrified to hear that the ungrateful minx had told Mr. Wallace she could not marry him.

"Why?" demanded Aunt Elizabeth in icy disapproval.

"His ears, Aunt Elizabeth, his ears," said Emily flippantly. "I really couldn't risk having my children inherit ears like that."

The indelicacy of such a reply staggered Aunt Elizabeth — which was probably why Emily had made it. She knew Aunt Elizabeth would be afraid to refer to the subject again.

The Rev. James Wallace thought it was “his duty” to go West the next spring. And that was that.

II

Then there was the episode of the local theatricals in Shrewsbury which were written up with vitriolic abuse in one of the Charlottetown papers. Shrewsbury people blamed Emily Byrd Starr for doing it. Who else, they demanded, could or would have written with such diabolic cleverness and sarcasm? Every one knew that Emily Byrd Starr had never forgiven Shrewsbury people for believing those yarns about her in the old John House affair. This was her method of revenge. Wasn't that like the Murrays? Carrying a secret grudge for years, until a suitable chance for revenge presented itself. Emily protested her innocence in vain. It was never discovered who had written the report and as long as she lived it kept coming up against her.

But in one way it worked out to her advantage. She was invited to all the social doings in Shrewsbury after that. People were afraid to leave her out lest she “write them up.” She could not get to everything — Shrewsbury was seven miles from Blair Water. But she got to Mrs. Tom Nickle's dinner dance and thought for six weeks that it had changed the current of her whole existence.

Emily-in-the-glass looked very well that night. She had got the dress she had longed for for years — spent the whole price of a story on it, to her Aunt's horror. Shot silk — blue in one light, silver in another, with mists of lace. She remembered that Teddy had said that when she got that dress he would paint her as an Ice-maiden in it.

Her righthand neighbour was a man who kept making “funny speeches” all through the meal and kept her wondering for what good purpose God had ever fashioned him.

But her left-hand neighbour! He talked little but he looked! Emily decided that she liked a man whose eyes said more than his lips. But he told her she looked like “the moonbeam of a blue summer night” in that

gown. I think it was that phrase that finished Emily — shot her clean through the heart — like the unfortunate little duck of the nursery rhyme. Emily was helpless before the charm of a well-turned phrase. Before the evening was over Emily, for the first time in her life, had fallen wildly and romantically into the wildest and most romantic kind of love—”the love the poets dreamed of,” as she wrote in her diary. The young man — I believe his beautiful and romantic name was Aylmer Vincent — was quite as madly in love as she. He literally haunted New Moon. He wooed beautifully. His way of saying “dear lady” charmed her. When he told her that “a beautiful hand was one of the chief charms of a beautiful woman” and looked adoringly at hers Emily kissed her hands when she went to her room that night because his eyes had caressed them. When he called her raptly “a creature of mist and flame” she misted and flamed about dim old New Moon until Aunt Elizabeth unthinkingly quenched her by asking her to fry up a batch of doughnuts for Cousin Jimmy. When he told her she was like an opal — milk-white outside but with a heart of fire and crimson, she wondered if life would always be like this.

“And to think I once imagined I cared for Teddy Kent,” she thought in amazement at herself.

She neglected her writing and asked Aunt Elizabeth if she could have the old blue box in the attic for a hope chest. Aunt Elizabeth graciously acceded. The record of the new suitor had been investigated and found impeccable. Good family — good social position — good business. All the omens were auspicious.

III

And then a truly terrible thing happened.

Emily fell out of love just as suddenly as she had fallen into it. One day she was, and the next she wasn't. That was all there was to it.

She was aghast. She couldn't believe it. She tried to pretend the old enchantment still existed. She tried to thrill and dream and blush. Nary thrill, nary blush. Her dark-eyed lover — why had it never struck her

before that his eyes were exactly like a cow's? — bored her. Ay, bored her. She yawned one evening in the very midst of one of his fine speeches. Why, there was nothing to him but fine speeches. There was nothing to add to that.

She was so ashamed that she was almost ill over it. Blair people thought she had been jilted and pitied her. The aunts who knew better were disappointed and disapproving.

“Fickle — fickle — like all the Starrs,” said Aunt Elizabeth bitterly.

Emily had no spunk to defend herself. She supposed she deserved it all. Perhaps she was fickle. She must be fickle. When such a glorious conflagration fizzled out so speedily and utterly into ashes. Not a spark of it left. Not even a romantic memory. Emily viciously inked out the passage in her diary about “the love the poets dreamed of.”

She was really very unhappy about it for a long while. Had she no depth at all? Was she such a superficial creature that even love with her was like the seeds that fell into the shallow soil in the immortal parable? She knew other girls had these silly, tempestuous, ephemeral affairs but she would never have supposed she would have one — could have one. To be swept off her feet like that by a handsome face and mellifluous voice and great dark eyes and a trick of pretty speeches! In brief Emily felt that she had made an absolute fool of herself and the Murray pride could not stick it.

To make it worse the young man married a Shrewsbury girl in six months. Not that Emily cared whom he married or how soon. But it meant that his romantic ardours were but things of superficiality, too, and lent a deeper tinge of humiliation to the silly affair. Andrew had been so easily consoled also. Percy Miller was not wasting in despair. Teddy had forgotten her. Was she really incapable of inspiring a deep and lasting passion in a man? To be sure, there was Dean. But even Dean could go away winter after winter and leave her to be wooed and won by any chance-met suitor.

“Am I fundamentally superficial?” poor Emily demanded of herself with terrible intensity

She took up her pen again with a secret gladness. But for a considerable time the lovemaking in her stories was quite cynical and misanthropic in its flavour.

Chapter VI

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I

Teddy Kent and Ilse Burnley came home in the summer for a brief vacation. Teddy had won an Art Scholarship which meant two years in Paris and was to sail for Europe in two weeks. He had written the news to Emily in an offhand way and she had responded with the congratulations of a friend and sister. There was no reference in either letter to rainbow gold or Vega of the Lyre. Yet Emily looked forward to his coming with a wistful, ashamed hope that would not be denied. Perhaps — dared she hope it? — when they met again face to face, in their old haunted woods and trysts — this coldness that had grown up so inexplicably between them would vanish as a sea-fog vanishes when the sun rose over the gulf. No doubt Teddy had had his imitation love affairs as she had hers. But when he came — when they looked again into each other's eyes — when she heard his signal whistle in Lofty John's bush —

But she never heard it. On the evening of the day when she knew Teddy was expected home she walked in the garden among brocaded moths, wearing a new gown of "powder-blue" chiffon and listened for it. Every robin call brought the blood to her cheek and made her heart beat wildly. Then came Aunt Laura through the dew and dusk.

"Teddy and Ilse are here," she said.

Emily went in to the stately, stiff, dignified parlour of New Moon, pale, queenly, aloof. Ilse hurled herself upon her with all her old, tempestuous affection, but Teddy shook hands with a cool detachment that almost equalled her own. Teddy? Oh, dear, no. Frederick Kent, R.A.-to-be. What was there left of the old Teddy in this slim, elegant young man with his sophisticated air and cool, impersonal eyes, and general implication of having put off for ever all childish things — including foolish old visions and insignificant little country girls he had played with in his infancy?

In which conclusion Emily was horribly unjust to Teddy. But she was not in a mood to be just to anybody. Nobody is who has made a fool of herself. And Emily felt that that was just what she had done — again. Mooning romantically about in a twilight garden, specially wearing powder-blue, waiting for a lover's signal from a beau who had forgotten all about her — or only remembered her as an old schoolmate on whom he had very properly and kindly and conscientiously come to call. Well, thank heaven, Teddy did not know how absurd she had been. She would take excellent care that he should never suspect it. Who could be more friendly and remote than a Murray of New Moon? Emily's manner, she flattered herself, was admirable. As gracious and impersonal as to an entire stranger. Renewed congratulations on his wonderful success, coupled with an absolute lack of all real interest in it. Carefully phrased, polite questions about his work on her side; carefully phrased polite questions about her work on his side. She had seen some of his pictures in the magazines. He had read some of her stories. So it went, with a wider gulf opening between them at every moment. Never had Emily felt herself so far away from Teddy. She recognized with a feeling that was almost terror how completely he had changed in those two years of absence. It would in truth have been a ghastly interview had it not been for Ilse, who chattered with all her old breeziness and tang, planning out a two weeks of gay doings while she was home, asking hundreds of questions; the same lovable old madcap of laughter and jest and dressed with all her old gorgeous violations of accepted canons of taste. In an extraordinary dress — a thing of greenish-yellow. She had a big pink peony at her waist and another at her shoulder. She wore a bright green hat with a wreath of pink flowers on it. Great hoops of pearl swung in her ears. It was a weird costume. No one but Ilse could have worn it successfully. And she looked like the incarnation of a thousand tropic springs in it — exotic, provocative, beautiful. So beautiful! Emily realized her friend's beauty afresh with a pang not of envy, but of bitter humiliation. Beside Ilse's golden sheen of hair and brilliance of amber eyes and red-rose loveliness of cheeks she must look pale and dark and insignificant. Of course Teddy

was in love with Ilse. He had gone to see her first — had been with her while Emily waited for him in the garden. Well, it made no real difference. Why should it? She would be just as friendly as ever. And was. Friendly with a vengeance. But when Teddy and Ilse had gone — together — laughing and teasing each other through the old Tomorrow Road Emily went up to her room and locked the door. Nobody saw her again until the next morning.

II

The gay two weeks of Ilse's planning followed. Picnics, dances and jamborees galore. Shrewsbury society decided that a rising young artist was somebody to be taken notice of and took notice accordingly. It was a veritable whirl of gaiety and Emily whirled about in it with the others. No step lighter in the dance, no voice quicker in the jest, and all the time feeling like the miserable spirit in a ghost story she had once read who had a live coal in its breast instead of a heart. All the time, feeling, too, far down under surface pride and hidden pain, that sense of completion and fulfilment which always came to her when Teddy was near her. But she took good care never to be alone with Teddy, who certainly could not be accused of any attempt to inveigle her into twosomes. His name was freely coupled with Ilse's and they took so composedly the teasing they encountered, that the impression gained ground that "things were pretty well understood between them." Emily thought Ilse might have told her if it were so. But Ilse, though she told many a tale of lovers forlorn whose agonies seemed to lie very lightly on her conscience, never mentioned Teddy's name, which Emily thought had a torturing significance of its own. She inquired after Perry Miller, wanting to know if he were as big an oaf as ever and laughing over Emily's indignant defence.

"He will be Premier some day no doubt," agreed Ilse scornfully. "He'll work like the devil and never miss anything by lack of asking for it, but won't you always smell the herring-barrels of Stovepipe Town?"

Perry came to see Ilse, bragged a bit too much over his progress and got so snubbed and manhandled that he did not come again. Altogether the two weeks seemed a nightmare to Emily, who thought she was unreservedly thankful when the time came for Teddy to go. He was going on a sailing vessel to Halifax, wanting to make some nautical sketches for a magazine, and an hour before flood-tide, while the Mira Lee swung at anchor by the wharf at Stovepipe Town, he came to say goodbye. He did not bring Ilse with him — no doubt, thought Emily, because Ilse was visiting in Charlottetown; but Dean Priest was there, so there was no dreaded solitude a deux. Dean was creeping back into his own, after the two weeks' junketings from which he had been barred out. Dean would not go to dances and clambakes, but he was always hovering in the background, as everybody concerned felt. He stood with Emily in the garden and there was a certain air of victory and possession about him that did not escape Teddy's eye. Dean, who never made the mistake of thinking gaiety was happiness, had seen more than others of the little drama that had been played out in Blair Water during those two weeks and the dropping of the curtain left him a satisfied man. The old, shadowy, childish affair between Teddy Kent of the Tansy Patch and Emily of New Moon, was finally ended. Whatever its significance or lack of significance had been, Dean no longer counted Teddy among his rivals.

Emily and Teddy parted with the hearty handshake and mutual good wishes of old schoolmates who do indeed wish each other well but have no very vital interest in the matter.

"Prosper and be hanged to you," as some old Murray had been wont to say.

Teddy got himself away very gracefully. He had the gift of making an artistic exit, but he did not once look back. Emily turned immediately to Dean and resumed the discussion which Teddy's coming had interrupted. Her lashes hid her eyes very securely. Dean, with his uncanny ability to read her thoughts, should not — must not guess — what? What was there to guess? Nothing — absolutely nothing. Yet Emily kept her lashes down.

When Dean, who had some other engagement that evening, went away half an hour later she paced sedately up and down among the gold of primroses for a little while, the very incarnation, in all seeming, of maiden meditation fancy free.

“Spinning out a plot, no doubt,” thought Cousin Jimmy proudly, as he glimpsed her from the kitchen window. “It beats me how she does it.”

III

Perhaps Emily was spinning out a plot. But as the shadows deepened she slipped out of the garden, through the dreamy peace of the old columbine orchard — along the Yesterday Road — over the green pasture field — past the Blair Water — up the hill beyond — past the Disappointed House — through the thick fir wood. There, in a clump of silver birches, one had an unbroken view of the harbour, flaming in lilac and rose-colour. Emily reached it a little breathlessly — she had almost run at the last. Would she be too late? Oh, what if she should be too late?

The Mira Lee was sailing out of the harbour, a dream vessel in the glamour of sunset, past purple headlands and distant, fairylike, misty coasts. Emily stood and watched her till she had crossed the bar into the gulf beyond. Stood and watched her until she had faded from sight in the blue dimness of the falling night, conscious only of a terrible hunger to see Teddy once more — just once more. To say goodbye as it should have been said.

Teddy was gone. To another world. There was no rainbow in sight. And what was Vega of the Lyre but a whirling, flaming, incredibly distant sun?

She slipped down among the grasses at her feet and lay there sobbing in the cold moonshine that had suddenly taken the place of the friendly twilight.

Mingled with her sharp agony was incredulity. This thing could not have happened. Teddy could no have gone away with only that soulless, chilly, polite goodbye. After all their years of comradeship, if nothing else. Oh, how would she ever get herself past three o'clock this night?

“I am a hopeless fool,” she whispered savagely. “He has forgotten. I am nothing to him. And I deserve it. Didn’t I forget him in those crazy weeks when I was imagining myself in love with Aylmer Vincent? Of course somebody has told him all about that. I’ve lost my chance of real happiness through that absurd affair. Where is my pride? To cry like this over a man who has forgotten me. But — but — it’s so nice to cry after having had to laugh for these hideous weeks.”

IV

Emily flung herself into work feverishly after Teddy had gone. Through long summer days and nights she wrote, while the purple stains deepened under her eyes and the rose stains faded out of her cheeks. Aunt Elizabeth thought she was killing herself and for the first time was reconciled to her intimacy with Jarback Priest, since he dragged Emily away from her desk in the evenings at least for walks and talks in the fresh air. That summer Emily paid off the last of her indebtedness to Uncle Wallace and Aunt Ruth with her “pot-boilers.”

But there was more than pot-boiling a-doing. In her first anguish of loneliness, as she lay awake at three o’clock, Emily had remembered a certain wild winter night when she and Ilse and Perry and Teddy had been “stormed in” in the old John House on the Derry Pond Road;* remembered all the scandal and suffering that had arisen therefrom; and remembered also that night of rapt delight “thinking out” a story that had flashed into her mind at a certain gay, significant speech of Teddy’s. At least, she had thought it significant then. Well, that was all over. But wasn’t the story somewhere? She had written the outline of that alluring, fanciful tale in a Jimmy-book the next day. Emily sprang out of bed in the still summer moonlight, lighted one of the famous candles of New Moon, and rummaged through a pile of old Jimmy-books. Yes, here it was. *A Seller of Dreams*. Emily squatted down on her haunches and read it through. It was good. Again it seized hold of her imagination and called forth all her creative impulse. She would write it out — she would begin that very

moment. Flinging a dressing-gown over her white shoulders to protect them from the keen gulf air she sat down before her open window and began to write. Everything else was forgotten — for a time at least — in the subtle, all-embracing joy of creation.

* See Emily Climbs.

Teddy was nothing but a dim memory — love was a blown-out candle. Nothing mattered but her story. The characters came to life under her hand and swarmed through her consciousness, vivid, alluring, compelling. Wit, tears, and laughter trickled from her pen. She lived and breathed in another world and came back to New Moon only at dawn to find her lamp burned out, and her table littered with manuscript — the first four chapters of her book. Her book! What magic and delight and awe and incredulity in the thought.

For weeks Emily seemed to live really only when she was writing it. Dean found her strangely rapt and remote, absent and impersonal. Her conversation was as dull as it was possible for Emily's conversation to be, and while her body sat or walked beside him her soul was — where? In some region where he could not follow, at all events. It had escaped him.

V

Emily finished her book in six weeks — finished it at dawn one morning. She flung down her pen and went to her window, lifting her pale, weary, triumphant little face to the skies of morning.

Music was dripping through the leafy silence in Lofty John's bush. Beyond were dawn-rosy meadows and the garden of New Moon living in an enchanted calm. The wind's dance over the hills seemed some dear response to the music and rhythm in her being. Hills, sea, shadows, all called to her with a thousand elfin voices of understanding and acclaim. The old gulf was singing. Exquisite tears were in her eyes. She had written it — oh, how happy she was! This moment atoned for everything.

Finished — complete! There it lay — A Seller of Dreams — her first book. Not a great book — oh, no, but hers — her very own. Something to

which she had given birth, which would never have existed had she not brought it into being. And it was good. She knew it was — felt it was. A fiery, delicate tale, instinct with romance, pathos, humour. The rapture of creation still illuminated it. She turned the pages over, reading a bit here and there — wondering if she could really have written that. She was right under the rainbow's end. Could she not touch the magic, prismatic thing? Already her fingers were clasping the pot of gold.

Aunt Elizabeth walked in with her usual calm disregard of any useless formality such as knocking.

“Emily,” she said severely, “have you been sitting up all night again?”

Emily came back to earth with that abominable mental jolt which can only be truly described as a thud — a “sickening thud” at that. Very sickening. She stood like a convicted schoolgirl. And *A Seller of Dreams* became instantly a mere heap of scribbled paper.

“I — I didn’t realize how time was passing, Aunt Elizabeth,” she stammered.

“You are old enough to have better sense,” said Aunt Elizabeth. “I don’t mind your writing — now. You seem to be able to earn a living by it in a very ladylike way. But you will wreck your health if you keep this sort of thing up. Have you forgotten that your mother died of consumption? At any rate, don’t forget that you must pick those beans to-day. It’s high time they were picked.”

Emily gathered up her manuscript with all her careless rapture gone. Creation was over; remained now the sordid business of getting her book published. Emily typewrote it on the little third-hand machine Perry had picked up for her at an auction sale — a machine that wrote only half of any capital letter and wouldn’t print the “m’s” at all. She put the capitals and the “m’s” in afterwards with a pen and sent the MS. away to a publishing firm. The publishing firm sent it back with a typewritten screed stating that “their readers had found some merit in the story but not enough to warrant an acceptance.”

This “damning with faint praise” flattened Emily out as not even a printed slip could have done. Talk about three o’clock that night! No, it is

an act of mercy not to talk about it — or about many successive three o'clocks.

“Ambition!” wrote Emily bitterly in her diary. “I could laugh! Where is my ambition now? What is it like to be ambitious? To feel that life is before you, a fair, unwritten white page where you may inscribe your name in letters of success? To feel that you have the wish and power to win your crown? To feel that the coming years are crowding to meet you and lay their largess at your feet? I once knew what it was to feel so.”

All of which goes to show how very young Emily still was. But agony is none the less real because in later years when we have learned that everything passes, we wonder what we agonized about. She had a bad three weeks of it. Then she recovered enough to send her story out again. This time the publisher wrote to her that he might consider the book if she would make certain changes in it. It was too “quiet.” She must “pep it up.” And the ending must be changed entirely. It would never do.

Emily tore his letter savagely into bits. Mutilate and degrade her story? Never! The very suggestion was an insult.

When a third publisher sent it back with a printed slip Emily's belief in it died. She tucked it away and took up her pen grimly.

“Well, I can write short stories at least. I must continue to do that.”

Nevertheless, the book haunted her. After a few weeks she took it out and reread it — coolly, critically, free alike from the delusive glamour of her first rapture and from the equally delusive depression of rejection slips. And still it seemed to her good. Not quite the wonder-tale she had fancied it, perhaps; but still a good piece of work. What then? No writer, so she had been told, was ever capable of judging his own work correctly. If only Mr. Carpenter were alive! He would tell her the truth. Emily made a sudden terrible resolution. She would show it to Dean. She would ask for his calm unprejudiced opinion and abide by it. It would be hard. It was always hard to show her stories to any one, most of all to Dean, who knew so much and had read everything in the world. But she must know. And she knew Dean would tell her the truth, good or bad. He thought nothing of her

stories. But this was different. Would he not see something worth while in this? If not —

VI

“Dean, I want your candid opinion about this story. Will you read it carefully, and tell me exactly what you think of it? I don’t want flattery — or false encouragement — I want the truth — the naked truth.”

“Are you so sure of that?” asked Dean dryly. “Very few people can endure seeing the naked truth. It has to have a rag or two to make it presentable.”

“I do want the truth,” said Emily stubbornly. “This book has been” — she choked a little over the confession, “refused three times. If you find any good in it I’ll keep on trying to find a publisher for it. If you condemn it I’ll burn it.”

Dean looked inscrutably at the little packet she held out to him. So this was what had wrapped her away from him all summer — absorbed her — possessed her. The one black drop in his veins — that Priest jealousy of being first — suddenly made its poison felt.

He looked into her cold, sweet face and starry eyes, grey-purple as a lake at dawn, and hated whatever was in the packet, but he carried it home and brought it back three nights later. Emily met him in the garden, pale and tense.

“Well,” she said.

Dean looked at her, guilty. How ivory white and exquisite she was in the chill dusk!

“‘Faithful are the wounds of a friend.’ I should be less than your friend if I told you falsehoods about this, Emily.”

“So — it’s no good.”

“It’s a pretty little story, Emily. Pretty and flimsy and ephemeral as a rose-tinted cloud. Cobwebs — only cobwebs. The whole conception is too far-fetched. Fairy tales are out of the fashion. And this one of yours makes

overmuch of a demand on the credulity of the reader. And your characters are only puppets. How could you write a real story? You've never lived."

Emily clenched her hands and bit her lips. She dared not trust her voice to say a single word. She had not felt like this since the night Ellen Greene had told her her father must die. Her heart, that had beaten so tumultuously a few minutes ago, was like lead, heavy and cold. She turned and walked away from him. He limped softly after her and touched her shoulder.

"Forgive me, Star. Isn't it better to know the truth? Stop reaching for the moon. You'll never get it. Why try to write, anyway? Everything has already been written."

"Some day," said Emily, compelling herself to speak steadily, "I may be able to thank you for this. Tonight I hate you."

"Is that just?" asked Dean quietly.

"No, of course it isn't just," said Emily wildly. "Can you expect me to be just when you've just killed me? Oh, I know I asked for it — I know it's good for me. Horrible things always are good for you, I suppose. After you've been killed a few times you don't mind it. But the first time one does — squirm. Go away, Dean. Don't come back for a week at least. The funeral will be over then."

"Don't you believe I know what this means to you, Star?" asked Dean pityingly.

"You can't — altogether. Oh, I know you're sympathetic. I don't want sympathy. I only want time to bury myself decently."

Dean, knowing it would be better to go, went. Emily watched him out of sight. Then she took up the little dog-eared, discredited manuscript he had laid on the stone bench and went up to her room. She looked it over by her window in the fading light. Sentence after sentence leaped out at her — witty, poignant, beautiful. No, that was only her fond, foolish, maternal delusion. There was nothing of that sort in the book. Dean had said so. And her book people. How she loved them. How real they seemed to her. It was terrible to think of destroying them. But they were not real. Only "puppets." Puppets would not mind being burned. She glanced up at the

starlit sky of the autumn night. Vega of the Lyre shone bluely down upon her. Oh, life was an ugly, cruel, wasteful thing!

Emily crossed over to her little fireplace and laid *A Seller of Dreams* in the grate. She struck a match, knelt down and held it to a corner with a hand that did not tremble. The flame seized on the loose sheets eagerly, murderously. Emily clasped her hands over her heart and watched it with dilated eyes, remembering the time she had burned her old “account book” rather than let Aunt Elizabeth see it. In a few moments the manuscript was a mass of writhing fires — in a few more seconds it was a heap of crinkled ashes, with here and there an accusing ghost-word coming out whitely on a blackened fragment, as if to reproach her.

Repentance seized upon her. Oh, why had she done it? Why had she burned her book? Suppose it was no good. Still, it was hers. It was wicked to have burned it. She had destroyed something incalculably precious to her. What did the mothers of old feel when their children had passed through the fire to Moloch — when the sacrificial impulse and excitement had gone? Emily thought she knew.

Nothing of her book, her dear book that had seemed so wonderful to her, but ashes — a little, pitiful heap of black ashes. Could it be so? Where had gone all the wit and laughter and charm that had seemed to glimmer in its pages — all the dear folks who had lived in them — all the secret delight she had woven into them as moonlight is woven among pines? Nothing left but ashes. Emily sprang up in such an anguish of regret that she could not endure it. She must get out — away — anywhere. Her little room, generally so dear and beloved and cosy, seemed like a prison. Out — somewhere — into the cold, free autumn night with its grey ghost-mists — away from walls and boundaries — away from that little heap of dark flakes in the grate — away from the reproachful ghosts of her murdered book folks. She flung open the door of the room and rushed blindly to the stair.

VII

Aunt Laura never to the day of her death forgave herself for leaving that mending-basket at the head of the stair. She had never done such a thing in her life before. She had been carrying it up to her room when Elizabeth called peremptorily from the kitchen asking where something was. Laura set her basket down on the top step and ran to get it. She was away only a moment. But that moment was enough for predestination and Emily. The tear-blinded girl stumbled over the basket and fell — headlong down the long steep staircase of New Moon. There was a moment of fear — a moment of wonderment — she felt plunged into deadly cold — she felt plunged into burning heat — she felt a soaring upward — a falling into unseen depths — a fierce stab of agony in her foot — then nothing more. When Laura and Elizabeth came running in there was only a crumpled silken heap lying at the foot of the stairs with balls and stockings all around it and Aunt Laura's scissors bent and twisted under the foot they had so cruelly pierced.

Chapter VII

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I

From October to April Emily Starr lay in bed or on the sitting-room lounge watching the interminable windy drift of clouds over the long white hills or the passionless beauty of winter trees around quiet fields of snow, and wondering if she would ever walk again — or walk only as a pitiable cripple. There was some obscure injury to her back upon which the doctors could not agree. One said it was negligible and would right itself in time. Two others shook their heads and were afraid. But all were agreed about the foot. The scissors had made two cruel wounds — one by the ankle, one on the sole of the foot. Blood-poisoning set in. For days Emily hovered between life and death, then between the scarcely less terrible alternative of death and amputation. Aunt Elizabeth prevented that. When all the doctors agreed that it was the only way to save Emily's life she said grimly that it was not the Lord's will, as understood by the Murrays, that people's limbs should be cut off. Nor could she be removed from this position. Laura's tears and Cousin Jimmy's pleadings and Dr. Burnley's execrations and Dean Priest's agreements budged her not a jot. Emily's foot should not be cut off. Nor was it. When she recovered unmaimed Aunt Elizabeth was triumphant and Dr. Burnley confounded.

The danger of amputation was over, but the danger of lasting and bad lameness remained. Emily faced that all winter.

"If I only knew one way or the other," she said to Dean. "If I knew, I could make up my mind to bear it — perhaps. But to lie here — wondering — wondering if I'll ever be well."

"You will be well," said Dean savagely.

Emily did not know what she would have done without Dean that winter. He had given up his invariable winter trip and stayed in Blair Water that he might be near her. He spent the days with her, reading,

talking, encouraging, sitting in the silence of perfect companionship. When he was with her Emily felt that she might even be able to face a lifetime of lameness. But in the long nights when everything was blotted out by pain she could not face it. Even when there was no pain her nights were often sleepless and very terrible when the wind wailed drearily about the old New Moon eaves or chased flying phantoms of snow over the hills. When she slept she dreamed, and in her dreams she was for ever climbing stairs and could never get to the top of them, lured upward by an odd little whistle — two higher notes and a low one — that ever retreated as she climbed. It was better to lie awake than have that terrible, recurrent dream. Oh, those bitter nights! Once Emily had not thought that the Bible verse declaring that there would be no night in heaven contained an attractive promise. No night? No soft twilight enkindled with stars? No white sacrament of moonlight? No mystery of velvet shadow and darkness? No ever-amazing miracle of dawn? Night was as beautiful as day and heaven would not be perfect without it.

But now in these dreary weeks of pain and dread she shared the hope of the Patmian seer. Night was a dreadful thing.

People said Emily Starr was very brave and patient and uncomplaining. But she did not seem so to herself. They did not know of the agonies of rebellion and despair and cowardice behind her outward calmness of Murray pride and reserve. Even Dean did not know — though perhaps he suspected.

She smiled gallantly when smiling was indicated, but she never laughed. Not even Dean could make her laugh, though he tried with all the powers of wit and humour at his command.

“My days of laughter are done,” Emily said to herself. And her days of creation as well. She could never write again. The “flash” never came. No rainbow spanned the gloom of that terrible winter. People came to see her continuously. She wished they would stay away. Especially Uncle Wallace and Aunt Ruth, who were sure she would never walk again and said so every time they came. Yet they were not so bad as the callers who were cheerfully certain she would be all right in time and did not believe a word

of it themselves. She had never had any intimate friends except Dean and Ilse and Teddy. Ilse wrote weekly letters in which she rather too obviously tried to cheer Emily up. Teddy wrote once when he heard of her accident. The letter was very kind and tactful and sincerely sympathetic. Emily thought it was the letter any indifferent friendly acquaintance might have written and she did not answer it though he had asked her to let him know how she was getting on. No more letters came. There was nobody but Dean. He had never failed her — never would fail her. More and more as the interminable days of storm and gloom passed she turned to him. In that winter of pain she seemed to herself to grow so old and wise that they met on equal ground at last. Without him life was a bleak, grey desert devoid of colour or music. When he came the desert would — for a time at least — blossom like the rose of joy and a thousand flowerets of fancy and hope and illusion would fling their garlands over it.

II

When spring came Emily got well — got well so suddenly and quickly that even the most optimistic of the three doctors was amazed. True, for a few weeks she had to limp about on a crutch, but the time came when she could do without it — could walk alone in the garden and look out on the beautiful world with eyes that could not be satisfied with seeing. Oh, how good life was again! How good the green sod felt beneath her feet! She had left pain and fear behind her like a castoff garment and felt gladness — no, not gladness exactly, but the possibility of being glad once more sometime.

It was worth while to have been ill to realize the savour of returning health and well-being on a morning like this, when a seawind was blowing up over the long, green fields. There was nothing on earth like a seawind. Life might, in some ways, be a thing of shreds and tatters, everything might be changed or gone; but pansies and sunset clouds were still fair. She felt again her old joy in mere existence.

“‘Truly the light is sweet and a pleasant thing it is for the eye to behold the sun,’” she quoted dreamily.

Old laughter came back. On the first day that Emily’s laughter was heard again in New Moon Laura Murray, whose hair had turned from ash to snow that winter, went to her room and knelt down by her bed to thank God. And while she knelt there Emily was talking about God to Dean in the garden on one of the most beautiful spring twilights imaginable, with a little, growing moon in the midst of it.

“There have been times this past winter when I felt God hated me. But now again I feel sure He loves me,” she said softly.

“So sure?” questioned Dean dryly. “I think God is interested in us but He doesn’t love us. He likes to watch us to see what we’ll do. Perhaps it amuses Him to see us squirm.”

“What a horrible conception of God!” said Emily with a shudder. “You don’t really believe that about Him, Dean.”

“Why not?”

“Because He would be worse than a devil then — a God who thought only about his own amusement, without even the devil’s justification of hating us.”

“Who tortured you all winter with bodily pain and mental anguish?” asked Dean.

“Not God. And He — sent me you,” said Emily steadily. She did not look at him; she lifted her face to the Three Princesses in their Maytime beauty — a white-rose face now, pale from its winter’s pain. Beside her the big spirea, which was the pride of Cousin Jimmy’s heart, banked up in its June-time snow, making a beautiful background for her. “Dean, how can I ever thank you for what you’ve done for me — been to me — since last October? I can never put it in words. But I want you to know how I feel about it.”

“I’ve done nothing except snatch at happiness. Do you know what happiness it was to me to do something for you Star — help you in some way — to see you turning to me in your pain for something that only I could give — something I had learned in my own years of loneliness? And

to let myself dream something that couldn't come true — that I knew ought not to come true—”

Emily trembled and shivered slightly. Yet why hesitate — why put off that which she had fully made up her mind to do?

“Are you so sure, Dean,” she said in a low tone, “that your dream — can't come true?”

Chapter VIII

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I

There was a tremendous sensation in the Murray clan when Emily announced that she was going to marry Dean Priest. At New Moon the situation was very tense for a time. Aunt Laura cried and Cousin Jimmy went about shaking his head and Aunt Elizabeth was exceedingly grim. Yet in the end they made up their minds to accept it. What else could they do? By this time even Aunt Elizabeth realized that when Emily said she was going to do a thing she would do it

“You would have made a worse fuss if I had told you I was going to marry Perry of Stovepipe Town,” said Emily when she had heard all Aunt Elizabeth had to say.

“Of course that is true enough,” admitted Aunt Elizabeth when Emily had gone out. “And, after all, Dean is well-off — and the Priests are a good family.”

“But so — so Priestly,” sighed Laura. “And Dean is far, far too old for Emily. Besides, his great-great-grandfather went insane.”

“Dean won’t go insane.”

“His children might.”

“Laura,” said Elizabeth rebukingly, and dropped the subject.

“Are you very sure you love him, Emily?” Aunt Laura asked that evening.

“Yes — in a way,” said Emily.

Aunt Laura threw out her hands and spoke with a sudden passion utterly foreign to her.

“But there’s only one way of loving.”

“Oh no, dearest of Victorian aunties,” answered Emily gaily. “There are a dozen different ways. You know I’ve tried one or two ways already.

And they failed me. Don't worry about Dean and me. We understand each other perfectly."

"I only want you to be happy, dear."

"And I will be happy — I am happy. I'm not a romantic little dreamer any longer. Last winter took that all out of me. I'm going to marry a man whose companionship satisfies me absolutely and he's quite satisfied with what I can give him — real affection and comradeship. I am sure that is the best foundation for a happy marriage. Besides, Dean needs me. I can make him happy. He has never been happy. Oh, it is delightful to feel that you hold happiness in your hand and can hold it out, like a pearl beyond price, to one who longs for it."

"You're too young," reiterated Aunt Laura.

"It's only my body that's young. My soul is a hundred years old. Last winter made me feel so old and wise. You know."

"Yes, I know." But Laura also knew that this very feeling old and wise merely proved Emily's youth. People who are old and wise never feel either. And all this talk of aged souls didn't do away with the fact that Emily, slim, radiant, with eyes of mystery, was not yet twenty, while Dean Priest was forty-two. In fifteen years — but Laura would not think of it.

And, after all, Dean would not take her away. There had been happy marriages with just as much disparity of age.

II

Nobody, it must be admitted, seemed to regard the match with favour. Emily had a rather abominable time of it for a few weeks. Dr. Burnley raged about the affair and insulted Dean. Aunt Ruth came over and made a scene.

"He's an infidel, Emily."

"He isn't!" said Emily indignantly.

"Well, he doesn't believe what we believe," declared Aunt Ruth as if that ought to settle the matter for any true Murray.

Aunt Addie, who had never forgiven Emily for refusing her son, even though Andrew was now happily and suitably, most suitably, married, was very hard to bear. She contrived to make Emily feel a most condescending pity. She had lost Andrew, so must console herself with lame Jarback Priest. Of course Aunt Addie did not put it in so many blunt words but she might as well have. Emily understood her implications perfectly.

“Of course, he’s richer than a young man could be,” conceded Aunt Addie.

“And interesting,” said Emily. “Most young men are such bores. They haven’t lived long enough to learn that they are not the wonders to the world they are to their mothers.”

So honours were about even there.

The Priests did not like it any too well either. Perhaps because they did not care to see a rich uncle’s possessions thus slipping through the fingers of hope. They said Emily Starr was just marrying Dean for his money, and the Murrays took care that she should hear they had said it. Emily felt that the Priests were continually and maliciously discussing her behind her back.

“I’ll never feel at home in your clan,” she told Dean rebelliously.

“Nobody will ask you to. You and I, Star, are going to live unto ourselves. We are not going to walk or talk or think or breathe according to any clan standard, be it Priest or Murray. If the Priests disapprove of you as a wife for me the Murrays still more emphatically disapprove of me as a husband for you. Never mind. Of course the Priests find it hard to believe that you are marrying me because you care anything for me. How could you? I find it hard to believe myself.”

But you do believe it, Dean? Truly I care more for you than any one in the world. Of course — I told you — I don’t love you like a silly, romantic girl.”

“Do you love any one else?” asked Dean quietly. It was the first time he had ventured to ask the question.

“No. Of course — you know — I’ve had one or two broken-backed love affairs — silly schoolgirl fancies. That is all years behind me. Last

winter seems like a lifetime — dividing me by centuries from those old follies. I'm all yours, Dean."

Dean lifted the hand he held and kissed it. He had never yet touched her lips.

"I can make you happy, Star. I know it. Old — lame as I am, I can make you happy. I've been waiting for you all my life, my star. That's what you've always seemed to me, Emily. An exquisite, unreachable star. Now I have you — hold you — wear you on my heart. And you will love me yet — some day you will give me more than affection."

The passion in his voice startled Emily a little. It seemed in some way to demand more of her than she had to give. And Ilse, who had graduated from the School of Oratory and had come home for a week before going on a summer concert tour, struck another note of warning that disturbed faintly for a time.

"In some ways, honey, Dean is just the man for you. He's clever and fascinating and not so horribly conscious of his own importance as most of the Priests. But you'll belong to him body and soul. Dean can't bear any one to have any interest outside of him. He must possess exclusively. If you don't mind that—"

"I don't think I do."

"Your writing—"

"Oh, I'm done with that. I seem to have no interest in it since my illness. I saw — then — how little it really mattered — how many more important things there were—"

"As long as you feel like that you'll be happy with Dean. Heigh-ho." Ilse sighed and pulled the blood-red rose that was pinned to her waist to pieces. "It makes me feel fearfully old and wise to be talking like this of your getting married, Emily. It seems so — absurd in some ways. Yesterday we were schoolgirls. To-day you're engaged. Tomorrow — you'll be a grandmother."

"Aren't you — isn't there anybody in your own life, Ilse?"

"Listen to the fox that lost her tail. No, thank you. Besides — one might as well be frank. I feel an awful mood of honest confession on me.

There's never been anybody for me but Perry Miller. And you've got your claws in him."

Perry Miller. Emily could not believe her ears.

"Ilse Burnley! You've always laughed at him — raged at him—"

"Of course I did. I liked him so much that it made me furious to see him making a fool of himself. I wanted to be proud of him and he always made me ashamed of him. Oh, there were times when he made me mad enough to bite the leg off a chair. If I hadn't cared, do you suppose it would have mattered what kind of a donkey he was? I can't get over it — the 'Burnley sotness,' I suppose. We never change. Oh, I'd have jumped at him — would yet — herring-barrels, Stovepipe Town and all. There you have it. But never mind. Life is very decent without him."

"Perhaps — some day—"

"Don't dream it. Emily, I won't have you setting about making matches for me. Perry never gave me two thoughts — never will. I'm not going to think of him. What's that old verse we laughed over once that last year in high school — thinking it was all nonsense?"

Since ever the world was spinning
And till the world shall end
You've your man in the beginning
Or you have him in the end,
But to have him from start to finish
And neither to borrow nor lend
Is what all of the girls are wanting
And none of the gods can send.

"Well, next year I'll graduate. For years after that a career. Oh, I dare say I'll marry some day."

"Teddy?" said Emily, before she could prevent herself. She could have bitten her tongue off the moment the word escaped it.

Ilse gave her a long, keen look, which Emily parried successfully with all the Murray pride — too successfully, perhaps.

“No, not Teddy. Teddy never thought about me. I doubt if he thinks of any one but himself. Teddy’s a duck but he’s selfish, Emily, he really is.”

“No, no,” indignantly. She could not listen to this.

“Well, we won’t quarrel over it. What difference does it make if he is? He’s gone out of our lives anyway. The cat can have him. He’s going to climb to the top — they thought him a wow in Montreal. He’ll make a wonderful portrait painter — if he can only cure himself of his old trick of putting you into all the faces he paints.”

“Nonsense. He doesn’t—”

“He does. I’ve raged at him about it times without number. Of course he denies it. I really think he’s quite unconscious of it himself. It’s the hangover from some old unconscious emotion, I suppose — to use the jargon of modern psychologists. Never mind. As I said, I mean to marry sometime. When I’m tired of a career. It’s very jolly now — but some day. I’ll make a sensible wedding o’t, just as you’re doing, with a heart of gold and a pocket of silver. Isn’t it funny to be talking of marrying some man you’ve never even seen? What is he doing at this very moment? Shaving — swearing — breaking his heart over some other girl? Still, he’s to marry me. Oh, we’ll be happy enough, too. And we’ll visit each other, you and I — and compare our children — call your first girl Ilse, won’t you, friend of my heart — and — and what a devilish thing it is to be a woman, isn’t it, Emily?”

Old Kelly, the tin peddler, who had been Emily’s friend of many years, had to have his say about it, too. One could not suppress Old Kelly.

“Gurrl dear, is it true that ye do be after going to marry Jarback Praste?”

“Quite true.” Emily knew it was of no use to expect Old Kelly to call Dean anything but Jarback. But she always winced.

Old Kelly crabbed his face.

“Ye’re too young at the business of living to be marrying any one — laste of all a Praste.”

“Haven’t you been twitting me for years with my slowness in getting a beau?” asked Emily shyly.

“Gurrl dear, a joke is a joke. But this is beyond joking. Don’t be pig-headed now, there’s a jewel. Stop a bit and think it over. There do be some knots mighty aisy to tie but the untying is a cat of a different brade. I’ve always been warning ye against marrying a Praste. ‘Twas a foolish thing — I might av known it. I should ‘ve towld ye to marry one.”

“Dean isn’t like the other Priests, Mr. Kelly. I’m going to be very happy.”

Old Kelly shook his bushy, reddish grey head incredulously.

“Then you’ll be the first Praste woman that ever was, not aven laving out the ould Lady at the Grange. But she liked a fight every day. It’ll be the death av you.”

“Dean and I won’t fight — at least not every day.” Emily was having some fun to herself. Old Kelly’s gloomy predictions did not worry her. She took rather an impish delight in egging him on.

“Not if ye give him his own way. He’ll sulk if ye don’t. All the Prastes sulk if they don’t get it. And he’ll be that jealous — ye’ll never dare spake to another man. Oh, the Prastes rule their wives. Old Aaron Praste made his wife go down on her knees whenever she had a little favour to ask. Me feyther saw it wid his own eyes.”

“Mr. Kelly, do you really suppose any man could make me do that?”

Old Kelly’s eyes twinkled in spite of himself.

“The Murray knee jintz do be a bit stiff for that,” he acknowledged, “But there’s other things. Do ye be after knowing that his Uncle Jim never spoke when he could grunt and always said ‘Ye fool’ to his wife when she conterdicted him.”

“But perhaps she was a fool, Mr. Kelly.”

“Mebbe. But was it polite? I lave it to ye. And his father threw the dinner dishes at his wife whin she made him mad. ‘Tis a fact, I’m telling you. Though the old divil was amusing when he was pleased.”

“That sort of thing always skips a generation,” said Emily. “And if not — I can dodge.”

“Gurrl dear, there do be worse things than having a dish or two flung at ye. Ye kin dodge them. But there’s things ye can’t dodge. Tell me now, do

ye know” — Old Kelly lowered his voice ominously—”that ‘tis said the Prastes do often get tired av bein’ married to the wan woman.”

Emily was guilty of giving Mr. Kelly one of the smiles Aunt Elizabeth had always disapproved of.

“Do you really think Dean will get tired of me? I’m not beautiful, dear Mr. Kelly, but I am very interesting.”

Old Kelly gathered up his lines with the air of a man who surrenders at discretion.

“Well, gurrl dear, ye do be having a good mouth for kissing, anyway. I see ye’re set on it. But I do be thinking the Lord intended ye for something different. Anyway, here’s hoping we’ll all make a good end. But he knows too much, that Jarback Praste, he’s after knowing far too much.”

Old Kelly drove off, waiting till he was decently out of earshot to mutter:

“Don’t it bate hell? And him as odd-looking as a cross-eyed cat!”

Emily stood still for a few minutes looking after Old Kelly’s retreating chariot. He had found the one joint in her armour and the thrust had struck home. A little chill crept over her as if a wind from the grave had blown across her spirit. All at once an old, old story whispered long ago by Great-aunt Nancy to Caroline Priest flashed into her recollection. Dean, so it was said, had seen the Black Mass celebrated.

Emily shook the recollection from her. That was all nonsense — silly, malicious, envious gossip of stay-at-homes. But Dean did know too much. He had eyes that had seen too much. In a way that had been part of the distinct fascination he had always had for Emily. But now it frightened her. Had she not always felt — did she not still feel — that he always seemed to be laughing at the world from some mysterious standpoint of inner knowledge — a knowledge she did not share — could not share — did not, to come down to the bare bones of it, want to share? He had lost some intangible, all-real zest of faith and idealism. It was there deep in her heart — an inescapable conviction, thrust it out of sight as she might. For a moment she felt with Ilse that it was a decidedly devilish thing to be a woman.

“It serves me right for bandying words with Old Jock Kelly on such a subject,” she thought angrily.

Consent was never given in set terms to Emily’s engagement. But the thing came to be tacitly accepted. Dean was well-to-do. The Priests had all the necessary traditions, including that of a grandmother who had danced with the Prince of Wales at the famous ball in Charlottetown. After all, there would be a certain relief in seeing Emily safely married.

“He won’t take her far away from us,” said Aunt Laura, who could have reconciled herself to almost anything for that. How could they lose the one bright, gay thing in that faded house?

“Tell Emily,” wrote old Aunt Nancy, “that twins run in the Priest family.”

But Aunt Elizabeth did not tell her.

Dr. Burnley, who had made the most fuss, gave in when he heard that Elizabeth Murray was overhauling the chests of quilts in the attic of New Moon and that Laura was hemstitching table linen.

“Those whom Elizabeth Murray has joined together let no man put asunder,” he said resignedly.

Aunt Laura cupped Emily’s face in her gentle hands and looked deep into her eyes. “God bless you, Emily, dear child.”

“Very mid-Victorian,” commented Emily to Dean. “But I liked it.”

Chapter IX

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I

On one point Aunt Elizabeth was adamant Emily should not be married until she was twenty. Dean, who had dreamed of an autumn wedding and a winter spent in a dreamy Japanese garden beyond the western sea, gave in with a bad grace. Emily, too, would have preferred an earlier bridal. In the back of her mind, where she would not even glance at it, was the feeling that the sooner it was over and made irrevocable, the better.

Yet she was happy, as she told herself very often and very sincerely. Perhaps there were dark moments when a disquieting thought stared her in the face — it was but a crippled, broken-winged happiness — not the wild, free-flying happiness she had dreamed of. But that, she reminded herself, was lost to her for ever.

One day Dean appeared before her with a flush of boyish excitement on his face.

“Emily, I’ve been and gone and done something. Will you approve? Oh, Lord, what will I do if you don’t approve.”

“What is it you’ve done?”

“I’ve bought me a house.”

“A house!”

“A house! I, Dean Priest, am a landed proprietor — owning a house, a garden and a spruce lot five acres in extent. I, who this morning hadn’t a square inch of earth to call my own. I, who all my life have been hungry to own a bit of land.”

“What house have you bought, Dean?”

“Fred Clifford’s house — at least the house he has always owned by a legal quibble. Really our house — appointed — foreordained for us since the foundation of the world.”

“The Disappointed House?”

“Oh, yes, that was your old name for it. But it isn’t going to be Disappointed any longer. That is — if — Emily, do you approve of what I’ve done?”

“Approve? You’re simply a darling, Dean. I’ve always loved that house. It’s one of those houses you love the minute you see them. Some houses are like that, you know — full of magic. And others have nothing at all of it in them. I’ve always longed to see that house fulfilled. Oh — and somebody told me you were going to buy that big horrible house at Shrewsbury. I was afraid to ask if it were true.”

“Emily, take back those words. You knew it wasn’t true. You knew me better. Of course, all the Priests wanted me to buy that house. My dear sister was almost in tears because I wouldn’t. It was to be had at a bargain — and it was such an elegant house.”

“It is elegant — with all the word implies,” agreed Emily. “But it’s an impossible house — not because of its size or its elegance but just because of its impossibility.”

“Ezackly. Any proper woman would feel the same. I’m so glad you’re pleased, Emily. I had to buy Fred’s house yesterday in Charlottetown — without waiting to consult you — another man was on the point of buying it, so I wired Fred instantly. Of course, if you hadn’t liked it I’d have sold it again. But I felt you would. We’ll make such a home of it, dear. I want a home. I’ve had many habitations but no homes. I’ll have it finished and fixed up as beautifully as possible for you, Star — my Star who is fit to shine in the palaces of kings.”

“Let’s go right up and look at it,” said Emily. “I want to tell it what is coming to it. I want to tell it it is going to live at last.”

“We’ll go up and look at it and in it. I’ve got the key. Got it from Fred’s sister. Emily, I feel as if I’d reached up and plucked the moon.”

“Oh, I’ve picked a lapful of stars,” cried Emily gaily.

II

They went up to the Disappointed House — through the old orchard full of columbines and along the Tomorrow Road, across a pasture field, up a little slope of golden fern, and over an old meandering fence with its longers bleached to a silvery grey, with clusters of wild everlastings and blue asters in its corners, then up the little winding, capricious path on the long fir hill, which was so narrow they had to walk singly and where the air always seemed so full of nice whispery sounds.

When they came to its end there was a sloping field before them, dotted with little, pointed firs, windy, grassy, lovable. And on top of it, surrounded by hill glamour and upland wizardry, with great sunset clouds heaped up over it, the house — their house.

A house with the mystery of woods behind it and around it, except on the south side where the land fell away in a long hill looking down on the Blair Water, that was like a bowl of dull gold now, and across it to meadows of starry rest beyond and the Derry Pond Hills that were as blue and romantic as the famous Alsatian Mountains. Between the house and the view, but not hiding it, was a row of wonderful Lombardy poplars.

They climbed the hill to the gate of a little enclosed garden — a garden far older than the house which had been built on the site of a little log cabin of pioneer days.

“That’s a view I can live with,” said Dean exultingly. “Oh, ‘tis a dear place this. The hill is haunted by squirrels, Emily. And there are rabbits about. Don’t you love squirrels and rabbits? And there are any number of shy violets hereabouts in spring, too. There is a little mossy hollow behind those young firs that is full of violets in May — violets,

Sweeter than lids of Emily’s eyes
Or Emily’s breath.

Emily’s a nicer name than Cytherea or Juno, I think. I want you to notice especially that little gate over yonder. It isn’t really needed. It opens only into that froggy marsh beyond the wood. But isn’t it a gate? I love a gate like that — a reasonless gate. It’s full of promise. There may be something wonderful beyond. A gate is always a mystery, anyhow — it lures — it is a

symbol. And listen to that bell ringing somewhere in the twilight across the harbour. A bell in twilight always has a magic sound — as if it came from somewhere ‘far far in fairyland.’ There are roses in that far corner — old-fashioned roses like sweet old songs set to flowering. Roses white enough to lie in your white bosom, my sweet, roses red enough to star that soft dark cloud of your hair. Emily, do you know I’m a little drunk tonight — on the wine of life. Don’t wonder if I say crazy things.”

Emily was very happy. The old, sweet garden seemed to be talking to her as a friend in the drowsy, winking light. She surrendered herself utterly to the charm of the place. She looked at the Disappointed House adoringly. Such a dear thoughtful little house. Not an old house — she liked it for that — an old house knew too much — was haunted by too many feet that had walked over its threshold — too many anguished or impassioned eyes that had looked out of its windows. This house was ignorant and innocent like herself. Longing for happiness. It should have it. She and Dean would drive out the ghosts of things that never happened. How sweet it would be to have a home of her very own.

“That house wants us as badly as we want it,” she said.

“I love you when your tones soften and mute like that, Star,” said Dean. “Don’t ever talk so to any other man, Emily.”

Emily threw him a glance of coquetry that very nearly made him kiss her. He had never kissed her yet. Some subtle prescience always told him she was not yet ready to be kissed. He might have dared it there and then, in that hour of glamour that had transmuted everything into terms of romance and charm — he might even have won her wholly then. But he hesitated — and the magic moment passed. From somewhere down the dim road behind the spruces came laughter. Harmless, innocent laughter of children. But it broke some faintly woven spell.

“Let us go in and see our house,” said Dean. He led the way across the wild-grown grasses to the door that opened into the livingroom. The key turned stiffly in the rusted lock. Dean took Emily’s hand and drew her in.

“Over your own threshold, sweet—”

He lifted his flashlight and threw a circle of shifting light around the unfinished room, with its bare, staring, lathed walls, its sealed windows, its gaping doorways, its empty fireplace — no, not quite empty. Emily saw a little heap of white ashes in it — the ashes of the fire she and Teddy had kindled years ago that adventurous summer evening of childhood — the fire by which they had sat and planned out their lives together. She turned to the door with a little shiver.

“Dean, it looks too ghostly and forlorn. I think I’d rather explore it by daylight. The ghosts of things that never happened are worse than the ghosts of things that did.”

III

It was Dean’s suggestion that they spend the summer finishing and furnishing their house — doing everything possible themselves and fixing it up exactly as they wanted it.

“Then we can be married in the spring — spend the summer listening to temple bells tinkling over eastern sands — watch Philae by moonlight — hear the Nile moaning by Memphis — come back in the autumn, turn the key of our own door — be at home.”

Emily thought the programme delightful. Her aunts were dubious about it — it didn’t seem quite proper and respectable really — people would talk terribly. And Aunt Laura was worried over some old superstition that it wasn’t lucky to furnish a house before a wedding. Dean and Emily didn’t care whether it was respectable and lucky or not. They went ahead and did it.

Naturally they were overwhelmed with advice from every one in the Priest and Murray clans — and took none of it. For one thing, they wouldn’t paint the Disappointed House — just shingled it and left the shingles to turn woodsy grey, much to Aunt Elizabeth’s horror.

“It’s only Stovepipe Town houses that aren’t painted,” she said.

They replaced the old, unused, temporary board steps, left by the carpenters thirty years before, with broad, red sandstones from the shore.

Dean had casement windows put in with diamond shaped panes which Aunt Elizabeth warned Emily would be terrible things to keep clean. And he added a dear little window over the front door with a little roof over it like a shaggy eyebrow and in the livingroom they had a French window from which you could step right out into the fir wood.

And Dean had jewels of closets and cupboards put in everywhere.

“I’m not such a fool as to imagine that a girl can keep on loving a man who doesn’t provide her with proper cupboards,” he declared.

Aunt Elizabeth approved of the cupboards but thought they were clean daft in regard to the wallpapers. Especially the livingroom paper. They should have had something cheerful there — flowers or gold stripes; or even, as a vast concession to modernity, some of those “landscape papers” that were coming in. But Emily insisted on papering it with a shadowy grey paper with snowy pine branches over it. Aunt Elizabeth declared she would as soon live in the woods as in such a room. But Emily in this respect, as in all others concerning her own dear house, was “as pig-headed as ever,” so exasperated Aunt Elizabeth averred, quite unconscious that a Murray was borrowing one of Old Kelly’s expressions.

But Aunt Elizabeth was really very good. She dug up, out of long undisturbed boxes and chests, china and silver belonging to her stepmother — the things Juliet Murray would have had if she had married in orthodox fashion a husband approved of her clan — and gave them to Emily. There were some lovely things among them — especially a priceless pink lustre jug and a delightful old dinner-set of real willowware — Emily’s grandmother’s own wedding-set. Not a piece was missing. And it had shallow thin cups and deep saucers and scalloped plates and round, fat, pobby tureens. Emily filled the built-in cabinet in the livingroom with it and gloated over it. There were other things she loved too; a little gilt-framed oval mirror with a black cat on top of it, a mirror that had so often reflected beautiful women that it lent a certain charm to every face; and an old clock with a pointed top and two tiny gilded spires on each side, a clock that gave warning ten minutes before it struck, a gentlemanly clock never taking people unawares. Dean wound it up but would not start it.

“When we come home — when I bring you in here as bride and queen, you shall start it going,” he said.

It turned out, too, that the Chippendale sideboard and the claw-footed mahogany table at New Moon were Emily’s. And Dean had no end of quaint delightful things picked up all over the world — a sofa covered with striped silk that had been in the Salon of a Marquise of the Old Regime, a lantern of wrought-iron lace from an old Venetian palace to hang in the livingroom, a Shiraz rug, a prayer-rug from Damascus, brass andirons from Italy, jades and ivories from China, lacquer bowls from Japan, a delightful little green owl in Japanese china, a painted Chinese perfume-bottle of agate which he had found in some weird place in Mongolia, with the perfume of the east — which is never the perfume of the west — clinging to it, a Chinese teapot with dreadful golden dragons coiling over it — five-clawed dragons whereby the initiated knew that it was of the Imperial cabinets. It was part of the loot of the Summer Palace in the Boxer Rebellion, Dean told Emily, but he would not tell her how it had come into his possession.

“Not yet. Some day. There’s a story about almost everything I’ve put in this house.”

IV

They had a great day putting the furniture in the livingroom. They tried it in a dozen different places and were not satisfied until they had found the absolutely right one. Sometimes they could not agree about it and then they would sit on the floor and argue it out. And if they couldn’t settle it they got Daffy to pull straws with his teeth and decide it that way. Daffy was always around. Saucy Sal had died of old age and Daffy was getting stiff and a bit cranky and snored dreadfully when he was sleeping, but Emily adored him and would not go to the Disappointed House without him. He always slipped up the hill path beside her like a grey shadow dappled with dark.

“You love that old cat more than you do me, Emily,” Dean once said — jestingly yet with an undertone of earnest.

“I have to love him,” defended Emily. “He’s growing old. You have all the years before us. And I must always have a cat about. A house isn’t a home without the ineffable contentment of a cat with its tail folded about its feet. A cat gives mystery, charm, suggestion. And you must have a dog.”

“I’ve never cared to have a dog since Tweed died. But perhaps I’ll get one — an altogether different kind of a one. We’ll need a dog to keep your cats in order. Oh, isn’t it nice to feel that a place belongs to you?”

“It’s far nicer to feel that you belong to a place,” said Emily, looking about her affectionately.

“Our house and we are going to be good friends,” agreed Dean.

V

They hung their pictures one day. Emily brought her favourites up, including the Lady Giovanna and Mona Lisa. These two were hung in the corner between the windows.

“Where your writing-desk will be,” said Dean. “And Mona Lisa will whisper to you the ageless secret of her smile and you shall put it in a story.”

“I thought you didn’t want me to write any more stories,” said Emily. “You’ve never seemed to like the fact of my writing.”

“That was when I was afraid it would take you away from me. Now, it doesn’t matter. I want you to do just as pleases you.”

Emily felt indifferent. She had never cared to take up her pen since her illness. As the days passed she felt a growing distaste to the thought of ever taking it up. To think of it meant to think of the book she had burned; and that hurt beyond bearing. She had ceased to listen for her “random word” — she was an exile from her old starry kingdom.

“I’m going to hang old Elizabeth Bas by the fireplace,” said Dean. “‘Engraving from a portrait by Rembrandt.’ Isn’t she a delightful old

woman, Star, in her white cap and tremendous white ruff collar? And did you ever see such a shrewd, humorous, complacent, slightly contemptuous old face?"

"I don't think I should want to have an argument with Elizabeth," reflected Emily. "One feels that she is keeping her hands folded under compulsion and might box your ears if you disagreed with her."

"She has been dust for over a century," said Dean dreamily. "Yet here she is living on this cheap reprint of Rembrandt's canvas. You are expecting her to speak to you. And I feel, as you do, that she wouldn't put up with any nonsense."

"But likely she has a sweetmeat stored away in some pocket of her gown for you. That fine, rosy, wholesome old woman. She ruled her family — not a doubt of it. Her husband did as she told him — but never knew it."

"Had she a husband?" said Dean doubtfully. "There's no wedding-ring on her finger."

"Then she must have been a most delightful old maid," averred Emily.

"What a difference between her smile and Mona Lisa's," said Dean, looking from one to the other. "Elizabeth is tolerating things — with just a hint of a sly, meditative cat about her. But Mona Lisa's face has that everlasting lure and provocation that drives men mad and writes scarlet pages on dim historical records. La Gioconda would be a more stimulating sweetheart. But Elizabeth would be nicer for an aunt."

Dean hung a little old miniature of his mother up over the mantelpiece. Emily had never seen it before. Dean Priest's mother had been a beautiful woman.

"But why does she look so sad?"

"Because she was married to a Priest," said Dean.

"Will I look sad?" teased Emily.

"Not if it rests with me," said Dean.

But did it? Sometimes that question forced itself on Emily, but she would not answer it. She was very happy two-thirds of that summer — which she told herself was a high average. But in the other third were

hours of which she never spoke to any one — hours in which her soul felt caught in a trap — hours when the great, green emerald winking on her finger seemed like a fetter. And once she even took it off just to feel free for a little while — a temporary escape for which she was sorry and ashamed the next day, when she was quite sane and normal again, contented with her lot and more interested than ever in her little grey house, which meant so much to her—”more to me than Dean does,” she said to herself once in a three-o’clock moment of stark, despairing honesty; and then refused to believe it next morning.

VI

Old Great-aunt Nancy of Priest Pond died that summer, very suddenly. “I’m tired of living. I think I’ll stop,” she said one day — and stopped. None of the Murrays benefited by her will; everything she had was left to Caroline Priest; but Emily got the gazing-ball and the brass chessy-cat knocker and the gold earrings — and the picture Teddy had done of her in water-colours years ago. Emily put the chessy-cat on the front porch door of the Disappointed House and hung the great silvery gazing-ball from the Venetian lantern and wore the quaint old earrings to many rather delightful poms and vanities. But she put the picture away in a box in the New Moon attic — a box that held certain sweet, old, foolish letters full of dreams and plans.

VII

They had glorious minutes of fun when they stopped to rest occasionally. There was a robin’s nest in the fir at the north corner which they watched and protected from Daffy.

“Think of the music penned in this fragile, pale blue wall,” said Dean, touching an egg one day. “Not the music of the moon perhaps, but an earthlier, homelier music, full of wholesome sweetness and the joy of

living. This egg will some day be a robin, Star, to whistle us blithely home in the afterlight.”

They made friends with an old rabbit that often came hopping out of the woods into the garden. They had a game as to who could count the most squirrels in the daytime and the most bats in the evening. For they did not always go home as soon as it got too dark to work. Sometimes they sat out on their sandstone steps listening to the melancholy loveliness of night-wind on the sea and watching the twilight creep up from the old valley and the shadows waver and flicker under the fir-trees and the Blair Water turning to a great grey pool tremulous with early stars. Daff sat beside them, watching everything with his great moonlight eyes, and Emily pulled his ears now and then.

“One understands a cat a little better now. At all other times he is inscrutable, but in the time of dusk and dew we can catch a glimpse of the tantalizing secret of his personality.”

“One catches a glimpse of all kinds of secrets now,” said Dean. “On a night like this I always think of the ‘hills where spices grow.’ That line of the old hymn Mother used to sing has always intrigued me — though I can’t ‘fly like a youthful hart or roe.’ Emily, I can see that you are getting your mouth in the proper shape to talk about the colour we’ll paint the woodshed. Don’t you do it. No one should talk paint when she’s expecting a moonrise. There’ll be a wonderful one presently — I’ve arranged for it. But if we must talk of furniture let’s plan for a few things we haven’t got yet and must have — a canoe for our boating trips along the Milky Way, for instance — a loom for the weaving of dreams and a jar of pixy-brew for festal hours. And can’t we arrange to have the spring of Ponce de Leon over in that corner? Or would you prefer a fount of Castaly? As for your trousseau, have what you like in it but there must be a gown of grey twilight with an evening star for your hair. Also one trimmed with moonlight and a scarf of sunset cloud.”

Oh, she liked Dean. How she liked him. If she could only love him!

One evening she slipped up alone to see her little house by moonlight. What a dear place it was. She saw herself there in the future — flitting

through the little rooms — laughing under the firs — sitting hand in hand with Teddy at the fireplace — Emily came to herself with a shock. With Dean, of course, with Dean. A mere trick of the memory.

VIII

There came a September evening when everything was done — even to the horseshoe over the door to keep the witches out — even to the candles Emily had stuck all about the livingroom — a little, jolly, yellow candle — a full, red, pugnacious candle — a dreamy, pale blue candle — a graceless candle with aces of hearts and diamonds all over it — a slim, dandyish candle.

And the result was good. There was a sense of harmony in the house. The things in it did not have to become acquainted but were good friends from the very start. They did not shriek at each other. There was not a noisy room in the house.

“There’s absolutely nothing more we can do,” sighed Emily. “We can’t even pretend there’s anything more to do.”

“I suppose not,” agreed Dean regretfully. Then he looked at the fireplace where kindlings and pinewood were laid.

“Yes, there is,” he cried. “How could we have forgotten it? We’ve got to see if the chimney will draw properly. I’m going to light that fire.”

Emily sat down on the settee in the corner and when the fire began to burn Dean came and sat beside her. Daffy lay stretched out at their feet, his little striped flanks moving peacefully up and down.

Up blazed the merry flames. They shimmered over the old piano — they played irreverent hide-and-seek with Elizabeth Bas’ adorable old face — they danced on the glass doors of the cupboard where the willowware dishes were; they darted through the kitchen door and the row of brown and blue bowls Emily had ranged on the dresser winked back at them.

“This is home,” said Dean softly. “It’s lovelier than I’ve ever dreamed of its being. This is how we’ll sit on autumn evenings all our lives, shutting out the cold misty nights that come in from the sea — just you

and I alone with the firelight and the sweetness. But sometimes we'll let a friend come in and share it — sip of our joy and drink of our laughter. We'll just sit here and think about it all — till the fire burns out.”

The fire crackled and snapped. Daffy purred. The moon shone down through the dance of the fir-boughs straight on them through the windows. And Emily was thinking — could not help thinking — of the time she and Teddy had sat there. The odd part was that she did not think of him longingly or lovingly. She just thought of him. Would she, she asked herself, in mingled exasperation and dread, find herself thinking of Teddy when she was standing up to be married to Dean?

When the fire had died down into white ashes Dean got up.

“It was worth while to have lived long dreary years for this — and to live them again, if need be, looking back to it,” he said, holding out his hand. He drew her nearer. What ghost came between the lips that might have met? Emily turned away with a sigh.

“Our happy summer is over, Dean.”

“Our first happy summer,” corrected Dean. But his voice suddenly sounded a little tired.

Chapter X

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I

They locked the door of the Disappointed House one November evening and Dean gave the key to Emily.

“Keep it till spring,” he said, looking out over the quiet, cold, grey fields across which a chilly wind was blowing. “We won’t come back here till then.”

In the stormy winter that followed, the cross-lots path to the little house was so heaped with drifts that Emily never went near it. But she thought about it often and happily, waiting amid its snows for spring and life and fulfilment. That winter was, on the whole, a happy time. Dean did not go away and made himself so charming to the older ladies of New Moon that they almost forgave him for being Jarback Priest. To be sure, Aunt Elizabeth never could understand more than half of his remarks and Aunt Laura put down to his debit account the change in Emily. For she was changed. Cousin Jimmy and Aunt Laura knew that, though no one else seemed to notice it. Often there was an odd restlessness in her eyes. And something was missing from her laughter. It was not so quick — so spontaneous as of old. She was a woman before her time, thought Aunt Laura with a sigh. Was that dreadful fall down the New Moon stairs the only cause? Was Emily happy? Laura dared not ask. Did she love Dean Priest whom she was going to marry in June? Laura did not know; but she did know that love is something that cannot be generated by any intellectual rule o’ thumb. Also that a girl who is as happy as an engaged girl should be does not spend so many hours when she should be sleeping, pacing up and down her room. This was not to be explained away on the ground that Emily was thinking out stories, Emily had given up writing. In vain Miss Royal wrote pleading and scolding letters from New York. In vain Cousin Jimmy slyly laid a new Jimmy-book at intervals on her desk.

In vain Laura timidly hinted that it was a pity not to keep on when you had made such a good start. Even Aunt Elizabeth's contemptuous assertion that she had always known Emily would get tired of it—"the Starr fickleness, you see" — failed to sting Emily back to her pen. She could not write — she would never try to write again.

"I've paid my debts and I've enough in the bank to get what Dean calls my wedding doo-dabs. And you've crocheted two filet spreads for me," she told Aunt Laura a little wearily and bitterly. "So what does it matter?"

"Was it — your fall that took away your — your ambition?" faltered poor Aunt Laura, voicing what had been her haunting dread all winter.

Emily smiled and kissed her.

"No, darling. That had nothing to do with it. Why worry over a simple, natural thing? Here I am, going to be married, with a prospective house and husband to think about. Doesn't that explain why I've ceased to care about — other things?"

It should have, but that evening Emily went out of the house after sunset. Her soul was pining for freedom and she went out to slip its leash for a little while. It had been an April day, warm in the sun, cold in the shadow. You felt the coldness even amid the sunlight warmth. The evening was chill. The sky was overcast with wrinkled, grey clouds, save along the west where a strip of yellow sky gleamed palely and in it, sad and fair, a new moon setting behind a dark hill. No living creature but herself seemed abroad and the cold shadows settling down over the withered fields lent to the landscape of too-early spring an aspect inexpressibly dreary and mournful. It made Emily feel hopeless, as if the best of life already lay in the past. Externals always had a great influence upon her — too great perhaps. Yet she was glad it was a dour evening. Anything else would have insulted her mood. She heard the sea shuddering beyond the dunes. An old verse from one of Roberts' poems came into her head:

Grey rocks and greyer sea.
And surf along the shore,

And in my heart a name
My lips shall speak no more.

Nonsense! Weak, silly, sentimental nonsense. No more of it!

II

But that letter from Ilse that day. Teddy was coming home. He was to sail on the Flavian. He was going to be home most of the summer.

“If it could only have been all over — before he came,” muttered Emily.

Always to be afraid of tomorrow? Content — even happy with to-day — but always afraid of tomorrow. Was this to be her life? And why that fear of tomorrow?

She had brought the key of the Disappointed House with her. She had not been in it since November and she wanted to see it — beautiful, waiting, desirable. Her home. In its charm and sanity vague, horrible fears and doubts would vanish. The soul of that happy last summer would come back to her. She paused at the garden gate to look lovingly at it — the dear little house nestled under the old trees that sighed softly as they had sighed to her childhood visions. Below, Blair Water was grey and sullen. She loved Blair Water in all its changes — its sparkle of summer, its silver of dusk, its miracle of moonlight, its dimpled rings of rain. And she loved it now, dark and brooding. There was somehow a piercing sadness in that sullen, waiting landscape all around her — as if — the odd fancy crossed her mind — as if it were afraid of spring. How this idea of fear haunted her! She looked up beyond the spires of the Lombardies on the hill. And in a sudden pale rift between the clouds a star shone down on her — Vega of the Lyre.

With a shiver Emily hurriedly unlocked the door and stepped in. The house seemed to be vacant — waiting for her. She fumbled through the darkness to the matches she knew were on the mantelpiece and lighted the tall, pale-green taper beside the clock. The beautiful room glimmered out

at her in the flickering light — just as they had left it that last evening. There was Elizabeth Bas, who could never have known the meaning of fear — Mona Lisa, who mocked at it. But the Lady Giovanna, who never turned her saintly profile to look squarely at you. Had she ever known it — this subtle, secret fear that one could never put in words? — that would be so ridiculous if one could put it in words? Dean Priest's sad lovely mother. Yes, she had known fear; it looked out of her pictured eyes now in that dim, furtive light.

Emily shut the door and sat down in the armchair beneath Elizabeth Bas' picture. She could hear the dead, dry leaves of a dead summer rustling eerily on the beech just outside the window. And the wind — rising — rising — rising. But she liked it. "The wind is free — not a prisoner like me." She crushed the unbidden thought down sternly. She would not think such things. Her fetters were of her own forging. She had put them on willingly, even desirously. Nothing to do but wear them gracefully.

How the sea moaned down there below the fields! But here in the little house what a silence there was! Something strange and uncanny about the silence. It seemed to hold some profound meaning. She would not have dared to speak lest something should answer her. Yet fear suddenly left her. She felt dreamy — happy — far away from life and reality. The walls of the shadowy room seemed slowly to fade from her vision. The pictures withdrew themselves. There seemed to be nothing before her but Great-aunt-Nancy's gazing-ball hung from the old iron lantern — a big, silvery, gleaming globe. In it she saw the reflected room, like a shining doll's-house, with herself sitting in the old, low chair and the taper on the mantelpiece like a tiny, impish star. Emily looked at it as she leaned back in her chair — looked at it till she saw nothing but that tiny point of light in a great misty universe.

III

Did she sleep? Dream? Who knows? Emily herself never knew. Twice before in her life — once in delirium* — once in sleep** she had drawn aside the veil of sense and time and seen beyond. Emily never liked to remember those experiences. She forgot them deliberately. She had not recalled them for years. A dream — a fancy fever-bred. But this?

* See Emily of New Moon. ** See Emily Climbs.

A small cloud seemed to shape itself within the gazing-ball. It dispersed — faded. But the reflected doll's-house in the ball was gone. Emily saw an entirely different scene — a long lofty room filled with streams of hurrying people — and among them a face she knew.

The gazing-ball was gone — the room in the Disappointed House was gone. She was no longer sitting in her chair looking on. She was in that strange, great room — she was among those throngs of people — she was standing by the man who was waiting impatiently before a ticket-window. As he turned his face and their eyes met she saw that it was Teddy — she saw the amazed recognition in his eyes. And she knew, indisputably that he was in some terrible danger — and that she must save him.

“Teddy. Come.”

It seemed to her that she caught his hand and pulled him away from the window. Then she was drifting back from him — back — back — and he was following — running after her — heedless of the people he ran into — following — following — she was back on the chair — outside of the gazing-ball — in it she still saw the station-room shrunk again to play-size — and that one figure running — still running — the cloud again — filling the ball — whitening — wavering — thinning — clearing. Emily was lying back in her chair staring fixedly into Aunt Nancy's gazing-ball, where the livingroom was reflected calmly and silverly, with a dead-white spot that was her face and one solitary taper-light twinkling like an impish star.

IV

Emily, feeling as if she had died and come back to life, got herself out of the Disappointed House somehow, and locked the door. The clouds had cleared away and the world was dim and unreal in starlight. Hardly realizing what she was doing she turned her face seaward through the spruce wood — down the long, windy, pasture-field — over the dunes to the sandshore — along it like a haunted, driven creature in a weird, uncanny half-lit kingdom. The sea afar out was like grey satin half hidden in a creeping fog but it washed against the sands as she passed in little swishing, mocking ripples. She was shut in between the misty sea and the high, dark sand-dunes. If she could only go on so forever — never have to turn back and confront the unanswerable question the night had put to her.

She knew, beyond any doubt or cavil or mockery that she had seen Teddy — had saved, or tried to save him, from some unknown peril. And she knew, just as simply and just as surely that she loved him — had always loved him, with a love that lay at the very foundation of her being.

And in two months' time she was to be married to Dean Priest.

What could she do? To marry him now was unthinkable. She could not live such a lie. But to break his heart — snatch from him all the happiness possible to his thwarted life — that, too, was unthinkable.

Yes, as Ilse had said, it was a very devilish thing to be a woman.

“Particularly,” said Emily, filled with bitter self-contempt, “a woman who seemingly doesn’t know her own mind for a month at a time. I was so sure last summer that Teddy no longer meant anything to me — so sure that I really cared enough for Dean to marry him. And now tonight — and that horrible power or gift or curse coming again when I thought I had outgrown it — left it behind forever.”

Emily walked on that eerie sandshore half the night and slipped guiltily and stealthily into New Moon in the wee sma’s to fling herself on her bed and fall at last into the absolute slumber of exhaustion.

A very ghastly time followed. Fortunately Dean was away, having gone to Montreal on business. It was during his absence that the world was horrified by the tragedy of the Flavian's fatal collision with an iceberg. The headlines struck Emily in the face like a blow, Teddy was to have sailed on the Flavian — Had he — had he? Who could tell her? Perhaps his mother — his queer, solitary mother who hated her with a hatred that Emily always felt like a tangible thing between them. Hitherto Emily would have shrunk unspeakably from seeking Mrs. Kent. Now nothing mattered except finding out if Teddy were on the Flavian. She hurried to the Tansy Patch. Mrs Kent came to the door — unaltered in all the years since Emily had first known her — frail, furtive, with her bitter mouth and that disfiguring red scar across her paleness. Her face changed as it always did when she saw Emily. Hostility and fear contended in her dark, melancholy eyes.

“Did Teddy sail on the Flavian?” demanded Emily without circumlocution.

Mrs. Kent smiled — an unfriendly little smile.

“Does it matter to you?” she said.

“Yes.” Emily was very blunt. The “Murray” look was on her face — the look few people could encounter undefeatedly. “If you know — tell me.”

Mrs. Kent told her, unwillingly, hating her, shaking like a little dead leaf quivering with a semblance of life in a cruel wind.

“He did not. I had a cable from him to-day. At the last moment he was prevented from sailing.”

“Thank you.” Emily turned away, but not before Mrs. Kent had seen the joy and triumph that had leaped into her shadowy eyes. She sprang forward and caught Emily's arm.

“It is nothing to you,” she cried wildly. “Nothing to you whether he is safe or not. You are going to marry another man. How dare you come here — demanding to know of my son — as if you had a right?”

Emily looked down at her pityingly, understandingly. This poor creature whose jealousy, coiled in her soul like a snake, had made life a

vale of torment for her.

“No right perhaps — except the right of loving him,” she said.

Mrs. Kent struck her hands together wildly.

“You — you dare to say that — you who are to marry another man?”

“I am not going to marry another man,” Emily found herself saying. It was quite true. For days she had not known what to do — now quite unmistakably she knew what she must do. Dreadful as it would be, still something that must be done. Everything was suddenly clear and bitter and inevitable before her.

“I cannot marry another man, Mrs. Kent, because I love Teddy. But he does not love me. I know that quite well. So you need not hate me any longer.”

She turned and went swiftly away from the Tansy Patch. Where was her pride, she wondered the pride of “the proud Murrays” — that she could so calmly acknowledge an unsought, unwanted love. But pride just then had no place in her.

Chapter XI

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I

When the letter came from Teddy — the first letter for so long — Emily's hand trembled so that she could hardly open it.

"I must tell you of a strange thing that has happened," he wrote. "Perhaps you know it already. And perhaps you know nothing and will think me quite mad. I don't know what to think of it myself. I know only what I saw — or thought I saw.

"I was waiting to buy my ticket for the boat-train to Liverpool — I was to sail on the Flavian. Suddenly I felt a touch on my arm — I turned and saw you. I swear it. You said, 'Teddy — come.' I was so amazed I could not think or speak. I could only follow you. You were running — no, not running. I don't know how you went — I only knew that you were retreating. How rotten this all sounds. Was I crazy? And all at once you weren't there — though we were by now away from the crowd in an open space where nothing could have prevented me from seeing you. Yet I looked everywhere — and came to my senses to realize that the boat-train had gone and I had lost my passage on the Flavian. I was furious — ashamed — until the news came. Then — I felt my scalp crinkle.

"Emily — you're not in England? It can't be possible you are in England. But then — what was it I saw in that station?

"Anyhow, I suppose it saved my life. If I had gone on the Flavian — well, I didn't. Thanks to — what?

"I'll be home soon. Will sail on the Moravian — if you don't prevent me again. Emily, I heard a queer story of you long ago — something about Ilse's mother. I've almost forgotten. Take care. They don't burn witches nowadays, of course — but still—"

No, they didn't burn witches. But still — Emily felt that she could have more easily faced the stake than what was before her.

II

Emily went up the hill path to keep tryst with Dean at the Disappointed House. She had had a note from him that day, written on his return from Montreal, asking her to meet him there at dusk. He was waiting for her on the doorstep — eagerly, happily. The robins were whistling softly in the fir copse and the evening was fragrant with the tang of balsam. But the air all about them was filled with the strangest, saddest, most unforgettable sound in nature — the soft, ceaseless wash on a distant shore on a still evening of the breakers of a spent storm. A sound rarely heard and always to be remembered. It is even more mournful than the rain-wind of night — the heartbreak and despair of all creation is in it. Dean took a quick step forward to meet her — then stopped abruptly. Her face — her eyes — what had happened to Emily in his absence? This was not Emily — this strange, white, remote girl of the pale twilight.

“Emily — what is it?” asked Dean — knowing before she told him.

Emily looked at him. If you had to deal a mortal blow why try to lighten it?

“I can’t marry you after all, Dean,” she said. “I don’t love you.”

That was all she could say. No excuses — no self-defence. There was none she could make. But it was shocking to see all the happiness wiped out of a human face like that.

There was a little pause — a pause that seemed an eternity with that unbearable sorrow of the sea throbbing through it. Then Dean said still quietly:

“I knew you didn’t love me. Yet you were — content to marry me — before this. What has made it impossible?”

It was his right to know. Emily stumbled through her silly, incredible tale.

“You see,” she concluded miserably, “when — I can call like that to him across space — I belong to him. He doesn’t love me — he never will — but I belong to him... . Oh, Dean, don’t look so. I had to tell you this —

but if you wish it — I will marry you — only I felt you must know the whole truth — when I knew it myself.”

“Oh, a Murray of New Moon always keeps her word.” Dean’s face twisted mockingly. “You will marry me — if I want you to. But I don’t want it — now. I see how impossible it is just as clearly as you do. I will not marry a woman whose heart is another man’s.”

“Can you ever forgive me, Dean?”

“What is there to forgive? I can’t help loving you and you can’t help loving him. We must let it go at that. Even the gods can’t unscramble eggs. I should have known that only youth could call to youth — and I was never young. If I ever had been, even though I am old now, I might have held you.”

He dropped his poor grey face in his hands. Emily found herself thinking what a nice, pleasant, friendly thing death would be.

But when Dean looked up again his face had changed. It had the old, mocking, cynical look.

“Don’t look so tragic, Emily. A broken engagement is a very slight thing nowadays. And it’s an ill wind that blows nobody good. Your aunts will thank whatever gods there be and my own clan will think that I have escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowler. Still — I rather wish that old Highland Scotch grandmother who passed that dangerous chromosome down to you had taken her second sight to the grave with her.”

Emily put her hands against the little porch column and laid her head against them. Dean’s face changed again as he looked at her. His voice when he spoke was very gentle — though cold and pale. All the brilliance and colour and warmth had gone from it.

“Emily, I give your life back to you. It has been mine, remember, since I saved you that day on Malvern rocks. It’s your own again. And we must say goodbye at last — in spite of our old compact. Say it briefly—’all farewells should be sudden when forever.’”

Emily turned and caught at his arm.

“Oh, not goodbye, Dean — not goodbye. Can’t we be friends still? I can’t live without your friendship.”

Dean took her face in his hands — Emily's cold face that he had once dreamed might flush against his kiss — and looked gravely and tenderly into it.

"We can't be friends again, dear."

"Oh, you will forget — you will not always care—"

"A man must die to forget you, I think. No, Star, we cannot be friends. You will not have my love and it has driven everything else out. I am going away. When I am old — really old — I will come back and we will be friends again, perhaps."

"I can never forgive myself."

"Again I ask what for? I do not reproach you — I even thank you for this year. It has been a royal gift to me. Nothing can ever take it from me. After all, I would not give that last perfect summer of mine for a generation of other men's happiness. My Star — my Star!"

Emily looked at him, the kiss she had never given him in her eyes. What a lonely place the world would be when Dean was gone — the world that had all at once grown very old. And would she ever be able to forget his eyes with that terrible expression of pain in them?

If he had gone then she would never have been quite free — always fettered by those piteous eyes and the thought of the wrong she had done him. Perhaps Dean realized this, for there was a hint of some malign triumph in his parting smile as he turned away. He walked down the path — he paused with his hand on the gate — he turned and came back.

III

"Emily, I've something to confess, too. May as well get it off my conscience. A lie — an ugly thing. I won you by a lie, I think. Perhaps that is why I couldn't keep you."

"A lie?"

"You remember that book of yours? You asked me to tell you the truth about what I thought of it? I didn't. I lied. It is a good piece of work — very good. Oh, some faults in it of course — a bit emotional — a bit

overstrained. You still need pruning — restraint. But it is good. It is out of the ordinary both in conception and development. It has charm and your characters do live. Natural, human, delightful. There, you know what I think of it now.”

Emily stared at him, a hot flush suddenly staining the pallor of her tortured little face.

“Good? And I burned it,” she said in a whisper.

Dean started.

“You — burned it!”

“Yes. And I can never write it again. Why — why did you lie to me? You?”

“Because I hated the book. You were more interested in it than in me. You would have found a publisher eventually — and it would have been successful. You would have been lost to me. How ugly some motives look when you put them into words. And you burned it? It seems very idle to say I’m bitterly sorry for all this. Idle to ask your forgiveness.”

Emily pulled herself together. Something had happened — she was really free — free from remorse, shame, regret. Her own woman once more. The balance hung level between them.

“I must not hold a grudge against Dean for this — like old Hugh Murray,” she thought confusedly. Aloud—”But I do — I do forgive it, Dean.”

“Thank you.” He looked up at the little grey house behind her. “So this is still to be the Disappointed House. Verily, there is a doom on it. Houses, like people, can’t escape their doom, it seems.”

Emily averted her gaze from the little house she had loved — still loved. It would never be hers now. It was still to be haunted by the ghosts of things that never happened.

“Dean — here is the key.”

Dean shook his head. “Keep it till I ask for it. What use would it be to me? The house can be sold, I suppose — though that seems like sacrilege.”

There was still something more. Emily held out her left hand with averted face. Dean must take off the emerald he had put on. She felt it

drawn from her finger, leaving a little cold band where it had warmed against her flesh, like a spectral circlet. It had often seemed to her like a fetter, but she felt sick with regret when she realized it was gone — forever. For with it went something that had made life beautiful for years — Dean’s wonderful friendship and companionship. To miss that — forever. She had not known how bitter a thing freedom could be.

When Dean had limped out of sight Emily went home. There was nothing else to do. With her mocking triumph that Dean had at last admitted she could write.

IV

If Emily’s engagement to Dean had made a commotion in the clans the breaking of it brewed a still wilder teapot tempest. The Priests were exultant and indignant at one and the same time, but the inconsistent Murrays were furious. Aunt Elizabeth had steadily disapproved of the engagement, but she disapproved still more strongly of its breaking. What would people think? And many things were said about “the Starr fickleness.”

“Did you,” demanded Uncle Wallace sarcastically, “expect that girl to remain in the same mind from one day to another?”

All the Murrays said things, according to their separate flavour, but for some reason Andrew’s dictum rankled with the keenest venom in Emily’s bruised spirit. Andrew had picked up a word somewhere — he said Emily was “temperamental.” Half the Murrays did not know just what it meant but they pounced on it eagerly. Emily was “temperamental” — just that. It explained everything — henceforth it clung to her like a burr. If she wrote a poem — if she didn’t like carrot pudding when everybody else in the clan did — if she wore her hair low when every one else was wearing it high — if she liked a solitary ramble over moonlit hills — if she looked some mornings as if she had not slept — if she took a notion to study the stars through a field-glass — if it was whispered that she had been seen dancing alone by moonlight among the coils of a New Moon hayfield — if

tears came into her eyes at the mere glimpse of some beauty — if she loved a twilight tryst in the “old orchard” better than a dance in Shrewsbury — it was all because she was temperamental. Emily felt herself alone in a hostile world. Nobody, not even Aunt Laura, understood. Even Ilse wrote rather an odd letter, every sentence of which contradicted some other sentence and left Emily with a nasty, confused feeling that Ilse loved her as much as ever but thought her “temperamental” too. Could Ilse, by any chance, have suspected the fact that, as soon as Perry Miller heard that “everything was off” between Dean Priest and Emily Starr, he had come out to New Moon and again asked Emily to promise to marry him? Emily had made short work of him, after a fashion which made Perry vow disgustedly that he was done with the proud monkey. But then he had vowed that so many times before.

Chapter XII

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I

“MAY 4, 19 —

“One o’clock is a somewhat unearthly hour to be writing in a journal. The truth is, I’ve been undergoing a white night. I can’t sleep and I’m tired of lying in the dark fancying things — unpleasant things — so I’ve lighted my candle and hunted up my old diary to ‘write it out.’

“I’ve never written in this journal since the night I burned my book and fell downstairs — and died. Coming back to life to find everything changed and all things made new. And unfamiliar and dreadful. It seems a lifetime ago. As I turn over the pages and glance at those gay, lighthearted entries I wonder if they were really written by me, Emily Byrd Starr.

“Night is beautiful when you are happy — comforting when you are in grief — terrible when you are lonely and unhappy. And tonight I have been horribly lonely. Misery overwhelmed me. I seem never to be able to stop halfway in any emotion and when loneliness does seize hold on me it takes possession of me body and soul and wrings me in its blank pain until all strength and courage go out of me. Tonight I am lonely — lonely. Love will not come to me — friendship is lost to me — most of all, as I verily feel, I cannot write. I have tried repeatedly and failed. The old creative fire seems to have burned out into ashes and I cannot rekindle it. All the evening I tried to write a story — a wooden thing in which wooden puppets moved when I jerked the strings. I finally tore it into a thousand pieces and felt that I did God service.

“These past weeks have been bitter ones. Dean has gone — where I know not. He has never written — never will, I suppose. Not to be getting letters from Dean when he is away seems strange and unnatural.

“And yet it is terribly sweet to be free once more.

“Ilse writes me that she is to be home for July and August. Also that Teddy will be, too. Perhaps this latter fact partly accounts for my white night. I want to run away before he comes.

“I have never answered the letter he wrote me after the sinking of the Flavian. I could not. I could not write of that. And if when he comes he speaks of it — I shall not be able to bear it. Will he guess that it is because I love him that I was able to set at naught the limitations of time and space to save him? I am ready to die of shame at thought of it. And at thought of what I said to Mrs. Kent. Yet somehow I have never been able to wish that unsaid. There was a strange relief in the stark honesty of it. I am not afraid she will ever tell him what I said. She would never have him know I cared if she could prevent it

“But I’d like to know how I am to get through the summer.

“There are times when I hate life. Other times again when I love it fiercely with an agonized realization of how beautiful it is — or might be — if —

“Before Dean went away he boarded up all the windows of the Disappointed House. I never go where I can see it. But I do see it for all that. Waiting there on its hill — waiting — dumb — blind. I have never taken my things out of it — which Aunt Elizabeth thinks a sure indication of insanity. And I don’t think Dean did either. Nothing has been touched. Mona Lisa is still mocking in the gloom and Elizabeth Bas is tolerantly contemptuous of temperamental idiots and the Lady Giovanna understands it all. My dear little house! And it is never to be a home. I feel as I felt that evening years ago when I followed the rainbow — and lost it. ‘There will be other rainbows’ I said then. But will there be?”

II

“MAY 15, 19 —

“This has been a lyric spring day — and a miracle has happened. It happened at dawn — when I was leaning out of my window, listening to a little, whispering, tricky wind o’ morning blowing out of Lofty John’s

bush. Suddenly — the flash came — again — after these long months of absence — my old, inexpressible glimpse of eternity. And all at once I knew I could write. I rushed to my desk and seized my pen. All the hours of early morning I wrote; and when I heard Cousin Jimmy going downstairs I flung down my pen and bowed my head over my desk in utter thankfulness that I could work again.

Get leave to work —
In this world 'tis the best you get at all,
For God in cursing gives us better gifts
Than men in benediction.

“So wrote Elizabeth Barrett Browning — and truly. It is hard to understand why work should be called a curse — until one remembers what bitterness forced or uncongenial labour is. But the work for which we are fitted — which we feel we are sent into the world to do — what a blessing it is and what fulness of joy it holds. I felt this to-day as the old fever burned in my fingertips and my pen once more seemed a friend.

“‘Leave to work’ — one would think any one could obtain so much. But sometimes anguish and heartbreak forbid us the leave. And then we realize what we have lost and know that it is better to be cursed by God than forgotten by Him. If He had punished Adam and Eve by sending them out to idleness, then indeed they would have been outcast and accursed. Not all the dreams of Eden ‘whence the four great rivers flow’ could have been as sweet as those I am dreaming tonight, because the power to work has come back to me.

“Oh, God, as long as I live give me ‘leave to work.’ Thus pray I. Leave and courage.”

III

“MAY 25, 19 —

“Dear sunshine, what a potent medicine you are. All day I revelled in the loveliness of the wonderful white bridal world. And tonight I washed

my soul free from dust in the aerial bath of a spring twilight. I chose the old hill road over the Delectable Mountain for its solitude and wandered happily along, pausing every few moments to think out fully some thought or fancy that came to me like a winged spirit. Then I prowled about the hill fields till long after dark, studying the stars with my field-glass. When I came in I felt as if I had been millions of miles away in the blue ether and all my old familiar surroundings seemed momentarily forgotten and strange.

“But there was one star at which I did not look. Vega of the Lyre.”

IV

“MAY 30, 19 —

“This evening, just when I was in the middle of a story Aunt Elizabeth said she wanted me to weed the onion-bed. So I had to lay down my pen and go out to the kitchen garden. But one can weed onions and think wonderful things at the same time, glory be. It is one of the blessings that we don’t always have to put our souls into what our hands may be doing, praise the gods — for otherwise who would have any soul left? So I weeded the onion-bed and roamed the Milky Way in imagination.”

V

“JUNE 10, 19 —

“Cousin Jimmy and I felt like murderers last night. We were. Baby-killers at that!

“It is one of the springs when there is a crop of maple-trees. Every key that fell from a maple this year seems to have grown. All over the lawn and garden and old orchard tiny maple-trees have sprung up by the hundreds. And of course they have to be rooted out. It would never do to let them grow. So we pulled them up all day yesterday and felt so mean and guilty over it. The dear, tiny, baby things. They have a right to grow — a right to keep on growing into great, majestic, splendid trees. Who are we

to deny it to them? I caught Cousin Jimmy in tears over the brutal necessity.

“‘I sometimes think,’ he whispered, ‘that it’s wrong to prevent anything from growing. I never grew up — not in my head.’

“And last night I had a horrible dream of being pursued by thousands of indignant young maple-tree ghosts. They crowded around me — tripped me up — thrashed me with their boughs — smothered me with their leaves. And I woke gasping for breath and nearly frightened to death, but with a splendid idea for a story in my head — The Vengeance of the Tree.”

VI

“JUNE 15, 19 —

“I picked strawberries on the banks of Blair Water this afternoon among the windy, sweet-smelling grasses. I love picking strawberries. The occupation has in it something of perpetual youth. The gods might have picked strawberries on high Olympus without injuring their dignity. A queen — or a poet — might stoop to it; a beggar has the privilege.

“And tonight I’ve been sitting here in my dear old room, with my dear books and dear pictures and dear little window of the kinky panes, dreaming in the soft, odorous summer twilight, while the robins are calling to each other in Lofty John’s bush and the poplars are talking eerily of old, forgotten things.

“After all, it’s not a bad old world — and the folks in it are not half bad either. Even Emily Byrd Star is decent in spots. Not altogether the false, fickle, ungrateful perversity she thinks she is in the wee sma’s — not altogether the friendless, forgotten maiden she imagines she is on white nights — not altogether the failure she supposes bitterly when three MSS. are rejected in succession. And not altogether the coward she feels herself to be when she thinks of Frederick Kent’s coming to Blair Water in July.”

Chapter XIII

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I

Emily was reading by the window of her room when she heard it — reading Alice Meynell's strange poem, "Letter From A Girl To Her Own Old Age," and thrilling mystically to its strange prophecies. Outside dusk was falling over the old New Moon garden; and clear through the dusk came the two high notes and the long low one of Teddy's old whistle in Lofty John's bush — the old, old call by which he had so often summoned her in the twilights of long ago.

Emily's book fell unheeded to the floor. She stood up, mist-pale, her eyes dilating into darkness. Was Teddy there? He had not been expected till the next week, though Ilse was coming that night. Could she have been mistaken? Could she have fancied it? Some chance robin call —

It came again. She knew as she had known at first that it was Teddy's whistle. There was no sound like it in the world. And it had been so long since she had heard it. He was there — waiting for her — calling for her. Should she go? She laughed under her breath. Go? She had no choice. She must go. Pride could not hold her back — bitter remembrance of the night she had waited for his call and it had not come could not halt her hurrying footsteps. Fear — shame — all were forgotten in the mad ecstasy of the moment. Without giving herself time to reflect that she was a Murray — only snatching a moment to look in the glass and assure herself that her ivory crepe dress was very becoming — how lucky it was that she had happened to put on that dress! — she flew down the stairs and through the garden. He was standing under the dark glamour of the old firs where the path ran through Lofty John's bush — bareheaded, smiling.

"Teddy."

"Emily."

Her hands were in his — her eyes were shining into his. Youth had come back — all that had once made magic made it again. Together once more after all those long weary years of alienation and separation. There was no longer any shyness — any stiffness — any sense or fear of change. They might have been children together again. But childhood had never known this wild, insurgent sweetness — this unconsidered surrender. Oh, she was his. By a word — a look — an intonation, he was still her master. What matter if, in some calmer mood, she might not quite like it — to be helpless — dominated like this? What matter if tomorrow she might wish she had not run so quickly, so eagerly, so unhesitatingly to meet him? Tonight nothing mattered except that Teddy had come back.

Yet, outwardly, they did not meet as lovers — only as old, dear friends. There was so much to talk of — so much to be silent over as they paced up and down the garden walks, while the stars laughed through the dark at them — hinting — hinting —

Only one thing was not spoken of between them — the thing Emily had dreaded. Teddy made no reference to the mystery of that vision in the London station. It was as if it had never been. Yet Emily felt that it had drawn them together again after long misunderstanding. It was well not to speak of it — it was one of those mystic things — one of the gods' secrets — that must not be spoken of. Best forgotten now that its work was done. And yet — so unreasonable are we mortals! — Emily felt a ridiculous disappointment that he didn't speak of it. She didn't want him to speak of it. But if it had meant anything to him must he not have spoken of it?

"It's good to be here again," Teddy was saying. "Nothing seems changed here. Time has stood still in this Garden of Eden. Look, Emily, how bright Vega of the Lyre is. Our star. Have you forgotten it?"

Forgotten? How she had wished she could forget.

"They wrote me you were going to marry Dean," said Teddy abruptly.

"I meant to — but I couldn't," said Emily.

"Why not?" asked Teddy as if he had a perfect right to ask it.

"Because I didn't love him," answered Emily, conceding his right.

Laughter — golden, delicious laughter that made you suddenly want to laugh too. Laughter was so safe — one could laugh without betraying anything. Ilse had come — Ilse was running down the walk. Ilse in a yellow silk gown the colour of her hair and a golden-brown hat the colour of her eyes, giving you the sensation that a gorgeous golden rose was at large in the garden.

Emily almost welcomed her. The moment had grown too vital. Some things were terrible if put into words. She drew away from Teddy almost primly — a Murray of New Moon once more.

“Darlings,” said Ilse, throwing an arm around each of them. “Isn’t it divine — all here together again? Oh, how much I love you! Let’s forget we are old and grownup and wise and unhappy and be mad, crazy, happy kids again for just one blissful summer.”

II

A wonderful month followed. A month of indescribable roses, exquisite hazes, silver perfection of moonlight, unforgettable amethystine dusks, march of rains, bugle-call of winds, blossoms of purple and star-dust, mystery, music, magic. A month of laughter and dance and joy, of enchantment infinite. Yet a month of restrained, hidden realization. Nothing was ever said. She and Teddy were seldom ever alone together. But one felt — knew. Emily fairly sparkled with happiness. All the old restlessness that had worried Aunt Laura had gone from her eyes. Life was good. Friendship — love — joy of sense and joy of spirit — sorrow — loveliness — achievement — failure — longing — all were part of life and therefore interesting and desirable.

Every morning when she awakened the new day seemed to her like some good fairy who would bring her some beautiful gift of joy. Ambition was, for the time at least, forgotten. Success — power — fame. Let those who cared for them pay the price and take them. But love is not bought and sold. It is a gift.

Even the memory of her burned book ceased to ache. What did one book more or less matter in this great universe of life and passion? How pale and shadowy was any pictured life beside this throbbing, scintillant existence! Who cared for laurel, after all? Orange blossoms would make a sweeter coronet. And what star of destiny was ever brighter and more alluring than Vega of the Lyre. Which, being interpreted, simply meant that nothing mattered any more in this world or any other except Teddy Kent.

III

"If I had a tail I'd lash it," groaned Ilse, casting herself on Emily's bed and hurling one of Emily's treasured volumes — a little old copy of the Rubaiyat Teddy had given her in high school days — across the room. The back came off and the leaves flew every which way for a Sunday. Emily was annoyed.

"Were you ever in such a state that you could neither cry nor pray nor swear?" demanded Ilse.

"Sometimes," agreed Emily dryly. "But I don't take it out on books that never harmed me. I just go and bite off somebody's head."

"There wasn't anybody's head handy to bite off, but I did something that was just as effective," said Ilse, casting a malevolent glance at Perry Miller's photograph which was propped up on Emily's desk.

Emily glanced at it, too, and her face Murrayfied, as Ilse expressed it. The photograph was still there but where Perry's intent and unabashed eyes had gazed out at her were now only jagged, unsightly holes.

Emily was furious. Perry had been so proud of those photographs. They were the first he had had taken in his life. "Never could afford any before," he had said frankly. He looked very handsome in them, though his pose was a bit truculent and aggressive with his wavy hair brushed back sleekly, and his firm mouth and chin showing to excellent advantage. Aunt Elizabeth had gazed at it, secretly wondering how she had ever dared make such a fine-looking young man as that eat in the kitchen. And Aunt Laura

had wiped her eyes sentimentally and thought that perhaps — after all — Emily and Perry — a lawyer would be quite a thing to have in the family, coming in a good third to minister and doctor. Though, to be sure, Stovepipe Town —

Perry had rather spoiled the gift for Emily by proposing to her again. It was very hard for Perry Miller to get it into his head that anything he wanted he couldn't get. And he had always wanted Emily.

"I've got the world by the tail now," he said proudly. "Every year'll find me higher up. Why can't you make up your mind to have me, Emily?"

"Is it just a question of making up one's mind?" asked Emily satirically.

"Of course. What else?"

"Listen, Perry," said Emily decidedly. "You're a good old pal. I like you — I'll always like you. But I'm tired of this nonsense and I'm going to put a stop to it. If you ever again ask me to marry you I'll never never speak to you as long as I live. Since you are good at making up your mind make up yours which you want — my friendship or my nonexistence."

"Oh, well." Perry shrugged his shoulders philosophically. He had about come to the conclusion anyhow that he might as well give up dangling after Emily Starr and getting nothing but snubs for his pains. Ten years was long enough to be a rejected but faithful swain. There were other girls, after all. Perhaps he had made a mistake. Too faithful and persistent. If he had wooed by fits and starts, blowing hot and cold like Teddy Kent, he might have had better luck. Girls were like that. But Perry did not say this. Stovepipe Town had learned a few things. All he said was:

"If you'd only stop looking at me in a certain way I might get over hankering for you. Anyhow, I'd never have got this far along if I hadn't been in love with you. I'd just have been a hired boy somewhere or a fisherman at the harbour. So I'm sorry. I haven't forgotten how you believed in me and helped me and stood up for me to your Aunt Elizabeth. It's been — been" — Perry's handsome face flushed suddenly and his voice shook a little—"it's been — sweet — to dream about you all these

years. I guess I'll have to give it up now. No use, I see. But don't take your friendship from me too, Emily."

"Never," said Emily impulsively putting out her hands. "You're a brick, Perry dear. You've done wonders and I'm proud of you."

And now to find the picture he had given her ruined. She flashed on Ilse eyes like a stormy sea.

"Ilse Burnley, how dare you do such a thing!"

"No use squizzling your eyebrows up at me like that, beloved demon," retorted Ilse. "Hasn't no effect on me a-tall. Couldn't endure that picture no-how. And Stovepipe Town in the background."

"What you've done is on a level with Stovepipe Town."

"Well, he asked for it. Smirking there. 'Behold ME. I am a Person In The Public Eye.' Never had such satisfaction as boring your scissors through those conceited orbs gave me. Two seconds more of looking at them and I'd have flung up my head and howled. Oh, how I hate Perry Miller. Puffed up like a poisoned pup!"

"I thought you told me you loved him," said Emily rather rudely.

"It's the same thing," said Ilse morosely. "Emily, why can't I get that creature out of my mind! It's too Victorian to say heart. I haven't any heart. I don't love him — I do hate him. But I can't keep from thinking about him. That's just a state of mind. Oh, I could yell at the moon. But the real reason I dug his eyes out was his turning Grit after having been born and raised Conservative."

"You are Conservative yourself."

"True but unimportant. I hate turncoats. I've never forgiven Henry IV for turning Catholic. Not because he was a Protestant but just because he was a turncoat I would have been just as implacable if he had been Catholic and turned Protestant. Perry has changed his politics just for the sake of getting into partnership with Leonard Abel. There's Stovepipe Town for you. Oh, he'll be Judge Miller and rich as wedding-cake — but — ! I wish he had had a hundred eyes so that I could have bored them all out! This is one of the times I feel it would be handy to have been a bosom friend of Lucrezia Borgia."

“Who was an excellent and rather stupid woman beloved for her good works.”

“Oh, I know the modern whitewashers are determined to rob history of anything that is picturesque. No matter, I shall cling to my faith in Lucrezia and William Tell. Put that picture out of my sight. Please, Emily.”

Emily put the maltreated picture away in a drawer of her desk. Her brief anger had gone. She understood. At least she understood why the eyes had been cut out. It was harder to understand just why Ilse could care so much and so incurably for Perry Miller. And there was just a hint of pity in her heart as well — condescending pity for Ilse who cared so much for a man who didn’t care for her.

“I think this will cure me,” said Ilse savagely. “I can’t — I won’t love a turncoat. Blind bat — congenital idiot that he is! Pah, I’m through with him. Emily, I wonder I don’t hate you. Rejecting with scorn what I want so much. Ice-cold thing, did you ever really care for anything or any creature except that pen of yours?”

“Perry has never really loved me,” evaded Emily. “He only imagines he does.”

“Well, I’d be content if he would only just imagine he loved me. How brazen I am about it. You’re the one person in the world I can have the relief of saying such things to. That’s why I can’t let myself hate you, after all. I daresay I’m not half as unhappy as I think myself. One never knows what may be around the next corner. After this I mean to bore Perry Miller out of my life and thoughts just as I bored his eyes out. Emily,” with an abrupt change of tone and posture, “do you know I like Teddy Kent better this summer than I ever did before.”

“Oh.” The monosyllable was eloquent, but Ilse was deaf to all its implications.

“Yes. He’s really charming. Those years in Europe have done something to him. Perhaps it’s just that they’ve taught him to hide his selfishness better.”

“Teddy Kent isn’t selfish. Why do you call him selfish? Look at his devotion to his mother.”

“Because she adores him. Teddy likes to be adored. That’s why he’s never fallen in love with any one, you know. That — and because the girls chased him so, perhaps. It was sickening in Montreal. They made such asses of themselves — waiting on him with their tongues hanging out — that I wanted to dress in male attire and swear I wasn’t of their sex. No doubt it was the same in Europe. No man alive can stand six years of that without being spoiled — and contemptuous. Teddy is all right with us — he knows we’re old pals who can see through him and will stand no nonsense. But I’ve see him accepting tribute — graciously bestowing a smile — a look — a touch as a reward. Saying to every one just what he thought she’d like to hear. When I saw it I always felt I’d love to say something to him that he’d think of for years whenever he woke up at three o’clock o’night.”

The sun had dropped into a bank of purple cloud behind the Delectable Mountain and a chill and shadow swept down the hill and across the dewy clover-fields to New Moon. The little room darkened and the glimpse of Blair Water through the gap in Lofty John’s bush changed all at once to livid grey.

Emily’s evening was spoiled. But she felt — knew — that Ilse was mistaken about many things. There was one comfort, too — evidently she had kept her secret well. Not even Ilse suspected it. Which was agreeable to both the Murray and the Starr.

IV

But Emily sat long at her window looking into the black night that turned slowly to pale silver as the moon rose. So the girls had “chased” Teddy.

She wished she had not run quite so quickly when he had called from Lofty John’s bush. “Oh, whistle, and I’ll come to you, my lad” was all very well in song. But one was not living in a Scotch ballad. And that change in Ilse’s voice — that almost confidential note. Did Ilse mean — ? How

pretty Ilse had looked tonight. In that smart, sleeveless dress of green sprinkled with tiny golden butterflies — with the green necklace that circled her throat and fell to her hips like a long green snake — with her green, gold-buckled shoes — Ilse always wore such ravishing shoes. Did Ilse mean — ? And if she did — ?

After breakfast Aunt Laura remarked to Cousin Jimmy that she felt sure something was on the dear child's mind.

Chapter XIV

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I

“The early bird catches — the desire of his heart,” said Teddy, slipping down beside Emily on the long, silken, pale-green grasses on the bank of Blair Water.

He had come so silently that Emily had not heard him until she saw him and she could not repress a start and blush — which she hoped wildly he did not see. She had wakened early and been seized with what her clan would doubtless have considered a temperamental desire to see the sun rise and make new acquaintances with Eden. So she had stolen down New Moon stairs and through the expectant garden and Lofty John’s bush to the Blair Water to meet the mystery of the dawn. It had never occurred to her that Teddy would be prowling, too.

“I like to come down here at sunrise, now and then,” he said. “It’s about the only chance I have of being alone for a few minutes. Our evenings and afternoons are all given over the mad revelry — and Mother likes me to be with her every moment of the forenoons. She’s had six such horribly lonely years.”

“I’m sorry I’ve intruded on your precious solitude,” said Emily stiffly, possessed of a horrible fear that he might think she knew of his habits and had come purposely to meet him.

Teddy laughed.

“Don’t put on New Moon airs with me, Emily Byrd Starr. You know perfectly well that finding you here is the crown of the morning for me. I’ve always had a wild hope that it might happen. And now it has. Let’s just sit here and dream together. God made this morning for us — just us two. Even talking would spoil it.”

Emily agreed silently. How dear it was to sit here with Teddy on the banks of Blair Water, under the coral of the morning sky, and dream —

just dream — wild, sweet, secret, unforgettable, foolish dreams. Alone with Teddy while all their world was sleeping. Oh, if this exquisite stolen moment could last! A line from some poem of Marjorie Pickthall quivered in her thought like a bar of music —

Oh, keep the world forever at the dawn.

She said it like a prayer under her breath.

Everything was so beautiful in this magical moment before sunrise. The wild blue irises around the pond, the violet shadows in the curves of the dunes, the white filmy mist hanging over the buttercup valley across the pond, the cloth of gold and silver that was called a field of daisies, the cool, delicious gulf breeze, the blue of far lands beyond the harbour, plumes of purple and mauve smoke going up on the still, golden air from the chimneys of Stovepipe Town where the fishermen rose early. And Teddy lying at her feet, his slim brown hands clasped behind his head. Again she felt inescapably the magnetic attraction of his personality. Felt it so strongly that she dared not meet his eyes. Yet she was admitting to herself with a secret candour which would have horrified Aunt Elizabeth that she wanted to run her fingers through his sleek black hair — feel his arms about her — press her face against his dark tender one — feel his lips on her lips —

Teddy took one of his hands from under his head and put it over hers.

For a moment of surrender she left it there. Then Ilse's words flashed into memory, searing her consciousness like a dagger of flame. "I've seen him accepting tribute"—"graciously bestowing a touch as a reward"—"saying to each one just what he thought she wanted to hear." Had Teddy guessed what she had been thinking? Her thoughts had seemed so vivid to her that she felt as if any one must see her thinking. Intolerable. She sprang up abruptly, shaking off his fingers.

"I must be going home."

So blunt. Somehow, she could not make it smoother. He must not — should not think — Teddy rose, too. A change in his voice and look. Their marvellous moment was over.

“So must I. Mother will be missing me. She’s always up early. Poor little Mother. She hasn’t changed. She isn’t proud of my success — she hates it. She thinks it has taken me from her. The years have not made it any easier for her. I want her to come away with me, but she will not. I think that is partly because she cannot bear to leave the old Tansy Patch and partly because she can’t endure seeing me shut up in my studio working — something that would bar her out. I wonder what made her so. I’ve never known her any other way, but I think she must have been different once. It’s odd for a son to know as little of his mother’s life as I do. I don’t even know what made that scar on her face. I know next to nothing of my father — absolutely nothing of his people. She will never talk of anything in the years before we came to Blair Water.”

“Something hurt her once — hurt her so terribly she has never got over it,” said Emily.

“My father’s death, perhaps?”

“No. At least, not if it were just death. There was something else — something poisonous. Well — bye-bye.”

“Going to Mrs. Chidlaw’s dinner-dance tomorrow night?”

“Yes. She is sending her car for me.”

“Whew! No use after that asking you to go with me in a one-hoss buggy — borrowed at that. Well, I must take Ilse then. Perry to be there?”

“No. He wrote me he couldn’t come — had to prepare for his first case. It’s coming up next day.”

“Perry is forging ahead, isn’t he? That bulldog tenacity of his never lets go of an objective once he gets his teeth into it. He’ll be rich when we’re still as poor as church mice. But then, we’re chasing rainbow gold, aren’t we?”

She would not linger — he might think she wanted to linger—“waiting with her tongue hanging out” — she turned away almost ungraciously. He had been so unregretfully ready to “take Ilse then.” As if it really didn’t matter much. Yet she was still conscious of his touch on her hand — it burned there yet. In that fleeting moment, in that brief caress, he had made her wholly his, as years of wifehood could never have made her Dean’s.

She could think of nothing else all day. She lived over and over again that moment of surrender. It seemed to her so inadequate that everything should be the same at New Moon and that Cousin Jimmy should be worrying over red spiders on his asters.

II

A tack on the Shrewsbury road made Emily fifteen minutes late for Mrs. Chidlaw's dinner. She flung a hasty glance into the mirror before she went down and turned away satisfied. An arrow of rhinestones in her dark hair — she had hair that wore jewels well — lent the necessary note of brilliance to the new dress of silvery-green lace over a pale-blue slip that became her so well. Miss Royal had picked it for her in New York — and Aunts Elizabeth and Laura had looked askance at it. Green and blue was such an odd combination. And there was so little of it. But it did something to Emily when she put it on. Cousin Jimmy looked at the exquisite, shimmering young thing with stars in her eyes, in the old candlelight kitchen and said ruefully to Aunt Laura after she had gone, "She doesn't belong to us in that dress."

"It made her look like an actress," said Aunt Elizabeth freezingly.

Emily did not feel like an actress as she ran down Mrs. Chidlaw's stairs and across the sun-room to the wide verandah where Mrs. Chidlaw had elected to hold her dinner party. She felt real, vital, happy, expectant. Teddy would be there — their eyes would meet significantly across the table — there would be the furtive sweetness of watching him secretly when he talked to some one else — and thought of her — they would dance together afterwards. Perhaps he would tell her — what she was longing to hear —

She paused for a second in the open doorway, her eyes soft and dreamy as a purple mist, looking out on the scene before her — one of those scenes which are always remembered from some subtle charm of their own.

The table was spread in the big rounded alcove at the corner of the vine-hung verandah. Beyond it tall, dark firs and Lombardies stood out against the after-sunset sky of dull rose and fading yellow. Through their stems she caught glimpses of the bay, dark and sapphire. Great masses of shadow beyond the little island of light — the gleam of pearls on Ilse's white neck. There were other guests — Professor Robins of McGill with his long, melancholy face made still longer by his odd spade-shaped beard; Lisette Chidlaw's round, cream-coloured, kissable face with its dark hair heaped high over it and her round, dark eyes; Jack Glenlake, dreamy and handsome; Annette Shaw, a sleepy, gold-and-white thing, always affecting a Mona Lisa smile; stocky little Tom Hallam with his humorous Irish face; Aylmer Vincent. Quite fat. Beginning to be bald. Still making pretty speeches to the ladies. How absurd to recall that she had once thought him Prince Charming! Solemn-looking Gus Rankin, with a vacant chair beside him, evidently for her. Elsie Borland, young and chubby, showing off her lovely hands a little in the candlelight. But of all the party Emily only saw Teddy and Ilse. The rest were puppets.

They were sitting together just opposite her. Teddy sleek and well-groomed as usual, his black head close to Ilse's golden one. Ilse, a glorified shining creature in torquoise-blue taffeta, looking the queen with a foam of laces on her full bosom and rose-and-silver nosegays at her shoulder. Just as Emily looked at them Ilse lifted her eyes to Teddy's face and asked some question — some intimate, vital question, Emily felt sure, from the expression of her face. She did not recall ever having seen just that look on Ilse's face before. There was some sort of definite challenge in it. Teddy looked down and answered her. Emily knew or felt that the word "love" was in his answer. Those two looked long into each other's eyes — at least it seemed long to Emily, beholding that interchange of rapt glances. Then Ilse blushed and looked away. When had Ilse ever blushed before? And Teddy threw up his head and swept the table with eyes that seemed exultant and victorious.

Emily went out into the circle of radiance from that terrible moment of disillusion. Her heart, so gay and light a moment before, seemed cold and

dead. In spite of the lights and laughter a dark, chill night seemed to be coming towards her. Everything in life seemed suddenly ugly. It was for her a dinner of bitter herbs and she never remembered anything Gus Rankin said to her. She never looked at Teddy, who seemed in wonderful spirits and was keeping up a stream of banter with Ilse, and she was chilly and unresponsive through the whole meal. Gus Rankin told all his favourite stories but like Queen Victoria of blessed memory, Emily was not amused. Mrs. Chidlaw was provoked and repented of having sent her car for so temperamental a guest. Annoyed probably over being paired with Gus Rankin, who had been asked at the last minute to fill Perry Miller's place. And looking like an outraged duchess over it. Yet you had to be civil to her. She might put you in a book if you weren't. Remember that time she wrote the review of our play! In reality, poor Emily was thanking whatever gods there be that she was beside Gus Rankin, who never wanted or expected any one to talk.

The dance was a ghastly affair for Emily. She felt like a ghost moving among revellers she had suddenly outgrown. She danced once with Teddy and Teddy, realizing that it was only her slim, silvery-green form he held, while her soul had retreated into some aloof impregnable citadel, did not ask her again. He danced several dances with Ilse and then sat out several more with her in the garden. His devotion to her was noticed and commented upon. Millicent Chidlaw asked Emily if the report that Ilse Burnley and Frederick Kent were engaged were true.

"He was always crazy about her, wasn't he?" Millicent wanted to know.

Emily, in a cool and impertinent voice, supposed so. Was Millicent watching her to see if she would flinch?

Of course he was in love with Ilse. What wonder? Ilse was so beautiful. What chance could her own moonlit charm of dark and silver have against that gold and ivory loveliness? Teddy liked her as a dear old pal and chum. That was all. She had been a fool again. Always deceiving herself. That morning by Blair Water — when she had almost let him see — perhaps he had seen — the thought was unbearable. Would she ever

learn wisdom? Oh, yes, she had learned it tonight. No more folly. How wise and dignified and unapproachable she would be henceforth.

Wasn't there some wretched, vulgar old proverb anent locking a stable door after the horse was stolen?

And just how was she to get through the rest of the night?

Chapter XV

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I

Emily, just home from an interminable week's visit at Uncle Oliver's, where a cousin had been getting married, heard at the postoffice that Teddy Kent had gone.

"Left at an hour's notice," Mrs. Crosby told her. "'Got a wire asking if he would take the vice-principal-ship of the College of Art in Montreal and had to go at once to see about it. Isn't that splendid? Hasn't he got on? It's really quite wonderful. Blair Water should be very proud of him, shouldn't it? Isn't it a pity his mother is so odd?"

Fortunately Mrs. Crosby never took time to await any answer to her questions. Emily knew she was turning pale and hated herself for it. She clutched her mail and hastened out of the postoffice. She passed several people on the way home and never realized it. As a consequence her reputation for pride went up dangerously. But when she reached New Moon Aunt Laura handed her a letter.

"Teddy left it. He was here last night to say goodbye."

The proud Miss Starr had a narrow escape from bursting into hysterical tears on the spot. A Murray in hysterics! Never had such a thing been heard of — never must be heard of. Emily gritted her teeth, took the letter silently and went to her room. The ice around her heart was melting rapidly. Oh, why had she been so cool and dignified with Teddy all that week after Mrs. Chidlaw's dance? But she had never dreamed he would be going away so soon. And now —

She opened her letter. There was nothing in it but a clipping of some ridiculous poetry Perry had written and published in a Charlottetown paper — a paper that was not taken at New Moon. She and Teddy had laughed over it — Ilse had been too angry to laugh — and Teddy had promised to get a copy for her.

Well, he had got it.

II

She was sitting there, looking whitely out into the soft, black, velvety night with its goblin-market of wind-tossed trees, when Ilse, who had also been away in Charlottetown, came in.

“So Teddy has gone. I see you have a letter from him, too.”

Too!

“Yes,” said Emily, wondering if it were a lie. Then concluded desperately she did not care whether it was a lie or not.

“He was terribly sorry to have to go so suddenly, but he had to decide at once and he couldn’t decide without getting some more information about it. Teddy won’t tie himself down too irrevocably to any position, no matter how tempting it is. And to be vice-principal of that college at his age is some little bouquet. Well, I’ll soon have to go myself. It’s been a gorgeous vacation but — Going to the dance at Derry Pond tomorrow night, Emily?”

Emily shook her head. Of what use was dancing now that Teddy was gone?

“Do you know,” said Ilse pensively, “I think this summer has been rather a failure, in spite of our fun. We thought we could be children again, but we haven’t been. We’ve only been pretending.”

Pretending? Oh, if this heartache were only a pretence! And this burning shame and deep, mute hurt. Teddy had not even cared enough to write her a line of farewell. She knew — she had known ever since the Chidlaw dance — he did not love her; but surely friendship demanded something. Even her friendship meant nothing to him. This summer had been only an interlude to him. Now he had gone back to his real life and the things that mattered. And he had written Ilse. Pretend? Oh, well, she would pretend with a vengeance. There were times when the Murray pride was certainly an asset.

“I think it’s as well the summer is over,” she said carelessly. “I simply must get down to work again. I have neglected my writing shamefully the past two months.”

“After all, that’s all you really care about, isn’t it?” said Ilse curiously. “I love my work but it doesn’t possess me as yours possesses you. I’d give it up in a twinkling for — well, we’re all as we’re made. But is it really comfortable, Emily, to care for only one thing in life?”

“Much more comfortable than caring for too many things.”

“I suppose so. Well, you ought to succeed when you lay everything on the altar of your goddess. That’s the difference between us. I’m of weaker clay. There are some things I couldn’t give up — some things I won’t. And as Old Kelly advises, if I can’t get what I want — well, I’ll want what I can get. Isn’t that common sense?”

Emily, wishing she could fool herself as easily as she could other people, went over to the window and kissed Ilse’s forehead.

“We aren’t children any longer — and we can’t go back to childhood, Ilse. We’re women — and must make the best of it. I think you’ll be happy yet. I want you to be.”

Ilse squeezed Emily’s hand. “Darn commonsense!” she said drearily.

If she had not been in New Moon she would probably have used the unexpurgated edition.

Chapter XVI

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I

“NOV. 17, 19 —

“There are two adjectives that are never separated in regard to a November day—‘dull’ and ‘gloomy.’ They were wedded together in the dawn of language and it is not for me to divorce them now. Accordingly, then, this day has been dull and gloomy, inside and outside, materially and spiritually.

“Yesterday wasn’t so bad. There was a warm autumnal sun and Cousin Jimmy’s big heap of pumpkins made a lovely pool of colour against the old grey barns, and the valley down by the brook was mellow with the late, leafless gold of juniper-trees. I walked in the afternoon through the uncanny enchantment of November woods, still haunted by loveliness, and again in the evening in the afterglow of an autumnal sunset. The evening was mild and wrapped in a great, grey, brooding stillness of windless fields and waiting hill — a stillness which was yet threaded through with many little eerie, beautiful sounds which I could hear if I listened as much with my soul as my ears. Later on there was a procession of stars and I got a message from them.

“But to-day was dreary. And tonight virtue has gone out of me. I wrote all day but I could not write this evening. I shut myself into my room and paced it like a caged creature. ‘Tis the middle of the night by the castle clock,’ but there is no use in thinking of sleep. I can’t sleep. The rain against the window is very dismal and the winds are marching by like armies of the dead. All the little ghostly joys of the past are haunting me — all the ghostly fears of the future.

“I keep thinking — foolishly — of the Disappointed House tonight — up there on the hill with the roar of the rainy wind about it. Somehow this is what hurts me worst tonight. Other nights it is the fact that I don’t even

know where Dean is this winter — or that Teddy never writes a line to me — or just that there are hours when sheer loneliness wrings the stamina out of me. In such moments I come to this old journal for comforting. It's like talking it out to a faithful friend."

II

"NOV. 30, 19 —

"I have two chrysanthemums and a rose out. The rose is a song and a dream and an enchantment all in one. The 'mums are very pretty, too, but it does not do to have them and the rose too near together. Seen by themselves they are handsome, bright blossoms, pink and yellow, and cheery, looking very well satisfied with themselves. But set the rose behind them and the change is actually amusing. They then seem like vulgar, frowsy kitchen maids beside a stately, white queen. It's not the fault of the poor 'mums that they weren't born roses, so to be fair to them I keep them by themselves and enjoy them that way.

"I wrote a good story to-day. I think even Mr. Carpenter would have been satisfied with it. I was happy while I was writing it. But when I finished it and came back to reality —

"Well, I'm not going to growl. Life has at least grown livable again. It was not livable through the autumn. I know Aunt Laura thought I was going into consumption. Not I. That would be too Victorian. I fought things out and conquered them and I'm a sane, free woman once more. Though the taste of my folly is still in my mouth at times and very bitter it is.

"Oh, I'm really getting on very well. I'm beginning to make a livable income for myself and Aunt Elizabeth reads my stories aloud o' evenings to Aunt Laura and Cousin Jimmy. I can always get through to-day very nicely. It's tomorrow I can't live through."

III

“JANUARY 15, 19 —

“I’ve been out for a moonlit snowshoe tramp. There was a nice bite of frost in the air and the night was exquisite — a frosty, starry lyric of light. Some nights are like honey — and some like wine — and some like wormwood. Tonight is like wine — white wine — some clear, sparkling, fairy brew that rather goes to one’s head. I am tingling all over with hope and expectation and victory over certain principalities and powers that got a grip on me last night about three o’clock.

“I have just drawn aside the curtain of my window and looked out. The garden is white and still under the moon, all ebony of shadow and silver of frosted snow. Over it all the delicate tracteries where trees stand up leafless in seeming death and sorrow. But only seeming. The life-blood is at their hearts and by and by it will stir and they will clothe themselves in bridal garments of young green leaves and pink blossoms. And over there where the biggest drift of all lies deep the Golden Ones will uplift their trumpets of the morning.

“And far beyond our garden field after field lies white and lonely in the moonlight. Lonely? I hadn’t meant to write that word. It slipped in. I’m not lonely — I have my work and my books and the hope of spring — and I know that this calm, simple existence is a much better and happier one than the hectic life I led last summer.

“I believed that before I wrote it down. And now I don’t believe it. It isn’t true. This is stagnation!!

“Oh, I am — I am lonely — with the loneliness of unshared thought. What is the use of denying it? When I came in I was the victor — but now my banner is in the dust again.”

IV

“FEB. 20, 19 —

“Something has happened to sour February’s temper. Such a peevish month. The weather for the past few weeks has certainly been living up to the Murray traditions.

“A dreary snowstorm is raging and the wind is pursuing tormented wraiths over the hills. I know that out beyond the trees Blair Water is a sad, black thing in a desert of whiteness. But the great, dark, wintry night outside makes my cosy little room with its crackling fire seem cosier, and I feel much more contented with the world than I did that beautiful night in January. Tonight isn’t so — so insulting.

“To-day in Glassford’s Magazine there was a story illustration by Teddy. I saw my own face looking out at me in the heroine. It always gives me a very ghostly sensation. And to-day it angered me as well. My face has no right to mean anything to him when I don’t.

“But for all that, I cut out his picture, which was in the ‘Who’s Who’ column, and put it in a frame and set it on my desk. I have no picture of Teddy. And tonight I took it out of the frame and laid it on the coals in the fireplace and watched it shrivel up. Just before the fire went out of it a queer little shudder went over it and Teddy seemed to wink at me — an impish, derisive wink — as if he said:

“‘You think you’ve forgotten — but if you had you wouldn’t have burned me. You are mine — you will always be mine — and I don’t want you.’

“If a good fairy were suddenly to appear before me and offer me a wish it would be this: to have Teddy Kent come and whistle again and again in Lofty John’s bush. And I would not go — not one step.

“I can’t endure this. I must put him out of my life.”

Chapter XVII

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I

The Murray clan had a really terrible time in the summer that followed Emily's twenty-second birthday. Neither Teddy nor Ilse came home that summer. Ilse was touring in the West and Teddy betook himself into some northern hinterland with an Indian treaty party to make illustrations for a serial. But Emily had so many beaux that Blair Water gossip was in as bad a plight as the centipede who couldn't tell which foot came after which. So many beaux and not one of them such as the connection could approve of.

There was handsome, dashing Jack Bannister, the Derry Pond Don Juan—"a picturesque scoundrel," as Dr. Burnley called him. Certainly Jack was untrammelled by any moral code. But who knew what effect his silver tongue and good looks might have on temperamental Emily? It worried the Murrays for three weeks and then it appeared that Emily had some sense, after all. Jack Bannister faded out of the picture.

"Emily should never have even spoken to him," said Uncle Oliver indignantly. "Why, they say he keeps a diary and writes down all his love affairs in it and what the girls said to him."

"Don't worry. He won't write down what I said to him," said Emily, when Aunt Laura reported this to her anxiously.

Harold Conway was another anxiety. A Shrewsbury man in his thirties, who looked like a poet gone to seed. With a shock of wavy dark auburn hair and brilliant brown eyes. Who "fiddled for a living."

Emily went to a concert and a play with him and the New Moon aunts had some sleepless nights. But when in Blair Water parlance Rod Dunbar "cut him out" things were even worse. The Dunbars were "nothing" when it came to religion. Rod's mother, to be sure, was a Presbyterian, but his father was a Methodist, his brother a Baptist and one sister a Christian Scientist. The other sister was a Theosophist, which was worse than all the

rest because they had no idea what it was. In all this mixture what on earth was Rod? Certainly no match for an orthodox niece of New Moon.

“His great-uncle was a religious maniac,” said Uncle Wallace gloomily. “He was kept chained in his bedroom for sixteen years. What has got into that girl? Is she idiot or demon?”

Yet the Dunbars were at least a respectable family; but what was to be said of Larry Dix — one of the “notorious Priest Pond Dixes” — whose father had once pastured his cows in the graveyard and whose uncle was more than suspected of having thrown a dead cat down a neighbour’s well for spite? To be sure, Larry himself was doing well as a dentist and was such a deadly-serious, solemn-in-earnest young man that nothing much could be urged against him, if one could only swallow the fact that he was a Dix. Nevertheless, Aunt Elizabeth was much relieved when Emily turned him adrift.

“Such presumption,” said Aunt Laura, meaning for a Dix to aspire to a Murray.

“It wasn’t because of his presumption I packed him off,” said Emily. “It was because of the way he made love. He made a thing ugly that should have been beautiful.”

“I suppose you wouldn’t have him because he didn’t propose romantically,” said Aunt Elizabeth contemptuously.

“No. I think my real reason was that I felt sure he was the kind of man who would give his wife a vacuum cleaner for a Christmas present,” vowed Emily.

“She will not take anything seriously,” said Aunt Elizabeth in despair.

“I think she is bewitched,” said Uncle Wallace. “She hasn’t had one decent beau this summer. She’s so temperamental decent fellows are scared of her.”

“She’s getting a terrible reputation as a flirt,” mourned Aunt Ruth. “It’s no wonder nobody worth while will have anything to do with her.

“Always with some fantastic love-affair on hand,” snapped Uncle Wallace. The clan felt that Uncle Wallace had, with unusual felicity, hit on

the very word. Emily's "love-affairs" were never the conventional, decorous things Murray love-affairs should be. They were indeed fantastic.

II

But Emily always blessed her stars that none of the clan except Aunt Elizabeth ever knew anything about the most fantastic of them all. If they had they would have thought her temperamental with a vengeance.

It all came about in a simple, silly way. The editor of the Charlottetown Argus, a daily paper with some pretensions to literature, had selected from an old U. S. newspaper a certain uncopyrighted story of several chapters — A Royal Betrothal, by some unknown author, Mark Greaves, for reprinting in the special edition of The Argus, devoted to "boosting" the claims of Prince Edward Island as a summer resort. His staff was small and the compositors had been setting up the type for the special edition at odd moments for a month and had it all ready except the concluding chapter of A Royal Betrothal. This chapter had disappeared and could not be found. The editor was furious, but that did not help matters any. He could not at that late hour find another story which would exactly fill the space, nor was there time to set it up if he could. The special edition must go to press in an hour. What was to be done?

At this moment Emily wandered in. She and Mr. Wilson were good friends and she always called when in town.

"You're a godsend," said Mr. Wilson. "Will you do me a favour?" He tossed the torn and dirty chapters of A Royal Betrothal over to her. "For heaven's sake, get to work and write a concluding chapter to that yarn. I'll give you half an hour. They can set it up in another half-hour. And we'll have the darn thing out on time."

Emily glanced hastily over the story. As far as it went there was no hint of what "Mark Greaves" intended as a denouement.

"Have you any idea how it ended?" she asked.

"No, never read it," groaned Mr. Wilson. "Just picked it for its length."

“Well, I’ll do my best, though I’m not accustomed to write with flippant levity of kings and queens,” agreed Emily. “This Mark Greaves, whoever he is, seems to be very much at home with royalty.”

“I’ll bet he never even saw one,” snorted Mr. Wilson.

In the half-hour allotted to her Emily produced a quite respectable concluding chapter with a solution of the mystery which was really ingenious. Mr. Wilson snatched it with an air of relief handed it to a compositor, and bowed Emily out with thanks.

“I wonder if any of the readers will notice where the seam comes in,” reflected Emily amusedly. “And I wonder if Mark Greaves will ever see it and if so what he will think.”

It did not seem in the least likely she would ever know and she dismissed the matter from her mind. Consequently when, one afternoon two weeks later, Cousin Jimmy ushered a stranger into the sitting-room where Emily was arranging roses in Aunt Elizabeth’s rock-crystal goblet with its ruby base — a treasured heirloom of New Moon — Emily did not connect him with *A Royal Betrothal*, though she had a distinct impression that the caller was an exceedingly irate man.

Cousin Jimmy discreetly withdrew and Aunt Laura, who had come in to place a glass dish full of strawberry preserves on the table to cool, withdrew also, wondering a little who Emily’s odd-looking caller could be. Emily herself wondered. She remained standing by the table, a slim, gracious thing in her pale-green gown, shining like a star in the shadowy, old-fashioned room.

“Won’t you sit down?” she questioned with all the aloof courtesy of New Moon. But the newcomer did not move. He simply stood before her staring at her. And again Emily felt that, while he had been quite furious when he came in, he was not in the least angry now.

He must have been born, of course, because he was there — but it was incredible, she thought, he could ever have been a baby. He wore audacious clothes and a monocle, screwed into one of his eyes — eyes that seemed absurdly like little black currants with black eyebrows that made right-angled triangles above them. He had a mane of black hair reaching to

his shoulders, an immensely long chin and a marble-white face. In a picture Emily thought he would have looked rather handsome and romantic. But here in the New Moon sitting-room he looked merely weird.

“Lyrical creature,” he said, gazing at her.

Emily wondered if he were by any chance an escaped lunatic.

“You do not commit the crime of ugliness,” he continued fervently.

“This is a wonderful moment — very wonderful. ‘Tis a pity we must spoil it by talking. Eyes of purple-grey, sprinkled with gold. Eyes that I have looked for all my life. Sweet eyes, in which I drowned myself eons ago.”

“Who are you?” said Emily crisply, now entirely convinced that he was quite mad. He laid his hand on his heart and bowed.

“Mark Greaves — Mark D. Greaves — Mark Delage Greaves.”

Mark Greaves! Emily had a confused idea that she ought to know the name. It sounded curiously familiar.

“Is it possible you do not recognize my name! Verily this is fame. Even in this remote corner of the world I should have supposed—”

“Oh,” cried Emily, light suddenly breaking on her. “I — I remember now. You wrote *A Royal Betrothal*.”

“The story you so unfeelingly murdered — yes.”

“Oh, I’m so sorry,” Emily interrupted. “Of course you would think it unpardonable. It was this way — you see—”

He stopped her by a wave of a very long, very white hand.

“No matter. No matter. It does not interest me at all now. I admit I was very angry when I came here. I am stopping at the Derry Pond Hotel of The Dunes — ah, what a name — poetry — mystery — romance — and I saw the special edition of *The Argus* this morning. I was angry — had I not a right to be? — and yet more sad than angry. My story was barbarously mutilated. A happy ending. Horrible. My ending was sorrowful and artistic. A happy ending can never be artistic. I hastened to the den of *The Argus*. I dissembled my anger — I discovered who was responsible. I came here — to denounce — to upbraid. I remain to worship.”

Emily simply did not know what to say. New Moon traditions held no precedent for this.

“You do not understand me. You are puzzled — your bewilderment becomes you. Again I say a wonderful moment. To come enraged — and behold divinity. To realize as soon as I saw you that you were meant for me and me alone.”

Emily wished somebody would come in. This was getting nightmarish.

“It is absurd to talk so,” she said shortly. “We are strangers—”

“We are not strangers,” he interrupted. “We have loved in some other life, of course. And our love was a violent, gorgeous thing — a love of eternity. I recognized you as soon as I entered. As soon as you have recovered from your sweet surprise you will realize this, too. When can you marry me?”

To be asked by a man to marry him five minutes after the first moment you have laid eyes on him is an experience more stimulating than pleasant. Emily was annoyed.

“Don’t talk nonsense, please,” she said curtly. “I am not going to marry you at any time.”

“Not marry me? But you must! I have never before asked a woman to marry me. I am the famous Mark Greaves. I am rich. I have the charm and romance of my French mother and the commonsense of my Scotch father. With the French side of me I feel and acknowledge your beauty and mystery. With the Scotch side of me I bow in homage to your reserve and dignity. You are ideal — adorable. Many women have loved me but I loved them not. I enter this room a free man. I go out a captive. Enchanting captivity! Adorable captor! I kneel before you in spirit.”

Emily was horribly afraid he would kneel before her in the flesh. He looked quite capable of it. And suppose Aunt Elizabeth should come in.

“Please go away,” she said desperately. “I’m — I’m very busy and I can’t stop talking to you any longer. I’m sorry about the story — if you would let me explain—”

“I have said it does not matter about the story. Though you must learn never to write happy endings — never. I will teach you. I will teach you

the beauty and artistry of sorrow and incompleteness. Ah, what a pupil you will be! What bliss to teach such a pupil! I kiss your hand.”

He made a step nearer as if to seize upon it. Emily stepped backward in alarm.

“You must be crazy,” she exclaimed.

“Do I look crazy?” demanded Mr. Greaves.

“You do,” retorted Emily flatly and cruelly.

“Perhaps I do — probably I do. Crazy — intoxicated with wine of the rose. All lovers are mad. Divine madness! Oh, beautiful, un-kissed lips!”

Emily drew herself up. This absurd interview must end. She was by now thoroughly angry.

“Mr. Greaves,” she said — and such was the power of the Murray look that Mr. Greaves realized she meant exactly what she said. “I shan’t listen to any more of this nonsense. Since you won’t let me explain about the matter of the story I bid you good-afternoon.”

Mr. Greaves looked gravely at her for a moment. Then he said solemnly:

“A kiss? Or a kick? Which?”

Was he speaking metaphorically? But whether or no —

“A kick,” said Emily disdainfully.

Mr. Greaves suddenly seized the crystal goblet and dashed it violently against the stove.

Emily uttered a faint shriek — partly of real terror — partly of dismay. Aunt Elizabeth’s treasured goblet.

“That was merely a defence reaction,” said Mr. Greaves, glaring at her. “I had to do that — or kill you. Ice-maiden! Chill vestal! Cold as your northern snows! Farewell.”

He did not slam the door as he went out. He merely shut it gently and irrevocably, so that Emily might realize what she had lost. When she saw that he was really out of the garden and marching indignantly down the lane as if he were crushing something beneath his feet, she permitted herself the relief of a long breath — the first she had dared to draw since his entrance.

“I suppose,” she said, half hysterically, “that I ought to be thankful he did not throw the dish of strawberry preserves at me.”

Aunt Elizabeth came in.

“Emily, the rock-crystal goblet! Your Grandmother Murray’s goblet! And you have broken it!”

“No, really. Auntie dear, I didn’t. Mr. Greaves — Mr. Mark Delage Greaves did it. He threw it at the stove.”

“Threw it at the stove!” Aunt Elizabeth was staggered. “Why did he throw it at the stove?”

“Because I wouldn’t marry him,” said Emily.

“Marry him! Did you ever see him before?”

“Never.”

Aunt Elizabeth gathered up the fragments of the crystal goblet and went out quite speechless. There was — there must be — something wrong with a girl when a man proposed marriage to her at first meeting. And hurled heirloom goblets at inoffensive stoves.

III

But it was the affair of the Japanese prince which really gave the Murrays their bad summer.

Second-cousin Louise Murray, who had lived in Japan for twenty years, came home to Derry Pond for a visit and brought with her a young Japanese prince, the son of a friend of her husband’s, who had been converted to Christianity by her efforts and wished to see something of Canada. His mere coming made a tremendous sensation in the clan and the community. But that was nothing to the next sensation when they realized that the prince had evidently and unmistakably fallen terrifically in love with Emily Byrd Starr of New Moon.

Emily liked him — was interested in him — was sorry for him in his bewildered reactions to the Presbyterian atmosphere of Derry Pond and Blair Water. Naturally a Japanese prince, even a converted one, couldn’t feel exactly at home. So she talked a great deal to him — he could talk

English excellently — and walked with him at moonrise in the garden — and almost every evening that slant-eyed, inscrutable face, with the black hair brushed straight back from it as smooth as satin, might be seen in the parlour of New Moon.

But it was not until he gave Emily a little frog beautifully cut out of moss agate that the Murrays took alarm. Cousin Louise sounded it first. Tearfully. She knew what that frog meant. Those agate frogs were heirlooms in the family of the prince. Never were they given away save as marriage and betrothal gifts. Was Emily engaged — to him? Aunt Ruth, looking as usual as if she thought everyone had gone mad, came over to New Moon and made quite a scene. It annoyed Emily so much that she refused to answer any questions. She was a bit edgy to begin with over the unnecessary way her clan had heckled her all summer over suitors that were not of her choosing and whom there was not the slightest danger of her taking seriously.

“There are some things not good for you to know,” she told Aunt Ruth impertinently.

And the distracted Murrays despairingly concluded that she had decided to be a Japanese princess. And if she had — well, they knew what happened when Emily made up her mind. It was something inevitable — like a visitation of God; but it was a dreadful thing. His Princeship cast no halo about him in the Murray eyes. No Murray before her would ever have dreamed of marrying any foreigner, much less a Japanese. But then of course she was temperamental.

“Always with some disreputable creature in tow,” said Aunt Ruth. “But this beats everything I ever feared. A pagan — a—”

“Oh, he isn’t that, Ruth,” mourned Aunt Laura. “He is converted — Cousin Louise says she is sure he is sincere, but—”

“I tell you he’s a pagan!” reiterated Aunt Ruth. “Cousin Louise could never convert anybody. Why, she’s none too sound herself. And her husband is a modernist if he’s anything. Don’t tell me! A yellow pagan! Him and his agate frogs!”

“She seems to have such an attraction for extraordinary men,” said Aunt Elizabeth, thinking of the rock-crystal goblet.

Uncle Wallace said it was preposterous. Andrew said she might at least have picked on a white man. Cousin Louise, who felt that the clan blamed her for it all, pleaded tearfully that he had beautiful manners when you really knew him.

“And she might have had the Reverend James Wallace,” said Aunt Elizabeth.

They lived through five weeks of this and then the prince went back to Japan. He had been summoned home by his family, Cousin Louise said — a marriage had been arranged for him with a princess of an old Samurai family. Of course he had obeyed; but he left the agate frog in Emily’s possession and nobody ever knew just what he said to her one night at moonrise in the garden. Emily was a little white and strange and remote when she came in, but she smiled impishly at her aunts and Cousin Louise.

“So I’m not to be a Japanese princess after all,” she said, wiping away some imaginary tears.

“Emily, I fear you’ve only been flirting with that poor boy,” rebuked Cousin Louise. “You have made him very unhappy.”

“I wasn’t flirting. Our conversations were about literature and history — mostly. He will never think of me again.”

“I know what he looked like when he read that letter,” retorted Cousin Louise. “And I know the significance of agate frogs.”

New Moon drew a breath of relief and thankfully settled down to routine again. Aunt Laura’s old, tender eyes lost their troubled look, but Aunt Elizabeth thought sadly of the Rev. James Wallace. It had been a nerve-racking summer. Blair Water whispered about, that Emily Starr had been “disappointed,” but predicted she would live to be thankful for it. You couldn’t trust them foreigners. Not likely he was a prince at all.

Chapter XVIII

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I

One day in the last week of October Cousin Jimmy began to plough the hill field, Emily found the lost legendary diamond of the Murrays,* and Aunt Elizabeth fell down the cellar steps and broke her leg.

*See Emily of New Moon.

Emily, in the warm amber of the afternoon, stood on the sandstone front steps of New Moon and looked about her with eyes avid for the mellow loveliness of the fading year. Most of the trees were leafless, but a little birch, still in golden array, peeped out of the young spruces — a birch Danae in their shadows — and the Lombardies down the lane were like a row of great golden candles. Beyond was the sere hill field scarfed with three bright red ribbons — the “ridges” Cousin Jimmy had ploughed. Emily had been writing all day and she was tired. She went down the garden to the little vine-hung summer house — she poked dreamily about; deciding where the new tulip bulbs should be planted. Here — in this moist rich soil where Cousin Jimmy had recently pried out the mouldering old side-steps. Next spring it should be a banquet board laden with stately chalices. Emily’s heel sank deeply into the moist earth and came out laden. She sauntered over to the stone bench and daintily scraped off the earth with a twig. Something fell and glittered on the grass like a dewdrop. Emily picked it up with a little cry. There in her hand was the Lost Diamond — lost over sixty years before, when Great-aunt Miriam Murray had gone into the summer house.

It had been one of her childish dreams to find the Lost Diamond — she and Ilse and Teddy had hunted for it scores of times. But of late years she had not thought about it. And here it was — as bright, as beautiful, as ever. It must have been hidden in some crevice of the old side-steps and fallen to the earth when they had been torn away. It made quite a sensation at

New Moon. A few days later the Murrays had a conclave about Aunt Elizabeth's bed to decide what should be done with it. Cousin Jimmy said stoutly that finding was keeping in this case. Edward and Miriam Murray were long since dead. They had left no family. The diamond by rights was Emily's.

"We are all heirs to it," said Uncle Wallace judicially. "It cost, I've heard, a thousand dollars sixty years ago. It's a beautiful stone. The fair thing is to sell it and give Emily her mother's share."

"One shouldn't sell a family diamond," said Aunt Elizabeth firmly.

This seemed to be the general opinion at bottom. Even Uncle Wallace acknowledged the sway of noblesse oblige. Eventually they all agreed that the diamond should be Emily's.

"She can have it set as a little pendant for her neck," said Aunt Laura.

"It was meant for a ring," said Aunt Ruth, just for the sake of disagreeing. "And she shouldn't wear it, in any case, until she is married. A diamond as big as that is in bad taste for a young girl."

"Oh, married!" Aunt Addie gave a rather nasty little laugh. It conveyed her opinion that if Emily waited for that to wear the diamond it was just possible she might never wear it. Aunt Addie had never forgiven Emily for refusing Andrew. And here she was at twenty-three — well, nearly — with no eligible beau in sight.

"The Lost Diamond will bring you luck, Emily," said Cousin Jimmy. "I'm glad they've left it with you. It's rightly yours. But will you let me hold it sometimes, Emily, — just hold it and look into it. When I look into anything like that I — I — find myself. I'm not simple Jimmy Murray then — I'm what I would have been if I hadn't been pushed into a well. Don't say anything about it to Elizabeth, Emily, but just let me hold it and look at it once in awhile."

"My favourite gem is the diamond, when all is said and done," Emily wrote to Ilse that night. "But I love gems of all kinds — except turquoise. Them I loathe — the shallow, insipid, soulless things. The gloss of pearl, glow of ruby, tenderness of sapphire, melting violet of amethyst, moonlit glimmer of aquamarine, milk and fire of opal — I love them all."

“What about emeralds?” Ilse wrote back — a bit nastily, Emily thought, not knowing that a Shrewsbury correspondent of Ilse’s wrote her now and then some unreliable gossip about Perry Miller’s visits to New Moon. Perry did come to New Moon occasionally. But he had given up asking Emily to marry him and seemed wholly absorbed in his profession. Already he was regarded as a coming man and shrewd politicians were said to be biding their time until he should be old enough to “bring out” as a candidate for the Provincial House.

“Who knows? You may be ‘my lady’ yet,” wrote Ilse, “Perry will be Sir Perry some day.”

Which Emily thought was even nastier than the scratch about the emerald.

II

At first it did not seem that the Lost Diamond had brought luck to any one at New Moon. The very evening of its finding Aunt Elizabeth broke her leg. Shawled and bonnetted for a call on a sick neighbour — bonnets had long gone out of fashion even for elderly ladies, but Aunt Elizabeth wore them still — she had started down cellar to get a jar of black currant jam for the invalid, had tripped in some way and fallen. When she was taken up it was found that her leg was broken and Aunt Elizabeth faced the fact that for the first time in her life she was to spend weeks in bed.

Of course New Moon got on without her, though she believed it couldn’t. But the problem of amusing her was a more serious one than the running of New Moon. Aunt Elizabeth fretted and pined over her enforced inactivity — could not read much herself — didn’t like to be read to — was sure everything was going to the dogs — was sure she was going to be lame and useless all the rest of her life — was sure Dr. Burnley was an old fool — was sure Laura would never get the apples packed properly — was sure the hired boy would cheat Cousin Jimmy.

“Would you like to hear the little story I finished to-day, Aunt Elizabeth?” asked Emily one evening. “It might amuse you.”

“Is there any silly lovemaking in it?” demanded Aunt Elizabeth ungraciously.

“No lovemaking of any kind. It’s pure comedy.”

“Well, let me hear it. It may pass the time.”

Emily read the story. Aunt Elizabeth made no comment whatever. But the next afternoon she said, hesitatingly, “Is there — any more — of that story you read last night?”

“No.”

“Well, if there was — I wouldn’t mind hearing it. It kind of took my thoughts away from myself. The folks seemed — sort of — real to me. I suppose that is why I feel as if I want to know what happens to them,” concluded Aunt Elizabeth as if apologizing for her weakness.

“I’ll write another story about them for you,” promised Emily.

When this was read Aunt Elizabeth remarked that she didn’t care if she heard a third one.

“Those Applegaths are amusing,” she said. “I’ve known people like them. And that little chap, Jerry Stowe. What happens to him when he grows up, poor child?”

III

Emily’s idea came to her that evening as she sat idly by her window looking rather drearily out on cold meadows and hills of grey, over which a chilly, lonesome wind blew. She could hear the dry leaves blowing over the garden wall. A few great white flakes were beginning to come down.

She had had a letter from Ilse that day. Teddy’s picture, *The Smiling Girl*, which had been exhibited in Montreal and had made a tremendous sensation, had been accepted by the Paris Salon.

“I just got back from the coast in time to see the last day of its exhibition here,” wrote Ilse. “And it’s you — Emily — it’s you. Just that old sketch he made of you years ago completed and glorified — the one your Aunt Nancy made you so mad by keeping — remember? There you were smiling down from Teddy’s canvas. The critics had a great deal to

say about his colouring and technique and ‘feeling’ and all that sort of jargon. But one said, ‘The smile on the girl’s face will become as famous as Mona Lisa’s.’ I’ve seen that very smile on your face a hundred times, Emily — especially when you were seeing that unseeable thing you used to call your flash. Teddy has caught the very soul of it — not a mocking, challenging smile like Mona Lisa’s — but a smile that seems to hint at some exquisitely wonderful secret you could tell if you liked — some whisper eternal — a secret that would make every one happy if they could only get you to tell it. It’s only a trick, I suppose — you don’t know that secret any more than the rest of us. But the smile suggests that you do — suggests it marvellously. Yes, your Teddy has genius — that smile proves it. What does it feel like, Emily, to realize yourself the inspiration of a genius? I’d give years of my life for such a compliment.”

Emily didn’t quite know what it felt like. But she did feel a certain small, futile anger with Teddy. What right had he who scorned her love and was indifferent to her friendship to paint her face — her soul — her secret vision — and hang it up for the world to gaze at? To be sure, he had told her in childhood that he meant to do it — and she had agreed then. But everything had changed since then. Everything.

Well, about this story, regarding which Aunt Elizabeth had such an Oliver Twist complex. Suppose she were to write another one — suddenly the idea came. Suppose she were to expand it into a book. Not like *A Seller of Dreams*, of course. That old glory could come back no more. But Emily had an instantaneous vision of the new book, as a whole — a witty, sparkling rill of human comedy. She ran down to Aunt Elizabeth.

“Aunty, how would you like me to write a book for you about those people in my story? Just for you — a chapter every day.”

Aunt Elizabeth carefully hid the fact that she was interested.

“Oh, you can if you want to. I wouldn’t mind hearing about them. But mind, you are not to put any of the neighbours in.”

Emily didn’t put any of the neighbours in — she didn’t need to. Characters galore trooped into her consciousness, demanding a local habitation and a name. They laughed and scowled and wept and danced —

and even made a little love. Aunt Elizabeth tolerated this, supposing you couldn't have a novel without some of it. Emily read a chapter every evening, and Aunt Laura and Cousin Jimmy were allowed to hear it along with Aunt Elizabeth. Cousin Jimmy was in raptures. He was sure it was the most wonderful story ever written.

"I feel young again when I'm listening to you," he said.

"Sometimes I want to laugh and sometimes I want to cry," confessed Aunt Laura. "I can't sleep for wondering what is going to happen to the Applegaths in the next chapter."

"It might be worse," conceded Aunt Elizabeth. "But I wish you'd cut out what you said about Gloria Applegath's greasy dish-towels. Mrs. Charlie Frost of Derry Pond, will think you mean her. Her towels are always greasy."

"Chips are bound to light somewhere," said Cousin Jimmy. "Gloria is funny in a book, but she'd be awful to live with. Too busy saving the world. Somebody ought to tell her to read her Bible."

"I don't like Cissy Applegath, though," said Aunt Laura apologetically. "She has such a supercilious way of speaking."

"A shallow-pated creature," said Aunt Elizabeth.

"It's old Jesse Applegath I can't tolerate," said Cousin Jimmy fiercely. "A man who would kick a cat just to relieve his feelings! I'd go twenty miles to slap the old he-devil's face. But" — hopefully—"maybe he'll die before long."

"Or reform," suggested Aunt Laura mercifully.

"No, no, don't let him reform," said Cousin Jimmy anxiously. "Kill him off, if necessary, but don't reform him. I wish, though, you'd change the colour of Peg Applegath's eyes. I don't like green eyes — never did."

"But I can't change them. They are green," protested Emily.

"Well, then, Abraham Applegath's whiskers," pleaded Cousin Jimmy. "I like Abraham. He's a gay dog. Can't he help his whiskers, Emily?"

"No" — firmly—"he can't."

Why couldn't they understand? Abraham had whiskers — wanted whiskers — was determined to have whiskers. She couldn't change him.

“It’s time we remembered that these people have no real existence,” rebuked Aunt Elizabeth.

But once — Emily counted it her greatest triumph — Aunt Elizabeth laughed. She was so ashamed of it she would not even smile all the rest of the reading.

“Elizabeth thinks God doesn’t like to hear us laugh,” Cousin Jimmy whispered behind his hand to Laura. If Elizabeth had not been lying there with a broken leg Laura would have smiled. But to smile under the circumstances seemed like taking an unfair advantage of her.

Cousin Jimmy went downstairs shaking his head and murmuring, “How does she do it? How does she do it! I can write poetry — but this. Those folks are alive!”

One of them was too much alive in Aunt Elizabeth’s opinion.

“That Nicholas Applegath is too much like old Douglas Courcy, of Shrewsbury,” she said. “I told you not to put any people we knew in it.”

“Why, I never saw Douglas Courcy.”

“It’s him to the life. Even Jimmy noticed it. You must cut him out, Emily.”

But Emily obstinately refused to “cut him out.” Old Nicholas was one of the best characters in her book. She was very much absorbed in it by this time. The composition of it was never the ecstatic rite the creation of *A Seller of Dreams* had been, but it was very fascinating. She forgot all vexing and haunting things while she was writing it. The last chapter was finished the very day the splints were taken off Aunt Elizabeth’s leg and she was carried down to the kitchen lounge.

“Well, your story has helped,” she admitted. “But I’m thankful to be where I can keep my eye on things once more. What are you going to do with your book? What are you going to call it?”

“The Moral of the Rose.”

“I don’t think that is a good title at all. I don’t know what it means — nobody will know.”

“No matter. That is the book’s name.”

Aunt Elizabeth sighed.

“I don’t know where you get your stubbornness from, Emily. I’m sure I don’t. You never would take advice. And I know the Courcys will never speak to us again, after the book is published.”

“The book hasn’t any chance of being published,” said Emily gloomily. “They’ll send it back, ‘damned with faint praise.’”

Aunt Elizabeth had never heard this expression before and she thought Emily had originated it and was being profane.

“Emily,” she said sternly, “don’t let me ever hear such a word from your lips again. I’ve more than suspected Ilse of such language — that poor girl never got over her early bringing up — she’s not to be judged by our standards. But Murrays of New Moon do not swear.”

“It was only a quotation, Aunt Elizabeth,” said Emily wearily.

She was tired — a little tired of everything. It was Christmas now and a long, dreary winter stretched before her — an empty, aimless winter. Nothing seemed worth while — not even finding a publisher for *The Moral of the Rose*.

IV

However, she typewrote it faithfully and sent it out. It came back. She sent it out again, three times. It came back. She retyped it — the MS. was getting dog-eared — and sent it out again. At intervals all that winter and summer she sent it out, working doggedly through a list of possible publishers. I forget how many times she retyped it. It became a sort of a joke — a bitter joke.

The worst of it was that the New Moon folk knew of all these rejections and their sympathy and indignation were hard to bear. Cousin Jimmy was so angry over every rejection of this masterpiece that he could not eat for a day afterwards and she gave up telling him of the journeys. Once she thought of sending it to Miss Royal and asking her if she had any influence to use. But the Murray pride would not brook the idea. Finally in the autumn when it returned from the last publisher on her list Emily did

not even open the parcel. She cast it contemptuously into a compartment of her desk.

Too sick at heart to war
With failure any more.

“That’s the end of it — and of all my dreams. I’ll use it up for scribbling paper. And now I’ll settle down to a tepid existence of pot-boiling.”

As least magazine editors were more appreciative than book publishers — as Cousin Jimmy indignantly said, they appeared to have more sense. While her book was seeking vainly for its chance her magazine clientele grew daily. She spent long hours at her desk and enjoyed her work after a fashion. But there was a little consciousness of failure under it all. She could never get much higher on the Alpine path. The glorious city of fulfilment on its summit was not for her. Pot-boiling! That was all. Making a living in what Aunt Elizabeth thought was a shamefully easy way.

Miss Royal wrote her frankly that she was falling off.

“You’re getting into a rut, Emily,” she warned, “A self-satisfied rut. The admiration of Aunt Laura and Cousin Jimmy is a bad thing for you. You should be here — we would keep you up to the scratch.”

Suppose she had gone to New York with Miss Royal when she had the chance six years ago. Would she not have been able to get her book published? Was it not the fatal Prince Edward Island postmark that condemned it — the little out-of-the-world province from which no good thing could ever come?

Perhaps! Perhaps Miss Royal had been right. But what did it matter?

No one came to Blair Water that summer. That is — Teddy Kent did not come. Ilse was in Europe again. Dean Priest seemed to have taken up his residence permanently at the Pacific Coast. Life at New Moon went on unchanged. Except that Aunt Elizabeth limped a little and Cousin Jimmy’s hair turned white quite suddenly, overnight as it seemed. Now and then Emily had a quick, terrible vision that Cousin Jimmy was growing old. They were all growing old. Aunt Elizabeth was nearly seventy. And when

she died New Moon went to Andrew. Already there were times when Andrew seemed to be putting on proprietary airs in his visits to New Moon. Not that he would ever live there himself, of course. But it ought to be kept in good shape against the day when it would be necessary to sell it.

“It’s time those old Lombardies were cut down,” said Andrew to Uncle Oliver one day. “They’re getting frightfully ragged at the tops. Lombardies are so out of date now. And that field with the young spruces should be drained and ploughed.”

“That old orchard should be cleared out,” said Uncle Oliver. “It’s more like a jungle than an orchard. The trees are too old for any good anyhow. They should all be chopped down. Jimmy and Elizabeth are too old-fashioned. They don’t make half the money out of this farm they should.”

Emily, overhearing this, clenched her fists. To see New Moon desecrated — her old, intimate, beloved trees cut down — the spruce field where wild strawberries grew improved out of existence — dreamy beauty of the old orchard destroyed — the little dells and slopes that kept all the ghostly joys of her past changed — altered. It was unbearable.

“If you had married Andrew New Moon would have been yours,” said Aunt Elizabeth bitterly, when she found Emily crying over what they had said.

“But the changes would have come just the same,” said Emily. “Andrew wouldn’t have listened to me. He believes that the husband is the head of the wife.”

“You will be twenty-four your next birthday,” said Aunt Elizabeth. Apropos of what?

Chapter XIX

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I

“OCT. 1, 19 —

“This afternoon I sat at my window and alternately wrote at my new serial and watched a couple of dear, amusing, youngish maple-trees at the foot of the garden. They whispered secrets to each other all the afternoon. They would bend together and talk earnestly for a few moments, then spring back and look at each other, throwing up their hands comically in horror and amazement over their mutual revelations. I wonder what new scandal is afoot in Treeland.”

II

“OCT. 10, 19 —

“This evening was lovely. I went up on the hill and walked about until twilight had deepened into an autumn night with a benediction of starry quietude over it. I was alone but not lonely. I was a queen in halls of fancy. I held a series of conversations with imaginary comrades and thought out so many epigrams that I was agreeably surprised at myself.”

III

“OCT. 28, 19 —

“Tonight I was out for one of my long walks. In a weird, purple, shadowy world, with great, cold clouds piling up above a yellow sky, hills brooding in the silence of forsaken woods, ocean tumbling on a rocky shore. The whole landscape seemed

As those who wait
Till judgment speak the doom of fate.

“It made me feel — horribly alone.

“What a creature of moods I am!

“‘Fickle,’ as Aunt Elizabeth says? Temperamental,’ as Andrew says?”

IV

“NOV. 5, 19 —

“What a fit of bad temper the world has indulged in! Day before yesterday she was not unbeautiful — a dignified old dame in fitting garb of brown and ermine. Yesterday she tried to ape juvenility, putting on all the airs and graces of spring, with scarfs of blue hazes. And what a bedraggled and uncomely old hag she was, all tatters and wrinkles. She grew peevish then over her own ugliness and has raged all night and day. I awakened up in the wee sma’s and heard the wind shrieking in the trees and tears of rage and spite sleeting against the pane.”

V

“NOV. 23, 19 —

“This is the second day of a heavy, ceaseless autumn rain. Really, it has rained almost every day this November. We had no mail to-day. The outside world is a dismal one, with drenched and dripping trees and sodden fields. And the damp and gloom have crept into my soul and spirit and sapped out all life and energy.

“I could not read, eat, sleep, write or do anything, unless I drove myself to do it and then I felt as if I were trying to do it with somebody else’s hands or brain and couldn’t work very well with them. I feel lustreless, dowdy and uninviting — I even bore myself.

“I shall grow mossy in this existence!

“There! I feel better for that little outburst of discontent. It has ejected something from my system. I know that into everybody’s life must come some days of depression and discouragement when all things in life seem

to lose savour. The sunniest day has its clouds; but one must not forget that the sun is there all the time.

“How easy it is to be a philosopher — on paper!

“(Item: — If you are out in a cold, pouring rain, does it keep you dry to remember that the sun is there just the same?)

“Well, thank heaven no two days are ever exactly alike!”

VI

“DEC. 3, 19 —

“There was a stormy, unrestful sunset tonight, behind the pale, blanched hills, gleaming angrily through the Lombardies and the dark fir-boughs in Lofty John’s bush, that were now and again tossed suddenly and distressfully in a fitful gust of wind. I sat at my window and watched it. Below in the garden it was quite dark and I could only see dimly the dead leaves that were whirling and dancing uncannily over the flowerless paths. The poor dead leaves — yet not quite dead, it seemed. There was still enough unquiet life left in them to make them restless and forlorn. They harkened yet to every call of the wind, which cared for them no longer but only played freakishly with them and broke their rest. I felt sorry for the leaves as I watched them in the dull, weird twilight, and angry — in a petulant fashion that almost made me laugh — with the wind that would not leave them in peace. Why should they — and I — be vexed with these transient, passionate breaths of desire for a life which has passed us by?

“I have not heard even from Ilse for a long time. She has forgotten me, too.”

VII

“JAN. 10, 19 —

“As I came home from the postoffice this evening — with three acceptances — I revelled in the winter loveliness around me. It was so very calm and still; the low sun cast such pure, pale tints of pink and

heliotrope over the snow; and the great, pale-silver moon peeping over the Delectable Mountain was such a friend of mine.

“How much difference in one’s outlook three acceptances make!”

VIII

“JAN. 20, 19 —

“The nights are so dreary now and there is such a brief space of grey, sunless day. I work and think all day and, when night comes down early, gloom settles on my soul. I can’t describe the feeling. It is dreadful — worse than any actual pain. In so far as I can express it in words I feel a great and awful weariness — not of body or brain but of feeling, coupled with a haunting dread of the future — any future — even a happy one — nay, a happy one most of all, for in this strange mood it seems to me that to be happy would require more effort — more buoyancy than I shall possess. The fantastic shape my fear assumes is that it would be too much trouble to be happy — require too much energy.

“Let me be honest — in this journal if nowhere else. I know quite well what is the matter with me. This afternoon I was rummaging in my old trunk in the garret and found a packet of the letters Teddy wrote the first year he was in Montreal. I was foolish enough to sit down and read them all. It was a mad thing to do. I am paying for it now. Such letters have a terrible resurrective power. I am surrounded by bitter fancies and unbidden ghosts — the little spectral joys of the past.”

IX

“FEB. 5, 19 —

“Life never seems the same to me as it used to. Something is gone. I am not unhappy. But life seems a sort of negative affair. I enjoy it on the whole and have many beautiful moments. I have success — at least a sort of success — in growing measure and a keen appreciation of all the world and the times offer for delight and interest. But underneath it all is the

haunting sense of emptiness. This is all because ‘full knee-deep lies the winter snow’ and I can’t go a-prowling. Wait till a thaw comes, when I can get out to the balm of the fir-trees and the peace of the white places and the ‘strength of the hills’ — what a beautiful old Biblical phrase that is! — and I shall be made whole once more.”

X

“FEB. 6, 19 —

“Last night I simply could not endure any longer the vaseful of dyed grasses on my mantelpiece. What if they had been there for forty years! I seized them, opened the window and strewed them over the lawn. This soothed me so that I slept like an infant. But this morning Cousin Jimmy had gathered them all up and handed them secretly back to me with a gentle warning not to let them ‘blow out’ again. Elizabeth would be horrified.

“I put them back in the vase. One cannot escape one’s kismet.”

XI

“FEB. 22, 19 —

“There was a creamy, misty sunset this evening and then moonlight. Such moonlight. It is such a night as one might fall asleep in and dream happy dreams of gardens and songs and companionship, feeling all the while through one’s sleep the splendour and radiance of the white moon-world outside as one hears soft, faraway music sounding through the thoughts and words that are born of it.

“I slipped away for a solitary walk through that fairy world of glamour. I went through the orchard where the black shadows of the trees fell over the snow — I went up to the gleaming white hill with the stars over it, I lurked along fir copses dim with mystery and along still, wood aisles where the night hid from the moonshine, I loitered across a dreamland field of ebon and ivory. I had a tryst with my friend of old days, the Wind

Woman. And every breath was a lyric and every thought an ecstasy and I've come back with a soul washed white and clean in the great crystal bath of the night.

"But Aunt Elizabeth said people would think me crazy if they saw me roaming around alone at this hour of the night. And Aunt Laura made me take a drink of hot black currant decoction lest I might have taken cold. Only Cousin Jimmy partly understood.

"'You went out to escape. I know,' he whispered.

'My soul has pastured with the stars
Upon the meadowlands of space.'

I whispered in return."

XII

"FEB. 26, 19 —

"Jasper Frost has been coming out here from Shrewsbury of late. I don't think he will come any more — after our conversation of last night. He told me he loved me with a love 'that would last through eternity.' But I thought an eternity with Jasper would be rather long. Aunt Elizabeth will be a little disappointed, poor dear. She likes Jasper and the Frosts are 'a good family.' I like him, too, but he is too prim and bandboxy.

"'Would you like a slovenly beau?' demanded Aunt Elizabeth.

"This posed me. Because I wouldn't.

"'Surely there's a happy medium,' I protested.

"'A girl shouldn't be too particular when she is' — I feel sure Aunt Elizabeth was going to say 'nearly twenty-four.' But she changed it to 'not entirely perfect herself.'

"I wish Mr. Carpenter had been alive to hear Aunt Elizabeth's italics. They were killing."

XIII

“MARCH 1, 19 —

“A wonderful music of night is coming to my window from Lofty John’s bush. No, not Lofty John’s bush any more.

“Emily Byrd Starr’s bush!

“I bought it to-day, with the proceeds of my latest serial. And it is mine — mine — mine. All the lovely things in it are mine — its moonlit vistas — the grace of its one big elm against the starlight — its shadowy little dells — its Junebells and ferns — its crystalline spring — its wind music sweeter than an old Cremona. No one can ever cut it down or desecrate it in any way.

“I am so happy. The wind is my comrade and the evening star my friend.”

XIV

“MARCH 23, 19 —

“Is there any sound in the world sadder and weirder than the wail of the wind around the eaves and past the windows on a stormy night? It sounds as if the brokenhearted cries of fair, unhappy women who died and were forgotten ages ago were being reechoed in the moaning wind of tonight. All my own past pain finds a voice in it as if it were moaning a plea for re-entrance into the soul that has cast it out. There are strange sounds in that night wind clamouring there at my little window. I hear the cries of old sorrows in it — and the moans of old despairs — and the phantom songs of dead hopes. The night wind is the wandering soul of the past. It has no share in the future — and so it is mournful.”

XV

“APRIL 10, 19 —

“This morning I felt more like myself than I have for a long time. I was out for a walk over the Delectable Mountain. It was a very mild, still, misty morning with lovely pearl-grey skies and smell of spring in the air.

Every turn and twist on that hill-road was an old friend to me. And everything was so young. April couldn't be old. The young spruces were so green and companionable with pearl-like beads of moisture fringing their needles.

“‘You are mine,’ called the sea beyond Blair Water.

“‘We have a share in her,’ said the hills.

“‘She is my sister,’ said a jolly little fir-tree.

“Looking at them the flash came — my old supernal moment that has come so sadly seldom these past dreary months. Will I lose it altogether as I grow old? Will nothing but ‘the light of common day’ be mine then?

“But at least it came to me this morning and I felt my immortality. After all, freedom is a matter of the soul.

‘Nature never did betray the heart that loved her.’

“She has always a gift of healing for us if we come humbly to her. Corroding memories and discontents vanished. I felt suddenly that some old gladness was yet waiting for me, just around the curve of the hill.

“The frogs are singing tonight. Why is frog such a funny, dear, charming, absurd word?”

XVI

“MAY 15, 19 —

“I know that when I am dead I shall sleep peaceably enough under the grasses through the summer and autumn and winter but when spring comes my heart will throb and stir in my sleep and call wistfully to all the voices calling far and wide in the world above me. Spring and morning were laughing to each other to-day and I went out to them and made a third.

“Ilse wrote to-day — a stingy little letter as far as news went — and spoke of coming home.

“‘I’m homesick,’ she wrote. ‘Are the wild birds still singing in the Blair Water woods and are the waves still calling beyond the dunes? I want them. And oh, to see the moon rise over the harbour as we watched it do

scores of times when we were children. And I want to see you. Letters are so unsatisfactory. There are so many things I'd like to talk over with you. Do you know I felt a little old to-day. It was a curious sensation.'

"She never mentioned Teddy's name. But she asked 'Is it true that Perry Miller is engaged to Judge Elmsley's daughter?'

"I don't think it is. But the mere report shows where Perry has climbed to already."

Chapter XX

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I

On her twenty-fourth birthday Emily opened and read the letter she had written “from herself at fourteen to herself at twenty-four.” It was not the amusing performance she had once expected it to be. She sat long at her window with the letter in her hand, watching the light of yellow, sinking stars over the bush that was still called Lofty John’s oftener than not, from old habit. What would pop out when she opened that letter? A ghost of first youth? Of ambition? Of vanished love? Of lost friendship? Emily felt she would rather burn the letter than read it. But that would be cowardly. One must face things — even ghosts. With a sudden quick movement she cut open the envelope and took out the letter.

A whiff of old fragrance came with it. Folded in it were some dried roseleaves — crisp brown things that crumbled to dust under her touch. Yes, she remembered that rose — Teddy had brought it to her one evening when they had been children together and he had been so proud of that first red rose that bloomed on a little house rosebush Dr. Burnley had given him — the only rose that ever did bloom on it, for that matter. His mother had resented his love for the little plant. One night it was accidentally knocked off the windowsill and broken. If Teddy thought or knew there was any connection between the two facts he never said so. Emily had kept the rose as long as possible in a little vase on her study table; but the night she had written her letter she had taken the limp, faded thing and folded it — with a kiss — between the sheets of paper. She had forgotten that it was there; and now it fell in her hand, faded, unbeautiful, like the rose-hopes of long ago, yet with some faint bitter-sweetness still about it. The whole letter seemed full of it — whether of sense or spirit she could hardly tell.

This letter was, she sternly told herself, a foolish, romantic affair. Something to be laughed at. Emily carefully laughed at some parts of it. How crude — how silly — how sentimental — how amusing! Had she really ever been young and callow enough to write such flowery exultant nonsense? And one would have thought, too, that fourteen regarded twenty-four as verging on venerable.

“Have you written your great book?” airily asked Fourteen in conclusion. “Have you climbed to the very top of the Alpine Path? Oh, Twenty-four, I’m envying you. It must be splendid to be you. Are you looking back patronizingly and pityingly to me? You wouldn’t swing on a gate now, would you? Are you a staid old married woman with several children, living in the Disappointed House with One-You-Know-Of? Only don’t be stodgy, I implore you, dear Twenty-four. And do be dramatic. I love dramatic things and people. Are you Mrs. — — — ? What name will fill those blanks? Oh, dear Twenty-four, I put into this letter for you a kiss — and a handful of moonshine — and the soul of a rose — and some of the green sweetness of the old hill field — and a whiff of wild violets. I hope you are happy and famous and lovely; and I hope you haven’t quite forgotten

“Your foolish

“OLD SELF.”

Emily locked the letter away.

“So much for that nonsense,” she said scoffingly.

Then she sat down in her chair, and dropped her head on her desk. Little silly, dreamy, happy, ignorant Fourteen! Always thinking that something great and wonderful and beautiful lay in the years ahead. Quite sure that the “mountain purple” could be reached. Quite sure that dreams always came true. Foolish Fourteen, who yet had known how to be happy.

“I’m envying you,” said Emily. “I wish I had never opened your letter, foolish little Fourteen. Go back to your shadowy past and don’t come again — mocking me. I’m going to have a white night because of you. I’m going to lie awake all night and pity myself.”

Yet already the footsteps of destiny were sound-on the stairs — though Emily thought they were only Cousin Jimmy's.

II

He had come to bring her a letter — a thin letter — and if Emily had not been too much absorbed in herself at fourteen she might have noticed that Cousin Jimmy's eyes were as bright as a cat's and that an air of ill-concealed excitement pervaded his whole being. Moreover that, when she had thanked him absently for the letter and gone back to her desk, he remained in the shadowy hall outside, watching her slyly through the half-open door. At first he thought she was not going to open the letter — she had flung it down indifferently and sat staring at it. Cousin Jimmy went nearly mad with impatience.

But after a few minutes more of absent musing Emily roused herself with a sigh and stretched out a hand for the letter.

"If I don't miss my guess, dear little Emily, you won't sigh when you read what's in that letter," thought Cousin Jimmy exultantly.

Emily looked at the return address in the upper corner, wondering what the Wareham Publishing Company were writing to her about. The big Warehams! The oldest and most important publishing house in America. A circular of some kind, probably. Then she found herself staring incredulously at the typewritten sheet — while Cousin Jimmy performed a noiseless dance on Aunt Elizabeth's braided rug out in the hall.

"I — don't — understand," gasped Emily.

DEAR MISS STARR: —

We take pleasure in advising you that our readers report favourably with regard to your story *The Moral of the Rose* and if mutually satisfactory arrangements can be made we shall be glad to add the book to our next season's lists. We shall also be interested in hearing of your plans with regard to future writing.

Very sincerely yours, *etc.*

"I don't understand—" said Emily again.

Cousin Jimmy could hold himself in no longer. He made a sound between a whoop and hurrah. Emily flew across the room and dragged him in.

“Cousin Jimmy, what does this mean? You must know something about it — how did the House of Wareham ever get my book?”

“Have they really accepted it?” demanded Cousin Jimmy.

“Yes. And I never sent it to them. I wouldn’t have supposed it was the least use — the Warehams. Am I dreaming?”

“No. I’ll tell you — don’t be mad now, Emily. You mind Elizabeth asked me to tidy up the garret a month ago. I was moving that old cardboard box you keep a lot of stuff in and the bottom fell out. Everything went — so — all over the garret. I gathered ‘em up — and your book manuscript was among ‘em. I happened to look at a page — and then I set down — and Elizabeth came up an hour later and found me still a-sitting there on my hams reading. I’d forgot everything. My, but she was mad! The garret not half done and dinner ready. But I didn’t mind what she said — I was thinking, ‘If that book made me forget everything like that there’s something in it. I’ll send it somewhere.’ And I didn’t know anywhere to send it but to the Warehams. I’d always heard of them. And I didn’t know how to send it — but I just stuffed it in an old cracker box and mailed it to them offhand.”

“Didn’t you even send stamps for its return?” gasped Emily, horrified.

“No, never thought of it. Maybe that’s why they took it. Maybe the other firms sent it back because you sent stamps.”

“Hardly.” Emily laughed and found herself crying.

“Emily, you ain’t mad at me, are you?”

“No — no — darling — I’m only so flabbergasted, as you say yourself, that I don’t know what to say or do. It’s all so — the Warehams!”

“I’ve been watching the mails ever since,” chuckled Cousin Jimmy. “Elizabeth has been thinking I’ve gone clear daft at last. If the story had come back I was going to smuggle it back to the garret — I wasn’t going to let you know. But when I saw that thin envelope — I remembered you

said once the thin envelopes always had good news — dear little Emily, don't cry!"

"I can't — help it — and oh, I'm sorry for what I called you, little Fourteen. You weren't silly — you were wise — you knew."

"It's gone to her head a little," said Cousin Jimmy to himself. "No wonder — after so many setbacks. But she'll soon be quite sensible again."

Chapter XXI

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I

Teddy and Ilse were coming home for a brief ten days in July. How was it, wondered Emily, that they always came together? That couldn't be just a coincidence. She dreaded the visit and wished it were over. It would be good to see Ilse again — somehow she could never feel a stranger with Ilse. No matter how long she was away, the moment she came back you found the old Ilse. But she did not want to see Teddy. Teddy who had forgotten her. Who had never written since he went away last. Teddy who was already famous, as a painter of lovely women. So famous and so successful that — Ilse wrote — he was going to give up magazine work. Emily felt a certain relief when she read that. She would no longer dread to open a magazine lest she see her own face — or soul — looking at her out of some illustration — with “Frederick Kent” scrawled in the corner, as if to say “know all men by these presents that this girl is mine.” Emily resented less the pictures which looked like her whole face than the ones in which only the eyes were hers. To be able to paint her eyes like that Teddy must know everything that was in her soul. The thought always filled her with fury and shame — and a sense of horrible helplessness. She would not — could not — tell Teddy to stop using her as a model. She had never stooped to acknowledge to him that she had noticed any resemblance to herself in his illustrations — she never would stoop.

And now he was coming home — might be home any time. If only she could go away — on any pretence — for a few weeks. Miss Royal was wanting her to go to New York for a visit. But it would never do to go away when Ilse was coming.

Well — Emily shook herself. What an idiot she was! Teddy was coming home, a dutiful son, to see his mother — and he would doubtless be glad enough to see old friends when their actual presence recalled them

to his memory; and why should there be anything difficult about it? She must get rid of this absurd self-consciousness. She would.

She was sitting at her open window. The night outside was like a dark, heavy, perfumed flower. An expectant night — a night when things intended to happen. Very still. Only the loveliest of muted sounds — the faintest whisper of trees, the airiest sigh of wind, the half-heard, half-felt moan of the sea.

“Oh, beauty!” whispered Emily, passionately, lifting her hands to the stars. “What would I have done without you all these years?”

Beauty of night — and perfume — and mystery. Her soul was filled with it. There was, just then, room for nothing else. She bent out, lifting her face to the jewelled sky — rapt, ecstatic.

Then she heard it. A soft, silvery signal in Lofty John’s bush — two higher notes and one long, low one — the old, old call that would once have sent her with flying feet to the shadows of the firs.

Emily sat as if turned to stone, her white face framed in the vines that clustered round her window. He was there — Teddy was there — in Lofty John’s bush — waiting for her — calling to her as of old. Expecting her!

Almost she had sprung to her feet — almost she had run downstairs and out to the shadows — the beautiful, perfumed shadows where he was waiting for her. But —

Was he only trying to see if he still had the old power over her?

He had gone away two years ago without even a written word of farewell. Would the Murray pride condone that? Would the Murray pride run to meet the man who had held her of so little account? The Murray pride would not. Emily’s young face took on lines of stubborn determination in the dim light. She would not go. Let him call as he might. “Whistle and I’ll come to you, my lad,” indeed! No more of that for Emily Byrd Starr. Teddy Kent need not imagine that he could come and go as went the years and find her meekly waiting to answer his lordly signal.

Again the call came — twice. He was there — so close to her. In a moment if she liked, she could be beside him — her hands in his — his eyes looking into hers — perhaps —

He had gone away without saying goodbye to her!

Emily rose deliberately and lighted her lamp. She sat down at her desk near the window, took up her pen and fell to writing — or a semblance of writing. Steadily she wrote — next day she found sheets covered with aimless repetitions of old poems learned in schooldays — and as she wrote she listened. Would the call come again? Once more? It did not. When she was quite sure it was not coming again she put out her light and lay down on her bed with her face in the pillow. Pride was quite satisfied. She had shown him she was not to be whistled off and on. Oh, how thankful she felt that she had been firm enough not to go. For which reason, no doubt, her pillow was wet with savage tears.

II

He came next night — with Ilse — in his new car. And there was handshaking and gaiety and laughter — oh, a great deal of laughter. Ilse was looking radiant in a big yellow hat trimmed with crimson roses. One of those preposterous hats only Ilse could get away with. How unlike the neglected, almost ragged Ilse of olden days. Yet just as lovable as ever. Nobody could help loving Ilse. Teddy was charming, too — with just the right amount of mingled interest and detachment an old resident coming back to childhood's home would naturally feel. Interested in everything and everybody. Oh, yes, indeed, hugely! Ilse tells me you're bringing out a book. Capital. What's it about? Must get a copy. Blair Water quite unchanged. Delightful to come back to a place where time seems to stand still.

Emily almost thought she must have dreamed the whistle in Lofty John's bush.

But she went for a drive to Priest Pond with him and Ilse — and made quite a sensation, for cars were still great novelties thereabouts. And they had a merry, delightful time — then and for the few remaining days of their visit. Ilse had meant to stay three weeks but found she could stay only five days. And Teddy, who seemed to be master of his own time,

decided to stay no longer, too. And they both came over to say goodbye to Emily and all went for a farewell moonlit spin — and laughed a great deal — and Ilse, with a hug, declared it was just like old times and Teddy agreed.

“If only Perry had been round,” he amended. “I’m sorry not to have seen old Perry. They tell me he is getting on like a house afire.”

Perry had gone to the Coast on business for his firm. Emily bragged a little about him and his success. Teddy Kent need not suppose he was the only one who was arriving.

“Are his manners any better than they used to be?” asked Ilse.

“His manners are good enough for us simple Prince Edward Islanders,” said Emily, nastily.

“Oh, well, I admit I never saw him pick his teeth in public,” conceded Ilse. “Do you know” — with a sly, sidelong glance at Teddy which Emily instantly noticed— “once I fancied myself quite in love with Perry Miller.”

“Lucky Perry!” said Teddy with what seemed a quiet smile of satisfied understanding.

Ilse did not kiss Emily goodbye, but she shook hands very cordially as did Teddy. Emily was thanking her stars, in genuine earnest this time, that she had not gone to Teddy when he whistled — if he ever had whistled. They drove gaily off down the lane. But when a few moments later Emily turned into New Moon there were flying footsteps behind her and she was enveloped in a silken embrace.

“Emily darling, goodbye. I love you as much as ever — but everything is so horribly changed — and we can never find the Islands of Enchantment again. I wish I hadn’t come home at all — but say you love me and always will. I couldn’t bear it if you didn’t.”

“Of course I’ll always love you, Ilse.”

They kissed lingeringly — almost sadly — among the faint, cold, sweet perfumes of night. Ilse went down the lane to where Teddy was purring and scintillating for her — or his car was — and Emily went into New Moon where her two old aunts and Cousin Jimmy were waiting for her.

“I wonder if Ilse and Teddy will ever be married,” said Aunt Laura.

“It’s time Ilse was settling down,” said Aunt Elizabeth.

“Poor Ilse,” said Cousin Jimmy inexplicably.

III

One late, lovely autumn day in November Emily walked home from the Blair Water postoffice with a letter from Ilse and a parcel. She was athrill with an intoxication of excitement that easily passed for happiness. The whole day had been a strangely, unreasonably delightful one of ripe sunshine on the sere hills, faint, grape-like bloom on the faraway woods and a soft, blue sky with little wisps of grey cloud like castoff veils. Emily had wakened in the morning from a dream of Teddy — the dear, friendly Teddy of the old days — and all day she had been haunted by an odd sense of his nearness. It seemed as if his footstep sounded at her side and as if she might come upon him suddenly when she rounded a spruce-fringed curve in the red road or went down into some sunny hollow where the ferns were thick and golden — find him smiling at her with no shadow of change between them, the years of exile and alienation forgotten. She had not really thought much about him for a long while. The summer and autumn had been busy — she was hard at work on a new story — Ilse’s letters had been few and scrappy. Why this sudden, irrational sense of his nearness? When she got Ilse’s fat letter she was quite sure there was some news of Teddy in it.

But it was the little parcel that was responsible for her excitement. It was stamped with the sign manual of the House of Wareham and Emily knew what it must hold. Her book — her Moral of the Rose.

She hurried home by the cross-lots road — the little old road over which the vagabond wandered and the lover went to his lady and children to joy and tired men home — the road that linked up eventually with the pasture field by the Blair Water and the Yesterday Road. Once in the grey-boughed solitude of the Yesterday Road Emily sat down in a bay of brown bracken and opened her parcel.

There lay her book. Her book, spleet-new from the publishers. It was a proud, wonderful, thrilling moment. The crest of the Alpine Path at last? Emily lifted her shining eyes to the deep blue November sky and saw peak after peak of sunlit azure still towering beyond. Always new heights of aspiration. One could never reach the top really. But what a moment when one reached a plateau and outlook like this! What a reward for the long years of toil and endeavour and disappointment and discouragement.

But oh, for her unborn Seller of Dreams!

IV

The excitement at New Moon that afternoon almost equalled Emily's own. Cousin Jimmy gave up unblushingly his plan of finishing the ploughing of the hill field to sit at home and gloat over the book. Aunt Laura cried — of course — and Aunt Elizabeth looked indifferent, merely remarking in a tone of surprise that it was bound like a real book. Evidently Aunt Elizabeth had been expecting paper covers. But she made some rather foolish mistakes in her quilt patches that afternoon and she did not once ask Jimmy why he wasn't ploughing. And when some callers dropped in later on *The Moral of the Rose* was mysteriously on the parlour table, though it had been up on Emily's desk when Aunt Elizabeth saw the automobile drive into the yard. Aunt Elizabeth never mentioned it and neither of the callers noticed it. When they went away Aunt Elizabeth said witheringly that John Angus had less sense than ever he had and that for her part, if she were Cousin Margaret, she would not wear clothes twenty years too young for her.

"An old ewe tricked out like a lamb," said Aunt Elizabeth contemptuously.

If they had done what was expected of them in regard to *The Moral of the Rose* Aunt Elizabeth would probably have said that John Angus had always been a jovial, goodnatured sort of creature and that it was really wonderful how Cousin Margaret had held her own.

V

In all the excitement Emily had — not exactly forgotten Ilse's letter, but wanted to wait until things had settled down a little before reading it. At twilight she went to her room and sat down in the fading light. The wind had changed at sunset and the evening was cold and edged. What Jimmy called a "skiff" of snow had fallen suddenly whitening the world and the withered, unlovely garden. But the storm-cloud had passed and the sky was clear and yellow over the white hills and dark firs. The odd perfume that Ilse always affected floated out of her letter when it was opened. Emily had always vaguely disliked it. But then her taste differed from Ilse's in the matter of perfumes as in so many others. Ilse liked the exotic, oriental, provocative odors. To the day of her death Emily will never catch a whiff of that perfume without turning cold and sick.

"Exactly one thousand times have I planned to write to you," wrote Ilse, "but when one is revolving rapidly on the wheel of things there doesn't seem to be an opportunity for anything one really wants to do. All these months I've been so rushed that I've felt precisely like a cat just one jump ahead of a dog. If I stopped for a breath it would catch me.

"But the spirit moves me to utter a few yowls tonight. I've something to tell you. And your darling letter came to-day — so I will write tonight, and let the dog eat me if he will.

"I'm glad you're keeping well and good-humoured. There are times I envy you fiercely, Emily — your New Moon quiet and peace and leisure — your intense absorption and satisfaction in your work — your singleness of purpose. 'If thine eye be single thy whole body shall be full of light.' That's either in the Bible or Shakespeare, but wherever it is, it is true. I remember you told me once you envied me my opportunities of travel. Emily, old dear, rushing about from one place to another isn't travelling. If you were like your foolish Ilse, chasing a score of butterfly projects and ambitions you wouldn't be so happy. You always remind me — always did remind me, even in our old chummy days — of somebody's line—'her soul was like a star and dwelt apart.'

“Well, when one can’t get the thing one really wants, one can’t help chasing after anything that might make a decent substitute. I know you’ve always thought me an unmitigated donkey because I cared so much about Perry Miller. I knew you never quite understood. You couldn’t. You never really cared a hoot about any he-creature, did you, Emily? So you thought me an idiot. I daresay I was. But I’m going to be sensible in future, I’m going to marry Teddy Kent.”

VI

“There — it’s out!”

Emily laid down — or dropped — the letter for a moment. She did not feel either pain or surprise — one does not feel either, I am told, when a bullet strikes the heart. It seemed to her that she had always known this was coming — always. At least, since the night of Mrs. Chidlaw’s dinner-dance. And yet, now that it had really happened, it seemed to her that she was suffering everything of death but its merciful dying. In the dim, twilight mirror before her she saw her own face. Had Emily-in-the-glass ever looked like that before? But her room was just the same. It seemed indecent that it should be the same. After a few moments — or years — Emily picked up the letter and read on.

“I’m not in love with Teddy, of course. But he’s just got to be a habit with me. I can’t do without him — and I either have to do without him or marry him. He won’t stand my hesitation any longer. Besides, he’s going to be very famous. I shall enjoy being the wife of a famous man. Also, he will have the simoleons, too. Not that I’m altogether mercenary, Emily. I said ‘No’ to a millionaire last week. A nice fellow, too — but with a face like a goodnatured weasel’s, if there can be such a thing. And he cried when I told him I wouldn’t marry him. Oh, it was ghastly.

“Yes, it’s mostly ambition, I grant you. And a certain odd kind of weariness and impatience with my life as it has been these last few years. Everything seems squeezed dry. But I’m really very fond of Teddy — always was. He’s nice and companionable — and our taste in jokes is

exactly the same. And he never bores me. I have no use for people who bore me. Of course he's too goodlooking for a man — he'll always be a target for the head-hunters. But since I don't care too much for him I shan't be tortured by jealousy. In life's morning march when my bosom was young I could have fried in boiling oil anyone — except you — at whom Perry Miller cast a sheep's eye.

“I've thought for years and known for weeks that this was coming some day. But I've been staving Teddy off — I wouldn't let him say the words that would really bind us. I don't know whether I'd ever have scraped up the courage to let him say them, but destiny took a hand. We were out for a spin two weeks ago one evening and a most unseasonable and malignant thunderstorm came up. We had a dreadful time getting back — there was no place on that bare, lonely hill-road we could stop — the rain fell in torrents, the thunder crashed, the lightning flashed. It was unendurable and we didn't endure it. We just tore through it and cussed. Then it cleared off as suddenly as it had began — and my nerves went to pieces — fancy! I have nerves now — and I began to cry like a frightened, foolish baby. And Teddy's arms were about me and he was saying I must marry him — and let him take care of me. I suppose I said I would because it's quite clear he thinks we are engaged. He has given me a blue Chow pup and a sapphire ring — a sapphire he picked up in Europe somewhere — an historic jewel for which a murder was once committed, I believe.

“I think it will be rather nice to be taken care of. Properly. I never was, you know. Dad had no use for me until you found out the truth about Mother — what a witch you were! And after that he adored and spoiled me. But he didn't take any more real care of me than before.

“We are to be married next June. Dad will be pleased, I fancy. Teddy was always the white-haired boy with him. Besides, I think he was beginning to be a little scared I was never going to hook a husband. Dad plumes himself on being a radical but at heart he out-Victorians the Victorians.

“And of course you must be my bridesmaid. Oh, Emily dear, how I wish I could see you tonight — talk with you — one of our old-time spiels — walk with you over the Delectable Mountain and along the ferny, frosted woodside, hang about that old garden by the sea where red poppies blow — all our old familiar places. I wish — I think I really do wish — I was ragged, barefooted, wild Ilse Burnley again. Life is pleasant still — oh, I don’t say it isn’t. Very pleasant — in spots — like the curate’s immortal egg. But the ‘first fine careless rapture’ — the thrush may recapture it but we never. Emily, old pal, would you turn the clock back if you could?”

VII

Emily read the letter over three times. Then she sat for a very long time at her window, looking blindly out on the blanched, dim world lying under the terrible mockery of a sky full of stars. The wind around the eaves was full of ghostly voices. Bits here and there in Ilse’s letter turned and twisted and vanished in her consciousness like little venomous snakes, each with a mortal sting.

“Your singleness of purpose” — “you never cared for anyone” — “of course you must be my bridesmaid” — “I’m really very fond of Teddy” — “my hesitation.”

Could any girl really “hesitate” over accepting Teddy Kent? Emily heard a little note of bitter laughter. Was it something in herself that laughed — or that vanishing spectre of Teddy that had haunted her all day — or an old smothered persistent hope that laughed before it died at last?

And at that very moment probably Ilse and Teddy were together.

“If I had gone — that night — last summer — when he called — would it have made any difference?” was the question that asked itself over and over again maddeningly.

“I wish I could hate Ilse. It would make it easier,” she thought drearily. “If she loved Teddy I think I could hate her. Somehow, it isn’t so dreadful when she doesn’t. It ought to be more dreadful. It’s very strange that I can

bear the thought of his loving her when I couldn't bear the thought of her loving him."

A great weariness suddenly possessed her. For the first time in her life death seemed a friend. It was very late when she finally went to bed. Towards morning she slept a little. But wakened stupidly at dawn. What was it she had heard?

She remembered.

She got up and dressed — as she must get up and dress every morning to come for endless years.

"Well," she said aloud to Emily-in-the-glass. "I've spilled my cup of life's wine on the ground — somehow. And she will give me no more. So I must go thirsty. Would — would it have been different if I had gone to him that night he called. If I only knew!" She thought she could see Dean's ironical, compassionate eyes.

Suddenly she laughed.

"In plain English — as Ilse would say — what a devilish mess I've made of things!"

Chapter XXII

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I

Life, of course, went on in spite of its dreadfulness. The routine of existence doesn't stop because one is miserable. There were even some moments that were not altogether bad. Emily again measured her strength with pain and again conquered. With the Murray pride and the Starr reserve at her elbow she wrote Ilse a letter of good wishes with which nobody could have found fault. If that were only all she had to do! If only people wouldn't keep on talking to her about Ilse and Teddy.

The engagement was announced in the Montreal papers and then in the Island ones.

"Yes, they're engaged and heaven help every one concerned," said Dr. Burnley. But he could not hide his satisfaction in it.

"Thought at one time you and Teddy were going to make a match of it," he said jovially to Emily — who smiled gallantly and said something about the unexpected always happening.

"Anyhow we'll have a wedding that is a wedding," declared the doctor. "We haven't had a wedding in the clan for God knows how long. I thought they'd forgotten how. I'll show 'em. Ilse writes me you're to be bridesmaid. And I'll be wanting you to oversee things generally. Can't trust a wedding to a housekeeper."

"Anything I can do, of course," said Emily automatically. Nobody should suspect what she felt not if she died for it. She would even be bridesmaid.

If it had not been for that prospect ahead she thought she could have got through the winter not unhappily. For *The Moral of the Rose* was a success from the start. The first edition exhausted in ten days — three large editions in two weeks — five in eight weeks. Exaggerated reports of the pecuniary returns were circulated everywhere. For the first time Uncle

Wallace looked at her with respect and Aunt Addie wished secretly that Andrew hadn't been consoled quite so soon. Old Cousin Charlotte, of Derry Pond, heard of the many editions and opined that Emily must be very busy if she had to put all the books together and sew them herself. The Shrewsbury people were furious because they imagined they were in the book. Every family believed they were the Applegaths.

"You were right not to come to New York," wrote Miss Royal. "You could never have written *The Moral of the Rose* here. Wild roses won't grow in city streets. And your story is like a wild rose, dear, all sweetness and unexpectedness with sly little thorns of wit and satire. It has power, delicacy, understanding. It's not just storytelling. There's some magicry in it. Emily Byrd Starr, where do you get your uncanny understanding of human nature — you infant?"

Dean wrote too—"good creative work, Emily. Your characters are natural and human and delightful. And I like the glowing spirit of youth that pervades the book."

II

"I had hoped to learn something from the reviews, but they are all too contradictory," said Emily. "What one reviewer pronounces the book's greatest merit another condemns as its worst fault. Listen to these—'Miss Starr never succeeds in making her characters convincing' and 'One fancies that some of the author's characters must have been copied from real life. They are so absolutely true to nature that they could hardly be the work of imagination.'"

"I told you people would recognize old Douglas Courcy," interjected Aunt Elizabeth.

"'A very tiresome book'—'a very delightful book'—'very undistinguished fiction' and 'on every page the work of the finished artist is apparent'—'a book of cheap and weak romanticism' and 'a classic quality in the book'—'a unique story of a rare order of literary workmanship' and 'a silly, worthless, colourless and desultory story'—'an

ephemeral sort of affair' and a book destined to live.' What is one to believe?"

"I would just believe only the favourable ones," said Aunt Laura. Emily sighed.

"My tendency is just the other way. I can't help believing the unfavourable ones are true and that the favourable ones were written by morons. But I don't really mind much what they say about the book. It's only when they criticize my heroine that I'm hurt and furious, I saw red over these reviews of darling Peggy. 'A girl of extraordinary stupidity'—'the heroine has too marked a self-consciousness of her mission.'"

"I did think she was a bit of a flirt," conceded Cousin Jimmy.

"'A thin, sweetish heroine'—'the heroine is something of a bore'—'queer but altogether too queer.'"

"I told you she shouldn't have had green eyes," groaned Cousin Jimmy. "A heroine should always have blue eyes."

"Oh, but listen to this," cried Emily gaily—"Peg Applegath is simply irresistible'—'Peg is a remarkably vivid personality'—'a fascinating heroine'—'Peg is too delightful not to be credited while we are under her spell'—'one of the immortal girls of literature.' What about green eyes now, Cousin Jimmy?"

Cousin Jimmy shook his head. He was not convinced.

"Here's a review for you," twinkled Emily. "'A psychological problem with roots that stretch far into subliminal depths which would give the book weight and value if it were grappled with sincerely.'"

"I know the meaning of all those words by themselves except two, but put together they don't make any sense," protested Cousin Jimmy ruefully.

"'Beneath the elusiveness and atmospheric charm is a wonderful firmness of character delineation.'"

"I don't quite get that either," confessed Cousin Jimmy, "But it sounds kind of favourable."

"'A conventional and commonplace book.'"

“What does ‘conventional’ mean!” asked Aunt Elizabeth, who would not have been posed by transubstantiation or Gnosticism.

“‘Beautifully written and full of sparkling humour. Miss Starr is a real artist in literature.’”

“Oh, now, there’s a reviewer with some sense,” purred Cousin Jimmy.

“‘The general impression left by the book is that it might be much worse.’”

“That reviewer was trying to be smart, I suppose,” said Aunt Elizabeth, apparently quite oblivious of the fact that she had said the very same thing herself.

“‘This book lacks spontaneity. It is saccharine and melodramatic, mawkish and naive.’”

“I know I fell into the well,” said Cousin Jimmy pitifully. “Is that why I can’t make head or tail out of that?”

“Here’s one you can understand — perhaps. ‘Miss Starr must have invented the Applegath orchard as well as her green-eyed heroine. There are no orchards in Prince Edward Island. They are killed by the harsh, salt winds that blow across that narrow sandy strip.’”

“Read that again please, Emily.”

Emily complied. Cousin Jimmy scratched his head, then shook it. “Do they let that kind run loose over there?”

“‘The story is a charming one, charmingly told. The characters are skilfully depicted, the dialogue deftly handled, the descriptive passages surprisingly effective. The quiet humour is simply delightful.’”

“I hope this will not make you vain, Emily,” said Aunt Elizabeth warningly.

“If it does, here’s the antidote. ‘This feeble, pretentious and sentimental story — if story it can be called — is full of banalities and trivialities. A mass of disconnected episodes and scraps of conversation, intermingled with long periods of reflection and self-examination.’”

“I wonder if the creature who wrote that knew the meaning of the words himself,” said Aunt Laura.

“‘The scene of this story is laid in Prince Edward Island, a detached portion of land off the coast of Newfoundland.’”

“Don’t Yankees ever study geography?” snorted exasperated Cousin Jimmy.

“‘A story that will not corrupt its readers.’”

“There’s a real compliment now,” said Aunt Elizabeth.

Cousin Jimmy looked doubtful. It sounded all right but — of course dear little Emily’s book couldn’t corrupt anyone but —

“‘To review a book of this kind is like attempting to dissect a butterfly’s wing or strip a rose of its petals to discover the secret of its fragrance.’”

“Too highfalutin,” sniffed Aunt Elizabeth.

“‘Honeyed sentimentality which the author evidently supposes is poetic fancy.’”

“Wouldn’t I like to smack his gob,” said Cousin Jimmy feelingly.

“‘Harmless and easy reading.’”

“I don’t know why, but I don’t quite like the sound of that,” commented Aunt Laura.

“‘This story will keep a kindly smile upon your lips and in your heart as well.’”

“Come now, that’s English. I can understand that,” beamed Cousin Jimmy.

“‘We began but found it impossible to finish this crude and tiresome book.’”

“Well, all I can say,” said Cousin Jimmy indignantly, “is that the oftener I read *The Moral of the Rose* the better I like it. Why, I was reading it for the fourth time yesterday and I was so interested I clean forgot all about dinner.”

Emily smiled. It was better to have won her standing with the New Moon folks than with the world. What mattered it what any reviewer said when Aunt Elizabeth remarked with an air of uttering the final judgment:

“Well, I never could have believed that a pack of lies could sound as much like the real truth as that book does.”

Chapter XXIII

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I

Emily, coming home one January night from an evening call, decided to use the cross-lots road that skirted the Tansy Patch. It had been a winter almost without snow and the ground under her feet was bare and hard. She seemed the only living creature abroad in the night and she walked slowly, savouring the fine, grim, eerie charm of flowerless meadows and silent woods, of the moon breaking suddenly out of black clouds over the lowlands of pointed firs; and trying, more or less successfully, not to think of the letter that had come from Ilse that day — one of Ilse's gay, incoherent letters, where one fact stood out barely. The wedding-day was set — the fifteenth of June.

“I want you to wear harebell blue gauze over ivory taffeta for your bridesmaid dress, darling. How your black silk hair will shine over it!

“My ‘bridal robe’ is going to be of ivory velvet and old Great-aunt Edith in Scotland is sending me out her veil of rose-point and Great-aunt Theresa in the same historic land is sending me a train of silver oriental embroidery that her husband once brought home from Constantinople. I'll veil it with tulle. Won't I be a dazzling creature? I don't think the dear old souls knew I existed till Dad wrote them about my ‘forthcoming nuptials.’ Dad is far more excited over everything than I am.

“Teddy and I are going to spend our honeymoon in old inns in out-of-the-way European corners — places where nobody else wants to go — Vallambroso and so on. That line of Milton's always intrigued me—‘thick as autumnal leaves that strew the brooks in Vallambroso.’ When you take it away from its horrible context it is a picture of sheer delight.

“I'll be home in May for my last preparations and Teddy will come the first of June to spend a little while with his mother. How is she taking it, Emily? Have you any idea? I can't get anything out of Teddy, so I suppose

she doesn't like it. She always hated me, I know. But then she seemed to hate everyone — with a special venom for you. I won't be particularly fortunate in my mother-in-law. I'll always have an eerie feeling that she's secretly heaping maledictions on my head. However, Teddy is nice enough to make up for her. He really is. I'd no idea how nice he could be and I'm growing fonder of him every day. Honestly. When I look at him and realize how handsome and charming he is I can't understand why I'm not madly in love with him. But it's really much more comfortable not to be. If I were I'd be heartbroken every time we quarrelled. We're always quarrelling — you know me of old. We always will. We'll spoil every wonderful moment with a quarrel. But life won't be dull."

Emily shivered. Her own life was looking very bleak and starved just then. Oh, how — nice — it would be when the wedding was over — the wedding where she should be bride — yes, should — and was to be bridesmaid — and people done talking of it. "Harebell blue over ivory taffeta!" Sackcloth and ashes, rather.

II

"Emily. Emily Starr."

Emily almost jumped. She had not seen Mrs. Kent in the gloom until they were face to face — at the little side path that led up to the Tansy Patch. She was standing there, bareheaded in the chill night, with outstretched hand.

"Emily, I want to have a talk with you. I saw you go past here at sunset and I've been watching for you ever since. Come up to the house."

Emily would much rather have refused. Yet she turned and silently climbed the steep, root-ribbed path, with Mrs. Kent flitting before her like a little dead leaf borne along by the wind. Through the ragged old garden where nothing ever grew but tansy, and into the little house that was as shabby as it had always been. People said Teddy Kent might fix up his mother's house a bit if he were making all the money folks said he was.

But Emily knew that Mrs. Kent would not let him — would not have anything changed.

She looked around the little place curiously. She had not been in it for many years — not since the long-ago days when she and Ilse and Teddy had been children there. It seemed quite unchanged. As of yore, the house seemed to be afraid of laughter. Someone always seemed to be praying in it. It had an atmosphere of prayer. And the old willow to the west was still tap-tapping on the window with ghostly fingertips. On the mantel was a recent photograph of Teddy — a good one. He seemed on the point of speaking — of saying something triumphant — exultant.

“Emily, I’ve found the rainbow gold. Fame — and love.”

She turned her back on it and sat down. Mrs. Kent sat opposite — a faded, shrinking little figure with the long scar slanting palely across her bitter mouth and lined face — the face that must have been very pretty once. She was looking intently, searchingly at Emily; but, as Emily instantly realized, the old smouldering hatred had gone out of her eyes — her tired eyes that must once have been young and eager and laughter-lit. She leaned forward and touched Emily’s arm with her slim, clawlike fingers.

“You know that Teddy is going to marry Ilse Burnley,” she said.

“Yes.”

“What do you feel about it?”

Emily moved impatiently.

“What do my feelings matter, Mrs. Kent? Teddy loves Ilse. She is a beautiful, brilliant, warmhearted girl. I am sure they will be very happy.”

“Do you still love him?”

Emily wondered why she did not feel resentment. But Mrs. Kent was not to be judged by ordinary rules. And here was a fine chance to save her face by a cool little lie — just a few indifferent words. “Not any longer, Mrs. Kent. Oh, I know I once imagined I did — imagining things like that is one of my weaknesses unfortunately. But I find I don’t care at all.”

Why couldn’t she say them? Well, she couldn’t, that was all. She could never, in any words, deny her love for Teddy. It was so much a part of

herself that it had a divine right to truth. And was there not, too, a secret relief in feeling that here at least was one person with whom she could be herself — before whom she need not pretend or hide?

“I don’t think you have any right to ask that question, Mrs. Kent. But — I do.”

Mrs. Kent laughed silently.

“I used to hate you. I don’t hate you any longer. We are one now, you and I. We love him. And he has forgotten us — he cares nothing for us — he has gone to her.”

“He does care for you, Mrs. Kent. He always did. Surely you can understand that there is more than one kind of love. And I hope — you are not going to hate Ilse because Teddy loves her.”

“No, I don’t hate her. She is more beautiful than you, but there is no mystery about her. She will never possess him wholly as you would have. It’s quite different. But I want to know this — are you unhappy because of this?”

“No. Only for a few minutes now and then. Generally I am too much interested in my work to brood morbidly on what can’t be mine.”

Mrs. Kent had listened thirstily. “Yes — yes — exactly. I thought so. The Murrays are so sensible. Some day — some day — you’ll be glad this has happened — glad that Teddy didn’t care for you. Don’t you think you will?”

“Perhaps.”

“Oh, I am sure of it. It’s so much better for you. Oh, you don’t know the suffering and wretchedness you will be spared. It’s madness to love anything too much. God is jealous. If you married Teddy he would break your heart — they always do. It is best — you will live to feel it was best.”

Tap — tap — tap went the old willow.

“Need we talk of this any more, Mrs. Kent?”

“Do you remember that night I found you and Teddy in the graveyard?” asked Mrs. Kent, apparently deaf to Emily’s question.

“Yes.” Emily found herself remembering it very vividly — that strange wonderful night when Teddy had saved her from mad Mr. Morrison and

said such sweet, unforgettable things to her.

“Oh, how I hated you that night!” exclaimed Mrs. Kent. “But I shouldn’t have said those things to you. All my life I’ve been saying things I shouldn’t. Once I said a terrible thing — such a terrible thing. I’ve never been able to get the echo of it out of my ears. And do you remember what you said to me? That was why I let Teddy go away from me. It was your doing. If he hadn’t gone you mightn’t have lost him. Are you sorry you spoke so?”

“No. If anything I said helped to clear the way for him I’m glad — glad.”

“You would do it over again?”

“I would.”

“And don’t you hate Ilse bitterly? She has taken what you wanted. You must hate her.”

“I do not. I love Ilse dearly as I always did. She has taken nothing from me that was ever mine.”

“I don’t understand it — I don’t understand it,” half whispered Mrs. Kent. “My love isn’t like that. Perhaps that is why it has always made me so unhappy. No, I don’t hate you any longer. But oh, I did hate you. I knew Teddy cared more for you than he did for me. Didn’t you and he talk about me — criticize me?”

“Never.”

“I thought you did. People were always doing that — always.”

Suddenly Mrs. Kent struck her tiny hands together violently.

“Why didn’t you tell me you didn’t love him any longer? Why didn’t you — even if it was a lie? That was what I wanted to hear. I could have believed you. The Murrays never lie.”

“Oh, what does it matter?” cried tortured Emily again. “My love means nothing to him now. He is Ilse’s. You need not be jealous of me any longer, Mrs. Kent.”

“I’m not — I’m not — it isn’t that.” Mrs. Kent looked at her oddly. “Oh, if I only dared — but no — but no, it’s too late. It would be no use now. I don’t think I know what I’m saying. Only — Emily — will you

come to see me sometimes? It's lonely here — very lonely — so much worse now when he belongs to Ilse. His picture came last Wednesday — no, Thursday. There is so little to distinguish the days here. I put it up there, but it makes things worse. He was thinking of her in it — can't you tell by his eyes he was thinking of the woman he loves? I am of no importance to him now. I am of no importance to anybody."

"If I come to see you — you mustn't talk of him — or of them," said Emily, pittingly.

"I won't. Oh, I won't. Though that won't prevent us from thinking of them, will it? You'll sit there — and I'll sit here — and we'll talk of the weather and think of him. How amusing! But — when you've really forgotten him — when you really don't care any more — you'll tell me, won't you?"

Emily nodded and rose to go. She could not endure this any longer. "And if there is ever anything I can do for you, Mrs. Kent—"

"I want rest — rest," said Mrs. Kent, laughing wildly. "Can you find that for me? Don't you know I'm a ghost, Emily? I died years ago. I walk in the dark."

As the door closed behind her Emily heard Mrs. Kent beginning to cry terribly. With a sigh of relief she turned to the crisp open spaces of the wind and the night, the shadows and the frosty moon. Ah, one could breathe here.

Chapter XXIV

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I

Ilse came in May — a gay, laughing Ilse. Almost too gay and laughing, Emily thought. Ilse had always been a merry, irresponsible creature; but not quite so unceasingly so as now. She never had a serious mood, apparently. She made a jest of everything, even her marriage. Aunt Elizabeth and Aunt Laura were quite shocked at her. A girl who was so soon to assume the responsibilities of wedded life should be more thoughtful and sober. Ilse told Emily they were mid-Victorian screams. She chatted ceaselessly when she and Emily were together, but never talked to her, despite the desire expressed in her letters for old-time spiels. Perhaps she was not quite all to blame for this. Emily, in spite of her determination to be exactly the same as of yore, could not help a certain restraint and reserve, born of her secret pain and her fierce determination to hide it. Ilse felt the restraint, though wholly unsuspecting of the cause. Emily was just naturally growing a little bit New Moonish, that was all, living there alone with those dear old antediluvians.

“When Teddy and I come back and set up house in Montreal you must spend every winter with us, darling. New Moon is a dear place in summer, but in winter you must be absolutely buried alive.”

Emily made no promises. She did not see herself as a guest in Teddy’s home. Every night she told herself she could not possibly endure tomorrow. But when tomorrow came it was livable. It was even possible to talk dress and details calmly with Ilse. The harebell blue dress became a reality and Emily tried it on two nights before Teddy was expected home. The wedding was only two weeks away now.

“You look like a dream in it, Emily,” said Ilse, stretched out on Emily’s bed with the grace and abandon of a cat — Teddy’s sapphire blotting her finger darkly. “You’ll make all my velvet and lace gorgeousness look

obvious and crude. Did I tell you Teddy is bringing Lorne Halsey with him for best man? I'm positively thrilled — the great Halsey. His mother has been so ill he didn't think he could come. But the obliging old lady has suddenly recovered and he's actually coming. His new book is a wow. Everybody in Montreal was raving over it and he's the most interesting and improbable creature. Wouldn't it be wonderful if you and he were to fall in love with each other, Emily?"

"Don't go matchmaking for me, Ilse," said Emily with a faint smile, as she took off the harebell dress. "I feel in my bones that I shall achieve old-maidhood, which is an entirely different thing from having old-maidhood thrust upon you."

"To be sure, he looks like a gargoyle," said Ilse meditatively. "If it hadn't been for that I think I might have married him myself. I'm almost sure I could have. His way of making love was to ask me my opinion about things. That was agreeable. But I had a hunch that if we were married he would stop asking for my opinion. That would not be agreeable. Besides, nobody could ever tell what he really thought. He might be looking as though he adored you and thinking he saw crow's-feet around your eyes. By the way, isn't Teddy the most beautiful thing?"

"He was always a nicelooking boy."

"A nicelooking boy," mimicked Ilse. "Emily Starr, if you ever do marry I hope your husband will chain you in the dog-kennel. I'll be calling you Aunt Emily in a minute. Why, there's nobody in Montreal who can hold a candle to him. It's his looks I love really — not him. Sometimes he bores me — really. Although I was so sure he wouldn't. He never did before we were engaged. I have a premonition that some day I'll throw the teapot at him. Isn't it a pity we can't have two husbands? One to look at and one to talk to. But Teddy and I will be by way of being a stunning couple, won't we, honey? He so dark — I so fair. Ideal. I've always wished I was 'a dark ladye' — like you — but when I said so to Teddy he just laughed and quoted the old verse,

‘If the bards of old the truth have told
The sirens have raven hair.
But over the earth since art had birth,
They paint the angels fair.’

That’s the nearest Teddy will ever get to calling me an angel. Luckily. For when all’s said and done, Emily, I’d rather — are you sure the door is shut so that Aunt Laura won’t drop dead? — I’d much rather be a siren than an angel. Wouldn’t you?”

“Let’s check up the invitations now and make sure we haven’t left anybody out,” was Emily’s response to this riot of words.

“Isn’t it terrible to belong to a clan like ours?” said Ilse peevishly. “There’s such a ghastly lot of old frumps and bores that have to be among those present. I hope some day I’ll get where there are no relations. I wish the whole damn affair was over. You’re sure you addressed a bid to Perry, aren’t you?”

“Yes.”

“I wonder if he’ll come? I hope he will. What a goose I was ever to fancy I cared so much for him! I used to hope — all sorts of things, in spite of the fact I knew he was crazy about you. But I never hoped after Mrs. Chidlaw’s dinner-dance. Do you remember it, Emily?”

Yes, Emily remembered that.

“Till then I’d always hoped a little — that some day when he realized he couldn’t have you — I’d catch his heart on the rebound — wasn’t that the Victorian phrase? I thought he’d be at the Chidlaws’ — I knew he had been invited. And I asked Teddy if Perry were coming. Teddy looked right into my eyes meaningly and said, ‘Perry will not be here. He’s working on the case he has to appear in tomorrow. Perry’s goal is ambition. He has no time for love.’

“I knew he was trying to warn me — and I knew it was no use to go on hoping — anything. So I gave up definitely. Well, it’s turned out all right. Isn’t it charming how things do turn out so beautifully? Makes one quite

believe in an overruling Providence. Isn't it nice to be able to blame everything on God?"

Emily hardly heard Ilse as she mechanically hung up the blue dress in her closet and slipped into a little green sport suit. So that was what Teddy had said to Ilse that night years ago when she knew he had uttered the word "love." And she had been so chilly to him because of it. Well, not likely it mattered. No doubt he had only been warning Ilse because he wanted her to turn her maiden thoughts from Perry and concentrate them on himself. She felt relieved when Ilse finally went home. Ilse's light, continual chatter rather got on her nerves — though she was ashamed to admit it. But then her nerves were on edge under this long-drawn-out torture. Two weeks more of it — and then, thank God, at least peace.

II

She went up to the Tansy Patch in the dusk to take back a book Mrs. Kent had lent her the night before. The visit must be made before Teddy came home. She had been up to the Tansy Patch several times since that first evening and an odd sort of friendship had sprung up between her and Mrs. Kent. They lent each other books and talked of everything except the one thing that mattered most to them. The book Emily was returning was an old copy of *The South African Farm*. Emily had expressed a wish to read it and Mrs. Kent had gone upstairs and presently came down with it — her white face a little whiter and the scar burning redly across it as always when she was deeply moved.

"Here is the book you want," she said. "I had it in a box upstairs."

Emily finished reading the book before she went to sleep. She was not sleeping well now and the nights were long. The book had a musty, unaired odour — evidently the box Mrs. Kent spoke of had not been opened for a long time. And in it Emily found a thin letter, unstamped, addressed to Mrs. David Kent.

The curious thing about the letter was that it was, apparently, unopened. Well, letters often re-sealed themselves like that, if placed

under pressure, when the flap had pulled open untorn in the first opening. Not likely it was of much significance. But of course she would mention it when she took the book back.

“Did you know there was a letter in this book, Mrs. Kent?”

“A letter. Did you say a letter?”

“Yes. Addressed to you.”

Emily held the letter out to Mrs. Kent, whose face became ghastly as she looked at the handwriting.

“You found that — in that book?” she whispered. “In that book that hasn’t been opened for over twenty-five years? Do you know — who wrote this letter? My — husband wrote it — and I have never read it — never known of it.”

Emily felt herself in the presence of some tragedy — the secret torture of Mrs. Kent’s life, perhaps.

“I will go away — so that you can read it alone,” she said gently and went out, leaving Mrs. Kent standing in the shadowy little room, holding the letter in her hand — as one might hold a snake.

III

“I sent for you tonight because there is something I must tell you,” said Mrs. Kent.

She was sitting, a tiny, erect, determined creature in the armchair by the window in the harsh light of a cold sunset. It was June but it was cold. The sky was hard and autumnal. Emily, walking up the cross-lots path had shivered and wished herself at home. But Mrs. Kent’s note had been urgent — almost peremptory. Why in the world did she want her! Surely, it could not be anything in connection with Teddy. And yet what else could make Mrs. Kent send for her in this fashion?

The moment she saw Mrs. Kent she was conscious of a curious change in her — a change hard to define. She was as frail, as pitiful as ever. There seemed even a certain defiant light in her eyes. But for the first time since she had known Mrs. Kent Emily did not feel that she was in the presence

of an unhappy woman. There was peace here — a strange, sorrowful, long-unknown peace. The tortured soul was — at last — off the rack.

“I have been dead — and in hell — but now I am alive again,” said Mrs. Kent. “It’s you who have done this — you found that letter. And so there is something I must tell you. It will make you hate me. And I shall be sorry for that now. But it must be told.”

Emily felt a sudden distaste for hearing whatever it was Mrs. Kent had to tell. It had — must have — something to do with Teddy. And she did not want to hear anything — anything — about Teddy now — Teddy who would be Ilse’s husband in two weeks.

“Don’t you think — perhaps — it would be better not to tell me?”

“It must be told. I have committed a wrong and I must confess it. I cannot undo it — I suppose it is too late to undo it — but it must be told. But there are other things that must be told first. Things I’ve never spoken of — things that have been torturing me until I’ve screamed out loud at night sometimes with the anguish of them. Oh, you will never forgive me — but I think you will be a little sorry for me.”

“I’ve always felt sorry for you, Mrs. Kent.”

“I think you did — yes, I think you did. But you couldn’t realize it all. Emily, I wasn’t like this when I was a girl. I was — like other people then. And I was pretty — indeed I was. When David Kent came and made me love him I was pretty. And he loved me — then — and he always loved me. He says so in this letter.”

She plucked it from the bosom of her dress and kissed it almost savagely.

“I can’t let you see it, Emily. No eyes but mine must ever see it. But I’ll tell you what is in it. Oh, you can’t know — you can’t understand how much I loved him, Emily. You think you love Teddy. But you don’t — you can’t love him as I loved his father.”

Emily had a different opinion on this point, but she did not say so.

“He married me and took me home to Malton where his people lived. We were so happy at first — too happy. I told you God was jealous. And his people did not like me — not from the first. They thought David had

married beneath him — that I wasn't good enough for him. They were always trying to come between us. Oh, I knew; I knew what they were after. His mother hated me. She never called me Aileen — only 'you' and 'David's wife.' I hated her because she was always watching me — never said anything — never did anything. Just watched me. I was never one of them. I never seemed able to understand their jokes. They were always laughing over something — me, half the time, I thought. They would write letters to David and never mention me. Some of them were always freezingly polite to me and some of them were always giving me digs. Once one of his sisters sent me a book on etiquette. Something was always hurting me — and I couldn't strike back — I couldn't hurt what was hurting me. David took their part — he had secrets with them he kept from me. But in spite of it all I was happy — till I dropped the lamp and my dress caught fire and scarred my face like this. After that I couldn't believe David could keep on loving me. I was so ugly. My nerves got raw and I couldn't help quarrelling with him over every trifle. But he was patient. He forgave me again and again. Only I was so afraid he couldn't love me with that scar. I knew I was going to have a baby, but I kept putting off telling him. I was afraid he would love it more than he did me. And then — I did a terrible thing. I hate to tell you of it. David had a dog — he loved it so much that I hated it I — I poisoned it. I don't know what possessed me. I never used to be like that — not till I was burned. Perhaps it was because the baby was coming."

Mrs. Kent stopped and changed suddenly from a woman quivering with unveiled feeling to a prim Victorian.

"I shouldn't talk about such matters to a young girl," she said anxiously.

"I have known for some years that babies do not come in Dr. Burnley's black bag," assured Emily gravely.

"Well" — Mrs. Kent underwent another transformation into passionate Aileen Kent again—"David found out what I had done. Oh — oh, his face! We had a dreadful quarrel. It was just before he went out to Winnipeg on a business trip. I — I was so furious over what he said that I screamed out

— oh, Emily — that I hoped I would never see his face again. I never did. God took me at my word. He died of pneumonia in Winnipeg. I never knew he was ill till the word of his death came. And the nurse was a girl he had once thought something of and who loved him. She waited on him and tended him while I was at home hating him. That is what I have thought I could never forgive God for. She packed up his things and sent them home — that book among them. He must have bought it in Winnipeg. I never opened it — I never could bear to touch it. He must have written that letter when he was near death and put it in the book for me — and perhaps died before he could tell her it was there. Maybe she knew and wouldn't tell me. And it has been there all these years, Emily — all these years when I've been believing David died angry with me — unforgiving me. I've dreamed of him night after night — always with his face turned away from me. Oh, twenty-seven years of that, Emily — twenty-seven years. Think of it. Haven't I atoned! And last night I opened and read his letter, Emily — just a few lines scribbled with a pencil — his poor hand could hardly hold it. He called me Dear Little Wife and said I must forgive him — I forgive him — for being so harsh and angry that last day — and he forgave me for what I had done — and said I mustn't worry over it nor over what I had said about not seeing his face again — he knew I didn't mean it — that he understood things better at the last — and he had always loved me dearly and always would — and — and — something more I can't tell anybody — too dear, too wonderful. Oh, Emily, can you imagine what this means to me — to know he didn't die angry with me — that he died loving me and thinking tenderly of me? But I didn't know it then. And I — I — don't think I've ever been quite right since. I know all his people thought me crazy. When Teddy was born I came up here away from them all. So that they couldn't lure him away from me. I wouldn't take a cent from them. I had David's insurance — we could just live on that. Teddy was all I had — and you came — and I knew you would take him from me. I knew he loved you — always. Oh, yes he did. When he went away I used to write him of all your flirtations. And two years ago — you remember he had to

go to Montreal so suddenly — and you were away — he couldn't wait to say goodbye. But he wrote you a letter."

Emily gave a little choked cry of denial.

"Oh, he did. I saw it lying on his table when he had gone out. I steamed the flap open and read it. I burned the letter, Emily — but I can tell you what was in it. Could I ever forget! He told you he had meant to tell you how much he loved you before he went — and if you could care a little for him to write and tell him so. But if you couldn't not to write at all. Oh, how I hated you. I burned the letter and sealed up a copy of some poetry verses that were in it. And he mailed it never knowing the difference. I was never sorry — never, not even when he wrote me he was going to marry Ilse. But last night — when you brought me that letter — and forgiveness — and peace — oh, I felt I had done an awful thing. I've ruined your life — and perhaps Teddy's. Can you ever forgive me, Emily?"

IV

Emily, amid all the whirl of emotions roused by Mrs. Kent's tale, was keenly conscious of only one thing. Bitterness — humiliation — shame had vanished from her being. Teddy had loved her. The sweetness of the revelation blotted out, for the time at least, all other feelings. Anger — resentment — could find no place in her soul. She felt like a new creature. And there was sincerity in heart and tone as she said slowly:

"I do — I do. I understand."

Mrs. Kent suddenly wrung her hands.

"Emily — is it too late? Is it too late? They're not married yet — I know he doesn't love her as he loved you. If you told him — if I told him —"

"No, no, no," cried Emily passionately. "It is too late. He must never know — you must never tell him. He loves Ilse now. I am sure of that — and telling him this would do no good and much evil. Promise me — dear Mrs. Kent, if you feel you owe me anything promise me, you'll never tell him."

“But you — you will be unhappy—”

“I will not be unhappy — not now. You don’t know what a difference this has made. The sting has gone out of everything. I am going to have a happy, busy, useful life and regret for old dreams will have no place in it. The wound will heal now.”

“It was — a terrible thing for me to do,” whispered Mrs. Kent. “I see that — at last.”

“I suppose it was. But I’m not thinking of that. Only that I’ve got my self-respect back.”

“The Murray pride,” whispered Mrs. Kent, staring at her. “After all, Emily Starr, I believe pride is a stronger passion with you than love.”

“Perhaps,” said Emily smiling.

V

She was in such a tumult of feeling when she reached home that she did a thing she was always ashamed of. Perry Miller was waiting in the New Moon garden for her. She had not seen him for a long time and at any other hour would have been glad to see him. Perry’s friendship, now that he had finally given up all hope of anything else, was a very pleasant part of her life. He had developed in the last few years — he was manly, humorous, much less boastful. He had even acquired certain fundamental rules of social etiquette and learned not to have too many hands and feet. He was too busy to come often to New Moon, but Emily always enjoyed his visits when he did come — except tonight. She wanted to be alone — to think things over — classify her emotions — revel in her restored sense of self-respect. To pace up and down among the silken poppy-ladies of the garden and talk with Perry was an almost impossible thing. She was in a frenzy of impatience to be rid of him. And Perry did not sense this at all. He had not seen her for a long while — and there were many things to talk over — Ilse’s wedding in especial. He kept on asking questions about it until Emily really didn’t know what she was saying. Perry was a bit

squiffy over the fact that he had not been asked to be groomsman. He thought he had a right to be — the old chum of both.

“I never thought Teddy would turn me down cold like that,” he growled. “I suppose he feels himself too big to have Stovepipe Town for groomsman.”

Then Emily did her dreadful thing — before she realized what she was saying, in her impatient annoyance with Perry for casting such aspersions on Teddy the words leaped out quite involuntarily.

“You goose. It wasn’t Teddy at all. Do you think Ilse would have you as groomsman — when she hoped for years you would be the groom?”

The moment she had spoken she stood aghast, sick with shame and remorse. What had she done? Betrayed friendship — violated confidence — a shameful, unpardonable thing. Could she, Emily Byrd Starr of New Moon, have done this?

Perry was standing by the dial staring at her dumbfounded.

“Emily, you don’t mean that. Ilse never thought of me that way, did she?”

Emily miserably realized that the spoken word could not be recalled and that the mess she had made of things couldn’t be mended by any fibs.

“She did — at one time. Of course she got over it long ago.”

“Me! Why, Emily, she always seemed to despise me — always ragging me about something — I never could please her — you remember.”

“Oh, I remember,” said Emily wearily. “She thought so much of you, she hated to see you fall below her standard. If she hadn’t — liked you — do you suppose she would have cared what grammar you used or what etiquette you smashed? I should never have told you this, Perry. I shall be ashamed of it all my life. You must never let her suspect you know.”

“Of course not. Anyhow, she’s forgotten it long ago.”

“Oh — yes. But you can understand why it wouldn’t be especially agreeable for her to have you as best man at her wedding. I hated to have you think Teddy such a snob. And now, you won’t mind, will you, Perry, if I ask you to go? I’m very tired — and I’ve so much to do the next two weeks.”

“You ought to be in bed, that’s a fact,” agreed Perry. “I’m a beast to be keeping you up. But when I come here it seems so much like old times I never want to go. What a set of shavers we were! And now Ilse and Teddy are going to be married. We’re getting on a bit.”

“Next thing you’ll be a staid old married man yourself, Perry,” said Emily, trying to smile. “I’ve been hearing things.”

“Not on your life! I’ve given up that idea for good. Not that I’m pining after you yet in particular — only nobody has any flavour after you. I’ve tried. I’m doomed to die a bachelor. They tell me it’s an easy death. But I’ve got a few ambitions by the tail and I’m not kicking about life. Bye-bye, dear. I’ll see you at the wedding. It’s in the afternoon, isn’t it?”

“Yes.” Emily wondered she could speak so calmly of it. “Three o’clock — then supper — and a motor drive to Shrewsbury to catch the evening boat. Perry, Perry, I wish I hadn’t told you that about Ilse. It was mean — mean — as we used to say at school — I never thought I could do such a thing.”

“Now, don’t go worrying over that. I’m as tickled as a dog with two tails to think Ilse ever thought that much of me, at any time. Don’t you think I’ve sense enough to know what a compliment it was? And don’t you think I understand what bricks you two girls always were to me and how much I owe you for letting me be your friend? I’ve never had any illusions about Stovepipe Town or the real difference between us. I wasn’t such a fool as not to understand that. I’ve climbed a bit — I mean to climb higher — but you and Ilse were born to it. And you never let me feel the difference as some girls did. I shan’t forget Rhoda Stuart’s dirty little slurs. So you don’t think I’d be such a cur now as to go strutting because I’ve found out Ilse once had a bit of a fancy for me — or that I’d ever let her think I knew? I’ve left that much of Stovepipe Town behind, anyhow — even if I still have to think what fork I’ll pick up first. Emily — do you remember the night your Aunt Ruth caught me kissing you?”*

*See Emily Climbs.

“I should think I do.”

“The only time I ever did kiss you,” said Perry non-sentimentally.
“And it wasn’t much of a shot, was it? When I think of the old lady standing there in her nightgown with the candle!”

Perry went off laughing and Emily went to her room.

“Emily-in-the-glass,” she said almost gaily, “I can look you squarely in the eyes again. I’m not ashamed any longer. He did love me.”

She stood there smiling for a little space. And then the smile faded.

“Oh, if I had only got that letter!” she whispered piteously.

Chapter XXV

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I

Only two weeks till the wedding. Emily found out how long two weeks can be, in spite of the fact that every waking moment was crowded with doings, domestic and social. The affair was much talked of everywhere. Emily set her teeth and went through with it. Ilse was here — there — everywhere. Doing nothing — saying much.

“About as composed as a flea,” growled Dr. Burnley.

“Ilse has got to be such a restless creature,” complained Aunt Elizabeth. “She seems to be frightened people wouldn’t know she was alive if she sat still a moment.”

“I’ve got forty-nine remedies for seasickness,” said Ilse. “If Aunt Kate Mitchell gets here I’ll have fifty. Isn’t it delightful to have thoughtful relatives, Emily?”

They were alone in Ilse’s room. It was the evening Teddy was expected. Ilse had tried on half a dozen different dresses and tossed them aside scornfully.

“Emily, what will I wear? Decide for me.”

“Not I. Besides — what difference does it make what you put on?”

“True — too true. Teddy never notices what I have on. I like a man who does notice and tells me of it. I like a man who likes me better in silk than in gingham.”

Emily looked out of the window into a tangled garden where the moonlight was an untroubled silver sea bearing softly on its breast a fleet of poppies. “I meant that Teddy — won’t think of your dress — only of you.”

“Emily, why do you persist in talking as if you thought Teddy and I were madly in love with each other? Is it that Victorian complex of yours?”

“For heaven’s sake, shut up about things Victorian!” Emily exclaimed with unusual, un-Murray-like violence. “I’m tired of it. You call every nice, simple, natural emotion Victorian. The whole world to-day seems to be steeped in a scorn for things Victorian. Do they know what they’re talking of? But I like sane, decent things — if that is Victorian.”

“Emily, Emily, do you suppose Aunt Elizabeth would think it either a sane or decent thing to be madly in love?”

Both girls laughed and the sudden tension relaxed.

“You’re not off, Emily?”

“Of course I am. Do you think I’d play gooseberry at such a time as this?”

“There you go again. Do you think I want to be shut up alone a whole evening with undiluted Teddy. We’ll have a scene every few minutes over something. Of course scenes are lovely. They brighten up life so. I’ve just got to have a scene once a week. You know I always did enjoy a good fight. Remember how you and I used to scrap? You haven’t been a bit of good at a row lately. Even Teddy is only half-hearted in a set-to. Perry, now — he could fight. Think what gorgeous rows Perry and I would have had. Our quarrels would have been splendid. Nothing petty — or quarrelsome — about them. And how we would have loved each other between them! O-hone-a-rie!”

“Are you hankering after Perry Miller yet?” demanded Emily fiercely.

“No, dear infant. And neither am I crazy about Teddy. After all, ours is only secondhand love on both sides, you know. Cold soup warmed over. Don’t worry. I’ll be good for him. I’ll keep him up to the notch in everything much better than if I thought him a little lower than the angels. It doesn’t do to think a man is perfection because he naturally thinks so, too, and when he finds some one who agrees with him he is inclined to rest on his oars. It riles me up a bit when every one seems to think I’m so amazingly lucky to ‘get’ Teddy for a husband. Comes Aunt Ida Mitchell — ‘You are getting a perfectly wonderful husband, Ilse’ — comes Bridget Mooney from Stovepipe Town scrubbing the floor — ‘Gosh but you’re gettin’ a swell man, Miss’ — ‘Sisters under their skins,’ you perceive.

Teddy is well enough — especially since he found out he isn't the only man in the world. He has learned sense somewhere. I'd like to know what girl taught it to him. Oh, there was one. He told me something about the affair — not much but enough. She used to snub him terribly — and then after she had led him on to think she cared she turned him down cold. Never even answered the letter in which he told her he loved her. I hate that girl, Emily — isn't it odd?"

"Don't hate her," said Emily, wearily. "Perhaps she didn't know what she was doing."

"I hate her for using Teddy like that. Though it did him heaps of good. Why do I hate her, Emily? Employ your renowned skill in psychological analysis and expound to me that mystery."

"You hate her — because — to borrow a certain crude expression we've often heard — you're 'taking her leavings.'"

"You demon! I suppose it's so. How ugly some things are when you ferret them out! I've been flattering myself that it was a noble hatred because she made Teddy suffer. After all, the Victorians were right in covering lots of things up. Ugly things should be hidden. Now, go home if go you must and I'll try to look like some one about to receive a blessing."

II

Lorne Halsey came with Teddy — the great Halsey whom Emily liked very much in spite of his gargoyleishness. A comical looking fellow with vital, mocking eyes, who seemed to look upon everything in general and Frederick Kent's wedding in particular as a huge joke. Somehow, this attitude made things a little easier for Emily. She was very brilliant and gay in the evenings they all spent together. She was terribly afraid of silence in Teddy's presence. "Never be silent with the person you love and distrust," Mr. Carpenter had said once. "Silence betrays."

Teddy was very friendly, but his gaze always omitted Emily. Once, when they all walked in the old, overgrown, willow-bordered lawn of the

Burnley place, Ilse stumbled on the happy idea of pick-out your favourite star.

“Mine is Sirius. Lorne?”

“Antares of the Scorpion — the red star of the south,” said Halsey.

“Bellatrix of Orion,” said Emily quickly. She had never thought about Bellatrix before, but she dared not hesitate a moment before Teddy.

“I have no especial favourite — there is only one star I hate. Vega of the Lyre,” said Teddy quietly. His voice was charged with a significance which instantly made every one uncomfortable though neither Halsey nor Ilse knew why. No more was said about stars. But Emily watched alone till they faded out one by one in the dawn.

III

Three nights before the wedding-day Blair Water and Derry Pond were much scandalized because Ilse Burnley had been seen driving with Perry Miller in his new runabout at some ungodly hour. Ilse coolly admitted it when Emily reproached her.

“Of course I did. I had had such a dull, bored evening with Teddy. We began it well with a quarrel over my blue Chow. Teddy said I cared more for it than I did for him. I said of course I did. It infuriated him, though he didn’t believe it. Teddy, manlike, really believes I’m dying about him.

“‘A dog that never chased a cat in its life,’ he sneered.

“Then we both sulked the rest of the evening. He went home at eleven without kissing me. I resolved I’d do something foolish and beautiful for the last time, so I sneaked down the lane for a lovely, lonely walk down to the dunes. Perry came along in his car and I just changed my mind and went for a little moonlit spin with him. I wasn’t married yet. Don’t be after looking at me so. We only stayed out till one and we were really very good and proper. I only wondered once — just what would happen if I suddenly said, ‘Perry, darling, you’re the only man I’ve ever really cared a hang for. Why can’t we get married?’ I wonder if when I’m eighty I’ll wish I’d said it.”

“You told me you had quite got over caring for Perry.”

“But did you believe me? Emily, thank God you’re not a Burnley.”

Emily reflected bitterly that it was not much better being a Murray. If it had not been for her Murray pride she would have gone to Teddy the night he called her — and she would have been tomorrow’s bride — not Ilse.

Tomorrow. It was tomorrow — the morrow when she would have to stand near Teddy and hear him vowing lifelong devotion to another woman. All was in readiness. A wedding-supper that pleased even Dr. Burnley, who had decreed that there should be “a good, old-fashioned wedding-supper — none of your modern dabs of this and that. The bride and groom mayn’t want much maybe, but the rest of us still have stomachs. And this is the first wedding for years. We’ve been getting pretty much like heaven in one respect anyhow — neither marrying nor giving in marriage. I want a spread. And tell Laura for heaven’s sake not to yowl at the wedding.”

So Aunts Elizabeth and Laura saw to it that for the first time in twenty years the Burnley house had a thorough cleaning from top to bottom. Dr. Burnley thanked God forcibly several times that he would only have to go through this once, but nobody paid any attention to him. Elizabeth and Laura had new satin dresses made. It was such a long time since they had had any excuse for new satin dresses.

Aunt Elizabeth made the wedding-cakes and saw to the hams and chickens. Laura made creams and jellies and salads and Emily carried them over to the Burnley Place, wondering at times if she wouldn’t soon wake up — before — before —

“I’ll be glad when all this fuss is over,” growled Cousin Jimmy.
“Emily’s working herself to death — look at the eyes of her!”

IV

“Stay with me tonight, Emily,” entreated Ilse. “I swear I won’t talk you to death and I won’t cry either. Though I admit if I could just be snuffed out

tonight like a candle I wouldn't mind. Jean Askew was Milly Hyslop's bridesmaid and she spent the night before her wedding with her and they both cried all night. Fancy such an orgy of tears. Milly cried because she was going to be married — and I suppose Jean must have been crying because she wasn't. Thank heaven, Emily, you and I were never the miauling kind. We'll be more likely to fight than cry, won't we? I wonder if Mrs. Kent will come tomorrow? I don't suppose so. Teddy says she never mentions his marriage. Though he says she seem oddly changed — gentler — calmer — more like other women. Emily, do you realize that by this time tomorrow I'll be Ilse Kent?"

Yes, Emily realized that.

They said nothing more. But two hours later when wakeful Emily had supposed the motionless Ilse was sound asleep Ilse suddenly sat up in bed and grabbed Emily's hand in the darkness.

"Emily — if one could only go to sleep unmarried — and wake up married — how nice it would be."

V

It was dawn — the dawn of Ilse's wedding-day. Ilse was sleeping when Emily slipped out of bed and went to the window. Dawn. A cluster of dark pines in a trance of calm down by the Blair Water. The air tremulous with elfin music; the wind winnowing the dunes; dancing amber waves on the harbour; the eastern sky abloom; the lighthouse at the harbour pearl-white against the ethereal sky; beyond all the blue field of the sea with its foam blossoms and behind that golden haze that swathed the hill of the Tansy Patch, Teddy — wakeful — waiting — welcoming the day that gave him his heart's desire. Emily's soul was washed empty of every wish or hope or desire except that the day were over.

"It is," she thought, "comforting when a thing becomes irrevocable."

"Emily — Emily."

Emily turned from the window.

“It’s a lovely day, Ilse. The sun will shine on you. Ilse — what is the matter? Ilse — you’re crying!”

“I can’t — help it,” sniffed Ilse. “It seems to be the proper, inescapable caper after all. I beg Milly’s pardon. But — I’m so beastly afraid. It’s an infernal sensation. Do you think it would do any good if I threw myself on the floor and screamed?”

“What are you afraid of?” said Emily, a little impatiently.

“Oh,” — Ilse sprang defiantly out of bed—”afraid I’ll stick my tongue out at the minister. What else?”

VI

What a morning! It always seemed a sort of nightmare recollection to Emily. Guests of the clan came early — Emily welcomed them until she felt that the smile must be frozen on her face. There were endless wedding-gifts to unwrap and arrange. Ilse, before she dressed, came to look them over indifferently.

“Who sent in that afternoon tea-set?” she asked.

“Perry,” said Emily. She had helped him choose it. A dainty service in a quaint old-fashioned rose design. A card with Perry’s black forcible handwriting. “To Ilse with the best wishes of her old friend Perry.”

Ilse deliberately picked up piece after piece and dashed it in fragments on the floor before the transfixed Emily could stop her.

“Ilse! Have you gone crazy?”

“There! What a glorious smash! Sweep up the fragments, Emily. That was just as good as screaming on the floor. Better. I can go through with it now.”

Emily disposed of the fragments just in time — Mrs. Clarinda Mitchell came billowing in, in pale-blue muslin and cherry-hued scarf. A sonsy, smiling, goodhearted cousin-by-marriage. Interested in everything. Who gave this? — Who had sent that?

“She’ll be such a sweet bride, I’m sure,” gushed Mrs. Clarinda. “And Teddy Kent is such a splendid fellow. It’s really an ideal marriage, isn’t it?”

One of those you read about! I love weddings like this. I thank my stars I didn't lose my interest in youthful things when I lost my youth. I've lots of sentiment in me yet — and I'm not afraid to show it. And did Ilse's wedding stockings really cost fourteen dollars?"

Aunt Isabella Hyslop, nee Mitchell, was gloomy. Offended because her costly present of cut sherbet glasses had been placed beside Cousin Annabel's funny set of old-fashioned crocheted doilies. Inclined to take a dark view of things.

"I hope everything will go off well. But I've got an uneasy feeling that trouble is coming — a presentiment, so to speak. Do you believe in signs? A big black cat ran right across the road in front of us down in the hollow. And right on that tree as we turned in at the lane was the fragment of an old election poster, 'Blue Ruin,' in black letters three inches long staring us in the face."

"That might mean bad luck for you, but hardly for Ilse."

Aunt Isabella shook her head. She would not be comforted.

"They say the wedding dress is like nothing ever seen on Prince Edward Island. Do you think such extravagance proper, Miss Starr!"

"The expensive part of it was a present from Ilse's old great-aunts in Scotland, Mrs. Mitchell. And most of us are married only once."

Whereupon Emily remembered that Aunt Isabella had been married three times and wondered if there wasn't something in black cat magic.

Aunt Isabella swept coldly off, and later on was heard to say that "that Starr girl is really intolerable since she got a book published. Thinks herself at liberty to insult any one."

Emily, before she had time to thank the Fates for her freedom, fell into the clutches of more Mitchell relatives. This aunt did not approve of another aunt's gift of a pair of ornate Bohemian glass vases.

"Bessie Jane never had much sense. A foolish choice. The children will be sure to unhook the prisms and lose them."

"What children?"

"Why, the children they will have, of course."

“Miss Starr will put that in a book, Matilda,” warned her husband, chuckling. Then he chuckled again and whispered to Emily:

“Why aren’t you the bride to-day? How come Ilse to cut you out, hey?”

Emily was thankful when she was summoned upstairs to help Ilse dress. Though even here aunts and cousins kept bobbing in and out, saying distracting things.

“Emily, do you remember the day of our first summer together when we fought over the honour of playing bride in one of our dramatic stunts? Well, I feel as if I were just playing bride. This isn’t real.”

Emily felt, too, as if it were not real. But soon — soon now — it would be all over and she could be blessedly alone. And Ilse when dressed was such an exquisite bride that she justified all the fuss of the wedding. How Teddy must love her!

“Doesn’t she look just like a queen?” whispered Aunt Laura adoringly.

Emily having slipped into her own harebell blue kissed the flushed maiden face under the rose-point cap and pearls of its bridal veil.

“Ilse dear, don’t think me hopelessly Victorian if I say I hope you’ll be happy ‘ever after.’”

Ilse squeezed her hand, but laughed a little too loudly.

“I hope it isn’t Queen Victoria Aunt Laura thinks I resemble,” she whispered. “And I have the most horrible suspicion that Aunt Janie Milburn is praying for me. Her face betrayed her when she came in to kiss me. It always makes me furious to suspect that people are praying for me. Now, Emily, do me one last favour. Herd everybody out of this room — everybody. I want to be alone, absolutely alone, for a few minutes.”

Somehow Emily managed it. The aunts and cousins fluttered downstairs. Dr. Burnley was waiting impatiently in the hall.

“Won’t you soon be ready? Teddy and Halsey are waiting for the signal to go into the drawing-room.”

“Ilse wants a few minutes alone. Oh, Aunt Ida, I’m so glad you got here” — to a stout lady who was coming pantingly up the stairs. “We were afraid something had happened to prevent you.”

“Something did,” gasped Aunt Ida — who was really a second-cousin. In spite of her breathlessness Aunt Ida was happy. She always liked to be the first to tell a piece of news — especially unpleasant news. “And the doctor couldn’t come at all — I had to get a taxi. That poor Perry Miller — you know him, don’t you? Such a clever young chap — was killed in a motor collision about an hour ago.”

Emily stifled a shriek, with a frantic glance at Ilse’s door. It was slightly ajar. Dr. Burnley was saying:

“Perry Miller killed. Good God, how horrible!”

“Well, as good as killed. He must be dead by this time — he was unconscious when they dragged him out of the wreck. They took him to the Charlottetown hospital and ‘phoned for Bill, who dashed right off, of course. It’s a mercy Ilse isn’t marrying a doctor. Have I time to take off my things before the ceremony?”

Emily, crushing her anguish over Perry, showed Aunt Ida to the spare room and returned to Dr. Burnley.

“Don’t let Ilse know about this,” he cautioned needlessly. “It would spoil her wedding — she and Perry were old cronies. And hadn’t you better hurry her up a little? It’s past the time.”

Emily, with more of a nightmare feeling than ever, went down the hall and knocked on Ilse’s door. There was no answer. She opened the door. On the floor in a forlorn heap lay the bridal veil and the priceless bouquet of orchids which must have cost Teddy more than any Murray or Burnley bride had ever paid before for her whole trousseau, but Ilse was nowhere to be seen. A window was open, the one over the kitchen stoop.

“What’s the matter?” exclaimed Dr. Burnley impatiently, coming up behind Emily. “Where’s Ilse?”

“She’s — gone,” said Emily stupidly

“Gone — gone where?”

“To Perry Miller.” Emily knew it quite well. Ilse had heard Aunt Ida and —

“Damn!” said Dr. Burnley.

VIII

In a few moments the house was a scene of consternation and flabbergasted wedding guests, all exclaiming and asking questions. Dr. Burnley lost his head and turned himself loose, running through his whole repertoire of profanity, regardless of womenfolks.

Even Aunt Elizabeth was paralysed. There was no precedent to go by. Juliet Murray, to be sure, had eloped. But she had got married. No clan bride had ever done anything like this. Emily alone retained some power of rational thought and action. It was she who found out from young Rob Mitchell how Ilse had gone. He had been parking his car in the barnyard when —

“I saw her spring out of that window with her train wrapped around her shoulders. She slid down the roof and jumped to the ground like a cat — tore out to the lane, jumped in Ken Mitchell’s runabout and was off like the devil was after her. I thought she must have gone crazy.”

“She has — in a way. Rob, you must go after her. Wait — I’ll get Dr. Burnley to go with you. I must stay here to see to things. Oh, be as quick as you can. It’s only fourteen miles to Charlottetown. You can go and come in an hour. You must bring her back — I’ll tell the guests to wait—”

“You’ll not make much out of this mess, Emily,” prophesied Rob.

IX

Even an hour like that passed. But Dr. Burnley and Rob returned alone. Ilse would not come — that was all there was to it. Perry Miller was not killed — was not even seriously injured — but Ilse would not come. She told her father that she was going to marry Perry Miller and nobody else.

The doctor was the centre of a little group of dismayed and tearful women in the upper hall. Aunt Elizabeth, Aunt Laura, Aunt Ruth, Emily.

“I suppose if her mother had lived this wouldn’t have happened,” said the doctor dazedly. “I never dreamed she cared for Miller. I wish somebody had wrung Ida Mitchell’s neck in time. Oh, cry — cry — yes,

cry” — fiercely to poor Aunt Laura. “What good will yelping do? What a devil of a mess! Somebody’s got to tell Kent — I suppose I must. And those distracted fools down there have to be fed. That’s what half of them came for, anyway. Emily, you seem to be the only creature left in the world with a grain of sense. See to things, there’s a good girl.”

Emily was not of an hysterical temperament, but for the second time in her life she was feeling that the only thing she could do would be to scream as loud and long as possible. Things had got to the point where only screaming would clear the air. But she got the guests marshalled to the tables. Excitement calmed down somewhat when they found they were not to be cheated out of everything. But the wedding-feast was hardly a success.

Even those who were hungry had an uneasy feeling that it wasn’t the thing to eat heartily under such circumstances. Nobody enjoyed it except old Uncle Tom Mitchell, who frankly went to weddings for the spread and didn’t care whether there was a ceremony or not. Brides might come and brides might go but a square meal was a feed. So he ate steadily away, only pausing now and then to shake his head solemnly and ask, “What air the women coming to?”

Cousin Isabella was set up on presentiments for life, but nobody listened to her. Most of the guests were afraid to speak, for fear of saying the wrong thing. Uncle Oliver reflected that he had seen many funeral repasts that were more cheerful. The waitresses were hurried and flurried and made ludicrous mistakes. Mrs. Derwent, the young and pretty wife of the new minister, looked to be on the point of tears — nay, actually had tears in her eyes. Perhaps she had been building on the prospective wedding fee. Perhaps its loss meant no new hat for her. Emily, glancing at her as she passed a jelly, wanted to laugh — a desire as hysterical as her wish to scream. But no desire at all showed itself on her cold white face. Shrewsbury people said she was as disdainful and indifferent as always. Could anything really make that girl feel?

And under it all she was keenly conscious of only one question. “Where was Teddy? What was he feeling — thinking — doing?” She hated

Ilse for hurting him — shaming him. She did not see how anything could go on after this. It was one of those events which must stop time.

X

“What a day!” sobbed Aunt Laura as they walked home in the dusk. “What a disgrace! What a scandal!”

“Allan Burnley has only himself to blame,” said Aunt Elizabeth. “He has let Ilse do absolutely as she pleases all her life. She was never taught any self-control. All her life she had done exactly as she wanted to do whenever the whim took her. No sense of responsibility whatever.”

“But if she loved Perry Miller,” pleaded Laura.

“Why did she promise to marry Teddy Kent then? And treat him like this? No, you need make no excuses for Ilse. Fancy a Burnley going to Stovepipe Town for a husband.

“Some one will have to see about sending the presents back,” moaned Laura. “I locked the door of the room where they were. One never knows — at such a time—”

Emily found herself alone in her room at last — too dazed, stricken, exhausted, to feel much of anything. A huge, round, striped ball unrolled itself on her bed and opened wide pink jaws.

“Daff,” said Emily wearily, “you’re the only thing in the world that stays put.”

She had a nasty sleepless night with a brief dawn slumber. From which she wakened to a new world where everything had to be readjusted. And she felt too tired to care for readjustment.

Chapter XXVI

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I

Ilse did not look as if she wanted excuses made for her when, two days later, she walked unannounced into Emily's room. She looked rosy, audacious, triumphant.

Emily stared at her.

"Well, I suppose the earthquake is over. What is left standing?"

"Ilse! How could you!"

Ilse pulled a notebook out of her handbag and pretended to consult it.

"I wrote down a list of the things you'd say. That was the first one. You've said it. The next is, 'Aren't you ashamed of yourself?' I'm not, you know," added Ilse impudently.

"I know you're not. That's why I don't ask it."

"I'm not ashamed — and I'm not sorry. I'm only a little bit sorry that I'm not sorry. And I'm shamelessly happy. But I suppose I spoiled the party. No doubt the old meows are having the time of their lives. They've got their craws full for once."

"How do you suppose Teddy is feeling?" asked Emily sternly.

"Is he feeling any worse than Dean did? There's an old proverb about glass houses."

Emily crimsoned.

"I know — I used Dean badly — but I didn't —

"Jilt him at the altar! True. But I didn't think about Teddy at all when I heard Aunt Ida say Perry was killed. I was quite mad. My one thought was to see Perry once before he died. I had to. And I found when I got there that, as Mark Twain said, the report of his death was greatly exaggerated. He wasn't even badly hurt — was sitting up in bed, his face all bruised and bandaged — looking like the devil. Want to hear what happened, Emily?"

Ilse dropped on the floor at Emily's feet — and looked coaxingly up into Emily's face.

"Honey, what's the use of disapproving a thing that was foreordained? That won't alter anything. I got a glimpse of Aunt Laura in the sitting-room as I sneaked upstairs. She was looking like something that had been left out overnight. But you have a streak in you that isn't Murray. You should understand. Don't waste your sympathy on Teddy. He doesn't love me — I've always known it. It's only his conceit that will suffer. Here — give him his sapphire for me, will you?" Ilse saw something in Emily's face she didn't like. "It can go to join Dean's emerald."

"Teddy left for Montreal the day after — after—"

"After the wedding that wasn't," finished Ilse. "Did you see him, Emily?"

"No."

"Well, if he'd go and shoot big game in Africa for awhile he'd get over it very quickly. Emily, I'm going to marry Perry — next year. It's all settled. I fell on his neck and kissed him as soon as I saw him. I let go my train and it streamed magnificently over the floor. I knew the nurse thought I had just got out of Dr. Percy's private asylum. But I turned her out of the room. And I told Perry I loved him and that I would never, never marry Teddy Kent no matter what happened — and then he asked me if I'd marry him — or I told him he must marry me — or neither of us asked — we just understood. I honestly don't remember which — and I don't care. Emily, if I were dead and Perry came and looked at me I'd live again. Of course I know he's always been after you — but he's going to love me as he never loved you. We were made for each other."

"Perry was never really in love with me," said Emily. "He liked me tremendously, that was all. He didn't know the difference — then." She looked down into Ilse's radiant face — and all her old, old love for this perverse, adorable friend rushed to eyes and lips.

"Dearest, I hope you'll be happy — always."

"How blessedly Victorian that sounds!" said Ilse contentedly. "Oh, I can be quiet now, Emily. For weeks I've been afraid that if I let myself be

quiet for a moment I'd bolt. And I don't even mind if Aunt Janie is praying for me. I believe I rather hope she is."

"What does your father say?"

"Oh, Dad." Ilse shrugged her shoulders. "He's still in the clutches of his old ancestral temper. Won't speak to me. But he'll come round. He's really as much to blame as I am for what I've done. You know I've never asked anyone in my life if I could do a thing. I just did it. Father never prevented me. At first because he hated me — then because he wanted to make up for hating me."

"I think you'll have to ask Perry sometimes if you can do things."

"I won't mind that. You'll be surprised to see what a dutiful wife I'll make. Of course I'm going right away — back to work. And in a year's time people will have forgotten — and Perry and I will be married quietly somewhere. No more rose-point veils and Oriental trains and clan weddings for me. Lord, what an escape! Then minutes later I'd have been married to Teddy. Think what a scandal there'd have been then when Aunt Ida arrived. Because I'd have gone just the same, you know."

II

That summer was a hard time for Emily. The very anguish of her suffering had filled life and now that it was over she realized its emptiness. Then, too, to go anywhere meant martyrdom. Everyone talking about the wedding, asking, wondering, surmising. But at last the wild gossip and clatter over Ilse's kididoes had finally died away and people found something else to talk about. Emily was left alone.

Alone? Ay, that was it. Always alone. Love — friendship gone forever. Nothing left but ambition. Emily settled herself resolutely down to work. Life ran again in its old accustomed grooves. Year after year the seasons walked by her door. Violet-sprinkled valleys of spring — blossom-script of summer — minstrel-firs of autumn — pale fires of the Milky Way on winter nights — soft, new-mooned skies of April — gnomish beauty of dark Lombardies against a moonrise — deep of sea calling to deep of wind

— lonely yellow leaves falling in October dusks — woven moonlight in the orchard. Oh, there was beauty in life still — always would be.

Immortal, indestructible beauty beyond all the stain and blur of mortal passion. She had some very glorious hours of inspiration and achievement. But mere beauty which had once satisfied her soul could not wholly satisfy it now. New Moon was unchanged, undisturbed by the changes that came elsewhere. Mrs. Kent had gone to live with Teddy. The old Tansy Patch was sold to some Halifax man for a summer home. Perry went to Montreal one autumn and brought Ilse back with him. They were living happily in Charlottetown, where Emily often visited them, astutely evading the matrimonial traps Ilse was always setting for her. It was becoming an accepted thing in the clan that Emily would not marry.

“Another old maid at New Moon,” as Uncle Wallace said gracefully.

“And to think of all the men she might have had,” said Aunt Elizabeth bitterly. “Mr. Wallace — Aylmer Vincent — Andrew—”

“But if she didn’t — love — them,” faltered Aunt Laura.

“Laura, you need not be indelicate.”

Old Kelly, who still went his rounds—”and will till the crack of doom,” declared Ilse — had quite given up teasing Emily about getting married, though he occasionally made regretful, cryptic allusions to “toad ointment.” There was none of his significant nods and winks. Instead, he always gravely asked her what book she did be working on now, and drove off shaking his spiky gray head. “What do the men be thinking of, anyway? Get up, my nag, get up.”

Some men were still thinking of Emily, it appeared. Andrew, now a brisk young widower, would have come at the beck of a finger Emily never lifted. Graham Mitchell, of Shrewsbury, unmistakably had intentions. Emily wouldn’t have him because he had a slight cast in one eye. At least, that was what the Murrays supposed. They could think of no other reason for her refusal of so good a match. Shrewsbury people declared that he figured in her next novel and that she had only been “leading him on” to “get material.” A reputed Klondike “millionaire” pursued her for a winter, but disappeared as briefly in the spring.

“Since she has published those books she thinks no one good enough for her,” said Blair Water folks.

Aunt Elizabeth did not regret the Klondike man — he was only a Derry Pond Butterworth, to begin with, and what were the Butterworths? Aunt Elizabeth always contrived to give the impression that Butterworths did not exist. They might imagine they did, but the Murrays knew better. But she did not see why Emily could not take Mooresby, of the firm of Mooresby and Parker, Charlottetown. Emily’s explanation that Mr. Mooresby could never live down the fact that he had once had his picture in the papers as a Perkins’ Food Baby struck Aunt Elizabeth as very inadequate. But Aunt Elizabeth at last admitted that she could not understand the younger generation.

III

Of Teddy Emily never heard, save from occasional items in newspapers which represented him as advancing steadily in his career. He was beginning to have an international reputation as a portrait painter. The old days of magazine illustrations were gone and Emily was never now confronted with her own face — or her own smile — or her own eyes — looking out at her from some casual page.

One winter Mrs. Kent died. Before her death she sent Emily a brief note — the only word Emily had ever had from her.

“I am dying. When I am dead, Emily, tell Teddy about the letter. I’ve tried to tell him, but I couldn’t. I couldn’t tell my son I had done that. Tell him for me.”

Emily smiled sadly as she put the letter away. It was too late to tell Teddy. He had long since ceased to care for her. And she — she would love him for ever. And even though he knew it not, surely such love would hover around him all his life like an invisible benediction, not understood but dimly felt, guarding him from ill and keeping from him all things of harm and evil.

IV

That same winter it was bruited abroad that Jim Butterworth, of Derry Pond, had bought or was about to buy the Disappointed House. He meant, so rumour said, to haul it away, rebuild and enlarge it; and doubtless when this was done he would install therein as mistress a certain buxom, thrifty damsel of Derry Pond known as “Geordie Bridge’s Mabel.” Emily heard the report with anguish. She slipped out that evening in the chill spring dusk and went up the dim overgrown path over the spruce hill to the front gate of the little house like an unquiet ghost. Surely it couldn’t be true that Dean had sold it. The house belonged to the hill. One couldn’t imagine the hill without it.

Once Emily had got Aunt Laura to see about bringing her own belongings from it — all but the gazing-ball. She could not bear to see that. It must be still hanging there, reflecting in its silver gloom by the dim light that fell through the slits of the shutters, the livingroom just as it was when she and Dean had parted. Rumour said Dean had taken nothing from it. All he had put in it was still there.

The little house must be very cold. It was so long since there was a fire in it. How neglected — how lonely — how heartbroken it looked. No light in the window — grass growing thickly over the paths — rank weeds crowding around the long-unopened door.

Emily stretched out her arms as if she wanted to put them around the house. Daff rubbed against her ankles and purred pleadingly. He did not like damp, chilly prowls — the fireside at New Moon was better for a pussy not so young as he once was. Emily lifted the old cat and set him on the crumbling gatepost.

“Daff,” she said, “there is an old fireplace in that house — with the ashes of a dead fire in it — a fireplace where pussies should bask and children dream. And that will never happen now, Daff, for Mabel Geordie doesn’t like open fireplaces — dirty, dusty things — a Quebec heater is so much warmer and more economical. Don’t you wish — or do you! —

Daff, that you and I had been born sensible creatures, alive to the superior advantages of Quebec heaters!”

Chapter XXVII

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I

It came clearly and suddenly on the air of a June evening. An old, old call — two higher notes and one long and soft and low. Emily Starr, dreaming at her window, heard it and stood up, her face suddenly gone white. Dreaming still — she must be! Teddy Kent was thousands of miles away, in the Orient — so much she knew from an item in a Montreal paper. Yes, she had dreamed it — imagined it.

It came again. And Emily knew that Teddy was there, waiting for her in Lofty John's bush — calling to her across the years. She went down slowly — out — across the garden. Of course Teddy was there — under the firs. It seemed the most natural thing in the world that he should come to her there, in that old-world garden where the three Lombardies still kept guard. Nothing was wanting to bridge the years. There was no gulf. He put out his hands and drew her to him, with no conventional greeting. And spoke as if there were no years — no memories — between them.

"Don't tell me you can't love me — you can — you must — why, Emily" — his eyes had met the moonlit brilliance of hers for a moment — "you do."

II

"It's dreadful what little things lead people to misunderstand each other," said Emily some minutes — or hours — later.

"I've been trying all my life to tell you I loved you," said Teddy. "Do you remember that evening long ago in the Tomorrow Road after we left high school? Just as I was trying to screw up my courage to ask you if you'd wait for me you said night air was bad for you and went in. I thought it was a poor excuse for getting rid of me — I knew you didn't care a hoot

about night air. That set me back for years. When I heard about you and Aylmer Vincent — Mother wrote you were engaged — it was a nasty shock. For the first time it occurred to me that you really didn't belong to me, after all. And that winter when you were ill — I was nearly wild. Away there in France where I couldn't see you. And people writing that Dean Priest was always with you and would probably marry you if you recovered. Then came the word that you were going to marry him. I won't talk of that. But when you — you — saved me from going to my death on the Flavian I knew you did belong to me, once and for all, whether you knew it or not. Then I tried again that morning by Blair Water — and again you snubbed me mercilessly. Shaking off my touch as if my hand were a snake. And you never answered my letter. Emily, why didn't you? You say you've always cared—"

"I never got the letter."

"Never got it? But I mailed it—"

"Yes, I know. I must tell you — she said I was to tell you—" She told him briefly.

"My mother? Did that?"

"You mustn't judge her harshly, Teddy. You know she wasn't like other women. Her quarrel with your father — did you know—"

"Yes, she told me all about that — when she came to me in Montreal. But this — Emily—"

"Let us just forget it — and forgive. She was so warped and unhappy she didn't know what she was doing. And I — I — was too proud — too proud to go when you called me that last time. I wanted to go — but I thought you were only amusing yourself—"

"I gave up hope then — finally. It had fooled me too often. I saw you at your window, shining, as it seemed to me, with an icy radiance like some cold wintry star — I knew you heard me — it was the first time you had failed to answer our old call. There seemed nothing to do but forget you — if I could. I never succeeded, but I thought I did — except when I looked at Vega of the Lyre. And I was lonely. Ilse was a good pal. Besides, I think I thought I could talk to her about you — keep a little corner in your life as

the husband of some one you loved. I knew Ilse didn't care much for me — I was only the consolation prize. But I thought we could jog along very well together and help each other keep away the fearful lonesomeness of the world. And then" — Teddy laughed at himself—"when she 'left me at the altar' according to the very formula of Bertha M. Clay I was furious. She had made such a fool of me — me, who fancied I was beginning to cut quite a figure in the world. My word, how I hated women for awhile! And I was hurt, too. I had got very fond of Ilse — I really did love her — in a way."

"In a way." Emily felt no jealousy of that.

III

"I don't know as I'd take Ilse's leavings," remarked Aunt Elizabeth.

Emily flashed on Aunt Elizabeth one of her old starry looks.

"Ilse's leavings. Why, Teddy has always belonged to me and I to him. Heart, soul and body," said Emily.

Aunt Elizabeth shuddered. One ought to feel these things — perhaps — but it was indecent to say them.

"Always sly," was Aunt Ruth's comment.

"She'd better marry him right off before she changes her mind again," said Aunt Addie.

"I suppose she won't wipe his kisses off," said Uncle Wallace.

Yet, on the whole, the clan were pleased. Much pleased. After all their anxieties over Emily's love affairs, to see her "settled" so respectably with a "boy" well known to them, who had, so far as they knew at least, no bad habits and no disgraceful antecedents. And who was doing pretty well in the business of picture-painting. They would not exactly say so, but Old Kelly said it for them.

"Ah, now, that's something like," said Old Kelly approvingly.

IV

Dean wrote a little while before the quiet bridal at New Moon. A fat letter with an enclosure — a deed to the Disappointed House and all it contained.

“I want you to take this, Star, as my wedding-gift. That house must not be disappointed again. I want it to live at last. You and Teddy can make use of it as a summer home. And some day I will come to see you in it. I claim my old corner in your house of friendship now and then.”

“How very — dear — of Dean. And I am so glad — he is not hurt any longer.”

She was standing where the Tomorrow Road opened out on the Blair Water valley. Behind her she heard Teddy’s eager footsteps coming to her. Before her on the dark hill, against the sunset, was the little beloved grey house that was to be disappointed no longer.

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“She was a form of life and light
That seen, became a part of sight,
And rose, where’er I turn’d mine eye,
The morning-star of Memory!”

— Byron.

To My Cousin

FREDERICA E. CAMPBELL

in remembrance of old days, old dreams, and old laughter

The Home of Our Fathers

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“I do like a road, because you can be always wondering what is at the end of it.”

The Story Girl said that once upon a time. Felix and I, on the May morning when we left Toronto for Prince Edward Island, had not then heard her say it, and, indeed, were but barely aware of the existence of such a person as the Story Girl. We did not know her at all under that name. We knew only that a cousin, Sara Stanley, whose mother, our Aunt Felicity, was dead, was living down on the Island with Uncle Roger and Aunt Olivia King, on a farm adjoining the old King homestead in Carlisle. We supposed we should get acquainted with her when we reached there, and we had an idea, from Aunt Olivia’s letters to father, that she would be quite a jolly creature. Further than that we did not think about her. We were more interested in Felicity and Cecily and Dan, who lived on the homestead and would therefore be our roofmates for a season.

But the spirit of the Story Girl’s yet unuttered remark was thrilling in our hearts that morning, as the train pulled out of Toronto. We were faring forth on a long road; and, though we had some idea what would be at the end of it, there was enough glamour of the unknown about it to lend a wonderful charm to our speculations concerning it.

We were delighted at the thought of seeing father’s old home, and living among the haunts of his boyhood. He had talked so much to us about it, and described its scenes so often and so minutely, that he had inspired us with some of his own deep-seated affection for it — an affection that had never waned in all his years of exile. We had a vague feeling that we, somehow, belonged there, in that cradle of our family, though we had never seen it. We had always looked forward eagerly to the promised day when father would take us “down home,” to the old house with the spruces behind it and the famous “King orchard” before it —

when we might ramble in “Uncle Stephen’s Walk,” drink from the deep well with the Chinese roof over it, stand on “the Pulpit Stone,” and eat apples from our “birthday trees.”

The time had come sooner than we had dared to hope; but father could not take us after all. His firm asked him to go to Rio de Janeiro that spring to take charge of their new branch there. It was too good a chance to lose, for father was a poor man and it meant promotion and increase of salary; but it also meant the temporary breaking up of our home. Our mother had died before either of us was old enough to remember her; father could not take us to Rio de Janeiro. In the end he decided to send us to Uncle Alec and Aunt Janet down on the homestead; and our housekeeper, who belonged to the Island and was now returning to it, took charge of us on the journey. I fear she had an anxious trip of it, poor woman! She was constantly in a quite justifiable terror lest we should be lost or killed; she must have felt great relief when she reached Charlottetown and handed us over to the keeping of Uncle Alec. Indeed, she said as much.

“The fat one isn’t so bad. He isn’t so quick to move and get out of your sight while you’re winking as the thin one. But the only safe way to travel with those young ones would be to have ‘em both tied to you with a short rope — a MIGHTY short rope.”

“The fat one” was Felix, who was very sensitive about his plumpness. He was always taking exercises to make him thin, with the dismal result that he became fatter all the time. He vowed that he didn’t care; but he DID care terribly, and he glowered at Mrs. MacLaren in a most undutiful fashion. He had never liked her since the day she had told him he would soon be as broad as he was long.

For my own part, I was rather sorry to see her going; and she cried over us and wished us well; but we had forgotten all about her by the time we reached the open country, driving along, one on either side of Uncle Alec, whom we loved from the moment we saw him. He was a small man, with thin, delicate features, close-clipped gray beard, and large, tired, blue eyes — father’s eyes over again. We knew that Uncle Alec was fond of children and was heart-glad to welcome “Alan’s boys.” We felt at home

with him, and were not afraid to ask him questions on any subject that came uppermost in our minds. We became very good friends with him on that twenty-four mile drive.

Much to our disappointment it was dark when we reached Carlisle — too dark to see anything very distinctly, as we drove up the lane of the old King homestead on the hill. Behind us a young moon was hanging over southwestern meadows of springtime peace, but all about us were the soft, moist shadows of a May night. We peered eagerly through the gloom.

“There’s the big willow, Bev,” whispered Felix excitedly, as we turned in at the gate.

There it was, in truth — the tree Grandfather King had planted when he returned one evening from ploughing in the brook field and stuck the willow switch he had used all day in the soft soil by the gate.

It had taken root and grown; our father and our uncles and aunts had played in its shadow; and now it was a massive thing, with a huge girth of trunk and great spreading boughs, each of them as large as a tree in itself.

“I’m going to climb it tomorrow,” I said joyfully.

Off to the right was a dim, branching place which we knew was the orchard; and on our left, among sibilant spruces and firs, was the old, whitewashed house — from which presently a light gleamed through an open door, and Aunt Janet, a big, bustling, sonsy woman, with full-blown peony cheeks, came to welcome us.

Soon after we were at supper in the kitchen, with its low, dark, raftered ceiling from which substantial hams and flitches of bacon were hanging. Everything was just as father had described it. We felt that we had come home, leaving exile behind us.

Felicity, Cecily, and Dan were sitting opposite us, staring at us when they thought we would be too busy eating to see them. We tried to stare at them when THEY were eating; and as a result we were always catching each other at it and feeling cheap and embarrassed.

Dan was the oldest; he was my age — thirteen. He was a lean, freckled fellow with rather long, lank, brown hair and the shapely King nose. We recognized it at once. His mouth was his own, however, for it was like to

no mouth on either the King or the Ward side; and nobody would have been anxious to claim it, for it was an undeniably ugly one — long and narrow and twisted. But it could grin in friendly fashion, and both Felix and I felt that we were going to like Dan.

Felicity was twelve. She had been called after Aunt Felicity, who was the twin sister of Uncle Felix. Aunt Felicity and Uncle Felix, as father had often told us, had died on the same day, far apart, and were buried side by side in the old Carlisle graveyard.

We had known from Aunt Olivia's letters, that Felicity was the beauty of the connection, and we had been curious to see her on that account. She fully justified our expectations. She was plump and dimpled, with big, dark-blue, heavy-lidded eyes, soft, feathery, golden curls, and a pink and white skin—"the King complexion." The Kings were noted for their noses and complexion. Felicity had also delightful hands and wrists. At every turn of them a dimple showed itself. It was a pleasure to wonder what her elbows must be like.

She was very nicely dressed in a pink print and a frilled muslin apron; and we understood, from something Dan said, that she had "dressed up" in honour of our coming. This made us feel quite important. So far as we knew, no feminine creatures had ever gone to the pains of dressing up on our account before.

Cecily, who was eleven, was pretty also — or would have been had Felicity not been there. Felicity rather took the colour from other girls. Cecily looked pale and thin beside her; but she had dainty little features, smooth brown hair of satin sheen, and mild brown eyes, with just a hint of demureness in them now and again. We remembered that Aunt Olivia had written to father that Cecily was a true Ward — she had no sense of humour. We did not know what this meant, but we thought it was not exactly complimentary.

Still, we were both inclined to think we would like Cecily better than Felicity. To be sure, Felicity was a stunning beauty. But, with the swift and unerring intuition of childhood, which feels in a moment what it sometimes takes maturity much time to perceive, we realized that she was

rather too well aware of her good looks. In brief, we saw that Felicity was vain.

“It’s a wonder the Story Girl isn’t over to see you,” said Uncle Alec. “She’s been quite wild with excitement about your coming.”

“She hasn’t been very well all day,” explained Cecily, “and Aunt Olivia wouldn’t let her come out in the night air. She made her go to bed instead. The Story Girl was awfully disappointed.”

“Who is the Story Girl?” asked Felix.

“Oh, Sara — Sara Stanley. We call her the Story Girl partly because she’s such a hand to tell stories — oh, I can’t begin to describe it — and partly because Sara Ray, who lives at the foot of the hill, often comes up to play with us, and it is awkward to have two girls of the same name in the same crowd. Besides, Sara Stanley doesn’t like her name and she’d rather be called the Story Girl.”

Dan speaking for the first time, rather sheepishly volunteered the information that Peter had also been intending to come over but had to go home to take some flour to his mother instead.

“Peter?” I questioned. I had never heard of any Peter.

“He is your Uncle Roger’s handy boy,” said Uncle Alec. “His name is Peter Craig, and he is a real smart little chap. But he’s got his share of mischief, that same lad.”

“He wants to be Felicity’s beau,” said Dan slyly.

“Don’t talk silly nonsense, Dan,” said Aunt Janet severely.

Felicity tossed her golden head and shot an unsisterly glance at Dan.

“I wouldn’t be very likely to have a hired boy for a beau,” she observed.

We saw that her anger was real, not affected. Evidently Peter was not an admirer of whom Felicity was proud.

We were very hungry boys; and when we had eaten all we could — and oh, what suppers Aunt Janet always spread! — we discovered that we were very tired also — too tired to go out and explore our ancestral domains, as we would have liked to do, despite the dark.

We were quite willing to go to bed; and presently we found ourselves tucked away upstairs in the very room, looking out eastward into the spruce grove, which father had once occupied. Dan shared it with us, sleeping in a bed of his own in the opposite corner. The sheets and pillowslips were fragrant with lavender, and one of Grandmother King's noted patchwork quilts was over us. The window was open and we heard the frogs singing down in the swamp of the brook meadow. We had heard frogs sing in Ontario, of course; but certainly Prince Edward Island frogs were more tuneful and mellow. Or was it simply the glamour of old family traditions and tales which was over us, lending its magic to all sights and sounds around us? This was home — father's home — OUR home! We had never lived long enough in any one house to develop a feeling of affection for it; but here, under the roof-tree built by Great-Grandfather King ninety years ago, that feeling swept into our boyish hearts and souls like a flood of living sweetness and tenderness.

"Just think, those are the very frogs father listened to when he was a little boy," whispered Felix.

"They can hardly be the SAME frogs," I objected doubtfully, not feeling very certain about the possible longevity of frogs. "It's twenty years since father left home."

"Well, they're the descendants of the frogs he heard," said Felix, "and they're singing in the same swamp. That's near enough."

Our door was open and in their room across the narrow hall the girls were preparing for bed, and talking rather more loudly than they might have done had they realized how far their sweet, shrill voices carried.

"What do you think of the boys?" asked Cecily.

"Beverley is handsome, but Felix is too fat," answered Felicity promptly.

Felix twitched the quilt rather viciously and grunted. But I began to think I would like Felicity. It might not be altogether her fault that she was vain. How could she help it when she looked in the mirror?

“I think they’re both nice and nice looking,” said Cecily.

Dear little soul!

“I wonder what the Story Girl will think of them,” said Felicity, as if, after all, that was the main thing.

Somehow, we, too, felt that it was. We felt that if the Story Girl did not approve of us it made little difference who else did or did not.

“I wonder if the Story Girl is pretty,” said Felix aloud.

“No, she isn’t,” said Dan instantly, from across the room. “But you’ll think she is while she’s talking to you. Everybody does. It’s only when you go away from her that you find out she isn’t a bit pretty after all.”

The girls’ door shut with a bang. Silence fell over the house. We drifted into the land of sleep, wondering if the Story Girl would like us.

A Queen of Hearts

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I wakened shortly after sunrise. The pale May sunshine was showering through the spruces, and a chill, inspiring wind was tossing the boughs about.

“Felix, wake up,” I whispered, shaking him.

“What’s the matter?” he murmured reluctantly.

“It’s morning. Let’s get up and go down and out. I can’t wait another minute to see the places father has told us of.”

We slipped out of bed and dressed, without arousing Dan, who was still slumbering soundly, his mouth wide open, and his bedclothes kicked off on the floor. I had hard work to keep Felix from trying to see if he could “shy” a marble into that tempting open mouth. I told him it would waken Dan, who would then likely insist on getting up and accompanying us, and it would be so much nicer to go by ourselves for the first time.

Everything was very still as we crept downstairs. Out in the kitchen we heard some one, presumably Uncle Alec, lighting the fire; but the heart of house had not yet begun to beat for the day.

We paused a moment in the hall to look at the big “Grandfather” clock. It was not going, but it seemed like an old, familiar acquaintance to us, with the gilt balls on its three peaks; the little dial and pointer which would indicate the changes of the moon, and the very dent in its wooden door which father had made when he was a boy, by kicking it in a fit of naughtiness.

Then we opened the front door and stepped out, rapture swelling in our bosoms. There was a rare breeze from the south blowing to meet us; the shadows of the spruces were long and clear-cut; the exquisite skies of early morning, blue and wind-winnowed, were over us; away to the west, beyond the brook field, was a long valley and a hill purple with firs and laced with still leafless beeches and maples.

Behind the house was a grove of fir and spruce, a dim, cool place where the winds were fond of purring and where there was always a resinous, woodsy odour. On the further side of it was a thick plantation of slender silver birches and whispering poplars; and beyond it was Uncle Roger's house.

Right before us, girt about with its trim spruce hedge, was the famous King orchard, the history of which was woven into our earliest recollections. We knew all about it, from father's descriptions, and in fancy we had roamed in it many a time and oft.

It was now nearly sixty years since it had had its beginning, when Grandfather King brought his bride home. Before the wedding he had fenced off the big south meadow that sloped to the sun; it was the finest, most fertile field on the farm, and the neighbours told young Abraham King that he would raise many a fine crop of wheat in that meadow. Abraham King smiled and, being a man of few words, said nothing; but in his mind he had a vision of the years to be, and in that vision he saw, not rippling acres of harvest gold, but great, leafy avenues of widespreading trees laden with fruit to gladden the eyes of children and grandchildren yet unborn.

It was a vision to develop slowly into fulfilment. Grandfather King was in no hurry. He did not set his whole orchard out at once, for he wished it to grow with his life and history, and be bound up with all of good and joy that should come to his household. So the morning after he had brought his young wife home they went together to the south meadow and planted their bridal trees. These trees were no longer living; but they had been when father was a boy, and every spring bedecked themselves in blossom as delicately tinted as Elizabeth King's face when she walked through the old south meadow in the morn of her life and love.

When a son was born to Abraham and Elizabeth a tree was planted in the orchard for him. They had fourteen children in all, and each child had its "birth tree." Every family festival was commemorated in like fashion, and every beloved visitor who spent a night under their roof was expected to plant a tree in the orchard. So it came to pass that every tree in it was a

fair green monument to some love or delight of the vanished years. And each grandchild had its tree, there, also, set out by grandfather when the tidings of its birth reached him; not always an apple tree — perhaps it was a plum, or cherry or pear. But it was always known by the name of the person for whom, or by whom, it was planted; and Felix and I knew as much about “Aunt Felicity’s pears,” and “Aunt Julia’s cherries,” and “Uncle Alec’s apples,” and the “Rev. Mr. Scott’s plums,” as if we had been born and bred among them.

And now we had come to the orchard; it was before us; we had only to open that little whitewashed gate in the hedge and we might find ourselves in its storied domain. But before we reached the gate we glanced to our left, along the grassy, spruce-bordered lane which led over to Uncle Roger’s; and at the entrance of that lane we saw a girl standing, with a gray cat at her feet. She lifted her hand and beckoned blithely to us; and, the orchard forgotten, we followed her summons. For we knew that this must be the Story Girl; and in that gay and graceful gesture was an allurements not to be gainsaid or denied.

We looked at her as we drew near with such interest that we forgot to feel shy. No, she was not pretty. She was tall for her fourteen years, slim and straight; around her long, white face — rather too long and too white — fell sleek, dark-brown curls, tied above either ear with rosettes of scarlet ribbon. Her large, curving mouth was as red as a poppy, and she had brilliant, almond-shaped, hazel eyes; but we did not think her pretty.

Then she spoke; she said,

“Good morning.”

Never had we heard a voice like hers. Never, in all my life since, have I heard such a voice. I cannot describe it. I might say it was clear; I might say it was sweet; I might say it was vibrant and far-reaching and bell-like; all this would be true, but it would give you no real idea of the peculiar quality which made the Story Girl’s voice what it was.

If voices had colour, hers would have been like a rainbow. It made words LIVE. Whatever she said became a breathing entity, not a mere verbal statement or utterance. Felix and I were too young to understand or

analyze the impression it made upon us; but we instantly felt at her greeting that it WAS a good morning — a surpassingly good morning — the very best morning that had ever happened in this most excellent of worlds.

“You are Felix and Beverley,” she went on, shaking our hands with an air of frank comradeship, which was very different from the shy, feminine advances of Felicity and Cecily. From that moment we were as good friends as if we had known each other for a hundred years. “I am glad to see you. I was so disappointed I couldn’t go over last night. I got up early this morning, though, for I felt sure you would be up early, too, and that you’d like to have me tell you about things. I can tell things so much better than Felicity or Cecily. Do you think Felicity is VERY pretty?”

“She’s the prettiest girl I ever saw,” I said enthusiastically, remembering that Felicity had called me handsome.

“The boys all think so,” said the Story Girl, not, I fancied, quite well pleased. “And I suppose she is. She is a splendid cook, too, though she is only twelve. I can’t cook. I am trying to learn, but I don’t make much progress. Aunt Olivia says I haven’t enough natural gumption ever to be a cook; but I’d love to be able to make as good cakes and pies as Felicity can make. But then, Felicity is stupid. It’s not ill-natured of me to say that. It’s just the truth, and you’d soon find it out for yourselves. I like Felicity very well, but she IS stupid. Cecily is ever so much cleverer. Cecily’s a dear. So is Uncle Alec; and Aunt Janet is pretty nice, too.”

“What is Aunt Olivia like?” asked Felix.

“Aunt Olivia is very pretty. She is just like a pansy — all velvety and purply and goldy.”

Felix and I SAW, somewhere inside of our heads, a velvet and purple and gold pansy-woman, just as the Story Girl spoke.

“But is she NICE?” I asked. That was the main question about grownups. Their looks mattered little to us.

“She is lovely. But she is twenty-nine, you know. That’s pretty old. She doesn’t bother me much. Aunt Janet says that I’d have no bringing up at all, if it wasn’t for her. Aunt Olivia says children should just be let COME

up — that everything else is settled for them long before they are born. I don't understand that. Do you?"

No, we did not. But it was our experience that grownups had a habit of saying things hard to understand.

"What is Uncle Roger like?" was our next question.

"Well, I like Uncle Roger," said the Story Girl meditatively. "He is big and jolly. But he teases people too much. You ask him a serious question and you get a ridiculous answer. He hardly ever scolds or gets cross, though, and THAT is something. He is an old bachelor."

"Doesn't he ever mean to get married?" asked Felix.

"I don't know. Aunt Olivia wishes he would, because she's tired keeping house for him, and she wants to go to Aunt Julia in California. But she says he'll never get married, because he is looking for perfection, and when he finds her she won't have HIM."

By this time we were all sitting down on the gnarled roots of the spruces, and the big gray cat came over and made friends with us. He was a lordly animal, with a silver-gray coat beautifully marked with darker stripes. With such colouring most cats would have had white or silver feet; but he had four black paws and a black nose. Such points gave him an air of distinction, and marked him out as quite different from the common or garden variety of cats. He seemed to be a cat with a tolerably good opinion of himself, and his response to our advances was slightly tinged with condescension.

"This isn't Topsy, is it?" I asked. I knew at once that the question was a foolish one. Topsy, the cat of which father had talked, had flourished thirty years before, and all her nine lives could scarcely have lasted so long.

"No, but it is Topsy's great-great-great-great-grandson," said the Story Girl gravely. "His name is Paddy and he is my own particular cat. We have barn cats, but Paddy never associates with them. I am very good friends with all cats. They are so sleek and comfortable and dignified. And it is so easy to make them happy. Oh, I'm so glad you boys have come to live here. Nothing ever happens here, except days, so we have to make our own

good times. We were short of boys before — only Dan and Peter to four girls.”

“FOUR girls? Oh, yes, Sara Ray. Felicity mentioned her. What is she like? Where does she live?”

“Just down the hill. You can’t see the house for the spruce bush. Sara is a nice girl. She’s only eleven, and her mother is dreadfully strict. She never allows Sara to read a single story. JUST you fancy! Sara’s conscience is always troubling her for doing things she’s sure her mother won’t approve, but it never prevents her from doing them. It only spoils her fun. Uncle Roger says that a mother who won’t let you do anything, and a conscience that won’t let you enjoy anything is an awful combination, and he doesn’t wonder Sara is pale and thin and nervous. But, between you and me, I believe the real reason is that her mother doesn’t give her half enough to eat. Not that she’s mean, you know — but she thinks it isn’t healthy for children to eat much, or anything but certain things. Isn’t it fortunate we weren’t born into that sort of a family?”

“I think it’s awfully lucky we were all born into the same family,” Felix remarked.

“Isn’t it? I’ve often thought so. And I’ve often thought what a dreadful thing it would have been if Grandfather and Grandmother King had never got married to each other. I don’t suppose there would have been a single one of us children here at all; or if we were, we would be part somebody else and that would be almost as bad. When I think it all over I can’t feel too thankful that Grandfather and Grandmother King happened to marry each other, when there were so many other people they might have married.”

Felix and I shivered. We felt suddenly that we had escaped a dreadful danger — the danger of having been born somebody else. But it took the Story Girl to make us realize just how dreadful it was and what a terrible risk we had run years before we, or our parents either, had existed.

“Who lives over there?” I asked, pointing to a house across the fields.

“Oh, that belongs to the Awkward Man. His name is Jasper Dale, but everybody calls him the Awkward Man. And they do say he writes poetry.

He calls his place Golden Milestone. I know why, because I've read Longfellow's poems. He never goes into society because he is so awkward. The girls laugh at him and he doesn't like it. I know a story about him and I'll tell it to you sometime."

"And who lives in that other house?" asked Felix, looking over the westering valley where a little gray roof was visible among the trees.

"Old Peg Bowen. She's very queer. She lives there with a lot of pet animals in winter, and in summer she roams over the country and begs her meals. They say she is crazy. People have always tried to frighten us children into good behaviour by telling us that Peg Bowen would catch us if we didn't behave. I'm not so frightened of her as I once was, but I don't think I would like to be caught by her. Sara Ray is dreadfully scared of her. Peter Craig says she is a witch and that he bets she's at the bottom of it when the butter won't come. But I don't believe THAT. Witches are so scarce nowadays. There may be some somewhere in the world, but it's not likely there are any here right in Prince Edward Island. They used to be very plenty long ago. I know some splendid witch stories I'll tell you some day. They'll just make your blood freeze in your veins."

We hadn't a doubt of it. If anybody could freeze the blood in our veins this girl with the wonderful voice could. But it was a May morning, and our young blood was running blithely in our veins. We suggested a visit to the orchard would be more agreeable.

"All right. I know stories about it, too," she said, as we walked across the yard, followed by Paddy of the waving tail. "Oh, aren't you glad it is spring? The beauty of winter is that it makes you appreciate spring."

The latch of the gate clicked under the Story Girl's hand, and the next moment we were in the King orchard.

Legends of the Old Orchard

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Outside of the orchard the grass was only beginning to grow green; but here, sheltered by the spruce hedges from uncertain winds and sloping to southern suns, it was already like a wonderful velvet carpet; the leaves on the trees were beginning to come out in woolly, grayish clusters; and there were purple-pencilled white violets at the base of the Pulpit Stone.

“It’s all just as father described it,” said Felix with a blissful sigh, “and there’s the well with the Chinese roof.”

We hurried over to it, treading on the spears of mint that were beginning to shoot up about it. It was a very deep well, and the curb was of rough, undressed stones. Over it, the queer, pagoda-like roof, built by Uncle Stephen on his return from a voyage to China, was covered with yet leafless vines.

“It’s so pretty, when the vines leaf out and hang down in long festoons,” said the Story Girl. “The birds build their nests in it. A pair of wild canaries come here every summer. And ferns grow out between the stones of the well as far down as you can see. The water is lovely. Uncle Edward preached his finest sermon about the Bethlehem well where David’s soldiers went to get him water, and he illustrated it by describing his old well at the homestead — this very well — and how in foreign lands he had longed for its sparkling water. So you see it is quite famous.”

“There’s a cup just like the one that used to be here in father’s time,” exclaimed Felix, pointing to an old-fashioned shallow cup of clouded blue ware on a little shelf inside the curb.

“It is the very same cup,” said the Story Girl impressively. “Isn’t it an amazing thing? That cup has been here for forty years, and hundreds of people have drunk from it, and it has never been broken. Aunt Julia dropped it down the well once, but they fished it up, not hurt a bit except for that little nick in the rim. I think it is bound up with the fortunes of the

King family, like the Luck of Edenhall in Longfellow's poem. It is the last cup of Grandmother King's second best set. Her best set is still complete. Aunt Olivia has it. You must get her to show it to you. It's so pretty, with red berries all over it, and the funniest little pot-bellied cream jug. Aunt Olivia never uses it except on a family anniversary."

We took a drink from the blue cup and then went to find our birthday trees. We were rather disappointed to find them quite large, sturdy ones. It seemed to us that they should still be in the sapling stage corresponding to our boyhood.

"Your apples are lovely to eat," the Story Girl said to me, "but Felix's are only good for pies. Those two big trees behind them are the twins' trees — my mother and Uncle Felix, you know. The apples are so dead sweet that nobody but us children and the French boys can eat them. And that tall, slender tree over there, with the branches all growing straight up, is a seedling that came up of itself, and NOBODY can eat its apples, they are so sour and bitter. Even the pigs won't eat them. Aunt Janet tried to make pies of them once, because she said she hated to see them going to waste. But she never tried again. She said it was better to waste apples alone than apples and sugar too. And then she tried giving them away to the French hired men, but they wouldn't even carry them home."

The Story Girl's words fell on the morning air like pearls and diamonds. Even her prepositions and conjunctions had untold charm, hinting at mystery and laughter and magic bound up in everything she mentioned. Apple pies and sour seedlings and pigs became straightway invested with a glamour of romance.

"I like to hear you talk," said Felix in his grave, stodgy way.

"Everybody does," said the Story Girl coolly. "I'm glad you like the way I talk. But I want you to like ME, too — AS WELL as you like Felicity and Cecily. Not BETTER. I wanted that once but I've got over it. I found out in Sunday School, the day the minister taught our class, that it was selfish. But I want you to like me AS WELL."

"Well, I will, for one," said Felix emphatically. I think he was remembering that Felicity had called him fat.

Cecily now joined us. It appeared that it was Felicity's morning to help prepare breakfast, therefore she could not come. We all went to Uncle Stephen's Walk.

This was a double row of apple trees, running down the western side of the orchard. Uncle Stephen was the first born of Abraham and Elizabeth King. He had none of grandfather's abiding love for woods and meadows and the kindly ways of the warm red earth. Grandmother King had been a Ward, and in Uncle Stephen the blood of the seafaring race claimed its own. To sea he must go, despite the pleadings and tears of a reluctant mother; and it was from the sea he came to set out his avenue in the orchard with trees brought from a foreign land.

Then he sailed away again — and the ship was never heard of more. The gray first came in grandmother's brown hair in those months of waiting. The, for the first time, the orchard heard the sound of weeping and was consecrated by a sorrow.

"When the blossoms come out it's wonderful to walk here," said the Story Girl. "It's like a dream of fairyland — as if you were walking in a king's palace. The apples are delicious, and in winter it's a splendid place for coasting."

From the Walk we went to the Pulpit Stone — a huge gray boulder, as high as a man's head, in the southeastern corner. It was straight and smooth in front, but sloped down in natural steps behind, with a ledge midway on which one could stand. It had played an important part in the games of our uncles and aunts, being fortified castle, Indian ambush, throne, pulpit, or concert platform, as occasion required. Uncle Edward had preached his first sermon at the age of eight from that old gray boulder; and Aunt Julia, whose voice was to delight thousands, sang her earliest madrigals there.

The Story Girl mounted to the ledge, sat on the rim, and looked at us. Pat sat gravely at its base and daintily washed his face with his black paws.

"Now for your stories about the orchard," said I.

“There are two important ones,” said the Story Girl. “The story of the Poet Who Was Kissed, and the Tale of the Family Ghost. Which one shall I tell?”

“Tell them both,” said Felix greedily, “but tell the ghost one first.”

“I don’t know.” The Story Girl looked dubious. “That sort of story ought to be told in the twilight among the shadows. Then it would frighten the souls out of your bodies.”

We thought it might be more agreeable not to have the souls frightened out of our bodies, and we voted for the Family Ghost.

“Ghost stories are more comfortable in daytime,” said Felix.

The Story Girl began it and we listened avidly. Cecily, who had heard it many times before, listened just as eagerly as we did. She declared to me afterwards that no matter how often the Story Girl told a story it always seemed as new and exciting as if you had just heard it for the first time.

“Long, long ago,” began the Story Girl, her voice giving us an impression of remote antiquity, “even before Grandfather King was born, an orphan cousin of his lived here with his parents. Her name was Emily King. She was very small and very sweet. She had soft brown eyes that were too timid to look straight at anybody — like Cecily’s there — and long, sleek, brown curls — like mine; and she had a tiny birthmark like a pink butterfly on one cheek — right here.

“Of course, there was no orchard here then. It was just a field; but there was a clump of white birches in it, right where that big, spreading tree of Uncle Alec’s is now, and Emily liked to sit among the ferns under the birches and read or sew. She had a lover. His name was Malcolm Ward and he was as handsome as a prince. She loved him with all her heart and he loved her the same; but they had never spoken about it. They used to meet under the birches and talk about everything except love. One day he told her he was coming the next day to ask A VERY IMPORTANT QUESTION, and he wanted to find her under the birches when he came. Emily promised to meet him there. I am sure she stayed awake that night, thinking about it, and wondering what the important question would be, although she knew perfectly well. I would have. And the next day she

dressed herself beautifully in her best pale blue muslin and sleeked her curls and went smiling to the birches. And while she was waiting there, thinking such lovely thoughts, a neighbour's boy came running up — a boy who didn't know about her romance — and cried out that Malcolm Ward had been killed by his gun going off accidentally. Emily just put her hands to her heart — so — and fell, all white and broken among the ferns. And when she came back to life she never cried or lamented. She was CHANGED. She was never, never like herself again; and she was never contented unless she was dressed in her blue muslin and waiting under the birches. She got paler and paler every day, but the pink butterfly grew redder, until it looked just like a stain of blood on her white cheek. When the winter came she died. But next spring" — the Story Girl dropped her voice to a whisper that was as audible and thrilling as her louder tones — "people began to tell that Emily was sometimes seen waiting under the birches still. Nobody knew just who told it first. But more than one person saw her. Grandfather saw her when he was a little boy. And my mother saw her once."

"Did YOU ever see her?" asked Felix skeptically.

"No, but I shall some day, if I keep on believing in her," said the Story Girl confidently.

"I wouldn't like to see her. I'd be afraid," said Cecily with a shiver.

"There wouldn't be anything to be afraid of," said the Story Girl reassuringly. "It's not as if it were a strange ghost. It's our own family ghost, so of course it wouldn't hurt us."

We were not so sure of this. Ghosts were unchancy folk, even if they were our family ghosts. The Story Girl had made the tale very real to us. We were glad we had not heard it in the evening. How could we ever have got back to the house through the shadows and swaying branches of a darkening orchard? As it was, we were almost afraid to look up it, lest we should see the waiting, blue-clad Emily under Uncle Alec's tree. But all we saw was Felicity, tearing over the green sward, her curls streaming behind her in a golden cloud.

“Felicity’s afraid she’s missed something,” remarked the Story Girl in a tone of quiet amusement. “Is your breakfast ready, Felicity, or have I time to tell the boys the Story of the Poet Who Was Kissed?”

“Breakfast is ready, but we can’t have it till father is through attending to the sick cow, so you will likely have time,” answered Felicity.

Felix and I couldn’t keep our eyes off her. Crimson-cheeked, shining-eyed from her haste, her face was like a rose of youth. But when the Story Girl spoke, we forgot to look at Felicity.

“About ten years after Grandfather and Grandmother King were married, a young man came to visit them. He was a distant relative of grandmother’s and he was a Poet. He was just beginning to be famous. He was VERY famous afterward. He came into the orchard to write a poem, and he fell asleep with his head on a bench that used to be under grandfather’s tree. Then Great-Aunt Edith came into the orchard. She was not a Great-Aunt then, of course. She was only eighteen, with red lips and black, black hair and eyes. They say she was always full of mischief. She had been away and had just come home, and she didn’t know about the Poet. But when she saw him, sleeping there, she thought he was a cousin they had been expecting from Scotland. And she tiptoed up — so — and bent over — so — and kissed his cheek. Then he opened his big blue eyes and looked up into Edith’s face. She blushed as red as a rose, for she knew she had done a dreadful thing. This could not be her cousin from Scotland. She knew, for he had written so to her, that he had eyes as black as her own. Edith ran away and hid; and of course she felt still worse when she found out that he was a famous poet. But he wrote one of his most beautiful poems on it afterwards and sent it to her — and it was published in one of his books.”

We had SEEN it all — the sleeping genius — the roguish, red-lipped girl — the kiss dropped as lightly as a rose-petal on the sunburned cheek.

“They should have got married,” said Felix.

“Well, in a book they would have, but you see this was in real life,” said the Story Girl. “We sometimes act the story out. I like it when Peter plays the poet. I don’t like it when Dan is the poet because he is so freckled and screws his eyes up so tight. But you can hardly ever coax Peter to be the poet — except when Felicity is Edith — and Dan is so obliging that way.”

“What is Peter like?” I asked.

“Peter is splendid. His mother lives on the Markdale road and washes for a living. Peter’s father ran away and left them when Peter was only three years old. He has never come back, and they don’t know whether he is alive or dead. Isn’t that a nice way to behave to your family? Peter has worked for his board ever since he was six. Uncle Roger sends him to school, and pays him wages in summer. We all like Peter, except Felicity.”

“I like Peter well enough in his place,” said Felicity primly, “but you make far too much of him, mother says. He is only a hired boy, and he hasn’t been well brought up, and hasn’t much education. I don’t think you should make such an equal of him as you do.”

Laughter rippled over the Story Girl’s face as shadow waves go over ripe wheat before a wind.

“Peter is a real gentleman, and he is more interesting than YOU could ever be, if you were brought up and educated for a hundred years,” she said.

“He can hardly write,” said Felicity.

“William the Conqueror couldn’t write at all,” said the Story Girl crushingly.

“He never goes to church, and he never says his prayers,” retorted Felicity, uncrushed.

“I do, too,” said Peter himself, suddenly appearing through a little gap in the hedge. “I say my prayers sometimes.”

This Peter was a slim, shapely fellow, with laughing black eyes and thick black curls. Early in the season as it was, he was barefooted. His attire consisted of a faded, gingham shirt and a scanty pair of corduroy

knickerbockers; but he wore it with such an unconscious air of purple and fine linen that he seemed to be much better dressed than he really was.

“You don’t pray very often,” insisted Felicity.

“Well, God will be all the more likely to listen to me if I don’t pester Him all the time,” argued Peter.

This was rank heresy to Felicity, but the Story Girl looked as if she thought there might be something in it.

“You NEVER go to church, anyhow,” continued Felicity, determined not to be argued down.

“Well, I ain’t going to church till I’ve made up my mind whether I’m going to be a Methodist or a Presbyterian. Aunt Jane was a Methodist. My mother ain’t much of anything but I mean to be something. It’s more respectable to be a Methodist or a Presbyterian, or SOMETHING, than not to be anything. When I’ve settled what I’m to be I’m going to church same as you.”

“That’s not the same as being BORN something,” said Felicity loftily.

“I think it’s a good deal better to pick your own religion than have to take it just because it was what your folks had,” retorted Peter.

“Now, never mind quarrelling,” said Cecily. “You leave Peter alone, Felicity. Peter, this is Beverley King, and this is Felix. And we’re all going to be good friends and have a lovely summer together. Think of the games we can have! But if you go squabbling you’ll spoil it all. Peter, what are you going to do to-day?”

“Harrow the wood field and dig your Aunt Olivia’s flower beds.”

“Aunt Olivia and I planted sweet peas yesterday,” said the Story Girl, “and I planted a little bed of my own. I am NOT going to dig them up this year to see if they have sprouted. It is bad for them. I shall try to cultivate patience, no matter how long they are coming up.”

“I am going to help mother plant the vegetable garden to-day,” said Felicity.

“Oh, I never like the vegetable garden,” said the Story Girl. “Except when I am hungry. Then I DO like to go and look at the nice little rows of

onions and beets. But I love a flower garden. I think I could be always good if I lived in a garden all the time.”

“Adam and Eve lived in a garden all the time,” said Felicity, “and THEY were far from being always good.”

“They mightn’t have kept good as long as they did if they hadn’t lived in a garden,” said the Story Girl.

We were now summoned to breakfast. Peter and the Story Girl slipped away through the gap, followed by Paddy, and the rest of us walked up the orchard to the house.

“Well, what do you think of the Story Girl?” asked Felicity.

“She’s just fine,” said Felix, enthusiastically. “I never heard anything like her to tell stories.”

“She can’t cook,” said Felicity, “and she hasn’t a good complexion. Mind you, she says she’s going to be an actress when she grows up. Isn’t that dreadful?”

We didn’t exactly see why.

“Oh, because actresses are always wicked people,” said Felicity in a shocked tone. “But I daresay the Story Girl will go and be one just as soon as she can. Her father will back her up in it. He is an artist, you know.”

Evidently Felicity thought artists and actresses and all such poor trash were members one of another.

“Aunt Olivia says the Story Girl is fascinating,” said Cecily.

The very adjective! Felix and I recognized its beautiful fitness at once. Yes, the Story Girl WAS fascinating and that was the final word to be said on the subject.

Dan did not come down until breakfast was half over, and Aunt Janet talked to him after a fashion which made us realize that it would be well to keep, as the piquant country phrase went, from the rough side of her tongue. But all things considered, we liked the prospect of our summer very much. Felicity to look at — the Story Girl to tell us tales of wonder — Cecily to admire us — Dan and Peter to play with — what more could reasonable fellows want?

Chapter IV.

The Wedding Veil of the Proud Princess

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When we had lived for a fortnight in Carlisle we belonged there, and the freedom of all its small fry was conferred on us. With Peter and Dan, with Felicity and Cecily and the Story Girl, with pale, grayeyed little Sara Ray, we were boon companions. We went to school, of course; and certain home chores were assigned to each of us for the faithful performance of which we were held responsible. But we had long hours for play. Even Peter had plenty of spare time when the planting was over.

We got along very well with each other in the main, in spite of some minor differences of opinion. As for the grownup denizens of our small world, they suited us also.

We adored Aunt Olivia; she was pretty and merry and kind; and, above all, she had mastered to perfection the rare art of letting children alone. If we kept ourselves tolerably clean, and refrained from quarrelling or talking slang, Aunt Olivia did not worry us. Aunt Janet, on the contrary, gave us so much good advice and was so constantly telling us to do this or not to do the other thing, that we could not remember half her instructions, and did not try.

Uncle Roger was, as we had been informed, quite jolly and fond of teasing. We liked him; but we had an uncomfortable feeling that the meaning of his remarks was not always that which met the ear. Sometimes we believed Uncle Roger was making fun of us, and the deadly seriousness of youth in us resented that.

The Uncle Alec we gave our warmest love. We felt that we always had a friend at court in Uncle Alec, no matter what we did or left undone. And we never had to turn HIS speeches inside out to discover their meaning.

The social life of juvenile Carlisle centred in the day and Sunday Schools. We were especially interested in our Sunday School, for we were fortunate enough to be assigned to a teacher who made our lessons so interesting that we no longer regarded Sunday School attendance as a disagreeable weekly duty; but instead looked forward to it with pleasure, and tried to carry out our teacher's gentle precepts — at least on Mondays and Tuesdays. I am afraid the remembrance grew a little dim the rest of the week.

She was also deeply interested in missions; and one talk on this subject inspired the Story Girl to do a little home missionary work on her own account. The only thing she could think of, along this line, was to persuade Peter to go to church.

Felicity did not approve of the design, and said so plainly.

“He won't know how to behave, for he's never been inside a church door in his life,” she warned the Story Girl. “He'll likely do something awful, and then you'll feel ashamed and wish you'd never asked him to go, and we'll all be disgraced. It's all right to have our mite boxes for the heathen, and send missionaries to them. They're far away and we don't have to associate with them. But I don't want to have to sit in a pew with a hired boy.”

But the Story Girl undauntedly continued to coax the reluctant Peter. It was not an easy matter. Peter did not come of a churchgoing stock; and besides, he alleged, he had not yet made up his mind whether to be a Presbyterian or a Methodist.

“It isn't a bit of difference which you are,” pleaded the Story Girl. “They both go to heaven.”

“But one way must be easier or better than the other, or else they'd all be one kind,” argued Peter. “I want to find the easiest way. And I've got a hankering after the Methodists. My Aunt Jane was a Methodist.”

“Isn't she one still?” asked Felicity pertly.

“Well, I don’t know exactly. She’s dead,” said Peter rebukingly.

“Do people go on being just the same after they’re dead?”

“No, of course not. They’re angels then — not Methodists or anything, but just angels. That is, if they go to heaven.”

“S’posen they went to the other place?”

But Felicity’s theology broke down at this point. She turned her back on Peter and walked disdainfully away.

The Story Girl returned to the main point with a new argument.

“We have such a lovely minister, Peter. He looks just like the picture of St. John my father sent me, only he is old and his hair is white. I know you’d like him. And even if you are going to be a Methodist it won’t hurt you to go to the Presbyterian church. The nearest Methodist church is six miles away, at Markdale, and you can’t attend there just now. Go to the Presbyterian church until you’re old enough to have a horse.”

“But s’posen I got too fond of being Presbyterian and couldn’t change if I wanted to?” objected Peter.

Altogether, the Story Girl had a hard time of it; but she persevered; and one day she came to us with the announcement that Peter had yielded.

“He’s going to church with us tomorrow,” she said triumphantly.

We were out in Uncle Roger’s hill pasture, sitting on some smooth, round stones under a clump of birches. Behind us was an old gray fence, with violets and dandelions thick in its corners. Below us was the Carlisle valley, with its orchard-embowered homesteads, and fertile meadows. Its upper end was dim with a delicate spring mist. Winds blew up the field like wave upon wave of sweet savour — spice of bracken and balsam.

We were eating little jam “turnovers,” which Felicity had made for us. Felicity’s turnovers were perfection. I looked at her and wondered why it was not enough that she should be so pretty and capable of making such turnovers. If she were only more interesting! Felicity had not a particle of the nameless charm and allurements which hung about every motion of the Story Girl, and made itself manifest in her lightest word and most careless

glance. Ah well, one cannot have every good gift! The Story Girl had no dimples at her slim, brown wrists.

We all enjoyed our turnovers except Sara Ray. She ate hers but she knew she should not have done so. Her mother did not approve of snacks between meals, or of jam turnovers at any time. Once, when Sara was in a brown study, I asked her what she was thinking of.

“I’m trying to think of something ma hasn’t forbid,” she answered with a sigh.

We were all glad to hear that Peter was going to church, except Felicity. She was full of gloomy forebodings and warnings.

“I’m surprised at you, Felicity King,” said Cecily severely. “You ought to be glad that poor boy is going to get started in the right way.”

“There’s a great big patch on his best pair of trousers,” protested Felicity.

“Well, that’s better than a hole,” said the Story Girl, addressing herself daintily to her turnover. “God won’t notice the patch.”

“No, but the Carlisle people will,” retorted Felicity, in a tone which implied that what the Carlisle people thought was far more important. “And I don’t believe that Peter has got a decent stocking to his name. What will you feel like if he goes to church with the skin of his legs showing through the holes, Miss Story Girl?”

“I’m not a bit afraid,” said the Story Girl staunchly. “Peter knows better than that.”

“Well, all I hope is that he’ll wash behind his ears,” said Felicity resignedly.

“How is Pat to-day?” asked Cecily, by way of changing the conversation.

“Pat isn’t a bit better. He just mopes about the kitchen,” said the Story Girl anxiously. “I went out to the barn and I saw a mouse. I had a stick in my hand and I fetched a swipe at it — so. I killed it stone dead. Then I took it in to Paddy. Will you believe it? He wouldn’t even look at it. I’m so

worried. Uncle Roger says he needs a dose of physic. But how is he to be made take it, that's the question. I mixed a powder in some milk and tried to pour it down his throat while Peter held him. Just look at the scratches I got! And the milk went everywhere except down Pat's throat."

"Wouldn't it be awful if — if anything happened to Pat?"
whispered
Cecily.

"Well, we could have a jolly funeral, you know," said Dan.

We looked at him in such horror that Dan hastened to apologize.

"I'd be awful sorry myself if Pat died. But if he DID, we'd have to give him the right kind of a funeral," he protested. "Why, Paddy just seems like one of the family."

The Story Girl finished her turnover, and stretched herself out on the grasses, pillowing her chin in her hands and looking at the sky. She was bare headed, as usual, and her scarlet ribbon was bound filletwise about her head. She had twined freshly plucked dandelions around it and the effect was that of a crown of brilliant golden stars on her sleek, brown curls.

"Look at that long, thin, lacy cloud up there," she said. "What does it make you think of, girls?"

"A wedding veil," said Cecily.

"That is just what it is — the Wedding Veil of the Proud Princess. I know a story about it. I read it in a book. Once upon a time" — the Story Girl's eyes grew dreamy, and her accents floated away on the summer air like windblown rose petals—"there was a princess who was the most beautiful princess in the world, and kings from all lands came to woo her for a bride. But she was as proud as she was beautiful. She laughed all her suitors to scorn. And when her father urged her to choose one of them as her husband she drew herself up haughtily — so—"

The Story Girl sprang to her feet and for a moment we saw the proud princess of the old tale in all her scornful loveliness —

"and she said,

“‘I will not wed until a king comes who can conquer all kings. Then I shall be the wife of the king of the world and no one can hold herself higher than I.’

“So every king went to war to prove that he could conquer every one else, and there was a great deal of bloodshed and misery. But the proud princess laughed and sang, and she and her maidens worked at a wonderful lace veil which she meant to wear when the king of all kings came. It was a very beautiful veil; but her maidens whispered that a man had died and a woman’s heart had broken for every stitch set in it.

“Just when a king thought he had conquered everybody some other king would come and conquer HIM; and so it went on until it did not seem likely the proud princess would ever get a husband at all. But still her pride was so great that she would not yield, even though everybody except the kings who wanted to marry her, hated her for the suffering she had caused. One day a horn was blown at the palace gate; and there was one tall man in complete armor with his visor down, riding on a white horse. When he said he had come to marry the princess every one laughed, for he had no retinue and no beautiful apparel, and no golden crown.

“‘But I am the king who conquers all kings,’ he said.

“‘You must prove it before I shall marry you,’ said the proud princess. But she trembled and turned pale, for there was something in his voice that frightened her. And when he laughed, his laughter was still more dreadful.

“‘I can easily prove it, beautiful princess,’ he said, ‘but you must go with me to my kingdom for the proof. Marry me now, and you and I and your father and all your court will ride straightway to my kingdom; and if you are not satisfied then that I am the king who conquers all kings you may give me back my ring and return home free of me forever more.’

“It was a strange wooing and the friends of the princess begged her to refuse. But her pride whispered that it would be such a wonderful thing to be the queen of the king of the world; so she consented; and her maidens dressed her, and put on the long lace veil that had been so many years a-making. Then they were married at once, but the bridegroom never lifted his visor and no one saw his face. The proud princess held herself more

proudly than ever, but she was as white as her veil. And there was no laughter or merrymaking, such as should be at a wedding, and every one looked at every one else with fear in his eyes.

“After the wedding the bridegroom lifted his bride before him on his white horse, and her father and all the members of his court mounted, too, and rode after them. On and on they rode, and the skies grew darker and the wind blew and wailed, and the shades of evening came down. And just in the twilight they rode into a dark valley, filled with tombs and graves.

“‘Why have you brought me here?’ cried the proud princess angrily.

“‘This is my kingdom,’ he answered. ‘These are the tombs of the kings I have conquered. Behold me, beautiful princess. I am Death!’

“He lifted his visor. All saw his awful face. The proud princess shrieked.

“‘Come to my arms, my bride,’ he cried. ‘I have won you fairly. I am the king who conquers all kings!’

“He clasped her fainting form to his breast and spurred his white horse to the tombs. A tempest of rain broke over the valley and blotted them from sight. Very sadly the old king and courtiers rode home, and never, never again did human eye behold the proud princess. But when those long, white clouds sweep across the sky, the country people in the land where she lived say, ‘Look you, there is the Wedding Veil of the Proud Princess.’”

The weird spell of the tale rested on us for some moments after the Story Girl had finished. We had walked with her in the place of death and grown cold with the horror that chilled the heart of the poor princess. Dan presently broke the spell.

“You see it doesn’t do to be too proud, Felicity,” he remarked, giving her a poke. “You’d better not say too much about Peter’s patches.”

Peter Goes to Church

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There was no Sunday School the next afternoon, as superintendent and teachers wished to attend a communion service at Markdale. The Carlisle service was in the evening, and at sunset we were waiting at Uncle Alec's front door for Peter and the Story Girl.

None of the grownups were going to church. Aunt Olivia had a sick headache and Uncle Roger stayed home with her. Aunt Janet and Uncle Alec had gone to the Markdale service and had not yet returned.

Felicity and Cecily were wearing their new summer muslins for the first time — and were acutely conscious of the fact. Felicity, her pink and white face shadowed by her drooping, forget-me-not-wreathed, leghorn hat, was as beautiful as usual; but Cecily, having tortured her hair with curl papers all night, had a rampant bush of curls all about her head which quite destroyed the sweet, nun-like expression of her little features. Cecily cherished a grudge against fate because she had not been given naturally curly hair as had the other two girls. But she attained the desire of her heart on Sundays at least, and was quite well satisfied. It was impossible to convince her that the satin smooth lustre of her weekday tresses was much more becoming to her.

Presently Peter and the Story Girl appeared, and we were all more or less relieved to see that Peter looked quite respectable, despite the indisputable patch on his trousers. His face was rosy, his thick black curls were smoothly combed, and his tie was neatly bowed; but it was his legs which we scrutinized most anxiously. At first glance they seemed well enough; but closer inspection revealed something not altogether customary.

“What is the matter with your stockings, Peter?” asked Dan bluntly.

“Oh, I hadn't a pair without holes in the legs,” answered Peter easily, “because ma hadn't time to darn them this week. So I put on two pairs.

The holes don't come in the same places, and you'd never notice them unless you looked right close."

"Have you got a cent for collection?" demanded Felicity.

"I've got a Yankee cent. I s'pose it will do, won't it?"

Felicity shook her head vehemently.

"Oh, no, no. It may be all right to pass a Yankee cent on a store keeper or an egg peddler, but it would never do for church."

"I'll have to go without any, then," said Peter. "I haven't another cent. I only get fifty cents a week and I give it all to ma last night."

But Peter must have a cent. Felicity would have given him one herself — and she was none too lavish of her coppers — rather than have him go without one. Dan, however, lent him one, on the distinct understanding that it was to be repaid the next week.

Uncle Roger wandered by at this moment and, beholding Peter, said,

"'Is Saul also among the prophets?' What can have induced you to turn churchgoer, Peter, when all Olivia's gentle persuasions were of no avail? The old, old argument I suppose—'beauty draws us with a single hair.'"

Uncle Roger looked quizzically at Felicity. We did not know what his quotations meant, but we understood he thought Peter was going to church because of Felicity. Felicity tossed her head.

"It isn't my fault that he's going to church," she said snappishly. "It's the Story Girl's doings."

Uncle Roger sat down on the doorstep, and gave himself over to one of the silent, inward paroxysms of laughter we all found so very aggravating. He shook his big, blond head, shut his eyes, and murmured,

"Not her fault! Oh, Felicity, Felicity, you'll be the death of your dear Uncle yet if you don't watch out."

Felicity started off indignantly, and we followed, picking up Sara Ray at the foot of the hill.

The Carlisle church was a very old-fashioned one, with a square, ivy-hung tower. It was shaded by tall elms, and the graveyard surrounded it completely, many of the graves being directly under its windows. We

always took the corner path through it, passing the King plot where our kindred of four generations slept in a green solitude of wavering light and shadow.

There was Great-grandfather King's flat tombstone of rough Island sandstone, so overgrown with ivy that we could hardly read its lengthy inscription, recording his whole history in brief, and finishing with eight lines of original verse composed by his widow. I do not think that poetry was Great-grandmother King's strong point. When Felix read it, on our first Sunday in Carlisle, he remarked dubiously that it LOOKED like poetry but didn't SOUND like it.

There, too, slept the Emily whose faithful spirit was supposed to haunt the orchard; but Edith who had kissed the poet lay not with her kindred. She had died in a far, foreign land, and the murmur of an alien sea sounded about her grave.

White marble tablets, ornamented with weeping willow trees, marked where Grandfather and Grandmother King were buried, and a single shaft of red Scotch granite stood between the graves of Aunt Felicity and Uncle Felix. The Story Girl lingered to lay a bunch of wild violets, misty blue and faintly sweet, on her mother's grave; and then she read aloud the verse on the stone.

““They were lovely and pleasant in their lives and in their death they were not divided.””

The tones of her voice brought out the poignant and immortal beauty and pathos of that wonderful old lament. The girls wiped their eyes; and we boys felt as if we might have done so, too, had nobody been looking. What better epitaph could any one wish than to have it said that he was lovely and pleasant in his life? When I heard the Story Girl read it I made a secret compact with myself that I would try to deserve such an epitaph.

“I wish I had a family plot,” said Peter, rather wistfully. “I haven't ANYTHING you fellows have. The Craigs are just buried anywhere they happen to die.”

“I'd like to be buried here when I die,” said Felix. “But I hope it won't be for a good while yet,” he added in a livelier tone, as we moved onward to

the church.

The interior of the church was as old-fashioned as its exterior. It was furnished with square box pews; the pulpit was a “wine-glass” one, and was reached by a steep, narrow flight of steps. Uncle Alec’s pew was at the top of the church, quite near the pulpit.

Peter’s appearance did not attract as much attention as we had fondly expected. Indeed, nobody seemed to notice him at all. The lamps were not yet lighted and the church was filled with a soft twilight and hush. Outside, the sky was purple and gold and silvery green, with a delicate tangle of rosy cloud above the elms.

“Isn’t it awful nice and holy in here?” whispered Peter reverently. “I didn’t know church was like this. It’s nice.”

Felicity frowned at him, and the Story Girl touched her with her slippered foot to remind him that he must not talk in church. Peter stiffened up and sat at attention during the service. Nobody could have behaved better. But when the sermon was over and the collection was being taken up, he made the sensation which his entrance had not produced.

Elder Frewen, a tall, pale man, with long, sandy sidewhiskers, appeared at the door of our pew with the collection plate. We knew Elder Frewen quite well and like him; he was Aunt Janet’s cousin and often visited her. The contrast between his weekday jollity and the unearthly solemnity of his countenance on Sundays always struck us as very funny. It seemed so to strike Peter; for as Peter dropped his cent into the plate he laughed aloud!

Everybody looked at our pew. I have always wondered why Felicity did not die of mortification on the spot. The Story Girl turned white, and Cecily turned red. As for that poor, unlucky Peter, the shame of his countenance was pitiful to behold. He never lifted his head for the remainder of the service; and he followed us down the aisle and across the graveyard like a beaten dog. None of us uttered a word until we reached the road, lying in the white moonshine of the May night. Then Felicity broke the tense silence by remarking to the Story Girl,

“I told you so!”

The Story Girl made no response. Peter sidled up to her.

“I’m awful sorry,” he said contritely. “I never meant to laugh. It just happened before I could stop myself. It was this way—”

“Don’t you ever speak to me again,” said the Story Girl, in a tone of cold concentrated fury. “Go and be a Methodist, or a Mohammedan, or ANYTHING! I don’t care what you are! You have HUMILIATED me!”

She marched off with Sara Ray, and Peter dropped back to us with a frightened face.

“What is it I’ve done to her?” he whispered. “What does that big word mean?”

“Oh, never mind,” I said crossly — for I felt that Peter HAD disgraced us—”She’s just mad — and no wonder. Whatever made you act so crazy, Peter?”

“Well, I didn’t mean to. And I wanted to laugh twice before that and DIDN’T. It was the Story Girl’s stories made me want to laugh, so I don’t think it’s fair for her to be mad at me. She hadn’t ought to tell me stories about people if she don’t want me to laugh when I see them. When I looked at Samuel Ward I thought of him getting up in meeting one night, and praying that he might be guided in his upsetting and downrising. I remembered the way she took him off, and I wanted to laugh. And then I looked at the pulpit and thought of the story she told about the old Scotch minister who was too fat to get in at the door of it, and had to h’ist himself by his two hands over it, and then whispered to the other minister so that everybody heard him.

“‘*This pulpit door was made for speerits*’ — and I wanted to laugh. And then Mr. Frewen come — and I thought of her story about his sidewhiskers — how when his first wife died of information of the lungs he went courting Celia Ward, and Celia told him she wouldn’t marry him unless he shaved them whiskers off. And he wouldn’t, just to be stubborn. And one day one of them caught fire, when he was burning brush, and

burned off, and every one thought he'd HAVE to shave the other off then. But he didn't and just went round with one whisker till the burned one grew out. And then Celia gave in and took him, because she saw there wasn't no hope of HIM ever giving in. I just remembered that story, and I thought I could see him, taking up the cents so solemn, with one long whisker; and the laugh just laughed itself before I could help it."

We all exploded with laughter on the spot, much to the horror of Mrs. Abraham Ward, who was just driving past, and who came up the next day and told Aunt Janet we had "acted scandalous" on the road home from church. We felt ashamed ourselves, because we knew people should conduct themselves decently and in order on Sunday farings-forth. But, as with Peter, it "had laughed itself."

Even Felicity laughed. Felicity was not nearly so angry with Peter as might have been expected. She even walked beside him and let him carry her Bible. They talked quite confidentially. Perhaps she forgave him the more easily, because he had justified her in her predictions, and thus afforded her a decided triumph over the Story Girl.

"I'm going to keep on going to church," Peter told her. "I like it. Sermons are more int'resting than I thought, and I like the singing. I wish I could make up my mind whether to be a Presbyterian or a Methodist. I s'pose I might ask the ministers about it."

"Oh, no, no, don't do that," said Felicity in alarm. "Ministers wouldn't want to be bothered with such questions."

"Why not? What are ministers for if they ain't to tell people how to get to heaven?"

"Oh, well, it's all right for grownups to ask them things, of course. But it isn't respectful for little boys — especially hired boys."

"I don't see why. But anyhow, I s'pose it wouldn't be much use, because if he was a Presbyterian minister he'd say I ought to be a Presbyterian, and if he was a Methodist he'd tell me to be one, too. Look here, Felicity, what IS the difference between them?"

"I — I don't know," said Felicity reluctantly. "I s'pose children can't understand such things. There must be a great deal of difference, of course,

if we only knew what it was. Anyhow, I am a Presbyterian, and I'm glad of it."

We walked on in silence for a time, thinking our own young thoughts. Presently they were scattered by an abrupt and startling question from Peter.

"What does God look like?" he said.

It appeared that none of us had any idea.

"The Story Girl would prob'ly know," said Cecily.

"I wish I knew," said Peter gravely. "I wish I could see a picture of God. It would make Him seem lots more real."

"I've often wondered myself what he looks like," said Felicity in a burst of confidence. Even in Felicity, so it would seem, there were depths of thought unplumbed.

"I've seen pictures of Jesus," said Felix meditatively. "He looks just like a man, only better and kinder. But now that I come to think of it, I've never seen a picture of God."

"Well, if there isn't one in Toronto it isn't likely there's one anywhere," said Peter disappointedly. "I saw a picture of the devil once," he added. "It was in a book my Aunt Jane had. She got it for a prize in school. My Aunt Jane was clever."

"It couldn't have been a very good book if there was such a picture in it," said Felicity.

"It was a real good book. My Aunt Jane wouldn't have a book that wasn't good," retorted Peter sulkily.

He refused to discuss the subject further, somewhat to our disappointment. For we had never seen a picture of the person referred to, and we were rather curious regarding it.

"We'll ask Peter to describe it sometime when he's in a better humour," whispered Felix.

Sara Ray having turned in at her own gate, I ran ahead to join the Story Girl, and we walked up the hill together. She had recovered her calmness of mind, but she made no reference to Peter. When we reached our lane and passed under Grandfather King's big willow the fragrance of the

orchard struck us in the face like a wave. We could see the long rows of trees, a white gladness in the moonshine. It seemed to us that there was in the orchard something different from other orchards that we had known. We were too young to analyze the vague sensation. In later years we were to understand that it was because the orchard blossomed not only apple blossoms but all the love, faith, joy, pure happiness and pure sorrow of those who had made it and walked there.

“The orchard doesn’t seem the same place by moonlight at all,” said the Story Girl dreamily. “It’s lovely, but it’s different. When I was very small I used to believe the fairies danced in it on moonlight nights. I would like to believe it now but I can’t.”

“Why not?”

“Oh, it’s so hard to believe things you know are not true. It was Uncle Edward who told me there were no such things as fairies. I was just seven. He is a minister, so of course I knew he spoke the truth. It was his duty to tell me, and I do not blame him, but I have never felt quite the same to Uncle Edward since.”

Ah, do we ever “feel quite the same” towards people who destroy our illusions? Shall I ever be able to forgive the brutal creature who first told me there was no such person as Santa Claus? He was a boy, three years older than myself; and he may now, for aught I know, be a most useful and respectable member of society, beloved by his kind. But I know what he must ever seem to me!

We waited at Uncle Alec’s door for the others to come up. Peter was by way of skulking shamefacedly past into the shadows; but the Story Girl’s brief, bitter anger had vanished.

“Wait for me, Peter,” she called.

She went over to him and held out her hand.

“I forgive you,” she said graciously.

Felix and I felt that it would really be worth while to offend her, just to be forgiven in such an adorable voice. Peter eagerly grasped her hand.

“I tell you what, Story Girl, I’m awfully sorry I laughed in church, but you needn’t be afraid I ever will again. No, sir! And I’m going to church

and Sunday School regular, and I'll say my prayers every night. I want to be like the rest of you. And look here! I've thought of the way my Aunt Jane used to give medicine to a cat. You mix the powder in lard, and spread it on his paws and his sides and he'll lick it off, 'cause a cat can't stand being messy. If Paddy isn't any better tomorrow, we'll do that."

They went away together hand in hand, children-wise, up the lane of spruces crossed with bars of moonlight. And there was peace over all that fresh and flowery land, and peace in our little hearts.

The Mystery of Golden Milestone

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Paddy was smeared with medicated lard the next day, all of us assisting at the rite, although the Story Girl was high priestess. Then, out of regard for mats and cushions, he was kept in durance vile in the granary until he had licked his fur clean. This treatment being repeated every day for a week, Pat recovered his usual health and spirits, and our minds were set at rest to enjoy the next excitement — collecting for a school library fund.

Our teacher thought it would be an excellent thing to have a library in connection with the school; and he suggested that each of the pupils should try to see how much money he or she could raise for the project during the month of June. We might earn it by honest toil, or gather it in by contributions levied on our friends.

The result was a determined rivalry as to which pupil should collect the largest sum; and this rivalry was especially intense in our home coterie.

Our relatives started us with a quarter apiece. For the rest, we knew we must depend on our own exertions. Peter was handicapped at the beginning by the fact that he had no family friend to finance him.

“If my Aunt Jane’d been living she’d have given me something,” he remarked. “And if my father hadn’t run away he might have given me something too. But I’m going to do the best I can anyhow. Your Aunt Olivia says I can have the job of gathering the eggs, and I’m to have one egg out of every dozen to sell for myself.”

Felicity made a similar bargain with her mother. The Story Girl and Cecily were each to be paid ten cents a week for washing dishes in their respective homes. Felix and Dan contracted to keep the gardens free from weeds. I caught brook trout in the westering valley of spruces and sold them for a cent apiece.

Sara Ray was the only unhappy one among us. She could do nothing. She had no relatives in Carlisle except her mother, and her mother did not approve of the school library project, and would not give Sara a cent, or put her in any way of earning one. To Sara, this was humiliation indescribable. She felt herself an outcast and an alien to our busy little circle, where each member counted every day, with miserly delight, his slowly increasing hoard of small cash.

"I'm just going to pray to God to send me some money," she announced desperately at last.

"I don't believe that will do any good," said Dan. "He gives lots of things, but he doesn't give money, because people can earn that for themselves."

"I can't," said Sara, with passionate defiance. "I think He ought to take that into account."

"Don't worry, dear," said Cecily, who always poured balm. "If you can't collect any money everybody will know it isn't your fault."

"I won't ever feel like reading a single book in the library if I can't give something to it," mourned Sara.

Dan and the girls and I were sitting in a row on Aunt Olivia's garden fence, watching Felix weed. Felix worked well, although he did not like weeding—"fat boys never do," Felicity informed him. Felix pretended not to hear her, but I knew he did, because his ears grew red. Felix's face never blushed, but his ears always gave him away. As for Felicity, she did not say things like that out of malice prepense. It never occurred to her that Felix did not like to be called fat.

"I always feel so sorry for the poor weeds," said the Story Girl dreamily. "It must be very hard to be rooted up."

"They shouldn't grow in the wrong place," said Felicity mercilessly.

"When weeds go to heaven I suppose they will be flowers," continued the Story Girl.

"You do think such queer things," said Felicity.

"A rich man in Toronto has a floral clock in his garden," I said. "It looks just like the face of a clock, and there are flowers in it that open at

every hour, so that you can always tell the time.”

“Oh, I wish we had one here,” exclaimed Cecily.

“What would be the use of it?” asked the Story Girl a little disdainfully. “Nobody ever wants to know the time in a garden.”

I slipped away at this point, suddenly remembering that it was time to take a dose of magic seed. I had bought it from Billy Robinson three days before in school. Billy had assured me that it would make me grow fast.

I was beginning to feel secretly worried because I did not grow. I had overheard Aunt Janet say I was going to be short, like Uncle Alec. Now, I loved Uncle Alec, but I wanted to be taller than he was. So when Billy confided to me, under solemn promise of secrecy, that he had some “magic seed,” which would make boys grow, and would sell me a box of it for ten cents, I jumped at the offer. Billy was taller than any boy of his age in Carlisle, and he assured me it all came from taking magic seed.

“I was a regular runt before I begun,” he said, “and look at me now. I got it from Peg Bowen. She’s a witch, you know. I wouldn’t go near her again for a bushel of magic seed. It was an awful experience. I haven’t much left, but I guess I’ve enough to do me till I’m as tall as I want to be. You must take a pinch of the seed every three hours, walking backward, and you must never tell a soul you’re taking it, or it won’t work. I wouldn’t spare any of it to any one but you.”

I felt deeply grateful to Billy, and sorry that I had not liked him better. Somehow, nobody did like Billy Robinson over and above. But I vowed I WOULD like him in future. I paid him the ten cents cheerfully and took the magic seed as directed, measuring myself carefully every day by a mark on the hall door. I could not see any advance in growth yet, but then I had been taking it only three days.

One day the Story Girl had an inspiration.

“Let us go and ask the Awkward Man and Mr. Campbell for a contribution to the library fund,” she said. “I am sure no one else has asked them, because nobody in Carlisle is related to them. Let us all go, and if they give us anything we’ll divide it equally among us.”

It was a daring proposition, for both Mr. Campbell and the Awkward Man were regarded as eccentric personages; and Mr. Campbell was supposed to detest children. But where the Story Girl led we would follow to the death. The next day being Saturday, we started out in the afternoon.

We took a short cut to Golden Milestone, over a long, green, dewy land full of placid meadows, where sunshine had fallen asleep. At first all was not harmonious. Felicity was in an ill humour; she had wanted to wear her second best dress, but Aunt Janet had decreed that her school clothes were good enough to go “traipsing about in the dust.” Then the Story Girl arrived, arrayed not in any second best but in her very best dress and hat, which her father had sent her from Paris — a dress of soft, crimson silk, and a white leghorn hat encircled by flame-red poppies. Neither Felicity nor Cecily could have worn it; but it became the Story Girl perfectly. In it she was a thing of fire and laughter and glow, as if the singular charm of her temperament were visible and tangible in its vivid colouring and silken texture.

“I shouldn’t think you’d put on your best clothes to go begging for the library in,” said Felicity cuttingly.

“Aunt Olivia says that when you are going to have an important interview with a man you ought to look your very best,” said the Story Girl, giving her skirt a lustrous swirl and enjoying the effect.

“Aunt Olivia spoils you,” said Felicity.

“She doesn’t either, Felicity King! Aunt Olivia is just sweet. She kisses me goodnight every night, and your mother NEVER kisses you.”

“My mother doesn’t make kisses so common,” retorted Felicity.

“But she gives us pie for dinner every day.”

“So does Aunt Olivia.”

“Yes, but look at the difference in the size of the pieces! And Aunt Olivia only gives you skim milk. My mother gives us

cream.”

“Aunt Olivia’s skim milk is as good as your mother’s cream,” cried the Story Girl hotly.

“Oh, girls, don’t fight,” said Cecily, the peacemaker. “It’s such a nice day, and we’ll have a nice time if you don’t spoil it by fighting.”

“We’re NOT fighting,” said Felicity. “And I like Aunt Olivia. But my mother is just as good as Aunt Olivia, there now!”

“Of course she is. Aunt Janet is splendid,” agreed the Story Girl.

They smiled at each other amicably. Felicity and the Story Girl were really quite fond of each other, under the queer surface friction that commonly resulted from their intercourse.

“You said once you knew a story about the Awkward Man,” said Felix. “You might tell it to us.”

“All right,” agreed the Story Girl. “The only trouble is, I don’t know the whole story. But I’ll tell you all I do know. I call it ‘The Mystery of the Golden Milestone.’”

“Oh, I don’t believe that story is true,” said Felicity. “I believe Mrs. Griggs was just romancing. She DOES romance, mother says.”

“Yes; but I don’t believe she could ever have thought of such a thing as this herself, so I believe it must be true,” said the Story Girl. “Anyway, this is the story, boys. You know the Awkward Man has lived alone ever since his mother died, ten years ago. Abel Griggs is his hired man, and he and his wife live in a little house down the Awkward Man’s lane. Mrs. Griggs makes his bread for him, and she cleans up his house now and then. She says he keeps it very neat. But till last fall there was one room she never saw. It was always locked — the west one, looking out over his garden. One day last fall the Awkward Man went to Summerside, and Mrs. Griggs scrubbed his kitchen. Then she went over the whole house and she

tried the door of the west room. Mrs. Griggs is a VERY curious woman. Uncle Roger says all women have as much curiosity as is good for them, but Mrs. Griggs has more. She expected to find the door locked as usual. It was NOT locked. She opened it and went in. What do you suppose she found?"

"Something like — like Bluebeard's chamber?" suggested Felix in a scared tone.

"Oh, no, NO! Nothing like THAT could happen in Prince Edward Island. But if there HAD been beautiful wives hanging up by their hair all round the walls I don't believe Mrs. Griggs could have been much more astonished. The room had never been furnished in his mother's time, but now it was ELEGANTLY furnished, though Mrs. Griggs says SHE doesn't know when or how that furniture was brought there. She says she never saw a room like it in a country farmhouse. It was like a bedroom and sitting-room combined. The floor was covered with a carpet like green velvet. There were fine lace curtains at the windows and beautiful pictures on the walls. There was a little white bed, and a dressing-table, a bookcase full of books, a stand with a work basket on it, and a rocking-chair. There was a woman's picture above the bookcase. Mrs. Griggs says she thinks it was a coloured photograph, but she didn't know who it was. Anyway, it was a very pretty girl. But the most amazing thing of all was that A WOMAN'S DRESS was hanging over a chair by the table. Mrs. Griggs says it NEVER belonged to Jasper Dale's mother, for she thought it a sin to wear anything but print and druggit; and this dress was of PALE BLUE silk. Besides that, there was a pair of blue satin slippers on the floor beside it — HIGH-HEELED slippers. And on the fly-leaves of the books the name 'Alice' was written. Now, there never was an Alice in the Dale connection and nobody ever heard of the Awkward Man having a sweetheart. There, isn't that a lovely mystery?"

"It's a pretty queer yarn," said Felix. "I wonder if it is true — and what it means."

"I intend to find out what it means," said the Story Girl. "I am going to get acquainted with the Awkward Man sometime, and then I'll find out his

Alice-secret.”

“I don’t see how you’ll ever get acquainted with him,” said Felicity. “He never goes anywhere except to church. He just stays home and reads books when he isn’t working. Mother says he is a perfect hermit.”

“I’ll manage it somehow,” said the Story Girl — and we had no doubt that she would. “But I must wait until I’m a little older, for he wouldn’t tell the secret of the west room to a little girl. And I mustn’t wait till I’m TOO old, for he is frightened of grownup girls, because he thinks they laugh at his awkwardness. I know I will like him. He has such a nice face, even if he is awkward. He looks like a man you could tell things to.”

“Well, I’d like a man who could move around without falling over his own feet,” said Felicity. “And then the look of him! Uncle Roger says he is long, lank, lean, narrow, and contracted.”

“Things always sound worse than they are when Uncle Roger says them,” said the Story Girl. “Uncle Edward says Jasper Dale is a very clever man and it’s a great pity he wasn’t able to finish his college course. He went to college two years, you know. Then his father died, and he stayed home with his mother because she was very delicate. I call him a hero. I wonder if it is true that he writes poetry. Mrs. Griggs says it is. She says she has seen him writing it in a brown book. She said she couldn’t get near enough to read it, but she knew it was poetry by the shape of it.”

“Very likely. If that blue silk dress story is true, I’d believe ANYTHING of him,” said Felicity.

We were near Golden Milestone now. The house was a big, weather-gray structure, overgrown with vines and climbing roses. Something about the three square windows in the second story gave it an appearance of winking at us in a friendly fashion through its vines — at least, so the Story Girl said; and, indeed, we could see it for ourselves after she had once pointed it out to us.

We did not get into the house, however. We met the Awkward man in his yard, and he gave us a quarter apiece for our library. He did not seem

awkward or shy; but then we were only children, and his foot was on his native heath.

He was a tall, slender man, who did not look his forty years, so unwrinkled was his high, white forehead, so clear and lustrous his large, dark-blue eyes, so free from silver threads his rather long black hair. He had large hands and feet, and walked with a slight stoop. I am afraid we stared at him rather rudely while the Story Girl talked to him. But was not an Awkward Man, who was also a hermit and kept blue silk dresses in a locked room, and possibly wrote poetry, a legitimate object of curiosity? I leave it to you.

When we got away we compared notes, and found that we all liked him — and this, although he had said little and had appeared somewhat glad to get rid of us.

“He gave us the money like a gentleman,” said the Story Girl. “I felt he didn’t grudge it. And now for Mr. Campbell. It was on HIS account I put on my red silk. I don’t suppose the Awkward Man noticed it at all, but Mr. Campbell will, or I’m much mistaken.”

How Betty Sherman Won A Husband

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The rest of us did not share the Story Girl's enthusiasm regarding our call on Mr. Campbell. We secretly dreaded it. If, as was said, he detested children, who knew what sort of a reception we might meet?

Mr. Campbell was a rich, retired farmer, who took life easily. He had visited New York and Boston, Toronto and Montreal; he had even been as far as the Pacific coast. Therefore he was regarded in Carlisle as a much travelled man; and he was known to be "well read" and intelligent. But it was also known that Mr. Campbell was not always in a good humour. If he liked you there was nothing he would not do for you; if he disliked you — well, you were not left in ignorance of it. In short, we had the impression that Mr. Campbell resembled the famous little girl with the curl in the middle of her forehead. "When he was good, he was very, very good, and when he was bad he was horrid." What if this were one of his horrid days?

"He can't DO anything to us, you know," said the Story Girl. "He may be rude, but that won't hurt any one but himself."

"Hard words break no bones," observed Felicity philosophically.

"But they hurt your feelings. I am afraid of Mr. Campbell," said Cecily candidly.

"Perhaps we'd better give up and go home," suggested Dan.

"You can go home if you like," said the Story Girl scornfully.

"But I am going to see Mr. Campbell. I know I can manage him. But if I have to go alone, and he gives me anything, I'll keep it all for my own collection, mind you."

That settled it. We were not going to let the Story Girl get ahead of us in the manner of collecting.

Mr. Campbell's housekeeper ushered us into his parlour and left us. Presently Mr. Campbell himself was standing in the doorway, looking us over. We took heart of grace. It seemed to be one of his good days, for there was a quizzical smile on his broad, clean-shaven, strongly-featured face. Mr. Campbell was a tall man, with a massive head, well thatched with thick, black hair, gray-streaked. He had big, black eyes, with many wrinkles around them, and a thin, firm, long-lipped mouth. We thought him handsome, for an old man.

His gaze wandered over us with uncomplimentary indifference until it fell on the Story Girl, leaning back in an armchair. She looked like a slender red lily in the unstudied grace of her attitude. A spark flashed into Mr. Campbell's black eyes.

"Is this a Sunday School deputation?" he inquired rather ironically.

"No. We have come to ask a favour of you," said the Story Girl.

The magic of her voice worked its will on Mr. Campbell, as on all others. He came in, sat down, hooked his thumb into his vest pocket, and smiled at her.

"What is it?" he asked.

"We are collecting for our school library, and we have called to ask you for a contribution," she replied.

"Why should I contribute to your school library?" demanded Mr. Campbell.

This was a poser for us. Why should he, indeed? But the Story Girl was quite equal to it. Leaning forward, and throwing an indescribable witchery into tone and eyes and smile, she said,

"Because a lady asks you."

Mr. Campbell chuckled.

"The best of all reasons," he said. "But see here, my dear young lady, I'm an old miser and curmudgeon, as you may have heard. I HATE to part with my money, even for a good reason. And I NEVER part with any of it, unless I am to receive some benefit from the expenditure. Now, what

earthly good could I get from your three by six school library? None whatever. But I shall make you a fair offer. I have heard from my housekeeper's urchin of a son that you are a 'master hand' to tell stories. Tell me one, here and now. I shall pay you in proportion to the entertainment you afford me. Come now, and do your prettiest."

There was a fine mockery in his tone that put the Story Girl on her mettle instantly. She sprang to her feet, an amazing change coming over her. Her eyes flashed and burned; crimson spots glowed in her cheeks.

"I shall tell you the story of the Sherman girls, and how Betty Sherman won a husband," she said.

We gasped. Was the Story Girl crazy? Or had she forgotten that Betty Sherman was Mr. Campbell's own great-grandmother, and that her method of winning a husband was not exactly in accordance with maidenly traditions.

But Mr. Campbell chuckled again.

"An excellent test," he said. "If you can amuse ME with that story you must be a wonder. I've heard it so often that it has no more interest for me than the alphabet."

"One cold winter day, eighty years ago," began the Story Girl without further parley, "Donald Fraser was sitting by the window of his new house, playing his fiddle for company, and looking out over the white, frozen bay before his door. It was bitter, bitter cold, and a storm was brewing. But, storm, or no storm, Donald meant to go over the bay that evening to see Nancy Sherman. He was thinking of her as he played 'Annie Laurie,' for Nancy was more beautiful than the lady of the song. 'Her face, it is the fairest that e'er the sun shone on,' hummed Donald — and oh, he thought so, too! He did not know whether Nancy cared for him or not. He had many rivals. But he knew that if she would not come to be the mistress of his new house no one else ever should. So he sat there that afternoon and dreamed of her, as he played sweet old songs and rollicking jigs on his fiddle.

“While he was playing a sleigh drove up to the door, and Neil Campbell came in. Donald was not overly glad to see him, for he suspected where he was going. Neil Campbell, who was Highland Scotch and lived down at Berwick, was courting Nancy Sherman, too; and, what was far worse, Nancy’s father favoured him, because he was a richer man than Donald Fraser. But Donald was not going to show all he thought — Scotch people never do — and he pretended to be very glad to see Neil and made him heartily welcome.

“Neil sat down by the roaring fire, looking quite well satisfied with himself. It was ten miles from Berwick to the bay shore, and a call at a half way house was just the thing. Then Donald brought out the whisky. They always did that eighty years ago, you know. If you were a woman, you could give your visitors a dish of tea; but if you were a man and did not offer them a ‘taste’ of whisky, you were thought either very mean or very ignorant.

“‘You look cold,’ said Donald, in his great, hearty voice. ‘Sit nearer the fire, man, and put a bit of warmth in your veins. It’s bitter cold the day. And now tell me the Berwick news. Has Jean McLean made up with her man yet? And is it true that Sandy McQuarrie is to marry Kate Ferguson? ‘Twill be a match now! Sure, with her red hair, Sandy will not be like to lose his bride past finding.’

“Neil had plenty of news to tell. And the more whisky he drank the more he told. He didn’t notice that Donald was not taking much. Neil talked on and on, and of course he soon began to tell things it would have been much wiser not to tell. Finally he told Donald that he was going over the bay to ask Nancy Sherman that very night to marry him. And if she would have him, then Donald and all the folks should see a wedding that WAS a wedding.

“Oh, wasn’t Donald taken aback! This was more than he had expected. Neil hadn’t been courting Nancy very long, and Donald never dreamed he would propose to her QUITE so soon.

“At first Donald didn’t know what to do. He felt sure deep down in his heart, that Nancy liked HIM. She was very shy and modest, but you know

a girl can let a man see she likes him without going out of her way. But Donald knew that if Neil proposed first he would have the best chance. Neil was rich and the Shermans were poor, and old Elias Sherman would have the most to say in the matter. If he told Nancy she must take Neil Campbell she would never dream of disobeying him. Old Elias Sherman was a man who had to be obeyed. But if Nancy had only promised some one else first her father would not make her break her word.

“Wasn’t it a hard plight for poor Donald? But he was a Scotchman, you know, and it’s pretty hard to stick a Scotchman long. Presently a twinkle came into his eyes, for he remembered that all was fair in love and war. So he said to Neil, oh, so persuasively,

“‘Have some more, man, have some more. ‘Twill keep the heart in you in the teeth of that wind. Help yourself. There’s plenty more where that came from.’

“Neil didn’t want MUCH persuasion. He took some more, and said slyly,

“‘Is it going over the bay the night that yourself will be doing?’

“Donald shook his head.

“‘I had thought of it,’ he owned, ‘but it looks a wee like a storm, and my sleigh is at the blacksmith’s to be shod. If I went it must be on Black Dan’s back, and he likes a canter over the ice in a snowstorm as little as I. His own fireside is the best place for a man tonight, Campbell. Have another taste, man, have another taste.’

“Neil went on ‘tasting,’ and that sly Donald sat there with a sober face, but laughing eyes, and coaxed him on. At last Neil’s head fell forward on his breast, and he was sound asleep. Donald got up, put on his overcoat and cap, and went to the door.

“‘May your sleep be long and sweet, man,’ he said, laughing softly, ‘and as for the waking, ‘twill be betwixt you and me.’

“With that he untied Neil’s horse, climbed into Neil’s sleigh, and tucked Neil’s buffalo robe about him.

“‘Now, Bess, old girl, do your bonniest,’ he said. ‘There’s more than you know hangs on your speed. If the Campbell wakes too soon Black Dan

could show you a pair of clean heels for all your good start. On, my girl.'

"Brown Bess went over the ice like a deer, and Donald kept thinking of what he should say to Nancy — and more still of what she would say to him. SUPPOSE he was mistaken. SUPPOSE she said 'no!'

"'Neil would have the laugh on me then. Sure he's sleeping well. And the snow is coming soon. There'll be a bonny swirl on the bay ere long. I hope no harm will come to the lad if he starts to cross. When he wakes he'll be in such a fine Highland temper that he'll never stop to think of danger. Well, Bess, old girl, here we are. Now, Donald Fraser, pluck up heart and play the man. Never flinch because a slip of a lass looks scornful at you out of the bonniest dark-blue eyes on earth.'

"But in spite of his bold words Donald's heart was thumping as he drove into the Sherman yard. Nancy was there milking a cow by the stable door, but she stood up when she saw Donald coming. Oh, she was very beautiful! Her hair was like a skein of golden silk, and her eyes were as blue as the gulf water when the sun breaks out after a storm. Donald felt more nervous than ever. But he knew he must make the most of his chance. He might not see Nancy alone again before Neil came. He caught her hand and stammered out,

"'Nan, lass, I love you. You may think 'tis a hasty wooing, but that's a story I can tell you later maybe. I know well I'm not worthy of you, but if true love could make a man worthy there'd be none before me. Will you have me, Nan?'

"Nancy didn't SAY she would have him. She just LOOKED it,
and

Donald kissed her right there in the snow.

"The next morning the storm was over. Donald knew Neil must be soon on his track. He did not want to make the Sherman house the scene of a quarrel, so he resolved to get away before the Campbell came. He persuaded Nancy to go with him to visit some friends in another settlement. As he brought Neil's sleigh up to the door he saw a black speck far out on the bay and laughed.

“‘Black Dan goes well, but he’ll not be quick enough,’ he said.

“Half an hour later Neil Campbell rushed into the Sherman kitchen and oh, how angry he was! There was nobody there but Betty Sherman, and Betty was not afraid of him. She was never afraid of anybody. She was very handsome, with hair as brown as October nuts and black eyes and crimson cheeks; and she had always been in love with Neil Campbell herself.

“‘Good morning, Mr. Campbell,’ she said, with a toss of her head. ‘It’s early abroad you are. And on Black Dan, no less! Was I mistaken in thinking that Donald Fraser said once that his favourite horse should never be backed by any man but him? But doubtless a fair exchange is no robbery, and Brown Bess is a good mare in her way.’

“‘Where is Donald Fraser?’ said Neil, shaking his fist. ‘It’s him I’m seeking, and it’s him I will be finding. Where is he, Betty Sherman?’

“‘Donald Fraser is far enough away by this time,’ mocked Betty. ‘He is a prudent fellow, and has some quickness of wit under that sandy thatch of his. He came here last night at sunset, with a horse and sleigh not his own, or lately gotten, and he asked Nan in the stable yard to marry him. Did a man ask ME to marry him at the cow’s side with a milking pail in my hand, it’s a cold answer he’d get for his pains. But Nan thought differently, and they sat late together last night, and ‘twas a bonny story Nan wakened me to hear when she came to bed — the story of a braw lover who let his secret out when the whisky was above the wit, and then fell asleep while his rival was away to woo and win his lass. Did you ever hear a like story, Mr. Campbell?’

“‘Oh, yes,’ said Neil fiercely. ‘It is laughing at me over the country side and telling that story that Donald Fraser will be doing, is it? But when I meet him it is not laughing he will be doing. Oh, no. There will be another story to tell!’

“‘Now, don’t meddle with the man,’ cried Betty. ‘What a state to be in because one goodlooking lass likes sandy hair and gray eyes better than Highland black and blue! You have not the spirit of a wren, Neil Campbell. Were I you, I would show Donald Fraser that I could woo and win a lass as

speedily as any Lowlander of them all; that I would! There's many a girl would gladly say 'yes' for your asking. And here stands one! Why not marry ME, Neil Campbell? Folks say I'm as bonny as Nan — and I could love you as well as Nan loves her Donald — ay, and ten times better!'

"What do you suppose the Campbell did? Why, just the thing he ought to have done. He took Betty at her word on the spot; and there was a double wedding soon after. And it is said that Neil and Betty were the happiest couple in the world — happier even than Donald and Nancy. So all was well because it ended well!"

The Story Girl curtsied until her silken skirts swept the floor. Then she flung herself in her chair and looked at Mr. Campbell, flushed, triumphant, daring.

The story was old to us. It had once been published in a Charlottetown paper, and we had read in Aunt Olivia's scrapbook, where the Story Girl had learned it. But we had listened entranced. I have written down the bare words of the story, as she told it; but I can never reproduce the charm and colour and spirit she infused into it. It LIVED for us. Donald and Neil, Nancy and Betty, were there in that room with us. We saw the flashes of expression on their faces, we heard their voices, angry or tender, mocking or merry, in Lowland and Highland accent. We realized all the mingled coquetry and feeling and defiance and archness in Betty Sherman's daring speech. We had even forgotten all about Mr. Campbell.

That gentleman, in silence, took out his wallet, extracted a note therefrom, and handed it gravely to the Story Girl.

"There are five dollars for you," he said, "and your story was well worth it. You ARE a wonder. Some day you will make the world realize it. I've been about a bit, and heard some good things, but I've never enjoyed anything more than that threadbare old story I heard in my cradle. And now, will you do me a favour?"

"Of course," said the delighted Story Girl.

"Recite the multiplication table for me," said Mr. Campbell.

We stared. Well might Mr. Campbell be called eccentric. What on earth did he want the multiplication table recited for? Even the Story Girl

was surprised. But she began promptly, with twice one and went through it to twelve times twelve. She repeated it simply, but her voice changed from one tone to another as each in succession grew tired. We had never dreamed that there was so much in the multiplication table. As she announced it, the fact that three times three was nine was exquisitely ridiculous, five times six almost brought tears to our eyes, eight times seven was the most tragic and frightful thing ever heard of, and twelve times twelve rang like a trumpet call to victory.

Mr. Campbell nodded his satisfaction.

“I thought you could do it,” he said. “The other day I found this statement in a book. ‘Her voice would have made the multiplication table charming!’ I thought of it when I heard yours. I didn’t believe it before, but I do now.”

Then he let us go.

“You see,” said the Story Girl as we went home, “you need never be afraid of people.”

“But we are not all Story Girls,” said Cecily.

That night we heard Felicity talking to Cecily in their room.

“Mr. Campbell never noticed one of us except the Story Girl,” she said, “but if I had put on MY best dress as she did maybe she wouldn’t have taken all the attention.”

“Could you ever do what Betty Sherman did, do you suppose?”
asked

Cecily absently.

“No; but I believe the Story Girl could,” answered Felicity rather snappishly.

Chapter VIII.

A Tragedy of Childhood

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The Story Girl went to Charlottetown for a week in June to visit Aunt Louisa. Life seemed very colourless without her, and even Felicity admitted that it was lonesome. But three days after her departure Felix told us something on the way home from school which lent some spice to existence immediately.

“What do you think?” he said in a very solemn, yet excited, tone.

“Jerry Cowan told me at recess this afternoon that he HAD SEEN A

PICTURE OF GOD — that he has it at home in an old, red-covered

history of the world, and has looked at it OFTEN.”

To think that Jerry Cowan should have seen such a picture often!

We were as deeply impressed as Felix had meant us to be.

“Did he say what it was like?” asked Peter.

“No — only that it was a picture of God, walking in the garden of Eden.”

“Oh,” whispered Felicity — we all spoke in low tones on the subject, for, by instinct and training, we thought and uttered the Great Name with reverence, in spite of our devouring curiosity—”oh, WOULD Jerry Cowan bring it to school and let us see it?”

“I asked him that, soon as ever he told me,” said Felix. “He said he might, but he couldn’t promise, for he’d have to ask his mother if he could

bring the book to school. If she'll let him he'll bring it tomorrow."

"Oh, I'll be almost afraid to look at it," said Sara Ray tremulously.

I think we all shared her fear to some extent. Nevertheless, we went to school the next day burning with curiosity. And we were disappointed. Possibly night had brought counsel to Jerry Cowan; or perhaps his mother had put him up to it. At all events, he announced to us that he couldn't bring the red-covered history to school, but if we wanted to buy the picture outright he would tear it out of the book and sell it to us for fifty cents.

We talked the matter over in serious conclave in the orchard that evening. We were all rather short of hard cash, having devoted most of our spare means to the school library fund. But the general consensus of opinion was that we must have the picture, no matter what pecuniary sacrifices were involved. If we could each give about seven cents we would have the amount. Peter could only give four, but Dan gave eleven, which squared matters.

"Fifty cents would be pretty dear for any other picture, but of course this is different," said Dan.

"And there's a picture of Eden thrown in, too, you know," added Felicity.

"Fancy selling God's picture," said Cecily in a shocked, awed tone.

"Nobody but a Cowan would do it, and that's a fact," said Dan.

"When we get it we'll keep it in the family Bible," said Felicity. "That's the only proper place."

"Oh, I wonder what it will be like," breathed Cecily.

We all wondered. Next day in school we agreed to Jerry Cowan's terms, and Jerry promised to bring the picture up to Uncle Alec's the following afternoon.

We were all intensely excited Saturday morning. To our dismay, it began to rain just before dinner.

"What if Jerry doesn't bring the picture to-day because of the rain?" I suggested.

“Never you fear,” answered Felicity decidedly. “A Cowan would come through ANYTHING for fifty cents.”

After dinner we all, without any verbal decision about it, washed our faces and combed our hair. The girls put on their second best dresses, and we boys donned white collars. We all had the unuttered feeling that we must do such honour to that Picture as we could. Felicity and Dan began a small spat over something, but stopped at once when Cecily said severely,

“How DARE you quarrel when you are going to look at a picture of
God to-day?”

Owing to the rain we could not foregather in the orchard, where we had meant to transact the business with Jerry. We did not wish our grownups around at our great moment, so we betook ourselves to the loft of the granary in the spruce wood, from whose window we could see the main road and hail Jerry. Sara Ray had joined us, very pale and nervous, having had, so it appeared, a difference of opinion with her mother about coming up the hill in the rain.

“I’m afraid I did very wrong to come against ma’s will,” she said miserably, “but I COULDN’T wait. I wanted to see the picture as soon as you did.”

We waited and watched at the window. The valley was full of mist, and the rain was coming down in slanting lines over the tops of the spruces. But as we waited the clouds broke away and the sun came out flashingly; the drops on the spruce boughs glittered like diamonds.

“I don’t believe Jerry can be coming,” said Cecily in despair. “I suppose his mother must have thought it was dreadful, after all, to sell such a picture.”

“There he is now!” cried Dan, waving excitedly from the window.

“He’s carrying a fish-basket,” said Felicity. “You surely don’t suppose he would bring THAT picture in a fish-basket!”

Jerry HAD brought it in a fish-basket, as appeared when he mounted the granary stairs shortly afterwards. It was folded up in a newspaper

packet on top of the dried herring with which the basket was filled. We paid him his money, but we would not open the packet until he had gone.

“Cecily,” said Felicity in a hushed tone. “You are the best of us all. YOU open the parcel.”

“Oh, I’m no gooder than the rest of you,” breathed Cecily, “but I’ll open it if you like.”

With trembling fingers Cecily opened the parcel. We stood around, hardly breathing. She unfolded it and held it up. We saw it.

Suddenly Sara began to cry.

“Oh, oh, oh, does God look like THAT?” she wailed.

Felix and I spoke not. Disappointment, and something worse, sealed our speech. DID God look like that — like that stern, angrily frowning old man with the tossing hair and beard of the woodcut Cecily held.

“I suppose He must, since that is His picture,” said Dan miserably.

“He looks awful cross,” said Peter simply.

“Oh, I wish we’d never, never seen it,” cried Cecily.

We all wished that — too late. Our curiosity had led us into some Holy of Holies, not to be profaned by human eyes, and this was our punishment.

“I’ve always had a feeling right along,” wept Sara, “that it wasn’t RIGHT to buy — or LOOK AT — God’s picture.”

As we stood there wretchedly we heard flying feet below and a blithe voice calling,

“Where are you, children?”

The Story Girl had returned! At any other moment we would have rushed to meet her in wild joy. But now we were too crushed and miserable to move.

“Whatever is the matter with you all?” demanded the Story Girl, appearing at the top of the stairs. “What is Sara crying about? What have you got there?”

“A picture of God,” said Cecily with a sob in her voice, “and oh, it is so dreadful and ugly. Look!”

The Story Girl looked. An expression of scorn came over her face.

“Surely you don’t believe God looks like that,” she said impatiently, while her fine eyes flashed. “He doesn’t — He couldn’t. He is wonderful and beautiful. I’m surprised at you. THAT is nothing but the picture of a cross old man.”

Hope sprang up in our hearts, although we were not wholly convinced.

“I don’t know,” said Dan dubiously. “It says under the picture ‘God in the Garden of Eden.’ It’s PRINTED.”

“Well, I suppose that’s what the man who drew it thought God was like,” answered the Story Girl carelessly. “But HE couldn’t have known any more than you do. HE had never seen Him.”

“It’s all very well for you to say so,” said Felicity, “but YOU don’t know either. I wish I could believe that isn’t like God — but I don’t know what to believe.”

“Well, if you won’t believe me, I suppose you’ll believe the minister,” said the Story Girl. “Go and ask him. He’s in the house this very minute. He came up with us in the buggy.”

At any other time we would never have dared catechize the minister about anything. But desperate cases call for desperate measures. We drew straws to see who should go and do the asking, and the lot fell to Felix.

“Better wait until Mr. Marwood leaves, and catch him in the lane,” advised the Story Girl. “You’ll have a lot of grownups around you in the house.”

Felix took her advice. Mr. Marwood, presently walking benignantly along the lane, was confronted by a fat, small boy with a pale face but resolute eyes.

The rest of us remained in the background but within hearing.

“Well, Felix, what is it?” asked Mr. Marwood kindly.

“Please, sir, does God really look like this?” asked Felix, holding out the picture. “We hope He doesn’t — but we want to know the truth, and that is why I’m bothering you. Please excuse us and tell me.”

The minister looked at the picture. A stern expression came into his gentle blue eyes and he got as near to frowning as it was possible for him

to get.

“Where did you get that thing?” he asked.

THING! We began to breathe easier.

“We bought it from Jerry Cowan. He found it in a red-covered history of the world. It SAYS it’s God’s picture,” said Felix.

“It is nothing of the sort,” said Mr. Marwood indignantly. “There is no such thing as a picture of God, Felix. No human being knows what he looks like — no human being CAN know. We should not even try to think what He looks like. But, Felix, you may be sure that God is infinitely more beautiful and loving and tender and kind than anything we can imagine of Him. Never believe anything else, my boy. As for this — this SACRILEGE — take it and burn it.”

We did not know what a sacrilege meant, but we knew that Mr. Marwood had declared that the picture was not like God. That was enough for us. We felt as if a terrible weight had been lifted from our minds.

“I could hardly believe the Story Girl, but of course the minister KNOWS,” said Dan happily.

“We’ve lost fifty cents because of it,” said Felicity gloomily.

We had lost something of infinitely more value than fifty cents, although we did not realize it just then. The minister’s words had removed from our minds the bitter belief that God was like that picture; but on something deeper and more enduring than mind an impression had been made that was never to be removed. The mischief was done. From that day to this the thought or the mention of God brings up before us involuntarily the vision of a stern, angry, old man. Such was the price we were to pay for the indulgence of a curiosity which each of us, deep in our hearts, had, like Sara Ray, felt ought not to be gratified.

“Mr. Marwood told me to burn it,” said Felix.

“It doesn’t seem reverent to do that,” said Cecily. “Even if it isn’t God’s picture, it has His name on it.”

“Bury it,” said the Story Girl.

We did bury it after tea, in the depths of the spruce grove; and then we went into the orchard. It was so nice to have the Story Girl back again. She

had wreathed her hair with Canterbury Bells, and looked like the incarnation of rhyme and story and dream.

“Canterbury Bells is a lovely name for a flower, isn’t it?” she said. “It makes you think of cathedrals and chimes, doesn’t it? Let’s go over to Uncle Stephen’s Walk, and sit on the branches of the big tree. It’s too wet on the grass, and I know a story — a TRUE story, about an old lady I saw in town at Aunt Louisa’s. Such a dear old lady, with lovely silvery curls.”

After the rain the air seemed dripping with odours in the warm west wind — the tang of fir balsam, the spice of mint, the wild woodsiness of ferns, the aroma of grasses steeping in the sunshine, — and with it all a breath of wild sweetness from far hill pastures.

Scattered through the grass in Uncle Stephen’s Walk, were blossoming pale, aerial flowers which had no name that we could ever discover. Nobody seemed to know anything about them. They had been there when Great-grandfather King bought the place. I have never seen them elsewhere, or found them described in any floral catalogue. We called them the White Ladies. The Story Girl gave them the name. She said they looked like the souls of good women who had had to suffer much and had been very patient. They were wonderfully dainty, with a strange, faint, aromatic perfume which was only to be detected at a little distance and vanished if you bent over them. They faded soon after they were plucked; and, although strangers, greatly admiring them, often carried away roots and seeds, they could never be coaxed to grow elsewhere.

“My story is about Mrs. Dunbar and the Captain of the FANNY,” said the Story Girl, settling herself comfortably on a bough, with her brown head against a gnarled trunk. “It’s sad and beautiful — and true. I do love to tell stories that I know really happened. Mrs. Dunbar lives next door to Aunt Louisa in town. She is so sweet. You wouldn’t think to look at her that she had a tragedy in her life, but she has. Aunt Louisa told me the tale. It all happened long, long ago. Interesting things like this all did happen long ago, it seems to me. They never seem to happen now. This was in ‘49, when people were rushing to the gold fields in California. It was just like a

fever, Aunt Louisa says. People took it, right here on the Island; and a number of young men determined they would go to California.

“It is easy to go to California now; but it was a very different matter then. There were no railroads across the land, as there are now, and if you wanted to go to California you had to go in a sailing vessel, all the way around Cape Horn. It was a long and dangerous journey; and sometimes it took over six months. When you got there you had no way of sending word home again except by the same plan. It might be over a year before your people at home heard a word about you — and fancy what their feelings would be!

“But these young men didn’t think of these things; they were led on by a golden vision. They made all their arrangements, and they chartered the brig *Fanny* to take them to California.

“The captain of the *Fanny* is the hero of my story. His name was Alan Dunbar, and he was young and handsome. Heroes always are, you know, but Aunt Louisa says he really was. And he was in love — wildly in love, — with Margaret Grant. Margaret was as beautiful as a dream, with soft blue eyes and clouds of golden hair; and she loved Alan Dunbar just as much as he loved her. But her parents were bitterly opposed to him, and they had forbidden Margaret to see him or speak to him. They hadn’t anything against him as a MAN, but they didn’t want her to throw herself away on a sailor.

“Well, when Alan Dunbar knew that he must go to California in the *Fanny* he was in despair. He felt that he could NEVER go so far away for so long and leave his Margaret behind. And Margaret felt that she could never let him go. I know EXACTLY how she felt.”

“How can you know?” interrupted Peter suddenly. “You ain’t old enough to have a beau. How can you know?”

The Story Girl looked at Peter with a frown. She did not like to be interrupted when telling a story.

“Those are not things one KNOWS about,” she said with dignity.

“One FEELS about them.”

Peter, crushed but not convinced, subsided, and the Story Girl went on.

“Finally, Margaret ran away with Alan, and they were married in Charlottetown. Alan intended to take his wife with him to California in the *Fanny*. If it was a hard journey for a man it was harder still for a woman, but Margaret would have dared anything for Alan’s sake. They had three days — ONLY three days — of happiness, and then the blow fell. The crew and the passengers of the *Fanny* refused to let Captain Dunbar take his wife with him. They told him he must leave her behind. And all his prayers were of no avail. They say he stood on the deck of the *Fanny* and pleaded with the men while the tears ran down his face; but they would not yield, and he had to leave Margaret behind. Oh, what a parting it was!”

There was heartbreak in the Story Girl’s voice and tears came into our eyes. There, in the green bower of Uncle Stephen’s Walk, we cried over the pathos of a parting whose anguish had been stilled for many years.

“When it was all over, Margaret’s father and mother forgave her, and she went back home to wait — to WAIT. Oh, it is so dreadful just to WAIT, and do nothing else. Margaret waited for nearly a year. How long it must have seemed to her! And at last there came a letter — but not from Alan. Alan was DEAD. He had died in California and had been buried there. While Margaret had been thinking of him and longing for him and praying for him he had been lying in his lonely, faraway grave.”

Cecily sprang up, shaking with sobs.

“Oh, don’t — don’t go on,” she implored. “I CAN’T bear any more.”

“There is no more,” said the Story Girl. “That was the end of it — the end of everything for Margaret. It didn’t kill HER, but her heart died.”

“I just wish I’d hold of those fellows who wouldn’t let the Captain take his wife,” said Peter savagely.

“Well, it was awful said,” said Felicity, wiping her eyes. “But it was long ago and we can’t do any good by crying over it now. Let us go and get something to eat. I made some nice little rhubarb tarts this morning.”

We went. In spite of new disappointments and old heartbreaks we had appetites. And Felicity did make scrumptious rhubarb tarts!

Chapter IX.

Magic Seed

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When the time came to hand in our collections for the library fund Peter had the largest — three dollars. Felicity was a good second with two and a half. This was simply because the hens had laid so well.

“If you’d had to pay father for all the extra handfuls of wheat you’ve fed to those hens, Miss Felicity, you wouldn’t have so much,” said Dan spitefully.

“I didn’t,” said Felicity indignantly. “Look how Aunt Olivia’s hens laid, too, and she fed them herself just the same as usual.”

“Never mind,” said Cecily, “we have all got something to give. If you were like poor Sara Ray, and hadn’t been able to collect anything, you might feel bad.”

But Sara Ray HAD something to give. She came up the hill after tea, all radiant. When Sara Ray smiled — and she did not waste her smiles — she was rather pretty in a plaintive, apologetic way. A dimple or two came into sight, and she had very nice teeth — small and white, like the traditional row of pearls.

“Oh, just look,” she said. “Here are three dollars — and I’m going to give it all to the library fund. I had a letter to-day from Uncle Arthur in Winnipeg, and he sent me three dollars. He said I was to use it ANY way I liked, so ma couldn’t refuse to let me give it to the fund. She thinks it’s an awful waste, but she always goes by what Uncle Arthur says. Oh, I’ve prayed so hard that some money might come some way, and now it has. See what praying does!”

I was very much afraid that we did not rejoice quite as unselfishly in Sara’s good fortune as we should have done. WE had earned our contributions by the sweat of our brow, or by the scarcely less disagreeable method of “begging.” And Sara’s had as good as descended upon her out of the skies, as much like a miracle as anything you could imagine.

“She prayed for it, you know,” said Felix, after Sara had gone home.

“That’s too easy a way of earning money,” grumbled Peter resentfully. “If the rest of us had just set down and done nothing, only prayed, how much do you s’pose we’d have? It don’t seem fair to me.”

“Oh, well, it’s different with Sara,” said Dan. “We COULD earn money and she COULDN’T. You see? But come on down to the orchard. The Story Girl had a letter from her father to-day and she’s going to read it to us.”

We went promptly. A letter from the Story Girl’s father was always an event; and to hear her read it was almost as good as hearing her tell a story.

Before coming to Carlisle, Uncle Blair Stanley had been a mere name to us. Now he was a personality. His letters to the Story Girl, the pictures and sketches he sent her, her adoring and frequent mention of him, all combined to make him very real to us.

We FELT then, what we did not understand till later years, that our grownup relatives did not altogether admire or approve of Uncle Blair. He belonged to a different world from theirs. They had never known him very intimately or understood him. I realize now that Uncle Blair was a bit of a Bohemian — a respectable sort of tramp. Had he been a poor man he might have been a more successful artist. But he had a small fortune of his own and, lacking the spur of necessity, or of disquieting ambition, he remained little more than a clever amateur. Once in a while he painted a picture which showed what he could do; but for the rest, he was satisfied to wander over the world, lighthearted and content. We knew that the Story Girl was thought to resemble him strongly in appearance and temperament, but she had far more fire and intensity and strength of will — her inheritance from King and Ward. She would never be satisfied as a dabbler; whatever her future career should be, into it she would throw all her powers of mind and heart and soul.

But Uncle Blair could do at least one thing surpassingly well. He could write letters. Such letters! By contrast, Felix and I were secretly ashamed of father’s epistles. Father could talk well but, as Felix said, he couldn’t write worth a cent. The letters we had received from him since his arrival

in Rio de Janeiro were mere scrawls, telling us to be good boys and not trouble Aunt Janet, incidentally adding that he was well and lonesome. Felix and I were always glad to get his letters, but we never read them aloud to an admiring circle in the orchard.

Uncle Blair was spending the summer in Switzerland; and the letter the Story Girl read to us, among the fair, frail White Ladies of the Walk, where the west wind came now with a sigh, and again with a rush, and then brushed our faces as softly as the down of a thistle, was full of the glamour of mountain-rimmed lakes, and purple chalets, and “snowy summits old in story.” We climbed Mount Blanc, saw the Jungfrau soaring into cloudland, and walked among the gloomy pillars of Bonnivard’s prison. Finally, the Story Girl told us the tale of the Prisoner of Chillon, in words that were Byron’s, but in a voice that was all her own.

“It must be splendid to go to Europe,” sighed Cecily longingly.

“I am going some day,” said the Story Girl airily.

We looked at her with a slightly incredulous awe. To us, in those years, Europe seemed almost as remote and unreachable as the moon. It was hard to believe that one of US should ever go there. But Aunt Julia had gone — and SHE had been brought up in Carlisle on this very farm. So it was possible that the Story Girl might go too.

“What will you do there?” asked Peter practically.

“I shall learn how to tell stories to all the world,” said the Story Girl dreamily.

It was a lovely, golden-brown evening; the orchard, and the farm-lands beyond, were full of ruby lights and kissing shadows. Over in the east, above the Awkward Man’s house, the Wedding Veil of the Proud Princess floated across the sky, presently turning as rosy as if bedewed with her heart’s blood. We sat there and talked until the first star lighted a white taper over the beech hill.

Then I remembered that I had forgotten to take my dose of magic seed, and I hastened to do it, although I was beginning to lose faith in it. I had not grown a single bit, by the merciless testimony of the hall door.

I took the box of seed out of my trunk in the twilit room and swallowed the decreed pinch. As I did so, Dan's voice rang out behind me.

"Beverley King, what have you got there?"

I thrust the box hastily into my trunk and confronted Dan.

"None of your business," I said defiantly.

"Yes, 'tis." Dan was too much in earnest to resent my blunt speech.

"Look here, Bev, is that magic seed? And did you get it from Billy Robinson?"

Dan and I looked at each other, suspicion dawning in our eyes.

"What do you know about Billy Robinson and his magic seed?" I demanded.

"Just this. I bought a box from him for — for — something. He said he wasn't going to sell any of it to anybody else. Did he sell any to you?"

"Yes, he did," I said in disgust — for I was beginning to understand that Billy and his magic seed were arrant frauds.

"What for? YOUR mouth is a decent size," said Dan.

"Mouth? It had nothing to do with my mouth! He said it would make me grow tall. And it hasn't — not an inch! I don't see what you wanted it for! You are tall enough."

"I got it for my mouth," said Dan with a shamefaced grin. "The girls in school laugh at it so. Kate Marr says it's like a gash in a pie. Billy said that seed would shrink it for sure."

Well, there it was! Billy had deceived us both. Nor were we the only victims. We did not find the whole story out at once. Indeed, the summer was almost over before, in one way or another, the full measure of that shameless Billy Robinson's iniquity was revealed to us. But I shall anticipate the successive relations in this chapter. Every pupil of Carlisle school, so it eventually appeared, had bought magic seed, under solemn promise of secrecy. Felix had believed blissfully that it would make him thin. Cecily's hair was to become naturally curly, and Sara Ray was not to be afraid of Peg Bowen any more. It was to make Felicity as clever as the Story Girl and it was to make the Story Girl as good a cook as Felicity. What Peter had bought magic seed for remained a secret longer than any

of the others. Finally — it was the night before what we expected would be the Judgment Day — he confessed to me that he had taken it to make Felicity fond of him. Skilfully indeed had that astute Billy played on our respective weaknesses.

The keenest edge to our humiliation was given by the discovery that the magic seed was nothing more or less than caraway, which grew in abundance at Billy Robinson's uncle's in Markdale. Peg Bowen had had nothing to do with it.

Well, we had all been badly hoaxed. But we did not trumpet our wrongs abroad. We did not even call Billy to account. We thought that least said was soonest mended in such a matter. We went very softly indeed, lest the grownups, especially that terrible Uncle Roger, should hear of it.

"We should have known better than to trust Billy Robinson," said Felicity, summing up the case one evening when all had been made known. "After all, what could you expect from a pig but a grunt?"

We were not surprised to find that Billy Robinson's contribution to the library fund was the largest handed in by any of the scholars. Cecily said she didn't envy him his conscience. But I am afraid she measured his conscience by her own. I doubt very much if Billy's troubled him at all.

Chapter X.

A Daughter of Eve

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“I hate the thought of growing up,” said the Story Girl reflectively, “because I can never go barefooted then, and nobody will ever see what beautiful feet I have.”

She was sitting, the July sunlight, on the ledge of the open hayloft window in Uncle Roger’s big barn; and the bare feet below her print skirt WERE beautiful. They were slender and shapely and satin smooth with arched insteps, the daintiest of toes, and nails like pink shells.

We were all the hayloft. The Story Girl had been telling us a tale

”Of old, unhappy, far-off things,
And battles long ago.”

Felicity and Cecily were curled up in a corner, and we boys sprawled idly on the fragrant, sunwarm heaps. We had “stowed” the hay in the loft that morning for Uncle Roger, so we felt that we had earned the right to loll on our sweet-smelling couch. Haylofts are delicious places, with just enough of shadow and soft, uncertain noises to give an agreeable tang of mystery. The swallows flew in and out of their nest above our heads, and whenever a sunbeam fell through a chink the air swarmed with golden dust. Outside of the loft was a vast, sunshiny gulf of blue sky and mellow air, wherein floated argosies of fluffy cloud, and airy tops of maple and spruce.

Pat was with us, of course, prowling about stealthily, or making frantic, bootless leaps at the swallows. A cat in a hayloft is a beautiful example of the eternal fitness of things. We had not heard of this fitness then, but we all felt that Paddy was in his own place in a hayloft.

“I think it is very vain to talk about anything you have yourself being beautiful,” said Felicity.

“I am not a bit vain,” said the Story Girl, with entire truthfulness. “It is not vanity to know your own good points. It would just be stupidity if you

didn't. It's only vanity when you get puffed up about them. I am not a bit pretty. My only good points are my hair and eyes and feet. So I think it's real mean that one of them has to be covered up the most of the time. I'm always glad when it gets warm enough to go barefooted. But, when I grow up they'll have to be covered all the time. It IS mean."

"You'll have to put your shoes and stockings on when you go to the magic lantern show tonight," said Felicity in a tone of satisfaction.

"I don't know that. I'm thinking of going barefooted."

"Oh, you wouldn't! Sara Stanley, you're not in earnest!" exclaimed Felicity, her blue eyes filling with horror.

The Story Girl winked with the side of her face next to Felix and me, but the side next the girls changed not a muscle. She dearly loved to "take a rise" out of Felicity now and then.

"Indeed, I would if I just made up my mind to. Why not? Why not bare feet — if they're clean — as well as bare hands and face?"

"Oh, you wouldn't! It would be such a disgrace!" said poor Felicity in real distress.

"We went to school barefooted all June," argued that wicked Story Girl. "What is the difference between going to the schoolhouse barefooted in the daytime and going in the evening?"

"Oh, there's EVERY difference. I can't just explain it — but every one KNOWS there is a difference. You know it yourself. Oh, PLEASE, don't do such a thing, Sara."

"Well, I won't, just to oblige you," said the Story Girl, who would have died the death before she would have gone to a "public meeting" barefooted.

We were all rather excited over the magic lantern show which an itinerant lecturer was to give in the schoolhouse that evening. Even Felix and I, who had seen such shows galore, were interested, and the rest were quite wild. There had never been such a thing in Carlisle before. We were all going, Peter included. Peter went everywhere with us now. He was a regular attendant at church and Sunday School, where his behaviour was as

irreproachable as if he had been “raised” in the caste of Vere de Vere. It was feather in the Story Girl’s cap, for she took all the credit of having started Peter on the right road. Felicity was resigned, although the fatal patch on Peter’s best trousers was still an eyesore to her. She declared she never got any good of the singing, because Peter stood up then and every one could see the patch. Mrs. James Clark, whose pew was behind ours, never took her eye off it — or so Felicity averred.

But Peter’s stockings were always darned. Aunt Olivia had seen to that, ever since she heard of Peter’s singular device regarding them on his first Sunday. She had also given Peter a Bible, of which he was so proud that he hated to use it lest he should soil it.

“I think I’ll wrap it up and keep it in my box,” he said. “I’ve an old Bible of Aunt Jane’s at home that I can use. I s’pose it’s just the same, even if it is old, isn’t it?”

“Oh, yes,” Cecily had assured him. “The Bible is always the same.”

“I thought maybe they’d got some new improvements on it since

Aunt Jane’s day,” said Peter, relieved.

“Sara Ray is coming along the lane, and she’s crying,” announced Dan, who was peering out of a knothole on the opposite side of the loft.

“Sara Ray is crying half her time,” said Cecily impatiently. “I’m sure she cries a quartful of tears a month. There are times when you can’t help crying. But I hide then. Sara just goes and cries in public.”

The lachrymose Sara presently joined us and we discovered the cause of her tears to be the doleful fact that her mother had forbidden her to go to the magic lantern show that night. We all showed the sympathy we felt.

“She SAID yesterday you could go,” said the Story Girl indignantly. “Why has she changed her mind?”

“Because of the measles in Markdale,” sobbed Sara. “She says Markdale is full of them, and there’ll be sure to be some of the

Markdale people at the show. So I'm not to go. And I've never seen a magic lantern — I've never seen ANYTHING."

"I don't believe there's any danger of catching measles," said Felicity. "If there was we wouldn't be allowed to go."

"I wish I COULD get the measles," said Sara defiantly. "Maybe I'd be of some importance to ma then."

"Suppose Cecily goes down with you and coaxes your mother," suggested the Story Girl. "Perhaps she'd let you go then. She likes Cecily. She doesn't like either Felicity or me, so it would only make matters worse for us to try."

"Ma's gone to town — pa and her went this afternoon — and they're not coming back till tomorrow. There's nobody home but Judy Pineau and me."

"Then," said the Story Girl, "why don't you just go to the show anyhow? Your mother won't ever know, if you coax Judy to hold her tongue."

"Oh, but that's wrong," said Felicity. "You shouldn't put Sara up to disobeying her mother."

Now, Felicity for once was undoubtedly right. The Story Girl's suggestion WAS wrong; and if it had been Cecily who protested, the Story Girl would probably have listened to her, and proceeded no further in the matter. But Felicity was one of those unfortunate people whose protests against wrong-doing serve only to drive the wrong-doer further on her sinful way.

The Story Girl resented Felicity's superior tone, and proceeded to tempt Sara in right good earnest. The rest of us held our tongues. It was, we told ourselves, Sara's own lookout.

"I have a good mind to do it," said Sara. "but I can't get my good clothes; they're in the spare room, and ma locked the door, for fear somebody would get at the fruit cake. I haven't a single thing to wear, except my school gingham."

“Well, that’s new and pretty,” said the Story Girl. “We’ll lend you some things. You can have my lace collar. That’ll make the gingham quite elegant. And Cecily will lend you her second best hat.”

“But I’ve no shoes or stockings. They’re locked up too.”

“You can have a pair of mine,” said Felicity, who probably thought that since Sara was certain to yield to temptation, she might as well be garbed decently for her transgression.

Sara did yield. When the Story Girl’s voice entreated it was not easy to resist its temptation, even if you wanted to. That evening, when we started for the schoolhouse, Sara Ray was among us, decked out in borrowed plumes.

“Suppose she DOES catch the measles?” Felicity said aside.

“I don’t believe there’ll be anybody there from Markdale. The lecturer is going to Markdale next week. They’ll wait for that,” said the Story Girl airily.

It was a cool, dewy evening, and we walked down the long, red hill in the highest of spirits. Over a valley filled with beech and spruce was a sunset afterglow — creamy yellow and a hue that was not so much red as the dream of red, with a young moon swung low in it. The air was sweet with the breath of mown hayfields where swaths of clover had been steeping in the sun. Wild roses grew pinkly along the fences, and the roadsides were star-dusted with buttercups.

Those of us who had nothing the matter with our consciences enjoyed our walk to the little whitewashed schoolhouse in the valley. Felicity and Cecily were void of offence towards all men. The Story Girl walked uprightly like an incarnate flame in her crimson silk. Her pretty feet were hidden in the tan-coloured, buttoned Paris boots which were the secret envy of every school girl in Carlisle.

But Sara Ray was not happy. Her face was so melancholy that the Story Girl lost patience with her. The Story Girl herself was not altogether at ease. Probably her own conscience was troubling her. But admit it she would not.

“Now, Sara,” she said, “you just take my advice and go into this with all your heart if you go at all. Never mind if it is bad. There’s no use being naughty if you spoil your fun by wishing all the time you were good. You can repent afterwards, but there is no use in mixing the two things together.”

“I’m not repenting,” protested Sara. “I’m only scared of ma finding it out.”

“Oh!” The Story Girl’s voice expressed her scorn. For remorse she had understanding and sympathy; but fear of her fellow creatures was something unknown to her. “Didn’t Judy Pineau promise you solemnly she wouldn’t tell?”

“Yes; but maybe some one who sees me there will mention it to ma.”

“Well, if you’re so scared you’d better not go. It isn’t too late. Here’s your own gate,” said Cecily.

But Sara could not give up the delights of the show. So she walked on, a small, miserable testimony that the way of the transgressor is never easy, even when said transgressor is only a damsel of eleven.

The magic lantern show was a splendid one. The views were good and the lecturer witty. We repeated his jokes to each other all the way home. Sara, who had not enjoyed the exhibition at all, seemed to feel more cheerful when it was over and she was going home. The Story Girl on the contrary was gloomy.

“There WERE Markdale people there,” she confided to me, “and the Williamsons live next door to the Cowans, who have measles. I wish I’d never egged Sara on to going — but don’t tell Felicity I said so. If Sara Ray had really enjoyed the show I wouldn’t mind. But she didn’t. I could see that. So I’ve done wrong and made her do wrong — and there’s nothing to show for it.”

The night was scented and mysterious. The wind was playing an eerie fleshless melody in the reeds of the brook hollow. The sky was dark and starry, and across it the Milky Way flung its shimmering misty ribbons.

“There’s four hundred million stars in the Milky Way,” quoth Peter, who frequently astonished us by knowing more than any hired boy could

be expected to. He had a retentive memory, and never forgot anything he heard or read. The few books left to him by his oft-referred-to Aunt Jane had stocked his mind with a miscellaneous information which sometimes made Felix and me doubt if we knew as much as Peter after all. Felicity was so impressed by his knowledge of astronomy that she dropped back from the other girls and walked beside him. She had not done so before because he was barefooted. It was permissible for hired boys to go to public meetings — when not held in the church — with bare feet, and no particular disgrace attached to it. But Felicity would not walk with a barefooted companion. It was dark now, so nobody would notice his feet.

“I know a story about the Milky Way,” said the Story Girl, brightening up. “I read it in a book of Aunt Louisa’s in town, and I learned it off by heart. Once there were two archangels in heaven, named Zerah and Zulamith—”

“Have angels names — same as people?” interrupted Peter.

“Yes, of course. They MUST have. They’d be all mixed up if they hadn’t.”

“And when I’m an angel — if I ever get to be one — will my name still be Peter?”

“No. You’ll have a new name up there,” said Cecily gently. “It says so in the Bible.”

“Well, I’m glad of that. Peter would be such a funny name for an angel. And what is the difference between angels and archangels?”

“Oh, archangels are angels that have been angels so long that they’ve had time to grow better and brighter and more beautiful than newer angels,” said the Story Girl, who probably made that explanation up on the spur of the moment, just to pacify Peter.

“How long does it take for an angel to grow into an archangel?” pursued Peter.

“Oh, I don’t know. Millions of years likely. And even then I don’t suppose ALL the angels do. A good many of them must just stay plain angels, I expect.”

“I shall be satisfied just to be a plain angel,” said Felicity modestly.

“Oh, see here, if you’re going to interrupt and argue over everything, we’ll never get the story told,” said Felix. “Dry up, all of you, and let the Story Girl go on.”

We dried up, and the Story Girl went on.

“Zerah and Zulamith loved each other, just as mortals love, and this is forbidden by the laws of the Almighty. And because Zerah and Zulamith had so broken God’s law they were banished from His presence to the uttermost bounds of the universe. If they had been banished TOGETHER it would have been no punishment; so Zerah was exiled to a star on one side of the universe, and Zulamith was sent to a star on the other side of the universe; and between them was a fathomless abyss which thought itself could not cross. Only one thing could cross it — and that was love. Zulamith yearned for Zerah with such fidelity and longing that he began to build up a bridge of light from his star; and Zerah, not knowing this, but loving and longing for him, began to build a similar bridge of light from her star. For a thousand thousand years they both built the bridge of light, and at last they met and sprang into each other’s arms. Their toil and loneliness and suffering were all over and forgotten, and the bridge they had built spanned the gulf between their stars of exile.

“Now, when the other archangels saw what had been done they flew in fear and anger to God’s white throne, and cried to Him,

“‘See what these rebellious ones have done! They have built them a bridge of light across the universe, and set Thy decree of separation at naught. Do Thou, then, stretch forth Thine arm and destroy their impious work.’

“They ceased — and all heaven was hushed. Through the silence sounded the voice of the Almighty.

“‘Nay,’ He said, ‘whatsoever in my universe true love hath builded not even the Almighty can destroy. The bridge must stand forever.’

“And,” concluded the Story Girl, her face upturned to the sky and her big eyes filled with starlight, “it stands still. That bridge is the Milky Way.”

“What a lovely story,” sighed Sara Ray, who had been wooed to a temporary forgetfulness of her woes by its charm.

The rest of us came back to earth, feeling that we had been wandering among the hosts of heaven. We were not old enough to appreciate fully the wonderful meaning of the legend; but we felt its beauty and its appeal. To us forevermore the Milky Way would be, not Peter’s overwhelming garland of suns, but the lucent bridge, love-created, on which the banished archangels crossed from star to star.

We had to go up Sara Ray’s lane with her to her very door, for she was afraid Peg Bowen would catch her if she went alone. Then the Story Girl and I walked up the hill together. Peter and Felicity lagged behind. Cecily and Dan and Felix were walking before us, hand in hand, singing a hymn. Cecily had a very sweet voice, and I listened in delight. But the Story Girl sighed.

“What if Sara does take the measles?” she asked miserably.

“Everyone has to have the measles sometime,” I said comfortingly, “and the younger you are the better.”

Chapter XI.

The Story Girl Does Penance

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Ten days later, Aunt Olivia and Uncle Roger went to town one evening, to remain over night, and the next day. Peter and the Story Girl were to stay at Uncle Alec's during their absence.

We were in the orchard at sunset, listening to the story of King Cophetua and the beggar maid — all of us, except Peter, who was hoeing turnips, and Felicity, who had gone down the hill on an errand to Mrs. Ray.

The Story Girl impersonated the beggar maid so vividly, and with such an illusion of beauty, that we did not wonder in the least at the king's love for her. I had read the story before, and it had been my opinion that it was "rot." No king, I felt certain, would ever marry a beggar maid when he had princesses galore from whom to choose. But now I understood it all.

When Felicity returned we concluded from her expression that she had news. And she had.

"Sara is real sick," she said, with regret, and something that was not regret mingled in her voice. "She has a cold and sore throat, and she is feverish. Mrs. Ray says if she isn't better by the morning she's going to send for the doctor. AND SHE IS AFRAID IT'S THE MEASLES."

Felicity flung the last sentence at the Story Girl, who turned very pale.

"Oh, do you suppose she caught them at the magic lantern show?" she said miserably.

"Where else could she have caught them?" said Felicity mercilessly. "I didn't see her, of course — Mrs. Ray met me at the door and told me not to come in. But Mrs. Ray says the measles always go awful hard with the Rays — if they don't die completely of them it leaves them deaf or half blind, or something like that. Of course," added Felicity, her heart melting at sight of the misery in the Story Girl's piteous eyes, "Mrs. Ray always looks on the dark side, and it may not be the measles Sara has after all."

But Felicity had done her work too thoroughly. The Story Girl was not to be comforted.

“I’d give anything if I’d never put Sara up to going to that show,” she said. “It’s all my fault — but the punishment falls on Sara, and that isn’t fair. I’d go this minute and confess the whole thing to Mrs. Ray; but if I did it might get Sara into more trouble, and I mustn’t do that. I sha’n’t sleep a wink tonight.”

I don’t think she did. She looked very pale and woebegone when she came down to breakfast. But, for all that, there was a certain exhilaration about her.

“I’m going to do penance all day for coaxing Sara to disobey her mother,” she announced with chastened triumph.

“Penance?” we murmured in bewilderment.

“Yes. I’m going to deny myself everything I like, and do everything I can think of that I don’t like, just to punish myself for being so wicked. And if any of you think of anything I don’t, just mention it to me. I thought it out last night. Maybe Sara won’t be so very sick if God sees I’m truly sorry.”

“He can see it anyhow, without you’re doing anything,” said Cecily.

“Well, my conscience will feel better.”

“I don’t believe Presbyterians ever do penance,” said Felicity dubiously. “I never heard of one doing it.”

But the rest of us rather looked with favour on the Story Girl’s idea. We felt sure that she would do penance as picturesquely and thoroughly as she did everything else.

“You might put peas in your shoes, you know,” suggested Peter.

“The very thing! I never thought of that. I’ll get some after breakfast. I’m not going to eat a single thing all day, except bread and water — and not much of that!”

This, we felt, was a heroic measure indeed. To sit down to one of Aunt Janet’s meals, in ordinary health and appetite, and eat nothing but bread

and water — that would be penance with a vengeance! We felt WE could never do it. But the Story Girl did it. We admired and pitied her. But now I do not think that she either needed our pity or deserved our admiration. Her ascetic fare was really sweeter to her than honey of Hymettus. She was, though quite unconsciously, acting a part, and tasting all the subtle joy of the artist, which is so much more exquisite than any material pleasure.

Aunt Janet, of course, noticed the Story Girl's abstinence and asked if she was sick.

"No. I am just doing penance, Aunt Janet, for a sin I committed. I can't confess it, because that would bring trouble on another person. So I'm going to do penance all day. You don't mind, do you?"

Aunt Janet was in a very good humour that morning, so she merely laughed.

"Not if you don't go too far with your nonsense," she said tolerantly.

"Thank you. And will you give me a handful of hard peas after breakfast, Aunt Janet? I want to put them in my shoes."

"There isn't any; I used the last in the soup yesterday."

"Oh!" The Story Girl was much disappointed. "Then I suppose I'll have to do without. The new peas wouldn't hurt enough. They're so soft they'd just squash flat."

"I'll tell you," said Peter, "I'll pick up a lot of those little round pebbles on Mr. King's front walk. They'll be just as good as peas."

"You'll do nothing of the sort," said Aunt Janet. "Sara must not do penance in that way. She would wear holes in her stockings, and might seriously bruise her feet."

"What would you say if I took a whip and whipped my bare shoulders till the blood came?" demanded the Story Girl aggrieved.

"I wouldn't SAY anything," retorted Aunt Janet. "I'd simply turn you over my knee and give you a sound, solid spanking, Miss Sara. You'd find that penance enough."

The Story Girl was crimson with indignation. To have such a remark made to you — when you were fourteen and a half — and before the boys, too! Really, Aunt Janet could be very dreadful.

It was vacation, and there was not much to do that day; we were soon free to seek the orchard. But the Story Girl would not come. She had seated herself in the darkest, hottest corner of the kitchen, with a piece of old cotton in her hand.

“I am not going to play to-day,” she said, “and I’m not going to tell a single story. Aunt Janet won’t let me put pebbles in my shoes, but I’ve put a thistle next my skin on my back and it sticks into me if I lean back the least bit. And I’m going to work buttonholes all over this cotton. I hate working buttonholes worse than anything in the world, so I’m going to work them all day.”

“What’s the good of working buttonholes on an old rag?” asked Felicity.

“It isn’t any good. The beauty of penance is that it makes you feel uncomfortable. So it doesn’t matter what you do, whether it’s useful or not, so long as it’s nasty. Oh, I wonder how Sara is this morning.”

“Mother’s going down this afternoon,” said Felicity. “She says none of us must go near the place till we know whether it is the measles or not.”

“I’ve thought of a great penance,” said Cecily eagerly. “Don’t go to the missionary meeting tonight.”

The Story Girl looked piteous.

“I thought of that myself — but I CAN’T stay home, Cecily. It would be more than flesh and blood could endure. I MUST hear that missionary speak. They say he was all but eaten by cannibals once. Just think how many new stories I’d have to tell after I’d heard him! No, I must go, but I’ll tell you what I’ll do. I’ll wear my school dress and hat. THAT will be penance. Felicity, when you set the table for dinner, put the broken-handled knife for me. I hate it so. And I’m going to take a dose of Mexican Tea every two hours. It’s such dreadful tasting stuff — but it’s a good blood purifier, so Aunt Janet can’t object to it.”

The Story Girl carried out her self-imposed penance fully. All day she sat in the kitchen and worked buttonholes, subsisting on bread and water and Mexican Tea.

Felicity did a mean thing. She went to work and made little raisin pies, right there in the kitchen before the Story Girl. The smell of raisin pies is something to tempt an anchorite; and the Story Girl was exceedingly fond of them. Felicity ate two in her very presence, and then brought the rest out to us in the orchard. The Story Girl could see us through the window, carousing without stint on raisin pies and Uncle Edward's cherries. But she worked on at her buttonholes. She would not look at the exciting serial in the new magazine Dan brought home from the postoffice, neither would she open a letter from her father. Pat came over, but his most seductive purrs won no notice from his mistress, who refused herself the pleasure of even patting him.

Aunt Janet could not go down the hill in the afternoon to find out how Sara was because company came to tea — the Millwards from Markdale. Mr. Millward was a doctor, and Mrs. Millward was a B.A. Aunt Janet was very desirous that everything should be as nice as possible, and we were all sent to our rooms before tea to wash and dress up. The Story Girl slipped over home, and when she came back we gasped. She had combed her hair out straight, and braided it in a tight, kinky, pudgy braid; and she wore an old dress of faded print, with holes in the elbows and ragged flounces, which was much too short for her.

"Sara Stanley, have you taken leave of your senses?" demanded Aunt Janet. "What do you mean by putting on such a rig! Don't you know I have company to tea?"

"Yes, and that is just why I put it on, Aunt Janet. I want to mortify the flesh—"

"I'll 'mortify' you, if I catch you showing yourself to the Millwards like that, my girl! Go right home and dress yourself decently — or eat your supper in the kitchen."

The Story Girl chose the latter alternative. She was highly indignant. I verily believe that to sit at the dining-room table, in that shabby, outgrown

dress, conscious of looking her ugliest, and eating only bread and water before the critical Millwards would have been positive bliss to her.

When we went to the missionary meeting that evening, the Story Girl wore her school dress and hat, while Felicity and Cecily were in their pretty muslins. And she had tied her hair with a snuff-brown ribbon which was very unbecoming to her.

The first person we saw in the church porch was Mrs. Ray. She told us that Sara had nothing worse than a feverish cold.

The missionary had at least seven happy listeners that night. We were all glad that Sara did not have measles, and the Story Girl was radiant.

“Now you see all your penance was wasted,” said Felicity, as we walked home, keeping close together because of the rumour that Peg Bowen was abroad.

“Oh, I don’t know. I feel better since I punished myself. But I’m going to make up for it tomorrow,” said the Story Girl energetically. “In fact, I’ll begin tonight. I’m going to the pantry as soon as I get home, and I’ll read father’s letter before I go to bed. Wasn’t the missionary splendid? That cannibal story was simply grand. I tried to remember every word, so that I can tell it just as he told it. Missionaries are such noble people.”

“I’d like to be a missionary and have adventures like that,” said Felix.

“It would be all right if you could be sure the cannibals would be interrupted in the nick of time as his were,” said Dan. “But sposen they weren’t?”

“Nothing would prevent cannibals from eating Felix if they once caught him,” giggled Felicity. “He’s so nice and fat.”

I am sure Felix felt very unlike a missionary at that precise moment.

“I’m going to put two cents more a week in my missionary box than

I’ve been doing,” said Cecily determinedly.

Two cents more a week out of Cecily's egg money, meant something of a sacrifice. It inspired the rest of us. We all decided to increase our weekly contribution by a cent or so. And Peter, who had had no missionary box at all, up to this time, determined to start one.

"I don't seem to be able to feel as int'rested in missionaries as you folks do," he said, "but maybe if I begin to give something I'll get int'rested. I'll want to know how my money's being spent. I won't be able to give much. When your father's run away, and your mother goes out washing, and you're only old enough to get fifty cents a week, you can't give much to the heathen. But I'll do the best I can. My Aunt Jane was fond of missions. Are there any Methodist heathen? I s'pose I ought to give my box to them, rather than to Presbyterian heathen."

"No, it's only after they're converted that they're anything in particular," said Felicity. "Before that, they're just plain heathen. But if you want your money to go to a Methodist missionary you can give it to the Methodist minister at Markdale. I guess the Presbyterians can get along without it, and look after their own heathen."

"Just smell Mrs. Sampson's flowers," said Cecily, as we passed a trim white paling close to the road, over which blew odours sweeter than the perfume of Araby's shore. "Her roses are all out and that bed of Sweet William is a sight by daylight."

"Sweet William is a dreadful name for a flower," said the Story Girl. "William is a man's name, and men are NEVER sweet. They are a great many nice things, but they are NOT sweet and shouldn't be. That is for women. Oh, look at the moonshine on the road in that gap between the spruces! I'd like a dress of moonshine, with stars for buttons."

"It wouldn't do," said Felicity decidedly. "You could see through it."

Which seemed to settle the question of moonshine dresses effectually.

The Blue Chest of Rachel Ward

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“It’s utterly out of the question,” said Aunt Janet seriously. When Aunt Janet said seriously that anything was out of the question it meant that she was thinking about it, and would probably end up by doing it. If a thing really was out of the question she merely laughed and refused to discuss it at all.

The particular matter in or out of the question that opening day of August was a project which Uncle Edward had recently mooted. Uncle Edward’s youngest daughter was to be married; and Uncle Edward had written over, urging Uncle Alec, Aunt Janet and Aunt Olivia to go down to Halifax for the wedding and spend a week there.

Uncle Alec and Aunt Olivia were eager to go; but Aunt Janet at first declared it was impossible.

“How could we go away and leave the place to the mercy of all those young ones?” she demanded. “We’d come home and find them all sick, and the house burned down.”

“Not a bit of fear of it,” scoffed Uncle Roger. “Felicity is as good a housekeeper as you are; and I shall be here to look after them all, and keep them from burning the house down. You’ve been promising Edward for years to visit him, and you’ll never have a better chance. The haying is over and harvest isn’t on, and Alec needs a change. He isn’t looking well at all.”

I think it was Uncle Roger’s last argument which convinced Aunt Janet. In the end she decided to go. Uncle Roger’s house was to be closed, and he and Peter and the Story Girl were to take up their abode with us.

We were all delighted. Felicity, in especial, seemed to be in seventh heaven. To be left in sole charge of a big house, with three meals a day to plan and prepare, with poultry and cows and dairy and garden to superintend, apparently furnished forth Felicity’s conception of Paradise.

Of course, we were all to help; but Felicity was to “run things,” and she gloried in it.

The Story Girl was pleased, too.

“Felicity is going to give me cooking lessons,” she confided to me, as we walked in the orchard. “Isn’t that fine? It will be easier when there are no grownups around to make me nervous, and laugh if I make mistakes.”

Uncle Alec and aunts left on Monday morning. Poor Aunt Janet was full of dismal forebodings, and gave us so many charges and warnings that we did not try to remember any of them; Uncle Alec merely told us to be good and mind what Uncle Roger said. Aunt Olivia laughed at us out of her pansy-blue eyes, and told us she knew exactly what we felt like and hoped we’d have a gorgeous time.

“Mind they go to bed at a decent hour,” Aunt Janet called back to Uncle Roger as she drove out of the gate. “And if anything dreadful happens telegraph us.”

Then they were really gone and we were all left “to keep house.”

Uncle Roger and Peter went away to their work. Felicity at once set the preparations for dinner a-going, and allotted to each of us his portion of service. The Story Girl was to prepare the potatoes; Felix and Dan were to pick and shell the peas; Cecily was to attend the fire; I was to peel the turnips. Felicity made our mouths water by announcing that she was going to make a roly-poly jam pudding for dinner.

I peeled my turnips on the back porch, put them in their pot, and set them on the stove. Then I was at liberty to watch the others, who had longer jobs. The kitchen was a scene of happy activity. The Story Girl peeled her potatoes, somewhat slowly and awkwardly — for she was not deft at household tasks; Dan and Felix shelled peas and tormented Pat by attaching pods to his ears and tail; Felicity, flushed and serious, measured and stirred skilfully.

“I am sitting on a tragedy,” said the Story Girl suddenly.

Felix and I stared. We were not quite sure what a “tragedy” was, but we did not think it was an old blue wooden chest, such as the Story Girl was undoubtedly sitting on, if eyesight counted for anything.

The old chest filled up the corner between the table and the wall. Neither Felix nor I had ever thought about it particularly. It was very large and heavy, and Felicity generally said hard things of it when she swept the kitchen.

“This old blue chest holds a tragedy,” explained the Story Girl.

“I know a story about it.”

“Cousin Rachel Ward’s wedding things are all in that old chest,” said Felicity.

Who was Cousin Rachel Ward? And why were her wedding things shut up in an old blue chest in Uncle Alec’s kitchen? We demanded the tale instantly. The Story Girl told it to us as she peeled her potatoes. Perhaps the potatoes suffered — Felicity declared the eyes were not properly done at all — but the story did not.

“It is a sad story,” said the Story Girl, “and it happened fifty years ago, when Grandfather and Grandmother King were quite young. Grandmother’s cousin Rachel Ward came to spend a winter with them. She belonged to Montreal and she was an orphan too, just like the Family Ghost. I have never heard what she looked like, but she **MUST** have been beautiful, of course.”

“Mother says she was awful sentimental and romantic,”
interjected
Felicity.

“Well, anyway, she met Will Montague that winter. He was handsome — everybody says so” —

“And an awful flirt,” said Felicity.

“Felicity, I **WISH** you wouldn’t interrupt. It spoils the effect. What would you feel like if I went and kept stirring things that didn’t belong to it into that pudding? I feel just the same way. Well, Will Montague fell in love with Rachel Ward, and she with him, and it was all arranged that they were to be married from here in the spring. Poor Rachel was so happy that

winter; she made all her wedding things with her own hands. Girls did, then, you know, for there was no such thing as a sewing-machine. Well, at last in April the wedding day came, and all the guests were here, and Rachel was dressed in her wedding robes, waiting for her bridegroom. And” — the Story Girl laid down her knife and potato and clasped her wet hands—”WILL MONTAGUE NEVER CAME!”

We felt as much of a shock as if we had been one of the expectant guests ourselves.

“What happened to him? Was HE killed too?” asked Felix.

The Story Girl sighed and resumed her work.

“No, indeed. I wish he had been. THAT would have been suitable and romantic. No, it was just something horrid. He had to run away for debt! Fancy! He acted mean right through, Aunt Janet says. He never sent even a word to Rachel, and she never heard from him again.”

“Pig!” said Felix forcibly.

“She was brokenhearted of course. When she found out what had happened, she took all her wedding things, and her supply of linen, and some presents that had been given her, and packed them all away in this old blue chest. Then she went away back to Montreal, and took the key with her. She never came back to the Island again — I suppose she couldn’t bear to. And she has lived in Montreal ever since and never married. She is an old woman now — nearly seventy-five. And this chest has never been opened since.”

“Mother wrote to Cousin Rachel ten years ago,” said Cecily, “and asked her if she might open the chest to see if the moths had got into it. There’s a crack in the back as big as your finger. Cousin Rachel wrote back that if it wasn’t for one thing that was in the trunk she would ask mother to open the chest and dispose of the things as she liked. But she could not bear that any one but herself should see or touch that one thing. So she wanted it left as it was. Ma said she washed her hands of it, moths or no moths. She said if Cousin Rachel had to move that chest every time the floor had to be scrubbed it would cure her of her sentimental nonsense.

But I think,” concluded Cecily, “that I would feel just like Cousin Rachel in her place.”

“What was the thing she couldn’t bear any one to see?” I asked.

“Ma thinks it was her wedding dress. But father says he believes it was Will Montague’s picture,” said Felicity. “He saw her put it in. Father knows some of the things that are in the chest. He was ten years old, and he saw her pack it. There’s a white muslin wedding dress and a veil — and — and — a — a” — Felicity dropped her eyes and blushed painfully.

“A petticoat, embroidered by hand from hem to belt,” said the Story Girl calmly.

“And a china fruit basket with an apple on the handle,” went on Felicity, much relieved. “And a tea set, and a blue candlestick.”

“I’d dearly love to see all the things that are in it,” said the Story Girl.

“Pa says it must never be opened without Cousin Rachel’s permission,” said Cecily.

Felix and I looked at the chest reverently. It had taken on a new significance in our eyes, and seemed like a tomb wherein lay buried some dead romance of the vanished years.

“What happened to Will Montague?” I asked.

“Nothing!” said the Story Girl viciously. “He just went on living and flourishing. He patched up matters with his creditors after awhile, and came back to the Island; and in the end he married a real nice girl, with money, and was very happy. Did you ever HEAR of anything so unjust?”

“Beverley King,” suddenly cried Felicity, who had been peering into a pot, “YOU’VE GONE AND PUT THE TURNIPS ON TO BOIL WHOLE JUST LIKE POTATOES!”

“Wasn’t that right?” I cried, in an agony of shame.

“Right!” but Felicity had already whisked the turnips out, and was slicing them, while all the others were laughing at me. I had added a

tradition on my own account to the family archives.

Uncle Roger roared when he heard it; and he roared again at night over Peter's account of Felix attempting to milk a cow. Felix had previously acquired the knack of extracting milk from the udder. But he had never before tried to "milk a whole cow." He did not get on well; the cow tramped on his foot, and finally upset the bucket.

"What are you to do when a cow won't stand straight?"
spluttered
Felix angrily.

"That's the question," said Uncle Roger, shaking his head gravely.

Uncle Roger's laughter was hard to bear, but his gravity was harder.

Meanwhile, in the pantry the Story Girl, apron-enshrouded, was being initiated into the mysteries of bread-making. Under Felicity's eyes she set the bread, and on the morrow she was to bake it.

"The first thing you must do in the morning is knead it well," said Felicity, "and the earlier it's done the better — because it's such a warm night."

With that we went to bed, and slept as soundly as if tragedies of blue chests and turnips and crooked cows had no place in the scheme of things at all.

An Old Proverb With A New Meaning

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It was halfpast five when we boys got up the next morning. We were joined on the stairs by Felicity, yawning and rosy.

“Oh, dear me, I overslept myself. Uncle Roger wanted breakfast at six. Well, I suppose the fire is on anyhow, for the Story Girl is up. I guess she got up early to knead the bread. She couldn’t sleep all night for worrying over it.”

The fire was on, and a flushed and triumphant Story Girl was taking a loaf of bread from the oven.

“Just look,” she said proudly. “I have every bit of the bread baked. I got up at three, and it was lovely and light, so I just gave it a right good kneading and popped it into the oven. And it’s all done and out of the way. But the loaves don’t seem quite as big as they should be,” she added doubtfully.

“Sara Stanley!” Felicity flew across the kitchen. “Do you mean that you put the bread right into the oven after you kneaded it without leaving it to rise a second time?”

The Story Girl turned quite pale.

“Yes, I did,” she faltered. “Oh, Felicity, wasn’t it right?”

“You’ve ruined the bread,” said Felicity flatly. “It’s as heavy as a stone. I declare, Sara Stanley, I’d rather have a little common sense than be a great story teller.”

Bitter indeed was the poor Story Girl’s mortification.

“Don’t tell Uncle Roger,” she implored humbly.

“Oh, I won’t tell him,” promised Felicity amiably. “It’s lucky there’s enough old bread to do to-day. This will go to the hens. But it’s an awful waste of good flour.”

The Story Girl crept out with Felix and me to the morning orchard, while Dan and Peter went to do the barn work.

“It isn’t ANY use for me to try to learn to cook,” she said.

“Never mind,” I said consolingly. “You can tell splendid stories.”

“But what good would that do a hungry boy?” wailed the Story Girl.

“Boys ain’t ALWAYS hungry,” said Felix gravely. “There’s times when they ain’t.”

“I don’t believe it,” said the Story Girl drearily.

“Besides,” added Felix in the tone of one who says while there is life there is yet hope, “you may learn to cook yet if you keep on trying.”

“But Aunt Olivia won’t let me waste the stuff. My only hope was to learn this week. But I suppose Felicity is so disgusted with me now that she won’t give me any more lessons.”

“I don’t care,” said Felix. “I like you better than Felicity, even if you can’t cook. There’s lots of folks can make bread. But there isn’t many who can tell a story like you.”

“But it’s better to be useful than just interesting,” sighed the Story Girl bitterly.

And Felicity, who was useful, would, in her secret soul, have given anything to be interesting. Which is the way of human nature.

Company descended on us that afternoon. First came Aunt Janet’s sister, Mrs. Patterson, with a daughter of sixteen years and a son of two. They were followed by a buggy-load of Markdale people; and finally, Mrs. Elder Frewen and her sister from Vancouver, with two small daughters of the latter, arrived.

“It never rains but it pours,” said Uncle Roger, as he went out to take their horse. But Felicity’s foot was on her native heath. She had been baking all the afternoon, and, with a pantry well stocked with biscuits, cookies, cakes, and pies, she cared not if all Carlisle came to tea. Cecily set the table, and the Story Girl waited on it and washed all the dishes afterwards. But all the blushing honours fell to Felicity, who received so

many compliments that her airs were quite unbearable for the rest of the week. She presided at the head of the table with as much grace and dignity as if she had been five times twelve years old, and seemed to know by instinct just who took sugar and who took it not. She was flushed with excitement and pleasure, and was so pretty that I could hardly eat for looking at her — which is the highest compliment in a boy's power to pay.

The Story Girl, on the contrary, was under eclipse. She was pale and lustreless from her disturbed night and early rising; and no opportunity offered to tell a melting tale. Nobody took any notice of her. It was Felicity's day.

After tea Mrs. Frewen and her sister wished to visit their father's grave in the Carlisle churchyard. It appeared that everybody wanted to go with them; but it was evident that somebody must stay home with Jimmy Patterson, who had just fallen sound asleep on the kitchen sofa. Dan finally volunteered to look after him. He had a new Henty book which he wanted to finish, and that, he said, was better fun than a walk to the graveyard.

"I think we'll be back before he wakes," said Mrs. Patterson, "and anyhow he is very good and won't be any trouble. Don't let him go outside, though. He has a cold now."

We went away, leaving Dan sitting on the door-sill reading his book, and Jimmy P. snoozing blissfully on the sofa. When we returned — Felix and the girls and I were ahead of the others — Dan was still sitting in precisely the same place and attitude; but there was no Jimmy in sight.

"Dan, where's the baby?" cried Felicity.

Dan looked around. His jaw fell in blank amazement. I never say any one look as foolish as Dan at that moment.

"Good gracious, I don't know," he said helplessly.

"You've been so deep in that wretched book that he's got out, and dear knows where he is," cried Felicity distractedly.

"I wasn't," cried Dan. "He MUST be in the house. I've been sitting right across the door ever since you left, and he couldn't have got out unless he crawled right over me. He must be in the house."

“He isn’t in the kitchen,” said Felicity rushing about wildly, “and he couldn’t get into the other part of the house, for I shut the hall door tight, and no baby could open it — and it’s shut tight yet. So are all the windows. He MUST have gone out of that door, Dan King, and it’s your fault.”

“He DIDN’T go out of this door,” reiterated Dan stubbornly. “I know that.”

“Well, where is he, then? He isn’t here. Did he melt into air?” demanded Felicity. “Oh, come and look for him, all of you. Don’t stand round like ninnies. We MUST find him before his mother gets here. Dan King, you’re an idiot!”

Dan was too frightened to resent this, at the time. However and wherever Jimmy had gone, he WAS gone, so much was certain. We tore about the house and yard like maniacs; we looked into every likely and unlikely place. But Jimmy we could not find, anymore than if he had indeed melted into air. Mrs. Patterson came, and we had not found him. Things were getting serious. Uncle Roger and Peter were summoned from the field. Mrs. Patterson became hysterical, and was taken into the spare room with such remedies as could be suggested. Everybody blamed poor Dan. Cecily asked him what he would feel like if Jimmy was never, never found. The Story Girl had a gruesome recollection of some baby at Markdale who had wandered away like that —

“And they never found him till the next spring, and all they found was — HIS SKELETON, with the grass growing through it,” she whispered.

“This beats me,” said Uncle Roger, when a fruitless hour had elapsed. “I do hope that baby hasn’t wandered down to the swamp. It seems impossible he could walk so far; but I must go and see. Felicity, hand me my high boots out from under the sofa, there’s a girl.”

Felicity, pale and tearful, dropped on her knees and lifted the cretonne frill of the sofa. There, his head pillowed hardly on Uncle Roger’s boots, lay Jimmy Patterson, still sound asleep!

“Well, I’ll be — jiggered!” said Uncle Roger.

“I KNEW he never went out of the door,” cried Dan triumphantly.

When the last buggy had driven away, Felicity set a batch of bread, and the rest of us sat around the back porch steps in the cat's light and ate cherries, shooting the stones at each other. Cecily was in quest of information.

"What does 'it never rains but it pours' mean?"

"Oh, it means if anything happens something else is sure to happen," said the Story Girl. "I'll illustrate. There's Mrs. Murphy. She never had a proposal in her life till she was forty, and then she had three in the one week, and she was so flustered she took the wrong one and has been sorry ever since. Do you see what it means now?"

"Yes, I guess so," said Cecily somewhat doubtfully. Later on we heard her imparting her newly acquired knowledge to Felicity in the pantry.

"'It never rains but it pours' means that nobody wants to marry you for ever so long, and then lots of people do."

Forbidden Fruit

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We were all, with the exception of Uncle Roger, more or less grumpy in the household of King next day. Perhaps our nerves had been upset by the excitement attendant on Jimmy Patterson's disappearance. But it is more likely that our crankiness was the result of the supper we had eaten the previous night. Even children cannot devour mince pie, and cold fried pork ham, and fruit cake before going to bed with entire impunity. Aunt Janet had forgotten to warn Uncle Roger to keep an eye on our bedtime snacks, and we ate what seemed good unto us.

Some of us had frightful dreams, and all of us carried chips on our shoulders at breakfast. Felicity and Dan began a bickering which they kept up the entire day. Felicity had a natural aptitude for what we called "bossing," and in her mother's absence she deemed that she had a right to rule supreme. She knew better than to make any attempt to assert authority over the Story Girl, and Felix and I were allowed some length of tether; but Cecily, Dan, and Peter were expected to submit dutifully to her decrees. In the main they did; but on this particular morning Dan was plainly inclined to rebel. He had had time to grow sore over the things that Felicity had said to him when Jimmy Patterson was thought lost, and he began the day with a flatly expressed determination that he was not going to let Felicity rule the roost.

It was not a pleasant day, and to make matters worse it rained until late in the afternoon. The Story Girl had not recovered from the mortifications of the previous day; she would not talk, and she would not tell a single story; she sat on Rachel Ward's chest and ate her breakfast with the air of a martyr. After breakfast she washed the dishes and did the bedroom work in grim silence; then, with a book under one arm and Pat under the other, she betook herself to the window-seat in the upstairs hall, and would not be lured from that retreat, charmed we never so wisely. She stroked the

purring Paddy, and read steadily on, with maddening indifference to all our pleadings.

Even Cecily, the meek and mild, was snappish, and complained of headache. Peter had gone home to see his mother, and Uncle Roger had gone to Markdale on business. Sara Ray came up, but was so snubbed by Felicity that she went home, crying. Felicity got the dinner by herself, disdaining to ask or command assistance. She banged things about and rattled the stove covers until even Cecily protested from her sofa. Dan sat on the floor and whittled, his sole aim and object being to make a mess and annoy Felicity, in which noble ambition he succeeded perfectly.

“I wish Aunt Janet and Uncle Alec were home,” said Felix. “It’s not half so much fun having the grownups away as I thought it would be.”

“I wish I was back in Toronto,” I said sulkily. The mince pie was to blame for THAT wish.

“I wish you were, I’m sure,” said Felicity, riddling the fire noisily.

“Any one who lives with you, Felicity King, will always be wishing he was somewhere else,” said Dan.

“I wasn’t talking to you, Dan King,” retorted Felicity, “‘Speak when you’re spoken to, come when you’re called.’”

“Oh, oh, oh,” wailed Cecily on the sofa. “I WISH it would stop raining. I WISH my head would stop aching. I WISH ma had never gone away. I WISH you’d leave Felicity alone, Dan.”

“I wish girls had some sense,” said Dan — which brought the orgy of wishing to an end for the time. A wishing fairy might have had the time of her life in the King kitchen that morning — particularly if she were a cynically inclined fairy.

But even the effects of unholy snacks wear away at length. By teatime things had brightened up. The rain had ceased, and the old, low-raftered room was full of sunshine which danced on the shining dishes of the dresser, made mosaics on the floor, and flickered over the table whereon a delicious meal was spread. Felicity had put on her blue muslin, and looked so beautiful in it that her good humour was quite restored. Cecily’s headache was better, and the Story Girl, refreshed by an afternoon siesta,

came down with smiles and sparkling eyes. Dan alone continued to nurse his grievances, and would not even laugh when the Story Girl told us a tale brought to mind by some of the “Rev. Mr. Scott’s plums” which were on the table.

“The Rev. Mr. Scott was the man who thought the pulpit door must be made for speerits, you know,” she said. “I heard Uncle Edward telling ever so many stories about him. He was called to this congregation, and he laboured here long and faithfully, and was much beloved, though he was very eccentric.”

“What does that mean?” asked Peter.

“Hush! It just means queer,” said Cecily, nudging him with her elbow. “A common man would be queer, but when it’s a minister, it’s eccentric.”

“When he gets very old,” continued the Story Girl, “the Presbytery thought it was time he was retired. HE didn’t think so; but the Presbytery had their way, because there were so many of them to one of him. He was retired, and a young man was called to Carlisle. Mr. Scott went to live in town, but he came out to Carlisle very often, and visited all the people regularly, just the same as when he was their minister. The young minister was a very good young man, and tried to do his duty; but he was dreadfully afraid of meeting old Mr. Scott, because he had been told that the old minister was very angry at being set aside, and would likely give him a sound drubbing, if he ever met him. One day the young minister was visiting the Crawfords in Markdale, when they suddenly heard old Mr. Scott’s voice in the kitchen. The young minister turned pale as the dead, and implored Mrs. Crawford to hid him. But she couldn’t get him out of the room, and all she could do was to hide him in the china closet. The young minister slipped into the china closet, and old Mr. Scott came into the room. He talked very nicely, and read, and prayed. They made very long prayers in those days, you know; and at the end of his prayer he said, ‘Oh Lord, bless the poor young man hiding in the closet. Give him courage not to fear the face of man. Make him a burning and a shining light to this sadly abused congregation.’ Just imagine the feelings of the young minister in the china closet! But he came right out like a man, though his

face was very red, as soon as Mr. Scott had done praying. And Mr. Scott was lovely to him, and shook hands, and never mentioned the china closet. And they were the best of friends ever afterwards.”

“How did old Mr. Scott find out the young minister was in the closet?” asked Felix.

“Nobody ever knew. They supposed he had seen him through the window before he came into the house, and guessed he must be in the closet — because there was no way for him to get out of the room.”

“Mr. Scott planted the yellow plum tree in Grandfather’s time,” said Cecily, peeling one of the plums, “and when he did it he said it was as Christian an act as he ever did. I wonder what he meant. I don’t see anything very Christian about planting a tree.”

“I do,” said the Story Girl sagely.

When next we assembled ourselves together, it was after milking, and the cares of the day were done with. We foregathered in the balsam-fragrant aisles of the fir wood, and ate early August apples to such an extent that the Story Girl said we made her think of the Irishman’s pig.

“An Irishman who lived at Markdale had a little pig,” she said, “and he gave it a pailful of mush. The pig ate the whole pailful, and then the Irishman put the pig IN the pail, and it didn’t fill more than half the pail. Now, how was that, when it held a whole pailful of mush?”

This seemed to be a rather unanswerable kind of conundrum. We discussed the problem as we roamed the wood, and Dan and Peter almost quarrelled over it, Dan maintaining that the thing was impossible, and Peter being of the opinion that the mush was somehow “made thicker” in the process of being eaten, and so took up less room. During the discussion we came out to the fence of the hill pasture where grew the “bad berry” bushes.

Just what these “bad berries” were I cannot tell. We never knew their real name. They were small, red-clustered berries of a glossy, seductive appearance, and we were forbidden to eat them, because it was thought they might be poisonous. Dan picked a cluster and held it up.

“Dan King, don’t you DARE eat those berries,” said Felicity in her “bossiest” tone. “They’re poison. Drop them right away.”

Now, Dan had not had the slightest intention of eating the berries. But at Felicity’s prohibition the rebellion which had smouldered in him all day broke into sudden flame. He would show her!

“I’ll eat them if I please, Felicity King,” he said in a fury:

“I don’t believe they’re poison. Look here!”

Dan crammed the whole bunch into his capacious mouth and chewed it up.

“They taste great,” he said, smacking; and he ate two more clusters, regardless of our horror-stricken protestations and Felicity’s pleadings.

We feared that Dan would drop dead on the spot. But nothing occurred immediately. When an hour had passed we concluded that the bad berries were not poison after all, and we looked upon Dan as quite a hero for daring to eat them.

“I knew they wouldn’t hurt me,” he said loftily. “Felicity’s so fond of making a fuss over everything.”

Nevertheless, when it grew dark and we returned to the house, I noticed that Dan was rather pale and quiet. He lay down on the kitchen sofa.

“Don’t you feel all right, Dan?” I whispered anxiously.

“Shut up,” he said.

I shut up.

Felicity and Cecily were setting out a lunch in the pantry when we were all startled by a loud groan from the sofa.

“Oh, I’m sick — I’m awful sick,” said Dan abjectly, all the defiance and bravado gone out of him.

We all went to pieces, except Cecily, who alone retained her presence of mind.

“Have you got a pain in your stomach?” she demanded.

“I’ve got an awful pain here, if that’s where my stomach is,” moaned Dan, putting his hand on a portion of his anatomy considerably below his stomach. “Oh — oh — oh!”

“Go for Uncle Roger,” commanded Cecily, pale but composed. “Felicity, put on the kettle. Dan, I’m going to give you mustard and warm water.”

The mustard and warm water produced its proper effect promptly, but gave Dan no relief. He continued to writhe and groan. Uncle Roger, who had been summoned from his own place, went at once for the doctor, telling Peter to go down the hill for Mrs. Ray. Peter went, but returned accompanied by Sara only. Mrs. Ray and Judy Pineau were both away. Sara might better have stayed home; she was of no use, and could only add to the general confusion, wandering aimlessly about, crying and asking if Dan was going to die.

Cecily took charge of things. Felicity might charm the palate, and the Story Girl bind captive the soul; but when pain and sickness wrung the brow it was Cecily who was the ministering angel. She made the writhing Dan go to bed. She made him swallow every available antidote which was recommended in “the doctor’s book;” and she applied hot cloths to him until her faithful little hands were half scalded off.

There was no doubt Dan was suffering intense pain. He moaned and writhed, and cried for his mother.

“Oh, isn’t it dreadful!” said Felicity, wringing her hands as she walked the kitchen floor. “Oh, why doesn’t the doctor come? I TOLD Dan the bad berries were poison. But surely they can’t kill people ALTOGETHER.”

“Pa’s cousin died of eating something forty years ago,” sobbed Sara Ray.

“Hold your tongue,” said Peter in a fierce whisper. “You oughter have more sense than to say such things to the girls. They don’t want to be any worse scared than they are.”

“But Pa’s cousin DID die,” reiterated Sara.

“My Aunt Jane used to rub whisky on for a pain,” suggested Peter.

“We haven’t any whisky,” said Felicity disapprovingly. “This is a temperance house.”

“But rubbing whisky on the OUTSIDE isn’t any harm,” argued Peter.

“It’s only when you take it inside it is bad for you.”

“Well, we haven’t any, anyhow,” said Felicity. “I suppose blueberry wine wouldn’t do in its place?”

Peter did not think blueberry wine would be any good.

It was ten o’clock before Dan began to get better; but from that time he improved rapidly. When the doctor, who had been away from home when Uncle Roger reached Markdale, came at half past ten, he found his patient very weak and white, but free from pain.

Dr. Grier patted Cecily on the head, told her she was a little brick, and had done just the right thing, examined some of the fatal berries and gave it as his opinion that they were probably poisonous, administered some powders to Dan and advised him not to tamper with forbidden fruit in future, and went away.

Mrs. Ray now appeared, looking for Sara, and said she would stay all night with us.

“I’ll be much obliged to you if you will,” said Uncle Roger. “I feel a bit shook. I urged Janet and Alec to go to Halifax, and took the responsibility of the children while they were away, but I didn’t know what I was letting myself in for. If anything had happened I could never have forgiven myself — though I believe it’s beyond the power of mortal man to keep watch over the things children WILL eat. Now, you young fry, get straight off to your beds. Dan is out of danger, and you can’t do any more good. Not that any of you have done much, except Cecily. She’s got a head of her shoulders.”

“It’s been a horrid day all through,” said Felicity drearily, as we climbed the stairs.

“I suppose we made it horrid ourselves,” said the Story Girl candidly. “But it’ll be a good story to tell sometime,” she added.

“I’m awful tired and thankful,” sighed Cecily.

We all felt that way.

A Disobedient Brother

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Dan was his own man again in the morning, though rather pale and weak; he wanted to get up, but Cecily ordered him to stay in bed. Fortunately Felicity forgot to repeat the command, so Dan did stay in bed. Cecily carried his meals to him, and read a Henty book to him all her spare time. The Story Girl went up and told him wondrous tales; and Sara Ray brought him a pudding she had made herself. Sara's intentions were good, but the pudding — well, Dan fed most of it to Paddy, who had curled himself up at the foot of the bed, giving the world assurance of a cat by his mellifluous purring.

“Ain't he just a great old fellow?” said Dan. “He knows I'm kind of sick, just as well as a human. He never pays no attention to me when I'm well.”

Felix and Peter and I were required to help Uncle Roger in some carpentering work that day, and Felicity indulged in one of the housecleaning orgies so dear to her soul; so that it was evening before we were all free to meet in the orchard and loll on the grasses of Uncle Stephen's Walk. In August it was a place of shady sweetness, fragrant with the odour of ripening apples, full of dear, delicate shadows. Through its openings we looked afar to the blue rims of the hills and over green, old, tranquil fields, lying the sunset glow. Overhead the lacing leaves made a green, murmurous roof. There was no such thing as hurry in the world, while we lingered there and talked of “cabbages and kings.” A tale of the Story Girl's, wherein princes were thicker than blackberries, and queens as common as buttercups, led to our discussion of kings. We wondered what it would be like to be a king. Peter thought it would be fine, only kind of inconvenient, wearing a crown all the time.

“Oh, but they don't,” said the Story Girl. “Maybe they used to once, but now they wear hats. The crowns are just for special occasions. They

look very much like other people, if you can go by their photographs.”

“I don’t believe it would be much fun as a steady thing,” said Cecily. “I’d like to SEE a queen though. That is one thing I have against the Island — you never have a chance to see things like that here.”

“The Prince of Wales was in Charlottetown once,” said Peter.

“My

Aunt Jane saw him quite close by.”

“That was before we were born, and such a thing won’t happen again until after we’re dead,” said Cecily, with very unusual pessimism.

“I think queens and kings were thicker long ago,” said the Story Girl. “They do seem dreadfully scarce now. There isn’t one in this country anywhere. Perhaps I’ll get a glimpse of some when I go to Europe.”

Well, the Story Girl was destined to stand before kings herself, and she was to be one whom they delighted to honour. But we did not know that, as we sat in the old orchard. We thought it quite sufficiently marvellous that she should expect to have the chance of just seeing them.

“Can a queen do exactly as she pleases?” Sara Ray wanted to know.

“Not nowadays,” explained the Story Girl.

“Then I don’t see any use in being one,” Sara decided.

“A king can’t do as he pleases now, either,” said Felix. “If he tries to, and if it isn’t what pleases other people, the Parliament or something squelches him.”

“Isn’t ‘squelch’ a lovely word?” said the Story Girl irrelevantly. “It’s so expressive. Squ-u-e-l-ch!”

Certainly it was a lovely word, as the Story Girl said it. Even a king would not have minded being squelched, if it were done to music like that.

“Uncle Roger says that Martin Forbes’ wife has squelched HIM,” said Felicity. “He says Martin can’t call his soul his own since he was married.”

“I’m glad of it,” said Cecily vindictively.

We all stared. This was so very unlike Cecily.

“Martin Forbes is the brother of a horrid man in Summerside who called me Johnny, that’s why,” she explained. “He was visiting here with his wife two years ago, and he called me Johnny every time he spoke to me. Just you fancy! I’ll NEVER forgive him.”

“That isn’t a Christian spirit,” said Felicity rebukingly.

“I don’t care. Would YOU forgive James Forbes if he had called YOU Johnny?” demanded Cecily.

“I know a story about Martin Forbes’ grandfather,” said the Story Girl. “Long ago they didn’t have any choir in the Carlisle church — just a precentor you know. But at last they got a choir, and Andrew McPherson was to sing bass in it. Old Mr. Forbes hadn’t gone to church for years, because he was so rheumatic, but he went the first Sunday the choir sang, because he had never heard any one sing bass, and wanted to hear what it was like. Grandfather King asked him what he thought of the choir. Mr. Forbes said it was ‘verra guid,’ but as for Andrew’s bass, ‘there was nae bass aboot it — it was just a bur-r-r-r the hale time.’”

If you could have heard the Story Girl’s “bur-r-r-r!” Not old Mr. Forbes himself could have invested it with more of Doric scorn. We rolled over in the cool grass and screamed with laughter.

“Poor Dan,” said Cecily compassionately. “He’s up there all alone in his room, missing all the fun. I suppose it’s mean of us to be having such a good time here, when he has to stay in bed.”

“If Dan hadn’t done wrong eating the bad berries when he was told not to, he wouldn’t be sick,” said Felicity. “You’re bound to catch it when you do wrong. It was just a Providence he didn’t die.”

“That makes me think of another story about old Mr. Scott,” said the Story Girl. “You know, I told you he was very angry because the Presbytery made him retire. There were two ministers in particular he blamed for being at the bottom of it. One time a friend of his was trying to console him, and said to him,

“‘You should be resigned to the will of Providence.’

“‘Providence had nothing to do with it,’ said old Mr. Scott.

“‘Twas the McCloskeys and the devil.’”

“You shouldn’t speak of the — the — DEVIL,” said Felicity, rather shocked.

“Well, that’s just what Mr. Scott said.”

“Oh, it’s all right for a MINISTER to speak of him. But it isn’t nice for little girls. If you HAVE to speak of — of — him — you might say the Old Scratch. That is what mother calls him.”

“‘‘Twas the McCloskeys and the Old Scratch,’” said the Story Girl reflectively, as if she were trying to see which version was the more effective. “It wouldn’t do,” she decided.

“I don’t think it’s any harm to mention the — the — that person, when you’re telling a story,” said Cecily. “It’s only in plain talking it doesn’t do. It sounds too much like swearing then.”

“I know another story about Mr. Scott,” said the Story Girl. “Not long after he was married his wife wasn’t quite ready for church one morning when it was time to go. So, just to teach her a lesson, he drove off alone, and left her to walk all the way — it was nearly two miles — in the heat and dust. She took it very quietly. It’s the best way, I guess, when you’re married to a man like old Mr. Scott. But just a few Sundays after wasn’t he late himself! I suppose Mrs. Scott thought that what was sauce for the goose was sauce for the gander, for she slipped out and drove off to church as he had done. Old Mr. Scott finally arrived at the church, pretty hot and dusty, and in none too good a temper. He went into the pulpit, leaned over it and looked at his wife, sitting calmly in her pew at the side.

“‘It was cleverly done,’ he said, right out loud, ‘BUT DINNA TRY IT AGAIN!’”

In the midst of our laughter Pat came down the Walk, his stately tail waving over the grasses. He proved to be the precursor of Dan, clothed and in his right mind.

“Do you think you should have got up, Dan?” said Cecily anxiously.

“I had to,” said Dan. “The window was open, and it was more’n I could stand to hear you fellows laughing down here and me missing it all. ‘Sides, I’m all right again. I feel fine.”

“I guess this will be a lesson to you, Dan King,” said Felicity, in her most maddening tone. “I guess you won’t forget it in a hurry. You won’t go eating the bad berries another time when you’re told not to.”

Dan had picked out a soft spot in the grass for himself, and was in the act of sitting down, when Felicity’s tactful speech arrested him midway. He straightened up and turned a wrathful face on his provoking sister. Then, red with indignation, but without a word, he stalked up the walk.

“Now he’s gone off mad,” said Cecily reproachfully. “Oh, Felicity, why couldn’t you have held your tongue?”

“Why, what did I say to make him mad?” asked Felicity in honest perplexity.

“I think it’s awful for brothers and sisters to be always quarrelling,” sighed Cecily. “The Cowans fight all the time; and you and Dan will soon be as bad.”

“Oh, talk sense,” said Felicity. “Dan’s got so touchy it isn’t safe to speak to him. I should think he’d be sorry for all the trouble he made last night. But you just back him up in everything, Cecily.”

“I don’t!”

“You do! And you’ve no business to, specially when mother’s away. She left ME in charge.”

“You didn’t take much charge last night when Dan got sick,” said Felix maliciously. Felicity had told him at tea that night he was getting fatter than ever. This was his tit-for-tat. “You were pretty glad to leave it all to Cecily then.”

“Who’s talking to you?” said Felicity.

“Now, look here,” said the Story Girl, “the first thing we know we’ll all be quarrelling, and then some of us will sulk all day tomorrow. It’s dreadful to spoil a whole day. Just let’s all sit still and count a hundred before we say another word.”

We sat still and counted the hundred. When Cecily finished she got up and went in search of Dan, resolved to soothe his wounded feelings. Felicity called after her to tell Dan there was a jam turnover she had put away in the pantry specially for him. Felix held out to Felicity a remarkably fine apple which he had been saving for his own consumption; and the Story Girl began a tale of an enchanted maiden in a castle by the sea; but we never heard the end of it. For, just as the evening star was looking whitely through the rosy window of the west, Cecily came flying through the orchard, wringing her hands.

“Oh, come, come quick,” she gasped. “Dan’s eating the bad berries again — he’s et a whole bunch of them — he says he’ll show Felicity. I can’t stop him. Come you and try.”

We rose in a body and rushed towards the house. In the yard we encountered Dan, emerging from the fir wood and champing the fatal berries with unrepentant relish.

“Dan King, do you want to commit suicide?” demanded the
Story
Girl.

“Look here, Dan,” I expostulated. “You shouldn’t do this. Think how sick you were last night and all the trouble you made for everybody. Don’t eat any more, there’s a good chap.”

“All right,” said Dan. “I’ve et all I want. They taste fine. I don’t believe it was them made me sick.”

But now that his anger was over he looked a little frightened. Felicity was not there. We found her in the kitchen, lighting up the fire.

“Bev, fill the kettle with water and put it on to heat,” she said in a resigned tone. “If Dan’s going to be sick again we’ve got to be ready for it.

I wish mother was home, that's all. I hope she'll never go away again. Dan King, you just wait till I tell her of the way you've acted."

"Fudge! I ain't going to be sick," said Dan. "And if YOU begin telling tales, Felicity King, I'LL tell some too. I know how many eggs mother said you could use while she was away — and I know how many you HAVE used. I counted. So you'd better mind your own business, Miss."

"A nice way to talk to your sister when you may be dead in an hour's time!" retorted Felicity, in tears between her anger and her real alarm about Dan.

But in an hour's time Dan was still in good health, and announced his intention of going to bed. He went, and was soon sleeping as peacefully as if he had nothing on either conscience or stomach. But Felicity declared she meant to keep the water hot until all danger was past; and we sat up to keep her company. We were sitting there when Uncle Roger walked in at eleven o'clock.

"What on earth are you young fry doing up at this time of night?" he asked angrily. "You should have been in your beds two hours ago. And with a roaring fire on a night that's hot enough to melt a brass monkey! Have you taken leave of your senses?"

"It's because of Dan," explained Felicity wearily. "He went and et more of the bad berries — a whole lot of them — and we were sure he'd be sick again. But he hasn't been yet, and now he's asleep."

"Is that boy stark, staring mad?" said Uncle Roger.

"It was Felicity's fault," cried Cecily, who always took Dan's part through evil report and good report. "She told him she guessed he'd learned a lesson and wouldn't do what she'd told him not to again. So he went and et them because she vexed him so."

"Felicity King, if you don't watch out you'll grow up into the sort of woman who drives her husband to drink," said Uncle Roger gravely.

"How could I tell Dan would act so like a mule!" cried Felicity.

"Get off to bed, every one of you. It's a thankful man I'll be when your father and mother come home. The wretched bachelor who undertakes to

look after a houseful of children like you is to be pitied. Nobody will ever catch me doing it again. Felicity, is there anything fit to eat in the pantry?"

That last question was the most unkindest cut of all. Felicity could have forgiven Uncle Roger anything but that. It really was unpardonable. She confided to me as we climbed the stairs that she hated Uncle Roger. Her red lips quivered and the tears of wounded pride brimmed over in her beautiful blue eyes. In the dim candlelight she looked unbelievably pretty and appealing. I put my arm about her and gave her a cousinly salute.

"Never you mind him, Felicity," I said. "He's only a grownup."

Chapter XVI.

The Ghostly Bell

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Friday was a comfortable day in the household of King. Everybody was in good humour. The Story Girl sparkled through several tales that ranged from the afrites and jinns of Eastern myth, through the piping days of chivalry, down to the homely anecdotes of Carlisle workaday folks. She was in turn an Oriental princess behind a silken veil, the bride who followed her bridegroom to the wars of Palestine disguised as a page, the gallant lady who ransomed her diamond necklace by dancing a coranto with a highwayman on a moonlit heath, and “Buskirk’s girl” who joined the Sons and Daughters of Temperance “just to see what was into it;” and in each impersonation she was so thoroughly the thing impersonated that it was a matter of surprise to us when she emerged from each our own familiar Story Girl again.

Cecily and Sara Ray found a “sweet” new knitted lace pattern in an old magazine and spent a happy afternoon learning it and “talking secrets.” Chancing — accidentally, I vow — to overhear certain of these secrets, I learned that Sara Ray had named an apple for Johnny Price—”and, Cecily, true’s you live, there was eight seeds in it, and you know eight means ‘they both love’ “ — while Cecily admitted that Willy Fraser had written on his slate and showed it to her,

”If you love me as I love you,
No knife can cut our love in two” —

“but, Sara Ray, NEVER you breathe this to a living soul.”

Felix also averred that he heard Sara ask Cecily very seriously,
“Cecily, how old must we be before we can have a REAL beau?”

But Sara always denied it; so I am inclined to believe Felix simply made it up himself.

Paddy distinguished himself by catching a rat, and being intolerably conceited about it — until Sara Ray cured him by calling him a “dear, sweet cat,” and kissing him between the ears. Then Pat sneaked abjectly off, his tail drooping. He resented being called a sweet cat. He had a sense of humour, had Pat. Very few cats have; and most of them have such an inordinate appetite for flattery that they will swallow any amount of it and thrive thereon. Paddy had a finer taste. The Story Girl and I were the only ones who could pay him compliments to his liking. The Story Girl would box his ears with her fist and say, “Bless your gray heart, Paddy, you’re a good sort of old rascal,” and Pat would purr his satisfaction; I used to take a handful of the skin on his back, shake him gently and say, “Pat, you’ve forgotten more than any human being ever knew,” and I vow Paddy would lick his chops with delight. But to be called “a sweet cat!” Oh, Sara, Sara!

Felicity tried — and had the most gratifying luck with — a new and complicated cake recipe — a gorgeous compound of a plumminess to make your mouth water. The number of eggs she used in it would have shocked Aunt Janet’s thrifty soul, but that cake, like beauty, was its own excuse. Uncle Roger ate three slices of it at teatime and told Felicity she was an artist. The poor man meant it as a compliment; but Felicity, who knew Uncle Blair was an artist and had a poor opinion of such fry, looked indignant and retorted, indeed she wasn’t!

“Peter says there’s any amount of raspberries back in the maple clearing,” said Dan. “S’posen we all go after tea and pick some?”

“I’d like to,” sighed Felicity, “but we’d come home tired and with all the milking to do. You boys better go alone.”

“Peter and I will attend to the milking for one evening,” said Uncle Roger. “You can all go. I have an idea that a raspberry pie for tomorrow night, when the folks come home, would hit the right spot.”

Accordingly, after tea we all set off, armed with jugs and cups. Felicity, thoughtful creature, also took a small basketful of jelly cookies along with her. We had to go back through the maple woods to the extreme end of Uncle Roger’s farm — a pretty walk, through a world of green, whispering boughs and spice-sweet ferns, and shifting patches of sunlight.

The raspberries were plentiful, and we were not long in filling our receptacles. Then we foregathered around a tiny wood spring, cold and pellucid under its young maples, and ate the jelly cookies; and the Story Girl told us a tale of a haunted spring in a mountain glen where a fair white lady dwelt, who pledged all comers in a golden cup with jewels bright.

“And if you drank of the cup with her,” said the Story Girl, her eyes glowing through the emerald dusk about us, “you were never seen in the world again; you were whisked straightway to fairyland, and lived there with a fairy bride. And you never WANTED to come back to earth, because when you drank of the magic cup you forgot all your past life, except for one day in every year when you were allowed to remember it.”

“I wish there was such a place as fairyland — and a way to get to it,” said Cecily.

“I think there IS such a place — in spite of Uncle Edward,” said the Story Girl dreamily, “and I think there is a way of getting there too, if we could only find it.”

Well, the Story Girl was right. There is such a place as fairyland — but only children can find the way to it. And they do not know that it is fairyland until they have grown so old that they forget the way. One bitter day, when they seek it and cannot find it, they realize what they have lost; and that is the tragedy of life. On that day the gates of Eden are shut behind them and the age of gold is over. Henceforth they must dwell in the common light of common day. Only a few, who remain children at heart, can ever find that fair, lost path again; and blessed are they above mortals. They, and only they, can bring us tidings from that dear country where we once sojourned and from which we must evermore be exiles. The world calls them its singers and poets and artists and storytellers; but they are just people who have never forgotten the way to fairyland.

As we sat there the Awkward Man passed by, with his gun over his shoulder and his dog at his side. He did not look like an awkward man, there in the heart of the maple woods. He strode along right masterfully and lifted his head with the air of one who was monarch of all he surveyed.

The Story Girl kissed her fingertips to him with the delightful audacity which was a part of her; and the Awkward Man plucked off his hat and swept her a stately and graceful bow.

“I don’t understand why they call him the awkward man,” said Cecily, when he was out of earshot.

“You’d understand why if you ever saw him at a party or a picnic,” said Felicity, “trying to pass plates and dropping them whenever a woman looked at him. They say it’s pitiful to see him.”

“I must get well acquainted with that man next summer,” said the Story Girl. “If I put it off any longer it will be too late. I’m growing so fast, Aunt Olivia says I’ll have to wear ankle skirts next summer. If I begin to look grownup he’ll get frightened of me, and then I’ll never find out the Golden Milestone mystery.”

“Do you think he’ll ever tell you who Alice is?” I asked.

“I have a notion who Alice is already,” said the mysterious creature. But she would tell us nothing more.

When the jelly cookies were all eaten it was high time to be moving homeward, for when the dark comes down there are more comfortable places than a rustling maple wood and the precincts of a possibly enchanted spring. When we reached the foot of the orchard and entered it through a gap in the hedge it was the magical, mystical time of “between lights.” Off to the west was a daffodil glow hanging over the valley of lost sunsets, and Grandfather King’s huge willow rose up against it like a rounded mountain of foliage. In the east, above the maple woods, was a silvery sheen that hinted the moonrise. But the orchard was a place of shadows and mysterious sounds. Midway up the open space in its heart we met Peter; and if ever a boy was given over to sheer terror that boy was Peter. His face was as white as a sunburned face could be, and his eyes were brimmed with panic.

“Peter, what is the matter?” cried Cecily.

“There’s — SOMETHING — in the house, RINGING A BELL,” said Peter, in a shaking voice. Not the Story Girl herself could have invested

that “something” with more of creepy horror. We all drew close together. I felt a crinkly feeling along my back which I had never known before. If Peter had not been so manifestly frightened we might have thought he was trying to “pass a joke” on us. But such abject terror as his could not be counterfeited.

“Nonsense!” said Felicity, but her voice shook. “There isn’t a bell in the house to ring. You must have imagined it, Peter. Or else Uncle Roger is trying to fool us.”

“Your Uncle Roger went to Markdale right after milking,” said Peter. “He locked up the house and gave me the key. There wasn’t a soul in it then, that I’m sure of. I druv the cows to the pasture, and I got back about fifteen minutes ago. I set down on the front door steps for a moment, and all at once I heard a bell ring in the house eight times. I tell you I was skeered. I made a bolt for the orchard — and you won’t catch me going near that house till your Uncle Roger comes home.”

You wouldn’t catch any of us doing it. We were almost as badly scared as Peter. There we stood in a huddled demoralized group. Oh, what an eerie place that orchard was! What shadows! What noises! What spooky swooping of bats! You COULDN’T look every way at once, and goodness only knew what might be behind you!

“There CAN’T be anybody in the house,” said Felicity.

“Well, here’s the key — go and see for yourself,” said Peter.

Felicity had no intention of going and seeing.

“I think you boys ought to go,” she said, retreating behind the defence of sex. “You ought to be braver than girls.”

“But we ain’t,” said Felix candidly. “I wouldn’t be much scared of anything REAL. But a haunted house is a different thing.”

“I always thought something had to be done in a place before it could be haunted,” said Cecily. “Somebody killed or something like that, you know. Nothing like that ever happened in our family. The Kings have always been respectable.”

“Perhaps it is Emily King’s ghost,” whispered Felix.

“She never appeared anywhere but in the orchard,” said the Story Girl. “Oh, oh, children, isn’t there something under Uncle Alec’s tree?”

We peered fearfully through the gloom. There WAS something — something that wavered and fluttered — advanced — retreated —

“That’s only my old apron,” said Felicity. “I hung it there to-day when I was looking for the white hen’s nest. Oh, what shall we do? Uncle Roger may not be back for hours. I CAN’T believe there’s anything in the house.”

“Maybe it’s only Peg Bowen,” suggested Dan.

There was not a great deal of comfort in this. We were almost as much afraid of Peg Bowen as we would be of any spectral visitant.

Peter scoffed at the idea.

“Peg Bowen wasn’t in the house before your Uncle Roger locked it up, and how could she get in afterwards?” he said. “No, it isn’t Peg Bowen. It’s SOMETHING that WALKS.”

“I know a story about a ghost,” said the Story Girl, the ruling passion strong even in extremity. “It is about a ghost with eyeholes but no eyes—”

“Don’t,” cried Cecily hysterically. “Don’t you go on! Don’t you say another word! I can’t bear it! Don’t you!”

The Story Girl didn’t. But she had said enough. There was something in the quality of a ghost with eyeholes but no eyes that froze our young blood.

There never were in all the world six more badly scared children than those who huddled in the old King orchard that August night.

All at once — something — leaped from the bough of a tree and alighted before us. We split the air with a simultaneous shriek. We would have run, one and all, if there had been anywhere to run to. But there wasn’t — all around us were only those shadowy arcades. Then we saw with shame that it was only our Paddy.

“Pat, Pat,” I said, picking him up, feeling a certain comfort in his soft, solid body. “Stay with us, old fellow.”

But Pat would none of us. He struggled out of my clasp and disappeared over the long grasses with soundless leaps. He was no longer our tame, domestic, well acquainted Paddy. He was a strange, furtive animal — a “questing beast.”

Presently the moon rose; but this only made matters worse. The shadows had been still before; now they moved and danced, as the night wind tossed the boughs. The old house, with its dreadful secret, was white and clear against the dark background of spruces. We were woefully tired, but we could not sit down because the grass was reeking with dew.

“The Family Ghost only appears in daylight,” said the Story Girl. “I wouldn’t mind seeing a ghost in daylight. But after dark is another thing.”

“There’s no such thing as a ghost,” I said contemptuously. Oh, how I wished I could believe it!

“Then what rung that bell?” said Peter. “Bells don’t ring of themselves, I s’pose, specially when there ain’t any in the house to ring.”

“Oh, will Uncle Roger never come home!” sobbed Felicity. “I know he’ll laugh at us awful, but it’s better to be laughed at than scared like this.”

Uncle Roger did not come until nearly ten. Never was there a more welcome sound than the rumble of his wheels in the lane. We ran to the orchard gate and swarmed across the yard, just as Uncle Roger alighted at the front door. He stared at us in the moonlight.

“Have you tormented any one into eating more bad berries, Felicity?” he demanded.

“Oh, Uncle Roger, don’t go in,” implored Felicity seriously. “There’s something dreadful in there — something that rings a bell. Peter heard it. Don’t go in.”

“There’s no use asking the meaning of this, I suppose,” said Uncle Roger with the calm of despair. “I’ve gave up trying to fathom you young ones. Peter, where’s the key? What yarn have you been telling?”

“I DID hear a bell ring,” said Peter stubbornly.

Uncle Roger unlocked and flung open the front door. As he did so, clear and sweet, rang out ten bell-like chimes.

“That’s what I heard,” cried Peter. “There’s the bell!”

We had to wait until Uncle Roger stopped laughing before we heard the explanation. We thought he never WOULD stop.

“That’s Grandfather King’s old clock striking,” he said, as soon as he was able to speak. “Sammy Prott came along after tea, when you were away to the forge, Peter, and I gave him permission to clean the old clock. He had it going merrily in no time. And now it has almost frightened you poor little monkeys to death.”

We heard Uncle Roger chuckling all the way to the barn.

“Uncle Roger can laugh,” said Cecily, with a quiver in her voice, “but it’s no laughing matter to be so scared. I just feel sick, I was so frightened.”

“I wouldn’t mind if he’d laugh once and have it done with it,” said Felicity bitterly. “But he’ll laugh at us for a year, and tell the story to every soul that comes to the place.”

“You can’t blame him for that,” said the Story Girl. “I shall tell it, too. I don’t care if the joke is as much on myself as any one. A story is a story, no matter who it’s on. But it IS hateful to be laughed at — and grownups always do it. I never will when I’m grown up. I’ll remember better.”

“It’s all Peter’s fault,” said Felicity. “I do think he might have had more sense than to take a clock striking for a bell ringing.”

“I never heard that kind of a strike before,” protested Peter. “It don’t sound a bit like other clocks. And the door was shut and the sound kind o’ muffled. It’s all very fine to say you would have known what it was, but I don’t believe you would.”

“I wouldn’t have,” said the Story Girl honestly. “I thought it WAS a bell when I heard it, and the door open, too. Let us be fair, Felicity.”

“I’m dreadful tired,” sighed Cecily.

We were all “dreadful tired,” for this was the third night of late hours and nerve racking strain. But it was over two hours since we had eaten the

cookies, and Felicity suggested that a saucerful apiece of raspberries and cream would not be hard to take. It was not, for any one but Cecily, who couldn't swallow a mouthful.

“I'm glad father and mother will be back tomorrow night,” she said.
“It's too exciting when they're away. That's my opinion.”

The Proof of the Pudding

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Felicity was cumbered with many cares the next morning. For one thing, the whole house must be put in apple pie order; and for another, an elaborate supper must be prepared for the expected return of the travellers that night. Felicity devoted her whole attention to this, and left the secondary preparation of the regular meals to Cecily and the Story Girl. It was agreed that the latter was to make a cornmeal pudding for dinner.

In spite of her disaster with the bread, the Story Girl had been taking cooking lessons from Felicity all the week, and getting on tolerably well, although, mindful of her former mistake, she never ventured on anything without Felicity's approval. But Felicity had no time to oversee her this morning.

"You must attend to the pudding yourself," she said. "The recipe's so plain and simple even you can't go astray, and if there's anything you don't understand you can ask me. But don't bother me if you can help it."

The Story Girl did not bother her once. The pudding was concocted and baked, as the Story Girl proudly informed us when we came to the dinnertable, all on her own hook. She was very proud of it; and certainly as far as appearance went it justified her triumph. The slices were smooth and golden; and, smothered in the luscious maple sugar sauce which Cecily had compounded, were very fair to view. Nevertheless, although none of us, not even Uncle Roger or Felicity, said a word at the time, for fear of hurting the Story Girl's feelings, the pudding did not taste exactly as it should. It was tough — decidedly tough — and lacked the richness of flavour which was customary in Aunt Janet's cornmeal puddings. If it had not been for the abundant supply of sauce it would have been very dry eating indeed. Eaten it was, however, to the last crumb. If it were not just what a cornmeal pudding might be, the rest of the bill of fare had been extra good and our appetites matched it.

“I wish I was twins so’s I could eat more,” said Dan, when he simply had to stop.

“What good would being twins do you?” asked Peter. “People who squint can’t eat any more than people who don’t squint, can they?”

We could not see any connection between Peter’s two questions.

“What has squinting got to do with twins?” asked Dan.

“Why, twins are just people that squint, aren’t they?” said Peter.

We thought he was trying to be funny, until we found out that he was quite in earnest. Then we laughed until Peter got sulky.

“I don’t care,” he said. “How’s a fellow to know? Tommy and Adam Cowan, over at Markdale, are twins; and they’re both cross-eyed. So I s’posed that was what being twins meant. It’s all very fine for you fellows to laugh. I never went to school half as much as you did; and you was brought up in Toronto, too. If you’d worked out ever since you was seven, and just got to school in the winter, there’d be lots of things you wouldn’t know, either.”

“Never mind, Peter,” said Cecily. “You know lots of things they don’t.”

But Peter was not to be conciliated, and took himself off in high dudgeon. To be laughed at before Felicity — to be laughed at BY Felicity — was something he could not endure. Let Cecily and the Story Girl cackle all they wanted to, and let those stuck-up Toronto boys grin like chessy-cats; but when Felicity laughed at him the iron entered into Peter’s soul.

If the Story Girl laughed at Peter the mills of the gods ground out his revenge for him in mid-afternoon. Felicity, having used up all the available cooking materials in the house, had to stop perforce; and she now determined to stuff two new pincushions she had been making for her room. We heard her rummaging in the pantry as we sat on the cool, spruce-shadowed cellar door outside, where Uncle Roger was showing us how to make elderberry popguns. Presently she came out, frowning.

“Cecily, do you know where mother put the sawdust she emptied out of that old beaded pincushion of Grandmother King’s, after she had sifted the needles out of it? I thought it was in the tin box.”

“So it is,” said Cecily.

“It isn’t. There isn’t a speck of sawdust in that box.”

The Story Girl’s face wore a quite indescribable expression, compound of horror and shame. She need not have confessed. If she had but held her tongue the mystery of the sawdust’s disappearance might have forever remained a mystery. She WOULD have held her tongue, as she afterwards confided to me, if it had not been for a horrible fear which flashed into her mind that possibly sawdust puddings were not healthy for people to eat — especially if there might be needles in them — and that if any mischief had been done in that direction it was her duty to undo it if possible at any cost of ridicule to herself.

“Oh, Felicity,” she said, her voice expressing a very anguish of humiliation, “I — I — thought that stuff in the box was cornmeal and used it to make the pudding.”

Felicity and Cecily stared blankly at the Story Girl. We boys began to laugh, but were checked midway by Uncle Roger. He was rocking himself back and forth, with his hand pressed against his stomach.

“Oh,” he groaned, “I’ve been wondering what these sharp pains I’ve been feeling ever since dinner meant. I know now. I must have swallowed a needle — several needles, perhaps. I’m done for!”

The poor Story Girl went very white.

“Oh, Uncle Roger, could it be possible? You COULDN’T have swallowed a needle without knowing it. It would have stuck in your tongue or teeth.”

“I didn’t chew the pudding,” groaned Uncle Roger. “It was too tough — I just swallowed the chunks whole.”

He groaned and twisted and doubled himself up. But he overdid it. He was not as good an actor as the Story Girl. Felicity looked scornfully at him.

“Uncle Roger, you are not one bit sick,” she said deliberately.

“You are just putting on.”

“Felicity, if I die from the effects of eating sawdust pudding, flavoured with needles, you’ll be sorry you ever said such a thing to your poor old uncle,” said Uncle Roger reproachfully. “Even if there were no needles in it, sixty-year-old sawdust can’t be good for my tummy. I daresay it wasn’t even clean.”

“Well, you know every one has to eat a peck of dirt in his life,” giggled Felicity.

“But nobody has to eat it all at once,” retorted Uncle Roger, with another groan. “Oh, Sara Stanley, it’s a thankful man I am that your Aunt Olivia is to be home tonight. You’d have me kilt entirely by another day. I believe you did it on purpose to have a story to tell.”

Uncle Roger hobbled off to the barn, still holding on to his stomach.

“Do you think he really feels sick?” asked the Story Girl anxiously.

“No, I don’t,” said Felicity. “You needn’t worry over him. There’s nothing the matter with him. I don’t believe there were any needles in that sawdust. Mother sifted it very carefully.”

“I know a story about a man whose son swallowed a mouse,” said the Story Girl, who would probably have known a story and tried to tell it if she were being led to the stake. “And he ran and wakened up a very tired doctor just as he had got to sleep.

“‘Oh, doctor, my son has swallowed a mouse,’ he cried. ‘What shall I do?’

“‘Tell him to swallow a cat,’ roared the poor doctor, and slammed his door.

“Now, if Uncle Roger has swallowed any needles, maybe it would make it all right if he swallowed a pincushion.”

We all laughed. But Felicity soon grew sober.

“It seems awful to think of eating a sawdust pudding. How on earth did you make such a mistake?”

“It looked just like cornmeal,” said the Story Girl, going from white to red in her shame. “Well, I’m going to give up trying to cook, and stick to things I can do. And if ever one of you mentions sawdust pudding to me I’ll never tell you another story as long as I live.”

The threat was effectual. Never did we mention that unholy pudding. But the Story Girl could not so impose silence on the grownups, especially Uncle Roger. He tormented her for the rest of the summer. Never a breakfast did he sit down to, without gravely inquiring if they were sure there was no sawdust in the porridge. Not a tweak of rheumatism did he feel but he vowed it was due to a needle, travelling about his body. And Aunt Olivia was warned to label all the pincushions in the house. “Contents, sawdust; not intended for puddings.”

How Kissing Was Discovered

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An August evening, calm, golden, dewless, can be very lovely. At sunset, Felicity, Cecily, and Sara Ray, Dan, Felix, and I were in the orchard, sitting on the cool grasses at the base of the Pulpit Stone. In the west was a field of crocus sky over which pale cloud blossoms were scattered.

Uncle Roger had gone to the station to meet the travellers, and the dining-room table was spread with a feast of fat things.

“It’s been a jolly week, take it all round,” said Felix, “but I’m glad the grownups are coming back tonight, especially Uncle Alec.”

“I wonder if they’ll bring us anything,” said Dan.

“I’m thinking long to hear all about the wedding,” said Felicity, who was braiding timothy stalks into a collar for Pat.

“You girls are always thinking about weddings and getting married,” said Dan contemptuously.

“We ain’t,” said Felicity indignantly. “I am NEVER going to get married. I think it is just horrid, so there!”

“I guess you think it would be a good deal horrid not to be,” said Dan.

“It depends on who you’re married to,” said Cecily gravely, seeing that Felicity disdained reply. “If you got a man like father it would be all right. But S’POSEN you got one like Andrew Ward? He’s so mean and cross to his wife that she tells him every day she wishes she’d never set eyes on him.”

“Perhaps that’s WHY he’s mean and cross,” said Felix.

“I tell you it isn’t always the man’s fault,” said Dan darkly. “When I get married I’ll be good to my wife, but I mean to be boss. When I open my mouth my word will be law.”

“If your word is as big as your mouth I guess it will be,” said Felicity cruelly.

“I pity the man who gets you, Felicity King, that’s all” retorted Dan.

“Now, don’t fight,” implored Cecily.

“Who’s fighting?” demanded Dan. “Felicity thinks she can say anything she likes to me, but I’ll show her different.”

Probably, in spite of Cecily’s efforts, a bitter spat would have resulted between Dan and Felicity, had not a diversion been effected at that moment by the Story Girl, who came slowly down Uncle Stephen’s Walk.

“Just look how the Story Girl has got herself up!” said Felicity.

“Why, she’s no more than decent!”

The Story Girl was barefooted and barearmed, having rolled the sleeves of her pink gingham up to her shoulders. Around her waist was twisted a girdle of the blood-red roses that bloomed in Aunt Olivia’s garden; on her sleek curls she wore a chaplet of them; and her hands were full of them.

She paused under the outmost tree, in a golden-green gloom, and laughed at us over a big branch. Her wild, subtle, nameless charm clothed her as with a garment. We always remembered the picture she made there; and in later days when we read Tennyson’s poems at a college desk, we knew exactly how an oread, peering through the green leaves on some haunted knoll of many fountained Ida, must look.

“Felicity,” said the Story Girl reproachfully, “what have you been doing to Peter? He’s up there sulking in the granary, and he won’t come down, and he says it’s your fault. You must have hurt his feelings dreadfully.”

“I don’t know about his feelings,” said Felicity, with an angry toss of her shining head, “but I guess I made his ears tingle all right. I boxed them both good and hard.”

“Oh, Felicity! What for?”

“Well, he tried to kiss me, that’s what for!” said Felicity, turning very red. “As if I would let a hired boy kiss me! I guess Master Peter won’t try anything like that again in a hurry.”

The Story Girl came out of her shadows and sat down beside us on the grass.

“Well, in that case,” she said gravely, “I think you did right to slap his ears — not because he is a hired boy, but because it would be impertinent in ANY boy. But talking of kissing makes me think of a story I found in Aunt Olivia’s scrapbook the other day. Wouldn’t you like to hear it? It is called, ‘How Kissing Was Discovered.’”

“Wasn’t kissing always discovered?” asked Dan.

“Not according to this story. It was just discovered accidentally.”

“Well, let’s hear about it,” said Felix, “although I think kissing’s awful silly, and it wouldn’t have mattered much if it hadn’t ever been discovered.”

The Story Girl scattered her roses around her on the grass, and clasped her slim hands over her knees. Gazing dreamily afar at the tinted sky between the apple trees, as if she were looking back to the merry days of the world’s gay youth, she began, her voice giving to the words and fancies of the old tale the delicacy of hoar frost and the crystal sparkle of dew.

“It happened long, long ago in Greece — where so many other beautiful things happened. Before that, nobody had ever heard of kissing. And then it was just discovered in the twinkling of an eye. And a man wrote it down and the account has been preserved ever since.

“There was a young shepherd named Glaucon — a very handsome young shepherd — who lived in a little village called Thebes. It became a very great and famous city afterwards, but at this time it was only a little village, very quiet and simple. Too quiet for Glaucon’s liking. He grew tired of it, and he thought he would like to go away from home and see something of the world. So he took his knapsack and his shepherd’s crook, and wandered away until he came to Thessaly. That is the land of the gods’ hill, you know. The name of the hill was Olympus. But it has nothing to do with this story. This happened on another mountain — Mount Pelion.

“Glaucón hired himself to a wealthy man who had a great many sheep. And every day Glaucón had to lead the sheep up to pasture on Mount Pelion, and watch them while they ate. There was nothing else to do, and he would have found the time very long, if he had not been able to play on a flute. So he played very often and very beautifully, as he sat under the trees and watched the wonderful blue sea afar off, and thought about Aglaia.

“Aglaia was his master’s daughter. She was so sweet and beautiful that Glaucón fell in love with her the very moment he first saw her; and when he was not playing his flute on the mountain he was thinking about Aglaia, and dreaming that some day he might have flocks of his own, and a dear little cottage down in the valley where he and Aglaia might live.

“Aglaia had fallen in love with Glaucón just as he had with her. But she never let him suspect it for ever so long. He did not know how often she would steal up the mountain and hide behind the rocks near where the sheep pastured, to listen to Glaucón’s beautiful music. It was very lovely music, because he was always thinking of Aglaia while he played, though he little dreamed how near him she often was.

“But after awhile Glaucón found out that Aglaia loved him, and everything was well. Nowadays I suppose a wealthy man like Aglaia’s father wouldn’t be willing to let his daughter marry a hired man; but this was in the Golden Age, you know, when nothing like that mattered at all.

“After that, almost every day Aglaia would go up the mountain and sit beside Glaucón, as he watched the flocks and played on his flute. But he did not play as much as he used to, because he liked better to talk with Aglaia. And in the evening they would lead the sheep home together.

“One day Aglaia went up the mountain by a new way, and she came to a little brook. Something was sparkling very brightly among its pebbles. Aglaia picked it up, and it was the most beautiful little stone that she had ever seen. It was only as large as a pea, but it glittered and flashed in the sunlight with every colour of the rainbow. Aglaia was so delighted with it that she resolved to take it as a present to Glaucón.

“But all at once she heard a stamping of hoofs behind her, and when she turned she almost died from fright. For there was the great god, Pan, and he was a very terrible object, looking quite as much like a goat as a man. The gods were not all beautiful, you know. And, beautiful or not, nobody ever wanted to meet them face to face.

“‘Give that stone to me,’ said Pan, holding out his hand.

“But Aglaia, though she was frightened, would not give him the stone.

“‘I want it for Glaucon,’ she said.

“‘I want it for one of my wood nymphs,’ said Pan, ‘and I must have it.’

“He advanced threateningly, but Aglaia ran as hard as she could up the mountain. If she could only reach Glaucon he would protect her. Pan followed her, clattering and bellowing terribly, but in a few minutes she rushed into Glaucon’s arms.

“The dreadful sight of Pan and the still more dreadful noise he made, so frightened the sheep that they fled in all directions. But Glaucon was not afraid at all, because Pan was the god of shepherds, and was bound to grant any prayer a good shepherd, who always did his duty, might make. If Glaucon had NOT been a good shepherd dear knows what would have happened to him and Aglaia. But he was; and when he begged Pan to go away and not frighten Aglaia any more, Pan had to go, grumbling a good deal — and Pan’s grumblings had a very ugly sound. But still he WENT, and that was the main thing.

“‘Now, dearest, what is all this trouble about?’ asked Glaucon; and Aglaia told him the story.

“‘But where is the beautiful stone?’ he asked, when she had finished. ‘Didst thou drop it in thy alarm?’

“No, indeed! Aglaia had done nothing of the sort. When she began to run, she had popped it into her mouth, and there it was still, quite safe. Now she poked it out between her red lips, where it glittered in the sunlight.

“‘Take it,’ she whispered.

“The question was — how was he to take it? Both of Aglaia’s arms were held fast to her sides by Glaucon’s arms; and if he loosened his clasp

ever so little he was afraid she would fall, so weak and trembling was she from her dreadful fright. Then Glaucon had a brilliant idea. He would take the beautiful stone from Aglaia's lips with his own lips.

"He bent over until his lips touched hers — and THEN, he forgot all about the beautiful pebble and so did Aglaia. Kissing was discovered!

"What a yarn!" said Dan, drawing a long breath, when we had come to ourselves and discovered that we were really sitting in a dewy Prince Edward Island orchard instead of watching two lovers on a mountain in Thessaly in the Golden Age. "I don't believe a word of it."

"Of course, we know it wasn't really true," said Felicity.

"Well, I don't know," said the Story Girl thoughtfully. "I think there are two kinds of true things — true things that ARE, and true things that are NOT, but MIGHT be."

"I don't believe there's any but the one kind of trueness," said Felicity. "And anyway, this story couldn't be true. You know there was no such thing as a god Pan."

"How do you know what there might have been in the Golden Age?" asked the Story Girl.

Which was, indeed, an unanswerable question for Felicity.

"I wonder what became of the beautiful stone?" said Cecily.

"Likely Aglaia swallowed it," said Felix practically.

"Did Glaucon and Aglaia ever get married?" asked Sara Ray.

"The story doesn't say. It stops just there," said the Story Girl. "But of course they did. I will tell you what I think. I don't think Aglaia swallowed the stone. I think it just fell to the ground; and after awhile they found it, and it turned out to be of such value that Glaucon could buy all the flocks and herds in the valley, and the sweetest cottage; and he and Aglaia were married right away."

"But you only THINK that," said Sara Ray. "I'd like to be really sure that was what happened."

"Oh, bother, none of it happened," said Dan. "I believed it while the Story Girl was telling it, but I don't now. Isn't that wheels?"

Wheels it was. Two wagons were driving up the lane. We rushed to the house — and there were Uncle Alec and Aunt Janet and Aunt Olivia! The excitement was quite tremendous. Every body talked and laughed at once, and it was not until we were all seated around the supper table that conversation grew coherent. What laughter and questioning and telling of tales followed, what smiles and bright eyes and glad voices. And through it all, the blissful purrs of Paddy, who sat on the window sill behind the Story Girl, resounded through the din like Andrew McPherson's bass — "just a bur-r-r-r the hale time."

"Well, I'm thankful to be home again" said Aunt Janet, beaming on us. "We had a real nice time, and Edward's folks were as kind as could be. But give me home for a steady thing. How has everything gone? How did the children behave, Roger?"

"Like models," said Uncle Roger. "They were as good as gold most of the days."

There were times when one couldn't help liking Uncle Roger.

Chapter XIX.

A Dread Prophecy

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“I’ve got to go and begin stumping out the elderberry pasture this afternoon,” said Peter dolefully. “I tell you it’s a tough job. Mr. Roger might wait for cool weather before he sets people to stumping out elderberries, and that’s a fact.”

“Why don’t you tell him so?” asked Dan.

“It ain’t my business to tell him things,” retorted Peter. “I’m hired to do what I’m told, and I do it. But I can have my own opinion all the same. It’s going to be a broiling hot day.”

We were all in the orchard, except Felix, who had gone to the postoffice. It was the forenoon of an August Saturday. Cecily and Sara Ray, who had come up to spend the day with us — her mother having gone to town — were eating timothy roots. Bertha Lawrence, a Charlottetown girl, who had visited Kitty Marr in June, and had gone to school one day with her, had eaten timothy roots, affecting to consider them great delicacies. The fad was at once taken up by the Carlisle schoolgirls. Timothy roots quite ousted “sours” and young raspberry sprouts, both of which had the real merit of being quite toothsome, while timothy roots were tough and tasteless. But timothy roots were fashionable, therefore timothy roots must be eaten. Pecks of them must have been devoured in Carlisle that summer.

Pat was there also, padding about from one to the other on his black paws, giving us friendly pokes and rubs. We all made much of him except Felicity, who would not take any notice of him because he was the Story Girl’s cat.

We boys were sprawling on the grass. Our morning chores were done and the day was before us. We should have been feeling very comfortable and happy, but, as a matter of fact, we were not particularly so.

The Story Girl was sitting on the mint beside the well-house, weaving herself a wreath of buttercups. Felicity was sipping from the cup of clouded blue with an overdone air of unconcern. Each was acutely and miserably conscious of the other's presence, and each was desirous of convincing the rest of us that the other was less than nothing to her. Felicity could not succeed. The Story Girl managed it better. If it had not been for the fact that in all our foregatherings she was careful to sit as far from Felicity as possible, we might have been deceived.

We had not passed a very pleasant week. Felicity and the Story Girl had not been "speaking" to each other, and consequently there had been something rotten in the state of Denmark. An air of restraint was over all our games and conversations.

On the preceding Monday Felicity and the Story Girl had quarrelled over something. What the cause of the quarrel was I cannot tell because I never knew. It remained a "dead secret" between the parties of the first and second part forever. But it was more bitter than the general run of their tiffs, and the consequences were apparent to all. They had not spoken to each other since.

This was not because the rancour of either lasted so long. On the contrary it passed speedily away, not even one low descending sun going down on their wrath. But dignity remained to be considered. Neither would "speak first," and each obstinately declared that she would not speak first, no, not in a hundred years. Neither argument, entreaty, nor expostulation had any effect on those two stubborn girls, nor yet the tears of sweet Cecily, who cried every night about it, and mingled in her pure little prayers fervent petitions that Felicity and the Story Girl might make up.

"I don't know where you expect to go when you die, Felicity," she said tearfully, "if you don't forgive people."

"I have forgiven her," was Felicity's answer, "but I am not going to speak first for all that."

"It's very wrong, and, more than that, it's so uncomfortable," complained Cecily. "It spoils everything."

“Were they ever like this before?” I asked Cecily, as we talked the matter over privately in Uncle Stephen’s Walk.

“Never for so long,” said Cecily. “They had a spell like this last summer, and one the summer before, but they only lasted a couple of days.”

“And who spoke first?”

“Oh, the Story Girl. She got excited about something and spoke to Felicity before she thought, and then it was all right. But I’m afraid it isn’t going to be like that this time. Don’t you notice how careful the Story Girl is not to get excited? That is such a bad sign.”

“We’ve just got to think up something that will excite her, that’s all,” I said.

“I’m — I’m praying about it,” said Cecily in a low voice, her tear-wet lashes trembling against her pale, round cheeks. “Do you suppose it will do any good, Bev?”

“Very likely,” I assured her. “Remember Sara Ray and the money.

That came from praying.”

“I’m glad you think so,” said Cecily tremulously. “Dan said it was no use for me to bother praying about it. He said if they COULDN’T speak God might do something, but when they just WOULDN’T it wasn’t likely He would interfere. Dan does say such queer things. I’m so afraid he’s going to grow up just like Uncle Robert Ward, who never goes to church, and doesn’t believe more than half the Bible is true.”

“Which half does he believe is true?” I inquired with unholy curiosity.

“Oh, just the nice parts. He says there’s a heaven all right, but no — no — HELL. I don’t want Dan to grow up like that. It isn’t respectable. And you wouldn’t want all kinds of people crowding heaven, now, would you?”

“Well, no, I suppose not,” I agreed, thinking of Billy Robinson.

“Of course, I can’t help feeling sorry for those who have to go to THE OTHER PLACE,” said Cecily compassionately. “But I suppose they wouldn’t be very comfortable in heaven either. They wouldn’t feel at

home. Andrew Marr said a simply dreadful thing about THE OTHER PLACE one night last fall, when Felicity and I were down to see Kitty, and they were burning the potato stalks. He said he believed THE OTHER PLACE must be lots more interesting than heaven because fires were such jolly things. Now, did you ever hear the like?"

"I guess it depends a good deal on whether you're inside or outside the fires," I said.

"Oh, Andrew didn't really mean it, of course. He just said it to sound smart and make us stare. The Marrs are all like that. But anyhow, I'm going to keep on praying that something will happen to excite the Story Girl. I don't believe there is any use in praying that Felicity will speak first, because I am sure she won't."

"But don't you suppose God could make her?" I said, feeling that it wasn't quite fair that the Story Girl should always have to speak first. If she had spoken first the other times it was surely Felicity's turn this time.

"Well, I believe it would puzzle Him," said Cecily, out of the depths of her experience with Felicity.

Peter, as was to be expected, took Felicity's part, and said the Story Girl ought to speak first because she was the oldest. That, he said, had always been his Aunt Jane's rule.

Sara Ray thought Felicity should speak first, because the Story Girl was half an orphan.

Felix tried to make peace between them, and met the usual fate of all peacemakers. The Story Girl loftily told him that he was too young to understand, and Felicity said that fat boys should mind their own business. After that, Felix declared it would serve Felicity right if the Story Girl never spoke to her again.

Dan had no patience with either of the girls, especially Felicity.

"What they both want is a right good spanking," he said.

If only a spanking would mend the matter it was not likely it would ever be mended. Both Felicity and the Story Girl were rather too old to be spanked, and, if they had not been, none of the grownups would have thought it worth while to administer so desperate a remedy for what they considered so insignificant a trouble. With the usual levity of grownups, they regarded the coldness between the girls as a subject of mirth and jest, and recked not that it was freezing the genial current of our youthful souls, and blighting hours that should have been fair pages in our book of days.

The Story Girl finished her wreath and put it on. The buttercups drooped over her high, white brow and played peep with her glowing eyes. A dreamy smile hovered around her poppy-red mouth — a significant smile which, to those of us skilled in its interpretation, betokened the sentence which soon came.

“I know a story about a man who always had his own opinion—”

The Story Girl got no further. We never heard the story of the man who always had his own opinion. Felix came tearing up the lane, with a newspaper in his hand. When a boy as fat as Felix runs at full speed on a broiling August forenoon, he has something to run for — as Felicity remarked.

“He must have got some bad news at the office,” said Sara Ray.

“Oh, I hope nothing has happened to father,” I exclaimed, springing anxiously to my feet, a sick, horrible feeling of fear running over me like a cool, rippling wave.

“It’s just as likely to be good news he is running for as bad,” said the Story Girl, who was no believer in meeting trouble half way.

“He wouldn’t be running so fast for good news,” said Dan cynically.

We were not left long in doubt. The orchard gate flew open and Felix was among us. One glimpse of his face told us that he was no bearer of glad tidings. He had been running hard and should have been rubicund. Instead, he was “as pale as are the dead.” I could not have asked him what was the matter had my life depended on it. It was Felicity who demanded impatiently of my shaking, voiceless brother:

“Felix King, what has scared you?”

Felix held out the newspaper — it was the Charlottetown *Daily Enterprise*.

“It’s there,” he gasped. “Look — read — oh, do you — think it’s — true? The — end of — the world — is coming tomorrow — at two — o’clock — in the afternoon!”

Crash! Felicity had dropped the cup of clouded blue, which had passed unscathed through so many changing years, and now at last lay shattered on the stone of the well curb. At any other time we should all have been aghast over such a catastrophe, but it passed unnoticed now. What mattered it that all the cups in the world be broken to-day if the crack o’ doom must sound tomorrow?

“Oh, Sara Stanley, do you believe it? DO you?” gasped Felicity, clutching the Story Girl’s hand. Cecily’s prayer had been answered. Excitement had come with a vengeance, and under its stress Felicity had spoken first. But this, like the breaking of the cup, had no significance for us at the moment.

The Story Girl snatched the paper and read the announcement to a group on which sudden, tense silence had fallen. Under a sensational headline, “The Last Trump will sound at Two O’clock Tomorrow,” was a paragraph to the effect that the leader of a certain noted sect in the United States had predicted that August twelfth would be the Judgment Day, and that all his numerous followers were preparing for the dread event by prayer, fasting, and the making of appropriate white garments for ascension robes.

I laugh at the remembrance now — until I recall the real horror of fear that enwrapped us in that sunny orchard that August morning of long ago; and then I laugh no more. We were only children, be it remembered, with a very firm and simple faith that grown people knew much more than we did, and a rooted conviction that whatever you read in a newspaper must be true. If the *Daily Enterprise* said that August twelfth was to be the Judgment Day how were you going to get around it?

“Do you believe it, Sara Stanley?” persisted Felicity. “DO you?”

“No — no, I don’t believe a word of it,” said the Story Girl.

But for once her voice failed to carry conviction — or, rather, it carried conviction of the very opposite kind. It was borne in upon our miserable minds that if the Story Girl did not altogether believe it was true she believed it might be true; and the possibility was almost as dreadful as the certainty.

“It CAN’T be true,” said Sara Ray, seeking refuge, as usual, in tears. “Why, everything looks just the same. Things COULDN’T look the same if the Judgment Day was going to be tomorrow.”

“But that’s just the way it’s to come,” I said uncomfortably. “It tells you in the Bible. It’s to come just like a thief in the night.”

“But it tells you another thing in the Bible, too,” said Cecily eagerly. “It says nobody knows when the Judgment Day is to come — not even the angels in heaven. Now, if the angels in heaven don’t know it, do you suppose the editor of the *Enterprise* can know it — and him a Grit, too?”

“I guess he knows as much about it as a Tory would,” retorted the Story Girl. Uncle Roger was a Liberal and Uncle Alec a Conservative, and the girls held fast to the political traditions of their respective households. “But it isn’t really the *Enterprise* editor at all who is saying it — it’s a man in the States who claims to be a prophet. If he IS a prophet perhaps he has found out somehow.”

“And it’s in the paper, too, and that’s printed as well as the Bible,” said Dan.

“Well, I’m going to depend on the Bible,” said Cecily. “I don’t believe it’s the Judgment Day tomorrow — but I’m scared, for all that,” she added piteously.

That was exactly the position of us all. As in the case of the bell-ringing ghost, we did not believe but we trembled.

“Nobody might have known when the Bible was written,” said Dan, “but maybe somebody knows now. Why, the Bible was written thousands of years ago, and that paper was printed this very morning. There’s been time to find out ever so much more.”

“I want to do so many things,” said the Story Girl, plucking off her crown of buttercup gold with a tragic gesture, “but if it’s the Judgment Day tomorrow I won’t have time to do any of them.”

“It can’t be much worse than dying, I s’pose,” said Felix, grasping at any straw of comfort.

“I’m awful glad I’ve got into the habit of going to church and Sunday School this summer,” said Peter very soberly. “I wish I’d made up my mind before this whether to be a Presbyterian or a Methodist. Do you s’pose it’s too late now?”

“Oh, that doesn’t matter,” said Cecily earnestly. “If — if you’re a Christian, Peter, that is all that’s necessary.”

“But it’s too late for that,” said Peter miserably. “I can’t turn into a Christian between this and two o’clock tomorrow. I’ll just have to be satisfied with making up my mind to be a Presbyterian or a Methodist. I wanted to wait till I got old enough to make out what was the difference between them, but I’ll have to chance it now. I guess I’ll be a Presbyterian, ‘cause I want to be like the rest of you. Yes, I’ll be a Presbyterian.”

“I know a story about Judy Pineau and the word Presbyterian,” said the Story Girl, “but I can’t tell it now. If tomorrow isn’t the Judgment Day I’ll tell it Monday.”

“If I had known that tomorrow might be the Judgment Day I wouldn’t have quarrelled with you last Monday, Sara Stanley, or been so horrid and sulky all the week. Indeed I wouldn’t,” said Felicity, with very unusual humility.

Ah, Felicity! We were all, in the depths of our pitiful little souls, reviewing the innumerable things we would or would not have done “if we had known.” What a black and endless list they made — those sins of omission and commission that rushed accusingly across our young memories! For us the leaves of the Book of Judgment were already opened; and we stood at the bar of our own consciences, than which for youth or eld, there can be no more dread tribunal. I thought of all the evil

deeds of my short life — of pinching Felix to make him cry out at family prayers, of playing truant from Sunday School and going fishing one day, of a certain fib — no, no away from this awful hour with all such euphonious evasions — of a LIE I had once told, of many a selfish and unkind word and thought and action. And tomorrow might be the great and terrible day of the last accounting! Oh, if I had only been a better boy!

“The quarrel was as much my fault as yours, Felicity,” said the Story Girl, putting her arm around Felicity. “We can’t undo it now. But if tomorrow isn’t the Judgment Day we must be careful never to quarrel again. Oh, I wish father was here.”

“He will be,” said Cecily. “If it’s the Judgment Day for Prince Edward Island it will be for Europe, too.”

“I wish we could just KNOW whether what the paper says is true or not,” said Felix desperately. “It seems to me I could brace up if I just KNEW.”

But to whom could we appeal? Uncle Alec was away and would not be back until late that night. Neither Aunt Janet nor Uncle Roger were people to whom we cared to apply in such a crisis. We were afraid of the Judgment Day; but we were almost equally afraid of being laughed at. How about Aunt Olivia?

“No, Aunt Olivia has gone to bed with a sick headache and mustn’t be disturbed,” said the Story Girl. “She said I must get dinner ready, because there was plenty of cold meat, and nothing to do but boil the potatoes and peas, and set the table. I don’t know how I can put my thoughts into it when the Judgment Day may be tomorrow. Besides, what is the good of asking the grownups? They don’t know anything more about this than we do.”

“But if they’d just SAY they didn’t believe it, it would be a sort of comfort,” said Cecily.

“I suppose the minister would know, but he’s away on his vacation” said Felicity. “Anyhow, I’ll go and ask mother what she thinks of it.”

Felicity picked up the *Enterprise* and betook herself to the house. We awaited her return in dire suspense.

“Well, what does she say?” asked Cecily tremulously.

“She said, ‘Run away and don’t bother me. I haven’t any time for your nonsense.’” responded Felicity in an injured tone. “And I said, ‘But, ma, the paper SAYS tomorrow is the Judgment Day,’ and ma just said ‘Judgment Fiddlesticks!’”

“Well, that’s kind of comforting,” said Peter. “She can’t put any faith in it, or she’d be more worked up.”

“If it only wasn’t PRINTED!” said Dan gloomily.

“Let’s all go over and ask Uncle Roger,” said Felix desperately.

That we should make Uncle Roger a court of last resort indicated all too clearly the state of our minds. But we went. Uncle Roger was in his barnyard, hitching his black mare into the buggy. His copy of the *Enterprise* was sticking out of his pocket. He looked, as we saw with sinking hearts, unusually grave and preoccupied. There was not a glimmer of a smile about his face.

“You ask him,” said Felicity, nudging the Story Girl.

“Uncle Roger,” said the Story Girl, the golden notes of her voice threaded with fear and appeal. “the *Enterprise* says that tomorrow is the Judgment Day? IS it? Do YOU think it is?”

“I’m afraid so,” said Uncle Roger gravely. “The *Enterprise* is always very careful to print only reliable news.”

“But mother doesn’t believe it,” cried Felicity.

Uncle Roger shook his head.

“That is just the trouble,” he said. “People won’t believe it till it’s too late. I’m going straight to Markdale to pay a man there some money I owe him, and after dinner I’m going to Summerside to buy me a new suit. My old one is too shabby for the Judgment Day.”

He got into his buggy and drove away, leaving eight distracted mortals behind him.

“Well, I suppose that settles it,” said Peter, in despairing tone.

“Is there anything we can do to PREPARE?” asked Cecily.

“I wish I had a white dress like you girls,” sobbed Sara Ray. “But I haven’t, and it’s too late to get one. Oh, I wish I had minded what ma said

better. I wouldn't have disobeyed her so often if I'd thought the Judgment Day was so near. When I go home I'm going to tell her about going to the magic lantern show."

"I'm not sure that Uncle Roger meant what he said," remarked the Story Girl. "I couldn't get a look into his eyes. If he was trying to hoax us there would have been a twinkle in them. He can never help that. You know he would think it a great joke to frighten us like this. It's really dreadful to have no grownups you can depend on."

"We could depend on father if he was here," said Dan stoutly.

"HE'D tell us the truth."

"He would tell us what he THOUGHT was true, Dan, but he couldn't KNOW. He's not such a well-educated man as the editor of the *Enterprise*. No, there's nothing to do but wait and see."

"Let us go into the house and read just what the Bible does say about it," suggested Cecily.

We crept in carefully, lest we disturb Aunt Olivia, and Cecily found and read the significant portion of Holy Writ. There was little comfort for us in that vivid and terrible picture.

"Well," said the Story Girl finally. "I must go and get the potatoes ready. I suppose they must be boiled even if it is the Judgment Day tomorrow. But I don't believe it is."

"And I've got to go and stump elderberries," said Peter. "I don't see how I can do it — go away back there alone. I'll feel scared to death the whole time."

"Tell Uncle Roger that, and say if tomorrow is the end of the world that there is no good in stumping any more fields," I suggested.

"Yes, and if he lets you off then we'll know he was in earnest," chimed in Cecily. "But if he still says you must go that'll be a sign he doesn't believe it."

Leaving the Story Girl and Peter to peel their potatoes, the rest of us went home, where Aunt Janet, who had gone to the well and found the fragments of the old blue cup, gave poor Felicity a bitter scolding about it.

But Felicity bore it very patiently — nay, more, she seemed to delight in it.

“Ma can’t believe tomorrow is the last day, or she wouldn’t scold like that,” she told us; and this comforted us until after dinner, when the Story Girl and Peter came over and told us that Uncle Roger had really gone to Summerside. Then we plunged down into fear and wretchedness again.

“But he said I must go and stump elderberries just the same” said Peter. “He said it might NOT be the Judgment Day tomorrow, though he believed it was, and it would keep me out of mischief. But I just can’t stand it back there alone. Some of you fellows must come with me. I don’t want you to work, but just for company.”

It was finally decided that Dan and Felix should go. I wanted to go also, but the girls protested.

“YOU must stay and keep us cheered up,” implored Felicity. “I just don’t know how I’m ever going to put in the afternoon. I promised Kitty Marr that I’d go down and spend it with her, but I can’t now. And I can’t knit any at my lace. I’d just keep thinking, ‘What is the use? Perhaps it’ll all be burned up tomorrow.’”

So I stayed with the girls, and a miserable afternoon we had of it. The Story Girl again and again declared that she “didn’t believe it,” but when we asked her to tell a story, she evaded it with a flimsy excuse. Cecily pestered at Aunt Janet’s life out, asking repeatedly, “Ma, will you be washing Monday?” “Ma, will you be going to prayer meeting Tuesday night?” “Ma, will you be preserving raspberries next week?” and various similar questions. It was a huge comfort to her that Aunt Janet always said, “Yes,” or “Of course,” as if there could be no question about it.

Sara Ray cried until I wondered how one small head could contain all the tears she shed. But I do not believe she was half as much frightened as disappointed that she had no white dress. In mid-afternoon Cecily came downstairs with her forget-me-not jug in her hand — a dainty bit of china, wreathed with dark blue forget-me-nots, which Cecily prized highly, and in which she always kept her toothbrush.

“Sara, I am going to give you this jug,” she said solemnly.

Now, Sara had always coveted this particular jug. She stopped crying long enough to clutch it delightedly.

“Oh, Cecily, thank you. But are you sure you won’t want it back if tomorrow isn’t the Judgment Day?”

“No, it’s yours for good,” said Cecily, with the high, remote air of one to whom forget-me-not jugs and all such pomps and vanities of the world were as a tale that is told.

“Are you going to give any one your cherry vase?” asked Felicity, trying to speak indifferently. Felicity had never admired the forget-me-not jug, but she had always hankered after the cherry vase — an affair of white glass, with a cluster of red glass cherries and golden-green glass leaves on its side, which Aunt Olivia had given Cecily one Christmas.

“No, I’m not,” answered Cecily, with a change of tone.

“Oh, well, I don’t care,” said Felicity quickly. “Only, if tomorrow is the last day, the cherry vase won’t be much use to you.”

“I guess it will be as much use to me as to any one else,” said Cecily indignantly. She had sacrificed her dear forget-me-not jug to satisfy some pang of conscience, or propitiate some threatening fate, but surrender her precious cherry vase she could not and would not. Felicity needn’t be giving any hints!

With the gathering shades of night our plight became pitiful. In the daylight, surrounded by homely, familiar sights and sounds, it was not so difficult to fortify our souls with a cheering incredulity. But now, in this time of shadows, dread belief clutched us and wrung us with terror. If there had been one wise older friend to tell us, in serious fashion, that we need not be afraid, that the *Enterprise* paragraph was naught save the idle report of a deluded fanatic, it would have been well for us. But there was not. Our grownups, instead, considered our terror an exquisite jest. At that very moment, Aunt Olivia, who had recovered from her headache, and Aunt Janet were laughing in the kitchen over the state the children were in because they were afraid the end of the world was close at hand. Aunt Janet’s throaty gurgle and Aunt Olivia’s trilling mirth floated out through the open window.

“Perhaps they’ll laugh on the other side of their faces tomorrow,” said Dan, with gloomy satisfaction.

We were sitting on the cellar hatch, watching what might be our last sunset o’er the dark hills of time. Peter was with us. It was his last Sunday to go home, but he had elected to remain.

“If tomorrow is the Judgment Day I want to be with you fellows,” he said.

Sara Ray had also yearned to stay, but could not because her mother had told her she must be home before dark.

“Never mind, Sara,” comforted Cecily. “It’s not to be till two o’clock tomorrow, so you’ll have plenty of time to get up here before anything happens.”

“But there might be a mistake,” sobbed Sara. “It might be two o’clock tonight instead of tomorrow.”

It might, indeed. This was a new horror, which had not occurred to us.

“I’m sure I won’t sleep a wink tonight,” said Felix.

“The paper SAYS two o’clock tomorrow,” said Dan. “You needn’t worry, Sara.”

But Sara departed, weeping. She did not, however, forget to carry the forget-me-not jug with her. All things considered, her departure was a relief. Such a constantly tearful damsel was not a pleasant companion. Cecily and Felicity and the Story Girl did not cry. They were made of finer, firmer stuff. Dry-eyed, with such courage as they might, they faced whatever might be in store for them.

“I wonder where we’ll all be this time tomorrow night,” said Felix mournfully, as we watched the sunset between the dark fir boughs. It was an ominous sunset. The sun dropped down amid dark, livid clouds, that turned sullen shades of purple and fiery red behind him.

“I hope we’ll be all together, wherever we are,” said Cecily gently. “Nothing can be so very bad then.”

“I’m going to read the Bible all tomorrow forenoon,” said Peter.

When Aunt Olivia came out to go home the Story Girl asked her permission to stay all night with Felicity and Cecily. Aunt Olivia assented

lightly, swinging her hat on her arm and including us all in a friendly smile. She looked very pretty, with her big blue eyes and warm-hued golden hair. We loved Aunt Olivia; but just now we resented her having laughed at us with Aunt Janet, and we refused to smile back.

“What a sulky, sulky lot of little people,” said Aunt Olivia, going away across the yard, holding her pretty dress up from the dewy grass.

Peter resolved to stay all night with us, too, not troubling himself about anybody’s permission. When we went to bed it was settling down for a stormy night, and the rain was streaming wetly on the roof, as if the world, like Sara Ray, were weeping because its end was so near. Nobody forgot or hurried over his prayers that night. We would dearly have loved to leave the candle burning, but Aunt Janet’s decree regarding this was as inexorable as any of Mede and Persia. Out the candle must go; and we lay there, quaking, with the wild rain streaming down on the roof above us, and the voices of the storm wailing through the writhing spruce trees.

The Judgment Sunday

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Sunday morning broke, dull and gray. The rain had ceased, but the clouds hung dark and brooding above a world which, in its windless calm, following the spent storm-throe, seemed to us to be waiting “till judgment spoke the doom of fate.” We were all up early. None of us, it appeared, had slept well, and some of us not at all. The Story Girl had been among the latter, and she looked very pale and wan, with black shadows under her deep-set eyes. Peter, however, had slept soundly enough after twelve o’clock.

“When you’ve been stumping out elderberries all the afternoon it’ll take more than the Judgment Day to keep you awake all night,” he said. “But when I woke up this morning it was just awful. I’d forgot it for a moment, and then it all came back with a rush, and I was worse scared than before.”

Cecily was pale but brave. For the first time in years she had not put her hair up in curlers on Saturday night. It was brushed and braided with Puritan simplicity.

“If it’s the Judgment Day I don’t care whether my hair is curly or not,” she said.

“Well,” said Aunt Janet, when we all descended to the kitchen, “this is the first time you young ones have ever all got up without being called, and that’s a fact.”

At breakfast our appetites were poor. How could the grownups eat as they did? After breakfast and the necessary chores there was the forenoon to be lived through. Peter, true to his word, got out his Bible and began to read from the first chapter in Genesis.

“I won’t have time to read it all through, I s’pose,” he said, “but I’ll get along as far as I can.”

There was no preaching in Carlisle that day, and Sunday School was not till the evening. Cecily got out her Lesson Slip and studied the lesson conscientiously. The rest of us did not see how she could do it. We could not, that was very certain.

“If it isn’t the Judgment Day, I want to have the lesson learned,” she said, “and if it is I’ll feel I’ve done what was right. But I never found it so hard to remember the Golden Text before.”

The long dragging hours were hard to endure. We roamed restlessly about, and went to and fro — all save Peter, who still steadily read away at his Bible. He was through Genesis by eleven and beginning on Exodus.

“There’s a good deal of it I don’t understand,” he said, “but I read every word, and that’s the main thing. That story about Joseph and his brother was so int’esting I almost forgot about the Judgment Day.”

But the long drawn out dread was beginning to get on Dan’s nerves.

“If it is the Judgment Day,” he growled, as we went in to dinner, “I wish it’d hurry up and have it over.”

“Oh, Dan!” cried Felicity and Cecily together, in a chorus of horror. But the Story Girl looked as if she rather sympathized with Dan.

If we had eaten little at breakfast we could eat still less at dinner. After dinner the clouds rolled away, and the sun came joyously and gloriously out. This, we thought, was a good omen. Felicity opined that it wouldn’t have cleared up if it was the Judgment Day. Nevertheless, we dressed ourselves carefully, and the girls put on their white dresses.

Sara Ray came up, still crying, of course. She increased our uneasiness by saying that her mother believed the *Enterprise* paragraph, and was afraid that the end of the world was really at hand.

“That’s why she let me come up,” she sobbed. “If she hadn’t been afraid I don’t believe she would have let me come up. But I’d have died if I couldn’t have come. And she wasn’t a bit cross when I told her I had gone to the magic lantern show. That’s an awful bad sign. I hadn’t a white dress, but I put on my white muslin apron with the frills.”

“That seems kind of queer,” said Felicity doubtfully. “You wouldn’t put on an apron to go to church, and so it doesn’t seem as if it was proper to put it on for Judgment Day either.”

“Well, it’s the best I could do,” said Sara disconsolately. “I wanted to have something white on. It’s just like a dress only it hasn’t sleeves.”

“Let’s go into the orchard and wait,” said the Story Girl. “It’s one o’clock now, so in another hour we’ll know the worst. We’ll leave the front door open, and we’ll hear the big clock when it strikes two.”

No better plan being suggested, we betook ourselves to the orchard, and sat on the boughs of Uncle Alec’s tree because the grass was wet. The world was beautiful and peaceful and green. Overhead was a dazzling blue sky, spotted with heaps of white cloud.

“Pshaw, I don’t believe there’s any fear of it being the last day,” said Dan, beginning a whistle out of sheer bravado.

“Well, don’t whistle on Sunday anyhow,” said Felicity severely.

“I don’t see a thing about Methodists or Presbyterians, as far as I’ve gone, and I’m most through Exodus,” said Peter suddenly.

“When does it begin to tell about them?”

“There’s nothing about Methodists or Presbyterians in the Bible,” said Felicity scornfully.

Peter looked amazed.

“Well, how did they happen then?” he asked. “When did they begin to be?”

“I’ve often thought it such a strange thing that there isn’t a word about either of them in the Bible,” said Cecily. “Especially when it mentions Baptists — or at least one Baptist.”

“Well, anyhow,” said Peter, “even if it isn’t the Judgment Day I’m going to keep on reading the Bible until I’ve got clean through. I never thought it was such an interesting book.”

“It sounds simply dreadful to hear you call the Bible an interesting book,” said Felicity, with a shudder at the sacrilege. “Why, you might be talking about ANY common book.”

“I didn’t mean any harm,” said Peter, crestfallen.

“The Bible IS an interesting book,” said the Story Girl, coming to Peter’s rescue. “And there are magnificent stories in it — yes, Felicity, MAGNIFICENT. If the world doesn’t come to an end I’ll tell you the story of Ruth next Sunday — or look here! I’ll tell it anyhow. That’s a promise. Wherever we are next Sunday I’ll tell you about Ruth.”

“Why, you wouldn’t tell stories in heaven,” said Cecily, in a very timid voice.

“Why not?” said the Story Girl, with a flash of her eyes. “Indeed I shall. I’ll tell stories as long as I’ve a tongue to talk with, or any one to listen.”

Ay, doubtless. That dauntless spirit would soar triumphantly above the wreck of matter and the crash of worlds, taking with it all its own wild sweetness and daring. Even the young-eyed cherubim, choiring on meadows of asphodel, might cease their harping for a time to listen to a tale of the vanished earth, told by that golden tongue. Some vague thought of this was in our minds as we looked at her; and somehow it comforted us. Not even the Judgment was so greatly to be feared if after it we were the SAME, our own precious little identities unchanged.

“It must be getting handy two,” said Cecily. “It seems as if we’d been waiting here for ever so much longer than an hour.”

Conversation languished. We watched and waited nervously. The moments dragged by, each seeming an hour. Would two o’clock never come and end the suspense? We all became very tense. Even Peter had to stop reading. Any unaccustomed sound or sight in the world about us struck on our taut senses like the trump of doom. A cloud passed over the sun and as the sudden shadow swept across the orchard we turned pale and trembled. A wagon rumbling over a plank bridge in the hollow made Sara Ray start up with a shriek. The slamming of a barn door over at Uncle Roger’s caused the cold perspiration to break out on our faces.

“I don’t believe it’s the Judgment Day,” said Felix, “and I never have believed it. But oh, I wish that clock would strike two.”

“Can’t you tell us a story to pass the time?” I entreated the Story Girl.

She shook her head.

“No, it would be no use to try. But if this isn’t the Judgment Day I’ll have a great one to tell of us being so scared.”

Pat presently came galloping up the orchard, carrying in his mouth a big field mouse, which, sitting down before us, he proceeded to devour, body and bones, afterwards licking his chops with great satisfaction.

“It can’t be the Judgment Day,” said Sara Ray, brightening up.
“Paddy would never be eating mice if it was.”

“If that clock doesn’t soon strike two I shall go out of my seven senses,” declared Cecily with unusual vehemence.

“Time always seems long when you’re waiting,” said the Story Girl.
“But it does seem as if we had been here more than an hour.”

“Maybe the clock struck and we didn’t hear it,” suggested Dan.
“Somebody’d better go and see.”

“I’ll go,” said Cecily. “I suppose, even if anything happens, I’ll have time to get back to you.”

We watched her white-clad figure pass through the gate and enter the front door. A few minutes passed — or a few years — we could not have told which. Then Cecily came running at full speed back to us. But when she reached us she trembled so much that at first she could not speak.

“What is it? Is it past two?” implored the Story Girl.

“It’s — it’s four,” said Cecily with a gasp. “The old clock isn’t going. Mother forgot to wind it up last night and it stopped. But it’s four by the kitchen clock — so it isn’t the Judgment Day — and tea is ready — and mother says to come in.”

We looked at each other, realizing what our dread had been, now that it was lifted. It was not the Judgment Day. The world and life were still before us, with all their potent lure of years unknown.

“I’ll never believe anything I read in the papers again,” said Dan, rushing to the opposite extreme.

“I told you the Bible was more to be depended on than the newspapers,” said Cecily triumphantly.

Sara Ray and Peter and the Story Girl went home, and we went in to tea with royal appetites. Afterwards, as we dressed for Sunday School upstairs, our spirits carried us away to such an extent that Aunt Janet had to come twice to the foot of the stairs and inquire severely, “Children, have you forgotten what day this is?”

“Isn’t it nice that we’re going to live a spell longer in this nice world?” said Felix, as we walked down the hill.

“Yes, and Felicity and the Story Girl are speaking again,” said Cecily happily.

“And Felicity DID speak first,” I said.

“Yes, but it took the Judgment Day to make her. I wish,” added Cecily with a sigh, “that I hadn’t been in quite such a hurry giving away my forget-me-not jug.”

“And I wish I hadn’t been in such a hurry deciding I’d be a Presbyterian,” said Peter.

“Well, it’s not too late for that,” said Dan. “You can change your mind now.”

“No, sir,” said Peter with a flash of spirit, “I ain’t one of the kind that says they’ll be something just because they’re scared, and when the scare is over go back on it. I said I’d be Presbyterian and I mean to stick to it.”

“You said you knew a story that had something to do with Presbyterians,” I said to the Story Girl. “Tell us it now.”

“Oh, no, it isn’t the right kind of story to tell on Sunday,” she replied. “But I’ll tell it tomorrow morning.”

Accordingly, we heard it the next morning in the orchard.

“Long ago, when Judy Pineau was young,” said the Story Girl, “she was hired with Mrs. Elder Frewen — the first Mrs. Elder Frewen. Mrs. Frewen had been a schoolteacher, and she was very particular as to how people talked, and the grammar they used. And she didn’t like anything but refined words. One very hot day she heard Judy Pineau say she was ‘all in a sweat.’ Mrs. Frewen was greatly shocked, and said, ‘Judy, you shouldn’t say that. It’s horses that sweat. You should say you are in a perspiration.’ Well, Judy promised she’d remember, because she liked Mrs. Frewen and was anxious to please her. Not long afterwards Judy was scrubbing the kitchen floor one morning, and when Mrs. Frewen came in Judy looked up and said, quite proud over using the right word, ‘Oh, Mees Frewen, ain’t it awful hot? I declare I’m all in a Presbyterian.’”

Dreamers of Dreams

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August went out and September came in. Harvest was ended; and though summer was not yet gone, her face was turned westering. The asters lettered her retreating footsteps in a purple script, and over the hills and valleys hung a faint blue smoke, as if Nature were worshipping at her woodland altar. The apples began to burn red on the bending boughs; crickets sang day and night; squirrels chattered secrets of Polichinelle in the spruces; the sunshine was as thick and yellow as molten gold; school opened, and we small denizens of the hill farms lived happy days of harmless work and necessary play, closing in nights of peaceful, undisturbed slumber under a roof watched over by autumnal stars.

At least, our slumbers were peaceful and undisturbed until our orgy of dreaming began.

“I would really like to know what especial kind of deviltry you young fry are up to this time,” said Uncle Roger one evening, as he passed through the orchard with his gun on his shoulder, bound for the swamp.

We were sitting in a circle before the Pulpit Stone, each writing diligently in an exercise book, and eating the Rev. Mr. Scott’s plums, which always reached their prime of juicy, golden-green flesh and bloomy blue skin in September. The Rev. Mr. Scott was dead and gone, but those plums certainly kept his memory green, as his forgotten sermons could never have done.

“Oh,” said Felicity in a shocked tone, when Uncle Roger had passed by, “Uncle Roger SWORE.”

“Oh, no, he didn’t,” said the Story Girl quickly. “‘Deviltry’ isn’t swearing at all. It only means extra bad mischief.”

“Well, it’s not a very nice word, anyhow,” said Felicity.

“No, it isn’t,” agreed the Story Girl with a regretful sigh. “It’s very expressive, but it isn’t nice. That is the way with so many words. They’re

expressive, but they're not nice, and so a girl can't use them"

The Story Girl sighed again. She loved expressive words, and treasured them as some girls might have treasured jewels. To her, they were as lustrous pearls, threaded on the crimson cord of a vivid fancy. When she met with a new one she uttered it over and over to herself in solitude, weighing it, caressing it, infusing it with the radiance of her voice, making it her own in all its possibilities for ever.

"Well, anyhow, it isn't a suitable word in this case," insisted Felicity. "We are not up to any dev — any extra bad mischief. Writing down one's dreams isn't mischief at all."

Certainly it wasn't. Surely not even the straitest sect of the grownups could call it so. If writing down your dreams, with agonizing care as to composition and spelling — for who knew that the eyes of generations unborn might not read the record? — were not a harmless amusement, could anything be called so? I trow not.

We had been at it for a fortnight, and during that time we only lived to have dreams and write them down. The Story Girl had originated the idea one evening in the rustling, rain-wet ways of the spruce wood, where we were picking gum after a day of showers. When we had picked enough, we sat down on the moss-grown stones at the end of a long arcade, where it opened out on the harvest-golden valley below us, our jaws exercising themselves vigorously on the spoil of our climbings. We were never allowed to chew gum in school or in company, but in wood and field, orchard and hayloft, such rules were in abeyance.

"My Aunt Jane used to say it wasn't polite to chew gum anywhere," said Peter rather ruefully.

"I don't suppose your Aunt Jane knew all the rules of etiquette," said Felicity, designing to crush Peter with a big word, borrowed from the *Family Guide*. But Peter was not to be so crushed. He had in him a certain toughness of fibre, that would have been proof against a whole dictionary.

"She did, too," he retorted. "My Aunt Jane was a real lady, even if she was only a Craig. She knew all those rules and she kept them when there

was nobody round to see her, just the same as when any one was. And she was smart. If father had had half her git-up-and-git I wouldn't be a hired boy to-day."

"Have you any idea where your father is?" asked Dan.

"No," said Peter indifferently. "The last we heard of him he was in the Maine lumber woods. But that was three years ago. I don't know where he is now, and," added Peter deliberately, taking his gum from his mouth to make his statement more impressive, "I don't care."

"Oh, Peter, that sounds dreadful," said Cecily. "Your own father!"

"Well," said Peter defiantly, "if your own father had run away when you was a baby, and left your mother to earn her living by washing and working out, I guess you wouldn't care much about him either."

"Perhaps your father may come home some of these days with a huge fortune," suggested the Story Girl.

"Perhaps pigs may whistle, but they've poor mouths for it," was all the answer Peter deigned to this charming suggestion.

"There goes Mr. Campbell down the road," said Dan. "That's his new mare. Isn't she a dandy? She's got a skin like black satin. He calls her Betty Sherman."

"I don't think it's very nice to call a horse after your own grandmother," said Felicity.

"Betty Sherman would have thought it a compliment," said the Story Girl.

"Maybe she would. She couldn't have been very nice herself, or she would never have gone and asked a man to marry her," said Felicity.

"Why not?"

"Goodness me, it was dreadful! Would YOU do such a thing yourself?"

"Well, I don't know," said the Story Girl, her eyes gleaming with impish laughter. "If I wanted him DREADFULLY, and HE wouldn't do the asking, perhaps I would."

“I’d rather die an old maid forty times over,” exclaimed Felicity.

“Nobody as pretty as you will ever be an old maid, Felicity,” said Peter, who never put too fine an edge on his compliments.

Felicity tossed her golden tressed head and tried to look angry, but made a dismal failure of it.

“It wouldn’t be ladylike to ask any one to marry you, you know,” argued Cecily.

“I don’t suppose the *Family Guide* would think so,” agreed the Story Girl lazily, with some sarcasm in her voice. The Story Girl never held the *Family Guide* in such reverence as did Felicity and Cecily. They pored over the “etiquette column” every week, and could have told you on demand, just exactly what kind of gloves should be worn at a wedding, what you should say when introducing or being introduced, and how you ought to look when your best young man came to see you.

“They say Mrs. Richard Cook asked HER husband to marry her,” said Dan.

“Uncle Roger says she didn’t exactly ask him, but she helped the lame dog over the stile so slick that Richard was engaged to her before he knew what had happened to him,” said the Story Girl. “I know a story about Mrs. Richard Cook’s grandmother. She was one of those women who are always saying ‘I told you so—’”

“Take notice, Felicity,” said Dan aside.

“ — And she was very stubborn. Soon after she was married she and her husband quarrelled about an apple tree they had planted in their orchard. The label was lost. He said it was a Fameuse and she declared it was a Yellow Transparent. They fought over it till the neighbours came out to listen. Finally he got so angry that he told her to shut up. They didn’t have any *Family Guide* in those days, so he didn’t know it wasn’t polite to say shut up to your wife. I suppose she thought she would teach him

manners, for would you believe it? That woman did shut up, and never spoke one single word to her husband for five years. And then, in five years' time, the tree bore apples, and they WERE Yellow Transparents. And then she spoke at last. She said, 'I told you so.'"

"And did she talk to him after that as usual?" asked Sara Ray.

"Oh, yes, she was just the same as she used to be," said the Story Girl wearily. "But that doesn't belong to the story. It stops when she spoke at last. You're never satisfied to leave a story where it should stop, Sara Ray."

"Well, I always like to know what happens afterwards," said Sara Ray.

"Uncle Roger says he wouldn't want a wife he could never quarrel with," remarked Dan. "He says it would be too tame a life for him."

"I wonder if Uncle Roger will always stay a bachelor," said Cecily.

"He seems real happy," observed Peter.

"Ma says that it's all right as long as he is a bachelor because he won't take any one," said Felicity, "but if he wakes up some day and finds he is an old bachelor because he can't get any one it'll have a very different flavour."

"If your Aunt Olivia was to up and get married what would your Uncle Roger do for a housekeeper?" asked Peter.

"Oh, but Aunt Olivia will never be married now," said Felicity.

"Why, she'll be twenty-nine next January."

"Well, o' course, that's pretty old," admitted Peter, "but she might find some one who wouldn't mind that, seeing she's so pretty."

"It would be awful splendid and exciting to have a wedding in the family, wouldn't it?" said Cecily. "I've never seen any one married, and

I'd just love to. I've been to four funerals, but not to one single wedding."

"I've never even got to a funeral," said Sara Ray gloomily.

"There's the wedding veil of the proud princess," said Cecily, pointing to a long drift of filmy vapour in the southwestern sky.

"And look at that sweet pink cloud below it," added Felicity.

"Maybe that little pink cloud is a dream, getting all ready to float down into somebody's sleep," suggested the Story Girl.

"I had a perfectly awful dream last night," said Cecily, with a shudder of remembrance. "I dreamed I was on a desert island inhabited by tigers and natives with two heads."

"Oh!" the Story Girl looked at Cecily half reproachfully. "Why couldn't you tell it better than that? If I had such a dream I could tell it so that everybody else would feel as if they had dreamed it, too."

"Well, I'm not you," countered Cecily, "and I wouldn't want to frighten any one as I was frightened. It was an awful dream — but it was kind of interesting, too."

"I've had some real int'resting dreams," said Peter, "but I can't remember them long. I wish I could."

"Why don't you write them down?" suggested the Story Girl. "Oh—" she turned upon us a face illuminated with a sudden inspiration. "I've an idea. Let us each get an exercise book and write down all our dreams, just as we dream them. We'll see who'll have the most interesting collection. And we'll have them to read and laugh over when we're old and gray."

Instantly we all saw ourselves and each other by inner vision, old and gray — all but the Story Girl. We could not picture her as old. Always, as long as she lived, so it seemed to us, must she have sleek brown curls, a voice like the sound of a harpstring in the wind, and eyes that were stars of eternal youth.

The Dream Books

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The next day the Story Girl coaxed Uncle Roger to take her to Markdale, and there she bought our dream books. They were ten cents apiece, with ruled pages and mottled green covers. My own lies open beside me as I write, its yellowed pages inscribed with the visions that haunted my childish slumbers on those nights of long ago.

On the cover is pasted a lady's visiting card, on which is written, "The Dream Book of Beverley King." Cecily had a packet of visiting cards which she was hoarding against the day when she would be grown up and could put the calling etiquette of the *Family Guide* into practice; but she generously gave us all one apiece for the covers of our dream books.

As I turn the pages and glance over the naïve records, each one beginning, "Last night I dreamed," the past comes very vividly back to me. I see that bowery orchard, shining in memory with a soft glow of beauty—"the light that never was on land or sea," — where we sat on those September evenings and wrote down our dreams, when the cares of the day were over and there was nothing to interfere with the pleasing throes of composition. Peter — Dan — Felix — Cecily — Felicity — Sara Ray — the Story Girl — they are all around me once more, in the sweet-scented, fading grasses, each with open dream books and pencil in hand, now writing busily, now staring fixedly into space in search of some elusive word or phrase which might best describe the indescribable. I hear their laughing voices, I see their bright, unclouded eyes. In this little, old book, filled with cramped, boyish writing, there is a spell of white magic that sets the years at naught. Beverley King is a boy once more, writing down his dreams in the old King orchard on the homestead hill, blown over by musky winds.

Opposite to him sits the Story Girl, with her scarlet rosetted head, her beautiful bare feet crossed before her, one slender hand propping her high,

white brow, on either side of which fall her glossy curls.

There, to the right, is sweet Cecily of the dear, brown eyes, with a little bloated dictionary beside her — for you dream of so many things you can't spell, or be expected to spell, when you are only eleven. Next to her sits Felicity, beautiful, and conscious that she is beautiful, with hair of spun sunshine, and sea-blue eyes, and all the roses of that vanished summer abloom in her cheeks.

Peter is beside her, of course, sprawled flat on his stomach among the grasses, one hand clutching his black curls, with his dream book on a small, round stone before him — for only so can Peter compose at all, and even then he finds it hard work. He can handle a hoe more deftly than a pencil, and his spelling, even with all his frequent appeals to Cecily, is a fearful and wonderful thing. As for punctuation, he never attempts it, beyond an occasion period, jotted down whenever he happens to think of it, whether in the right place or not. The Story Girl goes over his dreams after he has written them out, and puts in the commas and semicolons, and straightens out the sentences.

Felix sits on the right of the Story Girl, fat and stodgy, grimly in earnest even over dreams. He writes with his knees stuck up to form a writing-desk, and he always frowns fiercely the whole time.

Dan, like Peter, writes lying down flat, but with his back towards us; and he has a dismal habit of groaning aloud, writhing his whole body, and digging his toes into the grass, when he cannot turn a sentence to suit him.

Sara Ray is at his left. There is seldom anything to be said of Sara except to tell where she is. Like Tennyson's Maud, in one respect at least, Sara is splendidly null.

Well, there we sit and write in our dream books, and Uncle Roger passes by and accuses us of being up to dev — to very bad mischief.

Each of us was very anxious to possess the most exciting record; but we were an honourable little crew, and I do not think anything was ever written down in those dream books which had not really been dreamed. We had expected that the Story Girl would eclipse us all in the matter of dreams; but, at least in the beginning, her dreams were no more

remarkable than those of the rest of us. In dreamland we were all equal. Cecily, indeed, seemed to have the most decided talent for dramatic dreams. That meekest and mildest of girls was in the habit of dreaming truly terrible things. Almost every night battle, murder, or sudden death played some part in her visions. On the other hand, Dan, who was a somewhat truculent fellow, addicted to the perusal of lurid dime novels which he borrowed from the other boys in school, dreamed dreams of such a peaceful and pastoral character that he was quite disgusted with the resulting tame pages of his dream book.

But if the Story Girl could not dream anything more wonderful than the rest of us, she scored when it came to the telling. To hear her tell a dream was as good — or as bad — as dreaming it yourself.

As far as writing them down was concerned, I believe that I, Beverley King, carried off the palm. I was considered to possess a pretty knack of composition. But the Story Girl went me one better even there, because, having inherited something of her father's talent for drawing, she illustrated her dreams with sketches that certainly caught the spirit of them, whatever might be said of their technical excellence. She had an especial knack for drawing monstrosities; and I vividly recall the picture of an enormous and hideous lizard, looking like a reptile of the pterodactyl period, which she had dreamed of seeing crawl across the roof of the house. On another occasion she had a frightful dream — at least, it seemed frightful while she told us and described the dreadful feeling it had given her — of being chased around the parlour by the ottoman, which made faces at her. She drew a picture of the grimacing ottoman on the margin of her dream book which so scared Sara Ray when she beheld it that she cried all the way home, and insisted on sleeping that night with Judy Pineau lest the furniture take to pursuing her also.

Sara Ray's own dreams never amounted to much. She was always in trouble of some sort — couldn't get her hair braided, or her shoes on the right feet. Consequently, her dream book was very monotonous. The only thing worth mentioning in the way of dreams that Sara Ray ever achieved was when she dreamed that she went up in a balloon and fell out.

“I expected to come down with an awful thud,” she said shuddering, “but I lit as light as a feather and woke right up.”

“If you hadn’t woke up you’d have died,” said Peter with a dark significance. “If you dream of falling and DON’T wake you DO land with a thud and it kills you. That’s what happens to people who die in their sleep.”

“How do you know?” asked Dan skeptically. “Nobody who died in his sleep could ever tell it.”

“My Aunt Jane told me so,” said Peter.

“I suppose that settles it,” said Felicity disagreeably.

“You always say something nasty when I mention my Aunt Jane,” said Peter reproachfully.

“What did I say that was nasty?” cried Felicity. “I didn’t say a single thing.”

“Well, it sounded nasty,” said Peter, who knew that it is the tone that makes the music.

“What did your Aunt Jane look like?” asked Cecily sympathetically. “Was she pretty?”

“No,” conceded Peter reluctantly, “she wasn’t pretty — but she looked like the woman in that picture the Story Girl’s father sent her last week — the one with the shiny ring round her head and the baby in her lap. I’ve seen Aunt Jane look at me just like that woman looks at her baby. Ma never looks so. Poor ma is too busy washing. I wish I could dream of my Aunt Jane. I never do.”

“‘Dream of the dead, you’ll hear of the living,’” quoted Felix oracularly.

“I dreamed last night that I threw a lighted match into that keg of gunpowder in Mr. Cook’s store at Markdale,” said Peter. “It blew up — and everything blew up — and they fished me out of the mess — but I woke up before I’d time to find out if I was killed or not.”

“One is so apt to wake up just as things get interesting,” remarked the Story Girl discontentedly.

“I dreamed last night that I had really truly curly hair,” said Cecily mournfully. “And oh, I was so happy! It was dreadful to wake up and find it as straight as ever.”

Felix, that sober, solid fellow, dreamed constantly of flying through the air. His descriptions of his aerial flights over the treetops of dreamland always filled us with envy. None of the rest of us could ever compass such a dream, not even the Story Girl, who might have been expected to dream of flying if anybody did. Felix had a knack of dreaming anyhow, and his dream book, while suffering somewhat in comparison of literary style, was about the best of the lot when it came to subject matter. Cecily’s might be more dramatic, but Felix’s was more amusing. The dream which we all counted his masterpiece was the one in which a menagerie had camped in the orchard and the rhinoceros chased Aunt Janet around and around the Pulpit Stone, but turned into an inoffensive pig when it was on the point of catching her.

Felix had a sick spell soon after we began our dream books, and Aunt Janet essayed to cure him by administering a dose of liver pills which Elder Frewen had assured her were a cure-all for every disease the flesh is heir to. But Felix flatly refused to take liver pills; Mexican Tea he would drink, but liver pills he would not take, in spite of his own suffering and Aunt Janet’s commands and entreaties. I could not understand his antipathy to the insignificant little white pellets, which were so easy to swallow; but he explained the matter to us in the orchard when he had recovered his usual health and spirits.

“I was afraid to take the liver pills for fear they’d prevent me from dreaming,” he said. “Don’t you remember old Miss Baxter in Toronto, Bev? And how she told Mrs. McLaren that she was subject to terrible dreams, and finally she took two liver pills and never had any more dreams after that. I’d rather have died than risk it,” concluded Felix solemnly.

“I’d an exciting dream last night for once,” said Dan triumphantly. “I dreamt old Peg Bowen chased me. I thought I was up to her house and she took after me. You bet I scooted. And she caught me — yes, sir! I felt her

skinny hand reach out and clutch my shoulder. I let out a screech — and woke up.”

“I should think you did screech,” said Felicity. “We heard you clean over into our room.”

“I hate to dream of being chased because I can never run,” said Sara Ray with a shiver. “I just stand rooted to the ground — and see it coming — and can’t stir. It don’t sound much written out, but it’s awful to go through. I’m sure I hope I’ll never dream Peg Bowen chases me. I’ll die if I do.”

“I wonder what Peg Bowen would really do to a fellow if she caught him,” speculated Dan.

“Peg Bowen doesn’t need to catch you to do things to you,” said Peter ominously. “She can put ill-luck on you just by looking at you — and she will if you offend her.”

“I don’t believe that,” said the Story Girl airily.

“Don’t you? All right, then! Last summer she called at Lem Hill’s in Markdale, and he told her to clear out or he’d set the dog on her. Peg cleared out, and she went across his pasture, muttering to herself and throwing her arms round. And next day his very best cow took sick and died. How do you account for that?”

“It might have happened anyhow,” said the Story Girl — somewhat less assuredly, though.

“It might. But I’d just as soon Peg Bowen didn’t look at MY cows,” said Peter.

“As if you had any cows!” giggled Felicity.

“I’m going to have cows some day,” said Peter, flushing. “I don’t mean to be a hired boy all my life. I’ll have a farm of my own and cows and everything. You’ll see if I won’t.”

“I dreamed last night that we opened the blue chest,” said the Story Girl, “and all the things were there — the blue china candlestick — only it was brass in the dream — and the fruit basket with the apple on it, and the wedding dress, and the embroidered petticoat. And we were laughing, and trying the things on, and having such fun. And Rachel Ward herself came

and looked at us — so sad and reproachful — and we all felt ashamed, and I began to cry, and woke up crying.”

“I dreamed last night that Felix was thin,” said Peter, laughing. “He did look so queer. His clothes just hung loose, and he was going round trying to hold them on.”

Everybody thought this was funny, except Felix. He would not speak to Peter for two days because of it. Felicity also got into trouble because of her dreams. One night she woke up, having just had a very exciting dream; but she went to sleep again, and in the morning she could not remember the dream at all. Felicity determined she would never let another dream get away from her in such a fashion; and the next time she wakened in the night — having dreamed that she was dead and buried — she promptly arose, lighted a candle, and proceeded to write the dream down then and there. While so employed she contrived to upset the candle and set fire to her nightgown — a brand-new one, trimmed with any quantity of crocheted lace. A huge hole was burned in it, and when Aunt Janet discovered it she lifted up her voice with no uncertain sound. Felicity had never received a sharper scolding. But she took it very philosophically. She was used to her mother’s bitter tongue, and she was not unduly sensitive.

“Anyhow, I saved my dream,” she said placidly.

And that, of course, was all that really mattered. Grown people were so strangely oblivious to the truly important things of life. Material for new garments, of night or day, could be bought in any shop for a trifling sum and made up out of hand. But if a dream escape you, in what marketplace the wide world over can you hope to regain it? What coin of earthly minting will ever buy back for you that lost and lovely vision?

Such Stuff as Dreams Are Made On

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Peter took Dan and me aside one evening, as we were on our way to the orchard with our dream books, saying significantly that he wanted our advice. Accordingly, we went round to the spruce wood, where the girls would not see us to the rousing of their curiosity, and then Peter told us of his dilemma.

“Last night I dreamed I was in church,” he said. “I thought it was full of people, and I walked up the aisle to your pew and set down, as unconcerned as a pig on ice. And then I found that I hadn’t a stitch of clothes on — NOT ONE BLESSED STITCH. Now” — Peter dropped his voice—”what is bothering me is this — would it be proper to tell a dream like that before the girls?”

I was of the opinion that it would be rather questionable; but Dan vowed he didn’t see why. HE’D tell it quick as any other dream. There was nothing bad in it.

“But they’re your own relations,” said Peter. “They’re no relation to me, and that makes a difference. Besides, they’re all such ladylike girls. I guess I’d better not risk it. I’m pretty sure Aunt Jane wouldn’t think it was proper to tell such a dream. And I don’t want to offend Fel — any of them.”

So Peter never told that dream, nor did he write it down.

Instead, I remember seeing in his dream book, under the date of September fifteenth, an entry to this effect: —

“Last nite i dremed a drem. it wasent a polit drem so i won’t rite it down.”

The girls saw this entry but, to their credit be it told, they never tried to find out what the “drem” was. As Peter said, they were “ladies” in the best and truest sense of that much abused appellation. Full of fun and frolic and mischief they were, with all the defects of their qualities and all the

wayward faults of youth. But no indelicate thought or vulgar word could have been shaped or uttered in their presence. Had any of us boys ever been guilty of such, Cecily's pale face would have coloured with the blush of outraged purity, Felicity's golden head would have lifted itself in the haughty indignation of insulted womanhood, and the Story Girl's splendid eyes would have flashed with such anger and scorn as would have shrivelled the very soul of the wretched culprit.

Dan was once guilty of swearing. Uncle Alec whipped him for it — the only time he ever so punished any of his children. But it was because Cecily cried all night that Dan was filled with saving remorse and repentance. He vowed next day to Cecily that he would never swear again, and he kept his word.

All at once the Story Girl and Peter began to forge ahead in the matter of dreaming. Their dreams suddenly became so lurid and dreadful and picturesque that it was hard for the rest of us to believe that they were not painting the lily rather freely in their accounts of them. But the Story Girl was the soul of honour; and Peter, early in life, had had his feet set in the path of truthfulness by his Aunt Jane and had never been known to stray from it. When they assured us solemnly that their dreams all happened exactly as they described them we were compelled to believe them. But there was something up, we felt sure of that. Peter and the Story Girl certainly had a secret between them, which they kept for a whole fortnight. There was no finding it out from the Story Girl. She had a knack of keeping secrets, anyhow; and, moreover, all that fortnight she was strangely cranky and petulant, and we found it was not wise to tease her. She was not well, so Aunt Olivia told Aunt Janet.

"I don't know what is the matter with the child," said the former anxiously. "She hasn't seemed like herself the past two weeks. She complains of headache, and she has no appetite, and she is a dreadful colour. I'll have to see a doctor about her if she doesn't get better soon."

"Give her a good dose of Mexican Tea and try that first," said Aunt Janet. "I've saved many a doctor's bill in my family by using Mexican Tea."

The Mexican Tea was duly administered, but produced no improvement in the condition of the Story Girl, who, however, went on dreaming after a fashion which soon made her dream book a veritable curiosity of literature.

“If we can’t soon find out what makes Peter and the Story Girl dream like that, the rest of us might as well give up trying to write dream books,” said Felix discontentedly.

Finally, we did find out. Felicity wormed the secret out of Peter by the employment of Delilah wiles, such as have been the undoing of many a miserable male creature since Samson’s day. She first threatened that she would never speak to him again if he didn’t tell her; and then she promised him that, if he did, she would let him walk beside her to and from Sunday School all the rest of the summer, and carry her books for her. Peter was not proof against this double attack. He yielded and told the secret.

I expected the Story Girl would overwhelm him with scorn and indignation. But she took it very coolly.

“I knew Felicity would get it out of him sometime,” she said. “I think he has done well to hold out this long.”

Peter and the Story Girl, so it appeared, had wooed wild dreams to their pillows by the simple device of eating rich, indigestible things before they went to bed. Aunt Olivia knew nothing about it, of course. She permitted them only a plain, wholesome lunch at bedtime. But during the day the Story Girl would smuggle upstairs various tidbits from the pantry, putting half in Peter’s room and half in her own; and the result was these visions which had been our despair.

“Last night I ate a piece of mince pie,” she said, “and a lot of pickles, and two grape jelly tarts. But I guess I overdid it, because I got real sick and couldn’t sleep at all, so of course I didn’t have any dreams. I should have stopped with the pie and pickles and left the tarts alone. Peter did, and he had an elegant dream that Peg Bowen caught him and put him on to boil alive in that big black pot that hangs outside her door. He woke up before the water got hot, though. Well, Miss Felicity, you’re pretty smart.

But how will you like to walk to Sunday School with a boy who wears patched trousers?”

“I won’t have to,” said Felicity triumphantly. “Peter is having a new suit made. It’s to be ready by Saturday. I knew that before I promised.”

Having discovered how to produce exciting dreams, we all promptly followed the example of Peter and the Story Girl.

“There is no chance for me to have any horrid dreams,” lamented Sara Ray, “because ma won’t let me having anything at all to eat before I go to bed. I don’t think it’s fair.”

“Can’t you hide something away through the day as we do?”
asked
Felicity.

“No.” Sara shook her fawn-coloured head mournfully. “Ma always keeps the pantry locked, for fear Judy Pineau will treat her friends.”

For a week we ate unlawful lunches and dreamed dreams after our own hearts — and, I regret to say, bickered and squabbled incessantly throughout the daytime, for our digestions went out of order and our tempers followed suit. Even the Story Girl and I had a fight — something that had never happened before. Peter was the only one who kept his normal poise. Nothing could upset that boy’s stomach.

One night Cecily came into the pantry with a large cucumber, and proceeded to devour the greater part of it. The grownups were away that evening, attending a lecture at Markdale, so we ate our snacks openly, without any recourse to ways that were dark. I remember I supped that night off a solid hunk of fat pork, topped off with a slab of cold plum pudding.

“I thought you didn’t like cucumber, Cecily,” Dan remarked.

“Neither I do,” said Cecily with a grimace. “But Peter says they’re splendid for dreaming. He et one that night he had the dream about being caught by cannibals. I’d eat three cucumbers if I could have a dream like that.”

Cecily finished her cucumber, and then drank a glass of milk, just as we heard the wheels of Uncle Alec's buggy rambling over the bridge in the hollow. Felicity quickly restored pork and pudding to their own places, and by the time Aunt Janet came in we were all in our respective beds. Soon the house was dark and silent. I was just dropping into an uneasy slumber when I heard a commotion in the girls' room across the hall.

Their door opened and through our own open door I saw Felicity's white-clad figure flit down the stairs to Aunt Janet's room. From the room she had left came moans and cries.

"Cecily's sick," said Dan, springing out of bed. "That cucumber must have disagreed with her."

In a few minutes the whole house was astir. Cecily was sick — very, very sick, there was no doubt of that. She was even worse than Dan had been when he had eaten the bad berries. Uncle Alec, tired as he was from his hard day's work and evening outing, was despatched for the doctor. Aunt Janet and Felicity administered all the homely remedies they could think of, but to no effect. Felicity told Aunt Janet of the cucumber, but Aunt Janet did not think the cucumber alone could be responsible for Cecily's alarming condition.

"Cucumbers are indigestible, but I never knew of them making any one as sick as this," she said anxiously. "What made the child eat a cucumber before going to bed? I didn't think she liked them."

"It was that wretched Peter," sobbed Felicity indignantly. "He told her it would make her dream something extra."

"What on earth did she want to dream for?" demanded Aunt Janet in bewilderment.

"Oh, to have something worth while to write in her dream book, ma. We all have dream books, you know, and every one wants their own to be the most exciting — and we've been eating rich things to make us dream — and it does — but if Cecily — oh, I'll never forgive myself," said Felicity, incoherently, letting all kinds of cats out of the bag in her excitement and alarm.

“Well, I wonder what on earth you young ones will do next,”
said

Aunt Janet in the helpless tone of a woman who gives it up.

Cecily was no better when the doctor came. Like Aunt Janet, he declared that cucumbers alone would not have made her so ill; but when he found out that she had drunk a glass of milk also the mystery was solved.

“Why, milk and cucumbers together make a rank poison,” he said. “No wonder the child is sick. There — there now—” seeing the alarmed faces around him, “don’t be frightened. As old Mrs. Fraser says, ‘It’s no deidly.’ It won’t kill her, but she’ll probably be a pretty miserable girl for two or three days.”

She was. And we were all miserable in company. Aunt Janet investigated the whole affair and the matter of our dream books was aired in family conclave. I do not know which hurt our feelings most — the scolding we got from Aunt Janet, or the ridicule which the other grownups, especially Uncle Roger, showered on us. Peter received an extra “setting down,” which he considered rank injustice.

“I didn’t tell Cecily to drink the milk, and the cucumber alone wouldn’t have hurt her,” he grumbled. Cecily was able to be out with us again that day, so Peter felt that he might venture on a grumble. “‘Sides, she coaxed me to tell her what would be good for dreams. I just told her as a favour. And now your Aunt Janet blames me for the whole trouble.”

“And Aunt Janet says we are never to have anything to eat before we go to bed after this except plain bread and milk,” said Felix sadly.

“They’d like to stop us from dreaming altogether if they could,” said the Story Girl wrathfully.

“Well, anyway, they can’t prevent us from growing up,”
consoled
Dan.

“We needn’t worry about the bread and milk rule,” added Felicity. “Ma made a rule like that once before, and kept it for a week, and then we just

slipped back to the old way. That will be what will happen this time, too. But of course we won't be able to get any more rich things for supper, and our dreams will be pretty flat after this."

"Well, let's go down to the Pulpit Stone and I'll tell you a story I know," said the Story Girl.

We went — and straightway drank of the waters of forgetfulness. In a brief space we were laughing right merrily, no longer remembering our wrongs at the hands of those cruel grownups. Our laughter echoed back from the barns and the spruce grove, as if elfin denizens of upper air were sharing in our mirth.

Presently, also, the laughter of the grownups mingled with ours. Aunt Olivia and Uncle Roger, Aunt Janet and Uncle Alec, came strolling through the orchard and joined our circle, as they sometimes did when the toil of the day was over, and the magic time 'twixt light and dark brought truce of care and labour. 'Twas then we liked our grownups best, for then they seemed half children again. Uncle Roger and Uncle Alec lolled in the grass like boys; Aunt Olivia, looking more like a pansy than ever in the prettiest dress of pale purple print, with a knot of yellow ribbon at her throat, sat with her arm about Cecily and smiled on us all; and Aunt Janet's motherly face lost its everyday look of anxious care.

The Story Girl was in great fettle that night. Never had her tales sparkled with such wit and archness.

"Sara Stanley," said Aunt Olivia, shaking her finger at her after a sidesplitting yarn, "if you don't watch out you'll be famous some day."

"These funny stories are all right," said Uncle Roger, "but for real enjoyment give me something with a creep in it. Sara, tell us that story of the Serpent Woman I heard you tell one day last summer."

The Story Girl began it glibly. But before she had gone far with it, I, who was sitting beside her, felt an unaccountable repulsion creeping over me. For the first time since I had known her I wanted to draw away from the Story Girl. Looking around on the faces of the group, I saw that they all shared my feeling. Cecily had put her hands over her eyes. Peter was staring at the Story Girl with a fascinated, horror-stricken gaze. Aunt

Olivia was pale and troubled. All looked as if they were held prisoners in the bonds of a fearsome spell which they would gladly break but could not.

It was not our Story Girl who sat there, telling that weird tale in a sibilant, curdling voice. She had put on a new personality like a garment, and that personality was a venomous, evil, loathly thing. I would rather have died than have touched the slim, brown wrist on which she supported herself. The light in her narrowed orbs was the cold, merciless gleam of the serpent's eye. I felt frightened of this unholy creature who had suddenly come in our dear Story Girl's place.

When the tale ended there was a brief silence. Then Aunt Janet said severely, but with a sigh of relief,

"Little girls shouldn't tell such horrible stories."

This truly Aunt Janetian remark broke the spell. The grownups laughed, rather shakily, and the Story Girl — our own dear Story Girl once more, and no Serpent Woman — said protestingly,

"Well, Uncle Roger asked me to tell it. I don't like telling such stories either. They make me feel dreadful. Do you know, for just a little while, I felt exactly like a snake."

"You looked like one," said Uncle Roger. "How on earth do you do it?"

"I can't explain how I do it," said the Story Girl perplexedly.

"It just does itself."

Genius can never explain how it does it. It would not be genius if it could. And the Story Girl had genius.

As we left the orchard I walked along behind Uncle Roger and Aunt Olivia.

"That was an uncanny exhibition for a girl of fourteen, you know, Roger," said Aunt Olivia musingly. "What is in store for that child?"

"Fame," said Uncle Roger. "If she ever has a chance, that is, and I suppose her father will see to that. At least, I hope he will. You and I, Olivia, never had our chance. I hope Sara will have hers."

This was my first inkling of what I was to understand more fully in later years. Uncle Roger and Aunt Olivia had both cherished certain dreams and ambitions in youth, but circumstances had denied them their “chance” and those dreams had never been fulfilled.

“Some day, Olivia,” went on Uncle Roger, “you and I may find ourselves the aunt and uncle of the foremost actress of her day. If a girl of fourteen can make a couple of practical farmers and a pair of matter-of-fact housewives half believe for ten minutes that she really is a snake, what won’t she be able to do when she is thirty? Here, you,” added Uncle Roger, perceiving me, “cut along and get off to your bed. And mind you don’t eat cucumbers and milk before you go.”

The Bewitchment of Pat

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We were all in the doleful dumps — at least, all we “young fry” were, and even the grownups were sorry and condescended to take an interest in our troubles. Pat, our own, dear, frolicsome Paddy, was sick again — very, very sick.

On Friday he moped and refused his saucer of new milk at milking time. The next morning he stretched himself down on the platform by Uncle Roger’s back door, laid his head on his black paws, and refused to take any notice of anything or anybody. In vain we stroked and entreated and brought him tidbits. Only when the Story Girl caressed him did he give one plaintive little mew, as if to ask piteously why she could not do something for him. At that Cecily and Felicity and Sara Ray all began crying, and we boys felt choky. Indeed, I caught Peter behind Aunt Olivia’s dairy later in the day, and if ever a boy had been crying I vow that boy was Peter. Nor did he deny it when I taxed him with it, but he would not give in that he was crying about Paddy. Nonsense!

“What were you crying for, then?” I said.

“I’m crying because — because my Aunt Jane is dead,” said Peter defiantly.

“But your Aunt Jane died two years ago,” I said skeptically.

“Well, ain’t that all the more reason for crying?” retorted Peter. “I’ve had to do without her for two years, and that’s worse than if it had just been a few days.”

“I believe you were crying because Pat is so sick,” I said firmly.

“As if I’d cry about a cat!” scoffed Peter. And he marched off whistling.

Of course we had tried the lard and powder treatment again, smearing Pat’s paws and sides liberally. But to our dismay, Pat made no effort to lick it off.

“I tell you he’s a mighty sick cat,” said Peter darkly. “When a cat don’t care what he looks like he’s pretty far gone.”

“If we only knew what was the matter with him we might do something,” sobbed the Story Girl, stroking her poor pet’s unresponsive head.

“I could tell you what’s the matter with him, but you’d only laugh at me,” said Peter.

We all looked at him.

“Peter Craig, what do you mean?” asked Felicity.

“‘Zackly what I say.”

“Then, if you know what is the matter with Paddy, tell us,” commanded the Story Girl, standing up. She said it quietly; but Peter obeyed. I think he would have obeyed if she, in that tone and with those eyes, had ordered him to cast himself into the depths of the sea. I know I should.

“He’s BEWITCHED — that’s what’s the matter with him,” said Peter, half defiantly, half shamefacedly.

“Bewitched? Nonsense!”

“There now, what did I tell you?” complained Peter.

The Story Girl looked at Peter, at the rest of us, and then at poor Pat.

“How could he be bewitched?” she asked irresolutely, “and who could bewitch him?”

“I don’t know HOW he was bewitched,” said Peter. “I’d have to be a witch myself to know that. But Peg Bowen bewitched him.”

“Nonsense!” said the Story Girl again.

“All right,” said Peter. “You don’t have to believe me.”

“If Peg Bowen could bewitch anything — and I don’t believe she could — why should she bewitch Pat?” asked the Story Girl. “Everybody here and at Uncle Alec’s is always kind to her.”

“I’ll tell you why,” said Peter. “Thursday afternoon, when you fellows were all in school, Peg Bowen came here. Your Aunt Olivia gave her a lunch — a good one. You may laugh at the notion of Peg being a witch, but I notice your folks are always awful good to her when she comes, and awful careful never to offend her.”

“Aunt Olivia would be good to any poor creature, and so would mother,” said Felicity. “And of course nobody wants to offend Peg, because she is spiteful, and she once set fire to a man’s barn in Markdale when he offended her. But she isn’t a witch — that’s ridiculous.”

“All right. But wait till I tell you. When Peg Bowen was leaving Pat stretched out on the steps. She tramped on his tail. You know Pat doesn’t like to have his tail meddled with. He slewed himself round and clawed her bare foot. If you’d just seen the look she gave him you’d know whether she was a witch or not. And she went off down the lane, muttering and throwing her hands round, just like she did in Lem Hill’s cow pasture. She put a spell on Pat, that’s what she did. He was sick the next morning.”

We looked at each other in miserable, perplexed silence. We were only children — and we believed that there had been such things as witches once upon a time — and Peg Bowen WAS an eerie creature.

“If that’s so — though I can’t believe it — we can’t do anything,” said the Story Girl drearily. “Pat must die.”

Cecily began to weep afresh.

“I’d do anything to save Pat’s life,” she said. “I’d BELIEVE anything.”

“There’s nothing we can do,” said Felicity impatiently.

“I suppose,” sobbed Cecily, “we might go to Peg Bowen and ask her to forgive Pat and take the spell off him. She might, if we apologized real humble.”

At first we were appalled by the suggestion. We didn’t believe that Peg Bowen was a witch. But to go to her — to seek her out in that mysterious woodland retreat of hers which was invested with all the terrors of the unknown! And that this suggestion should come from timid Cecily, of all people! But then, there was poor Pat!

“Would it do any good?” said the Story Girl desperately. “Even if she did make Pat sick I suppose it would only make her crosser if we went and accused her of bewitching him. Besides, she didn’t do anything of the sort.”

But there was some uncertainty in the Story Girl’s voice.

“It wouldn’t do any harm to try,” said Cecily. “If she didn’t make him sick it won’t matter if she is cross.”

“It won’t matter to Pat, but it might to the one who goes to her,” said Felicity. “She isn’t a witch, but she’s a spiteful old woman, and goodness knows what she’d do to us if she caught us. I’m scared of Peg Bowen, and I don’t care who knows it. Ever since I can mind ma’s been saying, ‘If you’re not good Peg Bowen will catch you.’”

“If I thought she really made Pat sick and could make him better,

I’d try to pacify her somehow,” said the Story Girl decidedly.

“I’m frightened of her, too — but just look at poor, darling Paddy.”

We looked at Paddy who continued to stare fixedly before him with unwinking eyes. Uncle Roger came out and looked at him also, with what seemed to us positively brutal unconcern.

“I’m afraid it’s all up with Pat,” he said.

“Uncle Roger,” said Cecily imploringly, “Peter says Peg Bowen has bewitched Pat for scratching her. Do you think it can be so?”

“Did Pat scratch Peg?” asked Uncle Roger, with a horror-stricken face. “Dear me! Dear me! That mystery is solved. Poor Pat!”

Uncle Roger nodded his head, as if resigning himself and Pat to the worst.

“Do you really think Peg Bowen is a witch, Uncle Roger?” demanded the Story Girl incredulously.

“Do I think Peg Bowen is a witch? My dear Sara, what do YOU think of a woman who can turn herself into a black cat whenever she likes? Is she a witch? Or is she not? I leave it to you.”

“Can Peg Bowen turn herself into a black cat?” asked Felix, staring.

“It’s my belief that that is the least of Peg Bowen’s accomplishments,” answered Uncle Roger. “It’s the easiest thing in the world for a witch to turn herself into any animal you choose to mention. Yes, Pat is bewitched — no doubt of that — not the least in the world.”

“What are you telling those children such stuff for?” asked Aunt Olivia, passing on her way to the well.

“It’s an irresistible temptation,” answered Uncle Roger, strolling over to carry her pail.

“You can see your Uncle Roger believes Peg is a witch,” said Peter.

“And you can see Aunt Olivia doesn’t,” I said, “and I don’t either.”

“See here,” said the Story Girl resolutely, “I don’t believe it, but there MAY be something in it. Suppose there is. The question is, what can we do?”

“I’ll tell you what I’D do,” said Peter. “I’d take a present for Peg, and ask her to make Pat well. I wouldn’t let on I thought she’d made him sick. Then she couldn’t be offended — and maybe she’d take the spell off.”

“I think we’d better all give her something,” said Felicity. “I’m willing to do that. But who’s going to take the presents to her?”

“We must all go together,” said the Story Girl.

“I won’t,” cried Sara Ray in terror. “I wouldn’t go near Peg Bowen’s house for the world, no matter who was with me.”

“I’ve thought of a plan,” said the Story Girl. “Let’s all give her something, as Felicity says. And let us all go up to her place this evening, and if we see her outside we’ll just go quietly and set the things down before her with the letter, and say nothing but come respectfully away.”

“If she’ll let us,” said Dan significantly.

“Can Peg read a letter?” I asked.

“Oh, yes. Aunt Olivia says she is a good scholar. She went to school and was a smart girl until she became crazy. We’ll write it very plain.”

“What if we don’t see her?” asked Felicity.

“We’ll put the things on her doorstep then and leave them.”

“She may be miles away over the country by this time,” sighed Cecily, “and never find them until it’s too late for Pat. But it’s the only thing to

do. What can we give her?”

“We mustn’t offer her any money,” said the Story Girl. “She’s very indignant when any one does that. She says she isn’t a beggar. But she’ll take anything else. I shall give her my string of blue beads. She’s fond of finery.”

“I’ll give her that sponge cake I made this morning,” said Felicity. “I guess she doesn’t get sponge cake very often.”

“I’ve nothing but the rheumatism ring I got as a premium for selling needles last winter,” said Peter. “I’ll give her that. Even if she hasn’t got rheumatism it’s a real handsome ring. It looks like solid gold.”

“I’ll give her a roll of peppermint candy,” said Felix.

“I’ll give one of those little jars of cherry preserve I made,” said Cecily.

“I won’t go near her,” quavered Sara Ray, “but I want to do something for Pat, and I’ll send that piece of apple leaf lace I knit last week.”

I decided to give the redoubtable Peg some apples from my birthday tree, and Dan declared he would give her a plug of tobacco.

“Oh, won’t she be insulted?” exclaimed Felix, rather horrified.

“Naw,” grinned Dan. “Peg chews tobacco like a man. She’d rather have it than your rubbishy peppermints, I can tell you. I’ll run down to old Mrs. Sampson’s and get a plug.”

“Now, we must write the letter and take it and the presents to her right away, before it gets dark,” said the Story Girl.

We adjourned to the granary to indite the important document, which the Story Girl was to compose.

“How shall I begin it?” she asked in perplexity. “It would never do to say, ‘Dear Peg,’ and ‘Dear Miss Bowen’ sounds too ridiculous.”

“Besides, nobody knows whether she is Miss Bowen or not,” said Felicity. “She went to Boston when she grew up, and some say she was married there and her husband deserted her, and that’s why she went crazy. If she’s married, she won’t like being called Miss.”

“Well, how am I to address her?” asked the Story Girl in despair.

Peter again came to the rescue with a practical suggestion.

“Begin it, ‘Respected Madam,’” he said. “Ma has a letter a school trustee once writ to my Aunt Jane and that’s how it begins.”

“Respected Madam,” wrote the Story Girl. “We want to ask a very great favour of you and we hope you will kindly grant it if you can. Our favourite cat, Paddy, is very sick, and we are afraid he is going to die. Do you think you could cure him? And will you please try? We are all so fond of him, and he is such a good cat, and has no bad habits. Of course, if any of us tramps on his tail he will scratch us, but you know a cat can’t bear to have his tail tramped on. It’s a very tender part of him, and it’s his only way of preventing it, and he doesn’t mean any harm. If you can cure Paddy for us we will always be very, very grateful to you. The accompanying small offerings are a testimonial of our respect and gratitude, and we entreat you to honour us by accepting them.

”Very respectfully yours,

”SARA STANLEY.”

“I tell you that last sentence has a fine sound,” said Peter admiringly.

“I didn’t make that up,” admitted the Story Girl honestly. “I read it somewhere and remembered it.”

“I think it’s TOO fine,” criticized Felicity. “Peg Bowen won’t know the meaning of such big words.”

But it was decided to leave them in and we all signed the letter.

Then we got our “testimonials,” and started on our reluctant journey to the domains of the witch. Sara Ray would not go, of course, but she volunteered to stay with Pat while we were away. We did not think it necessary to inform the grownups of our errand, or its nature. Grownups had such peculiar views. They might forbid our going at all — and they would certainly laugh at us.

Peg Bowen’s house was nearly a mile away, even by the short cut past the swamp and up the wooded hill. We went down through the brook field and over the little plank bridge in the hollow, half lost in its surrounding sea of farewell summers. When we reached the green gloom of the woods

beyond we began to feel frightened, but nobody would admit it. We walked very closely together, and we did not talk. When you are near the retreat of witches and folk of that ilk the less you say the better, for their feelings are so notoriously touchy. Of course, Peg wasn't a witch, but it was best to be on the safe side.

Finally we came to the lane which led directly to her abode. We were all very pale now, and our hearts were beating. The red September sun hung low between the tall spruces to the west. It did not look to me just right for a sun. In fact, everything looked uncanny. I wished our errand were well over.

A sudden bend in the lane brought us out to the little clearing where Peg's house was before we were half ready to see it. In spite of my fear I looked at it with some curiosity. It was a small, shaky building with a sagging roof, set amid a perfect jungle of weeds. To our eyes, the odd thing about it was that there was no entrance on the ground floor, as there should be in any respectable house. The only door was in the upper story, and was reached by a flight of rickety steps. There was no sign of life about the place except — sight of ill omen — a large black cat, sitting on the topmost step. We thought of Uncle Roger's gruesome hints. Could that black cat be Peg? Nonsense! But still — it didn't look like an ordinary cat. It was so large — and had such green, malicious eyes! Plainly, there was something out of the common about the beastie!

In a tense, breathless silence the Story Girl placed our parcels on the lowest step, and laid her letter on the top of the pile. Her brown fingers trembled and her face was very pale.

Suddenly the door above us opened, and Peg Bowen herself appeared on the threshold. She was a tall, sinewy old woman, wearing a short, ragged, drugget skirt which reached scantily below her knees, a scarlet print blouse, and a man's hat. Her feet, arms, and neck were bare, and she had a battered old clay pipe in her mouth. Her brown face was seamed with a hundred wrinkles, and her tangled, grizzled hair fell unkemptly over her shoulders. She was scowling, and her flashing black eyes held no friendly light.

We had borne up bravely enough hitherto, in spite of our inward, unconfessed quakings. But now our strained nerves gave way, and sheer panic seized us. Peter gave a little yelp of pure terror. We turned and fled across the clearing and into the woods. Down the long hill we tore, like mad, hunted creatures, firmly convinced that Peg Bowen was after us. Wild was that scamper, as nightmare-like as any recorded in our dream books. The Story Girl was in front of me, and I can recall the tremendous leaps she made over fallen logs and little spruce bushes, with her long brown curls streaming out behind her from their scarlet fillet. Cecily, behind me, kept gasping out the contradictory sentences, “Oh, Bev, wait for me,” and “Oh, Bev, hurry, hurry!” More by blind instinct than anything else we kept together and found our way out of the woods. Presently we were in the field beyond the brook. Over us was a dainty sky of shell pink, placid cows were pasturing around us; the farewell summers nodded to us in the friendly breezes. We halted, with a glad realization that we were back in our own haunts and that Peg Bowen had not caught us.

“Oh, wasn’t that an awful experience?” gasped Cecily, shuddering.

“I wouldn’t go through it again — I couldn’t, not even for Pat.”

“It come on a fellow so sudden,” said Peter shamefacedly. “I think I could a-stood my ground if I’d known she was going to come out. But when she popped out like that I thought I was done for.”

“We shouldn’t have run,” said Felicity gloomily. “It showed we were afraid of her, and that always makes her awful cross. She won’t do a thing for Pat now.”

“I don’t believe she could do anything, anyway,” said the Story Girl. “I think we’ve just been a lot of geese.”

We were all, except Peter, more or less inclined to agree with her. And the conviction of our folly deepened when we reached the granary and found that Pat, watched over by the faithful Sara Ray, was no better. The Story

Girl announced that she would take him into the kitchen and sit up all night with him.

“He sha’n’t die alone, anyway,” she said miserably, gathering his limp body up in her arms.

We did not think Aunt Olivia would give her permission to stay up; but Aunt Olivia did. Aunt Olivia really was a duck. We wanted to stay with her also, but Aunt Janet wouldn’t hear of such a thing. She ordered us off to bed, saying that it was positively sinful in us to be so worked up over a cat. Five heartbroken children, who knew that there are many worse friends than dumb, furry folk, climbed Uncle Alec’s stairs to bed that night.

“There’s nothing we can do now, except pray God to make Pat better,” said Cecily.

I must candidly say that her tone savoured strongly of a last resort; but this was owing more to early training than to any lack of faith on Cecily’s part. She knew and we knew, that prayer was a solemn rite, not to be lightly held, nor degraded to common uses. Felicity voiced this conviction when she said,

“I don’t believe it would be right to pray about a cat.”

“I’d like to know why not,” retorted Cecily, “God made Paddy just as much as He made you, Felicity King, though perhaps He didn’t go to so much trouble. And I’m sure He’s abler to help him than Peg Bowen. Anyhow, I’m going to pray for Pat with all my might and main, and I’d like to see you try to stop me. Of course I won’t mix it up with more important things. I’ll just tack it on after I’ve finished asking the blessings, but before I say amen.”

More petitions than Cecily’s were offered up that night on behalf of Paddy. I distinctly heard Felix — who always said his prayers in a loud whisper, owing to some lasting conviction of early life that God could not hear him if he did not pray audibly — mutter pleadingly, after the “important” part of his devotions was over, “Oh, God, please make Pat better by the morning. PLEASE do.”

And I, even in these late years of irreverence for the dreams of youth, am not in the least ashamed to confess that when I knelt down to say my

boyish prayer, I thought of our little furry comrade in his extremity, and prayed as reverently as I knew how for his healing. Then I went to sleep, comforted by the simple hope that the Great Father would, after “important things” were all attended to, remember poor Pat.

As soon as we were up the next morning we rushed off to Uncle Roger’s. But we met Peter and the Story Girl in the lane, and their faces were as the faces of those who bring glad tidings upon the mountains.

“Pat’s better,” cried the Story Girl, blithe, triumphant. “Last night, just at twelve, he began to lick his paws. Then he licked himself all over and went to sleep, too, on the sofa. When I woke Pat was washing his face, and he has taken a whole saucerful of milk. Oh, isn’t it splendid?”

“You see Peg Bowen did put a spell on him,” said Peter, “and then she took it off.”

“I guess Cecily’s prayer had more to do with Pat’s getting better than Peg Bowen,” said Felicity. “She prayed for Pat over and over again. That is why he’s better.”

“Oh, all right,” said Peter, “but I’d advise Pat not to scratch Peg Bowen again, that’s all.”

“I wish I knew whether it was the praying or Peg Bowen that cured Pat,” said Felix in perplexity.

“I don’t believe it was either of them,” said Dan. “Pat just got sick and got better again of his own accord.”

“I’m going to believe that it was the praying,” said Cecily decidedly. “It’s so much nicer to believe that God cured Pat than that Peg Bowen did.”

“But you oughtn’t to believe a thing just ‘cause it would be more comfortable,” objected Peter. “Mind you, I ain’t saying God couldn’t cure Pat. But nothing and nobody can’t ever make me believe that Peg Bowen wasn’t at the bottom of it all.”

Thus faith, superstition, and incredulity strove together amongst us, as in all history.

Chapter XXV.

A Cup of Failure

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One warm Sunday evening in the moon of goldenrod, we all, grownups and children, were sitting in the orchard by the Pulpit Stone singing sweet old gospel hymns. We could all sing more or less, except poor Sara Ray, who had once despairingly confided to me that she didn't know what she'd ever do when she went to heaven, because she couldn't sing a note.

That whole scene comes out clearly for me in memory — the arc of primrose sky over the trees behind the old house, the fruit-laden boughs of the orchard, the bank of goldenrod, like a wave of sunshine, behind the Pulpit Stone, the nameless colour seen on a fir wood in a ruddy sunset. I can see Uncle Alec's tired, brilliant, blue eyes, Aunt Janet's wholesome, matronly face, Uncle Roger's sweeping blond beard and red cheeks, and Aunt Olivia's full-blown beauty. Two voices ring out for me above all others in the music that echoes through the halls of recollection. Cecily's sweet and silvery, and Uncle Alec's fine tenor. "If you're a King, you sing," was a Carlisle proverb in those days. Aunt Julia had been the flower of the flock in that respect and had become a noted concert singer. The world had never heard of the rest. Their music echoed only along the hidden ways of life, and served but to lighten the cares of the trivial round and common task.

That evening, after they tired of singing, our grownups began talking of their youthful days and doings.

This was always a keen delight to us small fry. We listened avidly to the tales of our uncles and aunts in the days when they, too — hard fact to realize — had been children. Good and proper as they were now, once, so it seemed, they had gotten into mischief and even had their quarrels and disagreements. On this particular evening Uncle Roger told many stories of Uncle Edward, and one in which the said Edward had preached sermons

at the mature age of ten from the Pulpit Stone fired, as the sequel will show, the Story Girl's imagination.

"Can't I just see him at it now," said Uncle Roger, "leaning over that old boulder, his cheeks red and his eyes burning with excitement, banging the top of it as he had seen the ministers do in church. It wasn't cushioned, however, and he always bruised his hands in his self-forgetful earnestness. We thought him a regular wonder. We loved to hear him preach, but we didn't like to hear him pray, because he always insisted on praying for each of us by name, and it made us feel wretchedly uncomfortable, somehow. Alec, do you remember how furious Julia was because Edward prayed one day that she might be preserved from vanity and conceit over her singing?"

"I should think I do," laughed Uncle Alec. "She was sitting right there where Cecily is now, and she got up at once and marched right out of the orchard, but at the gate she turned to call back indignantly, 'I guess you'd better wait till you've prayed the conceit out of yourself before you begin on me, Ned King. I never heard such stuck-up sermons as you preach.' Ned went on praying and never let on he heard her, but at the end of his prayer he wound up with 'Oh, God, I pray you to keep an eye on us all, but I pray you to pay particular attention to my sister Julia, for I think she needs it even more than the rest of us, world without end, Amen.'"

Our uncles roared with laughter over the recollection. We all laughed, indeed, especially over another tale in which Uncle Edward, leaning too far over the "pulpit" in his earnestness, lost his balance altogether and tumbled ingloriously into the grass below.

"He lit on a big Scotch thistle," said Uncle Roger, chuckling, "and besides that, he skinned his forehead on a stone. But he was determined to finish his sermon, and finish it he did. He climbed back into the pulpit, with the tears rolling over his cheeks, and preached for ten minutes longer, with sobs in his voice and drops of blood on his forehead. He was a plucky little beggar. No wonder he succeeded in life."

"And his sermons and prayers were always just about as outspoken as those Julia objected to," said Uncle Alec. "Well, we're all getting on in life

and Edward is gray; but when I think of him I always see him a little, rosy, curly-headed chap, laying down the law to us from the Pulpit Stone. It seems like the other day that we were all here together, just as these children are, and now we are scattered everywhere. Julia in California, Edward in Halifax, Alan in South America, Felix and Felicity and Stephen gone to the land that is very far off.”

There was a little space of silence; and then Uncle Alec began, in a low, impressive voice, to repeat the wonderful verses of the ninetieth Psalm — verses which were thenceforth bound up for us with the beauty of that night and the memories of our kindred. Very reverently we all listened to the majestic words.

“Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God.... For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.... For all our days are passed away in thy wrath; we spend our years as a tale that is told. The days of our years are threescore and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years yet is their strength, labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off and we fly away.... So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.... Oh, satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.... And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us; and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.”

The dusk crept into the orchard like a dim, bewitching personality. You could see her — feel her — hear her. She tiptoed softly from tree to tree, ever drawing nearer. Presently her filmy wings hovered over us and through them gleamed the early stars of the autumn night.

The grownups rose reluctantly and strolled away; but we children lingered for a moment to talk over an idea the Story Girl broached — a good idea, we thought enthusiastically, and one that promised to add considerable spice to life.

We were on the lookout for some new amusement. Dream books had begun to pall. We no longer wrote in them very regularly, and our dreams

were not what they used to be before the mischance of the cucumber. So the Story Girl's suggestion came pat to the psychological moment.

'I've thought of a splendid plan,' she said. 'It just flashed into my mind when the uncles were talking about Uncle Edward. And the beauty of it is we can play it on Sundays, and you know there are so few things it is proper to play on Sundays. But this is a Christian game, so it will be all right.'

'It isn't like the religious fruit basket game, is it?' asked Cecily anxiously.

We had good reason to hope that it wasn't. One desperate Sunday afternoon, when we had nothing to read and the time seemed endless, Felix had suggested that we have a game of fruit-basket; only instead of taking the names of fruits, we were to take the names of Bible characters. This, he argued, would make it quite lawful and proper to play on Sunday. We, too desirous of being convinced, also thought so; and for a merry hour Lazarus and Martha and Moses and Aaron and sundry other worthies of Holy Writ had a lively time of it in the King orchard. Peter having a Scriptural name of his own, did not want to take another; but we would not allow this, because it would give him an unfair advantage over the rest of us. It would be so much easier to call out your own name than fit your tongue to an unfamiliar one. So Peter retaliated by choosing Nebuchadnezzar, which no one could ever utter three times before Peter shrieked it out once.

In the midst of our hilarity, however, Uncle Alec and Aunt Janet came down upon us. It is best to draw a veil over what followed. Suffice it to say that the recollection gave point to Cecily's question.

'No, it isn't that sort of game at all,' said the Story Girl. 'It is this; each of you boys must preach a sermon, as Uncle Edward used to do. One of you next Sunday, and another the next, and so on. And whoever preaches the best sermon is to get a prize.'

Dan promptly declared he wouldn't try to preach a sermon; but Peter, Felix and I thought the suggestion a very good one. Secretly, I believed I could cut quite a fine figure preaching a sermon.

"Who'll give the prize?" asked Felix.

"I will," said the Story Girl. "I'll give that picture father sent me last week."

As the said picture was an excellent copy of one of Landseer's stags, Felix and I were well pleased; but Peter averred that he would rather have the Madonna that looked like his Aunt Jane, and the Story Girl agreed that if his sermon was the best she would give him that.

"But who's to be the judge?" I said, "and what kind of a sermon would you call the best?"

"The one that makes the most impression," answered the Story Girl promptly. "And we girls must be the judges, because there's nobody else. Now, who is to preach next Sunday?"

It was decided that I should lead off, and I lay awake for an extra hour that night thinking what text I should take for the following Sunday. The next day I bought two sheets of foolscap from the schoolmaster, and after tea I betook myself to the granary, barred the door, and fell to writing my sermon. I did not find it as easy a task as I had anticipated; but I pegged grimly away at it, and by dint of severe labour for two evenings I eventually got my four pages of foolscap filled, although I had to pad the subject-matter not a little with verses of quotable hymns. I had decided to preach on missions, as being a topic more within my grasp than abstruse theological doctrines or evangelical discourses; and, mindful of the need of making an impression, I drew a harrowing picture of the miserable plight of the heathen who in their darkness bowed down to wood and stone. Then I urged our responsibility concerning them, and meant to wind up by reciting, in a very solemn and earnest voice, the verse beginning, "Can we whose souls are lighted." When I had completed my sermon I went over it very carefully again and wrote with red ink — Cecily made it

for me out of an aniline dye — the word “thump” wherever I deemed it advisable to chastise the pulpit.

I have that sermon still, all its red thumps unfaded, lying beside my dream book; but I am not going to inflict it on my readers. I am not so proud of it as I once was. I was really puffed up with earthly vanity over it at that time. Felix, I thought, would be hard put to it to beat it. As for Peter, I did not consider him a rival to be feared. It was unsupposable that a hired boy, with little education and less experience of churchgoing, should be able to preach better than could I, in whose family there was a real minister.

The sermon written, the next thing was to learn it off by heart and then practise it, thumps included, until I was letter and gesture perfect. I preached it over several times in the granary with only Paddy, sitting immovably on a puncheon, for audience. Paddy stood the test fairly well. At least, he made an adorable listener, save at such times as imaginary rats distracted his attention.

Mr. Marwood had at least three absorbed listeners the next Sunday morning. Felix, Peter and I were all among the chieles who were taking mental notes on the art of preaching a sermon. Not a motion, or glance, or intonation escaped us. To be sure, none of us could remember the text when we got home; but we knew just how you should throw back your head and clutch the edge of the pulpit with both hands when you announced it.

In the afternoon we all repaired to the orchard, Bibles and hymn books in hand. We did not think it necessary to inform the grownups of what was in the wind. You could never tell what kink a grownup would take. They might not think it proper to play any sort of a game on Sunday, not even a Christian game. Least said was soonest mended where grownups were concerned.

I mounted the pulpit steps, feeling rather nervous, and my audience sat gravely down on the grass before me. Our opening exercises consisted solely of singing and reading. We had agreed to omit prayer. Neither Felix, Peter nor I felt equal to praying in public. But we took up a collection. The

proceeds were to go to missions. Dan passed the plate — Felicity's rosebud plate — looking as preternaturally solemn as Elder Frewen himself. Every one put a cent on it.

Well, I preached my sermon. And it fell horribly flat. I realized that, before I was half way through it. I think I preached it very well; and never a thump did I forget or misplace. But my audience was plainly bored. When I stepped down from the pulpit, after demanding passionately if we whose souls were lighted and so forth, I felt with secret humiliation that my sermon was a failure. It had made no impression at all. Felix would be sure to get the prize.

"That was a very good sermon for a first attempt," said the Story Girl graciously. "It sounded just like real sermons I have heard."

For a moment the charm of her voice made me feel that I had not done so badly after all; but the other girls, thinking it their duty to pay me some sort of a compliment also, quickly dispelled that pleasing delusion.

"Every word of it was true," said Cecily, her tone unconsciously implying that this was its sole merit.

"I often feel," said Felicity primly, "that we don't think enough about the heathens. We ought to think a great deal more."

Sara Ray put the finishing touch to my mortification.

"It was so nice and short," she said.

"What was the matter with my sermon?" I asked Dan that night. Since he was neither judge nor competitor I could discuss the matter with him.

"It was too much like a reg'lar sermon to be interesting," said Dan frankly.

"I should think the more like a regular sermon it was, the better," I said.

"Not if you want to make an impression," said Dan seriously.

"You must have something sort of different for that. Peter, now, HE'LL have something different."

"Oh, Peter! I don't believe he can preach a sermon," I said.

“Maybe not, but you’ll see he’ll make an impression,” said Dan.

Dan was neither the prophet nor the son of a prophet, but he had the second sight for once; Peter DID make an impression.

Peter Makes an Impression

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Peter's turn came next. He did not write his sermon out. That, he averred, was too hard work. Nor did he mean to take a text.

"Why, who ever heard of a sermon without a text?" asked Felix blankly.

"I am going to take a SUBJECT instead of a text," said Peter loftily. "I ain't going to tie myself down to a text. And I'm going to have heads in it — three heads. You hadn't a single head in yours," he added to me.

"Uncle Alec says that Uncle Edward says that heads are beginning to go out of fashion," I said defiantly — all the more defiantly that I felt I should have had heads in my sermon. It would doubtless have made a much deeper impression. But the truth was I had forgotten all about such things.

"Well, I'm going to have them, and I don't care if they are unfashionable," said Peter. "They're good things. Aunt Jane used to say if a man didn't have heads and stick to them he'd go wandering all over the Bible and never get anywhere in particular."

"What are you going to preach on?" asked Felix.

"You'll find out next Sunday," said Peter significantly.

The next Sunday was in October, and a lovely day it was, warm and bland as June. There was something in the fine, elusive air, that recalled beautiful, forgotten things and suggested delicate future hopes. The woods had wrapped fine-woven gossamers about them and the westering hill was crimson and gold.

We sat around the Pulpit Stone and waited for Peter and Sara Ray. It was the former's Sunday off and he had gone home the night before, but he assured us he would be back in time to preach his sermon. Presently he arrived and mounted the granite boulder as if to the manor born. He was dressed in his new suit and I, perceiving this, felt that he had the advantage

of me. When I preached I had to wear my second best suit, for it was one of Aunt Janet's laws that we should take our good suits off when we came home from church. There were, I saw, compensations for being a hired boy.

Peter made quite a handsome little minister, in his navy blue coat, white collar, and neatly bowed tie. His black eyes shone, and his black curls were brushed up in quite a ministerial pompadour, but threatened to tumble over at the top in graceless ringlets.

It was decided that there was no use in waiting for Sara Ray, who might or might not come, according to the humour in which her mother was. Therefore Peter proceeded with the service.

He read the chapter and gave out the hymn with as much SANG FROID as if he had been doing it all his life. Mr. Marwood himself could not have bettered the way in which Peter said,

“We will sing the whole hymn, omitting the fourth stanza.”

That was a fine touch which I had not thought of. I began to think that, after all, Peter might be a foeman worthy of my steel.

When Peter was ready to begin he thrust his hands into his pockets — a totally unorthodox thing. Then he plunged in without further ado, speaking in his ordinary conversational tone — another unorthodox thing. There was no shorthand reporter present to take that sermon down; but, if necessary, I could preach it over verbatim, and so, I doubt not, could everyone that heard it. It was not a forgettable kind of sermon.

“Dearly beloved,” said Peter, “my sermon is about the bad place — in short, about hell.”

An electric shock seemed to run through the audience. Everybody looked suddenly alert. Peter had, in one sentence, done what my whole sermon had failed to do. He had made an impression.

“I shall divide my sermon into three heads,” pursued Peter. “The first head is, what you must not do if you don't want to go to the bad place. The second head is, what the bad place is like” — sensation in the audience — “and the third head is, how to escape going there.

“Now, there’s a great many things you must not do, and it’s very important to know what they are. You ought not to lose no time in finding out. In the first place you mustn’t ever forget to mind what grownup people tell you — that is, GOOD grownup people.”

“But how are you going to tell who are the good grownup people?” asked Felix suddenly, forgetting that he was in church.

“Oh, that is easy,” said Peter. “You can always just FEEL who is good and who isn’t. And you mustn’t tell lies and you mustn’t murder any one. You must be specially careful not to murder any one. You might be forgiven for telling lies, if you was real sorry for them, but if you murdered any one it would be pretty hard to get forgiven, so you’d better be on the safe side. And you mustn’t commit suicide, because if you did that you wouldn’t have any chance of repenting it; and you mustn’t forget to say your prayers and you mustn’t quarrel with your sister.”

At this point Felicity gave Dan a significant poke with her elbow, and Dan was up in arms at once.

“Don’t you be preaching at me, Peter Craig,” he cried out. “I won’t stand it. I don’t quarrel with my sister any oftener than she quarrels with me. You can just leave me alone.”

“Who’s touching you?” demanded Peter. “I didn’t mention no names. A minister can say anything he likes in the pulpit, as long as he doesn’t mention any names, and nobody can answer back.”

“All right, but just you wait till tomorrow,” growled Dan, subsiding reluctantly into silence under the reproachful looks of the girls.

“You must not play any games on Sunday,” went on Peter, “that is, any weekday games — or whisper in church, or laugh in church — I did that once but I was awful sorry — and you mustn’t take any notice of Paddy — I mean of the family cat at family prayers, not even if he climbs up on your back. And you mustn’t call names or make faces.”

“Amen,” cried Felix, who had suffered many things because Felicity so often made faces at him.

Peter stopped and glared at him over the edge of the Pulpit Stone.

“You haven’t any business to call out a thing like that right in the middle of a sermon,” he said.

“They do it in the Methodist church at Markdale,” protested Felix, somewhat abashed. “I heard them.”

“I know they do. That’s the Methodist way and it is all right for them. I haven’t a word to say against Methodists. My Aunt Jane was one, and I might have been one myself if I hadn’t been so scared of the Judgment Day. But you ain’t a Methodist. You’re a Presbyterian, ain’t you?”

“Yes, of course. I was born that way.”

“Very well then, you’ve got to do things the Presbyterian way. Don’t let me hear any more of your amens or I’ll amen you.”

“Oh, don’t anybody interrupt again,” implored the Story Girl. “It isn’t fair. How can any one preach a good sermon if he is always being interrupted? Nobody interrupted Beverley.”

“Bev didn’t get up there and pitch into us like that,” muttered Dan.

“You mustn’t fight,” resumed Peter undauntedly. “That is, you mustn’t fight for the fun of fighting, nor out of bad temper. You must not say bad words or swear. You mustn’t get drunk — although of course you wouldn’t be likely to do that before you grow up, and the girls never. There’s prob’ly a good many other things you mustn’t do, but these I’ve named are the most important. Of course, I’m not saying you’ll go to the bad place for sure if you do them. I only say you’re running a risk. The devil is looking out for the people who do these things and he’ll be more likely to get after them than to waste time over the people who don’t do them. And that’s all about the first head of my sermon.”

At this point Sara Ray arrived, somewhat out of breath. Peter looked at her reproachfully.

“You’ve missed my whole first head, Sara,” he said. “that isn’t fair, when you’re to be one of the judges. I think I ought to preach it over again for you.”

“That was really done once. I know a story about it,” said the Story Girl.

“Who’s interrupting now?” aid Dan slyly.

“Never mind, tell us the story,” said the preacher himself, eagerly leaning over the pulpit.

“It was Mr. Scott who did it,” said the Story Girl. “He was preaching somewhere in Nova Scotia, and when he was more than half way through his sermon — and you know sermons were VERY long in those days — a man walked in. Mr. Scott stopped until he had taken his seat. Then he said, ‘My friend, you are very late for this service. I hope you won’t be late for heaven. The congregation will excuse me if I recapitulate the sermon for our friend’s benefit.’ And then he just preached the sermon over again from the beginning. It is said that that particular man was never known to be late for church again.”

“It served him right,” said Dan, “but it was pretty hard lines on the rest of the congregation.”

“Now, let’s be quiet so Peter can go on with his sermon,” said Cecily.

Peter squared his shoulders and took hold of the edge of the pulpit. Never a thump had he thumped, but I realized that his way of leaning forward and fixing this one or that one of his hearers with his eye was much more effective.

“I’ve come now to the second head of my sermon — what the bad place is like.”

He proceeded to describe the bad place. Later on we discovered that he had found his material in an illustrated translation of Dante's *Inferno* which had once been given to his Aunt Jane as a school prize. But at the time we supposed he must be drawing from Biblical sources. Peter had been reading the Bible steadily ever since what we always referred to as "the Judgment Sunday," and he was by now almost through it. None of the rest of us had ever read the Bible completely through, and we thought Peter must have found his description of the world of the lost in some portion with which we were not acquainted. Therefore, his utterances carried all the weight of inspiration, and we sat appalled before his lurid phrases. He used his own words to clothe the ideas he had found, and the result was a force and simplicity that struck home to our imaginations.

Suddenly Sara Ray sprang to her feet with a scream — a scream that changed into strange laughter. We all, preacher included, looked at her aghast. Cecily and Felicity sprang up and caught hold of her. Sara Ray was really in a bad fit of hysterics, but we knew nothing of such a thing in our experience, and we thought she had gone mad. She shrieked, cried, laughed, and flung herself about.

"She's gone clean crazy," said Peter, coming down out of his pulpit with a very pale face.

"You've frightened her crazy with your dreadful sermon," said Felicity indignantly.

She and Cecily each took Sara by an arm and, half leading, half carrying, got her out of the orchard and up to the house. The rest of us looked at each other in terrified questioning.

"You've made rather too much of an impression, Peter," said the Story Girl miserably.

"She needn't have got so scared. If she'd only waited for the third head I'd have showed her how easy it was to get clear of going to the bad place and

go to heaven instead. But you girls are always in such a hurry,” said Peter bitterly.

“Do you s’pose they’ll have to take her to the asylum?” said Dan in a whisper.

“Hush, here’s your father,” said Felix.

Uncle Alec came striding down the orchard. We had never before seen Uncle Alec angry. But there was no doubt that he was very angry. His blue eyes fairly blazed at us as he said,

“What have you been doing to frighten Sara Ray into such a condition?”

“We — we were just having a sermon contest,” explained the Story Girl tremulously. “And Peter preached about the bad place, and it frightened Sara. That is all, Uncle Alec.”

“All! I don’t know what the result will be to that nervous delicate child. She is shrieking in there and nothing will quiet her. What do you mean by playing such a game on Sunday, and making a jest of sacred things? No, not a word—” for the Story Girl had attempted to speak. “You and Peter march off home. And the next time I find you up to such doings on Sunday or any other day I’ll give you cause to remember it to your latest hour.”

The Story Girl and Peter went humbly home and we went with them.

“I CAN’T understand grownup people,” said Felix despairingly. “When Uncle Edward preached sermons it was all right, but when we do it it is ‘making a jest of sacred things.’ And I heard Uncle Alec tell a story once about being nearly frightened to death when he was a little boy, by a minister preaching on the end of the world; and he said, ‘That was something like a sermon. You don’t hear such sermons nowadays.’ But when Peter preaches just such a sermon, it’s a very different story.”

“It’s no wonder we can’t understand the grownups,” said the Story Girl indignantly, “because we’ve never been grownup ourselves. But THEY have been children, and I don’t see why they can’t understand us. Of course, perhaps we shouldn’t have had the contest on Sundays. But all the

same I think it's mean of Uncle Alec to be so cross. Oh, I do hope poor Sara won't have to be taken to the asylum."

Poor Sara did not have to be. She was eventually quieted down, and was as well as usual the next day; and she humbly begged Peter's pardon for spoiling his sermon. Peter granted it rather grumpily, and I fear that he never really quite forgave Sara for her untimely outburst. Felix, too, felt resentment against her, because he had lost the chance of preaching his sermon.

"Of course I know I wouldn't have got the prize, for I couldn't have made such an impression as Peter," he said to us mournfully, "but I'd like to have had a chance to show what I could do. That's what comes of having those crybaby girls mixed up in things. Cecily was just as scared as Sara Ray, but she'd more sense than to show it like that."

"Well, Sara couldn't help it," said the Story Girl charitably, "but it does seem as if we'd had dreadful luck in everything we've tried lately. I thought of a new game this morning, but I'm almost afraid to mention it, for I suppose something dreadful will come of it, too."

"Oh, tell us, what is it?" everybody entreated.

"Well, it's a trial by ordeal, and we're to see which of us can pass it. The ordeal is to eat one of the bitter apples in big mouthfuls without making a single face."

Dan made a face to begin with.

"I don't believe any of us can do that," he said.

"YOU can't, if you take bites big enough to fill your mouth," giggled Felicity, with cruelty and without provocation.

"Well, maybe you could," retorted Dan sarcastically. "You'd be so afraid of spoiling your looks that you'd rather die than make a face, I s'pose, no matter what you et."

"Felicity makes enough faces when there's nothing to make faces at," said Felix, who had been grimaced at over the breakfast table that morning and hadn't liked it.

“I think the bitter apples would be real good for Felix,” said Felicity. “They say sour things make people thin.”

“Let’s go and get the bitter apples,” said Cecily hastily, seeing that Felix, Felicity and Dan were on the verge of a quarrel more bitter than the apples.

We went to the seedling tree and got an apple apiece. The game was that every one must take a bite in turn, chew it up, and swallow it, without making a face. Peter again distinguished himself. He, and he alone, passed the ordeal, munching those dreadful mouthfuls without so much as a change of expression on his countenance, while the facial contortions the rest of us went through baffled description. In every subsequent trial it was the same. Peter never made a face, and no one else could help making them. It sent him up fifty per cent in Felicity’s estimation.

“Peter is a real smart boy,” she said to me. “It’s such a pity he is a hired boy.”

But, if we could not pass the ordeal, we got any amount of fun out of it, at least. Evening after evening the orchard reechoed to our peals of laughter.

“Bless the children,” said Uncle Alec, as he carried the milk pails across the yard. “Nothing can quench their spirits for long.”

The Ordeal of Bitter Apples

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I could never understand why Felix took Peter's success in the Ordeal of Bitter Apples so much to heart. He had not felt very keenly over the matter of the sermons, and certainly the mere fact that Peter could eat sour apples without making faces did not cast any reflection on the honour or ability of the other competitors. But to Felix everything suddenly became flat, stale, and unprofitable, because Peter continued to hold the championship of bitter apples. It haunted his waking hours and obsessed his nights. I heard him talking in his sleep about it. If anything could have made him thin the way he worried over this matter would have done it.

For myself, I cared not a groat. I had wished to be successful in the sermon contest, and felt sore whenever I thought of my failure. But I had no burning desire to eat sour apples without grimacing, and I did not sympathize over and above with my brother. When, however, he took to praying about it, I realized how deeply he felt on the subject, and hoped he would be successful.

Felix prayed earnestly that he might be enabled to eat a bitter apple without making a face. And when he had prayed three nights after this manner, he contrived to eat a bitter apple without a grimace until he came to the last bite, which proved too much for him. But Felix was vastly encouraged.

"Another prayer or two, and I'll be able to eat a whole one," he said jubilantly.

But this devoutly desired consummation did not come to pass. In spite of prayers and heroic attempts, Felix could never get beyond that last bite. Not even faith and works in combination could avail. For a time he could not understand this. But he thought the mystery was solved when Cecily came to him one day and told him that Peter was praying against him.

“He’s praying that you’ll never be able to eat a bitter apple without making a face,” she said. “He told Felicity and Felicity told me. She said she thought it was real cute of him. I think that is a dreadful way to talk about praying and I told her so. She wanted me to promise not to tell you, but I wouldn’t promise, because I think it’s fair for you to know what is going on.”

Felix was very indignant — and aggrieved as well.

“I don’t see why God should answer Peter’s prayers instead of mine,” he said bitterly. “I’ve gone to church and Sunday School all my life, and Peter never went till this summer. It isn’t fair.”

“Oh, Felix, don’t talk like that,” said Cecily, shocked. “God MUST be fair. I’ll tell you what I believe is the reason. Peter prays three times a day regular — in the morning and at dinner time and at night — and besides that, any time through the day when he happens to think of it, he just prays, standing up. Did you ever hear of such goings-on?”

“Well, he’s got to stop praying against me, anyhow,” said Felix resolutely. “I won’t put up with it, and I’ll go and tell him so right off.”

Felix marched over to Uncle Roger’s, and we trailed after, scenting a scene. We found Peter shelling beans in the granary, and whistling cheerily, as with a conscience void of offence towards all men.

“Look here, Peter,” said Felix ominously, “they tell me that you’ve been praying right along that I couldn’t eat a bitter apple. Now, I tell you —”

“I never did!” exclaimed Peter indignantly. “I never mentioned your name. I never prayed that you couldn’t eat a bitter apple. I just prayed that I’d be the only one that could.”

“Well, that’s the same thing,” cried Felix. “You’ve just been praying for the opposite to me out of spite. And you’ve got to stop it, Peter Craig.”

“Well, I just guess I won’t,” said Peter angrily. “I’ve just as good a right to pray for what I want as you, Felix King, even if you was brought up in Toronto. I s’pose you think a hired boy hasn’t any business to pray for particular things, but I’ll show you. I’ll just pray for what I please, and I’d like to see you try and stop me.”

“You’ll have to fight me, if you keep on praying against me,” said Felix.

The girls gasped; but Dan and I were jubilant, snuffing battle afar off.

“All right. I can fight as well as pray.”

“Oh, don’t fight,” implored Cecily. “I think it would be dreadful. Surely you can arrange it some other way. Let’s all give up the Ordeal, anyway. There isn’t much fun in it. And then neither of you need pray about it.”

“I don’t want to give up the Ordeal,” said Felix, “and I won’t.”

“Oh, well, surely you can settle it some way without fighting,” persisted Cecily.

“I’m not wanting to fight,” said Peter. “It’s Felix. If he don’t interfere with my prayers there’s no need of fighting. But if he does there’s no other way to settle it.”

“But how will that settle it?” asked Cecily.

“Oh, whoever’s licked will have to give in about the praying,” said Peter. “That’s fair enough. If I’m licked I won’t pray for that particular thing any more.”

“It’s dreadful to fight about anything so religious as praying,” sighed poor Cecily.

“Why, they were always fighting about religion in old times,” said Felix. “The more religious anything was the more fighting there was about it.”

“A fellow’s got a right to pray as he pleases,” said Peter, “and if anybody tries to stop him he’s bound to fight. That’s my way of looking at it.”

“What would Miss Marwood say if she knew you were going to fight?” asked Felicity.

Miss Marwood was Felix’ Sunday School teacher and he was very fond of her. But by this time Felix was quite reckless.

“I don’t care what she would say,” he retorted.

Felicity tried another tack.

“You’ll be sure to get whipped if you fight with Peter,” she said.
“You’re too fat to fight.”

After that, no moral force on earth could have prevented Felix from fighting. He would have faced an army with banners.

“You might settle it by drawing lots,” said Cecily desperately.

“Drawing lots is wickeder than fighting,” said Dan. “It’s a kind of gambling.”

“What would Aunt Jane say if she knew you were going to fight?”

Cecily demanded of Peter.

“Don’t you drag my Aunt Jane into this affair,” said Peter darkly.

“You said you were going to be a Presbyterian,” persisted Cecily.

“Good Presbyterians don’t fight.”

“Oh, don’t they! I heard your Uncle Roger say that Presbyterians were the best for fighting in the world — or the worst, I forget which he said, but it means the same thing.”

Cecily had but one more shot in her locker.

“I thought you said in your sermon, Master Peter, that people shouldn’t fight.”

“I said they oughtn’t to fight for fun, or for bad temper,” retorted Peter. “This is different. I know what I’m fighting for but I can’t think of the word.”

“I guess you mean principle,” I suggested.

“Yes, that’s it,” agreed Peter. “It’s all right to fight for principle. It’s kind of praying with your fists.”

“Oh, can’t you do something to prevent them from fighting, Sara?” pleaded Cecily, turning to the Story Girl, who was sitting on a bin, swinging her shapely bare feet to and fro.

“It doesn’t do to meddle in an affair of this kind between boys,” said the Story Girl sagely.

I may be mistaken, but I do not believe the Story Girl wanted that fight stopped. And I am far from being sure that Felicity did either.

It was ultimately arranged that the combat should take place in the fir wood behind Uncle Roger’s granary. It was a nice, remote, bosky place where no prowling grownup would be likely to intrude. And thither we all resorted at sunset.

“I hope Felix will beat,” said the Story Girl to me, “not only for the family honour, but because that was a mean, mean prayer of Peter’s. Do you think he will?”

“I don’t know,” I confessed dubiously. “Felix is too fat. He’ll get out of breath in no time. And Peter is such a cool customer, and he’s a year older than Felix. But then Felix has had some practice. He has fought boys in Toronto. And this is Peter’s first fight.”

“Did you ever fight?” asked the Story Girl.

“Once,” I said briefly, dreading the next question, which promptly came.

“Who beat?”

It is sometimes a bitter thing to tell the truth, especially to a young lady for whom you have a great admiration. I had a struggle with temptation in which I frankly confess I might have been worsted had it not been for a saving and timely remembrance of a certain resolution made on the day preceding Judgment Sunday.

“The other fellow,” I said with reluctant honesty.

“Well,” said the Story Girl, “I think it doesn’t matter whether you get whipped or not so long as you fight a good, square fight.”

Her potent voice made me feel that I was quite a hero after all, and the sting went out of my recollection of that old fight.

When we arrived behind the granary the others were all there. Cecily was very pale, and Felix and Peter were taking off their coats. There was a pure yellow sunset that evening, and the aisles of the fir wood were flooded with its radiance. A cool, autumnal wind was whistling among the

dark boughs and scattering blood red leaves from the maple at the end of the granary.

“Now,” said Dan, “I’ll count, and when I say three you pitch in, and hammer each other until one of you has had enough. Cecily, keep quiet. Now, one — two — three!”

Peter and Felix “pitched in,” with more zeal than discretion on both sides. As a result, Peter got what later developed into a black eye, and Felix’s nose began to bleed. Cecily gave a shriek and ran out of the wood. We thought she had fled because she could not endure the sight of blood, and we were not sorry, for her manifest disapproval and anxiety were damping the excitement of the occasion.

Felix and Peter drew apart after that first onset, and circled about one another warily. Then, just as they had come to grips again, Uncle Alec walked around the corner of the granary, with Cecily behind him.

He was not angry. There was a quizzical look in his eyes. But he took the combatants by their shirt collars and dragged them apart.

“This stops right here, boys,” he said. “You know I don’t allow fighting.”

“Oh, but Uncle Alec, it was this way,” began Felix eagerly.

“Peter—”

“No, I don’t want to hear about it,” said Uncle Alec sternly. “I don’t care what you were fighting about, but you must settle your quarrels in a different fashion. Remember my commands, Felix. Peter, Roger is looking for you to wash his buggy. Be off.”

Peter went off rather sullenly, and Felix, also sullenly, sat down and began to nurse his nose. He turned his back on Cecily.

Cecily “caught it” after Uncle Alec had gone. Dan called her a telltale and a baby, and sneered at her until Cecily began to cry.

“I couldn’t stand by and watch Felix and Peter pound each other all to pieces,” she sobbed. “They’ve been such friends, and it was dreadful to see them fighting.”

“Uncle Roger would have let them fight it out,” said the Story Girl discontentedly. “Uncle Roger believes in boys fighting. He says it’s as harmless a way as any of working off their original sin. Peter and Felix wouldn’t have been any worse friends after it. They’d have been better friends because the praying question would have been settled. And now it can’t be — unless Felicity can coax Peter to give up praying against Felix.”

For once in her life the Story Girl was not as tactful as her wont. Or — is it possible that she said it out of malice prepense? At all events, Felicity resented the imputation that she had more influence with Peter than any one else.

“I don’t meddle with hired boys’ prayers,” she said haughtily.

“It was all nonsense fighting about such prayers, anyhow,” said Dan, who probably thought that since all chance of a fight was over, he might as well avow his real sentiments as to its folly. “Just as much nonsense as praying about the bitter apples in the first place.”

“Oh, Dan, don’t you believe there is some good in praying?”
said
Cecily reproachfully.

“Yes, I believe there’s some good in some kinds of praying, but not in that kind,” said Dan sturdily. “I don’t believe God cares whether anybody can eat an apple without making a face or not.”

“I don’t believe it’s right to talk of God as if you were well acquainted with Him,” said Felicity, who felt that it was a good chance to snub Dan.

“There’s something wrong somewhere,” said Cecily perplexedly. “We ought to pray for what we want, of that I’m sure — and Peter wanted to be the only one who could pass the Ordeal. It seems as if he must be right — and yet it doesn’t seem so. I wish I could understand it.”

“Peter’s prayer was wrong because it was a selfish prayer, I guess,” said the Story Girl thoughtfully. “Felix’s prayer was all right, because it wouldn’t have hurt any one else; but it was selfish of Peter to want to be the only one. We mustn’t pray selfish prayers.”

“Oh, I see through it now,” said Cecily joyfully.

“Yes, but,” said Dan triumphantly, “if you believe God answers prayers about particular things, it was Peter’s prayer He answered. What do you make of that?”

“Oh!” the Story Girl shook her head impatiently. “There’s no use trying to make such things out. We only get more mixed up all the time. Let’s leave it alone and I’ll tell you a story. Aunt Olivia had a letter today from a friend in Nova Scotia, who lives in Shubenacadie. When I said I thought it a funny name, she told me to go and look in her scrap book, and I would find a story about the origin of the name. And I did. Don’t you want to hear it?”

Of course we did. We all sat down at the roots of the firs. Felix, having finally squared matters with his nose, turned around and listened also. He would not look at Cecily, but every one else had forgiven her.

The Story Girl leaned that brown head of hers against the fir trunk behind her, and looked up at the apple-green sky through the dark boughs above us. She wore, I remember, a dress of warm crimson, and she had wound around her head a string of waxberries, that looked like a fillet of pearls. Her cheeks were still flushed with the excitement of the evening. In the dim light she was beautiful, with a wild, mystic loveliness, a compelling charm that would not be denied.

“Many, many moons ago, an Indian tribe lived on the banks of a river in Nova Scotia. One of the young braves was named Accadee. He was the tallest and bravest and handsomest young man in the tribe—”

“Why is it they’re always so handsome in stories?” asked Dan.

“Why are there never no stories about ugly people?”

“Perhaps ugly people never have stories happen to them,” suggested Felicity.

“I think they’re just as interesting as the handsome people,” retorted Dan.

“Well, maybe they are in real life,” said Cecily, “but in stories it’s just as easy to make them handsome as not. I like them best that way. I just

love to read a story where the heroine is beautiful as a dream.”

“Pretty people are always conceited,” said Felix, who was getting tired of holding his tongue.

“The heroes in stories are always nice,” said Felicity, with apparent irrelevance. “They’re always so tall and slender. Wouldn’t it be awful funny if any one wrote a story about a fat hero — or about one with too big a mouth?”

“It doesn’t matter what a man LOOKS like,” I said, feeling that Felix and Dan were catching it rather too hotly. “He must be a good sort of chap and DO heaps of things. That’s all that’s necessary.”

“Do any of you happen to want to hear the rest of my story?” asked the Story Girl in an ominously polite voice that recalled us to a sense of our bad manners. We apologized and promised to behave better; she went on, appeased:

“Accadee was all these things that I have mentioned, and he was the best hunter in the tribe besides. Never an arrow of his that did not go straight to the mark. Many and many a snow white moose he shot, and gave the beautiful skin to his sweetheart. Her name was Shuben and she was as lovely as the moon when it rises from the sea, and as pleasant as a summer twilight. Her eyes were dark and soft, her foot was as light as a breeze, and her voice sounded like a brook in the woods, or the wind that comes over the hills at night. She and Accadee were very much in love with each other, and often they hunted together, for Shuben was almost as skilful with her bow and arrow as Accadee himself. They had loved each other ever since they were small papposes, and they had vowed to love each other as long as the river ran.

“One twilight, when Accadee was out hunting in the woods, he shot a snow white moose; and he took off its skin and wrapped it around him. Then he went on through the woods in the starlight; and he felt so happy and light of heart that he sometimes frisked and capered about just as a real moose would do. And he was doing this when Shuben, who was also out hunting, saw him from afar and thought he was a real moose. She stole cautiously through the woods until she came to the brink of a little valley.

Below her stood the snow white moose. She drew her arrow to her eye — alas, she knew the art only too well! — and took careful aim. The next moment Accadee fell dead with her arrow in his heart.”

The Story Girl paused — a dramatic pause. It was quite dark in the fir wood. We could see her face and eyes but dimly through the gloom. A silvery moon was looking down on us over the granary. The stars twinkled through the softly waving boughs. Beyond the wood we caught a glimpse of a moonlit world lying in the sharp frost of the October evening. The sky above it was chill and ethereal and mystical.

But all about us were shadows; and the weird little tale, told in a voice fraught with mystery and pathos, had peopled them for us with furtive folk in belt and wampum, and dark-tressed Indian maidens.

“What did Shuben do when she found out she had killed Accadee?” asked Felicity.

“She died of a broken heart before the spring, and she and Accadee were buried side by side on the bank of the river which has ever since borne their names — the river Shubenacadie,” said the Story Girl.

The sharp wind blew around the granary and Cecily shivered. We heard Aunt Janet’s voice calling “Children, children.” Shaking off the spell of firs and moonlight and romantic tale, we scrambled to our feet and went homeward.

“I kind of wish I’d been born an Injun,” said Dan. “It must have been a jolly life — nothing to do but hunt and fight.”

“It wouldn’t be so nice if they caught you and tortured you at the stake,” said Felicity.

“No,” said Dan reluctantly. “I suppose there’d be some drawback to everything, even being an Injun.”

“Isn’t it cold?” said Cecily, shivering again. “It will soon be winter. I wish summer could last forever. Felicity likes the winter, and so does the Story Girl, but I don’t. It always seems so long till spring.”

“Never mind, we’ve had a splendid summer,” I said, slipping my arm about her to comfort some childish sorrow that breathed in her plaintive voice.

Truly, we had had a delectable summer; and, having had it, it was ours forever. "The gods themselves cannot recall their gifts." They may rob us of our future and embitter our present, but our past they may not touch. With all its laughter and delight and glamour it is our eternal possession.

Nevertheless, we all felt a little of the sadness of the waning year. There was a distinct weight on our spirits until Felicity took us into the pantry and stayed us with apple tarts and comforted us with cream. Then we brightened up. It was really a very decent world after all.

The Tale of the Rainbow Bridge

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Felix, so far as my remembrance goes, never attained to success in the Ordeal of Bitter Apples. He gave up trying after awhile; and he also gave up praying about it, saying in bitterness of spirit that there was no use in praying when other fellows prayed against you out of spite. He and Peter remained on bad terms for some time, however.

We were all of us too tired those nights to do any special praying. Sometimes I fear our “regular” prayers were slurred over, or mumbled in anything but reverent haste. October was a busy month on the hill farms. The apples had to be picked, and this work fell mainly to us children. We stayed home from school to do it. It was pleasant work and there was a great deal of fun in it; but it was hard, too, and our arms and backs ached roundly at night. In the mornings it was very delightful; in the afternoons tolerable; but in the evenings we lagged, and the laughter and zest of fresher hours were lacking.

Some of the apples had to be picked very carefully. But with others it did not matter; we boys would climb the trees and shake the apples down until the girls shrieked for mercy. The days were crisp and mellow, with warm sunshine and a tang of frost in the air, mingled with the woodsy odours of the withering grasses. The hens and turkeys prowled about, pecking at windfalls, and Pat made mad rushes at them amid the fallen leaves. The world beyond the orchard was in a royal magnificence of colouring, under the vivid blue autumn sky. The big willow by the gate was a splendid golden dome, and the maples that were scattered through the spruce grove waved blood-red banners over the sombre conebearers. The Story Girl generally had her head garlanded with their leaves. They became her vastly. Neither Felicity nor Cecily could have worn them. Those two girls were of a domestic type that assorted ill with the wildfire in Nature’s veins. But when the Story Girl wreathed her nut brown tresses

with crimson leaves it seemed, as Peter said, that they grew on her — as if the gold and flame of her spirit had broken out in a coronal, as much a part of her as the pale halo seems a part of the Madonna it encircles.

What tales she told us on those faraway autumn days, peopling the russet arcades with folk of an elder world. Many a princess rode by us on her palfrey, many a swaggering gallant ruffled it bravely in velvet and plume adown Uncle Stephen's Walk, many a stately lady, silken clad, walked in that opulent orchard!

When we had filled our baskets they had to be carried to the granary loft, and the contents stored in bins or spread on the floor to ripen further. We ate a good many, of course, feeling that the labourer was worthy of his hire. The apples from our own birthday trees were stored in separate barrels inscribed with our names. We might dispose of them as we willed. Felicity sold hers to Uncle Alec's hired man — and was badly cheated to boot, for he levanted shortly afterwards, taking the apples with him, having paid her only half her rightful due. Felicity has not gotten over that to this day.

Cecily, dear heart, sent most of hers to the hospital in town, and no doubt gathered in therefrom dividends of gratitude and satisfaction of soul, such as can never be purchased by any mere process of bargain and sale. The rest of us ate our apples, or carried them to school where we bartered them for such treasures as our schoolmates possessed and we coveted.

There was a dusky, little, pear-shaped apple — from one of Uncle Stephen's trees — which was our favourite; and next to it a delicious, juicy yellow apple from Aunt Louisa's tree. We were also fond of the big sweet apples; we used to throw them up in the air and let them fall on the ground until they were bruised and battered to the bursting point. Then we sucked on the juice; sweeter was it than the nectar drunk by blissful gods on the Thessalian hill.

Sometimes we worked until the cold yellow sunsets faded out over the darkening distances, and the hunter's moon looked down on us through the sparkling air. The constellations of autumn scintillated above us. Peter and

the Story Girl knew all about them, and imparted their knowledge to us generously. I recall Peter standing on the Pulpit Stone, one night ere moonrise, and pointing them out to us, occasionally having a difference of opinion with the Story Girl over the name of some particular star. Job's Coffin and the Northern Cross were to the west of us; south of us flamed Fomalhaut. The Great Square of Pegasus was over our heads. Cassiopeia sat enthroned in her beautiful chair in the northeast; and north of us the Dippers swung untiringly around the Pole Star. Cecily and Felix were the only ones who could distinguish the double star in the handle of the Big Dipper, and greatly did they plume themselves thereon. The Story Girl told us the myths and legends woven around these immemorial clusters, her very voice taking on a clear, remote, starry sound as she talked of them. When she ceased, we came back to earth, feeling as if we had been millions of miles away in the blue ether, and that all our old familiar surroundings were momentarily forgotten and strange.

That night when he pointed out the stars to us from the Pulpit Stone was the last time for several weeks that Peter shared our toil and pastime. The next day he complained of headache and sore throat, and seemed to prefer lying on Aunt Olivia's kitchen sofa to doing any work. As it was not in Peter to be a malingerer he was left in peace, while we picked apples. Felix alone, must unjustly and spitefully, declared that Peter was simply shirking.

"He's just lazy, that's what's the matter with him," he said.

"Why don't you talk sense, if you must talk?" said Felicity. "There's no sense in calling Peter lazy. You might as well say I had black hair. Of course, Peter, being a Craig, has his faults, but he's a smart boy. His father was lazy but his mother hasn't a lazy bone in her body, and Peter takes after her."

"Uncle Roger says Peter's father wasn't exactly lazy," said the Story Girl. "The trouble was, there were so many other things he liked better than work."

"I wonder if he'll ever come back to his family," said Cecily. "Just think how dreadful it would be if OUR father had left us like that!"

“Our father is a King,” said Felicity loftily, “and Peter’s father was only a Craig. A member of our family COULDN’T behave like that.”

“They say there must be a black sheep in every family,” said the Story Girl.

“There isn’t any in ours,” said Cecily loyally.

“Why do white sheep eat more than black?” asked Felix.

“Is that a conundrum?” asked Cecily cautiously. “If it is I won’t try to guess the reason. I never can guess conundrums.”

“It isn’t a conundrum,” said Felix. “It’s a fact. They do — and there’s a good reason for it.”

We stopped picking apples, sat down on the grass, and tried to reason it out — with the exception of Dan, who declared that he knew there was a catch somewhere and he wasn’t going to be caught. The rest of us could not see where any catch could exist, since Felix solemnly vowed, ‘cross his heart, white sheep did eat more than black. We argued over it seriously, but finally had to give it up.

“Well, what is the reason?” asked Felicity.

“Because there’s more of them,” said Felix, grinning.

I forget what we did to Felix.

A shower came up in the evening and we had to stop picking. After the shower there was a magnificent double rainbow. We watched it from the granary window, and the Story Girl told us an old legend, culled from one of Aunt Olivia’s many scrapbooks.

“Long, long ago, in the Golden Age, when the gods used to visit the earth so often that it was nothing uncommon to see them, Odin made a pilgrimage over the world. Odin was the great god of the northland, you know. And wherever he went among men he taught them love and brotherhood, and skilful arts; and great cities sprang up where he had trodden, and every land through which he passed was blessed because one of the gods had come down to men. But many men and women followed Odin himself, giving up all their worldly possessions and ambitions; and to these he promised the gift of eternal life. All these people were good

and noble and unselfish and kind; but the best and noblest of them all was a youth named Ving; and this youth was beloved by Odin above all others, for his beauty and strength and goodness. Always he walked on Odin's right hand, and always the first light of Odin's smile fell on him. Tall and straight was he as a young pine, and his long hair was the colour of ripe wheat in the sun; and his blue eyes were like the northland heavens on a starry night.

"In Odin's band was a beautiful maiden named Alin. She was as fair and delicate as a young birch tree in spring among the dark old pines and firs, and Ving loved her with all his heart. His soul thrilled with rapture at the thought that he and she together should drink from the fountain of immortality, as Odin had promised, and be one thereafter in eternal youth.

"At last they came to the very place where the rainbow touched the earth. And the rainbow was a great bridge, built of living colours, so dazzling and wonderful that beyond it the eye could see nothing, only far away a great, blinding, sparkling glory, where the fountain of life sprang up in a shower of diamond fire. But under the Rainbow Bridge rolled a terrible flood, deep and wide and violent, full of rocks and rapids and whirlpools.

"There was a Warder of the bridge, a god, dark and stern and sorrowful. And to him Odin gave command that he should open the gate and allow his followers to cross the Rainbow Bridge, that they might drink of the fountain of life beyond. And the Warder set open the gate.

"'Pass on and drink of the fountain,' he said. 'To all who taste of it shall immortality be given. But only to that one who shall drink of it first shall be permitted to walk at Odin's right hand forever.'

"Then the company passed through in great haste, all fired with a desire to be the first to drink of the fountain and win so marvellous a boon. Last of all came Ving. He had lingered behind to pluck a thorn from the foot of a beggar child he had met on the highway, and he had not heard the Warder's words. But when, eager, joyous, radiant, he set his foot on the rainbow, the stern, sorrowful Warder took him by the arm and drew him back.

“‘Ving, strong, noble, and valiant,’ he said, ‘Rainbow Bridge is not for thee.’

“Very dark grew Ving’s face. Hot rebellion rose in his heart and rushed over his pale lips.

“‘Why dost thou keep back the draught of immortality from me?’ he demanded passionately.

“The Warder pointed to the dark flood that rolled under the bridge.

“‘The path of the rainbow is not for thee,’ he said, ‘but yonder way is open. Ford that flood. On the furthest bank is the fountain of life.’

“‘Thou mockest me,’ muttered Ving sullenly. ‘No mortal could cross that flood. Oh, Master,’ he prayed, turning beseechingly to Odin, ‘thou didst promise to me eternal life as to the others. Wilt thou not keep that promise? Command the Warder to let me pass. He must obey thee.’

“But Odin stood silent, with his face turned from his beloved, and Ving’s heart was filled with unspeakable bitterness and despair.

“‘Thou mayest return to earth if thou fearest to essay the flood,’ said the Warder.

“‘Nay,’ said Ving wildly, ‘earthly life without Alin is more dreadful than the death which awaits me in yon dark river.’

“And he plunged fiercely in. He swam, and struggled, he buffeted the turmoil. The waves went over his head again and again, the whirlpools caught him and flung him on the cruel rocks. The wild, cold spray beat on his eyes and blinded him, so that he could see nothing, and the roar of the river deafened him so that he could hear nothing; but he felt keenly the wounds and bruises of the cruel rocks, and many a time he would have given up the struggle had not the thought of sweet Alin’s loving eyes brought him the strength and desire to struggle as long as it was possible. Long, long, long, to him seemed that bitter and perilous passage; but at last he won through to the furthest side. Breathless and reeling, his vesture torn, his great wounds bleeding, he found himself on the shore where the fountain of immortality sprang up. He staggered to its brink and drank of its clear stream. Then all pain and weariness fell away from him, and he rose up, a god, beautiful with immortality. And as he did there came

rushing over the Rainbow Bridge a great company — the band of fellow travellers. But all were too late to win the double boon. Ving had won to it through the danger and suffering of the dark river.”

The rainbow had faded out, and the darkness of the October dusk was falling.

“I wonder,” said Dan meditatively, as we went away from that redolent spot, “what it would be like to live for ever in this world.”

“I expect we’d get tired of it after awhile,” said the Story Girl. “But,” she added, “I think it would be a goodly while before I would.”

Chapter XXIX.

The Shadow Feared of Man

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We were all up early the next morning, dressing by candlelight. But early as it was we found the Story Girl in the kitchen when we went down, sitting on Rachel Ward's blue chest and looking important.

"What do you think?" she exclaimed. "Peter has the measles! He was dreadfully sick all night, and Uncle Roger had to go for the doctor. He was quite light-headed, and didn't know any one. Of course he's far too sick to be taken home, so his mother has come up to wait on him, and I'm to live over here until he is better."

This was mingled bitter and sweet. We were sorry to hear that Peter had the measles; but it would be jolly to have the Story Girl living with us all the time. What orgies of story telling we should have!

"I suppose we'll all have the measles now," grumbled Felicity. "And October is such an inconvenient time for measles — there's so much to do."

"I don't believe any time is very convenient to have the measles," Cecily said.

"Oh, perhaps we won't have them," said the Story Girl cheerfully. "Peter caught them at Markdale, the last time he was home, his mother says."

"I don't want to catch the measles from Peter," said Felicity decidedly. "Fancy catching them from a hired boy!"

"Oh, Felicity, don't call Peter a hired boy when he's sick," protested Cecily.

During the next two days we were very busy — too busy to tell tales or listen to them. Only in the frosty dusk did we have time to wander afar in realms of gold with the Story Girl. She had recently been digging into a

couple of old volumes of classic myths and northland folklore which she had found in Aunt Olivia's attic; and for us, god and goddess, laughing nymph and mocking satyr, norn and valkyrie, elf and troll, and "green folk" generally, were real creatures once again, inhabiting the orchards and woods and meadows around us, until it seemed as if the Golden Age had returned to earth.

Then, on the third day, the Story Girl came to us with a very white face. She had been over to Uncle Roger's yard to hear the latest bulletin from the sick room. Hitherto they had been of a noncommittal nature; but now it was only too evident that she had bad news.

"Peter is very, very sick," she said miserably. "He has caught cold someway — and the measles have struck in — and — and—" the Story Girl wrung her brown hands together—"the doctor is afraid he — he — won't get better."

We all stood around, stricken, incredulous.

"Do you mean," said Felix, finding voice at length, "that Peter is going to die?"

The Story Girl nodded miserably.

"They're afraid so."

Cecily sat down by her half filled basket and began to cry.

Felicity said violently that she didn't believe it.

"I can't pick another apple to-day and I ain't going to try," said Dan.

None of us could. We went to the grownups and told them so; and the grownups, with unaccustomed understanding and sympathy, told us that we need not. Then we roamed about in our wretchedness and tried to comfort one another. We avoided the orchard; it was for us too full of happy memories to accord with our bitterness of soul. Instead, we resorted to the spruce wood, where the hush and the sombre shadows and the soft, melancholy sighing of the wind in the branches over us did not jar harshly on our new sorrow.

We could not really believe that Peter was going to die — to DIE. Old people died. Grownup people died. Even children of whom we had heard

died. But that one of US — of our merry little band — should die was unbelievable. We could not believe it. And yet the possibility struck us in the face like a blow. We sat on the mossy stones under the dark old evergreens and gave ourselves up to wretchedness. We all, even Dan, cried, except the Story Girl.

“I don’t see how you can be so unfeeling, Sara Stanley,” said Felicity reproachfully. “You’ve always been such friends with Peter — and made out you thought so much of him — and now you ain’t shedding a tear for him.”

I looked at the Story Girl’s dry, piteous eyes, and suddenly remembered that I had never seen her cry. When she told us sad tales, in a voice laden with all the tears that had ever been shed, she had never shed one of her own.

“I can’t cry,” she said drearily. “I wish I could. I’ve a dreadful feeling here—” she touched her slender throat—“and if I could cry I think it would make it better. But I can’t.”

“Maybe Peter will get better after all,” said Dan, swallowing a sob. “I’ve heard of lots of people who went and got better after the doctor said they were going to die.”

“While there’s life there’s hope, you know,” said Felix. “We shouldn’t cross bridges till we come to them.”

“Those are only proverbs,” said the Story Girl bitterly. “Proverbs are all very fine when there’s nothing to worry you, but when you’re in real trouble they’re not a bit of help.”

“Oh, I wish I’d never said Peter wasn’t fit to associate with,” moaned Felicity. “If he ever gets better I’ll never say such a thing again — I’ll never THINK it. He’s just a lovely boy and twice as smart as lots that aren’t hired out.”

“He was always so polite and goodnatured and obliging,” sighed Cecily.

“He was just a real gentleman,” said the Story Girl.

“There ain’t many fellows as fair and square as Peter,” said Dan.

“And such a worker,” said Felix.

“Uncle Roger says he never had a boy he could depend on like Peter,” I said.

“It’s too late to be saying all these nice things about him now,” said the Story Girl. “He won’t ever know how much we thought of him. It’s too late.”

“If he gets better I’ll tell him,” said Cecily resolutely.

“I wish I hadn’t boxed his ears that day he tried to kiss me,” went on Felicity, who was evidently raking her conscience for past offences in regard to Peter. “Of course I couldn’t be expected to let a hir — to let a boy kiss me. But I needn’t have been so cross about it. I might have been more dignified. And I told him I just hated him. That wasn’t true, but I s’pose he’ll die thinking it is. Oh, dear me, what makes people say things they’ve got to be so sorry for afterwards?”

“I suppose if Peter d-d-dies he’ll go to heaven anyhow,” sobbed Cecily. “He’s been real good all this summer, but he isn’t a church member.”

“He’s a Presbyterian, you know,” said Felicity reassuringly. Her tone expressed her conviction that that would carry Peter through if anything would. “We’re none of us church members. But of course Peter couldn’t be sent to the bad place. That would be ridiculous. What would they do with him there, when he’s so good and polite and honest and kind?”

“Oh, I think he’ll be all right, too,” sighed Cecily, “but you know he never did go to church and Sunday School before this summer.”

“Well, his father run away, and his mother was too busy earning a living to bring him up right,” argued Felicity. “Don’t you suppose that anybody, even God, would make allowances for that?”

“Of course Peter will go to heaven,” said the Story Girl. “He’s not grown up enough to go anywhere else. Children always go to heaven. But I don’t want him to go there or anywhere else. I want him to stay right here.

I know heaven must be a splendid place, but I'm sure Peter would rather be here, having fun with us."

"Sara Stanley," rebuked Felicity. "I should think you wouldn't say such things at such a solemn time. You're such a queer girl."

"Wouldn't you rather be here yourself than in heaven?" said the Story Girl bluntly. "Wouldn't you now, Felicity King? Tell the truth, 'cross your heart."

But Felicity took refuge from this inconvenient question in tears.

"If we could only DO something to help Peter!" I said desperately. "It seems dreadful not to be able to do a single thing."

"There's one thing we can do," said Cecily gently. "We can pray for him."

"So we can," I agreed.

"I'm going to pray like sixty," said Felix energetically.

"We'll have to be awful good, you know," warned Cecily. "There's no use praying if you're not good."

"That will be easy," sighed Felicity. "I don't feel a bit like being bad. If anything happens to Peter I feel sure I'll never be naughty again. I won't have the heart."

We did, indeed, pray most sincerely for Peter's recovery. We did not, as in the case of Paddy, "tack it on after more important things," but put it in the very forefront of our petitions. Even skeptical Dan prayed, his skepticism falling away from him like a discarded garment in this valley of the shadow, which sifts out hearts and tries souls, until we all, grownup or children, realize our weakness, and, finding that our own puny strength is as a reed shaken in the wind, creep back humbly to the God we have vainly dreamed we could do without.

Peter was no better the next day. Aunt Olivia reported that his mother was brokenhearted. We did not again ask to be released from work. Instead, we went at it with feverish zeal. If we worked hard there was less time for grief and grievous thoughts. We picked apples and dragged them to the granary doggedly. In the afternoon Aunt Janet brought us a lunch of

apple turnovers; but we could not eat them. Peter, as Felicity reminded us with a burst of tears, had been so fond of apple turnovers.

And, oh, how good we were! How angelically and unnaturally good! Never was there such a band of kind, sweet-tempered, unselfish children in any orchard. Even Felicity and Dan, for once in their lives, got through the day without any exchange of left-handed compliments. Cecily confided to me that she never meant to put her hair up in curlers on Saturday nights again, because it was pretending. She was so anxious to repent of something, sweet girl, and this was all she could think of.

During the afternoon Judy Pineau brought up a tear-blotted note from Sara Ray. Sara had not been allowed to visit the hill farm since Peter had developed measles. She was an unhappy little exile, and could only relieve her anguish of soul by daily letters to Cecily, which the faithful and obliging Judy Pineau brought up for her. These epistles were as gushingly underlined as if Sara had been a correspondent of early Victorian days.

Cecily did not write back, because Mrs. Ray had decreed that no letters must be taken down from the hill farm lest they carry infection. Cecily had offered to bake every epistle thoroughly in the oven before sending it; but Mrs. Ray was inexorable, and Cecily had to content herself by sending long verbal messages with Judy Pineau.

“My OWN DEAREST Cecily,” ran Sara’s letter. “I have just heard the sad news about POOR DEAR PETER. I can’t describe MY FEELINGS. They are DREADFUL. I have been crying ALL THE AFTERNOON. I wish I could FLY to you, but ma will not let me. She is afraid I will catch the measles, but I would rather have the measles A DOZEN TIMES OVER than be separated from you all like this. But I have felt, ever since the Judgment Sunday that I MUST OBEY MA BETTER than I used to do. If ANYTHING HAPPENS to Peter and you are let see him BEFORE IT HAPPENS give him MY LOVE and tell him HOW SORRY I AM, and that I hope we will ALL meet in A BETTER WORLD Everything in school is about the same. The master is awful cross by spells. Jimmy Frewen walked home with Nellie Bowan last night from prayer-meeting and HER ONLY FOURTEEN. Don’t you think it horrid BEGINNING SO YOUNG?

YOU AND ME would NEVER do anything like that till we were GROWN UP, would we? Willy Fraser looks SO LONESOME in school these days. I must stop for ma says I waste FAR TOO MUCH TIME writing letters. Tell Judy ALL THE NEWS for me.

”Your OWN TRUE FRIEND,
”SARA RAY.

“P.S. Oh I DO hope Peter will get better. Ma is going to get me a new brown dress for the winter. “S. R.”

When evening came we went to our seats under the whispering, sighing fir trees. It was a beautiful night — clear, windless, frosty. Some one galloped down the road on horseback, lustily singing a comic song. How dared he? We felt that it was an insult to our wretchedness. If Peter were going to — going to — well, if anything happened to Peter, we felt so miserably sure that the music of life would be stilled for us for ever. How could any one in the world be happy when we were so unhappy?

Presently Aunt Olivia came down the long twilight arcade. Her bright hair was uncovered and she looked slim and queen-like in her light dress. We thought Aunt Olivia very pretty then. Looking back from a mature standpoint I realize that she must have been an unusually beautiful woman; and she looked her prettiest as she stood under the swaying boughs in the last faint light of the autumn dusk and smiled down at our woebegone faces.

“Dear, sorrowful little people, I bring you glad tidings of great joy,” she said. “The doctor has just been here, and he finds Peter much better, and thinks he will pull through after all.”

We gazed up at her in silence for a few moments. When we had heard the news of Paddy’s recovery we had been noisy and jubilant; but we were very quiet now. We had been too near something dark and terrible and menacing; and though it was thus suddenly removed the chill and shadow of it were about us still. Presently the Story Girl, who had been standing up, leaning against a tall fir, slipped down to the ground in a huddled fashion and broke into a very passion of weeping. I had never heard any

one cry so, with dreadful, rending sobs. I was used to hearing girls cry. It was as much Sara Ray's normal state as any other, and even Felicity and Cecily availed themselves occasionally of the privilege of sex. But I had never heard any girl cry like this. It gave me the same unpleasant sensation which I had felt one time when I had seen my father cry.

"Oh, don't, Sara, don't," I said gently, patting her convulsed shoulder.

"You ARE a queer girl," said Felicity — more tolerantly than usual however—"you never cried a speck when you thought Peter was going to die — and now when he is going to get better you cry like that."

"Sara, child, come with me," said Aunt Olivia, bending over her. The Story Girl got up and went away, with Aunt Olivia's arms around her. The sound of her crying died away under the firs, and with it seemed to go the dread and grief that had been our portion for hours. In the reaction our spirits rose with a bound.

"Oh, ain't it great that Peter's going to be all right?" said Dan, springing up.

"I never was so glad of anything in my whole life," declared Felicity in shameless rapture.

"Can't we send word somehow to Sara Ray tonight?" asked Cecily, the ever-thoughtful. "She's feeling so bad — and she'll have to feel that way till tomorrow if we can't."

"Let's all go down to the Ray gate and holler to Judy Pineau till she comes out," suggested Felix.

Accordingly, we went and "hollered," with a right good will. We were much taken aback to find that Mrs. Ray came to the gate instead of Judy, and rather sourly demanded what we were yelling about. When she heard our news, however, she had the decency to say she was glad, and to promise she would convey the good tidings to Sara—"who is already in bed, where all children of her age should be," added Mrs. Ray severely.

WE had no intention of going to bed for a good two hours yet. Instead, after devoutly thanking goodness that our grownups, in spite of some

imperfections, were not of the Mrs. Ray type, we betook ourselves to the granary, lighted a huge lantern which Dan had made out of a turnip, and proceeded to devour all the apples we might have eaten through the day but had not. We were a blithe little crew, sitting there in the light of our goblin lantern. We had in very truth been given beauty for ashes and the oil of joy for mourning. Life was as a red rose once more.

“I’m going to make a big batch of patty-pans, first thing in the morning,” said Felicity jubilantly. “Isn’t it queer? Last night I felt just like praying, and tonight I feel just like cooking.”

“We mustn’t forget to thank God for making Peter better,” said Cecily, as we finally went to the house.

“Do you s’pose Peter wouldn’t have got better anyway?” said Dan.

“Oh, Dan, what makes you ask such questions?” exclaimed Cecily in real distress.

“I dunno,” said Dan. “They just kind of come into my head, like. But of course I mean to thank God when I say my prayers tonight.
That’s only decent.”

A Compound Letter

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Once Peter was out of danger he recovered rapidly, but he found his convalescence rather tedious; and Aunt Olivia suggested to us one day that we write a “compound letter” to amuse him, until he could come to the window and talk to us from a safe distance. The idea appealed to us; and, the day being Saturday and the apples all picked, we betook ourselves to the orchard to compose our epistles, Cecily having first sent word by a convenient caller to Sara Ray, that she, too, might have a letter ready. Later, I, having at that time a mania for preserving all documents relating to our life in Carlisle, copied those letters in the blank pages at the back of my dream book. Hence I can reproduce them verbatim, with the bouquet they have retained through all the long years since they were penned in that autumnal orchard on the hill, with its fading leaves and frosted grasses, and the “mild, delightful melancholy” of the late October day enfolding.

CECILY’S LETTER

“DEAR PETER: — I am so very glad and thankful that you are going to get better. We were so afraid you would not last Tuesday, and we felt dreadful, even Felicity. We all prayed for you. I think the others have stopped now, but I keep it up every night still, for fear you might have a relaps. (I don’t know if that is spelled right. I haven’t the dixonary handy, and if I ask the others Felicity will laugh at me, though she cannot spell lots of words herself.) I am saving some of the Honourable Mr. Whalen’s pears for you. I’ve got them hid where nobody can find them. There’s only a dozen because Dan et all the rest, but I guess you will like them. We have got all the apples picked, and are all ready to take the measles now, if we have to, but I hope we won’t. If we have to, though, I’d rather catch

them from you than from any one else, because we are acquainted with you. If I do take the measles and anything happens to me Felicity is to have my cherry vase. I'd rather give it to the Story Girl, but Dan says it ought to be kept in the family, even if Felicity is a crank. I haven't anything else valuable, since I gave Sara Ray my forget-me-not jug, but if you would like anything I've got let me know and I'll leave instructions for you to have it. The Story Girl has told us some splendid stories lately. I wish I was clever like her. Ma says it doesn't matter if you're not clever as long as you are good, but I am not even very good.

"I think this is all my news, except that I want to tell you how much we all think of you, Peter. When we heard you were sick we all said nice things about you, but we were afraid it was too late, and I said if you got better I'd tell you. It is easier to write it than to tell it out to your face. We think you are smart and polite and obliging and a great worker and a gentleman.

"Your true friend,

"CECILY KING.

"P.S. If you answer my letter don't say anything about the pears, because I don't want Dan to find out there's any left. C. K."

FELICITY'S LETTER

"DEAR PETER: — Aunt Olivia says for us all to write a compound letter to cheer you up. We are all awful glad you are getting better. It gave us an awful scare when we heard you were going to die. But you will soon be all right and able to get out again. Be careful you don't catch cold. I am going to bake some nice things for you and send them over, now that the doctor says you can eat them. And I'll send you my rosebud plate to eat off of. I'm only lending it, you know, not giving it. I let very few people use it because it is my greatest treasure. Mind you don't break it. Aunt Olivia must always wash it, not your mother.

“I do hope the rest of us won’t catch the measles. It must look horrid to have red spots all over your face. We all feel pretty well yet. The Story Girl says as many queer things as ever. Felix thinks he is getting thin, but he is fatter than ever, and no wonder, with all the apples he eats. He has give up trying to eat the bitter apples at last. Beverley has grown half an inch since July, by the mark on the hall door, and he is awful pleased about it. I told him I guessed the magic seed was taking effect at last, and he got mad. He never gets mad at anything the Story Girl says, and yet she is so sarkastic by times. Dan is pretty hard to get along with as usual, but I try to bear pashently with him. Cecily is well and says she isn’t going to curl her hair any more. She is so conscienshus. I am glad my hair curls of itself, ain’t you?

“We haven’t seen Sara Ray since you got sick. She is awful lonesome, and Judy says she cries nearly all the time but that is nothing new. I’m awful sorry for Sara but I’m glad I’m not her. She is going to write you a letter too. You’ll let me see what she puts in it, won’t you? You’d better take some Mexican Tea now. It’s a great blood purifier.

“I am going to get a lovely dark blue dress for the winter. It is ever so much prettier than Sara Ray’s brown one. Sara Ray’s mother has no taste. The Story Girl’s father is sending her a new red dress, and a red velvet cap from Paris. She is so fond of red. I can’t bear it, it looks so common. Mother says I can get a velvet hood too. Cecily says she doesn’t believe it’s right to wear velvet when it’s so expensive and the heathen are crying for the gospel. She got that idea from a Sunday School paper but I am going to get my hood all the same.

“Well, Peter, I have no more news so I will close for this time.

“hoping you will soon be quite well, I remain

”yours sincerely,

“FELICITY KING.

“P.S. The Story Girl peeked over my shoulder and says I ought to have signed it ‘yours affeckshunately,’ but I know better, because the *Family*

Guide has told lots of times how you should sign yourself when you are writing to a young man who is only a friend. F. K.”

FELIX’S LETTER

“DEAR PETER: — I am awful glad you are getting better. We all felt bad when we thought you wouldn’t, but I felt worse than the others because we hadn’t been on very good terms lately and I had said mean things about you. I’m sorry and, Peter, you can pray for anything you like and I won’t ever object again. I’m glad Uncle Alec interfered and stopped the fight. If I had licked you and you had died of the measles it would have been a dreadful thing.

“We have all the apples in and haven’t much to do just now and we are having lots of fun but we wish you were here to join in. I’m a lot thinner than I was. I guess working so hard picking apples is a good thing to make you thin. The girls are all well. Felicity puts on as many airs as ever, but she makes great things to eat. I have had some splendid dreams since we gave up writing them down. That is always the way. We ain’t going to school till we’re sure we are not going to have the measles. This is all I can think of, so I will draw to a close. Remember, you can pray for anything you like. FELIX KING.”

SARA RAY’S LETTER

“DEAR PETER: — I never wrote to A BOY before, so PLEASE excuse ALL mistakes. I am SO glad you are getting better. We were SO afraid you were GOING TO DIE. I CRIED ALL NIGHT about it. But now that you are OUT OF DANGER will you tell me WHAT IT REALLY FEELS LIKE to think you are going to die? Does it FEEL QUEER? Were you VERY badly frightened?

“Ma won’t let me go up the hill AT ALL now. I would DIE if it was not for Judy Pinno. (The French names are SO HARD TO SPELL.) JUDY IS

VERY OBLIGING and I feel that she SIMPATHISES WITH ME. In my LONELY HOURS I read my dream book and Cecily's old letters and they are SUCH A COMFORT to me. I have been reading one of the school library books too. I is PRETTY GOOD but I wish they had got more LOVE STORIES because they are so exciting. But the master would not let them.

"If you had DIED, Peter, and YOUR FATHER had heard it wouldn't he have FELT DREADFUL? We are having BEAUTIFUL WEATHER and the seenary is fine since the leaves turned. I think there is nothing so pretty as Nature after all.

"I hope ALL DANGER from the measles will soon be over and we can ALL MEET AGAIN AT THE HOME ON THE HILL. Till then FAREWELL.

"Your true friend,

"SARA RAY.

"P. S. Don't let Felicity see this letter. S. R."

DAN'S LETTER

"DEAR OLD PETE: — Awful glad you cheated the doctor. I thought you weren't the kind to turn up your toes so easy. You should of heard the girls crying.

"They're all getting their winter finery now and the talk about it would make you sick. The Story Girl is getting hers from Paris and Felicity is awful jealous though she pretends she isn't. I can see through her.

"Kitt Mar was up here Thursday to see the girls. She's had the measles so she isn't scared. She's a great girl to laugh. I like a girl that laughs, don't you?

"We had a call from Peg Bowen yesterday. You should of seen the Story Girl hustling Pat out of the way, for all she says she don't believe he was bewitched. Peg had your rheumatism ring on and the Story Girl's blue beads and Sara Ray's lace soed across the front of her dress. She wanted some tobacco and some pickles. Ma gave her some pickles but said we

didn't have no tobacco and Peg went off mad but I guess she wouldn't bewitch anything on account of the pickles.

"I ain't any hand to write letters so I guess I'll stop. Hope you'll be out soon. DAN."

THE STORY GIRL'S LETTER

"DEAR PETER: — Oh, how glad I am that you are getting better! Those days when we thought you wouldn't were the hardest of my whole life. It seemed too dreadful to be true that perhaps you would die. And then when we heard you were going to get better that seemed too good to be true. Oh, Peter, hurry up and get well, for we are having such good times and we miss you so much. I have coaxed Uncle Alec not to burn his potato stalks till you are well, because I remember how you always liked to see the potato stalks burn. Uncle Alec consented, though Aunt Janet said it was high time they were burned. Uncle Roger burned his last night and it was such fun.

"Pat is splendid. He has never had a sick spell since that bad one. I would send him over to be company for you, but Aunt Janet says no, because he might carry the measles back. I don't see how he could, but we must obey Aunt Janet. She is very good to us all, but I know she does not approve of me. She says I'm my father's own child. I know that doesn't mean anything complimentary because she looked so queer when she saw that I had heard her, but I don't care. I'm glad I'm like father. I had a splendid letter from him this week, with the darlingest pictures in it. He is painting a new picture which is going to make him famous. I wonder what Aunt Janet will say then.

"Do you know, Peter, yesterday I thought I saw the Family Ghost at last. I was coming through the gap in the hedge, and I saw somebody in blue standing under Uncle Alec's tree. How my heart beat! My hair should have stood up on end with terror but it didn't. I felt to see, and it was lying down quite flat. But it was only a visitor after all. I don't know whether I

was glad or disappointed. I don't think it would be a pleasant experience to see the ghost. But after I had seen it think what a heroine I would be!

"Oh, Peter, what do you think? I have got acquainted with the Awkward Man at last. I never thought it would be so easy. Yesterday Aunt Olivia wanted some ferns, so I went back to the maple woods to get them for her, and I found some lovely ones by the spring. And while I was sitting there, looking into the spring who should come along but the Awkward Man himself. He sat right down beside me and began to talk. I never was so surprised in my life. We had a very interesting talk, and I told him two of my best stories, and a great many of my secrets into the bargain. They may say what they like, but he was not one bit shy or awkward, and he has beautiful eyes. He did not tell me any of his secrets, but I believe he will some day. Of course I never said a word about his Alice-room. But I gave him a hint about his little brown book. I said I loved poetry and often felt like writing it, and then I said, 'Do you ever feel like that, Mr. Dale?' He said, yes, he sometimes felt that way, but he did not mention the brown book. I thought he might have. But after all I don't like people who tell you everything the first time you meet them, like Sara Ray. When he went away he said, 'I hope I shall have the pleasure of meeting you again,' just as seriously and politely as if I was a grownup young lady. I am sure he could never have said it if I had been really grown up. I told him it was likely he would and that he wasn't to mind if I had a longer skirt on next time, because I'd be just the same person.

"I told the children a beautiful new fairy story to-day. I made them go to the spruce wood to hear it. A spruce wood is the proper place to tell fairy stories in. Felicity says she can't see that it makes any difference where you tell them, but oh, it does. I wish you had been there to hear it too, but when you are well I will tell it over again for you.

"I am going to call the southernwood 'applerlingie' after this. Beverley says that is what they call it in Scotland, and I think it sounds so much more poetical than southernwood. Felicity says the right name is 'Boy's Love,' but I think that sounds silly.

“Oh, Peter, shadows are such pretty things. The orchard is full of them this very minute. Sometimes they are so still you would think them asleep. Then they go laughing and skipping. Outside, in the oat field, they are always chasing each other. They are the wild shadows. The shadows in the orchard are the tame shadows.

“Everything seems to be rather tired growing except the spruces and chrysanthemums in Aunt Olivia’s garden. The sunshine is so thick and yellow and lazy, and the crickets sing all day long. The birds are nearly all gone and most of the maple leaves have fallen.

“Just to make you laugh I’ll write you a little story I heard Uncle Alec telling last night. It was about Elder Frewen’s grandfather taking a pair of rope reins to lead a piano home. Everybody laughed except Aunt Janet. Old Mr. Frewen was HER grandfather too, and she wouldn’t laugh. One day when old Mr. Frewen was a young man of eighteen his father came home and said, ‘Sandy, I bought a piano at Simon Ward’s sale to-day. You’re to go tomorrow and bring it home.’ So next day Sandy started off on horseback with a pair of rope reins to lead the piano home. He thought it was some kind of livestock.

“And then Uncle Roger told about old Mark Ward who got up to make a speech at a church missionary social when he was drunk. (Of course he didn’t get drunk at the social. He went there that way.) And this was his speech.

“‘Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Chairman, I can’t express my thoughts on this grand subject of missions. It’s in this poor human critter’ — patting himself on the breast—’but he can’t git it out.’

“I’ll tell you these stories when you get well. I can tell them ever so much better than I can write them.

“I know Felicity is wondering why I’m writing such a long letter, so perhaps I’d better stop. If your mother reads it to you there is a good deal of it she may not understand, but I think your Aunt Jane would. “I remain “your very affectionate friend, “SARA STANLEY.”

I did not keep a copy of my own letter, and I have forgotten everything that was in it, except the first sentence, in which I told Peter I was awful

glad he was getting better.

Peter's delight on receiving our letters knew no bounds. He insisted on answering them and his letter, painstakingly disinfected, was duly delivered to us. Aunt Olivia had written it at his dictation, which was a gain, as far as spelling and punctuation went. But Peter's individuality seemed merged and lost in Aunt Olivia's big, dashing script. Not until the Story Girl read the letter to us in the granary by jack-o-lantern light, in a mimicry of Peter's very voice, did we savour the real bouquet of it.

PETER'S LETTER

"DEAR EVERYBODY, BUT ESPECIALLY FELICITY: — I was awful glad to get your letters. It makes you real important to be sick, but the time seems awful long when you're getting better. Your letters were all great, but I liked Felicity's best, and next to hers the Story Girl's. Felicity, it will be awful good of you to send me things to eat and the rosebud plate. I'll be awful careful of it. I hope you won't catch the measles, for they are not nice, especially when they strike in, but you would look all right, even if you did have red spots on your face. I would like to try the Mexican Tea, because you want me to, but mother says no, she doesn't believe in it, and Burtons Bitters are a great deal healthier. If I was you I would get the velvet hood all right. The heathen live in warm countries so they don't want hoods.

"I'm glad you are still praying for me, Cecily, for you can't trust the measles. And I'm glad you're keeping you know what for me. I don't believe anything will happen to you if you do take the measles; but if anything does I'd like that little red book of yours, *The Safe Compass*, just to remember you by. It's such a good book to read on Sundays. It is interesting and religious, too. So is the Bible. I hadn't quite finished the Bible before I took the measles, but ma is reading the last chapters to me. There's an awful lot in that book. I can't understand the whole of it, since I'm only a hired boy, but some parts are real easy.

“I’m awful glad you have such a good opinion of me. I don’t deserve it, but after this I’ll try to. I can’t tell you how I feel about all your kindness. I’m like the fellow the Story Girl wrote about who couldn’t get it out. I have the picture the Story Girl gave me for my sermon on the wall at the foot of my bed. I like to look at it, it looks so much like Aunt Jane.

“Felix, I’ve given up praying that I’d be the only one to eat the bitter apples, and I’ll never pray for anything like that again. It was a horrid mean prayer. I didn’t know it then, but after the measles struck in I found out it was. Aunt Jane wouldn’t have liked it. After this I’m going to pray prayers I needn’t be ashamed of.

“Sara Ray, I don’t know what it feels like to be going to die because I didn’t know I was going to die till I got better. Mother says I was lunny most of the time after they struck in. It was just because they struck in I was lunny. I ain’t lunny naturally, Felicity. I will do what you asked in your postscript, Sara, although it will be hard.

“I’m glad Peg Bowen didn’t catch you, Dan. Maybe she bewitched me that night we were at her place, and that is why the measles struck in. I’m awful glad Mr. King is going to leave the potato stalks until I get well, and I’m obliged to the Story Girl for coaxing him. I guess she will find out about Alice yet. There were some parts of her letter I couldn’t see through, but when the measles strike in, they leave you stupid for a spell. Anyhow, it was a fine letter, and they were all fine, and I’m awful glad I have so many nice friends, even if I am only a hired boy. Perhaps I’d never have found it out if the measles hadn’t struck in. So I’m glad they did but I hope they never will again. “Your obedient servant, “PETER CRAIG.”

On the Edge of Light and Dark

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We celebrated the November day when Peter was permitted to rejoin us by a picnic in the orchard. Sara Ray was also allowed to come, under protest; and her joy over being among us once more was almost pathetic. She and Cecily cried in one another's arms as if they had been parted for years.

We had a beautiful day for our picnic. November dreamed that it was May. The air was soft and mellow, with pale, aerial mists in the valleys and over the leafless beeches on the western hill. The sere stubble fields brooded in glamour, and the sky was pearly blue. The leaves were still thick on the apple trees, though they were russet hued, and the aftergrowth of grass was richly green, unharmed as yet by the nipping frosts of previous nights. The wind made a sweet, drowsy murmur in the boughs, as of bees among apple blossoms.

"It's just like spring, isn't it?" asked Felicity.

The Story Girl shook her head.

"No, not quite. It looks like spring, but it isn't spring. It's as if everything was resting — getting ready to sleep. In spring they're getting ready to grow. Can't you FEEL the difference?"

"I think it's just like spring," insisted Felicity.

In the sun-sweet place before the Pulpit Stone we boys had put up a board table. Aunt Janet allowed us to cover it with an old tablecloth, the worn places in which the girls artfully concealed with frost-whitened ferns. We had the kitchen dishes, and the table was gaily decorated with Cecily's three scarlet geraniums and maple leaves in the cherry vase. As for the viands, they were fit for the gods on high Olympus. Felicity had spent the whole previous day and the forenoon of the picnic day in concocting them. Her crowning achievement was a rich little plum cake, on the white frosting of which the words "Welcome Back" were lettered in pink candies. This was put before Peter's place, and almost overcame him.

“To think that you’d go to so much trouble for me!” he said, with a glance of adoring gratitude at Felicity. Felicity got all the gratitude, although the Story Girl had originated the idea and seeded the raisins and beaten the eggs, while Cecily had trudged all the way to Mrs. Jameson’s little shop below the church to buy the pink candies. But that is the way of the world.

“We ought to have grace,” said Felicity, as we sat down at the festal board. “Will any one say it?”

She looked at me, but I blushed to the roots of my hair and shook my head sheepishly. An awkward pause ensued; it looked as if we would have to proceed without grace, when Felix suddenly shut his eyes, bent his head, and said a very good grace without any appearance of embarrassment. We looked at him when it was over with an increase of respect.

“Where on earth did you learn that, Felix?” I asked.

“It’s the grace Uncle Alec says at every meal,” answered Felix.

We felt rather ashamed of ourselves. Was it possible that we had paid so little attention to Uncle Alec’s grace that we did not recognize it when we heard it on other lips?

“Now,” said Felicity jubilantly, “let’s eat everything up.”

In truth, it was a merry little feast. We had gone without our dinners, in order to “save our appetites,” and we did ample justice to Felicity’s good things. Paddy sat on the Pulpit Stone and watched us with great yellow eyes, knowing that tidbits would come his way later on. Many witty things were said — or at least we thought them witty — and uproarious was the laughter. Never had the old King orchard known a blither merrymaking or lighter hearts.

The picnic over, we played games until the early falling dusk, and then we went with Uncle Alec to the back field to burn the potato stalks — the crowning delight of the day.

The stalks were in heaps all over the field, and we were allowed the privilege of setting fire to them. ‘Twas glorious! In a few minutes the field was alight with blazing bonfires, over which rolled great, pungent clouds of smoke. From pile to pile we ran, shrieking with delight, to poke each up

with a long stick and watch the gush of rose-red sparks stream off into the night. In what a whirl of smoke and firelight and wild, fantastic, hurtling shadows we were!

When we grew tired of our sport we went to the windward side of the field and perched ourselves on the high pole fence that skirted a dark spruce wood, full of strange, furtive sounds. Over us was a great, dark sky, blossoming with silver stars, and all around lay dusky, mysterious reaches of meadow and wood in the soft, empurpled night. Away to the east a shimmering silveryness beneath a palace of aerial cloud foretokened moonrise. But directly before us the potato field, with its wreathing smoke and sullen flames, the gigantic shadow of Uncle Alec crossing and recrossing it, reminded us of Peter's famous description of the bad place, and probably suggested the Story Girl's remark.

"I know a story," she said, infusing just the right shade of weirdness into her voice, "about a man who saw the devil. Now, what's the matter, Felicity?"

"I can never get used to the way you mention the — the — that name," complained Felicity. "To hear you speak of the Old Scratch any one would think he was just a common person."

"Never mind. Tell us the story," I said curiously.

"It is about Mrs. John Martin's uncle at Markdale," said the Story Girl. "I heard Uncle Roger telling it the other night. He didn't know I was sitting on the cellar hatch outside the window, or I don't suppose he would have told it. Mrs. Martin's uncle's name was William Cowan, and he has been dead for twenty years; but sixty years ago he was a young man, and a very wild, wicked young man. He did everything bad he could think of, and never went to church, and he laughed at everything religious, even the devil. He didn't believe there was a devil at all. One beautiful summer Sunday evening his mother pleaded with him to go to church with her, but he would not. He told her that he was going fishing instead, and when church time came he swaggered past the church, with his fishing rod over his shoulder, singing a godless song. Half way between the church and the harbour there was a thick spruce wood, and the path ran through it. When

William Cowan was half way through it SOMETHING came out of the wood and walked beside him.”

I have never heard anything more horribly suggestive than that innocent word “something,” as enunciated by the Story Girl. I felt Cecily’s hand, icy cold, clutching mine.

“What — what — was IT like?” whispered Felix, curiosity getting the better of his terror.

“IT was tall, and black, and hairy,” said the Story Girl, her eyes glowing with uncanny intensity in the red glare of the fires, “and IT lifted one great, hairy hand, with claws on the end of it, and clapped William Cowan, first on one shoulder and then on the other, and said, ‘Good sport to you, brother.’ William Cowan gave a horrible scream and fell on his face right there in the wood. Some of the men around the church door heard the scream, and they rushed down to the wood. They saw nothing but William Cowan, lying like a dead man on the path. They took him up and carried him home; and when they undressed him to put him to bed, there, on each shoulder, was the mark of a big hand, BURNED INTO THE FLESH. It was weeks before the burns healed, and the scars never went away. Always, as long as William Cowan lived, he carried on his shoulders the prints of the devil’s hand.”

I really do not know how we should ever have got home, had we been left to our own devices. We were cold with fright. How could we turn our backs on the eerie spruce wood, out of which SOMETHING might pop at any moment? How cross those long, shadowy fields between us and our rooftree? How venture through the darkly mysterious bracken hollow?

Fortunately, Uncle Alec came along at this crisis and said he thought we’d better come home now, since the fires were nearly out. We slid down from the fence and started, taking care to keep close together and in front of Uncle Alec.

“I don’t believe a word of that yarn,” said Dan, trying to speak with his usual incredulity.

“I don’t see how you can help believing it,” said Cecily. “It isn’t as if it was something we’d read of, or that happened far away. It happened just

down at Markdale, and I've seen that very spruce wood myself."

"Oh, I suppose William Cowan got a fright of some kind," conceded Dan, "but I don't believe he saw the devil."

"Old Mr. Morrison at Lower Markdale was one of the men who undressed him, and he remembers seeing the marks," said the Story Girl triumphantly.

"How did William Cowan behave afterwards?" I asked.

"He was a changed man," said the Story Girl solemnly. "Too much changed. He never was known to laugh again, or even smile. He became a very religious man, which was a good thing, but he was dreadfully gloomy and thought everything pleasant sinful. He wouldn't even eat any more than was actually necessary to keep him alive. Uncle Roger says that if he had been a Roman Catholic he would have become a monk, but, as he was a Presbyterian, all he could do was to turn into a crank."

"Yes, but your Uncle Roger was never clapped on the shoulder and called brother by the devil," said Peter. "If he had, he mightn't have been so precious jolly afterwards himself."

"I do wish to goodness," said Felicity in exasperation, "that you'd stop talking of the — the — of such subjects in the dark. I'm so scared now that I keep thinking father's steps behind us are SOMETHING'S. Just think, my own father!"

The Story Girl slipped her arm through Felicity's.

"Never mind," she said soothingly. "I'll tell you another story — such a beautiful story that you'll forget all about the devil."

She told us one of Hans Andersen's most exquisite tales; and the magic of her voice charmed away all our fear, so that when we reached the bracken hollow, a lake of shadow surrounded by the silver shore of moonlit fields, we all went through it without a thought of His Satanic Majesty at all. And beyond us, on the hill, the homelight was glowing from the farmhouse window like a beacon of old loves.

The Opening of the Blue Chest

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November awakened from her dream of May in a bad temper. The day after the picnic a cold autumn rain set in, and we got up to find our world a drenched, wind-writhen place, with sodden fields and dour skies. The rain was weeping on the roof as if it were shedding the tears of old sorrows; the willow by the gate tossed its gaunt branches wildly, as if it were some passionate, spectral thing, wringing its fleshless hands in agony; the orchard was haggard and uncomely; nothing seemed the same except the staunch, trusty, old spruces.

It was Friday, but we were not to begin going to school again until Monday, so we spent the day in the granary, sorting apples and hearing tales. In the evening the rain ceased, the wind came around to the northwest, freezing suddenly, and a chilly yellow sunset beyond the dark hills seemed to herald a brighter morrow.

Felicity and the Story Girl and I walked down to the postoffice for the mail, along a road where fallen leaves went eddying fitfully up and down before us in weird, uncanny dances of their own. The evening was full of eerie sounds — the creaking of fir boughs, the whistle of the wind in the treetops, the vibrations of strips of dried bark on the rail fences. But we carried summer and sunshine in our hearts, and the bleak unloveliness of the outer world only intensified our inner radiance.

Felicity wore her new velvet hood, with a coquettish little collar of white fur about her neck. Her golden curls framed her lovely face, and the wind stung the pink of her cheeks to crimson. On my left hand walked the Story Girl, her red cap on her jaunty brown head. She scattered her words along the path like the pearls and diamonds of the old fairy tale. I remember that I strutted along quite insufferably, for we met several of the Carlisle boys and I felt that I was an exceptionally lucky fellow to have such beauty on one side and such charm on the other.

There was one of father's thin letters for Felix, a fat, foreign letter for the Story Girl, addressed in her father's minute handwriting, a drop letter for Cecily from some school friend, with "In Haste" written across the corner, and a letter for Aunt Janet, postmarked Montreal.

"I can't think who that is from," said Felicity. "Nobody in Montreal ever writes to mother. Cecily's letter is from Em Frewen. She always puts 'In Haste' on her letters, no matter what is in them."

When we reached home, Aunt Janet opened and read her Montreal letter. Then she laid it down and looked about her in astonishment.

"Well, did ever any mortal!" she said.

"What in the world is the matter?" said Uncle Alec.

"This letter is from James Ward's wife in Montreal," said Aunt Janet solemnly. "Rachel Ward is dead. And she told James' wife to write to me and tell me to open the old blue chest."

"Hurrah!" shouted Dan.

"Donald King," said his mother severely, "Rachel Ward was your relation and she is dead. What do you mean by such behaviour?"

"I never was acquainted with her," said Dan sulkily. "And I wasn't hurrahing because she is dead. I hurrahed because that blue chest is to be opened at last."

"So poor Rachel is gone," said Uncle Alec. "She must have been an old woman — seventy-five I suppose. I remember her as a fine, blooming young woman. Well, well, and so the old chest is to be opened at last. What is to be done with its contents?"

"Rachel left instructions about them," answered Aunt Janet, referring to the letter. "The wedding dress and veil and letters are to be burned. There are two jugs in it which are to be sent to James' wife. The rest of the things are to be given around among the connection. Each member is to have one, 'to remember her by.'"

"Oh, can't we open it right away this very night?" said Felicity eagerly.

"No, indeed!" Aunt Janet folded up the letter decidedly. "That chest has been locked up for fifty years, and it'll stand being locked up one more

night. You children wouldn't sleep a wink tonight if we opened it now. You'd go wild with excitement."

"I'm sure I won't sleep anyhow," said Felicity. "Well, at least you'll open it the first thing in the morning, won't you, ma?"

"No, I'll do nothing of the sort," was Aunt Janet's pitiless decree. "I want to get the work out of the way first — and Roger and Olivia will want to be here, too. We'll say ten o'clock tomorrow forenoon."

"That's sixteen whole hours yet," sighed Felicity.

"I'm going right over to tell the Story Girl," said Cecily.

"Won't she be excited!"

We were all excited. We spent the evening speculating on the possible contents of the chest, and Cecily dreamed miserably that night that the moths had eaten everything in it.

The morning dawned on a beautiful world. A very slight fall of snow had come in the night — just enough to look like a filmy veil of lace flung over the dark evergreens, and the hard frozen ground. A new blossom time seemed to have revisited the orchard. The spruce wood behind the house appeared to be woven out of enchantment. There is nothing more beautiful than a thickly growing wood of firs lightly powdered with new-fallen snow. As the sun remained hidden by gray clouds, this fairy-beauty lasted all day.

The Story Girl came over early in the morning, and Sara Ray, to whom faithful Cecily had sent word, was also on hand. Felicity did not approve of this.

"Sara Ray isn't any relation to our family," she scolded to Cecily, "and she has no right to be present."

"She's a particular friend of mine," said Cecily with dignity. "We have her in everything, and it would hurt her feelings dreadfully to be left out of this. Peter is no relation either, but he is going to be here when we open it, so why shouldn't Sara?"

"Peter ain't a member of the family YET, but maybe he will be some day. Hey, Felicity?" said Dan.

“You’re awful smart, aren’t you, Dan King?” said Felicity, reddening. “Perhaps you’d like to send for Kitty Marr, too — though she DOES laugh at your big mouth.”

“It seems as if ten o’clock would never come,” sighed the Story Girl. “The work is all done, and Aunt Olivia and Uncle Roger are here, and the chest might just as well be opened right away.”

“Mother SAID ten o’clock and she’ll stick to it,” said Felicity crossly. “It’s only nine now.”

“Let us put the clock on half an hour,” said the Story Girl. “The clock in the hall isn’t going, so no one will know the difference.”

We all looked at each other.

“I wouldn’t dare,” said Felicity irresolutely.

“Oh, if that’s all, I’ll do it,” said the Story Girl.

When ten o’clock struck Aunt Janet came into the kitchen, remarking innocently that it hadn’t seemed anytime since nine. We must have looked horribly guilty, but none of the grownups suspected anything. Uncle Alec brought in the axe, and pried off the cover of the old blue chest, while everybody stood around in silence.

Then came the unpacking. It was certainly an interesting performance. Aunt Janet and Aunt Olivia took everything out and laid it on the kitchen table. We children were forbidden to touch anything, but fortunately we were not forbidden the use of our eyes and tongues.

“There are the pink and gold vases Grandmother King gave her,” said Felicity, as Aunt Olivia unwrapped from their tissue paper swathings a pair of slender, old-fashioned, twisted vases of pink glass, over which little gold leaves were scattered. “Aren’t they handsome?”

“And oh,” exclaimed Cecily in delight, “there’s the china fruit basket with the apple on the handle. Doesn’t it look real? I’ve thought so much about it. Oh, mother, please let me hold it for a minute. I’ll be as careful as careful.”

“There comes the china set Grandfather King gave her,” said the Story Girl wistfully. “Oh, it makes me feel sad. Think of all the hopes that Rachel Ward must have put away in this chest with all her pretty things.”

Following these, came a quaint little candlestick of blue china, and the two jugs which were to be sent to James' wife.

"They ARE handsome," said Aunt Janet rather enviously. "They must be a hundred years old. Aunt Sara Ward gave them to Rachel, and she had them for at least fifty years. I should have thought one would have been enough for James' wife. But of course we must do just as Rachel wished. I declare, here's a dozen tin patty pans!"

"Tin patty pans aren't very romantic," said the Story Girl discontentedly.

"I notice that you are as fond as any one of what is baked in them," said Aunt Janet. "I've heard of those patty pans. An old servant Grandmother King had gave them to Rachel. Now we are coming to the linen. That was Uncle Edward Ward's present. How yellow it has grown."

We children were not greatly interested in the sheets and tablecloths and pillow-cases which now came out of the capacious depths of the old blue chest. But Aunt Olivia was quite enraptured over them.

"What sewing!" she said. "Look, Janet, you'd almost need a magnifying glass to see the stitches. And the dear, old-fashioned pillowslips with buttons on them!"

"Here are a dozen handkerchiefs," said Aunt Janet. "Look at the initial in the corner of each. Rachel learned that stitch from a nun in Montreal. It looks as if it was woven into the material."

"Here are her quilts," said Aunt Olivia. "Yes, there is the blue and white counterpane Grandmother Ward gave her — and the Rising Sun quilt her Aunt Nancy made for her — and the braided rug. The colours are not faded one bit. I want that rug, Janet."

Underneath the linen were Rachel Ward's wedding clothes. The excitement of the girls waxed red hot over these. There was a Paisley shawl in the wrappings in which it had come from the store, and a wide scarf of some yellowed lace. There was the embroidered petticoat which had cost Felicity such painful blushes, and a dozen beautifully worked sets of the fine muslin "undersleeves" which had been the fashion in Rachel Ward's youth.

“This was to have been her appearing out dress,” said Aunt Olivia, lifting out a shot green silk. “It is all cut to pieces — but what a pretty soft shade it was! Look at the skirt, Janet. How many yards must it measure around?”

“Hoopskirts were in then,” said Aunt Janet. “I don’t see her wedding hat here. I was always told that she packed it away, too.”

“So was I. But she couldn’t have. It certainly isn’t here. I have heard that the white plume on it cost a small fortune. Here is her black silk mantle. It seems like sacrilege to meddle with these clothes.”

“Don’t be foolish, Olivia. They must be unpacked at least. And they must all be burned since they have cut so badly. This purple cloth dress is quite good, however. It can be made over nicely, and it would become you very well, Olivia.”

“No, thank you,” said Aunt Olivia, with a little shudder. “I should feel like a ghost. Make it over for yourself, Janet.”

“Well, I will, if you don’t want it. I am not troubled with fancies. That seems to be all except this box. I suppose the wedding dress is in it.”

“Oh,” breathed the girls, crowding about Aunt Olivia, as she lifted out the box and cut the cord around it. Inside was lying a dress of soft silk, that had once been white but was now yellowed with age, and, enfolding it like a mist, a long, white bridal veil, redolent with some strange, old-time perfume that had kept its sweetness through all the years.

“Poor Rachel Ward,” said Aunt Olivia softly. “Here is her point lace handkerchief. She made it herself. It is like a spider’s web. Here are the letters Will Montague wrote her. And here,” she added, taking up a crimson velvet case with a tarnished gilt clasp, “are their photographs — his and hers.”

We looked eagerly at the daguerreotypes in the old case.

“Why, Rachel Ward wasn’t a bit pretty!” exclaimed the Story Girl in poignant disappointment.

No, Rachel Ward was not pretty, that had to be admitted. The picture showed a fresh young face, with strongly marked, irregular features, large black eyes, and black curls hanging around the shoulders in old-time style.

“Rachel wasn’t pretty,” said Uncle Alec, “but she had a lovely colour, and a beautiful smile. She looks far too sober in that picture.”

“She has a beautiful neck and bust,” said Aunt Olivia critically.

“Anyhow, Will Montague was really handsome,” said the Story Girl.

“A handsome rogue,” growled Uncle Alec. “I never liked him. I was only a little chap of ten but I saw through him. Rachel Ward was far too good for him.”

We would dearly have liked to get a peep into the letters, too. But Aunt Olivia would not allow that. They must be burned unread, she declared. She took the wedding dress and veil, the picture case, and the letters away with her. The rest of the things were put back into the chest, pending their ultimate distribution. Aunt Janet gave each of us boys a handkerchief. The Story Girl got the blue candlestick, and Felicity and Cecily each got a pink and gold vase. Even Sara Ray was made happy by the gift of a little china plate, with a loudly coloured picture of Moses and Aaron before Pharaoh in the middle of it. Moses wore a scarlet cloak, while Aaron disported himself in bright blue. Pharaoh was arrayed in yellow. The plate had a scalloped border with a wreath of green leaves around it.

“I shall never use it to eat off,” said Sara rapturously. “I’ll put it up on the parlour mantelpiece.”

“I don’t see much use in having a plate just for ornament,” said Felicity.

“It’s nice to have something interesting to look at,” retorted Sara, who felt that the soul must have food as well as the body.

“I’m going to get a candle for my candlestick, and use it every night to go to bed with,” said the Story Girl. “And I’ll never light it without thinking of poor Rachel Ward. But I DO wish she had been pretty.”

“Well,” said Felicity, with a glance at the clock, “it’s all over, and it has been very interesting. But that clock has got to be put back to the right time some time through the day. I don’t want bedtime coming a whole half-hour before it ought to.”

In the afternoon, when Aunt Janet was over at Uncle Roger’s, seeing him and Aunt Olivia off to town, the clock was righted. The Story Girl and

Peter came over to stay all night with us, and we made taffy in the kitchen, which the grownups kindly gave over to us for that purpose.

“Of course it was very interesting to see the old chest unpacked,” said the Story Girl as she stirred the contents of a saucepan vigorously. “But now that it is over I believe I am sorry that it is opened. It isn’t mysterious any longer. We know all about it now, and we can never imagine what things are in it any more.”

“It’s better to know than to imagine,” said Felicity.

“Oh, no, it isn’t,” said the Story Girl quickly. “When you know things you have to go by facts. But when you just dream about things there’s nothing to hold you down.”

“You’re letting the taffy scorch, and THAT’S a fact you’d better go by,” said Felicity sniffing. “Haven’t you got a nose?”

When we went to bed, that wonderful white enchantress, the moon, was making an elfland of the snow-misted world outside. From where I lay I could see the sharp tops of the spruces against the silvery sky. The frost was abroad, and the winds were still and the land lay in glamour.

Across the hall, the Story Girl was telling Felicity and Cecily the old, old tale of Argive Helen and “evil-hearted Paris.”

“But that’s a bad story,” said Felicity when the tale was ended.

“She left her husband and run away with another man.”

“I suppose it was bad four thousand years ago,” admitted the Story Girl. “But by this time the bad must have all gone out of it. It’s only the good that could last so long.”

Our summer was over. It had been a beautiful one. We had known the sweetness of common joys, the delight of dawns, the dream and glamour of noontides, the long, purple peace of carefree nights. We had had the pleasure of bird song, of silver rain on greening fields, of storm among the trees, of blossoming meadows, and of the converse of whispering leaves. We had had brotherhood with wind and star, with books and tales, and hearth fires of autumn. Ours had been the little, loving tasks of every day, blithe companionship, shared thoughts, and adventuring. Rich were we in the memory of those opulent months that had gone from us — richer than

we then knew or suspected. And before us was the dream of spring. It is always safe to dream of spring. For it is sure to come; and if it be not just as we have pictured it, it will be infinitely sweeter.

THE GOLDEN ROAD

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Foreword

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Once upon a time we all walked on the golden road. It was a fair highway, through the Land of Lost Delight; shadow and sunshine were blessedly mingled, and every turn and dip revealed a fresh charm and a new loveliness to eager hearts and unspoiled eyes.

On that road we heard the song of morning stars; we drank in fragrances aerial and sweet as a May mist; we were rich in gossamer fancies and iris hopes; our hearts sought and found the boon of dreams; the years waited beyond and they were very fair; life was a rose-lipped comrade with purple flowers dripping from her fingers.

We may long have left the golden road behind, but its memories are the dearest of our eternal possessions; and those who cherish them as such may haply find a pleasure in the pages of this book, whose people are pilgrims on the golden road of youth.

Chapter I.

A New Departure

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“I’ve thought of something amusing for the winter,” I said as we drew into a half-circle around the glorious woodfire in Uncle Alec’s kitchen.

It had been a day of wild November wind, closing down into a wet, eerie twilight. Outside, the wind was shrilling at the windows and around the eaves, and the rain was playing on the roof. The old willow at the gate was writhing in the storm and the orchard was a place of weird music, born of all the tears and fears that haunt the halls of night. But little we cared for the gloom and the loneliness of the outside world; we kept them at bay with the light of the fire and the laughter of our young lips.

We had been having a splendid game of Blind-Man’s Buff. That is, it had been splendid at first; but later the fun went out of it because we found that Peter was, of malice prepense, allowing himself to be caught too easily, in order that he might have the pleasure of catching Felicity — which he never failed to do, no matter how tightly his eyes were bound. What remarkable goose said that love is blind? Love can see through five folds of closely-woven muffler with ease!

“I’m getting tired,” said Cecily, whose breath was coming rather quickly and whose pale cheeks had bloomed into scarlet. “Let’s sit down and get the Story Girl to tell us a story.”

But as we dropped into our places the Story Girl shot a significant glance at me which intimated that this was the psychological moment for introducing the scheme she and I had been secretly developing for some days. It was really the Story Girl’s idea and none of mine. But she had insisted that I should make the suggestion as coming wholly from myself.

“If you don’t, Felicity won’t agree to it. You know yourself, Bev, how contrary she’s been lately over anything I mention. And if she goes against it Peter will too — the ninny! — and it wouldn’t be any fun if we weren’t all in it.”

“What is it?” asked Felicity, drawing her chair slightly away from Peter’s.

“It is this. Let us get up a newspaper of our own — write it all ourselves, and have all we do in it. Don’t you think we can get a lot of fun out of it?”

Everyone looked rather blank and amazed, except the Story Girl. She knew what she had to do, and she did it.

“What a silly idea!” she exclaimed, with a contemptuous toss of her long brown curls. “Just as if WE could get up a newspaper!”

Felicity fired up, exactly as we had hoped.

“I think it’s a splendid idea,” she said enthusiastically. “I’d like to know why we couldn’t get up as good a newspaper as they have in town! Uncle Roger says the Daily Enterprise has gone to the dogs — all the news it prints is that some old woman has put a shawl on her head and gone across the road to have tea with another old woman. I guess we could do better than that. You needn’t think, Sara Stanley, that nobody but you can do anything.”

“I think it would be great fun,” said Peter decidedly. “My Aunt Jane helped edit a paper when she was at Queen’s Academy, and she said it was very amusing and helped her a great deal.”

The Story Girl could hide her delight only by dropping her eyes and frowning.

“Bev wants to be editor,” she said, “and I don’t see how he can, with no experience. Anyhow, it would be a lot of trouble.”

“Some people are so afraid of a little bother,” retorted Felicity.

“I think it would be nice,” said Cecily timidly, “and none of us have any experience of being editors, any more than Bev, so that wouldn’t matter.”

“Will it be printed?” asked Dan.

“Oh, no,” I said. “We can’t have it printed. We’ll just have to write it out — we can buy foolscap from the teacher.”

“I don’t think it will be much of a newspaper if it isn’t printed,” said Dan scornfully.

“It doesn’t matter very much what YOU think,” said Felicity.

“Thank you,” retorted Dan.

“Of course,” said the Story Girl hastily, not wishing to have Dan turned against our project, “if all the rest of you want it I’ll go in for it too. I daresay it would be real good fun, now that I come to think of it. And we’ll keep the copies, and when we become famous they’ll be quite valuable.”

“I wonder if any of us ever will be famous,” said Felix.

“The Story Girl will be,” I said.

“I don’t see how she can be,” said Felicity skeptically. “Why, she’s just one of us.”

“Well, it’s decided, then, that we’re to have a newspaper,” I resumed briskly. “The next thing is to choose a name for it. That’s a very important thing.”

“How often are you going to publish it?” asked Felix.

“Once a month.”

“I thought newspapers came out every day, or every week at least,” said Dan.

“We couldn’t have one every week,” I explained. “It would be too much work.”

“Well, that’s an argument,” admitted Dan. “The less work you can get along with the better, in my opinion. No, Felicity, you needn’t say it. I know exactly what you want to say, so save your breath to cool your porridge. I agree with you that I never work if I can find anything else to do.”

“Remember it is harder still

To have no work to do,”

quoted Cecily reprovingly.

“I don’t believe THAT,” rejoined Dan. “I’m like the Irishman who said he wished the man who begun work had stayed and finished it.”

“Well, is it decided that Bev is to be editor?” asked Felix.

“Of course it is,” Felicity answered for everybody.

“Then,” said Felix, “I move that the name be The King Monthly Magazine.”

“That sounds fine,” said Peter, hitching his chair a little nearer Felicity’s.

“But,” said Cecily timidly, “that will leave out Peter and the Story Girl and Sara Ray, just as if they didn’t have a share in it. I don’t think that would be fair.”

“You name it then, Cecily,” I suggested.

“Oh!” Cecily threw a deprecating glance at the Story Girl and Felicity. Then, meeting the contempt in the latter’s gaze, she raised her head with unusual spirit.

“I think it would be nice just to call it Our Magazine,” she said. “Then we’d all feel as if we had a share in it.”

“Our Magazine it will be, then,” I said. “And as for having a share in it, you bet we’ll all have a share in it. If I’m to be editor you’ll all have to be sub-editors, and have charge of a department.”

“Oh, I couldn’t,” protested Cecily.

“You must,” I said inexorably. “‘England expects everyone to do his duty.’ That’s our motto — only we’ll put Prince Edward Island in place of England. There must be no shirking. Now, what departments will we have? We must make it as much like a real newspaper as we can.”

“Well, we ought to have an etiquette department, then,” said Felicity. “The Family Guide has one.”

“Of course we’ll have one,” I said, “and Dan will edit it.”

“Dan!” exclaimed Felicity, who had fondly expected to be asked to edit it herself.

“I can run an etiquette column as well as that idiot in the Family Guide, anyhow,” said Dan defiantly. “But you can’t have an etiquette department unless questions are asked. What am I to do if nobody asks any?”

“You must make some up,” said the Story Girl. “Uncle Roger says that is what the Family Guide man does. He says it is impossible that there can be as many hopeless fools in the world as that column would stand for otherwise.”

“We want you to edit the household department, Felicity,” I said, seeing a cloud lowering on that fair lady’s brow. “Nobody can do that as well as you. Felix will edit the jokes and the Information Bureau, and Cecily must be fashion editor. Yes, you must, Sis. It’s easy as wink. And the Story Girl will attend to the personals. They’re very important. Anyone can contribute a personal, but the Story Girl is to see there are some in every issue, even if she has to make them up, like Dan with the etiquette.”

“Bev will run the scrap book department, besides the editorials,” said the Story Girl, seeing that I was too modest to say it myself.

“Aren’t you going to have a story page?” asked Peter.

“We will, if you’ll be fiction and poetry editor,” I said.

Peter, in his secret soul, was dismayed, but he would not blanch before Felicity.

“All right,” he said, recklessly.

“We can put anything we like in the scrap book department,” I explained, “but all the other contributions must be original, and all must have the name of the writer signed to them, except the personals. We must all do our best. Our Magazine is to be ‘a feast of reason and flow of soul.’”

I felt that I had worked in two quotations with striking effect. The others, with the exception of the Story Girl, looked suitably impressed.

“But,” said Cecily, reproachfully, “haven’t you anything for Sara Ray to do? She’ll feel awful bad if she is left out.”

I had forgotten Sara Ray. Nobody, except Cecily, ever did remember Sara Ray unless she was on the spot. But we decided to put her in as advertising manager. That sounded well and really meant very little.

“Well, we’ll go ahead then,” I said, with a sigh of relief that the project had been so easily launched. “We’ll get the first issue out about the first of January. And whatever else we do we mustn’t let Uncle Roger get hold of it. He’d make such fearful fun of it.”

“I hope we can make a success of it,” said Peter moodily. He had been moody ever since he was entrapped into being fiction editor.

“It will be a success if we are determined to succeed,” I said. “‘Where there is a will there is always a way.’”

“That’s just what Ursula Townley said when her father locked her in her room the night she was going to run away with Kenneth MacNair,” said the Story Girl.

We pricked up our ears, scenting a story.

“Who were Ursula Townley and Kenneth MacNair?” I asked.

“Kenneth MacNair was a first cousin of the Awkward Man’s grandfather, and Ursula Townley was the belle of the Island in her day. Who do you suppose told me the story — no, read it to me, out of his brown book?”

“Never the Awkward Man himself!” I exclaimed incredulously.

“Yes, he did,” said the Story Girl triumphantly. “I met him one day last week back in the maple woods when I was looking for ferns. He was sitting by the spring, writing in his brown book. He hid it when he saw me and looked real silly; but after I had talked to him awhile I just asked him about it, and told him that the gossips said he wrote poetry in it, and if he did would he tell me, because I was dying to know. He said he wrote a little of everything in it; and then I begged him to read me something out of it, and he read me the story of Ursula and Kenneth.”

“I don’t see how you ever had the face,” said Felicity; and even Cecily looked as if she thought the Story Girl had gone rather far.

“Never mind that,” cried Felix, “but tell us the story. That’s the main thing.”

“I’ll tell it just as the Awkward Man read it, as far as I can,” said the Story Girl, “but I can’t put all his nice poetical touches in, because I can’t remember them all, though he read it over twice for me.”

A Will, A Way and A Woman

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“One day, over a hundred years ago, Ursula Townley was waiting for Kenneth MacNair in a great beechwood, where brown nuts were falling and an October wind was making the leaves dance on the ground like pixy-people.”

“What are pixy-people?” demanded Peter, forgetting the Story Girl’s dislike of interruptions.

“Hush,” whispered Cecily. “That is only one of the Awkward Man’s poetical touches, I guess.”

“There were cultivated fields between the grove and the dark blue gulf; but far behind and on each side were woods, for Prince Edward Island a hundred years ago was not what it is today. The settlements were few and scattered, and the population so scanty that old Hugh Townley boasted that he knew every man, woman and child in it.

“Old Hugh was quite a noted man in his day. He was noted for several things — he was rich, he was hospitable, he was proud, he was masterful — and he had for daughter the handsomest young woman in Prince Edward Island.

“Of course, the young men were not blind to her good looks, and she had so many lovers that all the other girls hated her—”

“You bet!” said Dan, aside —

“But the only one who found favour in her eyes was the very last man she should have pitched her fancy on, at least if old Hugh were the judge. Kenneth MacNair was a dark-eyed young sea-captain of the next settlement, and it was to meet him that Ursula stole to the beechwood on that autumn day of crisp wind and ripe sunshine. Old Hugh had forbidden his house to the young man, making such a scene of fury about it that even Ursula’s high spirit quailed. Old Hugh had really nothing against Kenneth himself; but years before either Kenneth or Ursula was born, Kenneth’s

father had beaten Hugh Townley in a hotly contested election. Political feeling ran high in those days, and old Hugh had never forgiven the MacNair his victory. The feud between the families dated from that tempest in the provincial teapot, and the surplus of votes on the wrong side was the reason why, thirty years after, Ursula had to meet her lover by stealth if she met him at all.”

“Was the MacNair a Conservative or a Grit?” asked Felicity.

“It doesn’t make any difference what he was,” said the Story Girl impatiently. “Even a Tory would be romantic a hundred years ago. Well, Ursula couldn’t see Kenneth very often, for Kenneth lived fifteen miles away and was often absent from home in his vessel. On this particular day it was nearly three months since they had met.

“The Sunday before, young Sandy MacNair had been in Carlyle church. He had risen at dawn that morning, walked barefooted for eight miles along the shore, carrying his shoes, hired a harbour fisherman to row him over the channel, and then walked eight miles more to the church at Carlyle, less, it is to be feared, from a zeal for holy things than that he might do an errand for his adored brother, Kenneth. He carried a letter which he contrived to pass into Ursula’s hand in the crowd as the people came out. This letter asked Ursula to meet Kenneth in the beechwood the next afternoon, and so she stole away there when suspicious father and watchful stepmother thought she was spinning in the granary loft.”

“It was very wrong of her to deceive her parents,” said Felicity primly.

The Story Girl couldn’t deny this, so she evaded the ethical side of the question skilfully.

“I am not telling you what Ursula Townley ought to have done,” she said loftily. “I am only telling you what she DID do. If you don’t want to hear it you needn’t listen, of course. There wouldn’t be many stories to tell if nobody ever did anything she shouldn’t do.

“Well, when Kenneth came, the meeting was just what might have been expected between two lovers who had taken their last kiss three months before. So it was a good half-hour before Ursula said,

“‘Oh, Kenneth, I cannot stay long — I shall be missed. You said in your letter that you had something important to talk of. What is it?’

“‘My news is this, Ursula. Next Saturday morning my vessel, The Fair Lady, with her captain on board, sails at dawn from Charlottetown harbour, bound for Buenos Ayres. At this season this means a safe and sure return — next May.’

“‘Kenneth!’ cried Ursula. She turned pale and burst into tears. ‘How can you think of leaving me? Oh, you are cruel!’

“‘Why, no, sweetheart,’ laughed Kenneth. ‘The captain of The Fair Lady will take his bride with him. We’ll spend our honeymoon on the high seas, Ursula, and the cold Canadian winter under southern palms.’

“‘You want me to run away with you, Kenneth?’ exclaimed Ursula.

“‘Indeed, dear girl, there’s nothing else to do!’

“‘Oh, I cannot!’ she protested. ‘My father would—’

“‘We’ll not consult him — until afterward. Come, Ursula, you know there’s no other way. We’ve always known it must come to this. YOUR father will never forgive me for MY father. You won’t fail me now. Think of the long parting if you send me away alone on such a voyage. Pluck up your courage, and we’ll let Townleys and MacNairs whistle their mouldy feuds down the wind while we sail southward in The Fair Lady. I have a plan.’

“‘Let me hear it,’ said Ursula, beginning to get back her breath.

“‘There is to be a dance at The Springs Friday night. Are you invited, Ursula?’

“‘Yes.’

“‘Good. I am not — but I shall be there — in the fir grove behind the house, with two horses. When the dancing is at its height you’ll steal out to meet me. Then ‘tis but a fifteen mile ride to Charlottetown, where a good minister, who is a friend of mine, will be ready to marry us. By the time the dancers have tired their heels you and I will be on our vessel, able to snap our fingers at fate.’

“‘And what if I do not meet you in the fir grove?’ said Ursula, a little impertinently.

“‘If you do not, I’ll sail for South America the next morning, and many a long year will pass ere Kenneth MacNair comes home again.’

“Perhaps Kenneth didn’t mean that, but Ursula thought he did, and it decided her. She agreed to run away with him. Yes, of course that was wrong, too, Felicity. She ought to have said, ‘No, I shall be married respectably from home, and have a wedding and a silk dress and bridesmaids and lots of presents.’ But she didn’t. She wasn’t as prudent as Felicity King would have been.”

“She was a shameless hussy,” said Felicity, venting on the long-dead Ursula that anger she dare not visit on the Story Girl.

“Oh, no, Felicity dear, she was just a lass of spirit. I’d have done the same. And when Friday night came she began to dress for the dance with a brave heart. She was to go to The Springs with her uncle and aunt, who were coming on horseback that afternoon, and would then go on to The Springs in old Hugh’s carriage, which was the only one in Carlyle then. They were to leave in time to reach The Springs before nightfall, for the October nights were dark and the wooded roads rough for travelling.

“When Ursula was ready she looked at herself in the glass with a good deal of satisfaction. Yes, Felicity, she was a vain baggage, that same Ursula, but that kind didn’t all die out a hundred years ago. And she had good reason for being vain. She wore the sea-green silk which had been brought out from England a year before and worn but once — at the Christmas ball at Government House. A fine, stiff, rustling silk it was, and over it shone Ursula’s crimson cheeks and gleaming eyes, and masses of nut brown hair.

“As she turned from the glass she heard her father’s voice below, loud and angry. Growing very pale, she ran out into the hall. Her father was already half way upstairs, his face red with fury. In the hall below Ursula saw her stepmother, looking troubled and vexed. At the door stood Malcolm Ramsay, a homely neighbour youth who had been courting Ursula in his clumsy way ever since she grew up. Ursula had always hated him.

“‘Ursula!’ shouted old Hugh, ‘come here and tell this scoundrel he lies. He says that you met Kenneth MacNair in the beechgrove last Tuesday. Tell him he lies! Tell him he lies!’

“Ursula was no coward. She looked scornfully at poor Ramsay.

“‘The creature is a spy and a tale-bearer,’ she said, ‘but in this he does not lie. I DID meet Kenneth MacNair last Tuesday.’

“‘And you dare to tell me this to my face!’ roared old Hugh. ‘Back to your room, girl! Back to your room and stay there! Take off that finery. You go to no more dances. You shall stay in that room until I choose to let you out. No, not a word! I’ll put you there if you don’t go. In with you — ay, and take your knitting with you. Occupy yourself with that this evening instead of kicking your heels at The Springs!’

“He snatched a roll of gray stocking from the hall table and flung it into Ursula’s room. Ursula knew she would have to follow it, or be picked up and carried in like a naughty child. So she gave the miserable Ramsay a look that made him cringe, and swept into her room with her head in the air. The next moment she heard the door locked behind her. Her first proceeding was to have a cry of anger and shame and disappointment. That did no good, and then she took to marching up and down her room. It did not calm her to hear the rumble of the carriage out of the gate as her uncle and aunt departed.

“‘Oh, what’s to be done?’ she sobbed. ‘Kenneth will be furious. He will think I have failed him and he will go away hot with anger against me. If I could only send a word of explanation I know he would not leave me. But there seems to be no way at all — though I have heard that there’s always a way when there’s a will. Oh, I shall go mad! If the window were not so high I would jump out of it. But to break my legs or my neck would not mend the matter.’

“The afternoon passed on. At sunset Ursula heard hoof-beats and ran to the window. Andrew Kinnear of The Springs was tying his horse at the door. He was a dashing young fellow, and a political crony of old Hugh. No doubt he would be at the dance that night. Oh, if she could get speech for but a moment with him!

“When he had gone into the house, Ursula, turning impatiently from the window, tripped and almost fell over the big ball of homespun yarn her father had flung on the floor. For a moment she gazed at it resentfully — then, with a gay little laugh, she pounced on it. The next moment she was at her table, writing a brief note to Kenneth MacNair. When it was written, Ursula unwound the gray ball to a considerable depth, pinned the note on it, and rewound the yarn over it. A gray ball, the color of the twilight, might escape observation, where a white missive fluttering down from an upper window would surely be seen by someone. Then she softly opened her window and waited.

“It was dusk when Andrew went away. Fortunately old Hugh did not come to the door with him. As Andrew untied his horse Ursula threw the ball with such good aim that it struck him, as she had meant it to do, squarely on the head. Andrew looked up at her window. She leaned out, put her finger warningly on her lips, pointed to the ball, and nodded. Andrew, looking somewhat puzzled, picked up the ball, sprang to his saddle, and galloped off.

“So far, well, thought Ursula. But would Andrew understand? Would he have wit enough to think of exploring the big, knobby ball for its delicate secret? And would he be at the dance after all?

“The evening dragged by. Time had never seemed so long to Ursula. She could not rest or sleep. It was midnight before she heard the patter of a handful of gravel on her windowpanes. In a trice she was leaning out. Below in the darkness stood Kenneth MacNair.

“‘Oh, Kenneth, did you get my letter? And is it safe for you to be here?’

“‘Safe enough. Your father is in bed. I’ve waited two hours down the road for his light to go out, and an extra half-hour to put him to sleep. The horses are there. Slip down and out, Ursula. We’ll make Charlottetown by dawn yet.’

“‘That’s easier said than done, lad. I’m locked in. But do you go out behind the new barn and bring the ladder you will find there.’

“Five minutes later, Miss Ursula, hooded and cloaked, scrambled soundlessly down the ladder, and in five more minutes she and Kenneth were riding along the road.

“‘There’s a stiff gallop before us, Ursula,’ said Kenneth.

“‘I would ride to the world’s end with you, Kenneth MacNair,’ said Ursula. Oh, of course she shouldn’t have said anything of the sort, Felicity. But you see people had no etiquette departments in those days. And when the red sunlight of a fair October dawn was shining over the gray sea The Fair Lady sailed out of Charlottetown harbour. On her deck stood Kenneth and Ursula MacNair, and in her hand, as a most precious treasure, the bride carried a ball of gray homespun yarn.”

“Well,” said Dan, yawning, “I like that kind of a story. Nobody goes and dies in it, that’s one good thing.”

“Did old Hugh forgive Ursula?” I asked.

“The story stopped there in the brown book,” said the Story Girl, “but the Awkward Man says he did, after awhile.”

“It must be rather romantic to be run away with,” remarked Cecily, wistfully.

“Don’t you get such silly notions in your head, Cecily King,” said Felicity, severely.

Chapter III.

The Christmas Harp

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Great was the excitement in the houses of King as Christmas drew nigh. The air was simply charged with secrets. Everybody was very penurious for weeks beforehand and hoards were counted scrutinizingly every day. Mysterious pieces of handiwork were smuggled in and out of sight, and whispered consultations were held, about which nobody thought of being jealous, as might have happened at any other time. Felicity was in her element, for she and her mother were deep in preparations for the day. Cecily and the Story Girl were excluded from these doings with indifference on Aunt Janet's part and what seemed ostentatious complacency on Felicity's. Cecily took this to heart and complained to me about it.

"I'm one of this family just as much as Felicity is," she said, with as much indignation as Cecily could feel, "and I don't think she need shut me out of everything. When I wanted to stone the raisins for the mincemeat she said, no, she would do it herself, because Christmas mincemeat was very particular — as if I couldn't stone raisins right! The airs Felicity puts on about her cooking just make me sick," concluded Cecily wrathfully.

"It's a pity she doesn't make a mistake in cooking once in a while herself," I said. "Then maybe she wouldn't think she knew so much more than other people."

All parcels that came in the mail from distant friends were taken charge of by Aunts Janet and Olivia, not to be opened until the great day of the feast itself. How slowly the last week passed! But even watched pots will boil in the fulness of time, and finally Christmas day came, gray and dour and frost-bitten without, but full of revelry and rose-red mirth within. Uncle Roger and Aunt Olivia and the Story Girl came over early for the day; and Peter came too, with his shining, morning face, to be hailed with

joy, for we had been afraid that Peter would not be able to spend Christmas with us. His mother had wanted him home with her.

“Of course I ought to go,” Peter had told me mournfully, “but we won’t have turkey for dinner, because ma can’t afford it. And ma always cries on holidays because she says they make her think of father. Of course she can’t help it, but it ain’t cheerful. Aunt Jane wouldn’t have cried. Aunt Jane used to say she never saw the man who was worth spoiling her eyes for. But I guess I’ll have to spend Christmas at home.”

At the last moment, however, a cousin of Mrs. Craig’s in Charlottetown invited her for Christmas, and Peter, being given his choice of going or staying, joyfully elected to stay. So we were all together, except Sara Ray, who had been invited but whose mother wouldn’t let her come.

“Sara Ray’s mother is a nuisance,” snapped the Story Girl. “She just lives to make that poor child miserable, and she won’t let her go to the party tonight, either.”

“It is just breaking Sara’s heart that she can’t,” said Cecily compassionately. “I’m almost afraid I won’t enjoy myself for thinking of her, home there alone, most likely reading the Bible, while we’re at the party.”

“She might be worse occupied than reading the Bible,” said Felicity rebukingly.

“But Mrs. Ray makes her read it as a punishment,” protested Cecily. “Whenever Sara cries to go anywhere — and of course she’ll cry tonight — Mrs. Ray makes her read seven chapters in the Bible. I wouldn’t think that would make her very fond of it. And I’ll not be able to talk the party over with Sara afterwards — and that’s half the fun gone.”

“You can tell her all about it,” comforted Felix.

“Telling isn’t a bit like talking it over,” retorted Cecily. “It’s too onesided.”

We had an exciting time opening our presents. Some of us had more than others, but we all received enough to make us feel comfortably that we were not unduly neglected in the matter. The contents of the box which

the Story Girl's father had sent her from Paris made our eyes stick out. It was full of beautiful things, among them another red silk dress — not the bright, flame-hued tint of her old one, but a rich, dark crimson, with the most distracting flounces and bows and ruffles; and with it were little red satin slippers with gold buckles, and heels that made Aunt Janet hold up her hands in horror. Felicity remarked scornfully that she would have thought the Story Girl would get tired wearing red so much, and even Cecily commented apart to me that she thought when you got so many things all at once you didn't appreciate them as much as when you only got a few.

"I'd never get tired of red," said the Story Girl. "I just love it — it's so rich and glowing. When I'm dressed in red I always feel ever so much cleverer than in any other colour. Thoughts just crowd into my brain one after the other. Oh, you darling dress — you dear, sheeny, red-rosey, glistening, silky thing!"

She flung it over her shoulder and danced around the kitchen.

"Don't be silly, Sara," said Aunt Janet, a little stimy. She was a good soul, that Aunt Janet, and had a kind, loving heart in her ample bosom. But I fancy there were times when she thought it rather hard that the daughter of a roving adventurer — as she considered him — like Blair Stanley should disport herself in silk dresses, while her own daughters must go clad in gingham and muslin — for those were the days when a feminine creature got one silk dress in her lifetime, and seldom more than one.

The Story Girl also got a present from the Awkward Man — a little, shabby, worn volume with a great many marks on the leaves.

"Why, it isn't new — it's an old book!" exclaimed Felicity. "I didn't think the Awkward Man was mean, whatever else he was."

"Oh, you don't understand, Felicity," said the Story Girl patiently. "And I don't suppose I can make you understand. But I'll try. I'd ten times rather have this than a new book. It's one of his own, don't you see — one that he has read a hundred times and loved and made a friend of. A new book, just out of a shop, wouldn't be the same thing at all. It wouldn't

MEAN anything. I consider it a great compliment that he has given me this book. I'm prouder of it than of anything else I've got."

"Well, you're welcome to it," said Felicity. "I don't understand and I don't want to. I wouldn't give anybody a Christmas present that wasn't new, and I wouldn't thank anybody who gave me one."

Peter was in the seventh heaven because Felicity had given him a present — and, moreover, one that she had made herself. It was a bookmark of perforated cardboard, with a gorgeous red and yellow worsted goblet worked on it, and below, in green letters, the solemn warning, "Touch Not The Cup." As Peter was not addicted to habits of intemperance, not even to looking on dandelion wine when it was pale yellow, we did not exactly see why Felicity should have selected such a device. But Peter was perfectly satisfied, so nobody cast any blight on his happiness by carping criticism. Later on Felicity told me she had worked the bookmark for him because his father used to drink before he ran away.

"I thought Peter ought to be warned in time," she said.

Even Pat had a ribbon of blue, which he clawed off and lost half an hour after it was tied on him. Pat did not care for vain adornments of the body.

We had a glorious Christmas dinner, fit for the halls of Lucullus, and ate far more than was good for us, none daring to make us afraid on that one day of the year. And in the evening — oh, rapture and delight! — we went to Kitty Marr's party.

It was a fine December evening; the sharp air of morning had mellowed until it was as mild as autumn. There had been no snow, and the long fields, sloping down from the homestead, were brown and mellow. A weird, dreamy stillness had fallen on the purple earth, the dark fir woods, the valley rims, the sere meadows. Nature seemed to have folded satisfied hands to rest, knowing that her long wintry slumber was coming upon her.

At first, when the invitations to the party had come, Aunt Janet had said we could not go; but Uncle Alec interceded in our favour, perhaps influenced thereto by Cecily's wistful eyes. If Uncle Alec had a favourite among his children it was Cecily, and he had grown even more indulgent

towards her of late. Now and then I saw him looking at her intently, and, following his eyes and thought, I had, somehow, seen that Cecily was paler and thinner than she had been in the summer, and that her soft eyes seemed larger, and that over her little face in moments of repose there was a certain languor and weariness that made it very sweet and pathetic. And I heard him tell Aunt Janet that he did not like to see the child getting so much the look of her Aunt Felicity.

“Cecily is perfectly well,” said Aunt Janet sharply. “She’s only growing very fast. Don’t be foolish, Alec.”

But after that Cecily had cups of cream where the rest of us got only milk; and Aunt Janet was very particular to see that she had her rubbers on whenever she went out.

On this merry Christmas evening, however, no fears or dim foreshadowings of any coming event clouded our hearts or faces. Cecily looked brighter and prettier than I had ever seen her, with her softly shining eyes and the nut brown gloss of her hair. Felicity was too beautiful for words; and even the Story Girl, between excitement and the crimson silk array, blossomed out with a charm and allurements more potent than any regular loveliness — and this in spite of the fact that Aunt Olivia had tabooed the red satin slippers and mercilessly decreed that stout shoes should be worn.

“I know just how you feel about it, you daughter of Eve,” she said, with gay sympathy, “but December roads are damp, and if you are going to walk to Marrs’ you are not going to do it in those frivolous Parisian concoctions, even with overboots on; so be brave, dear heart, and show that you have a soul above little red satin shoes.”

“Anyhow,” said Uncle Roger, “that red silk dress will break the hearts of all the feminine small fry at the party. You’d break their spirits, too, if you wore the slippers. Don’t do it, Sara. Leave them one wee loophole of enjoyment.”

“What does Uncle Roger mean?” whispered Felicity.

“He means you girls are all dying of jealousy because of the Story Girl’s dress,” said Dan.

“I am not of a jealous disposition,” said Felicity loftily, “and she’s entirely welcome to the dress — with a complexion like that.”

But we enjoyed that party hugely, every one of us. And we enjoyed the walk home afterwards, through dim, enshadowed fields where silvery star-beams lay, while Orion trod his stately march above us, and a red moon climbed up the black horizon’s rim. A brook went with us part of the way, singing to us through the dark — a gay, irresponsible vagabond of valley and wilderness.

Felicity and Peter walked not with us. Peter’s cup must surely have brimmed over that Christmas night. When we left the Marr house, he had boldly said to Felicity, “May I see you home?” And Felicity, much to our amazement, had taken his arm and marched off with him. The primness of her was indescribable, and was not at all ruffled by Dan’s hoot of derision. As for me, I was consumed by a secret and burning desire to ask the Story Girl if I might see HER home; but I could not screw my courage to the sticking point. How I envied Peter his easy, insouciant manner! I could not emulate him, so Dan and Felix and Cecily and the Story Girl and I all walked hand in hand, huddling a little closer together as we went through James Frewen’s woods — for there are strange harps in a fir grove, and who shall say what fingers sweep them? Mighty and sonorous was the music above our heads as the winds of the night stirred the great boughs tossing athwart the starlit sky. Perhaps it was that aeolian harmony which recalled to the Story Girl a legend of elder days.

“I read such a pretty story in one of Aunt Olivia’s books last night,” she said. “It was called ‘The Christmas Harp.’ Would you like to hear it? It seems to me it would just suit this part of the road.”

“There isn’t anything about — about ghosts in it, is there?” said Cecily timidly.

“Oh, no, I wouldn’t tell a ghost story here for anything. I’d frighten myself too much. This story is about one of the shepherds who saw the angels on the first Christmas night. He was just a youth, and he loved music with all his heart, and he longed to be able to express the melody that was in his soul. But he could not; he had a harp and he often tried to

play on it; but his clumsy fingers only made such discord that his companions laughed at him and mocked him, and called him a madman because he would not give it up, but would rather sit apart by himself, with his arms about his harp, looking up into the sky, while they gathered around their fire and told tales to wile away their long night vigils as they watched their sheep on the hills. But to him the thoughts that came out of the great silence were far sweeter than their mirth; and he never gave up the hope, which sometimes left his lips as a prayer, that some day he might be able to express those thoughts in music to the tired, weary, forgetful world. On the first Christmas night he was out with his fellow shepherds on the hills. It was chill and dark, and all, except him, were glad to gather around the fire. He sat, as usual, by himself, with his harp on his knee and a great longing in his heart. And there came a marvellous light in the sky and over the hills, as if the darkness of the night had suddenly blossomed into a wonderful meadow of flowery flame; and all the shepherds saw the angels and heard them sing. And as they sang, the harp that the young shepherd held began to play softly by itself, and as he listened to it he realized that it was playing the same music that the angels sang and that all his secret longings and aspirations and strivings were expressed in it. From that night, whenever he took the harp in his hands, it played the same music; and he wandered all over the world carrying it; wherever the sound of its music was heard hate and discord fled away and peace and goodwill reigned. No one who heard it could think an evil thought; no one could feel hopeless or despairing or bitter or angry. When a man had once heard that music it entered into his soul and heart and life and became a part of him for ever. Years went by; the shepherd grew old and bent and feeble; but still he roamed over land and sea, that his harp might carry the message of the Christmas night and the angel song to all mankind. At last his strength failed him and he fell by the wayside in the darkness; but his harp played as his spirit passed; and it seemed to him that a Shining One stood by him, with wonderful starry eyes, and said to him, 'Lo, the music thy harp has played for so many years has been but the echo of the love and sympathy and purity and beauty in thine own soul; and if at any time

in the wanderings thou hadst opened the door of that soul to evil or envy or selfishness thy harp would have ceased to play. Now thy life is ended; but what thou hast given to mankind has no end; and as long as the world lasts, so long will the heavenly music of the Christmas harp ring in the ears of men.' When the sun rose the old shepherd lay dead by the roadside, with a smile on his face; and in his hands was a harp with all its strings broken."

We left the fir woods as the tale was ended, and on the opposite hill was home. A dim light in the kitchen window betokened that Aunt Janet had no idea of going to bed until all her young fry were safely housed for the night.

"Ma's waiting up for us," said Dan. "I'd laugh if she happened to go to the door just as Felicity and Peter were strutting up. I guess she'll be cross. It's nearly twelve."

"Christmas will soon be over," said Cecily, with a sigh. "Hasn't it been a nice one? It's the first we've all spent together. Do you suppose we'll ever spend another together?"

"Lots of 'em," said Dan cheerily. "Why not?"

"Oh, I don't know," answered Cecily, her footsteps lagging somewhat. "Only things seem just a little too pleasant to last."

"If Willy Fraser had had as much spunk as Peter, Miss Cecily King mightn't be so low spirited," quoth Dan, significantly.

Cecily tossed her head and disdained reply. There are really some remarks a self-respecting young lady must ignore.

Chapter IV.

New Year Resolutions

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If we did not have a white Christmas we had a white New Year. Midway between the two came a heavy snowfall. It was winter in our orchard of old delights then, — so truly winter that it was hard to believe summer had ever dwelt in it, or that spring would ever return to it. There were no birds to sing the music of the moon; and the path where the apple blossoms had fallen were heaped with less fragrant drifts. But it was a place of wonder on a moonlight night, when the snowy arcades shone like avenues of ivory and crystal, and the bare trees cast fairylike tracteries upon them. Over Uncle Stephen's Walk, where the snow had fallen smoothly, a spell of white magic had been woven. Taintless and wonderful it seemed, like a street of pearl in the new Jerusalem.

On New Year's Eve we were all together in Uncle Alec's kitchen, which was tacitly given over to our revels during the winter evenings. The Story Girl and Peter were there, of course, and Sara Ray's mother had allowed her to come up on condition that she should be home by eight sharp. Cecily was glad to see her, but the boys never hailed her arrival with overmuch delight, because, since the dark began to come down early, Aunt Janet always made one of us walk down home with her. We hated this, because Sara Ray was always so maddeningly self-conscious of having an escort. We knew perfectly well that next day in school she would tell her chums as a "dead" secret that "So-and-So King saw her home" from the hill farm the night before. Now, seeing a young lady home from choice, and being sent home with her by your aunt or mother are two entirely different things, and we thought Sara Ray ought to have sense enough to know it.

Outside there was a vivid rose of sunset behind the cold hills of fir, and the long reaches of snowy fields glowed fairily pink in the western light. The drifts along the edges of the meadows and down the lane looked as if a

series of breaking waves had, by the lifting of a magician's wand, been suddenly transformed into marble, even to their toppling curls of foam.

Slowly the splendour died, giving place to the mystic beauty of a winter twilight when the moon is rising. The hollow sky was a cup of blue. The stars came out over the white glens and the earth was covered with a kingly carpet for the feet of the young year to press.

"I'm so glad the snow came," said the Story Girl. "If it hadn't the New Year would have seemed just as dingy and worn out as the old. There's something very solemn about the idea of a New Year, isn't there? Just think of three hundred and sixty-five whole days, with not a thing happened in them yet."

"I don't suppose anything very wonderful will happen in them," said Felix pessimistically. To Felix, just then, life was flat, stale and unprofitable because it was his turn to go home with Sara Ray.

"It makes me a little frightened to think of all that may happen in them," said Cecily. "Miss Marwood says it is what we put into a year, not what we get out of it, that counts at last."

"I'm always glad to see a New Year," said the Story Girl. "I wish we could do as they do in Norway. The whole family sits up until midnight, and then, just as the clock is striking twelve, the father opens the door and welcomes the New Year in. Isn't it a pretty custom?"

"If ma would let us stay up till twelve we might do that too," said Dan, "but she never will. I call it mean."

"If I ever have children I'll let them stay up to watch the New Year in," said the Story Girl decidedly.

"So will I," said Peter, "but other nights they'll have to go to bed at seven."

"You ought to be ashamed, speaking of such things," said Felicity, with a scandalized face.

Peter shrank into the background abashed, no doubt believing that he had broken some Family Guide precept all to pieces.

"I didn't know it wasn't proper to mention children," he muttered apologetically.

“We ought to make some New Year resolutions,” suggested the Story Girl. “New Year’s Eve is the time to make them.”

“I can’t think of any resolutions I want to make,” said Felicity, who was perfectly satisfied with herself.

“I could suggest a few to you,” said Dan sarcastically.

“There are so many I would like to make,” said Cecily, “that I’m afraid it wouldn’t be any use trying to keep them all.”

“Well, let’s all make a few, just for the fun of it, and see if we can keep them,” I said. “And let’s get paper and ink and write them out. That will make them seem more solemn and binding.”

“And then pin them up on our bedroom walls, where we’ll see them every day,” suggested the Story Girl, “and every time we break a resolution we must put a cross opposite it. That will show us what progress we are making, as well as make us ashamed if we have too many crosses.”

“And let’s have a Roll of Honour in Our Magazine,” suggested Felix, “and every month we’ll publish the names of those who keep their resolutions perfect.”

“I think it’s all nonsense,” said Felicity. But she joined our circle around the table, though she sat for a long time with a blank sheet before her.

“Let’s each make a resolution in turn,” I said. “I’ll lead off.”

And, recalling with shame certain unpleasant differences of opinion I had lately had with Felicity, I wrote down in my best hand,

“I shall try to keep my temper always.”

“You’d better,” said Felicity tactfully.

It was Dan’s turn next.

“I can’t think of anything to start with,” he said, gnawing his penholder fiercely.

“You might make a resolution not to eat poison berries,” suggested Felicity.

“You’d better make one not to nag people everlastingly,” retorted Dan.

“Oh, don’t quarrel the last night of the old year,” implored Cecily.

“You might resolve not to quarrel any time,” suggested Sara Ray.

“No, sir,” said Dan emphatically. “There’s no use making a resolution you CAN’T keep. There are people in this family you’ve just GOT to quarrel with if you want to live. But I’ve thought of one — I won’t do things to spite people.”

Felicity — who really was in an unbearable mood that night — laughed disagreeably; but Cecily gave her a fierce nudge, which probably restrained her from speaking.

“I will not eat any apples,” wrote Felix.

“What on earth do you want to give up eating apples for?” asked Peter in astonishment.

“Never mind,” returned Felix.

“Apples make people fat, you know,” said Felicity sweetly.

“It seems a funny kind of resolution,” I said doubtfully. “I think our resolutions ought to be giving up wrong things or doing right ones.”

“You make your resolutions to suit yourself and I’ll make mine to suit myself,” said Felix defiantly.

“I shall never get drunk,” wrote Peter painstakingly.

“But you never do,” said the Story Girl in astonishment.

“Well, it will be all the easier to keep the resolution,” argued Peter.

“That isn’t fair,” complained Dan. “If we all resolved not to do the things we never do we’d all be on the Roll of Honour.”

“You let Peter alone,” said Felicity severely. “It’s a very good resolution and one everybody ought to make.”

“I shall not be jealous,” wrote the Story Girl.

“But are you?” I asked, surprised.

The Story Girl coloured and nodded. “Of one thing,” she confessed, “but I’m not going to tell what it is.”

“I’m jealous sometimes, too,” confessed Sara Ray, “and so my first resolution will be ‘I shall try not to feel jealous when I hear the other girls in school describing all the sick spells they’ve had.’”

“Goodness, do you want to be sick?” demanded Felix in astonishment.

“It makes a person important,” explained Sara Ray.

“I am going to try to improve my mind by reading good books and listening to older people,” wrote Cecily.

“You got that out of the Sunday School paper,” cried Felicity.

“It doesn’t matter where I got it,” said Cecily with dignity. “The main thing is to keep it.”

“It’s your turn, Felicity,” I said.

Felicity tossed her beautiful golden head.

“I told you I wasn’t going to make any resolutions. Go on yourself.”

“I shall always study my grammar lesson,” I wrote — I, who loathed grammar with a deadly loathing.

“I hate grammar too,” sighed Sara Ray. “It seems so unimportant.”

Sara was rather fond of a big word, but did not always get hold of the right one. I rather suspected that in the above instance she really meant uninteresting.

“I won’t get mad at Felicity, if I can help it,” wrote Dan.

“I’m sure I never do anything to make you mad,” exclaimed Felicity.

“I don’t think it’s polite to make resolutions about your sisters,” said Peter.

“He can’t keep it anyway,” scoffed Felicity. “He’s got such an awful temper.”

“It’s a family failing,” flashed Dan, breaking his resolution ere the ink on it was dry.

“There you go,” taunted Felicity.

“I’ll work all my arithmetic problems without any help,” scribbled Felix.

“I wish I could resolve that, too,” sighed Sara Ray, “but it wouldn’t be any use. I’d never be able to do those compound multiplication sums the teacher gives us to do at home every night if I didn’t get Judy Pineau to help me. Judy isn’t a good reader and she can’t spell AT ALL, but you can’t stick her in arithmetic as far as she went herself. I feel sure,” concluded poor Sara, in a hopeless tone, “that I’ll NEVER be able to understand compound multiplication.”

“Multiplication is vexation,

Division is as bad,
The rule of three perplexes me,
And fractions drive me mad,'”
quoted Dan.

“I haven’t got as far as fractions yet,” sighed Sara, “and I hope I’ll be too big to go to school before I do. I hate arithmetic, but I am PASSIONATELY fond of geography.”

“I will not play tit-tat-x on the fly leaves of my hymn book in church,” wrote Peter.

“Mercy, did you ever do such a thing?” exclaimed Felicity in horror. Peter nodded shamefacedly.

“Yes — that Sunday Mr. Bailey preached. He was so long-winded, I got awful tired, and, anyway, he was talking about things I couldn’t understand, so I played tit-tat-x with one of the Markdale boys. It was the day I was sitting up in the gallery.”

“Well, I hope if you ever do the like again you won’t do it in OUR pew,” said Felicity severely.

“I ain’t going to do it at all,” said Peter. “I felt sort of mean all the rest of the day.”

“I shall try not to be vexed when people interrupt me when I’m telling stories,” wrote the Story Girl. “but it will be hard,” she added with a sigh.

“I never mind being interrupted,” said Felicity.

“I shall try to be cheerful and smiling all the time,” wrote Cecily.

“You are, anyway,” said Sara Ray loyally.

“I don’t believe we ought to be cheerful ALL the time,” said the Story Girl. “The Bible says we ought to weep with those who weep.”

“But maybe it means that we’re to weep cheerfully,” suggested Cecily.

“Sorter as if you were thinking, ‘I’m very sorry for you but I’m mighty glad I’m not in the scrape too,’” said Dan.

“Dan, don’t be irreverent,” rebuked Felicity.

“I know a story about old Mr. and Mrs. Davidson of Markdale,” said the Story Girl. “She was always smiling and it used to aggravate her husband, so one day he said very crossly, ‘Old lady, what ARE you

grinning at?’ ‘Oh, well, Abiram, everything’s so bright and pleasant, I’ve just got to smile.’

“Not long after there came a time when everything went wrong — the crop failed and their best cow died, and Mrs. Davidson had rheumatism; and finally Mr. Davidson fell and broke his leg. But still Mrs. Davidson smiled. ‘What in the dickens are you grinning about now, old lady?’ he demanded. ‘Oh, well, Abiram,’ she said, ‘everything is so dark and unpleasant I’ve just got to smile.’ ‘Well,’ said the old man crossly, ‘I think you might give your face a rest sometimes.’”

“I shall not talk gossip,” wrote Sara Ray with a satisfied air.

“Oh, don’t you think that’s a little TOO strict?” asked Cecily anxiously. “Of course, it’s not right to talk MEAN gossip, but the harmless kind doesn’t hurt. If I say to you that Emmy MacPhail is going to get a new fur collar this winter, THAT is harmless gossip, but if I say I don’t see how Emmy MacPhail can afford a new fur collar when her father can’t pay my father for the oats he got from him, that would be MEAN gossip. If I were you, Sara, I’d put MEAN gossip.”

Sara consented to this amendment.

“I will be polite to everybody,” was my third resolution, which passed without comment.

“I’ll try not to use slang since Cecily doesn’t like it,” wrote Dan.

“I think some slang is real cute,” said Felicity.

“The Family Guide says it’s very vulgar,” grinned Dan. “Doesn’t it, Sara Stanley?”

“Don’t disturb me,” said the Story Girl dreamily. “I’m just thinking a beautiful thought.”

“I’ve thought of a resolution to make,” cried Felicity. “Mr. Marwood said last Sunday we should always try to think beautiful thoughts and then our lives would be very beautiful. So I shall resolve to think a beautiful thought every morning before breakfast.”

“Can you only manage one a day?” queried Dan.

“And why before breakfast?” I asked.

“Because it’s easier to think on an empty stomach,” said Peter, in all good faith. But Felicity shot a furious glance at him.

“I selected that time,” she explained with dignity, “because when I’m brushing my hair before my glass in the morning I’ll see my resolution and remember it.”

“Mr. Marwood meant that ALL our thoughts ought to be beautiful,” said the Story Girl. “If they were, people wouldn’t be afraid to say what they think.”

“They oughtn’t to be afraid to, anyhow,” said Felix stoutly. “I’m going to make a resolution to say just what I think always.”

“And do you expect to get through the year alive if you do?” asked Dan.

“It might be easy enough to say what you think if you could always be sure just what you DO think,” said the Story Girl. “So often I can’t be sure.”

“How would you like it if people always said just what they think to you?” asked Felicity.

“I’m not very particular what SOME people think of me,” rejoined Felix.

“I notice you don’t like to be told by anybody that you’re fat,” retorted Felicity.

“Oh, dear me, I do wish you wouldn’t all say such sarcastic things to each other,” said poor Cecily plaintively. “It sounds so horrid the last night of the old year. Dear knows where we’ll all be this night next year. Peter, it’s your turn.”

“I will try,” wrote Peter, “to say my prayers every night regular, and not twice one night because I don’t expect to have time the next, — like I did the night before the party,” he added.

“I s’pose you never said your prayers until we got you to go to church,” said Felicity — who had had no hand in inducing Peter to go to church, but had stoutly opposed it, as recorded in the first volume of our family history.

“I did, too,” said Peter. “Aunt Jane taught me to say my prayers. Ma hadn’t time, being as father had run away; ma had to wash at night same as in daytime.”

“I shall learn to cook,” wrote the Story Girl, frowning.

“You’d better resolve not to make puddings of—” began Felicity, then stopped as suddenly as if she had bitten off the rest of her sentence and swallowed it. Cecily had nudged her, so she had probably remembered the Story Girl’s threat that she would never tell another story if she was ever twitted with the pudding she had made from sawdust. But we all knew what Felicity had started to say and the Story Girl dealt her a most uncousinly glance.

“I will not cry because mother won’t starch my aprons,” wrote Sara Ray.

“Better resolve not to cry about anything,” said Dan kindly.

Sara Ray shook her head forlornly.

“That would be too hard to keep. There are times when I HAVE to cry. It’s a relief.”

“Not to the folks who have to hear you,” muttered Dan aside to Cecily.

“Oh, hush,” whispered Cecily back. “Don’t go and hurt her feelings the last night of the old year. Is it my turn again? Well, I’ll resolve not to worry because my hair is not curly. But, oh, I’ll never be able to help wishing it was.”

“Why don’t you curl it as you used to do, then?” asked Dan.

“You know very well that I’ve never put my hair up in curl papers since the time Peter was dying of the measles,” said Cecily reproachfully.

“I resolved then I wouldn’t because I wasn’t sure it was quite right.”

“I will keep my fingernails neat and clean,” I wrote. “There, that’s four resolutions. I’m not going to make any more. Four’s enough.”

“I shall always think twice before I speak,” wrote Felix.

“That’s an awful waste of time,” commented Dan, “but I guess you’ll need to if you’re always going to say what you think.”

“I’m going to stop with three,” said Peter.

“I will have all the good times I can,” wrote the Story Girl.

“THAT’S what I call sensible,” said Dan.

“It’s a very easy resolution to keep, anyhow,” commented Felix.

“I shall try to like reading the Bible,” wrote Sara Ray.

“You ought to like reading the Bible without trying to,” exclaimed Felicity.

“If you had to read seven chapters of it every time you were naughty I don’t believe you would like it either,” retorted Sara Ray with a flash of spirit.

“I shall try to believe only half of what I hear,” was Cecily’s concluding resolution.

“But which half?” scoffed Dan.

“The best half,” said sweet Cecily simply.

“I’ll try to obey mother ALWAYS,” wrote Sara Ray, with a tremendous sigh, as if she fully realized the difficulty of keeping such a resolution.

“And that’s all I’m going to make.”

“Felicity has only made one,” said the Story Girl.

“I think it better to make just one and keep it than make a lot and break them,” said Felicity loftily.

She had the last word on the subject, for it was time for Sara Ray to go, and our circle broke up. Sara and Felix departed and we watched them down the lane in the moonlight — Sara walking demurely in one runner track, and Felix stalking grimly along in the other. I fear the romantic beauty of that silver shining night was entirely thrown away on my mischievous brother.

And it was, as I remember it, a most exquisite night — a white poem, a frosty, starry lyric of light. It was one of those nights on which one might fall asleep and dream happy dreams of gardens of mirth and song, feeling all the while through one’s sleep the soft splendour and radiance of the white moon-world outside, as one hears soft, faraway music sounding through the thoughts and words that are born of it.

As a matter of fact, however, Cecily dreamed that night that she saw three full moons in the sky, and wakened up crying with the horror of it.

The First Number of “our Magazine”

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The first number of Our Magazine was ready on New Year’s Day, and we read it that evening in the kitchen. All our staff had worked nobly and we were enormously proud of the result, although Dan still continued to scoff at a paper that wasn’t printed. The Story Girl and I read it turnabout while the others, except Felix, ate apples. It opened with a short

EDITORIAL

With this number Our Magazine makes its first bow to the public. All the editors have done their best and the various departments are full of valuable information and amusement. The tastefully designed cover is by a famous artist, Mr. Blair Stanley, who sent it to us all the way from Europe at the request of his daughter. Mr. Peter Craig, our enterprising literary editor, contributes a touching love story. (Peter, aside, in a gratified pig’s whisper: “I never was called ‘Mr.’ before.”) Miss Felicity King’s essays on Shakespeare is none the worse for being an old school composition, as it is new to most of our readers. Miss Cecily King contributes a thrilling article of adventure. The various departments are ably edited, and we feel that we have reason to be proud of Our Magazine. But we shall not rest on our oars. “Excelsior” shall ever be our motto. We trust that each succeeding issue will be better than the one that went before. We are well aware of many defects, but it is easier to see them than to remedy them. Any suggestion that would tend to the improvement of Our Magazine will be thankfully received, but we trust that no criticism will be made that will hurt anyone’s feelings. Let us all work together in harmony, and strive to make Our Magazine an influence for good and a source of innocent pleasure, and let us always remember the words of the poet.

“The heights by great men reached and kept
Were not attained by sudden flight,

But they, while their companions slept,
Were toiling upwards in the night.”

(Peter, IMPRESSIVELY:—”I’ve read many a worse editorial in the Enterprise.”)

ESSAY ON SHAKESPEARE

Shakespeare’s full name was William Shakespeare. He did not always spell it the same way. He lived in the reign of Queen Elizabeth and wrote a great many plays. His plays are written in dialogue form. Some people think they were not written by Shakespeare but by another man of the same name. I have read some of them because our school teacher says everybody ought to read them, but I did not care much for them. There are some things in them I cannot understand. I like the stories of Valeria H. Montague in the Family Guide ever so much better. They are more exciting and truer to life. Romeo and Juliet was one of the plays I read. It was very sad. Juliet dies and I don’t like stories where people die. I like it better when they all get married especially to dukes and earls. Shakespeare himself was married to Anne Hatheway. They are both dead now. They have been dead a good while. He was a very famous man.

FELICITY KING.

(PETER, MODESTLY: “I don’t know much about Shakespeare myself but I’ve got a book of his plays that belonged to my Aunt Jane, and I guess I’ll have to tackle him as soon as I finish with the Bible.”)

THE STORY OF AN ELOPEMENT FROM CHURCH

This is a true story. It happened in Markdale to an uncle of my mothers. He wanted to marry Miss Jemima Parr. Felicity says Jemima is not a romantic name for a heroin of a story but I cant help it in this case because it is a true story and her name realy was Jemima. My mothers uncle was named Thomas Taylor. He was poor at that time and so the father of Miss Jemima Parr did not want him for a soninlaw and told him he was not to come near the house or he would set the dog on him. Miss Jemima Parr was very pretty and my mothers uncle Thomas was just crazy about her and she wanted him too. She cried almost every night after her father forbid him to come to the house except the nights she had to sleep

or she would have died. And she was so frightened he might try to come for all and get tore up by the dog and it was a bulldog too that would never let go. But mothers uncle Thomas was too cute for that. He waited till one day there was preaching in the Markdale church in the middle of the week because it was sacrament time and Miss Jemima Parr and her family all went because her father was an elder. My mothers uncle Thomas went too and set in the pew just behind Miss Jemima Parrs family. When they all bowed their heads at prayer time Miss Jemima Parr didnt but set bolt uprite and my mothers uncle Thomas bent over and wispered in her ear. I dont know what he said so I cant right it but Miss Jemima Parr blushed that is turned red and noddod her head. Perhaps some people may think that my mothers uncle Thomas shouldent of wispered at prayer time in church but you must remember that Miss Jemima Parrs father had thretened to set the dog on him and that was hard lines when he was a respektable young man though not rich. Well when they were singing the last sam my mothers uncle Thomas got up and went out very quitely and as soon as church was out Miss Jemima Parr walked out too real quick. Her family never suspekted anything and they hung round talking to folks and shaking hands while Miss Jemima Parr and my mothers uncle Thomas were eloping outside. And what do you suppose they eloped in. Why in Miss Jemima Parrs fathers slay. And when he went out they were gone and his slay was gone also his horse. Of course my mothers uncle Thomas didnt steal the horse. He just borroed it and sent it home the next day. But before Miss Jemima Parrs father could get another rig to follow them they were so far away he couldent catch them before they got married. And they lived happy together forever afterwards. Mothers uncle Thomas lived to be a very old man. He died very suddent. He felt quite well when he went to sleep and when he woke up he was dead.

PETER CRAIG.

MY MOST EXCITING ADVENTURE

The editor says we must all write up our most exciting adventure for Our Magazine. My most exciting adventure happened a year ago last November. I was nearly frightened to death. Dan says he wouldn't of been

scared and Felicity says she would of known what it was but it's easy to talk.

It happened the night I went down to see Kitty Marr. I thought when I went that Aunt Olivia was visiting there and I could come home with her. But she wasn't there and I had to come home alone. Kitty came a piece of the way but she wouldn't come any further than Uncle James Frewen's gate. She said it was because it was so windy she was afraid she would get the toothache and not because she was frightened of the ghost of the dog that haunted the bridge in Uncle James' hollow. I did wish she hadn't said anything about the dog because I mightn't of thought about it if she hadn't. I had to go on alone thinking of it. I'd heard the story often but I'd never believed in it. They said the dog used to appear at one end of the bridge and walk across it with people and vanish when he got to the other end. He never tried to bite anyone but one wouldn't want to meet the ghost of a dog even if one didn't believe in him. I knew there was no such thing as ghosts and I kept saying a paraphrase over to myself and the Golden Text of the next Sunday School lesson but oh, how my heart beat when I got near the hollow! It was so dark. You could just see things dim-like but you couldn't see what they were. When I got to the bridge I walked along sideways with my back to the railing so I couldn't think the dog was behind me. And then just in the middle of the bridge I met something. It was right before me and it was big and black, just about the size of a Newfoundland dog, and I thought I could see a white nose. And it kept jumping about from one side of the bridge to the other. Oh, I hope none of my readers will ever be so frightened as I was then. I was too frightened to run back because I was afraid it would chase me and I couldn't get past it, it moved so quick, and then it just made one spring right on me and I felt its claws and I screamed and fell down. It rolled off to one side and laid there quite quiet but I didn't dare move and I don't know what would have become of me if Amos Cowan hadn't come along that very minute with a lantern. And there was me sitting in the middle of the bridge and that awful thing beside me. And what do you think it was but a big umbrella with a white handle? Amos said it was his umbrella and it had blown away from him and he had

to go back and get the lantern to look for it. I felt like asking him what on earth he was going about with an umbrella open when it wasn't raining. But the Cowans do such queer things. You remember the time Jerry Cowan sold us God's picture. Amos took me right home and I was thankful for I don't know what would have become of me if he hadn't come along. I couldn't sleep all night and I never want to have any more adventures like that one.

CECILY KING.

PERSONALS

Mr. Dan King felt somewhat indisposed the day after Christmas — probably as the result of too much mince pie. (DAN, INDIGNANTLY:—"I wasn't. I only et one piece!")

Mr. Peter Craig thinks he saw the Family Ghost on Christmas Eve. But the rest of us think all he saw was the white calf with the red tail. (PETER, MUTTERING SULKILY:—"It's a queer calf that would walk up on end and wring its hands.")

Miss Cecily King spent the night of Dec. 20th with Miss Kitty Marr. They talked most of the night about new knitted lace patterns and their beaus and were very sleepy in school next day. (CECILY, SHARPLY:—"We never mentioned such things!")

Patrick Grayfur, Esq., was indisposed yesterday, but seems to be enjoying his usual health to-day.

The King family expect their Aunt Eliza to visit them in January. She is really our great-aunt. We have never seen her but we are told she is very deaf and does not like children. So Aunt Janet says we must make ourselves scarece when she comes.

Miss Cecily King has undertaken to fill with names a square of the missionary quilt which the Mission Band is making. You pay five cents to have your name embroidered in a corner, ten cents to have it in the centre, and a quarter if you want it left off altogether. (CECILY, INDIGNANTLY:—"That isn't the way at all.")

ADS.

WANTED — A remedy to make a fat boy thin. Address, “Patient Sufferer, care of Our Magazine.”

(FELIX, SOURLY:—”Sara Ray never got that up. I’ll bet it was Dan. He’d better stick to his own department.”)

HOUSEHOLD DEPARTMENT

Mrs. Alexander King killed all her geese the twentieth of December. We all helped pick them. We had one Christmas Day and will have one every fortnight the rest of the winter.

The bread was sour last week because mother wouldn’t take my advice. I told her it was too warm for it in the corner behind the stove.

Miss Felicity King invented a new recete for date cookies recently, which everybody said were excelent. I am not going to publish it though, because I don’t want other people to find it out.

ANXIOUS INQUIRER: — If you want to remove inkstains place the stain over steam and apply salt and lemon juice. If it was Dan who sent this question in I’d advise him to stop wiping his pen on his shirt sleeves and then he wouldn’t have so many stains.

FELICITY KING.

ETIQUETTE DEPARTMENT

F-l-x: — Yes, you should offer your arm to a lady when seeing her home, but don’t keep her standing too long at the gate while you say good night.

(FELIX, ENRAGED:—”I never asked such a question.”)

C-c-l-y: — No, it is not polite to use “Holy Moses” or “dodgasted” in ordinary conversation.

(Cecily had gone down cellar to replenish the apple plate, so this passed without protest.)

S-r-a: — No, it isn’t polite to cry all the time. As to whether you should ask a young man in, it all depends on whether he went home with you of his own accord or was sent by some elderly relative.

F-l-t-y: — It does not break any rule of etiquette if you keep a button off your best young man’s coat for a keepsake. But don’t take more than one or his mother might miss them.

DAN KING.

FASHION NOTES

Knitted mufflers are much more stylish than crocheted ones this winter. It is nice to have one the same colour as your cap.

Red mittens with a black diamond pattern on the back are much run after. Em Frewen's grandma knits hers for her. She can knit the double diamond pattern and Em puts on such airs about it, but I think the single diamond is in better taste.

The new winter hats at Markdale are very pretty. It is so exciting to pick a hat. Boys can't have that fun. Their hats are so much alike.

CECILY KING.

FUNNY PARAGRAPHS

This is a true joke and really happened.

There was an old local preacher in New Brunswick one time whose name was Samuel Clask. He used to preach and pray and visit the sick just like a regular minister. One day he was visiting a neighbour who was dying and he prayed the Lord to have mercy on him because he was very poor and had worked so hard all his life that he hadn't much time to attend to religion.

"And if you don't believe me, O Lord," Mr. Clask finished up with, "just take a look at his hands."

FELIX KING.

GENERAL INFORMATION BUREAU

DAN: — Do porpoises grow on trees or vines?

Ans. Neither. They inhabit the deep sea.

FELIX KING.

(DAN, AGGRIEVED:—"Well, I'd never heard of porpoises and it sounded like something that grew. But you needn't have gone and put it in the paper."

FELIX:—"It isn't any worse than the things you put in about me that I never asked at all."

CECILY, SOOTHINGLY:—"Oh, well, boys, it's all in fun, and I think Our Magazine is perfectly elegant."

FELICITY, FAILING TO SEE THE STORY GIRL AND BEVERLEY EXCHANGING WINKS BEHIND HER BACK:—"It certainly is, though SOME PEOPLE were so opposed to starting it.")

What harmless, happy fooling it all was! How we laughed as we read and listened and devoured apples! Blow high, blow low, no wind can ever quench the ruddy glow of that faraway winter night in our memories. And though Our Magazine never made much of a stir in the world, or was the means of hatching any genius, it continued to be capital fun for us throughout the year.

Great-Aunt Eliza's Visit

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It was a diamond winter day in February — clear, cold, hard, brilliant. The sharp blue sky shone, the white fields and hills glittered, the fringe of icicles around the eaves of Uncle Alec's house sparkled. Keen was the frost and crisp the snow over our world; and we young fry of the King households were all agog to enjoy life — for was it not Saturday, and were we not left all alone to keep house?

Aunt Janet and Aunt Olivia had had their last big “kill” of market poultry the day before; and early in the morning all our grownups set forth to Charlottetown, to be gone the whole day. They left us many charges as usual, some of which we remembered and some of which we forgot; but with Felicity in command none of us dared stray far out of line. The Story Girl and Peter came over, of course, and we all agreed that we would haste and get the work done in the forenoon, that we might have an afternoon of uninterrupted enjoyment. A taffy-pull after dinner and then a jolly hour of coasting on the hill field before supper were on our programme. But disappointment was our portion. We did manage to get the taffy made but before we could sample the result satisfactorily, and just as the girls were finishing with the washing of the dishes, Felicity glanced out of the window and exclaimed in tones of dismay,

“Oh, dear me, here's Great-aunt Eliza coming up the lane! Now, isn't that too mean?”

We all looked out to see a tall, gray-haired lady approaching the house, looking about her with the slightly puzzled air of a stranger. We had been expecting Great-aunt Eliza's advent for some weeks, for she was visiting relatives in Markdale. We knew she was liable to pounce down on us any time, being one of those delightful folk who like to “surprise” people, but we had never thought of her coming that particular day. It must be confessed that we did not look forward to her visit with any pleasure. None

of us had ever seen her, but we knew she was very deaf, and had very decided opinions as to the way in which children should behave.

“Whew!” whistled Dan. “We’re in for a jolly afternoon. She’s deaf as a post and we’ll have to split our throats to make her hear at all. I’ve a notion to skin out.”

“Oh, don’t talk like that, Dan,” said Cecily reproachfully. “She’s old and lonely and has had a great deal of trouble. She has buried three husbands. We must be kind to her and do the best we can to make her visit pleasant.”

“She’s coming to the back door,” said Felicity, with an agitated glance around the kitchen. “I told you, Dan, that you should have shovelled the snow away from the front door this morning. Cecily, set those pots in the pantry quick — hide those boots, Felix — shut the cupboard door, Peter — Sara, straighten up the lounge. She’s awfully particular and ma says her house is always as neat as wax.”

To do Felicity justice, while she issued orders to the rest of us, she was flying busily about herself, and it was amazing how much was accomplished in the way of putting the kitchen in perfect order during the two minutes in which Great-aunt Eliza was crossing the yard.

“Fortunately the sitting-room is tidy and there’s plenty in the pantry,” said Felicity, who could face anything undauntedly with a well-stocked larder behind her.

Further conversation was cut short by a decided rap at the door. Felicity opened it.

“Why, how do you do, Aunt Eliza?” she said loudly.

A slightly bewildered look appeared on Aunt Eliza’s face. Felicity perceived she had not spoken loudly enough.

“How do you do, Aunt Eliza,” she repeated at the top of her voice. “Come in — we are glad to see you. We’ve been looking for you for ever so long.”

“Are your father and mother at home?” asked Aunt Eliza, slowly.

“No, they went to town today. But they’ll be home this evening.”

“I’m sorry they’re away,” said Aunt Eliza, coming in, “because I can stay only a few hours.”

“Oh, that’s too bad,” shouted poor Felicity, darting an angry glance at the rest of us, as if to demand why we didn’t help her out. “Why, we’ve been thinking you’d stay a week with us anyway. You **MUST** stay over Sunday.”

“I really can’t. I have to go to Charlottetown tonight,” returned Aunt Eliza.

“Well, you’ll take off your things and stay to tea, at least,” urged Felicity, as hospitably as her strained vocal chords would admit.

“Yes, I think I’ll do that. I want to get acquainted with my — my nephews and nieces,” said Aunt Eliza, with a rather pleasant glance around our group. If I could have associated the thought of such a thing with my preconception of Great-aunt Eliza I could have sworn there was a twinkle in her eye. But of course it was impossible. “Won’t you introduce yourselves, please?”

Felicity shouted our names and Great-aunt Eliza shook hands all round. She performed the duty grimly and I concluded I must have been mistaken about the twinkle. She was certainly very tall and dignified and imposing — altogether a great-aunt to be respected.

Felicity and Cecily took her to the spare room and then left her in the sitting-room while they returned to the kitchen, to discuss the matter in family conclave.

“Well, and what do you think of dear Aunt Eliza?” asked Dan.

“S-s-s-sh,” warned Cecily, with a glance at the half-open hall door.

“Pshaw,” scoffed Dan, “she can’t hear us. There ought to be a law against anyone being as deaf as that.”

“She’s not so old-looking as I expected,” said Felix. “If her hair wasn’t so white she wouldn’t look much older than your mother.”

“You don’t have to be very old to be a great-aunt,” said Cecily. “Kitty Marr has a great-aunt who is just the same age as her mother. I expect it was burying so many husbands turned her hair white. But Aunt Eliza doesn’t look just as I expected she would either.”

“She’s dressed more stylishly than I expected,” said Felicity. “I thought she’d be real old-fashioned, but her clothes aren’t too bad at all.”

“She wouldn’t be bad-looking if ‘tweren’t for her nose,” said Peter. “It’s too long, and crooked besides.”

“You needn’t criticize our relations like that,” said Felicity tartly.

“Well, aren’t you doing it yourselves?” expostulated Peter.

“That’s different,” retorted Felicity. “Never you mind Great-aunt Eliza’s nose.”

“Well, don’t expect me to talk to her,” said Dan, “‘cause I won’t.”

“I’m going to be very polite to her,” said Felicity. “She’s rich. But how are we to entertain her, that’s the question.”

“What does the Family Guide say about entertaining your rich, deaf old aunt?” queried Dan ironically.

“The Family Guide says we should be polite to EVERYBODY,” said Cecily, with a reproachful look at Dan.

“The worst of it is,” said Felicity, looking worried, “that there isn’t a bit of old bread in the house and she can’t eat new, I’ve heard father say. It gives her indigestion. What will we do?”

“Make a pan of rusks and apologize for having no old bread,” suggested the Story Girl, probably by way of teasing Felicity. The latter, however, took it in all good faith.

“The Family Guide says we should never apologize for things we can’t help. It says it’s adding insult to injury to do it. But you run over home for a loaf of stale bread, Sara, and it’s a good idea about the rusks. I’ll make a panful.”

“Let me make them,” said the Story Girl, eagerly. “I can make real good rusks now.”

“No, it wouldn’t do to trust you,” said Felicity mercilessly. “You might make some queer mistake and Aunt Eliza would tell it all over the country. She’s a fearful old gossip. I’ll make the rusks myself. She hates cats, so we mustn’t let Paddy be seen. And she’s a Methodist, so mind nobody says anything against Methodists to her.”

“Who’s going to say anything, anyhow?” asked Peter belligerently.

“I wonder if I might ask her for her name for my quilt square?” speculated Cecily. “I believe I will. She looks so much friendlier than I expected. Of course she’ll choose the five-cent section. She’s an estimable old lady, but very economical.”

“Why don’t you say she’s so mean she’d skin a flea for its hide and tallow?” said Dan. “That’s the plain truth.”

“Well, I’m going to see about getting tea,” said Felicity, “so the rest of you will have to entertain her. You better go in and show her the photographs in the album. Dan, you do it.”

“Thank you, that’s a girl’s job,” said Dan. “I’d look nice sitting up to Aunt Eliza and yelling out that this was Uncle Jim and ‘tother Cousin Sarah’s twins, wouldn’t I? Cecily or the Story Girl can do it.”

“I don’t know all the pictures in your album,” said the Story Girl hastily.

“I s’pose I’ll have to do it, though I don’t like to,” sighed Cecily. “But we ought to go in. We’ve left her alone too long now. She’ll think we have no manners.”

Accordingly we all filed in rather reluctantly. Great-aunt Eliza was toasting her toes — clad, as we noted, in very smart and shapely shoes — at the stove and looking quite at her ease. Cecily, determined to do her duty even in the face of such fearful odds as Great-aunt Eliza’s deafness, dragged a ponderous, plush-covered album from its corner and proceeded to display and explain the family photographs. She did her brave best but she could not shout like Felicity, and half the time, as she confided to me later on, she felt that Great-aunt Eliza did not hear one word she said, because she didn’t seem to take in who the people were, though, just like all deaf folks, she wouldn’t let on. Great-aunt Eliza certainly didn’t talk much; she looked at the photographs in silence, but she smiled now and then. That smile bothered me. It was so twinkly and so very un-great-aunt-Elizaish. But I felt indignant with her. I thought she might have shown a little more appreciation of Cecily’s gallant efforts to entertain.

It was very dull for the rest of us. The Story Girl sat rather sulkily in her corner; she was angry because Felicity would not let her make the

rusks, and also, perhaps, a little vexed because she could not charm Great-aunt Eliza with her golden voice and storytelling gift. Felix and I looked at each other and wished ourselves out in the hill field, careering gloriously adown its gleaming crust.

But presently a little amusement came our way. Dan, who was sitting behind Great-aunt Eliza, and consequently out of her view, began making comments on Cecily's explanation of this one and that one among the photographs. In vain Cecily implored him to stop. It was too good fun to give up. For the next half-hour the dialogue ran after this fashion, while Peter and Felix and I, and even the Story Girl, suffered agonies trying to smother our bursts of laughter — for Great-aunt Eliza could see if she couldn't hear:

CECILY, SHOUTING:—"That is Mr. Joseph Elliott of Markdale, a second cousin of mother's."

DAN:—"Don't brag of it, Sis. He's the man who was asked if somebody else said something in sincerity and old Joe said 'No, he said it in my cellar.'"

CECILY:—"This isn't anybody in our family. It's little Xavy Gautier who used to be hired with Uncle Roger."

DAN:—"Uncle Roger sent him to fix a gate one day and scolded him because he didn't do it right, and Xavy was mad as hops and said 'How you 'spect me to fix dat gate? I never learned jogerfy.'"

CECILY, WITH AN ANGUISHED GLANCE AT DAN:—"This is Great-uncle Robert King."

DAN:—"He's been married four times. Don't you think that's often enough, dear great-aunty?"

CECILY:—" (Dan!!) This is a nephew of Mr. Ambrose Marr's. He lives out west and teaches school."

DAN:—"Yes, and Uncle Roger says he doesn't know enough not to sleep in a field with the gate open."

CECILY:—"This is Miss Julia Stanley, who used to teach in Carlisle a few years ago."

DAN:—"When she resigned the trustees had a meeting to see if they'd ask her to stay and raise her supplement. Old Highland Sandy was alive then and he got up and said, 'If she for go let her for went. Perhaps she for marry.'"

CECILY, WITH THE AIR OF A MARTYR:—"This is Mr. Layton, who used to travel around selling Bibles and hymn books and Talmage's sermons."

DAN:—"He was so thin Uncle Roger used to say he always mistook him for a crack in the atmosphere. One time he stayed here all night and went to prayer meeting and Mr. Marwood asked him to lead in prayer. It had been raining 'most every day for three weeks, and it was just in haymaking time, and everybody thought the hay was going to be ruined, and old Layton got up and prayed that God would send gentle showers on the growing crops, and I heard Uncle Roger whisper to a fellow behind me, 'If somebody don't choke him off we won't get the hay made this summer.'"

CECILY, IN EXASPERATION:—" (Dan, shame on you for telling such irreverent stories.) This is Mrs. Alexander Scott of Markdale. She has been very sick for a long time."

DAN:—"Uncle Roger says all that keeps her alive is that she's scared her husband will marry again."

CECILY:—"This is old Mr. James MacPherson who used to live behind the graveyard."

DAN:—"He's the man who told mother once that he always made his own iodine out of strong tea and baking soda."

CECILY:—"This is Cousin Ebenezer MacPherson on the Markdale road."

DAN:—"Great temperance man! He never tasted rum in his life. He took the measles when he was forty-five and was crazy as a loon with them, and the doctor ordered them to give him a dose of brandy. When he swallowed it he looked up and says, solemn as an owl, 'Give it to me oftener and more at a time.'"

CECILY, IMPLORINGLY:—"(Dan, do stop. You make me so nervous I don't know what I'm doing.) This is Mr. Lemuel Goodridge. He is a minister."

DAN:—"You ought to see his mouth. Uncle Roger says the drawing string has fell out of it. It just hangs loose — so fashion."

Dan, whose own mouth was far from being beautiful, here gave an imitation of the Rev. Lemuel's, to the utter undoing of Peter, Felix, and myself. Our wild guffaws of laughter penetrated even Great-aunt Eliza's deafness, and she glanced up with a startled face. What we would have done I do not know had not Felicity at that moment appeared in the doorway with panic-stricken eyes and exclaimed,

"Cecily, come here for a moment."

Cecily, glad of even a temporary respite, fled to the kitchen and we heard her demanding what was the matter.

"Matter!" exclaimed Felicity, tragically. "Matter enough! Some of you left a soup plate with molasses in it on the pantry table and Pat got into it and what do you think? He went into the spare room and walked all over Aunt Eliza's things on the bed. You can see his tracks plain as plain. What in the world can we do? She'll be simply furious."

I looked apprehensively at Great-aunt Eliza; but she was gazing intently at a picture of Aunt Janet's sister's twins, a most stolid, uninteresting pair; but evidently Great-aunt Eliza found them amusing for she was smiling widely over them.

"Let us take a little clean water and a soft bit of cotton," came Cecily's clear voice from the kitchen, "and see if we can't clean the molasses off. The coat and hat are both cloth, and molasses isn't like grease."

"Well, we can try, but I wish the Story Girl would keep her cat home," grumbled Felicity.

The Story Girl here flew out to defend her pet, and we four boys sat on, miserably conscious of Great-aunt Eliza, who never said a word to us, despite her previously expressed desire to become acquainted with us. She kept on looking at the photographs and seemed quite oblivious of our presence.

Presently the girls returned, having, as transpired later, been so successful in removing the traces of Paddy's mischief that it was not deemed necessary to worry Great-aunt Eliza with any account of it. Felicity announced tea and, while Cecily conveyed Great-aunt Eliza out to the dining-room, lingered behind to consult with us for a moment.

"Ought we to ask her to say grace?" she wanted to know.

"I know a story," said the Story Girl, "about Uncle Roger when he was just a young man. He went to the house of a very deaf old lady and when they sat down to the table she asked him to say grace. Uncle Roger had never done such a thing in his life and he turned as red as a beet and looked down and muttered, 'E-r-r, please excuse me — I — I'm not accustomed to doing that.' Then he looked up and the old lady said 'Amen,' loudly and cheerfully. She thought Uncle Roger was saying grace all the time."

"I don't think it's right to tell funny stories about such things," said Felicity coldly. "And I asked for your opinion, not for a story."

"If we don't ask her, Felix must say it, for he's the only one who can, and we must have it, or she'd be shocked."

"Oh, ask her — ask her," advised Felix hastily.

She was asked accordingly and said grace without any hesitation, after which she proceeded to eat heartily of the excellent supper Felicity had provided. The rusks were especially good and Great-aunt Eliza ate three of them and praised them. Apart from that she said little and during the first part of the meal we sat in embarrassed silence. Towards the last, however, our tongues were loosened, and the Story Girl told us a tragic tale of old Charlottetown and a governor's wife who had died of a broken heart in the early days of the colony.

"They say that story isn't true," said Felicity. "They say what she really died of was indigestion. The Governor's wife who lives there now is a relation of our own. She is a second cousin of father's but we've never seen her. Her name was Agnes Clark. And mind you, when father was a young man he was dead in love with her and so was she with him."

"Who ever told you that?" exclaimed Dan.

“Aunt Olivia. And I’ve heard ma teasing father about it, too. Of course, it was before father got acquainted with mother.”

“Why didn’t your father marry her?” I asked.

“Well, she just simply wouldn’t marry him in the end. She got over being in love with him. I guess she was pretty fickle. Aunt Olivia said father felt awful about it for awhile, but he got over it when he met ma. Ma was twice as goodlooking as Agnes Clark. Agnes was a sight for freckles, so Aunt Olivia says. But she and father remained real good friends. Just think, if she had married him we would have been the children of the Governor’s wife.”

“But she wouldn’t have been the Governor’s wife then,” said Dan.

“I guess it’s just as good being father’s wife,” declared Cecily loyally.

“You might think so if you saw the Governor,” chuckled Dan. “Uncle Roger says it would be no harm to worship him because he doesn’t look like anything in the heavens above or on the earth beneath or the waters under the earth.”

“Oh, Uncle Roger just says that because he’s on the opposite side of politics,” said Cecily. “The Governor isn’t really so very ugly. I saw him at the Markdale picnic two years ago. He’s very fat and bald and red-faced, but I’ve seen far worse looking men.”

“I’m afraid your seat is too near the stove, Aunt Eliza,” shouted Felicity.

Our guest, whose face was certainly very much flushed, shook her head.

“Oh, no, I’m very comfortable,” she said. But her voice had the effect of making us uncomfortable. There was a queer, uncertain little sound in it. Was Great-aunt Eliza laughing at us? We looked at her sharply but her face was very solemn. Only her eyes had a suspicious appearance. Somehow, we did not talk much more the rest of the meal.

When it was over Great-aunt Eliza said she was very sorry but she must really go. Felicity politely urged her to stay, but was much relieved when Great-aunt Eliza adhered to her intention of going. When Felicity

took her to the spare room Cecily slipped upstairs and presently came back with a little parcel in her hand.

“What have you got there?” demanded Felicity suspiciously.

“A — a little bag of roseleaves,” faltered Cecily. “I thought I’d give them to Aunt Eliza.”

“The idea! Don’t you do such a thing,” said Felicity contemptuously. “She’d think you were crazy.”

“She was awfully nice when I asked her for her name for the quilt,” protested Cecily, “and she took a tencent section after all. So I’d like to give her the roseleaves — and I’m going to, too, Miss Felicity.”

Great-aunt Eliza accepted the little gift quite graciously, bade us all goodbye, said she had enjoyed herself very much, left messages for father and mother, and finally betook herself away. We watched her cross the yard, tall, stately, erect, and disappear down the lane. Then, as often aforetime, we gathered together in the cheer of the red hearth-flame, while outside the wind of a winter twilight sang through fair white valleys brimmed with a reddening sunset, and a faint, serene, silver-cold star glimmered over the willow at the gate.

“Well,” said Felicity, drawing a relieved breath, “I’m glad she’s gone. She certainly is queer, just as mother said.”

“It’s a different kind of queerness from what I expected, though,” said the Story Girl meditatively. “There’s something I can’t quite make out about Aunt Eliza. I don’t think I altogether like her.”

“I’m precious sure I don’t,” said Dan.

“Oh, well, never mind. She’s gone now and that’s the last of it,” said Cecily comfortingly.

But it wasn’t the last of it — not by any manner of means was it! When our grownups returned almost the first words Aunt Janet said were,

“And so you had the Governor’s wife to tea?”

We all stared at her.

“I don’t know what you mean,” said Felicity. “We had nobody to tea except Great-aunt Eliza. She came this afternoon and—”

“Great-aunt Eliza? Nonsense,” said Aunt Janet. “Aunt Eliza was in town today. She had tea with us at Aunt Louisa’s. But wasn’t Mrs. Governor Lesley here? We met her on her way back to Charlottetown and she told us she was. She said she was visiting a friend in Carlisle and thought she’d call to see father for old acquaintance sake. What in the world are all you children staring like that for? Your eyes are like saucers.”

“There was a lady here to tea,” said Felicity miserably, “but we thought it was Great-aunt Eliza — she never SAID she wasn’t — I thought she acted queer — and we all yelled at her as if she was deaf — and said things to each other about her nose — and Pat running over her clothes—”

“She must have heard all you said while I was showing her the photographs, Dan,” cried Cecily.

“And about the Governor at tea time,” chuckled unrepentant Dan.

“I want to know what all this means,” said Aunt Janet sternly.

She knew in due time, after she had pieced the story together from our disjointed accounts. She was horrified, and Uncle Alec was mildly disturbed, but Uncle Roger roared with laughter and Aunt Olivia echoed it.

“To think you should have so little sense!” said Aunt Janet in a disgusted tone.

“I think it was real mean of her to pretend she was deaf,” said Felicity, almost on the verge of tears.

“That was Agnes Clark all over,” chuckled Uncle Roger. “How she must have enjoyed this afternoon!”

She had enjoyed it, as we learned the next day, when a letter came from her.

“Dear Cecily and all the rest of you,” wrote the Governor’s wife, “I want to ask you to forgive me for pretending to be Aunt Eliza. I suspect it was a little horrid of me, but really I couldn’t resist the temptation, and if you will forgive me for it I will forgive you for the things you said about the Governor, and we will all be good friends. You know the Governor is a very nice man, though he has the misfortune not to be handsome.

“I had just a splendid time at your place, and I envy your Aunt Eliza her nephews and nieces. You were all so nice to me, and I didn’t dare to be a bit nice to you lest I should give myself away. But I’ll make up for that when you come to see me at Government House, as you all must the very next time you come to town. I’m so sorry I didn’t see Paddy, for I love pussy cats, even if they do track molasses over my clothes. And, Cecily, thank you ever so much for that little bag of potpourri. It smells like a hundred rose gardens, and I have put it between the sheets for my very sparest room bed, where you shall sleep when you come to see me, you dear thing. And the Governor wants you to put his name on the quilt square, too, in the tencent section.

“Tell Dan I enjoyed his comments on the photographs very much. They were quite a refreshing contrast to the usual explanations of ‘who’s who.’ And Felicity, your rusks were perfection. Do send me your recipe for them, there’s a darling.

“Yours most cordially,
AGNES CLARK LESLEY.

“Well, it was decent of her to apologize, anyhow,” commented Dan.

“If we only hadn’t said that about the Governor,” moaned Felicity.

“How did you make your rusks?” asked Aunt Janet. “There was no baking-powder in the house, and I never could get them right with soda and cream of tartar.”

“There was plenty of baking-powder in the pantry,” said Felicity.

“No, there wasn’t a particle. I used the last making those cookies Thursday morning.”

“But I found another can nearly full, away back on the top shelf, ma, — the one with the yellow label. I guess you forgot it was there.”

Aunt Janet stared at her pretty daughter blankly. Then amazement gave place to horror.

“Felicity King!” she exclaimed. “You don’t mean to tell me that you raised those rusks with the stuff that was in that old yellow can?”

“Yes, I did,” faltered Felicity, beginning to look scared. “Why, ma, what was the matter with it?”

“Matter! That stuff was TOOTH-POWDER, that’s what it was. Your Cousin Myra broke the bottle her tooth-powder was in when she was here last winter and I gave her that old can to keep it in. She forgot to take it when she went away and I put it on that top shelf. I declare you must all have been bewitched yesterday.”

Poor, poor Felicity! If she had not always been so horribly vain over her cooking and so scornfully contemptuous of other people’s aspirations and mistakes along that line, I could have found it in my heart to pity her.

The Story Girl would have been more than human if she had not betrayed a little triumphant amusement, but Peter stood up for his lady manfully.

“The rusks were splendid, anyhow, so what difference does it make what they were raised with?”

Dan, however, began to taunt Felicity with her tooth-powder rusks, and kept it up for the rest of his natural life.

“Don’t forget to send the Governor’s wife the recipe for them,” he said.

Felicity, with eyes tearful and cheeks crimson from mortification, rushed from the room, but never, never did the Governor’s wife get the recipe for those rusks.

We Visit Cousin Mattie's

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One Saturday in March we walked over to Baywater, for a long-talked-of visit to Cousin Mattie Dilke. By the road, Baywater was six miles away, but there was a short cut across hills and fields and woods which was scanty three. We did not look forward to our visit with any particular delight, for there was nobody at Cousin Mattie's except grownups who had been grown up so long that it was rather hard for them to remember they had ever been children. But, as Felicity told us, it was necessary to visit Cousin Mattie at least once a year, or else she would be "huffed," so we concluded we might as well go and have it over.

"Anyhow, we'll get a splendiferous dinner," said Dan. "Cousin Mattie's a great cook and there's nothing stingy about her."

"You are always thinking of your stomach," said Felicity pleasantly.

"Well, you know I couldn't get along very well without it, darling," responded Dan who, since New Year's, had adopted a new method of dealing with Felicity — whether by way of keeping his resolution or because he had discovered that it annoyed Felicity far more than angry retorts, deponent sayeth not. He invariably met her criticisms with a goodnatured grin and a flippant remark with some tender epithet tagged on to it. Poor Felicity used to get hopelessly furious over it.

Uncle Alec was dubious about our going that day. He looked abroad on the general dourness of gray earth and gray air and gray sky, and said a storm was brewing. But Cousin Mattie had been sent word that we were coming, and she did not like to be disappointed, so he let us go, warning us to stay with Cousin Mattie all night if the storm came on while we were there.

We enjoyed our walk — even Felix enjoyed it, although he had been appointed to write up the visit for Our Magazine and was rather weighed down by the responsibility of it. What mattered it though the world were

gray and wintry? We walked the golden road and carried spring time in our hearts, and we beguiled our way with laughter and jest, and the tales the Story Girl told us — myths and legends of elder time.

The walking was good, for there had lately been a thaw and everything was frozen. We went over fields, crossed by spidery trails of gray fences, where the withered grasses stuck forlornly up through the snow; we lingered for a time in a group of hill pines, great, majestic tree-creatures, friends of evening stars; and finally struck into the belt of fir and maple which intervened between Carlisle and Baywater. It was in this locality that Peg Bowen lived, and our way lay near her house though not directly in sight of it. We hoped we would not meet her, for since the affair of the bewitchment of Paddy we did not know quite what to think of Peg; the boldest of us held his breath as we passed her haunts, and drew it again with a sigh of relief when they were safely left behind.

The woods were full of the brooding stillness that often precedes a storm, and the wind crept along their white, cone-sprinkled floors with a low, wailing cry. Around us were solitudes of snow, arcades picked out in pearl and silver, long avenues of untrodden marble whence sprang the cathedral columns of the firs. We were all sorry when we were through the woods and found ourselves looking down into the snug, commonplace, farmstead-dotted settlement of Baywater.

“There’s Cousin Mattie’s house — that big white one at the turn of the road,” said the Story Girl. “I hope she has that dinner ready, Dan. I’m hungry as a wolf after our walk.”

“I wish Cousin Mattie’s husband was still alive,” said Dan. “He was an awful nice old man. He always had his pockets full of nuts and apples. I used to like going there better when he was alive. Too many old women don’t suit me.”

“Oh, Dan, Cousin Mattie and her sisters-in-law are just as nice and kind as they can be,” reproached Cecily.

“Oh, they’re kind enough, but they never seem to see that a fellow gets over being five years old if he only lives long enough,” retorted Dan.

“I know a story about Cousin Mattie’s husband,” said the Story Girl.
“His name was Ebenezer, you know—”

“Is it any wonder he was thin and stunted looking?” said Dan.

“Ebenezer is just as nice a name as Daniel,” said Felicity.

“Do you REALLY think so, my angel?” inquired Dan, in honey-sweet tones.

“Go on. Remember your second resolution,” I whispered to the Story Girl, who was stalking along with an outraged expression.

The Story Girl swallowed something and went on.

“Cousin Ebenezer had a horror of borrowing. He thought it was simply a dreadful disgrace to borrow ANYTHING. Well, you know he and Cousin Mattie used to live in Carlisle, where the Rays now live. This was when Grandfather King was alive. One day Cousin Ebenezer came up the hill and into the kitchen where all the family were. Uncle Roger said he looked as if he had been stealing sheep. He sat for a whole hour in the kitchen and hardly spoke a word, but just looked miserable. At last he got up and said in a desperate sort of way, ‘Uncle Abraham, can I speak with you in private for a minute?’ ‘Oh, certainly,’ said grandfather, and took him into the parlour. Cousin Ebenezer shut the door, looked all around him and then said imploringly, ‘MORE PRIVATE STILL.’ So grandfather took him into the spare room and shut that door. He was getting frightened. He thought something terrible must have happened Cousin Ebenezer. Cousin Ebenezer came right up to grandfather, took hold of the lapel of his coat, and said in a whisper, ‘Uncle Abraham, CAN — YOU — LEND — ME — AN — AXE?’”

“He needn’t have made such a mystery about it,” said Cecily, who had missed the point entirely, and couldn’t see why the rest of us were laughing. But Cecily was such a darling that we did not mind her lack of a sense of humour.

“It’s kind of mean to tell stories like that about people who are dead,” said Felicity.

“Sometimes it’s safer than when they’re alive though, sweetheart,” commented Dan.

We had our expected good dinner at Cousin Mattie's — may it be counted unto her for righteousness. She and her sisters-in-law, Miss Louisa Jane and Miss Caroline, were very kind to us. We had quite a nice time, although I understood why Dan objected to them when they patted us all on the head and told us whom we resembled and gave us peppermint lozenges.

We Visit Peg Bowen

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We left Cousin Mattie's early, for it still looked like a storm, though no more so than it had in the morning. We intended to go home by a different path — one leading through cleared land overgrown with scrub maple, which had the advantage of being farther away from Peg Bowen's house. We hoped to be home before it began to storm, but we had hardly reached the hill above the village when a fine, driving snow began to fall. It would have been wiser to have turned back even then; but we had already come a mile and we thought we would have ample time to reach home before it became really bad. We were sadly mistaken; by the time we had gone another half-mile we were in the thick of a bewildering, blinding snowstorm. But it was by now just as far back to Cousin Mattie's as it was to Uncle Alec's, so we struggled on, growing more frightened at every step. We could hardly face the stinging snow, and we could not see ten feet ahead of us. It had turned bitterly cold and the tempest howled all around us in white desolation under the fast-darkening night. The narrow path we were trying to follow soon became entirely obliterated and we stumbled blindly on, holding to each other, and trying to peer through the furious whirl that filled the air. Our plight had come upon us so suddenly that we could not realize it. Presently Peter, who was leading the van because he was supposed to know the path best, stopped.

"I can't see the road any longer," he shouted. "I don't know where we are."

We all stopped and huddled together in a miserable group. Fear filled our hearts. It seemed ages ago that we had been snug and safe and warm at Cousin Mattie's. Cecily began to cry with cold. Dan, in spite of her protests, dragged off his overcoat and made her put it on.

"We can't stay here," he said. "We'll all freeze to death if we do. Come on — we've got to keep moving. The snow ain't so deep yet. Take hold of

my hand, Cecily. We must all hold together. Come, now.”

“It won’t be nice to be frozen to death, but if we get through alive think what a story we’ll have to tell,” said the Story Girl between her chattering teeth.

In my heart I did not believe we would ever get through alive. It was almost pitch dark now, and the snow grew deeper every moment. We were chilled to the heart. I thought how nice it would be to lie down and rest; but I remembered hearing that that was fatal, and I endeavoured to stumble on with the others. It was wonderful how the girls kept up, even Cecily. It occurred to me to be thankful that Sara Ray was not with us.

But we were wholly lost now. All around us was a horror of great darkness. Suddenly Felicity fell. We dragged her up, but she declared she could not go on — she was done out.

“Have you any idea where we are?” shouted Dan to Peter.

“No,” Peter shouted back, “the wind is blowing every which way. I haven’t any idea where home is.”

Home! Would we ever see it again? We tried to urge Felicity on, but she only repeated drowsily that she must lie down and rest. Cecily, too, was reeling against me. The Story Girl still stood up staunchly and counselled struggling on, but she was numb with cold and her words were hardly distinguishable. Some wild idea was in my mind that we must dig a hole in the snow and all creep into it. I had read somewhere that people had thus saved their lives in snowstorms. Suddenly Felix gave a shout.

“I see a light,” he cried.

“Where? Where?” We all looked but could see nothing.

“I don’t see it now but I saw it a moment ago,” shouted Felix. “I’m sure I did. Come on — over in this direction.”

Inspired with fresh hope we hurried after him. Soon we all saw the light — and never shone a fairer beacon. A few more steps and, coming into the shelter of the woodland on the further side, we realized where we were.

“That’s Peg Bowen’s house,” exclaimed Peter, stopping short in dismay.

“I don’t care whose house it is,” declared Dan. “We’ve got to go to it.”

“I s’pose so,” acquiesced Peter ruefully. “We can’t freeze to death even if she is a witch.”

“For goodness’ sake don’t say anything about witches so close to her house,” gasped Felicity. “I’ll be thankful to get in anywhere.”

We reached the house, climbed the flight of steps that led to that mysterious second story door, and Dan rapped. The door opened promptly and Peg Bowen stood before us, in what seemed exactly the same costume she had worn on the memorable day when we had come, bearing gifts, to propitiate her in the matter of Paddy.

“Behind her was a dim room scantily illumined by the one small candle that had guided us through the storm; but the old Waterloo stove was colouring the gloom with tremulous, rose-red whorls of light, and warm and cosy indeed seemed Peg’s retreat to us snow-covered, frost-chilled, benighted wanderers.

“Gracious goodness, where did yez all come from?” exclaimed Peg. “Did they turn yez out?”

“We’ve been over to Baywater, and we got lost in the storm coming back,” explained Dan. “We didn’t know where we were till we saw your light. I guess we’ll have to stay here till the storm is over — if you don’t mind.”

“And if it won’t inconvenience you,” said Cecily timidly.

“Oh, it’s no inconvenience to speak of. Come in. Well, yez HAVE got some snow on yez. Let me get a broom. You boys stomp your feet well and shake your coats. You girls give me your things and I’ll hang them up. Guess yez are most froze. Well, sit up to the stove and git het up.”

Peg bustled away to gather up a dubious assortment of chairs, with backs and rungs missing, and in a few minutes we were in a circle around her roaring stove, getting dried and thawed out. In our wildest flights of fancy we had never pictured ourselves as guests at the witch’s hearthstone. Yet here we were; and the witch herself was actually brewing a jorum of ginger tea for Cecily, who continued to shiver long after the rest of us were

roasted to the marrow. Poor Sis drank that scalding draught, being in too great awe of Peg to do aught else.

“That’ll soon fix your shivers,” said our hostess kindly. “And now I’ll get yez all some tea.”

“Oh, please don’t trouble,” said the Story Girl hastily.

“‘Tain’t any trouble,” said Peg briskly; then, with one of the sudden changes to fierceness which made her such a terrifying personage, “Do yez think my vittels ain’t clean?”

“Oh, no, no,” cried Felicity quickly, before the Story Girl could speak, “none of us would ever think THAT. Sara only meant she didn’t want you to go to any bother on our account.”

“It ain’t any bother,” said Peg, mollified. “I’m spry as a cricket this winter, though I have the realagy sometimes. Many a good bite I’ve had in your ma’s kitchen. I owe yez a meal.”

No more protests were made. We sat in awed silence, gazing with timid curiosity about the room, the stained, plastered walls of which were well-nigh covered with a motley assortment of pictures, chromos, and advertisements, pasted on without much regard for order or character.

We had heard much of Peg’s pets and now we saw them. Six cats occupied various cosy corners; one of them, the black goblin which had so terrified us in the summer, blinked satirically at us from the centre of Peg’s bed. Another, a dilapidated, striped beastie, with both ears and one eye gone, glared at us from the sofa in the corner. A dog, with only three legs, lay behind the stove; a crow sat on a roost above our heads, in company with a matronly old hen; and on the clock shelf were a stuffed monkey and a grinning skull. We had heard that a sailor had given Peg the monkey. But where had she got the skull? And whose was it? I could not help puzzling over these gruesome questions.

Presently tea was ready and we gathered around the festal board — a board literally as well as figuratively, for Peg’s table was the work of her own unskilled hands. The less said about the viands of that meal, and the dishes they were served in, the better. But we ate them — bless you, yes! — as we would have eaten any witch’s banquet set before us. Peg might or

might not be a witch — common sense said not; but we knew she was quite capable of turning every one of us out of doors in one of her sudden fierce fits if we offended her; and we had no mind to trust ourselves again to that wild forest where we had fought a losing fight with the demon forces of night and storm.

But it was not an agreeable meal in more ways than one. Peg was not at all careful of anybody's feelings. She hurt Felix's cruelly as she passed him his cup of tea.

"You've gone too much to flesh, boy. So the magic seed didn't work, hey?"

How in the world had Peg found out about that magic seed? Felix looked uncommonly foolish.

"If you'd come to me in the first place I'd soon have told you how to get thin," said Peg, nodding wisely.

"Won't you tell me now?" asked Felix eagerly, his desire to melt his too solid flesh overcoming his dread and shame.

"No, I don't like being second fiddle," answered Peg with a crafty smile. "Sara, you're too scrawny and pale — not much like your ma. I knew her well. She was counted a beauty, but she made no great things of a match. Your father had some money but he was a tramp like meself. Where is he now?"

"In Rome," said the Story Girl rather shortly.

"People thought your ma was crazy when she took him. But she'd a right to please herself. Folks is too ready to call other folks crazy. There's people who say I'M not in my right mind. Did yez ever" — Peg fixed Felicity with a piercing glance—"hear anything so ridiculous?"

"Never," said Felicity, white to the lips.

"I wish everybody was as sane as I am," said Peg scornfully. Then she looked poor Felicity over critically. "You're goodlooking but proud. And your complexion won't wear. It'll be like your ma's yet — too much red in it."

"Well, that's better than being the colour of mud," muttered Peter, who wasn't going to hear his lady traduced, even by a witch. All the thanks he

got was a furious look from Felicity, but Peg had not heard him and now she turned her attention to Cecily.

“You look delicate. I daresay you’ll never live to grow up.”

Cecily’s lip trembled and Dan’s face turned crimson.

“Shut up,” he said to Peg. “You’ve no business to say such things to people.”

I think my jaw dropped. I know Peter’s and Felix’s did. Felicity broke in wildly.

“Oh, don’t mind him, Miss Bowen. He’s got SUCH a temper — that’s just the way he talks to us all at home. PLEASE excuse him.”

“Bless you, I don’t mind him,” said Peg, from whom the unexpected seemed to be the thing to expect. “I like a lad of spurrit. And so your father run away, did he, Peter? He used to be a beau of mine — he seen me home three times from singing school when we was young. Some folks said he did it for a dare. There’s such a lot of jealousy in the world, ain’t there? Do you know where he is now?”

“No,” said Peter.

“Well, he’s coming home before long,” said Peg mysteriously.

“Who told you that?” cried Peter in amazement.

“Better not ask,” responded Peg, looking up at the skull.

If she meant to make the flesh creep on our bones she succeeded. But now, much to our relief, the meal was over and Peg invited us to draw our chairs up to the stove again.

“Make yourselves at home,” she said, producing her pipe from her pocket. “I ain’t one of the kind who thinks their houses too good to live in. Guess I won’t bother washing the dishes. They’ll do yez for breakfast if yez don’t forget your places. I s’pose none of yez smokes.”

“No,” said Felicity, rather primly.

“Then yez don’t know what’s good for yez,” retorted Peg, rather grumpily. But a few whiffs of her pipe placated her and, observing Cecily sigh, she asked her kindly what was the matter.

“I’m thinking how worried they’ll be at home about us,” explained Cecily.

“Bless you, dearie, don’t be worrying over that. I’ll send them word that yez are all snug and safe here.”

“But how can you?” cried amazed Cecily.

“Better not ask,” said Peg again, with another glance at the skull.

An uncomfortable silence followed, finally broken by Peg, who introduced her pets to us and told how she had come by them. The black cat was her favourite.

“That cat knows more than I do, if yez’ll believe it,” she said proudly. “I’ve got a rat too, but he’s a bit shy when strangers is round. Your cat got all right again that time, didn’t he?”

“Yes,” said the Story Girl.

“Thought he would,” said Peg, nodding sagely. “I seen to that. Now, don’t yez all be staring at the hole in my dress.”

“We weren’t,” was our chorus of protest.

“Looked as if yez were. I tore that yesterday but I didn’t mend it. I was brought up to believe that a hole was an accident but a patch was a disgrace. And so your Aunt Olivia is going to be married after all?”

This was news to us. We felt and looked dazed.

“I never heard anything of it,” said the Story Girl.

“Oh, it’s true enough. She’s a great fool. I’ve no faith in husbands. But one good thing is she ain’t going to marry that Henry Jacobs of Markdale. He wants her bad enough. Just like his presumption, — thinking himself good enough for a King. His father is the worst man alive. He chased me off his place with his dog once. But I’ll get even with him yet.”

Peg looked very savage, and visions of burned barns floated through our minds.

“He’ll be punished in hell, you know,” said Peter timidly.

“But I won’t be there to see that,” rejoined Peg. “Some folks say I’ll go there because I don’t go to church oftener. But I don’t believe it.”

“Why don’t you go?” asked Peter, with a temerity that bordered on rashness.

“Well, I’ve got so sunburned I’m afraid folks might take me for an Injun,” explained Peg, quite seriously. “Besides, your minister makes such

awful long prayers. Why does he do it?”

“I suppose he finds it easier to talk to God than to people,” suggested Peter reflectively.

“Well, anyway, I belong to the round church,” said Peg comfortably, “and so the devil can’t catch ME at the corners. I haven’t been to Carlisle church for over three years. I thought I’d a-died laughing the last time I was there. Old Elder Marr took up the collection that day. He’d on a pair of new boots and they squeaked all the way up and down the aisles. And every time the boots squeaked the elder made a face, like he had toothache. It was awful funny. How’s your missionary quilt coming on, Cecily?”

Was there anything Peg didn’t know?

“Very well,” said Cecily.

“You can put my name on it, if you want to.”

“Oh, thank you. Which section — the five-cent one or the tencent one?” asked Cecily timidly.

“The tencent one, of course. The best is none too good for me. I’ll give you the ten cents another time. I’m short of change just now — not being as rich as Queen Victory. There’s her picture up there — the one with the blue sash and diamint crown and the lace curting on her head. Can any of yez tell me this — is Queen Victory a married woman?”

“Oh, yes, but her husband is dead,” answered the Story Girl.

“Well, I s’pose they couldn’t have called her an old maid, seeing she was a queen, even if she’d never got married. Sometimes I sez to myself, ‘Peg, would you like to be Queen Victory?’ But I never know what to answer. In summer, when I can roam anywhere in the woods and the sunshine — I wouldn’t be Queen Victory for anything. But when it’s winter and cold and I can’t git nowheres — I feel as if I wouldn’t mind changing places with her.”

Peg put her pipe back in her mouth and began to smoke fiercely. The candle wick burned long, and was topped by a little cap of fiery red that seemed to wink at us like an impish gnome. The most grotesque shadow of Peg flickered over the wall behind her. The one-eyed cat remitted his grim

watch and went to sleep. Outside the wind screamed like a ravening beast at the window. Suddenly Peg removed her pipe from her mouth, bent forward, gripped my wrist with her sinewy fingers until I almost cried out with pain, and gazed straight into my face. I felt horribly frightened of her. She seemed an entirely different creature. A wild light was in her eyes, a furtive, animal-like expression was on her face. When she spoke it was in a different voice and in different language.

“Do you hear the wind?” she asked in a thrilling whisper. “What IS the wind? What IS the wind?”

“I — I — don’t know,” I stammered.

“No more do I,” said Peg, “and nobody knows. Nobody knows what the wind is. I wish I could find out. I mightn’t be so afraid of the wind if I knew what it was. I am afraid of it. When the blasts come like that I want to crouch down and hide me. But I can tell you one thing about the wind — it’s the only free thing in the world — THE — ONLY — FREE — THING. Everything else is subject to some law, but the wind is FREE. It bloweth where it listeth and no man can tame it. It’s free — that’s why I love it, though I’m afraid of it. It’s a grand thing to be free — free free — free!”

Peg’s voice rose almost to a shriek. We were dreadfully frightened, for we knew there were times when she was quite crazy and we feared one of her “spells” was coming on her. But with a swift movement she turned the man’s coat she wore up over her shoulders and head like a hood, completely hiding her face. Then she crouched forward, elbows on knees, and relapsed into silence. None of us dared speak or move. We sat thus for half an hour. Then Peg jumped up and said briskly in her usual tone,

“Well, I guess yez are all sleepy and ready for bed. You girls can sleep in my bed over there, and I’ll take the sofya. Yez can put the cat off if yez like, though he won’t hurt yez. You boys can go downstairs. There’s a big pile of straw there that’ll do yez for a bed, if yez put your coats on. I’ll light yez down, but I ain’t going to leave yez a light for fear yez’d set fire to the place.”

Saying goodnight to the girls, who looked as if they thought their last hour was come, we went to the lower room. It was quite empty, save for a pile of fire wood and another of clean straw. Casting a stealthy glance around, ere Peg withdrew the light, I was relieved to see that there were no skulls in sight. We four boys snuggled down in the straw. We did not expect to sleep, but we were very tired and before we knew it our eyes were shut, to open no more till morning. The poor girls were not so fortunate. They always averred they never closed an eye. Four things prevented them from sleeping. In the first place Peg snored loudly; in the second place the fitful gleams of firelight kept flickering over the skull for half the night and making gruesome effects on it; in the third place Peg's pillows and bedclothes smelled rankly of tobacco smoke; and in the fourth place they were afraid the rat Peg had spoken of might come out to make their acquaintance. Indeed, they were sure they heard him skirmishing about several times.

When we wakened in the morning the storm was over and a young morning was looking through rosy eyelids across a white world. The little clearing around Peg's cabin was heaped with dazzling drifts, and we boys fell to and shovelled out a road to her well. She gave us breakfast — stiff oatmeal porridge without milk, and a boiled egg apiece. Cecily could NOT eat her porridge; she declared she had such a bad cold that she had no appetite; a cold she certainly had; the rest of us choked our messes down and after we had done so Peg asked us if we had noticed a soapy taste.

"The soap fell into the porridge while I was making it," she said. "But," — smacking her lips, — "I'm going to make yez an Irish stew for dinner. It'll be fine."

An Irish stew concocted by Peg! No wonder Dan said hastily,

"You are very kind but we'll have to go right home."

"Yez can't walk," said Peg.

"Oh, yes, we can. The drifts are so hard they'll carry, and the snow will be pretty well blown off the middle of the fields. It's only three-quarters of a mile. We boys will go home and get a pung and come back for you girls."

But the girls wouldn't listen to this. They must go with us, even Cecily.

"Seems to me yez weren't in such a hurry to leave last night," observed Peg sarcastically.

"Oh, it's only because they'll be so anxious about us at home, and it's Sunday and we don't want to miss Sunday School," explained Felicity.

"Well, I hope your Sunday School will do yez good," said Peg, rather grumpily. But she relented again at the last and gave Cecily a wishbone.

"Whatever you wish on that will come true," she said. "But you only have the one wish, so don't waste it."

"We're so much obliged to you for all your trouble," said the Story Girl politely.

"Never mind the trouble. The expense is the thing," retorted Peg grimly.

"Oh!" Felicity hesitated. "If you would let us pay you — give you something—"

"No, thank yez," responded Peg loftily. "There is people who take money for their hospitality, I've heerd, but I'm thankful to say I don't associate with that class. Yez are welcome to all yez have had here, if yez ARE in a big hurry to get away."

She shut the door behind us with something of a slam, and her black cat followed us so far, with stealthy, furtive footsteps, that we were frightened of it. Eventually it turned back; then, and not till then, did we feel free to discuss our adventure.

"Well, I'm thankful we're out of THAT," said Felicity, drawing a long breath. "Hasn't it just been an awful experience?"

"We might all have been found frozen stark and stiff this morning," remarked the Story Girl with apparent relish.

"I tell you, it was a lucky thing we got to Peg Bowen's," said Dan.

"Miss Marwood says there is no such thing as luck," protested Cecily. "We ought to say it was Providence instead."

"Well, Peg and Providence don't seem to go together very well, somehow," retorted Dan. "If Peg is a witch it must be the Other One she's in co. with."

“Dan, it’s getting to be simply scandalous the way you talk,” said Felicity. “I just wish ma could hear you.”

“Is soap in porridge any worse than tooth-powder in rusks, lovely creature?” asked Dan.

“Dan, Dan,” admonished Cecily, between her coughs, “remember it’s Sunday.”

“It seems hard to remember that,” said Peter. “It doesn’t seem a mite like Sunday and it seems awful long since yesterday.”

“Cecily, you’ve got a dreadful cold,” said the Story Girl anxiously.

“In spite of Peg’s ginger tea,” added Felix.

“Oh, that ginger tea was AWFUL,” exclaimed poor Cecily. “I thought I’d never get it down — it was so hot with ginger — and there was so much of it! But I was so frightened of offending Peg I’d have tried to drink it all if there had been a bucketful. Oh, yes, it’s very easy for you all to laugh! You didn’t have to drink it.”

“We had to eat two meals, though,” said Felicity with a shiver. “And I don’t know when those dishes of hers were washed. I just shut my eyes and took gulps.”

“Did you notice the soapy taste in the porridge?” asked the Story Girl.

“Oh, there were so many queer tastes about it I didn’t notice one more than another,” answered Felicity wearily.

“What bothers me,” remarked Peter absently, “is that skull. Do you suppose Peg really finds things out by it?”

“Nonsense! How could she?” scoffed Felix, bold as a lion in daylight.

“She didn’t SAY she did, you know,” I said cautiously.

“Well, we’ll know in time if the things she said were going to happen do,” mused Peter.

“Do you suppose your father is really coming home?” queried Felicity.

“I hope not,” answered Peter decidedly.

“You ought to be ashamed of yourself,” said Felicity severely.

“No, I oughtn’t. Father got drunk all the time he was home, and wouldn’t work and was bad to mother,” said Peter defiantly. “She had to support him as well as herself and me. I don’t want to see any father

coming home, and you'd better believe it. Of course, if he was the right sort of a father it'd be different."

"What I would like to know is if Aunt Olivia is going to be married," said the Story Girl absently. "I can hardly believe it. But now that I think of it — Uncle Roger has been teasing her ever since she was in Halifax last summer."

"If she does get married you'll have to come and live with us," said Cecily delightedly.

Felicity did not betray so much delight and the Story Girl remarked with a weary little sigh that she hoped Aunt Olivia wouldn't. We all felt rather weary, somehow. Peg's predictions had been unsettling, and our nerves had all been more or less strained during our sojourn under her roof. We were glad when we found ourselves at home.

The folks had not been at all troubled about us, but it was because they were sure the storm had come up before we would think of leaving Cousin Mattie's and not because they had received any mysterious message from Peg's skull. We were relieved at this, but on the whole, our adventure had not done much towards clearing up the vexed question of Peg's witchcraft.

Chapter IX.

Extracts From the February and March Numbers of “our Magazine”

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RESOLUTION HONOUR ROLL

Miss Felicity King.

HONOURABLE MENTION

Mr. Felix King. Mr. Peter Craig. Miss Sara Ray.

EDITORIAL

The editor wishes to make a few remarks about the Resolution Honour Roll. As will be seen, only one name figures on it. Felicity says she has thought a beautiful thought every morning before breakfast without missing one morning, not even the one we were at Peg Bowen's. Some of our number think it not fair that Felicity should be on the honour roll (FELICITY, ASIDE: “That's Dan, of course.”) when she only made one resolution and won't tell us what any of the thoughts were. So we have decided to give honourable mention to everybody who has kept one resolution perfect. Felix has worked all his arithmetic problems by himself. He complains that he never got more than a third of them right and the teacher has marked him away down; but one cannot keep resolutions without some inconvenience. Peter has never played tit-tat-x in church or got drunk and says it wasn't as bad as he expected. (PETER, INDIGNANTLY: “I never said it.” CECILY, SOOTHINGLY: “Now, Peter, Bev only meant that as a joke.”) Sara Ray has never talked any mean gossip, but does not find conversation as interesting as it used to be. (SARA RAY, WONDERINGLY: “I don't remember of saying that.”)

Felix did not eat any apples until March, but forgot and ate seven the day we were at Cousin Mattie's. (FELIX: “I only ate five!”) He soon gave up trying to say what he thought always. He got into too much trouble. We think Felix ought to change to old Grandfather King's rule. It was, “Hold

your tongue when you can, and when you can't tell the truth." Cecily feels she has not read all the good books she might, because some she tried to read were very dull and the Pansy books were so much more interesting. And it is no use trying not to feel bad because her hair isn't curly and she has marked that resolution out. The Story Girl came very near to keeping her resolution to have all the good times possible, but she says she missed two, if not three, she might have had. Dan refuses to say anything about his resolutions and so does the editor.

PERSONALS

We regret that Miss Cecily King is suffering from a severe cold.

Mr. Alexander Marr of Markdale died very suddenly last week. We never heard of his death till he was dead.

Miss Cecily King wishes to state that she did not ask the question about "Holy Moses" and the other word in the January number. Dan put it in for a mean joke.

The weather has been cold and fine. We have only had one bad storm. The coasting on Uncle Roger's hill continues good.

Aunt Eliza did not favour us with a visit after all. She took cold and had to go home. We were sorry that she had a cold but glad that she had to go home. Cecily said she thought it wicked of us to be glad. But when we asked her "cross her heart" if she wasn't glad herself she had to say she was.

Miss Cecily King has got three very distinguished names on her quilt square. They are the Governor and his wife and a witch's.

The King family had the honour of entertaining the Governor's wife to tea on February the seventeenth. We are all invited to visit Government House but some of us think we won't go.

A tragic event occurred last Tuesday. Mrs. James Frewen came to tea and there was no pie in the house. Felicity has not yet fully recovered.

A new boy is coming to school. His name is Cyrus Brisk and his folks moved up from Markdale. He says he is going to punch Willy Fraser's head if Willy keeps on thinking he is Miss Cecily King's beau.

(CECILY: “I haven’t ANY beau! I don’t mean to think of such a thing for at least eight years yet!”)

Miss Alice Reade of Charlottetown Royalty has come to Carlisle to teach music. She boards at Mr. Peter Armstrong’s. The girls are all going to take music lessons from her. Two descriptions of her will be found in another column. Felix wrote one, but the girls thought he did not do her justice, so Cecily wrote another one. She admits she copied most of the description out of Valeria H. Montague’s story Lord Marmaduke’s First, Last, and Only Love; or the Bride of the Castle by the Sea, but says they fit Miss Reade better than anything she could make up.

HOUSEHOLD DEPARTMENT

Always keep the kitchen tidy and then you needn’t mind if company comes unexpectedly.

ANXIOUS INQUIRER: We don’t know anything that will take the stain out of a silk dress when a soft-boiled egg is dropped on it. Better not wear your silk dress so often, especially when boiling eggs.

Ginger tea is good for colds.

OLD HOUSEKEEPER: Yes, when the baking-powder gives out you can use tooth-powder instead.

(FELICITY: “I never wrote that! I don’t care, I don’t think it’s fair for other people to be putting things in my department!”)

Our apples are not keeping well this year. They are rotting; and besides father says we eat an awful lot of them.

PERSEVERANCE: I will give you the recipe for dumplings you ask for. But remember it is not everyone who can make dumplings, even from the recipe. There’s a knack in it.

If the soap falls into the porridge do not tell your guests about it until they have finished eating it because it might take away their appetite.

FELICITY KING.

ETIQUETTE DEPARTMENT

P-r C-g: — Do not criticize people’s noses unless you are sure they can’t hear you, and don’t criticize your best girl’s great-aunt’s nose in any case.

(FELICITY, TOSSING HER HEAD: “Oh, my! I s’pose Dan thought that was extra smart.”)

C-y K-g: — When my most intimate friend walks with another girl and exchanges lace patterns with her, what ought I to do? Ans. Adopt a dignified attitude.

F-y K-g: — It is better not to wear your second best hat to church, but if your mother says you must it is not for me to question her decision.

(FELICITY: “Dan just copied that word for word out of the Family Guide, except about the hat part.”)

P-r C-g: — Yes, it would be quite proper to say good evening to the family ghost if you met it.

F-x K-g: — No, it is not polite to sleep with your mouth open. What’s more, it isn’t safe. Something might fall into it.

DAN KING.

FASHION NOTES

Crocheted watch pockets are all the rage now. If you haven’t a watch they do to carry your pencil in or a piece of gum.

It is stylish to have hair ribbons to match your dress. But it is hard to match gray drugget. I like scarlet for that.

It is stylish to pin a piece of ribbon on your coat the same colour as your chum wears in her hair. Mary Martha Cowan saw them doing it in town and started us doing it here. I always wear Kitty’s ribbon and Kitty wears mine, but the Story Girl thinks it is silly.

CECILY KING.

AN ACCOUNT OF OUR VISIT TO COUSIN MATTIE’S

We all walked over to Cousin Mattie’s last week. They were all well there and we had a fine dinner. On our way back a snowstorm came up and we got lost in the woods. We didn’t know where we were or nothing. If we hadn’t seen a light I guess we’d all have been frozen and snowed over, and they would never have found us till spring and that would be very sad. But we saw a light and made for it and it was Peg Bowen’s. Some people think she is a witch and it’s hard to tell, but she was real hospitable and took us all in. Her house was very untidy but it was warm. She has a skull. I mean

a loose skull, not her own. She lets on it tells her things, but Uncle Alec says it couldn't because it was only an Indian skull that old Dr. Beecham had and Peg stole it when he died, but Uncle Roger says he wouldn't trust himself with Peg's skull for anything. She gave us supper. It was a horrid meal. The Story Girl says I must not tell what I found in the bread and butter because it would be too disgusting to read in Our Magazine but it don't matter because we were all there, except Sara Ray, and know what it was. We stayed all night and us boys slept in straw. None of us had ever slept on straw before. We got home in the morning. That is all I can write about our visit to Cousin Mattie's.

FELIX KING.

MY WORST ADVENTURE

It's my turn to write it so I suppose I must. I guess my worst adventure was two years ago when a whole lot of us were coasting on Uncle Rogers hill. Charlie Cowan and Fred Marr had started, but halfway down their sled got stuck and I run down to shove them off again. Then I stood there just a moment to watch them with my back to the top of the hill. While I was standing there Rob Marr started Kitty and Em Frewen off on his sled. His sled had a wooden tongue in it and it slanted back over the girls' heads. I was right in the way and they yelled to me to get out, but just as I heard them it struck me. The sled took me between the legs and I was histed back over the tongue and dropped in a heap behind before I knew what had happened to me. I thought a tornado had struck me. The girls couldn't stop though they thought I was killed, but Rob came tearing down and helped me up. He was awful scared but I wasn't killed nor my back wasn't broken but my nose bled something awful and kept on bleeding for three days. Not all the time but by spells.

DAN KING.

THE STORY OF HOW CARLISLE GOT ITS NAME

This is a true story to. Long ago there was a girl lived in charlotte town. I dont know her name so I cant right it and maybe it is just as well for Felicity might think it wasnt romantik like Miss Jemima Parrs. She was awful pretty and a young englishman who had come out to make his

fortune fell in love with her and they were engaged to be married the next spring. His name was Mr. Carlisle. In the winter he started off to hunt cariboo for a spell. Cariboos lived on the island then. There aint any here now. He got to where it is Carlisle now. It wasn't anything then only woods and a few indians. He got awful sick and was sick for ever so long in a indian camp and only an old micmac squaw to wait on him. Back in town they all thought he was dead and his girl felt bad for a little while and then got over it and took up with another beau. The girls say that wasnt romantik but I think it was sensible but if it had been me that died I'd have felt bad if she forgot me so soon. But he hadnt died and when he got back to town he went right to her house and walked in and there she was standing up to be married to the other fellow. Poor Mr. Carlisle felt awful. He was sick and week and it went to his head. He just turned and run and run till he got back to the old micmac's camp and fell in front of it. But the indians had gone because it was spring and it didnt matter because he really was dead this time and people come looking for him from town and found him and buryed him there and called the place after him. They say the girl was never happy again and that was hard lines on her but maybe she deserved it.

PETER CRAIG.

MISS ALICE READE

Miss Alice Reade is a very pretty girl. She has kind of curly blackish hair and big gray eyes and a pale face. She is tall and thin but her figure is pretty fair and she has a nice mouth and a sweet way of speaking. The girls are crazy about her and talk about her all the time.

FELIX KING.

BEAUTIFUL ALICE

That is what we girls call Miss Reade among ourselves. She is divinely beautiful. Her magnificent wealth of raven hair flows back in glistening waves from her sun-kissed brow. (DAN: "If Felix had said she was sunburned you'd have all jumped on him." (CECILY, COLDLY: "Sun-kissed doesn't mean sunburned." DAN: "What does it mean then?" CECILY, EMBARRASSED: "I — I don't know. But Miss Montague says

the Lady Geraldine's brow was sun-kissed and of course an earl's daughter wouldn't be sunburned. "THE STORY GIRL: "Oh, don't interrupt the reading like this. It spoils it.") Her eyes are gloriously dark and deep, like midnight lakes mirroring the stars of heaven. Her features are like sculptured marble and her mouth is a trembling, curving Cupid's bow. (PETER, ASIDE: "What kind of a thing is that?") Her creamy skin is as fair and flawless as the petals of a white lily. Her voice is like the ripple of a woodland brook and her slender form is matchless in its symmetry. (DAN: "That's Valeria's way of putting it, but Uncle Roger says she don't show her feed much." FELICITY: "Dan! if Uncle Roger is vulgar you needn't be!") Her hands are like a poet's dreams. She dresses so nicely and looks so stylish in her clothes. Her favourite colour is blue. Some people think she is stiff and some say she is stuck-up, but she isn't a bit. It's just that she is different from them and they don't like it. She is just lovely and we adore her.)

CECILY KING.

Disappearance of Paddy

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As I remember, the spring came late that year in Carlisle. It was May before the weather began to satisfy the grownups. But we children were more easily pleased, and we thought April a splendid month because the snow all went early and left gray, firm, frozen ground for our rambles and games. As the days slipped by they grew more gracious; the hillsides began to look as if they were thinking of mayflowers; the old orchard was washed in a bath of tingling sunshine and the sap stirred in the big trees; by day the sky was veiled with delicate cloud drift, fine and filmy as woven mist; in the evenings a full, low moon looked over the valleys, as pallid and holy as some aureoled saint; a sound of laughter and dream was on the wind and the world grew young with the mirth of April breezes.

“It’s so nice to be alive in the spring,” said the Story Girl one twilight as we swung on the boughs of Uncle Stephen’s walk.

“It’s nice to be alive any time,” said Felicity, complacently.

“But it’s nicer in the spring,” insisted the Story Girl. “When I’m dead I think I’ll FEEL dead all the rest of the year, but when spring comes I’m sure I’ll feel like getting up and being alive again.”

“You do say such queer things,” complained Felicity. “You won’t be really dead any time. You’ll be in the next world. And I think it’s horrid to talk about people being dead anyhow.”

“We’ve all got to die,” said Sara Ray solemnly, but with a certain relish. It was as if she enjoyed looking forward to something in which nothing, neither an unsympathetic mother, nor the cruel fate which had made her a colourless little nonentity, could prevent her from being the chief performer.

“I sometimes think,” said Cecily, rather wearily, “that it isn’t so dreadful to die young as I used to suppose.”

She prefaced her remark with a slight cough, as she had been all too apt to do of late, for the remnants of the cold she had caught the night we were lost in the storm still clung to her.

“Don’t talk such nonsense, Cecily,” cried the Story Girl with unwonted sharpness, a sharpness we all understood. All of us, in our hearts, though we never spoke of it to each other, thought Cecily was not as well as she ought to be that spring, and we hated to hear anything said which seemed in any way to touch or acknowledge the tiny, faint shadow which now and again showed itself dimly athwart our sunshine.

“Well, it was you began talking of being dead,” said Felicity angrily. “I don’t think it’s right to talk of such things. Cecily, are you sure your feet ain’t damp? We ought to go in anyhow — it’s too chilly out here for you.”

“You girls had better go,” said Dan, “but I ain’t going in till old Isaac Frewen goes. I’ve no use for him.”

“I hate him, too,” said Felicity, agreeing with Dan for once in her life. “He chews tobacco all the time and spits on the floor — the horrid pig!”

“And yet his brother is an elder in the church,” said Sara Ray wonderingly.

“I know a story about Isaac Frewen,” said the Story Girl. “When he was young he went by the name of Oatmeal Frewen and he got it this way. He was noted for doing outlandish things. He lived at Markdale then and he was a great, overgrown, awkward fellow, six feet tall. He drove over to Baywater one Saturday to visit his uncle there and came home the next afternoon, and although it was Sunday he brought a big bag of oatmeal in the wagon with him. When he came to Carlisle church he saw that service was going on there, and he concluded to stop and go in. But he didn’t like to leave his oatmeal outside for fear something would happen to it, because there were always mischievous boys around, so he hoisted the bag on his back and walked into church with it and right to the top of the aisle to Grandfather King’s pew. Grandfather King used to say he would never forget it to his dying day. The minister was preaching and everything was quiet and solemn when he heard a snicker behind him. Grandfather King turned around with a terrible frown — for you know in those days it was

thought a dreadful thing to laugh in church — to rebuke the offender; and what did he see but that great, hulking young Isaac stalking up the aisle, bending a little forward under the weight of a big bag of oatmeal? Grandfather King was so amazed he couldn't laugh, but almost everyone else in the church was laughing, and grandfather said he never blamed them, for no funnier sight was ever seen. Young Isaac turned into grandfather's pew and thumped the bag of oatmeal down on the seat with a thud that cracked it. Then he plumped down beside it, took off his hat, wiped his face, and settled back to listen to the sermon, just as if it was all a matter of course. When the service was over he hoisted his bag up again, marched out of church, and drove home. He could never understand why it made so much talk; but he was known by the name of Oatmeal Frewen for years."

Our laughter, as we separated, rang sweetly through the old orchard and across the far, dim meadows. Felicity and Cecily went into the house and Sara Ray and the Story Girl went home, but Peter decoyed me into the granary to ask advice.

"You know Felicity has a birthday next week," he said, "and I want to write her an ode."

"A — a what?" I gasped.

"An ode," repeated Peter, gravely. "It's poetry, you know. I'll put it in Our Magazine."

"But you can't write poetry, Peter," I protested.

"I'm going to try," said Peter stoutly. "That is, if you think she won't be offended at me."

"She ought to feel flattered," I replied.

"You never can tell how she'll take things," said Peter gloomily. "Of course I ain't going to sign my name, and if she ain't pleased I won't tell her I wrote it. Don't you let on."

I promised I wouldn't and Peter went off with a light heart. He said he meant to write two lines every day till he got it done.

Cupid was playing his world-old tricks with others than poor Peter that spring. Allusion has been made in these chronicles to one, Cyrus Brisk,

and to the fact that our brown-haired, soft-voiced Cecily had found favour in the eyes of the said Cyrus. Cecily did not regard her conquest with any pride. On the contrary, it annoyed her terribly to be teased about Cyrus. She declared she hated both him and his name. She was as uncivil to him as sweet Cecily could be to anyone, but the gallant Cyrus was nothing daunted. He laid determined siege to Cecily's young heart by all the methods known to lovelorn swains. He placed delicate tributes of spruce gum, molasses taffy, "conversation" candies and decorated slate pencils on her desk; he persistently "chose" her in all school games calling for a partner; he entreated to be allowed to carry her basket from school; he offered to work her sums for her; and rumour had it that he had made a wild statement to the effect that he meant to ask if he might see her home some night from prayer meeting. Cecily was quite frightened that he would; she confided to me that she would rather die than walk home with him, but that if he asked her she would be too bashful to say no. So far, however, Cyrus had not molested her out of school, nor had he as yet thumped Willy Fraser — who was reported to be very low in his spirits over the whole affair.

And now Cyrus had written Cecily a letter — a love letter, mark you. Moreover, he had sent it through the postoffice, with a real stamp on it. Its arrival made a sensation among us. Dan brought it from the office and, recognizing the handwriting of Cyrus, gave Cecily no peace until she showed us the letter. It was a very sentimental and rather ill-spelled epistle in which the inflammable Cyrus reproached her in heartrending words for her coldness, and begged her to answer his letter, saying that if she did he would keep the secret "in violets." Cyrus probably meant "inviolable" but Cecily thought it was intended for a poetical touch. He signed himself "your troo lover, Cyrus Brisk" and added in a postscript that he couldn't eat or sleep for thinking of her.

"Are you going to answer it?" asked Dan.

"Certainly not," said Cecily with dignity.

"Cyrus Brisk wants to be kicked," growled Felix, who never seemed to be any particular friend of Willy Fraser's either. "He'd better learn how to

spell before he takes to writing love letters.”

“Maybe Cyrus will starve to death if you don’t,” suggested Sara Ray.

“I hope he will,” said Cecily cruelly. She was truly vexed over the letter; and yet, so contradictory a thing is the feminine heart, even at twelve years old, I think she was a little flattered by it also. It was her first love letter and she confided to me that it gives you a very queer feeling to get it. At all events — the letter, though unanswered, was not torn up. I feel sure Cecily preserved it. But she walked past Cyrus next morning at school with a frozen countenance, evincing not the slightest pity for his pangs of unrequited affection. Cecily winced when Pat caught a mouse, visited a school chum the day the pigs were killed that she might not hear their squealing, and would not have stepped on a caterpillar for anything; yet she did not care at all how much she made the brisk Cyrus suffer.

Then, suddenly, all our spring gladness and Maytime hopes were blighted as by a killing frost. Sorrow and anxiety pervaded our days and embittered our dreams by night. Grim tragedy held sway in our lives for the next fortnight.

Paddy disappeared. One night he lapped his new milk as usual at Uncle Roger’s dairy door and then sat blandly on the flat stone before it, giving the world assurance of a cat, sleek sides glistening, plummy tail gracefully folded around his paws, brilliant eyes watching the stir and flicker of bare willow boughs in the twilight air above him. That was the last seen of him. In the morning he was not.

At first we were not seriously alarmed. Paddy was no roving Thomas, but occasionally he vanished for a day or so. But when two days passed without his return we became anxious, the third day worried us greatly, and the fourth found us distracted.

“Something has happened to Pat,” the Story Girl declared miserably. “He never stayed away from home more than two days in his life.”

“What could have happened to him?” asked Felix.

“He’s been poisoned — or a dog has killed him,” answered the Story Girl in tragic tones.

Cecily began to cry at this; but tears were of no avail. Neither was anything else, apparently. We searched every nook and cranny of barns and outbuildings and woods on both the King farms; we inquired far and wide; we roved over Carlisle meadows calling Paddy's name, until Aunt Janet grew exasperated and declared we must stop making such exhibitions of ourselves. But we found and heard no trace of our lost pet. The Story Girl moped and refused to be comforted; Cecily declared she could not sleep at night for thinking of poor Paddy dying miserably in some corner to which he had dragged his failing body, or lying somewhere mangled and torn by a dog. We hated every dog we saw on the ground that he might be the guilty one.

"It's the suspense that's so hard," sobbed the Story Girl. "If I just knew what had happened to him it wouldn't be QUITE so hard. But I don't know whether he's dead or alive. He may be living and suffering, and every night I dream that he has come home and when I wake up and find it's only a dream it just breaks my heart."

"It's ever so much worse than when he was so sick last fall," said Cecily drearily. "Then we knew that everything was done for him that could be done."

We could not appeal to Peg Bowen this time. In our desperation we would have done it, but Peg was far away. With the first breath of spring she was up and off, answering to the lure of the long road. She had not been seen in her accustomed haunts for many a day. Her pets were gaining their own living in the woods and her house was locked up.

The Witch's Wishbone

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When a fortnight had elapsed we gave up all hope.

"Pat is dead," said the Story Girl hopelessly, as we returned one evening from a bootless quest to Andrew Cowan's where a strange gray cat had been reported — a cat which turned out to be a yellowish brown nondescript, with no tail to speak of.

"I'm afraid so," I acknowledged at last.

"If only Peg Bowen had been at home she could have found him for us," asserted Peter. "Her skull would have told her where he was."

"I wonder if the wishbone she gave me would have done any good," cried Cecily suddenly. "I'd forgotten all about it. Oh, do you suppose it's too late yet?"

"There's nothing in a wishbone," said Dan impatiently.

"You can't be sure. She TOLD me I'd get the wish I made on it. I'm going to try whenever I get home."

"It can't do any harm, anyhow," said Peter, "but I'm afraid you've left it too late. If Pat is dead even a witch's wishbone can't bring him back to life."

"I'll never forgive myself for not thinking about it before," mourned Cecily.

As soon as we got home she flew to the little box upstairs where she kept her treasures, and brought therefrom the dry and brittle wishbone.

"Peg told me how it must be done. I'm to hold the wishbone with both hands, like this, and walk backward, repeating the wish nine times. And when I've finished the ninth time I'm to turn around nine times, from right to left, and then the wish will come true right away."

"Do you expect to see Pat when you finish turning?" said Dan skeptically.

None of us had any faith in the incantation except Peter, and, by infection, Cecily. You never could tell what might happen. Cecily took the wishbone in her trembling little hands and began her backward pacing, repeating solemnly, "I wish that we may find Paddy alive, or else his body, so that we can bury him decently." By the time Cecily had repeated this nine times we were all slightly infected with the desperate hope that something might come of it; and when she had made her nine gyrations we looked eagerly down the sunset lane, half expecting to see our lost pet. But we saw only the Awkward Man turning in at the gate. This was almost as surprising as the sight of Pat himself would have been; but there was no sign of Pat and hope flickered out in every breast but Peter's.

"You've got to give the spell time to work," he expostulated. "If Pat was miles away when it was wished it wouldn't be reasonable to expect to see him right off."

But we of little faith had already lost that little, and it was a very disconsolate group which the Awkward Man presently joined.

He was smiling — his rare, beautiful smile which only children ever saw — and he lifted his hat to the girls with no trace of the shyness and awkwardness for which he was notorious.

"Good evening," he said. "Have you little people lost a cat lately?"

We stared. Peter said "I knew it!" in a triumphant pig's whisper. The Story Girl started eagerly forward.

"Oh, Mr. Dale, can you tell us anything of Paddy?" she cried.

"A silver gray cat with black points and very fine marking?"

"Yes, yes!"

"Alive?"

"Yes."

"Well, doesn't that beat the Dutch!" muttered Dan.

But we were all crowding about the Awkward Man, demanding where and when he had found Paddy.

"You'd better come over to my place and make sure that it really is your cat," suggested the Awkward Man, "and I'll tell you all about finding

him on the way. I must warn you that he is pretty thin — but I think he'll pull through."

We obtained permission to go without much difficulty, although the spring evening was wearing late, for Aunt Janet said she supposed none of us would sleep a wink that night if we didn't. A joyful procession followed the Awkward Man and the Story Girl across the gray, starlitten meadows to his home and through his pine-guarded gate.

"You know that old barn of mine back in the woods?" said the Awkward Man. "I go to it only about once in a blue moon. There was an old barrel there, upside down, one side resting on a block of wood. This morning I went to the barn to see about having some hay hauled home, and I had occasion to move the barrel. I noticed that it seemed to have been moved slightly since my last visit, and it was now resting wholly on the floor. I lifted it up — and there was a cat lying on the floor under it. I had heard you had lost yours and I took it this was your pet. I was afraid he was dead at first. He was lying there with his eyes closed; but when I bent over him he opened them and gave a pitiful little mew; or rather his mouth made the motion of a mew, for he was too weak to utter a sound."

"Oh, poor, poor Paddy," said tender-hearted Cecily tearfully.

"He couldn't stand, so I carried him home and gave him just a little milk. Fortunately he was able to lap it. I gave him a little more at intervals all day, and when I left he was able to crawl around. I think he'll be all right, but you'll have to be careful how you feed him for a few days. Don't let your hearts run away with your judgment and kill him with kindness."

"Do you suppose any one put him under that barrel?" asked the Story Girl.

"No. The barn was locked. Nothing but a cat could get in. I suppose he went under the barrel, perhaps in pursuit of a mouse, and somehow knocked it off the block and so imprisoned himself."

Paddy was sitting before the fire in the Awkward Man's clean, bare kitchen. Thin! Why, he was literally skin and bone, and his fur was dull and lustreless. It almost broke our hearts to see our beautiful Paddy brought so low.

“Oh, how he must have suffered!” moaned Cecily.

“He’ll be as prosperous as ever in a week or two,” said the Awkward Man kindly.

The Story Girl gathered Paddy up in her arms. Most mellifluously did he purr as we crowded around to stroke him; with friendly joy he licked our hands with his little red tongue; poor Paddy was a thankful cat; he was no longer lost, starving, imprisoned, helpless; he was with his comrades once more and he was going home — home to his old familiar haunts of orchard and dairy and granary, to his daily rations of new milk and cream, to the cosy corner of his own fireside. We trooped home joyfully, the Story Girl in our midst carrying Paddy hugged against her shoulder. Never did April stars look down on a happier band of travellers on the golden road. There was a little gray wind out in the meadows that night, and it danced along beside us on viewless, fairy feet, and sang a delicate song of the lovely, waiting years, while the night laid her beautiful hands of blessing over the world.

“You see what Peg’s wishbone did,” said Peter triumphantly.

“Now, look here, Peter, don’t talk nonsense,” expostulated Dan. “The Awkward Man found Paddy this morning and had started to bring us word before Cecily ever thought of the wishbone. Do you mean to say you believe he wouldn’t have come walking up our lane just when he did if she had never thought of it?”

“I mean to say that I wouldn’t mind if I had several wishbones of the same kind,” retorted Peter stubbornly.

“Of course I don’t think the wishbone had really anything to do with our getting Paddy back, but I’m glad I tried it, for all that,” remarked Cecily in a tone of satisfaction.

“Well, anyhow, we’ve got Pat and that’s the main thing,” said Felix.

“And I hope it will be a lesson to him to stay home after this,” commented Felicity.

“They say the barrens are full of mayflowers,” said the Story Girl. “Let us have a mayflower picnic tomorrow to celebrate Paddy’s safe return.”

Flowers O' May

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Accordingly we went a-maying, following the lure of dancing winds to a certain westward sloping hill lying under the spiritlike blue of spring skies, feathered over with lispings young pines and firs, which cupped little hollows and corners where the sunshine got in and never got out again, but stayed there and grew mellow, coaxing dear things to bloom long before they would dream of waking up elsewhere.

‘Twas there we found our mayflowers, after faithful seeking. Mayflowers, you must know, never flaunt themselves; they must be sought as becomes them, and then they will yield up their treasures to the seeker — clusters of star-white and dawn-pink that have in them the very soul of all the springs that ever were, reincarnated in something it seems gross to call perfume, so exquisite and spiritual is it.

We wandered gaily over the hill, calling to each other with laughter and jest, getting parted and delightfully lost in that little pathless wilderness, and finding each other unexpectedly in nooks and dips and sunny silences, where the wind purred and gentled and went softly. When the sun began to hang low, sending great fan-like streamers of radiance up to the zenith, we foregathered in a tiny, sequestered valley, full of young green fern, lying in the shadow of a wooded hill. In it was a shallow pool — a glimmering green sheet of water on whose banks nymphs might dance as blithely as ever they did on Argive hill or in Cretan dale. There we sat and stripped the faded leaves and stems from our spoil, making up the blossoms into bouquets to fill our baskets with sweetness. The Story Girl twisted a spray of divinest pink in her brown curls, and told us an old legend of a beautiful Indian maiden who died of a broken heart when the first snows of winter were falling, because she believed her long-absent lover was false. But he came back in the spring time from his long captivity; and when he heard that she was dead he sought her grave to

mourn her, and lo, under the dead leaves of the old year he found sweet sprays of a blossom never seen before, and knew that it was a message of love and remembrance from his dark-eyed sweetheart.

“Except in stories Indian girls are called squaws,” remarked practical Dan, tying his mayflowers together in one huge, solid, cabbage-like bunch. Not for Dan the bother of filling his basket with the loose sprays, mingled with feathery elephant’s-ears and trails of creeping spruce, as the rest of us, following the Story Girl’s example, did. Nor would he admit that ours looked any better than his.

“I like things of one kind together. I don’t like them mixed,” he said.

“You have no taste,” said Felicity.

“Except in my mouth, best beloved,” responded Dan.

“You do think you are so smart,” retorted Felicity, flushing with anger.

“Don’t quarrel this lovely day,” implored Cecily.

“Nobody’s quarrelling, Sis. I ain’t a bit mad. It’s Felicity. What on earth is that at the bottom of your basket, Cecily?”

“It’s a History of the Reformation in France,” confessed poor Cecily, “by a man named D-a-u-b-i-g-n-y. I can’t pronounce it. I heard Mr. Marwood saying it was a book everyone ought to read, so I began it last Sunday. I brought it along today to read when I got tired picking flowers. I’d ever so much rather have brought Ester Reid. There’s so much in the history I can’t understand, and it is so dreadful to read of people being burned to death. But I felt I OUGHT to read it.”

“Do you really think your mind has improved any?” asked Sara Ray seriously, wreathing the handle of her basket with creeping spruce.

“No, I’m afraid it hasn’t one bit,” answered Cecily sadly. “I feel that I haven’t succeeded very well in keeping my resolutions.”

“I’ve kept mine,” said Felicity complacently.

“It’s easy to keep just one,” retorted Cecily, rather resentfully.

“It’s not so easy to think beautiful thoughts,” answered Felicity.

“It’s the easiest thing in the world,” said the Story Girl, tiptoeing to the edge of the pool to peep at her own arch reflection, as some nymph left

over from the golden age might do. “Beautiful thoughts just crowd into your mind at times.”

“Oh, yes, AT TIMES. But that’s different from thinking one REGULARLY at a given hour. And mother is always calling up the stairs for me to hurry up and get dressed, and it’s VERY hard sometimes.”

“That’s so,” conceded the Story Girl. “There ARE times when I can’t think anything but gray thoughts. Then, other days, I think pink and blue and gold and purple and rainbow thoughts all the time.”

“The idea! As if thoughts were coloured,” giggled Felicity.

“Oh, they are!” cried the Story Girl. “Why, I can always SEE the colour of any thought I think. Can’t you?”

“I never heard of such a thing,” declared Felicity, “and I don’t believe it. I believe you are just making that up.”

“Indeed I’m not. Why, I always supposed everyone thought in colours. It must be very tiresome if you don’t.”

“When you think of me what colour is it?” asked Peter curiously.

“Yellow,” answered the Story Girl promptly. “And Cecily is a sweet pink, like those mayflowers, and Sara Ray is very pale blue, and Dan is red and Felix is yellow, like Peter, and Bev is striped.”

“What colour am I?” asked Felicity, amid the laughter at my expense.

“You’re — you’re like a rainbow,” answered the Story Girl rather reluctantly. She had to be honest, but she would rather not have complimented Felicity. “And you needn’t laugh at Bev. His stripes are beautiful. It isn’t HE that is striped. It’s just the THOUGHT of him. Peg Bowen is a queer sort of yellowish green and the Awkward Man is lilac. Aunt Olivia is pansy-purple mixed with gold, and Uncle Roger is navy blue.”

“I never heard such nonsense,” declared Felicity. The rest of us were rather inclined to agree with her for once. We thought the Story Girl was making fun of us. But I believe she really had a strange gift of thinking in colours. In later years, when we were grown up, she told me of it again. She said that everything had colour in her thought; the months of the year ran through all the tints of the spectrum, the days of the week were arrayed

as Solomon in his glory, morning was golden, noon orange, evening crystal blue, and night violet. Every idea came to her mind robed in its own especial hue. Perhaps that was why her voice and words had such a charm, conveying to the listeners' perception such fine shadings of meaning and tint and music.

"Well, let's go and have something to eat," suggested Dan. "What colour is eating, Sara?"

"Golden brown, just the colour of a molasses cooky," laughed the Story Girl.

We sat on the ferny bank of the pool and ate of the generous basket Aunt Janet had provided, with appetites sharpened by the keen spring air and our wilderness roving. Felicity had made some very nice sandwiches of ham which we all appreciated except Dan, who declared he didn't like things minced up and dug out of the basket a chunk of boiled pork which he proceeded to saw up with a jack-knife and devour with gusto.

"I told ma to put this in for me. There's some CHEW to it," he said.

"You are not a bit refined," commented Felicity.

"Not a morsel, my love," grinned Dan.

"You make me think of a story I heard Uncle Roger telling about Cousin Annetta King," said the Story Girl. "Great-uncle Jeremiah King used to live where Uncle Roger lives now, when Grandfather King was alive and Uncle Roger was a boy. In those days it was thought rather coarse for a young lady to have too hearty an appetite, and she was more admired if she was delicate about what she ate. Cousin Annetta set out to be very refined indeed. She pretended to have no appetite at all. One afternoon she was invited to tea at Grandfather King's when they had some special company — people from Charlottetown. Cousin Annetta said she could hardly eat anything. 'You know, Uncle Abraham,' she said, in a very affected, fine-young-lady voice, 'I really hardly eat enough to keep a bird alive. Mother says she wonders how I continue to exist.' And she picked and pecked until Grandfather King declared he would like to throw something at her. After tea Cousin Annetta went home, and just about dark Grandfather King went over to Uncle Jeremiah's on an errand. As he

passed the open, lighted pantry window he happened to glance in, and what do you think he saw? Delicate Cousin Annetta standing at the dresser, with a big loaf of bread beside her and a big platterful of cold, boiled pork in front of her; and Annetta was hacking off great chunks, like Dan there, and gobbling them down as if she was starving. Grandfather King couldn't resist the temptation. He stepped up to the window and said, 'I'm glad your appetite has come back to you, Annetta. Your mother needn't worry about your continuing to exist as long as you can tuck away fat, salt pork in that fashion.'

"Cousin Annetta never forgave him, but she never pretended to be delicate again."

"The Jews don't believe in eating pork," said Peter.

"I'm glad I'm not a Jew and I guess Cousin Annetta was too," said Dan.

"I like bacon, but I can never look at a pig without wondering if they were ever intended to be eaten," remarked Cecily naively.

When we finished our lunch the barrens were already wrapping themselves in a dim, blue dusk and falling upon rest in dell and dingle. But out in the open there was still much light of a fine emerald-golden sort and the robins whistled us home in it. "Horns of Elfland" never sounded more sweetly around hoary castle and ruined fane than those vesper calls of the robins from the twilight spruce woods and across green pastures lying under the pale radiance of a young moon.

When we reached home we found that Miss Reade had been up to the hill farm on an errand and was just leaving. The Story Girl went for a walk with her and came back with an important expression on her face.

"You look as if you had a story to tell," said Felix.

"One is growing. It isn't a whole story yet," answered the Story Girl mysteriously.

"What is it?" asked Cecily.

"I can't tell you till it's fully grown," said the Story Girl. "But I'll tell you a pretty little story the Awkward Man told us — told me — tonight. He was walking in his garden as we went by, looking at his tulip beds. His

tulips are up ever so much higher than ours, and I asked him how he managed to coax them along so early. And he said HE didn't do it — it was all the work of the pixies who lived in the woods across the brook. There were more pixy babies than usual this spring, and the mothers were in a hurry for the cradles. The tulips are the pixy babies' cradles, it seems. The mother pixies come out of the woods at twilight and rock their tiny little brown babies to sleep in the tulip cups. That is the reason why tulip blooms last so much longer than other blossoms. The pixy babies must have a cradle until they are grown up. They grow very fast, you see, and the Awkward Man says on a spring evening, when the tulips are out, you can hear the sweetest, softest, clearest, fairy music in his garden, and it is the pixy folk singing as they rock the pixy babies to sleep."

"Then the Awkward Man says what isn't true," said Felicity severely.

A Surprising Announcement

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“Nothing exciting has happened for ever so long,” said the Story Girl discontentedly, one late May evening, as we lingered under the wonderful white bloom of the cherry trees. There was a long row of them in the orchard, with a Lombardy poplar at either end, and a hedge of lilacs behind. When the wind blew over them all the spicy breezes of Ceylon’s isle were never sweeter.

It was a time of wonder and marvel, of the soft touch of silver rain on greening fields, of the incredible delicacy of young leaves, of blossom in field and garden and wood. The whole world bloomed in a flush and tremor of maiden loveliness, instinct with all the evasive, fleeting charm of spring and girlhood and young morning. We felt and enjoyed it all without understanding or analyzing it. It was enough to be glad and young with spring on the golden road.

“I don’t like excitement very much,” said Cecily. “It makes one so tired. I’m sure it was exciting enough when Paddy was missing, but we didn’t find that very pleasant.”

“No, but it was interesting,” returned the Story Girl thoughtfully. “After all, I believe I’d rather be miserable than dull.”

“I wouldn’t then,” said Felicity decidedly. “And you need never be dull when you have work to do. ‘Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do!’”

“Well, mischief is interesting,” laughed the Story Girl. “And I thought you didn’t think it ladylike to speak of that person, Felicity?”

“It’s all right if you call him by his polite name,” said Felicity stiffly.

“Why does the Lombardy poplar hold its branches straight up in the air like that, when all the other poplars hold theirs out or hang them down?” interjected Peter, who had been gazing intently at the slender spire showing darkly against the fine blue eastern sky.

“Because it grows that way,” said Felicity.

“Oh I know a story about that,” cried the Story Girl. “Once upon a time an old man found the pot of gold at the rainbow’s end. There IS a pot there, it is said, but it is very hard to find because you can never get to the rainbow’s end before it vanishes from your sight. But this old man found it, just at sunset, when Iris, the guardian of the rainbow gold, happened to be absent. As he was a long way from home, and the pot was very big and heavy, he decided to hide it until morning and then get one of his sons to go with him and help him carry it. So he hid it under the boughs of the sleeping poplar tree.

“When Iris came back she missed the pot of gold and of course she was in a sad way about it. She sent Mercury, the messenger of the gods, to look for it, for she didn’t dare leave the rainbow again, lest somebody should run off with that too. Mercury asked all the trees if they had seen the pot of gold, and the elm, oak and pine pointed to the poplar and said,

“‘The poplar can tell you where it is.’

“‘How can I tell you where it is?’ cried the poplar, and she held up all her branches in surprise, just as we hold up our hands — and down tumbled the pot of gold. The poplar was amazed and indignant, for she was a very honest tree. She stretched her boughs high above her head and declared that she would always hold them like that, so that nobody could hide stolen gold under them again. And she taught all the little poplars she knew to stand the same way, and that is why Lombardy poplars always do. But the aspen poplar leaves are always shaking, even on the very calmest day. And do you know why?”

And then she told us the old legend that the cross on which the Saviour of the world suffered was made of aspen poplar wood and so never again could its poor, shaken, shivering leaves know rest or peace. There was an aspen in the orchard, the very embodiment of youth and spring in its litheness and symmetry. Its little leaves were hanging tremulously, not yet so fully blown as to hide its development of bough and twig, making poetry against the spiritual tints of a spring sunset.

“It does look sad,” said Peter, “but it is a pretty tree, and it wasn’t its fault.”

“There’s a heavy dew and it’s time we stopped talking nonsense and went in,” decreed Felicity. “If we don’t we’ll all have a cold, and then we’ll be miserable enough, but it won’t be very exciting.”

“All the same, I wish something exciting would happen,” finished the Story Girl, as we walked up through the orchard, peopled with its nun-like shadows.

“There’s a new moon tonight, so may be you’ll get your wish,” said Peter. “My Aunt Jane didn’t believe there was anything in the moon business, but you never can tell.”

The Story Girl did get her wish. Something happened the very next day. She joined us in the afternoon with a quite indescribable expression on her face, compounded of triumph, anticipation, and regret. Her eyes betrayed that she had been crying, but in them shone a chastened exultation. Whatever the Story Girl mourned over it was evident she was not without hope.

“I have some news to tell you,” she said importantly. “Can you guess what it is?”

We couldn’t and wouldn’t try.

“Tell us right off,” implored Felix. “You look as if it was something tremendous.”

“So it is. Listen — Aunt Olivia is going to be married.”

We stared in blank amazement. Peg Bowen’s hint had faded from our minds and we had never put much faith in it.

“Aunt Olivia! I don’t believe it,” cried Felicity flatly. “Who told you?”

“Aunt Olivia herself. So it is perfectly true. I’m awfully sorry in one way — but oh, won’t it be splendid to have a real wedding in the family? She’s going to have a big wedding — and I am to be bridesmaid.”

“I shouldn’t think you were old enough to be a bridesmaid,” said Felicity sharply.

“I’m nearly fifteen. Anyway, Aunt Olivia says I have to be.”

“Who’s she going to marry?” asked Cecily, gathering herself together after the shock, and finding that the world was going on just the same.

“His name is Dr. Seton and he is a Halifax man. She met him when she was at Uncle Edward’s last summer. They’ve been engaged ever since. The wedding is to be the third week in June.”

“And our school concert comes off the next week,” complained Felicity. “Why do things always come together like that? And what are you going to do if Aunt Olivia is going away?”

“I’m coming to live at your house,” answered the Story Girl rather timidly. She did not know how Felicity might like that. But Felicity took it rather well.

“You’ve been here most of the time anyhow, so it’ll just be that you’ll sleep and eat here, too. But what’s to become of Uncle Roger?”

“Aunt Olivia says he’ll have to get married, too. But Uncle Roger says he’d rather hire a housekeeper than marry one, because in the first case he could turn her off if he didn’t like her, but in the second case he couldn’t.”

“There’ll be a lot of cooking to do for the wedding,” reflected Felicity in a tone of satisfaction.

“I s’pose Aunt Olivia will want some rusks made. I hope she has plenty of tooth-powder laid in,” said Dan.

“It’s a pity you don’t use some of that tooth-powder you’re so fond of talking about yourself,” retorted Felicity. “When anyone has a mouth the size of yours the teeth show so plain.”

“I brush my teeth every Sunday,” asseverated Dan.

“Every Sunday! You ought to brush them every DAY.”

“Did anyone ever hear such nonsense?” demanded Dan sincerely.

“Well, you know, it really does say so in the Family Guide,” said Cecily quietly.

“Then the Family Guide people must have lots more spare time than I have,” retorted Dan contemptuously.

“Just think, the Story Girl will have her name in the papers if she’s bridesmaid,” marvelled Sara Ray.

“In the Halifax papers, too,” added Felix, “since Dr. Seton is a Halifax man. What is his first name?”

“Robert.”

“And will we have to call him Uncle Robert?”

“Not until he’s married to her. Then we will, of course.”

“I hope your Aunt Olivia won’t disappear before the ceremony,” remarked Sara Ray, who was surreptitiously reading “The Vanquished Bride,” by Valeria H. Montague in the Family Guide.

“I hope Dr. Seton won’t fail to show up, like your cousin Rachel Ward’s beau,” said Peter.

“That makes me think of another story I read the other day about Great-uncle Andrew King and Aunt Georgina,” laughed the Story Girl. “It happened eighty years ago. It was a very stormy winter and the roads were bad. Uncle Andrew lived in Carlisle, and Aunt Georgina — she was Miss Georgina Matheson then — lived away up west, so he couldn’t get to see her very often. They agreed to be married that winter, but Georgina couldn’t set the day exactly because her brother, who lived in Ontario, was coming home for a visit, and she wanted to be married while he was home. So it was arranged that she was to write Uncle Andrew and tell him what day to come. She did, and she told him to come on a Tuesday. But her writing wasn’t very good and poor Uncle Andrew thought she wrote Thursday. So on Thursday he drove all the way to Georgina’s home to be married. It was forty miles and a bitter cold day. But it wasn’t any colder than the reception he got from Georgina. She was out in the porch, with her head tied up in a towel, picking geese. She had been all ready Tuesday, and her friends and the minister were there, and the wedding supper prepared. But there was no bridegroom and Georgina was furious. Nothing Uncle Andrew could say would appease her. She wouldn’t listen to a word of explanation, but told him to go, and never show his nose there again. So poor Uncle Andrew had to go ruefully home, hoping that she would relent later on, because he was really very much in love with her.”

“And did she?” queried Felicity.

“She did. Thirteen years exactly from that day they were married. It took her just that long to forgive him.”

“It took her just that long to find out she couldn’t get anybody else,” said Dan, cynically.

A Prodigal Returns

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Aunt Olivia and the Story Girl lived in a whirlwind of dressmaking after that, and enjoyed it hugely. Cecily and Felicity also had to have new dresses for the great event, and they talked of little else for a fortnight. Cecily declared that she hated to go to sleep because she was sure to dream that she was at Aunt Olivia's wedding in her old faded gingham dress and a ragged apron.

"And no shoes or stockings," she added, "and I can't move, and everyone walks past and looks at my feet."

"That's only in a dream," mourned Sara Ray, "but I may have to wear my last summer's white dress to the wedding. It's too short, but ma says it's plenty good for this summer. I'll be so mortified if I have to wear it."

"I'd rather not go at all than wear a dress that wasn't nice," said Felicity pleasantly.

"I'd go to the wedding if I had to go in my school dress," cried Sara Ray. "I've never been to anything. I wouldn't miss it for the world."

"My Aunt Jane always said that if you were neat and tidy it didn't matter whether you were dressed fine or not," said Peter.

"I'm sick and tired of hearing about your Aunt Jane," said Felicity crossly.

Peter looked grieved but held his peace. Felicity was very hard on him that spring, but his loyalty never wavered. Everything she said or did was right in Peter's eyes.

"It's all very well to be neat and tidy," said Sara Ray, "but I like a little style too."

"I think you'll find your mother will get you a new dress after all," comforted Cecily. "Anyway, nobody will notice you because everyone will be looking at the bride. Aunt Olivia will make a lovely bride. Just think how sweet she'll look in a white silk dress and a floating veil."

“She says she is going to have the ceremony performed out here in the orchard under her own tree,” said the Story Girl. “Won’t that be romantic? It almost makes me feel like getting married myself.”

“What a way to talk,” rebuked Felicity, “and you only fifteen.”

“Lots of people have been married at fifteen,” laughed the Story Girl. “Lady Jane Gray was.”

“But you are always saying that Valeria H. Montague’s stories are silly and not true to life, so that is no argument,” retorted Felicity, who knew more about cooking than about history, and evidently imagined that the Lady Jane Gray was one of Valeria’s titled heroines.

The wedding was a perennial source of conversation among us in those days; but presently its interest palled for a time in the light of another quite tremendous happening. One Saturday night Peter’s mother called to take him home with her for Sunday. She had been working at Mr. James Frewen’s, and Mr. Frewen was driving her home. We had never seen Peter’s mother before, and we looked at her with discreet curiosity. She was a plump, black-eyed little woman, neat as a pin, but with a rather tired and careworn face that looked as if it should have been rosy and jolly. Life had been a hard battle for her, and I rather think that her curly-headed little lad was all that had kept heart and spirit in her. Peter went home with her and returned Sunday evening. We were in the orchard sitting around the Pulpit Stone, where we had, according to the custom of the households of King, been learning our golden texts and memory verses for the next Sunday School lesson. Paddy, grown sleek and handsome again, was sitting on the stone itself, washing his jowls.

Peter joined us with a very queer expression on his face. He seemed bursting with some news which he wanted to tell and yet hardly liked to.

“Why are you looking so mysterious, Peter?” demanded the Story Girl.

“What do you think has happened?” asked Peter solemnly.

“What has?”

“My father has come home,” answered Peter.

The announcement produced all the sensation he could have wished. We crowded around him in excitement.

“Peter! When did he come back?”

“Saturday night. He was there when ma and I got home. It give her an awful turn. I didn’t know him at first, of course.”

“Peter Craig, I believe you are glad your father has come back,” cried the Story Girl.

“‘Course I’m glad,” retorted Peter.

“And after you saying you didn’t want ever to see him again,” said Felicity.

“You just wait. You haven’t heard my story yet. I wouldn’t have been glad to see father if he’d come back the same as he went away. But he is a changed man. He happened to go into a revival meeting one night this spring and he got converted. And he’s come home to stay, and he says he’s never going to drink another drop, but he’s going to look after his family. Ma isn’t to do any more washing for nobody but him and me, and I’m not to be a hired boy any longer. He says I can stay with your Uncle Roger till the fall ‘cause I promised I would, but after that I’m to stay home and go to school right along and learn to be whatever I’d like to be. I tell you it made me feel queer. Everything seemed to be upset. But he gave ma forty dollars — every cent he had — so I guess he really is converted.”

“I hope it will last, I’m sure,” said Felicity. She did not say it nastily, however. We were all glad for Peter’s sake, though a little dizzy over the unexpectedness of it all.

“This is what I’d like to know,” said Peter. “How did Peg Bowen know my father was coming home? Don’t you tell me she isn’t a witch after that.”

“And she knew about your Aunt Olivia’s wedding, too,” added Sara Ray.

“Oh, well, she likely heard that from some one. Grown up folks talk things over long before they tell them to children,” said Cecily.

“Well, she couldn’t have heard father was coming home from any one,” answered Peter. “He was converted up in Maine, where nobody knew him, and he never told a soul he was coming till he got here. No, you can believe what you like, but I’m satisfied at last that Peg is a witch and that

skull of hers does tell her things. She told me father was coming home and he come!”

“How happy you must be,” sighed Sara Ray romantically. “It’s just like that story in the Family Guide, where the missing earl comes home to his family just as the Countess and Lady Violetta are going to be turned out by the cruel heir.”

Felicity sniffed.

“There’s some difference, I guess. The earl had been imprisoned for years in a loathsome dungeon.”

Perhaps Peter’s father had too, if we but realized it — imprisoned in the dungeon of his own evil appetites and habits, than which none could be more loathsome. But a Power, mightier than the forces of evil, had struck off his fetters and led him back to his long-forfeited liberty and light. And no countess or lady of high degree could have welcomed a long-lost earl home more joyfully than the tired little washerwoman had welcomed the erring husband of her youth.

But in Peter’s ointment of joy there was a fly or two. So very, very few things are flawless in this world, even on the golden road.

“Of course I’m awful glad that father has come back and that ma won’t have to wash any more,” he said with a sigh, “but there are two things that kind of worry me. My Aunt Jane always said that it didn’t do any good to worry, and I s’pose it don’t, but it’s kind of a relief.”

“What’s worrying you?” asked Felix.

“Well, for one thing I’ll feel awful bad to go away from you all. I’ll miss you just dreadful, and I won’t even be able to go to the same school. I’ll have to go to Markdale school.”

“But you must come and see us often,” said Felicity graciously. “Markdale isn’t so far away, and you could spend every other Saturday afternoon with us anyway.”

Peter’s black eyes filled with adoring gratitude.

“That’s so kind of you, Felicity. I’ll come as often as I can, of course; but it won’t be the same as being around with you all the time. The other thing is even worse. You see, it was a Methodist revival father got

converted in, and so of course he joined the Methodist church. He wasn't anything before. He used to say he was a Nothingarian and lived up to it — kind of bragging like. But he's a strong Methodist now, and is going to go to Markdale Methodist church and pay to the salary. Now what'll he say when I tell him I'm a Presbyterian?"

"You haven't told him, yet?" asked the Story Girl.

"No, I didn't dare. I was scared he'd say I'd have to be a Methodist."

"Well, Methodists are pretty near as good as Presbyterians," said Felicity, with the air of one making a great concession.

"I guess they're every bit as good," retorted Peter. "But that ain't the point. I've got to be a Presbyterian, 'cause I stick to a thing when I once decide it. But I expect father will be mad when he finds out."

"If he's converted he oughtn't to get mad," said Dan.

"Well, lots o' people do. But if he isn't mad he'll be sorry, and that'll be even worse, for a Presbyterian I'm bound to be. But I expect it will make things unpleasant."

"You needn't tell him anything about it," advised Felicity. "Just keep quiet and go to the Methodist church until you get big, and then you can go where you please."

"No, that wouldn't be honest," said Peter sturdily. "My Aunt Jane always said it was best to be open and above board in everything, and especially in religion. So I'll tell father right out, but I'll wait a few weeks so as not to spoil things for ma too soon if he acts up."

Peter was not the only one who had secret cares. Sara Ray was beginning to feel worried over her looks. I heard her and Cecily talking over their troubles one evening while I was weeding the onion bed and they were behind the hedge knitting lace. I did not mean to eavesdrop. I supposed they knew I was there until Cecily overwhelmed me with indignation later on.

"I'm so afraid, Cecily, that I'm going to be homely all my life," said poor Sara with a tremble in her voice. "You can stand being ugly when you are young if you have any hope of being better looking when you grow up. But I'm getting worse. Aunt Mary says I'm going to be the very image of

Aunt Matilda. And Aunt Matilda is as homely as she can be. It isn't" — and poor Sara sighed—"a very cheerful prospect. If I am ugly nobody will ever want to marry me, and," concluded Sara candidly, "I don't want to be an old maid."

"But plenty of girls get married who aren't a bit pretty," comforted Cecily. "Besides, you are real nice looking at times, Sara. I think you are going to have a nice figure."

"But just look at my hands," moaned Sara. "They're simply covered with warts."

"Oh, the warts will all disappear before you grow up," said Cecily.

"But they won't disappear before the school concert. How am I to get up there and recite? You know there is one line in my recitation, 'She waved her lily-white hand,' and I have to wave mine when I say it. Fancy waving a lily-white hand all covered with warts. I've tried every remedy I ever heard of, but nothing does any good. Judy Pineau said if I rubbed them with toad-spit it would take them away for sure. But how am I to get any toad-spit?"

"It doesn't sound like a very nice remedy, anyhow," shuddered Cecily. "I'd rather have the warts. But do you know, I believe if you didn't cry so much over every little thing, you'd be ever so much better looking. Crying spoils your eyes and makes the end of your nose red."

"I can't help crying," protested Sara. "My feelings are so very sensitive. I've given up trying to keep THAT resolution."

"Well, men don't like crybabies," said Cecily sagely. Cecily had a good deal of Mother Eve's wisdom tucked away in that smooth, brown head of hers.

"Cecily, do you ever intend to be married?" asked Sara in a confidential tone.

"Goodness!" cried Cecily, quite shocked. "It will be time enough when I grow up to think of that, Sara."

"I should think you'd have to think of it now, with Cyrus Brisk as crazy after you as he is."

“I wish Cyrus Brisk was at the bottom of the Red Sea,” exclaimed Cecily, goaded into a spurt of temper by mention of the detested name.

“What has Cyrus been doing now?” asked Felicity, coming around the corner of the hedge.

“Doing NOW! It’s ALL the time. He just worries me to death,” returned Cecily angrily. “He keeps writing me letters and putting them in my desk or in my reader. I never answer one of them, but he keeps on. And in the last one, mind you, he said he’d do something desperate right off if I wouldn’t promise to marry him when we grew up.”

“Just think, Cecily, you’ve had a proposal already,” said Sara Ray in an awe-struck tone.

“But he hasn’t done anything desperate yet, and that was last week,” commented Felicity, with a toss of her head.

“He sent me a lock of his hair and wanted one of mine in exchange,” continued Cecily indignantly. “I tell you I sent his back to him pretty quick.”

“Did you never answer any of his letters?” asked Sara Ray.

“No, indeed! I guess not!”

“Do you know,” said Felicity, “I believe if you wrote him just once and told him your exact opinion of him in good plain English it would cure him of his nonsense.”

“I couldn’t do that. I haven’t enough spunk,” confessed Cecily with a blush. “But I’ll tell you what I did do once. He wrote me a long letter last week. It was just awfully SOFT, and every other word was spelled wrong. He even spelled baking soda, ‘bacon soda!’”

“What on earth had he to say about baking soda in a love-letter?” asked Felicity.

“Oh, he said his mother sent him to the store for some and he forgot it because he was thinking about me. Well, I just took his letter and wrote in all the words, spelled right, above the wrong ones, in red ink, just as Mr. Perkins makes us do with our dictation exercises, and sent it back to him. I thought maybe he’d feel insulted and stop writing to me.”

“And did he?”

“No, he didn’t. It is my opinion you can’t insult Cyrus Brisk. He is too thick-skinned. He wrote another letter, and thanked me for correcting his mistakes, and said it made him feel glad because it showed I was beginning to take an interest in him when I wanted him to spell better. Did you ever? Miss Marwood says it is wrong to hate anyone, but I don’t care, I hate Cyrus Brisk.”

“Mrs. Cyrus Brisk WOULD be an awful name,” giggled Felicity.

“Flossie Brisk says Cyrus is ruining all the trees on his father’s place cutting your name on them,” said Sara Ray. “His father told him he would whip him if he didn’t stop, but Cyrus keeps right on. He told Flossie it relieved his feelings. Flossie says he cut yours and his together on the birch tree in front of the parlour window, and a row of hearts around them.”

“Just where every visitor can see them, I suppose,” lamented Cecily. “He just worries my life out. And what I mind most of all is, he sits and looks at me in school with such melancholy, reproachful eyes when he ought to be working sums. I won’t look at him, but I FEEL him staring at me, and it makes me so nervous.”

“They say his mother was out of her mind at one time,” said Felicity.

I do not think Felicity was quite well pleased that Cyrus should have passed over her rose-red prettiness to set his affections on that demure elf of a Cecily. She did not want the allegiance of Cyrus in the least, but it was something of a slight that he had not wanted her to want it.

“And he sends me pieces of poetry he cuts out of the papers,” Cecily went on, “with lots of the lines marked with a lead pencil. Yesterday he put one in his letter, and this is what he marked:

“‘If you will not relent to me

Then must I learn to know

Darkness alone till life be flown.

Here — I have the piece in my sewing-bag — I’ll read it all to you.”

Those three graceless girls read the sentimental rhyme and giggled over it. Poor Cyrus! His young affections were sadly misplaced. But after all, though Cecily never relented towards him, he did not condemn himself

to darkness alone till life was flown. Quite early in life he wedded a stout, rosy, buxom lass, the very antithesis of his first love; he prospered in his undertakings, raised a large and respectable family, and was eventually appointed a Justice of the Peace. Which was all very sensible of Cyrus.

The Rape of the Lock

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June was crowded full of interest that year. We gathered in with its sheaf of fragrant days the choicest harvest of childhood. Things happened right along. Cecily declared she hated to go to sleep for fear she might miss something. There were so many dear delights along the golden road to give us pleasure — the earth dappled with new blossom, the dance of shadows in the fields, the rustling, rain-wet ways of the woods, the faint fragrance in meadow lanes, liltings of birds and croon of bees in the old orchard, windy pipings on the hills, sunset behind the pines, limpid dews filling primrose cups, crescent moons through darklings boughs, soft nights alight with blinking stars. We enjoyed all these boons, unthinkingly and lightheartedly, as children do. And besides these, there was the absorbing little drama of human life which was being enacted all around us, and in which each of us played a satisfying part — the gay preparations for Aunt Olivia's mid-June wedding, the excitement of practising for the concert with which our schoolteacher, Mr. Perkins, had elected to close the school year, and Cecily's troubles with Cyrus Brisk, which furnished unholy mirth for the rest of us, though Cecily could not see the funny side of it at all.

Matters went from bad to worse in the case of the irrepressible Cyrus. He continued to shower Cecily with notes, the spelling of which showed no improvement; he worried the life out of her by constantly threatening to fight Willy Fraser — although, as Felicity sarcastically pointed out, he never did it.

"But I'm always afraid he will," said Cecily, "and it would be such a DISGRACE to have two boys fighting over me in school."

"You must have encouraged Cyrus a little in the beginning or he'd never have been so persevering," said Felicity unjustly.

“I never did!” cried outraged Cecily. “You know very well, Felicity King, that I hated Cyrus Brisk ever since the very first time I saw his big, fat, red face. So there!”

“Felicity is just jealous because Cyrus didn’t take a notion to her instead of you, Sis,” said Dan.

“Talk sense!” snapped Felicity.

“If I did you wouldn’t understand me, sweet little sister,” rejoined aggravating Dan.

Finally Cyrus crowned his iniquities by stealing the denied lock of Cecily’s hair. One sunny afternoon in school, Cecily and Kitty Marr asked and received permission to sit out on the side bench before the open window, where the cool breeze swept in from the green fields beyond. To sit on this bench was always considered a treat, and was only allowed as a reward of merit; but Cecily and Kitty had another reason for wishing to sit there. Kitty had read in a magazine that sun-baths were good for the hair; so both she and Cecily tossed their long braids over the windowsill and let them hang there in the broiling sunshine. And while Cecily sat thus, diligently working a fraction sum on her slate, that base Cyrus asked permission to go out, having previously borrowed a pair of scissors from one of the big girls who did fancy work at the noon recess. Outside, Cyrus sneaked up close to the window and cut off a piece of Cecily’s hair.

This rape of the lock did not produce quite such terrible consequences as the more famous one in Pope’s poem, but Cecily’s soul was no less agitated than Belinda’s. She cried all the way home from school about it, and only checked her tears when Dan declared he’d fight Cyrus and make him give it up.

“Oh, no, You mustn’t.” said Cecily, struggling with her sobs. “I won’t have you fighting on my account for anything. And besides, he’d likely lick you — he’s so big and rough. And the folks at home might find out all about it, and Uncle Roger would never give me any peace, and mother would be cross, for she’d never believe it wasn’t my fault. It wouldn’t be so bad if he’d only taken a little, but he cut a great big chunk right off the

end of one of the braids. Just look at it. I'll have to cut the other to make them fair — and they'll look so awful stubby."

But Cyrus' acquirement of the chunk of hair was his last triumph. His downfall was near; and, although it involved Cecily in a most humiliating experience, over which she cried half the following night, in the end she confessed it was worth undergoing just to get rid of Cyrus.

Mr. Perkins was an exceedingly strict disciplinarian. No communication of any sort was permitted between his pupils during school hours. Anyone caught violating this rule was promptly punished by the infliction of one of the weird penances for which Mr. Perkins was famous, and which were generally far worse than ordinary whipping.

One day in school Cyrus sent a letter across to Cecily. Usually he left his effusions in her desk, or between the leaves of her books; but this time it was passed over to her under cover of the desk through the hands of two or three scholars. Just as Em Frewen held it over the aisle Mr. Perkins wheeled around from his station before the blackboard and caught her in the act.

"Bring that here, Emmeline," he commanded.

Cyrus turned quite pale. Em carried the note to Mr. Perkins. He took it, held it up, and scrutinized the address.

"Did you write this to Cecily, Emmeline?" he asked.

"No, sir."

"Who wrote it then?"

Em said quite shamelessly that she didn't know — it had just been passed over from the next row.

"And I suppose you have no idea where it came from?" said Mr. Perkins, with his frightful, sardonic grin. "Well, perhaps Cecily can tell us. You may take your seat, Emmeline, and you will remain at the foot of your spelling class for a week as punishment for passing the note. Cecily, come here."

Indignant Em sat down and poor, innocent Cecily was haled forth to public ignominy. She went with a crimson face.

“Cecily,” said her tormentor, “do you know who wrote this letter to you?”

Cecily, like a certain renowned personage, could not tell a lie.

“I — I think so, sir,” she murmured faintly.

“Who was it?”

“I can’t tell you that,” stammered Cecily, on the verge of tears.

“Ah!” said Mr. Perkins politely. “Well, I suppose I could easily find out by opening it. But it is very impolite to open other people’s letters. I think I have a better plan. Since you refuse to tell me who wrote it, open it yourself, take this chalk, and copy the contents on the blackboard that we may all enjoy them. And sign the writer’s name at the bottom.”

“Oh,” gasped Cecily, choosing the lesser of two evils, “I’ll tell you who wrote it — it was —

“Hush!” Mr. Perkins checked her with a gentle motion of his hand. He was always most gentle when most inexorable. “You did not obey me when I first ordered you to tell me the writer. You cannot have the privilege of doing so now. Open the note, take the chalk, and do as I command you.”

Worms will turn, and even meek, mild, obedient little souls like Cecily may be goaded to the point of wild, sheer rebellion.

“I — I won’t!” she cried passionately.

Mr. Perkins, martinet though he was, would hardly, I think, have inflicted such a punishment on Cecily, who was a favourite of his, had he known the real nature of that luckless missive. But, as he afterwards admitted, he thought it was merely a note from some other girl, of such trifling sort as schoolgirls are wont to write; and moreover, he had already committed himself to the decree, which, like those of Mede and Persian, must not alter. To let Cecily off, after her mad defiance, would be to establish a revolutionary precedent.

“So you really think you won’t?” he queried smilingly. “Well, on second thoughts, you may take your choice. Either you will do as I have bidden you, or you will sit for three days with” — Mr. Perkins’ eye

skimmed over the schoolroom to find a boy who was sitting alone—"with Cyrus Brisk."

This choice of Mr. Perkins, who knew nothing of the little drama of emotions that went on under the routine of lessons and exercises in his domain, was purely accidental, but we took it at the time as a stroke of diabolical genius. It left Cecily no choice. She would have done almost anything before she would have sat with Cyrus Brisk. With flashing eyes she tore open the letter, snatched up the chalk, and dashed at the blackboard.

In a few minutes the contents of that letter graced the expanse usually sacred to more prosaic compositions. I cannot reproduce it verbatim, for I had no after opportunity of refreshing my memory. But I remember that it was exceedingly sentimental and exceedingly ill-spelled — for Cecily mercilessly copied down poor Cyrus' mistakes. He wrote her that he wore her hare over his hart—"and he stole it," Cecily threw passionately over her shoulder at Mr. Perkins — that her eyes were so sweet and lovely that he couldn't find words nice enuf to describ them, that he could never forget how butiful she had looked in prar meeting the evening before, and that some meels he couldn't eat for thinking of her, with more to the same effect and he signed it "yours till deth us do part, Cyrus Brisk."

As the writing proceeded we scholars exploded into smothered laughter, despite our awe of Mr. Perkins. Mr. Perkins himself could not keep a straight face. He turned abruptly away and looked out of the window, but we could see his shoulders shaking. When Cecily had finished and had thrown down the chalk with bitter vehemence, he turned around with a very red face.

"That will do. You may sit down. Cyrus, since it seems you are the guilty person, take the eraser and wipe that off the board. Then go stand in the corner, facing the room, and hold your arms straight above your head until I tell you to take them down."

Cyrus obeyed and Cecily fled to her seat and wept, nor did Mr. Perkins meddle with her more that day. She bore her burden of humiliation bitterly for several days, until she was suddenly comforted by a realization that

Cyrus had ceased to persecute her. He wrote no more letters, he gazed no longer in rapt adoration, he brought no more votive offerings of gum and pencils to her shrine. At first we thought he had been cured by the unmerciful chaffing he had to undergo from his mates, but eventually his sister told Cecily the true reason. Cyrus had at last been driven to believe that Cecily's aversion to him was real, and not merely the defence of maiden coyness. If she hated him so intensely that she would rather write that note on the blackboard than sit with him, what use was it to sigh like a furnace longer for her? Mr. Perkins had blighted love's young dream for Cyrus with a killing frost. Thenceforth sweet Cecily kept the noiseless tenor of her way unvexed by the attentions of enamoured swains.

Chapter XVI.

Aunt Una's Story

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Felicity, and Cecily, Dan, Felix, Sara Ray and I were sitting one evening on the mossy stones in Uncle Roger's hill pasture, where we had sat the morning the Story Girl told us the tale of the Wedding Veil of the Proud Princess. But it was evening now and the valley beneath us was brimmed up with the glow of the afterlight. Behind us, two tall, shapely spruce trees rose up against the sunset, and through the dark oriel of their sundered branches an evening star looked down. We sat on a little strip of emerald grassland and before us was a sloping meadow all white with daisies.

We were waiting for Peter and the Story Girl. Peter had gone to Markdale after dinner to spend the afternoon with his reunited parents because it was his birthday. He had left us grimly determined to confess to his father the dark secret of his Presbyterianism, and we were anxious to know what the result had been. The Story Girl had gone that morning with Miss Reade to visit the latter's home near Charlottetown, and we expected soon to see her coming gaily along over the fields from the Armstrong place.

Presently Peter came jauntily stepping along the field path up the hill.

"Hasn't Peter got tall?" said Cecily.

"Peter is growing to be a very fine looking boy," decreed Felicity.

"I notice he's got ever so much handsomer since his father came home," said Dan, with a killing sarcasm that was wholly lost on Felicity, who gravely responded that she supposed it was because Peter felt so much freer from care and responsibility.

"What luck, Peter?" yelled Dan, as soon as Peter was within earshot.

"Everything's all right," he shouted jubilantly. "I told father right off, licketty-split, as soon as I got home," he added when he reached us. "I was anxious to have it over with. I says, solemn-like, 'Dad, there's something I've got to tell you, and I don't know how you'll take it, but it can't be

helped,' I says. Dad looked pretty sober, and he says, says he, 'What have you been up to, Peter? Don't be afraid to tell me. I've been forgiven to seventy times seven, so surely I can forgive a little, too?' 'Well,' I says, desperate-like, 'the truth is, father, I'm a Presbyterian. I made up my mind last summer, the time of the Judgment Day, that I'd be a Presbyterian, and I've got to stick to it. I'm sorry I can't be a Methodist, like you and mother and Aunt Jane, but I can't and that's all there is to it,' I says. Then I waited, scared-like. But father, he just looked relieved and he says, says he, 'Goodness, boy, you can be a Presbyterian or anything else you like, so long as it's Protestant. I'm not caring,' he says. 'The main thing is that you must be good and do what's right.' I tell you," concluded Peter emphatically, "father is a Christian all right."

"Well, I suppose your mind will be at rest now," said Felicity. "What's that you have in your buttonhole?"

"That's a four-leaved clover," answered Peter exultantly. "That means good luck for the summer. I found it in Markdale. There ain't much clover in Carlisle this year of any kind of leaf. The crop is going to be a failure. Your Uncle Roger says it's because there ain't enough old maids in Carlisle. There's lots of them in Markdale, and that's the reason, he says, why they always have such good clover crops there."

"What on earth have old maids to do with it?" cried Cecily.

"I don't believe they've a single thing to do with it, but Mr. Roger says they have, and he says a man called Darwin proved it. This is the rigmarole he got off to me the other day. The clover crop depends on there being plenty of bumblebees, because they are the only insects with tongues long enough to — to — fer — fertilize — I think he called it the blossoms. But mice eat bumblebees and cats eat mice and old maids keep cats. So your Uncle Roger says the more old maids the more cats, and the more cats the fewer field-mice, and the fewer field-mice the more bumblebees, and the more bumblebees the better clover crops."

"So don't worry if you do get to be old maids, girls," said Dan. "Remember, you'll be helping the clover crops."

“I never heard such stuff as you boys talk,” said Felicity, “and Uncle Roger is no better.”

“There comes the Story Girl,” cried Cecily eagerly. “Now we’ll hear all about Beautiful Alice’s home.”

The Story Girl was bombarded with eager questions as soon as she arrived. Miss Reade’s home was a dream of a place, it appeared. The house was just covered with ivy and there was a most delightful old garden — “and,” added the Story Girl, with the joy of a connoisseur who has found a rare gem, “the sweetest little story connected with it. And I saw the hero of the story too.”

“Where was the heroine?” queried Cecily.

“She is dead.”

“Oh, of course she’d have to die,” exclaimed Dan in disgust. “I’d like a story where somebody lived once in awhile.”

“I’ve told you heaps of stories where people lived,” retorted the Story Girl. “If this heroine hadn’t died there wouldn’t have been any story. She was Miss Reade’s aunt and her name was Una, and I believe she must have been just like Miss Reade herself. Miss Reade told me all about her. When we went into the garden I saw in one corner of it an old stone bench arched over by a couple of pear trees and all grown about with grass and violets. And an old man was sitting on it — a bent old man with long, snow-white hair and beautiful sad blue eyes. He seemed very lonely and sorrowful and I wondered that Miss Reade didn’t speak to him. But she never let on she saw him and took me away to another part of the garden. After awhile he got up and went away and then Miss Reade said, ‘Come over to Aunt Una’s seat and I will tell you about her and her lover — that man who has just gone out.’

“‘Oh, isn’t he too old for a lover?’ I said.

“Beautiful Alice laughed and said it was forty years since he had been her Aunt Una’s lover. He had been a tall, handsome young man then, and her Aunt Una was a beautiful girl of nineteen.

“We went over and sat down and Miss Reade told me all about her. She said that when she was a child she had heard much of her Aunt Una — that

she seemed to have been one of those people who are not soon forgotten, whose personality seems to linger about the scenes of their lives long after they have passed away.”

“What is a personality? Is it another word for ghost?” asked Peter.

“No,” said the Story Girl shortly. “I can’t stop in a story to explain words.”

“I don’t believe you know what it is yourself,” said Felicity.

The Story Girl picked up her hat, which she had thrown down on the grass, and placed it defiantly on her brown curls.

“I’m going in,” she announced. “I have to help Aunt Olivia ice a cake tonight, and you all seem more interested in dictionaries than stories.”

“That’s not fair,” I exclaimed. “Dan and Felix and Sara Ray and Cecily and I have never said a word. It’s mean to punish us for what Peter and Felicity did. We want to hear the rest of the story. Never mind what a personality is but go on — and, Peter, you young ass, keep still.”

“I only wanted to know,” muttered Peter sulkily.

“I DO know what personality is, but it’s hard to explain,” said the Story Girl, relenting. “It’s what makes you different from Dan, Peter, and me different from Felicity or Cecily. Miss Reade’s Aunt Una had a personality that was very uncommon. And she was beautiful, too, with white skin and night-black eyes and hair — a ‘moonlight beauty,’ Miss Reade called it. She used to keep a kind of a diary, and Miss Reade’s mother used to read parts of it to her. She wrote verses in it and they were lovely; and she wrote descriptions of the old garden which she loved very much. Miss Reade said that everything in the garden, plot or shrub or tree, recalled to her mind some phrase or verse of her Aunt Una’s, so that the whole place seemed full of her, and her memory haunted the walks like a faint, sweet perfume.

“Una had, as I’ve told you, a lover; and they were to have been married on her twentieth birthday. Her wedding dress was to have been a gown of white brocade with purple violets in it. But a little while before it she took ill with fever and died; and she was buried on her birthday instead of being married. It was just in the time of opening roses. Her lover has been

faithful to her ever since; he has never married, and every June, on her birthday, he makes a pilgrimage to the old garden and sits for a long time in silence on the bench where he used to woo her on crimson eves and moonlight nights of long ago. Miss Reade says she always loves to see him sitting there because it gives her such a deep and lasting sense of the beauty and strength of love which can thus outlive time and death. And sometimes, she says, it gives her a little eerie feeling, too, as if her Aunt Una were really sitting there beside him, keeping tryst, although she has been in her grave for forty years.”

“It would be real romantic to die young and have your lover make a pilgrimage to your garden every year,” reflected Sara Ray.

“It would be more comfortable to go on living and get married to him,” said Felicity. “Mother says all those sentimental ideas are bosh and I expect they are. It’s a wonder Beautiful Alice hasn’t a beau herself. She is so pretty and ladylike.”

“The Carlisle fellows all say she is too stuck up,” said Dan.

“There’s nobody in Carlisle half good enough for her,” cried the Story Girl, “except — ex-cept—”

“Except who?” asked Felix.

“Never mind,” said the Story Girl mysteriously.

Chapter XVII.

Aunt Olivia's Wedding

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What a delightful, old-fashioned, wholesome excitement there was about Aunt Olivia's wedding! The Monday and Tuesday preceding it we did not go to school at all, but were all kept home to do chores and run errands. The cooking and decorating and arranging that went on those two days was amazing, and Felicity was so happy over it all that she did not even quarrel with Dan — though she narrowly escaped it when he told her that the Governor's wife was coming to the wedding.

"Mind you have some of her favourite rusks for her," he said.

"I guess," said Felicity with dignity, "that Aunt Olivia's wedding supper will be good enough for even a Governor's wife."

"I s'pose none of us except the Story Girl will get to the first table," said Felix, rather gloomily.

"Never mind," comforted Felicity. "There's a whole turkey to be kept for us, and a freezerful of ice cream. Cecily and I are going to wait on the tables, and we'll put away a little of everything that's extra nice for our suppers."

"I do so want to have my supper with you," sighed Sara Ray, "but I s'pose ma will drag me with her wherever she goes. She won't trust me out of her sight a minute the whole evening — I know she won't."

"I'll get Aunt Olivia to ask her to let you have your supper with us," said Cecily. "She can't refuse the bride's request."

"You don't know all ma can do," returned Sara darkly. "No, I feel that I'll have to eat my supper with her. But I suppose I ought to be very thankful I'm to get to the wedding at all, and that ma did get me a new white dress for it. Even yet I'm so scared something will happen to prevent me from getting to it."

Monday evening shrouded itself in clouds, and all night long the voice of the wind answered to the voice of the rain. Tuesday the downpour

continued. We were quite frantic about it. Suppose it kept on raining over Wednesday! Aunt Olivia couldn't be married in the orchard then. That would be too bad, especially when the late apple tree had most obligingly kept its store of blossom until after all the other trees had faded and then burst lavishly into bloom for Aunt Olivia's wedding. That apple tree was always very late in blooming, and this year it was a week later than usual. It was a sight to see — a great tree-pyramid with high, far-spreading boughs, over which a wealth of rosy snow seemed to have been flung. Never had bride a more magnificent canopy.

To our rapture, however, it cleared up beautifully Tuesday evening, and the sun, before setting in purple pomp, poured a flood of wonderful radiance over the whole great, green, diamond-dripping world, promising a fair morrow. Uncle Alec drove off to the station through it to bring home the bridegroom and his best man. Dan was full of a wild idea that we should all meet them at the gate, armed with cowbells and tin-pans, and "charivari" them up the lane. Peter sided with him, but the rest of us voted down the suggestion.

"Do you want Dr. Seton to think we are a pack of wild Indians?" asked Felicity severely. "A nice opinion he'd have of our manners!"

"Well, it's the only chance we'll have to chivaree them," grumbled Dan. "Aunt Olivia wouldn't mind. SHE can take a joke."

"Ma would kill you if you did such a thing," warned Felicity. "Dr. Seton lives in Halifax and they NEVER chivaree people there. He would think it very vulgar."

"Then he should have stayed in Halifax and got married there," retorted Dan, sulkily.

We were very curious to see our uncle-elect. When he came and Uncle Alec took him into the parlour, we were all crowded into the dark corner behind the stairs to peep at him. Then we fled to the moonlight world outside and discussed him at the dairy.

"He's bald," said Cecily disappointedly.

"And RATHER short and stout," said Felicity.

"He's forty, if he's a day," said Dan.

“Never you mind,” cried the Story Girl loyally, “Aunt Olivia loves him with all her heart.”

“And more than that, he’s got lots of money,” added Felicity.

“Well, he may be all right,” said Peter, “but it’s my opinion that your Aunt Olivia could have done just as well on the Island.”

“YOUR opinion doesn’t matter very much to our family,” said Felicity crushingly.

But when we made the acquaintance of Dr. Seton next morning we liked him enormously, and voted him a jolly good fellow. Even Peter remarked aside to me that he guessed Miss Olivia hadn’t made much of a mistake after all, though it was plain he thought she was running a risk in not sticking to the Island. The girls had not much time to discuss him with us. They were all exceedingly busy and whisked about at such a rate that they seemed to possess the power of being in half a dozen places at once. The importance of Felicity was quite terrible. But after dinner came a lull.

“Thank goodness, everything is ready at last,” breathed Felicity devoutly, as we foregathered for a brief space in the fir wood. “We’ve nothing more to do now but get dressed. It’s really a serious thing to have a wedding in the family.”

“I have a note from Sara Ray,” said Cecily. “Judy Pineau brought it up when she brought Mrs. Ray’s spoons. Just let me read it to you: —

DEAREST CECILY: — A DREADFUL MISFORTUNE has happened to me. Last

night I went with Judy to water the cows and in the spruce bush we found a WASPS’ NEST and Judy thought it was AN OLD ONE and she POKED IT WITH A STICK. And it was a NEW ONE, full of wasps, and

they all flew out and STUNG US TERRIBLY, on the face and hands. My face is all swelled up and I can HARDLY SEE out of one eye. The SUFFERING was awful but I didn’t mind that as much as being scared ma wouldn’t take me to the wedding. But she says I can go and I’m going. I know that I am a HARD-LOOKING SIGHT, but it isn’t anything catching. I am writing this so that you won’t get

a shock when you see me. Isn't it SO STRANGE to think your dear Aunt Olivia is going away? How you will miss her! But your loss will be her gain.

“‘Au revoir,

“‘Your loving chum,

SARA RAY.’”

“That poor child,” said the Story Girl.

“Well, all I hope is that strangers won't take her for one of the family,” remarked Felicity in a disgusted tone.

Aunt Olivia was married at five o'clock in the orchard under the late apple tree. It was a pretty scene. The air was full of the perfume of apple bloom, and the bees blundered foolishly and delightfully from one blossom to another, half drunken with perfume. The old orchard was full of smiling guests in wedding garments. Aunt Olivia was most beautiful amid the frost of her bridal veil, and the Story Girl, in an unusually long white dress, with her brown curls clubbed up behind, looked so tall and grownup that we hardly recognized her. After the ceremony — during which Sara Ray cried all the time — there was a royal wedding supper, and Sara Ray was permitted to eat her share of the feast with us.

“I'm glad I was stung by the wasps after all,” she said delightedly. “If I hadn't been ma would never have let me eat with you. She just got tired explaining to people what was the matter with my face, and so she was glad to get rid of me. I know I look awful, but, oh, wasn't the bride a dream?”

We missed the Story Girl, who, of course, had to have her supper at the bridal table; but we were a hilarious little crew and the girls had nobly kept their promise to save tidbits for us. By the time the last table was cleared away Aunt Olivia and our new uncle were ready to go. There was an orgy of tears and leavetakings, and then they drove away into the odorous moonlight night. Dan and Peter pursued them down the lane with a fiendish din of bells and pans, much to Felicity's wrath. But Aunt Olivia and Uncle Robert took it in good part and waved their hands back to us with peals of laughter.

“They’re just that pleased with themselves that they wouldn’t mind if there was an earthquake,” said Felix, grinning.

“It’s been splendid and exciting, and everything went off well,” sighed Cecily, “but, oh dear, it’s going to be so queer and lonesome without Aunt Olivia. I just believe I’ll cry all night.”

“You’re tired to death, that’s what’s the matter with you,” said Dan, returning. “You girls have worked like slaves today.”

“Tomorrow will be even harder,” said Felicity comfortingly. “Everything will have to be cleaned up and put away.”

Peg Bowen paid us a call the next day and was regaled with a feast of fat things left over from the supper.

“Well, I’ve had all I can eat,” she said, when she had finished and brought out her pipe. “And that doesn’t happen to me every day. There ain’t been as much marrying as there used to be, and half the time they just sneak off to the minister, as if they were ashamed of it, and get married without any wedding or supper. That ain’t the King way, though. And so Olivia’s gone off at last. She weren’t in any hurry but they tell me she’s done well. Time’ll show.”

“Why don’t you get married yourself, Peg?” queried Uncle Roger teasingly. We held our breath over his temerity.

“Because I’m not so easy to please as your wife will be,” retorted Peg.

She departed in high good humour over her repartee. Meeting Sara Ray on the doorstep she stopped and asked her what was the matter with her face.

“Wasps,” stammered Sara Ray, laconic from terror.

“Humph! And your hands?”

“Warts.”

“I’ll tell you what’ll take them away. You get a pertater and go out under the full moon, cut the pertater in two, rub your warts with one half and say, ‘One, two, three, warts, go away from me.’ Then rub them with the other half and say, ‘One, two, three, four, warts, never trouble me more.’ Then bury the pertater and never tell a living soul where you buried

it. You won't have no more warts. Mind you bury the pertater, though. If you don't, and anyone picks it up, she'll get your warts."

Sara Ray Helps Out

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We all missed Aunt Olivia greatly; she had been so merry and companionable, and had possessed such a knack of understanding small fry. But youth quickly adapts itself to changed conditions; in a few weeks it seemed as if the Story Girl had always been living at Uncle Alec's, and as if Uncle Roger had always had a fat, jolly housekeeper with a double chin and little, twinkling blue eyes. I don't think Aunt Janet ever quite got over missing Aunt Olivia, or looked upon Mrs. Hawkins as anything but a necessary evil; but life resumed its even tenor on the King farm, broken only by the ripples of excitement over the school concert and letters from Aunt Olivia describing her trip through the land of Evangeline. We incorporated the letters in Our Magazine under the heading "From Our Special Correspondent" and were very proud of them.

At the end of June our school concert came off and was a great event in our young lives. It was the first appearance of most of us on any platform, and some of us were very nervous. We all had recitations, except Dan, who had refused flatly to take any part and was consequently carefree.

"I'm sure I shall die when I find myself up on that platform, facing people," sighed Sara Ray, as we talked the affair over in Uncle Stephen's Walk the night before the concert.

"I'm afraid I'll faint," was Cecily's more moderate foreboding.

"I'm not one single bit nervous," said Felicity complacently.

"I'm not nervous this time," said the Story Girl, "but the first time I recited I was."

"My Aunt Jane," remarked Peter, "used to say that an old teacher of hers told her that when she was going to recite or speak in public she must just get it firmly into her mind that it was only a lot of cabbage heads she had before her, and she wouldn't be nervous."

“One mightn’t be nervous, but I don’t think there would be much inspiration in reciting to cabbage heads,” said the Story Girl decidedly. “I want to recite to PEOPLE, and see them looking interested and thrilled.”

“If I can only get through my piece without breaking down I don’t care whether I thrill people or not,” said Sara Ray.

“I’m afraid I’ll forget mine and get stuck,” foreboded Felix. “Some of you fellows be sure and prompt me if I do — and do it quick, so’s I won’t get worse rattled.”

“I know one thing,” said Cecily resolutely, “and that is, I’m going to curl my hair for tomorrow night. I’ve never curled it since Peter almost died, but I simply must tomorrow night, for all the other girls are going to have theirs in curls.”

“The dew and heat will take all the curl out of yours and then you’ll look like a scarecrow,” warned Felicity.

“No, I won’t. I’m going to put my hair up in paper tonight and wet it with a curling-fluid that Judy Pineau uses. Sara brought me up a bottle of it. Judy says it is great stuff — your hair will keep in curl for days, no matter how damp the weather is. I’ll leave my hair in the papers till tomorrow evening, and then I’ll have beautiful curls.”

“You’d better leave your hair alone,” said Dan gruffly. “Smooth hair is better than a lot of fly-away curls.”

But Cecily was not to be persuaded. Curls she craved and curls she meant to have.

“I’m thankful my warts have all gone, any-way,” said Sara Ray.

“So they have,” exclaimed Felicity. “Did you try Peg’s recipe?”

“Yes. I didn’t believe in it but I tried it. For the first few days afterwards I kept watching my warts, but they didn’t go away, and then I gave up and forgot them. But one day last week I just happened to look at my hands and there wasn’t a wart to be seen. It was the most amazing thing.”

“And yet you’ll say Peg Bowen isn’t a witch,” said Peter.

“Pshaw, it was just the potato juice,” scoffed Dan.

“It was a dry old potato I had, and there wasn’t much juice in it,” said Sara Ray. “One hardly knows what to believe. But one thing is certain — my warts are gone.”

Cecily put her hair up in curl-papers that night, thoroughly soaked in Judy Pineau’s curling-fluid. It was a nasty job, for the fluid was very sticky, but Cecily persevered and got it done. Then she went to bed with a towel tied over her head to protect the pillow. She did not sleep well and had uncanny dreams, but she came down to breakfast with an expression of triumph. The Story Girl examined her head critically and said,

“Cecily, if I were you I’d take those papers out this morning.”

“Oh, no; if I do my hair will be straight again by night. I mean to leave them in till the last minute.”

“I wouldn’t do that — I really wouldn’t,” persisted the Story Girl. “If you do your hair will be too curly and all bushy and fuzzy.”

Cecily finally yielded and went upstairs with the Story Girl. Presently we heard a little shriek — then two little shrieks — then three. Then Felicity came flying down and called her mother. Aunt Janet went up and presently came down again with a grim mouth. She filled a large pan with warm water and carried it upstairs. We dared ask her no questions, but when Felicity came down to wash the dishes we bombarded her.

“What on earth is the matter with Cecily?” demanded Dan. “Is she sick?”

“No, she isn’t. I warned her not to put her hair in curls but she wouldn’t listen to me. I guess she wishes she had now. When people haven’t natural curly hair they shouldn’t try to make it curly. They get punished if they do.”

“Look here, Felicity, never mind all that. Just tell us what has happened Sis.”

“Well, this is what has happened her. That ninny of a Sara Ray brought up a bottle of mucilage instead of Judy’s curling-fluid, and Cecily put her hair up with THAT. It’s in an awful state.”

“Good gracious!” exclaimed Dan. “Look here, will she ever get it out?”

“Goodness knows. She’s got her head in soak now. Her hair is just matted together hard as a board. That’s what comes of vanity,” said Felicity, than whom no vainer girl existed.

Poor Cecily paid dearly enough for HER vanity. She spent a bad forenoon, made no easier by her mother’s severe rebukes. For an hour she “soaked” her head; that is, she stood over a panful of warm water and kept dipping her head in with tightly shut eyes. Finally her hair softened sufficiently to be disentangled from the curl papers; and then Aunt Janet subjected it to a merciless shampoo. Eventually they got all the mucilage washed out of it and Cecily spent the remainder of the forenoon sitting before the open oven door in the hot kitchen drying her illused tresses. She felt very downhearted; her hair was of that order which, glossy and smooth normally, is dry and harsh and lustreless for several days after being shampooed.

“I’ll look like a fright tonight,” said the poor child to me with trembling voice. “The ends will be sticking out all over my head.”

“Sara Ray is a perfect idiot,” I said wrathfully

“Oh, don’t be hard on poor Sara. She didn’t mean to bring me mucilage. It’s really all my own fault, I know. I made a solemn vow when Peter was dying that I would never curl my hair again, and I should have kept it. It isn’t right to break solemn vows. But my hair will look like dried hay tonight.”

Poor Sara Ray was quite overwhelmed when she came up and found what she had done. Felicity was very hard on her, and Aunt Janet was coldly disapproving, but sweet Cecily forgave her unreservedly, and they walked to the school that night with their arms about each other’s waists as usual.

The schoolroom was crowded with friends and neighbours. Mr. Perkins was flying about, getting things into readiness, and Miss Reade, who was the organist of the evening, was sitting on the platform, looking her sweetest and prettiest. She wore a delightful white lace hat with a fetching little wreath of tiny forget-me-nots around the brim, a white muslin dress with sprays of blue violets scattered over it, and a black lace scarf.

“Doesn’t she look angelic?” said Cecily rapturously.

“Mind you,” said Sara Ray, “the Awkward Man is here — in the corner behind the door. I never remember seeing him at a concert before.”

“I suppose he came to hear the Story Girl recite,” said Felicity. “He is such a friend of hers.”

The concert went off very well. Dialogues, choruses and recitations followed each other in rapid succession. Felix got through his without “getting stuck,” and Peter did excellently, though he stuffed his hands in his trousers pockets — a habit of which Mr. Perkins had vainly tried to break him. Peter’s recitation was one greatly in vogue at that time, beginning,

“My name is Norval; on the Grampian hills
My father feeds his flocks.”

At our first practice Peter had started gaily in, rushing through the first line with no thought whatever of punctuation—”My name is Norval on the Grampian Hills.”

“Stop, stop, Peter,” quoth Mr. Perkins, sarcastically, “your name might be Norval if you were never on the Grampian Hills. There’s a semicolon in that line, I wish you to remember.”

Peter did remember it. Cecily neither fainted nor failed when it came her turn. She recited her little piece very well, though somewhat mechanically. I think she really did much better than if she had had her desired curls. The miserable conviction that her hair, alone among that glossy-tressed bevy, was looking badly, quite blotted out all nervousness and self-consciousness from her mind. Her hair apart, she looked very pretty. The prevailing excitement had made bright her eye and flushed her cheeks rosily — too rosily, perhaps. I heard a Carlisle woman behind me whisper that Cecily King looked consumptive, just like her Aunt Felicity; and I hated her fiercely for it.

Sara Ray also managed to get through respectably, although she was pitifully nervous. Her bow was naught but a short nod—”as if her head worked on wires,” whispered Felicity uncharitably — and the wave of her lily-white hand more nearly resembled an agonized jerk than a wave. We

all felt relieved when she finished. She was, in a sense, one of “our crowd,” and we had been afraid she would disgrace us by breaking down.

Felicity followed her and recited her selection without haste, without rest, and absolutely without any expression whatever. But what mattered it how she recited? To look at her was sufficient. What with her splendid fleece of golden curls, her great, brilliant blue eyes, her exquisitely tinted face, her dimpled hands and arms, every member of the audience must have felt it was worth the ten cents he had paid merely to see her.

The Story Girl followed. An expectant silence fell over the room, and Mr. Perkins’ face lost the look of tense anxiety it had worn all the evening. Here was a performer who could be depended on. No need to fear stage fright or forgetfulness on her part. The Story Girl was not looking her best that night. White never became her, and her face was pale, though her eyes were splendid. But nobody thought about her appearance when the power and magic of her voice caught and held her listeners spellbound.

Her recitation was an old one, figuring in one of the School Readers, and we scholars all knew it off by heart. Sara Ray alone had not heard the Story Girl recite it. The latter had not been drilled at practices as had the other pupils, Mr. Perkins choosing not to waste time teaching her what she already knew far better than he did. The only time she had recited it had been at the “dress rehearsal” two nights before, at which Sara Ray had not been present.

In the poem a Florentine lady of old time, wedded to a cold and cruel husband, had died, or was supposed to have died, and had been carried to “the rich, the beautiful, the dreadful tomb” of her proud family. In the night she wakened from her trance and made her escape. Chilled and terrified, she had made her way to her husband’s door, only to be driven away brutally as a restless ghost by the horror-stricken inmates. A similar reception awaited her at her father’s. Then she had wandered blindly through the streets of Florence until she had fallen exhausted at the door of the lover of her girlhood. He, unafraid, had taken her in and cared for her. On the morrow, the husband and father, having discovered the empty tomb, came to claim her. She refused to return to them and the case was

carried to the court of law. The verdict given was that a woman who had been “to burial borne” and left for dead, who had been driven from her husband’s door and from her childhood home, “must be adjudged as dead in law and fact,” was no more daughter or wife, but was set free to form what new ties she would. The climax of the whole selection came in the line,

“The court pronounces the defendant — DEAD!” and the Story Girl was wont to render it with such dramatic intensity and power that the veriest dullard among her listeners could not have missed its force and significance.

She swept along through the poem royally, playing on the emotions of her audience as she had so often played on ours in the old orchard. Pity, terror, indignation, suspense, possessed her hearers in turn. In the court scene she surpassed herself. She was, in very truth, the Florentine judge, stern, stately, impassive. Her voice dropped into the solemnity of the all-important line,

“‘The court pronounces the defendant—’”

She paused for a breathless moment, the better to bring out the tragic import of the last word.

“DEAD,” piped up Sara Ray in her shrill, plaintive little voice.

The effect, to use a hackneyed but convenient phrase, can better be imagined than described. Instead of the sigh of relieved tension that should have swept over the audience at the conclusion of the line, a burst of laughter greeted it. The Story Girl’s performance was completely spoiled. She dealt the luckless Sara a glance that would have slain her on the spot could glances kill, stumbled lamely and impotently through the few remaining lines of her recitation, and fled with crimson cheeks to hide her mortification in the little corner that had been curtained off for a dressing-room. Mr. Perkins looked things not lawful to be uttered, and the audience tittered at intervals for the rest of the performance.

Sara Ray alone remained serenely satisfied until the close of the concert, when we surrounded her with a whirlwind of reproaches.

“Why,” she stammered aghast, “what did I do? I — I thought she was stuck and that I ought to prompt her quick.”

“You little fool, she just paused for effect,” cried Felicity angrily. Felicity might be rather jealous of the Story Girl’s gift, but she was furious at beholding “one of our family” made ridiculous in such a fashion. “You have less sense than anyone I ever heard of, Sara Ray.”

Poor Sara dissolved in tears.

“I didn’t know. I thought she was stuck,” she wailed again.

She cried all the way home, but we did not try to comfort her. We felt quite out of patience with her. Even Cecily was seriously annoyed. This second blunder of Sara’s was too much even for her loyalty. We saw her turn in at her own gate and go sobbing up her lane with no relenting.

The Story Girl was home before us, having fled from the schoolhouse as soon as the programme was over. We tried to sympathize with her but she would not be sympathized with.

“Please don’t ever mention it to me again,” she said, with compressed lips. “I never want to be reminded of it. Oh, that little IDIOT!”

“She spoiled Peter’s sermon last summer and now she’s spoiled your recitation,” said Felicity. “I think it’s time we gave up associating with Sara Ray.”

“Oh, don’t be quite so hard on her,” pleaded Cecily. “Think of the life the poor child has to live at home. I know she’ll cry all night.”

“Oh, let’s go to bed,” growled Dan. “I’m good and ready for it. I’ve had enough of school concerts.”

By Way of the Stars

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But for two of us the adventures of the night were not yet over. Silence settled down over the old house — the eerie, whisperful, creeping silence of night. Felix and Dan were already sound asleep; I was drifting near the coast o' dreams when I was aroused by a light tap on the door.

"Bev, are you asleep?" came in the Story Girl's whisper.

"No, what is it?"

"S-s-h. Get up and dress and come out. I want you."

With a good deal of curiosity and some misgiving I obeyed. What was in the wind now? Outside in the hall I found the Story Girl, with a candle in her hand, and her hat and jacket.

"Where are you going?" I whispered in amazement.

"Hush. I've got to go to the school and you must come with me. I left my coral necklace there. The clasp came loose and I was so afraid I'd lose it that I took it off and put it in the bookcase. I was feeling so upset when the concert was over that I forgot all about it."

The coral necklace was a very handsome one which had belonged to the Story Girl's mother. She had never been permitted to wear it before, and it had only been by dint of much coaxing that she had induced Aunt Janet to let her wear it to the concert.

"But there's no sense in going for it in the dead of night," I objected. "It will be quite safe. You can go for it in the morning."

"Lizzie Paxton and her daughter are going to clean the school tomorrow, and I heard Lizzie say tonight she meant to be at it by five o'clock to get through before the heat of the day. You know perfectly well what Liz Paxton's reputation is. If she finds that necklace I'll never see it again. Besides, if I wait till the morning, Aunt Janet may find out that I left it there and she'd never let me wear it again. No, I'm going for it now.

If you're afraid," added the Story Girl with delicate scorn, "of course you needn't come."

Afraid! I'd show her!

"Come on," I said.

We slipped out of the house noiselessly and found ourselves in the unutterable solemnity and strangeness of a dark night. It was a new experience, and our hearts thrilled and our nerves tingled to the charm of it. Never had we been abroad before at such an hour. The world around us was not the world of daylight. 'Twas an alien place, full of weird, evasive enchantment and magicry.

Only in the country can one become truly acquainted with the night. There it has the solemn calm of the infinite. The dim wide fields lie in silence, wrapped in the holy mystery of darkness. A wind, loosened from wild places far away, steals out to blow over dewy, starlit, immemorial hills. The air in the pastures is sweet with the hush of dreams, and one may rest here like a child on its mother's breast.

"Isn't it wonderful?" breathed the Story Girl as we went down the long hill. "Do you know, I can forgive Sara Ray now. I thought tonight I never could — but now it doesn't matter any more. I can even see how funny it was. Oh, wasn't it funny? 'DEAD' in that squeaky little voice of Sara's! I'll just behave to her tomorrow as if nothing had happened. It seems so long ago now, here in the night."

Neither of us ever forgot the subtle delight of that stolen walk. A spell of glamour was over us. The breezes whispered strange secrets of elf-haunted glens, and the hollows where the ferns grew were brimmed with mystery and romance. Ghostlike scents crept out of the meadows to meet us, and the fir wood before we came to the church was a living sweetness of Junebells growing in abundance.

Junebells have another and more scientific name, of course. But who could desire a better name than Junebells? They are so perfect in their way that they seem to epitomize the very scent and charm of the forest, as if the old wood's daintiest thoughts had materialized in blossom; and not all

the roses by Bendameer's stream are as fragrant as a shallow sheet of Junebells under the boughs of fir.

There were fireflies abroad that night, too, increasing the gramarye of it. There is certainly something a little supernatural about fireflies. Nobody pretends to understand them. They are akin to the tribes of fairy, survivals of the elder time when the woods and hills swarmed with the little green folk. It is still very easy to believe in fairies when you see those goblin lanterns glimmering among the fir tassels.

"Isn't it beautiful?" said the Story Girl in rapture. "I wouldn't have missed it for anything. I'm glad I left my necklace. And I am glad you are with me, Bev. The others wouldn't understand so well. I like you because I don't have to talk to you all the time. It's so nice to walk with someone you don't have to talk to. Here is the graveyard. Are you frightened to pass it, Bev?"

"No, I don't think I'm frightened," I answered slowly, "but I have a queer feeling."

"So have I. But it isn't fear. I don't know what it is. I feel as if something was reaching out of the graveyard to hold me — something that wanted life — I don't like it — let's hurry. But isn't it strange to think of all the dead people in there who were once alive like you and me. I don't feel as if I could EVER die. Do you?"

"No, but everybody must. Of course we go on living afterwards, just the same. Don't let's talk of such things here," I said hurriedly.

When we reached the school I contrived to open a window. We scrambled in, lighted a lamp and found the missing necklace. The Story Girl stood on the platform and gave an imitation of the catastrophe of the evening that made me shout with laughter. We prowled around for sheer delight over being there at an unearthly hour when everybody supposed we were sound asleep in our beds. It was with regret that we left, and we walked home as slowly as we could to prolong the adventure.

"Let's never tell anyone," said the Story Girl, as we reached home. "Let's just have it as a secret between us for ever and ever — something that nobody else knows a thing about but you and me."

“We’d better keep it a secret from Aunt Janet anyhow,” I whispered, laughing. “She’d think we were both crazy.”

“It’s real jolly to be crazy once in a while,” said the Story Girl.

Extracts From “our Magazine”

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EDITORIAL

As will be seen there is no Honour Roll in this number. Even Felicity has thought all the beautiful thoughts that can be thought and cannot think any more. Peter has never got drunk but, under existing circumstances, that is not greatly to his credit. As for our written resolutions they have silently disappeared from our chamber walls and the place that once knew them knows them no more for ever. (PETER, PERPLEXEDLY: “Seems to me I’ve heard something like that before.”) It is very sad but we will all make some new resolutions next year and maybe it will be easier to keep those.

THE STORY OF THE LOCKET THAT WAS BAKED

This was a story my Aunt Jane told me about her granma when she was a little girl. Its funny to think of baking a locket, but it wasn’t to eat. She was my great granma but Ill call her granma for short. It happened when she was ten years old. Of course she wasent anybodys granma then. Her father and mother and her were living in a new settlement called Brinsley. Their nearest naybor was a mile away. One day her Aunt Hannah from Charlottetown came and wanted her ma to go visiting with her. At first granma’s ma thought she couldnt go because it was baking day and granma’s pa was away. But granma wasent afraid to stay alone and she knew how to bake the bread so she made her ma go and her Aunt Hannah took off the handsome gold locket and chain she was waring round her neck and hung it on granmas and told her she could ware it all day. Granma was awful pleased for she had never had any jewelry. She did all the chores and then was needing the loaves when she looked up and saw a tramp coming in and he was an awful villenus looking tramp. He didnt even pass the time of day but just set down on a chair. Poor granma was awful fritened and she turned her back on him and went on needing the

loaf cold and trembling — that is, granma was trembling not the loaf. She was worried about the locket. She didn't know how she could hide it for to get anywhere she would have to turn round and pass him.

All of a sudden she thought she would hide it in the bread. She put her hand up and pulled it hard and quick and broke the fastening and needed it right into the loaf. Then she put the loaf in the pan and set it in the oven.

The tramp hadn't seen her do it and then he asked for something to eat. Granma got him up a meal and when he'd eaten it he began prowling about the kitchen looking into everything and opening the cupboard doors. Then he went into granma's mas room and turned the bureau drawers and trunk inside out and threw the things in them all about. All he found was a purse with a dollar in it and he swore about it and took it and went away. When granma was sure he was really gone she broke down and cried. She forgot all about the bread and it burned as black as coal. When she smelled it burning granma ran and pulled it out. She was awful scared the locket was spoiled but she sawed open the loaf and it was there safe and sound. When her Aunt Hannah came back she said granma deserved the locket because she had saved it so clever and she gave it to her and granma always wore it and was very proud of it. And granma used to say that was the only loaf of bread she ever spoiled in her life.

PETER CRAIG.

(FELICITY: "Those stories are all very well but they are only true stories. It's easy enough to write true stories. I thought Peter was appointed fiction editor, but he has never written any fiction since the paper started. That's not MY idea of a fiction editor. He ought to make up stories out of his own head." PETER, SPUNKILY: "I can do it, too, and I will next time. And it ain't easier to write true stories. It's harder, 'cause you have to stick to facts." FELICITY: "I don't believe you could make up a story." PETER: "I'll show you!")

MY MOST EXCITING ADVENTURE

It's my turn to write it but I'm SO NERVOUS. My worst adventure happened TWO YEARS AGO. It was an awful one. I had a striped ribbon, striped brown and yellow and I LOST IT. I was very sorry for it was a

handsome ribbon and all the girls in school were jealous of it. (FELICITY: "I wasn't. I didn't think it one bit pretty." CECILY: "Hush!") I hunted everywhere but I couldn't find it. Next day was Sunday and I was running into the house by the front door and I saw SOMETHING LYING ON THE STEP and I thought it was my ribbon and I made a grab at it as I passed. But, oh, it was A SNAKE! Oh, I can never describe how I felt when I felt that awful thing WRIGGLING IN MY HAND. I let it go and SCREAMED AND SCREAMED, and ma was cross at me for yelling on Sunday and made me read seven chapters in the Bible but I didn't mind that much after what I had come through. I would rather DIE than have SUCH AN EXPERIENCE again.

SARA RAY.

TO FELICITY ON HER BERTHDAY

Oh maiden fair with golden hair

And brow of purest white,

Id fight for you I'd die for you

Let me be your faithful knite.

This is your berthday blessed day

You are thirteen years old today

May you be happy and fair as you are now

Until your hair is gray.

I gaze into your shining eyes,

They are so blue and bright.

Id fight for you Id die for you

Let me be your faithful knite.

A FRIEND.

(DAN: "Great snakes, who got that up? I'll bet it was Peter." FELICITY, WITH DIGNITY: "Well, it's more than YOU could do. YOU couldn't write poetry to save your life." PETER, ASIDE TO BEVERLEY: "She seems quite pleased. I'm glad I wrote it, but it was awful hard work.")

PERSONALS

Patrick Grayfur, Esq., caused his friends great anxiety recently by a prolonged absence from home. When found he was very thin but is now as fat and conceited as ever.

On Wednesday, June 20th, Miss Olivia King was united in the bonds of holy matrimony to Dr. Robert Seton of Halifax. Miss Sara Stanley was bridesmaid, and Mr. Andrew Seton attended the groom. The young couple received many handsome presents. Rev. Mr. Marwood tied the nuptial knot. After the ceremony a substantial repast was served in Mrs. Alex King's well-known style and the happy couple left for their new home in Nova Scotia. Their many friends join in wishing them a very happy and prosperous journey through life.

A precious one from us is gone,
A voice we loved is stilled.
A place is vacant in our home
That never can be filled.

(THE STORY GIRL: "Goodness, that sounds as if somebody had died. I've seen that verse on a tombstone. WHO wrote that notice?" FELICITY, WHO WROTE IT: "I think it is just as appropriate to a wedding as to a funeral!")

Our school concert came off on the evening of June 29th and was a great success. We made ten dollars for the library.

We regret to chronicle that Miss Sara Ray met with a misfortune while taking some violent exercise with a wasps' nest recently. The moral is that it is better not to monkey with a wasps' nest, new or old.

Mrs. C. B. Hawkins of Baywater is keeping house for Uncle Roger. She is a very large woman. Uncle Roger says he has to spend too much time walking round her, but otherwise she is an excellent housekeeper.

It is reported that the school is haunted. A mysterious light was seen there at two o'clock one night recently.

(THE STORY GIRL AND I EXCHANGE KNOWING SMILES
BEHIND THE OTHERS' BACKS.)

Dan and Felicity had a fight last Tuesday — not with fists but with tongues. Dan came off best — as usual. (FELICITY LAUGHS

SARCASTICALLY.)

Mr. Newton Craig of Markdale returned home recently after a somewhat prolonged visit in foreign parts. We are glad to welcome Mr. Craig back to our midst.

Billy Robinson was hurt last week. A cow kicked him. I suppose it is wicked of us to feel glad but we all do feel glad because of the way he cheated us with the magic seed last summer.

On April 1st Uncle Roger sent Mr. Peter Craig to the manse to borrow the biography of Adam's grandfather. Mr. Marwood told Peter he didn't think Adam had any grandfather and advised him to go home and look at the almanac. (PETER, SOURLY: "Your Uncle Roger thought he was pretty smart." FELICITY, SEVERELY: "Uncle Roger IS smart. It was so easy to fool you.")

A pair of blue birds have built a nest in a hole in the sides of the well, just under the ferns. We can see the eggs when we look down. They are so cunning.

Felix sat down on a tack one day in May. Felix thinks housecleaning is great foolishness.

ADS.

LOST — STOLEN — OR STRAYED — A HEART. Finder will be rewarded by returning same to Cyrus E. Brisk, Desk 7, Carlisle School.

LOST OR STOLEN. A piece of brown hair about three inches long and one inch thick. Finder will kindly return to Miss Cecily King, Desk 15, Carlisle School.

(CECILY: "Cyrus keeps my hair in his Bible for a bookmark, so Flossie tells me. He says he means to keep it always for a remembrance though he has given up hope." DAN: "I'll steal it out of his Bible in Sunday School." CECILY, BLUSHING: "Oh, let him keep it if it is any comfort to him. Besides, it isn't right to steal." DAN: "He stole it." CECILY: "But Mr. Marwood says two wrongs never make a right.")

HOUSEHOLD DEPARTMENT

Aunt Olivia's wedding cake was said to be the best one of its kind ever tasted in Carlisle. Me and mother made it.

ANXIOUS INQUIRER: — It is not advisable to curl your hair with mucilage if you can get anything else. Quince juice is better. (CECILY, BITTERLY: “I suppose I’ll never hear the last of that mucilage.” DAN: “Ask her who used tooth-powder to raise biscuits?”)

We had rhubarb pies for the first time this spring last week. They were fine but hard on the cream.

FELICITY KING.

ETIQUETTE DEPARTMENT

PATIENT SUFFERER: — What will I do when a young man steals a lock of my hair? Ans.: — Grow some more.

No, F-l-x, a little caterpillar is not called a kittenpillar. (FELIX, ENRAGED: “I never asked that! Dan just makes that etiquette column up from beginning to end!” FELICITY: “I don’t see what that kind of a question has to do with etiquette anyhow.”)

Yes, P-t-r, it is quite proper to treat a lady friend to ice cream twice if you can afford it.

No, F-l-c-t-y, it is not ladylike to chew tobacco. Better stick to spruce gum.

DAN KING.

FASHION NOTES

Frilled muslin aprons will be much worn this summer. It is no longer fashionable to trim them with knitted lace. One pocket is considered smart.

Clamshells are fashionable keepsakes. You write your name and the date inside one and your friend writes hers in the other and you exchange.

CECILY KING.

FUNNY PARAGRAPHS

MR. PERKINS:—”Peter, name the large islands of the world.”

PETER:—”The Island, the British Isles and Australia.” (PETER, DEFIANTLY: “Well, Mr. Perkins said he guessed I was right, so you needn’t laugh.”)

This is a true joke and really happened. It’s about Mr. Samuel Clask again. He was once leading a prayer meeting and he looked through the

window and saw the constable driving up and guessed he was after him because he was always in debt. So in a great hurry he called on Brother Casey to lead in prayer and while Brother Casey was praying with his eyes shut and everybody else had their heads bowed Mr. Clask got out of the window and got away before the constable got in because he didn't like to come in till the prayer was finished.

Uncle Roger says it was a smart trick on Mr. Clask's part, but I don't think there was much religion about it.

FELIX KING.

Peg Bowen Comes to Church

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When those of us who are still left of that band of children who played long years ago in the old orchard and walked the golden road together in joyous companionship, foregather now and again in our busy lives and talk over the events of those many merry moons — there are some of our adventures that gleam out more vividly in memory than the others, and are oftener discussed. The time we bought God's picture from Jerry Cowan — the time Dan ate the poison berries — the time we heard the ghostly bell ring — the bewitchment of Paddy — the visit of the Governor's wife — and the night we were lost in the storm — all awaken reminiscent jest and laughter; but none more than the recollection of the Sunday Peg Bowen came to church and sat in our pew. Though goodness knows, as Felicity would say, we did not think it any matter for laughter at the time — far from it.

It was one Sunday evening in July. Uncle Alec and Aunt Janet, having been out to the morning service, did not attend in the evening, and we small fry walked together down the long hill road, wearing Sunday attire and trying, more or less successfully, to wear Sunday faces also. Those walks to church, through the golden completeness of the summer evenings, were always very pleasant to us, and we never hurried, though, on the other hand, we were very careful not to be late.

This particular evening was particularly beautiful. It was cool after a hot day, and wheat fields all about us were ripening to their harvestry. The wind gossiped with the grasses along our way, and over them the buttercups danced, goldenly-glad. Waves of sinuous shadow went over the ripe hayfields, and plundering bees sang a freebooting lilt in wayside gardens.

"The world is so lovely tonight," said the Story Girl. "I just hate the thought of going into the church and shutting all the sunlight and music

outside. I wish we could have the service outside in summer.”

“I don’t think that would be very religious,” said Felicity.

“I’d feel ever so much more religious outside than in,” retorted the Story Girl.

“If the service was outside we’d have to sit in the graveyard and that wouldn’t be very cheerful,” said Felix.

“Besides, the music isn’t shut out,” added Felicity. “The choir is inside.”

“‘Music has charms to soothe a savage breast,’” quoted Peter, who was getting into the habit of adorning his conversation with similar gems.

“That’s in one of Shakespeare’s plays. I’m reading them now, since I got through with the Bible. They’re great.”

“I don’t see when you get time to read them,” said Felicity.

“Oh, I read them Sunday afternoons when I’m home.”

“I don’t believe they’re fit to read on Sundays,” exclaimed Felicity.

“Mother says Valeria Montague’s stories ain’t.”

“But Shakespeare’s different from Valeria,” protested Peter.

“I don’t see in what way. He wrote a lot of things that weren’t true, just like Valeria, and he wrote swear words too. Valeria never does that. Her characters all talk in a very refined fashion.”

“Well, I always skip the swear words,” said Peter. “And Mr. Marwood said once that the Bible and Shakespeare would furnish any library well. So you see he put them together, but I’m sure that he would never say that the Bible and Valeria would make a library.”

“Well, all I know is, I shall never read Shakespeare on Sunday,” said Felicity loftily.

“I wonder what kind of a preacher young Mr. Davidson is,” speculated Cecily.

“Well, we’ll know when we hear him tonight,” said the Story Girl. “He ought to be good, for his uncle before him was a fine preacher, though a very absentminded man. But Uncle Roger says the supply in Mr. Marwood’s vacation never amounts to much. I know an awfully funny story about old Mr. Davidson. He used to be the minister in Baywater, you

know, and he had a large family and his children were very mischievous. One day his wife was ironing and she ironed a great big nightcap with a frill round it. One of the children took it when she wasn't looking and hid it in his father's best beaver hat — the one he wore on Sundays. When Mr. Davidson went to church next Sunday he put the hat on without ever looking into the crown. He walked to church in a brown study and at the door he took off his hat. The nightcap just slipped down on his head, as if it had been put on, and the frill stood out around his face and the string hung down his back. But he never noticed it, because his thoughts were far away, and he walked up the church aisle and into the pulpit, like that. One of his elders had to tiptoe up and tell him what he had on his head. He plucked it off in a dazed fashion, held it up, and looked at it. 'Bless me, it is Sally's nightcap!' he exclaimed mildly. 'I do not know how I could have got it on.' Then he just stuffed it into his pocket calmly and went on with the service, and the long strings of the nightcap hung down out of his pocket all the time."

"It seems to me," said Peter, amid the laughter with which we greeted the tale, "that a funny story is funnier when it is about a minister than it is about any other man. I wonder why."

"Sometimes I don't think it is right to tell funny stories about ministers," said Felicity. "It certainly isn't respectful."

"A good story is a good story — no matter who it's about," said the Story Girl with ungrammatical relish.

There was as yet no one in the church when we reached it, so we took our accustomed ramble through the graveyard surrounding it. The Story Girl had brought flowers for her mother's grave as usual, and while she arranged them on it the rest of us read for the hundredth time the epitaph on Great-Grandfather King's tombstone, which had been composed by Great-Grandmother King. That epitaph was quite famous among the little family traditions that entwine every household with mingled mirth and sorrow, smiles and tears. It had a perennial fascination for us and we read it over every Sunday. Cut deeply in the upright slab of red Island sandstone, the epitaph ran as follows: —

SWEET DEPARTED SPIRIT

Do receive the vows a grateful widow pays,
Each future day and night shall hear her speak her Isaac's praise.
Though thy beloved form must in the grave decay
Yet from her heart thy memory no time, no change shall steal away.
Do thou from mansions of eternal bliss
Remember thy distressed relict.
Look on her with an angel's love —
Soothe her sad life and cheer her end
Through this world's dangers and its griefs.
Then meet her with thy well-known smiles and welcome
At the last great day.

"Well, I can't make out what the old lady was driving at," said Dan.

"That's a nice way to speak of your great-grandmother," said Felicity severely.

"How does The Family Guide say you ought to speak of your great-grandma, sweet one?" asked Dan.

"There is one thing about it that puzzles me," remarked Cecily. "She calls herself a GRATEFUL widow. Now, what was she grateful for?"

"Because she was rid of him at last," said graceless Dan.

"Oh, it couldn't have been that," protested Cecily seriously. "I've always heard that Great-Grandfather and Great-Grandmother were very much attached to each other."

"Maybe, then, it means she was grateful that she'd had him as long as she did," suggested Peter.

"She was grateful to him because he had been so kind to her in life, I think," said Felicity.

"What is a 'distressed relict'?" asked Felix.

"'Relict' is a word I hate," said the Story Girl. "It sounds so much like relic. Relict means just the same as widow, only a man can be a relict, too."

“Great-Grandmother seemed to run short of rhymes at the last of the epitaph,” commented Dan.

“Finding rhymes isn’t as easy as you might think,” avowed Peter, out of his own experience.

“I think Grandmother King intended the last of the epitaph to be in blank verse,” said Felicity with dignity.

There was still only a sprinkling of people in the church when we went in and took our places in the old-fashioned, square King pew. We had just got comfortably settled when Felicity said in an agitated whisper, “Here is Peg Bowen!”

We all stared at Peg, who was pacing composedly up the aisle. We might be excused for so doing, for seldom were the decorous aisles of Carlisle church invaded by such a figure. Peg was dressed in her usual short drugget skirt, rather worn and frayed around the bottom, and a waist of brilliant turkey red calico. She wore no hat, and her grizzled black hair streamed in elf locks over her shoulders. Face, arms and feet were bare — and face, arms and feet were liberally powdered with FLOUR. Certainly no one who saw Peg that night could ever forget the apparition.

Peg’s black eyes, in which shone a more than usually wild and fitful light, roved scrutinizingly over the church, then settled on our pew.

“She’s coming here,” whispered Felicity in horror. “Can’t we spread out and make her think the pew is full?”

But the manoeuvre was too late. The only result was that Felicity and the Story Girl in moving over left a vacant space between them and Peg promptly plumped down in it.

“Well, I’m here,” she remarked aloud. “I did say once I’d never darken the door of Carlisle church again, but what that boy there” — nodding at Peter—”said last winter set me thinking, and I concluded maybe I’d better come once in a while, to be on the safe side.”

Those poor girls were in an agony. Everybody in the church was looking at our pew and smiling. We all felt that we were terribly disgraced; but we could do nothing. Peg was enjoying herself hugely, beyond all doubt. From where she sat she could see the whole church,

including pulpit and gallery, and her black eyes darted over it with restless glances.

“Bless me, there’s Sam Kinnaird,” she exclaimed, still aloud. “He’s the man that dunned Jacob Marr for four cents on the church steps one Sunday. I heard him. ‘I think, Jacob, you owe me four cents on that cow you bought last fall. Rec’llect you couldn’t make the change?’ Well, you know, ‘twould a-made a cat laugh. The Kinnairds were all mighty close, I can tell you. That’s how they got rich.”

What Sam Kinnaird felt or thought during this speech, which everyone in the church must have heard, I know not. Gossip had it that he changed colour. We wretched occupants of the King pew were concerned only with our own outraged feelings.

“And there’s Melita Ross,” went on Peg. “She’s got the same bonnet on she had last time I was in Carlisle church six years ago. Some folks has the knack of making things last. But look at the style Mrs. Elmer Brewer wears, will yez? Yez wouldn’t think her mother died in the poorhouse, would yez, now?”

Poor Mrs. Brewer! From the tip of her smart kid shoes to the dainty cluster of ostrich tips in her bonnet — she was most immaculately and handsomely arrayed; but I venture to think she could have taken small pleasure in her fashionable attire that evening. Some of the unregenerate, including Dan, were shaking with suppressed laughter, but most of the people looked as if they were afraid to smile, lest their turn should come next.

“There’s old Stephen Grant coming in,” exclaimed Peg viciously, shaking her floury fist at him, “and looking as if butter wouldn’t melt in his mouth. He may be an elder, but he’s a scoundrel just the same. He set fire to his house to get the insurance and then blamed ME for doing it. But I got even with him for it. Oh, yes! He knows that, and so do I! He, he!”

Peg chuckled quite fiendishly and Stephen Grant tried to look as if nothing had been said.

“Oh, will the minister never come?” moaned Felicity in my ear. “Surely she’ll have to stop then.”

But the minister did not come and Peg had no intention of stopping.

“There’s Maria Dean.” she resumed. “I haven’t seen Maria for years. I never call there for she never seems to have anything to eat in the house. She was a Clayton and the Claytons never could cook. Maria sorter looks as if she’d shrunk in the wash, now, don’t she? And there’s Douglas Nicholson. His brother put rat poison in the family pancakes. Nice little trick that, wasn’t it? They say it was by mistake. I hope it WAS a mistake. His wife is all rigged out in silk. Yez wouldn’t think to look at her she was married in cotton — and mighty thankful to get married in anything, it’s my opinion. There’s Timothy Patterson. He’s the meanest man alive — meaner’n Sam Kinnaird even. Timothy pays his children five cents apiece to go without their suppers, and then steals the cents out of their pockets after they’ve gone to bed. It’s a fact. And when his old father died he wouldn’t let his wife put his best shirt on him. He said his second best was plenty good to be buried in. That’s another fact.”

“I can’t stand much more of this,” wailed Felicity.

“See here, Miss Bowen, you really oughtn’t to talk like that about people,” expostulated Peter in a low tone, goaded thereto, despite his awe of Peg, by Felicity’s anguish.

“Bless you, boy,” said Peg good-humouredly, “the only difference between me and other folks is that I say these things out loud and they just think them. If I told yez all the things I know about the people in this congregation you’d be amazed. Have a peppermint?”

To our horror Peg produced a handful of peppermint lozenges from the pocket of her skirt and offered us one each. We did not dare refuse but we each held our lozenge very gingerly in our hands.

“Eat them,” commanded Peg rather fiercely.

“Mother doesn’t allow us to eat candy in church,” faltered Felicity.

“Well, I’ve seen just as fine ladies as your ma give their children lozenges in church,” said Peg loftily. She put a peppermint in her own mouth and sucked it with gusto. We were relieved, for she did not talk during the process; but our relief was of short duration. A bevy of three

very smartly dressed young ladies, sweeping past our pew, started Peg off again.

“Yez needn’t be so stuck up,” she said, loudly and derisively. “Yez was all of yez rocked in a flour barrel. And there’s old Henry Frewen, still above ground. I called my parrot after him because their noses were exactly alike. Look at Caroline Marr, will yez? That’s a woman who’d like pretty well to get married, And there’s Alexander Marr. He’s a real Christian, anyhow, and so’s his dog. I can always size up what a man’s religion amounts to by the kind of dog he keeps. Alexander Marr is a good man.”

It was a relief to hear Peg speak well of somebody; but that was the only exception she made.

“Look at Dave Fraser strutting in,” she went on. “That man has thanked God so often that he isn’t like other people that it’s come to be true. He isn’t! And there’s Susan Frewen. She’s jealous of everybody. She’s even jealous of Old Man Rogers because he’s buried in the best spot in the graveyard. Seth Erskine has the same look he was born with. They say the Lord made everybody but I believe the devil made all the Erskines.”

“She’s getting worse all the time. What WILL she say next?” whispered poor Felicity.

But her martyrdom was over at last. The minister appeared in the pulpit and Peg subsided into silence. She folded her bare, floury arms over her breast and fastened her black eyes on the young preacher. Her behaviour for the next half-hour was decorum itself, save that when the minister prayed that we might all be charitable in judgment Peg ejaculated “Amen” several times, loudly and forcibly, somewhat to the discomfiture of the Young man, to whom Peg was a stranger. He opened his eyes, glanced at our pew in a startled way, then collected himself and went on.

Peg listened to the sermon, silently and motionlessly, until Mr. Davidson was half through. Then she suddenly got on her feet.

“This is too dull for me,” she exclaimed. “I want something more exciting.”

Mr. Davidson stopped short and Peg marched down the aisle in the midst of complete silence. Half way down the aisle she turned around and faced the minister.

“There are so many hypocrites in this church that it isn’t fit for decent people to come to,” she said. “Rather than be such hypocrites as most of you are it would be better for you to go miles into the woods and commit suicide.”

Wheeling about, she strode to the door. Then she turned for a Parthian shot.

“I’ve felt kind of worried for God sometimes, seeing He has so much to attend to,” she said, “but I see I needn’t be, so long’s there’s plenty of ministers to tell Him what to do.”

With that Peg shook the dust of Carlisle church from her feet. Poor Mr. Davidson resumed his discourse. Old Elder Bayley, whose attention an earthquake could not have distracted from the sermon, afterwards declared that it was an excellent and edifying exhortation, but I doubt if anyone else in Carlisle church tasted it much or gained much good therefrom. Certainly we of the King household did not. We could not even remember the text when we reached home. Felicity was comfortless.

“Mr. Davidson would be sure to think she belonged to our family when she was in our pew,” she said bitterly. “Oh, I feel as if I could never get over such a mortification! Peter, I do wish you wouldn’t go telling people they ought to go to church. It’s all your fault that this happened.”

“Never mind, it will be a good story to tell sometime,” remarked the Story Girl with relish.

The Yankee Storm

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In an August orchard six children and a grownup were sitting around the pulpit stone. The grownup was Miss Reade, who had been up to give the girls their music lesson and had consented to stay to tea, much to the rapture of the said girls, who continued to worship her with unabated and romantic ardour. To us, over the golden grasses, came the Story Girl, carrying in her hand a single large poppy, like a blood-red chalice filled with the wine of August wizardry. She proffered it to Miss Reade and, as the latter took it into her singularly slender, beautiful hand, I saw a ring on her third finger. I noticed it, because I had heard the girls say that Miss Reade never wore rings, not liking them. It was not a new ring; it was handsome, but of an old-fashioned design and setting, with a glint of diamonds about a central sapphire. Later on, when Miss Reade had gone, I asked the Story Girl if she had noticed the ring. She nodded, but seemed disinclined to say more about it.

“Look here, Sara,” I said, “there’s something about that ring — something you know.”

“I told you once there was a story growing but you would have to wait until it was fully grown,” she answered.

“Is Miss Reade going to marry anybody — anybody we know?” I persisted.

“Curiosity killed a cat,” observed the Story Girl coolly. “Miss Reade hasn’t told me that she was going to marry anybody. You will find out all that is good for you to know in due time.”

When the Story Girl put on grownup airs I did not like her so well, and I dropped the subject with a dignity that seemed to amuse her mightily.

She had been away for a week, visiting cousins in Markdale, and she had come home with a new treasure-trove of stories, most of which she had heard from the old sailors of Markdale Harbour. She had promised

that morning to tell us of “the most tragic event that had ever been known on the north shore,” and we now reminded her of her promise.

“Some call it the ‘Yankee Storm,’ and others the ‘American Gale,’” she began, sitting down by Miss Reade and beaming, because the latter put her arm around her waist. “It happened nearly forty years ago, in October of 1851. Old Mr. Coles at the Harbour told me all about it. He was a young man then and he says he can never forget that dreadful time. You know in those days hundreds of American fishing schooners used to come down to the Gulf every summer to fish mackerel. On one beautiful Saturday night in this October of 1851, more than one hundred of these vessels could be counted from Markdale Capes. By Monday night more than seventy of them had been destroyed. Those which had escaped were mostly those which went into harbour Saturday night, to keep Sunday. Mr. Coles says the rest stayed outside and fished all day Sunday, same as through the week, and HE says the storm was a judgment on them for doing it. But he admits that even some of them got into harbour later on and escaped, so it’s hard to know what to think. But it is certain that on Sunday night there came up a sudden and terrible storm — the worst, Mr. Coles says, that has ever been known on the north shore. It lasted for two days and scores of vessels were driven ashore and completely wrecked. The crews of most of the vessels that went ashore on the sand beaches were saved, but those that struck on the rocks went to pieces and all hands were lost. For weeks after the storm the north shore was strewn with the bodies of drowned men. Think of it! Many of them were unknown and unrecognizable, and they were buried in Markdale graveyard. Mr. Coles says the schoolmaster who was in Markdale then wrote a poem on the storm and Mr. Coles recited the first two verses to me.

“‘Here are the fishers’ hillside graves,
The church beside, the woods around,
Below, the hollow moaning waves
Where the poor fishermen were drowned.
“‘A sudden tempest the blue welkin tore,
The seamen tossed and torn apart

Rolled with the seaweed to the shore
While landsmen gazed with aching heart.'

"Mr. Coles couldn't remember any more of it. But the saddest of all the stories of the Yankee Storm was the one about the Franklin Dexter. The Franklin Dexter went ashore on the Markdale Capes and all on board perished, the Captain and three of his brothers among them. These four young men were the sons of an old man who lived in Portland, Maine, and when he heard what had happened he came right down to the Island to see if he could find their bodies. They had all come ashore and had been buried in Markdale graveyard; but he was determined to take them up and carry them home for burial. He said he had promised their mother to take her boys home to her and he must do it. So they were taken up and put on board a sailing vessel at Markdale Harbour to be taken back to Maine, while the father himself went home on a passenger steamer. The name of the sailing vessel was the Seth Hall, and the captain's name was Seth Hall, too. Captain Hall was a dreadfully profane man and used to swear bloodcurdling oaths. On the night he sailed out of Markdale Harbour the old sailors warned him that a storm was brewing and that it would catch him if he did not wait until it was over. The captain had become very impatient because of several delays he had already met with, and he was in a furious temper. He swore a wicked oath that he would sail out of Markdale Harbour that night and 'God Almighty Himself shouldn't catch him.' He did sail out of the harbour; and the storm did catch him, and the Seth Hall went down with all hands, the dead and the living finding a watery grave together. So the poor old mother up in Maine never had her boys brought back to her after all. Mr. Coles says it seems as if it were foreordained that they should not rest in a grave, but should lie beneath the waves until the day when the sea gives up its dead."

"'They sleep as well beneath that purple tide
As others under turf,'"

quoted Miss Reade softly. "I am very thankful," she added, "that I am not one of those whose dear ones 'go down to the sea in ships.' It seems to

me that they have treble their share of this world's heartache."

"Uncle Stephen was a sailor and he was drowned," said Felicity, "and they say it broke Grandmother King's heart. I don't see why people can't be contented on dry land."

Cecily's tears had been dropping on the autograph quilt square she was faithfully embroidering. She had been diligently collecting names for it ever since the preceding autumn and had a goodly number; but Kitty Marr had one more and this was certainly a fly in Cecily's ointment.

"Besides, one I've got isn't paid for — Peg Bowen's," she lamented, "and I don't suppose it ever will be, for I'll never dare to ask her for it."

"I wouldn't put it on at all," said Felicity.

"Oh, I don't dare not to. She'd be sure to find out I didn't and then she'd be very angry. I wish I could get just one more name and then I'd be contented. But I don't know of a single person who hasn't been asked already."

"Except Mr. Campbell," said Dan.

"Oh, of course nobody would ask Mr. Campbell. We all know it would be of no use. He doesn't believe in missions at all — in fact, he says he detests the very mention of missions — and he never gives one cent to them."

"All the same, I think he ought to be asked, so that he wouldn't have the excuse that nobody DID ask him," declared Dan.

"Do you really think so, Dan?" asked Cecily earnestly.

"Sure," said Dan, solemnly. Dan liked to tease even Cecily a wee bit now and then.

Cecily relapsed into anxious thought, and care sat visibly on her brow for the rest of the day. Next morning she came to me and said:

"Bev, would you like to go for a walk with me this afternoon?"

"Of course," I replied. "Any particular where?"

"I'm going to see Mr. Campbell and ask him for his name for my square," said Cecily resolutely. "I don't suppose it will do any good. He wouldn't give anything to the library last summer, you remember, till the Story Girl told him that story about his grandmother. She won't go with

me this time — I don't know why. I can't tell a story and I'm frightened to death just to think of going to him. But I believe it is my duty; and besides I would love to get as many names on my square as Kitty Marr has. So if you'll go with me we'll go this afternoon. I simply COULDN'T go alone."

A Missionary Heroine

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Accordingly, that afternoon we bearded the lion in his den. The road we took was a beautiful one, for we went “cross lots,” and we enjoyed it, in spite of the fact that we did not expect the interview with Mr. Campbell to be a very pleasant one. To be sure, he had been quite civil on the occasion of our last call upon him, but the Story Girl had been with us then and had beguiled him into good-humour and generosity by the magic of her voice and personality. We had no such ally now, and Mr. Campbell was known to be virulently opposed to missions in any shape or form.

“I don’t know whether it would have been any better if I could have put on my good clothes,” said Cecily, with a rueful glance at her print dress, which, though neat and clean, was undeniably faded and RATHER short and tight. “The Story Girl said it would, and I wanted to, but mother wouldn’t let me. She said it was all nonsense, and Mr. Campbell would never notice what I had on.”

“It’s my opinion that Mr. Campbell notices a good deal more than you’d think for,” I said sagely.

“Well, I wish our call was over,” sighed Cecily. “I can’t tell you how I dread it.”

“Now, see here, Sis,” I said cheerfully, “let’s not think about it till we get there. It’ll only spoil our walk and do no good. Let’s just forget it and enjoy ourselves.”

“I’ll try,” agreed Cecily, “but it’s ever so much easier to preach than to practise.”

Our way lay first over a hill top, gallantly plumed with golden rod, where cloud shadows drifted over us like a gypsying crew. Carlisle, in all its ripely tinted length and breadth, lay below us, basking in the August sunshine, that spilled over the brim of the valley to the far-off Markdale Harbour, cupped in its harvest-golden hills.

Then came a little valley overgrown with the pale purple bloom of thistles and elusively haunted with their perfume. You say that thistles have no perfume? Go you to a brook hollow where they grow some late summer twilight at dewfall; and on the still air that rises suddenly to meet you will come a waft of faint, aromatic fragrance, wondrously sweet and evasive, the distillation of that despised thistle bloom.

Beyond this the path wound through a forest of fir, where a wood wind wove its murmurous spell and a wood brook dimpled pellucidly among the shadows — the dear, companionable, elfin shadows — that lurked under the low growing boughs. Along the edges of that winding path grew banks of velvet green moss, starred with clusters of pigeon berries. Pigeon berries are not to be eaten. They are woolly, tasteless things. But they are to be looked at in their glowing scarlet. They are the jewels with which the forest of conebearers loves to deck its brown breast. Cecily gathered some and pinned them on hers, but they did not become her. I thought how witching the Story Girl's brown curls would have looked twined with those brilliant clusters. Perhaps Cecily was thinking of it, too, for she presently said,

“Bev, don't you think the Story Girl is changing somehow?”

“There are times — just times — when she seems to belong more among the grownups than among us,” I said, reluctantly, “especially when she puts on her bridesmaid dress.”

“Well, she's the oldest of us, and when you come to think of it, she's fifteen, — that's almost grownup,” sighed Cecily. Then she added, with sudden vehemence, “I hate the thought of any of us growing up. Felicity says she just longs to be grownup, but I don't, not a bit. I wish I could just stay a little girl for ever — and have you and Felix and all the others for playmates right along. I don't know how it is — but whenever I think of being grownup I seem to feel tired.”

Something about Cecily's speech — or the wistful look that had crept into her sweet brown eyes — made me feel vaguely uncomfortable; I was glad that we were at the end of our journey, with Mr. Campbell's big house before us, and his dog sitting gravely at the veranda steps.

“Oh, dear,” said Cecily, with a shiver, “I’d been hoping that dog wouldn’t be around.”

“He never bites,” I assured her.

“Perhaps he doesn’t, but he always looks as if he was going to,” rejoined Cecily.

The dog continued to look, and, as we edged gingerly past him and up the veranda steps, he turned his head and kept on looking. What with Mr. Campbell before us and the dog behind, Cecily was trembling with nervousness; but perhaps it was as well that the dour brute was there, else I verily believe she would have turned and fled shamelessly when we heard steps in the hall.

It was Mr. Campbell’s housekeeper who came to the door, however; she ushered us pleasantly into the sitting-room where Mr. Campbell was reading. He laid down his book with a slight frown and said nothing at all in response to our timid “good afternoon.” But after we had sat for a few minutes in wretched silence, wishing ourselves a thousand miles away, he said, with a chuckle,

“Well, is it the school library again?”

Cecily had remarked as we were coming that what she dreaded most of all was introducing the subject; but Mr. Campbell had given her a splendid opening, and she plunged wildly in at once, rattling her explanation off nervously with trembling voice and flushed cheeks.

“No, it’s our Mission Band autograph quilt, Mr. Campbell. There are to be as many squares in it as there are members in the Band. Each one has a square and is collecting names for it. If you want to have your name on the quilt you pay five cents, and if you want to have it right in the round spot in the middle of the square you must pay ten cents. Then when we have got all the names we can we will embroider them on the squares. The money is to go to the little girl our Band is supporting in Korea. I heard that nobody had asked you, so I thought perhaps you would give me your name for my square.”

Mr. Campbell drew his black brows together in a scowl.

“Stuff and nonsense!” he exclaimed angrily. “I don’t believe in Foreign Missions — don’t believe in them at all. I never give a cent to them.”

“Five cents isn’t a very large sum,” said Cecily earnestly.

Mr. Campbell’s scowl disappeared and he laughed.

“It wouldn’t break me,” he admitted, “but it’s the principle of the thing. And as for that Mission Band of yours, if it wasn’t for the fun you get out of it, catch one of you belonging. You don’t really care a rap more for the heathen than I do.”

“Oh, we do,” protested Cecily. “We do think of all the poor little children in Korea, and we like to think we are helping them, if it’s ever so little. We ARE in earnest, Mr. Campbell — indeed we are.”

“Don’t believe it — don’t believe a word of it,” said Mr. Campbell impolitely. “You’ll do things that are nice and interesting. You’ll get up concerts, and chase people about for autographs and give money your parents give you and that doesn’t cost you either time or labour. But you wouldn’t do anything you disliked for the heathen children — you wouldn’t make any real sacrifice for them — catch you!”

“Indeed we would,” cried Cecily, forgetting her timidity in her zeal. “I just wish I had a chance to prove it to you.”

“You do, eh? Come, now, I’ll take you at your word. I’ll test you. Tomorrow is Communion Sunday and the church will be full of folks and they’ll all have their best clothes on. If you go to church tomorrow in the very costume you have on at present, without telling anyone why you do so, until it is all over, I’ll give you — why, I vow I’ll give you five dollars for that quilt of yours.”

Poor Cecily! To go to church in a faded print dress, with a shabby little old sun-hat and worn shoes! It was very cruel of Mr. Campbell.

“I — I don’t think mother would let me,” she faltered.

Her tormentor smiled grimly.

“It’s not hard to find some excuse,” he said sarcastically.

Cecily crimsoned and sat up facing Mr. Campbell spunkily.

“It’s NOT an excuse,” she said. “If mother will let me go to church like this I’ll go. But I’ll have to tell HER why, Mr. Campbell, because I’m

certain she'd never let me if I didn't."

"Oh, you can tell all your own family," said Mr. Campbell, "but remember, none of them must tell it outside until Sunday is over. If they do, I'll be sure to find it out and then our bargain is off. If I see you in church tomorrow, dressed as you are now, I'll give you my name and five dollars. But I won't see you. You'll shrink when you've had time to think it over."

"I sha'n't," said Cecily resolutely.

"Well, we'll see. And now come out to the barn with me. I've got the prettiest little drove of calves out there you ever saw. I want you to see them."

Mr. Campbell took us all over his barns and was very affable. He had beautiful horses, cows and sheep, and I enjoyed seeing them. I don't think Cecily did, however. She was very quiet and even Mr. Campbell's handsome new span of dappled grays failed to arouse any enthusiasm in her. She was already in bitter anticipation living over the martyrdom of the morrow. On the way home she asked me seriously if I thought Mr. Campbell would go to heaven when he died.

"Of course he will," I said. "Isn't he a member of the church?"

"Oh, yes, but I can't imagine him fitting into heaven. You know he isn't really fond of anything but live stock."

"He's fond of teasing people, I guess," I responded. "Are you really going to church tomorrow in that dress, Sis?"

"If mother'll let me I'll have to," said poor Cecily. "I won't let Mr. Campbell triumph over me. And I DO want to have as many names as Kitty has. And I DO want to help the poor little Korean children. But it will be simply dreadful. I don't know whether I hope mother will or not."

I did not believe she would, but Aunt Janet sometimes could be depended on for the unexpected. She laughed and told Cecily she could please herself. Felicity was in a rage over it, and declared SHE wouldn't go to church if Cecily went in such a rig. Dan sarcastically inquired if all she went to church for was to show off her fine clothes and look at other

people's; then they quarrelled and didn't speak to each other for two days, much to Cecily's distress.

I suspect poor Sis wished devoutly that it might rain the next day; but it was gloriously fine. We were all waiting in the orchard for the Story Girl who had not begun to dress for church until Cecily and Felicity were ready. Felicity was her prettiest in flower-trimmed hat, crisp muslin, floating ribbons and trim black slippers. Poor Cecily stood beside her mute and pale, in her faded school garb and heavy coppertoed boots. But her face, if pale, was very determined. Cecily, having put her hand to the plough, was not of those who turn back.

"You do look just awful," said Felicity. "I don't care — I'm going to sit in Uncle James' pew. I WON'T sit with you. There will be so many strangers there, and all the Markdale people, and what will they think of you? Some of them will never know the reason, either."

"I wish the Story Girl would hurry," was all poor Cecily said. "We're going to be late. It wouldn't have been quite so hard if I could have got there before anyone and slipped quietly into our pew."

"Here she comes at last," said Dan. "Why — what's she got on?"

The Story Girl joined us with a quizzical smile on her face. Dan whistled. Cecily's pale cheeks flushed with understanding and gratitude. The Story Girl wore her school print dress and hat also, and was gloveless and heavy shod.

"You're not going to have to go through this all alone, Cecily," she said.

"Oh, it won't be half so hard now," said Cecily, with a long breath of relief.

I fancy it was hard enough even then. The Story Girl did not care a whit, but Cecily rather squirmed under the curious glances that were cast at her. She afterwards told me that she really did not think she could have endured it if she had been alone.

Mr. Campbell met us under the elms in the churchyard, with a twinkle in his eye.

“Well, you did it, Miss,” he said to Cecily, “but you should have been alone. That was what I meant. I suppose you think you’ve cheated me nicely.”

“No, she doesn’t,” spoke up the Story Girl undauntedly. “She was all dressed and ready to come before she knew I was going to dress the same way. So she kept her bargain faithfully, Mr. Campbell, and I think you were cruel to make her do it.”

“You do, eh? Well, well, I hope you’ll forgive me. I didn’t think she’d do it — I was sure feminine vanity would win the day over missionary zeal. It seems it didn’t — though how much was pure missionary zeal and how much just plain King spunk I’m doubtful. I’ll keep my promise, Miss. You shall have your five dollars, and mind you put my name in the round space. No five-cent corners for me.”

A Tantalizing Revelation

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“I shall have something to tell you in the orchard this evening,” said the Story Girl at breakfast one morning. Her eyes were very bright and excited. She looked as if she had not slept a great deal. She had spent the previous evening with Miss Reade and had not returned until the rest of us were in bed. Miss Reade had finished giving music lessons and was going home in a few days. Cecily and Felicity were in despair over this and mourned as those without comfort. But the Story Girl, who had been even more devoted to Miss Reade than either of them, had not, as I noticed, expressed any regret and seemed to be very cheerful over the whole matter.

“Why can’t you tell it now?” asked Felicity.

“Because the evening is the nicest time to tell things in. I only mentioned it now so that you would have something interesting to look forward to all day.”

“Is it about Miss Reade?” asked Cecily.

“Never mind.”

“I’ll bet she’s going to be married,” I exclaimed, remembering the ring.

“Is she?” cried Felicity and Cecily together.

The Story Girl threw an annoyed glance at me. She did not like to have her dramatic announcements forestalled.

“I don’t say that it is about Miss Reade or that it isn’t. You must just wait till the evening.”

“I wonder what it is,” speculated Cecily, as the Story Girl left the room.

“I don’t believe it’s much of anything,” said Felicity, beginning to clear away the breakfast dishes. “The Story Girl always likes to make so much out of so little. Anyhow, I don’t believe Miss Reade is going to be

married. She hasn't any beaux around here and Mrs. Armstrong says she's sure she doesn't correspond with anybody. Besides, if she was she wouldn't be likely to tell the Story Girl."

"Oh, she might. They're such friends, you know," said Cecily.

"Miss Reade is no better friends with her than she is with me and you," retorted Felicity.

"No, but sometimes it seems to me that she's a different kind of friend with the Story Girl than she is with me and you," reflected Cecily. "I can't just explain what I mean."

"No wonder. Such nonsense," sniffed Felicity. "It's only some girl's secret, anyway," said Dan, loftily. "I don't feel much interest in it."

But he was on hand with the rest of us that evening, interest or no interest, in Uncle Stephen's Walk, where the ripening apples were beginning to glow like jewels among the boughs.

"Now, are you going to tell us your news?" asked Felicity impatiently.

"Miss Reade IS going to be married," said the Story Girl. "She told me so last night. She is going to be married in a fortnight's time."

"Who to?" exclaimed the girls.

"To" — the Story Girl threw a defiant glance at me as if to say, "You can't spoil the surprise of THIS, anyway," — "to — the Awkward Man."

For a few moments amazement literally held us dumb.

"You're not in earnest, Sara Stanley?" gasped Felicity at last.

"Indeed I am. I thought you'd be astonished. But I wasn't. I've suspected it all summer, from little things I've noticed. Don't you remember that evening last spring when I went a piece with Miss Reade and told you when I came back that a story was growing? I guessed it from the way the Awkward Man looked at her when I stopped to speak to him over his garden fence."

"But — the Awkward Man!" said Felicity helplessly. "It doesn't seem possible. Did Miss Reade tell you HERSELF?"

"Yes."

"I suppose it must be true then. But how did it ever come about? He's SO shy and awkward. How did he ever manage to get up enough spunk to

ask her to marry him?”

“Maybe she asked him,” suggested Dan.

The Story Girl looked as if she might tell if she would.

“I believe that WAS the way of it,” I said, to draw her on.

“Not exactly,” she said reluctantly. “I know all about it but I can’t tell you. I guessed part from things I’ve seen — and Miss Reade told me a good deal — and the Awkward Man himself told me his side of it as we came home last night. I met him just as I left Mr. Armstrong’s and we were together as far as his house. It was dark and he just talked on as if he were talking to himself — I think he forgot I was there at all, once he got started. He has never been shy or awkward with me, but he never talked as he did last night.”

“You might tell us what he said,” urged Cecily. “We’d never tell.”

The Story Girl shook her head.

“No, I can’t. You wouldn’t understand. Besides, I couldn’t tell it just right. It’s one of the things that are hardest to tell. I’d spoil it if I told it — now. Perhaps some day I’ll be able to tell it properly. It’s very beautiful — but it might sound very ridiculous if it wasn’t told just exactly the right way.”

“I don’t know what you mean, and I don’t believe you know yourself,” said Felicity pettishly. “All that I can make out is that Miss Reade is going to marry Jasper Dale, and I don’t like the idea one bit. She is so beautiful and sweet. I thought she’d marry some dashing young man. Jasper Dale must be nearly twenty years older than her — and he’s so queer and shy — and such a hermit.”

“Miss Reade is perfectly happy,” said the Story Girl. “She thinks the Awkward Man is lovely — and so he is. You don’t know him, but I do.”

“Well, you needn’t put on such airs about it,” sniffed Felicity.

“I am not putting on any airs. But it’s true. Miss Reade and I are the only people in Carlisle who really know the Awkward Man. Nobody else ever got behind his shyness to find out just what sort of a man he is.”

“When are they to be married?” asked Felicity.

“In a fortnight’s time. And then they are coming right back to live at Golden Milestone. Won’t it be lovely to have Miss Reade always so near us?”

“I wonder what she’ll think about the mystery of Golden Milestone,” remarked Felicity.

Golden Milestone was the beautiful name the Awkward Man had given his home; and there was a mystery about it, as readers of the first volume of these chronicles will recall.

“She knows all about the mystery and thinks it perfectly lovely — and so do I,” said the Story Girl.

“Do YOU know the secret of the locked room?” cried Cecily.

“Yes, the Awkward Man told me all about it last night. I told you I’d find out the mystery some time.”

“And what is it?”

“I can’t tell you that either.”

“I think you’re hateful and mean,” exclaimed Felicity. “It hasn’t anything to do with Miss Reade, so I think you might tell us.”

“It has something to do with Miss Reade. It’s all about her.”

“Well, I don’t see how that can be when the Awkward Man never saw or heard of Miss Reade until she came to Carlisle in the spring,” said Felicity incredulously, “and he’s had that locked room for years.”

“I can’t explain it to you — but it’s just as I’ve said,” responded the Story Girl.

“Well, it’s a very queer thing,” retorted Felicity.

“The name in the books in the room was Alice — and Miss Reade’s name is Alice,” marvelled Cecily. “Did he know her before she came here?”

“Mrs. Griggs says that room has been locked for ten years. Ten years ago Miss Reade was just a little girl of ten. SHE couldn’t be the Alice of the books,” argued Felicity.

“I wonder if she’ll wear the blue silk dress,” said Sara Ray.

“And what will she do about the picture, if it isn’t hers?” added Cecily.

“The picture couldn’t be hers, or Mrs. Griggs would have known her for the same when she came to Carlisle,” said Felix.

“I’m going to stop wondering about it,” exclaimed Felicity crossly, aggravated by the amused smile with which the Story Girl was listening to the various speculations. “I think Sara is just as mean as mean when she won’t tell us.”

“I can’t,” repeated the Story Girl patiently.

“You said one time you had an idea who ‘Alice’ was,” I said. “Was your idea anything like the truth?”

“Yes, I guessed pretty nearly right.”

“Do you suppose they’ll keep the room locked after they are married?” asked Cecily.

“Oh, no. I can tell you that much. It is to be Miss Reade’s own particular sitting room.”

“Why, then, perhaps we’ll see it some time ourselves, when we go to see Miss Reade,” cried Cecily.

“I’d be frightened to go into it,” confessed Sara Ray. “I hate things with mysteries. They always make me nervous.”

“I love them. They’re so exciting,” said the Story Girl.

“Just think, this will be the second wedding of people we know,” reflected Cecily. “Isn’t that interesting?”

“I only hope the next thing won’t be a funeral,” remarked Sara Ray gloomily. “There were three lighted lamps on our kitchen table last night, and Judy Pineau says that’s a sure sign of a funeral.”

“Well, there are funerals going on all the time,” said Dan.

“But it means the funeral of somebody you know. I don’t believe in it — MUCH — but Judy says she’s seen it come true time and again. I hope if it does it won’t be anybody we know very well. But I hope it’ll be somebody I know a LITTLE, because then I might get to the funeral. I’d just love to go to a funeral.”

“That’s a dreadful thing to say,” commented Felicity in a shocked tone. Sara Ray looked bewildered.

“I don’t see what is dreadful in it,” she protested.

“People don’t go to funerals for the fun of it,” said Felicity severely. “And you just as good as said you hoped somebody you knew would die so you’d get to the funeral.”

“No, no, I didn’t. I didn’t mean that AT ALL, Felicity. I don’t want anybody to die; but what I meant was, if anybody I knew HAD to die there might be a chance to go to the funeral. I’ve never been to a single funeral yet, and it must be so interesting.”

“Well, don’t mix up talk about funerals with talk about weddings,” said Felicity. “It isn’t lucky. I think Miss Reade is simply throwing herself away, but I hope she’ll be happy. And I hope the Awkward Man will manage to get married without making some awful blunder, but it’s more than I expect.”

“The ceremony is to be very private,” said the Story Girl.

“I’d like to see them the day they appear out in church,” chuckled Dan. “How’ll he ever manage to bring her in and show her into the pew? I’ll bet he’ll go in first — or tramp on her dress — or fall over his feet.”

“Maybe he won’t go to church at all the first Sunday and she’ll have to go alone,” said Peter. “That happened in Markdale. A man was too bashful to go to church the first time after getting married, and his wife went alone till he got used to the idea.”

“They may do things like that in Markdale but that is not the way people behave in Carlisle,” said Felicity loftily.

Seeing the Story Girl slipping away with a disapproving face I joined her.

“What is the matter, Sara?” I asked.

“I hate to hear them talking like that about Miss Reade and Mr. Dale,” she answered vehemently. “It’s really all so beautiful — but they make it seem silly and absurd, somehow.”

“You might tell me all about it, Sara,” I insinuated. “I wouldn’t tell — and I’d understand.”

“Yes, I think you would,” she said thoughtfully. “But I can’t tell it even to you because I can’t tell it well enough yet. I’ve a feeling that there’s

only one way to tell it — and I don't know the way yet. Some day I'll know it — and then I'll tell you, Bev.”

Long, long after she kept her word. Forty years later I wrote to her, across the leagues of land and sea that divided us, and told her that Jasper Dale was dead; and I reminded her of her old promise and asked its fulfilment. In reply she sent me the written love story of Jasper Dale and Alice Reade. Now, when Alice sleeps under the whispering elms of the old Carlisle churchyard, beside the husband of her youth, that story may be given, in all its old-time sweetness, to the world.

The Love Story of the Awkward Man

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(Written by the Story Girl)

Jasper Dale lived alone in the old homestead which he had named Golden Milestone. In Carlisle this giving one's farm a name was looked upon as a piece of affectation; but if a place must be named why not give it a sensible name with some meaning to it? Why Golden Milestone, when Pinewood or Hillslope or, if you wanted to be very fanciful, Ivy Lodge, might be had for the taking?

He had lived alone at Golden Milestone since his mother's death; he had been twenty then and he was close upon forty now, though he did not look it. But neither could it be said that he looked young; he had never at any time looked young with common youth; there had always been something in his appearance that stamped him as different from the ordinary run of men, and, apart from his shyness, built up an intangible, invisible barrier between him and his kind. He had lived all his life in Carlisle; and all the Carlisle people knew of or about him — although they thought they knew everything — was that he was painfully, abnormally shy. He never went anywhere except to church; he never took part in Carlisle's simple social life; even with most men he was distant and reserved; as for women, he never spoke to or looked at them; if one spoke to him, even if she were a matronly old mother in Israel, he was at once in an agony of painful blushes. He had no friends in the sense of companions; to all outward appearance his life was solitary and devoid of any human interest.

He had no housekeeper; but his old house, furnished as it had been in his mother's lifetime, was cleanly and daintily kept. The quaint rooms were as free from dust and disorder as a woman could have had them. This was known, because Jasper Dale occasionally had his hired man's wife,

Mrs. Griggs, in to scrub for him. On the morning she was expected he betook himself to woods and fields, returning only at nightfall. During his absence Mrs. Griggs was frankly wont to explore the house from cellar to attic, and her report of its condition was always the same—"neat as wax." To be sure, there was one room that was always locked against her, the west gable, looking out on the garden and the hill of pines beyond. But Mrs. Griggs knew that in the lifetime of Jasper Dale's mother it had been unfurnished. She supposed it still remained so, and felt no especial curiosity concerning it, though she always tried the door.

Jasper Dale had a good farm, well cultivated; he had a large garden where he worked most of his spare time in summer; it was supposed that he read a great deal, since the postmistress declared that he was always getting books and magazines by mail. He seemed well contented with his existence and people let him alone, since that was the greatest kindness they could do him. It was unsupposable that he would ever marry; nobody ever had supposed it.

"Jasper Dale never so much as THOUGHT about a woman," Carlisle oracles declared. Oracles, however, are not always to be trusted.

One day Mrs. Griggs went away from the Dale place with a very curious story, which she diligently spread far and wide. It made a good deal of talk, but people, although they listened eagerly, and wondered and questioned, were rather incredulous about it. They thought Mrs. Griggs must be drawing considerably upon her imagination; there were not lacking those who declared that she had invented the whole account, since her reputation for strict veracity was not wholly unquestioned.

Mrs. Griggs's story was as follows: —

One day she found the door of the west gable unlocked. She went in, expecting to see bare walls and a collection of odds and ends. Instead she found herself in a finely furnished room. Delicate lace curtains hung before the small, square, broad-silled windows. The walls were adorned with pictures in much finer taste than Mrs. Griggs could appreciate. There was a bookcase between the windows filled with choicely bound books. Beside it stood a little table with a very dainty workbasket on it. By the

basket Mrs. Griggs saw a pair of tiny scissors and a silver thimble. A wicker rocker, comfortable with silk cushions, was near it. Above the bookcase a woman's picture hung — a water-colour, if Mrs. Griggs had but known it — representing a pale, very sweet face, with large, dark eyes and a wistful expression under loose masses of black, lustrous hair. Just beneath the picture, on the top shelf of the bookcase, was a vaseful of flowers. Another vaseful stood on the table beside the basket.

All this was astonishing enough. But what puzzled Mrs. Griggs completely was the fact that a woman's dress was hanging over a chair before the mirror — a pale blue, silken affair. And on the floor beside it were two little blue satin slippers!

Good Mrs. Griggs did not leave the room until she had thoroughly explored it, even to shaking out the blue dress and discovering it to be a tea-gown — wrapper, she called it. But she found nothing to throw any light on the mystery. The fact that the simple name "Alice" was written on the fly-leaves of all the books only deepened it, for it was a name unknown in the Dale family. In this puzzled state she was obliged to depart, nor did she ever find the door unlocked again; and, discovering that people thought she was romancing when she talked about the mysterious west gable at Golden Milestone, she indignantly held her peace concerning the whole affair.

But Mrs. Griggs had told no more than the simple truth. Jasper Dale, under all his shyness and aloofness, possessed a nature full of delicate romance and poesy, which, denied expression in the common ways of life, bloomed out in the realm of fancy and imagination. Left alone, just when the boy's nature was deepening into the man's, he turned to this ideal kingdom for all he believed the real world could never give him. Love — a strange, almost mystical love — played its part here for him. He shadowed forth to himself the vision of a woman, loving and beloved; he cherished it until it became almost as real to him as his own personality and he gave this dream woman the name he liked best — Alice. In fancy he walked and talked with her, spoke words of love to her, and heard words of love in return. When he came from work at the close of day she met him at his

threshold in the twilight — a strange, fair, starry shape, as elusive and spiritual as a blossom reflected in a pool by moonlight — with welcome on her lips and in her eyes.

One day, when he was in Charlottetown on business, he had been struck by a picture in the window of a store. It was strangely like the woman of his dream love. He went in, awkward and embarrassed, and bought it. When he took it home he did not know where to put it. It was out of place among the dim old engravings of bewigged portraits and conventional landscapes on the walls of Golden Milestone. As he pondered the matter in his garden that evening he had an inspiration. The sunset, flaming on the windows of the west gable, kindled them into burning rose. Amid the splendour he fancied Alice's fair face peeping archly down at him from the room. The inspiration came then. It should be her room; he would fit it up for her; and her picture should hang there.

He was all summer carrying out his plan. Nobody must know or suspect, so he must go slowly and secretly. One by one the furnishings were purchased and brought home under cover of darkness. He arranged them with his own hands. He bought the books he thought she would like best and wrote her name in them; he got the little feminine knick-knacks of basket and thimble. Finally he saw in a store a pale blue tea-gown and the satin slippers. He had always fancied her as dressed in blue. He bought them and took them home to her room. Thereafter it was sacred to her; he always knocked on its door before he entered; he kept it sweet with fresh flowers; he sat there in the purple summer evenings and talked aloud to her or read his favourite books to her. In his fancy she sat opposite to him in her rocker, clad in the trailing blue gown, with her head leaning on one slender hand, as white as a twilight star.

But Carlisle people knew nothing of this — would have thought him tinged with mild lunacy if they had known. To them, he was just the shy, simple farmer he appeared. They never knew or guessed at the real Jasper Dale.

One spring Alice Reade came to teach music in Carlisle. Her pupils worshipped her, but the grown people thought she was rather too distant

and reserved. They had been used to merry, jolly girls who joined eagerly in the social life of the place. Alice Reade held herself aloof from it — not disdainfully, but as one to whom these things were of small importance. She was very fond of books and solitary rambles; she was not at all shy but she was as sensitive as a flower; and after a time Carlisle people were content to let her live her own life and no longer resented her unlikeness to themselves.

She boarded with the Armstrongs, who lived beyond Golden Milestone around the hill of pines. Until the snow disappeared she went out to the main road by the long Armstrong lane; but when spring came she was wont to take a shorter way, down the pine hill, across the brook, past Jasper Dale's garden, and out through his lane. And one day, as she went by, Jasper Dale was working in his garden.

He was on his knees in a corner, setting out a bunch of roots — an unsightly little tangle of rainbow possibilities. It was a still spring morning; the world was green with young leaves; a little wind blew down from the pines and lost itself willingly among the budding delights of the garden. The grass opened eyes of blue violets. The sky was high and cloudless, turquoise-blue, shading off into milkiness on the far horizons. Birds were singing along the brook valley. Rollicking robins were whistling joyously in the pines. Jasper Dale's heart was filled to overflowing with a realization of all the virgin loveliness around him; the feeling in his soul had the sacredness of a prayer. At this moment he looked up and saw Alice Reade.

She was standing outside the garden fence, in the shadow of a great pine tree, looking not at him, for she was unaware of his presence, but at the virginal bloom of the plum trees in a far corner, with all her delight in it outblossoming freely in her face. For a moment Jasper Dale believed that his dream love had taken visible form before him. She was like — so like; not in feature, perhaps, but in grace and colouring — the grace of a slender, lissome form and the colouring of cloudy hair and wistful, dark gray eyes, and curving red mouth; and more than all, she was like her in expression — in the subtle revelation of personality exhaling from her like

perfume from a flower. It was as if his own had come to him at last and his whole soul suddenly leaped out to meet and welcome her.

Then her eyes fell upon him and the spell was broken. Jasper remained kneeling mutely there, shy man once more, crimson with blushes, a strange, almost pitiful creature in his abject confusion. A little smile flickered about the delicate corners of her mouth, but she turned and walked swiftly away down the lane.

Jasper looked after her with a new, painful sense of loss and loveliness. It had been agony to feel her conscious eyes upon him, but he realized now that there had been a strange sweetness in it, too. It was still greater pain to watch her going from him.

He thought she must be the new music teacher but he did not even know her name. She had been dressed in blue, too — a pale, dainty blue; but that was of course; he had known she must wear it; and he was sure her name must be Alice. When, later on, he discovered that it was, he felt no surprise.

He carried some mayflowers up to the west gable and put them under the picture. But the charm had gone out of the tribute; and looking at the picture, he thought how scant was the justice it did her. Her face was so much sweeter, her eyes so much softer, her hair so much more lustrous. The soul of his love had gone from the room and from the picture and from his dreams. When he tried to think of the Alice he loved he saw, not the shadowy spirit occupant of the west gable, but the young girl who had stood under the pine, beautiful with the beauty of moonlight, of starshine on still water, of white, wind-swayed flowers growing in silent, shadowy places. He did not then realize what this meant: had he realized it he would have suffered bitterly; as it was he felt only a vague discomfort — a curious sense of loss and gain commingled.

He saw her again that afternoon on her way home. She did not pause by the garden but walked swiftly past. Thereafter, every day for a week he watched unseen to see her pass his home. Once a little child was with her, clinging to her hand. No child had ever before had any part in the shy man's dream life. But that night in the twilight the vision of the rocking-

chair was a girl in a blue print dress, with a little, golden-haired shape at her knee — a shape that lisped and prattled and called her “mother;” and both of them were his.

It was the next day that he failed for the first time to put flowers in the west gable. Instead, he cut a loose handful of daffodils and, looking furtively about him as if committing a crime, he laid them across the footpath under the pine. She must pass that way; her feet would crush them if she failed to see them. Then he slipped back into his garden, half exultant, half repentant. From a safe retreat he saw her pass by and stoop to lift his flowers. Thereafter he put some in the same place every day.

When Alice Reade saw the flowers she knew at once who had put them there, and divined that they were for her. She lifted them tenderly in much surprise and pleasure. She had heard all about Jasper Dale and his shyness; but before she had heard about him she had seen him in church and liked him. She thought his face and his dark blue eyes beautiful; she even liked the long brown hair that Carlisle people laughed at. That he was quite different from other people she had understood at once, but she thought the difference in his favour. Perhaps her sensitive nature divined and responded to the beauty in his. At least, in her eyes Jasper Dale was never a ridiculous figure.

When she heard the story of the west gable, which most people disbelieved, she believed it, although she did not understand it. It invested the shy man with interest and romance. She felt that she would have liked, out of no impertinent curiosity, to solve the mystery; she believed that it contained the key to his character.

Thereafter, every day she found flowers under the pine tree; she wished to see Jasper to thank him, unaware that he watched her daily from the screen of shrubbery in his garden; but it was some time before she found the opportunity. One evening she passed when he, not expecting her, was leaning against his garden fence with a book in his hand. She stopped under the pine.

“Mr. Dale,” she said softly, “I want to thank you for your flowers.”

Jasper, startled, wished that he might sink into the ground. His anguish of embarrassment made her smile a little. He could not speak, so she went on gently.

“It has been so good of you. They have given me so much pleasure — I wish you could know how much.”

“It was nothing — nothing,” stammered Jasper. His book had fallen on the ground at her feet, and she picked it up and held it out to him.

“So you like Ruskin,” she said. “I do, too. But I haven’t read this.”

“If you — would care — to read it — you may have it,” Jasper contrived to say.

She carried the book away with her. He did not again hide when she passed, and when she brought the book back they talked a little about it over the fence. He lent her others, and got some from her in return; they fell into the habit of discussing them. Jasper did not find it hard to talk to her now; it seemed as if he were talking to his dream Alice, and it came strangely natural to him. He did not talk volubly, but Alice thought what he did say was worth while. His words lingered in her memory and made music. She always found his flowers under the pine, and she always wore some of them, but she did not know if he noticed this or not.

One evening Jasper walked shyly with her from his gate up the pine hill. After that he always walked that far with her. She would have missed him much if he had failed to do so; yet it did not occur to her that she was learning to love him. She would have laughed with girlish scorn at the idea. She liked him very much; she thought his nature beautiful in its simplicity and purity; in spite of his shyness she felt more delightfully at home in his society than in that of any other person she had ever met. He was one of those rare souls whose friendship is at once a pleasure and a benediction, showering light from their own crystal clearness into all the dark corners in the souls of others, until, for the time being at least, they reflected his own nobility. But she never thought of love. Like other girls she had her dreams of a possible Prince Charming, young and handsome and debonair. It never occurred to her that he might be found in the shy, dreamy recluse of Golden Milestone.

In August came a day of gold and blue. Alice Reade, coming through the trees, with the wind blowing her little dark lovelocks tricksily about under her wide blue hat, found a fragrant heap of mignonette under the pine. She lifted it and buried her face in it, drinking in the wholesome, modest perfume.

She had hoped Jasper would be in his garden, since she wished to ask him for a book she greatly desired to read. But she saw him sitting on the rustic seat at the further side. His back was towards her, and he was partially screened by a copse of lilacs.

Alice, blushing slightly, unlatched the garden gate, and went down the path. She had never been in the garden before, and she found her heart beating in a strange fashion.

He did not hear her footsteps, and she was close behind him when she heard his voice, and realized that he was talking to himself, in a low, dreamy tone. As the meaning of his words dawned on her consciousness she started and grew crimson. She could not move or speak; as one in a dream she stood and listened to the shy man's reverie, guiltless of any thought of eavesdropping.

"How much I love you, Alice," Jasper Dale was saying, unafraid, with no shyness in voice or manner. "I wonder what you would say if you knew. You would laugh at me — sweet as you are, you would laugh in mockery. I can never tell you. I can only dream of telling you. In my dream you are standing here by me, dear. I can see you very plainly, my sweet lady, so tall and gracious, with your dark hair and your maiden eyes. I can dream that I tell you my love; that — maddest, sweetest dream of all — that you love me in return. Everything is possible in dreams, you know, dear. My dreams are all I have, so I go far in them, even to dreaming that you are my wife. I dream how I shall fix up my dull old house for you. One room will need nothing more — it is your room, dear, and has been ready for you a long time — long before that day I saw you under the pine. Your books and your chair and your picture are there, dear — only the picture is not half lovely enough. But the other rooms of the house must be made to bloom out freshly for you. What a delight it is thus to dream of what I

would do for you! Then I would bring you home, dear, and lead you through my garden and into my house as its mistress. I would see you standing beside me in the old mirror at the end of the hall — a bride, in your pale blue dress, with a blush on your face. I would lead you through all the rooms made ready for your coming, and then to your own. I would see you sitting in your own chair and all my dreams would find rich fulfilment in that royal moment. Oh, Alice, we would have a beautiful life together! It's sweet to make believe about it. You will sing to me in the twilight, and we will gather early flowers together in the spring days. When I come home from work, tired, you will put your arms about me and lay your head on my shoulder. I will stroke it — so — that bonny, glossy head of yours. Alice, my Alice — all mine in my dream — never to be mine in real life — how I love you!”

The Alice behind him could bear no more. She gave a little choking cry that betrayed her presence. Jasper Dale sprang up and gazed upon her. He saw her standing there, amid the languorous shadows of August, pale with feeling, wide-eyed, trembling.

For a moment shyness wrung him. Then every trace of it was banished by a sudden, strange, fierce anger that swept over him. He felt outraged and hurt to the death; he felt as if he had been cheated out of something incalculably precious — as if sacrilege had been done to his most holy sanctuary of emotion. White, tense with his anger, he looked at her and spoke, his lips as pale as if his fiery words scathed them.

“How dare you? You have spied on me — you have crept in and listened! How dare you? Do you know what you have done, girl? You have destroyed all that made life worth while to me. My dream is dead. It could not live when it was betrayed. And it was all I had. Oh, laugh at me — mock me! I know that I am ridiculous! What of it? It never could have hurt you! Why must you creep in like this to hear me and put me to shame? Oh, I love you — I will say it, laugh as you will. Is it such a strange thing that I should have a heart like other men? This will make sport for you! I, who love you better than my life, better than any other man in the world can love you, will be a jest to you all your life. I love you

— and yet I think I could hate you — you have destroyed my dream — you have done me deadly wrong.”

“Jasper! Jasper!” cried Alice, finding her voice. His anger hurt her with a pain she could not endure. It was unbearable that Jasper should be angry with her. In that moment she realized that she loved him — that the words he had spoken when unconscious of her presence were the sweetest she had ever heard, or ever could hear. Nothing mattered at all, save that he loved her and was angry with her.

“Don’t say such dreadful things to me,” she stammered, “I did not mean to listen. I could not help it. I shall never laugh at you. Oh, Jasper” — she looked bravely at him and the fine soul of her shone through the flesh like an illuminating lamp—”I am glad that you love me! and I am glad I chanced to overhear you, since you would never have had the courage to tell me otherwise. Glad — glad! Do you understand, Jasper?”

Jasper looked at her with the eyes of one who, looking through pain, sees rapture beyond.

“Is it possible?” he said, wonderingly. “Alice — I am so much older than you — and they call me the Awkward Man — they say I am unlike other people” —

“You ARE unlike other people,” she said softly, “and that is why I love you. I know now that I must have loved you ever since I saw you.”

“I loved you long before I saw you,” said Jasper.

He came close to her and drew her into his arms, tenderly and reverently, all his shyness and awkwardness swallowed up in the grace of his great happiness. In the old garden he kissed her lips and Alice entered into her own.

Uncle Blair Comes Home

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It happened that the Story Girl and I both got up very early on the morning of the Awkward Man's wedding day. Uncle Alec was going to Charlottetown that day, and I, awakened at daybreak by the sounds in the kitchen beneath us, remembered that I had forgotten to ask him to bring me a certain schoolbook I wanted. So I hurriedly dressed and hastened down to tell him before he went. I was joined on the stairs by the Story Girl, who said she had wakened and, not feeling like going to sleep again, thought she might as well get up.

"I had such a funny dream last night," she said. "I dreamed that I heard a voice calling me from away down in Uncle Stephen's Walk—'Sara, Sara, Sara,' it kept calling. I didn't know whose it was, and yet it seemed like a voice I knew. I wakened up while it was calling, and it seemed so real I could hardly believe it was a dream. It was bright moonlight, and I felt just like getting up and going out to the orchard. But I knew that would be silly and of course I didn't go. But I kept on wanting to and I couldn't sleep any more. Wasn't it queer?"

When Uncle Alec had gone I proposed a saunter to the farther end of the orchard, where I had left a book the preceding evening. A young mom was walking rosily on the hills as we passed down Uncle Stephen's Walk, with Paddy trotting before us. High overhead was the spiritlike blue of paling skies; the east was a great arc of crystal, smitten through with auroral crimsonings; just above it was one milk-white star of morning, like a pearl on a silver sea. A light wind of dawn was weaving an orient spell.

"It's lovely to be up as early as this, isn't it?" said the Story Girl. "The world seems so different just at sunrise, doesn't it? It makes me feel just like getting up to see the sun rise every morning of my life after this. But I

know I won't. I'll likely sleep later than ever tomorrow morning. But I wish I could."

"The Awkward Man and Miss Reade are going to have a lovely day for their wedding," I said.

"Yes, and I'm so glad. Beautiful Alice deserves everything good. Why, Bev — why, Bev! Who is that in the hammock?"

I looked. The hammock was swung under the two end trees of the Walk. In it a man was lying, asleep, his head pillowed on his overcoat. He was sleeping easily, lightly, and wholesomely. He had a pointed brown beard and thick wavy brown hair. His cheeks were a dusky red and the lashes of his closed eyes were as long and dark and silken as a girl's. He wore a light gray suit, and on the slender white hand that hung down over the hammock's edge was a spark of diamond fire.

It seemed to me that I knew his face, although assuredly I had never seen him before. While I groped among vague speculations the Story Girl gave a queer, choked little cry. The next moment she had sprung over the intervening space, dropped on her knees by the hammock, and flung her arms about the man's neck.

"Father! Father!" she cried, while I stood, rooted to the ground in my amazement.

The sleeper stirred and opened two large, exceedingly brilliant hazel eyes. For a moment he gazed rather blankly at the brown-curled young lady who was embracing him. Then a most delightful smile broke over his face; he sprang up and caught her to his heart.

"Sara — Sara — my little Sara! To think didn't know you at first glance! But you are almost a woman. And when I saw you last you were just a little girl of eight. My own little Sara!"

"Father — father — sometimes I've wondered if you were ever coming back to me," I heard the Story Girl say, as I turned and scuttled up the Walk, realizing that I was not wanted there just then and would be little missed. Various emotions and speculations possessed my mind in my retreat; but chiefly did I feel a sense of triumph in being the bearer of exciting news.

“Aunt Janet, Uncle Blair is here,” I announced breathlessly at the kitchen door.

Aunt Janet, who was kneading her bread, turned round and lifted floury hands. Felicity and Cecily, who were just entering the kitchen, rosy from slumber, stopped still and stared at me.

“Uncle who?” exclaimed Aunt Janet.

“Uncle Blair — the Story Girl’s father, you know. He’s here.”

“WHERE?”

“Down in the orchard. He was asleep in the hammock. We found him there.”

“Dear me!” said Aunt Janet, sitting down helplessly. “If that isn’t like Blair! Of course he couldn’t come like anybody else. I wonder,” she added in a tone unheard by anyone else save myself, “I wonder if he has come to take the child away.”

My elation went out like a snuffed candle. I had never thought of this. If Uncle Blair took the Story Girl away would not life become rather savourless on the hill farm? I turned and followed Felicity and Cecily out in a very subdued mood.

Uncle Blair and the Story Girl were just coming out of the orchard. His arm was about her and hers was on his shoulder. Laughter and tears were contending in her eyes. Only once before — when Peter had come back from the Valley of the Shadow — had I seen the Story Girl cry. Emotion had to go very deep with her ere it touched the source of tears. I had always known that she loved her father passionately, though she rarely talked of him, understanding that her uncles and aunts were not wholeheartedly his friends.

But Aunt Janet’s welcome was cordial enough, though a trifle flustered. Whatever thrifty, hardworking farmer folk might think of gay, Bohemian Blair Stanley in his absence, in his presence even they liked him, by the grace of some winsome, lovable quality in the soul of him. He had “a way with him” — revealed even in the manner with which he caught staid Aunt Janet in his arms, swung her matronly form around as though she had been a slim schoolgirl, and kissed her rosy cheek.

“Sister o’ mine, are you never going to grow old?” he said. “Here you are at forty-five with the roses of sixteen — and not a gray hair, I’ll wager.”

“Blair, Blair, it is you who are always young,” laughed Aunt Janet, not ill pleased. “Where in the world did you come from? And what is this I hear of your sleeping all night in the hammock?”

“I’ve been painting in the Lake District all summer, as you know,” answered Uncle Blair, “and one day I just got homesick to see my little girl. So I sailed for Montreal without further delay. I got here at eleven last night — the stationmaster’s son drove me down. Nice boy. The old house was in darkness and I thought it would be a shame to rouse you all out of bed after a hard day’s work. So I decided that I would spend the night in the orchard. It was moonlight, you know, and moonlight in an old orchard is one of the few things left over from the Golden Age.”

“It was very foolish of you,” said practical Aunt Janet. “These September nights are real chilly. You might have caught your death of cold — or a bad dose of rheumatism.”

“So I might. No doubt it was foolish of me,” agreed Uncle Blair gaily. “It must have been the fault, of the moonlight. Moonlight, you know, Sister Janet, has an intoxicating quality. It is a fine, airy, silver wine, such as fairies may drink at their revels, unharmed of it; but when a mere mortal sips of it, it mounts straightway to his brain, to the undoing of his daylight common sense. However, I have got neither cold nor rheumatism, as a sensible person would have done had he ever been lured into doing such a nonsensible thing; there is a special Providence for us foolish folk. I enjoyed my night in the orchard; for a time I was companioned by sweet old memories; and then I fell asleep listening to the murmurs of the wind in those old trees yonder. And I had a beautiful dream, Janet. I dreamed that the old orchard blossomed again, as it did that spring eighteen years ago. I dreamed that its sunshine was the sunshine of spring, not autumn. There was newness of life in my dream, Janet, and the sweetness of forgotten words.”

“Wasn’t it strange about MY dream?” whispered the Story Girl to me.

“Well, you’d better come in and have some breakfast,” said Aunt Janet. “These are my little girls — Felicity and Cecily.”

“I remember them as two most adorable tots,” said Uncle Blair, shaking hands. “They haven’t changed quite so much as my own baby-child. Why, she’s a woman, Janet — she’s a woman.”

“She’s child enough still,” said Aunt Janet hastily.

The Story Girl shook her long brown curls.

“I’m fifteen,” she said. “And you ought to see me in my long dress, father.”

“We must not be separated any longer, dear heart,” I heard Uncle Blair say tenderly. I hoped that he meant he would stay in Canada — not that he would take the Story Girl away.

Apart from this we had a gay day with Uncle Blair. He evidently liked our society better than that of the grownups, for he was a child himself at heart, gay, irresponsible, always acting on the impulse of the moment. We all found him a delightful companion. There was no school that day, as Mr. Perkins was absent, attending a meeting of the Teachers’ Convention, so we spent most of its golden hours in the orchard with Uncle Blair, listening to his fascinating accounts of foreign wanderings. He also drew all our pictures for us, and this was especially delightful, for the day of the camera was only just dawning and none of us had ever had even our photographs taken. Sara Ray’s pleasure was, as usual, quite spoiled by wondering what her mother would say of it, for Mrs. Ray had, so it appeared, some very peculiar prejudices against the taking or making of any kind of picture whatsoever, owing to an exceedingly strict interpretation of the second commandment. Dan suggested that she need not tell her mother anything about it; but Sara shook her head.

“I’ll have to tell her. I’ve made it a rule to tell ma everything I do ever since the Judgment Day.”

“Besides,” added Cecily seriously, “the Family Guide says one ought to tell one’s mother everything.”

“It’s pretty hard sometimes, though,” sighed Sara. “Ma scolds so much when I do tell her things, that it sort of discourages me. But when I think

of how dreadful I felt the time of the Judgment Day over deceiving her in some things it nerves me up. I'd do almost anything rather than feel like that the next time the Judgment Day comes."

"Fe, fi, fo, fum, I smell a story," said Uncle Blair. "What do you mean by speaking of the Judgment Day in the past tense?"

The Story Girl told him the tale of that dreadful Sunday in the preceding summer and we all laughed with him at ourselves.

"All the same," muttered Peter, "I don't want to have another experience like that. I hope I'll be dead the next time the Judgment Day comes."

"But you'll be raised up for it," said Felix.

"Oh, that'll be all right. I won't mind that. I won't know anything about it till it really happens. It's the expecting it that's the worst."

"I don't think you ought to talk of such things," said Felicity.

When evening came we all went to Golden Milestone. We knew the Awkward Man and his bride were expected home at sunset, and we meant to scatter flowers on the path by which she must enter her new home. It was the Story Girl's idea, but I don't think Aunt Janet would have let us go if Uncle Blair had not pleaded for us. He asked to be taken along, too, and we agreed, if he would stand out of sight when the newly married pair came home.

"You see, father, the Awkward Man won't mind us, because we're only children and he knows us well," explained the Story Girl, "but if he sees you, a stranger, it might confuse him and we might spoil the homecoming, and that would be such a pity."

So we went to Golden Milestone, laden with all the flowery spoil we could plunder from both gardens. It was a clear amber-tinted September evening and far away, over Markdale Harbour, a great round red moon was rising as we waited. Uncle Blair was hidden behind the windblown tassels of the pines at the gate, but he and the Story Girl kept waving their hands at each other and calling out gay, mirthful jests.

"Do you really feel acquainted with your father?" whispered Sara Ray wonderingly. "It's long since you saw him."

“If I hadn’t seen him for a hundred years it wouldn’t make any difference that way,” laughed the Story Girl.

“S-s-h-s-s-h — they’re coming,” whispered Felicity excitedly.

And then they came — Beautiful Alice blushing and lovely, in the prettiest of pretty blue dresses, and the Awkward Man, so fervently happy that he quite forgot to be awkward. He lifted her out of the buggy gallantly and led her forward to us, smiling. We retreated before them, scattering our flowers lavishly on the path, and Alice Dale walked to the very doorstep of her new home over a carpet of blossoms. On the step they both paused and turned towards us, and we shyly did the proper thing in the way of congratulations and good wishes.

“It was so sweet of you to do this,” said the smiling bride.

“It was lovely to be able to do it for you, dearest,” whispered the Story Girl, “and oh, Miss Reade — Mrs. Dale, I mean — we all hope you’ll be so, so happy for ever.”

“I am sure I shall,” said Alice Dale, turning to her husband. He looked down into her eyes — and we were quite forgotten by both of them. We saw it, and slipped away, while Jasper Dale drew his wife into their home and shut the world out.

We scampered joyously away through the moonlit dusk. Uncle Blair joined us at the gate and the Story Girl asked him what he thought of the bride.

“When she dies white violets will grow out of her dust,” he answered.

“Uncle Blair says even queerer things than the Story Girl,” Felicity whispered to me.

And so that beautiful day went away from us, slipping through our fingers as we tried to hold it. It hooded itself in shadows and fared forth on the road that is lighted by the white stars of evening. It had been a gift of Paradise. Its hours had all been fair and beloved. From dawn flush to fall of night there had been naught to mar it. It took with it its smiles and laughter. But it left the boon of memory.

The Old Order Changeth

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“I am going away with father when he goes. He is going to spend the winter in Paris, and I am to go to school there.”

The Story Girl told us this one day in the orchard. There was a little elation in her tone, but more regret. The news was not a great surprise to us. We had felt it in the air ever since Uncle Blair’s arrival. Aunt Janet had been very unwilling to let the Story Girl go. But Uncle Blair was inexorable. It was time, he said, that she should go to a better school than the little country one in Carlisle; and besides, he did not want her to grow into womanhood a stranger to him. So it was finally decided that she was to go.

“Just think, you are going to Europe,” said Sara Ray in an awe-struck tone. “Won’t that be splendid!”

“I suppose I’ll like it after a while,” said the Story Girl slowly, “but I know I’ll be dreadfully homesick at first. Of course, it will be lovely to be with father, but oh, I’ll miss the rest of you so much!”

“Just think how WE’LL miss YOU,” sighed Cecily. “It will be so lonesome here this winter, with you and Peter both gone. Oh, dear, I do wish things didn’t have to change.”

Felicity said nothing. She kept looking down at the grass on which she sat, absently pulling at the slender blades. Presently we saw two big tears roll down over her cheeks. The Story Girl looked surprised.

“Are you crying because I’m going away, Felicity?” she asked.

“Of course I am,” answered Felicity, with a big sob. “Do you think I’ve no f-f-eeling?”

“I didn’t think you’d care much,” said the Story Girl frankly. “You’ve never seemed to like me very much.”

“I d-don’t wear my h-heart on my sleeve,” said poor Felicity, with an attempt at dignity. “I think you m-might stay. Your father would let you s-

stay if you c-coaxed him.”

“Well, you see I’d have to go some time,” sighed the Story Girl, “and the longer it was put off the harder it would be. But I do feel dreadfully about it. I can’t even take poor Paddy. I’ll have to leave him behind, and oh, I want you all to promise to be kind to him for my sake.”

We all solemnly assured her that we would.

“I’ll g-give him cream every m-morning and n-night,” sobbed Felicity, “but I’ll never be able to look at him without crying. He’ll make me think of you.”

“Well, I’m not going right away,” said the Story Girl, more cheerfully. “Not till the last of October. So we have over a month yet to have a good time in. Let’s all just determine to make it a splendid month for the last. We won’t think about my going at all till we have to, and we won’t have any quarrels among us, and we’ll just enjoy ourselves all we possibly can. So don’t cry any more, Felicity. I’m awfully glad you do like me and am sorry I’m going away, but let’s all forget it for a month.”

Felicity sighed, and tucked away her damp handkerchief.

“It isn’t so easy for me to forget things, but I’ll try,” she said disconsolately, “and if you want any more cooking lessons before you go I’ll be real glad to teach you anything I know.”

This was a high plane of self-sacrifice for Felicity to attain. But the Story Girl shook her head.

“No, I’m not going to bother my head about cooking lessons this last month. It’s too vexing.”

“Do you remember the time you made the pudding—” began Peter, and suddenly stopped.

“Out of sawdust?” finished the Story Girl cheerfully. “You needn’t be afraid to mention it to me after this. I don’t mind any more. I begin to see the fun of it now. I should think I do remember it — and the time I baked the bread before it was raised enough.”

“People have made worse mistakes than that,” said Felicity kindly.

“Such as using tooth-powd—” but here Dan stopped abruptly, remembering the Story Girl’s plea for a beautiful month. Felicity

coloured, but said nothing — did not even LOOK anything.

“We HAVE had lots of fun together one way or another,” said Cecily, retrospectively.

“Just think how much we’ve laughed this last year or so,” said the Story Girl. “We’ve had good times together; but I think we’ll have lots more splendid years ahead.”

“Eden is always behind us — Paradise always before,” said Uncle Blair, coming up in time to hear her. He said it with a sigh that was immediately lost in one of his delightful smiles.

“I like Uncle Blair so much better than I expected to,” Felicity confided to me. “Mother says he’s a rolling stone, but there really is something very nice about him, although he says a great many things I don’t understand. I suppose the Story Girl will have a very gay time in Paris.”

“She’s going to school and she’ll have to study hard,” I said.

“She says she’s going to study for the stage,” said Felicity. “Uncle Roger thinks it is all right, and says she’ll be very famous some day. But mother thinks it’s dreadful, and so do I.”

“Aunt Julia is a concert singer,” I said.

“Oh, that’s very different. But I hope poor Sara will get on all right,” sighed Felicity. “You never know what may happen to a person in those foreign countries. And everybody says Paris is such a wicked place. But we must hope for the best,” she concluded in a resigned tone.

That evening the Story Girl and I drove the cows to pasture after milking, and when we came home we sought out Uncle Blair in the orchard. He was sauntering up and down Uncle Stephen’s Walk, his hands clasped behind him and his beautiful, youthful face uplifted to the western sky where waves of night were breaking on a dim primrose shore of sunset.

“See that star over there in the southwest?” he said, as we joined him. “The one just above that pine? An evening star shining over a dark pine tree is the whitest thing in the universe — because it is LIVING whiteness

— whiteness possessing a soul. How full this old orchard is of twilight! Do you know, I have been trysting here with ghosts.”

“The Family Ghost?” I asked, very stupidly.

“No, not the Family Ghost. I never saw beautiful, brokenhearted Emily yet. Your mother saw her once, Sara — that was a strange thing,” he added absently, as if to himself.

“Did mother really see her?” whispered the Story Girl.

“Well, she always believed she did. Who knows?”

“Do you think there are such things as ghosts, Uncle Blair?” I asked curiously.

“I never saw any, Beverley.”

“But you said you were trysting with ghosts here this evening,” said the Story Girl.

“Oh, yes — the ghosts of the old years. I love this orchard because of its many ghosts. We are good comrades, those ghosts and I; we walk and talk — we even laugh together — sorrowful laughter that has sorrow’s own sweetness. And always there comes to me one dear phantom and wanders hand in hand with me — a lost lady of the old years.”

“My mother?” said the Story Girl very softly.

“Yes, your mother. Here, in her old haunts, it is impossible for me to believe that she can be dead — that her LAUGHTER can be dead. She was the gayest, sweetest thing — and so young — only three years older than you, Sara. Yonder old house had been glad because of her for eighteen years when I met her first.”

“I wish I could remember her,” said the Story Girl, with a little sigh. “I haven’t even a picture of her. Why didn’t you paint one, father?”

“She would never let me. She had some queer, funny, half-playful, half-earnest superstition about it. But I always meant to when she would become willing to let me. And then — she died. Her twin brother Felix died the same day. There was something strange about that, too. I was holding her in my arms and she was looking up at me; suddenly she looked past me and gave a little start. ‘Felix!’ she said. For a moment she trembled and then she smiled and looked up at me again a little

beseechingly. ‘Felix has come for me, dear,’ she said. ‘We were always together before you came — you must not mind — you must be glad I do not have to go alone.’ Well, who knows? But she left me, Sara — she left me.”

There was that in Uncle Blair’s voice that kept us silent for a time. Then the Story Girl said, still very softly:

“What did mother look like, father? I don’t look the least little bit like her, do I?”

“No, I wish you did, you brown thing. Your mother’s face was as white as a wood-lily, with only a faint dream of rose in her cheeks. She had the eyes of one who always had a song in her heart — blue as a mist, those eyes were. She had dark lashes, and a little red mouth that quivered when she was very sad or very happy like a crimson rose too rudely shaken by the wind. She was as slim and lithe as a young, white-stemmed birch tree. How I loved her! How happy we were! But he who accepts human love must bind it to his soul with pain, and she is not lost to me. Nothing is ever really lost to us as long as we remember it.”

Uncle Blair looked up at the evening star. We saw that he had forgotten us, and we slipped away, hand in hand, leaving him alone in the memory-haunted shadows of the old orchard.

Chapter XXVIII.

The Path to Arcady

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October that year gathered up all the spilled sunshine of the summer and clad herself in it as in a garment. The Story Girl had asked us to try to make the last month together beautiful, and Nature seconded our efforts, giving us that most beautiful of beautiful things — a gracious and perfect moon of falling leaves. There was not in all that vanished October one day that did not come in with auroral splendour and go out attended by a fair galaxy of evening stars — not a day when there were not golden lights in the wide pastures and purple hazes in the ripened distances. Never was anything so gorgeous as the maple trees that year. Maples are trees that have primeval fire in their souls. It glows out a little in their early youth, before the leaves open, in the redness and rosy-yellowness of their blossoms, but in summer it is carefully hidden under a demure, silver-lined greenness. Then when autumn comes, the maples give up trying to be sober and flame out in all the barbaric splendour and gorgeousness of their real nature, making of the hills things out of an Arabian Nights dream in the golden prime of good Haroun Alraschid.

You may never know what scarlet and crimson really are until you see them in their perfection on an October hillside, under the unfathomable blue of an autumn sky. All the glow and radiance and joy at earth's heart seem to have broken loose in a splendid determination to express itself for once before the frost of winter chills her beating pulses. It is the year's carnival ere the dull Lenten days of leafless valleys and penitential mists come.

The time of apple-picking had come around once more and we worked joyously. Uncle Blair picked apples with us, and between him and the Story Girl it was an October never to be forgotten.

“Will you go far afield for a walk with me to-day?” he said to her and me, one idle afternoon of opal skies, pied meadows and misty hills.

It was Saturday and Peter had gone home; Felix and Dan were helping Uncle Alec top turnips; Cecily and Felicity were making cookies for Sunday, so the Story Girl and I were alone in Uncle Stephen's Walk.

We liked to be alone together that last month, to think the long, long thoughts of youth and talk about our futures. There had grown up between us that summer a bond of sympathy that did not exist between us and the others. We were older than they — the Story Girl was fifteen and I was nearly that; and all at once it seemed as if we were immeasurably older than the rest, and possessed of dreams and visions and forward-reaching hopes which they could not possibly share or understand. At times we were still children, still interested in childish things. But there came hours when we seemed to our two selves very grown up and old, and in those hours we talked our dreams and visions and hopes, vague and splendid, as all such are, over together, and so began to build up, out of the rainbow fragments of our childhood's companionship, that rare and beautiful friendship which was to last all our lives, enriching and enstarring them. For there is no bond more lasting than that formed by the mutual confidences of that magic time when youth is slipping from the sheath of childhood and beginning to wonder what lies for it beyond those misty hills that bound the golden road.

"Where are you going?" asked the Story Girl.

"To 'the woods that belt the gray hillside' — ay, and overflow beyond it into many a valley purple-folded in immemorial peace," answered Uncle Blair. "I have a fancy for one more ramble in Prince Edward Island woods before I leave Canada again. But I would not go alone. So come, you two gay youthful things to whom all life is yet fair and good, and we will seek the path to Arcady. There will be many little things along our way to make us glad. Joyful sounds will 'come ringing down the wind;' a wealth of gypsy gold will be ours for the gathering; we will learn the potent, unutterable charm of a dim spruce wood and the grace of flexile mountain ashes fringing a lonely glen; we will tryst with the folk of fur and feather; we'll hearken to the music of gray old firs. Come, and you'll have a ramble and an afternoon that you will both remember all your lives."

We did have it; never has its remembrance faded; that idyllic afternoon of roving in the old Carlisle woods with the Story Girl and Uncle Blair gleams in my book of years, a page of living beauty. Yet it was but a few hours of simplest pleasure; we wandered pathlessly through the sylvan calm of those dear places which seemed that day to be full of a great friendliness; Uncle Blair sauntered along behind us, whistling softly; sometimes he talked to himself; we delighted in those brief reveries of his; Uncle Blair was the only man I have ever known who could, when he so willed, “talk like a book,” and do it without seeming ridiculous; perhaps it was because he had the knack of choosing “fit audience, though few,” and the proper time to appeal to that audience.

We went across the fields, intending to skirt the woods at the back of Uncle Alec’s farm and find a lane that cut through Uncle Roger’s woods; but before we came to it we stumbled on a sly, winding little path quite by accident — if, indeed, there can be such a thing as accident in the woods, where I am tempted to think we are led by the Good People along such of their fairy ways as they have a mind for us to walk in.

“Go to, let us explore this,” said Uncle Blair. “It always drags terribly at my heart to go past a wood lane if I can make any excuse at all for traversing it: for it is the by-ways that lead to the heart of the woods and we must follow them if we would know the forest and be known of it. When we can really feel its wild heart beating against ours its subtle life will steal into our veins and make us its own for ever, so that no matter where we go or how wide we wander in the noisy ways of cities or over the lone ways of the sea, we shall yet be drawn back to the forest to find our most enduring kinship.”

“I always feel so SATISFIED in the woods,” said the Story Girl dreamily, as we turned in under the low-swinging fir boughs. “Trees seem such friendly things.”

“They are the most friendly things in God’s good creation,” said Uncle Blair emphatically. “And it is so easy to live with them. To hold converse with pines, to whisper secrets with the poplars, to listen to the tales of old romance that beeches have to tell, to walk in eloquent silence with self-

contained firs, is to learn what real companionship is. Besides, trees are the same all over the world. A beech tree on the slopes of the Pyrenees is just what a beech tree here in these Carlisle woods is; and there used to be an old pine hereabouts whose twin brother I was well acquainted with in a dell among the Apennines. Listen to those squirrels, will you, chattering over yonder. Did you ever hear such a fuss over nothing? Squirrels are the gossips and busybodies of the woods; they haven't learned the fine reserve of its other denizens. But after all, there is a certain shrill friendliness in their greeting."

"They seem to be scolding us," I said, laughing.

"Oh, they are not half such scolds as they sound," answered Uncle Blair gaily. "If they would but 'tak a thought and mend' their shrew-like ways they would be dear, lovable creatures enough."

"If I had to be an animal I think I'd like to be a squirrel," said the Story Girl. "It must be next best thing to flying."

"Just see what a spring that fellow gave," laughed Uncle Blair. "And now listen to his song of triumph! I suppose that chasm he cleared seemed as wide and deep to him as Niagara Gorge would to us if we leaped over it. Well, the wood people are a happy folk and very well satisfied with themselves."

Those who have followed a dim, winding, balsamic path to the unexpected hollow where a wood-spring lies have found the rarest secret the forest can reveal. Such was our good fortune that day. At the end of our path we found it, under the pines, a crystal-clear thing with lips unkissed by so much as a stray sunbeam.

"It is easy to dream that this is one of the haunted springs of old romance," said Uncle Blair. "'Tis an enchanted spot this, I am very sure, and we should go softly, speaking low, lest we disturb the rest of a white, wet naiad, or break some spell that has cost long years of mystic weaving."

"It's so easy to believe things in the woods," said the Story Girl, shaping a cup from a bit of golden-brown birch bark and filling it at the spring.

“Drink a toast in that water, Sara,” said Uncle Blair. “There’s not a doubt that it has some potent quality of magic in it and the wish you wish over it will come true.”

The Story Girl lifted her golden-hued flagon to her red lips. Her hazel eyes laughed at us over the brim.

“Here’s to our futures,” she cried, “I wish that every day of our lives may be better than the one that went before.”

“An extravagant wish — a very wish of youth,” commented Uncle Blair, “and yet in spite of its extravagance, a wish that will come true if you are true to yourselves. In that case, every day WILL be better than all that went before — but there will be many days, dear lad and lass, when you will not believe it.”

We did not understand him, but we knew Uncle Blair never explained his meaning. When asked it he was wont to answer with a smile, “Some day you’ll grow to it. Wait for that.” So we addressed ourselves to follow the brook that stole away from the spring in its windings and doublings and tricky surprises.

“A brook,” quoth Uncle Blair, “is the most changeful, bewitching, lovable thing in the world. It is never in the same mind or mood two minutes. Here it is sighing and murmuring as if its heart were broken. But listen — yonder by the birches it is laughing as if it were enjoying some capital joke all by itself.”

It was indeed a changeful brook; here it would make a pool, dark and brooding and still, where we bent to look at our mirrored faces; then it grew communicative and gossiped shallowly over a broken pebble bed where there was a diamond dance of sunbeams and no troutling or minnow could glide through without being seen. Sometimes its banks were high and steep, hung with slender ashes and birches; again they were mere, low margins, green with delicate mosses, shelving out of the wood. Once it came to a little precipice and flung itself over undauntedly in an indignation of foam, gathering itself up rather dizzily among the mossy stones below. It was some time before it got over its vexation; it went boiling and muttering along, fighting with the rotten logs that lie across it,

and making far more fuss than was necessary over every root that interfered with it. We were getting tired of its ill-humour and talked of leaving it, when it suddenly grew sweet-tempered again, swooped around a curve — and presto, we were in fairyland.

It was a little dell far in the heart of the woods. A row of birches fringed the brook, and each birch seemed more exquisitely graceful and golden than her sisters. The woods receded from it on every hand, leaving it lying in a pool of amber sunshine. The yellow trees were mirrored in the placid stream, with now and then a leaf falling on the water, mayhap to drift away and be used, as Uncle Blair suggested, by some adventurous wood sprite who had it in mind to fare forth to some far-off, legendary region where all the brooks ran into the sea.

“Oh, what a lovely place!” I exclaimed, looking around me with delight.

“A spell of eternity is woven over it, surely,” murmured Uncle Blair. “Winter may not touch it, or spring ever revisit it. It should be like this for ever.”

“Let us never come here again,” said the Story Girl softly, “never, no matter how often we may be in Carlisle. Then we will never see it changed or different. We can always remember it just as we see it now, and it will be like this for ever for us.”

“I’m going to sketch it,” said Uncle Blair.

While he sketched it the Story Girl and I sat on the banks of the brook and she told me the story of the Sighing Reed. It was a very simple little story, that of the slender brown reed which grew by the forest pool and always was sad and sighing because it could not utter music like the brook and the birds and the winds. All the bright, beautiful things around it mocked it and laughed at it for its folly. Who would ever look for music in it, a plain, brown, unbeautiful thing? But one day a youth came through the wood; he was as beautiful as the spring; he cut the brown reed and fashioned it according to his liking; and then he put it to his lips and breathed on it; and, oh, the music that floated through the forest! It was so entrancing that everything — brooks and birds and winds — grew silent to

listen to it. Never had anything so lovely been heard; it was the music that had for so long been shut up in the soul of the sighing reed and was set free at last through its pain and suffering.

I had heard the Story Girl tell many a more dramatic tale; but that one stands out for me in memory above them all, partly, perhaps, because of the spot in which she told it, partly because it was the last one I was to hear her tell for many years — the last one she was ever to tell me on the golden road.

When Uncle Blair had finished his sketch the shafts of sunshine were turning crimson and growing more and more remote; the early autumn twilight was falling over the woods. We left our dell, saying goodbye to it for ever, as the Story Girl had suggested, and we went slowly homeward through the fir woods, where a haunting, indescribable odour stole out to meet us.

“There is magic in the scent of dying fir,” Uncle Blair was saying aloud to himself, as if forgetting he was not quite alone. “It gets into our blood like some rare, subtly-compounded wine, and thrills us with unutterable sweetnesses, as of recollections from some other fairer life, lived in some happier star. Compared to it, all other scents seem heavy and earth-born, luring to the valleys instead of the heights. But the tang of the fir summons onward and upward to some ‘far-off, divine event’ — some spiritual peak of attainment whence we shall see with unfaltering, unclouded vision the spires of some aerial City Beautiful, or the fulfilment of some fair, fadeless land of promise.”

He was silent for a moment, then added in a lower tone,

“Felicity, you loved the scent of dying fir. If you were here tonight with me — Felicity — Felicity!”

Something in his voice made me suddenly sad. I was comforted when I felt the Story Girl slip her hand into mine. So we walked out of the woods into the autumn dusk.

We were in a little valley. Halfway up the opposite slope a brush fire was burning clearly and steadily in a maple grove. There was something

indescribably alluring in that fire, glowing so redly against the dark background of forest and twilit hill.

“Let us go to it,” cried Uncle Blair, gaily, casting aside his sorrowful mood and catching our hands. “A wood fire at night has a fascination not to be resisted by those of mortal race. Hasten — we must not lose time.”

“Oh, it will burn a long time yet,” I gasped, for Uncle Blair was whisking us up the hill at a merciless rate.

“You can’t be sure. It may have been lighted by some good, honest farmer-man, bent on tidying up his sugar orchard, but it may also, for anything we know, have been kindled by no earthly woodman as a beacon or summons to the tribes of fairyland, and may vanish away if we tarry.”

It did not vanish and presently we found ourselves in the grove. It was very beautiful; the fire burned with a clear, steady glow and a soft crackle; the long arcades beneath the trees were illuminated with a rosy radiance, beyond which lurked companies of gray and purple shadows. Everything was very still and dreamy and remote.

“It is impossible that out there, just over the hill, lies a village of men, where tame household lamps are shining,” said Uncle Blair.

“I feel as if we must be thousands of miles away from everything we’ve ever known,” murmured the Story Girl.

“So you are!” said Uncle Blair emphatically. “You’re back in the youth of the race — back in the beguilement of the young world. Everything is in this hour — the beauty of classic myths, the primal charm of the silent and the open, the lure of mystery. Why, it’s a time and place when and where everything might come true — when the men in green might creep out to join hands and dance around the fire, or dryads steal from their trees to warm their white limbs, grown chilly in October frosts, by the blaze. I wouldn’t be much surprised if we should see something of the kind. Isn’t that the flash of an ivory shoulder through yonder gloom? And didn’t you see a queer little elfin face peering at us around that twisted gray trunk? But one can’t be sure. Mortal eyesight is too slow and clumsy a thing to match against the flicker of a pixy-litten fire.”

Hand in hand we wandered through that enchanted place, seeking the folk of elfland, “and heard their mystic voices calling, from fairy knoll and haunted hill.” Not till the fire died down into ashes did we leave the grove. Then we found that the full moon was gleaming lustrously from a cloudless sky across the valley. Between us and her stretched up a tall pine, wondrously straight and slender and branchless to its very top, where it overflowed in a crest of dark boughs against the silvery splendour behind it. Beyond, the hill farms were lying in a suave, white radiance.

“Doesn’t it seem a long, long time to you since we left home this afternoon?” asked the Story Girl. “And yet it is only a few hours.”

Only a few hours — true; yet such hours were worth a cycle of common years untouched by the glory and the dream.

We Lose A Friend

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Our beautiful October was marred by one day of black tragedy — the day Paddy died. For Paddy, after seven years of as happy a life as ever a cat lived, died suddenly — of poison, as was supposed. Where he had wandered in the darkness to meet his doom we did not know, but in the frosty dawnlight he dragged himself home to die. We found him lying on the doorstep when we got up, and it did not need Aunt Janet's curt announcement, or Uncle Blair's reluctant shake of the head, to tell us that there was no chance of our pet recovering this time. We felt that nothing could be done. Lard and sulphur on his paws would be of no use, nor would any visit to Peg Bowen avail. We stood around in mournful silence; the Story Girl sat down on the step and took poor Paddy upon her lap.

"I s'pose there's no use even in praying now," said Cecily desperately.

"It wouldn't do any harm to try," sobbed Felicity.

"You needn't waste your prayers," said Dan mournfully, "Pat is beyond human aid. You can tell that by his eyes. Besides, I don't believe it was the praying cured him last time."

"No, it was Peg Bowen," declared Peter, "but she couldn't have bewitched him this time for she's been away for months, nobody knows where."

"If he could only TELL us where he feels the worst!" said Cecily piteously. "It's so dreadful to see him suffering and not be able to do a single thing to help him!"

"I don't think he's suffering much now," I said comfortingly.

The Story Girl said nothing. She passed and repassed her long brown hand gently over her pet's glossy fur. Pat lifted his head and essayed to creep a little nearer to his beloved mistress. The Story Girl drew his limp body close in her arms. There was a plaintive little mew — a long quiver

— and Paddy’s friendly soul had fared forth to wherever it is that good cats go.

“Well, he’s gone,” said Dan, turning his back abruptly to us.

“It doesn’t seem as if it can be true,” sobbed Cecily. “This time yesterday morning he was full of life.”

“He drank two full saucers of cream,” moaned Felicity, “and I saw him catch a mouse in the evening. Maybe it was the last one he ever caught.”

“He did for many a mouse in his day,” said Peter, anxious to pay his tribute to the departed.

“‘He was a cat — take him for all in all. We shall not look upon his like again,’” quoted Uncle Blair.

Felicity and Cecily and Sara Ray cried so much that Aunt Janet lost patience completely and told them sharply that they would have something to cry for some day — which did not seem to comfort them much. The Story Girl shed no tears, though the look in her eyes hurt more than weeping.

“After all, perhaps it’s for the best,” she said drearily. “I’ve been feeling so badly over having to go away and leave Paddy. No matter how kind you’d all be to him I know he’d miss me terribly. He wasn’t like most cats who don’t care who comes and goes as long as they get plenty to eat. Paddy wouldn’t have been contented without me.”

“Oh, no-o-o, oh, no-o-o,” wailed Sara Ray lugubriously.

Felix shot a disgusted glance at her.

“I don’t see what YOU are making such a fuss about,” he said unfeelingly. “He wasn’t your cat.”

“But I l-l-oved him,” sobbed Sara, “and I always feel bad when my friends d-do.”

“I wish we could believe that cats went to heaven, like people,” sighed Cecily. “Do you really think it isn’t possible?”

Uncle Blair shook his head.

“I’m afraid not. I’d like to think cats have a chance for heaven, but I can’t. There’s nothing heavenly about cats, delightful creatures though they are.”

“Blair, I’m really surprised to hear the things you say to the children,” said Aunt Janet severely.

“Surely you wouldn’t prefer me to tell them that cats DO go to heaven,” protested Uncle Blair.

“I think it’s wicked to carry on about an animal as those children do,” answered Aunt Janet decidedly, “and you shouldn’t encourage them. Here now, children, stop making a fuss. Bury that cat and get off to your apple picking.”

We had to go to our work, but Paddy was not to be buried in any such offhand fashion as that. It was agreed that we should bury him in the orchard at sunset that evening, and Sara Ray, who had to go home, declared she would be back for it, and implored us to wait for her if she didn’t come exactly on time.

“I mayn’t be able to get away till after milking,” she sniffed, “but I don’t want to miss it. Even a cat’s funeral is better than none at all.”

“Horrid thing!” said Felicity, barely waiting until Sara was out of earshot.

We worked with heavy hearts that day; the girls cried bitterly most of the time and we boys whistled defiantly. But as evening drew on we began to feel a sneaking interest in the details of the funeral. As Dan said, the thing should be done properly, since Paddy was no common cat. The Story Girl selected the spot for the grave, in a little corner behind the cherry copse, where early violets enskied the grass in spring, and we boys dug the grave, making it “soft and narrow,” as the heroine of the old ballad wanted hers made. Sara Ray, who managed to come in time after all, and Felicity stood and watched us, but Cecily and the Story Girl kept far aloof.

“This time last night you never thought you’d be digging Pat’s grave tonight,” sighed Felicity.

“We little k-know what a day will bring forth,” sobbed Sara. “I’ve heard the minister say that and it is true.”

“Of course it’s true. It’s in the Bible; but I don’t think you should repeat it in connection with a cat,” said Felicity dubiously.

When all was in readiness the Story Girl brought her pet through the orchard where he had so often frisked and prowled. No useless coffin enclosed his breast but he reposed in a neat cardboard box.

"I wonder if it would be right to say 'ashes to ashes and dust to dust,'" said Peter.

"No, it wouldn't," averred Felicity. "It would be real wicked."

"I think we ought to sing a hymn, anyway," asseverated Sara Ray.

"Well, we might do that, if it isn't a very religious one," conceded Felicity.

"How would 'Pull for the shore, sailor, pull for the shore,' do?" asked Cecily. "That never seemed to me a very religious hymn."

"But it doesn't seem very appropriate to a funeral occasion either," said Felicity.

"I think 'Lead, kindly light,' would be ever so much more suitable," suggested Sara Ray, "and it is kind of soothing and melancholy too."

"We are not going to sing anything," said the Story Girl coldly. "Do you want to make the affair ridiculous? We will just fill up the grave quietly and put a flat stone over the top."

"It isn't much like my idea of a funeral," muttered Sara Ray discontentedly.

"Never mind, we're going to have a real obituary about him in Our Magazine," whispered Cecily consolingly.

"And Peter is going to cut his name on top of the stone," added Felicity. "Only we mustn't let on to the grownups until it is done, because they might say it wasn't right."

We left the orchard, a sober little band, with the wind of the gray twilight blowing round us. Uncle Roger passed us at the gate.

"So the last sad obsequies are over?" he remarked with a grin.

And we hated Uncle Roger. But we loved Uncle Blair because he said quietly,

"And so you've buried your little comrade?"

So much may depend on the way a thing is said. But not even Uncle Blair's sympathy could take the sting out of the fact that there was no

Paddy to get the froth that night at milking time. Felicity cried bitterly all the time she was straining the milk. Many human beings have gone to their graves unattended by as much real regret as followed that one gray pussy cat to his.

Chapter XXX.

Prophecies

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“Here’s a letter for you from father,” said Felix, tossing it to me as he came through the orchard gate. We had been picking apples all day, but were taking a mid-afternoon rest around the well, with a cup of its sparkling cold water to refresh us.

I opened the letter rather indifferently, for father, with all his excellent and lovable traits, was but a poor correspondent; his letters were usually very brief and very unimportant.

This letter was brief enough, but it was freighted with a message of weighty import. I sat gazing stupidly at the sheet after I had read it until Felix exclaimed,

“Bev, what’s the matter with you? What’s in that letter?”

“Father is coming home,” I said dazedly. “He is to leave South America in a fortnight and will be here in November to take us back to Toronto.”

Everybody gasped. Sara Ray, of course, began to cry, which aggravated me unreasonably.

“Well,” said Felix, when he got his second wind, “I’ll be awful glad to see father again, but I tell you I don’t like the thought of leaving here.”

I felt exactly the same but, in view of Sara Ray’s tears, admit it I would not; so I sat in grum silence while the other tongues wagged.

“If I were not going away myself I’d feel just terrible,” said the Story Girl. “Even as it is I’m real sorry. I’d like to be able to think of you as all here together when I’m gone, having good times and writing me about them.”

“It’ll be awfully dull when you fellows go,” muttered Dan.

“I’m sure I don’t know what we’re ever going to do here this winter,” said Felicity, with the calmness of despair.

“Thank goodness there are no more fathers to come back,” breathed Cecily with a vicious earnestness that made us all laugh, even in the midst of our dismay.

We worked very half-heartedly the rest of the day, and it was not until we assembled in the orchard in the evening that our spirits recovered something like their wonted level. It was clear and slightly frosty; the sun had declined behind a birch on a distant hill and it seemed a tree with a blazing heart of fire. The great golden willow at the lane gate was laughter-shaken in the wind of evening. Even amid all the changes of our shifting world we could not be hopelessly low-spirited — except Sara Ray, who was often so, and Peter, who was rarely so. But Peter had been sorely vexed in spirit for several days. The time was approaching for the October issue of Our Magazine and he had no genuine fiction ready for it. He had taken so much to heart Felicity’s taunt that his stories were all true that he had determined to have a really-truly false one in the next number. But the difficulty was to get anyone to write it. He had asked the Story Girl to do it, but she refused; then he appealed to me and I shirked. Finally Peter determined to write a story himself.

“It oughtn’t to be any harder than writing a poem and I managed that,” he said dolefully.

He worked at it in the evenings in the granary loft, and the rest of us forebore to question him concerning it, because he evidently disliked talking about his literary efforts. But this evening I had to ask him if he would soon have it ready, as I wanted to make up the paper.

“It’s done,” said Peter, with an air of gloomy triumph. “It don’t amount to much, but anyhow I made it all out of my own head. Not one word of it was ever printed or told before, and nobody can say there was.”

“Then I guess we have all the stuff in and I’ll have Our Magazine ready to read by tomorrow night,” I said.

“I s’pose it will be the last one we’ll have,” sighed Cecily. “We can’t carry it on after you all go, and it has been such fun.”

“Bev will be a real newspaper editor some day,” declared the Story Girl, on whom the spirit of prophecy suddenly descended that night.

She was swinging on the bough of an apple tree, with a crimson shawl wrapped about her head, and her eyes were bright with roguish fire.

“How do you know he will?” asked Felicity.

“Oh, I can tell futures,” answered the Story Girl mysteriously. “I know what’s going to happen to all of you. Shall I tell you?”

“Do, just for the fun of it,” I said. “Then some day we’ll know just how near you came to guessing right. Go on. What else about me?”

“You’ll write books, too, and travel all over the world,” continued the Story Girl. “Felix will be fat to the end of his life, and he will be a grandfather before he is fifty, and he will wear a long black beard.”

“I won’t,” cried Felix disgustedly. “I hate whiskers. Maybe I can’t help the grandfather part, but I CAN help having a beard.”

“You can’t. It’s written in the stars.”

“‘Tain’t. The stars can’t prevent me from shaving.”

“Won’t Grandpa Felix sound awful funny?” reflected Felicity.

“Peter will be a minister,” went on the Story Girl.

“Well, I might be something worse,” remarked Peter, in a not ungratified tone.

“Dan will be a farmer and will marry a girl whose name begins with K and he will have eleven children. And he’ll vote Grit.”

“I won’t,” cried scandalized Dan. “You don’t know a thing about it. Catch ME ever voting Grit! As for the rest of it — I don’t care. Farming’s well enough, though I’d rather be a sailor.”

“Don’t talk such nonsense,” protested Felicity sharply. “What on earth do you want to be a sailor for and be drowned?”

“All sailors aren’t drowned,” said Dan.

“Most of them are. Look at Uncle Stephen.”

“You ain’t sure he was drowned.”

“Well, he disappeared, and that is worse.”

“How do you know? Disappearing might be real easy.”

“It’s not very easy for your family.”

“Hush, let’s hear the rest of the predictions,” said Cecily.

“Felicity,” resumed the Story Girl gravely, “will marry a minister.”

Sara Ray giggled and Felicity blushed. Peter tried hard not to look too self-consciously delighted.

“She will be a perfect housekeeper and will teach a Sunday School class and be very happy all her life.”

“Will her husband be happy?” queried Dan solemnly.

“I guess he’ll be as happy as your wife,” retorted Felicity reddening.

“He’ll be the happiest man in the world,” declared Peter warmly.

“What about me?” asked Sara Ray.

The Story Girl looked rather puzzled. It was so hard to imagine Sara Ray as having any kind of future. Yet Sara was plainly anxious to have her fortune told and must be gratified.

“You’ll be married,” said the Story Girl recklessly, “and you’ll live to be nearly a hundred years old, and go to dozens of funerals and have a great many sick spells. You will learn not to cry after you are seventy; but your husband will never go to church.”

“I’m glad you warned me,” said Sara Ray solemnly, “because now I know I’ll make him promise before I marry him that he will go.”

“He won’t keep the promise,” said the Story Girl, shaking her head. “But it is getting cold and Cecily is coughing. Let us go in.”

“You haven’t told my fortune,” protested Cecily disappointedly.

The Story Girl looked very tenderly at Cecily — at the smooth little brown head, at the soft, shining eyes, at the cheeks that were often over-rosy after slight exertion, at the little sunburned hands that were always busy doing faithful work or quiet kindnesses. A very strange look came over the Story Girl’s face; her eyes grew sad and far-reaching, as if of a verity they pierced beyond the mists of hidden years.

“I couldn’t tell any fortune half good enough for you, dearest,” she said, slipping her arm round Cecily. “You deserve everything good and lovely. But you know I’ve only been in fun — of course I don’t know anything about what’s going to happen to us.”

“Perhaps you know more than you think for,” said Sara Ray, who seemed much pleased with her fortune and anxious to believe it, despite the husband who wouldn’t go to church.

“But I’d like to be told my fortune, even in fun,” persisted Cecily.

“Everybody you meet will love you as long as you live.” said the Story Girl. “There that’s the very nicest fortune I can tell you, and it will come true whether the others do or not, and now we must go in.”

We went, Cecily still a little disappointed. In later years I often wondered why the Story Girl refused to tell her fortune that night. Did some strange gleam of foreknowledge fall for a moment across her mirth-making? Did she realize in a flash of prescience that there was no earthly future for our sweet Cecily? Not for her were to be the lengthening shadows or the fading garland. The end was to come while the rainbow still sparkled on her wine of life, ere a single petal had fallen from her rose of joy. Long life was before all the others who trysted that night in the old homestead orchard; but Cecily’s maiden feet were never to leave the golden road.

The Last Number of Our Magazine

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EDITORIAL

It is with heartfelt regret that we take up our pen to announce that this will be the last number of Our Magazine. We have edited ten numbers of it and it has been successful beyond our expectations. It has to be discontinued by reason of circumstances over which we have no control and not because we have lost interest in it. Everybody has done his or her best for Our Magazine. Prince Edward Island expected everyone to do his and her duty and everyone did it.

Mr. Dan King conducted the etiquette department in a way worthy of the Family Guide itself. He is especially entitled to commendation because he laboured under the disadvantage of having to furnish most of the questions as well as the answers. Miss Felicity King has edited our helpful household department very ably, and Miss Cecily King's fashion notes were always up to date. The personal column was well looked after by Miss Sara Stanley and the story page has been a marked success under the able management of Mr. Peter Craig, to whose original story in this issue, "The Battle of the Partridge Eggs," we would call especial attention. The Exciting Adventure series has also been very popular.

And now, in closing, we bid farewell to our staff and thank them one and all for their help and cooperation in the past year. We have enjoyed our work and we trust that they have too. We wish them all happiness and success in years to come, and we hope that the recollection of Our Magazine will not be held least dear among the memories of their childhood.

(SOBS FROM THE GIRLS): "INDEED IT WON'T!"

OBITUARY

On October eighteenth, Patrick Grayfur departed for that bourne whence no traveller returns. He was only a cat, but he had been our faithful

friend for a long time and we aren't ashamed to be sorry for him. There are lots of people who are not as friendly and gentlemanly as Paddy was, and he was a great mouser. We buried all that was mortal of poor Pat in the orchard and we are never going to forget him. We have resolved that whenever the date of his death comes round we'll bow our heads and pronounce his name at the hour of his funeral. If we are anywhere where we can't say the name out loud we'll whisper it.

"Farewell, dearest Paddy, in all the years that are to be We'll cherish your memory faithfully."1

MY MOST EXCITING ADVENTURE

My most exciting adventure was the day I fell off Uncle Roger's loft two years ago. I wasn't excited until it was all over because I hadn't time to be. The Story Girl and I were looking for eggs in the loft. It was filled with wheat straw nearly to the roof and it was an awful distance from us to the floor. And wheat straw is so slippery. I made a little spring and the straw slipped from under my feet and there I was going head first down from the loft. It seemed to me I was an awful long time falling, but the Story Girl says I couldn't have been more than three seconds. But I know that I thought five thoughts and there seemed to be quite a long time between them. The first thing I thought was, what has happened, because I really didn't know at first, it was so sudden. Then after a spell I thought the answer, I am falling off the loft. And then I thought, what will happen to me when I strike the floor, and after another little spell I thought, I'll be killed. And then I thought, well, I don't care. I really wasn't a bit frightened. I just was quite willing to be killed. If there hadn't been a big pile of chaff on the barn floor these words would never have been written. But there was and I fell on it and wasn't a bit hurt, only my hair and mouth and eyes and ears got all full of chaff. The strange part is that I wasn't a bit frightened when I thought I was going to be killed, but after all the danger was over I was awfully frightened and trembled so the Story Girl had to help me into the house.

FELICITY KING.

THE BATTLE OF THE PARTRIDGE EGGS

Once upon a time there lived about half a mile from a forrest a farmer and his wife and his sons and daughters and a granddaughter. The farmer and his wife loved this little girl very much but she caused them great trouble by running away into the woods and they often spent haf days looking for her. One day she wondered further into the forrest than usual and she begun to be hungry. Then night closed in. She asked a fox where she could get something to eat. The fox told her he knew where there was a partridges nest and a bluejays nest full of eggs. So he led her to the nests and she took five eggs out of each. When the birds came home they missed the eggs and flew into a rage. The bluejay put on his topcoat and was going to the partridge for law when he met the partridge coming to him. They lit up a fire and commenced sining their deeds when they heard a tremendous howl close behind them. They jumped up and put out the fire and were immejutly attacked by five great wolves. The next day the little girl was rambelling through the woods when they saw her and took her prisoner. After she had confessed that she had stole the eggs they told her to raise an army. They would have to fight over the nests of eggs and whoever one would have the eggs. So the partridge raised a great army of all kinds of birds except robins and the little girl got all the robins and foxes and bees and wasps. And best of all the little girl had a gun and plenty of ammunishun. The leader of her army was a wolf. The result of the battle was that all the birds were killed except the partridge and the bluejay and they were taken prisoner and starved to death.

The little girl was then taken prisoner by a witch and cast into a dunjun full of snakes where she died from their bites and people who went through the forrest after that were taken prisoner by her ghost and cast into the same dunjun where they died. About a year after the wood turned into a gold castle and one morning everything had vanished except a piece of a tree.

PETER CRAIG.

(DAN, WITH A WHISTLE:—"Well, I guess nobody can say Peter can't write fiction after THAT."

SARA RAY, WIPING AWAY HER TEARS:—"It's a very interesting story, but it ends SO sadly."

FELIX:—"What made you call it The Battle of the Partridge Eggs when the bluejay had just as much to do with it?"

PETER, SHORTLY:—"Because it sounded better that way."

FELICITY:—"Did she eat the eggs raw?"

SARA RAY:—"Poor little thing, I suppose if you're starving you can't be very particular."

CECILY, SIGHING:—"I wish you'd let her go home safe, Peter, and not put her to such a cruel death."

BEVERLEY:—"I don't quite understand where the little girl got her gun and ammunition."

PETER, SUSPECTING THAT HE IS BEING MADE FUN OF:—"If you could write a better story, why didn't you? I give you the chance."

THE STORY GIRL, WITH A PRETERNATURALLY SOLEMN FACE:—"You shouldn't criticize Peter's story like that. It's a fairy tale, you know, and anything can happen in a fairy tale."

FELICITY:—"There isn't a word about fairies in it!"

CECILY:—"Besides, fairy tales always end nicely and this doesn't."

PETER, SULKILY:—"I wanted to punish her for running away from home."

DAN:—"Well, I guess you did it all right."

CECILY:—"Oh, well, it was very interesting, and that is all that is really necessary in a story.")

PERSONALS

Mr. Blair Stanley is visiting friends and relatives in Carlisle. He intends returning to Europe shortly. His daughter, Miss Sara, will accompany him.

Mr. Alan King is expected home from South America next month. His sons will return with him to Toronto. Beverley and Felix have made hosts of friends during their stay in Carlisle and will be much missed in social circles.

The Mission Band of Carlisle Presbyterian Church completed their missionary quilt last week. Miss Cecily King collected the largest sum on her square. Congratulations, Cecily.

Mr. Peter Craig will be residing in Markdale after October and will attend school there this winter. Peter is a good fellow and we all wish him success and prosperity.

Apple picking is almost ended. There was an unusually heavy crop this year. Potatoes, not so good.

HOUSEHOLD DEPARTMENT

Apple pies are the order of the day.

Eggs are a very good price now. Uncle Roger says it isn't fair to have to pay as much for a dozen little eggs as a dozen big ones, but they go just as far.

FELICITY KING.

ETIQUETTE DEPARTMENT

F-l-t-y. Is it considered good form to eat peppermints in church? Ans.; No, not if a witch gives them to you.

No, F-l-x, we would not call Treasure Island or the Pilgrim's Progress dime novels.

Yes, P-t-r, when you call on a young lady and her mother offers you a slice of bread and jam it is quite polite for you to accept it.

DAN KING.

FASHION NOTES

Necklaces of roseberries are very much worn now.

It is considered smart to wear your school hat tilted over your left eye.

Bangs are coming in. Em Frewen has them. She went to Summerside for a visit and came back with them. All the girls in school are going to bang their hair as soon as their mothers will let them. But I do not intend to bang mine.

CECILY KING.

(SARA RAY, DESPAIRINGLY:—"I know ma will never let ME have bangs.")

FUNNY PARAGRAPHS

D-n. What are details? C-l-y. I am not sure, but I think they are things that are left over.

(CECILY, WONDERINGLY:—"I don't see why that was put among the funny paragraphs. Shouldn't it have gone in the General Information department?")

Old Mr. McIntyre's son on the Markdale Road had been very sick for several years and somebody was sympathizing with him because his son was going to die. "Oh," Mr. McIntyre said, quite easy, "he might as weel be awa'. He's only retarding buzziness."

FELIX KING.

GENERAL INFORMATION BUREAU

P-t-r. What kind of people live in uninhabited places?

Ans.: Cannibals, likely.

FELIX KING.

1 (return)

[The obituary was written by Mr. Felix King, but the two lines of poetry were composed by Miss Sara Ray.]

Our Last Evening Together

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It was the evening before the day on which the Story Girl and Uncle Blair were to leave us, and we were keeping our last tryst together in the orchard where we had spent so many happy hours. We had made a pilgrimage to all the old haunts — the hill field, the spruce wood, the dairy, Grandfather King's willow, the Pulpit Stone, Pat's grave, and Uncle Stephen's Walk; and now we foregathered in the sere grasses about the old well and feasted on the little jam turnovers Felicity had made that day specially for the occasion.

"I wonder if we'll ever all be together again," sighed Cecily.

"I wonder when I'll get jam turnovers like this again," said the Story Girl, trying to be gay but not making much of a success of it.

"If Paris wasn't so far away I could send you a box of nice things now and then," said Felicity forlornly, "but I suppose there's no use thinking of that. Dear knows what they'll give you to eat over there."

"Oh, the French have the reputation of being the best cooks in the world," rejoined the Story Girl, "but I know they can't beat your jam turnovers and plum puffs, Felicity. Many a time I'll be hankering after them."

"If we ever do meet again you'll be grown up," said Felicity gloomily.

"Well, you won't have stood still yourselves, you know."

"No, but that's just the worst of it. We'll all be different and everything will be changed."

"Just think," said Cecily, "last New Year's Eve we were wondering what would happen this year; and what a lot of things have happened that we never expected. Oh, dear!"

"If things never happened life would be pretty dull," said the Story Girl briskly. "Oh, don't look so dismal, all of you."

"It's hard to be cheerful when everybody's going away," sighed Cecily.

“Well, let’s pretend to be, anyway,” insisted the Story Girl. “Don’t let’s think of parting. Let’s think instead of how much we’ve laughed this last year or so. I’m sure I shall never forget this dear old place. We’ve had so many good times here.”

“And some bad times, too,” reminded Felix.

“Remember when Dan et the bad berries last summer?”

“And the time we were so scared over that bell ringing in the house,” grinned Peter.

“And the Judgment Day,” added Dan.

“And the time Paddy was bewitched,” suggested Sara Ray.

“And when Peter was dying of the measles,” said Felicity.

“And the time Jimmy Patterson was lost,” said Dan. “Gee-whiz, but that scared me out of a year’s growth.”

“Do you remember the time we took the magic seed,” grinned Peter.

“Weren’t we silly?” said Felicity. “I really can never look Billy Robinson in the face when I meet him. I’m always sure he’s laughing at me in his sleeve.”

“It’s Billy Robinson who ought to be ashamed when he meets you or any of us,” commented Cecily severely. “I’d rather be cheated than cheat other people.”

“Do you mind the time we bought God’s picture?” asked Peter.

“I wonder if it’s where we buried it yet,” speculated Felix.

“I put a stone over it, just as we did over Pat,” said Cecily.

“I wish I could forget what God looks like,” sighed Sara Ray. “I can’t forget it — and I can’t forget what the bad place is like either, ever since Peter preached that sermon on it.”

“When you get to be a real minister you’ll have to preach that sermon over again, Peter,” grinned Dan.

“My Aunt Jane used to say that people needed a sermon on that place once in a while,” retorted Peter seriously.

“Do you mind the night I et the cucumbers and milk to make me dream?” said Cecily.

And therewith we hunted out our old dream books to read them again, and, forgetful of coming partings, laughed over them till the old orchard echoed to our mirth. When we had finished we stood in a circle around the well and pledged “eternal friendship” in a cup of its unrivalled water.

Then we joined hands and sang “Auld Lang Syne.” Sara Ray cried bitterly in lieu of singing.

“Look here,” said the Story Girl, as we turned to leave the old orchard, “I want to ask a favour of you all. Don’t say goodbye to me tomorrow morning.”

“Why not?” demanded Felicity in astonishment.

“Because it’s such a hopeless sort of word. Don’t let’s SAY it at all. Just see me off with a wave of your hands. It won’t seem half so bad then. And don’t any of you cry if you can help it. I want to remember you all smiling.”

We went out of the old orchard where the autumn night wind was beginning to make its weird music in the russet boughs, and shut the little gate behind us. Our revels there were ended.

The Story Girl Goes

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The morning dawned, rosy and clear and frosty. Everybody was up early, for the travellers must leave in time to catch the nine o'clock train. The horse was harnessed and Uncle Alec was waiting by the door. Aunt Janet was crying, but everybody else was making a valiant effort not to. The Awkward Man and Mrs. Dale came to see the last of their favourite. Mrs. Dale had brought her a glorious sheaf of chrysanthemums, and the Awkward Man gave her, quite gracefully, another little, old, limp book from his library.

“Read it when you are sad or happy or lonely or discouraged or hopeful,” he said gravely.

“He has really improved very much since he got married,” whispered Felicity to me.

Sara Stanley wore a smart new travelling suit and a blue felt hat with a white feather. She looked so horribly grown up in it that we felt as if she were lost to us already.

Sara Ray had vowed tearfully the night before that she would be up in the morning to say farewell. But at this juncture Judy Pineau appeared to say that Sara, with her usual luck, had a sore throat, and that her mother consequently would not permit her to come. So Sara had written her parting words in a three-cornered pink note.

“My OWN DARLING FRIEND: — WORDS CANNOT EXPRESS my feelings over not being able to go up this morning to say goodbye to one I so FONDLY ADORE. When I think that I cannot SEE YOU AGAIN my heart is almost TOO FULL FOR UTTERANCE. But mother says I cannot and I MUST OBEY. But I will be present IN SPIRIT. It just BREAKS MY HEART that you are going SO FAR AWAY. You have always been SO KIND to me and never hurt my feelings AS SOME DO and I shall miss you SO MUCH. But I earnestly HOPE AND PRAY that you will be

HAPPY AND PROSPEROUS wherever YOUR LOT IS CAST and not be seasick on THE GREAT OCEAN. I hope you will find time AMONG YOUR MANY DUTIES to write me a letter ONCE IN A WHILE. I shall ALWAYS REMEMBER YOU and please remember me. I hope we WILL MEET AGAIN sometime, but if not may we meet in A FAR BETTER WORLD where there are no SAD PARTINGS. “Your true and loving friend,

“SARA RAY”

“Poor little Sara,” said the Story Girl, with a queer catch in her voice, as she slipped the tear-blotted note into her pocket. “She isn’t a bad little soul, and I’m sorry I couldn’t see her once more, though maybe it’s just as well for she’d have to cry and set us all off. I WON’T cry. Felicity, don’t you dare. Oh, you dear, darling people, I love you all so much and I’ll go on loving you always.”

“Mind you write us every week at the very least,” said Felicity, winking furiously.

“Blair, Blair, watch over the child well,” said Aunt Janet. “Remember, she has no mother.”

The Story Girl ran over to the buggy and climbed in. Uncle Blair followed her. Her arms were full of Mrs. Dale’s chrysanthemums, held close up to her face, and her beautiful eyes shone softly at us over them. No goodbyes were said, as she wished. We all smiled bravely and waved our hands as they drove out of the lane and down the moist red road into the shadows of the fir wood in the valley. But we still stood there, for we knew we should see the Story Girl once more. Beyond the fir wood was an open curve in the road and she had promised to wave a last farewell as they passed around it.

We watched the curve in silence, standing in a sorrowful little group in the sunshine of the autumn morning. The delight of the world had been ours on the golden road. It had enticed us with daisies and rewarded us with roses. Blossom and lyric had waited on our wishes. Thoughts, careless and sweet, had visited us. Laughter had been our comrade and fearless Hope our guide. But now the shadow of change was over it.

“There she is,” cried Felicity.

The Story Girl stood up and waved her chrysanthemums at us. We waved wildly back until the buggy had driven around the curve. Then we went slowly and silently back to the house. The Story Girl was gone.

Pat of Silver Bush Series

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PAT OF SILVER BUSH

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Introduces Pat

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1

“Oh, oh, and I think I’ll soon have to be doing some rooting in the parsley bed,” said Judy Plum, as she began to cut Winnie’s red crepe dress into strips suitable for “hooking.” She was very much pleased with herself because she had succeeded in browbeating Mrs. Gardiner into letting her have it. Mrs. Gardiner thought Winnie might have got another summer’s wear out of it. Red crepe dresses were not picked up in parsley beds, whatever else might be.

But Judy had set her heart on that dress. It was exactly the shade she wanted for the inner petals of the fat, “raised” roses in the fine new rug she was hooking for Aunt Hazel ... a rug with golden-brown “scrolls” around its edges and, in the centre, clusters of red and purple roses such as never grew on any earthly rosebush.

Judy Plum “had her name up,” as she expressed it, for hooked rugs, and she meant that this should be a masterpiece. It was to be a wedding gift for Aunt Hazel, if that young lady really got married this summer, as, in Judy’s opinion, it was high time she should, after all her picking and choosing.

Pat, who was greatly interested in the rug’s progress, knew nothing except that it was for Aunt Hazel. Also, there was another event impending at Silver Bush of which she was ignorant and Judy thought it was high time she was warned. When one has been the “baby” of a family for almost seven years just how is one going to take a supplanter? Judy, who loved everybody at Silver Bush in reason, loved Pat out of reason and was worried over this beyond all measure. Pat was always after taking things a bit too seriously. As Judy put it, she “loved too hard.” What a scene she had been after making that very morning because Judy wanted her old

purple sweater for the roses. It was far too tight for her and more holy than righteous, if ye plaze, but Pat wouldn't hear of giving it up. She loved that old sweater and she meant to wear it another year. She fought so tigerishly about it that Judy ... of course ... gave in. Pat was always like that about her clothes. She wore them until they simply wouldn't look at her because they were so dear to her she couldn't bear to give them up. She hated her new duds until she had worn them for a few weeks. Then she turned around and loved them fiercely, too.

"A quare child, if ye'll belave me," Judy used to say, shaking her grizzled head. But she would have put the black sign on any one else who called Pat a queer child.

"What makes her queer?" Sidney had asked once, a little belligerently. Sidney loved Pat and didn't like to hear her called queer.

"Sure, a leprachaun touched her the day she was born wid a liddle green rose-thorn," answered Judy mysteriously.

Judy knew all about leprachauns and banshees and water-kelpies and fascinating beings like that.

"So she can't ever be just like other folks. But it isn't all to the bad. She'll be after having things other folks can't have."

"What things?" Sidney was curious.

"She'll love folks ... and things ... better than most ... and that'll give her the great delight. But they'll hurt her more, too. 'Tis the way of the fairy gift and ye have to take the bad wid the good."

"If that's all the leppern did for her I don't think he amounts to much," said young Sidney scornfully.

"S ... sh!" Judy was scandalised. "Liddle ye know what may be listening to ye. And I'm not after saying it was all. She'll see things. Hundreds av witches flying be night over the woods and steeples on broomsticks, wid their black cats perched behind them. How wud ye like that?"

"Aunt Hazel says there aren't any such things as witches, 'specially in Prince Edward Island," said Sidney.

“If ye don’t be belaving innnything what fun are ye going to get out av life?” asked Judy unanswerably. “There may niver be a witch in P. E. Island but there’s minny a one in ould Ireland even yet. The grandmother av me was one.”

“Are *you* a witch?” demanded Sidney daringly. He had always wanted to ask Judy that.

“I might be having a liddle av it in me, though I’m not be way av being a full witch,” said Judy significantly.

“And are you sure the leppern pricked Pat?”

“Sure? Who cud be sure av what a fairy might be doing? Maybe it’s only the mixed blood in her makes her quare. Frinch and English and Irish and Scotch and Quaker ... ‘tis a tarrible mixture, I’m telling ye.”

“But that’s all so long ago,” argued Sidney. “Uncle Tom says it’s just Canadian now.”

“Oh, oh,” said Judy, highly offended, “if yer Uncle Tom do be knowing more about it than meself whatever are ye here plaguing me to death wid yer questions for? Scoot, scat, and scamper, or I’ll warm your liddle behind for ye.”

“I don’t believe there’s either witches or fairies,” cried Sid, just to make her madder. It was always fun to make Judy Plum mad.

“Oh, oh, indade! Well, I knew a man in ould Ireland said the same thing. Said it as bould as brass, he did. And he met some one night, whin he was walking home from where he’d no business to be. Oh, oh, what they did to him!”

“What ... what?” demanded Sid eagerly.

“Niver ye be minding what it was. ‘Tis better for ye niver to know. He was niver the same again and he held his tongue about the Good Folk after that, belave me. Only I’m advising ye to be a bit careful what ye say out loud whin ye think ye’re all alone, me bould young lad.”

Judy was hooking her rug in her own bedroom, just over the kitchen ... a fascinating room, so the Silver Bush children thought. It was not plastered. The walls and ceiling were finished with smooth bare boards which Judy kept beautifully whitewashed. The bed was an enormous one with a fat chaff tick. Judy scorned feathers and mattresses were, she believed, a modern invention of the Bad Man Below. It had pillowslips trimmed with crocheted "pineapple" lace, and was covered with a huge "autograph quilt" which some local society had made years before and which Judy had bought.

"Sure and I likes to lie there a bit when I wakes and looks at all the names av people that are snug underground and me still hearty and kicking," she would say.

The Silver Bush children all liked to sleep a night now and then with Judy, until they grew too big for it, and listen to her tales of the folks whose names were on the quilt. Old forgotten fables ... ancient romances ... Judy knew them all, or made them up if she didn't. She had a marvellous memory and a knack of dramatic word-painting. Judy's tales were not always so harmless as that. She had an endless store of weird yarns of ghosts and "rale nice murders," and it was a wonder she did not scare the children out of a year's growth. But they were only deliciously goosefleshed. They knew Judy's stories were "lies," but no matter. They were absorbing and interesting lies. Judy had a delightful habit of carrying a tale on night after night, with a trick of stopping at just the right breathless place which any writer of serial stories would have envied her. Pat's favourite one was a horrible tale of a murdered man who was found in pieces about the house ... an arm in the garret ... a head in the cellar ... a hambone in a pot in the pantry. "It gives me such a lovely shudder, Judy."

Beside the bed was a small table covered with a crocheted tidy, whereon lay a beaded, heart-shaped pincushion and a shell-covered box in which Judy kept the first tooth of all the children and a lock of their hair. Also a razor-fish shell from Australia and a bit of beeswax that she used to make her thread smooth and which was seamed with innumerable fine,

criss-cross wrinkles like old Great-great-aunt Hannah's face at the Bay Shore. Judy's Bible lay there, too, and a fat little brown book of "Useful Knowledge" out of which Judy constantly fished amazing information. It was the only book Judy ever read. Folks, she said, did be more interesting than books.

Bunches of dried tansy and yarrow and garden herbs hung from the ceiling everywhere and looked gloriously spooky on moonlight nights. Judy's big blue chest which she had brought out with her from the Old Country thirty years ago stood against the wall and when Judy was in especial good humour she would show the children the things in it ... an odd and interesting *mélange*, for Judy had been about the world a bit in her time. Born in Ireland she had "worked out" in her teens ... in a "castle" no less, as the Silver Bush children heard with amazed eyes. Then she had gone to England and worked there until a roving brother took a notion to go to Australia and Judy went with him. Australia not being to his liking he next tried Canada and settled down on a P. E. Island farm for a few years. Judy went to work at Silver Bush in the days of Pat's grandparents, and, when her brother announced his determination to pull up stakes and go to the Klondike, Judy coolly told him he could go alone. She liked "the Island." It was more like the Ould Country than any place she'd struck. She liked Silver Bush and she loved the Gardiners.

Judy had been at Silver Bush ever since. She had been there when "Long Alec" Gardiner brought his young bride home. She had been there when each of the children was born. She belonged there. It was impossible to think of Silver Bush without her. With her flair for picking up tales and legends she knew more of the family history than any of the Gardiners themselves did.

She never had had any notion of marrying.

"I niver had but the one beau," she told Pat once. "He seranaded me under me windy one night and I poured a jug av suds over him. Maybe it discouraged him. Innyway, he niver got any forrarder."

"Were you sorry?" asked Pat.

"Niver a bit, me jewel. He hadn't the sinse God gave geese innyhow."

“Do you think you’ll ever marry now, Judy?” asked Pat anxiously. It would be so terrible if Judy married and went away.

“Oh, oh, at me age! And me as grey as a cat!”

“How old are you, Judy Plum?”

“‘Tis hardly a civil question that, but ye’re too young to know it. I do be as old as me tongue and a liddle older than me teeth. Don’t be fretting yer liddle gizzard about me marrying. Marrying’s a trouble and not marrying’s a trouble and I sticks to the trouble I knows.”

“I’m never going to marry either, Judy,” said Pat. “Because if I got married I’d have to go away from Silver Bush, and I couldn’t bear that. We’re going to stay here always ... Sid and me ... and you’ll stay with us, won’t you, Judy? And teach me how to make cheeses.”

“Oh, oh, cheeses, is it? Thim cheese factories do be making all the cheeses now. There isn’t a farm on the Island but Silver Bush that does be making thim. And this is the last summer I’ll be doing thim I’m thinking.”

“Oh, Judy Plum, you *mustn’t* give up making cheeses. You must make them forever. *Please*, Judy Plum?”

“Well, maybe I’ll be making two or three for the family,” conceded Judy. “Yer dad do be always saying the factory ones haven’t the taste av the homemade ones. How could they, I’m asking ye? Run be the min! What do min be knowing about making cheeses? Oh, oh, the changes since I first come to the Island!”

“I *hate* changes,” cried Pat, almost in tears.

It had been so terrible to think of Judy never making any more cheeses. The mysterious mixing in of something she called “rennet” ... the beautiful white curds next morning ... the packing of it in the hoops ... the stowing it away under the old “press” by the church barn with the round grey stone for a weight. Then the long drying and mellowing of the big golden moons in the attic ... all big save one dear tiny one made in a special hoop for Pat. Pat knew everybody in North Glen thought the Gardiners terribly old-fashioned because they still made their own cheeses, but who cared for that? Hooked rugs were old-fashioned, too, but summer visitors and tourists raved over them and would have bought all

Judy Plum made. But Judy would never sell one. They were for the house at Silver Bush and no other.

3

Judy was hooking furiously, trying to finish her rose before the “dim,” as she always called the twilights of morning and evening. Pat liked that. It sounded so lovely and strange. She was sitting on a little stool on the landing of the kitchen stairs, just outside Judy’s open door, her elbows on her thin knees, her square chin cupped in her hands. Her little laughing face, that always seemed to be laughing even when she was sad or mad or bad, was ivory white in winter but was already beginning to pick up its summer tan. Her hair was ginger-brown and straight ... and long. Nobody at Silver Bush, except Aunt Hazel, had yet dared to wear bobbed hair. Judy raised such a riot about it that mother hadn’t ventured to cut Winnie’s or Pat’s. The funny thing was that Judy had bobbed hair herself and so was in the very height of the fashion she disdained. Judy had always worn her grizzled hair short. Hadn’t time to be fussing with hairpins she declared.

Gentleman Tom sat beside Pat, on the one step from the landing into Judy’s room, blinking at her with insolent green eyes, whose very expression would have sent Judy to the stake a few hundred years ago. A big, lanky cat who always looked as if he had a great many secret troubles; continually thin in spite of Judy’s partial coddling; a black cat ... “the blackest black cat I ever did be seeing.” For a time he had been nameless. Judy held it wasn’t lucky to name a baste that had just “come.” Who knew what might be offended? So the black grimalkin was called Judy’s Cat, with a capital, until one day Sid referred to it as “Gentleman Tom,” and Gentleman Tom he was from that time forth, even Judy surrendering. Pat was fond of all cats, but her fondness for Gentleman Tom was tempered with awe. He had come from nowhere apparently, not even having been born like other kittens, and attached himself to Judy. He slept on the foot of her bed, walked beside her, with his ramrod of a tail straight up in the

air, wherever she went and had never been heard to purr. It couldn't be said that he was a sociable cat. Even Judy, who would allow no faults in him, admitted he was "a bit particular who he spoke to."

"Sure and he isn't what ye might call a talkative cat but he do be grand company in his way."

Introduces Silver Bush

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1

Pat's brook-brown eyes had been staring through the little round window in the wall above the landing until Judy had made her mysterious remark about the parsley bed. It was her favourite window, opening outward like the port-hole of a ship. She never went up to Judy's room without stopping to look from it. Dear little fitful breezes came to that window that never came anywhere else and you saw such lovely things out of it. The big grove of white birch on the hill behind it which gave Silver Bush its name and which was full of dear little screech owls that hardly ever screeched but purred and laughed. Beyond it all the dells and slopes and fields of the old farm, some of them fenced in with the barbed wire Pat hated, others still surrounded by the snake fences of silvery-grey "longers," with goldenrod and aster thick in their angles.

Pat loved every field on the farm. She and Sidney had explored every one of them together. To her they were not just fields ... they were persons. The big hill field that was in wheat this spring and was now like a huge green carpet; the field of the Pool which had in its very centre a dimple of water, as if some giantess when earth was young had pressed the tip of her finger down into the soft ground: it was framed all summer in daisies and blue flags and she and Sid bathed their hot tired little feet there on sultry days. The Mince Pie field, which was a triangle of land running up into the spruce bush: the swampy Buttercup field where all the buttercups in the world bloomed; the field of Farewell Summers which in September would be dotted all over with clumps of purple asters; the Secret Field away at the back, which you couldn't see at all and would never suspect was there until you had gone through the woods, as she and Sid had daringly done one day, and come upon it suddenly, completely

surrounded by maple and fir woods, basking in a pool of sunshine, scented by the breath of the spice ferns that grew in golden clumps around it. Its feathery bent grasses were starred with the red of wild strawberry leaves; and there were some piles of large stones here and there, with bracken growing in their crevices and clusters of longstemmed strawberries all around their bases. That was the first time Pat had ever picked a “bouquet” of strawberries.

In the corner by which they entered were two dear little spruces, one just a hand’sbreadth taller than the other ... brother and sister, just like Sidney and her. Wood Queen and Fern Princess, they had named them instantly. Or rather Pat did. She loved to name things. It made them just like people ... people you loved.

They loved the Secret Field better than all the other fields. It seemed somehow to belong to them as if they had been the first to discover it; it was so different from the poor, bleak, little stony field behind the barn that nobody loved ... nobody except Pat. She loved it because it was a Silver Bush field. That was enough for Pat.

But the fields were not all that could be seen from that charming window on this delightful spring evening when the sky in the west was all golden and soft pink, and Judy’s “dim” was creeping down out of the silver bush. There was the Hill of the Mist to the east, a little higher than the hill of the silver bush, with three lombardies on its very top, like grim, black, faithful watchmen. Pat loved that hill dreadfully hard, although it wasn’t on Silver Bush land ... quite a mile away in fact, and she didn’t know to whom it belonged; in one sense, that is: in another she knew it was hers because she loved it so much. Every morning she waved a hand of greeting to it from her window. Once, when she was only five, she remembered going to spend the day with the Great-aunts at the Bay Shore farm and how frightened she had been lest the Hill of the Mist might be moved while she was away. What a joy it had been to come home and find it still in its place, with its three poplars untouched, reaching up to a great full moon above them. She was now, at nearly seven, so old and wise that she knew the Hill of the Mist would never be moved. It would always be

there, go where she would, return when she might. This was comforting in a world which Pat was already beginning to suspect was full of a terrible thing called change ... and another terrible thing which she was not yet old enough to know was disillusionment. She only knew that whereas a year ago she had firmly believed that if she could climb to the top of the Hill of the Mist she might be able to touch that beautiful shining sky, perhaps ... oh, rapture! ... pick a trembling star from it, she knew now that nothing of the sort was possible. Sidney had told her this and she had to believe Sid who, being a year older than herself, knew so much more than she did. Pat thought nobody knew as much as Sidney ... except, of course, Judy Plum who knew everything. It was Judy who knew that the wind spirits lived on the Hill of the Mist. It was the highest hill for miles around and the wind spirits did always be liking high points. Pat knew what they looked like, though nobody had ever told her ... not even Judy who thought it safer not to be after describing the cratur. Pat knew the north wind was a cold, glittering spirit and the east wind a grey shadowy one; but the spirit of the west wind was a thing of laughter and the south wind was a thing of song.

The kitchen garden was just below the window, with Judy's mysterious parsley bed in one corner, and beautiful orderly rows of onions and beans and peas. The well was beside the gate ... the old-fashioned open well with a handle and roller and a long rope with a bucket at its end, which the Gardiners kept to please Judy who simply wouldn't hear of any new-fangled pump being put in. Sure and the water would never be the same again. Pat was glad Judy wouldn't let them change the old well. It was beautiful, with great ferns growing out all the way down its sides from the crevices of the stones that lined it, almost hiding from sight the deep clear water fifty feet below, which always mirrored a bit of blue sky and her own little face looking up at her from those always untroubled depths. Even in winter the ferns were there, long and green, and always the mirrored Patricia looked up at her from a world where tempests never blew. A big maple grew over the well ... a maple that reached with green arms to the house, every year a little nearer.

Pat could see the orchard, too ... a most extraordinary orchard with spruce trees and apple trees delightfully mixed up together ... in the Old Part, at least. The New Part was trim and cultivated and not half so interesting. In the Old Part were trees that Great-grandfather Gardiner had planted and trees that had never been planted at all but just *grew*, with delightful little paths criss-crossing all over it. At the far end was a corner full of young spruces with a tiny sunny glade in the midst of them, where several beloved cats lay buried and where Pat went when she wanted to “think things out.” Things sometimes have to be thought out even at nearly seven.

2

At one side of the orchard was the graveyard. Yes, truly, a graveyard. Where Great-great-grandfather, Nehemiah Gardiner, who had come out to P. E. Island in 1780, was buried, and likewise his wife, Marie Bonnet, a French Huguenot lady. Great-grandfather, Thomas Gardiner, was there, too, with his Quaker bride, Jane Wilson. They had been buried there when the nearest graveyard was across the Island at Charlottetown, only to be reached by a bridle path through the woods. Jane Wilson was a demure little lady who always wore Quaker grey and a prim, plain cap. One of her caps was still in a box in the Silver Bush attic. She it was who had fought off the big black bear trying to get in at the window of their log cabin by pouring scalding hot mush on its face. Pat loved to hear Judy tell that story and describe how the bear had torn away through the stumps back of the cabin, pausing every once in so long for a frantic attempt to scrape the mush off its face. Those must have been exciting days in P. E. Island, when the woods were alive with bears and they would come and put their paws on the banking of the houses and look in at the windows. What a pity that could never happen now because there were no bears left! Pat always felt sorry for the last bear. How lonesome he must have been!

Great-uncle Richard was there ... “Wild Dick Gardiner” who had been a sailor and had fought with sharks, and was reputed to have once eaten human flesh. He had sworn he would never rest on land. When he lay dying of measles ... of all things for a daredevil sailor to die of ... he had wanted his brother Thomas to promise to take him out in a boat and bury him under the waters of the Gulf. But scandalised Thomas would do nothing of the sort and buried Dick in the family plot. As a result, whenever any kind of misfortune was going to fall on the Gardiners, Wild Dick used to rise and sit on the fence and sing his rake-helly songs until his sober, God-fearing kinsfolk had to come out of their graves and join him in the chorus. At least, this was one of Judy Plum’s most thrilling yarns. Pat never believed it but she wished she could. Weeping Willy’s grave was there, too ... Nehemiah’s brother who, when he first came to P. E. Island and saw all the huge trees that had to be cleared away, had sat down and cried. It was never forgotten. Weeping Willy he was to his death and after, and no girl could be found willing to be Mrs. Weeping Willy. So he lived his eighty years out in sour old bachelorhood and ... so Judy said ... when good fortune was to befall his race Weeping Willy sat on his flat tombstone and wept. And Pat couldn’t believe that either. But she wished Weeping Willy *could* come back and see what was in the place of the lonely forest that had frightened him. If he could see Silver Bush *now*!

Then there was the “mystery grave.” On the tombstone the inscription, “*To my own dear Emily and our little Lilian.*” Nothing more, not even a date. Who was Emily? Not one of the Gardiners, that was known. Perhaps some neighbour had asked the privilege of burying his dear dead near him in the Gardiner plot where she might have company in the lone new land. And how old was the little Lilian? Pat thought if any of the Silver Bush ghosts did “walk” she wished it might be Lilian. She wouldn’t be the least afraid of *her*.

There were many children buried there ... nobody knew how many because there was no stone for any of them. The Great-greats had horizontal slabs of red sandstone from the shore propped on four legs, over them, with all their names and virtues inscribed thereon. The grass grew

about them thick and long and was never disturbed. On summer afternoons the sandstone slabs were always hot and Gentleman Tom loved to lie there, beautifully folded up in slumber. A paling fence, which Judy Plum whitewashed scrupulously every spring, surrounded the plot. And the apples that fell into the graveyard from overhanging boughs were never eaten. “It wudn’t be rispictful,” explained Judy. They were gathered up and given to the pigs. Pat could never understand why, if it wasn’t “rispictful” to eat those apples, it was any more “rispictful” to feed them to the pigs.

She was very proud of the graveyard and very sorry the Gardiners had given up being buried there. It would be so nice, Pat thought, to be buried right at home, so to speak, where you could hear the voices of your own folks every day and all the nice sounds of home ... nice sounds such as Pat could hear now through the little round window. The whirl of the grindstone as father sharpened an axe under the sweetapple-tree ... a dog barking his head off somewhere over at Uncle Tom’s ... the west wind rustling in the trembling poplar leaves ... the saw-wheats calling in the silver bush — Judy said they were calling for rain ... Judy’s big white gobbler lording it about the yard ... Uncle Tom’s geese talking back and forth to the Silver Bush geese ... the pigs squealing in their pens ... even that was pleasant because they were Silver Bush pigs: the Thursday kitten mewing to be let into the granary ... somebody laughing ... Winnie, of course. What a pretty laugh Winnie had; and Joe whistling around the barns ... Joe did whistle so beautifully and half the time didn’t know he was whistling. Hadn’t he once started to whistle in church? But that was a story for Judy Plum to tell. Judy, take her own word for it, had never been the same again.

The barns where Joe was whistling were near the orchard, with only the Whispering Lane that led to Uncle Tom’s between them. The little barn stood close to the big barn like a child ... such an odd little barn with gables and a tower and oriel windows like a church. Which was exactly what it was. When the new Presbyterian church had been built in South Glen Grandfather Gardiner had bought the old one and hauled it home for a barn. It was the only thing he had ever done of which Judy Plum hadn’t

approved. It was only what she expected when he had a stroke five years later at the age of seventy-five, and was never the same again though he lived to be eighty. And say what you might there hadn't been the same luck among the Silver Bush pigs after the sty was shifted to the old church. They became subject to rheumatism.

3

The sun had set. Pat always liked to watch its western glory reflected in the windows of Uncle Tom's house beyond the Whispering Lane. It was the hour she liked best of all the hours on the farm. The poplar leaves were rustling silkily in the afterlight; the yard below was suddenly full of dear, round, fat, furry pussy-cats, bent on making the most of the cat's light. Silver Bush always overflowed with kittens. Nobody ever had the heart to drown them. Pat especially was fond of them. It was a story Judy loved to tell ... how the minister had told Pat, aged four, that she could ask him any question she liked. Pat had said sadly, "Why don't Gentleman Tom have kittens?" The poor man did be resigning at the next Presbytery. He had a tendency to laughing and he said he couldn't preach wid liddle Pat Gardiner looking at him from her pew, so solemn-like and reproachful.

In the yard were black Sunday, spotted Monday, Maltese Tuesday, yellow Wednesday, calico Friday, Saturday who was just the colour of the twilight. Only striped Thursday continued to wail heartbrokenly at the granary door. Thursday had always been an unsociable kitten, walking by himself like Kipling's cat in Joe's story book. The old gobbler, with his coral-red wattles, had gone to roost on the orchard fence. Bats were swooping about ... fairies rode on bats, Judy said. Lights were springing up suddenly to east and west ... at Ned Baker's and Kenneth Robinson's and Duncan Gardiner's and James Adams'. Pat loved to watch them and wonder what was going on in the rooms where they bloomed. But there was one house in which there was never any light ... an old white house among thick firs on the top of a hill to the southwest, two farms away from

Silver Bush. It was a long, rather low house ... Pat called it the Long Lonely House. It hadn't been lived in for years. Pat always felt so sorry for it, especially in the "dim" when the lights sprang up in all the other houses over the country side. It must feel lonely and neglected. Somehow she resented the fact that it didn't have all that other houses had.

"It wants to be lived in, Judy," she would say wistfully.

There was the evening star in a pale silvery field of sky just over the tall fir tree that shot up in the very centre of the silver bush. The first star always gave her a thrill. Wouldn't it be lovely if she could fly up to that dark swaying fir-top between the evening star and the darkness?

Chapter III.

Concerning Parsley Beds

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1

The red rose was nearly finished and Pat suddenly remembered that Judy had said something about rooting in the parsley bed.

“Judy Plum,” she said, “what do you think you’ll find in the parsley bed?”

“What wud ye be after thinking if I told ye I’d find a tiny wee new baby there?” asked Judy, watching her sharply.

Pat looked for a moment as if she had rather had the wind knocked out of her. Then ...

“Do you think, Judy, that we really need another baby here?”

“Oh, oh, as to that, a body might have her own opinion. But wudn’t it be nice now? A house widout a baby do be a lonesome sort av place I’m thinking.”

“Would you ... would you like a baby better than me, Judy Plum?”

There was a tremble in Pat’s voice.

“That I wudn’t, me jewel. Ye’re Judy’s girl and Judy’s girl ye’ll be forever if I was finding a dozen babies in the parsley bed. It do be yer mother I’m thinking av. The fact is, she’s got an unaccountable notion for another baby, Patsy, and I’m thinking we must be humouring her a bit, seeing as she isn’t extry strong. So there’s the truth av the matter for ye.”

“Of course, if mother wants a baby I don’t mind,” conceded Pat.

“Only,” she added wistfully, “we’re such a nice little family now, Judy ... just mother and daddy and Aunt Hazel and you and Winnie and Joe and Sid and me. I wish we could just stay like that forever.”

“I’m not saying it wudn’t be best. These afterthoughts do be a bit upsetting whin ye’ve been thinking a family’s finished. But there it is ... nothing’ll do yer mother but a baby. So it’s poor Judy Plum must get down

on her stiff ould marrow-bones and see what's to be found in the parsley bed."

"Are babies really found in parsley beds, Judy? Jen Foster says the doctor brings them in a black bag. And Ellen Price says a stork brings them. And Polly Gardiner says old Granny Garland from the bridge brings them in her basket."

"The things youngsters do be talking av nowadays," ejaculated Judy. "Ye've seen Dr. Bentley whin he was here be times. Did ye iver see him wid innny black bag?"

"No ... o ... o."

"And do there be innny storks on P. E. Island?"

Pat had never heard of any.

"As for Granny Garland, I'm not saying she hasn't a baby or two stowed away in her basket now and again. But if she has ye may rist contint she found it in her own parsley bed. What av that? She doesn't pick the babies for the quality. Ye wudn't want a baby av Granny Garland's choosing, wud ye, now?"

"Oh, no, no. But couldn't I help you look for it, Judy?"

"Listen at her. It's liddle ye know what ye do be talking about, child dear. It's only some one wid a drop av witch blood in her like meself can see the liddle craturs at all. And it's all alone I must go at the rise av the moon, in company wid me cat. 'Tis a solemn performance, I'm telling ye, this finding av babies, and not to be lightly undertaken."

Pat yielded with a sigh of disappointment.

"You'll pick a pretty baby, won't you, Judy? A Silver Bush baby *must* be pretty."

"Oh, oh, I'll do me best. Ye must remimber that none av thim are much to look at in the beginning. All crinkled and wrinkled just like the parsley leaves. And I'm telling ye another thing ... it's mostly the pretty babies that grow up to be the ugly girls. Whin *I* was a baby ..."

"Were *you* ever a baby, Judy?" Pat found it hard to believe. It was preposterous to think of Judy Plum ever having been a baby. And could there ever have been a time when there was *no* Judy Plum?

“I was that. And I was so handsome that the neighbours borried me to pass off as their own whin company come. And look at me now! Just remimber that if you don’t think the baby I’ll be finding is as goodlooking as ye’d want. Of course I had the jandies whin I was a slip av a girleen. It turned me as yellow as a brass cint. Me complexion was niver the same agin.”

“But, Judy, you’re not ugly.”

“Maybe it’s not so bad as that,” said Judy cautiously, “but I wudn’t have picked *this* face if I cud have had the picking. There now, I’ve finished me rose and a beauty it is and I must be off to me milking. Ye’d better go and let that Thursday cratur into the granary afore it breaks its heart. And don’t be saying a word to innny one about this business av the parsley bed.”

“I won’t. But, Judy ... I’ve a kind of awful feeling in my stomach ...”
Judy laughed.

“The cliverness av the cratur! I know what ye do be hinting at. Well, after I’m finished wid me cows ye might slip into the kitchen and I’ll be frying ye an egg.”

“In butter, Judy?”

“Sure in butter. Lashings av it ... enough to sop yer bits av bread in it the way ye like. And I’m not saying but what there might be a cinnymon bun left over from supper.”

Judy, who never wore an apron, turned up her drugget skirt around her waist, showing her striped petticoat, and stalked downstairs, talking to herself as was her habit. Gentleman Tom followed her like a dark familiar. Pat uncoiled herself and went down to let Thursday into the granary. She still had a queer feeling though she could not decide whether it was really in her stomach or not. The world all at once seemed a bit too big. This new baby was an upsetting sort of an idea. The parsley bed had suddenly become a sinister sort of place. For a moment Pat was tempted to go to it and deliberately tear it all up by the roots. Judy wouldn’t be able to find a baby in it then. But mother ... mother wanted a baby. It would never do to disappoint mother.

“But I’ll hate it,” thought Pat passionately. “An *outsider* like that!”

If she could only talk it over with Sid it would be a comfort. But she had promised Judy not to say a word to anybody about it. It was the first time she had ever had a secret from Sid and it made her feel uncomfortable. Everything seemed to have changed a little in some strange fashion ... and Pat hated change.

2

Half an hour later she had put the thought of it out of her mind and was in the garden, bidding the flowers goodnight. Pat never omitted this ceremony. She was sure they would miss her if she forgot it. It was so beautiful in the garden, in the late twilight, with a silvery hint of moonrise over the Hill of the Mist. The trees around it ... old maples that Grandmother Gardiner had planted when she came as a bride to Silver Bush ... were talking to each other as they always did at night. Three little birch trees that lived together in one corner were whispering secrets. The big crimson peonies were blots of darkness in the shadows. The bluebells along the path trembled with fairy laughter. Some late June lilies starred the grass at the foot of the garden: the columbines danced: the white lilac at the gate flung passing breaths of fragrance on the dewy air: the southernwood ... Judy called it “lad’s love” ... which the little Quaker Great-grand had brought with her from the old land a hundred years ago, was still slyly aromatic.

Pat ran about from plot to plot and kissed everything. Tuesday ran with her and writhed in furry ecstasy on the walks before her ... walks that Judy had picked off with big stones from the shore, dazzlingly whitewashed.

When Pat had kissed all her flowers goodnight she stood for a little while looking at the house. How beautiful it was, nestled against its wooden hill, as if it had grown out of it ... a house all white and green, just like its own silver birches, and now patterned over charmingly with tree shadows cast by a moon that was floating over the Hill of the Mist. She

always loved to stand outside of Silver Bush after dark and look at its lighted windows. There was a light in the kitchen where Sid was at his lessons ... a light in the parlor where Winnie was practising her music ... a light up in mother's room. A light for a moment flashed in the hall, as somebody went upstairs, bringing out the fan window over the front door.

"Oh, I've got such a *lovely* home," breathed Pat, clasping her hands. "It's such a nice *friendly* house. Nobody ... *nobody* ... has such a lovely home. I'd just like to *hug* it."

Pat had her eggs in the kitchen with plenty of butter gravy, and then there was the final ceremony of putting a saucer of milk for the fairies on the well platform. Judy never omitted it.

"There's no knowing what bad luck we might be having if we forgot it. Sure and we know how to trate fairies at Silver Bush."

The fairies came by night and drank it up. This was one of the things Pat was strongly inclined to believe. Hadn't Judy herself seen fairies dancing in a ring one night when she was a girleen in Ould Ireland?

"But Joe says there are no fairies in P. E. Island," she said wistfully.

"The things Joe do be saying make me sometimes think the b'y don't be all there," said Judy indignantly. "Wasn't there folks coming out to P.E.I, from the Ould Country for a hundred years, me jewel? And don't ye be belaving there'd always be a fairy or two, wid a taste for a bit av adventure, wud stow himself away among their belongings and come too, and thim niver a bit the wiser? And isn't the milk always gone be morning, I'm asking ye?"

Yes, it was. You couldn't get away from *that*.

"You're sure the cats don't drink it, Judy?"

"Oh, oh, cats, is it? There don't be much a cat wudn't do if it tuk it into its head, I'm granting ye, but the bouldest that iver lived wudn't be daring to lap up the milk that was left for a fairy. That's the one thing no cat'd ever do ... be disrespectful to a fairy — and it'd be well for mortal craturs to folly his example."

"Couldn't we stay up some night, Judy, and watch? I'd love to see a fairy."

“Oh, oh, see, is it? Me jewel, ye can’t see the fairies unless ye have the seeing eye. Ye’d see nothing at all, only just the milk drying up slow, as it were. Now be off to bed wid ye and mind ye don’t forget yer prayers or maybe ye’ll wake up and find Something sitting on your bed in the night.”

“I never do forget my prayers,” said Pat with dignity.

“All the better for ye. I knew a liddle girl that forgot one night and a banshee got hold av her. Oh, oh, she was niver the same agin.”

“What did the banshee do to her, Judy?”

“Do to her, is it? It put a curse on her, that it did. Ivery time she tried to laugh she cried and ivery time she tried to cry she laughed. Oh, oh, ‘twas a bitter punishment. Now, what’s after plaguing ye? I can tell be the liddle face av ye ye’re not aisy.”

“Judy, I keep thinking about that baby in the parsley bed. Don’t you think ... they’ve no baby over at Uncle Tom’s. Couldn’t you give it to them? Mother could see it as often as she wanted to. We’re four of a family now.”

“Oh, oh, do ye be thinking four is innnything av a family to brag av? Why, yer great-great-grandmother, Old Mrs. Nehemiah, had seventeen afore she called it a day. And four av thim died in one night wid the black cholera.”

“Oh, Judy, how could she ever bear *that*?”

“Sure and hadn’t she thirteen left, me jewel? But they do say as she was niver the same agin. And now it’s not telling ye agin to go to bed I’ll be doing ... oh, no, it’s not *telling*.”

3

Pat tiptoed upstairs, past the old grandfather clock on the landing that wouldn’t go ... hadn’t gone for forty years. The “dead clock” she and Sid called it. But Judy always insisted that it told the right time twice a day. Then down the hall to her room, with a wistful glance at the close-shut spare-room door as she passed it ... the Poet’s room, as it was called,

because a poet who had been a guest at Silver Bush had slept there for a night. Pat had a firm belief that if you could only open the door of any shut room quickly enough you would catch all the furniture in strange situations. The chairs crowded together talking, the table lifting its white muslin skirts to show its pink sateen petticoat, the fire shovel and tongs dancing a fandango by themselves. But then you never could. Some sound always warned them and they were back in their places as demure as you please.

Pat said her prayers ... *Now I Lay me*, and the Lord's Prayer, and then her own prayer. This was always the most interesting part because she made it up herself. She could not understand people who didn't like to pray. May Binnie, now. May had told her last Sunday in Sunday School that she never prayed unless she was scared about something. Fancy that!

Pat prayed for everybody in the family and for Judy Plum and Uncle Tom and Aunt Edith and Aunt Barbara ... and for Sailor Uncle Horace at sea ... and everybody else's sailor uncle at sea ... and all the cats and Gentleman Tom and Joe's dog ... "little black Snicklefritz with his curly tail," so that God wouldn't get mixed up between Joe's dog and Uncle Tom's dog who was big and black with a straight tail ... and any fairies that might be hanging round and any poor ghosts that might be sitting on the tombstones ... and for Silver Bush itself ... dear Silver Bush.

"Please keep it always the same, dear God," begged Pat, "and don't let any more trees blow down."

Pat rose from her knees and stood there a bit rebelliously. Surely she had prayed for everybody and everything she could really be expected to pray for. Of course on stormy nights she always prayed for people who might be out in the storm. But this was a lovely spring night.

Finally she plumped down on her knees again.

"Please, dear God, if there is a baby out there in that parsley bed, keep it warm tonight. Dad says there may be a little frost."

Sunday's Child

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1

It was only a few evenings later that there was a commotion in the house at Silver Bush ... pale faces ... mysterious comings and goings. Aunt Barbara came over with a new white apron on, as if she were going to work instead of visit. Judy stalked about, muttering to herself. Father, who had been hanging round the house all day rather lazily for him, came down from mother's room and telephoned with the dining-room door shut. Half an hour afterwards Aunt Frances came over from the Bay Shore and whisked Winnie and Joe off on an unlooked-for weekend.

Pat was sitting on Weeping Willy's tombstone. She was on her dignity for she felt that she was being kept out of things somehow and she resented it. There was no resorting to mother who had kept her room all the afternoon. So Pat betook herself to the graveyard and the society of her family ghosts until Judy Plum came along ... a portentously solemn Judy Plum, looking wiser than any mortal woman could possibly be.

"Pat, me jewel, wud ye be liking to spend the night over at yer Uncle Tom's for a bit av a change? Siddy will be going along wid ye."

"Why?" demanded Pat distantly.

"Yer mother do be having a tarrible headache and the house has got to be that still. The doctor's coming ..."

"Is mother bad enough to want a doctor?" cried Pat in quick alarm. Mary May's mother had had the doctor a week before ... and died!

"Oh, oh, be aisy now, darlint. A doctor's just a handy thing to have round whin a body has one of thim headaches. I'm ixpecting yer mother to be fine and dandy be the morning if the house is nice and quiet tonight. So just you and Siddy run over to Swallowfield like good children. And since

the moon do be at its full at last I'm thinking it's high time for the parsley bed. No telling what ye'll be seeing here tomorrow."

"That baby, I suppose," said Pat, a little contemptuously. "I should think, Judy Plum, if mother has such a bad headache it's a poor time to bother her with a new baby."

"She's been waiting for it so long I'm looking for it to iffect a miraculous cure," said Judy. "Innyhow, it's tonight or niver wid that moon. It was be way av being just such a night whin I found *you* in the parsley bed."

Pat looked at the moon disapprovingly. It didn't look like a proper moon ... so queer and close and red and lanterny. But it was all of a piece with this odd night.

"Come, skip along ... here's yer liddle nighty in the black satchel."

"I want to wait for Sid."

"Siddy's hunting me turkeys. He'll be over whin he finds thim. Sure, ye're not afraid to go alone? It's only a cat's walk over there and the moon's lit up."

"You know very well, Judy Plum, that I'm not afraid. But things are ... queer ... tonight."

Judy chuckled.

"They do take spells av being that and far be it from me to deny it. Likely the woods are full av witches tonight but they won't be bothering ye if ye mind yer own business. Here's a handful av raisins for ye, same as ye git on Sundays, and niver be bothering yer head wid things ye can't understand."

Pat went over to Swallowfield rather unwillingly, although it was a second home to her ... the adjoining farm where Uncle Tom and Aunt Edith and Aunt Barbara lived. Judy Plum approved of Aunt Barbara, had an old vendetta with Aunt Edith, and had no opinion of old bachelors. A man should be married. If he wasn't he had cheated some poor woman out of a husband. But Pat was very found of big, jolly Uncle Tom, with his nice, growly way of speaking, who was the only man in North Glen still wearing a beard ... a beautiful, long, crinkly black beard. She liked Aunt

Barbara, who was round and rosy and jolly, but she was always a little afraid of Aunt Edith, who was thin and sallow and laughterless, and had a standing feud with Judy Plum.

“Born unmarried, that one,” Judy had been heard to mutter spitefully.

Pat went to Swallowfield by the Whispering Lane, which was fringed with birches, also planted by some long-dead bride. The brides of Silver Bush seemed to have made a hobby of planting trees. The path was picked out by big stones which Judy Plum whitewashed as far as the gate; from the gate Aunt Edith did it, because Uncle Tom and Aunt Barbara wouldn’t be bothered and she wasn’t going to let Judy Plum crow over her. The lane was crossed half way by the gate and beyond it were no birches but dear fence corners full of bracken and lady fern and wild violets and caraway. Pat loved the Whispering Lane. When she was four she had asked Judy Plum if it wasn’t the “way of life” the minister had talked about in church; and somehow ever since it had seemed to her that some beautiful secret hid behind the birches and whispered in the nodding lace of its caraway blossoms.

She skipped along the lane, lighthearted again, eating her raisins. It was full of dancing, inviting shadows ... friendly shadows out for a playmate. Once a shy grey rabbit hopped from bracken clump to bracken clump. Beyond the lane were dim, windy pastures of twilight. The air smelled deliciously. The trees wanted to be friends with her. All the little grass stems swayed towards her in the low breezes. Uncle Tom’s barn field was full of woolly-faced lambs at their evening games and three dear wee Jersey calves, with soft, sweet eyes, looked at her over the fence. Pat loved Jersey calves and Uncle Tom was the only man in North Glen who kept Jerseys.

Beyond, in the yard, Uncle Tom’s buildings were like a little town by themselves. He had so many of them ... pig houses and hen houses and sheep houses and boiler houses and goose houses and turnip houses ... even an apple house which Pat thought was a delightful name. North Glen people said that Tom Gardiner put up some kind of a new building every year. Pat thought they all huddled around the big barn like chickens around

their mother. Uncle Tom's house was an old one, with two wide, low windows that looked like eyes on either side of a balcony that was like a nose. It was a prim and dignified house but all its primness couldn't resist its own red front door which was just like an impish tongue sticking out of its face. Pat always felt as if the house was chuckling to itself over some joke nobody but itself knew, and she liked the mystery. She wouldn't have liked Silver Bush to be like that: Silver Bush mustn't have secrets from *her*: but it was all right in Swallowfield.

2

If it had not been for mother's headache and the doctor coming and Judy Plum's parsley bed Pat would have thought it romantic and delightful to have spent a night at Swallowfield. She had never been there for a night before ... it was too near home. But that was part of its charm ... to be so near home and yet not quite home ... to look out of the window of the gable room and *see* home ... see its roof over the trees and all its windows lighted up. Pat was a bit lonely. Sid was far away at the other end of the house. Uncle Tom had made speeches about doctors and black bags until Aunt Edith had shut him up ... or Pat. Perhaps it was Pat.

"If you mean, Uncle Tom," Pat had said proudly, "that Dr. Bentley is bringing us a baby in a black bag you're very much mistaken. *We grow our own babies*. Judy Plum is looking for *ours* in the parsley bed at this very minute."

"Well ... I'm ... dashed," said Uncle Tom. And he looked as if he *were* dashed. Aunt Edith had given Pat a pinwheel cookie and hustled her off to bed in a very pretty room where the curtains and chair covers were of creamy chintz with purple violets scattered over it and where the bed had a pink quilt. All very splendid. But it looked big and lonesome.

Aunt Edith turned the bedclothes and saw Pat cuddled down before she left. But she did not kiss her as Aunt Barbara would have done. And there would be no Judy Plum to tiptoe in when she thought you were asleep and

whisper, “God bless and kape ye through the night, me jewel.” Judy never missed doing that. But tonight she would be hunting through the parsley bed, likely never thinking of her “jewel” at all. Pat’s lips trembled. The tears were very near now ... and then she thought of Weeping Willy. One disgrace like that was enough in a family. *She* would not be Weeping Pat.

But she could not sleep. She lay watching the chimneys of Silver Bush through the window and wishing Sid’s room were only near hers. Suddenly a light flashed from the garret window of Silver Bush ... flashed a second and disappeared. It was as if the house had winked at her ... called to her. In a moment Pat was out of bed and at the window. She curled up in the big flounced and ruffled wing chair. It was no use to try to sleep so she would just cuddle here and watch dear Silver Bush. It was like a beautiful picture ... the milk-white house against its dark wooded hill, framed in an almost perfectly round opening in the boughs of the trees. Besides ... who knew? ... maybe Ellen Price was right after all and the storks did bring the babies. It was a nicer idea than any of the others. Perhaps if she watched she might see a silvery bird, flying from some far land beyond the blue gulf’s rim and lighting on the roof of Silver Bush.

The boughs of the old fir tree outside tapped on the house. Dogs seemed to be barking everywhere over North Glen. Now and then a big Junebug thudded against the window. The water in the Field of the Pool glimmered mysteriously. Away up on the hill the moonlight glinting on one of the windows of the Long Lonely House gave it a strange, momentary appearance of being lighted up. Pat had a thrill. A treetop behind the house looked like a witch crouched on its roof, just alighted from her broomstick. Pat’s flesh crawled deliriously. Maybe there really were witches. Maybe they flew on a broomstick over the harbour at nights. What a jolly way of getting about! Maybe they brought the babies. But no, no. They didn’t want anything at Silver Bush that witches brought. Better the parsley bed than that. It was a lovely night for a baby to come. Was that a great white bird sailing over the trees? No, only a silvery cloud. Another Junebug ... swoop went the wind around Uncle Tom’s apple house ... tap-tap went the fir boughs ... Pat was fast asleep in the big chair and

there Sidney found her when he slipped cautiously in at dawn before any one else at Swallowfield was up.

“Oh, Siddy!” Pat threw her arms about him and held him close to her in the chair. “Isn’t it funny ... I’ve been here all night. The bed was so big and lonesome. Oh, Sid, do you think Judy has found it yet?”

“Found what?”

“Why ... the baby.” Surely it was all right to tell Sid now. It was such a relief not to have a guilty secret from him any longer. “Judy went hunting for it in the parsley bed last night ... for mother, you know.”

Sid looked very wise ... or as wise as a boy could look who had two big, round, funny brown eyes under fuzzy golden-brown curls. *He* was a year older than Pat ... *he* had been to school ... *he* knew just what that parsley bed yarn amounted to. But it was just as well for a girl like Pat to believe it.

“Let’s go home and see,” he suggested.

Pat got quickly into her clothes and they crept noiselessly downstairs and out of doors into a land pale in the morning twilight. The dew-wet earth was faintly fragrant. Pat had no memory of ever having been up before sunrise in her life. How lovely it was to be walking hand in hand with Sid along the Whispering Lane before the day had really begun!

“I hope this new kid will be a girl,” said Sid. “Two boys are enough in a family but nobody cares how many girls there are. And I hope it’ll be goodlooking.”

For the first time in her life Pat felt a dreadful stab of jealousy. But she was loyal, too.

“Of course it will. But you won’t like it better than me, will you ... oh, *please* Siddy?”

“Silly! Of course I won’t like it better than you. I don’t expect to like it at all,” said Sid disdainfully.

“Oh, you *must* like it a little, because of mother. And oh, Sid, please promise that you’ll never like *any* girl better than me.”

“Sure I won’t.” Sid was very fond of Pat and didn’t care who knew it. At the gate he put his chubby arms about her and kissed her.

“You won’t ever *marry* another girl, Sid?”

“Not much. I’m going to be a bachelor like Uncle Tom. He says he likes a quiet life and I do, too.”

“And we’ll always live at Silver Bush and I’ll keep house for you,” said Pat eagerly.

“Sure. Unless I go west; lots of boys do.”

“Oh!” A cold wind blew across Pat’s happiness. “Oh, you must never go west, Sid ... you *couldn’t* leave Silver Bush. You couldn’t find any nicer place.”

“Well, we can’t *all* stay here, you know, when we grow up,” said Sid reasonably.

“Oh, why can’t we?” cried Pat, on the point of tears again. The lovely morning was spoiled for her.

“Oh, well, we’ll be here for years yet,” said Sid soothingly. “Come along. There’s Judy giving Friday and Monday their milk.”

“Oh, Judy,” gasped Pat, “did you find it?”

“Sure and didn’t I that? The prettiest baby ye iver set eyes on and swate beyond iverything. I’m thinking I must be putting on me dress-up dress whin I get the work done be way av cilebrating.”

“Oh, I’m so glad it’s pretty because it belongs to our family,” said Pat. “Can we see it right away?”

“Indade and ye can’t, me jewel. It’s up in yer mother’s room and she’s sound aslape and not to be disturbed. She had a wakeful night av it. I was a tarrible long time finding that baby. Me eyesight isn’t what it was I’m grieving to say. I’m thinking that’s the last baby I’ll iver be able to find in the parsley bed.”

3

Judy gave Pat and Sid their breakfast in the kitchen. Nobody else was up. It was such fun to have breakfast there with Judy and have the milk poured over their porridge out of her “cream cow” ... that little old brown jug in

the shape of a cow, with her tail curled up in a most un-cowlike fashion for a handle and her mouth for a spout. Judy had brought the cream cow from Ireland with her and prized it beyond all saying. She had promised to leave it to Pat when she died. Pat hated to hear Judy talk of dying, but, as she had also promised to live a hundred years ... *D. V...* ... that was nothing to worry about yet awhile.

The kitchen was a cheery place and was as tidy and spotless as if Silver Bush had not just been passing through a night of suspense and birth. The walls were whitewashed snowily: the stove shone: Judy's blue and white jugs on the scoured dresser sparkled in the rays of the rising sun. Judy's geraniums bloomed in the windows. The space between stove and table was covered by a big, darkred rug with three black cats hooked in it. The cats had eyes of yellow wool which were still quite bright and catty in spite of the fact that they had been trodden over for many years. Judy's living black cat sat on the bench and thought hard. Two fat kittens were sleeping in a patch of sunlight on the floor. And, as if that were not enough in the cat line, there were three marvellous kittens in a picture on the wall ... Judy's picture, likewise brought out from Ireland. Three white kittens with blue eyes, playing with a ball of silk thread gloriously entangled. Cats and kittens might come and go at Silver Bush, but Judy's kittens were eternally young and frisky. This was a comfort to Pat who, when she was very young, was afraid they might grow up and change, too. It always broke her heart when some beloved kitten turned overnight into a lanky half-grown cat.

There were other pictures ... Queen Victoria at her coronation and King William riding his white horse over the Boyne: a marble cross, poised on a dark rock in a raging ocean, lavishly garlanded with flowers, having a huge open Bible on a purple cushion at its foot: the Burial of the Pet Bird: mottoes worked in wool ... *Home Sweet Home ... Upwards and Onwards*. These had all been judged at successive spring cleanings to be unworthy of the other rooms but Judy wouldn't have them burned. Pat wouldn't have liked them anywhere else but she liked them on the walls of Judy's kitchen. It wouldn't have been quite the same without them.

It was lovely, Pat thought as she ate her toast, that everything was just the same. She had had a secret, dreadful fear that she would find everything changed and different and heartbreaking.

Dad came in just as they finished and Pat flew to him. He looked tired but he caught her up with a smile.

“Has Judy told you that you have a new sister?”

“Yes. I’m glad. I think it will be an improvement,” said Pat, gravely and staunchly.

Dad laughed.

“That’s right. Some folks have been afraid you mightn’t like it ... might think your nose was out of joint.”

“My nose is all right,” said Pat. “Feel it.”

“Av course her nose is all right. Don’t ye be after putting inny such notions in her head, Long Alec Gardiner,” said Judy, who had bossed little Long Alec about when he was a child and continued to do so now that he was big Long Alec with a family of his own. “And ye naden’t have been thinking that child wud be jealous ... she hasn’t a jealous bone in her body, the darlint. Jealous, indade!” Judy’s grey-green eyes flashed quite fiercely. Nobody need be thinking the new baby was more important than Pat or that more was going to be made of it.

4

It was well on in the forenoon when they were allowed upstairs. Judy marshalled them up, very imposing in her blue silk dress, of a day when it was a recommendation for silk that it could stand alone. She had had it for fifteen years, having got it in honour of the bride young Long Alec was bringing to Silver Bush, and she put it on only for very special occasions. It had been donned for every new baby and the last time it had been worn was six years ago at Grandmother Gardiner’s funeral. Fashions had changed considerably but what cared Judy? A silk dress was a silk dress.

She was so splendid in it that the children were half in awe of her. They liked her much better in her old drugget but Judy tasted her day of state.

A nurse in white cap and apron was queening it in mother's room. Mother was lying on her pillows, white and spent after that dreadful headache, with her dark wings of hair around her face and her sweet, dreamy, golden-brown eyes shining with happiness. Aunt Barbara was rocking a quaint old black cradle, brought down from the garret ... a cradle a hundred years old which Great-great-Grandfather Nehemiah had made with his own hands. Every Silver Bush baby had been rocked in it. The nurse did not approve of either cradles or rocking but she was powerless against Aunt Barbara and Judy combined.

"Not have a cradle for it, do ye be saying?" the scandalised Judy ejaculated. "Ye'll not be intinding to put the swate wee cratur in a basket? Oh, oh, did inny one iver be hearing the like av it? It's niver a baby at Silver Bush that'll be brought up in your baskets, as if it was no better than a kitten, and that I'm telling ye. Here's the cradle that I've polished wid me own hands and into that same cradle she'll be going."

Pat, after a rapturous kiss for mother, tiptoed over to the cradle, trembling with excitement. Judy lifted the baby out and held it so that the children could see it.

"Oh, Judy, isn't she sweet?" whispered Pat in ecstasy. "Can't I hold her for just the tiniest moment?"

"That ye can, darlint," ... and Judy put the baby into Pat's arms before either nurse or Aunt Barbara could prevent her. Oh, oh, that was one in the eye for the nurse!

Pat stood holding the fragrant thing as knackily as if she had been doing it all her life. What tiny, darling legs it had! What dear, wee, crumpled paddies! What little pink nails like perfect shells!

"What colour are its eyes, Judy?"

"Blue," said Judy, "big and blue like violets wid dew on them, just like Winnie's. And it's certain I am that she do be having dimples in her chakes. Sure a woman wid a baby like that naden't call the quane her cousin."

““The child that is born on the Sabbath day
Will be bonny and blithe and good and gay,””

said Aunt Barbara.

“Of course she will,” said Pat. “She would, no matter what day she was born on. Isn’t she *our* baby?”

“Oh, oh, there’s the right spirit for ye,” said Judy.

“The baby must really be put back in the cradle now,” said the nurse by way of reasserting her authority.

Pat relinquished it reluctantly. Only a few minutes ago she had been thinking of the baby as an interloper, only to be tolerated for mother’s sake. But now it was one of the family and it seemed as if it had always been at Silver Bush. No matter how it had come, from stork or black bag or parsley bed, it was *there* and it was *theirs*.

“What’s in a Name?”

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1

The new baby at Silver Bush did not get its name until three weeks later when mother was able to come down stairs and the nurse had gone home, much to Judy’s satisfaction. She approved of Miss Martin as little as Miss Martin approved of her.

“Oh, oh, legs and lipstick!” she would say contemptuously, when Miss Martin doffed her regalia and went out to take the air. Which was unjust to Miss Martin, who had no more legs than other women of the fashion and used her lipstick very discreetly. Judy watched her down the lane with a malevolent eye.

“Oh, oh, but I’d like to be putting a tin ear on that one. Wanting to call the wee treasure Greta! Oh, oh, *Greta!* And her with a grandfather that died and come back to life, that he did!”

“Did he really, Judy Plum?”

“He did that. Old Jimmy Martin was dead as a dorennail for two days. The doctors said it. Thin he come back to life ... just to spite his family I’m telling ye. But, as ye might ixpect, he was niver the same agin. His relations were rale ashamed av him. Miss Martin naden’t be holding that rid head av hers so high.”

“But why, Judy?” asked Sid. “Why were they ashamed of him?”

“Oh, oh, whin ye’re dead it’s only dacent to *stay* dead,” retorted Judy. “Ye’d think she’d remimber that whin she was trying to boss folks who looked after babies afore she was born or thought av, the plum-faced thing! But she’s gone now, good riddance, and we won’t have her stravaging about the house with a puss on her mouth inny more. Too minny bushels for a small canoe ... it do be that that’s the trouble wid *her*.”

“She can’t help her grandfather, Judy,” said Pat.

“Oh, oh, I’m not saying she could, me jewel. We none of us can hilp our ancistors. Wasn’t me own grandmother something av a witch? But it’s sure we’ve all got some and it ought to kape us humble.”

Pat was glad Miss Martin was gone, not because she didn’t like her but because she knew she would be able to hold the baby oftener now. Pat adored the baby. How in the world had Silver Bush ever got on without her? Silver Bush without the baby was quite unthinkable to Pat now. When Uncle Tom asked her gravely if they had decided yet whether to keep or drown the baby she was horrified and alarmed.

“Sure, me jewel, he was only tazing ye,” comforted Judy, with her great, broad, jolly laugh. “‘Tis just an ould bachelor’s idea av a joke.”

They had put off naming the baby until Miss Martin had gone, because nobody really wanted to call the baby Greta but didn’t want to hurt her feelings. The very afternoon she left they attended to the matter ... or tried to.

But it was no easy thing to pick a name. Mother wanted to call it Doris after her own mother and father wanted Rachel after his mother. Winnie, who was romantic, wanted Elaine, and Joe thought Dulcie would be nice. Pat had secretly called it Miranda for a week and Sidney thought such a blue-eyed baby ought to be named Violet. Aunt Hazel thought Kathleen just the name for it, and Judy, who must have her say with the rest, thought Emmerillus was a rale classy name. The Silver Bush people thought Judy must mean Amaryllis but were never sure of it.

In the end father suggested that each of them plant a named seed in the garden and see whose came up first. That person should have the privilege of naming the baby.

“If we find more than one up at once the winners must plant over again,” he said.

This was a sporting chance and the children were excited. The seeds were planted and tagged and watched every day: but it was Pat who thought of getting up early in the mornings to keep tabs on the bed. Judy said things came up in the night. There was nothing at dark ... and in the morning there you were. And there Pat was on the eighth morning, just as

the sun was rising, up before any one but Judy. You would have to get up before you went to bed if you meant to get ahead of Judy.

And Pat's seed was up! For just one moment she exulted. Then she grew sober and her long-lashed amber eyes filled with troubled wonder. Of course Miranda was a lovely name for a baby. But father wanted Rachel. Mother had named her and Sidney, Uncle Tom had named Joe, Hazel had named Winnie, surely it was father's turn. He hadn't said much ... father never said much ... but Pat knew somehow that he wanted very badly to name the baby Rachel. In her secret heart Pat had hoped that father's seed would be first.

She looked around her. No living creature in sight except Gentleman Tom, sitting darkly on the cheese stone. The next moment her seed was yanked out and flung into the burdock patch behind the henhouse. Dad had a chance yet.

But luck seemed against poor dad. Next morning Win's and mother's seeds were up. Pat ruthlessly uprooted them, too. Win didn't count and mother had named two children already. That was plenty for her. Joe's met the same fate next morning. Then up popped Sid's and Judy's. Pat was quite hardened in rascality now and they went. Anyhow, no child ought *ever* to be called Emmerillus.

The next day there was none up and Pat began to be worried. Every one was wondering why none of the seeds were up yet. Judy darkly insinuated that they had been planted the wrong time of the moon. And perhaps father's wouldn't come up at all. Pat prayed very desperately that night that it might be up the next morning.

It was.

Pat looked about her in triumph, quite untroubled as yet by her duplicity. She had won the victory for father. Oh, how lovely everything was! Gossamer clouds of pale gold floated over the Hill of the Mist. The wind had fallen asleep among the silver birches. The tall firs among them quivered with some kind of dark laughter. The fields were all around her like great gracious arms. The popples, as Judy called them, were whispering around the granary. The world was just a big, smiling

greenness, with a vast, alluring blueness seawards. There was a clear, pale, silvery sky over her and everything in the garden seemed to have burst into bloom overnight. Judy's big clump of bleeding-heart by the kitchen door was hung with ruby jewels. The country was sprinkled with white houses in the sunrise. A stealthy kitten crept through the orchard. Thursday was licking his sleek little chops on the window sill of his beloved granary. A red squirrel chattered at him from a bough of the maple tree over the well. Judy came out to draw a bucket of water.

"Oh, Judy, father's seed is up," cried Pat. She wouldn't say up *first* because *that* wasn't true.

"Oh, oh!" Judy accepted the "sign" with good grace. "Well, it do be yer dad's turn for a fact, and Rachel is a better name than Greta inny day. Greta! The impidence av it!"

2

Rachel it was in fact and Rachel it became in law one Sunday six weeks later when the baby was baptised at church in a wondrous heirloom christening robe of eyelet embroidery that Grandmother Gardiner had made for her first baby. All the Silver Bush children had been christened in it. Long robes for babies had gone out of fashion but Judy Plum would not have thought the christening lawful if the baby had not been at least five feet long. They tacked Doris on to the name, too, by way of letting mother down easy, but it was dad's day of triumph.

Pat was not sorry for what she had done but her conscience had begun to trouble her a bit and that night when Judy Plum came in to leave her nightly blessing, Pat, who was wide-awake, sat up in bed and flung her arms around Judy's neck.

"Oh, Judy ... I did something ... I s'pose it was bad. I ... I wanted father to name the baby ... and I pulled up the seeds as fast as they came up in the mornings. Was it very bad, Judy?"

“Oh, oh, shocking,” said Judy, with a contradictory twinkle in her eyes. “If Joe knew he’d put a tin ear on ye. But I’ll not be telling. More be token as I wanted yer dad to have his way. He do be put upon be the women in this house and that’s a fact.”

“His seed was the last one to come up,” said Pat, “and Aunt Hazel’s never came up at all.”

“Oh, oh, didn’t it now?” giggled Judy. “It was up the morning afore yer dad’s and I pulled it out meself.”

What Price Weddings?

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1

Late in August of that summer Pat began to go to school. The first day was very dreadful ... almost as dreadful as that day the year before when she had watched Sidney start to school without her. They had never been separated before. She had stood despairingly at the garden gate and watched him out of sight down the lane until she could see him no longer for tears.

“He’ll be back in the evening, me jewel. Think av the fun av watching for him to come home,” comforted Judy.

“The evening is so far away,” sobbed Pat. It seemed to her the day would never end: but half past four came and Pat went flying down the lane to greet Sid. Really, it was so splendid to have him back that it almost atoned for seeing him go.

Pat didn’t want to go to school. To be away from Silver Bush for eight hours five days out of every week was a tragedy to her. Judy put her up a delicious lunch, filled her satchel with her favourite little red apples and kissed her goodbye encouragingly.

“Now, darlint, remimber it’s goin’ to get an eddication ye are. Oh, oh, and eddication is a great thing and it’s meself do be after knowing it because I never had one.”

“Why, Judy, you know more than anybody else in the world,” said Pat wonderingly.

“Oh, oh, to be sure I do, but an eddication isn’t just knowing things,” said Judy wisely. “Don’t ye be worrying a bit. Ye’ll get on fine. Ye know yer primer so ye’ve got a good start. Now run along, girleen, and mind ye’re rale mannerly to yer tacher. It’s the credit av Silver Bush ye must be kaping up, ye know.”

It was this thought that braced Pat sufficiently to enable her to get through the day. It kept the tears back as she turned, at the end of the lane, clinging to Sid's hand, to wave back to Judy who was waving encouragingly from the garden gate. It bore her up under the scrutiny of dozens of strange eyes and her interview with the teacher. It gave her backbone through the long day as she sat alone at her little desk and made pot-hooks ... or looked through the window down into the school bush which she liked much better. It was an ever-present help in recesses and dinner hour, when Winnie was off with the big girls and Sid and Joe with the boys and she was alone with the first and second primers.

When school came out at last Pat reviewed the day and proudly concluded that she had not disgraced Silver Bush.

And then the glorious homecoming! Judy and mother to welcome her back as if she had been away for a year ... the baby smiling and cooing at her ... Thursday running to meet her ... all the flowers in the garden nodding a greeting.

"I *know* everything's glad to see me back," she cried.

Really, it was enough to make one willing to go away just to have the delight of coming back. And then the fun of telling Judy all that had happened in school!

"I liked all the girls except May Binnie. She said there wasn't any moss in the cracks of *her* garden walk. I said I *liked* moss in the cracks of a garden walk. And she said our house was old-fashioned and needed painting. And she said the wallpaper in our spare-room was stained."

"Oh, oh, and well you know it is," said Judy. "There's that lake be the chimney that Long Alec has niver been able to fix, try as he will. But if ye start out be listening to what a Binnie says ye'll have an earful. What did ye say to me fine Miss May Binnie, darlint?"

"I said Silver Bush didn't need to be painted as often as other people's houses because it wasn't ugly."

Judy chuckled.

"Oh, oh, that was one in the eye for me fine May. The Binnie house is one av the ugliest I've iver seen for all av its yaller paint. And what did

she say to *that*.”

“Oh, Judy, she said the pink curtains in the Big Parlour were faded and shabby. And that *crushed* me. Because they *are* ... and everybody else in North Glen has such nice lace curtains in their parlours.”

2

But this was all three weeks ago and already going to school was a commonplace and Pat had even begun to like it. And then one afternoon Judy casually remarked, out of a clear sky so to speak,

“I s’pose ye know that yer Aunt Hazel is going to be married the last wake in September?”

At first Pat wouldn’t believe it ... simply couldn’t. Aunt Hazel *couldn’t* be married and go away from Silver Bush. When she had to believe it she cried night after night for a week. Not even Judy could console her ... not even the memory of Weeping Willy shame her.

“Sure and it’s time yer Aunt Hazel was married if she don’t be intinding to be an ould maid.”

“Aunt Barbara and Aunt Edith are old maids and they’re happy,” sobbed Pat.

“Oh, oh, two ould maids is enough for one family. And yer Aunt Hazel is right to be married. Sure and it’s a kind av hard world for women at the bist. I’m not saying but what we’ll miss her. She’s always had a liddle knack av making people happy. But it’s time she made her ch’ice. She’s niver been man-crazy ... oh, oh, her worst inimy couldn’t say that av her. But she’s been a bit av a flirt in her day and there’s been a time or two I was afraid she was going to take up wid a crooked stick. ‘Judy,’ she wud a’way be saying to me, ‘I want to try just a few more beaus afore I settle down.’ It’s a bit av good luck that she’s made up her mind for Robert Madison. He’s a rale steady feller. Ye’ll like yer new uncle, darlint.”

“I won’t,” said Pat obstinately, determined to hate him forever. “Do *you* like him, Judy?”

“To be sure I do. He’s got more in his head than the comb’ll iver take out I warrant ye. And a store-kaper he is, which is a bit asier than farming for the wife.”

“Do you think he’s goodlooking enough for Aunt Hazel, Judy?”

“Oh, oh, I’ve seen worse. Maybe there’s a bit too much av him turned up for fate and there’s no denying he has flying jibs like all that family. They tuk it from the Callenders. Niver did innny one see such ears as old Hinry Callender had. If ye hadn’t been seeing innnything but his head ye cudn’t have told whether he was a man or a bat. Oh, oh, but it’s the lucky thing they’ve got pared down a bit be the Madison mixture! Robert’s got a rale nice face and I’m after telling ye we’re all well satisfied wid yer Aunt Hazel’s match. We’ve had our worries I can be telling ye now. There was Gordon Rhodes back a bit ... but I niver belaved she’d take a scut like him. Too crooked to lie straight in bed like all the Rhodeses. And Will Owen ... to be sure Long Alec liked him but the man had no more to say for himself than a bump on a log. If the Good Man Above had struck him dumb we’d niver av known it. For me own part I like thim a bit more flippant. At one time we did be thinking she’d take Siddy Taylor. But whin she tould him one night that she cudn’t abide his taste in neckties he went off mad and niver come back. Small blame to him for that. If ye do be wanting a man iver, Pat, don’t be after criticising his neckties until ye’ve landed him afore the minister. And yer mother kind av liked Cal Gibson. Sure and he was the ladylike cratur. But he was one av the Summerside Gibsons and I was afraid he’d always look down on yer Aunt Hazel’s people. Barring the fact that he was as quare-looking as a cross-eyed cat ... But this Robert Madison, he kept a-coming and a-coming, always bobbing up whiniver one of the other lads got the mitten on the wrong hand. Whin the Madisons do be wanting a thing they have the habit av getting it in the long run. Rob’s Uncle Jim now ... didn’t I iver tell ye the story av how he pickled his brother in rum and brought him home to be buried?”

“*Pickled* him, Judy?”

“I’m telling ye. Ned Madison died on board Jim’s ship back in 1850 whin they were in the middle av the Indian Ocean. Iverybody said he must be buried at say. But Jim Madison swore till all turned blue that Ned shud be tuk home and buried in the fam’ly plot on the Island. So he got the ship’s carpenter to make a lead coffin and he clapped young Ned in it and filled it up wid rum. And Ned come home fresh as a daisy. I’m not saying that Jim was iver the same man agin though, mind ye. And that’s the Madison for ye. Oh, oh, it’s all for the bist as it is and we must have a rale fine widding for the honour av the fam’ly.”

Pat found it hard to be reconciled to it. She had always been so fond of Aunt Hazel ... far fonder than of Aunt Edith or even Aunt Barbara. Aunt Hazel was so jolly and pretty. Her face was as brown as a nut, her eyes and hair were brown, her lips and cheeks scarlet. Aunt Hazel looked her name. Some people didn’t. Lily Wheatley was as black as a crow and Ruby Rhodes was pale and washed out.

The rest of the Silver Bush children took it more philosophically. Sidney thought it would be rather exciting to have a wedding in the family. Winnie thought it must be rather good fun to be married.

“I don’t see the fun of it,” said Pat bitterly.

“Why, everybody has to be married,” said Winnie. “You’ll be married yourself some day.”

Pat rushed to mother in anguish.

“Mother, tell me ... I don’t have to get married ever ... do I?”

“Not unless you want to,” assured mother.

“Oh, that’s all right,” said relieved Pat. “Because I’ll never want to.”

“The girls all talk that way,” said Judy, winking at Mrs. Gardiner over Pat’s head. “There’s no jidging the minute I might take the notion meself. Sure and didn’t I have the fine proposal the other night. Old Tom Drinkwine shuffled up here and asked me to be his fourth missus, so he did. Sure and I all but dropped the new tay-pot whin he come out wid it. It’s the long time I’ve waited to be axed but me chanct has come at last.”

“Oh, Judy, you wouldn’t marry him?”

“Oh, oh, and why shudn’t I now?”

“And leave us?”

“Oh, oh, there’s the rub,” remarked Judy, who had sent old Tom off to what she called “the tune the ould cow died on.”

“‘Twud be more than the quarter av inny man that’d tempt me to do that same.”

But a *whole* man might tempt Judy some day and Pat was uneasy. Oh, change was terrible! What a pity people had to get married!

3

“The widding’s to be the last wake av September, *D. V.*” Judy told her one day.

Pat winced. She knew it must be but to have announced in this indifferent fashion was anguish.

“What does *D. V.* mean, Judy?”

“Oh, oh, it means if the Good Man Above is willing.”

“And what if He isn’t willing, Judy?”

“Thin it wud niver happen, me jewel.”

Pat wondered if she prayed to God *not* to be willing if it would do any good.

“What would happen if you prayed for ... for a *wicked* thing, Judy?”

“Oh, oh, you might get it,” said Judy so eerily that Pat was terrified and decided that it was wiser to take no risks.

Eventually she became resigned to it. She found herself quite important in school because her aunt was going to be married. And there was a pleasant air of excitement about Silver Bush, which deepened as the days went by. Little was talked of but the wedding preparations. The old barn cat had what Judy called a “clutch” of kittens and nobody was excited over it except Pat. But it was nice to have a bit of a secret. Only she and the barn cat knew where the kittens were. She would not tell until they were too old to drown. Somehow, most of the spring kittens had vanished in some mysterious fashion which Pat never could fathom. Only Tuesday

and Thursday were left and Tuesday was promised to Aunt Hazel. So the new kittens were warmly welcomed, but finding names for them had to be left until the wedding was over because Pat couldn't get any one interested in it just now.

The Poet's room was repapered, much to her joy ... though she was sorry to see the old paper torn off ... and when mother brought home new, cobwebby lace curtains for the Big Parlour Pat began to think a wedding had its good points. But she was very rebellious when her room was repapered, too. She loved the old paper, with its red and green parrots that had been there ever since she could remember. She had never been without a secret hope that they might come alive sometime.

"I don't see why my room has to be papered, even if Aunt Hazel is going to be married," she sobbed.

"Listen to rason now, darlint," argued Judy. "Sure and on the widding day the place'll be full av quality. All yer grand relations from town and Novy Scotia will be here and the Madisons from New Brunswick ... millionaires, they do be saying. And some av thim will have to be putting their wraps in yer room. Ye wudn't want thim to be seeing old, faded wallpaper, wud ye now?"

No ... o ... o, Pat wouldn't want that.

"And I've tould yer mother ye must be allowed to pick the new paper yerself ... sure and there do be a pattern of bluebells at the store that you'd love. So cheer up and help me wid the silver polishing. Ivery piece in the house must be rubbed up for the grand ivent. Sure and we haven't had a widding at Silver Bush for twinty years. It do be too much like heaven that, wid nather marrying nor giving in marriage. The last was whin yer Aunt Christine got her man. Sure and I hope yer Aunt Hazel won't have the mischance to her widding veil that poor liddle Chrissy had."

"Why, what happened to it, Judy?"

"Oh, oh, what happened to it, sez she. It had a cap av rose point that yer great-great-grandmother brought from the Ould Country wid her. Oh, oh, 'twas the illigant thing! And they had it lying in state on the bed in the Poet's room. But whin they wint in to get it, me jewel, ... well, there was a

liddle dog here at Silver Bush thin and the liddle spalpane had got into the room unbeknownst and he had chewed and slobbered the veil and the lace cap till ye cudn't tell where one left off and the other begun. Poor liddle Chrissie cried that pitiful ... small blame to her."

"Oh, Judy, what did they do?"

"Do, is it? Sure they cud do nothing and they did it. Poor Chrissy had to be married widout her veil, sobbing all troo the cirrimony. A great scandal it made I'm telling ye. It's meself that will kape the key av the Poet's room this time and if I catch that Snicklefritz prowling about the house it's meself that'll put a tin ear on that dog, if Joe takes a fit over it. And now, whin we've finished this lot av silver, ye'll come out to the ould part and help me pick the damsons. Sure and I'm going to do up a big crock av baked damsons for yer Aunt Hazel. Hasn't she always said there was nobody cud bake damsons like ould Judy Plum ... more be token of me name perhaps."

"Oh, hurry with the silver, Judy."

Pat loved picking damsons with Judy ... and the green gages and the golden gages and the big purplered egg plums.

"Oh, oh, I'm niver in a hurry, me jewel. There's all the time in the world and after that there's eternity. There's loads and lashins av work if yer Aunt Hazel is to have the proper widding but it'll all be done dacently and in order."

4

Pat couldn't help feeling pleasantly excited when she found that she was to be Aunt Hazel's flower girl. But she felt so sorry for Winnie who was too old to be a flower girl and not old enough to be a bridesmaid, that it almost spoilt her own pleasure. Aunt Hazel was to have two bridesmaids and all were to be dressed in green, much to Judy's horror, who declared green was unlucky for weddings.

“Oh, oh, there was a widding once in the Ould Country and the bridesmaids wore grane. And the fairies were that mad they put a curse on the house, that they did.”

“How did they curse it, Judy?”

“I’m telling ye. There was niver to be innny more laughter in that house ... niver agin. Oh, oh, that’s a tarrible curse. Think av a house wid no laughter in it.”

“And wasn’t there ever any, Judy?”

“Niver a bit. Plinty of waping but no laughing. Oh, oh, ‘twas a sorryful place!”

Pat felt a little uneasy. What if there never were to be any more laughter at Silver Bush ... father’s gentle chuckles and Uncle Tom’s hearty booms ... Winnie’s silvery trills ... Judy’s broad mirth? But her dress was so pretty ... a misty, spring-green crepe with smocked yoke and a cluster of dear pink rosebuds on the shoulder. And a shirred green hat with roses on the brim. Pat had to revel in it, curse or no curse. She did not realise ... as Judy did ... that the green made her pale, tanned little face paler and browner. Pat as yet had no spark of vanity. The dress itself was everything.

The wedding was to be in the afternoon and the “nuptial cemetery,” as Winnie, who was a ten-year-old Mrs. Malaprop ... called it, was to be in the old grey stone church at South Glen which all the Gardiners had attended from time immemorial. Judy thought this a modern innovation.

“Sure and in the ould days at Silver Bush they used to be married in the avening and dance the night away. But they didn’t go stravaging off on these fine honeymoon trips then. Oh, oh, they wint home and settled down to their business. ‘Tis the times that have changed and not for the better I do be thinking. It used to be only the Episcopalians was married in church. Sure and it’s niver been a Presbyterian custom at all, at all.”

“Are you a Presbyterian, Judy?”

Pat was suddenly curious. She had never thought about Judy’s religion. Judy went to the South Glen church with them on Sundays but would never sit in the Gardiner pew ... always up in the gallery, where she could see everything, Uncle Tom said.

“Oh, oh, I’m Presbyterian as much as an Irish body can be,” said Judy cautiously. “Sure and I cud niver be a rale Presbyterian not being Scotch. But innyhow I’m praying that all will go well and that yer Aunt Hazel’ll have better luck than yer grand-dad’s secound cousin had whin she was married.”

“What happened to grand-dad’s second cousin, Judy?”

“Oh, oh, did ye niver hear av it? Sure and it seems nobody’d iver tell ye yer fam’ly history if ould Judy didn’t. She died, poor liddle soul, of the pewmonia, the day before the widding and was buried in her widding dress. ‘Twas a sad thing for she’d been long in landing her man ... she was thirty if she was a day ... and it was hard to be disap’inted at the last moment like that. Now, niver be crying, me jewel, over what happened fifty years ago. She’d likely be dead innyhow be this time and maybe she was spared a lot av trouble, for the groom was a wild felly enough and was only taking her for her bit av money, folks said. Here, give me a spell stirring this cake and don’t be picking the plums out av it to ate.”

5

During the last week the excitement was tremendous. Pat was allowed to stay home from school, partly because every one wanted her to run errands, partly because she would probably have died if she hadn’t been allowed. Judy spent most of her time in the kitchen, concocting and baking, looking rather like an old witch hanging over some unholy brew. Aunt Barbara came over and helped but Aunt Edith did her share of the baking at home because no kitchen was big enough to hold her and Judy Plum. Aunt Hazel made the creams and mother the sparkling red jellies. That was all mother was allowed to do. It was thought she had enough work looking after Cuddles ... as the baby was called by every one in spite of all the pother about her name. Mother, so Judy Plum told Pat, had never been quite the same since that bad headache the night Cuddles was found in the parsley bed, and they must be taking care of her.

Pat beat eggs and stirred innumerable cakes, taking turns with Sid in eating the savory scrapings from the bowls. The house was full of delicious smells from morning till night. And everywhere it was “Pat, come here,” and “Pat, run there,” till she was fairly bewildered.

“Aisy now,” remonstrated Judy. “Make yer head save yer heels, darlint. ‘Tis a great lesson to learn. Iverything’ll sort itsilf out in God’s good time. They do be imposing on ye a bit but Judy’ll see yer not put upon too much. Sure and I don’t see how we’d iver get yer Aunt Hazel married widout ye.”

They wouldn’t have got the wedding butter without her, that was certain. Judy had kept the blue cow’s milk back for a week from the factory and the day before the wedding she started to churn it in the old-fashioned crank churn which she would never surrender for anything more modern. Judy churned and churned until Pat, going down into the cool, cobwebby cellar in mid-forenoon, found her “clane distracted.”

“The crame’s bewitched,” said Judy in despair. “Me arms are fit to drop off at the roots and niver a sign av butter yet.”

It was not to be thought of that mother should churn and Aunt Hazel was busy with a hundred things. Dad was sent for from the barn and agreed to have a whirl at it. But after churning briskly for half an hour he gave it up as a bad job.

“You may as well give the cream to the pigs, Judy,” he said. “We’ll have to buy the butter at the store.”

This was absolute disgrace for Judy. To buy the butter from the store and only the Good Man Above knowing who made it! She went to get the dinner, feeling that the green wedding was at the bottom of it.

Pat slipped off the apple barrel where she had been squatted, and began to churn. It was great fun. She had always wanted to churn and Judy would never let her because if the cream were churned too slow or too fast the butter would be too hard or too soft. But now it didn’t matter and she could churn to her heart’s content. Splash ... splash ... splash! Flop ... flop ... flop! Thud ... thud ... thud! Swish ... swish ... swish! The business of turning the crank had grown gradually harder and Pat had just decided that

for once in her life she had got all the churning she wanted when it suddenly grew lighter and Judy came down to call her to dinner.

“I’ve churned till I’m all in a sweat, Judy.”

Judy was horrified.

“A sweat, is it? Niver be using such a word, girleen. Remimber the Binnies may *sweat* but the Gardiners *perspire*. And now I s’pose I’ll have to be giving the crame to the pigs. ‘Tis a burning shame, that it is ... the blue cow’s crame and all ... and bought butter for a Silver Bush widding! But what wud ye ixpect wid grane dresses? I’m asking ye. Inny one might av known ...”

Judy had lifted the cover from the churn and her eyes nearly popped out of her head.

“If the darlint hasn’t brought the butter! Here it is, floating round in the buttermilk, as good butter as was iver churned. And wid her liddle siven-year-old arms, whin nather meself nor Long Alec cud come be it. Oh, oh, just let me be after telling the whole fam’ly av it!”

Probably Pat never had such another moment of triumph in her whole life.

Here Comes the Bride

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1

The wedding day came at last.

Pat had been counting dismally towards it for a week. Only four more days to have Aunt Hazel at Silver Bush ... only three ... only two — only one. Pat had the good fortune to sleep with Judy the night before, because her bedroom was needed for the guests who came from afar. So she wakened with Judy before sunrise and slipped down anxiously to see what kind of a day it was going to be.

“Quane’s weather!” said Judy in a tone of satisfaction. “I was a bit afraid last night we’d have rain, bekase there was a ring around the moon and it’s ill-luck for the bride the rain falls on, niver to mintion all the mud and dirt tracked in. Now I’ll just slip out and tell the sun to come up and thin I’ll polish off the heft av the milking afore yer dad gets down. The poor man’s worn to the bone wid all the ruckus.”

“Wouldn’t the sun come up if you didn’t tell it, Judy?”

“I’m taking no chances on a widding day, me jewel.”

While Judy was out milking Pat prowled about Silver Bush. How queer a house was in the early morning before people were up! Just as if it were watching for something. Of course all the rooms had an unfamiliar look on account of the wedding. The Big Parlour had been filled with a flame of autumn leaves and chrysanthemums. The new curtains were so lovely that Pat felt a fierce regret the Binnies were not to be among the guests at the house. Just fancy May’s face if she saw them! The Little Parlour was half full of wedding presents. The table had been laid in the dining-room the night before. How pretty it looked, with its sparkling glass and its silver candlesticks and tall slender candles like moonbeams and the beautiful colours of the jellies.

Pat ran outside. The sun, obedient to Judy's mandate, was just coming up. The air was the amber honey of autumn. Every birch and poplar in the silver bush had become a golden maiden. The garden was tired of growing and had sat down to rest but the gorgeous hollyhocks were flaunting over the old stone dyke. A faint, lovely morning haze hung over the Hill of the Mist and trembled away before the sun. What a lovely world to be alive in!

Then Pat turned and saw a lank, marauding, half-eared cat ... an alien to Silver Bush ... lapping up the milk in the saucer that had been left for the fairies. So that was how it went! She had always suspected it but to *know* it was bitter. Was there no real magic left in the world?

"Judy," ... Pat was almost tearful when Judy came to the well with her pails of milk ... "the fairies *don't* drink the milk. It's a cat ... just as Sidney always said."

"Oh, oh, and if the fairies didn't nade it last night why shudn't a poor cat have it, I'm asking. Hasn't he got to live? I niver said they come ivery night. They've other pickings no doubt."

"Judy, did you ever really see a fairy drinking the milk? Cross your heart?"

"Oh, oh, what if I didn't? Sure the grandmother of me did. Minny's the time I've heard her tell it. A leprachaun wid the liddle ears av him wriggling as he lapped it up. And she had her leg bruk nixt day, that she had. Ye may be thankful if ye niver see any av the Grane Folk. They don't be liking it and that I'm tellin ye."

2

It was a day curiously compounded of pain and pleasure for Pat. Silver Bush buzzed with excitement, especially when Snicklefritz got stung on the eyelid by a wasp and had to be shut up in the church barn. And then everybody was getting dressed. Oh, weddings *were* exciting things ... Sid

was right. Mother wore the loveliest new dress, the colour of a golden-brown chrysanthemum, and Pat was so proud of her it hurt.

“It’s so nice to have a pretty mother,” she exclaimed rapturously.

She was proud of all her family. Of father, who had had a terrible time finding his necktie and who, in his excitement, had put his left boot on his right foot and laced it up before he discovered his mistake, but now looked every inch a Gardiner. Of darling wee Cuddles with her silk stockings rolled down to show her dear, bare, chubby legs. Of Winnie, who in her yellow dress looked like a great golden pansy. Of Sid and Joe in new suits and white collars. Even of Judy Plum who had blossomed out in truly regal state. The dress-up dress had come out of the brown chest, likewise a rather rusty lace shawl and bonnet of quilted blue satin of the vintage of last century. Judy would have scorned to be seen in public without a bonnet. No giddy hats for her. Also what she called a “paireen” of glossy, patent leather slippers with high heels. Thus fearsomely arrayed Judy minced about, keeping a watchful eye on everything and greeting arriving friends in what she called her “company voice” and the most perfect English pronunciation you ever heard.

Aunt Hazel and her bridesmaids were as yet invisible in the Poet’s room. Mother dressed Pat in her pretty green dress and hat. Pat loved it ... but she ran upstairs to her closet to tell her old blue voile that she still loved it the best. Then the aunts came over, Aunt Barbara very weddingish in a dress and coat of beige lace which Aunt Edith thought far too young for her. Nobody could call Aunt Edith’s dress young but it was very handsome and Pat nearly burst with pride in her whole clan.

Uncle Brian from Summerside was going to take the bride and her maids to the church in his new car and it was a wonderful moment when they came floating down the stairs. Pat’s eyes smarted a wee bit. Was this mysterious creature in white satin and misty veil, with the great shower bouquet of roses and lilies of the valley, her dear, jolly Aunt Hazel? Pat felt as if she were already lost to them. But Aunt Hazel lingered to whisper.

“I’ve slipped the pansies you picked for me into my bouquet, darling ... they’re the ‘something blue’ the bride must wear, and thanks ever so much.”

And all was well again for a while.

Father took mother and Winnie and Judy and Joe in the Silver Bush Lizzie but Pat and Sid went in Uncle Tom’s “span.” No Lizzie or any other such lady for Uncle Tom. He drove a great roomy, double-seated “phaeton” drawn by two satin bay horses with white stars on their foreheads and Pat liked it far better than any car. But why was Uncle Tom so slow in coming? “We’ll be late. There’s a million buggies and cars gone past already,” worried Pat.

“Oh, oh, don’t be exaggerating, girleen.”

“Well, there was five anyway,” cried Pat indignantly.

“There he’s coming now,” said Judy. “Mind yer manners,” she added in a fierce whisper. “No monkey-didoes whin things get a bit solemn, mind ye that.”

Pat and Sid and Aunt Barbara sat in the back seat. Pat felt tremendously important and bridled notably when May Binnie looked out enviously from a car that honked past them. Generally she and Sid walked to church by a short cut across the fields and along a brook scarfed with farewell summers. But the road was lovely, too, with the sunny, golden stubble fields, the glossy black crows sitting on the fences, the loaded apple boughs dragging on the grass of the orchards, the pastures spangled with asters, and the sea far out looking so blue and happy, with great fleets of cloudland sailing over it.

Then there was the crowded church among its maples and spruces — the arrangement of the procession — the people standing up — Aunt Hazel trailing down the aisle on father’s arm — Jean Madison and Sally Gardiner behind her — Pat bringing up the rear gallantly with her basket of roses in her brown paws — the sudden hush — the minister’s solemn voice — the prayer — the lovely colours that fell on the people through the stained glass windows, turning them from prosaic folks into miracles. At first Pat was too bewildered to analyse her small sensations. She saw a

little quivering ruby of light fall on Aunt Hazel's white veil ... she saw Rob Madison's flying jibs ... she saw Sally Gardiner's night-black hair under her green hat ... she saw the ferns and flowers ... and suddenly she heard Aunt Hazel saying, "I will," and saw her looking up at her groom.

A dreadful thing happened to Pat. She turned frantically to Judy Plum who was sitting just behind her at the end of the front pew.

"Judy, lend me your hanky. I'm going to cry," she whispered in a panic.

Judy fairly came out in gooseflesh. She realised that a desperate situation must be handled desperately. Her hanky was a huge white one which would engulf Pat. Moreover the Binnies were at the back of the church. She bent forward.

"If there do be one tear out av ye to disgrace Silver Bush I'll niver fry ye an egg in butter agin as long as I live."

Pat took a brace. Perhaps it was the thought of Silver Bush or the fried egg or both combined. She gave a desperate gulp and swallowed the lump in her throat. Savage winking prevented the fall of a single tear. The ceremony was over ... nobody had noticed the little by-play ... and everybody thought Pat had behaved beautifully. The Silver Bush people were much relieved. They had all been more or less afraid that Pat would break down at the last, just as Cora Gardiner had done at her sister's wedding, erupting into hysterical howls right in the middle of the prayer and having to be walked out by a humiliated mother.

"Ye carried yerself off well, darlint," whispered Judy proudly.

Pat contrived to get through the reception and the supper but she found she couldn't eat, not even a chicken slice or the lovely "lily salad" mother had made. She was very near crying again when somebody said to Aunt Hazel,

"What is it like to be Hazel Madison? Do you realise that you *are* Hazel Madison now?"

Hazel Gardiner no longer! Oh, it was just too much!

Aftermath

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1

And then the going away! For the first time in her life Pat found out what it was like to say goodbye to some one who was not coming back. But she could cry then because everybody cried, even Judy, who seldom cried.

“When I feels like crying,” Judy was accustomed to say, “I just do be sitting down and having a good laugh.”

She would not let Pat stand too long, looking after Aunt Hazel, tranced in her childish tears.

“It’s unlucky to watch a parting friend out av sight,” she told her.

Pat turned away and wandered dismally through the empty rooms. With everything so upset and disarranged upstairs and down Silver Bush wasn’t like home at all. Even the new lace curtains seemed part of the strangeness. The table, that had been so pretty, looked terrible ... untidy ... crumby ... messy ... with Aunt Hazel’s chair pushed rakily aside just as she had risen from it. Pat’s brown eyes were drowned again.

“Come along wid me, darlint, and help me out a bit,” Judy ... wise Judy ... was saying. “Sure and yer mother has gone to bed, rale played out wid all the ruckus, and small wonder. And Winnie’s tying hersilf into kinks wid the stomachache and that’s no puzzle ather wid the way she was after stuffing hersilf. So there’s nobody but us two to look after things. We’ll lave the dining-room as it is till the morning but we’ll straighten up the parlours and the bedrooms. Sure and the poor house do be looking tired.”

Judy had doffed her silk and high heels and company voice and was in her comfortable old drugget and brogans ... and brogue ... again. Pat was glad. Judy seemed much more homelike and companionable so.

“Can we put all the furniture back in its right place?” she said eagerly. Somehow it would be a comfort to have the sideboard and the old parlour rocker that had been put out of sight as too shabby, and the vases of pampas grass that had been condemned as old-fashioned, back again where they belonged.

“Oh, oh, we’ll do that. And lave off looking as doleful as if yer Aunt Hazel had been buried instid av being married.”

“I don’t feel much like smiling, Judy.”

“There’s rason in that. Sure and I’ve been grinning that much to-day I fale as if I’d been turned into a chessy-cat. But it’s been one grand widding, so it has, and the like av it Jen Binnie will never see for all av her city beau. As for the supper, Government House itsilf cudn’t bate it. And the cirrimony was that solemn it wud av scared me out av the notion av getting married if I iver had inny.”

“I would have cried and spoiled it all if it hadn’t been for you, Judy dear,” said Pat gratefully.

“Oh, oh, I wasn’t blaming ye. I knew a big, handsome bridesmaid onct and she burst out waping right in the middle av the cirrimony. And the things people did be saying ... such as she was crying bekase she wasn’t getting married hersilf, whin it was just her full heart. At that it was better than the bridesmaid that was laughing in the middle av things at Rosella Gardiner’s widding. No one iver did be knowing what she laughed at ... she wud niver tell ... but the groom thought it was at him, and he niver wud spake to her again. It started a ruckus in the fam’ly that lasted for forty years. Oh, oh, the liddle things that do be having a big inding!”

Pat didn’t think that for the bridesmaid to laugh in the middle of the ceremony was a little thing. She was very glad nothing like that had happened to make Aunt Hazel’s wedding ridiculous.

“Come now and we’ll swape up all this confetti stuff first. The ould days av rice were better I’m thinking. The hins got a good fade innyhow. Oh, oh, this table do be looking like the relics of ould dacency, doesn’t it now? I’m seeing one av the good silver crame jugs has got a dint in it. But whin all’s said and done it don’t be looking much like the table did after

yer Great-aunt Margaret's widding over at the Bay Shore farm. Oh, oh, that was a tommyshaw!"

"What happened, Judy?"

"Happened, is it? Ye may well ask. They had a fringed cloth on the table be way av extry style and whin the groom's cousin ... ould Jim Milroy he is now ... Jim wid the beard he was called thin ... oh, oh, he had the magnificent beard. Sure and 'twas a shame to shave it off just bekase it wint out av fashion ... well, where was I at? He wint to get up from the table in a hurry as he always did and didn't one av his buttons catch in the fringe and away wint fringe and cloth and dishes and all. Niver did inny one see such a smash. I was down to the Bay Shore to hilp thim out a bit and me and yer Aunt Frances claned up the mess, her crying and lamenting all the time and small blame to her. All the illigant dishes smashed and the carpet plastered wid the stuff that was spilled, niver to spake av the poor bride's dress as was clane ruined be a great cup av tay tipped over in her lap. Oh, oh, I was a young skellup av a thing thin and I thought it a great joke but the Bay Shore people were niver the same agin. Now, run up to yer room, and put off yer finery and we'll get to work. I belave we're after having a rainy night av it. The wind's rising and it's dark as a squaw's pocket already."

It was such a comfort to put things back in their places. When the job was finished Silver Bush looked like home again. Darkness had fallen and rain was beginning to splash against the windows.

"Let's go into the kitchen now and I'll get ye a tasty liddle bite afore I do be setting the bread. I noticed ye didn't ate innnything av their fine spread. I've a pot of hot pay soup I brewed up for mesilf kaping warm on the back av the stove and there's some chicken lift over I'm thinking."

"I don't feel like eating with Aunt Hazel gone," said Pat, rather mistily again. That thought *would* keep coming back.

"Oh, oh, fat sorrow is better than lean sorrow, me jewel. Here now, ain't this snug as two kittens in a basket? We'll shut out the dark. And here's a liddle cat wid an illigant grey suit and a white shirt, be the name

av Thursday, wid his small heart breaking for a word after all the neglect av the day.”

A fierce yowl sounded outside. Gentleman Tom was demanding entrance.

“Let me let him in, Judy,” said Pat eagerly. She did so love to let things in out of the cold. Pat held the door open for a moment. It was a wild night after the lovely day. The rain was streaming down. The wind was thrashing the silver bush mercilessly. Snicklefritz was howling dolefully in the church barn since Joe was not yet back from the station to comfort him.

Pat turned away with a shiver. The peace of the old kitchen was in delightful contrast to the storm outside. The stove was glowing clear red in the dusk. Thursday was coiled up under it, thinking this was how things should be. It was so nice to be in this bright, warm room, supping Judy’s hot pea soup and watching the reflection of the kitchen outside through the window. Pat loved to do that. It looked so uncanny and witchlike ... so real yet so unreal ... with Judy apparently calmly setting bread under the thrashing maple by the well.

2

Pat loved to watch Judy set bread and listen to her talking to herself as she always did while kneading and thumping. Tonight Judy was reviewing the church wedding.

“Oh, oh, she was dressed very gay outside but I’m wondering what was undernath. Sure and it’s well if it was no worse than patches ... Bertha Holmes is the pert one. Only fifteen and she do be making eyes at the b’ys already. I remimber her at her own aunt’s widding whin she was about the age av Pat here. She was after throwing hersilf on the floor and kicking and screaming. Oh, oh, wudn’t I like to have had the spanking av her! Simon Gardiner was be way av being rale groomed up to-day. Sure and whin I saw him, so starched and proper in his pew, looking as if he was doing the world a big favour be living, it was hard to belave the last time I

saw him he was so drunk he thought the table was follying him round, and crying like a baby he was bekase it wud be sure to catch him, having four legs to his two. It tickled me ribs, that. Oh, oh, it's liddle folks know what other folks do be thinking av thim in church. And wud ye listen to Ould Man Taylor calling his wife sugar-pie and him married thirty years, the ould softy. Though maybe it's better than George Harvey and his 'ould woman.' There was ould Elmer Davidson stumbling in late whin the cirrimony had begun and sp'iling the solemnity. He'll be late for the resurrection, that one. Mary Jarvis and her yilping whin they were signing the papers! Thim that likes can call it singing. Singing, indade! The Great-aunts av the Bay Shore farm were after being a bit more stately than common ... be way of showing their contimpt for both Gardiners and Madisons I'm thinking. Sure and it's a wonder they condescend to come at all. Oh, oh, but the supper wud give thim one in the eye. It's a long day since they've set down to such a spread I'm thinking. Oh, oh, but I got square wid Ould Maid Sands. Sez I to her, sly-like, 'While there's life there's hope.' *She* knew well what I was maning, so she did."

Judy was shaking with silent laughter as she patted her bread. Then she grew sober.

"Oh, oh, there was one at the widding that'll be to none other. Kate MacKenzie has got the sign."

"What sign, Judy?" asked Pat drowsily.

"Oh, oh, I forgot liddle pitchers have the long ears, darlint. 'Tis the death sign I mint. But it do be life. There's always the birth and the death and the bridal mixed up together. And a nice cheerful widding it was in spite av all."

Pat was almost asleep. The downtrodden black cats were beginning to trot around the rug under her very eyes.

"Wake up, me jewel, and go to bed properly. Listen at that wind. There'll be apples to pick up tomorrow."

Pat looked up, yawning and comforted. After all, life at dear Silver Bush was going on. The world hadn't come to an end just because Aunt Hazel was gone.

“Judy, tell me again about the man you saw hanged in Ireland before I go to bed.”

“Oh, oh, that do be a tarrible story for bedtime. It wud make yer hair stand on end.”

“I *like* having my hair stand on end. Please, Judy.”

Judy picked Pat up on her knee.

“Hug me close, Judy, and tell me.”

The harrowing tale was told and Pat, who had heard it a dozen times before, thrilled just as deliciously as at the first. There was no doubt about it ... she enjoyed “tarrible” things.

“Sure and I shudn’t be telling ye all these tales av bad people,” said Judy, a bit uncomfortably, looking at Pat’s dilated eyes.

“Of course, Judy, I like to *live* with good people better than bad, but I like *hearing* about bad people better than good.”

“Well, I do be thinking it wud be a dull world if nobody iver did anything he oughtn’t. What wud we find to talk about?” asked Judy unanswerably. “Innyway, it’s to bed ye must be going. And say a prayer for all poor ghosts. If Wild Dick or Waping Willy or ather or both av thim are on the fence tonight ‘tis a wet time they’ll be having av it.”

“Maybe I won’t be so lonesome if I say my prayers twice,” thought Pat. She said them twice and even contrived to pray for her new uncle. Perhaps as a reward for this she fell asleep instantly. Once in the night she wakened and a flood of desolation poured over her. But in the darkness she heard a melodious purring and felt the beautiful touch of a velvet cat. Pat swallowed hard. The rain was still sobbing around the eaves. Aunt Hazel was gone. But Silver Bush held her in its heart. To lie in this dear house, sheltered from the storm, with Thursday purring under her hand ... apples to be picked tomorrow ... oh, life to beckon once more. Pat fell asleep comforted.

A Day to Spend

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1

Again it was September at Silver Bush ... a whole year since Aunt Hazel was married: and now it seemed to Pat that Aunt Hazel had always been married. She and Uncle Bob often came “home” for a visit and Pat was very fond of Uncle Bob now, and even thought his flying jibs were nice. The last time, too, Aunt Hazel had had a darling, tiny baby, with amber-brown eyes like Pat’s own. Cuddles wasn’t a baby any longer. She was toddling round on her own chubby legs and was really a sister to be proud of. She had been through all her teething at eleven months. It was beautiful to watch her waking up and beautiful to bend over her while she was asleep. She seemed to know you were there and would smile delightedly. A spirit of her own, too. When she was eight months old she had bitten Uncle Tom when he poked a finger into her mouth to find out if she had any teeth. He found out.

And now had come the invitation for Pat to spend a Saturday at the Bay Shore farm, with Great-aunt Frances Selby and Great-aunt Honor Atkins ... not to mention “Cousin” Dan Gowdy and a still greater aunt, who was mother’s great-aunt. Pat’s head was usually dizzy when she got this far and small wonder, as Judy would say.

Pat loved the sound of “a day to spend.” It sounded so gloriously lavish to “spend” a whole day, letting its moments slip one by one through your fingers like beads of gold.

But she was not enthusiastic over spending it at the Bay Shore. When she and Sid had been very small they had called the Bay Shore the Don’t-touch-it House guiltily, to themselves. Everybody was so old there. Two years ago, when she had been there with mother, she remembered how Aunt Frances frowned because when they were walking in the orchard,

she, Pat, had picked a lovely, juicy, red plum from a laden tree. And Aunt Honor, a tall lady with snow-white hair and eyes as black as her dress, had asked her to repeat some Bible verses and had been coldly astonished when Pat made mistakes in them. The great-aunts always asked you to repeat Bible verses ... so said Winnie and Joe who had been there often ... and you never could tell what they would give when you got through ... a dime or a cooky or a tap on the head.

But to go *alone* to the Bay Shore! Sidney had been asked, too, but Sidney had gone to visit Uncle Brian's while his teeth were attended to. Perhaps it was just as well because Sidney was not in high favour at the Bay Shore, having fallen asleep at the supper table and tumbled ingloriously off his chair to the floor, with an heirloom goblet in his hand, the last time he was there.

Pat talked it over with Judy Friday evening, sitting on the sandstone steps at the kitchen door and working her sums to be all ready for Monday. Pat was a year older and an inch taller, by the marks Judy kept on the old pantry door where she measured every child on its birthday. She was well on in subtraction and Judy was helping her. Judy could add and subtract. When her head was clear she could multiply. Division she never attempted.

The kitchen behind them was full of the spicy smell of Judy's kettle of pickles. Gentleman Tom was sitting on the well platform, keeping an eye on Snicklefritz, who was dozing on the cellar door, keeping an eye on Gentleman Tom. In the corner of the yard was a splendid pile of cut hardwood which Pat and Sid had stacked neatly up in the summer evenings after school. Pat gloated over it. It was so prophetic of cosy, cheerful winter evenings when the wind would growl and snarl because it couldn't get into Silver Bush. Pat would have been perfectly happy if it had not been for the morrow's visit.

"The aunts are so ... so stately," she confided to Judy. She would never have dared criticise them to mother who had been a Selby and was very proud of her people.

“The grandmother av thim was a Chidlaw,” said Judy as if that explained everything. “I’m not saying but they’re a bit grim but they’ve had a tarrible lot av funerals at the Bay Shore. Yer Aunt Frances lost her man afore she married him and yer Aunt Honor lost hers after she married him and they’ve niver settled which got the worst av it. They’re a bit near, too, it must be confessed, and thim wid lashings of money. But they do be rale kind at heart and they think a lot av all yer mother’s children.”

“I don’t mind Aunt Frances or Aunt Honor, but I’m a *little* afraid of Great-great-aunt Hannah and Cousin Dan,” confessed Pat.

“Oh, oh, ye nadn’t be. Maybe ye’ll not be seeing the ould led dy at all. She hasn’t left her own room for sixteen years and she’s ninety-three be the clock, so she is, and there don’t be minny seeing her. And ould Danny is harmless. He fell aslape at the top av the stairs and rolled down thim whin he was a lad. He was niver the same agin. But some do be saying he saw the ghost.”

“Oh, Judy, is there a ghost at Bay Shore?”

“Not now. But long ago there was. Oh, oh, they were tarrible ashamed av it.”

“Why?”

“Ye know they thought it was kind av a disgraceful thing to have a ghost in the house. Some folks do be thinking it an honour but there ye are. I’m not denying the Bay Shore ghost was a troublesome cratur. Sure and he was a nice, frindly, sociable ghost and hadn’t any rale dog-sense about the proper time for appearing. He was a bit lonesome it wud seem. He wud sit round on the footboards av their beds and look at thim mournful like, as if to say, ‘Why the divil won’t ye throw a civil word to a felly?’ And whin company come and they were all enjying themselves they’d hear a dape sigh and there me fine ghost was. It was be way av being tarrible monotonous after a while. But the ghost was niver seen agin after yer great-great-uncle died and yer Great-aunt Honor tuk to running things. I’m thinking she was a bit too near, aven for a ghost, that one. So ye nadn’t be afraid av seeing him but ye’d better not be looking too close at the vase that makes the faces.”

“A vase ... that makes faces!”

“Sure, me jewel. It’s on the parlour mantel and it made a face once at Sarah Jenkins as was hired there whin she was dusting it. She was nather to hold nor bind wid fright.”

This was delightful. But after all, Pat thought Judy was a little too contemptuous of the Bay Shore people.

“Their furniture is very grand, Judy.”

“Grand, is it?” Judy knew very well she had been snubbed. “Oh, oh, ye can’t be telling *me* innnything about grandeur. Didn’t I work in Castle McDermott whin I was a slip av a girleen? Grandeur, is it? Lace and sating bed-quilts, I’m telling ye. And a white marble staircase wid a golden bannister. Dinner sets av solid gold and gold vases full av champagne. And thiry servants if there was one. Sure and they kipt servants to wait on the other servants there. The ould lord wud pass round plates wid gold sovereigns at the Christmas dinner and hilp yerself. Oh, oh, what’s yer Bay Shore farm to that, I’m asking. And now just rin over thim verses ye larnt last Sunday, in case yer Aunt Honor wants ye to say some.”

“I can say them without a mistake to you, Judy. But it will be so different with Aunt Honor.”

“Sure and ye’d better just shut yer eyes and purtind she’s a cabbage-head, darlint. Though old Jed Cattermole didn’t be thinking her that whin she put him in his place at the revival meetings.”

“What did she do, Judy?”

“Do, is it? I’m telling ye. Old Jed thought he was extry cliver bekase he didn’t belave in God. Just be way av showing off one night he wint to one av the revival matings ould Mr. Campbell was having whin he was minister at South Glen. And after all the tistimonies me bould Jed gets up and sez, sez he, ‘I’m not belaving there’s innny God but if there is He do be a cruel, unreasonabe ould tyrant. And now,’ sez Jed, swelling up all over wid consate, like an ould tom turkey, ‘if there is a God why doesn’t he strike me dead for what I’ve said. I dare Him to do it,’ sez ould Jed, feeling bigger than iver. Iverybody was so shocked ye cud have heard a pin fall. And yer Aunt Honor turns round and sez she, cool-like, ‘Do you really

think ye're av that much importance to God, Jedediah Cattermole?' Iverybody laughed. Did ye iver be seeing one av thim big rid balloons whin ye've stuck a pin in it? Oh, oh, that was me proud Jed. He was niver the same agin. Now yer sums are done and me pickles are done, so we'll just have a bit av fun roasting some crab apples wid cloves stuck in thim for scint."

"I wish Sid was here," sighed Pat. "He does love clove apples so. Will he be back Sunday night, do you think, Judy? I *can't* live another week without him."

"Ye set yer heart too much on Siddy, me jewel. What'll ye be after doing whin ye grow up and have to part?"

"Oh, that'll never be, Judy. Sid and I are never going to part. We'll neither of us marry but just live on here at Silver Bush and take care of everything. We have it all settled."

Judy sighed.

"I wish ye wudn't be so set on him. Why don't ye be after getting yersilf a chum in school like the other liddle girls? Winnie has lashings av thim."

"I don't want anybody but Sid. The girls in school are nice but I don't love any of them. I don't *want* to love any one or anything but my own family and Silver Bush."

2

Since Pat had to go to the Bay Shore farm she was glad it was this particular Saturday because father was going to replace the old board fence around the orchard with a new one. Pat hated to see the old fence torn down. It was covered with such pretty lichens, and vines had grown over its posts and there was a wave of caraway all along it as high as your waist.

Judy had a reason for being glad, too. The ukase had gone forth that the big poplar in the corner of the yard must be cut down because its core was

rotten and the next wind might send it crashing down on the henhouse. Judy had plotted with Long Alec to cut it down the day Pat was away for she knew every blow of the axe would go to the darlint's heart.

Joe ran Pat down to the Bay Shore in the car. She bent from it as it whirled out of the lane to wave goodbye to Silver Bush. Cuddles' dear little rompers on the line behind the house were plumped out with wind and looked comically like three small Cuddles swinging from the line. Pat sighed and then resolved to make the best of things. The day was lovely, full of blue, sweet autumn hazes. The road to the Bay Shore was mostly down hill, running for part of the way through spruce "barrens," its banks edged with ferns, sweet-smelling bay bushes, and clusters of scarlet pigeonberries. There was a blue, waiting sea at the end and an old grey house fronting the sunset, so close to the purring waves that in storms their spray dashed over its very doorstep ... a wise old house that knew many things, as Pat always felt. Mother's old home and therefore to be loved, whether one could love the people in it or not.

It still made quite a sensation at Bay Shore when any one arrived in a car. The aunts came out and gave a prim welcome and Cousin Dan waved from a near field where he was turning over the sod into beautiful red furrows, so even and smooth. Cousin Dan was very proud of his ploughing.

Joe whirled away, leaving Pat to endure her ordeal of welcome and examination. The great-aunts were as stiff as the starched white petticoats that were still worn at Bay Shore. To tell truth, the great-aunts were really frightfully at a loss what to say to this long-legged, sunburned child whom they thought it a family duty to invite to Bay Shore once in so long. Then Pat was taken up to the Great-great's room for a few minutes. She went reluctantly. Great-great-aunt Hannah was so mysteriously old ... a tiny, shrunken, wrinkled creature peering at her out of a mound of quilts in a huge, curtained bed.

"So this is Mary's little girl," said a piping voice.

"No. I am Patricia Gardiner," said Pat, who hated to be called anybody's little girl, even mother's.

Great-great-aunt Hannah put a clawlike hand on Pat's arm and drew her close to the bed, peering at her with old, old blue eyes, so old that sight had come back to them.

"Nae beauty ... nae beauty," she muttered.

"She may grow up better-looking than you expect," said Aunt Frances, as one determinedly looking on the bright side. "She is terribly sunburned now."

Pat's little brown face, with its fine satiny skin, flushed mutinously. She did not care if she were "no beauty" but she disliked being criticised to her face like this. Judy would have said it wasn't manners. And then when they went downstairs Aunt Honor said in a tone of horror,

"There's a rip in your dress, child."

Pat wished they wouldn't call her "child." She would have loved to stick her tongue out at Aunt Honor but that wouldn't be manners either. She stood very stiff while Aunt Honor brought needle and thread and sewed it up.

"Of course Mary can't attend to everything and Judy Plum wouldn't care if they were all in rags," said Aunt Frances condoningly.

"Judy *would* care," cried Pat. "She's *very* particular about our clothes and our manners. That shoulder ripped on the way over. So there."

In spite of this rather unpropitious beginning the day was not so bad. Pat said her verses correctly and Aunt Honor gave her a cooky ... and watched her eat it. Pat was in agonies of thirst but was too shy to ask for a glass of water. When dinner time came, however, there was plenty of milk ... Judy would have said "skim" milk. But it was served in a lovely old gold-green glass pitcher that made the skimmiest of milk look like Jersey cream. The table was something of the leanest, according to Silver Bush standards. Pat's portion of the viands was none too lavish, but she ate it off a plate with a coloured border of autumn leaves ... one of the famous Selby plates, a hundred years old. Pat felt honoured and tried not to feel hungry. For dessert she had three of the tabooed red plums.

After dinner Aunt Frances said she had a headache and was going to lie down. Cousin Dan suggested aspirin but Aunt Frances crushed him with a

look.

“It is not God’s will that we should take aspirin for relief from the pain He sends,” she said loftily, and stalked off, with her red glass, silver-stoppered vinaigrette held to her nose.

Aunt Honor turned Pat loose in the parlour and told her to amuse herself. This Pat proceeded to do. Everything was of interest and now she was alone she could have a good time. She had been wondering how she could live through the afternoon if she had to sit it out with the aunts. Both she and Aunt Honor were mutually relieved to be rid of each other.

3

The parlour furniture *was* grand and splendid. There was a big, polished brass door-handle in which she saw herself reflected with such a funny face. The china door-plate had roses painted on it. The blinds were pulled down and she loved the cool, green light which filled the room ... it made her feel like a mermaid in a shimmering sea-pool. She loved the little procession of six white ivory elephants marching along the black mantel. She loved the big spotted shells on the whatnot which murmured of the sea when she held them to her ear. And there was the famous vase, full of peacock feathers, that had made a face at Sarah Jenkins. It was of white glass and had curious markings on its side that did resemble a face. But it did not grimace at Pat though she wished it would. There was a brilliant red-and-yellow china hen sitting on a yellow nest on a corner table that was very wonderful. And there were deep Battenburg lace scallops on the window shades. Surely even Castle McDermott couldn’t beat that.

Pat would have liked to see all the hidden things in the house. Not its furniture or its carpets but the letters in old boxes upstairs and the clothes in old trunks. But this was impossible. She dared not leave the parlour. The aunts would die of horror if they caught her prowling.

When everything in the room had been examined Pat curled herself up on the sofa and spent an absorbed hour looking at the pictures in old

albums with faded blue and red plush bindings and in hinged leather frames that opened and shut like a book. What funny old pictures in full skirts and big sleeves and huge hats high up on the head! There was one of Aunt Frances in the eighties, in a flounced dress and a little “sacque” with its sloping shoulders and square scallops ... *and* a frilled parasol. Oh, you could just see how proud she was of that parasol! It seemed funny to think of Aunt Frances as a little girl with a frivolous parasol.

There was a picture of father ... a young man without a moustache. Pat giggled over that. One of mother, too ... a round, plump face, with “bangs” and a big bow of ribbon in her hair. And one of Great-uncle Burton who went away and was “never heard of again.” What fascination was in the phrase! Even dead people were heard of again. They had funerals and headstones.

And here was Aunt Honor as a baby. Looking like Cuddles! Oh, would Cuddles *ever* look like Aunt Honor? It was unthinkable. How terribly people changed! Pat sighed.

A Maiden All Forlorn

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1

At dusk there was the question of how Pat was to get home. Aunt Frances, who was the horsewoman of Bay Shore, was to have driven her. But Aunt Frances was still enduring God's will in her bedroom and Aunt Honor hadn't driven a horse for years. As for Cousin Dan, he couldn't be trusted away from home with a team. Aunt Honor finally telephoned to the nearest neighbour.

"Morton MacLeod is going to town. I thought he would, since it is Saturday night. He says he'll take you and drop you off at Silver Bush. You don't mind going as far as the MacLeod place alone, do you? You will be there before dark."

Pat didn't mind anything except the prospect of staying at the Bay Shore overnight. And she was never in the least afraid of the dark. She had often been alone in it. The other children at her age had been afraid of the dark and ran in when it came. But Pat never did. They said at Silver Bush that she was "her father's child" for that. Long Alec always liked to wander around alone at night ... "enjoying the beauty of the darkness," he said. There was a family legend that Pat at the age of four had slept out in the caraway in the orchard all one night, nobody missing her until Judy, who had been sitting up with a sick neighbour, came home at sunrise and raised a riot. Pat dimly remembered the family rapture when she was found and joy washing like a rosy wave over mother's pale, distracted face.

She said her goodbyes politely and made her way up to the MacLeod place where bad news met her. Morton's car was "acting up" and he had given up the idea of going to town.

“So you’ll have to run back to the Bay Shore,” his mother told her kindly.

Pat went slowly down the lane and when she was screened from sight of the house by a spruce grove she stopped to think. She did not want to go back to the Bay Shore. The very thought of spending the night in the big spare room, with its bed that looked far too grand to be slept in, was unbearable. No, she would just walk home. It was only three miles ... she walked that every day going to school and back.

Pat started off briskly and gaily, feeling very independent and daring and grownup. How Judy would stare when she sauntered into the kitchen and announced carelessly that she had walked home from the Bay Shore all alone in the dark. “Oh, oh, and ain’t ye the bould one?” Judy would say admiringly.

And then ... the dark chilly night seemed suddenly to be coming to meet her ... and when the road forked she wasn’t sure which fork to take ... the left one? ... oh, it must be the left one ... Pat ran along it with sheer panic creeping into her heart.

It was dark now ... quite dark. And Pat suddenly discovered that to be alone on a strange road two miles from home in a very dark darkness was an entirely different thing from prowling in the orchard or running along the Whispering Lane or wandering about the Field of the Pool with the homelights of Silver Bush always in sight.

The woods and groves around her, that had seemed so friendly on the golden September day were strangers now. The far, dark spruce hills seemed to draw nearer threateningly. *Was this the right road?* There were no homelights anywhere. Had she taken the wrong turn and was this the “line” road that ran along the backs of the farms between the two townships? Would she ever get home? Would she ever see Sid again ... hear Winnie’s laugh and Cuddles’ dear little squeals of welcome? Last Sunday in church the choir had sung, “*The night is dark and I am far from home.*” She knew what that meant now as she broke into a desperate little run. The white birches along the roadside seemed to be trying to catch her with ghostly hands. The wind wailed through the spruces. At Silver Bush

you never quite knew how the wind would come at you ... from behind the church barn like a cat pouncing ... down from the Hill of the Mist like a soft bird flying ... through the orchard like a playmate ... but it always came as a friend. This wind was no friend. Was that it crying in the spruces? Or was it the Green Harper of Judy's tale who harped people away to Fairyland whether they would or no? All Judy's stories, enjoyed and disbelieved at home, became fearfully true here. Those strange little shadows, dark amid the darkness, under the ferns ... suppose they *were* fairies. Judy said if you met a fairy you were never the same again. No threat could have been more terrible to Pat. To be changed ... to be not yourself!

That wild, faraway note ... was it the Peter Branaghan of another of Judy's tales, out on the hills piping to his ghostly sheep? And still no light ... she *must* be on the wrong road.

All at once she was wild with terror of the chill night and the eerie wind and the huge, dark pathless world around her. She stopped short and uttered a bitter little cry of desolation.

"Can I help you?" said a voice.

Some one had just come around the turn of the road. A boy ... not much taller than herself ... with something queer about his eyes ... with a little blot of shadow behind him that looked like a dog. That was all Pat could see. But suddenly she felt safe ... protected. He had such a nice voice.

"I ... think I'm lost," she gasped. "I'm Pat Gardiner ... and I took the wrong road."

"You're on the line road," said the boy. "But it turns and goes down past Silver Bush. Only it's a little longer. I'll take you home. I'm Hilary Gordon ... but everybody calls me Jingle."

Pat knew at once who he was and felt well acquainted. She had heard Judy talk about the Gordons who had bought the little old Adams farm that marched with Silver Bush. They had no family of their own but an orphan nephew was living with them and Judy said it was likely he had poor pickings of it. He did not go to the North Glen school for the old Adams

place was in the South Glen school district, but they were really next-door neighbours.

2

They walked on. They did not talk much but Pat felt happy now as she trotted along. The moon rose and in its light she looked at him curiously. He had dark-coloured, horn-rimmed glasses ... that was what was the matter with his eyes. And he wore trousers of which one leg came to the knee and the other half way between knee and ankle, which Pat thought rather dreadful.

“I belong to Silver Bush, you know,” she said.

“I don’t belong anywhere,” said Jingle forlornly.

Pat wanted to comfort him for something she did not understand. She slipped her little hand into his ... he had a warm pleasant hand. They walked home together so. The wind ... the night ... were friendly again. The dark boughs of the trees, tossing against the silver moonlit sky, were beautiful ... the spicy, woodsy smells along the road delightful.

“Where does that road go?” asked Pat once as they passed an inviting path barred by moonlight and shadow.

“I don’t know but we’ll go and see some day,” said Jingle.

They were just like old, old friends.

And then the dear light of Silver Bush shining across the fields ... the dear house overflowing with welcoming light. Pat could have cried with joy to see it again. Even if nobody would be very glad to see her back the house would.

“Thank you so much for coming home with me,” she said shyly at the gate of the kitchen yard. “I was so frightened.”

Then she added boldly ... because she had heard Judy say a girl ought always to give a dacent feller a bite whin he had seen her home and Pat, for the credit of Silver Bush, wanted to do the proper thing ...

“I wish you’d come and have dinner with us Monday. We’re going to have chickens because it’s Labour Day. Judy says she labours that day just the same as any day but she always celebrates it with a chicken dinner. Please come.”

“I’d like to,” said Jingle. “And I’m glad McGinty and I happened along when you were scared.”

“Is McGinty the name of your dog?” asked Pat, looking at it a little timidly. Snicklefritz and Uncle Tom’s old Bruno were all the dogs she was acquainted with.

“Yes. He’s the only friend I’ve got in the world,” said Jingle.

“Except me,” said Pat.

Jingle suddenly smiled. Even in the moonlight she saw that he had a nice smile.

“Except you,” he agreed.

Judy appeared at the open kitchen door, peering out.

“I must run,” said Pat hastily. “Monday then. Don’t forget. And bring McGinty, too. There’ll be some bones.”

“Now who was ye colloquing wid out there?” asked Judy curiously. “Sure and ye might av brought yer beau in and let’s give him the once-over. Not but that ye’re beginning a trifle young.”

“That wasn’t a beau, Judy,” cried Pat, scandalised at the bare idea. “That was just Jingle.”

“Hear at her. And who may Jingle be, if it’s not asking too much?”

“Hilary Gordon ... and I was coming home alone ... and I got lost ... I was a *little* frightened, Judy ... and he’s coming to dinner on Monday.”

“Oh, oh, it’s the fast worker ye are,” chuckled Judy, delighted that she had got something to tease Pat about ... Pat who had never thought there was any boy in the world but Sidney.

But Pat was too happy to mind. She was home, in the bright kitchen of Silver Bush. The horror of that lonely road had ceased to be ... had never been. It was really beautiful to come home at night ... to step out of darkness into the light and warmth of home.

“Did ye save a piece of pie for me, Judy?”

“Oh, oh, that I did. Don’t I know the skimp males of the Bay Shore? Sure and it’s niver cut and come agin there. It’s more than a bit av pie I have for ye. What wud ye say now to a sausage and a baked pittaty?”

Over the supper Pat told Judy all about the day and her walk home.

“Think av the pluck av her, starting out alone like that on Shank’s mare,” said Judy, just as Pat had expected. That was the beauty of Judy. “Though I’m not saying it isn’t a good thing that Jingle-lad happened along whin he did. Mind ye ask the cratur over for a liddle bite now and agin. I knew ould Larry Gordon whin he lived on the Taylor farm beyant the store. He’s a skim milk man, that he is.”

Judy had several classifications of people who were not lavish. You were “saving” ... which was commendable. You were “close” ... which was on the border line. You were “near” ... which was over it. You were “skim milk” ... which was beyond the pale. But Judy could not resist giving Pat a sly dig.

“I s’pose me poor kitchen is very tame after the splendours av the Bay Shore farm?”

“Silver Bush kitchen is better than the Bay Shore parlour,” declared Pat: but she declared it drowsily. It had been a pretty full and strenuous day for eight years.

“Niver rub yer eyes wid innnything but yer elbows, me jewel,” cautioned Judy, as she convoyed Pat upstairs.

Mother, who had been singing Cuddles to sleep, slipped in to ask Pat if she had had a good time.

“The Bay Shore farm is such a lovely place,” said Pat truthfully. It *was* a lovely *place*. And Pat wouldn’t hurt mother’s feelings for the world by confessing that her visit to mother’s old home had not been altogether pleasant. Mother loved Bay Shore almost as well as she, Pat, loved Silver Bush. Dear Silver Bush! Pat felt as if its arms were around her protectingly as she drifted into dreamland.

Dinner Is Served

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1

Pat had a bad Sunday of it.

When she found that the old poplar had been cut down she mourned and would not be comforted.

“Look, me jewel, what a pretty bit av scenery ye can see between the hin-house and the church barn,” entreated Judy. “That bit av the South river, ye cud niver see it from here afore. Sure and here’s yer Sunday raisins for ye. Be ating thim now and stop fretting after an ould tree that wud better av been down tin years ago.”

Judy always gave every Silver Bush child a handful of raisins as a special treat for Sundays. Pat ate hers between sobs but it was not until evening that she would admit the newly revealed view was pretty. Then she sat at the round window and watched the silver loop of the river and another far blue hill, so far away that it must be on the very edge of the world. But still she missed the great, friendly, rustling greenness that had always filled that gap.

“I’ll never see the kittens chasing each other up that tree again, Judy,” she mourned. “They had such fun ... they’d run out on that big bough and drop to the henhouse roof. Oh, Judy, I didn’t think trees *ever* got old.”

Monday morning she remembered that she had asked Jingle to dinner. Remembered it rather dubiously. Suppose he came in those awful trousers with part of one leg missing? She dared not, for fear of being teased, ask Judy to put anything extra on the table. But she was glad when she saw Judy putting on the silver knives and forks and the second best silver cream jug.

“Why all this splendour?” demanded Joe.

“Sure and isn’t Pat’s beau coming to dinner?” said Judy. “We must be after putting our best foot forward for the credit av the fam’ly.”

“Judy!” cried Pat furiously. Neither then nor in the years to come could she endure having any one call Jingle her beau. “He isn’t my beau! I’m never going to have a beau.”

“Niver’s a long day,” said Judy philosophically. “Ye’d better be shutting Snicklefritz up, Joe, for I understand the young man’s bringing his dog and we don’t want inny difference av opinion atween thim.”

Presently Jingle and McGinty were discerned, hanging about the yard gate, too shy to venture further. Pat ran out to welcome him. To her relief he wore a rather shabby but quite respectable suit, with legs of equal length. He was bare-legged, to be sure, but what of that. All the boys in North Glen went barefooted in summer ... although not when asked out to dinner, perhaps. Somebody had given his brown hair a terrible cut. His eyes were invisible behind blue glasses, he had a pale face and an overlong mouth. Certainly he was not handsome but Pat still liked him. Also McGinty, who now revealed himself as a very young dog just starting out to see life.

“Doesn’t that stuffing smell good?” asked Pat, as she convoyed him into the kitchen. “And Judy’s made one of her applecakes for dessert. They’re delicious. Judy, this is Jingle ... and McGinty.”

The Silver Bush family accepted Jingle calmly ... Judy had probably warned them all. Dad gravely asked him if he would have white or dark meat and mother asked him if he took cream and sugar. You could always depend on father and mother, Pat felt. Even Winnie was lovely and made him take a second helping of applecake. What a family!

As for McGinty, Judy had set a big platter of meat and bones for him on the cellar hatch.

“Go to it, Mister Dog,” she told him. “I’ll warrant it’s a long day since ye saw the like av that at Maria Gordon’s.”

After dinner Jingle said shyly,

“Listen ... I saw some lovely rice lilies in our back field across the brook yesterday. Let’s go and get some.”

Pat had always longed to explore the brook that ran between Silver Bush and the old Adams place for a field's length and then branched across Adams territory. None of the Silver Bush children had ever been allowed to cross the boundary line. It was well known that old Mr. Adams wouldn't "have young ones stravaging over his fields."

"Do you think your uncle will mind?" asked Pat.

It turned out that neither uncle nor aunt was home. They had gone to spend Labour Day with friends.

"What would you have done for dinner if you hadn't come here?" exclaimed Pat.

"Oh, they left out some bread and molasses for me," said Jingle.

Bread and molasses on a holiday! This was skim milk with a vengeance.

"Mind ye don't poison yerselves wid mushrooms," warned Judy, handing them a bag of cinnamon buns. "I knew a b'y and girl onct as et a lot av toadstools in the woods by mistake."

"And I suppose they were never the same again?" said Joe teasingly.

"They've been dead iver since, if that's what ye mane be niver being the same agin," retorted Judy in a huff.

Once out of sight of the house Jingle's shyness dropped away from him and Pat found him a delightful companion ... so delightful that she had a horrible sense of disloyalty to Sid. She could only square matters by reminding herself that she was just terribly sorry for Jingle, who had no friends.

It was Jingle who proposed that they should name the brook Jordan because it "rolled between."

"Between our farm and yours," said Pat delightedly. Here was a pal who liked to name places just as she did.

"And let's build a bridge of stones over it, so that we can cross easy whenever we want to," proposed Jingle, who evidently took it for granted that there would be plenty of crossing.

That was fun; and when the bridge was made ... well and solidly, for Jingle would tolerate no jerry-building ... they had an afternoon of

prowling and rambling. They followed Jordan to its source at the very back of the old Adams place by fields that seemed made of sunshine and silence, over fences guarded by gay companies of goldenrod, through woods dappled with shadows, along little twisted paths that never did what you expected them to do. There was no end of lovely kinks and tiny cascades in the brook and the mosses on its banks were emerald and gold.

McGinty was in raptures. To roam like this was the joy of a little dog's life. He would race madly far ahead of them, then sit on his haunches waiting for them to come up with him, with his little red tongue lolling from his jaws. Pat loved McGinty; she was afraid she loved him better than curly, black Snicklefritz who, when all was said and done, was a one-man dog and a bit snappish with anybody but Joe. McGinty was such a dear little dog ... so wistful ... so anxious to be loved: with his little white cheeks and his golden-brown back and ears ... pointed ears that stuck straight up when he was happy and dropped a bit when he was mournful: and tail all ready to wag whenever any one wanted it to wag.

2

In the end they found a beauty spot ... a deep, still, woodland pool out of which the brook flowed, fed by a diamond trickle of water over the stones of a little hill. Around it grew lichen-spruces and whispering maples, with little "cradle hills" under them; and just beyond a breezy slope with a few mossy, grass-grown sticks scattered here and there, and a bluebird perched on the point of a picket. It was all so lovely that it hurt. Why, Pat wondered, did lovely things so often hurt?

"This is the prettiest spot I've ever seen," cried Pat ... "almost" ... remembering the Secret Field.

"Isn't it?" said Jingle happily. "I don't think any one knows of it. Let's keep it a secret."

"Let's," agreed Pat.

“It always makes me think of a piece of poetry I learned at school ... *The Haunted Spring* ... ever hear it?”

Jingle recited it for her. He must be clever, Pat thought. Even Sid couldn't recite a long piece of poetry off by heart like that. And some of the lines thrilled her like a chord of music ... “*gaily in the mountain glen,*” ... “*distant bugles faintly ring.*” But what did “*wakes the peasants' evening fears,*” mean? What was a peasant? Oh, just a farmer ... “*wakes the farmer's evening fears* ...” no, that was too funny. Better leave it peasant. She and Jingle had one of those chummy laughs that ripen friendship.

They sat on the hill, in the sweet, grass-scented air, and ate their cinnamon buns. Far down over the fields and groves they could see the blue plain of the gulf.

“There's a fairy diamond,” cried Pat, pointing ... that dazzling point of light sometimes seen for a moment in a distant field where a plough has turned up a bit of broken glass.

Jingle taught her how to suck honey out of clover horns. They found five little yellow flowers like stars by a flat lichened old stone and Jingle gloated over them through his absurd glasses. Pat was glad Jingle liked flowers. Hardly any boys did. Joe and Sid thought they were all right ... for girls.

McGinty lay with his head on Jingle's legs and his tail across Pat's bare knees. And then Jingle took a bit of birch bark from a fallen tree near them and, with the aid of a few timothy stems, made under her very eyes the most wonderful little house ... rooms, porch, windows, chimneys, all complete. It was like magic.

“Oh, how do you do it?” breathed Pat.

“I'm always building houses,” said Jingle dreamily, rolling McGinty over and clasping his hands around his sunburned knees. “In my head, I mean. I call them my dream-houses. Some day when I'm grown up I'm going to build them really. I'll build one for *you*, Pat.”

“Oh, will you really, Jingle?”

“Yes, I thought it out last Saturday night after I went to bed. And I’ll think of lots more things about it. It will be the loveliest house you ever saw, Pat, by the time I get it finished.”

“It couldn’t be lovelier than Silver Bush,” cried Pat jealously.

“Silver Bush *is* lovely,” admitted Jingle. “It satisfies me when I look at it. Hardly any other house does. When I look at a house I nearly always want to tear it down and build it right. But I wouldn’t change Silver Bush a bit.”

Canny Jingle! Pat never dreamed of doubting his opinions of houses after that.

McGinty turned over on his back and entreated some one to tickle his stomach.

“I wish Aunt Maria liked McGinty better,” said Jingle. “She doesn’t like him at all. I was afraid the day he chewed up one of her good table napkins she was going to send him away. But Uncle Lawrence said he could stay. Uncle Lawrence doesn’t mind McGinty but he laughs at him and McGinty can’t bear to be laughed at.”

“Dogs don’t,” said Pat knowingly, out of her extensive acquaintance of three dogs.

“McGinty has to sleep in the straw shed at nights. He howled so the other night I went out and slept with him. *Mother* would let him sleep indoors and bring his bones in.”

Pat’s eyes grew big with surprise. Jingle’s mother! Judy had called him an orphan. And hadn’t he himself said he hadn’t a friend in the world except McGinty?

“I thought your mother was ... dead.”

Jingle selected a timothy stalk and began to chew it with an affectation of indifference.

“No, my dad is dead. He died when I was a baby. Mother married again. They live in Honolulu.”

“Don’t you ever see her?” exclaimed Pat, to whom Honolulu meant simply nothing at all. But something in Jingle’s tone made her feel as if it must be very far away.

“Not often,” said Jingle, who could not bear to admit that he had no recollection of ever seeing his mother. “You see, her husband’s health is bad and he can’t stand the Canadian climate. But of course I write to her — every Sunday.”

He did not tell Pat that the letters were never sent but kept in a careful bundle in a box under his bed. Perhaps some day he could give them to mother.

“Of course,” agreed Pat, who had already accepted the situation with the unquestioning philosophy of eight. “What does she look like?”

“She’s ... she’s very pretty,” said Jingle stoutly. “She ... she has pale gold hair ... and big blue, shining eyes ... eyes as blue as that water out there.”

“Like Winnie’s,” said Pat, understandingly.

“I wish she didn’t have to live so far away,” said Jingle chokingly. He choked so valiantly that he choked something down. When you were a big boy of ten you simply mustn’t cry ... anyway, not before a girl.

Pat said nothing. She just put her skinny little paw on his and squeezed it. Pat, even at eight, had all the wisdom of the world.

They sat there until the air grew cool and faint blue shadows fell over faraway hills beyond which neither of them had ever been, and little shivers ran over the silver-green water of the Haunted Spring. To other people this might just be Larry Gordon’s back field. To Pat and Jingle it was, from that day, forever fairyland.

“Let’s name this place, too,” said Jingle. “Let’s call it Happiness. And let’s keep it a secret.”

“I love secrets,” said Pat. “It’s nice to have them. This has been a lovely afternoon.”

3

They were late for supper when they got back, but Judy fed them with fried ham and corn-cake in the kitchen. After Jingle and McGinty had

gone Judy asked Pat how she and her boyfriend had got on. Boyfriend was not so insulting as beau. Pat, hauling in a big word to impress Judy, condescended to remark haughtily,

“We entertained each other very well.”

“Oh, oh, I’m not doubting it. Sure and ye’ve picked a pretty good one for yer first. Ye can see there’s brading behind him.”

Judy was always so strong on breeding.

“He’s dreadful awkward, Judy.” Pat thought if she criticised him she might convince Judy there was nothing in this beau business. “Didn’t you see how he run into the door when he was coming out of the dining-room and begged its pardon?”

“Oh, oh, that’s why I’m saying he’s a gintleman. Wud inny one else have begged a dure’s pardon?”

“But he was so stupid he thought it was a person he’d run into.”

“Oh, oh, he isn’t that stupid. No, no, me jewel, he’s nobody’s fool, that lad. And he’s rale mannerly. He et his broth widout trying to swally the spoon and it’s meself has niver been able to tache Sidy that yet.”

“But he’s not a bit nicelooking, Judy ... not like Sid.”

“Oh, oh, I’m owning thim glasses av his do be giving him a quare look. And a shears-and-basin cut av hair niver improved inny one. But did ye be noticing how nice his ears were set against his head? And handsome is as handsome does. Remimber that, Miss Pat, whin ye be come to picking a man in earnest. He’s a bit thin and gangling but thim kind fills out whin they get older. Ye can tell be the look av him that he doesn’t be getting half enough to ate. Be sure ye ask him in for a male whiniver ye dacently can. They do be saying his mother neglicts him tarrible, she’s so taken up wid her fine new man.”

“Did you ever see her, Judy?”

“Niver ... and no one else round here. Jim Gordon married her out av Novy Scotia and they lived there. He did be dying just after the baby was born and his lady widow didn’t be wearing her weeds long. She married her second whin this Jingle-lad was no more’n two and wint away to foreign parts and left the baby wid his uncle Larry. Jim Gordon was as nice

a feller as iver stepped, aven if he did be always trying to make soup in a sieve. I'm thinking he'd turn over in his grave if he knew that Larry had the bringing-up av his b'y. Larry do be taking after his mother. His father was the gay lad wid a flattering tongue. He cudn't spake widout paying ye a compliment. But he was whispered to death."

"*Whispered* to death, Judy?"

"I'm telling ye. He bruk a poor girl's heart and she died. But her voice was always at his ear after that ... she whispered him to death for all av his fine new bride. Ye shud av seen him in church wid his head hanging down, hearing something that all the praching and singing cudn't drown. Oh, oh, 'tis an ould story now and better forgotten. There do be few fam'lies that haven't a skiliton in some av their closets. There was Solomon Gardiner over at South Glen ... the man who swore at God."

"What happened to him?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing?"

"Just that. Nothing iver happened to him agin. The Good Man Above just left him alone. Oh, oh, but it was hard on the family. Come and hilp me wid the turkeys now. But what's troubling ye, darlint?"

"I'm afraid, Judy ... perhaps Jingle has a flattering tongue, too. He said ... he said ..."

"Out wid it."

"He said I had the prettiest eyes he ever saw."

Judy chuckled.

"Sure and there's no great flattery in that. And to think av him that shy at dinner ye wud be thinking he cudn't say bo to a goose. There's a bit av Irish in the Gordons be token of their old lady grandmother."

"Do *you* think I have pretty eyes, Judy?" It was the first time Pat had ever thought about her eyes.

"Ye have the Selby eyes and Winnie has the Gardiner eyes and they'll both pass wid a shove. But niver be minding yer eyes for minny a year yet and don't be belaving all the b'ys say to ye, me jewel. Remimber compliments cost thim nothing."

When Judy's fine flock of white turkeys had been shooed off the graveyard fence and into their house Sid had arrived home in Uncle Brian's car. He had to be told about Jingle but took it quite easily ... to Pat's relief and something that was not relief. She almost wished he had taken it a little harder. Didn't he *care*?

"He needs a friend so much," she explained. "I've got three brothers now. But of course I'll always love you best, Sid." "Siddy."

"You'd better, old girl," said Sid. "If you don't I'll like May Binnie better'n you."

"Of course I couldn't love anybody better than my own family," said Pat, still wistfully.

But Sid ran in to coax a snack out of Judy Plum. He was in high spirits for he had just discovered a new wart on his left hand. That meant he was ahead of Sam Binnie at last. They had been ties for quite a time.

Pat crept a bit lonesomely up the back stairs and sat down by the round window. The little pearly pool over in the field was mirroring black spruce trees against a red sunset. For a moment the windows of the Long Lonely House were ablaze ... then went sorrowfully out. There was not even a kitten to be seen in the yard. Oh, if Sid had just been a *little* jealous of Jingle! She knew how *she* would feel if he had made a chum of any girl but her. Suppose he should ever like May Binnie better ... hateful May Binnie with her bold black eyes. For a moment she almost hated herself for liking Jingle.

Then she thought of Happiness and the water laughing down the stones in that secret place.

"Jingle likes my eyes," thought Pat. "Friends *are* nice."

Black Magic

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1

It was in the last week of October that McGinty disappeared. Pat was just as heartbroken as Jingle. It seemed now that Jingle and McGinty had been always part of her life ... as if there could never have been a time when they did not come over Jordan every Saturday afternoon or slip into Judy's kitchen in the chill "dims" for an evening of fun and laughter. To Jingle, who had never known a real home, these evenings were wonderful ... little glimpses into another world.

The only fly in Pat's ointment was that Sid and Jingle didn't hit it off very well. Not that they disliked each other; they simply did not speak the same language. Had they been older they might have said they bored each other. Sid thought Jingle a queer, moony fellow with his dream houses and his dark glasses and his ragged clothes, and said so. Jingle thought Sid had a bit too high an opinion of himself, even for a Gardiner of Silver Bush, and did not say so. Thus it came about that Pat and Sid played and prowled together after school, but Saturday afternoons, when Sid wanted to be off with Joe at the farm work, she gave to Jingle. For the most part they spent them in Happiness and Jingle built no end of houses and had a new idea every week for the house he was going to build for Pat. Pat was interested in it although of course she would never live anywhere but at Silver Bush. They explored woodland and barrens and stream but Pat never took Jingle to the Secret Field. *That* was her and Sid's secret just as Happiness was hers and Jingle's. Pat hugged herself in delight. Secrets were such lovely things. She used to sit in church and pity the people who didn't know anything about the Secret Field and Happiness.

McGinty went everywhere with them and was the happiest little dog in the world. And then ... there was no McGinty.

Pat found Jingle in Happiness one afternoon, face downwards amid the frosted ferns, sobbing as if his heart would break. Pat herself had been feeling a good deal like crying. For one thing, that hateful May Binnie had given Sid an apple in school the day before ... a wonderful apple with Sid's initials and her own ... such cheek! ... in pale green on its red side. May had pasted the letters over the apple weeks before and this was the result. Sid was quite tickled over it but Pat would have hurled the apple into the stove if she had dared. Sid put it on the dining-room mantel and she had to look at it during every meal. Then, too, Sid had been cross with her that morning because it had rained the day before.

"You prayed for rain Thursday night ... I heard you," he reproached her. "And you *knew* I wanted Friday to be fine."

"No, I didn't, Siddy," wailed Pat. "I heard dad saying the springs were so low ... and the one in Hap ... the one that Jordan comes from is. That was why I prayed for rain. I'm sorry, Siddy."

"Don't call me Siddy," retorted Sid, who seemed full of grievances just then. "You know I hate it."

"I won't, ever again," promised Pat. "Please don't be mad at me, Siddy ... Sid, I mean. I just can't bear it."

"Well, don't be a baby then. You're worse than Cuddles," said Sid. But he gave her a careless hug and Pat was partially comforted. Only partially. She set off for Happiness rather dolefully but the sight of Jingle's distress drove all thoughts of her own troubles from her mind.

"Oh, Jingle, what's the matter?"

"McGinty's gone," said Jingle, sitting up.

"Gone?"

"Gone ... or lost. He went with me to the store at Silverbridge last night and he ... he disappeared. I couldn't find him anywhere. Oh, Pat!"

Jingle's head went down again. He didn't care who saw him cry. Pat mingled her tears with his but assured him that McGinty would be found ... must be found.

Followed a terrible week. No trace of McGinty could be discovered. Judy was of opinion that the dog had been stolen. Jingle put up a notice in

the stores offering a reward of twenty-five cents ... all he had in the world ... for the recovery of McGinty. Pat wanted to make it forty-five cents ... she had a dime and was sure she could borrow another from Judy. But Jingle wouldn't let her. Pat prayed every bedtime that McGinty might be found and sat up in the middle of the night to pray again.

"Dear God, please bring McGinty back to Jingle. *Please*, dear God. You know he's all Jingle's got with his mother so far away."

And everything was in vain. There was no trace of McGinty. Jingle went home every night with no little golden-brown comrade running through the yard to meet him. He could not sleep, picturing a little lost dog alone in the world on a bleak autumn night. Where was McGinty? Was he cold and lonely? Maybe he wasn't getting enough ... or anything ... to eat.

"Judy, can't you do something?" begged Pat desperately. "You've always said there was a bit of a witch in you. You said once your grandmother could turn herself into a cat whenever she wanted to. Can't you find McGinty?"

Judy — who had, however, decided that something must be done before Pat worried herself to death ... shook her head.

"I've been trying, me jewel, but I know whin I'm bate. If I had me grandmother's magic book I might manage it. But there it is. My advice to ye is to go and see Mary Ann McClenahan on the Silverbridge road. She's a witch in good standing I belave, though I'm telling the world she do be a bit hefty for a broomstick. If she can't hilp ye I don't know av inny that can."

Pat had been compelled to give up believing in fairies but she still had an open mind towards witches. They had certainly existed once. The Bible said so. And you couldn't get away from the fact that Judy's grandmother had been one.

"Are you sure Mary Ann McClenahan is a witch, Judy?"

"Oh, oh, she always knows what ye do be thinking av. That shows she's a witch."

Pat ran to tell Jingle. She found him standing on the stone bridge over Jordan, scowling viciously at the sky and shaking his fist at it.

“Jingle ... you’re not ... praying that way?”

“No, I was just telling God what I thought of the whole business,” said Jingle despairingly.

But he agreed to go the next evening to Mary Ann McClenahan’s. They asked Sid to go, too ... the more the safer ... but Sid was training a young owl he had caught in the silver bush and declined to have any truck with witches. They started off staunchly, although Joe, going off to plough the Mince Pie field, with a delightful jingle of chains about his horses, solemnly warned them to watch out.

“Old Mary Ann signed her name in the devil’s book you know. *I’d* jump out of my skin if she looked cross-wise at me.”

Pat was not easily frightened and remained in her skin. If God, seemingly, wouldn’t pay any attention to your desperate little prayers could you be blamed if you resorted to a witch?

“Mind ye’re home afore dark,” cautioned Judy. “Sure and ‘tis Hollow Eve this blessed night and all the dead folks will be walking. Ye just do be telling Mary Ann yer story straight out and do as she bids ye.”

Jingle and Pat went down the lane where the wind blew the shadows of bare birches about and waves of dead leaves lay along under the spruce hedges. The late autumn sunshine flowed goldenly about them. The Hill of the Mist wore a faint purple scarf. Pat had on her new scarlet tam and was pleasantly conscious of it, amid all her anxieties about McGinty. Jingle strode along, his hands in his ragged pockets, and his still raggeder trousers flapping about his bare legs. Pat had never been out on the main road with him in broad daylight before. In Happiness and along the kinks of Jordan it did not matter how he was dressed. But here ... well, she hoped none of the Binnies would be abroad, that was all.

2

Mrs. McClenahan’s little, whitewashed house with its bright blue door was a good two miles from Silver Bush, along the Silverbridge road. A huge

willow, from which a few forlorn, pale-yellow leaves were fluttering down on the grey roof, overshadowed it, and there was a quaint little dormer window over the door.

“Oh, Pat, look at that window,” whispered Jingle, forgetting even McGinty in his momentary ecstasy. “I never saw such a lovely window. I’ll put one like that in *your* house.”

The window might be all right but the paling was very ragged and the yard it enclosed was a jungle of burdocks. Pat reflected that being a witch didn’t seem like a very profitable business after all. She thought shrewdly that if *she* had ever signed her name in the devil’s book she would have made a better bargain than that.

Jingle knocked on the blue door. Presently steps sounded inside. A prickly sensation went over Pat. Perhaps after all it was not right to tamper with the powers of darkness. Then the door opened and Mary Ann McClenahan stood on the threshold, looking down at them out of tiny black eyes, surrounded by cushions of fat. Her untidy hair was black too, coal-black, although she must be as old as Judy. Altogether she looked much too plump and jolly for a witch and Pat’s terror passed away.

“Now who may ye be and what might ye be wanting wid me,” said Mrs. McClenahan with an accent three times as strong as Judy’s.

Pat had the Selby trick of never wasting words or breath or time.

“Hilary Gordon here has lost his dog and Judy said if we came to you perhaps you could find it for him. That is, if you really are a witch. Are you?”

Mary Ann McClenahan’s look at once grew secretive and mysterious.

“Whisht, child ... don’t be talking av witches in the open daylight like this. Little ye know what might happen. And finding a lost cratur isn’t something to be done on a dure-step. Come inside ... and at that ye’d better come up to the loft where I can go on wid me waving. I’m waving a tablecloth for the fairies up there. All the witches in P. E. Island promised to do one apiece for thim. The poor liddle shiftless craturs left all ther tablecloths out in the frost last Tuesday night and ‘twas the ruination av thim.”

They went up the narrow stairs to a cluttered loft where Mrs. McClenahan's loom stood by the window that had caught Jingle's eye. On the sill a perfectly clean black cat was licking himself all over to make himself cleaner. His big, yellow, black-rimmed eyes shone rather uncannily in the gloom of the loft. In spite of his being a witch's cat Pat liked the look of him. What she would have felt like had she known that he was her lost and deplored Sunday, given to Mary Ann McClenahan by Judy a year before I cannot tell you. Luckily Sunday had grown out of all recognition.

Mrs. McClenahan pushed a stool and a rickety chair towards the children and went back to her weaving.

"Sure and I can't be wasting a moment. It's the quane's own cloth I'm waving and sour enough her Majesty'll look if it's not finished on time."

Pat knew very well it was only a flannel blanket Mary Ann was weaving but she was not going to contradict a witch. Besides ... perhaps Mary Ann *did* turn it into a gossamer web when she had finished it ... one of those things of jewelled mist and loveliness you saw on the grass and on the fern beds along the woods on a summer morning.

"So ye've come to get me to find the b'y's McGinty," said Mary Ann. "Oh, I know the name ... I'm after knowing all about it. Yer Aunt Edith's cat was telling mine the whole story at the last dance we had. Yer Aunt Edith do be too grand for the likes av us but it's liddle she thinks where her cat do be going be spells. It's lucky ye come in the right time av the moon. I cudn't have done a thing for ye nixt wake. But now there's maybe just a chanct. Why doesn't that fine lady mother av yours iver be coming to see ye, young Hilary Gordon?"

Jingle thought witches were rather impertinent. However, if you dealt with them ...

"My mother lives too far away to come often," he explained politely. Mary Ann McClenahan shrugged her fat shoulders.

"Ye're in the right to make excuses for her, young Hilary, but I've me own opinion av her and ye nadn't get mad at me for saying so bekase a

witch doesn't have to care who gets mad. And now that I've got that off me chist I'll be thinking av yer dog. It'll take a bit av conniving."

Mrs. McClenahan leaned over and extracted two handfuls of raisins from a paper bag on a shelf.

"Here, stow these away in yer liddle insides whilst I do a bit av thinking."

There was silence for awhile. The children devoted themselves to the business of eating and watching Mrs. McClenahan's shuttle fly back and forth. Pat eyed her wonderingly. Had she really signed her name in the devil's big black book, as Joe said?

Presently Mrs. McClenahan caught her eye and nodded.

"Ye've got a liddle mole on yer neck. Sure and 'tis the witch's mark. Come now, child dear, wudn't ye like to be a witch? Think av the fun av riding on a broomstick."

Pat *had* thought of it. The idea had a charm. Though she would have preferred to fly on a swallow's back, skimming over the steeples and dark spruce woods at night. But ...

"Must I sign my name in the devil's book?" she whispered.

Mrs. McClenahan nodded solemnly.

"I'd pick out a rale nice shiny black divil for ye ... though mind ye, it's the fact that aven divils are not what they used to be."

"I think I'm too young to be a witch, thank you," said Pat decidedly.

Mrs. McClenahan chuckled.

"Sure and it's the young witches that do be having the power, child dear. No sinse in waiting till ye're grey as an owl. Think it over ... 'tisn't ivery one can be a witch ... we're that exclusive ye'd niver belave. As for this McGinty cratur. Whin ye lave here folly yer noses up the hill and turn yerselves around free times, north, south, east and west. Then go down the hill to Silverbridge. There's a house just foreninst the bridge wid a rid door like yer Uncle Tom's, only faded like. Turn yerselves about free times again and knock twict on the door. And if innny one comes ... mind I'm not saying innny one will ... cross yer fingers and ask, 'Is McGinty here?' Thin, if ye get McGinty ... mind I'm not saying ye will ... make a

good use av yer legs and ask no questions. That's all I can be doing for ye."

"And what is your charge for the advice?" asked Jingle gravely, producing his quarter.

"Sure and we can't charge folks wid moles innnything. It's clane against our rules."

"Thank you very much, Mrs. McClenahan," said Pat. "We're very much obliged to you."

"You do be a pair av mannerly children at that," said Mrs. McClenahan. "If you hadn't been it wudn't be Mary Ann McClenahan that wud have hilped ye to a dog. I'm that fed up wid the sass and impidence av most av the fry around here. It was diffrunt whin I was young. Now hurry along ... sure and wise folks will be indures afore moonrise on Hollow Eve. Don't forget the turning round part or ye may look for yer McGinty till the eyes fall out av yer heads."

Mrs. McClenahan stood on her doorstep and watched them out of sight. Then she said a queer thing for a witch. She said,

"God bless the liddle craturs."

Whereat Mary Ann McClenahan waddled over to Mr. Alexander's across the road and asked if she might use their phone to call up a frind at the bridge, plaze and thank ye.

3

The October day was burning low behind the dark hills when Pat and Jingle left Mrs. McClenahan's. When they reached the top of the hill they turned themselves around three times and bowed gravely to north, south, east and west. When they paused before the red-doored house at Silverbridge they turned three times again. If there were no McGinty at the end of the quest it should be through no failure of theirs to perform Witch McClenahan's ritual scrupulously.

When Jingle knocked twice the door was opened with uncanny suddenness and the doorway filled by a giant of a man in sock feet, with a bushy red head and a week's growth of red whisker. A very strong whiff floated out, reminding Pat of something Judy took out of a black bottle now and again in winter for a cold.

They both crossed their fingers and Jingle said hoarsely,
"Is McGinty here?"

The man turned and opened a mean little door at his right. Inside, on a rickety chair, sat McGinty. The look of misery in the poor dog's eyes changed to rapture. With one bound he was in Jingle's arms.

"He come here one night about a wake ago," said the man. "That cold and hungry he was ... and we tuk him in."

"That was real good of you," said Pat, since Jingle was temporarily bereft of speech.

"Wasn't it that now?" said the man with a grin.

Something about him made Pat remember Witch McClenahan's advice to make friends of their legs.

"Thank you very much," she said, and pulled the tranced Jingle by the arm.

The red door was shut ... the red moon was staring at them just over a hill between two tall firs ... and they had a dog that was nearly dying of happiness in their arms. What a walk home that was! The whole world was touched with wonder. They went straight over the fields in a cross-country cut, with their long shadows running before them. Jingle walked in a kind of dreamy rapture, hugging McGinty, but Pat had eyes for all the charm of bare, lonely stubble fields, woods where boughs darkled against a sky washed white in moonlight and of a wind that had been only a whisper when they had left home but was now wild, cold, and rustly, sweeping up from the sea. They passed through Happiness where all the little cradle hills were sound asleep and along Jordan. Then down through the silver bush on a path that wound through moonlit birches to the backyard of home, where Sid had decorated the gateposts with wonderful turnip lanterns and Judy had set her little copper candlestick, saucer-shaped with

a curly handle, on the windowsill for welcome, and they had smelt her salt pork frying half way through the bush. Then the warm kitchen, full of delicious smells, and Judy's delight and welcome, and the supper of fried salt pork and potatoes baked in their jackets. Just the three of them. Sidney and Joe were doing the barn chores. Winnie was off with a chum, mother was upstairs with Cuddles, and dad was snoozing on the dining-room lounge.

After supper Pat and Jingle went down into the big, mysterious cellar, spooky with giant shadows, for apples, and then they all sat around the stove that was as good as a fireplace, with its doors that slid so far back, and talked things over. It was lovely to sit there, so cosy and warm, with that eerie wind moaning without ... full of the voices of ghosts, Judy said, for this was Hallow E'en. McGinty sprawled out on the black cat rug, his eyes fixed on Jingle, evidently afraid to go to sleep for fear he might waken to find this all a dream. Thursday, who had been missing for a day or two, had turned up, a fat and flourishing prodigal, and Gentleman Tom sat on the bench, thinking. Like Puck of Pook's Hill, Gentleman Tom could have sat a century, just thinking.

"I'm so glad it's got cold enough to have a fire in the evenings," said Pat. "And in winter it'll be even nicer. One can be so cosy in winter."

Jingle said nothing. His idea of winter evenings was very different. A cold, dirty kitchen ... a smoking coal oil lamp ... a bed in the unfinished loft. But just now he had his dog back and he was perfectly happy. To sit here and munch apples with Pat while Judy thumped and kneaded her bread was all he asked.

"Oh, oh, she isn't called a witch for nothing, that one," said Judy, when she had heard the whole tale. "I used to be after knowing the McClenahans rale well years ago. Tom McClenahan was a dacent soul although he'd talk the hind-leg off a cat whin he got started. A tarrible talker, I'm tellin ye. Onct he got mad whin Mary Ann twitted him wid his good going tongue, and swore he wudn't spake a word for a month. He kept the vow two days but he was niver the same man agin. The strain was too much for him. Mary Ann always belaved it was why he dropped dead in about a year's

time. He was a fine fiddler in his day and he had a fiddle that cud make iverybody dance.”

“*Make* them dance, Judy?”

“I’m telling ye. Whin folks heard it they *had* to dance. It was an ould fiddle his dad brought out from Ireland. Sure and he tried it on a minister onct, the spalpane.”

“Did the minister dance?”

“Didn’t he that? It made a tarrible scandal. They had him up afore Presbytery. Tom offered to go and fiddle to the whole lot av thim to prove poor Mr. MacPhee cudn’t hilp it, but they wudn’t have him. A pity now. Think what a sight it wud av been ... a dozen or more long-tailed ministers all dancing to Tom McClenahan’s fiddle. Oh, oh! But they let Mr. MacPhee off and hushed the whole thing up. Is it going ye are, Jingle? Well, say a prayer for all poor ghosts and have as liddle truck wid witches as ye can after this. All very well for onct in a while but not to make a habit av it.”

Jingle slipped away, meaning to spend the night in the Gordon hayloft with McGinty, and sleepy Pat went happily to bed.

“Why do you fill those children up with all that nonsense about witches, Judy?” called Long Alec, half laughing, half rebuking, from the dining room. He had been rated that day by Edith for allowing Judy Plum to stuff his children with such lies as she did and felt it was time for one of his spasmodic attempts to regulate her. Judy chuckled.

“Rest ye aisy, Alec Gardiner. They only half belave it and they do be getting a big kick out av it. I’ll warrant Mary Ann had her fun wid them.”

“What made you think of sending them to her?”

“Sure now I’d an idea she’d know where McGinty was. She’s in wid that gang at Silverbridge that stole Rob Clark’s collie and all Mrs. Taylor’s barred rocks wake afore last and thim all ready for market. Mary Ann’s be way av being an aunt be marriage to Tom Cudahy av the rid door. But she’s that kindhearted, the cratur, and rale soft about children and I thought she might hilp. She’s got a bit av money saved up and the Cudahys pipe whin she calls the tune. So all’s well that inds well and niver be bothering if the

children do be having a liddle fun thinking she's a witch. Sure and didn't I bring all of yes up on witches and are ye inny the worse av it? I'm asking ye."

Company Manners

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1

Winter that year, at least in its early months, was a mild affair, and Pat and Jingle, or Pat and Sid, as the case might be, but seldom the three together, roamed far afield at will, exploring new haunts and re-loving old ones, running through winter birches that wore stars in their hair on early falling dusks, coming in from their frosty rambles with cheeks like “liddle rid apples,” to be fed and cossetted and sometimes scolded by Judy. At least, she scolded Sid and Pat when she thought they needed it for their souls’ good, but she never scolded Jingle. He wished she would. He thought it would be nice if some one cared enough about you to scold ... in Judy’s way, with sly laughter lurking behind every word and apples and cinnamon buns to bind up your bruised feelings immediately afterwards. Even his aunt did not scold him ... she merely ignored him as if he had no existence for her at all. Jingle used to go home after one of Judy’s tirades feeling very lonely and wondering what it would be like to be important to somebody.

Though snowless, it was cold enough to freeze the Pool solid. Sid taught Pat to skate and Jingle learned for himself, with a pair of old skates Judy dug out of the attic for him. Jingle skating, his long legs clad as usual in ragged trousers, his lanky body encased in an old “yallery-green” sweater whose sleeves his aunt had darned with red, his ill-cut hair sticking out from under an old cap of his uncle’s, was rather an odd object.

“Isn’t he a sight?” laughed Sid.

“He can’t help his looks,” said Pat loyally.

“Oh, oh, that b’y will be having the fine figure whin he’s filled out a bit and he’s got more brains in his liddle finger than ye have in yer whole carcase, Sid, me handsome lad,” said Judy.

And then unreasonable Pat was furious with Judy for maligning Sid.

“Sure and it’s the hard life I have among ye all,” sighed Judy. “Be times I’m thinking I’d better have taken ould Tom. Well, they tell me he’s single yet.”

Whereupon Pat dissolved in tears and begged Judy to forgive her and never, never leave them.

Although once in a while a few delicate white flakes flew against your face in the late afternoons, it was December before the first real snow came, just in time to make a white world for Christmas, much to Judy’s relief, since a green Christmas meant a fat graveyard, she said. Pat sat curled up at her round window and watched gardens and fields and hills grow white under the mysterious veil of the falling snow, and the little empty nests in the maple by the well fill up with it. Every time she looked out the world had grown whiter.

“I love a snowstorm,” she said rapturously to Judy.

“Oh, oh, is there innything ye don’t love, me jewel?”

“It’s nice to love things, Judy.”

“If ye don’t be loving thim too hard. If ye do ... they hurt ye too much in the ind.”

“Not Silver Bush. Silver Bush will never hurt me, Judy.”

“What about whin ye have to lave it?”

“You know I’m never going to leave Silver Bush, Judy ... never. Oh, Judy, see how white the Hill of the Mist is. And how lonesome the Long Lonely House looks. I wish I could go and build a fire in it sometimes and warm it up. It would feel better.”

“Oh, oh, ye’re not thinking houses raly fale, are ye now?”

“Oh, Judy, I’m *sure* they do. Jingle says so, too. I know Silver Bush does. It’s glad when we are and sorry when we are. And if it was left without any one to live in it it would break its heart. I know Silver Bush has always been a little ashamed of me because I could never get up in school Friday afternoons and say a piece like the others. And then last Friday I did. I learned the *Haunted Spring* from Jingle and I got up on the floor ... oh, Judy, it was awful. My legs shook so ... May Binnie giggled

... and I couldn't get a word out. I was just going to run back to my seat ... and I thought of Silver Bush and how could I come home and face it if I was such a coward. And I just up and said my piece right out and Miss Derry said, 'Well done, Patricia,' and the scholars all clapped. And when I came home I'm sure Silver Bush smiled at me."

"Ye're a quare child enough yet," said Judy. "But I'm glad ye didn't let May Binnie triumph over ye. That's a liddle girl I'm not liking much and I don't care who knows it."

"Sid likes her," said Pat, a bit forlornly.

2

Soon Silver Bush became a house full of secrets. Mystery lurked everywhere and Judy went about looking like a bobbed Sphinx. Pat helped her make the pudding and helped Winnie and mother decorate the dining room and wreath the banisters with greenery from the woods around the Secret Field. And she helped Sid pick his presents in the Silverbridge store for every one but her. She did not feel hurt when he slipped off upstairs in the store to the room where the dishes were kept and she did not ask him what the bulging parcel in his pocket was as they went home. She only wondered a bit dismally whether it was for her or May Binnie.

It was such fun wading home from the mailbox with armfuls of brown parcels that were not to be opened until Christmas morning and then revealed lovely boxes of silver paper tied with gold ribbons. Christmas itself was a wonderful day. Jingle and McGinty came for dinner. They had had a narrow escape from not coming. Pat was so mad because Judy told her to be sure and ask her beau that she wouldn't say a word to Jingle about it until the very "dim" of Christmas Eve. Then she suddenly relented and tore off to the garret to set a candle in the window. There was no telephone at the Gordon place and she and Jingle had agreed that when she wanted him specially she was to set a light in the garret window. Jingle

arrived speedily and so got his Christmas invitation by the skin of his teeth.

It was the first time in his life that Jingle had had a real Christmas and McGinty nearly died of the dinner he ate. Everybody got presents ... even Jingle. Judy gave him a pair of mittens and Pat gave him a little white china dog with blue eyes and a pink china ribbon around its neck ... the best she could afford after all the family had been remembered out of her small hoard. Nobody knew what earthly use it could be to Jingle but he slept with it under his pillow that night and got more warmth from it than from Judy's mittens. His mother had not sent him anything ... not even a letter. It took all the comfort Jingle got out of the blue-eyed dog to keep back the tears when he remembered this. He tried to make excuses for her. Perhaps in Honolulu, that land of eternal summer, they didn't have Christmases.

Sidney gave Pat a jug with a golden lining ... a little fat brown jug that seemed somehow to have grown fat from laughing. Pat loved it but she thought Jingle's present the most wonderful thing she got. A doll's house which he had made himself and which was really a much more wonderful bit of work than Pat had any idea of. Long Alec whistled when he saw it and Uncle Tom said, "By ginger!"

"I hadn't any money to buy you a present," said Jingle, who had spent his solitary, long-saved quarter on a Christmas card for his mother, "so I made this."

"I like something that's made better than something that's bought," said Pat. "Oh, what chimneys ... and real windows that *open*."

"That's nothing to the house I'll build for you some day, Pat."

Christmas Day was just like all the pleasant Christmases at Silver Bush. The only exciting thing was a terrible fight all over the kitchen between Gentleman Tom and Snooks, the pet owl. Snooks was quite a family pet by now. He endured and was endured by Thursday and Snicklefritz but he and Gentleman Tom had declared war on each other at sight. Gentleman Tom was licked and fled into ignominious retreat under

the stove: but there were a good many feathers strewn over the kitchen floor first.

One night the following week Pat excitedly called out to Judy,

“Oh, Judy ... Judy ... I’ve got a growing pain!”

She had never had growing pains and both she and Judy were afraid she wouldn’t grow properly. Long Alec talked worriedly of rheumatism but Judy laughed at him and sat up half the night rubbing Pat’s legs joyously.

“Ye’ll be taking a start this spring and growing like a weed after this,” she promised Pat. “Sure and it’s a rare relief to me mind, I’m telling ye. I’m not wanting inny sawed-off girls at Silver Bush.”

3

After Christmas the snow went away and the January winds whined over cold, hard-frozen pastures and through grey, cold trees. Only the red edges of the furrows in the Mince Pie field had little feathers of white on them and a persistent wreath lay along the north side of the Hill of the Mist.

January evenings were pleasant at Silver Bush. Uncle Tom would come over and he and dad would sit by Judy’s stove and talk, while Pat and Jingle and Sidney listened and Winnie and Joe studied their lessons in the dining room. They would talk of politics and pigs and finally drift into family histories and community tales. The whitewashed walls of the old kitchen reechoed to their laughter. Sometimes Uncle Tom got mad and the shadow of his big beard would quiver with indignation on the wall. But Uncle Tom’s rages never lasted long. One thump of his fist on the table and all was well again.

Sometimes mother would come in with Cuddles and sit for awhile just looking beautiful. Mother never talked much. Perhaps she couldn’t get a chance, what with Judy and dad and Uncle Tom. But sometimes she looked at Pat and Sidney and little Cuddles with eyes that made a lump come into Jingle’s throat. To have a mother look at you like that!

“Judy,” Pat said after one of these evenings, when she was sleeping with Judy because Winnie had a chum in. “I don’t see how heaven could be any better than this.”

“Oh, oh, will ye listen at her?” said the scandalised Judy. “Sure and do ye be thinking there’ll be a biting wind like that wailing around the windy in heaven?”

“Oh, I like that wind, Judy. It makes it seem cosier ... to cuddle here snug and warm and think it can’t get at you. Listen to it tearing down through the silver bush, Judy. Now please, Judy, tell me a ghost story. It’s so long since I’ve slept with you ... please, Judy. Something that’ll just make the flesh creep on my bones.”

“Did I iver tell ye about how Janet McGuigan come back for her widding ring the night after she was buried, her man having tuk it off her finger afore they coffined her, thinking it might come in handy for his second? Oh, oh, the McGuigans do be that farseeing.”

“How did they know she came back for it?”

“I’m telling ye. The ring wasn’t in Tom McGuigan’s cash-box the nixt morning. But six years afterwards whin he tuk a plot in the new graveyard they tuk up her coffin to shift it and it bruk open ... being an economical kind av coffin, ye see ... and there on her hand was the ring. Oh, oh, me saving Tom was niver the same agin.”

February and still no snow. Judy began to talk of getting ready to hook a big crumb-cloth for the dining room, a bigger one than Aunt Edith’s of which she was so proud. “Oh, oh, I’ll be taking the pride av her down a peg or two,” vowed Judy. Her dye-pot was always on the stove. She was an expert in homemade dyes. No “bought” dyes for Judy. They faded in a year, she averred. Crottle and lichens and barks ... elderberries that gave purple dyes ... the inner bark of birch trees for brown ... green dye from willow stems ... yellow from Lombardy poplars. Judy knew them all and she and the children tramped far afield searching for them.

And then came March, with its mad, galloping winds, and the anniversary of father’s and mother’s wedding day. The Gardiners always celebrated birthdays and wedding days by a little family gathering of some

kind. This year Uncle Brian's family and Aunt Helen Taylor were the guests. They were to come in the afternoon and have dinner at night ... an innovation that made Judy's head whirl.

"Oh, oh, this having company isn't what it's cracked up to be," she muttered discontentedly.

Pat was in her element, although she was not looking forward to the party quite as joyously as usual. Uncle Brian was no friend of hers because whenever he came to Silver Bush he was always saying to father, "If I were you I'd make some changes here." And Aunt Helen was coming ... rich Aunt Helen, dad's sister but so much older that she seemed more like his aunt than his sister. And Aunt Helen, Judy said, was coming to take either Winnie or Pat back to Summerside for a visit.

Pat hoped and prayed Aunt Helen wouldn't take her. She didn't want to leave Silver Bush ... why, she had never slept out of it a night in her life. It would be terrible. But how happy it made her to do little, homely services for the dear house. To dust and polish and bake and run errands. To help get out mother's wedding set of fluted china with the gold pansy on the side of the cups and in the centre of the plates. She and Winnie were allowed to fix up the Poet's Room and make the bed a thing of beauty with a lace spread and cushions like flowers. Judy concocted and baked, and Cuddles tasted everything that came her way, including a frosty latch. After which she tasted no more of anything for a time but lived on malted milk.

When the feast day came Pat was careful to put on her blue georgette dress. She didn't like it as well as her red one but it was its turn and it mustn't be neglected. How she hoped Aunt Helen wouldn't choose her! It took all the fun out of the party for Pat. Suppose she pretended to be sick? No, Judy might give her castor oil, as she had done the last time Pat had a cold.

"Why don't you give me something out of your black bottle, Judy?" Pat had protested. "That smells nicer than castor oil."

"Oh, oh." Judy looked very sly. "'Tis too strong entirely for the likes av ye... ."

“*What* is in that bottle, Judy?”

“Oh, oh, ‘tis only last wake I was burying a cat that died av curiosity,” retorted Judy. “Not another skelp out av ye and swally this tay-spoon at once.”

Even Aunt Helen would be better than castor oil. But perhaps she would be sick and not able to come. Would it be wrong, Pat wondered, to pray that somebody might be sick ... not very sick ... just a little sick ... just enough to make them not want to come out on a cold, blustery March day?

Pat wound a blue scarf around her head and she and Jingle climbed up into the hayloft of the church barn where they could watch for the arrivals through the oriel window, while McGinty hunted imaginary rats over the mow or lay before them and pretended to be dead when he thought himself neglected. Every car or buggy that drove up or down the road made Pat squirm with fear that it was Aunt Helen. She *did* come ... in Uncle Brian’s car and waddled up through the garden.

“She looks just like a jug,” said Pat resentfully.

And Uncle Brian’s Norma was with them. Pat had hoped Norma wouldn’t come either. She didn’t like her because Norma was reputed prettier than Winnie.

“I don’t think she’s half as pretty,” she said.

“*You* look awful nice in that blue scarf, Pat,” said Jingle admiringly.

Which would have been all right if he had stopped there. But he went on and said the thing that spoiled it all.

“Pat ... when we grow up ... with you be *my* girl?”

Pat, not at all realising that at nine she had just had what was practically her first proposal, went scarlet with anger.

“If you ever say anything like that to me again, Hilary Gordon, I’ll never speak to you as long as I live,” she stormed.

“Oh, all right, I didn’t mean to make you mad,” said Jingle abjectly. “Don’t you like me?”

“Of course I like you. But I’m *never* going to be *anybody*’s girl.”

Jingle looked so woebegone that it made Pat madder still ... and cruel.

“If I was anybody’s girl,” she said distinctly, “he’d have to be goodlooking.”

Jingle took off his spectacles.

“Ain’t I better looking now?” he demanded.

He *was*. Pat had never seen his eyes before. They were large and grey and steady with a twinkle somewhere behind their steadiness. But Pat was in no mood to admire.

“Not a great deal. Your hair is all raggedy and your mouth is too wide. Sid says it would take a foot-rule to measure it.”

And Pat shook the dust of the hayloft from her feet and departed indignantly.

“Maybe she’ll change her mind,” said McGinty.

“She’ll have to,” said Jingle.

4

But the day continued to go criss-cross for Pat. She fell foul of Norma as soon as she went in. Norma was going about, tossing her famous redgold curls, with her nose cocked up and her greenish-brown eyes full of contempt. “So *this* is Silver Bush,” she said. “It’s an awful old-fashioned place.”

Again Pat crimsoned with wrath.

“Shutters give a house an *air*,” she said.

“Oh, I don’t mean the shutters. We’ve got shutters on our house, too ... ever so much greener than yours. You should just see *our* house. You haven’t a verandah ... or even a garage.”

“No. But we’ve got a graveyard,” said Pat triumphantly.

Norma was a bit floored. She couldn’t deny the graveyard.

“And you haven’t got a Poet’s room or a round window,” went on Pat still more tauntingly. The mention of the window gave Norma an inspiration.

“You haven’t *one* bay window,” she cried. “Not one. We’ve got three ... two in the living room and one in the dining room. A house without any bay window is just *funny*.”

To hear Silver Bush called funny! Pat simply couldn’t stand it. She slapped Norma’s pink-and-white face ... slapped it hard.

Then there was what Judy called a tommyshaw. Norma screamed and burst into tears. Mother was horrified ... dad was shocked ... or pretended to be. Judy came in and frog-marched Pat to the kitchen.

“A nice show ye’ve made av yerself!”

“I don’t care ... I don’t care ... I *won’t* let her make fun of Silver Bush,” sobbed Pat. “I’m glad I slapped her. You can scold me all you like. I’m *glad*.”

“The timper av her!” said Judy. And then went up to her room and sat on her blue chest and laughed till she cried.

“Oh, oh, didn’t me fine Miss Norma get her comeuppance for onct, wid her airs and graces and her slams about the house her father was brought up in!”

Pat was not allowed to have dinner in the dining room. For punishment she must eat in the kitchen. To be punished because she had stood up for Silver Bush. It was too much.

“I’d *rather* eat here with you, Judy, any time,” she sobbed. “But it’s my *feelings* that are hurt.”

There was balm in Gilead. Aunt Helen was so shocked at Pat’s behaviour that there was no question of inviting her to Summerside. Winnie went with her. Pat made her peace with the family ... none of whom cared much for the spoiled Norma ... and she and Sid and Judy picked the bones of the sacrificial turkeys before they went to bed, while Judy told them all about Norma’s grandmother on the mother’s side.

“Oh, oh, it’s the quare one she was and the foolish things she wud be saying. Her poor husband was long in dying and she did be after grudging him ivery breath he drew. ‘If he lives too long I’ll niver get another man,’ she sez to me, time and time again, mournful like. And nather she did. He

hung on till he spiled her chances and it wasn't Judy Plum that was sorry for her, I'm telling ye."

The Shadow of Fear

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1

No sooner had Winnie gone than winter came in a day. Pat's round window was thick furred with snow; the Whispering Lane was filled with huge drifts through which dad and Uncle Tom shovelled a fascinating narrow path until they met at the gate. The piles of stones in the Old Part of the orchard were marble pyramids. The Hill of the Mist shone like silver. The hill field was a dazzling white sheet. Even the stony field was beautiful. Pat remembered that the Secret Field must be lovely, with Wood Queen and Fern Princess standing guard.

The graveyard was filled almost to the level of the paling.

"Sure and aven Wild Dick wud find it hard to get out av that," said Judy, busy providing comforts for cold little creatures ... cats and dogs and chickens and children.

Pat liked a big storm. Especially did she love to snuggle in warm, fluffy blankets and defy the great, dark, wintry night outside her cosy room, hugging her hot water bottle. A hot water bottle was such a nice thing. You kneaded your toes in it; when your feet were warm as warm could be you held it close in your arms: and finally you put it against the cold spot in your back. And the first thing you knew it was morning and the sun was shining through the drift ... and the hot water bag was unpleasantly like a clammy dead rat just behind you.

It was rather nice, too, to have one's room all to oneself; still, she missed Winnie terribly ... the blue laughter of her eyes ... the silver music of her voice.

"Just two more weeks and Winnie'll be home," she counted exultantly.

It was in school that she heard it. Of course it was May Binnie who told her.

“So your Aunt Helen is going to adopt Winnie.”

Pat stared at her.

“She isn’t.”

May giggled.

“Fancy your not knowing. Of course she is. It’s a great thing for Winnie, ma says. And it might have been you if you hadn’t slapped Norma’s face.”

Pat stood staring at May. Something had fallen over her spirit like the cold grey light that swept over the world before a snow squall in November. She was too chilled to resent the fact that Sid must have told May about her slapping Norma. There was no room for any but the one terrible thought. It was only afternoon recess but Pat rushed to the porch, snatched her hat and coat, and started home, stumbling wildly along the deep-rutted, drifted road. Oh, to get home to mother ... mother now, not Judy. Judy did for little griefs but for this, only mother ... to tell her this ghastly thing was not true ... that nobody had ever thought of such a thing as Winnie going to live with Aunt Helen.

“Oh, oh, and what’s bringing ye home so early?” cried Judy, as Pat stumbled, half-frozen, into the kitchen. “Ye’ve niver walked all that way in thim roads ... and yer Uncle Tom was going for ye all in his fine new pung.”

“Where’s mother?” gasped Pat.

“Mother, is it? Sure yer dad and her is gone over to the Bay Shore. They phoned over that yer Aunt Frances was down with pewmony. Whatever is it that’s the matter wid the child?”

But for the first time Pat had nothing to say to Judy. The question she had to ask could not be asked of Judy. Judy, rather huffed, let her alone, and Pat ranged the deserted house like a restless ghost. Oh, how empty it was! Nobody there ... neither mother nor father nor Cuddles. Nor Winnie! And perhaps Winnie would never be back. Suppose her laugh would never be heard again at Silver Bush!

“Something’s been happening in school,” reflected Judy uneasily. “I’m hoping she didn’t get into a ruckus wid her lady tacher. I niver cud be

knowing what the trustees mint be hiring ould Arthur Saint's girl for a tacher, wid her hair the colour av a rid brick."

Pat could eat no supper. Bedtime came and still father and mother were not back. Pat cried herself to sleep. But she awoke in the night ... sat up ... remembered sickeningly. Everything was quiet. The wind had gone down and Silver Bush was cracking in the frost. Through her window she could see the faint light of stars over the dark fir trees that grew along the dyke between the Silver Bush and Swallowfield pastures. Pat found just then that things always seem worse in the dark. She felt she could not live another minute without knowing the truth.

Resolutely she got out of bed and lighted her candle. Resolutely the small white figure marched down the silent hall, past Joe's room and the Poet's room to father's and mother's room. Yes, they were home, sound asleep. A fragrant adorable Cuddles was curled up in her little crib but for the first time Pat did not gloat over her.

Long Alec and his tired wife, just fallen soundly asleep after a cold drive over vile roads, were wakened to see a desperate little face bending over them.

"Child, what's the matter? Are you sick?"

"Oh, dad, Aunt Helen isn't going to adopt Winnie? She isn't, is she, dad?"

"Look here, Pat." Dad was stern. "Have you come here and wakened your mother and me just to ask that?"

"Oh, dad, I *had* to know."

Mother understandingly put a slender hand on Pat's shaking arm.

"Darling, she's not going to adopt her ... but she may keep her for awhile and send her to school. It would really be a great thing for Winnie."

"Do you mean ... Winnie wouldn't come back *here*?"

"It isn't settled yet. Aunt Helen only threw out a hint. Of course Winnie'll be home *often*. ..."

The following week of dark, tortured days was the hardest Pat had ever known in her life. She could not eat and the sight of Winnie's vacant place at meals reduced her to tears. Her family found it rather hard to make excuses for what they thought was her unreasonable behaviour.

"Just humour her a liddle," pleaded Judy. "She's that worked up and miserable she doesn't know which ind of her is up. A bird cudn't be living on what she ates."

"You spoil her, Judy," said Long Alec severely. He was out of patience with Pat's moping.

"Iverybody do be the better for a bit av sp'iling now and thin," said Judy loyally. But she tried to bring Pat into a more reasonable frame of mind.

"Don't ye want Winnie to get an eddication?"

"She could get an education at home," sobbed Pat.

"Not much av a one. Oh, oh, I'd have ye know the Gardiners don't be like the Binnies. 'We're not going to eddicate Suzanne,' sez me Madam Binnie. 'Soon as she'd get through Quane's she'd marry and the money'd be wasted.' No, no, me jewel, the Gardiners are a differunt brade av cats. Winnie's thirteen. Sure and she'll soon be wanting to study for her intrance and who's ould Arthur Saint's daughter for that I'm asking ye? Ye'll niver convince me she knows a word av the Lating and French."

"English is good enough for anybody," protested Pat.

"Ye'll find it isn't good enough for Quane's," retorted Judy. "Winnie'd be able to go to the Summerside schools and yer Aunt Helen cud do more for her than yer dad iver can, wid his one small farm and the five av ye ating it up. Now, stop fretting, me jewel, and come and cut rags for me while I do a bit av hooking."

Then came the letter from Aunt Helen for dad. Pat, her hands locked behind her so that no one should see them trembling, stood mutely by while Long Alec deliberately tried on two pairs of spectacles, scrutinised the stamp, remarked that Helen had always been a pretty writer, hunted up a knife to slit the envelope ... took out the letter. Outside in the yard somebody was laughing. How dared anybody laugh at such a moment?

“Helen says Brian is bringing Winnie home Saturday,” he announced casually. “So I guess she’s given up the notion of keeping her. I always thought she would. So that’s that.”

“Oh, I *must* be flying,” thought Pat as she ran to tell Judy. Judy admitted satisfaction.

“It do be just as well I’m thinking. Helen was always a bit of a crank. And I’m not thinking it’s a wise-like thing to break up a family inny sooner than nade be.”

“Isn’t a family one of the loveliest things in the world, Judy?” cried Pat. “And oh, look at Gentleman Tom. Isn’t he sitting cute?”

“Oh, oh, it’s the different looking girl ye are from the morning. Iverything plazes ye tonight, aven the way a poor cat arranges his hams,” chuckled Judy, who was overjoyed to see her darling happy again.

Pat ran out in the twilight to tell the good news to the silver bush and the leafless maples. She looked with eyes of love at the old, snow-roofed house drawing its cloak of trees around it in the still mild winter evening. Even in winter Silver Bush was lovely because of what it sheltered and hoped for.

Then she ran back in and up to the garret to set a light for Jingle. Jingle had been her only comfort during the past dreadful week. Even Sid hadn’t seemed to worry much whether Winnie came home or not. He hoped she would, of course, but he didn’t lose sleep over it. Jingle had always assured Pat she would. Who, he thought, wouldn’t come back to Silver Bush if she could? So now he came to share in Pat’s joy. The two of them waded back along Jordan to Happiness; it was buried in snow but the Haunted Spring was still running freshly, hung about with jewels. How lovely the silvery world was ... how lovely the white hills of snow! They did not get home till nearly eight and Judy scolded.

“I’m not having ye roaming off wid any Jingle if ye can’t be home and to bed at the proper time.”

“What is the proper time for going to bed, Judy?” laughed Pat. Every word was a laugh with Pat tonight. And oh, how good supper tasted!

“Sure now and ye’re asking a question that’s niver been answered,” chuckled Judy.

Saturday came with more March wind and snow. Oh, it shouldn’t storm the day Winnie was coming home. Perhaps Uncle Brian wouldn’t bring her if it stormed. But in the late afternoon the sun came out below the storm cloud and made a dazzling fair world. The rooms of Silver Bush were all filled with a golden light from the clearing western sky. All the gardens and yards and orchards were pranked out with the exquisite shadows of leafless trees.

And then they came, right out of the heart of the wild winter sunset. Winnie was very glad Aunt Helen had decided not to keep her.

“She said I laughed too much and it got on her nerves,” Winnie told Pat. “Besides, I put pepper in the potatoes instead of salt the day her maid was away ... oh, by mistake of course. That settled it. She said I had the makings of a sloppy housekeeper.”

“Silver Bush is *glad* to hear you laugh,” whispered Pat, hugging her savagely.

The storm came up again in the night. Pat woke up and heard it ... remembered that everything was all right and sank happily to sleep again. What difference now how much it stormed? All her dear ones were near her, safe under the same kindly roof. Dad and mother and little Cuddles ... Joe and Sidney ... Judy in her own eyrie, with her black Gentleman Tom curled up at her feet ... Thursday and Snicklefritz behind the kitchen stove. And Winnie was home ... home to stay!

Elizabeth Happens

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1

“I smell spring!” Pat cried rapturously, sniffing the air one day ... the day she discovered the first tiny feathery green sprays of caraway along the borders of the Whispering Lane. That same night the frogs had begun to sing in the Field of the Pool. She and Jingle heard them when they were coming home in the “dim” from Happiness.

“I love frogs,” said Pat.

Jingle wasn’t sure he liked frogs. Their music was so sad and silver and far away it always made him think of his mother.

Never, Pat reflected, looking back over her long life of almost nine years, had there been such a lovely spring. Never had the long, rolling fields around Silver Bush been so green: never had the gay trills of song in the maple by the well been so sweet: never had there been such wonderful evenings full of the scent of lilacs: and never had there been anything so beautiful as the young wild cherry tree in Happiness or the little wild plum that hung over the fence in the Secret Field. She and Sid went back to pay a call on their field one Sunday afternoon, to see how it had got through the winter. It was always spring there before it was spring anywhere else. Their spruces tossed them an airy welcome and the wild plum was another lovely secret to be shared.

Everything was so *clean* in spring, Pat thought. No weeds ... no long grass ... no fallen leaves. And all over the house the wholesome smell of newly-cleaned rooms. For Judy and mother had been papering and scrubbing and washing and ironing and polishing for weeks. Pat and Winnie helped them in the evenings after school. It was lovely to make Silver Bush as beautiful as it could be made.

“Sure and I do be getting spring fever in me bones,” said Judy one night. The next day she was down with flu; it ran through the whole family ... lightly, with one exception. Pat had it hard ... “as she do be having iverything, the poor darlint,” thought Judy ... and did not pick up rapidly. Aunt Helen came down unexpectedly one day and decreed that Pat needed a change. In the twinkling of an eye it was decided that Pat was to go to Elmwood for three weeks.

Pat didn’t want to go. She had never been away from Silver Bush overnight and three weeks of nights seemed an eternity. But nobody paid any heed to her protestations and the dread morning came when father was to take her to Summerside. Jingle was over and they ate breakfast together, sitting on the sandstone steps, with the sun rising redly over the Hill of the Mist and the cherry trees along the dyke throwing sprays of pearly blossoms against the blue sky... .

Pat was more resigned, having begun to thrill a little to the excitement about her. After all, it was nice to be quite important. Sid was blue ... or envious ... and Jingle was undoubtedly blue. Cuddles was crying because she had got it into her small golden head that something was going to happen to Pat. And Judy was warning her not to forget to write. Forget! Was it likely?

“And you must write me, Judy,” said Pat anxiously.

“Oh, oh, I don’t be much av a hand at writing letters,” said Judy dubiously. The truth being that Judy hadn’t written any kind of a letter for over twenty years. “I’m thinking ye’ll have to depind on the rest av the folks for letters but sind me a scrape av the pin now and agin for all that.”

Pat had put her three favourite dolls to bed in her doll house and got Judy to put it away for her in the blue chest. She had bid tearful farewells to every room in the house and every tree within calling distance and to her own face in the water of the well. Snicklefritz and McGinty and Thursday had been hugged and wept over. Then came the awful ordeal of saying goodbye to everybody. Judy’s last glimpse of Pat was a rather tragic little face peering out of the back window of the car.

“Sure and this is going to be the lonesome place till she comes back,” sighed Judy.

2

Pat had no sooner arrived at Elmwood than she wrote mother a pitiful letter entreating to be taken home. That first night at Elmwood was a rather dreadful one. The big, old-fashioned bed, with its tent canopy hung with yellowed net, was so huge she felt lost in it. And at home mother or Judy would be standing at the kitchen door calling everybody in out of the dark. “O ... w!” Pat gave a smothered yelp of anguish at the thought. But ...

“This is just a visit. I’ll soon be home again ... in just twenty-one days,” she reminded herself bravely.

Her next letter to Judy was more cheerful. Pat had discovered that there were some pleasant things about visiting. Uncle Brian’s house was quite near and Aunt Helen was surprisingly kind and nice in her own home. It was quite exciting to be taken down town every day and see all the entrancing things in the store windows. Sometimes Norma and Amy took her down Saturday evenings when the windows were lighted up and looked like fairyland, especially the druggist’s, where there were such beautiful coloured bottles of blue and ruby and purple.

“Aunt Helen’s house is very fine,” wrote Pat, beginning also to discover that she liked writing letters. “It is much more splendid than the Bay Shore house. And Uncle Brian’s is finer still. But I wouldn’t let on to Norma that I thought it fine because she has always bragged so about it. She said to me, ‘Isn’t it handsomer than Silver Bush?’ and I said, ‘Yes, much handsomer but not half so lovely.’

“I like Uncle Brian better now. He shook hands with me just as if I was grown up. Norma is as stuck-up as ever but Amy is nice. Aunt Helen has a plaster Paris dog on the dining-room mantel that looks just like Sam Binnie. Aunt Helen says all Amasa Taylor’s apple trees were nawed to

death by mice last winter. Oh, Judy, I hope our apple trees will never be nawed by mice. Please tell father not to name the new red calf till I come home. It won't be long now ... only fourteen more days. Don't forget to give Thursday his milk every night, Judy, and please put a little cream in it. Are the columbines and the bleeding-heart out yet? I hope Cuddles won't grow too much before I get back.

"Aunt Helen gave me a new dress. She says it is a sensible dress. I don't like sensible dresses much. And there are no Sunday raisins here.

"Aunt Helen is a perfect housekeeper. The neighbours say you could eat your porridge off her floor but she never puts enough salt in her porridge so I don't like to eat it anywhere.

"Uncle Brian says Jim Hartley will come to a bad end. Jim lives next door and it is exciting to look at him and wonder what the end will be. Do you think he may be hung, Judy?

"Aunt Helen lets me drink tea. She says it is all nonsense the way they bring up children nowadays not to drink tea.

"Old cousin George Gardiner told me I didn't look much like my mother. He said mother had been a beauty in her day. It made me feel he was disappointed in me. He praised Norma and Amy for their good looks. I don't mind how much he praises their looks but I can't bear to hear their house praised. I think bay windows are *horrid*.

"Oh, Judy, I do hope everything will stay just the same at Silver Bush till I get back."

It was wildly exciting to get letters from home ... "*Miss Patricia Gardiner, Elmwood, Summerside.*" Jingle wrote the nicest letters because he told her things no one else thought of telling her ... how the Silver Bush folks were pestered with squirrels in the garret and Judy was clean wild ... how the sheep laurel was out in Happiness ... what apple trees had the most bloom ... how Joe had cut off Gentleman Tom's whiskers but Judy said they would grow in all right again ... how the barn cat had kittens ... and, most wonderful of all, how the farm with the Long Lonely House had been sold to some strange man who was coming there to live. Pat was

thrilled over this: but it was terrible to think of these things happening and she not there to see them.

“Only ten days more,” said Pat, looking at the calendar. “Only ten days more and I’ll be home.”

Judy did not write but she sent messages in everybody’s letters. “Tell her the house do be that lonely for her,” was the one Pat liked best, and “that skinny beau of yours do be looking as if he was sent for and couldn’t go,” was the one she liked least.

Pat found Aunt Jessie’s afternoon tea, which she was giving for a visiting friend, very tiresome. Norma and Amy were too much taken up with their own doings to bother with her, her head ached with the crowd and the lights and the chatter ... “they sound just like Uncle Tom’s geese when they all start chattering at once,” thought Pat unkindly. She slipped away upstairs to seek a quiet spot where she could sit and dream of Silver Bush and found it in Uncle Brian’s snugery at the end of the hall. But when she pulled aside the curtain to creep into the window seat it was already occupied. A little girl of about her own age was curled up in the corner ... a girl who had been crying but who now looked up at Pat with half appealing, half defiant eyes ... beautiful eyes ... large, dreamy, grey eyes ... the loveliest eyes Pat had ever seen, with long lashes quilling darkly around them. And there was something besides beauty in the eyes ... Pat could not have told what it was ... only it gave her a queer feeling that she had known this girl always. Perhaps the stranger felt something of the same when she looked into Pat’s eyes. Or perhaps it was Pat’s smile ... already “little Pat Gardiner’s smile” was, unknown to Pat, becoming a clan tradition. At all events she suddenly shook back her thick brown curls, drew her feet under her, and pointed to the opposite corner of the seat with a welcoming smile on her small, flowerlike face. They were good friends before they spoke a word to each other.

Pat hopped in and squirmed down. The heavy blue velvet curtain swung behind her, cutting them off from the world. Outside, the boughs of a pine tree screened the window. They were alone together. They looked at each other and smiled again.

“I’m Patricia Gardiner of Silver Bush,” said Pat.

“I’m Elizabeth Wilcox ... but they call me Bets,” said the girl.

“Why, that’s the name of the man who has bought the Long Lonely House Farm at North Glen,” cried Pat.

Bets nodded.

“Yes, that’s dad. And that’s why I’ve been crying. I ... don’t want to go away down there ... so far from everybody.”

“It’s not far from me,” said Pat eagerly.

Bets seemed to find comfort in this.

“Isn’t it ... really?”

“Just a cat’s walk, as Judy says. Right up a hill from Silver Bush. And it’s a lovely old house. I’m so fond of it. I’ve always wanted to see a light in it. Oh, I’m glad you’re coming to it, Bets.”

Bets blinked the last tears out of her eyes and thought she might be glad, too. They sat there together and talked until there was a hue and cry through the house for them and Bets was dragged away by the aunt who had brought her to the party. But by this time she and Pat knew all that was worth while knowing about each other’s pasts.

3

“Oh, Judy,” Pat wrote that night, “I’ve found the dearest friend. Her name is Bets Wilcox and she is coming to live at the Long Lonely House. It will soon have a light in its windows now. Her full name is Elizabeth Gertrude and she is so pretty, far prettier than Norma, and we’ve promised each other that we’ll always be faithful till death us do part. Just think, Judy, this time yesterday I didn’t know there was such a person in the world. Aunt Helen says she is very delicate and that is why her father has sold his farm which is kind of low and marshy and he thinks the Long House farm will be healthier.

“I never thought I could like any one outside my own family as much as I like Bets. It was Norma found us in the window seat and I guess she

was jealous because she sniffed and said, ‘Birds of a feather, I suppose,’ and when I said yes she said to Bets, ‘You mustn’t cut her out with Hilary Gordon. She’s his girl you know.’ I said ... very dignified, Judy ... ‘I am not his girl. We are just good friends.’ I told Bets all about Jingle and she said we ought to try to make his life happier and she thinks it’s awful silly to talk about a boy being your beau when he is just a friend and she says we can’t think about beaus for at least seven years yet. I said I was never going to think of them but Bets said they might be nice to have when you grew up.

“But oh, Judy, I haven’t told you the strangest thing. Bets and I were born on the same day. That makes us a kind of twins, doesn’t it? And we both love poetry *passionately*. Bets says that Mr. George Palmer, who lives on the farm next to them, found out his son was writing poetry and whipped him for it. Bets is going to lend me a fairy story called *The Honey Stew of the Countess Bertha*. She says there is a lovely ghost in it.

“Oh, Judy, day after tomorrow I’ll be home. It seems too good to be true.”

4

“The best part of a visit is getting home,” said Pat.

Uncle Brian drove her down to Silver Bush one evening. To Uncle Brian it meant a pleasant half-hour’s run after a tiresome day in the office. To Pat it meant a breath-taking return from exile. It was dark and she could see only the lights of the North Glen farmsteads but she knew them all. Mr. French’s light and the Floyd light, Jimmy Card’s light and the lights of Silverbridge away off to the right; the Robinsons’ light ... the Robinsons had been away for months but they must be home again. How nice to see their light in its old place! The dark roads were strange but it was their own strangeness ... a strangeness she knew. And then the home lane ... wasn’t that Joe’s whistle? ... and the friendly old trees waving their hands at her ... and the house with all its windows alight to welcome

her ... Gentleman Tom sitting on the gatepost and all the family to run out and meet her ... except dad who had to go to a political meeting at Silverbridge. And Cuddles, who was two years old and hadn't said a word yet, to the secret worry of everybody, suddenly crowed out, "Pat," clearly and distinctly. Jingle and McGinty were there, too, and supper in the kitchen with crisp, golden-brown rolls and fried brook trout Jingle had caught in Jordan for her. Judy wore a new drugget dress and the broadest of smiles. Nothing was changed. Pat had been secretly afraid they might have moved some of the furniture about ... that the kittens in the picture might have grown up or King William and his white horse got across the Boyne. It was beautiful to see the moon rising over her own fields. She loved to hear the North Glen dogs barking from farm to farm.

"Did Joe really cut off Gentleman Tom's whiskers, Judy?"

"Sure he did that same, the spalpane, and a funnier looking baste ye niver saw, but they're growing in agin fine."

"I'll have to get acquainted with everything all over again," said Pat joyfully. "Won't dad be home before I go to bed, Judy?"

"It's not likely," said Judy ... who had her own reasons for wanting Pat to get a good night's rest before she saw Long Alec.

Her own dear room ... such a quiet pleasant happy little room ... and her own dear bed waiting for her. Then the fun of getting up in the morning and seeing everything by daylight. The garden had grown beyond belief but it knew her ... oh, it knew her. She flew about and kissed all the trees, even the cross little spruce tree at the gate she had never really liked, it was so grumpy. She flung a kiss to Pat in the well. Life was *too* sweet.

And then she saw father coming from the barn!

They got her comforted after awhile though for a time Judy thought she had them beat. Long Alec had to promise he would let his moustache grow again immediately before she would stop crying.

"Sure and I told ye what a shock it wud be to her," Judy said reproachfully to Long Alec. "Ye know how hard she takes inny change and ye shud av waited until she had her fun out av coming home afore ye shaved it off."

It was a subdued Pat who went along the Whispering Lane to see the folks at Swallowfield and be rejoiced over by an uncle and aunts who had missed her sadly. But still it was lovely to be back home. And thank goodness Uncle Tom hadn't shaved *his* whiskers off!

The Rescue of Pepper

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1

As a matter of fact Long Alec never let his moustache grow again after all. When he asked Pat gravely about it, Pat, having got used to seeing him without it, decided she rather liked the look of him as he was. Besides, as she candidly told Judy, it was nicer for kissing. She had another cry on the day when Winnie's famous golden curls were bobbed at last ... and a shingle bob at that. And yet, when Winnie had been bobbed for a week, it seemed as if she had been bobbed always.

Judy's disapproval lasted longer.

"Making a b'y out av her," sniffed Judy, as she put the shorn curls tenderly away in her glory box. "Oh, oh, it's not meself that do be knowing what the girls av to-day are coming to. Trying to make thimselves into min and not succading very well at that. Sure and they'll all be bald as nuts be the time they're fifty and that's one comfort."

Worse than the bobbing as far as Pat was concerned was the notion Winnie took one day in Sunday School that she would be a missionary when she grew up and go to India. Pat worried for weeks over it, despite Judy's philosophy.

"Oh, oh, don't borry trouble so far ahead, Patsy dear. She cudn't go for all av tin years yet at the laste and a big lot av water will have run down yer Jordan be that time. So just sit ye down and have a liddle bite av me bishop's bread and niver be minding Winnie's romantic notions av religion."

"I suppose it's very wicked of me not to want her to be a missionary," sighed Pat. "But India is so far away. Do you think, Judy, it would be wrong for me to pray that Winnie will change her mind before she grows up?"

“Oh, oh, I wudn’t be meddling much wid that kind of praying,” said Judy, looking very wise. “Ye niver can tell how it will be turning out, Patsy dear. I’ve known minny a quare answer in me time. Just trust to the chanct that Winnie’ll change her mind av her own accord. It’s a safe bet wid inny girl.”

Pat ate her bishop’s bread ... made from a recipe Judy had brought from Australia and would never give to any one. She had promised to will it to Pat, however.

The latter still had a grievance.

“Mr. James Robinson has gone and cut down that row of spruce trees along the fence in his cow-pasture. I just can’t forgive him.”

“Listen at her. Sure and hadn’t the man a right to do what he liked wid his own? Though ye wudn’t catch inny Robinson planting a tree be chanct. Not they. It’s aisier to cut down and destroy.”

“They weren’t his trees half as much as they were mine,” said Pat stubbornly. “He didn’t love them and I did. I used to watch the red sunrise behind them in the mornings when I woke up. They were so lovely and clear and dark against it. And don’t you remember them in the silver thaw last winter, Judy ... how they just looked like a row of funny old women that had got caught in a shower without umbrellas walking along one behind the other?”

It was a great day for Pat when the Wilcoxes moved to the Long House farm and for the first time in her recollection a light shone down from its windows that night. It gave Pat such delightful little thrills of comradeship to help Bets get settled. Mr. and Mrs. Wilcox were quiet folks who adored Bets and gave her her own way in everything. This might have spoiled some children but Bets was too sweet and wholesome by nature to be easily spoiled. She was allowed to pick the wallpaper for her own room and Pat went to Silverbridge with her to help choose it. They both liked the same one ... a pale green with rose sprays on it. Pat could see it already on the walls of that long room, dim with fir shadows, which had been assigned to Bets.

“Oh, isn’t this house glad to have people living in it again,” she exulted. “It will always be the Long House but it won’t be lonely any more.”

Judy was secretly well pleased that Pat had a girl friend of her own age at last. Judy had always felt worried over the fact that Pat had none. Winnie had half a dozen chums, but Pat, although she got on well enough with the girls at school, had never been closely drawn to any of them.

“Bets is the prettiest girl in school now,” she told Judy proudly. “May Binnie can’t hold a candle to her ... and oh, doesn’t May hate her! But every one else loves her. I love her *dreadfully*, Judy.”

“I wudn’t be after loving her too much,” warned Judy. “Not too much, Patsy dear.”

“As if any one could be loved too much!” scoffed Pat. But Judy shook her head.

“She’ll never comb grey hairs, that one. Sure and that liddle face av hers do be having a bloom that’s not av earth,” she muttered to herself, thinking of Bets’ too brilliant roses and the strange look that went and came in her eyes, as if she had some secret source of happiness no one else knew. Perhaps Bets’ charm lay in that look. For charm she had. Every one felt it, old and young.

“Some of the girls in school are jealous because Bets is *my* chum,” Pat told Judy. “They’ve tried and tried to get her away. But Bets and I just hang together. We’re twins really, Judy. And every day I find out something new about her. Sometimes we call each other Gertrude and Margaret. We are so sorry for our middle names because they are never used. We think they feel bad about it. But that is one of our secrets. I like *nice* secrets. May Binnie told me a secret last week and it was a horrid one. Oh, Judy, aren’t you glad the Wilcoxes have come to the Long House?”

“I am that. It’s a trate to have good neighbours. And George Wilcox do be a quiet inoffensive man enough. But his dad, old Geordie, was a terror to snakes in his time. Whin he got in one av his fine rages I’ve seen him grab the pudding from the pot and throw it out av the door. And that

stubborn he was. Whin they voted in church to set for prayers d'ye think me fine Geordie wud do it? Not be a jugful. Stiff as a ram-rod wud he stand up, wid his back to the minister, and his legs a yard apart and glare over the congregation. Oh, oh, he's in heaven now, poor man, and I hope he lets the angels have a bit av their own way."

"What funny things you do remember about people, Judy," giggled Pat.

"Remimber, is it? Sure thin and it isn't a funny thing I remimber about Geordie's cousin, Matt Wilcox. *He* was be way av having a rat or two in his garret. Thought he was haunted by a divil."

"Haunted by a devil?" Pat had a real thrill.

"I'm telling ye. But his fam'ly didn't be worrying much over until he tuk to liking to hear the cratur's talk. Said its conversation was rale interesting. They tuk him to the asylum thin but sorra a bit did he care, for his divil went wid him. He lived there for years, rale happy and continted as long as they'd just let him sit quiet and listen. Thin one day they found him crying fit to break his heart. 'Sure,' sez he, 'me divil has gone back to his own place and what I'm to do now for a bit av entertainment I don't know.' They tuk him home quite cured but he always said there niver was innny rale flavour in innnything folks said to him the rist av his life. He said he missed the tang av ... oh, oh, av a place I'll not be mintioning to ye, Patsy dear."

"I suppose you mean hell," said Pat coolly, much to Judy's horror. "I'm sure I hear it often enough. Uncle Tom's man is always telling things to go there. Uncle Tom says he just can't help it."

"Oh, oh, maybe he can't at that. He's ould Andy Taylor's grandson and ould Andy had a great gift av swearing. He was the only man in South Glen that ever did be swearing. Sure and nobody else had the heart to try whin they'd heard what ould Andy cud do. Swearing and laughing he always was, the ould scallywag. 'As long as I can laugh at things I'll get along widout God,' sez he. 'Whin I can't laugh I'll turn to him,' sez he. Whin his own son died he laughed and sez, 'Poor b'y, he's been saved a lot av trouble,' sez he. Whin his wife died he sez, 'There's one mistake corrected,' sez he. But whin ould Soapy John, that he'd hated and

quarrelled wid all his life, fell out av his buggy and bruk his neck he sez, 'This is too funny to laugh at,' sez he, 'I'll have to be going to church and getting religion,' sez he. And niver a Sunday he missed from that to the day av his death."

2

Pat had never had such a happy summer. It was lovely to have some one to walk to and from school with. Sid was drifting more and more to the companionship of the other boys, although he and Pat still had their beautiful hours of prowling in the fields or hunting eggs in the barn or looking for strayed turkeys in the dims.

Sometimes Bets would come down to Silver Bush where she and Pat had a playhouse among the birches. Time and again Judy let them have their suppers in it. It was so romantic and adventurous to have meals out of doors, finishing up with a dessert of ruby red currants eaten off a lettuce leaf. Or they sat in the moonlight at the kitchen door and listened to Judy's stories of ghosts and fairies and ancestors and "grey people" that haunted apple orchards in the dusks of eve and morn. No wonder that Pat had to go clear up to the Long House with Bets afterwards. Pat was so pickled in Judy's stories that they only gave her thrills. Bets had the thrills, too, but if her father and mother had known the extent of Judy's repertoire they might not have been so complacent over Bets' visits to Silver Bush.

They helped Judy makes her cheeses ... for the last time. The decree had gone forth that henceforth all the milk must be sent to the factory and the cheese bought there.

"Oh, Judy, I *wish* things didn't have to change."

"But they do, Patsy dear. That do be life. And yer dad nades all the money he can be getting for his milk. But there'll niver be a bit av dacent flavoured cheese at Silver Bush agin. Factory cheese indade!" sniffed Judy rebelliously.

Sometimes Pat would go up to the Long House ... by a fascinating path up the hill fields ... a path you always felt happy on, as if the fairies had traced it. She found something new to love every time she traversed it ... some sunny fern corner or mossy log or baby tree. You went along the Whispering Lane and across the end of Uncle Tom's garden and there was your path. The first outpost of this land of fairy was a big clump of spruce trees where Pat generally lingered to pick a "chew" of gum. Then there was a brook ... a tiny thread of a brook that ran into Jordan ... with a lady silver birch hanging over the log bridge. Beyond it a meadow cross-cut enticed you in daisies with an old pine at the top that always seemed to be waiting for something, Pat thought. Then it ran along an upland dyke where you could pick bouquets of longstemmed strawberries in the crevices and look down far over the lowlands and groves to the sea. Sometimes Bets would come to meet her here ... or again she would be waving at her from one of her windows as Pat came through the spruces on the hill. Then Silver Bush and the world Pat knew dropped out of sight and before them were the bush-dotted fields of the Long House farm and the shining loops of the Silverbridge river. And it was wonderful just to be alive.

The tragedy of that summer was Thursday's death. Poor Thursday was missing for a couple of days and was found lying stiff and stark on the well platform one morning, having dragged himself home to die.

"Judy, it's dreadful that cats can't live as long as we do," sighed Pat. "You just have time to get so fond of them ... and they die. Judy, do you think it hurt poor Thursday very much to die?"

Pat took it pretty hard but Thursday had been away a good deal all summer, sometimes for weeks at a time, and Pepper and Salt, two adorable kittens, one smoky grey, one grey and white, with a pansy face, had crept into Pat's heart for her consolation. They had an affecting funeral at which Sid and Jingle were pallbearers and Salt and Pepper reluctant mourners with huge black bows around their necks. Pat and Bets made wreaths of wild flowers for the dead pussy. Pat wanted to bury him in the graveyard, between Weeping Willy and Wild Dick, because he seemed so much like

one of the family. But Judy was horrified at the idea; so they buried Thursday in the little glade among the spruces where the other Silver Bush cats slept the sleep that knows no waking. Clever Bets wrote an epitaph in verse for him and Jingle burnt it on a board. Thursday's funeral was always remembered in Silver Bush annals because Cuddles inadvertently sat down on a Scotch thistle after it and only Pat could comfort her. Cuddles always turned to Pat in her woes.

"At least I suppose I can put flowers on Thursday's grave," said Pat a little defiantly. She found it hard to forgive Judy for refusing Thursday the graveyard.

3

There was a terrible time one soft, golden end of a rainy day when Pepper fell into the well. Pepper had a knack of getting into trouble. It was only the preceding Sunday night that he had walked up Judy's back and danced on her shoulders when they were all at family prayers in the Little Parlour. Sid had disgraced himself by laughing out and dad had been very angry.

Pepper was missing one evening when Pat put his saucer of milk on the well platform and when Pat called him lamentable shrieks were heard from somewhere. But from *where*? Pat and Bets hunted everywhere a cat could possibly be but no Pepper. Only those piteous cries that seemed to come now from the sky, now from the silver bush, now from the graveyard.

"Sure and the cratur's bewitched," cried Judy. "He can't be far off but I'm bated to say where."

Bets finally solved the mystery.

"He's in the well," she cried.

Pat ran to it with a shriek of despair. Nothing could be seen in the dim depths but there was no doubt that Pepper was down there somewhere. As they looked down the shrieks redoubled.

“The water’s calm as a clock,” said Judy. “Where has the baste got to? Oh, oh, I’m seeing. Look at the eyes av him blazing. He must have fell in the water but me brave Pepper has climbed out on that liddle shelf av rock between the stones and the water. Listen at him. He’ll split his throat. And well may he wail for I’m blist if I can be seeing how we’re to get him up, what wid yer dad and the b’ys away to the Bay Shore and not likely back till midnight. This do be a tommyshaw.”

“We *can’t* leave him there all night,” cried Pat in agony. She flew to the garret to set the signal light. If only Jingle would see it! Jingle had been spending most of his evenings grubbing young spruces out of a big field Mr. Gordon wanted to clean up, but he saw Pat’s light as he tramped home and in a few minutes he and McGinty were in the Silver Bush yard. McGinty, when he found out what was the trouble, sat down and howled antiphonally to Pepper’s yells. It was a doleful duet.

“Oh, Jingle, can’t *you* save Pepper?” implored Pat.

Jingle was a rather comical knight-errant, to be sure, with his frayed trousers and dark glasses and “raggedy hair,” but he came promptly and practically to the help of lady fair. The three of them, aided by Judy, dragged a ladder from the barn and contrived, goodness knew how, to get it down the well. Down went Jingle, while Pat and Bets prevented McGinty from a suicidal leap after him. Terrible moments of suspense. Up came Jingle, grasping a forlorn, dripping kitten who promptly expressed his gratitude by giving his rescuer a ferocious bite on the wrist.

“Oh, oh,” groaned Judy, “but I’m faling as if I’d been pulled through a keyhole. It’s been the tarrible day, what wid Cuddles catching her liddle fingers in the wringer and Snicklefritz ating up one av yer dad’s boots and Siddy’s owl gone the Good Man Above only knows where. And now,” she concluded in a tone of despair, “we’ll have to be dragging water up from yer Jordan till we can get the well claned. And nobody knowing how minny lizards we’ll have to be drinking in that same.”

“Lizards!”

“I’m telling ye. Didn’t ould Mr. Adams’ grandfather swally a lizard one day whin he tuk a drink of the brook water? Sure and he was niver the

same again ... he wud always fale it wriggling about in his insides whin his stomach was impty.”

Pat reflected with a grue that she and Jingle had often drunk of Jordan water ... though it was generally from the rock spring up in Happiness. She immediately felt something wrong with *her* stomach. But maybe that was only because it was empty. They shut Pepper up in the granary to dry off and went in to a supper of hot meat pie in Judy’s kitchen. After so much excitement one really needed a little nourishment... .

But that night Pat had a dreadful dream that she had swallowed a frog!

4

Pat found a new delight in life ... going up to stay all night with Bets. The first time was in early December when Judy was glad to pack her off to the Long House as soon as she came from school, because Long Alec was killing the pigs and Pat was neither to hold nor bind when they killed the pigs. Not, as Judy sarcastically pointed out to her, that it prevented her later on from enjoying the sausages and fried ham that were among the products of the late lamented.

Pat went up to the Long House over a silver road of new-fallen snow. Every time she turned to look down on home the world was a little whiter. Bets, who had not been in school that day, was waiting for her under the pine. Just above them the Long House, amid its fir trees, was like a little dark island in a sea of snow.

There was something about the long, low-eaved house, with the dormer windows in its roof, that pleased Pat. And Bets’ room was a delightful one with two dormers along its side and one at each end. It was very grand, Pat told Judy, with a real “set of furniture” and a long mirror in which the delighted girls could see themselves from top to toe. The west window was covered with vines, leafless now but a green dappled curtain in summer, and the east looked right out into a big apple tree. Pat and Bets sat by the little stove and ate apples until any one might have expected them to burst.

Then they crept into bed and cuddled down for one of those talks dear to the hearts of small schoolgirls from time immemorial.

“It’s so much easier to be confidential in the dark,” Pat had told Judy. “I can tell Bets *everything* then.”

“Oh, oh, I wudn’t tell *iverything* to innnybody,” warned Judy. “Not iverything, me jewel.”

“Not to anybody but Bets,” agreed Pat. “Bets is different.”

“Too different,” sighed Judy. But she did not let Pat hear it.

To lie there, with the soft swish of the fir trees sounding just outside, and talk “secrets” with Bets ... lovely secrets, not like May Binnie’s ... was delightful. Bets had recently been to some wedding in the Wilcox clan and Pat had to hear all about it ... the mysterious pearl-white bride, the bridesmaids’ lovely dresses, the flowers, the feast.

“Do you suppose *we* will ever get married?” whispered Bets.

“*I* won’t,” said Pat. “I couldn’t ever go away from Silver Bush.”

“But you wouldn’t like to be an old maid, would you?” said Bets. “Besides, you could get him to come and live with you at Silver Bush, couldn’t you?”

This was a new idea for Pat. It seemed quite attractive. Somehow, when you were with Bets, everything seemed possible. Perhaps that was another part of her charm.

“We were born on the same day,” went on Bets, “so if we’re ever married we must try to be married the same day.”

“And die the same day. Oh, wouldn’t that be romantic?” breathed Pat in ecstasy.

Pat woke in the night with just a little pang of homesickness. Was Silver Bush all right? She slipped out of bed and stole across to the nearest dormer window. She breathed on its frosty stars until she had made clear a space to peer through ... then caught her breath with delight. The snow had ceased and a big moon was shining down on the cold, snowy hills. The powdered fir trees seemed to be covered with flowers spun from moonshine, the apple trees seemed picked out in silver filigree. The open space of the lawn was sparkling with enormous diamonds. How beautiful

Silver Bush looked when you gazed down on it on a moonlit winter night! Was darling Cuddles covered up warm? She *did* kick the clothes off so. Was mother's headache better? Away over beyond Silver Bush was the poor, lean, ugly Gordon house which nobody had ever loved. Jingle would be sleeping in his kitchen loft now. All summer he had slept in the hay-mow with McGinty. Poor Jingle, whose mother never wrote to him! How could a mother be like that? Pat almost hated to go back to sleep again and lose so much beauty. It had always seemed a shame to sleep through a moonlit night. Somehow those far hills looked so different in moonlight. A verse she and Bets had learned "off by heart," in school that day came to her mind:

"Come, for the night is cold,
And the frosty moonlight fills
Hollow and rift and fold
Of the eerie Ardise hills."

She repeated it to herself with a strange, deep exquisite thrill of delight, such as she had never felt before ... something that went deeper than body or brain and touched some inner sanctum of being of which the child had never been conscious. Perhaps that moment was for Patricia Gardiner the "soul's awakening" of the old picture. All her life she was to look back to it as a sort of milestone ... that brief, silvery vigil at the dormer window of the Long House.

Judy Puts Her Foot Down

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1

“Just as naked as the day she was born,” concluded Aunt Edith ... and said no more. She felt ... everybody felt ... that there was no more to be said.

Mother looked horrified and ashamed. Uncles Tom and Brian looked horrified and amused. Aunt Jessie looked horrified and contemptuous. Norma and Amy looked horrified and smug. Winnie looked horrified and annoyed. Dad and Joe and Sid looked just plain horrified.

Pat stood before this family court, with Aunt Edith’s hand on her shoulder, struggling unsuccessfully to keep back her tears. Well might she cry, thought the family; but her tears were not of shame or fear, as they supposed, but of regret over something marvellously beautiful which Aunt Edith had destroyed ... something which could never be replaced. This was why Pat was crying; the realisation of her enormity hadn’t yet come home to her.

For a week Pat had been a lonely soul. Bets was away for a visit. Jingle and Sid were busy with haymaking; and Judy, of all things unthinkable, was away. Judy had never been away from Silver Bush in Pat’s recollection. Vacations were unknown in Judy’s calendar.

“Sure and I’d niver work if I cud find innything else to do,” she would say, “but the puzzle av it is I niver can.”

There was trouble at the Bay Shore. Cousin Danny had broken his leg and Aunt Frances was ill, so Bay Shore borrowed Judy from Silver Bush to tide over the emergency. Pat found this especially dreadful. She missed Judy at every turn. The house had never seemed so full of her as when she was away, and even the delight of having mother in the kitchen most of the time and helping her in all household doings did not quite compensate. Besides, Gentleman Tom was gone, too. He had disappeared the very day

Judy had been whirled away to Bay Shore; and the back yard and kitchen without Gentleman Tom were lonesome places. And what would Judy say when she came home and found her cat was gone? Perhaps she would think Pat had forgotten to feed him.

Pat consoled herself by working feverishly over the garden, determined that Judy should be satisfied with it on her return. Evening after evening Pat carried pails of water to it. She liked drawing the water up. It was fun to watch the bucket going down. Over that oval of blue sky with her own face framed in it at the bottom of the well. And then, as the bucket struck the water, to see it all blotted out, as if a mirror had been shattered. When the last bucketful had been drawn up Pat hung over the curb and watched the water grow slowly calm again and Pat of the Well coming back, at first very shiveringly, then more clearly, then clear and distinct once more, with just an occasional quiver when a drop of water fell from a fern.

Pat loved watering the garden ... giving thirsty things drink after a hot day. First of all she always watered Judy's pets ... the row of garden violets under the kitchen window which Judy called "Pink-o'-my-Johns" ... such a delightful name! ... and a clump of mauve and white "sops-in-wine" by the turkey house and the "pinies" by the gate. Then all the other flowers ... and the roses last of all because she liked to linger over them, especially the white roses with the dream of gold in their hearts and the plot of pansies in a far corner that seemed to bloom for her alone.

On this particular evening Pat had been at loose ends. It had rained so heavily the night before that the garden did not need watering and when the "dim" came there was nothing to do and nobody to talk to. But it was a summer evening of glamour and enchantment and mystery and Pat was full of it, as she ran, with her hair streaming behind her, through the silver birches at moonrising, until she came out on the southern side in a little glade misted over with white daisies, lying amid its bracken like a cool pool of frosty moonlight.

She paused there to drink in the loveliness of the scene before her. More and more that summer of her tenth year, Pat had found herself

responsive to the beauty of the world around her. It was becoming a passion with her.

The moon was rising over the Hill of the Mist ... the moon that Pat had thought, when she was a tiny tot, must be a beautiful world where all was happiness. Little pools of shadow lay here and there all over the farm, among the shorn hayfields. There was one big field of hay that hadn't been touched yet; wind waves went over it in that misty light. Beyond it a field where happy calves were in buttercups to their shoulders ... the only living creatures in sight if you were sure those shadows along the edge of the silver bush *were* shadows and not little rabbits dancing.

A warm brooding night ... a night that surely belonged to the fairies. For the moment Pat could believe in them wholeheartedly again. Some strange bewitchment entered into her and crept along her veins. She remembered a Judy-story of an enchanted princess who had to dance naked in the moonlight every night of full moon in a woodland glen, and a sudden craving possessed her to dance thus in moonlight, too. Why not? There was nobody to see. It would be beautiful ... beautiful.

Pat disrobed. There was not much to do ... she was already bare-legged. Her pale-blue cotton frock and two small undies were cast aside and she stood among the shadows, a small, unashamed dryad, quivering with a strange, hitherto unknown ecstasy as the moon's pale fingers touched her through the trees.

She stepped out among the daisies and began the little dance Bets had taught her. A breeze blew on her through the aisles of the shining birches. If she held up her hands to it wouldn't it take hold of them? A faint, delicious perfume arose from the dew-wet ferns she danced on; somewhere far away laughter was drifting across the night ... faint, fairy laughter which seemed to come from the Haunted Spring. She felt as light of being as if she were really made of moonlight. Oh, never had there been such a moment as this! She paused on tip-toe among the daisies and held out her arms to let the cool fire of that dear and lovely moon bathe her slim child-body.

"Pat!" said Aunt Edith, with forty exclamation points in her voice.

Pat came back to earth with a shudder. Her exquisite dream was over. The horror in Aunt Edith's voice enrobed her like a garment of shame. She could not even find a word to say.

"Put on your clothes," said Aunt Edith icily. Not for her to deal with the situation. That was Long Alec's job. Pat dumbly put on her clothes and followed Aunt Edith down through the silver bush and into the Little Parlour where the rest of the Silver Bushites were entertaining the Brianites who had run down for a call. Of course, thought Pat miserably, Norma and Amy, who never misbehaved, would have to be there to see her humiliation.

"How *could* you, Pat?" asked mother reproachfully.

"I ... I wanted to bathe in the moonlight," sobbed Pat. "I didn't think it was any harm. I didn't think any one would see me."

"I never heard of any decent child wanting to bathe in moonlight," said Aunt Jessie.

And then Uncle Tom laughed uproariously.

2

The punishment of Pat, which the Silver Bush family thought was a very light one, considering the enormity of her offence, was to Pat the most terrible thing they could have devised. She was "sent to Coventry." For a week she was to speak to nobody at Silver Bush and nobody was to speak to her, except when it was absolutely necessary.

Pat lived ... she could never tell how ... through three days of it. It seemed like an eternity. To think that *Sid* wouldn't speak to her! Why, Sid had been the most furious of them all. Mother and father seemed sorry for her but firm. As for Winnie ...

"She looks at me as if I was a stranger," thought poor Pat.

She was not allowed to play with Jingle who came over unsuspectingly the next evening. Jingle was very indignant and Pat snubbed him for it.

"My family have the right to correct me," she told him haughtily.

But she cried herself to sleep every night. On the third night she went to bed sadly, after kissing all her flowers and her two little cats goodnight. Below stairs the house was full of light and laughter for Uncle Tom and dad were roaring in the kitchen and Winnie was practising her singing lesson in the Little Parlour and Joe and Sid were playing “grab” in the dining room, and Cuddles was chuckling and gurgling with mother on the front porch. Only she, Pat, had no part or lot with them. She was outcast.

Pat woke up in the darkness ... and smelled ham frying! She sat up in bed. The Little Parlour clock was striking twelve. Who on earth could be frying ham at midnight in Silver Bush? Nobody but Judy ... Judy must be home!

Pat slipped noiselessly out of bed, so as not to wake Winnie ... Winnie who would not even *ask* what she was doing if she did. Sniffing that delectable odour Pat crept down through the silent house. She hoped that Judy would not send her to Coventry; and she thought her heart might stop aching for a little while if she could feel Judy’s arms around her.

Softly she opened the kitchen door. Beautiful sight! There was dear old Judy frying herself a snack of ham, her jolly old shadow flying in all directions over the kitchen walls and ceiling as she darted about.

And ... was it believable? ... there was Gentleman Tom, sitting inscrutably on the bench, watching her. How peaceful and home-y and comforting it all was!

There had been anything but a peaceful scene in the kitchen two hours before when Judy had arrived home and demanded if all was well with the children. When she was told Pat was in disgrace and why Judy, as she expressed it, tore up the turf. Such a “ruckus” had never been known at Silver Bush. Everybody caught it.

“Suppose she had been *seen*, Judy?” protested mother.

“Oh, oh, but they didn’t see her, did they?” demanded Judy scornfully.

“Nobody but Aunt Edith ...”

“Oh, oh, is it *Aunt* Edith?” sniffed Judy. “And it was me fine *Edith* that dragged her in and blew it all afore Brian and his fine lady wife, ye’re telling me? Sure it was like her. It’s a pity a liddle thing like that cudn’t av

been hushed up in the fam'ly. And to punish the tinder-hearted cratur so cruel! Ye rarely ain't wise, Long Alec. A bit av a tongue-lashing might av been all right but to kape on torturing the poor jewel for a wake and her that fond av ye all! It's telling ye to yer face, I am Long Alec, ye don't deserve such a daughter."

"Well, well," said Long Alec, quite cowed, "I don't think it's done her much harm. We'll let her off the rest of the week."

"I don't know what possessed the child to do such a thing," said mother.

"Oh, oh, it's a bit av that ould Frinch leddy coming out in her, I warrant ye," suggested Judy.

"Certainly it didn't come from the Quaker side," chuckled Uncle Tom.

"Judy!"

Pat was in Judy's arms, laughing, crying. It was a glorious five minutes. Even Gentleman Tom betrayed a trifle of sympathy.

Finally Judy held Pat off and pretended to look stern.

"I don't want to be hard on ye, Patsy, but what monkey-didoes have ye been cutting up? It's a fine yarn yer dad has been spinning me av ye dancing in the bush widout innny clothes on."

"Oh, Judy, I never saw such a moon ... and I was pretending I was a bewitched princess ... and Uncle Tom *laughed* at me. That spoiled it worst of all, Judy ... and it *was* so beautiful before Aunt Edith came."

There was some wild strain of poetry in Judy that made her understand. She hugged Pat with a fierce tenderness.

"Oh, oh, I've rid the riot act to thim, I'm telling ye. Whin I get me dander up I'm a terror to snakes. There'll be no more visiting in Coventry for ye, me jewel. But ye'd better not be doing any more quare things for awhile."

"The trouble is, *I* don't think the things I do are queer," said Pat gravely. "They seem quite reasonable to me. And Aunt Edith was just ... ridiculous."

"Ye niver spoke a truer word. Oh, oh, what a shock it must av been to the poor sowl. She's forgotten she has innny legs, that one. But ye'd better

be a bit careful, Patsy, and if ye fale inny more hankering for such bathing just ye tell me and I'll get a pitcherful av moonlight and pour it over ye. And now just sit down and have a liddle bit av ham wid me and tell me all that's happened. Sure and it's good to be home agin."

"Oh, Judy, where did Gentleman Tom come from? He's never been seen here since you went away."

"Are ye telling me? Sure and he was sitting on the dure-step when I got out av the Bay Shore rig, looking as if he wasn't knowing where his nixt mouse was coming from. *I'm* not asking him where he's been. I mightn't be liking the answer. Innyway, here he is and here I am ... and there's a beautiful pink dress av eyelet embroidery in me grip that yer Aunt Honor sint ye. It'll be one in the eye for Norma whin she sees ye in it."

"I'm going to sleep the rest of the night with you, Judy," said Pat resolutely.

Under a Cloud

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1

When in mid-September Long Alec suddenly announced to his family that, harvest being over, he meant to take a trip out west to visit a brother who had settled there years ago Pat took it more calmly than they had feared. It was rather dreadful, of course, to think of dad being away for a whole month, but, as he said himself, if he didn't go away he couldn't come back again. There would be his homecoming to expect and plan for, and meanwhile life was very pleasant at Silver Bush. She liked the fall nights because the fires were lighted. Jingle was building an elegant bird-house for her to be put up in the maple by the well when finished; and Mr. Wilcox was going to take Bets and her to the Exhibition in Charlottetown. Pat had never been to one yet. To the small denizens of North Glen a visit to the Exhibition loomed up with as much of excitement and delight as a trip to Europe or "the coast" might to older folks. Socially you were not in the swim unless you had been to the Exhibition. There were the weeks of delightful anticipation ... the Exhibition itself ... then weeks of just as delightful reminiscence. All things considered, Pat was quite cheerful about dad's absence. It was Judy who seemed to view it most gloomily ... Pat couldn't understand why. For the week preceding Long Alec's departure Judy had done an extra deal of talking to and arguing with herself. Disjointed sentences reached Pat's ears every now and again.

"I'm not knowing what gets into the min be times. It do be saming as if they had to have a crazy spell once in so long" ... "a bit av Wild Dick coming out in him I'm telling ye" ... "'tis the curse av the wandering foot" ... "oh, oh, it's too aisy to get about now. Sure and that's what's the matter wid the world."

But when Pat asked what the trouble was Judy's only reply was a curt:

“Ax me no questions and I’ll be telling ye no lies.”

Dad went away one windy, cloudy September morning. Uncle Tom and the aunts came along the Whispering Lane to say goodbye. Everybody was a little sober. The “west” was a long way off ... the goodbyes a bit tremulous.

“May the Good Man Above give us all good health,” muttered Judy, as she dashed back into the kitchen and began to rattle the stove lids fiercely. Pat hopped into the car and went as far as the road with dad. She stood and watched the car out of sight and then turned towards home with a choking sensation. At that moment the sun broke through a black cloud and poured a flood of radiance over Silver Bush. Pat realised afresh how beautiful home was, nestling under its misty blue hill with its background of golden trees.

“Oh, how lovely you are!” she cried, holding out her arms to it. The tears that filled her eyes were not caused by dad’s going. She was pierced by the swift exquisite pang which beauty always gave her ... always would give her. It was almost anguish while it lasted ... but the pain was heavenly.

It was well that Pat had her trip to the Exhibition over before she heard the terrible thing. She did have it ... two glorious days with Bets ... and, as the gods themselves cannot recall their gifts, she always had it, although for a time it seemed as if she had nothing ... would have nothing for evermore ... but pain and fear.

Again it was May Binnie who told her ... that dad meant to buy a farm out west and settle there!

A strange icy ripple, such as she had never felt before, ran over Pat.

“That isn’t true,” she cried.

May laughed.

“It is. Everybody knows it. Winnie knows it. I s’pose they were afraid to tell you for fear you’d make a scene.”

Pat looked passionately into May’s bold black eyes.

“I wouldn’t have hated you for telling me this, May Binnie, if you hadn’t *liked* telling it. But I am going to *tell God about you tonight.*”

May laughed again ... a little uncomfortably. What she called Pat Gardiner's "rages" always made her uncomfortable. And who knew what Pat might tell God about her?

Pat went home sick and cold with agony to the very depth of her being.

"Mother, it isn't true ... it isn't ... say it isn't!"

Mother looked compassionately into Pat's tortured young eyes. They had tried to keep this from Pat, hoping she might never have to be told. Dad might not like the west. But if he did, go they must. When easygoing Long Alec did make up his mind there was no budging it, as everybody at Silver Bush knew.

"We don't know, dear. Father is thinking of it. He had a hankering to go when Allan went, years ago, but he couldn't leave his parents then. Now ... I don't know. Be brave, Pat, dear. We'll all be together ... the west is a splendid country ... more chances for the boys perhaps ..."

She stopped. Better not say more just now.

"So ye've heard?" was all Judy said, when Pat came, white-faced, into the kitchen.

"Judy, it can't happen ... it just can't. Judy, God wouldn't let such a thing happen."

Judy shook her head.

"Long Alec will settle that, laving God out av the question, Patsy, me jewel. Oh, oh, it's a man's world, so it is, and we women must just be putting up wid it."

"It will be the end of everything, Judy."

"I'm fearing it will be worse than that," muttered Judy. "I'm fearing it will be the beginning av a lot av new things. Sure, the heart av me will be bruk."

She did not say this aloud. Pat must not know until it became necessary that Judy would not be going west with them. To Judy, the idea of leaving Silver Bush was as dreadful as it was to Pat; but she could not leave the Island. Judy had a secret conviction that if the Gardiners went west she would end her days at the Bay Shore farm, taking Danny's part

and waiting on the ould leddy who would live forever ... and eating her soul out with longing and loneliness for her own.

“Oh, oh, they do be all I’ve got,” she mourned. “And all I axed was to be let go on working for thim as long as I was on the hoof. To the devil wid Long Alec and his notions and his stubbornness ... him that ye wudn’t think cud stand up against a moonbame. But ‘tis in the blood to be set that way whin they think they want innything. His ould Great-uncle Alec was the same but he had a bit av sinse in his pate and whin he onct tuk a notion he wanted to go somewhere he was knowing he shudn’t didn’t he go and shave his head compleate and thin he cudn’t go till the hair grew in and be that time the danger was over. Minny’s the time I’ve heard ould Grandfather Gardiner tell av it. ‘Twas be way av being a fam’ly joke.”

“When will we *know*, Judy?”

“That I can’t tell ye, darlint. Long Alec said he’d write as soon as he made up his mind. God hasten the day! There’s nothing we can be doing but wait.”

Pat shivered. The words were so terrible and so true. How could one wait? Tomorrow would be more cruel than to-day.

2

In the weeks that followed Pat felt as if her heart were bleeding drop by drop. She seemed to be alone in her anguish. Sid rather hoped dad wouldn’t go west but was not terribly cut up about it. Joe frankly hoped he *would* go. Winnie thought it might be fun. Mother *seemed* quite indifferent to it, in her usual calm, gentle fashion. Even Judy was fiercely silent and would give tongue to neither regrets nor hopes. Bets and Jingle were both in despair but Pat found she could not talk the matter over with them. It went too deep.

She got through the days in school somehow and then wandered about Silver Bush like an unhappy little ghost. She could not read. The books she had loved were no more than printed words. She and Bets had been half

way through *The Wind In The Willows*, reading it under the Watching Pine on the hilltop, but now it lay neglected in the bookcase at the Long House. She could not play with Bets or Jingle ... she could not bear it when she might soon have to leave them forever. She could not play with Sid because Sid *could* play and showed thereby that he was not feeling as badly as he should be. She could not play with Salt and Pepper because they were too cheerful. McGinty was the only animal that seemed to realise the situation. He and Jingle were a gloomy pair.

Pat slept badly and ate next to nothing.

“That thin she do be getting,” worried Judy to Mrs. Gardiner. “Sure there isn’t a pick on her bones. It’s me belafe that if Long Alec drags that child out west it’ll be killing her. She can’t live away from Silver Bush. Sure and she do be loving ivery inch av it.”

“I wish she didn’t love it so much,” sighed mother. “But she is young ... she will forget. We older ones ...” Mother stopped quickly. That was like mother. Mother never showed what she felt. That had been a Bay Shore tradition. The more emotional and expressive Gardiners sometimes thought she had no “feelings.”

Pat was having plenty and very dreadful ones they were. Everything she looked at hurt her. It hurt her to be in the house ... to think of those dear rooms being cold ... perhaps nobody even bothering to light a fire in them. Perhaps there would be no light in the windows at night ... in the house that had always overflowed with light: no plumes of homely smoke going up from its chimneys: nobody looking on beauty from the round window. And if there were people in it ... she hated that thought, too. Who would be sleeping in her room ... who would be ruling in Judy’s kitchen?

It was worse outside. The garden would be so lonely. No one there to love or welcome the flowers. The daffodils and the columbines would come up in the spring but she would not be there to see. The bees would hum in the Canterbury bells and she not there to listen. The poplars would whisper but she would not hear them whispering. The tiny, pointed, crimson buds would come on the wild rosebushes in the lane, not for her gathering. Perhaps the people who would come to Silver Bush would root

up the old garden entirely. Pat had heard Uncle Brian say once it was really only an old jungle and Alec should clear it out. They would change and tear up. Oh, she could not bear it!

And yet, somehow, it could never be theirs. In after years Pat said of this time, "I knew they could never have the soul of Silver Bush. *That* would always be mine."

But she would not be there. There would be no more jolly meals in the old kitchen ... no more chronicles of Judy on the sandstone steps ... no more kitten hunts in the old barns ... no more delightful days and nights at the Long House ... no more pilgrimages over Jordan ... no Happiness ... no Secret Field ... no Hill of the Mist. There wouldn't be any hills at all on the prairie.

This *must* be a dream. Oh, if she could only wake up!

So many poisonous things were said in school. The girls talked so casually of the Gardiners going west ... some a little enviously as if they would like to go, too. Jean Robinson said she only wished she could get away from this dull old hole.

And then one day May Binnie said that her father had decided to buy Silver Bush!

"If he does we'll fix it up a bit, I can tell you," she said to Pat. "Pa says he'll cut down that old part of the orchard and plough it up and sow it with beans. We'll build a sun-porch of course. And pa says he'll cut down all them birch trees. He says too many trees aren't healthy."

Only sheer malice could have made her say *that*. Pat dragged herself home.

"The Binnies will cut down all our birches, Judy."

"Oh, oh, the Good Man Above may have something to say to *that*," said Judy darkly. But her faithful old heart was heavy. She knew Mac Binnie already looked on Silver Bush as his and was telling everybody about the "improvements" he meant to make.

"Improvements, is it?" Judy had demanded. "Sure he'd better be making some improvements in the manners av himsilf and his daughters, if it's improvements he do be wanting, the ould wind-bag. Mrs. Binnie

hersilf cud do wid a few. Fancy her in me kitchen and her looking like a haystack, niver to mintion her presiding at the dining room table where a Selby from Bay Shore has been sitting. Oh, oh, 'tis a topsy-turvy world, so it is, and getting no better fast."

"I was so happy just a little while ago, Judy. And now I'll never be happy again."

"Oh, oh, niver's a long day, me jewel."

"I hate May Binnie, Judy ... I *hate* her!"

"Sure, Patsy dear, hating do be something that's always bist done yisterday. Life do be too short to waste inny av it hating. Though, if a body *did* have a liddle more time ... but thim Binnie cratur's do be clane benath hating."

"If there was anything we could do to prevent it," sobbed Pat.

Judy shook her head.

"But there isn't ... not in Canady innyhow. That's the worst av a new land where nather God nor the divil have had time to be getting much av a hold on things. Now, if there was a wishing well here like there was in me home in ould Ireland sure and ye cud make it all right in the twinkle av a fairy's eye. All ye'd have to do is go to it at moonrise and ye'd get yer wish."

Pat went to Happiness that night and wished over the Haunted Spring. Who knew?

It was horrible to live with fear ... and suspense. Dad's first letter came when Pat was in school and Judy told her first thing that there was no news yet. Long Alec thought the west a grand country. Allan had done well. But he hadn't decided yet ... he was looking about ... he would be able to tell them next letter.

"So kape up yer pecker, Patsy darlint. There's hope yet."

"I'm afraid to hope, Judy," said Pat drearily. "It *hurts* too much to hope. It would be so much worse when you had to stop hoping."

"Oh, oh, but ye're too young to be larning *that*," muttered Judy. She pounded and thumped and battered her bread, wishing it were Long Alec. Oh, oh, but wudn't she knead some sinse into him! Him wid the good

Island farm and a fine growing fam'ly to be draming av pulling up stakes and going to a new country at his age!

3

The next letter came. It was Saturday and Pat had wakened to a grey dawn. The rain against the windows was very dreary. Everybody at Silver Bush expected dad's letter that day though nobody said anything about it, and Pat felt that the rain was a bad omen.

"Oh, oh, cheer up, Patsy darlint," said Judy. "Sure and I remimber a bit av poetry I larned whin I was a girleen ... *'a dark and dreary morning often brings a pleasant day.'* Often have I seen it mesilf."

It stopped raining at noon, although the clouds still hung dark and heavy over the silver bush. Pat was watching from the garden as the old postman drove up to the mail box. He was a little bent old man with a fringe of white beard, driving a crazy buggy behind a lean old sorrel horse. It seemed incredible that her destiny was in his bag. She went slowly down the lane, a pale moth of a girl, hardly knowing whether she wanted to see a letter or not. It would be so terrible to wait for its opening but at least they would *know*.

The letter was there. Pat took it out and looked at it ... "*Mrs. Alex. B. Gardiner, Silver Bush, North Glen, P. E. Island.*" All her life after a letter seemed to Pat a terrible intriguing, devilish thing. What might ... or might not ... be in it? She remembered that when she had been very small she had been horribly frightened of a "dead" letter she had carried home. She had thought it had come from a dead person. But this was even worse.

She walked back up the lane. Half way up she paused in a little bay of the fence which was full of the white-gold of the "life everlasting" that blooms in September. Her knees were shaking.

"Oh, dear God, please don't let there be any bad news in this letter," she whispered. And then desperately ... because old Alec Gardiner in South Glen had a daughter Patricia, middle-aged and married, and there

must be no mistake ... “Dear God, it’s Long Alec’s Pat of Silver Bush speaking, not just Alec’s Pat.”

Somehow everybody was in the kitchen when Pat entered. Judy sat down on a chair rather suddenly. Bets was just arriving, having torn breathlessly down the hill when she saw the postman. Jingle and McGinty were hanging around the doorstep. McGinty had his ears turned down. Mother, her eyes very bright and with an unusual little red spot on either cheek, took the letter and looked around at all the tense, waiting faces ... except Pat’s. She could not bear to look at Pat’s.

It was a thousand fold worse than when the letter had come about Winnie.

“We must all be as brave as possible if father says we must go,” she said gently.

She opened the letter steadily and glanced over it. It seemed as if the very trees outside stopped to listen.

“Thank God,” she said in a whisper.

“Mother ...”

“Father is coming back. He doesn’t like the west as well as the Island. He says, ‘I’ll be very happy to be home again.’”

And at that very moment, as if waiting for the signal, the sun broke out of the clouds above the Silver Bush and the kitchen was flooded with dancing lights and elfin leaf shadows.

“So that’s that,” said Joe, a bit glumly. He whistled to Snicklefritz and went out.

Pat and Bets were weeping wildly in each other’s arms. Judy got up with a grunt.

“Oh, oh, and what’s all the tears for, I’m asking ye? I thought ye’d be dancing for joy.”

“You’re crying yourself, Judy.” Pat laughed through her tears.

“Sure and it’s the tinder heart av me. I cud niver see inny one crying that I didn’t jine in. Haven’t I wept the quarts at the funerals av people who didn’t be mattering a hoot to me? I’m that uplifted I wudn’t call the quane me cousin. Oh, oh, and it’s me limon pies that are burned as black

as a cinder in me oven. Well, well, I'll just be making another batch. We've had minny a good bite here and plaze the Good Man Above we'll have minny another. It's been a hard wake av it but iverything do be coming to an ind sometime if only ye do be living to see it."

Pat had put on gladness like a garment. She wondered if anybody had ever died of happiness.

"I just couldn't have borne it, Pat, if you went away," sobbed Bets.

Jingle had said nothing. He had sniffed desperately, determined not to let any one see *him* cry. He was at that moment lying face downwards in the mint along Jordan and McGinty could have told you what he was doing. But McGinty wasn't worried. His ears stuck up for he knew somehow that, in spite of shaking shoulders, his chum was happy.

4

Pat came dancing down the hill that night on feet that hardly seemed to touch the earth. She halted under the Watching Pine to gloat over Silver Bush, all her love for it glowing like a rose in her face. It had never looked so beautiful and beloved. How nice to see the smoke curling up from its chimney! How jolly and comfortable the fat, bursting old barns looked, where hundreds of kittens yet unborn would frisk! The wind was singing everywhere in the trees. Over her was a soft, deep, loving sky. Every field she looked on was a friend. The asters along the path were letters of the poem in her heart. She seemed to move and breathe in a trance of happiness. She was a reed in a moonlit pool ... she was a wind in a wild garden ... she was the stars and the lights of home ... she was ... she was Pat Gardiner of Silver Bush!

"Oh, dear God, this is such a lovely world," she whispered.

"A nice hour to be coming in for yer supper," said Judy.

"I was so happy I forgot all about supper. Oh, Judy, I'll always love this day. I'm so happy I'm a little frightened ... as if it couldn't be *right* to feel so happy."

“Oh, oh, drink all the happiness ye can, me darlint, whin the cup is held to yer lips,” said Judy wisely. “Now be after ating yer liddle bite and thin to bed. I packed yer mother off whin Cuddles wint. *She* hasn’t been slaping much of late ather I’m telling ye, though the Selbys kape their falings to thimselves. Oh, oh, and so Madam Binnie won’t be bossing things here for a while yet. And what may ye be thinking av that, me Gintleman Tom?”

“I don’t know if I’ll be able to sleep much even tonight, Judy. It’s lovely to be so happy you can’t sleep.”

But Pat was sound as a bell when Judy crept in to see if the little sisters had the extra blanket for the chill September night.

“Oh, oh, she’ll niver be quite that young agin,” whispered Judy. “It’s such a time as she’s had that makes even the liddle cratur old in their sowls. If one cud be after spanking Long Alec now as I did whin he was a b’y!”

“Am I So Ugly Judy?”

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1

For the first time Pat was getting ready to go to a party ... a real, evening party which Aunt Hazel was giving for two of her husband's nieces who were visiting her. It was what Uncle Tom called a “double-barrelled party” ... girls and boys of Winnie's and Joe's age for Elma Madison and young fry from ten to twelve for Kathleen. Sid pretended to hate the whole thing and vowed he wouldn't go till the last minute when he suddenly changed his mind ... perhaps because Winnie twitted him with sulking because May Binnie wasn't invited.

“Sure and ye wudn't be expicting she wud be,” said Judy loftily. “Since whin have the Binnies set themselves up for the aquals av the Gardiners ... or aven av the Madisons I'm asking ye.”

Pat was very glad when Sid decided to go for Bets was laid up with a sore throat and Jingle, though invited, couldn't or wouldn't go because his only decent suit of clothes had become absurdly tight for him. He had hoped that his mother might send him money for a new suit at Christmas but Christmas had passed as usual without present or letter.

“It's lovely to be nearly eleven,” Pat was exulting to Judy. “I'm almost one of the big girls now.”

“That ye are,” said Judy with a sigh.

It was exciting to be dressing for a real party. Winnie had already gone to several and it was one of the dear delights of Pat's life to sit on the bed and watch her getting ready. But to be dressing yourself!

“Yellow's yer colour, me jewel,” said Judy, as Pat slipped into her little party frock of primrose voile. “Sure and whin yer mother talked av getting the Nile grane I put me foot down. ‘One grane dress is enough in a lifetime,’ sez I to her. ‘Don't ye be remimbering all the bad luck she had in

the one ye got her for the widding? Niver once did she put it on but something happened her or it.’”

“That was true, Judy, now that I come to think of it. I had it on when I broke mother’s Crown Derby plate ... and quarrelled with Sid ... we’d never done that before ... and found the hole in my stocking leg at church ... and put too much pepper in the turnips the day Aunt Frances was here to dinner... .”

“‘And innyhaw,’ sez I, clinching the matter like, ‘grane doesn’t be suiting her complexion.’ So the yellow it is and ye’ll look like a dancing buttercup in it.”

“But I won’t be dancing, Judy. I’m not old enough. We’ll just play games. I do hope they won’t play Clap in and Clap out. They do that so often at school and I hate it ... because ... because, Judy, none of the boys ever pick me out to sit beside. I’m not pretty, you know.”

Pat said it without bitterness. Her lack of beauty had never worried her. But Judy tossed her head.

“They’d better wait till ye come into yer full looks afore they say that, I’m thinking. Now, here’s a trifle av scint for yer hanky ...”

“Put a little bit behind my ears, too ... please, Judy.”

“That I won’t. Scint behind the ears is no place for dacency. A drop on yer hanky and maybe a dab on yer frill. Here’s yer bit av blue fox for yer neck ... though I’m not seeing where the blue comes in. But it sets ye. Now hold yer head up wid the best of thim and don’t be forgetting ye’re a Gardiner. Ye’re to recite I’m hearing?”

“Yes. Aunt Hazel asked me to. I’ve been practising to the little spruce bushes behind the henhouse. Bets was to sing if she hadn’t got a bad throat. It’s just too mean she’s sick. It would have been so wonderful to go to our first party together. I know I’ll be lonesome. I don’t know many of the Silverbridge girls. And I’ll miss Bets so. She’s lovely, Judy. They say Kathie Madison is pretty but I’m sure she isn’t prettier than Bets.”

Joe and Winnie and Sid and Pat all piled into the cutter to drive to Silverbridge through the fine blue crystal of the early winter evening, along roads where slender, lacy trees hung darkly against the rose and gold

of the sky. That was fun ... and at first the party was fun, too. Kathleen Madison *was* pretty ... the prettiest girl Pat had ever seen in her life. A girl with close-cut curls of dark glossy gold, a skin of milk and roses, a dimpled bud of a mouth, and brilliant bluish-green eyes. Pat heard Chet Taylor of South Glen say she was worth walking three miles to see.

Well and good. It did not bother Pat. The evening went with a swing. The Silverbridge girls were all nice and friendly. They *did* play Clap in and Clap out but Mark Madison asked Pat to sit with him so it did not matter if half a dozen other boys were jealously trying for Kathie. Oh, parties *were* fun!

Then, in an evil moment Pat's hair bow fell off and she ran upstairs to put it on. Kathie Madison was in the room, too, pinning together a rent in the lace of her frock. As Pat stood before the looking-glass Kathie came and stood beside her. There was no particular malice in Kathie. She liked Pat Gardiner, as almost every girl did. But unluckily Mark Madison was the one boy Kathie had wanted for Clap in and Clap out. So she came and stood by Pat.

"It's a lovely party, isn't it?" she said. "Your dress is real pretty. Only ... do you think yellow goes well with such a brown skin?"

Something happened to Pat, as she looked at herself and Kathie in the mirror ... something that had never happened before. It was not jealousy ... it was a sudden, dreadful despair. *She was ugly!* Standing beside this fairy girl she was ugly. Pale hair ... a brown face ... a mouth like a straight line and a much too long straight line ... Pat shuddered.

"What's the matter?" asked Kathie.

"Nothing. I just hit my funny bone," said Pat valiantly. But everything had burst like a bubble. There was no more fun for her that evening. She even hated Mark Madison. He must have asked her to sit with him only out of pity ... or because Aunt Hazel had ordered him to do it. She could not eat Aunt Hazel's wonderful supper and her recitation fell flat because as Uncle Robert said, she did not put any pep in it. Pep! Pat felt that she would never have pep again. She only wished she could get away home and cry. She did cry, quietly, as they drove home through the sparkling

night of windless frost, over shadow-barred moonlit roads, between black velvet trees. All the beauty of the night was wasted on Pat who could see nothing but herself and Kathie side by side in the glass.

When she got home she slipped into the Poet's room to have another look at herself. Yes, there was no doubt about it. She was ugly. One did not mind not being very pretty. When Uncle Brian the last time he had been down, had said to her on leaving, "Try to be better looking when I come back," Pat had laughed with the others ... all except Judy, who had sent a very black look after Brian.

But to be ugly. The tears welled up in Pat's eyes. She had never thought she was ugly until she had seen herself beside Kathie. Now she *knew*. What a way for a lovely party to end! Talk about green being unlucky! Nothing worse than this could have happened to her in green. It was she who was unlucky. Nobody would ever love her ... Bets couldn't really care for an ugly friend ... Jingle must just have been making fun of her when he told her she had a cute nose and lovely eyes. Eyes ... just between yellow and brown ... they had looked just like a cat's beside Kathie's enormous blue orbs. And her lashes!

"Even if mine were long I couldn't flicker them like she does," thought Pat disconsolately, forgetting that Kathie had "flickered" them in vain at Mark Madison.

Pat's bed was by the window where she could see the sunrise ... if she woke early enough. She woke early enough the next morning but the wild red sunrise through the trees and its light falling over the white snow-fields did not thrill her. She had very little to say at breakfast. She told Judy dully that the party had been "very nice." She went to school, blind to the aerial colouring of the opal winter day and the dance of loose snow over the meadows. She kept aloof from all the girls who had also been at the party. They were raving over Kathleen's looks. Pat simply couldn't bear it.

She had never been jealous of a girl's looks before. Bets was pretty and Pat was proud of her. To be sure she had always hated Norma but that was because Norma was said to be prettier than Winnie. She wondered if Jingle

thought her *very* ugly. She remembered the coloured chromo of the pretty little girl in the Gordon parlour which she knew Jingle adored. She did not know he adored it because he had heard some one say it looked like his mother. As Pat remembered it it looked like Kathie. Pat writhed.

Did everybody think her ugly? The old man who called around once a week selling fish always addressed her as “Pretty.” But then he called everybody pretty. She had never thought she was pretty ... she had never thought much about her looks at all. And now she could think of nothing else. She was ugly ... nobody would ever like her ... Sid and Joe would be ashamed of their ugly sister... .

“Patricia, have you finished your composition?”

Patricia hadn’t. How could you write compositions when the heart of you was broken?

2

There was company for supper at Silver Bush that night and Judy was too busy to pay any attention to Pat, although she watched her out of the tail of her eye. Pat had to wash the supper dishes. Ordinarily she made a saga of doing it. She liked to wash pretty dishes. Pat loved everything about the house but she loved the dishes particularly. It was such fun to make them clean and shining in the hot soapy water. She always washed her favourites first. The dishes she didn’t like had just to wait until she was good and ready for them and it was fun to picture their dumb, glowering wrath as they waited *and* waited and saw the others preferred before them. That hideous old brown plate with the chipped edges ... how furious it got! “It’s *my* turn now ... I’m an old family plate ... I won’t be treated like this ... I’ve been at Silver Bush for fifty years ... that stuck-up thing with the forget-me-nots on the rim has only been here for a year.” But it always had to wait until the very last in spite of its howls. Tonight Pat washed it first. Poor thing, it couldn’t help being ugly.

She was glad of bedtime and crept off in mingled moonlight and twilight, while the purple shadows gathered along the lee of the snowdrifts behind the well and the west wind in the silver bush was twisting the birches mercilessly.

And then Judy, who had been out milking, invaded the room with a resolute air.

“What do be ailing ye, Pat? Sure and if ye’re faling the way ye’ve been looking all day there’s something sarious the matter. Wandering around widout a word to throw to a dog and peering into the looking-glass be times as if ye was after seeing if the wrinkles was coming. Make a clane breast av it, darlint.”

Pat sat up.

“Oh, Judy, it’s such a terrible thing to be ugly, isn’t it, Judy? *Am* I so very ugly, Judy?”

“So *that’s* it? Oh, oh, and who’s been telling ye ye was ugly if a body may ask?”

“Nobody. But at the party Kathie Madison stood beside me in front of the glass ... and I saw it for myself.”

“Oh, oh, there’s not minny girls but wud look a bit plainer than common beside me fine Kathleen. I’m not denying she’s handsome. And so was her mother afore her. But she wasn’t after getting any more husbands than her homely sister for all av that ... only one and that one no great shakes I’m telling ye. Wid all her looks she tuk her pigs to a poor market. It isn’t the beauties that make the good marriages as a rule, Patsy darlint. There was Cora Davidson now at the Bay Shore. She was that goodlooking the min were said to be crazy over her. But it’s the fact, Patsy darlint, and her own mother it was that tould me, there niver was but one axed her to marry him. He axed her on Wednesday and on Thursday they took him to a lunatic asylum. Oh, I’m telling ye. And have ye iver heard what happened at her sister Annie’s widding supper? They had the cake made in Charlottetown a wake before be way of being more stylish than their neighbours and whin the bride made a jab at it to cut it didn’t a bunch av mice rin out and scamper all over the table? Oh, oh, the screaming and

jumping! More like a wake than a widding! The Davidsons niver hilt up their heads agin for minny a long day I'm telling you."

It was no use. Pat was not to be sidetracked by any of Judy's tales tonight.

"Oh, Judy, I hate to think I'm so ugly my family will be ashamed of me ... people will call me 'that plain Gardiner girl.' Last week at the pie social at Silverbridge nobody would buy Minnie Fraser's pie because she was so ugly ..."

Pat's voice broke on a sob. Judy perceived that skilful handling was required. She sat down on Pat's bed and looked very lovingly at her. The dear liddle thing wid her wide, frindly smile, as if she did be imbracing all the world, and the golden-brown swateness of her eyes! Thinking she was ugly! Setting off in such high cockalorum for her first liddle party and coming home wid her bit av a heart half bruk in two!

"I'm not saying ye're handsome, Patsy, but I *am* saying it's distinguished looking ye are. Ye haven't come into yer looks yet. Wait ye a few years till ye've outgrown yer arms and legs. Wid yer eyes and a bit av luck ye'll get a finer husband than minny av thim."

"Oh, Judy, it's not husbands I'm thinking of," sobbed Pat impatiently. "And I don't want to be terribly handsome. Bets and I read a story last week about a girl who was so beautiful crowds rushed out to see her and a king died for love of her. I wouldn't want that. I just want to be pretty enough so that people wouldn't mind looking at me."

"And who's been minding looking at ye, I'd like to know," said Judy fiercely. "If that stuck-up puss av a Kathie Madison said innything to hurt yer liddle falings ..."

"It wasn't what she said, Judy, so much as the way she said it. 'Such a brown skin' ... as if I was an Indian. Oh, Judy, I can't outgrow my skin, can I?"

"There's thim that thinks a brown skin handsomer than all yer Miss Pink-and-whites. She'll freckle in summer, that one."

"And I'm not even clever, Judy. I can only love people ... and things."

“Oh, oh, ‘tis a great gift that ... and it’s not ivery one that has it, me jewel. Now, we’ll just be seeing where ye are for looks, rale calm and judicial like. Ye’ve got the fine eyes, as Jingle told ye ...”

“And a cute nose, he said, Judy. *Have I?*”

“Ye have that ... and the dainty liddle eyebrows ... oh, oh, but ye’ve got no ind av good p’int ... and the nice ears like liddle pink shells. I warrant ye that Kathie one hasn’t much to brag av in ears ... not if she’s a Madison.”

“Her hair hid them mostly but I got a glimpse of one ... It *did* stick out,” confessed Pat.

“I’m telling ye! Yer mouth may be a bit wide but ye’re not seeing the way it curls up at the corners whin ye laugh, darlint. Oh, oh, ye’ve got a way av laughing, Patsy. And the ‘ristocratic ankles av ye! I’ll be bound that Kathie one has a bit too much beef on hers.”

“Yes, Kathie *has* fat ankles,” Pat recalled to her comforting. “But she has such lovely hair. Look at mine ... straight as a string and just the colour of ginger.”

“Yer hair will be getting darker all the time, me jewel. Sure and the wonder is ye girls have inny skin or hair at all, running round in sun and wind bareheaded as ye do. Yer mother and her leddy sisters all wore sunbonnets I’m telling ye.”

“Oh, Judy, that would be horrid. I *love* the sun and wind.”

“Oh, oh, thin don’t be howling bekase yer skin is brown and yer hair all faded. Ye can’t ate yer cake and have it, too. I’m guessing it’s healthier.”

“Winnie has such lovely curls. I don’t see why I haven’t any.”

“Winnie do be Selby and ye do be Gardiner. Yer mother now ... oh, oh, but she had the rale permanent, so she had, that yer Aunt Jessie cudn’t have if she had her head boiled and baked for a year. But ye’ve got a flavour av yer own and a tongue as swate as violets whin ye begin blarneying ... and whin ye smile yer eyes twinkle like yer Grandmother Gardiner’s ... and she was the prettiest ould leddy I iver laid me eyes on. And ye’ve got a way av looking at a body and dropping yer eyes and thin

looking agin that's going to play havoc some day. I've seen me lad Jingle's face whin ye looked at him so."

"Judy ... have I really?"

"Oh, oh, maybe I shudn't be telling ye av it ... not but what ye'd find it out sooner or later. I'm telling ye, Patsy darlint, a look like that is worth all the blue eyes and liddle red mouths in the world. Yer mother had it. Oh, oh, *she* knew all the tricks in her day."

"Father says mother was a great belle when she was a girl, Judy."

"Well may he say it for the hard time he had to get her! Ivery one thought she wud take Fred Taylor. Oh, oh, but he had the silver tongue. He cud wheedle the legs off an iron pot. But whin it came to the last ditch sure and she laped it wid yer dad. Minny was the sore heart at her widding."

"But she was pretty, Judy."

"Her own sister ... yer Aunt Doris ... wasn't pretty I'm telling ye, and she had more beaus than yer mother aven. Sure and I think it was bekase she always looked so slapy the min wanted to wake her up. She was the lazy one av the Bay Shore girls but ivery one liked her nixt to yer mother. Yer Aunt Evelyn had the prettiest arms and shoulders av the lot ... as ye'll have yersilf some day, darlint, whin ye get a liddle more mate on yer bones. Yer Aunt Flora now ... *she* was the flirt. She tried to flirt wid ivery one in sight. Now there's niver no sinse in that, Patsy dear. A few like to kape yer hand in ... but not ivery one. Remimber that whin yer time comes."

"Kathie told me that Jim Madison climbed to the top of the biggest tree at Silverbridge to see if he could pick a star for her."

"Oh, oh, but did he get the star, darlint? There's innny number av ways av showing off. Now just ye be going to slape wid a good heart. Ye've got a liddle better opinion of yersilf I be thinking?"

"A whole lot better, Judy. I guess I've been pretty silly. But I did look so brown ..."

"Sure and I'll tell ye an ould beauty secret, Patsy dear. Whin the spring comes just ye run out ivery morning and wash yer face in morning dew."

I'm not saying it'll make ye pink and white like Kathleen but it'll make yer skin like satin."

"Really, Judy?"

"Sure and isn't it in me book av Useful Knowledge? I'll be showing it to ye tomorrow."

"Why haven't *you* done that, Judy?"

"Oh, oh, nothing cud make inny diffrence to me old elephant's hide. Ye've got to begin it young. Georgie Shortreed made a rigular beauty av hersilf that way, so she did, and made a good match in a fam'ly that was as full av ould maids as a pudding av plums. Was I iver telling ye how her sister Kitty lost her one chanct? Sure and didn't she throw a pan av dishwater over her beau one night, accidental like, whin he was standing on the kitchen dure-step, trying to get up enough spunk to knock ... him being a bould young lad av fifty wid a taste for ugly girls and not used to sparking. Away he wint and niver come back, small wonder, for wasn't his bist suit ruint entirely wid grase? The Shortreeds all had that lazy trick av opening the dure and letting the dishwater fly right and lift widout looking. Was I iver telling ye how their ould dad, Dick Shortreed, quarrelled wid his marching neighbour, Ab Bollinger, over a hin?"

"No." Pat snuggled down on her pillow, happy again and ready to taste Judy's yarns.

"They fought over the hin for three years and wint to law about it ... to the magistrate innyway ... and 'twas the joke av the country side. And after they had spint more money than wud buy a hundred hins this same Ab Bollinger's daughter up and married ould Dick Shortreed's son and the ould folks made up their quarrel and killed the hin for the widding supper. 'Twas a tough bite I'm thinking be that time."

After Judy went out Pat slipped out of bed to the window where the moonlight was glittering on the frosted panes. Winnie had not come up yet and the night was very still. Pat could see the fields of crystal snow, the shadows in the Whispering Lane, and the silver fringe of icicles on the church barn. A light was shining in Bets' dormer up at the Long House. She was good friends with the world again. What did it matter if she had

no great beauty herself? She had the beauty of shining meadows ... of moon secrets in field and grove ... of beloved Silver Bush.

Still, it was a comfort as she crept to bed again to remember that Kathie had the Madison ears.

Shores of Romance

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1

“Sure and it’ll rain afore night,” said Judy at noon. “Look how clare ye can see yer Hill av the Mist.”

Pat hoped it wouldn’t rain. She and Jingle had planned a walk to the shore. This was by way of being a treat to Pat for although you could, from Silver Bush, see the great gulf to the north and the shimmering blue curve of the harbour to the east, it was a mile and a half to the shore itself and the Silver Bush children did not often get down. Pat felt that she needed something to cheer her up. Buttons, the dearest kitten that had ever been at Silver Bush ... to be sure, every kitten was that ... had died that morning without rhyme or reason. All his delights were over ... frisking in the “dim” ... flying up trees ... catching small mice in the jungle of the Old Part ... basking on the tombstones. Pat had tearfully buried this little dead thing that only yester-night had been so beautiful.

Besides, she was “out” with Sid over his frog. Pat was always so sorry for imprisoned things and Sid had had that poor frog in a pail in the yard for a week. Every time Pat looked at it it seemed to look at her appealingly. Perhaps it had a father or mother or husband or wife in the pool. Or even just a dear friend to whom it longed to be reunited. So Pat carried it away to the Field of the Pool and Sid hadn’t spoken to her for two days.

All the afternoon the heat waves shimmered over the Buttercup Field and the sun “drew water” ... as if some far-off Weaver in the west were spinning shining threads of rain between sky and sea. But it was still a lovely evening when Jingle and Pat ... and McGinty ... started for the shore, although far down on the lowlands was a smudge of fog here and there, with little fir trees sticking spectrally up out of it.

“Don’t ye go and get drowned now,” warned Judy, as she always did when anybody went to the shore. “And mind ye don’t fall over the capes or get caught be the tide or run over by an auty afore ye get to the shore road or ...” but they were out of hearing before Judy could think up any more “ors.”

Pat loved that long red road that wandered on until it reached the sea, twisting unexpectedly just because it wanted to, among the spruce “barrens,” where purple sheep laurel bordered the path and meadow-sweet and blue-eyed grass grew along the fences. “Kiss-me-quicks,” Judy called the blue-eyed grasses. Pat liked this name best but you couldn’t call it that to a boy. They rambled happily on, sucking honey-filled horns of red clover, a mad, happy little dog tearing along before them with his tongue out. Sometimes they talked and sometimes they didn’t. That was what Pat liked about Jingle. You didn’t have to talk to him unless you wanted to.

Half way to the shore they had to call at Mr. Hughes’, where Jingle had an errand for his uncle. The Hughes house was a rather tumbledown one but it had some funny twinkly windows that Jingle liked. Jingle was always on the lookout for windows. They had a peculiar fascination for him. He averred that the windows of a house made or marred it.

“Will I put windows like that in your house, Pat?”

Pat giggled. Jingle had put all kinds of windows in that imaginary house of hers already.

She would rather have waited outside and looked at the windows, even if more than one of the panes was broken and stuffed with rags, while Jingle did his errand but he dragged her in. Jingle knew that there were three Hughes girls there and face them alone he would not.

Mr. Hughes was out but they were asked to sit down and wait until he came in. Neither felt at home. The Hughes kitchen was in what Judy would have called a “tarrible kilter” and a black swarm of flies had settled on the dirty dishes of the supper table. Sally and Bess and Cora Hughes sat in a row behind the table and grinned at the callers ... a malicious grin not in the least likely to put shy or sensitive people at their ease. Pat knew them only slightly but she had heard of them.

“Which of us girls,” said Bess to Jingle with an impish, green-eyed smile, “are you going to marry when you grow up?”

Jingle’s face turned a dark, uncomfortable red. He shuffled his bare feet but did not answer.

“Oh, ain’t you the bashful one?” giggled Sally. “Just look how he’s blushing, girls.”

“I’m going to get ma’s tape and measure his mouth,” said Cora, sticking her tongue out at Jingle.

Jingle looked hunted and desperate but still would not speak ... could not, probably. Pat was furious. These girls were making fun of Jingle. She recalled a word she had heard the minister use in his sermon last Sunday. Pat had no idea what it meant but she liked the sound of it. It was dignified.

“Don’t mind them, Jingle. They are nothing but protoplasms,” she said scornfully.

For a moment it worked. Then the Hughes temper broke.

“Skinny!” cried Bess.

“Shrimp!” cried Cora.

“Moon-face!” cried Sally.

and,

“*You* needn’t get your Scotch up, Pat Gardiner,” they all cried together.

“Oh, I’m not angry, if that’s what you mean,” said Pat icily. “I’m only sorry for you.”

This got under the Hughes skins.

“Sorry for us?” Bess laughed nastily. “Better be sorry for your old Witch Judy. She’s going straight to the Bad Place when she dies. Witches do.”

There was an end to all dignity. Pat tossed her head.

“Judy isn’t a witch. I think your father is a cousin of Mary Ann McClenahan’s, isn’t he?”

There was no denying this. But Sally got even.

“Why doesn’t your mother ever come to see you,” she asked Jingle.

“I don’t think that is any business of yours,” said Pat.

“I wasn’t addressing you, *Miss Gardiner*,” retorted Sally. “Better hang *your* tongue out to cool.”

“Now, now, what’s all this fuss about?”

Mrs. Hughes waddled into the room with an old felt hat of her husband’s atop of her rough hair. She subsided into a mangy old plush chair and looked reproachfully at everybody.

“Who’s been slapping your face, Jingle? You girls been teasing him I s’pose. I declare I don’t see why you can’t try and act as if you’d been *raised*. You mustn’t mind their nonsense, Jingle. They’re a bit too fond of their fun.”

Fun! If it was fun to insult callers! But Mr. Hughes came in at last. Jingle delivered his uncle’s message and they got away. McGinty had long since fled and was waiting for them on the shore road.

“Let’s forget all about it,” said Pat. “We won’t spoil our walk by thinking about them.”

“It’s not *them*,” said Jingle, too miserable to care whether he was ungrammatical or not. “It’s what they said about ... about mother.”

2

It was so lovely at the shore that they soon forgot the Hughes episode. They passed by the old, wind-beaten spruces of Tiny Cove and ran down to where the wind and shore were calling each other. Fishing boats went past, wraithlike. Far-off was the thunder of waves on the bar but here the sea crouched and purred. They raced along the shore with the sting of the blowing sand in their faces. They waded in the pools among the rocks. They built “sea-palaces” with shells and driftwood. Finally they sat them down on a red rock in a little curve below the red “cap” and looked far out in the soft fading purple of the longshore twilight to some magic shore beyond the world’s rim.

“Would you like to go away ‘way out there, Pat?”

“No.” Pat shivered. “It would be too far from home.”

“I think *I* would,” said Jingle dreamily. “There’s so much in the world I want to see ... the great palaces and cathedrals men have built. I want to learn how to build them, too. But ...”

Jingle stopped. He knew it was no use to hope for such a thing. He must, as far as he could see, spend his life picking up stones and grubbing out young spruce trees on his uncle’s farm.

“Joe used to say he would like to be a sailor like Uncle Horace,” said Pat. “He said he hated farming, but he hasn’t said anything about it lately. Father wouldn’t listen to him.”

“School will begin next week,” said Jingle. “I hate to go. Miss Chidlaw will want me to join the entrance class ... and what’s the use? I can’t get to Queen’s ... ever.”

“You want to go, Jingle?”

“Of course I want to go. It’s the first step. But ... I can’t.”

“Next year they’ll want *me* to join the entrance but I’m not going to,” said Pat resolutely. “I don’t want to go to college. I’m just going to stay at Silver Bush and help Judy. Oh, isn’t the salt tang in the air here lovely, Jingle? I wish we could come to the shore oftener.”

“The mists down by the harbour look like ghosts, don’t they? And look at that little, lonely ship away over there ... it looks as if it was drifting over the edge of the world. There’s a fog coming in from sea. I guess maybe we’d better be going, Pat.”

There was only one objection to their going. While they had sat there the tide had come in. It was almost at their feet now. The rocks at the cape points were already under water. They looked at each other with suddenly whitened faces.

“We ... we can’t get around the capes,” gasped Pat.

Jingle looked at the rocks above them. Could they climb them? No, not here. They overhung too much.

“Will we ... be drowned, Jingle?” whispered Pat, clutching him.

Jingle put his arm around her. He must be brave and cool for Pat’s sake.

“No, of course not. See that little cave in the cape? We can climb up to it. I’m almost sure the tide never rises as high as that.”

“Oh, you can’t be sure,” said Pat. “Remember Judy’s stories of people being caught by the tide and drowned.”

“That was in Ireland. I never heard of it happening here. Come ... quick.”

Jingle caught up McGinty and they raced through the water which was by now almost to their knees. Two rather badly scared children scrambled up into the little cave. As a matter of fact they need not have been scared. The cave was well above high tide mark. But neither of them was quite sure of that. They sat huddled together with McGinty between them. McGinty at least was quite easy in his mind. Indian plains and Lapland snows were all the same to McGinty when the two people he loved were with him.

Pat’s panic subsided after a few minutes. She always felt safe with Jingle. And it wasn’t likely the tide rose this high. But how long would it be before they could escape? The folks at home would be wild with fright. If they had only remembered Judy’s warning!

But, in spite of everything, the romance of it appealed to Pat. Marooned in a cave by the tide was romantic if ever anything was. As for Jingle, if he had been sure that they were quite safe, he would have been perfectly happy. He had Pat all to himself ... something that didn’t happen very often since Bets had come to the Long House. Not but what he liked Bets. But Pat was the only girl with whom Jingle never felt shy.

“If those horrid Hughes girls could see us now wouldn’t they laugh,” giggled Pat. “But I’m sorry I let them make me mad. Judy says you must never lower yourself to be mad with *scum*.”

“I wasn’t mad,” said Jingle, “but what they said about mother hurt. Because ... it’s *true*.”

Pat squeezed his hand sympathetically.

“I’m sure she’ll come some day, Jingle.”

“I’ve given up hoping it,” said Jingle bitterly. “She ... she never sent me a card last Christmas at all.”

“Doesn’t she answer your letters, Jingle ... ever?”

“I ... I never send the letters, Pat,” said Jingle miserably. “I’ve never sent any of them. I write them every Sunday but I just keep them in a box in an old chest. She never answered the first one I sent ... so I never sent any more.”

Pat just couldn’t help it. She felt so sorry for Jingle ... writing those letters Sunday after Sunday and never sending them. Impulsively she put her arm around his neck and kissed his cheek.

“There’s no one like you in all the world, Pat,” said Jingle comforted.

“Hear, hear,” said the thuds of McGinty’s tail.

Faraway shores were now only dim grey lands. The dark shadows of the oncoming night were all around them.

“Let’s pretend things to pass the time,” suggested Pat. “Let’s pretend the rocks dance ...”

“Let’s pretend things about that old house up there,” said Jingle.

The old house was on the top of the right cape. It was not one of the fish-houses that sprinkled the shore. Two generations ago it had been built by an eccentric Englishman who had brought his family out from England and lived there mysteriously. He seemed to have plenty of money and there were gay doings in the house until his wife died. Then he had left the Island as suddenly as he had come. Nobody would buy a house in such a place and it had sunk into a ruin. Its windows were broken ... its chimneys had toppled down. The wind and the mist were the only guests now in rooms that had once echoed to music and laughter and dancing feet. In the gathering shadows the old house had the look of fate which even a commonplace building assumes beneath the falling night ... as if it brooded over dark secrets ... grim deeds whereof history has no record.

“I wonder if anybody was ever murdered in that house,” whispered Pat, with a delicious creepy thrill.

They peopled the old house with the forms of those who had once lived there. They invented the most gruesome things. The Englishman had killed his wife ... had thrown her over the cape ... had buried her under the house ... her ghost walked there on nights like this. On stormy nights the

house resounded with weeping and wailing ... on moonlit nights it was full of *shadows* ... restless, uneasy shadows. They scared themselves nearly to death and McGinty, excited by their tragic voices, howled dismally.

All at once they were too scared to go on pretending. It was dark ... too dark to see the gulf although they could hear it. The bar moaned. An occasional bitter splash of rain blew into their cave. The little waves sobbed on the lonely shore. The very wind seemed full of the voices of the ghosts they had created. It was an eerie place ... Pat snuggled close to Jingle.

“Oh, I wish somebody would come,” she whispered.

Wishes don’t often come true on the dot but Pat’s did. A dim bobbing light came into sight out on the water ... it drew nearer ... there was a boat with a grizzled old fisherman in it. Jingle yelled wildly and the boat pulled in to the cape. Andrew Morgan lifted a lantern and peered at them.

“I-golly, if it isn’t the Gordon boy and the Gardiner girl! Whatever are ye doing there? Caught by the tide, hey? Well, it’s a bit of luck for ye that I took the notion to row down to Tiny Cove for a bag of salt. I heered that dog yelping and thought I’d better see where he was. Climb down now ... a bit careful ... ay, that’s the trick. And where do ye want to go?”

3

Two thankful children were duly landed in the cove and lost no time in scampering home. A lovely clean rain was pelting down but they did not mind it. They burst into Judy’s kitchen joyfully ... out of the wind and rain and dark into the light of home. Why, the house was holding out its arms to them!

Judy was scandalised.

“Chilled to the bone ye are! Pewmony’ll be the last of it.”

“No, really, Judy, we kept warm running. Don’t scold, Judy. And don’t tell any one. Mother would worry so if we ever went to the shore again.

I'll slip into a dry dress and Jingle can put on a shirt of Sid's. And you'll give us a snack, won't you, Judy? We're hungry as bears."

"Oh, oh, and ye might have been drowned ... or if ould Andy Morgan hadn't come along ... sure and for onct in his life the ould ninny was in the right place ... ye'd av had to stay there till the tide turned ... a nice scandal."

"The Hughes girls would have made one out of it anyway," laughed Pat.

"That tribe!" said Judy contemptuously, when she heard the story. "Sure and that Sally-thing is glib since she got her tongue righted. Charmed be a snake she was whin she was three years ould and cudn't talk plain agin for years."

"Charmed by a snake?"

"I'm telling ye. Curled upon the dure-step me fine snake was and Sally astaring into its eyes. Her mother fetched it a swipe wid a billet av wood and Sally yelled as if she'd been hit herself. Old Man Hughes told me the tale himsilf so I lave ye to guess how much truth was in it. Maybe they was ashamed av the way she lisped ... but there's no being up to snakes and one thing is certain ... Sally had the cratur's hiss in her v'ice till she was six. Mary Ann McClenahan was be way av saying she was a changeling. Oh, oh, ye did well to give them a bar about Mary Ann. They ain't proud av the connection I'm telling ye. But ... me memory's getting that poor ... what was it ye was after calling them now?"

"Protoplasms," said Pat proudly.

"Oh, oh, that sounds exactly like thim, whin I come to think av it," nodded Judy. "Now sit ye down and ate yer liddle bite. I sint yer mother off to bed, niver letting on to her where ye'd gone and don't let me see ye coming home agin wid such didoes to yer credit."

"You know it would be dull if nothing out of the common ever happened, Judy. And if we never have any adventures we'll have nothing to remember when we get old."

"The sinse av her," said Judy admiringly.

What Would Judy Think of It?

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1

When Pat went to Silverbridge in September to spend a few days with Aunt Hazel she went willingly, for a brief exile from Silver Bush was not so terrible as it used to be and Aunt Hazel's home was a jolly place to visit. But when, just as the visit was nearly ended, word came that Cuddles and Sid were down with measles and that Pat must not come home until all danger of catching them was past, it was rather a cat of another colour. However, what with one thing and another, Pat contrived to enjoy herself tolerably well and consoled herself in her spasms of homesickness by writing letters to everybody.

(The letter to Bets. With a border of dinky little black cats inked in all around it.)

“Sweetheart Elizabeth: —

“I think ‘sweetheart’ is a *tenderer* word than darling, don’t you? This is my birthday and your birthday and isn’t it a shame we can’t spend it together? But even if we couldn’t be together I’ve been thinking of you all day and loving you. Aren’t you glad our birthday is in September? I think it is one of the nicest things that ever happened me because September is my favourite month in the year. It’s such a friendly month and it seems as if the year had stopped being in a hurry and had time to think about you.

“Bets, just think of it. We’re twelve. It seems such a short time since I was a child. And just think, our next birthday we’ll be in our teens. Uncle Robert’s Maiden Aunt says once you are in your teens the years just whirl by and first thing you know you’re old. I can’t believe we’ll ever be old, Bets ... can you?

“I like it pretty well here. Aunt Hazel’s place is lovely but everything would be prettier if you could share it with me. The window in my room looks out on the orchard and off to the left is a dear little valley all full of young spruces and shadows. I mean the spruces are young not the shadows. I think shadows are always *old*. They are lovely but I think I am always a little bit afraid of them because they are so very old. Aunt Hazel laughed when I said this and said notions like that were what came of Judy Plum stuffing us all with her yarns about fairies but I don’t think that has anything to do with it. It’s just that shadows always seem to me to be *alive*, especially when moonlight and twilight are mixing.

“I go over the road to Uncle Robert’s brother’s house quite often to play with Sylvia Cyrilla Madison. I like that name. It has a nice, ripply, gurgly sound like a brook. She is a nice girl but I can never like any one as well as you, Bets. I *like* Sylvia Cyrilla but I *love* you. Sylvia Cyrilla thinks Sid is very handsome. Somehow I don’t like to hear her praise him. When her grownup sister Mattie said the same thing I was *proud*. But I hated to hear Sylvia Cyrilla say it. Why?

“Sylvia Cyrilla’s big brother, Bert, told her I was a cute little skeesicks. But probably he only said it out of politeness.

“Aunt Hazel is teaching me to make fudge and hemstitch. I like doing things like that but Sylvia Cyrilla says it’s old-fashioned. She says girls have to have a career now. She is going to have one. But I’m sure I don’t want one. Somebody has to make fudge and I notice Sylvia Cyrilla likes to eat it as well as any one.

“Jen Campbell is Sylvia Cyrilla’s dearest friend. She is good fun but she doesn’t like to be beaten in anything. When I said Sid and Cuddles had the measles she said proudly, ‘I had mumps and measles and scarlet fever and middle ear in one year and now I have to get my tonsils out.’ It made me feel very inexperienced.

“Jen says she wishes she had been born a boy. I don’t, do you? I think it is just lovely to be a girl.

“I am writing this up in Aunt Hazel’s garret and it’s raining. I love to be in a garret when it’s raining, don’t you? I love a sweet, rainy darkness

like there is outside. The rain seems so friendly when it's gentle. Uncle Rob says I'm a regular garret cat but the reason I like to be up here is because I can see the harbour from one window and Silver Bush from another. From here it just looks like a little white spot against the birch bush. I can't see your house but I can see the Hill of the Mist, only it is north of me now instead of being east. That gives me a queer, Alice-in-the-looking-glass feeling.

"Tonight there are windy shadows flying over the harbour under the rain ... like great long misty wings. It gives me a strange feeling when I look at them ... it almost hurts me and yet I love them. Oh, Bets, darling, isn't it lovely to be alive and see things like that?"

"I am going to tell you a secret. I wouldn't tell it to any one in the world but you. I know you won't laugh and I can't bear to have secrets from *you*."

"I think I fell in love last Sunday night at eight o'clock. Aunt Hazel took me to a sacred concert in Silverbridge given by three blind men. One played the piano and one played the violin and one sang. His singing was just *heavenly*, Bets, and he was so handsome. He had dark hair and a beautiful nose and the loveliest blue eyes although he was blind. When he began to sing I had such a queer sinking feeling at the pit of my stomach. I thought I must be getting religion, as Judy says, and then in a flash I knew what had happened to me because my knees were shaking. I asked Judy once how you could tell when you fell in love and she said, 'Ye'll find yer legs trimbling a bit.'"

"Oh, how I wished I could only do some splendid thing to make him notice me, or die for him. I was glad Aunt Hazel had scented my hands with toilet water before I left and that I had on my blue dress and my little blue necklace even if he couldn't see it. It would have been awful to fall in love if you had your old clothes on or if you had a cold in the head like poor Sylvia Cyrilla. She was sniffing and blowing her nose all the evening."

"Oh, I shall never forget it, Bets. But the trouble is it didn't last. It was all over by Monday morning. That seemed terrible because Sunday night I thought it would last to all eternity as it says in books. I don't feel a bit

like that about him now, though it makes me a little dizzy just to remember it. Am I fickle? I'd hate to be fickle.

"Won't it be lovely when I can go home and we can be together again? I'm crossing every day off on the calendar and I pray every night that nobody else at Silver Bush will take measles. Please don't read any poetry under the Watching Pine until I get back. I can't bear to think of you being there without me.

"I must go to bed now and get my 'beauty sleep' as Uncle Rob says. I like the words 'beauty sleep.' Just suppose one *could* fall asleep ugly and wake up beautiful. That wouldn't seem so wonderful to you, darling, because you *are* beautiful, but poor me!

"It would be rather nice to have a blind husband because he wouldn't care if you weren't pretty. But I don't suppose I'll ever see him again.

"Think of me every moment you can.

"Your own,

"Patricia.

"P.S. Aunt Hazel says I ought to get my hair bobbed. But what would Judy say?"

2

(The letter to mother)

"My Own Sweetest Mother: —

"I'm just making believe you're *here*, mother, and that I'm feeling your arm around me. I'm just starving for you all. There is something pleasant about most of the days here but you seem so far away at night. Do you miss me? And does Silver Bush miss me? Dear Silver Bush. When I came up to the garret tonight and looked to where it was all was dead and dark. Then it just came to life with lights in all its windows and I thought I could see you all there, and Judy and Gentleman Tom, and I guess I cried a little.

“I was so glad to hear Sid and Cuddles were getting on all right. I hope Cuddles won’t forget me. I’m glad you baked your letter in the oven so I wouldn’t get germs in it, because it would be dreadful if just when I was ready to go home I’d come down with measles here. Mother dearest, I hope you don’t have any of your bad headaches while I am away.

“I read my chapter in the Bible every night, mother, and say my prayers. Miss Martha Madison is here for a long visit. Uncle Robert calls her his Maiden Aunt behind her back and you can just see the capitals. Every night she comes in and asks me if I’ve said my prayers. I don’t like strangers meddling with my prayers. It will soon be a year since dad came home from the west but still every night I thank God for it. I just can’t thank Him enough. Jen says she has cousins out there and it is a splendid country. Likely it is ... but it isn’t Silver Bush.

“There’s one thing I do like here, mother. The sheepskin rug by my bed. It’s so nice to hop out of bed and dig your toes into a sheepskin rug, ever so much nicer than cold oilcloth or even a hooked mat. Can I have a sheepskin rug, mother? That is, if it won’t hurt Judy’s feelings.

“I had a lovely letter from Bets to-day. Mother, I do love Bets. I’m so glad that I have such a beautiful friend. There is something about her voice makes me think of the wind blowing through the Silver Bush. And her eyes are like *yours*, always looking as if she knew something lovely.

“You are just the loveliest mother. I like writing letters because it is easier to write things like that than say them.

“Mother, can my new winter dress be red? I love soft glowing colours like red. Sylvia Cyrilla says she would like to have a new dress every month but I wouldn’t. I like to wear my clothes long enough to get fond of them. I hate to think that my last year’s brown has got too small for me. I’ve had so many good times in that dear old dress. Mind you don’t let Judy have any of my old things for hooking until I come home. I know she’s got her eye on my yellow middy blouse but you can lengthen the sleeves, can’t you, mother?

“There’s a lovely moon rising over the harbour tonight although the wind sounds a little sad around the garret. Judy says that when I saw the

full moon one night when I was three years old I said, ‘Oh, see the man carrying a lantern in the sky.’ Did I really?

“The Maiden Aunt says she likes lavender among sheets. When I said we always put sweet clover between ours she sniffed. Aunt Hazel said yesterday I could make the Brown Betty for dinner but I couldn’t do it right with the Maiden Aunt looking on and watching for mistakes. So it wasn’t good and I felt *humiliated* but anyhow I think Brown Betty sounds too cannibalish.

“I think Sylvia Cyrilla’s mother just worships her parlour. She keeps it locked up and the blind down and only very special visitors ever get into it. I’m glad we live all over our house, mother.

“The Maiden Aunt says there will be a frost tonight. Oh, I hope not. I don’t want the flowers to be nipped before I get back. But I noticed to-day that the yellow leaves have begun to fall from the poplars so the summer is over.

“I’ve just thrown a kiss out to the wind to carry to you. And I’m putting lots of kisses in this letter, a kiss for everybody and everything and a special kiss for father and Cuddles. Isn’t it lucky love doesn’t make a letter weigh any heavier? If it did this letter would be so heavy I couldn’t afford the postage.

“Aunt Hazel’s new baby is very sweet but not so pretty as Cuddles was. Oh, mother, there really isn’t anybody like the Silver Bush people, is there? I think we’re *such* a nice family! And you are the nicest person in it.

“Your devoted daughter,

“Pat.

“P.S. Aunt Hazel says I ought to have my hair bobbed. Do you think Judy would mind now? Sylvia Cyrilla says her mother cried for a week when she had hers bobbed but she likes it now.

“P.G.”

(Letter to Sid)

“Dearest Sid: —

“I’m so glad to hear you are getting better and able to eat. The Maiden Aunt says you shouldn’t be let eat much when you are getting over measles but I guess Judy knows better than a Maiden Aunt. I hated to think you were sick and me not there to fan your fevered brow or do a single thing for you. But I knew Judy would look after you if mother couldn’t spare time from Cuddles.

“I like it here. It is a nice friendly house and Aunt Hazel lets me stay up till half past nine. But I will be glad when I can go home. I hope I won’t take the measles but I think it would be real exciting to be sick. They would make such a fuss over me then. When you get well we must go back to our Secret Field and see how our spruces are.

“Sylvia Cyrilla says that Fred Davidson and his sister Muriel used to be devoted to each other just like you and me but they quarrelled and now they never speak. Oh, Sid, don’t let us *ever* quarrel. I couldn’t bear it.

“Of course they are only Davidsons.

“Sylvia Cyrilla says the South Glen Petersons got a bad scare last week. They thought Myrtle Peterson had eloped. But it turned out she was only drowned. And Sylvia says May Binnie is your girl. She isn’t, is she, Sid? You’d never have a Binnie for a girl. They are not in our class.

“I wish you would marry Bets when you grow up. I wouldn’t mind *her* coming to Silver Bush. She would love it as much as I do and I’m sure she’d make you a lovely wife. And she wouldn’t mind my living with you I know.

“If the grey and white barn-cat has kittens tell Joe to save one for me.

“It will soon be ploughing time. I’ll be home in time to help pick the apples. Bert Madison is teaching me how to tie a sailor’s knot and I’ll show you but you won’t show May Binnie, will you, Sid?

“Your own dear sister,

“Pat.

“P.S. Aunt Hazel says I ought to have my hair bobbed. Do you think it would improve me? But what would Judy say?”

4

(Letter to Jingle)

“Dear Jingle: —

“It was ripping of you to write me so often. I’m glad you missed me. Nobody at Silver Bush have *said* they missed me. I supposed Sid and Cuddles were too sick to, and Winnie and Joe are so big now I guess I don’t matter much to them.

“I’m up in the garret. I like to sit here and watch the trees in the spruce valley getting black and listen to the wind moaning round the chimneys. Tonight it’s the kind that Judy calls the ghost wind. It makes me think of that piece of poetry you read the last day we were in Happiness.

“The midnight wind came wild and dread
Swelled with the voices of the dead.

“Those lines always give me a lovely creepy shudder, Jingle, and I’m glad you feel it, too. Sid thinks it’s all bosh. He laughs at me when I wonder what is the meaning of the things the trees are always saying and what some of the winds are always so sorry for. But you never laugh at me, Jingle. Every night here, before I go to sleep I lie still and think I can hear the water falling over the mossy rock in dear Happiness.

“How is McGinty? Give him a hug for me. The Maiden Aunt has a dog but I’m sorry for it. She never lets it out of her sight and the poor thing has nothing but a rubber rat to play with. They have several dogs at Sylvia Cyrilla’s, Bert’s dog and Myrtle’s dog and the family dog, but none of these are as nice as McGinty. Uncle Rob’s father down the road has a dog but he is not an exciting dog. Uncle Rob says he is always so tired he has to lean against a fence to bark. Speaking of dogs, I found such a lovely poem in Aunt Hazel’s scrapbook called *The Little Dog Angel*. I cried when

I read it because I thought of you and McGinty. I could just see McGinty slipping out of heaven's gates between St. Peter's legs to 'bark a welcome to you in the shivering dark.' Oh, Jingle, I'm sure dear little dogs like McGinty *must* have souls.

"I wonder what you'd think of Aunt Hazel's house. I think you'd say it was too tall. But it's really very nice inside. Only there are no back steps to sit on and no round window and no dead clock.

"What do you think, Jingle? Old Mr. Peter Morgan from the harbour told me he was a pirate in his young days and buried a treasure worth millions on a West Indies island and never could find the place again. If he had told me that four years ago I would have believed him but he has left it too late. I wish it was as easy to believe things as it used to be.

"The fence back of Uncle Robert's house is the line between Queen's and Prince county. It's perfectly thrilling, Jingle, to think you can go into another county just by climbing over a fence. Somehow you expect everything to be different. I climb over it every day just to get the nice adventury feeling. Aunt Hazel says it doesn't take much to give me a thrill but I think it is lucky. What would life be without a few thrills? And what would life be without Betses and Jingles and Sids and Judys and Silver Bushes?

"Chum Pat.

"P.S. Aunt Hazel says she thinks I ought to have my hair bobbed. Would you like me bobbed, Jingle?"

5

(Letter to Judy with Judy's comments)

"My Own Dear Judy: —

"It just seems ages since I left home and I've been so lonesome for you all and the dear old kitchen. Aunt Hazel's kitchen is very up to date but it isn't as cosy as ours, Judy. When I get homesick at nights I go up to the garret and watch the lights of Silver Bush and picture out what every one

is doing and I see you setting bread in the kitchen, talking to yourself, *(fancy that now.)* And Gentleman Tom thinking away on his bench. *(Sure and it's the grand thinker ye are, Tom. I'm after telling the world ye can think more in a day than most folks can in a wake.)* They have no cats here because Uncle Robert's Maiden Aunt visits so often and so long and she doesn't like them. I don't like the Maiden Aunt very well. *(Oh, oh, small blame to ye for that, Patsy.)* She is very homely. I know I'm not much to look at myself but I haven't a nose like hers. Everything, even her hair, seems to be frightened of it and trying to get away from it. *(Sure and there's observation for ye.)* And yet I'm a little sorry for her, Judy, *(oh, oh, the tinder heart av her now)*, because she is really lonely. She hasn't anybody or any place to love. That must be dreadful.

"Aunt Hazel has the loveliest blue quilt, quilted in fans, on her spare bed. And she has the rose mat you hooked for her on her living room floor. She is very proud of it and points it out to every one. *(Oh, oh, so I'm getting me name up, it sames.)* She hasn't a parlour or she would have put it there. It isn't fashionable to have parlours now, Sylvia Cyrilla says. I don't know what she'd say if she knew we have two. *(Sure and who cares what she'd say? A parlour sounds far grander than a living room inny day.)*

"Mother says I can have a new red dress this winter, Judy. And I hope she'll let me get a little red hat to go with it. *(Oh, oh, but that would be rale chick.)* Jen Davidson says she is going to have two new hats. She says the Davidsons always do. Well, you can't wear more than one hat at a time, can you, Judy? *(The philosophy av her.)* The Maiden Aunt sniffs when I talk of clothes but Aunt Hazel says that is because she can't afford them herself and if Uncle Robert didn't help her out every year she wouldn't have a stitch to her back. *(Sure and folks don't be wanting minny stiches to their backs nowadays, jidging be the fashion books I've been seeing.)*

"Oh, Judy dear, the Maiden Aunt say it isn't right to tell fairy tales, not even that there is a Santa Claus. *(Set her up wid it.)* But I'm going to keep on believing in fairy rings and horseshoes over the door and witches on

broomsticks. It makes life so thrilling to believe in things. If you believe in a thing it doesn't matter whether it exists or not. (*Sure and she cud argy a Philadelphy lawyer down, the darlint.*)

"We don't have any eating between meals here, Judy. I guess it's healthier but when bedtime comes I *do* think of your eggs and butter. I think a snack at bedtime is healthy. (*Sure and all sinsible people do be thinking the same.*) But Aunt Hazel is a good cook. She can make the loveliest ribbon cake. I wish you would learn to make ribbon cake, Judy. (*Oh, oh, yer ribbon cake, is it? I'm too old a dog to be larning yer new millinery tricks.*) But her cranberry pies aren't as nice as yours, Judy. They're too sweet. (*Oh, oh, the blarney of the cratur! She's after wanting to put me in the good humour.*) Sylvia Cyrilla's mother can make lovely Devonshire cream. (*Devonshire crame, is it? I cud make Devonshire crame afore she was born or thought of. But will ye be telling me where the crame is to come from wid ivery drop of milk sint off to the cheese factory?*) But she isn't a good cook in other ways. Her things *look* all right but something always *tastes* wrong. Not enough salt or too much, or no flavouring or something like that. (*No gumption, me jewel, that's the trouble. No gumption.*)

"Sylvia Cyrilla's father's cousin in Charlottetown tried to cut his throat last week but Sylvia Cyrilla says he didn't succeed and they took him to the hospital and sewed him up. (*Alvin Sutton that wud be. Sure and none av the Suttons iver made a good job av innything they undertook.*)

"Aunt Hazel's father-in-law and mother-in-law live up the road a piece, Mr. and Mrs. James Madison. I often go up on errands. Mr. James has no use for me because I can't eat a plate of porridge. He says it is a dish for a king. But I'm not a king. (*Porridge, is it? Sure and I'm not running down porridge but skinny ould Jim Madison isn't after being much av an advertisement for it.*) They are very proud of their oldest daughter, Mary. She is an M. A. and won some great scholarships and is a teacher in a college. I suppose it is nice to be so clever, Judy. (*Oh, oh, but I'm not hearing av her getting a man, though.*) Mr. James likes to tease his wife. When Sylvia Cyrilla's father asked him if he would get married over again

he laughed and said yes, but not to the same woman. Mrs. James didn't laugh though. (*Oh, oh, she was after knowing it might be half fun and whole earnest.*) They say Mr. James was very wild when he was young but he says if he hadn't been there'd have been no stories to tell about him now ... he'd be nothing but a dull old grandfather.

"I've been collecting stories ever since I've been here, Judy, so that I'll have lots to tell when I'm old like you. There is one about a ghost on a farm belonging to Sylvia Cyrilla's uncle who has whiskers. I mean the ghost has whiskers. Isn't that funny? Can you imagine a ghost with whiskers? (*Sure and I knew a ghost in ould Ireland wid a bald head. There's no accounting for the freaks av the cratures.*) And Jen Davidson had a cousin who always cried when he was drunk. I thought it was because he was sorry he was drunk but Jen says it was because he couldn't get drunk oftener. Old Mr. McAllister from the bridge was up to see Mr. James last Monday and said he would have been up Sunday only he was wrestling with Satan all day. Do you suppose he really was, Judy, or was he just speaking poetically. (*Oh, oh, I'm guessing he must av been trying to keep on good terms wid his wife. She'd quarrel wid a feather bed, that one. Sure and he only married her be accident. Whin he proposed to her he was expicting her to say no and whin she said yes poor Johnny McAllister got the surprise av his life.*) His brother was a dreadful man and died shaking his fist at God. (*Ye cudn't be ixpicting a McAllister to have inny manners, aven on his deathbed, Patsy darlint.*) The Maltby brothers have made up their quarrel after never speaking for thirty years. I don't think they're half as interesting now. Uncle Rob says they've made up because they've forgotten what they quarrelled about but if anybody could remember it they'd start all over again. And Mr. Gordon Keys at the bridge keeps his wife in order by crocheting lace whenever she won't do as he says. She hates to see him do it and so she gives in.

"The funniest story I've collected so far is this. Several years ago old Sam McKenzie was very sick in Charlottetown and everybody thought he was going to die. He was very rich and prominent, so Mr. Trotter, the undertaker, knew the family would want a fine coffin for him and he

imported an extra fine one right off to have it ready because it was a very cold winter and he was afraid the strait might freeze over any day. And then old Sam went and got better and poor Mr. Trotter was left with that expensive coffin on his hands, and nobody likely to buy it. But he kept quiet and one day a few months afterwards old Tom Ramsay, who was rich and prominent, too, dropped dead when nobody expected him to. And Mr. Trotter told the family he had just one coffin on hand that was good enough and they took it and so old Tom Ramsay was buried in Sam McKenzie's coffin. The secret leaked out after awhile and the Ramsays were furious but they couldn't unbury him.

"That is my funniest story but the nicest is about old Mr. George McFadyen who died four years ago and went to heaven. At first he couldn't find any Islanders but after awhile he found out there were lots of them, only they had to be kept locked up for fear they would try to get back to the Island. Mr. James Madison told me that but he wouldn't explain how he found out about Mr. McFadyen's experience. Anyway I'm sure I'd feel like that, Judy. If I went to heaven I'd want to get back to Silver Bush.

"I was afraid when it blew so hard last night some of our trees would blow down. If Joe saves a kitten for me be sure you give it some cream, Judy. Jen Davidson has an aunt that has been married four times. (*Oh, oh, the lies she must av been after telling the min, that one!*) Jen seems proud of her but Uncle Rob says she ought to be more economical with husbands when there isn't enough to go round. I think he said that to tease the Maiden Aunt. Madge Davidson is going to marry Crofter Carter. (*Sure and she's a bit shopworn or she wudn't be after looking at him. I've seen the day a Davidson wudn't walk on the same side av the road as a Carter.*) Ross Halliday and Marinda Bailey at Silverbridge are married. They were engaged for fifteen years. I suppose they got tired of it. (*Sure and Marinda Bailey always said she wudn't marry till she got used to the thought av it. She was always a bit soft in the head, that one. But the min same to like that sort I'm telling ye. She niver had inny looks but kissing goes be favour and if Ross is the happy man at last it isn't Judy Plum that'll grudge it to*

him.) Mrs. Samuel Carter is dead and the funeral is Friday. They've had a terrible lot of funerals there, Sylvia Cyrilla says, but Mr. Carter says funerals are not as expensive as weddings when all is said and done. *(And that's no drame whin ye have to support yer son-in-laws as Sam Carter has. I'm telling ye.)*

"I hope you won't be tired reading this long letter, Judy. I've written some of it every day for a week and just put down everything that came into my head. I'll soon be home now and we can talk everything over. Don't let anybody change any of the furniture about when I'm away. If this letter is bulgy it's just because I've put so many hugs in it for you.

"Your loving

"Patsy.

"P.S. Aunt Hazel says she thinks my hair would grow darker if it was bobbed. Do you think it would, Judy?

"P."

(Sure and it's the good latter she does be writing. It's the lonesome place around here widout the liddle dancing fate and the dear laugh av her. That way she has av smiling at ye as if there was some nice liddle joke atween ye'll carry her far. But nixt year will be lashings av time to talk av bobbing. Sure and I must be putting this letter in me glory box.)

Three Daughters of One Race

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1

If the years did not exactly whirl past after you were twelve, as the Maiden Aunt had so dolefully predicted, they really did seem to go faster. Pat and Bets could hardly believe that their thirteenth birthday was so near when mother told Pat that Joan and Dorothy were coming over from St. John for a visit and it would be nice to have a little party for them.

“You can have it on your birthday. That is Bets’ birthday, too, and you will kill three birds with one stone,” said mother gaily.

Pat was not very keen about parties ... not as keen as Judy would have liked her to be. Neither was she especially excited over the visit of Joan and Dorothy Selby, although she was rather curious. She had heard a good deal at one time or another about the beauty of Dorothy. Both Joan and Dorothy had had their pictures in a society paper as “the lovely little daughters of Mr. and Mrs. Albert Selby of Linden Lodge.” One would just like to see for oneself if Dorothy were as pretty as family gossip reported.

“I don’t believe she’s a bit prettier than Winnie.”

“Oh, oh, ‘tis likely not, if Winnie was dressed up like her ... sure and it’s sometimes the fine feathers that make the fine birds. But yer Uncle Albert was the fine-looking b’y and they say Dorothy takes after him. He’s niver been home much. He got a gay young wife that thought things dull here.”

“Joan and Dorothy are being educated at a convent boarding school,” said Pat. “I suppose they’ll be frightfully clever.”

Judy sniffed.

“Oh, oh, cliverness can’t be put in wid a spoon aven at yer convints. We do be having *some* brains at Silver Bush. Don’t let thim overcrow ye, Pat, wid their fine city ways and convint brading. Howsomiver, I ixpect

they're nice liddle girls and seeing as they're yer only cousins on the spindle side I'm hoping ye'll take to thim."

Joan and Dorothy had not been at Silver Bush twenty-four hours before Pat had secretly made up her mind that she was not going to "take" to them. Perhaps, although she would never have owned it, she was a little jealous of Dorothy who certainly lived up to her reputation for beauty. She *was* prettier than Winnie ... though Pat never could be got to admit that she was prettier than Bets. Her hair was a dark, nutty brown, dipping down prettily over her forehead, and it made Pat's look even more gingery and faded by contrast. She had velvety brown eyes that made Pat's amber-hued ones look almost yellow. She had beautiful hands ... which she put up to her face very often and which made everybody else's look sunburned and skinny. Joan, who was the brainy one and made no great claims to beauty, was very proud of Dorothy's looks and bragged a little about them.

"Dorothy is the prettiest girl in St. John," she told Pat.

"She *is* very pretty," admitted Pat. "Almost as pretty as Winnie and Bets Wilcox."

"Oh, Winnie!" Joan looked amused. "Winnie *is* quite nice looking, of course. You would be, too, if your hair wasn't so long and terribly straight. It's so Victorian."

Probably Joan hadn't any very clear idea what Victorian meant but had heard somebody say it and thought it would impress this rather independent country cousin.

"Judy doesn't want me to bob my hair," said Pat coldly.

"Judy? Oh, that quaint old servant of yours. Do you really let her run you like that?"

"Judy isn't a servant," cried Pat hotly.

"Not a servant? What is she then?"

"She's one of the family."

"Don't you pay her wages?"

Pat had really never thought about it.

"I ... I suppose so."

“She *is* a servant then. Of course it’s awfully sweet of you to love her as you do but mother says it doesn’t do to make too much of servants. It makes them forget their place. Judy isn’t very respectful I notice. But of course it’s different in the country. Oh, *look* at Dorothy over there by the lilies. Doesn’t she look like an angel?”

Pat permitted herself an impertinence.

“I’ve heard that pretty girls hardly ever make pretty women. Do you think it’s true, Joan?”

“Mother was a pretty girl and she is a pretty woman. Mother was a Charlottetown Hilton,” said Joan loftily.

Pat knew nothing about Charlottetown Hiltons but she understood Joan was putting on airs, as Judy would say.

This was when they had been several days at Silver Bush. They had been very polite the first day. Silver Bush was such a *charming* spot ... the garden was so “quaint” ... the well was so “quaint” ... the church barn was so “quaint” ... the graveyard was “priceless.” What was the matter? Pat knew in a flash. They were patronising the garden and the well and the barn. And the graveyard!

“You drink water out of a tap, I suppose,” she said scornfully.

“Oh, you are the *funniest* darling,” said Dorothy, hugging her.

But after they did not condescend quite so much. They had all sized each other up and formed opinions that would last for some time. Pat liked Dorothy well enough but Joan was a “blow.”

“I wish you could see *our* mums,” she said when Pat showed her the garden. “Dad always takes all the prizes at the Horticultural Show with them. Why doesn’t Uncle Alec cut that old spruce down? It shades the corner too much.”

“That tree is a friend of the family,” said Pat.

“I wouldn’t have violets in that corner,” suggested Dorothy. “I’d have them over at the west side.”

“But the violets have always been in that corner,” said Pat.

“How this gate creaks!” said Joan with a shudder. “Why don’t you oil it?”

“It has *always* creaked,” said Pat.

“Your garden is quaint but rather jungly. It ought to be cleared out,” said Dorothy as they left it.

Pat had learned a few things since the day she had slapped Norma. For the honour of Silver Bush no guest must be insulted. Otherwise there is no knowing what she might have done to Dorothy.

It was just as bad inside the house. Joan was all for changing the furniture about if it had been *her* house.

“Do you know what I’d do? I’d put the piano in *that* corner ...”

“But it *belongs* in this corner,” said Pat.

“The room would look so much better, darling, if you just changed it a little,” said Joan.

“The room would *hate* you if you changed it,” cried Pat.

Joan and Dorothy exchanged amused glances behind her back. And Pat knew they did. But she forgave them because they praised Bets. Bets, they said, was lovely, with such sweet ways.

“Oh, oh, she has the good heart, av course she has the good manners,” said Judy.

Pat warmed to Joan when Joan admired the bird-house Jingle had given her. Jingle had a knack of making delightful bird-houses. But when the girls met Jingle Joan lost grace again. Dorothy was sweet to him ... perhaps a little too sweet ... but Joan saw only the badly cut hair and the nondescript clothes. And Dorothy enraged Pat by saying afterwards,

“It’s awfully sweet of you to be nice to that poor boy.”

Patronising! That was the word for it. She had patronised Jingle, too. And yet Jingle liked to hear Dorothy play on the piano. It couldn’t be denied she could do it. Winnie’s performance was nothing beside hers. Both the Selby girls were musical ... Joan practised night and day on her guitar and Dorothy “showed off” her pretty little paws on the piano.

“Ye’d be thinking she mint to tear the kays out be the roots,” muttered Judy, who did not like to see Winnie so eclipsed.

So the visit was not a great success although the older folk ... all but Judy ... thought the girls got on beautifully. Pat found it a bit hard to keep Joan and Dorothy amused ... and they had to be amused all the time. They could not hunt their fun for themselves as she and Bets could. Pat showed them the graveyard and introduced them to all the fields by name, to the Old Part and the Whispering Lane. She even tried not to mind when Sid took Dorothy back and showed her the Secret Field. But it did hurt horribly.

She knew the family thought Sid was “sweet” on Dorothy. Perhaps that was better than being sweet on May Binnie. But Pat did not want Sid to be sweet on anybody.

“You’re just jealous of Dorothy because Cuddles has taken such a fancy to her,” jeered Sid.

“I’m not ... I’m not,” cried Pat. “Only ... that was *our* secret.”

“We’re getting too big to have secret fields and all that nonsense,” said Sid in a grownup manner.

“I hate growing up,” sobbed Pat. “Oh, Sid, I don’t mind you liking Dorothy ... I’m glad you like her ... but *she* didn’t care about that field.”

“No, she didn’t,” admitted Sid. “She said what on earth did we see in it to make a secret of. And what *did* we see, Pat, if it comes to that?”

“Oh!” Pat felt helpless. If Sid couldn’t see what they had seen he couldn’t be made to.

Joan and Dorothy did not care for the playhouse in the birch bush; they did not care for hunting kittens in the barn: two fluffy-tailed orange ones left them cold, although Dorothy did distracting things with them when any boys were around. She cuddled them under her lovely chin and even kissed the sunwarm tops of their round, velvety heads ... “Just,” as Judy muttered to herself, “to be making the b’ys wish they were kittens.”

They knew nothing about “pretending adventures.” They did not like fishing in Jordan with long fat worms; they could not sit for hours on a

fence or boulder or apple-tree bough and talk over the things they saw, as Pat and Bets could. They found nothing delightful in sitting on Weeping Willy's tombstone and looking for the first star. Joe took them driving in the evenings and the party was a bit of excitement. They wore dresses the like of which had never been seen in North Glen before and were remembered for years by the girls who saw them. But they were bored, though they tried politely to hide it.

One thing they did like, however ... sitting in the kitchen or on the back doorsteps in the September twilights, when the sky was all full of a soft brightness of a sun that had dropped behind the dark hills and the birchen boughs in the big bush waved as if tossing kisses to the world, listening to Judy's stories while they ate red, nut-sweet apples. It was the one time when Pat and her cousins really liked each other. Nor ... though Dorothy thought it so "quaint" to eat in the kitchen ... did they despise Judy's "liddle bites" after the story telling. Pat caught them exchanging amused glances over Judy's fried eggs and codfish cakes but they praised her bishop's bread and doughnuts so warmly that Judy's heart softened to them a bit. Judy felt rather self-reproachful because she did not like these girls better herself after having been so anxious that Pat should like them. Gentleman Tom, who had never noticed any one but Judy, seemed to take a fancy to Joan and followed her about. Pat thought Judy would be jealous but not a bit of it ... apparently.

"He knows she nades watching, that one," sniffed Judy.

"It is nice here in summer," admitted Joan on one of these evenings, "but it must be frightfully dull in winter."

"It isn't. Winter here is lovely. One can be so cosy in winter," retorted Pat.

"You haven't even a furnace," said Joan. "How in the world do you keep from freezing to death?"

"We've stoves in every room," said Pat proudly. "And heaps of good firewood ... look at the pile over there. We can see our fires ... we don't have to sit up to a hole in the floor to get warm."

Joan laughed.

“We have steam radiators, silly ... and open fireplaces. You *are* funny, Pat ... you’re so touchy about Silver Bush. One would think you thought it was the only place in the world.”

“It is ... for me,” said Pat.

“Joe doesn’t think so,” said Joan. “I’ve had talks with Joe when we were out driving. He isn’t contented here, Pat.”

Pat stared.

“Did Joe tell you that?”

“Oh, not in so many words but I could see. I don’t think any of you here really understand Joe. He doesn’t like farming ... he wants to be a sailor. Joe is a boy with very deep feelings, Pat, but he doesn’t like showing them.”

“The idea of her explaining Joe to me,” sobbed Pat to Judy, after the girls had gone to their bed in the Poet’s room. “I know Joe has some silly ideas about sailing, just as well as she does, but father says he’ll soon have more sense. I’m sure Joe would never want to go away from Silver Bush.”

“Ye can’t all be staying here foriver, darlint,” warned Judy.

“But we needn’t think of that for years yet, Judy. Joe is only nineteen. And Joan to be putting on airs about ‘understanding’ him!”

“Oh, oh, that’s where the shoe pinches,” chuckled Judy.

“And Joan asked me to-day if I didn’t think Dorothy had a lovely laugh. She said Dorothy was noted for her laugh. I agreed, just to be polite, Judy ...”

“Oh, oh, if one hadn’t to be polite! But thin ... one has.”

“But I don’t think Dorothy’s laugh is half as pretty as Winnie’s, Judy.”

“Sure and they’ve both got the Selby laugh and ye can’t be telling which av thim is laughing if ye don’t see her. But I’m knowing nather ye nor Joan cud be convinced av that. The trouble is, me jewel, that ye and Joan are a bit too much alike in a good minny things iver to be hitting it off very well.”

Pat did not tell Judy everything that had stung her. Joan had said,

“After all, that Jingle of yours has a lovely smile.”

“He’s not *my* Jingle,” said Pat shortly. And what difference did it make to Joan whether Jingle had a lovely smile or not? Hadn’t she made fun of his hair and his glasses and his frayed trousers? And she had also laughed at Uncle Tom’s beard and Judy’s book of Useful Knowledge. One was “Victorian” and the other was “outmoded.” They condescended to Aunt Edith and Aunt Barbara, too ... they were “such quaint old darlings.” Pat had never been so conscious of the leak stain on the dining-room ceiling and the worn places in the Little Parlour carpet until she saw Joan looking at them, and she had not noticed how mossy the shingles of the kitchen roof were growing until Joan said amiably that she rather liked old houses.

“*Our* house is really rather too new. It’s of white stucco with a red-tiled roof ... a bit glaring. Father says it will mellow with time.”

“I never like new houses,” said Pat. “They haven’t any ghosts.”

“Ghosts? But you don’t believe in ghosts, do you, Pat?”

“I didn’t mean ghosts ... exactly.”

“What did you mean then?”

“Oh ... just that ... when a house has been lived in for years and years ... *something* of the people who have lived in it *stays* in it.”

“You quaint darling!” said Dorothy.

3

Pat exulted in the freedom and silence of home after they had gone. It was altogether delightful to be alone again. The books that had been strewn everywhere were back in their places; the Poet’s room was no longer cluttered up with alien dresses and shoes and brushes and necklaces.

“Isn’t it nice just to be here by ourselves and no outsiders?” she said to Judy as they sat on the steps. A night of dim silver was brooding over the bush and the pale, perfect gold of the trembling aspen leaves had faded into shadow. The still air was full of far, muted surf thunder. Gentleman Tom had arranged himself beautifully on the well platform and the two

orange kittens were blinking their jewel eyes and purring their small hearts out on Pat's lap.

"Mother says she is so sorry I didn't love my cousins. I *do* love them, Judy, but I don't *like* them."

"Oh, oh, but three's a crowd," said Judy. "Two girls can be getting on very well but whin there's three av ye and all high-steppers, some one's bound to get rubbed the wrong way. Often have I been seeing it."

"I liked Joan in spots ... but she made me feel *unimportant*, Judy. She snubbed me."

"Sure and she'd snub the moon, that one. But she's the cliver one for all."

"And she bragged ... she *did*."

"The Hiltons always did be liking to make a bit av a splash. And didn't ye do a bit av snubbing and bragging now yersilf, Patsy darlint? Thought I'm not saying ye didn't be having the aggravation. There don't be minny families that haven't their own liddle kinks. Even the Selbys now, niver to mintion the Gardiners. Ye have to be making allowances. I'm thinking ye'd av been liking the girls better if it wasn't for yer liddle jealousy, Patsy ..."

"I wasn't jealous, Judy!"

"Oh, oh, be honest now, me jewel. Ye was jealous of Joan because Joe liked her and ye was jealous of Dorothy because Sid and Cuddles liked her. Ye have yer liddle faults, Patsy, just as they have."

"I don't tell fibs anyway. They told mother when they went away they had had a perfectly lovely time. They hadn't. That was a lie, Judy."

"Oh, oh ... a polite lie maybe ... and maybe not all a lie. They had it in spots as ye say, I'm thinking."

"Anyway there's one word I never want to hear again as long as I live, Judy, and that's 'quaint.'"

"Quaint, is it? Sure and whin Joan called Gintleman Tom quaint I'll be swearing the baste winked at me. I cud av been telling Miss Joan her own grandfather was quaint the night he got up to be making a spach at a Tory meeting and his wife, who was born a Tolman and be the same token a

Grit, laned over from the sate behind and pulled him down be his coat-tails. Ye cud hear the thud all over the hall. Not a word wud she let him be saying. Oh, oh, quaint!”

“Sometimes, Judy, they made me awful mad ... *inside*.”

“But ye kept it inside. That shows ye’re getting on. It’s what we all have to be larning, me jewel, if we want to be living wid folks paceable. Mad inside, is it? Sure and I was mad inside ivery day they was here whin they began showing off in me own kitchen. And that Joan one talking about kaping ‘abreast av the times.’ Sure, thinks I to mesilf, if chasing around in circles after yer own tail is kaping up wid the times ye’re the lady that can be doing it. And thin I wud be thinking that yer Aunts at the Bay Shore were just the same whin they were liddle girls and thinks I, fam’lies must be standing be each other and life will be curing us all av a lot av foolishness. I wudn’t wonder if ye’d be mating the girls some time agin whin ye’ve all got a bit riper and finding ye like thim very well.”

Pat received this prediction in sceptical silence. She looked up to the Long House where the light in Bets’ window was glowing like a friendly star on a dark hill.

“Anyway I’m glad Bets and I can be alone again. Bets is the only girl I want for a friend.”

“What will ye be doing whin she grows up and goes away?”

“Oh, but she never will, Judy. Even if she gets married she will go on living at the Long House because she is the only child. And I’ll always be here and we’ll always be together. We have it all arranged.”

Judy sighed and nudged.

“Don’t be after saying thim things out loud, Patsy ... not out loud, darlint. Sure and ye niver can tell who might be listening to ye.”

Mock Sunshine

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1

“Pat, can you meet me in Happiness right away?” phoned Jingle.

The Gordons had had a telephone put in at last and Jingle and Pat generally kept the wire from rusting.

Pat knew from Jingle’s voice that something exciting had happened ... exciting and pleasant. What could it be? Exciting and pleasant things were so rare in Jingle’s life, poor fellow. She went to Happiness so speedily that she was there before Jingle, waiting for him in a ferny hollow among the cradle hills. Jingle lingered for a moment behind a screen of young spruces to watch her ... her wonderful golden-brown eyes fixed dreamily on the sky ... a provoking smile over hidden thoughts lingering around her mouth ... just enough of a smile to give it that dear little kissable quirk at the corner that was beginning to make Jingle’s heart act queerly whenever he saw it. What was she thinking of? What *did* girls think of? Jingle found himself wishing he knew more about them in general.

Pat looked away from her clouds to see a Jingle she had never seen before with eyes so bright that their radiance shone through even the dark quenching glasses.

“Jingle, you look as if ... as if everything had come true.”

“It has ... for me.” Jingle flung himself down on the grass and propped his face on his thin sunburned hands. “Pat ... mother’s coming ... tomorrow!”

Pat gasped.

“Oh, Jingle! At last! How wonderful!”

“The telegram came last night. I phoned right over to Silver Bush but Judy said you were away. Then this morning I had to leave at five to take a

load of factory cheese to town. I've just got back ... I wanted you to be the first to know."

"Jingle ... I'm so glad!"

"I am, too ... only, Pat ... I wish she'd written she was coming instead of wiring it."

"Likely she hadn't time. Where was she?"

"In St. John. Oh, Pat, think of it ... I'm fifteen and I've never seen my mother ... not to remember her. Not even a picture of her ... I haven't the least idea what she really looks like. Long ago ... you remember, Pat ... the day we found Happiness? ... I told you she had blue eyes and golden hair. But I just imagined that because I heard Aunt Maria say once that she was 'fair.' Perhaps she isn't like that at all."

"I'm sure she'll be lovely whatever kind of eyes and hair she has," assured Pat.

"Ever since I saw that Madonna of the Clouds in your little parlour I've been imagining mother looked like that. Of course she must be older ... mother is really thirty-five. I couldn't sleep last night for thinking about her coming. I don't see how I can wait till tomorrow. Last night I thought I couldn't wait for *two* morrows."

Jingle's thin, delicately-cut face was dreamy and remote. Pat gazed at him, thrilling with sympathy. She knew what this meant to him.

"I know. Judy says when I was small and promised anything 'tomorrow' I'd keep plaguing her, 'Where is tomorrow now, Judy?' *Your* tomorrow is somewhere, Jingle ... right this very minute it must be somewhere. Isn't that nice to think?"

"All day to-day I've just been in a dream, Pat. It didn't seem real. I've taken out and read the telegram a hundred times just to be sure. If it had only been a letter, Pat ... a letter she had written ... *touched*."

"You'll have her, herself, tomorrow and that will be better than any letter. How long will she stay?"

"I don't know. She doesn't say anything but that she'll be here. I hope for *weeks*."

"Perhaps ... perhaps she'll take you away with her, Jingle."

Pat was a little breathless. The idea had gone through her like lightning. It was a very unwelcome one. Jingle gone? Jordan and no Jingle! Happiness and no Jingle! A queer chill seemed to begin somewhere inside of her and spread all over her body.

Jingle shook his head.

"I don't think so ... some way I ... I don't think I'd even want to go. But to see her ... to feel her arms around me just once! To tell her everything. I'm going to give her all the letters, Pat. I got them out of the box last night and read them over. The first ones, when I just had to print the letters, were so funny. But a mother wouldn't think them funny, would she? A mother would like them, don't you think?"

"I'm sure she'll just love them. She couldn't help it."

Jingle gave a sigh of satisfaction.

"You know so much more about a mother than I do, Pat. You've had one all your life."

Pat winked her eyes savagely. It would be absurd to cry. But she was twisted with a sudden fierce pity for Jingle ... whose mother had never come to see him ... who had *years* of letters that he had never sent. She was sorry for the mother who had missed them.

But everything would be all right after this.

"You must come over and see mother, Pat."

"Oh, but, Jingle, I don't like to. You'll want to be alone together."

"Most of the time, I suppose. But I want you to see her ... and I want her to see you. And we'll bring her up here and show her Happiness, won't we, Pat? You won't mind?"

"Of course not. And of course she'll want to see it because it's a place you love."

"I haven't had time to make anything for her... ."

"You can get a lovely bouquet ready for her, Jingle. She'll just love that."

"But we haven't any nice flowers at our place."

"Come over early in the morning and get some from our garden. I'll make the bouquet up for you ... there's some lovely baby's breath out now."

You can choose the flowers and I'll arrange them. Judy says I have a knack with flowers. Jingle, what is your mother's name?"

"Mrs. Garrison," said Jingle bitterly. It was a hateful thing to him that his mother's name was not his. "Her first name is Doreen. That is a pretty name, isn't it?"

"So Jim's fine widdy is coming to see her b'y at last?" said Judy when she heard the news. "Well, it's not afore the time. I'm thinking Larry Gordon wrote her a bit av a letter. I've heard him say it was time he knew what her plans for the b'y was if she had inny. The tacher up at South Glen has been at him to take up the branches this year but Larry says what wud the use be. They can't expect *him* to foot the bills for Quane's, what wid him being barely able to scrape up his interest ivery year."

"Then ... you think ... you don't think Jingle's mother is coming just because she wanted to see him?" said Pat slowly.

"I'm not saying she isn't. But ye do be knowing she's niver wanted to see him for over a dozen years. Howsomiver, maybe she's had a change av heart and let's hope it hard, Patsy, for I'm thinking that poor Jingle-lad is all set up over her coming."

"He is ... oh, Judy, it just means everything to him. Maybe ... when she sees him ..."

"Maybe," agreed Judy dubiously.

2

Jingle was over bright and early to get the bouquet for his mother. He had put on his poor best suit, which was too short for him and had been too short for a year. His aunt had cut his hair and made rather a worse job than usual of it. But his face was flushed with excitement and for the first time it occurred to Pat that Jingle wasn't such a bad-looking boy. If it were not for those awful glasses!

"Jingle, take them off before your mother comes. It couldn't hurt your eyes for a little while."

“Aunt Maria wouldn’t like it. She paid for my glasses, you know, and she says I’ve got to wear them all the time or it would be wasted money. She ... she knows I hate them, I think ... and that’s really why she gets so cross if I leave them off. When we get mother away by ourselves ... when we go to Happiness ... I’ll take them off. Pat, think of mother ... my own mother ... in Happiness!”

They spent a long time over the bouquet. Jingle was hard to please. Only absolutely perfect flowers must go into it ... and no delphiniums.

“Delphiniums are so haughty,” said Jingle. “And they’ve no perfume. Just sweet-smelling flowers, Pat. And a bit of southern wood. You know Judy calls it ‘lad’s love.’ So it ought to go in mother’s bouquet.”

Jingle laughed a bit consciously. But he did not mind if Pat thought him sentimental.

“We’ll put in some of the leaves of the old sweetbriar ... they’ve such a lovely apple scent. I wish there were more roses out. It’s too early for them ... but these little pink buds are darling ... and those white ones with the pink hearts. There was one lovely copper rose out last night ... just one on father’s new bush. He told me we could have it. But it rained last night and it was all beaten and ruined this morning. I almost cried. But here’s one long red bud from Winnie’s bush and I’ll put it in your coat, Jingle.”

“Just two hours more,” said Jingle. “Pat, I want you to come over right after dinner, before she comes. Will you?”

“Oh, Jingle ... wouldn’t you want to be alone when you see her first?”

“If I *could* be alone ... but Uncle Lawrence and Aunt Maria will be there ... and, somehow ... I don’t know ... I just feel as if I wanted you there, too, Pat.”

In the end Pat went, thrilling from head to foot with excitement ... and considerable curiosity. She had put her hair in curlers the night before, to look her best before Jingle’s mother, but the result was rather bushy and rampant. “It would look all right if it was bobbed, Judy,” she muttered rebelliously.

“Standing out round yer head like a hello,” said Judy sarcastically.

Pat braided it in tightly and put on the new blue pullover Judy had knitted for her, over her cornflower blue skirt. Would Jingle's mother think her just a crude little country girl with a head like a fuzz-bush?

"I don't suppose she'll ever think of me at all," Pat comforted herself. "She'll be so taken up with Jingle."

Jingle was waiting with his bouquet, his lips set tightly to hide their quivering. Larry Gordon's old car clattered in at the gate.

"Here she comes," said Pat ... magic, breathless words.

She came. They saw her get out of the car and drift up the stone walk. Jingle had meant to run to meet her. But he found he couldn't move. He stood there stupidly, his breath coming quickly, his bouquet quivering in his hands. Was this his mother ... this?

Pat saw her more clearly than Jingle did. Tall, slender, graceful as a flower, in a soft fluttering chiffon dress like blue mist; pale, silvery-golden hair sleeked down all over her head like a cap under a little tilted hat of smooth blue feathers: bluish-green eyes that never seemed to see you, even when they looked at you, under eyebrows as thin as a line drawn in soot; a mouth that spoiled everything, so vividly red and arched was it. She might have stepped off a magazine cover. Beautiful ... oh, yes, very beautiful! But not ... somehow ... like a mother!

"I like a mother who *looks* like a mother," was the thought that whisked through Pat's head. This woman looked ... at first ... like a girl.

Doreen Garrison came up the walk, looking rather curiously at the two standing by the door. Jingle spoke first. "Mother!" he said. It was the first time he had ever said it. It sounded like a prayer.

A flash of amazement flickered in Doreen Garrison's restless eyes ... a little tinkling laugh rippled over her carmine lips.

"You don't mean to say *you* are my Jingle-baby? Why ... why ... you're almost grown up, darling."

She stooped and dropped a light kiss, as cold as snow, on his cheek.

She hadn't known him! Pat, looking at Jingle, thought it was dreadful to see happiness wiped out of a human face like that.

“This is for you ... mother.” Jingle poked the bouquet out to her stiffly. She glanced at it ... took it ... again the little rippling insincere laugh ... that was *not*, Pat thought, laughter ... came. Jingle flinched as if she had boxed his ears.

“Angel-boy, what can I do with such an enormous thing? How did you ever get so many flowers into it? It must weigh a ton. Just put it somewhere, honey, and I’ll take a bud out of it when I go. I haven’t much time ... I have to catch the evening boat and I must have a long talk with your Uncle Lawrence. I had no idea how you had grown.”

She laid one of her very long, very slender, ivory-white hands, with its tinted, polished nails, on his shoulder and looked him over in a cool appraising manner.

“You’re a bit weedy, aren’t you, angel? Do you eat enough? But I suppose you’re at the weedy age. Take off those terrible glasses. Do you really need them? Have you had your eyes tested lately?”

“No,” said Jingle. He did not add “mother” this time. “This is Pat Gardiner,” he finished awkwardly.

Mrs. Garrison flicked an eye over Pat, who had an instant conviction that her stockings were on crooked and her hair like a Fiji islander’s. Somehow, they all found themselves sitting in the Gordon parlour. Nobody knew what to say, but Mrs. Garrison talked lightly, saying sweet, insincere things in her silvery voice to Mr. and Mrs. Gordon, making such play with her hands that you had to look at them to see how lovely they were. Pat thought of her own mother’s hands ... a little thin, a little knotted, the palms seamed and hardened a bit with years of work. But hands you liked to have touch you. She couldn’t imagine any one liking the touch of Mrs. Garrison’s hands.

Jingle stared at the carpet but Pat, her first shyness gone, looked Mrs. Garrison over very coolly. Lovely ... very lovely ... but what was wrong with her face? In after years Pat found a word for it ... a *cheated* face. In after years Pat knew that this woman had worked so hard remaining young and beautiful for a husband whose fancy strayed lightly to every beautiful woman he met that she had spent herself. She was like a shadow ...

beautiful ... elusive ... not real. And this was Jingle's mother ... who called everybody, even Larry Gordon, "darling" and now and then flung a word to her son as one might throw a bone to a hungry dog. Pat could not fathom the depth of the embarrassment Doreen Garrison was feeling in the presence of this forgotten, unloved boy. But she knew that Jingle's mother would not stay here one moment longer than she had to.

"What an ugly little dog!" laughed Doreen as McGinty dashed in to Jingle. McGinty had been shut up in the stable but had found his way out. He knew he was needed.

"Do you really like dogs, Jingle-baby? I'll send you a nice one."

"McGinty is a nice dog, thank you. I don't want another dog," said Jingle, his face flushing a dark red.

Pat got up and went home. Jingle followed her to the door.

"She ... she's pretty, isn't she?" he asked wistfully.

"The prettiest woman I've ever seen," agreed Pat heartily.

When she looked at Jingle's face she couldn't help remembering the copper rose, so beautiful in the evening, so broken and battered the next morning. She hated Doreen Garrison ... hated her for years ... until she had learned to pity her.

"You'll come back as soon as you can, Pat? You know ... I want to show her Happiness. And it's as much yours as mine."

Pat promised. She knew that Jingle knew that his mother would not care about seeing Happiness, and she knew he didn't want to be alone with his mother. But Pat learned that day that you may know a great many things you must never put in words.

3

She went back in mid-afternoon to find Doreen Garrison ready to leave.

"But ... mother ..." Jingle seemed forcing himself to speak the word ... "Pat and I want to show you Happiness. It's such a pretty place."

"Happiness? Why in the world do you call it that, you funny darlings?"

“Because it is such a lovely spot we pretend nobody could ever be unhappy there,” said Pat.

Amusement flickered into Doreen Garrison’s eyes ... the eyes Jingle had once pretended were as blue as a starlit sky.

“How wonderful to know nothing about life and so be able to imagine everything,” she said lightly. “I can’t visit your Happiness, Jingle-baby ... how could heels like these travel over fields and stumps? Besides, I must not risk losing the boat. If I did it would mean missing the steamer at San Francisco. Jingle-baby, you’re standing incorrectly ... so ... that’s better. And you *do* look so much better without those glasses. *Never* put them on again, honey-boy. I’ve told your uncle to take you to a good oculist and if you really need glasses to have you equipped with proper ones. He’s to get you some decent clothes, too, and take you to the barber at Silverbridge ... there’s the car ... well ...”

She looked a little uncertainly at Jingle, as if she supposed she ought to kiss him again. But there was something about Jingle just then that did not encourage kissing. Doreen Garrison felt relieved. It had really been a dreadful day ... one felt so awkward ... so ill at ease with this great half-grown hobbledehoy with his preposterous hair and clothes, who couldn’t even talk. How had her lovely Jingle-baby ever turned into such a creature? But her duty was done ... his future was arranged for ... Lawrence would see to it.

She patted him lightly on the head.

“Bye, honey-boy. So sorry I haven’t longer to stay. Don’t grow *quite* so much in the next twelve years, please, angel. Goodbye ... Nora, is it?”

“Goodbye,” said Pat haughtily, with the disconcerting conviction that Doreen Garrison did not even notice that she was being haughty.

She flitted down the stone walk like a bird glad to escape its cage, leaving a trace of some exotic perfume behind her. Jingle stood on the step and watched her go ... this tarnished, discrowned queen who had so long sat on the secret throne of his heart. Would she look back and wave to him? No, she was gone. His bouquet was lying on the hall table. She had

not even remembered to take the bud. The southernwood in it was limp and faded.

“Well, how did you like your mother?” asked Aunt Maria.

Jingle winced. His aunt’s harsh, disagreeable voice jarred horribly on his sensitive nerves.

“I ... I thought she was lovely,” he said. It was ghastly to have to lie about your mother.

Aunt Maria shrugged her bony shoulders.

“Well, she’s settled things for you anyhow. You’re to go in the entrance class next year and after that to college. She says you can be anything you like and she’ll foot the bills. As for clothes ... she found as much fault with yours as if she’d paid for them. You’re to have two new suits ... *tailored*. No hand-me-downs for *her* son! Humph!”

Aunt Maria disappeared indignantly into the kitchen.

Jingle looked at Pat with dead lustreless eyes. Something caught at her throat.

“Will you come to Happiness after supper?” he said quietly. “There’s something I want you to do for me.”

Ashes to Ashes

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1

Jingle was lying face downwards among the ferns in Happiness when Pat got there. A little dog with a big heart was sitting beside him, apparently mounting guard over a brown paper parcel on the grass.

Pat squatted down beside him, saying nothing. She was beginning to learn how full of silent little tragedies life is. She wished wildly that she could help Jingle in some way. Judy was fond of telling a story of long long ago when Pat had been four years old and was being trained to say “please.” One day she could not remember it. “What is the word that makes things happen, Judy?” she had asked. Oh, for such a magic word now ... some word which would make everything right for Jingle.

It was very lovely in Happiness that evening. There was a clear, pale, silvery-blue sky, feathered with tiny, blossom-like clouds, over them. The scent of clover was in the air. A corner of Happiness lay in the shadow of the woods, the rest of it was flooded with wine-red sunset. There was the elfin laugh of the hidden brook and there was the beauty of pale starflowers along its banks. The only thing in sight that was not beautiful was the huge gash in the woods on the hill where Larry Gordon had got out his winter fuel. It was terrible to see the empty places where the trees had been cut. Trees *had* to be cut ... people had to have firewood ... but Pat could never see the resultant ugliness without a heartache. Of course time would beautify it again. Great clumps of ferns would grow by the hacked stumps ... the crooks of the bracken would unfold along its desecrated paths ... slender birches and poplars would spring up as years went by. Perhaps the wounds and scars in human lives would be like that, too.

“I wish,” said Jingle suddenly, twisting himself around until his head lay in Pat’s lap, “I wish my dream hadn’t come true, Pat. It was so much

more beautiful when it wasn't true."

"I know," said Pat softly. She patted the rough head with brown hands that were tender and gentle and wise. Their touch unloosed the floods of Jingle's bitterness.

"She ... she gave me ten dollars, Pat. It burned my fingers when I took it. And I'm to go to college. But she wasn't interested in my plans. I showed her the house I'd drawn for her ... she only laughed."

"Jingle, I think your mother was so ... so surprised to find you so big that she felt ... she didn't feel ... she felt you were a stranger. Next time she comes it may be very different."

"Whose fault is it if I am like a stranger to her? And there will never be a next time ... I knew that when she went away. She doesn't love me ... she never has loved me. I know that now. I might have known it always if I hadn't been a fool."

Pat couldn't endure the desolation in his tone. She patted his head again.

"I love you anyhow, Jingle ... almost ... *just* as well as I love Sid."

Jingle caught the caressing hand and held it tight against his tear wet cheek.

"Thank you, Pat. And ... Pat, will you do me a favour? Will you call me 'Hilary' after this? I ... I ... somehow, Jingle is such a silly nickname for a big boy."

Pat knew his mother had spoiled the name for him. It had been her pet name for him once. Surely she must have loved him then.

"I'll try ... only you mustn't mind if I call you Jingle sometimes before I get the new habit."

In her heart she was saying, "I'll *call* him Hilary to his face but I'll always think of him as Jingle."

"I told you there was something I wanted you to do for me, Pat," Jingle went on, still with that strange, new bitterness. "I ... I didn't give her those letters. I'll light a fire over there on that rock ... and will you burn them for me?"

Pat assented. She knew there was nothing else to be done with those letters now. Jingle built the fire and Pat opened the parcel and fed them to the hungry little flames ... a burnt offering of a boy's wasted love and faith and hope. Pat hated to burn them. It seemed a terrible thing to do. The tiny scraps of letters written when he was a little boy and paper was hard to come by ... on a flyleaf torn from an old schoolbook or the back of a discarded circular ... sometimes even on a carefully cut and folded piece of wrapping paper. A mother should have treasured them as jewels. But Doreen Garrison would never read them. The pity of it! Now and then a white line came out for a moment on the quivering black ash ... Pat couldn't help seeing them ... *"My own darling mother"* ... *"perhaps you will come to see me soon, dearest"* ... *"I was head of my class all the week, mother dearest. Aren't you glad?"* ... Pat ground her little white teeth in a futile rage against fate.

After the last letter was burned Pat gathered up the little pile of ashes and scattered them in the brook.

"There, that's done." Hilary stood up; he looked older: there was a stern set to his jaw, a new ring in his voice, as of one who had put away childish things. "And now ... well, I'm going to college ... and I'm going to be an architect ... and I'm going to succeed."

They walked back in silence along the ferny windings of Jordan. The moon was rising and the bats were out. An owl was calling eerily from the spruce hill beyond Happiness. A great golden star hung over Silver Bush. They parted on the bridge. Pat lifted her eyes to his.

"Goodnight, Jingle dear ... I mean Hilary."

"Goodnight, Pat. You've been a brick. Pat ... your eyes are lovely ... lovely."

"Oh, that's just the moonlight," said Pat.

Pat helped Judy wash the milk pails and get all the fluffy little golden chicks into their coops while she told her about Doreen Garrison.

“Oh, Judy, she was ... she was ...”

“Sort of supercilious like,” suggested Judy.

“No, no, not that ... she was as polite to us as if we were strangers ... but ... just as if she didn’t believe we were there at all. I couldn’t have believed there was a mother like that in the world, Judy.”

“Oh, oh, ye do be liddle knowing what some mothers are like, more shame to them. And you can’t be putting into thim the things the Good Man Above left out, so why be worrying over it? Just be saying a prayer for all poor orphans and be thankful ye’ve got a mother that has roots.”

“Roots?”

“Sure and that’s what’s the matter wid yer Doreen Garrison. She hasn’t a root to her. Nothing to anchor her down and hold against the winds. Sure and she may be one av thim things they do be calling a modern mother, I’ve been hearing av thim.”

“I just felt, Judy, as if she had remembered him against her will and would forget him again as soon as he was out of her sight.”

“I’m telling ye. Maria Gordon did be saying once that Jim’s widdy was the best hand at forgetting things she didn’t want to remimber she was iver knowing. I’m rale sorry for yer Jingle. Ye’d better ask him over to dinner tomorrow and give him a liddle bite av blackberry roly-poly. Sure and I’ll be making it on purpose for him.”

“He wants to be called Hilary after this, Judy. And ... it’s a funny coincidence ... last week Bets and I decided that after this we would call each other Elizabeth and Patricia. But of course,” added Pat hastily, “we don’t expect other people to call us that.”

“Oh, oh, and that same is just as well, me jewel, because ye’re Pat to me and niver innything but Pat ye’ll be.”

“Pat of Silver Bush,” said Pat happily. It was beautiful to have home and love and family ties. Bold-and-Bad, the kitten of the summer, came flying across the yard to her. Pat picked him up and squeezed some purrs

out of him. No matter what dreadful things happened at least there were still cats in the world.

In the moonlight she went along the Whispering Lane and down the field path and up the hill. She made a tryst with Bets to tell her about Jingle's mother ... at least as much as Jingle would wish told. Bets must know the state of things so that she would not hurt Jingle's feelings.

Pat reached the Watching Pine first and stood under it, her face against its rough old trunk as she waited. At first the moon was veiled in a misty cloud and Pat thrilled to a dim sense of magic and wonder that came with the glimpse of that cloudy moon through the pine. It was a wonderful night ... a night when she might see the Little People perhaps. She had believed in them long ago and this was one of the moments she still believed in them. Wasn't that some tiny moonshine creature in a peaked cap with little bells on it sitting on a fence panel? No, only a vibrating strip of dried bark. The soft sweet air blew to her from the secret meadows at the back of the farms. Then the moon came out from her cloud and the little fir trees scattered along the fences were splashes of ink-black shadows in mystic shapes. Below were houses sleeping in moonlit gardens. Far out there was a trail of moonlight on the sea like a lady's silken dress. Pat felt herself a sister to all the loveliness of the world. If only everybody could feel this secret, satisfying rapture! Poor Jingle would be curled up in the hayloft with McGinty, trying to forget his broken heart. It seemed cruel to be happy when he was miserable but it was no use trying not to be, when the night was full of wonder and Silver Bush with its love was below you, and you could hear Joe's delightful whistle and Snicklefritz's bark even at this distance. And when you were waiting for the dearest friend any girl ever had to join you. There, lilting along the path came Bets, part of the beauty of the night.

"We must love him all the more to make it up to him," said Bets when she had heard the tale ... all except the burned letters which Pat knew must be a secret always between herself and ... Hilary.

His Way Is on the Sea

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1

There was a family council at Silver Bush when school opened in September. It was decreed that Pat must join the entrance class and prepare herself for the Queen's Academy examinations the next year. Pat protested ... but father was inexorable. He had let Winnie off, realising that Winnie's golden curls thatched a brain that could never be brought to distinguish between a participle and an infinitive: but Pat's record in school, although never brilliant, had been above the average: so to Queen's she must go and study for a teacher's licence.

"You'll get the North Glen school and board at home," said dad ... which was the only gleam of hope Pat saw in the whole dismal prospect. She flew to the kitchen and poured out her discontent and rebellion to Judy.

"Oh, oh, and don't ye want to be eddicated, Patsy darling?"

To be educated was all right ... but to go away from home was all wrong.

"I don't seem to be like other girls, Judy. They all want to go to college and have a career. I don't ... I just want to stay at Silver Bush and help you and mother. There's work for me here, Judy ... you know there is. Mother isn't strong. As for being educated ... I *shall* be well educated ... love educates, Judy."

"Oh, oh, and ye're not so far out there, girleen. But there's minny a thing to be considered besides. Money doesn't be growing on bushes, darlint."

"What fun if it did!" For a moment Pat was sidetracked by a vision of little gold dollars hanging from the ends of branches like golden blossoms.

“Yer dad isn’t rich ... and a fam’ly like this is ixpensive whin they’re growing up and nading the pretty clothes. You’ll have to get ready to help him out a bit until some av ye are married or gone away.”

“I don’t want any of us to get married or go away.”

“Ye’re clane unrasonable, darlint.”

Pat was beginning to suspect that she was unreasonable ... that these things would have to be faced some time. For instance, Winnie had a beau. Not “beaus” ... she had had beaus for over a year and Pat had grown used to their coming and going and Winnie’s resultant chatter about “dates” ... but “a” beau. Frank Russell of the Bay Shore Russells seemed to have scattered all the others and Winnie was beginning to blush painfully when Joe teased her about him. Pat hated Frank so bitterly that she could hardly be civil to him. Judy got quite out of patience with her.

“Ye ought to be having a liddle bit av sinse, Pat. Young Frank is be way av being a rale good match. The Russells do be all knowing how to make one hand wash the other. An only son and his mother dead and all the Bay Shore girls trying to nab him. Winnie’d just be stepping into that grand ould Russell place at the Bay Shore and be quane, wid niver a motherin-law to look black at her if she moved a sofya. And that near home and all.”

“Winnie’s too young to *think* of being married,” protested Pat.

“Sure and the darlint is eighteen. There’s no question av being married yet awhile ... she must have her courting time as is proper. But a Russell always means business and young Frank has the glint in his eye. I’m telling ye. He knows where to be coming for a good wife.”

“He isn’t very intelligent,” snapped Pat.

“Will ye listen at her? He ain’t much for rading poetry or building fancy houses, like yer Jingle, I’m supposing, but he’s got a rale grip on politics, as Long Alec was quick to see, and I’m clane missing me guess if he don’t be in Parliamint be the time he’s a bit bald. Ye’re not nading innys great intilligence for that. Winnie’s no rale scholard hersilf, the darlint, but there isn’t the like av her for the light biscuit on the Island. She’ll be the grand housekeeper for that fine house. I’m telling ye.”

Pat didn't want telling. The thought of Winnie ever leaving home, no matter how long the courting days were, remained intolerable. She continued to hate Frank but she resigned herself to the entrance class and even took up the work with a certain grim determination to do well for the sake of Silver Bush. She knew people thought the Silver Bush family was lacking in ambition. Joe had stubbornly refused to go to school after he was fifteen; Winnie had always been "dumb" when it came to lessons; Sid was determined to know farming and nothing else. So it was up to her to re-establish the Gardiner credit in the halls of learning.

"I'm so thankful Bets is in the entrance class, too, Judy. I was afraid for a long while she couldn't be ... her father thought she wasn't strong enough. But Bets coaxed so hard he has given in. If Bets is with me when I go to Queen's it won't be so bad ... supposing I ever get there."

"Supposing, is it? Sure and there isn't much doubt but ye'll get there, cliver and all as ye are whin ye give yer mind to it. Whin I watch ye working out them queer algebra things it makes me have wheels in me head. As for yer jawmetry stuff, Gintleman Tom himsilf cudn't be seeing through it."

"Geometry is my favourite class, Judy. Bets doesn't like it ... but she loves everything else that I love. We have planned to study together each night about all through the winter. We'll study hard for two hours and then we'll talk."

"I belave ye. The liddle tongues av ye do be always clacking."

"Yes, but, Judy, there are times when we don't talk at all. We just sit and think. Sometimes we don't even think ... we just *sit*. It's enough just to be together. And oh, Judy, Bets and I ..."

"I did be hearing ye was calling each other Elizabeth and Patricia."

Pat laughed.

"We did try to. But it didn't work. Elizabeth and Patricia sounded like strangers ... we didn't know ourselves. As I was saying ... Bets and I have begun to read the Bible right through. We're not going to skip a single chapter, not even those awful names in Chronicles. You've no idea how interesting the Bible is, Judy, when you read it just as a story."

“Oh, oh, haven’t I now? Sure and wasn’t I rading me Bible afore ye were born or thought av? But I *did* be skipping the names. There was too minny jaw-breakers among thim for me. I do be wondering if there niver was inny nicknames in thim days. D’ye think now, Patsy dear, that ivery time Jehosaphat’s mother called him to his liddle dinner she said the whole name?”

2

The autumn drifted by: maple fires were kindled around the Secret Field: bracken and lady fern turned brown in Happiness: Jordan ran to the sea between borders of purple asters: golden harvest moons looked down over the Hill of the Mist. A gracious September and a mellow October were succeeded by a soft and sad November, when long silken lines of rain slanted across the sere hillsides.

And then one day, without any warning, came the first break in the family at Silver Bush.

They had all, except Joe, been spending Saturday afternoon and evening at the Bay Shore farm ... where nothing had changed in Pat’s remembrance. It was “a world where all things seemed the same.” She was beginning to love the Bay Shore for that very changelessness ... it seemed the one place you could depend on in a changing world. Aunt Frances and Aunt Honor were just as “stately” as ever, though they had given up asking her to say Bible verses and tapping her on the head when they disapproved of her. They still disapproved of her in many things but Pat liked even the disapproval because anything else would have been change. Cousin Danny still wore his elvish grin. The Great-great was still alive ... at ninety-eight ... and not a day older apparently, nor any more complimentary. Every time she saw Pat she said “Nae beauty,” in the same peevish tone, as if Pat were entirely to blame for it. The vase that had made the face at Sarah Jenkins still stood on the same bracket and the polished doorknobs still brightly reflected your face. The white ivory elephants had never finished

marching across the mantel and the red and yellow china hen had evidently never succeeded in hatching out her eggs.

Bets was with them and this added to the pleasure of the day. It was such fun to show Bets everything. The aunts liked her ... but who could help liking Bets? Even the Great-great peered at her with admiration in her bright old eyes and for once forgot to tell Pat she was no beauty.

When they came back to Silver Bush Pat must walk up the hill with Bets: it had turned colder and the first snowfall was whitening down over the twilight world when Pat came into the kitchen. At once she saw that something must be wrong ... terribly wrong. Mother was looking as white as if she had been struck ... Winnie was crying ... and Judy, of all people, had been crying. Sid looked as if he were trying not to cry. Father stood by the table holding a letter in his hand. Snicklefritz sat by him, looking up with mute, imploring eyes. Gentleman Tom had an air of not liking things. Even Bold-and-Bad, whom ordinarily nothing could subdue, crouched with an apologetic air under the stove.

Pat looked around. Everybody was there ...except ... except ...

“Where’s Joe?” she cried.

For a moment nobody spoke. Then Winnie sobbed, “He’s gone.”

“Gone! Where?”

“To sea. He went to the harbour tonight and sailed in Pierce Morgan’s vessel for the West Indies.”

“And me niver suspecting it, the gomeril I am,” wailed Judy. “Not aven whin he come in, all queer like, and said he wud be taking a run to Silverbridge. Sure and if I’d known what was in his head I’d have hung on to him till after the tide set ...”

“That wouldn’t have done any good,” said Long Alec, rousing himself from his abstraction. “He was bound to go sooner or later. I’ve known that for some time. But he was so young ... and to go off like this without a word to one of us ... it was cruel of him. There, there, Mary.”

For mother had turned and buried her face on his shoulder with a little, broken cry. Father led her out of the kitchen. Winnie and Cuddles followed. Sid went out and Pat was weeping wildly in Judy’s arms.

“Judy, I can’t bear it ... I can’t bear it! Joe to go ... and like that.”

“Sure and it do be cruel, as Long Alec said. The young fry do be cruel be times ... they don’t know ... they don’t know. Now, don’t be breaking yer liddle heart, darlint. Remimber it’s harder for yer mother than for inny av the rest av ye. Joe’ll be back some time ...”

“But never to *stay*, Judy ... never to stay. Oh, I’ll always hate this day ... always.”

“Oh, oh, don’t be cynical now,” said Judy, who picked up words as the children studied their lessons but not always the exact meaning. “Where’s the sinse av hating the poor day? Ye must just be looking this in the face. It’s Wild Dick and yer Uncle Horace over again ... sure and Joe had always been more like Horace than his own dad. He knew if he tried to say goodbye Long Alec wud be trying to put him off. Now kape up yer pecker, Patsy, for the sake av yer mother. Siddy’s here to carry on and it’s the smart lad he is. His heart’s in the farm as Joe’s niver was, and he can aven drive the autymobile which the Good Man Above niver intinded innybody to do. Joe’s gone but he hasn’t taken Silver Bush wid him. Did ye be after seeing the liddle note he lift on Long Alec’s desk ... no? There was a missage for ye in it ... ‘tell Pat to be good to Snicklefritz’ ... and there was one for me, too, be way av a joke. Joe always had a joke, the darlint. ‘Tell Judy to see that those blamed kittens in her picture are grown up be the time I come back.’ Sure and wasn’t he always laughing at thim same kittens.”

But Pat could not laugh again for a long time. She was the last one at Silver Bush to resign herself to the inevitable. Eventually she found herself doing it, with a sense of shame that it could be so. But the raw rainy winter was half over before she ceased to have sleepless nights when it stormed and began looking forward with pleasure to Joe’s letters, with bewitching foreign stamps on them which Cuddles proudly collected. They were full of the glamour of strange ports and distant lands, of the lure of adventure and white-winged ships, to which Pat thrilled in spite of herself. Somehow, although she hadn’t believed it possible, Silver Bush got on without him. Sid had stepped manfully into his place ... in truth Sid was

glad of an excuse to leave school ... mother began to smile again, Frank Russell consoled Winnie, everybody ceased to listen for the gay whistle that had echoed so often through the twilights around the old barns. Even Snicklefritz stopped wearing a sorrowful cast of countenance and listening mournfully to every footstep on the stone walk.

Change ... and worse than change, forgetfulness! It seemed dreadful to Pat that things could be forgotten. Why, they were just as bad as the family at Silverbridge that had one son in California and one in Australia, one in India and one in Petrograd and didn't seem to mind it at all.

"Oh, oh, how cud we be living if we didn't forget, me jewel?" said Judy.

"But Christmas was so terrible," sighed Pat. "The first time we weren't all here. I couldn't help thinking of something I heard you say once ... that once one of a family was away for Christmas it was likely they would never be all together again. I just couldn't eat ... and I didn't see how any one else could."

"But do ye be remimbering how ye slipped into the kitchen at bedtime and we had a faste on the bones?" said Judy slyly.

3

Everything passes. Winter was spring before they knew it. Everybody was looking forward with delight to Joe's homecoming. March brought a saddening letter from him. He was not coming home in Pierce Morgan's vessel. He had shipped for a voyage to China. Well, that was a disappointment ... but meanwhile March was April, with sap astir and frogs tuning up the field of the Pool, and all the apple boughs that had fallen in winter storms to be gathered up and burned. Sid and Pat did that and they and Bets and Hilary had a glorious bonfire at night: and after it was over Pat couldn't walk home with Bets because Sid did. Pat didn't mind ... she was too happy because Sid seemed to be having quite a crush on Bets this spring.

“He’s all out with May Binnie, Judy. Won’t it be lovely if he marries Bets some day?”

“Oh, oh, go aisy wid yer matchmaking,” said Judy sarcastically.

Besides, it was nice to sit with Hilary on Weeping Willy’s tombstone, in the glow from the smouldering embers in the orchard, and talk about things. Pat had learned to call him Hilary ... she was even beginning to think of him as Hilary, though in moments of excitement the old name popped out. Judy never could bring her tongue to call him anything else. To her he would always be Jingle.

“The darlints,” she would say to Gentleman Tom, looking out of her kitchen window at them. “I do be wondering what’s afore thim in life. And how much longer is it they have to be young and lighthearted.”

Gentleman Tom would not tell her.

April was May, with a white fire of wild cherry in Happiness and young daffodils dancing all over the garden and little green cones shooting up in the iris beds. Every day Pat made some new discovery.

“One forgets all through the year how lovely spring really is and so it comes as a surprise every time,” she said.

And finally May was June, with a fairy wild plum hanging out in the Whispering Lane and purple waves of lilac breaking along the yard fence and Judy’s beds of white pansies all ablaze ... big white, velvety pansies ... and everywhere all the different shades of green in the young spring woods on the hills.

“Spring is nicer at Silver Bush than anywhere else, Judy. Just look what a lovely iris ... frosty white with a ripple of blue fringing every petal. It’s Joe’s iris ... he planted it last spring ... and now where is he?”

“On the other side av the world belike. Tell me, Patsy dear, do you be understanding how it is they don’t fall off down there? I’ve niver been able to get the hang of it into me mind somehow.”

Pat tried to explain but Judy still shook her grey bob in a maze of uncertainty.

“Oh, oh, it’s me own stupidity I’m knowing.”

“No, it’s my fault, Judy. I’ve a headache tonight.”

“Sure and it’s studying too hard ye are. That algebra now, it’s mesilf do be thinking it isn’t fit for girls to be larning. Morning, noon and night at it as ye are.”

“I *must* study, Judy ... the Entrance comes in another month and I *must* pass. Father and mother will feel dreadfully if I don’t. I’m not afraid of the mathematics; I’ve always been fond of arithmetic especially. Only ... do you remember how dreadfully sorry I used to be for poor A and B and C because they had to work so hard. D appeared to have things easier.”

“Sure and I do remimber how pitiful ye used to look up and say, ‘Doesn’t A *iver* have a holiday, Judy?’ It’s the grand marks ye’ll be making in iverything I’m ixpecting.”

“No, I’m such a dub in history, Judy. I can’t remember dates.”

“Dates, is it? And who care about dates? What difference does it make whin things happened as long as they did happen?”

“The examiners think it makes some difference, Judy. The only two dates I’m positively sure of are that Julius Caesar landed in Britain 55 B.C. and that the battle of Waterloo was fought in 1815. Outside of those everything is in a fog.”

“Me own Great-grandfather fell at the battle av Waterloo,” said Judy. “And left me Great-grandmother a widdy with nine small children. But what’s a widdy more or less in the world now after the Great War? Do ye be remimbering anything av it, Pat?”

“I was five when the armistice was signed. I remember the fireworks at the bridge ... and, dimly, people talking of it before that. It seems like a dream. *You* never talk of it, Judy.”

“Sure and I was ashamed all through it bekase I had none of me own to go ... and thankful that Sidly and Joe were children. Yer mother and yer Aunt Hazel and mesilf just knit socks for the soldiers and sat tight. It’s a time I don’t like to be thinking av, wid ivery one ranting at the Kaiser and yer Uncle Tom and yer dad moaning bekase they was too old to go, and us lying awake at night worrying for fear they’d find a loophole in spite av the Fam’ly Bible. And yet all av us a bit ashamed in our hearts that we didn’t have inny maple leaves in the windies. Not but what there was a bit

av fun about it, wid all the girls that proud to be walking wid the boys in khaki and yer Uncle Tom singing a hymn av hate in the back yard at Swallyfield ivery morning afore breakfast. Sure and if I didn't hear him shouting, 'I'd rather die in the trenches than live under German rule,' while I was milking I'd be running over to see if he'd got lumbago. He was that ixcited whin the election for the Union Government was on ... sure and I did be fearing he'd burst a blood vessel. Whin he found yer Aunt Edith praying that it might go in he was rale indignant. 'Elections ain't won be prayers,' sez he, and he marched her down to vote and her protesting all the way it was unwomanly. Ye niver saw such a tommyshaw. Sandy Taylor at the Bay Shore called his first b'y John Jellico Douglas Haig Lloyd George Bonar Law Kitchener. Ye shud av seen the look av the minister whin he was christened. And after it all the b'ys has just called him Slat all his life, him being so thin. They did be saying that Ralph Morgan married Jane Fisher just to escape inlisting. Sure and I'm no jidge av things matrimonial, Patsy, and niver pretinded to be but it did seem to me that I'd rather be facing the Kaiser and all his angels than marry a Fisher. Maybe Ralph come round to the same way av thinking. Whin we had the memorial service for the boys as had been killed he heaves a big sigh and sez to me, 'Ah, Judy, *they're at peace*,' sez he. Oh, oh, it's all over now and I'm hoping the world will have more sinse than iver to get in a mess like the same agin, more be token that the women can be voting."

"Old Billy Smithson at Silverbridge doesn't agree with you, Judy. He says women are fools and things will soon be in a worse mess than ever."

"Oh, oh, and are ye thinking that possible now?" said Judy sarcastically. "Old Billy shudn't be after jidging all women be his own. Well do I remimber the first time I was iver voting. I wore me blue silk and me high-heeled boots whin I wint to the polls and I was that ixcited I cud niver tell where I put the cross on me ballot. From what I culd ixplain to him yer dad always thought I'd put it in the wrong place. But innyway me man wint in so it was no great matter if I did. I've niver been voting since bekase it always happens I've been canning tomaties or some special job like that whiniver there's an election."

“Uncle Tom says every one ought to exercise her franchise ... that it’s solemn duty.”

“Listen at that. Don’t it be sounding fine? But wud I be letting me tomaties or me baked damsons spoil bekase I had to traipse off to Silverbridge to be voting? Sure, Patsy dear, governmints may go in and governmints may go out but the jam pots av Silver Bush do have to be filled.”

Gentleman Tom Sits on the Stairs

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1

Pat need not have worried about her history paper. She was not fated to write it that year. The headache she complained of had not disappeared by next morning and it was further complicated by a sore throat. Mother advised her to stay in bed and Pat agreed so meekly that Judy was alarmed. Early next morning she tiptoed anxiously in to see her.

“How’s the morning wid ye, me jewel?”

Pat looked at her with burning eyes above a flushed face.

“The dead clock out in the hall has begun ticking, Judy. Please stop it. Every tick hurts my head so.”

Judy ran out, roused Mrs. Gardiner, and telephoned for Dr. Bentley.

Pat had scarlet fever.

At first nobody was much alarmed. Joe and Winnie had had scarlet fever in childhood and had not been especially ill. But as the days wore on anxiety settled down over Silver Bush like an ever deepening cloud. Dr. Bentley looked grave and talked of “complications.” Mother, who had never had scarlet fever herself, was debarred from the sick room and Judy and Winnie waited on Pat. Judy would not hear of a trained nurse. She had never got over Miss Martin and her “Greta.” Nobody ever knew when she slept or if she slept at all. All night she sat by Pat’s bed in the bandy-legged Queen Anne chair, with its faded red damask seat, which Pat had rescued from the garret because she loved it ... never dozing or nodding, ready with cooling drink and tender touch. Dr. Bentley afterwards spoke of her as “one of those born nurses who seem to know by instinct what it takes most women years of training to learn.”

When Pat became delirious she would do nothing and take nothing for anybody but Judy.

And Pat was very delirious. Delusion after delusion chased each other through her fevered brain. Weeping Willy had carried off the wooden button on the pantry door. *"I'm sure God will think that so funny,"* said Pat, vainly searching for it before God could find out. The cracks in the ceiling wouldn't stay in place but crawled all over. She was on a lonely road, where the dark was waiting to pounce on her, calling to Jingle who was walking away unconcernedly with Emily-and-Lilian's tombstone under his arm. She was at the bottom of the well where Wild Dick had thrown her. She was searching for the Secret Field which Dorothy had taken away. She heard Joe's whistle but could never see Joe. Somebody had changed all the furniture in Silver Bush and Pat was vainly trying to get it back in place. The minister had said in church last Sunday that God held the world in the hollow of his hand. *Suppose He got tired and dropped it, Judy?*

"Sure and that's one thing He'll niver be doing, Patsy, rest ye aisy."

The wind blew and would never stop ... *it must be so tired, Judy. Please make it stop.* She was on a road at the head of a long procession of rolling cheeses ... all the cheeses that had ever been made at Silver Bush ... she *had* to keep ahead of them. Faces were looking in at the window ... pressed against the pane ... or leering in a row along the footboard of the bed like the Bay Shore ghost. Hideous faces, cruel, crafty, terrifying faces. *Please, Judy, drive them away ... please ... please.* She had long fierce arguments between Pat and Patricia. Time was running by her like the dark river of the hymn. She couldn't catch up with it. *If we stopped all the clocks couldn't we stop time, Judy? Please!* And who, oh, who would give poor Bold-and-Bad his meals?

"Sure and I will, Patsy darlint. Ye nadn't be fretting over Bold-and-Bad. He's living up to his name ivery minute of the day, slaping on the Poet's bed and getting rolled up in me shate of fly-paper. Sure and ye niver saw a madder cat. It's Gentleman Tom that's doing the worrying. He do be setting on the landing ivery moment he can spare from his own lawful concerns."

Then came two or three dreadful days when Pat's life hung in the balance. Dr. Bentley shook his head. The family gave her up. But Judy never quailed. She hadn't got the "sign" and as for Gentleman Tom he never budged off the landing, although sometimes he bristled and spat.

"Sure and whatever is after Pat will have the hard time to get past that baste," Judy said confidently.

But the third night, in the wee sma' hours, when Silver Bush was holding its wakeful breath, wondering despairingly what the morrow would bring, Gentleman Tom arose, shook himself, and walked gravely downstairs to his own cushion in the kitchen.

"He was knowing there wasn't innny more nade av sitting there," said Judy at sunrise. "Pat had got the turn. I met him coming down whin I was coming up and he was after giving me a look. Whin I wint in the darlint's room I was ixpecting to see a difference and I did. Look at her there, slaping as peaceful as a lamb. Sure and this is a joyful day for Silver Bush. Ye can be watching her, Winnie, the while I brew me a jug av tay. I nade a bit av a stimulant, what wid me knees shaking and me poor head going round in circles."

2

Pat's convalescence was a long one. It was five weeks before she could even sit up in bed and drink her broth out of the dear little yellow bowl with blue roses in it ... a Bay Shore heirloom ... which Aunt Honor had sent over for her. She had a little gold cushion that was like a small sun behind her head ... Aunt Hazel had sent *it* up ... and wore a lovely jacket of primrose silk which Aunt Edith had brought over for her. Everybody was so good to her. The banished Bets sent her up leaves full of wild strawberries and Hilary brought brook trout for her. When Hilary sprained his ankle so badly that he had to keep the house for a week Judy herself, armed with a can of worms and Sid's hook and line stalked up and down the banks of Jordan to cater to Pat's slowly-reviving appetite. Mother

came to the door and looked in with happy eyes. Sometimes Cuddles' darling anxious little face peered through the stair railings, not permitted to come any nearer.

It was seven weeks before Pat was allowed out of bed, despite her pleadings.

"I'm getting so tired of the bed, Judy. I'm sure it wouldn't hurt me to get up for a little and sit in a chair by the window. I want to see *outside* so much. You don't know how tired I am of looking at the bluebells on the wallpaper. That cluster of them over the washstand looks just like a little pot-bellied elf with a bonnet on and it grins at me. Now, don't look terrified, Judy dear. I'm not out of my head again. You can see it for yourself."

"I'm not denying there's a resemblance. But ye'll not be out av bed for two days more. Them's the doctor's orders and I'll folly them."

"Well, prop me up on the pillows, Judy, so that I can at least see something out of the window."

That was nice. She could see the slender fir-tops against the blue sky at the bottom of the garden ... the cloud-castles that came and went ... the swallow-haunted gable end of the barn ... the smoke from Uncle Tom's chimney making magic against the hills. Pat lived on this for two days more and then Judy let her sit on a chair by the window for half an hour. Pat managed to walk to the chair although she admitted she felt very like a bowl of jelly that would all fall apart if violently shaken. But her eyes and ears made the most of that half hour. At first it was a shock to see how the summer had gone while she had been sick. But what beautiful colours the world was showing. How wonderful to see again the blue shoulders of the hills across the harbour and the ecstasy of farewell summers in the field of that ilk ... the silky wind ripples going over the grass on the lawn and all her own intimate, beloved trees. The breeze whispering from hill to hill and blowing in the scent of flowers to her. The honeysuckle over the graveyard paling with Judy's ducks squattering around the well. Bold-and-Bad on the window sill of the church barn and a curly black dog, with a white heart on his breast, on the granary steps.

And ... could it be? ... Bets! A slim lovely girl in a lilac dress, her arms full of peonies, waving to her from the Whispering Lane. Bets had *grown*.

“Judy sent me word I could just look at you from here if I was right on the dot. Oh, Pat, darling, it’s just heavenly to see you again. If you knew what I’ve been through! I wanted to send Hilary word ... he’s just been frantic ... but Judy thought both of us would be too much excitement for you. He’ll be here tomorrow.”

Every day Pat was allowed to sit up a little longer, until she could spend the whole afternoon at her window. Hilary and Bets were allowed in the garden now and could shout things up at her, though Judy wouldn’t allow her to talk much in return. But it was enough just to be there, looking out on the beautiful moods of the fields, that sometimes twinkled in summer rain and sometimes basked in sunshine. One evening Judy let her stay up after supper. It was lovely to see the “dim” come stealing over the garden again. She recalled the last story she and Bets had read together, of an old enchanted garden in which flowers could talk. Just suppose her own flowers talked at night. That red rose in the corner became a passionate lover and whispered compliments to the white rose. That swaggering tiger lily told tales of incredible adventures. The nodding sleepy poppies gave away all their secrets. But the Madonna lilies only said their prayers.

She hadn’t seen the stars for so long. And to watch the moon rise! Bets and she had read a poem once about the moon rising over Hymettus. But it couldn’t be more beautiful than the moon rising over the Hill of the Mist with the harbour beyond. The tree shadows were lovely. The tall lilies looked like white saints in the moon-glow.

Judy coming in was quite horrified to find that Pat had not yet returned to bed.

“Ye haven’t been slaping, have ye now?” she queried anxiously. “Not slaping in the moonlight, child dear?”

“No. But I’d love to. Why shouldn’t I?”

“Listen at her. Don’t ye iver go slaping in moonlight. It’s liable ye are to go mad. Sure and I knew a man once ... he slipt out in the moonlight one night and he was niver the same again.”

Pat sighed. She hated to leave that delicious silver bath of moonlight but she *was* tired. It was nice to feel tired again and drift off to sleep so easily.

Ten weeks from the day she took sick Pat came downstairs, feeling a glad freedom. What a day that was! Such a triumphant Judy! All the poppies dancing to do her honour! Comfortably hungry for her dinner once more. Such a delightful meal with everybody exchanging happy looks. Even Gentleman Tom made a fuss over her.

“Sure and the house do be glad to see you round it again,” gloated Judy.

“It was nice to see everything in the same place. She had been afraid something would be changed. The garden *had* changed a great deal. And even Bets and Jingle seemed changed ... older, some way. Jingle had certainly grown taller. Oh, why did things have to change? The old sad question.

“Maybe there’s a bit av change in yersilf, darlint,” said Judy, a little sadly. Pat *was* changed ... she looked older in some unmistakeable way.

“Sure and ye can’t be going quite so near the gate av death widout it changing ye,” whispered Judy to herself. “She isn’t the child inny more. She’ll never be the same again.”

The others thought it was just her pallor and thinness. Uncle Tom told her she had a lovely suit of bones.

“I’ll soon fatten up on your cooking, Judy. Life tastes good to-day.”

“Sure and life do be having a taste, don’t it, Patsy? I’m only a poor ould maid as has worked out all her days for a living and yet I’m declaring life has a taste. Sure and I smack me lips over it.”

“Hilary has brought me a jolly book to read ... Bets is sweeter than ever. On the whole, it’s a pretty nice world in spite of change and it’s wonderful to be back in it again.”

“I’m telling ye. But, Patsy darlint, ye must be going careful. There’s to be no running all over for a while yet. Just sit ye still and listen to yer hair growing.”

3

Pat found it was more likely she would have to listen to her hair falling out. It began to fall out alarmingly. Judy assured her that it was only to be expected but even Judy was scared. Pat wept and would not be comforted.

“I’m bald, Judy ... actually bald. I suppose it’s a judgement on me for hating my ginger hair. Judy, what if it never comes in again?”

“But av coorse it will,” said Judy ... who was by no means as sure of it as she would have liked to be. She made Pat a cap of lace and silk to wear but there were some bad weeks. Some prophesied dire things. Aunt Edith had known a girl whose hair had come out like that.

“It grew in again *white*,” said Aunt Edith.

Then the hair *did* begin to grow in ... a dark fuzz at first. Pat was relieved to find it was not white at any rate. Then longer ... thicker ...

“I do be belaving it’s going to be curly,” whispered Judy in a kind of awed rapture.

For the first time in weeks Pat wanted a mirror. The hair was curly. Not too curly but just lovely natural waves. And *dark* ... dark brown. Pat thought she would die of happiness. Her hair was “bobbed” now and at no cost to Judy who was only too glad to see her darling with hair at all.

“So you’ve made up your mind to be a beauty after all,” said Uncle Tom, the first time he saw her without a cap.

“Hardly that,” decided Pat, as she scrutinised herself in the mirror that night. “But it *is* an improvement.”

“Innyway, ye’ll niver be nading a permanent,” said Judy, “and that’s be way av being a blessing. Sure and Dr. Bentley’s wife do be having a permanent, they tell me, and her scalp was burned so bad the hair do be all

coming out in patches. I'm thinking she'll be wishing she'd left the Good Man's work alone."

Altogether Pat was well satisfied with her bout of scarlet fever. She had got dark wavy hair out of it and escaped Queen's for another year.

Glamour of Youth

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1

Bets had passed her entrance but refused to go to Queen's until Pat could go, too. Pat, having missed her exams, must wait until next year.

A nice thing had happened. Hilary had failed to pass his entrance ... that was not the nice thing ... owing to the fact that the teacher at the South Glen school had been a poor one. Larry Gordon took Hilary away and sent him to the North Glen school. Consequently every morning Hilary and Bets and Pat walked gaily to school together and found life good. Sid went no longer. He was father's righthand man now. But Cuddles was going. She started blithely off one September morning and Pat, recalling the day she had "started school," felt very motherly and protective and sentimental as she watched dear Cuddles trotting along before them, hand in hand with another small, gleeful mite from the Robinson family. How little they knew of life, poor wee souls! How very aged and experienced Pat felt herself!

"Can you believe we were ever as young as that?" she asked of Bets incredulously.

Bets couldn't and sighed. Yet both of them tripped along the road as if they had been born, like Beatrice, under a dancing star. It was lovely to be old enough to remember childhood with a sigh. It was lovely to have before them a road filled with soft amethyst mist. It was lovely to see dark young fir trees edging harvest meadows. It was lovely to take a short cut through the little wood lane in Herbert Taylor's woods. It was lovely to be together. For it all came back to that. Nothing would have had just the same flavour if it had not been shared with each other.

Joe had never been home. Letters came from him from spicy tropic lands and Arctic wastes and Mediterranean ports, and were great events at

Silver Bush. After everybody had read them they were sent over to Swallowfield and from there to the Bay Shore and then back for mother's "glory box," as they called it in imitation of Judy's glory box. Pat had a glory box of her own now in which she kept all kinds of "souvenirs," labelled somewhat systematically ... "a flower from Bets' garden" ... "new plan for 'my house,' drawn by Hilary Gordon" ... "letters from my brother, Joseph A. Gardiner" ... "a snapshot of Bets and me under the Watching Pine" ... "a packet of notes from my beloved friend, Elizabeth Gertrude Wilcox" ... "the pencil I wrote my first letter to H.H. with."

For "H.H." was Harris J. Hynes ... and Pat was over head and ears in love with him! Absolutely sunk, Winnie said. It had happened in church, one dull November day, when the moan of an eerie wind sounded around the tower and Pat was feeling sad for no earthly reason than that it pleased her to feel so. She had not felt sad when she had left Silver Bush for she had on her new scarlet hat under which her amber eyes glowed like jewels. Her skin, which had looked sallow with ginger hair, looked creamy with dark brown. Her lips were as red as her hat.

"Oh, oh, and isn't that chick now!" said Judy admiringly. "I niver saw innnything chicker. Oh, oh, Patsy darlint" ... Judy sighed ... "the beaus will soon be coming."

Pat tossed her head.

"I don't want beaus, Judy."

"Oh, oh, ivery girl shud have a few beaus, Patsy. Sure and it's her right and so I do be telling ould Tillie Taylor last wake whin she was saying she didn't hold wid beaus. 'Ather they manes nothing or they manes too much,' sez she but what she was maning hersilf the Good Man Above only knows and maybe He'd be puzzled."

"Anyway they don't call them beaus now, Judy. That's old fashioned. It's boyfriends now."

"Boyfriends, is it? Oh, oh, Patsy me jewel, some day ye'll be finding the difference atween a frind and a beau."

Pat and Bets were both pleased to be a bit sorrowful during that walk to church. They confessed they felt old. November was such a dreary

month.

“Oh, Bets, the years will just go round like this ... and changes will come ... you’ll marry some one and go away from me. Bets, when I think of it I couldn’t suffer any more if I was dying. Bets, I just couldn’t bear it.”

“I couldn’t either,” said Bets in a broken voice. Then they both felt better. It was so wonderful to be young and sad together.

2

Pat’s mood lasted until the second hymn. Then everything was changed in the twinkling of an eye.

He had come in with some other boys. He was standing just across the aisle from her. He was looking right at her over his hymn book. Looking admiringly. It was the first time Pat had ever noticed a boy looking at her admiringly. She suddenly felt that she was beautiful. And ... also for the first time she blushed devastatingly and dropped her eyes. There had never been a boy she couldn’t look squarely at before.

She knew what had happened to her ... just what had happened years ago at the blind men’s concert ... and by the same sign. Her legs were trembling.

But *this* was real.

“I wonder if I dare look at him,” she thought ... and dared.

The hymn was over now. They were all sitting down. He appeared to find his boots interesting. Pat had a good chance to look at him.

He was handsome. Wonderful crinkly golden-brown hair ... clear-cut features — all the heroes in stories had clear-cut features ... great brown eyes. For he lifted his eyes at that moment and looked at her again. Thousands of electric thrills went over Pat.

She heard not one word of the sermon, not even the text, much to Long Alec’s indignation, for it was one of his rules that every one in his family must be able to tell the text at the dinner table on Sundays. But if Pat could

not remember the text she would always remember the anthem. “*Joy to the world,*” sang the choir. Could anything be more appropriate? She never glanced his way again but when they left the church she passed him in the porch and again their eyes met. It was quite terrible and Pat was breathless as she went down the steps.

Everything was changed. Even November had its points. The clouds were gone. The woodpath was beaded with pale sunlight. Quiet grey trees on all sides treasured some secret of loveliness.

“Did you see Harris Hynes?” asked Bets.

“Who is Harris Hynes?” asked Pat, knowing quite well, although she had never heard the name before.

“The new boy. His people have bought the Calder place. He sat just across from us.”

“Oh, that boy? Yes, I noticed him,” said Pat casually. She felt horribly disloyal. It was the first time she had kept anything from Bets.

“He would be rather handsome if it wasn’t for his nose,” said Bets.

“His nose? I didn’t see anything wrong with his nose,” said Pat, rather coldly.

“Oh, it’s crooked. Of course you only notice it in profile. But he has gorgeous hair. They say he goes with Myra Lockley at Silverbridge.”

A dreadful sinking feeling engulfed Pat. Joy to the world, indeed! Where had the sunlight gone? November was a horrid month.

But that look in his eyes.

3

The invitation to Edna Robinson’s party came the next day. Would he be there? She thought of nothing else for two days. When Wednesday night came it was an exquisite night of moonlight and frost but because Harris Hynes might be at Edna’s dance she was blind to its beauty. It was sweet agony to decide which of two dresses she should wear ... the red was the smartest but the blue and silver made her look more grown up ... a slender

swaying thing of moonshine and twilight. She put it on — she put little dabs of perfume on her hair and throat ... she even borrowed a pair of Winnie's milky pearl eardrops for her ears. It was wonderful to dress for him ... to wonder if he would notice what she wore. For the first time she made a little ritual of dressing.

Then she went down to show herself to Judy who was making sausage meat in the kitchen. Judy knew there was something in the wind the moment she sniffed the perfume, but she said only,

“Ye're looking lovely, darlint.”

Would *he* think her lovely? That was the question. But she pretended to be interested only in the sausage meat. Judy mustn't forget to put nutmeg in. Father liked nutmeg. Judy shook with laughter when the door closed behind Pat.

“It isn't sausage meat the darlint is thinking av. Oh, oh, I do be knowing the signs.”

How dreadful to think he mightn't be there! How thrilling to look at that dark hill against the sunset, just behind which was the Calder place, now the Hynes place. *He* lived there. If he were at the party and she met him what would she say? Suppose she talked too much ... or not enough? Would his people ... his mother ... like her? She heard not a word that Sid and Bets said. But when May Binnie, seeing the blue and silver dress for the first time in the Robinson guest room, said,

“That's the new shade they call twilight, isn't it? It would be a lovely colour on some people. But don't you think you're too sallow for such a trying blue, Pat?” it worried her. Not that she cared what May Binnie thought ... but would *he* think her sallow? She seemed to remember Myra Lockley had a lovely complexion.

She knew the minute he came in ... her heart beat suffocatingly when she heard his laugh in the hall. She had never heard it before but there was only one person in the world who could laugh like that. It was wonderful to see him enter the room with the other boys ... with them but not of them ... set apart ... a young Greek god.

Oh, Pat had it very bad.

She was dancing with Paul Robinson when Harris cut in. Then she was dancing with him. It was like a miracle. They hadn't even been introduced. But then they didn't need any introduction. They knew each other ... they had known each other for ages. It seemed as if they danced in silence for an eternity. Then ...

"Won't you look at me, wonder-girl?" he was saying softly.

Pat lifted her face and looked at him. After that it was all over with her. But she was not Pat Gardiner for nothing. Judy's training stood her in good stead. She made her eyes mocking ... challenging. He was not going to know ... not just yet. Now that *she* knew what *his* eyes had told. Knowledge was power.

"So this is Patricia?" he said. The way he pronounced her name was enchanting. Never, so his tone said, had there been such a beautiful name. "Have you been thinking about me?"

"Now, why in the world should I have been thinking about you?" said Pat airily. Nobody could have dreamed that she had been thinking about nothing else. Nobody would have dreamed how exultant she was at this proof that Sunday had meant to him what it had meant to her.

"Indeed, I don't know why," he agreed with a masterly sigh. "I only know that I want you to be very, very nice to me."

He walked home with her. Sid and Bets faded away into the blue crystal of the night and they were alone. To walk with Harris over the hills, with the dark woods behind and a starry sky above and the cool white birches along the meadow fences, was something never to be forgotten. Pat was afraid everything she said was stupid. But Harris didn't seem to think so. Not that she said a great deal. Harris was the talker. She listened breathlessly while he described his recent trip in an aeroplane. He was going to be a bird-man. No tame career for *him*.

"What a dull old party," yawned Winnie, as she scrambled into bed. Frank had not been there.

And to Pat it had been cataclysmic. She held her pretty dress caressingly to her face before she hung it in her closet. *He* had liked it. She would keep that dress forever. Judy should never have *it* for her hooked

rugs. She put the flowery paper serviette *he* had spread over her knee at supper in her glory box, smoothing and folding it with reverent fingers. She lay awake until the pale golden dawn came in, recalling all he had said and saying it over again to herself. She worried for fear she had been too stiff. Perhaps he wouldn't understand. Judy always said to give them the fun of a chase ... but Judy was old-fashioned. When she wakened to find the sunshine raining all over her bed she wondered how any one could be unhappy in such a world. She could never feel sad again.

She went about in a dream all day haunted by the ghostly echoes of the violins ... by *his* voice ... and by lines of romantic poetry that came and went like beautiful wraiths in her memory. *Read life's meaning in each other's eyes.* Bets had a poem with that line in it in *her* glory box and Pat had once thought it silly. Oh, *this* was life. She knew its meaning now.

"Let me be seeing yer tongue," said Judy anxiously at night. "I'm thinking ye're after catching cold at that dance. Ather that or ... is it a beau, Patsy darlint? Won't ye be telling ould Judy if it's a beau?"

"Judy, you're too ridiculous."

No matter how hard she tried Pat couldn't hide her secrets from her family. Soon they all knew that Pat "had a crush" on Harris Hynes and got no end of fun out of it. Nobody, to Pat's indignation, took it very seriously ... except Judy and Bets. She told Bets all about it the first night she spent at the Long House. Every once in so long she and Bets simply *had* to sleep together and talk things over. Bets was quite enthralled to find herself the confidante of a real love affair. She got almost as many thrills out of it as Pat.

Even as You and I

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1

For Pat life had become a serial of excitement. The curves of the dullest road were intriguing because she might meet Harris J. Hynes around them. The prosiest sermon good old Mr. Paxton might preach became eloquent when her eyes exchanged messages with Harris' across the aisle. She blushed furiously when he entered a room unexpectedly or when he handed her a book from the Sunday School library or held a door open for her to pass through. His manners were so courtly!

She marked a little ring around the date in the calendar in her glory box on which he first called her "dear." He had given her the calendar ... a calendar in the shape of a pink rose with gilt greetings on its petal months. "To mark your happy days on," he told her. "Frightfully sentimental," jeered Winnie. But Judy was quite enraptured with it.

"I do be kind av liking a sentimental beau, Patsy. They do mostly seem to be too hard-boiled nowadays."

Pat had one of her moments of beauty when he told her he had been watching her window light half the night. (It was really Judy's light but neither Harris nor Pat ever knew that.) It was thrilling to discover that he liked cats and was not in the least annoyed when Bold-and-Bad rubbed against his best trousers and haired them. Really, his temper must be angelic! Pat would not have been surprised to find he had wings under his navy blue coat.

And it was the delight of all delights to go to the movies at Silverbridge with him.

A theatre had been started in the shabby old community hall in Silverbridge and pictures were shown Wednesday and Saturday nights. Judy was persuaded to go once but never again. She said it was too

upsetting. Pat was sure she could never forget the first time Harris took her.

“Has any one ever told you how lovely you were?” he whispered, as he helped her on with her coat in the Silver Bush kitchen.

“Lots of people,” laughed Pat mendaciously, with an impish light in her eyes.

(“Oh, oh, that’s the way to answer thim,” exulted Judy to herself in the pantry. “You won’t be finding the Silver Bush girls too aisy, *Mr. Hynes.*”)

Pat felt as sparkling as the night. They went to Silverbridge by a short cut up the hill, past the Long House and down over the fields to the river. The white sorcery of winter was all around them and her arm was tucked warmly in the curve of Harris’ arm. Just a little ahead were Sid and Bets. Sid was really having quite a case on Bets, much to Pat’s delight.

“I couldn’t dream of anything more perfect,” she told Judy.

“Oh, oh, Bets’ll be having a dozen other beaus yet afore she settles down ... like yerself,” retorted Judy. Whereat Pat went off in high dudgeon. Well, old folks couldn’t understand.

“I wonder who was the first person to think the new moon beautiful,” said Pat dreamily.

“I’ve no eyes for the moon tonight,” said Harris significantly.

Pat felt faintly chilled. The implication of Harris’ remark was complimentary ... but that slim crescent hanging over the snowy spruces that were like silver palms was so exquisite that Pat wanted Harris to share its loveliness with her. Hilary would have. Then she was horrified at such a thought.

She forgot her momentary disloyalty in the theatre. It was so wonderful ... Pat would have worked that word to death that winter if she had not given it an occasional rest by using “marvellous.” Crowds were around them but they were alone in the scented darkness. Once Harris took her hand and held it. When she tried to pull it away ... “say please,” whispered Harris. Pat did not say please.

The only fly in her ointment was the beauty of the screen sirens. Did they ever sneeze ... have cold sores ... swallow a crumb the wrong way?

How could any boy sit and look at them a whole evening and then see *anything* in ordinary, everyday girls? It was almost worse than last Sunday in church when Myra Lockley had been there, the guest of Dell Robinson. Pat couldn't keep her eyes off Myra's dazzling complexion ... all her own, too. You could tell that. Pat was sure Myra spent the whole service gazing at the navy blue back of Harris Hynes who had taken a notion that day to sit in his family pew up front. She tried to tease Harris a little about Myra the next evening when they were skating on the moonlight pool. Harris had just laughed and said, "There was a Myra."

At first Pat was pleased. Then she wondered if the day would ever come when he would say, "There was a Patricia."

2

Her first love letter was another "wonderful" thing. Harris had gone to visit a friend in town and Pat had never expected him to write her. But he did. Pat found the letter behind Judy's clock when she came home from school.

"Sure and I tucked it out of sight so that me bould Siddy shudn't be seeing it," whispered Judy.

Pat was put to it to find a place wherein to read the sacred missive. At that moment there was somebody in every room of the house, even the Poet's room, because Aunt Helen was at Silver Bush for a visit. To read it in the kitchen where Judy was "dressing" a brace of fat hens, was unthinkable.

Pat had an inspiration. She got her snowshoes and was away through the Silver Bush, across the hill field, and through the woods. Soon she found the Secret Field, an untrodden level of spirit-blue snow, where the Wood Queen and the Fern Princess were slender saplings now. The very spot for love-letters. Seated on a grey "longer" under the maples Pat read her letter. *Little Queen* ... she had always wondered, ever since she and Bets had read Ella Wheeler Wilcox's poems together if any one would

ever call her “little queen.” *I can see you at this very moment, wonderful Patricia ... I wish I could write you with a rose instead of a pen ...* and he was *hers unalterably*, Harris J. Hynes.

What *did* the J stand for? He would never tell any one. But he had said, “I’ll tell *you* what it is some day,” in a tone implying that it was some beautiful secret that would affect their entire lives.

“Oh, oh, and how minny kisses was there in your billy-doo?” said Judy, when Pat came home, her cheeks crimson from something more than her tramp in the frosty night. It was no use being angry with Judy.

“They don’t call them billets-doux now, Judy,” she said, gravely. “They call them mash notes.”

“They would that. The uglier the better nowadays. There’s something *rale* romantic in the sound av billy-doo. Now, Patsy darlint, ye’ll be writing back to him but don’t be forgetting that the written words do be lasting.”

Pat had mislaid her fountain pen and the family ink-bottle was dry so she hunted up her very prettiest pencil to answer it, the one Sid had given her on her birthday, all gold and blue, with a big, silk, flame-coloured tassel. Judy need not have worried over what Pat would write back. Her letter was really full of a dainty mockery that made the devoted Harris more “unalterably hers,” than ever.

And, having written her letter, she wrapped the pencil in tissue paper and put it away in her glory box, vowing solemnly that it should never be used to write anything else ... unless another letter to Harris. And she lay awake for hours with Harris’ letter under her pillow ... she did not want to waste this happy night sleeping.

“But what,” said Judy very slyly one day, “does Jingle be thinking av all this?”

Pat winced. Hilary’s attitude had been a secret thorn in her side all winter. She knew he hated Harris by the fact that he always was dourly silent when Harris was about. One evening when Harris had been bragging a bit what several noted relatives of his had done ... Judy could have told you all the Hynes bragged ... Hilary had said quite nastily,

“But what are *you* going to do?”

Harris had been fine. He had just flung up his splendid crest and laughed kindly at Hilary: and when Hilary had turned away Harris had whispered to Pat,

“I’m going to win the most wonderful girl in P.E. Island ... something no other Hynes has ever done.”

Still, Pat hated to feel the little chill of alienation between her and Hilary. They never went to Happiness now. Of course, they hardly ever had gone in winter and Hilary was studying very hard so that he had few foot-loose evenings to spend in Judy’s kitchen. Harris, of course, never spent his evenings in the kitchen. He was entertained in the Little Parlour, where he was supposed to help Pat with her French and Latin. Sometimes Pat thought it would have been much jollier in the kitchen. There were times when, Latin and French being exhausted, she found herself with little to say. Though that didn’t matter much. Harris had plenty for both.

But, when the beautiful copper beech at the top of the hill field blew down in a terrific March gale, it was Hilary who understood her grief and comforted her. Harris couldn’t understand at all. Why such a fuss over an old tree? He laughed at her kindly as at an unreasonable child.

“Snap out of it, Pat. Aren’t there any number of trees left in the world yet?”

“There are any number of people left in the world when some one dies, but that doesn’t mend the grief of those who love him,” said Hilary.

Harris laughed. He always laughed when Hilary said anything. “The moonstruck house-builder” he called him ... though never in Pat’s hearing. Just at this moment Pat found herself thinking that Harris’ eyes were really *too* brown and glossy. Strange she had never noticed it before. But Hilary understood. Darling Hilary. A wave of affection for him seemed to flood her being. Even when it ebbed it seemed to have swept something away with it that had been there. She went to the picture with Harris that night but it was a little ... flat. And Harris was really too possessive. He had his brother’s cutter and he was absurdly solicitous about the robes.

“I’m not quite senile yet,” said Pat.

Harris laughed.

“So it can scratch.”

Why could he never take anything seriously?

When he lifted her out at the gate Pat looked at Silver Bush. It seemed to look back at her reproachfully. It struck her that she had been thinking more about Harris Hynes that winter than of dear Silver Bush. She was suddenly repentant.

“Aren’t you ever going to kiss me, Pat?” Harris was whispering.

“Perhaps ... when you grow up,” said Pat ... and laughed too.

Harris had driven angrily away but Pat slept soundly, albeit it was their first tiff. Harris did not show himself at Silver Bush for a week and Sid and Winnie tormented her mercilessly about it. Pat wasn’t worried although Judy thought she might be.

“Boys do be like that now and then, Patsy. They take the quare notions. He’ll be along some av these long-come-shorts, darlint.”

“I haven’t a doubt of it,” said Pat with a shrug. “Meanwhile, I’ll get a little real studying done.”

3

Harris came back and everything was as before. Or was it? Where had the glamour gone? Pat felt a little disgusted with herself ... and with Harris ... and with the world in general. And then Harris went into Mr. Taylor’s store in Silverbridge! There was no reason why a clerk in a dry-goods store shouldn’t be as romantic as anybody else. But it seemed such a terrible come down after all his bird-man talk! Pat felt as if he were a stranger.

“Mr. H. Jemuel Hynes has taken a position with Mr. Taylor of Silverbridge” ... so ran one of the locals in the next paper ... perhaps inspired by no friend of Hynes.

“Jemuel! So that is what the J stood for. No wonder he wouldn’t tell it,” Pat giggled, as Judy read it out to her.

Judy talked to herself as she kneaded her bread that night in a quiet kitchen. For everybody was out except Pat, who was studying in the Little Parlour.

“Sure and the ind’s near whin she do be laughing at him. I’m not knowing why he shud be ashamed av a good Bible name. Well, it’s been a liddle experience like for her. She’ll know better how to handle the nixt one.”

There was one final flare-up of romance the night she and Harris walked down the hill from Bets’ party. Harris had been very nice that evening; and he really would have been very handsome if his nose hadn’t that frightful kink in it. His hair *was* wonderful and he was a wonderful dancer. And it was a wonderful night. After all, there was no use, as Judy said, in expecting too much of any boy. They all had their liddle failings.

“It’s cold ... hurry,” she said impatiently.

If Judy had heard that she would have known that the end was nearer still.

They went through the Whispering Lane and Harris paused by the garden gate and drew her to him. Pat was looking at the garden, all sparkle and snow in the moonshine. How sweet it was, with its hidden secrets!

“Look, Harris,” she said ... and her voice rippled through a verse she loved.

“So white with frost my garden lies,
So still, so white my garden is,
Full sure the fields of Paradise
Are not more fair than this.
The streets of pearl, the gates of gold,
Are they indeed more peace possessed,
Than this white pleasaunce pure and cold
Against the amber west?”

“Don’t let’s talk about the weather,” Harris was saying. “I want you only to think of me.”

The light went out of Pat’s face as if some one had blown it out.

“Hilary would have loved that.”

She hadn’t meant to say it aloud ... but it seemed to say itself.

Harris laughed. Harris certainly had a frightful knack of laughing at the wrong time.

“That sissy! I suppose he *would* moon over gardens and trees.”

Something clicked inside Pat’s brain.

“He isn’t a sissy,” she cried. “The idea of *you* calling him a sissy ... *you with your curls and your great soft cowey eyes,*” she finished, but in thought.

Harris tightened his arm.

“It mustn’t be cross,” he said fatally.

Pat stepped back and removed his arm.

“I don’t want to see you again, Harris Jemuel Hynes,” she said clearly and distinctly.

Harris found out eventually that she meant it.

“You’re as fickle-minded as a breeze,” were his bitter parting words.

Pat was not worried over her fickleness but she was rather worried over the conviction that Harris had always taken a bit too much for granted from the start. He was what horrid May Binnie called horridly, “a fast worker.” And she, Pat Gardiner of Silver Bush, had fallen for it.

Judy used a dreadful phrase sometimes of certain girls ... “a bit too willing.”

“Have I been too willing?” Pat asked herself solemnly.

When it became manifest that Pat’s case with Harris Hynes was off she was tormented a good deal. Bets was very sweet and understanding and comforting, but Pat did not feel entirely easy until she had talked the matter over with Judy.

“Oh, Judy, it was very exciting while it lasted. But it didn’t last.”

“Oh, oh, darlint, I niver thought it wud come to innything. Ye’re too young for the sarious side. He was just a bit of an excursion like for ye. I wudn’t be after criticising him as long as ye’d a liking for him, Pat, but wasn’t he a bit too free and aisy now? I do be liking the shy ones better that don’t be calling the cows be their first name at the second visit. And

he do be standing wid his legs too far apart for real illigance. Now did ye iver notice the way Jingle stands? Like a soldier. He do be such a diffrunt looking b'y since he do be wearing better clo'se and having his hair cut at Silverbridge, niver to mintion his stylish glasses."

It was strange but rather nice just to feel quietly happy again, without thrills and chills and semi-demi-quavers.

"Sid and Hilary are better than all the beaus in the world, Judy. I'm never going to fall in love again."

"Not before the nixt time innyway, Patsy."

"There won't be any next time."

"Oh, oh, it's much more comfortable not to be in love, I'm agreed. And wud ye be wanting that blue dress av yours much longer, darlint? It's all gone under the arms and it do be just the shade for that bit av blue scroll in me mat."

"Oh, you can have it," said Pat indifferently. She burned the letter just as indifferently. Nevertheless, years after, when she came across a little tasselled pencil in an old box in the attic she smiled and sighed.

Hilary came in with his lean brown hands filled with the first mayflowers for her and they went off on a ramble to Happiness.

"Sure and it's the happy b'y that Jingle is this blessed night," chuckled Judy.

"Friendship is much more satisfactory than love," Pat reflected, before she went to sleep.

April Magic

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1

One dim wet evening in early spring, when a shabby old world was trying to wash the winter grime from its face before it must welcome April, there was wild music among the birches and Pat listened to it as she chatted with Judy in the kitchen. Mother was tired and had been packed off to bed early. Somehow, everybody at Silver Bush, without saying anything about it, was becoming very careful of mother.

Cuddles was singing to herself in the Little Parlour ... Cuddles had such a sweet voice, Pat reflected lovingly. Judy was mixing her bread with Gentleman Tom on one side of her and Bold-and-Bad on the other. Snicklefritz was curled up by the stove, snoring. Snicklefritz was getting old, as nobody would admit.

And then ... there was the sound of footsteps on the stone walk. Dad or Sid coming in from the barn, thought Pat. But Snicklefritz knew better. In an instant he was awake and had hurled himself at the door in a frenzy of barks and scratches.

“Now, whatever’s got into the dog?” said Judy. “Sure and it’s long wakes since he bothered his liddle old head about inny stranger ... and it’s the quare dream I had last night ... and, hivenly day, am I draming still?”

For the door was open and a bronzed young man was on the stop ... and Snicklefritz was speechless in ecstasy ... and Pat had flown to his arms, wet as he was. Sid and dad were rushing in from the barn ... and mother, who had been disobedient and hadn’t gone to bed after all, was flying down stairs ... and Bold-and-Bad was spitting and bristling at all this fuss over a stranger. And everybody was a little crazy because Joe had come home ... Joe so changed and yet the same Joe ... hugging mother and the girls and Judy and laughing at the antics of Bold-and-Bad and

pretending to be in a fury because the white kittens in Judy's picture hadn't grown up after all.

They had a gay fortnight at Silver Bush. Snicklefritz simply refused to be parted one moment from Joe and insisted on sleeping on his bed at night. And every night Judy crept in to see if Joe was warm and ask the Good Man Above to bless him, as she had done when he was a child.

There were tales to tell of far lands and strange faces and everybody was happy. Pat was *too* happy, Judy thought, with several wise shakes of her head.

"The Ould Ones don't be giving ye a gift like that for nothing, as me grandmother used to say. No, no, you would have to be paying."

And then Joe was gone again. And this time those he left knew that Joe would never belong to Silver Bush again. He would be home for a visit once in a while ... with longer intervals between each visit ... but his path was on the sea and his way on the great waters. To Pat came bitterly the realisation that Joe was an outsider. The life of Silver Bush closed over his going with hardly a ripple.

"Judy, it seems a little terrible. I was so brokenhearted when Joe went away the first time ... I felt sure I couldn't live without him. And now ... I love him just as much as ever ... and it was queer and lonely without him for a few days ... but now it's as if he'd always been away. If ... if he had *wanted* to stay home ... it doesn't seem as if there was any real place for him. His old place seems to have grown over. And *that* hurts me, Judy."

"It do be life, Patsy darlint. They come and they go. But there do be one liddle heart that can't find comfort. Do ye be looking at the eyes av that poor Snicklefritz. He's too old to be standing such another parting."

Judy was right. The next morning Snicklefritz was found on Joe's bed, with his head on Joe's pillow. And Snicklefritz would waken no more to wail or weep. Pat and Sid and Hilary and Bets and Cuddles buried him in a corner of the old graveyard. Judy made no objections to this although she would never let a cat be buried there.

"I thought you liked cats better than dogs, Judy," said Cuddles.

“I do that same, but a cat do be having no right in a graveyard,” was all Judy’s explanation.

Cuddles prayed that night that Snicklefritz wouldn’t be lonesome. Pat knew he wouldn’t. He slept with his own. What more could an old dog ask? And perhaps on the nights when Wild Dick sang and Willy wept a jolly little ghost dog would come out of his grave and bark.

2

Pat and Bets were lingering by the little green gate at the top of the hill path, making plans. They were full of plans that spring ... plans for the summer ... plans for college in the fall ... plans for life beyond. They were going to camp out for a week this summer ... they were going to room together at Queen’s ... and in a few years’ time they were going to take a trip to Europe. They had been planning imaginary journeys through all their years of comradeship but this one was going to be real ... some day.

“Isn’t it fun to make plans?” Pat would say happily.

They had spent the afternoon together at the Long House. Pat loved the Long House next to Silver Bush. It was a house that always invited you to enter ... a house, Pat often thought, that always said, “So glad you’ve come.” Open doors ... geraniums in the windows ... wide, shallow, well-trodden steps up to the porch. Inside, to take off the chill of the early spring, glowing fires. They had read poetry, together savouring the wealth of beauty found in linked words; they had discussed their grievances. Bets’ mother wouldn’t let her wear pyjamas but insisted on nightdresses. And Bets did so crave a lovely pair of yellow ones like Sara Robinson had. So up to date. They did a great deal of laughing, pouncing on their jokes like frolicsome young kittens. And at the end Bets walked to the green gate with Pat and stood there talking for another hour. They just couldn’t get talked out. And anyway Pat was going the next day to the Bay Shore for a visit and there were so many things to say. It was, they agreed, just tragic to be parted so long.

It was the first mild evening of that late, cold spring. Beyond the lowlands the sea was silver grey, save just at the horizon where there was a long line of shining gold. Far, far away a bell was ringing ... some bell of lost Atlantis perhaps. A green, mystical twilight was screening all the bare, ugly fields from sight. Faint, enchanted star-fire shone over the spruces behind them. Down below them Uncle Tom was burning brush. Was there anything more fascinating than a fire in the open after night? And somewhere beyond those chilly skies was the real spring of blossom and the summer of roses. They gazed out over the world with all the old hill rapture no dweller in the valley ever knows. Oh, life was sweet together!

“Couldn’t we have our tent back in the Secret Field the nights we sleep out?” said Bets. Bets knew about the Secret Field now. Sid had told her and Pat was glad. She couldn’t have told herself, after her pact with Sid, but she hated to have Bets shut out of any of her secrets.

“Think of it,” she breathed. “Sleeping there ... with the woods all around us ... and the silver birches in the moonlight ... we must arrange for a moon, of course. Bets, can’t you see it?”

Bets could. Her cherry-blossom face, wrapped in a scarlet scarf, reflected Pat’s enthusiasm. That scarf became Bets, Pat reflected. But then everything did. Her clothes always seemed to love her. She could wear the simplest dress like a queen. She was so pretty ... and yet you always thought more of the sweetness than the prettiness of her face.

“Sid says we’d be scared to death back there,” she said. “But we won’t. Not even if the wee green folks of the hills Judy talks about came to our tent door and peeped in.”

Suddenly the night laid its finger on their lips. Something uncanny ... something fairylike was abroad. The spruces on the hill against the pale sunset were all at once a company of old crones. They seemed to be listening to something. Then they would shake with scornful laughter. The near-by bushes rustled as if a faun had slipped through them. Pat and Bets instinctively put their arms around each other. At that moment they were elfin-hearted things themselves, akin to the shadows and the silences.

They could have knelt down on the dear earth and kissed its clods for very gladness in it.

Did it last for a moment or a century? They could never have told. A light flashing out in the kitchen of Silver Bush recalled Pat to reality.

“I must go. Sid is going to run me over to the Bay Shore when the chores are done.”

“Tell them hello for me,” said Bets lightly.

“I wish you were going with me. Nothing has the same flavour without you, Bets.” Pat leaned over the gate and dropped a kiss on Bets’ cool cheek. Life had as yet touched them both so lightly that parting was still “sweet sorrow.”

Pat ran lightly down the path, turning her back, although she knew it not, on her years of unshadowed happiness.

A flock of geese flying over in the April night ... a grey cat pouncing out from the ferns in the Whispering Lane ... lantern shadows in the barnyard ... a girl half-drunk with the sweet, heady wine of spring.

“Oh, Judy, life is so beautiful ... and spring is so beautiful. Judy, how can you help dancing?”

“Dancing, is it?” Judy sat down with a grunt. She was tired and she did not like it because it meant that she was growing old. Judy had just one dread in life ... that she might grow too old to be of use to Silver Bush. “Whin ye come to my years, Patsy darlint, dancing don’t be coming so aisy. But dance while ye can ... oh, oh, dance while ye can. And rap a bit av wood.”

One Shall Be Taken

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1

Pat was to have stayed two weeks at the Bay Shore farm. She did not mind ... much. She had learned how to get along with the aunts and they thought her “much improved.” A good bit of Selby in her after all. The Great-great had “passed away” a year ago but nothing else had changed at the Bay Shore. Pat liked this ... it gave her a nice sensation of having cheated Time.

But at the end of a week Long Alec came for her one evening. And his face ...

“Dad, is anything wrong? Mother ...”

No, not mother. Bets. Bets had flu pneumonia.

Pat felt an icy finger touch ... just touch ... her heart.

“Why wasn’t I sent for before?” she said very quietly.

“They didn’t think she was in danger until this evening. She asked for you. I think we’ll be in time.”

Bets “in danger” ... “in time,” ... the phrases made a meaningless jumble in Pat’s head. The drive home was like a nightmare. Nothing was real. It couldn’t be real. Things like this simply didn’t happen. God wouldn’t let them. Of course she would waken soon. Meanwhile ... one must keep very quiet. If one said a word too much ... one might have to go on dreaming. She had such a queer feeling that her heart was a stone ... sinking, sinking, sinking ... ever since that finger had touched it.

They drove up to Silver Bush. Pat would go up the hill path. It was quicker so because the lane of the Long House ran to the Silverbridge road. Judy caught Pat in her arms as she stumbled from the car.

“Judy ... Bets ...” but no, one must be quiet. One mustn’t ask questions. One dared not.

“I’ll walk up the hill with you, Pat.”

It was Hilary ... a pale, set-lipped Hilary. Judy ... wise Judy ... whispered to him,

“No, let her be going alone, Jingle. It’ll be ... kinder.”

“Don’t you think there’s a little hope, Judy?” asked Hilary huskily. Judy shook her head.

“I do be getting the sign, Jingle. It’s a bit hard to understand. Ivery one loved her so. Sure and hiven must be nading some laughter.”

Pat didn’t know whether she was alone or not. She ran breathlessly along the Whispering Lane and down the field and up the hill. The Watching Pine watched ... *what was it watching for?* A grim red sun with a black bar of cloud across it was setting behind a dark hill as she reached the green gate. She turned for a moment ... just a moment before one had to ... know. As long as one didn’t *know* one could live. The black sea of a cold grey April twilight was far below her. That faraway bell was still ringing. It was only a week since she and Bets had listened to it and made their plans for the summer. A thing like this couldn’t come in a week ... it would need years and years. How foolish she was to be ... afraid. One *must* waken soon.

May Binnie was in the Long House kitchen when Pat went in ... always pushing herself in where she wasn’t wanted, Pat reflected detachedly. Then the room where she and Bets had slept and whispered and laughed ... and Bets lying on the bed, pale and sweet ... always sweet ... breathing too quickly. There were others there ... Mr. and Mrs. Wilcox ... the nurse ... but Pat saw only Bets.

“Dearest Pat ... I’m so glad you’ve come,” Bets whispered.

“Darling ... how are you?”

“Better, Pat ... much better ... only a little tired.”

Of course she was better. One had known she must be.

Why, then, didn’t one waken?

Some one put a chair by the bed for Pat and she sat down. Bets put out a cold hand ... how very thin it had grown ... and Pat took it. The nurse came up with a hypodermic. Bets opened her eyes.

“Let Pat do that for me, please. Let Pat do everything for me now.”

The nurse hesitated. Then some one else ... Dr. Bentley ... came up.

“There is no use in giving any more hypodermics,” he said. “She has ceased to react to them. Let her ... rest.”

Pat heard Mrs. Wilcox break into dreadful sobbing and Mr. Wilcox led her from the room. The doctor went, too. The nurse adjusted the shade of the light. Pat sat movelessly. She would not speak ... no word must disturb Bets’ rest. Bets must be better if she were resting. Now and then she felt Bets’ fingers give a gentle little pressure against her own. Very gently Pat squeezed backed. In a few days she and Bets would be laughing over this ... next summer when they would be sleeping in their tent in the moonlit Secret Field it would be such a joke to recall ...

“My breath ... is getting ... very short,” said Bets.

She did not speak again. At sunrise a little change came over her face ... such a little terrible change.

“Bets,” cried Pat imploringly. Bets had always answered when she called before. Now she did not even lift the heavy white lids of her beautiful eyes. But she was smiling.

“It’s ... over,” said the nurse softly.

Pat heard some one ... Bets’ mother ... give a piteous moan. She went over to the window and looked out. The sky in the east was splendid. Below in the valley the silver birches seemed afloat in morning mists. Far-off the harbour lighthouse stood up, golden-white against the sunrise. Smoke was curling up from the roofs of Swallowfield and Silver Bush.

Pat wished sickly that she could get back into last year. There were no nightmares there.

The room was so dreadfully still after all the agony. Pat wished some one would make a noise. Why was the nurse tiptoeing about like that? Nothing could disturb Bets now ... Bets who was lying there with the dawn of some eternal day on her face.

Pat went over and looked at her quite calmly. Bets looked like some one with a lovely secret. Bets had always looked like that ... only now one knew she would never tell it. Pat dimly recalled some text she had heard

ages ago ... last Sunday in the Bay Shore church. *I am come into deep waters where the floods overflow me.* If one could only wake!

"I think if I could cry my throat wouldn't ache so much," she thought dully.

2

Home ... mother's silent handclasp of sympathy ... Winnie's kind blue eyes ... Judy's anxious, "Patsy darlint, ye've had no breakfast. Can't ye be ating a liddle bite? Ye must be kaping up yer strength. Don't grieve, me jewel. Sure and they tell me she died smiling ... she's gone on a glad journey."

Pat was not grieving. Death was still incredible. Her family wondered at her calm.

"There's something in her isn't belaving it yet," said Judy shrewdly.

The days were still a dream. There was the funeral. Pat walked calmly up to the Long House by the hill path. She would not have been surprised to see Bets coming dancing through the green gate to meet her. She glanced up at the window that used to frame Bets' laughing face ... surely she must be there.

The Long House was full of people. May Binnie was there ... May Binnie was crying ... May Binnie who had always hated Bets. And her mother was trying to comfort her! That was *funny*. If only Bets could share in her amusement over it!

But Bets only lay smiling with that white, sweet peace on her waxen face and Hilary's cluster of pussywillows from the tree in Happiness between her fingers. There were flowers everywhere. The Sunday School had sent a cross with the motto, *Gone Home*, on it. Pat would have laughed at that, only she knew she was never going to laugh again. Home! *This* was Bets' home ... the Long House and the garden she had loved and planned for. Bets was *not* gone home ... she had only gone on an uncompanied journey from which she must presently return.

May Binnie almost had hysterics when the casket was closed. Many people thought Pat Gardiner was very unfeeling. Only a discerning few thought that fierce, rebellious young face more piteous than many tears.

If only she could get away by herself! Somewhere where people could not look at her. But, if one persisted in dreaming, one must go to the graveyard. She went with Uncle Tom, because Sid and Hilary, who were pallbearers, had taken the car. Spring still refused to come and it was a bleak, dull day. A few snowflakes were falling on the gray fields. The sea was black and grim. The cold road was hard as iron. And so they came to the little burying-ground on a western hill that had been flooded with many hundreds of sunsets, where there was a heap of red clay and an empty grave. The boys Bets had played around with carried her to it over a path heaped with the sodden leaves of a vanished year; and Pat listened unflinchingly to the most dreadful sound in the world ... the sound of the clods falling on the coffin of the beloved.

"She is in a Better Place, my dear," Mrs. Binnie was saying to the sobbing May behind her. Pat turned.

"Do you think there is a better place than Silver Bush and the Long House farm?" she said. "I don't ... and I don't think Bets did either!"

"That awful girl," Mrs. Binnie always said when she told of it. "She talked like a perfect heathen."

Pat awakened from her dream that evening. The sun set. Then came darkness ... and the hills and trees drawing nearer ... no light in Bets' window.

Pat had never really believed that any one she loved could die. Now she had learned the bitter lesson that it is possible ... that it does happen.

"Let me be alone tonight, Winnie," she said; and Winnie sympathetically went away to the Poet's room.

Pat undressed and crept into bed, shivering. The wind at the window was no longer a friend ... it was a malignant thing. She was so lonely ... it was impossible to endure such loneliness. If she could only sleep ... sleep! But then there would be such a dreadful awakening and remembering.

Bets was ... dead. She, who loved everything beautiful, was now lying in that cold, damp grave on the hill with the long grasses and withered leaves blowing drearily around it. Pat buried her face in her pillow and the long-denied tears came in a flood.

“Darlint ... darlint ... don’t be mourning like this.”

Judy had crept in ... dear, tender old Judy. She was kneeling by the bed and her arms were about the tortured creature.

“Oh, Judy, I didn’t know life could ever hurt like this. I can’t bear it, Judy.”

“Dear heart, we do all be thinking that at first.”

“I can never forgive God for taking her from me,” gasped Pat between her racking sobs.

“Child dear, whoiver heard av not forgiving God,” said the horrified Judy who did not know her Omar. “But He won’t be holding it against ye.”

“Life has all gone to pieces, Judy. And yet I have to go on living. How can I?”

“Sure and ye’ve only got to live one day at a time, darlint. One can always be living just one more day.”

“She was such a dear, Judy ... we had so many plans ... I *can’t* go to Queen’s without her. Oh, Judy, our friendship was so beautiful. Why didn’t God let it go on? Doesn’t He like beautiful things?”

“Sure and we can’t be telling what He has in mind but we can be belaving it’s nothing but good. Maybe He was wanting to *kape* your friendship beautiful, Patsy darlint.”

Lost Fragrance

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1

When Bets had been dead for a week it seemed to Pat she had been dead for years, so long is pain. The days passed like ghosts. Pat went for long walks over hills and fields in the evenings ... trying to face her sorrow ... seeing the loveliness of the crescent spring around her. She only *saw* it ... she could not *feel* it. *Where was Bets who had walked with her last spring?*

Everything had ended. And everything had to begin anew. That was the worst of it. How was one to begin anew when the heart had gone out of life?

“I wish I could forget her, Judy ... I wish I could forget her. It hurts to remember,” she cried wildly once. “If I could drink some cup of forgetfulness like that in your old story, Judy ...”

“But wud ye be after doing it if ye could, darlint? Ye’d forget all the gladness along with the pain ... all the fun and happiness ye had wid yer liddle chum. Wud ye be wanting *that*?”

No, she would not want that. She hugged her sweet memories to her heart. But how to go on living ...

“Ye don’t be remimbering one day whin ye was a liddle dot av four, Patsy? Ye wint to the door and all the sky was clouded over thick and dark. Ye was frightened to death. Ye did be running to yer mother, crying, ‘Oh, mother, where is the blue sky gone to ... oh, mother!’ Ye wudn’t be belaving us whin we tould ye it wud come back. But the nixt morning there it was smiling at ye.”

Pat still couldn’t believe that her blue sky would ever come back ... couldn’t believe that there would come a time when she would be happy again. Why, it would be terrible to be happy without Bets, even if it were

possible ... disloyal to Bets ... disloyal to love. She despised herself when she had to admit that she felt hungry once more!

Silver Bush was all her comfort now. Her love for it seemed the only solid thing under her feet. Insensibly she drew comfort and strength from its old, patient, familiar acres. Spring passed. The daffodils and spirea and bleeding-heart and columbines bloomed. Bets had loved the columbines so, she should be here to see them. The pansies they had planted together, because, for some mysterious reason, pansies would not grow up on the hill, bloomed at Silver Bush, but no slim girl figure ever came down the hill to pick them in a sunset garden. The big apple tree at the Long House bloomed as it had bloomed for two generations but she and Bets could not sit on the long bough and read poetry. Pat couldn't bear to open the books she had read with Bets ... to see the lines and paragraphs they had marked. Bets seemed to die afresh every time there was something Pat wanted to share with her and could not.

Summer came. The honeysuckle was thick over the graveyard paling. To think that the scent of honeysuckles meant nothing to Bets now ... or the soft stars of evening ... or the moon on white roses. The little path up the hill field grew over with grass. Nobody ever walked on it now. The Wilcoxes had sold the Long House farm and moved to town ... Stranger lights were in it but Bets' room was always dark. Sundays were terrible. She and Bets had always spent the afternoon and evening together. Sid wouldn't talk of Bets ... Sid in his secret boyish way had been hard hit by her death ... but Hilary would.

"I could never have lived through this summer if it hadn't been for Hilary," Pat thought.

Yet, undeniably life began to beckon once more. The immortal spirit of beauty again held aloft its torch for her. Pat hated herself because she could enjoy anything with no Bets in the world.

"Judy, I feel as if I oughtn't to be even a little bit happy. And yet, to-day, back in the Secret Field I *was* happy. I forgot Bets for a little while ... and then ... oh, Judy ... I *remembered*. It seemed sad to think I *could*

forget her. And the Secret Field was changed somehow ... more beautiful than ever but still ... not just the same, Judy.”

Judy recalled an old line in a poem she had learned in faraway school days ... a poem by a forgotten, outmoded author who yet had the secret of touching the heart. “*Ye have looked on death since ye saw me last,*” she whispered to herself. But aloud ...

“Ye naden’t be worrying over being happy, darlint. Bets would be glad av it.”

“You know, Judy, at first it hurt me to think of Bets ... I couldn’t bear it. But now ... it’s a comfort. I can think of her in all our old haunts. Tonight, when the moon came up I thought, ‘She is standing in it under the Watching Pine, waiting for me.’ And it was sweet ... for a little while ... just to pretend it. But I’ll never have another chum, Judy ... and I wouldn’t if I could. It hurts too much to lose them.”

“Ye’re young to have larned that, darlint, but we all have to sooner or later. And as for another ... oh, oh, oh, that’s all as it’s ordered. I’ve talked to ye as wise as inny av thim, Patsy, about choosing frinds but ye don’t be choosing frinds after all. They *come* to ye ... or they don’t. Just that. Ye get the ones meant for you, be they minny or few, in the time app’nted for their coming.”

Summer passed. The old days were once more lovely in remembrance. The root of white perennial phlox Bets had given her bloomed for the first time. The gold and bronze dahlias flamed against the green spruce hedge. The pageant of autumn woods began. Bets had gone “rose-crowned into the darkness” ... Joe had forsaken them ... but the Hill of the Mist was still amethyst and mysterious on September mornings ... the Secret Field held all its old allure ... Silver Bush, dear Silver Bush ... was still her own, beautiful and beloved. Pat’s laughter once more echoed in Judy’s kitchen ... once more she bandied jokes with Uncle Tom ... once more she spent long hours in Happiness with Hilary, talking over college plans. The world was sweet again.

“Yet in the purple shadow
And in the warm grey rain
What hints of ancient sorrow
And unremembered pain!”

No, not “unremembered.” She would always remember it. She had had Bets for nine wonderful years and nothing could take them from her. Judy had been right as she always was. One would not drink of the cup of forgetfulness if one could.

Exile

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1

When the pass lists came out in August Hilary led and Pat had a very respectable showing. So it was Queen's in September for both and Pat thought she might like it if she could survive an absence from Silver Bush for two-thirds of the year. She had always had a sneaking sympathy for Lot's wife. Was she really to be blamed so much for lingering to look back at her home? Pat's only comfort was that Hilary would be at Queen's too, and they would be coming home every weekend.

"You wouldn't think a house could be so nice as Silver Bush is in so many different ways, Judy. And the pieces of furniture in it don't seem like furniture. They're persons, Judy. That old chair that was Great-grandfather Nehemiah's ... when I sit in it it just puts its arms around me, Judy. I feel it. And all the chairs just *want* to be sat in."

"Sure and iverything in the house has been loved and took care av and used be so minny human beings, Patsy. It stands to rason they do be more than just furniture."

"I guess I'm hopelessly Victorian, Judy. Norma says I am. I really don't want to do anything in the world but stay on here at Silver Bush and love it and take care of the things in it and plan for it. If I do really get through the licence exams next year and get a school I'm going to shingle the roof with my first quarter's salary. Those new red and green shingles, Judy. Think how lovely they'd look against the silver birches in winter. And we must have a new rug for the Little Parlour. And oh, Judy, don't forget to see that the delphiniums are divided in October, will you? They must be this year ... and I'm afraid nobody will remember it when I'm not here."

There was some excitement in getting her outfit ready ... and secret sorrow, remembering how much fun it would have been to talk things over with Bets. Pat couldn't have a great deal ... crops had been poor that year. But the necessary things were managed and Uncle Tom gave her a beautiful coat with a huge fluffy fur collar and Aunt Barbara gave her a smart little hat of brown velvet, tipped over one eye, and the aunts at the Bay Shore gave her an evening dress. Judy knit her two lovely pullovers and Aunt Edith would have given her silk undies if it had not been for the pyjama question. Silver Bush was rocked to its foundation over that. Aunt Edith, who thought even coloured silk nighties immoral, declared pyjamas were immodest and brazen faced. Pat was set on pyjamas. Even Judy favoured them simply because Aunt Edith hated them.

"How," said Aunt Edith solemnly, "would you like to die in your sleep and go before your Maker in pyjamas, Patricia?"

Mother gave the casting vote ... as she had a trick of doing — and Pat got her pyjamas.

When the last day came Pat went to the Secret Field to say goodbye and on her return lingered long at the top of the hill field. Autumn was here ... the air was full of its muted music. The old farm lay before her in the golden light of the mellow September evening. She knew every kink and curve of it. Every field was an intimate friend. The Pool glimmered mysteriously. The round window winked at her. The trees she had grown up with waved to her. The garden was afoam with starry white cosmos backed by the stately phalanx of the Prince's Feather. Dear Silver Bush! Never had she felt so close to it ... so one with it.

Since the Silver Bush treasury was so very lean Pat had to put up with a rather cheap boarding house that always seemed full of stale cooking smells. It was a square, bare house on a treeless lot, on a street that was quiet only for a little while at night ... a street where the wind could only creep in a narrow space like a cringing, fettered thing, instead of sweeping grandly over wide fields and great salt wastes of sea. But at least it was not exactly like the other houses on the street. Pat felt that she couldn't have

borne to live on a street where the houses were all exactly alike. And it had a little park next to it, with a few trees.

When Pat stood alone in her room that night, with its mustard coloured ingrain carpet and its dreadful maroon walls and the arrogance of its pert alarm clock, loneliness rolled over her like a wave. Judy had sent her off that morning with “gobs av good luck to ye,” but at this moment Pat was sure there was no good luck in the world for her away from Silver Bush.

She ran to the window. Below the street the western train was puffing and chugging. If she could only step on it and go home! Far beyond was cold moonlight on alien hills.

She shut her eyes and imagined she could see Silver Bush. The moon would be shining down on the Secret Field now. The little rabbits would be sitting on the paths among the birches. She heard the gulf wind sighing in the old firs and the maples whispering on the hills of home. She saw the silvery poplar leaves drifting down through the blue “dim.” She thought of the old doorstep listening for her footfall ... of her room missing her. She saw Judy in the kitchen knitting, with Gentleman Tom beside her and Bold-and-Bad in her lap ... Cuddles perched thoughtfully somewhere about as was her dear habit ... as *she*, Pat, had perched long years ago.

She was overcome with homesickness ... submerged in it. She cast herself on her hard little bed and wept.

2

Pat lived through the pangs of homesickness. She was finding out how many things can be lived through. Eventually she was homesick only on rainy evenings when she could imagine the rain splashing on the back doorstones and running down the windows of a kitchen crowded with cats defiant of the weather.

She liked Queen’s fairly well. She liked all the professors except the one who always seemed looking with amused tolerance at every one and everything. She imagined him looking just so at Silver Bush. As for

studies she contrived to get along with a good average. The only marked talent she had was for loving things very greatly and that did not help you much with Greek verbs and dates. It helped you a bit socially, though. Pat was popular at Queen's, in spite of the fact that the other students always felt she was a little detached and aloof ... among them but not of them. She was early elected to membership in the Saturday Satellites and by New Year's she was a star in the Dramatic Club. She was voted "not exactly pretty but charming." A bit proud ... you knew her a street off by the way she carried her head. A bit reserved ... she had no chums among the girls. A bit odd ... she would rather sit in that shabby little park by her boarding house in the evenings than go to a movie.

Pat liked to sit there in the twilight and watch the lights spring up in the houses along the street and in the valley and over on the other hill. Commonplace-looking houses, most of them, but who knew what might be going on inside of them? Sometimes Hilary sat there with her. Hilary was the only boy in the world with whom she could be at the same time taciturn and comfortable. They knew how to be silent together.

Pat took Hilary for granted and did not think about his looks at all, other than to see that he did not wear weird neckties. But quite a number of Queen's girls thought Hilary a charming fellow, although everybody knew that he had eyes only for Pat Gardiner who did not care a hoot about him. Hilary was first and foremost a student and cared little for social doings although he had outgrown all his old awkwardness and shyness. The weekend trip home with Pat was all the diversion he sought or desired.

Those weekends were always delightful. They went on the train to Silverbridge and then walked home. First along the road. Up one long, spruce-walled hill ... down into a green valley ... another hill ... another valley ... twists and turns ...

"I hate a straight road or a flat one," said Pat. "This is a road I love ... all curves and dips. It's *my* road. Oh, it may belong nominally to the township but it's *mine*. I love it all, even that dark little glen Judy calls Suicide Hollow. She used to tell me the loveliest creepy story about it years ago."

Then they left the road and went straight home over country ... past the eerie misty marsh and across the Secret Field and through the woods by little paths that had never been made but just happened. Perhaps there would be northern lights and a hazy new moon; or perhaps just a soft blue darkness. Cool running waters ... aeolian harps in the spruces. The very stars were neighbours.

If only Bets could have been with them! Pat never took that walk home without thinking of Bets ... Bets whose grave on the hillside was covered with a loose drift of autumn leaves.

And then Silver Bush! It came on you so suddenly and beautifully as you stepped over the crest of the hill field. It welcomed you like a friend with all its windows astar ... Judy saw to that. Though once they caught her napping when she was late getting in from the barn and mother had gone to bed with a headache. There wasn't a light in Silver Bush and Pat thought she almost loved it best in the dark ... so brooding and motherly.

The same dear old creak to the gate ... and the happiest dog in the world throwing himself at Hilary. McGinty always came as far as Silver Bush to meet Hilary. Never a Friday night did he miss. Then Judy's kitchen and welcome. Hilary always stayed to supper and Judy invariably had hot pea soup to begin with, just to warm them up a liddle mite after their cold walk. And a juicy bone for McGinty.

The wind snoring round the house ... all the news to hear ... all the mad, bad, sad deeds Bold-and-Bad had done ... three balls of velvet fluff with tiny whiskered faces tumbling about on the floor. Silver Bush was, as Aunt Edith scornfully said, always infested with kittens. As for Bold-and-Bad, he was ceasing to be a cat and was on the way to becoming a family habit.

Judy always gave them a box of eats to take back Monday morning.

"As long as one can get a liddle bite one can kape up," she would say.

Pat wondered how Queen's students who got home only once in a blue moon, survived. But then their homes were not Silver Bush!

Fancy's Fool

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1

Pat met him for the first time at the Dramatic Club's exclusive dance in the Queen's auditorium, by which they celebrated the successful presentation of their play *Ladies in Waiting*. Pat had been one of the ladies and had been voted exceptionally good, although in certain vivid scenes she could never look "passionate" enough to satisfy an exacting director.

"How can any one look passionate with a cute nose?" she would ask him pathetically. In the end she looked impish and elusive which seemed to take just as well with the audience.

He came up to her and told her that he was going to dance with her. He never asked a girl to dance or drive with him ... he simply told her that she was going to do it. That, said the Queen's girls, was his "line." It seemed to be a popular one, though the girls he didn't notice talked contemptuously of cave man stuff.

"I've been wondering all the evening who you were," he told her.

"Couldn't you have found out?" asked Pat.

"Perhaps. But I wanted to find out from yourself alone. We are going to the sun-porch presently to see if the moon is rising properly and then we can discover who we are."

Pat discovered that he was Lester Conway and that he was in his third year at Queen's, but had just come back to college after an absence caused by pneumonia. She also discovered that his home was in Summerside.

"I know you're thinking just what I'm thinking," he said gravely. "That we have been living ten miles apart all our lives and have never met till now."

His tone implied that all their lives had been terribly wasted. But then, everything he said seemed to have some special significance. And he had a

way of leaning towards you that shut out all the rest of the world.

“What an escape I’ve had. I was so bored with the whole affair that I was just going to go when ... you happened. I saw you coming downstairs and ever since that moment I’ve been afraid to look away for fear you’d disappear.”

“Do you say that to every girl half an hour after you’ve met her?” demanded Pat, hoping that the sound of her voice would keep him from hearing how her heart was thumping.

“I’ve never said it to any girl before and I think you know that. And I think you’ve been waiting for me, haven’t you?”

Pat was of the opinion that she had but she had enough Silver Bush sense to keep her from saying so. A lovely colour was staining her cheeks. Her French-English-Scotch-Irish-Quaker blood was running like quicksilver through her veins. Yes, *this* was love. No nonsense this time about your knees shaking ... no emotional thrills. Just a deep, quiet conviction that you had met your fate ... some one you could follow to the world’s end ... “*beyond its utmost purple rim*” ... “*deep into the dying day*” ...

He told her he was going to drive her home and did, through a night drenched with moonlight. He told her that he was going to see her soon again.

“This wonderful day has come and gone but there will be another tomorrow,” he said, dropping his voice and whispering the final word confidentially as he announced this remarkable fact.

Pat thought she was getting very sensible because she slept quite well that night ... after she once got to sleep.

It was speedily an item of college gossip that Lester Conway and Pat Gardiner had a terrible “case” on each other. It was a matter of speculation what particular brand of magic she had used, for Lester Conway had never really fallen for any girl before though he had played around with several.

He was a dark lover ... Pat felt that she could never bear a fair man again, remembering Harris Jemuel’s golden locks. He was not especially goodlooking but Pat knew she had got far beyond the stage of admiring

movie stars. He was distinguished-looking ... with that faint, mysterious scowl. Lester thought he looked more interesting when he was scowling ... like *Lara* and those fellows. His psychology was sound. Whenever a girl met him she wondered what he looked like when he smiled ... and tried to find out.

He was appallingly clever. There was nothing he couldn't do. He danced and skated and footballed and hockeyed and tennised and sang and acted and played the ukulele and drew. He had designed the last cover for *The Lantern*. Very futuristic, that drawing was. And in the February number he had a poem, *To a Wild Blue Violet*, containing some daring lines in spite of its Victorian title. It was unsigned and speculation was rife as to who had written it and who the wild blue violet was. Pat knew. It speaks volumes for her condition of heart and mind that she didn't see anything comical in being called a blue violet. If she had been sane she would have known that a brown-and-orange marigold was more in her line. She was, in spite of her infatuation, a bit surprised to find that Lester could write poetry. She had faintly and reluctantly suspected that he wouldn't know poetry when he saw it. But *A Wild Blue Violet* was "free verse." Everything else, Lester told her, was outmoded. The tyranny of rhyme was ended forever. She would never have dared let him know after that that she had bought a secondhand volume called *Poems of Passion* and underlined half of them. *I shall be dust when my heart forgets*, she underlined twice.

She was horribly afraid she wasn't half clever enough for him. He completely flabbergasted her one evening by a casual reference to the Einstein theory ... looking at her sidewise to see if she were properly impressed. Pat didn't know anything about the Einstein theory. She did not suspect that neither did he and spent much of the night writhing over her ignorance. What must he think of her? She went to the public library and tried to read up about it but it made her head ache and she was unhappy until the next evening when Lester told her she was as wonderful as a new-mooned April evening.

"I'd like to know if you said that because it just came into your head or if you made it up last night," said Pat. Her tongue was always her own,

whatever her heart might be. But she was happy again in spite of Einstein. Lester really did not pay many compliments, so one prized it when he did. Not like Harris Hynes whose “line” had evidently been to say something flattering whenever he opened his mouth. Judy had always said *he* must have kissed the Blarney stone. How wraithlike Harris seemed now, beside Lester’s scowls and commands. To think she had ever fancied she cared for him! Mere schoolgirl infatuation ... calf love. He had so little appreciation of the beautiful, poor fellow. She recalled pointing out the Hill of the Mist to him one moonlit winter night and he had said admiringly that it looked like a frosted cake. Poor Harris!

And poor Hilary! *He* had had to retire into his corner again. No more evenings in the park ... no more rambles together. Even the weekend walks did not often come his way now. The car roads held and Lester drove her home in his little red roadster. He was the only boy at Queen’s who had his own car. There was no pea soup in Judy’s kitchen for *him*. And Pat almost prayed that he wouldn’t notice the terrible crack in the dining-room ceiling.

2

It worried Pat a little that Judy didn’t have much of a mind to him. Not that she ever said so. It was what she *didn’t* say. And her tone when Pat told her he was one of the Summerside Conways ... Lester B. Conway.

“Oh, oh, it do be a noble name. And is it any secret what the B. do be standing for? Not Bartholomew be innny chance?”

“B. stands for Branchley,” said Pat shortly. “His mother was one of the Homeburn Branchleys.”

“Sure I do be knowing thim all. Conways *and* Branchleys. His mother used to visit here before ould Conway made his pile. She was rale humble thin. Minny’s the time I’ve wiped yer Lester’s liddle nose for him whin he was knee high to a toad. Howsomiver,” concluded Judy loftily, “it’s likely

the matter is too high for me. Money makes the mare go and it's the cute one ye are, I'm thinking."

Judy was really impossible. To insinuate that she, Patricia Gardiner, had picked out Lester Conway because he had money.

"She should know me better," thought Pat indignantly.

But she felt the lack of Judy. If darling Bets were only alive! She would have understood. What a comfort it would have been to talk over her problems with Bets. For there *were* problems. For instance, Lester had told her she was to marry him right away as soon as college closed. There was no sense in waiting. He was going right into business with his dad.

This was simply ridiculous. Of course, some day ... but she wasn't going to even think of getting married for years yet. She must teach school and help them at home ... reshingle and repaint Silver Bush ... get a hardwood floor in the dining-room ... a brass knocker for the front door ... pay for Cuddles' music lessons.

Lester just laughed at this the night of the Saturday Satellites' Easter dance.

"You are too lovely, Pat, to be wasted any longer on a shabby, obscure old farm like Silver Bush," he said.

A little madness came over Pat. The very soul of her was aflame.

"Don't ever speak to me again, Lester Conway," she said, each word falling like a tinkling drop of icy water on a cold stone.

"Why, what have I done?" said Lester in genuine amazement.

That made it worse, if anything could make it worse. He didn't realise at all what he had done. Pat turned her back on him and flew upstairs. To get her wraps was the work of a minute ... to slip down the back-stairs and through the side-hall, another minute. Then out ... and back to Linden Avenue. The bite and tang of the cold air seemed to increase her anger. Patricia Gardiner of Silver Bush had never in all her life been so furious.

Lester came down the next evening, looking more Lara-like than ever. He ignored the incident ... he thought that would be the best policy ... and told her she was going with him to the Easter Prom.

“Thank you, I’m not,” said Pat, “and please don’t waste any more of those charming scowls on me. When I tell anybody I’m through with him I’m *through*.”

When Pat said anything in a certain way she was believed.

“Of all the fickle girls,” said Lester. Just like Harris. Men were so tiresomely alike.

“I was born in moonlight, they tell me,” said Pat coolly. “So I’m naturally changeable. No one can insult Silver Bush in my hearing. And I’m tired ... very tired ... of taking orders from you.”

The Conway temper ... Judy could have told you a few things about *it* ... flared up.

“Oh ... well ... if you’re going off the deep end about it!” he said nastily. “Anyway, I just began going about with you to put a spoke in Hilary Gordon’s wheel.”

She was glad he had said that. He had set her free. She had been hating him so bitterly that her hate had made her as much of a prisoner as love had. Now he had simply ceased to exist.

“I’ve heard Judy use a phrase,” said Pat to herself after he had flung away, scowling for once in real earnest, “‘fancy’s fool.’ Well, I’ve been fancy’s fool. And that is that.”

3

It was a good while before she could talk the whole thing over with Judy. Now Judy sympathised and understood.

“Oh, oh, Patsy dear, I niver did be liking yer taking up wid a Conway, not aven if his pockets were lined wid gold. Gentleman Tom didn’t like him ... there was something in that cat’s eye whiniver he saw him. And he was always a bit too lordly for me taste, Patsy. A man shud be a bit humble like whin he’s courting for if he isn’t whin will he be? I’m asking ye.”

“I can never forgive him for making fun of Silver Bush, Judy.”

“Making fun av Silver Bush, was he? Oh, oh, if ye’d seen the liddle shack his father was raised in, wid the stovepipe sticking out av its roof. Sure and the Conways were the scrapings av the pot in thim days. And the timper av the ould man. One time he wasn’t after liking the colour av a new petticoat his wife did be buying ... it was grane whin he wanted purple. He did be taking it up to the attic av his grand house in Summerside and firing it out av the windy. It caught on the top av a big popple at the back av the house and there it did be hanging all the rist av the summer. Whin the wind filled it out ‘twas a proper sight now. The folks did be calling it the Conway flag. Ould Conway cudn’t get it down bekase the popple was ralely in Ned Orley’s lot and Ned and him were bad frinds and Ned wudn’t be letting innny one get at the tree. He said he was a better Irishman than ould Conway and liked a bit av rale Paddy grane in his landscape.”

“Lester admits his father was a self-made man, Judy.”

“Oh, oh, that wud be a very pretty story if it was the true one. Ould Conway didn’t be making himsilf. The Good Man Above attinded to that. And he made his pile out av a grane and feed store. But I’m saying for him he wasn’t skim milk ... like his brother Jim. *He* was the miser, now. ‘Take out the lamp,’ sez he whin he was dying. ‘A candle do be good enough to die by.’ Oh, oh, there do be some quare people in the world,” conceded Judy. “As for me poor Lester, they tell me he’s rale downhearted now that his temper fit do be over. I’m afraid it’s ye that do be the deluthering cratur, Patsy. He did be thinking ye were rale fond av him.”

“Of course I admit I was a perfect idiot, Judy. But I’m cured. I’ll never fall in love again ... if I can help it,” she added candidly.

“Oh, oh, why not, me jewel?” laughed Judy. “As yer Aunt Hazel used to say it’s a bit av fun in a dull life. Only don’t be carrying it too far and breaking hearts, aven av the Conways. There do be big difference atween falling in love and loving, Patsy.”

“How do you know all this, Judy? Were *you* ever in love?” said Pat impudently.

Judy chuckled.

“One can be larning a lot be observation,” she remarked.

“But, Judy, how can one *tell* the difference between loving and being in love?”

“It do be taking some experience,” acknowledged Judy.

Pat burned *Poems of Passion* but when she came across the line ...
“*spilt water from a broken shard*,” in one of Carman’s poems she underlined it. That was all love really was, anyway.

She went to the Easter Prom with Hilary.

“Poor Jingle!” said Judy to Gentleman Tom. “That does be *twicet*. If she gets over the third time ...”

“Let’s Pretend”

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1

“Let us see the handsome houses where the wealthy nobles dwell,” quoted Hilary. “In other words let us take a stroll along Abegweit Avenue. There’s one of the new houses there I want to show you. I won’t tell you which one it is ... I want you to guess it. If you’re the lass I take you to be, Pat, you’ll spot it at sight.”

It was a Saturday afternoon in spring with sudden-sweeping April winds. The world seemed so friendly on a day like this, Pat thought. She wore her crimson jersey and tam and knew she looked well in them and that Lester Conway, scowling by in his roadster, knew it, too. But let Lester scowl on. Hilary’s quizzical smile was much pleasanter in a companion and Hilary looked brown and wholesome in the spring sunshine. Not much like the ragged little lad who had met her on that dark, lonely road of long ago. But the same at heart. Dear old Hilary! Faithful, dependable Hilary. Such a friend was better than a thousand of Judy’s “beaus.”

They had not gone home for this weekend, since the Satellites were having a wind-up jamboree that night. Pat could by now survive staying a weekend in town. Yet she felt that she always missed something when she did. Today, for instance, the wild violets would be out in Happiness ... the white ones ... and they not there to find them.

Abegweit Avenue was the finest residential street in town and at the end it ran out into the country, with a vision of distant emerald hills beyond. It always compelled Pat to admit that there were a few satisfying houses in the world beside Silver Bush. All kinds of houses were built on it — from Victorian monstrosities with towers and cupolas, to the newest thing in bungalows. Pat and Hilary loved to walk along it, talking when

they felt like it, holding their tongues when they didn't, discussing and criticising the houses, making changes in most of them, putting in a window here and slicing one off there, lifting or lowering roofs ... "a low roof gives a house a friendly air," said Hilary.

Some houses thrilled them, some charmed them, some annoyed them. Some were attractive, some repellent ... "I'd like to smash a few of your windows," was Pat's reaction to one. Even the doors were fascinating. What went on behind them? Did they let you out ... or in?

Then they had to settle which house they would accept as a gift, supposing they were simply compelled to take one.

"I think I'd take that gentle house on the corner," said Pat. "It has an attic ... I must have an attic. And it looks as if it had been loved for years. I knew *that* the first time I ever saw it. It would like me, too. And that funny little window away off by itself has a joke it wants to tell me."

"I'm choosing one of the new houses this time," said Hilary. "I like a new house better than an old one when all is said and done. I would feel that *I* owned a new house. An old house would own *me*."

Pat had kept a keen lookout for Hilary's house. She had thought several of the new ones might be it. But when she saw it she knew it. A little house nestled in a hollow half way up a little hill. Its upper windows looked right out on the top of the hill. Its very chimneys smacked of romance. A tremendous maple tree bent over it. The tree was so enormous and the house so small. It looked like a toy house the big tree had picked up to play with and got fond of it. It had a little garden by its side, with violets in a corner and in the centre a pool with a border of flat stones, edged with daffodils.

"Oh!" Pat drew a long breath. "I'm so glad I didn't miss that. Yes, if they give you that house, Hilary, take it. It's so ... so *right*, isn't it?"

"That tree in the front should be cut down though," said Hilary thoughtfully. "It breaks the line ... and spoils the view."

"It doesn't ... it simply guards it as a treasure. You wouldn't cut that lovely birch down, Hilary."

“I’d cut any tree down if it wasn’t in the right place,” persisted Hilary stubbornly.

“A tree is always in the right place,” said Pat just as stubbornly.

“Well, I won’t cut it down yet awhile,” conceded Hilary. “But I’ll tell you what I am going to do some dark night, Pat. I’m going to sneak up here and carry off that cast-iron deer next door and sink it in the bay fathoms deep.”

“Would it be worth while? The whole place is so awful. You couldn’t carry off that enormous portico. The house looks like a sanitarium. Did you ever suppose any place could be so hideous?”

“The house next to it isn’t hideous ... exactly. But it has a cruel, secretive look. I don’t like it. A house shouldn’t be so sly and reserved. And there’s a house I’d like to buy and groom it up. It’s so out at elbows. The shingles are curling up and the verandah roof is sagging.”

“But at least it isn’t self-satisfied. The next one *is* ... positively smug. And *that* one ... they say it cost a fortune and it’s as gloomy as a tomb.”

“Shutters on those stark windows would make an amazing difference,” said Hilary reflectively. “It’s really wonderful, Pat, how much a little thing can do to make or mar a house. But I don’t think there’s any place for dreaming in that house ... or for ghosts. There must be a place for dreams and ghosts in every house I’ll design.”

“There’s that unfinished house, Hilary ... it always makes my heart ache. Why don’t they finish it?”

“I’ve found out why. A man began to build that house just to please his wife and she died when it was only half done. He hadn’t the heart to finish it. That white place is a house for the witch of the snow. It’s positively dazzling.”

“What is the matter with that house in the middle of the block, Hilary? It’s very splendid but ...”

“It hasn’t enough restraint. It bulges like ... like ...”

“Like a fat woman without corsets,” laughed Pat. “Like Mary Ann McClenahan. Poor Mary Ann died last week. Do you remember how we thought she was a witch, Hilary?”

One house was as yet only a hole in the ground, with men setting pipes and running wires in it. Who was waiting for that house? Perhaps a bride-to-be. Or perhaps some tired old body who never in her life had a house to her liking and meant to have one before she died. There was a house that wanted to be wakened up. And there was one with Dr. Ames coming away from it. He looked grave. Perhaps some one was dying in that house. He wouldn't be looking like that if a baby had come.

"I would like to see all the houses in the world ... all the beautiful ones at least," said Hilary. "And I've got a new idea for your house to-day."

He was always getting new ideas for it but nowadays he never told her what they were. Everything was to be a surprise.

They walked back in silence. Hilary was dreaming. All men dream. His dream was of building beautiful homes for love to dwell in ... houses to keep people from the biting wind and the fierce sun and the loneliness of dark night. It must be a fascinating thing to build a house ... to create beauty that would last for generations and be shelter and protection and friendliness as well as beauty. And some day he *would* build a house for Pat ... and she *must* live in it.

Pat was thinking again how nice it was to walk with Hilary. With Harris and Lester she had felt that she must be always bright and witty and sparkling lest they might think her "dumb." Hilary was restful. And he never said embarrassing things. To be sure his looks sometimes said many things his tongue never did. But who could quarrel with looks?

Shadow and Sunshine

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1

Care sat visibly on Patricia's brow.

"My vision cannot pierce beyond the darkness of next week, Judy. It is completely bounded by the gloomy shade of licence exams. Judy, what if I don't pass?"

"Oh, oh, but ye will, darlint. Haven't ye been studying all the term like a Trojan? Excpt maybe thim few wakes whin me bould Lester was ordering ye about. So don't be worrying yer head about it. Just take a bit av a walk through the birches and fale thankful that spring do never be forgetting to come. And thin, maybe, ye'll be making Siddy's fav'rite pancakes for supper. It's mesilf can't give thim the turn at the right moment like ye can."

"Judy, you old flatterer! You know nobody can make pancakes like yours."

"Oh, oh, but the pastry now, Patsy, I niver had the light hand wid it that ye do be having. Sure that pie ye was after making last wake-ind ... it did be looking as if it had just stipped out av the pages av that magazine Winnie takes."

"Sure and that'll divart her a bit," thought Judy. But it didn't.

"I can't help worrying, Judy. It will be dreadful if I don't pass ... it will hurt mother so. And she *mustn't* be hurt."

For everybody at Silver Bush had become very careful of mother without saying much about it. Nobody ever heard her complain but all winter she had been taking little bitter strychnine tablets for the heart and a "rest" in the afternoons. The shadow had crept towards Silver Bush so stealthily that even yet they hardly realised its grim presence. Father was looking grey and worried. Although none of the children knew it the

doctor was advising an operation and Judy and Aunt Edith were, for the first, last, and only time in their lives of the same opinion about it.

“They’ll just cut her up for an experiment,” said Aunt Edith wrathfully. “I know them.”

“Indade and I wudn’t put it by thim,” agreed Judy bitterly.

Mother herself would not hear of an operation. She felt that it couldn’t be afforded: but she didn’t tell Long Alec that. She merely said that she was frightened of it. Long Alec rather marvelled at this. He had never associated fear of any kind with his wife. But then neither had he ever associated that strange languor and willingness to lie quietly and let other people do the work. Mother had never hurried through life; she had walked leisurely ... Judy was wont to say she had never known any one who made so little noise moving round a house ... but she got a surprising amount of work done.

Pat got through the exams eventually and even dared to hope she had done fairly well. She left Queen’s with a good deal of regret and grimy Linden Avenue with none at all. Home again to dear Silver Bush, never more to leave it ... for the home school was promised her and Pat had already in imagination spent a year’s salary on Silver Bush. Several years’, in fact ... there were so many things she wanted to do for it. How she loved it! The house and everything about it were linked inextricably with her life and thought. There was one verse in the Bible she could never understand. *Forget also thine own people and thy father’s house*. It always made her shiver. How could anybody do *that*?

She fell in love with life all over again on those spring evenings when she walked over the hill or by Jordan or in the secret paths of her enchanted birches. Winds ... delicate dawns ... starry nights ... shore fields blurred by a silvery fog ... the cool wet greenness of the spring rains ... all had a message for her and all made her think of Bets ... even yet Pat’s voice quivered when she pronounced that name.

Where was Bets?

“In what ethereal dances,
By what eternal streams”

did her footsteps wind?

“I wonder if Bets isn’t homesick in heaven for *this*?” Pat pointed to the white lilac over the garden fence. “And she must miss the sunsets. This is just such a night as she loved, Judy. Oh, Judy, last spring she was *here*. All winter at Queen’s, where she had never been, it wasn’t so hard. But here ... everything seems to speak of her. Tonight, when I smell that white lilac it seems to me that she must be near. She doesn’t seem dead any more. She just seems around the corner somewhere, still dear and loving. But oh, I want her so!”

“Pat,” came Cuddles’ voice, clear and insistent at her elbow, “do you think I have It?”

“We’ll be having our hands full wid that same young Cuddles,” Judy had confided to Pat that very day. “In a few years that is, whin she grows into her eyes. Yer Uncle Tom sees it. Wasn’t it only yisterday he sez to me, sez he, ‘Ye’ll be finding her a handful.’ Oh, oh, she’ll dance through life, that one.”

Pat could not realize that Cuddles was by way of getting to be a big girl. It was only yesterday she had been an adorable baby, with dimpled arms and cheeks, whose very look said “come and love me.” And now she was eleven ... with one teasing, unruly curl hanging down the middle of her forehead and a nose that even at eleven was not the smudge of other elevens. And her eyes! No wonder Cuddles was spoiled. When she looked up sorrowfully and appealingly, she was never punished severely. You couldn’t punish a young saint gone astray. Cuddles’ eyes were always asking for something and always getting it. Unlike Pat, Cuddles revelled in chums and Silver Bush was overrun with them ... “chattering like crows,” said Judy indulgently. Judy was proud of Cuddles’ popularity. As for the opposite sex ... well, if tributes of sticky candies and moist apples, and stickier and moister dabs of kisses meant anything Cuddles certainly had “It.”

“When *I* was eleven,” said Pat with the tone of eighty, “I wasn’t thinking of such things, Miss Rachel.”

“Oh, but I’m a modern child,” said Cuddles serenely. “And Trix Binnie says you’ve got to have It or the boys won’t look at you.”

Judy shook her grey head solemnly, as if to remark, “If they say these things in the green tree what will they say in the dry?” But Cuddles persisted.

“You might tell me what it is, Pat, and if you think I’ve got It. After all” ... Cuddles was very serious “I’d rather get information from my own family than from the Binnies.”

“The sinse av her now!” said Judy.

Pat took Cuddles off into the graveyard and, sitting on Wild Dick’s tombstone, tried to give her some “information.” She felt that she must fill mother’s place with darling Cuddles now. Mother must not be bothered.

2

And then the shadow, which had been creeping nearer and nearer, pounced.

Mother was ill ... mother was very, very ill.

Mother was dying.

Nobody said it but everybody knew it. Except Judy who stubbornly refused to believe it. Judy wouldn’t give up hope. She hadn’t got “the sign.”

“And I’ll not be belaving it till I do,” she said.

Pat wouldn’t believe it either.

“Mother can’t die,” she said desperately, “not *our* mother.”

They had always taken mother so for granted. She had always been there ... she always would be there. How was it possible to picture anything else?

Pat had not even Hilary to help her through those weeks. Hilary was up west, helping another uncle build a house. The task delighted Hilary. It had

an ideal quality for him. Besides, before he could design houses he wanted to know all about building them, from the ground up.

“Bets last year ... and now mother,” thought Pat.

Then came a torturing hope. The specialist who was called in advised an operation. With it, he conceded, there was a chance. Without it, none.

Judy, when she heard there was to be an operation, gave up hope at once, sign or no sign.

“Oh, oh, it’s mesilf shud be dying instid av her,” she muttered. “I don’t be knowing what the Good Man Above means, so I don’t.”

Gentleman Tom winked inscrutably.

“Ye can’t be doing innnything, cat dear. Ye wudn’t let what was after Patsy that time get her. But ye can’t be guarding Mrs. Long Alec ... not if they take her to that hospital to be cut up. And her a Selby av the Bay Shore!”

Pat was up in mother’s room. A new Pat ... older ... graver. But more hopeful. As long as one had a little hope!

Mother had asked to be propped up in bed, so that she might see the green fields she loved. Her hands lay on the counterpane. It was strange to see mother’s hands so white and idle.

She was to be taken to the hospital the next day. Mother was very fine and simple and brave about it. But when had mother ever been anything else? Mother had never been excitable like the Gardiners. Her *spirit* was always at rest, so that any one who came into her presence was always conscious of a great calm. Her eyes were still the asking eyes of a girl and yet there was something maternal about her bosom that made you want to lay your head on it if you were tired or troubled.

“The apple blossoms are out. I’m glad I’ve seen them once more. I was a girl under them once, Pat, like you ... and your father ...”

Mother’s voice trailed off into some hinterland of happy remembrance.

“You’ll see the apple blossoms for many more springs, mother darling. You’ll come back from the hospital cured and well ... and I’ve ordered a lovely day for you to go on.”

Mother smiled.

“I hope so. I’ve never given myself up yet, Pat. But I’d like to talk to you a little about some things ... supposing I don’t come back. We must look that in the face, dearest. Winnie will be marrying Frank ... and you will have to take my place, you know.”

“I ... I know,” choked Pat. “And I’ll never, never marry, mother, I promise that. I’ll stay here and keep a home for dad and Sid and Cuddles. Sid won’t want to marry ever, when he has me.”

Again mother smiled.

“I don’t ask you to promise that, dear. I’d like to think you’ll marry some day. I want you to be a happy wife and a joyful mother of children. Like I’ve been. I’ve been so happy here, Patsy. I was only twenty when I came here. A spoiled child, too ... and as for housekeeping, I didn’t know the difference between simmering and boiling. Judy taught me ... wonderful old Judy. Be good to her, Pat ... if I don’t come back. But I needn’t tell you that. Judy was so good to me. She was even quite fierce about my working ... she hated to see my hands spoiled. I *had* pretty hands, Pat. But I didn’t mind spoiling them for Silver Bush. I’ve loved it as you do. Every room in it has always been a friend of mine ... had a life of its own for me. How I loved to wake up in the night and feel that my husband and my children were well and safe and warm, sleeping peacefully. Life hasn’t anything better to offer a woman than that, Patsy.”

Mother didn’t say this all at one. There were long pauses when she lay very still ... little gasps for breath. Sometimes terrible lances of fear pierced Pat’s new armour of hope. When father came in to take her place as watcher Pat went down and out to the dark garden. Every one else was in bed, even Judy. She could not go to bed ... she could not sleep. The night was warm and kind. It put its arms around her like a mother. The white iris seemed to shine hopefully in the dark. Bold-and-Bad came padding along the walk and curled up in her lap. There were times when even Bold-and-Bad could behave like a Christian. He knew that Pat needed comfort and he did his best to give it.

Pat sat on the garden bench until dawn came over the Hill of the Mist and Bold-and-Bad ran away for a glorious mouse hunt in the graveyard.

The day had begun in a pale windless morning ... the day on which mother was to go. *Would she ever return?*

That old hymn she had hated ... "*change and decay in all around I see.*"

Change was what she had always dreaded.

"*Oh, Thou who changest not abide with me.*"

It was not a hateful hymn after all ... it was a hymn to be loved. How wonderful to feel that there was something that never changed ... a Power under and above and around on which you could depend. Peace seemed to flow into her.

"Child dear, whatever got ye up so early?"

"I wasn't in bed at all. I've been in the garden, Judy ... just praying."

"Oh, oh, it's all inny av us can be doing now," said Judy despairingly.

Cuddles had not been allowed to know the worst but she heard it in school that day and Pat had hard work to comfort her that evening.

"And what do you think Trix Binnie said?" she sobbed. "She said she *envied* me ... it was so exciting to have a death in the house."

"You go down on yer liddle marrow bones this night and thank the Good Man Above he didn't be making ye a Binnie," said Judy solemnly.

Even that day was lived through. At night dad telephoned from town that the operation was successfully over and that mother was coming out of the anesthetic nicely. The Silver Bush folk slept that night; but there was still a long week of suspense to be lived through before they dared really hope. Then dad came home, with a light in his tired eyes that had not shone there for many a day. Mother would live: never very strong perhaps ... never just the woman she had been. But she would live.

"Oh, oh, and didn't I be always telling ye so?" said Judy triumphantly, forgetting all her gloomy dreads of "cutting up." "There niver was no sign. Gintleman Tom did be knowing it. That cat niver worried himsilf at all, at all."

Mother could not come home for six weeks, and during those weeks Pat and Judy ran Silver Bush, for both the aunts at the Bay Shore were ill and Winnie had to go the rescue. Pat was in the seventh heaven. She loved everything about the house more than ever. The fine hemstitched tablecloths ... Judy's hooked rugs ... the monogrammed sheets ... the cedar chest full of blankets ... the embroidered centerpieces ... the lace doilies ... the dear old blue willowware plates ... Grandmother Selby's silver tea service, the old mirrors that had stolen a bit of loveliness from every fair face that had ever looked into them. All had a new meaning for her. Every window was loved for some special bit of beauty to be seen from it. She loved her own because she could see the Hill of the Mist ... she loved the Poet's window because there was a faraway glimpse of the bay ... she loved the round window because it looked right into the silver bush ... she loved the front hall window because it looked squarely on the garden. As for its attic windows, one saw everything in the world worth seeing from them and sometimes Pat would go up the attic for no earthly reason except to look out of them.

She and Judy didn't make slaves of themselves. Every once in so long Pat would say,

"Now, let's stop thinking housework, Judy, and think wild strawberries," ... or ferns ... or Junebells as the case might be, and off they would go for a ramble. And in the "dime" they would sit on the backdoor steps as of old and Judy would tell funny tales and Pat would laugh until she took kinks.

"Oh, oh, ye do be knowing how to work, Patsy darlint ... stopping for a bit av a laugh once in so long. There's few people do be knowing the sacret. Yer aunts at the Bay Shore ... they niver do be laughing and it's the rason they do be taking sick spells so often."

"Uncle Brian and Aunt Jessie are coming for the weekend, Judy. I must cut some iris for the Poet's room. I do love fixing up that room for a guest. And we must have an apple tart with whipped cream. That's Uncle Brian's favourite dessert."

Pat always remembered what a guest liked to eat. And she was, as Judy declared, “a cook be the grace av God.” She loved to cook, feeling delightedly that in this one thing at least she was akin to the women of all lands and all ages. Almost all her letters to mother and Hilary and college correspondents began, “I’ve just put something in the oven.” The pantry was never without its box of spicy cookies and the fluffy perfection of her cakes left Judy speechless. As for the fruit cake she proudly concocted and baked one day all on her own, take Judy’s word for it, there never had been a fruit cake to match it at Silver Bush.

“I was niver no great hand at fruit cake, darlint,” she said sadly. “Yer Aunt Edith always do be saying it takes a born lady to make a rale fruit cake and maybe she is right. But I might av been larning the trick if it hadn’t been for a bit av discouragement I was having just after I came to Silver Bush. I thought one day I’d be making a fruit cake and at it I wint, wid more zale than jidgement. Yer Uncle Horace was home thin ... and a young imp he was ... hanging round to see what he could see and mebbe get a licking av the bowl. ‘What do ye be putting in a fruit cake, Judy Plum,’ he sez, curious like. ‘A liddle bit av iverything,’ sez I short like. And whin I turns me back to line the pan what did the young divil do but impty the ink-bottle on the clock shelf into me cake ... and me niver knowing it. Sure and yer Aunt Edith do be saying a good fruit cake shud be black. Mine was black enough to plaze her, Patsy darlint.”

Pat exulted in finding a new recipe and serving it before anybody else when the Ladies’ Aid met at Silver Bush. She loved to pore over the advertisement pictures in the magazines ... the lovely cookies and fruits and vegetables ... dear little white and red radishes ... curly lettuce ... crimson beets ... golden asparagus with little green tips. She loved going to town to shop. There were certain things in the stores there, *hers*, though she had not yet bought them. She liked to browbeat the butcher and bulldoze the grocer delicately ... to resist temptation and yield to it ... to save and spend. She loved to think of weary and lonely people coming to Silver Bush for rest and food and love.

And under everything a sense of deep satisfaction in doing the thing she was meant to do. She tasted it to the full in the beautiful silences which occasionally fell over Silver Bush when every one was quietly busy and the cats basked on the window sills.

And then to prepare for mother's homecoming!

Balm in Gilead

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1

“Father walks slow to what he used to do,” said Winnie with a sigh, as she and Pat shelled peas on the kitchen steps in the sultry August afternoon, with Bold-and-Bad sitting between them. An occasional breeze set the leaves of the young aspen by the door shaking wildly. Pat loved that aspen. It had grown up unregarded in a few summers ... Judy always threatening to cut it down ... and then over night it had turned from a shrub into a tree. And then dad had declared it must come down but Pat had interceded successfully.

“In a year or two it will shade the steps so nicely. Think of the moonlight falling through it on summer nights, dad.”

Dad shrugged and let her have her way. Everybody knew Pat couldn’t bear to have a tree cut down. No use having the child cry her golden-brown eyes out.

Over in the field of the Pool Sid was building an oat-stack. Sid, it was said, could build the best oat-stack in P.E. Island.

Pat looked after dad wistfully as he crossed the yard and went over to the field of the Pool. He did walk slower; he was more stooped. Yet how she hated to admit it.

“Is it any wonder? After those dreadful weeks when we didn’t know whether mother would live or die. And I don’t think he ever really got over Joe’s going.” Winnie sighed again. Pat looked keenly at her. Winnie had been very remote and dreamy for some days past. Pat suddenly remembered that she had not heard Winnie laughing ... since when? Since the last night Frank Russell had been over. And he had not been over for a week.

It had been a suspected thing all through the year that Winnie and Frank would be married in the fall. All through the winter Judy had hooked rugs "like mad." Pat did not warm to the thought but it had to be faced and accepted.

"Winnie, what is the trouble, darling?"

"There's no trouble," said Winnie impatiently. "Don't be silly, Pat."

"I'm not silly. You've been ... funny ... for a week. Have you quarrelled with your Frank?"

"No," said Winnie slowly. Then her face went white and her eyes filled with tears. She *must* tell somebody and mother mustn't be bothered now. Pat wasn't old enough to understand, of course ... Winnie still persisted in thinking of Pat as a mere child ... but she was better than nobody at all.

"It's only ... he was a little angry when I told him we couldn't be married this fall after all ... perhaps not for years."

"But ... Winnie ... *why*? I thought it was all settled."

"So it was. Before mother took ill. But you know perfectly well, Pat, that everything is changed now. We simply have to look facts in the face. Mother may be spared to us for many years but she'll always be an invalid. You will be teaching and Judy isn't as young as she once was. She can't do all the work that has to be done here, even with your help after school. And it would break her heart to get any one in to help her, even if dad could afford it, which he can't. So I must give up all thoughts of being married just now. Of course Frank doesn't like it, but he'll just have to reconcile himself to it. If he doesn't ... well, there are plenty of other girls ready to keep house for him."

In spite of herself Winnie's voice faltered. The thought of all those willing girls was very bitter. And Frank had been very ... difficult. The Russells did not like to be kept waiting. She knew he wouldn't wait for years. And if he did ... they would be old and tired and all the first blossom of life would be withered and scentless. Just like poor Sophie Wright. She and Gordon Dodds had waited for fifteen years until her paralysed father died; and Sophie had never seemed like a bride. Just a faded little woman who no longer cared greatly whether she was married

or not. Yet Winnie did not falter in her decision. There was good stuff in the Silver Bush girls. They put duty first always, even in a world which was clamouring that the word was outmoded and the thing to do was to grab what you wanted when you wanted it and let everything else go hang.

For just a moment a wild thrill of joy swept over Pat. Winnie wouldn't marry Frank after all. There wouldn't be any more changes at Silver Bush. She and Winnie and Sid would just go on living there, taking care of father and mother, loving Silver Bush and each other, recking nothing of the changing world outside. It would be heavenly.

But Winnie's eyes! They looked like blue violets that somebody had stepped on and bruised horribly.

Pat had never been able to understand how Winnie *could* love Frank as she did. Frank ... if you didn't hate him because he was stealing your sister ... was a nice enough fellow, with a wholesome pink face and steady grey-blue eyes. But nothing romantic about him ... no smart compliments, no Lara-like glooms ... nothing to induce such a riot of feeling as Winnie evidently experienced whenever she heard his step at the door.

What did Winnie see in him? Pat gave it up.

All the lawless joy died out of Pat when she saw Winnie's eyes. It was simply ridiculous to think of Winnie's eyes looking so ... just ridiculous, that was all. And quite unnecessary. Because she, Pat, had everything nicely planned out already.

"Winnie, do you know you're just talking nonsense? Of course you're going to marry Frank. I am not going to take the school. I decided that as soon as mother came home. I'll be here to help Judy."

"Pat, you can't do that. It wouldn't be fair to ask you to give up your school after you studied so hard at Queen's to get your licence ... you *ought* to have your chance ..."

Pat laughed.

"My chance! That's just it. I've got my chance ... the chance I've been aching for. The chance to stay at Silver Bush and care for it. I've hated the thought of teaching school. Who knows even if I'd get on well in the home school? I might have to go away another year ... and *that* ... but we

needn't go into that. Of course I'd rather have mother well and strong than anything else even if I had to go to the ends of the earth. But since she can't be ... well, I have the consolation of knowing I can stay home anyhow."

"What will dad say?"

"Dad knows. Why, Win, he was relieved. He never thought but that you'd be getting married and he didn't know just how things could be managed here. Because he didn't want me disappointed either in having to give up my school. *Disappointed!*" Pat howled again. "Win, parents aren't the selfish creatures so many horrid stories make them out. They *don't* want their children to sacrifice and give up for them. They want them to be happy."

"All but the cranks," said Judy, who had brought her little spinning wheel out to the platform and thought herself at liberty to butt into any conversation. "There do always be a few cranks aven among parents. Oh, oh, but not among the Gardiners."

"I think," said Winnie in a rather unsteady tone, "if you don't mind finishing the peas, Pat ... I'll go upstairs for a little while."

Pat grinned. Winnie would go upstairs and write to Frank.

"Likely Winnie will be marrying Frank this fall, Judy," Pat said with a gulp. It seemed to make a thing so irrevocable to say it.

"Oh, oh, and why not, the darlint? She can cook and she can sew. She can get along widout things. She do be knowing whin to laugh and whin not to. Oh, oh, she's fit to be married. It do be eliven years since we had a wedding at Silver Bush. Sure and that's a liddle bit too much like heaven, wid nather marrying nor giving in marriage."

"George Nicholson is going to be married to Mary Baker," announced Cuddles, who had wandered along with a little spotted barn cat she affected in her arms. "I wish he would wait till I grow up. I believe he would like me better than Mary because there is no fun in her. There's a good deal in me when my conscience doesn't bother me. O ... h, look at Bold-and-Bad."

Bold-and-Bad had met his match since Cuddles had been bringing the barn cat to the house. The barn cat was scrawny and ugly but she was taking impudence from nobody. Bold-and-Bad was ludicrously afraid of her. It was a sight of fun to see that whiffet of a cat attack and put to flight an animal who should have been able to demolish her with a blow of his paw. Bold-and-Bad fled over the yard and through the graveyard and across the Mince Pie field with yowls of terror.

“Look at Gentleman Tom enjoying av it,” chuckled Judy.

“We have nice cats at Silver Bush,” said Cuddles complacently. “Interesting cats. And they have an *air*. They walk so proud and hold their tails up. Other cats *slink*. Trix Binnie laughed when I said that and said, ‘You’re getting just as crazy as Pat over your old Silver Bush, thinking there’s nothing like it.’ ‘Well, there isn’t,’ I told her. And I was right, wasn’t I, Pat?”

“You were,” said Pat fervently. “But there comes your barn cat back and you’d best take her to the barn before dad sees her. You know he doesn’t want the barn cats encouraged to the house. He says he puts up with Gentleman Tom and Bold-and-Bad because they’re old established customs.”

“How old is Gentleman Tom, Judy?”

“Oh, oh, old, is it? The Good Man Above do be knowing that. All *I* do be knowing is that he come here twelve years ago, looking as old as he does this blessed minute. Maybe there isn’t inny age about him,” concluded Judy mysteriously. “Ye can’t iver be thinking av him as a kitten, can ye now?”

“I’m sure he could tell some queer tales, Judy. It’s a pity cats can’t talk.”

“Talk is it? Whoiver told ye they cudn’t talk, Cuddles darling? The grandfather of me heard two cats talking onct but he niver cud be got to tell what they said ... No, no, he didn’t want to be getting in wrong wid the tribe. As I was telling Sidy last Sunday whin he was raving mad because Bold-and-Bad had gone to slape on his Sunday pants and they was kivered

wid cat hairs, ‘Think whatever ye like av a cat, Siddey darlint,’ sez I to him, ‘but don’t be *saying* innnything. If the King av the cats heard ye now!’

“And what would have happened if the King of the cats had heard him, Judy?”

“Oh, oh, let’s lave that tale for a rale wild stormy winter night, Cuddles, whin ye’re slaping wid old Judy snug and cosy. Thin I’ll be telling ye what happened to a man in ould Ireland that did be saying things av cats a liddle too loud and careless like. It’s no tale for a summer afternoon wid a widding looming up.”

2

Winnie was to be married in late September and Silver Bush settled down to six weeks of steady preparation. Judy had a new swing shelf put up in the cellar to fill with rows on rows of ruby jam-pots for Winnie. The woodwork in the Poet’s room was to be painted all over in robin’s egg blue and then there was the excitement of choosing paper to harmonise with it. Though Pat hated to tear the old paper off. It had been on so long. And she resented having the chairs in the Big Parlour recovered. There was a sort of harmony about the old room as it was. New things jarred. But Silver Bush must look its best, for Winnie was to have a big wedding.

“The clan do be liking a bit av a show,” said Judy delightedly.

“It means a great deal of work,” said Aunt Edith rather disapprovingly.

“Work, is it? Ye do be right. It’s busy as a hin wid one chick we all are. I do be kaping just one jump ahead. But I’m not liking yer sneaking widdings as if they was ashamed av it. We’ll be having one to be proud av, wid ivery relative on both sides and lots av presents and two bridesmaids and a flower girl ... Oh, oh, and Winnie’s trosso now! The like av it has niver been seen at Silver Bush. All her liddle undies made be hand. ‘An inch av handwork do be worth a machine mile,’ sez I to Mrs. Binnie whin she do be saying her cousin’s daughter had two dozen av ivery kind. It do

be a comfort to me when I climb up to my loft at night, falling as if I'd been pulled through a key-hole."

"Oh, Judy, you and I are getting to be old women," sighed Aunt Barbara.

Judy looked scandalised.

"Yes, yes, but whisht ... don't be spaking av it, woman dear," she whispered apprehensively.

Winnie had a dream of a wedding dress ... the sort of dress every girl would like to have. Everybody loved it except Aunt Edith, who was horrified at its brevity. Dresses were at their shortest when Winnie was married. Aunt Edith had been praying for years that women's skirts might be longer but apparently in vain.

"It's a condition that can't be affected by prayer," Uncle Tom told her gravely.

Winnie moved through all the bustle of preparation with a glory in her eyes, smiling dreamily over thoughts of her own. Frank haunted Silver Bush to such an extent that Judy was a trifle peeved at him.

"He do be all right in his place but I'm not liking him spread over everything," she grumbled.

"Frank is devoted to Winnie," said Pat rather distantly. "I think it is beautiful." She had finally accepted Frank as one of the family and he had straightway become a person to be defended, even from Judy.

"I wonder how Frank proposed to Winnie," remarked Cuddles, as she helped Pat adorn a cake with pale green slivers of angelica and crimson cherries. "I suppose he would be very romantic. Do you think he went on his knees?"

Sid, in for a drink of water, roared.

"We don't do that nowadays, Cuds. Frank just said to Winnie, 'How about it, kid?' I heard him," Sid salved his conscience by winking at Judy behind Cuddles' back.

"When I grow up and anybody proposes to me he'll have to be a good deal more flowery and eloquent than that. I can tell you, if he wants me to listen to him," she said.

“The frog went a-courting,” remarked Judy cryptically.

Winnie's Wedding

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1

The engagement was announced in the papers ... a new-fangled notion which met with Judy's disapproval.

"Oh, oh, there do be minny a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip," she muttered. "Sure and we'd be in the pretty scrape if innnything but good happened Frank in the nixt three wakes. There was Maggie Nicholson now ... her beau did be going clane out av his head a wake before the day itsilf and it's in the asylum he's been iver since. Wudn't thim Binnies have the laugh on us if the widding didn't come off after all."

Only three weeks to the wedding day ... Winnie's wedding day when she would leave Silver Bush forever. There were moments when Pat felt she couldn't endure it. When Vernon Gardiner said jokingly to Winnie,

"Next time we meet I'll have to call you Mrs. Russell," Pat went upstairs and cried. To think of Winnie being Mrs. Russell. It sounded so terribly changed and different and far away. Her Winnie!

Tears didn't stop the days from flying by. The wedding was to be in the church. Pat wanted Winnie to be married at home under the copper beech on the lawn. Mother couldn't go to the church. But Frank wanted the church. The Russells were Anglicans and had always been married in church. Frank got his way ... "of course," as Pat scornfully remarked to the air.

Pat and Judy were up to their eyes in baking and favourite recipes were hunted up ... recipes that had not been used for years because they took so many eggs. The traditional Silver Bush bride-cake alone required three dozen.

The Bay Shore aunts and the Swallowfield aunts sent over baskets of delicious confections. Aunt Barbara's basket was full of different kinds of

cookies ... orange cookies and date cookies and vanilla crisps and walnut bars and the Good Man Above knew how many more.

“Oh, oh, it won’t be much like Lorna Binnie’s wedding table,” exulted Judy. “Sure and poor Mrs. Binnie thought if she did be cutting her cookies in a dozen different shapes it wud be giving thim a different flavour. Now, Patsy darlint, just ye be kaping an eye on thim chickens while I do be getting me yard posts whitewashed.”

At first dawn Bold-and-Bad was shouting all over Silver Bush that he had found a mouse and Judy’s footsteps sounded on the kitchen stairs. The morning hush was already broken by the stir of last-minute preparations. It had rained in the night but now it was a fine and a new, lovely world with its face washed and blinking its innocent eyes at the sun.

“Sure and the day was ordered,” said Judy as she raked the lawn where robins were pulling out long fat worms.

Pat couldn’t eat a mouthful of breakfast. It was a shock to see Winnie eating so heartily. Pat was sure that if *she* were going to be married she couldn’t eat for a week beforehand. Of course she wouldn’t want Winnie to be like that silly Lena Taylor, who, it was said, cried for a month before she was married. But when you were going away from Silver Bush that day how could you have an appetite?

The forenoon was like a whirlwind. The table had to be set ... *oh, why did families have to be broken up like this?* Among salads, jellies and cakes Pat moved as to the manor born. *This time tomorrow Winnie would belong to another family.* Everybody’s place was settled; Pat had a knack of dovetailing people rather cleverly ... *only herself and Sidy and Cuddles left at Silver Bush.* The rooms bloomed under her hands. The little alcove Uncle Tom called Cuddle Corner was a nest of round golden pillows like small suns ... *It was dreadful to find pleasure in these things when Winnie was going away.*

Flowers must be cut. As a rule Pat didn’t like to cut the flowers. She always felt such a vivid crimson delight in her splendid blossoms ... a feeling that made the thought of cutting them hurt her. But now she slashed at them savagely.

The table looked beautiful. It would be such a shame to spoil it ... turn it into an after-dinner mess. But, as Judy said, that was life.

“Anyhow, Silver Bush looks perfectly lovely,” thought Pat in a momentary rapture.

In a way it was all like an echo of Aunt Hazel’s long-ago wedding day. The same confusion when everybody was dressing. Gentleman Tom was the only calm creature in the house. Judy was distracted because Bold-and-Bad had been seen dashing through the hall with a very large, very dead mouse and the Good Man Above only knew what he had done with it. That vain Cuddles, who had been trying all the mirrors in the house to see which was the most becoming, was in trouble over the hang of her flowered chiffon dress. It had been a bitter pill to Cuddles that she was too old to be Winnie’s flower girl. Aunt Hazel’s six-year-old Emmy was cast for that part and Cuddles was secretly determined to look prettier than she did.

“What does my nose look like, Pat? Do you think it is too big?”

Cuddles’ nose had always worried her. How would it turn out?

“If it is I don’t see how you can remedy it,” laughed Pat. “Never mind your nose, Cuddles darling. You look very sweet.”

“Can’t I put a dab of powder on it, Pat? Please. I’m eleven.”

“That would only draw attention to it,” warned Pat.

Cuddles saw this. She cast a satisfied look at herself in the glass.

“I have decided,” she remarked in a matter-of-fact tone, “that I will get married when I am twenty and have three children. Pat, do I have to kiss Frank?”

“I’m not going to,” said Pat savagely.

Judy, who was set on “witnessing the nuptials,” as she expressed it, had again laid aside her drugget dress and her Irish brogue. Out came the dress-up dress and the English pronunciation as good as ever. Only the former was a bit tight. Pat had a terrible time getting Judy hooked into it.

“Sure and I had a waist whin this was made,” mourned Judy. “Do you be thinking it’s a trifle old-fashioned like, Pat?”

Pat got some lace and did wonders with it. Judy felt real “chick.”

Mother was dressed, sitting in state in the Big Parlour with her grey hair and her soft blue eyes. Pat realised with a swift pang that mother had got very grey in the year. But she looked like a picture in her pretty dress of silver-grey and rose, with the necklace dad had given her when she came out of the hospital ... an amber string like drops of golden dew. Father was not going to the church after all. At the last moment he had decided that he simply could not leave mother alone. Uncle Tom must give the bride away. Winnie was not very well pleased over this. That fierce, immense black beard of his was so old-fashioned. But Winnie was too happy to mind anything much. In her bridal array she was an exquisite, shimmering young thing with face and eyes that were love and rapture incarnate. Pat's throat swelled as she looked at her. Frank Russell suddenly became the man who could make Winnie look like this. She forgave him the offence of becoming her brother-in-law.

The kitchen clock was ten to, the parlour clock was five past, the dining-room clock was striking the hour. Which meant that it was a quarter past and time to go.

2

Sitting in the crowded church, with its decorations of tawny tiger lilies and lemon-hued gladioli ... the C. G. I. T. girls had done it for Winnie ... Pat thought busily to keep herself from crying. Winnie had warned her solemnly ... "Pat, don't you *dare* cry when I'm getting married." She had been so near crying at Aunt Hazel's wedding long ago but this was tenfold worse.

It was odd to see the groom so pale ... he was always so pink and chubby. But he looked well. She was glad he was nice looking. If Silver Bush had to have in-laws it should have handsome ones. Uncle Tom's magnificent beard looked purple in the light that fell on it through the stained glass window ... like some old Assyrian king's. Winnie had said, "I do." How solemn! Just a word uttered or unuttered and a whole life was

changed ... perhaps even the course of history. If Napoleon's mother had said "No," in place of "Yes?" Why, it was over ... it was over ... Winnie was Mrs. Frank Russell ... the bridal party was going into the vestry ... Uncle Brian's Norma was singing the bridal anthem ... Pat recalled that long-ago day when she had slapped Norma's face.

What was that dreadful old Cousin Sam Gardiner whispering to her over the top of the pew? "I wunner how many husbands and wives in this church would like a change." How many, indeed? Perhaps old Malcolm Madison, who was said to have laughed only three times in his life. Perhaps Gerald Black, whose wife had such a passion for swatting flies that she had bent forward in church one day and swatted one on Jackson Russell's bald head. Or Mrs. Henry Green, whose husband, Pat reflected wildly, looked like his own tombstone. She wondered if the story Judy told of him was true ... that he had been whipped in school one day because the master caught him writing a love-letter on his slate to Lura Perry who was half gipsy. It couldn't be ... not with that Scotch-Presbyterian-elder mouth. Old Uncle John Gardiner was improving the wait by snatching a nap. Wasn't there a story about his wooden leg catching fire one day when he dozed by the fire? There was Mrs. James Morgan who had never forgiven her daughter for marrying Carl Porter and had never entered her house. How *could* families act like that?

Mrs. Albert Cody ... Sarah Malone that was. Judy had a story about her. "Oh, oh, she had one of thim aisy-going fellers ... wint around wid her for years and years and niver got no forrader. Sarah wint away for a visit to her Aunt in Halifax and writ back great yarns av her beaus and fine times. That scared him and he writ for her to come home and be married. Sure and there hadn't been a word av truth in what Sarah had tould him. Her aunt was that sick and cranky she niver wint out av the house."

Sarah Cody was a Sunday School teacher and looked very meek and devout beside her easygoing Abner. Very likely Judy had made it all up.

(What was that horrid Mrs. Stephen Russell whispering ... "made the mistake of choosing a prettier bridesmaid than herself." It wasn't true ... it wasn't ... Allie Russell wasn't half as pretty as Winnie.) Old Grant

Madison, who had told dad once that he had read too many dreadful things in old histories ever to believe in God. How dreadful not to believe in God. How could one live? Mrs. Scott Gardiner had ironed out her wrinkles in some way ... “beauty tricks,” said Judy contemptuously. Why in the world didn’t Winnie come back? But there was no Winnie now ... only a mysterious stranger known as Mrs. Frank Russell. What was darling Cuddles thinking of as she gazed dreamily up at the tinted window, nimbused in its blue and gold. She was really a delightful little thing. Pat recalled in amazement that she hadn’t wanted Cuddles to be born.

3

Home again. Handshakings and congratulations and kisses. Pat even kissed Frank. But she hugged Winnie fiercely.

“Here’s a whole heartful of good wishes for you, dear one,” she whispered.

Then she must fly for her ruffled organdy apron. The chilled cocktails must be got out of the ice-house, the creamed chicken put in the patties, the wedding gifts placed with just the right emphasis. Children ran about the grounds like small roses. The house was full. Every Gardiner and half-Gardiner, every Selby, every Russell was there. “This looks like the Day of Judgment,” said old Cousin Ralph Russell. He caught Pat by the arm as she flew by him.

“Long Alec’s girl. I hear you’ve got to be a beauty, hey? Let me look at you. No, no, not a beauty ... and you’ve no great brains they tell me ... but you’ve got a way with you. You’ll get a man.”

How people did harp on getting married! It was disgusting. Even oldish Ellery Madison, who still congratulated himself on escaping traps, called Pat “Ducky” and told her he’d take her if she liked.

“If you wait till we’re both grownup I might think of it,” retorted Pat.

“Oh, oh, but that’s the way to talk to them,” Judy told her as they lighted the candles. “‘Twas mesilf that shut him up quick whin he sez to

me, sez he, 'It's time *you* were married, Judy.' 'How the min do be hating a woman that's dared to do widout thim,' sez I. Sure and I've been snubbing the cratur's right and left. They've no more sinse than to be cluttering up me kitchen and ruining the rugs. Ould Jerry Russell sez to me, sez he, 'Miss Plum, do ye be thinking God is God or just a great first cause?' And Mark Russell sez, wid a face as grave as a jidge's, 'What is yer opinion av the governmint bringing on an election this fall, Miss Plum?' Sure and didn't I know they was pulling me leg? I sez to thim, sez I, 'Ye haven't the sinse ye was born wid,' sez I, 'if ye don't know a widding is no place to be talking av God or politics. And I'll thank ye to stop Miss Plumming me,' sez I, and that finished thim. Sure and wasn't the cirrimony grand, Patsy dear? Jake Russell sez to me, 'She's the prettiest bride ye've iver had at Silver Bush,' and I sez to him, sez I, 'For once in yer life ye've said a mouthful.' But that platinum ring now, do ye be thinking it's rale legal? I'm thinking Winnie'd fale a bit safer wid an old-fashioned gold one."

"Judy, how can I *bear* to see Winnie go away?"

"Ye must sind her away wid a smile, Patsy darlint. Whatever comes after, sind her away wid a smile."

Laughter and Tears

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1

It was all over. Winnie had gone.

“Pat darling,” she whispered, with her eyes softly full of farewell, “everything was lovely. I’ve really enjoyed my own wedding. You and Judy were wonderful.”

Pat managed to smile as Judy had exhorted, but when Judy found her looking at the deserted festal board she said,

“Judy, isn’t it nice to be ... able to ... stop smiling? I ... I hope there won’t be another wedding at Silver Bush for a hundred years.”

“Why, I wish we could have a wedding every day,” said Cuddles. “I suppose the next one here will be your own. And then it will be my turn. That is,” she added reflectively, “if I can get any one to have me. I don’t want to be an old maid.”

“Sure and don’t be hurting my falings,” said Judy. “I’m an ould maid.”

“I always forget that,” said Cuddles contritely. “You aren’t a bit like an old maid, Judy. You’re ... you’re just *Judy*.”

“Mr. Ronald Russell of St. John told me mother was the most beautiful woman he had ever seen,” said Pat.

“And ye’ll be loving Mr. Ronald Russell foriver bekase av it. But I’m thinking he’s right. Did ye hear him saying to Winnie, ‘Are ye going to be making a Prisbytarian av him?’ ... maning Frank. And Winnie sez, sez she, Prisbytarians don’t be made, they’re born,’ sez she. Oh, oh, wasn’t that the answer to me smart gintleman? St. John can’t be getting far ahead av Silver Bush I’m thinking. He had his appetite wid him, that one. But I do be liking a man who enj’ys his vittles.”

“He’s a member of Parliament,” said Pat, “and they say he’ll be Premier some day.”

“And him ould Short-and-dirty Russell’s son! A fat chanct!” said Judy scornfully.

“I hope the pictures will turn out well,” said Cuddles. “I was in them all.”

“Innyway, Winnie wasn’t photygraphed wid her arm round her groom like Jean Madison was. Ondacint I call it. And now, Patsy darlint, will we start claning up or lave it till the morning?”

“Whatever you like, Judy.”

“Oh, oh, it’s ye are the mistress here now, wid Winnie gone and yer mother niver to be troubled. It’s for ye to give orders and for me to obey them.”

“Nonsense, Judy. Fancy me giving you orders!”

“I’d rather it that way, Patsy darlint,” said Judy firmly.

Pat hesitated. Then quietly accepted the sovereignty of Silver Bush.

“Very well, Judy. We’ll leave things just as they are tonight. We’re all tired. Do you remember the night after Aunt Hazel’s wedding when we did the dining room?”

“It’s the darlint ye was, working like a liddle slave to kape from crying.”

“And you told me funny stories: Judy, let’s have a bit of a fire ... there’s a chill in the air and the first fire is such a delightful thing. And we’ll sit by it and you’ll tell stories.”

“Ye must av been hearing all me stories a million times over, Patsy. Though I do be thinking whin I saw the Joe Kellers to-day — he did be marrying his wife bekase a liddle girl he was swate on jilted him and she married him bekase Sam Miller av the Bay Shore jilted her. So what wud ye ixpect?”

“That they wouldn’t be very happy, Judy.”

“Oh, oh, and that’s where ye wud be wrong, me jewel. The marriage was be way av being a big success. That do be life, ye know.”

“Life is queer, Judy. Winnie and her Frank now ... she doesn’t seem to have a fear or doubt. I’d be frightened ... I could never be *sure* I loved any one *enough* to marry him. And then to-day ... away down in my heart I

was just *sick* over Winnie going ... and yet on the surface I was enjoying the excitement, too.”

“There do be always something to take the edge off things,” said Judy shrewdly. “That do be why nothing is iver as hard as ye think it’s going to be.”

Hilary came in after having driven some of the guests to the station and joined them. Bold-and-Bad, who had been sulking all day because nobody had admired him, lay down on the rug, gathered his feet and nose and tail into a snug circle, and forgave the world. Old Aunt Louisa, who had seen so much come and go, looked down on them from the wall. The white kittens still gambolled in immortal youth. King William still rode proudly across the Boyne. It was ... rather nice to have a feeling of leisure and tranquillity again. And yet Pat was afraid that upstairs there was a dreadful stillness and silence after all the fuss was over that would pounce on her when she went to bed. She kept Hilary as long as she could and was so nice to him that when he said goodnight to her on the poplar-patterned doorstep he was bold enough to ask her to kiss him.

“Of course I’ll kiss you,” said Pat graciously. “I’ve been kissing so many friends to-day one more or less doesn’t matter.”

“I don’t want a friendly kiss,” said Hilary ... and went off on that note.

“Oh, oh, and ye might av give him his kiss,” said Judy, who was always hearing what she had no business to. “He’ll be going away far enough all too soon, poor b’y.”

“I ... I ... was perfectly willing to kiss him,” cried Pat chokily. “And don’t ... *don’t* ... talk of his going away. I can’t bear it tonight.”

2

Pat was very lonely when she went up to bed. The house seemed so strangely empty now that Winnie’s laugh had gone out of it. Here was the mirror that had reflected her face. That little vacant chair where she had always sat was very eloquent. Her little discarded slippers that could have

danced by themselves the whole night through, so often had Winnie's feet danced in them, comforted each other under the bed. They looked as if her feet had just stepped out of them. Her fragrance still lingered in the room. It was all terrible.

Pat leaned out of the window to drink in the cold, delicious air. The wind sounded eerie in the bushes. A dog was barking over at Swallowfield. Pat had rather thought that when she found herself alone she would cast herself on the bed in an abandonment of anguish. But there was still moonlight in the world ... still owls in the silver bush. The old loyalties of home were still potent ... it *would* be nice to have a room of one's very own.

A house always looks very pathetic and unfriended on a dawn after a festivity. Pat found happiness and comfort in restoring it all from cellar to garret. The presents were packed and sent to the Bay Shore. It was fun to read the account of the wedding in the papers.

"The bride before her marriage was Winifred Alma, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Alec Gardiner." That hurt Pat. Wasn't Winnie still their daughter? *"The bridesmaids wore dresses of pink Georgette crêpe with pink mohair hats and bouquets of sweet peas. Little Emmy Madison made a charming flower girl in a smocked frock of pink voile."* Fancy little Emmy having her name and dress in the papers! *Miss Patricia Gardiner, sister of the bride, was charming in marigold voile.* And oh, oh ... *"Miss Judy Plum wore blue silk with corsage of roses."* It must have been that rogue of a Jen Russell who had put that in. Judy was tremendously pleased. Her name right there with all the quality, bracketed with the groom's aunt, the haughty Mrs. Ronald Russell in her black satin with mauve orchids! Though Judy was a bit dubious about "corsage." It sounded ... well ... a liddle quare.

Then there were visits to the Bay Shore to help Winnie get settled in her big white house with its background of sapphire water, where there was a coloured, fir-scented garden, full of wind music and bee song, that dipped in terraces to the harbour shore and was always filled with the

sound of “perilous seas forlorn.” Pat would have been quite happy if she could have forgotten that Hilary was going away.

The Chatelaine of Silver Bush

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1

Pat was feeling older than she would probably feel at fifty. Life had all at once grown bare and chilly. Hilary was going to Toronto to take the five-year course in architecture.

His mother had arranged it, he told Pat briefly. Since that bitter day, when Doreen Garrison had finally turned her back on her Jingle-baby Hilary had never spoken of his mother. Pat knew he never heard from her except for some brief note containing a check for his college expenses.

Pat was glad for Hilary's sake. He was on the way to realise all his dreams and ambitions. But on her own account she was very bleak. Nobody to prowl with ... nobody to tell things to ... it was always so easy to tell things to Hilary. Nobody to joke with.

"We've always laughed at the same things, Judy."

"Oh, oh, and that's why ye do be such good frinds, Patsy. It's the rale test. It's sorry I am mesilf that Jingle is going. A fine gintleman he's got to be, that tall and straight standing. And ye tell me he's to be an arkytict. Oh, oh, I'm hoping he won't be like the one I heard of in ould Ireland. He did be buying the plan av a fine house from the Bad Man Below. And the price he had to be paying was his swateheart's soul. 'Twas a grand house I'm telling ye but there was few iver wanted to live in it."

"I don't think Hilary will spend souls buying plans from the devil," said Pat, with a forlorn smile. "He can design plenty himself. But, Judy, it seems to me I just can't bear it. Bets dead ... Winnie gone ... and now Hilary."

"It's mesilf that's noticed how things do be going in threes like that, Patsy. It do be likely nothing but good'll happen to ye for a long time now."

“But life will be so ... so empty, Judy.”

“He’ll be coming back some fine day.”

Pat shook her head. Talk of Hilary’s return was empty and meaningless. She knew he would never come back, unless for a vacation month or two. Their days of happy comradeship were over ... their hours in Happiness ... their rambles by field and shore. Childhood was gone. The “first fine rapture” of youth was gone.

“What’s to become av McGinty? Oh, oh, there’ll be one poor brokenhearted liddle dog.”

“Hilary is giving McGinty to me. I know he *will* be brokenhearted. But if love can help him ...”

Pat choked. She was seeing McGinty’s eyes when the morrow brought no Hilary.

“Oh, oh, but I’m glad to hear that. I’m not liking a dogless house. Cats do be int’reesting cratur, as Cuddles says, but there’s *something* about a dog, now. Sure and there’ll be some fun saving bones again.”

Pat knew Hilary was waiting for her in Happiness. They had agreed to have their parting tryst there, before Hilary left to catch the night train. Slowly she went to keep it. The air was full of colour; there was just the faintest hint of frost in its sweet mildness; the evening sunshine was exceedingly mellow on grey old barns; as she went over Jordan she noticed the two dark, remote, pointed firs among the golden maples in the corner of the field. Hilary loved those firs. He said they were the twin spires of some mystic cathedral of sunset.

2

Hilary was waiting in Happiness, sitting on an old mossy stone by the spring that the years had never touched. Beside him sat a gay little dog with a hint of wistfulness behind his gaiety. McGinty felt something coming to him ... something formless and chill. But as long as he was with his dear master what did it matter?

Hilary drew a quick breath: his eyes lit up slowly from within as was their way. She was coming to him over the field ... a slip of a girl in a gold and orange sweater, the autumnal sunshine burnishing her dark-brown hair and glinting in her amber eyes; her face glowing with warm, ripe, *kissable* tints, her body like a young sapling never to be broken, however it might bend.

“Trusty, dusky, vivid, true,
With eyes of gold and bramble dew.”

Why couldn't he have said that instead of Stevenson? It was truer of Pat than it could be of anybody else. Why couldn't he say to her all the burning and eloquent things he thought of in the night but could never utter the next day?

Pat sat down on the stone beside Hilary. They talked only a little and that in rather jerky sentences.

“I'll never come to Happiness again,” said Pat.

“Why not? I'd like to think of you sitting here sometimes ... with McGinty.”

“Poor little dorglums!” Pat absently caressed McGinty's willing head with one of her slender brown hands ... her *dear* hands, thought Hilary. “No, I couldn't bear to come here without you, Hilary. We've been here so often ... we've been chums for so many years.”

“Can't we ... can't we ... sometime ... be more than chums, Pat?” blurted Hilary desperately.

Pat instantly became just a little aloof, although her face had flushed to a sudden warm rose. Hilary was such a nice friend ... chum ... brother ... but never a lover. Pat was very positive on that point.

“We've always been wonderful friends, Hilary. Don't spoil it now. Why, we've been chums ever since that night you saved me from heaven knows what on the Line road. Ten years.”

“They've been very good years.” Hilary seemed to have taken his repulse more philosophically than she had feared. “What will the years to come be, I wonder?”

“They’ll be marvellous years for you, Hilary. You’ll succeed ... you’ll reach the top. And then all your old friends here ... ‘specially little old maid Pat of Silver Bush, will brag about having once known you.”

“I *will* succeed,” Hilary set his teeth together. “With your ... friendship ... I can do anything. I want to tell you ... if I can ... what your friendship and the life I’ve shared with you at Silver Bush have meant to me. It’s kept me from growing up hateful and cynical. You’ve all been so sure that life is good that I’ve never been able to disbelieve it ... never will be able to. You’ll write me often, won’t you, Pat? It will be ... lonely ... at first. I don’t know a soul in Toronto.”

“Of course I will. And don’t forget, Hilary,” ... Pat laughed teasingly ... “you’re to build a house for me some day. I’ll live in it when Sid gets married and turns me out of Silver Bush. And you’ll come to see me in it ... I’ll be a nice old lady with silver hair ... and I’ll give you a cup of tea out of Grandmother Selby’s pot ... and we’ll talk over our lives and ... and ... pretend it’s all been a dream ... and that we’re just Pat and Jingle home once more.”

“Wherever *you* are, Pat, will always be home to me.”

There he went again. If it were not that they must presently say a long goodbye she would be angry with him. But she couldn’t be angry tonight. He would soon forget this nonsense. Hundreds of beautiful clever girls in Toronto. But they would always be friends ... the very best of friends ... she couldn’t imagine *not* being friends with Hilary.

They went back, following the curves of Jordan, talking of old days. It was lovely to remember things together. There were asters along their way. Hilary wanted to pick a rarely dark-blue cluster for her but she would not let him.

“No. Don’t pick them because they would fade and that would be my last memory of them. Let’s just leave them here and we can always remember them as we saw them together ... beautiful and unfaded.”

That was the real Pat touch. Hilary remembered that she had never really liked to pick flowers. He never forgot her, as she stood there

gloating over them, herself, to him, as beautiful and mysterious as the autumn twilight. Dear ... desirable!

The brook was prattling away and crooning to itself. Tall firs, that had been mere saplings when they first explored it, stretched their protecting arms over it: the mosses were green on its banks. In its ripple and murmur the voices of their childhood sounded ... all the long-unheard notes were there, blended with the sweet sorrow inseparable from bygones. Hilary at twenty and Pat at eighteen felt themselves to be aged travellers wistfully recalling youth.

They paused on the stone bridge across Jordan. Pat held out her hands. She wanted to cry on his shoulder and knew she must not. If she did ... he would take her in his arms. That would be nice ... but ...

She wanted to tell him that she loved him dearly. She did love him so much ... better than Joe now ... almost better than Sidney. She wanted to kiss him ... but Hilary did not want friendly kisses. Yet they *couldn't* part like this.

"I'm not going to say goodbye half a dozen times before I'm really gone ... like old Auntie Sarah Gordon," said Hilary, pretending to laugh. "Goodbye, Pat."

But he seemed to have forgotten to let go her hands. This simply couldn't be endured any longer.

"Goodbye, Jingle." The old name came impulsively to her lips. She pulled her hands away from his warm, pleasant grip and ran up the path against the moon.

Hilary stood and looked after her. McGinty huddled shivering against his leg. McGinty knew things were all wrong somehow.

Hilary was thinking of the house he would build for Pat. He could see it ... he could almost see its lights gleaming through the dusk of some land "beyond the hills and far away." More beautiful than even Silver Bush. For a moment he almost hated Silver Bush. It was the only rival he feared. Then he set his teeth.

"I'll have you yet, Pat."

Pat stumbled up the path and across the field blindly and brought up against the garden gate. Then the denied tears came. She simply couldn't bear it. Everything gone! Who *could* bear it?

Rays of the rising moon touched the Hill of the Mist with delicate silver fingers. The night was a blue pearl seaward. The low continual thunder of the gulf tides in the harbour bar filled the air. The dreaming peace of the orchard seemed to beckon. The old barns, that must be alive with the ghosts of all the kittens that had frolicked in them, were huddled together companionably. Silver Bush was full of friendly lights. Pat brushed the tears from her eyes and looked at it.

It was such a loyal old house ... always faithful to those who loved it. You felt it was your friend as soon as you stepped into it. It was full of dear yesterdays and beautiful old years. It had been assimilating beauty and loveliness ... which is not quite the same thing ... for generations. There had been so many things in this house and it had not forgotten one of them. Love and sorrow ... tragedies ... comedies. Babies had been born ... brides had dreamed ... all sorts of fashions had come and gone before the old mirrors. Its very walls seemed to hold laughter.

The house remembered her whole life. *It* had always been the same ... *it* had never changed ... not really. Only little surface changes. How she loved it! She loved it in morning rose and sunset amber, and best of all in the darkness of night, when it loomed palely through the gloom and was all her own. This beauty was hers ... all hers. Life could never be empty at Silver Bush. Somebody had pitied her once ... "so out of the world." Pat laughed. Out of the world? Nay, she was *in* the world here ... *her* world. "*I dwell among my own people.*" Wise Shulamite!

A mysterious content flooded her. This was home.

MISTRESS PAT

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There were hundreds of trees, big and little, on the Silver Bush farm and every tree was a personal friend of Pat's. It was anguish to her when one of them, even some gnarled old spruce in the woods at the back, was cut down. Nobody had ever been able to convince Pat that it was not murder to cut a tree down ... justifiable homicide perhaps, since there had to be fires and lumber, but homicide nevertheless.

And no tree was ever cut in the grove of white birches behind the house. *That* would have been sacrilege. Occasionally one blew down in an autumn storm and was mourned by Pat until time turned it into a beautiful mossy log with ferns growing thickly all along it.

Everybody at Silver Bush loved the birch grove, though to none of them did it mean what it meant to Pat. For her it *lived*. She not only knew the birches but they knew her: the fern-sweet solitudes, threaded with shadows, knew her: the wind in the boughs always made her a glad salutation. From the first beginnings of memory she had played in it and wandered in it and dreamed in it. She could not remember the time it had not held her imagination in thrall and dominated her life. In childhood it had been peopled by the leprechauns and green folk of Judy Plum's stories: and now that those dear and lovely beliefs had drifted away from her like faint and beckoning wraiths their old magic still haunted the silver bush. It could never be to Pat just the ordinary grove of white-skinned trees and ferny hollows it was to other people. But then, Pat, so her family always said, was just a little different from other people, too. She had been different when she was a big-eyed child ... different when she was a brown, skinny little imp in her early teens ... and still different, now that she was twenty and ought, so Judy Plum felt, to be having beaux.

There *had* been a boy or two in Pat's past but Judy considered them mere experiments. Pat, however, did not seem to want beaux, in spite of

Judy's sly hints. All she really wanted, or seemed to want, was to "run" Silver Bush and take care of mother ... who was a bit of an invalid ... and see that as few changes as possible came into existence there. If she could have been granted a fairy wish it would be that she might wave a wand and make everything remain exactly the same for at least a hundred years.

She loved her home with a passion. She was deeply loyal to it ... to its faults as well as its virtues ... though she would never admit it had any faults. Every small thing about it gave her the keenest joy. If she went away for a visit she was homesick until she could return to it.

"Silver Bush isn't her house ... it's her religion," Uncle Brian had once said teasingly.

Every room in it meant something ... had some vital message for her. It had the look that houses wear when they have been loved for years. It was a house where nobody ever seemed to be in a hurry ... a house from which nobody ever went away without feeling better in some way ... a house in which there was always laughter. There had been so much laughter at Silver Bush that the very walls seemed soaked in it. It was a house where you felt welcome the moment you stepped into it. It took you in ... rested you. The very chairs clamoured to be sat upon, so hospitable was it. And it was overrun by beautiful cats ... fat, fluffy fellows basking on the window sills or huddles of silk-soft kittens sleeping on the warm sandstone slabs in the old family graveyard beyond the orchard. People came from all over the Island to get a Silver Bush cat. Pat hated to give them away but of course something had to be done, since the kitten crop never failed.

"Tom Baker was here for a kitten to-day," said Judy.

"'What brade is it?' sez he, solemn-like. That fam'ly av Bakers never did be having too much sinse. 'Oh, oh, no brade at all,' sez I. 'Our cats do be just common or garden cats,' sez I. 'But we give them a good home and talk to thim now and thin as inny self-respecting cat likes to be talked to,' sez I, 'wid a bit av a compliment thrown in once in a while. And so they do their bist for us in the matter av kittens as well as all ilse. Sure and I do be forgetting what a rat looks like,' sez I. I was faling a bit unwilling to give

him the kitten. They'll trate it well, I'm having no manner av doubt, but they'll niver remimber to pass the time av day wid it."

"Our cats own us anyway," said Cuddles lazily. "Aunt Edith says it's absurd the way we spoil them. She says there are lots of poor Christians don't have the life our cats have and she thinks it awful that we let them sleep at the foot of our beds."

"Oh, oh, see there now, ye've sint Gentleman Tom off mad," said Judy reprovingly. "Cats always do be knowing what ye're saying av thim. And Gentleman Tom's that sensitive."

Cuddles idly watched Gentleman Tom ... Judy's lank, black cat who was so old that he had forgotten to die, Sid said ... stalk indignantly off through the ferns of the path. She and Pat and Judy were spending the hours of the late summer afternoon in the silver bush. They had fallen into the habit of doing their odd jobs there, where bird music occasionally dripped through the leafy silence or a squirrel chattered or wood winds wove their murmurous spells. Pat went there to write her letters and Cuddles studied her lessons. Often mother brought her knitting and sewing. It was a lovely place to work in ... though Cuddles seldom worked while there. She generally left that to Pat and Judy. The latter was sitting on a mossy log, stoning cherries for preserving and the former was making new apple-green curtains for the dining room. Cuddles, observing that it was a poor place that couldn't support one lady, put her hands on the grass behind her and leaned back on them, looking up at the opal-hued sky between the treetops.

"Bold-and-Bad won't leave us," she said. "*He* isn't so touchy."

"Oh, oh, ye cudn't be hurting that cat's falings, by rason that he hasn't got inny," said Judy, with a somewhat scornful glance at the big grey cat sitting on the log by Pat, blinking eyes of pale jade with a black line down their centre at a dog with a sleek, golden-brown back who was happily gnawing a rather malodorous bone behind the log, occasionally pausing to gaze up in Pat's face adoringly and wistfully. Then Pat would stroke his head and pull his pointed ears, whereat Bold-and-Bad would look more remote than ever. Bold-and-Bad always considered "the dog McGinty," as

Judy called him, an interloper. Hilary Gordon had left him with Pat nearly two years ago, when he went away to college in Toronto. At first McGinty had nearly broken his heart but he knew Pat loved him and eventually he perked up a bit and gave Bold-and-Bad as good as he sent. An armed truce existed between them, for Bold-and-Bad had not forgotten what Pat did to him the day he scratched McGinty's nose. McGinty would always have been friends but Bold-and-Bad was simply not having any.

"Oh, oh, what wid all these cherries to be stoned afore supper I do be wishing we had a ghost like they had at Castle McDermott in the ould days," said Judy, with an exaggerated sigh. "That was a ghost now ... a rale useful, industrious cratur. The odd jobs he'd do ye wudn't be belaving ... stirring the porridge and peeling the pittaties and scouring the brasses ... he wasn't above turning his hand to innnything. Sorra the day the ould lord lift a bit av money on the kitchen dresser for him, saying the labourer was worthy av his hire. He niver come again ... his falings having been hurt be the same. Oh, oh, it cost the McDermott the kape av another maid. Ye niver know where ye are whin ye're dealing wid the cratur. Sure and that's the disadvantage av ghosts. Some wud have been offinded if they hadn't been thanked. But a ghost like that wud be rale handy once in a while at Silver Bush, wudn't it now, Cuddles, darlint?"

Luckily Judy did not see Pat and Cuddles exchanging smiles. They had begun to share with each other their amused delight in Judy's stories, which had replaced the credulity of early childhood. There had been a time when both Pat and Cuddles would have believed implicitly in the industrious McDermott ghost.

"Judy, if that yarn is a gentle hint for me to get busy and help you stone those cherries I'm not going to take it," said Cuddles with a grin. "I hate sewing and preserving. Pat is the domestic type ... I'm not. When I'm here I just like to squat on the grass and listen to you talking. I've got my blue dress on and cherry juice stains. Besides, I've got pains in my stomach ... I really have ... every now and then."

"If ye *will* ate liddle grane apples ye must put up wid pains in yer stomach," said Judy, as remorselessly as cause and effect. "Though whin I

was a girleen it wasn't thought rale good manners to talk av yer insides so plain, Cuddles."

"You keep on calling me Cuddles," said Cuddles sulkily. "I've asked you all to stop it and not one of you will. Away from home I'm Rae ... I like that, but here at Silver Bush everybody 'Cuddles' me. It's so ... so babyish ... now that I'm thirteen."

"So it is, Cuddles dear," agreed Judy. "But I'm too old to be larning new names. I'm guessing ye'll always be Cuddles to me. And such a tommyshaw as we had finding a name for ye at that! Do ye be minding, Pat? And how upset ye was bekase I wint hunting in the parsley bed for a new baby the night Cuddles was born? Oh, oh, that was the tarrible night at Silver Bush! We niver thought yer mother wud live through it, Patsy dear. To think it do be thirteen years ago!"

"I remember how big and red the moon was that night, rising over the Hill of the Mist," said Pat dreamily. "Oh, Judy, did you know that the lightning struck the middle lombardy on the Hill of the Mist last week? It killed it and it has to be cut down. I don't see how I can stand it. I've always loved those three trees so. They've been there ever since I can remember. Now, McGinty, don't do it. I know it's a temptation when his tail hangs down so ... that's right, Bold-and-Bad, tuck it up. And while I think about it, Bold-and-Bad, you needn't ... you really needn't ... bring any more mice to my bedside in the early morning hours, I'll take your word for it that you caught them."

"The yells av him whin he's carrying one upstairs!" said Judy. "It'd break his heart if he cudn't be showing it off to somebody."

"I thought you said a moment ago he hadn't any feelings," giggled Cuddles.

Judy ignored her and turned to Pat.

"Will we be having a cherry pudding tomorrow, Patsy?"

"Yes, I think so. Oh, do you remember how Joe loved cherry puddings?"

"Oh, oh, there's not much I do be forgetting about Joe, Patsy dear. Was it Shanghai his last letter was from? I'm not belaving thim yellow Chinese

know innnything about making cherry puddings. Or plum puddings ather. We'll have one av thim for Christmas when Joe will be home."

"I wonder if he really will," sighed Pat. "He has never been home for Christmas since he went away. He's always planned to come but something always prevents."

"Trix Binnie says Joe has had his nose tattooed and that's the reason he doesn't come home," said Cuddles. "She says Captain Dave Binnie saw him last year in Buenos Ayres and didn't know him, he looked so awful. Do you think there's any truth in it?"

"Not if a Binnie do be telling it," said Judy contemptuously. "Don't be worrying, Cuddles."

"Oh, I'm not. I rather hoped it was. It would be so interesting. If he is tattooed I'm going to get him to do me when he comes home."

There was simply nothing to be said to this. Judy turned again to Pat.

"He's to be captain by Christmas, didn't he say? Oh, oh, but that b'y has got on! He'll be a year younger than yer Uncle Horace was whin he got his ship. I do be minding the time *he* come home that summer and brought his monkey wid him."

"A monkey?"

"I'm telling ye. The baste took possession. Yer liddle grandmother was nearly out av her wits. And poor ould Jim Appleby ... he was niver known to be sober ... just a bit less drunk than common was all ye cud be saying at the bist av times ... he come down to Silver Bush to buy some pigs and yer Uncle Horace's monkey was skipping along the top av the pig-pen fince quite careless-like. Yer grandfather said ould Jim turned white ... all but his nose ... and he sez, sez he, 'I've got 'em! Ma always said I'd git 'em and I have. But I'll niver be touching a drop again.' He kipt his word for two months but he was that cross and cantankerous his family were rale glad whin he forgot about the monkey. Mrs. Jim did be saying she wished Horace Gardiner wud kape his minagerie widin bounds. If Jim comes it's a rale reunion we'll have, Patsy."

"Yes. Winnie and Frank will be over and we'll all be together again. We must plan it all out some of these days. I do love planning things."

“Aunt Edith says it’s no use making plans because something always happens to upset them,” said Cuddles gloomily.

“Niver ye be belaving it, me jewel. And innyhow what if they do be upset? Ye’ve had the fun av planning. Don’t be letting yer Aunt Edith make a ... a ... what did Sidy be calling it now?”

“A pessimist.”

“Oh, oh, doesn’t that sound just like her! Innyway, don’t be letting her make ye that. Aven if Joe doesn’t get home, the darlint, there’ll be Winnie and Frank and yer Aunt Hazel’s liddle gang, and the turkeys we’ll be having for dinner are roosting on the fence behind the church barn this blessed minute growing as hard as they kin. And Pat there is saving up all the resates and menoos in the magazines. Oh, oh, there’ll be the great preparations I’m thinking and me fine Edith won’t be spiling it wid her sighs and sorrows. She do be having a grudge at life, that one. Patsy, do ye be minding the time ye were dancing naked here by the light av the moon and me lady Edith nabbed ye?”

“Dancing naked? And you won’t even let me wear shorts round home,” moaned Cuddles.

“And they broke my heart by sending me to Coventry,” went on Pat, as if Cuddles had not spoken. “They never knew how cruel they were. And the night you came home, Judy, and I smelt the ham frying!”

“Sure, minny’s the good liddle bite we’ve had in the ould days, Patsy. But there’s as minny ahead as behind I’m hoping. And maybe, Miss Cuddles ... as I shud be after calling Rachel ... if ye won’t be stoning inny cherries will ye be above making some blueberry muffins for supper? Patsy is wanting to finish her hemstitching and Sidy’s that fond av thim.”

“I’ll do that,” agreed Cuddles. “I like blueberry things. Oh, and I’m going up to the Bay Shore next week to pick blueberries with Winnie. She says I can sleep out in a tent right down by the shore. I want to sleep out some night here in Silver Bush. We could have a hammock swung between those two big trees there. It would be heavenly. Judy, did Uncle Tom ever have any love affairs when he was young?”

“Oh, oh, the way ye do be jumping from one thing to another!” protested Judy. “No doubt he had his fun girling like the rest av the b’ys. I’m not knowing why it niver turned serious. What put him into yer head?”

“He’s asked me to mail a letter for him at Silverbridge three times this summer. He said they were too nosy at the North Glen post office. It was addressed to a lady.”

Pat and Judy exchanged knowing glances. Judy repressed her excitement and spoke with careful carelessness.

“Did ye be noticing the name av the lady, Cuddles darlint?”

“Oh, Mrs. Something-or-other,” said Cuddles with a yawn. “I forget the name. Uncle Tom looked so red and sheepish when he asked me I just wondered what he was up to.”

“Yer Uncle Tom must be close on sixty,” reflected Judy. “It do be the time some min take a second silly spell about the wimmen. But wid Edith to kape him straight he can’t go far. Sure and I do be minding how crazy he was to go to the Klondike whin the big gold rush was on ... nather to hold nor bind. But me lady Edith nipped that in the bud and I’m thinking he’s niver ralely forgiven her for it. Oh, oh, we’ve all had our bits av drames that niver come true. If I cud just have a run over to the Ould Country now and see if Castle McDermott is as grand as it used to be. But it’ll niver come to pass.”

“‘Each mortal has his Carcassonne,’” quoted Pat dreamily, recalling a poem Hilary Gordon had marked for her once.

But Cuddles, always the more practical, said coolly, “And why can’t it, Judy? You could take a couple of months off any summer, now that I’m old enough to help Pat. The fare second class wouldn’t be too much and you could see all your relatives there and have a gorgeous time.”

Judy blinked as if somebody had struck her. “Oh, oh, Cuddles darlint, it sounds rale reasonable whin ye put it that way. It’s a wonder I niver thought av it. But I’m not so young as I once was ... I do be getting a bit ould for gallivanting round.”

“You’re not too old, Judy. Just you go next summer. All you have to do is to make up your mind.”

“Oh, oh, make up yer mind, sez she. That takes a bit av doing, Cuddles dear ... as well as a bit av thinking av.”

“Don’t think about it ... just go,” said Cuddles, rolling over on her stomach and pulling McGinty’s ears. “If you think too much about it you’ll never do it.”

“Oh, oh, whin I was thirteen I was be way av being nearly as wise as you are. I’ve larned foolishness since,” said Judy sarcastically. “It’s not running off to Ireland I’ll be as if it was a jaunt to Silverbridge. And me frinds there have grown ould ... I doubt if they’d know me, grey as an owl that I am. There do be a new McDermott at the castle, I’m ixpicting, talking rale English. The ould lord had a brogue so thick ye cud stir it.”

“It’s perfectly thrilling to think you ever lived in a castle, Judy ... and waited on a lord. It’s even more exciting than remembering that mother’s fourth cousin married into the English nobility. I wonder if we’ll ever see her. Pat, let’s you and I go over some day and call on our titled friend.”

“I’m afraid she’s not even aware of our existence,” grinned Pat. “A fourth cousin is pretty far removed and she went to England to live with her aunt when she was a little girl. Mother saw her once, though.”

“Oh, oh, that she did,” said Judy. “She visited at the Bay Shore whin she was tin and they all come over here one day to play wid the young fry here. They had a day av it. She’s a barrownite’s wife now ... Sir Charles Gresham ... and his aunt do be married to an earl.”

“Is he a belted earl?” demanded Cuddles. “A belted earl sounds so much more earlish than an unbelted one.”

“Oh, oh, he’s iverything an earl shud be. I do be forgetting what he was earl of but it was a rale aristocratic name. It was all in the papers whin yer cousin was married. Lady Gresham wasn’t young but she made a good market be waiting. Oh, oh, niver shall I be forgetting the aunts at the Bay Shore whin the news come. They cudn’t be innny prouder than they always were, so they got rale humble. ‘It’s nothing to us av coorse,’ sez yer Great-aunt Frances. ‘She’s a great leddy now and she wudn’t be acknowledging innny kin to common people like us.’ Oh, oh, to be hearing Frances Selby calling herself common people!”

“Trix Binnie says she doesn’t believe that Lady Gresham is any relation at all to us,” said Cuddles, picking up a yellow kitten, with a face like a golden pansy, that came skittering through the ferns, and tucking it under her chin.

“She wudn’t! But yer fourth cousin she is and it was her uncle the Bishop they did be blaming for staling the silver at the Bay Shore the night he slipt there.”

“Stealing the silver, Judy?” Pat had never heard of this though Judy had been recounting her family legends to her all her life.

“I’m telling ye. Ye know that illigant silver hairbrush and comb in the spare room at the Bay Shore, to say nothing av the liddle looking glass and the two scent bottles. That proud av it they was. They niver did be putting it out for common people but a Bishop was a Bishop and whin he wint up to bed there it was all spread out gorgeous-like on the bury top. Oh, oh, but it wasn’t there the nixt morning, though. Yer Great-great-Aunt Hannah was on the hoof thin ... it was long afore she got bed-rid ... and she was just about wild. She just set down and wrote and asked the Bishop what he’d done wid it. Back he wrote, ‘I am poor but honest. The silver is in the box av blankets. It was too luxurious for a humble praste like meself to use and I was afraid some av me medicine might fall on it.’ Oh, oh, the silver was on top av the blankets all right enough and yer poor Great-great-Aunt was niver the same agin, after as much as accusing the Bishop av staling it. Patsy darlint, spaking av letters, was there inny news in the one ye got from Jingle this morning if a body may ask?”

“A very special bit of news,” said Pat. “I saved it to tell you this afternoon when we’d be out here. Hilary sent in the design for a window to some big competition ... and it won the prize. Against a hundred and sixty competitors.”

“It’s the cliver lad Jingle is ... and it’ll be the lucky girl that do be getting him.”

Pat ignored this. She didn’t want Hilary Gordon for anything but a friend but she did not exactly warm to the idea of that “lucky girl” whoever she was.

“Hilary always had a liking for windows. Whenever he saw one that stood out from the ordinary run he went into raptures over it. That little dormer one in old Mary McClenahan’s house ... Judy, do you remember the time you sent us to her to witch McGinty back?”

“And she did, didn’t she now?”

“She knew where he was to be found anyhow,” Pat sighed. “Judy, life was really more fun when I believed she was a witch.”

“I’m telling ye.” Judy nodded her clipped grey head mysteriously. “The less ye do be belaving the colder life do be. This bush now ... it was nicer whin it was packed full av fairies, wasn’t it?”

“Yes ... in a way. But their magic still hangs round it, though the fairies are gone.”

“Oh, oh, ye belaved in thim once, that’s why. If ye don’t belave in fairies they can’t exist. That do be why grown folks can niver be seeing thim,” said Judy sagely. “It’s pitying the children I am that niver have the chanct to belave in fairies. They’ll be the poorer all their lives bekase av it.”

“I remember one story you told me ... of the little girl who was playing in a bush like this and was lured away to fairyland by exquisite music. I used to tiptoe through here in the ‘dim’ and listen for it. But I don’t think I really wanted to hear it ... I was afraid that if I went to fairyland I’d never come back. And no fairy country could ever satisfy me after Silver Bush.”

The look came into Pat’s brook-brown eyes which always made people feel she was remembering something very lovely. Pat was not the beauty of the Gardiner family but there was magic in her face when that look came. She rose and folded up her sewing and went down to the house, followed by McGinty. The robins were beginning to whistle and the clouds over the bush were turning to a faint rose. The ferns and long grasses of the path were gold in the light of the westering sun. Away to the right long shadows were creeping over the hill pasture. And down beyond the low fields was the blue mist that was an August sea.

Sid was in the yard trying to make an obstinate calf drink. Cuddles' two pet white ducks were lying by the well. They were to be offered up for Thanksgiving dinner but Judy had not dared to hint this to Cuddles as yet. Father was mowing the early oats. Mother, her nap over, was down in the garden among the velvety Sweet Williams. A squirrel was running saucily over the kitchen roof. It was going to be a dear quiet evening, such as she loved best, with every one and everything at Silver Bush happy. Pat loved to see things and people happy; and she herself had the gift, than which there is none more enviable, of finding great pleasure in little things. The bats would be coming out at the rising of the moon and the great, green spaciousness of the farm would be all around the house that always seemed to her more a person than a house.

"Pat's just as crazy as ever about Silver Bush, isn't she?" said Cuddles. "I think she'd die if she had to leave it. I don't believe she'll ever get married, Judy, just because of that. I love Silver Bush, too, but I don't want to live here *all* my life. I want to go away ... and have adventures ... and see the world."

"Sure and it wudn't do if iverybody wanted to stay at home," agreed Judy. "But Patsy has always had Silver Bush in her heart ... right at the very core av it. Whin she was no more than five she was asking yer mother one fine day where God was. And yer mother sez gentle-like, 'He is iverywhere, Patsy.' 'Iverywhere?' sez Pat, her eyes that pitiful. 'Hasn't He got innny home? Oh, mother, I'm so sorry for Him.' Did ye iver hear av such a thing as being sorry for God! Well, that was me liddle Pat. Cuddles dear" ... Judy lowered her voice like a conspirator, although Pat was well out of sight and hearing ... "Jem Robinson has been hanging round a bit, hasn't he now? He's a rale nice lad and only one year more to go at college. Do ye be thinking Pat has innny notion av him?"

"I'm sure she hasn't, Judy. Though she says the only thing she has against him is that his face needs sidewhiskers and he was born a generation too late. I heard her say that to Sid. What did she mean, Judy?"

"The Good Man Above do alone be knowing," groaned Judy. "Sure, Cuddles darling, it's all right to be a bit particular-like. The Silver Bush

girls have niver been like the Binnies. ‘Olive has a beau for ivery night in the wake,’ sez Mrs. Binnie to me onct, boastful-like. ‘So she do be for going in for quantity afore quality,’ sez I. But what if ye’re too particular? I’m asking ye.”

“I’m not old enough to have beaus yet,” said Cuddles, “but just you wait till I am. It must be thrilling, Judy, to have some one tell you he loves you.”

“Ould Tom Drinkwine did be telling me that onct upon a time but niver a thrill did I be faling,” said Judy reflectively.

Chapter II

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“All the months are friends of mine but apple month is the dearest,” chanted Pat.

It was October at Silver Bush and she and Cuddles and Judy picked apples in the New Part of the orchard every afternoon ... which wasn't so very new now, since it was all of twenty years old. But the Old Part was very much older and the apples in it were mostly sweet and fed to the pigs. Sometimes Long Alec Gardiner thought it would be far better to cut it down and get some real good out of the land but Pat couldn't be made to hear reason about it. She loved the Old Part far better than the New. It had been planted by Great-grandfather Gardiner and was shadowy and mysterious, with as many old spruce trees as apple trees in it, and one special corner where generations of beloved cats and kittens had been buried. Besides, as Pat pointed out, if you cleared away the Old Part it would leave the graveyard open to all the world, since the Old Part surrounded it on three sides. This argument had weight with Long Alec. He was proud, in his way, of the old family burial plot, where nobody was ever buried now but where so many greats and grands of every degree slept ... for the Gardiners of Silver Bush came of old P.E. Island pioneer stock. So the Old Part was spared and in spring it was as beautiful as the New Part, when the gnarled trees were young and bridal again for a brief space in the sweet spring days and the cool spring nights.

It was such a mellow and dreamy afternoon and Silver Bush seemed mellow and dreamy, too. Pat thought the old farm had a mood for every day in the year and every hour in the day. Now it would be gay ... now melancholy ... now friendly ... now austere ... now grey ... now golden. To-day it was golden. The Hill of the Mist had wrapped a scarf of blue haze about its brown shoulders and was mysteriously lovely still, in spite of the missing Lombardy. Behind it a great castle of white cloud, with

mauve shadows, towered up. There had been a delicate, ghostly rain the night before and the scent of the little hollow in the graveyard, full of frosted ferns, was distilled on the air. How green the pastures were for autumn! The kitchen yard was full of the pale gold of aspens and the turkey house was almost lost in a blaze of crimson sumacs. The white birches which some forgotten bride had planted along the Whispering Lane, that led from Silver Bush to Swallowfield, were amber, and the huge maple over the well was a flame. When Pat paused every few minutes just to look at it she whispered,

““The scarlet of the maples can shake me like a cry
Of bugles going by.””

“What might ye be whispering to yersilf, Patsy? Sure and ye might be telling us if it’s inny joke. It seems to be delighting ye.”

Pat lifted eyebrows like little slender wings.

“It was just a bit of poetry, Judy, and you don’t care much for poetry.”

“Oh, oh, po’try do be all right in its place but it won’t be kaping the apples if there’s a hard frost some av these nights. We’re a bit behind wid the picking as it is. And more work than iver to look forward to, now that yer dad has bought the ould Adams place for pasture and going into the live stock business.”

“But he’s going to have a hired man to help him, Judy.”

“Oh, oh, and who will be looking after the hired man I’m asking ye. He’ll be nading a bite to ate, I’m thinking, and mebbe a bit av washing and minding done. Not that I’m complaining av the work, mind ye. But ye can niver tell about an outsider. It’s been minny a long day since we had inny av the brade at Silver Bush and it’ll be a bit av a change, as ye say yersilf.”

“I don’t mind changes that mean things *coming* as much as changes that means things *going*,” said Pat, pausing to aim a wormy apple at two kittens who were chasing each other up the tree trunks. “And I’m so glad dad has bought the old Adams place. The little stone bridge Hilary and I built over Jordan and the Haunted Spring will belong to us now ... and Happiness.”

“Oh, oh, to think av buying happiness now!” chuckled Judy. “I wasn’t after thinking it cud be done, Patsy.”

“Judy, don’t you remember that Hilary and I called the little hill by the Haunted Spring Happiness? We used to have such lovely times there.”

“Oh, I’m minding. It was just me liddle joke, Patsy dear. Sure and it tickled me ribs to think av inny one being able to buy happiness. Oh, oh, there do be a few things God kapes to Himsilf and that do be one av thim. Though I did be knowing a man in ould Ireland that tried to buy off Death.”

“He couldn’t do that, Judy,” sighed Pat, recalling with a shiver the dark day when Bets, the lovely and beloved friend of her childhood, had died and left a blank in her life that had never been filled.

“But he *did*. And thin, whin he wanted death and prayed for him Death wudn’t come. ‘No, no,’ sez Death, ‘a bargain is a bargain.’ But this hired man now ... where is he going to slape? That’s been bothering me a bit. Wud yer dad be wanting me to give up me snug kitchen chamber for him and moving somewhere up the front stairs?”

Judy couldn’t keep the anxiety out of her voice. Pat shook her slim brown hands, that talked quite as eloquently as her lips, at Judy reassuringly.

“No, indeed, Judy. Dad knows that kitchen chamber is your kingdom. He’s going to fit up that nice little loft over the granary for him. Put a stove and a bed and a bit of furniture in it and it will be very comfortable. He can spend his evenings there when he’s home, don’t you think? What’s been worrying *me*, Judy, was that he might want to hang around the kitchen and spoil our jolly evenings.”

“Oh, oh, we’ll manage.” Judy was suddenly in good cheer. She would have surrendered her kitchen chamber without a word of protest had Long Alec so decreed but the thought had lain heavy on her heart. She had slept so cosily in that chamber for over forty years. “All I’m hoping is that yer dad won’t be hiring Sim Ledbury. He’s been after the place I hear.”

“Oh, surely dad wouldn’t want a Ledbury round,” said Cuddles.

“Ye can’t pick and choose, Cuddles dear. That do be the trouble. Hired hilp is be way av being scarce and yer dad must be having a man that understands cows. Sim do be thinking he does. But a Ledbury wid the freedom av me kitchen will be a hard pill to swallow and him wid a face like a tombstone and born hating cats. Gintleman Tom took just the one look at him the day he was here and thin made himsilf scarce. If we can be getting a man who’ll be good company for the cats ye’ll niver hear a word av complaint from me about him, as long as he’s willing to do a bit av work for his wages. Yer dad has got his name up for niver being put out at innnything so he cud be imposed upon something shameful. But we’ll all be seeing what we’ll see and now we’ve finished wid this tree I’m going in to bake me damsons.”

“I’m going to stay out till the sunshine fails me. I think, Judy, when I grow very old I’ll just sit and bask in the sunshine all the time ... I love it so. Cuddles, what about a run back to the Secret Field before sunset?”

Cuddles shook a golden-brown head.

“I’d love to go but you know I twisted my foot this morning and it hurts me yet. I’m going over to sit on Weeping Willy’s slab in the graveyard for a while and just dream. I feel shimmery to-day ... as if I was made of sunbeams.”

When Cuddles said things like that Pat had a vague feeling that Cuddles was clever and ought to be educated if it could be managed. But it had to be admitted that so far Cuddles seemed to share the family indifference to education. She went in unashamedly for “a good time” and pounced on life like a cat on a mouse.

Pat slipped away for one of her dear pilgrimages to the Secret Field ... that little tree-encircled spot at the very back of the farm, which she and Sid had discovered so long ago and which she, at least, had loved ever since. Almost every Sunday evening, when they walked over the farm, talking and planning ... for Sid was developing into an enthusiastic farmer ... they ended up with the Secret Field, which was always in grass and always bore a wonderful crop of wild strawberries. Sid had promised her he would never plough it up. It was really too small to be worthwhile

cultivating anyhow. And if it were ploughed up there might never be any more of Judy's famous wild strawberry shortcakes or those still more delicious things Pat made and which she called strawberry cream pies.

It was nice to go there with Sid but it was even nicer to go alone. There was nothing then to come between her and the silent, rapt communion she seemed to hold with it. It was the loneliest and loveliest spot on the farm. Its very silence was friendly and seemed to come out of the woods around it like a real presence. No wind ever blew there and rain and snow fell lightly. In summer it was a pool of sunlight, in winter a pool of frost ... now in autumn a pool of colour. Musky, spicy shadows seemed to hover around its grey old fences. Pat always felt that the field knew it was beautiful and was happy in its knowledge. She lingered in it until the sun set and then went slowly back home, savouring every moment of the gathering dusk. What a lovely phrase "gathering dusk" was ... almost as lovely as Judy's "dim", though the latter had a certain eerie quality that always gave Pat a rapture.

At the top of the hill field she paused, as always, to gloat over Silver Bush. The light shone out from the door and windows of the kitchen where Judy would be preparing supper, with the cats watching for a "liddle bite" and McGinty cocking a pointed ear for Pat's footstep. Would it be as nice when that unknown creature, the all-too-necessary hired man, would be hanging round, waiting for his supper? Of course it wouldn't. He would be a stranger and an alien. Pat fiercely resented the thought of him.

They would have supper by lamplight now. For a while she always hated to have to light the lamp for supper ... it meant that the wind had blown the summer away and that winter nights were closing in. Then she liked it ... it was so cosy and companionable and Silver Bushish, with Judy's "dim" looking in through the crimson vines around the window.

The colour of home on an autumn dusk was an exquisite thing. The trees all around it seemed to love it. The house belonged to them and to the garden and the green hill and the orchard and they to it. You couldn't separate them, Pat felt. She always wondered how any one could live in a house where there were no trees. It seemed an indecency, like a too naked

body. Trees ... to veil and caress and beshadow ... trees to warn you back and beckon you on. Lombardies for statelines ... birches for maiden grace ... maples for friendliness ... spruce and fir for mystery ... poplars to whisper secrets. Only they never really did. You thought you understood as long as you listened ... but when you left them you realized they had just been laughing at you ... thin, rustling, silky laughter. All the trees kept some secret. Who knew but that all those white birches, which stood so primly all day, when night and moonlight came, might step daintily out of the earth and pirouette over the meadows, while the young spruces around the Mince Pie field danced a saraband? Laughing at her fancy, Pat ran into the light and good cheer of Judy's whitewashed kitchen with life singing in her heart.

Chapter III

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“Tillytuck! Did ye iver be hearing the like av that for a name?” said Judy, quite flabbergasted for once. “Niver have I heard such a name on the Island before.”

“He’s been working on the south shore for years but he really belongs to Nova Scotia, dad says,” said Cuddles.

“Oh, oh, that ixplains it. Minny a quare name I’ve known coming out av Novy Scoshy. And what will we be after calling him? If he’s a young chap we can be calling him be his given name if he do be having one but if he’s a bit oldish it’ll have to be Mr. Tillytuck, since hired hilp is getting so uppish these days, and it’ll be the death av me if I do have to be saying ‘Mr. Tillytuck’ ivery time I open me mouth. *Mister* Tillytuck!”

Judy savoured the absurdity of it.

“He’s quite old, dad says. Over fifty,” remarked Cuddles.

“And dad says, too, that he’s a bit peculiar.”

“Peculiar, is it, thin? Oh, oh, people do be saying that I’m a bit that way mesilf, so there’ll be a pair av us. Is he peculiar in being worth his salt in the way av work? That do be the question.”

“He comes well recommended and dad was almost in despair of getting any one half suitable.”

“And is *Mister* Tillytuck married, I’m asking. *Mistress* Tillytuck! Oh, oh.”

“Dad didn’t say. But he’s to be here tomorrow so we’ll find out all about him. Judy, what *have* you got in that pot?”

“A bit av soup lift over from dinner. I did be thinking we’d like a liddle sup av it be bedtime. And lave a drop in the pot for Siddy. He’s gone gallivanting and it’s a cold night and mebbe a long drive home.”

There was no trace of disdain in Judy’s “gallivanting.” Judy thought gallivanting one of the lawful delights of youth.

It was a wild wet November evening, with an occasional vicious swish of rain on the windows. But the fire glowed brightly: Gentleman Tom was curled up on his own prescriptive chair and McGinty slumbered on the rug; Bold-and-Bad on one side of the stove, and Squedunk, a half-grown, striped cat on his promotion, on the other, kept up a lovely chorus of purrs: and Cuddles had a cherry-red dress on that brought out the young sheen of her hair. Cuddles had such lovely hair, Pat thought proudly. Nothing so pallid and washed out as gold, like Dot Robinson's ... no, a warm golden brown.

Judy's soup had a very tempting aroma. Judy was past-mistress of the art of soup-making. Long Alec always said all she had to do was wave her hand over the pot. Mother was mending by the table. Mother had never been strong since her operation and Pat, who watched her with a jealous love, thought she ought to be resting. But mother always liked to do the mending.

"It will be the last thing I'll give up, Pat. Most women don't like mending. I always did. The little worn garments ... when you were children ... they seemed so much a part of you. And now your bits of silk things. It doesn't hurt me really. I like to think I'm a little use still."

"Mother! Don't you dare say anything like that again! You're the very heart and soul of Silver Bush ... you know you are. We couldn't do without you for a day."

Mother smiled ... that little slow, sweet, mysterious smile of mother's ... the smile of a woman very wise and very loving. But then everything about mother was wise and loving. When shrieks of laughter rang out she looked as if she were laughing, too, though mother never did laugh ... not really.

"Let's have a jolly evening," Cuddles had said. "If this Tillytuck creature doesn't like staying in the granary loft in the evenings this may be the last evening we'll have the kitchen to ourselves, so let's make the most of it. Tell us some stories, Judy ... and I'll roast some clove apples."

"'Pile high the logs, the wind blows chill,'" quoted Pat. "At least put a few more sticks in the stove. That doesn't sound half as romantic as piling

high the logs, does it?"

"I'm thinking it might be more comfortable if it isn't be way av being romantic," said Judy, sitting down to her knitting in a corner whence she could give the soup pot an occasional magic stir. "They did be piling the logs in Castle McDermott minny the time and we'd have our faces frying and the backs av us frazing. Oh, oh, give me the modern ways ivery time."

"It seems funny to think of fires in heaven," ruminated Pat, curling up Turkfashion on the old hooked rug before the stove, with its pattern of three rather threadbare black cats. "But I want a fire there once in a while ... and a nice howly, windy night like this to point the contrast. And now for your ghost story, Judy."

"I'm clane run out av ghosts," complained Judy ... who had been saying the same thing for years. But she always produced or invented a new one, telling it with such verisimilitude of detail that even Pat and Cuddles were ... sometimes ... convinced. You could no longer believe in fairies of course, but the world hadn't quite given up all faith in ghosts. "Howsiver, whin I come to think av it, I may niver have told ye av the night me own great-uncle saw the Ould Ould McDermott ... the grandfather of the Ould McDermott av me own time ... a-sitting on his own grave and talking away to himsilf, angry-like. Did I now?"

"No ... no ... go on," said Cuddles eagerly.

But the ghost story of the Ould Ould McDermott was fated never to be told for at that moment there came a resounding treble knock upon the kitchen door. Before one of the paralysed trio could stir the door was opened and Tillytuck walked into the room ... and, though nobody just then realised it, into the life and heart of Silver Bush. They knew he was Tillytuck because he could be nobody else in the world.

Tillytuck came in and shut the door behind him but not before a lank, smooth-haired black dog had slipped in beside him. McGinty sat up and looked at him and the strange dog sat down and looked at McGinty. But the Silver Bush trio had no eyes just then for anybody but Tillytuck. They stared at him as if hypnotised.

Tillytuck was short and almost as broad as he was long. His red face was almost square, made squarer, if possible, by a pair of old-fashioned mutton-chop whiskers of a faded ginger hue. His mouth was nothing but a wide slit and his nose the merest round button of a nose. His hair could not be seen for it was concealed under a mangy old fur cap. His body was encased in a faded overcoat and a rather gorgeous tartan scarf was wrapped around his neck. In one hand he carried a huge, bulging old Gladstone bag and in the other what was evidently a fiddle done up in a flannel case.

Tillytuck stood and looked at the three wimmen critters out of twinkling little black eyes almost buried in cushions of fat.

“How pleased ye look to see me!” he said. “Only sorter paralysed as it were. Well, I can’t help being goodlooking.”

He went into what seemed an internal convulsion of silent chuckles. Pat jerked herself out of her trance. Mother had gone upstairs ... somebody must do ... say ... something. Judy, probably for the first time in her life, seemed incapable of speech or movement.

Pat scrambled up from the rug and went forward.

“Mr ... Mr. Tillytuck, is it?”

“The same, at your service ... Christian name, Josiah,” said the newcomer, with a bow that might have been courtly if he had had any neck to speak of. It was not till afterwards that Pat thought what a nice voice he had. “Age, fifty-five ... in politics, Liberal ... religion, fundamentalist ... gentleman-at-large, symbolically speaking. And an Orangeman,” he added, looking at a large picture of King William on a white horse, crossing the Boyne, that hung upon the wall.

“Won’t you ... take off your coat ... and sit down?” said Pat rather stupidly. “You see ... we didn’t expect you tonight. Father told us you would be here tomorrow.”

“I got a chance up on a truck to Silverbridge so I thought I’d better take it,” rumbled Mr. Tillytuck. He hung his cap up on a nail, revealing a head thatched with thick pepper-and-salt curls. He took off his scarf and coat and the cause of a mysterious bulge at one side was explained ... a huge, stuffed, white Arctic owl which he proudly set up on the clock shelf.

He put his bag in one corner with his fiddle on top of it. Then, with unerring discrimination, he selected the most comfortable chair in the kitchen ... Great-grandfather Nehemiah Gardiner's old glossy wooden armchair with its red cushions ... sank into it and produced a stubby black pipe from his pocket.

"Any objections?" he rumbled. "I never smoke if ladies object."

"We don't," said Pat. "We're used to Uncle Tom smoking."

Mr. Tillytuck deliberately loaded and lighted his pipe. Ten minutes before no one in the room had ever seen him. And now he seemed to belong there ... to have been always there. It was impossible to think of him as a stranger or a change. Even Judy, who, as a rule, didn't care what any man thought of her clothes, was thanking her stars that she had on her new drugget dress and a white apron. McGinty had sniffed once at him approvingly and then gone to sleep again, ignoring the new dog entirely. The two grey cats went on purring. Only Gentleman Tom hadn't yet made up his mind and continued to stare at him suspiciously.

Mr. Tillytuck's body was almost as square as his face and was encased in a faded and rather ragged old grey sweater, revealing glimpses of a red flannel shirt which brought a sudden peculiar gleam into Judy's eyes. It was so exactly the shade she would be wanting for the red rosebuds in the rug she meant to hook coming on spring.

"If ye've no objection to the pipe have ye any to the dog?" went on Mr. Tillytuck. "If ye haven't maybe ye wouldn't mind him lying down in that corner over there."

Judy decided that it was time she asserted herself. After all, this was *her* kitchen, not *Mister* Tillytuck's.

"Oh, oh, and is it a well-behaved dog he is, *Mister* Tillytuck, I'm asking ye."

"He is," replied Tillytuck solemnly. "But he's been an unfortunate kind of dog ... born to ill-luck as the sparks fly upward. Ye may not believe me, Miss ... Miss ..."

"Plum," said Judy shortly.

“Miss Plum, that dog has had a hard life of it. He’s had mange and distemper once each and worms continual. He got run over by a truck last summer and poisoned by strychnine the summer before that.”

“He must have as many lives as a cat,” giggled Cuddles.

“He’s in good health now,” assured Mr. Tillytuck. “He’s a bit lame from cutting his foot with a sliver of broken glass last week but he’ll soon be over it. And he throws a fit once in a while ... epileptic. Foams at the mouth. Staggers. Falls. In ten minutes gets up and trots away as good as new. So ye need never be worrying about him if ye see him take one. He’s really a broth of a dog, only kind of sensitive, and fine with the cows. I have a great respect for dogs ... always touch my cap when I meet one.”

“What is his name?” asked Pat.

“I call him just Dog,” responded Mr. Tillytuck. And Just Dog he remained during his entire sojourn at Silver Bush.

“A bit too glib wid yer tongue, *Mister* Tillytuck,” thought Judy. But she only said,

“And what may yer mind be in regard to cats?”

“Oh,” said Mr. Tillytuck, who seemed quite contented with a whiff of his pipe between speeches, “I have a feeling for cats, Miss Plum. When I wandered in here the other morning I thought I’d like the people here because there was a cat on the window sill. It’s a kind of instink with me. So thinks I to myself, ‘This place has got a flavour. I could do with a job here.’ And how right I was!”

“Where might your last place be?”

“On a fox farm down South Shore way. No names mentioned. I’ve been there three years. Got on well ... liked it well ... till the old missus died and the boss married again. I couldn’t pull with the new one at all. Everything on the table bought and only enough to keep the worms quiet at that. A terrible tetchie old woman. Ye couldn’t mention the weather to her but she’d quarrel with ye over it. Seemed to take it as a personal insult if you didn’t like the day. Then she picked on Dog right along. ‘Even a dog has some rights, woman,’ I told her. ‘You and me ain’t going to click,’ I told her. I’m rather finnickie as to the company I keep,’ I told her. ‘My dog

is better company than a contentious woman,' I told her. 'I'm nobody's slave,' I told her ... and give notice. When I can't stay in a place without quarrelling with the folks I just mosey along. Likely I'll be here quite a while. Looks like a snug harbour to me. This armchair just fits my kinks. I've had my ups and downs. Escaped from the *Titanic* for one thing."

"Oh!" Cuddles and Pat were all eyes and ears. This was exciting. Judy gave her soup a vicious swirl. Was she to have a rival in the story telling art?

"Yes, I escaped," said Mr. Tillytuck, "by not sailing in her." He put his pipe back into his mouth and emitted a rumble which they were to learn he called laughter.

"Oh, oh, so that do be your idea of a joke," thought Judy. "I'm getting yer measure, *Mister* Tillytuck."

"Not but what I've had my tragedies," resumed Mr. Tillytuck. He rolled up his sweater sleeve and showed a long white scar on his sinewy arm. "A leopard gave me that when I was a tamer in a circus in the States in my young days. Ah, that was the exciting life. I have a peculiar power over animals. No animal," said Mr. Tillytuck impressively, "can look me in the eye."

"Oh, oh, and are ye married?" persisted Judy remorselessly.

"Not by a jugful!" exclaimed Mr. Tillytuck, so explosively that every one jumped, even Gentleman Tom. Then he subsided into mildness again. "No, I've neither wife nor progeny, Miss Plum. I've often tried to get married but something always prevented. Sometimes every one was willing but the girl herself. Sometimes nobody was willing. Sometimes I couldn't get the question out. If I hadn't been such a temperance man I might have been married many a time. Needed something to loosen my tongue."

Mr. Tillytuck winked at Pat and Pat had a horrible urge to wink back at him. Really, some people did have a queer effect on you.

"I've always thought nobody understood me quite as well as I understood myself," resumed Mr. Tillytuck. "It isn't likely I'll ever marry now. But while there's life there's hope." This time it was at Judy he

winked and Judy felt that she was not half as “mad” as she should be. She gave her soup a final stir and stood up briskly.

“Wud ye be jining us in a sup av soup, *Mister* Tillytuck?”

“Ah, some small refreshment will not be amiss,” responded Mr. Tillytuck in a gratified tone. “I am not above the pleasures of the palate in moderation. And ever since I entered this dwelling I’ve been saying to myself whenever you stirred that pot, ‘Of all the smells that I ever did smell I never smelled a smell that smelled half as good as that smell smells.’”

Pat and Cuddles proceeded to set the table. Mr. Tillytuck watched them with approbation.

“A pair of high-steppers,” he remarked presently in a hoarse aside to Judy. “Some class to *them*. The little one has the wrist of an aristocrat.”

“Oh, oh, and so ye’ve noticed that now?” said Judy, highly gratified.

“Naturally. I’m an expert in regard to weemen. ‘There’s elegance for you,’ I said to myself the moment I opened the door. Some difference from the girls at the fox farm. Just between friends, Miss Plum, they looked like dried apples on a string. One of them was as thin as a weasel and living on lettuce to get thinner. But these two now ... Cupid will be busy I reckon. No doubt you’ve a terrible time with the boys hanging round, Miss Plum?”

“Oh, oh, we’re not altogether overlooked,” said Judy complacently.

“And now, *Mister* Tillytuck, will ye be sitting in?”

Mr. Tillytuck slid into a chair.

“I wonder if you’d mind leaving out the ‘mister,’” he said. “I’m not used to it and it makes me feel like a pilgrim and sojourner. Josiah, now ... if you wouldn’t mind.”

“Oh, oh, but I wud,” said Judy decidedly. “Sure and Josiah has always been a name I cudn’t bear iver since old Josiah Miller down at South Glen murdered his wife.”

“I was well acquainted with Josiah Miller,” remarked Mr. Tillytuck, taking up his spoon. “First he choked his wife, then he hanged her, then he dropped her in the river with a stone tied to her. Taking no chances. Ah, I

knew him well. In fact, I may say he was a particular friend of mine at one time. But after that happened of course I had to drop him.”

“Did they hang him?” demanded Cuddles with ghoulisn interest.

“No. They couldn’t prove it although everybody knew he did it. They kind of sympathised with him. There’s an odd woman that *has* to be murdered. He died a natural death but his ghost walked. I met it once on a time.”

“Oh!” Cuddles didn’t notice Judy’s evident disapproval of this poaching on her preserves. “Really, Mr. Tillytuck?”

“No mistake, Miss Gardiner. Most ghosts is nothing but rats. But this was a genuwine phantom.”

“Did he ... did he speak to you?”

Mr. Tillytuck nodded.

“‘I see you’re out for a walk like myself,’ says he. But I made no reply. I have discovered it is better not to monkey with spooks, miss. Interesting things, but dangerous. So irresponsible, speaking romantically. So, as Friend Josiah was right in the road and I couldn’t get past him I just walked through him. Never saw him again. Miss Plum, this *is* soup.”

Judy had spent the evening swinging from approval to disapproval of Mr. Tillytuck ... which continued to be the case during his whole sojourn at Silver Bush. His appreciation of her soup got him another bowlful. Pat was wishing father would come home from Swallowfield. Perhaps Mr. Tillytuck didn’t know he had to sleep in the granary. But Mr. Tillytuck said, as he got up from the table,

“I understand my quarters is in the granary ... so if you’ll be kind enough to tell me where it is ...”

“*Miss Rachel* will be taking the flashlight and showing ye the way,” said Judy. “There do be plinty av good blankets on the bed but I’m afraid ye’ll find it cold. There do be no fire since we didn’t be knowing ye were coming.”

“I’ll kindle one in a jiffy.”

“Oh, oh, thin ye’ll be smoked out. That fire has to be lit for an hour afore it’ll give over smoking. There do be something out av kilter wid the

chimney. Long ... Mr. Gardiner is maning to have it fixed.”

“I’ll fix it myself. I worked with a mason for years. Down at the fox farm they had a bad chimney and I built it over in fine shape.”

“Did it draw?” asked Judy sceptically.

“Draw! Miss Plum, that chimney drew the cat clean up it one night. The poor animal was never seen again.”

Judy subsided. Mr. Tillytuck possessed himself of his bag and his violin and his owl and his dog.

“I’m ready, Miss Gardiner. And as for the matter of names, Miss Plum, the Prince of Wales called me Josiah the whole summer I worked on his ranch in Alberta. A very democratic young man. But if you can’t bring yourself to it plain Tillytuck will do for me. And if you’ve warts or anything like that on your hands” ... Cuddles guiltily put a hand behind her ... “I can cure them in a jiffy.”

Judy primmed her mouth and took a high tone.

“Thank ye kindly but we do be knowing a few things at Silver Bush. Me grandmother did be taching me a charm for warts whin I was a girleen and it works rale well. Goodnight, *Mister* Tillytuck. I’m hoping ye’ll be warm and slape well.”

“I’ll be in the arms of old Murphy in short order,” assured Mr. Tillytuck.

They heard Cuddles’ laughter floating back through the rain all the way to the granary. Evidently Mr. Tillytuck was amusing her.

“Certainly he is peculiar,” said Pat. “But peculiar people give colour to life, don’t they, Judy?”

Cuddles ran in, her face sparkling and radiant from wind and rain.

“Isn’t he a darling? He told me he belonged to one of the best families in Nova Scotia.”

“Av which statement I have me doubts,” said Judy. “I’m thinking he was spaking symbolically, as he sez himsilf. And it didn’t use to be manners, taking yer story right out av yer mouth as ye heard him do to mesilf. But he sames a goodnatured simple sort av cratur and likely we can put up wid him as long as our family animals can.”

“He thinks you’re wonderful, Judy. And he wishes you *would* call him Josiah.”

“That I’ll not thin. But I’m not saying I won’t be laving off the Mister after a day or two. It’s too much of a strain. Cuddles dear, to-morry I’ll be fixing up a bit av a charm for that liddle wart av yours. I’m knowing it shud av been attinded to long ago but what wid all these comings and goings and hirings it wint out av me head. Oh, oh, I’ll not be having any *Mister* Tillytuck wid a sidewhisker casting up the fam’ly warts to me!”

“I must write Hilary all about him,” laughed Pat. “He would delight in him. Oh, Judy, if Hilary could only drop in some of these November evenings as he used to do things would be perfect. It’s over two years now since he went away and it seems like a hundred. Is there any soup left for Sid, Judy?”

“Loads and lashings av it. Was it to the dance at South Glen he was going?”

“Wherever he went he took Madge Robinson,” said Cuddles. “He’s giving her quite a rush now. All summer it was Sara Russell. I believe Sid is a dreadful flirt.”

Pat smiled contentedly. There was safety in numbers. After all, Sid had never seemed really to have a serious notion of any girl since Bets had died. It pleased Pat to think he would be faithful to her sweet memory all his life ... as she, Pat, would be. She would never have another intimate girl friend. She liked to think of herself as a happy old maid and Sid a happy old bachelor, living gaily together all their lives, loving and caring for Silver Bush, with Winnie and Cuddles and Joe coming home for long visits with their families, and McGinty and the cats living forever and Judy telling stories in the kitchen. One couldn’t think of Silver Bush without Judy. She had always been there and of course she always would be.

“Judy,” said Cuddles solemnly, turning back in the hall doorway on her way to bed, “Judy, mind you don’t go and fall in love with Josiah. I saw him winking at you.”

Judy’s only reply was a snort.

Chapter IV

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The days of that late autumn seemed to Pat to slip by like a golden river of happiness, even after the last cricket song had been sung. Mother was keeping well ... father was jubilant over the good harvest ... Cuddles was taking more interest in her lessons ... the surplus kittens of the summer's crop had all found excellent homes ... and there was enough of dances and beaus to satisfy Pat's not very passionate love of social life. Almost any time she would have preferred to roast apples and bandy lovely ghost stories in Judy's kitchen to going to a party. Cuddles could not understand this: *she* was longing for the day when she would be old enough to go to dances and have "boyfriends."

"I mean to have a great deal of *attention*," she told Judy gravely. "A few flirtations ... *nice* ones, Judy ... and then I'll fall in love *sensibly*."

"Oh, oh," said Judy with a twinkle, "I'm thinking that can't be done, Cuddles darlint. A sensible love affair now ... it do be sounding a bit dull to me."

"Pat says she's never going to fall in love with anybody. I really believe she does want to be an old maid, Judy."

"I've been hearing girls talk that way afore now," scoffed Judy. But she was secretly uneasy. The Silver Bush girls in any generation had never been flirts but she would have liked Pat to show a little more interest in the young men who came and went at Silver Bush and took her to dances and pictures and corn-roasts and skating parties and moonlight snowshoe tramps. Pat had any number of "boyfriends" but friends were all they were or seemed likely to be. Judy was quite elated when Milton Taylor of South Glen began haunting Silver Bush and taking Pat out when she would go. But Pat would not go often enough to please Judy.

"Oh, oh, Patsy dear, he'll have the finest farm in South Glen some day and the nice boy he is! It's the affectionate husband he'd be making ye."

“‘An affectionate husband,’” giggled Pat. “Oh, Judy, you’re so Victorian. Affectionate husbands are out of date. We like the cave men, don’t we, Cuddles?”

Cuddles and Pat exchanged grins. In spite of the difference in their ages they were great chums and Pat had a dreadful habit of telling Cuddles all about her beaus, what they did and what they said. Pat had a nippy tongue when she chose and the youths in question would not have been exactly delighted if they could have overheard her.

“But don’t you intend to get married sometime, Pat?” Cuddles asked once.

Pat shook her brown head impatiently.

“Oh ... sometime perhaps ... when I have to ... but not for years and years. Why, Silver Bush couldn’t spare me.”

“But if Sid brings a wife in sometime ...”

“Sid won’t do that,” cried Pat passionately. “I don’t believe Sid will ever marry. You know he was in love with Bets, Cuddles. I believe he will always be faithful to her memory.”

“Judy says men aren’t like that. And every one says May Binnie is making a dead set at him.”

“Sid will never marry May Binnie ... that’s one thing I’m sure of,” said Pat. The very thought made her feel cold. She and May Binnie had always hated each other.

Tillytuck was almost as much interested in Pat’s affairs as was Judy. Every young man who came to Silver Bush got a severe scrutiny, though he knew it not, from Tillytuck’s little black eyes. It delighted him to listen to Pat’s badinage.

“Gosh, but she knows how to handle the men!” he exclaimed admiringly one night, when the door closed behind Pat and Milton Taylor. “She’ll make a fine wife for some one. I admit that I admire her deportment, Judy.”

“Oh, oh, we all do know how to be handling the men at Silver Bush, Tillytuck,” said Judy loftily.

For it was “Judy” and “Tillytuck” now. Judy would none of Josiah and “mister” was too formal to keep up for long. They were excellent friends after a fashion. It seemed to Judy, as to everybody, that Tillytuck must have always been at Silver Bush. It was impossible to believe that it was only six weeks since he had dropped in with his owl and his fiddle and Just Dog. The very cats purred louder when he came into the house. To be sure, Gentleman Tom never quite approved of him. But then Gentleman Tom had always been a reserved, taciturn cat who never really took up with any one but Judy.

Tillytuck had his prescriptive corner and chair in the kitchen and he was always slipping in to ask Judy to make a cup of tea for him. The fun of it, to Pat and Cuddles, was that Judy always made it, without a word of complaint. She soon discovered that Tillytuck had a sweet tooth where pies and cake were concerned and when she was in a good humour with him there was usually a triangle of one or a slice of the other waiting for him, to the amusement of the girls who affected to believe that Judy was “sweet” on Tillytuck, much to her scorn. Sometimes she would even sit down on the other side of the stove and drink a cup of tea with him. When she felt compelled to scold him he always soothed her with a compliment.

“See how I can manage the weemen,” he would whisper complacently to Pat. “Ain’t it the pity I’m not a marrying man?”

“Perhaps you may marry yet,” responded Pat with a grave face, dropping a dot of red jelly like a gleaming ruby in the pale yellow centre of her lemon tarts.

“Maybe ... when I make up my mind whether I want to take pity on Judy or not,” Tillytuck answered with a wink. “There’s times when I think she’d suit me. She’s fond of talking and I’m fond of listening.”

Judy ignored nonsense of this kind. She had, so she informed the girls, taken Tillytuck’s measure once and for all.

She was, however, very bitter because he never went to church. Judy thought all hired men ought to go to church. It was only respectable. If they did not go who knew but that censorious neighbours would claim it was because they were so overworked at Silver Bush during the week that

they did not be having the strength to go to church on Sundays. But Tillytuck was adamant to her arguments.

“I don’t approve of human hymns,” he said firmly. “Nothing should be sung in churches but the psalms of David ... with maybe an occasional paraphrase on special occasions. Them’s my principles and I sticks to them. I always sing a psalm before I go to bed and every Sunday morning I read a chapter in my testament.”

“And on Waping Willy’s tombstone,” muttered Judy, who, for some mysterious reason resented Tillytuck’s habit of going into the graveyard to read the said chapter.

And then ... Christmas was drawing near and Great Preparations were being made. You could hear the capitals in Tillytuck’s voice when he referred to them. They were going to have a real “reunion.” Winnie and Frank would come and Uncle Tom and Aunt Edith and Aunt Barbara from Swallowfield and Aunt Hazel and Uncle Rob Madison and their five children and the Bay Shore Great-aunts if their rheumatism let them. In fact, it was to be what Judy called “a regular tommyshaw” and Pat was brimful of happiness and expectation over it all. It would be the first “real” Christmas since she had become the virtual mistress of Silver Bush. The previous one Frank had had bronchitis, so he and Winnie couldn’t come, and the one before that Aunt Hazel’s family had measles and Hilary was not there for the first time in years, and it hadn’t been a Christmassy Christmas at all. But everything would be different this year. And Joe expected to be home for the first Christmas since he went away. Judy’s turkeys were fat as fat could be and there was to be a goose because dad liked goose and a couple of ducks because Uncle Tom liked ducks. As for the rest of the bill of fare, Pat was poring over cookbooks most of her spare time. Many and old were the cookbooks of Silver Bush, full of clan recipes that had stood the test of time. Most of them had nice names linked up with all kinds of people who had invented the recipes ... many of them people who were dead or in far lands. It gave Pat a thrill to thumb them over ... Grandmother Selby’s jellied cabbage salad ... Aunt Hazel’s ginger cookies ... Cousin Miranda’s beefsteak pie ... the Bay Shore

pudding ... Great-grandmother Gardiner's fruit cake ... Old Joe Pingle's mince pie ... Uncle Horace's raisin gravy. Pat never could find out who Old Joe Pingle was. Nobody, not even Judy, seemed to know. But Uncle Horace had brought the recipe for raisin gravy home from his first voyage and told Judy he had killed a man for it ... though nobody believed him.

Judy was planning to get a new "dress-up dress" for the occasion. Her old one, a blue garment of very ancient vintage, was rarely a liddle old-fashioned.

"And besides, Patsy dear, I'd be nading it if I took a run over to ould Ireland some av these long-come-shorts. I can't be getting the thought out av me head iver since Cuddles put it in. Sure and if I wint I'd want to make a rale good apparance afore me ould frinds, not to spake av a visit to Castle McDermott. What wud ye think av a nice wine-colour, Patsy? They tell me it's rale fashionable, this fall. And mebbe sating as a bit av a change from silk."

Pat, although the thought of Judy going to Ireland, even if only for a visit, gave her a nasty sensation, entered heartily into the question of the new dress and went to town with Judy to help in the selection and bully the dressmaker into making it exactly as Judy wanted it. Uncle Tom was in town that day and they saw him dodging out of a jeweller's shop, trying hastily to secrete a small, ornately wrapped parcel in his pocket before he encountered them. Not succeeding, he muttered something about having to see a man and shot down a side street.

"Uncle Tom is awfully mysterious about something these days," said Pat. "What do you suppose he has been buying in that shop? I'm sure it couldn't have been anything for Aunt Edith or Aunt Barbara."

"Oh, oh, Patsy dear, I'm belaving yer Uncle Tom has a notion av getting married. I know the signs."

Pat experienced another disagreeable sensation. Change at Swallowfield was almost as bad as change at Silver Bush. Uncle Tom and the aunts had *always* lived there ... always would. Pat couldn't fit an Aunt Tom into the picture at all. "Oh, Judy, I can't think he would be so foolish. At his age! Why, he's sixty!"

“Wid me own eyes, Patsy, I saw him rading a letter one day and stuffing it into his pocket like mad whin he caught me eye on him. And blushing! Whin a man av his age do be blushing there’s something quare in the wind. Do ye be minding back in the summer Cuddles telling us she was after mailing letters from him to a lady?”

Pat sighed and put the disagreeable matter out of her mind. She wasn’t going to have the afternoon spoiled. There were many things to buy besides Judy’s satin dress. Pat loved shopping. It was so fascinating to go into the big department store and pick things to buy ... pretty things that just wanted to be taken away from all the glitter and too-muchness to be made part of a real home. They had to have some new overdrapes for the dining-room and new covers for the Big Parlour cushions and a set of little glass dishes to serve the chilled fruit cocktails Pat had decided on for the first course of the Christmas dinner. Judy was a little dubious about trying to put on too much style ... “cocktails” had a quare sound whin all was said and done and Silver Bush had always been a great timperance place ...

“Oh, Judy darling, it isn’t that kind of cocktails at all. Just bits of fruit ... and juice ... and a red maraschino cherry on top. You’ll love them.”

Judy surrendered. If Patsy wanted quality dishes she must have them. Anyhow, Judy was sure the Binnies never opened a dinner with cocktails and it was always well to be a few frills ahead of them. Judy enjoyed every minute of her excursion to town and brought home a wine-coloured satin of a lustre to dazzle even Castle McDermott. It dazzled Tillytuck to whom Judy proudly displayed it that night.

“A bit too voluptuous” was all he would say. And got no pie that night. Tillytuck confessed to himself as he took his way to the granary that this was one of the times he had failed in tact. If he has known that Judy had in the pantry a cold roast duck and a dish of browned potato which she had intended to share with him by way of a “liddle bite” he would have had still poorer opinion of his tact. As it was, Cuddles discovered it and she and Pat and Judy did justice to it before they went to bed, Sid coming in at

the last to pick the bones and listen to Judy's story about a lost diamond ring that had been found in a turkey's crop cut open by accident.

"And that do be minding me ... did I iver be telling ye av the first time yer Aunt Hazel dressed a turkey for dinner whin she was a slip av a girleen? Oh, oh, there niver was such a disgrace at Silver Bush. It tuk us years to live it down."

"What happened, Judy?"

"Ye'll niver be telling her I told ye? Well, thin, she tuk a great notion to be dressing and stuffing the turkey for dinner one time and nobody was to interfere wid it. We didn't be ixpecting any company that day, just having the turkey for ourselves we were, not being Binnies as sells ivery blessed thing off the farm they can and living on potatoes and point. But unixpected company come ... quality folks from town no less ... a mumber of Parlymint and his lady wife. I did be thanking me stars we had the turkey but oh, oh, what happened whin yer dad cut a slice off the brist, maning to give all white mate to the lady visitor!"

"Judy, what *did* happen? Don't be so mysterious."

"Mysterious, is it? Well, it's hating to tell it av Silver Bush I am. Not but what yer dad laughed till he was sick afterwards. Well, thin, to tell the worst, yer Aunt Hazel had niver taken out the turkey's crop and whin yer dad carved off that slice kernels av whate and a bunch av oats fell down all over the plate. I wasn't there av coorse ... I niver wud be setting at the table whin there was quality company ... and it did be well I wasn't for niver wud I have been the same agin. It was bad enough to hear yer grandmother telling av it. She niver hilt up her head quite so high agin, poor ould leddy. Oh, oh, it's only something to be laughing over now, though we did be thinking it was a tragedy thin."

Cuddles screamed over the tale but Pat felt a little troubled. It was a dreadful thing to have happened at Silver Bush even if it had been a quarter of a century before. Nothing worse could have been told of the Binnies.

"I do hope nothing disgraceful will happen at our Christmas dinner," she said anxiously.

“Niver worry, Patsy dear. There do be no paycock’s feathers in the house now. Sure and I burned thim all the day after *that*. Yer Uncle Horace said I was a superstitious ould woman and was rale peeved bekase he had brought thim home. So there’ll be nothing to bring us bad luck but still I’ll be thankful whin it’s all well over. As Tillytuck was remarking yisterday, there do be a certain amount av nervous strain over it all.”

“Tillytuck told me to-day that his grandfather was a pirate,” said Cuddles. “Also that he was through the Halifax horror when that ship loaded with munitions blew up in the days of the war. Do you really think, Judy, that Tillytuck has had all the adventures that he says he has?”

Judy’s only reply was a sardonic laugh.

Chapter V

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Christmas was drawing nearer and there was so much to be done. Pat and Cuddles worked like beavers and Judy flew about, or tried to, in three directions at once. A big box of goodies had to be packed and sent to Hilary ... poor Hilary who must spend his Christmas in a dreary Toronto boarding house. Mince meat and Christmas cake must be concocted. Judy had to go for fittings of the new dress and nearly died of them. The silver and brasses had to be cleaned: everything must be made spick and span.

“The things in this house *are* nice,” said Cuddles, as she rubbed at the spoons. “I wonder why. They’re not really so handsome but they’re *nice*.”

“They’re loved, that’s why,” said Pat softly. “They’ve been loved and cared for for years. I love everything in this house *terribly*, Cuddles.”

“I believe you love them too much, Pat. I love them, too, but you seem to worship them.”

“I can’t help it. Silver Bush means everything to me and it seems to mean more every year of my life. I do want this Christmas to go off well ... everything just right ... all the folks enjoying themselves. Judy, do you think six mince pies will be enough? It would be disgraceful if we didn’t have enough of everything.”

“Loads and lashings,” assured Judy. “Mrs. Tom Robinson do be thinking we’re tarrible extravagant. ‘A fat kitchen makes a lean will,’ she did be sighing to me the other day whin she was in, borrying the quilt clamps off av me. ‘Oh, oh,’ sez I, ‘we’re not like the Birtwhistles at the bridge,’ sez I. ‘After they do be having a bit av company,’ sez I, ‘not a dab av butter will be et in that house till all the extry bills are made up,’ sez I. She tuk it wid her chin up but she was faling it all right. Ould Mrs. Birtwhistle was her mother’s cousin. Oh, oh, I’m knowing too much about all the folks in these parts for inny av thim to be giving me digs in me own

kitchen. A lean will indade! Plaze the Good Man Above it'll be a long time afore there's innny nade to talk av wills at Silver Bush."

"But Aunt Edith says we do live too high at Silver Bush," said Cuddles. "She says we really ought to be more frugal."

"Frugal! I hate that word," said Pat. "It sounds so ... so porridgy. I do hope Joe will get home in time. We must give a party for him if he does, some night between Christmas and New Year's. I love to give parties. It's so nice to see people coming to Silver Bush in pretty dresses, all smiling and happy. I hope everybody will have a good appetite Christmas Day. I love to feed hungry people."

"Oh, oh, and what are women for if it's not to fade the world?" said Judy complacently. "Sure and it do be giving me pleasure just to see a cat lapping his milk. It's glad I am you girls do be having the rale Silver Bush notions av hospitality. I'm minding the fuss yer Aunt Jessie did be making once bekase company came unixpicted like and she had nothing to give thim to ate. Niver was Silver Bush in innny such predicament I'm telling ye."

"There ain't so much fun here as at the Jebbs' though," said Tillytuck, who was sandpapering an axe-handle in his corner and thought Judy needed taking down a bit. "They were always quarrelling there. Two would start and then all the rest would join in. It was interesting. You folks here never quarrel. I never saw such a harmonious family."

"I should think we wouldn't quarrel," said Pat indignantly. "It would be terrible to have quarrels at Silver Bush. I hope we never, never will have."

"You'll be a fortunate family then," said Tillytuck. "There ain't many families but have a ruction once in a while."

"I think I would *die* if any of us quarrelled," said Pat. "We leave that to people like the Binnies."

Hope died hard in the matter of Joe but the days passed without any word of him or his ship. It was over three years since Joe had been home and Pat always knew, when she surprised a certain look in mother's eyes,

that she was longing for her sailor boy. It would shadow mother's Christmas a bit if Joe didn't get home in time for it.

Pat had hoped for a fine Christmas day, clear and crisp, with a crackle of frost and unspoiled fields of snow and caps of lovely white fur on the posts down the lane: but she felt dubious as she took her last look from the kitchen door late on Christmas Eve. She and Judy had stayed up to make the stuffing for "the birds" but Judy was now folding weary hands for slumber in the kitchen chamber and Tillytuck had gone to sleep, perchance to snore, in the granary loft. A snarling, quarrelsome wind was fighting with the white birches and wailing around the barns. It did not sound like a fine day on the morrow but one must hope for the best, as Judy said. Pat shut out the chill of the winter night and paused a moment in the warm old kitchen to gloat over things in general. Everything she loved best was safe under her roof. The house seemed breathing softly and contentedly in its sleep. Life was very sweet.

Pat's hopes for a fine day were vain. Christmas morning dawned on a dreadful combination of fog and rain. Rain by itself, Pat always thought, was an honest thing ... fog lovely and eerie ... but together they were horrible. Tillytuck agreed with her.

"It's fogging, Judy," he said dolefully when he came in for breakfast. "Fogging hard. I can put up with a rainy day but I can't come these half-and-halves, like a woman who never knows her own mind. No, sir."

"Oh, oh, and I'm not knowing what's to be done, wid people tramping all over me clane floor in dirty boots," said Judy viciously.

"We'll just have to do as they do in Nova Scotia, Judy."

Judy bit.

"Oh, oh, and what is it they do in Novy Scoshy, if a body may ask?"

"They do the best they can," said Tillytuck solemnly, as he went out with the milking pails. Tillytuck mostly did the milking now. Judy had surrendered the chore unwillingly. She was afraid, when Long Alec insisted on it, that he thought she was growing too old for it. And she never could be brought to believe that Tillytuck stripped the cows properly. Besides, wasn't he ruining the young barn cats by milking into

their mouths? That was no way to be training cats. Ye wudn't be catching Gentleman Tom or Bold-and-Bad or Squedunk at inny such capers.

After breakfast the blue and gold and purple and silver parcels were distributed and every one was pleased. Pat had been afraid Sid might not like the rather gorgeous silk pyjamas she had got him but Sid did.

"They're the very niftiest pyjamas I ever saw in my life," vowed Cuddles.

"And where have you seen so many pyjamas, miss?" demanded Long Alec, thinking to "get a rise" out of Cuddles.

"On the bargain counters," retorted Cuddles ... and the laugh was on dad. It did not take much to make the Silver Bush people laugh. Laughter came easily to them.

"Isn't she the cliver one," said Judy ... and then stiffened in horror.

Tillytuck was proudly uncovering his Christmas present for "the missus." A Jerusalem cherry! A pretty thing, to be sure, with its glossy green leaves and ruby red fruit, and mother was delighted with it. But Judy beat a sudden retreat to the kitchen, followed by Pat.

"Judy, what is the matter? You're never going to be sick to-day!"

"Patsy darlint, it's well if there's nothing worse than me being sick happens here this blissed day. Were ye seeing what that Tillytuck did be giving to yer mother? A Jerusalem cherry no less! Sure and didn't I come all out wid gooseflesh whin I saw it."

"But what about it, Judy? It's a pretty thing. I thought it lovely of Tillytuck to remember mother."

"Oh, oh, don't ye be knowing a Jerusalem cherry brings bad luck? There was one brought into this house thirty years ago and yer Uncle Tom slipped on the stairs and bruk three ribs that very night. I'm telling ye. Patsy darlint, can't ye be contriving to set the thing outside somewhere till the dinner be over at laste?"

Pat shook her head.

"We couldn't do that. It would offend Tillytuck. Anyway, I know mother wouldn't hear of it. You mustn't be superstitious, Judy. A pretty thing like a Jerusalem cherry can't bring bad luck."

“I’m hoping ye’re right, Patsy, but we’ll be seeing what we’ll see. ‘Fogging, Judy,’ sez he. No wonder it do be fogging, and him wid that Jerusalem thing in his granary that blissed minute! But wid all there is to see to I’m not to stand bithering here.”

“I’m going to see about the spare room right off so that it will be all in order if any one comes early,” said Pat briskly. “May I have that new hooked rug you’ve got stored away in the attic to lay by the bed ... the one with the great soft, plushy roses?”

“Av coorse. I mint it for yer hope chist but the way ye’re snubbing the min right and lift there’ll be lashings av time for *that*. Put plinty av blankets on the bed, Patsy darlint. If the Bay Shore aunts come they may be staying all night. Style widout comfort is not the way av Silver Bush. Yer Aunt Helen at Glenwood now ... ye do be knowing yersilf what style she puts on ... silk spreads and liddle lace and ribbing cushions ... but I’ve always been hearing that people who slipt there vowed they were cold in bed. The minister slipt there one night and so cold he was he started prowling for a blanket in the night and fell down the back stairs. That was be way av being a disgrace. I’m telling ye.”

Cuddles had already made the spare room bed and was infuriated because Pat insisted on making it over again.

“You’ll be as bad as Aunt Edith before you’re thirty, Pat. She imagines nobody can do anything right but herself. And Judy’s no better, no matter what she thinks. She’s been teaching me to make gravy for weeks but now when I want to make it to-day she won’t let me. You all make me weary.”

“Don’t be cross, Cuddles. You made the bed as nicely as any one could but the extra blankets have to be put on. Cuddles, do you know I love to make up beds and think of all the tired people who will lie in them. I couldn’t bear it if any one should be cold in bed in Silver Bush. Will you get some of the silver polish and do the mirrors? I want them to shine like diamonds ... especially the one in the hall.”

The hall mirror was one that had been brought out from France by Great-great-grandmother, Marie Bonnet. It was a long, softly gleaming thing in a ruddy copper frame and Pat loved it. Cuddles had an affection

for it, too, because she thought she looked nicer in it than in any other mirror at Silver Bush.

“Sure and it was always the flattering one,” said Judy, as Cuddles rubbed at the frame. “Minny’s the pretty face that’s looked into it.”

“I wonder,” said Pat dreamily ... passing carelessly through the hall just to make sure Cuddles was doing the polishing right ... “if one came here some moonlit night one couldn’t see all the shadowy faces that once looked into it looking out again.”

“Oh, oh, ye’d nade the enchanted mirror of Castle McDermott for that,” chuckled Judy. “That looking glass wasn’t like other looking glasses. There did be a curse on it. I was always afraid av it. Be times it did be saming like a frind and thin again like an inimy. And I was always wanting to look in it, in spite av me fear, jist to be seeing if innything looked out av it.”

“And did anything ever, Judy?”

“Niver a bit av it, girl dear. The looking glass wasn’t for common folks like mesilf. Niver did I be seeing innything worse than me own frickled face. But there did be thim that did.”

“What did they see, Judy?”

“Oh, oh, there’s no time for that now. It’s me raisin gravy I must be seeing to this blissed minute.”

Pat shut the hall door and set her back against it resolutely.

“Judy, not one step do you stir from this hall till you’ve told us what was seen in the McDermott mirror, if there’s no raisin gravy made this Christmas.”

“Oh, oh,” ... Judy surrendered ... “It’s mebbe as well to tell it whin Tillytuck can’t be claiming to have stipped out av the glass. Did ye be hearing him the other avening whin I was telling av the dance one Saturday night in South Glin that they kipt up too late ... past the stroke av twelve ... and the Bad Man Below intered? Sez me Tillytuck solemnly, ‘I rimimber it only too well. I was at that dance.’ ‘Indade,’ sez I, sarcastic-like, ‘ye must be an aged man, Tillytuck, for the dance was all av eighty years ago.’ But he carried it off wid a grin. Ye can’t shame that man. But I

can't be rimimbering all the tales av the looking glass now. There was a Kathleen McDermott once who was no better than she shud be an me fine lady whips out one night to meet her gintleman lover and run away wid him. But me grand gintleman was killed on his way to her and Kathleen hurried back home thinking no one wud know. But the doors were closed agin her. The McDermott had looked in the glass and seen it all. Bridget McDermott saw *her* soldier husband dying in India the night he was killed. But nobody iver knew what Nora McDermott saw for the pore liddle soul dropped the lamp she was holding and her dress caught fire and she was dead in two hours."

"Oh!" Cuddles shivered deliciously. "Why did they keep such a terrible thing in the castle?"

"Sure, it *belonged* there," said Judy mysteriously. "Ye wudn't have thim move it. And it was be way av being frindly as often as not. Eileen McDermott knew her man was alive, shipwrecked on a South Say island, whin iveryone else was sure for a whole winter that he was drowned. She saw him in the glass. And the McDermott av me own time saw a minuet danced in it one night and niver was innny the worse av it. And now I'm getting back to me kitchen. I've wasted enough time palavering wid ye."

"Half the fun of making preparations for anything is in talking things over," reflected Cuddles, giving the mirror a final whisk. It held no ghosts. But Cuddles felt secretly satisfied with what she saw in it.

Chapter VI

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Eventually everything was in readiness. The table beautifully set ... Pat made Cuddles take off the tablecloth three times before it was smooth enough to suit her ... the house full of delicious odours, everybody dressed up except Judy.

“I’m not putting on me dress-up dress till me dinner is out of the way. I’m not wanting spots on it. Whin the last dish is washed I’ll slip up and put it on in time for supper. They’ll see me in all my grandeur thin. Yer table do be looking lovely, Patsy, but I’m thinking it wud look better if that cherry thing didn’t be sitting in the middle av it.”

“I thought it would please Tillytuck. He’s sensitive, you know. And if it is going to bring us bad luck it will anyhow, so what matter where it sits?”

“Sez she, laughing in her slave at the foolish ould woman. Oh, oh, we’ll be seing, Patsy. Joe hasn’t come after all and I’ve me own opinion as to what previnted him.”

Pat looked about happily. Everything was just right. She must run and tie Sid’s necktie for him. She loved to do that ... nobody else at Silver Bush could suit him. What matter if a cold rain were falling outside? Here it was snug and warm, the smiling rooms full of Christmas magic. Then the old brass knocker on the front door began to go tap-a-tap. The first guests had arrived ... Uncle Brian and Aunt Jessie, who hadn’t been asked at all but had just decided to run down in the free and easy clan fashion and bring rich old Cousin Nicholas Gardiner from New Brunswick, who was visiting them and wanted to see his relatives at Silver Bush. Pat, as she let them in, cast one wild glance through the dining room door to see if three more places could be crowded into the table without spoiling it and knew they couldn’t. The Jerusalem cherry had begun its dire work.

Soon everybody had come ... Frank and Winnie, Aunt Hazel and Uncle Robert Madison and all the little Madisons, the two stately Great-aunts, Frances and Honor from the Bay Shore farm, Uncle Tom and Aunt Barbara and Aunt Edith ... the latter looking as disapproving as usual.

“Raisin gravy,” she sniffed, as she went upstairs. “Judy Plum made that on purpose. She knows I can’t eat raisin gravy. It always gives me dyspepsia.”

But nobody seemed to have dyspepsia at that Christmas table. At first all went very well. A dear, gentle lady, with golden-brown eyes and silvery hair, sat at the head and her smile made every one feel welcome. Pat had elected to help Judy wait on the table but every one else sat down. The children sat at a special table in the Little Parlour as was the custom of the caste, and the cocktail course passed off without a hitch ... three extra cocktails having been hurriedly concocted by Cuddles who, however, forgot to put a maraschino cherry on them. Of course Aunt Edith got one of the cherryless ones and blamed Judy Plum for it, and Great-aunt Frances got another and felt slighted. Old Cousin Nicholas got the third and didn’t care. He never et the durn things anyhow. Uncle Tom ate his, although Aunt Edith reminded him that maraschino cherries were apt to give old people indigestion. “I’m not so aged yet,” said Uncle Tom stiffly. Uncle Tom did look surprisingly young, as Pat and Judy were quick to note. The once flowing, wavy black beard, which had been growing smaller all summer, was by now clipped to quite a smart little point and he had got gold-rimmed eyeglasses in place of the old spectacles. Pat thought of those California letters but put the thought resolutely away. Nothing must mar this Christmas dinner ... though Winnie was telling a story that would have been much better left untold. Judy almost froze in her tracks with horror as Winnie’s clear voice drifted out to the kitchen.

“It was just after Frank and I were married, you know. I hadn’t really got settled down. Unexpected company came to supper one night and I sent Frank off to the store to get some sliced ham for an emergency dish. I thought it seemed *rather* pink when I was arranging it on the plate ... so nicely, with curly little parsley sprays. It *did* look artistic. Frank helped

everybody and then took a bite himself. He laid down his fork and looked at me. I knew something was awfully wrong but *what?* I stopped pouring the tea and snatched up a mouthful of ham. What do you think?" Winnie looked impishly around the table. "That ham was *raw!*"

Shouts of laughter filled the dining room. Under cover of the noise Pat dashed out to the kitchen where she and Judy had a silent rage. They had laughed themselves when Winnie had first told the tale at Silver Bush. But to tell it to all the world was a very different thing.

"Oh, oh, the disgrace av having Edith and Mrs. Brian hear av it!" moaned Judy. "But niver be hard on her, Patsy. I do be knowing too well what loosened her tongue. And were ye noticing that Cuddles put the slim grane chair out av the liddle parlour for yer Uncle Brian and it cracked in one leg? Ivery time I've seen the crack widening a bit and the Good Man Above only knows if it'll last out the male. And here's Tillytuck sulking bekase he slipped on the floor and fell on his dog. He's been vowing I spilled a liddle gravy right in his corner, the great clumsy. But it's time to be taking in the soup."

And then, as if it had been waiting for Judy's words as a cue, the Jerusalem cherry showed what it could really do when it gave its mind to it. It seemed as if everything happened at once. Tillytuck, made sulkier still by Judy's speech, opened the door and stalked furiously out into the rain. Uncle Tom's wet, dripping Newfoundland, who had followed the Swallowfield folks over, dashed in. Just Dog simply couldn't stand that, after being fallen on. He flew at the intruder. The two dogs rolled in a furry avalanche right against Pat who had started for the dining room door bearing a trayful of soup plates full of a delicious brew that Judy called chicken broth. Down went poor Pat in a frightful mêlée of dogs, broken plates and spilled soup. Hearing the din, every one, except Cousin Nicholas, rushed out of the dining room. Aunt Hazel's two year old baby began to shriek piercingly. Aunt Edith took a heart attack on the spot. Judy Plum, for the first and only time in her life, lost her head but lost it to good purpose. She grabbed a huge pepper-pot from the dresser and hurled the contents full in the faces of the writhing, snarling dogs. It was

effective. The Newfoundland tore loose, dashed wildly through the dining room, ruining Aunt Jessie's new blue georgette dress as he collided with her, tore through the hall, tore upstairs, ran into a delicately papered pastel wall, tore down again, and escaped through the front door which Billy Madison had presence of mind enough to open for him. As for Just Dog, he had bolted through the cellar door, which had been left open, and struck the board shelf across the steps. Just Dog, shelf, three tin pails, two stewpans, and a dozen glass jars of Judy's baked damson preserves all crashed down the cellar steps together!

It seemed that Pandemonium reigned at Silver Bush for the next quarter of an hour. Aunt Edith was gasping for breath and demanding a cold compress. She had to be taken upstairs by Aunt Barbara and ministered to.

"Excitement always brings on that pain in my heart," she murmured piteously. "Judy Plum *knows* that."

Uncle Tom and Uncle Brian were in kinks of laughter. Aunt Frances and Aunt Honor *looked* "This is not how things are done at the Bay Shore." And poor Pat scrambled dizzily up from the floor, dripping with soup, crimson with shame and humiliation. It was Cuddles who saved the situation. Cuddles was superb. She didn't lose her wits for a second.

"Everybody go back and sit down," she ordered. "Buddy, stop yelling ... stop it, I say! Pat, slip up and get into another dress. Judy, clean up the mess. There is plenty of soup left ... Pat had only half the servings on the tray and Judy hid a potful away in the pantry. I'll have it ready in a jacksniff. Shut the cellar door and keep that dog down there until he gets the pepper out of his eyes."

Judy always declared she had never been as proud of any one at Silver Bush as she was of Cuddles at that time. But just at the moment poor Judy was feeling nothing but the bitterest humiliation. Never had such a shameful thing happened at Silver Bush. Wait till she got hold of Tillytuck! Wait till she could get her hands on that Jerusalem cherry.

In a surprisingly short time the guests were back at the table, where Cousin Nicholas had been placidly eating crackers through all the

hullabaloo. Cuddles and Judy between them served the soup. Pat came down, clothed and in her right mind once more. Two cats, whose nervous systems had been shattered, fled to the peace and calm of Judy's kitchen chamber. The Jerusalem cherry bided its time. The goose-duck-turkey course was a grand success and Judy's raisin gravy was acclaimed the last word in gravies. The dessert was amazing, though Cousin Nicholas did manage to upset a jug of sauce over the tablecloth. Judy came in and calmly mopped it up. Judy had got her second wind now and was prepared for anything.

Pat sat down for the dessert and there was laughter. People were to seek Pat from birth till death because she gave them the gift of laughter. Though she had secret worry gnawing at her heart. Aunt Jessie had eaten only three spoonfuls of her pudding! Wasn't it good? And Winnie ... somehow ... wasn't looking just right. She had suddenly become very quiet and rather pale.

To Judy's thankfulness the cracked chair lasted the dinner out, though it creaked alarmingly every time Uncle Brian moved. Then came "the grand dishwashing," as Judy called it, in the kitchen. Judy and Pat and Cuddles tackled it gaily. Things weren't so bad, after all. The guests were enjoying a good clan pi-jaw in the Big Parlour and the children were sitting around Tillytuck in the Little Parlour, looking up fascinated, while he told them stories. "Terrible lies," Judy vowed they were. But then Tillytuck had once said, "What a dull fellow I'd be if I never told anything but the truth." Anyhow, he was keeping "the young ones" quiet and that was something.

Chapter VII

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The dishes disposed of, Pat and Judy began to think of the supper. Judy determinedly set the Jerusalem cherry on the sideboard and hid the slim chair in the hall closet. A fresh cloth ... the one with daisies woven in it ... was brought out and Pat began to feel cheered up. After all, the guests were enjoying themselves and that was the main thing. Even Aunt Edith had come down, pale and heroic and forgiving. Just dog crawled out of the cellar and coiled himself up in his own corner. Silver Bush rang with gay voices, firelight shimmered over pretty dishes, delicious things were brought from pantry and cellar: and Pat thought proudly that the supper table, with its lighted candles, looked even prettier than the dinner table. And its circle of faces was happy and wise and kind.

“What’s the matter with Win?” asked Cuddles, who had decided to help wait with Judy and Pat and have her supper with them in the kitchen later on. “She’s yellow and pea-green ... is she sick?”

On the very heels of her question Frank came out hurriedly and whispered something to Pat who gave an ejaculation of dismay.

“I didn’t think it wise for her to come,” said Frank. “But she was so anxious to ... and you know ... we didn’t expect ... *this* ... for two weeks.”

Pat pushed him aside and ran to the telephone. Confusion reigned again at Silver Bush. Winnie was being taken upstairs to the Poet’s room. Pat and Judy were dashing madly from place to place. Mother couldn’t stay at the table. Cuddles was left to wait on it alone and did it well. As Tillytuck was wont to aver, she had her head screwed on right. But it was a rather flat meal. No laughter. And nobody had much appetite now, except Cousin Nicholas. A doctor and a nurse arrived in the pouring rain and as soon as possible the guests departed ... except Cousin Nicholas, who hadn’t caught on to the situation at all and announced his intention of staying a few days at Silver Bush.

As soon as they had gone, Judy, with a set face, marched into the dining room and carried the Jerusalem cherry out to Tillytuck, uncorking the vials of her wrath.

“Take this *thing* out av the house immajetly if not sooner, Josiah Tillytuck. It’s done enough harm already and now, wid what’s ixpicted upstairs, I’m not having it here one minute longer.”

Tillytuck obeyed humbly. What was the use of being peevish with the women?

A strange quiet fell over Silver Bush ... an expectant quiet. The supper dishes were washed and put away and Judy and Pat and Cuddles sat down before the kitchen fire to wait ... and eat russet apples in place of their forgotten supper. Their irrepressible gaiety was beginning to bubble up in spite of everything. After all, it *was* something to get a good laugh.

Tillytuck was smoking in his corner with Just Dog at his feet. McGinty was as near Pat as he could get and Bold-and-Bad and Squedunk ventured downstairs. Dad and Cousin Nicholas were raking over clan history in the Little Parlour. Sid was reading a murder mystery in the dining-room. Things seemed quite normal again ... were it not for muted sounds overhead and the occasional visits of the white-capped nurse to the kitchen.

“Oh, oh, what a day!” sighed Judy.

“It’s been dreadful,” assented Pat, “but it will be a story to laugh at some day. That is why things don’t always go smoothly I suppose. There’d be no interesting history. I only wish Hilary had been here to-day. I must write him a full account of it. What a sight I must have been, drowned in soup and dogs! Well, eight of our good soup plates go to the dump and the slim chair is done for ... and we’ll have no damson preserves till next fall ... but after all, that’s all the real damage.”

“I’m hoping it may be,” said Judy, with an ear cocked ceilingward. “What did ye do wid yer cherry, Tillytuck? If ye put it in the granary the place’ll burn down tonight.”

“I hove it into the pig-pen,” said Tillytuck sourly.

“Oh, oh, God hilp the poor pigs thin,” retorted Judy.

“I’ll never forget Aunt Frances’ face,” giggled Cuddles.

“Oh, oh, Aunt Frances, is it? Niver be minding her, Cuddles dear. Things have happened at the Bay Shore, too. Don’t I be minding one time I was over there hilping them out at a big time and whin yer Aunt Frances was jist in the act av setting a big bowl of red currant preserves on the table she did be giving the awfulest yell ye iver heard and falling over backward wid the bowl. Talk av soup! She did be looking as if she was lying murdered in her blood. At first ivery one thought she’d had a fit. But whin they come to find out a wee divil av a b’y had slipped down under the table and grabbed holt av her leg. Oh, oh, minny’s the time I’ve laughed over it. Her dress was clane ruint, and her timper ... Pasty darlint!”

“Judy ... What is it?”

“Oh, oh, nothing much,” said Judy in a despairing tone. “Only I niver rimimbered to put me dress-up dress on after all! It wint clare out av me head after the dog-fight ... and me puddling round afore all the company in me old drugget.”

“Never mind, Judy,” comforted Pat, seeing Judy was really upset. “Nobody would notice it. And you might have got spots on it and then what about Castle McDermott?”

“Yer Aunt Edith wud be thinking I’d nothing but drugget to wear,” groaned Judy. “Though she hadn’t got all the basting thrids out of her own dress, if ye noticed. It’s meself isn’t used to dog-fights in me kitchen” ... with a malevolent glance at Tillytuck. “It’s minny a year since I saw one ... the last was in South Glin church all av tin years ago. Oh, oh, that was a tommyshaw! Billy Gardiner always brought his dog to church. It was be way av being winked at for iverybody knew poor Billy was only half there, and they did be setting in a back pew, the dog behaving himself fine, though he did be giving a tarrible howl whin a lady visitor from town got up one day to sing a solo. Sure, nobody blamed the dog. But this day I’m telling ye av, another dog wandered in, the door being open, and Billy’s dog wint for him. The strange dog flew up the aisle wid Billy’s dog after

him. He was caught jist under the pulpit! Oh, oh!” Judy rocked with laughter at the recollection, forgetful of her unworn splendors.

“What did they do, Judy?”

“Do, is it? Elder Jimmy Gardiner and Elder Tom Robinson aich grabbed a dog and carried it out be the scruff av the neck. Picture to yersilves, girls dear ... a solemn ould elder wid a long beard and a most unchristian ixpression walking down the aisle, one on one side av the church and one on the other, houlding a dog at arm’s length.”

“Ah,” said Tillytuck, “I was in the church that day. I remember it well.”

This was too much for Judy. She got up and went into the pantry. Sid came out to say that Cousin Nicholas wished to go to bed and wanted a hot water bottle to take with him. Pat convoyed him to the spare room. Tillytuck, realising that he was out of favour, went off to the granary.

Pat had just come down when there was a knock at the door. Who on earth could it be at this time of night? Cuddles opened it ... and in out of the starless dripping night stepped Joe! Captain Joe, tall and bronzed and changed, after years of typhoons on China seas, but unmistakably Joe.

“Flew here,” said Joe laconically. “Flew from Halifax. Got into Charlottetown at dusk and hired a motor to bring me out. Thought I’d make it in time for supper anyhow. Everything happened to that car that could happen ... and finally a broken axle. Nevertheless, here I am ... and why are you all up as late and looking so solemn?”

Pat told him. Joe whistled.

“Not little Winnie! Why, I always think of her as a kid herself. What a night for the stork to fly! Anything in the pantry, Judy?”

His old grin robbed the question of insult. Joe *knew* there would be something in the pantry. Judy had a whole turkey stowed away, as well as the pot of soup. By the time mother had come down and hugged Joe and hurried anxiously back upstairs Judy had another table spread and they all sat down to it, even forgiven Tillytuck, whom Cuddles haled in from the granary.

“Ah, this is worth coming home for,” said Joe. “Cuddles, you’re almost grown up. Any beau yet, Pat?”

“Oh, oh, ye’d better be asking her that,” said Judy. “Don’t ye think it’s time we had another widding at Silver Bush? She snubbed Elmer Moody last wake so bad he wint off vowing he’d niver set foot in Silver Bush agin.”

“He breathes through his mouth,” said Pat airily.

“Listen at her. Some fault to find wid ivery one av the poor b’ys. And what about yersilf, Joe? Do ye be coming home to find a wife?”

Joe blushed surprisingly. Pat only half liked it. She had heard rumours of several girls Captain Joe had been writing to occasionally. None of them were quite good enough for Joe. But it was the old story ... change ... change. Pat hated change so. And little, cool, unexpected breaths of it were always blowing across everything, even the jolliest of times, bringing a chill of foreboding.

“And you’re not tattooed after all, Joe,” said Cuddles, half disappointedly.

“Only my hands,” said Joe, displaying a blue anchor on one and his own initials on the other.

“Will you tattoo mine on mine?” asked Cuddles eagerly.

Before Joe could answer an indignant old man suddenly erupted into the kitchen, wrapped in a dressing gown. It was Cousin Nicholas and Cousin Nicholas was distinctly in a temper.

“Cats!” he snarled. “Cats! I had just fallen into a refreshing slumber when a huge cat jumped on my stomach ... on my stomach, mark you. I detest cats.”

“It ... must have been Bold-and-Bad,” gasped Pat. “He does so love to get into the spare room bed. I’m so sorry, Cousin Nicholas ...”

“Sorry, miss! I never can get to sleep again after I am once wakened up. Will your sorrow cure that? I came down to ask you to find that cat and secure him. *I* don’t know where the beast is ... probably under the bed, plotting more devilment.”

“Peevish ... very peevish,” muttered Tillytuck quite audibly. Cuddles meowed and Cousin Nicholas glared at her.

“The manners of Silver Bush are not what they were in my day,” he said crushingly. “I had a very hard time to get to sleep at all. There was too much going and coming upstairs. Is anybody sick?”

“Yes ... but it don’t be catching,” said Judy reassuringly.

Pat, trying not to laugh, hurried upstairs and discovered Bold-and-Bad crouching in the corner of the hall, evidently trying to figure out how many lives he had left. For once in his life Bold-and-Bad was cowed. Pat carried him down and shut him up in the back porch, not without a pat or two ... for she was not overly attracted to Cousin Nicholas.

That irate gentleman was finally persuaded to go back to bed. Evidently some idea of what was going on had filtered through his aged brain, for, as Pat assisted his somewhat shaky steps up the stairs, he whispered,

“Mebbe I shouldn’t mention it to a young girl like you ... but is it a baby?”

Pat nodded.

“Ah, then,” said Cousin Nicholas, peering suspiciously about him, “you’d better watch that cat. Cats suck babies’ breaths.”

“What an opinion our Cousin Nicholas will have of Silver Bush,” said Pat, half mournfully, half laughingly, when she returned to the kitchen. “Even our cats and dogs can’t behave. And you, Cuddles ... I’m ashamed of you. Whatever made you meow at him?”

“I wasn’t meowing at *him*,” said Cuddles gravely. “I was just meowing.”

“Oh, oh, ye naden’t be worrying over what ould Nicholas Gardiner thinks av our animals,” sniffed Judy. “I wasn’t saying innnything before for he’s your cousin and whin all is said and done blood do be thicker than water. But did ye iver hear how me fine Nicholas got his start in life? Whin his liddle baby brother died ould Nicholas ... only he was jist eliven thin ... earned fifty cents be letting all the neighbourhood children in to see the wee dead body in the casket for a cint apace. That did be the

foundation av *his* fortunes. He turned that fifty cints over and over, it growing wid ivery turn, and niver a bad spec did he make.”

“Judy, is that really true? I mean ... haven’t you mixed up Cousin Nicholas with some one else?”

“Niver a bit av it. The Gardiners don’t all be angels, me jewel. Sure and that story was laughed over in the clan for years. Aven his mother laughed wid the bist av thim. She was a Bowman and he got his quare ways from her. So he’s more to be pitied than laughed at.”

“Yes, indeed,” agreed Pat. “Think of never knowing the delight of loving a nice, prowly, velvety cat.”

“He’s awfully rich though, isn’t he?” said Cuddles.

“Oh, oh, wid one kind av riches, Cuddles darlint. But it’s better to be poor and fale rich than to be rich and fale poor. Hark!”

Judy suddenly held up her hand.

“What’s that?”

“Sounds like a cat on the porch roof,” said Sid.

Pat dashed upstairs, returning in a few minutes flushed with excitement.

“Come here, *Aunt* Cuddles,” she laughed.

Chapter VIII

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Joe and Sid and dad went to bed. Tillytuck, mildly remarking that he had had enough passionate scenes for one day, betook himself to the granary. But Pat and Cuddles and Judy decided to make a night of it. It was three now. They sat around the fire and lived over that fateful Christmas Day. They roared with laughter over the look of Cousin Nicholas.

“Sure and he naden’t have been making such a fuss over a poor cat,” said Judy. “Well do I remimber what happened to a man in Silverbridge years ago. He jumped into his bid one night and found a dead man atwane the shates.”

“Judy!”

“I’m telling ye. It was his own brither but if Tillytuck was here he’d be saying he was the dead man. And now let’s be having another liddle bite. I’m faling as if I hadn’t had a dacent male for wakes, what wid dog-fights and ould cousins and people flying like birds. It’s thankful I am that I frog-marched me Tillytuck out wid that Jerusalem cherry afore Joe did be starting from Halyfax.”

“To think that mother is a grandmother and we’re aunts,” said Cuddles. “It makes me feel awfully old. I’m glad it’s a girl. You can dress them so cute. They’re going to name it Mary Laura Patricia after its two grandmothers and call it Mary. Frank put the Patricia in for you, Pat, because he said if it hadn’t been for you that child would never have been born. What did he mean?”

“Just some of his nonsense. He persists in thinking I gave up a career so that Winnie could get married. I’m glad they’re calling it mother’s name. But I always think a second name seems woeful and reproachful because it is never mentioned often enough to give it personality. As for a third name, it’s nothing but a ghost.”

“Tillytuck was really quite excited over it, wasn’t he?”

“Can you imagine Tillytuck ever being a baby?” said Pat dreamily.

“Oh, oh, he was, and mebbe somebody’s pride and joy,” sighed Judy sentimentally. “It do be tarrible what we come to wid the years. Sure and another Christmas is over and we can’t be denying it was merry in spots.”

And then it was morning. The rain was over; the whole world was soaked and sodden but in the east was a primrose brightening and soon the Hill of the Mist was like a bare, brown breast in the pale early sunshine. The house, after all the revel and excitement, had a dishevelled, cynical, ashamed look. Pat longed to fall upon it and restore it to serenity and self-respect.

Winnie, white and sweet, was asking them with her pretty laugh what they thought of her little surprise party. Sid was declaring to indignant Cuddles that the baby had a face like a monkey. Mother was played out and condemned to a day in bed. And Judy stole out to see if the pigs had survived the Jerusalem cherry.

Chapter IX

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“Oh, oh, I do be tasting spring to-day,” said Judy one early May morning. It had been a long cold winter, though a pleasant one socially, with dances and doings galore. They had two dances at Silver Bush for Joe ... one the week after he came home and one on the night before he went away again. Tillytuck had been the fiddler on both occasions and Cuddles had danced several sets and thought she was nearly grown up. It was a family joke that Cuddles had cut Pat out in the good graces of Ned Avery and had been asked to go with him to a dance at South Glen. But mother would not allow this. Cuddles, she said, was far too young. Cuddles was peeved.

“It seems to me you’re always too young or too old to do anything you like in this world,” she said scornfully. “And you won’t let Joe tattoo my initials on my arm. It would be *such* a distinction. Nobody in school is tattooed *anywhere*. Trix Binnie would just be wild with envy.”

“Oh, oh, since when have the Gardiners taken to caring what a Binnie thought av innything?” sniffed Judy.

Spring was late in coming that year. Judy had a saying that “it wudn’t be spring till the snow on the Hill av the Mist melted and the snow on the Hill av the Mist wudn’t melt till spring.” There were fitful promises of it ... sudden lovely days followed by bitter east winds and grey ghost mists, or icy northwest winds and frosts. But on this particular day it did seem as if it had really come to stay. It was a warm day of entrancing gleams and glooms. Once a silver shower drifted low over the Hill of the Mist ... over the Long House ... over the Field of the Pool — over the silver bush ... and away down to the gulf. Then the day made up its mind to be sunny. The distances were hung with pale blue hazes and there was an emerald mist on the trees everywhere. The world was sweet and the Pool was a great sapphire. Cuddles found some white and purple violets down by the singing waters of Jordan and young ferns were uncoiling along the edge of

the birch grove. Pat discovered that the little clump of poet's narcissus on the lawn was peeping above ground. It gave her a pang to remember that she had got it from Bets ... Bets who had loved the springs so but no longer answered to their call. Pat looked wistfully up the hill to the Long House ... the Long Lonely House once more, for the people who had moved into it when the Wilcoxes went away had gone again and the house was untenanted, as it had been when Pat was a child and used to wish its windows could be lighted up at night like other houses. Now she no longer felt that way about it, though she still felt a thrill of pleasure when the sunset flame kindled its western windows into a fleeting semblance of life and colour, and still shivered when it looked cold and desolate on moonlit winter nights. She resented the thought of any one living there when Bets, sweet, beloved Bets, had gone, never to return. When it was empty she could pretend Bets was still there and would come running down the hill, as in the old fair and unforgotten days, on some of these spring evenings that seemed able to call anything out of the grave.

When Judy "tasted" spring it was time to begin housecleaning and as Tillytuck was away for the day on "the other farm" as the "old Adams place" was now called, Judy and Pat took the opportunity to clean the granary chamber ... a task which Judy performed rather viciously, for Tillytuck was temporarily out of favour with her, partly because Just Dog had killed three of her chickens the day before and chewed up one leg of Siddey's khaki pants, and partly because ...

"He did be coming home drunk agin last night and slipt in the stable."

Judy's "agin" seemed to imply that Tillytuck came home drunk frequently. As a matter of fact this was only his second offence and Tillytuck was such an excellent worker that Long Alec winked at his very occasional weakness.

"Not that he'd be giving in he was tight ... Oh, no. He wud only say the moon seemed a bit unsteady-like. And he was after warning me not to be getting innyside notion av marrying into me head aven if he did be liking to talk to me. Me! But wud it be innyside use getting mad wid the likes av him? It ann'ys him more to be laughing at him. He did be trying to get up the

granary stips ... me watching him through the liddle round windy and having me own fun ... but he cudn't trust his legs, so he paraded to the stable, walking very stiff and pompous. Oh, oh, the dear knows what we'll be finding in his din ... a goat's nest, I wudn't be wondering."

"Tillytuck says he's going to get a radio," said Cuddles, who was not in school, as it was Saturday.

"Oh, oh, a radio, is it? I'm relaved to hear it. Mebbe if he gets one he won't be rading such trash as this." Judy indignantly held up a book she had discovered on Tillytuck's table. "Do ye be seeing it ... *The Mistakes av Moses*. It do be a rank infidel book he borried off ould Roger Madison av Silverbridge and whin I rated him for rading it he sez, 'I like to see both sides av a question,' sez he. Him and his curiosity!"

Judy tossed the offending volume out of the window into the pig-pen and ostentatiously washed her hands.

"You can't stick Tillytuck on the catechism though," said Pat. "And he really is a great hand to read his Bible."

"But he has his doubts about the story of Jonah and the whale," said Cuddles. "He told me so."

"Does he be talking to children av such things?" Judy was horrified. "It's telling him me opinion av that I'll be. Don't ye be hading him, Cuddles. We've niver hild wid infidelity at Silver Bush and if Moses did be making a mistake or two it's me considered opinion that he knew more about things in gineral than Josiah Tillytuck and ould Roger Madison put together."

"You're just a bit peeved with Tillytuck because he tried to cap your stories," suggested Cuddles slyly. For there had been quite a scene in the kitchen two evenings previously when Judy had told a tale of some lady on the south side who put rat poison by mistake for baking powder in the family pancakes and Tillytuck had said he had eaten one of them.

"It isn't a chanct I do be having wid Tillytuck," said Judy passionately. "I stick to the truth but he do be making things up as he goes along."

"But you made candy for him afterwards, Judy."

“Oh, oh, so I did,” admitted Judy with a deprecating grin. “He gets round a body somehow wid his palaver. There do be times whin he cud wheedle the legs off an iron pot. Niver be laughing at an ould woman, Cuddles dear. Tillytuck and I do be understanding each other rale well, for all av our tiffs. If he likes to think I’m dying about him he’s welcome to it. He hasn’t minny pleasures. And now we’ve finished the chamber so we’ll ...”

“The pigs are in the graveyard, Judy,” cried Cuddles.

“I’ll pig thim,” ejaculated Judy viciously as she whirled down the granary stairs in horror. But after all cud ye be blaming the poor pigs? They had niver been thimsilves since they et the Jeruselem cherry.

In the afternoon they tackled the garret. Pat always loved cleaning in general and the garret in particular. It was delightful to make Silver Bush as clean and sweet as the spring ... a new curtain here ... a new wallpaper there ... a spot of paint where it would do most good. Little changes that didn’t hurt ... much. Though Pat was always sorry for the old wallpapers and missed them.

When you came to the garret you always found so many things you had almost forgotten and all the family ghosts got a good rummaging.

“Sure, housecleaning and diggin’ a well do be the only two things I know av that ye begin at the top and work down wid,” said Judy. “Well, the garret do be done and that do be making the fortieth time I’ve been at the cleaning av it. Forty-one years this very May, Pasty dear, since I tuk up wid Silver Bush, hoping to put the summer in if Long Alec’s mother was suited wid me ... and here I do be still.”

“And will be for forty more years I hope,” said Pat with a hug. “But we haven’t quite finished, Judy. I want to see what’s in that old black chest in the corner. It hasn’t been turned out properly for years.”

“Oh, oh, there’s nothing much there but the relics av ould dacency,” said Judy.

“We really should examine it. The moths may have got into it.”

“Sure and it’s always aisy to find an excuse for what ye want to do,” said Judy slyly. “But we’ll ransack it if ye wait till I get supper. We’ll

come up here in the dim and see what's in it."

Accordingly, after supper Pat betook herself to the garret, which was growing shadowy, although the outside world was still in the glow of sunset. It was a spring sunset ... pale golds and soft pinks and ethereal apple greens shading up to silvery blue over the birches. Pat ached with the loveliness of it, being one of those

"who feel the thrill
Of beauty like a pang."

Violet mists were veiling the distant hills. The little green-skirted maples over at Swallowfield were dancing girls with the dark spruces behind them, like grim, old-maid duennas. Sid had ploughed the Mince Pie field that day and it lay in beautiful, red, even furrows. From the Field of the Pool there sounded the dreamy trill of a few frogs through the brooding spring evening and there was some indefinable glamour over everything. Things were a little "queer" as they had sometimes seemed in childhood on certain evenings.

"This makes me think of the night you told me Cuddles was coming," she said to Judy, who came up the stairs, panting a little. "Oh, Judy dear, just look at that sunset."

"Innything spacial about it?" asked Judy a little shortly ... because she didn't like the idea of being out of breath after only two flights of stairs.

"There's something special about every sunset, Judy. I never saw a cloud just that colour and shape before ... see ... the one over the tall fir-tree."

"I'm not denying it's handsome. Sure and I wudn't be like ould Rob Pennock at the South Glen. His wife was rale ashamed av his insinsibility. 'He doesn't know there's such a thing as a sunset,' — she sez to me once, impatient-like."

"How terrible it must be not to see and *feel* beauty," said Pat softly. "I'm so glad I can find happiness in all lovely little things ... like that cloud. It seems to me that every time I look out of a window the world gives me a gift. Look at those old dark firs around the pool. Judy, does it

ever seem to you that the Pool is drying up? It seems to me that it isn't as deep as it used to be."

"I'm fearing it is," acknowledged Judy. "It's a way thim pools has. There was one below Swallyfield whin I was here first ... and now it's nothing but a grane dimple wid some ferns and bracken in it."

"I don't know how I'll bear it if it dries up. I've always loved it so."

"What don't ye be loving around the ould place, Patsy dear?"

"The more things and people you love the more happiness you get, Judy."

"Oh, oh, and the more sorrow too. Now, whatever made me go and say that! It jist slipped out."

"It's true, I suppose," said Pat thoughtfully. "It's the price you pay for loving, I guess. If I hadn't loved Bets so much it wouldn't have hurt me so terribly when she died. But it was worth the hurt, Judy."

"It always do be," said Judy gently. "So niver ye be minding me silly talk av the sorrow."

"Well, how about the black chest, Judy?"

"Cuddles wants us to be waiting till she can come. She said she wudn't be long ... she had a bit av Lating to look over. She do be getting int'rested in her books at last. Joe did be giving her a bit av advice now and thin."

"I hope we'll be able to afford to give her a real good education, Judy. We never do seem to have much money, I admit."

"Too hospitable, I'm supposing some do be thinking. Mrs. Binnie says we throw out more wid a spoon than the min can bring in wid a shovel ... Binnie-like. *Our* min like the good living. And what if we don't be having too much money, Patsy dear? Sure and we have lashings av things no money cud be buying. There'll be enough squazed out for Cuddles whin the time comes, niver fear. The Good Man Above will be seeing to that."

The drone of the separator came up from the yard below where Tillytuck was operating under the big maple over the well and singing a Psalm sonorously, with McGinty and some cats for an audience. It struck Pat that Tillytuck had a remarkably good voice. And he was setting the saucer for the fairies, just as Judy always did.

“I used to think the fairies really came and drank it. I wish I could believe things like that now, Judy.”

“It do be fun belaving things. I often wonder, Patsy dear, at all the skiptics do be losing. As for the saucer av milk, the dog McGinty gets it now mostly. Look at him sitting there and thumping his bit av a tail ivery time Tillytuck gets to the end av a verse. He may not be having innny great ear for music but he do be knowing how to get round Tillytuck.”

“Judy, I’m almost sure dear little dogs like McGinty must have souls.”

“A liddle bit av one mebbe,” said Judy cautiously. “I niver cud hould wid the verse ‘widout are dogs,’ Patsy dear, though niver be telling the minister or Tillytuck I said it. Whiniver I see the dog McGinty I think av Jingle. Wasn’t it a letter from him ye got to-day? And is there innny word av him coming home this summer?”

“No,” Pat sighed. She had been hoping Hilary would come. “He has to work in vacation, Judy.”

“I s’pose his mother doesn’t be thinking innny more about him than she iver did?”

“I don’t know. He never mentions her name now. Of course she is quite willing to send him all the money he needs ... but he’s terribly independent, Judy. He is determined to earn all he can for himself. And as for coming home ... well, you know, since his uncle died and his aunt went to town he really has no home to come back to. Of course I’ve told him a dozen times he is to look upon Silver Bush as home. Do you remember how I used to set a light in this very window when I wanted him to come over?”

“And he niver failed to come, did he, Patsy? I’m almost belaving if ye set a light in this windy tonight he’d see it and come. Patsy dear,” ... Judy’s voice grew wheedling and confidential ... “do ye iver be thinking a bit about Jingle ... ye know ...”

Pat laughed, her amber eyes full of roguish mirth.

“Judy darling, you’ve always had great hopes of making a match between Hilary and me but they’re doomed to disappointment. Hilary and

I are chums but we'll never be anything else. We're *too* good chums to be anything else."

"Ye seen so set on turning ivery one else down," sighed Judy. "And I always did be liking Jingle. It's not a bad thing to be chums wid yer husband, I'm tould."

"*Why* are you so set on my having a 'real' beau, Judy? Any one would think you wanted to get rid of me."

"It's better ye're knowing than that, me jewel. Whin ye lave Silver Bush the light av ould Judy Plum's eyes will go wid ye."

"Then just be glad I mean to stay, Judy. I never want to leave Silver Bush ... I want to stay here always and grow old with my cats and dogs. I love the very walls of it. Look, Judy, the Virignia creeper has got to the roof. It's lucky we have so many vines here, for the house does need painting terribly and dad says he can't afford it this year."

"Yer Uncle Tom is painting Swallyfield ... white, wid grane trimmings, it's to be. He started to-day."

"Yes." A shadow fell over Pat's face. Every one in North Glen knew by this time that Tom Gardiner was writing to a lady in California, though not even the keenest of the gossips had found out anything more, not even her name. "Swallowfield really needs painting but it has needed it for years. And now Uncle Tom seems to have a mania for sprucing things up. He's even going to have that dear old red door stained and grained. I've always loved that red door so much. Judy, you don't think there is anything in that story of his going to be married, do you?"

"I wudn't be saying. And me fine Aunt Edith wudn't be liking it," said Judy in a tone which indicated that for her, at least, there would be balm in Gilead if Tom Gardiner really up and married at last. "There do be another story round, Patsy, that Joe do be ingaged to Enid Sutton. Is there innny truth in *it*?"

"I can't say. He saw a good deal of her when he was home. Well, she is a very nice girl and will suit Joe very well."

Pat felt herself very magnanimous in thus according approval to Joe's reputed choice. If it had been Sid ... Pat shivered a little. But Sid wouldn't

be thinking of marrying for years yet.

“Oh, oh, if it iver comes to a widding I hope Enid will be having better luck wid her dress than her mother had. There was a dressmaker in town making it ... the Suttons houlding thimsilves a bit above the Silverbridge dressmaker ... and she was sick, but she sint word she’d have the dress ready for the widding day widout fail. Whin the morning come, she did be phoning up she had sint it be the train but whin the train come in niver a widding dress was on it. And, what’s more, that dress niver turned up ... niver, Patsy dear. The poor liddle bride was married in a blue serge suit and tears.”

“Whatever became of the dress, Judy?”

“The Good Man Above knows and Him only. It was shipped be the ixpress agent at Charlottetown and that was the last iver seen or heard av it. White sating and lace! But at that I do be thinking she was luckier than the bride at Castle McDermott.”

“What happened to her?”

“Oh, oh, it was a hundred years afore me time there but the story was tould me. She wint to the wardrobe and put her hand in to fetch out her widding dress and ...” Judy leaned forward dramatically in the gathering gloom ... *“and it was grasped by a bony hand.”*

“Whose?” Pat shivered deliriously.

“Oh, oh, *whose?* That did be the question, Patsy dear. No good Christian, I’m telling ye. The poor bride fainted and the widding had to be put off and the groom was killed on the way home, being thrown from his horse. Minny’s the time I did be seeing the wardrobe whin I was working there but niver wud the McDermotts allow that door to be opened agin. The story wint that the widding dress was still hanging there. Oh, oh!” Judy sighed. “I belave I’ll have to be paying a visit to ould Ireland this fall. I do be having a hankering for it I haven’t had for years.”

Cuddles came running up the stairs, preceded by Bold-and-Bad who covered three steps at a leap.

“Oh, I hope I’m in time. I’ve finished that Latin. No wonder Latin died. *Did* people ever really talk that stuff? Talk it just as you and I do? I

can't believe it. Joe made me promise I'd lead my class in it and if I did he'd tattoo my arm next time he came no matter what fuss *you* made. So I'm going to do it or bust."

"The young ladies av Castle McDermott niver did be talking av busting," said Judy reproachfully.

"Oh, I suppose they talked a brogue you could cut with a knife," retorted Cuddles. "Well, let's get at the old chest. It's such fun to rummage through old boxes. You never know what you may come across. It's like living for a while in yesterday."

Chapter X

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They dragged the old black chest out of its corner to the window. Bold-and-Bad, deciding that it was not a thing likely to do a cat any good, crept off into the darkness under the eaves and imagined himself a Bengal tiger. The black chest was full of the usual miscellany of old garret chests. Ancient lace and velvet and flower-trimmed hats, bundles of banished Christmas cards, limp ostrich feathers, faded family photographs, strings of birds' eggs, discarded dresses with the pointed basques and polonaises and puffed sleeves of other vintages, old schoolbooks, maps the Silver Bush children had drawn, packets of yellow letters, a "rat" worn in the days of pompadours, old faded things once beautiful. They had oceans of fun over them.

"What on earth is this?" demanded Cuddles, holding up an indescribable mass of crushed wire. Judy gave a snort of laughter.

"Oh, oh, that do be yer Aunt Helen's ould bustle. I rimimber how yer dad yelled whin she brought it home. It's the dashing lady she was and always the first in the clan to be out in a new fashion. She wint to a concert that night at the Bridge wid her beau and they say he was crimson to the ears, he was that ashamed av it. But in a few wakes' time iverybody did be wearing thim. He shud have been thankful she didn't wear it like Maggie Jimson at the South Glin did whin her sister as was working up in Bosting sint her one home ... a rale fancy one all covered wid blue sating."

"How did she wear it, Judy?"

"Outside her dress," said Judy solemnly. "They say the folks who were in church that day were niver the same agin. Oh, oh, but the fashions do be changing always. Only kissing stays in. Mebbe this ould bustle will be took down some av these days and displayed on the parlour mantelpiece be way av an heirloom."

“Look at this!” Cuddles held up a huge brown velvet hat with a draggled and enormous shaded-green ostrich feather on it. “Fancy living up to a hat like that!”

“Oh, oh, that was yer Aunt Hazel’s hat wid what they called a willow plume and rale nice it did be looking over her pompydore. Though I niver fancied velvet hats mesilf iver since the mouse jumped out av Mrs. Reuben Russell’s one Sunday at the Bridge church. *That* was a tommyshaw.”

“If Tillytuck was here he’d say he was the mouse,” giggled Cuddles. Pat pounced on an article.

“Judy, if here isn’t my old little cheese hoop! I’ve often wondered where it disappeared to. I wanted to keep it always in remembrance of those dear little cheeses you used to make me in it ... one for myself every year. You don’t remember Judy making cheese, Cuddles, but I do. It was such fun.”

“And here do be one av yer Great-grandmother Gardiner’s ruffled caps,” said Judy. “Minny’s the time I’ve done it up for her ... she always said that nobody cud be giving the frills the right quirk like young Judy. Oh, oh, I was young Judy thin and I’d larned the trick at Castle McDermott. Ould lady Gardiner always made her caps hersilf ... it’s the beautiful himstitcher she was. She was a rale fine ould lady, if some folks did be thinking her a bit too uppity. Did I iver be telling ye av the night she was knaling be her bed be an open windy, saying her prayers and her thoughts in hiven ... I’m s’posing ... and a big cat crawled through the windy and lit on her back suddent-like wid a pair av claws that tuk hold?”

“Oh!” Cuddles shrieked in delight. “What did Great-grand say?”

“Say, is it?” Judy looked cautiously around. “It was thirty-nine years ago and I’ve niver told a living soul afore. She said a word beginning wid D and inding wid N.”

Pat doubled up with laughter. Stately old Great-grandmother Gardiner whose picture hung in the Big Parlour with her white cap encircling her saintly face! Really, the things Judy knew about respectable people were dreadful.

“This ould rag was a dress yer grandmother wore in her day.” Judy held up a faded affair with manifold flounces. “Striped silk jist like ribbing grass. Mebbe it’s the very one — I’m not saying it is but it might be ... she wore jist the twicet.”

“Why didn’t she wear it again?” asked Cuddles.

“Oh, oh, if it’s the one ... mind ye. I’m not saying it is ... yer grandmother and her cousin, Mrs. Tom Taylor, were great rivals, it did be said, in the matter av dresses and both av thim fond av gay colours. And whin yer grandmother come to church quite gorgeous-like in her striped dress Mrs. Tom turned quite grane and said nothing but wint to town nixt day and bought a dress av the same piece and give it to her ould scrubwoman at the Bridge. The poor ould soul was pleased as Punch and got it made up at oncet and wore it to church the nixt Sunday. Oh, oh, ‘twas rale cruel av Mrs. Tom and there was a judgmint on her, for her own father died and she did have to be wearing black for two years. It was rale bitter, for black didn’t set her. But niver wud yer grandmother put the striped dress on her back agin.”

“How foolish of her,” said Cuddles loftily.

“Oh, oh, it’s the foolish folks as does all the int’risting things,” chuckled Judy. “There’d not be minny stories to tell if ivery one was wise. And if here isn’t Sid’s ould Teddy bear! Niver a night wud he go to slape widout it. It’s meself sewed thim shoe-buttons in for eyes whin Ned Binnie picked the first ones out and poor Sid’s liddle heart was broken.”

“They’re saying in school Sid has a case on Jenny Madison,” said Cuddles.

“Sid has a new ‘case’ every two months,” said Pat lightly. “What a pretty dress this must have been in its time, Judy ... a sort of silvery stuff with lace frills in the sleeves.”

“Silvery, is it? If ye cud see it as I see it! That was a dress yer Aunt Lorraine had for her first liddle party the summer I come here. Ye niver cud imagine innything bluer than her eyes. I can see her dancing in the orchard be moonlight yet to show it off to us afore she wint. She’s been churchyard dust for forty years. Her first liddle party was her last. Ye’ll

rimimber her tombstone av white marble wid a baby's head and wings sticking out behind its ears. Sure I niver thought it suitable for a girl's tombstone but I've been tould it wasn't a baby but a cherub, whatever that may be. I'm not forgetting the day I took Siddey through the South Glin churchyard whin he was six. He did be looking at the cherub and thin at me. 'Where is the rist av it, Judy?' he sez, solemn like."

"Are these her letters?" asked Cuddles, holding up a yellowed packet.

"I'm thinking those are yer Great-aunt Martha's. She did be dying young, too, but she had a beau as was a great letter-writer. Her father didn't hould wid him and some say Martha died av a broken heart and some from wearing too thin stockings in the winter time. Ye can be taking the romantic or the sensible explanation, whichever's suiting ye bish."

"Why didn't her father approve of her beau?"

"I'm not thinking he had much agin the young man himself but he was after having an uncle who was hanged for taking part in some rebellion and cut down and recovered. He niver talked agin. Some said his throat had been injured ... but there was some as thought he'd seen something as scared him out av talking foriver. Anyhow, her father wasn't wanting innny half-hanged person in his fam'ly."

"Now, here's something!" exclaimed Pat, fishing up a silver 'chain' bracelet. "It's a bit black but it could be cleaned."

"The padlock and key's missing, Patsy dear, so it wudn't be much use. That was yer Aunt Hazel's, too. They did be all the rage thin. I had a hankering after one meself but whin I heard the story av Sissy Morgan's chain bracelet up at the Bay Shore it tuk the fascination out av thim for me."

"What was that?"

"Oh, oh, her beau was a captin and afore he wint on the v'yage that proved his last he locked a chain bracelet on her arm ... a gold one it was, no less ... and tuk the key wid him, making her promise she'd niver marry innny one ilse unless he come back and unlocked the bracelet. Sissy promised light enough. The Morgans wud promise innnything. But she was pretty, that Sissy, and the captin was crazy about her. He was swept

overboard in a storm and the kay went to the bottom of the Atlantic with him. Liddle Sissy took on a bit but the Morgans soon got over things and in a year she did begin wanting really bad to marry Peter Snowe. But she was scared to because of her promise about the bracelet. Her dad wanted the match because Peter was really well to do but Sissy stuck to it she wasn't and several tommyshaws they had over it all. Oh, oh, but there was the funny squeal to it."

"What was the sequel?"

"Oh, oh, sequel, is it? Well, Sissy, was slapping sound in her bed one moonlight night and when she woke the bracelet was unlocked ... just that. She didn't begin seeing nothing or nobody but it was unlocked."

"I don't think that is funny, Judy," said Cuddles with a little shiver. "That was ... horrible."

"Oh, oh! Sure and it was funny then when Peter Snowe wouldn't have her after all ... said he wasn't taking in any ghost's lavings. The rest of the minute seemed to be having the same feeling and she died an old maid in the end of it."

"Why, here's Joe's silver spoon," pounced Pat. "This is a find. We never knew what became of it. How in the world did it get here? Won't mother be pleased!"

The little silver spoon with the dents where Joe had cut his teeth ... Joe who was half way to China now. Pat sighed and rose.

"Well, that is all. I wonder if we should burn those old letters. In a way I'd like to read them ... there's something fascinating in old letters ... they seem to open ghostly gates ... but I suppose Aunt Martha wouldn't have liked it."

Pat picked the packet up. An old dim, flattened four-leaved clover slipped from it. Who had found luck with it? Not Aunt Martha at all events. The letters were brittle and yellow ... full of old words of love written years ago from hearts that were dust ... full of old joys that had once been raptures and dim old griefs that had once been agonies.

"We must drag the chest back into its corner. Look at Bold-and-Bad peering out of it."

Bold-and-Bad's eyes were glowing in his lair, giving that uncanny expression cats' eyes often do ... as if they were merely transparent, letting the burning fires behind them become visible.

"They did be saying that Martha's beau's uncle looked like that be times," Judy whispered as she went downstairs.

It was rather too spooky. Cuddles fled in Judy's wake. But Pat still lingered, going back to the window where the full moon was beginning to weave beautiful patterns of vine leaves on the garret floor. The spookier the garret was the more she loved it. The letters in her hands made her think of Hilary's letter that day. Like all his letters it had a certain flavour. It *lived*. You could almost hear Hilary's voice speaking through it ... see the laughter in his eyes. Every time you re-read one of his letters you found something new in it. To-day's had enclosed a sketch of his prize design for a house on the side of a hill. There was something about it faintly reminiscent of Silver Bush. Pat had one of her moments of wishing passionately that Hilary was somewhere about ... that they could join hands as of old and run across the old stone bridge over Jordan. Surely they had only to slip over the old bridge to find themselves in the old fairyland. They would go back to Happiness and the Haunted Spring, following the misty little brook through the old fields where the moonlight loved to dream. They would linger there, lapped round by exquisite silence. Shadowy laughter would echo faintly about them. Cool elusive night smells would be all around. Little white sheep would be out on the hills. Surely Happiness kept their old days for them and they would find them there. Pat shivered. The rising wind moaned rather eerily around the lofty window. She felt suddenly, strangely lonely ... right there in dear Silver Bush she felt lonely ... *homesick*. It was uncanny. She ran downstairs and left the garret to its ghosts.

Chapter XI

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When Judy read an item from “Events of the Week” in a Charlottetown paper to the Silver Bush girls one evening they were only mildly and pleasantly excited over it. The Countess of Medchester, the paragraph stated, was visiting friends in Ottawa on her way home from Vancouver to England.

“That do be the lady married to the earl as is uncle av yer cousin, Lady Gresham,” said Judy proudly. “Oh, oh, it do be giving me a bit av a thrill, as Cuddles says, to rade that item and riflict that we do be in a manner connected wid her.”

“Even though she doesn’t know of our existence,” laughed Pat. “I don’t suppose Lady Gresham brags to her friends of her very distant relationship to certain unimportant people on a Canadian farm.”

“Likely she thinks we’re Indians,” grinned Cuddles. “Still, as Judy says, there’s a thrill in it.”

“Whin ye see May Binnie nixt time ye can be saying ... to yersilf, av coorse ... ‘Ye don’t be having a fourth cousin in the English aristocracy, *Miss Binnie.*’ And *that’ll* be a satisfaction.”

“*I* shall say it to Trix,” said Cuddles.

“Indeed, you won’t,” cried Pat. “Don’t make yourself ridiculous, Cuddles. We’re of no more importance in the Countess of Medchester’s eyes ... supposing she ever heard of us ... than the Binnies. And who cares? Look at that froth of cherry bloom behind the turkey house. I’m quite sure there’s nothing lovelier on the grounds of Medchester Castle ... if there is a castle.”

“Av coorse there’s a castle,” said Judy, carefully cutting out the item. “An earl cudn’t be living in innnything humbler. I’m pinning this up on the wall be me dresser to show Tillytuck. He’s niver quate belaved me whin I tould him av yer being third cousin to Lady Gresham ...”

“Fourth, Judy, fourth.”

“Oh, oh, I might have made a bit av a mistake in the figure but does it be mattering? Innyhow, *this* will convince him. He was be way av being a bit cranky this morning whin he come in for breakfast though he cudn’t be putting a name to the rason ... like the cintipede that had rheumatism in one av his legs but cudn’t tell which. He was putting on some frills wid me but *this* will be one in the eye for him. A rale countess wid a maid to button her boots! Oh, oh! I had a faling last night there did be something strange in the air.”

When the letter came that day ... being left in the mailbox at the road just like any common epistle and carried up to the house in Tillytuck’s none too clean hand ... Judy felt there was something stranger still in the air. A heavy cream-tinted envelope with a dainty silver crest on the flap, addressed in a black distinctive hand to Mrs. Alex Gardiner, North Glen, P.E. Island, and postmarked Ottawa. The crest and the postmark had a very queer effect on Judy. She gave a gasp and looked at Gentleman Tom. Gentleman Tom winked knowingly.

“Anybody dead?” said Tillytuck.

Judy ignored him and called for Pat in an agitated voice. Pat came in from the garden, her arms full of the plumes of white lilac, McGinty ambling at her heels. Cuddles came running across the yard, the spring sunlight shining on her golden-brown head. Judy was standing in the middle of the kitchen floor holding the letter at arm’s length.

“Judy, what is it?”

“Ye may well ask,” said Judy. “Will ye be looking at the crest? And the postmark?”

Pat took the letter.

“I feel a thrill ... several thrills,” whispered Cuddles.

“Thrills, is it? Sure and ye’ll be having thrills wid a vengeance if that do be what I’m thinking it is.”

“It’s for mother,” said Pat slowly. Mother was away for a visit at Glenwood. “I suppose we’d better open it. It may be something requiring prompt attention.”

Judy handed Pat the paring knife. She had a presentiment that the letter should not be torn open like an ordinary epistle. Pat slit the envelope, took out the letter ... likewise crested ... and glanced over it. She turned red ... she turned pale ... she stared at the others in silence.

“What is it?” whispered Cuddles. “Quick ... I’ve got such a queer prickly feeling in my spine.”

“It’s from the Countess of Medchester,” said Pat in a hollow voice. “She says she promised Lady Gresham she would see her *cousins* before she returned to England ... she’s coming to Charlottetown to visit friends and she wants to come out here ... here ... next Saturday. Saturday!”

Poor Pat repeated the word as if Saturday meant the end of the world.

For a moment nobody spoke ... could speak. Even Tillytuck seemed to have passed into a state of coma. In the silence Gentleman Tom reached over and dug a claw into his leg but Tillytuck did not even wince.

Cuddles was the first to recover.

“Have the Countess of Medchester *here*,” she gasped. “We *can’t*.”

But Judy had got her second wind. She was an expert in dealing with situations without precedent.

“Oh, oh, mebbe we can’t ... but we will. What’s a countess whin all is said and done? Sure, she’ll ate and drink and wash behind her ears like inny common person. What time av day will she be here, Patsy?”

“The forenoon ... she’s leaving on the night boat. That means she’ll be here for dinner, Judy!”

“She will be in a good place for the same thin, I’m telling ye. It will be a proud day for Silver Bush and no countess was iver ating a better male than we can be putting up. But ‘twill take some planning, so kape up yer pecker, Patsy, and let’s be getting down to brass tacks. We’ve no time for blithering. Sure and yer countesses can’t be ating lilac blossoms.”

Pat came up gasping. She felt ashamed of herself. It was positively Binnie-like to be flabbergasted like this.

“You’re right, of course, Judy. Let me see ... this is Tuesday. The floors in the dining room and the Big Parlour *must* be done over ... they’re simply terrible. I’ll paint them to-day and stain them tomorrow. I wish I

could do something to the front door. The paint is all peeling off. But I daren't meddle with it. We must just leave it open and trust she won't notice it. Then, Cuddles, we have to go to Winnie's one day this week to help her get her sewing done. We should have gone last week but I wanted to wait till this week to see their big crab-apple tree in bloom. We'll go Thursday. That will give us Friday to prepare. We must take her to the Poet's room because the ceiling isn't cracked there as it is in the spare room and we must put the spread mother embroidered on the bed. Sid can go for mother Friday evening. It is a shame to have her visit cut short when it's her first for years ... but of course she'd like to be here."

"Oh, oh, and there'll be two great ladies together thin," said Judy. "I'll match yer mother agin inny countess in the world. Sure and a Bay Shore Selby cud hould up her hid wid inny av the quality."

Pat was herself again. Tillytuck was lost in admiration of her. From that moment Silver Bush was a place of excited but careful planning and overhauling and cleaning and decorating and discussing. Even Tillytuck had his say.

"The dinner's the thing," he told them. "A good meal is never to be sneezed at, speaking symbolically."

Every one agreed with this. The dinner must be such as even the wife of a belted earl could not turn up her nose at. Pat did endless research work among all her recipe books. Cuddles cut school to help. What was Latin and the chance of tattooing compared to this?

It was decided to have fried chicken for dinner ... Judy's fried chicken was something to dream about.

"Wid sparrow grass. Sure and sparrow grass is a sort av lordly vegetable. Ye'll be making the sauce ye larned at the Short Coorse, Patsy dear. And will ye be having time to hemstitch the new napkins?"

"Cuddles and I are going to sit up all night to do them. I think we'll have iced melon balls and ice-cream for dessert and a lemon cocoanut cake. We mustn't attempt too much."

"Not to be ostentatious," agreed Judy who dearly loved a big word now and then.

“And, after all, she may be on a diet,” grinned Cuddles. Cuddles had regained all her insouciance. Trix Binnie would be sunk when she heard of it all, positively sunk.

“I hope she’ll think Silver Bush nice,” breathed Pat. That was all she really cared about.

“She cudn’t be hilping it,” said Judy. “Let’s be hoping it will be fine on Saturday. If it rains ...”

Judy left it to the imagination what it would be like to entertain a countess in a rainstorm.

“It *must* be fine,” was Pat’s ultimatum.

“Do you think it wouldn’t be a good thing to ... to pray for fine weather?” suggested Cuddles, who felt that no chances should be taken. Judy shook her head solemnly.

“Girls dear, I wudn’t. Ye can niver be telling what comes av such praying. Well do I rimimber the day in South Glen church whin the minister, ould Mr. McCary, did be praying for rain wid all his might and main. Whin the people were going home from church down comes a thunderstorm and drinches iverybody to the skin. Ould James Martin and ould Thomas Urquhart were together and Thomas sez, sez he, ‘I do be wishing he hadn’t prayed till we got home. Thim McCarys niver cud be moderate,’ sez he. So ye’d better be laving it to nature, girls dear. And thank the Good Man Above there’ll be no Jerusalem cherries around. Whin she comes, Patsy dear, av coorse I’ll kape in the background but don’t ye be thinking I’d better have me dress-up dress on, in case she might catch a glimpse av me coming or going?”

“Of course, Judy. And oh, Judy, do you think you could coax Tillytuck to leave off that terrible old fur cap of his for one day? If she saw him going through the yard!”

“Niver be worrying over Tillytuck. He’ll be away to town that day wid the calves yer dad sold. And none too well plazed about it. Him thinking he wanted a glimpse av a countess! And trying to be sarcastic. He sez to me, sez he, ‘Kape a stiff upper lip, Judy. After all, yer grandmother was a witch and that’s sort of aristocracy, symbolically spaking.’ ‘I’m not nading

to stiffen me upper lip,' sez I. 'I do be knowing me place and kaping it, spaking the plain truth and no symbols.' Tillytuck do be getting a bit out av hand. He was after smoking his pipe in the graveyard today, setting on Waping Willy's tombstone as bould as brass."

"Aunt Edith and Aunt Barbara are terribly excited," said Pat. "I wanted them to come over for dinner but they wouldn't. Aunt Edith vetoed it. However, she very kindly offered to lend us her silver soup spoons. She said a countess could tell at a glance if the spoons were solid or only plated. I'm so glad our teaspoons are solid ... only they're so old and thin."

"Oh, oh, they do be all the more aristocratic for that," comforted Judy. "The countess will be saying to hersilf, 'There's *fam*'ly behind *thim*. Nothing av the mushroom in *thim*,' she'll be saying. And spaking av the Swallowfield folks, have ye noticed innynthing odd about yer Uncle Tom's beard?"

"Yes ... it has almost disappeared," sighed Pat. "It's nothing more than an imperial now."

"Whin it disappears altogether we'll be hearing some news," said Judy with a mysterious nod.

But Pat had no time just then to be worrying over Uncle Tom's vanishing whiskers. By Wednesday night Silver Bush was ready for the countess ... or for royalty itself. On Thursday Sid took Pat and Cuddles over to the Bay Shore to help Winnie with her spring sewing. They really sewed all the forenoon. In the afternoon Winnie said, "Never mind any more for a while. Come out in the wind and sun. We don't often have such an afternoon to spend together."

They prowled about the garden, picking flowers, drinking in the crab-apple blossoms, watching the harbour and making nonsense rhymes. In the midst of their fun they heard the telephone ring in the house.

Chapter XII

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Pat went in to answer it, as Winnie had her Christmas baby in her arms. When Pat heard Judy's voice she knew that something tremendous had occurred for Judy never used the telephone if she could help it.

"Patsy dear, is it yersilf? I do be having a word for you. *She's here.*"

"Judy! Who? Not the countess?"

"I'm telling ye. But I can't be explaining over the phone. Only come as quick as ye can, darlint. Sidly and yer dad have gone to town."

"We'll be right over," gasped Pat.

But how to get right over? Frank was away with the car. There was nothing for it but the old buggy and the old grey mare. It would take them an hour to get to Silver Bush. And Uncle Brian must be 'phoned to and asked to bring mother right home. Between them Pat and Cuddles got the mare harnessed and after several hundred years ... or what seemed like it ... they found themselves alighting in the yard of Silver Bush ... which looked as quiet and peaceful as usual with Just Dog sleeping on the doorstone and three kittens curled up in a ball on the well platform.

"I suppose the countess is in the Big Parlour," said Pat. "Let's slip into the kitchen and find out everything from Judy first."

"How do you talk to countesses?" gasped Cuddles. "Pat, I think I'll go and hide in the barn loft."

"Indeed you won't! You're not a Binnie! We'll see Judy and then we'll slip upstairs and get some decent clothes on before we beard the lion in her den."

Pat had on her blue linen afternoon dress ... which, incidentally, was the most becoming thing she owned. Cuddles wore her pretty green sweater with its little white embroidered linen collar, above which her wind-tossed hair gleamed, the colour of sunlight on October beeches. Both girls ran, giggling with nervousness, up the herringbone brick walk to the

kitchen door and rushed in unceremoniously. Then they both stopped in their tracks. Cuddles' eyes wirelessly to Pat, "Do you really live through things like this or do you just die?"

Judy Plum and the Countess of Medchester were sitting by the table, whereon were the remnants of a platterful of baked sausages and potatoes. At the very moment of the girls' entry Judy was pouring cream from her "cream cow" into her ladyship's cup and the latter was helping herself to a piece of the delightful thing Judy called "Bishop's bread." Gentleman Tom was attending meticulously to his toilet in the centre of the floor and Bold-and-Bad was coiled on the countess' lap, while McGinty was squatted by the legs of her chair. Tillytuck was sitting in his corner ... fortunately minus the fur cap, which, however, hung on his chair back. Judy was in her striped drugget but with a beautiful white apron starched stiff as a board. She was as completely at her ease as if the countess had been a scrubwoman. As for Lady Medchester, Pat, amid all her dumfounderment, instantly got the impression that she was enjoying herself hugely.

"And here," said Judy, with incredible nonchalance, "are the girls I've been telling ye av ... Mrs. Long Alec's daughters. Patricia and Rachel."

The countess instantly got up and shook hands with Patricia and Rachel. She had mouse-coloured hair and a square, reddish face, but the smile on her wide mouth was charming.

"I'm so glad you've come before I have to go," she said. "It would have been dreadful to go back home and have to tell Clara that I hadn't seen any of her cousins at all. She has always had such a dear recollection of some wonderful days she spent on Prince Edward Island when a child. It was too bad to come down on you like this. But I got a cable from England last night which made it imperative I should leave tonight, so I had to come this afternoon. Your Judy ..." she flashed a smile at Judy ... "made me delightfully welcome and showed me around your lovely home ... and, last but not least, has given me a most delicious meal. I was so hungry."

Somehow they found themselves all sitting around the table. Pat realized thankfully that Judy had had sense enough to put the best tablecloth on it and the silver spoons. But why on earth hadn't she got

supper in the dining room? And what was the silver teapot doing on the dresser while the old brown crockery one graced the table?

And there was Tillytuck sitting in his shirt sleeves! Was there really anything to do but die? What was one to say? Pat wildly thought of an article in a recent magazine on “How to Start a Conversation With People You Have Just Met,” but none of the gambits seemed to fit in here exactly. However, they were not necessary. The countess kept on talking in a frank, friendly, charming way that somehow included everybody, even Tillytuck. Pat, with a reckless feeling that nothing mattered now anyhow, flung conventionality to the winds. Cuddles was never long rattled by anything and in a surprisingly short time they were all chatting gaily and merrily. The countess insisted on their having some tea and Bishop’s Bread with her ... she was on her third cup herself, she said. Judy trotted to the pantry and brought back some forgotten orange biscuits. Lady Medchester wanted to hear all about mother and was only sorry she couldn’t see her way clear to taking a Silver Bush kitten back with her to England.

“You see one of your cats has already quite made up his mind to like me,” she laughed, looking down at the placidly heaving, furry flanks of Bold-and-Bad.

“And that cat don’t condescend to every one, speaking symbolically, ma’am,” said Tillytuck.

Pat had a confused impression that it was quite proper to say “ma’am” to a queen but hardly the way to address a countess. A countess! *Was* this stout, comfortable lady, in the plain, rather sloppy tweed suit, really a countess? Why ... why ... she seemed just like anybody else. She had the oddest resemblance to Mrs. Snuffy Madison of South Glen! Only Mrs. Snuffy was the better looking!

And there was no mistaking it ... she was enjoying the bread and biscuits.

“Cats don’t,” said Lady Medchester, smiling at Tillytuck out of her hazel eyes and giving the wistful McGinty a nip of sausage. “That is why their approval, when they do bestow it, is really so much more of a

compliment than a dog's. Dogs are so much easier pleased, don't you think?"

"You've said a mouthful, ma'am," said Tillytuck admiringly.

Cuddles, who, up to now, had contrived to keep a perfectly demure face, narrowly escaped choking to death over a gulp of tea. Pat, glancing wildly around, suddenly encountered Lady Medchester's eyes. Something passed between them ... understanding ... comradeship ... a delicious enjoyment of the situation. After that Pat didn't care what anybody did or said ... which was rather fortunate, for a few minutes later, when Lady Medchester happened to remark that she had had friends on the *Titanic*, Tillytuck said sympathetically, "Ah, so had I, ma'am ... so had I."

"The ould liar!" said Judy under her breath. But everybody heard her. This time it was Lady Medchester who narrowly escaped disaster over a bit of biscuit. And again her twinkling eyes sought Pat's.

"Couldn't you stay till mother comes?" asked Pat, as the countess rose, gently and regretfully displacing her lapful of silken cat.

"I'm so sorry I can't. I've really stayed too long as it is. I have to catch that boat train. But it has been delightful. And I can tell Clara that at least I've seen Mary's dear girls. You'll be coming to England some day I'm sure, and when you do you must look me up. I'm so sorry to put this beautiful cat down."

"You've got hairs all over your stomach, ma'am," said Tillytuck. "Dogs ain't like that now."

If looks could have slain Judy would have been a murderess. But the countess put her hands on Pat's shoulders, kissed her cheek and bowed her head, shaking with laughter.

"He's priceless," she whispered. "Priceless. And so is your Judy. Darlings, I only wish I could have stayed longer."

The countess picked up a little squashy hat with a gold and brown feather on it that looked like a hand-me-down from the Silverbridge store, adjusted a silver fox stole which Pat knew must have cost a small fortune, kissed Cuddles, made a mysterious visit into the pantry with Judy, donned

a pair of antiquated gauntlets and went out to her car. Before she got in she looked around her. Silver Bush had cast over her the spell it cast over all.

“A quiet, beautiful place where there is time to live,” she said, as if speaking to herself. Then she waved her hand to Judy ... “We had such a pleasant little chat, hadn’t we?” ... and was gone.

“Oh, oh, but Silver Bush has been honoured this day,” said Judy as they went back in.

“Judy, tell us everything ... I’m simply bursting. And how did you come to have supper in the kitchen?”

“Oh, oh, don’t be blaming me,” entreated Judy. “It do be a long story that’ll take some telling. Niver did I live through such an afternoon in me life. Tillytuck, do ye be wanting a liddle bite? Not that ye deserve it ... but there’s some av the pittaties and sausages lift if ye care for them.”

“What’s good enough for a countess is good enough for me,” said Tillytuck, sitting down to the table with avidity. “She’s a fine figure of a woman that, though maybe a bit broader in the beam than you’d expect of a countess, symbolically speaking. I found something alluring about her.”

“Come out to the graveyard,” whispered Judy to the girls. “We won’t be disturbed there and I can be telling ye the tale. Sure and ‘twill be one for the annals of Silver Bush.”

“Uncle Brian has just phoned that mother was away to a picnic with some friends of Aunt Helen’s and he couldn’t locate her.”

“It doesn’t matter now,” sighed Pat. “Why, oh, why, do things never happen as you plan? But I don’t care ... she was lovely ... and she enjoyed herself... .”

“Oh, oh, that she did,” agreed Judy, settling herself on Weeping Willy’s tombstone, while Pat and Cuddles and McGinty squatted on Wild Dick’s, “and nothing could or magnificent about her. But whin she drove in, girls dear, I didn’t be knowing for a minute whither I stud on me heels or me hid. I did be taking her up to the Poet’s room to wash her hands ... oh, oh, I did all the honours, aven to slipping in that extry nice cake av soap ye brought home the other day, the one wrapped up in shiny paper ... and the bist av the embridged towels. I cudn’t manage the new sprid but if ye’d

heard her ladyship rave over the beautiful patchwork quilt! Thin I dashed up to me room for a squint in me book av Useful Knowledge. But niver a word cud I find about intertaining the nobility so I had to be falling back on what I cud rimimber av the doings at Castle McDermott. It do be a pity I niver thought av slipping into me dress-up dress. But I was a bit excited-like. Whin I'd finished ixplaining to her that I'd phoned for ye nothing wud do her but I must show her all round the place. She said she wanted to see a rale Canadian farm at close range. It did be suiting me for I didn't be knowing if it was manners to lave her all alone and to sit wid a countess in the Big Parlour was a fearsome thought. I did be taking her all through the orchard and the silver bush and the cats' burying ground. And thin all through the graveyard and telling her all the ould stories ... and didn't she laugh over Waping Willy! Thin whin we wint back to the house she wanted to see me kitchen ... and me not knowing how Just Dog wud behave. Whin we got in it she sez to me, just like one old frind to another, 'Cud ye let me have a cup av tay, Judy ... and what is that delicious odour I smell?' Well, girls dear, ye know just what it was ... me bit av baked sausage and pittaties I had in the oven for Tillytuck and mesilf, ivery one ilse being away. 'Will ye be giving me a taste av it?' she sez, wheedling-like. 'Right here in the kitchen, Judy, where the scint av lilacs is coming in through that windy, Judy,' sez she, 'and the very same white kittens that hung on me nursery wall more years ago than I'll admit aven to you, Judy,' sez she. Sure and I cudn't stand up to a countess so she had her way. I got out the bist silver taypot and one av the parlour chairs for her. But she plunked hersilf down on ould Nehemiah's and sez, sez she, 'I want me tay right out av that ould brown pot. There's nothing like it for flavour,' sez she. And nothing wud do but I must sit down wid her and take a share av the sausages and pittaties. But I wasn't after ating minny, girls dear ... me appetite wasn't wid me. Siven av thim sausages disappeared and I et only the one av thim. Think av it, me drinking tay wid a countess, and crooking me liddle finger rale illigant whin I happened to think av it! Madam Binnie'll niver be belaving it. And wud ye be belaving it, girls dear? She was at Castle McDermott hersilf whin she was a girleen and tould me all

about the ould place. It did be making me fale I must be going to see it afore long. Prisently Bold-and-Bad comes along asking ‘have ye room for a cat?’ and jumps up in her lap. Oh, oh, ye saw for yersilves she was a different brade from Cousin Nicholas. Well, we did be sitting there colloguing, her and me and the cats, rale cosy and frindly, whin I heard a tarrible noise in the back porch. It didn’t sound like innything on earth but I did be knowing it was Tillytuck gargling his throat, him thinking it was a bit sore this morning. I did be glancing at the countess a bit apprehensive-like but she was admiring me crame cow and taking no notice apparently. I was fearing whin he finished wid his throat he’d be breaking out into a Psalm but niver did I think he’d have the presumption to come in. I was clane flabbergasted whin I saw him standing in the dureway. I did be giving him the high sign to take himsilf off but he paid no attintion and was all for setting down on her ladyship’s hat which she had tossed on a chair careless-like. I got it away just in time, girls dear, and down he plumped. Wud ye belave it, her ladyship smiled at him in that nice way she has and passed a remark about the weather. And didn’t Tillytuck tell her rain was coming bekase he had rheumatism in his arms! And thin tilting back on the hind-legs av his chair, wid his thumbs tucked into his bilt, casual-like, he wint on to tell her one av his ‘traggedies’ ... how the lion had got out av his cage and clawed him. ‘It was a lippard last time,’ I cudn’t hilp saying, sarcastic-like. But her ladyship tuk his measure and I cud see she was lading him on, and him thinking he was showing me how to hobnob wid the quality. Thin Just Dog started to throw one av his fits but Tillytuck whisked him out so quick I’m not thinking her ladyship tuk it in. What wid it all, me nerves were getting a bit jumpy and niver was there a more welcome sound to me ears than the ould Russell mare’s trot up the lane.”

“Did you give the countess a swig out of your black bottle, Judy?” asked Sid, who had arrived home and come to find out why nobody had got supper ready for him. “If she left anything in the pantry I’d be glad of a bite.”

“Why did you take her into the pantry just as she was leaving, Judy?” asked Pat.

“Oh, oh, I’d promised to give her a jar av me strawberry jam. But she’ll niver be getting it home safe ... there do be something in an ocean v’yage it can’t be standing ... she’ll be firing it overboard afore she’s half way across. She said to me in the pantry, Patsy dear, that ye did be having a lovely smile and a grand sinse av fun. Sure and I’m putting that bit av biscuit she lift on her plate in me glory box for a kapesake. It was her third so there did be no insult in her laving it. Well, it do be all over and whether I’ll slape a wink tonight or not the Good Man Above only knows.”

Judy was snoring soundly enough in the kitchen chamber when Pat and Cuddles went to bed. Young Joe Merritt had been around Silver Bush that night, wanting Pat to go to a picture with him but Pat had refused. Judy, as usual, wanted to know why poor Joe was always being snubbed. Wasn’t he be way av being a rale nice young man and a cousin av the Charlottetown Merritts at that?

“I haven’t a fault to find with him, Judy,” said Pat gravely, “but our taste in jokes is entirely different.”

“Oh, oh, that’s sarious,” agreed Judy ... and crossed Joe Merritt’s name from her list of possibles.

“Pull up the blind and let the night in, Cuddles. And don’t light the lamp yet. When you light it you make an enemy of the dark. It stares in at you resentfully. Just now it’s kind and friendly. Let’s sit here at the window and talk it all over. It would be wicked to go to sleep too soon on such a night.”

“Sleep! I’ll never sleep again in this world,” sighed Cuddles luxuriously, squatting on the floor and snuggling against Pat’s knee while she proceeded to devour some water-cress sandwiches. They were getting in the habit of these delightful little gossips by their window, with only the trees and the stars to listen. Tonight the scent of lilacs drifted in and the night was like a cup of fragrance that had spilled over. A wind was waking far off in the spruces on the hill. The robins were still whistling and the silver bush was an elusive, shadowy world breathing mystery. Bold-and-

Bad padded in and insinuated himself into Cuddles' lap, where he lay and purred, tensing and flexing his claws happily. One lap was quite as good as another to Bold-and-Bad.

"I've had too many thrills to-day to be sleepy ... some just awful and some wonderful. Wasn't Lady Medchester lovely, Pat? And *not* because she was a countess. She had such a finished air somehow. She wasn't a bit handsome ... did you notice how much she looked like Mrs. Snuffy Madison? ... and her clothes were really shabby. Except the fox stole of course. But her hat ... well, it looked as if Tillytuck *had* sat on it. But for all that there was something about her that we can't ever get, Pat, in a hundred years."

"*She* wouldn't care what the Binnies thought," said Pat mischievously.

"Don't ... I'm blushing. And I'm never going even to mention it to Trix. Have a sandwich, Pat? You must be empty. We neither of us had anything since dinner but a biscuit and a scrap of Bishop's bread. I was only pretending to eat under Lady Medchester's eyes. Puss, do stop digging your claws into me. I'm sure Lady Medchester will have an amusing tale to tell when she gets home. The stately halls of England will resound to mirth over Judy and Tillytuck."

"Tillytuck perhaps ... but not Judy. People laugh *with* Judy, not *at* her. Our countess liked Judy. Did you notice what a lovely voice she had? It somehow made me think of old mellow things that had been loved for centuries ... after I got capable of thinking at all, that is. Cuddles, I'll never forget the sight as we bounced into the kitchen ... Judy Plum and the Countess of Medchester *tête-à-tête* at our kitchen table, with Tillytuck for audience. Nobody will ever believe it. It *will* be something to tell our grandchildren ... if we ever have any."

"I mean to have some," said Cuddles coolly.

"Well," said Pat, leaning out of the window to catch a glimpse of that loveliest of created things ... a young moon in an evening sky ... "there's one thing the Countess of Medchester will never know she missed ... my lemon cocoanut cake and Judy's fried chicken. I must write Hilary an account of this."

The Second Year

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Chapter I

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Pat never could discover how Lady Medchester's visit to Silver Bush got into the Charlottetown papers. But there it was in "Happenings of the Week." "The Countess of Medchester, who has been spending a few days with friends in Charlottetown, was a visitor at Silver Bush, North Glen, on Thursday last. Lady Medchester is a distant connection of Mr. and Mrs. Alexander Gardiner. Her Ladyship is delighted with our beautiful Island and says that it resembles the old country more than any place she has yet seen in Canada."

The Silver Bush people did not like the item. It savoured too much of a certain publicity they scorned ... "putting on dog," as Sid slangily expressed it. No doubt it reduced the Binnies to speechless impotence for a time and everybody in South Glen church the next Sunday gazed at the Gardiner family with almost the awe they would have accorded to royalty itself. But that did not atone for what Pat felt was a breach of good taste. Even Tillytuck thought it "rather crude, symbolically speaking." Nobody happened to notice that Judy, who might have been expected to be the most indignant of all, had very little to say and fought shy of the subject. Eventually it was forgotten. After all, there were much more important things to think of at Silver Bush. Countesses might come and countesses might go but wandering turkeys had to be reclaimed at night and Madonna lilies divided and perennial seeds sown, and a new border of delphiniums planned for down the front walk. Lady Medchester's visit slipped into its proper place in the Silver Bush perspective ... a gay memory to be talked and laughed over on winter nights before the fire.

Meantime, Uncle Tom had stained and grained his once red front door and had painted his apple house sage green with maroon trim. And everybody in Silver Bush and Swallowfield was wondering more or less uneasily why he had done it. Not but what both needed attention. The

apple house had long been a faded affair and the red of the door was badly peeled. Nevertheless they had been that way for years and Uncle Tom had not bothered about them. And now, right in the pinch of hard times, when the hay crop was poor and the potato bugs unusually rampant and the turnips practically nonexistent, Uncle Tom was spending good money in this unnecessary fashion.

“He do be getting younger every day,” said Judy. “Oh, oh, it’s suspicious, I’m telling ye.”

“I opine there’s a female in the wind, speaking symbolically,” said Tillytuck.

It was the one cloud on Pat’s horizon that summer. Some change was brewing and change at Swallowfield was nearly as bad as change at Silver Bush. Everything had been the same there for years. Aunt Edith and Aunt Barbara had held sway in the house, agreeing quite amicably in the main, and both bossing Uncle Tom for his soul’s and body’s good. And now both were uneasy. Tom was getting out of hand.

“It has to do with those California letters ... I’m sure it has,” Aunt Barbara told Pat unhappily. “We know he gets them ... the postoffice people have told it ... but we’ve never seen one of them. We don’t know where on earth he keeps them ... we’ve looked everywhere. Edith says if she can find them she’ll burn them to ashes but I don’t see what good that would do. We haven’t an idea who she is ... Tom must mail his answers in town.”

“If Tom brings a ... a wife in here ...” Aunt Edith choked over the word ... “you and I will have to go, Barbara.”

“Oh, don’t say that, Edith.” Aunt Barbara was on the verge of tears. She loved Swallowfield almost as much as Pat loved Silver Bush.

“I will say it and I do say it,” repeated Aunt Edith inflexibly. “Can you think for one minute of us staying here, under the thumb of a new mistress? We can get a little house at the Bridge, I suppose.”

“I can’t believe Uncle Tom will really be so foolish at his age,” said Pat.

“I have never been a man,” said Aunt Barbara somewhat superfluously, “but this I do know ... a man can be a fool at *any* age. And you know the old proverb. Tom is fifty-nine.”

“I sometimes think,” said Aunt Barbara slowly, “that you ... that we ... didn’t do quite right when we broke off Tom’s affair with Merle Henderson, long ago, Edith.”

“Nonsense! What was there to break off?” demanded Aunt Edith crisply. “They weren’t engaged. He had a schoolboy’s fancy for her ... but you know as well as I do, Barbara, that it would never have done for him to have married a Henderson.”

“She was a clever, pretty little thing,” protested Aunt Barbara.

“Her tongue was hung in the middle and her grandmother was insane,” said Aunt Edith.

“Well, Dr. Bentley says everybody is a little insane on some points. I do think we shouldn’t have meddled, Edith.”

Aunt Barbara’s “we” was a concession to peace. Both of them knew it had been Edith’s doings alone.

Pat sympathised with them and her heart hardened against Uncle Tom when she found him waiting for her at the old stile, half way along the Whispering Lane, where the trees screened them from the sight of both Swallowfield and Silver Bush. Pat was all for sailing on with a frosty nod but Uncle Tom put a shy hand on her shoulder.

“Pat,” he said slowly, “I’d ... I’d like to have a little talk with you. It’s ... it’s not often I have the chance to see you alone.”

Pat sat down on the stile ungraciously. She had a horrible presentiment of what Uncle Tom wanted to tell her. And she wasn’t going to help him out ... not she! With his vanishing beard and his front doors and his apple barns he had kept everybody on the two farms jittery all summer.

“It’s ... it’s a little hard to begin,” said Uncle Tom hesitatingly.

Pat wouldn’t make it any easier. She gazed uncompromisingly through the birches to a field where winds were weaving patterns in the ripening wheat and making sinuous shadows like flowing amber wine. But for once in her life Pat was blind to beauty.

Poor Uncle Tom took off his straw hat and mopped a brow that had not been so high some thirty-odd years back.

"I don't know if you ever heard of a ... a ... a lady by the name of Merle Henderson," he said desperately.

Pat never had until Aunt Edith had mentioned her that day but ...

"I have," she said drily.

Uncle Tom looked relieved.

"Then ... then perhaps you know that once ... long ago ... when I was young ... ahem, younger ... I ... I ... in short ... Merle and I were ... were ... in short ..." Uncle Tom burst out with the truth explosively ... "I was desperately in love with her."

Pat was furious to find her heart softening. She had always loved Uncle Tom ... he had always been good to her ... and he did look so pathetic.

"Why didn't you marry her?" she asked gently.

"She ... she wouldn't have me," said Uncle Tom, with a sheepish smile. Now that the plunge was over he found himself swimming. "Oh, I know Edith thinks *she* put the kibosh on it. But not by a jugful. If Merle would have married me a regiment of Ediths wouldn't have mattered. I don't wonder Merle turned me down. It would have been a miracle if she had cared for me ... then. I was nothing but a raw boy and she ... she was the most beautiful little creature, Pat. I'm not romantic ... but she always seemed like a ... like an ethereal being to me, Pat ... a ... a fairy, in short."

Pat had a sudden glimpse of understanding. To Uncle Tom his vanished Merle was not only Merle ... she was youth, beauty, mystery, romance ... everything that was lacking in the life of a rather bald, more than middle-aged farmer, domineered over by two maiden sisters.

"She had soft, curly, red-brown hair ... and soft, sweet red-brown eyes ... and such a sweet little red mouth. If you could have heard her laugh, Pat ... I've never forgotten that laugh of hers. We used to dance together at parties ... she was as light as a feather. She was as slim and lovely as ... as that young white birch in moonlight, Pat. She walked like ... like spring. I've never cared for anybody else ... I've loved her all my life."

"What became of her?"

“She went out to California ... she had an aunt there ... and married there. But she is a widow now, Pat. Two years ago ... you remember? ... the Streeters came home from California for a visit. George Streeter was an old pal of mine. He told me all about Merle ... she wasn’t left well off and she’s had to earn her own living. She’s a public speaker ... a lecturer ... oh, she’s very clever, Pat. Her letters are wonderful. I ... I couldn’t get her out of my head after what George told me. And so ... I ... well, I wrote her. And we’ve been corresponding ever since. I’ve asked her to marry me, Pat.”

“And will she?” Pat asked the question kindly. She couldn’t hurt Uncle Tom’s feelings ... poor old Uncle Tom who had loved and lost and went on faithfully loving still. It *was* romantic.

“Ah, that’s the question, Pat,” said Uncle Tom mysteriously. “She hasn’t decided ... but I think she’s inclined to, Pat ... I think she’s inclined to. I think she’s very tired of facing the world alone, poor little thing. And this is where I want you to help me out, Patsy.”

“Me!” said Pat in amazement.

“Yes. You see, she’s in New Brunswick now, visiting friends there. And she thinks it would be a good idea for her to run across to the Island and ... and ... sorter see how the land lays, I guess. Find out maybe if I’m the kind of man she could be happy with. She wanted me to go over to New Brunswick but it’s hard for me to get away just now with harvest coming on and only a half-grown boy to help. Read what she says, Patsy.”

Pat took the letter a bit reluctantly. It was written on thick, pale-blue paper and a rather heavy perfume exhaled from it. But the paragraph in reference to her visit was sensibly expressed.

“We have probably both changed a good deal, honey boy, and perhaps we’d better see each other before coming to a decision.”

Pat with difficulty repressed a grin over the “honey boy.”

“I still don’t quite see where I come in, Uncle Tom.”

“I ... I want you to invite her to spend a few days at Silver Bush,” said Uncle Tom eagerly. “I can’t invite her to Swallowfield ... Edith would — would have a conniption ... and anyhow she wouldn’t come there. But if

you'd write her a nice little note ... Mrs. Merle Merridew ... and ask her to Silver Bush ... she went to school with Alec ... do, now, Patsy."

Pat knew she would be letting herself in for awful trouble. Certainly Aunt Edith would never forgive her. Judy would think she had gone clean crazy and Cuddles would think it a huge joke. But it was impossible to refuse poor Uncle Tom, pleading for what he believed his chance for happiness again. Pat did not yield at once but after a consultation with mother she told Uncle Tom she would do it. The letter of invitation was written and sent the very next day and during the following week Pat was in swithers of alternate regret, apprehension, and a determination to stand by Uncle Tom at all costs.

There was a good deal of consternation at Silver Bush when the rest of the family heard what she had done. Dad was dubious ... but after all it was Tom's business, not his. Sid and Cuddles, as Pat had foreseen, considered it a joke. Tillytuck stubbornly refused to express any opinion. It was a man's own concern, symbolically speaking, and wimmen critters had no right to interfere. Judy, after her first horrified, "God give ye some sinse, Patsy!" was just a bit intrigued with the romance of it ... and a secret desire to see how me fine Edith wud be after taking it.

Edith did not take it very well. She descended on Pat, dragging in her wake poor Aunt Barbara who had been weeping all over the house but still thought they ought not to meddle in the matter. Pat had a bad quarter of an hour.

"How *could* you do such a thing, Pat?"

"I couldn't refuse Uncle Tom," said Pat. "And it doesn't really make any difference, Aunt Edith. If I hadn't asked her to come here he would have gone to New Brunswick to see her. And she may not marry him after all."

"Oh, don't try to be comforting," groaned Aunt Edith.

"Marry him! Of course she'll marry him. And she is a *grandmother*. George Streeter said so ... and thinks she is still a girl. It's simply terrible to think of it. I don't see how I'm going to stand it. Excitement always brings on a pain in my heart. Everybody knows that. *You* know it, Pat."

Pat did know it. What if it all killed Aunt Edith? But it was too late now. Uncle Tom was quite out of hand. He felt that the situation was delicious. Life had suddenly become romantic again. Nothing that Edith could and did say bothered him in the least. He had even begun negotiating for the purchase of a trim little bungalow at Silverbridge for “the girls” to retire to.

“Him and his bungalow!” said Aunt Edith in a contempt too vast to be expressed in words. “Pat, you’re the only one who seems to have any influence ... *any* influence ... over that infatuated man now. Can’t you put him off this notion in some way? At least, you can try.”

Pat promised to try, by way of preventing Aunt Edith from having a heart attack, and went up to the spare room to put a great bowl of yellow mums on the brown bureau. If she were to have a new aunt she must be friends with her. Alienation from Swallowfield was unthinkable. Pat sighed. What a pity it all was! They had been so happy and contented there for years. She hated change more than ever.

Chapter II

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Mrs. Merridew was coming on the afternoon train and Uncle Tom was going to meet her with the span.

“I suppose I ought to have an automobile, Pat. She’ll think this turn-out very old-fashioned.”

“She won’t see prettier horses anywhere,” Pat encouraged. And Uncle Tom drove away with what he hoped was a careless and romantic air. Outwardly he really looked as solemn as his photograph in the family album but at heart he was a boy of twenty again, keeping tryst with an old dream that was to him as of yesterday.

Tillytuck persisted in hanging around although Judy hinted that there was work waiting on the other place. Tillytuck took no hints. “I’m always interested in courtings,” he averred shamelessly.

It seemed an endless time after they heard the train blow at Silverbridge before Uncle Tom returned. Sid unromantically proffered the opinion that Uncle Tom had died of fright. Then they heard the span pausing by the gate.

“Here comes the bride,” grunted Tillytuck, slipping out by the kitchen door.

Pat and Cuddles ran out to the lawn. Judy peered from the porch window. Tillytuck had secreted himself behind a lilac bush. Even mother, who had one of her bad days and was in bed, raised herself on her pillows to look down through the vines.

They saw Uncle Tom helping out of the phaeton a vast lady who seemed even vaster in a white dress and a large, white, floppy hat. A pair of very fat legs bore her up the walk to the door where the girls awaited her. Pat stared unbelievably. Could this woman, with feet that bulged over her high-heeled shoes, be the light-footed fairy of Uncle Tom’s old dancing dreams?

“And this is Pat? How *are* you, sugar-pie?” Mrs. Merridew gave Pat a hearty hug. “And Cuddles ... darling!” Cuddles was likewise engulfed. Pat found her voice and asked the guest to come upstairs. Uncle Tom had spoken no word. It was Cuddles’ private opinion that his vocal cords had been paralysed by shock.

“Can that be all one woman?” Tillytuck asked the lilac bush. “I don’t like ‘em skinny ... but ...”

“Think av *that* in Swallowfield,” Judy said to Gentleman Tom. “Oh, oh, it’s widening his front dure as well as painting it Tom Gardiner shud have done.”

Gentleman Tom said nothing, as was his habit, but McGinty crawled under the kitchen lounge. And upstairs mother was lying back on her pillows shaking with laughter. “Poor Tom!” she said. “Oh, poor Tom!”

Mrs. Merridew talked and laughed all the way upstairs. She lifted her awful fat arms and removed her hat, showing snow-white hair lying in sleek moulded waves around a face that might once have been pretty but whose red-brown eyes were lost in pockets of flesh. The red sweet mouth was red still ... rather too red. Lipstick was not in vogue at Silver Bush ... but the lavish gleam of gold in the teeth inside detracted from its sweetness. As for the laugh that Uncle Tom had remembered, it was merely a fat rumble ... yet with something goodnatured about it, too.

“Oh, honey, let’s sit outside,” exclaimed Mrs. Merridew, after she had got downstairs again. They trailed out to the garden after her. Uncle Tom, still voiceless, brought up the rear. Pat did not dare look at him. What on earth was going on in his mind? Mrs. Merridew lowered herself into a rustic chair, that creaked ominously, and beamed about her.

“I love to sit and watch the golden bees plundering the sweets of the clover,” she announced. “I adore the country. The city is so artificial. Don’t you truly think the city is so artificial, sugar-pie? There can be no real interchange of souls in the city. Here in the beautiful country, under God’s blue sky” ... Mrs. Merridew raised fat beringed hands to it ...

“human beings can be their real and highest selves. I am sure you agree with me, angel.”

“Of course,” said Pat stupidly. She couldn’t think of an earthly thing to say. Not that it mattered. Mrs. Merridew could and did talk for them all. She babbled on as if she were on the lecture platform and all her audience needed to do was sit and listen. “Are you interested in psychoanalysis?” she asked Pat but waited for no answer. When Judy announced supper Pat asked Uncle Tom to stay and share it with them. But Uncle Tom managed to get out a refusal. He said he must go home and see to the chores.

“Mind, you promised to take me for a drive this evening,” said Mrs. Merridew coquettishly. “And, oh, girls, he didn’t know me when I got off the train. Fancy that ... when we were sweethearts in the long ago.”

“You were ... thinner ... then,” said Uncle Tom slowly. Mrs. Merridew shook a pudgy finger at him.

“We’ve both changed. You look a good bit older, Tom. But never mind ... at heart we’re just as young as ever, aren’t we, honey boy?”

Honey boy departed. Pat and Cuddles and Mrs. Merridew went in to supper. Mrs. Merridew wanted to sit where she could see the beauty of the delphiniums down the garden walk. Her life, she said, was a continual search for beauty.

They put her where she could see the delphiniums and listened in fascinated silence while she talked. Never had any one just like this come to Silver Bush. Fat ladies had been there ... talkative ladies had been there ... beaming, goodnatured ladies had been there. But never any one half so fat and talkative and beaming and goodnatured as Mrs. Merridew. Pat and Cuddles dared not look at each other. Only when Mrs. Merridew gave utterance to the phrase, “a heterogeneous mass of potentiality,” as airily as if she had said “the blue of delphiniums” Cuddles kicked Pat under the table and Judy, in the kitchen, said piteously to Tillytuck, “Sure and I used to be able to understand the English language.”

The next morning Mrs. Merridew came down to breakfast, looking simply enormous in a blue kimono. She talked all through breakfast and all through the forenoon and all through dinner. In the afternoon she was away driving with Uncle Tom but she talked all through supper. During the early evening she stopped talking, probably through sheer exhaustion, and

sat on the rustic chair on the lawn, her hands folded across her satin stomach. When Uncle Tom came over she began talking again and talked through the evening, with the exception of a few moments when she went to the piano and sang, *Once in the Dear Dead Days Beyond Recall*. She sang beautifully and if she had been invisible they would all have enjoyed it. Tillytuck, who was in the kitchen and couldn't see her, declared he was enraptured. But Judy could only wonder if the piano bench would ever be the same again.

"She simply can't forget she isn't on the lecture platform," said Pat.

There was no subject Mrs. Merridew couldn't talk about. She discoursed on Christian Science and vitamins, on Bolshevism and little theatres, on Japan's designs in Manchuria and television, on theosophy and bi-metallism, on the colour of your aura and the value of constructive thinking in contrast to negative thinking, on the theory of reincarnation and the Higher Criticism, on the planetesimal hypothesis and the trend of modern fiction, on the best way to preserve your furs from moths and how to give a cat castor oil. She reminded Pat of a random verse conned in schooldays and she wrote it of her in her descriptive letter to Hilary.

"Her talk was like a stream that runs
With rapid flow from rocks to roses,
She passed from parrakeets to puns,
She leaped from Mahomet to Moses."

"I do be thinking she ain't mentally sound," groaned Judy. "There was a quare streak in the Hindersons I do be rimimbering. Her grandmother was off be spells and her Great-uncle had his coffin made years afore he died and kipt it under the spare-room bed. Oh, oh, the talk it made."

"I knew the man when I was a boy," said Tillytuck. "His wife kept her fruit cake and the good sheets in it."

Judy went on as if there had been no interruption.

"And yet, in spite av iverything, girls dear, I do be kind av liking her."

In truth, they all "kind of liked" her ... even mother, who, nevertheless, was compelled by Pat to stay in bed most of the time that she might not be

talked to death. Mrs. Merridew was so entirely goodnatured and her smile *was* charming. The floors might creak as she walked over them but her spirit was feather-light. She might have a liking for snacks of bread and butter with an inch of brown sugar spread on top of it but there wasn't a scrap of malice in her heart. Judy might speculate pessimistically on what would happen if she fell downstairs but she adored McGinty and was hail-fellow-well-met with all the cats. Even Gentleman Tom succumbed to her spell and waved his thin, stiff tail when she tickled him behind the ears. Judy, who had implicit confidence in Gentleman Tom's insight into human nature, admitted that maybe Tom Gardiner wasn't quite the fool she had been thinking him. For Mrs. Merridew, in spite of her avoirdupois, was "rale cliver round the house." She insisted on helping with the chores and washed dishes and polished silver and swept floors with astonishing deftness, talking ceaselessly and effortlessly all the time. In the evenings she went driving with Uncle Tom or sat with him in the moonlight garden. Nobody could tell what Uncle Tom was thinking, not even Pat. But the aunts had subsided into the calm of despair. They had not called on Mrs. Merridew ... they would not countenance her in any way ... but it was their opinion that she had Tom hypnotised.

Pat was sitting on a log in the silver bush one evening ... her own dear, dim silver bush, full of moon-patterned shadows ... having crept away to be by herself for a little while. Mrs. Merridew was in the kitchen eating doughnuts, telling Judy how travel broadened the mind, and encouraging her to take her trip to Ireland. Judy's kitchen was certainly not what it used to be just now and Pat was secretly relieved to feel that Mrs. Merridew's visit was drawing to a close. Even if she came back to North Glen it would be to Swallowfield, not to Silver Bush.

Some one came along the path and sat down beside her with a heavy sigh. Uncle Tom! Somehow Pat understood what was in his heart without words ... that "all that was left of his bright, bright dream" was dust and ashes. Poor mistaken Uncle Tom, who had imagined that the old magic could be recaptured.

“She’s expecting me to propose to her again, Patsy,” he said, after a long silence.

“Must you?” asked Pat.

“As a man of honour I must ... and that tonight,” said Uncle Tom solemnly ... and said no more.

Pat decided that silence was golden. After a time they got up and went back to the house. As they emerged from the bush the shadow of a fat woman was silhouetted on the kitchen blind.

“Look at it,” said Uncle Tom, with a hollow groan. “I never imagined any one could change so much, Patsy. Patsy ...” there was a break in Uncle Tom’s voice ... “I ... I ... wish I had never seen her *old*, Patsy.”

When they went in Mrs. Merridew whisked Uncle Tom off to the Little Parlour. But the next day something rather mysterious happened. Mrs. Merridew announced at breakfast that she must catch the ten-fifteen train to town and would Sid be kind enough to drive her down to Silverbridge? She bade them all goodbye cheerily and drew Pat aside for a few whispered sentences.

“Don’t blame me, sugar-pie. He told me you knew all about it ... and I really did intend to take him before I came, darling. But when I saw him ... well, I knew right off I simply couldn’t. Of course it’s rotten to let any one down like that but I’m so terribly sensitive in regard to beauty. He was so old-looking and changed. He wasn’t a bit the Tom Gardiner I knew. I want you to be specially good to him and cheer him up until he is once more able to tune his spirit into the rhythm of the happiness vibrations that are all around us. He didn’t say much but I knew he was feeling my decision very deeply. Still, after a little he’ll see for himself that it is all for the best.”

She climbed into the waiting car, waved a chubby, dimpled hand at them and departed.

“I hope the springs av that car will be lasting till they get to the station,” said Judy. “And whin’s the widding to be, Patsy?”

“Never at all,” smiled Pat. “It’s all off.”

“Thank the Good Man Above for that,” said Judy devoutly. “Oh, oh, it was a rare noble act av ye to ask her here, Patsy, and ye’ve had yer reward. If yer Uncle Tom had got engaged to her be letter he’d have had to have stuck to it, no matter what he felt like when he saw her. And it isn’t but what I liked her, Patsy, and it’s sorry for her disappointment I am ... but she wud niver have done for a wife for Tom Gardiner. It’s well he had the sense to see it, even at the last moment.”

Pat said nothing. Uncle Tom said nothing ... neither then nor at any other time. His little flyer in romance was over. The negotiations for the Silverbridge bungalow were abruptly dropped. The aunts both persisted in thinking that Pat had “influenced” Uncle Tom and were overwhelmingly grateful to her. In vain Pat assured them she had done nothing.

“Don’t tell *me*,” said Aunt Edith. “He was simply *fascinated* from the moment she came. He went around like a man in a dream. But *something* held him back from the last fatal step and that something was *you*, Pat. She’ll be furious that he’s slipped through her fingers again of course.”

Still Pat held her tongue. They would never believe Mrs. Merridew had actually refused Tom and that he thanked heaven for his escape.

Life at Swallowfield and Silver Bush settled back into its customary tranquillity.

“I must write all about it to Hilary,” said Pat, sitting down at her window in the afterglow. The world was afloat in primrose light, pale and exquisite. The garden below was alive with robins, and swallows were skimming low across the meadows. The hill field was a sea of wheaten gold and beyond it velvety dark spruces were caressing crystal air. How lovely everything was! How everything seemed to beckon to her! What a *friendly* farm Silver Bush was! And how beautiful it was to have a quiet evening again, with a “liddle bite” and a glorious gab-fest with Judy later on in prospect. And oh, how glad she was that there was to be no change at Swallowfield. Hilary would be glad to hear it, too.

“I wish I could slip that sunset into the letter and send it to him,” she thought. “I remember when I was about six saying to Judy, ‘Oh, Judy, isn’t it lovely to live in a world where there are sunsets?’ I still think it is.”

Chapter III

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During the autumn and winter after the shadow of a new bride at Swallowfield had vanished from Pat's sky life went on at Silver Bush delightfully. It was a very cold winter ... so cold that there was not only frost but feathers on the windows most of the time ... and there was much snow and wild wind in birch and spruce. And never a thaw, not even in January, although Tillytuck was loath to give up hope of one.

"I've never seen a January without a thaw yet and I've seen hundreds of them," he asserted ... and wondered grumpily why everybody laughed. But he saw one that year. The cold continued unbroken. The stones around Judy's flower beds always wore white snow caps and looked like humpy little gnomes. Pat was glad the garden was covered up. It always hurt her to see her beautiful garden in winters when there was little snow ... so forsaken looking, with mournful bare flower stalks sticking up out of the hard frozen earth and bare, writhing shrubs that you never could believe could be mounds of rosy blossoms in June. It was nice to think of it sleeping under a spotless coverlet, dreaming of the time when the first daffodil would usher in spring's age of gold.

And there was beauty, too, everywhere. Sometimes Pat thought the winter woods with their white reserve and fearlessly displayed nakedness seemed the rarest and finest of all. You never knew how beautiful a tree really was until you saw it leafless against a pearl-grey winter sky. And was there ever anything quite so perfect as the birch grove in a pale-rose twilight after a fine calm fall of snow?

In the stormy evenings Silver Bush, snug and sheltered, holding love, laughed defiance through its lighted windows at the grey night full of driving snow. They all crowded into Judy's kitchen and ate apples and candy, while happy cats purred and a wheezy little dog who, alas, was growing old and a bit deaf, snored at Pat's feet. Wild and weird or gay and

thrilling were the tales told by Judy and Tillytuck in a rivalry that sometimes convulsed the Silver Bush folks. Judy had taken to locating most of her yarns in Ireland and when she told a gruesome tale of the man who had made a bargain with the Bad Man Below and broke it Tillytuck could not possibly claim to have known or been the man.

“What was the bargain, Judy?”

“Oh, oh, it was for his wife’s life. She was to live as long as he niver prayed to God. But if he prayed to God she wud die and *he* was to belong to Ould Satan foriver. Sure and she lived for minny a year. And thin me fine man got a bit forgetful-like and one day whin the pig bruk its leg he sez, sez he, in a tragic tone, ‘Oh God!’ sez he. And his wife did be dying that very night.”

“But that wasn’t a prayer, Judy.”

“Oh, oh, but it was. Whin ye cry on God like that in inny trouble it do be a prayer. The Bad Man Below knew it well.”

“What became of the husband, Judy?”

“Oh, oh, he was *taken away*,” said Judy, contriving to convey a suggestion of indescribable eeriness that sent a shiver down everybody’s back. Satisfied with the effect she remarked deprecatingly,

“But listen to me prating av ould days. I’d be better imployed setting me bread.”

And while Judy set the bread Tillytuck would spin a yarn of being chased by wolves one moonlit night while skating and told it so well that every one shuddered pleasantly. But Judy said coldly,

“I did be rading that very story, Tillytuck, in Long Alec’s ould Royal Rader in me blue chist.”

“I daresay you read something like it,” retorted Tillytuck unabashed. “I never claimed to be the only man chased by wolves.”

Then they all had “a liddle bite” and went to bed, snuggled warm and cosy while the winds ravened outside.

Dwight Madison took to haunting Silver Bush that winter and it was quite plain that he had, as Sid said, “a terrible ailment called serious intentions.” Pat tried to snub him. Dwight wouldn’t *be* snubbed. It never

occurred to Dwight that any girl would want to snub him. Aunt Hazel was hot in his favour but Judy, for a wonder, was not. He was a too deadly serious, solemn, in-earnest young man for Judy.

“De ye be calling *that* a beau?” she demanded after his first visit in a tone that implied she would rather call it something the cats had brought in. Pat said she thought he snored and Cuddles remarked that he looked like spinach. After that, there was no more to be said and Long Alec, who rather favoured Dwight because he had prospects from a bachelor uncle, concluded that modern girls were hard to please. Aunt Hazel was quite cool to Pat for a time.

Bold-and-Bad had pneumonia in March but got over it, thanks, it was believed, to Tillytuck’s ministrations. Tillytuck sat up with him two whole nights in the granary chamber, keeping him covered with a blanket in a box by the open window. Twice during each night Judy ploughed out to him through the snow to carry him a hot cup of tea and “a liddle bite.” Gentleman Tom did not have pneumonia but he had a narrow escape of his own, which Judy related with gusto.

“Girls dear, niver did I be hearing av such a thing. Ye’ll be remimbering that whin we had the rolled roast for dinner Sunday I did be taking out the string afore I tuk it to the table and throwing it into the woodbox? Oh, oh, and this afternoon whin I come in didn’t Gentleman Tom be sitting there be the stove, wid something hanging from his mouth like a rat’s tail. Whin I looked closer I saw it was a bit av string and I tuk hould av it and pulled it. I did be pulling out over a yard av it. The baste had swallied it till he was full av it and cudn’t quite manage the last two inches and it did be that saved his life for niver cud he have digested it. But, girls dear, if ye cud have seen the look on his face whin I was pulling at the string! And from this out it’s burning ivery roast string at once I’ll be doing for we don’t want inny more av our cats committing suicide in that fashion.”

“Another joke for you to write to Hilary, Pat,” said Cuddles slyly.

But at last they were throwing open the windows to let in the spring and Pat learned all over again how lovely young cherry trees were, waving

whitely in green twilights, and the scent of apple blossoms in moonlight, and the colonies of blue grape-hyacinths under the dining-room windows. But there were some clouds on her horizon, no bigger than a man's hand yet fraught with worrisome possibilities. She could not settle down in perfect peace, even after housecleaning was, as Tillytuck said, "all done though not quite finished." There was a lick of paint to be administered here and there, some curtains to be mended, the early carrots to be thinned out and dozens of delightful little things like that to be attended to. But ever and anon what Hawthorne calls "a dreary presentiment of impending change" crept across her happiness like a hint of September coolness stealing athwart the languor of an August afternoon. For one thing, trees were dying everywhere as a result of the bitter winter or because of some disease. The cross little spruce tree at the garden gate, which had grown up into a cross big tree, died, and although Pat had liked it the least of all the trees she grieved over its death. It was heartrending to walk through the woods at the back and see a friend here and there turning brown or failing to leaf out. Even the huge spruce in Happiness was dying and one of Hilary's "twin spires."

For another thing, Judy was by now quite keen on going to Ireland for a visit in the fall. Pat hated the very thought but she knew she must not be selfish and horrid. Judy had served Silver Bush long and faithfully and deserved a holiday if any one ever did. Pat choked down her dismay and talked encouragingly. Of course Judy must go. There was nothing in the world to prevent her. Cuddles was going to try the Entrance in July and if she passed would likely be away at Queen's next year, but somebody could be got in to help Pat during Judy's absence. Judy would stay all winter of course. It would not be worth going for less and a winter crossing of the Atlantic was not advisable. The Atlantic! When Pat thought of the Atlantic rolling between her and Judy she felt absolutely sick. But Cuddles was "thrilled" about it all.

"Thrilled, is it?" said Judy rather sourly. "Ye'll be having thrills wid a vengeance if ould Mrs. Bob Robinson comes here in me place. She's the

only one we can be getting, it sames. Oh, oh, what'll me poor kitchen be in her rajame?"

"But think of all the fun you'll have when you come back, putting it to rights, Judy."

"Oh, oh, ye've got the right philosophy av it," agreed Judy brightening up. "Did I be telling ye I had a letter from me cousin in Ireland to-day?"

They had been very curious about that letter. A letter for Judy was a phenomenon at Silver Bush. And Judy had been curiously affected by it. If it had been possible for her to turn pale she would have done so. She had taken the letter and stalked off to the graveyard to read it. All the rest of the day she had been strangely quiet.

"I sint her a scratch av me pin back a bit. I hadn't been hearing from her for over twinty years and thinks I to mesilf, 'Maybe she's dead but at innyrate I'll find out.' And to-day along comes her answer. Living and flourishing and that glad to think av me visiting her. And me ould Uncle Michael Plum do be living yet at ninety-five and calling his son av sivinty a saucy young felly whiniver he conterdicts him! It did be giving me a quare faling, Patsy. I'm thinking I know what it's going to be like on the resurrection day, no less."

"Hilary is going across this month," said Pat. "He has won the Bannister scholarship and is going to spend the summer in France, sketching French country houses."

Pat did not tell them everything about the matter. She did not tell them that Hilary had asked her a certain question again. If she could answer it as he wished he would spend the summer in P.E. Island instead of in France. But Pat was sure she couldn't answer it as he wished. She loved him so dearly as a friend but that was all.

"I'm putting into this letter," she concluded, "a little corner of the orchard, a young fir all overgrown with green tassel tips, that moonlit curve you remember in Jordan ... a bit of wild plum spray ... a wind that has blown over spice ferns ... the purr of a little cat and the bark of a little dog who desires to be remembered to you ... and always my best *friendly*

love. Isn't that enough, Hilary, darling? Come home and enjoy these things and let us have one more summer of our old jolly companionship."

Her heart glowed with the thought of it. There never was such a chum and playfellow in the whole world as Hilary. But Hilary couldn't see it that way: and so he was going to France. Perhaps Hilary knew more about some things than Pat ever told him. Cuddles wrote to him occasionally and told him more of Pat's goings-on than Pat ever dreamed of. Hilary knew of all the would-be's who came to Silver Bush and it may be that Cuddles coloured her accounts a trifle highly. Certainly Hilary somehow got the impression that Pat had developed into a notable flirt, with no end of desperate lovers at her feet. Even when Cuddles wrote about Dwight Madison she did not mention his goggling eyes or the fact that he was an agent on commission for farm implements. Instead she said he was President of the Young Men's Bible Class and that dad thought him a very sensible young man who would have oodles of money when his bachelor uncle died. If it had not been for that dramatic epistle of Cuddles ... who honestly thought she was doing Pat a good turn by trying to make Hilary jealous ... Hilary might have come to the Island that summer after all. He was too used to being turned down by Pat as a lover to be discouraged by that alone.

Then there was the rumour that Sid was engaged to Dorothy Milton. Jealousy went through Pat like a needle whenever she heard it. Vainly she tried to comfort herself by thinking that, at any rate, Sid could not marry until the other place was paid for and a new house built on it. The old house had been torn down and the lumber in it used to build a new stable. Pat had felt sad over that, too. It had been Hilary's home and they had signalled back and forth on cool blue summer nights. As for Dorothy Milton, she was a nice girl undoubtedly and would be a very suitable wife for Sid if he had to marry some day. Pat told herself this a hundred times without making much impression on something that would not be reconciled. She was hurt, too, that, if it were true, Sid had not told her. They were such chums in everything else. He consulted her in everything else. Sid was taking over the running of the farm more and more, as Long

Alec devoted himself to stock-raising on the other place. Every Sunday evening Pat and Sid would walk over the entire farm and note the crops and fences and plan for the future. It was Sid's ambition to make Silver Bush the best farm in North Glen and Pat was with him heart and soul. If only things could go on forever like this! When Pat read her Bible chapter one night she found the verse, "Meddle not with them that are given to change," and underscored it three times. Solomon, she felt, had gone to the root of things.

Cuddles was another of Pat's problems ... or rather Rae, as she must henceforth be called. On her birthday she had gathered all the family around her and told them without circumlocution that they were not to call her Cuddles any more. She would simply not take any notice of anything that was said to her unless she was called Rae. And she stuck to it. It was hard at first. They all hated to give up the dear, absurd old name that was linked with so many sweet memories of Cuddles when she was an adorable baby, when she was a new schoolgirl, when she was in her arms-and-legs stage, when she was just stepping daintily into her teens. But Cuddles stood to her guns and they got into the new habit sooner than they would have thought possible ... all except Judy. Judy did try her best but she could never do better than "Cud-Rae," which was so ridiculous that Rae eventually yielded a point and let Judy revert to the old name.

The Silver Bush folks had suspected for some time that Rae was going to be the beauty of the family and at last they were sure of it. Martin Madison, who had three ugly daughters, said contemptuously that Rae Gardiner was only two dimples and a smile. But there was more to her than that. Tillytuck considered that he had put it in a nutshell when he said she had all the other North Glen girls skinned a mile. There was some "glamour" about her that they didn't have. She really had a headful of brains and talked of being a doctor ... more to horrify Judy than anything else since she had really no especial hankering for a "career." And she was clever enough to conceal her cleverness, especially from the youths who began to come to Silver Bush ... boys of the generation after Pat, whom they regarded as quite elderly. Rae was very popular with them: she had a

come-and-find out air about her that intrigued them and she had practised a faraway, mysterious smile so faithfully before her mirror that it drove them quite crazy guessing what she was thinking of. None of them interested her at all, not being in the least like the pictures of the movie stars she kept pinned on the wall at the head of her bed. But, she coolly told Pat, they would do for getting your hand in.

Rae was full of life. Her every step was a dance, her every gesture full of grace and virility. She went about looking for thrills and always found them. Pat, looking at the exquisite oval of her little unwritten face, sighed and wondered what life had for this dear sister. She was far more worried over Rae's future than her own and mothered her to what Rae considered an absurd degree. It was provoking when you were feeling romantic and ethereal to be cautioned to put on your overshoes! And to be told you were a snob because you complained of Tillytuck saying queer things in the kitchen when you were entertaining a Charlottetown boy and his sister in the Little Parlour.

"I'm *not* a snob, Pat. You know very well Tillytuck is always saying odd things. Of course they're great fun and we laugh at them but *strangers* don't understand. And that Little Parlour door *won't* stay shut. I'll *never* forget the look on Jerry Arnold's face last night when he heard Judy and Tillytuck in one of their arguments."

Rae came to an end of breath and italics which gave Pat a chance to say bitingly,

"Jerry Arnold's father was a junk man twenty years ago."

"Who is being the snob now?" retorted Rae. "Jerry is going to have money. Oh, you needn't look at me like that, Pat. I've no notion of ever marrying Jerry Arnold ... he isn't my style" ... (was this ... could this, be little Cuddles who was a baby day before yesterday?) ... "but when I *do* marry I'm going to marry a rich man. I admit I'm worldly. I like money. And you know, Pat, we've never had quite enough of that at Silver Bush."

"But think of the other things we've had," said Pat softly. Rae, sweet, absurd little Rae, was not to be taken too seriously. "Not much money I

admit but everything else that matters. And besides we've always got tomorrow."

"That sounds very fine but what does it mean?" Rae had taken up a pose of being hard-boiled this spring. "No, my Patricia, one has to be practical in this kind of a world. I've thought it all over carefully and I've decided that I'll marry money ... and have a good time the rest of my life."

"Have you any one in mind?" enquired Pat sarcastically.

Rae's blue, black-lashed eyes filled with laughter.

"No, darling. There's really plenty of time. Though Trix Binnie is married ... married at seventeen. Just think of it ... only two years older than I am. Her face while she was being married was simply a scream. Jerry Arnold says she looked exactly like a kitten that had caught its first mouse."

"Well, we had an excellent view of May's shoulder blades for the space of a quarter of an hour," said Pat, who had been so furious over the Binnies presuming to invite the Gardiners to the wedding that it took Rae a whole evening to persuade her to go to church.

"Those raw-boned girls certainly shouldn't wear backless dresses," said Rae, with a complacent glance over her own shoulder. "Trix really didn't care a bit for Nels Royce, but when she failed in the Entrance last year there was really nothing else for her. It was so funny to hear Mrs. Binnie pretending Trix wouldn't have gone to Queen's even if she had passed. 'I wouldn't have Trix teaching school. I ain't going to have *my* daughter a slave to the public.'"

Pat howled. Rae's mimicry of Mrs. Binnie was inimitable.

"I'm sure May is furious because Trix is married before her," continued Rae. "I suppose she has finally given up hope of Sid, now that he is really engaged to Dorothy Milton."

"Do you suppose ... he really is?" asked Pat.

"Oh, yes. She's got her ring. I noticed it last night at choir practice. I wonder when they'll be married."

Pat shivered. She suddenly felt like a very small cat in a very big world. The gold was fading out of the evening sky. A great white moth flew by in the dusk. The spruce wood on the hill had turned black. The moon was rising over the Hill of the Mist. Far down the sea shivered in silver ecstasy. Everything was beautiful but there was something in the air ... another chill of change. Rae had suddenly grown up and Sid belonged to them no longer. Then one of her April changes came over her. After all, the world was full of June and Silver Bush was still the same. She sprang up.

“It’s a waste of time to go to bed too early on moonlight nights. And all the wealth of June is ours, no matter how poor we may be according to your worldly standards, darling. Let’s get out the car and run over to Winnie’s.”

Pat had learned to run the car that spring. Judy had been much upset about it and talked gloomily of a girl at the Bridge who had tried to run her father’s car, put her foot on the accelerator instead of the brake and had gone clean through a haystack ... or so Judy had heard. Pat managed to acquire the knack without any such disaster, although Tillytuck averred that on one occasion he saved his life only by jumping over the doghouse, and Judy still came out in gooseflesh when she saw Pat backing the car out of the garage.

“Times do be changed,” she remarked to Gentleman Tom. “Here’s Patsy and Cuddles dashing off in the car whin they shud be thinking av their bed. Cat dear, is it that I do be getting ould whin I can’t get used to it?”

Gentleman Tom put a leg rather stiffly over his shoulder. Perhaps he, too, felt that he was getting old.

Chapter IV

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They heard about the Long House at Winnie's. It was to have new tenants. They had rented the house for the summer ... not the farm, which was still to be farmed by John Hammond, the owner, who had bought it from the successor of the Wilcoxes.

Pat heard the news with a feeling of distaste. The Long House had been vacant almost ever since Bets had died. A couple had bought the farm, lived there for a few months, then sold out to John Hammond. Pat had been glad of this. It was easier to fancy that Bets was still there when it was empty. In childhood she had resented it being empty and lonely, and had wanted to see it occupied and warmed and lighted. But it was different now. She preferred to think of it as tenanted only by the fragrance of old years and the little spectral joys of the past. Somehow, it seemed to belong to her as long as it was

“Abandoned to the lonely peace
Of bygone ghostly things.”

Judy had more news the next morning. The newcomers were a man and his sister. Kirk was their name. He was a widower and had been until recently the editor of a paper in Halifax. And they had bought the house, not rented it. “Wid the garden and the spruce bush thrown in,” said Judy. “John Hammond do be still houlding to the farm. He was here last night, after ye wint away, complaining tarrible about the cost av his wife's operation. ‘Oh, oh, what a pity,’ sez I, sympathetic-like. ‘Sure and a funeral wud have come chaper,’ sez I. Patsy dear, did ye be hearing Lester Conway was married?”

“Somebody sent me a paper with the notice marked,” laughed Pat. “I'm sure it was May Binnie. Fancy any one supposing it mattered to me.”

It seemed a lifetime since she had been so wildly in love with Lester Conway. Why was it she never fell in love like that nowadays? Not that she wanted to ... but *why*? Was she getting too old? Nonsense!

She knew her clan was beginning to say she didn't know what she wanted but she knew quite well and couldn't find it in any of the men who wooed her. As far as they were concerned, she seemed possessed by a spirit of contrariness. No matter how nice they seemed while they were merely friends or acquaintances she could not bear them when they showed signs of developing into lovers. Silver Bush had no rival in her heart.

In the evening she stood in the garden and looked up at the Long House ... it was suddenly a delicate, aerial pink in the sunset light. Pat had never been near it since the day of Bets' funeral. Now she had a strange whim to visit it once more before the strangers came and took it from her forever ... to go and keep a tryst with old, sacred memories.

Pat slipped into the house and flung a bright-hued scarf over her brown dress with its neck-frill of pleated pink chiffon. She always thought she looked nicer in that dress than any other. Somehow people seldom wondered whether Pat Gardiner was pretty or not ... she was so vital, so wholesome, so joyous, that nothing else mattered. Yet her dark-brown hair was wavy and lustrous, her golden-brown eyes held challenging lights and the corners of her mouth had such a jolly quirk. She was looking her best tonight with a little flush of excitement staining her round, creamy cheeks. She felt as if she were slipping back into the past.

Judy was in the kitchen, telling stories to a couple of Aunt Hazel's small fry who were visiting at Silver Bush. Pat caught a sentence or two as she went out. "Oh, oh, the ears av him, children dear! He cud hear the softest wind walking over the hills and what the grasses used to say to aich other at the sunrising." Dear old Judy! What a matchless storyteller she was!

"I remember how Joe and Win and Sid and I used to sit on the backdoor steps and listen to her telling fairy tales by moonlight," thought Pat, "and whatever she told you you felt had happened ... *must* have

happened. That is the difference between her yarns and Tillytuck's. Oh, it is really awful to think of her going away in the fall for a whole winter."

Pat went up to the Long House by the old delightful short cut past Swallowfield and over the brook and up the hill fields. It was a long time since she had trodden that fairy path but it had not changed. The fields on the hill still looked as if they loved each other. The big silver birch still hung over the log bridge across the brook. The damp mint, crushed under her feet, still gave out its old haunting aroma, and all kinds of wild blossom filled the crevices of the stone dyke where she and Bets had picked wild strawberries. Its base was still lost in a wave of fern and bayberry. And on the hill the Watching Pine still watched and seemed to shake a hand meaningly at her. At the top was the old gate, fallen into ruin, and beyond it the path through the spruce bush where silence seemed to kneel like a grey nun and she felt that Bets must come to meet her, walking through the dusk with dreams in her eyes.

Past the bush she came out on the garden with the house in the midst. Pat stopped and gazed around her. Everything she looked on had some memory of pleasure or pain. The old garden was very eloquent ... that old garden that had once been so beloved by Bets. She seemed to come back again in the flowers she had tended and loved. The whole place was full of her. She had planted that row of lilies ... she had trained that vine over the trellis ... she had set out that rosebush by the porch step. But most of it was now a festering mass of weeds and in its midst was the sad, empty house, with the little dormer window in its spruce-shadowed roof ... the window of the room where she had seen the sunrise light falling over Bets' dead face. A dreadful pang of loneliness tore her soul.

"I hate those people who are going to live in you," she told the house. "I daresay they'll tear you up and turn you inside out. That will break my heart. You won't be *you* then."

She went across the garden, along an old mossy walk where the unpruned rosebushes caught at her dress as if they wanted to hold her. Across the lawn, overgrown with grass, to the cherry orchard and around its curve. Then she stopped short in amazed embarrassment.

In a little semicircle of young spruces was a fire of applewood, like a vivid rose of night. Two people were squatted on the grass before it ... two people and a dog and a cat. The dog, a splendid white and gold creature, who looked as if he could understand a joke, sat beside the man, and the cat, black, bigger than any cat had a right to be, with pale-green moonlike eyes, was snuggled down beside the girl, his beautiful white paws folded under his snowy breast. Pat, in a surge of unreasonable indignation ... Bets had set out that semicircle of trees ... muttered a curt "Pardon me ... I didn't mean to ... intrude."

She, Pat, an intruder here! It was bitter.

But before she could turn and vanish the girl had sprung to her feet, run across the intervening space and caught Pat's arm.

"Don't go," she said imploringly. "Oh, don't go. Stop and get acquainted. You must be one of the Gardiner girls from Silver Bush. I've been hearing about you."

"I'm Pat Gardiner," said Pat curtly. She knew she was being silly and bitter but for the moment she could not help it. She almost hated this girl: and yet there was something undeniably attractive about her. You felt that from the very first. She was a little taller than Pat and she wore knickerbockers and a khaki shirt. She had long, slanted, grey-green eyes with long fair lashes that should have gone with fair hair. But her hair was sloe-black, worn in a glossy braid around her head and waving back from her forehead in a peculiarly virile way. Her skin was creamy with a few freckles ... delicious freckles, as if they had been shaken out of a pepper-pot over nose and tips of cheeks. She had a crooked clever mouth with a mutinous tilt. Pat didn't think her a bit pretty but she felt drawn to that face in spite of herself.

"And I'm Suzanne Kirk. Really Suzanne. Christened so. Not Susan putting on frills. Now we know each other ... or rather we've known each other for hundreds of years. I recognised you as soon as I saw you. Come and squat with us."

Pat, still a little stiff, let herself be pulled over to the fire. She wanted to be friendly ... and yet she didn't.

“This is my brother, David, Miss Gardiner.”

David Kirk got up and put out a long lean brown hand. He was quite old ... forty, if a day, Pat thought mercilessly ... and there were grey dabs in the dark hair over his ears. He was not handsome, yet he was certainly what Judy would have called “a bit distinguished-like.” There was a good deal of his sister’s charm in his face and though his eyes were grey-blue instead of grey-green, there was the same tilt to his mouth ... perhaps a little more decided ... a little cynical. And when he spoke, although he said only, “I am glad to meet you, Miss Gardiner,” there was something in his voice that made everything he said seem significant.

“And this is Ichabod,” said Suzanne, waving her hand to the dog, who thumped his tail ingratiatingly. “Of course it’s an absurd name for a lordly creature like him but David wanted to give him a name no dog had ever had before. I’m *sure* no dog was ever called Ichabod before, aren’t you?”

“I never heard of one.” Pat felt that she was yielding in spite of herself. It *did* seem as if she had known them before.

“Our cat is called Alphonso-of-the-emerald-eyes. Alphonso, meet Miss Gardiner.”

Alphonso did not wave his tail. He merely blinked a disdainful eye and went on being Alphonso-of-the-emerald-eyes. Suzanne whispered to Pat,

“He is a haughty cat of ancient lineage but he likes being tickled under the ear just as well as if he were a cat who didn’t know who his grandfather was. He understands every word we say but he never gossips. Pick out a soft spot of ground, Miss Gardiner, and we’ll have a nice do-nothing time.”

For a moment Pat hesitated. Then she curled up beside Alphonso.

“I suppose I’ve been trespassing,” she said, “but I didn’t know you’d come yet. So I wanted to come up and say goodbye to the Long House. I ... I used to come here a great deal. I have very dear memories of it.”

“But you are not going to say goodbye to it ... and you are going to come here a great deal again. I know we are going to be good friends,” said Suzanne. “David and I want neighbours ... want them terribly. And we’re not really moved in yet ... we’re going to sleep in the hayloft

tonight ... but our furniture is all in there higgledy-piggledy. The only thing in place is that old iron lantern over the front door. I *had* to hang that up and put a candle in it. It's our beacon star ... we'll light it every night. Isn't it lovely? We picked it up one time we were over in France ... in an old château some king had built for his beloved. David went for his paper and I mortgaged my future for years and went with him. I've never regretted it. It's funny ... but all the things I do regret were prudent things ... or what seemed so at the time. David and I have just been prowling about this evening. We arrived two hours ago in a terrible old rattling, banging, squeaking car ... a secondhand which we bought last week. It took all our spare cash to buy the house but we don't grudge it. The minute we saw that house I knew we must have it. It is a house of delightful personality, don't you think?"

"I've always loved it," said Pat softly.

"Oh, I knew it had been loved the moment I saw it. I think you can always tell when a house has been loved. But it's been asleep for so long. And lonely. It always hurts me to see a house lonely. I felt that I must bring it back to life and chum with it. I *know* it feels happy because we are going to fix it up."

Pat felt the cockles of her heart warming. Houses meant to this girl what they meant to herself ... creatures, not things.

"We found this pile of apple boughs here and couldn't resist the temptation to light it. There is no wood makes such a lovely fire as applewood. And we're so happy tonight. We've just been hungry for a home ... with trees and flowers and a cat or two to do our purring for us. We haven't had a home since we were children ... not even when David was married. He and his wife lived in a little apartment for the short time the poor darling did live. We're short on relations so we'll have to depend on neighbours. It doesn't take much to make us laugh and although we're quite clever we're not so clever that anybody need be scared of us. We can't be very wild ... David here was shell-shocked somewhere in France when he was twenty and has to live quietly ... but we do mean to be good friends with life."

“I was bad friends with it when I came up here,” said Pat frankly, letting herself thaw a little more. “You see, I really did resent you ... anybody ... coming in here. It seemed to belong to a dear friend of mine who used to live here ... and died six years ago.”

“But you don’t resent us any longer, do you? Because now you know we love this place, too. We’ll be good to your ghosts and your memories, Miss Gardiner.”

“I’m just Pat,” ... letting herself go completely.

“Just as I’m Suzanne.”

Suddenly they all felt comfortable and congenial. Ichabod lay down ... Alphonso really went to sleep. The applewood fire crackled and sputtered companionably. About them was the velvet and shadow of the oncoming night with dreaming moonlit trees beyond. In the spruces little winds were gossiping and far below the river gleamed like a blue ribbon tied around its green hill.

“I’m so glad the view goes with the house,” said Suzanne. “You don’t know how rich it makes me feel just to look at it. And that old garden is one I’ve always dreamed. I knew I had to have wistaria and larkspur and fox-gloves and canterbury-bells and hollyhocks and here they all are. It’s uncanny. We’re going to build a stone fireplace here in this crescent of trees. It just wants it.”

“Bets ... my friend ... planted those trees. They’re hers ... really ... but she won’t mind lending them to you.”

Suzanne reached across Alphonso and squeezed Pat’s hand.

“It’s nice of you to say that. No, she won’t mind, because we love them. You never mind letting people have things when you know they love them. And she won’t mind our making an iris glade in the spruce bush. That is another thing I’ve always dreamed of ... hundreds of iris with spruce trees around them ... all around them, so the glade will never be seen save by those you want to see it. And we can go there when we want to be alone. One needs a little solitude in life.”

They sat and talked for what might have been an hour or a century. The talk had colour ... Pat recognised that fact instantly. Everything they

talked of was interesting the moment they touched it. Occasionally there was a flavour of mockery in David Kirk's laughter and a somewhat mordant edge to his wit. Pat thought he was a little bitter but there was something stimulating and pungent about his bitterness and she found herself liking that lean, dark face of his, with its quick smiles. He had a way of saying things that gave them poignancy and Pat loved the fashion in which he and Suzanne could toss a ball of conversation back and forth, always keeping it in the air.

"The moon is going behind a cloud ... a silvery white cloud," said Suzanne. "I love a cloud like that."

"There are so many things of that sort to give pleasure," said Pat dreamily. "Such *little* things ... and yet so much pleasure."

"I know ... like the heart of an unblown rose," murmured Suzanne.

"Or the tang of a fir wood," said David.

"Let's each give a list of loveliest things," said Suzanne. "The things that please us most, just as they come into our heads, no matter what they are. *I* love the strange deep shadows that come just before sunset ... June bugs thudding against the windows ... a bite of homemade bread ... a hot water bottle on a cold winter night ... wet mossy stones in a brook ... the song of wind in the top of an old pine. Now, Pat?"

"The way a cat folds its paws under its breast ... blue smoke rising in the air on a frosty winter morning... the way my little niece Mary laughs, crinkling up her eyes ... old fields dreaming in moonlight ... the scrunch of dry leaves under your feet in the silver bush in November ... a baby's toes ... the smell of clean clothes as you take them off the line."

"David?"

"The cold of ice," said David slowly. "Alphonso's eyes ... the smell of rain after burning drought ... water at night ... a leaping flame ... the strange dark whiteness of a winter night ... brook-brown eyes in a girl."

It never occurred to Pat that David Kirk was trying to pay her a compliment. She thought her eyes were yellow ... "cat's eyes," May Binnie had said. She wondered if David Kirk's dead young wife had had brook-brown eyes.

The Kirks walked down the hill with her and she made them go into the kitchen and have some of Judy's orange biscuits with a glass of milk. There was no place else to take them for Rae had callers in the Big Parlour and mother had an old friend in the Little Parlour and Long Alec was colloquing with the minister in the dining-room. But the Kirks were people you'd just as soon take into the kitchen as not. Judy was excessively polite, in spite of Suzanne's shirt and knickerbockers ... too polite, really. Judy didn't know what to make of this sudden intimacy.

"I want to see lots of you ... I'm sure we are going to be good friends." Sid coming in, spoke to them on the doorstep.

"Do you know them?" asked Pat in surprise.

"Met them in the Silverbridge store this afternoon. The girl asked me if I knew who lived in the queer old-fashioned place at the foot of the hill."

Pat, who had been feeling very rich, suddenly felt poor ... horribly poor. She went out into the garden and looked at Silver Bush ... friendly Silver Bush with its lights welcoming all the world. Blossoms cool with night were around her but they meant nothing to her. Squedunk slithered through the delphiniums to rub against her leg and she never even noticed him. The colour had gone out of everything.

"She dared to laugh at you ... she dared to call you old-fashioned," she whispered to the house. She shook her brown fist at the darkness. She had never been able to hear Silver Bush disparaged in any way. She had hated Uncle Brian last week because he had said that Silver Bush was settling on its foundations and getting a slant to its floors. And now she hated Suzanne Kirk. Suzanne, indeed! No more of Suzanne for her. To think she had been ready to accept her as a friend ... to put her in Bets' place! To think she had hob-nobbed with her around the applewood fire and told her sacred things! But never again.

"I ... I feel just like a caterpillar somebody had stepped on," said Pat chokily.

In the kitchen the genius of prophecy had descended upon Tillytuck.

"That'll be a match some day, mark my words, Judy Plum."

“Ye wud better go out and look at the moon,” scoffed Judy. “Beaus don’t be so scarce at Silver Bush that Patsy nades to take up wid *that*. He do be old enough to be her father. We’ll have to be rale civil to him though, for they tell me he do be writing a book and if we offind him he might be putting us into it.”

Up at the Long House David Kirk was saying to Suzanne,
“She makes me think of a woodland brook.”

Chapter V

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Pat snubbed Suzanne when the latter telephoned down to ask her and Sid to their house-warming. She could not go because she had another engagement for the evening ... which was quite true, for, knowing that the house-warming was coming off, she had promised to go to a dance in South Glen. And when Suzanne and David came down the hill path one evening on their way to a moonlit concert which the boarders at the Bay Shore hotel were giving on the North Glen sandshore, and asked Pat to go with them she was entirely gracious and aloof and very sorry she couldn't possibly go ... with no more excuse than that. Though in her heart she wanted to go. But something in her had been hurt too deeply. She could never forgive a jibe at Silver Bush, as unlucky Lester Conway had discovered years ago, and she took a bitter delight in refusing very sweetly ... "oh, oh, terrible polite she was," Judy reported to Tillytuck. Judy was just as well pleased that this threatened friendship with the Long House people seemed unlikely to materialise. "Widowers do be sly ... terrible sly," she reflected.

Suzanne was not one of those who could not take a hint and Pat was troubled with no more invitations. The lights gleamed in the Long House at evening but Pat resolutely turned her eyes away from them. Music drifted down the hill when Suzanne played on her violin in the garden under the stars but Pat shut her ears to it.

And yet she felt by times a strange hint of loneliness. Just now and then came a queer, hitherto unknown feeling, expressed by the deadly word "drab" ... as if life were made of grey flannel. Then she felt guilty. Life at Silver Bush could never be *that*. She wanted nothing but Silver Bush and her own family ... nothing!

Rae contributed a bit to the comedy of living that summer by having a frightful attack of schoolgirl veal love, the object of which was a young

evangelist who was holding revival meetings in Mr. Jonas Monkman's big barn. He did not approve of "organised churches" and these services were in the nature of a free-for-all and, being very lively of their kind, attracted crowds, some of whom came to scoff and remained to pray. For it could not be denied that the young preacher had a very marked power for stirring the emotions of his hearers to concert pitch. He had an exceedingly handsome, marble-white face with rather too large, too soft, too satiny brown eyes and long, crinkly, mahogany-hued hair, sweeping back in a mane from what Rae once incautiously said was "a noble brow," and a remarkably caressing, wooing voice, expressive of everything. The teenagers went down like ninepins before him. A choir was collected, consisting of everybody in the two Glens who could be persuaded to function. Rae, who sang sweetly, was leading soprano, looking like the very rose of song as she carolled with her eyes turned heavenward ... or at least towards the banners of cobwebs hanging from the roof of the barn. She went every night, gave up teasing to be allowed to wear knickerbockers around home, and discarded costume earrings because the evangelist referred to jewelry as "gauds ... all gauds." She was tormented terribly because of her "case" on the preacher, but she gave as good as she got and nobody except Pat thought it was anything but a passing crush. For that matter, all the girls were more or less in love with him and it was difficult to tell where love left off and religion began, as Elder Robinson remarked sarcastically. But Elder Robinson did not approve of the revivals conducted by itinerant evangelists ... "go-preachers" he called them. And Rae and her ilk considered Elder Robinson a hidebound old fossil. Even when Jedidiah Madison of Silverbridge, who hadn't been inside of a church for years, wandered into the barn one night and was saved in three minutes Elder Robinson was still incredulous of any good thing. "Let us see if it lasts," he was reported to have said ... and added that he had just been reading of a very successful evangelist who had turned out to be a bank bandit. Pat had no fear that Mr. Wheeler was a bandit but she detested him and was as puzzled as alarmed over Rae's infatuation.

Tillytuck was likewise hard-boiled and said that the meetings were merely a form of religious dissipation. Judy went one night out of curiosity but could never be prevailed on to go again. Mr. Wheeler played a violin solo that night and she was horrified. No matter if the meeting was held in a barn. It was, or purported to be, Divine Service and fiddles had no place in such. Neither had she any exalted opinion of the sermon. “Oh, oh, not much av a pracher that! Sure and I cud understand ivery word he said.” So Pat and Rae were the only ones who went regularly ... Pat going because Rae was so set on it ... and very soon it was bruited abroad in the Glens that the Gardiner girls meant to leave the Presbyterian church and join the go-preachers. It blistered Pat’s pride to hear it and she was less than civil to Mr. Wheeler when he walked home with them after the meeting. To be sure it was on the way to his boarding house and he always walked by Pat and not by Rae, but Pat was the suspicious older guardian sister to the backbone. It was all very well to laugh at calf love but Rae must be protected. It was a real relief to Pat’s mind when, after six hectic weeks, Mr. Wheeler departed for pastures new and Mr. Monkman’s barn reverted to rats and silence. Rae continued to blush furiously for several weeks when Sid teased her about her boyfriend ... Mr. Wheeler had said that he was glad to find there were still girls in the world who *could* blush ... but nothing more came of it and Pat’s alarm subsided. Rae was asked to sing in the South Glen choir ... began to experiment with the effect of her eyelashes on the tenor and wear “gauds” again ... and everything blew over, save for a little knot of faithful disciples who continued to hold services of their own in their homes and would have nothing further to do with churches of any description.

Chapter VI

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Pat was in a store in town one evening when Suzanne Kirk came up to her and, in spite of Pat's frigid bow, said smilingly,

"May I have a chance home with you, Miss Gardiner? David was to have run in for me but something must have gone wrong with our Lizzie."

"Oh, certainly," said Pat graciously.

"You are sure it won't crowd you?"

"Not in the least," said Pat more graciously still. Inwardly she was furious. She had promised herself a pleasant leisurely drive home through the golden August evening, over a certain little back road where nobody ever went and where there were such delicious things to see. Pat knew all the roads home from town and liked each for some peculiar charm. But now everything was spoiled. Well, she would go by the regular road and get home as soon as she could. She made the car screech violently as she rounded the first corner. It seemed to express her feelings.

"Don't let's go home by this road," said Suzanne softly. "There's so much traffic ... and it's so straight. A straight road is an abomination, don't you think? I like lovely turns around curves of ferns and spruce ... and little dips into brooky hollows ... and the things the car lights pick up as you turn corners, starting out at you in the undergrowth like fairy folk taken by surprise."

"A thunderstorm is coming up," said Pat, more graciously every time she spoke.

"Oh, we'll out-race it. Let us take the road out from that street. David and I went by that last week ... it's a dear, lost, bewitching road."

Oh, didn't she know it! Pat turned the car so abruptly in the direction of the back road that she narrowly avoided a collision. How dare Suzanne Kirk, who had called Silver Bush queer, like that road? It was an insult. She hated to have Suzanne Kirk like anything she liked. Well, the road was

rough and rutty ... and the thunderstorm was an excuse for driving fast. Suzanne Kirk should have a good bumpy drive that would cure her of her liking for back roads.

Pat did not talk or try to talk. Neither, after a few futile attempts, did Suzanne. They were about half way home when the latter said, with a tinge of alarm in her voice,

“The storm is coming up rather quickly, isn’t it?”

Pat had been grimly aware of that for some time. It was growing dark. Huge menacing black masses were piling up in the northwest in the teeth of a rapidly rising wind. This was a frightful road to be on in a rain ... narrow and twisting with reedy ditches on either side. Curves and dips and startled fairy folk were all very well in fine weather, but in wind and rain and darkness ... and all three seemed to envelop them at once ... a wall of black ... an ocean of driving rain ... a howl of tempest ... a blue-white flare of lightning ... a deafening crash of thunder ... and then disaster. The car had swerved on the suddenly greasy road and the next moment they were in the ditch.

Well, it might have been worse. The car was right-side up and the ditch was not deep. But it was full of soft mud under its bracken and Pat knew she could never get the car back to the road.

“There’s nothing to do but stay here till the storm is over and some one comes along,” she said. “I’m ... I’m sorry I’ve ditched you, Miss Kirk.”

“Never be sorry. This is an adventure. What a storm! It’s been brewing all day but I really didn’t expect it so soon. What time is it?”

“Eight-thirty. The trouble is this is *such* a back road. Very few people travel on it at any time. And houses are few and far between. But I think that last glare of lightning showed one off to the right. As soon as the rain stops I’ll go to it and see if I can get somebody to haul us out ... or at least phone for help.”

It was an hour before the storm passed. It was pitch dark by now and the ditch in which they sat so snugly was a rushing river.

“I’m going to try to make that house,” said Pat resolutely.

“I’ll go with you,” said Suzanne. “I won’t stay here alone. And I’ve got a flashlight in my bag.”

They managed to get out of the car and out of the ditch. There was no use in hunting for the gate, if there was a gate, but when Suzanne’s flashlight showed a place where it was possible to scramble over the fence they scrambled over it and through a wilderness of raspberry canes. Beyond this a barn loomed up and they had to circumnavigate it in mud. Finally they reached the house.

“No lights,” said Pat as they mounted the crazy steps to a dilapidated veranda. “I’m afraid nobody lives here. There are several old uninhabited houses along this road and it’s just our luck to strike one.”

“What a queer, old-fashioned place!” said Suzanne, playing her flashlight over it. She couldn’t have said anything more unfortunate. Pat, who had thawed out a trifle, froze up again.

She knocked on the door ... knocked again ... took up a board lying near and pounded vigorously ... called aloud ... finally yelled. There was no response.

“Let us see if it is locked,” said Suzanne, trying the latch. It wasn’t. They stepped in. The flashlight revealed a kitchen that did not seem to have been lived in for many a day. There was an old rusty stove, a trestle table, several dilapidated chairs, and a still more dilapidated couch.

“Any port in a storm,” said Suzanne cheerfully. “I suggest, Miss Gardiner, that we camp here for the night. It’s beginning to rain again ... listen ... and we may be miles from an inhabited house. We can bring in the rugs. You take the couch and I’ll pick out the softest spot on the floor. We’ll be dry at least and in the morning we can more easily get assistance.”

Pat agreed that it was the only thing to do. They would probably not worry at Silver Bush. It had not been certain that she would return home that night ... an old Queen’s classmate had asked her to visit her. They went back to the car, got the rugs and locked it up. Pat insisted that Suzanne should take the couch and Suzanne was determined Pat should have it. They solved it by flipping a coin.

Pat wrapped a rug around her and curled up on the couch. Suzanne lay down on the floor with a cushion under her head. Neither expected to sleep. Who could sleep with a splosy thud of rain falling regularly near one and rats scurrying overhead. After what seemed hours Suzanne called softly across the room,

“Are you asleep, Miss Gardiner?”

“No ... I feel as if I could never sleep again.”

Suzanne sat up.

“Then for heaven’s sake let’s talk. This is ghastly. I’ve a mortal horror of rats. There seem to be simply swarms of them in this house. Talk ... talk. You needn’t pretend to like me if you don’t. And for the matter of that, as one woman to another, why don’t you like me, Pat Gardiner? Why *won’t* you like me? I thought you did that night by the fire. And we liked you ... we thought there was something simply dear about you. And then when we called on our way to the concert ... why, we seemed to be looking at you through glass! We couldn’t get near you at all. David was hurt but I was furious ... simply furious. I’m sure my blood boiled. I could hear it bubbling in my veins. Oh, how I hoped your husband would beat you! And yet, every night since, I’ve been watching your kitchen light and wondering what was going on in it and wishing we could drop in and fraternise. I can’t imagine you and I not being friends ... *real* friends. We were made for it. Isn’t it Kipling who says, ‘There is no gift like friendship’?”

“Yes ... *Parnesius* in *Puck*,” said Pat.

“Oh, you know *Puck* too? Now, why can’t we give that gift to each other?”

“Did you think,” said Pat in a choked voice, “that I could be friends with any one who ... who laughed at Silver Bush?”

“Laugh at Silver Bush! Pat Gardiner, I never did. How could I? I’ve loved it from the first moment David and I looked down on it.”

Pat sat up on the creaking couch.

“You ... you asked in the Silverbridge store who lived in that *queer* old-fashioned place. Sid heard you.”

“Pat! Let me think. Why, I remember ... I *didn't* say ‘queer.’ I said, ‘Who lives in that dear, quaint, old-fashioned house at the foot of the hill?’ Sid forgot one of the adjectives and was mistaken in one of the others. Pat, I couldn’t call Silver Bush ‘queer.’ You don’t know how much I admire it. And I admire it all the more because it *is* old-fashioned. That is why I loved the Long House at first sight.”

Pat felt the ice round her heart thawing rapidly. “Quaint” was complimentary rather than not and she didn’t mind the “old-fashioned.” And she did want to be friends with Suzanne. Perhaps Suzanne was prose where Bets had been poetry. But such prose!

“I’m sorry I froze up,” she said frankly. “But I’m such a thin-skinned creature where Silver Bush is concerned. I couldn’t bear to hear it called queer.”

“I don’t blame you. And now everything is going to be all right. We just *belong* somehow. Don’t you feel it? You’re all so nice. I love Judy ... the wit and sympathy and blarney of her. And that wonderful old, wise, humorous face of hers. She’s really a museum piece ... there’s nothing like her anywhere else in the world. You’ll like us, too. I’m decent in spots and David is nice ... sometimes he’s very nice. One day he is a philosopher ... the next day he is a child.”

“Aren’t all men?” said Pat, tremendously wise.

“David more than most, I think. He’s had a rotten life, Pat. He was years getting over his shell-shock. It simply blotted out his career. He was so ambitious once. When he got better it was too late. He has been sub-editor of a Halifax paper for years ... and hating it. His bit of a wife died, too, just a few months after their marriage. And I taught school ... and hated it. Then old Uncle Murray died out west and left us some money ... not a fortune but enough to live on. And so we became free. Free! Oh, Pat, you’ve never known what slavery meant so you don’t know what freedom is. I *love* keeping house ... it’s really a lovely phrase, isn’t it? Keeping it ... holding it fast against the world ... against all the forces trying to tear it open. And David has time to write his war book at last ... he’s always longed to. We are so happy ... and we’ll be happier still to have you as a

friend. I don't believe you've any idea how nice you are, Pat. And now let's just talk all night."

They talked for a good part of it. And then Suzanne fell suddenly silent. Pat rather envied her the floor. It was level, at least ... not all bumps and hollows, like the couch. Would it ever stop raining? How the windows rattled! Great heavens, what was that? Oh, only a brick blowing off the chimney and thumping down over the roof. Those rats! Oh for an hour of Gentleman Tom! It was ... so nice ... to be friends ... with Suzanne ... she hoped ... a great wave of sleep rolled over Pat and engulfed her.

When she wakened the rain had ceased and the outside world was lying in the strange timeless light of early dawn. Pat raised herself on her elbow and looked out. Some squirrels were scolding and chattering in an old apple tree. A little pond at the foot of the slope was softly clear and pellucid, with spruce trees dark and soft beyond it. An old crone of a hemlock was shaking her head rebukingly at some giddy young saplings on the hill. Gossamer clouds were floating in a clear silvery eastern sky that looked as if it had not known a thunderstorm in a hundred years. And a huge black dog was sitting on the doorstep. This was like a place Judy used to tell of in Ireland that was haunted by the ghost of a black dog who bayed at the door before a death. However, this dog didn't look exactly like a ghost!

Suzanne was still asleep. Pat looked around and saw something that gave her an idea. She got to her feet cautiously.

Chapter VII

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When Suzanne wakened half an hour later she sat up and gazed around her in amazement. A most delectable odour came from a sizzling frying pan on the stove in which crisp bacon slices could be discerned. On the hearth was a plateful of golden-brown triangles of toast and Pat was putting a spoonful of tea in a battered old granite teapot.

The table was set with dishes and in the centre was a bouquet of ferns and meadow-queen in an old pickle jar.

“Pat, what magic is this? Are you a witch?”

“Not a bit of it. When I woke up I saw a pile of firewood behind the stove and a frying pan on a nail. I found plates and cups and knives and forks in the pantry. Evidently this house is occupied by times. The owner probably lives on some other farm and camps here for haying and harvest and things like that. I lit the fire and went out to the car. Took a chance with the dog ... there is a dog ... but he paid no attention to me. I had a package of bacon in the car and a couple of loaves of bread. Mother likes baker’s toast, you know. I found some tea in the pantry ... and so breakfast is served, madam.”

“You’re a born homemaker, Pat. This awful place actually looks quite homey and pleasant. I never thought a pickle jar bouquet could be so charming. And I’m hungry ... I’m positively starving. Let’s eat. Our first meal together ... our first breaking of bread. I like that phrase ... breaking bread together ... don’t you? Who is it speaks of ‘bread of friendship’?”

“Carman,” said Pat, dishing up her bacon.

“What a lovely *clean* morning it is!” said Suzanne, scrambling up.
“Look, Pat, there’s a big pine down by that pond. I love pines so much it hurts me. And I love crisp bacon and crisper toast. Thank heaven there is plenty of it. I never was so hungry in my life.”

They were half through their breakfast when a queer strangled noise behind them startled them. They turned around ... and stiffened with horror. In the hall doorway a man was standing ... a tall, gaunt, unshaven creature in a motley collection of garments, with an extraordinarily long grey moustache, which didn't seem to belong to his lean, lantern-jawed face at all, hanging down on either side of his chin. This apparition was staring at them, apparently as much taken aback as they were.

"I thought I was over it," he said mournfully, shaking a grizzled head. "I mostly sleeps it off."

Pat rose and stammered out an explanation. The gentleman waved a hand at her.

"It's all right. Sorry you had to sleep on the floor. If I'd been awake I'd have give you my bed."

"We knocked ... and called ..."

"Just so. Old Gabe's trump couldn't have roused me last night. I was a bit lit up, to state facts. You did right to make yourselves at home. But it's a wonder the dog didn't tear you to pieces. He's a savage brute."

"He wasn't here when we came ... and he seemed quite quiet this morning."

"'Zat a fact? Then I've been fooled. Bought him on the grounds that he was a tartar. I keep him here for tramps. My name is Nathaniel Butterbloom and I'm just sorter camping here while I take off the harvest. I live down at Three Corners."

"Won't you sit down and share our breakfast?" said Pat lamely.

"Don't care if I do," said Mr. Butterbloom and sat down without more ado. "Sorry there ain't no tablecloth. I had one but the rats et it."

Pat, exchanging a grin with Suzanne, poured him a cup of tea and helped him liberally to bacon and toast.

"This *is* a pleasant surprise and that's a fact. I've been scraping up my own meals. When I run out of provisions I fry a kitten," he added mournfully. "That barn out there is overrun with cats. I started out with three cats two years ago but there must be hundreds now."

“It’s a wonder they don’t keep the rats down,” said Suzanne mischievously. “And your roof leaks very badly, Mr. Butterbloom.”

“Well,” said Mr. Butterbloom placidly, “when it rains I can’t get up on the roof to work, can I? And when it’s fine it doesn’t leak.”

“I’m sorry there is no milk for your tea,” said Pat.

“There’s some in the pantry if the spiders haven’t got into it.”

“They have,” said Pat briefly.

Mr. Butterbloom drank his cup of tea and champed his bacon in silence. Suzanne had just whispered solemnly to Pat, “A strong silent man,” when he wiped his moustache with the back of his hand and spoke again. “What mought your names be?”

“This is Miss Kirk ... and I’m one of the Gardiner girls from North Glen.”

“Pleased to meet you both. And so you ain’t married women?”

“No ... no.” Suzanne shook her head in demure sadness.

“Neither am I. I’ve a widder woman keeping house for me at Three Corners. She isn’t much of a cook but she rubs my back for me. I have to have my back rubbed for half an hour every night before I can sleep ... unless I’m lit up. I’ve heard of the Gardiners. Very genteel. I’ve never been in North Glen but I courted an old maid in South Glen for a while. I was younger then. She kept me dangling for a year and then up and married a widower. Since then I’ve sorter lost my enthusiasm for marriage.”

He relapsed into silence while he polished off another helping. When the platter was empty he sighed deeply.

“Miss, that was a breakfast. After all, I may have made a mistake in not getting married.” He fixed a fishy, speculative eye on Suzanne. “I haven’t much book-larning but I’ve a couple of farms, nearly paid for.”

Suzanne did not rise to this but she and Pat offered to wash the dishes before leaving.

“Never mind,” said Mr. Butterbloom gloomily. “I don’t wash dishes. The dog licks ‘em clean. If you must be going I’ll get out the hosses and haul your buzz-wagon out of the ditch.”

He refused an offer of payment sadly.

“Didn’t you cook my breakfast? But could you do with a kitten?
There’s several around just the right age.”

Pat explained politely that they had all the cats needful at Silver Bush.

“It’s of no consequence. I s’pose” ... with a sigh ... “it’ll come in handy sometime when the cupboard is bare.”

When they got out of sight of the house Pat stopped the car so that they might have a laugh. When two people have laughed ... really laughed ... together they are friends for life.

“Two unchaperoned females spending the night in a house with a drunken man,” gasped Suzanne. “Let’s pray the writer of ‘North Glen Notes’ never finds it out.”

Nobody but Judy ever knew the whole story. Judy, of course, knew all about Nathaniel Butterbloom.

“A bit av a divil in his day,” she said, “but he’s too old now to cut up much. Innyhow, ye can be thankful he didn’t ask ye to rub his back for him.”

Chapter VIII

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Pat had gone to her Secret Field, seeking the refreshment of soul she always found there. It was as beautiful and remote and mystic as ever, full of the sunshine of uncounted summers. The trees about it welcomed her and Pat flung herself down among the feathery bent grasses and listened to the silence until she felt at one with it and certain problems that had rather worried her of late dropped into proper focus as they always did in that sweet place, where the fairies still surely lingered if they lingered in the world at all. Under the ancient spell of the Secret Field Pat became a child again and could believe anything.

She went from it to Happiness by a narrow wood lane where ferns grew waist-high on either side. Pat knew all the little lanes in the woods and was known of them. They had their moods and their whims. One always seemed full of hidden laughter and furtive feet. One never seemed to know just where it wanted to go. In this one it always seemed as if you were in a temple. Overhead in the young, resinous fir boughs a wind was crooning a processional. The aroma drifting under the arches from old sunny hollows and lurking nooks was as the incense of worship, the exquisite shadows that filled the woods were acolytes, and the thoughts that came to her were like prayers.

“If one could only feel always like this,” Pat had said once to Judy. “All the little worries swallowed up ... all the petty spites and fears and disappointments forgotten ... just love and peace and beauty.”

“Oh, oh, but what wud there be lift for heaven, girl dear?” asked Judy.

The lane finally led out to the back fields of the other place and Pat found her way to Happiness and sat down near the Haunted Spring in a little hollow among the ferny cradle-hills. Far down before her, beyond the still, golden pastures, was the sapphire of the gulf. Over the westering hill of spruce a sunset of crimson and warm gold was fading out into apple

green. And all this beauty was hers just for the looking. In these silent and remembered places she could think of old, beloved things ... of sunsets she and Hilary had watched there together ... Hilary, who at this very moment would be somewhere on the ocean on his way back from his summer in Europe. He had written her most delightful letters but she was glad he would soon be back in Canada. It would be pleasant to think that the Atlantic no longer rolled between them. She wondered a little wistfully why he couldn't have planned to stop off for a few days on the Island on his way to Toronto. She had asked him to. And he had never even referred to the invitation, although he had wound up his letter by saying "my love to Silver Bush." She could see from where she sat her name and his cut on a maple tree and overgrown with lichen. Pat sighed sentimentally. She wished she could be a child again with no worries. To be sure she had thought she had worries then ... father going west and thinking you were ugly and Joe running away to sea and things like that. But there had been no men then ... no question of beaux and people who persisted in turning into lovers when all you wanted of them was to be friends. Jim Mallory was in love with her now. She had met him at a dance in Silverbridge and, as Rae told Hilary in her next letter to him, he fell for her with a crash that could be heard for miles. He was a really fine fellow ... "oh, oh, that's something like now," Judy said, the first evening he came to Silver Bush. Pat liked him terribly ... almost as much as she liked Hilary and David. Rae told Judy she believed Pat was really in love but Judy had grown pessimistic under repeated disappointments.

"I've no great faith in it lasting," she said.

Pat, when she left home that night, hardly knew herself whether she wasn't a little bit in love or not. Certainly ... the look in his eyes ... the touch of his fingers when he lingered to say goodnight under enchanted moons ... she hadn't felt like that since the days of Lester Conway. But her hour in the Secret Field and Happiness cleared the matter up for her. No, liking wasn't enough ... little thrills and raptures weren't enough. There must be something more before she could dream of leaving Silver Bush. Poor Jim Mallory never had a chance after that and in a week or two Long

Alec was to ask his wife in a mildly exasperated tone what the dickens the girl wanted anyways. Was nobody good enough for her?

“No,” said Mother softly, “just as nobody was good enough for me till you came, Alec.”

“Fiddlesticks!” said Long Alec. But he said it gently. After all, he was in no hurry to lose Pat.

Rae was another of Pat’s little problems. She had passed her Entrance and wanted to go to Queen’s. But just where was the money to come from? The crop was only fair: there had been some heavy losses in cattle: it was just barely possible to pay the interest on the mortgage this year. Dad wanted Rae to wait for another year and Rae was taking it hard. But in Happiness Pat decided that Rae must go. They would borrow the money from Uncle Tom who would be quite willing to lend it. Long Alec had a horror of borrowing. It had robbed him of many a night’s sleep when he mortgaged Silver Bush to buy the Adams place. But Pat thought she could bring him round. Rae could pay back the loan in a year of teaching if she were lucky enough to get the home school. If not, in two. Everything seemed feasible in Happiness.

If only Judy were not going to Ireland! But Judy was so set on it now that nothing could turn her from it, even if anybody could have been selfish enough to try. She meant to sail in November and was already talking of passports and a new trunk.

“Sure and I cudn’t be taking my old blue chist. It’s a bit ould-fashioned. I tuk it to Australy wid me and thin to Canady but the times have changed since thin and a body must kape up wid thim. And I’ll have to be getting a negleege, too, it’s like. There do be a pink silk one wid white cherry blossoms all over it, marked down at Brennan’s. Do ye be thinking I’m too old for it, girls dear?”

The idea of Judy, in a pink, cherry-blossomed “negleege” was something nobody at Silver Bush could contemplate with equanimity. But not a word was said to dissuade her. Pat assured her there was no longer any age in fashions.

Yes, Judy was going. The fact must be faced. But it no longer blocked up the future. The winter would pass ... the spring would come ... and Judy would come with it. Meanwhile, she was not taking Silver Bush to Ireland in her pocket. It would stay where it was, under its sheltering trees, with its fields lying cool and quiet around it. Pat, on her way home, stopped as ever at the top of the hill to gloat over it — this house where her dear ones were lying asleep.

For she had lingered long in Happiness and Silver Bush had gone to bed. There was still a light in Judy's kitchen chamber. Judy was probably hunting through her book of useful knowledge for remedies for seasickness. Though Uncle Tom had slyly suggested that her black bottle was as good an old reliable as any.

Pat was happy. In spite of everything the autumn world was beautiful. Some of its days might bring purple gifts ... some might bring peace ... all would bring loveliness.

"Darling Silver Bush!" said Pat. "How could anybody ever think of leaving you if she could help it?"

She remembered how sorry she had been in childhood for the Jamesons of Silverbridge ... a family who were always moving round. To be sure, they seemed to like it ... but the very thought of such an existence made Pat shiver.

Long Alec was horrified at first when Pat broached the idea of borrowing the money for Rae's year at Queen's. But she talked him round. It was beginning to be suspected at Silver Bush that Pat could twist dad around her little finger. Rae averred she did it by flattering him but Pat indignantly denied it.

"It would be of no use to try to flatter dad. You know as well as I do, Rae, that dad is impervious to flattery."

"Oh, oh, there do be no such man," muttered Judy with a grin. Flattery or not, Long Alec yielded and everything was soon arranged. Rae was wild with delight.

"If I'd had to wait till next year I'd have gone straight to the end of the world and jumped off. Emmy's going this year and Dot Robinson and you

know we've always been such pals. And I'm going to study, Pat ... oh, am I going to study? I know everybody says the Silver Bush girls are lookers and popular with the boys but have no brains. I mean to show them. Aunt Barbara says a girl doesn't need brains if she's pretty but that's an idea left over from the Victorians. Nowadays you've got to have brains to capitalise your good looks."

"Did ye be thinking that out for yersilf, darlint?" asked Judy.

"No," said Rae, one of whose charms was honesty, "I saw it in a magazine. Oh, but I'm happy! Pat darling, the world is only sixteen years old to-day. And can't we have a party before I go?"

"Of course, I've got that all planned out."

Pat loved to give parties and welcomed any excuse for one. And this one, being a sort of send-off for Rae, must be a special one.

"We'll have it a week from Friday night. We'll have a platform built in the silver bush for dancing and Chinese lanterns hung on the trees."

"Pat, how lovely! It will be like fairyland. Will there be a moon?"

"There will. I'll see to that," promised Pat.

"Don't make too many fine plans," said Sid warningly. "Remember when you do some of them always go agley."

Pat tossed a defiant brown head.

"What matter? I love making plans. I'll be making plans when I'm eighty. Let's get right to work, Rae, planning out the eats. We'll have some of those new ribbon sandwiches Norma had at her tea last week. They're so pretty."

Brown and golden heads bent together over recipe books. Delicious excitement began to pervade everything. Pat and Rae talked so much about the affair that Long Alec, who was taking a jaundiced view of things just then, growled to Judy that the fools of the world weren't all dead yet.

"Oh, oh, and don't ye think it'll be a rale dull place whin they are?" demanded Judy. "Do ye be thinking ..." in a soothing whisper ... "ye'd like a bacon-and-pittatie pie for supper?"

Long Alec brightened. After all, crops might be poor and you might be beginning to suspect that you had paid too much for the old Adams place

but Judy's bacon-and-potato pies were something to live for. And girls were only young once.

Chapter IX

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Uncle Horace's letter added to the pleasant excitement. Uncle Horace, who had been living as a retired sea-captain in Vancouver, was coming home for a visit for the first time in twenty years. The older folk were naturally the more deeply stirred by this. Judy for a little while was neither to hold nor bind. But Pat and Rae were intrigued, too, at the thought of this mysterious, romantic uncle they had never seen, about whom Judy had told so many yarns ... the Horace of the black-ink fruitcake and the monkey and the mutiny off Bombay. The man who, so Judy had said, kept the winds in jars. They *had* believed that once and the charm of it still hung around their thoughts of him.

He had mentioned Wednesday as the probable day of his arrival and on Tuesday Pat subjected Silver Bush to such a furbishing up that Sid asked sarcastically if Uncle Horace were coming to see them or their furniture.

"It's what we are to do wid thim blessed cats do be puzzling me," worried Judy. "Yer Uncle Horace hates cats as bad as ould Cousin Nicholas himsilf cud do."

"Oh, *do* you remember Cousin Nicholas coming downstairs that rainy Christmas night little Mary was born?" giggled Rae.

"Rimimber, is it? Oh, oh, cud I iver be forgetting him, standing there looking like the wrath av God. And now we do be having three to kape out av Horace's way. To be sure, Gintleman Tom won't be bothering him much but Bold-and-Bad and that Squedunk are so frindly. We'll just have to see that the dure av the Poet's room is kipt tight shut and trust the rist to the Good Man Above. It's the lucky thing we've got rid av Popka."

Pat did not know if it were so lucky. It had half-broken her heart to give Popka away to the distant cousin down at East Point. He was such a beautiful cat with his fluffy Maltese coat and white paws, and so affectionate. Why he used to go over the house at night, visit all the

bedrooms and kiss all the sleepers. And the purrs of him! He could out-purr Bold-and-Bad and Squedunk together. It was a shame to give him away. But Long Alec was adamant. Three cats were enough ... more than enough ... for any house. He would really like to be sure of an unoccupied chair once in a while. Popka must go ... and Popka went. Pat and Rae both cried when his new owner bore him away, shrieking piteously in a basket.

Uncle Horace did not come Wednesday, nor on Thursday or Friday. Long Alec shrugged disappointedly. Likely he had changed his mind at the last minute and wouldn't come at all. That was Horace all over.

"But if he does come I want all you folks to mind your p's and q's," said Long Alec warningly. "Horace is a bit peculiar in some ways. He was a regular martinet on board ship I understand. Everything had to be just so, running smooth as oil. And he was just the same about a house. That's why he never married, he told us the last time he was home. Couldn't find a wife neat enough. It's all very well to listen to Judy's yarns of his pranks. He used to be a rip for them, I admit, but nobody else was to play them and accidents had no place in his scheme of things. I don't know what he'll think of your dance. The last time he was home he was badly down on dancing."

"And him the liveliest dancer on the Island forty years ago," marvelled Judy.

"He's reformed since then ... and the reformed ones are generally the stiffest. Anyhow, all of you do your best to keep things moving smoothly. I don't want Horace to go away thinking things not lawful to be uttered of my household."

Pat and Rae promised, and then forgot all about him in the excitement of the party preparations. Hundreds of last minute things to do. Cream to be whipped ... floors and furniture to be polished ... at the very last an extra cake to be made because Pat was afraid they mightn't have enough. Judy declared that the queen's pantry couldn't be better stocked but gave in when Pat insisted.

"Oh, oh, ye do be the mistress here," she said with a touch of grandeur. Pat made an old-fashioned jelly roll that would cut into golden coils with

ruby jelly between them. A pretty cake ... just as pretty as any new-fangled thing. Where on earth was Rae? Prinking in her room of course ... fussing over her hair. And so much yet to be seen to! Pat had always been conscious of a sneaking sympathy with Martha. But she was very happy. Silver Bush looked beautiful. She loved the shining surfaces ... the flowers in bowls all over the house ... the glitter of glass and silver in the dining-room ... everything in the best Gardiner tradition. Sid had strung Chinese lanterns on the trees all around the platform and Tillytuck was to be fiddler, with old Matt Corcoran from the Bridge to spell him. The day of gold would be followed by a night of silver, for the weather was behaving perfectly. And at dusk, pretty girls and girls not so pretty were gazing into mirrors all over the two Glens and Silverbridge and Bay Shore. Judy, with groans that could not be uttered, was donning her wine-hued dress and Tillytuck was struggling into a white collar in the granary loft. Even the cats were giving their flanks a few extra licks. For the party at Silver Bush was easily the event of the season.

Pat, hurrying into a frock of daffodil chiffon, fluffed out her dark-brown cloud of hair and looked in her mirror with pleasure. She was feeling a trifle tired but her reflection heartened her up wonderfully. She had forgotten that she was really rather pretty. "Nae beauty" of course ... Pat had never forgotten Great-great-Aunt Hannah's dictum ... but quite pleasant to look upon.

And Rae, in her dress of delphinium blue, was a dream.

"Blue is really the loveliest colour in the world," thought Pat. "I'm sorry I can never wear it."

The dress suited Rae. But for that matter any dress did. Rae's clothes always seemed to *belong* to her. You could never imagine any one else wearing them. Once she slipped a dress over that rippling gold-brown head you thought she must have been born in it. Pat reflected with a thrill of pride that she had never seen this darling sister looking so lovely. Her eyes had such starry lights in them behind her long lashes ... eyes that were as full of charm as wood violets. To be sure, Rae wouldn't have wanted her eyes compared to wood violets ... or forget-me-nots either. That was

Victorian. Cornflower blue, now ... that sounded so much more up to date. Don Robinson had told her at the last club dance that her eyes were cornflower blue.

The Binnies were the first to come ... "spying out the land," Judy vowed. They heard May's laughter far down the lane. "Ye always hear her afore ye see her, that one," sniffed Judy. May was very gorgeous in a gown of cheap, mailorder radium lace that broke in billows around her feet and afforded a wonderful view of most of the bones in her spine. She tapped Pat condescendingly on the shoulder and said,

"You look dragged to death, darling. If I were you I'd stay in bed all day tomorrow. Ma always makes me do that after a spree."

Pat shrugged away from that hateful, fat, dimpled hand with its nails stained coral. What an intolerable phrase ... "if I were you"! As if a Binnie ever could be a Gardiner! She was thankful that the arrival of the Russells and Uncle Brian's girls saved her from the necessity of replying. Winnie was looking like a girl again tonight, in spite of her two children. For there was a new baby at the Bay Shore and Judy was going to take care of it during the evening, as she loved to do.

Pat did not dance till late. There were too many things to see to. And even when she was free she liked better to stand a little in the background, where a clump of stately white fox-glove spikes glimmered against the edge of the birches, and gloat over the whole scene. Everything was going beautifully. The dreamy August night seemed like a cup of fragrance that had spilled over. The gay lilt of Tillytuck's fiddle rippled through the moonlight to die away magically, through green, enchanted boughs, into the beautiful silences of the silver bush and the misty, glimmering fields beyond. It was really a wonder that Wild Dick didn't rise up out of his grave to dance to it.

The platform, full of flowerlike faces and flowerlike dresses, looked so pretty. Everybody seemed happy. How sweet darling mother looked, sitting among the young folks like a fine white queen, her gold-brown eyes shining with pleasure. Uncle Tom was as young as anybody, dancing as blithely as if he had never heard of Mrs. Merridew. His beard had grown

out in all its old magnificence and the streaks of grey in it did not show in that mellow light. What a lovely dress Suzanne was wearing ... green crêpe and green lace swirling about her feet. Suzanne was not really pretty ... she said herself that she had a mouth like a gargoyle ... but she was distinguished looking ... a friend to be proud of. May Binnie, with all her flashing, full-blown beauty, looked almost comical beside her. Poor Rex Miller was not there. At home, sulking, Pat thought with a regretful shrug. She had not exactly refused him two evenings before ... Pat did not often actually have to refuse her lovers ... she was, as Judy would have said, too diplomatic-like ... but she had the knack of delicately making them understand a certain thing and thus avoiding for herself and them the awkwardness of a blunt “no.”

Where was Sid’s Dorothy, with her sweet dark face? She had not come either. Pat wondered why. She hated herself for half hoping Sid and Dorothy had quarrelled. But if that were the reason Sid was dancing so often with May Binnie Pat felt she was already punished for her selfish hope. Of course May was a good dancer ... of her kind. At any rate, the boys all liked to dance with her. May was never in any danger of being a wallflower.

Amy’s new ring flashed on the shoulder of her partner as she drifted by. Amy was engaged. Another change. What a pity people had to grow up ... and get married ... and go away. She had always liked Amy much better than Norma. She recalled with considerable relish the time she had slapped Norma’s face for making fun of Silver Bush. Norma never dared to do it again.

What an exquisite profile Rae had as she lifted her face to her partner ... a tall Silverbridge boy. Rae had no lack of partners either. And the way she had of looking at them! Really, the child was getting to be quite a handful. Was there actually anybody standing back in the shadows behind Tillytuck? Pat had fancied several times there was but could never be quite sure. Probably Uncle Tom’s hired man.

David hunted her out and insisted on her dancing ... and sitting out in the silver bush with him afterwards ... just far enough away from the

dancers to make Tillytuck's fiddling sound like fairy music. Pat liked both. David was a capital dancer and she loved to talk with him. He had such a charming voice. Sometimes he was a little bitter but there was such a stimulating pungency about his bitterness. Like choke cherries. They puckered your mouth horribly but still you hankered after them. She would far rather sit here and talk to David than dance with boys who held you closer than you liked and paid you silly compliments, most of which they had picked up from the talkies.

Then a run into the house to see the baby. It was so heavenly to watch a baby asleep, with Judy crooning over it like an old weather-beaten Madonna. Judy was a bit upset on several counts.

"Patsy darlint, there do be some couples spooning on the flat monnymints in the graveyard. Do ye be thinking that dacent now?"

"It's not in the best of taste but we can hardly turn them out of it, Judy. It's only on Wild Dick's and Weeping Willy's. Wild Dick would sympathise with them and as for Weeping Willy ... who cares for his feelings? We don't count *him* among our glorious dead ... sitting down and crying instead of going bravely to work. Is that all that's worrying you, Judy?"

"It's not worrying I am but there's been a mysterious disappearance. The roll-jelly cake has gone out av the pantry and the bowl av whipped crame in the ice-house is gone. Siddy forgot to lock it. Bold-and-Bad do be licking his chops very suspicious-like but he'd have been laving the bowl at laste. Of coorse I can be whipping up more crame in a brace av shakes. But who cud have took the cake, Patsy? Niver did the like happen before."

"I suppose some of the boys have been playing tricks. Never mind, Judy, there's plenty of cake ... you said so yourself."

"But the impidence av thim ... coming into me pantry like that. Likely enough it was Sam Binnie. Patsy darlint, Rex Miller isn't here. Ye haven't been quarrelling wid him, have ye now?"

"No, Judy darling. But he won't be coming around any more. I couldn't help it. He was nice ... I liked him but ... Judy, don't be looking like that. When I asked him a question ... any question ... I always knew exactly

what he'd answer. And he never ... really never, Judy ... laughs in the right place."

"Mebbe ye cud have taught him to laugh in the right place," said Judy sarcastically.

"I don't think I could. One has to be born knowing that. So I had to wave him gently away ... 'symbolically speaking.'"

"Oh, oh, ye'll be doing that once too often, me jewel," predicted Judy darkly.

"Judy, this love business is no end of a bother. 'In life's morning march when my bosom was young' I thought it must be tremendously romantic. But it's just a nuisance. Life would be much simpler if there were nothing of the sort."

"Oh, oh, simple, is it? A bit dull, I'm thinking. I've niver had innny love affairs meself to spake av but oh, the fun I've had watching other people's!"

Pat had been able to sidetrack Rex Miller "diplomatically" but she was not so fortunate with Samuel MacLeod ... probably because it had never occurred to her that he had any "intentions" regarding her. Samuel ... nobody ever called him Sam ... it simply couldn't be done ... came now and again to Silver Bush to confer with Pat and Rae on the programs of the Young People's Society, of which he was president, but no one, not even Judy, ever looked upon him as a possible beau. And now after supper, having asked Pat to dance ... Rae said that dancing with Samuel was almost as solemn a performance as leading the Young People's ... he followed it up by asking her to go for a walk in the garden. Pat steered him past the graveyard, which he seemed to mistake for the garden, and got him into the delphinium walk. And, standing there, even more dreadfully conscious of hands and feet than usual, he told her that his heart had chosen her for the supreme object of its love and that if she would like to be Mrs. Samuel MacLeod she had only to say the word.

Pat was so dumbfounded that she couldn't speak at all at first and it was not till Samuel, taking her silence for maidenly consent began

gingerly to put a long arm around her, that she came to the surface and managed to gasp out,

“Oh, no ... no ... I don’t think I can ... I mean, I’m sure I can’t. Oh, it’s utterly impossible.”

As she spoke there was a smothered giggle on the other side of the delphiniums and Emmy Madison and Dot Robinson scuttled away across the lawn.

“Oh, I’m so sorry,” cried Pat. “I never thought anybody was there.”

“It doesn’t matter,” said Samuel, with a dignity that somehow did not misbecome him. “I am not ashamed to have people know that I aspired to you.”

In spite of his absurd Victorian phrases Pat found herself for the first time rather liking him. He couldn’t help being a South Glen MacLeod. They were all like that. And she made up her mind that she would never entertain Judy or Suzanne by an account of this proposal ... though to be sure that wretched Emmy and Dot would spread it all over the clan.

All in all, Pat drew a breath of relief when the last guest had gone and the last lantern candle expired, leaving the silver bush to its dreams and its moonlight. The party had been a tremendous success ... “the nicest party I’ve ever been to,” Suzanne whispered before she took the hill road. “And that supper! Come up tomorrow night and we’ll have a good pi-jaw about everything.”

But when you were hostess there was, as Judy said, “a bit av a strain,” especially with the proposal of Samuel thrown in. She turned from the gate and ran up the back walk, crushing the damp mint as she ran. The late August night had grown a bit chilly and Judy’s kitchen, where a fire had been lit to brew the coffee, seemed attractive.

Pat halted in the doorway in amazement. There were Uncle Tom and the aunts ... mother ... Rae ... Judy ... Tillytuck ... dad ... and Uncle Horace! For of course the stranger could be nobody else.

Pat felt a little bit dazed as he rose to shake hands with her. This was not the Uncle Horace she had pictured ... neither the genial old rascal of Judy’s yarns nor the typical tar of dad’s reminiscences. He was tall and

thin and saturnine, with hair of pepper and salt. With his long lean face and shell-rimmed spectacles he looked more like a somewhat dyspeptic minister than a retired sea-captain. To be sure, there was something about his mouth ... and his keen blue eyes ... Pat felt that she wouldn't have liked to head that mutiny against him.

"This is Pat," said Long Alec.

"Humph! I've been hearing things about you," grunted Uncle Horace as he shook hands.

Pat hadn't a glimmer whether the things were complimentary or the reverse and retreated into herself. Uncle Horace, it seemed, had arrived unexpectedly, walking up from Silverbridge. Finding a party in full swing he had decided not to show himself until it was over.

"Had some fun watching the dance from the bush," he said. "Some pretty girls clothed in smiles ... and not much else. I never expected to see P.E. Island girls at a dance with no clothes on."

"No clothes," said Aunt Edith, rather staggered. She had not graced the party but had come over to find out what was keeping Tom so late.

"Well, none to speak of. There were three girls there with no back at all to their frocks. Times have changed since we were young, Alec."

"For the better I should think," said Rae pertly. "It must have been awful ... dresses lined and relined, sleeves as big as balloons, and rats in your hair."

Uncle Horace looked at her meditatively, as if wondering what kind of an insect she was, fitted his fingertips carefully together, and went on with his tale. For the first time in her life Rae Gardiner felt squelched.

"When I felt that I needed a little sustenance I slipped into the pantry when the coast was clear and got me a cake. A real good cake ... roll-jelly ... I didn't think they made them now. Then I scouted around for some milk and found a bowl of whipped cream in the ice-house. 'Plenty more where that came from,' thought I. Made a pretty decent meal."

"And me blaming Sam Binnie," said Judy. "Oh, oh, I'll be begging his pardon, Binnie and all as he is."

“I kept back in the bush ... had to,” said Uncle Horace. “If I moved I fell over some canoodling couple. There were people in love all over the place.”

“Love is in the air at Silver Bush, symbolically speaking,” said Tillytuck. “I find it rather pleasant. The little girls’ love affairs give a flavour to life.”

“But Judy here isn’t married yet,” said Uncle Horace gravely.

“Oh, oh, I cudn’t support a husband,” sighed Judy.

“Don’t you think it’s time?” said Uncle Horace gravely. “We’re none of us getting younger, you know, Judy.”

“But I’m hoping some av us do be getting a liddle wiser,” retorted Judy witheringly.

But she was plainly in high cockalorum. Horace had always had a warm spot in her heart and in her eyes he was still a boy.

“I got a drink of the old well while you were at supper,” said Uncle Horace in a different tone. “There’s none like it the world over. I’ve always understood David and his craving for a drink from the well at Bethlehem. And the ferns along the road from Silverbridge. I’ve smelled smells all the world over, east and west, and there’s no perfume like the fragrance of spice ferns as you walk along a P.E. Island road on a summer evening. Well, young folks like your girls and Judy mayn’t mind staying up all night, Alec, but I’m not equal to it any longer. Judy, do you suppose it’s possible to have fried chicken for breakfast?”

“How like a man!” Rae telegraphed in disgust to Pat. Expecting to have fried chicken for breakfast when it was four o’clock after a party! But Judy was actually looking pleased.

“There do be a pair av young roosters out there just asking for it,” she said meditatively.

Judy and Pat and Rae had a last word when everybody had gone.

“Oh, oh, but I’m faling like a bit av chewed string,” sighed Judy.

“Howiver, the party was a grand success and aven Tillytuck sitting down on a shate av fly-paper in the pantry where he did have no business to be and thin strutting pompous-like across the platform wid it stuck to his

pants cudn't be called inny refliction on Silver Bush. He did be purtinding to be mad about it but I'm belaving he did it on purpose to make a sinsation. Oh, oh, ye cud have knocked me down wid a feather whin I was after clearing up the supper dishes. I did be hearing a thud ... and there was me fine Horace full lingham on the floor ye rubbed up so well, Patsy. 'Terrible slippery floor ye've got, woman,' was all he said. Ye niver cud be telling if Horace was mad or if he wasn't."

"I like him," said Pat, who had made up her mind about him when he talked of the well and the ferns.

"Pat, what on earth were you and Samuel MacLeod doing in the garden?" asked Rae.

"Oh, just moonlighting," answered Pat, demure as an owl.

"I never saw anything so funny as the two of you dancing together. He looked like a windmill in a fit."

"Don't ye be making fun av the poor boy," said Judy. "He can't be hilping his long arms and legs. At that, it do be better than being sawed off. And while he cudn't be said to talk he does be managing to get things said."

"He gets them said all right," thought Pat. But she heroically contented herself with thinking of it.

Chapter X

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Uncle Horace did not prove hard to entertain. When he was not talking over old times with dad or Uncle Tom or Judy he was reading sentimental novels ... the more sentimental the better. When he had exhausted the Silver Bush library he borrowed from the neighbours. But the book David Kirk lent him did not please him at all.

“They don’t get married at the last,” he grumbled. “I don’t care a hoot for a book where they don’t get properly married ... or hanged ... at the last. These modern novels that leave everything unfinished annoy me. And the heroines are all too old. I don’t like ‘em a day over sixteen.”

“But things are often unfinished in real life,” said Pat, who had picked up the idea from David.

“All the more reason why they should come right in books,” said Uncle Horace testily. “Real life! We get enough real life living. *I* like fairy tales. I like a nice snug tidy ending in a book with all the loose ends tucked in. Judy’s yarns never left things in the air. That’s why she’s always been such a corking success as a storyteller.”

Uncle Horace was no mean storyteller himself when they could get him going ... which wasn’t always. Around Judy’s kitchen fire in the cool evenings he would loosen up. They heard the tale of his being wrecked on the Magdalens on his first voyage ... of the shark crashing through the glass roof of his cabin and landing on the dinner table ... of the ghost of the black dog that haunted one of his ships and foreboded misfortune.

“Did you ever see it yourself?” asked David Kirk with a sceptical twist to his lips.

Uncle Horace looked at him witheringly.

“Yes ... once,” he said. “Before the mutiny off Bombay.”

His listeners shivered. When Tillytuck and Judy told tales of seeing ghosts nobody minded or believed it. But it was different with Uncle

Horace someday. Still, David stuck to his guns. Sailors were always superstitious.

“You don’t mean to say that you really believe in ghosts, Captain Gardiner?”

Uncle Horace looked through David and far away.

“I believe what I see, sir. It may be that my eyes deceived me. Not everybody can see ghosts. It is a gift.”

“A gift I wasn’t dowered with,” said Suzanne, a trifle too complacently. Uncle Horace demolished her with one of those rare looks of his. Suzanne afterwards told Pat that she felt as if that look had bored a hole clean through her and shown her to be hollow and empty.

The next excitement was Amy’s wedding to which everyone at Silver Bush and Swallowfield went through a pouring rain, except Judy and mother. Uncle Horace would not go in the car. It transpired that he had never been in a car and was determined he never would be. So he went with Uncle Tom in the phaeton and got well drenched for his prejudices. It rained all day. But Uncle Horace came back in high good humour.

“Thank goodness there’s a bride or two left in the world yet,” he said as he came dripping into the kitchen where Rae, who had reached home before him, was describing to a greedy Judy how Amy’s bridal veil of tulle was held to her head in the latest fashion by a triple strand of pearls, with white gardenias at the back. Judy didn’t feel that what-do-you-call-’ems could be so lucky as orange blossoms but she knew without asking that the wedding feast would have been more fashionable than filling and she had a “liddle bite” ready for everybody as they came in. Pat was last of all, having lingered to help Aunt Jessie and Norma. She looked around at the bright, homely picture with satisfaction. It was dismal to start anywhere in rain: but to come home in rain was pleasant ... to step from cold and wet into warmth and welcome. The only thing she missed was the cats. Since Uncle Horace’s coming they had been religiously banished. Gentleman Tom spent his leisure in the kitchen chamber, Tillytuck kept a disgruntled Bold-and-Bad in the granary and Squedunk was a patient prisoner in the

church barn. Only when Uncle Horace was away were they allowed to sneak back into the kitchen.

But that night, while everybody slumbered in the comfort of Silver Bush a poor, footsore, half-dead little cat came crawling up the lane. It was Popka, cold, tired, hungry on the last lap of his hundred mile journey from East Point. When he reached the well-remembered doorstone he paused and tried to lick his wet fur into some semblance of decency before meowing faintly and pitifully for admittance. But the door of Silver Bush remained cruelly closed. Not even Judy in the kitchen chamber heard that feeble cry. Poor Popka dragged himself around to the back and there discovered the broken pane in the cellar window which Judy had been lamenting for a week. In the kitchen he found a saucer of milk under the table which an overstuffed Bold-and-Bad had left when Judy had smuggled him in for his supper. Heartened by this Popka looked happily about him. It was home. The kitchen was warm and cosy ... there were several inviting cushions. But Popka craved the comfort of contact with some of his human friends. On four weary legs he climbed the stairs. Alas, every door but one was closed to him. The door of the Poet's room was half open. Popka slipped in. Ah, here was companionship. Popka jumped on the bed.

Pat, going downstairs before any one else, saw a sight through the door of the Poet's room that both horrified and delighted her. Popka, her dear, lamented Popka, was curled into a placid vibrant ball on Uncle Horace's stomach. Pat slipped in, gently lifted Popka and gently departed, leaving Uncle Horace apparently undisturbed. But when Uncle Horace came down to breakfast his first words were,

"Who came in and took my cat?"

"I did," confessed Pat. "I thought you hated cats."

"Used to," said Uncle Horace. "Couldn't bear 'em years ago. Wiser now. Found out they made life worth living. Been wondering why you didn't have any round. Used to be too much cat here if anything. Missed 'em. Tell you tonight how I come to make friends with the tribe."

That night around the kitchen fire, while Popka purred on his knee and Bold-and-Bad winked at him from the lounge, Uncle Horace told of the mystery of the black cat with the bows of ribbon in its ears.

“It was the last voyage I made on this side of the world. We sailed from Halifax for China and the first mate had his young brother with him ... a lad of seventeen. He’d fetched his favourite cat along with him ... Pills was his name. The cat’s I mean, not the boy’s. The boy’s name was Geordie. Pills was black ... the blackest thing you ever saw, with one white shoe, and cute as a pet fox. Both the cat’s ears had been punched and he was togged out with little bows of red ribbon tied in ‘em. That proud he was of them, too! Once when Geordie took them out to put fresh ones in and didn’t do it for a day Pills just sulked till he had his ribbons back. Every one on board made a pet of him, except Cannibal Jim ...”

“Cannibal Jim? Why was he called that?” asked Rae.

Uncle Horace frowned at her. He did not like interruptions.

“Don’t know, miss. Never asked him. It was his own business. I’d never liked cats before myself but I couldn’t help liking Pills. I got just as fond of him as the others and felt as tickled as could be when he favoured me by coming to sleep in my cabin at night. ‘Twasn’t everybody he’d sleep with. No, sir! That cat picked his bedfellows. There were only three people he’d sleep with ... Geordie and me and the cook. Turn and turn about. He never got mixed up. One night the cook took him when it was my turn but that cat threw fits till the cook let him go and in less than a minute he was kneading his paws on my stomach. Next night was the cook’s regular turn but Pills punished him by acting up again and went and slept in a coil of rope on deck. He wouldn’t sleep with Geordie or me out of our turn but the cook had to be dealt with. Well, right in the middle of the Indian Ocean Pills disappeared ... clean disappeared. We kept hoping for days he’d turn up but he never did. I’d hard work to keep the crew from mobbing Cannibal Jim, for every one believed he’d thrown Pills overboard, though he swore till all was blue he’d never touched him. And now for the part you won’t believe. Six months later that cat walks into his own old home in Halifax and curled up on his own special cushion. That’s

a fact, explain it as you like. He was mighty thin and his feet were bleeding but Geordie's mother knew him at once by the bows in his ears. She took it into her head the ship was lost and that somehow the cat had survived and got home. She nearly went crazy till she found out different. I went to see Pills when I got back and he knew me right off ... draped himself around my legs and purred like mad. There wasn't any doubt in the world that it was Pills."

"But, Uncle Horace, how *could* he have got home?"

"Well, the only explanation I could figure out was this. The day before we missed Pills we'd been hailed by a ship, the *Alice Lee* bound for Boston, U. S. A. They had sickness on board and had run out of some drug, I forget what, and the captain wanted to know if we could let him have some. We could, so he sent a boat across with two men in it. I concluded that one of them swiped the cat. Afterwards Geordie recalled that Pills had been sitting, perky and impudent, on a coil of rope as the men came over the side. He was never seen again but he wasn't missed till the next day. It was Geordie's turn for him that night but Geordie thought cook had him and being sorry for cook, who was looking like a lopsided squirrel with toothache, made no fuss. He didn't get worried till the next afternoon. The men all maintained that no sailor would ever steal another ship's cat, especially a black one, and blamed Cannibal Jim, as I've said. But I never believed even Cannibal Jim would play fast and loose with luck that way. We certainly had nothing but squalls and typhoons the rest of the voyage and finally a man overboard. But the most puzzling thing was that Pills took six months to get home. I went west that year and took to voyaging the Pacific so I never fell in with any of the *Alice Lee*'s crew again but I did find out that she got to Boston two months after she'd passed us. Suppose Pills was on her. That left four months to be accounted for. Where was he? I'll tell you where he was. Travelling the miles between Boston and Halifax on his own black legs."

Tillytuck snorted incredulously.

"Either that or he swum it," said Uncle Horace sternly. "I find it easier to believe he walked. Don't ask me how he knew the road. I tell you that I

saw, then and there, that cats had forgotten more than human beings ever knew and I made up my mind to cultivate their society. When this little fellow hopped up on me last night I just told him to pick out a soft spot on my old carcase and snuggle down.”

By the time Uncle Horace’s visit drew near its close they had all decided that they liked him tremendously, even if he did disapprove of their clothes and avert his eyes in horror from the pale green and pink and orchid silk panties on the line Monday mornings. They thought, too, that Uncle Horace liked them, though they couldn’t feel sure of it. Pat was sure, however, that he must approve of Silver Bush. Everything went smoothly until the very last day ... and *it* was really dreadful. In the first place Sid upset Judy’s bowl of breakfast pancake batter on the floor and Winnie’s baby crawled into it. Of course Uncle Horace had to appear at the very worst moment before the baby could be even picked up, and probably thought that was how they amused babies at Silver Bush. Then Rae put an unopened can of peas on the stove to heat for dinner. The can exploded with a bang, the kitchen was full of steam and particles of peas, and Uncle Horace got a burn on the cheek where the can struck him. To crown all, Rae dared him to go to Silverbridge in the car with her after supper and Uncle Horace, though he had never been in a car, vowed no girl should stump him and got in. Nobody knew what went wrong ... Rae was considered a good driver ... but the car, instead of going down the lane dashed through the paling fence, struck the church barn, and finished up against a tree. No harm was done except a bent bumper and Rae and Uncle Horace proceeded on their way. Uncle Horace did not seem disturbed. He said when he came home he had supposed it was just Rae’s way of starting and he thought he’d get a car of his own when he went back to the coast.

“Sure and some av ye must have seen a fairy, wid all the bad luck we’ve had today,” gasped Judy when he was safely off to bed.

“Today simply hasn’t happened. I cut it out of the week,” said Pat ruefully. “After all our efforts to make a good impression! But did you ever see anything funnier than his expression when that can hit him?”

“Yes ... his expression when I sideswiped the church barn,” said Rae.

They both shrieked with laughter.

“I am afraid Uncle Horace will think we are all terrible and you in particular, Rae.”

But Uncle Horace did not think so. That evening he told Long Alec he wanted to pay the expenses of Rae’s year at Queen’s.

“She’s a gallant girl and easy on the eye,” he said. “I’ve neither chick nor child of my own. I like your girls, Alec. They can laugh when things go wrong and I like that. Any one can laugh when it’s all smooth sailing. I’ll not be east again, Alec, but I’m glad I came for once. It’s been good to see old Judy again. Those plum tarts of hers with whipped cream! My stomach will never be the same again but it was worth it. I’m glad you keep up all the old traditions here.”

“One does one’s best,” said Long Alec modestly.

But Judy in the kitchen was shaking her grey bob sorrowfully at Gentleman Tom.

“Young Horace don’t be young inny longer. All the divilment has gone out av him. And looking so solemn! There was a time the solemn he looked the more mischief he was plotting. Oh, oh!” Judy sighed. “I’m fearing we do all be getting a bit ould, cat dear.”

The Third Year

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Chapter I

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Rae was off to Queen's and Pat was very lonely. Of course Rae came home every Friday night, just as Pat had done in her Queen's year, and they had hilarious week ends. But the rest of the time was hard to endure. No Rae to laugh and gossip with ... no Rae to talk over the day with at bedtime ... no Rae to sleep in the little white bed beside her own. Pat cried herself to sleep for several nights, and then devoted herself to Silver Bush more passionately than ever.

Rae, after her first homesick week, liked town and college very much, though she was sometimes cold in her boarding house bed and the only window of her room looked out on the blank brick wall of the next house instead of a flower garden and green fields and misty hills.

And Judy was getting ready for her trip to Ireland. She was to go in November with the Patterson family from Summerside, who were revisiting the old sod, and all through October little else was talked of at Silver Bush. Pat, though she hated the thought of Judy going, threw herself heart and soul into the preparations. Judy must and should have this wonderful trip to her old home after her life of hard work. Everybody was interested. Long Alec went to town and got Judy her steamer trunk. Judy looked a bit strange when he dumped it on the walk.

"Oh, oh, I *know* I do be going ... but I can't belave it, Patsy. That trunk there ... I can't fale it belongs to me. If it was the old blue chist now ..."

But of course the old blue chest couldn't be taken to Ireland. And Judy at last believed she was going when a paragraph in the "North Glen Notes" announced that Miss Judy Plum of Silver Bush would spend the winter with her relatives in Ireland. Judy looked queerer than ever when she saw it. It seemed to make everything so irrevocable.

"Patsy darlint, it must be the will av the Good Man Above that I'm to go," she said when she read it.

“Nothing like a change, as old Murdoch MacGonigal said when he turned over in his grave,” remarked Tillytuck cheerfully.

Everybody gave Judy something. Uncle Tom gave a leather suitcase and mother a beautiful brush and comb and hand mirror.

“Oh, oh, niver did I be thinking I’d have a t’ilet set av me own,” said Judy. “Talk av the silver backed ones the Bishop stole! And wid me monnygram on the back av the looking glass! I do be hoping me ould uncle will have sinse enough lift to take in the grandeur av it.”

Pat gave her a “negleege” and Aunt Barbara gave her a crinkly scarf of cardinal crêpe which she had worn only once and which Judy had greatly admired. Even Aunt Edith gave her a grey hug-me-tight with a purple border. Pat nearly went into kinks at the thought of Judy in such a thing but Judy was rather touched.

“Sure and it was rale kind av Edith. I hadn’t ixpicted it for we’ve niver been what ye might call cronies. Mebbe I’ll see some poor ould lady in Ireland that it’ll set.”

Judy’s travelling dress exercised them all but one was finally got that pleased her. Also a grey felt hat with a smart, tiny scarlet feather in it. Judy tried the whole outfit on one night in the kitchen chamber and was so scared by her stylish reflection in the cracked mirror that she was for tearing everything off immediately.

“Oh, oh, it doesn’t look like *me* Patsy. It does be frightening me. Will I iver get back into mesilf?”

But Pat made her go down to the kitchen and show herself to everybody. And everybody felt that this hatted and coated and scarlet-feathered Judy *was* a stranger but everybody paid her compliments and Tillytuck said if he’d ever suspected what a fine-looking woman she really was there was no knowing what might have happened.

“I hope nothing will prevent Judy from going,” said Rae. “It would break her heart to be disappointed now. But when I think of coming home Friday nights and Judy not here! And that horrid old Mrs. Bob Robinson, with her pussy cat face!” Rae blinked her eyes fiercely.

“Mrs. Robinson isn’t really so bad, Rae,” protested Pat half-heartedly. “At any rate she is the best we can get and it’s only for the winter.”

“I tell you she’s an inquisitive, snooping old thing,” snapped Rae. “*You* didn’t see her going down the walk after you’d hired her, giving her chops a sly lick of self-satisfaction every three steps. I did. And I know she was thinking, ‘*I’ll* show them what proper housekeeping is at Silver Bush.’”

One burning question had been ... who was to be got in to help Pat for the winter? From several candidates Mrs. Bob Robinson of Silverbridge was finally chosen, as the least objectionable. Tillytuck didn’t take to her and nicknamed her Mrs. Puddleduck at sight. It was not hard to imagine why for Mrs. Robinson was very short and very plump and very waddly. The Silver Bush family could never again think of her as anything but Mrs. Puddleduck. Tillytuck’s nicknames had a habit of sticking.

To Judy, of course, Mrs. Puddleduck was nothing but a necessary evil.

“She do be more up to date than mesilf I’m not doubting” ... with a toss of her grey head. “They do be saying she took that domestic short course last year. But will she be kaping our cats continted I’m asking ye?”

“They say she’s a very careful, saving woman,” said Long Alec.

“Oh, oh, careful, is it? I’m not doubting it.” Judy waxed very sarcastic. “She do be getting that from no stranger. Her grandfather did be putting a sundial in his garden and thin built a canopy over it to perfect it from the sun. Oh, oh, careful! Ye’ve said it!”

“She’ll never make such apple fritters as yours, Judy, if she took fifty short courses,” said Sid, passing his plate up for a second helping.

Then there was the matter of the passport. They had quite a time convincing Judy that she must have a photograph taken for it.

“Sure an’ wud ye want to be photygraphed if ye had a face like that, Rae, darlint,” she would demand, pointing to the kitchen mirror which never paid any one compliments. But when the picture came home Judy, in her new hat, with the crinkled crêpe scarf about her throat looked so surprisingly handsome that she was delighted. She kept the passport in the drawer of the kitchen cupboard and took frequent peeps at it when nobody was about.

“Did I ever be thinking a hat cud make such a difference? I can’t be seeing but that I do be ivery bit as goodlooking as Lady Medchester, and her a blue-blood aristocrat!”

Had it not been for Judy’s going that October would have been a perfectly happy month for Pat. It was a golden, frostless autumn and when the high winds blew it fairly rained apples in the orchards and the ferns along the Whispering Lane were brown and spicy. There were gay evenings up at the Long House with Suzanne and David ... hours of good gab-fest by the light of their leaping fire. David developed a habit of walking down the hill with Pat which Judy did not think at all necessary. Pat had come down that hill many a night alone.

“Thim widowers,” she muttered viciously ... but took care that Pat did not hear her. Judy had soon discovered that Pat resented any criticism of David Kirk.

Then McGinty died. They had long expected it. The little dog had been feeble all summer: he had grown deaf and very wistful. It broke Pat’s heart when she met his pleading eyes. But to the very last he tried to wag his tail when she came to him. He died with his golden brown head pillowed on her hand. Judy cried like a child and even Tillytuck and Long Alec blew their noses. McGinty was buried beside Snicklefritz in the old graveyard and Pat had to write and tell Hilary that he was gone.

“I feel as if I could never love a dog again,” she wrote. “I miss him so. It is so hard to remember that he is dead. I’m always looking for him. Hilary, just before he died he suddenly lifted his head and pricked his ears just as he used to do when he heard your step. I think he *did* hear something because all at once that heartbreaking look of longing went out of his eyes and he gave such a happy little sigh and cuddled his head down in my hand and ... it seems too harsh to say he died. He just ceased to be. I wish you had come home, Hilary. I’m sure it was you his eyes were always asking for. Do you remember how he always came to meet us those Friday evenings when we came home from college? And he was with you that night so long ago when you saved me from dying of sheer terror on the base-line road. He was only a little, loving-hearted dog but his going has

made a terrible hole in my life. It's another change ... and Rae is gone ... and Judy is going. Oh, Hilary, life seems to be just change ... change ... change. Everything changes but Silver Bush. It is always the same and I love it more every day of my life."

Hilary Gordon frowned a bit when he read this. And he frowned still more over a certain paragraph in a letter Rae had written.

"I do wish you'd come home this summer, Jingle. If you don't soon come Pat will up and marry that horrid David Kirk. I know she will. It's really mysterious the influence that man has gained over her. It's David this and David that ... she's always quoting him. So far as I can see he doesn't do anything but talk to her ... and he *can* talk. The creature is abominably clever."

Hilary sighed. Perhaps he should have gone to the Island last summer. But he was working his way through college ... for accept help from the mother who had neglected him all his life he would not ... and summer visits home ... to Hilary "home" meant Silver Bush ... could not be squeezed into his budget.

Chapter II

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The first day of November came when Judy must pack. It was mild and calm and sunny but there had been hard frost the night before, for the first time, and the garden had suffered. Pat hated to look at her flowers. The nasturtiums were positively indecent. She realised that the summer was over at last.

Judy's trunk was in the middle of the kitchen floor. Pat helped her pack. "Don't forget the black bottle, Judy," Sid said slyly as he passed. Judy ignored this but she brought down her book of Useful Knowledge.

"I must be taking this, Patsy. There do be a lot av ettiket hints in it. Or do ye be thinking they're a trifle out av date? The book is by way av being a bit ouldish. I wudn't want me cousins in Ireland to be thinking I didn't know the latest rules. And, Patsy darlint, I'm taking me ould dress-up dress as well as the new one. I did be always loving that dress. The new one is rale fine but I haven't been wearing it long enough to fale acquainted wid it. Do ye rimimber how ye always hated to give up any av yer ould clothes, Patsy? And, Patsy dear, here's the kay av me blue chist. I'm wanting ye to kape it for me whin I'm gone and if innything but good shud be happening to me over there ... not that I'm thinking it will ... ye'll be finding me bit av a will in the baking powder can in the till."

"Judy, just imagine it ... this time next week you'll be in the middle of the Atlantic."

"Patsy dear," said Judy soberly, "there's a favour I'd be asking ye. Will ye be saying that liddle hymn ivery night whin ye say yer prayers ... the one where it does be mintioning 'those in peril on the say.' It'd be a rale comfort to me on the bounding dape. Well, me trunk's packed, thank the Good Man Above. Sure and I knew a woman that tuk four trunks wid her whin she wint to the Ould Country. I'm not knowing how she stud it. Iverything do be ready but what if something'll be previnting me from

going at the last minute, Patsy? I'm that built up on it I cudn't be standing it."

"Nothing will happen to prevent you, Judy. You'll have a splendid trip and a lovely visit with all your cousins."

"I'm hoping it, girl dear. But I've been seeing so minny disappointments in life. And, Patsy dear, kape an eye on Gentleman Tom, will ye and see that Mrs. Puddleduck don't be imposing on him. I'm not knowing how the poor baste will be doing widout me."

"Don't worry, Judy. I'll look after him ... if he doesn't go and disappear as he did the last time you were away from home."

Pat lingered a little while that evening on the back-stair landing looking out of the round window. There was a promise of gathering storm. A peevish wind was tormenting the boughs of the aspen poplar. Scudding clouds seemed to sweep the tips of the silver birches. Soon the rain would be falling on the dark autumn fields. But even a wild wet night like this would have been delightful at Silver Bush if her heart had been lighter. Judy would be gone by this time tomorrow night and Mrs. Puddleduck would be reigning in her stead. No Judy to come home to ... no Judy to give you "liddle bites" ... no Judy to stir pea soup ... no Judy to slip in on cold nights with the eiderdown puff off the Poet's bed.

"And what," said Gentleman Tom on the step above, "is a poor cat to do?"

Long Alec took Judy to the station next morning through a drizzling rain. She was going to Summerside to spend the night at Uncle Brian's and take the boat train with the Pattersons the next day. Everybody stood at the gate and waved her off, smiling gallantly till the car was out of sight. Pat turned back to the kitchen where Mrs. Puddleduck was already making a cake and looking quite at home.

"I hate her," thought Pat, wildly and unjustly.

Dinner ... the first meal without Judy ... was a sorry affair. The soup of Mrs. Puddleduck was not the soup of Judy Plum.

"She doesn't know how to stir the brew," Tillytuck whispered to Pat.

Rae came home that night but supper was a gloomy affair. Mrs. Puddleduck's cake, in spite of her domestic short course, rather looked as if somebody had sat down on it: Long Alec was very silent: Tillytuck went straight to his granary roost as soon as the meal was over. Nothing pleased him and he did not pretend to be pleased.

"I feel old, Pat ... as old as Methuselah," said Rae drearily, as they peeped into the kitchen before going to bed.

"I feel middle-aged, which is far worse," moaned Pat.

Mrs. Puddleduck was sitting there, knitting complacently at a sweater. No cat was in sight, not even Gentleman Tom.

"I wish I could be a cat for a little while, just to bite you," whispered Rae to the fat back of the unconscious Mrs. Puddleduck, who really was quite undeserving of all this hatred and, in fact, thought quite highly of herself for "helping the Gardiners out" while Judy Plum was gallivanting off to Ireland.

Saturday was dark and dour but a pleasant letter from Hilary helped Pat through the forenoon. Dear Hilary! What letters he could write! Hilary as a friend, even in faraway Toronto, was worth all the beaux in the Maritimes.

In mid-afternoon it began to rain again, battering everything down in the desolate garden. Tillytuck and Mrs. Puddleduck were already at loggerheads because when she complained that Just Dog had barked all night he had indulged in one of his silent fits of laughter and said blandly, "If you'd told me he'd purred I'd have been more surprised."

Sid took the girls over to the Bay Shore to help Winnie paper a room. The air was as full of flying leaves as of rain, and floods ran muddily down the gutters of the road. It was just as bad when they returned at night.

"I suppose Judy is on board ship now. They were to sail from Halifax at five o'clock," sighed Rae. "There's Tillytuck playing his fiddle. How can he have the heart? But I suppose he's trying to get on the good side of Mrs. Puddleduck. That man has no soul above snacks."

"I don't know how we'll ever get through the winter," said Pat.

They ran up the wet walk and opened the kitchen door ... then stood on the threshold literally paralysed with amazement. Tillytuck's fiddle was purring under his hands. Mother was mending by the table whereon was a huge platterful of fat doughnuts. Long Alec lay on the sofa, snoozing blissfully with Squedunk on his chest and Bold-and-Bad and Popka curled up at his feet. Gentleman Tom, with the air of a cat making up his mind to forgive somebody, was sitting on the rug, with his tail stretched out uncompromisingly behind him.

And Judy ... *Judy* ... in her old drugget dress was sitting beside the stove stirring the contents of a savoury pot! Her knitting was on her lap and she looked like anything but a heartbroken woman.

For a moment the girls stared at her unbelievably. Then with a shriek of "Judy!!!" they hurled themselves upon her. Wet as they were she hugged them with a fierce tenderness.

"Judy ... Judy ... *darling* ... but why ... why ...?"

"I just cudn't be going, that do be all, me jewels. I was knowing it in me heart as soon as I lift. Poor Alec hadn't a word to throw to a dog. Ye cud have been scraping the blue mould off av him be the time we got to the station. But thinks I to meself, 'I'd look like a nice fool backing out now, after all thim prisents,' thinks I. So I did be sticking it out till I got into me bed at yer Uncle Brian's that night ... the second bist spare room it was ... oh, oh, they trated me fine, I'll be saying that for thim. But niver the wink wud I be slaping. I kipt thinking av me kitchen here, wid Mrs. Puddleduck reigning in me stid ... and of all the things that might be happening to me, roaming abroad. Running inty an iceberg maybe ... or maybe dying over there. Not that I'd be minding the dying so much but being buried among strangers. And thin if innything but good shud be happening to some av ye here! Thinks I, 'Perhaps they'll be larning to like Mrs. Puddleduck better'n me and her as smooth as crame.' I cud see ye all, snug and cosy, wid the beaus slipping along in the dim. Thinks I, 'There do be all the turkeys to be fattened for Christmas and the winter hooking to be done and mebbe Joe coming home to be married,' ... and I cudn't be standing it. So at breakfast I up and told Brian I'd been after

changing me mind and I'd just be going back to Silver Bush instead av to Ireland wid the Pattersons."

"Judy, you said the other day it would break your heart if anything prevented you from going ..."

"Oh, oh, yisterday and to-day do be two different things," said Judy complacently. "Whin ye thought I was all ixcited over me trip I was just talking to kape me spirits up. It's the happy woman I am to think I'll slape in me own snug bed tonight wid Gintleman Tom curled up at me fate. Brian brought me home this afternoon and whin I stepped over the threshold of me kitchen I wudn't have called the quane me cousin. Oh, oh, ye shud have been seeing Madam Puddleduck's face! 'I thought this was how it wud be,' sez she, as spiteful as a fairy that had just got a spanking."

"Judy, where *is* Mrs. Puddleduck?"

"Safe back at the bridge where she belongs. Sure and she wasn't for staying long whin she saw me back. Oh, oh, she'll be saying plinty besides her prayers tonight. I wint inty me pantry thinking I'd see fine things in the ways av Sunday baking, what wid her domestic short course and all. But all I did be seeing was a cake looking like nothing on earth and a pie wid a lot of hen tracks on it. Tillytuck tells me he did be ating a pace av it and niver will his stomach be the same agin. Oh, oh, domestic science, sez I! I did be putting it in the pig's pail and frying up a big batch av doughnuts."

"Praise the sea but keep on land is a good proverb, symbolically speaking," said Tillytuck. After which he ate nine doughnuts.

Everybody was shamelessly glad and showed it, much to Judy's secret delight and relief. They shut out the rain and the cold wind. Never had the old kitchen held a more contented, more congenial bunch of people. Grief and loneliness had gone where old moons go and even King William looked jubilant in his never-ending passage of the Boyne. Outside it might be a dank and streaming November night but here was the eternal summer of the heart.

"Isn't it nice to look *out* into a storm?" said Rae. "Listen to that wind roaring. I love it. Judy, I'm glad you're not on the Atlantic."

“I do be just where I want to be, Cuddles darlint, and faling rale high and hilarious. Sure and I do be good frinds wid Silver Bush agin. It’s been looking at me reproachful-like for a long time. I’m knowing now I cud niver be laving it. It’s got into the marrow av me. So here I am, wid enough fine clothes to do me for the rist av me life and all the fun av getting ready. Oh, oh, ‘twill be a stirring tale ... the story av how Judy Plum went to Ireland and got back so quick she met hersilf going. And now we’ll begin planning a bit for Christmas.”

Judy crept in that night to see if the girls were warm ... the darling, thoughtful old thing.

“You’re such a *dependable* old sport, Judy,” said a drowsy Pat, sitting up and hugging her. “It seems unbelievably lovely that you’re here ... *here* ... and not far away on the billow.”

Judy was not acquainted with Wilson Macdonald’s couplet,

“For this is wealth to know my foot’s returning
Is always music to a friend of mine,”

but she felt that she was a very rich woman with only one small cloud on her perfect joy.

“Patsy darlint, do ye think I ought to be giving thim back ... the prisents, I mane?”

“Certainly not, Judy. They were given to you and they are yours.”

Judy gave a sigh of relief.

“It’s rale glad I am to hear ye say so, Patsy. It wud have been bitter hard to give up that illigant t’ilet set. But I’m thinking I’ll give yer Aunt Edith’s hug-me-tight back to her. Niver will I let her be saying I come be it under false pretences.”

Just as a great wave of sleep was breaking over Pat a sad premonitory thought drifted across her mind.

“And yet ... for all she didn’t go ... I feel as if things were going to change.”

Chapter III

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When Rae came home from Queen's in the spring, the happy possessor of a teacher's license, she got the home school and settled down for a summer of good fun before school should open. "Fun" to Rae at this stage meant beaus and, as Judy said, they were standing in line. Pat couldn't quite get used to the idea of "little Cuddles" being really old enough to have beaus but Rae herself had no doubts on that point. And she admitted quite candidly that she liked having them. Not that she ever flirted, in spite of the Binnies. "College has improved Rae Gardiner some," Mrs. Binnie was reported to have said, "but it ain't cured her of being boy-crazy."

Rae just *looked*. "Come," said that look. "I know a secret you would like to know and no one can tell it to you but me."

She was not really as pretty as Winnie or as witty as Pat but there was magic in her ... what Tillytuck called "glamour, symbolically speaking." "The little monkey has a way with her," said Uncle Tom. And the youth of both Glens knew it. It did not matter how much or how severely she snubbed them, this creature of cruelty and loveliness held them in thrall. Long Alec complained that Silver Bush was literally overrun and that they never had a quiet Sunday any more. But Judy would listen to no such growling.

"Wud ye be wanting yer girls to be like John B. Madison's," she enquired sarcastically. "Six av thim there and niver a beau to divide between them."

"There's reason in all things," protested Long Alec, who liked to have an undisturbed Sunday afternoon nap.

"Not in beaus," said Judy shrewdly. "And I'm minding that the yard at the Bay Shore used to be full of rigs on Sunday afternoons, young Alec Gardiner's among them. Don't be forgetting you were once young, Long Alec. We'll all have a bit av quiet fun be times watching the antics. Were

ye hearing what happened to Just Dog last Sunday afternoon whin one av the young Shortreed sprouts ... Lloyd I'm thinking his name was ... was sitting on the front porch steps, looking kind av holy and solemn, for all the world like his ould Grandfather Shortreed at prayer mating. Sure and the poor baste ... not maning Lloyd ... met up wid a rat in the stone dyke behind the church barn and cornered it. But me Mr. Rat put up a fight and clamped his teeth in Just Dog's jaw. Such howling ye niver did be hearing as he tore across the yard and through me kitchen and the hall and out past the young fry on the steps and through me bed av petunias. Roaring down the lane he wint, the rat still houlding on tight. The girls wint into kinks and Tillytuck come bucketing out, rale indignant, and saying, the divil himself must have got inty the modern rats. 'Oh, oh,' sez I, 'don't be spaking so flippant av the divil, *Mr. Tillytuck*. He's an ancient ould lad and shud be rispicted,' sez I. Lloyd Shortreed looked rale shocked."

"And no wonder. I don't hold with such goings-on in my house on Sunday."

"Sure and who cud be hilping it?" protested Judy. "It was Just Dog's doings intirely, going rat-hunting on Sunday. Before that the young fry were all quiet and sober-like. As for Tillytuck and his langwidge, iverybody do be knowing him. It's well known he didn't larn it at Silver Bush. Just Dog did be coming back later on wid no rat attached, rale meek and chastened-like. Lloyd hasn't been back since and good riddance. The Shortreeds do be having no sinse av humour."

"Lloyd's a very decent fellow," said Long Alec shortly.

"And that cliver wid his needle," added Judy slyly. "He did be piecing a whole quilt whin he was but four years ould and he's niver been able to live it down. His mother brings it out and shows it round whiniver company comes."

Long Alec got up and went out. He knew he was no match for Judy.

They celebrated Rae's homecoming by another party to which all Rae's college friends came. Rae loved dancing. Her very slippers, if left to themselves, would have danced the whole night through. But Pat's feet were not as light as they had been at the last party. Sid was not there. Sid

was a very remote and unhappy boy. There had been a social sensation in North Glen early in the winter. Dorothy Milton, who had been engaged to Sid for two years, ran away with and married her cousin from Halifax, a dissipated, fascinating youth who “travelled” for a Halifax firm. Sid would have nothing of sympathy from his family. He would not talk of the matter at all. But he had been hard and bitter and defiant ever since and Pat felt hopelessly cut off from him. He worked feverishly but he came and went among his own like a stranger.

“Patience,” said mother. “It will wear away in time. Poor Dorothy! I’m sorrier for her than for Sid.”

“I’m not,” sobbed Pat fiercely. “I hate her ... for breaking Sid’s heart.”

“Oh, oh, iverybody’s heart gets a bit av a crack at one time or another,” said Judy. “Siddy isn’t the first b’y to be jilted and he won’t be the last, as long as the poor girls haven’t got the sinse God gave geese.”

But Judy didn’t like to look at Sid’s eyes herself.

When the party was over Pat and Rae went by a mossy, velvety path to their tent in the bush, amid a growth of young white, wild cherry trees. They had achieved their long-cherished dream of sleeping out in the silver bush and the reality was more beautiful than the dream, even when the wind blew the tent down on them one night and Little Mary was half smothered before they could find her. There was another new baby at the Bay Shore and Little Mary had been committed to the care of Aunt Pat until her mother should be about. They all loved Little Mary but Aunt Pat adored and spoiled her. To see Little Mary running about the garden on her dear chubby legs, pausing now and then to lift a flower to her small nose, or following Judy out to feed the chickens, or chasing kittens in the old barns, where generations of furry things had frisked their little lives and ceased to be, gave Pat never-ending thrills. And the questions she would ask ... “Aunt Pat, why weren’t ears made plain?” ... “Aunt Pat, have flowers little souls?” ... “Where do the days go, Aunt Pat. Dey mus’ go *somewhere*” ... “Does God live in Judy’s blue chest, Aunt Pat?” Once or twice the thought came to Pat that to marry and have a dimpled question

mark like this of your very own might even make up for the loss of Silver Bush.

Judy came through the scented darkness to see if they were all right and gossip a little about various things. Judy had been to a funeral that day ... a very unusual dissipation for her. But old William Madison at the Bridge had died and Judy had worked a few months for his mother before coming to Silver Bush.

“Sure and iverything wint off very well. It was the grand funeral he had and he’d have been rale well plazed if he cud have seen it. He had great fun arranging it all, I’m told. Oh, oh, and he died very politely, asking thim all to ixcuse him for the bother he was putting thim to. His ould Aunt Polly was rale vexed because she didn’t be getting the sate at the funeral she thought she shud have but nobody else had innny fault to find wid the programme. It do be hard to plaze ivery one. Polly Madison is one av the Holy Christians ... holier than innny av thim, I’m hearing.”

For the “go-preacher’s” disciples had formed themselves into a “Holy Christian church” and were cruelly referred to in the Glen as the Holy Christians.

“I hear they’re going to build a church,” said Pat.

“That they are ... but they’re not calling it a church. It do be ‘a place av meeting.’ The same Aunt Polly do be giving the land for it. And Mr. Wheeler is coming back to be their minister ... or their shepherd as they do be saying, not approving av ministers or av paying thim salaries ather. He’ll be living on air no doubt. Aunt Polly says he is very spiritual but I’m thinking it’s only the way he was av lifting his eyes and taffying her up. Innyway her husband don’t be houlding wid new-fangled religions. ‘Are ye prepared to die?’ the go-preacher asked him rale solemn-like, I’m tould. But ould Jim Polly was always a hard nut to crack. ‘Better be asking if I’m prepared to live,’ sez he. ‘Living comes first,’ sez he.”

Pat had detected a sudden movement of Rae’s when Judy mentioned Mr. Wheeler’s name, and felt her worry increase. Suppose he made up to Rae again!

Chapter IV

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Mr. Wheeler did return and did “make up to” Rae. That is, he fairly haunted Silver Bush and made himself quite agreeable socially ... or tried to. The Gardiners no longer went to any of his services and the Holy Christians thought he might find more spiritual ways of spending his time than playing violin duets with Rae Gardiner and mooning about the garden with Pat until the very cats were bored. For Pat decidedly put herself forward to entertain him when he came and contrived to be present during most of the duets. To be sure, Rae laughed at and made constant fun of him. But she never seemed her usual saucy, indifferent self in his presence. She was quiet and subdued, with never a coquettish look, and Pat was not exactly easy. The creature *was* handsome in his way, with his dark eyes and crinkly sweep of hair, and his voice in which there were echoes of everything. Aunt Polly’s daughter, who taught in South Glen, was reputed to have said that he had a certain Byronic charm. Byronic charm or not Pat wasn’t going to have any nonsense and she played gooseberry with amiable persistence whenever he appeared. He looked a great deal at Rae and dropped his voice tenderly when he spoke to her: but he showed no aversion to talking with Pat ... “currying favour,” Tillytuck said.

Judy teased Rae sometimes about him.

“Sure and he’d be easy to cook for, Cuddles darlint. They’re telling me he niver ates innnything but nuts and bran biscuits. No wonder he’s not nading a salary. But how about kaping a wife?”

“You do say such ridiculous things,” said Rae rather snappishly. “What is it to me whether he can keep a wife or not?”

Tillytuck was not quite easy in his mind about it. He considered Mr. Wheeler a dangerous creature and wondered why Long Alec tolerated his presence at all. As he entirely disapproved of the Holy Christians he decided he would take up with churchgoing again as a token of his

disapproval. He took several weeks to accumulate enough courage to go, being afraid, as he told Judy, of making too much of a sensation. But when he finally did go and nobody took any particular notice of it he was secretly furious.

“There wasn’t a goodlooking woman in church,” he grumbled, “and no great shakes of a minister. He runs to words and I don’t believe his views on the devil are sound. Sort of flabby. I like a devil with some backbone.”

“Suppose you do be going to the Holy Christians,” said Judy disdainfully, as she sliced up her red cabbage for pickling. “I’m hearing they have wrestling matches wid That Person quite frequent.”

“The people of this place are having too much truck with Holy Christians as it is,” said Tillytuck sourly, “and the time will come when they’ll see it.”

“There’ll no harm come to Silver Bush from that poor lad,” said Judy. “And ye’ll all be getting a rale surprise some day.”

“You’ve got wheels in your head,” scoffed Tillytuck.

Pat, at that moment, was working in the garden, at peace with herself and all the world. Somehow, she always felt safe from change in that garden. Just now it seemed to be taking pleasure in itself. Its flowers were guests not prisoners ... its blue delphiniums, its frail fleeting loveliness of poppies, its Canterbury bells, delicious mauve flecked with purple, its roses of gold and snow, its lilies of milk and wine.

Westward the sun was sinking low over a far land of shining hills. The air was sweet with a certain blended fragrance that only the Silver Bush garden knew. The whole lovesome place was full of soft amethyst shadows.

What fairy things the seeds of immortelles were! What a lovely name “bee balm” was! It was on evenings like this long ago she had listened for Joe’s whistle as he came home from work. There was never any whistle now ... Sid never whistled. Poor Sid! Would he never get over fretting for that hateful Dorothy? He was running around, here, there and everywhere, with all kinds of girls, rumour said. They saw very little of him at Silver Bush. At work all day ... and off in the evening till late. Mother’s eyes

were very sad sometimes. Judy advised patience ... he would come back to himself yet. Pat found it hard to be patient. At times she felt like shaking Sid. Why should he shut her out of his life as he did? That was always one of the little shadows in the background.

There was a hint of September coolness blowing across August's languor ... another summer almost gone. The years were certainly beginning to spin past rather quickly. Well, to grow old with Silver Bush would not be hard, Pat reflected, with the philosophy of one who is as yet very far from age.

Suddenly Pat scowled. There was that wretched Mr. Wheeler coming up the lane. Thank goodness, Rae had gone to Winnie's. Now for another evening of boredom. When would he take the hint that his attentions to Rae weren't welcome to her or anybody else? Her lovely garden evening would be quite spoiled. And he had been here only last night. Really, he was becoming an intolerable nuisance.

Would it be violating Silver Bush traditions too flagrantly to give him a hint of it?

Pat's greeting was a trifle distant and she went on coolly snipping off delphinium seeds. Bold-and-Bad, who had been prowling among the shrubs, made a few spiteful remarks. You couldn't hoodwink Bold-and-Bad.

Mr. Wheeler stood looking down at her. Pat had an old sunburned felt hat of Sid's on her head which she would not have thought ... if she had thought about it at all ... likely to attract masculine admiration. And she wore an ancient brown crêpe dress which burrs and stick-tights could no longer injure. She did not know how its warm hues brought out the creaminess of her skin ... the gloss of her hair ... the fire of her amber eyes. She was really looking her best and when, after a rather overlong silence, she raised her eyes to her caller's she found his dark, soulful orbs ... the adjectives were Aunt Polly's daughter's ... gazing down at her with a strange expression in their depths. An incredible idea came to Pat ... and was instantly dismissed. Nonsense! She wished he wouldn't stand so close to her. She knew at once what he had for supper. How overfull his red lips

were! And when had his fingernails been cleaned last? *Why* didn't somebody come along? People were always somewhere else when you wanted them and when you didn't you simply fell over them.

"You are smiling ... you have such a fascinating smile. What are you thinking of, Patricia," he said in a low, caressing tone.

Merciful goodness, suppose she told him what she was thinking! Pat had hard work to avert a grin. And then the bolt fell, straight out of the blue.

Mr. Wheeler helped himself to one of her hands and looked at it.

"Little white hand," he murmured. "Little white hand that holds my heart."

Pat's hands were brown and not particularly little. She tried to pull it away. But he held on and put his arm around her. Worse and more of it, as Tillytuck would say. Suppose Judy were looking out of the kitchen window!

"Please, don't be so ... foolish," said Pat coldly.

"I'm not foolish. I am wise ... very wise ... wise with the wisdom of countless ages." His voice was getting lower and tenderer with every word. "I've been wanting this opportunity for weeks. It has been so hard to find you alone. Dearest, sweetest of angels, have you any idea how much I love you ... have loved you for a thousand lives?"

"I never thought of such a thing ... I always thought it was Rae," was all poor Pat could gasp.

Mr. Wheeler smiled patronisingly.

"You couldn't have thought that, my darling. Miss Rachel is a charming child. But it is you, my sweet ... and always has been since the first moment I drowned my soul in your beautiful eyes. I think I must have dreamed you all my life ... and now my dream has come true." He tried to draw her closer. "You belong to me ... you know you do. We will have such a wonderful life together, my queen."

Pat recovered herself. She wrested her hand from his clasp, feeling quite furious over her ridiculous position.

“You must forget all this nonsense, Mr. Wheeler,” she said decisively. “I hadn’t the slightest idea you felt that way about me. And ...” Pat was growing angry, “just how did you come to imagine that I would marry *you*?”

Mr. Wheeler dropped her hand and looked down at her, with something rather unpleasant in his eyes.

“You have encouraged me to think so.” His voice had lost a good deal of its smooth oiliness. “I cannot believe you do not care for me.”

“Please try,” said Pat in a dangerous tone. It flicked on the raw. A dark flush spread over Mr. Wheeler’s face. He seemed all at once to be quite a different person.

“You have shown me very plainly that you liked my society, Miss Gardiner ... almost *too* plainly. I consider that I had every right to suppose that my proposal would be welcome ... very welcome. You have flirted with me shamelessly ... you have lured me on, for your own amusement I must now suppose. I should have known it ... I was well warned ... I was told what you were ...”

Pat, looking into his angry eyes, felt as she had felt one day when she had turned over an old, beautiful mossy stone in the Whispering Lane and seen what was underneath.

“I think you had better go, Mr. Wheeler,” she said icily.

“Oh, I’m going ... I’m going ... and rest assured I shall never darken the doors of this place again.”

Mr. Wheeler stalked off, his conceit considerably slimmed down, and Pat, still in a swither of various emotions, rushed into the kitchen, displaced a chairful of indignant cats, and gave tongue.

“Oh, oh, and what were you and His Riverince colloquing in the garden about that sint him down the lane at the rate av no man’s business?” demanded Judy.

“Judy, I’m feeling so many different things I don’t know which I’m feeling most. That horrible creature actually asked me ... *me*, Pat Gardiner ... to marry him! And he’d been eating onions, Judy!”

“Sure and weren’t ye by way av knowing he was a vegetarian,” said Judy coolly. “I’ve been ixpicting this for some time ...”

“Judy! What made you expect it?”

“The way he had av looking at ye, whin ye weren’t looking at him.”

“Oh, Judy ... the worst of it is ... he thinks I encouraged him! I feel I’m disgraced. And when he found I wouldn’t marry him ... he was horrid. He hasn’t *any* manners, not even bad ones.”

“The higher a monkey climbs the more he shows his tail,” quoted Judy. “Niver be taking it to heart, Patsy. Ye’re rid av him now for good.”

“I really think so, Judy. I’ve an idea he meant it when he said he would never darken our doors again.”

“Sure now and that will be our loss,” said Judy sarcastically. “He’s kipt out considerable av the sunshine this summer. And ... I’m not sticking up for him, Patsy ... I did always be thinking he was no rale gintleman under the skin ... but you *did* be always sticking round ...”

“I did it to keep him away from Rae. I ... I ... thought he’d take the hint. I never dreamed he’d think I was in love with him ... *him!* Judy, it’s really a ridiculous and tiresome world by spells. I’m going up to the Long House ... I’ve got to have something to take the taste of the Reverend Wheeler out of my soul and to talk nice scandal with David and Suzanne may do it.”

“I’m wondering how Cuddles will be taking this,” muttered Judy after Pat had gone out. “I’m thinking iverybody but ould Judy Plum is blind as a bat round here. Well, we’re rid av the go-pracher, glory be. But I’m not knowing if I like that Kirk man much better. He’s got his eye on her. He’s not hurrying ... whin it’s yer second you do be more careful-like. But I do be knowing the signs. Oh, oh, it’s a wonder me bit av corned ham wasn’t being biled too much whin I was listening to Patsy’s troubles. But it’s done to the quane’s taste and I’m setting it in the ice-house to cool. Beaus may come and beaus may go but we must be having our liddle comforts.”

Pat, up at the Long House, soon forgot her anger and humiliation in the company of David and Suzanne. They talked and laughed together around the fireplace the Kirks had built in Bet’s crescent of trees while Ichabod

sat close to David and Alphonso shared his favours between the girls and the evening star looked over cloudy purple ramparts in the west. It seemed to Pat that every evening she spent there she grew wiser and maturer in some mysterious way. Their talk was so different ... so rich ... so stimulating ... so brimming over with ideas. The ghosts of the past were laid. She had begun to think of the Long House as the home of Suzanne and David rather than as the home of Bets.

“She is growing older and I’m growing younger. Perhaps we’ll meet,” David was thinking.

“Their souls are the same age,” Suzanne was thinking.

But nobody knew what Alphonso-of-the-emerald-eyes or Ichabod thought.

The Fourth Year

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Chapter I

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Pat looked out of the Little Parlour window a bit wistfully one evening in late November. Another summer was ended. How quickly summers passed now! There was a hard grey twilight after a little snow and there was a threat of still more snow in the dour air. The shadows ... chilly, hostile shadows ... seemed to be raining out of the silver bush. A biting wind was lashing everything as if determined to take its ill-temper out on the world. A few forlorn yellow leaves blew crazily over the lawn. An empty nest swung lonesomely in the wind from a bough of the big apple tree on which the pale yellow-green apples always stayed so long after the leaves were gone. The apples were no good and were never picked but the tree always looked so exquisite in its spring blossom that Pat wouldn't have it cut down. It had been what Pat called a peevish day and even the loveliness of a tall, dark spruce tree near the dyke, powdered with feathers of snow, did not give her the shiver of delight such things usually did. She thought it was the kind of a day that would make people quarrel if people ever quarrelled at Silver Bush. But November had been a vexing month all through ... one day glorious ... the next day savage. You never knew just where you were with it. And Pat did not like this evening ... she felt as if some long finger of change which was always reaching out to her was at last just on the point of touching her.

She was restless. She would have liked to go up to the Long House but the Kirks were away. She wished Rae would come home ... Rae must have called somewhere after school. Though Rae hadn't been exactly the same for the past two months. Pat couldn't lay her finger just on the point of difference but she felt it in her sensitive soul. Rae sometimes snapped now ... she who had always been so sunshiny. And sometimes Pat thought that when she looked meaningly at Rae in the presence of others, to share the savour of some subtle joke, Rae averted her eyes without any answering

twinkle. And at times it almost seemed as if she had taken up a pose of being misunderstood. What was wrong? Weren't things going well in school? From all Pat could find out they were but she couldn't rid herself of the feeling that Rae had some secret trouble ... for the first time an unshared trouble. Nothing was really changed ... and yet Pat had moments of feeling that everything was changed. Once she asked Rae if anything was worrying her and Rae snapped out so savage a "Nonsense!" that Pat held her peace. Surely it couldn't be the fact that Mr. Wheeler had suddenly stopped coming to Silver Bush and was reputed to have a wild case on a visiting girl from New Brunswick that accounted for the mournful mauve smudges under Rae's blue eyes some mornings.

Pat reassured herself by reflecting that this would pass. And meanwhile Silver Bush made everything bearable. Pat loved it more with every passing year and all the little household rites that meant so much to her. Always when she came home to Silver Bush its peace and dignity and beauty seemed to envelop her like a charm. Nothing very terrible could happen there.

Judy's cheery philosophy never failed, but Pat could not mention even to Judy the vague chill of change between herself and Rae. In the evenings when they foregathered in the kitchen and Tillytuck played on his fiddle she sometimes felt that she must only have imagined it. Rae was the gayest of them all then ... "a bit too gay," Judy thought, though she never said so. Things did be often arranging themselves if you just let them alone. Judy was more worried over a reckless look she sometimes caught in Sid's brown eyes and over certain bits of gossip that came her way occasionally.

Pat lighted the lamp as Sid and Rae came in. Rae flung her schoolbooks on a chair and said nothing. But Sid had a chuckle and a bit of news.

"Your go-preacher has gone, Pat. The Holy C's are blaming you for it. They say you flirted with him and made a fool of him and he can't stand the place now. Aunt Polly is especially down on you. She adores that shepherd."

Sid spoke banteringly and Pat had some laughing rejoinder ready when a smothered sound, between a gasp and a cry, made them look at Rae.

“Great Scott, sis, you’ll singe your eyelashes if you let your eyes blaze like that,” said Sid.

Rae took no notice of him. She was looking at Pat.

“So this is your doing ... you have driven him away,” she said in a low, tense tone ... such a tone as Pat had never heard Rae use before ...

seventeen-year-old Rae whom Pat still thought of as a child. Pat almost laughed ... but laughter suddenly fell dead on her lips. Why, the poor darling was in earnest! And how pretty she looked in her golden-brown dress with her flushed cheeks and overbright eyes! Her head positively shone like a lamp in the dark corner. She was so sweet ... and absurd ... and deadly serious. This last realization should have warned Pat but didn’t.

“Rae, dearest, don’t be foolish,” she said gently.

“Oh, don’t be foolish,” mocked Rae furiously. “That’s *your* attitude I know ... has been right along. *I* am a mere baby of course ... *I* have no rights ... no feelings ... no feelings *at all* ... no claim to be considered a human being. ‘Don’t be foolish,’ says the wise Patricia. That really *is* a clever idea!”

Rae’s voice trembled with passion. She rushed out of the Little Parlour and up the stairs like a golden whirlwind. There were three doors on the way to her room and she banged them all.

“Whew!” whistled Sid. “I always knew she had a bad case on Wheeler but I didn’t think it went that deep.”

“Sid ... you don’t think she cared really!”

“Oh, calf love no doubt. We all survive it. But it hurts at the time.” Sid laughed a bit bitterly.

Pat went up to her room. Rae was pacing up and down it like a caged animal. She turned a stormy young face on her sister.

“Leave me alone, can’t you? You’ve done me enough harm, haven’t you? You took him from me ... deliberately. I saw you trying to attract him. What chance had I? Well, I forgave you. But now he’s gone ... he’s

gone ... and I'll never see him again ... and I can't stand it. I hate you ... I hate you ... I hate everything."

"Please don't let's quarrel," said Pat helplessly. In a desperate effort to be calm she picked up her best pair of silk stockings and began to polish the mirror with them, not in the least knowing what she held in her hand. It was the last straw for Rae.

"Who is quarrelling? Don't try to put the blame on me."

"Oh, Rae, Rae ... don't twist everything I say to mean something else."

"Oh, don't try to twist things, she says. Who twisted things this summer ... all summer ... to make him think me a child? It's *such* an interesting thing to watch the man you love making love to another woman and that woman your own sister who is deliberately trying to attract him, just for her own amusement!"

"Rae ... never ... never! I *did* try to save you from ... from ..."

"Save me! From what? You may well hesitate. You know you made him think I cared for Jerry Arnold. Jerry Arnold! A pipsqueak like that! It was Lawrence Wheeler I loved all the time and you knew it. He loved me, too, till you came between us. Yes, he did. The first time we met we felt ... we *knew* ... we had loved each other in a thousand former lives."

For the life of her Pat couldn't help smiling. She recognized the phrase. Hadn't Lawrence Wheeler of the soulful eyes said it to *her*?

"Suppose we talk ... or try to ... as if we were grown up," she suggested kindly.

"Oh, but I'm not grown up ... I'm only a child." Rae was pacing feverishly up and down the room. "A child can't see ... can't love ... can't suffer. *Can't suffer!* Oh, what I've gone through these past two months! And nobody saw ... nobody understood ... nobody has ever tried to understand me. *You* didn't. *You* care for nothing but Silver Bush. You acted as you did just because you're so crazy to keep Silver Bush always the same. My own sister to use me like that!"

Pat lost her patience and her temper, too. The idea of a scene like this over a creature like Larry Wheeler!

"This has gone far enough," she said frostily.

“I agree with you,” Rae was frost instantly also.

“When you come to your senses,” said Pat, “you’ll realise perhaps just what a goose you’ve made of yourself over a go-preacher with cow’s eyes.”

“Don’t you think you’re really being a little vulgar, my dear Patricia?” said Rae, with eyes of blue ice. “*I am of no consequence of course ... but there is such a thing as good taste. You seem to have forgotten that, along with several other things. Never mention Lawrence Wheeler’s name to me again.*”

Pat clamped her teeth together to keep from saying things she would have been terribly sorry for afterwards. The urge to say them passed.

“We’ve both lost our tempers, Rae, and said foolish things. We’ll feel differently in the morning.”

“Oh, will we? I’ll never feel differently ... and I’ll never forgive you, Pat Gardiner ... never. You and that old widower of yours!”

“Who is being vulgar now?” Pat was furious again. “At least Mr. Kirk is a gentleman!”

“And Lawrence Wheeler isn’t, I suppose?”

“You can suppose what you like. You’ve dragged his name up again. He was simply too sloppy for anything. I never dreamed that *you* ... Rae Gardiner of Silver Bush ... could take him seriously. And he’d been eating onions before he proposed to me.”

“Oh, so he proposed to you. I didn’t know you had lured him on that far. I thought even you had enough self-respect to stop short of that.”

“We have had enough of this,” said Pat, her voice trembling.

“I think so, too. But let me tell you this, Pat Gardiner. Since you are so bent on ‘saving’ people you’d better look after Sid a bit. He’s dangling around May Binnie again. I’ve known it for weeks but I didn’t say anything about it because I knew it would worry you. I had a little consideration for *you*. But you’ve been so intent on running my life that it has ceased to matter to you what Sid does, I suppose.”

“Rae dearest ... we’re both upset ... we’re both saying things we shouldn’t ... let’s forget this. We mustn’t let any one know we’ve

quarrelled ...”

“I don’t care if all the world knows it.” Rae marched out of the room. She did not come back. That night she slept in the Poet’s room ... if she slept at all. Pat didn’t. It was the first time since the night before mother’s operation that she had lain awake all night. Surely she and Rae couldn’t have quarrelled ... after all their years of comradeship and love ... all their secrets kept and shared together. It must be a horrid dream. The Binnie girls were always quarrelling ... one expected nothing better of them. But such things simply couldn’t happen at Silver Bush. Was there any truth in what Rae had said about Sid and May? There couldn’t be. It was nothing but idle gossip. She knew Sid better than that. Of course May Binnie was pretty, with the obvious, indisputable prettiness of rich black hair, vivid colour, laughing, brilliant, bold eyes. But Sid could never care for her after Bets ... or even after sweet foolish mistaken Dorothy. Pat brushed the teasing thought away. It was so easy to start gossip in the Glens. Nothing mattered just now but the quarrel with Rae.

Then it was dawn. Very early dawn is a dreary thing. Nothing is quite human. The world is “fey.” And there was no Rae in the little bed beside hers. Pat had always loved to watch Rae waking up ... she had such a pretty way of doing it. And the morning sunshine always poured in on her head, making it like a warm pool of gold on the pillow. But there was no Rae this morning ... no sunshine. Pat sat up and looked out of the window. The different farmsteads were beginning to take form in the pale grey light on the thin snow. The little row of sheep tracks leading from the church barn across the Mince Pie field might have been made by Pan. A chilly foolish little wind of dawn was sighing around the eaves. A flock of tiny snowbirds settled on the roof of the granary. The haystacks in the Field of Farewell Summers looked gnome-like in the pale greyness. Pat gazed drearily at the blown clouds and the wide white fields and the lonely star of morning.

Everything seemed so much the same ... and everything was so horribly changed.

Pat looked like the ghost of herself at breakfast but Rae came down, cool, gay, smiling, her face apparently as blithe as the day. She tossed an airy word to Pat, bantered Sid, complimented Judy on her muffins and went off to school with a parting pat for Bold-and-Bad.

Pat tried to feel relieved. It had blown over. Rae was ashamed of her outburst and wanted to ignore it. She was just going to act as if nothing had happened.

"I won't remember it either," vowed Pat. But there was a sore spot in her heart, even after she had talked it all over with Judy ... Judy who had suspected all along that Rae was nursing some secret sorrow that loomed large in the eyes of seventeen.

"Judy, it was dreadful. We both lost our tempers and said blistering things ... things that can never be forgotten."

"Oh, oh, it do be amazing how much we can be forgetting in life," said Judy.

"But it was so ... so ugly, Judy. There has never been a quarrel at Silver Bush before."

"Oh, oh, hasn't there been now, darlint? Sure there was lashings av thim whin yer dad and his gang were growing up. The rafters would ring wid their shouting at each other ... and Edith giving her opinion av iverybody ivery once in so long. This will be passing away just as they did. Did ye iver be hearing the rason ould Angus MacLeod av the South Glin didn't hang himsilf? He made up his mind to, all bekase life did be getting too tejus. And thin he had a fight wid his wife ... the first one they'd iver had. It livened him up so he wint out and used the rope to tie up a calf and niver was timplted agin. As for poor liddle Cuddles, that sore and hurt and thinking it do be going to hurt foriver ... just ye be taking no notice, Patsy ... be yersilf and iverything will be just the same only more so."

"Mother must know nothing of it ... I won't have mother hurt," said Pat firmly.

"If she can be kaping it from her she do be cliverer than I'm thinking," Judy told Gentleman Tom when Pat had gone out. "And I'm fearing this quarrel do be a bit more sarious than I've been pretinding. Whin two

people don't be caring overmuch for aich other a quarrel niver amounts to much betwane thim. It's soon made up. But whin they love aich other like Patsy and Cuddles it do be going so dape it's rale hard to be forgetting it. I'm wishing Long Alec had chased that go-pracher off Silver Bush wid a shotgun the first time he iver showed his coweyes here. Whativer cud inny girl be seeing in him? Didn't he nearly sit down on Gintleman Tom the first time he called!"

Chapter II

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December was a hard month for Pat. Life seemed to drag itself along like a wounded animal. Winter set in early. It snowed continuously for three weeks. Little storm demons danced in the yard and whirled along the lanes. Everywhere were huge banks of snow, white in the sun, pale blue in the shadows. There were quaint caps of it on the unused chimneys. It was piled deep in the Secret Field when Pat went to it on snowshoes. One felt that spring could never come again, either to Silver Bush or one's heart. On a rare fine day the world seemed made of diamond dust, cold, dazzling, splendid, heartless. There was the beauty of winter moonlight on frosted panes and chill harpings of wind beneath cold, unfriendly stars. At least, Pat felt they were unfriendly. Things were *not* the same. Always between her and Rae was the coldness and shadow of a thing that must not be spoken of ... that must be forgotten. Rae chattered continuously of surface things but in regard to everything else she preserved a silence more dreadful than anger. There was always that false gaiety, good-humoured and polite! To Pat that politeness of Rae's was a terrible thing. They might have been strangers ... they *were* strangers. Rae seemed to have locked her heart against her sister forever.

Just before Christmas Rae announced carelessly that she had been awarded a scholarship ... a three months' course in nature study at the O.A.C. in Guelph and meant to take advantage of it. The trustees had granted her leave of absence and Molly MacLeod of South Glen was to take the school for the three months.

"That is splendid," said Pat, who knew Rae must have been aware of the possibility of this for weeks and had never said a word about it.

"Isn't it?" Rae was brightly enthusiastic. She was very busy during the following days preparing for her going and talking casually of plans. She was all radiance and sparkle and teased mercilessly because Judy was

afraid she would learn to smoke cigarettes at Guelph. But she never consulted Pat about anything and when Pat, at Christmas, gave her a crimson kimono with darker crimson 'mums embroidered on it, remarking that she thought it would be nice for Guelph, Rae merely said, "How ripping of you! It's perfectly gorgeous." But she never told Pat that Uncle Horace had sent a check for a new coat and when she bought a stunning one of natural leopard with cuffs and collar of seal, she showed it to Judy and mother and the aunts but not to Pat ... merely left it lying on her bed where Pat could see it if she chose. Pat was too hurt to mention it.

When Rae went away, looking very smart and grownup in her leopard coat and a little green hat tipped provocatively over one eye, she kissed Pat goodbye as she did the others but her lips merely brushed Pat's cheek and most of the kiss was expended on air. Pat watched her out of sight with a breaking heart and cried herself to sleep that night. The loneliness was hideous. She couldn't bear to look at the bed where Rae had slept or the little old bronze slippers Rae had danced in so often but thought too worn to take to Guelph. One of them was lying forlornly under the bureau, the other under the bed. Pat got up and put them together. They did not look quite so forlorn and discarded then.

True, there had been no real comradeship between her and Rae for weeks, though they had shared the same room and sat at the same table. But now that Rae was gone it seemed as if hope had gone with her. Pat was too proud and hurt even to talk it over with Judy. It was the first time she had not been able to talk a thing over with Judy.

That cold, indifferent goodbye kiss of Rae's! Little Cuddles who used to put her chubby arms about her neck and love her "so hard!" Pat couldn't bear to think of it. She looked at her new calendar hanging on the wall ... a very elaborate affair which Tillytuck had given her. She had always thought a new calendar a fascinating thing, yet with something a little terrible about it. It was rather fun to flip over the leaves and wonder just what would be happening on this or that day. Now she hated to see it. There were three months to be lived through before Rae would come back. And when she did come would things be any better?

Bold-and-Bad padded into the room and jumped on the bed. Pat gathered him into her arms. Dear old cat, he was still left to her anyhow. And Silver Bush! Whatever came and went, whoever loved or did not love her, there was still Silver Bush.

Nevertheless Pat looked so haggard and woebegone at breakfast that Judy wished things not lawful to be uttered concerning go-preachers.

During that dreary winter Pat's only real pleasures were her evenings at the Long House — Suzanne and David were so kind and understanding ... especially David. "I always feel so comfortable with him," thought Pat ... and her letters from Hilary. One of his stimulating epistles always heartened her up. She saved them up to read in the little violet-blue hour before night came ... the hour she and Rae had been used to spend in their room, talking and joking. She always slept better after a letter from Hilary. And very poorly after a letter from Rae. For Rae wrote Pat in regular turn ... flippant little notes, each seeming just like another turn of the screw. They were full of college news and jokes, such as she might have written to any one. But never a word about Silver Bush affairs ... no reference to home jokes. Rae kept all that for her letters to mother and Judy. "When I see the evening star over the trees on the campus I always think of Silver Bush," Rae wrote Judy. If Rae had only written that to her, thought Pat.

Pat sent Rae a box of goodies and Rae was quite effusive.

"No doubt it's a youthful taste to be thinking of things to eat," she wrote back, "but how the girls did appreciate your box. It was really awfully kind of you to think of sending it," ... "as if I were some outsider who couldn't be expected to send her a box," thought Pat ... "I hear that Uncle Tom has had the mumps and that Tillytuck is still howling hymns to the moon in the granary. Also that Sid is still dancing attendance on May Binnie. She'll get him yet. The Binnies never let go. Do you suppose North Glen will faint if I appear out in a bright yellow rain coat when I come home? Or one of those long slinky sophisticated evening dresses? Silver Bush must really wake up to the fact that fashions change. I had a letter from Hilary last night. It's odd to think this is his last year in college. He has won another architectural scholarship and is going to locate in British

Columbia when he is through. He thinks he will be able to get out here to see me before I leave.”

Hilary had not told Pat about any of his plans.

The announcement of Mr. Wheeler’s marriage was in the paper that day. Judy viciously poked the sheet that bore it into the fire and held it down with the poker.

Two weeks later it was the end of March and Judy was getting her dye-pot ready. And Rae was coming home. Pat found herself dreading it ... and brokenhearted because she was dreading it.

“What is the matter with Pat this spring?” Long Alec asked Judy. “She hasn’t seemed like herself all winter ... and now she’s positively moping. Is she in love with anybody?”

Judy snorted.

“Well then, does she need a tonic? I remember you used to dose us all with sulphur and molasses every spring, Judy. Perhaps it might do her good.”

Judy did not think sulphur and molasses would help Pat much.

Chapter III

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It was a mild day when Rae came home ... a day full of the soft languor of early spring when nature is still tired after her wrestle with winter. There had been a light, misty snowfall in the night and Pat went for a walk to the Secret Field in the afternoon to see if she could win from it a little courage to face Rae's return. It was very lovely in those silent woods with their white-mossed trees. Every step she took revealed some new enchantment as if some ambitious elfin artificer were striving to show just how much could be done with nothing but the white mystery of snow in hands that knew how to make use of it. Such a snowfall, thought Pat, was the finest test of beauty. Whenever there was any ugliness or distortion it showed it mercilessly: but beauty and grace were added unto beauty and grace even as unto him that hath shall be given more abundantly. She wished she had some one to enjoy the loveliness with her ... Hilary ... Suzanne ... David ... Rae. Rae! But Rae would be coming home in a few hours' time, artificially cordial, looking at her with bright, indifferent eyes.

"I just can't bear it," thought Pat miserably.

When Pat heard the jingle of sleighbells coming up the lane in the "dim" she fled to her room. Every one else was in the kitchen waiting for Rae ... mother and Sid and Judy and Tillytuck and the cats. Pat felt she had no part or lot among them.

It had turned colder. There was a thin green sky behind the snowy trees and the silver gladness of an evening star over the birches. Pat heard the noise of laughter and greeting in the kitchen. Well, she supposed she must go down.

There was a sound of flying feet on the stairs. Suddenly it seemed to Pat that there was no air in the room. Rae burst in ... a rosy, radiant Rae, her eyes as blue as ever, her mouth like a kissed flower. She engulfed Pat in a fierce leopard-skin hug.

“Patsy darling ... why weren’t you down? Oh, but it’s good to see you again!”

This was the old Rae. Pat was afraid she was going to howl. All at once life was beautiful again. It was as if she had wakened up from a horrible dream and seen a starlit sky. “Pat, haven’t you a word to say to me? You aren’t sore at me still, are you? Oh, I wouldn’t blame you if you were. I was the world’s prize idiot. I realised that very soon after we quarrelled but I was too proud to admit it. And you wrote me such icy, stiff letters while I was away.”

“Oh!” Pat began to laugh and cry at once. They got their arms around each other. Everything was all right ... beautifully all right again.

It was a wonderful evening. Every one enjoyed Judy’s superlative supper, with Rae feeding the cats tidbits and Tillytuck and Judy outdoing themselves telling stories. Again and again Rae’s eyes met Pat’s over the table in the old camaraderie. Even King William looked as if sometime he might really get across the Boyne. But the best of all came at bedtime when they settled down for the old delight of talking things over with Bold-and-Bad tensing and flexing his claws on Pat’s bed and Popka blinking goldenly on Rae’s.

“Isn’t it jolly to be good sisters again?” exclaimed Rae. “I feel like that verse in the Bible where all the morning stars sang together. It’s just been horrid ... horrid. How could I have been such a little fool? I just wallowed in selfpity all the fall and then it seemed as if that outburst had to come. And all over that ... that creature! I’m so ashamed of ever dreaming I cared for him. I can’t understand how I could have been so ... so fantastic. And yet I really did have a terrible case. Of course I knew perfectly well in my heart it could never come to anything. At the very worst of my infatuation ... when I was trying to pretend to every one I didn’t care a speck ... I knew no Silver Bush girl could ever marry a go-preacher. But that didn’t prevent me from being crazy about him. It seemed so romantic ... a hopeless love, you know. Two found souls forever sundered by family pride and all that, you know. I just revelled in it ... I can see that now. The way he used to look at me across that barn! And once, when he read his

text ... 'Behold thou art fair, my love, behold thou art fair. Thou hast dove's eyes' ... he looked right at me and I nearly died of rapture. He really was in love with me then. You never saw the poem he wrote me, Pat. He was jealous of everything, it seemed ... of 'the wind that whispered in my ear' ... of 'the sunshine that played on my hair' ... of 'the moonbeam that lay on my pillow.' The lines didn't scan very well and the rhymes limped but I thought it was a masterpiece. Can you wonder I was furious when you just stepped in and lifted him under my very nose? By the way, he's married, did you know, Pat?"

"Yes. I saw it in the paper."

"Oh, he sent *me* an announcement," giggled Rae. "You should have seen it. With scrolls of forget-me-nots around the border! If I hadn't been cured before that would have cured me. Pat, why is it written in the stars that girls have to make fools of themselves."

"We were both geese," said Pat.

"Let's blame it all on the moon," said Rae.

They felt very near to each other. And then Judy came in with cups of delicious hot cocoa for them and a "liddle bite" of Bishop's bread and a handful of raisins as if they were children again.

"Just think," said Pat, "to other people this day has been only Wednesday. To me it's the day you came home ... home to me ... back into my life. It may be March still by the calendar but it's April in my heart ... April full of spring song."

"Here's to my having more sense in all the years to come," said Rae, waving her cup of cocoa.

"To *our* having more sense," corrected Pat.

"It's lovely to be home again," sighed Rae. "I had a splendid time at Guelph ... and I really did learn lots ... much more than just nature study. The social side was all right, too. There were some nice boys. We had a gorgeous trip to Niagara. But I am half inclined to agree with you that there is no place like Silver Bush. It must do something to people who live in it. Those darling cats! I really haven't seen a decent cat since I left the Island, Pat ... no cat who looked as if he really enjoyed being a cat, you

know. I wish we could do some crazy thing to celebrate. Sleep out in the moonlight or something like that. But it's too Marchy. So we must just have a good pi-jaw. Tell me *everything* that has happened since I went away. Your letters were so ... so *charitable*. There was no kick in them. Let me tell you once for all, Pat, that a person who always speaks well of every one is a most uninteresting correspondent. I'm sure you must be boiling over with gossip. Have there been any nice juicy scandals? Who has been born ... married ... engaged? Not you, I hope. Pat, don't go and get married to David. He's far too old for you, darling ... he really is."

"Don't be silly, sweetheart. I just want David as a friend."

"The darlints," said Judy happily, as she went downstairs. "I was knowing the good ould Gardiner sinse wud come out on top."

It was wonderful to be too happy to sleep. The very sky through the window looked glad. And when Pat wakened a verse she had heard David read a few days before ... a verse which had hurt her at the time but now seemed like a friend ... came to her mind.

"Whoever wakens on a day,
Happy to know and be,
To enjoy the air, to love his kind,
To labour and be free,
Already his enraptured soul
Lives in Eternity."

She repeated the lines to herself as she stood by her window. Rae slipped out of bed and joined her. Judy was crossing the yard, carrying something for the comfort of her hens.

"Pat," said Rae a bit soberly, "does it ever strike you that Judy is growing old?"

"Don't!" Pat winced. "I don't want to think of anything to spoil this happy morning."

But she did know that Judy was growing old, shut her eyes to it as she might. And hadn't Judy said to her rather solemnly one day,

“Patsy darlint, there do be a nightdress wid a croshay yoke all riddy in the top right hand till av me blue chist if I iver tuk ill suddent-like.”

“Judy ... don’t you feel well?” Pat had cried in alarm.

“Oh, oh, niver be worrying, darlint. I’m fit as a fiddle. Only I did be rading in the dead list av the paper this morning that ould Maggie Patterson had died in Charlottetown. We were cronies whin I did be coming to the Island at first and she do be only a year older than mesilf. So I just thought I’d mintion the nightdress to ye. The ould lady in Castle McDermott had one av lace and sating she always put on whin she had the doctor.”

“I’m so glad you and Rae are as you used to be, Pat,” said mother when Pat took her breakfast into her. Pat looked at mother.

“I didn’t think you knew we weren’t,” she said slowly.

Mother smiled.

“You can’t hide such things from mothers, darling. We always know. And I think a little wise forgetfulness is indicated.”

Pat stooped and kissed her.

“Mr precious dear, wasn’t it lucky father fell in love with *you*,” she breathed.

Rae was in kinks in the hall when Pat went out.

“Oh, Pat, Pat, life *is* worth living. I’ve just seen Judy making Tillytuck take a dose of castor oil. You’ll never know what you’ve missed.”

Yes, life was worth living again. And now Pat felt that she could throw herself into housecleaning plans and spring renovating with a heart at leisure from itself. The days that had seemed so endless wouldn’t be half long enough now for all she wanted to crowd into them.

Chapter IV

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David and Suzanne went to England for a trip that spring and the Long House was closed for the summer. Pat missed them terribly but Judy and Rae were consolable.

“That Suzanne has been trying iver since she come to make a match betwane her brother and Patsy,” Judy told Cuddles. “I’ve been fearing lately she’d manage it. And him as’ll soon be using hair tonics! Patsy hasn’t inny other beau after her just now. The min do be getting discouraged. Somehow the word do be going round she thinks nobody good enough for her.”

“And there really isn’t a man in the Glens she couldn’t have by just crooking her finger,” said Rae thoughtfully. “I think it’s just that way she has of saying ‘I know’ sympathetically. And she doesn’t mean a thing by it.”

“Do ye be thinking, Cuddles, that there is inny chance av Jingle coming home this summer now?”

Rae shook her head.

“I’m afraid not, Judy. He’s got a big contract for building a mountain inn in B.C... . a splendid chance for a young architect. Besides ... I think he has grown away from us now. He and Pat will never be anything but good friends. You can’t make him jealous ... I know for I’ve tried ... so I’m sure he doesn’t care for her except just as she cares for him. Do you know, Judy, I think it would be better if the uncles and aunts ... and perhaps all of us ... would stop teasing Pat about beaus or their absence. She thinks the whole clan is bent on marrying her off ... and it rouses the Gardiner obstinacy. There’s a streak of it in us all. If you all hadn’t been so contemptuous of poor Larry Wheeler I don’t believe I’d ever have given him a second thought.”

“Girls do be like that, I’m knowing. But I’d like to see both you and Patsy snug and safe, wid some one to care for ye, afore I die, Cuddles darlint.”

Rae laughed.

“Judy, I’m only seventeen. Hardly on the shelf yet. And don’t you talk of dying ... you’ll live to see our grandchildren.”

Judy shook her head.

“I can’t be polishing off a day’s work like I used to, Cuddles dear. Oh, oh, we all have to grow old and ye haven’t larned yet how quick time do be passing.”

“As for Pat,” resumed Rae, “I think perhaps she’ll never marry. She loves Silver Bush too much to leave it for any man. The best chance David has is that the Long House is so near Silver Bush that she could still keep an eye on it. Do you know that Norma is to be married this summer?”

“I’ve been hearing it. Mrs. Brian will be rale aisy in her mind now wid both of her girls well settled. Norma’ll niver have to lift a hand. Not that I do be thinking her beau is innny great shakes av a man wid all his money though he comes of a rale aristocratic family. His mother now ... she was one av the Summerside MacMillans and niver did she be letting her husband forget it. She kipt up all the MacMillan traditions ... niver wore the same pair av silk stockings twice and her maid had to be saying, ‘Dinner is served, madam,’ just like that, afore she cud ate a bite, wid service plates and all the flat silver matching. And in sason and out av sason she did be reminding her husband she was a MacMillan along wid iverybody av innny importance on the Island. It was lucky he had a bit av humour in him or it might have been after being a trifle monotonous. Will I iver be forgetting the story I heard him tell on the madam one cillebration at the Bay Shore? It was whin his b’ys, Jim and Davy, were two liddle chaps and Jim did be coming home from church one day rale earnest and sez he to Davy, ‘The minister did be talking av Jesus all the time but he didn’t be saying who Jesus was.’ ‘Why, Jesus MacMillan av coorse,’ sez Norma’s beau, in just the tone av his mother. Mr. MacMillan did be roaring at it, but yer Aunt Honor thought it was tarrible irriverint.

Innyway, a Gardiner is as good as a MacMillan inny day. And now I must be making a few cookies, Liddle Mary will be coming over for a wake. She do be so like Patsy whin she was small. Sometimes I'm wondering if the clock has turned back. She do be always saying goodnight to the wind like Patsy did ... and the quistions av her! 'Have I *got* to be good, Judy? Can't I be a liddle bad sometimes whin I'm alone wid you?' And, 'What's the use av washing me face after dark, Judy?' Sure and it's a bit av sunshine whin she comes and I'm thinking the very smallest flower in the garden do be glad, niver to mintion the cats."

Pat was really far more interested in Rae's matrimonial prospects than her own. For Rae seemed to be "swithering," as Judy put it, between two very nice young men. Bruce Madison of South Glen and Peter Alward of Charlottetown were both camping on the doorstep, and were frightfully and romantically jealous of each other, turning, so it was said, quite pale when they met. Life, as Tillytuck said, was dramatic because of it.

Pat had nothing against either of them ... except that they meant change ... and sometimes it was thought that Rae favoured one and then the other. She discussed them as flippantly as usual with Pat and Judy but both Pat and Judy were agreed that it was highly probable she would eventually decide on one of them. Pat hated the thought, of course. But if Rae had to marry some day ... of course it wouldn't be for years yet ... it *must* be somebody living near. Pat inclined to like Peter best but Judy favoured Bruce.

"We *would* make an awfully goodlooking couple," agreed Rae. "I really like Bruce best in summer but I have a rankling suspicion that Peter would be the best for winter. And he always makes me *feel* beautiful ... that's a knack some men never have, you may have noticed. But then ... his nose! Have you noticed his nose, Pat? It's not so bad now but in a few years it will be very bony and aristocratic. I can't exactly see myself eating breakfast every morning of my life with it opposite me. And it's terrible to think that my daughters might inherit it. It wouldn't matter so much about the boys ... a boy can get away with any kind of a nose because few girls are as sensitive to noses as I am. But the poor girls!"

Judy was horrified but she had no great liking for Peter's nose herself. So Silver Bush had its own fun out of the haunting suitors and the Golden Age seemed to have returned and nobody took anything very seriously until Pat went to a dance at the Bay Shore Hotel and Donald Holmes, as Rae announced at the breakfast table next morning, fell for her with a crash that could be heard for miles. What was more, Pat blushed, actually blushed, when Rae said this. Everybody drew the same conclusion from that blush. Pat had met her fate.

At once everybody in the Gardiner clan sat up and took notice. For the rest of the summer Donald Holmes was a constant visitor at Silver Bush. Rae and her two jealous suitors no longer held the centre of the stage. Everybody approved. The Holmes family had the proper social and political traditions, and Donald himself was the junior partner in a prosperous firm of chartered accountants.

"Oh, oh, that do be something like now," Judy told Tillytuck delightedly. "There's brading there. And he'll wear well. Patsy was in the right be waiting."

"Methinks I smell the fragrance of orange blossoms, symbolically speaking," Tillytuck remarked to Uncle Tom.

"Well, it's about time," said Uncle Tom, who was not given to symbols.

"It's really better luck than she deserves after all her flirtations," said Aunt Edith rather sourly.

Pat herself believed she was in love ... really in love. There were weeks of pretty speeches and prettier silences and enchanted moons and stars and kittens ... though in her secret soul she suspected him of not caring overmuch about cats. But at least he pretended to like the kittens. One couldn't have everything. He was well-born, well-bred, goodlooking and charming, and for the first time since the days of Lester Conway Pat felt thrills and queer sensations generally.

"I thought I'd left all that behind with seventeen," she told Rae, "but it really seems to have come back."

Rae, who was expecting “one of the men she’s engaged to ...” *à la* May Binnie ... carefully perfumed her throat.

“A plain answer to a plain question, Pat. Do you mean to marry him?”

“I’m not Betty Baxter,” said Pat with a twinkle.

“Don’t be exasperating. Every one knows he means to ask you. Candidly, Pat, I’d like him very much for a brother-in-law.”

Pat looked sober. In imagination she saw the paragraph in the Charlottetown papers announcing her engagement.

“I blush when I hear his step at the door,” she said meditatively.

“I’ve noticed that myself,” grinned Rae.

“And I suffer agonies of jealousy if he says a word of admiration for any other girl. On the whole ... I haven’t quite made up my mind ... not quite ... but I *think*, Rae, when *he* says, ‘Will you please?’ *I’ll* say, ‘Yes, thank you.’”

Rae got up and hugged Pat chokily.

“I’m glad ... I’m glad. And yet I’m on the point of howling.”

“Confidence for confidence, Rae. Which, if either, of your young men do you intend to marry?”

Rae pulled an ear of Squedunk, who was sitting on his haunches on her bed, gazing at the girls with his usual limpid, round-eyed look. Gentleman Tom looked as if all the wisdom of the ages was his, Bold-and-Bad looked as if life was one amusing adventure, but Squedunk always looked as if he could be a kitten forever if he wanted to.

“Pat, I wish I knew. I’ve been horribly flippant about it but that was just to cover up. I really don’t know. I do like them both so much ... Pat, is it ever possible to be in love with two men? It isn’t in books, I know ... but in life? Because I *do* love them both. They’re both darlings. But, Pat, honestly, the minute I decide I like Bruce best I find I have a mind to Peter. And *vice versa*. That’s all I can say yet. Well, Norma’s wedding comes off next week. Judy is furious because they are going to rehearse the whole ceremony in the church the night before. ‘Nixt thing they’ll be rehearsing the funerals,’ she says. Judy will be simply mad with delight if you marry Donald. And yet she’ll die of sorrow when you go. *When you go*

... that turns me cold. Oh, Pat, wouldn't life be nice and simple if people never fell in love? I wish I *could* make up my mind between Bruce and Peter. But I just can't. If I could only marry them both."

The shrieks of an anguished car resounded from the yard and Rae ran down to welcome Bruce ... or it may have been Peter.

The next afternoon Pat, as she expressed it, "put off Martha and put on Mary," and hied herself to her Secret Field, although there was apple jelly to make and cucumbers to pickle. She went through the mysterious emerald light of the maple woods, where it seemed as if there must have been silence for a hundred years, and sat down on an old log covered with a mat of green moss in the corner of her field. It had changed so little in all the years. It was still her own and it still held secret understanding with her. But to-day something came between her soul and it. In spite of everything something touched her with unrest ... the certainty of coming change, perhaps.

She looked up at a splash of crimson in the maple above her head. Another summer almost gone. There was a hint of autumn and decay and change in the air, even the air of the Secret Field, with the purples of its bent grasses. Yes, she would marry Donald Holmes. She was quite sure she loved him. Pat stood up and waved a kiss to the Secret Field. When she next saw it she would belong to Donald Holmes.

She had intended to call at Happiness on her way home ... she had not been there all summer ... but she did not. Happiness belonged to things that were ... things that had passed ... things that could never return.

She was in the birch grove when Donald came to her the next evening. Donald Holmes was really a fine chap and deeply in love with Pat. To him she looked like love incarnate. She had a kitten on her shoulder and her dress was a young leaf green with a scarlet girdle. There was something about her face that made him think of pine woods and upland meadows and gulf breezes. He had come to ask her a certain question and he asked it, simply and confidently, as he had a right to ask it ... for if any girl had ever encouraged a man Pat had encouraged Donald Holmes that summer.

Pat turned a little away from his flushed, eager face. Through a gap in the trees she saw the dark purple of the woods on Robinson's hill ... the blue sheen of the gulf ... the green of the clover aftermath in the Field of the Pool ... the misty opal sky ... and Silver Bush!

She turned to Donald and opened her lips to say, "yes." She found herself trembling.

"I'm ... I'm terribly sorry," was what she said. "I can't marry you. I thought I could but I can't."

Chapter V

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“I rather think I hope there’ll be an earthquake before tomorrow morning,” thought Pat when she went to bed that night. The whole world had gone very stale and life seemed greyer than ashes. In a way she was actually disappointed. She would miss Donald horribly. But leave Silver Bush for him? Impossible!

She knew she was in for a terrible time with her clan and she was not mistaken. By the time they got through with her she felt, as she confided to the not overly sympathetic Rae, “like a bargain counter of soiled rayon.” Even mother was a little disappointed.

“*Couldn’t* you have cared for him, darling?”

“I thought I could ... I thought I did ... mother, I just can’t explain. I’m dreadfully sorry ... I’m so ashamed of myself ... I deserve everything that is being said of me ... but I couldn’t.”

Everybody was saying plenty. All her relatives took turns heckling her about it. Long Alec gave her a piece of his mind.

“But I didn’t love him, father ... I really didn’t,” said poor Pat miserably.

“It’s a pity you didn’t find that out a little sooner,” said Long Alec sourly. “I don’t like hearing my daughter called a jilt. No, don’t smile at me like that, miss. Let me tell you you trade too much on that smile. *This* is past being a joke.”

“You’ll go through the woods and pick up a crooked stick yet,” warned Aunt Edith darkly.

“There’s really been too much of this, Aunt Edith,” protested Pat, feeling that any self-respecting worm had to turn sometime. “I’m not going to marry anybody just to please the clan.”

“What *can* she be wanting in the way of a husband?” moaned Aunt Barbara.

“Heaven knows,” said Aunt Edith ... but in a tone that sounded very dubious of heaven’s knowledge. “She’ll never have such a chance again.”

“You know you aren’t getting any younger, Pat,” Uncle Tom objected mildly. “Why couldn’t you have cottoned to him?”

Pat was flippant to hide her feelings.

“My English and Scotch blood liked him, Uncle Tom, but the French didn’t and I was none too sure about the Irish.”

Uncle Tom shook his head.

“If you don’t watch out all the men will be grabbed,” he said gloomily. “Beaus aren’t found hanging on bushes, you know.”

“If they were it would be all right,” said Pat, more flippantly than ever. “One needn’t pick them then. Just let them hang.”

Uncle Tom gave it up. What could you do with a she like that?

Aunt Jessie said that the Selbys were always changeable and Uncle Brian said he could always have told her that Pat was only making a fool of young Holmes for her own amusement and Aunt Helen said Pat had always been different from anybody else.

“A girl who would rather ramble in the woods than go to a dance. Don’t tell me she’s normal.”

Most odious of all was the sympathetic Mrs. Binnie who said when she met her,

“You seem to have bad luck with your beaus, Pat dearie. But never be cast down even if he has slipped through your fingers. There’s as good fish in the sea as ever come out of it. And you know, dearie, even if you can’t git a husband there’s lots of careers open to gals nowadays.”

It was hard to take that from a Binnie. As if Donald Holmes had jilted her! And harder still to hear that Donald Holmes’ mother was saying that that Gardiner girl had deliberately led her son on ... kept him dangling all summer and then threw him over.

“But I deserve it, I suppose,” thought poor Pat bitterly.

The only person who was not reported as saying anything was Donald Holmes himself, who preserved an unbroken silence and behaved, as Aunt

Edith averred, in the most gentlemanly fashion about everything connected with the whole pitiable affair.

Judy was upset at first but soon came round when every one else was blaming her darling and recollected that Donald Holmes had had a very quare sort of great-uncle.

“A bit av a miser and always wint about as shabby as a singed cat. Aven the dogs stopped to look at him, him being that peculiar. And I’m minding there did be a cousin somewhere on the mother’s side dressed up in weeds and wint to the church widding av a man who had jilted her. Oh, oh, and it’s liable to crop out inny time and that I will declare and maintain.”

Sid, too, to Pat’s surprise, stood up for her.

“Let her alone. If she doesn’t want to marry Donald Holmes she doesn’t have to.”

Pat lingered late in the garden one night. There was a mirth of windy trees all about Silver Bush and a misty, cloud-blown new moon hanging over it. First the twilight was golden-green, then emerald. Afar off the evening hills were drawing purple hoods about them. In spite of everything Pat felt at peace with her own soul as she had not done for a long time.

“If it’s foolish to love Silver Bush better than any man I’ll always be a fool,” she said to herself. “Why, I *belong* here. What an unbelievable thing that I was just on the point of saying something to Donald that would have cut me off from it forever.”

As she turned to leave the garden she said passionately and quite sincerely,

“I hope nobody will ever ask me to marry him again.” And then a thought darted quite unbidden into her mind.

“I’m glad I don’t have to tell Hilary I’m engaged.”

Chapter VI

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There came a grim day in November with nothing at first to distinguish it from other days. But in mid-afternoon Gentleman Tom gravely got down from the cushion of Great Grandfather Nehemiah's chair and looked all about him. Judy and Pat watched him as they made the cranberry pies and turkey dressing for Thanksgiving. He gave one long look at Judy, as she recalled afterwards, then walked out of the house, across the yard and along the Whispering Lane, with his thin black tail held gallantly in air. They watched him out of sight but did not attach much importance to his going. He often went on such expeditions, returning at nightfall. But the dim changed into darkness on this particular night and Gentleman Tom had not returned. Gentleman Tom never did return. It seemed a positive calamity to the folks at Silver Bush. Many beloved cats of old days had long been hunting mice in the Elysian fields but their places had soon been filled by other small tigerlings. None, it was felt, could fill Gentleman Tom's place. He had been there so long he seemed like one of the family. They really felt that he must go on living forever.

No light was ever thrown on his fate. All enquiries were vain. Apparently no mortal eye had seen Gentleman Tom after he had gone from Silver Bush. Pat and Rae were mournfully certain that some dire fate had overtaken him but Judy would not have it.

"Gintleman Tom has got the sign and gone to his own place," she said mysteriously. "Don't be asking me where it might be ... Gintleman Tom did be always one to kape his own counsel. Do ye be minding the night we all thought ye were dying, Patsy dear? I'm not denying I'll miss him. A discrate, well-behaved baste he was. All he iver wanted was his own cushion and a bit av mate or a sup av milk betwane times. Gintleman Tom was niver one to cry over spilt milk, was he now?"

Philosophically as Judy tried to take it she was very lonely when she climbed into her bed at nights, with no black guardian at its foot.

“Changes do be coming,” she whispered sadly. “Gintleman Tom *knew*. That do be why he wint. He niver liked to be upset. And I’m fearing the luck av Silver Bush do be gone wid him.”

The Fifth Year

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Chapter I

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Pat, coming home from the Long House, where she and David and Suzanne had been reading poetry before the fire all the evening, paused for a moment to gloat over Silver Bush before going in. She always did that when coming home from anywhere. And tonight it seemed especially beautiful, making an incredibly delicate picture with its dark background of silver birches and dim, dreaming winter fields. There were the white, sparkling snows of a recent storm on its roof. Two lace-like powdered firs, that had grown tall in the last few years, were reaching up to the west of it. To the south were two leafless birches and directly between them the round pearl of the moon. A warm golden light was gleaming out of the kitchen window ... the light of home. It was fascinating to look at the door and realise that by just opening it one could step into beauty and light and love.

The world seemed all moonlight and silver bush, faintly broken by the music of a wind so uncertain that you hardly knew whether there really was a wind or not. The trees along the Whispering Lane looked as if they had been woven on fairy looms and a beloved pussy cat was stepping daintily through the snow to her.

Pat was very happy. It had been a beautiful winter ... one of the happiest winters of her life. None of the changes Judy had foreboded upon the departure of Gentleman Tom had so far come to pass. Winnie and her twinkling children came over often and Little Mary stayed for weeks at a time, though her mother complained that Pat spoiled her so outrageously that there was no doing anything with her when she went home. Mary had once said,

“I wish I was an orphan and then I could come and live with Aunt Pat. She lets me do *everying* I want to.”

The only time Mary ever found Aunt Pat cross with her was the day she had taken Tillytuck's hatchet and cut down a little poplar that was just beginning life behind the turkey house. Aunt Pat's eyes did flash then. Mary was packed off home in disgrace and made to feel that if Aunt Pat ever forgave her it would be more than she deserved. Mary really couldn't understand it. It had been such a *little* tree. Aunt Pat hadn't been half so cross when she, Little Mary, had spilled a whole can of molasses on the Little Parlour rug or upset the jug of water on the floor in the Poet's room.

But everybody at Silver Bush spoiled Little Mary because they loved her. She had such a delightful little face. Everything about it laughed ... her eyes ... her mouth ... the corners of her nose ... the dimples in her cheeks ... the little curl in front of her ears. Judy vowed she was "the spit and image" of Pat in childhood but she was far prettier than Pat had ever been. Yet she lacked the elfin charm that had been Pat's and sometimes Judy thought it was just as well. Perhaps it was not a good thing to have that strange little spark of difference that set you off by yourself and made a barrier, however slight and airy it might be, between you and your kind. It is quite likely that this lurking idea of Judy's was born of the fact that Pat's beaux no longer came to Silver Bush. Ever since the affair of Donald Holmes the youth of the Glens had left Pat severely alone. To be sure, when Tillytuck commented on this, Judy scornfully remarked that Pat had had them all tied up by the ears at one time or another and no more men were left. But in secret it worried her. It made Judy quite wild to think of Pat ever being an old maid. Even David Kirk didn't seem to be getting anywhere with what the clan persisted in thinking his wooing. When Judy heard that Mrs. Binnie had said that Pat Gardiner was pretty well on the shelf she trembled with wrath.

"Oh, oh, there do be just this difference betwane Madam Binnie and a rattlesnake, Tillytuck ... the snake can't be talking."

Pat was not worrying over the absence of the men.

"I fall in love but it doesn't last," she told Judy philosophically. "It never has lasted ... you know that, Judy. I'm constitutionally fickle and that being the case I'm never going to trust my emotions again. It wouldn't

matter if it hurt only me ... but it hurts other people. There's only one real love in my life, Judy ... Silver Bush. I'll always be true to *it*. It satisfies me. Nothing else does. Even when I was craziest about Harris Hynes and Lester Conway and ... and Donald Holmes, I always felt there was something wanting. I couldn't tell what but I knew it. So don't worry over me, Judy."

Judy's only comfort was that Hilary's letters still came regularly.

Pat had had a book from him that day ... a lovely book in a dull green leather binding with a golden spider-web over it ... a book that *belonged* to Pat. Hilary's gifts were like that ... something that must have made him say, whenever his eyes lighted on it, "That is Pat's. It couldn't be anybody else's."

If life could just go on forever like this ... at least for years, "safe from corroding change." In childhood you thought it would but now you knew it couldn't. Something was always coming up ... something you never expected. Only that day she had overheard Judy saying to Tillytuck, "Oh, oh, things do be going too well. We do be going to have an awful wallop before long." Tillytuck had told Judy she needed a liver pill but Pat was afraid there was something in it.

At Silver Bush Rae's love affairs had usurped the place that Pat's used to hold. Rae discussed her two suitors very frankly with Pat and Judy in the talks around the kitchen fire o' nights, often to the unromantic accompaniment of butter-fried eggs or turkey bones. Rae was never of the same heart two nights in succession.

"Don't change your mind so often," Pat said once in exasperation.

"Oh, but it's glorious," laughed Rae. "Think how deadly monotonous it would be to be in love with the same man week in and week out. Of course I mean to make up my mind permanently some day. I feel sure I'll marry one of those boys. They are both good matches."

"Rae! That sounds hatefully mercenary."

"Sister dear, I finished with romance when Larry Wheeler sent me a flower-wreathed announcement of his bridals. That cured me forever. And

I'm not mercenary ... I'm only through with being a sentimentalist. It's just that I find it hard to decide between two equally nice boys."

"It's hardly fair to them," protested Pat. "And people are talking. They say you're more or less engaged to both of them."

"Well, you know I'm not. Neither of them is by way of being a bit deceived. And, in spite of their jealousy, they're such good sports over it all, too. They are so fearfully polite to each other outwardly. No fear of a duel there even if it wasn't out of date."

"You wouldn't want a man to risk his life for you, would you?" demanded Pat.

"No ... no." For a moment Rae looked serious. "But I think I'd like to have him *willing* to risk it. I wonder if either Bruce or Peter would be that. However, they are getting no end of thrills out of it. It's a kind of race, you know, and men enjoy that ever so much more than a tame courtship. Sometimes I think I'll decide it by lot ... I really do. They seem so evenly balanced. If Peter's nose is not all I would fondly dream neither are Bruce's ears. And their names are nice. That's *something*. How awful it would be to marry a man who had one of those terrible names in Dickens! Judy, do you think Bruce will be fat by the time he is forty? I'm afraid I wouldn't love him then. There is no danger of that with Peter. He'll always be thin as a snipe. But he has rosy cheeks. I don't like rosy cheeks in men. I prefer them pale and interesting. And will his mother like me?"

"It wudn't be innny great odds if she didn't, Cuddles dear," said Judy, who was enjoying Rae's "nonsense" immensely. "The woman has no great gumption. I used to be hearing she was one to give her fam'ly b'iling hot soup on a dog-day. Peter do be getting his sinse from his father's side."

"Last night I *almost* told him I'd marry him. But I had sense enough to know it was just the moon. I could be in love with anybody when the moon is just right. Pat, don't look so disapproving. You've no right to. *You've* been known to change your mind. I wish I could make up my mind ... I really do. It's so wearing. I never thought I could be in such a predicament."

“I don’t believe you care a pin for either of them,” said Pat impatiently.

“Pat, I do ... I really do. That is the exasperating part of it ... the part that doesn’t square with books.”

“Why not send them both packing and go on with your college course? You used to want to be a doctor.”

Rae sighed.

“It costs too much. And besides ... my ambition seems to have petered out ... no, that isn’t a pun, really it isn’t. We’re like that at Silver Bush, it seems, Pat. We’re just domestic girls after all and want a home to potter over, with a nice husband and a few nice babies.”

“Oh, oh, that’s the only sensible word ye’ve said tonight, Cuddles darlint,” grinned Judy. She knew her Cuddles and did not take her dilemma very seriously. It was all the darlint’s fun and added to the gaiety of life at Silver Bush. Some fine day Cuddles would find out which of those nice lads she liked best and there would be a fine wedding and Cuddles would settle down not far from home, as Winnie had done. So Judy hoped in her inveterate matchmaking old heart. It was only Pat who worried over it. Somehow she could not picture Rae either as Mrs. Bruce Madison or Mrs. Peter Alward. But she asked herself honestly was it because she thought Rae did not care enough for either of them or was it because she hated the change another marriage would bring to Silver Bush?

“Just be letting it alone, Patsy dear,” advised Judy. “The Good Man Above do be having things in hand, I’m belaving.”

Chapter II

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It was spring ... it was summer ... it was September ... it was almost another autumn. Pat had come home from a three weeks' visit in Summerside, where Aunt Jessie had been ill and Pat had been keeping house for Uncle Brian. Now she was home again and oh, it was good! Was the sunshine amber or was it gold? How gallant the late hollyhocks looked along the dyke! How alive the air was! What a delightful smell the apple orchard had in September! How adorable were two fat pussy cats rolling in the sun! And the garden welcomed her ... *wanted* her.

"Any news, Judy? Tell me everything that's happened while I've been away. Letters never tell half enough ... and Rae's have really been sketchy."

"Oh, oh, Rae!" Judy looked rather as if the world were on its last legs, but Pat was too absorbed in Silver Bush generally to notice it. Tillytuck coughed significantly behind his hand and remarked that Cupid had as usual been busy at Silver Bush.

"Oh, Peter and Bruce, I suppose," laughed Pat. "Is Rae going to keep those poor wretches dangling forever? It's really getting past a joke. Where is she by the way?"

"She did be climbing the haystack in the Mince Pie Field half an hour ago, just after she did be getting home from school," said Judy, frowning at Tillytuck.

Pat betook herself to the Mince Pie Field where a splotch of colour on a half-used haystack betrayed Rae's whereabouts. Pat scrambled up the ladder and Rae grabbed her.

"Darling, I'm so glad you're back. It seems like a hundred years since you went to Summerside. I've just been lying here, letting my thoughts ripen and grow mellow. I think there's a caterpillar on my neck, but it doesn't matter. Even caterpillars have rights."

Pat slipped down beside Rae with a sigh of enjoyment. How blue the sky was, with those great banks of golden cloud in the south! Pat didn't like a cloudless sky ... it always seemed to her hard and remote. A few clouds made it friendly ... humanised it. How cool and delicious was the gulf breeze blowing round them, bringing with it all kinds of elusive whiffs from all the little dells and slopes of the old farm. The Buttercup Field was a pasture this year. Pat remembered how she and Sid used to play in that field when the buttercup glory came up to their heads.

"Isn't it heavenly just to lie quiet like this and soak yourself in the beauty of the world?" she said dreamily.

Rae did not answer. Pat turned her head and looked at her sister lying in her lithe young slimness on the hay. How very soft and radiant Rae's eyes were! There was something about her ...

"Pat darling," said Rae, "I'm engaged."

Pat felt as if a thunderbolt had hit her.

"Rae ... let me see your tongue."

"No, I'm not feverish, beloved ... really, I'm not."

"Are you serious, Rae?"

"Absolutely. Oh, Pat, I'm just weak and trembly with happiness. I never knew any one could be so happy. It's only three weeks since you went away but everything has changed. Pat, life has just seemed like a storybook these three weeks, and every day an exciting chapter."

Pat had got her second wind but she, too, felt weak and trembly with something that was not exactly happiness.

"Which is it ... Bruce or Peter?" she asked a bit drily.

Rae gave a young, delightful laugh.

"Oh, Pat, it's neither of them. It's Brook Hamilton."

Pat felt stunned.

"*Who* is Brook Hamilton?"

Rae laughed again.

"Fancy any one not knowing who Brook Hamilton is. I can't believe I didn't know him myself three weeks ago. I met him the first night you went away at Dot's dance ..."

“Rae Gardiner, you don’t mean to tell me you’re engaged to a man you’ve known only three weeks!”

“Don’t go off the deep end, darling. We’re not to be married till he’s through college so we’ll have lots of time to get acquainted. And he’s my man ... there’s no mistake about that. At nine o’clock that evening I had never seen him. At ten I loved him. Judy says it happens like that once in a thousand years. I never believed in love at first sight before ... but now I know it’s the only kind.”

“Rae ... Rae ... *I* thought that once, too ... I was sure I was madly in love with Lester Conway ... and it was nothing but the moon ...”

“There wasn’t any moon the night of Dot’s party, so you can’t blame this on the moon.”

“I suppose,” said Pat sarcastically, “he’s extremely handsome and you’ve fallen for ...”

“But he isn’t. I think he’s ugly really, when I think of his face at all. But it’s such a delightful ugliness. And he has such steady blue eyes and such dependable broad shoulders, and such thick black hair ... though it always looks as if he’d combed it with a rake. But I like that, too. He wouldn’t be Brook if he had sleek hair. Dearest, it’s all right ... it really is. Mother and Dad like him and even Judy approves of him. We’re to be married when he’s through college and go to China.”

“China!”

“Yes. He’s going to take charge of the Chinese branch of his father’s business there ... I forgot to tell you he’s one of the Halifax Hamiltons and Dot’s cousin.”

“But ... China!”

“It *does* sound like a long hop. But, really, darling, nothing matters ... Indian plains or Lapland snows ... so long as I’m with him. I don’t talk like this to the others, Pat ... but with you I’ve just got to let myself go.”

“And what about Bruce and Peter?” asked Pat, with a faint smile.

“Pat, it was really comical. Oh, there’s so much to tell you. You see, they didn’t know anything about Brook, but they told me two weeks ago that I had to make up my mind between them. And I just told them I was

engaged to Brook. You should have seen their faces. Then they just faded out of the picture. I don't think they ever really existed."

"And were you engaged *then* ... a week after you'd met him?"

"Darling, we were engaged three days after we met. I couldn't help it. What would *you* do if Sir Launcelot just rode into your back yard and told you you had to marry him? Because Brook didn't *ask* me, you know ... he just told me I had to. There wasn't the least use objecting even if I'd wanted to. And ... oh, Pat, I ... I *cried*. That's the shameful truth. I haven't the least idea why I did, but I simply howled. It was such a relief ... I'd been thinking I was just one of the crowd to him ... and Dot was trying to hint he was after Lenore Madison ... that freckled, snub-nosed thing. You may be sure I didn't ask for any time to consider. Pat, you're not going to cry!"

"No ... no ... but this is really a little unexpected, Rae."

For one awful moment Pat had felt as if Rae ... this Rae ... were a stranger to her. She had been away from Silver Bush for only three weeks and *this* had happened.

"I know." Rae squeezed Pat's hand. "And I know it must all seem like indecent haste to you. But if you count time by heart-throbs as somebody says you should, it's been a century since I met him. He *isn't* a stranger. He's one of our kind ... like Hilary ... knows all our quacks, really he does. You'll understand when you meet him, Pat."

Pat did understand. She couldn't find a single fault with Brook Hamilton. As a brother-in-law he was everything that could be desired. Tall, lean, with intensely blue eyes and straight black brows. Certainly he and Rae made a wonderful-looking young pair in spite of his "rather ugly" face. She couldn't hate him as she had hated Frank, even if he were going to take her sister away. But, mercifully, not for a long time yet. And there was no doubt that Rae loved him.

"I wish I could love somebody like that," said Pat, with a little pang of envy. She sat alone for a long time in her room that evening while the robins whistled outside and the purple night sky looked down on her. So, in the years to come, she would always have to sit alone. For the first time

in her life Pat felt *old* ... for the first time a little chill of fear for her own future touched her. She almost hated Bold-and-Bad for purring so loudly on the bed. It was outrageous that a cat should be so blatantly happy. Really Bold-and-Bad had no tact.

"I suppose," thought Pat dolefully, "the time will come when I'll have nothing left but a cat." Then she brightened up. "And Silver Bush. That will be enough," she added softly.

At bedtime she knelt by Rae's bed and put her arm across Rae's shoulders.

"Cuddles dear," she said, slipping back to the old nickname, "Brook is a dear ... and I think you're both lucky ... and I love you ... love you ... love you."

"Pat, you're the dearest thing in the world. And why didn't you cast the Reverend Wheeler of happy memory up to me and remind me of the time I thought I was in love with him? I really expected you to do it ... I don't know how any human being could have resisted doing it."

Judy was only moderately pleased over the engagement because of the prospect of China.

"Oh, oh, I've great opinions of haythens, Patsy dear. They do be all right to sind missionaries to, but not to be living among. And her wid him looks av hers to go to Chiny! Sure and some ugly girl wud have done for him I'm thinking, since he can't be continted in a civilised country. But I'm not denying he's a fine lad and he can't be hilping his uncle."

"Now, Judy, what about his uncle?"

"Oh, oh, it's an ould tale and better not raked up maybe. Well, if ye will be having it. The Hamiltons may be av Halifax now but the grandfather av him lived in Charlottetown whin his lads were small. And Brook's uncle was the black shape ... if it don't be insulting shape to call him so. Crooked he was as a dog's hind leg. He wint out wist after quarrelling wid his dad and what did he do but write a long account av his being killed whin a train struck his horse and buggy at a crossing and got it published in a liddle newspaper there, one av his wild cronies being editor av it, and sint a marked copy home to the ould folks. It just about broke his

poor mother's heart ... I'm not saying his dad tuk it so hard and small blame to him ... and they had a lot av worry tilligraphing to have the body sint home. And whin they wint to the station wid the hearse and undertaker and all to mate the corpse didn't me fine Dicky Hamilton stip off the train laughing at the joke he'd played on thim!"

"How horrible! But don't tell Rae that, Judy."

"Oh, oh, it's not likely ... nor the squeal to it ather. For what do you think, Patsy dear? The young scallywag did be killed the nixt wake in the very same way he'd writ av ... he was driving along one avening reckless-like and the train struck him on that crossing on the wist road and that was the ind av him. Niver be telling me it wasn't jidgmint. But there do be no doubting that Cuddles is over head and heels in love wid Brook. 'Sure and there do be other min in the world, Cuddles darlint,' I sez, be way av tazing her a bit. 'There aren't,' she sez, solemn-like. 'There's simply nobody else in the world, Judy,' sez she. And that being the case we must just be making the bist av it, uncle or no uncle. After all, there do be something rale glamorous about it as Tillytuck wud say."

As a matter of fact, all Tillytuck said was, "Engaged, by gosh!" Such a whirlwind courtship was entirely too much for Tillytuck. He relieved his feeling by playing on his fiddle in the graveyard, seated on Wild Dick's tombstone, much to Judy's horror.

"How do you know Wild Dick doesn't still like to hear the fiddle, Judy?" asked Sid audaciously.

"If Wild Dick do be in heaven he has the angels to be listening to ... and if he isn't he do be having other things to think av," was Judy's indignant reply. Tillytuck had to give her his old red flannel shirt for the rosebuds in her new hooked rug before he could make his peace with her. And then nearly wrecked it again by solemnly telling Little Mary, to whom Judy had just been relating a story of some naughty children who had been turned into brooms by a witch ... "I was one of them brooms!"

The Sixth Year

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Chapter I

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For a year things went beautifully at Silver Bush. Everybody was happy. Mother was better than she had been for a long time. Sid seemed to have recovered his good spirits and was taking a keen interest in everything again. Gossip no longer coupled his name with any girl's and Pat saw her old dream of living always at Silver Bush with Sid taking vague shape again. It was just like it used to be. They planned and joked and walked in faint blue twilights and Sid told her everything, and together they bullied Long Alec and Tillytuck when any difference of opinion came up. Between them they managed to get Silver Bush repainted, although Long Alec hated any extra expense as long as there was a mortgage on it. But Silver Bush looked beautiful ... so white and trig and prosperous with its green shutters and trim. It warmed the cockles of Pat's heart just to look at it. And to hear Sid say once, gruffly, on their return one winter evening from a long prowl back to their Secret Field,

“You're a good old scout, Pat. I don't know what I'd have done without you these past two years.”

“Oh, Sid!” Pat could only say that as she rubbed her face against his shoulder. This was one of life's good moments. They had had such a wonderful walk. It had been lovely back in the woods. It was after the first snowfall and the woods were at peace in a white transfiguration, placidly still and calm, where the thick ranks of the young saplings were snow-laden and an occasional warm golden shaft of light from the low-hanging sun pierced through, tingeing the dark bronze-green of the spruces and the greyish-green streams of moss with vivid beauty. They had come home by way of Happiness, where Jordan was crooning to itself under the ice. The old pastures, which had been so beautiful and flowery in June, were cold and white now, but Pat loved them, as she loved them in all moods.

She lingered at the gate to taste her happiness after Sid had gone on to the barn. It was going to be a night of frost and silver. To her right the garden was hooding itself in the shadows of dusk. Pat loved to think of all her staunch old flowers under the banks of snow, waiting for spring. Far away a dim hill came out darkly against a winter sunset. Beyond the dyke was a group of old spruces which Long Alec often said should be cut down. But Pat pleaded for them. Seen in daylight they *were* old and uncomely, dead almost to the top, with withered branches. But seen in this enchanted light, against a sky that began by being rosy-saffron and continued in silver green, and ended in crystal blue, they were like tall, slender witch women weaving spells of necromancy in a rune of olden days. Pat felt a stirring of her childish desire to share in their gramarye ... to have fellowship in their twilight sorceries.

Off to her left the orchard was white and still, heaped with drifts along the fences. Over it all was a delicate tracery of shadow where the trees stood up lifeless in seeming death and sorrow. But it was only seeming. The life-blood was in their hearts and by and by it would stir and they would clothe themselves in bridal garments of young green leaves and pink blossoms, and lush grass would wave where the snow was now lying and golden buttercups dance among it. Spring always came again ... she must never forget that.

Silver Bush looked very beautiful in the faint beginning moonlight ... her own dear Silver Bush. It still welcomed her ... it was still hers, no matter what changes came and went. Life seemed to have put on a new meaning now that Sid had come back to her in their old companionship. She pulled his love about her like a cloak and felt warm and satisfied.

Rae had settled down to filling a hope chest and writing daily letters of portentous length to Brook Hamilton. She was changed ... more gentle, thoughtful, womanly. There was no more pretending to be hard-boiled. Love, Sid told her teasingly, did mellow people remarkably. The old flippancy was gone, though she laughed as much as ever and never had her laughter, thought adoring Pat, been so exquisite.

Pat had resigned herself to the fact of Rae's engagement. But she would not be getting married for at least three years. They had those years to look forward to ... years, dreamed Pat, of companionship and plans and all the dear intimacies of home.

Winter slipped away ... spring and summer passed. September wore a golden moon like a ring and again autumn brewed a cup of magic and held it to your lips. Only Tillytuck secretly thought it rather slow. The beaux came no longer, since Rae was known to be bespoken and Pat, so it was said, thought no one good enough for her.

"Life is getting a bit tedious here, Judy," he said, mournfully. "There doesn't seem to be as much glamour, romantically speaking."

Perhaps Judy thought so, too. She sighed ... it was not like Judy to sigh. Pat would have another birthday in a week ... and not a beau in sight. Even David, Judy had decided, had really no serious intentions, and she hated him for it as sincerely as if she had never disapproved of him. She did not want Pat to marry him, but that was for Pat to decide, not for him. As for Jingle, there never was any word of his coming home for a visit.

"He's grown away from us, Judy. We're only memories to him now. He has his own work and his own ambitions. Even his letters aren't just what they used to be."

Pat hadn't seemed to care. She was more taken up with Silver Bush than ever and she and Sid were "thick as thieves" again. Which was all to the good, as far as it went. To be sure, of late weeks, Sid had taken to gallivanting again. Nobody could find out where he was going although Judy had certain uneasy suspicions she never breathed to any one. Judy sighed again as she clapped her baked beans and bacon in the oven. Then she brightened up. Every one needed a liddle bite once in so often and as long as she, Judy Plum, could provide it there was balm in Gilead.

A week later Judy looked back to that day and wondered if what had happened had been a judgment on her for thinking life had got a bit dull. For Pat's birthday had come and that evening Sid had brought May Binnie in and announced, curtly and defiantly, and yet with such a pitiful, beaten look on his face, that they had been married that day in Charlottetown.

“We thought we’d surprise you,” said May, glancing archly about her out of bold, brilliant eyes. “Birthday surprise for you, Pat.”

Chapter II

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Pat sat up all that night, looking out over the quiet, unchanged fields of the farm, trying to look this hideous fact in the face. She was in the Poet's room and she had locked the door. She would not even have Rae with her.

She could not yet believe that this had happened. At first one cannot believe in a monstrous thing. Can one ever believe it? It was a dream ... a nightmare. She would waken presently. She must ... or go mad.

She had been so happy that evening at twilight ... so unusually, inexplicably happy, as if the gods were going to give her some wonderful gift ... and now she would never be happy again. Pat was still young enough to think that when a thing like this happened you could never be happy again. Everything ... *everything* ... had changed in the twinkling of an eye. Sid was lost to her forever. The very fields she had loved now looked strange and hostile as she gazed on them. "Our inheritance is turned to strangers and our house to aliens." She had read that verse in her Bible chapter two nights ago and shivered over the picture of desolation it presented. And now it had come true in her own life ... her life that a few hours ago had seemed so full and beautiful and was now so ugly and empty.

It had been such a ghastly hour. Nobody knew what to say or do. Pat's face seemed to wither as she looked at them ... at May, flushed and triumphant under all her uneasiness, at Sid, sullen and defiant. May tried to carry the situation off brazenly, after the true Binnie fashion.

"Come, Pat, don't look so snooty. *I'm* willing to let bygones be bygones, even if you and I *have* hated each other all our lives."

This was only too true but it was terrible to have the feeling dragged into light as nakedly as this. Pat could not answer. She turned away as if she had neither seen nor heard May and walked blindly out of the room. The only feeling she was keenly conscious of just then was a sick desire to

get away from the light into a dark place where no one could see her ... where she could hide like a wounded animal.

May looked after her and her bold handsome face flushed crimson under Pat's utter disregard. Her black eyes held a flame that was not good to see. But she laughed as she turned to Sid.

"She'll get over it, honey-boy. I never expected a warm welcome from Pat, you know."

Rae alone kept her head. Neither mother nor father must be told till morning, she reflected. As for Judy and Tillytuck, they seemed stricken dumb. Tillytuck slipped off to his granary shaking his head and Judy climbed to her kitchen chamber, feeling, for the time at least, more crushed and cowed than ever in her life before.

"I've felt it coming," she muttered, as she crept into bed forlornly. "I've been hearing he was going wid the bold young hussy. And Gintleman Tom knew it was coming, that he did. That was why he lit out like the knowing baste he was. He knew he cud niver be standing a Binnie. Oh, oh, if I did be knowing as much av magic as me grandmother I'd change her into a toad that I wud. What'll be coming av it the Good Man Above only knows. One does be thinking the world cud be run a bit better. I'm fearing this will break Patsy's heart."

Chapter III

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All the rest of her life Pat knew she had left girlhood behind her on that dreadful night. Hope seemed to be blotted out entirely. Already the hours that had passed seemed like an eternity and tomorrow ... all the tomorrows ... would be just as bad. Her mind went round and round in a miserable circle and got nowhere. May Binnie living at Silver Bush ... Silver Bush overrun with Binnies ... they were a clannish crew in their way. Old Mr. Binnie who ate peas with his knife and old Mrs. Binnie who always sopped her bread in her gravy. And all the slangy, loud-voiced crew of them, the kind of people before whom you must always say everything over to yourself beforehand to be sure it was safe. What a crowd for Sid to have got himself mixed up with! No, it could not be faced.

Pat wouldn't go down when morning came ... couldn't. For the first time in her life she was a shirker. She could hear them talking beneath her at the breakfast-table. She could hear May's desecrating laugh. She clenched her hands in fury and wretchedness. She pulled down the blind and shut out a world that was too glad with its early sunshine and its purple mists.

Presently Rae came in ... trim, alert, competent. Her blue eyes showed no traces of the tears she had shed in the night.

"Pat, I left you alone last night because I realised that a thing like this had much better be talked over in the morning."

"What is the use of talking it over any time?" asked Pat listlessly.

"We must talk it over because we have to face the situation, Pat. There is no use in turning our back on it or squinting at it out of the corners of our eyes ... or ignoring it. Let's just get down to real things and look to the future."

"But I can't face it ... Rae, I *can't*," cried poor Pat desperately. "Talk about the future! There isn't any future! If it had been anybody but May

Binnie! I'm not the little fool I once was. I've known for long that Sid would marry sometime. Even when I couldn't help hoping he wouldn't I knew he would. But May Binnie!"

"I know. I know as well as you do that Sid has made a dreadful mistake and will realise it all too clearly some day. I know May is cheap and common and has no background ... kitchen-bred, as Judy would say ... but ..."

"How could he do it? How could he like *her* ... after Bets ... even after poor Dorothy?"

"May is alluring in her own way, Pat. *We* can't see it but the men do. And she has always meant to get Sid. We've just got to make the best of it and take things as they come."

"I won't," said Pat rebelliously. "They may *have* to come but I haven't got to take them without protest. I'll never reconcile myself to this ... never."

"To-day that seems so long, so strange, so bitter
Will soon be some forgotten yesterday,"

quoted Rae softly.

"It won't," said Pat dismally.

"I've been doing some talking already this morning," went on Rae.

"For one thing I broke the news to dad."

"And he ... what did he ..."

"Oh, there were fireworks. The Gardiner temper flared up. But I know how to manage dad. I told him he had to take a reasonable view of it for mother's sake. When he calmed down he and I worked it out. Sid and May will have to live here for a year or two, until the mortgage is cleared. Then dad will build a house for them on the other place and they can live there."

"And in the meantime," said Pat passionately, "life will be unlivable at Silver Bush ... you know it will."

"I don't know anything of the sort. Of course it won't be as pleasant as it has been. But, Pat, you know as well as I do that we've got to make the best of it for mother's sake."

“Does she know?”

“Yes. Dad told her. I fucked *that*.”

“And how ... how did she take it?”

“How does mother take anything? Just like the gallant lady she is! We mustn’t fail her, Pat.”

Pat groped out a hand, found Rae’s and squeezed it. Somehow their ages seemed reversed. It was as if Rae were the older sister.

“I’ll do my best,” she choked. “There’s a verse in the Bible somewhere ... ‘be of good courage’ ... I’ve always thought it a wonderful phrase. I suppose it was meant just for times like this. But oh, Rae, how *can* we live with May? Her habits ... her ideals ... her point of view about everything ... are so different from ours.”

“She must have some good points,” said Rae reasonably. “She’s really popular in her own set. Everybody says she is a good worker.”

“We have no work for her to do here,” said Pat bitterly.

“You know, Pat, nothing is ever quite so dreadful in reality as in anticipation. We must just look *around* this. It’s blocking up our view at present because we are too close to it.”

“We can never be ourselves ... our real selves ... when she is about, Rae.”

“Perhaps not. But she won’t be always around. And she isn’t going to rule here whatever she may think. ‘I’m master here,’ said dad, at the end of our talk, ‘and your mother is mistress of Silver Bush and will remain so.’ So that’s that. I must be off to school now. You won’t have to face May this morning. Sid has taken her home for the day.”

Judy, who, for the first time in her life, had been a coward, crept in now and Pat flew to her old arms.

“Judy ... Judy ... help me to bear it.”

“Oh, oh, bearing is it? We’ll bear it together, Patsy darling, to the last turn av the screw, wid a grin for the honour av Silver Bush. And just be reminding, Patsy, what the Good Book says ... about happiness being inside av ye and not outside. Thim mayn’t just be the words but it’s what I’m believing it manes.”

“All very well if things outside would stop poking at you,” said Pat, rather less forlornly.

“We’ve got to be saving Silver Bush from her,” said Judy slyly. “She’ll be trying to spile it while she do be here and we’ll have our liddle bit av fun heading her off, Patsy darlint ... diplomatic-like and widout ructions for the honour av the fam’ly. Ye’d have had a laugh this morning if ye’d been down, Patsy, to see Bould-and-Bad turning his back on her, aven if she did be making a fuss over him. She’s rale fond av the animiles so we nadn’t worry over that.”

To Pat it was almost another count against May that she was fond of cats. She hated to admit a good point in her.

“How was Sid, Judy?”

“Oh, oh, looking like innything but a happy bridegroom. And just a bit under her thumb already, as I cud be seeing. Her wid her ‘honey-boy’ and telling av the way his hair curled over his forrid! As if I hadn’t been knowing it all his life. But I was as smooth as crame, darlint, and that rispictful ye’d have died and niver did I be aven glancing at her stockings all in rolls round her ankles. Sure and it was a comfort to me to be knowing Long Alec wasn’t intinding to hand Silver Bush over to Sid, as the Binnies hoped. Long Alec’s not taking off his boots afore he goes to bed. ‘You and yer wife can stay here till I can afford to build a house for ye,’ sez he ... and me fine May wasn’t liking it. She’s been telling round what she would do when she got to Silver Bush. ‘I can be getting Sid Gardiner back whin I crook me finger,’ sez she. Oh, oh, she’s got him, worse luck, but she hasn’t got Silver Bush and niver will. A year or two will soon pass, Patsy dear, and thin we’ll be free av her. Maybe aven sooner wid a bit av luck.”

“She has gone home for the day,” Rae said.

“To be getting her boxes and breaking the news to the Binnies. I’m thinking they’ll bear up well under it. She did be insisting on washing the dishes first and I did be letting her for pace’ sake. She did be making as much commotion as a cat in a fit, finding where iverything shud go, and

smashed the ould blue plate be way av showing what she cud do. But I'll not be denying she washed thim clane and didn't be laving a grasey sink."

Pat had always washed the dishes. She began to be sorry she hadn't gone down for breakfast after all. It would have been more dignified ... more Silver Bushish.

"Now, come ye down, Patsy darlint, and have a liddle bite," said Judy wheedlingly. "I've been after frying a bit av the new ham and an egg in butter. A cup av tay will restore yer balance like. And we'll be having our liddle laugh now and agin behind her back, Patsy."

Pat pulled up the blind again. There was a little chill at her heart which had never been there before and which she felt would always be there henceforth. But afar the Hill of the Mist was lovely in the September sunshine. When she looked at it it gave her some of its own pride and calm and faint austerity.

She went up to see mother after she had had her breakfast and found her, as always, serene and clear and pale, like a star seen through the rifts of storm-cloud.

"Darling, it's hard, I know. I'm sorry for Sid ... he *has* made a great mistake, poor boy. But if we all do our best things will work out somehow. They always do."

Poor brave darling mother!

"We'll be all right when we get our second wind," said Pat staunchly. "I'm going to be decent to May, mother, and there won't be any bickering ... I won't have that here. But Silver Bush is going to be saved from the Binnies, mother, and no mistake about it."

Mother laughed.

"Trust you for that, Pat."

The Seventh Year

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Chapter I

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Pat and Rae felt, in the months of that following winter, that they needed every ounce of philosophy and “diplomacy” that they possessed. The first weeks were very hard. At times adjustment seemed almost impossible. May’s quick temper increased the difficulty. Some of the scenes she made always remained in Pat’s memory like degrading, vulgar things. Yet her spasms of rage were not so bad, the girls thought, as her little smiles and innuendoes about everything. “I think I have *some* rights surely,” she would say to Sid, with a toss of her sleek head. “It’s hard to do anything with somebody watching and criticising all the time, isn’t it now, honey-boy?” And Sid would look at Pat with defiant and yet appealing eyes that nearly broke her heart.

When May could not get her way she sulked and went round for a day or two “wid a puss on her mouth,” according to Judy. Then, finding that nobody paid any attention to her sulks, she would become amiable again. Pat set her teeth and kept her head.

“I *won’t* have quarrels at Silver Bush,” she said. “Whatever she does or says I won’t quarrel with her.” And even when May cried passionately, “You’ve *always* tried to make trouble between me and Sid,” Pat would smile and say, “Come, May, be reasonable. We’re not children now, you know.” Then go up to her room and writhe in secret over the torment and ugliness of it all.

In the long run May succumbed to the inevitable, compromises were made on both sides, and life settled once more into outward calmness at Silver Bush. One thing nobody could deny was that May was a worker; and fortunately she liked outside work better than inside. She took over the care of milk and poultry, Judy making a virtue out of necessity in yielding it to her and never denying that the separator was thoroughly cleaned.

“May,” Mrs. Binnie said superfluously, “is not a soulless sassiety woman. I brought all *my* gals up to work.”

To be sure, May made a frightful racket in everything she did and at Silver Bush, where household ritual had always been performed without noise, this was something of a domestic crime. Pat, suffering too much to be just, told Rae that May made more fuss in ten minutes than any one else could make in a year.

Judy and May had one battle royal as to who was to scrub the kitchen. Judy won. May never attempted to usurp Judy’s kitchen privileges again.

Pat found she could get used to being unhappy ... and then that she could even be happy again, between the spasms of unhappiness. Of course there were changes everywhere ... little irritating changes which were perhaps harder to bear than some greater dislocation. For one thing, May’s friends gave her a “shower,” after which Silver Bush was cluttered up with gim-cracks. Pat’s especial hatred was a dreadful onyx-topped table. May put it in the hall under the heirloom mirror. It was a desecration. And May’s new gay cushions, which made everything else seem faded, were scattered everywhere. But May did not get her own way when it came to moving furniture about.

She learned that things were to be left as they were and that a large engraving of Landseer’s stag, framed in crimson plush and gilt a foot wide, was *not* going to be hung in the dining room. May, after a scene, carried it off to her own room, where nobody interfered with her arrangements.

“I suppose your ladyship doesn’t object to *that*,” she remarked to Pat.

“Of course you can do as you like in your own room,” said Pat wearily.

Would this petty bickering go on forever? And that very afternoon May had broken the old Bristol-ware vase by stuffing a huge bouquet of ‘mums into it. Of course it was cracked ... always had been cracked. May said she didn’t hold with having cracked things around. She had her own room repapered ... blue roses on a bright pink ground. “So cheerful,” Mrs. Binnie said admiringly. “That grey paper in what they call the Pote’s room gives me the willies, May dearie.”

May brought her dog with her, an animal known by the time-tested name of Rover. He killed the chickens, dug up Pat's bulbs, chewed the clothes on the line ... Tillytuck had a pitched battle with May because his best shirt was mangled ... and chased the cats in his spare time. Eventually Just Dog gave him a drubbing which chastened him and Rae, in May's absences, used to spank him so soundly with a stiff folded newspaper that he learned manners after a sort. There were even times when Pat was afraid she was learning to like him. It was hard for Pat not to like a dog if he had any decency at all.

As Pat had foreseen Silver Bush was overrun with the Binnie tribe. May's brothers flicked cigarette ashes all over the house. Her sisters and cousins came in what Judy called "droves," filled the house with shrieks, and listened behind doors. Judy caught them at it. And they were always more or less offended no matter how they were treated. If you were nice to them you were patronising them; if you left them alone you were snubbing them. Olive would bring her whole family. Olive did not believe in punishing children. "They're going to enjoy their childhood," she said. Perhaps they enjoyed it but nobody else did. They were what Judy called "holy terrors." Judy found a dirty grey velvet elephant in her soup pot one day. Olive's six-year-old had slipped it in "for fun."

Mrs. Binnie came over frequently and spent the afternoon in Judy's kitchen, proclaiming to the world that as far as she was concerned all was peace and goodwill. She rocked fiercely on the golden-oak rocker May had introduced into the kitchen ... rather fortunately, Judy thought, for certainly no Silver Bush chair could be counted on to bear up under the strain of Mrs. Binnie's two hundred and thirty-three pounds.

"No, no, two hundred and thirty-six, ma," May would argue.

"I guess I know my own weight, child," Mrs. Binnie would retort breezily. "And I ain't ashamed of it. 'Why don't you diet?' my sister Josephine keeps telling me. 'Not for mine,' I tell her, 'I'm contented to be as God made me!'"

"Oh, oh, I do be thinking God had precious little to do wid it," said Judy to Tillytuck.

Mrs. Binnie had a little button nose and yellowish-white hair screwed up in a tight knot on the crown of her head. Gossip was her mother-tongue and grammar was her servant, not her master. Also, her “infernal organs” gave her a good deal of trouble. Pat used to wonder how Sid could bear to look at her and think that May would be like her when she was sixty.

“I’d like to give that hair of hers a bluing rinse,” Rae would whisper maliciously to Pat, when Mrs. Binnie was laying down the law about something and nodding her head until a hairpin invariably slipped out.

Mrs. Binnie, unlike May, “couldn’t abide” cats. They gave her asthma and, as May said, she started gasping if a cat was parked within a mile of her. So when Mrs. Binnie came out went the cats. Even Bold-and-Bad was no exception. Bold-and-Bad, however, did not hold with selfpity and made himself at home in Tillytuck’s granary.

“But I’d like to have seen ye try it on Gintleman Tom,” Judy used to think malevolently.

Generally one or more of “thim rampageous Binnie girls” came with her and they and May talked and argued without cessation. The Binnies were a family with no idea of reticence. Everybody told everything to everybody else ... “talking it over,” they called it. None of them could ever understand why everything that was thought about couldn’t be talked about. They had no comprehension whatever of people who did not think at the tops of their voices and empty out their feelings to the dregs. There were times when the unceasing clack of their tongues drove Tillytuck to the granary even on the coldest winter afternoons for escape and Pat longed despairingly for the beautiful old silences.

There was at least one consolation for Pat and Rae ... they still had their evenings undisturbed. May thought it quite awful to sit in the kitchen, “with the servants.” Generally she carried Sid off to a dance or show and when they were home they had company of their own in the Little Parlour ... which had been tacitly handed over to May and which she called the “living room,” much to Judy’s amusement.

“Oh, oh, we’ve only the one living room at Silver Bush and that’s me kitchen,” she would remark to Tillytuck with a wink. “There do be more

living done here than in all the other rooms put together.”

“You’ve said a mouthful,” said Tillytuck, just as he had said it to Lady Medchester.

So Pat and Rae and Judy and Tillytuck foregathered as of old in the kitchen of evenings and forgot for a few hours the shadow that was over Silver Bush. They always had some special little jamboree to take the taste of some particularly hard day out of their mouths ... as, for instance, the one on which Pat found May prying into her bureau drawers ... or the one when May, who had a trick of acting hostess, assured a fastidious visiting clergyman who had declined a second helping that there was plenty more in the kitchen.

They could even laugh over Mrs. Binnie’s malapropisms. It was so delicious when she asked Rae gravely whether “phobias” were annuals or perennials. To be sure, neither Judy nor Tillytuck was very sure just where the point of the joke was but it was heartening to see the girls laughing again as of old. Those evenings were almost the only time it was safe to laugh. If May heard laughter she took it into her head that they were laughing at her and sulked. Once in a while, when May had gone for one of her frequent visits home, Sid would creep in, too, for a bit of the old-time fun and one of Judy’s liddle bites. Sid and Pat had had their hour of reconciliation long ere this: Pat couldn’t endure to be “out” with Sid. But there were no more rambles and talks and plans together. May resented any such thing. She went with him now on his walks about the farm and expounded her ideas as to what changes should be made. She also aired her views to the whole family. A lot of trees should be cut down ... there were entirely too many ... it was “messy,” especially that aspen poplar by the steps. And the Old Part of the orchard ought to be cleaned out entirely; it was a sheer waste of good ground. She did not go so far as to suggest ploughing up the graveyard though she said it was horrid having a place like that so near the house and having to pass it every time you went to the barn or the henhouse. When she went to either of these places after dark she averred it made her flesh creep.

“If I were you,” she would remark airily to Pat, “I’d make a few changes round here. A front porch is so out of date. And there really should be a wall or two knocked out. The Poet’s room and our room together would just make one real nice-sized room. You don’t need two spare rooms any more’n a frog needs trousers.”

“Silver Bush suits us as it is,” said Pat stiffly.

“Don’t get so excited, child,” said May provokingly ... and how provoking May could be! “I was only making a suggestion. Surely you needn’t throw a fit over that.”

“She would do nothing but patch and change and tear up if she could have her way here,” Pat told Rae viciously.

“Oh, oh, just like her ould grandad,” said Judy. “He did be having a mania for tearing down and rebuilding. Innything for a change was *his* motto.”

“Judy, last night as I passed the Little Parlour I heard May say to Sid, ‘Anyway you’ll have Silver Bush when your father dies.’ Judy, she did! *When your father dies.*”

Judy chuckled.

“It do be ill waiting for dead men’s shoes. Yer dad is good for twinty years yet at the laste. But it’s like a Binnie to be saying that same.”

Chapter II

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Sometimes Pat would escape from it all to her fields and woods, at peace in their white loveliness. It carried her through many hard hours to remember that in ten minutes she could, if she must, be in that meadow solitude of her Secret Field, far from babble and confusion. There were yet wonderful ethereal dawns which she and Rae shared together ... there were yet full moons rising behind snowy hills ... rose tints over sunset dells ... slender birches and shadowy nooks ... winds calling to each other at night ... apple-green “dims” ... starry quietudes that soothed your pain ... April buds in happiness ... “Thank God, April still comes to the world” ... and Silver Bush to be loved and protected and cherished.

And with the spring Joe came home, to be married at last; after every one had concluded, so Mrs. Binnie said, that poor Enid Sutton was never going to get him.

“Many’s the time I’ve said to her, ‘Don’t be too sure of him. A sailor has a sweetheart in every port. It isn’t as if you was still a girl. You never can depend on them sailors. Take Mrs. Rory MacPherson at the Bridge ... a disappointed woman if ever there was one. *Her* husband was a sailor and she thought he was dead and was going to get married again when he turned up alive and well.’”

There was a big gay wedding at the Suttons and every one thought bronzed Joe remarkably handsome. Pat thought so, too, and was proud of him; but he seemed a stranger now ... Joe, whose going had once been such a tragedy. She was even a little glad when all the fuss was over and Joe and his bride were gone on a wonderful bridal trip around the world in Joe’s new vessel. She could settle down to housecleaning and gardening now ... at least, after Mrs. Binnie had had her say about the event.

“A grand wedding. Some people don’t see how old Charlie Sutton could afford it but I always say most folks is only married once and why

not make a splurge. I always did like a wedding. Wasn't May the naughty thing to run off the way she did, so sly-like? I'll bet you folks here wasn't a bit more flabbergasted than I was when I heard it. And maybe I didn't feel upset about her coming in here with you all. But I always believed it would work out in time and it has. People said May could never live in peace here, Pat was such a crank. But I said, 'No, Pat isn't a crank. It's just that you have to understand her.' And I was right, wasn't I, dearie? May made up her mind when she come here that she'd get along with you. 'It takes two to make a quarrel, ma, you know,' she said. And I said, 'That's the right spirit, dearie. Behave like a lady whatever you do. You're a Gardiner now and must live up to their traditions. And you must make allowances.' That's what I said to her. 'You must make allowances. And don't be scared. I hope *my* daughter isn't a coward,' I said. It's a real joy to me to see how well you've got on together, though I don't deny that Judy Plum has been a hard nut to crack. May has felt certain things ... May always did feel things so deeply. But she just made allowances as I advised her. 'Judy Plum has been spoiled as every one knows,' I told her, 'but she's old and breaking up fast and you can afford to humour her a bit, dearie.' 'Oh, I'm not going to stoop to argue with a servant,' May says. 'I'm above that.' May always was so sensible. Well, I'm glad poor Enid Sutton has got married at last ... she's gone off terrible these past three years waiting for Joe and not knowing if he'd ever come. And what about you, Pat dearie? I can't imagine what the men are thinking of. Isn't your widower a bit slow?" ... with a smirk that had the same effect on Pat as a dig in the ribs ... "Folks think he's trying to back out of it but I tell them, 'no, that'll be a match yet.' Just you encourage him a little more, dearie ... that's all he needs. To be sure, May said to me the other day, *I* wouldn't take another woman's leavings, ma.' But you're not getting any younger, Pat, if you'll excuse my saying so. *I* was married when I was eighteen and I could have been married when I was seventeen. My dress was of red velvet and my hat was of black velvet with a green plume. Every one thought it elegant but I was disappointed. I'd always wanted to be wedded in a sky-blue gown, the hue of God's own heaven."

“Once of her poetical flights,” whispered Tillytuck to Judy. But Pat and Rae both heard him and almost choked trying not to laugh. Mrs. Binnie, who never dreamed any one could be laughing at her, kept on.

“Is it true the Kirks are putting up a sundial in the Long House garden?”

“Yes,” said Pat shortly.

“Well now, I never did hold with them modern inventions,” said Mrs. Binnie complacently. “An old-fashioned clock is good enough for *me*.”

“Never mind,” said Rae, when Mrs. Binnie had finally waddled off to the “living room,” “it will soon be lilac time.”

“With white apple boughs framing a moon,” said Pat.

“And violets in the silver bush,” said Rae.

“And a new row of lilies to be planted along the dyke,” said Pat.

“And great crimson clovers in the Mince Pie Field.”

“And blue-eyed grass around the Pool ...”

“And pussywillows in Happiness ...”

“And a dance of daisies along Jordan.”

“Oh, we’ve heaps of precious things left yet, Pat — things nobody, not even a Binnie can spoil.” Were the days when she could wash her being in the sunrise and feel as blithe as a bird gone forever? Perhaps they would come back when the new house would be built and Silver Bush was all their own again. But that was as yet far in the future. There was Judy coming across the yard, bringing in some drenched little chickens May had forgotten to put in. Was Judy getting bent? Pat shivered.

But still life seemed sadly out of tune, struggle as bravely as one might.

Chapter III

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“I’ll have nothing to do with anything to-day but spring,” said Pat ... even gaily. For May had gone home that morning and they had a whole day to be alone ... three delightful meals to eat alone when they could sit around the table and talk as long as they liked in the old way. Sometimes Pat and Judy thought those frequent visits of May home were all that saved their reason. Everything seemed different. Judy vowed that the very washing machine ran easier when she was away. Even the house seemed to draw a breath of relief. It had never got used to May.

It had not been an easy spring at Silver Bush despite its beauty. Housecleaning with May was rather a heartbreaking business. She was so full of suggestions.

“Why not do away with that messy old front garden, Pat and make a real lawn?” ... or, “I’d have a window cut there, Pat. This hall is really awfully dark in the afternoons.” ... or, “The orchard is really trying to get into the house, Pat. Why not have that tree cut down?”

May simply could not or would not get it into her head that Pat was not having trees cut down. In regard to this particular tree, May was not, perhaps, so far wrong as in some of her suggestions. It really was too close to the house ... a young apple tree that had started up of itself and grew so slyly that it was a tree before any one took much notice of it. Now it was pushing its boughs into the very window of the Big Parlour. When May spoke it was a thing of beauty, all starred with tiny red buds just on the point of bursting.

“I think it’s lovely having the orchard coming right into the house like this,” said Pat.

“You would,” said May. It was a favourite retort with her and she always contrived to put a vast amount of contempt into it.

None of her suggestions were adopted and May tearfully told her mother, in Judy's hearing, that she "simply couldn't do a thing in her husband's house." She was determined to have a "herbaceous border" and nagged at Sid until he interceded with Pat and it was decided that it might be made across the bottom of the little lawn, where hitherto nothing but lilies of the valley had grown wildly and thickly. There were plenty of other lilies of the valley about but Pat hated to see those ploughed up and May's iris and delphiniums and what Mrs. Binnie called "concubines," set in their place. Because May really did not care a bit for flowers. She wanted her herbaceous border because Olive had told her they were all the fashion now and every one in town was making one.

"Do you know that May badgered Sid at last into taking her back and showing her the Secret Field?" asked Rae.

Yes, Pat knew it. May had laughed on her return.

"I've seen your famous field, Pat ... nothing but a little hole in the woods. And you've been making such a fuss over it all these years."

To Pat it was the ultimate treason that Sid should have showed May the Secret Field ... *their* Secret Field. But she could not blame him. He had to do it for peace' sake.

"You love your sister better than your wife," May told him passionately, whenever he refused to do anything Pat didn't want done. He and May had begun to quarrel violently and life at Silver Bush was made bitter all that summer by it. Meal times were the worst. The bickering between them was almost incessant.

"Oh, do let us have one meal without a fight," Long Alec remarked in exasperation one day. Pat, who had been listening in silence to May's sarcasm and Sid's sulky replies, rose and went to her room.

"I can't bear it any longer ... I can't," she said wildly. She twitched the shade to pull it down and shut out the insulting sunlight. It escaped her and whizzed wildly to the top, thereby nearly scaring to death Bold-and-Bad, asleep on Rae's bed.

"You don't deserve a cat," said Bold-and-Bad, or words to that effect.

Pat glared at him.

“To think that it has come to this at Silver Bush!”

Rae, coming in a little later with the mail and an armful of blossom, turned the key in the door. That was necessary now. There was no longer the old-time privacy at Silver Bush. May might bounce in on them at any time without the pretence of knocking. She merely laughed at the idea of knocking and called it “Silver Bush airs.”

“Pat, darling, don’t take it so to heart. I admit there’s a time every day when May makes me yearn for the good old days when you could pull peoples’ wigs off. But when I feel that way I just reflect what Brook’s eyes would make of her ... can’t you see the twinkle in them? ... and she shrinks to her proper perspective. It isn’t going to last forever.”

“It is ... it is,” cried Pat wildly. “Rae, May doesn’t *want* to have a house built on the other place ... she wants to have Silver Bush. I’ve heard her talking to Sid ... I couldn’t help hearing ... you know what her voice is like when she’s angry. ‘I’ll never go to live on the Adams’ place ... it would be so far out of the world ... you can’t move all them barns. You told me when you persuaded me to marry you that we would live at Silver Bush. And I’m going to ... and it won’t be under the thumb of your old-maid sister either. She’s nothing but a parasite ... living off your father when there’s nothing now to prevent her from going away and earning her own living when I’m here to run things.’ She’s doing her best to set Sid against us all ... you know she is. And she attributes some petty motive to everything we do or say ... or *don’t* say. Remember the scene she made last week because I hadn’t taken any notice of her new dress ... that awful concoction of cheap radium lace over that sleazy bright blue silk. I thought the kindest thing I could do was *not* to take notice of it. I was ashamed to think any one at Silver Bush could wear such a thing. And she tells Sid we’re always laughing at her.”

“Well, you *did* laugh last night when she said that thing about the moon,” grinned Rae.

“Who could help it? I forgot myself in the delight of seeing that new moon over the crest of that fir in the silver bush and I pointed it out to

May. 'How cute!' remarks my sister-in-law. And that creature is ... by law ... a Gardiner of Silver Bush!"

"Still, the new moon over the fir tree is just as exquisite as it ever was," said Rae softly.

But Pat would listen just then to no comforting.

"Think of dinner. At the best now we never have any real conversation at our meals ... and at the worst it is like it was to-day. Rae, at times it simply seems to me that everything sane and sweet and happy has vanished from Silver Bush and only returns for a little while when she is away. Why, she listens on the 'phone ... fancy any one at Silver Bush listening on the 'phone! ... and gossips over what she hears. I feel dragged in the dust when I hear her. Do you know that she took that gang of her Summerside cousins into our room yesterday ... our room! ... and showed it to them?"

"Well, she wouldn't find it littered with hairpins and face powder as hers is," said Rae, looking fondly around at their little immaculate room, engoldened by the light of the new corn-coloured curtains she and Pat had selected that spring. Here, at least, were yet stillness and peace and refreshment whatever might be the state of things elsewhere. "And as for her setting Sid against us, she can't do that, Pat. Sid knows what she is now. And dad will remain master of Silver Bush. Let's just sit tight and wait. Here's a letter from Hilary I've just brought in from the box. It will cheer you up."

But it hardly did, though Pat wistfully read it over three times in the hope of finding that elusive something Hilary's letters used to possess. It was nice, like all Hilary's letters. But it was the first for quite a long time ... and it was a little remote, somehow ... as if he were thinking of something else all the time he was writing it. He was going to Italy and then to the east ... Egypt ... India ... to study architecture. He would be away for a year.

"I want to see the whole world," he wrote. Pat shivered. The "whole world" had a cold, huge sound to her. Yet for the first time the idea came into her head that it might be rather nice to see the world with Hilary or

some such congenial companion. Philae against a desert sunset ... the storied Alhambra ... the pearl-white wonder of the Taj Mahal by moonlight ... Petra, that “rose-red city half as old as Time,” as Hilary had quoted. It would be wonderful to see them. But it would be more wonderful still to look at Silver Bush and know it for her own again ... as she was afraid it never would be. Perhaps May was there to stay. She wanted to and she always got what she wanted. She had wanted Sid and she had got him. She would get Silver Bush by hook or crook. Already at times she assumed sly airs of mistress-ship and did the honours of the garden on the strength of her “herbaceous border,” explaining ungraciously that the stones around the beds were a whim of old Judy Plum’s. “We humour her.”

And the place was overrun by her family. Judy used to tell Tillytuck that Silver Bush was crawling wid thim. Sure and wasn’t all the Binnie clan that prolific!

That hateful young brother of May’s with the weasel eyes was there more than half his time, “helping” Sid and making fun of Judy who revenged herself by hiding tidbits he coveted away in the pantry and blandly knowing nothing about them.

“Poor old Judy is failing fast,” said May. “She puts things away and forgets where she puts them.”

May was much in the kitchen now, cooking up what Judy called “messes” for her own friends and leaving all the greasy or doughy pots and pans for Judy to wash. Judy couldn’t have told you whether she disliked May more in good humour or in “the sulks.” When she was sulky she banged and slammed but her tongue was still; when she was in good humour she never stopped talking. There were few quiet moments at Silver Bush now. Judy in despair took to sitting and knitting on Wild Dick’s tombstone. Tillytuck sat there, too, on Weeping Willy’s, smoking his pipe. “I like company but not too much,” was all he would say. It was all great fun for May. She persisted in assuming that Tillytuck and Judy were “courting” in the graveyard.

“Will I be caring what she says?” said Judy bitterly to Pat. “Oh, oh, she can’t run me kitchen. She was be way av hanging up a calendar on me wall yesterday right below King William and Quane Victoria ... a picture av a big fat girl wid no clothes at all on. I did be taking it down and throwing it in the fire. ‘Sure,’ sez I to her, ‘that hussy is no fit company for ather a king or a quane,’ sez I. And nather was that cousin av hers she had here yesterday in a bathing suit. She come in as bould as brass wid her great bare fat legs and did be setting on yer Great-grandfather Nehemiah’s chair, wid thim crossed. And thim not aven a dacent white ... sun-tan she did be calling it ... more like the colour av skim milk cheese. Tillytuck just took one look and flid to the granary. I cudn’t be trating her as I did the calendar but I sez, ‘People that fond av showing their legs ought to be dieting a bit,’ sez I. ‘You quaint thing!’ sez she. Oh, oh, it’s thanking the Good Man Above I am she didn’t call me priceless. It do be her fav’rite ajective. But whin May did be saying that one-piece bathing suits were all the fashion now and did I ixpict people to go bathing in long dresses and crinolines, I sez, ‘Oh, oh, far be it from me to be like yer Aunt Ellice, May,’ sez I. ‘Whin her nace sint her a statue av the Venus av Mily for a Christmas prisent she did be putting a dress on it, rale tasty, afore she showed it to her frinds. I’m not objecting to legs as legs,’ sez I, ‘spacially at the shore where they do be plinty av background for thim, but whin they’re as big and fat as yer lady cousin’s,’ sez I, ‘they do be a bit overpowering in me kitchen.’ ‘Ivery one thinks that Emma looks stunning in her suit,’ sez May. ‘Stunning do be the right word,’ sez I. ‘Ye saw the iffict she had on Tillytuck and he’s not a man asily upset,’ sez I. ‘As for the fashion,’ sez I, ‘av coorse what one monkey does all the other monkeys will be doing,’ sez I. Me fine May sez that I’d insulted her frind and hadn’t a word to throw to a dog all day but I’m liking her far better whin she’s sulky than whin she’s frindly. She did be trying to pump me about Cleaver this morning but I wasn’t knowing innynthing. Do there be innynthing to know, Patsy dear?”

“Not a thing,” said Pat with a smile.

“Oh, oh, I wasn’t expecting it,” said Judy with no smile. She did not know whether to feel relieved or disappointed. She did not quite like Cleaver, who was an honour graduate of McGill and was spending his summer doing research work at the Silverbridge harbour. Pat had got acquainted with him at the Long House and he had dangled a bit round Silver Bush. He was enormously clever and his researches into various elusive bacilli had already put him in the limelight. But poor Cleaver looked rather like a magnified bacillus himself and Judy, try as she would, could not see him as a husband for Pat.

“It’ll be the widower yet, I’m fearing,” she told Tillytuck in the graveyard. “Specially if this news we’re hearing about Jingle is true. I’ve always had me own ideas ... but I do be only an ould fool and getting no younger, as Mrs. Binnie do be saying ivery once in so long.”

“Old Matilda Binnie has a new set of teeth and a new fur coat,” said Tillytuck. “Now, if she could get a new set of brains she might do very well for a while.” He took a few whiffs at his pipe and then added gravely, “Symbolically speaking.”

Chapter IV

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Aunt Edith died very suddenly in August. They all felt the shock of it. None of them had ever loved Aunt Edith very much ... she was not a lovable person. But she was part of the established order of things and her passing meant another change. Oddly enough, Judy, who had had a lifelong vendetta with her, seemed to mourn and miss her most. Judy thought life would be almost stodgy when there was no Aunt Edith to horrify and exchange polite, barbed jabs with.

“Whin I think I’ll niver see her in me kitchen agin, insulting me, I do be having a very quare faling, Patsy dear.”

It was of course May who told Pat, with much relish, that Hilary Gordon was engaged. Some Binnie had had a letter from another Binnie who lived in Vancouver and knew the girl. She and Hilary were to be married when he returned from his year abroad and he was to be taken into the noted firm of architects in which her father was the senior partner.

“He was a beau of yours long ago, wasn’t he, when you were a young girl?” asked May in a malicious drawl.

“I think it’s true,” Rae told Pat that night. “I heard it some time ago. Dot has friends in Vancouver and they wrote it to her. I ... I didn’t know whether to tell you or not.”

“Why on earth shouldn’t you tell me?” said Pat very coldly.

“Well ...” Rae hesitated ... “you and Hilary were always such friends ...”

“Exactly!” Pat bit the word off and her brook-brown eyes were full of a rather dangerous fire. “We have always been good friends and so I would naturally be interested in hearing any good news about him. All that ... that hurts me is that he should have left me to hear it from others. Rae Gardiner, what are you looking at me like that for?”

"I've always thought," said Rae, taking her life in her hands, "that you ... that you cared much more for Hilary than you ever suspected yourself, Pat."

Pat laughed a little unsteadily.

"Rae, don't be a goose. You and Judy have always been a little delirious on the subject of Hilary. I've always loved Hilary and always will. He's just like a dear brother to me. Do you realise how many years it is since I've seen him? Of course we've drifted apart even as friends. It was inevitable. Even our correspondence is dying a natural death. I haven't had a letter from him since he went abroad."

"I was only a child when he went away but I remember how I liked him," said Rae. "I used to think he was the nicest boy in the world."

"So he was," said Pat. "And I hope he's going to marry some one who is nice enough for him."

"He really was in love with you, wasn't he, Pat?"

"He thought he was. I knew he would get over that."

"Well ..." Rae had been irradiated all day with some secret happiness and now it came out ... "Brook is coming over for a week before college opens. I do hope Miss Macaulay will have my blue georgette done by that time. And I think I'll have a little jacket of that lovely transparent blue velvet we saw in town to go with it. I feel sure Brook will love me in that dress."

"I thought he loved you in any dress," teased Pat.

"Oh, he does. But there are degrees, Pat."

"And no one," thought Pat a little drearily, "cares how I'm dressed."

She looked out of the window and saw a rising moon ... and remembered old moonrises she had watched with Hilary ... "when she was a girl." That phrase of May's rankled. And Mrs. Binnie had been rather odious the other day, assuring her again there were as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it ... apropos of the announcement of the engagement of a South Glen girl to Donald Holmes.

"You're young enough yet," said Mrs. Binnie soothingly. "And when people say you're beginning to look a bit old-maidish I always tell them,

‘Is it any wonder? Think of the responsibility Pat has had for years, with her mother ill and so much on her shoulders. No wonder she’s getting old-looking afore her time.’”

Pat had got pretty well into the habit of ignoring Mrs. Binnie but that phrase “young yet” haunted her. She went to the mirror and looked dispassionately at herself. She really did not think she looked old. Her dark brown hair was as glossy as ever ... her amber eyes as bright ... her cheeks as smooth and rounded. Perhaps there were a few tiny lines in the corners of her eyes and ... *what was that?* Pat leaned nearer, her eyes dilating a little. Was it ... could it be ... yes, it was! A grey hair!

Chapter V

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Pat went up to the Long House that night. She walked blithely and springily. She was not going to worry over that grey hair. She would not even pull it out. The Selbys all turned grey young. What did it matter? She would not grow old in heart, no matter what she did in head. She would always keep her banner of youth flying gallantly. Wrinkles might come on her face but there should never be any on her soul. And yet there had been a moment that day when Pat had felt as if she didn't want to be young any longer. Things hurt you too much when you were young. Surely they wouldn't hurt so much when you got old. You wouldn't care so much then ... things would be settled ... there wouldn't be so many changes. People you knew wouldn't always be running off to far lands ... or getting married. Your hair would be *all* grey and it wouldn't matter. You wouldn't be eating your heart out longing for a lost paradise.

Altogether it had not been a pleasant day. May had had a fit of the sulks and had taken it out slamming doors ... Rover had eaten a plateful of fudge Pat had set outside to cool ... Judy had seemed downhearted about something ... perhaps the news about Hilary though she never referred to it but only muttered occasionally to herself about "strange going-ons." Pat decided that she felt a trifle stodgy and needed something to pep her up a bit. She would find it at the Long House ... she always did. Whenever life seemed a bit grey ... whenever she felt a passing pang of loneliness over the changes that had been and ... worse still ... would be, she went up the hill to David and Suzanne. Whenever the door of the Long House clanged behind her it seemed to shut out the world, with its corroding discontents and vexations. Once, Pat thought with a stab of pain, she had felt that way when she went into Silver Bush. That she couldn't feel so any longer was a very bitter thing ... a thing she couldn't get used to. But tonight as she and David and Suzanne sat around the fire — it was a cool September night

and any excuse served when they wanted to light that fire ... and cracked nuts and talked ... or didn't talk ... the bitterness faded out of Pat's heart as it always did in their company. Suzanne was rather quiet, sitting with Alphonso curled up in her lap: but Pat and David never found themselves lacking for something to say. Pat looked at the motto that ran in quaint, irregular letters around the fireplace.

“There be three gentle and goodlie things,
To be here,
To be together,
And to think well of one another.”

That was true: and while it remained true one could bear anything else, no matter what sort of a hole it left in your life. What a dear Suzanne was! And what nice eyes David had ... very whimsical when they were not tender and very tender when they were not whimsical. And his voice ... what did his voice always remind her of? She could never tell but she knew it was something that always tugged at her heart. And she knew he liked her very much. It was nice to be liked ... nice to have such friends to come to whenever you wanted to.

David walked home with her as he always did. Pat had never until tonight stopped to think how very pleasant those walks home were. Tonight the hills were dreamy under a harvest moon. They went through the close-set spruce grove that always seemed to be guarding so many secrets ... down the field path under the Watching Pine that still watched ... for what? ... over the brook and along the Whispering Lane. At the gate where they always parted they stood in silence for a little while, lost in the beauty of the night. Faint music came to them. It was only Tillytuck playing in his lair but, muted by the distance, it sounded like some fairy melody under a haunted moon. Beyond the trees were great quietudes of sky where burned the stars that never changed ... the only things that never changed.

David was thinking that silence with Pat was more eloquent than talk with any other woman. He was also wondering what Pat would do or say if

he suddenly did what he had always wanted to do ... put his arm about her and said, "darling." What he did say was almost as shattering to Pat's new-found mood of contentment.

"Has Suzanne told you her little secret yet?"

Suzanne? A secret? There was only one kind of a secret people spoke about in that tone. Pat involuntarily put up her hand as if warding off a blow.

"No ... o ... o," she said faintly.

"She probably would have if you had been alone with her tonight. She's very happy. She has made up a quarrel she had before we came here with an old lover ... and they are engaged."

It was too much ... it really was. So Suzanne was to be lost to her, too! And she had to be polite and say something nice.

"I ... I ... hope she will always be very happy," she gasped.

"I think she will," said David quietly. "She has loved him for years ... I never knew just what the trouble was. We're a secretive lot, we Kirks. Of course they won't be married till he has finished college. He has had to work his way through. And then ... what am I to do, Pat?"

"You ... you'll miss her," said Pat. She knew she was being incredibly stupid.

"You'll have to tell me what to do, Pat," David said, bending a little nearer, his voice taking on a very significant tone.

Was David by any chance proposing to her? And if he were what on earth could she say? She wasn't going to say anything! She had had enough shocks for one day ... Hilary engaged ... grey hair ... Suzanne engaged! Oh, why must life be such an uncertain thing? You never knew where you were ... you never had security ... you never knew when there might not be some dreadful bolt from the blue. She would just pretend she hadn't heard David's question and go in. Which she did.

But that night she sat in the moonlight in her room for a long while and looked at the two paths she might take in life. Rae was away and the house was silent ... and, so it seemed to Pat, lonely. Silver Bush always seemed when night fell to be mourning for its ravished peace. The sky outside was

cloudless but a brisk wind was blowing past. "What is the wind in such a hurry for, Aunt Pat?" Little Mary had asked wistfully not long ago. Everything seemed in a hurry ... life was in a hurry ... it couldn't let you be ... it swept you on with it as if you were a leaf in the wind.

Which path should she take? David was going to ask her to marry him ... she had known for a long time in the back of her mind that he would ask her if she ever let him. She was terribly fond of David. Life with him would be a very pleasant pilgrimage. Even a grey day was full of colour when David was around. She was always contented in his company. And his eyes were sometimes so sad. She wanted to make them happy. Was that reason enough for marrying a man, even one as nice as David? If she didn't marry him she would lose him out of her life. He would never stay at the Long House after Suzanne had gone. And she couldn't lose any more friends ... she just couldn't.

Suppose she didn't take that path? Suppose she just went on living here at Silver Bush ... growing into being "Aunt Pat" ... helping plan the clan weddings and funerals ... her brown hair turning pepper-and-salt. That grey hair popped into her mind. It seemed as if age had just tapped her on the shoulder. But it would be all right if only Silver Bush might be hers to love and plan for and live for, free from all outsiders and intruders. She wouldn't hesitate a second then. But would it be? Would it ever be hers again? She knew what May's designs were. And she knew Sid didn't want to leave Silver Bush for the other place. Would dad stand out against them ... could he? No, it would end in May being mistress of Silver Bush some day. That was the secret dread that always haunted Pat. And if it ever came about ...

A few weeks later David said quietly to her in the garden of the Long House ... the garden where Bet's ghost sometimes walked even yet for Pat ...

"Do you think you could marry me, Pat?"

Pat looked afar for a moment of silence to the firry rim of an eastern hill. Then she said just as quietly, "I think I could."

Chapter VI

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Mother was told first. Mother's face was always serene but it changed a little when Pat told her.

"Darling, do you really love him?"

Pat looked out of the window. There had been a frost the night before and the garden had a blighted look. She had been hoping mother wouldn't ask that question.

"I do really, mother, but perhaps not in just the way you mean."

"There's only the one way," said mother softly.

"Then I'm one of the kind of people who can't love that way. I've tried ... and I can't."

"It doesn't come by trying either," said mother.

"Mother dear, I'm terribly fond of David. We suit each other ... our minds click. He loves the same things I do. I'm always happy with him ... we'll always be good chums."

Mother said no more. She picked up something she was making for Rae's hope chest and went on putting tiny invisible stitches in it. After all perhaps it would work out. It was not what she had wanted for Pat but the child must make her own choices. David Kirk was a nice fellow ... mother had always liked him. And Pat would not be far from her.

Judy came next and, for one who had always been anxious to see Pat "settled", betrayed no great delight. But she wished Pat well and was careful to say that *Mr. Kirk* had rale brading. Since the engagement was an accomplished fact Judy was not going to say anything against a future member of the family.

"The poor darlint, she don't be as happy as she thinks hersilf," Judy told Bold-and-Bad, regarding him as the only safe confidant. Only she felt that Bold-and-Bad never understood her quite so well as Gentleman Tom

had done. "And after all the min she might have had! But I'm hoping the Good Man Above knows what's bish for us all."

To Rae Pat talked more frankly than to any one.

"Pat dear, if you love him ..."

"Not as you love Brook, Rae. I'm just not capable of that sort of loving ... or it doesn't last. David *needs* me ... or will need me when Suzanne goes. We're not going to be married until she is ... for two years at the least. I wouldn't marry him, Rae ... I wouldn't marry anybody ... if I knew I could go on living at Silver Bush. But if May stays here ... and she means to ... I can't, especially when you are gone to China. I've always loved the Long House next to Silver Bush. I'll be *near* Silver Bush ... I can always look down on it and watch over it."

"I believe that's the real reason you're going to marry David Kirk," thought Rae. She looked at the shadow of the vine leaves on the bedroom floor. It looked like a dancing faun. Rae blinked to hide sudden foolish tears. Pat was going to miss something. But aloud she said only,

"I hope you'll be happy, Pat. You deserve to be. You've always been a darling."

Father took it philosophically. He would have liked some one a bit younger. But Kirk was a nice chap and seemed to have enough money to live on. There was something distinguished about him. His war book had been acclaimed by the critics and he was working on a "History of the Maritimes" of which, Long Alec had been told, great things were expected. Pat had always liked those brainy fellows. She had a right to please herself.

The rest of the clan were surprised and amused. Pat sensed that none of them quite approved. Winnie and the Bay Shore aunts said absolutely nothing, but silence can say a great deal sometimes. Only Aunt Barbara said deprecatingly,

"But, Pat, he's *grey*."

"So am I," said Pat, flaunting her one grey hair.

"Let's hope it lasts this time," said Uncle Tom. Pat thought he might have been nicer after the way she had stood by him in the affair of Mrs.

Merridew.

May was frankly delighted, though her delight faded a little when she learned that there was no prospect of an immediate marriage. Mrs. Binnie, rocking fiercely, had her say-so as well.

“So you’ve hooked the widower at last, Pat? What did I tell you ... never give up. I’ve never understood how a gal could bring herself to marry a widower ... but then any port in a storm. Of course, as I said to Olive, he’s a bit on the old side ...”

“I don’t like boys,” said Pat coolly. “I get on better with men. And you must admit, Mrs. Binnie, that his ears don’t stick out.”

“I call that flippant, Pat. Marriage is a very serious thing. As I was saying, when I said that to Olive she sez, ‘I s’pose it’s better to be an old man’s darling than a young man’s slave. Pat isn’t so young as she used to be herself, ma. She’ll make a very good wife for David Kirk.’ Olive always kind of liked you, Pat. She always said you meant well.”

“That was very kind of her.”

Pat’s amused, remote smile offended Mrs. Binnie. That was the worst of Pat. Always laughing at you in her sleeve. Mebbe she’d find out marrying an old widower was no laughing matter.

Suzanne was wild with delight.

“I’ve been hoping for it from the first, Pat. You’re made for each other. David worries a bit because he’s so much older. I tell him he’s growing younger every day and you’re growing older so you’ll soon meet. He’s a darling if he is my brother. He never dared to hope ... till lately. He always said he had two rivals.”

“Two?”

“Silver Bush ... and Hilary Gordon.”

Pat smiled.

“Silver Bush was his rival, I’ll admit. But Hilary ... he might as well call Sid a rival.”

Yet her face had changed subtly. Some of the laughter went out of it. She was wondering why there was such a distinct relief in the thought that,

since her correspondence with Hilary seemed to have died a natural death, she would not have to write him that she was going to marry David Kirk.

The Eighth Year

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Chapter I

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It rained Thursday and Friday and then for a change, as Tillytuck said, it rained Saturday. Not the romping, rollicking, laughter-filled rain of spring but the sad, hopeless rain of autumn that seemed like the tears of old sorrows on the windowpanes of Silver Bush.

“I love some kinds of rain,” said Rae, “but not this kind. Doesn’t the garden look forlorn? Nothing but the ghosts of flowers left in it ... and such unkempt ghosts at that. And we had such good times all summer working in that garden, hadn’t we, Pat? I wonder if it will be the same next summer? I’ve a nasty, going-to-happen feeling this morning that I don’t like.”

Judy, too, had had some kind of a “sign” in the night and was pessimistic. But nobody at first sight connected these forewarnings with the tall, thin lady who drove up the lane late in the afternoon and tied a spiritless grey nag to the paling of the graveyard.

“One more av thim agents,” said Judy, watching her from the kitchen window, as she stalked up the wet walk, a suitcase dangling from the end of one of her long arms.

“Sure and I’ve been pestered wid half a dozen of thim this wake. She don’t be looking as if business was inny too prosperous.”

“She looks like an angleworm on end,” giggled Rae.

“I wouldn’t let her in if I was you,” said Mrs. Binnie, who seldom let a Saturday afternoon pass without a call at Silver Bush.

Judy had had some such idea herself but that speech of Mrs. Binnie’s banished it.

“Oh, oh, we do be more mannerly than that at Silver Bush,” she said loftily, and invited the stranger in cordially, offering her a chair near the fire. No Binnie was going to tell Judy who was to be let in or out of *her* kitchen!

“It’s a wet day,” sighed the caller, as she sank into the chair and let the suitcase drop on the floor with an air of relief. She was remarkably tall and very slight, dressed in shabby black, and with enormous pale blue eyes. They positively drowned out her face and gave you the uncanny impression that she hadn’t any features but eyes. Otherwise you might have noticed that her cheekbones were a shade too high and her thin mouth rather long and new-moonish. She gave Squedunk such a look of disapproval that that astute cat remarked that he would go out and have a look at the weather and stood not upon the order of his going.

“It’s a wet day for travelling but I’ve allowed myself just ten days to do the Island and time is getting on.”

“You don’t belong to the Island?” said Rae ... quite superfluously, Judy thought. Sure and cudn’t ye be telling *that* niver belonged to the Island!

“No.” Another long sigh. “My home is in Novy Scoshy. I’ve seen better days. But when you haven’t a husband to support you you’ve got to make a living somehow. I was an agent before I was married and so I just took to the road again. Every little helps.”

“Sure and it do be hard lines to be a widdy in this could world,” said Judy, instantly sympathetic, and hauling forward her pot of soup.

“Oh, I ain’t a widdy woman, worse luck.” Another sigh. “My husband left me years ago.”

“Oh, oh!” Judy pushed the pot back again. If your husband left you there was something wrong somewhere. “And what might ye be selling?”

“All kinds of pills and liniments, tonics and perfumes, face creams and powders,” said the caller, opening her suitcase and preparing to display her wares. But at this juncture the porch door opened and Tillytuck appeared in the doorway. He got no further, being apparently frozen in his tracks. As for the lady of the eyes, she clasped her hands and opened and shut her mouth twice. The third time she managed to ejaculate,

“Josiah!”

Tillytuck said something like “Good gosh!” He gazed helplessly around him. “I’m sober ... I’m sober ... I can’t hope I’m drunk now.”

“Oh, oh, so this lady is no stranger to you I’m thinking?” said Judy.

“Stranger!” The lady in question rolled her eyes rapidly, making Rae think of the dogs in the old fairy tale. “He is ... he was ... he is my husband.”

Judy looked at Tillytuck.

“Is it the truth she do be spaking, *Mr. Tillytuck*?”

Tillytuck tried to brazen it out. He nodded and grinned.

“Oh, oh,” said Judy sarcastically, “and isn’t the truth refreshing after all the lies we’ve been hearing!”

“I’ve always felt,” said Tillytuck mournfully, “that you never really believed anything I said. But if this ... person has been telling you I left her she’s been speaking symbolically. I was druv to it. She told me to go.”

“Because he didn’t ... and wouldn’t ... believe in predestination,” said Mrs. Tillytuck. “He was no better than a modernist. I couldn’t live with a man who didn’t believe in predestination. Could you?”

“Sure and I’ve niver tried,” said Judy, to whom Mrs. Tillytuck had seemed to appeal. Mrs. Binnie asked what predestination was but nobody answered her.

“She told me to go,” repeated Tillytuck, “and I took her at her word. ‘There’s really been too much of this,’ I said ... and it was all I did say. I appeal to you, Jane Maria, wasn’t it all I did say?”

Tears filled Mrs. Tillytuck’s eyes. You really felt afraid of drowning in them.

“You’re welcome back any time, Josiah,” she sobbed. “Any time you believe in predestination you can come home.”

Tillytuck said nothing. He turned and went out. Mrs. Tillytuck wiped her eyes while Judy regarded her rather stonily and Pat and Rae tried to keep their faces straight.

“This ... this has upset me a little,” said Mrs. Tillytuck apologetically. “I hope you’ll excuse me. I hadn’t laid eyes on Josiah for fifteen years. He hasn’t changed a particle. Has he been here all that time?”

“No,” said Judy shortly. “Only seven years.”

“Then you know him pretty well I daresay. Always telling wonderful stories of his adventures I suppose? The yarns I’ve listened to! And every

last one of them crazier than the others.”

“Was his grandfather really a pirate?” asked Rae. She had always been curious on that point.

“Listen to her now. His grandfather a pirate! Why, he was only a minister. But isn’t that like Josiah? Him and his romances and ‘traggedies’! He always had a wild desire for notoriety ... always had a craze to be mixed up with any scandal or catastrophe he heard of. Why, that man didn’t like funerals because he couldn’t pretend to be the corpse. But it wasn’t that I minded. After all, his lies were interesting and I like a little frivolous conversation once in a while. He was easy enough to live with, I’ll say that for him. And I didn’t mind his sly orgies so much though I warned him what happened to my Uncle Asa. Uncle Asa threw himself into a full bathtub when *he* was full, mistaking it for his bed. He broke his neck first and then he drowned. No, it was Josiah’s theology. At first I thought it was just indigestion but when I realized he meant it my conscience wouldn’t stand for it. He said there never was an Adam or Eve and he said the doctrine of predestination was blasphemous and abominable. So I told him he had to choose between me and modernism. But I suffered. I loved that man with all his faults. It has preyed on my mind all these years. What is going to become of his immortal soul?”

Nobody, not even Mrs. Binnie, tried to answer this question.

“Well,” resumed Mrs. Tillytuck more briskly, “this isn’t business. I dunno as I feel very businesslike just now. My heart don’t feel just right. This has been a shock to it. I suffer greatly from a tired heart.”

Nobody knew whether this was a physical or an emotional ailment. Mrs. Binnie understood it to be the former and asked quite sympathetically, “Did you ever try a mustard plaster at the pit of your stomach, Mrs. Tillytuck?”

“I fear that wouldn’t benefit a weary heart,” said Mrs. Tillytuck pathetically. “Possibly, madam, you have never suffered as I have from a weary wounded heart?”

“No, thank goodness my heart is all right,” said Mrs. Binnie. “My only trouble is rheumatism in the knee j’int.”

“I have the very thing for that here,” said Mrs. Tillytuck briskly. “You try this liniment.”

Mrs. Binnie bought the liniment and Mrs. Tillytuck looked appealingly at the others. But Judy said darkly they didn’t be wanting inny beautifying messes.

“We do all be handsome enough here widout thim.”

“I’ve never seen anybody so handsome she couldn’t be handsomer,” said Mrs. Tillytuck with another sigh as she closed her bag. At the door she turned.

“I s’pose you don’t happen to know if Josiah has saved up any money these fifteen years?”

Nobody happened to know.

“Ah well, it isn’t likely. A rolling stone gathers no moss. Though he wasn’t lazy ... I’ll say that for him. And you can tell him my parting word was ... believe in predestination Josiah, and you’ll be welcome home at any time.”

Mrs. Tillytuck was gone. The echo of her steps died away down the walk. Pat and Rae went into their long repressed spasm. Mrs. Binnie said there was always something about Tillytuck that made her think he was married.

Judy was very silent, her only remark being, as she watched Mrs. Tillytuck driving out of the yard,

“A beanpole like that!”

Chapter II

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Tillytuck did not show up for supper, having gone on an errand, real or pretended, to Silverbridge. But he slipped into the kitchen at night, when Judy and Rae and Pat were roasting apples around the fire, and slid into his own corner. Judy bustled about to get him a liddle bite and was markedly cordial. Sure and couldn't she be as civil to Tillytuck now as she pleased when nobody could ever again be thinking she was setting her cap for him!

"I suppose you were all a bit surprised to learn I was a family man?" he said, in a tone of mingled sheepishness and bravado.

"Tillytuck, tell us all about it," pleaded Rae. "We're dying of curiosity."

Tillytuck fitted his fingertips carefully together. "There ain't much to tell," he said ... and proceeded to tell it, punctuated by gentle snorts from Judy.

"I've often wondered how I came to do it. It all begun with a moon. You can never trust a moon."

"Oh, oh, we must have something to blame our mistakes on," said Judy, good-humouredly, as she set a large plateful of his favourite cinnamon buns beside him on the corner of the table.

"I'd known her for some time in a kind of a way, but the first time I really met her was at a friend's house and we sot out on the porch and talked. She was a fine figger of a woman then ... some meat on her bones ... and them eyes of hers was kind of devastating by moonlight. I won't deny there was a touch of glamour about it. But I didn't really mean to propose to her ... honest, I didn't. It *wasn't* a proposal ... just a kind of a hint. Partly out of sympathy and partly because of the moon. But she snapped me up so quick I was an engaged man before I knew what had happened to me. Hog-tied, that's what I was. Well, we was married and went to live in her house. It was rather prosy for a man of my romantic

temperament but we was well enough for a spell, though the boys called us the long and short of it. I was devoted to that woman, Judy. (Snort.) Many a time I've got up in the middle of the night and made a cup of tea for her. She always liked a cup of tea when she got up in the night. Claimed it was good for her heart. And she was the best wife in the world except for a few things. She sighed too much and she used to get hopping mad if I hung my cap on the wrong hook. Likewise she had an edge to her tongue if I went in without scraping my boots. I ain't denying we had a few surface quarrels but no more than enough to spice life up a bit. It was her theology we went to the mat about finally. I couldn't stomach it and I told her so. She was a fundamentalist ... oh, was she a fundamentalist? I was one myself but I wouldn't give her the satisfaction of admitting it, and anyhow I stopped short at predestination. As for my saying there was no Adam or Eve I was only talking poetically but when I saw how she got her dander up over it I pretended to be in earnest. From that on there was no living with her and when she up and told me to go I went as quick as I could get. I was tired of her lumpy gravy anyhow, and the dishwater she called soup. If she'd been a cook like you, Judy, I could have believed in anything."

Tillytuck rumbled and took a large bite out of a cinnamon bun.

"Life would be dull if we hadn't a few tragedies to look back on," he said philosophically.

But three days later the world of Silver Bush temporarily toppled into chaos. Tillytuck had given warning.

Everybody went into a state of consternation. Long Alec and Sid, because they were losing a good man, Judy and Rae and Pat, because they were losing Tillytuck. It did not seem possible. He had been a part of their life so long that it was unthinkable that he could cease to be such. Another change, thought Pat sadly.

"It's just that he feels he's lost face," said Rae. "He would never have thought of going if that horrid woman hadn't come here and given him away. That is his real reason for going, whatever he may say. I'm just going to sit here and hate her hard."

“It do be too bad ye can’t be putting up wid us inny longer,” said Judy bitterly to him that evening.

“You know it ain’t that, Judy. I’ve stayed longer here than any place I’ve been in. But I’m getting too contented here. It’s always been my motto to move on if I got too contented anywhere. And I’ll admit there’s been too much Binnie around here of late for my liking. Besides, I’m getting on in years. You can’t escape Anno Domini. Farm work on a place like this is a bit hard on me now. I’ve saved up a little money and me and a friend on the South shore are going to start up a fox ranch of our own. But I’ll never forget you folks here. I’ll miss your soup, Judy.”

There was a tremble in Tillytuck’s voice. Judy was setting the supper-table and trying to make an obstreperous saltcellar shake. Suddenly she snatched it up and hurled it through the open window.

“I’ve put up wid that thing for twinty years,” she said savagely, “but I’ll not be putting up wid it another day.”

Tillytuck went away one bleak November evening. He turned in the doorway for a last word.

“May the years be kind to ye all, speaking poetically,” he said. “You are as fine a bunch of folks as I ever had the good luck to live among. You understand a man of my calibre. It’s a great thing to be understood. Long Alec is the right kind of a man to work for and your mother is a saint if ever there was one. I haven’t cried since I was a child but I come near it when she told me goodbye before she went up to bed. If that wild woman of mine ever pays you another call, Judy, for pity’s sake don’t tell her I believe in predestination now. If she knew it she’d drag me back by hook or crook. I’ll send for my radio when I get settled. Ajoo.”

He waved his hand with a courtly air, sniffed sadly the aroma of Judy’s beans and onions, and turned his back on her cheery domain. They watched him going down the lane in the dim, with his stuffed owl under his arm and the same old fur cap on his head that he had worn upon his arrival. Just Dog walked close beside him, with a tail that had apparently no wag left in it. A weird moon with a cloud-ribbed face was rising over

the Hill of the Mist. The surging of wind in the tree branches was very mournful.

Rae's face crumpled up.

"I ... I ... think I'd like to cry," she said chokily. "Do you remember the night he came? You sent me to show him the way to the granary and he said 'Goodnight, little Cuddles,' as he went up the stair. I felt he was an old friend then."

"Sure and I wish I'd niver found fault wid him for playing his fiddle in the graveyard," said Judy. "Maybe the poor soul will niver get a taste av dape apple pie again. That wife av his was wondering what wud become av his soul but I'm wondering what's going to happen to his poor body."

"He was a genial old soul," said Mrs. Binnie.

"There was something so quaint about him," whimpered May.

Pat wanted to cry but wouldn't because May was doing it. She slipped an arm about Judy, who, somehow, was looking strangely old.

"Anyway, we've got Silver Bush and you left," she whispered.

Judy poked the fire fiercely.

"Sure and it's a could world and we must all do our bist to bring a liddle warmth into it," she said briskly.

And so passed Josiah Tillytuck from the annals of Silver Bush.

Chapter III

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Life seemed to change somehow at Silver Bush after Tillytuck's going though it was hard just to put your finger on the change. The evenings in the kitchen didn't seem half so jolly for one thing, lacking the rivalry in tale-telling between Judy and Tillytuck. Tillytuck's place had been taken by young Jim Macaulay from Silverbridge who was efficient as a worker but was only "young Jim Macaulay." He occupied the granary chamber but when evening came he departed on his own social pursuits. He never went on "sprees" and was more amenable to suggestion than Tillytuck had been, so that Long Alec liked him. But Judy said the pinch av salt had been left out of him. Pat was just as well pleased; nobody could ever take Tillytuck's place and it was as well there was nobody to try. She spent more evenings at the Long House that winter than ever before. David sometimes came down but he was always rather a misfit in Judy's kitchen. She Mr. Kirked him so politely and always shut up like a clam. He and Pat were, as Pat frequently told herself, very happy in their engagement. They had such a nice friendly understanding. No nonsense. Just good comradeship and quiet laughter and a kiss or two. Pat did not mind David's kisses at all.

So another winter slipped away ... another miracle of spring was worked ... another summer brought its treasures to Silver Bush. And one evening Pat read in the paper that the *Ausonia* had arrived at Halifax. The next day the wire came from Hilary. He was coming to the Island for just a day.

Rae found Pat in a kind of trance in their room.

"Rae ... Hilary is coming ... Hilary! He will be here tomorrow night."

"How jolly!" gasped Rae. "I was just a kid when he went away but I remember him well. Pat, you look funny. Won't you be glad to see him?"

“I would be glad to see the Hilary who went away,” said Pat restlessly. “But will he be? He must have changed. We’ve all changed. Will he think I’ve got terribly old?”

“Pat, you goose! When you laugh you look about seventeen. Remember he has grown older himself.”

But Pat couldn’t sleep that night. She re-read the telegram before she went to bed. It meant Hilary ... Hilary and the fir-scented Silver Bush ... Hilary and the water laughing over the rocks in happiness ... Hilary and snacks in Judy’s kitchen. But did it ... could it? Could the gulf of years be bridged so easily?

“Of course we’ll be strangers,” thought Pat miserably. But no ... no. Hilary and she could never be strangers. To see him again ... to hear his voice ... she had not been thrilled like this for years. Did his eyes still laugh when they looked at you? With that hint of wistful appeal back of their laughter? And in the back of her mind, thrust out of sight, was a queer relief that David was away. He and Suzanne had gone for a visit to Nova Scotia. Pat would not acknowledge the relief or look at it.

Judy was almost tremulous over the news. She spent the next day making all the things she knew Hilary had liked in the old days and polished everything in the kitchen till it shone. Even the white kittens and King William and Queen Victoria all had their faces washed. May said you would have thought the Prince of Wales was coming.

“I suppose he’ll be married as soon as he gets back to Vancouver,” she said.

“Oh, oh, that’s as the Good Man Above wills,” said Judy, “and neither you nor I do be having innnything to do wid it.”

“Pat always wanted him, didn’t she?” said May. “She never took up with David Kirk until she heard Hilary was engaged.”

“Pat niver ‘wanted’ him,” retorted Judy. “The shoe was on the other foot intirely. But ye cudn’t be understanding.”

She muttered under her breath as she went into the pantry, “‘Spake not in the ears av a fool.’” May overheard it and shrugged. Who cared what Judy said!

There was a whispering of rain in the air and a growl of thunder when Pat went up to dress for Hilary's coming. She tried on three dresses and tore them off in despair. Finally she slipped on her old marigold chiffon. After all, yellow was her colour. She fluffed out her brown hair and looked at herself with a little bit of exultation such as she had not felt for a long while. The mirror was still a friend. She was flushed with excitement ... her gold-brown eyes were starry ... surely Hilary would not think her so very much changed.

She moved restlessly about the room, changing things aimlessly, then changing them back again. What was it David had read to her from a poem the night before he went away?

“Nothing in earth or heaven
Comes as it came before.”

It couldn't be the old Hilary who was coming.

“And I can't bear it if he is a stranger ... I *can't*,” she thought passionately. “It would be better if he never came back if he comes as a stranger.”

All at once she did something she couldn't account for. She pulled David's diamond and sapphire ring off her finger and dropped it in a tray on her table. She felt a thrill of shame as she did it ... but she *had* to do it. There was some inner compulsion that would not be disobeyed.

Rae came running up.

“Pat, he's here ... he's getting out of a car in the yard.”

“I simply can't go down to see him,” gasped Pat, going momentarily to pieces. “He'll be so changed ...”

“Nonsense. There is Judy letting him in. He'll be in the Big Parlour ... hurry.”

Pat ran blindly downstairs. She collided with somebody in the hall ... she never knew who it was. She stood in the doorway for a moment. It was a very poignant moment. Afterwards Pat was sure she had never experienced anything like it. She always maintained she knew exactly what she would feel like on the resurrection morning.

“Jingle!” The old name came spontaneously to her lips. It *was* Jingle ... Jingle and no stranger. How could she ever have feared he would be a stranger? He was holding her hands.

“Pat ... Pat ... I’ve years of things to say to you ... but I’ll say them all in one sentence ... you haven’t changed. Pat, I’ve been so terribly afraid you would have changed. But it was only yesterday we parted at the bridge over Jordan. But why aren’t you laughing, Pat? I’ve always seen you laughing.”

Pat couldn’t laugh just then. Next day ... next hour she might laugh. But now at this longed-for meeting after so many years she must be quiet for a space.

Yet they had a wonderful evening ... just she and Hilary and a rejuvenated Judy ... and of course the cats ... in the old kitchen. May was luckily away and Rae considerably effaced herself. Outside the whole world might be a welter of wind and flame and water but here was calm and beauty and old delight. It was so enchanting to be shut away from the storm with Hilary ... just as of yore ... to be drinking amber tea and eating Judy’s applecake with him and talking of old days and fun and dreams.

He *had* changed a little after all. His delicately cut face was more mature and had lost its boyish curves. His slim figure ... so nicely lean ... had an added distinction and poise. But his eyes still laughed wistfully and his thin, sensitive lips still parted in the old intriguing smile. She suddenly knew what it was she had always liked in David’s smile. It was a little like Hilary’s.

Hilary, looking at Pat, saw, as he had always seen, all his fancies, hopes, dreams in a human shape. She, too, had changed a little. More womanly ... even more desirable. Her sweet brown face ... her quick twisted smile ... the witchery of her brown eyes ... they were all as he had remembered them. How lovely was the curve of her chin and neck melting into the glow of mellow lamplight behind her! She looked all gold and rose and laughter. And she had the same trick of lifting her eyes which had been wont to set his head spinning long ago ... a trick all the more effective because it was so wholly unconscious.

How much like old times it was ... and was not! Time had been kind to the old place. But Gentleman Tom and McGinty had gone and Judy had grown old. She looked at him with all her old affection in her grey-green eyes but the eyes were more sunken than he remembered them and the hair more grizzled. Yet she could still tell a story and she could still produce a gorgeous “liddle bite.” Through years of boarding houses Hilary had always remembered Judy’s “liddle bites.”

“Judy, will you leave me that picture of the white kittens when ... a hundred years from now I hope ... you are finished with the things of this planet?”

“Oh, oh, but I will that,” Judy promised. “It do be the only picture I’ve iver owned. I did be bringing it wid me from the ould sod and I wudn’t know me kitchen widout it.”

“I’ll hang it in my study,” said Hilary.

“In one of thim wonderful new houses ye’ll be building,” said Judy slyly. “Sure and ye’ve got on a bit, haven’t ye, Jingle? Oh, oh, will ye be excusing me? I’m knowing I shud be saying Mr. Gordon.”

“Don’t you know what would happen to you if you called me that, Judy? I love to hear the old nickname. As for getting on ... yes, I suppose I have. I’ve got about everything I ever wanted” ... “except,” he added, but only in thought, “the one thing that mattered.”

Judy caught his look at Pat and went into the pantry, ostensibly to bring out some new dainty but really to shut the door and relieve her feelings.

“Oh, oh, I’m not wishing *Mr. Kirk* innnything but good,” she told the soup tureen, “but if he’d just vanish inty thin air I’d be taking it as a kind act av the Good Man Above.”

The glow at Pat’s heart when she went to sleep was with her when she woke and went with her through the day ... an exquisite day of sunshine when beauty seemed veritably to shimmer over fields and woods and sea ... when there were great creamy cloud-mountains with amber valleys beyond the hills ... when the air was full of the sweet smell of young grasses in early morning. Pat and Hilary went back into the past. Its iridescence was over everything they looked at. They went to the well

down which Hilary had once gone to rescue a small cat ... and Pat, looking down it as she had not looked for a long time, saw the old Pat-of-the-Well with Hilary's face beside her in its calm, fern-fringed depths. They made pilgrimages to the Field of the Pool and the Mince Pie Field and the Buttercup Field and the Field of Farewell Summers. They went to the orchard and saw the little glade among the spruces of the Old Part where all the Silver Bush cats were buried.

"I wonder if the spirits of all the pussy folk and the doggy folk I've loved will meet me with purrs and yaps of gladness at the pearly gates," said Pat whimsically, as they went through the graveyard to McGinty's grave. "We buried him right here, Hilary. He was such a dear little dog. I've never had the heart for a dog since. Dogs come and go ... Sid always has one for the cows ... and May's dog isn't so bad as dogs go ... but I can never let myself really love a dog again."

"I've never had one either. Of course I've never had a place I could keep a dog and do justice to him. Some day ... perhaps ..." Hilary stopped and looked at Judy's whitewashed stones along the graveyard paths and around her "bed" of perennials ... Judy did not hold with herbaceous borders ... by the turkey house, where bloomed gallant delphiniums higher than your head. May could never understand why her delphiniums didn't flourish the way Judy's did.

"It's jolly to see these again. I'll have some whitewashed stones ..." Hilary checked himself again. He gazed about him greedily. "I've seen many wonderful abodes since I went away, Pat ... palaces and castles galore ... but I've never seen any place so absolutely *right* as Silver Bush. It's good to be here again and find it so unchanged."

"I've tried to keep it so," said Pat warmly.

"To see the Swallowfield chimney over there" ... Hilary seemed to be speaking to himself ... "and the delphiniums ... and the Field of the Pool ... and those lombardies far away on that purple hill. Only there used to be three of them. Even McGinty must be somewhere round, I think. I'm expecting to feel his warm, rough little tongue on my hand any moment.

Do you remember the time we lost McGinty and Mary Ann McClenahan found him for us? I really believed she was a witch that night.”

Their conversation was punctuated with “do you remembers.” “Do you remember the night you found me lost on the Base Line road?” ... “Do you remember how you used to signal to me from the garret window?” ... “Do you remember the time we were so afraid your father was going out west?” ... “Do you remember the time the tide caught us in Tiny Cove?” ... “Do you remember the time you almost died of scarlet fever?” ... “Do you remember” ... this was Pat’s question, very tender and gentle ... “do you remember Bets?”

“It seems as if your coming had brought her back, too ... I feel that she *must* be up there at the Long House and might come lilting down the hill at any moment.”

“Yes, I remember her. She was a sweet thing. Who is living in the Long House now?”

“David and Suzanne Kirk ... brother and sister ... friends of mine ... they’re away just now.” Pat spoke rather jerkily. “Shall we have our walk back to Happiness now, Hilary?”

Our walk back to Happiness! Was it possible to walk back to happiness? At all events they tried it. They went through a golden summer world ... through the eternal green twilight of the silver bush ... through the field beyond ... over the old stone bridge across Jordan.

“We made a good job of that, didn’t we?” said Hilary. “There isn’t a stone out of place after all these years.”

It was all so like the old days. They were boy and girl again. The wind companioned them gallantly and feathery bent-grasses bathed their feet in coolness. On every hand were little green valleys full of loveliness. Everything was wrapped in the light of other days. The dance of sunbeams in the brook shallows was just as it had been so many years ago. And so they came to Happiness and the Haunted Spring again.

“I haven’t been here for years,” said Pat under her breath. “I couldn’t bear to come ... alone ... somehow. It’s as lovely as ever, isn’t it?”

“Do you remember,” said Hilary slowly, “the day ... my mother came ... and you burned my letters?”

Pat nodded. She felt like slipping her hand into Hilary’s and giving him the old sympathetic squeeze. Something in his tone told her that the pain and disillusionment of that memory was still keen.

“She is dead,” said Hilary. “She died last year. She left me ... some money. At first I didn’t think I could take it. Then ... I thought ... perhaps it would be a slap in her dead face if I didn’t. So I took it ... and had my year in the East. After all ... I think she loved me once ... when I was her little Jingle-baby. Afterwards ... she forgot. *He* made her forget. I mean to try to think of her without bitterness, Pat.”

“It doesn’t do to hold bitterness,” said Pat slowly. “Judy always says that. It ... it poisons life. I know. I’m trying to put a certain bitterness out of my own life. Oh, Hilary ... I know it is babyish to long as I do for the old happy days ... they can never come back, although, now that you are here, they seem to be just around the corner.”

In the evening they went through the woods to the Secret Field. Hilary had always understood her love of that field. The woods had a beautiful mood on that evening ... a friendly mood. They didn’t always have it. Sometimes they were aloof ... wrapped up in their own concerns. Sometimes they even frowned. But she and Hilary were two children again and the woods took them to their heart. They were full of little pockets of sunshine and ferny paths and whispers and clumps of birches that the winds loved ... wild growths and colours and scents in sweet procession ... a sunset seen through fir tops ... great rosy clouds over the Secret Field ... all the old magic and witchery had come back.

“If this could last,” thought Pat.

It was raining moonlight through the poplars when they got back. They went into the old garden, lying fragrant and velvety under the moon. White roses glimmered mysteriously here and there. A little wind brought them the spice of the ferns along the Whispering Lane. Pat was silent. Talk was a commonplace which did not belong to this enchanted hour. It was one of the moments when beauty seemed to flow through her like a river. She

surrendered herself utterly to the charm of the time and place. There was no past — no future — nothing but this exquisite present.

Hilary looked at the moonlit brilliance of her eyes and bent a little nearer ... his lips opened to speak. But a car came whirling into the yard and May got out of it, amid a chorus of howls without words from its other occupants. Pat shivered. May was back. The day of enchantment was over.

May saw them in the garden and came to them. Scent of honeysuckle ... fragrance of fern ... breath of tea-roses, were all drowned in the wave of cheap perfume that preceded her. She greeted Hilary very gushingly and looked vicious over his cool courtesy. Hilary had never liked May and he was not going to pretend pleasure over meeting her again. May gave one of her nasty little laughs.

"I suppose I'm a crowd," she remarked. "Isn't it ... lucky ... David isn't home, Pat?"

"I don't know what you mean," said Pat icily ... knowing perfectly.

"Of course Pat has told you of her engagement to David Kirk," May said maliciously, turning to Hilary. "He's really quite a nice old chap, you know. Such a pity you couldn't have met him."

Nobody spoke. May, having gratified her spite, went into the house. Pat shivered again. Everything was spoiled. Suddenly Hilary seemed very remote ... as remote as those dark firs spiring above the silver birches.

"Is this true, Pat?" he asked in a low tone.

Pat nodded. She could not speak.

Hilary took her hand.

"As an old friend there is no happiness I don't wish you, dear. You know that, don't you?"

"Of course." Pat tried to speak lightly ... airily. "And I return your good wishes, Hilary. We ... we heard of your engagement last year."

She thought miserably, "I'm simply not going to let him off with it. I would have told him about David ... if he had told me ..."

"My engagement?" Hilary laughed slightly. "I'm not engaged. Oh, I know there was some silly gossip about me and Anna Loveday. Her brother is a great friend of mine and I'm going into his firm when I go

back. Anna's a sweet thing and has her own 'beau' as Judy would say. There's only one girl in my life ... and you know who she is, Pat. I didn't think there was any hope for me but I felt I must come and see."

"You'll find ... some one yet ..."

"No ... you've spoiled me for loving any one else. There's only one *you*."

Pat said nothing more ... there did not seem anything she could say.

They went into the kitchen for a parting hour before Hilary must leave for the boat train. They were all there ... Judy, Rae, Sid, and Long Alec. Even mother had stayed up late to say goodbye. It should have been a merry evening. Judy was in great fettle and told some of her inimitable tales. Hilary laughed with the others but there was no mirth in his laughter. Pat had one of her dismal moments of feeling that she would never laugh again.

She and Judy stood together at the door and watched Hilary go across the yard to his waiting car.

"Oh, oh, it's a sorryful thing to watch inny one going away by moonlight," said Judy. "I'm thinking, Patsy, I'll never be seeing Jingle again, the dear lad."

"I don't think he will ever come again to Silver Bush," said Pat. Her voice was quiet but her very words seemed tears. "Judy, why must there be so much bitterness in everything ... even in what should be a beautiful friendship?"

"I'm not knowing," admitted Judy.

"The scissors are lost *again*," May told them as they reentered the kitchen, her tone implying that every one at Silver Bush was responsible for their disappearance.

"Oh, oh, if that was all that did be lost!" Judy sighed dismally, as she climbed to her kitchen chamber. Judy was quite unacquainted with Tennyson but she would wholeheartedly have agreed with him that there was something in the world amiss ... oh, oh, very much amiss. And she was far from being sure ... now ... that it would ever be unriddled.

The Ninth Year

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Chapter I

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Hilary wrote just once to Pat after he went away ... one of his old delightful letters, full of beautiful little pencil sketches of the houses he was going to design. Just at the last he wrote:

“Don’t feel badly, Pat, dear, because I love you and you can’t love me. I’ve always loved you. I can’t help it and I wouldn’t if I could. If the choice had been mine I would still have chosen to love you. There are people who try to forget a hopeless love. I’m not one of them, Pat. To me the greatest misfortune life could bring would be that I should forget you. I want to remember and love you always. That will be unspeakably better than any happiness that could come through forgetting. My love for you is the best thing ... always has been the best thing ... in my life. It hasn’t made me poorer. On the contrary it has enriched my whole existence and given me the gift of clear vision for the things that matter; it has been a lamp held before my feet whereby I have avoided many pitfalls of baser passions and unworthy dreams. It will always be so. Therefore don’t pity me and don’t feel unhappy about me.”

But Pat did feel unhappy and the feeling persisted more or less under all the outward happiness of the autumn and winter. For it did seem to be a happy time. Long Alec had definitely stated that in a year from the next spring he hoped to build on the other farm for Sid and May. Every one knew this was final and May, with much pouting and sulking, had to reconcile herself to the fact that she would never be mistress of Silver Bush.

Mother, too, was stronger and better than she had been for years. She said with a laugh that she was having a second youth. She was able to join in the family life again and go about seeing her friends. It seemed like a miracle for they had all accepted the fact for years that mother would always be an invalid, with a “good day” once in a while. Now the good

days were the rule rather than the exception. So in spite of May that year was the pleasantest Pat had known for a long time ... except for that odd persistent little ache of indefinable longing under everything. It never exactly ceased ... though she forgot about it often ... when she was gardening ... sewing ... planning ... when Little Mary came to Silver Bush and wanted some of Judy's "malicious toast" ... when Bold-and-Bad trounced some upstart kitten for its own good ... when she and Suzanne and David sat by the Long House fire ... when she and Rae took sweet counsel together over plans and problems ... when she wakened early to revel in Silver Bush lying in its misty morning silence ... *her* home ... her dear, beloved, all-sufficing home ... when Winnie came to Silver Bush, purring over her golden babies. For Winnie had twins ... Winnie and Rachel ... babies that looked as if they had been lifted bodily out of a magazine advertisement. When Pat looked at the two absurd, darling, round-faced, blue-eyed mites on the same pillow she always swallowed a little choke of longing.

Rae expected to be married in another year. Her hope chest was full to overflowing and she and Pat were already planning the details of the wedding ... a regular clan wedding, of course.

"The last big wedding at Silver Bush," said Pat.

"What about your own?" asked Rae.

"Oh, mine. It won't be a smart event. David and I will just slip away some day and be married. There isn't going to be any fuss," said Pat hurriedly ... and turned the conversation to something else. She was very, very fond of David but things were nice just as they were. She did not want to think of marrying at all. The thought of leaving Silver Bush was not bearable.

Rae looked at her curiously but said nothing. Rae was very wise in her generation.

"It doesn't do to meddle," she reflected sagely. "I sometimes wish I'd never written Hilary about Pat's various beaus. Perhaps it did more harm than good ... if he had come sooner ..."

Well, life was full of “ifs.” For instance *if* she had not gone to the dance where she met Brook? She had been within an inch of *not* going. Rae shuddered.

“When Rae is married,” Pat told Judy, “I want her to have the loveliest wedding we’ve ever had at Silver Bush.”

“Oh, oh, it ought to be wid a whole year to get riddy in,” agreed Judy.

But nothing ever happens just as you imagine it will, as Pat had many times discovered. A week later came the bolt from the blue. Brook wrote that the manager of the Chinese branch had suddenly died. It had become absolutely necessary for him to start for China at once instead of next year. Would Rae go with him?

Of course Rae would go with him. It meant a marriage at three day’s notice, but what of that?

“You ... can’t,” gasped Pat.

They were sitting in the hay-mow of the church barn, having discovered that it was about the only place where they were safe from May or some prowling Binnie coming down on them. The fragrance of dried clover was around them and an arrogant orange-gold barn cat sat on a rafter and looked at them out of mysterious jewel-like eyes.

“I can and will,” said Rae resolutely. “Lily Robinson will take the school and be thankful to get it. We won’t bother with a wedding cake ...”

“Rae, do you want Judy to drop dead! Of course we’ll have a wedding cake. It won’t have time to ripen as good wedding cake should but in all else it shall be the weddingest cake ever seen. But what about your dress?”

“Will it be possible to have a white dress, Pat ... a white satin dress? I’m old-fashioned ... I’m Victorian ... I want to be married in a white satin dress. I love satin.”

“We’ll make it possible,” said Pat. Forthwith she and Rae and Judy and mother went into committee on the subject. Pat and Rae hustled off to town for the dress ... Inez Macaulay came to make it and sewed for dear life. Mother, who hadn’t done such a thing for years, declared she would make the cake.

“Oh, oh, and she do be the lady as can do it,” said Judy. “All the Bay Shore girls cud make fruitcake to the quane’s taste.”

Judy pleaded for “just a liddle wedding.” They could have the aunts and uncles and cousins surely. But nobody agreed with her.

“We can’t have all the two clans, and since we can’t have all we must have none. No, Judy, Brook and I are just going to be married here with you home folks looking on.”

Judy had to reconcile herself. But she shook her grizzled head. Times indeed were changed at Silver Bush when one of its daughters could be married off like this.

“Sure and I fale ould and done,” said Judy ... looking cautiously about, however, to make sure nobody heard her.

“You’ve taken your own time about telling me,” said May with a toss of her head when Pat informed her that Rae was to be married.

“We’ve only known it for twenty-four hours ourselves,” said Pat. May, however, was determined to be sulky. Nevertheless, there were times when Judy surprised a smug look on her face.

“She do be thinking there’ll be one more out av her way,” reflected Judy scornfully.

“I’m glad to hear you’re getting another of your gals married off,” Mrs. Binnie told mother patronisingly. “You’ll soon be like myself ... only one left.” A sentimental sigh. “What about you, Pat? Isn’t it time you were thinking of leaping the ditch? The men don’t seem to be what they were in *my* young days.”

Pat fled to her room where Rae had piled all her belongings on the bed.

“Forget Mother Binnie, Pat, and help me pack. I never was any good at packing. Tell me what to take or leave.”

The yawning trunk gave Pat a stab. Rae was really going away ... going to China! Why couldn’t it have been Rae’s fortune to settle down near home like Winnie? Yet she remembered that she had thought Winnie’s going a tragedy. How life grew around changes until they became a part of it and were changes no more! Winnie coming home with her babies ... Winnie’s home to visit ... why, it was all delightful. But China!

And yet Rae was serenely happy over it all. A line of some old-fashioned song Aunt Hazel used to sing long ago came back to Pat, as she folded and packed. "*The one who goes is happier far than the one that's left behind.*"

Perhaps it was true. She almost envied Rae her happiness. And yet she felt sorry for her ... for Rae, who was leaving Silver Bush. How *could* any one be happy, leaving Silver Bush?

"This time tomorrow I'll be an old married woman," said Rae, scrutinising herself in the mirror. "I believe it's high time I was married, Pat. It seems to me that I'm getting a certain school-teacherish look already. Do you know Brook is having the wedding ring specially made. No hand-me-downs for him, he says. I hope I'll get through the ceremony respectably. Mother Binnie will be there, watching me."

"She isn't coming, Rae!"

"She is. May asked me if her mother couldn't come to see me married? I really couldn't say no. So I want everything to go nicely. I'm *not* going to look up at Brook when I'm uttering the final vow. That has got so common ... Mrs. Binnie said Olive did it and every one thought it 'so touching.' Anyway, I'd be sure to laugh. Listen to that bluebird out in the orchard, Pat. I suppose they don't have bluebirds in China ... or do they? But there'll be cats ... surely there'll be cats in China ... cats guarding mysterious secrets ... cats furry and contented. Only ... will they mew in Chinese? If they do! And then, of course, after a while there'll be my children. I want ten."

"Ten? Why stop short of the dozen?" giggled Pat.

"Oh, I'm not greedy. One must leave a few for other people."

"If Aunt Barbara heard you!" said Pat, as she tucked a bag of dried lavender into Rae's trunk ... lavender from the Silver Bush garden to sweeten sheets in China.

"But she doesn't. I don't say these things to anybody but you. We've been such chums, haven't we, Pat? We've laughed and cried together ... we're *friends* as well as sisters ... only for those horrid weeks we never really spoke to each other. That's the memory I'm ashamed of. But I've so many beautiful memories ... of home and you and mother and Judy.

They'll always light life like a lamp. Can you quote that verse we found the other night and thought so lovely?"

“What Love anticipates may die in flower,
What Love possesses may be thine an hour,
But redly gleams in Life's unlit Decembers
What Love remembers.”

“It's true, isn't it, dear? We'll always have our lovely memories even in our 'late Decembers.' Oh, I'm going to miss you all. I'll often be hungry for Silver Bush. Don't think I don't feel leaving it and you all, Pat. I do. But ... but ...”

“There's Brook Hamilton,” smiled Pat.

“Yes.” Rae was very thoughtful. “But the old life I'm leaving will always be very dear to me. And you've been the dearest sister.”

“Just don't,” said Pat. “You'll have me breaking down and howling. I've made up my mind I won't spoil your wedding with tears.”

“And please, darling, don't cry after I'm gone. I can't bear to think of you here, in tears, after I'm gone.”

“I'll likely have a little weep,” said Pat frankly. “I don't think I can escape that. But I never give way to despair as I used to long ago. Rae, I've learned to accept change even though I can never help dreading it ... never can understand people who actually seem to like it. There's Lily calling you for your last fitting.”

The day before the wedding there was hope at Silver Bush that Mrs. Binnie wouldn't be able to come after all. Her first cousin, old Samuel Cobbledick, had died and the funeral was to be an hour before the time fixed for the ceremony.

“It's a real apostrophe to have him dying at this particular time,” Mrs. Binnie grumbled to May. “He's been suffering from general ability for years but he needn't of died till after the wedding. He was always a very tiresome man. It was an infernal hemmeridge finished him off. I'm awful disappointed. I'd set my heart on seeing darling Rae married.”

“Oh, oh, I do be hoping the funeral will go off more harmonious than his brother John’s did,” said Judy. “John did be wanting to make all the arrangements for the funeral himself before he died ... wanting things done rale stylish and having no confidence in his wife, her being av the second skimmings brand. They did be fighting all their lives but the biggest row they iver had was over his funeral. She didn’t be spaking to him agin while he was alive and she wudn’t sit among the mourners at all, nor have innynthing to do wid the doings. It did be kind av spiling the occasion.”

“All fam’lies have their little differences,” said Mrs. Binnie stiffly. “Poor Sam’s widow is feeling blue enough. I’ve been there all the afternoon condoning with her.”

“Ye’ll be maning ‘condole,’” said Judy innocently. It was not often she bothered correcting Madam Binnie but there were times and seasons.

“I meant what I said,” returned Mrs. Binnie, “and I’ll thank you, Miss Plum, not to be putting words in my mouth.”

Pat and Rae found it hard to win sleep that last night together. Half a dozen times one of them would say, “Well, let’s turn over and go to sleep.” They would turn over but they wouldn’t go to sleep. Soon they would be talking again.

“I hope it will be fine tomorrow,” said Rae. “I want to leave Silver Bush with my last sight of it bathed in sunshine.”

“Tomorrow?” said Pat. “*Today!* The clock in the Little Parlour has just struck twelve. It’s your wedding day, Cuddles.”

“Time I was taking the bridal jitters,” laughed Rae. “I don’t believe I’ll have them at all. It all seems so — so *natural* to be marrying Brook, you know.”

They must have slept a little for presently Pat was surprised to find herself sitting up in bed looking through the window at a world that lay in a clear, pale, thin dawnlight. It was Rae’s wedding day and hereafter when she wakened she must waken alone.

A beautiful sunshiny day as Rae had desired, with mad, happy crickets singing everywhere and sinuous winds making golden shivers in the

wheatfields.

“Really,” said Rae, “the weather at Silver Bush isn’t like the weather anywhere else, even over at Swallowfield. I’ve teased you so often, Pat, for thinking things here were different from anywhere else ... but in my heart I’ve always known it, too.”

“Isn’t it a *wonderful* day!” gushed May when they went down.

May rather spoiled the weather for Pat. But then with May everything was always either “wonderful” or “priceless.” Those were her pet adjectives. Pat felt that she didn’t want May to have anything to do with Rae’s wedding day, even to the extent of approving it.

It was a busy morning. Brook arrived at noon. Pat laid and decorated the wedding table. May, too, by way of asserting her rights, set a huge hodge-podge from her herbaceous border in the centre of it after Pat had gone up to dress. Judy carried it ostentatiously out to the kitchen.

“Always taking a bit too much on herself,” she muttered.

May got square by saying, when Judy appeared in her wine-coloured dress-up dress,

“How well that dress has kept its looks, Judy. It doesn’t really look very old-fashioned at all.”

Chapter II

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Upstairs a bride was being dressed.

“Here’s a blue garter for luck,” whispered Pat.

Rae stood, looking rather wraithlike in her shimmer of satin and tulle. She wore mother’s old veil ... a bit creamy and a bit old-fashioned ... high on the head instead of the modern mob-cap ... but Rae’s young beauty shone radiantly among its folds. She was so full of happiness that it seemed to spill over and make everything lovely.

“Doesn’t she look cute?” said May, who had pushed herself in.

Pat and Rae’s eyes met in the last of their many amused, secret exchanges of looks. Pat knew it would be the last ... at least for many years.

“I won’t ... I *won’t* cry,” she said grimly to herself. “At least not now.”

As Rae gathered up her dress to go downstairs Bold-and-Bad saw his opportunity. He had been sitting at the head of the stairs, very sulky and offended because he had been shut out of Pat’s room. He pounced and bit ... bit Rae right in the fleshy part of her slender leg. Rae gave a little squeal ... Bold-and-Bad fled ... and Pat examined the damage.

“He hasn’t broken the skin ... but, darling, the beast has started a run in your stocking. What on earth got into him?”

“It can’t be helped now,” said Rae, stifling a laugh. “Thank heaven skirts are long. I deserve it ... it was I who shut the door in his face. I was afraid he’d get tangled up in my veil. It was no way to treat an old family cat. He did perfectly right to bite me.”

The rest all seemed rather dreamlike to Pat. The ceremony went off beautifully ... though Rae afterwards said she could think of nothing but that run in her stocking the whole time. It would be so awful if Mrs. Binnie caught a glimpse of it somehow in spite of long skirts ... for Mrs. Binnie was there after all, having rushed madly away as soon as dear

Samuel's funeral was over. She reached Silver Bush just as the bride came down the stairs.

Mother was pale and sweet and composed and dad, dreaming of youth and his own bridal day, looked very tenderly at this baby of his who had so swiftly and unaccountably grown up and was being married before he had realised that she was out of her cradle.

Just as Brook took his bride in his arms to kiss her Bold-and-Bad stalked in ... a repentant Bold-and-Bad, carrying a large and juicy rat in his mouth which he laid down at Rae's feet, with an air of atonement. A moment before everybody had been on the point of tears ... but the tension dissolved in a burst of laughter and Rae's wedding feast was as jolly as she had wanted it to be.

Nevertheless she found it hard to keep back her own tears when she turned at the door of her room for a farewell look. She recalled all the times she had left home before ... but always to come back. Now she was going, never to come back ... at least as Rae Gardiner. She would go out and shut the door and never open it again. She had finished with it and the happy, laughter-filled past that was linked with it. She clung to Pat.

"Darling, you'll write me every week, won't you? And I'm sure we'll be home for a visit in three years at the latest."

They were gone.

"I never saw Rae look so sweet and lovely," sobbed Mrs. Binnie, her fat figure shaking. May was trying to squeeze out a few tears but Pat did not feel in the least like crying, though she thought her face would crack if she went on smiling any longer. She and Judy cleared up the rooms and washed the dishes and put things away. When Pat crept into the kitchen at dusk she found Judy sitting by a fire she had kindled.

"Oh, oh, I thought a bit av a fire wudn't be amiss a could avening like this. The cats do be liking it. Ye know, Patsy, I've just been wishing poor ould Tillytuck was here, there in his corner, smoking his pipe. It ... it wudn't same so lonesome-like."

It was odd to hear Judy talking of being lonesome. Pat sat down beside her on the floor, resting her head in Judy's lap and pulling Judy's arm

around her. They sat so in silence for a long time, listening to the pleasant snap of the starting fire and the vociferous purring of the kitten Judy had snuggled at her side. Judy had always known how to make little creatures happy.

“Judy, this is the third time we’ve kept vigil in this old kitchen after we’ve seen a bride drive away. Do you remember Aunt Hazel’s ... and Winnie’s? ... how we sat here and you told me stories to cheer me up? I don’t want stories tonight, Judy. I just want to be quiet ... and have you baby me a bit. I’m ... tired.”

When Pat had risen and gone to the porch door to let in a pleading Popka Judy signed and whispered to herself.

“Oh, oh, I’m thinking all me stories do be told. Sure and I’m nothing but a guttering candle now.” But she did not let Pat hear her. And before long, when she had been thinking of Mrs. Binnie tearing in red-faced from the funeral, she began to chuckle.

“What is it, Judy?”

“Oh, oh, I didn’t mane to be laughing, Patsy, but it did be just coming inty me head what they did be telling once av ould Sam Cobbledick. He was fond av a drop whin he was younger but what wid his wife watching him he niver got much ava chanct to one. He was rale sick wid the flu one time and the doctor lift a liddle whiskey in a bottle for him. Mrs. Cobbledick thought it was only midicine and wint out to church. Thin in drops a neighbour man, ould Lem Morrison, and *he* brings a liddle drop in a bottle, too, sly-like. But ould Sam looks at it in dape disappointment. ‘There isn’t enough to make us both drunk,’ sez he. ‘Let’s put it together and make one av us drunk,’ sez he. ‘And let’s draw lots to see which’ll it be,’ sez he. So the lot fell to ould Sam. But ye did be saying ye weren’t wanting innny stories tonight.”

“I want to hear this one. What happened to old Sam, Judy?”

“Oh, oh, whin Sarah Coddledick came home her sick man was dancing and singing in the middle av the floor and niver a bit av flu left in him. She didn’t be guessing innny av the truth but she tould the doctor his midicines were entirely too strong for a sick man, aven if it cured him that

quick. And now, Pasty, darlint, we'll be having a liddle bite. I was noticing ye didn't be ating much supper."

Pat found the night bitter. There seemed such an unearthly stillness over the whole house. She sat at her window for a long time in the darkness. Below in the garden the white phlox glimmered ... one of the many flowers Bets had given her ... that sweet-lipped friend of long ago. The pain of Bets' passing had faded out with time as gently as an old, old moon fades out into the sunrise, but it always came back at moments like this. She remembered how she used to lie awake, especially on stormy nights, after Winnie and Joe had gone. She could not bear to look at Rae's little white bed.

But there was a wonderful sunrise the next morning ... crimson and warm gold flushing up into the blue. A bird was singing somewhere in the orchard and the borders of the hill field were aflame with golden rod. Dawn still came beautifully ... and she still had Silver Bush. Little Mary would often come to occupy Rae's bed. Her spun-gold hair would gleam on that lonely pillow.

And, of course, there was always David ... dear old dependable David. She must not forget him.

The Tenth Year

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Chapter I

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It took Pat a long while to get used to Rae's absence. Sometimes she thought she would never get used to it. The autumn weeks were very hard. Every place ... every room ... seemed so full of Rae ... even more so than when she had been home. Pat was, somehow, always expecting to see her ... glimmering through the birches on moonlit nights ... lirting along the Whispering Lane ... coming home from school laughing over some jest of the day ... wearing her youth like a golden rose. And then the renewed sadness of the realisation that she would not come. For a time it really seemed that Rae had taken the laughter of Silver Bush with her. Then it crept back; again there were jokes and talks in the kitchen o'nights.

Two things helped Pat through the fall and winter ... Silver Bush and her evenings with David and Suzanne. Her love for Silver Bush had suffered no abatement ... nay, it had seemed to deepen and intensify with the years, as other loves passed out of her life, as other changes came ... or threatened to come. For Uncle Tom's big black beard was quite grey now and dad was getting bald and Winnie's gold hair was fading to drab. And ... though Pat put the thought fiercely away whenever it came to her ... Judy was getting old. It was not all May's malice.

But then mother was so much better ... almost well ... beginning to take her place in the family life again. It was like a miracle, everybody said. So Pat was happy and contented in spite of certain passing aches of loneliness which made themselves felt on wakeful nights when a grief-possessed wind wailed around the eaves.

Then it seemed that spring touched Silver Bush in the night and winter was over. Drifts of rain softened over the hills that were not yet green ... it was more as if a faint green shadow had fallen over them. Warm, wet winds blew through the awakening silver bush. Faint mists curled and uncurled in the Field of the Pool. Then came the snow of cherry petals on

the walks and the wind in the grasses at morning and the delight of seeing young shoots pop up in the garden.

“I have nothing to do with anything in the world today but spring,” vowed Pat, the morning after housecleaning was finished. She refused to be cast down even by the fact that the building of the new house on the other place had to be postponed again for financial reasons. She spent the whole day in the garden, planning, discovering, exulting. Judy’s clump of bleeding-heart was in bloom. Nothing could be so lovely. But then, to Pat, one flower from the garden of Silver Bush would always be sweeter than a whole florist’s window.

“Let’s have supper in the orchard tonight, Judy.”

They had it ... just she and mother and Judy and Little Mary, for the men were all away and May had gone home to help her mother houseclean. The Binnies generally got around to housecleaning when every one else was finishing.

Supper under hanging white boughs ... apple blossoms dropping into your cream-pitcher ... a dear, gentle evening with the “ancient lyric madness” Carman speaks of loose in the air. A meal like this was a sacrament. Pat was happy ... mother was happy ... Little Mary was happy because she was always happy where Aunt Pat was ... even though the sky was so terribly big. It was one of the secret fears of Little Mary’s life, which she had never yet whispered to any one, that the sky was too big. Even Judy, who had been mourning all day because a brood of young turkeys had got their feet wet and died, took heart of grace and thought maybe she was good for many a year yet.

“Life is sweet,” thought Pat, looking about her with a gaze of dreamy delight.

A few hours later life handed her one of its surprises.

She went up to the Long House in the twilight ... past the velvety green of the hill field, through the spruce bush. The perfume of lilacs had not changed and the robins still sang vespers in some lost sweet language of elder days. She found David in the garden by the stone fireplace, where he had kindled a fire ... “for company,” he said. Suzanne had gone to town

but Ichabod and Alphonso were sitting beside him. Pat sat down on the bench.

“Any news?” she asked idly.

“Yes. The wild cherry at the southeast corner of the spruce bush is coming into bloom,” said David ... and said nothing more for a long time. Pat did not mind. She liked their long, frequent, friendly silences when you could think of anything you liked.

“Suzanne is going to be married next month,” said David suddenly.

Pat lifted a startled face. She had not thought it would be before the fall. And ... if Suzanne were to be married ... what about David? He couldn't stay on at the Long House alone. Would his next words say something of the sort? Pat felt her lips and mouth go curiously dry. But of course ...

What *was* David saying?

“Do you really want to marry me, Pat?”

What an extraordinary question! Hadn't she promised to marry him? Hadn't they been engaged ... happily, contentedly, engaged, for years?

“David! What *do* you mean? Of course ...”

“Wait.” David bent forward and looked her squarely in the face.

“Look into my eyes, Pat ... don't turn your face away. Tell me the truth.”

Under his compelling gaze Pat gasped out,

“I ... I can't ... I don't know it. But I think I do, David ... oh, I really think I do.”

“*I* think, dear,” said David slowly, “that your attitude, whether you realise it or not, is, ‘I'd just as soon be married to you as any one, if I have to be married.’ That isn't enough for me, Pat. No, you don't love me, though you've pretended you have ... pretended beautifully, to yourself as well as me. I won't have you on those terms, Pat.”

The garden whirled around Pat ... jiggled up and down ... steadied itself.

“I ... I meant to make you happy, David,” she said piteously.

"I know. And I don't mind taking chances with my own life ... but with yours ... no, I can't risk it."

"You seem to have made up your mind to jilt me, David." Pat was between tears and something like hysterical laughter. "And I do ... I really do ... like you so much."

"That isn't enough. I'm not blaming you. I took a chance. I thought I could teach you to love me. I've failed. I'm the kind of man all women like ... and none love. It ... it was that way before. I will not have it so again ... it's too bitter. There's an old couplet —

"'There's always one who kisses
And one who turns the cheek.'"

"Not always," murmured Pat.

"No, not always. But often ... and it's not going to be that way with me a second time. We'll always be good friends, Pat ... and nothing more."

"You *need* me," said Pat desperately again. After all ... though she knew in her heart he was right ... knew he had never been anything but a way out ... knew that sometimes at three o'clock of night she had wakened and felt that she was a prisoner ... she could not bear to lose him out of her life.

"Yes, I need you ... but I can never have *you*. I've known that ever since Hilary Gordon's visit last summer."

"David, what nonsense have you got into your head? Hilary has always been like a dear brother to me ..."

"He's twined with the roots of your life, Pat ... in some way I can never be. I can't brook such a rival."

Pat couldn't have told what she felt like ... on the surface. The whole experience seemed unreal. Had David really told her he couldn't marry her? But away down under everything she knew she felt *free* ... curiously free. She was almost a little dizzy with the thought of freedom ... as if she had drunk some heady, potent wine. Mechanically she began to take his ring off her finger.

“No.” David lifted his hand. “Keep it, Pat ... wear it on some other finger. We’ve had a wonderful ... friendship. It was only my blindness that I hoped for more. And don’t worry over me. I’ve been offered the head editorship of the *Weekly Review*. When Suzanne marries I’ll take it.”

So he would go, too, out of her life. Pat never remembered quite how she got home. But Judy was knitting in the kitchen and Pat sat down opposite her rather grimly.

“Judy ... I’ve been jilted.”

“Jilted, is it?” Judy said no more. She was suddenly like a watchful terrier.

“Yes ... in the most barefaced manner. David Kirk told me tonight that he wouldn’t marry me” ... Pat contrived to give her voice a plaintive twist ... “that nothing on earth would induce him to marry me.”

“Oh, oh, ye didn’t be asking him to marry ye, I’m thinking. Did he be giving his rasons?” Judy was still watchful.

“He said I didn’t love him ... enough.”

“Oh, oh, and do ye?”

“No,” said Pat in a low tone. “No. I’ve tried, Judy ... I’ve tried ... but I think I’ve always known. And so have you.”

“I’m not be way av being sorry it’s all off,” said Judy. She went on knitting quietly.

“What will the Binnies say?” said Pat whimsically.

“Oh, oh, I don’t think ye’ve come down to minding what the Binnies say, me jewel.”

“No, I don’t care a rap what they say. But others ... oh well, they are used to me by this time. And this is the last of my broken-backed love affairs they’ll ever have to worry over. I’ll never have any more, Judy.”

“Niver do be a long day,” said Judy sceptically. Then she added,

“Ye’ll be getting the one ye *are* to get. A thing like that don’t be left to chance, Patsy.”

“Anyway, Judy, we won’t talk of this any more. It ... it isn’t pleasant. I’m free once more ... free to love and live for Silver Bush. That’s all that matters. Free! It’s a wonderful word.”

When Pat had gone out Judy knitted inscrutably for a while. Then she remarked to Bold-and-Bad, “So that do be the last av the widower, thank the Good Man Above.”

Chapter II

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The breaking of Pat's engagement made but little flurry in the clan. They had given up expecting anything else of this fickle wayward girl. May said she had always looked for it ... she knew David wasn't really the marrying kind. Dad said nothing ... what was there to say? Mother understood, as always. In her heart mother was relieved. Suzanne understood, too.

"I'm sorry ... terribly sorry ... and bitterly disappointed. But it was just one of the things that had to be."

"It's nice to be able to lay the blame of everything on predestination," said Pat ruefully. "I feel I've failed you ... and David ... and I'm ever so fond of him ..."

"That might be enough for some men, but not David," said Suzanne quietly. "I wish it could have been different, Pat dear ... but it can't be, so we must just put it behind us and go on."

When Suzanne was married and David had gone the Long House was closed and lightless once more. Again it was the Long Lonely House. Some houses are like that ... they have a doom on them which they can never long escape.

Pat took stock of things. She was at peace. Her whole world had been temporarily wrecked ... ruined ... turned upside down, but nothing had really changed in Silver Bush. There was no longer anything to come between her and it ... never would be again. She was through with love and all its counterfeits. Henceforth Silver Bush would have no rival in her heart. She could live for it alone. There might be some hours of loneliness. But there was something wonderful even in loneliness. At least you belonged to yourself when you were lonely.

Pat flung back her brown head and her brown eyes kindled.

"Freedom is a glad thing," she said.

Chapter III

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One smoky October evening they found Judy lying unconscious in the stable beside the old white cow. She had not been allowed to do any milking for a long time but she had slipped out in the dim to do it that night, since May was away and she knew “the min” would be tired when they came home from the other place.

They carried her to her bed in the kitchen chamber and sent for Dr. Bentley. Under his ministrations she recovered consciousness but he looked very grave when he came down to the kitchen.

“Her heart is in a very bad condition. I can’t understand how she kept up so long.”

“Judy hasn’t felt well all summer,” said Pat heavily. “I’ve known it ... though she wouldn’t give in that there was anything the matter with her or let me call you. ‘Can he be curing old age?’ she would say. I know I should have insisted ... I knew she was old but I think I never realised it ... never believed Judy *could* be ill ...”

“It wouldn’t have mattered. I could have done nothing,” said Dr. Bentley. “It’s only a question of a week or two.”

Pat hated him for his casualness. To him Judy was nothing but an old, worn-out servant. When he had gone she went up to the kitchen chamber where Judy was lying. Pale rays slanted through the clouds above the silver bush and gleamed athwart all Judy’s little treasured possessions.

Judy turned her dim old eyes lovingly on Pat’s face.

“Don’t be faling down, Patsy darlint. I’ve been sure iver since Gintleman Tom wint away that me own time wasn’t far off. And of late I’ve been faling it drawing nigh just as ye fale snow in the air before it comes. Oh, oh, I’m glad I won’t be a bother to innny one long or make innny one much trouble dying.”

“Judy ... Judy ...”

“Oh, oh, I’m knowing ye wudn’t think innnything ye cud do for ould Judy a trouble, darlint. But I’ve always asked the Good Man Above that I wudn’t be bed-rid long whin me time came and I’ve always been hoping I cud die at Silver Bush. It’s been me home for long, long years. I’ve had a happy life here, Patsy, and now death seems rale frindly.”

Pat wondered how many people would think that Judy had had a happy life ... a life spent in what they would think the monotonous drudgery of service on a little farm. Ah well, “the kingdom of heaven is within you,” Pat knew Judy had been happy ... that she asked for nothing but that people should turn to her for help ... should “want” her. Nothing so dreadful could happen to Judy as not to be wanted.

But was it ... could it be ... Judy who was talking so calmly of dying? Judy!

Dr. Bentley had given Judy two weeks but she lived for four. She was very happy and contented. Life, she felt, was ending beautifully for her, here where her heart had always been. There would be no going away from Silver Bush ... no long lingering in uselessness until people came in time to hate her because she was so helpless and in their way. Everything was just as she would have wished it.

Pat was her constant attendant. May would have nothing to do with waiting on her ... “I hate sick people,” she announced airily ... but nobody wanted her to.

“Oh, oh, it’s rale nice to be looked after,” Judy told Pat with her old smile.

“You’ve looked after us all long enough, Judy. It’s your turn to be waited on now.”

“Patsy darlint, if I cud just be having you and nobody else to do for me!”

“I’m with you to the last, dearest Judy.”

“I’m knowing ye’ll come as far as ye can wid me but ye mustn’t be tiring yersilf out, Patsy.”

“It doesn’t tire me. I’m just going to do nothing for a while but look after you. May is doing the work ... to give her her due, Judy, she isn’t

lazy.”

“Oh, oh, but she’ll never have the luck wid the young turkeys that I’ve had,” said Judy in a tone of satisfaction.

Bold-and-Bad seldom left Judy. He curled up on the bed beside her where she could stroke him if she wanted to and always purred when she did so. “Looking at me wid his big round eyes, Patsy, as much as to say, ‘I cud spare a life or two, Judy, if ye wanted one.’ Sure and he’s far better company than inny av the Binnies,” she added with a grin. Mrs. Binnie thought it her duty to “sit by” Judy frequently and Judy endured it courteously. She wasn’t going to forget her pretty manners even on her dying bed. But she always sighed with relief when Mrs. Binnie trundled downstairs.

Yes, it was pleasant to lie easily and think over old days and jokes and triumphs ... all the tears and joys of forgotten years ... all the pain and beauty of life. “Oh, oh, we’ve had our frolics,” she would think with a little chuckle. Nothing worried her any more.

Pat always sat and talked with her in “the dim.” Sometimes Judy seemed so well and natural that wild hopes would spring up in Pat’s heart.

“I’ve been minding meself a bit av the ould days, Patsy. It’s me way av passing the time. De ye be rimimbering the night yer Aunt Edith caught ye dancing naked in Silver Bush and they sint ye to Coventry? And the time Long Alec shaved his moustache off and bruk yer liddle heart? And the night Pepper fell into the well? Do ye be rimimbering whin liddle Jingle and his dog wud be hanging round? There was something in his face I always did be liking. He had a way wid him. And how ye did be hating to hear him called yer beau! ‘That isn’t a beau,’ sez she, indignant, ‘That was just Jingle.’ And the two av ye slipping in to ask me for a handful av raisins. Oh, oh, thim was the good ould days. But I’m thinking these days be good, too. There do be always new good coming up to take the place av the old that goes, Patsy. There’s liddle Mary now ... she was here this afternoon wid her liddle buttercup head shining like a star in me ould room, and her liddle tongue going nineteen to the dozen. The questions she do be asking. ‘Isn’t there inny Mrs. God, Judy?’ And whin I sez ‘no’ she

did just be looking a look at me, and sez she solemn-like, ‘Then is God an ould bachelor, Judy?’ Sure and maybe I shudn’t have laughed, Patsy, but the darlint wasn’t maning inny irriverrince and ye’ll be knowing I niver cud miss a joke. I’m thinking God himsilf wud have laughed at the face av her. He must be liking a bit av fun, too, Patsy, whin he made us so fond av it. I’ve been having a long life, Patsy, and minny things to be thankful for but for nothing more than me liddle gift av seeing something to laugh at in almost iverything. And that do be minding me ... whin Dr. Bentley was here today he did be taking me timperature and I did be thinking av the scare yer Aunt Hazel did be giving us once. She had a rale bad spell av flu and yer Aunt Edith was bound to take her timperature wid her funny liddle thermometer. It didn’t suit yer Aunt Hazel to be fussed over so whiniver me fine Edith’s back was turned Hazel whips the thermometer out av her mouth and sticks it in her hot cup av tay. Whin she heard Edith coming back she sticks it in her mouth again. And poor Edith just about died av fright whin she looked at it and saw what it rigistered. She flew downstairs and sint Long Alec for the doctor at the rate av no man’s business, being sure Hazel had pewmonia wid a timperature like that. Oh, oh, but we had the laugh on her whin the truth come out. Niver cud ye be saying ‘timperature’ to Edith agin, poor soul. Her and me niver were be way av being cronies but I’ll niver deny she had the bist blood av P. E. Island in her veins.”

“Are you sure you’re not tiring yourself, Judy?”

“Talking so much, sez she. Oh, oh, Patsy darlint, it rists me ... and what do a few hours one way or another be mattering whin ye’ve come to journey’s ind?”

One night Judy talked of the disposal of her few treasures.

“There’ll be a bit av money in the bank after me funeral ixpenses do be paid. I’ve lift it to be divided betwane Winnie and Cuddles and yersilf. Winnie is to hev me autygraph quilt and I promised me blue chist to Sidly years ago. There do be some mats in the garret I put away for ye, Patsy, and me Book av Useful Knowledge and all the liddle things in me glory box. And the book wid all me resates in it. Ye’ll sind Hilary the white

kittens, darlint. I'll be giving me bead pincushion to yer Aunt Barbara for a liddle rimimberance. Her and me always did be hitting it off rale well. And ye'll see that the ould black bottle is destroyed afore inny one sees it. Folks might be misunderstanding it."

"I'll ... I'll see to everything, Judy."

"And, Patsy darlint, ye'll see that they bury me out there in the ould graveyard where I won't be far from Silver Bush? There do be a liddle place betwane Waping Willy and the fince where ye can be squazing me in wid a slip av white lilac at me hid. And I'd like a slab on me grave, too, in place av a standing-up tombstone, so the cats can slape on it. It wud be company-like. And ye'll dress me in me ould dress-up dress ... the blue one. I always did be liking it. It won't be as tight as it was at Winnie's widding. Do ye be minding?"

"Judy" ... Pat did not often break down but there were times when she could not help it ... "however can I ... however can Silver Bush get along without you?"

"There'll be a way," said Judy gently. "There always do be a way. There do be only one thing ... I'm wondering who'll whitewash the stones and the posts nixt spring. Me fine May won't ... she niver hild be it."

"I'll see to that, Judy. Everything is going to be kept at Silver Bush just as you left it."

"It'll be too hard on yer hands, Patsy dear." But Judy was not really worried. She knew the Good Man Above would attend to things.

But it seemed there were one or two things on Judy's conscience.

"Patsy darlint, do ye be minding whin that bit av news about the countess visiting at Silver Bush was put in the paper and ye niver cud find out who did be doing it? Darlint, it was be way av being mesilf. I've been often thinking av owning up to it but niver cud I get up me courage. I did be wanting all the folks to know av it so I 'phoned it in. The editor, he did be touching it up a bit though. Can ye be forgiving me, Patsy?"

"Forgive? Oh, Judy! Why ... that was ... nothing."

"It wasn't in kaping wid the traditions av Silver Bush and well I knew it. And, Patsy darlint, all thim stories av mine ... most av thim happened

but maybe I did touch thim up a bit, dramatic-like, now and agin. Me grandmother niver was a witch ... but she *cud* see things other folks cudn't. One day I do be minding I was walking wid her, me being a slip av tin or twelve ... and we met a man there was talk av. He was alone, saming-like, but me grandmother sez to him, sez she, 'Good day to you and yer *company*.' I've niver forgot his face but whin I asked her what she mint she said to thank God I didn't be knowing and not another word wud she say. He did be hanging himself not long after on his verandah, deliberate-like. And now I've tould ye this I'm not worrying over innnything. All will be coming right ... I'm knowing it somehow, being death-wise. Love doesn't iver be dying, Patsy. I'd like to have seen ye a bride, darlint. But it's glad I am I'll niver have to live at Silver Bush wid ye gone."

One afternoon Judy wandered a little. She thought she heard Joe's whistle and Rae's laugh. "The Silver Bush girls always had the pretty way av laughing," she murmured. She raked down some one who "didn't be washing the butter properly." Once she said, "If ye'd set a light in the windy, Patsy." Again she was hunting through an imaginary parsley bed for something she couldn't find. "I'm fearing I've lost the knack av finding thim," she sighed.

But when Pat went up to her in the dim she was lying peacefully. Mrs. Binnie had just gone down and had passed Pat on the stairs with an ominous moan.

"Thank the Good Man Above I've seen the last av the Binnie gang," said Judy. "I heard her groaning to you on the stairs. It's bad luck to mate on the stairs as the mouse said whin the cat caught him half way down, but the luck'll be on her. She's been talking av funerals be way av cheering me up. 'Whin me father died,' sez she, 'he had a wonderful funeral. The flowers were grand! And the crowds!' Ye cud be seeing it was a great comfort to the fam'ly."

"Are you feeling any worse, Judy?"

"I niver felt better in me life, darlint. I haven't an ache or a pain. Wud ye be propping me up a bit? I'd like to have a look at the ould silver bush

and the clouds having their fun wid the wind over it.”

“Can you guess who’s been here inquiring for you, Judy? Tillytuck, no less. He came all the way from the South shore to ask after you.”

“Oh, oh, that was very affable av him,” said Judy in a gratified tone.

Judy’s bed had been moved so that she could see out of the window when propped up. Pat raised her on her pillows and she looked out with a relish on a scene that was for her full of memories. The owls were calling in the silver bush. The patient acres of the old farm were lying in the fitful light of a windy sunset. But the twilight shadows were falling peacefully over the sheltered kitchen garden where Long Alec was burning weeds. Tillytuck, who had asked Long Alec if he might have a few parsnips, was squatted down on his haunches, busily digging, while a stick of some kind which he had thrust into his pants pocket stuck up behind him with a grotesque resemblance to a forked tail.

Judy reached out and clutched Pat’s hand.

““Did ye iver see the devil
Wid his liddle wooden shovel
Digging pittaties in the garden
Wid his tail cocked up?””

she quoted, laughing, and fell back on her pillows. Her kind loving eyes closed. Judy, who had laughed so bravely, gaily, gallantly all her life, had died laughing.

Chapter IV

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Silver Bush was made ready to receive death. Judy lay in state in the Big Parlour ... Pat had a queer feeling that it should really have been in the kitchen ... while outside great flakes of the first snowfall were coming down. Her busy hands were still, quite still, at last. Beautiful flowers had been sent in, but Pat searched her garden and found a few late 'mums and some crimson leaves and berries to put in Judy's hands, folded on the breast of her blue dress-up dress. Judy's face took on a beauty and dignity in death it had never known in life. The funeral was largely attended ... Pat couldn't help feeling that Judy would have been proud of it. And then it was over ... the house, so terribly still, to be put in order and no Judy to talk it over with in the kitchen afterwards! Pat reflected, with a horrible choke, how Judy would have enjoyed talking over her own funeral ... how she would have chuckled over the jokes. For there had been jokes ... it seemed that there were jokes everywhere, even at funerals. Old Malcolm Anderson making one of his rare remarks as he looked down on Judy's dead face, "Poor woman, I hope you're as happy as you look," ... mournfully, as if he rather doubted it; and Olive's son yowling because his sisters pushed him away from the window and he couldn't see the flowers being carried out ... "Never mind," one of his sisters comforting him, "you'll see the flowers at mother's funeral."

When all was done, Pat, wondering how she could bear the dull, dead ache in her heart, averted her eyes from the spectral winter landscape and went to the kitchen expecting to find it a tragedy of emptiness. But mother was there in Judy's place, with a chairful of cats beside her. Pat buried her head in mother's lap and cried out all the tears she had wanted to cry out since Judy was stricken down.

"Oh, mother ... mother ... I've nothing but you and Silver Bush left now."

The Eleventh Year

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Chapter I

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There were many times in the year following Judy's death when cold waves of pain went over Pat. At first it seemed literally impossible to carry on without Judy. Life seemed very savourless now that Judy's tales were all told. But Pat found, as others have done, that "we forget because we must." Life began to be livable again and then sweet. Silver Bush seemed to cry to her, "Make me homelike again ... keep my rooms lighted ... my heart warmed. Bring young laughter here to keep me from growing old."

Almost every one she had loved was changed or gone ... the old voices of gladness sounded no more ... but Silver Bush was still the same.

That first Christmas without Judy was bitter. Winnie wanted them all to go to the Bay Shore for the day but Pat wouldn't hear of it. Leave Silver Bush alone for Christmas? Not she! Every tradition was scrupulously carried out. It was easier because mother could share in things now, and they had a good Christmas Day after all. Uncle Tom and Aunt Barbara and Winnie and Frank and their children came. May went home for the day, so there was no jarring presence. A letter came from Rae with the good news that in two years' time she and Brook would be coming "home" to take charge of the Vancouver branch. Compared to China Vancouver seemed next door. As Judy used to say, there was always something to take the edge off. Nevertheless Pat was glad when the day was over. The first Christmas above a grave can never be a wholly joyous thing. She and mother talked it over in the kitchen afterwards and laughed a little over certain things. The cats purred around them and Uncle Tom and dad played checkers. But once or twice Pat caught herself listening for Judy's step on the back stairs.

By spring hope was her friend again and her delight in Silver Bush was keen and vivid once more. Her love for it kept her young. To be sure, often

now came little needle-like reminders of the passing years. Now and again there was another grey hair and she knew the quirk at the corner of her mouth was getting a little more pronounced. "We're all growing old," she thought with a pang. But she really didn't mind it so much for herself. It was the change in others she hated to see. Winnie was getting matronly and Frank ... who had just been elected to membership in the Provincial House ... was grey above the ears. If other people would only stay young, Pat thought, she wouldn't mind growing old herself. Though it was rather horrid to be told you "looked young," as Uncle Brian once did. She knew the Binnies regarded her as definitely "on the shelf" and that they were calling her among themselves "the single perennial." Even Little Mary once gravely asked her, "Aunt Pat, did *you* ever have any beaus?" It sometimes amused her to reflect that she was really quite a different person to different people. To the Binnies she was a disappointed spinster who had been "crossed in love" ... to the Great-aunts at the Bay Shore she was an inexperienced child ... to Lester Conway she was a divine, alluring, unobtainable creature. For Lester, who was now a young widower, had tried vainly to warm up the cold soup. Pat would none of him. The time when she had been so wildly in love with him in her Queen's days seemed as far away and unreal as the days of immemorial antiquity. To be sure, he had been slim and romantic and dashing then, whereas he was stout and plump-faced now. And he had once laughed at Silver Bush. Pat had never forgiven him for that ... never would forgive him.

In the spring Long Alec again announced that the next year the new house would be built. It had been postponed twice but the mortgage was paid at last and there would be no more postponements. Pat lived on this through the summer. Nevertheless, when the autumn came again it was not just a wholesome time for Pat. Sometimes mother watched her a little anxiously. Pat seemed to have an attack of nerves now and then. She developed a taste for taking lonely walks by herself among the twilight shadows. They seemed to be better company than she found in the sunlight. She came back from them looking as if she were of the band of grey shadows herself. Mother didn't like it. It seemed to her that the child,

on those lone rambles, was trying to warm herself by some fire that had died out years ago. She had that look on her face when she came in. Mother wanted Pat to go away for a visit somewhere but Pat only laughed.

“There is nowhere I could go where I would be half as happy as I am at Silver Bush. You know I’ve died several times of homesickness when I was away. Don’t worry over me, sweetheart. I’m fine and dandy ... and next year Silver Bush will be *ours* again ... and I’ve a hundred plans for it.”

A night came when Pat found herself alone at Silver Bush ... absolutely alone for the first time, in that old house where there had been always so many. Mother and father were over at the Bay Shore and would not be back till late. It was wonderful that mother could gad about like that again. Pat thought she wouldn’t mind being alone ... *could* she be alone with dear Silver Bush? ... but some restlessness drove her outside. There was a moan of the autumn wind in the leafless birches and a wonderful display of northern lights. Pat recalled that Judy had always been superstitious about northern lights. They were a “sign.” How Judy seemed to come back on a night like this! Dead and gone years seemed to be whispering to themselves all about her. The crisp leaves rustled under her feet as she went along the path to the orchard. She recalled old autumns when she and Sid had raced through the fallen leaves. There were voices in the wind, calling to her out of the past. Many things came back to her ... bitter, beautiful, sad, joyous things ... crises that had seemed to wreck life and were only dim memories now. She was haunted. This would not do. She must shake this off. She would go in and light up the house. It did not like to be dark and silent. Yet she paused for a moment on the doorstep, the prey of a sudden fancy. That shut door was a door of dreams through which she might slip into the Silver Bush of long ago. For a fleeting space she had a curious feeling that Judy and Tillytuck and Hilary and Rae and Winnie and Joe were all in there and if she could only go in quickly and silently enough she would find them. A world utterly passed away might be her universe once more.

“This is nonsense,” said Pat, giving herself a shake. “This won’t do. These moods are coming too often now.”

She flung open the door and went in ... lighted a lamp. There was nobody there except Bold-and-Bad. But Pat could have sworn that Judy had been there a moment before.

She did not sleep for a long time that night. She felt vaguely apprehensive, although she could assign no reason for it. As she said afterwards her soul knew something she did not. Late in the night she fell into a troubled slumber. Thus was passed her last night in that beloved old room where she had dreamed her dreams of girlhood and suffered the heartaches of womanhood, where she had endured her defeats and exulted over her victories. Never again was she to lay her head on its pillow ... never again waken to see the morning sunshine gleaming in at her vine-hung window. She had looked from that window on spring blossom and summer greenness, on autumn fields and winter snows. She had seen starshine and sunrise from it. She had knelt there in keen happiness and bitter sorrow. And now that was all finished. The Angel of the Years turned the page whereon it was writ while she lay in that uneasy slumber ... and she knew it not.

It was Sunday and everybody went to church. Pat remembered as she went out of the door that when she was a child she had always been so sorry for Silver Bush when everybody went to church. It must feel lonely. She had always been glad when she was left home because she would be company for it.

Something made her turn her head as the car went down the lane. Silver Bush looked beautiful, even on that dour November day, against its sheltering trees. She felt her heart go out to it as they turned the corner and it was hidden from her sight.

The minister had just announced his text ... it was always remarked as a curious coincidence that it was, “Thy house shall become a desolation” ... when young Corey Robinson entered the church, hurried up the aisle and whispered a word to Long Alec. Pat heard it ... every one in the church heard it in a few moments.

Silver Bush was burning!

Pat seemed to die a thousand deaths on that ride home. Yet when she got there she was curiously numb ... terror seemed to have washed her being clean of everything. Even when she saw that terrible fire blazing against the grey November hillside she gave no sign ... made no sound.

It seemed as if everybody in both the Glens and Silverbridge and Bay Shore were there ... but nothing could be done ... nothing but stand helplessly and see a home that had been a home for generations wiped out. That night Silver Bush, with all its memories, all its possessions, was in ashes!

Chapter II

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They all went to Swallowfield until things could be settled. Pat took no part in the settling. Life had suddenly become for her like a landscape on the moon. She had the odd feeling of not belonging to this or any world that she had felt once or twice after a bad attack of flu. Only ... this feeling would never pass. Mother, who bore up wonderfully, watched her anxiously.

It turned out that May had left the oil stove in the porch burning when she went to church. It was supposed to have exploded. Pat was not in the least interested in *how* it had happened. She was not interested in anything ... not even in the finding of Judy's "cream cow" quite unharmed amid the ashes in the cellar and the old front door with its knocker, lying on the lawn. Somebody had wrenched it off in a first vain attempt to enter the blazing house. She did not care when it was discovered that all the hooked rugs Judy had stored in the garret for her were safe, Aunt Barbara having borrowed them to copy the patterns the day before the fire. When you are horribly, hopelessly tired you can't care about anything.

The only thing that seemed to be the least bit of comfort to her was that the white kittens had not been burned. She had packed the picture up after Judy's death and sent it to Hilary. He had never even acknowledged it ... that hurt her ... but as she had sent it to his office she felt quite sure he must have received it. Yes, she was faintly glad Judy's kittens had not been burned.

At first Long Alec talked of rebuilding Silver Bush. It was insured. Everybody seemed very pleased about the insurance ... but no insurance could restore the old heirlooms ... the old associations. And then, four days after the fire, Great-Aunt Frances at the Bay Shore died and it was found that she had left the Bay Shore farm to mother.

"It's strange how things work out," said Aunt Barbara.

“Very strange,” agreed Pat bitterly.

The kaleidoscope shifted again. Long Alec and mother and Pat would go to live at the Bay Shore. And the new house for Sid and May ... a house without memories ... would be built on the old foundation of Silver Bush. It would not be like the old Silver Bush. That was gone and the place thereof would know it no more.

May was openly triumphant. A new house, with all the bay windows she wanted and a colour-scheme kitchen like Olive’s! Lovely!

Mother was really pleased at the thought of going back to her old home to live.

“Mother is younger than I am,” thought Pat drearily.

She felt horribly old. Her love for Silver Bush had kept her young ... and now it was gone. Nothing was left ... there was only a dreadful, unbearable emptiness.

“Life has beaten me,” she told herself. She had had enough grief in her life to know that in time even the bitterest fades out into a not unpleasing dearness and sweetness of recollection. But this heartbreak could never fade. Everything had fallen into ruins around her. She could never fit into the life at the Bay Shore. She had a terrible feeling that she did not belong anywhere ... or to anybody ... in this new sad lonely world.

“I think ... if I could ever be glad of anything again ... I’d be glad that Judy died before this happened,” she thought. She did not say these things to anybody. Nobody but mother would have understood and she was not going to make things harder for mother. But her heart was like an unlighted room and nothing, she thought she knew, could ever illumine it again.

Chapter III

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One evening two weeks later Pat slipped away in the twilight and went along the Whispering Lane like a ghost, to where home had been. She had never dared to go before. But something drew her now.

Where Silver Bush had been was only a yawning cellar full of ashes and charred beams. Pat leaned on the old yard gate ... which had not burned because the wind had blown the flames back against the bush ... and looked long and quietly about her. She wore her long blue coat and the little dress of crinkled red crepe she had worn to church ... the only clothes she owned just now. Her head was bare and her face was very pale.

The evening was soft and gentle and almost windless. No living thing stirred near her except a lean adventurous barn cat that picked its way gingerly through the yard. Bold-and-Bad and Popka had been transferred to Swallowfield and Winnie had taken Squedunk.

It hurt Pat worse than anything else to see the dead stark trees of the birch grove. She shuddered as she recalled standing there that fatal Sunday and seeing the flames ravage them. It had seemed to hurt her even more than seeing her home burn ... those trees she had always loved ... trees that had been akin to her. More than half the bush was killed. The old aspen by the kitchen door was only a charred stump and the maple over the well was an indecency. The hood of the well was burned. May would have a pump put in now. But that didn't matter. Nothing mattered.

All the flower clumps near the house had been burned ... Judy's bleeding-heart ... the southernwood ... the white lilac. The lawn itself looked like an old yellow blanket. Beyond stretched a russet land of shadows and lonely furrows and woods that stirred faintly in their dreams. Far away, in the direction of Silverbridge, Angus Macaulay must have been working in his forge for she could hear the ring of his anvil, faintly clear, as if some goblin forger were at work among the hills.

“I suppose I can teach,” thought Pat. “I have my old licence. They won’t need me at the Bay Shore ... they’ve had Anna Palmer there for years to help and she’ll stay on. But I can’t build up a new life ... I’m too tired. I’ll just go on existing ... withering into unimportance ... drifting from one place to another ... rootless ... living in houses I hate ... oh, can it be I standing here looking at the place where Silver Bush was? ... that old Bible verse ... ‘it shall be a heap forever ... it shall not be built again’ ... I wish that were true ... I wish no house could ever be built here again ... it will be a desecration. Oh, if I could only wake up and find it all a dream!”

“Pat, darling,” said a voice from the shadows around her.

She turned ... incredulous ... amazed ...

“Jingle!”

The old name sprang to her lips. The autumn dusk was no longer cold and loveless over the remote hills. Something seemed to have come with him ... courage ... hope ... inspiration ... that same dear sense of protection and understanding that had come to her that evening of long ago when he had found her lost in the dark on the Base Line road. She held out both her hands but he caught her in his arms ... his lips were seeking hers ... a tremor half fear, half delight, shook her. And then that old, old unacknowledged ache of loneliness she had tried to stifle with Silver Bush vanished forever. His lips were on hers ... and she *knew*. It was like a tide turning home.

“I’ve made you mine forever with that kiss,” he said triumphantly. “You can never belong to anyone else. And I’ve waited long enough for it,” he added with his old laugh.

Pat stood quivering with his arms about her. Life was not over after all ... it was only beginning.

“I ... I don’t deserve you, Hilary,” she whispered humbly. “It seems ... it seems ... oh, are you *really* here? I’m not dreaming it, am I?”

“I’m real, sweetheart ... joy ... delight ... wonder! I started as soon as I saw the account of the fire in an Island paper. But I was coming anyway ... I had only been waiting to finish our house. I know what this tragedy of

Silver Bush must have meant to you ... but I've a home for you by another sea, Pat. And in it we'll build up a new life and the old will become just a treasury of dear and sacred memories ... of things time cannot destroy. Will you come to it with me?"

"I'll go to the end of the world and back with you, Hilary. I can't understand my not knowing all these years that it was you I loved. Those other men ... some of them were so nice ... I thought I couldn't marry them because I couldn't leave Silver Bush ... but I know now it was because they weren't *you* ..."

"Are you really my girl ... *my* girl at last, Pat? You remember how furiously you used to deny it? And your eyes are as brown as ever, Pat. I can't see in the dimness but I'm sure they are. And I know you look just as much as ever like a creamy rose with gold in its heart. Do you know, Pat, I never got your letter or Judy's kittens till two months ago? I've been in Japan for over a year, studying Japanese architecture. Letters were forwarded but parcels weren't. And you broke the postal laws shamelessly by tucking your letter inside the parcel. Dearest, let's go into the old graveyard and sit on a slab. I want to have you wholly to myself for an hour before we go back to Swallowfield. There's going to be a moonrise tonight ... how long is it since we watched a moonrise together?"

"A moonrise tonight." That was always a magical phrase. Pat was in a maze of happiness as they walked to the old graveyard and sat on Weeping Willy's flat tombstone. She hadn't felt like this for years ... had believed she could never feel like this again ... as if some supernal musician had swept her very soul with his fingers and evolved some ethereal harmony. Was it possible life could always be so rich ... so poignant ... so *significant* as this?

"I want to tell you all about the home I have ready for you," said Hilary. "When I came back from Japan and found the picture and your letter I wanted to come east at once. But that very day when I was prowling on the heights above the city I found a spot ... a spot I *recognized*, although I had never seen it before ... a spot that *wanted* me. There was a spring in the corner with a little brook trickling out ... four

darling little apple trees in another corner ... and a hill of pines behind it, with a river and a mountain within neighborly distance ... a faint blue mountain. I don't know its name but we'll call it the Hill of the Mist. That spot was just crying for a house to be built on it. So ... I built one. It's waiting for you. It's a dear house, Pat ... fat red chimneys ... sharp little gables on the side of the roof ... a door that says 'come in' and another one that says, 'stay out.' It's painted white and has bottlegreen shutters like Silver Bush."

"It sounds heavenly, Hilary ... but I'd live in an igloo in Greenland if you were there."

"There's a lovely jam closet," said Hilary slyly. "I thought you'd want one."

Pat's eyes flickered.

"Of course I want one. While I live and move and have my being I'll want a jam closet," she said decidedly. "And we'll have Judy's rugs on the floor and the old Silver Bush knocker on the door that says 'come in'."

"The dining-room has a wide, low window opening into the pine wood at the back. We can eat with the sound of the pines in our ears. And from the other window we can see the sunset while we eat our supper. I've built the house, Pat ... I've provided the body but you must provide the soul. There's a lovely big fireplace that can hold real logs ... I left it all laid ready for lighting ... you will light the fire and make the room live."

"Like the old kitchen at Silver Bush. It *will* be homelike."

"You could make any place homelike, Pat. We'll sit there caring only when we want to care for what is outside ... wind or rain, mist or moonshine. We'll have a dog that wags his tail when he sees us ... more than one. Lots of jolly little dogs and furry kittens. And a Silver Bush cat. I suppose Bold-and-Bad is too old to endure emigration to a far land."

"Yes, he must end his days at Swallowfield. Aunt Barbara loves him. But I'm sure it will be possible to send a kitten by express — it has been done. Hilary, why did you give up writing to me?"

"I thought it wasn't any use. I thought the only decent thing to do was to leave you in peace. Besides, you *were* taking me too much for granted,

Pat. You were blinded by our years of friendship. When can we be married, Pat?"

"As soon as you like," said Pat shamelessly. "At least ... when I've had time to get a few clothes. I haven't a rag but what I'm wearing."

"We'll spend our honeymoon in a chalet in the Austrian Tyrol, Pat. I picked it out years ago. Then we'll go home ... *home*. Listen to me rolling the word under my tongue. I've never had a home, you know. Oh, how tired I am of living in other people's houses! Pat, there is water in the house, of course, but I've made a little well out of the spring in the corner and stoned it up ... a delightful little well where we can dip up water under the ferns. And we'll put a saucer of milk there every night for the fairies. Judy's white kittens are already hanging on the wall of our living room and that old china dog with the blue eyes you gave me years ago is squatting on the mantelpiece."

"Hilary, you don't mean to say you've got that yet?"

"Haven't I! It has gone everywhere with me ... it's been my mascot. We'll make it a family heirloom. And I have a few things picked up in my wanderings you'll love, Pat."

"Is there a good place for a garden?"

"The best. We'll have a garden, my very own dear ... with columbine for the fairies and poppies for dancing shadows and marigolds for laughter. And we'll have the walks picked off with whitewashed stones. Slugs and spiders and blight and mildew will never infest it, I feel sure. You've always been a sort of half-cousin to the fairies and you ought to be able to keep such plagues away."

Delightful nonsense! Was it she, Pat, who was laughing at it ... she, who had been in such despair an hour ago? Miracles *did* happen. And it was so easy to laugh when Hilary was about. That new, far, unseen home would be as full of laughter as Silver Bush had been.

"And Rae will be somewhere near after two years," thought Pat.

They sat in a trance of happiness, savouring "the unspent joy of all the unborn years" in the moonlight and waving shadows of the ancient graveyard where so many kind old hearts rested. They had been dust for

many years but their love lived on. Judy had been right. Love did not ... could not die.

The moon had risen. The sky was like a great silver bowl pouring down light over the world. A little wind raised and swayed the long hair-like grass growing around the slab on Judy's grave, giving the curious suggestion of something prisoned under it trying to draw a long breath and float upward.

"I wish Judy could have known of this," said Pat softly. "Dear old Judy ... she always wanted it."

"Judy knew it would come to pass. She sent me this. I got it in Japan after months of delay. I would have started for Silver Bush at the moment if I could have, but it was impossible to arrange. And anyway ... I thought I might have a better chance if I waited a decent interval."

Hilary had taken a cheap crumpled envelope from his pocket book and extracted a sheet of bluelined paper.

"Dear Jingle," Judy had printed on it in faint, straggling letters, "She has give David Kirk the air. I'm thinking youd have a good chance if youd come back.

Judy Plum."

"Dear, dear old Judy," said Pat. "She must have written that on her dying bed ... look how feeble some of the letters are ... and got somebody to smuggle it out to the mailbox for her."

"Judy knew that would bring me back from the dead," said Hilary with pardonable exaggeration. "She died knowing it. And, Pat," he added quickly, sensing that she was too near tears for a betrothal hour, "will you make soup for me like Judy's when we're married?"

Just as they had admitted they must really return to Swallowfield a grey shadow leaped over the paling, poised for a moment on Judy's slab and then skimmed away.

"Oh, there's Bold-and-Bad," cried Pat. "I must catch him and take him back. He's too old to be left out o'nights."

“This evening belongs to me,” said Hilary firmly. “I won’t let you go chasing cats ... not even Bold-and-Bad. He’ll follow us back without any chasing. I’ve found something I once thought I’d lost forever and I won’t be cheated out of a single moment.”

The old graveyard heard the most charming sound in the world ... the low yielding laugh of a girl held prisoner by her lover.

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TO MY COUSIN
Beatrice A. McIntyre
THIS BOOK
IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

“Kilmeny looked up with a lovely grace,
But nae smile was seen on Kilmeny’s face;
As still was her look, and as still was her ee,
As the stillness that lay on the emerant lea,
Or the mist that sleeps on a waveless sea.

... ..

Such beauty bard may never declare,
For there was no pride nor passion there;

... ..

Her seymar was the lily flower,
And her cheek the moss-rose in the shower;
And her voice like the distant melodye
That floats along the twilight sea.”

— *The Queen’s Wake*

JAMES HOGG

The Thoughts of Youth

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The sunshine of a day in early spring, honey pale and honey sweet, was showering over the red brick buildings of Queenslea College and the grounds about them, throwing through the bare, budding maples and elms, delicate, evasive etchings of gold and brown on the paths, and coaxing into life the daffodils that were peering greenly and perkily up under the windows of the co-eds' dressing-room.

A young April wind, as fresh and sweet as if it had been blowing over the fields of memory instead of through dingy streets, was purring in the treetops and whipping the loose tendrils of the ivy network which covered the front of the main building. It was a wind that sang of many things, but what it sang to each listener was only what was in that listener's heart. To the college students who had just been capped and diplomad by "Old Charlie," the grave president of Queenslea, in the presence of an admiring throng of parents and sisters, sweethearts and friends, it sang, perchance, of glad hope and shining success and high achievement. It sang of the dreams of youth that may never be quite fulfilled, but are well worth the dreaming for all that. God help the man who has never known such dreams — who, as he leaves his alma mater, is not already rich in aerial castles, the proprietor of many a spacious estate in Spain. He has missed his birthright.

The crowd streamed out of the entrance hall and scattered over the campus, fraying off into the many streets beyond. Eric Marshall and David Baker walked away together. The former had graduated in Arts that day at the head of his class; the latter had come to see the graduation, nearly bursting with pride in Eric's success.

Between these two was an old and tried and enduring friendship, although David was ten years older than Eric, as the mere tale of years goes, and a hundred years older in knowledge of the struggles and

difficulties of life which age a man far more quickly and effectually than the passing of time.

Physically the two men bore no resemblance to one another, although they were second cousins. Eric Marshall, tall, broad-shouldered, sinewy, walking with a free, easy stride, which was somehow suggestive of reserve strength and power, was one of those men regarding whom less-favoured mortals are tempted seriously to wonder why all the gifts of fortune should be showered on one individual. He was not only clever and good to look upon, but he possessed that indefinable charm of personality which is quite independent of physical beauty or mental ability. He had steady, grayish-blue eyes, dark chestnut hair with a glint of gold in its waves when the sunlight struck it, and a chin that gave the world assurance of a chin. He was a rich man's son, with a clean young manhood behind him and splendid prospects before him. He was considered a practical sort of fellow, utterly guiltless of romantic dreams and visions of any sort.

"I am afraid Eric Marshall will never do one quixotic thing," said a Queenslea professor, who had a habit of uttering rather mysterious epigrams, "but if he ever does it will supply the one thing lacking in him."

David Baker was a short, stocky fellow with an ugly, irregular, charming face; his eyes were brown and keen and secretive; his mouth had a comical twist which became sarcastic, or teasing, or winning, as he willed. His voice was generally as soft and musical as a woman's; but some few who had seen David Baker righteously angry and heard the tones which then issued from his lips were in no hurry to have the experience repeated.

He was a doctor — a specialist in troubles of the throat and voice — and he was beginning to have a national reputation. He was on the staff of the Queenslea Medical College and it was whispered that before long he would be called to fill an important vacancy at McGill.

He had won his way to success through difficulties and drawbacks which would have daunted most men. In the year Eric was born David Baker was an errand boy in the big department store of Marshall & Company. Thirteen years later he graduated with high honors from

Queenslea Medical College. Mr. Marshall had given him all the help which David's sturdy pride could be induced to accept, and now he insisted on sending the young man abroad for a post-graduate course in London and Germany. David Baker had eventually repaid every cent Mr. Marshall had expended on him; but he never ceased to cherish a passionate gratitude to the kind and generous man; and he loved that man's son with a love surpassing that of brothers.

He had followed Eric's college course with keen, watchful interest. It was his wish that Eric should take up the study of law or medicine now that he was through Arts; and he was greatly disappointed that Eric should have finally made up his mind to go into business with his father.

"It's a clean waste of your talents," he grumbled, as they walked home from the college. "You'd win fame and distinction in law — that glib tongue of yours was meant for a lawyer and it is sheer flying in the face of Providence to devote it to commercial uses — a flat crossing of the purposes of destiny. Where is your ambition, man?"

"In the right place," answered Eric, with his ready laugh. "It is not your kind, perhaps, but there is room and need for all kinds in this lusty young country of ours. Yes, I am going into the business. In the first place, it has been father's cherished desire ever since I was born, and it would hurt him pretty badly if I backed out now. He wished me to take an Arts course because he believed that every man should have as liberal an education as he can afford to get, but now that I have had it he wants me in the firm."

"He wouldn't oppose you if he thought you really wanted to go in for something else."

"Not he. But I don't really want to — that's the point, David, man. You hate a business life so much yourself that you can't get it into your blessed noddle that another man might like it. There are many lawyers in the world — too many, perhaps — but there are never too many good honest men of business, ready to do clean big things for the betterment of humanity and the upbuilding of their country, to plan great enterprises and carry them through with brain and courage, to manage and control, to aim

high and strike one's aim. There, I'm waxing eloquent, so I'd better stop. But ambition, man! Why, I'm full of it — it's bubbling in every pore of me. I mean to make the department store of Marshall & Company famous from ocean to ocean. Father started in life as a poor boy from a Nova Scotian farm. He has built up a business that has a provincial reputation. I mean to carry it on. In five years it shall have a maritime reputation, in ten, a Canadian. I want to make the firm of Marshall & Company stand for something big in the commercial interests of Canada. Isn't that as honourable an ambition as trying to make black seem white in a court of law, or discovering some new disease with a harrowing name to torment poor creatures who might otherwise die peacefully in blissful ignorance of what ailed them?"

"When you begin to make poor jokes it is time to stop arguing with you," said David, with a shrug of his fat shoulders. "Go your own gait and dree your own weird. I'd as soon expect success in trying to storm the citadel single-handed as in trying to turn you from any course about which you had once made up your mind. Whew, this street takes it out of a fellow! What could have possessed our ancestors to run a town up the side of a hill? I'm not so slim and active as I was on MY graduation day ten years ago. By the way, what a lot of co-eds were in your class — twenty, if I counted right. When I graduated there were only two ladies in our class and they were the pioneers of their sex at Queenslea. They were well past their first youth, very grim and angular and serious; and they could never have been on speaking terms with a mirror in their best days. But mark you, they were excellent females — oh, very excellent. Times have changed with a vengeance, judging from the line-up of co-eds to-day. There was one girl there who can't be a day over eighteen — and she looked as if she were made out of gold and roseleaves and dewdrops."

"The oracle speaks in poetry," laughed Eric. "That was Florence Percival, who led the class in mathematics, as I'm a living man. By many she is considered the beauty of her class. I can't say that such is my opinion. I don't greatly care for that blonde, babyish style of loveliness — I prefer Agnes Champion. Did you notice her — the tall, dark girl with the

ropes of hair and a sort of crimson, velvety bloom on her face, who took honours in philosophy?”

“I DID notice her,” said David emphatically, darting a keen side glance at his friend. “I noticed her most particularly and critically — for someone whispered her name behind me and coupled it with the exceedingly interesting information that Miss Champion was supposed to be the future Mrs. Eric Marshall. Whereupon I stared at her with all my eyes.”

“There is no truth in that report,” said Eric in a tone of annoyance. “Agnes and I are the best of friends and nothing more. I like and admire her more than any woman I know; but if the future Mrs. Eric Marshall exists in the flesh I haven’t met her yet. I haven’t even started out to look for her — and don’t intend to for some years to come. I have something else to think of,” he concluded, in a tone of contempt, for which anyone might have known he would be punished sometime if Cupid were not deaf as well as blind.

“You’ll meet the lady of the future some day,” said David dryly. “And in spite of your scorn I venture to predict that if fate doesn’t bring her before long you’ll very soon start out to look for her. A word of advice, oh, son of your mother. When you go courting take your common sense with you.”

“Do you think I shall be likely to leave it behind?” asked Eric amusedly.

“Well, I mistrust you,” said David, sagely wagging his head. “The Lowland Scotch part of you is all right, but there’s a Celtic streak in you, from that little Highland grandmother of yours, and when a man has that there’s never any knowing where it will break out, or what dance it will lead him, especially when it comes to this lovemaking business. You are just as likely as not to lose your head over some little fool or shrew for the sake of her outward favour and make yourself miserable for life. When you pick you a wife please remember that I shall reserve the right to pass a candid opinion on her.”

“Pass all the opinions you like, but it is MY opinion, and mine only, which will matter in the long run,” retorted Eric.

“Confound you, yes, you stubborn offshoot of a stubborn breed,” growled David, looking at him affectionately. “I know that, and that is why I’ll never feel at ease about you until I see you married to the right sort of a girl. She’s not hard to find. Nine out of ten girls in this country of ours are fit for kings’ palaces. But the tenth always has to be reckoned with.”

“You are as bad as *Clever Alice* in the fairy tale who worried over the future of her unborn children,” protested Eric.

“*Clever Alice* has been very unjustly laughed at,” said David gravely. “We doctors know that. Perhaps she overdid the worrying business a little, but she was perfectly right in principle. If people worried a little more about their unborn children — at least, to the extent of providing a proper heritage, physically, mentally, and morally, for them — and then stopped worrying about them after they ARE born, this world would be a very much pleasanter place to live in, and the human race would make more progress in a generation than it has done in recorded history.”

“Oh, if you are going to mount your dearly beloved hobby of heredity I am not going to argue with you, David, man. But as for the matter of urging me to hasten and marry me a wife, why don’t you” — It was on Eric’s lips to say, “Why don’t you get married to a girl of the right sort yourself and set me a good example?” But he checked himself. He knew that there was an old sorrow in David Baker’s life which was not to be unduly jarred by the jests even of privileged friendship. He changed his question to, “Why don’t you leave this on the knees of the gods where it properly belongs? I thought you were a firm believer in predestination, David.”

“Well, so I am, to a certain extent,” said David cautiously. “I believe, as an excellent old aunt of mine used to say, that what is to be will be and what isn’t to be happens sometimes. And it is precisely such unchancy happenings that make the scheme of things go wrong. I dare say you think me an old foggy, Eric; but I know something more of the world than you do, and I believe, with Tennyson’s *Arthur*, that ‘there’s no more subtle master under heaven than is the maiden passion for a maid.’ I want to see you safely anchored to the love of some good woman as soon as may be, that’s

all. I'm rather sorry Miss Campion isn't your lady of the future. I liked her looks, that I did. She is good and strong and true — and has the eyes of a woman who could love in a way that would be worth while. Moreover, she's well-born, well-bred, and well-educated — three very indispensable things when it comes to choosing a woman to fill your mother's place, friend of mine!"

"I agree with you," said Eric carelessly. "I could not marry any woman who did not fulfill those conditions. But, as I have said, I am not in love with Agnes Campion — and it wouldn't be of any use if I were. She is as good as engaged to Larry West. You remember West?"

"That thin, leggy fellow you chummed with so much your first two years in Queenslea? Yes, what has become of him?"

"He had to drop out after his second year for financial reasons. He is working his own way through college, you know. For the past two years he has been teaching school in some out-of-the-way place over in Prince Edward Island. He isn't any too well, poor fellow — never was very strong and has studied remorselessly. I haven't heard from him since February. He said then that he was afraid he wasn't going to be able to stick it out till the end of the school year. I hope Larry won't break down. He is a fine fellow and worthy even of Agnes Campion. Well, here we are. Coming in, David?"

"Not this afternoon — haven't got time. I must mosey up to the North End to see a man who has got a lovely throat. Nobody can find out what is the matter. He has puzzled all the doctors. He has puzzled me, but I'll find out what is wrong with him if he'll only live long enough."

A Letter of Destiny

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Eric, finding that his father had not yet returned from the college, went into the library and sat down to read a letter he had picked up from the hall table. It was from Larry West, and after the first few lines Eric's face lost the absent look it had worn and assumed an expression of interest.

"I am writing to ask a favour of you, Marshall," wrote West. "The fact is, I've fallen into the hands of the Philistines — that is to say, the doctors. I've not been feeling very fit all winter but I've held on, hoping to finish out the year.

"Last week my landlady — who is a saint in spectacles and calico — looked at me one morning at the breakfast table and said, VERY gently, 'You must go to town tomorrow, Master, and see a doctor about yourself.'

"I went and did not stand upon the order of my going. Mrs. Williamson is She-Who-Must-Be-Obeyed. She has an inconvenient habit of making you realize that she is exactly right, and that you would be all kinds of a fool if you didn't take her advice. You feel that what she thinks to-day you will think tomorrow.

"In Charlottetown I consulted a doctor. He punched and pounded me, and poked things at me and listened at the other end of them; and finally he said I must stop work 'immejutly and to onct' and hie me straightway to a climate not afflicted with the northeast winds of Prince Edward Island in the spring. I am not to be allowed to do any work until the fall. Such was his dictum and Mrs. Williamson enforces it.

"I shall teach this week out and then the spring vacation of three weeks begins. I want you to come over and take my place as pedagogue in the Lindsay school for the last week in May and the month of June. The school year ends then and there will be plenty of teachers looking for the place, but just now I cannot get a suitable substitute. I have a couple of pupils who are preparing to try the Queen's Academy entrance examinations, and

I don't like to leave them in the lurch or hand them over to the tender mercies of some third-class teacher who knows little Latin and less Greek. Come over and take the school till the end of the term, you petted son of luxury. It will do you a world of good to learn how rich a man feels when he is earning twenty-five dollars a month by his own unaided efforts!

"Seriously, Marshall, I hope you can come, for I don't know any other fellow I can ask. The work isn't hard, though you'll likely find it monotonous. Of course, this little north-shore farming settlement isn't a very lively place. The rising and setting of the sun are the most exciting events of the average day. But the people are very kind and hospitable; and Prince Edward Island in the month of June is such a thing as you don't often see except in happy dreams. There are some trout in the pond and you'll always find an old salt at the harbour ready and willing to take you out codfishing or lobstering.

"I'll bequeath you my boarding house. You'll find it comfortable and not further from the school than a good constitutional. Mrs. Williamson is the dearest soul alive; and she is one of those old-fashioned cooks who feed you on feasts of fat things and whose price is above rubies.

"Her husband, Robert, or Bob, as he is commonly called despite his sixty years, is quite a character in his way. He is an amusing old gossip, with a turn for racy comment and a finger in everybody's pie. He knows everything about everybody in Lindsay for three generations back.

"They have no living children, but Old Bob has a black cat which is his especial pride and darling. The name of this animal is Timothy and as such he must always be called and referred to. Never, as you value Robert's good opinion, let him hear you speaking of his pet as 'the cat,' or even as 'Tim.' You will never be forgiven and he will not consider you a fit person to have charge of the school.

"You shall have my room, a little place over the kitchen, with a ceiling that follows the slant of the roof down one side, against which you will bump your head times innumerable until you learn to remember that it is there, and a looking glass which will make one of your eyes as small as a pea and the other as big as an orange.

“But to compensate for these disadvantages the supply of towels is generous and unexceptionable; and there is a window whence you will daily behold an occidental view over Lindsay Harbour and the gulf beyond which is an unspeakable miracle of beauty. The sun is setting over it as I write and I see such a sea of glass mingled with fire as might have figured in the visions of the Patmian seer. A vessel is sailing away into the gold and crimson and pearl of the horizon; the big revolving light on the tip of the headland beyond the harbour has just been lighted and is winking and flashing like a beacon,

””O’er the foam
Of perilous seas in faerie lands forlorn.””

“Wire me if you can come; and if you can, report for duty on the twenty-third of May.”

Mr. Marshall, Senior, came in, just as Eric was thoughtfully folding up his letter. The former looked more like a benevolent old clergyman or philanthropist than the keen, shrewd, somewhat hard, although just and honest, man of business that he really was. He had a round, rosy face, fringed with white whiskers, a fine head of long white hair, and a pursed-up mouth. Only in his blue eyes was a twinkle that would have made any man who designed getting the better of him in a bargain think twice before he made the attempt.

It was easily seen that Eric must have inherited his personal beauty and distinction of form from his mother, whose picture hung on the dark wall between the windows. She had died while still young, when Eric was a boy of ten. During her lifetime she had been the object of the passionate devotion of both her husband and son; and the fine, strong, sweet face of the picture was a testimony that she had been worthy of their love and reverence. The same face, cast in a masculine mold, was repeated in Eric; the chestnut hair grew off his forehead in the same way; his eyes were like hers, and in his grave moods they held a similar expression, half brooding, half tender, in their depths.

Mr. Marshall was very proud of his son's success in college, but he had no intention of letting him see it. He loved this boy of his, with the dead mother's eyes, better than anything on earth, and all his hopes and ambitions were bound up in him.

"Well, that fuss is over, thank goodness," he said testily, as he dropped into his favourite chair.

"Didn't you find the programme interesting?" asked Eric absently.

"Most of it was tommyrot," said his father. "The only things I liked were Charlie's Latin prayer and those pretty little girls trotting up to get their diplomas. Latin IS the language for praying in, I do believe, — at least, when a man has a voice like Old Charlie's. There was such a sonorous roll to the words that the mere sound of them made me feel like getting down on my marrow bones. And then those girls were as pretty as pinks, now weren't they? Agnes was the finest-looking of the lot in my opinion. I hope it's true that you're courting her, Eric?"

"Confound it, father," said Eric, half irritably, half laughingly, "have you and David Baker entered into a conspiracy to hound me into matrimony whether I will or no?"

"I've never said a word to David Baker on such a subject," protested Mr. Marshall.

"Well, you are just as bad as he is. He hectored me all the way home from the college on the subject. But why are you in such a hurry to have me married, dad?"

"Because I want a homemaker in this house as soon as may be. There has never been one since your mother died. I am tired of housekeepers. And I want to see your children at my knees before

I die, Eric, and I'm an old man now."

"Well, your wish is natural, father," said Eric gently, with a glance at his mother's picture. "But I can't rush out and marry somebody offhand, can I? And I fear it wouldn't exactly do to advertise for a wife, even in these days of commercial enterprise."

“Isn’t there ANYBODY you’re fond of?” queried Mr. Marshall, with the patient air of a man who overlooks the frivolous jests of youth.

“No. I never yet saw the woman who could make my heart beat any faster.”

“I don’t know what you young men are made of nowadays,” growled his father. “I was in love half a dozen times before I was your age.”

“You might have been ‘in love.’ But you never LOVED any woman until you met my mother. I know that, father. And it didn’t happen till you were pretty well on in life either.”

“You’re too hard to please. That’s what’s the matter, that’s what’s the matter!”

“Perhaps I am. When a man has had a mother like mine his standard of womanly sweetness is apt to be pitched pretty high. Let’s drop the subject, father. Here, I want you to read this letter — it’s from Larry.”

“Humph!” grunted Mr. Marshall, when he had finished with it. “So Larry’s knocked out at last — always thought he would be — always expected it. Sorry, too. He was a decent fellow. Well, are you going?”

“Yes, I think so, if you don’t object.”

“You’ll have a pretty monotonous time of it, judging from his account of Lindsay.”

“Probably. But I am not going over in search of excitement. I’m going to oblige Larry and have a look at the Island.”

“Well, it’s worth looking at, some parts of the year,” conceded Mr. Marshall. “When I’m on Prince Edward Island in the summer I always understand an old Scotch Islander I met once in Winnipeg. He was always talking of ‘the Island.’ Somebody once asked him, ‘What island do you mean?’ He simply LOOKED at that ignorant man. Then he said, ‘Why, Prince Edward Island, mon. WHAT OTHER ISLAND IS THERE?’ Go if you’d like to. You need a rest after the grind of examinations before settling down to business. And mind you don’t get into any mischief, young sir.”

“Not much likelihood of that in a place like Lindsay, I fancy,” laughed Eric.

“Probably the devil finds as much mischief for idle hands in Lindsay as anywhere else. The worst tragedy I ever heard of happened on a backwoods farm, fifteen miles from a railroad and five from a store. However, I expect your mother’s son to behave himself in the fear of God and man. In all likelihood the worst thing that will happen to you over there will be that some misguided woman will put you to sleep in a spare room bed. And if that does happen may the Lord have mercy on your soul!”

Chapter III.

The Master of Lindsay School

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One evening, a month later, Eric Marshall came out of the old, whitewashed schoolhouse at Lindsay, and locked the door — which was carved over with initials innumerable, and built of double plank in order that it might withstand all the assaults and batteries to which it might be subjected.

Eric's pupils had gone home an hour before, but he had stayed to solve some algebra problems, and correct some Latin exercises for his advanced students.

The sun was slanting in warm yellow lines through the thick grove of maples to the west of the building, and the dim green air beneath them burst into golden bloom. A couple of sheep were nibbling the lush grass in a far corner of the playground; a cowbell, somewhere in the maple woods, tinkled faintly and musically, on the still crystal air, which, in spite of its blandness, still retained a touch of the wholesome austerity and poignancy of a Canadian spring. The whole world seemed to have fallen, for the time being, into a pleasant untroubled dream.

The scene was very peaceful and pastoral — almost too much so, the young man thought, with a shrug of his shoulders, as he stood in the worn steps and gazed about him. How was he going to put in a whole month here, he wondered, with a little smile at his own expense.

“Father would chuckle if he knew I was sick of it already,” he thought, as he walked across the playground to the long red road that ran past the school. “Well, one week is ended, at any rate. I’ve earned my own living for five whole days, and that is something I could never say before in all my twenty-four years of existence. It is an exhilarating thought. But teaching the Lindsay district school is distinctly NOT exhilarating — at least in such a well-behaved school as this, where the pupils are so painfully good that I haven’t even the traditional excitement of thrashing

obstreperous bad boys. Everything seems to go by clock work in Lindsay educational institution. Larry must certainly have possessed a marked gift for organizing and drilling. I feel as if I were merely a big cog in an orderly machine that ran itself. However, I understand that there are some pupils who haven't shown up yet, and who, according to all reports, have not yet had the old Adam totally drilled out of them. They may make things more interesting. Also a few more compositions, such as John Reid's, would furnish some spice to professional life."

Eric's laughter wakened the echoes as he swung into the road down the long sloping hill. He had given his fourth grade pupils their own choice of subjects in the composition class that morning, and John Reid, a sober, matter-of-fact little urchin, with not the slightest embryonic development of a sense of humour, had, acting upon the whispered suggestion of a roguish deskmate, elected to write upon "Courting." His opening sentence made Eric's face twitch mutinously whenever he recalled it during the day. "Courting is a very pleasant thing which a great many people go too far with."

The distant hills and wooded uplands were tremulous and aerial in delicate springtime gauzes of pearl and purple. The young, green-leaved maples crowded thickly to the very edge of the road on either side, but beyond them were emerald fields basking in sunshine, over which cloud shadows rolled, broadened, and vanished. Far below the fields a calm ocean slept bluely, and sighed in its sleep, with the murmur that rings for ever in the ear of those whose good fortune it is to have been born within the sound of it.

Now and then Eric met some callow, check-shirted, bare-legged lad on horseback, or a shrewd-faced farmer in a cart, who nodded and called out cheerily, "Howdy, Master?" A young girl, with a rosy, oval face, dimpled cheeks, and pretty dark eyes filled with shy coquetry, passed him, looking as if she would not be at all averse to a better acquaintance with the new teacher.

Half way down the hill Eric met a shambling, old gray horse drawing an express wagon which had seen better days. The driver was a woman:

she appeared to be one of those drab-tinted individuals who can never have felt a rosy emotion in all their lives. She stopped her horse, and beckoned Eric over to her with the knobby handle of a faded and bony umbrella.

“Reckon you’re the new Master, ain’t you?” she asked.

Eric admitted that he was.

“Well, I’m glad to see you,” she said, offering him a hand in a much darned cotton glove that had once been black.

“I was right sorry to see Mr. West go, for he was a right good teacher, and as harmless, inoffensive a creetur as ever lived. But I always told him every time I laid eyes on him that he was in consumption, if ever a man was. YOU look real healthy — though you can’t always tell by looks, either. I had a brother complected like you, but he was killed in a railroad accident out west when he was real young.

“I’ve got a boy I’ll be sending to school to you next week. He’d oughter gone this week, but I had to keep him home to help me put the pertaters in; for his father won’t work and doesn’t work and can’t be made to work.

“Sandy — his full name is Edward Alexander — called after both his grandfathers — hates the idee of going to school worse ‘n pisen — always did. But go he shall, for I’m determined he’s got to have more larning hammered into his head yet. I reckon you’ll have trouble with him, Master, for he’s as stupid as an owl, and as stubborn as Solomon’s mule. But mind this, Master, I’ll back you up. You just lick Sandy good and plenty when he needs it, and send me a scrape of the pen home with him, and I’ll give him another dose.

“There’s people that always sides in with their young ones when there’s any rumpus kicked up in the school, but I don’t hold to that, and never did. You can depend on Rebecca Reid every time, Master.”

“Thank you. I am sure I can,” said Eric, in his most winning tones.

He kept his face straight until it was safe to relax, and Mrs. Reid drove on with a soft feeling in her leathery old heart, which had been so toughened by long endurance of poverty and toil, and a husband who

wouldn't work and couldn't be made to work, that it was no longer a very susceptible organ where members of the opposite sex were concerned.

Mrs. Reid reflected that this young man had a way with him.

Eric already knew most of the Lindsay folks by sight; but at the foot of the hill he met two people, a man and a boy, whom he did not know. They were sitting in a shabby, old-fashioned wagon, and were watering their horse at the brook, which gurgled limpidly under the little plank bridge in the hollow.

Eric surveyed them with some curiosity. They did not look in the least like the ordinary run of Lindsay people. The boy, in particular, had a distinctly foreign appearance, in spite of the gingham shirt and homespun trousers, which seemed to be the regulation, work-a-day outfit for the Lindsay farmer lads. He had a lithe, supple body, with sloping shoulders, and a lean, satiny brown throat above his open shirt collar. His head was covered with thick, silky, black curls, and the hand that hung down by the side of the wagon was unusually long and slender. His face was richly, though somewhat heavily featured, olive tinted, save for the cheeks, which had a dusky crimson bloom. His mouth was as red and beguiling as a girl's, and his eyes were large, bold and black. All in all, he was a strikingly handsome fellow; but the expression of his face was sullen, and he somehow gave Eric the impression of a sinuous, feline creature basking in lazy grace, but ever ready for an unexpected spring.

The other occupant of the wagon was a man between sixty-five and seventy, with iron-gray hair, a long, full, gray beard, a harsh-featured face, and deep-set hazel eyes under bushy, bristling brows. He was evidently tall, with a spare, ungainly figure, and stooping shoulders. His mouth was close-lipped and relentless, and did not look as if it had ever smiled. Indeed, the idea of smiling could not be connected with this man — it was utterly incongruous. Yet there was nothing repellent about his face; and there was something in it that compelled Eric's attention.

He rather prided himself on being a student of physiognomy, and he felt quite sure that this man was no ordinary Lindsay farmer of the genial, garrulous type with which he was familiar.

Long after the old wagon, with its oddly assorted pair, had gone lumbering up the hill, Eric found himself thinking of the stern, heavy browed man and the black-eyed, red-lipped boy.

A Tea Table Conversation

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The Williamson place, where Eric boarded, was on the crest of the succeeding hill. He liked it as well as Larry West had prophesied that he would. The Williamsons, as well as the rest of the Lindsay people, took it for granted that he was a poor college student working his way through as Larry West had been doing. Eric did not disturb this belief, although he said nothing to contribute to it.

The Williamsons were at tea in the kitchen when Eric went in. Mrs. Williamson was the “saint in spectacles and calico” which Larry West had termed her. Eric liked her greatly. She was a slight, gray-haired woman, with a thin, sweet, highbred face, deeply lined with the records of outlived pain. She talked little as a rule; but, in the pungent country phrase she never spoke but she said something. The one thing that constantly puzzled Eric was how such a woman ever came to marry Robert Williamson.

She smiled in a motherly fashion at Eric, as he hung his hat on the whitewashed wall and took his place at the table. Outside of the window behind him was a birch grove which, in the westering sun, was a tremulous splendour, with a sea of undergrowth wavered into golden billows by every passing wind.

Old Robert Williamson sat opposite him, on a bench. He was a small, lean old man, half lost in loose clothes that seemed far too large for him. When he spoke his voice was as thin and squeaky as he appeared to be himself.

The other end of the bench was occupied by Timothy, sleek and complacent, with a snowy breast and white paws. After old Robert had taken a mouthful of anything he gave a piece to Timothy, who ate it daintily and purred resonant gratitude.

“You see we’re busy waiting for you, Master,” said old Robert. “You’re late this evening. Keep any of the youngsters in? That’s a foolish way of

punishing them, as hard on yourself as on them. One teacher we had four years ago used to lock them in and go home. Then he'd go back in an hour and let them out — if they were there. They weren't always. Tom Ferguson kicked the panels out of the old door once and got out that way. We put a new door of double plank in that they couldn't kick out."

"I stayed in the schoolroom to do some work," said Eric briefly.

"Well, you've missed Alexander Tracy. He was here to find out if you could play checkers, and, when I told him you could, he left word for you to go up and have a game some evening soon. Don't beat him too often, even if you can. You'll need to stand in with him, I tell you, Master, for he's got a son that may brew trouble for you when he starts in to go to school. Seth Tracy's a young imp, and he'd far sooner be in mischief than eat. He tries to run on every new teacher and he's run two clean out of the school. But he met his match in Mr. West. William Tracy's boys now — you won't have a scrap of bother with THEM. They're always good because their mother tells them every Sunday that they'll go straight to hell if they don't behave in school. It's effective. Take some preserve, Master. You know we don't help things here the way Mrs. Adam Scott does when she has boarders, 'I s'pose you don't want any of this — nor you — nor you?' Mother, Aleck says old George Wright is having the time of his life. His wife has gone to Charlottetown to visit her sister and he is his own boss for the first time since he was married, forty years ago. He's on a regular orgy, Aleck says. He smokes in the parlour and sits up till eleven o'clock reading dime novels."

"Perhaps I met Mr. Tracy," said Eric. "Is he a tall man, with gray hair and a dark, stern face?"

"No, he's a round, jolly fellow, is Aleck, and he stopped growing pretty much before he'd ever begun. I reckon the man you mean is Thomas Gordon. I seen him driving down the road too. HE won't be troubling you with invitations up, small fear of it. The Gordons ain't sociable, to say the least of it. No, sir! Mother, pass the biscuits to the Master."

"Who was the young fellow he had with him?" asked Eric curiously.

"Neil — Neil Gordon."

“That is a Scotch name for such a face and eyes. I should rather have expected Guiseppe or Angelo. The boy looks like an Italian.”

“Well, now, you know, Master, I reckon it’s likely he does, seeing that that’s exactly what he is. You’ve hit the nail square on the head. Italyun, yes, sir! Rather too much so, I’m thinking, for decent folks’ taste.”

“How has it happened that an Italian boy with a Scotch name is living in a place like Lindsay?”

“Well, Master, it was this way. About twenty-two years ago — WAS it twenty-two, Mother or twenty-four? Yes, it was twenty-two—’twas the same year our Jim was born and he’d have been twenty-two if he’d lived, poor little fellow. Well, Master, twenty-two years ago a couple of Italian pack peddlers came along and called at the Gordon place. The country was swarming with them then. I useter set the dog on one every day on an average.

“Well, these peddlers were man and wife, and the woman took sick up there at the Gordon place, and Janet Gordon took her in and nursed her. A baby was born the next day, and the woman died. Then the first thing anybody knew the father skipped clean out, pack and all, and was never seen or heard tell of afterwards. The Gordons were left with the fine youngster to their hands. Folks advised them to send him to the Orphan Asylum, and ‘twould have been the wisest plan, but the Gordons were never fond of taking advice. Old James Gordon was living then, Thomas and Janet’s father, and he said he would never turn a child out of his door. He was a masterful old man and liked to be boss. Folks used to say he had a grudge against the sun ‘cause it rose and set without his say so. Anyhow, they kept the baby. They called him Neil and had him baptized same as any Christian child. He’s always lived there. They did well enough by him. He was sent to school and taken to church and treated like one of themselves. Some folks think they made too much of him. It doesn’t always do with that kind, for ‘what’s bred in bone is mighty apt to come out in flesh,’ if ‘taint kept down pretty well. Neil’s smart and a great worker, they tell me. But folks hereabouts don’t like him. They say he ain’t to be trusted further’n you can see him, if as far. It’s certain he’s

awful hot tempered, and one time when he was going to school he near about killed a boy he'd took a spite to — choked him till he was black in the face and Neil had to be dragged off.”

“Well now, father, you know they teased him terrible,” protested Mrs. Williamson. “The poor boy had a real hard time when he went to school, Master. The other children were always casting things up to him and calling him names.”

“Oh, I daresay they tormented him a lot,” admitted her husband. “He’s a great hand at the fiddle and likes company. He goes to the harbour a good deal. But they say he takes sulky spells when he hasn’t a word to throw to a dog. ‘Twouldn’t be any wonder, living with the Gordons. They’re all as queer as Dick’s hat-band.”

“Father, you shouldn’t talk so about your neighbours,” said his wife rebukingly.

“Well now, Mother, you know they are, if you’d only speak up honest. But you’re like old Aunt Nancy Scott, you never say anything uncharitable except in the way of business. You know the Gordons ain’t like other people and never were and never will be. They’re about the only queer folks we have in Lindsay, Master, except old Peter Cook, who keeps twenty-five cats. Lord, Master, think of it! What chanct would a poor mouse have? None of the rest of us are queer, leastwise, we hain’t found it out if we are. But, then, we’re mighty uninteresting, I’m bound to admit that.”

“Where do the Gordons live?” asked Eric, who had grown used to holding fast to a given point of inquiry through all the bewildering mazes of old Robert’s conversation.

“Away up yander, half a mile in from Radnor road, with a thick spruce wood atween them and all the rest of the world. They never go away anywheres, except to church — they never miss that — and nobody goes there. There’s just old Thomas, and his sister Janet, and a niece of theirs, and this here Neil we’ve been talking about. They’re a queer, dour, cranky lot, and I WILL say it, Mother. There, give your old man a cup of tea and never mind the way his tongue runs on. Speaking of tea, do you know Mrs.

Adam Palmer and Mrs. Jim Martin took tea together at Foster Reid's last Wednesday afternoon?"

"No, why, I thought they were on bad terms," said Mrs. Williamson, betraying a little feminine curiosity.

"So they are, so they are. But they both happened to visit Mrs. Foster the same afternoon and neither would leave because that would be knuckling down to the other. So they stuck it out, on opposite sides of the parlour. Mrs. Foster says she never spent such an uncomfortable afternoon in all her life before. She would talk a spell to one and then t'other. And they kept talking TO Mrs. Foster and AT each other. Mrs. Foster says she really thought she'd have to keep them all night, for neither would start to go home afore the other. Finally Jim Martin came in to look for his wife, 'cause he thought she must have got stuck in the marsh, and that solved the problem. Master, you ain't eating anything. Don't mind my stopping; I was at it half an hour afore you come, and anyway I'm in a hurry. My hired boy went home to-day. He heard the rooster crow at twelve last night and he's gone home to see which of his family is dead. He knows one of 'em is. He heard a rooster crow in the middle of the night onct afore and the next day he got word that his second cousin down at Souris was dead. Mother, if the Master don't want any more tea, ain't there some cream for Timothy?"

A Phantom of Delight

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Shortly before sunset that evening Eric went for a walk. When he did not go to the shore he liked to indulge in long tramps through the Lindsay fields and woods, in the mellowness of “the sweet ‘o the year.” Most of the Lindsay houses were built along the main road, which ran parallel to the shore, or about the stores at “The Corner.” The farms ran back from them into solitudes of woods and pasture lands.

Eric struck southwest from the Williamson homestead, in a direction he had not hitherto explored, and walked briskly along, enjoying the witchery of the season all about him in earth and air and sky. He felt it and loved it and yielded to it, as anyone of clean life and sane pulses must do.

The spruce wood in which he presently found himself was smitten through with arrows of ruby light from the setting sun. He went through it, walking up a long, purple aisle where the wood-floor was brown and elastic under his feet, and came out beyond it on a scene which surprised him.

No house was in sight, but he found himself looking into an orchard; an old orchard, evidently long neglected and forsaken. But an orchard dies hard; and this one, which must have been a very delightful spot once, was delightful still, none the less so for the air of gentle melancholy which seemed to pervade it, the melancholy which invests all places that have once been the scenes of joy and pleasure and young life, and are so no longer, places where hearts have throbbed, and pulses thrilled, and eyes brightened, and merry voices echoed. The ghosts of these things seem to linger in their old haunts through many empty years.

The orchard was large and long, enclosed in a tumbledown old fence of longers bleached to a silvery gray in the suns of many lost summers. At regular intervals along the fence were tall, gnarled fir trees, and an evening wind, sweeter than that which blew over the beds of spice from

Lebanon, was singing in their tops, an earth-old song with power to carry the soul back to the dawn of time.

Eastward, a thick fir wood grew, beginning with tiny treelets just feathering from the grass, and grading up therefrom to the tall veterans of the mid-grove, unbrokenly and evenly, giving the effect of a solid, sloping green wall, so beautifully compact that it looked as if it had been clipped into its velvet surface by art.

Most of the orchard was grown over lushly with grass; but at the end where Eric stood there was a square, treeless place which had evidently once served as a homestead garden. Old paths were still visible, bordered by stones and large pebbles. There were two clumps of lilac trees; one blossoming in royal purple, the other in white. Between them was a bed ablaze with the starry spikes of June lilies. Their penetrating, haunting fragrance distilled on the dewy air in every soft puff of wind. Along the fence rosebushes grew, but it was as yet too early in the season for roses.

Beyond was the orchard proper, three long rows of trees with green avenues between, each tree standing in a wonderful bow of pink and white.

The charm of the place took sudden possession of Eric as nothing had ever done before. He was not given to romantic fancies; but the orchard laid hold of him subtly and drew him to itself, and he was never to be quite his own man again. He went into it over one of the broken panels of fence, and so, unknowing, went forward to meet all that life held for him.

He walked the length of the orchard's middle avenue between long, sinuous boughs picked out with delicate, rose-hearted bloom. When he reached its southern boundary he flung himself down in a grassy corner of the fence where another lilac bush grew, with ferns and wild blue violets at its roots. From where he now was he got a glimpse of a house about a quarter of a mile away, its gray gable peering out from a dark spruce wood. It seemed a dull, gloomy, remote place, and he did not know who lived there.

He had a wide outlook to the west, over far hazy fields and misty blue intervals. The sun had just set, and the whole world of green meadows

beyond swam in golden light. Across a long valley brimmed with shadow were uplands of sunset, and great sky lakes of saffron and rose where a soul might lose itself in colour. The air was very fragrant with the baptism of the dew, and the odours of a bed of wild mint upon which he had trampled. Robins were whistling, clear and sweet and sudden, in the woods all about him.

“This is a veritable ‘haunt of ancient peace,’” quoted Eric, looking around with delighted eyes. “I could fall asleep here, dream dreams and see visions. What a sky! Could anything be diviner than that fine crystal eastern blue, and those frail white clouds that look like woven lace? What a dizzying, intoxicating fragrance lilacs have! I wonder if perfume could set a man drunk. Those apple trees now — why, what is that?”

Eric started up and listened. Across the mellow stillness, mingled with the croon of the wind in the trees and the flute-like calls of the robins, came a strain of delicious music, so beautiful and fantastic that Eric held his breath in astonishment and delight. Was he dreaming? No, it was real music, the music of a violin played by some hand inspired with the very spirit of harmony. He had never heard anything like it; and, somehow, he felt quite sure that nothing exactly like it ever had been heard before; he believed that that wonderful music was coming straight from the soul of the unseen violinist, and translating itself into those most airy and delicate and exquisite sounds for the first time; the very soul of music, with all sense and earthliness refined away.

It was an elusive, haunting melody, strangely suited to the time and place; it had in it the sigh of the wind in the woods, the eerie whispering of the grasses at dewfall, the white thoughts of the June lilies, the rejoicing of the apple blossoms; all the soul of all the old laughter and song and tears and gladness and sobs the orchard had ever known in the lost years; and besides all this, there was in it a pitiful, plaintive cry as of some imprisoned thing calling for freedom and utterance.

At first Eric listened as a man spellbound, mutely and motionlessly, lost in wonderment. Then a very natural curiosity overcame him. Who in

Lindsay could play a violin like that? And who was playing so here, in this deserted old orchard, of all places in the world?

He rose and walked up the long white avenue, going as slowly and silently as possible, for he did not wish to interrupt the player. When he reached the open space of the garden he stopped short in new amazement and was again tempted into thinking he must certainly be dreaming.

Under the big branching white lilac tree was an old, sagging, wooden bench; and on this bench a girl was sitting, playing on an old brown violin. Her eyes were on the faraway horizon and she did not see Eric. For a few moments he stood there and looked at her. The pictures she made photographed itself on his vision to the finest detail, never to be blotted from his book of remembrance. To his latest day Eric Marshall will be able to recall vividly that scene as he saw it then — the velvet darkness of the spruce woods, the overarching sky of soft brilliance, the swaying lilac blossoms, and amid it all the girl on the old bench with the violin under her chin.

He had, in his twenty-four years of life, met hundreds of pretty women, scores of handsome women, a scant half dozen of really beautiful women. But he knew at once, beyond all possibility of question or doubt, that he had never seen or imagined anything so exquisite as this girl of the orchard. Her loveliness was so perfect that his breath almost went from him in his first delight of it.

Her face was oval, marked in every cameo-like line and feature with that expression of absolute, flawless purity, found in the angels and Madonnas of old paintings, a purity that held in it no faintest strain of earthliness. Her head was bare, and her thick, jet-black hair was parted above her forehead and hung in two heavy lustrous braids over her shoulders. Her eyes were of such a blue as Eric had never seen in eyes before, the tint of the sea in the still, calm light that follows after a fine sunset; they were as luminous as the stars that came out over Lindsay Harbour in the afterglow, and were fringed about with very long, soot-black lashes, and arched over by most delicately pencilled dark eyebrows. Her skin was as fine and purely tinted as the heart of a white rose. The

collarless dress of pale blue print she wore revealed her smooth, slender throat; her sleeves were rolled up above her elbows and the hand which guided the bow of her violin was perhaps the most beautiful thing about her, perfect in shape and texture, firm and white, with rosy-nailed taper fingers. One long, drooping plume of lilac blossom lightly touched her hair and cast a wavering shadow over the flowerlike face beneath it.

There was something very childlike about her, and yet at least eighteen sweet years must have gone to the making of her. She seemed to be playing half unconsciously, as if her thoughts were far away in some fair dreamland of the skies. But presently she looked away from “the bourne of sunset,” and her lovely eyes fell on Eric, standing motionless before her in the shadow of the apple tree.

The sudden change that swept over her was startling. She sprang to her feet, the music breaking in mid-strain and the bow slipping from her hand to the grass. Every hint of colour fled from her face and she trembled like one of the wind-stirred June lilies.

“I beg your pardon,” said Eric hastily. “I am sorry that I have alarmed you. But your music was so beautiful that I did not remember you were not aware of my presence here. Please forgive me.”

He stopped in dismay, for he suddenly realized that the expression on the girl’s face was one of terror — not merely the startled alarm of a shy, childlike creature who had thought herself alone, but absolute terror. It was betrayed in her blanched and quivering lips and in the widely distended blue eyes that stared back into his with the expression of some trapped wild thing.

It hurt him that any woman should look at him in such a fashion, at him who had always held womanhood in such reverence.

“Don’t look so frightened,” he said gently, thinking only of calming her fear, and speaking as he would to a child. “I will not hurt you. You are safe, quite safe.”

In his eagerness to reassure her he took an unconscious step forward. Instantly she turned, and, without a sound, fled across the orchard, through a gap in the northern fence and along what seemed to be a lane bordering

the fir wood beyond and arched over with wild cherry trees misty white in the gathering gloom. Before Eric could recover his wits she had vanished from his sight among the firs.

He stooped and picked up the violin bow, feeling slightly foolish and very much annoyed.

“Well, this is a most mysterious thing,” he said, somewhat impatiently. “Am I bewitched? Who was she? WHAT was she? Can it be possible that she is a Lindsay girl? And why in the name of all that’s provoking should she be so frightened at the mere sight of me? I have never thought I was a particularly hideous person, but certainly this adventure has not increased my vanity to any perceptible extent. Perhaps I have wandered into an enchanted orchard, and been outwardly transformed into an ogre. Now that I have come to think of it, there is something quite uncanny about the place. Anything might happen here. It is no common orchard for the production of marketable apples, that is plain to be seen. No, it’s a most unwholesome locality; and the sooner I make my escape from it the better.”

He glanced about it with a whimsical smile. The light was fading rapidly and the orchard was full of soft, creeping shadows and silences. It seemed to wink sleepy eyes of impish enjoyment at his perplexity. He laid the violin bow down on the old bench.

“Well, there is no use in my following her, and I have no right to do so even if it were of use. But I certainly wish she hadn’t fled in such evident terror. Eyes like hers were never meant to express anything but tenderness and trust. Why — why — WHY was she so frightened? And who — who — WHO — can she be?”

All the way home, over fields and pastures that were beginning to be moonlight silvered he pondered the mystery.

“Let me see,” he reflected. “Mr. Williamson was describing the Lindsay girls for my benefit the other evening. If I remember rightly he said that there were four handsome ones in the district. What were their names? Florrie Woods, Melissa Foster — no, Melissa Palmer — Emma Scott, and Jennie May Ferguson. Can she be one of them? No, it is a

flagrant waste of time and gray matter supposing it. That girl couldn't be a Florrie or a Melissa or an Emma, while Jennie May is completely out of the question. Well, there is some bewitchment in the affair. Of that I'm convinced. So I'd better forget all about it."

But Eric found that it was impossible to forget all about it. The more he tried to forget, the more keenly and insistently he remembered. The girl's exquisite face haunted him and the mystery of her tantalized him.

True, he knew that, in all likelihood, he might easily solve the problem by asking the Williamsons about her. But somehow, to his own surprise, he found that he shrank from doing this. He felt that it was impossible to ask Robert Williamson and probably have the girl's name overflowed in a stream of petty gossip concerning her and all her antecedents and collaterals to the third and fourth generation. If he had to ask any one it should be Mrs. Williamson; but he meant to find out the secret for himself if it were at all possible.

He had planned to go to the harbour the next evening. One of the lobstermen had promised to take him out codfishing. But instead he wandered southwest over the fields again.

He found the orchard easily — he had half expected NOT to find it. It was still the same fragrant, grassy, wind-haunted spot. But it had no occupant and the violin bow was gone from the old bench.

"Perhaps she tiptoed back here for it by the light o' the moon," thought Eric, pleasing his fancy by the vision of a lithe, girlish figure stealing with a beating heart through mingled shadow and moonshine. "I wonder if she will possibly come this evening, or if I have frightened her away for ever. I'll hide me behind this spruce copse and wait."

Eric waited until dark, but no music sounded through the orchard and no one came to it. The keenness of his disappointment surprised him, nay more, it vexed him. What nonsense to be so worked up because a little girl he had seen for five minutes failed to appear! Where was his common sense, his "gumption," as old Robert Williamson would have said? Naturally a man liked to look at a pretty face. But was that any reason why he should feel as if life were flat, stale, and unprofitable simply because he

could not look at it? He called himself a fool and went home in a petulant mood. Arriving there, he plunged fiercely into solving algebraical equations and working out geometry exercises, determined to put out of his head forthwith all vain imaginings of an enchanted orchard, white in the moonshine, with lilts of elfin music echoing down its long arcades.

The next day was Sunday and Eric went to church twice. The Williamson pew was one of the side ones at the top of the church and its occupants practically faced the congregation. Eric looked at every girl and woman in the audience, but he saw nothing of the face which, setting will power and common sense flatly at defiance, haunted his memory like a star.

Thomas Gordon was there, sitting alone in his long, empty pew near the top of the building; and Neil Gordon sang in the choir which occupied the front pew of the gallery. He had a powerful and melodious, though untrained voice, which dominated the singing and took the colour out of the weaker, more commonplace tones of the other singers. He was well-dressed in a suit of dark blue serge, with a white collar and tie. But Eric idly thought it did not become him so well as the working clothes in which he had first seen him. He was too obviously dressed up, and he looked coarser and more out of harmony with his surroundings.

For two days Eric refused to let himself think of the orchard. Monday evening he went codfishing, and Tuesday evening he went up to play checkers with Alexander Tracy. Alexander won all the games so easily that he never had any respect for Eric Marshall again.

“Played like a feller whose thoughts were wool gathering,” he complained to his wife. “He’ll never make a checker player — never in this world.”

The Story of Kilmeny

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Wednesday evening Eric went to the orchard again; and again he was disappointed. He went home, determined to solve the mystery by open inquiry. Fortune favoured him, for he found Mrs. Williamson alone, sitting by the west window of her kitchen and knitting at a long gray sock. She hummed softly to herself as she knitted, and Timothy slept blackly at her feet. She looked at Eric with quiet affection in her large, candid eyes. She had liked Mr. West. But Eric had found his way into the inner chamber of her heart, by reason that his eyes were so like those of the little son she had buried in the Lindsay churchyard many years before.

“Mrs. Williamson,” said Eric, with an affectation of carelessness, “I chanced on an old deserted orchard back behind the woods over there last week, a charming bit of wilderness. Do you know whose it is?”

“I suppose it must be the old Connors orchard,” answered Mrs. Williamson after a moment’s reflection. “I had forgotten all about it. It must be all of thirty years since Mr. and Mrs. Connors moved away. Their house and barns were burned down and they sold the land to Thomas Gordon and went to live in town. They’re both dead now. Mr. Connors used to be very proud of his orchard. There weren’t many orchards in Lindsay then, though almost everybody has one now.”

“There was a young girl in it, playing on a violin,” said Eric, annoyed to find that it cost him an effort to speak of her, and that the blood mounted to his face as he did so. “She ran away in great alarm as soon as she saw me, although I do not think I did or said anything to frighten or vex her. I have no idea who she was. Do you know?”

Mrs. Williamson did not make an immediate reply. She laid down her knitting and gazed out of the window as if pondering seriously some question in her own mind. Finally she said, with an intonation of keen interest in her voice,

“I suppose it must have been Kilmeny Gordon, Master.”

“Kilmeny Gordon? Do you mean the niece of Thomas Gordon of whom your husband spoke?”

“Yes.”

“I can hardly believe that the girl I saw can be a member of Thomas Gordon’s family.”

“Well, if it wasn’t Kilmeny Gordon I don’t know who it could have been. There is no other house near that orchard and I’ve heard she plays the violin. If it was Kilmeny you’ve seen what very few people in Lindsay have ever seen, Master. And those few have never seen her close by. I have never laid eyes on her myself. It’s no wonder she ran away, poor girl. She isn’t used to seeing strangers.”

“I’m rather glad if that was the sole reason of her flight,” said Eric. “I admit I didn’t like to see any girl so frightened of me as she appeared to be. She was as white as paper, and so terrified that she never uttered a word, but fled like a deer to cover.”

“Well, she couldn’t have spoken a word in any case,” said Mrs. Williamson quietly. “Kilmeny Gordon is dumb.”

Eric sat in dismayed silence for a moment. That beautiful creature afflicted in such a fashion — why, it was horrible! Mingled with his dismay was a strange pang of personal regret and disappointment.

“It couldn’t have been Kilmeny Gordon, then,” he protested at last, remembering. “The girl I saw played on the violin exquisitely. I never heard anything like it. It is impossible that a deaf mute could play like that.”

“Oh, she isn’t deaf, Master,” responded Mrs. Williamson, looking at Eric keenly through her spectacles. She picked up her knitting and fell to work again. “That is the strange part of it, if anything about her can be stranger than another. She can hear as well as anybody and understands everything that is said to her. But she can’t speak a word and never could,

at least, so they say. The truth is, nobody knows much about her. Janet and Thomas never speak of her, and Neil won't either. He has been well questioned, too, you can depend on that; but he won't ever say a word about Kilmeny and he gets mad if folks persist."

"Why isn't she to be spoken of?" queried Eric impatiently. "What is the mystery about her?"

"It's a sad story, Master. I suppose the Gordons look on her existence as a sort of disgrace. For my own part, I think it's terrible, the way she's been brought up. But the Gordons are very strange people, Mr. Marshall. I kind of reproved father for saying so, you remember, but it is true. They have very strange ways. And you've really seen Kilmeny? What does she look like? I've heard that she was handsome. Is it true?"

"I thought her very beautiful," said Eric rather curtly. "But HOW has she been brought up, Mrs. Williamson? And why?"

"Well, I might as well tell you the whole story, Master. Kilmeny is the niece of Thomas and Janet Gordon. Her mother was Margaret Gordon, their younger sister. Old James Gordon came out from Scotland. Janet and Thomas were born in the Old Country and were small children when they came here. They were never very sociable folks, but still they used to visit out some then, and people used to go there. They were kind and honest people, even if they were a little peculiar.

"Mrs. Gordon died a few years after they came out, and four years later James Gordon went home to Scotland and brought a new wife back with him. She was a great deal younger than he was and a very pretty woman, as my mother often told me. She was friendly and gay and liked social life. The Gordon place was a very different sort of place after she came there, and even Janet and Thomas got thawed out and softened down a good bit. They were real fond of their stepmother, I've heard. Then, six years after she was married, the second Mrs. Gordon died too. She died when Margaret was born. They say James Gordon almost broke his heart over it.

"Janet brought Margaret up. She and Thomas just worshipped the child and so did their father. I knew Margaret Gordon well once. We were just

the same age and we set together in school. We were always good friends until she turned against all the world.

“She was a strange girl in some ways even then, but I always liked her, though a great many people didn’t. She had some bitter enemies, but she had some devoted friends too. That was her way. She made folks either hate or love her. Those who did love her would have gone through fire and water for her.

“When she grew up she was very pretty — tall and splendid, like a queen, with great thick braids of black hair and red, red cheeks and lips. Everybody who saw her looked at her a second time. She was a little vain of her beauty, I think, Master. And she was proud, oh, she was very proud. She liked to be first in everything, and she couldn’t bear not to show to good advantage. She was dreadful determined, too. You couldn’t budge her an inch, Master, when she once had made up her mind on any point. But she was warmhearted and generous. She could sing like an angel and she was very clever. She could learn anything with just one look at it and she was terrible fond of reading.

“When I’m talking about her like this it all comes back to me, just what she was like and how she looked and spoke and acted, and little ways she had of moving her hands and head. I declare it almost seems as if she was right here in this room instead of being over there in the churchyard. I wish you’d light the lamp, Master. I feel kind of nervous.”

Eric rose and lighted the lamp, rather wondering at Mrs. Williamson’s unusual exhibition of nerves. She was generally so calm and composed.

“Thank you, Master. That’s better. I won’t be fancying now that Margaret Gordon’s here listening to what I’m saying. I had the feeling so strong a moment ago.

“I suppose you think I’m a long while getting to Kilmeny, but I’m coming to that. I didn’t mean to talk so much about Margaret, but somehow my thoughts got taken up with her.

“Well, Margaret passed the Board and went to Queen’s Academy and got a teacher’s license. She passed pretty well up when she came out, but

Janet told me she cried all night after the pass list came out because there were some ahead of her.

“She went to teach school over at Radnor. It was there she met a man named Ronald Fraser. Margaret had never had a beau before. She could have had any young man in Lindsay if she had wanted him, but she wouldn’t look at one of them. They said it was because she thought nobody was good enough for her, but that wasn’t the way of it at all, Master. I knew, because Margaret and I used to talk of those matters, as girls do. She didn’t believe in going with anybody unless it was somebody she thought everything of. And there was nobody in Lindsay she cared that much for.

“This Ronald Fraser was a stranger from Nova Scotia and nobody knew much about him. He was a widower, although he was only a young man. He had set up storekeeping in Radnor and was doing well. He was real handsome and had taking ways women like. It was said that all the Radnor girls were in love with him, but I don’t think his worst enemy could have said he flirted with them. He never took any notice of them; but the very first time he saw Margaret Gordon he fell in love with her and she with him.

“They came over to church in Lindsay together the next Sunday and everybody said it would be a match. Margaret looked lovely that day, so gentle and womanly. She had been used to hold her head pretty high, but that day she held it drooping a little and her black eyes cast down. Ronald Fraser was very tall and fair, with blue eyes. They made as handsome a couple as I ever saw.

“But old James Gordon and Thomas and Janet didn’t much approve of him. I saw that plain enough one time I was there and he brought Margaret home from Radnor Friday night. I guess they wouldn’t have liked anybody, though, who come after Margaret. They thought nobody was good enough for her.

“But Margaret coaxed them all round in time. She could do pretty near anything with them, they were so fond and proud of her. Her father held out the longest, but finally he give in and consented for her to marry Ronald Fraser.

“They had a big wedding, too — all the neighbours were asked. Margaret always liked to make a display. I was her bridesmaid, Master. I helped her dress and nothing would please her; she wanted to look that nice for Ronald’s sake. She was a handsome bride; dressed in white, with red roses in her hair and at her breast. She wouldn’t wear white flowers; she said they looked too much like funeral flowers. She looked like a picture. I can see her this minute, as plain as plain, just as she was that night, blushing and turning pale by turns, and looking at Ronald with her eyes of love. If ever a girl loved a man with all her heart Margaret Gordon did. It almost made me feel frightened. She gave him the worship it isn’t right to give anybody but God, Master, and I think that is always punished.

“They went to live at Radnor and for a little while everything went well. Margaret had a nice house, and was gay and happy. She dressed beautiful and entertained a good deal. Then — well, Ronald Fraser’s first wife turned up looking for him! She wasn’t dead after all.

“Oh, there was terrible scandal, Master. The talk and gossip was something dreadful. Every one you met had a different story, and it was hard to get at the truth. Some said Ronald Fraser had known all the time that his wife wasn’t dead, and had deceived Margaret. But I don’t think he did. He swore he didn’t. They hadn’t been very happy together, it seems. Her mother made trouble between them. Then she went to visit her mother in Montreal, and died in the hospital there, so the word came to Ronald. Perhaps he believed it a little too readily, but that he DID believe it I never had a doubt. Her story was that it was another woman of the same name. When she found out Ronald thought her dead she and her mother agreed to let him think so. But when she heard he had got married again she thought she’d better let him know the truth.

“It all sounded like a queer story and I suppose you couldn’t blame people for not believing it too readily. But I’ve always felt it was true. Margaret didn’t think so, though. She believed that Ronald Fraser had deceived her, knowing all the time that he couldn’t make her his lawful wife. She turned against him and hated him just as much as she had loved him before.

“Ronald Fraser went away with his real wife, and in less than a year word came of his death. They said he just died of a broken heart, nothing more nor less.

“Margaret came home to her father’s house. From the day that she went over its threshold, she never came out until she was carried out in her coffin three years ago. Not a soul outside of her own family ever saw her again. I went to see her, but Janet told me she wouldn’t see me. It was foolish of Margaret to act so. She hadn’t done anything real wrong; and everybody was sorry for her and would have helped her all they could. But I reckon pity cut her as deep as blame could have done, and deeper, because you see, Master, she was so proud she couldn’t bear it.

“They say her father was hard on her, too; and that was unjust if it was true. Janet and Thomas felt the disgrace, too. The people that had been in the habit of going to the Gordon place soon stopped going, for they could see they were not welcome.

“Old James Gordon died that winter. He never held his head up again after the scandal. He had been an elder in the church, but he handed in his resignation right away and nobody could persuade him to withdraw it.

“Kilmeny was born in the spring, but nobody ever saw her, except the minister who baptized her. She was never taken to church or sent to school. Of course, I suppose there wouldn’t have been any use in her going to school when she couldn’t speak, and it’s likely Margaret taught her all she could be taught herself. But it was dreadful that she was never taken to church, or let go among the children and young folks. And it was a real shame that nothing was ever done to find out why she couldn’t talk, or if she could be cured.

“Margaret Gordon died three years ago, and everybody in Lindsay went to the funeral. But they didn’t see her. The coffin lid was screwed down. And they didn’t see Kilmeny either. I would have loved to see HER for Margaret’s sake, but I didn’t want to see poor Margaret. I had never seen her since the night she was a bride, for I had left Lindsay on a visit just after that, and what I came home the scandal had just broken out. I remembered Margaret in all her pride and beauty, and I couldn’t have

borne to look at her dead face and see the awful changes I knew must be there.

“It was thought perhaps Janet and Thomas would take Kilmeny out after her mother was gone, but they never did, so I suppose they must have agreed with Margaret about the way she had been brought up. I’ve often felt sorry for the poor girl, and I don’t think her people did right by her, even if she was mysteriously afflicted. She must have had a very sad, lonely life.

“That is the story, Master, and I’ve been a long time telling it, as I dare say you think. But the past just seemed to be living again for me as I talked. If you don’t want to be pestered with questions about Kilmeny Gordon, Master, you’d better not let on you’ve seen her.”

Eric was not likely to. He had heard all he wanted to know and more.

“So this girl is at to core of a tragedy,” he reflected, as he went to his room. “And she is dumb! The pity of it! Kilmeny! The name suits her. She is as lovely and innocent as the heroine of the old ballad. ‘And oh, Kilmeny was fair to see.’ But the next line is certainly not so appropriate, for her eyes were anything but ‘still and steadfast’ — after she had seen me, at all events.”

He tried to put her out of his thoughts, but he could not. The memory of her beautiful face drew him with a power he could not resist. The next evening he went again to the orchard.

A Rose of Womanhood

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When he emerged from the spruce wood and entered the orchard his heart gave a sudden leap, and he felt that the blood rushed madly to his face. She was there, bending over the bed of June lilies in the centre of the garden plot. He could only see her profile, virginal and white.

He stopped, not wishing to startle her again. When she lifted her head he expected to see her shrink and flee, but she did not do so; she only grew a little paler and stood motionless, watching him intently.

Seeing this, he walked slowly towards her, and when he was so close to her that he could hear the nervous flutter of her breath over her parted, trembling lips, he said very gently,

“Do not be afraid of me. I am a friend, and I do not wish to disturb or annoy you in any way.”

She seemed to hesitate a moment. Then she lifted a little slate that hung at her belt, wrote something on it rapidly, and held it out to him. He read, in a small distinctive handwriting,

“I am not afraid of you now. Mother told me that all strange men were very wicked and dangerous, but I do not think you can be. I have thought a great deal about you, and I am sorry I ran away the other night.”

He realized her entire innocence and simplicity. Looking earnestly into her still troubled eyes he said,

“I would not do you any harm for the world. All men are not wicked, although it is too true that some are so. My name is Eric Marshall and I am teaching in the Lindsay school. You, I think, are Kilmeny Gordon. I thought your music so very lovely the other evening that I have been wishing ever since that I might hear it again. Won’t you play for me?”

The vague fear had all gone from her eyes by this time, and suddenly she smiled — a merry, girlish, wholly irresistible smile, which broke through the calm of her face like a gleam of sunlight rippling over a placid

sea. Then she wrote, “I am very sorry that I cannot play this evening. I did not bring my violin with me. But I will bring it tomorrow evening and play for you if you would like to hear me. I should like to please you.”

Again that note of innocent frankness! What a child she was — what a beautiful, ignorant child, utterly unskilled in the art of hiding her feelings! But why should she hide them? They were as pure and beautiful as herself. Eric smiled back at her with equal frankness.

“I should like it more than I can say, and I shall be sure to come tomorrow evening if it is fine. But if it is at all damp or unpleasant you must not come. In that case another evening will do. And now won’t you give me some flowers?”

She nodded, with another little smile, and began to pick some of the June lilies, carefully selecting the most perfect among them. He watched her lithe, graceful motions with delight; every movement seemed poetry itself. She looked like a very incarnation of Spring — as if all the shimmer of young leaves and glow of young mornings and evanescent sweetness of young blossoms in a thousand springs had been embodied in her.

When she came to him, radiant, her hands full of the lilies, a couplet from a favourite poem darted into his head —

”A blossom vermeil white
That lightly breaks a faded flower sheath,
Here, by God’s rood, is the one maid for me.”

The next moment he was angry with himself for his folly. She was, after all, nothing but a child — and a child set apart from her fellow creatures by her sad defect. He must not let himself think nonsense.

“Thank you. These June lilies are the sweetest flowers the spring brings us. Do you know that their real name is the white narcissus?” She looked pleased and interested.

“No, I did not know,” she wrote. “I have often read of the white narcissus and wondered what it was like. I never thought of it being the same as my dear June lilies. I am glad you told me. I love flowers very much. They are my very good friends.”

“You couldn’t help being friends with the lilies. Like always takes to like,” said Eric. “Come and sit down on the old bench — here, where you were sitting that night I frightened you so badly. I could not imagine who or what you were. Sometimes I thought I had dreamed you — only,” he added under his breath and unheard by her, “I could never have dreamed anything half so lovely.”

She sat down beside him on the old bench and looked unshrinkingly in his face. There was no boldness in her glance — nothing but the most perfect, childlike trust and confidence. If there had been any evil in his heart — any skulking thought, he was afraid to acknowledge — those eyes must have searched it out and shamed it. But he could meet them unafraid. Then she wrote,

“I was very much frightened. You must have thought me very silly, but I had never seen any man except Uncle Thomas and Neil and the egg peddler. And you are different from them — oh, very, very different. I was afraid to come back here the next evening. And yet, somehow, I wanted to come. I did not want you to think I did not know how to behave. I sent Neil back for my bow in the morning. I could not do without it. I cannot speak, you know. Are you sorry?”

“I am very sorry for your sake.”

“Yes, but what I mean is, would you like me better if I could speak like other people?”

“No, it does not make any difference in that way, Kilmeny. By the way, do you mind my calling you Kilmeny?”

She looked puzzled and wrote, “What else should you call me?
That is my name. Everybody calls me that.”

“But I am such a stranger to you that perhaps you would wish me to call you Miss Gordon.”

“Oh, no, I would not like that,” she wrote quickly, with a distressed look on her face. “Nobody ever calls me that. It would make me feel as if I were not myself but somebody else. And you do not seem like a stranger to me. Is there any reason why you should not call me Kilmeny?”

“No reason whatever, if you will allow me the privilege. You have a very lovely name — the very name you ought to have.”

“I am glad you like it. Do you know that I was called after my grandmother and she was called after a girl in a poem? Aunt Janet has never liked my name, although she liked my grandmother. But I am glad you like both my name and me. I was afraid you would not like me because I cannot speak.”

“You can speak through your music, Kilmeny.”

She looked pleased. “How well you understand,” she wrote. “Yes, I cannot speak or sing as other people can, but I can make my violin say things for me.”

“Do you compose your own music?” he asked. But he saw she did not understand him. “I mean, did any one ever teach you the music you played here that evening?”

“Oh, no. It just came as I thought. It has always been that way. When I was very little Neil taught me to hold the violin and the bow, and the rest all came of itself. My violin once belonged to Neil, but he gave it to me. Neil is very good and kind to me, but I like you better. Tell me about yourself.”

The wonder of her grew upon him with every passing moment. How lovely she was! What dear little ways and gestures she had — ways and gestures as artless and unstudied as they were effective. And how strangely little her dumbness seemed to matter after all! She wrote so quickly and easily, her eyes and smile gave such expression to her mobile face, that voice was hardly missed.

They lingered in the orchard until the long, languid shadows of the trees crept to their feet. It was just after sunset and the distant hills were purple against the melting saffron of the sky in the west and the crystalline blue of the sky in the south. Eastward, just over the fir woods, were clouds, white and high heaped like snow mountains, and the westernmost of them shone with a rosy glow as of sunset on an Alpine height.

The higher worlds of air were still full of light — perfect, stainless light, unmarred of earth shadow; but down in the orchard and under the

spruces the light had almost gone, giving place to a green, dewy dusk, made passionately sweet with the breath of the apple blossoms and mint, and the balsamic odours that rained down upon them from the firs.

Eric told her of his life, and the life in the great outer world, in which she was girlishly and eagerly interested. She asked him many questions about it — direct and incisive questions which showed that she had already formed decided opinions and views about it. Yet it was plain to be seen that she did not regard it as anything she might ever share herself. Hers was the dispassionate interest with which she might have listened to a tale of the land of fairy or of some great empire long passed away from earth.

Eric discovered that she had read a great deal of poetry and history, and a few books of biography and travel. She did not know what a novel meant and had never heard of one. Curiously enough, she was well informed regarding politics and current events, from the weekly paper for which her uncle subscribed.

“I never read the newspaper while mother was alive,” she wrote, “nor any poetry either. She taught me to read and write and I read the Bible all through many times and some of the histories. After mother died Aunt Janet gave me all her books. She had a great many. Most of them had been given to her as prizes when she was a girl at school, and some of them had been given to her by my father. Do you know the story of my father and mother?”

Eric nodded.

“Yes, Mrs. Williamson told me all about it. She was a friend of your mother.”

“I am glad you have heard it. It is so sad that I would not like to tell it, but you will understand everything better because you know. I never heard it until just before mother died. Then she told me all. I think she had thought father was to blame for the trouble; but before she died she told me she believed that she had been unjust to him and that he had not known. She said that when people were dying they saw things more clearly and she saw she had made a mistake about father. She said she had many

more things she wanted to tell me, but she did not have time to tell them because she died that night. It was a long while before I had the heart to read her books. But when I did I thought them so beautiful. They were poetry and it was like music put into words.”

“I will bring you some books to read, if you would like them,” said Eric.

Her great blue eyes gleamed with interest and delight.

“Oh, thank you, I would like it very much. I have read mine over so often that I know them nearly all by heart. One cannot get tired of really beautiful things, but sometimes I feel that I would like some new books.”

“Are you never lonely, Kilmeny?”

“Oh, no, how could I be? There is always plenty for me to do, helping Aunt Janet about the house. I can do a great many things” — she glanced up at him with a pretty pride as her flying pencil traced the words. “I can cook and sew. Aunt Janet says I am a very good housekeeper, and she does not praise people very often or very much. And then, when I am not helping her, I have my dear, dear violin. That is all the company I want. But I like to read and hear of the big world so far away and the people who live there and the things that are done. It must be a very wonderful place.”

“Wouldn’t you like to go out into it and see its wonders and meet those people yourself?” he asked, smiling at her.

At once he saw that, in some way he could not understand, he had hurt her. She snatched her pencil and wrote, with such swiftness of motion and energy of expression that it almost seemed as if she had passionately exclaimed the words aloud,

“No, no, no. I do not want to go anywhere away from home. I do not want ever to see strangers or have them see me. I could not bear it.”

He thought that possibly the consciousness of her defect accounted for this. Yet she did not seem sensitive about her dumbness and made frequent casual references to it in her written remarks. Or perhaps it was the shadow on her birth. Yet she was so innocent that it seemed unlikely she could realize or understand the existence of such a shadow. Eric finally decided that it was merely the rather morbid shrinking of a sensitive child

who had been brought up in an unwholesome and unnatural way. At last the lengthening shadows warned him that it was time to go.

“You won’t forget to come tomorrow evening and play for me,” he said, rising reluctantly. She answered by a quick little shake of her sleek, dark head, and a smile that was eloquent. He watched her as she walked across the orchard,

“With the moon’s beauty and the moon’s soft pace,”
and along the wild cherry lane. At the corner of the firs she paused and waved her hand to him before turning it.

When Eric reached home old Robert Williamson was having a lunch of bread and milk in the kitchen. He looked up, with a friendly grin, as Eric strode in, whistling.

“Been having a walk, Master?” he queried.

“Yes,” said Eric.

Unconsciously and involuntarily he infused so much triumph into the simple monosyllable that even old Robert felt it. Mrs. Williamson, who was cutting bread at the end of the table, laid down her knife and loaf, and looked at the young man with a softly troubled expression in her eyes. She wondered if he had been back to the Connors orchard — and if he could have seen Kilmeny Gordon again.

“You didn’t discover a gold mine, I s’pose?” said old Robert dryly.
“You look as if you might have.”

At the Gate of Eden

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When Eric went to the old Connors orchard the next evening he found Kilmeny waiting for him on the bench under the white lilac tree, with the violin in her lap. As soon as she saw him she caught it up and began to play an airy delicate little melody that sounded like the laughter of daisies.

When it was finished she dropped her bow, and looked up at him with flushed cheeks and questioning eyes.

“What did that say to you?” she wrote.

“It said something like this,” answered Eric, falling into her humour smilingly. “Welcome, my friend. It is a very beautiful evening. The sky is so blue and the apple blossoms so sweet. The wind and I have been here alone together and the wind is a good companion, but still I am glad to see you. It is an evening on which it is good to be alive and to wander in an orchard that is fine and white. Welcome, my friend.”

She clapped her hands, looking like a pleased child.

“You are very quick to understand,” she wrote. “That was just what I meant. Of course I did not think it in just those words, but that was the FEELING of it. I felt that I was so glad I was alive, and that the apple blossoms and the white lilacs and the trees and I were all pleased together to see you come. You are quicker than Neil. He is almost always puzzled to understand my music, and I am puzzled to understand his. Sometimes it frightens me. It seems as if there were something in it trying to take hold of me — something I do not like and want to run away from.”

Somehow Eric did not like her references to Neil. The idea of that handsome, low-born boy seeing Kilmeny every day, talking to her, sitting at the same table with her, dwelling under the same roof, meeting her in the hundred intimacies of daily life, was distasteful to him. He put the thought away from him, and flung himself down on the long grass at her feet.

“Now play for me, please,” he said. “I want to lie here and listen to you.”

“And look at you,” he might have added. He could not tell which was the greater pleasure. Her beauty, more wonderful than any pictured loveliness he had ever seen, delighted him. Every tint and curve and outline of her face was flawless. Her music enthralled him. This child, he told himself as he listened, had genius. But it was being wholly wasted. He found himself thinking resentfully of the people who were her guardians, and who were responsible for her strange life. They had done her a great and irremediable wrong. How dared they doom her to such an existence? If her defect of utterance had been attended to in time, who knew but that it might have been cured? Now it was probably too late. Nature had given her a royal birthright of beauty and talent, but their selfish and unpardonable neglect had made it of no account.

What divine music she lured out of the old violin — merry and sad, gay and sorrowful by turns, music such as the stars of morning might have made singing together, music that the fairies might have danced to in their revels among the green hills or on yellow sands, music that might have mourned over the grave of a dead hope. Then she drifted into a still sweeter strain. As he listened to it he realized that the whole soul and nature of the girl were revealing themselves to him through her music — the beauty and purity of her thoughts, her childhood dreams and her maiden reveries. There was no thought of concealment about her; she could not help the revelation she was unconscious of making.

At last she laid her violin aside and wrote,

“I have done my best to give you pleasure. It is your turn now. Do you remember a promise you made me last night? Have you kept it?”

He gave her the two books he had brought for her — a modern novel and a volume of poetry unknown to her. He had hesitated a little over the former; but the book was so fine and full of beauty that he thought it could not bruise the bloom of her innocence ever so slightly. He had no doubts about the poetry. It was the utterance of one of those great inspired souls

whose passing tread has made the kingdom of their birth and labour a veritable Holy Land.

He read her some of the poems. Then he talked to her of his college days and friends. The minutes passed very swiftly. There was just then no world for him outside of that old orchard with its falling blossoms and its shadows and its crooning winds.

Once, when he told her the story of some college pranks wherein the endless feuds of freshmen and sophomores figured, she clapped her hands together according to her habit, and laughed aloud — a clear, musical, silvery peal. It fell on Eric's ear with a shock of surprise. He thought it strange that she could laugh like that when she could not speak. Wherein lay the defect that closed for her the gates of speech? Was it possible that it could be removed?

"Kilmeny," he said gravely after a moment's reflection, during which he had looked up as she sat with the ruddy sunlight falling through the lilac branches on her bare, silky head like a shower of red jewels, "do you mind if I ask you something about your inability to speak? Will it hurt you to talk of the matter with me?"

She shook her head.

"Oh, no," she wrote, "I do not mind at all. Of course I am sorry I cannot speak, but I am quite used to the thought and it never hurts me at all."

"Then, Kilmeny, tell me this. Do you know why it is that you are unable to speak, when all your other faculties are so perfect?"

"No, I do not know at all why I cannot speak. I asked mother once and she told me it was a judgment on her for a great sin she had committed, and she looked so strangely that I was frightened, and I never spoke of it to her or anyone else again."

"Were you ever taken to a doctor to have your tongue and organs of speech examined?"

"No. I remember when I was a very little girl that Uncle Thomas wanted to take me to a doctor in Charlottetown and see if anything could

be done for me, but mother would not let him. She said it would be no use. And I do not think Uncle Thomas thought it would be, either.”

“You can laugh very naturally. Can you make any other sound?”

“Yes, sometimes. When I am pleased or frightened I have made little cries. But it is only when I am not thinking of it at all that I can do that. If I TRY to make a sound I cannot do it at all.”

This seemed to Eric more mysterious than ever.

“Do you ever try to speak — to utter words?” he persisted.

“Oh yes, very often. All the time I am saying the words in my head, just as I hear other people saying them, but I never can make my tongue say them. Do not look so sorry, my friend. I am very happy and I do not mind so very much not being able to speak — only sometimes when I have so many thoughts and it seems so slow to write them out, some of them get away from me. I must play to you again. You look too sober.”

She laughed again, picked up her violin, and played a tinkling, roguish little melody as if she were trying to tease him, looking at Eric over her violin with luminous eyes that dared him to be merry.

Eric smiled; but the puzzled look returned to his face many times that evening. He walked home in a brown study. Kilmeny’s case certainly seemed a strange one, and the more he thought of it the stranger it seemed.

“It strikes me as something very peculiar that she should be able to make sounds only when she is not thinking about it,” he reflected. “I wish David Baker could examine her. But I suppose that is out of the question. That grim pair who have charge of her would never consent.”

The Straight Simplicity of Eve

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For the next three weeks Eric Marshall seemed to himself to be living two lives, as distinct from each other as if he possessed a double personality. In one, he taught the Lindsay district school diligently and painstakingly; solved problems; argued on theology with Robert Williamson; called at the homes of his pupils and took tea in state with their parents; went to a rustic dance or two and played havoc, all unwittingly, with the hearts of the Lindsay maidens.

But this life was a dream of workaday. He only LIVED in the other, which was spent in an old orchard, grassy and overgrown, where the minutes seemed to lag for sheer love of the spot and the June winds made wild harping in the old spruces.

Here every evening he met Kilmeny; in that old orchard they garnered hours of quiet happiness together; together they went wandering in the fair fields of old romance; together they read many books and talked of many things; and, when they were tired of all else, Kilmeny played to him and the old orchard echoed with her lovely, fantastic melodies.

At every meeting her beauty came home afresh to him with the old thrill of glad surprise. In the intervals of absence it seemed to him that she could not possibly be as beautiful as he remembered her; and then when they met she seemed even more so. He learned to watch for the undisguised light of welcome that always leaped into her eyes at the sound of his footsteps. She was nearly always there before him and she always showed that she was glad to see him with the frank delight of a child watching for a dear comrade.

She was never in the same mood twice. Now she was grave, now gay, now stately, now pensive. But she was always charming. Thrawn and twisted the old Gordon stock might be, but it had at least this one offshoot of perfect grace and symmetry. Her mind and heart, utterly unspoiled of

the world, were as beautiful as her face. All the ugliness of existence had passed her by, shrined in her double solitude of upbringing and muteness.

She was naturally quick and clever. Delightful little flashes of wit and humour sparkled out occasionally. She could be whimsical — even charmingly capricious. Sometimes innocent mischief glimmered out in the unfathomable deeps of her blue eyes. Sarcasm, even, was not unknown to her. Now and then she punctured some harmless bubble of a young man's conceit or masculine superiority with a biting little line of daintily written script.

She assimilated the ideas in the books they read, speedily, eagerly, and thoroughly, always seizing on the best and truest, and rejecting the false and spurious and weak with an unfailing intuition at which Eric marvelled. Hers was the spear of Ithuriel, trying out the dross of everything and leaving only the pure gold.

In manner and outlook she was still a child. Yet now and again she was as old as Eve. An expression would leap into her laughing face, a subtle meaning reveal itself in her smile, that held all the lore of womanhood and all the wisdom of the ages.

Her way of smiling enchanted him. The smile always began far down in her eyes and flowed outward to her face like a sparkling brook stealing out of shadow into sunshine.

He knew everything about her life. She told him her simple history freely. She often mentioned her uncle and aunt and seemed to regard them with deep affection. She rarely spoke of her mother. Eric came somehow to understand, less from what she said than from what she did not say, that Kilmeny, though she had loved her mother, had always been rather afraid of her. There had not been between them the natural beautiful confidence of mother and child.

Of Neil, she wrote frequently at first, and seemed very fond of him. Later she ceased to mention him. Perhaps — for she was marvellously quick to catch and interpret every fleeting change of expression in his voice and face — she discerned what Eric did not know himself — that his eyes clouded and grew moody at the mention of Neil's name.

Once she asked him naively,

“Are there many people like you out in the world?”

“Thousands of them,” said Eric, laughing.

She looked gravely at him. Then she gave her head a quick decided little shake.

“I do not think so,” she wrote. “I do not know much of the world, but I do not think there are many people like you in it.”

One evening, when the faraway hills and fields were scarfed in gauzy purples, and the intervalles were brimming with golden mists, Eric carried to the old orchard a little limp, worn volume that held a love story. It was the first thing of the kind he had ever read to her, for in the first novel he had lent her the love interest had been very slight and subordinate. This was a beautiful, passionate idyl exquisitely told.

He read it to her, lying in the grass at her feet; she listened with her hands clasped over her knee and her eyes cast down. It was not a long story; and when he had finished it he shut the book and looked up at her questioningly.

“Do you like it, Kilmeny?” he asked.

Very slowly she took her slate and wrote,

“Yes, I like it. But it hurt me, too. I did not know that a person could like anything that hurt her. I do not know why it hurt me. I felt as if I had lost something that I never had. That was a very silly feeling, was it not? But I did not understand the book very well, you see. It is about love and I do not know anything about love. Mother told me once that love is a curse, and that I must pray that it would never enter into my life. She said it very earnestly, and so I believed her. But your book teaches that it is a blessing. It says that it is the most splendid and wonderful thing in life. Which am I to believe?”

“Love — real love — is never a curse, Kilmeny,” said Eric gravely.

“There is a false love which IS a curse. Perhaps your mother believed it was that which had entered her life and ruined it; and so she made the mistake. There is nothing in the world — or in heaven either, as I believe — so truly beautiful and wonderful and blessed as love.”

“Have you ever loved?” asked Kilmeny, with the directness of phrasing necessitated by her mode of communication which was sometimes a little terrible. She asked the question simply and without embarrassment. She knew of no reason why love might not be discussed with Eric as other matters — music and books and travel — might be.

“No,” said Eric — honestly, as he thought, “but every one has an ideal of love whom he hopes to meet some day—’the ideal woman of a young man’s dream.’ I suppose I have mine, in some sealed, secret chamber of my heart.”

“I suppose your ideal woman would be beautiful, like the woman in your book?”

“Oh, yes, I am sure I could never care for an ugly woman,” said Eric, laughing a little as he sat up. “Our ideals are always beautiful, whether they so translate themselves into realities or not. But the sun is going down. Time does certainly fly in this enchanted orchard. I believe you bewitch the moments away, Kilmeny. Your namesake of the poem was a somewhat uncanny maid, if I recollect aright, and thought as little of seven years in elfland as ordinary folk do of half an hour on upper earth. Some day I shall waken from a supposed hour’s lingering here and find myself an old man with white hair and ragged coat, as in that fairy tale we read the other night. Will you let me give you this book? I should never commit the sacrilege of reading it in any other place than this. It is an old book, Kilmeny. A new book, savouring of the shop and marketplace, however beautiful it might be, would not do for you. This was one of my mother’s books. She read it and loved it. See — the faded rose leaves she placed in it one day are there still. I’ll write your name in it — that quaint, pretty name of yours which always sounds as if it had been specially invented for you—’Kilmeny of the Orchard’ — and the date of this perfect June day on which we read it together. Then when you look at it you will always remember me, and the white buds opening on that rosebush beside you, and the rush and murmur of the wind in the tops of those old spruces.”

He held out the book to her, but, to his surprise, she shook her head, with a deeper flush on her face.

“Won’t you take the book, Kilmeny? Why not?”

She took her pencil and wrote slowly, unlike her usual quick movement.

“Do not be offended with me. I shall not need anything to make me remember you because I can never forget you. But I would rather not take the book. I do not want to read it again. It is about love, and there is no use in my learning about love, even if it is all you say. Nobody will ever love me. I am too ugly.”

“You! Ugly!” exclaimed Eric. He was on the point of going off into a peal of laughter at the idea when a glimpse of her half averted face sobered him. On it was a hurt, bitter look, such as he remembered seeing once before, when he had asked her if she would not like to see the world for herself.

“Kilmeny,” he said in astonishment, “you don’t really think yourself ugly, do you?”

She nodded, without looking at him, and then wrote,

“Oh, yes, I know that I am. I have known it for a long time. Mother told me that I was very ugly and that nobody would ever like to look at me. I am sorry. It hurts me much worse to know I am ugly than it does to know I cannot speak. I suppose you will think that is very foolish of me, but it is true. That was why I did not come back to the orchard for such a long time, even after I had got over my fright. I hated to think that YOU would think me ugly. And that is why I do not want to go out into the world and meet people. They would look at me as the egg peddler did one day when I went out with Aunt Janet to his wagon the spring after mother died. He stared at me so. I knew it was because he thought me so ugly, and I have always hidden when he came ever since.”

Eric’s lips twitched. In spite of his pity for the real suffering displayed in her eyes, he could not help feeling amused over the absurd idea of this beautiful girl believing herself in all seriousness to be ugly.

“But, Kilmeny, do you think yourself ugly when you look in a mirror?” he asked smiling.

“I have never looked in a mirror,” she wrote. “I never knew there was such a thing until after mother died, and I read about it in a book. Then I asked Aunt Janet and she said mother had broken all the looking glasses in the house when I was a baby. But I have seen my face reflected in the spoons, and in a little silver sugar bowl Aunt Janet has. And it IS ugly — very ugly.”

Eric’s face went down into the grass. For his life he could not help laughing; and for his life he would not let Kilmeny see him laughing. A certain little whimsical wish took possession of him and he did not hasten to tell her the truth, as had been his first impulse. Instead, when he dared to look up he said slowly,

“I don’t think you are ugly, Kilmeny.”

“Oh, but I am sure you must,” she wrote protestingly. “Even Neil does. He tells me I am kind and nice, but one day I asked him if he thought me very ugly, and he looked away and would not speak, so I knew what he thought about it, too. Do not let us speak of this again. It makes me feel sorry and spoils everything. I forget it at other times. Let me play you some goodbye music, and do not feel vexed because I would not take your book. It would only make me unhappy to read it.”

“I am not vexed,” said Eric, “and I think you will take it some day yet — after I have shown you something I want you to see. Never mind about your looks, Kilmeny. Beauty isn’t everything.”

“Oh, it is a great deal,” she wrote naively. “But you do like me, even though I am so ugly, don’t you? You like me because of my beautiful music, don’t you?”

“I like you very much, Kilmeny,” answered Eric, laughing a little; but there was in his voice a tender note of which he was unconscious. Kilmeny was aware of it, however, and she picked up her violin with a pleased smile.

He left her playing there, and all the way through the dim resinous spruce wood her music followed him like an invisible guardian spirit.

“Kilmeny the Beautiful!” he murmured, “and yet, good heavens, the child thinks she is ugly — she with a face more lovely than ever an artist

dreamed of! A girl of eighteen who has never looked in a mirror! I wonder if there is another such in any civilized country in the world. What could have possessed her mother to tell her such a falsehood? I wonder if Margaret Gordon could have been quite sane. It is strange that Neil has never told her the truth. Perhaps he doesn't want her to find out."

Eric had met Neil Gordon a few evenings before this, at a country dance where Neil had played the violin for the dancers. Influenced by curiosity he had sought the lad's acquaintance. Neil was friendly and talkative at first; but at the first hint concerning the Gordons which Eric threw out skilfully his face and manner changed. He looked secretive and suspicious, almost sinister. A sullen look crept into his big black eyes and he drew his bow across the violin strings with a discordant screech, as if to terminate the conversation. Plainly nothing was to be found out from him about Kilmeny and her grim guardians.

A Troubling of the Waters

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One evening in late June Mrs. Williamson was sitting by her kitchen window. Her knitting lay unheeded in her lap, and Timothy, though he nestled ingratiatingly against her foot as he lay on the rug and purred his loudest, was unregarded. She rested her face on her hand and looked out of the window, across the distant harbour, with troubled eyes.

“I guess I must speak,” she thought wistfully. “I hate to do it. I always did hate meddling. My mother always used to say that ninety-nine times out of a hundred the last state of a meddler and then she meddled with was worse than the first. But I guess it’s my duty. I was Margaret’s friend, and it is my duty to protect her child any way I can. If the Master does go back across there to meet her I must tell him what I think about it.”

Overhead in his room, Eric was walking about whistling. Presently he came downstairs, thinking of the orchard, and the girl who would be waiting for him there.

As he crossed the little front entry he heard Mrs. Williamson’s voice calling to him.

“Mr. Marshall, will you please come here a moment?”

He went out to the kitchen. Mrs. Williamson looked at him deprecatingly. There was a flush on her faded cheek and her voice trembled.

“Mr. Marshall, I want to ask you a question. Perhaps you will think it isn’t any of my business. But it isn’t because I want to meddle. No, no. It is only because I think I ought to speak. I have thought it over for a long time, and it seems to me that I ought to speak. I hope you won’t be angry, but even if you are I must say what I have to say. Are you going back to the old Connors orchard to meet Kilmeny Gordon?”

For a moment an angry flush burned in Eric’s face. It was more Mrs. Williamson’s tone than her words which startled and annoyed him.

“Yes, I am, Mrs. Williamson,” he said coldly. “What of it?”

“Then, sir,” said Mrs. Williamson with more firmness, “I have got to tell you that I don’t think you are doing right. I have been suspecting all along that that was where you went every evening, but I haven’t said a word to any one about it. Even my husband doesn’t know. But tell me this, Master. Do Kilmeny’s uncle and aunt know that you are meeting her there?”

“Why,” said Eric, in some confusion, “I — I do not know whether they do or not. But Mrs. Williamson, surely you do not suspect me of meaning any harm or wrong to Kilmeny Gordon?”

“No, I don’t, Master. I might think it of some men, but never of you. I don’t for a minute think that you would do her or any woman any wilful wrong. But you may do her great harm for all that. I want you to stop and think about it. I guess you haven’t thought. Kilmeny can’t know anything about the world or about men, and she may get to thinking too much of you. That might break her heart, because you couldn’t ever marry a dumb girl like her. So I don’t think you ought to be meeting her so often in this fashion. It isn’t right, Master. Don’t go to the orchard again.”

Without a word Eric turned away, and went upstairs to his room.

Mrs. Williamson picked up her knitting with a sigh.

“That’s done, Timothy, and I’m real thankful,” she said. “I guess there’ll be no need of saying anything more. Mr. Marshall is a fine young man, only a little thoughtless. Now that he’s got his eyes opened I’m sure he’ll do what is right. I don’t want Margaret’s child made unhappy.”

Her husband came to the kitchen door and sat down on the steps to enjoy his evening smoke, talking between whiffs to his wife of Elder Tracy’s church row, and Mary Alice Martin’s beau, the price Jake Crosby was giving for eggs, the quantity of hay yielded by the hill meadow, the trouble he was having with old Molly’s calf, and the respective merits of Plymouth Rock and Brahma roosters. Mrs. Williamson answered at random, and heard not one word in ten.

“What’s got the Master, Mother?” inquired old Robert, presently.

“I hear him striding up and down in his room ‘sif he was caged. Sure you didn’t lock him in by mistake?”

“Maybe he’s worried over the way Seth Tracy’s acting in school,” suggested Mrs. Williamson, who did not choose that her gossipy husband should suspect the truth about Eric and Kilmeny Gordon.

“Shucks, he needn’t worry a morsel over that. Seth’ll quiet down as soon as he finds he can’t run the Master. He’s a rare good teacher — better’n Mr. West was even, and that’s saying something. The trustees are hoping he’ll stay for another term. They’re going to ask him at the school meeting tomorrow, and offer him a raise of supplement.”

Upstairs, in his little room under the eaves, Eric Marshall was in the grip of the most intense and overwhelming emotion he had ever experienced.

Up and down, to and fro, he walked, with set lips and clenched hands. When he was wearied out he flung himself on a chair by the window and wrestled with the flood of feeling.

Mrs. Williamson’s words had torn away the delusive veil with which he had bound his eyes. He was face to face with the knowledge that he loved Kilmeny Gordon with the love that comes but once, and is for all time. He wondered how he could have been so long blind to it. He knew that he must have loved her ever since their first meeting that May evening in the old orchard.

And he knew that he must choose between two alternatives — either he must never go to the orchard again, or he must go as an avowed lover to woo him a wife.

Worldly prudence, his inheritance from a long line of thrifty, cool-headed ancestors, was strong in Eric, and he did not yield easily or speedily to the dictates of his passion. All night he struggled against the new emotions that threatened to sweep away the “common sense” which David Baker had bade him take with him when he went a-wooing. Would

not a marriage with Kilmeny Gordon be an unwise thing from any standpoint?

Then something stronger and greater and more vital than wisdom or unwisdom rose up in him and mastered him. Kilmeny, beautiful, dumb Kilmeny was, as he had once involuntarily thought, “the one maid” for him. Nothing should part them. The mere idea of never seeing her again was so unbearable that he laughed at himself for having counted it a possible alternative.

“If I can win Kilmeny’s love I shall ask her to be my wife,” he said, looking out of the window to the dark, southwestern hill beyond which lay his orchard.

The velvet sky over it was still starry; but the water of the harbour was beginning to grow silvery in the reflection of the dawn that was breaking in the east.

“Her misfortune will only make her dearer to me. I cannot realize that a month ago I did not know her. It seems to me that she has been a part of my life for ever. I wonder if she was grieved that I did not go to the orchard last night — if she waited for me. If she does, she does not know it herself yet. It will be my sweet task to teach her what love means, and no man has ever had a lovelier, purer, pupil.”

At the annual school meeting, the next afternoon, the trustees asked Eric to take the Lindsay school for the following year. He consented unhesitatingly.

That evening he went to Mrs. Williamson, as she washed her tea dishes in the kitchen.

“Mrs. Williamson, I am going back to the old Connors orchard to see Kilmeny again tonight.”

She looked at him reproachfully.

“Well, Master, I have no more to say. I suppose it wouldn’t be of any use if I had. But you know what I think of it.”

“I intend to marry Kilmeny Gordon if I can win her.”

An expression of amazement came into the good woman’s face. She looked scrutinizingly at the firm mouth and steady gray eyes for a

moment. Then she said in a troubled voice,

“Do you think that is wise, Master? I suppose Kilmeny is pretty; the egg peddler told me she was; and no doubt she is a good, nice girl. But she wouldn’t be a suitable wife for you — a girl that can’t speak.”

“That doesn’t make any difference to me.”

“But what will your people say?”

“I have no ‘people’ except my father. When he sees Kilmeny he will understand. She is all the world to me, Mrs. Williamson.”

“As long as you believe that there is nothing more to be said,” was the quiet answer, “I’d be a little bit afraid if I was you, though. But young people never think of those things.”

“My only fear is that she won’t care for me,” said Eric soberly.

Mrs. Williamson surveyed the handsome, broad-shouldered young man shrewdly.

“I don’t think there are many women would say you ‘no’, Master. I wish you well in your wooing, though I can’t help thinking you’re doing a daft-like thing. I hope you won’t have any trouble with Thomas and Janet. They are so different from other folks there is no knowing. But take my advice, Master, and go and see them about it right off. Don’t go on meeting Kilmeny unbeknownst to them.”

“I shall certainly take your advice,” said Eric, gravely. “I should have gone to them before. It was merely thoughtlessness on my part. Possibly they do know already. Kilmeny may have told them.”

Mrs. Williamson shook her head decidedly.

“No, no, Master, she hasn’t. They’d never have let her go on meeting you there if they had known. I know them too well to think of that for a moment. Go you straight to them and say to them just what you have said to me. That is your best plan, Master. And take care of Neil. People say he has a notion of Kilmeny himself. He’ll do you a bad turn if he can, I’ve no doubt. Them foreigners can’t be trusted — and he’s just as much a foreigner as his parents before him — though he HAS been brought up on oatmeal and the shorter catechism, as the old saying has it. I feel that somehow — I always feel it when I look at him singing in the choir.”

“Oh, I am not afraid of Neil,” said Eric carelessly. “He couldn’t help loving Kilmeny — nobody could.”

“I suppose every young man thinks that about his girl — if he’s the right sort of young man,” said Mrs. Williamson with a little sigh.

She watched Eric out of sight anxiously.

“I hope it’ll all come out right,” she thought. “I hope he ain’t making an awful mistake — but — I’m afraid. Kilmeny must be very pretty to have bewitched him so. Well, I suppose there is no use in my worrying over it. But I do wish he had never gone back to that old orchard and seen her.”

Chapter XI.

A Lover and His Lass

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Kilmeny was in the orchard when Eric reached it, and he lingered for a moment in the shadow of the spruce wood to dream over her beauty.

The orchard had lately overflowed in waves of old-fashioned caraway, and she was standing in the midst of its sea of bloom, with the lace-like blossoms swaying around her in the wind. She wore the simple dress of pale blue print in which he had first seen her; silk attire could not better have become her loveliness. She had woven herself a chaplet of half open white rosebuds and placed it on her dark hair, where the delicate blossoms seemed less wonderful than her face.

When Eric stepped through the gap she ran to meet him with outstretched hands, smiling. He took her hands and looked into her eyes with an expression before which hers for the first time faltered. She looked down, and a warm blush strained the ivory curves of her cheek and throat. His heart bounded, for in that blush he recognized the banner of love's vanguard.

"Are you glad to see me, Kilmeny?" he asked, in a low significant tone.

She nodded, and wrote in a somewhat embarrassed fashion,

"Yes. Why do you ask? You know I am always glad to see you. I was afraid you would not come. You did not come last night and I was so sorry. Nothing in the orchard seemed nice any longer. I couldn't even play. I tried to, and my violin only cried. I waited until it was dark and then I went home."

"I am sorry you were disappointed, Kilmeny. I couldn't come last night. Some day I shall tell you why. I stayed home to learn a new lesson. I am sorry you missed me — no, I am glad. Can you understand how a person may be glad and sorry for the same thing?"

She nodded again, with a return of her usual sweet composure.

“Yes, I could not have understood once, but I can now. Did you learn your new lesson?”

“Yes, very thoroughly. It was a delightful lesson when I once understood it. I must try to teach it to you some day. Come over to the old bench, Kilmeny. There is something I want to say to you. But first, will you give me a rose?”

She ran to the bush, and, after careful deliberation, selected a perfect half-open bud and brought it to him — a white bud with a faint, sunrise flush about its golden heart.

“Thank you. It is as beautiful as — as a woman I know,” Eric said.

A wistful look came into her face at his words, and she walked with a drooping head across the orchard to the bench.

“Kilmeny,” he said, seriously, “I am going to ask you to do something for me. I want you to take me home with you and introduce me to your uncle and aunt.”

She lifted her head and stared at him incredulously, as if he had asked her to do something wildly impossible. Understanding from his grave face that he meant what he said, a look of dismay dawned in her eyes. She shook her head almost violently and seemed to be making a passionate, instinctive effort to speak. Then she caught up her pencil and wrote with feverish haste:

“I cannot do that. Do not ask me to. You do not understand. They would be very angry. They do not want to see any one coming to the house. And they would never let me come here again. Oh, you do not mean it?”

He pitied her for the pain and bewilderment in her eyes; but he took her slender hands in his and said firmly,

“Yes, Kilmeny, I do mean it. It is not quite right for us to be meeting each other here as we have been doing, without the knowledge and consent of your friends. You cannot now understand this, but — believe me — it is so.”

She looked questioningly, pityingly into his eyes. What she read there seemed to convince her, for she turned very pale and an expression of hopelessness came into her face. Releasing her hands, she wrote slowly,

“If you say it is wrong I must believe it. I did not know anything so pleasant could be wrong. But if it is wrong we must not meet here any more. Mother told me I must never do anything that was wrong. But I did not know this was wrong.”

“It was not wrong for you, Kilmeny. But it was a little wrong for me, because I knew better — or rather, should have known better. I didn’t stop to think, as the children say. Some day you will understand fully. Now, you will take me to your uncle and aunt, and after I have said to them what I want to say it will be all right for us to meet here or anywhere.”

She shook her head.

“No,” she wrote, “Uncle Thomas and Aunt Janet will tell you to go away and never come back. And they will never let me come here any more. Since it is not right to meet you I will not come, but it is no use to think of going to them. I did not tell them about you because I knew that they would forbid me to see you, but I am sorry, since it is so wrong.”

“You must take me to them,” said Eric firmly. “I am quite sure that things will not be as you fear when they hear what I have to say.”

Uncomforted, she wrote forlornly,

“I must do it, since you insist, but I am sure it will be no use. I cannot take you tonight because they are away. They went to the store at Radnor. But I will take you tomorrow night; and after that I shall not see you any more.”

Two great tears brimmed over in her big blue eyes and splashed down on her slate. Her lips quivered like a hurt child’s. Eric put his arm impulsively about her and drew her head down upon his shoulder. As she cried there, softly, miserably, he pressed his lips to the silky black hair with its coronal of rosebuds. He did not see two burning eyes which were looking at him over the old fence behind him with hatred and mad passion blazing in their depths. Neil Gordon was crouched there, with clenched hands and heaving breast, watching them.

“Kilmeny, dear, don’t cry,” said Eric tenderly. “You shall see me again. I promise you that, whatever happens. I do not think your uncle and aunt

will be as unreasonable as you fear, but even if they are they shall not prevent me from meeting you somehow.”

Kilmeny lifted her head, and wiped the tears from her eyes.

“You do not know what they are like,” she wrote. “They will lock me into my room. That is the way they always punished me when I was a little girl. And once, not so very long ago, when I was a big girl, they did it.”

“If they do I’ll get you out somehow,” said Eric, laughing a little.

She allowed herself to smile, but it was a rather forlorn little effort. She did not cry any more, but her spirits did not come back to her. Eric talked gaily, but she only listened in a pensive, absent way, as if she scarcely heard him. When he asked her to play she shook her head.

“I cannot think any music tonight,” she wrote, “I must go home, for my head aches and I feel very stupid.”

“Very well, Kilmeny. Now, don’t worry, little girl. It will all come out all right.”

Evidently she did not share his confidence, for her head drooped again as they walked together across the orchard. At the entrance of the wild cherry lane she paused and looked at him half reproachfully, her eyes filling again. She seemed to be bidding him a mute farewell. With an impulse of tenderness which he could not control, Eric put his arm about her and kissed her red, trembling mouth. She started back with a little cry. A burning colour swept over her face, and the next moment she fled swiftly up the darkening lane.

The sweetness of that involuntary kiss clung to Eric’s lips as he went homeward, half-intoxicating him. He knew that it had opened the gates of womanhood to Kilmeny. Never again, he felt, would her eyes meet his with their old unclouded frankness. When next he looked into them he knew that he should see there the consciousness of his kiss. Behind her in the orchard that night Kilmeny had left her childhood.

A Prisoner of Love

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When Eric betook himself to the orchard the next evening he had to admit that he felt rather nervous. He did not know how the Gordons would receive him and certainly the reports he had heard of them were not encouraging, to say the least of it. Even Mrs. Williamson, when he had told her where he was going, seemed to look upon him as one bent on bearding a lion in his den.

“I do hope they won’t be very uncivil to you, Master,” was the best she could say.

He expected Kilmeny to be in the orchard before him, for he had been delayed by a call from one of the trustees; but she was nowhere to be seen. He walked across it to the wild cherry lane; but at its entrance he stopped short in sudden dismay.

Neil Gordon had stepped from behind the trees and stood confronting him, with blazing eyes, and lips which writhed in emotion so great that at first it prevented him from speaking.

With a thrill of dismay Eric instantly understood what must have taken place. Neil had discovered that he and Kilmeny had been meeting in the orchard, and beyond doubt had carried that tale to Janet and Thomas Gordon. He realized how unfortunate it was that this should have happened before he had had time to make his own explanation. It would probably prejudice Kilmeny’s guardians still further against him. At this point in his thoughts Neil’s pent up passion suddenly found vent in a burst of wild words.

“So you’ve come to meet her again. But she isn’t here — you’ll never see her again! I hate you — I hate you — I hate you!”

His voice rose to a shrill scream. He took a furious step nearer Eric as if he would attack him. Eric looked steadily in his eyes with a calm defiance, before which his wild passion broke like foam on a rock.

“So you have been making trouble for Kilmeny, Neil, have you?” said Eric contemptuously. “I suppose you have been playing the spy. And I suppose that you have told her uncle and aunt that she has been meeting me here. Well, you have saved me the trouble of doing it, that is all. I was going to tell them myself, tonight. I don’t know what your motive in doing this has been. Was it jealousy of me? Or have you done it out of malice to Kilmeny?”

His contempt cowed Neil more effectually than any display of anger could have done.

“Never you mind why I did it,” he muttered sullenly. “What I did or why I did it is no business of yours. And you have no business to come sneaking around here either. Kilmeny won’t meet you here again.”

“She will meet me in her own home then,” said Eric sternly.

“Neil, in behaving as you have done you have shown yourself to be

a very foolish, undisciplined boy. I am going straightway to Kilmeny’s uncle and aunt to explain everything.”

Neil sprang forward in his path.

“No — no — go away,” he implored wildly. “Oh, sir — oh, Mr. Marshall, please go away. I’ll do anything for you if you will. I love Kilmeny. I’ve loved her all my life. I’d give my life for her. I can’t have you coming here to steal her from me. If you do — I’ll kill you! I wanted to kill you last night when I saw you kiss her. Oh, yes, I saw you. I was watching — spying, if you like. I don’t care what you call it. I had followed her — I suspected something. She was so different — so changed. She never would wear the flowers I picked for her any more. She seemed to forget I was there. I knew something had come between us. And it was you, curse you! Oh, I’ll make you sorry for it.”

He was working himself up into a fury again — the untamed fury of the Italian peasant thwarted in his heart’s desire. It overrode all the restraint of his training and environment. Eric, amid all his anger and

annoyance, felt a thrill of pity for him. Neil Gordon was only a boy still; and he was miserable and beside himself.

“Neil, listen to me,” he said quietly. “You are talking very foolishly. It is not for you to say who shall or shall not be Kilmeny’s friend. Now, you may just as well control yourself and go home like a decent fellow. I am not at all frightened by your threats, and I shall know how to deal with you if you persist in interfering with me or persecuting Kilmeny. I am not the sort of person to put up with that, my lad.”

The restrained power in his tone and look cowed Neil. The latter turned sullenly away, with another muttered curse, and plunged into the shadow of the firs.

Eric, not a little ruffled under all his external composure by this most unexpected and unpleasant encounter, pursued his way along the lane which wound on by the belt of woodland in twist and curve to the Gordon homestead. His heart beat as he thought of Kilmeny. What might she not be suffering? Doubtless Neil had given a very exaggerated and distorted account of what he had seen, and probably her dour relations were very angry with her, poor child. Anxious to avert their wrath as soon as might be, he hurried on, almost forgetting his meeting with Neil. The threats of the latter did not trouble him at all. He thought the angry outburst of a jealous boy mattered but little. What did matter was that Kilmeny was in trouble which his heedlessness had brought upon her.

Presently he found himself before the Gordon house. It was an old building with sharp eaves and dormer windows, its shingles stained a dark gray by long exposure to wind and weather. Faded green shutters hung on the windows of the lower story. Behind it grew a thick wood of spruces. The little yard in front of it was grassy and prim and flowerless; but over the low front door a luxuriant early-flowering rose vine clambered, in a riot of blood-red blossom which contrasted strangely with the general bareness of its surroundings. It seemed to fling itself over the grim old house as if intent on bombarding it with an alien life and joyousness.

Eric knocked at the door, wondering if it might be possible that Kilmeny should come to it. But a moment later it was opened by an

elderly woman — a woman of rigid lines from the hem of her lank, dark print dress to the crown of her head, covered with black hair which, despite its few gray threads, was still thick and luxuriant. She had a long, pale face somewhat worn and wrinkled, but possessing a certain harsh comeliness of feature which neither age nor wrinkles had quite destroyed; and her deep-set, light gray eyes were not devoid of suggested kindliness, although they now surveyed Eric with an unconcealed hostility. Her figure, in its merciless dress, was very angular; yet there was about her a dignity of carriage and manner which Eric liked. In any case, he preferred her unsmiling dourness to vulgar garrulity.

He lifted his hat.

“Have I the honour of speaking to Miss Gordon?” he asked.

“I am Janet Gordon,” said the woman stiffly.

“Then I wish to talk with you and your brother.”

“Come in.”

She stepped aside and motioned him to a low brown door opening on the right.

“Go in and sit down. I’ll call Thomas,” she said coldly, as she walked out through the hall.

Eric walked into the parlour and sat down as bidden. He found himself in the most old-fashioned room he had ever seen. The solidly made chairs and tables, of some wood grown dark and polished with age, made even Mrs. Williamson’s “parlour set” of horsehair seem extravagantly modern by contrast. The painted floor was covered with round braided rugs. On the centre table was a lamp, a Bible and some theological volumes contemporary with the square-runged furniture. The walls, wainscoted half way up in wood and covered for the rest with a dark, diamond-patterned paper, were hung with faded engravings, mostly of clerical-looking, bewigged personages in gowns and bands.

But over the high, undecorated black mantelpiece, in a ruddy glow of sunset light striking through the window, hung one which caught and held Eric’s attention to the exclusion of everything else. It was the enlarged

“crayon” photograph of a young girl, and, in spite of the crudity of execution, it was easily the center of interest in the room.

Eric at once guessed that this must be the picture of Margaret Gordon, for, although quite unlike Kilmeny’s sensitive, spirited face in general, there was a subtle, unmistakable resemblance about brow and chin.

The pictured face was a very handsome one, suggestive of velvety dark eyes and vivid colouring; but it was its expression rather than its beauty which fascinated Eric. Never had he seen a countenance indicative of more intense and stubborn will power. Margaret Gordon was dead and buried; the picture was a cheap and inartistic production in an impossible frame of gilt and plush; yet the vitality in that face dominated its surroundings still. What then must have been the power of such a personality in life?

Eric realized that this woman could and would have done whatsoever she willed, unflinchingly and unrelentingly. She could stamp her desire on everything and everybody about her, moulding them to her wish and will, in their own despite and in defiance of all the resistance they might make. Many things in Kilmeny’s upbringing and temperament became clear to him.

“If that woman had told me I was ugly I should have believed her,” he thought. “Ay, even though I had a mirror to contradict her. I should never have dreamed of disputing or questioning anything she might have said. The strange power in her face is almost uncanny, peering out as it does from a mask of beauty and youthful curves. Pride and stubbornness are its salient characteristics. Well, Kilmeny does not at all resemble her mother in expression and only very slightly in feature.”

His reflections were interrupted by the entrance of Thomas and Janet Gordon. The latter had evidently been called from his work. He nodded without speaking, and the two sat gravely down before Eric.

“I have come to see you with regard to your niece, Mr. Gordon,” he said abruptly, realizing that there would be small use in beating about the bush with this grim pair. “I met your — I met Neil Gordon in the Connors orchard, and I found that he has told you that I have been meeting Kilmeny there.”

He paused. Thomas Gordon nodded again; but he did not speak, and he did not remove his steady, piercing eyes from the young man's flushed countenance. Janet still sat in a sort of expectant immovability.

"I fear that you have formed an unfavourable opinion of me on this account, Mr. Gordon," Eric went on. "But I hardly think I deserve it. I can explain the matter if you will allow me. I met your niece accidentally in the orchard three weeks ago and heard her play. I thought her music very wonderful and I fell into the habit of coming to the orchard in the evenings to hear it. I had no thought of harming her in any way, Mr. Gordon. I thought of her as a mere child, and a child who was doubly sacred because of her affliction. But recently I — I — it occurred to me that I was not behaving quite honourably in encouraging her to meet me thus. Yesterday evening I asked her to bring me here and introduce me to you and her aunt. We would have come then if you had been at home. As you were not we arranged to come tonight."

"I hope you will not refuse me the privilege of seeing your niece, Mr. Gordon," said Eric eagerly. "I ask you to allow me to visit her here. But I do not ask you to receive me as a friend on my own recommendations only. I will give you references — men of standing in Charlottetown and Queenslea. If you refer to them—"

"I don't need to do that," said Thomas Gordon, quietly. "I know more of you than you think, Master. I know your father well by reputation and I have seen him. I know you are a rich man's son, whatever your whim in teaching a country school may be. Since you have kept your own counsel about your affairs I supposed you didn't want your true position generally known, and so I have held my tongue about you. I know no ill of you, Master, and I think none, now that I believe you were not beguiling Kilmeny to meet you unknown to her friends of set purpose. But all this doesn't make you a suitable friend for her, sir — it makes you all the more unsuitable. The less she sees of you the better."

Eric almost started to his feet in an indignant protest; but he swiftly remembered that his only hope of winning Kilmeny lay in bringing Thomas Gordon to another way of thinking. He had got on better than he

had expected so far; he must not now jeopardize what he had gained by rashness or impatience.

“Why do you think so, Mr. Gordon?” he asked, regaining his self-control with an effort.

“Well, plain speaking is best, Master. If you were to come here and see Kilmeny often she’d most likely come to think too much of you. I mistrust there’s some mischief done in that direction already. Then when you went away she might break her heart — for she is one of those who feel things deeply. She has been happy enough. I know folks condemn us for the way she has been brought up, but they don’t know everything. It was the best way for her, all things considered. And we don’t want her made unhappy, Master.”

“But I love your niece and I want to marry her if I can win her love,” said Eric steadily.

He surprised them out of their self possession at last. Both started, and looked at him as if they could not believe the evidence of their ears.

“Marry her! Marry Kilmeny!” exclaimed Thomas Gordon incredulously. “You can’t mean it, sir. Why, she is dumb — Kilmeny is dumb.”

“That makes no difference in my love for her, although I deeply regret it for her own sake,” answered Eric. “I can only repeat what I have already said, Mr. Gordon. I want Kilmeny for my wife.”

The older man leaned forward and looked at the floor in a troubled fashion, drawing his bushy eyebrows down and tapping the calloused tips of his fingers together uneasily. He was evidently puzzled by this unexpected turn of the conversation, and in grave doubt what to say.

“What would your father say to all this, Master?” he queried at last.

“I have often heard my father say that a man must marry to please himself,” said Eric, with a smile. “If he felt tempted to go back on that opinion I think the sight of Kilmeny would convert him. But, after all, it is what I say that matters in this case, isn’t it, Mr. Gordon? I am well educated and not afraid of work. I can make a home for Kilmeny in a few

years even if I have to depend entirely on my own resources. Only give me the chance to win her — that is all I ask.”

“I don’t think it would do, Master,” said Thomas Gordon, shaking his head. “Of course, I dare say you — you” — he tried to say “love,” but Scotch reserve balked stubbornly at the terrible word—”you think you like Kilmeny now, but you are only a lad — and lads’ fancies change.”

“Mine will not,” Eric broke in vehemently. “It is not a fancy, Mr. Gordon. It is the love that comes once in a lifetime and once only. I may be but a lad, but I know that Kilmeny is the one woman in the world for me. There can never be any other. Oh, I’m not speaking rashly or inconsiderately. I have weighed the matter well and looked at it from every aspect. And it all comes to this — I love Kilmeny and I want what any decent man who loves a woman truly has the right to have — the chance to win her love in return.”

“Well!” Thomas Gordon drew a long breath that was almost a sigh. “Maybe — if you feel like that, Master — I don’t know — there are some things it isn’t right to cross. Perhaps we oughtn’t — Janet, woman, what shall we say to him?”

Janet Gordon had hitherto spoken no word. She had sat rigidly upright on one of the old chairs under Margaret Gordon’s insistent picture, with her knotted, toil-worn hands grasping the carved arms tightly, and her eyes fastened on Eric’s face. At first their expression had been guarded and hostile, but as the conversation proceeded they lost this gradually and became almost kindly. Now, when her brother appealed to her, she leaned forward and said eagerly,

“Do you know that there is a stain on Kilmeny’s birth, Master?”

“I know that her mother was the innocent victim of a very sad mistake, Miss Gordon. I admit no real stain where there was no conscious wrong doing. Though, for that matter, even if there were, it would be no fault of Kilmeny’s and would make no difference to me as far as she is concerned.”

A sudden change swept over Janet Gordon’s face, quite marvelous in the transformation it wrought. Her grim mouth softened and a flood of

repressed tenderness glorified her cold gray eyes.

“Well, then.” she said almost triumphantly, “since neither that nor her dumbness seems to be any drawback in your eyes I don’t see why you should not have the chance you want. Perhaps your world will say she is not good enough for you, but she is — she is” — this half defiantly. “She is a sweet and innocent and true-hearted lassie. She is bright and clever and she is not ill looking. Thomas, I say let the young man have his will.”

Thomas Gordon stood up, as if he considered the responsibility off his shoulders and the interview at an end.

“Very well, Janet, woman, since you think it is wise. And may God deal with him as he deals with her. Good evening, Master. I’ll see you again, and you are free to come and go as suits you. But I must go to my work now. I left my horses standing in the field.”

“I will go up and send Kilmeny down,” said Janet quietly.

She lighted the lamp on the table and left the room. A few minutes later Kilmeny came down. Eric rose and went to meet her eagerly, but she only put out her right hand with a pretty dignity and, while she looked into his face, she did not look into his eyes.

“You see I was right after all, Kilmeny,” he said, smiling. “Your uncle and aunt haven’t driven me away. On the contrary they have been very kind to me, and they say I may see you whenever and wherever I like.”

She smiled, and went over to the table to write on her slate.

“But they were very angry last night, and said dreadful things to me. I felt very frightened and unhappy. They seemed to think I had done something terribly wrong. Uncle Thomas said he would never trust me out of his sight again. I could hardly believe it when Aunt Janet came up and told me you were here and that I might come down. She looked at me very strangely as she spoke, but I could see that all the anger had gone out of her face. She seemed pleased and yet sad. But I am glad they have forgiven us.”

She did not tell him how glad she was, and how unhappy she had been over the thought that she was never to see him again. Yesterday she would have told him all frankly and fully; but for her yesterday was a lifetime away — a lifetime in which she had come into her heritage of womanly dignity and reserve. The kiss which Eric had left on her lips, the words her uncle and aunt had said to her, the tears she had shed for the first time on a sleepless pillow — all had conspired to reveal her to herself. She did not yet dream that she loved Eric Marshall, or that he loved her. But she was no longer the child to be made a dear comrade of. She was, though quite unconsciously, the woman to be wooed and won, exacting, with sweet, innate pride, her dues of allegiance.

A Sweeter Woman Ne'er Drew Breath

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Thenceforward Eric Marshall was a constant visitor at the Gordon homestead. He soon became a favourite with Thomas and Janet, especially the latter. He liked them both, discovering under all their outward peculiarities sterling worth and fitness of character. Thomas Gordon was surprisingly well read and could floor Eric any time in argument, once he became sufficiently warmed up to attain fluency of words. Eric hardly recognized him the first time he saw him thus animated. His bent form straightened, his sunken eyes flashed, his face flushed, his voice rang like a trumpet, and he poured out a flood of eloquence which swept Eric's smart, up-to-date arguments away like straws in the rush of a mountain torrent. Eric enjoyed his own defeat enormously, but Thomas Gordon was ashamed of being thus drawn out of himself, and for a week afterwards confined his remarks to "Yes" and "No," or, at the outside, to a brief statement that a change in the weather was brewing.

Janet never talked on matters of church and state; such she plainly considered to be far beyond a woman's province. But she listened with lurking interest in her eyes while Thomas and Eric pelted on each other with facts and statistics and opinions, and on the rare occasions when Eric scored a point she permitted herself a sly little smile at her brother's expense.

Of Neil, Eric saw but little. The Italian boy avoided him, or if they chanced to meet passed him by with sullen, downcast eyes. Eric did not trouble himself greatly about Neil; but Thomas Gordon, understanding the motive which had led Neil to betray his discovery of the orchard trysts, bluntly told Kilmeny that she must not make such an equal of Neil as she had done.

"You have been too kind to the lad, lassie, and he's got presumptuous. He must be taught his place. I mistrust we have all made more of him than

we should.”

But most of the idyllic hours of Eric’s wooing were spent in the old orchard; the garden end of it was now a wilderness of roses — roses red as the heart of a sunset, roses pink as the early flush of dawn, roses white as the snows on mountain peaks, roses full blown, and roses in buds that were sweeter than anything on earth except Kilmeny’s face. Their petals fell in silken heaps along the old paths or clung to the lush grasses among which Eric lay and dreamed, while Kilmeny played to him on her violin.

Eric promised himself that when she was his wife her wonderful gift for music should be cultivated to the utmost. Her powers of expression seemed to deepen and develop every day, growing as her soul grew, taking on new colour and richness from her ripening heart.

To Eric, the days were all pages in an inspired idyl. He had never dreamed that love could be so mighty or the world so beautiful. He wondered if the universe were big enough to hold his joy or eternity long enough to live it out. His whole existence was, for the time being, bounded by that orchard where he wooed his sweetheart. All other ambitions and plans and hopes were set aside in the pursuit of this one aim, the attainment of which would enhance all others a thousand-fold, the loss of which would rob all others of their reason for existence. His own world seemed very far away and the things of that world forgotten.

His father, on hearing that he had taken the Lindsay school for a year, had written him a testy, amazed letter, asking him if he were demented.

“Or is there a girl in the case?” he wrote. “There must be, to tie you down to a place like Lindsay for a year. Take care, master Eric; you’ve been too sensible all your life. A man is bound to make a fool of himself at least once, and when you didn’t get through with that in your teens it may be attacking you now.”

David also wrote, expostulating more gravely; but he did not express the suspicions Eric knew he must entertain.

“Good old David! He is quaking with fear that I am up to something he can’t approve of, but he won’t say a word by way of attempting to force my confidence.”

It could not long remain a secret in Lindsay that “the Master” was going to the Gordon place on courting thoughts intent. Mrs. Williamson kept her own and Eric’s counsel; the Gordons said nothing; but the secret leaked out and great was the surprise and gossip and wonder. One or two incautious people ventured to express their opinion of the Master’s wisdom to the Master himself; but they never repeated the experiment. Curiosity was rife. A hundred stories were circulated about Kilmeny, all greatly exaggerated in the circulation. Wise heads were shaken and the majority opined that it was a great pity. The Master was a likely young fellow; he could have his pick of almost anybody, you might think; it was too bad that he should go and take up with that queer, dumb niece of the Gordons who had been brought up in such a heathenish way. But then you never could guess what way a man’s fancy would jump when he set out to pick him a wife. They guessed Neil Gordon didn’t like it much. He seemed to have got dreadful moody and sulky of late and wouldn’t sing in the choir any more. Thus the buzz of comment and gossip ran.

To those two in the old orchard it mattered not a whit. Kilmeny knew nothing of gossip. To her, Lindsay was as much of an unknown world as the city of Eric’s home. Her thoughts strayed far and wide in the realm of her fancy, but they never wandered out to the little realities that hedged her strange life around. In that life she had blossomed out, a fair, unique thing. There were times when Eric almost regretted that one day he must take her out of her white solitude to a world that, in the last analysis, was only Lindsay on a larger scale, with just the same pettiness of thought and feeling and opinion at the bottom of it. He wished he might keep her to himself for ever, in that old, spruce-hidden orchard where the roses fell.

One day he indulged himself in the fulfillment of the whim he had formed when Kilmeny had told him she thought herself ugly. He went to Janet and asked her permission to bring a mirror to the house that he might have the privilege of being the first to reveal Kilmeny to herself exteriorly. Janet was somewhat dubious at first.

“There hasn’t been such a thing in the house for sixteen years, Master. There never was but three — one in the spare room, and a little one in the

kitchen, and Margaret's own. She broke them all the day it first struck her that Kilmeny was going to be bonny. I might have got one after she died maybe. But I didn't think of it; and there's no need of lasses to be always prinking at their looking glasses."

But Eric pleaded and argued skilfully, and finally Janet said,

"Well, well, have your own way. You'd have it anyway I think, lad. You are one of those men who always get their own way. But that is different from the men who TAKE their own way — and that's a mercy," she added under her breath.

Eric went to town the next Saturday and picked out a mirror that pleased him. He had it shipped to Radnor and Thomas Gordon brought it home, not knowing what it was, for Janet had thought it just as well he should not know.

"It's a present the Master is making Kilmeny," she told him.

She sent Kilmeny off to the orchard after tea, and Eric slipped around to the house by way of the main road and lane. He and Janet together unpacked the mirror and hung it on the parlour wall.

"I never saw such a big one, Master," said Janet rather doubtfully, as if, after all, she distrusted its gleaming, pearly depth and richly ornamented frame. "I hope it won't make her vain. She is very bonny, but it may not do her any good to know it."

"It won't harm her," said Eric confidently. "When a belief in her ugliness hasn't spoiled a girl a belief in her beauty won't."

But Janet did not understand epigrams. She carefully removed a little dust from the polished surface, and frowned meditatively at the by no means beautiful reflection she saw therein.

"I cannot think what made Kilmeny suppose she was ugly, Master."

"Her mother told her she was," said Eric, rather bitterly.

"Ah!" Janet shot a quick glance at the picture of her sister. "Was that it? Margaret was a strange woman, Master. I suppose she thought her own beauty had been a snare to her. She WAS bonny. That picture doesn't do her justice. I never liked it. It was taken before she was — before she met Ronald Fraser. We none of us thought it very like her at the time. But,

Master, three years later it was like her — oh, it was like her then! That very look came in her face.”

“Kilmeny doesn’t resemble her mother,” remarked Eric, glancing at the picture with the same feeling of mingled fascination and distaste with which he always regarded it. “Does she look like her father?”

“No, not a great deal, though some of her ways are very like his. She looks like her grandmother — Margaret’s mother, Master. Her name was Kilmeny too, and she was a handsome, sweet woman. I was very fond of my stepmother, Master. When she died she gave her baby to me, and asked me to be a mother to it. Ah well, I tried; but I couldn’t fence the sorrow out of Margaret’s life, and it sometimes comes to my mind that maybe I’ll not be able to fence it out of Kilmeny’s either.”

“That will be my task,” said Eric.

“You’ll do your best, I do not doubt. But maybe it will be through you that sorrow will come to her after all.”

“Not through any fault of mine, Aunt Janet.”

“No, no, I’m not saying it will be your fault. But my heart misgives me at times. Oh, I dare say I am only a foolish old woman, Master. Go your ways and bring your lass here to look at your plaything when you like. I’ll not make or meddle with it.”

Janet betook herself to the kitchen and Eric went to look for Kilmeny. She was not in the orchard and it was not until he had searched for some time that he found her. She was standing under a beech tree in a field beyond the orchard, leaning on the longer fence, with her hands clasped against her cheek. In them she held a white Mary-lily from the orchard. She did not run to meet him while he was crossing the pasture, as she would once have done. She waited motionless until he was close to her. Eric began, half laughingly, half tenderly, to quote some lines from her namesake ballad:

””Kilmeny, Kilmeny, where have you been?
Long hae we sought baith holt and den, —
By linn, by ford, and greenwood tree!

Yet you are halesome and fair to see.
Where got you that joup o' the lily sheen?
That bonny snood o' the birk sae green,
And those roses, the fairest that ever was seen?
Kilmeny, Kilmeny, where have you been?'

"Only it's a lily and not a rose you are carrying. I might go on and quote the next couplet too —

"'Kilmeny looked up with a lovely grace,
But there was nae smile on Kilmeny's face.'

"Why are you looking so sober?"

Kilmeny did not have her slate with her and could not answer; but Eric guessed from something in her eyes that she was bitterly contrasting the beauty of the ballad's heroine with her own supposed ugliness.

"Come down to the house, Kilmeny. I have something there to show you — something lovelier than you have ever seen before," he said, with boyish pleasure shining in his eyes. "I want you to go and put on that muslin dress you wore last Sunday evening, and pin up your hair the same way you did then. Run along — don't wait for me. But you are not to go into the parlour until I come. I want to pick some of those Mary-lilies up in the orchard."

When Eric returned to the house with an armful of the long stemmed, white Madonna lilies that bloomed in the orchard Kilmeny was just coming down the steep, narrow staircase with its striped carpeting of homespun drugget. Her marvelous loveliness was brought out into brilliant relief by the dark wood work and shadows of the dim old hall.

She wore a trailing, clinging dress of some creamy tinted fabric that had been her mother's. It had not been altered in any respect, for fashion held no sway at the Gordon homestead, and Kilmeny thought that the dress left nothing to be desired. Its quaint style suited her admirably; the neck was slightly cut away to show the round white throat, and the sleeves were long, full "bishops," out of which her beautiful, slender hands slipped like

flowers from their sheaths. She had crossed her long braids at the back and pinned them about her head like a coronet; a late white rose was fastened low down on the left side.

”A man had given all other bliss
And all his worldly wealth for this —
To waste his whole heart in one kiss
Upon her perfect lips,”

quoted Eric in a whisper as he watched her descend. Aloud he said,

“Take these lilies on your arm, letting their bloom fall against your shoulder — so. Now, give me your hand and shut your eyes. Don’t open them until I say you may.”

He led her into the parlour and up to the mirror.

“Look,” he cried, gaily.

Kilmeny opened her eyes and looked straight into the mirror where, like a lovely picture in a golden frame, she saw herself reflected. For a moment she was bewildered. Then she realized what it meant. The lilies fell from her arm to the floor and she turned pale. With a little low, involuntary cry she put her hands over her face.

Eric pulled them boyishly away.

“Kilmeny, do you think you are ugly now? This is a truer mirror than Aunt Janet’s silver sugar bowl! Look — look — look! Did you ever imagine anything fairer than yourself, dainty Kilmeny?”

She was blushing now, and stealing shy radiant glances at the mirror. With a smile she took her slate and wrote naively,

“I think I am pleasant to look upon. I cannot tell you how glad I am. It is so dreadful to believe one is ugly. You can get used to everything else, but you never get used to that. It hurts just the same every time you remember it. But why did mother tell me I was ugly? Could she really have thought so? Perhaps I have become better looking since I grew up.”

“I think perhaps your mother had found that beauty is not always a blessing, Kilmeny, and thought it wiser not to let you know you possessed it. Come, let us go back to the orchard now. We mustn’t waste this rare

evening in the house. There is going to be a sunset that we shall remember all our lives. The mirror will hang here. It is yours. Don't look into it too often, though, or Aunt Janet will disapprove. She is afraid it will make you vain."

Kilmeny gave one of her rare, musical laughs, which Eric never heard without a recurrence of the old wonder that she could laugh so when she could not speak. She blew an airy little kiss at her mirrored face and turned from it, smiling happily.

On their way to the orchard they met Neil. He went by them with an averted face, but Kilmeny shivered and involuntarily drew nearer to Eric.

"I don't understand Neil at all now," she wrote nervously. "He is not nice, as he used to be, and sometimes he will not answer when I speak to him. And he looks so strangely at me, too. Besides, he is surly and impertinent to Uncle and Aunt."

"Don't mind Neil," said Eric lightly. "He is probably sulky because of some things I said to him when I found he had spied on us."

That night before she went up stairs Kilmeny stole into the parlour for another glimpse of herself in that wonderful mirror by the light of a dim little candle she carried. She was still lingering there dreamily when Aunt Janet's grim face appeared in the shadows of the doorway.

"Are you thinking about your own good looks, lassie? Ay, but remember that handsome is as handsome does," she said, with grudging admiration — for the girl with her flushed cheeks and shining eyes was something that even dour Janet Gordon could not look upon unmoved.

Kilmeny smiled softly.

"I'll try to remember," she wrote, "but oh, Aunt Janet, I am so glad I am not ugly. It is not wrong to be glad of that, is it?"

The older woman's face softened.

"No, I don't suppose it is, lassie," she conceded. "A comely face is something to be thankful for — as none know better than those who have never possessed it. I remember well when I was a girl — but that is neither here nor there. The Master thinks you are wonderful bonny, Kilmeny," she added, looking keenly at the girl.

Kilmeny started and a scarlet blush scorched her face. That, and the expression that flashed into her eyes, told Janet Gordon all she wished to know. With a stifled sigh she bade her niece good night and went away.

Kilmeny ran fleetly up the stairs to her dim little room, that looked out into the spruces, and flung herself on her bed, burying her burning face in the pillow. Her aunt's words had revealed to her the hidden secret of her heart. She knew that she loved Eric Marshall — and the knowledge brought with it a strange anguish. For was she not dumb? All night she lay staring wide-eyed through the darkness till the dawn.

Chapter XIV.

In Her Selfless Mood

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Eric noticed a change in Kilmeny at their next meeting — a change that troubled him. She seemed aloof, abstracted, almost ill at ease. When he proposed an excursion to the orchard he thought she was reluctant to go. The days that followed convinced him of the change. Something had come between them. Kilmeny seemed as far away from him as if she had in truth, like her namesake of the ballad, sojourned for seven years in the land “where the rain never fell and the wind never blew,” and had come back washed clean from all the affections of earth.

Eric had a bad week of it; but he determined to put an end to it by plain speaking. One evening in the orchard he told her of his love.

It was an evening in August, with wheat fields ripening to their harvestry — a soft violet night made for love, with the distant murmur of an unquiet sea on a rocky shore sounding through it. Kilmeny was sitting on the old bench where he had first seen her. She had been playing for him, but her music did not please her and she laid aside the violin with a little frown.

It might be that she was afraid to play — afraid that her new emotions might escape her and reveal themselves in music. It was difficult to prevent this, so long had she been accustomed to pour out all her feelings in harmony. The necessity for restraint irked her and made of her bow a clumsy thing which no longer obeyed her wishes. More than ever at that instant did she long for speech — speech that would conceal and protect where dangerous silence might betray.

In a low voice that trembled with earnestness Eric told her that he loved her — that he had loved her from the first time he had seen her in that old orchard. He spoke humbly but not fearfully, for he believed that she loved him, and he had little expectation of any rebuff.

“Kilmeny, will you be my wife?” he asked finally, taking her hands in his.

Kilmeny had listened with averted face. At first she had blushed painfully but now she had grown very pale. When he had finished speaking and was waiting for her answer, she suddenly pulled her hands away, and, putting them over her face, burst into tears and noiseless sobs.

“Kilmeny, dearest, have I alarmed you? Surely you knew before that I loved you. Don’t you care for me?” Eric said, putting his arm about her and trying to draw her to him. But she shook her head sorrowfully, and wrote with compressed lips,

“Yes, I do love you, but I will never marry you, because I cannot speak.”

“Oh, Kilmeny,” said Eric smiling, for he believed his victory won, “that doesn’t make any difference to me — you know it doesn’t, sweetest. If you love me that is enough.”

But Kilmeny only shook her head again. There was a very determined look on her pale face. She wrote,

“No, it is not enough. It would be doing you a great wrong to marry you when I cannot speak, and I will not do it because I love you too much to do anything that would harm you. Your world would think you had done a very foolish thing and it would be right. I have thought it all over many times since something Aunt Janet said made me understand, and I know I am doing right. I am sorry I did not understand sooner, before you had learned to care so much.”

“Kilmeny, darling, you have taken a very absurd fancy into that dear black head of yours. Don’t you know that you will make me miserably unhappy all my life if you will not be my wife?”

“No, you think so now; and I know you will feel very badly for a time. Then you will go away and after awhile you will forget me; and then you will see that I was right. I shall be very unhappy, too, but that is better than spoiling your life. Do not plead or coax because I shall not change my mind.”

Eric did plead and coax, however — at first patiently and smilingly, as one might argue with a dear foolish child; then with vehement and distracted earnestness, as he began to realize that Kilmeny meant what she said. It was all in vain. Kilmeny grew paler and paler, and her eyes revealed how keenly she was suffering. She did not even try to argue with him, but only listened patiently and sadly, and shook her head. Say what he would, entreat and implore as he might, he could not move her resolution a hairsbreadth.

Yet he did not despair; he could not believe that she would adhere to such a resolution; he felt sure that her love for him would eventually conquer, and he went home not unhappily after all. He did not understand that it was the very intensity of her love which gave her the strength to resist his pleading, where a more shallow affection might have yielded. It held her back unflinchingly from doing him what she believed to be a wrong.

An Old, Unhappy, Far-Off Thing

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The next day Eric sought Kilmeny again and renewed his pleadings, but again in vain. Nothing he could say, no argument which he could advance, was of any avail against her sad determination. When he was finally compelled to realize that her resolution was not to be shaken, he went in his despair to Janet Gordon. Janet listened to his story with concern and disappointment plainly visible on her face. When he had finished she shook her head.

“I’m sorry, Master. I can’t tell you how sorry I am. I had hoped for something very different. HOPED! I have PRAYED for it. Thomas and I are getting old and it has weighed on my mind for years — what was to become of Kilmeny when we would be gone. Since you came I had hoped she would have a protector in you. But if Kilmeny says she will not marry you I am afraid she’ll stick to it.”

“But she loves me,” cried the young man, “and if you and her uncle speak to her — urge her — perhaps you can influence her—”

“No, Master, it wouldn’t be any use. Oh, we will, of course, but it will not be any use. Kilmeny is as determined as her mother when once she makes up her mind. She has always been good and obedient for the most part, but once or twice we have found out that there is no moving her if she does resolve upon anything. When her mother died Thomas and I wanted to take her to church. We could not prevail on her to go. We did not know why then, but now I suppose it was because she believed she was so very ugly. It is because she thinks so much of you that she will not marry you. She is afraid you would come to repent having married a dumb girl. Maybe she is right — maybe she is right.”

“I cannot give her up,” said Eric stubbornly. “Something must be done. Perhaps her defect can be remedied even yet. Have you ever thought of

that? You have never had her examined by a doctor qualified to pronounce on her case, have you?"

"No, Master, we never took her to anyone. When we first began to fear that she was never going to talk Thomas wanted to take her to Charlottetown and have her looked to. He thought so much of the child and he felt terrible about it. But her mother wouldn't hear of it being done. There was no use trying to argue with her. She said that it would be no use — that it was her sin that was visited on her child and it could never be taken away."

"And did you give in meekly to a morbid whim like that?"
asked

Eric impatiently.

"Master, you didn't know my sister. We HAD to give in — nobody could hold out against her. She was a strange woman — and a terrible woman in many ways — after her trouble. We were afraid to cross her for fear she would go out of her mind."

"But, could you not have taken Kilmeny to a doctor unknown to her mother?"

"No, that was not possible. Margaret never let her out of her sight, not even when she was grown up. Besides, to tell you the whole truth, Master, we didn't think ourselves that it would be much use to try to cure Kilmeny. It WAS a sin that made her as she is."

"Aunt Janet, how can you talk such nonsense? Where was there any sin? Your sister thought herself a lawful wife. If Ronald Fraser thought otherwise — and there is no proof that he did — HE committed a sin, but you surely do not believe that it was visited in this fashion on his innocent child!"

"No, I am not meaning that, Master. That wasn't where Margaret did wrong; and though I never liked Ronald Fraser over much, I must say this in his defence — I believe he thought himself a free man when he married Margaret. No, it's something else — something far worse. It gives me a shiver whenever I think of it. Oh, Master, the Good Book is right when it

says the sins of the parents are visited on the children. There isn't a truer word in it than that from cover to cover."

"What, in heaven's name, is the meaning of all this?" exclaimed Eric. "Tell me what it is. I must know the whole truth about Kilmeny. Do not torment me."

"I am going to tell you the story, Master, though it will be like opening an old wound. No living person knows it but Thomas and me. When you hear it you will understand why Kilmeny can't speak, and why it isn't likely that there can ever be anything done for her. She doesn't know the truth and you must never tell her. It isn't a fit story for her ears, especially when it is about her mother. Promise me that you will never tell her, no matter what may happen."

"I promise. Go on — go on," said the young man feverishly.

Janet Gordon locked her hands together in her lap, like a woman who nerves herself to some hateful task. She looked very old; the lines on her face seemed doubly deep and harsh.

"My sister Margaret was a very proud, high-spirited girl, Master. But I would not have you think she was unlovable. No, no, that would be doing a great injustice to her memory. She had her faults as we all have; but she was bright and merry and warmhearted. We all loved her. She was the light and life of this house. Yes, Master, before the trouble that came on her Margaret was a winsome lass, singing like a lark from morning till night. Maybe we spoiled her a little — maybe we gave her too much of her own way.

"Well, Master, you have heard the story of her marriage to Ronald Fraser and what came after, so I need not go into that. I know, or used to know Elizabeth Williamson well, and I know that whatever she told you would be the truth and nothing more or less than the truth.

"Our father was a very proud man. Oh, Master, if Margaret was too proud she got it from no stranger. And her misfortune cut him to the heart. He never spoke a word to us here for more than three days after he heard of it. He sat in the corner there with bowed head and would not touch bite

or sup. He had not been very willing for her to marry Ronald Fraser; and when she came home in disgrace she had not set foot over the threshold before he broke out railing at her. Oh, I can see her there at the door this very minute, Master, pale and trembling, clinging to Thomas's arm, her great eyes changing from sorrow and shame to wrath. It was just at sunset and a red ray came in at the window and fell right across her breast like a stain of blood.

"Father called her a hard name, Master. Oh, he was too hard — even though he was my father I must say he was too hard on her, brokenhearted as she was, and guilty of nothing more after all than a little willfulness in the matter of her marriage.

"And father was sorry for it — Oh, Master, the word wasn't out of his mouth before he was sorry for it. But the mischief was done. Oh, I'll never forget Margaret's face, Master! It haunts me yet in the black of the night. It was full of anger and rebellion and defiance. But she never answered him back. She clenched her hands and went up to her old room without saying a word, all those mad feelings surging in her soul, and being held back from speech by her sheer, stubborn will. And, Master, never a word did Margaret say from that day until after Kilmeny was born — not one word, Master. Nothing we could do for her softened her. And we were kind to her, Master, and gentle with her, and never reproached her by so much as a look. But she would not speak to anyone. She just sat in her room most of the time and stared at the wall with such awful eyes. Father implored her to speak and forgive him, but she never gave any sign that she heard him.

"I haven't come to the worst yet, Master. Father sickened and took to his bed. Margaret would not go in to see him. Then one night Thomas and I were watching by him; it was about eleven o'clock. All at once he said,

"'Janet, go up and tell the lass' — he always called Margaret that — it was a kind of pet name he had for her—'that I'm deein' and ask her to come down and speak to me afore I'm gone.'

"Master, I went. Margaret was sitting in her room all alone in the cold and dark, staring at the wall. I told her what our father had said. She never

let on she heard me. I pleaded and wept, Master. I did what I had never done to any human creature — I kneeled to her and begged her, as she hoped for mercy herself, to come down and see our dying father. Master, she wouldn't! She never moved or looked at me. I had to get up and go downstairs and tell that old man she would not come."

Janet Gordon lifted her hands and struck them together in her agony of remembrance.

"When I told father he only said, oh, so gently,

"'Poor lass, I was too hard on her. She isna to blame. But I canna go to meet her mother till our little lass has forgie'n me for the name I called her. Thomas, help me up. Since she winna come to me I must e'en go to her.'

"There was no crossing him — we saw that. He got up from his deathbed and Thomas helped him out into the hall and up the stair. I walked behind with the candle. Oh, Master, I'll never forget it — the awful shadows and the storm wind wailing outside, and father's gasping breath. But we got him to Margaret's room and he stood before her, trembling, with his white hairs falling about his sunken face. And he prayed Margaret to forgive him — to forgive him and speak just one word to him before he went to meet her mother. Master" — Janet's voice rose almost to a shriek — "she would not — she would not! And yet she WANTED to speak — afterwards she confessed to me that she wanted to speak. But her stubbornness wouldn't let her. It was like some evil power that had gripped hold of her and wouldn't let go. Father might as well have pleaded with a graven image. Oh, it was hard and dreadful! She saw her father die and she never spoke the word he prayed for to him. THAT was her sin, Master, — and for that sin the curse fell on her unborn child. When father understood that she would not speak he closed his eyes and was like to have fallen if Thomas had not caught him.

"'Oh, lass, you're a hard woman,' was all he said. And they were his last words. Thomas and I carried him back to his room, but the breath was gone from him before we ever got him there.

“Well, Master, Kilmeny was born a month afterwards, and when Margaret felt her baby at her breast the evil thing that had held her soul in its bondage lost its power. She spoke and wept and was herself again. Oh, how she wept! She implored us to forgive her and we did freely and fully. But the one against whom she had sinned most grievously was gone, and no word of forgiveness could come to her from the grave. My poor sister never knew peace of conscience again, Master. But she was gentle and kind and humble until — until she began to fear that Kilmeny was never going to speak. We thought then that she would go out of her mind. Indeed, Master, she never was quite right again.

“But that is the story and it’s a thankful woman I am that the telling of it is done. Kilmeny can’t speak because her mother wouldn’t.”

Eric had listened with a gray horror on his face to the gruesome tale. The black tragedy of it appalled him — the tragedy of that merciless law, the most cruel and mysterious thing in God’s universe, which ordains that the sin of the guilty shall be visited on the innocent. Fight against it as he would, the miserable conviction stole into his heart that Kilmeny’s case was indeed beyond the reach of any human skill.

“It is a dreadful tale,” he said moodily, getting up and walking restlessly to and fro in the dim spruce-shadowed old kitchen where they were. “And if it is true that her mother’s willful silence caused Kilmeny’s dumbness, I fear, as you say, that we cannot help her. But you may be mistaken. It may have been nothing more than a strange coincidence. Possibly something may be done for her. At all events, we must try. I have a friend in Queenslea who is a physician. His name is David Baker, and he is a very skilful specialist in regard to the throat and voice. I shall have him come here and see Kilmeny.”

“Have your way,” assented Janet in the hopeless tone which she might have used in giving him permission to attempt any impossible thing.

“It will be necessary to tell Dr. Baker why Kilmeny cannot speak — or why you think she cannot.”

Janet’s face twitched.

“Must that be, Master? Oh, it’s a bitter tale to tell a stranger.”

“Don’t be afraid. I shall tell him nothing that is not strictly necessary to his proper understanding of the case. It will be quite enough to say that Kilmeny may be dumb because for several months before her birth her mother’s mind was in a very morbid condition, and she preserved a stubborn and unbroken silence because of a certain bitter personal resentment.”

“Well, do as you think best, Master.”

Janet plainly had no faith in the possibility of anything being done for Kilmeny. But a rosy glow of hope flashed over Kilmeny’s face when Eric told her what he meant to do.

“Oh, do you think he can make me speak?” she wrote eagerly.

“I don’t know, Kilmeny. I hope that he can, and I know he will do all that mortal skill can do. If he can remove your defect will you promise to marry me, dearest?”

She nodded. The grave little motion had the solemnity of a sacred promise.

“Yes,” she wrote, “when I can speak like other women I will marry you.”

David Baker's Opinion

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The next week David Baker came to Lindsay. He arrived in the afternoon when Eric was in school. When the latter came home he found that David had, in the space of an hour, captured Mrs. Williamson's heart, wormed himself into the good graces of Timothy, and become hail-fellow-well-met with old Robert. But he looked curiously at Eric when the two young men found themselves alone in the upstairs room.

"Now, Eric, I want to know what all this is about. What scrape have you got into? You write me a letter, entreating me in the name of friendship to come to you at once. Accordingly I come post haste. You seem to be in excellent health yourself. Explain why you have inveigled me hither."

"I want you to do me a service which only you can do, David," said Eric quietly. "I didn't care to go into the details by letter. I have met in Lindsay a young girl whom I have learned to love. I have asked her to marry me, but, although she cares for me, she refuses to do so because she is dumb. I wish you to examine her and find out the cause of her defect, and if it can be cured. She can hear perfectly and all her other faculties are entirely normal. In order that you may better understand the case I must tell you the main facts of her history."

This Eric proceeded to do. David Baker listened with grave attention, his eyes fastened on his friend's face. He did not betray the surprise and dismay he felt at learning that Eric had fallen in love with a dumb girl of doubtful antecedents; and the strange case enlisted his professional interest. When he had heard the whole story he thrust his hands into his pockets and strode up and down the room several times in silence. Finally he halted before Eric.

"So you have done what I foreboded all along you would do — left your common sense behind you when you went courting."

“If I did,” said Eric quietly, “I took with me something better and nobler than common sense.”

David shrugged his shoulders.

“You’ll have hard work to convince me of that, Eric.”

“No, it will not be difficult at all. I have one argument that will convince you speedily — and that is Kilmeny Gordon herself. But we will not discuss the matter of my wisdom or lack of it just now. What I want to know is this — what do you think of the case as I have stated it to you?”

David frowned thoughtfully.

“I hardly know what to think. It is very curious and unusual, but it is not totally unprecedented. There have been cases on record where pre-natal influences have produced a like result. I cannot just now remember whether any were ever cured. Well, I’ll see if anything can be done for this girl. I cannot express any further opinion until I have examined her.”

The next morning Eric took David up to the Gordon homestead. As they approached the old orchard a strain of music came floating through the resinous morning arcades of the spruce wood — a wild, sorrowful, appealing cry, full of indescribable pathos, yet marvelously sweet.

“What is that?” exclaimed David, starting.

“That is Kilmeny playing on her violin,” answered Eric. “She has great talent in that respect and improvises wonderful melodies.”

When they reached the orchard Kilmeny rose from the old bench to meet them, her lovely luminous eyes distended, her face flushed with the excitement of mingled hope and fear.

“Oh, ye gods!” muttered David helplessly.

He could not hide his amazement and Eric smiled to see it. The latter had not failed to perceive that his friend had until now considered him as little better than a lunatic.

“Kilmeny, this is my friend, Dr. Baker,” he said.

Kilmeny held out her hand with a smile. Her beauty, as she stood there in the fresh morning sunshine beside a clump of her sister lilies, was something to take away a man’s breath. David, who was by no means lacking in confidence and generally had a ready tongue where women were

concerned, found himself as mute and awkward as a school boy, as he bowed over her hand.

But Kilmeny was charmingly at ease. There was not a trace of embarrassment in her manner, though there was a pretty shyness. Eric smiled as he recalled HIS first meeting with her. He suddenly realized how far Kilmeny had come since then and how much she had developed.

With a little gesture of invitation Kilmeny led the way through the orchard to the wild cherry lane, and the two men followed.

“Eric, she is simply unutterable!” said David in an undertone. “Last night, to tell you the truth, I had a rather poor opinion of your sanity. But now I am consumed with a fierce envy. She is the loveliest creature I ever saw.”

Eric introduced David to the Gordons and then hurried away to his school. On his way down the Gordon lane he met Neil and was half startled by the glare of hatred in the Italian boy’s eyes. Pity succeeded the momentary alarm. Neil’s face had grown thin and haggard; his eyes were sunken and feverishly bright; he looked years older than on the day when Eric had first seen him in the brook hollow.

Prompted by sudden compassionate impulse Eric stopped and held out his hand.

“Neil, can’t we be friends?” he said. “I am sorry if I have been the cause of inflicting pain on you.”

“Friends! Never!” said Neil passionately. “You have taken Kilmeny from me. I shall hate you always. And I’ll be even with you yet.”

He strode fiercely up the lane, and Eric, with a shrug of his shoulders, went on his way, dismissing the meeting from his mind.

The day seemed interminably long to him. David had not returned when he went home to dinner; but when he went to his room in the evening he found his friend there, staring out of the window.

“Well,” he said, impatiently, as David wheeled around but still kept silence, “What have you to say to me? Don’t keep me in suspense any longer, David. I have endured all I can. To-day has seemed like a thousand years. Have you discovered what is the matter with Kilmeny?”

“There is nothing the matter with her,” answered David slowly, flinging himself into a chair by the window.

“What do you mean?”

“Just exactly what I say. Her vocal organs are all perfect. As far as they are concerned, there is absolutely no reason why she should not speak.”

“Then why can’t she speak? Do you think — do you think—”

“I think that I cannot express my conclusion in any better words than Janet Gordon used when she said that Kilmeny cannot speak because her mother wouldn’t. That is all there is to it. The trouble is psychological, not physical. Medical skill is helpless before it. There are greater men than I in my profession; but it is my honest belief, Eric, that if you were to consult them they would tell you just what I have told you, neither more nor less.”

“Then there is no hope,” said Eric in a tone of despair. “You can do nothing for her?”

David took from the back of his chair a crochet antimacassar with a lion rampant in the center and spread it over his knee.

“I can do nothing for her,” he said, scowling at that work of art. “I do not believe any living man can do anything for her. But I do not say — exactly — that there is no hope.”

“Come, David, I am in no mood for guessing riddles. Speak plainly, man, and don’t torment me.”

David frowned dubiously and poked his finger through the hole which represented the eye of the king of beasts.

“I don’t know that I can make it plain to you. It isn’t very plain to myself. And it is only a vague theory of mine, of course. I cannot substantiate it by any facts. In short, Eric, I think it is possible that Kilmeny may speak sometime — if she ever wants it badly enough.”

“Wants to! Why, man, she wants to as badly as it is possible for any one to want anything. She loves me with all her heart and she won’t marry me because she can’t speak. Don’t you suppose that a girl under such circumstances would ‘want’ to speak as much as any one could?”

“Yes, but I do not mean that sort of wanting, no matter how strong the wish may be. What I do mean is — a sudden, vehement, passionate inrush of desire, physical, psychical, mental, all in one, mighty enough to rend asunder the invisible fetters that hold her speech in bondage. If any occasion should arise to evoke such a desire I believe that Kilmeny would speak — and having once spoken would thenceforth be normal in that respect — ay, if she spoke but the one word.”

“All this sounds like great nonsense to me,” said Eric restlessly. “I suppose you have an idea what you are talking about, but I haven’t. And, in any case, it practically means that there is no hope for her — or me. Even if your theory is correct it is not likely such an occasion as you speak of will ever arise. And Kilmeny will never marry me.”

“Don’t give up so easily, old fellow. There HAVE been cases on record where women have changed their minds.”

“Not women like Kilmeny,” said Eric miserably. “I tell you she has all her mother’s unfaltering will and tenacity of purpose, although she is free from any taint of pride or selfishness. I thank you for your sympathy and interest, David. You have done all you could — but, heavens, what it would have meant to me if you could have helped her!”

With a groan Eric flung himself on a chair and buried his face in his hands. It was a moment which held for him all the bitterness of death. He had thought that he was prepared for disappointment; he had not known how strong his hope had really been until that hope was utterly taken from him.

David, with a sigh, returned the crochet antimacassar carefully to its place on the chair back.

“Eric, last night, to be honest, I thought that, if I found I could not help this girl, it would be the best thing that could happen, as far as you were concerned. But since I have seen her — well, I would give my right hand if I could do anything for her. She is the wife for you, if we could make her speak; yes, and by the memory of your mother” — David brought his fist down on the window sill with a force that shook the casement,—“she is the wife for you, speech or no speech, if we could only convince her of it.”

“She cannot be convinced of that. No, David, I have lost her.
Did you tell her what you have told me?”

“I told her I could not help her. I did not say anything to her of my theory — that would have done no good.”

“How did she take it?”

“Very bravely and quietly—’like a winsome lady’. But the look in her eyes — Eric, I felt as if I had murdered something. She bade me goodbye with a pitiful smile and went upstairs. I did not see her again, although I stayed to dinner as her uncle’s request. Those old Gordons are a queer pair. I liked them, though. They are strong and staunch — good friends, bitter enemies. They were sorry that I could not help Kilmeny, but I saw plainly that old Thomas Gordon thought that I had been meddling with predestination in attempting it.”

Eric smiled mechanically.

“I must go up and see Kilmeny. You’ll excuse me, won’t you, David? My books are there — help yourself.”

But when Eric reached the Gordon house he saw only old Janet, who told him that Kilmeny was in her room and refused to see him.

“She thought you would come up, and she left this with me to give you, Master.”

Janet handed him a little note. It was very brief and blotted with tears.

“Do not come any more, Eric,” it ran. “I must not see you, because it would only make it harder for us both. You must go away and forget me. You will be thankful for this some day. I shall always love and pray for you.”

“KILMENY.”

“I MUST see her,” said Eric desperately. “Aunt Janet, be my friend. Tell her she must see me for a little while at least.”

Janet shook her head but went upstairs. She soon returned.

“She says she cannot come down. You know she means it, Master, and it is of no use to coax her. And I must say I think she is right. Since she

will not marry you it is better for her not to see you.”

Eric was compelled to go home with no better comfort than this. In the morning, as it was Sunday, he drove David Baker to the station. He had not slept and he looked so miserable and reckless that David felt anxious about him. David would have stayed in Lindsay for a few days, but a certain critical case in Queenslea demanded his speedy return. He shook hands with Eric on the station platform.

“Eric, give up that school and come home at once. You can do no good in Lindsay now, and you’ll only eat your heart out here.”

“I must see Kilmeny once more before I leave,” was all Eric’s answer.

That afternoon he went again to the Gordon homestead. But the result was the same; Kilmeny refused to see him, and Thomas Gordon said gravely,

“Master, you know I like you and I am sorry Kilmeny thinks as she does, though maybe she is right. I would be glad to see you often for your own sake and I’ll miss you much; but as things are I tell you plainly you’d better not come here any more. It will do no good, and the sooner you and she get over thinking about each other the better for you both. Go now, lad, and God bless you.”

“Do you know what it is you are asking of me?” said Eric hoarsely.

“I know I am asking a hard thing for your own good, Master. It is not as if Kilmeny would ever change her mind. We have had some experience with a woman’s will ere this. Tush, Janet, woman, don’t be weeping. You women are foolish creatures. Do you think tears can wash such things away? No, they cannot blot out sin, or the consequences of sin. It’s awful how one sin can spread out and broaden, till it eats into innocent lives, sometimes long after the sinner has gone to his own accounting. Master, if you take my advice, you’ll give up the Lindsay school and go back to your own world as soon as may be.”

Chapter XVII.

A Broken Fetter

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Eric went home with a white, haggard face. He had never thought it was possible for a man to suffer as he suffered then. What was he to do? It seemed impossible to go on with life — there was NO life apart from Kilmeny. Anguish wrung his soul until his strength went from him and youth and hope turned to gall and bitterness in his heart.

He never afterwards could tell how he lived through the following Sunday or how he taught school as usual on Monday. He found out how much a man may suffer and yet go on living and working. His body seemed to him an automaton that moved and spoke mechanically, while his tortured spirit, pent-up within, endured pain that left its impress on him for ever. Out of that fiery furnace of agony Eric Marshall was to go forth a man who had put boyhood behind him for ever and looked out on life with eyes that saw into it and beyond.

On Tuesday afternoon there was a funeral in the district and, according to custom, the school was closed. Eric went again to the old orchard. He had no expectation of seeing Kilmeny there, for he thought she would avoid the spot lest she might meet him. But he could not keep away from it, although the thought of it was an added torment, and he vibrated between a wild wish that he might never see it again, and a sick wonder how he could possibly go away and leave it — that strange old orchard where he had met and wooed his sweetheart, watching her develop and blossom under his eyes, like some rare flower, until in the space of three short months she had passed from exquisite childhood into still more exquisite womanhood.

As he crossed the pasture field before the spruce wood he came upon Neil Gordon, building a longer fence. Neil did not look up as Eric passed, but sullenly went on driving poles. Before this Eric had pitied Neil; now he was conscious of feeling sympathy with him. Had Neil suffered as he

was suffering? Eric had entered into a new fellowship whereof the passport was pain.

The orchard was very silent and dreamy in the thick, deep tinted sunshine of the September afternoon, a sunshine which seemed to possess the power of extracting the very essence of all the odours which summer has stored up in wood and field. There were few flowers now; most of the lilies, which had queened it so bravely along the central path a few days before, were withered. The grass had become ragged and sere and unkempt. But in the corners the torches of the goldenrod were kindling and a few misty purple asters nodded here and there. The orchard kept its own strange attractiveness, as some women with youth long passed still preserve an atmosphere of remembered beauty and innate, indestructible charm.

Eric walked drearily and carelessly about it, and finally sat down on a half fallen fence panel in the shadow of the overhanging spruce boughs. There he gave himself up to a reverie, poignant and bitter sweet, in which he lived over again everything that had passed in the orchard since his first meeting there with Kilmeny.

So deep was his abstraction that he was conscious of nothing around him. He did not hear stealthy footsteps behind him in the dim spruce wood. He did not even see Kilmeny as she came slowly around the curve of the wild cherry lane.

Kilmeny had sought the old orchard for the healing of her heartbreak, if healing were possible for her. She had no fear of encountering Eric there at that time of day, for she did not know that it was the district custom to close the school for a funeral. She would never have gone to it in the evening, but she longed for it continually; it, and her memories, were all that was left her now.

Years seemed to have passed over the girl in those few days. She had drunk of pain and broken bread with sorrow. Her face was pale and strained, with bluish, transparent shadows under her large wistful eyes, out of which the dream and laughter of girlhood had gone, but into which had come the potent charm of grief and patience. Thomas Gordon had shaken

his head bodingly when he had looked at her that morning at the breakfast table.

“She won’t stand it,” he thought. “She isn’t long for this world. Maybe it is all for the best, poor lass. But I wish that young Master had never set foot in the Connors orchard, or in this house. Margaret, Margaret, it’s hard that your child should have to be paying the reckoning of a sin that was sinned before her birth.”

Kilmeny walked through the lane slowly and absently like a woman in a dream. When she came to the gap in the fence where the lane ran into the orchard she lifted her wan, drooping face and saw Eric, sitting in the shadow of the wood at the other side of the orchard with his bowed head in his hands. She stopped quickly and the blood rushed wildly over her face.

The next moment it ebbed, leaving her white as marble. Horror filled her eyes, — blank, deadly horror, as the livid shadow of a cloud might fill two blue pools.

Behind Eric Neil Gordon was standing tense, crouched, murderous. Even at that distance Kilmeny saw the look on his face, saw what he held in his hand, and realized in one agonized flash of comprehension what it meant.

All this photographed itself in her brain in an instant. She knew that by the time she could run across the orchard to warn Eric by a touch it would be too late. Yet she must warn him — she MUST — she MUST! A mighty surge of desire seemed to rise up within her and overwhelm her like a wave of the sea, — a surge that swept everything before it in an irresistible flood. As Neil Gordon swiftly and vindictively, with the face of a demon, lifted the axe he held in his hand, Kilmeny sprang forward through the gap.

“ERIC, ERIC, LOOK BEHIND YOU — LOOK BEHIND YOU!”

Eric started up, confused, bewildered, as the voice came shrieking across the orchard. He did not in the least realize that it was Kilmeny who had called to him, but he instinctively obeyed the command.

He wheeled around and saw Neil Gordon, who was looking, not at him, but past him at Kilmeny. The Italian boy’s face was ashen and his eyes

were filled with terror and incredulity, as if he had been checked in his murderous purpose by some supernatural interposition. The axe, lying at his feet where he had dropped it in his unutterable consternation on hearing Kilmeny's cry told the whole tale. But before Eric could utter a word Neil turned, with a cry more like that of an animal than a human being, and fled like a hunted creature into the shadow of the spruce wood.

A moment later Kilmeny, her lovely face dewed with tears and sunned over with smiles, flung herself on Eric's breast.

“Oh, Eric, I can speak, — I can speak! Oh, it is so wonderful!
Eric, I love you — I love you!”

Neil Gordon Solves His Own Problem

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“It is a miracle!” said Thomas Gordon in an awed tone.

It was the first time he had spoken since Eric and Kilmeny had rushed in, hand in hand, like two children intoxicated with joy and wonder, and gasped out their story together to him and Janet.

“Oh, no, it is very wonderful, but it is not a miracle,” said Eric. “David told me it might happen. I had no hope that it would. He could explain it all to you if he were here.”

Thomas Gordon shook his head. “I doubt if he could, Master — he, or any one else. It is near enough to a miracle for me. Let us thank God reverently and humbly that he has seen fit to remove his curse from the innocent. Your doctors may explain it as they like, lad, but I’m thinking they won’t get much nearer to it than that. It is awesome, that is what it is. Janet, woman, I feel as if I were in a dream. Can Kilmeny really speak?”

“Indeed I can, Uncle,” said Kilmeny, with a rapturous glance at Eric. “Oh, I don’t know how it came to me — I felt that I **MUST** speak — and I did. And it is so easy now — it seems to me as if I could always have done it.”

She spoke naturally and easily. The only difficulty which she seemed to experience was in the proper modulation of her voice. Occasionally she pitched it too high — again, too low. But it was evident that she would soon acquire perfect control of it. It was a beautiful voice — very clear and soft and musical.

“Oh, I am so glad that the first word I said was your name, dearest,” she murmured to Eric.

“What about Neil?” asked Thomas Gordon gravely, rousing himself with an effort from his abstraction of wonder. “What are we to do with him when he returns? In one way this is a sad business.”

Eric had almost forgotten about Neil in his overwhelming amazement and joy. The realization of his escape from sudden and violent death had not yet had any opportunity to take possession of his thoughts.

“We must forgive him, Mr. Gordon. I know how I should feel towards a man who took Kilmeny from me. It was an evil impulse to which he gave way in his suffering — and think of the good which has resulted from it.”

“That is true, Master, but it does not alter the terrible fact that the boy had murder in his heart, — that he would have killed you. An overruling Providence has saved him from the actual commission of the crime and brought good out of evil; but he is guilty in thought and purpose. And we have cared for him and instructed him as our own — with all his faults we have loved him! It is a hard thing, and I do not see what we are to do. We cannot act as if nothing had happened. We can never trust him again.”

But Neil Gordon solved the problem himself. When Eric returned that night he found old Robert Williamson in the pantry regaling himself with a lunch of bread and cheese after a trip to the station. Timothy sat on the dresser in black velvet state and gravely addressed himself to the disposal of various tidbits that came his way.

“Good night, Master. Glad to see you’re looking more like yourself. I told the wife it was only a lover’s quarrel most like. She’s been worrying about you; but she didn’t like to ask you what was the trouble. She ain’t one of them unfortunate folks who can’t be happy athout they’re everlasting poking their noses into other people’s business. But what kind of a rumpus was kicked up at the Gordon place, tonight, Master?”

Eric looked amazed. What could Robert Williamson have heard so soon?

“What do you mean?” he asked.

“Why, us folks at the station knew there must have been a to-do of some kind when Neil Gordon went off on the harvest excursion the way he did.”

“Neil gone! On the harvest excursion!” exclaimed Eric.

“Yes, sir. You know this was the night the excursion train left. They cross on the boat tonight — special trip. There was a dozen or so fellows from hereabouts went. We was all standing around chatting when Lincoln Frame drove up full speed and Neil jumped out of his rig. Just bolted into the office, got his ticket and out again, and on to the train without a word to any one, and as black looking as the Old Scratch himself. We was all too surprised to speak till he was gone. Lincoln couldn’t give us much information. He said Neil had rushed up to their place about dark, looking as if the constable was after him, and offered to sell that black filly of his to Lincoln for sixty dollars if Lincoln would drive him to the station in time to catch the excursion train. The filly was Neil’s own, and Lincoln had been wanting to buy her but Neil would never hear to it afore. Lincoln jumped at the chance. Neil had brought the filly with him, and Lincoln hitched right up and took him to the station. Neil hadn’t no luggage of any kind and wouldn’t open his mouth the whole way up, Lincoln says. We concluded him and old Thomas must have had a row. D’ye know anything about it? Or was you so wrapped up in sweethearting that you didn’t hear or see nothing else?”

Eric reflected rapidly. He was greatly relieved to find that Neil had gone. He would never return and this was best for all concerned. Old Robert must be told a part of the truth at least, since it would soon become known that Kilmeny could speak.

“There was some trouble at the Gordon place tonight, Mr. Williamson,” he said quietly. “Neil Gordon behaved rather badly and frightened Kilmeny terribly, — so terribly that a very surprising thing has happened. She has found herself able to speak, and can speak perfectly.”

Old Robert laid down the piece of cheese he was conveying to his mouth on the point of a knife and stared at Eric in blank amazement.

“God bless my soul, Master, what an extraordinary thing!” he ejaculated. “Are you in earnest? Or are you trying to see how much of a fool you can make of the old man?”

“No, Mr. Williamson, I assure you it is no more than the simple truth. Dr. Baker told me that a shock might cure her, — and it has. As for Neil,

he has gone, no doubt for good, and I think it well that he has.”

Not caring to discuss the matter further, Eric left the kitchen. But as he mounted the stairs to his room he heard old Robert muttering, like a man in hopeless bewilderment,

“Well, I never heard anything like this in all my born days — never — never. Timothy, did YOU ever hear the like? Them Gordons are an unaccountable lot and no mistake. They couldn’t act like other people if they tried. I must wake mother up and tell her about this, or I’ll never be able to sleep.”

Victor From Vanquished Issues

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Now that everything was settled Eric wished to give up teaching and go back to his own place. True, he had “signed papers” to teach the school for a year; but he knew that the trustees would let him off if he procured a suitable substitute. He resolved to teach until the fall vacation, which came in October, and then go. Kilmeny had promised that their marriage should take place in the following spring. Eric had pleaded for an earlier date, but Kilmeny was sweetly resolute, and Thomas and Janet agreed with her.

“There are so many things that I must learn yet before I shall be ready to be married,” Kilmeny had said. “And I want to get accustomed to seeing people. I feel a little frightened yet whenever I see any one I don’t know, although I don’t think I show it. I am going to church with Uncle and Aunt after this, and to the Missionary Society meetings. And Uncle Thomas says that he will send me to a boarding school in town this winter if you think it advisable.”

Eric vetoed this promptly. The idea of Kilmeny in a boarding school was something that could not be thought about without laughter.

“I can’t see why she can’t learn all she needs to learn after she is married to me, just as well as before,” he grumbled to her uncle and aunt.

“But we want to keep her with us for another winter yet,” explained Thomas Gordon patiently. “We are going to miss her terrible when she does go, Master. She has never been away from us for a day — she is all the brightness there is in our lives. It is very kind of you to say that she can come home whenever she likes, but there will be a great difference. She will belong to your world and not to ours. That is for the best — and we wouldn’t have it otherwise. But let us keep her as our own for this one winter yet.”

Eric yielded with the best grace he could muster. After all, he reflected, Lindsay was not so far from Queenslea, and there were such things as boats and trains.

“Have you told your father about all this yet?” asked Janet anxiously.

No, he had not. But he went home and wrote a full account of his summer to old Mr. Marshall that night.

Mr. Marshall, Senior, answered the letter in person. A few days later, Eric, coming home from school, found his father sitting in Mrs. Williamson’s prim, fleckless parlour. Nothing was said about Eric’s letter, however, until after tea. When they found themselves alone, Mr. Marshall said abruptly,

“Eric, what about this girl? I hope you haven’t gone and made a fool of yourself. It sounds remarkably like it. A girl that has been dumb all her life — a girl with no right to her father’s name — a country girl brought up in a place like Lindsay! Your wife will have to fill your mother’s place, — and your mother was a pearl among women. Do you think this girl is worthy of it? It isn’t possible! You’ve been led away by a pretty face and dairy maid freshness. I expected some trouble out of this freak of yours coming over here to teach school.”

“Wait until you see Kilmeny, father,” said Eric, smiling.

“Humph! That’s just exactly what David Baker said. I went straight to him when I got your letter, for I knew that there was some connection between it and that mysterious visit of his over here, concerning which I never could drag a word out of him by hook or crook. And all HE said was, ‘Wait until you see Kilmeny Gordon, sir.’ Well, I WILL wait till I see her, but I shall look at her with the eyes of sixty-five, mind you, not the eyes of twenty-four. And if she isn’t what your wife ought to be, sir, you give her up or paddle your own canoe. I shall not aid or abet you in making a fool of yourself and spoiling your life.”

Eric bit his lip, but only said quietly,

“Come with me, father. We will go to see her now.”

They went around by way of the main road and the Gordon lane.
Kilmeny was not in when they reached the house.

“She is up in the old orchard, Master,” said Janet. “She loves that place so much she spends all her spare time there. She likes to go there to study.”

They sat down and talked awhile with Thomas and Janet. When they left, Mr. Marshall said,

“I like those people. If Thomas Gordon had been a man like Robert Williamson I shouldn’t have waited to see your Kilmeny. But they are all right — rugged and grim, but of good stock and pith — native refinement and strong character. But I must say candidly that I hope your young lady hasn’t got her aunt’s mouth.”

“Kilmeny’s mouth is like a love-song made incarnate in sweet flesh,” said Eric enthusiastically.

“Humph!” said Mr. Marshall. “Well,” he added more tolerantly, a moment later, “I was a poet, too, for six months in my life when I was courting your mother.”

Kilmeny was reading on the bench under the lilac trees when they reached the orchard. She stood up and came shyly forward to meet them, guessing who the tall, white-haired old gentleman with Eric must be. As she approached Eric saw with a thrill of exultation that she had never looked lovelier. She wore a dress of her favourite blue, simply and quaintly made, as all her gowns were, revealing the perfect lines of her lithe, slender figure. Her glossy black hair was wound about her head in a braided coronet, against which a spray of wild asters shone like pale purple stars. Her face was flushed delicately with excitement. She looked like a young princess, crowned with a ruddy splash of sunlight that fell through the old trees.

“Father, this is Kilmeny,” said Eric proudly.

Kilmeny held out her hand with a shyly murmured greeting. Mr. Marshall took it and held it in his, looking so steadily and piercingly into her face that even her frank gaze wavered before the intensity of his keen

old eyes. Then he drew her to him and kissed her gravely and gently on her white forehead.

“My dear,” he said, “I am glad and proud that you have consented to be my son’s wife — and my very dear and honoured daughter.”

Eric turned abruptly away to hide his emotion and on his face was a light as of one who sees a great glory widening and deepening down the vista of his future.

THE BLUE CASTLE

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Chapter I

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If it had not rained on a certain May morning Valancy Stirling's whole life would have been entirely different. She would have gone, with the rest of her clan, to Aunt Wellington's engagement picnic and Dr. Trent would have gone to Montreal. But it did rain and you shall hear what happened to her because of it.

Valancy wakened early, in the lifeless, hopeless hour just preceding dawn. She had not slept very well. One does not sleep well, sometimes, when one is twenty-nine on the morrow, and unmarried, in a community and connection where the unmarried are simply those who have failed to get a man.

Deerwood and the Stirlings had long since relegated Valancy to hopeless old maidenhood. But Valancy herself had never quite relinquished a certain pitiful, shamed, little hope that Romance would come her way yet—never, until this wet, horrible morning, when she wakened to the fact that she was twenty-nine and unsought by any man.

Ay, *there* lay the sting. Valancy did not mind so much being an old maid. After all, she thought, being an old maid couldn't possibly be as dreadful as being married to an Uncle Wellington or an Uncle Benjamin, or even an Uncle Herbert. What hurt her was that she had never had a chance to be anything but an old maid. No man had ever desired her.

The tears came into her eyes as she lay there alone in the faintly greying darkness. She dared not let herself cry as hard as she wanted to, for two reasons. She was afraid that crying might bring on another attack of that pain around the heart. She had had a spell of it after she had got into bed—rather worse than any she had had yet. And she was afraid her mother would notice her red eyes at breakfast and keep at her with minute, persistent, mosquito-like questions regarding the cause thereof.

“Suppose,” thought Valancy with a ghastly grin, “I answered with the plain truth, ‘I am crying because I cannot get married.’ How horrified Mother would be—though she is ashamed every day of her life of her old maid daughter.”

But of course appearances should be kept up. “It is not,” Valancy could hear her mother’s prim, dictatorial voice asserting, “it is not *maidenly* to think about *men*.”

The thought of her mother’s expression made Valancy laugh—for she had a sense of humour nobody in her clan suspected. For that matter, there were a good many things about Valancy that nobody suspected. But her laughter was very superficial and presently she lay there, a huddled, futile little figure, listening to the rain pouring down outside and watching, with a sick distaste, the chill, merciless light creeping into her ugly, sordid room.

She knew the ugliness of that room by heart—knew it and hated it. The yellow-painted floor, with one hideous, “hooked” rug by the bed, with a grotesque, “hooked” dog on it, always grinning at her when she awoke; the faded, dark-red paper; the ceiling discoloured by old leaks and crossed by cracks; the narrow, pinched little washstand; the brown-paper lambrequin with purple roses on it; the spotted old looking-glass with the crack across it, propped up on the inadequate dressing-table; the jar of ancient potpourri made by her mother in her mythical honeymoon; the shell-covered box, with one burst corner, which Cousin Stickles had made in her equally mythical girlhood; the beaded pincushion with half its bead fringe gone; the one stiff, yellow chair; the faded old motto, “Gone but not forgotten,” worked in coloured yarns about Great-grandmother Stirling’s grim old face; the old photographs of ancient relatives long banished from the rooms below. There were only two pictures that were not of relatives. One, an old chromo of a puppy sitting on a rainy doorstep. That picture always made Valancy unhappy. That forlorn little dog crouched on the doorstep in the driving rain! Why didn’t *some one* open the door and let him in? The other picture was a faded, passe-partouted engraving of Queen Louise coming down a stairway, which Aunt Wellington had lavishly given

her on her tenth birthday. For nineteen years she had looked at it and hated it, beautiful, smug, self-satisfied Queen Louise. But she never dared destroy it or remove it. Mother and Cousin Stickles would have been aghast, or, as Valancy irreverently expressed it in her thoughts, would have had a fit.

Every room in the house was ugly, of course. But downstairs appearances were kept up somewhat. There was no money for rooms nobody ever saw. Valancy sometimes felt that she could have done something for her room herself, even without money, if she were permitted. But her mother had negatived every timid suggestion and Valancy did not persist. Valancy never persisted. She was afraid to. Her mother could not brook opposition. Mrs. Stirling would sulk for days if offended, with the airs of an insulted duchess.

The only thing Valancy liked about her room was that she could be alone there at night to cry if she wanted to.

But, after all, what did it matter if a room, which you used for nothing except sleeping and dressing in, were ugly? Valancy was never permitted to stay alone in her room for any other purpose. People who wanted to be alone, so Mrs. Frederick Stirling and Cousin Stickles believed, could only want to be alone for some sinister purpose. But her room in the Blue Castle was everything a room should be.

Valancy, so cowed and subdued and overridden and snubbed in real life, was wont to let herself go rather splendidly in her day-dreams. Nobody in the Stirling clan, or its ramifications, suspected this, least of all her mother and Cousin Stickles. They never knew that Valancy had two homes—the ugly red brick box of a home, on Elm Street, and the Blue Castle in Spain. Valancy had lived spiritually in the Blue Castle ever since she could remember. She had been a very tiny child when she found herself possessed of it. Always, when she shut her eyes, she could see it plainly, with its turrets and banners on the pine-clad mountain height, wrapped in its faint, blue loveliness, against the sunset skies of a fair and unknown land. Everything wonderful and beautiful was in that castle. Jewels that queens might have worn; robes of moonlight and fire; couches

of roses and gold; long flights of shallow marble steps, with great, white urns, and with slender, mist-clad maidens going up and down them; courts, marble-pillared, where shimmering fountains fell and nightingales sang among the myrtles; halls of mirrors that reflected only handsome knights and lovely women—herself the loveliest of all, for whose glance men died. All that supported her through the boredom of her days was the hope of going on a dream spree at night. Most, if not all, of the Stirlings would have died of horror if they had known half the things Valancy did in her Blue Castle.

For one thing she had quite a few lovers in it. Oh, only one at a time. One who wooed her with all the romantic ardour of the age of chivalry and won her after long devotion and many deeds of derring-do, and was wedded to her with pomp and circumstance in the great, banner-hung chapel of the Blue Castle.

At twelve, this lover was a fair lad with golden curls and heavenly blue eyes. At fifteen, he was tall and dark and pale, but still necessarily handsome. At twenty, he was ascetic, dreamy, spiritual. At twenty-five, he had a clean-cut jaw, slightly grim, and a face strong and rugged rather than handsome. Valancy never grew older than twenty-five in her Blue Castle, but recently—very recently—her hero had had reddish, tawny hair, a twisted smile and a mysterious past.

I don't say Valancy deliberately murdered these lovers as she outgrew them. One simply faded away as another came. Things are very convenient in this respect in Blue Castles.

But, on this morning of her day of fate, Valancy could not find the key of her Blue Castle. Reality pressed on her too hardly, barking at her heels like a maddening little dog. She was twenty-nine, lonely, undesired, ill-favoured—the only homely girl in a handsome clan, with no past and no future. As far as she could look back, life was drab and colourless, with not one single crimson or purple spot anywhere. As far as she could look forward it seemed certain to be just the same until she was nothing but a solitary, little withered leaf clinging to a wintry bough. The moment when

a woman realises that she has nothing to live for—neither love, duty, purpose nor hope—holds for her the bitterness of death.

“And I just have to go on living because I can’t stop. I may have to live eighty years,” thought Valancy, in a kind of panic. “We’re all horribly long-lived. It sickens me to think of it.”

She was glad it was raining—or rather, she was drearily satisfied that it was raining. There would be no picnic that day. This annual picnic, whereby Aunt and Uncle Wellington—one always thought of them in that succession—inevitably celebrated their engagement at a picnic thirty years before, had been, of late years, a veritable nightmare to Valancy. By an impish coincidence it was the same day as her birthday and, after she had passed twenty-five, nobody let her forget it.

Much as she hated going to the picnic, it would never have occurred to her to rebel against it. There seemed to be nothing of the revolutionary in her nature. And she knew exactly what every one would say to her at the picnic. Uncle Wellington, whom she disliked and despised even though he had fulfilled the highest Stirling aspiration, “marrying money,” would say to her in a pig’s whisper, “Not thinking of getting married yet, my dear?” and then go off into the bellow of laughter with which he invariably concluded his dull remarks. Aunt Wellington, of whom Valancy stood in abject awe, would tell her about Olive’s new chiffon dress and Cecil’s last devoted letter. Valancy would have to look as pleased and interested as if the dress and letter had been hers or else Aunt Wellington would be offended. And Valancy had long ago decided that she would rather offend God than Aunt Wellington, because God might forgive her but Aunt Wellington never would.

Aunt Alberta, enormously fat, with an amiable habit of always referring to her husband as “he,” as if he were the only male creature in the world, who could never forget that she had been a great beauty in her youth, would condole with Valancy on her sallow skin—

“I don’t know why all the girls of today are so sunburned. When I was a girl my skin was roses and cream. I was counted the prettiest girl in Canada, my dear.”

Perhaps Uncle Herbert wouldn't say anything—or perhaps he would remark jocularly, “How fat you're getting, Doss!” And then everybody would laugh over the excessively humorous idea of poor, scrawny little Doss getting fat.

Handsome, solemn Uncle James, whom Valancy disliked but respected because he was reputed to be very clever and was therefore the clan oracle—brains being none too plentiful in the Stirling connection—would probably remark with the owl-like sarcasm that had won him his reputation, “I suppose you're busy with your hope-chest these days?”

And Uncle Benjamin would ask some of his abominable conundrums, between wheezy chuckles, and answer them himself.

“What is the difference between Doss and a mouse?

“The mouse wishes to harm the cheese and Doss wishes to charm the he's.”

Valancy had heard him ask that riddle fifty times and every time she wanted to throw something at him. But she never did. In the first place, the Stirlings simply did not throw things; in the second place, Uncle Benjamin was a wealthy and childless old widower and Valancy had been brought up in the fear and admonition of his money. If she offended him he would cut her out of his will—supposing she were in it. Valancy did not want to be cut out of Uncle Benjamin's will. She had been poor all her life and knew the galling bitterness of it. So she endured his riddles and even smiled tortured little smiles over him.

Aunt Isabel, downright and disagreeable as an east wind, would criticise her in some way—Valancy could not predict just how, for Aunt Isabell never repeated a criticism—she found something new with which to jab you every time. Aunt Isabel prided herself on saying what she thought, but didn't like it so well when other people said what *they* thought to *her*. Valancy never said what *she* thought.

Cousin Georgiana—named after her great-great-grandmother, who had been named after George the Fourth—would recount dolorously the names of all relatives and friends who had died since the last picnic and wonder “which of us will be the first to go next.”

Oppressively competent, Aunt Mildred would talk endlessly of her husband and her odious prodigies of babies to Valancy, because Valancy would be the only one she could find to put up with it. For the same reason, Cousin Gladys—really First Cousin Gladys once removed, according to the strict way in which the Stirlings tabulated relationship—a tall, thin lady who admitted she had a sensitive disposition, would describe minutely the tortures of her neuritis. And Olive, the wonder girl of the whole Stirling clan, who had everything Valancy had not—beauty, popularity, love—would show off her beauty and presume on her popularity and flaunt her diamond insignia of love in Valancy’s dazzled, envious eyes.

There would be none of all this today. And there would be no packing up of teaspoons. The packing up was always left for Valancy and Cousin Stickles. And once, six years ago, a silver teaspoon from Aunt Wellington’s wedding set had been lost. Valancy never heard the last of that silver teaspoon. Its ghost appeared Banquo-like at every subsequent family feast.

Oh, yes, Valancy knew exactly what the picnic would be like and she blessed the rain that had saved her from it. There would be no picnic this year. If Aunt Wellington could not celebrate on the sacred day itself she would have no celebration at all. Thank whatever gods there were for that.

Since there would be no picnic, Valancy made up her mind that, if the rain held up in the afternoon, she would go up to the library and get another of John Foster’s books. Valancy was never allowed to read novels, but John Foster’s books were not novels. They were “nature books”—so the librarian told Mrs. Frederick Stirling—“all about the woods and birds and bugs and things like that, you know.” So Valancy was allowed to read them—under protest, for it was only too evident that she enjoyed them too much. It was permissible, even laudable, to read to improve your mind and your religion, but a book that was enjoyable was dangerous. Valancy did not know whether her mind was being improved or not; but she felt vaguely that if she had come across John Foster’s books years ago life might have been a different thing for her. They seemed to her to yield

glimpses of a world into which she might once have entered, though the door was forever barred to her now. It was only within the last year that John Foster's books had been in the Deerwood library, though the librarian told Valancy that he had been a well-known writer for several years.

"Where does he live?" Valancy had asked.

"Nobody knows. From his books he must be a Canadian, but no more information can be had. His publishers won't say a word. Quite likely John Foster is a nom de plume. His books are so popular we can't keep them in at all, though I really can't see what people find in them to rave over."

"I think they're wonderful," said Valancy, timidly.

"Oh—well—" Miss Clarkson smiled in a patronising fashion that relegated Valancy's opinions to limbo, "I can't say I care much for bugs myself. But certainly Foster seems to know all there is to know about them."

Valancy didn't know whether she cared much for bugs either. It was not John Foster's uncanny knowledge of wild creatures and insect life that enthralled her. She could hardly say what it was—some tantalising lure of a mystery never revealed—some hint of a great secret just a little further on—some faint, elusive echo of lovely, forgotten things—John Foster's magic was indefinable.

Yes, she would get a new Foster book. It was a month since she had *Thistle Harvest*, so surely Mother could not object. Valancy had read it four times—she knew whole passages off by heart.

And—she almost thought she would go and see Dr. Trent about that queer pain around the heart. It had come rather often lately, and the palpitations were becoming annoying, not to speak of an occasional dizzy moment and a queer shortness of breath. But could she go to him without telling any one? It was a most daring thought. None of the Stirlings ever consulted a doctor without holding a family council and getting Uncle James' approval. *Then*, they went to Dr. Ambrose Marsh of Port Lawrence, who had married Second Cousin Adelaide Stirling.

But Valancy disliked Dr. Ambrose Marsh. And, besides, she could not get to Port Lawrence, fifteen miles away, without being taken there. She

did not want any one to know about her heart. There would be such a fuss made and every member of the family would come down and talk it over and advise her and caution her and warn her and tell her horrible tales of great-aunts and cousins forty times removed who had been “just like that and dropped dead without a moment’s warning, my dear.”

Aunt Isabel would remember that she had always said Doss looked like a girl who would have heart trouble—“so pinched and peaked always”; and Uncle Wellington would take it as a personal insult, when “no Stirling ever had heart disease before”; and Georgiana would forebode in perfectly audible asides that “poor, dear little Doss isn’t long for this world, I’m afraid”; and Cousin Gladys would say, “Why, *my* heart has been like that for *years*,” in a tone that implied no one else had any business even to have a heart; and Olive—Olive would merely look beautiful and superior and disgustingly healthy, as if to say, “Why all this fuss over a faded superfluity like Doss when you have *me*?”

Valancy felt that she couldn’t tell anybody unless she had to. She felt quite sure there was nothing at all seriously wrong with her heart and no need of all the pother that would ensue if she mentioned it. She would just slip up quietly and see Dr. Trent that very day. As for his bill, she had the two hundred dollars that her father had put in the bank for her the day she was born, but she would secretly take out enough to pay Dr. Trent. She was never allowed to use even the interest of this.

Dr. Trent was a gruff, outspoken, absent-minded old fellow, but he was a recognised authority on heart-disease, even if he were only a general practitioner in out-of-the-world Deerwood. Dr. Trent was over seventy and there had been rumours that he meant to retire soon. None of the Stirling clan had ever gone to him since he had told Cousin Gladys, ten years before, that her neuritis was all imaginary and that she enjoyed it. You couldn’t patronise a doctor who insulted your first-cousin-once-removed like that—not to mention that he was a Presbyterian when all the Stirlings went to the Anglican church. But Valancy, between the devil of disloyalty to clan and the deep sea of fuss and clatter and advice, thought she would take a chance with the devil.

Chapter II

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When cousin Stickles knocked at her door, Valancy knew it was half-past seven and she must get up. As long as she could remember, Cousin Stickles had knocked at her door at half-past seven. Cousin Stickles and Mrs. Frederick Stirling had been up since seven, but Valancy was allowed to lie abed half an hour longer because of a family tradition that she was delicate. Valancy got up, though she hated getting up more this morning than ever she had before. What was there to get up for? Another dreary day like all the days that had preceded it, full of meaningless little tasks, joyless and unimportant, that benefited nobody. But if she did not get up at once she would not be ready for breakfast at eight o'clock. Hard and fast times for meals were the rule in Mrs. Stirling's household. Breakfast at eight, dinner at one, supper at six, year in and year out. No excuses for being late were ever tolerated. So up Valancy got, shivering.

The room was bitterly cold with the raw, penetrating chill of a wet May morning. The house would be cold all day. It was one of Mrs. Frederick's rules that no fires were necessary after the twenty-fourth of May. Meals were cooked on the little oil-stove in the back porch. And though May might be icy and October frost-bitten, no fires were lighted until the twenty-first of October by the calendar. On the twenty-first of October Mrs. Frederick began cooking over the kitchen range and lighted a fire in the sitting-room stove in the evenings. It was whispered about in the connection that the late Frederick Stirling had caught the cold which resulted in his death during Valancy's first year of life because Mrs. Frederick would not have a fire on the twentieth of October. She lighted it the next day—but that was a day too late for Frederick Stirling.

Valancy took off and hung up in the closet her nightdress of coarse, unbleached cotton, with high neck and long, tight sleeves. She put on undergarments of a similar nature, a dress of brown gingham, thick, black

stockings and rubber-heeled boots. Of late years she had fallen into the habit of doing her hair with the shade of the window by the looking-glass pulled down. The lines on her face did not show so plainly then. But this morning she jerked the shade to the very top and looked at herself in the leprous mirror with a passionate determination to see herself as the world saw her.

The result was rather dreadful. Even a beauty would have found that harsh, unsoftened side-light trying. Valancy saw straight black hair, short and thin, always lustreless despite the fact that she gave it one hundred strokes of the brush, neither more nor less, every night of her life and faithfully rubbed Redfern's Hair Vigor into the roots, more lustreless than ever in its morning roughness; fine, straight, black brows; a nose she had always felt was much too small even for her small, three-cornered, white face; a small, pale mouth that always fell open a trifle over little, pointed white teeth; a figure thin and flat-breasted, rather below the average height. She had somehow escaped the family high cheek-bones, and her dark-brown eyes, too soft and shadowy to be black, had a slant that was almost Oriental. Apart from her eyes she was neither pretty nor ugly—just insignificant-looking, she concluded bitterly. How plain the lines around her eyes and mouth were in that merciless light! And never had her narrow, white face looked so narrow and so white.

She did her hair in a pompadour. Pompadours had long gone out of fashion, but they had been in when Valancy first put her hair up and Aunt Wellington had decided that she must always wear her hair so.

"It is the *only* way that becomes you. Your face is so small that you *must* add height to it by a pompadour effect," said Aunt Wellington, who always enunciated commonplaces as if uttering profound and important truths.

Valancy had hankered to do her hair pulled low on her forehead, with puffs above the ears, as Olive was wearing hers. But Aunt Wellington's dictum had such an effect on her that she never dared change her style of hairdressing again. But then, there were so many things Valancy never dared do.

All her life she had been afraid of something, she thought bitterly. From the very dawn of recollection, when she had been so horribly afraid of the big black bear that lived, so Cousin Stickles told her, in the closet under the stairs.

“And I always will be—I know it—I can’t help it. I don’t know what it would be like not to be afraid of something.”

Afraid of her mother’s sulky fits—afraid of offending Uncle Benjamin—afraid of becoming a target for Aunt Wellington’s contempt—afraid of Aunt Isabel’s biting comments—afraid of Uncle James’ disapproval—afraid of offending the whole clan’s opinions and prejudices—afraid of not keeping up appearances—afraid to say what she really thought of anything—afraid of poverty in her old age. Fear—fear—fear—she could never escape from it. It bound her and enmeshed her like a spider’s web of steel. Only in her Blue Castle could she find temporary release. And this morning Valancy could not believe she had a Blue Castle. She would never be able to find it again. Twenty-nine, unmarried, undesired—what had she to do with the fairy-like chatelaine of the Blue Castle? She would cut such childish nonsense out of her life forever and face reality unflinchingly.

She turned from her unfriendly mirror and looked out. The ugliness of the view always struck her like a blow; the ragged fence, the tumble-down old carriage-shop in the next lot, plastered with crude, violently coloured advertisements; the grimy railway station beyond, with the awful derelicts that were always hanging around it even at this early hour. In the pouring rain everything looked worse than usual, especially the beastly advertisement, “Keep that schoolgirl complexion.” Valancy *had* kept her schoolgirl complexion. That was just the trouble. There was not a gleam of beauty anywhere—“exactly like my life,” thought Valancy drearily. Her brief bitterness had passed. She accepted facts as resignedly as she had always accepted them. She was one of the people whom life always passes by. There was no altering that fact.

In this mood Valancy went down to breakfast.

Chapter III

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Breakfast was always the same. Oatmeal porridge, which Valancy loathed, toast and tea, and one teaspoonful of marmalade. Mrs. Frederick thought two teaspoonfuls extravagant—but that did not matter to Valancy, who hated marmalade, too. The chilly, gloomy little dining-room was chillier and gloomier than usual; the rain streamed down outside the window; departed Stirlings, in atrocious, gilt frames, wider than the pictures, glowered down from the walls. And yet Cousin Stickles wished Valancy many happy returns of the day!

“Sit up straight, Doss,” was all her mother said.

Valancy sat up straight. She talked to her mother and Cousin Stickles of the things they always talked of. She never wondered what would happen if she tried to talk of something else. She knew. Therefore she never did it.

Mrs. Frederick was offended with Providence for sending a rainy day when she wanted to go to a picnic, so she ate her breakfast in a sulky silence for which Valancy was rather grateful. But Christine Stickles whined endlessly on as usual, complaining about everything—the weather, the leak in the pantry, the price of oatmeal and butter—Valancy felt at once she had buttered her toast too lavishly—the epidemic of mumps in Deerwood.

“Doss will be sure to ketch them,” she foreboded.

“Doss must not go where she is likely to catch mumps,” said Mrs. Frederick shortly.

Valancy had never had mumps—or whooping cough—or chicken-pox—or measles—or anything she should have had—nothing but horrible colds every winter. Doss’ winter colds were a sort of tradition in the family. Nothing, it seemed, could prevent her from catching them. Mrs. Frederick and Cousin Stickles did their heroic best. One winter they kept

Valancy housed up from November to May, in the warm sitting-room. She was not even allowed to go to church. And Valancy took cold after cold and ended up with bronchitis in June.

“None of *my* family were ever like that,” said Mrs. Frederick, implying that it must be a Stirling tendency.

“The Stirling’s seldom take cold,” said Cousin Stickles resentfully. *She* had been a Stirling.

“I think,” said Mrs. Frederick, “that if a person makes up her mind *not* to have colds she will not *have* colds.”

So that was the trouble. It was all Valancy’s own fault.

But on this particular morning Valancy’s unbearable grievance was that she was called Doss. She had endured it for twenty-nine years, and all at once she felt she could not endure it any longer. Her full name was Valancy Jane. Valancy Jane was rather terrible, but she liked Valancy, with its odd, out-land tang. It was always a wonder to Valancy that the Stirlings had allowed her to be so christened. She had been told that her maternal grandfather, old Amos Wansbarra, had chosen the name for her. Her father had tacked on the Jane by way of civilising it, and the whole connection got out of the difficulty by nicknaming her Doss. She never got Valancy from any one but outsiders.

“Mother,” she said timidly, “would you mind calling me Valancy after this? Doss seems so—so—I don’t like it.”

Mrs. Frederick looked at her daughter in astonishment. She wore glasses with enormously strong lenses that gave her eyes a peculiarly disagreeable appearance.

“What is the matter with Doss?”

“It—seems so childish,” faltered Valancy.

“Oh!” Mrs. Frederick had been a Wansbarra and the Wansbarra smile was not an asset. “I see. Well, it should suit *you* then. You are childish enough in all conscience, my dear child.”

“I am twenty-nine,” said the dear child desperately.

“I wouldn’t proclaim it from the house-tops if I were you, dear,” said Mrs. Frederick. “Twenty-nine! *I* had been married nine years when I was

twenty-nine.”

“I was married at seventeen,” said Cousin Stickles proudly.

Valancy looked at them furtively. Mrs. Frederick, except for those terrible glasses and the hooked nose that made her look more like a parrot than a parrot itself could look, was not ill-looking. At twenty she might have been quite pretty. But Cousin Stickles! And yet Christine Stickles had once been desirable in some man’s eyes. Valancy felt that Cousin Stickles, with her broad, flat, wrinkled face, a mole right on the end of her dumpy nose, bristling hairs on her chin, wrinkled yellow neck, pale, protruding eyes, and thin, puckered mouth, had yet this advantage over her—this right to look down on her. And even yet Cousin Stickles was necessary to Mrs. Frederick. Valancy wondered pitifully what it would be like to be wanted by some one—needed by some one. No one in the whole world needed her, or would miss anything from life if she dropped suddenly out of it. She was a disappointment to her mother. No one loved her. She had never so much as had a girl friend.

“I haven’t even a gift for friendship,” she had once admitted to herself pitifully.

“Doss, you haven’t eaten your crusts,” said Mrs. Frederick rebukingly.

It rained all the forenoon without cessation. Valancy pieced a quilt. Valancy hated piecing quilts. And there was no need of it. The house was full of quilts. There were three big chests, packed with quilts, in the attic. Mrs. Frederick had begun storing away quilts when Valancy was seventeen and she kept on storing them, though it did not seem likely that Valancy would ever need them. But Valancy must be at work and fancy work materials were too expensive. Idleness was a cardinal sin in the Stirling household. When Valancy had been a child she had been made to write down every night, in a small, hated, black notebook, all the minutes she had spent in idleness that day. On Sundays her mother made her tot them up and pray over them.

On this particular forenoon of this day of destiny Valancy spent only ten minutes in idleness. At least, Mrs. Frederick and Cousin Stickles

would have called it idleness. She went to her room to get a better thimble and she opened *Thistle Harvest* guiltily at random.

“The woods are so human,” wrote John Foster, “that to know them one must live with them. An occasional saunter through them, keeping to the well-trodden paths, will never admit us to their intimacy. If we wish to be friends we must seek them out and win them by frequent, reverent visits at all hours; by morning, by noon, and by night; and at all seasons, in spring, in summer, in autumn, in winter. Otherwise we can never really know them and any pretence we may make to the contrary will never impose on them. They have their own effective way of keeping aliens at a distance and shutting their hearts to mere casual sightseers. It is of no use to seek the woods from any motive except sheer love of them; they will find us out at once and hide all their sweet, old-world secrets from us. But if they know we come to them because we love them they will be very kind to us and give us such treasures of beauty and delight as are not bought or sold in any market-place. For the woods, when they give at all, give unstintedly and hold nothing back from their true worshippers. We must go to them lovingly, humbly, patiently, watchfully, and we shall learn what poignant loveliness lurks in the wild places and silent intervals, lying under starshine and sunset, what cadences of unearthly music are harped on aged pine boughs or crooned in copses of fir, what delicate savours exhale from mosses and ferns in sunny corners or on damp brooklands, what dreams and myths and legends of an older time haunt them. Then the immortal heart of the woods will beat against ours and its subtle life will steal into our veins and make us its own forever, so that no matter where we go or how widely we wander we shall yet be drawn back to the forest to find our most enduring kinship.”

“Doss,” called her mother from the hall below, “what are you doing all by yourself in that room?”

Valancy dropped *Thistle Harvest* like a hot coal and fled downstairs to her patches; but she felt the strange exhilaration of spirit that always came momentarily to her when she dipped into one of John Foster’s books. Valancy did not know much about woods—except the haunted groves of

oak and pine around her Blue Castle. But she had always secretly hankered after them and a Foster book about woods was the next best thing to the woods themselves.

At noon it stopped raining, but the sun did not come out until three. Then Valancy timidly said she thought she would go uptown.

“What do you want to go uptown for?” demanded her mother.

“I want to get a book from the library.”

“You got a book from the library only last week.”

“No, it was four weeks.”

“Four weeks. Nonsense!”

“Really it was, Mother.”

“You are mistaken. It cannot possibly have been more than two weeks. I dislike contradiction. And I do not see what you want to get a book for, anyhow. You waste too much time reading.”

“Of what value is my time?” asked Valancy bitterly.

“Doss! Don’t speak in that tone to *me*.”

“We need some tea,” said Cousin Stickles. “She might go and get that if she wants a walk—though this damp weather is bad for colds.”

They argued the matter for ten minutes longer and finally Mrs. Frederick agreed rather grudgingly that Valancy might go.

Chapter IV

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“Got your rubbers on?” called Cousin Stickles, as Valancy left the house.

Christine Stickles had never once forgotten to ask that question when Valancy went out on a damp day.

“Yes.”

“Have you got your flannel petticoat on?” asked Mrs. Frederick.

“No.”

“Doss, I really do not understand you. Do you want to catch your death of cold *again*?” Her voice implied that Valancy had died of a cold several times already. “Go upstairs this minute and put it on!”

“Mother, I don’t *need* a flannel petticoat. My sateen one is warm enough.”

“Doss, remember you had bronchitis two years ago. Go and do as you are told!”

Valancy went, though nobody will ever know just how near she came to hurling the rubber-plant into the street before she went. She hated that grey flannel petticoat more than any other garment she owned. Olive never had to wear flannel petticoats. Olive wore ruffled silk and sheer lawn and filmy laced flounces. But Olive’s father had “married money” and Olive never had bronchitis. So there you were.

“Are you sure you didn’t leave the soap in the water?” demanded Mrs. Frederick. But Valancy was gone. She turned at the corner and looked back down the ugly, prim, respectable street where she lived. The Stirling house was the ugliest on it—more like a red brick box than anything else. Too high for its breadth, and made still higher by a bulbous glass cupola on top. About it was the desolate, barren peace of an old house whose life is lived.

There was a very pretty house, with leaded casements and dubbed gables, just around the corner—a new house, one of those houses you love

the minute you see them. Clayton Markley had built it for his bride. He was to be married to Jennie Lloyd in June. The little house, it was said, was furnished from attic to cellar, in complete readiness for its mistress.

“I don’t envy Jennie the man,” thought Valancy sincerely—Clayton Markley was not one of her many ideals—“but I *do* envy her the house. It’s such a nice young house. Oh, if I could only have a house of my own—ever so poor, so tiny—but my own! But then,” she added bitterly, “there is no use in yowling for the moon when you can’t even get a tallow candle.”

In dreamland nothing would do for Valancy but a castle of pale sapphire. In real life she would have been fully satisfied with a little house of her own. She envied Jennie Lloyd more fiercely than ever today. Jennie was not so much better looking than she was, and not so very much younger. Yet she was to have this delightful house. And the nicest little Wedgwood teacups—Valancy had seen them; an open fireplace, and monogrammed linen; hemstitched tablecloths, and china-closets. Why did *everything* come to some girls and *nothing* to others? It wasn’t fair.

Valancy was once more seething with rebellion as she walked along, a prim, dowdy little figure in her shabby raincoat and three-year-old hat, splashed occasionally by the mud of a passing motor with its insulting shrieks. Motors were still rather a novelty in Deerwood, though they were common in Port Lawrence, and most of the summer residents up at Muskoka had them. In Deerwood only some of the smart set had them; for even Deerwood was divided into sets. There was the smart set—the intellectual set—the old-family set—of which the Stirlings were members—the common run, and a few pariahs. Not one of the Stirling clan had as yet condescended to a motor, though Olive was teasing her father to have one. Valancy had never even been in a motorcar. But she did not hanker after this. In truth, she felt rather afraid of motorcars, especially at night. They seemed to be too much like big purring beasts that might turn and crush you—or make some terrible savage leap somewhere. On the steep mountain trails around her Blue Castle only gaily caparisoned steeds might proudly pace; in real life Valancy would have been quite contented to drive in a buggy behind a nice horse. She got a buggy drive only when

some uncle or cousin remembered to fling her “a chance,” like a bone to a dog.

Chapter V

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Of course she must buy the tea in Uncle Benjamin's grocery-store. To buy it anywhere else was unthinkable. Yet Valancy hated to go to Uncle Benjamin's store on her twenty-ninth birthday. There was no hope that he would not remember it.

"Why," demanded Uncle Benjamin, leeringly, as he tied up her tea, "are young ladies like bad grammarians?"

Valancy, with Uncle Benjamin's will in the background of her mind, said meekly, "I don't know. Why?"

"Because," chuckled Uncle Benjamin, "they can't decline matrimony."

The two clerks, Joe Hammond and Claude Bertram, chuckled also, and Valancy disliked them a little more than ever. On the first day Claude Bertram had seen her in the store she had heard him whisper to Joe, "Who is that?" And Joe had said, "Valancy Stirling—one of the Deerwood old maids." "Curable or incurable?" Claude had asked with a snicker, evidently thinking the question very clever. Valancy smarted anew with the sting of that old recollection.

"Twenty-nine," Uncle Benjamin was saying. "Dear me, Doss, you're dangerously near the second corner and not even thinking of getting married yet. Twenty-nine. It seems impossible."

Then Uncle Benjamin said an original thing. Uncle Benjamin said, "How time does fly!"

"I think it *crawls*," said Valancy passionately. Passion was so alien to Uncle Benjamin's conception of Valancy that he didn't know what to make of her. To cover his confusion, he asked another conundrum as he tied up her beans—Cousin Stickles had remembered at the last moment that they must have beans. Beans were cheap and filling.

"What two ages are apt to prove illusory?" asked Uncle Benjamin; and, not waiting for Valancy to "give it up," he added, "Mir-age and marri-

age.”

“M-i-r-a-g-e is pronounced *mirazh*,” said Valancy shortly, picking up her tea and her beans. For the moment she did not care whether Uncle Benjamin cut her out of his will or not. She walked out of the store while Uncle Benjamin stared after her with his mouth open. Then he shook his head.

“Poor Doss is taking it hard,” he said.

Valancy was sorry by the time she reached the next crossing. Why had she lost her patience like that? Uncle Benjamin would be annoyed and would likely tell her mother that Doss had been impertinent—“to *me!*”—and her mother would lecture her for a week.

“I’ve held my tongue for twenty years,” thought Valancy. “Why couldn’t I have held it once more?”

Yes, it was just twenty, Valancy reflected, since she had first been twitted with her loverless condition. She remembered the bitter moment perfectly. She was just nine years old and she was standing alone on the school playground while the other little girls of her class were playing a game in which you must be chosen by a boy as his partner before you could play. Nobody had chosen Valancy—little, pale, black-haired Valancy, with her prim, long-sleeved apron and odd, slanted eyes.

“Oh,” said a pretty little girl to her, “I’m so sorry for you. You haven’t got a beau.”

Valancy had said defiantly, as she continued to say for twenty years, “I don’t *want* a beau.” But this afternoon Valancy once and for all stopped saying that.

“I’m going to be honest with myself anyhow,” she thought savagely. “Uncle Benjamin’s riddles hurt me because they are true. I *do* want to be married. I want a house of my own—I want a husband of my own—I want sweet, little fat *babies* of my own—” Valancy stopped suddenly aghast at her own recklessness. She felt sure that Rev. Dr. Stalling, who passed her at this moment, read her thoughts and disapproved of them thoroughly. Valancy was afraid of Dr. Stalling—had been afraid of him ever since the Sunday, twenty-three years before, when he had first come to St. Albans’.

Valancy had been too late for Sunday School that day and she had gone into the church timidly and sat in their pew. No one else was in the church—nobody except the new rector, Dr. Stalling. Dr. Stalling stood up in front of the choir door, beckoned to her, and said sternly, “Little boy, come up here.”

Valancy had stared around her. There was no little boy—there was no one in all the huge church but herself. This strange man with the blue glasses couldn’t mean her. She was not a boy.

“Little boy,” repeated Dr. Stalling, more sternly still, shaking his forefinger fiercely at her, “come up here at once!”

Valancy arose as if hypnotised and walked up the aisle. She was too terrified to do anything else. What dreadful thing was going to happen to her? What *had* happened to her? Had she actually turned into a boy? She came to a stop in front of Dr. Stalling. Dr. Stalling shook his forefinger—such a long, knuckly forefinger—at her and said:

“Little boy, take off your hat.”

Valancy took off her hat. She had a scrawny little pigtail hanging down her back, but Dr. Stalling was shortsighted and did not perceive it.

“Little boy, go back to your seat and *always* take off your hat in church. *Remember!*”

Valancy went back to her seat carrying her hat like an automaton. Presently her mother came in.

“Doss,” said Mrs. Stirling, “what do you mean by taking off your hat? Put it on instantly!”

Valancy put it on instantly. She was cold with fear lest Dr. Stalling should immediately summon her up front again. She would have to go, of course—it never occurred to her that one could disobey the rector—and the church was full of people now. Oh, what would she do if that horrible, stabbing forefinger were shaken at her again before all those people? Valancy sat through the whole service in an agony of dread and was sick for a week afterwards. Nobody knew why—Mrs. Frederick again bemoaned herself of her delicate child.

Dr. Stalling found out his mistake and laughed over it to Valancy—who did not laugh. She never got over her dread of Dr. Stalling. And now to be caught by him on the street corner, thinking such things!

Valancy got her John Foster book—*Magic of Wings*. “His latest—all about birds,” said Miss Clarkson. She had almost decided that she would go home, instead of going to see Dr. Trent. Her courage had failed her. She was afraid of offending Uncle James—afraid of angering her mother—afraid of facing gruff, shaggy-browed old Dr. Trent, who would probably tell her, as he had told Cousin Gladys, that her trouble was entirely imaginary and that she only had it because she liked to have it. No, she would not go; she would get a bottle of Redfern’s Purple Pills instead. Redfern’s Purple Pills were the standard medicine of the Stirling clan. Had they not cured Second Cousin Geraldine when five doctors had given her up? Valancy always felt very sceptical concerning the virtues of the Purple Pills; but there *might* be something in them; and it was easier to take them than to face Dr. Trent alone. She would glance over the magazines in the reading-room a few minutes and then go home.

Valancy tried to read a story, but it made her furious. On every page was a picture of the heroine surrounded by adoring men. And here was she, Valancy Stirling, who could not get a solitary beau! Valancy slammed the magazine shut; she opened *Magic of Wings*. Her eyes fell on the paragraph that changed her life.

“*Fear is the original sin,*” wrote John Foster. “*Almost all the evil in the world has its origin in the fact that some one is afraid of something.* It is a cold, slimy serpent coiling about you. It is horrible to live with fear; and it is of all things degrading.”

Valancy shut *Magic of Wings* and stood up. She would go and see Dr. Trent.

Chapter VI

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The ordeal was not so dreadful, after all. Dr. Trent was as gruff and abrupt as usual, but he did not tell her her ailment was imaginary. After he had listened to her symptoms and asked a few questions and made a quick examination, he sat for a moment looking at her quite intently. Valancy thought he looked as if he were sorry for her. She caught her breath for a moment. Was the trouble serious? Oh, it couldn't be, surely—it really hadn't bothered her *much*—only lately it had got a little worse.

Dr. Trent opened his mouth—but before he could speak the telephone at his elbow rang sharply. He picked up the receiver. Valancy, watching him, saw his face change suddenly as he listened, “ ‘Lo—yes—yes—*what?*—yes—yes”—a brief interval—“My God!”

Dr. Trent dropped the receiver, dashed out of the room and upstairs without even a glance at Valancy. She heard him rushing madly about overhead, barking out a few remarks to somebody—presumably his housekeeper. Then he came tearing downstairs with a club bag in his hand, snatched his hat and coat from the rack, jerked open the street door and rushed down the street in the direction of the station.

Valancy sat alone in the little office, feeling more absolutely foolish than she had ever felt before in her life. Foolish—and humiliated. So this was all that had come of her heroic determination to live up to John Foster and cast fear aside. Not only was she a failure as a relative and non-existent as a sweetheart or friend, but she was not even of any importance as a patient. Dr. Trent had forgotten her very presence in his excitement over whatever message had come by the telephone. She had gained nothing by ignoring Uncle James and flying in the face of family tradition.

For a moment she was afraid she was going to cry. It *was* all so—ridiculous. Then she heard Dr. Trent's housekeeper coming down the stairs. Valancy rose and went to the office door.

“The doctor forgot all about me,” she said with a twisted smile.

“Well, that’s too bad,” said Mrs. Patterson sympathetically. “But it wasn’t much wonder, poor man. That was a telegram they ‘phoned over from the Port. His son has been terribly injured in an auto accident in Montreal. The doctor had just ten minutes to catch the train. I don’t know what he’ll do if anything happens to Ned—he’s just bound up in the boy. You’ll have to come again, Miss Stirling. I hope it’s nothing serious.”

“Oh, no, nothing serious,” agreed Valancy. She felt a little less humiliated. It was no wonder poor Dr. Trent had forgotten her at such a moment. Nevertheless, she felt very flat and discouraged as she went down the street.

Valancy went home by the short-cut of Lover’s Lane. She did not often go through Lover’s Lane—but it was getting near supper-time and it would never do to be late. Lover’s Lane wound back of the village, under great elms and maples, and deserved its name. It was hard to go there at any time and not find some canoodling couple—or young girls in pairs, arms intertwined, earnestly talking over their secrets. Valancy didn’t know which made her feel more self-conscious and uncomfortable.

This evening she encountered both. She met Connie Hale and Kate Bayley, in new pink organdy dresses with flowers stuck coquettishly in their glossy, bare hair. Valancy had never had a pink dress or worn flowers in her hair. Then she passed a young couple she didn’t know, dandering along, oblivious to everything but themselves. The young man’s arm was around the girl’s waist quite shamelessly. Valancy had never walked with a man’s arm about her. She felt that she ought to be shocked—they might leave that sort of thing for the screening twilight, at least—but she wasn’t shocked. In another flash of desperate, stark honesty she owned to herself that she was merely envious. When she passed them she felt quite sure they were laughing at her—pitying her—“there’s that queer little old maid, Valancy Stirling. They say she never had a beau in her whole life”—Valancy fairly ran to get out of Lover’s Lane. Never had she felt so utterly colourless and skinny and insignificant.

Just where Lover's Lane debouched on the street, an old car was parked. Valancy knew that car well—by sound, at least—and everybody in Deerwood knew it. This was before the phrase “tin Lizzie” had come into circulation—in Deerwood, at least; but if it had been known, this car was the tinniest of Lizzies—though it was not a Ford but an old Grey Slosson. Nothing more battered and disreputable could be imagined.

It was Barney Snaith's car and Barney himself was just scrambling up from under it, in overalls plastered with mud. Valancy gave him a swift, furtive look as she hurried by. This was only the second time she had ever seen the notorious Barney Snaith, though she had heard enough about him in the five years that he had been living “up back” in Muskoka. The first time had been nearly a year ago, on the Muskoka road. He had been crawling out from under his car then, too, and he had given her a cheerful grin as she went by—a little, whimsical grin that gave him the look of an amused gnome. He didn't look bad—she didn't believe he was bad, in spite of the wild yarns that were always being told of him. Of course he went tearing in that terrible old Grey Slosson through Deerwood at hours when all decent people were in bed—often with old “Roaring Abel”, who made the night hideous with his howls—“both of them dead drunk, my dear”. And every one knew that he was an escaped convict and a defaulting bank clerk and a murderer in hiding and an infidel and an illegitimate son of old Roaring Abel Gay and the father of Roaring Abel's illegitimate grandchild and a counterfeiter and a forger and a few other awful things. But still Valancy didn't believe he was bad. Nobody with a smile like that could be bad, no matter what he had done.

It was that night the Prince of the Blue Castle changed from a being of grim jaw and hair with a dash of premature grey to a rakish individual with overlong, tawny hair, dashed with red, dark-brown eyes, and ears that stuck out just enough to give him an alert look but not enough to be called flying jibs. But he still retained something a little grim about the jaw.

Barney Snaith looked even more disreputable than usual just now. It was very evident that he hadn't shaved for days, and his hands and arms, bare to the shoulders, were black with grease. But he was whistling

gleefully to himself and he seemed so happy that Valancy envied him. She envied him his light-heartedness and his irresponsibility and his mysterious little cabin up on an island in Lake Mistawis—even his rickety old Grey Slosson. Neither he nor his car had to be respectable and live up to traditions. When he rattled past her a few minutes later, bareheaded, leaning back in his Lizzie at a rakish angle, his longish hair blowing in the wind, a villainous-looking old black pipe in his mouth, she envied him again. Men had the best of it, no doubt about that. This outlaw was happy, whatever he was or wasn't. She, Valancy Stirling, respectable, well-behaved to the last degree, was unhappy and had always been unhappy. So there you were.

Valancy was just in time for supper. The sun had clouded over, and a dismal, drizzling rain was falling again. Cousin Stickles had the neuralgia. Valancy had to do the family darning and there was no time for *Magic of Wings*.

“Can't the darning wait till tomorrow?” she pleaded.

“Tomorrow will bring its own duties,” said Mrs. Frederick inexorably.

Valancy darned all the evening and listened to Mrs. Frederick and Cousin Stickles talking the eternal, niggling gossip of the clan, as they knitted drearily at interminable black stockings. They discussed Second Cousin Lilian's approaching wedding in all its bearings. On the whole, they approved. Second Cousin Lilian was doing well for herself.

“Though she hasn't hurried,” said Cousin Stickles. “She must be twenty-five.”

“There have not—fortunately—been many old maids in our connection,” said Mrs. Frederick bitterly.

Valancy flinched. She had run the darning needle into her finger.

Third Cousin Aaron Gray had been scratched by a cat and had blood-poisoning in his finger. “Cats are most dangerous animals,” said Mrs. Frederick. “I would never have a cat about the house.”

She glared significantly at Valancy through her terrible glasses. Once, five years ago, Valancy had asked if she might have a cat. She had never

referred to it since, but Mrs. Frederick still suspected her of harbouring the unlawful desire in her heart of hearts.

Once Valancy sneezed. Now, in the Stirling code, it was very bad form to sneeze in public.

“You can always repress a sneeze by pressing your finger on your upper lip” said Mrs. Frederick rebukingly.

Half-past nine o’clock and so, as Mr. Pepys would say, to bed. But First Cousin Stickles’ neuralgic back must be rubbed with Redfern’s Liniment. Valancy did that. Valancy always had to do it. She hated the smell of Redfern’s Liniment—she hated the smug, beaming, portly, be-whiskered, be-spectacled picture of Dr. Redfern on the bottle. Her fingers smelled of the horrible stuff after she got into bed, in spite of all the scrubbing she gave them.

Valancy’s day of destiny had come and gone. She ended it as she had begun it, in tears.

Chapter VII

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There was a rosebush on the little Stirling lawn, growing beside the gate. It was called “Doss’s rosebush.” Cousin Georgiana had given it to Valancy five years ago and Valancy had planted it joyfully. She loved roses. But—of course—the rosebush never bloomed. That was her luck. Valancy did everything she could think of and took the advice of everybody in the clan, but still the rosebush would not bloom. It thrived and grew luxuriantly, with great leafy branches untouched of rust or spider; but not even a bud had ever appeared on it. Valancy, looking at it two days after her birthday, was filled with a sudden, overwhelming hatred for it. The thing wouldn’t bloom: very well, then, she would cut it down. She marched to the tool-room in the barn for her garden knife and she went at the rosebush viciously. A few minutes later horrified Mrs. Frederick came out to the verandah and beheld her daughter slashing insanely among the rosebush boughs. Half of them were already strewn on the walk. The bush looked sadly dismantled.

“Doss, what on earth are you doing? Have you gone crazy?”

“No,” said Valancy. She meant to say it defiantly, but habit was too strong for her. She said it deprecatingly. “I—I just made up my mind to cut this bush down. It is no good. It never blooms—never will bloom.”

“That is no reason for destroying it,” said Mrs. Frederick sternly. “It was a beautiful bush and quite ornamental. You have made a sorry-looking thing of it.”

“Rose trees should *bloom*,” said Valancy a little obstinately.

“Don’t argue with *me*, Doss. Clear up that mess and leave the bush alone. I don’t know what Georgiana will say when she sees how you have hacked it to pieces. Really, I’m surprised at you. And to do it without consulting *me*!”

“The bush is mine,” muttered Valancy.

“What’s that? What did you say, Doss?”

“I only said the bush was mine,” repeated Valancy humbly.

Mrs. Frederick turned without a word and marched back into the house. The mischief was done now. Valancy knew she had offended her mother deeply and would not be spoken to or noticed in any way for two or three days. Cousin Stickles would see to Valancy’s bringing-up but Mrs. Frederick would preserve the stony silence of outraged majesty.

Valancy sighed and put away her garden knife, hanging it precisely on its precise nail in the tool-shop. She cleared away the several branches and swept up the leaves. Her lips twitched as she looked at the straggling bush. It had an odd resemblance to its shaken, scrawny donor, little Cousin Georgiana herself.

“I certainly have made an awful-looking thing of it,” thought Valancy.

But she did not feel repentant—only sorry she had offended her mother. Things would be so uncomfortable until she was forgiven. Mrs. Frederick was one of those women who can make their anger felt all over a house. Walls and doors are no protection from it.

“You’d better go uptown and git the mail,” said Cousin Stickles, when Valancy went in. “I can’t go—I feel all sorter peaky and piny this spring. I want you to stop at the drugstore and git me a bottle of Redfern’s Blood Bitters. There’s nothing like Redfern’s Bitters for building a body up. Cousin James says the Purple Pills are the best, but I know better. My poor dear husband took Redfern’s Bitters right up to the day he died. Don’t let them charge you more’n ninety cents. I kin git it for that at the Port. And what *have* you been saying to your poor mother? Do you ever stop to think, Doss, that you kin only have one mother?”

“One is enough for me,” thought Valancy undutifully, as she went uptown.

She got Cousin Stickles’ bottle of bitters and then she went to the post-office and asked for her mail at the General Delivery. Her mother did not have a box. They got too little mail to bother with it. Valancy did not expect any mail, except the *Christian Times*, which was the only paper they took. They hardly ever got any letters. But Valancy rather liked to

stand in the office and watch Mr. Carewe, the grey-bearded, Santa-Clausy old clerk, handing out letters to the lucky people who did get them. He did it with such a detached, impersonal, Jove-like air, as if it did not matter in the least to him what supernal joys or shattering horrors might be in those letters for the people to whom they were addressed. Letters had a fascination for Valancy, perhaps because she so seldom got any. In her Blue Castle exciting epistles, bound with silk and sealed with crimson, were always being brought to her by pages in livery of gold and blue, but in real life her only letters were occasional perfunctory notes from relatives or an advertising circular.

Consequently she was immensely surprised when Mr. Carewe, looking even more Jovian than usual, poked a letter out to her. Yes, it was addressed to her plainly, in a fierce, black hand: "Miss Valancy Stirling, Elm Street, Deerwood"—and the postmark was Montreal. Valancy picked it up with a little quickening of her breath. Montreal! It must be from Doctor Trent. He had remembered her, after all.

Valancy met Uncle Benjamin coming in as she was going out and was glad the letter was safely in her bag.

"What," said Uncle Benjamin, "is the difference between a donkey and a postage-stamp?"

"I don't know. What?" answered Valancy dutifully.

"One you lick with a stick and the other you stick with a lick. Ha, ha!"

Uncle Benjamin passed in, tremendously pleased with himself.

Cousin Stickles pounced on the *Times* when Valancy got home, but it did not occur to her to ask if there were any letters. Mrs. Frederick would have asked it, but Mrs. Frederick's lips at present were sealed. Valancy was glad of this. If her mother had asked if there were any letters Valancy would have had to admit there was. Then she would have had to let her mother and Cousin Stickles read the letter and all would be discovered.

Her heart acted strangely on the way upstairs, and she sat down by her window for a few minutes before opening her letter. She felt very guilty and deceitful. She had never before kept a letter secret from her mother. Every letter she had ever written or received had been read by Mrs.

Frederick. That had never mattered. Valancy had never had anything to hide. But this *did* matter. She could not have any one see this letter. But her fingers trembled with a consciousness of wickedness and unfilial conduct as she opened it—trembled a little, too, perhaps, with apprehension. She felt quite sure there was nothing seriously wrong with her heart but—one never knew.

Dr. Trent's letter was like himself—blunt, abrupt, concise, wasting no words. Dr. Trent never beat about the bush. "Dear Miss Sterling"—and then a page of black, positive writing. Valancy seemed to read it at a glance; she dropped it on her lap, her face ghost-white.

Dr. Trent told her that she had a very dangerous and fatal form of heart disease—angina pectoris—evidently complicated with an aneurism—whatever that was—and in the last stages. He said, without mincing matters, that nothing could be done for her. If she took great care of herself she might live a year—but she might also die at any moment—Dr. Trent never troubled himself about euphemisms. She must be careful to avoid all excitement and all severe muscular efforts. She must eat and drink moderately, she must never run, she must go upstairs and uphill with great care. Any sudden jolt or shock might be fatal. She was to get the prescription he enclosed filled and carry it with her always, taking a dose whenever her attacks came on. And he was hers truly, H. B. Trent.

Valancy sat for a long while by her window. Outside was a world drowned in the light of a spring afternoon—skies entrancingly blue, winds perfumed and free, lovely, soft, blue hazes at the end of every street. Over at the railway station a group of young girls was waiting for a train; she heard their gay laughter as they chattered and joked. The train roared in and roared out again. But none of these things had any reality. Nothing had any reality except the fact that she had only another year to live.

When she was tired of sitting at the window she went over and lay down on her bed, staring at the cracked, discoloured ceiling. The curious numbness that follows on a staggering blow possessed her. She did not feel anything except a boundless surprise and incredulity—behind which was

the conviction that Dr. Trent knew his business and that she, Valancy Stirling, who had never lived, was about to die.

When the gong rang for supper Valancy got up and went downstairs mechanically, from force of habit. She wondered that she had been let alone so long. But of course her mother would not pay any attention to her just now. Valancy was thankful for this. She thought the quarrel over the rose-bush had been really, as Mrs. Frederick herself might have said, Providential. She could not eat anything, but both Mrs. Frederick and Cousin Stickles thought this was because she was deservedly unhappy over her mother's attitude, and her lack of appetite was not commented on. Valancy forced herself to swallow a cup of tea and then sat and watched the others eat, with an odd feeling that years had passed since she had sat with them at the dinner-table. She found herself smiling inwardly to think what a commotion she could make if she chose. Let her merely tell them what was in Dr. Trent's letter and there would be as much fuss made as if—Valancy thought bitterly—they really cared two straws about her.

"Dr. Trent's housekeeper got word from him today," said Cousin Stickles, so suddenly that Valancy jumped guiltily. Was there anything in thought waves? "Mrs. Judd was talking to her uptown. They think his son will recover, but Dr. Trent wrote that if he did he was going to take him abroad as soon as he was able to travel and wouldn't be back here for a year at least."

"That will not matter much to *us*," said Mrs. Frederick majestically. "He is not *our* doctor. I would not"—here she looked or seemed to look accusingly right through Valancy—"have *him* to doctor a sick cat."

"May I go upstairs and lie down?" said Valancy faintly. "I—I have a headache."

"What has given you a headache?" asked Cousin Stickles, since Mrs. Frederick would not. The question has to be asked. Valancy could not be allowed to have headaches without interference.

"You ain't in the habit of having headaches. I hope you're not taking the mumps. Here, try a spoonful of vinegar."

“Piffle!” said Valancy rudely, getting up from the table. She did not care just then if she were rude. She had had to be so polite all her life.

If it had been possible for Cousin Stickles to turn pale she would have. As it was not, she turned yellower.

“Are you sure you ain’t feverish, Doss? You sound like it. You go and get right into bed,” said Cousin Stickles, thoroughly alarmed, “and I’ll come up and rub your forehead and the back of your neck with Redfern’s Liniment.”

Valancy had reached the door, but she turned. “I won’t be rubbed with Redfern’s Liniment!” she said.

Cousin Stickles stared and gasped. “What—what do you mean?”

“I said I wouldn’t be rubbed with Redfern’s Liniment,” repeated Valancy. “Horrid, sticky stuff! And it has the vilest smell of any liniment I ever saw. It’s no good. I want to be left alone, that’s all.”

Valancy went out, leaving Cousin Stickles aghast.

“She’s feverish—she *must* be feverish,” ejaculated Cousin Stickles.

Mrs. Frederick went on eating her supper. It did not matter whether Valancy was or was not feverish. Valancy had been guilty of impertinence to *her*.

Chapter VIII

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Valancy did not sleep that night. She lay awake all through the long dark hours—thinking—thinking. She made a discovery that surprised her: she, who had been afraid of almost everything in life, was not afraid of death. It did not seem in the least terrible to her. And she need not now be afraid of anything else. Why had she been afraid of things? Because of life. Afraid of Uncle Benjamin because of the menace of poverty in old age. But now she would never be old—neglected—tolerated. Afraid of being an old maid all her life. But now she would not be an old maid very long. Afraid of offending her mother and her clan because she had to live with and among them and couldn't live peaceably if she didn't give in to them. But now she hadn't. Valancy felt a curious freedom.

But she was still horribly afraid of one thing—the fuss the whole jamfry of them would make when she told them. Valancy shuddered at the thought of it. She couldn't endure it. Oh, she knew so well how it would be. First there would be indignation—yes, indignation on the part of Uncle James because she had gone to a doctor—any doctor—without consulting *him*. Indignation on the part of her mother for being so sly and deceitful —“to your own mother, Doss”. Indignation on the part of the whole clan because she had not gone to Dr. Marsh.

Then would come the solicitude. She would be taken to Dr. Marsh, and when Dr. Marsh confirmed Dr. Trent's diagnosis she would be taken to specialists in Toronto and Montreal. Uncle Benjamin would foot the bill with a splendid gesture of munificence in thus assisting the widow and orphan, and talk forever after of the shocking fees specialists charged for looking wise and saying they couldn't do anything. And when the specialists could do nothing for her Uncle James would insist on her taking Purple Pills—“I've known them to effect a cure when *all* the doctors had given up”—and her mother would insist on Redfern's Blood

Bitters, and Cousin Stickles would insist on rubbing her over the heart every night with Redfern's Liniment on the grounds that it *might* do good and *couldn't* do harm; and everybody else would have some pet dope for her to take. Dr. Stalling would come to her and say solemnly, "You are very ill. Are you prepared for what may be before you?"—almost as if he were going to shake his forefinger at her, the forefinger that had not grown any shorter or less knobbly with age. And she would be watched and checked like a baby and never let do anything or go anywhere alone. Perhaps she would not even be allowed to sleep alone lest she die in her sleep. Cousin Stickles or her mother would insist on sharing her room and bed. Yes, undoubtedly they would.

It was this last thought that really decided Valancy. She could not put up with it and she wouldn't. As the clock in the hall below struck twelve Valancy suddenly and definitely made up her mind that she would not tell anybody. She had always been told, ever since she could remember, that she must hide her feelings. "It is not ladylike to have feelings," Cousin Stickles had once told her disapprovingly. Well, she would hide them with a vengeance.

But though she was not afraid of death she was not indifferent to it. She found that she *resented* it; it was not fair that she should have to die when she had never lived. Rebellion flamed up in her soul as the dark hours passed by—not because she had no future but because she had no past.

"I'm poor—I'm ugly—I'm a failure—and I'm near death," she thought. She could see her own obituary notice in the *Deerwood Weekly Times*, copied into the *Port Lawrence Journal*. "A deep gloom was cast over Deerwood, etc., etc."—"leaves a large circle of friends to mourn, etc., etc., etc."—lies, all lies. Gloom, forsooth! Nobody would miss her. Her death would not matter a straw to anybody. Not even her mother loved her—her mother who had been so disappointed that she was not a boy—or at least, a pretty girl.

Valancy reviewed her whole life between midnight and the early spring dawn. It was a very drab existence, but here and there an incident loomed

out with a significance out of all proportion to its real importance. These incidents were all unpleasant in one way or another. Nothing really pleasant had every happened to Valancy.

“I’ve never had one wholly happy hour in my life—not one,” she thought. “I’ve just been a colourless nonentity. I remember reading somewhere once that there is an hour in which a woman might be happy all her life if she could but find it. I’ve never found my hour—never, never. And I never will now. If I could only have had that hour I’d be willing to die.”

Those significant incidents kept bobbing up in her mind like unbidden ghosts, without any sequence of time or place. For instance, that time when, at sixteen, she had blued a tubful of clothes too deeply. And the time when, at eight, she had “stolen” some raspberry jam from Aunt Wellington’s pantry. Valancy never heard the last of those two misdemeanours. At almost every clan gathering they were raked up against her as jokes. Uncle Benjamin hardly ever missed re-telling the raspberry jam incident—he had been the one to catch her, her face all stained and streaked.

“I have really done so few bad things that they have to keep harping on the old ones,” thought Valancy. “Why, I’ve never even had a quarrel with any one. I haven’t an enemy. What a spineless thing I must be not to have even one enemy!”

There was that incident of the dust-pile at school when she was seven. Valancy always recalled it when Dr. Stalling referred to the text, “To him that hath shall be given and from him that hath not shall be taken even that which he hath.” Other people might puzzle over that text but it never puzzled Valancy. The whole relationship between herself and Olive, dating from the day of the dust-pile, was a commentary on it.

She had been going to school a year, but Olive, who was a year younger, had just begun and had about her all the glamour of “a new girl” and an exceedingly pretty girl at that. It was at recess and all the girls, big and little, were out on the road in front of the school making dust-piles. The aim of each girl was to have the biggest pile. Valancy was good at

making dust-piles—there was an art in it—and she had secret hopes of leading. But Olive, working off by herself, was suddenly discovered to have a larger dust-pile than anybody. Valancy felt no jealousy. Her dust-pile was quite big enough to please her. Then one of the older girls had an inspiration.

“Let’s put all our dust on Olive’s pile and make a tremendous one,” she exclaimed.

A frenzy seemed to seize the girls. They swooped down on the dust-piles with pails and shovels and in a few seconds Olive’s pile was a veritable pyramid. In vain Valancy, with scrawny, outstretched little arms, tried to protect hers. She was ruthlessly swept aside, her dust-pile scooped up and poured on Olive’s. Valancy turned away resolutely and began building another dust-pile. Again a bigger girl pounced on it. Valancy stood before it, flushed, indignant, arms outspread.

“Don’t take it,” she pleaded. “Please don’t take it.”

“But *why?*” demanded the older girl. “Why won’t you help to build Olive’s bigger?”

“I want my own little dust-pile,” said Valancy piteously.

Her plea went unheeded. While she argued with one girl another scraped up her dust-pile. Valancy turned away, her heart swelling, her eyes full of tears.

“Jealous—you’re jealous!” said the girls mockingly.

“You were very selfish,” said her mother coldly, when Valancy told her about it at night. That was the first and last time Valancy had ever taken any of her troubles to her mother.

Valancy was neither jealous nor selfish. It was only that she wanted a dust-pile of her own—small or big mattered not. A team of horses came down the street—Olive’s dust pile was scattered over the roadway—the bell rang—the girls trooped into school and had forgotten the whole affair before they reached their seats. Valancy never forgot it. To this day she resented it in her secret soul. But was it not symbolical of her life?

“I’ve never been able to have my own dust-pile,” thought Valancy.

The enormous red moon she had seen rising right at the end of the street one autumn evening of her sixth year. She had been sick and cold with the awful, uncanny horror of it. So near to her. So big. She had run in trembling to her mother and her mother had laughed at her. She had gone to bed and hidden her face under the clothes in terror lest she might look at the window and see that horrible moon glaring in at her through it.

The boy who had tried to kiss her at a party when she was fifteen. She had not let him—she had evaded him and run. He was the only boy who had ever tried to kiss her. Now, fourteen years later, Valancy found herself wishing that she had let him.

The time she had been made to apologise to Olive for something she hadn't done. Olive had said that Valancy had pushed her into the mud and spoiled her new shoes *on purpose*. Valancy knew she hadn't. It had been an accident—and even that wasn't her fault—but nobody would believe her. She had to apologise—and kiss Olive to “make up”. The injustice of it burned in her soul tonight.

That summer when Olive had the most beautiful hat, trimmed with creamy yellow net, with a wreath of red roses and little ribbon bows under the chin. Valancy had wanted a hat like that more than she had ever wanted anything. She pleaded for one and had been laughed at—all summer she had to wear a horrid little brown sailor with elastic that cut behind her ears. None of the girls would go around with her because she was so shabby—nobody but Olive. People had thought Olive so sweet and unselfish.

“I was an excellent foil for her,” thought Valancy. “Even then she knew that.”

Valancy had tried to win a prize for attendance in Sunday School once. But Olive won it. There were so many Sundays Valancy had to stay home because she had colds. She had once tried to “say a piece” in school one Friday afternoon and had broken down in it. Olive was a good reciter and never got stuck.

The night she had spent in Port Lawrence with Aunt Isabel when she was ten. Byron Stirling was there; from Montreal, twelve years old,

conceited, clever. At family prayers in the morning Byron had reached across and given Valancy's thin arm such a savage pinch that she screamed out with pain. After prayers were over she was summoned to Aunt Isabel's bar of judgment. But when she said Byron had pinched her Byron denied it. He said she cried out because the kitten scratched her. He said she had put the kitten up on her chair and was playing with it when she should have been listening to Uncle David's prayer. He was *believed*. In the Stirling clan the boys were always believed before the girls. Valancy was sent home in disgrace because of her exceeding bad behavior during family prayers and she was not asked to Aunt Isabel's again for many moons.

The time Cousin Betty Stirling was married. Somehow Valancy got wind of the fact that Betty was going to ask her to be one of her bridesmaids. Valancy was secretly uplifted. It would be a delightful thing to be a bridesmaid. And of course she would have to have a new dress for it—a pretty new dress—a pink dress. Betty wanted her bridesmaids to dress in pink.

But Betty had never asked her, after all. Valancy couldn't guess why, but long after her secret tears of disappointment had been dried Olive told her. Betty, after much consultation and reflection, had decided that Valancy was too insignificant—she would “spoil the effect.” That was nine years ago. But tonight Valancy caught her breath with the old pain and sting of it.

That day in her eleventh year when her mother had badgered her into confessing something she had never done. Valancy had denied it for a long time but eventually for peace' sake she had given in and pleaded guilty. Mrs. Frederick was always making people lie by pushing them into situations where they *had* to lie. Then her mother had made her kneel down on parlour floor, between herself and Cousin Stickles, and say, “O God, please forgive me for not speaking the truth.” Valancy had said it, but as she rose from her knees she muttered, “But O God, *you* know I did speak the truth.” Valancy had not then heard of Galileo but her fate was

similar to his. She was punished just as severely as if she hadn't confessed and prayed.

The winter she went to dancing-school. Uncle James had decreed she should go and had paid for her lessons. How she had looked forward to it! And how she had hated it! She had never had a voluntary partner. The teacher always had to tell some boy to dance with her, and generally he had been sulky about it. Yet Valancy was a good dancer, as light on her feet as thistledown. Olive, who never lacked eager partners, was heavy.

The affair of the button-string, when she was ten. All the girls in school had button-strings. Olive had a very long one with a great many beautiful buttons. Valancy had one. Most of the buttons on it were very commonplace, but she had six beauties that had come off Grandmother Stirling's wedding-gown—sparkling buttons of gold and glass, much more beautiful than any Olive had. Their possession conferred a certain distinction on Valancy. She knew every little girl in school envied her the exclusive possession of those beautiful buttons. When Olive saw them on the button-string she had looked at them narrowly but said nothing—then. The next day Aunt Wellington had come to Elm Street and told Mrs. Frederick that she thought Olive should have some of those buttons—Grandmother Stirling was just as much Wellington's mother as Frederick's. Mrs. Frederick had agreed amiably. She could not afford to fall out with Aunt Wellington. Moreover, the matter was of no importance whatever. Aunt Wellington carried off four of the buttons, generously leaving two for Valancy. Valancy had torn these from her string and flung them on the floor—she had not yet learned that it was unladylike to have feelings—and had been sent supperless to bed for the exhibition.

The night of Margaret Blunt's party. She had made such pathetic efforts to be pretty that night. Rob Walker was to be there; and two nights before, on the moonlit verandah of Uncle Herbert's cottage at Mistawis, Rob had really seemed attracted to her. At Margaret's party Rob never even asked her to dance—did not notice her at all. She was a wallflower, as usual. That, of course, was years ago. People in Deerwood had long since given up inviting Valancy to dances. But to Valancy its humiliation

and disappointment were of the other day. Her face burned in the darkness as she recalled herself, sitting there with her pitifully crimped, thin hair and the cheeks she had pinched for an hour before coming, in an effort to make them red. All that came of it was a wild story that Valancy Stirling was rouged at Margaret Blunt's party. In those days in Deerwood that was enough to wreck your character forever. It did not wreck Valancy's, or even damage it. People knew *she* couldn't be fast if she tried. They only laughed at her.

"I've had nothing but a second-hand existence," decided Valancy. "All the great emotions of life have passed me by. I've never even had a grief. And have I ever really loved anybody? Do I really love Mother? No, I don't. That's the truth, whether it is disgraceful or not. I don't love her—I've never loved her. What's worse, I don't even like her. So I don't know anything about any kind of love. My life has been empty—empty. Nothing is worse than emptiness. Nothing!" Valancy ejaculated the last "nothing" aloud passionately. Then she moaned and stopped thinking about anything for a while. One of her attacks of pain had come on.

When it was over something had happened to Valancy—perhaps the culmination of the process that had been going on in her mind ever since she had read Dr. Trent's letter. It was three o'clock in the morning—the wisest and most accursed hour of the clock. But sometimes it sets us free.

"I've been trying to please other people all my life and failed," she said. "After this I shall please myself. I shall never pretend anything again. I've breathed an atmosphere of fibs and pretences and evasions all my life. What a luxury it will be to tell the truth! I may not be able to do much that I want to do but I won't do another thing that I don't want to do. Mother can pout for weeks—I shan't worry over it. 'Despair is a free man—hope is a slave'."

Valancy got up and dressed, with a deepening of that curious sense of freedom. When she had finished with her hair she opened the window and hurled the jar of potpourri over into the next lot. It smashed gloriously against the schoolgirl complexion on the old carriage-shop.

"I'm sick of fragrance of dead things," said Valancy.

Chapter IX

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Uncle Herbert and Aunt Alberta's silver wedding was delicately referred to among the Stirlings during the following weeks as "the time we first noticed poor Valancy was—a little—you understand?"

Not for words would any of the Stirlings have said out and out at first that Valancy had gone mildly insane or even that her mind was slightly deranged. Uncle Benjamin was considered to have gone entirely too far when he had ejaculated, "She's dippy—I tell you, she's dippy," and was only excused because of the outrageousness of Valancy's conduct at the aforesaid wedding dinner.

But Mrs. Frederick and Cousin Stickles had noticed a few things that made them uneasy *before* the dinner. It had begun with the rosebush, of course; and Valancy never was really "quite right" again. She did not seem to worry in the least over the fact that her mother was not speaking to her. You would never suppose she noticed it at all. She had flatly refused to take either Purple Pills or Redfern's Bitters. She had announced coolly that she did not intend to answer to the name of "Doss" any longer. She had told Cousin Stickles that she wished she would give up wearing that brooch with Cousin Artemas Stickles' hair in it. She had moved her bed in her room to the opposite corner. She had read *Magic of Wings* Sunday afternoon. When Cousin Stickles had rebuked her Valancy had said indifferently, "Oh, I forgot it was Sunday"—and *had gone on reading it*.

Cousin Stickles had seen a terrible thing—she had caught Valancy sliding down the bannister. Cousin Stickles did not tell Mrs. Frederick this—poor Amelia was worried enough as it was. But it was Valancy's announcement on Saturday night that she was not going to go to the Anglican church any more that broke through Mrs. Frederick's stony silence.

“Not going to church any more! Doss, have you absolutely taken leave —”

“Oh, I’m going to church,” said Valancy airily. “I’m going to the Presbyterian church. But to the Anglican church I will not go.”

This was even worse. Mrs. Frederick had recourse to tears, having found outraged majesty had ceased to be effective.

“What have you got against the Anglican church?” she sobbed.

“Nothing—only just that you’ve always made me go there. If you’d made me go to the Presbyterian church I’d want to go to the Anglican.”

“Is that a nice thing to say to your mother? Oh, how true it is that it is sharper than a serpent’s tooth to have a thankless child.”

“Is that a nice thing to say to your daughter?” said unrepentant Valancy.

So Valancy’s behaviour at the silver wedding was not quite the surprise to Mrs. Frederick and Christine Stickles that it was to the rest. They were doubtful about the wisdom of taking her, but concluded it would “make talk” if they didn’t. Perhaps she would behave herself, and so far no outsider suspected there was anything queer about her. By a special mercy of Providence it had poured torrents Sunday morning, so Valancy had not carried out her hideous threat of going to the Presbyterian church.

Valancy would not have cared in the least if they had left her at home. These family celebrations were all hopelessly dull. But the Stirlings always celebrated everything. It was a long-established custom. Even Mrs. Frederick gave a dinner party on her wedding anniversary and Cousin Stickles had friends in to supper on her birthday. Valancy hated these entertainments because they had to pinch and save and contrive for weeks afterwards to pay for them. But she wanted to go to the silver wedding. It would hurt Uncle Herbert’s feelings if she stayed away, and she rather liked Uncle Herbert. Besides, she wanted to look over all her relatives from her new angle. It would be an excellent place to make public her declaration of independence if occasion offered.

“Put on your brown silk dress,” said Mrs. Stirling.

As if there were anything else to put on! Valancy had only the one festive dress—that snuffy-brown silk Aunt Isabel had given her. Aunt Isabel had decreed that Valancy should never wear colours. They did not become her. When she was young they allowed her to wear white, but that had been tacitly dropped for some years. Valancy put on the brown silk. It had a high collar and long sleeves. She had never had a dress with low neck and elbow sleeves, although they had been worn, even in Deerwood, for over a year. But she did not do her hair pompadour. She knotted it on her neck and pulled it out over her ears. She thought it became her—only the little knot was so absurdly small. Mrs. Frederick resented the hair but decided it was wisest to say nothing on the eve of the party. It was so important that Valancy should be kept in good humour, if possible, until it was over. Mrs. Frederick did not reflect that this was the first time in her life that she had thought it necessary to consider Valancy’s humours. But then Valancy had never been “queer” before.

On their way to Uncle Herbert’s—Mrs. Frederick and Cousin Stickles walking in front, Valancy trotting meekly along behind—Roaring Abel drove past them. Drunk as usual but not in the roaring stage. Just drunk enough to be excessively polite. He raised his disreputable old tartan cap with the air of a monarch saluting his subjects and swept them a grand bow. Mrs. Frederick and Cousin Stickles dared not cut Roaring Abel altogether. He was the only person in Deerwood who could be got to do odd jobs of carpentering and repairing when they needed to be done, so it would not do to offend him. But they responded with only the stiffest, slightest of bows. Roaring Abel must be kept in his place.

Valancy, behind them, did a thing they were fortunately spared seeing. She smiled gaily and waved her hand to Roaring Abel. Why not? She had always liked the old sinner. He was such a jolly, picturesque, unashamed reprobate and stood out against the drab respectability of Deerwood and its customs like a flame-red flag of revolt and protest. Only a few nights ago Abel had gone through Deerwood in the wee sma’s, shouting oaths at the top of his stentorian voice which could be heard for miles, and lashing his horse into a furious gallop as he tore along prim, proper Elm Street.

“Yelling and blaspheming like a fiend,” shuddered Cousin Stickles at the breakfast-table.

“I cannot understand why the judgment of the Lord has not fallen upon that man long ere this,” said Mrs. Frederick petulantly, as if she thought Providence was very dilatory and ought to have a gentle reminder.

“He’ll be picked up dead some morning—he’ll fall under his horse’s hoofs and be trampled to death,” said Cousin Stickles reassuringly.

Valancy had said nothing, of course; but she wondered to herself if Roaring Abel’s periodical sprees were not his futile protest against the poverty and drudgery and monotony of his existence. *She* went on dream sprees in her Blue Castle. Roaring Abel, having no imagination, could not do that. *His* escapes from reality had to be concrete. So she waved at him today with a sudden fellow feeling, and Roaring Abel, not too drunk to be astonished, nearly fell off his seat in his amazement.

By this time they had reached Maple Avenue and Uncle Herbert’s house, a large, pretentious structure peppered with meaningless bay windows and excrescent porches. A house that always looked like a stupid, prosperous, self-satisfied man with warts on his face.

“A house like that,” said Valancy solemnly, “is a blasphemy.”

Mrs. Frederick was shaken to her soul. What had Valancy said? Was it profane? Or only just queer? Mrs. Frederick took off her hat in Aunt Alberta’s spare-room with trembling hands. She made one more feeble attempt to avert disaster. She held Valancy back on the landing as Cousin Stickles went downstairs.

“Won’t you try to remember you’re a lady?” she pleaded.

“Oh, if there were only any hope of being able to forget it!” said Valancy wearily.

Mrs. Frederick felt that she had not deserved this from Providence.

Chapter X

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“Bless this food to our use and consecrate our lives to Thy service,” said Uncle Herbert briskly.

Aunt Wellington frowned. She always considered Herbert’s graces entirely too short and “flippant.” A grace, to be a grace in Aunt Wellington’s eyes, had to be at least three minutes long and uttered in an unearthly tone, between a groan and a chant. As a protest she kept her head bent a perceptible time after all the rest had been lifted. When she permitted herself to sit upright she found Valancy looking at her. Ever afterwards Aunt Wellington averred that she had known from that moment that there was something wrong with Valancy. In those queer, slanted eyes of hers—“we should always have known she was not entirely *right* with eyes like that”—there was an odd gleam of mockery and amusement—as if Valancy were laughing at *her*. Such a thing was unthinkable, of course. Aunt Wellington at once ceased to think it.

Valancy was enjoying herself. She had never enjoyed herself at a “family reunion” before. In social functions, as in childish games, she had only “filled in.” Her clan had always considered her very dull. She had no parlour tricks. And she had been in the habit of taking refuge from the boredom of family parties in her Blue Castle, which resulted in an absent-mindedness that increased her reputation for dullness and vacuity.

“She has no social presence whatever,” Aunt Wellington had decreed once and for all. Nobody dreamed that Valancy was dumb in their presence merely because she was afraid of them. Now she was no longer afraid of them. The shackles had been stricken off her soul. She was quite prepared to talk if occasion offered. Meanwhile she was giving herself such freedom of thought as she had never dared to take before. She let herself go with a wild, inner exultation, as Uncle Herbert carved the turkey. Uncle Herbert gave Valancy a second look that day. Being a man, he didn’t know

what she had done to her hair, but he thought surprisedly that Doss was not such a bad-looking girl, after all; and he put an extra piece of white meat on her plate.

“What herb is most injurious to a young lady’s beauty?” propounded Uncle Benjamin by way of starting conversation—“loosening things up a bit,” as he would have said.

Valancy, whose duty it was to say, “What?” did not say it. Nobody else said it, so Uncle Benjamin, after an expectant pause, had to answer, “Thyme,” and felt that his riddle had fallen flat. He looked resentfully at Valancy, who had never failed him before, but Valancy did not seem even to be aware of him. She was gazing around the table, examining relentlessly every one in this depressing assembly of sensible people and watching their little squirms with a detached, amused smile.

So these were the people she had always held in reverence and fear. She seemed to see them with new eyes.

Big, capable, patronising, voluble Aunt Mildred, who thought herself the cleverest woman in the clan, her husband a little lower than the angels and her children wonders. Had not her son, Howard, been all through teething at eleven months? And could she not tell you the best way to do everything, from cooking mushrooms to picking up a snake? What a bore she was! What ugly moles she had on her face!

Cousin Gladys, who was always praising her son, who had died young, and always fighting with her living one. She had neuritis—or what she called neuritis. It jumped about from one part of her body to another. It was a convenient thing. If anybody wanted her to go somewhere she didn’t want to go she had neuritis in her legs. And always if any mental effort was required she could have neuritis in her head. You can’t *think* with neuritis in your head, my dear.

“What an old humbug you are!” thought Valancy impiously.

Aunt Isabel. Valancy counted her chins. Aunt Isabel was the critic of the clan. She had always gone about squashing people flat. More members of it than Valancy were afraid of her. She had, it was conceded, a biting tongue.

“I wonder what would happen to your face if you ever smiled,” speculated Valancy, unblushingly.

Second Cousin Sarah Taylor, with her great, pale, expressionless eyes, who was noted for the variety of her pickle recipes and for nothing else. So afraid of saying something indiscreet that she never said anything worth listening to. So proper that she blushed when she saw the advertisement picture of a corset and had put a dress on her Venus de Milo statuette which made it look “real tasty.”

Little Cousin Georgiana. Not such a bad little soul. But dreary—very. Always looking as if she had just been starched and ironed. Always afraid to let herself go. The only thing she really enjoyed was a funeral. You knew where you were with a corpse. Nothing more could happen to *it*. But while there was life there was fear.

Uncle James. Handsome, black, with his sarcastic, trap-like mouth and iron-grey side-burns, whose favourite amusement was to write controversial letters to the *Christian Times*, attacking Modernism. Valancy always wondered if he looked as solemn when he was asleep as he did when awake. No wonder his wife had died young. Valancy remembered her. A pretty, sensitive thing. Uncle James had denied her everything she wanted and showered on her everything she didn’t want. He had killed her—quite legally. She had been smothered and starved.

Uncle Benjamin, wheezy, pussy-mouthed. With great pouches under eyes that held nothing in reverence.

Uncle Wellington. Long, pallid face, thin, pale-yellow hair—“one of the fair Stirlings”—thin, stooping body, abominably high forehead with such ugly wrinkles, and “eyes about as intelligent as a fish’s,” thought Valancy. “Looks like a cartoon of himself.”

Aunt Wellington. Named Mary but called by her husband’s name to distinguish her from Great-aunt Mary. A massive, dignified, permanent lady. Splendidly arranged, iron-grey hair. Rich, fashionable beaded dress. Had *her* moles removed by electrolysis—which Aunt Mildred thought was a wicked evasion of the purposes of God.

Uncle Herbert, with his spiky grey hair. Aunt Alberta, who twisted her mouth so unpleasantly in talking and had a great reputation for unselfishness because she was always giving up a lot of things she didn't want. Valancy let them off easily in her judgment because she liked them, even if they were in Milton's expressive phrase, "stupidly good." But she wondered for what inscrutable reason Aunt Alberta had seen fit to tie a black velvet ribbon around each of her chubby arms above the elbow.

Then she looked across the table at Olive. Olive, who had been held up to her as a paragon of beauty, behaviour and success as long as she could remember. "Why can't you hold yourself like Olive, Doss? Why can't you stand correctly like Olive, Doss? Why can't you speak prettily like Olive, Doss? Why can't you make an effort, Doss?"

Valancy's elfin eyes lost their mocking glitter and became pensive and sorrowful. You could not ignore or disdain Olive. It was quite impossible to deny that she was beautiful and effective and sometimes she was a little intelligent. Her mouth might be a trifle heavy—she might show her fine, white, regular teeth rather too lavishly when she smiled. But when all was said and done, Olive justified Uncle Benjamin's summing up—"a stunning girl." Yes, Valancy agreed in her heart, Olive was stunning.

Rich, golden-brown hair, elaborately dressed, with a sparkling bandeau holding its glossy puffs in place; large, brilliant blue eyes and thick silken lashes; face of rose and bare neck of snow, rising above her gown; great pearl bubbles in her ears; the blue-white diamond flame on her long, smooth, waxen finger with its rosy, pointed nail. Arms of marble, gleaming through green chiffon and shadow lace. Valancy felt suddenly thankful that her own scrawny arms were decently swathed in brown silk. Then she resumed her tabulation of Olive's charms.

Tall. Queenly. Confident. Everything that Valancy was *not*. Dimples, too, in cheeks and chin. "A woman with dimples always gets her own way," thought Valancy, in a recurring spasm of bitterness at the fate which had denied her even one dimple.

Olive was only a year younger than Valancy, though a stranger would have thought that there was at least ten years between them. But nobody

ever dreaded old maidenhood for her. Olive had been surrounded by a crowd of eager beaux since her early teens, just as her mirror was always surrounded by a fringe of cards, photographs, programmes and invitations. At eighteen, when she had graduated from Havergal College, Olive had been engaged to Will Desmond, lawyer in embryo. Will Desmond had died and Olive had mourned for him properly for two years. When she was twenty-three she had a hectic affair with Donald Jackson. But Aunt and Uncle Wellington disapproved of that and in the end Olive dutifully gave him up. Nobody in the Stirling clan—whatever outsiders might say—hinted that she did so because Donald himself was cooling off. However that might be, Olive's third venture met with everybody's approval. Cecil Price was clever and handsome and "one of the Port Lawrence Prices." Olive had been engaged to him for three years. He had just graduated in civil engineering and they were to be married as soon as he landed a contract. Olive's hope chest was full to overflowing with exquisite things and Olive had already confided to Valancy what her wedding-dress was to be. Ivory silk draped with lace, white satin court train, lined with pale green georgette, heirloom veil of Brussels lace. Valancy knew also—though Olive had not told her—that the bridesmaids were selected and that she was not among them.

Valancy had, after a fashion, always been Olive's confidante—perhaps because she was the only girl in the connection who could not bore Olive with return confidences. Olive always told Valancy all the details of her love affairs, from the days when the little boys in school used to "persecute" her with love letters. Valancy could not comfort herself by thinking these affairs mythical. Olive really had them. Many men had gone mad over her besides the three fortunate ones.

"I don't know what the poor idiots see in me, that drives them to make such double idiots of themselves," Olive was wont to say. Valancy would have liked to say, "I don't either," but truth and diplomacy both restrained her. She *did* know, perfectly well. Olive Stirling was one of the girls about whom men do go mad just as indubitably as she, Valancy, was one of the girls at whom no man ever looked twice.

“And yet,” thought Valancy, summing her up with a new and merciless conclusiveness, “she’s like a dewless morning. There’s *something* lacking.”

Chapter XI

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Meanwhile the dinner in its earlier stages was dragging its slow length along true to Stirling form. The room was chilly, in spite of the calendar, and Aunt Alberta had the gas-logs lighted. Everybody in the clan envied her those gas-logs except Valancy. Glorious open fires blazed in every room of her Blue Castle when autumnal nights were cool, but she would have frozen to death in it before she would have committed the sacrilege of a gas-log. Uncle Herbert made his hardy perennial joke when he helped Aunt Wellington to the cold meat—"Mary, will you have a little lamb?" Aunt Mildred told the same old story of once finding a lost ring in a turkey's crop. Uncle Benjamin told *his* favourite prosy tale of how he had once chased and punished a now famous man for stealing apples. Second Cousin Jane described all her sufferings with an ulcerating tooth. Aunt Wellington admired the pattern of Aunt Alberta's silver teaspoons and lamented the fact that one of her own had been lost.

"It spoiled the set. I could never get it matched. And it was my wedding-present from dear old Aunt Matilda."

Aunt Isabel thought the seasons were changing and couldn't imagine what had become of our good, old-fashioned springs. Cousin Georgiana, as usual, discussed the last funeral and wondered, audibly, "which of us will be the next to pass away." Cousin Georgiana could never say anything as blunt as "die." Valancy thought she could tell her, but didn't. Cousin Gladys, likewise as usual, had a grievance. Her visiting nephews had nipped all the buds off her house-plants and chivied her brood of fancy chickens—"squeezed some of them actually to death, my dear."

"Boys will be boys," reminded Uncle Herbert tolerantly.

"But they needn't be ramping, rampageous animals," retorted Cousin Gladys, looking round the table for appreciation of her wit. Everybody smiled except Valancy. Cousin Gladys remembered that. A few minutes

later, when Ellen Hamilton was being discussed, Cousin Gladys spoke of her as “one of those shy, plain girls who can’t get husbands,” and glanced significantly at Valancy.

Uncle James thought the conversation was sagging to a rather low plane of personal gossip. He tried to elevate it by starting an abstract discussion on “the greatest happiness.” Everybody was asked to state his or her idea of “the greatest happiness.”

Aunt Mildred thought the greatest happiness—for a woman—was to be “a loving and beloved wife and mother.” Aunt Wellington thought it would be to travel in Europe. Olive thought it would be to be a great singer like Tetrizzini. Cousin Gladys remarked mournfully that *her* greatest happiness would be to be free—absolutely free—from neuritis. Cousin Georgiana’s greatest happiness would be “to have her dear, dead brother Richard back.” Aunt Alberta remarked vaguely that the greatest happiness was to be found in “the poetry of life” and hastily gave some directions to her maid to prevent any one asking her what she meant. Mrs. Frederick said the greatest happiness was to spend your life in loving service for others, and Cousin Stickles and Aunt Isabel agreed with her—Aunt Isabel with a resentful air, as if she thought Mrs. Frederick had taken the wind out of her sails by saying it first. “We are all too prone,” continued Mrs. Frederick, determined not to lose so good an opportunity, “to live in selfishness, worldliness and sin.” The other women all felt rebuked for their low ideals, and Uncle James had a conviction that the conversation had been uplifted with a vengeance.

“The greatest happiness,” said Valancy suddenly and distinctly, “is to sneeze when you want to.”

Everybody stared. Nobody felt it safe to say anything. Was Valancy trying to be funny? It was incredible. Mrs. Frederick, who had been breathing easier since the dinner had progressed so far without any outbreak on the part of Valancy began to tremble again. But she deemed it the part of prudence to say nothing. Uncle Benjamin was not so prudent. He rashly rushed in where Mrs. Frederick feared to tread.

“Doss,” he chuckled, “what is the difference between a young girl and an old maid?”

“One is happy and careless and the other is cappy and hairless,” said Valancy. “You have asked that riddle at least fifty times in my recollection, Uncle Ben. Why don’t you hunt up some new riddles if riddle you *must*? It is such a fatal mistake to try to be funny if you don’t succeed.”

Uncle Benjamin stared foolishly. Never in his life had he, Benjamin Stirling, of Stirling and Frost, been spoken to so. And by Valancy of all people! He looked feebly around the table to see what the others thought of it. Everybody was looking rather blank. Poor Mrs. Frederick had shut her eyes. And her lips moved tremblingly—as if she were praying. Perhaps she was. The situation was so unprecedented that nobody knew how to meet it. Valancy went on calmly eating her salad as if nothing out of the usual had occurred.

Aunt Alberta, to save her dinner, plunged into an account of how a dog had bitten her recently. Uncle James, to back her up, asked where the dog had bitten her.

“Just a little below the Catholic church,” said Aunt Alberta.

At that point Valancy laughed. Nobody else laughed. What was there to laugh at?

“Is that a vital part?” asked Valancy.

“What do you mean?” said bewildered Aunt Alberta, and Mrs. Frederick was almost driven to believe that she had served God all her years for naught.

Aunt Isabel concluded that it was up to her to suppress Valancy.

“Doss, you are horribly thin,” she said. “You are *all* corners. Do you *ever* try to fatten up a little?”

“No.” Valancy was not asking quarter or giving it. “But I can tell you where you’ll find a beauty parlour in Port Lawrence where they can reduce the number of your chins.”

“*Val-an-cy!*” The protest was wrung from Mrs. Frederick. She meant her tone to be stately and majestic, as usual, but it sounded more like an imploring whine. And she did not say “Doss.”

“She’s feverish,” said Cousin Stickles to Uncle Benjamin in an agonised whisper. “We’ve thought she’s seemed feverish for several days.”

“She’s gone dippy, in my opinion,” growled Uncle Benjamin. “If not, she ought to be spanked. Yes, spanked.”

“You can’t spank her.” Cousin Stickles was much agitated. “She’s twenty-nine years old.”

“So there is that advantage, at least, in being twenty-nine,” said Valancy, whose ears had caught this aside.

“Doss,” said Uncle Benjamin, “when I am dead you may say what you please. As long as I am alive I demand to be treated with respect.”

“Oh, but you know we’re all dead,” said Valancy, “the whole Stirling clan. Some of us are buried and some aren’t—yet. That is the only difference.”

“Doss,” said Uncle Benjamin, thinking it might cow Valancy, “do you remember the time you stole the raspberry jam?”

Valancy flushed scarlet—with suppressed laughter, not shame. She had been sure Uncle Benjamin would drag that jam in somehow.

“Of course I do,” she said. “It was good jam. I’ve always been sorry I hadn’t time to eat more of it before you found me. Oh, *look* at Aunt Isabel’s profile on the wall. Did you ever see anything so funny?”

Everybody looked, including Aunt Isabel herself which of course, destroyed it. But Uncle Herbert said kindly, “I—I wouldn’t eat any more if I were you, Doss. It isn’t that I grudge it—but don’t you think it would be better for yourself? Your—your stomach seems a little out of order.”

“Don’t worry about my stomach, old dear,” said Valancy. “It is all right. I’m going to keep right on eating. It’s so seldom I get the chance of a satisfying meal.”

It was the first time any one had been called “old dear” in Deerwood. The Stirlings thought Valancy had invented the phrase and they were afraid of her from that moment. There was something so uncanny about such an expression. But in poor Mrs. Frederick’s opinion the reference to a satisfying meal was the worst thing Valancy had said yet. Valancy had always been a disappointment to her. Now she was a disgrace. She thought

she would have to get up and go away from the table. Yet she dared not leave Valancy there.

Aunt Alberta's maid came in to remove the salad plates and bring in the dessert. It was a welcome diversion. Everybody brightened up with a determination to ignore Valancy and talk as if she wasn't there. Uncle Wellington mentioned Barney Snaith. Eventually somebody did mention Barney Snaith at every Stirling function, Valancy reflected. Whatever he was, he was an individual that could not be ignored. She resigned herself to listen. There was a subtle fascination in the subject for her, though she had not yet faced this fact. She could feel her pulses beating to her fingertips.

Of course they abused him. Nobody ever had a good word to say of Barney Snaith. All the old, wild tales were canvassed—the defaulting cashier-counterfeiter-infidel-murderer-in-hiding legends were thrashed out. Uncle Wellington was very indignant that such a creature should be allowed to exist at all in the neighbourhood of Deerwood. He didn't know what the police at Port Lawrence were thinking of. Everybody would be murdered in their beds some night. It was a shame that he should be allowed to be at large after all that he had done.

“What *has* he done?” asked Valancy suddenly.

Uncle Wellington stared at her, forgetting that she was to be ignored.

“Done! Done! He's done *everything*.”

“*What* has he done?” repeated Valancy inexorably. “What do you *know* that he has done? You're always running him down. And what has ever been proved against him?”

“I don't argue with women,” said Uncle Wellington. “And I don't need proof. When a man hides himself up there on an island in Muskoka, year in and year out, and nobody can find out where he came from or how he lives, or what he does there, *that's* proof enough. Find a mystery and you find a crime.”

“The very idea of a man named Snaith!” said Second Cousin Sarah. “Why, the name itself is enough to condemn him!”

“I wouldn’t like to meet him in a dark lane,” shivered Cousin Georgiana.

“What do you suppose he would do to you?” asked Valancy.

“Murder me,” said Cousin Georgiana solemnly.

“Just for the fun of it?” suggested Valancy.

“Exactly,” said Cousin Georgiana unsuspiciously. “When there is so much smoke there must be some fire. I was afraid he was a criminal when he came here first. I *felt* he had something to hide. I am not often mistaken in my intuitions.”

“Criminal! Oh course he’s a criminal,” said Uncle Wellington.

“Nobody doubts it”—glaring at Valancy. “Why, they say he served a term in the penitentiary for embezzlement. I don’t doubt it. And they say he’s in with that gang that are perpetrating all those bank robberies round the country.”

“*Who* say?” asked Valancy.

Uncle Wellington knotted his ugly forehead at her. What had got into this confounded girl, anyway? He ignored the question.

“He has the identical look of a jail-bird,” snapped Uncle Benjamin. “I noticed it the first time I saw him.”

“ ‘A fellow by the hand of nature marked,
Quoted and sighed to do a deed of shame’, ”

declaimed Uncle James. He looked enormously pleased over the managing to work that quotation in at last. He had been waiting all his life for the chance.

“One of his eyebrows is an arch and the other is a triangle,” said Valancy. “Is *that* why you think him so villainous?”

Uncle James lifted *his* eyebrows. Generally when Uncle James lifted his eyebrows the world came to an end. This time it continued to function.

“How do *you* know his eyebrows so well, Doss?” asked Olive, a trifle maliciously. Such a remark would have covered Valancy with confusion two weeks ago, and Olive knew it.

“Yes, how?” demanded Aunt Wellington.

“I’ve seen him twice and I looked at him closely,” said Valancy composedly. “I thought his face the most interesting one I ever saw.”

“There is no doubt there is something fishy in the creature’s past life,” said Olive, who began to think she was decidedly out of the conversation, which had centred so amazingly around Valancy. “But he can hardly be guilty of *everything* he’s accused of, you know.”

Valancy felt annoyed with Olive. Why should *she* speak up in even this qualified defence of Barney Snaith? What had she to do with him? For that matter, what had Valancy? But Valancy did not ask herself this question.

“They say he keeps dozens of cats in that hut up back on Mistawis,” said Second Cousin Sarah Taylor, by way of appearing not entirely ignorant of him.

Cats. It sounded quite alluring to Valancy, in the plural. She pictured an island in Muskoka haunted by pussies.

“That alone shows there is something wrong with him,” decreed Aunt Isabel.

“People who don’t like cats,” said Valancy, attacking her dessert with a relish, “always seem to think that there is some peculiar virtue in not liking them.”

“The man hasn’t a friend except Roaring Abel,” said Uncle Wellington. “And if Roaring Abel had kept away from him, as everybody else did, it would have been better for—for some members of his family.”

Uncle Wellington’s rather lame conclusion was due to a marital glance from Aunt Wellington reminding him of what he had almost forgotten—that there were girls at the table.

“If you mean,” said Valancy passionately, “that Barney Snaith is the father of Cecily Gay’s child, he *isn’t*. It’s a wicked lie.”

In spite of her indignation Valancy was hugely amused at the expression of the faces around that festal table. She had not seen anything like it since the day, seventeen years ago, when at Cousin Gladys’ thimble party, they discovered that she had got—SOMETHING—in her head at school. *Lice* in her head! Valancy was done with euphemisms.

Poor Mrs. Frederick was almost in a state of collapse. She had believed—or pretended to believe—the Valancy still supposed that children were found in parsley beds.

“Hush—hush!” implored Cousin Stickles.

“I don’t mean to hush,” said Valancy perversely. “I’ve hush-hushed all my life. I’ll scream if I want to. Don’t make me want to. And stop talking nonsense about Barney Snaith.”

Valancy didn’t exactly understand her own indignation. What did Barney Snaith’s imputed crimes and misdemeanours matter to her? And why, out of them all, did it seem most intolerable that he should have been poor, pitiful little Cecily Gay’s false lover? For it *did* seem intolerable to her. She did not mind when they called him a thief and a counterfeiter and jail-bird; but she could not endure to think that he had loved and ruined Cecily Gay. She recalled his face on the two occasions of their chance meetings—his twisted, enigmatic, engaging smile, his twinkle, his thin, sensitive, almost ascetic lips, his general air of frank daredeviltry. A man with such a smile and lips might have murdered or stolen but he could not have betrayed. She suddenly hated every one who said it or believed it of him.

“When *I* was a young girl I never thought or spoke about such matters, Doss,” said Aunt Wellington, crushingly.

“But I’m not a young girl,” retorted Valancy, uncrushed. “Aren’t you always rubbing that into me? And you are all evil-minded, senseless gossips. Can’t you leave poor Cissy Gay alone? She’s dying. Whatever she did, God or the Devil has punished her enough for it. You needn’t take a hand, too. As for Barney Snaith, the only crime he has been guilty of is living to himself and minding his own business. He can, it seems, get along without you. Which *is* an unpardonable sin, of course, in your little snobocracy.” Valancy coined that concluding word suddenly and felt that it was an inspiration. That was exactly what they were and not one of them was fit to mend another.

“Valancy, your poor father would turn over in his grave if he could hear you,” said Mrs. Frederick.

“I dare say he would like that for a change,” said Valancy brazenly.

“Doss,” said Uncle James heavily, “the Ten Commandments are fairly up to date still—especially the fifth. Have you forgotten that?”

“No,” said Valancy, “but I thought *you* had—especially the ninth. Have you ever thought, Uncle James, how dull life would be without the Ten Commandments? It is only when things are forbidden that they become fascinating.”

But her excitement had been too much for her. She knew, by certain unmistakable warnings, that one of her attacks of pain was coming on. It must not find her there. She rose from her chair.

“I am going home now. I only came for the dinner. It was very good, Aunt Alberta, although your salad-dressing is not salt enough and a dash of cayenne would improve it.”

None of the flabbergasted silver wedding guests could think of anything to say until the lawn gate clanged behind Valancy in the dusk. Then—

“She’s feverish—I’ve said right along she was feverish,” moaned Cousin Stickles.

Uncle Benjamin punished his pudgy left hand fiercely with his pudgy right.

“She’s dippy—I tell you she’s gone dippy,” he snorted angrily. “That’s all there is about it. Clean dippy.”

“Oh, Benjamin,” said Cousin Georgiana soothingly, “don’t condemn her too rashly. We *must* remember what dear old Shakespeare says—that charity thinketh no evil.”

“Charity! Poppy-cock!” snorted Uncle Benjamin. “I never heard a young woman talk such stuff in my life as she just did. Talking about things she ought to be ashamed to think of, much less mention. Blaspheming! Insulting *us*! What she wants is a generous dose of spank-weed and I’d like to be the one to administer it. H-uh-h-h-h!” Uncle Benjamin gulped down the half of a scalding cup of coffee.

“Do you suppose that the mumps could work on a person that way?” wailed Cousin Stickles.

"I opened an umbrella in the house yesterday," sniffed Cousin Georgiana. "I *knew* it betokened some misfortune."

"Have you tried to find out if she has a temperature?" asked Cousin Mildred.

"She wouldn't let Amelia put the thermometer under her tongue," whimpered Cousin Stickles.

Mrs. Frederick was openly in tears. All her defences were down.

"I must tell you," she sobbed, "that Valancy has been acting very strangely for over two weeks now. She hasn't been a bit like herself—Christine could tell you. I have hoped against hope that it was only one of her colds coming on. But it is—it must be something worse."

"This is bringing on my neuritis again," said Cousin Gladys, putting her hand to her head.

"Don't cry, Amelia," said Herbert kindly, pulling nervously at his spiky grey hair. He hated "family ructions." Very inconsiderate of Doss to start one at *his* silver wedding. Who could have supposed she had it in her? "You'll have to take her to a doctor. This may be only a—er—a brainstorm. There are such things as brainstorms nowadays, aren't there?"

"I—I suggested consulting a doctor to her yesterday," moaned Mrs. Frederick. "And she said she wouldn't go to a doctor—wouldn't. Oh, surely I have had trouble enough!"

"And she *won't* take Redfern's Bitters," said Cousin Stickles.

"Or *anything*," said Mrs. Frederick. "And she's determined to go to the Presbyterian church," said Cousin Stickles—repressing, however, to her credit be it said, the story of the bannister.

"That proves she's dippy," growled Uncle Benjamin. "I noticed something strange about her the minute she came in today. I noticed it *before* today." (Uncle Benjamin was thinking of "m-i-r-a-z-h.") "Everything she said today showed an unbalanced mind. That question—'Was it a vital part?' Was there any sense at all in that remark? None whatever! There never was anything like that in the Stirlings. It must be from the Wansbarras."

Poor Mrs. Frederick was too crushed to be indignant. "I never heard of anything like that in the Wansbarras," she sobbed,

"Your father was odd enough," said Uncle Benjamin.

"Poor Pa was—peculiar," admitted Mrs. Frederick tearfully, "but his mind was never affected."

"He talked all his life exactly as Valancy did today," retorted Uncle Benjamin. "And he believed he was his own great-great grandfather born over again. I've heard him say it. Don't tell *me* that a man who believed a thing like *that* was ever in his right senses. Come, come, Amelia, stop sniffing. Of course Doss has made a terrible exhibition of herself today, but she's not responsible. Old maids are apt to fly off at a tangent like that. If she had been married when she should have been she wouldn't have got like this."

"Nobody wanted to marry her," said Mrs. Frederick, who felt that, somehow, Uncle Benjamin was blaming her.

"Well, fortunately there's no outsider here," snapped Uncle Benjamin. "We may keep it in the family yet. I'll take her over to see Dr. Marsh tomorrow. *I* know how to deal with pig-headed people. Won't that be best, James?"

"We must have medical advice certainly," agreed Uncle James.

"Well, that's settled. In the meantime, Amelia, act as if nothing had happened and keep an eye on her. Don't let her be alone. Above all, don't let her sleep alone."

Renewed whimpers from Mrs. Frederick.

"I can't help it. Night before last I suggested she'd better have Christine sleep with her. She positively refused—and *locked her door*. Oh, you don't know how she's changed. She won't work. At least, she won't sew. She does her usual housework, of course. But she wouldn't sweep the parlour yesterday morning, though we *always* sweep it on Thursdays. She said she'd wait till it was dirty. 'Would you rather sweep a dirty room than a clean one?' I asked her. She said, 'Of course. I'd see something for my labour then.' Think of it!"

Uncle Benjamin thought of it.

“The jar of potpourri”—Cousin Stickles pronounced it as spelled —“has disappeared from her room. I found the pieces in the next lot. She won’t tell us what happened to it.”

“I should never have dreamed it of Doss,” said Uncle Herbert. “She has always seemed such a quiet, sensible girl. A bit backward—but sensible.”

“The only thing you can be sure of in this world is the multiplication table,” said Uncle James, feeling cleverer than ever.

“Well, let’s cheer up,” suggested Uncle Benjamin. “Why are chorus girls like fine stock raisers?”

“Why?” asked Cousin Stickles, since it had to be asked and Valancy wasn’t there to ask it.

“Like to exhibit calves,” chuckled Uncle Benjamin.

Cousin Stickles thought Uncle Benjamin a little indelicate. Before Olive, too. But then, he was a man.

Uncle Herbert was thinking that things were rather dull now that Doss had gone.

Chapter XII

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Valancy hurried home through the faint blue twilight—hurried too fast perhaps. The attack she had when she thankfully reached the shelter of her own room was the worst yet. It was really very bad. She might die in one of those spells. It would be dreadful to die in such pain. Perhaps—perhaps this was death. Valancy felt pitifully alone. When she could think at all she wondered what it would be like to have someone with her who could sympathise—someone who really cared—just to hold her hand tight, if nothing else—some one just to say, “Yes, I know. It’s dreadful—be brave—you’ll soon be better;” not some one merely fussy and alarmed. Not her mother or Cousin Stickles. Why did the thought of Barney Snaith come into her mind? Why did she suddenly feel, in the midst of this hideous loneliness of pain, that *he* would be sympathetic—sorry for any one that was suffering? Why did he seem to her like an old, well-known friend? Was it because she had been defending him—standing up to her family for him?

She was so bad at first that she could not even get herself a dose of Dr. Trent’s prescription. But eventually she managed it, and soon after relief came. The pain left her and she lay on her bed, spent, exhausted, in a cold perspiration. Oh, that had been horrible! She could not endure many more attacks like that. One didn’t mind dying if death could be instant and painless. But to be hurt so in dying!

Suddenly she found herself laughing. That dinner *had* been fun. And it had all been so simple. She had merely *said* the things she had always *thought*. Their faces! Uncle Benjamin—poor, flabbergasted Uncle Benjamin! Valancy felt quite sure he would make a new will that very night. Olive would get Valancy’s share of his fat hoard. Olive had always got Valancy’s share of everything. Remember the dust-pile.

To laugh at her clan as she had always wanted to laugh was all the satisfaction she could get out of life now. But she thought it was rather pitiful that it should be so. Might she not pity herself a little when nobody else did?

Valancy got up and went to her window. The moist, beautiful wind blowing across groves of young-leaved wild trees touched her face with the caress of a wise, tender, old friend. The lombardies in Mrs. Tredgold's lawn, off to the left—Valancy could just see them between the stable and the old carriage-shop—were in dark purple silhouette against a clear sky and there was a milk-white, pulsating star just over one of them, like a living pearl on a silver-green lake. Far beyond the station were the shadowy, purple-hooded woods around Lake Mistawis. A white, filmy mist hung over them and just above it was a faint, young crescent. Valancy looked at it over her thin left shoulder.

“I wish,” she said whimsically, “that I may have *one* little dust-pile before I die.”

Chapter XIII

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Uncle Benjamin found he had reckoned without his host when he promised so airily to take Valancy to a doctor. Valancy would not go. Valancy laughed in his face.

“Why on earth should I go to Dr. Marsh? There’s nothing the matter with my mind. Though you all think I’ve suddenly gone crazy. Well, I haven’t. I’ve simply grown tired of living to please other people and have decided to please myself. It will give you something to talk about besides my stealing the raspberry jam. So that’s that.”

“Doss,” said Uncle Benjamin, solemnly and helplessly, “you are not—like yourself.”

“Who am I like, then?” asked Valancy.

Uncle Benjamin was rather posed.

“Your Grandfather Wansbarra,” he answered desperately.

“Thanks.” Valancy looked pleased. “That’s a real compliment. I remember Grandfather Wansbarra. He was one of the few human beings I *have* known—almost the only one. Now, it is of no use to scold or entreat or command, Uncle Benjamin—or exchange anguished glances with Mother and Cousin Stickles. I am not going to any doctor. And if you bring any doctor here I won’t see him. So what are you going to do about it?”

What indeed! It was not seemly—or even possible—to hale Valancy doctorwards by physical force. And in no other way could it be done, seemingly. Her mother’s tears and imploring entreaties availed not.

“Don’t worry, Mother,” said Valancy, lightly but quite respectfully. “It isn’t likely I’ll do anything very terrible. But I mean to have a little fun.”

“Fun!” Mrs. Frederick uttered the word as if Valancy had said she was going to have a little tuberculosis.

Olive, sent by her mother to see if *she* had any influence over Valancy, came away with flushed cheeks and angry eyes. She told her mother that nothing could be done with Valancy. After *she*, Olive, had talked to her just like a sister, tenderly and wisely, all Valancy had said, narrowing her funny eyes to mere slips, was, “*I don’t show my gums when I laugh.*”

“More as if she were talking to herself than to me. Indeed, Mother, all the time I was talking to her she gave me the impression of not really listening. And that wasn’t all. When I finally decided that what I was saying had no influence over her I begged her, when Cecil came next week, not to say anything queer before him, at least. Mother, what do you think she said?”

“I’m sure I can’t imagine,” groaned Aunt Wellington, prepared for anything.

“She said, ‘I’d rather like to shock Cecil. His mouth is too red for a man’s.’ Mother, I can never feel the same to Valancy again.”

“Her mind is affected, Olive,” said Aunt Wellington solemnly. “You must not hold her responsible for what she says.”

When Aunt Wellington told Mrs. Frederick what Valancy had said to Olive, Mrs. Frederick wanted Valancy to apologise.

“You made me apologise to Olive fifteen years ago for something I didn’t do,” said Valancy. “That old apology will do for now.”

Another solemn family conclave was held. They were all there except Cousin Gladys, who had been suffering such tortures of neuritis in her head “ever since poor Doss went queer” that she couldn’t undertake any responsibility. They decided—that is, they accepted a fact that was thrust in their faces—that the wisest thing was to leave Valancy alone for a while—“give her her head” as Uncle Benjamin expressed it—“keep a careful eye on her but let her pretty much alone.” The term of “watchful waiting” had not been invented then, but that was practically the policy Valancy’s distracted relatives decided to follow.

“We must be guided by developments,” said Uncle Benjamin. “It is”—solemnly—“easier to scramble eggs that unscramble them. Of course—if she becomes violent—”

Uncle James consulted Dr. Ambrose Marsh. Dr. Ambrose Marsh approved their decision. He pointed out to irate Uncle James—who would have liked to lock Valancy up somewhere, out of hand—that Valancy had not, as yet, really done or said anything that could be constructed as proof of lunacy—and without proof you cannot lock people up in this degenerate age. Nothing that Uncle James had reported seemed very alarming to Dr. Marsh, who put up his hand to conceal a smile several times. But then he himself was not a Stirling. And he knew very little about the old Valancy. Uncle James stalked out and drove back to Deerwood, thinking that Ambrose Marsh wasn't much of a doctor, after all, and that Adelaide Stirling might have done better for herself.

Chapter XIV

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Life cannot stop because tragedy enters it. Meals must be made ready though a son dies and porches must be repaired even if your only daughter is going out of her mind. Mrs. Frederick, in her systematic way, had long ago appointed the second week in June for the repairing of the front porch, the roof of which was sagging dangerously. Roaring Abel had been engaged to do it many moons before and Roaring Abel promptly appeared on the morning of the first day of the second week, and fell to work. Of course he was drunk. Roaring Abel was never anything but drunk. But he was only in the first stage, which made him talkative and genial. The odour of whisky on his breath nearly drove Mrs. Frederick and Cousin Stickles wild at dinner. Even Valancy, with all her emancipation, did not like it. But she liked Abel and she liked his vivid, eloquent talk, and after she washed the dinner dishes she went out and sat on the steps and talked to him.

Mrs. Frederick and Cousin Stickles thought it a terrible proceeding, but what could they do? Valancy only smiled mockingly at them when they called her in, and did not go. It was so easy to defy once you got started. The first step was the only one that really counted. They were both afraid to say anything more to her lest she might make a scene before Roaring Abel, who would spread it all over the country with his own characteristic comments and exaggerations. It was too cold a day, in spite of the June sunshine, for Mrs. Frederick to sit at the dining-room window and listen to what was said. She had to shut the window and Valancy and Roaring Abel had their talk to themselves. But if Mrs. Frederick had known what the outcome of that talk was to be she would have prevented it, if the porch was never repaired.

Valancy sat on the steps, defiant of the chill breeze of this cold June which had made Aunt Isabel aver the seasons were changing. She did not

care whether she caught a cold or not. It was delightful to sit there in that cold, beautiful, fragrant world and feel free. She filled her lungs with the clean, lovely wind and held out her arms to it and let it tear her hair to pieces while she listening to Roaring Abel, who told her his troubles between intervals of hammering gaily in time to his Scotch songs. Valancy liked to hear him. Every stroke of his hammer fell true to the note.

Old Abel Gay, in spite of his seventy years, was handsome still, in a stately, patriarchal manner. His tremendous beard, falling down over his blue flannel shirt, was still a flaming, untouched red, though his shock of hair was white as snow, and his eyes were a fiery, youthful blue. His enormous, reddish-white eyebrows were more like moustaches than eyebrows. Perhaps this was why he always kept his upper lip scrupulously shaved. His cheeks were red and his nose ought to have been, but wasn't. It was a fine, upstanding, aquiline nose, such as the noblest Roman of them all might have rejoiced in. Abel was six feet two in his stockings, broad-shouldered, lean-hipped. In his youth he had been a famous lover, finding all women too charming to bind himself to one. His years had been a wild, colourful panorama of follies and adventures, gallantries, fortunes and misfortunes. He had been forty-five before he married—a pretty slip of a girl whom his goings-on killed in a few years. Abel was piously drunk at her funeral and insisted on repeating the fifty-fifth chapter of Isaiah—Abel knew most of the Bible and all the Psalms by heart—while the minister, whom he disliked, prayed or tried to pray. Thereafter his house was run by an untidy old cousin who cooked his meals and kept things going after a fashion. In this unpromising environment little Cecilia Gay had grown up.

Valancy had known “Cissy Gay” fairly well in the democracy of the public school, though Cissy had been three years younger than she. After they left school their paths diverged and she had seen nothing of her. Old Abel was a Presbyterian. That is, he got a Presbyterian preacher to marry him, baptise his child and bury his wife; and he knew more about Presbyterian theology than most ministers, which made him a terror to them in arguments. But Roaring Abel never went to church. Every

Presbyterian minister who had been in Deerwood had tried his hand—once—at reforming Roaring Abel. But he had not been pestered of late. Rev. Mr. Bently had been in Deerwood for eight years, but he had not sought out Roaring Abel since the first three months of his pastorate. He had called on Roaring Abel then and found him in the theological stage of drunkenness—which always followed the sentimental maudlin one, and preceded the roaring, blasphemous one. The eloquently prayerful one, in which he realised himself temporarily and intensely as a sinner in the hands of an angry God, was the final one. Abel never went beyond it. He generally fell asleep on his knees and awakened sober, but he had never been “dead drunk” in his life. He told Mr. Bently that he was a sound Presbyterian and sure of his election. He had no sins—that he knew of—to repent of.

“Have you never done anything in your life that you are sorry for?” asked Mr. Bently.

Roaring Abel scratched his bushy white head and pretended to reflect.

“Well, yes,” he said finally. “There were some women I might have kissed and didn’t. I’ve always been sorry for *that*.”

Mr. Bently went out and went home.

Abel had seen that Cissy was properly baptised—jovially drunk at the same time himself. He made her go to church and Sunday School regularly. The church people took her up and she was in turn a member of the Mission Band, the Girls’ Guild and the Young Women’s Missionary Society. She was a faithful, unobtrusive, sincere, little worker. Everybody liked Cissy Gay and was sorry for her. She was so modest and sensitive and pretty in that delicate, elusive fashion of beauty which fades so quickly if life is not kept in it by love and tenderness. But then liking and pity did not prevent them from tearing her in pieces like hungry cats when the catastrophe came. Four years previously Cissy Gay had gone up to a Muskoka hotel as a summer waitress. And when she had come back in the fall she was a changed creature. She hid herself away and went nowhere. The reason soon leaked out and scandal raged. That winter Cissy’s baby was born. Nobody ever knew who the father was. Cecily kept her poor pale

lips tightly locked on her sorry secret. Nobody dared ask Roaring Abel any questions about it. Rumour and surmise laid the guilt at Barney Snaith's door because diligent inquiry among the other maids at the hotel revealed the fact that nobody there had ever seen Cissy Gay "with a fellow." She had "kept herself to herself" they said, rather resentfully. "Too good for *our* dances. And now look!"

The baby had lived for a year. After its death Cissy faded away. Two years ago Dr. Marsh had given her only six months to live—her lungs were hopelessly diseased. But she was still alive. Nobody went to see her. Women would not go to Roaring Abel's house. Mr. Bently had gone once, when he knew Abel was away, but the dreadful old creature who was scrubbing the kitchen floor told him Cissy wouldn't see any one. The old cousin had died and Roaring Abel had had two or three disreputable housekeepers—the only kind who could be prevailed on to go to a house where a girl was dying of consumption. But the last one had left and Roaring Abel had now no one to wait on Cissy and "do" for him. This was the burden of his plaint to Valancy and he condemned the "hypocrites" of Deerwood and its surrounding communities with some rich, meaty oaths that happened to reach Cousin Stickles' ears as she passed through the hall and nearly finished the poor lady. Was Valancy listening to *that*?

Valancy hardly noticed the profanity. Her attention was focussed on the horrible thought of poor, unhappy, disgraced little Cissy Gay, ill and helpless in that forlorn old house out on the Mistawis road, without a soul to help or comfort her. And this in a nominally Christian community in the year of grace nineteen and some odd!

"Do you mean to say that Cissy is all alone there now, with nobody to do anything for her—*nobody*?"

"Oh, she can move about a bit and get a bite and sup when she wants it. But she can't work. It's d--d hard for a man to work hard all day and go home at night tired and hungry and cook his own meals. Sometimes I'm sorry I kicked old Rachel Edwards out." Abel described Rachel picturesquely.

“Her face looked as if it had wore out a hundred bodies. And she moped. Talk about temper! Temper’s nothing to moping. She was too slow to catch worms, and dirty—d—d dirty. I ain’t unreasonable—I know a man has to eat his peck before he dies—but she went over the limit. What d’ye sp’ose I saw that lady do? She’d made some punkin jam—had it on the table in glass jars with the tops off. The dawg got up on the table and stuck his paw into one of them. What did she do? She jest took holt of the dawg and wrung the syrup off his paw back into the jar! Then screwed the top on and set it in the pantry. I sets open the door and says to her, ‘Go!’ The dame went, and I fired the jars of punkin after her, two at a time. Thought I’d die laughing to see old Rachel run—with them punkin jars raining after her. She’s told everywhere I’m crazy, so nobody’ll come for love or money.”

“But Cissy *must* have some one to look after her,” insisted Valancy, whose mind was centred on this aspect of the case. She did not care whether Roaring Abel had any one to cook for him or not. But her heart was wrung for Cecilia Gay.

“Oh, she gits on. Barney Snaith always drops in when he’s passing and does anything she wants done. Brings her oranges and flowers and things. There’s a Christian for you. Yet that sanctimonious, snivelling parcel of St. Andrew’s people wouldn’t be seen on the same side of the road with him. Their dogs’ll go to heaven before they do. And their minister—slick as if the cat had licked him!”

“There are plenty of good people, both in St. Andrew’s and St. George’s, who would be kind to Cissy if *you* would behave yourself,” said Valancy severely. “They’re afraid to go near your place.”

“Because I’m such a sad old dog? But I don’t bite—never bit any one in my life. A few loose words spilled around don’t hurt any one. And I’m not asking people to come. Don’t want ‘em poking and prying about. What I want is a housekeeper. If I shaved every Sunday and went to church I’d get all the housekeepers I’d want. I’d be respectable then. But what’s the use of going to church when it’s all settled by predestination? Tell me that, Miss.”

“Is it?” said Valancy.

“Yes. Can’t git around it nohow. Wish I could. I don’t want either heaven or hell for steady. Wish a man could have ‘em mixed in equal proportions.”

“Isn’t that the way it is in this world?” said Valancy thoughtfully—but rather as if her thought was concerned with something else than theology.

“No, no,” boomed Abel, striking a tremendous blow on a stubborn nail. “There’s too much hell here—entirely too much hell. That’s why I get drunk so often. It sets you free for a little while—free from yourself—yes, by God, free from predestination. Ever try it?”

“No, I’ve another way of getting free,” said Valancy absently. “But about Cissy now. She *must* have some one to look after her—”

“What are you harping on Sis for? Seems to me you ain’t bothered much about her up to now. You never even come to see her. And she used to like you so well.”

“I should have,” said Valancy. “But never mind. You couldn’t understand. The point is—you must have a housekeeper.”

“Where am I to get one? I can pay decent wages if I could get a decent woman. D’ye think I like old hags?”

“Will I do?” said Valancy.

Chapter XV

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“Let us be calm,” said Uncle Benjamin. “Let us be perfectly calm.”

“Calm!” Mrs. Frederick wrung her hands. “How can I be calm—how could anybody be calm under such a disgrace as this?”

“Why in the world did you let her go?” asked Uncle James.

“*Let her!* How could I stop her, James? It seems she packed the big valise and sent it away with Roaring Abel when he went home after supper, while Christine and I were out in the kitchen. Then Doss herself came down with her little satchel, dressed in her green serge suit. I felt a terrible premonition. I can’t tell you how it was, but I seemed to *know* that Doss was going to do something dreadful.”

“It’s a pity you couldn’t have had your premonition a little sooner,” said Uncle Benjamin drily.

“I said, ‘Doss, *where are you going?*’ and *she* said, ‘I am going to look for my Blue Castle.’ ”

“Wouldn’t you think *that* would convince Marsh that her mind is affected?” interjected Uncle James.

“And *I* said, ‘Valancy, what *do* you mean?’ And *she* said, ‘I am going to keep house for Roaring Abel and nurse Cissy. He will pay me thirty dollars a month.’ I wonder I didn’t drop dead on the spot.”

“You shouldn’t have let her go—you shouldn’t have let her out of the house,” said Uncle James. “You should have locked the door—anything —”

“She was between me and the front door. And you can’t realise how determined she was. She was like a rock. That’s the strangest thing of all about her. She used to be so good and obedient, and now she’s neither to hold nor bind. But I said *everything* I could think of to bring her to her senses. I asked her if she had no regard for her reputation. I said to her solemnly, ‘Doss, when a woman’s reputation is once smirched nothing can

ever make it spotless again. Your character will be gone for ever if you go to Roaring Abel's to wait on a bad girl like Sis Gay.' And she said, 'I don't believe Cissy was a bad girl, but I don't care if she was.' Those were her very words, 'I don't care if she was.' "

"She has lost all sense of decency," exploded Uncle Benjamin.

" 'Cissy Gay is dying,' she said, 'and it's a shame and disgrace that she is dying in a Christian community with no one to do anything for her. Whatever she's been or done, she's a human being.' "

"Well, you know, when it comes to that, I suppose she is," said Uncle James with the air of one making a splendid concession.

"I asked Doss if she had no regard for appearances. She said, 'I've been keeping up appearances all my life. Now I'm going in for realities. Appearances can go hang!' *Go hang!*"

"An outrageous thing!" said Uncle Benjamin violently. "An outrageous thing!"

Which relieved his feelings, but didn't help any one else.

Mrs. Frederick wept. Cousin Stickles took up the refrain between her moans of despair.

"I told her—we *both* told her—that Roaring Abel had certainly killed his wife in one of his drunken rages and would kill her. She laughed and said, 'I'm not afraid of Roaring Abel. He won't kill *me*, and he's too old for me to be afraid of his gallantries.' What did she mean? What *are* gallantries?"

Mrs. Frederick saw that she must stop crying if she wanted to regain control of the conversation.

"I said to her, 'Valancy, if you have no regard for your own reputation and your family's standing, have you none for *my* feelings?' She said, 'None.' Just like that, '*None!*'"

"Insane people never *do* have any regard for other people's feelings," said Uncle Benjamin. "That's one of the symptoms."

"I broke out into tears then, and she said, 'Come now, Mother, be a good sport. I'm going to do an act of Christian charity, and as for the damage it will do my reputation, why, you know I haven't any matrimonial

chances anyhow, so what does it matter?’ And with that she turned and went out.”

“The last words I said to her,” said Cousin Stickles pathetically, “were, ‘Who will rub my back at nights now?’ And she said—she said—but no, I cannot repeat it.”

“Nonsense,” said Uncle Benjamin. “Out with it. This is no time to be squeamish.”

“She said”—Cousin Stickles’ voice was little more than a whisper—“she said—‘*Oh, darn!*’ ”

“To think I should have lived to hear my daughter swearing!” sobbed Mrs. Frederick,

“It—it was only imitation swearing,” faltered Cousin Stickles, desirous of smoothing things over now that the worst was out. But she had *never* told about the bannister.

“It will be only a step from that to real swearing,” said Uncle James sternly.

“The worst of this”—Mrs. Frederick hunted for a dry spot on her handkerchief—“is that every one will know now that she is deranged. We can’t keep it a secret any longer. Oh, I cannot bear it!”

“You should have been stricter with her when she was young,” said Uncle Benjamin.

“I don’t see how I could have been,” said Mrs. Frederick—truthfully enough.

“The worst feature of the case is that that Snaith scoundrel is always hanging around Roaring Abel’s, said Uncle James. “I shall be thankful if nothing worse comes of this mad freak than a few weeks at Roaring Abel’s. Cissy Gay *can’t* live much longer.”

“And she didn’t even take her flannel petticoat!” lamented Cousin Stickles.

“I’ll see Ambrose Marsh again about this,” said Uncle Benjamin—meaning Valancy, not the flannel petticoat.

“I’ll see Lawyer Ferguson,” said Uncle James.

“Meanwhile,” added Uncle Benjamin, “let us be calm.”

Chapter XVI

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Valancy had walked out to Roaring Abel's house on the Mistawis road under a sky of purple and amber, with a queer exhilaration and expectancy in her heart. Back there, behind her, her mother and Cousin Stickles were crying—over themselves, not over her. But here the wind was in her face, soft, dew-wet, cool, blowing along the grassy roads. Oh, she loved the wind! The robins were whistling sleepily in the firs along the way and the moist air was fragrant with the tang of balsam. Big cars went purring past in the violet dusk—the stream of summer tourists to Muskoka had already begun—but Valancy did not envy any of their occupants. Muskoka cottages might be charming, but beyond, in the sunset skies, among the spires of the firs, her Blue Castle towered. She brushed the old years and habits and inhibitions away from her like dead leaves. She would *not* be littered with them.

Roaring Abel's rambling, tumble-down old house was situated about three miles from the village, on the very edge of "up back," as the sparsely settled, hilly, wooded country around Mistawis was called vernacularly. It did not, it must be confessed, look much like a Blue Castle.

It had once been a snug place enough in the days when Abel Gay had been young and prosperous, and the punning, arched sign over the gate—"A. Gay, Carpenter," had been fine and freshly painted. Now it was a faded, dreary old place, with a leprous, patched roof and shutters hanging askew. Abel never seemed to do any carpenter jobs about his own house. It had a listless air, as if tired of life. There was a dwindling grove of ragged, crone-like old spruces behind it. The garden, which Cissy used to keep neat and pretty, had run wild. On two sides of the house were fields full of nothing but mulleins. Behind the house was a long stretch of useless barrens, full of scrub pines and spruces, with here and there a blossoming bit of wild cherry, running back to a belt of timber on the shores of Lake

Mistawis, two miles away. A rough, rocky, boulder-strewn lane ran through it to the woods—a lane white with pestiferous, beautiful daisies.

Roaring Abel met Valancy at the door.

“So you’ve come,” he said incredulously. “I never s’posed that ruck of Stirlings would let you.”

Valancy showed all her pointed teeth in a grin.

“They couldn’t stop me.”

“I didn’t think you’d so much spunk,” said Roaring Abel admiringly. “And look at the nice ankles of her,” he added, as he stepped aside to let her in.

If Cousin Stickles had heard this she would have been certain that Valancy’s doom, earthly and unearthly, was sealed. But Abel’s superannuated gallantry did not worry Valancy. Besides, this was the first compliment she had ever received in her life and she found herself liking it. She sometimes suspected she had nice ankles, but nobody had ever mentioned it before. In the Stirling clan ankles were among the unmentionables.

Roaring Abel took her into the kitchen, where Cissy Gay was lying on the sofa, breathing quickly, with little scarlet spots on her hollow cheeks. Valancy had not seen Cecilia Gay for years. Then she had been such a pretty creature, a slight blossom-like girl, with soft, golden hair, clear-cut, almost waxen features, and large, beautiful blue eyes. She was shocked at the change in her. Could this be sweet Cissy—this pitiful little thing that looked like a tired broken flower? She had wept all the beauty out of her eyes; they looked too big—enormous—in her wasted face. The last time Valancy had seen Cecilia Gay those faded, piteous eyes had been limpid, shadowy blue pools aglow with mirth. The contrast was so terrible that Valancy’s own eyes filled with tears. She knelt down by Cissy and put her arms about her.

“Cissy dear, I’ve come to look after you. I’ll stay with you till—till—as long as you want me.”

“Oh!” Cissy put her thin arms about Valancy’s neck. “Oh—*will* you? It’s been so—lonely. I can wait on myself—but it’s been so *lonely*. It—

would just be like—heaven—to have some one here—like you. You were always—so sweet to me—long ago.”

Valancy held Cissy close. She was suddenly happy. Here was some one who needed her—some one she could help. She was no longer a superfluity. Old things had passed away; everything had become new.

“Most things are predestinated, but some are just darn sheer luck,” said Roaring Abel, complacently smoking his pipe in the corner.

Chapter XVII

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When Valancy had lived for a week at Roaring Abel's she felt as if years had separated her from her old life and all the people she had known in it. They were beginning to seem remote—dream-like—far-away—and as the days went on they seemed still more so, until they ceased to matter altogether.

She was happy. Nobody ever bothered her with conundrums or insisted on giving her Purple Pills. Nobody called her Doss or worried her about catching cold. There were no quilts to piece, no abominable rubber-plant to water, no ice-cold maternal tantrums to endure. She could be alone whenever she liked, go to bed when she liked, sneeze when she liked. In the long, wondrous, northern twilights, when Cissy was asleep and Roaring Abel away, she could sit for hours on the shaky back verandah steps, looking out over the barrens to the hills beyond, covered with their fine, purple bloom, listening to the friendly wind singing wild, sweet melodies in the little spruces, and drinking in the aroma of the sunned grasses, until darkness flowed over the landscape like a cool, welcome wave.

Sometimes of an afternoon, when Cissy was strong enough, the two girls went into the barrens and looked at the wood-flowers. But they did not pick any. Valancy had read to Cissy the gospel thereof according to John Foster: "It is a pity to gather wood-flowers. They lose half their witchery away from the green and the flicker. The way to enjoy wood-flowers is to track them down to their remote haunts—gloat over them—and then leave them with backward glances, taking with us only the beguiling memory of their grace and fragrance."

Valancy was in the midst of realities after a lifetime of unrealities. And busy—very busy. The house had to be cleaned. Not for nothing had Valancy been brought up in the Stirling habits of neatness and cleanliness. If she found satisfaction in cleaning dirty rooms she got her fill of it there.

Roaring Abel thought she was foolish to bother doing so much more than she was asked to do, but he did not interfere with her. He was very well satisfied with his bargain. Valancy was a good cook. Abel said she got a flavour into things. The only fault he found with her was that she did not sing at her work.

“Folk should always sing at their work,” he insisted. “Sounds cheerful-like.”

“Not always,” retorted Valancy. “Fancy a butcher singing at his work. Or an undertaker.”

Abel burst into his great broad laugh.

“There’s no getting the better of you. You’ve got an answer every time. I should think the Stirlings would be glad to be rid of you. *They* don’t like being sassed back.”

During the day Abel was generally away from home—if not working, then shooting or fishing with Barney Snaith. He generally came home at nights—always very late and often very drunk. The first night they heard him come howling into the yard, Cissy had told Valancy not to be afraid.

“Father never does anything—he just makes a noise.”

Valancy, lying on the sofa in Cissy’s room, where she had elected to sleep, lest Cissy should need attention in the night—Cissy would never have called her—was not at all afraid, and said so. By the time Abel had got his horses put away, the roaring stage had passed and he was in his room at the end of the hall crying and praying. Valancy could still hear his dismal moans when she went calmly to sleep. For the most part, Abel was a good-natured creature, but occasionally he had a temper. Once Valancy asked him coolly:

“What is the use of getting in a rage?”

“It’s such a d—d relief,” said Abel.

They both burst out laughing together.

“You’re a great little sport,” said Abel admiringly. “Don’t mind my bad French. I don’t mean a thing by it. Jest habit. Say, I like a woman that ain’t afraid to speak to me. Sis there was always too meek—too meek. That’s why she got adrift. I like you.”

“All the same,” said Valancy determinedly, “there is no use in sending things to hell as you’re always doing. And I’m *not* going to have you tracking mud all over a floor I’ve just scrubbed. You *must* use the scraper whether you consign it to perdition or not.”

Cissy loved the cleanness and neatness. She had kept it so, too, until her strength failed. She was very pitifully happy because she had Valancy with her. It had been so terrible—the long, lonely days and nights with no companionship save those dreadful old women who came to work. Cissy had hated and feared them. She clung to Valancy like a child.

There was no doubt that Cissy was dying. Yet at no time did she seem alarmingly ill. She did not even cough a great deal. Most days she was able to get up and dress—sometimes even to work about in the garden or the barrens for an hour or two. For a few weeks after Valancy’s coming she seemed so much better that Valancy began to hope she might get well. But Cissy shook her head.

“No, I can’t get well. My lungs are almost gone. And I—don’t want to. I’m so tired, Valancy. Only dying can rest me. But it’s lovely to have you here—you’ll never know how much it means to me. But Valancy—you work too hard. You don’t need to—Father only wants his meals cooked. I don’t think you are strong yourself. You turn so pale sometimes. And those drops you take. *Are you well, dear?*”

“I’m all right,” said Valancy lightly. She would not have Cissy worried. “And I’m not working hard. I’m glad to have some work to do—something that really wants to be done.”

“Then”—Cissy slipped her hand wistfully into Valancy’s—“don’t let’s talk any more about my being sick. Let’s just forget it. Let’s pretend I’m a little girl again—and you have come here to play with me. I used to wish that long ago—wish that you could come. I knew you couldn’t, of course. But how I did wish it! You always seemed so different from the other girls—so kind and sweet—and as if you had something in yourself nobody knew about—some dear, pretty secret. *Had you, Valancy?*”

“I had my Blue Castle,” said Valancy, laughing a little. She was pleased that Cissy had thought of her like this. She had never suspected

that anybody liked or admired or wondered about her. She told Cissy all about her Blue Castle. She had never told any one about it before.

“Every one has a Blue Castle, I think,” said Cissy softly. “Only every one has a different name for it. *I* had mine—once.”

She put her two thin little hands over her face. She did not tell Valancy—then—who had destroyed her Blue Castle. But Valancy knew that, whoever it was, it was not Barney Snaith.

Chapter XVIII

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Valancy was acquainted with Barney by now—well acquainted, it seemed, though she had spoken to him only a few times. But then she had felt just as well acquainted with him the first time they had met. She had been in the garden at twilight, hunting for a few stalks of white narcissus for Cissy's room when she heard that terrible old Grey Slosson coming down through the woods from Mistawis—one could hear it miles away. Valancy did not look up as it drew near, thumping over the rocks in that crazy lane. She had never looked up, though Barney had gone racketting past every evening since she had been at Roaring Abel's. This time he did not racket past. The old Grey Slosson stopped with even more terrible noises than it made going. Valancy was conscious that Barney had sprung from it and was leaning over the ramshackle gate. She suddenly straightened up and looked into his face. Their eyes met—Valancy was suddenly conscious of a delicious weakness. Was one of her heart attacks coming on?—But this was a new symptom.

His eyes, which she had always thought brown, now seen close, were deep violet—translucent and intense. Neither of his eyebrows looked like the other. He was thin—too thin—she wished she could feed him up a bit—she wished she could sew the buttons on his coat—and make him cut his hair—and shave every day. There was *something* in his face—one hardly knew what it was. Tiredness? Sadness? Disillusionment? He had dimples in his thin cheeks when he smiled. All these thoughts flashed through Valancy's mind in that one moment while his eyes looked into hers.

“Good-evening, Miss Stirling.”

Nothing could be more commonplace and conventional. Any one might have said it. But Barney Snaith had a way of saying things that gave them poignancy. When he said good-evening you felt that it was a good evening and that it was partly his doing that it was. Also, you felt that

some of the credit was yours. Valancy felt all this vaguely, but she couldn't imagine why she was trembling from head to foot—it *must* be her heart. If only he didn't notice it!

"I'm going over to the Port," Barney was saying. "Can I acquire merit by getting or doing anything there for you or Cissy?"

"Will you get some salt codfish for us?" said Valancy. It was the only thing she could think of. Roaring Abel had expressed a desire that day for a dinner of boiled salt codfish. When her knights came riding to the Blue Castle, Valancy had sent them on many a quest, but she had never asked any of them to get her salt codfish.

"Certainly. You're sure there's nothing else? Lots of room in Lady Jane Grey Slosson. And she always gets back *some* time, does Lady Jane."

"I don't think there's anything more," said Valancy. She knew he would bring oranges for Cissy anyhow—he always did.

Barney did not turn away at once. He was silent for a little. Then he said, slowly and whimsically:

"Miss Stirling, you're a brick! You're a whole cartload of bricks. To come here and look after Cissy—under the circumstances."

"There's nothing so bricky about that," said Valancy. "I'd nothing else to do. And—I like it here. I don't feel as if I'd done anything specially meritorious. Mr. Gay is paying me fair wages. I never earned any money before—and I like it." It seemed so easy to talk to Barney Snaith, someway—this terrible Barney Snaith of the lurid tales and mysterious past—as easy and natural as if talking to herself.

"All the money in the world couldn't buy what you're doing for Cissy Gay," said Barney. "It's splendid and fine of you. And if there's anything I can do to help you in any way, you have only to let me know. If Roaring Abel ever tries to annoy you—"

"He doesn't. He's lovely to me. I like Roaring Abel," said Valancy frankly.

"So do I. But there's one stage of his drunkenness—perhaps you haven't encountered it yet—when he sings ribald songs—"

“Oh, yes. He came home last night like that. Cissy and I just went to our room and shut ourselves in where we couldn’t hear him. He apologised this morning. I’m not afraid of any of Roaring Abel’s stages.”

“Well, I’m sure he’ll be decent to you, apart from his inebriated yowls,” said Barney. “And I’ve told him he’s got to stop damning things when you’re around.”

“Why?” asked Valancy slyly, with one of her odd, slanted glances and a sudden flake of pink on each cheek, born of the thought that Barney Snaith had actually done so much for *her*. “I often feel like damning things myself.”

For a moment Barney stared. Was this elfin girl the little, old-maidish creature who had stood there two minutes ago? Surely there was magic and devilry going on in that shabby, weedy old garden.

Then he laughed.

“It will be relief to have some one to do it for you, then. So you don’t want anything but salt codfish?”

“Not tonight. But I dare say I’ll have some errands for you very often when you go to Port Lawrence. I can’t trust Mr. Gay to remember to bring all the things I want.”

Barney had gone away, then, in his Lady Jane, and Valancy stood in the garden for a long time.

Since then he had called several times, walking down through the barrens, whistling. How that whistle of his echoed through the spruces on those June twilights! Valancy caught herself listening for it every evening—rebuked herself—then let herself go. Why shouldn’t she listen for it?

He always brought Cissy fruit and flowers. Once he brought Valancy a box of candy—the first box of candy she had ever been given. It seemed sacrilege to eat it.

She found herself thinking of him in season and out of season. She wanted to know if he ever thought about her when she wasn’t before his eyes, and, if so, what. She wanted to see that mysterious house of his back on the Mistawis island. Cissy had never seen it. Cissy, though she talked

freely of Barney and had known him for five years, really knew little more of him than Valancy herself.

“But he isn’t bad,” said Cissy. “Nobody need ever tell me he is. He *can’t* have done a thing to be ashamed of.”

“Then why does he live as he does?” asked Valancy—to hear somebody defend him.

“I don’t know. He’s a mystery. And of course there’s something behind it, but I *know* it isn’t disgrace. Barney Snaith simply couldn’t do anything disgraceful, Valancy.”

Valancy was not so sure. Barney must have done *something*—sometime. He was a man of education and intelligence. She had soon discovered that, in listening to his conversations and wrangles with Roaring Abel—who was surprisingly well read and could discuss any subject under the sun when sober. Such a man wouldn’t bury himself for five years in Muskoka and live and look like a tramp if there were not too good—or bad—a reason for it. But it didn’t matter. All that mattered was that she was sure now that he had never been Cissy Gay’s lover. There was nothing like *that* between them. Though he was very fond of Cissy and she of him, as any one could see. But it was a fondness that didn’t worry Valancy.

“You don’t know what Barney has been to me, these past two years,” Cissy had said simply. “*Everything* would have been unbearable without him.”

“Cissy Gay is the sweetest girl I ever knew—and there’s a man somewhere I’d like to shoot if I could find him,” Barney had said savagely.

Barney was an interesting talker, with a knack of telling a great deal about his adventures and nothing at all about himself. There was one glorious rainy day when Barney and Abel swapped yarns all the afternoon while Valancy mended tablecloths and listened. Barney told weird tales of his adventures with “shacks” on trains while hobbing it across the continent. Valancy thought she ought to think his stealing rides quite dreadful, but didn’t. The story of his working his way to England on a cattle-ship sounded more legitimate. And his yarns of the Yukon

enthralled her—especially the one of the night he was lost on the divide between the Gold Run and Sulphur Valley. He had spent two years out there. Where in all this was there room for the penitentiary and the other things?

If he were telling the truth. But Valancy knew he was.

“Found no gold,” he said. “Came away poorer than when I went. But such a place to live! Those silences at the back of the north wind *got* me. I’ve never belonged to myself since.”

Yet he was not a great talker. He told a great deal in a few well-chosen words—how well-chosen Valancy did not realise. And he had a knack of saying things without opening his mouth at all.

“I like a man whose eyes say more than his lips,” thought Valancy.

But then she liked everything about him—his tawny hair—his whimsical smiles—the little glints of fun in his eyes—his loyal affection for that unspeakable Lady Jane—his habit of sitting with his hands in his pockets, his chin sunk on his breast, looking up from under his mismated eyebrows. She liked his nice voice which sounded as if it might become caressing or wooing with very little provocation. She was at times almost afraid to let herself think these thoughts. They were so vivid that she felt as if the others *must* know what she was thinking.

“I’ve been watching a woodpecker all day,” he said one evening on the shaky old back verandah. His account of the woodpecker’s doings was satisfying. He had often some gay or cunning little anecdote of the wood folk to tell them. And sometimes he and Roaring Abel smoked fiercely the whole evening and never said a word, while Cissy lay in the hammock swung between the verandah posts and Valancy sat idly on the steps, her hands clasped over her knees, and wondered dreamily if she were really Valancy Stirling and if it were only three weeks since she had left the ugly old house on Elm Street.

The barrens lay before her in a white moon splendour, where dozens of little rabbits frisked. Barney, when he liked, could sit down on the edge of the barrens and lure those rabbits right to him by some mysterious sorcery

he possessed. Valancy had once seen a squirrel leap from a scrub pine to his shoulder and sit there chattering to him. It reminded her of John Foster.

It was one of the delights of Valancy's new life that she could read John Foster's books as often and as long as she wanted to. She read them all to Cissy, who loved them. She also tried to read them to Abel and Barney, who did not love them. Abel was bored and Barney politely refused to listen at all.

"Piffle," said Barney.

Chapter XIX

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Of course, the Stirlings had not left the poor maniac alone all this time or refrained from heroic efforts to rescue her perishing soul and reputation. Uncle James, whose lawyer had helped him as little as his doctor, came one day and, finding Valancy alone in the kitchen, as he supposed, gave her a terrible talking to—told her she was breaking her mother’s heart and disgracing her family.

“But *why*?” said Valancy, not ceasing to scour her porridge pot decently. “I’m doing honest work for honest pay. What is there in that that is disgraceful?”

“Don’t quibble, Valancy,” said Uncle James solemnly. “This is no fit place for you to be, and you know it. Why, I’m told that that jail-bird, Snaith, is hanging around here every evening.”

“Not *every* evening,” said Valancy reflectively. “No, not quite every evening.”

“It’s—it’s insufferable!” said Uncle James violently. “Valancy, you *must* come home. We won’t judge you harshly. I assure you we won’t. We will overlook all this.”

“Thank you,” said Valancy.

“Have you no sense of shame?” demanded Uncle James.

“Oh, yes. But the things *I* am ashamed of are not the things *you* are ashamed of.” Valancy proceeded to rinse her dishcloth meticulously.

Still was Uncle James patient. He gripped the sides of his chair and ground his teeth.

“We know your mind isn’t just right. We’ll make allowances. But you *must* come home. You shall not stay here with that drunken, blasphemous old scoundrel—”

“Were you by any chance referring to *me*, *Mister* Stirling?” demanded Roaring Abel, suddenly appearing in the doorway of the back verandah

where he had been smoking a peaceful pipe and listening to “old Jim Stirling’s” tirade with huge enjoyment. His red beard fairly bristled with indignation and his huge eyebrows quivered. But cowardice was not among James Stirling’s shortcomings.

“I was. And, furthermore, I want to tell you that you have acted an iniquitous part in luring this weak and unfortunate girl away from her home and friends, and I will have you punished yet for it—”

James Stirling got no further. Roaring Abel crossed the kitchen at a bound, caught him by his collar and his trousers, and hurled him through the doorway and over the garden paling with as little apparent effort as he might have employed in whisking a troublesome kitten out of the way.

“The next time you come back here,” he bellowed, “I’ll throw you through the window—and all the better if the window is shut! Coming here, thinking yourself God to put the world to rights!”

Valancy candidly and unashamedly owned to herself that she had seen few more satisfying sights than Uncle James’ coat-tails flying out into the asparagus bed. She had once been afraid of this man’s judgment. Now she saw clearly that he was nothing but a rather stupid little village tin-god.

Roaring Abel turned with his great broad laugh.

“He’ll think of that for years when he wakes up in the night. The Almighty made a mistake in making so many Stirlings. But since they are made, we’ve got to reckon with them. Too many to kill out. But if they come here bothering you I’ll shoo ‘em off before a cat could lick its ear.”

The next time they sent Dr. Stalling. Surely Roaring Abel would not throw him into asparagus beds. Dr. Stalling was not so sure of this and had no great liking for the task. He did not believe Valancy Stirling was out of her mind. She had always been queer. He, Dr. Stalling, had never been able to understand her. Therefore, beyond doubt, she was queer. She was only just a little queerer than usual now. And Dr. Stalling had his own reasons for disliking Roaring Abel. When Dr. Stalling had first come to Deerwood he had had a liking for long hikes around Mistawis and Muskoka. On one of these occasions he had got lost and after much wandering had fallen in with Roaring Abel with his gun over his shoulder.

Dr. Stalling had contrived to ask his question in about the most idiotic manner possible. He said, "Can you tell me where I'm going?"

"How the devil should I know where you're going, gosling?" retorted Abel contemptuously.

Dr. Stalling was so enraged that he could not speak for a moment or two and in that moment Abel had disappeared in the woods. Dr. Stalling had eventually found his way home, but he had never hankered to encounter Abel Gay again.

Nevertheless he came now to do his duty. Valancy greeted him with a sinking heart. She had to own to herself that she was terribly afraid of Dr. Stalling still. She had a miserable conviction that if he shook his long, bony finger at her and told her to go home, she dared not disobey.

"Mr. Gay," said Dr. Stalling politely and condescendingly, "may I see Miss Stirling alone for a few minutes?" Roaring Abel was a little drunk—just drunk enough to be excessively polite and very cunning. He had been on the point of going away when Dr. Stalling arrived, but now he sat down in a corner of the parlour and folded his arms.

"No, no, mister," he said solemnly. "That wouldn't do—wouldn't do at all. I've got the reputation of my household to keep up. I've got to chaperone this young lady. Can't have any sparkin' going on here behind my back."

Outraged Dr. Stalling looked so terrible that Valancy wondered how Abel could endure his aspect. But Abel was not worried at all.

"D'ye know anything about it, anyway?" he asked genially.

"About *what*?"

"Sparkin'," said Abel coolly.

Poor Dr. Stalling, who had never married because he believed in a celibate clergy, would not notice this ribald remark. He turned his back on Abel and addressed himself to Valancy.

"Miss Stirling, I am here in response to your mother's wishes. She begged me to come. I am charged with some messages from her. Will you"—he wagged his forefinger—"will you hear them?"

“Yes,” said Valancy faintly, eyeing the forefinger. It had a hypnotic effect on her.

“The first is this. If you will leave this—this—”

“House,” interjected Roaring Abel. “H-o-u-s-e. Troubled with an impediment in your speech, ain’t you, Mister?”

“—this *place* and return to your home, Mr. James Stirling will himself pay for a good nurse to come here and wait on Miss Gay.”

Back of her terror Valancy smiled in secret. Uncle James must indeed regard the matter as desperate when he would loosen his purse-strings like that. At any rate, her clan no longer despised her or ignored her. She had become important to them.

“That’s *my* business, Mister,” said Abel. “Miss Stirling can go if she pleases, or stay if she pleases. I made a fair bargain with her, and she’s free to conclude it when she likes. She gives me meals that stick to my ribs. She don’t forget to put salt in the porridge. She never slams doors, and when she has nothing to say she don’t talk. That’s uncanny in a woman, you know, Mister. I’m satisfied. If she isn’t, she’s free to go. But no woman comes here in Jim Stirling’s pay. If any one does”—Abel’s voice was uncannily bland and polite—“I’ll spatter the road with her brains. Tell him that with A. Gay’s compliments.”

“Dr. Stalling, a nurse is not what Cissy needs,” said Valancy earnestly. “She isn’t so ill as that, yet. What she wants is companionship—somebody she knows and likes just to live with her. You can understand that, I’m sure.”

“I understand that your motive is quite—ahem—commendable.” Dr. Stalling felt that he was very broad-minded indeed—especially as in his secret soul he did not believe Valancy’s motive *was* commendable. He hadn’t the least idea what she was up to, but he was sure her motive was not commendable. When he could not understand a thing he straightway condemned it. Simplicity itself! “But your first duty is to your mother. *She* needs you. She implores you to come home—she will forgive everything if you will only come home.”

“That’s a pretty little thought,” remarked Abel meditatively, as he ground some tobacco up in his hand.

Dr. Stalling ignored him.

“She entreats, but I, Miss Stirling,”—Dr. Stalling remembered that he was an ambassador of Jehovah—“*I command*. As your pastor and spiritual guide, I command you to come home with me—this very day. Get your hat and coat and come *now*.”

Dr. Stalling shook his finger at Valancy. Before that pitiless finger she drooped and wilted visibly.

“She’s giving in,” thought Roaring Abel. “She’ll go with him. Beats all, the power these preacher fellows have over women.”

Valancy was on the point of obeying Dr. Stalling. She must go home with him—and give up. She would lapse back to Doss Stirling again and for her few remaining days or weeks be the cowed, futile creature she had always been. It was her fate—typified by that relentless, uplifted forefinger. She could no more escape from it than Roaring Abel from his predestination. She eyed it as the fascinated bird eyes the snake. Another moment—

“*Fear is the original sin*,” suddenly said a still, small voice away back—back—back of Valancy’s consciousness. “*Almost all the evil in the world has its origin in the fact that some one is afraid of something*.”

Valancy stood up. She was still in the clutches of fear, but her soul was her own again. She would not be false to that inner voice.

“Dr. Stalling,” she said slowly, “I do not at present owe *any* duty to my mother. She is quite well; she has all the assistance and companionship she requires; she does not need me at all. I *am* needed here. I am going to stay here.”

“There’s spunk for you,” said Roaring Abel admiringly.

Dr. Stalling dropped his forefinger. One could not keep on shaking a finger forever.

“Miss Stirling, is there *nothing* that can influence you? Do you remember your childhood days—“

“Perfectly. And hate them.”

“Do you realise what people will say? What they *are* saying?”

“I can imagine it,” said Valancy, with a shrug of her shoulders. She was suddenly free of fear again. “I haven’t listened to the gossip of Deerwood teaparties and sewing circles twenty years for nothing. But, Dr. Stalling, it doesn’t matter in the least to me what they say—not in the least.”

Dr. Stalling went away then. A girl who cared nothing for public opinion! Over whom sacred family ties had no restraining influence! Who hated her childhood memories!

Then Cousin Georgiana came—on her own initiative, for nobody would have thought it worth while to send her. She found Valancy alone, weeding the little vegetable garden she had planted, and she made all the platitudinous pleas she could think of. Valancy heard her patiently. Cousin Georgiana wasn’t such a bad old soul. Then she said:

“And now that you have got all that out of your system, Cousin Georgiana, can you tell me how to make creamed codfish so that it will not be as thick as porridge and as salt as the Dead Sea?”

* * *

“We’ll just have to *wait*,” said Uncle Benjamin. “After all, Cissy Gay can’t live long. Dr. Marsh tells me she may drop off any day.”

Mrs. Frederick wept. It would really have been so much easier to bear if Valancy had died. She could have worn mourning then.

Chapter XX

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When Abel gay paid Valancy her first month's wages—which he did promptly, in bills reeking with the odour of tobacco and whiskey—Valancy went into Deerwood and spent every cent of it. She got a pretty green crêpe dress with a girdle of crimson beads, at a bargain sale, a pair of silk stockings, to match, and a little crinkled green hat with a crimson rose in it. She even bought a foolish little beribboned and belaced nightgown.

She passed the house on Elm Street twice—Valancy never even thought about it as “home”—but saw no one. No doubt her mother was sitting in the room this lovely June evening playing solitaire—and cheating. Valancy knew that Mrs. Frederick always cheated. She never lost a game. Most of the people Valancy met looked at her seriously and passed her with a cool nod. Nobody stopped to speak to her.

Valancy put on her green dress when she got home. Then she took it off again. She felt so miserably undressed in its low neck and short sleeves. And that low, crimson girdle around the hips seemed positively indecent. She hung it up in the closet, feeling flatly that she had wasted her money. She would never have the courage to wear that dress. John Foster's arraignment of fear had no power to stiffen her against this. In this one thing habit and custom were still all-powerful. Yet she sighed as she went down to meet Barney Snaith in her old snuff-brown silk. That green thing had been very becoming—she had seen so much in her one ashamed glance. Above it her eyes had looked like odd brown jewels and the girdle had given her flat figure and entirely different appearance. She wished she could have left it on. But there were some things John Foster did not know.

Every Sunday evening Valancy went to the little Free Methodist church in a valley on the edge of “up back”—a spireless little grey building among the pines, with a few sunken graves and mossy gravestones in the small, paling-encircled, grass-grown square beside it. She liked the

minister who preached there. He was so simple and sincere. An old man, who lived in Port Lawrence and came out by the lake in a little disappearing propeller boat to give a free service to the people of the small, stony farms back of the hills, who would otherwise never have heard any gospel message. She liked the simple service and the fervent singing. She liked to sit by the open window and look out into the pine woods. The congregation was always small. The Free Methodists were few in number, poor and generally illiterate. But Valancy loved those Sunday evenings. For the first time in her life she liked going to church. The rumour reached Deerwood that she had “turned Free Methodist” and sent Mrs. Frederick to bed for a day. But Valancy had not turned anything. She went to the church because she liked it and because in some inexplicable way it did her good. Old Mr. Towers believed exactly what he preached and somehow it made a tremendous difference.

Oddly enough, Roaring Abel disapproved of her going to the hill church as strongly as Mrs. Frederick herself could have done. He had “no use for Free Methodists. He was a Presbyterian.” But Valancy went in spite of him.

“We’ll hear something worse than *that* about her soon,” Uncle Benjamin predicted gloomily.

They did.

Valancy could not quite explain, even to herself, just why she wanted to go to that party. It was a dance “up back” at Chidley Corners; and dances at Chidley Corners were not, as a rule, the sort of assemblies where well-brought-up young ladies were found. Valancy knew it was coming off, for Roaring Abel had been engaged as one of the fiddlers.

But the idea of going had never occurred to her until Roaring Abel himself broached it at supper.

“You come with me to the dance,” he ordered. “It’ll do you good—put some colour in your face. You look peaked—you want something to liven you up.”

Valancy found herself suddenly wanting to go. She knew nothing at all of what dances at Chidley Corners were apt to be like. Her idea of dances

had been fashioned on the correct affairs that went by that name in Deerwood and Port Lawrence. Of course she knew the Corners' dance wouldn't be just like them. Much more informal, of course. But so much the more interesting. Why shouldn't she go? Cissy was in a week of apparent health and improvement. She wouldn't mind staying alone in the least. She entreated Valancy to go if she wanted to. And Valancy *did* want to go.

She went to her room to dress. A rage against the snuff-brown silk seized her. Wear *that* to a party! Never. She pulled her green crêpe from its hanger and put in on feverishly. It was nonsense to feel so—so—naked—just because her neck and arms were bare. That was just her old maidishness. She would not be ridden by it. On went the dress—the slippers.

It was the first time she had worn a pretty dress since the organdies of her early teens. And *they* had never made her look like this.

If she only had a necklace or something. She wouldn't feel so bare then. She ran down to the garden. There were clovers there—great crimson things growing in the long grass. Valancy gathered handfuls of them and strung them on a cord. Fastened above her neck they gave her the comfortable sensation of a collar and were oddly becoming. Another circlet of them went round her hair, dressed in the low puffs that became her. Excitement brought those faint pink stains to her face. She flung on her coat and pulled the little, twisty hat over her hair.

"You look so nice and—and—different, dear," said Cissy. "Like a green moonbeam with a gleam of red in it, if there could be such a thing."

Valancy stooped to kiss her.

"I don't feel right about leaving you alone, Cissy."

"Oh, I'll be all right. I feel better tonight than I have for a long while. I've been feeling badly to see you sticking here so closely on my account. I hope you'll have a nice time. I never was at a party at the Corners, but I used to go sometimes, long ago, to dances up back. We always had good times. And you needn't be afraid of Father being drunk tonight. He never

drinks when he engages to play for a party. But—there may be—liquor. What will you do if it gets rough?”

“Nobody would molest me.”

“Not seriously, I suppose. Father would see to that. But it *might* be noisy and—and unpleasant.”

“I won’t mind. I’m only going as a looker-on. I don’t expect to dance. I just want to *see* what a party up back is like. I’ve never seen anything except decorous Deerwood.”

Cissy smiled rather dubiously. She knew much better than Valancy what a party “up back” might be like if there should be liquor. But again there mightn’t be.

“I hope you’ll enjoy it,” she repeated.

Valancy enjoyed the drive there. They went early, for it was twelve miles to Chidley Corners, and they had to go in Abel’s old, ragged top-buggy. The road was rough and rocky, like most Muskoka roads, but full of the austere charm of northern woods. It wound through beautiful, purring pines that were ranks of enchantment in the June sunset, and over the curious jade-green rivers of Muskoka, fringed by aspens that were always quivering with some supernal joy.

Roaring Abel was excellent company, too. He knew all the stories and legends of the wild, beautiful “up back,” and he told them to Valancy as they drove along. Valancy had several fits of inward laughter over what Uncle Benjamin and Aunt Wellington, *et al.*, would feel and think and say if they saw her driving with Roaring Abel in that terrible buggy to a dance at Chidley Corners.

At first the dance was quiet enough, and Valancy was amused and entertained. She even danced twice herself, with a couple of nice “up back” boys who danced beautifully and told her she did, too.

Another compliment came her way—not a very subtle one, perhaps, but Valancy had had too few compliments in her life to be over-nice on that point. She overheard two of the “up back” young men talking about her in the dark “lean-to” behind her.

“Know who that girl in green is?”

“Nope. Guess she’s from out front. The Port, maybe. Got a stylish look to her.”

“No beaut but cute-looking, I’ll say. ‘Jever see such eyes?’”

The big room was decorated with pine and fir boughs, and lighted by Chinese lanterns. The floor was waxed, and Roaring Abel’s fiddle, purring under his skilled touch, worked magic. The “up back” girls were pretty and prettily dressed. Valancy thought it the nicest party she had ever attended.

By eleven o’clock she had changed her mind. A new crowd had arrived—a crowd unmistakably drunk. Whiskey began to circulate freely. Very soon almost all the men were partly drunk. Those in the porch and outside around the door began howling “come-all-ye’s” and continued to howl them. The room grew noisy and reeking. Quarrels started up here and there. Bad language and obscene songs were heard. The girls, swung rudely in the dances, became dishevelled and tawdry. Valancy, alone in her corner, was feeling disgusted and repentant. Why had she ever come to such a place? Freedom and independence were all very well, but one should not be a little fool. She might have known what it would be like—she might have taken warning from Cissy’s guarded sentences. Her head was aching—she was sick of the whole thing. But what could she do? She must stay to the end. Abel could not leave till then. And that would probably be not till three or four in the morning.

The new influx of boys had left the girls far in the minority and partners were scarce. Valancy was pestered with invitations to dance. She refused them all shortly, and some of her refusals were not well taken. There were muttered oaths and sullen looks. Across the room she saw a group of the strangers talking together and glancing meaningly at her. What were they plotting?

It was at this moment that she saw Barney Snaith looking in over the heads of the crowds at the doorway. Valancy had two distinct convictions—one was that she was quite safe now; the other was that *this* was why she had wanted to come to the dance. It had been such an absurd hope that she had not recognised it before, but now she knew she had come because of the possibility that Barney might be there, too. She thought that perhaps

she ought to be ashamed for this, but she wasn't. After her feeling of relief her next feeling was one of annoyance with Barney for coming there unshaved. Surely he might have enough self-respect to groom himself up decently when he went to a party. There he was, bareheaded, bristly-chinned, in his old trousers and his blue homespun shirt. Not even a coat. Valancy could have shaken him in her anger. No wonder people believed everything bad of him.

But she was not afraid any longer. One of the whispering group left his comrades and came across the room to her, through the whirling couples that now filled it uncomfortably. He was a tall, broad-shouldered fellow, not ill-dressed or ill-looking but unmistakably half drunk. He asked Valancy to dance. Valancy declined civilly. His face turned livid. He threw his arm about her and pulled her to him. His hot, whiskied breath burned her face.

"We won't have fine-lady airs here, my girl. If you ain't too good to come here you ain't too good to dance with us. Me and my pals have been watching you. You're got to give us each a turn and a kiss to boot."

Valancy tried desperately and vainly to free herself. She was being dragged out into the maze of shouting, stamping, yelling dancers. The next moment the man who held her went staggering across the room from a neatly planted blow on the jaw, knocking down whirling couples as he went. Valancy felt her arm grasped.

"This way—quick," said Barney Snaith. He swung her out through the open window behind him, vaulted lightly over the sill and caught her hand.

"Quick—we must run for it—they'll be after us."

Valancy ran as she had never run before, clinging tight to Barney's hand, wondering why she did not drop dead in such a mad scamper. Suppose she did! What a scandal it would make for her poor people. For the first time Valancy felt a little sorry for them. Also, she felt glad that she had escaped from that horrible row. Also, glad that she was holding tight to Barney's hand. Her feelings were badly mixed and she had never had so many in such a brief time in her life.

They finally reached a quiet corner in the pine woods. The pursuit had taken a different direction and the whoops and yells behind them were growing faint. Valancy, out of breath, with a crazily beating heart, collapsed on the trunk of a fallen pine.

“Thanks,” she gasped.

“What a goose you were to come to such a place!” said Barney.

“I—didn’t—know—it—would—be like this,” protested Valancy.

“You *should* have known. Chidley Corners!”

“It—was—just—a name—to me.”

Valancy knew Barney could not realise how ignorant she was of the regions “up back.” She had lived in Deerwood all her life and of course he supposed she knew. He didn’t know how she had been brought up. There was no use trying to explain.

“When I drifted in at Abel’s this evening and Cissy told me you’d come here I was amazed. And downright scared. Cissy told me she was worried about you but hadn’t liked to say anything to dissuade you for fear you’d think she was thinking selfishly about herself. So I came on up here instead of going to Deerwood.”

Valancy felt a sudden delightful glow irradiating soul and body under the dark pines. So he had actually come up to look after her.

“As soon as they stop hunting for us we’ll sneak around to the Muskoka road. I left Lady Jane down there. I’ll take you home. I suppose you’ve had enough of your party.”

“Quite,” said Valancy meekly. The first half of the way home neither of them said anything. It would not have been much use. Lady Jane made so much noise they could not have heard each other. Anyway, Valancy did not feel conversationally inclined. She was ashamed of the whole affair—ashamed of her folly in going—ashamed of being found in such a place by Barney Snaith. By Barney Snaith, reputed jail-breaker, infidel, forger and defaulter. Valancy’s lips twitched in the darkness as she thought of it. But she *was* ashamed.

And yet she was enjoying herself—was full of a strange exultation—bumping over that rough road beside Barney Snaith. The big trees shot by

them. The tall mulleins stood up along the road in stiff, orderly ranks like companies of soldiers. The thistles looked like drunken fairies or tipsy elves as their car-lights passed over them. This was the first time she had even been in a car. After all, she liked it. She was not in the least afraid, with Barney at the wheel. Her spirits rose rapidly as they tore along. She ceased to feel ashamed. She ceased to feel anything except that she was part of a comet rushing gloriously through the night of space.

All at once, just where the pine woods frayed out to the scrub barrens, Lady Jane became quiet—too quiet. Lady Jane slowed down quietly—and stopped.

Barney uttered an aghast exclamation. Got out. Investigated. Came apologetically back.

“I’m a doddering idiot. Out of gas. I knew I was short when I left home, but I meant to fill up in Deerwood. Then I forgot all about it in my hurry to get to the Corners.”

“What can we do?” asked Valancy coolly.

“I don’t know. There’s no gas nearer than Deerwood, nine miles away. And I don’t dare leave you here alone. There are always tramps on this road—and some of those crazy fools back at the Corners may come straggling along presently. There were boys there from the Port. As far as I can see, the best thing to do is for us just to sit patiently here until some car comes along and lends us enough gas to get to Roaring Abel’s with.”

“Well, what’s the matter with that?” said Valancy.

“We may have to sit here all night,” said Barney.

“I don’t mind,” said Valancy.

Barney gave a short laugh. “If you don’t, I needn’t. I haven’t any reputation to lose.”

“Nor I,” said Valancy comfortably.

Chapter XXI

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We'll just sit here," said Barney, "and if we think of anything worth while saying we'll say it. Otherwise, not. Don't imagine you're bound to talk to me."

"John Foster says," quoted Valancy, " 'If you can sit in silence with a person for half an hour and yet be entirely comfortable, you and that person can be friends. If you cannot, friends you'll never be and you need not waste time in trying'."

"Evidently John Foster says a sensible thing once in a while," conceded Barney.

They sat in silence for a long while. Little rabbits hopped across the road. Once or twice an owl laughed out delightfully. The road beyond them was fringed with the woven shadow lace of trees. Away off to the southwest the sky was full of silvery little cirrus clouds above the spot where Barney's island must be.

Valancy was perfectly happy. Some things dawn on you slowly. Some things come by lightning flashes. Valancy had had a lightning flash.

She knew quite well now that she loved Barney. Yesterday she had been all her own. Now she was this man's. Yet he had done nothing—said nothing. He had not even looked at her as a woman. But that didn't matter. Nor did it matter what he was or what he had done. She loved him without any reservations. Everything in her went out wholly to him. She had no wish to stifle or disown her love. She seemed to be his so absolutely that thought apart from him—thought in which he did not predominate—was an impossibility.

She had realised, quite simply and fully, that she loved him, in the moment when he was leaning on the car door, explaining that Lady Jane had no gas. She had looked deep into his eyes in the moonlight and had

known. In just that infinitesimal space of time everything was changed. Old things passed away and all things became new.

She was no longer unimportant, little old maid Valancy Stirling. She was a woman, full of love and therefore rich and significant—justified to herself. Life was no longer empty and futile, and death could cheat her of nothing. Love had cast out her last fear.

Love! What a searing, torturing, intolerably sweet thing it was—this possession of body, soul and mind! With something at its core as fine and remote and purely spiritual as the tiny blue spark in the heart of the unbreakable diamond. No dream had ever been like this. She was no longer solitary. She was one of a vast sisterhood—all the women who had ever loved in the world.

Barney need never know it—though she would not in the least have minded his knowing. But *she* knew it and it made a tremendous difference to her. Just to love! She did not ask to be loved. It was rapture enough just to sit there beside him in silence, alone in the summer night in the white splendour of moonshine, with the wind blowing down on them out of the pine woods. She had always envied the wind. So free. Blowing where it listed. Through the hills. Over the lakes. What a tang, what a zip it had! What a magic of adventure! Valancy felt as if she had exchanged her shop-worn soul for a fresh one, fire-new from the workshop of the gods. As far back as she could look, life had been dull—colourless—savourless. Now she had come to a little patch of violets, purple and fragrant—hers for the plucking. No matter who or what had been in Barney's past—no matter who or what might be in his future—no one else could ever have this perfect hour. She surrendered herself utterly to the charm of the moment.

"Ever dream of ballooning?" said Barney suddenly.

"No," said Valancy.

"I do—often. Dream of sailing through the clouds—seeing the glories of sunset—spending hours in the midst of a terrific storm with lightning playing above and below you—skimming above a silver cloud floor under a full moon—wonderful!"

"It does sound so," said Valancy. "I've stayed on earth in my dreams."

She told him about her Blue Castle. It was so easy to tell Barney things. One felt he understood everything—even the things you didn't tell him. And then she told him a little of her existence before she came to Roaring Abel's. She wanted him to see why she had gone to the dance "up back."

"You see—I've never had any real life," she said. "I've just—breathed. Every door has always been shut to me."

"But you're still young," said Barney.

"Oh, I know. Yes, I'm 'still young'—but that's so different from *young*," said Valancy bitterly. For a moment she was tempted to tell Barney why her years had nothing to do with her future; but she did not. She was not going to think of death tonight.

"Though I never was really young," she went on—"until tonight," she added in her heart. "I never had a life like other girls. You couldn't understand. Why,"—she had a desperate desire that Barney should know the worst about her—"I didn't even love my mother. Isn't it awful that I don't love my mother?"

"Rather awful—for her," said Barney drily.

"Oh, she didn't know it. She took my love for granted. And I wasn't any use or comfort to her or anybody. I was just a—a—vegetable. And I got tired of it. That's why I came to keep house for Mr. Gay and look after Cissy."

"And I suppose your people thought you'd gone mad."

"They did—and do—literally," said Valancy. "But it's a comfort to them. They'd rather believe me mad than bad. There's no other alternative. But I've been *living* since I came to Mr. Gay's. It's been a delightful experience. I suppose I'll pay for it when I have to go back—but I'll have *had* it."

"That's true," said Barney. "If you buy your experience it's your own. So it's no matter how much you pay for it. Somebody else's experience can never be yours. Well, it's a funny old world."

"Do you think it really is old?" asked Valancy dreamily. "I never believe *that* in June. It seems so young tonight—somehow. In that

quivering moonlight—like a young, white girl—waiting.”

“Moonlight here on the verge of up back is different from moonlight anywhere else,” agreed Barney. “It always makes me feel so clean, somehow—body and soul. And of course the age of gold always comes back in spring.”

It was ten o’clock now. A dragon of black cloud ate up the moon. The spring air grew chill—Valancy shivered. Barney reached back into the innards of Lady Jane and clawed up an old, tobacco-scented overcoat.

“Put that on,” he ordered.

“Don’t you want it yourself?” protested Valancy.

“No. I’m not going to have you catching cold on my hands.”

“Oh, I won’t catch cold. I haven’t had a cold since I came to Mr. Gay’s—though I’ve done the foolishhest things. It’s funny, too—I used to have them all the time. I feel so selfish taking your coat.”

“You’ve sneezed three times. No use winding up your ‘experience’ up back with grippe or pneumonia.”

He pulled it up tight about her throat and buttoned it on her. Valancy submitted with secret delight. How nice it was to have some one look after you so! She snuggled down into the tobaccoey folds and wished the night could last forever.

Ten minutes later a car swooped down on them from “up back.” Barney sprang from Lady Jane and waved his hand. The car came to a stop beside them. Valancy saw Uncle Wellington and Olive gazing at her in horror from it.

So Uncle Wellington had got a car! And he must have been spending the evening up at Mistawis with Cousin Herbert. Valancy almost laughed aloud at the expression on his face as he recognised her. The pompous, be-wiskered old humbug!

“Can you let me have enough gas to take me to Deerwood?” Barney was asking politely. But Uncle Wellington was not attending to him.

“Valancy, how came you *here*!” he said sternly.

“By chance or God’s grace,” said Valancy.

“With this jail-bird—at ten o’clock at night!” said Uncle Wellington.

Valancy turned to Barney. The moon had escaped from its dragon and in its light her eyes were full of deviltry.

“Are you a jail-bird?”

“Does it matter?” said Barney, gleams of fun in *his* eyes.

“Not to me. I only asked out of curiosity,” continued Valancy.

“Then I won’t tell you. I never satisfy curiosity.” He turned to Uncle Wellington and his voice changed subtly.

“Mr. Stirling, I asked you if you could let me have some gas. If you can, well and good. If not, we are only delaying you unnecessarily.”

Uncle Wellington was in a horrible dilemma. To give gas to this shameless pair! But not to give it to them! To go away and leave them there in the Mistawis woods—until daylight, likely. It was better to give it to them and let them get out of sight before any one else saw them.

“Got anything to get gas in?” he grunted surlily.

Barney produced a two-gallon measure from Lady Jane. The two men went to the rear of the Stirling car and began manipulating the tap. Valancy stole sly glances at Olive over the collar of Barney’s coat. Olive was sitting grimly staring straight ahead with an outraged expression. She did not mean to take any notice of Valancy. Olive had her own secret reasons for feeling outraged. Cecil had been in Deerwood lately and of course had heard all about Valancy. He agreed that her mind was changed and was exceedingly anxious to find out whence the derangement had been inherited. It was a serious thing to have in the family—a very serious thing. One had to think of one’s—descendants.

“She got it from the Wansbarras,” said Olive positively. “There’s nothing like that in the Stirlings—nothing!”

“I hope not—I certainly hope not,” Cecil had responded dubiously. “But then—to go out as a servant—for that is what it practically amounts to. Your cousin!”

Poor Olive felt the implication. The Port Lawrence Prices were not accustomed to ally themselves with families whose members “worked out.”

Valancy could not resist temptation. She leaned forward.

“Olive, does it hurt?”

Olive bit—stiffly.

“Does *what* hurt?”

“Looking like that.”

For a moment Olive resolved she would take no further notice of Valancy. Then duty came uppermost. She must not miss the opportunity.

“Doss,” she implored, leaning forward also, “won’t you come home—come home tonight?”

Valancy yawned.

“You sound like a revival meeting,” she said. “You really do.”

“If you will come back—”

“All will be forgiven.”

“Yes,” said Olive eagerly. Wouldn’t it be splendid if *she* could induce the prodigal daughter to return? “We’ll never cast it up to you. Doss, there are nights when I cannot sleep for thinking of you.”

“And me having the time of my life,” said Valancy, laughing.

“Doss, I can’t believe you’re bad. I’ve always said you couldn’t be bad —”

“I don’t believe I can be,” said Valancy. “I’m afraid I’m hopelessly proper. I’ve been sitting here for three hours with Barney Snaith and he hasn’t even tried to kiss me. I wouldn’t have minded if he had, Olive.”

Valancy was still leaning forward. Her little hat with its crimson rose was tilted down over one eye—Valancy’s smile—what had happened to Valancy! She looked—not pretty—Doss couldn’t be pretty—but provocative, fascinating—yes, abominably so. Olive drew back. It was beneath her dignity to say more. After all, Valancy must be both mad *and* bad.

“Thanks—that’s enough,” said Barney behind the car. “Much obliged, Mr. Stirling. Two gallons—seventy cents. Thank you.”

Uncle Wellington climbed foolishly and feebly into his car. He wanted to give Snaith a piece of his mind, but dared not. Who knew what the creature might do if provoked? No doubt he carried firearms.

Uncle Wellington looked indecisively at Valancy. But Valancy had turned her back on him and was watching Barney pour the gas into Lady Jane's maw.

"Drive on," said Olive decisively. "There's no use in waiting here. Let me tell you what she said to me."

"The little hussy! The shameless little hussy!" said Uncle Wellington.

Chapter XXII

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The next thing the Stirlings heard was that Valancy had been seen with Barney Snaith in a movie theatre in Port Lawrence and after it at supper in a Chinese restaurant there. This was quite true—and no one was more surprised at it than Valancy herself. Barney had come along in Lady Jane one dim twilight and told Valancy unceremoniously if she wanted a drive to hop in.

“I’m going to the Port. Will you go there with me?”

His eyes were teasing and there was a bit of defiance in his voice. Valancy, who did not conceal from herself that she would have gone anywhere with him to any place, “hopped in” without more ado. They tore into and through Deerwood. Mrs. Frederick and Cousin Stickles, taking a little air on the verandah, saw them whirl by in a cloud of dust and sought comfort in each other’s eye. Valancy, who in some dim pre-existence had been afraid of a car, was hatless and her hair was blowing wildly round her face. She would certainly come down with bronchitis—and die at Roaring Abel’s. She wore a low-neck dress and her arms were bare. That Snaith creature was in his shirt-sleeves, smoking a pipe. They were going at the rate of forty miles an hour—sixty, Cousin Stickles averred. Lady Jane could hit the pike when she wanted to. Valancy waved her hand gaily to her relatives. As for Mrs. Frederick, she was wishing she knew how to go into hysterics.

“Was it for this,” she demanded in hollow tones, “that I suffered the pangs of motherhood?”

“I will *not* believe,” said Cousin Stickles solemnly, “that our prayers will not yet be answered.”

“Who—*who* will protect that unfortunate girl when I am gone?” moaned Mrs. Frederick.

As for Valancy, she was wondering if it could really be only a few weeks since she had sat there with them on that verandah. Hating the rubberplant. Pestered with teasing questions like black flies. Always thinking of appearances. Cowed because of Aunt Wellington's teaspoons and Uncle Benjamin's money. Poverty-stricken. Afraid of everybody. Envyng Olive. A slave to moth-eaten traditions. Nothing to hope for or expect.

And now every day was a gay adventure.

Lady Jane flew over the fifteen miles between Deerwood and the Port—through the Port. The way Barney went past traffic policemen was not holy. The lights were beginning to twinkle out like stars in the clear, lemon-hued twilight air. This was the only time Valancy ever really liked the town, and she was crazy with the delight of speeding. Was it possible she had ever been afraid of a car? She was perfectly happy, riding beside Barney. Not that she deluded herself into thinking it had any significance. She knew quite well that Barney had asked her to go on the impulse of the moment—an impulse born of a feeling of pity for her and her starved little dreams. She was looking tired after a wakeful night with a heart attack, followed by a busy day. She had so little fun. He'd give her an outing for once. Besides, Abel was in the kitchen, at the point of drunkenness where he was declaring he did not believe in God and beginning to sing ribald songs. It was just as well she should be out of the way for a while. Barney knew Roaring Abel's repertoire.

They went to the movie—Valancy had never been to a movie. And then, finding a nice hunger upon them, they went and had fried chicken—unbelievable delicious—in the Chinese restaurant. After which they rattled home again, leaving a devastating trail of scandal behind them. Mrs. Frederick gave up going to church altogether. She could not endure her friends' pitying glances and questions. But Cousin Stickles went every Sunday. She said they had been given a cross to bear.

Chapter XXIII

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On one of Cissy's wakeful nights, she told Valancy her poor little story. They were sitting by the open window. Cissy could not get her breath lying down that night. An inglorious gibbous moon was hanging over the wooded hills and in its spectral light Cissy looked frail and lovely and incredibly young. A child. It did not seem possible that she could have lived through all the passion and pain and shame of her story.

"He was stopping at the hotel across the lake. He used to come over in his canoe at night—we met in the pines down the shore. He was a young college student—his father was a rich man in Toronto. Oh, Valancy, I didn't mean to be bad—I didn't, indeed. But I loved him so—I love him yet—I'll always love him. And I—didn't know—some things. I didn't understand. Then his father came and took him away. And—after a little—I found out—oh, Valancy,—I was so frightened. I didn't know what to do. I wrote him—and he came. He—he said he would marry me, Valancy."

"And why—and why?—"

"Oh, Valancy, he didn't love me any more. I saw that at a glance. He—he was just offering to marry me because he thought he ought to—because he was sorry for me. He wasn't bad—but he was so young—and what was I that he should keep on loving me?"

"Never mind making excuses for him," said Valancy a bit shortly. "So you wouldn't marry him?"

"I couldn't—not when he didn't love me any more. Somehow—I can't explain—it seemed a worse thing to do than—the other. He—he argued a little—but he went away. Do you think I did right, Valancy?"

"Yes, I do. *You* did right. But he—"

"Don't blame him, dear. Please don't. Let's not talk about him at all. There's no need. I wanted to tell you how it was—I didn't want you to think me bad—"

“I never did think so.”

“Yes, I felt that—whenever you came. Oh, Valancy, what you’ve been to me! I can never tell you—but God will bless you for it. I know He will—‘with what measure ye mete’.”

Cissy sobbed for a few minutes in Valancy’s arms. Then she wiped her eyes.

“Well, that’s almost all. I came home. I wasn’t really so very unhappy. I suppose I should have been—but I wasn’t. Father wasn’t hard on me. And my baby was so sweet, Valancy—with such lovely blue eyes—and little rings of pale gold hair like silk floss—and tiny dimpled hands. I used to bite his satin-smooth little face all over—softly, so as not to hurt him, you know—”

“I know,” said Valancy, wincing. “I know—a woman *always* knows—and dreams—”

“And he was *all* mine. Nobody else had any claim on him. When he died, oh, Valancy, I thought I must die too—I didn’t see how anybody could endure such anguish and live. To see his dear little eyes and know he would never open them again—to miss his warm little body nestled against mine at night and think of him sleeping alone and cold, his wee face under the hard frozen earth. It was so awful for the first year—after that it was a little easier, one didn’t keep thinking ‘this day last year’—but I was so glad when I found out I was dying.”

“ ‘Who could endure life if it were not for the hope of death?’ ” murmured Valancy softly—it was of course a quotation from some book of John Foster’s.

“I’m glad I’ve told you all about it,” sighed Cissy. “I wanted you to know.”

Cissy died a few nights after that. Roaring Abel was away. When Valancy saw the change that had come over Cissy’s face she wanted to telephone for the doctor. But Cissy wouldn’t let her.

“Valancy, why should you? He can do nothing for me. I’ve known for several days that—this—was near. Let me die in peace, dear—just holding your hand. Oh, I’m so glad you’re here. Tell Father good-bye for me. He’s

always been as good to me as he knew how—and Barney. Somehow, I think that Barney—”

But a spasm of coughing interrupted and exhausted her. She fell asleep when it was over, still holding to Valancy’s hand. Valancy sat there in the silence. She was not frightened—or even sorry. At sunrise Cissy died. She opened her eyes and looked past Valancy at something—something that made her smile suddenly and happily. And, smiling, she died.

Valancy crossed Cissy’s hands on her breast and went to the open window. In the eastern sky, amid the fires of sunrise, an old moon was hanging—as slender and lovely as a new moon. Valancy had never seen an old, old moon before. She watched it pale and fade until it paled and faded out of sight in the living rose of day. A little pool in the barrens shone in the sunrise like a great golden lily.

But the world suddenly seemed a colder place to Valancy. Again nobody needed her. She was not in the least sorry Cecilia was dead. She was only sorry for all her suffering in life. But nobody could ever hurt her again. Valancy had always thought death dreadful. But Cissy had died so quietly—so pleasantly. And at the very last—something—had made up to her for everything. She was lying there now, in her white sleep, looking like a child. Beautiful! All the lines of shame and pain gone.

Roaring Abel drove in, justifying his name. Valancy went down and told him. The shock sobered him at once. He slumped down on the seat of his buggy, his great head hanging.

“Cissy dead—Cissy dead,” he said vacantly. “I didn’t think it would ‘a’ come so soon. Dead. She used to run down the lane to meet me with a little white rose stuck in her hair. Cissy used to be a pretty little girl. And a good little girl.”

“She has always been a good little girl,” said Valancy.

Chapter XXIV

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Valancy herself made Cissy ready for burial. No hands but hers should touch that pitiful, wasted little body. The old house was spotless on the day of burial. Barney Snaith was not there. He had done all he could to help Valancy before it—he had shrouded the pale Cecilia in white roses from the garden—and then had gone back to his island. But everybody else was there. All Deerwood and “up back” came. They forgave Cissy splendidly at last. Mr. Bradly gave a very beautiful funeral address. Valancy had wanted her old Free Methodist man, but Roaring Abel was obdurate. He was a Presbyterian and no one but a Presbyterian minister should bury *his* daughter. Mr. Bradly was very tactful. He avoided all dubious points and it was plain to be seen he hoped for the best. Six reputable citizens of Deerwood bore Cecilia Gay to her grave in decorous Deerwood cemetery. Among them was Uncle Wellington.

The Stirlings all came to the funeral, men and women. They had had a family conclave over it. Surely now that Cissy Gay was dead Valancy would come home. She simply could not stay there with Roaring Abel. That being the case, the wisest course—decreed Uncle James—was to attend the funeral—legitimise the whole thing, so to speak—show Deerwood that Valancy had really done a most creditable deed in going to nurse poor Cecilia Gay and that her family backed her up in it. Death, the miracle worker, suddenly made the thing quite respectable. If Valancy would return to home and decency while public opinion was under its influence all might yet be well. Society was suddenly forgetting all Cecilia’s wicked doings and remembering what a pretty, modest little thing she had been—“and motherless, you know—motherless!” It was the psychological moment—said Uncle James.

So the Stirlings went to the funeral. Even Cousin Gladys’ neuritis allowed her to come. Cousin Stickles was there, her bonnet dripping all

over her face, crying as woefully as if Cissy had been her nearest and dearest. Funerals always brought Cousin Stickles' "own sad bereavement" back.

And Uncle Wellington was a pall-bearer.

Valancy, pale, subdued-looking, her slanted eyes smudged with purple, in her snuff-brown dress, moving quietly about, finding seats for people, consulting in undertones with minister and undertaker, marshalling the "mourners" into the parlour, was so decorous and proper and Stirlingish that her family took heart of grace. This was not—could not be—the girl who had sat all night in the woods with Barney Snaith—who had gone tearing bareheaded through Deerwood and Port Lawrence. This was the Valancy they knew. Really, surprisingly capable and efficient. Perhaps she had always been kept down a bit too much—Amelia really was rather strict—hadn't had a chance to show what was in her. So thought the Stirlings. And Edward Beck, from the Port road, a widower with a large family who was beginning to take notice, took notice of Valancy and thought she might make a mighty fine second wife. No beauty—but a fifty-year-old widower, Mr. Beck told himself very reasonably, couldn't expect everything. Altogether, it seemed that Valancy's matrimonial chances were never so bright as they were at Cecilia Gay's funeral.

What the Stirlings and Edward Beck would have thought had they known the back of Valancy's mind must be left to the imagination. Valancy was hating the funeral—hating the people who came to stare with curiosity at Cecilia's marble-white face—hating the smugness—hating the dragging, melancholy singing—hating Mr. Bradley's cautious platitudes. If she could have had her absurd way, there would have been no funeral at all. She would have covered Cissy over with flowers, shut her away from prying eyes, and buried her beside her nameless little baby in the grassy burying-ground under the pines of the "up back" church, with a bit of kindly prayer from the old Free Methodist minister. She remembered Cissy saying once, "I wish I could be buried deep in the heart of the woods where nobody would ever come to say, 'Cissy Gay is buried here,' and tell over my miserable story."

But this! However, it would soon be over. Valancy knew, if the Stirlings and Edward Beck didn't, exactly what she intended to do then. She had lain awake all the preceding night thinking about it and finally deciding on it.

When the funeral procession had left the house, Mrs. Frederick sought out Valancy in the kitchen.

"My child," she said tremulously, "you'll come home *now*?"

"Home," said Valancy absently. She was getting on an apron and calculating how much tea she must put to steep for supper. There would be several guests from "up back"—distant relatives of the Gays' who had not remembered them for years. And she was so tired she wished she could borrow a pair of legs from the cat.

"Yes, home," said Mrs. Frederick, with a touch of asperity. "I suppose you won't dream of staying here now—alone with Roaring Abel."

"Oh, no, I'm not going to stay *here*," said Valancy. "Of course, I'll have to stay for a day or two, to put the house in order generally. But that will be all. Excuse me, Mother, won't you? I've a frightful lot to do—all those "up back" people will be here to supper."

Mrs. Frederick retreated in considerable relief, and the Stirlings went home with lighter hearts.

"We will just treat her as if nothing had happened when she comes back," decreed Uncle Benjamin. "That will be the best plan. Just as if nothing had happened."

Chapter XXV

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On the evening of the day after the funeral Roaring Abel went off for a spree. He had been sober for four whole days and could endure it no longer. Before he went, Valancy told him she would be going away the next day. Roaring Abel was sorry, and said so. A distant cousin from “up back” was coming to keep house for him—quite willing to do so now since there was no sick girl to wait on—but Abel was not under any delusions concerning her.

“She won’t be like you, my girl. Well, I’m obliged to you. You helped me out of a bad hole and I won’t forget it. And I won’t forget what you did for Cissy. I’m your friend, and if you ever want any of the Stirlings spanked and sot in a corner send for me. I’m going to wet my whistle. Lord, but I’m dry! Don’t reckon I’ll be back afore tomorrow night, so if you’re going home tomorrow, good-bye now.”

“I *may* go home tomorrow,” said Valancy, “but I’m not going back to Deerwood.”

“Not going—”

“You’ll find the key on the woodshed nail,” interrupted Valancy, politely and unmistakably. “The dog will be in the barn and the cat in the cellar. Don’t forget to feed her till your cousin comes. The pantry is full and I made bread and pies today. Good-bye, Mr. Gay. You have been very kind to me and I appreciate it.”

“We’ve had a d—d decent time of it together, and that’s a fact,” said Roaring Abel. “You’re the best small sport in the world, and your little finger is worth the whole Stirling clan tied together. Good-bye and good-luck.”

Valancy went out to the garden. Her legs trembled a little, but otherwise she felt and looked composed. She held something tightly in her hand. The garden was lying in the magic of the warm, odorous July

twilight. A few stars were out and the robins were calling through the velvety silences of the barrens. Valancy stood by the gate expectantly. Would he come? If he did not—

He was coming. Valancy heard Lady Jane Grey far back in the woods. Her breath came a little more quickly. Nearer—and nearer—she could see Lady Jane now—bumping down the lane—nearer—nearer—he was there—he had sprung from the car and leaning over the gate, looking at her.

“Going home, Miss Stirling?”

“I don’t know—yet,” said Valancy slowly. Her mind was made up, with no shadow of turning, but the moment was very tremendous.

“I thought I’d run down and ask if there was anything I could do for you,” said Barney.

Valancy took it with a canter.

“Yes, there is something you can do for me,” she said, evenly and distinctly. “Will you marry me?”

For a moment Barney was silent. There was no particular expression on his face. Then he gave an odd laugh.

“Come, now! I knew luck was just waiting around the corner for me. All the signs have been pointing that way today.”

“Wait.” Valancy lifted her hand. “I’m in earnest—but I want to get my breath after that question. Of course, with my bringing up, I realise perfectly well that this is one of the things ‘a lady should not do’.”

“But why—why?”

“For two reasons.” Valancy was still a little breathless, but she looked Barney straight in the eyes while all the dead Stirlings revolved rapidly in their graves and the living ones did nothing because they did not know that Valancy was at that moment proposing lawful marriage to the notorious Barney Snaith. “The first reason is, I—I—” Valancy tried to say “I love you” but could not. She had to take refuge in a pretended flippancy. “I’m crazy about you. The second is—this.”

She handed him Dr. Trent’s letter.

Barney opened it with the air of a man thankful to find some safe, sane thing to do. As he read it his face changed. He understood—more perhaps

than Valancy wanted him to.

“Are you sure nothing can be done for you?”

Valancy did not misunderstand the question.

“Yes. You know Dr. Trent’s reputation in regard to heart disease. I haven’t long to live—perhaps only a few months—a few weeks. I want to *live* them. I can’t go back to Deerwood—you know what my life was like there. And”—she managed it this time—“I love you. I want to spend the rest of my life with you. That’s all.”

Barney folded his arms on the gate and looked gravely enough at a white, saucy star that was winking at him just over Roaring Abel’s kitchen chimney.

“You don’t know anything about me. I may be a—murderer.”

“No, I don’t. You *may* be something dreadful. Everything they say of you may be true. But it doesn’t matter to me.”

“You care that much for me, Valancy?” said Barney incredulously, looking away from the star and into her eyes—her strange, mysterious eyes.

“I care—that much,” said Valancy in a low voice. She was trembling. He had called her by her name for the first time. It was sweeter than another man’s caress could have been just to hear him say her name like that.

“If we are going to get married,” said Barney, speaking suddenly in a casual, matter-of-fact voice, “some things must be understood.”

“Everything must be understood,” said Valancy.

“I have things I want to hide,” said Barney coolly “You are not to ask me about them.”

“I won’t,” said Valancy.

“You must never ask to see my mail.”

“Never.”

“And we are never to pretend anything to each other.”

“We won’t,” said Valancy. “You won’t even have to pretend you like me. If you marry me I know you’re only doing it out of pity.”

“And we’ll never tell a lie to each other about anything—a big lie or petty lie.”

“Especially a petty lie,” agreed Valancy.

“And you’ll have to live back on my island. I won’t live anywhere else.”

“That’s partly why I want to marry you,” said Valancy.

Barney peered at her.

“I believe you mean it. Well—let’s get married, then.”

“Thank you,” said Valancy, with a sudden return of primness. She would have been much less embarrassed if he had refused her.

“I suppose I haven’t any right to make conditions. But I’m going to make one. You are never to refer to my heart or my liability to sudden death. You are never to urge me to be careful. You are to forget—absolutely forget—that I’m not perfectly healthy. I have written a letter to my mother—here it is—you are to keep it. I have explained everything in it. If I drop dead suddenly—as I likely will do—”

“It will exonerate me in the eyes of your kindred from the suspicion of having poisoned you,” said Barney with a grin.

“Exactly.” Valancy laughed gaily. “Dear me, I’m glad this is over. It has been—a bit of an ordeal. You see, I’m not in the habit of going about asking men to marry me. It is so nice of you not to refuse me—or offer to be a brother!”

“I’ll go to the Port tomorrow and get a license. We can be married tomorrow evening. Dr. Stalling, I suppose?”

“Heavens, no.” Valancy shuddered. “Besides, he wouldn’t do it. He’d shake his forefinger at me and I’d jilt you at the altar. No, I want my old Mr. Towers to marry me.”

“Will you marry me as I stand?” demanded Barney. A passing car, full of tourists, honked loudly—it seemed derisively. Valancy looked at him. Blue homespun shirt, nondescript hat, muddy overalls. Unshaved!

“Yes,” she said.

Barney put his hands over the gate and took her little, cold ones gently in his.

“Valancy,” he said, trying to speak lightly, “of course I’m not in love with you—never thought of such a thing as being in love. But, do you know, I’ve always thought you were a bit of a dear.”

Chapter XXVI

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The next day passed for Valancy like a dream. She could not make herself or anything she did seem real. She saw nothing of Barney, though she expected he must go rattling past on his way to the Port for a license.

Perhaps he had changed his mind.

But at dusk the lights of Lady Jane suddenly swooped over the crest of the wooded hill beyond the lane. Valancy was waiting at the gate for her bridegroom. She wore her green dress and her green hat because she had nothing else to wear. She did not look or feel at all bride-like—she really looked like a wild elf strayed out of the greenwood. But that did not matter. Nothing at all mattered except that Barney was coming for her.

“Ready?” said Barney, stopping Lady Jane with some new, horrible noises.

“Yes.” Valancy stepped in and sat down. Barney was in his blue shirt and overalls. But they were clean overalls. He was smoking a villainous-looking pipe and he was bareheaded. But he had a pair of oddly smart boots on under his shabby overalls. And he was shaved. They clattered into Deerwood and through Deerwood and hit the long, wooded road to the Port.

“Haven’t changed your mind?” said Barney.

“No. Have you?”

“No.”

That was their whole conversation on the fifteen miles. Everything was more dream-like than ever. Valancy didn’t know whether she felt happy. Or terrified. Or just plain fool.

Then the lights of Port Lawrence were about them. Valancy felt as if she were surrounded by the gleaming, hungry eyes of hundreds of great, stealthy panthers. Barney briefly asked where Mr. Towers lived, and Valancy as briefly told him. They stopped before the shabby little house in

an unfashionable street. They went in to the small, shabby parlour. Barney produced his license. So he *had* got it. Also a ring. This thing was real. She, Valancy Stirling, was actually on the point of being married.

They were standing up together before Mr. Towers. Valancy heard Mr. Towers and Barney saying things. She heard some other person saying things. She herself was thinking of the way she had once planned to be married—away back in her early teens when such a thing had not seemed impossible. White silk and tulle veil and orange-blossoms; no bridesmaid. But one flower girl, in a frock of cream shadow lace over pale pink, with a wreath of flowers in her hair, carrying a basket of roses and lilies-of-the-valley. And the groom, a noble-looking creature, irreproachably clad in whatever the fashion of the day decreed. Valancy lifted her eyes and saw herself and Barney in the little slanting, distorting mirror over the mantelpiece. She in her odd, unbridal green hat and dress; Barney in shirt and overalls. But it was Barney. That was all that mattered. No veil—no flowers—no guests—no presents—no wedding-cake—but just Barney. For all the rest of her life there would be Barney.

“Mrs. Snaith, I hope you will be very happy,” Mr. Towers was saying.

He had not seemed surprised at their appearance—not even at Barney’s overalls. He had seen plenty of queer weddings “up back.” He did not know Valancy was one of the Deerwood Stirlings—he did not even know there *were* Deerwood Stirlings. He did not know Barney Snaith was a fugitive from justice. Really, he was an incredibly ignorant old man. Therefore he married them and gave them his blessing very gently and solemnly and prayed for them that night after they had gone away. His conscience did not trouble him at all.

“What a nice way to get married!” Barney was saying as he put Lady Jane in gear. “No fuss and flub-dub. I never supposed it was half so easy.”

“For heaven’s sake,” said Valancy suddenly, “let’s forget we *are* married and talk as if we weren’t. I can’t stand another drive like the one we had coming in.”

Barney howled and threw Lady Jane into high with an infernal noise.

“And I thought I was making it easy for you,” he said. “You didn’t seem to want to talk.”

“I didn’t. But I wanted you to talk. I don’t want you to make love to me, but I want you to act like an ordinary human being. Tell me about this island of yours. What sort of a place is it?”

“The jolliest place in the world. You’re going to love it. The first time I saw it I loved it. Old Tom MacMurray owned it then. He built the little shack on it, lived there in winter and rented it to Toronto people in summer. I bought it from him—became by that one simple transaction a landed proprietor owning a house and an island. There is something so satisfying in owning a whole island. And isn’t an uninhabited island a charming idea? I’d wanted to own one ever since I’d read *Robinson Crusoe*. It seemed too good to be true. And beauty! Most of the scenery belongs to the government, but they don’t tax you for looking at it, and the moon belongs to everybody. You won’t find my shack very tidy. I suppose you’ll want to make it tidy.”

“Yes,” said Valancy honestly. “I *have* to be tidy. I don’t really *want* to be. But untidiness hurts me. Yes, I’ll have to tidy up your shack.”

“I was prepared for that,” said Barney, with a hollow groan.

“But,” continued Valancy reluctantly, “I won’t insist on your wiping your feet when you come in.”

“No, you’ll only sweep up after me with the air of a martyr,” said Barney. “Well, anyway, you can’t tidy the lean-to. You can’t even enter it. The door will be locked and I shall keep the key.”

“Bluebeard’s chamber,” said Valancy. “I shan’t even think of it. I don’t care how many wives you have hanging up in it. So long as they’re really dead.”

“Dead as door-nails. You can do as you like in the rest of the house. There’s not much of it—just one big living-room and one small bedroom. Well built, though. Old Tom loved his job. The beams of our house are cedar and the rafters fir. Our living-room windows face west and east. It’s wonderful to have a room where you can see both sunrise and sunset. I have two cats there. Banjo and Good luck. Adorable animals. Banjo is a

big, enchanting, grey devil-cat. Striped, of course. I don't care a hang for any cat that hasn't stripes. I never knew a cat who could swear as genteely and effectively as Banjo. His only fault is that he snores horribly when he is asleep. Luck is a dainty little cat. Always looking wistfully at you, as if he wanted to tell you something. Maybe he will pull it off sometime. Once in a thousand years, you know, one cat is allowed to speak. My cats are philosophers—neither of them ever cries over spilt milk.

“Two old crows live in a pine-tree on the point and are reasonably neighbourly. Call ‘em Nip and Tuck. And I have a demure little tame owl. Name, Leander. I brought him up from a baby and he lives over on the mainland and chuckles to himself o’nights. And bats—it’s a great place for bats at night. Scared of bats?”

“No; I like them.”

“So do I. Nice, queer, uncanny, mysterious creatures. Coming from nowhere—going nowhere. Swoop! Banjo likes ‘em, too. Eats ‘em. I have a canoe and a disappearing propeller boat. Went to the Port in it today to get my license. Quieter than Lady Jane.”

“I thought you hadn’t gone at all—that you *had* changed your mind,” admitted Valancy.

Barney laughed—the laugh Valancy did not like—the little, bitter, cynical laugh.

“I never change my mind,” he said shortly. They went back through Deerwood. Up the Muskoka road. Past Roaring Abel’s. Over the rocky, daisied lane. The dark pine woods swallowed them up. Through the pine woods, where the air was sweet with the incense of the unseen, fragile bells of the linnaeas that carpeted the banks of the trail. Out to the shore of Mistawis. Lady Jane must be left here. They got out. Barney led the way down a little path to the edge of the lake.

“There’s our island,” he said gloatingly.

Valancy looked—and looked—and looked again. There was a diaphanous, lilac mist on the lake, shrouding the island. Through it the two enormous pine-trees that clasped hands over Barney’s shack loomed out

like dark turrets. Behind them was a sky still rose-hued in the afterlight, and a pale young moon.

Valancy shivered like a tree the wind stirs suddenly. Something seemed to sweep over her soul.

“My Blue Castle!” she said. “Oh, my Blue Castle!”

They got into the canoe and paddled out to it. They left behind the realm of everyday and things known and landed on a realm of mystery and enchantment where anything might happen—anything might be true.

Barney lifted Valancy out of the canoe and swung her to a lichen-covered rock under a young pine-tree. His arms were about her and suddenly his lips were on hers. Valancy found herself shivering with the rapture of her first kiss.

“Welcome home, dear,” Barney was saying.

Chapter XXVII

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Cousin Georgiana came down the lane leading up to her little house. She lived half a mile out of Deerwood and she wanted to go in to Amelia's and find out if Doss had come home yet. Cousin Georgiana was anxious to see Doss. She had something very important to tell her. Something, she was sure, Doss would be delighted to hear. Poor Doss! She *had* had rather a dull life of it. Cousin Georgiana owed to herself that *she* would not like to live under Amelia's thumb. But that would be all changed now. Cousin Georgiana felt tremendously important. For the time being, she quite forgot to wonder which of them would go next.

And here was Doss herself, coming along the road from Roaring Abel's in such a queer green dress and hat. Talk about luck. Cousin Georgiana would have a chance to impart her wonderful secret right away, with nobody else about to interrupt. It was, you might say, a Providence.

Valancy, who had been living for four days on her enchanted island, had decided that she might as well go in to Deerwood and tell her relatives that she was married. Otherwise, finding that she had disappeared from Roaring Abel's, they might get out a search warrant for her. Barney had offered to drive her in, but she had preferred to go alone. She smiled very radiantly at Cousin Georgiana, who, she remembered, as of some one known a long time ago, had really been not a bad little creature. Valancy was so happy that she could have smiled at anybody—even Uncle James. She was not averse to Cousin Georgiana's company. Already, since the houses along the road were becoming numerous, she was conscious that curious eyes were looking at her from every window.

"I suppose you're going home, dear Doss?" said Cousin Georgiana as she shook hands—furtively eyeing Valancy's dress and wondering if she had *any* petticoat on at all.

"Sooner or later," said Valancy cryptically.

“Then I’ll go along with you. I’ve been wanting to see you very especially, Doss dear. I’ve something quite *wonderful* to tell you.”

“Yes?” said Valancy absently. What on earth was Cousin Georgiana looking so mysterious and important about? But did it matter? No. Nothing mattered but Barney and the Blue Castle up back in Mistawis.

“Who do you suppose called to see me the other day?” asked Cousin Georgiana archly.

Valancy couldn’t guess.

“Edward Beck.” Cousin Georgiana lowered her voice almost to a whisper. “*Edward Beck.*”

Why the italics? And *was* Cousin Georgiana blushing?

“Who on earth is Edward Beck?” asked Valancy indifferently.

Cousin Georgiana stared.

“Surely you remember Edward Beck,” she said reproachfully. “He lives in that lovely house on the Port Lawrence road and he comes to our church—regularly. You *must* remember him.”

“Oh, I think I do now,” said Valancy, with an effort of memory. “He’s that old man with a wen on his forehead and dozens of children, who always sits in the pew by the door, isn’t he?”

“Not dozens of children, dear—oh, no, not dozens. Not even *one* dozen. Only nine. At least only nine that count. The rest are dead. He *isn’t* old—he’s only about forty-eight—the prime of life, Doss—and what does it matter about a wen?”

“Nothing, of course,” agreed Valancy quite sincerely. It certainly did not matter to her whether Edward Beck had a wen or a dozen wens or no wen at all. But Valancy was getting vaguely suspicious. There was certainly an air of suppressed triumph about Cousin Georgiana. Could it be possible that Cousin Georgiana was thinking of marrying again? Marrying Edward Beck? Absurd. Cousin Georgiana was sixty-five if she were a day and her little anxious face was as closely covered with fine wrinkles as if she had been a hundred. But still—

“My dear,” said Cousin Georgiana, “Edward Beck wants to marry *you.*”

Valancy stared at Cousin Georgiana for a moment. Then she wanted to go off into a peal of laughter. But she only said:

“Me?”

“Yes, you. He fell in love with you at the funeral. And he came to consult me about it. I was such a friend of his first wife, you know. He is very much in earnest, Dossie. And its a wonderful chance for you. He’s very well off—and you know—you—you—”

“Am not so young as I once was,” agreed Valancy. “ ‘To her that hath shall be given.’ Do you really think I would make a good stepmother, Cousin Georgiana?”

“I’m sure you would. You were always so fond of children.”

“But nine is such a family to start with,” objected Valancy gravely.

“The two oldest are grown up and the third almost. That leaves only six that really count. And most of them are boys. So much easier to bring up than girls. There’s an excellent book—’Health Care of the Growing Child’—Gladys has a copy, I think. It would be such a help to you. And there are books about morals. You’d manage nicely. Of course I told Mr. Beck that I thought you would—would—”

“Jump at him,” supplied Valancy.

“Oh, no, no, dear. I wouldn’t use such an indelicate expression. I told him I thought you would consider his proposal favourably. And you will, won’t you, dearie?”

“There’s only one obstacle,” said Valancy dreamily. “You see, I’m married already.”

“Married!” Cousin Georgiana stopped stock-still and stared at Valancy. “Married!”

“Yes. I was married to Barney Snaith last Tuesday evening in Port Lawrence.”

There was a convenient gate-post hard by. Cousin Georgiana took firm hold of it.

“Doss, dear—I’m an old woman—are you trying to make fun of me?”

“Not at all. I’m only telling you the truth. For heaven’s sake, Cousin Georgiana,”—Valancy was alarmed by certain symptoms—“don’t go

crying here on the public road!”

Cousin Georgiana choked back the tears and gave a little moan of despair instead.

“Oh, Doss, *what* have you done? What *have* you done?”

“I’ve just been telling you. I’ve got married,” said Valancy, calmly and patiently.

“To that—that—aw—that—*Barney Snaith*. Why, they say he’s had a dozen wives already.”

“I’m the only one round at present,” said Valancy.

“What will your poor mother say?” moaned Cousin Georgiana.

“Come along with me and hear, if you want to know,” said Valancy.

“I’m on my way to tell her now.”

Cousin Georgiana let go the gate-post cautiously and found that she could stand alone. She meekly trotted on beside Valancy—who suddenly seemed quite a different person in her eyes. Cousin Georgiana had a tremendous respect for a married woman. But it was terrible to think of what the poor girl had done. So rash. So reckless. Of course Valancy must be stark mad. But she seemed so happy in her madness that Cousin Georgiana had a momentary conviction that it would be a pity if the clan tried to scold her back to sanity. She had never seen that look in Valancy’s eyes before. But what *would* Amelia say? And Ben?

“To marry a man you know nothing about,” thought Cousin Georgiana aloud.

“I know more about him than I know of Edward Beck,” said Valancy.

“Edward Beck *goes to church*,” said Cousin Georgiana. “Does Bar—does your husband?”

“He has promised that he will go with me on fine Sundays,” said Valancy.

When they turned in at the Stirling gate Valancy gave an exclamation of surprise.

“Look at my rosebush! Why, it’s blooming!”

It was. Covered with blossoms. Great, crimson, velvety blossoms. Fragrant. Glowing. Wonderful.

“My cutting it to pieces must have done it good,” said Valancy, laughing. She gathered a handful of the blossoms—they would look well on the supper-table of the verandah at Mistawis—and went, still laughing, up the walk, conscious that Olive was standing on the steps, Olive, goddess-like in loveliness, looking down with a slight frown on her forehead. Olive, beautiful, insolent. Her full form voluptuous in its swathings of rose silk and lace. Her golden-brown hair curling richly under her big, white-frilled hat. Her colour ripe and melting.

“Beautiful,” thought Valancy coolly, “but”—as if she suddenly saw her cousin through new eyes—“without the slightest touch of distinction.”

So Valancy had come home, thank goodness, thought Olive. But Valancy was not looking like a repentant, returned prodigal. This was the cause of Olive’s frown. She was looking triumphant—graceless! That outlandish dress—that queer hat—those hands full of blood-red roses. Yet there was something about both dress and hat, as Olive instantly felt, that was entirely lacking in her own attire. This deepened the frown. She put out a condescending hand.

“So you’re back, Doss? Very warm day, isn’t it? Did you walk in?”

“Yes. Coming in?”

“Oh, no. I’ve just been in. I’ve come often to comfort poor Auntie. She’s been so lonesome. I’m going to Mrs. Bartlett’s tea. I have to help pour. She’s giving it for her cousin from Toronto. Such a charming girl. You’d have loved meeting her, Doss. I think Mrs. Bartlett did send you a card. Perhaps you’ll drop in later on.”

“No, I don’t think so,” said Valancy indifferently. “I’ll have to be home to get Barney’s supper. We’re going for a moonlit canoe ride around Mistawa tonight.”

“Barney? Supper?” gasped Olive. “What *do* you mean, Valancy Stirling?”

“Valancy Snaith, by the grace of God.”

Valancy flaunted her wedding-ring in Olive’s stricken face. Then she nimbly stepped past her and into the house. Cousin Georgiana followed.

She would not miss a moment of the great scene, even though Olive did look as if she were going to faint.

Olive did not faint. She went stupidly down the street to Mrs. Bartlett's. *What* did Doss mean? She couldn't have—that ring—oh, what fresh scandal was that wretched girl bringing on her defenceless family now? She should have been—shut up—long ago.

Valancy opened the sitting-room door and stepped unexpectedly right into grim assemblage of Stirlings. They had not come together of malice prepense. Aunt Wellington and Cousin Gladys and Aunt Mildred and Cousin Sarah had just called in on their way home from a meeting of the missionary society. Uncle James had dropped in to give Amelia some information regarding a doubtful investment. Uncle Benjamin had called, apparently, to tell them it was a hot day and ask them what was the difference between a bee and a donkey. Cousin Stickles had been tactless enough to know the answer—"one gets all the honey, the other all the whacks"—and Uncle Benjamin was in a bad humour. In all of their minds, unexpressed, was the idea of finding out if Valancy had yet come home, and, if not, what steps must be taken in the matter.

Well, here was Valancy at last, a poised, confident thing, not humble and deprecating as she should have been. And so oddly, improperly young-looking. She stood in the doorway and looked at them, Cousin Georgiana timorous, expectant, behind her. Valancy was so happy she didn't hate her people any more. She could even see a number of good qualities in them that she had never seen before. And she was sorry for them. Her pity made her quite gentle.

"Well, Mother," she said pleasantly.

"So you've come home at last!" said Mrs. Frederick, getting out a handkerchief. She dared not be outraged, but she did not mean to be cheated of her tears.

"Well, not exactly," said Valancy. She threw her bomb. "I thought I ought to drop in and tell you I was married. Last Tuesday night. To Barney Snaith."

Uncle Benjamin bounced up and sat down again.

“God bless my soul,” he said dully. The rest seemed turned to stone. Except Cousin Gladys, who turned faint. Aunt Mildred and Uncle Wellington had to help her out to the kitchen.

“She would have to keep up the Victorian traditions,” said Valancy, with a grin. She sat down, uninvited, on a chair. Cousin Stickles had begun to sob.

“Is there *one* day in your life that you haven’t cried?” asked Valancy curiously.

“Valancy,” said Uncle James, being the first to recover the power of utterance, “did you mean what you said just now?”

“I did.”

“Do you mean to say that you have actually gone and married—*married*—that notorious Barney Snaith—that—that—criminal—that—”

“I have.”

“Then,” said Uncle James violently, “you are a shameless creature, lost to all sense of propriety and virtue, and I wash my hands entirely of you. I do not want ever to see your face again.”

“What have you left to say when I commit murder?” asked Valancy.

Uncle Benjamin again appealed to God to bless his soul.

“That drunken outlaw—that—”

A dangerous spark appeared in Valancy’s eyes. They might say what they liked to and of her but they should not abuse Barney.

“Say ‘damn’ and you’ll feel better,” she suggested.

“I can express my feelings without blasphemy. And I tell you you have covered yourself with eternal disgrace and infamy by marrying that drunkard—”

“*You* would be more endurable if you got drunk occasionally. Barney is *not* a drunkard.”

“He was seen drunk in Port Lawrence—pickled to the gills,” said Uncle Benjamin.

“If that is true—and I don’t believe it—he had a good reason for it. Now I suggest that you all stop looking tragic and accept the situation. I’m married—you can’t undo that. And I’m perfectly happy.”

“I suppose we ought to be thankful he has really married her,” said Cousin Sarah, by way of trying to look on the bright side.

“If he really has,” said Uncle James, who had just washed his hands of Valancy. “Who married you?”

“Mr. Towers, of Port Lawrence.”

“By a Free Methodist!” groaned Mrs. Frederick—as if to have been married by an imprisoned Methodist would have been a shade less disgraceful. It was the first thing she had said. Mrs. Frederick didn’t know *what* to say. The whole thing was too horrible—too horrible—too nightmarish. She was sure she must wake up soon. After all their bright hopes at the funeral!

“It makes me think of those what-d’ye-call-‘ems,” said Uncle Benjamin helplessly. “Those yarns—you know—of fairies taking babies out of their cradles.”

“Valancy could hardly be a changeling at twenty-nine,” said Aunt Wellington satirically.

“She was the oddest-looking baby I ever saw, anyway,” averted Uncle Benjamin. “I said so at the time—you remember, Amelia? I said I had never seen such eyes in a human head.”

“I’m glad *I* never had any children,” said Cousin Sarah. “If they don’t break your heart in one way they do it in another.”

“Isn’t it better to have your heart broken than to have it wither up?” queried Valancy. “Before it could be broken it must have felt something splendid. *That* would be worth the pain.”

“Dipp—clean dippy,” muttered Uncle Benjamin, with a vague, unsatisfactory feeling that somebody had said something like that before.

“Valancy,” said Mrs. Frederick solemnly, “do you ever pray to be forgiven for disobeying your mother?”

“I *should* pray to be forgiven for obeying you so long,” said Valancy stubbornly. “But I don’t pray about that at all. I just thank God every day for my happiness.”

“I would rather,” said Mrs. Frederick, beginning to cry rather belatedly, “see you dead before me than listen to what you have told me

today.”

Valancy looked at her mother and aunts, and wondered if they could ever have known anything of the real meaning of love. She felt sorrier for them than ever. They were so very pitiable. And they never suspected it.

“Barney Snaith is a scoundrel to have deluded you into marrying him,” said Uncle James violently.

“Oh, *I* did the deluding. I asked *him* to marry me,” said Valancy, with a wicked smile.

“Have you *no* pride?” demanded Aunt Wellington.

“Lots of it. I am proud that I have achieved a husband by my own unaided efforts. Cousin Georgiana here wanted to help me to Edward Beck.”

“Edward Beck is worth twenty thousand dollars and has the finest house between here and Port Lawrence,” said Uncle Benjamin.

“That sounds very fine,” said Valancy scornfully, “but it isn’t worth *that*”—she snapped her fingers—“compared to feeling Barney’s arms around me and his cheek against mine.”

“*Oh, Doss!*” said Cousin Stickles. Cousin Sarah said, “*Oh, Doss!*” Aunt Wellington said, “Valancy, you need not be indecent.”

“Why, it surely isn’t indecent to like to have your husband put his arm around you? I should think it would be indecent if you didn’t.”

“Why expect decency from her?” inquired Uncle James sarcastically. “She has cut herself off from decency forevermore. She has made her bed. Let her lie on it.”

“Thanks,” said Valancy very gratefully. “How you would have enjoyed being Torquemada! Now, I must really be getting back. Mother, may I have those three woollen cushions I worked last winter?”

“Take them—take everything!” said Mrs. Frederick.

“Oh, I don’t want everything—or much. I don’t want my Blue Castle cluttered. Just the cushions. I’ll call for them some day when we motor in.”

Valancy rose and went to the door. There she turned. She was sorrier than ever for them all. *They* had no Blue Castle in the purple solitudes of

Mistawis.

“The trouble with you people is that you don’t laugh enough,” she said.

“Doss dear,” said Cousin Georgiana mournfully, “some day you will discover that blood is thicker than water.”

“Of course it is. But who wants water to be thick?” parried Valancy.

“We want water to be thin—sparkling—crystal-clear.”

Cousin Stickles groaned.

Valancy would not ask any of them to come and see her—she was afraid they *would* come out of curiosity. But she said:

“Do you mind if I drop in and see you once in a while, Mother?”

“My house will always be open to you,” said Mrs. Frederick, with a mournful dignity.

“You should never recognise her again,” said Uncle James sternly, as the door closed behind Valancy.

“I cannot quite forget that I am a mother,” said Mrs. Frederick. “My poor, unfortunate girl!”

“I dare say the marriage isn’t legal,” said Uncle James comfortingly.

“He has probably been married half a dozen times before. But *I* am through with her. I have done all I could, Amelia. I think you will admit that. Henceforth”—Uncle James was terribly solemn about it—“Valancy is to me as one dead.”

“Mrs. Barney Snaith,” said Cousin Georgiana, as if trying it out to see how it would sound.

“He has a score of aliases, no doubt,” said Uncle Benjamin. “For my part, I believe the man is half Indian. I haven’t a doubt they’re living in a wigwam.”

“If he has married her under the name of Snaith and it isn’t his real name wouldn’t that make the marriage null and void?” asked Cousin Stickles hopefully.

Uncle James shook his head.

“No, it is the man who marries, not the name.”

“You know,” said Cousin Gladys, who had recovered and returned but was still shaky, “I had a distinct premonition of this at Herbert’s silver

dinner. I remarked it at the time. When she was defending Snaith. You remember, of course. It came over me like a revelation. I spoke to David when I went home about it.”

“What—*what*,” demanded Aunt Wellington of the universe, “has come over Valancy? *Valancy*!”

The universe did not answer but Uncle James did.

“Isn’t there something coming up of late about secondary personalities cropping out? I don’t hold with many of those new-fangled notions, but there may be something in this one. It would account for her incomprehensible conduct.”

“Valancy is so fond of mushrooms,” sighed Cousin Georgiana. “I’m afraid she’ll get poisoned eating toadstools by mistake living up back in the woods.”

“There are worse things than death,” said Uncle James, believing that it was the first time in the world that such statement had been made.

“Nothing can ever be the same again!” sobbed Cousin Stickles.

Valancy, hurrying along the dusty road, back to cool Mistawis and her purple island, had forgotten all about them—just as she had forgotten that she might drop dead at any moment if she hurried.

Chapter XXVIII

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Summer passed by. The Stirling clan—with the insignificant exception of Cousin Georgiana—had tacitly agreed to follow Uncle James' example and look upon Valancy as one dead. To be sure, Valancy had an unquiet, ghostly habit of recurring resurrections when she and Barney clattered through Deerwood and out to the Port in that unspeakable car. Valancy bareheaded, with stars in her eyes. Barney, bareheaded, smoking his pipe. But shaved. Always shaved now, if any of them had noticed it. They even had the audacity to go in to Uncle Benjamin's store to buy groceries. Twice Uncle Benjamin ignored them. Was not Valancy one of the dead? While Snaith had never existed. But the third time he told Barney he was a scoundrel who should be hung for luring an unfortunate, weak-minded girl away from her home and friends.

Barney's one straight eyebrow went up.

"I have made her happy," he said coolly, "and she was miserable with her friends. So that's that."

Uncle Benjamin stared. It had never occurred to him that women had to be, or ought to be, "made happy."

"You—you pup!" he said.

"Why be so unoriginal?" queried Barney amiably. "Anybody could call me a pup. Why not think of something worthy of the Stirlings? Besides, I'm not a pup. I'm really quite a middle-aged dog. Thirty-five, if you're interested in knowing."

Uncle Benjamin remembered just in time that Valancy was dead. He turned his back on Barney.

Valancy was happy—gloriously and entirely so. She seemed to be living in a wonderful house of life and every day opened a new, mysterious room. It was in a world which had nothing in common with the one she had left behind—a world where time was not—which was young with

immortal youth—where there was neither past nor future but only the present. She surrendered herself utterly to the charm of it.

The absolute freedom of it all was unbelievable. They could do exactly as they liked. No Mrs. Grundy. No traditions. No relatives. Or in-laws. “Peace, perfect peace, with loved ones far away,” as Barney quoted shamelessly.

Valancy had gone home once and got her cushions. And Cousin Georgiana had given her one of her famous candlewick spreads of most elaborate design. “For your spare-room bed, dear,” she said.

“But I haven’t got any spare-room,” said Valancy.

Cousin Georgiana looked horrified. A house without a spare-room was monstrous to her.

“But it’s a lovely spread,” said Valancy, with a kiss, “and I’m so glad to have it. I’ll put it on my own bed. Barney’s old patch-work quilt is getting ragged.”

“I don’t see how you can be contented to live up back,” sighed Cousin Georgiana. “It’s so out of the world.”

“Contented!” Valancy laughed. What was the use of trying to explain to Cousin Georgiana. “It is,” she agreed, “most gloriously and entirely out of the world.”

“And you are really happy, dear?” asked Cousin Georgiana wistfully.

“I really am,” said Valancy gravely, her eyes dancing.

“Marriage is such a serious thing,” sighed Cousin Georgiana.

“When it’s going to last long,” agreed Valancy.

Cousin Georgiana did not understand this at all. But it worried her and she lay awake at nights wondering what Valancy meant by it.

Valancy loved her Blue Castle and was completely satisfied with it. The big living-room had three windows, all commanding exquisite views of exquisite Mistawis. The one in the end of the room was an oriel window—which Tom MacMurray, Barney explained, had got out of some little, old “up back” church that had been sold. It faced the west and when the sunsets flooded it Valancy’s whole being knelt in prayer as if in some great cathedral. The new moons always looked down through it, the lower pine

boughs swayed about the top of it, and all through the nights the soft, dim silver of the lake dreamed through it.

There was a stone fireplace on the other side. No desecrating gas imitation but a real fireplace where you could burn real logs. With a big grizzly bearskin on the floor before it, and beside it a hideous, red-plush sofa of Tom MacMurray's régime. But its ugliness was hidden by silver-grey timber wolf skins, and Valancy's cushions made it gay and comfortable. In a corner a nice, tall, lazy old clock ticked—the right kind of a clock. One that did not hurry the hours away but ticked them off deliberately. It was the jolliest looking old clock. A fat, corpulent clock with a great, round, man's face painted on it, the hands stretching out of its nose and the hours encircling it like a halo.

There was a big glass case of stuffed owls and several deer heads—likewise of Tom MacMurray's vintage. Some comfortable old chairs that asked to be sat upon. A squat little chair with a cushion was prescriptively Banjo's. If anybody else dared sit on it Banjo glared him out of it with his topaz-hued, black-ringed eyes. Banjo had an adorable habit of hanging over the back of it, trying to catch his own tail. Losing his temper because he couldn't catch it. Giving it a fierce bite for spite when he *did* catch it. Yowling malignantly with pain. Barney and Valancy laughed at him until they ached. But it was Good Luck they loved. They were both agreed that Good Luck was so lovable that he practically amounted to an obsession.

One side of the wall was lined with rough, homemade book-shelves filled with books, and between the two side windows hung an old mirror in a faded gilt-frame, with fat cupids gamboling in the panel over the glass. A mirror, Valancy thought, that must be like the fabled mirror into which Venus had once looked and which thereafter reflected as beautiful every woman who looked into it. Valancy thought she was almost pretty in that mirror. But that may have been because she had shingled her hair.

This was before the day of bobs and was regarded as a wild, unheard-of proceeding—unless you had typhoid. When Mrs. Frederick heard of it she almost decided to erase Valancy's name from the family Bible. Barney cut the hair, square off at the back of Valancy's neck, bringing it down in a

short black fringe over her forehead. It gave a meaning and a purpose to her little, three-cornered face that it never had possessed before. Even her nose ceased to irritate her. Her eyes were bright, and her sallow skin had cleared to the hue of creamy ivory. The old family joke had come true—she was really fat at last—anyway, no longer skinny. Valancy might never be beautiful, but she was of the type that looks its best in the woods—elfin—mocking—alluring. Her heart bothered her very little. When an attack threatened she was generally able to head it off with Dr. Trent's prescription. The only bad one she had was one night when she was temporarily out of medicine. And it *was* a bad one. For the time being, Valancy realised keenly that death was actually waiting to pounce on her any moment. But the rest of the time she would not—did not—let herself remember it at all.

Chapter XXIX

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Valancy toiled not, neither did she spin. There was really very little work to do. She cooked their meals on a coal-oil stove, performing all her little domestic rites carefully and exultingly, and they ate out on the verandah that almost overhung the lake. Before them lay Mistawis, like a scene out of some fairy tale of old time. And Barney smiling his twisted, enigmatical smile at her across the table.

“What a view old Tom picked out when he built this shack!” Barney would say exultantly.

Supper was the meal Valancy liked best. The faint laughter of winds was always about them and the colours of Mistawis, imperial and spiritual, under the changing clouds were something that cannot be expressed in mere words. Shadows, too. Clustering in the pines until a wind shook them out and pursued them over Mistawis. They lay all day along the shores, threaded by ferns and wild blossoms. They stole around the headlands in the glow of the sunset, until twilight wove them all into one great web of dusk.

The cats, with their wise, innocent little faces, would sit on the verandah railing and eat the tidbits Barney flung them. And how good everything tasted! Valancy, amid all the romance of Mistawis, never forgot that men had stomachs. Barney paid her no end of compliments on her cooking.

“After all,” he admitted, “there’s something to be said for square meals. I’ve mostly got along by boiling two or three dozen eggs hard at once and eating a few when I got hungry, with a slice of bacon once in a while and a jorum of tea.”

Valancy poured tea out of Barney’s little battered old pewter teapot of incredible age. She had not even a set of dishes—only Barney’s

mismatched chipped bits—and a dear, big, pobby old jug of robin’s-egg blue.

After the meal was over they would sit there and talk for hours—or sit and say nothing, in all the languages of the world, Barney pulling away at his pipe, Valancy dreaming idly and deliciously, gazing at the far-off hills beyond Mistawis where the spires of firs came out against the sunset. The moonlight would begin to silver the Mistawis. Bats would begin to swoop darkly against the pale, western gold. The little waterfall that came down on the high bank not far away would, by some whim of the wildwood gods, begin to look like a wonderful white woman beckoning through the spicy, fragrant evergreens. And Leander would begin to chuckle diabolically on the mainland shore. How sweet it was to sit there and do nothing in the beautiful silence, with Barney at the other side of the table, smoking!

There were plenty of other islands in sight, though none were near enough to be troublesome as neighbours. There was one little group of islets far off to the west which they called the Fortunate Isles. At sunrise they looked like a cluster of emeralds, at sunset like a cluster of amethysts. They were too small for houses; but the lights on the larger islands would bloom out all over the lake, and bonfires would be lighted on their shores, streaming up into the wood shadows and throwing great, blood-red ribbons over the waters. Music would drift to them alluringly from boats here and there, or from the verandahs on the big house of the millionaire on the biggest island.

“Would you like a house like that, Moonlight?” Barney asked once, waving his hand at it. He had taken to calling her Moonlight, and Valancy loved it.

“No,” said Valancy, who had once dreamed of a mountain castle ten times the size of the rich man’s “cottage” and now pitied the poor inhabitants of palaces. “No. It’s too elegant. I would have to carry it with me everywhere I went. On my back like a snail. It would own me—possess me, body and soul. I like a house I can love and cuddle and boss. Just like ours here. I don’t envy Hamilton Gossard ‘the finest summer residence in Canada.’ It is magnificent, but it isn’t my Blue Castle.”

Away down at the far end of the lake they got every night a glimpse of a big, continental train rushing through a clearing. Valancy liked to watch its lighted windows flash by and wonder who was on it and what hopes and fears it carried. She also amused herself by picturing Barney and herself going to the dances and dinners in the houses on the islands, but she did not want to go in reality. Once they did go to a masquerade dance in the pavilion at one of the hotels up the lake, and had a glorious evening, but slipped away in their canoe, before unmasking time, back to the Blue Castle.

“It was lovely—but I don’t want to go again,” said Valancy.

So many hours a day Barney shut himself up in Bluebeard’s Chamber. Valancy never saw the inside of it. From the smells that filtered through at times she concluded he must be conducting chemical experiments—or counterfeiting money. Valancy supposed there must be smelly processes in making counterfeit money. But she did not trouble herself about it. She had no desire to peer into the locked chambers of Barney’s house of life. His past and his future concerned her not. Only this rapturous present. Nothing else mattered.

Once he went away and stayed away two days and nights. He had asked Valancy if she would be afraid to stay alone and she had said she would not. He never told her where he had been. She was not afraid to be alone, but she was horribly lonely. The sweetest sound she had ever heard was Lady Jane’s clatter through the woods when Barney returned. And then his signal whistle from the shore. She ran down to the landing rock to greet him—to nestle herself into his eager arms—they *did* seem eager.

“Have you missed me, Moonlight?” Barney was whispering.

“It seems a hundred years since you went away,” said Valancy.

“I won’t leave you again.”

“You must,” protested Valancy, “if you want to. I’d be miserable if I thought you wanted to go and didn’t, because of me. I want you to feel perfectly free.”

Barney laughed—a little cynically.

“There is no such thing as freedom on earth,” he said. “Only different kinds of bondages. And comparative bondages. *You* think you are free now because you’ve escaped from a peculiarly unbearable kind of bondage. But are you? You love me—*that’s* a bondage.”

“Who said or wrote that ‘the prison unto which we doom ourselves no prison is’?” asked Valancy dreamily, clinging to his arm as they climbed up the rock steps.

“Ah, now you have it,” said Barney. “That’s all the freedom we can hope for—the freedom to choose our prison. But, Moonlight,”—he stopped at the door of the Blue Castle and looked about him—at the glorious lake, the great, shadowy woods, the bonfires, the twinkling lights—“Moonlight, I’m glad to be home again. When I came down through the woods and saw my home lights—mine—gleaming out under the old pines—something I’d never seen before—oh, girl, I was glad—glad!”

But in spite of Barney’s doctrine of bondage, Valancy thought they were splendidly free. It was amazing to be able to sit up half the night and look at the moon if you wanted to. To be late for meals if you wanted to—she who had always been rebuked so sharply by her mother and so reproachfully by Cousin Stickles if she were one minute late. Dawdle over meals as long as you wanted to. Leave your crusts if you wanted to. Not come home at all for meals if you wanted to. Sit on a sun-warm rock and paddle your bare feet in the hot sand if you wanted to. Just sit and do nothing in the beautiful silence if you wanted to. In short, do any fool thing you wanted to whenever the notion took you. If *that* wasn’t freedom, what was?

Chapter XXX

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They didn't spend all their days on the island. They spent more than half of them wandering at will through the enchanted Muskoka country. Barney knew the woods as a book and he taught their lore and craft to Valancy. He could always find trail and haunt of the shy wood people. Valancy learned the different fairy-likenesses of the mosses—the charm and exquisiteness of woodland blossoms. She learned to know every bird at sight and mimic its call—though never so perfectly as Barney. She made friends with every kind of tree. She learned to paddle a canoe as well as Barney himself. She liked to be out in the rain and she never caught cold.

Sometimes they took a lunch with them and went berrying—strawberries and blueberries. How pretty blueberries were—the dainty green of the unripe berries, the glossy pinks and scarlets of the half ripens, the misty blue of the fully matured! And Valancy learned the real flavour of the strawberry in its highest perfection. There was a certain sunlit dell on the banks of Mistawis along which white birches grew on one side and on the other still, changeless ranks of young spruces. There were long grasses at the roots of the birches, combed down by the winds and wet with morning dew late into the afternoons. Here they found berries that might have graced the banquets of Lucullus, great ambrosial sweetnesses hanging like rubies to long, rosy stalks. They lifted them by the stalk and ate them from it, uncrushed and virgin, tasting each berry by itself with all its wild fragrance ensphered therein. When Valancy carried any of these berries home that elusive essence escaped and they became nothing more than the common berries of the market-place—very kitchenly good indeed, but not as they would have been, eaten in their birch dell until her fingers were stained as pink as Aurora's eyelids.

Or they went after water-lilies. Barney knew where to find them in the creeks and bays of Mistawis. Then the Blue Castle was glorious with them,

every receptacle that Valancy could contrive filled with the exquisite things. If not water lilies then cardinal flowers, fresh and vivid from the swamps of Mistawis, where they burned like ribbons of flame.

Sometimes they went troutng on little nameless rivers or hidden brooks on whose banks Naiads might have sunned their white, wet limbs. Then all they took with them were some raw potatoes and salt. They roasted the potatoes over a fire and Barney showed Valancy how to cook the trout by wrapping them in leaves, coating them with mud and baking them in a bed of hot coals. Never were such delicious meals. Valancy had such an appetite it was no wonder she put flesh on her bones.

Or they just prowled and explored through woods that always seemed to be expecting something wonderful to happen. At least, that was the way Valancy felt about them. Down the next hollow—over the next hill—you would find it.

“We don’t know where we’re going, but isn’t it fun to go?” Barney used to say.

Once or twice night overtook them, too far from their Blue Castle to get back. But Barney made a fragrant bed of bracken and fir boughs and they slept on it dreamlessly, under a ceiling of old spruces with moss hanging from them, while beyond them moonlight and the murmur of pines blended together so that one could hardly tell which was light and which was sound.

There were rainy days, of course, when Muskoka was a wet green land. Days when showers drifted across Mistawis like pale ghosts of rain and they never thought of staying in because of it. Days when it rained in right good earnest and they had to stay in. Then Barney shut himself up in Bluebeard’s Chamber and Valancy read, or dreamed on the wolfskins with Good Luck purring beside her and Banjo watching them suspiciously from his own peculiar chair. On Sunday evenings they paddled across to a point of land and walked from there through the woods to the little Free Methodist church. One felt really too happy for Sunday. Valancy had never really liked Sundays before.

And always, Sundays and weekdays, she was with Barney. Nothing else really mattered. And what a companion he was! How understanding! How jolly! How—how Barney-like! That summed it all up.

Valancy had taken some of her two hundred dollars out of the bank and spent it in pretty clothes. She had a little smoke-blue chiffon which she always put on when they spent the evenings at home—smoke-blue with touches of silver about it. It was after she began wearing it that Barney began calling her Moonlight.

“Moonlight and blue twilight—that is what you look like in that dress. I like it. It belongs to you. You aren’t exactly pretty, but you have some adorable beauty-spots. Your eyes. And that little kissable dent just between your collar bones. You have the wrist and ankle of an aristocrat. That little head of yours is beautifully shaped. And when you look backward over your shoulder you’re maddening—especially in twilight or moonlight. An elf maiden. A wood sprite. You belong to the woods, Moonlight—you should never be out of them. In spite of your ancestry, there is something wild and remote and untamed about you. And you have such a nice, sweet, throaty, summery voice. Such a nice voice for love-making.”

“Shure an’ ye’ve kissed the Blarney Stone,” scoffed Valancy. But she tasted these compliments for weeks.

She got a pale green bathing-suit, too—a garment which would have given her clan their deaths if they had ever seen her in it. Barney taught her how to swim. Sometimes she put her bathing-dress on when she got up and didn’t take it off until she went to bed—running down to the water for a plunge whenever she felt like it and sprawling on the sun-warm rocks to dry.

She had forgotten all the old humiliating things that used to come up against her in the night—the injustices and the disappointments. It was as if they had all happened to some other person—not to her, Valancy Snaith, who had always been happy.

“I understand now what it means to be born again,” she told Barney.

Holmes speaks of grief “staining backward” through the pages of life; but Valancy found her happiness had stained backward likewise and

flooded with rose-colour her whole previous drab existence. She found it hard to believe that she had ever been lonely and unhappy and afraid.

“When death comes, I shall have lived,” thought Valancy. “I shall have had my hour.”

And her dust-pile!

One day Valancy had heaped up the sand in the little island cove in a tremendous cone and stuck a gay little Union Jack on top of it.

“What are you celebrating?” Barney wanted to know.

“I’m just exorcising an old demon,” Valancy told him.

Chapter XXXI

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Autumn came. Late September with cool nights. They had to forsake the verandah; but they kindled a fire in the big fireplace and sat before it with jest and laughter. They left the doors open, and Banjo and Good Luck came and went at pleasure. Sometimes they sat gravely on the bearskin rug between Barney and Valancy; sometimes they slunk off into the mystery of the chill night outside. The stars smouldered in the horizon mists through the old oriel. The haunting, persistent croon of the pine-trees filled the air. The little waves began to make soft, sobbing splashes on the rocks below them in the rising winds. They needed no light but the firelight that sometimes leaped up and revealed them—sometimes shrouded them in shadow. When the night wind rose higher Barney would shut the door and light a lamp and read to her—poetry and essays and gorgeous, dim chronicles of ancient wars. Barney never would read novels: he vowed they bored him. But sometimes she read them herself, curled up on the wolf skins, laughing aloud in peace. For Barney was not one of those aggravating people who can never hear you smiling audibly over something you've read without inquiring placidly, "What is the joke?"

October—with a gorgeous pageant of colour around Mistawis, into which Valancy plunged her soul. Never had she imagined anything so splendid. A great, tinted peace. Blue, wind-winnowed skies. Sunlight sleeping in the glades of that fairyland. Long dreamy purple days paddling idly in their canoe along shores and up the rivers of crimson and gold. A sleepy, red hunter's moon. Enchanted tempests that stripped the leaves from the trees and heaped them along the shores. Flying shadows of clouds. What had all the smug, opulent lands out front to compare with this?

November—with uncanny witchery in its changed trees. With murky red sunsets flaming in smoky crimson behind the westering hills. With

dear days when the austere woods were beautiful and gracious in a dignified serenity of folded hands and closed eyes—days full of a fine, pale sunshine that sifted through the late, leafless gold of the juniper-trees and glimmered among the grey beeches, lighting up evergreen banks of moss and washing the colonnades of the pines. Days with a high-sprung sky of flawless turquoise. Days when an exquisite melancholy seemed to hang over the landscape and dream about the lake. But days, too, of the wild blackness of great autumn storms, followed by dank, wet, streaming nights when there was witch-laughter in the pines and fitful moans among the mainland trees. What cared they? Old Tom had built his roof well, and his chimney drew.

“Warm fire—books—comfort—safety from storm—our cats on the rug. Moonlight,” said Barney, “would you be any happier now if you had a million dollars?”

“No—nor half so happy. I’d be bored by conventions and obligations then.”

December. Early snows and Orion. The pale fires of the Milky Way. It was really winter now—wonderful, cold, starry winter. How Valancy had always hated winter! Dull, brief, uneventful days. Long, cold, companionless nights. Cousin Stickles with her back that had to be rubbed continually. Cousin Stickles making weird noises gargling her throat in the mornings. Cousin Stickles whining over the price of coal. Her mother, probing, questioning, ignoring. Endless colds and bronchitis—or the dread of it. Redfern’s Liniment and Purple Pills.

But now she loved winter. Winter was beautiful “up back”—almost intolerably beautiful. Days of clear brilliance. Evenings that were like cups of glamour—the purest vintage of winter’s wine. Nights with their fire of stars. Cold, exquisite winter sunrises. Lovely ferns of ice all over the windows of the Blue Castle. Moonlight on birches in a silver thaw. Ragged shadows on windy evenings—torn, twisted, fantastic shadows. Great silences, austere and searching. Jewelled, barbaric hills. The sun suddenly breaking through grey clouds over long, white Mistawis. Icy-grey twilights, broken by snow-squalls, when their cosy living-room, with

its goblins of firelight and inscrutable cats seemed cosier than ever. Every hour brought a new revelation and wonder.

Barney ran Lady Jane into Roaring Abel's barn and taught Valancy how to snowshoe—Valancy, who ought to be laid up with bronchitis. But Valancy had not even a cold. Later on in the winter Barney had a terrible one and Valancy nursed him through it with a dread of pneumonia in her heart. But Valancy's colds seemed to have gone where old moons go. Which was luck—for she hadn't even Redfern's Liniment. She had thoughtfully bought a bottle at the Port and Barney had hurled it into frozen Mistawis with a scowl.

"Bring no more of that devilish stuff here," he had ordered briefly. It was the first and last time he had spoken harshly to her.

They went for long tramps through the exquisite reticence of winter woods and the silver jungles of frosted trees, and found loveliness everywhere.

At times they seemed to be walking through a spellbound world of crystal and pearl, so white and radiant were clearings and lakes and sky. The air was so crisp and clear that it was half intoxicating.

Once they stood in a hesitation of ecstasy at the entrance of a narrow path between ranks of birches. Every twig and spray was outlined in snow. The undergrowth along its sides was a little fairy forest cut out of marble. The shadows cast by the pale sunshine were fine and spiritual.

"Come away," said Barney, turning. "We must not commit the desecration of tramping through there."

One evening they came upon a snowdrift far back in an old clearing which was in the exact likeness of a beautiful woman's profile. Seen too close by, the resemblance was lost, as in the fairy-tale of the Castle of St. John. Seen from behind, it was a shapeless oddity. But at just the right distance and angle the outline was so perfect that when they came suddenly upon it, gleaming out against the dark background of spruce in the glow of winter sunset they both exclaimed in amazement. There was a low, noble brow, a straight, classic nose, lips and chin and cheek-curve modelled as if some goddess of old time had sat to the sculptor, and a

breast of such cold, swelling purity as the very spirit of the winter woods might display.

“ ‘All the beauty that old Greece and Rome, sung, painted, taught’, ” quoted Barney.

“And to think no human eyes save ours have seen or will see it,” breathed Valancy, who felt at times as if she were living in a book by John Foster. As she looked around her she recalled some passages she had marked in the new Foster book Barney had brought her from the Port—with an adjuration not to expect *him* to read or listen to it.

“ ‘All the tintings of winter woods are extremely delicate and elusive’, ” recalled Valancy. “ ‘When the brief afternoon wanes and the sun just touches the tops of the hills, there seems to be all over the woods an abundance, not of colour, but of the spirit of colour. There is really nothing but pure white after all, but one has the impression of fairy-like blendings of rose and violet, opal and heliotrope on the slopes—in the dingles and along the curves of the forest-land. You feel sure the tint is there, but when you look at it directly it is gone. From the corner of your eye you are aware that it is lurking over yonder in a spot where there was nothing but pale purity a moment ago. Only just when the sun is setting is there a fleeting moment of real colour. Then the redness streams out over the snow and incarnadines the hills and rivers and smites the crest of the pines with flame. Just a few minutes of transfiguration and revelation—and it is gone.’ ”

“I wonder if John Foster ever spent a winter in Mistawis,” said Valancy.

“Not likely,” scoffed Barney. “People who write tosh like that generally write it in a warm house on some smug city street.”

“You are too hard on John Foster,” said Valancy severely. “No one could have written that little paragraph I read you last night without having seen it first—you know he couldn’t.”

“I didn’t listen to it,” said Barney morosely. “You know I told you I wouldn’t.”

“Then you’ve got to listen to it now,” persisted Valancy. She made him stand still on his snowshoes while she repeated it.

“ ‘She is a rare artist, this old Mother Nature, who works “for the joy of working” and not in any spirit of vain show. Today the fir woods are a symphony of greens and greys, so subtle that you cannot tell where one shade begins to be the other. Grey trunk, green bough, grey-green moss above the white, grey-shadowed floor. Yet the old gypsy doesn’t like unrelieved monotonies. She must have a dash of colour. See it. A broken dead fir bough, of a beautiful red-brown, swinging among the beards of moss’ .”

“Good Lord, do you learn all that fellow’s books by heart?” was Barney’s disgusted reaction as he strode off.

“John Foster’s books were all that saved my soul alive the past five years,” averred Valancy. “Oh, Barney, look at that exquisite filigree of snow in the furrows of that old elm-tree trunk.”

When they came out to the lake they changed from snowshoes to skates and skated home. For a wonder Valancy had learned, when she was a little schoolgirl, to skate on the pond behind the Deerwood school. She never had any skates of her own, but some of the other girls had lent her theirs and she seemed to have a natural knack of it. Uncle Benjamin had once promised her a pair of skates for Christmas, but when Christmas came he had given her rubbers instead. She had never skated since she grew up, but the old trick came back quickly, and glorious were the hours she and Barney spent skimming over the white lakes and past the dark islands where the summer cottages were closed and silent. Tonight they flew down Mistawis before the wind, in an exhilaration that crimsoned Valancy’s cheeks under her white tam. And at the end was her dear little house, on the island of pines, with a coating of snow on its roof, sparkling in the moonlight. Its windows glinted impishly at her in the stray gleams.

“Looks exactly like a picture-book, doesn’t it?” said Barney.

They had a lovely Christmas. No rush. No scramble. No niggling attempts to make ends meet. No wild effort to remember whether she hadn’t given the same kind of present to the same person two Christmases

before—no mob of last-minute shoppers—no dreary family “reunions” where she sat mute and unimportant—no attacks of “nerves.” They decorated the Blue Castle with pine boughs, and Valancy made delightful little tinsel stars and hung them up amid the greenery. She cooked a dinner to which Barney did full justice, while Good Luck and Banjo picked the bones.

“A land that can produce a goose like that is an admirable land,” vowed Barney. “Canada forever!” And they drank to the Union Jack a bottle of dandelion wine that Cousin Georgiana had given Valancy along with the bedspread.

“One never knows,” Cousin Georgiana had said solemnly, “when one may need a little stimulant.”

Barney had asked Valancy what she wanted for a Christmas present.

“Something frivolous and unnecessary,” said Valancy, who had got a pair of goloshes last Christmas and two long-sleeved, woolen undervests the year before. And so on back.

To her delight, Barney gave her a necklace of pearl beads. Valancy had wanted a string of milky pearl beads—like congealed moonshine—all her life. And these were so pretty. All that worried her was that they were really too good. They must have cost a great deal—fifteen dollars, at least. Could Barney afford that? She didn’t know a thing about his finances. She had refused to let him buy any of her clothes—she had enough for that, she told him, as long as she would need clothes. In a round, black jar on the chimney-piece Barney put money for their household expenses—always enough. The jar was never empty, though Valancy never caught him replenishing it. He couldn’t have much, of course, and that necklace—but Valancy tossed care aside. She would wear it and enjoy it. It was the first pretty thing she had ever had.

Chapter XXXII

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New year. The old, shabby, inglorious outlived calendar came down. The new one went up. January was a month of storms. It snowed for three weeks on end. The thermometer went miles below zero and stayed there. But, as Barney and Valancy pointed out to each other, there were no mosquitoes. And the roar and crackle of their big fire drowned the howls of the north wind. Good Luck and Banjo waxed fat and developed resplendent coats of thick, silky fur. Nip and Tuck had gone.

“But they’ll come back in spring,” promised Barney.

There was no monotony. Sometimes they had dramatic little private spats that never even thought of becoming quarrels. Sometimes Roaring Abel dropped in—for an evening or a whole day—with his old tartan cap and his long red beard coated with snow. He generally brought his fiddle and played for them, to the delight of all except Banjo, who would go temporarily insane and retreat under Valancy’s bed. Sometimes Abel and Barney talked while Valancy made candy for them; sometimes they sat and smoked in silence *à la* Tennyson and Carlyle, until the Blue Castle reeked and Valancy fled to the open. Sometimes they played checkers fiercely and silently the whole night through. Sometimes they all ate the russet apples Abel had brought, while the jolly old clock ticked the delightful minutes away.

“A plate of apples, an open fire, and ‘a jolly goode booke’ are a fair substitute for heaven,” vowed Barney. “Any one can have the streets of gold. Let’s have another whack at Carman.”

It was easier now for the Stirlings to believe Valancy of the dead. Not even dim rumours of her having been over at the Port came to trouble them, though she and Barney used to skate there occasionally to see a movie and eat hot dogs shamelessly at the corner stand afterwards. Presumably none of the Stirlings ever thought about her—except Cousin

Georgiana, who used to lie awake worrying about poor Doss. Did she have enough to eat? Was that dreadful creature good to her? Was she warm enough at nights?

Valancy was quite warm at nights. She used to wake up and revel silently in the cosiness of those winter nights on that little island in the frozen lake. The nights of other winters had been so cold and long. Valancy hated to wake up in them and think about the bleakness and emptiness of the day that had passed and the bleakness and emptiness of the day that would come. Now she almost counted that night lost on which she didn't wake up and lie awake for half an hour just being happy, while Barney's regular breathing went on beside her, and through the open door the smouldering brands in the fireplace winked at her in the gloom. It was very nice to feel a little Lucky cat jump up on your bed in the darkness and snuggle down at your feet, purring; but Banjo would be sitting dourly by himself out in front of the fire like a brooding demon. At such moments Banjo was anything but canny, but Valancy loved his uncanniness.

The side of the bed had to be right against the window. There was no other place for it in the tiny room. Valancy, lying there, could look out of the window, through the big pine boughs that actually touched it, away up Mistawis, white and lustrous as a pavement of pearl, or dark and terrible in the storm. Sometimes the pine boughs tapped against the panes with friendly signals. Sometimes she heard the little hissing whisper of snow against them right at her side. Some nights the whole outer world seemed given over to the empery of silence; then came nights when there would be a majestic sweep of wind in the pines; nights of dear starlight when it whistled freakishly and joyously around the Blue Castle; brooding nights before storm when it crept along the floor of the lake with a low, wailing cry of brooding and mystery. Valancy wasted many perfectly good sleeping hours in these delightful communings. But she could sleep as long in the morning as she wanted to. Nobody cared. Barney cooked his own breakfast of bacon and eggs and then shut himself up in Bluebeard's Chamber till supper time. Then they had an evening of reading and talk. They talked about everything in this world and a good many things in

other worlds. They laughed over their own jokes until the Blue Castle re-echoed.

“You *do* laugh beautifully,” Barney told her once. “It makes me want to laugh just to hear you laugh. There’s a trick about your laugh—as if there were so much more fun back of it that you wouldn’t let out. Did you laugh like that before you came to Mistawis, Moonlight?”

“I never laughed at all—really. I used to giggle foolishly when I felt I was expected to. But now—the laugh just comes.”

It struck Valancy more than once that Barney himself laughed a great deal oftener than he used to and that his laugh had changed. It had become wholesome. She rarely heard the little cynical note in it now. Could a man laugh like that who had crimes on his conscience? Yet Barney *must* have done something. Valancy had indifferently made up her mind as to what he had done. She concluded he was a defaulting bank cashier. She had found in one of Barney’s books an old clipping cut from a Montreal paper in which a vanished, defaulting cashier was described. The description applied to Barney—as well as to half a dozen other men Valancy knew—and from some casual remarks he had dropped from time to time she concluded he knew Montreal rather well. Valancy had it all figured out in the back of her mind. Barney had been in a bank. He was tempted to take some money to speculate—meaning, of course, to put it back. He had got in deeper and deeper, until he found there was nothing for it but flight. It had happened so to scores of men. He had, Valancy was absolutely certain, never meant to do wrong. Of course, the name of the man in the clipping was Bernard Craig. But Valancy had always thought Snaith was an alias. Not that it mattered.

Valancy had only one unhappy night that winter. It came in late March when most of the snow had gone and Nip and Tuck had returned. Barney had gone off in the afternoon for a long, woodland tramp, saying he would be back by dark if all went well. Soon after he had gone it had begun to snow. The wind rose and presently Mistawis was in the grip of one of the worst storms of the winter. It tore up the lake and struck at the little house. The dark angry woods on the mainland scowled at Valancy, menace in the

toss of their boughs, threats in their windy gloom, terror in the roar of their hearts. The trees on the island crouched in fear. Valancy spent the night huddled on the rug before the fire, her face buried in her hands, when she was not vainly peering from the oriel in a futile effort to see through the furious smoke of wind and snow that had once been blue-dimpled Mistawis. Where was Barney? Lost on the merciless lakes? Sinking exhausted in the drifts of the pathless woods? Valancy died a hundred deaths that night and paid in full for all the happiness of her Blue Castle. When morning came the storm broke and cleared; the sun shone gloriously over Mistawis; and at noon Barney came home. Valancy saw him from the oriel as he came around a wooded point, slender and black against the glistening white world. She did not run to meet him. Something happened to her knees and she dropped down on Banjo's chair. Luckily Banjo got out from under in time, his whiskers bristling with indignation. Barney found her there, her head buried in her hands.

"Barney, I thought you were dead," she whispered.

Barney hooted.

"After two years of the Klondike did you think a baby storm like this could get me? I spent the night in that old lumber shanty over by Muskoka. A bit cold but snug enough. Little goose! Your eyes look like burnt holes in a blanket. Did you sit up here all night worrying over an old woodsman like me?"

"Yes," said Valancy. "I—couldn't help it. The storm seemed so wild. Anybody might have been lost in it. When—I saw you—come round the point—there—something happened to me. I don't know what. It was as if I had died and come back to life. I can't describe it any other way."

Chapter XXXIII

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Spring. Mistawis black and sullen for a week or two, then flaming in sapphire and turquoise, lilac and rose again, laughing through the oriel, caressing its amethyst islands, rippling under winds soft as silk. Frogs, little green wizards of swamp and pool, singing everywhere in the long twilights and long into the nights; islands fairy-like in a green haze; the evanescent beauty of wild young trees in early leaf; frost-like loveliness of the new foliage of juniper-trees; the woods putting on a fashion of spring flowers, dainty, spiritual things akin to the soul of the wilderness; red mist on the maples; willows decked out with glossy silver pussies; all the forgotten violets of Mistawis blooming again; lure of April moons.

“Think how many thousands of springs have been here on Mistawis—and all of them beautiful,” said Valancy. “Oh, Barney, look at that wild plum! I will—I must quote from John Foster. There’s a passage in one of his books—I’ve re-read it a hundred times. He must have written it before a tree just like that:

“ ‘Behold the young wild plum-tree which has adorned herself after immemorial fashion in a wedding-veil of fine lace. The fingers of wood pixies must have woven it, for nothing like it ever came from an earthly loom. I vow the tree is conscious of its loveliness. It is bridling before our very eyes—as if its beauty were not the most ephemeral thing in the woods, as it is the rarest and most exceeding, for today it is and tomorrow it is not. Every south wind purring through the boughs will winnow away a shower of slender petals. But what matter? Today it is queen of the wild places and it is always today in the woods’.”

“I’m sure you feel much better since you’ve got that out of your system,” said Barney heartlessly.

“Here’s a patch of dandelions,” said Valancy, unsubdued. “Dandelions shouldn’t grow in the woods, though. They haven’t any sense of the fitness

of things at all. They are too cheerful and self-satisfied. They haven't any of the mystery and reserve of the real wood-flowers."

"In short, they've no secrets," said Barney. "But wait a bit. The woods will have their own way even with those obvious dandelions. In a little while all that obtrusive yellowness and complacency will be gone and we'll find here misty, phantom-like globes hovering over those long grasses in full harmony with the traditions of the forest."

"That sounds John Fosterish," teased Valancy.

"What have I done that deserved a slam like that?" complained Barney.

One of the earliest signs of spring was the renaissance of Lady Jane. Barney put her on roads that no other car would look at, and they went through Deerwood in mud to the axles. They passed several Stirlings, who groaned and reflected that now spring was come they would encounter that shameless pair everywhere. Valancy, prowling about Deerwood shops, met Uncle Benjamin on the street; but he did not realise until he had gone two blocks further on that the girl in the scarlet-collared blanket coat, with cheeks reddened in the sharp April air and the fringe of black hair over laughing, slanted eyes, was Valancy. When he did realise it, Uncle Benjamin was indignant. What business had Valancy to look like—like—like a young girl? The way of the transgressor was hard. Had to be. Scriptural and proper. Yet Valancy's path couldn't be hard. She wouldn't look like that if it were. There was something wrong. It was almost enough to make a man turn modernist.

Barney and Valancy clanged on to the Port, so that it was dark when they went through Deerwood again. At her old home Valancy, seized with a sudden impulse, got out, opened the little gate and tiptoed around to the sitting-room window. There sat her mother and Cousin Stickles drearily, grimly knitting. Baffling and inhuman as ever. If they had looked the least bit lonesome Valancy would have gone in. But they did not. Valancy would not disturb them for worlds.

Chapter XXXIV

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Valancy had two wonderful moments that spring.

One day, coming home through the woods, with her arms full of trailing arbutus and creeping spruce, she met a man who she knew must be Allan Tierney. Allan Tierney, the celebrated painter of beautiful women. He lived in New York in winter, but he owned an island cottage at the northern end of Mistawis to which he always came the minute the ice was out of the lake. He was reputed to be a lonely, eccentric man. He never flattered his sitters. There was no need to, for he would not paint any one who required flattery. To be painted by Allan Tierney was all the *cachet* of beauty a woman could desire. Valancy had heard so much about him that she couldn't help turning her head back over her shoulder for another shy, curious look at him. A shaft of pale spring sunlight fell through a great pine athwart her bare black head and her slanted eyes. She wore a pale green sweater and had bound a fillet of linnaea vine about her hair. The feathery fountain of trailing spruce overflowed her arms and fell around her. Allan Tierney's eyes lighted up.

"I've had a caller," said Barney the next afternoon, when Valancy had returned from another flower quest.

"Who?" Valancy was surprised but indifferent. She began filling a basket with arbutus.

"Allan Tierney. He wants to paint you, Moonlight."

"Me!" Valancy dropped her basket and her arbutus. "You're laughing at me, Barney."

"I'm not. That's what Tierney came for. To ask my permission to paint my wife—as the Spirit of Muskoka, or something like that."

"But—but—" stammered Valancy, "Allan Tierney never paints any but —any but—"

“Beautiful women,” finished Barney. “Conceded. Q. E. D., Mistress Barney Snaith is a beautiful woman.”

“Nonsense,” said Valancy, stooping to retrieve her arbutus. “You *know* that’s nonsense, Barney. I know I’m a heap better-looking than I was a year ago, but I’m not beautiful.”

“Allan Tierney never makes a mistake,” said Barney. “You forget, Moonlight, that there are different kinds of beauty. Your imagination is obsessed by the very obvious type of your cousin Olive. Oh, I’ve seen her—she’s a stunner—but you’d never catch Allan Tierney wanting to paint her. In the horrible but expressive slang phrase, she keeps all her goods in the shop-window. But in your subconscious mind you have a conviction that nobody can be beautiful who doesn’t look like Olive. Also, you remember your face as it was in the days when your soul was not allowed to shine through it. Tierney said something about the curve of your cheek as you looked back over your shoulder. You know I’ve often told you it was distracting. And he’s quite batty about your eyes. If I wasn’t absolutely sure it was solely professional—he’s really a crabbed old bachelor, you know—I’d be jealous.”

“Well, I don’t want to be painted,” said Valancy. “I hope you told him that.”

“I couldn’t tell him that. I didn’t know what *you* wanted. But I told him *I* didn’t want my wife painted—hung up in a salon for the mob to stare at. Belonging to another man. For of course I couldn’t buy the picture. So even if you had wanted to be painted, Moonlight, your tyrannous husband would not have permitted it. Tierney was a bit squiffy. He isn’t used to being turned down like that. His requests are almost like royalty’s.”

“But we are outlaws,” laughed Valancy. “We bow to no decrees—we acknowledge no sovereignty.”

In her heart she thought unashamedly:

“I wish Olive could know that Allan Tierney wanted to paint me. *Me!* Little-old-maid-Valancy-Stirling-that-was.”

Her second wonder-moment came one evening in May. She realised that Barney actually liked her. She had always hoped he did, but

sometimes she had a little, disagreeable, haunting dread that he was just kind and nice and chummy out of pity; knowing that she hadn't long to live and determined she should have a good time as long as she did live; but away back in his mind rather looking forward to freedom again, with no intrusive woman creature in his island fastness and no chattering thing beside him in his woodland prowls. She knew he could never love her. She did not even want him to. If he loved her he would be unhappy when she died—Valancy never flinched from the plain word. No “passing away” for her. And she did not want him to be the least unhappy. But neither did she want him to be glad—or relieved. She wanted him to like her and miss her as a good chum. But she had never been sure until this night that he did.

They had walked over the hills in the sunset. They had the delight of discovering a virgin spring in a ferny hollow and had drunk together from it out of a birch-bark cup; they had come to an old tumble-down rail fence and sat on it for a long time. They didn't talk much, but Valancy had a curious sense of *oneness*. She knew that she couldn't have felt that if he hadn't liked her.

“You nice little thing,” said Barney suddenly. “Oh, you nice little thing! Sometimes I feel you're too nice to be real—that I'm just dreaming you.”

“Why can't I die now—this very minute—when I am so happy!” thought Valancy.

Well, it couldn't be so very long now. Somehow, Valancy had always felt she would live out the year Dr. Trent had allotted. She had not been careful—she had never tried to be. But, somehow, she had always counted on living out her year. She had not let herself think about it at all. But now, sitting here beside Barney, with her hand in his, a sudden realisation came to her. She had not had a heart attack for a long while—two months at least. The last one she had had was two or three nights before Barney was out in the storm. Since then she had not remembered she had a heart. Well, no doubt, it betokened the nearness of the end. Nature had given up the struggle. There would be no more pain.

“I’m afraid heaven will be very dull after this past year,” thought Valancy. “But perhaps one will not remember. Would that be—nice? No, no. I don’t want to forget Barney. I’d rather be miserable in heaven remembering him than happy forgetting him. And I’ll always remember through all eternity—that he really, *really* liked me.”

Chapter XXXV

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Thirty seconds can be very long sometimes. Long enough to work a miracle or a revolution. In thirty seconds life changed wholly for Barney and Valancy Snaith.

They had gone around the lake one June evening in their disappearing propeller, fished for an hour in a little creek, left their boat there, and walked up through the woods to Port Lawrence two miles away. Valancy prowled a bit in the shops and got herself a new pair of sensible shoes. Her old pair had suddenly and completely given out, and this evening she had been compelled to put on the little fancy pair of patent-leather with rather high, slender heels, which she had bought in a fit of folly one day in the winter because of their beauty and because she wanted to make one foolish, extravagant purchase in her life. She sometimes put them on of an evening in the Blue Castle, but this was the first time she had worn them outside. She had not found it any too easy walking up through the woods in them, and Barney geyed her unmercifully about them. But in spite of the inconvenience, Valancy secretly rather liked the look of her trim ankles and high instep above those pretty, foolish shoes and did not change them in the shop as she might have done.

The sun was hanging low above the pines when they left Port Lawrence. To the north of it the woods closed around the town quite suddenly. Valancy always had a sense of stepping from one world to another—from reality to fairyland—when she went out of Port Lawrence and in a twinkling found it shut off behind her by the armies of the pines.

A mile and a half from Port Lawrence there was a small railroad station with a little station-house which at this hour of the day was deserted, since no local train was due. Not a soul was in sight when Barney and Valancy emerged from the woods. Off to the left a sudden curve in the track hid it from view, but over the tree-tops beyond, the long plume of

smoke betokened the approach of a through train. The rails were vibrating to its thunder as Barney stepped across the switch. Valancy was a few steps behind him, loitering to gather June-bells along the little, winding path. But there was plenty of time to get across before the train came. She stepped unconcernedly over the first rail.

She could never tell how it happened. The ensuing thirty seconds always seemed in her recollection like a chaotic nightmare in which she endured the agony of a thousand lifetimes.

The heel of her pretty, foolish shoe caught in a crevice of the switch. She could not pull it loose. “Barney—Barney!” she called in alarm. Barney turned—saw her predicament—saw her ashen face—dashed back. He tried to pull her clear—he tried to wrench her foot from the prisoning hold. In vain. In a moment the train would sweep around the curve—would be on them.

“Go—go—quick—you’ll be killed, Barney!” shrieked Valancy, trying to push him away.

Barney dropped on his knees, ghost-white, frantically tearing at her shoe-lace. The knot defied his trembling fingers. He snatched a knife from his pocket and slashed at it. Valancy still strove blindly to push him away. Her mind was full of the hideous thought that Barney was going to be killed. She had no thought for her own danger.

“Barney—go—go—for God’s sake—go!”

“Never!” muttered Barney between his set teeth. He gave one mad wrench at the lace. As the train thundered around the curve he sprang up and caught Valancy—dragging her clear, leaving the shoe behind her. The wind from the train as it swept by turned to icy cold the streaming perspiration on his face.

“Thank God!” he breathed.

For a moment they stood stupidly staring at each other, two white, shaken, wild-eyed creatures. Then they stumbled over to the little seat at the end of the station-house and dropped on it. Barney buried his face in his hands and said not a word. Valancy sat, staring straight ahead of her with unseeing eyes at the great pine woods, the stumps of the clearing, the

long, gleaming rails. There was only one thought in her dazed mind—a thought that seemed to burn it as a shaving of fire might burn her body.

Dr. Trent had told her over a year ago that she had a serious form of heart-disease—that any excitement might be fatal.

If that were so, why was she not dead now? This very minute? She had just experienced as much and as terrible excitement as most people experience in a lifetime, crowded into that endless thirty seconds. Yet she had not died of it. She was not an iota the worse for it. A little wobbly at the knees, as any one would have been; a quicker heart-beat, as any one would have; nothing more.

Why!

Was it possible Dr. Trent had made a mistake?

Valancy shivered as if a cold wind had suddenly chilled her to the soul. She looked at Barney, hunched up beside her. His silence was very eloquent: Had the same thought occurred to him? Did he suddenly find himself confronted by the appalling suspicion that he was married, not for a few months or a year, but for good and all to a woman he did not love and who had foisted herself upon him by some trick or lie? Valancy turned sick before the horror of it. It could not be. It would be too cruel—too devilish. Dr. Trent *couldn't* have made a mistake. Impossible. He was one of the best heart specialists in Ontario. She was foolish—unnerved by the recent horror. She remembered some of the hideous spasms of pain she had had. There must be something serious the matter with her heart to account for them.

But she had not had any for nearly three months.

Why!

Presently Barney bestirred himself. He stood up, without looking at Valancy, and said casually:

“I suppose we’d better be hiking back. Sun’s getting low. Are your good for the rest of the road?”

“I think so,” said Valancy miserably.

Barney went across the clearing and picked up the parcel he had dropped—the parcel containing her new shoes. He brought it to her and let

her take out the shoes and put them on without any assistance, while he stood with his back to her and looked out over the pines.

They walked in silence down the shadowy trail to the lake. In silence Barney steered his boat into the sunset miracle that was Mistawis. In silence they went around feathery headlands and across coral bays and silver rivers where canoes were slipping up and down in the afterglow. In silence they went past cottages echoing with music and laughter. In silence drew up at the landing-place below the Blue Castle.

Valancy went up the rock steps and into the house. She dropped miserably on the first chair she came to and sat there staring through the oriel, oblivious of Good Luck's frantic purrs of joy and Banjo's savage glares of protest at her occupancy of his chair.

Barney came in a few minutes later. He did not come near her, but he stood behind her and asked gently if she felt any the worse for her experience. Valancy would have given her year of happiness to have been able honestly to answer "Yes."

"No," she said flatly.

Barney went into Bluebeard's Chamber and shut the door. She heard him pacing up and down—up and down. He had never paced like that before.

And an hour ago—only an hour ago—she had been so happy!

Chapter XXXVI

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Finally Valancy went to bed. Before she went she re-read Dr. Trent's letter. It comforted her a little. So positive. So assured. The writing so black and steady. Not the writing of a man who didn't know what he was writing about. But she could not sleep. She pretended to be asleep when Barney came in. Barney pretended to go to sleep. But Valancy knew perfectly well he wasn't sleeping any more than she was. She knew he was lying there, staring through the darkness. Thinking of what? Trying to face—what?

Valancy, who had spent so many happy wakeful hours of night lying by that window, now paid the price of them all in this one night of misery. A horrible, portentous fact was slowly looming out before her from the nebula of surmise and fear. She could not shut her eyes to it—push it away—ignore it.

There could be nothing seriously wrong with her heart, no matter what Dr. Trent had said. If there had been, those thirty seconds would have killed her. It was no use to recall Dr. Trent's letter and reputation. The greatest specialists made mistakes sometimes. Dr. Trent had made one.

Towards morning Valancy fell into a fitful doze with ridiculous dreams. One of them was of Barney taunting her with having tricked him. In her dream she lost her temper and struck him violently on the head with her rolling-pin. He proved to be made of glass and shattered into splinters all over the floor. She woke with a cry of horror—a gasp of relief—a short laugh over the absurdity of her dream—a miserable sickening recollection of what had happened.

Barney was gone. Valancy knew, as people sometimes know things—inescapably, without being told—that he was not in the house or in Bluebeard's Chamber either. There was a curious silence in the living-room. A silence with something uncanny about it. The old clock had stopped. Barney must have forgotten to wind it up, something he had never

done before. The room without it was dead, though the sunshine streamed in through the oriel and dimples of light from the dancing waves beyond quivered over the walls.

The canoe was gone but Lady Jane was under the mainland trees. So Barney had betaken himself to the wilds. He would not return till night—perhaps not even then. He must be angry with her. That furious silence of his must mean anger—cold, deep, justifiable resentment. Well, Valancy knew what she must do first. She was not suffering very keenly now. Yet the curious numbness that pervaded her being was in a way worse than pain. It was as if something in her had died. She forced herself to cook and eat a little breakfast. Mechanically she put the Blue Castle in perfect order. Then she put on her hat and coat, locked the door and hid the key in the hollow of the old pine and crossed to the mainland in the motor boat. She was going into Deerwood to see Dr. Trent. She must *know*.

Chapter XXXVII

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Dr. Trent looked at her blankly and fumbled among his recollections.

“Er—Miss—Miss—”

“Mrs. Snaith,” said Valancy quietly. “I was Miss Valancy Stirling when I came to you last May—over a year ago. I wanted to consult you about my heart.”

Dr. Trent’s face cleared.

“Oh, of course. I remember now. I’m really not to blame for not knowing you. You’ve changed—splendidly. And married. Well, well, it has agreed with you. You don’t look much like an invalid now, hey? I remember that day. I was badly upset. Hearing about poor Ned bowled me over. But Ned’s as good as new and you, too, evidently. I told you so, you know—told you there was nothing to worry over.”

Valancy looked at him.

“You told me, in your letter,” she said slowly, with a curious feeling that some one else was talking through her lips, “that I had angina pectoris—in the last stages—complicated with an aneurism. That I might die any minute—that I couldn’t live longer than a year.”

Dr. Trent stared at her.

“Impossible!” he said blankly. “I couldn’t have told you that!”

Valancy took his letter from her bag and handed it to him.

“Miss Valancy Stirling,” he read. “Yes—yes. Of course I wrote you—on the train—that night. But I *told* you there was nothing serious—”

“Read your letter,” insisted Valancy.

Dr. Trent took it out—unfolded it—glanced over it. A dismayed look came into his face. He jumped to his feet and strode agitatedly about the room.

“Good heavens! This is the letter I meant for old Miss Jane Sterling. From Port Lawrence. She was here that day, too. I sent you the wrong

letter. What unpardonable carelessness! But I was beside myself that night. My God, and you believed that—you believed—but you didn't—you went to another doctor—"

Valancy stood up, turned round, looked foolishly about her and sat down again.

"I believed it," she said faintly. "I didn't go to any other doctor. I—I—it would take too long to explain. But I believed I was going to die soon."

Dr. Trent halted before her.

"I can never forgive myself. What a year you must have had! But you don't look—I can't understand!"

"Never mind," said Valancy dully. "And so there's nothing the matter with my heart?"

"Well, nothing serious. You had what is called pseudo-angina. It's never fatal—passes away completely with proper treatment. Or sometimes with a shock of joy. Have you been troubled much with it?"

"Not at all since March," answered Valancy. She remembered the marvellous feeling of re-creation she had had when she saw Barney coming home safe after the storm. Had that "shock of joy" cured her?

"Then likely you're all right. I told you what to do in the letter you should have got. *And* of course I supposed you'd go to another doctor. Child, why didn't you?"

"I didn't want anybody to know."

"Idiot," said Dr. Trent bluntly. "I can't understand such folly. And poor old Miss Sterling. She must have got your letter—telling her there was nothing serious the matter. Well, well, it couldn't have made any difference. Her case was hopeless. Nothing that she could have done or left undone could have made any difference. I was surprised she lived as long as she did—two months. She was here that day—not long before you. I hated to tell her the truth. You think I'm a blunt old curmudgeon—and my letters *are* blunt enough. I can't soften things. But I'm a snivelling coward when it comes to telling a woman face to face that she's got to die soon. I told her I'd look up some features of the case I wasn't quite sure of and let

her know next day. But you got her letter—look here, ‘Dear Miss S-t-e-r-l-i-n-g’.”

“Yes. I noticed that. But I thought it a mistake. I didn’t know there were any Sterlings in Port Lawrence.”

“She was the only one. A lonely old soul. Lived by herself with only a little home girl. She died two months after she was here—died in her sleep. My mistake couldn’t have made any difference to her. But you! I can’t forgive myself for inflicting a year’s misery on you. It’s time I retired, all right, when I do things like that—even if my son was supposed to be fatally injured. Can you ever forgive me?”

A year of misery! Valancy smiled a tortured smile as she thought of all the happiness Dr. Trent’s mistake had bought her. But she was paying for it now—oh, she was paying. If to feel was to live she was living with a vengeance.

She let Dr. Trent examine her and answered all his questions. When he told her she was fit as a fiddle and would probably live to be a hundred, she got up and went away silently. She knew that there were a great many horrible things outside waiting to be thought over. Dr. Trent thought she was odd. Anybody would have thought, from her hopeless eyes and woebegone face, that he had given her a sentence of death instead of life. Snaith? Snaith? Who the devil had she married? He had never heard of Snaiths in Deerwood. And she had been such a sallow, faded, little old maid. Gad, but marriage *had* made a difference in her, anyhow, whoever Snaith was. Snaith? Dr. Trent remembered. That rascalion “up back!” Had Valancy Stirling married *him*? And her clan had let her! Well, probably that solved the mystery. She had married in haste and repented at leisure, and that was why she wasn’t overjoyed at learning she was a good insurance prospect, after all. Married! To God knew whom! Or what! Jailbird? Defaulter? Fugitive from justice? It must be pretty bad if she had looked to death as a release, poor girl. But why were women such fools? Dr. Trent dismissed Valancy from his mind, though to the day of his death he was ashamed of putting those letters into the wrong envelopes.

Chapter XXXVIII

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Valancy walked quickly through the back streets and through Lover's Lane. She did not want to meet any one she knew. She didn't want to meet even people she didn't know. She hated to be seen. Her mind was so confused, so torn, so messy. She felt that her appearance must be the same. She drew a sobbing breath of relief as she left the village behind and found herself on the "up back" road. There was little fear of meeting any one she knew here. The cars that fled by her with raucous shrieks were filled with strangers. One of them was packed with young people who whirled past her singing uproariously:

“My wife has the fever, O then,
My wife has the fever, O then,
My wife has the fever,
Oh, I hope it won't leave her,
For I want to be single again.”

Valancy flinched as if one of them had leaned from the car and cut her across the face with a whip.

She had made a covenant with death and death had cheated her. Now life stood mocking her. She had trapped Barney. Trapped him into marrying her. And divorce was so hard to get in Ontario. So expensive. And Barney was poor.

With life, fear had come back into her heart. Sickening fear. Fear of what Barney would think. Would say. Fear of the future that must be lived without him. Fear of her insulted, repudiated clan.

She had had one draught from a divine cup and now it was dashed from her lips. With no kind, friendly death to rescue her. She must go on living and longing for it. Everything was spoiled, smirched, defaced. Even that year in the Blue Castle. Even her unashamed love for Barney. It had been

beautiful because death waited. Now it was only sordid because death was gone. How could any one bear an unbearable thing?

She must go back and tell him. Make him believe she had not meant to trick him—she *must* make him believe that. She must say good-bye to her Blue Castle and return to the brick house on Elm Street. Back to everything she had thought left behind forever. The old bondage—the old fears. But that did not matter. All that mattered now was that Barney must somehow be made to believe she had not consciously tricked him.

When Valancy reached the pines by the lake she was brought out of her daze of pain by a startling sight. There, parked by the side of old, battered ragged Lady Jane, was another car. A wonderful car. A purple car. Not a dark, royal purple but a blatant, screaming purple. It shone like a mirror and its interior plainly indicated the car caste of Vere de Vere. In the driver's seat sat a haughty chauffeur in livery. And in the tonneau sat a man who opened the door and bounced out nimbly as Valancy came down the path to the landing-place. He stood under the pines waiting for her and Valancy took in every detail of him.

A stout, short, pudgy man, with a broad, rubicund, good-humoured face—a clean-shaven face, though an unparalysed little imp at the back of Valancy's paralysed mind suggested the thought, "Such a face should have a fringe of white whisker around it." Old-fashioned, steel-rimmed spectacles on prominent blue eyes. A purse-mouth; a little round, knobby nose. Where—where—where, groped Valancy, had she seen that face before? It seemed as familiar to her as her own.

The stranger wore a green hat and a light fawn overcoat over a suit of a loud check pattern. His tie was a brilliant green of lighter shade; on the plump hand he outstretched to intercept Valancy an enormous diamond winked at her. But he had a pleasant, fatherly smile, and in his hearty, unmodulated voice was a ring of something that attracted her.

"Can you tell me, Miss, if that house yonder belongs to a Mr. Redfern? And if so, how can I get to it?"

Redfern! A vision of bottles seemed to dance before Valancy's eyes—long bottles of bitters—round bottles of hair tonic—square bottles of

liniment—short, corpulent little bottles of purple pills—and all of them bearing that very prosperous, beaming moon-face and steel-rimmed spectacles on the label. Dr. Redfern!

“No,” said Valancy faintly. “No—that house belongs to Mr. Snaith.”

Dr. Redfern nodded.

“Yes, I understand Bernie’s been calling himself Snaith. Well, it’s his middle name—was his poor mother’s. Bernard Snaith Redfern—that’s him. And now, Miss, you can tell me how to get over to that island? Nobody seems to be home there. I’ve done some waving and yelling. Henry, there, wouldn’t yell. He’s a one-job man. But old Doc Redfern can yell with the best of them yet, and ain’t above doing it. Raised nothing but a couple of crows. Guess Bernie’s out for the day.”

“He was away when I left this morning,” said Valancy. “I suppose he hasn’t come home yet.”

She spoke flatly and tonelessly. This last shock had temporarily bereft her of whatever little power of reasoning had been left her by Dr. Trent’s revelation. In the back of her mind the aforesaid little imp was jeeringly repeating a silly old proverb, “It never rains but it pours.” But she was not trying to think. What was the use?

Dr. Redfern was gazing at her in perplexity.

“When you left this morning? Do you live—over there?”

He waved his diamond at the Blue Castle.

“Of course,” said Valancy stupidly. “I’m his wife.”

Dr. Redfern took out a yellow silk handkerchief, removed his hat and mopped his brow. He was very bald, and Valancy’s imp whispered, “Why be bald? Why lose your manly beauty? Try Redfern’s Hair Vigor. It keeps you young.”

“Excuse me,” said Dr. Redfern. “This is a bit of a shock.”

“Shocks seem to be in the air this morning.” The imp said this out loud before Valancy could prevent it.

“I didn’t know Bernie was—married. I didn’t think he *would* have got married without telling his old dad.”

Were Dr. Redfern's eyes misty? Amid her own dull ache of misery and fear and dread, Valancy felt a pang of pity for him.

"Don't blame him," she said hurriedly. "It—it wasn't his fault. It—was all my doing."

"You didn't ask him to marry you, I suppose," twinkled Dr. Redfern. "He might have let me know. I'd have got acquainted with my daughter-in-law before this if he had. But I'm glad to meet you now, my dear—very glad. You look like a sensible young woman. I used to sorter fear Barney'd pick out some pretty bit of fluff just because she was good-looking. They were all after him, of course. Wanted his money? Eh? Didn't like the pills and the bitters but liked the dollars. Eh? Wanted to dip their pretty little fingers in old Doc's millions. Eh?"

"Millions!" said Valancy faintly. She wished she could sit down somewhere—she wished she could have a chance to think—she wished she and the Blue Castle could sink to the bottom of Mistawis and vanish from human sight forevermore.

"Millions," said Dr. Redfern complacently. "And Bernie chucks them for—that." Again he shook the diamond contemptuously at the Blue Castle, "Wouldn't you think he'd have more sense? And all on account of a white bit of a girl. He must have got over *that* feeling, anyhow, since he's married. You must persuade him to come back to civilisation. All nonsense wasting his life like this. Ain't you going to take me over to your house, my dear? I suppose you've some way of getting there."

"Of course," said Valancy stupidly. She led the way down to the little cove where the disappearing propeller boat was snuggled.

"Does your—your man want to come, too?"

"Who? Henry. Not he. Look at him sitting there disapproving. Disapproves of the whole expedition. The trail up from the road nearly gave him a conniption. Well, it *was* a devilish road to put a car on. Whose old bus is that up there?"

"Barney's."

"Good Lord! Does Bernie Redfern ride in a thing like that? It looks like the great-great-grandmother of all the Fords."

“It isn’t a Ford. It’s a Grey Slosson,” said Valancy spiritedly. For some occult reason, Dr. Redfern’s good-humoured ridicule of dear old Lady Jane stung her to life. A life that was all pain but still *life*. Better than the horrible half-dead-and-half-aliveness of the past few minutes—or years. She waved Dr. Redfern curtly into the boat and took him over to the Blue Castle. The key was still in the old pine—the house still silent and deserted. Valancy took the doctor through the living-room to the western verandah. She must at least be out where there was air. It was still sunny, but in the southwest a great thundercloud, with white crests and gorges of purple shadow, was slowly rising over Mistawis. The doctor dropped with a gasp on a rustic chair and mopped his brow again.

“Warm, eh? Lord, what a view! Wonder if it would soften Henry if he could see it.”

“Have you had dinner?” asked Valancy.

“Yes, my dear—had it before we left Port Lawrence. Didn’t know what sort of wild hermit’s hollow we were coming to, you see. Hadn’t any idea I was going to find a nice little daughter-in-law here all ready to toss me up a meal. Cats, eh? Puss, puss! See that. Cats love me. Bernie was always fond of cats! It’s about the only thing he took from me. He’s his poor mother’s boy.”

Valancy had been thinking idly that Barney must resemble his mother. She had remained standing by the steps, but Dr. Redfern waved her to the swing seat.

“Sit down, dear. Never stand when you can sit. I want to get a good look at Barney’s wife. Well, well, I like your face. No beauty—you don’t mind my saying that—you’ve sense enough to know it, I reckon. Sit down.”

Valancy sat down. To be obliged to sit still when mental agony urges us to stride up and down is the refinement of torture. Every nerve in her being was crying out to be alone—to be hidden. But she had to sit and listen to Dr. Redfern, who didn’t mind talking at all.

“When do you think Bernie will be back?”

“I don’t know—not before night probably.”

“Where did he go?”

“I don’t know that either. Likely to the woods—up back.”

“So he doesn’t tell you his comings and goings, either? Bernie was always a secretive young devil. Never understood him. Just like his poor mother. But I thought a lot of him. It hurts me when he disappeared as he did. Eleven years ago. I haven’t seen my boy for eleven years.”

“Eleven years.” Valancy was surprised. “It’s only six since he came here.”

“Oh, he was in the Klondike before that—and all over the world. He used to drop me a line now and then—never give any clue to where he was but just a line to say he was all right. I s’pose he’s told you all about it.”

“No. I know nothing of his past life,” said Valancy with sudden eagerness. She wanted to know—she must know now. It hadn’t mattered before. Now she must know all. And she could never hear it from Barney. She might never even see him again. If she did, it would not be to talk of his past.

“What happened? Why did he leave his home? Tell me. Tell me.”

“Well, it ain’t much of a story. Just a young fool gone mad because of a quarrel with his girl. Only Bernie was a stubborn fool. Always stubborn. You never could make that boy do anything he didn’t want to do. From the day he was born. Yet he was always a quiet, gentle little chap, too. Good as gold. His poor mother died when he was only two years old. I’d just begun to make money with my Hair Vigor. I’d dreamed the formula for it, you see. Some dream that. The cash rolled in. Bernie had everything he wanted. I sent him to the best schools—private schools. I meant to make a gentleman of him. Never had any chance myself. Meant he should have every chance. He went through McGill. Got honours and all that. I wanted him to go in for law. He hankered after journalism and stuff like that. Wanted me to buy a paper for him—or back him in publishing what he called a ‘real, worthwhile, honest-to-goodness Canadian Magazine’. I s’pose I’d have done it—I always did what he wanted me to do. Wasn’t he all I had to live for? I wanted him to be happy. And he never was happy. Can you believe it? Not that he said so. But I’d always a feeling that he

wasn't happy. Everything he wanted—all the money he could spend—his own bank account—travel—seeing the world—but he wasn't happy. Not till he fell in love with Ethel Traverse. Then he was happy for a little while.”

The cloud had reached the sun and a great, chill, purple shadow came swiftly over Mistawis. It touched the Blue Castle—rolled over it. Valancy shivered.

“Yes,” she said, with painful eagerness, though every word was cutting her to the heart. “What—was—she—like?”

“Prettiest girl in Montreal,” said Dr. Redfern. “Oh, she was a looker, all right. Eh? Gold hair—shiny as silk—great, big, soft, black eyes—skin like milk and roses. Don't wonder Bernie fell for her. And brains as well. *She* wasn't a bit of fluff. B.A. from McGill. A thoroughbred, too. One of the best families. But a bit lean in the purse. Eh! Bernie was mad about her. Happiest young fool you ever saw. Then—the bust-up.”

“What happened?” Valancy had taken off her hat and was absently thrusting a pin in and out of it. Good Luck was purring beside her. Banjo was regarding Dr. Redfern with suspicion. Nip and Tuck were lazily cawing in the pines. Mistawis was beckoning. Everything was the same. Nothing was the same. It was a hundred years since yesterday. Yesterday, at this time, she and Barney had been eating a belated dinner here with laughter. Laughter? Valancy felt that she had done with laughter forever. And with tears, for that matter. She had no further use for either of them.

“Blest if I know, my dear. Some fool quarrel, I suppose. Bernie just lit out—disappeared. He wrote me from the Yukon. Said his engagement was broken and he wasn't coming back. And not to try to hunt him up because he was never coming back. I didn't. What was the use? I knew Bernie. I went on piling up money because there wasn't anything else to do. But I was mighty lonely. All I lived for was them little notes now and then from Bernie—Klondike—England—South Africa—China—everywhere. I thought maybe he'd come back some day to his lonesome old dad. Then six years ago even the letters stopped. I didn't hear a word of or from him till last Christmas.”

“Did he write?”

“No. But he drew a check for fifteen thousand dollars on his bank account. The bank manager is a friend of mine—one of my biggest shareholders. He’d always promised me he’d let me know if Bernie drew any checks. Bernie had fifty thousand there. And he’d never touched a cent of it till last Christmas. The check was made out to Aynsley’s, Toronto—”

“Aynsley’s?” Valancy heard herself saying Aynsley’s! She had a box on her dressing-table with the Aynsley trademark.

“Yes. The big jewellery house there. After I’d thought it over a while, I got brisk. I wanted to locate Bernie. Had a special reason for it. It was time he gave up his fool hoboing and come to his senses. Drawing that fifteen told me there was something in the wind. The manager communicated with the Aynsleys—his wife was an Aynsley—and found out that Bernard Redfern had bought a pearl necklace there. His address was given as Box 444, Port Lawrence, Muskoka, Ont. First I thought I’d write. Then I thought I’d wait till the open season for cars and come down myself. Ain’t no hand at writing. I’ve motored from Montreal. Got to Port Lawrence yesterday. Enquired at the post-office. Told me they knew nothing of any Bernard Snaith Redfern, but there was a Barney Snaith had a P. O. box there. Lived on an island out here, they said. So here I am. And where’s Barney?”

Valancy was fingering her necklace. She was wearing fifteen thousand dollars around her neck. And she had worried lest Barney had paid fifteen dollars for it and couldn’t afford it. Suddenly she laughed in Dr. Redfern’s face.

“Excuse me. It’s so—amusing,” said poor Valancy.

“Isn’t it?” said Dr. Redfern, seeing a joke—but not exactly hers. “Now, you seem like a sensible young woman, and I dare say you’ve lots of influence over Bernie. Can’t you get him to come back to civilisation and live like other people? I’ve a house up there. Big as a castle. Furnished like a palace. I want company in it—Bernie’s wife—Bernie’s children.”

“Did Ethel Traverse ever marry?” queried Valancy irrelevantly.

“Bless you, yes. Two years after Bernie levanted. But she’s a widow now. Pretty as ever. To be frank, that was my special reason for wanting to find Bernie. I thought they’d make it up, maybe. But, of course, that’s all off now. Doesn’t matter. Bernie’s choice of a wife is good enough for me. It’s my boy I want. Think he’ll soon be back?”

“I don’t know. But I don’t think he’ll come before night. Quite late, perhaps. And perhaps not till tomorrow. But I can put you up comfortably. He’ll certainly be back tomorrow.”

Dr. Redfern shook his head.

“Too damp. I’ll take no chances with rheumatism.”

“Why suffer that ceaseless anguish? Why not try Redfern’s Liniment?” quoted the imp in the back of Valancy’s mind.

“I must get back to Port Lawrence before rain starts. Henry goes quite mad when he gets mud on the car. But I’ll come back tomorrow. Meanwhile you talk Bernie into reason.”

He shook her hand and patted her kindly on the shoulder. He looked as if he would have kissed her, with a little encouragement, but Valancy did not give it. Not that she would have minded. He was rather dreadful and loud—and—and—dreadful. But there was something about him she liked. She thought dully that she might have liked being his daughter-in-law if he had not been a millionaire. A score of times over. And Barney was his son—and heir.

She took him over in the motor boat and watched the lordly purple car roll away through the woods with Henry at the wheel looking things not lawful to be uttered. Then she went back to the Blue Castle. What she had to do must be done quickly. Barney *might* return at any moment. And it was certainly going to rain. She was thankful she no longer felt very bad. When you are bludgeoned on the head repeatedly, you naturally and mercifully become more or less insensible and stupid.

She stood briefly like a faded flower bitten by frost, by the hearth, looking down on the white ashes of the last fire that had blazed in the Blue Castle.

“At any rate,” she thought wearily, “Barney isn’t poor. He will be able to afford a divorce. Quite nicely.”

Chapter XXXIX

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She must write a note. The imp in the back of her mind laughed. In every story she had ever read when a runaway wife decamped from home she left a note, generally on the pin-cushion. It was not a very original idea. But one had to leave something intelligible. What was there to do but write a note? She looked vaguely about her for something to write with. Ink? There was none. Valancy had never written anything since she had come to the Blue Castle, save memoranda of household necessities for Barney. A pencil sufficed for them, but now the pencil was not to be found. Valancy absently crossed to the door of Bluebeard's Chamber and tried it. She vaguely expected to find it locked, but it opened unresistingly. She had never tried it before, and did not know whether Barney habitually kept it locked or not. If he did, he must have been badly upset to leave it unlocked. She did not realise that she was doing something he had told her not to do. She was only looking for something to write with. All her faculties were concentrated on deciding just what she would say and how she would say it. There was not the slightest curiosity in her as she went into the lean-to.

There were no beautiful women hanging by their hair on the walls. It seemed a very harmless apartment, with a commonplace little sheet-iron stove in the middle of it, its pipe sticking out through the roof. At one end was a table or counter crowded with odd-looking utensils. Used no doubt by Barney in his smelly operations. Chemical experiments, probably, she reflected dully. At the other end was a big writing desk and swivel-chair. The side walls were lined with books.

Valancy went blindly to the desk. There she stood motionless for a few minutes, looking down at something that lay on it. A bundle of galleyproofs. The page on top bore the title *Wild Honey*, and under the title were the words "by John Foster."

The opening sentence—"Pines are the trees of myth and legend. They strike their roots deep into the traditions of an older world, but wind and star love their lofty tops. What music when old Æolus draws his bow across the branches of the pines—" She had heard Barney say that one day when they walked under them.

So Barney was John Foster!

Valancy was not excited. She had absorbed all the shocks and sensations that she could compass for one day. This affected her neither one way nor the other. She only thought:

"So this explains it."

"It" was a small matter that had, somehow, stuck in her mind more persistently than its importance seemed to justify. Soon after Barney had brought her John Foster's latest book she had been in a Port Lawrence bookshop and heard a customer ask the proprietor for John Foster's new book. The proprietor had said curtly, "Not out yet. Won't be out till next week."

Valancy had opened her lips to say, "Oh, yes, it *is* out," but closed them again. After all, it was none of her business. She supposed the proprietor wanted to cover up his negligence in not getting the book in promptly. Now she knew. The book Barney had given her had been one of the author's complimentary copies, sent in advance.

Well! Valancy pushed the proofs indifferently aside and sat down in the swivel-chair. She took up Barney's pen—and a vile one it was—pulled a sheet of paper to her and began to write. She could not think of anything to say except bald facts.

"Dear Barney:—

I went to Dr. Trent this morning and found out he had sent me the wrong letter by mistake. There never was anything serious the matter with my heart and I am quite well now.

I did not mean to trick you. Please believe that. I could not bear it if you did not believe that. I am very sorry for the mistake.

But surely you can get a divorce if I leave you. Is desertion a ground for divorce in Canada? Of course if there is anything I can do to help or hasten it I will do it gladly, if your lawyer will let me know.

I thank you for all your kindness to me. I shall never forget it. Think as kindly of me as you can, because I did not mean to trap you. Good-bye.

Yours gratefully,

Valancy.”

It was very cold and stiff, she knew. But to try to say anything else would be dangerous—like tearing away a dam. She didn’t know what torrent of wild incoherences and passionate anguish might pour out. In a postscript she added:

“Your father was here today. He is coming back tomorrow. He told me everything. I think you should go back to him. He is very lonely for you.”

She put the letter in an envelope, wrote “Barney” across it, and left it on the desk. On it she laid the string of pearls. If they had been the beads she believed them she would have kept them in memory of that wonderful year. But she could not keep the fifteen thousand dollar gift of a man who had married her out of pity and whom she was now leaving. It hurt her to give *up* her pretty bauble. That was an odd thing, she reflected. The fact that she was leaving Barney did not hurt her—yet. It lay at her heart like a cold, insensible thing. If it came to life—Valancy shuddered and went out —

She put on her hat and mechanically fed Good Luck and Banjo. She locked the door and carefully hid the key in the old pine. Then she crossed to the mainland in the disappearing propeller. She stood for a moment on the bank, looking at her Blue Castle. The rain had not yet come, but the

sky was dark, and Mistawis grey and sullen. The little house under the pines looked very pathetic—a casket rifled of its jewels—a lamp with its flame blown out.

“I shall never again hear the wind crying over Mistawis at night,” thought Valancy. This hurt her, too. She could have laughed to think that such a trifle could hurt her at such a time.

Chapter XL

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Valancy paused a moment on the porch of the brick house in Elm Street. She felt that she ought to knock like a stranger. Her rosebush, she idly noticed, was loaded with buds. The rubber-plant stood beside the prim door. A momentary horror overcame her—a horror of the existence to which she was returning. Then she opened the door and walked in.

“I wonder if the Prodigal Son ever felt really at home again,” she thought.

Mrs. Frederick and Cousin Stickles were in the sitting-room. Uncle Benjamin was there, too. They looked blankly at Valancy, realising at once that something was wrong. This was not the saucy, impudent thing who had laughed at them in this very room last summer. This was a grey-faced woman with the eyes of a creature who had been stricken by a mortal blow.

Valancy looked indifferently around the room. She had changed so much—and it had changed so little. The same pictures hung on the walls. The little orphan who knelt at her never-finished prayer by the bed whereon reposed the black kitten that never grew up into cat. The grey “steel engraving” of Quatre Bras, where the British regiment forever stood at bay. The crayon enlargement of the boyish father she had never known. There they all hung in the same places. The green cascade of “Wandering Jew” still tumbled out of the old granite saucepan on the windowstand. The same elaborate, never-used pitcher stood at the same angle on the sideboard shelf. The blue and gilt vases that had been among her mother’s wedding-presents still primly adorned the mantelpiece, flanking the china clock of berosed and besprayed ware that never went. The chairs in exactly the same places. Her mother and Cousin Stickles, likewise unchanged, regarding her with stony unwelcome.

Valancy had to speak first.

“I’ve come home, Mother,” she said tiredly.

“So I see.” Mrs. Frederick’s voice was very icy. She had resigned herself to Valancy’s desertion. She had almost succeeded in forgetting there was a Valancy. She had rearranged and organised her systematic life without any reference to an ungrateful, rebellious child. She had taken her place again in a society which ignored the fact that she had ever had a daughter and pitied her, if it pitied her at all, only in discreet whispers and asides. The plain truth was that, by this time, Mrs. Frederick did not want Valancy to come back—did not want ever to see or hear of her again.

And now, of course, Valancy was here. With tragedy and disgrace and scandal trailing after her visibly.

“So I see,” said Mrs. Frederick. “May I ask why?”

“Because—I’m—not—going to die,” said Valancy huskily.

“God bless my soul!” said Uncle Benjamin. “Who said you were going to die?”

“I suppose,” said Cousin Stickles shrewishly—Cousin Stickles did not want Valancy back either—“I suppose you’ve found out he has another wife—as we’ve been sure all along.”

“No. I only wish he had,” said Valancy. She was not suffering particularly, but she was very tired. If only the explanations were all over and she were upstairs in her old, ugly room—alone. Just alone! The rattle of the beads on her mother’s sleeves, as they swung on the arms of the reed chair, almost drove her crazy. Nothing else was worrying her; but all at once it seemed that she simply could not endure that thin, insistent rattle.

“My home, as I told you, is always open to you,” said Mrs. Frederick stonily, “but I can never forgive you.”

Valancy gave a mirthless laugh.

“I’d care very little for that if I could only forgive myself,” she said.

“Come, come,” said Uncle Benjamin testily. But rather enjoying himself. He felt he had Valancy under his thumb again. “We’ve had enough of mystery. What has happened? Why have you left that fellow? No doubt there’s reason enough—but what particular reason is it?”

Valancy began to speak mechanically. She told her tale bluntly and barely.

“A year ago Dr. Trent told me I had angina pectoris and could not live long. I wanted to have some—life—before I died. That’s why I went away. Why I married Barney. And now I’ve found it is all a mistake. There is nothing wrong with my heart. I’ve got to live—and Barney only married me out of pity. So I have to leave him—free.”

“God bless me!” said Uncle Benjamin. Cousin Stickles began to cry.

“Valancy, if you’d only had confidence in your own mother—”

“Yes, yes, I know,” said Valancy impatiently, “What’s the use of going into that now? I can’t undo this year. God knows I wish I could. I’ve tricked Barney into marrying me—and he’s really Bernard Redfern. Dr. Redfern’s son, of Montreal. And his father wants him to go back to him.”

Uncle Benjamin made a queer sound. Cousin Stickles took her black-bordered handkerchief away from her eyes and stared at Valancy. A queer gleam suddenly shot into Mrs. Frederick’s stone-grey orbs.

“Dr. Redfern—not the Purple Pill man?” she said.

Valancy nodded. “He’s John Foster, too—the writer of those nature books.”

“But—but—” Mrs. Frederick was visibly agitated, though not over the thought that she was the mother-in-law of John Foster—“*Dr. Redfern is a millionaire!*”

Uncle Benjamin shut his mouth with a snap.

“Ten times over,” he said.

Valancy nodded.

“Yes. Barney left home years ago—because of—of some trouble—some—disappointment. Now he will likely go back. So you see—I had to come home. He doesn’t love me. I can’t hold him to a bond he was tricked into.”

Uncle Benjamin looked incredibly sly.

“Did he say so? Does he want to get rid of you?”

“No. I haven’t seen him since I found out. But I tell you—he only married me out of pity—because I asked him to—because he thought it

would only be for a little while.”

Mrs. Frederick and Cousin Stickles both tried to speak, but Uncle Benjamin waved a hand at them and frowned portentously.

“Let *me* handle this,” wave and wave and frown seemed to say. To Valancy:

“Well, well, dear, we’ll talk it over later. You see, we don’t quite understand everything yet. As Cousin Stickles says, you should have confided in us before. Later on—I dare say we can find a way out of this.”

“You think Barney can easily get a divorce, don’t you?” said Valancy eagerly.

Uncle Benjamin silenced with another wave the exclamation of horror he knew was trembling on Mrs. Frederick’s lips.

“Trust to me, Valancy. Everything will arrange itself. Tell me this, Dossie. Have you been happy up back? Was Sn—Mr. Redfern good to you?”

“I have been very happy and Barney was very good to me,” said Valancy, as if reciting a lesson. She remembered when she studied grammar at school she had disliked the past and perfect tenses. They had always seemed so pathetic. “I have been”—it was all over and done with.

“Then don’t worry, little girl.” How amazingly paternal Uncle Benjamin was! “Your family will stand behind you. We’ll see what can be done.”

“Thank you,” said Valancy dully. Really, it was quite decent of Uncle Benjamin. “Can I go and lie down a little while? I’m—I’m—tired.”

“Of course you’re tired.” Uncle Benjamin patted her hand gently—very gently. “All worn out and nervous. Go and lie down, by all means. You’ll see things in quite a different light after you’ve had a good sleep.”

He held the door open. As she went through he whispered, “What is the best way to keep a man’s love?”

Valancy smiled wanly. But she had come back to the old life—the old shackles. “What?” she asked as meekly as of yore.

“Not to return it,” said Uncle Benjamin with a chuckle. He shut the door and rubbed his hands. Nodded and smiled mysteriously round the

room.

“Poor little Doss!” he said pathetically.

“Do you really suppose that—Snaith—can actually be Dr. Redfern’s son?” gasped Mrs. Frederick.

“I see no reason for doubting it. She says Dr. Redfern has been there. Why, the man is rich as wedding-cake. Amelia, I’ve always believed there was more in Doss than most people thought. You kept her down too much—repressed her. She never had a chance to show what was in her. And now she’s landed a millionaire for a husband.”

“But—” hesitated Mrs. Frederick, “he—he—they told terrible tales about him.”

“All gossip and invention—all gossip and invention. It’s always been a mystery to me why people should be so ready to invent and circulate slanders about other people they know absolutely nothing about. I can’t understand why you paid so much attention to gossip and surmise. Just because he didn’t choose to mix up with everybody, people resented it. I was surprised to find what a decent fellow he seemed to be that time he came into my store with Valancy. I discounted all the yarns then and there.”

“But he was seen dead drunk in Port Lawrence once,” said Cousin Stickles. Doubtfully, yet as one very willing to be convinced to the contrary.

“Who saw him?” demanded Uncle Benjamin truculently. “Who saw him? Old Jemmy Strang *said* he saw him. I wouldn’t take old Jemmy Strang’s word on oath. He’s too drunk himself half the time to see straight. He said he saw him lying drunk on a bench in the Park. Pshaw! Redfern’s been asleep there. Don’t worry over *that*.”

“But his clothes—and that awful old car—” said Mrs. Frederick uncertainly.

“Eccentricities of genius,” declared Uncle Benjamin. “You heard Doss say he was John Foster. I’m not up in literature myself, but I heard a lecturer from Toronto say that John Foster’s books had put Canada on the literary map of the world.”

“I—suppose—we must forgive her,” yielded Mrs. Frederick.

“Forgive her!” Uncle Benjamin snorted. Really, Amelia was an incredibly stupid woman. No wonder poor Doss had gone sick and tired of living with her. “Well, yes, I think you’d better forgive her! The question is—will Snaith forgive *us*!”

“What if she persists in leaving him? You’ve no idea how stubborn she can be,” said Mrs. Frederick.

“Leave it all to me, Amelia. Leave it all to me. You women have muddled it enough. This whole affair has been bungled from start to finish. If you had put yourself to a little trouble years ago, Amelia, she would not have bolted over the traces as she did. Just let her alone—don’t worry her with advice or questions till she’s ready to talk. She’s evidently run away in a panic because she’s afraid he’d be angry with her for fooling him. Most extraordinary thing of Trent to tell her such a yarn! That’s what comes of going to strange doctors. Well, well, we mustn’t blame her too harshly, poor child. Redfern will come after her. If he doesn’t, I’ll hunt him up and talk to him as man to man. He may be a millionaire, but Valancy is a Stirling. He can’t repudiate her just because she was mistaken about her heart disease. Not likely he’ll want to. Doss is a little overstrung. Bless me, I must get in the habit of calling her Valancy. She isn’t a baby any longer. Now, remember, Amelia. Be very kind and sympathetic.”

It was something of a large order to expect Mrs. Frederick to be kind and sympathetic. But she did her best. When supper was ready she went up and asked Valancy if she wouldn’t like a cup of tea. Valancy, lying on her bed, declined. She just wanted to be left alone for a while. Mrs. Frederick left her alone. She did not even remind Valancy that her plight was the outcome of her own lack of daughterly respect and obedience. One could not—exactly—say things like that to the daughter-in-law of a millionaire.

Chapter XLI

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Valancy looked dully about her old room. It, too, was so exactly the same that it seemed almost impossible to believe in the changes that had come to her since she had last slept in it. It seemed—somehow—indecent that it should be so much the same. There was Queen Louise everlastingly coming down the stairway, and nobody had let the forlorn puppy in out of the rain. Here was the purple paper blind and the greenish mirror. Outside, the old carriage-shop with its blatant advertisements. Beyond it, the station with the same derelicts and flirtatious flappers.

Here the old life waited for her, like some grim ogre that bided his time and licked his chops. A monstrous horror of it suddenly possessed her. When night fell and she had undressed and got into bed, the merciful numbness passed away and she lay in anguish and thought of her island under the stars. The camp-fires—all their little household jokes and phrases and catch words—their furry beautiful cats—the lights agleam on the fairy islands—canoes skimming over Mistawis in the magic of morning—white birches shining among the dark spruces like beautiful women's bodies—winter snows and rose-red sunset fires—lakes drunken with moonshine—all the delights of her lost paradise. She would not let herself think of Barney. Only of these lesser things. She could not endure to think of Barney.

Then she thought of him inescapably. She ached for him. She wanted his arms around her—his face against hers—his whispers in her ear. She recalled all his friendly looks and quips and jests—his little compliments—his caresses. She counted them all over as a woman might count her jewels—not one did she miss from the first day they had met. These memories were all she could have now. She shut her eyes and prayed.

“Let me remember every one, God! Let me never forget one of them!”

Yet it would be better to forget. This agony of longing and loneliness would not be so terrible if one could forget. And Ethel Traverse. That shimmering witch woman with her white skin and black eyes and shining hair. The woman Barney had loved. The woman whom he still loved. Hadn't he told her he never changed his mind? Who was waiting for him in Montreal. Who was the right wife for a rich and famous man. Barney would marry her, of course, when he got his divorce. How Valancy hated her! And envied her! Barney had said, "I love you," to *her*. Valancy had wondered what tone Barney would say "I love you" in—how his dark-blue eyes would look when he said it. Ethel Traverse knew. Valancy hated her for the knowledge—hated and envied her.

"She can never have those hours in the Blue Castle. They are *mine*," thought Valancy savagely. Ethel would never make strawberry jam or dance to old Abel's fiddle or fry bacon for Barney over a camp-fire. She would never come to the little Mistawis shack at all.

What was Barney doing—thinking—feeling now? Had he come home and found her letter? Was he still angry with her? Or a little pitiful. Was he lying on their bed looking out on stormy Mistawis and listening to the rain streaming down on the roof? Or was he still wandering in the wilderness, raging at the predicament in which he found himself? Hating her? Pain took her and wrung her like some great pitiless giant. She got up and walked the floor. Would morning never come to end this hideous night? And yet what could morning bring her? The old life without the old stagnation that was at least bearable. The old life with the new memories, the new longings, the new anguish.

"Oh, why can't I die?" moaned Valancy.

Chapter XLII

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It was not until early afternoon the next day that a dreadful old car clanked up Elm Street and stopped in front of the brick house. A hatless man sprang from it and rushed up the steps. The bell was rung as it had never been rung before—vehemently, intensely. The ringer was demanding entrance, not asking it. Uncle Benjamin chuckled as he hurried to the door. Uncle Benjamin had “just dropped in” to enquire how dear Doss—Valancy was. Dear Doss—Valancy, he had been informed, was the same. She had come down for breakfast—which she didn’t eat—gone back to her room, come down for dinner—which she didn’t eat—gone back to her room. That was all. She had not talked. And she had been let, kindly, considerately, alone.

“Very good. Redfern will be here today,” said Uncle Benjamin. And now Uncle Benjamin’s reputation as a prophet was made. Redfern was here—unmistakably so.

“Is my wife here?” he demanded of Uncle Benjamin without preface.

Uncle Benjamin smiled expressively.

“Mr. Redfern, I believe? Very glad to meet you, sir. Yes, that naughty little girl of yours is here. We have been—”

“I must see her,” Barney cut Uncle Benjamin ruthlessly short.

“Certainly, Mr. Redfern. Just step in here. Valancy will be down in a minute.”

He ushered Barney into the parlour and betook himself to the sitting-room and Mrs. Frederick.

“Go up and tell Valancy to come down. Her husband is here.”

But so dubious was Uncle Benjamin as to whether Valancy could really come down in a minute—or at all—that he followed Mrs. Frederick on tiptoe up the stairs and listened in the hall.

“Valancy dear,” said Mrs. Frederick tenderly, “your husband is in the parlour, asking for you.”

“Oh Mother.” Valancy got up from the window and wrung her hands. “I cannot see him—I cannot! Tell him to go away—*ask* him to go away. I can’t see him!”

“Tell her,” hissed Uncle Benjamin through the keyhole, “that Redfern says he won’t go away until he *has* seen her.”

Redfern had not said anything of the kind, but Uncle Benjamin thought he was that sort of a fellow. Valancy knew he was. She understood that she might as well go down first as last.

She did not even look at Uncle Benjamin as she passed him on the landing. Uncle Benjamin did not mind. Rubbing his hands and chuckling, he retreated to the kitchen, where he genially demanded of Cousin Stickles:

“Why are good husbands like bread?”

Cousin Stickles asked why.

“Because women need them,” beamed Uncle Benjamin.

Valancy was looking anything but beautiful when she entered the parlour. Her white night had played fearful havoc with her face. She wore an ugly old brown-and-blue gingham, having left all her pretty dresses in the Blue Castle. But Barney dashed across the room and caught her in his arms.

“Valancy, darling—oh, you darling little idiot! Whatever possessed you to run away like that? When I came home last night and found your letter I went quite mad. It was twelve o’clock—I knew it was too late to come here then. I walked the floor all night. Then this morning Dad came—I couldn’t get away till now. Valancy, whatever got into you? Divorce, forsooth! Don’t you know—”

“I know you only married me out of pity,” said Valancy, brushing him away feebly. “I know you don’t love me—I know—”

“You’ve been lying awake at three o’clock too long,” said Barney, shaking her. “That’s all that’s the matter with you. Love you! Oh, don’t I

love you! My girl, when I saw that train coming down on you I knew whether I loved you or not!”

“Oh, I was afraid you would try to make me think you cared,” cried Valancy passionately. “Don’t—don’t! I know all about Ethel Traverse—your father told me everything. Oh, Barney, don’t torture me! I can never go back to you!”

Barney released her and looked at her for a moment. Something in her pallid, resolute face spoke more convincingly than words of her determination.

“Valancy,” he said quietly, “Father couldn’t have told you everything because he didn’t know it. Will you let *me* tell you—everything?”

“Yes,” said Valancy wearily. Oh, how dear he was! How she longed to throw herself into his arms! As he put her gently down in a chair, she could have kissed the slender, brown hands that touched her arms. She could not look up as he stood before her. She dared not meet his eyes. For his sake, she must be brave. She knew him—kind, unselfish. Of course he would pretend he did not want his freedom—she might have known he would pretend that, once the first shock of realisation was over. He was so sorry for her—he understood her terrible position. When had he ever failed to understand? But she would never accept his sacrifice. Never!

“You’ve seen Dad and you know I’m Bernard Redfern. And I suppose you’ve guessed that I’m John Foster—since you went into Bluebeard’s Chamber.”

“Yes. But I didn’t go in out of curiosity. I forgot you had told me not to go in—I forgot—”

“Never mind. I’m not going to kill you and hang you up on the wall, so there’s no need to call for Sister Anne. I’m only going to tell you my story from the beginning. I came back last night intending to do it. Yes, I’m ‘old Doc. Redfern’s son’—of Purple Pills and Bitters fame. Oh, don’t I know it? Wasn’t it rubbed into me for years?”

Barney laughed bitterly and strode up and down the room a few times. Uncle Benjamin, tiptoeing through the hall, heard the laugh and frowned.

Surely Doss wasn't going to be a stubborn little fool. Barney threw himself into a chair before Valancy.

"Yes. As long as I can remember I've been a millionaire's son. But when I was born Dad wasn't a millionaire. He wasn't even a doctor—isn't yet. He was a veterinary and a failure at it. He and Mother lived in a little village up in Quebec and were abominably poor. I don't remember Mother. Haven't even a picture of her. She died when I was two years old. She was fifteen years younger than Father—a little school teacher. When she died Dad moved into Montreal and formed a company to sell his hair tonic. He'd dreamed the prescription one night, it seems. Well, it caught on. Money began to flow in. Dad invented—or dreamed—the other things, too—Pills, Bitters, Liniment and so on. He was a millionaire by the time I was ten, with a house so big a small chap like myself always felt lost in it. I had every toy a boy could wish for—and I was the loneliest little devil in the world. I remember only one happy day in my childhood, Valancy. Only one. Even you were better off than that. Dad had gone out to see an old friend in the country and took me along. I was turned loose in the barnyard and I spent the whole day hammering nails in a block of wood. I had a glorious day. When I had to go back to my roomful of playthings in the big house in Montreal I cried. But I didn't tell Dad why. I never told him anything. It's always been a hard thing for me to tell things, Valancy—anything that went deep. And most things went deep with me. I was a sensitive child and I was even more sensitive as a boy. No one ever knew what I suffered. Dad never dreamed of it.

"When he sent me to a private school—I was only eleven—the boys ducked me in the swimming-tank until I stood on a table and read aloud all the advertisements of Father's patent abominations. I did it—then"—Barney clinched his fists—"I was frightened and half drowned and all my world was against me. But when I went to college and the sophs tried the same stunt I didn't do it." Barney smiled grimly. "They couldn't make me do it. But they could—and did—make my life miserable. I never heard the last of the Pills and the Bitters and the Hair Tonic. 'After using' was my nickname—you see I'd always such a thick thatch. My four college years

were a nightmare. You know—or you don’t know—what merciless beasts boys can be when they get a victim like me. I had few friends—there was always some barrier between me and the kind of people I cared for. And the other kind—who would have been very willing to be intimate with rich old Doc. Redfern’s son—I didn’t care for. But I had one friend—or thought I had. A clever, bookish chap—a bit of a writer. That was a bond between us—I had some secret aspirations along that line. He was older than I was—I looked up to him and worshipped him. For a year I was happier than I’d ever been. Then—a burlesque sketch came out in the college magazine—a mordant thing, ridiculing Dad’s remedies. The names were changed, of course, but everybody knew what and who was meant. Oh, it was clever—damnably so—and witty. McGill rocked with laughter over it. I found out *he* had written it.”

“Oh, were you sure?” Valancy’s dull eyes flamed with indignation.

“Yes. He admitted it when I asked him. Said a good idea was worth more to him than a friend, any time. And he added a gratuitous thrust. ‘You know, Redfern, there are some things money won’t buy. For instance—it won’t buy you a grandfather.’ Well, it was a nasty slam. I was young enough to feel cut up. And it destroyed a lot of my ideals and illusions, which was the worst thing about it. I was a young misanthrope after that. Didn’t want to be friends with any one. And then—the year after I left college—I met Ethel Traverse.”

Valancy shivered. Barney, his hands stuck in his pockets, was regarding the floor moodily and didn’t notice it.

“Dad told you about her, I suppose. She was very beautiful. And I loved her. Oh, yes, I loved her. I won’t deny it or belittle it now. It was a lonely, romantic boy’s first passionate love, and it was very real. And I thought she loved me. I was fool enough to think that. I was wildly happy when she promised to marry me. For a few months. Then—I found out she didn’t. I was an involuntary eavesdropper on a certain occasion for a moment. That moment was enough. The proverbial fate of the eavesdropper overtook me. A girl friend of hers was asking her how she could stomach Doc. Redfern’s son and the patent-medicine background.

“ ‘His money will gild the Pills and sweeten the Bitters,’ said Ethel, with a laugh. ‘Mother told me to catch him if I could. We’re on the rocks. But pah! I smell turpentine whenever he comes near me’.”

“Oh, Barney!” cried Valancy, wrung with pity for him. She had forgotten all about herself and was filled with compassion for Barney and rage against Ethel Traverse. How dared she?

“Well,”—Barney got up and began pacing round the room—“that finished me. Completely. I left civilisation and those accursed dopes behind me and went to the Yukon. For five years I knocked about the world—in all sorts of outlandish places. I earned enough to live on—I wouldn’t touch a cent of Dad’s money. Then one day I woke up to the fact that I no longer cared a hang about Ethel, one way or another. She was somebody I’d known in another world—that was all. But I had no hankering to go back to the old life. None of that for me. I was free and I meant to keep so. I came to Mistawis—saw Tom MacMurray’s island. My first book had been published the year before, and made a hit—I had a bit of money from my royalties. I bought my island. But I kept away from people. I had no faith in anybody. I didn’t believe there was such a thing as real friendship or true love in the world—not for me, anyhow—the son of Purple Pills. I used to revel in all the wild yarns they told of me. In fact, I’m afraid I suggested a few of them myself. By mysterious remarks which people interpreted in the light of their own prepossessions.

“Then—you came. I *had* to believe you loved me—really loved *me*—not my father’s millions. There was no other reason why you should want to marry a penniless devil with my supposed record. And I was sorry for you. Oh, yes, I don’t deny I married you because I was sorry for you. And then—I found you the best and jolliest and dearest little pal and chum a fellow ever had. Witty—loyal—sweet. You made me believe again in the reality of friendship and love. The world seemed good again just because you were in it, honey. I’d have been willing to go on forever just as we were. I knew that, the night I came home and saw my homelight shining out from the island for the first time. And knew you were there waiting for me. After being homeless all my life it was beautiful to have a home. To

come home hungry at night and know there was a good supper and a cheery fire—and *you*.

“But I didn’t realise what you actually meant to me till that moment at the switch. Then it came like a lightning flash. I knew I couldn’t live without you—that if I couldn’t pull you loose in time I’d have to die with you. I admit it bowled me over—knocked me silly. I couldn’t get my bearings for a while. That’s why I acted like a mule. But the thought that drove me to the tall timber was the awful one that you were going to die. I’d always hated the thought of it—but I supposed there wasn’t any chance for you, so I put it out of my mind. Now I had to face it—you were under sentence of death and I couldn’t live without you. When I came home last night I had made up my mind that I’d take you to all the specialists in the world—that something surely could be done for you. I felt sure you couldn’t be as bad as Dr. Trent thought, when those moments on the track hadn’t even hurt you. And I found your note—and went mad with happiness—and a little terror for fear you didn’t care much for me, after all, and had gone away to get rid of me. But now, it’s all right, isn’t it, darling?”

Was she, Valancy being called “darling”?

“I can’t believe you care for me,” she said helplessly. “I *know* you can’t. What’s the use, Barney? Of course, you’re sorry for me—of course you want to do the best you can to straighten out the mess. But it can’t be straightened out that way. You couldn’t love me—me.” She stood up and pointed tragically to the mirror over the mantel. Certainly, not even Allan Tierney could have seen beauty in the woeful, haggard little face reflected there.

Barney didn’t look at the mirror. He looked at Valancy as if he would like to snatch her—or beat her.

“Love you! Girl, you’re in the very core of my heart. I hold you there like a jewel. Didn’t I promise you I’d never tell you a lie? Love you! I love you with all there is of me to love. Heart, soul, brain. Every fibre of body and spirit thrilling to the sweetness of you. There’s nobody in the world for me but you, Valancy.”

“You’re—a good actor, Barney,” said Valancy, with a wan little smile. Barney looked at her.

“So you don’t believe me—yet?”

“I—can’t.”

“Oh—damn!” said Barney violently.

Valancy looked up startled. She had never seen *this* Barney. Scowling! Eyes black with anger. Sneering lips. Dead-white face.

“You don’t want to believe it,” said Barney in the silk-smooth voice of ultimate rage. “You’re tired of me. You want to get out of it—free from me. You’re ashamed of the Pills and the Liniment, just as she was. Your Stirling pride can’t stomach them. It was all right as long as you thought you hadn’t long to live. A good lark—you could put up with me. But a lifetime with old Doc Redfern’s son is a different thing. Oh, I understand—perfectly. I’ve been very dense—but I understand, at last.”

Valancy stood up. She stared into his furious face. Then—she suddenly laughed.

“You darling!” she said. “You do mean it! You do really love me! You wouldn’t be so enraged if you didn’t.”

Barney stared at her for a moment. Then he caught her in his arms with the little low laugh of the triumphant lover.

Uncle Benjamin, who had been frozen with horror at the keyhole, suddenly thawed out and tiptoed back to Mrs. Frederick and Cousin Stickles.

“Everything is all right,” he announced jubilantly.

Dear little Doss! He would send for his lawyer right away and alter his will again. Doss should be his sole heiress. To her that had should certainly be given.

Mrs. Frederick, returning to her comfortable belief in an overruling Providence, got out the family Bible and made an entry under “Marriages.”

Chapter XLIII

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“But, barney,” protested Valancy after a few minutes, “your father—somehow—gave me to understand that you *still* loved *her*.”

“He would. Dad holds the championship for making blunders. If there’s a thing that’s better left unsaid you can trust him to say it. But he isn’t a bad old soul, Valancy. You’ll like him.”

“I do, now.”

“And his money isn’t tainted money. He made it honestly. His medicines are quite harmless. Even his Purple Pills do people whole heaps of good when they believe in them.”

“But—I’m not fit for your life,” sighed Valancy. “I’m not—clever—or well-educated—or—”

“My life is in Mistawis—and all the wild places of the world. I’m not going to ask you to live the life of a society woman. Of course, we must spend a bit of the time with Dad—he’s lonely and old—”

“But not in that big house of his,” pleaded Valancy. “I can’t live in a palace.”

“Can’t come down to that after your Blue Castle,” grinned Barney. “Don’t worry, sweet. I couldn’t live in that house myself. It has a white marble stairway with gilt bannisters and looks like a furniture shop with the labels off. Likewise it’s the pride of Dad’s heart. We’ll get a little house somewhere outside of Montreal—in the real country—near enough to see Dad often. I think we’ll build one for ourselves. A house you build for yourself is so much nicer than a hand-me-down. But we’ll spend our summers in Mistawis. And our autumns travelling. I want you to see the Alhambra—it’s the nearest thing to the Blue Castle of your dreams I can think of. And there’s an old-world garden in Italy where I want to show you the moon rising over Rome through the dark cypress-trees.”

“Will that be any lovelier than the moon rising over Mistawis?”

“Not lovelier. But a different kind of loveliness. There are so many kinds of loveliness. Valancy, before this year you’ve spent all your life in ugliness. You know nothing of the beauty of the world. We’ll climb mountains—hunt for treasures in the bazaars of Samarcand—search out the magic of east and west—run hand in hand to the rim of the world. I want to show you it all—see it again through your eyes. Girl, there are a million things I want to show you—do with you—say to you. It will take a lifetime. And we must see about that picture by Tierney, after all.”

“Will you promise me one thing?” asked Valancy solemnly.

“Anything,” said Barney recklessly.

“Only one thing. You are never, under any circumstances or under any provocation, to cast it up to me that I asked you to marry me.”

Chapter XLIV

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Extract from letter written by Miss Olive Stirling to Mr. Cecil Bruce:

“It’s really disgusting that Doss’ crazy adventures should have turned out like this. It makes one feel that there is no use in behaving properly.

“I’m *sure* her mind was unbalanced when she left home. What she said about a dust-pile showed that. Of course I don’t think there was ever a thing the matter with her heart. Or perhaps Snaith or Redfern or whatever his name really is fed Purple Pills to her, back in that Mistawis hut and cured her. It would make quite a testimonial for the family ads, wouldn’t it?

“He’s such an insignificant-looking creature. I mentioned this to Doss but all she said was, ‘I don’t like collar ad men.’

“Well, he’s certainly no collar ad man. Though I must say there is something rather distinguished about him, now that he has cut his hair and put on decent clothes. I really think, Cecil, you should exercise more. It doesn’t do to get too fleshy.

“He also claims, I believe, to be John Foster. We can believe *that* or not, as we like, I suppose.

“Old Doc Redfern has given them two millions for a wedding-present. Evidently the Purple Pills bring in the bacon. They’re going to spend the fall in Italy and the winter in Egypt and motor through Normandy in apple-blossom time. Not in that dreadful old Lizzie, though. Redfern has got a wonderful new car.

“Well, I think I’ll run away, too, and disgrace myself. It seems to pay.

“Uncle Ben is a scream. Likewise Uncle James. The fuss they all make over Doss now is absolutely sickening. To hear Aunt Amelia talking of ‘my son-in-law, Bernard Redfern’ and ‘my daughter, Mrs. Bernard Redfern.’ Mother and Father are as bad as the rest. And they can’t see that Valancy is just laughing at them all in her sleeve.”

Chapter XLV

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Valancy and Barney turned under the mainland pines in the cool dusk of the September night for a farewell look at the Blue Castle. Mistawis was drowned in sunset lilac light, incredibly delicate and elusive. Nip and Tuck were cawing lazily in the old pines. Good Luck and Banjo were mewed and mewling in separate baskets in Barney's new, dark-green car *en route* to Cousin Georgiana's. Cousin Georgiana was going to take care of them until Barney and Valancy came back. Aunt Wellington and Cousin Sarah and Aunt Alberta had also entreated the privilege of looking after them, but to Cousin Georgiana was it given. Valancy was in tears.

"Don't cry, Moonlight. We'll be back next summer. And now we're off for a real honeymoon."

Valancy smiled through her tears. She was so happy that her happiness terrified her. But, despite the delights before her—the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome—the lure of the ageless Nile—the glamour of the Riviera—mosque and palace and minaret—she knew perfectly well that no spot or place or home in the world could ever possess the sorcery of her Blue Castle.

MAGIC FOR MARIGOLD

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To

NORA

in memory of a world that has passed away

Chapter I.

What's in a Name?

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I

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Once upon a time--which, when you come to think of it, is really the only proper way to begin a story--the only way that really smacks of romance and fairyland--all the Harmony members of the Lesley clan had assembled at Cloud of Spruce to celebrate Old Grandmother's birthday as usual. Also to name Lorraine's baby. It was a crying shame, as Aunt Nina pathetically said, that the little darling had been in the world four whole months without a name. But what could you do, with poor dear Leander dying in that terribly sudden way just two weeks before his daughter was born and poor Lorraine being so desperately ill for weeks and weeks afterwards? Not very strong yet, for that matter. And there was tuberculosis in her family, you know.

Aunt Nina was not really an aunt at all--at least, not of any Lesley. She was just a cousin. It was the custom of the Lesley caste to call every one "Uncle" or "Aunt" as soon as he or she had become too old to be fitly called by a first name among the young fry. There will be no end of these "aunts" and "uncles" bobbing in and out of this story--as well as several genuine ones. I shall not stop to explain which kind they were. It doesn't matter. They were all Lesleys or married to Lesleys. *That* was all that mattered. You were born to the purple if you were a Lesley. Even the pedigrees of their cats were known.

All the Lesleys adored Lorraine's baby. They had all agreed in loving Leander--about the only thing they had ever been known to agree on. And it was thirty years since there had been a baby at Cloud of Spruce. Old Grandmother had more than once said gloomily that the good old stock was running out. So this small lady's advent would have been hailed with delirious delight if it hadn't been for Leanders death and Lorraine's long illness. Now that Old Grandmother's birthday had come, the Lesleys had an excuse for their long-deferred jollification. As for the name, no Lesley

baby was ever named until every relative within get-at-able distance had had his or her say in the matter. The selection of a suitable name was, in their eyes, a much more important thing than the mere christening. And how much more in the case of a fatherless baby whose mother was a sweet soul enough--but--you know--a Winthrop!

Cloud of Spruce, the original Lesley homestead, where Old Grandmother and Young Grandmother and Mrs. Leander and the baby and Salome Silversides lived, was on the harbour shore, far enough out of Harmony village to be in the real country; a cream brick house--a nice chubby old house--so covered with vines that it looked more like a heap of ivy than a house; a house that had folded its hands and said, "I will rest." Before it was the beautiful Harmony Harbour; with its purring waves, so close that in autumnal storms the spray dashed over the very doorsteps and encrusted the windows. Behind it was an orchard that climbed the slope. And about it always the soft sighing of the big spruce wood on the hill.

The birthday dinner was eaten in Old Grandmother's room--which had been the "orchard room" until Old Grandmother, two years back, had cheerfully and calmly announced that she was tired of getting up before breakfast and working between meals.

"I'm going to spend the rest of my life being waited on," she said. "I've had ninety years of slaving for other people--" and bossing them, the Lesleys said in their hearts. But not out loud, for it did really seem at times as if Old Grandmother's ears could hear for miles. Uncle Ebenezer said something once about Old Grandmother, to himself, in his cellar at midnight, when he knew he was the only human being in the house. Next Sunday afternoon Old Grandmother cast it up to him. She said Lucifer had told her. Lucifer was her cat. And Uncle Ebenezer suddenly remembered that *his* cat had been sitting on the edge of the potato bin when he said that.

It was safest not to say things about Old Grandmother.

Old Grandmother's room was a long, dim-green apartment running across the south end of the house, with a glass door opening right into the orchard. Its walls were hung with photographs of Lesley brides for sixty

years back, most of them with enormous bouquets and wonderful veils and trains. Clementine's photograph was among them--Clementine, Leander's first wife, who had died six years ago with *her* little unnamed daughter. Old Grandmother had it hanging on the wall at the foot of her bed so that she could see it all the time. Old Grandmother had been very fond of Clementine. At least, she always gave Lorraine that impression.

The picture was good to look at--Clementine Lesley had been very beautiful. She was not dressed as a bride--in fact the picture had been taken just before her marriage and had a clan fame as "Clementine with the lily." She was posed standing with her beautiful arms resting on a pedestal and in one slender, perfect hand--Clementine's hands had become a tradition of loveliness--she held a lily, at which she was gazing earnestly. Old Grandmother had told Lorraine once that a distinguished guest at Cloud of Spruce, an artist of international fame, had exclaimed on seeing that picture,

"Exquisite hands! Hands into which a man might fearlessly put his soul!"

Lorraine had sighed and looked at her rather thin little hands. Not beautiful--scarcely even pretty; yet Leander had once kissed their fingertips and said--but Lorraine did not tell Old Grandmother what Leander had said. Perhaps Old Grandmother might have liked her better if she had.

Old Grandmother had her clock in the corner by the bed--a clock that had struck for the funerals and weddings and goings and comings and meetings and partings of five generations; the grandfather clock her husband's father had brought out from Scotland a hundred and forty years ago; the Lesleys plumed themselves on being Prince Edward Island pioneer stock. It was still keeping excellent time and Old Grandmother got out of bed every night to wind it. She would have done that if she had been dying.

Her other great treasure was in the opposite corner. A big glass case with Alicia, the famous Skinner doll, in it. Old Grandmother's mother had been a Skinner and the doll had no part in Lesley traditions, but every Lesley child had been brought up in the fear and awe of it and knew its

story. Old Grandmother's mother's sister had lost her only little daughter of three years and had never been "quite right" afterwards. She had had a waxen image of her baby made and kept it beside her always and talked to it as if it had been alive. It was dressed in a wonderful embroidered dress that had belonged to the dead baby, and wore one of her slippers. The other slipper was held in one waxen hand ready for the small bare foot that peeped out under the muslin flounces. The doll was so lifelike that Lorraine always shuddered when she passed it, and Salome Silversides was very doubtful of the propriety of having such a thing in the house at all, especially as she knew that Lazarre, the French hired man, thought and told that it was the Old Lady's "Saint" and believed she prayed before it regularly. But all the Lesleys had a certain pride in it. No other Prince Edward Island family could boast a doll like that. It conferred a certain distinction upon them and tourists wrote it up in their local papers when they went back home.

Of course the cats were present at the festivity also. Lucifer and the Witch of Endor. Both of black velvet with great round eyes. Cloud of Spruce was noted for its breed of black cats with topaz-hued eyes. Its kittens were not scattered broadcast but given away with due discrimination.

Lucifer was Old Grandmother's favourite. A remote, subtle cat. An inscrutable cat so full of mystery that it fairly oozed out of him. The Witch of Endor became her name but compared to Lucifer she was commonplace. Salome wondered secretly that Old Grandmother wasn't afraid of a judgment for calling a cat after the Old Harry. Salome "liked cats in their place" but she was furious when Uncle Klondike said to her once, "Salome Silversides! Why, you ought to be a cat yourself with a name like that. A sleek, purring plushy Maltese."

"I'm sure I don't look like a cat," said Salome, highly insulted. And Uncle Klondike agreed that she did not.

Old Grandmother was a gnomish dame of ninety-two who meant to live to be a hundred. A tiny, shrunken, wrinkled thing with flashing black eyes. There was a Puckish hint of malice in most things she said or did.

She ruled the whole Lesley clan and knew everything that was said and done in it. If she had given up "slaving" she certainly had not given up "bossing." To-day she was propped up on crimson cushions, with a fresh, frilled, white cap tied around her face, eating her dinner heartily and thinking things not lawful to be uttered about her daughters-in-law and her granddaughters-in-law and her great-grand-daughters-in-law.

II

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Young Grandmother, a mere lass of sixty-five, sat at the head of the long table--a tall, handsome lady with bright, steel-blue eyes and white hair, whom Old Grandmother thought a somewhat pert young thing. There was nothing of the traditional grandmother of caps and knitting about *her*. She was like a stately old princess in her purple velvet gown with its wonderful lace collar. The gown had been made eight years before, but when Young Grandmother wore anything it seemed at once in the height of the fashion. Most of the Lesleys present thought she should not have laid aside her black even for a birthday dinner. But Young Grandmother did not care what they thought any more than Old Grandmother did. She had been a Blaisdell--one of "the stubborn Blaisdells"--and the Blaisdell traditions were as good as the Lesley traditions any day.

Lorraine sat on the right of Young Grandmother at the table, with the baby in her cradle beside her. Because of the baby she had a certain undeniable importance never before conceded her. All the Lesleys had been more or less opposed to Leander's "second choice." Only the fact that she was a minister's daughter appeased them. She was a shy, timid, pretty creature--quite insignificant except for her enormous masses of lustrous, pale gold hair. Her small face was sweet and flower-like and she had peculiarly soft grey-blue eyes with long lashes. She looked very young and fragile in her black dress. But she was beginning to be a little happy once more. Her arms, that had reached out so emptily in the silence of the night, were filled again. The fields and hills around Cloud of Spruce that had been so stark and bare and chill when her little lady came were green and golden now, spilled over with blossoms, and the orchard was an exquisite perfumed world by itself. One could not be altogether unhappy, in springtime, with such a wonderful, unbelievable baby.

The baby lay in the old Heppelwhite cradle where her father and grandfather had lain before her--a quite adorable baby, with a saucy little chin, tiny hands as exquisite as the apple-blossoms, eyes of fairy blue, and the arrogant, superior smile of babies before they have forgotten all the marvellous things they know at first. Lorraine could hardly eat her dinner for gazing at her baby--and wondering. Would this tiny thing ever be a dancing, starry-eyed girl--a white bride--a mother? Lorraine shivered. It did not do to look so far ahead. Aunt Anne got up, brought a shawl, and tenderly put it around Lorraine's shoulders. Lorraine was almost melted, for the June day was hot, but she wore the shawl all through dinner rather than hurt Aunt Anne's feelings. That one fact described Lorraine.

On Young Grandmother's left sat Uncle Klondike, the one handsome, mysterious, unaccountable member of the Lesley clan, with his straight, heavy eyebrows, his flashing blue eyes, his mane of tawny hair and the red-gold beard which had caused a sentimental Harmony lady of uncertain years to say that he made her think of those splendid old Vikings.

Uncle Klondike's real name was Horace, but ever since he had come back from the Yukon with gold dropping out of his pockets he had been known as Klondike Lesley. His deity was the God of All Wanderers and in his service Horace Lesley had spent wild, splendid, adventurous years.

When Klondike had been a boy at school he had a habit of looking at certain places on the map and saying, "I'll go there." Go he did. He had stood on the southernmost boulder of Ceylon and sat on Buddhist cairns at the edge of Thibet. The Southern Cross was a pal and he had heard the songs of nightingales in the gardens of the Alhambra. India and the China seas were to him as a tale that is told, and he had walked alone in great Arctic spaces under northern lights. He had lived in many places but he had never thought of any of them as home. That name had all unconsciously been kept sacred to the long, green, seaward-looking glen where he had been born.

And finally he had come home, sated, to live the rest of his life a decent law-abiding clansman, whereof the conclusive sign and token was that he had trimmed his moustache and beard into decency. The moustache

had been particularly atrocious. Its ends hung down nearly as far as his beard did. When Aunt Anne asked him despairingly why upon earth he wore a moustache like that he retorted that he wrapped it round his ears to keep them warm. The clan were horribly afraid he meant to go on wearing them--for Uncle Klondike was both Lesley *and* Blaisdell. He finally had them clipped, though he could never be induced to go the length of a clean-shaven face, fashion or no fashion. But, though he went to bed early at least once a week, he still savoured life with gusto and the clan were always secretly much afraid of him and his satiric winks and cynical speeches. Aunt Nina, in particular, had held him in terror ever since the day she had told him proudly that her husband had *never* lied to her.

"Oh, you poor woman," said Uncle Klondike, with real sympathy in his tone.

Nina supposed there was a joke somewhere but she could never find it. She was a W. C. T. U. and an I. O. D. E. and most of the other letters of the alphabet--but somehow she found it hard to get the hang of Klondike's jokes.

Klondike Lesley was known to be a woman-hater. He scoffed openly at all love, more especially the supreme absurdity of love at first sight. This did not prevent his clan from trying for years to marry him off. It would be the making of Klondike if he had a good wife who would stand no nonsense. They were very obvious about it, and with the renowned Lesley frankness, recommended several excellent brides to him. But Klondike Lesley was notoriously hard to please.

"Katherine Nichols?"

"But look at the thick ankles of her."

"Emma Goodfellow?"

"Her mother used to call out 'meow' in church whenever the minister said something she didn't like. Can't risk heredity."

"Rose Osborn?"

"I can't stand a woman with pudgy hands."

"Sara Jenet?"

"An egg without salt."

"Lottie Parks?"

"I'd like her as a flavouring, not as a dish."

"Ruth Russell?"--triumphantly, as having at last hit on a woman with whom no reasonable man could find fault.

"Too peculiar. When she has nothing to say she doesn't talk. That's really too uncanny in a woman, you know."

"Dorothy Porter?"

"Ornamental by candlelight. But I don't believe she'd look so well at breakfast."

"Amy Ray?"

"Always purring, blinking, sidling, clawing. Nice small pussy-cat but I'm no mouse."

"Agnes Barr?"

"A woman who says Coué's formula instead of her prayers!"

"Olive Purdy?"

"Tongue--temper--and tears. Go sparingly, thank you."

Even Old Grandmother took a hand and met with no better success. She was wiser than to throw any one girl at his head--the men of the Lesley clan never had married the women picked out for them. But she had her own way of managing things.

"He travels the fastest who travels alone," was all she could get out of Klondike.

"Very clever of you," said Old Grandmother, "if travelling fast is all there is to life."

"Not clever of *me*. Don't you know your Kipling, Grandmother?"

"What is a Kipling?" said Old Grandmother.

Uncle Klondike did not tell her. He merely said he was doomed to die a bachelor--and could not escape his kismet.

Old Grandmother was not a stupid woman even if she didn't know what a Kipling was.

"You've waited too long--you've lost your appetite," she said shrewdly.

The Lesleys gave it up. No use trying to fit this exasperating relative with a wife. A bachelor Klondike remained, with an awful habit of wiring

"sincere sympathy" when any of his friends got married. Perhaps it was just as well. His nephews and nieces might benefit, especially Lorraine's baby whom he evidently worshipped. So here he was, unwedded, light-hearted and content, watching them all with his amused smile.

Lucifer had leaped on his knee as soon as he had sat down. Lucifer condescended to very few but, as he told the Witch of Endor, Klondike Lesley had a way with him. Uncle Klon fed Lucifer with bits from his own plate and Salome, who ate with the family because she was a fourth cousin of Jane Lyle, who had married the stepbrother of a Lesley, thought it ghastly.

III

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The baby had to be talked all over again and Uncle William-over-the-bay covered himself with indelible disgrace by saying dubiously,

"She is not--ahem--really a pretty child, do you think?"

"All the better for her future looks," said Old Grandmother tartly. She had been biding her moment, like a watchful cat, to give a timely dig.

"*You*," she added maliciously, "were a very pretty baby--though you did not have any more hair on your head than you have now."

"Beauty is a fatal gift. She will be better without it," sighed Aunt Nina.

"Then why do you cold-cream your face every night and eat raw carrots for your complexion and dye your hair?" asked Old Grandmother.

Aunt Nina couldn't imagine how Old Grandmother knew about the carrots. *She* had no cat to tattle to Lucifer.

"We are all as God made us," said Uncle Ebenezer piously.

"Then God botched some of us," snapped Old Grandmother, looking significantly at Uncle Ebenezer's enormous ears and the frill of white whisker around his throat that made him look oddly like a sheep. But then, reflected Old Grandmother, whoever might be responsible for the nose, it was hardly fair to blame God for Ebenezer's whiskers.

"She has a peculiarly shaped hand, hasn't she?" persisted Uncle William-over-the-bay.

Aunt Anne bent over and kissed one of the little hands.

"The hand of an artist," she said.

Lorraine looked at her gratefully and hated Uncle William-over-the-bay bitterly for ten minutes under her golden hair.

"Handsome is as handsome does," said Uncle Archibald, who rarely opened his mouth save to emit a proverb.

"Would you mind telling me, Archibald," said Old Grandmother pleasantly, "if you really look that solemn when you're asleep."

No one answered her. Aunt Mary Martha-over-the-bay, the only one who could have answered, had been dead for ten years.

"Whether she's pretty or not, she's going to have very long lashes," said Aunt Anne, reverting to the baby as a safer subject of conversation. There was no sense in letting Old Grandmother start a family row for her own amusement so soon after poor Leander's passing away.

"God help the men then," said Uncle Klon gravely.

Aunt Anne wondered why Old Grandmother was laughing to herself until the bed shook. Aunt Anne reflected that it would have been just as well if Klondike with his untimely sense of humour had not been present in a serious assemblage like this.

"Well, we must give her a pretty name, anyhow," said Aunt Flora briskly. "It's simply a shame that it's been left as long as this. No Lesley ever was before. Come, Grandmother, you ought to name her. What do you suggest?"

Old Grandmother affected the indifferent. She had three namesakes already so she knew Leander's baby wouldn't be named after *her*.

"Call it what you like," she said. "I'm too old to bother about it. Fight it out among yourselves."

"But we'd like your advice, Grandmother," unfortunately said Aunt Leah, whom Old Grandmother was just detesting because she had noticed the minute Leah shook hands with her that she had had her nails manicured.

"I have no advice to give. I have nothing but a little wisdom and I cannot give you *that*. Neither can I help it if a woman has a bargain-counter nose."

"Are you referring to *my* nose," inquired Aunt Leah with spirit. She often said she was the only one in the clan who wasn't afraid of Old Grandmother.

"The pig that's bit squeals," retorted Old Grandmother. She leaned back on her pillows disdainfully and sipped her tea with a vengeance. She had got square with Leah for manicuring her nails.

She had insisted on having her dinner first so that she might watch the others eating theirs. She knew it made them all more or less uncomfortable. Oh, but it was fine to be able to be disagreeable again. She had had to be so good and considerate for four months. Four months was long enough to mourn for anybody. Four months of not daring to give anybody a wiggling. They had seemed like four centuries.

Lorraine sighed. She knew what *she* wanted to call her baby. But she knew that she would never have the courage to say it. And if she did she knew they would never consent to it. When you married into a family like the Lesleys you had to take the consequences. It was very hard when you couldn't name your own baby--when you were not even asked what you'd *like* it named. If Lee had only lived it would have been different. Lee, who was not a bit like the other Lesleys--except Uncle Klon, a little--Lee, who loved wonder and beauty and laughter--laughter that had been hushed so suddenly. Surely the jests of Heaven must have had more spice since he had joined in them. How he would have howled at this august conclave over the naming of his baby! How he would have brushed them aside! Lorraine felt sure he would have let her call her baby--

"I think," said Mrs. David Lesley, throwing her bombshell gravely and sadly, "that it would only be graceful and fitting that she should be called after Leander's first wife."

Mrs. David and Clementine had been very intimate friends. But Clementine! Lorraine shivered again and wished she hadn't, for Aunt Anne's eye looked like another shawl.

Everybody looked at Clementine's picture.

"Poor little Clementine," sighed Aunt Stasia in a tone that made Lorraine feel she should never have taken poor little Clementine's place.

"Do you remember what lovely jet black hair she had?" asked Aunt Marcia.

"And what lovely hands?" said Great-Aunt Matilda.

"She was so young to die," sighed Aunt Josephine.

"She was *such* a sweet girl," said Great-Aunt Elizabeth.

"A sweet girl all right," agreed Uncle Klon, "but why condemn an innocent child to carry a name like that all her life? That would really be a sin."

The clan, with the exception of Mrs. David, felt grateful to him and looked it, especially Young Grandmother. The name simply wouldn't have done, no matter how sweet Clementine was. That horrid old song, for instance--*Oh, my darling Clementine*, that boys used to howl along the road at nights. No, no, not for a Lesley. But Mrs. David was furious. Not only because Klondike disagreed with her but because he was imitating her old lisp, so long outgrown that it really was mean of him to drag it up again like this.

"Will you have some more dressing?" inquired Young Grandmother graciously.

"No, thank you." Mrs. David was not going to have any more, by way of signifying displeasure. Later on she took a still more terrible revenge by leaving two-thirds of her pudding uneaten, knowing that Young Grandmother had concocted it. Young Grandmother woke up in the night and wondered if anything could really have been the matter with the pudding. The others *might* have eaten it out of politeness.

"If Leander's name had been almost anything else she might have been named for her father," said Great-Uncle Walter. "Roberta--Georgina--Johanna--Andrea--Stephanie--Wilhelmina--"

"Or Davidena," said Uncle Klon. But Great-Uncle Walter ignored him.

"You can't make anything out of a name like *Leander*. Whatever did you call him that for, Marian?"

"His grandfather named him after him who swam the Hellespont," said Young Grandmother as rebukingly as if she had not, thirty-five years before, cried all one night because Old Grandfather had given her baby such a horrid name.

"She might be called Hero," said Uncle Klon.

"We had a dog called that once," said Old Grandmother.

"Leander didn't tell you before he died that he wanted any special name, did he, Lorraine?" inquired Aunt Nina.

"No," faltered Lorraine. "He--he had so little time to tell me--anything."

The clan frowned at Nina as a unit. They thought she was very tactless. But what could you expect of a woman who wrote poetry and peddled it about the country? *Writing* it might have been condoned--and concealed. After all, the Lesleys were not intolerant and everybody had some shortcomings. But *selling* it openly!

"I should like baby to be called Gabriella," persisted Nina.

"There has never been such a name among the Lesleys," said Old Grandmother. And that was *that*.

"I think it's time we had some new names," said the poetess rebelliously. But every one looked stony, and Nina began to cry. She cried upon the slightest provocation. Lorraine remembered that Leander had always called her Mrs. Gummidge.

"Come, come," said Old Grandmother, "surely we can name this baby as well comfortably as uncomfortably. Don't make the mistake, Nina, of thinking that you are helping things along by making a martyr of yourself."

"What do *you* think, Miss Silversides?" inquired Uncle Charlie, who thought Salome was being entirely ignored and didn't like it.

"Oh, it doesn't matter what *I* think. *I* am of no consequence," said Salome, ostentatiously helping herself to the pickles.

"Come, come, now, you're one of the family," coaxed Uncle Charlie, who knew--so he said--how to handle women.

"Well"--Salome relaxed because she was really dying to have her say in it--"I've always thought names that ended in 'ine' were so elegant. *My* choice would be Rosaline."

"Or Evangeline," said Great-Uncle Walter.

"Or Eglantine," said Aunt Marcia eagerly.

"Or Gelatine," said Uncle Klön.

There was a pause.

"Juno would be such a nice name," said Cousin Teresa.

"But we are Presbyterians," said Old Grandmother.

"Or Robinette," suggested Uncle Charlie.

"We are English," said Young Grandmother.

"I think Yvonne is such a romantic name," said Aunt Flora.

"Names have really nothing to do with romance," said Uncle Klon.

"The most thrilling and tragic love affair I ever knew was between a man named Silas Twingletoe and a woman named Kezia Birtwhistle. It's my opinion children shouldn't be named at all. They should be numbered until they're grown up, then choose their own names."

"But then you are not a mother, my dear Horace," said Young Grandmother tolerantly.

"Besides, there's an Yvonne Clubine keeping a lingerie shop in Charlottetown," said Aunt Josephine.

"Lingerie? If you mean underclothes for heaven's sake say so," snapped Old Grandmother.

"Juanita is a rather nice uncommon name," suggested John Eddy Lesley-over-the-bay. "J-u-a-n-i-t-a."

"Nobody would know how to spell it or pronounce it," said Aunt Marcia.

"I think," began Uncle Klon--but Aunt Josephine took the road.

"I think--"

"*Place aux dames*," murmured Uncle Klon. Aunt Josephine thought he was swearing but ignored him.

"I think the baby should be called after one of our missionaries. It's a shame that we have three foreign missionaries in the connection and not one of them has a namesake--even if they are only fourth cousins. *I* suggest we call her Harriet after the oldest one."

"But," said Aunt Anne, "that would be slighting Ellen and Louise."

"Well," said Young Grandmother haughtily--Young Grandmother was haughty because nobody had suggested naming the baby after *her*--"call her the whole three names, Harriet Ellen Louise Lesley. Then no fourth cousin need feel slighted."

The suggestion seemed to find favour. Lorraine caught her breath anxiously and looked at Uncle Klon. But rescue came from another

quarter.

"Have you ever," said Old Grandmother with a wicked chuckle,
"thought what the initials spell?"

They hadn't. They did. Nothing more was said about missionaries.

IV

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"Sylvia is a beautiful name," ventured Uncle Howard, whose first sweetheart had been a Sylvia.

"You couldn't call her that," said Aunt Millicent in a shocked tone. "Don't you remember Great-Uncle Marshall's Sylvia went insane? She died filling the air with shrieks. *I* think Bertha would be more suitable."

"Why, there's a Bertha in John C. Lesley's family-over-the-bay," said Young Grandmother.

John C. was a distant relative who was "at outs" with his clan. So Bertha would never do.

"Wouldn't it be nice to name her Adela?" said Aunt Anne. "You know Adela is the only really distinguished person the connection has ever produced. A famous authoress--"

"*I* should like the mystery of her husband's death to be cleared up before any grandchild of mine is called after her," said Young Grandmother austerely.

"Nonsense, Mother! You surely don't suspect Adela."

"There *was* arsenic in the porridge," said Young Grandmother darkly.

"I'll tell you what the child should be called," said Aunt Sybilla, who had been waiting for the psychic moment. "Theodora! It was revealed to me in a vision of the night. I was awakened by a feeling of icy coldness on my face. I came all out in goose flesh. And I heard a voice distinctly pronounce the name--*Theodora*. I wrote it down in my diary as soon as I arose."

John Eddy Lesley-over-the-bay laughed. Sybilla hated him for weeks for it.

"I wish," said sweet old Great-Aunt Matilda, "that she could be called after my little girl who died."

Aunt Matilda's voice trembled. Her little girl had been dead for fifty years but she was still unforgotten. Lorraine loved Aunt Matilda. She wanted to please her. But she couldn't--she *couldn't*--call her dear baby Emmalinza.

"It's unlucky to call a child after a dead person," said Aunt Anne positively.

"Why not call the baby Jane," said Uncle Peter briskly. "My mother's name--a good, plain, sensible name that'll wear. Nickname it to suit any age. Jenny--Janie--Janet--Jeannette--Jean--and Jane for the seventies."

"Oh, wait till I'm dead--*please*," wailed Old Grandmother. "It would always make me think of Jane Putkammer."

Nobody knew who Jane Putkammer was or why Old Grandmother didn't want to think of her. As nobody asked why--the dessert having just been begun--Old Grandmother told them.

"When my husband died she sent me a letter of condolence written in red ink. Jane, indeed!"

So the baby escaped being Jane. Lorraine felt really grateful to Old Grandmother. She had been afraid Jane might carry the day. And how fortunate there was such a thing as red ink in the world.

"Funny about nicknames," said Uncle Klon. "I wonder did they have nicknames in Biblical times. Was Jonathan ever shortened into Jo? Was King David ever called Dave? And fancy Melchizedek's mother always calling him that."

"Melchizedek hadn't a mother," said Mrs. David triumphantly--and forgave Uncle Klon. But not Young Grandmother. The pudding remained uneaten.

"Twenty years ago Jonathan Lesley gave me a book on 'The Hereafter,'" said Old Grandmother reminiscently. "And he's been in the Hereafter eighteen years and I am still in the Here."

"Any one would think you expected to live forever," said Uncle Jarvis, speaking for the first time. He had been sitting in silence, hoping gloomily that Leander's baby was an elect infant. What mattered a name compared to that?

"I do," said Old Grandmother, chuckling. That was one for Jarvis, the solemn old ass.

"We're not really getting anywhere about the baby's name, you know," said Uncle Paul desperately.

"Why not let Lorraine name her own baby?" said Uncle Klon suddenly. "Have you any name you'd like her called, dear?"

Again Lorraine caught her breath. Oh, hadn't she! She wanted to call her baby Marigold. In her girlhood she had had a dear friend named Marigold. The only girl-friend she ever had. Such a dear, wonderful, bewitching, lovable creature. She had filled Lorraine's starved childhood with beauty and mystery and affection. And she had died. If only she might call her baby Marigold! But she knew the horror of the clan over such a silly, fanciful, outlandish name. Old Grandmother--Young Grandmother--no, they would never consent. She knew it. All her courage exhaled from her in a sigh of surrender.

"No-o-o," she said in a small, hopeless voice. Oh, if she were only not such a miserable coward.

And that terrible Old Grandmother knew it.

"She's fibbing," she thought. "She has a name but she's too scared to tell it. Clementine, now--she would have stood on her own feet and told them what was what."

Old Grandmother looked at Clementine, forever gazing at her lily, and forgot that she said Clementine's ability to stand on her own feet and tell people--even Old Grandmother--what was what had not especially commended her to Old Grandmother at one time. But Old Grandmother liked people with a mind of their own--when they were dead.

Old Grandmother was beginning to feel bored with the whole matter. What a fuss over a name. As if it really mattered what that mite in the cradle, with the golden fuzz on her head, was called. Old Grandmother looked at the tiny sleeping face curiously. Lorraine's hair but Leander's chin and brow and nose. A fatherless baby with only that foolish Winthrop girl for a mother.

"I *must* live long enough for her to remember me," thought Old Grandmother. "It's only a question of keeping on at it. Marian has no imagination and Lorraine has too much. Somebody must give that child a few hints to live by, whether she's to be minx or madonna."

"If it was only a boy it would be so easy to name it," said Uncle Paul.

Then for ten minutes they wrangled over what they would have called it if it had been a boy. They were beginning to get quite warm over it when Aunt Myra took a throbbing in the back of her neck.

"I'm afraid one of my terrible headaches is coming on," she said faintly.

"What would women do if headaches had never been invented?" asked Old Grandmother. "It's the most convenient disease in the world. It can come on so suddenly--go so conveniently. And nobody can prove we haven't got it."

"I'm sure no one has ever suffered as I do," sighed Myra.

"We all think that," said Old Grandmother, seeing a chance to shoot another poisoned arrow. "I'll tell you what's the matter with you. Eye strain. You should really wear glasses at your age, Myra."

"Why can't those headaches be cured?" said Uncle Paul. "Why don't you try a new doctor?"

"Who is there to try now that poor Leander is in his grave?" wailed Myra. "I don't know what we Lesleys are ever going to do without him. We'll just have to *die*. Dr. Moorhouse drinks and Dr. Stackley is an evolutionist. And you wouldn't have me go to that woman-doctor, would you?"

No, of course not. No Lesley would go to that woman-doctor. Dr. M. Woodruff Richards had been practising in Harmony for two years, but no Lesley would have called in a woman-doctor if he had been dying. One might as well commit suicide. Besides, a woman-doctor was an outrageous portent, not to be tolerated or recognised at all. As Great-Uncle Robert said indignantly, "The weemen are gittin' entirely too intelligent."

Klondike Lesley was especially sarcastic about her. "An unsexed creature," he called her. Klondike had no use for unfeminine women who

aped men. "Neither fish nor flesh nor good red herring," as Young Grandfather had been wont to say. But they talked of her through their coffee and did not again revert to the subject of the baby's name. They were all feeling a trifle sore over *that*. It seemed to them all that neither Old Grandmother nor Young Grandmother nor Lorraine had backed them up properly. With the result that all the guests went home with the great question yet unsettled.

"Just as I expected. All squawks--nothing but squawks as usual," said Old Grandmother.

"We might have known what would happen when we had this on Friday," said Salome, as she washed up the dishes.

"Well, the great affair is over," said Lucifer to the Witch of Endor as they discussed a plate of chicken bones and Pope's noses on the back veranda, "and that baby hasn't got a name yet. But these celebrations are red-letter days for *us*. Listen to me purr."

Chapter II.

Sealed of the Tribe

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I

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Things were rather edgy in the Lesley clan for a few weeks. As Uncle Charlie said, they had their tails up. Cousin Sybilla was reported to have gone on a hunger strike--which she called a fast--about it. Stasia and Teresa, two affectionate sisters, quarrelled over it and wouldn't speak to each other. There was a connubial rupture between Uncle Thomas and Aunt Katherine because she wanted to consult Ouija about a name. Obadiah Lesley, who in thirty years had never spoken a cross word to his wife, rated her so bitterly for wanting to call the baby Consuela that she went home to her mother for three days. An engagement trembled in the balance. Myra's throbbings in the neck became more frequent than ever. Uncle William-over-the-bay vowed he wouldn't play checkers until the child was named. Aunt Josephine was known to be praying about it at a particular hour every day. Nina cried almost ceaselessly over it and gave up peddling poetry for the time being, which led Uncle Paul to remark that it was an ill wind which blew no good. Young Grandmother preserved an offended silence. Old Grandmother laughed to herself until the bed shook. Salome and the cats held their peace, though Lucifer carefully kept his tail at half-mast. Everybody was more or less cool to Lorraine because she had not taken his or her choice. It really looked as if Leander's baby was never going to get a name.

Then--the shadow fell. One day the little lady of Cloud of Spruce seemed fretful and feverish. The next day more so. The third day Dr. Moorhouse was called--the first time for years that a Lesley had to call in an outside doctor. For three generations there had been a Dr. Lesley at Cloud of Spruce. Now that Leander was gone they were all at sea. Dr. Moorhouse was brisk and cheerful. Pooh--pooh! No need to worry--not the slightest. The child would be all right in a day or two.

She wasn't. At the end of a week the Lesley clan were thoroughly alarmed. Dr. Moorhouse had ceased to pooh-pooh. He came anxiously twice a day. And day by day the shadow deepened. The baby was wasting away to skin and bone. Anguished Lorraine hung over the cradle with eyes that nobody could bear to look at. Everybody proposed a different remedy but nobody was offended if it wasn't used. Things were too serious for that. Only Nina was almost sent to Coventry because she asked Lorraine one day if infantile paralysis began like that, and Aunt Marcia was frozen out because she heard a dog howling one night. Also, when Flora said she had found a diamond-shaped crease in a clean tablecloth--a sure sign of death in the year--Klondike insulted her. But Klondike was forgiven because he was nearly beside himself over the baby's condition.

Dr. Moorhouse called in Dr. Stackley, who might be an evolutionist but had a reputation of being good with children. After a long consultation they changed the treatment; but there was no change in the little patient. Klondike brought a specialist from Charlottetown who looked wise and rubbed his hands and said Dr. Moorhouse was doing all that could be done and that while there was life there was always hope, especially in the case of children.

"Whose vitality is sometimes quite extraordinary," he said gravely, as if enunciating some profound discovery of his own.

It was at this juncture that Great-Uncle Walter, who hadn't gone to church for thirty years, made a bargain with God that he would go if the child's life was spared, and that Great-Uncle William-over-the-bay recklessly began playing checkers again. Better break a vow before a death than after it. Teresa and Stasia had made up as soon as the baby took ill, but it was only now that the coolness between Thomas and Katherine totally vanished. Thomas told her for goodness' sake to try Ouija or any darned thing that might help. Even Old Cousin James T., who was a black sheep and never called "Uncle" even by the most tolerant, came to Salome one evening.

"Do you believe in prayer?" he asked fiercely.

"Of course I do," said Salome indignantly.

"Then *pray*. *I* don't--so it's no use for me to pray. But you pray your darnedest."

II

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A terrible day came when Dr. Moorhouse told Lorraine gently that he could do nothing more. After he had gone Young Grandmother looked at Old Grandmother.

"I suppose," she said in a low voice, "we had better take the cradle into the spare room."

Lorraine gave a bitter cry. This was equivalent to a death sentence. At Cloud of Spruce, just as with the Murrays down at Blair Water, it was a tradition that dying people must be taken into the spare room.

"You'll do one thing before you take her into the spare room," said Old Grandmother fiercely. "Moorhouse and Stackley have given up the case. They've only half a brain between them anyhow. Send for that woman-doctor."

Young Grandmother looked thunderstruck. She turned to Uncle Klondike, who was sitting by the baby's cradle, his haggard face buried in his hands.

"Do you suppose--I've *heard* she was very clever--they say she was offered a splendid post in a children's hospital in Montreal but preferred general practice--"

"Oh, get her, get her," said Klondike--savage from the bitter business of hoping against hope. "Any port in a storm. She can't do any harm now."

"Will *you* go for her, Horace," said Young Grandmother quite humbly.

Klondike Lesley uncoiled himself and went. He had never seen Dr. Richards before--save at a distance, or spinning past him in her smart little runabout. She was in her office and came forward to meet him gravely sweet.

She had a little, square, wide-lipped, straight-browed face like a boy's. Not pretty but haunting. Wavy brown hair with one teasing, unruly little curl that *would* fall down on her forehead, giving her a youthful look in spite of her thirty-five years. What a dear face! So wide at the cheekbones-

-so deep grey-eyed. With such a lovely, smiling, generous mouth. Some old text of Sunday-school days suddenly flitted through Klondike Lesley's dazed brain:

"She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life."

For just a second their eyes met and locked. Only a second. But it did the work of years. The irresistible woman had met the immovable man and the inevitable had happened. She might have had thick ankles--only she hadn't; her mother might have meowed all over the church. Nothing would have mattered to Klondike Lesley. She made him think of all sorts of lovely things, such as sympathy, kindness, generosity, and women who were not afraid to grow old. He had the most extraordinary feeling that he would like to lay his head on her breast and cry, like a little boy who had got hurt, and have her stroke his head and say,

"Never mind--be brave--you'll soon feel better, dear."

"Will you come to see my little niece?" he heard himself pleading. "Dr. Moorhouse has given her up. We are all very fond of her. Her mother will die if she cannot be saved. Won't you come?"

"Of course I will," said Dr. Richards.

She came. She said little, but she did some drastic things about diet and sleeping. Old and Young Grandmothers gasped when she ordered the child's cradle moved out on the veranda. Every day for two weeks her light, steady footsteps came and went about Cloud of Spruce. Lorraine and Salome and Young Grandmother hung breathlessly on her briefest word.

Old Grandmother saw her once. She had told Salome to bring "the woman-doctor in," and they had looked at each other for a few minutes in silence. The steady, sweet, grey eyes had gazed unquailingly into the piercing black ones.

"If a son of mine had met you I would have ordered him to marry you," Old Grandmother said at last with a chuckle.

The little humorous quirk in Dr. Richards's mouth widened to a smile. She looked around her at all the laughing brides of long ago in their billows of tulle.

"But I would not have married him unless I wanted to," she said.

Old Grandmother chuckled again.

"Trust you for that." But she never called her "the woman-doctor" again. She spoke with her own dignity of "Dr. Richards"--for a short time.

Klondike brought Dr. Richards to Cloud of Spruce and took her away. Her own car was laid up for repairs. But nobody was paying much attention to Klondike just then.

At the end of the two weeks it seemed to Lorraine that the shadow had ceased to deepen on the little wasted face.

A few more days--was it not lightening--lifting? At the end of three more weeks Dr. Richards told them that the baby was out of danger. Lorraine fainted and Young Grandmother shook and Klondike broke down and cried unashamedly like a schoolboy.

III

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A few days later the clan had another conclave--a smaller and informal one. The aunts and uncles present were all genuine ones. And it was not, as Salome thankfully reflected, on a Friday.

"This child must be named at once," said Young Grandmother authoritatively. "Do you realize that she might have died without a name?"

The horror of this kept the Lesleys silent for a few minutes. Besides, every one dreaded starting up another argument so soon after those dreadful weeks. Who knew but what it had been a judgment on them for quarrelling over it?

"But *what* shall we call her?" said Aunt Anne timidly.

"There is only one name you can give her," said Old Grandmother, "and it would be the blackest ingratitude if you didn't. Call her after the woman who has saved her life, of course."

The Lesleys looked at each other. A simple, graceful, natural solution of the problem--if only--

"But *Woodruff!*" sighed Aunt Marcia.

"She's got another name, hasn't she?" snapped Old Grandmother. "Ask Horace there what M stands for? *He* can tell you, or I'm much mistaken."

Every one looked at Klondike. In the anxiety of the past weeks everybody in the clan had been blind to Klondike's goings-on--except perhaps Old Grandmother.

Klondike straightened his shoulders and tossed back his mane. It was as good a time as any to tell something that would soon have to be told.

"Her full name," he said, "is now Marigold Woodruff Richards, but in a few weeks' time it will be Marigold Woodruff Lesley."

"And that," remarked Lucifer to the Witch of Endor under the milk bench at sunset, with the air of a cat making up his mind to the inevitable, "is that."

"What do you think of her?" asked the Witch, a little superciliously.

"Oh, she has points," conceded Lucifer. "Kissable enough."

The Witch of Endor, being wise in her generation, licked her black paws and said no more, but continued to have her own opinion.

Chapter III.

April Promise

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I

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On the evening of Old Grandmother's ninety-eighth birthday there was a sound of laughter on the dark staircase--which meant that Marigold Lesley, who had lived six years and thought the world a very charming place, was dancing downstairs. You generally heard Marigold before you saw her. She seldom walked. A creature of joy, she ran or danced. "The child of the singing heart," Aunt Marigold called her. Her laughter always seemed to go before her. Both Young Grandmother and Mother, to say nothing of Salome and Lazarre, thought that golden trill of laughter echoing through the somewhat prim and stately rooms of Cloud of Spruce the loveliest sound in the world. Mother often said this. Young Grandmother never said it. That was the difference between Young Grandmother and Mother.

Marigold squatted down on the broad, shallow, uneven sandstone steps at the front door and proceeded to think things over--or, as Aunt Marigold, who was a very dear, delightful woman, phrased it, "make magic for herself." Marigold was always making magic of some kind.

Already, even at six, Marigold found this an entrancing occupation--"int'resting," to use her own pet word. She had picked it up from Aunt Marigold and from then to the end of life things would be for Marigold interesting or uninteresting. Some people might demand of life that it be happy or untroubled or successful. Marigold Lesley would only ask that it be interesting. Already she was looking with avid eyes on all the exits and entrances of the drama of life.

There had been a birthday party for Old Grandmother that day, and Marigold had enjoyed it--especially that part in the pantry about which nobody save she and Salome knew. Young Grandmother would have died of horror if she had known how many of the whipped cream tarts Marigold had actually eaten.

But she was glad to be alone now and think things over. In Young Grandmother's opinion Marigold did entirely too much thinking for so small a creature. Even Mother, who generally understood, sometimes thought so too. It couldn't be good for a child to have its mind prowling in all sorts of corners. But everybody was too tired after the party to bother about Marigold and her thoughts just now, so she was free to indulge in a long delightful reverie. Marigold was, she would have solemnly told you, "thinking over the past." Surely a most fitting thing to do on a birthday, even if it wasn't your own. Whether all her thoughts would have pleased Young Grandmother, or even Mother, if they had known them, there is no saying. But then they did not know them. Long, long ago--when she was only five and a half--Marigold had horrified her family--at least the Grandmotherly part of it--by saying in her nightly prayer, "Thank you, dear God, for 'ranging it so that nobody knows what I think." Since then Marigold had learned worldly wisdom and did not say things like that out loud--in her prayers. But she continued to think privately that God was very wise and good in making thoughts exclusively your own. Marigold hated to have people barging in, as Uncle Klondike would have said, on her little soul.

But then, as Young Grandmother would have said and did say, Marigold always had ways no orthodox Lesley baby ever thought of having--"the Winthrop coming out in her," Young Grandmother muttered to herself. All that was good in Marigold was Lesley and Blaisdell. All that was bad or puzzling was Winthrop. For instance, that habit of hers of staring into space with a look of rapture. *What* did she see? And what right had she to see it? And when you asked her what she was thinking of she stared at you and said, "Nothing." Or else propounded some weird, unanswerable problem such as, "Where was I before I was me?"

The sky above her was a wonderful soft deep violet. A wind that had lately blown over clover-meadows came around the ivied shoulder of the house in the little purring puffs that Marigold loved. To her every wind in the world was a friend--even those wild winter ones that blew so fiercely up the harbour. The row of lightning-rod balls along the top of Mr.

Donkin's barn across the road seemed like silver fairy worlds floating in the afterlight against the dark trees behind them. The lights across the harbour were twinkling out along the shadowy shore. Marigold loved to watch the harbour lights. They fed some secret spring of delight in her being. The big spireas that flanked the steps--Old Grandmother always called them Bridal Wreaths, with a sniff for meaningless catalogue names--were like twin snowdrifts in the dusk. The old thorn hedge back of the apple-barn, the roots of which had been brought out from Scotland in some past that was to Marigold of immemorial antiquity, was as white as the spireas, and scented the air all around it. Cloud of Spruce was such a place always inside and out for sweet, wholesome smells. People found out there that there was such a thing as honeysuckle left in the world. There was the entrancing pale gold of lemon lilies in the shadows under the lilac-trees, and the proud white iris was blooming all along the old brick walk worn smooth by the passing of many feet. Away far down Marigold knew the misty sea was lapping gladly on the windy sands of the dunes. Mr. Donkin's dear little pasture-field, full of blue-eyed grass, with the birches all around it, was such a *contented* field. She had always envied Mr. Donkin that field. It looked, thought Marigold, as if it just loved being a field and wouldn't be anything else for the world. Right over it was the dearest little grey cloud that was slowly turning to rose like a Quaker lady blushing. And all the trees in sight were whispering in the dusk like old friends--all but the lonely, unsociable Lombardies.

Salome was singing lustily in the pantry, where she was washing dishes. Salome couldn't sing, but she always sang and Marigold liked to hear her, especially at twilight. "Shall we ga-a-a-ther at the ri-ver. The *bew-tiful-the bew-tiful* river?" warbled Salome. And Marigold saw the beautiful river, looking like the harbour below Cloud of Spruce. Lazarre was playing his fiddle behind the copse of young spruces back of the apple-barn--the old brown fiddle that his great-great-great-grandfather had brought from Grand Pré. Perhaps Evangeline had danced to it. Aunt Marigold had told Marigold the story of Evangeline. Young Grandmother and Mother and Aunt Marigold and Uncle Klou were in Old

Grandmother's room talking over clan chit-chat together. A bit of gossip, Old Grandmother always averred, was an aid to digestion. Everybody Marigold loved was near her. She hugged her brown knees with delight, and thought with a vengeance.

II

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Marigold had lived her six years, knowing no world but Harmony Harbour and Cloud of Spruce. All her clan loved her and petted her, though some of them occasionally squashed her for her own good. And Marigold loved them all--even those she hated she loved as part of her clan. And she loved Cloud of Spruce. How lucky she had happened to be born there. She loved everything and everybody about it. To-night everything seemed to drift through her consciousness in a dreamy, jumbled procession of delight, big and little things, past and present, all tangled up together.

The pigeons circling over the old apple-barn; the apple-barn itself--such an odd old barn with a tower and oriel window like a church--and the row of funny little hemlocks beyond it. "Look at those hemlocks," Uncle Klon had said once. "Don't they look like a row of old-maid schoolteachers with their fingers up admonishing a class of naughty little boys." Marigold always thought of them so after that and walked past them in real half-delicious fear. What if they should suddenly shake their fingers so at *her*? She would die of it, she knew. But it *would* be int'resting.

The hemlocks were not the only mysterious trees about Cloud of Spruce. That lilac-bush behind the well, for example. Sometimes it was just lilac-bush. And sometimes, especially in the twilight or early dawn, it was a nodding old woman knitting. It was. And the spruce-tree down at the shore which in twilight or on stormy winter days looked just like a witch leaning out from the bank, her hair streaming wildly behind her. Then there were trees that talked--Marigold heard them. "Come, come," the pines at the right of the orchard were always calling. "We have something to tell you," whispered the maples at the gate. "Isn't it enough to look at us?" crooned the white birches along the road side of the garden, which Young Grandmother had planted when she came to Cloud of Spruce as a bride. And those Lombardies that kept such stately watch about the old

house. At night the wind wandered through them like a grieving spirit. Elfin laughter and fitful moans sounded in their boughs. You might say what you liked but Marigold would never believe that those Lombardies were just *trees*.

The old garden that faced the fair blue harbour, with its white gate set midway, where darling flowers grew and kittens ran beautiful brief little pilgrimages before they were given away--or vanished mysteriously. It had all the beauty of old gardens where sweet women have aforetime laughed and wept. Some bit of old clan history was bound up with almost every clump and walk in it, and already Marigold knew most of it. The things that Young Grandmother and Mother would not tell her Salome would, and the things that Salome would not Lazarre would.

The road outside the gate--one of the pleasant red roads of "the Island." To Marigold, a long red road of mystery. On the right hand it ran down to the windy seafields at the harbour's mouth and stopped there--as if, thought Marigold, the sea had bitten it off. On the left it ran through a fern valley, up to the shadowy crest of a steep hill with eager little spruce-trees running up the side of it as if trying to catch up with the big ones at the top. And over it to a new world beyond where there was a church and a school and the village of Harmony. Marigold loved that hill road because it was full of rabbits. You could never go up it without seeing some of the darlings. There was room in Marigold's heart for all the rabbits of the world. She had horrible suspicions that Lucifer caught baby rabbits--and *ate them*. Lazarre had as good as given that dark secret away in his rage over some ruined cabbages in the kitchen-garden. "Dem devil rabbit," he had stormed. "I wish dat Lucifer, he eat dem *all*." Marigold *couldn't* feel the same to Lucifer after that, though she kept on loving him, of course. Marigold always kept on loving--and hating--when she had once begun. "She's got *that* much Lesley in her anyhow," said Uncle Klön.

The harbour, with its silent mysterious ships that came and went; Marigold loved it the best of all the outward facts of her life--better, as yet, than even the wonderful green cloud of spruce on the hill eastward that gave her home its name. She loved it when it was covered with little

dancing ripples like songs. She loved it when its water was smooth as blue silk; she loved it when summer showers spun shining threads of rain below its western clouds; she loved it when its lights blossomed out in the blue of summer dusks and the bell of the Anglican Church over the bay rang faint and sweet. She loved it when the mist mirages changed it to some strange enchanted haven of "fairylands forlorn"; she loved it when it was ruffled in rich dark crimson under autumn sunsets; she loved it when silver sails went out of it in the strange white wonder of dawn; but she loved it best on late still afternoons, when it lay like a great gleaming mirror, all faint, prismatic colours like the world in a soap-bubble. It was so nice and thrilly to stand down on the wharf and see the trees upside down in the water and a great blue sky underneath you. And what if you couldn't stick on but fell down into that sky? *Would you fall through it?*

And she loved the purple-hooded hills that cradled it--those long dark hills that laughed to you and beckoned--but always kept some secret they would never tell.

"What is over the hills, Mother?" she had asked Mother once.

"Many things--wonderful things--heart-breaking things," Mother had answered with a sigh.

"I'll go and find them all sometime," Marigold had said confidently.

And then Mother had sighed again.

But the other side of the harbour--"over the bay"--continued to hold a lure for Marigold. Everything, she felt sure, would be different over there. Even the people who lived there had a fascinating name--"over-the-bayers"--which when Marigold had been *very* young, she thought was "over-the-bears."

Marigold had been down to the gulf shore on the other side of the dreamy dunes once, with Uncle Klon and Aunt Marigold. They had lingered there until the sunken sun had sucked all the rosy light out of the great blue bowl of the sky and twilight came down over the crash and the white turmoil of the breakers. For the tide was high and the winds were out and the sea was thundering its mighty march of victory. Marigold would have been terrified if she had not had Uncle Klon's lean brown hand to

hold. But with him to take the edge off those terrible thrills it had been all pure rapture.

Next to the harbour Marigold loved the big spruce wood on the hill--though she had been up there only twice in her life.

As far back as she could remember that spruce hill had held an irresistible charm for her. She would sit on the steps of Old Grandmother's room and look up it by the hour so long and so steadily that Young Grandmother would wonder uneasily if the child were just "right." There had been a half-wit two generations back in the Winthrops.

The hill was so high. Long ago she had used to think that if she could get up on that hill she could touch the sky. Even yet she thought if she were there and gave a little spring she *might* land right in heaven. Nothing lived there except rabbits and squirrels--and perhaps "de leetle green folk," of whom Lazarre had told her. But beyond it--ah, beyond it--was the *Hidden Land*. It seemed to Marigold she had always called it that--always known about it. The beautiful, wonderful Hidden Land. Oh, to see it, just to climb up that hill to the very top and gaze upon it. And yet when Mother asked her one day if she would like a walk up the hill Marigold had shrunk back and exclaimed,

"Oh, Mother, the hill is so high. If we got to the top we'd be above *everything*. I'd rather stay down here with things."

Mother had laughed and humoured her. But one evening, only two months later, Marigold had daringly done it alone. The lure suddenly proved stronger than the dread. Nobody was around to forbid her or call her back. She walked boldly up the long flight of flat sandstone steps that led right up the middle of the orchard, set into the grass. She paused at the first step to kiss a young daffodil goodnight--for there were daffodils all about that orchard. Away beyond, the loveliest rose-hued clouds were hanging over the spruces. They had caught the reflection of the west, but Marigold thought they shone so because they looked on the Hidden Land--the land she would see in a moment if her courage only held out. She could be brave so long as it was not dark. She must get up the hill--and back--before it was dark. The gallant small figure ran up the steps to the old

lichen-covered fence and sagging green gate where seven slim poplars grew. But she did not open it. Somehow she could not go right into that spruce wood. Lazarre had told her a story of that spruce wood--or some other spruce wood. Old Fidèle the caulker had been cutting down a tree there and his axe was dull and he swore, "Devil take me," he said, "if I don't t'row dis dam axe in de pond." *"An' de devil took heem."* Lazarre was dreadfully in earnest.

"Did any one see it?" asked Marigold, round-eyed.

"No; but dey see de hoof-prints," said Lazarre conclusively. "And stomp in de groun' roun' de tree. An' you leesten now--where did Fidèle go if de devil didn't take heem? Nobody never see heem again roun' dese parts."

So no spruce wood for Marigold. In daylight she never really believed the devil had carried off Fidèle, but one is not so incredulous after the sun goes down. And Marigold did not really want to see the devil, though she thought to herself that it *would* be int'resting.

She ran along the fence to the corner of the orchard where the spruces stopped. How cool and velvety the young grass felt. It *felt* green. But in the Hidden Land it would be ever so much greener--"living green," as one of Salome's hymns said. She scrambled through a lucky hole in the fence, ran out into Mr. Donkin's wheat-stubble and looked eagerly--confidently for the Hidden Land.

For a moment she looked--tears welled up in her eyes--her lips trembled--she almost cried aloud in bitterness of soul.

There was no Hidden Land!

Nothing before her but fields and farmhouses and barns and groves--just the same as along the road to Harmony. Nothing of the wonderful secret land of her dreams. Marigold turned; she must rush home and find Mother and cry--cry--cry! But she stopped, gazing with a suddenly transfigured face at the sunset over Harmony Harbour.

She had never seen the whole harbour at one time before; and the sunset was a rare one even in that island of wonderful sunsets. Marigold plunged her eyes into those lakes of living gold and supernal crimson and

heavenly apple-green--into those rose-coloured waters--those far-off purple seas--and felt as if she were drowning ecstatically in loveliness. Oh, *there* was the Hidden Land--there beyond those shining hills--beyond that great headland that cut the radiant sea at the harbours mouth--there in that dream city of towers and spires whose gates were of pearl. It was not lost to her. How foolish she had been to fancy it just over the hill. Of course it couldn't be there--so near home. But she knew where it was now. The horrible disappointment and the sense of bitter loss that was far worse than the disappointment, had all vanished in that moment of sheer ecstasy above the world. She *knew*.

It was growing dark. She could see the lights of Cloud of Spruce blooming out in the dusk below her. And the night was creeping out of the spruces at her. She looked once timidly in that direction--and there, just over a little bay of bracken at the edge of the wood, beckoning to her from a copse--a Little White Girl. Marigold waved back before she saw it was only a branch of wild, white plum-blossom, wind-shaken. She ran back to the orchard and down the steps to meet Mother at the door of Old Grandmother's room.

"Oh, Mother, it's so nice to come home at bedtime," she whispered, clutching the dear warm hand.

"Where have you been, child?" ask Young Grandmother rather sternly.

"Up on the hill."

"You must not go there alone at this time of night," said Young Grandmother.

Oh, but she had been there once. And she had seen the Hidden Land.

Then she had gone up the hill with Mother this spring--only a few weeks ago--to pick arbutus. They had had a lovely time and found a spring there, with ferns thick around its untrampled edges--a delicate dim thing, half shadow, all loveliness. Marigold had pulled the ferns aside and peeped into it--had seen her own face looking up at her. No, not her own face. The Little Girl who lived in the spring, of course, and came out on moonlit nights to dance around it. Marigold knew naught of Grecian myth or Anglo-Saxon folk-lore but the heart of childhood has its own lovely

interpretation of nature in every age and clime, and Marigold was born knowing those things that are hidden forever from the wise and prudent and sceptical.

She and Mother had wandered along dear little paths over gnarled roots. They had found a beautiful smooth-trunked beech or two. They had walked on sheets of green moss velvety enough for the feet of queens. Later on, Mother told her, there would be June-bells and trilliums and wild orchids and lady's slippers there for the seeking. Later still, strawberries out in the clearings at the back.

"When I get big I'm coming here every day," said Marigold. She thought of the evening so long ago--a whole year--when she had seen for a moment the Little White Girl. It *couldn't* have been a plum-bough. Perhaps some day she would see her again.

III

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Lucifer was prowling about the bed of striped ribbon-grass, giving occasional mysterious pounces into it. The Witch of Endor was making some dark magic of her own on the white gate-post. They were both older than Marigold, who felt therefore that they were uncannily aged. Lazarre had confided to her his belief that they would live as long as the Old Lady did. "Dey tells her everyt'ing--everyt'ing," Lazarre had said. "Haven' I seen dem, sittin' dare on her bed, wi' deir tail hangin' down, a-talkin' to her lak dey was Chreestian? An' every tam dat Weetch she catch a mouse, don' she go for carry it to de Old Lady to see? You take care what you do 'fore dose cats. I wouldn't lak to be de chap dat would hurt one of dem. What dem fellers don' know ain't wort' knowin'." Marigold loved them but held them in awe. Their unfailing progeny gave her more delight. Little furry creatures were always lying asleep on the sunwarm grasses or frisking in yard and orchard. Ebon balls of fluff. Though not all ebon, alas. The number of spotted and striped kittens around led Uncle Klon to have his serious doubts about the Witch's morals. But he had the decency to keep his doubts to himself, and Marigold liked the striped kittens best--undisturbed by any thought of bends sinister. Creatures with such sweet little faces could have no dealings with the devil she felt quiet sure, whatever their parents might be up to.

Lazarre had given over fiddling and was going home--his little cottage down in "the hollow," where he had a black-eyed wife and half a dozen black-eyed children. Marigold watched him crossing the field, carrying something tied up in a red hanky, whistling gaily, as he was always doing when not fiddling, his head and shoulders stooped because he was continually in such a hurry that they were always several inches in advance of his feet. Marigold was very fond of Lazarre, who had been choreman at Cloud of Spruce before she was born and so was part of the

things that always had been and always would be. She liked the quick, cordial twinkle in his black eyes and the gleam of his white teeth in his brown face. He was very different from Phidime Gautier, the big blacksmith in the Hollow, of whom Marigold went in positive dread, with his fierce black moustaches you could hang your hat on. There was an unproved legend that he ate a baby every other day. But Lazarre wasn't like that. He was kind and gentle and gay.

She was sure Lazarre couldn't hurt anything. To be sure there was that horrible tale of his killing pigs. But Marigold never believed it. She knew Lazarre couldn't kill pigs--at least, not pigs he was acquainted with.

He could carve wonderful baskets out of plum-stones and make fairy horns out of birch-bark, and he always knew the right time of the moon to do anything. She loved to talk with him, though if Mother and the Grandmothers had known what they talked about sometimes they would have put a sharp and sudden stop to it. For Lazarre, who firmly believed in fairies and witches and "ghostises" of all kinds, lived therefore in a world of romance, and made Marigold's flesh creep deliciously with his yarns. She didn't believe them all, but you *had* to believe what had happened to Lazarre himself. He had seen his grandmother in the middle of the night standing by his bed when she was forty miles away. And next day word had come that the old lady had "gone daid."

That night Marigold had cried out in terror, when Mother was taking the lamp out of her room, "Oh, Mother, don't let the dark in--don't let the dark in. Oh, Mother, I'm so afraid of the big dark."

She had never been afraid to go to sleep in the dark before, and Mother and Young Grandmother could not understand what had got into her. Finally they compromised by leaving the light in Mother's room with the door open. You had to go through Mother's room to get to Marigold's. The dusky, golden half-light was a comfort. If people came and stood by your bed in the middle of the night--people who were forty miles away--you could at least *see* them.

Sometimes Lazarre played his fiddle in the orchard on moonlight nights and Marigold danced to it. Nobody could play the fiddle like

Lazarre. Even Salome grudgingly admitted that.

"It's angelic, ma'am, that's what it is," she said with solemn reluctance as she listened to the bewitching lilts of the unseen musician up in the orchard. "And to think that easygoing French boy can make it. My good, hardworking brother tried all his life to learn to play the fiddle and never could. And this Lazarre can do it without trying. Why he can almost make *me* dance."

"That would be a miracle indeed," said Uncle Klon.

And Young Grandmother did tell Marigold she spent too much time with Lazarre.

"But I like him so much, and I want to see as much of him as I can in this world," explained Marigold. "Salome says he can't go to heaven because he's a Frenchman."

"Salome is very wicked and foolish to say such a thing," said Young Grandmother sternly. "Of course, Frenchmen go to heaven if they behave themselves"--not as if she were any too sure of it herself, however.

IV

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Salome went through the hall and into the orchard room with a cup of tea for Old Grandmother. As the door opened Marigold heard Aunt Marigold say,

"We'd better go to the graveyard next Sunday."

Marigold hugged herself with delight. One Sunday in every spring the Cloud of Spruce folks made a special visit to the little burying-ground on a western hill with flowers for their graves. Nobody went with them except Uncle Klon and Aunt Marigold. And Marigold loved a visit to the graveyard and particularly to Father's grave. She had an uneasy conviction that she ought to feel sad, as Mother and Young Grandmother did, but she never could manage it.

It was really such a charming spot. That smooth grey stone between the two dear young firs all greened over with their new spring tips, and the big spirea-bush almost hiding the grave and waving a hundred white hands to you in the wind that rippled the long grasses. The graveyard was full of spirea. Salome liked this. "Makes it more cheerful-like," she was wont to say. Marigold didn't know whether the graveyard was cheerful or not, but she knew she loved it. Especially when Uncle Klon was with her. Marigold was very fond of Uncle Klon. There was such fun in him. His sayings were so int'resting. He had such a delightful way of saying, "When I was in Ceylon," or "When I was in Borneo," as another might say, "When I was in Charlottetown" or "When I was over the bay." And he occasionally swore such fascinating oaths--at least Salome said they were oaths, though they didn't sound like it. "By the three wise monkeys," was one of them. So mysterious. *What* were the three wise monkeys? Nobody ever talked to her as he did. He told her splendid stories of the brave days of old, and wonderful yarns of his own adventures. For instance, that thrilling tale of the night he was lost on the divide between Gold Run and Sulphur Valleys

in the Klondike. And that one about the ivory island in the far northern seas--an island covered with walrus tusks heaped like driftwood, as if all the walruses went there to die. He told her jokes. He always made her laugh--even in the graveyard, because he told her such funny stories about the names on the tombstones and altogether made her feel that these folks were really all alive somewhere. Father and all, just as nice and funny as they were in the world. So why grieve about them? Why sigh as Salome always did when she paused by Mrs. Amos Reekie's grave and said,

"Ah, many's the cup of tea I've drunk with *her!*"

"Won't you drink lots more with her in heaven?" demanded Marigold once, rather recklessly, after some of Uncle Klon's yarns.

"Good gracious, no, child." Salome was dreadfully shocked. Though in her secret soul she thought heaven would be a much more cheerful place if one *could* have a good cup of tea with an old crony.

"They drink wine there, don't they?" persisted Marigold. "The Bible says so. Don't you think a cup of tea would be more *respectable* than wine?"

Salome *did* think so, but she would have died the death before she would have corrupted Marigold's youthful mind by saying so.

"There are mysteries too deep for us poor mortals to understand," she said solemnly.

Uncle Klon was third in Marigold's young affections. Mother of course came first; and then Aunt Marigold, with her dear wide mouth quirked up at the corners, so that she always seemed to be laughing even when very sad. These three were in the inner sanctum of Marigold's heart, a very exclusive little sanctum out of which were shut many who thought they had a perfect right to be there.

Marigold sometimes wondered whom she wanted to be like when she grew up. In some moods she wanted to be like Mother. But Mother was "put upon." Generally she thought she wanted to be like Aunt Marigold--who had a little way of saying things. Nobody else could have said them. Marigold always felt she would recognise one of Aunt Marigold's sayings if she met it in her porridge. And when she said only, "It's a fine day," her

voice had a nice confidential tone that made you feel nobody else knew it was a fine day--that it was a lovely secret shared between you. And when you had supper at Aunt Marigold's she *made* you take a third helping.

V

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Marigold hardly knew where the grandmothers came in. She knew she ought to love them, but did she? Even at six Marigold had discovered that you cannot love by rule o' thumb.

Young Grandmother was not so bad. She was old, of course, with that frost-fine, serene old age that is in its way as beautiful as youth. Marigold felt this long before she could define it, and was disposed to admire Young Grandmother.

But Old Grandmother. To Marigold, Old Grandmother, so incredibly old, had never seemed like anything human. She could never have been born; it was equally unthinkable that she could ever die. Marigold was thankful she did not have to go into Old Grandmother's room very often. Old Grandmother could not be bothered with children--"unspanked nuisances," she called them.

But she had to go sometimes. When she had been naughty she was occasionally sent to sit on a little stool on the floor of Old Grandmother's room as a punishment. And a very dreadful punishment it was--much worse than Mother and Young Grandmother, who thought they were being lenient, realised. There she sat for what seemed like hours, and Old Grandmother sat up against her pillows and stared at her unwinkingly. Never speaking. *That* was what made it so ghastly.

Though when she did speak it was not very pleasant, either. How contemptuous Old Grandmother could be. Once when she had made Marigold angry, "Hoity toity, a little pot is soon hot!" Marigold winched under the humiliation of it for days. A little pot indeed!

It was no use trying to keep anything from this terrible old lady who saw through everything. Once Marigold had tried to hoodwink her with a small half-fib.

"You are not a true Lesley. The Lesleys never lie," said Old Grandmother.

"Oh, don't they!" cried Marigold, who already knew better.

Suddenly Old Grandmother laughed. Old Grandmother was surprising sometimes. After Marigold had gone into the spare room one day and tried on the hats of several guests, there was a council in the orchard room that evening. Mother and Young Grandmother were horrified. But Old Grandmother would not allow Marigold to be punished.

"I did that myself once," she said. "But I wasn't found out," she whispered to Marigold with a chuckle. She chuckled again on the day when Young Grandmother had asked Marigold a foolish, unanswerable question. "*Why* are you so bad?" But Marigold had answered it--sulkily. "It's more *int'resting* than being good."

Old Grandmother called her back as she was following outraged Young Grandmother out of the room, and put a tiny blue-veined hand on her shoulder.

"It may be more interesting," she whispered, "but *you* can't keep it up because you're a Lesley. The Lesleys never *could* be bad with any comfort to themselves. Too much conscience. No use making yourself miserable just for the sake of being bad."

Marigold always went into the orchard room on Sunday mornings to recite her golden text and catechism questions to Old Grandmother. Woe betide her if she missed a word. And in her nervousness she always did miss, no matter how perfectly she could say them before she went in. And she always was sent in there to take pills. Nobody at Cloud of Spruce could make Marigold take pills except Old Grandmother. *She* had no trouble. "Don't screw up your face like that. I hate ugly children. Open your mouth." Marigold opened it. "Pop it in." Popped in it was. "Swallow it." It was swallowed--somehow. And then Old Grandmother would put her hand somewhere about the bed and produce a handful of big fat juicy blue raisins.

For she was not always unamiable. And sometimes she showed Marigold the big family Bible--a sort of Golden Book where all the clan

names were written, and where all sorts of yellowed old clippings were kept. And sometimes she told her stories about the brides on the walls and the hair wreaths where the brown and gold and black locks of innumerable dead and gone Lesleys bloomed in weird, unfading buds and blossoms.

Old Grandmother was always saying things, too--queer, odd speeches with a tang in them Marigold somehow liked. They generally shocked Young Grandmother and Mother, but Marigold remembered and pondered over them though she seldom understood them fully. They did not seem related to anything in her small experience. In after life they were to come back to her. In many a crisis some speech of Old Grandmother's suddenly popped into mind and saved her from making a mistake.

But on the whole Marigold always breathed a sigh of relief when the door of the orchard room closed behind her.

VI

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Marigold at six had already experienced most of the passions that make life vivid and dreadful and wonderful--none the less vivid and dreadful at six than at sixteen or sixty. Probably she was born knowing that you were born to the purple if you were a Lesley. But pride of race blossomed to full stature in her the day she talked with little May Kemp from the Hollow.

"Do you wash your face *every* day?" asked May incredulously.

"Yes," said Marigold.

"Whether it needs it or not?"

"Of course. Don't you?"

"Not me," said May contemptuously. "I just wash mine when its dirty."

Then Marigold realised the difference between the Lesley caste and outsiders as all Young Grandmother's homilies had not been able to make her.

Shame? Oh, she had known it to the full--drunk its cup to the dregs. Would she ever forget that terrible supper-table when she had slipped, red and breathless, into her seat, apologising for being late? An inexcusable thing when there were company to tea--two ministers and two ministers' wives.

"I couldn't help it, Mother. I went to help Kate Blacquierre drive Mr. Donkin's cows to water and we had such a time chasing that bloody heifer."

At once Marigold knew she had said something dreadful. The frozen horror on the faces of her family told her that. One minister looked aghast, one hid a grin.

What had she said?

"Marigold, you may leave the table and go to your room," said Mother, who seemed almost on the point of tears. Marigold obeyed wretchedly, having no idea in the world what it was all about. Later on she found out.

"But Kate said it," she wailed. "Kate said she'd like to break every bloody bone in that bloody heifer's body. I never thought 'bloody' was swearing, though it's an ugly word."

She had *sworn* before the minister--before two ministers. And their wives! Marigold did not think she could ever live it down. A hot wave of shame ran over her whenever she thought about it. It did not matter that she was never allowed to go with Kate again; she had not cared much for Kate anyhow. But to have disgraced herself and Mother and the Lesley name! She had thought it bad enough when she had asked Mr. Lord of Charlottetown, with awe and reverence, "Please, *are you God?*" She had been laughed at so for that and had suffered keen humiliation. But this! And yet she could not understand why "bloody" was swearing. Even Old Grandmother--who had laughed herself sick over the incident--couldn't explain that.

The spirit of jealousy had claimed her, too. She was secretly jealous of Clementine, the girl who had once been Father's wife--whose grave was beside his on the hill under the spireas--jealous for her mother. Father had belonged to Clementine once. Perhaps he belonged to her again now. There were times when Marigold was absolutely possessed with this absurd jealousy. When she went into Old Grandmother's room and saw Clementine's beautiful picture on the wall, she hated it. She wanted to go up and tear it down and trample on it. Lorraine would have been horrified if she had dreamed of Marigold's feelings in this respect. But Marigold kept her secret fiercely and went on hating Clementine--especially her beautiful hands. Marigold thought her mother quite as beautiful as Clementine. She always felt so sorry for little girls whose mothers were not beautiful. And Mother had the loveliest feet. Uncle Klondike had said more than once that Lorraine had the daintiest little foot and ankle he had ever seen in a woman. This did not count for much among the Lesleys. Ankles were better not spoken of, even if the present-day fashion of skirts did show them shamelessly. But Mother's hands weren't pretty; they were too thin--too small; and Marigold felt sometimes she just couldn't *bear* Clementine's hands. Especially when some of the clan praised them. Old

Grandmother referred to them constantly; it really did seem as if Old Grandmother sensed Marigold's jealousy and liked to tease her.

"I don't think she was so pretty," Marigold had been tortured into saying once.

Old Grandmother smiled.

"Clementine Lawrence was a beauty, my dear. Not an insignificant little thing like--like her sister up there in Harmony."

But Marigold felt sure Old Grandmother had started to say "like your mother," and she hated Clementine and her hands and her fadeless white lily more poisonously than ever.

Grief? Sorrow? Why, her heart nearly broke when her dear grey kitten had died. She had never known before that anything *she* loved could die.

"Has yesterday gone to heaven, Mother?" she had sobbed the next day.

"I--I suppose so," said Mother.

"Then I don't want to go to heaven," Marigold had cried stormily. "I never want to meet that dreadful day again."

"You'll probably have to meet far harder days than that," had been Young Grandmother's comforting remark.

As for fear, had she not always known it? One of her very earliest memories was of being shut up in the dim shuttered parlor because she had spilled some of her jam pudding on Young Grandmother's best tablecloth. How such a little bit of pudding could have spread itself over so much territory she could not understand. But into the parlour she went--a terrible room with its queer streaky lights and shadows. And as she huddled against the door in the gloom she saw a dreadful thing. To the day of her death Marigold believed it happened. All the chairs in the room suddenly began dancing around the table in a circle headed by the big horsehair rocking-chair. And every time the rocking-chair galloped past her it bowed to her with awful, exaggerated politeness. Marigold screamed so wildly that they came and took her out--disgusted that she could not endure so easy a punishment.

"That's the Winthrop coming out in her," said Young Grandmother nastily.

The Lesleys and Blaisdells had more pluck. Marigold never told what had frightened her. She knew they would not believe her. But it was to be years before she could go into the parlour without a shudder, and she would have died rather than sit in that horsehair rocking-chair.

She had never been quite so vindictive over anything as over the affair of the Skinner doll. That had happened last August. May Kemp's mother had come up to clean the apple-barn, and May had come with her. May and Marigold had played happily for awhile in the playhouse in the square of currant-bushes--a beautiful playhouse in that you could sit in it and eat ruby-hued fruit off your own walls--and then May had said she would give one of her eyes to see the famous Skinner doll. Marigold had gone bravely into the orchard room to ask Old Grandmother if May might come in and see it. She found Old Grandmother asleep--really asleep, not pretending as she sometimes did. Marigold was turning away when her eyes fell on Alicia. Somehow Alicia looked so lovely and appealing--as if she were *asking* for a little fun. Impulsively Marigold ran to the glass case, opened the door and took Alicia out. She even slipped the shoe out of the hand that had held it for years, and put it on the waiting foot.

"Ain't you the bold one?" said May admiringly, when Marigold appeared among the red currants with Alicia in her arms.

But Marigold did not feel so bold when Salome, terrible and regal in her new plum-coloured drugget and starched white apron, had appeared before them and haled her into Old Grandmother's room.

"I should have known she was too quiet," said Salome. "There was the two of 'em--with HER on a chair for a throne, offering HER red currants on lettuce leaves and kissing HER hands. And a crown of flowers on HER head. And both HER boots on. You could 'a' knocked me down with a feather. HER, that's never been out o' that glass case since I came to Cloud o' Spruce."

"Why did you do such a naughty thing?" said Old Grandmother snappily.

"She--she wanted to be loved so much," sobbed Marigold. "Nobody has loved her for so long."

"You might wait till I'm dead before meddling with her. She will be yours then to 'love' all you want to."

"But you will live forever," cried Marigold. "Lazarre says so. And I didn't hurt her one bit."

"You might have broken her to fragments."

"Oh, no, no, I couldn't hurt her by loving her."

"I'm not so sure of that," muttered Old Grandmother, who was constantly saying things Marigold was to understand twenty years later.

But Old Grandmother was very angry, and she decreed that Marigold was to have her meals alone in the kitchen for three days. Marigold resented this bitterly. There seemed to be something especially degrading about it. This was one of the times when it was just as well God had arranged it so that nobody knew what you thought.

That night when Marigold went to bed she was determined she would not say all her prayers. Not the part about blessing Old Grandmother. "Bless Mother and Young Grandmother and Salome." Marigold got up then and got into bed, having carefully placed her two shoes close together under the bed so that they wouldn't be lonesome. She did that every night. She couldn't have slept a wink if those shoes had been far apart, missing each other all night.

But she couldn't sleep to-night. In vain she tried to. In vain she counted sheep jumping over a wall. They *wouldn't* jump. They turned back at the wall and made faces at her--a bad girl who wouldn't pray for her old grandmother. Marigold stubbornly fought her Lesley conscience for an hour; then she got out of bed, knelt down and said, "Please bless Mother and Young Grandmother and Salome and everybody who needs a blessing."

Surely that took in Old Grandmother. Surely she could go to sleep now. But just as surely she couldn't. This time she surrendered after half an hour's fight. "Please bless Mother and Young Grandmother and Salome--and you can bless Old Grandmother if you like."

There now. She wouldn't yield another inch.

Fifteen minutes later Marigold was out of bed again.

"Please bless Mother and Young Grandmother and Salome and Old Grandmother for Jesus' sake, amen."

The sheep jumped now. Faster and faster and faster--they were like a long flowing white stream--Marigold was asleep.

VII

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The stars were coming out. Marigold loved to watch them--though the first time she had seen stars to realise them she had been terribly frightened. She had wakened up as Mother stepped out of Uncle Klon's car when he had brought them home from a visit in South Harmony. She had looked up through the darkness and shrieked.

"Oh, Mother, the sky has burned up and nothing but the sparks are left."

How they had all laughed and how ashamed she had been. But now Uncle Klon had taught her things about them and she knew the names of Betelguese and Rigel, Saiph and Alnita better than she could pronounce them. Oh, spring was a lovely time, when the harbour was a quivering, shimmering reach of blue and the orchard was sprinkled with violets and the nights were like a web of starlight.

But all the seasons were lovely. Summer, when strawberries were red on the hill-field and the rain was so sweet in the wild rose cups, and the faint sweetness of new-mown hay was everywhere, and the full moon made such pretty dapples under the orchard trees, and the great fields of daisies across the harbour were white as snow.

Of all the seasons Marigold loved autumn best. Then the Gaffer Wind of her favourite fairy-tale blew his trumpet over the harbour and the glossy black crows sat in rows on the fences, and the yellow leaves began to fall from the aspens at the green gate, and there was the silk of frost on the orchard grass in the mornings. In the evenings there was a nice reek of burning leaves from Lazarre's bonfires and the ploughed fields on the hill gleamed redly against the dark spruces. And some night you went to bed in a drab dull world and wakened up to see a white miraculous one. Winter had touched it in the darkness and transformed it.

Marigold loved winter, too, with the mysterious silence of its moonlit snow-fields and the spell of its stormy skies. And the big black cats creeping mysteriously through the twilit glades where the shadows of the trees were lovelier than the trees themselves, while the haystacks in Mr. Donkin's yard looked like a group of humpy old men with white hair. The pasture-fields which had been green and gold in June were cold and white, with ghost-flowers sticking up above the snow. Marigold always felt so sorry for those dead flowerstalks. She wanted to whisper to them, "Spring will come."

The winter mornings were int'resting because they had breakfast by candlelight. The winter evenings were dear when the wind howled outside, determined to get into Cloud of Spruce. It clawed at the doors--shrieked at the windows--gave Marigold delicious little thrills. But it never got in. It was so nice to sit in the warm bright room with the cats toasting their furry flanks before the fire and the pleasant purr of Salome's spinning-wheel in the kitchen. And then to bed in the little room off Mother's, with sweet, sleepy kisses, to snuggle down in soft, creamy blankets and hear the storm outside. Yes, the world was a lovely place to be alive in, even if the devil did occasionally carry off people who swore.

Chapter IV.

Marigold Goes A-visiting

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I

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Marigold, for the first time in her small life, was going on what she called a "real" visit. That is, she was going to Uncle Paul's to stay all night, without Mother or Young Grandmother. In this fact its "realness" consisted for Marigold. Visiting with Grandmother was int'resting and visiting with Mother int'resting *and* pleasant, but to go somewhere on your own like this made you feel old and adventurous.

Besides, she had never been at Uncle Paul's, and there were things there she wanted to see. There was a "water-garden," which was a hobby of Uncle Paul's and much talked of in the clan. Marigold hadn't the least idea what a "water-garden" was. There was a case of stuffed hummingbirds. And, more int'resting than all else, there was a skeleton in the closet. She had heard Uncle Paul speak of it and hoped madly that she might get a glimpse of it.

Uncle Paul was not an over-the-bear, so was not invested with such romance as they, who lived so near the Hidden Land, were. He lived only at the head of the Bay, but that was six miles away, so it was really "travelling" to go there. She liked Uncle Paul, though she was a little in awe of Aunt Flora; and she liked Frank.

Frank was Uncle Paul's young half-brother. He had curly black hair and "romantic" grey eyes. So Marigold had heard Aunt Nina say. She didn't know what romantic meant, but she liked Frank's eyes. He had a nice, slow smile and a nice, soft drawling voice. Marigold had heard he was going to marry Hilda Wright. Then that he wasn't. Then that he had sold his farm and was going to some mysterious region called "the West." Lazarre told Salome it was because Hilda had jilted him. Marigold didn't know what jilted was, but whatever it was she hated Hilda for doing it to Frank. She had never liked Hilda much anyway, even if she were some distant kind of a cousin by reason of her great-grandmother being a Blaisdell. She was a

pale pretty girl with russet hair and a mouth that never pleased Marigold. A stubborn mouth and a bitter mouth. Yet very pleasant when she laughed. Marigold almost liked Hilda when she laughed.

"Dey're too stubborn, dat pair," Lazarre told Salome. "Hilda say Frank he mus' spik first an' Frank he say he be dam if he do."

Marigold was sorry Frank was going West, which, as far as she was concerned, was something "beyond the bourne of time and space," but she looked forward to this visit with him. He would show her the humming-birds and the water-garden, and she believed she could coax him to let her have a peep at the skeleton. And he would take her on his knee and tell her funny stories; perhaps he might even take her for a drive in his new buggy behind his little black mare Jenny. Marigold thought this ever so much more fun than riding in a car.

Of course she was sorry to leave Mother even for a night, and sorry to leave her new kitten. But to go for a real visit! Marigold spent a raptured week looking forward to it and living it in imagination.

II

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And it was horrid--horrid. There was nothing nice about it from the very beginning, except the drive to the Head with Uncle Klon and Aunt Marigold, over wood-roads spicy with the fern scent of the warm summer afternoon. As soon as they left her there the horridness began. Marigold did not know that she was homesick, but she knew she was unhappy from her head to her toes and that everything was disappointing. What good was a case of humming-birds if there were no one to talk them over with? Even the water-garden did not interest her, and there were no signs of a skeleton anywhere. As for Frank, he was the worst disappointment of all. He hardly took any notice of her at all. And he was so changed--so gruff and smileless, with a horrible little moustache which looked just like a dab of soot on his upper lip. It was the moustache over which he and Hilda had quarrelled, though nobody knew about it but themselves.

Marigold ate very little supper. She thought every mouthful would choke her. She took only two bites of Aunt Flora's nut cake with whipped cream on top, and Aunt Flora, who had made it on purpose for her, never really forgave her. After supper she went out and leaned forlornly against the gate, looking wistfully up the long red road of mystery that led back home. Oh, if she were only home--with Mother. The west wind stirring in the grasses--the robin-vesper calls--the long tree shadows across a field of wheaten gold--all hurt her now because Mother wasn't here.

"Nothing is ever like what you think it's going to be," she thought dismally.

It was after supper at home now, too. Grandmother would be weaving in the garret--and Salome would be giving the cats their milk--and Mother--Marigold ran in to Aunt Flora.

"Aunt Flora, I must go home right away--please--*please*."

"Nonsense, child," said Aunt Flora stiffly. "Don't take a fit of the fidgets now."

Marigold wondered why she had never noticed before what a great beaky nose Aunt Flora had.

"Oh, *please* take me home," she begged desperately.

"You can't go home to-night," said Aunt Flora impatiently. The car isn't working right. Don't get lonesome now. I guess you're tired. You'd better go to bed. Frank'll drive you home to-morrow if it doesn't rain. Come now, seven's your bedtime at home, isn't it?"

"Seven's your bedtime at home." At *home*--lying in her own bed, with the light shining from Mother's room--with a delicious golden ball of fluff that curled and purred all over your bed and finally went to sleep on your legs. Marigold couldn't bear it.

"Oh, I want to go home. I want to go home," she sobbed.

"I can't have any nonsense now," said Aunt Flora firmly. Aunt Flora was noted for her admirable firmness with children. "Surely you're not going to be a crybaby. I'll take you up and help you undress."

III

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Marigold was lying alone in a huge room in a huge bed that was miles from the floor. She was suddenly half wild with terror and altogether wild with unendurable homesickness. It was dark with a darkness that could be felt. She had never gone to bed in the dark before. Always that friendly light in Mother's room--and sometimes Mother stayed with her till she went to sleep, though Young Grandmother disapproved of that. Marigold had been afraid to ask Aunt Flora to leave the light. Aunt Flora had tucked her in and told her to be a good girl.

"Shut your eyes and go right to sleep, and it will be morning before you know it--and you can go home."

Then she had gone out and shut the door. Aunt Flora flattered herself she knew how to deal with children.

Marigold *couldn't* go to sleep in the dark. And it would be years and *years* before morning came--if it ever did.

"There's nobody here who loves me," she thought passionately.

The black endless hours dragged on. They really were hours, though to Marigold they seemed like centuries. It must surely be nearly morning.

How the wind was wailing round the house! Marigold loved the wind at home, especially at this time of the year when it made her cosy little bed seem cosier. But was this some terrible wind that Lazarre called "de ghos' wind"?

"It blows at de tam of de year when de dead peop' get out of dare grave for a lil' while," he told her.

Was this the time of year? And that man-hole she had seen in the ceiling before Aunt Flora took the light out? Lazarre had told her a dreadful story about seeing a horrible face "wit long hairy ear" looking down at him from a man-hole.

There was a closet in the room. *Was that the closet where the skeleton was?* Suppose the door opened and it fell out. Or walked out. Suppose its bones rattled--Uncle Paul said they did sometimes. What was it she had heard about Uncle Paul keeping a pet rat in the barn? Suppose he brought it into the house at night! Suppose it wandered about! Wasn't that a rat gnawing somewhere?

Would she ever see home again? Suppose mother died before morning. Suppose it rained--rained for a week--and they wouldn't take her home. She knew how Aunt Flora hated to get mud on the new car. And wasn't that thunder?

It was only wagons rumbling across the long bridge over the East River below the house, but Marigold did not know that. She did know she was going to scream--she knew she couldn't live another minute in that strange bed in that dark, haunted room. *What was that?* Queer scratches on the window. Oh--Lazarre's story of the devil coming to carry off a bad child and scratching on the window to get in. Because she hadn't said her prayers. Marigold hadn't said hers. She had been too homesick and miserable to think of them. She couldn't say them now--but she could sit up in bed and scream like a thing demented. And she did.

IV

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Uncle Paul and Aunt Flora, wakened out of their first sound sleep after a hard day's work, came running in. Marigold stopped screaming when she saw them.

"The child's trembling--she must be cold," said Uncle Paul.

"I'm not cold," said Marigold through her chattering teeth, "but I must go home."

"Now, Marigold, you must be a reasonable little girl," soothed Aunt Flora firmly. "It's eleven o'clock. You can't get home to-night. Would you like some raisins?"

"I want to go home," repeated Marigold.

"Who's raising the Old Harry here?" said Frank, coming in. He had heard Marigold's shrieks when he was getting ready for bed. "Here, sis, is a chocolate mouse for you. Eat it and shut your little trap."

It was a lovely, brown chocolate mouse with soft, creamy insides--the kind of confection the soul of the normal Marigold loved. But now it only suggested Uncle Paul's mythical rat.

"I don't want it--I want to go home."

"Perhaps if you bring her up a kitten," suggested Uncle Paul in desperation.

"I don't want a kitten," wailed Marigold. "I want to go home."

"I'll give you my coloured egg-dish if you'll stay quietly till morning," implored Aunt Flora, casting firmness to the winds.

"I don't want the coloured egg-dish. I want to go home."

"Well, go," said Uncle Paul, finally losing his patience with this exasperating child. "There's plenty of good road."

But Aunt Flora had realised that Marigold was on the verge of hysterics, and to have a hysterical child on her hands was a prospect that made even her firmness quail. She had never approved of Paul's whim of

bringing the child here anyhow. This was a Winthrop trick if ever there was one.

"I think Frank had better hitch up and take her home. She may cry herself sick."

"She's a great big baby and I'm ashamed of her," said Uncle Paul crushingly. That speech was to rankle in Marigold's soul for many a day, but at the moment she was only concerned with the fact that Uncle Paul told Frank to go out and hitch up.

"Well, this *is* the limit," said Frank grouchily.

Aunt Flora helped the sobbing Marigold to dress. Uncle Paul was so annoyed that he wouldn't even say good-bye to her. Aunt Flora said it very stiffly. When Mother had kissed Marigold good-bye she had whispered, "When you come home be sure to thank Aunt Flora for the lovely time she has given you." But it did not seem just the right thing to say, so Marigold said nothing.

"Cut out the weeps," ordered Frank as he lifted her into the buggy. "Upon my word, I admire Herod."

Frank was abominably cross. He had had a hard day's work in the harvest-field and was in no mood for a twelve-mile ride, all for the whim of a silly kid. Lord, what nuisances kids were. He was glad he would never have any. Marigold conquered her sobs with an effort. She was going home. Nothing else mattered. Frank sent his black mare spinning along the road and never spoke a word, but Marigold didn't care. She was going home.

Half-way home they turned the corner at the school, and Martin Richard's house was just beyond--a little, old-fashioned white house with a tall Lombardy standing sentinel at either corner, and a tangle of rose-bushes fringing its short lane.

"Why, Frank," cried Marigold, "what's the matter with the house?"

Frank looked--shouted, "My Golly!"--stopped the mare--sprang out of the buggy--tore into the yard--hammered on the door. A window over the door opened--Marigold saw a girl lean out. It was Hilda Wright, who must

have been staying all night with her cousin, Jean Richards. Frank saw her, too.

"The house is on fire," he shouted. "Get them up--quick. There's no time to lose."

A wild half-hour followed--a most int'resting half-hour. Luckily Frank's mare had been trained to stand without hitching, and Marigold sat there watching greedily. The house suddenly sparkled with lights. Men rushed out for buckets and ladders. Gigantic grotesque shadows went hurtling over the barns in the lantern-light. Dogs barked their heads off. It was very satisfying while it lasted. The fire was soon put out. The kitchen roof had caught from a spark. But after it was out, Marigold could see Frank and Hilda standing very close together by one of the Lombardies.

Marigold sat in the buggy and enjoyed the sudden swoops of wind. It was not a stormy night after all--it was a windy, starry night. How thick the stars were. Marigold would have liked to count them but she did not dare. Lazarre had told her that if you tried to count the stars you would drop down dead. Suppose--somewhere--a star fell down at your feet. Suppose a lot of them did. Suppose you were chasing stars all over the meadows--over the hills--over the dunes. Till you picked up handfuls of them.

Frank and Hilda came out to the buggy together. Hilda was carrying a little lantern, and the red silk scarf around her head fluttered about her face like a scarlet flame. The bitterness had gone out of her mouth and she was smiling. So was Frank.

"And you've sat here all this time alone without a word. And Jenny not even hitched. Well, you're a plucky little kid after all. I don't wonder you were homesick and scared in that big barn Flora calls a spare room. I'll get you home now in two shakes. Nighty-night, honey."

The "honey" was not for Marigold but for Hilda, who after being kissed, leaned forward and squeezed Marigold's hand.

"I'm *glad* you were homesick," she whispered. "But I hope you won't ever be homesick again."

"I guess Frank won't go West now," whispered Marigold.

"If he does I'll go with him," whispered Hilda. "I'll go to the ends of the earth with him."

"Look here, darling, you'll catch cold," interrupted Frank considerately. "Hop in and finish your beauty sleep. I'll be up to-morrow night. Just now I've got to get this little poppet home. She saved your uncle's house to-night with her monkey didoes, anyway."

Frank was so nice and jolly and funny all the rest of the way home that Marigold was almost sorry when they got there. Every one at Cloud of Spruce was in bed, but Mother was not asleep. She came down at once and hugged Marigold when she heard Frank's story--at least as much as he chose to tell. He said nothing about Hilda, but he gave Marigold a fierce parting hug and put two chocolate mice in her hand.

"Guess you can eat these fellows now without choking," he said.

Marigold, safe in her own dear bed, with her kitten at her feet, ate her mice and fell asleep wondering if Frank were "dam" because he had, after all, spoken first.

Chapter V.

The Door That Men Call Death

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I

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After all Old Grandmother did not live out her hundred years--much to the disappointment of the clan, who all wanted to be able to brag that one of them had "attained the century mark." The McAllisters over-the-bay had a centenarian aunt and put on airs about it. It was intolerable that they should go the Lesleys one better in anything when they were comparative newcomers, only three generations out from Scotland, when the Lesleys were five.

But Death was not concerned about clan rivalry and somehow even Old Grandmother's "will to live" could not carry her so far. She failed rapidly after that ninety-eighth birthday-party and nobody expected her to get through the next winter--except Marigold, to whom it had never occurred that Old Grandmother would not go on living forever. But in the spring Old Grandmother rallied amazingly.

"Mebbe she'll make it yet," said Mrs. Kemp to Salome. Salome shook her head.

"No; she's done. It's the last flicker of the candle. I wish she *could* live out the century. It's disgusting to think of old Christine McAllister, who's been deaf and blind and with no more mind than a baby for ten years, living to be a hundred and Lesley with all her faculties dying at only ninety-nine."

Marigold in the wash-house doorway caught her breath. Was Old Grandmother going to *die*--could such a thing happen? Oh, it couldn't. It *couldn't*. The bottom seemed to have dropped out of everything for Marigold. Not that she was conscious of any particular love for Old Grandmother. But she was one of The Things That Always Have Been. And when one of The Things That Always Have Been disappear, it is a shock. It makes you feel as if *nothing* could be depended on.

She had got a little used to the idea by next Saturday, when she went in to say her verses to Old Grandmother. Old Grandmother was propped up on her rosy pillows, knitting furiously on a blue jacket for a new great-grandson at the Coast. Her eyes were as bright and boring as ever.

"Sit down. I can't hear your verses till I've finished counting."

Marigold sat down and looked at the brides. She did not want to look at Clementine's picture but she had to. She couldn't keep her eyes from it. She clenched her small hands and set her teeth. Hateful, hateful Clementine, who had more beautiful hands than Mother. And that endless dreamy smile at the lily--as if nothing else mattered. If she had only had the self-conscious smirk of the other brides, Marigold might not have hated her so much. *They* cared what people thought about them. Clementine didn't. She was so sure of herself--so sure of having Father--so sure of being flawlessly beautiful, she never thought for a moment of anybody's opinion. She *knew* that people couldn't help looking at her and admiring her even though they hated her. Marigold wrenched her eyes away and fastened them on the picture of an angel over Old Grandmother's bed--a radiant being with long white wings and halo of golden curls, soaring easily through sunset skies. *Was* Old Grandmother going to die? And if she did, would she be like that? Marigold had a daring little imagination but it faltered before such a conception.

"What are you thinking of?" demanded Old Grandmother so suddenly and sharply that Marigold spoke out the question in her mind before she could prevent herself.

"Will you be an angel when you die, ma'am?"

Old Granny sighed. "I suppose so. How it will bore me. Who's been telling you I was going to die?"

"Nobody," faltered Marigold, alive to what she had done. "Only--only--"

"Out with it," ordered Old Grandmother.

"Mrs. Kemp said it was a pity you couldn't live to be the hundred when old Chris McAllister did."

"Since when," demanded Old Grandmother in an awful tone, "have the Lesleys been the rivals of the McAllisters? *The McAllisters!* And does anybody suppose that Chris McAllister has been *living* for the last ten years? Why, she's been deader than I'll be when I've been under the sod for a century! For that matter she never *was* alive. As for dying, I'm not going to die till I get good and ready. For one thing, I'm going to finish this jacket first. What else did Mrs. Kemp say? Not that I care. I'm done with curiosity about life. I'm only curious now about death. Still, she was always an amusing old devil."

She didn't say much more--only that the Lawson baby couldn't live and Mrs. Gray-over-the-bay had a cancer and Young Sam Marr had appendicitis."

"Cheerful little budget. I dreamed last night I went to heaven and saw Old Sam Marr there and it made me so mad I woke up. The idea of Old Sam Marr in heaven."

Old Grandmother shook her knitting-needle ferociously at a shrinking little bride who seemed utterly lost in the clouds of tulle and satin that swirled around her.

"Why don't you want him in heaven?" asked Marigold.

"If it comes to that I don't know. I never disliked Old Sam. It's only--he couldn't *belong* in heaven. No business there at all."

Marigold had some difficulty in imagining Old Grandmother "belonging" in heaven either.

"You wouldn't want him in--the other place."

"Of course not. Poor old harmless, doddering Sam. Always spewing tobacco-juice over everything. The only thing he had to be proud of was the way he could spit. There really ought to be a betwixt-and-between place. Only," added Granny with a grin, "if there were, most of us would be in it."

She knitted a round of her jacket sleeve before she spoke again. Marigold put in the time hating Clementine.

"I was sorry when Old Sam Marr died, though," said Granny abruptly. "Do you know why? He was the last person alive who could remember me

when I was young and handsome."

Marigold looked at Old Grandmother. Could this ugly little old woman ever have been young and pretty? Old Grandmother caught the scepticism in her eyes.

"You don't believe I ever was. Why, child, my hair was red-gold and my arms were the boast of the clan. No Lesley man ever married an ugly woman. Some of us were fools and some shrews, but we never shirked a woman's first duty--to please a man's eyes. To be sure, the Lesley men knew how to pick wives. Come here and let me have a look at you."

Marigold went and stood by the bed. Old Grandmother put a skinny hand under her chin, tilted up her face and looked very searchingly at her.

"Hmm. The Winthrop hair--too pale a gold, but it may darken--the Lesley blue eyes--the Blaisdell ears--too early to say whose nose you have--*my* complexion. Well, thank goodness, I don't think you'll be hard to look at."

Old Grandmother chuckled as she always did when achieving a bit of modern slang. Marigold went out feeling more cheerful. She didn't believe Old Grandmother had any idea of dying.

II

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Granny continued to improve. She sat up in bed and knit. She saw everybody who came and chattered to them. She held long pow-wows with Lucifer. She wouldn't let Young Grandmother have her new silk dress made without a high collar. She had Lazarre in and hauled him over the coals because he was said to have been drunk and given his wife a black eye.

"She won't die dese twenty year," said the aggrieved Lazarre. "Dere's only room for wan of dem down dare."

Then Aunt Harriet in Charlottetown gave a party in honour of her husband's sister, and Young Grandmother and Mother were going in Uncle Klou's car. They would not be back before three o'clock that night, but Salome would be there and Old Grandmother was amazingly well and brisk. And then at the last moment Salome was summoned to the deathbed of an aunt in South Harmony. Young Grandmother in her silken magnificence and Mother looking like a slender lily in her green crêpe, with the blossom of her face atop of it, came to the orchard room.

"Of course we can't go now," said Young Grandmother regretfully. She had wanted to go--the said husband's sister had been a girlhood friend of hers.

"Why can't you go?" snapped Old Grandmother. "I've finished my jacket and I'm going to die at three o'clock tonight, but that isn't any reason why you shouldn't go to the party, is it? Of course you'll go. Don't dare stay home on my account."

Young Grandmother was not much worried over Old Grandmother's prediction. That was just one of her characteristic remarks.

"Do you feel any worse?" she asked perfunctorily.

"When I'm perfectly well there's not much the matter with me," said Old Grandmother cryptically. "There's no earthly sense in your staying

home on my account. If I need anything Marigold can get it for me. I hope you ate a good supper. You won't get much at Harriet's. She thinks starving her guests is living the simple life. And she always fills the cups too full on purpose--so there'll be no room for cream. Harriet can make a pitcher of cream go farther than any woman I know."

"We are not going there for what we will get to eat," said Young Grandmother majestically.

Old Grandmother chuckled.

"Of course not. Anyhow, you'll *go*. I want to hear all about that party. It'll be amusing. I'd rather be amused than loved now. You take notice whether Grace and Marjory are speaking to each other yet or not. And whether Kathleen Lesley has had her eyebrows plucked. I heard she was going to when she went to New York. And if Louisa has on that awful pink georgette dress with green worms on it--try to see if you can't spill some coffee over it."

"If you think we'd better not go--" began Young Grandmother.

"Marian Blaisdell, if you don't get out of this room instantly I'll throw something at you. There's Klon honking now. You know he doesn't like to wait. Be off, both of you, and send Marigold in. She can sit here and keep me company till her bedtime."

Old Grandmother watched Young Grandmother and Mother out with a curious expression in her old black eyes.

"She hates to think of me dying because she won't be *Young* Grandmother any longer. It's a promotion she's not anxious for," she told Marigold, who had come reluctantly in. "Get your picture book and sit down, child. I want to think for awhile. Later on I've got some things to say to you."

"Yes, ma'am." Marigold always said "Yes, ma'am" to Old Grandmother and "Yes, Grandmother" to Young Grandmother. She sat down obediently but unwillingly. It was a lovely spring evening and Sylvia would be waiting at the Green Gate. They had planned to make a special new kind of magic by the White Fountain that night. And now she would have to spend the whole evening sitting here with Old Grandmother, who wouldn't even

talk but lay there with her eyes closed. Was she asleep? If she were, couldn't she, Marigold, run up through the orchard to the Green Gate for a moment to tell Sylvia why she couldn't come. Sylvia mightn't understand otherwise. The Magic Door was open right beside her chair--she could slip through it--be back in a minute.

"Are you asleep, ma'am?" she whispered cautiously.

"Shut up. Of course I'm asleep," snapped Old Grandmother.

Marigold sighed and resigned herself. Dear knows what Sylvia would do. Never come again perhaps. Marigold had never broken tryst with her before. She turned her chair softly around so that her back would be toward Clementine, and looked at the other brides in the crinolines and flower-lined poke bonnets of the sixties, the bustles and polonaises of the eighties, the balloon sleeves and bell skirts of the nineties, the hobbles and huge hats of the tens. Marigold knew nothing of their respective dates, of course. They all belonged to that legendary time before she was born, when people wore all kinds of absurd dresses. The only one who didn't look funny was Clementine, in her lace-shrouded shoulders, her sleek cap of hair and her fadeless, fashionless lily. She came back to Clementine every time--somehow she couldn't help it. It was like a sore tooth you *had* to bite on. But she would not turn round to look at her. She *would* not.

III

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"What are you staring at Clementine like that for?" Old Grandmother was sitting erectly up in bed. "Handsome, wasn't she? The handsomest of all the Lesley brides. Such colour--such expression--and the charming gestures of her wonderful hands. It was such a pity--" Old Grandmother stopped abruptly. Marigold felt sure she had meant to say, "It was such a pity she died."

Old Grandmother threw back the blankets and slipped two tiny feet over the edge of the bed.

"Get me my clothes and stockings," she ordered. "There in the top bureau drawer. And the black silk dress hanging in the closet. And the prunella shoes in the blue box. Quick, now."

"You're not going to get up?" gasped Marigold in amazement. She had never seen Old Grandmother up in her life. She hadn't supposed Old Grandmother could get up.

"I'm going to get up and I'm going to take a walk in the orchard," said Old Grandmother. "You just do as I tell you and no back talk. I did what I pleased before you were born or thought of, and I'll do what I please tonight. That's why I made them go to the party. Hop."

Marigold hopped. She brought the clothes and the black dress and the prunella boots and helped Old Grandmother put them on. Not that Old Grandmother required much assistance. She stood up triumphantly, holding to the bed post.

"Bring me my black silk scarf and one of the canes in the old clock. I've walked about this room every night after the rest were in bed--to keep my legs in working order--but I haven't been out of doors for nine years."

Marigold, feeling as if she must be in a dream, brought the cane, and followed Old Grandmother out of The Magic Door and down the shallow steps. Old Grandmother paused and looked around her. The moon was not

yet up, though there was silvery brightness behind the spruces on the hill. To the west there was a little streak of soft, dear gold behind the birches. There was a cold clear dew on the grass. The Witch of Endor was shrieking insults at somebody out behind the apple-barn.

Old Grandmother sniffed.

"Oh, the salt tang of the sea! It's good to smell it again. And the apple-blossoms. I had forgotten what spring was like. Is that old stone bench still in the orchard under the cedar-tree? Take me there. I want to see one more moon rise over that cloud of spruce."

Marigold took hold of Old Grandmother's hand and they went into the orchard--a spot Marigold was very fond of. It was such a very delightful and extraordinary old orchard where apple-trees and fir-trees and pine-trees were deliciously mixed up together. Between the trees in the open spaces were flower-beds. Thickets of sweet clover, white and fragrant; clumps of Canterbury-bells, pink and purple. Plots of mint and southernwood. Big blush roses. Perfumed winds blew there. Elves dwelt in the currant bushes. Little Green Folk lived up in the old beech-tree.

There was a queer sort of expectant hush over the orchard as Marigold and Old Grandmother went through it to where the great spreading cedar rose out of a drift of blooming spirea-bushes. Marigold thought it must be because the flowers were watching for the moon to rise.

IV

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Old Grandmother sank down on the stone bench with a grunt. She sat there silent and motionless for what seemed to Marigold a very long time. The moon rose over the cloud of spruce and the orchard became transfigured. A garden of flowers in moonlight is a strange, enchanted thing with a touch of diablerie, and Marigold, sensitive to every influence, felt its charm long years before she could define it. Nothing was the same as in daylight. She had never been out in the orchard so late as this before. The June lilies held up their cups of snow; the moonlight lay silver white on the stone steps. The perfume of the lilacs came in little puffs on the crystal air; beyond the orchard lay old fields she knew and loved, mysterious misty spaces of moonshine now. Far, far away was the murmur of the sea.

And still Old Grandmother dreamed on. Did she see faces long under the mould bright and vivid again? Were there flying feet, summoning voices, that only she could hear in that old moonlit orchard? What voices were calling to her out of the firs? Marigold felt a funny little prickling along her spine. She was perfectly sure that she and Old Grandmother were not alone in the orchard.

"Well, how have you been since we came out here?" demanded Old Grandmother at last.

"Pretty comf'able," said Marigold, rather startled.

"Good," said Old Grandmother. "It's a good test--the test of silence. If you can sit in silence with any one for half an hour and feel 'comfortable,' you and that person can be friends. If not, friends you'll never be and you needn't waste time trying. I've brought you out here to-night for two reasons, Marigold. The first is to give you some hints about living, which may do you some good and may not. The second was to keep a tryst with the years. We haven't been alone here, child."

No; Marigold had known that. She drew a little closer to Old Grandmother.

"Don't be frightened, child. The ghosts that walk here are friendly, homey ghosts. They wouldn't hurt you. They are of your race and blood. Do you know you look strangely like a child who died seventy years before you were born? My husband's niece. Not a living soul remembers that little creature but me--her beauty--her charm--her wonder. But I remember her. You have her eyes and mouth--and that same air of listening to voices only she could hear. Is that a curse or a blessing I wonder? My children played in this orchard--and then my grandchildren---and my great-grandchildren. Such a lot of small ghosts! To think that in a house where there were once fourteen children there is now nobody but you."

"That isn't my fault," said Marigold, who felt as if Old Grandmother were blaming her.

"It's nobody's fault, just as it was nobody's fault that your father died of pneumonia before you were born. Cloud of Spruce will be yours some day, Marigold."

"Will it?" Marigold was startled. Such a thing had never occurred to her.

"And you must always love it. Places know when they're loved--just the same as people. I've seen houses whose hearts were actually broken. This house and I have always been good friends. I've always loved it from the day I came here as a bride. I planted most of those trees. You must marry some day, Marigold, and fill those old rooms again. But not too young--not too young. I married at seventeen and I was a grandmother at thirty-six. It was awful. Sometimes it seems to me that I've *always* been a grandmother.

"I *could* have been married at sixteen. But I was determined I wouldn't be married till I had finished knitting my apple-leaf bedspread. Your great-grandfather went off in such a rage I didn't know if he'd ever come back. But he did. He was only a boy himself. Two children--that's what we were. Two young fools. That's what everybody called us. And yet we were wiser

then than I am now. We knew things then I don't know now. I've stayed up too late. Don't do that, Marigold--don't live till there's nothing left of life but the Pope's nose. Nobody will be sorry when I die."

Suddenly Marigold gasped.

"I will be sorry," she cried--and meant it. Why, it would be terrible. No Old Grandmother at Cloud of Spruce. How could the world go on at all?

"I don't mean that kind of sorriness," said Old Grandmother. "And even you won't be sorry long. Isn't it strange? I was once afraid of Death. He was a foe then--now he is a lover. Do you know, Marigold, it is thirty years since any one called me by my name? Do you know what my name is?"

"No-o," admitted Marigold. It was the first time she had ever realised that Old Grandmother must have a name.

"My name is Edith. Do you know I have an odd fancy I want to hear some one call me that again. Just once. Call me by my name, Marigold."

Marigold gasped again. This was terrible. It was sacrilege. Why, one might almost as well be expected to call God by His name to His face.

"Say anything--anything--with my name in it," said Old Grandmother impatiently.

"I--I don't know what to say,--Edith," stammered Marigold. It sounded dreadful when she had said it. Old Grandmother sighed.

"It's no use. *That* isn't my name--not as you say it. Of course it couldn't be. I should have known better." Suddenly she laughed.

"Marigold, I wish I could be present at my own funeral. Oh, wouldn't it be fun! The whole clan will be here to the last sixth cousin. They'll sit around and say all the usual kind, good, dull things about me instead of the interesting truth. The only true thing they'll say will be that I had a wonderful constitution. That's always said of any Lesley who lives to be over eighty. Marigold--" Old Grandmother's habit of swinging a conversation around by its ears was always startling, "what do you really think about the world?"

Marigold, though taken by surprise, knew exactly what she thought about the world.

"It think it's very int'resting," she said.

Old Grandmother stared at her, then laughed.

"You've hit it. 'Whether there be tongues they shall fail--whether there be prophecies they shall vanish away'--but the pageant of human life goes on. I've never tired watching it. I've lived nearly a century--and when all's said and done there's nothing I'm more thankful for than that I've always found the world and the people in it interesting. Yes, life's been worth living. Marigold, how many little boys are sweet on you?"

"Sweet on me." Marigold didn't understand.

"Haven't you any little beau?" explained Old Grandmother.

Marigold was quite shocked. "Of course not. I'm too small."

"Oh, are you? I had *two* beaux when I was your age. Can you imagine *me* being seven years old and having two little boys sweet on me?"

Marigold looked at Old Grandmother's laughter-filled and moonlight-softened black eyes and for the first time realised that Old Grandmother had not always been old. Why, she might even have been Edith.

"For that matter I had a beau when I was six," said Old Grandmother triumphantly. "Girls were *born* having beaux in my day. Little Jim Somebody--I've forgotten his last name if I ever knew it--walked three miles to buy a stick of candy for me. I was only six, but I knew what that meant. He has been dead for eighty years. And there was Charlie Snaith. He was nine. We always called him Froggy-face. I'll never forget his huge round eyes staring at me as he asked, 'Can I be your beau?' Or how he looked when I giggled and said 'no.' There were a good many 'no's' before I finally said 'yes.'" Old Grandmother laughed reminiscently, with all the delight of a girl in her teens.

"It was Great-Grandfather you first said 'yes' to, wasn't it?" asked Marigold.

Old Grandmother nodded.

"But I had some narrow escapes. I was crazy about Frank Lister when I was fifteen. My folks wouldn't let me have him. He wanted me to run away with him. I've always been sorry I didn't. But then if I had I'd have been sorry for that, too. I was very near taking Bob Clancy--and now all I can remember about him was that he got drunk once and varnished his

mother's kitchen with maple-syrup. Joe Benson was in love with me. I had told him I thought he was magnificent. If you tell a certain kind of man he's magnificent you can have him--if you really want that kind of a man. Peter March was a nice fellow. He was thought to be dying of consumption, and he pleaded with me to marry him and give him a year of happiness. Just suppose I had. He got better and lived to be seventy. Never take a risk like that with a live man, Marigold. He married Hilda Stuart. A pretty girl but too self-conscious. And every time Hilda spent more than five cents a week Peter took neuralgia. He always sat ahead of me in church, and I was always tormented with a desire to slap a spot on his bald head that looked like a fly."

"Was Great-Grandfather a handsome man?" asked Marigold.

"Handsome? Handsome? Every one was handsome a hundred years ago. I don't know if he was handsome or not. I only know he was my man from the moment I first set eyes on him. It was at a dinner-party. He was there with Janet Churchill. She thought she had him hooked. She always hated me. I had gold slippers on that night that were too tight for me. I kicked them off under the table for a bit of ease. Never found one of them again. I knew Janet was responsible for it. But I got even with her. I took her beau. It wasn't hard. She was a black velvet beauty of a girl--far prettier than I was--but she kept all her goods in the show-window. Where there is no mystery there is no romance. Remember that, Marigold."

"Did you and Great-Grandfather live here when you were married?"

"Yes. He built Cloud of Spruce and brought me here. We were quite happy. Of course we quarrelled now and then. And once he swore at me. I just swore back at him. It horrified him so he never set me such a bad example again. The worst quarrel we ever had was when he spilled soup over my purple silk dress. I always believed he did it on purpose because he didn't like the dress. He has been dead up there in South Harmony graveyard for forty years, but if he were here now I'd like to slap his face for that dress."

"How did you get even with him?" asked Marigold, knowing very well Old Grandmother *had* got even.

Old Grandmother laughed until she had hardly enough breath left to speak.

"I told him that since he had ruined my dress I'd go to church next Sunday in my petticoat. And I *did*."

"Oh, Grandmother." Marigold thought this was going too far.

"Oh, I wore a long silk coat over it. He never knew till we were in our pew. When I sat down the coat fell open in front and he saw the petticoat--a bright Paddy-green it was. Oh, his face--I can see it yet."

Old Grandmother rocked herself to and fro on the stone bench in a convulsion of mirth.

"I pulled the coat together. But I don't think your great-grandfather got much good of *that* sermon. When it was over he took me by the arm and marched me down the aisle and out to our buggy. No hanging round to talk gossip that day. He never spoke all the way home--sat there with his mouth primmed up. In fact he never said a word about it at all--but he never could bear green the rest of his life. And it was my color. But the next time I got a green dress he gave our fat old washerwoman a dress off the same piece. So of course I couldn't wear the dress, and I never dared get green again. After all, it took a clever person to get the better of your great-grandfather in the long run. But that was the only serious quarrel we ever had, though we used to squabble for a few years over the bread. He wanted the slices cut thick and I wanted them thin. It spoiled a lot of meals for us."

"Why couldn't you have each cut them to suit yourselves?"

Old Grandmother chuckled.

"No, no. That would have been giving in on a trifle. It's harder to do that than give in on something big. Of course we worked it out like that after we had so many children the question was to get enough bread for the family, thick or thin. But to the end of his life there were times when he would snort when I cut a lovely thin paper-like slice, and times when I honestly couldn't help sniffing when he carved off one an inch thick."

"*I like bread thin*," said Marigold, sympathising with Old Grandmother.

"But if you marry a man who likes it thick--and I know now that every proper man does--let him have it thick from the start. Don't stick on trifles, Marigold. The slices of bread didn't worry me when your great-grandfather fell in love with his second cousin, Mary Lesley. She always tried to flirt with every male creature in sight. Simply couldn't leave the men alone. She wasn't handsome but she carried herself like a queen, so people thought she was one. It's a useful trick, Marigold. You might remember it. But don't flirt. Either you hurt yourself or you hurt some one else."

"Didn't *you* flirt?" asked Marigold slyly.

"Yes. That's why I'm telling you not to. For the rest--take what God sends you. That was a bad time while it lasted. But he came back. They generally come back if you have sense enough to keep still and wait--as I had, glory be. The only time I broke loose was the night of Charlie Blaisdell's wedding. Alec sat in a corner and talked to Mary all the evening. I flew out of the house and walked the six miles home in a thin evening dress and satin shoes. It was in March. It should have killed me, of course--but here I am at ninety-nine tough and tasty. And Alec never missed me! Thought I'd gone home with Abe Lesley's crowd. Oh, well, he came to his senses when Mary dropped him for something fresher. But I can't say I was ever very fond of Mary Lesley after that. She was a mischief-maker, anyhow, always blowing old jealousies into a flame for the fun of it.

"I got on very well with the rest of the clan, though the in-laws were mostly very stupid, poor things. Alec's mother didn't approve of us having such a big family. She said it kept Alec's nose to the grindstone. I had twins twice just to spite her, but we got on very well for all that. And Alec's brother Sam was a terrible bore. Nothing ever happened to him. He never even fell in love. Died when he was sixty, in his sleep. It used to make me mad to see any one wasting life like that. Paul was a black sheep. Always got drunk on every solemn or awful occasion. Got drunk at Ruth Lesley's wedding--she was married from here--and upset two stands of bees over there by the apple-barn just as the bridal party came out here to

the orchard to be married. That was the liveliest wedding I was ever at. Never shall I forget old Minister Wood flying up those steps pursued by bees. Talk about ghosts!"

Old Grandmother laughed until she had to wipe the tears from her eyes.

"Poor Ruth. She was so stung up she looked like a bride with the smallpox. Oh, well, she had only about half a brain, anyway. She always threw her arms about her husband in public when she wanted to ask him some small favor. How red and furious he got! And he always refused. You'd have thought she'd have learned sense in time. Some women never do. Be sure you have some sense, Marigold, when it comes to handling the men."

"Tell me some more stories, Grandmother," entreated Marigold.

"Child, I could tell you stories all night. This orchard is full of them. Up there by the scabby apple-tree Bess Lesley swooned because Alexander McKay asked her to marry him too suddenly. People 'swooned' in my day--'fainted' in your grandmother's. Now they don't do either. But what a lot of fun they miss. Alexander thought Bess was dead--that he'd killed her with his abruptness. We found him on his knees by her, tearing his hair and shrieking blue murder. He thought I was a brute because I threw a dipperful of water over her. She came to very quickly--her curls were only paper ones--and such a looking creature as she was, with them hanging limp about her face and a complexion like a tallow candle. But she had a wonderful figure. It seems to me the girls look like sticks nowadays. Alexander clasped her in his arms and implored her to forgive him. She forgave him--and married him--but she never forgave me. Talking of ghosts--they had a haunted door in their house. Always found open no matter how it was shut and locked."

"Do you really believe that, Grandmother?"

"Of course. Always believe things like that. If you don't believe things you'll never have any fun. The more things you can believe the more interesting life is, as you say yourself. Too much incredulity makes it a

poor thing. As for the ghosts, we had another haunted house in the clan--Garth Lesley's-over-the-bay. It was haunted by a white cat!"

"Why?"

"Nobody knew. But there it was. The Garth Lesleys were rather proud of it. Lots of people saw it. *I* saw it. At least, I saw a white cat washing its face on the stairs."

"But was it the ghost cat?"

"Oh, there you go again. I prefer to believe it was. Otherwise I could never say I'd seen a real ghost. Over there in that corner where the three pines are, Hilary and Kate Lesley agreed to tell each other what they really thought of each other. They thought it would be fun--but they never 'spoke' again. Kate was engaged at one time to her third cousin, Ben Lesley-over-the-bay. It was broken off and later she found her photograph in his mother's album adorned with horns and a moustache. There was a terrible family row over that. In the tail of the day she married Dave Ridley. A harmless creature--only he *would* eat the icing off his wife's piece of cake whenever they went anywhere to tea. Kate didn't seem to mind--she hated icing--but I always wanted to choke him with gobs of icing until he had enough of it for once. Ben's sister Laura was jilted by Turner Reed. He married Josie Lesley and when they appeared out in church the first Sunday Laura Lesley went too, in the dress that was to have been her wedding one, and sat down on the other side of Ben. Alec said she should have been tarred and feathered, but I tell you I liked her spunk. There's a piece of that very dress in my silk log-cabin quilt in the green chest in the garret. You are to have it--and my pearl ring. Your great-grandfather found the pearl in an oyster the day we were engaged and had it set for me. It was reckoned worth five hundred dollars. I've left it to you in my will so none of the others can raise a rumpus or do you out of it. Edith-over-the-bay has had her eye on it for years. Thinks she should have it because she was my first namesake. She owes me more than her name if she but knew it. She wouldn't exist at all if it hadn't been for me. *I* made the match between her father and mother. I was quite a matchmaker in my time. They really

didn't want to marry each other a bit but they were just as happy as if they had. All the same, Marigold, don't ever let any one make a match for *you*."

Old Grandmother was silent for a few moments, thinking over, maybe, more old, forgotten loves of the clan. The wind swayed the trees and the shadows danced madly. *Were* they only shadows--?

"Annabel Lesley and I used to sit under the syrup apple-tree over there and talk," said Old Grandmother--in a different voice. A gentle, tender voice. "I loved Annabel. She was the only one of the Lesley clan I really loved. A sweet woman. The only woman I ever knew who would keep secrets. A woman who would really burn a letter if you asked her to. It was safe to empty your soul out to her. Learn to keep a secret, Marigold. And she was just. Learn to be just, Marigold. The hardest thing in the world is to be just. I never was just. It was so much easier to be generous."

"I could sit here all night and hear you tell about those people," whispered Marigold.

Old Grandmother sighed. "Once I could have stayed up all night--talking--dancing--and then laugh in the sunrise. But you can't do those things at ninety-nine. I must leave my ghosts and go in. After all they were a pretty decent lot. We've never had a real scandal in the clan. Unless that old affair about Adela's husband and the arsenic could be called one. You'll notice when Adela's books are spoken of, she's 'our cousin.' But when the porridge mystery comes up she's 'a third cousin.' Not that I ever believed she did it. Marigold, will you forgive me for all the pills I've made you take?"

"Oh, they were good for me," protested Marigold.

Old Grandmother chuckled.

"Those are the things we have to be forgiven for. But I don't ask you to forgive me for all the Bible verses I made you learn. You'll be grateful to me for them some day. It's amazing what beautiful things there are in the Bible. 'When all the morning stars sang together.' And that speech of Ruth's to Naomi. Only it always enraged me, too, because no daughter-in-law of mine would ever have said the like to *me*. Ah, well, they're all gone now except Marian. It's time--it's high time for me to go, too."

Marigold felt it was such a pity Old Grandmother had to die just when she had got really acquainted with her. And besides Marigold had something on her conscience.

"Grandmother," she whispered, "I--I've made faces at you when you weren't looking."

Old Grandmother touched Marigold's little round cheek with the tip of her finger.

"Are you so sure I didn't see your faces? I did--often. They weren't quite as impish as the ones I made at your age. I'm glad I've lived long enough for you to remember me, little Marigold. I'm leaving off--you're beginning. Live joyously, little child. Never mind the old traditions. Traditions don't matter in a day when queens have their pictures in magazine advertisements. But play the game of life according to the rules. You might as well, because you can't cheat life in the end.

"And don't think too much about what people will say. For years I wanted to do something but I was prevented by the thought of what my cousin Evelina would say. At last I did it. And she said, 'I really didn't think Edith had so much spunk in her.' Do anything you want to, Marigold--as long as you can go to your looking-glass afterwards and look yourself in the face. The oracle has spoken. And after all, is it any use? You'll make your own mistakes and learn from them as we all do. Hand me my cane, child. I'm glad I came out. I haven't had a laugh for years till to-night when I thought of poor Minister Wood and the bees."

"Why, I've heard you laugh often, Grandmother," said Marigold, wonderingly.

"Cackling over the mistakes of poor humanity isn't laughing," said Old Grandmother. She rose easily to her feet and walked through the orchard, leaning very lightly on her cane. At the gate she paused and looked back, waving a kiss to the invisible presences behind her. The moonlight made jewels of her eyes. The black scarf wound tightly round her head looked like a cap of sleek black hair. Suddenly the years were bridged. She was Edith--Edith of the gold slippers and the Paddy-green petticoat. Before she thought, Marigold cried out,

"Oh--Edith--I know what you looked like now."

"That had the right sound," said Old Grandmother. "You've given me a moment of youth, Marigold. And now I'm old again and tired--very tired. Help me up the steps."

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"Can I help you undress?"

"No, I'm not going to die in a nightdress." Old Grandmother climbed on the bed and pulled the puff over her. "And I'm going to smash one tradition to bits. I'm not going to die in the spare room. But I'm hungry. I think I'd like an egg fried in butter. But you can't do it. Isn't that pathetic? Me wanting a fried egg on my very deathbed and not able to get it."

Old Grandmother chuckled again--her old satiric chuckle. The Edith of the orchard had gone back to the shadows of a lost century.

"Go and bring me a glass of milk and a roll--one of Salome's rolls. She makes the best rolls in the world. You can tell her so after I'm gone. I wouldn't give her the satisfaction of telling it as long as I am alive."

Marigold flew to the kitchen, elate with a secret purpose. She was going to fry Old Grandmother an egg. She had never fried an egg, but she had watched Salome do it for Lazarre a hundred times. And she did it--beautifully. When she went back to the orchard room she carried the gold-and-white circle on Old Grandmother's own particular plate, with one of Salome's crisp golden-brown rolls.

"Well, of all the children!" said Old Grandmother. She sat up against her pillows and ate her egg with a relish. "It's got just the flavour it should have. You have the real Lesley touch. We always know by grace and not by law just how big a pinch to put in. Now bring Lucifer to me. I have things to tell that cat. And you must go to bed. It's twelve o'clock."

"Should I leave you, ma'am?"

Marigold took no stock in Old Grandmother's remarks about dying. That was just Old Grandmother's way of talking. Dying people didn't go roaming in orchards or eat eggs fried in butter. But perhaps she ought to stay with her till Mother and Young Grandmother came home.

"Of course you must leave me. I'm all right--and will be all right. There's no earthly reason why you should stay here. Turn the light low and leave the water on the table here."

Marigold brought Lucifer, warm and black from his nest in the woodshed, and filled Old Grandmother's glass.

"Would you like anything more?"

"Nothing you can get me. I'd like a drink of the dandelion wine Alec's sister Eliza used to make. Nobody could make wine like her. Dead these sixty years--but I can taste it yet--like liquid sunlight. Off with you, now."

Marigold left Old Grandmother sipping ghostly dandelion wine of the vintage of the sixties, with Lucifer purring blackly beside her. Young Grandmother and Mother found her there when they came in at three o'clock. Lucifer was asleep, but Old Grandmother lay very still with a strange, wise little smile on her face, as if she had attained to the ultimate wisdom and was laughing still but in no unkindly fashion at all blind suppositions and perplexities.

"I shall never forgive myself," cried Young Grandmother--*Young* Grandmother no longer.

VI

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The blinds were drawn. The doors were purple-bowed. The Lesleys came and went decorously. A terrible, abysmal loneliness engulfed Marigold.

And then she suddenly ceased to believe Old Grandmother was dead. That was not Old Grandmother--that little ivory-white creature in the big flower-banked casket. *That* was not the Edith of the old orchard. *She* was living and laughing still--if not in the orchard then somewhere else. Even in heaven--which must and would become an entirely different place the moment Old Grandmother arrived there.

Chapter VI.

The Power of the Dog

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I

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Marigold wakened one September morning earlier than her wont, when all the eastern sky was abloom with the sunrise, because she was going to school that day. She did not know whether she was glad or sorry, but she did know she was very much interested--and a little frightened. And she was determined she would not show she was frightened. For one thing she was sure Old Grandmother would have scorned her for being frightened; and Old Grandmother dead had somehow become a more potent influence in Marigold's life than Old Grandmother living. For another thing, Marigold had always felt that Mother was a little bit disappointed in her that night at Uncle Paul's. Of course that was ages ago when she was a mere child of six. She was seven now, and it would never do to show you were frightened.

She lay happily in her bed, her two little silver-golden braids with their curling ends lying over her pillows, looking out of the window beside her. She loved that window because she could see the orchard from it and the cloud of spruce. She could lie in bed and watch the tops of the spruces tossing in the morning wind. Always when she wakened up, there they were dark against the blue. Always when she went to sleep they were weaving magic with the moonlight or the stars. And she loved the other window of her room because she could see the harbour from it and across the harbour to a misty blue cloud behind which was her dear Hidden Land.

Marigold was sure nobody in the world had such a dear little room as hers--a room, too, that could only be entered through Mother's. That made her feel so safe always. Because night, even when you were seven, was a strange though beautiful thing. Who knew what went on outside in the darkness? Strange uncanny beasts were abroad, as Marigold had good reason to know, having seen them. Perhaps the trees moved about and talked to one another. That pine which was always stretching out its arms

to the maple might go across the orchard and put them around her. Those two old spruce crones, with the apple-barn between them in daytime, got their heads together at night. The little row of birches along Mr. Donkin's line-fence danced in and out everywhere. Perhaps that slim little beech in the spruce copse behind the barn, who kept herself to herself and was considered very stuck-up by the spruces, escaped from them for awhile and forgot her airs and graces in a romp with her own kind. And the hemlock schoolma'ams, with a final grim fingershake at terrified little boys, stalked at large, shaking their fingers at everything. Oh, the things they did were int'resting beyond any doubt, but Marigold was just as glad none of them could come walking up the stairs into her room without Mother catching them.

The air was tremulous with elfin music. Oh, it was certainly a lovely world--especially that part of it which you entered through The Magic Door and the Green Gate. To other people this part of the world was only the orchard and the "big spruce-bush" on the hill. They knew nothing of the wonderful things there. But you could find those wonderful things only if you went through The Magic Door and the Green Gate. And said The Rhyme. The Rhyme was a very important part of the magic, too. Sylvia would not come unless you said The Rhyme.

Grandmother--who was neither Young nor Old now but just Grandmother--did not approve of Sylvia. She could not understand why Mother permitted Sylvia at all. It was absurd and outrageous and unchristian.

"I could understand such devotion to a flesh-and-blood playmate," said Grandmother coldly. "But this nonsensical imaginary creature is beyond me. It's worse than nonsense. It is positively wicked."

"Almost all lonely children have these imaginary playmates," pleaded Lorraine. "I had. And Leander had. He often told me about them. He had three chums when he was a little boy. He called them Mr. Ponk and Mr. Urt and Mr. Jiggles. Mr. Ponk lived in the well and Mr. Urt in the old hollow poplar-tree and Mr. Jiggles 'just roamed round!'"

"Leander never told *me* about them," said Grandmother, almost unbelievably.

"I've often heard you tell as a joke that one day when he was six he came running in out of breath and exclaimed, 'Oh Mother, I was chased up the road by a *pretending bull* and I ran without hope.'"

"Yes; and I scolded him well for it and sent him to bed without his supper," said Grandmother righteously. "For one thing he had been told not to run like that on a hot day and for another I had no more use for pretendings then than I have now."

"I don't wonder he never told you about Mr. Ponk & Co.," thought Lorraine. But she did not say it. One did not say those things to Grandmother.

"It is not so much Sylvia herself I object to," went on Grandmother, "as all the things Marigold tells us about their adventures. She seems actually to believe in them. That 'dance of fairies' they saw. Fairies! That's why she's afraid to sleep in the dark. Mark well my words, Lorraine, it will teach her to lie and deceive. You should put your foot down on this at once and tell her plainly there is no such a creature as this Sylvia and that you will not allow this self-deception to go on."

"I *can't* tell her that," protested Lorraine. "You remember how she fretted when her Sunday-school teacher told her that her dead kitten had no soul. Why, she made herself ill for a week."

"I was almost ill for a week after that fright she gave me the morning she slipped out of bed and went off up the hill to play with Sylvia at sunrise, when you were in town," said Grandmother severely. "Never shall I forget my feelings when I went into her room in the morning and found her bed empty. And just after that kidnapping case in New Brunswick, too."

"Of course she shouldn't have done that," admitted Lorraine. "She and Sylvia had made a plan to go across to the big hill and 'catch the sun' when it came up behind it."

Grandmother sniffed.

"You talk as if you believed in Sylvia's existence yourself, Lorraine. The whole thing is unnatural. There's something wrong about a child who wants to be alone so much. Really, I think she is bewitched. Remember the day of the Sunday-school picnic? Marigold didn't want to go to it. Said she'd rather play with Sylvia. *That* was unnatural. And the other night when she said her prayers she asked God to bless Mother and Grandmother and Sylvia. I was shocked. And that story she came home with last week--how they had seen three enormous elephants marching along the spruce hill and drinking by moonlight at the White Fountain--by which I suppose she meant the spring."

"But that *may* have been true," protested Lorraine timidly. "You know that was the very time the elephants escaped from the circus in Charlottetown and were found in South Harmony."

"If three elephants paraded through Harmony somebody would likely have seen them besides Marigold. No; she made the whole thing up. And the long and short of it is, Lorraine, I tell you plainly that if you let your child go on like this people will think she is not all there."

This was very terrible--to Mother as well as Grandmother. It was a very disgraceful thing to have a child who was not all there. But still Mother was unwilling to destroy Marigold's beautiful dream-world.

"She told us the other day," continued Grandmother, "that Sylvia told her 'God was a very nice-looking old gentleman.' Fancy your child learning things like that from a playmate."

"*You* talk now as if *you* thought Sylvia was real," said Lorraine mischievously. But Grandmother ignored her.

"It is a good thing Marigold will soon be going to school. She will forget this Sylvia riff-raff when it opens."

The school was half a mile away and Grandmother was to drive Marigold there the first day. It seemed to Marigold that they never would get off, but Cloud of Spruce was never in a hurry. At last they really were on the road. Marigold had on her new blue dress, and her lunch was packed in a little basket. Salome had filled it generously with lovely heart-shaped sandwiches and cookies cut in animal shapes, and Mother had slipped in

some of her favourite jelly in a little broken-handled cream jug of robins-egg blue, which Marigold had always loved in spite of its broken handle--or because of it. She was sure it felt it.

It was September and the day was true September. Marigold enjoyed the drive, in spite of certain queer feelings born of the suspicion that Mother was crying behind the waxberry-bush back at Cloud of Spruce,--until she saw The Dog. After that she enjoyed it no more. The Dog was sitting on the steps of old Mr. Plaxton's little house and when he saw them he tore down to the gate and along the fields inside the fence, barking madly. He was a fairly large dog, with short, tawny hair, ears that stuck straight up, and a tail with a black spot on the end of it. Marigold was sure he would tear her limb from limb if he could catch her. And she would have to go to school alone in the future.

She rather enjoyed the day in school, however, in spite of some alarming, sniggering small boys whom Marigold decidedly did not like. It was quite delightful to be made a fuss over, and the big girls made such a fuss over her. They quarrelled as to whom she would sit with and finally settled the matter by drawing straws. Lazarre called and took her home when school came out, and there was no sign of The Dog. So Marigold felt quite happy and thought school was very nice.

II

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The next day it was not quite so nice. This time Mother walked to school with her and at first it was lovely. There was no dog at Mr. Plaxton's gate but on the other side of the road was the Widow Turner's great flock of geese and goslings with a huge gander who ran to the road and hissed at them through the fence. Marigold would not tell Mother that the geese frightened her and very soon she forgot about them. After all, a gander was not a dog; and it was delightful to be walking along that beautiful road with Mother. Marigold probably forgot everything she learned in school that day, but she never forgot the tricks of the winding road, the gay companies of goldenrod in the field corners, the way the fir-trees hung over the bend, the long waves going over Mr. Donkin's field of wheat, and the white young clouds sailing adventurously over the harbour. The road ran up the red hill, and the rain in the night had washed all the dust from the rounded clumps of spice fern along the edges.

Then they crossed a brook, not on the plank bridge but on a dear little bridge of stones, where they could see the pearl-crested eddies around the dripping grasses; and then came a dear bit of wood where balsam boughs made music and all the little violet-shadows were stippled with sunlight, and they walked on a fairy path near the fence, over sheets of lovely moss, almost up to the green corner where the white schoolhouse stood. Marigold would have been perfectly happy if she could have forgotten The Dog and the gander.

No, school wasn't quite so nice that day. The big girls did not take much notice of her. There was another new pupil, with amazing red-gold, bobbed curls, and they were all agog over her.

The teacher made Marigold sit with a little girl named Sarah Miller, whom she did not know and did not like; and a hateful boy across the aisle chewed gum and grinned at her alternately. When he chewed his ears

waggled, and when he grinned at her his face was that of an unholy imp. He came up to her at recess, and Marigold turned her back upon him. Plainly this Lesley puss must have her claws clipped at once.

"You'd better get your mammy to bring you to school every day," he jeered. "If she don't, old Plaxton's dog'll eat you. That dog has et three people."

"Et them!" In spite of herself Marigold could not help turning round. The Dog had such a terrible fascination for her.

"Body and bones, I'll tell the world. One of them was a little girl about your age. Dogs always know when folks are afraid of them."

Marigold had a queer, sick, cold feeling. But she thought Old Grandmother would have made short work of this impudent boy.

"Do you suppose," she said cuttingly, "that *I* am afraid of a thousand dogs?"

"You talk big like all the Lesleys," retorted her tormentor. "But just you wait till that dog gets his teeth in your shin and you'll sing a different tune, Miss High-and-Mighty."

Marigold did not feel very high-and-mighty. And when she asked Sarah Miller if geese ever bit and Sarah said,

"Yes. Our old gander flew at me and knocked me down one day and bit me," Marigold felt that life was really too difficult. How was she ever to get home? There were no other children going her way. Mr. Donkin had no children nor Mr. Plaxton nor Mr. Ross nor the Widow Turner. Lazarre's children and Phidime's went to the French School "over east," where Marigold had so long ago dreamed the Hidden Land was.

Then Uncle Klon came along and took her home in the car. The gander hissed at them and The Dog flew down to the gate and howled his head off at them. He was really a very noisy Dog. Marigold did not say a word of her fears to Uncle Klon. She couldn't bear that he should think her a coward either. She talked the matter over with Lucifer, who had no opinion of dogs at all.

"Not that I have ever had anything to do with them," he admitted. "But I've heard that a dog insulted one of my ancestors."

When Marigold said her prayers that night she prayed most earnestly that The Dog might not be there the next morning.

III

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Mother wanted to take her to school again but Grandmother said,

"There is no use in pampering her like that. She may as well get used to going alone, first as last. There's nothing on the road to hurt her."

"There are motor-cars."

"There are very seldom motor-cars on this road so early in the morning. Besides, they'll be there to-morrow just the same as to-day. Marigold must learn to walk on the side of the road and never cross it."

Marigold was not afraid of motor-cars. She loved to see them go purring past in the violet dusk, with their great golden moons of eyes, and sometimes turning in at the gate, making strange magic with their shifting light on trees and flowers. Even in daylight they were int'resting. But tawny dogs as big as lions and enormous hissing ganders were quite another thing. She had not slept all night for thinking of them. Suppose there wasn't any God! Old Cousin Malcolm-over-the-bay said there wasn't. *Suppose* The Dog should be there? *Suppose* the gate should be open. *Suppose* he could jump over the fence. *Suppose* he "et" her up, body and bones. Nobody would ever know what became of her. She remembered a horrible tale Lazarre had told her of a dog that flew at some one's throat and tore out the "juggler" vein. *Suppose* he tore out her "juggler" vein.

She said her prayers that morning very earnestly. And in spite of her terror she did not forget to put on her green dress, though she didn't like it, because it was its turn and mustn't feel neglected. She tried to eat some breakfast. She went out to the road, that had suddenly stretched to miles and miles, all filled with terror for her, with her lunch-basket and her little quaking heart.

"You're not frightened to go alone, darling?" said Mother, kissing her good-bye.

"Oh, no," lied Marigold gallantly. Mother must not know--must not even suspect.

"And I won't--I *won't* be frightened," she whispered defiantly to the world. "I'll *make* it true. I'm *sure* God will not let The Dog be there. I'm *quite* sure."

"Cheer up," said Lucifer on the gate post, blinking his topaz eyes at her. "A dog is only a dog. Bristle up your tail and spit at him. Any one can bark through a fence."

There was no delight in the road that day for Marigold, though the fir-trees blew gaily together on the windy hill and Mr. Donkin's calves stood in a ferny corner and looked at her with elfin mischief in their soft dark eyes. As she drew near Mr. Plaxton's house she could see The Dog sitting on the steps. Marigold grew cold all over, but she came on. Old Grandmother, she was sure, would have gone on. The Dog rushed down to the gate and tore along the fence and barked. Most furiously. *Did he know she was afraid of him?* It seemed a year to Marigold before she left him behind. She felt rather sickish all day in school and couldn't eat her lunch. And her spirit was bitter within her. God hadn't answered her prayer. Very likely old Cousin Malcolm was right. Of course he was right. Marigold went home past The Dog in a godless world, where only Terror reigned supreme.

IV

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For a week Marigold lived in that world and tasted its horror to the full. But she would have died before she admitted her cowardice to Mother or Grandmother. She might have told it to Aunt Marigold, but Aunt Marigold was away. She could not play with Sylvia, and a new batch of kittens left her cold. And every day that Dog rushed down to the gate and pursued her beside the fence with Barks. Marigold saw everything connected with The Dog in capitals. Some day--Marigold knew it--he would jump the fence.

One rainy day she felt sure he would not be there, but he was. Noisier than ever.

"I wish you were dead," Marigold whispered passionately. But she could not pray that he would die, though once she tried to. Even a dog has some rights, she felt. She still prayed--though she did not think it a bit of use.

And then one day The Dog did jump the fence.

V

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"The child is getting frightfully thin and pale," worried Mother. "She hardly eats any breakfast. I'm sure that long walk to school is too much for her."

"I walked two and a half miles to school when I was her age," said Grandmother, who was worried, too, but wouldn't give in. "How is she to get to school if she doesn't walk? She can't be taken every day."

"She has nightmares--something Marigold never had before," persisted Mother. "Last night she screamed dreadfully that 'it' had caught her. And do you notice how little she laughs?"

"I notice she doesn't go traipsing up the hill after Sylvia any more and that's so much to the good," said Grandmother in a tone of satisfaction. "I'll tell her she mustn't go tearing round with the children at school, tiring herself out. That's what's the matter with her."

There was no need of such a command. Marigold was so quiet at school that the other children thought her stupid and the teacher thought her a model--though a little dull. She couldn't seem to remember half she was told. How could she when she didn't hear it, being wrapped up in dread of the walk home past The Dog? The terrible thing was that it wasn't getting any easier--harder if anything. Marigold felt that she couldn't go on being brave forever. Some day she would break down and confess everything, and everybody would know what a coward she was.

The Dog was at the steps as usual and as usual ran and barked. But Marigold was suddenly confronted with a new terror. The Widow Turner's geese were out on the road! They spread all over the road, and as she drew near, the big gander flew at her with huge outstretched wings, hissing furiously. Marigold dropped book and lunch-box, and screamed.

At that The Dog jumped the fence. He appeared to fly over it without effort. And just when Marigold expected to be devoured at a gulp or feel

his teeth at her "juggler" vein, she saw him hurl himself at the gander. The outraged gander turned tail and ran as never gander ran before, towards the hole in the fence where he had escaped. The Dog chivied all the rest of the flock through after him and then leaped victoriously back to Marigold. His impact nearly knocked her off her feet, but the next moment she knew she was not a bit afraid. The Dog was capering around her in an ecstasy of friendliness, stopping every moment or so to yap out his good intentions. Why, he was really only an overgrown pup. And all his barking and tearing had just been sheer neighbourliness. No wonder God hadn't answered her prayer.

As Marigold walked on The Dog trotted cockily along beside her, occasionally licking her hand or lifting his adoring dog face with a delighted yelp. He seemed to be the happiest Dog in the world just to be with her. He went right to the school with her and that night when she went home, no longer a bit afraid, she went right up to the gate and kissed him through the bars.

"I'm so sorry I hated you and prayed that you wouldn't be here," she told him.

"What's a little hatred between friends?" said The Dog. "That gander shan't give you any more sass. I'll see to that, Lovely."

Marigold's laughter rang again through Cloud of Spruce that evening. The world was once more a nice, smiling place where everybody was happy. She ate a hearty supper and then she was off up the hill to Sylvia-- which didn't please Grandmother so well. After that she scurried off to school early in the morning so that she could have a little time to play with The Dog, who having found he could jump the fence when he had to, jumped it every morning and evening just to be petted by Marigold and fed little snacks from her basket.

Marigold felt a certain sweetness of victory because she had never told any one how frightened she was. It seemed to her that she had redeemed herself from some taint of disgrace that had clung to her ever since the night at Uncle Paul's. But now that she was frightened no longer she told Mother, because she couldn't bear to have secrets from Mother. Lorraine

was secretly horror-stricken when she realised what a long-drawn-out agony this small creature had been enduring in silence and solitude.

"I don't think you were a coward at all, dearest. You were very brave to go right on when you were so afraid--and keep going on."

"If I could have picked my mother I'd have picked you," whispered Marigold. Everything was beautiful again and every wind of the world was a friend.

"Didn't I tell you," purred Lucifer.

"I shall always like cats a *little* better than dogs," said Marigold, "but Mr. Plaxton's Dog is a Beautiful Dog."

"There ain't no such animal," Lucifer had the last word.

Chapter VII.

Lost Laughter

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I

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Marigold woke up on a Saturday morning in June with stars of delight in her eyes. She thought it the loveliest thing that Sylvia's birthday should be in June. And they were going to have a birthday-picnic in the spruce-bush by the little spring with its untrampled edges--in a banquet-hall with tall spruces for columns. With little frosted cakes--some with "M" on them in pink icing and some with "S." And one gorgeous big cake with both "M" and "S" on it, intertwined, with a drift of cocoanut over everything. Mother had made it specially for Sylvia's birthday. Mother was such a brick. Grandmother, now--but Marigold was not going to think of Grandmother and her attitude in regard to Sylvia, on this wonderful morning of dawn-rosy meadows and sky-ey lures, of white young cherry-trees and winds dancing over the hills.

"Spring is *such* an exciting time," thought Marigold blissfully, as she sprang out of bed and began to dress.

Grandmother and Mother had already begun breakfast--Grandmother, very stately and dignified as usual, with silvery hair and sharp steel-blue eyes, was looking displeased. She disapproved of this birthday picnic as much as she disapproved of Sylvia. She had so confidently expected that Marigold would get over this Sylvia-nonsense when she went to school. But Marigold had been going to school for a year and seemed more besotted on Sylvia than ever.

"We'll have to tell her to-day that you're going to the sanitarium to-morrow," said Grandmother.

"Oh, not to-day," implored Lorraine. "Let her have one more happy day. Not till the morning."

Lorraine had taken a bad cold in March and it "hung on." Aunt Marigold said there was nothing serious as yet but advised a couple of months in the sanitarium. She frightened Grandmother and Lorraine a

good deal more than the latter's condition justified, but Aunt Marigold was wise in her day and generation. She knew Lorraine was tired out and run down. She knew she needed a real rest and that she would never get it at Cloud of Spruce or visiting among her relatives. And she knew she would never leave Marigold unless she were thoroughly frightened. So Aunt Marigold did it thoroughly.

"You are going in the afternoon to-morrow. That will give her very little time to get used to it."

"Oh, but not to-day," pleaded Mother. Grandmother yielded. You couldn't refuse the request of a woman who was going to the sanitarium next day, even if you did think it remarkably silly. And then Marigold came running in with her little wild-rose face all alight, and began to eat her porridge out of the dear little blue bowl she loved. Real porridge. Grandmother insisted on that. No imaginary porridges called "cereals" for Grandmother.

"Isn't it lovely that Sylvia's birthday is in June?" she said. "And she's just eight years old, too. Isn't that 'stronary? Why, it makes us pretty near twins, doesn't it, Mother? We're going to have such an elegant time to-day. After the picnic we're going to find that echo that lives 'way, 'way back in the hilly land."

"Don't you go so far away that you can't get back in time for dinner," said Grandmother. "You were late last Saturday."

Marigold looked rather scornfully at Grandmother. Didn't Grandmother understand that when you went through The Magic Door you stepped straight into fairyland, where there was no such thing as time?

"I think I'll be a little scared to go so far back," said Marigold confidentially to Mother. Marigold never minded admitting she was scared since the day of The Dog--The Dog that now, alas, belonged only to the beautiful far-off past. In the winter Mr. Plaxton had sold him to a man who lived over the bay. And Marigold, who had once wished he was dead, walked past Mr. Plaxton's door every school morning with an aching lump in her throat, hating Mr. Plaxton and missing woefully that friendly eager

catapult of barks that had always hurled itself over the fence at her. God had answered her prayer after all--rather late, she thought very bitterly.

"I see one has to be careful what one prays for," was her opinion.

"But Sylvia won't be scared. Sylvia isn't afraid of anything. Why--" Marigold cast about for some statement to show how very brave Sylvia was--"why, she'd just as soon call the minister John as not, if she wanted to."

"You see," telegraphed Grandmother's steel-blue eyes. But Mother only laughed.

"What jam do you want in your tarts, dear? Plum or gooseberry?"

Marigold liked gooseberry best, but--"Oh, plum, Mother. Sylvia likes plum."

The lunch-basket was made up and Marigold trotted happily into the orchard room--and trotted back again.

"Please, where is the key of the orchard door?" she said.

"It's upstairs on my bureau," said Grandmother. "Go out of the side door."

Marigold looked reproachfully at Grandmother, wondering if when *she* got to be over seventy years old she would be so stupid.

"You know I *have* to go through the orchard door, Grandmother. It's a Magic Door. None of the others are."

"Run upstairs and get the key for yourself, dear," said mother gently.

Grandmother sniffed, but looked rather pleased. An idea had just come to her.

Marigold, happily unconscious of Grandmother's idea, got the key and went through The Magic Door into The Land Where Wishes Come True--which unimaginative people called the old orchard. You went through the orchard and up the stone steps until you came to the Green Gate, about which grew the seven slim poplars that always turned into nymphs when she and Sylvia played there. Marigold opened the gate--shut her eyes--said The Rhyme--opened them. Yes, there was Sylvia with her floating dark hair and her dreamy eyes, her snow-white hands and feet among the fine, fair shadows of the poplars. Marigold sprang forward with a cry of joy.

"To think I once thought you were a plum-blossom bough!" she laughed.

II

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Grandmother did not carry out her idea as soon as Mother had gone away. That would have been cruel and Grandmother was never cruel--intentionally. She must wait until Marigold recovered from the grief of Mother's going. At first Marigold thought she could never get over it. She was shocked the first day she laughed. She had not expected to be able to laugh again until Mother came home. But Sylvia did say such funny things. And a letter came from Mother every day--such a dear, jolly, understanding letter. Then--

"Grandmother, please, can I have the key of The Magic Door?" asked Marigold one morning.

Grandmother looked at her with cold eyes.

"I have locked that door and it is to remain locked," she said deliberately. "I find that I often forget to lock it at night, and that is very dangerous."

"But, Grandmother," exclaimed Marigold, "I *must* have the key. You *know* I can't see Sylvia unless I go that way."

"Then you must get along without seeing her," said Grandmother immovably.

Marigold did not plead or coax. She knew quite well that no pleading would avail with Grandmother--who had been "one of the stubborn Blaisdells," as Salome said, before she married into the Lesley clan. But she went away with eyes that were stripped of laughter. Grandmother gazed after her triumphantly. This would put an end to all nonsense.

It did. Marigold made one effort to find Sylvia. She went out through the hall door, up the orchard and through the Green Gate. She shut her eyes--said The Rhyme--opened them.

There was no Sylvia.

Marigold crept back to the house--a pathetic, defeated little figure.

For a week Marigold moped--so Grandmother termed it. Grandmother was very good to her. She let her help cook--Salome being away on one of her rare vacations--shell lovely walnuts with kinky meats, seed raisins, slice citron peel; even--oh, bliss of happier days!--beat eggs. But Marigold seemed interested in nothing. She sat about a great deal in a big chair on the veranda, looking out on the harbour, with a smileless little face.

One night Grandmother discovered that Marigold had gone to bed without saying her prayers. Horrified, Grandmother made Marigold get right up and say them. But when Marigold got into bed again she looked at Grandmother with sad, defiant eyes.

"My soul didn't pray a bit," she said.

When another week had passed, Grandmother began to worry about Marigold. All was not well with the child. She was growing thin and pale.

"It's the heat," said Grandmother. "If it would only get cooler she would be all right."

Grandmother would not even let herself look at the idea that Marigold was fretting for Sylvia. It was absurd to suppose that a child would become ill because of the imaginary loss of an imaginary playmate.

She went into Harmony and bought Marigold a magnificent doll--almost as big and beautiful as Alicia. Marigold thanked her, played with it a little, then laid it aside.

"Why don't you like your doll?" asked Grandmother severely.

"It's a very nice doll," said Marigold listlessly. "But it isn't alive. Sylvia was."

It was the first time she had spoken of Sylvia. Grandmother's brow grew dark.

"You are a very ungrateful little girl," said Grandmother.

Marigold sighed. She was sorry Grandmother thought her ungrateful. But she did not really care very much. When you are horribly tired you can't care very much about anything. There was no joy in waking up any longer. The bluebells in the orchard had no message for her and she had forgotten the language of the roses. The days seemed endless and the nights--the lonely, black, dreadful nights when the windows rattled so

terribly and the wind sang and sobbed so lonesomely in the tree-tops around Cloud of Spruce--worse than endless. There was nothing then but a great, empty, aching loneliness. No sweet medicine of Mother's kisses. No Sylvia. But one night Marigold heard distant music.

"I think it is Sylvia singing on the hill," she said, when Grandmother asked her sharply what she was listening to.

Grandmother was vexed with herself that she couldn't help recalling that silly old superstition of Salome's that angels sing to children about to die. But Grandmother was really alarmed by now. The child was going to skin and bone. She hadn't laughed for a month. The house seemed haunted by her sad little face. What was to be done? Lorraine must not be worried.

Grandmother got Marigold a lovely new dress of silvery silk and a necklace of beautiful pale green beads. Nobody in the whole Lesley clan had such a beautiful necklace. Marigold put it on and thanked Grandmother dutifully, and went away and sat on her chair on the veranda. Grandmother gave Marigold her own way about everything--except the one thing that really mattered. But Grandmother did not for a moment suppose *that* mattered at all. And she certainly wasn't going to give in about a thing that didn't matter.

Marigold pined and paled more visibly every day. Grandmother was at her wit's end.

"If only Horace's wife was home," she said helplessly.

But Uncle Klon and Aunt Marigold were far away at the Coast, so Dr. Moorhouse was called in--very secretly so that no rumour of it might reach Lorraine--and Dr. Moorhouse couldn't find anything wrong with the child. A little run down. The weather was hot. Plenty of sleep, food and fresh air. He left some pills for her: Marigold took them as obediently for Grandmother as for Old Grandmother, but she grew no better.

"I'll soon be sleeping in the spare room, won't I, Grandmother?" she said one night.

Grandmother's old face grew suddenly older. The spare room!

"Don't be foolish, dear," she said very gently. "You are not going to die. You'll soon be all right."

"I don't want to be all right," said Marigold. "When I die I can go through The Magic Door without any key."

Grandmother could not sleep that night. She recalled what Great-Aunt Elizabeth had once said of Marigold.

"She is too glad to live. Such gladness is not of earth."

But then, Aunt Elizabeth had always been an old pessimist. Always predicting somebody's death. Of course she hit it once in a while, but not a tenth of her predictions ever came true. There was no need to worry over Marigold. The child had always been perfectly healthy. Though not exactly robust. Rather too sensitive--like Lorraine. The weather was so hot. As soon as it cooled, her appetite would come back. But still Grandmother could not sleep. She decided that if Marigold did not soon begin to improve, Lorraine would have to be sent for.

III

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Dr. Adam Clow, professor of psychology in a famous university, was talking over family folk-lore with Grandmother, on the veranda of Cloud of Spruce, looking out into a blue dimness that was the harbour but which to him, just now, was a fair, uncharted land where he might find all his lost Aprils. Only the loveliest of muted sounds were heard--the faint whisper of friendly trees, the half-heard, half-felt moan of the surf, the airiest sigh of wind. Down the road the witching lilt of some invisible musician who was playing a fiddle at Lazarre's.

And the purr of black cats humped up on the steps--cats who must have been at Cloud of Spruce forever and would be there forever, changeless, ageless creatures that they were. What did the world look like to a cat, speculated Dr. Clow? Know what he might about psychology he did not know that.

Dr. Clow was a very old friend of Grandmother's, and this visit was a great event to her. There was nobody on earth for whose opinion she had such respect as she had for Adam's. He was one of the few people left to call her Marian--to remember her as "one of the handsome Blaisdell girls."

Adam Clow was that rare thing--a handsome old man, having lived a good life so long that he was very full of the beauty of the spirit. His dark eyes were still softly luminous and his thin, delicately cut, finely wrinkled face rather dreamy and remote. But his smile was vivid and youthful and his mouth showed strength and tenderness and humour.

He came once every year to hear the fir-trees whispering on the hills of home. Here where all his race and all his friends, save Marian Blaisdell, had vanished--here was still "home." Here still on purple evenings and starlit midnights and white dawns the little waves murmured and sighed on the harbour shore. And of all those who had once listened to them with him was left only Marian Blaisdell--handsome Marian, who had a certain

queen's loveliness about her still. With her he could talk about charming vanished households and the laughing girls of long ago and old summers so sweet they could not wholly die. He shuddered when he thought of a recent evening spent with a former schoolmate who prided herself on keeping up with the times and talked to him the whole time about eugenics and chromosomes and the growing menace of the feeble-minded. Dr. Adam Clow thanked his stars for a vine-hung veranda and a woman who had grown old gracefully.

"Oh, well, I haven't got to wheel-chairs and gruel yet," said Grandmother complacently.

They talked of the old days and the new days, and watched the moon rising over the old fields they knew. And Dr. Clow told her all the jokes he could think of. He was the only person in the world who dared tell jokes to Grandmother. And finally Grandmother--proud, reserved Grandmother--found herself telling him all about Marigold--who was asleep in her little room with tears still gemming her lashes. She had not taken any int'rest in Dr. Clow. He was Grandmother's meat and, like Grandmother, must long since have forgotten the way to fairyland.

Grandmother *had* to tell somebody. Adam's coming seemed providential. She had always found it easy to tell things to him--always, until now. To her amazement, she found it incredibly hard to tell Adam Clow that she had locked The Magic Door.

"She doesn't seem to *want* to get better," she concluded helplessly.

"A wounded spirit who can bear'?" quoted Adam Clow softly.

"I don't understand," said Grandmother in a hurt tone. "I--I think I've been very kind to Marigold."

"And *I* think," said Adam Clow rather sternly, "that she is dying of a broken heart."

Grandmother began to say "Bosh," and stopped. One didn't say bosh to doctors of psychology.

"You don't really mean to say you think she has got so ill because she can't see that Sylvia of hers any more? Or imagines she can't?"

Dr. Clow put his slender finger-tips together.

"I think I might talk a great deal of wise jargon about a neurosis caused by a suppressed desire for her playmate," he said. "But I won't. I simply advise you to give her the key of The Magic Door."

"But--Adam!" Grandmother could not give in so easily. "Is it *right* to encourage her in those pretenses--those falsehoods--"

"They are not falsehoods. They are truths to her. She sees things invisible to us. She is a queen in the lovely Kingdom of Make-Believe. She is not trying to deceive anybody. She has the wonderful gift of creation in an unusual degree. It is such a pity that she will lose it as she grows older--that she will have to forego its wonder and live, like us, in the light of common day. Has this never occurred to you, Marian?"

No, it hadn't. But--Grandmother gave a little sigh--of surrender. Dr. Clow stood up.

"I must be going. We have sat up terribly late for old folks."

"I'm sorry you have to walk to Harmony," said Grandmother. "Our horse is too lame to drive just now--and Horace is away--so his car--"

"I don't like a car after dark. In a car you can never feel the charm of the soft enfolding night. I want to walk. It keeps me limber. Well, it's good-bye for another year. I must go back to-morrow and begin work. And if I have to slip off this 'robe of flesh' before next summer I'll save up my jokes to tell you in eternity. After all, there's nothing quite so satisfying as an old friendship, is there, Marian? As for Marigold--the earth has grown very old for us, Marian. Let us be thankful it is still young and full of magic for Marigold."

IV

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The next morning after breakfast Grandmother silently laid the key of the orchard door by Marigold's blue bowl. Marigold lifted incredulous eyes.

"Oh, Grandmother! May I--may I?"

"Yes," said Grandmother curtly. In spite of Adam's fine phrases she did not relish defeat by this puss of a Marigold. And there was Lucifer cocking an insolent yellow eye at her, as if he were hugely amused over the whole affair.

Marigold stood still for a moment, transfigured. Her face was as blithe as the day. It was as if a little shower of joy had rained down upon her out of the sky. She flew through the orchard room--through The Magic Door--through the blue-eye grass of the orchard as if there were some Atalanta wizardry in her feet. Through the Green Gate. For another moment she stood, almost afraid. Suppose Sylvia--Then she shut her eyes and said her Rhyme.

V

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Grandmother stood in The Magic Door at twilight. There was a pale moon-glow behind the cloud of spruce. There was a dance of great plummy boughs in the western wind. And there was a sound not heard in the orchard for a long time--the sound of Marigold's laughter as she waved goodnight to Sylvia over the Green Gate.

Chapter VIII.

“It”

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I

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Mother was home--pink-cheeked and rested and well--and Marigold was going to Blue Water Beach to stay from Friday evening to Sunday night. In other words, a week-end, though that expression had not yet penetrated to Cloud of Spruce. And Marigold was delighted for several good reasons. The best reason was that she would see Nancy--fascinating Nancy of the brown eyes and russet hair; and not only see her but play with her--play with Nancy's beautiful set of dishes kept in the little square box-cupboard in the wall, with the glass door, and not only play with her but sleep with her two whole nights in her fascinating little room, where there was a dressing-table with a lovely frill of sheer white muslin over a pink lining, and a turquoise blue jug and basin with fluted edges, and peacocks on the wallpaper. They would talk delicious little secrets which nobody in the world but their small selves knew. Aunt Stasia's house was near a railroad, and it was such thrilly fun to watch the lighted trains go by in the night, like great dragons breathing smoke and fire.

Then there was to be a party on Saturday afternoon at Lily Johnson's, just across the road from Aunt Stasia's, to which Marigold was invited, and she had the loveliest new dress for it.

Moreover, Blue Water Beach was in that realm of magic "over the bay," where at sunset there were dim old shores of faded gold and dusk. Who knew but that some time she might actually get down to Blue Water Point and see what was beyond it--the Hidden Land, which she had longed all her life to see? She had never dared to ask any one what was beyond Blue Water Point for fear she should be told that there were only the same red coves and headlands and blue silk water that there were on this side of it. Surely there must be something more than that if one could only reach that far purple misty outpost of the "fairylands forlorn" Aunt Marigold

talked about. As long as Marigold didn't *know* there wasn't, she could still dream that dear dream.

In the third place, she wanted to wipe out the memory of that old disgrace three years ago, when she had behaved so terribly at Uncle Paul's. Uncle Paul always ragged her about it every time he saw her, and Aunt Flora had never really forgiven her. To be sure, they had to admit that if Marigold had been the good and proper child she should have been, Martin Richard's house would have burned down and Frank Lesley and Hilda Wright would probably never have married each other. Still, Marigold knew she had behaved badly and she burned for a chance to redeem herself.

Standing on the veranda of Cloud of Spruce, Marigold could see three houses in a row over the bay. Three little white dots only six miles away as the crow flew, but nearly fifteen when you had to drive around the Head of the Bay. Though there was a delightful possibility that Uncle Klon just back from the Coast would have his new motor-boat in time to run her over Friday evening.

The middle dot was Aunt Stasia's house--an int'resting house--an unexpected kind of house; like one of those houses in dreams where you are forever discovering new, fascinating rooms; a house where there was red flannel in the glass lamps; a house with a delightful, uncared-for garden where gnarled old apple-trees bent over plots of old-fashioned flowers--thickets of sweet clover, white and fragrant, beds of mint and southernwood, honeysuckles and blush roses; and where there was an old mossy path running up to the ivy-grown front door. Oh, Blue Water Beach was a charming spot, and Marigold couldn't eat or sleep properly for a week because of looking forward to her week-end there.

Of course, this world being as it is, there were one or two small flies in her ointment. Aunt Stasia herself, now. Marigold always felt a little frightened of Aunt Stasia--who wasn't really an aunt but only a cousin. Aunt Stasia of the tragic, wrinkled face, where nothing was left of her traditional beauty but her large dark eyes. Aunt Stasia who always wore black and a widow's veil and never, never smiled. Marigold supposed you

couldn't smile if, just a few minutes after you had been married, your husband had been killed by a flash of lightning. But Marigold sometimes wondered, supposing such a thing happened to *her*, if she wouldn't *have* to smile now and then--after years and years had passed, of course. There were so many things in the world to smile at.

Then, too, Aunt Stasia was--fussy. In spite of her romantic and tragic airs, Aunt Stasia was *very* fussy. A crumb on the carpet unfitted her for the day. A fly on the ceiling sent her to bed with a headache. If you got a spot on the tablecloth, Aunt Stasia looked at you as if you had broken all the Ten at once. Marigold knew she would have to be exceedingly proper and perfect at Blue Water Beach if she did not want to smirch the honour of Cloud of Spruce. She liked gentle, kitteny Cousin Teresa better. Cousin Teresa was Aunt Stasia's sister, but she was never called Aunt. There was nothing auntish about her. When Aunt Stasia wasn't around Cousin Teresa could be just like a little girl herself. But then Aunt Stasia mostly was around.

Also, Beulah. Beulah and Nancy were sisters, Aunt Stasia's nieces--real nieces. The children of her dead sister. But whereas Marigold loved Nancy next to Sylvia, she did not like Beulah at all. Not at all. Not the least little bit. Beulah, she thought in her secret soul, was a mean, spiteful little cat. It was Beulah who had once deliberately pushed her into a bush of stick-tights; Beulah who had told her that Mother was disappointed because she wasn't a boy. Marigold had never dared ask Mother about it for fear it was the truth, but it rankled bitterly along with her hatred of Clementine.

II

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Marigold was sent from Cloud of Spruce spick and span, with her new dress and her best nightgown in her bag. She arrived at Blue Water Beach spick and span, just in time for supper, to which they at once sat down. Aunt Stasia had welcomed her kindly, though with the usual remote, haunting sound of tears in her voice. Cousin Teresa had kissed and purred; Nancy had given her an ecstatic hug; even Beulah had shaken hands in her superior way and proffered a peck on the cheek.

Marigold was hungry and the supper looked simply gorgeous. There were raspberries in generous blue saucers, and when Aunt Stasia had given her enough cream Cousin Teresa gave her a little more. Nancy was smiling happily and significantly at her across the table, as if to say, "Just wait till we get to bed. I've *heaps* to tell you."

Altogether, in spite of Beulah and Aunt Stasia and the terrible spotlessness of everything, Marigold was rapturously happy. Too happy. The gods didn't like it.

Then--it happened.

Marigold was sitting just where a burst of evening sunshine shone straight down on her shining pale gold hair, with its milk-white parting. Suddenly Aunt Stasia bent forward and looked with awful intentness at Marigold's head. An expression of profound horror came into her eyes. She gasped and looked again. Then looked at Teresa, bent forward and whispered agitatedly in her ear.

"*Im*-possible," said Cousin Teresa.

"See for yourself," said Aunt Stasia.

Cousin Teresa rose and came around the table to the petrified Marigold, who was just realising that something perfectly awful must have happened, but couldn't imagine what. She was so agitated that she slopped her tea over in the saucer. *That* was a terrible break.

"Oh, dear me," wailed Cousin Teresa. "*What* can we do. What *can* we do?"

Cousin Teresa did something. Marigold felt a light touch on her head. Cousin Teresa dashed out of the room and came back a moment later looking ready to faint.

"Do you suppose--there are any more?" demanded Aunt Stasia hollowly.

"I don't *see* any more," said Cousin Teresa.

Beulah was snickering. Nancy was wirelessly sympathy.

"What is the matter with me?" cried Marigold.

No attention was paid to her.

"Is there--a *comb*--in the house?" asked Cousin Teresa in a low, shamed voice.

Aunt Stasia shook her head forcibly. "No--never was. There has never been any need of one here, thank heaven."

Marigold was hopelessly bewildered. No comb at Blue Water Beach? Why, there was an abundance of them--one in every bedroom and one in the kitchen.

"I've a comb of my own in my bag," she said with spirit.

Aunt Stasia looked at her.

"A comb? Do you mean to say that they sent you here--*knowing*--"

"It isn't that kind of a comb," whispered Cousin Teresa. "Oh, Stasia, what can we do?"

"Do. Well, we must keep her away from Nancy and Beulah at all events. Take her up to the spare room, Teresa, until we have consulted over the matter. Run along with Teresa, child--at once. And mind you don't go near the bed. Sit on the hassock by the window. If you haven't finished your supper, take a piece of cake and a cooky with you."

Marigold did not want cake or cooky. She wanted to know what was the matter with her. She dared not ask Aunt Stasia but she indignantly demanded of Cousin Teresa on the stairs what she had done to be put away like this with such scorn and contumely. Marigold didn't use those words but she felt them.

"Hush," said Cousin Teresa nervously, as if the walls around had ears.
"The less said about IT the better. Of course, I don't suppose it is your fault. But it's simply terrible."

III

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Marigold found herself alone in the spare room. Humiliated--frightened--and a little angry. For all the Lesleys had a bit of temper, and this was no way to treat a visitor. What a hateful grin she had seen on Beulah's face as Cousin Teresa walked her out of the room! She went to the dim mirror and scrutinised her countenance carefully and as much of her sleek head as she could see. Nothing was wrong apparently. Yet that look of horror in Aunt Stasia's eyes!

She must have some terrible disease. Yes, that must be it. Leprosy was an awful thing. Suppose she had leprosy--or smallpox. Or that dreadful thing Uncle Klon flippantly called T. B.? *What* was it she had heard "ran" in the Lesleys. Agatha Lesley had died of it. Something about the heart. But *this* had to do with the head evidently. She wondered if and how soon it would prove fatal. She thought pathetically that she was very young to die. Oh, she must get home right away if she had anything dreadful. Charming Blue Water Beach was now simply a place to get out of as soon as possible. Poor Mother, how terribly she would feel--

Marigold was suddenly aware that Aunt Stasia and Cousin Teresa were talking together in the parlour below the spare room. There was a little grating in the floor under the window, where a small "heat hole" penetrated the parlour ceiling. Marigold had been trained not to eavesdrop. But there were, she felt, exceptions to every rule. She *must* find out what was the matter with her head. Deliberately she lay down on the rag carpet and laid her ear to the grating. She found she could hear tolerably well, save at such times as Aunt Stasia dropped her voice in a fresh access of horror, leaving tantalising gaps which might hold who knew what of ghastly revelation.

"We can't let her go to the party," said Aunt Stasia. "What if any one were to see--what we saw. I don't believe such a thing has ever happened to a Lesley before."

"Oh, yes--once--to Charlotte Lesley when she went to school."

Now, Charlotte Lesley was dead. Marigold shuddered. Of course, Charlotte had died of IT.

"And Dan," continued Cousin Teresa. "Remember Dan?"

"A boy is different. And besides, you know how Dan turned out," said Aunt Stasia.

How had Dan turned out? Marigold felt as if she would give anything to know.

"Such a disgrace," Cousin Teresa was wailing when Marigold could hear again. "Her hair will have to be shingled to the bone. I suppose we *could* get a--comb."

"I will not be seen buying a comb," said Aunt Stasia decidedly.

"And where is she to sleep?" moaned Cousin Teresa. "We can't take her home to-night. In the spare room?"

"No--no. She can't sleep *there*. I'd never feel sure of the bed again. We must put her in Annabel's room."

"But Annabel died there," objected Cousin Teresa.

"Marigold doesn't know that," said Aunt Stasia.

Oh, but Marigold did--now. Not that it mattered to her how many people had died in Annabel's room. But she would not be able to sleep with Nancy. This was a far more bitter disappointment than not going to the party.

"There was only *one*," Cousin Teresa was saying hopefully, when their voices became audible again.

"There are sure to be more of them," said Aunt Stasia darkly.

Them! Marigold had a flash of awful illumination.

Germs, of course. Those mysterious, terrible things she had heard Aunt Marigold speak of. She was--what was it? Oh, yes--a germ-carrier. Germs that perhaps she would never be able to get rid of. She must be an outcast all her life! Horror fell over her small face like a frost.

Aunt Stasia and Cousin Teresa were going out of the parlour. Marigold got up and crept pathetically to the window, feeling as if it were years since she had left home that afternoon, so happy and light-hearted, never

dreaming of IT. Away out beyond the harbour, a little lonely ship was drifting over the edge of the world. The lonely red road wound past Blue Water Beach in the twilight. A lonely black wind was blowing. Marigold always felt that winds had colour--and this one was certainly black. Everything was black. No party--no night of soul-satisfying exchange of thought with Nancy. Nothing but--germs.

IV

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Marigold slept--or did not sleep--in Annabel's room, where there was a man-hole in the ceiling with a black, spooky look. But she never thought of being frightened. What were spooks and devils and things generally compared to the horror of IT. The rain began to pour down--the fir-boughs tapped against the windows. The blankets, which Cousin Teresa had thoughtfully put on because the June night was cold, simply reeked of mothballs. If she were only in her own bed at home between fragrant sheets. Marigold thought the night would never end.

In the morning she had her breakfast at a little table by herself in the corner of the kitchen. Once Nancy slipped in and snuggled down beside her. "I don't care if you have got--them--I love you just the same," said Nancy loyally.

"Nancy Walker! you come right out of there," said Beulah's sharp voice from the door. "Aunt Stasia said you weren't to go near her."

Nancy went out, crying.

"Oh, I'm so sorry for you," said Beulah, before she turned away.

The malice of Beulah's smile was hard to bear and the pity of Beulah bit deep. Marigold went dismally back to Annabel's room--where the bed had already been stripped to the bones. She could see Cousin Teresa busy over tubs in the wash-house. Nancy was carrying a great sheaf of mauve and gold irises across the road to Johnson's, to help decorate for the party.

Away over the harbour was a soft blur that was Cloud of Spruce--dear Cloud of Spruce--dear home. If she were only there! But Aunt Stasia had told her they could not take her home until after the party. A fog was creeping up to Blue Water Beach. It crept on and on--it blotted out the harbour--it blotted out the distant shore of Cloud of Spruce--it blotted out the world. She was alone in the universe with her terrible, mysterious

shame. Poor Marigold's Lesley spirit failed her at last. She broke down and cried.

Aunt Teresa drove her home that evening. Again she was coming home from a visit in disgrace. And when they reached Cloud of Spruce, Mother was away. Thinking Marigold would not be home till Sunday evening, she had gone to South Harmony for a visit. Marigold felt she simply could not bear it.

Cousin Teresa whispered mysteriously to Grandmother.

"Impossible," cried Grandmother peevishly.

"We found one," said Cousin Teresa positively.

One what? Oh, if Marigold only knew *what!*

"Only one." Grandmother's tone implied that Stasia had made a great deal of fuss over a trifle. Grandmother herself would have made enough fuss about IT if *she* had discovered it. But when Stasia made the fuss that was a cat of a different stripe.

"Have you--a comb?" whispered Cousin Teresa.

Grandmother nodded haughtily. She took Marigold upstairs to her room and gave her head a merciless combing with an odd little kind of comb such as Marigold had never seen before. Then she brought her down again.

"No results," she said crisply. "I believe Stasia simply imagined it."

"I saw IT myself," said Cousin Teresa, a trifle shrewishly. She drove away a little offended. Marigold sat down disconsolately on the veranda steps. She dared not ask Grandmother anything. Grandmother was annoyed and when Grandmother was annoyed she was very aloof. Moreover, she had contrived to make Marigold feel that she was in some terrible disgrace--that she had done something no Lesley ever should do. And yet what she had done or how she was responsible, Marigold hadn't the slightest idea. Oh, if Mother were only home!

Then Aunt Marigold came--almost as good as Mother--almost as gentle and tender and understanding. She had been talking with Grandmother.

"So you've been and gone and got into a scrape, Marigold," she said, laughing. "Never mind, precious. There seems to have been only one."

"One what?" demanded Marigold passionately. She simply could not stand this hideous suspense and ignorance any longer. "Aunt Marigold--please--please do tell me what is the matter with my head?"

Aunt Marigold stared.

"Marigold, you dear funny thing, do you mean you don't know?"

Marigold nodded, her eyes like wet pansies.

"And I've just *got* to know," she said desperately.

Aunt Marigold explained.

"It's apt to happen to any child who goes to a public school," she concluded comfortingly.

"Pshaw, is *that* all?" said Marigold. "I guess I got IT when I changed hats with that new girl day before yesterday."

She was so happy she could have cried for joy. Had there then ever been such a starry sky? Such a dear misty, new moon? Such dancing northern lights over the harbour? Down the road Lazarre's dog and Phidime's dog were talking about their feelings at the top of their voices. And Sylvia up in the cloud of spruce. It was too late to go to her to-night, but she would be there in the morning. Marigold blew an airy kiss to the hill. No germs. No leprosy. Aunt Stasia had made all this fuss about so small a matter. Marigold thought bitterly of the party, the unworn dress, the lost two nights with dear Nancy.

"Aunt Stasia is--" began Aunt Marigold. Then she suddenly snapped her lips together. After all, there was such a thing as clan loyalty, especially in the hearing of the rising generation.

"An old fool," said Marigold, sweetly and distinctly.

Chapter IX.

A Lesley Christmas

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I

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It was a Lesley tradition to celebrate Christmas by a royal reunion, and this year it was the turn of Cloud of Spruce. This was the first time it had happened in Marigold's memory, and she was full of delighted anticipation. At heart a thorough clansman, she loved, without knowing she loved, all the old clan customs and beliefs and follies and wisdoms as immutable as law of Mede and Persian. They were all part of that int'resting world where she lived and moved and had her being--a world which could never be dull for Marigold, who possessed the talismanic power of flinging something glamorous over the most commonplace fact of life. As Aunt Marigold said, Marigold saw the soul of things as well as the things themselves.

There were weeks of preparation in which Marigold revelled. Grandmother and Mother and Salome worked like slaves, cleaning Cloud of Spruce from attic to cellar. The last week was given over to cooking. Such things as were concocted in that house! Such weighings and measurings and mixings! Mother thought they were really being too lavish, but for once Grandmother counted no cost.

"I have seen many things come into fashion and go out of fashion but a good meal abides," she said oracularly.

Marigold thrilled with bliss because she was permitted to help. It was such fun to beat egg-whites until you could hold the bowl upside down, and dig the kinky meats out of the walnuts. Grandmother made a big panful of Devonshire clotted cream. Mother made the mince pies that would be taken in with a sprig of holly stuck in them--piping hot, for lukewarm mince pies were an abomination at Cloud of Spruce. And there was a pound cake that required thirty-two eggs--an extravagance known at Cloud of Spruce only when there was a "reunion." Salome baked a whole box of what she called "hop-and-go-fetch-its"--dear, humpy little cakes

with raisins in them and icing over the tops and pink candies over that. Marigold knew what the hop-and-go-fetch-its were for. Just for "pieces" for herself and all the children who came.

Besides, Marigold had her recitation to learn. It was one of the Christmas reunion customs to have a "programme" of speeches and songs and recitations in the parlour after dinner, while the hostesses were cleaning up and washing the dishes. Aunt Marigold had found a cute little recitation for Marigold, and Mother had trained her in the appropriate gestures and inflections. It was to be her first performance of the kind, and Marigold was very anxious to do well. She was not in the least afraid that she wouldn't. She knew her "piece" so perfectly that she could have recited it standing on her head, and every gesture came pat to the word, ending with the graceful little "curtsey" Mother was at such pains to teach her. Beulah would be there and Marigold was sure that curtsey would finish *her* completely.

II

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Finally the great day of the feast came. Outside it was a grey squally day, filling the little empty nests in the maple-trees full of snow and surrounding the sad black harbour with meadows of white. But inside there was gaiety and Christmas magic in the very air. The bannisters were garlanded with greenery, the windows hung with crimson rings. The big sideboard was a delectable mountain of good things. The cream was whipped for the banana cake; the kitchen range was singing a lyric of beech and maple; and Salome was purring with importance. The spare room bed really looked too beautiful to be slept in. Grandmother's new pillow slips with crocheted lace six inches deep were on the pillows and Mother had sewed little flat bags of lavender inside them. The Christmas-tree in the hall was covered with lovely red and gold and blue and silver bubbles, such as fairies must have blown. Every one was dressed up-- Mother in her brown velvet with little amber earrings against her white neck, Grandmother in her best black silk with a wonderful crêpy purple shawl which was kept in perfumed tissue paper in the lower drawer of the spare room bureau all the year round, save only for big clan affairs like this. Even Lucifer had a new scarlet silk neck-bow, which he considered mere vanity and vexation of spirit.

So far Christmas-Day had been flawless for Marigold. She had got lovely presents from everybody; even Lazarre had given her a near-silver mouse with a blue velvet pin-cushion erupting from its back. Marigold secretly thought it rather awful. It looked as if the mouse wasn't--healthy. But she wouldn't have hurt Lazarre's feelings for the world by letting him suspect this. Again Marigold was disposed to thank goodness people did not know what you thought.

III

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It was such fun to watch the arrivals from the window in Salome's room, where she had her shelf of potted plants. The ivies and petunias fell down in a green screen behind which Marigold could peep without being seen--or being caught at it by Grandmother, who thought "peeking" at visitors extremely bad manners. Bad manners it might be, but it was too int'resting to give up. The folks getting out of the cars and buggies and cutters--for all three were in use today--would have been amazed by the things Marigold, whom they still thought of as a mere baby, knew about them.

There was Uncle Peter's Pete, who had poured whiskey into his aunt's dandelion wine and set her drunk. How solemn and stupid he looked, not at all like a boy who would do such a trick. But you could never tell. And Aunt Katherine, who--so Uncle Klon had said--was a witch and turned herself into a grey cat at night. Marigold no longer believed that but she liked to play with the idea. Aunt Katherine certainly looked like a grey cat in her grey coat trimmed with grey fur; but her rosy smiling face was not properly witch-like. Only Uncle Klon said they were the worst kind of witches--the kind that didn't look like witches.

Uncle Mark and Uncle Jerry were coming up the walk together. At some former Christmas feast they had quarrelled and Uncle Mark had pulled Uncle Jerry's nose. It was years before they spoke. But they seemed on good terms now. Even Old Aunt Kitty, who was really only a distant third cousin, was coming with Uncle Jarvis and Aunt Marcia. Aunt Kitty, whose bonnet had fallen off one day when she was sitting in the front pew of the old Harmony church gallery, peering over the railing to see who was sitting below. Aunt Kitty had nearly pitched after the bonnet herself in her frantic effort to grab it and had only been saved by old Mr. Peasely catching hold of her skirt. It had been a gay, wild bonnet of ostrich plumes and flowers, and its descent had made something of a sensation, especially

since, by some impish trick of chance, it had landed squarely on Elder Beamish's bald head as neatly as if it had been fitted on. The Beamishes and the Kittys--Marigold couldn't remember Aunt Kitty's family name--had never been good friends and this incident didn't help matters any. Aunt Kitty looked decorous enough now as she hobbled up the walk leaning on her cane, but she had been a wild old girl at one time, Uncle Klon said.

Aunty Clo was coming, too--who really was an aunt of sorts, though Marigold never could get her placed. She did not like Aunty Clo and neither did Uncle Klon, who vowed she was certainly very much too ugly to live. "She is really lovable under her skin," Aunt Marigold had said, fresh from a reading of Kipling. "Then for heaven's sake, tell her to take her skin off," Uncle Klon had retorted.

Uncle Archibald's Martin and his wife Jenny. They were a by-word for their terrible quarrels, but Aunt Marigold declared they loved each other between times enough to make up for it. Martin had left his car at the gate and she saw him stop Jenny and kiss her under the Scotch pine. Before dinner was over they were calling each other awful names across the table and scandalising the whole clan. But as Marigold listened to the amazing epithets she thought of that long kiss under the pine and wondered if a kiss like that wasn't worth a lot of hard names.

Aunt Sybilla, who "went in for spiritualism." Marigold didn't know what spiritualism was but had a vague idea that it had to do with liquor. Still, Aunt Sybilla didn't look like *that*.

Uncle Charlie, whose laughter boomed over the whole garden, and Garnet Lesley, who would come to a bad end--so every one said. It was int'resting to speculate concerning that bad end. George Lesley, who was going to be married to Mary Patterson. Marigold liked George. "I wish he would wait till I grow up," she thought. "I believe he would like me better than Mary, because there is no fun in her. There is a good deal in me when my conscience doesn't bother me."

Gloomy Uncle Jarvis, with his fierce black beard, who never read any book but the Bible and was always "talking religion" to every one within five minutes of meeting them. Aunt Honora--who *must* have had her face

screwed up one time when the wind changed and who had taken a vow never to marry--"quite unnecessarily," Uncle Klone said. Uncle Obadiah, whose great ears stuck out like flaps. Uncle Dan, who had a glass eye and thought nobody knew of it. And last of all Uncle Milton and Aunt Charlotte and Aunt Nora. Thirty years before Uncle Milton had jilted Aunt Nora and when he married Aunt Charlotte, Aunt Nora had decked herself out in widow's weeds and gone to the wedding! And now here they were coming up the walk together, chatting amiably about the weather and their rheumatism. It was very interesting, looking down on them like this when they couldn't see her, but Marigold paid for her fun when the time came to go in to the parlour and speak to everybody. It was a dreadful ordeal and she shrank back against Mother.

"You must learn to go into a room without thinking every one is staring at you," said Grandmother.

"But they *do* stare," shuddered Marigold. "They're all looking at me to see how much I've grown since the last time or who I look like now. And Aunt Josephine will say I'm not as tall for my age as Gwennie. You know she will."

"It won't kill you if she does," said Grandmother.

"You must act like a lady," whispered Mother.

"Don't be a coward," said Old Grandmother from a faraway moonlit orchard.

It was Old Grandmother who did the trick. Marigold went through the ordeal of handshaking with her head up and her cheeks so crimson that even Aunt Josephine thought her complexion much better. The "big" dinner was in the orchard room, and any one looking at the table would have known that the good old days when nobody bothered about balanced rations had not yet wholly passed at Cloud of Spruce. But Marigold and all the other small fry had theirs in the dining-room.

Marigold rejoiced over this. She never really enjoyed a meal in the orchard room, because she was so busy hating Clementine. They were catered to by Salome, who saw that they all had plenty of dressing and a piece of banana cake besides pudding. Even Uncle Peter's Pete, who had

been known to say he wished a fellow could eat two Christmas dinners at once, was satisfied. So everything was beautiful until dinner was over and the "programme" under way in the parlour. And then Marigold crashed down to defeat and not even Old Grandmother's shade could help her.

She got up to say her recitation--and not one word could she remember of it. She stood there before thousands--more or less--of faces, and could not even recall the title. It was all Uncle Peter's Pete's fault, so Marigold always vowed. Just before her name was called he had whispered into the back of her neck, "You haven't washed behind your ears." Marigold knew that territory *had* been washed--Salome had seen to that--but it rattled her nevertheless. And now she stood dazed, frantic, coming out with goose-flesh all over her body. If Mother had been there just to say the first line--Marigold knew she could go on if she could just remember the first line. But Mother was out helping with the dishes. And there was Pete grinning and Beulah gleefully contemptuous and Nancy squirming in sympathy.

Marigold shut her eyes in a desperate effort to forget every one and straightway saw the most astounding things. Aunt Emma's big cameo brooch with Uncle Ned's hair in it expanded to gigantic size, and Aunt Emma fastened to it--Uncle Jerry with a long nose pulled out like the elephant's child--Uncle Peter's Pete's aunt dancing drunkenly after dandelion wine--Aunt Katherine, a grey cat riding on a broomstick--Aunt Kitty falling headlong after her bonnet--Aunty Clo with her skin off--Uncle Obadiah, just a pair of enormous ears with a tiny manikin between them--Uncle Dan with just one huge eye winking at her all the time--

Dizzy Marigold opened her eyes to come back to reality from that fantastic world into which she had been plunged. But still she could not get that first line.

"Come, come, have you got a bone in your throat?" said Uncle Paul.

"Cat's got her tongue," giggled Uncle Peter's Pete.

"Bit off more than you can chew, eh," said Uncle Charlie, good-naturedly.

Beulah giggled. Flesh and blood could bear no more. Marigold rushed from the room--flew upstairs--tore through Mother's room--slammed shut

her door and hurled herself on her bed in an agony of shame and humiliation.

She huddled there all the rest of the afternoon. Mother and Grandmother and Salome were too busy to think about her. Nancy searched but could not find her. Marigold wept in her pillows and wondered what they were saying about her. I don't know if it would have comforted her any had she known they were not thinking about her at all. What was a tragedy to her was only a passing incident to them.

In the rose and purple twilight they went away. Marigold lay and listened to the cars snorting and the sleighbells jingling and then to a tired little lonely motherless wind sobbing itself to sleep in the vines--a wind that had made a fool of itself in the great family of Winds and daren't lift its voice above a whisper.

To Marigold came some one who had never lost the knack of looking at the world through a child's eyes.

"Oh, Aunt Marigold, I've dis-dis-graced myself and--all--the Lesleys," sobbed Marigold.

"Oh, no, darling. There's no disgrace in a little stage fright. We all have it. The first time *I* tried to recite in public my tongue clove to the roof of my mouth and I snivelled--yes, snivelled, and my father had to come up and carry me down from the platform. You got away on your own legs at least."

Marigold could not stop crying all at once, but she sat up and blew her nose.

"Oh, Aunt Marigold--really?"

"Yes, really. Father said to me, 'I am disappointed in you,' and *I* said, 'I wouldn't care for that if I wasn't disappointed in myself.'"

"That's how I feel, too," whispered Marigold. "And then Beulah--"

"Never mind the Beulahs. You'll find heaps of them in life. The only thing to do is ignore them. Beulah would make an excellent mouse-trap, but if she tried for a hundred years she couldn't look as sweet and pretty as you did, standing up there with your puzzled blue eyes. And when you screwed them shut--"

"Oh, I saw such funny things, Aunt Marigold," cried Marigold, bursting into a peal of laughter. Aunt Marigold's little bit of artful flattery was a pick-me-up. It was true poor Beulah was very plain. Oh, how nice to be with some one who just understood and loved. Nothing seemed so disgraceful any more. A truce to vain regrets. She'd show them another time. And here was Lucifer and Salome with a plate of hop-and-go-fetch-its.

"I saved 'em for you," said Salome. "Uncle Peter's Pete was bound to have them but *I* Peted him. He'll not try to sneak into *my* pantry again in a hurry."

"I suppose I can take off this absurd ribbon now," said Lucifer, his very whiskers vibrating with indignation. "A dog doesn't mind making an ass of himself, but a cat has his feelings."

Chapter X.

The Bobbing of Marigold

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I

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"Sylvia has bobbed her hair," said Marigold rebelliously.

Grandmother sniffed, as Grandmother was apt to sniff at the mention of Sylvia--though since the day of Dr. Clows visit she had never referred to her, and the key of The Magic Door was always in the lock. But she only said,

"Well, *you're* not going to have yours bobbed, so you can make up your small mind to that. In after years you will thank me for it."

Marigold didn't look or feel very thankful just then. *Everybody* had bobbed hair. Nancy and Beulah--who laughed at her long "tails"--and all the girls in school and even Mrs. Donkin's scared-looking little "home girl" across the road. But she, Marigold Lesley of Cloud of Spruce, had to be hopelessly old-fashioned because Grandmother so decreed. Mother would have been willing for the bob, though she might cry in secret about it. Mother had always been so proud of Marigold's silken fleece. But Grandmother! Marigold knew it was hopeless.

"I don't know if we should do it," said Grandmother--not alluding to bobbed hair. "She has never been left alone before. Suppose something should happen."

"Nothing ever happens here," said Marigold pessimistically and untruthfully. Things happened right along--int'resting things and beautiful things. But this was Marigold's blue day. She could not go with Grandmother and Mother and Salome to Great-Aunt Jean's golden wedding because Aunt Jean's grandchildren had measles. Marigold did so want to see a golden wedding.

"You can get what you like for supper," said Grandmother. "But remember you are not to touch the chocolate cake. That is for the missionary tea to-morrow. Nor cut any of my Killarney roses. I want them to decorate my table."

"Have a good time, honey-child," whispered Mother. "Why not ask Sylvia down to tea with you? There are doughnuts in the cellar crock and plenty of hop-and-go-fetch-its."

But Marigold did not brighten to this. For the first time she felt a vague discontent with Sylvia, her fairy-playmate of three dream-years.

"I *almost* wish I had a real little girl to play with," she said, as she stood at the gate, watching Grandmother and Mother and Salome drive off up the road--all packed tightly in the buggy. Poor Mother, as Marigold knew, had to sit on the narrow edge of nothing.

II

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Perhaps this *was* a Magic Day. Perhaps the dark mind of the Witch of Endor, sitting on the gate post, brewed up some kind of spell. Who knows? At all events, when Marigold turned to look down the other road--the road that ran along the harbour shore to the big Summer Hotel by the dunes--there was the wished-for little girl standing by her very elbow and grinning at her.

Marigold stared in amazement. She had never seen the girl before or any one just like her. The stranger was about her own age--possibly a year older. With ivory outlines, a wide red mouth, long narrow green eyes and little dark eyebrows like wings. Bareheaded, with blue-black hair. Beautifully bobbed, as Marigold instantly perceived with a sigh. She wore an odd, smart green dress with touches of scarlet embroidery and she had wonderful slim white hands--very beautiful and very white. Marigold glanced involuntarily at her own sunburned little paws--and felt ashamed. But--the stranger had *bare knees*. Marigold had never seen this fashion before and she was as much horrified as Grandmother herself could have been.

Who could this girl be? She had appeared so suddenly, so uncannily. She looked different in every way from the Harmony little girls.

"Who are you?" she asked abruptly, before she realised that such a question was probably bad manners.

The stranger grinned.

"I'm me," she said.

Marigold turned haughtily away. A Lesley of Cloud of Spruce was not going to be made fun of by any little nobody from nowhere.

But the girl in green whirled about on tip-toes till she was in front of Marigold once more.

"I'm Princess Varvara," she said. "I'm staying at the hotel down there with Aunt Clara. My uncle is the Duke of Cavendish and Governor-General of Canada. He is visiting the Island and to-day they all went down to visit Cavendish, because it was called after my uncle's great-great-grandfather. All except Aunt Clara and me. She had a headache and they wouldn't take me because there are measles in Cavendish. I was so mad I ran away. I wanted to give Aunt Clara the scare of her life. She's mild and gentle as a kitten but, oh, such a darned tyrant. I can't call my soul my own. So when she went to bed with her headache I just slipped off when Olga was waiting on her. I'm going to do as I like for one day, anyhow. I'm fed up with being looked after. What's the matter?"

"You are telling me a lot of fibs," said Marigold. "You are not a princess. There are no princesses in Prince Edward Island. And you wouldn't be dressed like that if you were a princess."

Varvara laughed. There was some trick about her laugh. It made you want to laugh too. Marigold had hard work to keep from laughing. But she wouldn't laugh. You couldn't laugh when anybody was trying to deceive you with such yarns.

"She must be one of the Americans down at the hotel," thought Marigold. "And she thinks it fun to fool a silly little down-easter like me if she can. But she *can't*! Imagine a princess having bare knees! Just like Lazarre's kids."

"How do you think a princess should be dressed?" demanded Varvara. "In a crown and a velvet robe. You're silly. I *am* a Princess. My father was a Russian Prince and he was killed in The Terror. Mother is English. A sister of the Duke's. We live in England now, but I came out to Canada with Aunt Clara to visit Uncle."

"I'm not a bad hand at making up things myself," said Marigold. She had an impulse to tell this girl all about Sylvia.

Varvara shrugged her shoulders.

"All right. You needn't believe me if you don't want to. All I want is somebody to play with. You'll do nicely. What is your name?"

"Marigold Lesley."

"How old are you?"

"Ten. How old are *you*?" Marigold was determined that the questions should not be all on one side.

"Oh, I'm just the right age. Come, ask me in. I want to see where you live. Will your mother let us play together?"

"Mother and Grandmother have gone to Aunt Jean's golden wedding," explained Marigold. "And Salome was invited, too, because her mother was a friend of Aunt Jean's. So I'm all alone."

The stranger suddenly threw her arms about Marigold and kissed her rapturously on both cheeks.

"How splendid. Let's have a good time. Let's be as bad as we like. Do you know I love you. You are so pretty. Prettier than I am--and I'm the prettiest princess of my age in Europe."

Marigold was shocked. Little girls shouldn't say things like that. Even if you thought them--sometimes, when you had your blue dress on--you shouldn't say them. But Varvara was talking on.

"That sleek, parted gold hair makes you look like a saint in a stained glass window. But why don't you have it bobbed?"

"Grandmother won't let me."

"Cut it off in spite of her."

"You don't know Grandmother," said Marigold.

She couldn't decide whether she really liked this laughing, tantalising creature or not. But she was int'resting--oh, yes, she was int'resting. Something had happened with a vengeance. Would she tell her about Sylvia? And take her up the hill? No, not yet--somehow, not yet. There was the nice little playhouse in the currant-bushes first.

"What a darling spot," cried Varvara. "But how do you play here all by yourself?"

"I pretend I am the Lady Gloriana Fitzgerald, and sit in the parlour and tell my servant what to do."

"Oh, let me be the servant. I think it must be such fun. Now, you tell me what to do. Shall I sweep the floor?"

Marigold had no trouble telling Varvara what to do. She would show this young Yankee, who thought her soft enough to believe any old yarn, just what it was to be Marigold Lesley of Cloud of Spruce.

III

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They had a very good time for a while. When they got tired of it they went to see the pigs--Varvara thought them "very droll animals"--and then they went picking raspberries in the bush behind the pig-house. Varvara kept telling wonderful stories. Certainly, thought Marigold, she was a crackerjack at making up. But they suddenly found all their clothes filled with stick-tights, which was decidedly unpleasant.

"What would you think if I said 'damn'?" demanded Varvara explosively.

Marigold didn't say what she would think, but her face said it for her.

"Well, I won't," said Varvara. "I'll just say 'lamb' in the same tone and that will relieve my feelings just the same. What berries are those? Eat some and if they don't kill you I'll take some, too. You know there is a kind of berry--if you eat them you can see fairies and talk to them. I've been looking for them all my life."

"Well, these aren't fairy-berries. They are poisonous," said Marigold. "I *did* eat some once and they made me *awful sick*. The minister prayed for me in church," she concluded importantly.

"When *I* was sick the Archbishop of Canterbury prayed for me," said Varvara.

Marigold wished she had made her minister the moderator of the General Assembly at least.

"Let's go and sit on that seat in the orchard and pick these things out of our clothes," suggested Varvara. "And play 'I see' while we do it. The game is which will see the most wonderful things. *I* see a china cat with diamond whiskers walking over the lawn."

"*I* see a bear with wings," said Marigold, who felt she could see things quite as marvellous as any girl from the States trying to pass herself off as a princess.

"I see five angels sitting in that apple-tree."

"I see three little grey monkeys on a twisted bough with four moons rising behind them."

Varvara drew her black brows together in a scowl. She didn't like being outseen.

"I see the devil squatting over there in your garden, with his tail curled up over his back."

Marigold was annoyed. She felt that *she* couldn't see anything more amazing than that.

"You don't!" she cried. "That--that person never comes into *our* garden."

Varvara laughed scornfully.

"It'd be a more interesting place if he did. Do you know"--
confidentially--"I pray for the devil every night."

"Pray for him! *For* him!"

"Yes. I'm so sorry for him. Because he wasn't always a devil you know. If he *had* been I suppose he wouldn't mind it so much. There must be spells when he feels awfully homesick, wishing he could be an angel again. Well, we've got all the stick-tights out. What will we do now?"

Again Marigold thought of introducing her to Sylvia. And again for some occult reason she postponed it.

"Let's go and fire potato-balls. Its great fun."

"I don't know how to fire potato-balls. What are they?"

"I'll show you--little tiny things like small green apples. You stick one on the point of a long switch--and whirl it--so--and the potato ball flies through the air for miles. I hit Lazarre in the face with one last night. My, but he was mad."

"Who is Lazarre?"

"Our French hired boy."

"How many servants have you got?"

"Just Lazarre. Salome isn't really a servant. She is related to us."

"We had fifty before The Terror," said Varvara. "And eight gardeners. Our grounds were a dream. I can just barely remember them. Uncle's are

wonderful, too. But I like your little garden, and that house of currant-bushes. Isn't it fun to sit and eat currants off your own walls? Well, where are your potato-balls?"

"Over there in Mr. Donkin's field. We must go up the orchard and along by the fence and--"

"Why not cut straight across?" asked Varvara, waving her hand at Mr. Donkin's creamy green oats.

"There's no path there," said Marigold.

"We'll make a path," said Varvara--and made it. Right through the oats. Marigold followed her, though she knew she shouldn't, praying that Mr. Donkin wouldn't see them.

Varvara thought firing potato-balls the best sport ever. In her excitement she fell half-a-dozen times over potato-plants and got her dress in a fearful state in the wet clay a morning shower had left. And the potato-ball juice stained her face and hands till she looked more like a beggar-maid than a princess.

"I never was real dirty in my life before. It's nice," she said complacently.

IV

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Varvara insisted on helping Marigold to get supper, though Marigold would have preferred being alone. Company did not help to get supper at Cloud of Spruce. But Varvara was out to do as she liked and she did it. She helped set the table, remarking,

"That cup is just like one Aunt Clara used to have. Her husband bit a piece out of it one day when he was in a tantrum."

Marigold knew by this alone that Varvara was no princess. Princess's uncles could never do things like *that*. Why, Phidime had done that once--bit a piece right out of his wife's much prized cut-glass tumbler. The only one she had. A lady she had worked for had given it to her.

Varvara even went to the spare room with Marigold to get the fruit-cake. Marigold decided that for company she must cut some fruit-cake. Grandmother always did. And it was kept in a box under the spare room bed--the sleek, smooth terrible spare room bed where so many people had died. The fruit-cake had always been kept there, ever since Grandmother's children were small and the spare room the only place they dared not go to look for it.

"Oh!" squealed Varvara. "Is that a feather bed? A *real* feather bed?"

"Yes."

Varvara took one wild leap and landed squarely in the middle of it, bounding up and down in ecstasy right on Grandmother's famous spread of filet crochet.

"I've always wanted to see what a feather bed was like. I didn't think there were any left in the world."

Marigold was horrified. That sacred spare room bed! *What* would Grandmother say.

"Every dead person in our family except Old Grandmother has died in that bed," she said.

Varvara turned pale and hastily slid off the bed.

"Why didn't you tell me that before I jumped on it, you little whelp?" she cried excitedly.

"I'm not a little whelp," said Marigold.

"Of course you're not." There was another wild hug and kiss. Marigold emerged from it somewhat discomposed. The Lesleys were not so emotional.

But when Varvara saw the chocolate cake in the pantry, she must have *that* for supper. She must.

"We can't," said Marigold. "Grandmother said I wasn't to touch it."

Varvara stamped her feet.

"I don't care what your grandmother said. I *will* have it. I'm keen on chocolate cake. And they never let me have more than two tiny pieces. Just put that cake right on the table. At once."

"We are not going to have that cake," said Marigold. There was no one by to see it, but at that instant she looked like a pocket-edition of Grandmother. "There is the fruitcake and the date loaf and the hop-and-go-fetch-its."

"I don't want your hop-and-go-what-do-you-call-'ems. Once and for all, are we going to have this cake?"

"Once and for all we're *not*."

Varvara clenched her hands.

"If I were my grandmother I'd order you to be knouted to death--"

"If I were *my* grandmother I'd turn you over my knees and spank you," said Marigold intrepidly.

Varvara at once grew calm--deadly, stonily calm.

"If you don't let me have that chocolate cake for my supper I'll go out and climb what you call the apple-barn roof and jump down."

"You can't scare me with that," said Marigold scornfully.

Varvara turned without another word and marched out. Marigold followed her a little uneasily. Of course she was only bluffing. She wouldn't do *that*. Why, it would kill her. Even this wild creature couldn't do a thing like that.

Varvara was running nimbly up the ladder. In another second she was on the flat top of the gambrel roof.

"Now, will you let me have the chocolate cake?" she cried.

"No," said Marigold resolutely.

Varvara jumped. Marigold screamed. She shut her eyes in anguish and opened them expecting to see Varvara dead and broken on the stones of the path below. What she saw was Varvara hanging, shrieking on the pine-tree by the apple-barn. Her dress had billowed out and caught on the stub of a lopped branch.

Marigold ran to her frantically.

"Oh, you can have the chocolate cake--you can have *anything*."

"How am I to get down?" moaned Varvara, whose temper and determination had evaporated between heaven and earth.

"I'll bring up the step-ladder. I think you can reach it," gasped Marigold.

Varvara managed to escape by the grace of the step-ladder, though she tore her dress woefully in the process.

"I always do just what I say I'll do," she remarked coolly.

"Just look at your dress," shivered Marigold.

"I am more important than my dress," said Varvara loftily.

Marigold was trembling in every limb as she went back to the pantry. Suppose Varvara really had fallen on those stones. Grandmother had said those girls from the States would do *anything*. Marigold believed it.

"Just look how beautifully I've decorated the table," said Varvara proudly.

Marigold looked. Grandmother's Killarney roses were drooping artistically in the big green basket. Oh, yes, artistically. Varvara had the knack.

"Grandmother told me I wasn't to pick any of those roses," wailed Marigold.

"Well, you didn't, did you, you darling donkey? Tell her *I* did it."

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The real quarrel did not come until after supper. They had had quite a jolly supper. Varvara was so funny and interesting and said such dreadful things about the picture of Queen Victoria on the dining-room wall.

"Doesn't she look like somebody's old cook with a lace curtain on her head?"

It was really a terrible chromo, originally sent out as a "supplement" with a Montreal paper and framed in hundreds of houses all over the loyal Island. It represented the good queen with a broad blue ribbon across her breast and a crown on her head filled with diamonds, the least of which was as big as a walnut. From the crown descended the aforesaid lace curtain around the face and bust of the queen, and what wasn't lace curtain was diamonds--on ears and throat and breast and hand and arm. Marigold had always had much the same opinion as Varvara about it and had once expressed it. Only once. Grandmother had looked at her as if she had committed *lese-majeste* and said,

"*That is Queen Victoria,*" as if Marigold hadn't known it.

But Marigold wasn't going to have girls from the States coming in and making fun of the royal family.

"I don't think you have any business to talk like that of *our* queen," she said haughtily.

"Silly--she was Mother's aunt," retorted Varvara. "Mother remembers her well. She wasn't a bit handsome, but I'm sure she never looked like *that*. If that's where you get your ideas of a princess's dress from I don't wonder you don't think I'm one. Marigold, this chocolate cake is simply topping."

Varvara ate about half of the chocolate cake and paid it a compliment with every piece. Well, reflected Marigold complacently, certainly Cloud of Spruce cookery was good enough for anybody even if she had been the

princess she pretended to be. Varvara certainly was--nice. One couldn't help liking her. Marigold decided that after the dishes were washed she would take Varvara through The Magic Door and the Green Gate and introduce her to Sylvia.

But when she went out to the garden after washing the dishes she found Varvara tormenting her toad--her own pet toad who lived under the yellow rose-bush and knew her. Marigold was certain he knew her. And here was this abominable girl poking him with a sharp stick that must hurt him terribly.

"You stop that!" she cried.

"I won't--it's fun," retorted Varvara. "I'm going to kill it--poke it to death."

Marigold darted forward and wrenched the stick out of Varvara's hand. She broke it in three pieces and confronted her self-invited guest in a true Lesleyan anger.

"You shall not hurt my toad," she said superbly. "I don't care what you threaten--not one bit. You can jump off the apple-barn or down the well or go and throw yourself into the harbour. But you shan't kill my toad, Miss *Princess!*"

The derision that Marigold contrived to put into that "princess" is untransferable to paper. Varvara suddenly was in a most terrible temper. She was almost like an animal in her rage. She bared her teeth and dilated her eyes. Her very hair seemed to bristle.

"Pig! Louse! Flea!" she snarled. "Moon-calf! Beast!" Oh, the venom she contrived to put into her epithets. "You'd make God laugh! Cry-baby! Snivelling thing!"

Marigold *was* crying, but it was with rage. Russian princesses," real or pretended, had no monopoly of temper.

"You have the face of a monkey," Marigold cried.

"I'll--pull--your--ears--out--by--the--roots," said Varvara, with a horrible kind of deliberate devilishness.

She hurled herself against Marigold. She pulled Marigold's hair and she slapped Marigold's face. Marigold had never been so manhandled in

her life. She, Marigold Lesley. She struck out blindly and found Varvara's nose. She gave it a fierce, sudden tweak. Varvara emitted a malignant yowl and tore herself loose.

"You--you--do you think you can use me like this--*me*?"

"Haven't I done it?" said Marigold triumphantly.

Varvara looked around. On a garden seat lay Grandmother's shears. With a yell like a demon she pounced on them. Before Marigold could run or stir there was a sudden fierce click--another--and Marigold's two pale gold braids were dangling limply in Varvara's beautiful hand.

"Oh!" shrieked Marigold, clapping her hands to her shorn head.

Suddenly Varvara laughed. Her brief insanity had passed. She dropped the shears and the golden tresses and flung her arms around Marigold.

"Let's kiss and make up. Mustn't let a little thing like this spoil a whole day. Say you forgive me, darlingest."

"Darlingest" said it dazedly. She didn't want to--but she did. This wild girl of laughter and jest had a hundred faults and the one great virtue of charm. She would always be forgiven anything.

But Marigold, in spite of her shorn tresses, was almost glad to see Grandmother and Mother driving into the yard.

"Why? What?" began Grandmother, staring at Marigold's head.

"I did it," interposed the ragged, flushed, juice-stained Varvara resolutely. "You are not to blame her for it. It was all my doings. I did it because I was furious, but I'm glad. You'll have to let her have it trimmed decently now. And *I* ate the chocolate cake and picked the roses and jumped on the feather bed. She is not to be scolded at all for it. Remember that."

Grandmother made an involuntary step forward. The Princess Varvara had the narrowest escape of her royal life.

"Who are you?" demanded Grandmother.

Varvara told her as she had told Marigold. With this difference. She was believed. Grandmother knew all about the Vice-Regal visit to Prince Edward Island, and she had seen Varvara's picture in the *Charlottetown Patriot*.

Grandmother set her lips together. One couldn't, of course, scold a grand-niece of Queen Victoria and the daughter of a Russian Prince. One couldn't. But, oh, if one only could!

An automobile stopped at the gate. A young man and an elderly lady got out of it and came up the walk. A very fine, tall, stately lady, with diamonds winking on her fingers. Her hair snow-white, her face long, her nose long. She could never have been beautiful but she was not under any necessity of being beautiful.

"There's Aunt Clara and Lord Percy," whispered Varvara to Marigold. "I can see she's mad all over--and there's so much of her to get mad. Won't I get a roasting!"

Marigold stiffened in horror. A dreadful conviction came over her that Varvara really was the princess she had claimed to be.

And she had pulled her nose!

The wonderful, great lady walked past Varvara without even looking at her--without looking at anything, indeed. Yet one felt she saw everything and took in the whole situation even to Varvara's muddy dangling rags and dirty face.

"I am sorry," she said to Grandmother, "that my naughty little runaway niece should have given you so much trouble."

"She has not been any trouble to us," said Grandmother graciously, as one queen to another. "I am very sorry I was not at home this afternoon"--combining truth with courtesy to a remarkable degree.

The great lady turned to Varvara.

"Come, my dear," she said softly and sweetly.

Varvara disregarded her for a moment. She sprang past her and embraced Marigold tempestuously.

"If you were sugar I'd eat you up. Promise me you'll always love me--even if you never see me again. Promise--as long as grass grows and water runs. Promise."

"I will--oh, I will," gasped Marigold sincerely. It was very odd, but in spite of everything she felt that she did and would love Varvara devotedly.

"I've had such a *satisfying* time to-day," said Varvara. "They can't take *that* from me. I really didn't mean to kill your old toad. And you've got your hair bobbed. You can thank me and God for that."

She danced off to the gate, ignoring Lady Clara but throwing an airy kiss to Grandmother. "Laugh, Marigold, laugh," she called imperiously from the car. "I like to leave people laughing."

Marigold managed the ghost of a laugh, after which Varvara deliberately turned a complete double somersault before everybody and hopped into the back seat. Lord Percy smiled at Mother. Mother was a very pretty woman.

"An incorrigible little demon," he said.

VI

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"I think," said Grandmother quite quietly when she had heard the whole tale, "that princesses are rather too strenuous playmates for you. Perhaps, after all, your imaginary Sylvia is really a better companion."

Marigold thought so too. She ran happily through the dreamy peace of the orchard to meet the twilight that was creeping out of the spruce-grove. Back to Sylvia, her comrade of star-shine and moon-mist, who did not pull hair and slap--or provoke pulling and slapping--Sylvia, who was waiting for her in the shadows beyond the Green Gate. She was very well satisfied with Sylvia again. It was just as Grandmother had said. Princesses were too--too--what was it? Too *it*, anyhow.

She was glad she hadn't told her about Sylvia. She was glad she hadn't shown her the dear fat grey kittens in the apple-barn. Who knew but Varvara would have held them up by their tails? And though she felt sure she could never forget Princess Varvara--the tang of her--the magic of her mirth and storms--there was a queer, bitter little regret far down in her soul.

She had been used to pretend "Suppose a Princess dropped in to tea." And it *had* happened--and she hadn't known it. Besides Varvara wasn't a bit like a Princess. The way she had gobbled things down at supper. Marigold was the poorer for a lost illusion.

Meanwhile down in Cloud of Spruce Mother was putting away Marigold's golden braids and crying over them. Grandmother was girding an apron on with a stern countenance, to make another chocolate cake, late as it was. Salome was counting the hop-and-go-fetch-its and wondering how two children could ever have eaten so many in one afternoon. Marigold's appetite was never very extensive.

"I'll bet that princess will have stomach-ache to-night if she never had it before," she thought vindictively. And Lucifer and the Witch of Endor

were talking over the general cussedness of things under the milk bench.

"Take it from me," Lucifer was saying, "princesses aren't what they used to be in the good old days."

Chapter XI.

A Counsel of Perfection

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I

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There was really only one creature in the world whom Marigold hated-- apart from Clementine, who couldn't be said to be in the world. And that creature was Gwendolen Vincent Lesley--in the family Bible and on the lips of Aunt Josephine. Everywhere else she was Gwennie, the daughter of "Uncle" Luther Lesley, who lived away down east at Rush Hill. She was a second cousin of Marigold's and Marigold had never seen her. Nevertheless she hated her, in her up-rising and her down-sitting, by night and by day, Sundays as well as week-days. And the cause of this hatred was Aunt Josephine.

Aunt Josephine, who was really a second cousin, was a tall severe lady with a pronounced chin and stabbing black eyes which Marigold always felt must see to her very bones--X-ray eyes, Uncle Klon called them. She lived in Charlottetown, when she was home--which wasn't often. Aunt Josephine was an old maid; not a bachelor girl or a single woman but a genuine dyed-in-the-wool old maid. Lazarre added that she "lived on" her relations; by which cannibalish statement he meant that Aunt Josephine was fonder of visiting round than of staying home. She was especially fond of Cloud of Spruce and came as often as she decently could, and every time she came she praised Gwendolen Vincent Lesley to the skies. But she never praised Marigold.

The very first time she had ever seen Marigold she had said, looking at her scrutinisingly,

"Well, you have your father's nose beyond any doubt."

Marigold had never known that her father's nose had been his worst point, but she knew Aunt Josephine was not being complimentary.

"Gwendolen Lesley has such a beautiful little nose," continued Aunt Josephine, who had just come from a visit to Luther's. "Purely Grecian. But *then* everything about *her* is beautiful. I have never in all my life seen such

a lovely child. And her disposition is as charming as her face. She is very clever, too, and led her class of twenty in school last term. She showed me the picture of an angel in her favourite book of Bible stories and said, 'That is my model, Aunty.'

Who wouldn't hate Gwendolen after that? And that was only the beginning. All through that visit and every succeeding visit Aunt Josephine prated about the inexhaustible perfections of Gwendolen Vincent, in season and out of season.

Gwendolen, it appeared, was so conscientious that she wrote down every day all the time she had spent in idleness and prayed over it. She had never, it seemed, given any one a moment's worry since she was born. She had taken the honour diploma for Sabbath-school attendance--Aunt Josephine never said "Sunday"--every year since she had begun going.

"She is *such* a spiritual child," said Aunt Josephine.

"Would she jump if you stuck a pin in her?" asked Marigold.

Grandmother frowned and Mother looked shocked--with a glint of unlawful, unLesleyan amusement behind the shock--and Aunt Josephine looked coldly at her.

"Gwendolen is *never* pert," she rebuked.

It also transpired that Gwendolen always repeated hymns to herself before going to sleep. Marigold, who spent *her* pre-sleep hours in an orgy of wonderful imagery adventures, felt miserably how far short she fell of Gwendolen Vincent. And Gwendolen always ate just what was put before her and *never* ate too much.

"I never saw a child so free from greediness," said Aunt Josephine.

Marigold wondered uneasily if Aunt Josephine had noticed her taking that third tart.

And with all this Gwendolen, it appeared, was "sensible." Sensible! Marigold knew what that meant. Somebody who would use roses to make soup of if she could.

Gwendolen had never had her hair bobbed.

"And she has such wonderful, luxuriant, thick, long, shining, glossy curls," said Aunt Josephine, who would have added some more adjectives

to the curls if she could have thought of them.

Grandmother, who did not approve of bobbed hair, looked scornfully at Marigold's sleek, cropped head. Marigold, who had never before known a pang of jealousy in regard to a living creature, was rent with its anguish now. Oh, how she hated this paragon of a Gwendolen Vincent Lesley--this angelic and spiritual being, who took honour diplomas and led her class but who yet--Marigold clutched avidly at the recollection of the note Gwennie had written her at Christmas--didn't appear to know that "sapphire" shouldn't be spelled "saffire."

Gwendolen Vincent was "tidy." She was brave--"not afraid of thunderstorms," said Aunt Josephine when Marigold cowered in Mother's lap during a terrible one. She always did *exactly* what she was told--"See that, Marigold," said Grandmother. She never slammed doors--Marigold had just slammed one. She was a wonderful cook for her age. She was never late for meals--"See that, Marigold," said Mother. She never mislaid anything. She always cleaned her teeth after *every* meal. She never used slang. She never interrupted. She never made grammatical errors. She had perfect teeth--Marigold's eye-teeth were just a wee bit too prominent. She was never tomboyish--Marigold had been swinging on a gate. She never was too curious about anything--Marigold had been asking questions. She always was early to bed and early to rise because she knew it was the way and the only way to be healthy and wealthy and wise.

"I don't believe *that*," said Marigold rudely. "Phidime gets up at five o'clock every morning of his life and he's the poorest man in Harmony."

And then it appeared that Gwendolen never answered back.

Once and once only did Marigold, for a fleeting moment, think she might like Gwendolen in spite of her goodness. It was when Aunt Josephine told how Gwendolen had once got up in the middle of the night and gone downstairs *in the dark* to let in a poor, cold, miserable pussy-cat crying on the doorstep. But the next minute Aunt Josephine was describing how careful Gwendolen was to keep her nails clean--looking at Marigold's as she talked.

"Gwendolen has such lovely white half-moons at the base of her nails."

Now, Marigold had no half-moons.

"In short"--though it never really was in short with Aunt Josephine--
"Gwendolen is a perfect little lady."

Somehow that phrase got under Marigold's skin as nothing else had done.

"I'm fed up with this," she reflected furiously. It was the first time she had ever dared to use this new expression even in thought. Grandmother and Mother merely got rather tired of things. But rather tired was too mild to express her feelings towards the perfect little lady. And under it all that persistent stabbing ache of jealousy. Marigold would have liked as well as any one else to have a clan reputation of being a perfect lady.

And now Gwendolen was coming to Cloud of Spruce for a visit. Luther had written Grandmother that he wanted his little girl to visit Harmony and get acquainted with all her relatives. Especially did he want her to know Cloud of Spruce, where he had had such jolly times when a boy. Grandmother screwed up her lips a bit over the reference to "jolly times"--she remembered some of them--but she wrote back a very cordial invitation.

Aunt Josephine, who was just completing a visit, said she hoped, if Gwendolen came up for the mooted visit, Marigold would learn from her how a really nice little girl should behave. If Marigold had not been there Grandmother would have bristled up and said that Marigold was a pretty well-behaved child on the whole and her friends reasonably satisfied with her. She would probably have added that Luther Lesley had been a devil of a fellow when he was young and Annie Vincent was the biggest tomboy on the Island before she was married. And that it was curious, to say the least of it, that the pair of them should have produced so saintly an offspring.

But Marigold *was* there, so Grandmother had to look at her sternly and say, "I hope so too."

Marigold did not know that when she had betaken her wounded spirit to the gay ranks of rosy hollyhocks beside the grey-green apple-barn for solace, Grandmother remarked to Mother,

"Thank mercy *that* is over. We won't have another infliction of the old fool for at least three months."

"Aunt Josephine 'likes cats in their place,'" said Lucifer. "*I* know the breed."

II

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And then Gwendolen Vincent Lesley came. Marigold got up early the day she was expected, in order to have everything in perfect readiness for the task of entertaining a thorough lady. She was going to be as proper and angelic and spiritual as Gwendolen if it killed her. It was hard to have Mother say pleadingly, "Now, *please* see if you can behave nicely when Gwennie is here," as if she never behaved nicely when Gwennie wasn't there. For a moment Marigold felt an unholy desire that the very first thing she might do would be to scoop up a handful of mud and throw it at the visitor. But that passed. No, she was going to be good--not commonly good, not ordinarily good, but fearfully, extraordinarily, angelically good.

They met. Gwendolen stiffly put out a slender immaculate hand. Marigold glanced apprehensively at her own nails--thank goodness they were clean, even if they had no half-moons. And oh, Gwendolen *was* just as beautiful--and just as ladylike--and just as faultless as Aunt Josephine had painted her. Not one comforting, consoling defect anywhere.

There were the famous nut-brown curls falling around her delicate, spiritual face--there were the large, mild, dewy blue eyes and the exquisitely arched brows--there were the pearly teeth and the straight Grecian nose, the rosebud mouth, the shell-pink ears that lay back so nicely against her head, the cherubic expression, the sweet voice--very sweet. Marigold wondered if it was jealousy that made her think it was a little *too* sweet.

Marigold could have forgiven Gwendolen her beauty but she couldn't forgive her her hopeless perfection of conduct and manners. They had a ghastly week of it. They didn't, as Uncle Klou would have expressed it, click worth a cent in spite of the determined spirituality of both. And oh, how good they both were. Grandmother began to think there might be something in a good example after all.

And they bored each other nearly to death.

Marigold felt forlornly that they *might* have had such a good time if Gwendolen wasn't so horribly proper and if she hadn't to live up to her. Swinging in the apple-barn--housekeeping among the currant-bushes--rollicking in the old grey hay-barn full of cats--prowling about the spruce wood--wading in the brook--gathering mussels down by the shore--making nonsense rhymes--talking sleepy little secrets after they went to bed. But there were no secrets to talk over--nice girls didn't have secrets. And of course Gwendolen was occupied--presumably--repeating hymns.

Once there was a terrible thunderstorm. Marigold was determined she would not show how frightened she was. Gwendolen remarked calmly that the lightning kept her from going to sleep and covered her head with the bedclothes. Marigold wouldn't do that--Gwendolen might think *she* was doing it because she was terrified. Mother came to the door and said, "Darling, are you frightened?"

"No, not a bit," answered Marigold gallantly, hoping that the bedclothes would keep Gwendolen from noticing how her voice was shaking.

"Aren't thunderstorms jolly?" asked Gwendolen in the morning.

"Aren't they?" answered Marigold most enthusiastically.

It was Gwendolen's beautiful table-manners that were hardest to emulate. This had always been one of Marigold's weak points. She was always in such a hurry to get through and be at something. But now she liked to linger at the table as long as possible. There would be all the less time to spend in Gwendolen's dull company, cudgelling her brains for some amusement that would be proper and spiritual. Gwendolen ate slowly, used her knife and fork with the strictest propriety, apparently enjoyed crusts, said "Excuse me" whenever indicated, and asked, "May I have the butter if you please, Aunt Lorraine?" where Marigold would have polished it off in two words, "Butter, mums?" And oh, but she would have loved Gwendolen if the latter had ever spilled one drop of gravy on the tablecloth!

One night they went to church with Grandmother to hear a missionary speak. Marigold hadn't wanted to go especially, but Gwendolen was so

eager for it that Grandmother took them along, though she did not approve of small girls going out to night meetings. Marigold enjoyed the walk to the church--enjoyed it so much that she had an uneasy feeling that it wasn't spiritual to enjoy things to such an extent. But the white young clouds sailing over the moonlit sky were so dear--the shadows of the spruces on the road so fascinating--the sheep so pearly-white in the silver fields--the whole dear, fragrant summer night so friendly and lovesome. But when she said timidly to Gwendolen,

"Isn't the world lovely after dark?" Gwendolen only said starchily,

"I don't worry so much about the heathen in summer when it's warm, but oh, what *do* they do in cold weather?"

Marigold had never worried about the heathen at all, though she faithfully put a tenth of her little allowance every month in a mite-box for them. Again she felt bitterly her inferiority to Gwendolen Vincent and loved her none the better for it.

But it was that night she prayed,

"Please make me pretty good but not quite as good as Gwen, because she never seems to have any fun."

"Those two children get on beautifully," said Grandmother. "They've never had the slightest quarrel. I really never expected that the visit would go off half so well."

Mother agreed--it was better to agree with Grandmother--but she had a queer conviction that the children weren't getting on at all. Though she couldn't have given the slightest reason for it.

III

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Came a morning when Grandmother and Mother had to go into Harmony village. Grandmother was getting a new black satin made and Mother had a date with the dentist. They would be away most of the forenoon and Salome had been summoned away by the illness of a relative, but Gwendolen was so good and Marigold so much improved that they did not feel any special anxiety over leaving them alone. But just before they drove away Grandmother said to them,

"Now mind you, don't either of you stick your head between the bars of the gate."

Nobody to this day knows why Grandmother said that. Marigold believes it was simply predestination. Nobody ever *had* stuck her head between the bars of the gate and it had been there for ten years. A substantial gate of slender criss-cross iron bars. No flimsy wire gates for Cloud of Spruce. It had never occurred to Marigold to stick her head between the bars of the gate. Nor did it occur to her now.

But as soon as Grandmother and Mother had disappeared from sight down the road Gwendolen the model, who had been strangely silent all the morning, said deliberately,

"I *am* going to stick my head through the bars of the gate."

Marigold couldn't believe her ears. After what Grandmother had said! The good, so-obedient Gwendolen!

"I'm not going to be bossed by an old woman any longer."

She marched down the steps and down the walk, followed by the suddenly alarmed Marigold.

"Oh, don't--don't, please, Gwennie," she begged. "I'm sure it isn't safe--the squares are so small. What if you couldn't get it out again?"

For answer, Gwendolen stuck her head through one of the oblong spaces between the bars. Pushed her head through to be exact--and it was a

tight squeeze.

"There!" she said triumphantly, her mop of curls falling forward over her face and confirming a wild suspicion Marigold had felt at the breakfast-table--that Gwendolen had not washed behind her ears that morning.

"Oh, take it out--please, Gwennie," begged Marigold.

"I'll take it out when I please, Miss Prunes-and-prisms. I'm so sick of being good that I'm going to be just as bad as I want to be after this. I don't care how shocked you will be. You just watch the next thing I do."

Marigold's world seemed to spin around her. Before it grew steady again she heard Gwendolen give a frantic little yowl.

"Oh, I can't get my head out," she cried. "I can't--get--my--head--out."

Nor could she. The thick mop of curls falling forward made just the difference of getting in and getting out. Pull--writhe--twist--squirm as she might, she could not free herself. Marigold, in a panic, climbed over the gate and tried to push the head back--with no results save yelps of anguish from Gwendolen, who, if she were hurt as badly as she sounded, was very badly hurt indeed.

Gwendolen was certainly very uncomfortable. The unnatural position made her back and legs ache frightfully. She declared that the blood was running into her head and she would die. Marigold, shaking in the grip of this new terror, murmured faintly,

"Will it--do--any good--to pray?"

"Pray--pray. If you went for the blacksmith it would do more good than all the prayers in the world, you sickening, pious little cat!" said the spiritual Gwendolen.

The blacksmith! Phidime Gautier. Marigold went cold all over. She was in mortal dread of Phidime, who was a dead shot with tobacco-juice and not the least particular about his targets. She had never really believed the legend about the baby, but the impression of it was still in possession of her feelings. Phidime was very gruff and quick-tempered and never "stood for any kids" hanging round his shop. Marigold felt that she could never have the courage to go to Phidime.

"Oh, don't you think if I took you round the waist and pulled hard I could pull you out?" she gasped.

"Yes, and pull my head clean off," snapped Gwendolen. She gave another agonised squirm but to no effect, except that she nearly scraped one of her ears off. Suddenly she began shrieking like a maniac. "I can't stand this another minute--I can't," she gasped between shrieks. "Oh--I'm dying--I'm dying."

Marigold dared hesitate no longer. She tore off down the road like a mad thing. As she went the wild howls of Gwendolen Vincent could be heard faintly and more faintly. Was Gwennie dead? Or just yelled out?

"Hey, left a pie in the oven?" shouted Uncle Jed Clark as she spun by him.

Marigold answered not. To reach the blacksmith shop, to gasp out her tale, took all the breath she had.

"For de love of all de saints," said Phidime. He killed a nail on the floor with a squirt of tobacco-juice and hunted out a file very deliberately. Phidime had never seen any reason why he should hurry. And Gwennie might be dead!

Eventually the file was found, and he started up the road like the grim black ogre of fairy-tales. Gwendolen was not dead. She was still shrieking.

"Here now, stop dat yelling," said Phidime unsympathetically.

It took some time to file the bar and Phidime was not overly gentle. But at last it was done and Gwendolen Vincent was free, considerably rumpled and dishevelled, with a head that felt as if it were three sizes larger than ordinarily.

"Don't you go for do dat fool t'ing any more again," said Phidime warningly.

Gwendolen looked up at him and said spitefully,

"Old devil-face!"

Marigold nearly dropped in her tracks. Ladylike? Spiritual? Not to speak of commonly grateful?

"You keep dat sassy tongue of yours in your haid," said Phidime blackly as he turned away. Gwendolen stuck her tongue out at him.

Marigold was feeling a bit shrewish after her terror. She looked at Gwendolen and uttered the four most unpopular words in the world.

"I told you so," said Marigold.

"Oh, shut your head!"

This was indecent. "Shut your mouth" was an old friend--Marigold had often heard the boys at school using it--but "shut you head" was an interloper.

"I don't care if you *are* shocked, Miss Prim," said Gwendolen. "I'm through with trying to be as good as you. Nobody could be. I don't care *what* Aunt Josephine says."

"Aunt--Jo-seph-ine!"

"Yes, Aunt Jo-seph-ine! She does nothing all the time she is at Rush Hill but sing your praises."

"Mine!" gasped Marigold.

"Yes. She just held you up as a perfect model--always telling me how good you were! I knew I'd hate you--and I didn't want to come here for a visit--I like to go somewhere where something's happening all the time--but Father made me. And I made up my mind I'd be just as ladylike as you. Such a week!"

"Aunt Josephine told me *you* were a model--a perfect lady. *I've* been trying to be as good as you," gasped Marigold.

They looked at each other for a moment--and understood. Gwendolen began to laugh.

"I just couldn't stand it a day longer. That's why I stuck my head in the gate."

"Aunt Josephine told me you said hymns before you went to sleep--and took an angel for your model--and--"

"I was just stuffing Aunt Josephine. My, but it was easy to pull her leg."

Which was wicked of course. But in proportion to the wickedness did Marigold's sudden and new-born affection for Gwendolen Vincent increase.

"She made me so mad praising you. I wanted to show her you weren't the only saint in the world."

"Did you really want to hear that missionary?" asked Marigold.

"I sure did. Wanted to hear if he'd tell any cannibal yarns so's we could make a game of them when I went back to Rush Hill," said Gwennie promptly.

Which was wickeder still. But oh, how Marigold loved Gwennie.

"We've wasted a week," she said mournfully.

"Never mind. We'll make up for it this week," said Gwendolen Vincent ominously.

Grandmother can't understand it to this day. She never forgot that second week.

"One of your deep ones, that," Salome always said afterwards, whenever any one mentioned the name of Gwendolen Vincent.

"You can't always tell a saint by the cut of his jib," remarked Lucifer, who had never felt that his tail was safe in spite of Gwendolen's saintliness.

Chapter XII.

Marigold Entertains

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I

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"No more fat for me. I've nearly died eating fat this week," was Gwendolen's declaration of independence that night at supper. Grandmother, who hadn't noticed the gate yet--Phidime had wired it up rather cleverly--wondered what had happened to her.

"You should eat the fat *with* the lean," she said severely.

Gwennie stuck out her tongue at Grandmother. It gave Marigold a shock to realise that anybody could do that and live. Grandmother actually said nothing. What was there to say? But she reflected that Annie Vincent's child possibly ran truer to form than they had supposed after all. Grandmother would never have admitted it, but she was almost as tired of Gwennie's perfection as Marigold was. So she pretended not to see the grimace.

Grandmother had to pretend blindness a good many times in the days that followed, rather than outrage hospitality and incur Annie Vincent's eternal wrath by spanking her offspring or sending her home with a flea in her ear. The famed serenity of Cloud of Spruce was smashed to smithereens. A day without a thrill was a lost day for Gwennie.

Marigold enjoyed it--with reservations. Gwennie cared nothing for story-books or kittens and knew nothing whatever about the dryads that lived in the beech clump or the wind spirits that came up the harbour on stormy nights. Marigold would never have dreamed of telling her about Sylvia or taking her along the secret paths of her enchanted groves. But still Gwennie was a good little scout. There was always something doing when she was about, and she was funny. She was always "taking off" some one. She could imitate anyone to perfection. It was very amusing--though you always had a little uneasy feeling that the minute your back was turned she might be imitating *you*. Grandmother really was very cross the day Gwennie spilled soup over Mrs. Dr. Emsley's silk dress at the dinner-

table because she was "taking off" the old doctor's way of eating soup and sending poor Marigold into convulsions of unholy mirth.

Of course fun was all right. But Gwennie laughed at so many things Marigold had been taught to hold sacred, and giggled when she should be reverent. It was awful to go to church with her. She said such funny things about everybody and it was so wicked to laugh in church, even silently. Yet laugh Marigold sometimes had to till the pew shook and Grandmother glared at her.

But Marigold would not allow Gwennie to baptise the kittens. Gwen thought it would be "such fun" and had the bowl of water and everything ready. She was to be the minister and Marigold was to hold the kittens.

But Marigold had put her foot down firmly. No kittens were going to be baptised and that was that.

"Grandmother wouldn't allow it," said Marigold.

"I don't care a hang for Grandmother," said Gwennie.

"I do."

"You're just afraid of her," said Gwennie contemptuously. "Do have some spunk."

"I've lots of spunk," retorted Marigold. "And it isn't because I'm afraid of her that I won't have the kittens baptised. It just isn't right."

"Do you know," said Gwennie, "what I do at home when Father or Mother won't let me do things. I just sit down and yell at the top of my voice till they give in."

"You couldn't yell Grandmother out," said Marigold proudly.

Gwennie sulked all the evening and Marigold felt badly because she really liked Gwennie very much. But there were some things that simply were not done and baptising kittens was one of them. Gwennie announced in the morning that she would forgive Marigold.

"I don't want to be forgiven. I haven't done anything wrong," retorted Marigold. "I *won't* be forgiven."

"I *will* forgive you. You can't prevent me," said Gwennie virtuously.

"And now let's arrange for something different to happen to-day. I'm tired

of everything we've been doing. Look here, was there ever a day in your life you did *everything* you wanted to?"

Marigold reflected. "No."

"Well, let's do everything we want to to-day. Every single thing."

"Everything *you* want or everything *I* want?" queried Marigold significantly.

"Everything *I* want," declared Gwennie. "I'm the visitor, so you *ought* to let me do as I want. Now, come on, don't be a 'fraid-cat. I won't ask you to baptise kittens. We'll leave the holy things out since you're so squeamish. I'll tell you what I *am* going to do. I'm dying to taste some of that blueberry wine. I asked your grandmother yesterday for some but she said it wasn't good for little girls. That's all in my eye. I'm just going to get a bottle out right now and open it. We'll take a glass apiece and put the bottle back. Nobody'll ever know."

Marigold knew quite well this wasn't right. But it was a different kind of wrongness from the kitten-project. And she knew that Gwennie would do it whether it was right or not; and Marigold had a secret hankering to see what blueberry wine was like. They would never give her any of it, which she thought very mean. Grandmother's blueberry wine was famous, and when evening callers came they were always treated to blueberry wine with their cake.

Grandmother and Mother and Salome were all far up in the orchard picking the August apples. It was a good chance and, as Gwennie said, likely nobody would miss the two glassfuls if they put the bottle away back on the pantry shelf in the dark corner.

The dining-room was cool and shadowy. It had been newly papered in the spring, and Mother had just put up the new cream net curtains that waved softly in the August breezes. Grandmother's beautiful bluebird centrepiece, which Aunt Dorothy had sent her all the way from Vancouver, was on the table under the bowl of purple delphiniums. Hanging over a chair was Salome's freshly laundered blue and white print dress.

Marigold lingered to whisper something to the delphiniums, while Gwennie popped into the pantry and came out with a bottle.

"The cork is wired down," she said. "I'll have to run out to the apple-barn and get the pliers. You wait here and if you hear any one coming pop the bottle back into the pantry."

Nobody came and Marigold watched the bottle with its beautiful purplish-red glow. At last she was going to know what blueberry wine was like. It was really rather jolly to have some one round who dared fly in Grandmother's face.

Gwennie saw nobody but Lazarre on her trip to the apple-barn. Lazarre, whose opinion of Gwennie's ancestry was sulphurous, knew something was in the wind.

"Dat kid she always look special lak de angel w'en she plannin' some devil-work," he muttered. But he said nothing. If three women couldn't look after her it was none of his business.

"I've brought a corkscrew, too," said Gwennie, twisting the wire deftly around with the pliers.

As it happened, there was no need of the corkscrew. None whatever.

Gwennie and Marigold hardly knew what had happened. There had been a noise like a gun-shot--and they were standing in the middle of the dining-room looking wildly at each other. There was not much blueberry wine left in that bottle. The rest of it was on the ceiling--on the walls--on the new curtains--on Salome's dress--on the blue bird centrepiece--on Gwennie's face--on Marigold's pretty pink linen dress! Gwennie had learned something she had never known before about blueberry wine. And if thrills were what she was after, she had had enough in one moment to last several weeks.

For an instant she stood in dismay. Then she seized Marigold's hand. "Come quick," she hissed, "get that dress off--get something on--hurry."

Marigold let herself be whisked upstairs. What dreadful thing had happened? Blueberry stains never came out, she had heard Salome say. But Gwennie gave her no time to think. The stained dress was dragged off and thrown into the closet--Marigold's old tan one was thrown over her head--Gwennie wiped the blueberry wine off her face with one of Mother's towels. There were some spots on her dress, too, but that did not matter.

"Come," she said imperiously, snatching Marigold's hand.

"Where are we going?" gasped Marigold as they tore down the road.

"*Anywhere*. We've got to vamoose until they get over that dining-room. They'd kill us if they saw us when they see *it*. We'll stay away till evening. Their fit will be over by then and maybe we'll get off with whole hides. But I'd like to be a fly on the ceiling when Grandmother sees that room."

"We can't stay away all day. We've nothing to eat," groaned Marigold.

"We'll eat berries and roots--and things," said Gwennie. "We'll be Gipsies and live in the woods. Come to think of it, it will be fun."

"Will you take a drive," said a voice above them.

It was Mr. Abel Derusha, the Weed Man, on his double-seated wagon, bareheaded as always, with his dog Buttons beside him!

II

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The Weed Man was one of the few romantic personages the country around the harbour could boast. He lived somewhere up at the Head but was well known all over the surrounding communities--at least people thought they knew him well, whereas perhaps nobody really knew him at all.

In his youth Abel Derusha had gone to college and studied for the ministry. Then that was given up. There was a heresy hunt and the result was that Abel Derusha came home, lived at the Head with his old-maid sister Tabby and set up his weed-wagon. Soon he was known as the "Weed Man." In summer he drove all over the Island gathering medicinal plants and herbs and selling them and the decoctions he made from them. He made only a pittance by it. But he and Tabby had enough to live on, and Abel Derusha's weed-fad was little more than an excuse to live in the open. Marigold thought him very "int'resting" and often felt that it would be a delightful thing to drive about with him on his red wagon. She always felt the strange charm of his personality though she knew little of his history--just what she had heard Salome say to Mrs. Kemp one day.

"Abel Derusha always took things easy. Never seemed to worry over trials and disappointments as most folks do. Seems to me that as long as he can wander over the country hunting weeds and talking to that old red dog of his as if it was a human being he don't care how the world wags on. Didn't even worry when they put him out of the ministry. Said God was in the woods as well as any church. He favours his mother's people, the Courteloes. Sort of shiftless and dreamy. All born with hang-nails on their heels. The Derushas were all ashamed of him. 'Tisn't the way to get on in the world."

No, good and worthy Salome. It is not the way to get on in your world, but there may be other worlds where getting on is estimated by different

standards, and Abel Derusha lived in one of these--a world far beyond the ken of the thrifty Harbour farmers. Marigold knew that world, though she knew it didn't do to live in it *all* the time as Abel did. Though you were very happy there. Abel Derusha was the happiest person she knew.

He had a face so short it positively looked square, a long, rippling, silky red beard and an odd, spiky, truculent moustache that didn't seem to belong to the beard at all. There was no doubt he was ugly, but Marigold had always thought it was a nice kind of ugliness. He had beautiful clear blue eyes that told he had kept the child-heart. The red squirrels would come to him in the woods and he called all the dogs in the country by their first name. When he came to Cloud of Spruce--which he did not always do, being "pernickety" in regard to his ports of call--he sat in his red wagon and talked with Lazarre and Salome and Mother and Grandmother by the hour, if they would linger to talk with him, though he would never enter the house. After he had gone Lazarre would shrug his shoulders and say contemptuously,

"Dat man, he's crack." Whereat Salome would inform Lazarre, by way of standing by her race, that Abel Derusha had forgotten more than he, the said Lazarre, ever knew. He had promised once to take Marigold for a drive with him and Marigold hankered after it, though she knew she would never be let go. And now here she and Gwennie were out to do as they liked for a whole day and here was the Weed Man offering them a drive.

"Sure," said Gwennie promptly. But Marigold, in spite of her secret wishes, hung back.

"Where are you going?"

"Anywhere--anywhere," said Abel easily. "I'm just poking along to-day--just poking along, thinking how I'd have made the world if I *had* made it. And if you two small skeesicks want to come along why just come."

"But they wouldn't know what had happened to us at home," said Marigold doubtfully.

"They'll know what has happened to the dining-room," giggled Gwen. "Come on now, Marigold. Be a sport."

"Marigold's right," said the Weed Man. "Doesn't do to worry folks who worry. *I* never worry myself. Here's Jim Donkin coming along. I'll ask him to drop over to Cloud of Spruce and tell the folks you've come for a day with me. We'll get our dinners somewhere along the road and we'll go home to my place for supper, and I'll bring you back in the evening. How's that?"

Nobody but the Weed Man would have proposed such a plan. But Abel didn't see any reason if the girls wanted a drive why they shouldn't have it on a day God had made specially for people who wanted to be out. Gwennie had quite made up her mind to go and Marigold couldn't help thinking it would be very int'resting.

So Jim Donkin was asked to take the word to Cloud of Spruce, and Marigold and Gwennie were in the back seat of the red wagon, amid fragrant bundles of Abel's harvest, bowling along the road, quite delighted with themselves. Marigold resolved to forget the catastrophe of the blueberry wine. It had been Gwen's doings, anyway. They wouldn't kill Gwen because she was a visitor and meanwhile here was a whole golden day, with the very air seeming alive, flung into their laps as a gift. Perhaps Marigold had a spice of Uncle Klon's wanderlust in her. At any rate the prospect of driving about with the Weed Man filled her with secret delight. She had always known she would like the Weed Man.

"What road are you going to take?" demanded Gwen.

"Whatever road pleases me," said the Weed Man, looking disdainfully at a car that passed. "Look at that critter insulting the daylight. I've no use at all for them. Nor your aeroplanes. If God had meant us to fly He'd have given us wings."

"Did God mean you to drive this poor old horse when He gave you legs?" said Gwen pertly.

"Yes, when He gave him four legs to my two," was the retort. Abel was so well pleased with himself that he chuckled for a mile. Then he turned into a red side road, narrow and woodsy, with daisies blowing by the longer fences, little pole-gates under the spruces, stone dykes overgrown with things he loved to rifle, looping brooks and grassy fields girdled by

woods. It was all very dear and remote and lovely and the Weed Man told them tales of every kink and turn, talking sometimes like the educated man he really was and sometimes lapsing into the vernacular of his childhood.

There was one lovely, gruesome tale of a hollow where a murdered woman's body had been found; and at a certain corner of the road a "go-preacher" had been stoned.

"What did they stone him for?" asked Gwen.

"For preaching the truth--or what he believed the truth, anyhow. They always do that if you preach the truth--stone you or crucify you."

"You meant to be a preacher once yourself, didn't you?" Gwen was possessed of a questioning devil.

"The preaching was Tabby's idea. I never wanted to myself--not enough to tell lies for it anyhow. See that house in the hollow. There was a man lived there who used to say his prayers every morning and then get up and kick his wife."

"Why did he kick her?"

"Ah, that's the point, now. Nobody ever knew. Mebbe 'twas just his way of saying 'amen.'"

"He wouldn't have kicked *me* twice," said Gwen.

"I believe you." The Weed Man grinned at her over his shoulder. "Here's the old Malloy place. Used to be a leprechaun living there--the Malloys brought him out from Ireland among their bits of furniture, 'twas said. Guess 'twas true. Never heard of any native leprechauns in Prince Edward Island."

"What is a leprechaun?" asked Marigold who had a thrill at the name.

"A liddle dwarf fairy dressed in red with a peaky cap. If you could see him and keep on seeing him he'd lead you to a pot of buried gold. Jimmy Malloy saw him once but he tuk his eyes off him for a second and the liddle fellow vanished. Howsomever, Jimmy could always wiggle his ears after that. He got that much out of it."

"What good did wiggling his ears do him?"

"Very few can do it. *I* can. Look."

"Oh, will you show me how to do that?" cried Gwennie.

"'Tisn't an accomplishment--it's a gift," said the Weed Man solemnly. "Tom Squirely lives over there. Always bragging he doesn't owe a cent. Good reason why. Nobody would lend him one."

"I heard Lazarre say the same thing about you," said Gwen impudently. "If you live in glass houses you shouldn't throw stones."

"Why not now? Somebody'll be sure to throw a stone at your house whether or no, so you might as well have your fun, too. C. C. Vessey lives on that hill. Not a bad feller--not so mean as his dad. When old Vessey's wife died she was buried with a little gold brooch unbeknown to him. When he found it out he went one night to the graveyard and opened up the grave and casket to get that brooch. Here, wait you a minute. I've got to run in and see Captain Simons for a second. He wanted me to bring him a south-west wind to-day. I have to tell him I couldn't bring it to-day but I'll send him one to-morrow."

"Do you suppose he really sells the winds?" whispered Marigold.

"No," scornfully. "I see through your Weed Man. His head isn't screwed on very tight. But he's good fun and his stories are great. I don't believe that leprechaun yarn though."

"Don't you now?" said the Weed Man, returning creepily from behind, though they had never seen him leave the house, and looking at Gwennie compassionately. "What a lot you're going to miss if you don't believe things. Now, I just drive round believing everything and such fun as I have."

"Lazarre says you're lazy," commented Gwen.

"No, no, not lazy. Just contented. I'm the biggest toad in my own puddle, so it don't worry me none if there's bigger toads in other puddles. I'm king of myself. Now look-a-here. Suppose we call and see old Granny Phin. I haven't seen her for a long while. And maybe she'll let Lily give us a bite of dinner."

Gwen and Marigold surveyed rather dubiously the little house before which the Weed Man was stopping. It was a tumbledown little place with too many brown paper windowpanes. The gate hung by one hinge, the yard

was overgrown with Scotch thistle and tansy, and even at a distance the old woman who sat on the crazy veranda did not seem attractive.

"I don't like the look of the place much," whispered Gwen. "Hope we don't catch the itch."

"What is that?"

"Marigold, don't you know *anything*?"

Marigold thought gloatingly of certain things she *did* know--lovely things--things Gwennie never would or could know. But she only said,

"I don't know what *that* is."

"Then pray heaven you never *do* know," said Gwen importantly. "*I* know. Caught it from a kid going to school who lived in just such a place as this. Ugh! Lard and sulphur till you could die."

"Come on, now, and don't you be whispering to each other," said the Weed Man. "Granny Phin won't like that. You don't want to get on the rough side of *her* tongue. She's eighty-seven years old, but she's every inch alive."

III

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Physically, Granny Phin was hardly every inch alive, for she could not walk alone, having, as she told her visitors later, "paralattics of the hips." But, mentally, her strength had not abated. She was of striking appearance, with snow-white hair in elf-locks around her dead-white face and flashing greenish-blue eyes. She still possessed all her teeth, but they were discoloured and fang-like and when she drew back her lips in a smile she was certainly a rather wolf-like old dame. She wore a frilled widow's cap tied tightly under her chin, a red calico blouse, and a voluminous skirt of red-and-black checked homespun, and was evidently addicted to bare feet. She liked to sit on the veranda, where she could scream maledictions and shake her long black stick at any persons or objects that incurred her dislike or displeasure. Marigold had heard of Granny Phin, but she had never expected to see her. Curiosity mingled with her trepidation as she followed the Weed Man up the path. What a difference there was in old women, she thought, comparing Old Grandmother and Grandmother to this crone.

"Well, this *is* a treat," said Granny Phin.

"It's a warm day, Mistress Phin," said the Weed Man.

"Ye'll be in a warmer place ere long, no doubt," retorted Granny, "and I'll sit in my high seat in heaven and laugh at yez. Hev ye forgot the last time ye was here that dog o' yourn bit me?"

"Yes, and the poor liddle brute has been ill almost ever since," said the Weed Man rather sternly. "He's only just got well. Don't let me see you letting him bite you again."

"The devil himself can't get the better of yer tongue," chuckled Granny admiringly. "Well, come up, come up. Lucky for you I'm in a good humour to-day. I've had such fun watching old Doc Ramsay's funeral go past. Ten

years ago to-day he told me I'd only a year to live. Interduce yer family, please."

"Miss Marigold Lesley of Cloud of Spruce--Miss Gwennie Lesley of Rush Hill."

"Cloud o' Spruce folk, eh? I worked at Cloud o' Spruce in my young days. The old lady was a bigotty one. Yer Aunt Adela was there that summer. She looked like an angel, but they do be saying she p'isened her man."

"She isn't our Aunt Adela. She's only a third cousin," said Gwen. "And she didn't poison her husband."

"Well, well, take it easy. Half the husbands in the world ought to be p'isened, anyhow. I had four so I ought to know something of the breed. Sit down all of yez on the floor of the veranda and let yer feet hang down, till dinner's ready. That's what ye've come for, I reckon. Lily--Lily."

In response to Granny's yells a tall, thin, slatternly woman with a sullen face showed herself for a moment in the doorway.

"Company for dinner, Lily--quality folks from Cloud o' Spruce. Put on a tablecloth and bring out the frog pie. And mind ye brew some skeewiddle tea. And send T. B. out to talk to the girls."

"Lily's peeved to-day," grinned Granny as Lily disappeared without a word. "I boxed her ears this morning 'cause she left the soap in the water."

"And her past sixty. Come, come," protested the Weed Man.

"I believe ye. Ye'd think she could have larned sense in sixty years," said Granny, choosing to misunderstand him. "But some folks never larn sense. Yerself now--ye was a young fool once and now ye're an old one. Sad that. T. B., come here and entertain the young ladies."

T. B. came rather sulkily and squatted down by Gwennie. He was a shock-headed urchin with his grandmother's wicked green eyes. Marigold took little notice of him. She was absorbed in awful visions of frog pie. And *what* was skeewiddle tea? It sounded worse than frog pie because she hadn't the least idea what it was. But Gwennie, who had a flair for all kinds of boys, was soon quite at home, bandying slang with Timothy Benjamin Phin--T. B. for short. T. B. soon learned that there were "no flies on her,"

even if she were one of those "bigotty Lesleys," and also no great need to be overfussy as to what he said. When a plain "damn" slipped out Gwen only giggled.

"Oh, T. B., aren't you afraid you'll go to the bad place if you say such words?"

"Nix on that," contemptuously. "*I* don't believe there's any heaven or hell. When you die there's an end of you."

"Wouldn't you like to go on living?"

"Nope. There's no fun in it," said the youthful misanthrope. "And heaven's a dull place from all the accounts I've heard."

"You've never been there or you wouldn't call it dull," said Marigold suddenly.

"Have *you* been there?"

Marigold thought of the Hidden Land and the spruce hill and Sylvia.

"Yes," she said.

T. B. looked at her. This Marigold-girl was not as pretty as the Gwen one and there wasn't as much "go" in her; but there was something that made T. B. rather cautious, so instead of saying what he would have said to Gwen, he merely remarked politely,

"You're lying."

"Mind yer manners," Granny suddenly shot at T. B. from her conversation with the Weed Man. "Don't ye let me catch ye calling ladies liars."

"Oh, give your face a rest," retorted T. B.

"No shrimp sauce if ye please," said Granny.

T. B. shrugged his shoulders and turned to Gwen.

"She was picking on Aunt Lily all day 'cause Aunt Lily left the soap in the wash-pan. She used to smack her, but *I* stopped that. I wasn't going to have Granny abuse Aunt Lily."

"How did you stop her?" queried Gwen.

"The last time she smacked Aunt Lily I went up to her and bit her," said T. B. coolly.

"You ought to bite her oftener, if that will stop her," giggled Gwen.

"There ain't nothing else worth standing up to her for," grinned T. B. "Granny's tough biting. No, I let her alone and she lets me alone--mostly. She gave me a jaw last week when I got drunk."

"Apple-sauce. You never," scoffed Gwen.

T. B. *had*--as a sort of experiment, it appeared.

"Jest wanted to see what it was like. And it was awful disappointing. I jest went to sleep. Could do that without getting drunk. No fear of my getting jagged again. No kick in it. Nothing is ever like what you expect it to be in this world. It's a dull old hole."

"'Tisn't," interjected Granny again. "It's an int'resting world. Vi'lent int'resting."

Marigold felt there was one thing she had in common with Granny at least. In a sense Marigold was enjoying herself. All this was a glimpse into a kind of life she had never known existed, but it was int'resting--"vi'lent int'resting," as Granny said.

Granny and the Weed Man appeared to be enjoying themselves, too, in spite of an occasional passage-at-arms.

"Going to the Baptist church, are yez?" snarled Granny. "Well, if ye do yer dog'll go to heaven afore ye do. Catch *me* going to a Baptist church. I'm a Episcopalian--always was and always will be, world without end, amen."

"I don't believe you ever saw the inside of an Episcopalian church in your life," taunted the Weed Man.

"Yah, I'd tweak yer nose for that if I could reach it," retorted Granny. "Go to yer Baptist church--go to yer Baptist church. Ye son of a monkey-faced rabbit. And I'll sit here and imagine yez all being fried."

She suddenly turned to Marigold.

"If this Weed Man was as rich as he's poor he'd be riding over the heads of all of us. I tell you the real pride of this man is ridic'lous."

"Dinner's ready," Aunt Lily called sulkily from inside.

"Come and help me in," said Granny, reaching briskly for her black stick. "All that keeps me alive is the little bit I eat."

Before the Weed Man could go gallantly to her assistance a shining new car, filled with gaily dressed people, suddenly swung in at the gate and stopped in front of the veranda. The driver bent from the car to make some request, but Granny, crouched like an old tigress, did not allow him to utter a word. She caught up the nearest missile--which happened to be a plate filled with gravy and bacon scraps--from the bench beside her and hurled it at him. It missed his face by a hair's breadth and landed squarely, gravy and all, in a fashionable lady's silken lap. Granny Phin followed this up by a series of fearsome yells and maledictions of which the mildest were, "May all yer pittaties be rotten" and "May ye always be looking for something and never finding it" and--finally, "May ye all have the seven-year itch. I'll pray for it, that I will."

The half-dazed driver backed his car out of the gate and broke all speed-limits down the road. Gwen was squealing with delight, the Weed Man was grinning and Marigold was trying hard to feel shocked.

Granny was in high good humour.

"My, but that did me good. I kin hold up my end of a row yit. Ye could tell by the look of that fellow his grandfather hanged himself in the horse-stable. Come to dinner, all of yez. If we'd known ye were comin' we'd a killed the old rooster. It's time he was used anyway. But there's always frog pie, hey? Now for the frog pie."

To Marigold's relief and Gwen's disappointment there was no frog pie. Indeed, there wasn't much of anything but fried ham and potatoes with some blueberry jam--which suggested rather dismal recollections to Marigold. The dinner was a dull affair, for Aunt Lily was still sulky, Granny was busy gobbling and the Weed Man was silent. It was one of his peculiarities that he seldom talked inside any house.

"Can't think or talk right with walls round me--never could," he had told Salome once.

After dinner the Weed Man paid for their meal with a bottle of liniment for Granny's "paralattics," and Granny bade them a friendly good-bye.

"It's sorry I am that ye're goin' instead o' comin'," she said graciously.

She pulled Marigold so close to her that Marigold had a horrible idea that Granny Phin was going to kiss her. If *that* happened Marigold knew she would never be the same girl again. But Granny only whispered,

"She's a bit purtier than you, but I like *you* best--ye look like a bit o' spring."

Which was a nicer compliment than one would have expected old Granny Phin to pay.

IV

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Their afternoon drive led along the winding shore of a little river running into the Head of the Bay. Far down was the blue, beckoning harbour and beyond it the sunny dunes and the misty gulf. The Weed Man shook his whip at it mournfully.

"One poetry has vanished from the gulf forever," he said, more to himself than to the girls. "When I was a boy that gulf there would be dotted with white sails on a day like this. Now there's nothing but gasoline boats and they're not on speaking terms with romance at all. Romance is vanishing--romance is vanishing out of our world."

He shook his head gloomily. But Marigold, looking on the world with the eyes of youth, saw romance everywhere. As for Gwennie she was not concerned with romance or the lack of it but only with her stomach.

"Gee, I'm hungry," she said. "I didn't get half enough at the Phins's. Where'll we have supper?"

"Down at my place," said the Weed Man. "We're going there now. Tabby'll have a bite for us. After supper I'll take you home--if the weather keeps good-humoured. Those weather-gaws aren't out for nothing. It'll rain cats and dogs to-morrow."

Marigold wondered what weather-gaws were--and then forgot in thinking how interesting it would be if it really rained cats and dogs. Little silk-eared kittens everywhere by the basketful--loads of darling pudgy puppies.

The Weed Man's "place" was at the end of a wood road far down by the red harbour shore. He did not like to have his fellow-mortals too close to him. The little white-washed house seemed to be cuddled down among shrubs and blossoms. There were trees everywhere--the Weed Man would never have any cut down--and four blinking, topaz-eyed kittens in a row

on the window-sill, all looking as if they had been cut out of black velvet by the same pattern.

"Cloud o' Spruce breed," said the Weed Man as he lifted the girls down, "Your Old Grandmother gave me the great-grandmother of them. You are very welcome to my poor house, young ladies. Here, Tabby, we've company for supper. Bring along a glass o' water apiece."

"Goodness, aren't we going to have anything for supper but a glass of water?" whispered Gwen.

But Marigold was taken up with Tabby Derusha, about whom she had heard her elders talking. She was not, so Salome said, "all there." She was reported to go Abel one better in the matter of heresy, for she didn't believe in God at all. She laughed a great deal and seldom went from home.

Tabby was very stout and wore a dress of bright red-and-white striped material. Her face was round and blank but her red hair was abundant and beautiful, and she had her brother's kind, childlike blue eyes. She laughed pleasantly at the girls as she brought them the water.

"Down with it--every drop," ordered the Weed Man. "Every one who comes into my house has to drink a full glass of water first thing. People never drink half enough water. If they did they wouldn't have to pay as many doctors' bills. Drink, I say."

Marigold was not in the least thirsty and she found the second half of the generous tumbler hard to "down." Gwennie drank half of hers.

"Finish," said the Weed Man sternly.

"There, then," said Gwennie, and threw the rest of her water in the Weed Man's face.

"Oh, Gwennie!" cried Marigold reproachfully. Miss Tabby laughed. The Weed Man stood quite still, looking comical enough with the water dripping from his whiskers.

"That'll save me washing my face," he said--and it was all he did say.

"How *does* Gwennie do such things and get away with it?" wondered Marigold. "Is it because she's so pretty?"

She was ashamed of Gwennie's manners. Perhaps Gwen was a little ashamed of herself--if shame were possible to her--for she behaved beautifully at the table--making only one break, when she asked Tabby curiously if it were true she didn't believe in God.

"As long as I can laugh at things I can get along without God," said Tabby mysteriously. "When I can't laugh I'll have to believe in Him."

They had a good supper with plenty of Tabby's applecake and cinnamon-buns and raisin-bread and the Weed Man's stories in between. But when he came in after supper and said the rain was very near and they must wait till morning to go home, it was not so very pleasant.

"Oh, we *must* go home," cried Marigold. "Please, please take us home, Mr. Derusha."

"I can't drive you home and then drive back fourteen miles in a rainstorm. I am content with my allotted portion but I am poor--I can't afford a buggy. And my umbrella's full of holes. You're all right here. Your folks know where you are and won't worry. They know we're clean. Your Grandmother was rained in here one night herself seven years ago. You go right to bed and sleep, and morning'll be here 'fore you know it."

V

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"I know I won't sleep a wink in this horrid place," said Gwen snappily, looking scornfully around the tiny bedroom and seeing only the bare uneven floor with its round, braided rug, the cheap little bureau with its cracked mirror, the chipped pitcher and bowl, the stained and cracked ceiling, the old-fashioned knitted lace that trimmed the pillow slips. Marigold saw these things, too, but she saw something else--the view of the harbour through the little window, splendid in the savage sunset of approaching storm. Marigold was tired and rather inclined to think that doing everything you wanted wasn't such fun after all; but under the spell of an outlook like that, the sense of romance and adventure persisted. Why couldn't Gwen make the best of things? She had been grumbling ever since supper. She wasn't such a sport after all.

"If the wind changes, your face will always look like that."

"Oh, don't try to be smart," snapped Gwen. "Old Abel should have taken us home. He promised to. I'm scared to death to sleep in the same house with Tabby Derusha. Any one can see she's cracked. She might come in and smother us with a pillow."

Marigold was a little frightened of Tabby herself--now that it was dark. But all she said was,

"I do hope Salome won't forget to give the cats their strippings."

"I do hope there aren't any bed-bugs in this bed," said Gwen, looking at it with disfavour. "It looks like it."

"Oh, no, I'm sure there isn't. Everything is so clean," said Marigold.

"Let's just say our prayer and get into bed."

"I wonder you aren't afraid to say your prayers after that lie you told T. B. to-day about having been in Heaven," said Gwen--who was tired and out of sorts and determined to wreak it on somebody.

"It wasn't a lie--it wasn't--oh, you don't understand," cried Marigold.
"It was Sylvia--"

She stopped short. She had never told Gwennie about Sylvia. Gwen had somehow got an inkling that Marigold had some secret connected with the spruce wood and teased her to tell it at intervals. She pounced on Marigold's inadvertent sentence.

"Sylvia! You've some secret about Sylvia, whoever she is. You're mean and dirty not to tell me. Friends always tell each other secrets."

"Not some kinds of secrets. I'm *not* going to tell you about Sylvia, and you needn't coax. I guess I have a right to my own secrets."

Gwen threw one of her boots at the wall.

"All right then. Keep it to yourself. Do you think I want to know your horrid secrets? I *do* know one of them, anyhow. You're jealous of Clementine Lawrence."

Marigold coloured hotly. How on earth had Gwennie found that out? She had never mentioned Clementine to her.

"Oh-h-h!" Gwennie chuckled maliciously. She had to torment somebody as an outlet to her nerves, and Marigold was the only one handy. "You didn't think I knew that. You can't hide things from *me*. Gee, how sour you looked when I praised her picture! Fancy being jealous of a dead woman you never saw! It is the funniest thing I ever heard of."

Marigold writhed. The worst of it was it was *true*. She seemed to hate Clementine more bitterly every day of her life. She wished she could stop it. It was a torture when she thought of it. And it was torture to think that Gwennie had stumbled on it.

"Of course," went on Gwen, "the first Mrs. Leander was ever so much handsomer than your mother. Of course your father would love her best. Ma says widowers just marry the second time for a housekeeper. I could just stand and look at Clementine's picture for hours. When I grow up I'm going to have mine taken just like that, looking at a lily, with my hair done the same way. I'm never going to have *my* hair bobbed. It's *common*."

"The Princess Varvara had *hers* bobbed," retorted Marigold.

"Russian princesses don't count."

"She is a grand-niece of Queen Victoria."

"So *she* said. You needn't put on any airs with me, Marigold Lesley, because you had a princess visiting you. I'm a--a--Democrat."

"You're not. It's only in the States there are Democrats."

"Well, it's something that doesn't take stock in kings and queens, anyway. I forget the right word. And as for politics, do you know I'm going to be a Tory after this. Sir John Carter is ever so much better looking than our Liberal man."

"You *can't* be a To--Conservative," cried Marigold, outraged at this topsy-turvy idea. "Why--why--you were *born* a Grit."

"You'll see if I can't. Well--" Gwen had got her clothes off and wriggled into one of the rather skimpy little cotton nightgowns Tabby had unearthed from somewhere for them, "now for prayers. I'm awful tired of saying the same old prayer. I'm going to invent a new one of my own."

"Do you think it's--safe?" asked Marigold dubiously. When you were a stranger in a strange land wouldn't it be best to stick to the tried and tested in prayers as well as politics.

"Why not? But I know what I'll do. I'm going to say *your* prayer--the one your Aunt Marigold made up for you."

"You shan't," cried Marigold. "That's my very own special prayer."

"Selfish pig," said Gwennie.

Marigold said no more. Perhaps it *was* selfish. And anyway Gwennie would say it if she wanted to. She knew her Gwennie. But she also knew her own dear prayer would be spoiled for her forever if that imp from Rush Hill said it.

Gwennie knelt down with one eye on Marigold. And at the last moment she relented. Gwen wasn't such a bad sort after all. But having said that she was going to invent a new prayer it was up to her to invent one. She wouldn't back down altogether, but Gwen suddenly discovered that it was not such an easy thing to invent a prayer.

"Dear God," she said slowly, "please--please--oh, please never let me have moles like Tabby Derusha's. And never mind about the daily bread--"

I'm sure to have lots of that--but please give me lots of pudding and cake and jam. And please bless all the folks who deserve it."

"There, that's done," she announced, hopping into bed.

"I'm sure God will think that a funny prayer," said Marigold.

"Well, don't you suppose He wants a little amusement sometimes?" demanded Gwennie. "Anyway, it's my own prayer. It isn't one somebody else made up for me. Gee, Marigold, what if there should be a nest of mice in this bed? There's a chaff tick."

What gruesome things Gwennie did think of. They had blown out their lamp and it was very dark. They were fourteen miles from home. The raindrops began to thud against the little windows. *Was* Tabby Derusha "cracked."

"Abel sent in some apples for you."

Gwennie, to use her own expression, let out a yelp. Tabby was standing by their bed. How could she have got there without their hearing her? Certainly it was eerie. And when she had gone out again they did not dare eat the apples for fear there were worms in them.

"What's that snuffing at the door?" whispered Gwen. "Do you s'pose it's old Abel Derusha turned into a wolf?"

"It's only Buttons," scoffed Marigold. But she was glad when a sudden snore proclaimed that Gwen had fallen asleep. Before she went to sleep herself Tabby Derusha came in again--silently as a shadow, with a little candle this time. She bent over the bed. Marigold, cold with sudden terror, kept her eyes shut and held her breath. Were they going to be killed? Smothered with pillows?

"Dear little children," said Tabby Derusha, lifting one of Gwen's lovely curls gently. "Hair soft as silk--sweet little faces--pretty little dears."

There was a touch soft as a rose-leaf on Marigold's cheek. Tabby gloated over them for a few minutes longer. Then she was gone, as noiselessly as she had come. But Marigold was no longer afraid. She felt as safe and as much at home as if she were in her own blue room at Cloud of Spruce. After all, it had been an int'resting day. And Gwen was all right. She hadn't stolen her prayer. Marigold said it over again under her breath--

the beautiful little prayer she loved because it *was* so beautiful and because Aunt Marigold had made it up for her--and went to sleep.

VI

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"I didn't sleep a wink the whole night," vowed Gwen.

"Never mind, here's a new morning--such a lovely new morning," said Marigold.

The rain was over. The southwest wind the Weed Man had promised Captain Simons was blowing. The clouds were racing before it. Down on the beach the water was purring in little blue ripples. The sky in the east was all rosy silver. The grass was green and wet on the high red cliffs. Over the harbour hung a milky mist. Then the rising sun rent it apart and made a rainbow of it. A vessel came sailing through it over a glistening path. Never, thought Marigold, had the world seemed so lovely.

"What are you doing?" said Gwen, struggling impatiently into her clothes, much annoyed because Buttons had got in after all and slept on her dress.

"I--I think--I'm praying," said Marigold dreamily.

VII

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Uncle Klön came for them in his car before breakfast was over.

"Are they very mad at Cloud of Spruce?" asked Gwennie. Rather soberly for her. She did not like Uncle Klön. He was always too many for her.

"There's a special Providence for children and idiots," said Uncle Klön gently. "Jim Donkin forgot to give the message till late last night and they were so relieved to find out where you had gone, that the dining-room rather sank into the background. You'd better not look again on blueberry wine when it is purple, Miss Gwen."

"It's a good thing we're too big to be spanked," whispered Gwen, when she saw Grandmother's face.

"I believe you," said Lucifer.

Chapter XIII.

A Ghost Is Laid

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I

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That affair of the blueberry wine was certainly a bad business. There was some secret talk at Cloud of Spruce of sending Gwennie home after it. But nothing came of it, and Gwennie never even knew it had been mooted. It would never do to offend Luther and Annie, Grandmother concluded, though for her part she couldn't understand Josephine. But the real reason was that they all liked Gwennie in spite of--or maybe because of--her deviltries. "An amusing compound of mischief and precocity," said Uncle Klon, who liked to be amused.

"A darn leetle minx," said Lazarre, but he ran his legs off for her. "A child of Beelzebub," said Salome, but kept the old stone cooky-jar full of hop-and-go-fetch-its for Gwennie. Gwennie might be saintly or devilish as the humour took her, but she was not a bit stuck-up about her looks and she had Annie Vincent's kind, ungrudging heart and Luther Lesley's utter inability to hold any spite. As for Marigold, she and Gwennie had some terrible spats, but they had so much fun between that the fights didn't greatly matter. Though Gwennie had a poisonous little tongue when she got mad and said some things that rankled--especially about Clementine.

Clementine's picture had been left on the orchard room wall when most of Old Grandmother's faded brides had been packed away in the oblivion of the garret. There she hung in the green gloom, with her ivory-white face, her sleek braided flow of hair, her pale beautiful hands and her long-lashed eyes forever entreating the lily. Marigold felt she would not have hated Clementine so much if she had looked squarely and a little arrogantly at you like the other brides--if you could have met her eyes and defied them.

But that averted, indifferent gaze, as if you didn't matter at all--as if what you felt or thought didn't matter at all. Oh, for the others Clementine Lesley might be dead, but for Marigold she was torturingly alive and she

knew Father had only married Mother for a housekeeper. All his love belonged to that disdainful Lady of the Lily. And Gwennie, suspecting this secret wound in Marigold's soul, turned the barb in it occasionally by singing the praises of Clementine's picture.

The only faint comfort Marigold had was a hope that if Clementine had lived to be old she might have become enormously fat like her mother up at Harmony village. A good many Lawrences lived in or about Harmony and none of them, it was whispered, cared very much for Lorraine, though they were always painfully polite to her. Marigold knew this, as she knew so many things older folk never dreamed of her knowing, and always felt whenever old Mrs. Lawrence's eye rested on her that she had no right to exist. If she could only have believed thoroughly that Clementine would have looked like her mother when she grew old she would not have been jealous of her.

For old Mrs. Lawrence was a funny old dame, and one is never jealous of funny people.

Mrs. Lawrence was very proud of her resemblance to Queen Victoria and dressed up to it. She had three chins, a bosom like a sheep and a harmless, if irritating, habit of shedding hairpins wherever she went. Her favourite adjective was "Christian," and she had a very decided dislike to being reminded that she was either fat or old. She constantly wore a brooch with Clementine's hair in it and when she talked of her daughter--as she did very often--she snuffled. In spite of this, Mrs. Lawrence had many good qualities and was a decent old soul enough, as Uncle Klon said.

But Marigold saw only her defects and foibles because that was all she wanted to see in Clementine's mother; and it rejoiced her when Uncle Klon poked fun at Mrs. Lawrence's pet peculiarity of saving all her children's boots. It was said she had a roomful of them--every boot or shoe that her family of four had ever worn from their first little slipper up. Which did nobody any harm and need not have given Marigold such fierce pleasure. But when was jealousy ever reasonable?

II

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Uncle Peter's son Royal had married and brought his bride home to Harmony. She was said to be unusually pretty, and even Aunt Josephine had said she was the most exquisite bride she had ever seen. There had been the usual clan jollifications in her honour, and now Uncle Klon and Aunt Marigold were giving a party for her--a "fancy dress" dance where all the young fry were to be masked. It sounded very int'resting to Marigold and very provocative to Gwennie as they listened to Mother and Grandmother talking it over at the supper-table. Both wished intensely that they could see that party. But both knew that they must go right to bed as soon as Mother and Grandmother had gone.

"And be good little girls," said Grandmother warningly.

"There's no fun in being a good little girl," said Gwennie, with a pout at Grandmother. "I don't see why we can't go to that party, too."

"You were not invited," said Mother.

"You are not old enough to go to parties," said Grandmother.

"Your day is coming," comforted Salome.

Uncle Klon came out from Harmony for them in his car--already dressed in his fancy costume--a great, flowered-velvet coat that had belonged to some Great-great across the sea, a real sword, and a powdered wig. With lace ruffles at wrist and breast. Mother and Grandmother were not wearing fancy dress, but Grandmother was very splendid in velvet and Mother very pretty in brown brocade and pearls. And Marigold felt delightfully that it was just like a bit out of a story, and she wished she could go up the hill and tell Sylvia about it. She had never even seen Sylvia since Gwennie came, and there were times when she was consumed with longing for her. But she never went up the hill. Gwennie simply must not find out about Sylvia.

"Run on in, kidlets, and go to bed now," said Uncle Klon, grinning rather maliciously, because he knew perfectly well how they hated it.

"Don't call me '*kidlet*,'" flashed Gwen.

After the car had purred off in the twilight, she sat down on the veranda steps and would not say a word. Such a visitation of silence was rare with Gwennie, but Marigold rather welcomed it. She was glad to sit and dream in the lovely twilight, while Lucifer skulked like a black demon among the flower-beds.

It was not the Lucifer of Old Grandmother's days. That Lucifer had gone where good cats go. But there had been another Lucifer to step into his four shoes, looking so exactly like him that in a few weeks it seemed just the same old Lucifer. There had been a procession of Lucifers and Witches for generations at Cloud of Spruce, all looking so much alike that Phidime and Lazarre thought they were one and the same and concluded they were the Old Lady's devils.

Salome, after milking, came along.

"I'm going to bed," she said. "I've got a headache. And it's time you went, too. There's lemonade and cookies for you in the pantry."

"Lemonade and cookies," said Gwennie scornfully, after Salome had gone in, leaving a couple of minxes at large in Cloud of Spruce.

"Lemonade and cookies! And they are having all kinds of ices and salads and cakes at the party."

"There's no use thinking about that," said Marigold with a sigh. "It's 9 o'clock. We might as well go to bed."

"Bed! *I'm* going to the party."

Marigold stared.

"The party? But you can't."

"Maybe I can't. But I will. I've been thinking it all out. We'll just go. It's only a mile in--we can easily walk it. We must be dressed up ourselves so that if any one sees us they'll think we belong to the party. There's heaps of things in those chests in the garret and I'll make masks. We won't go in the house--just peep in at the windows and see all the dresses and the fun."

So far had evil communications corrupted good manners that Marigold felt no qualms of conscience at all. It would certainly be int'resting. And she was quite wild to see that "exquisite bride" and all the wonderful costumes. Uncle Peter's Pete, she had heard, was going as a devil. The only thing that gave her to think was whether they could really get away with it.

"What if Grandmother catches us?" she said.

"A fig for your grandmother. She won't--and if she does, what then? She can't kill us. Have some gizzard."

Marigold had lots of "gizzard" and in ten minutes they were in the garret tiptoeing cautiously lest Salome hear them in the retreat of her kitchen chamber. The garret was rather a spooky place by candlelight, and Marigold had never been there after dark before.

Great bunches of dried herbs hung from the nails in the rafters, together with bundles of goose-wings, hanks of yarns and various discarded coats. Grandmother's big loom, where she still wove homespun blankets, was before the window. An old, old piano was in one corner and there was some legend of a ghostly lady who played on it by times. And there was a chest under the eaves filled with silken dresses in which gay girls had danced years ago. Marigold had never seen the contents of that chest, but Gwennie seemed to know all about them. She must have been rummaging, Marigold thought. Gwennie *had*--one rainy day when nobody knew where she was--and she knew what was in the big chest, but she did not know--and neither did Marigold--that the little gown of misty green crêpe with tiny daisies sprinkled over it and a satin girdle with a rhinestone buckle in it, which was lying in a box on the top of the contents of the chest, had been a dress of Clementine's. Marigold knew that Clementine had been buried in her wedding-dress and that old Mrs. Lawrence had taken away the rest of her pretty gowns. But this one had been overlooked; perhaps Mrs. Lawrence did not know it still existed. The first Mrs. Leander had her own reasons for keeping it and it had remained in the box in which she had placed it all those years.

"Here's the very thing for you," said Gwen. "*I'm* going as a fortune-teller, with this scarlet cloak and hood and the pack of cards. They're all

here together--somebody must have worn them once to a fancy ball."

Marigold fingered the emerald satin of the girdle lovingly. She adored satin.

"But I can't wear this," she objected. "It's miles too big for me."

"Put it on," ordered Gwen. "I can fix it for you. I'm a crackerjack at that. Ma says I'm a born dressmaker. Let's go down to our room. Salome'll hear us creaking about up here."

Marigold put on the daisy dress, with its pretty, short sleeves of lace and its round low neck. Oh, it was pretty even if it were old-fashioned and wrinkled. Marigold was tall for her ten years and Clementine had been small and slight; still the dress was too long--and loose. But resourceful Gwennie, with a paper of safety-pins, worked marvels. The skirt was looped up at intervals all around and the pins hidden under clusters of daisies Gwen got off an old hat and which matched the daisies in the dress admirably.

"Now get your good slippers and pink silk stockings," commanded Gwen, sprinkling her own cloak and the green dress lavishly with Mother's violet water. "I've got to make our masks."

Which she proceeded to do, slashing ruthlessly into Old Grandmother's widow "fall" of stiff black crêpe. Then she put on her own red stockings and fixed up a "wand" for herself out of an old umbrella handle with a silvery Christmas-tree ball at the end and a Japanese snake of scarlet paper wreathed around the handle. Nobody could deny that Gwen was past mistress in her own particular brand of magic, and Marigold was lost in admiration of her cleverness. A few minutes later two black-faced figures, one in green and one in red, slipped silently out of Cloud of Spruce and fled along the dark Harmony road, while Salome slept the sleep of the just in the kitchen chamber and Lucifer told the Witch of Endor that he'd be condemned if he ever let that young demon from Rush Hill walk him about the yard on his hind legs again.

III

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Marigold, who was never frightened in the dark if she had any one with her, enjoyed the walk to the village. It was a fairy night, with eerie pixie voices in the bracken. Why were the clouds racing across the moonlit sky in such a hurry? To what mysterious sky-tryst were they hastening? An occasional rabbit frisked across the moonlit road. Marigold was half sorry when they reached the village.

Luckily Uncle Klon's house was in the outskirts, so they had no need of traversing the streets. They slipped up the side lane, squirmed through a gap in the privet hedge, boldly walked across the lawn and found themselves at the window of the big room where the dancing was going on. It was open and the blind was up, and they had a full view of the inside.

Marigold caught her breath with delight. Oh, it was fairyland. It was like a little glimpse into another world. For the second time in her life Marigold thought it might be really quite nice to be grown up. She remembered the first time. Long ago, when she had been only six, curled up on the ottoman in the spare room, watching an eighteen-year-old cousin dressing for a dance. When would she be like that? Not for twelve years. She groaned aloud.

"What's the matter, Sugar-pie? Sick?"

"No. It's only--it takes so long to grow up," sighed Marigold.

"Not so long as you think," remarked Grandmother, passing through the hall.

And now again, for a moment, Marigold felt that it really look too long to grow up.

The room was rosily lighted by a gay enormous Chinese lantern hung from the ceiling. The floor was filled with dancers in the most wonderful dresses. There was gaiety in the very air. Lovely low laughter was

everywhere, drifting out over the lawn in front and the flower-garden behind. Aunt Marigold's dog was howling heart-brokenly to the music in his kennel. Such flowers--such lights--such music--such dresses. Most of the younger guests were masked but few of the older ones were, and Marigold liked best to watch them because she knew them. There was Aunt Anne, in grey lace over amber silk--Marigold had never seen Aunt Anne so magnificent before! Cousin Jen, with a diamond wreath in her hair, and Cousin Barbara, who always had runs in her stockings, and Cousin Madge, who was the best dancer in the Lesley clan. Her very slippers would have danced by themselves the night through. Aunt Emma, who still wore her hair pompadour and old Uncle Percy, whose wife had her hair bobbed three months before he ever noticed it. Old Uncle Nathaniel, with his great shock of grey hair reaching to his shoulders and looking, so Uncle Klon was wont to say, like a lion that had eaten a Christian who disagreed with him. And, sitting maskless by Aunt Marigold in the palm corner, a creature so lovely, in her gown of pale pink chiffon embroidered with silver, with her hair folded about her head like a golden hood, that Marigold felt at once that this was the "exquisite bride." *Exquisite* was the word. Marigold could hardly drag her eyes from her. It had been worth it all, just to see her.

Mother was dancing--actually dancing--and Grandmother was sitting by the wall, looking as if she didn't think much of fox-trots and tangos. Beside her, a stately old dowager in mauve satin, with hair arranged a la Victoria, and a cameo brooch with Clementine's hair in it. The sight of Mrs. Lawrence spoiled things for Marigold. She was quite ready to turn away when Gwen said,

"We've seen all we can see here. Let's take a sneak around to the dining-room and have a look at the supper."

But the dining-room blinds were down and they could see nothing.

"We'll go right in and see it," said Gwen.

"Oh, do you think its safe?"

"Of course, it's safe. Look at all the rigs here. We'll never be noticed. I'm going to see all that's to be seen, you bet."

In they went. As Gwen said, nobody noticed them. The supper-table proved such a dream that they hung over it breathlessly. Never in her life had Marigold seen such *pretty* eats--such dainty cakes and cakelets, such wonderful striped sandwiches, such beautiful dishes. Cloud of Spruce could put up a solid banquet, but this alluring daintiness was something new. Gwen perceived sourly that there was no chance of "swiping" anything--there were too many waitresses around, so, after they had looked their fill, she pulled Marigold grumpily away.

"Let's take a peep at the other room again and get out."

Hitherto all had gone well. They were reckless with success. Boldly they crossed the hall and boldly they stood in the doorway of the dancing-room. The floor was not so crowded now. The August night was warm and many of the dancers had gone out to the moonlit lawn. More of the old folks were sitting around the room. Mrs. Lawrence was more Queen-Victorian than ever as she languidly plied a huge ostrich fan of the vintage of the nineties. Old Uncle Percy was down at the end of the hall telephoning, and shouting at the top of his voice as usual. Marigold thought of the clan story about him and snickered.

"What is that racket?" a caller in Uncle Percy's office had once asked.

"Oh, that's only old Mr. Lesley talking to his wife down in Montague," the junior partner had replied.

"Well, why doesn't he phone her instead of yelling across the Island like that?" said the caller.

Gwen turned to see why Marigold was shaking with laughter. Then the end of the world came. Gwen stepped on a small ball that somehow happened to be lying under the fringe of the portière, shot wildly into the room and fell with a curdling scream. As she felt herself shooting she grabbed Marigold--who did not fall but went staggering across the room on the slippery floor and there sat neatly down at the very feet of old Mrs. Lawrence, who had just begun to tell Grandmother how many times she had had the flu.

The next moment Mrs. Lawrence was all but in hysterics, and the room was full. Marigold had scrambled to her feet and was standing there

dazedly, but Gwen was still sprawled on the floor. It was Uncle Klone who picked her up and stripped the mask from her face.

"I knew it was you." He stood her beside Marigold, from whose face some one else had removed the mask.

"Oh, Marigold," cried Mother in horror. But old Mrs. Lawrence was still the centre of attraction. Until she could be revived and calmed nobody had any time to spare for Gwen and Marigold.

"Clementine's dress--Clementine's dress," Mrs. Lawrence was shrieking and sobbing. "The dress--she wore--when she came--in to tell me she had just--promised to marry--Leander Lesley. I didn't think--you'd let--your daughter--insult me so--Lorraine."

"Oh, I had nothing to do with it--truly I hadn't," almost sobbed Mother.

"My heart broke--when Clementine died--and now to have it brought up like this--*here*--" people made out between Mrs. Lawrences yelps. "Oh--I shouldn't--have come. I had a presentiment--one of my dark--forebodings came to me."

"Calm yourself, Mrs. Lawrence--here, try a sip of water," said Aunt Marigold.

"Calm--myself! It's--enough--to kill me. We all--die--sudden--unexpected--death--Oh, Lorraine--Lorraine--you took her place--but your daughter--might have left--her dress--her sacred--little--dress--alone."

"Oh, I didn't know," cried Marigold. She wanted to cry--but cry she would not before all those people. Had not Old Grandmother once said that a Lesley should never cry before the world? Yet it was plain to be seen she had involved Mother in some terrible disgrace. All the sense of mystery and romance had fled. She felt that she and Gwennie were only naughty, silly children who had been ignominiously found out.

Mrs. Lawrence yelped more wildly than ever.

"You'd better have her carried upstairs," said Aunt Marigold. "She really has a weak heart--I'm afraid--"

"Oh, Clementine--Clementine," wailed Mrs. Lawrence. "To think--of the dress--you wore--being *here*. That--dreadful--child--Lorraine--how could you--"

Gwen, who had hitherto been rather dazed and sobered by the suddenness of the catastrophe, now wrenched her shoulder from Uncle Klön's restraining hand and sprang forward.

"Shut your face, you old screech-owl," she said furiously. "You've been told Aunt Lorraine had nothing to do with it. Neither had Marigold. It was *me* found that mouldy old dress and made Marigold put it on. Now, get that through your dippy old head and stop making a fuss over nothing. Oh, glare--glare! You'd like to boil me in oil and pick my bones, but I don't care *that* for you, you fat old cow."

And Gwen snapped her fingers under outraged Queen Victoria's very nose.

Mrs. Lawrence, finding some one else could make more noise than she could, ceased yooping. She got on her feet, scattering a shower of hairpins on the floor, with the noted Carberry temper sticking out of every kink and curve of her abundant figure, and assisted by Aunt Marigold and Uncle Percy, moved slowly to the stairs.

"One must--make allowances--of course," she sobbed, for the things--children will do. I am--glad--it wasn't your fault--Lorraine. I didn't--think--I had--deserved that--of you."

"Dear Mrs. Lawrence, don't be angry," implored Lorraine.

"Angry--oh, no. I'm not angry--I'm only--heart-broken. If God--"

"You might as well leave God out of it," said Gwen.

"Gwen, keep quiet," said Uncle Klön furiously.

Whereupon Gwen threw back her head and yelled loud and long.

Everybody was now in the room or the hall, or crowding up to the windows outside. Marigold felt as if everyone in the world were staring at her.

"Could you run us home, Horace?" said Grandmother wearily. "I'm tired--and this has about finished me. Do you want to stay for supper, Lorraine?"

"No--oh, no," said Lorraine, struggling to keep back her tears.

In the back seat of the car Marigold cried for sorrow and Gwen howled for vexation of spirit. But Uncle Klön laughed so uproariously that

Grandmother said nervously:

"Horace, *do* pay attention to your steering. I don't see how you can laugh. It's been simply a terrible affair. If it had been any one but old Mrs. Lawrence!"

"Good for her," said Uncle Klon. "I don't believe any one ever told her the truth about herself before. It was priceless."

Gwen stopped sniffing and pricked up her ears. After all, there *was* something nice about Uncle Klon.

"But it *must* have been a shock to see Clementine's dress suddenly come before her like that," said Grandmother. What was the matter with Grandmother's voice? Grandmother couldn't be laughing--she *couldn't*. But was she trying *not* to laugh? "You know, Horace, she really worshipped Clementine--"

"Clementine was a good little scout," said Uncle Klon. "I always liked her. It was to her credit that she wasn't spoiled by such a silly old mother."

"She was a pretty thing," said Grandmother. "I remember her in that dress. People raved about her skin and her hands."

"Clem certainly had pretty hands. It was a pity she had such huge feet," said Uncle Klon.

"She couldn't help her big feet," rebuked Grandmother.

"Of course not. But they were certainly--generous," laughed Uncle Klon. "No wonder the old lady kept all her boots. Too much good leather to waste. Clem had only one quarrel in her life that she never made up. The quarrel with Emmy Carberry. Emmy was going to marry a man neither the Carberrys nor the Lawrences approved of. 'I wouldn't be in your shoes for the world, Emmy,' said Clem solemnly."

"Don't worry, Clem darling," said Emmy, sticking out a foot in her little Number Two's beside poor Clem's brogans. 'You could never get into them.' Of course, Clem never forgave her."

Just then in a twinkling something happened to poor, crushed, weeping Marigold in the back seat. The spirit of jealousy departed from her forever--at least as far as Clementine was concerned. *Clementine had big feet*. And Mother had feet that even Uncle Klon thought perfection. Oh--

Marigold smiled through her tears in the darkness--oh, she could afford to pity Clementine.

"Give me a good reason why I shouldn't take the hide off you," said Uncle Klon as he lifted Gwen from the car.

"I made you laugh," said Gwen saucily.

"You shameless young hussy," said Uncle Klon.

Grandmother said nothing. Of what use was it saying anything to Gwen? Of what use was it trying to drown fish? And she was going home the next evening. Besides, in her secret soul, Grandmother was not sorry that Caroline Lawrence had got her "come uppance" at last.

"Well, this is the end of Wednesday. Now for Thursday. But they might have given us a bite to eat," grumbled Gwen as she rolled into bed. "I wish I'd swiped that little plate of striped sandwiches. But did you ever see anything so funny as that old dragon yowling? Didn't I shut her up! I hope the devil flies away with her before morning. After all I'm glad I'm going home to-morrow night, Marigold. I like you better than I ever dreamed I'd do after Aunt Jo's sickening praises. But your grandmother gets my goat."

"Aren't you going to say your prayers?" reminded Marigold.

"No use waking God up at this hour of the night," said Gwen drowsily.

She was sleeping like a lamb before Marigold had finished her prayers. Marigold was very very thankful and told God so. Not exactly that Clementine had big feet, of course, but that the horrible feeling of hatred and jealousy had gone completely out of her little heart. It was so comfortable.

Mother gave Marigold a little scolding in the morning.

"Mrs. Lawrence might have died of heart-failure. Think how you would have felt. As it is, we heard this morning that she cried all night--cried *violently*," Mother added, fearing that Marigold was not just alive to the awfulness of what she had done.

"Never you worry," said Salome. "It served old Madam right. Her and her old boots. Thinking she's like Queen Victoria. But all the same, I'm thankful that limb of Satan is going home to-night. I should really like to

have a few minutes' peace. I feel as if I'd been run through a meat-chopper these three weeks. Heaven help the clan when *she* grows up."

"Amen," said Lucifer with an emphatic whisk of his tail.

Gwennie went home that evening.

"Now maybe we can call our souls our own again," said Salome. And yet she did not say it very briskly. Nor did she snub Lazarre when he remarked mournfully,

"By gosh, you t'ink somebody was die in de house."

The lost serenity of Cloud of Spruce had returned to it, only slightly rippled next day by the arrival of an inky postcard from Gwen, addressed to Grandmother.

"I forgot to tell you that I dropped one of your best silver spoons through a crack in the apple-barn floor day before yesterday. I think you can get it easily if you crawl under the barn."

Marigold missed her badly for two days and in a lesser degree for the third. But after all, it was very nice to be alone with Sylvia again. Laughter and frolics were good things, but one didn't want to laugh and frolic *all* the time. She was like one tasting the beauty of quiet after days of boisterous, stimulating wind. The velvet faces of the pansies were waiting for her in the twilight and her own intimate, beloved trees welcomed her once more to their fraternity. When she shut the little Green Gate behind her she went into a different world--where one could be happy and have beautiful hours without being noisy all the time. She turned and looked down on the old vine-hung house and the harbour beyond. There was no sound in the great quiet world but the song of the wind. And there were soft, dewy shadows in every green meadow-nook of Mr. Donkin's farm.

"If I could have picked my place to be born, I'd have picked Cloud of Spruce," she whispered, holding out her arms as if she wanted to put them around the house--this beautiful old place that so many hands had made and so many hearts had loved.

And Clementine's ghost was forever laid. The next time she went to the graveyard she stole over and put a little flower on Clementine's grave--poor pretty Clementine. She no longer felt that she wanted to push her

away from Father's side. And she knew now that Father hadn't married Mother just for a housekeeper. For she had told Mother the whole story, and Mother had laughed a little and cried a little.

"I was never jealous of Clementine. They were children. He did love her very dearly. But to me he gave the love of his manhood. I *know*."

So Marigold had no further grudge against Clementine's picture. She could look at it calmly and agree that it was very beautiful. But once she gave herself the satisfaction of remarking to it,

"It's a good thing your feet don't show."

Chapter XIV.

Bitterness of Soul

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I

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"Here's a new morning," said Marigold blithe as the day. Somehow she was unusually happy that autumn-tinted morning as she went to school. She always felt as if she had wings on a day like this. She loved October--loved it well in its first crimson pomp, when frosted leaves hung like a flame and the asters along the road were like pale purple songs; and even better in its later quiet of brown autumnal fields and the shadowy interfoldings of the hills over the bay; with its evenings full of the nice smell of burning leaves in Lazzarre's bonfires and all its apples to be picked and stored in the apple-barn, until such time as it grew too cold and they must be put away in barrels in the cellar.

A group of girls tittered a little as Marigold passed them on the playground. She did not mind very much. Marigold was, in truth, rather a lonely creature in school. She had never "made up" with any of the girls particularly, and with the new seats that held only one there was not the olden chance for intimacies. Not one of them went her way home. She did not quarrel with them and she played games with them at noon-hour and recess, but in some mysterious way she was not of them and they faintly resented it. "Stuck-up," they called her; though Marigold was not in the least stuck-up.

The sense of cleavage deepened as she grew older, instead of disappearing. Sometimes Marigold felt wistfully that it would be nice to have a real chum, of the kind you read about in books--not a fitful visitor like Varvara or Gwennie, bringing a wild whirl of colour into your life and then vanishing as completely as if they had never existed. But she could not find her in Harmony school. And being of a nature that could not compromise with second best when best was denied Marigold made no lesser friendships. There was always Sylvia--though Sylvia was not *quite*

as real as she had once seemed. The old magic still worked but it was not quite so magical now.

This morning Marigold felt something new in the school atmosphere. It was not her imagination that the girls whispered and looked at her--with much of curiosity and a little malice. Marigold felt it all through the forenoon and at recess, but no one said anything in particular to her until noon-hour. Then, as her class sat in a circle among the fern-smothered spruce-stumps on the banks of the brook below the schoolhouse the barrage opened.

"How do you like Mr. Thompson, Marigold?" asked Em Stanton with a giggle.

Marigold wondered why upon earth Mr. Thompson's name was dragged into it. He was the new minister who had come to Harmony in the spring. Marigold was not as yet vitally interested in new ministers. It had been a rather exciting time for the older folks. It would be hard to fill old Mr. Henry's place--Mr. Henry who had filled the pulpit of Harmony church for thirty years and was "a saint if ever there was one."

"He used to make me weep six times every Sunday," sighed Miss Amelia Martin. "I hoped my time would come before his. I've always felt he would be such a lovely man to bury you."

"Oh, Lord," Aunt Kitty Standish had prayed at the first Aid meeting after his retirement, "Oh, Lord, send us as good a minister as Mr. Henry--but, oh, Lord, you can't do it."

Nobody thought Mr. Thompson as good but he seemed the best of the candidates.

"He's a good preacher," said Salome, "but its a pity he's a widower. He'll marry in the congregation and that'll spoil him." Adding, however, by way of a comforting after-thought, "But I'm glad they've picked him. I like a comfortable-looking minister."

Mr. Thompson had one daughter about Marigold's age--round and rosy little Jane Thompson, who went, however, to the village school, the church and manse being there, so that Marigold saw little of her save in Sunday school, where they were in the same class. Jane always knew her golden

text and memory-verses and catechism-questions perfectly well--one would expect a minister's daughter to do that. But it didn't make her any the more int'resting, Marigold thought. As for Mr. Thompson, she liked him when she thought about him at all--which was, to tell the truth, only when he called at Cloud of Spruce. She liked the jolly, unministerial twinkle in his eye especially. Now, why should Em Stanton be so suddenly interested in her feelings towards Mr. Thompson? A disagreeable little sensation came over Marigold--as if a faint chill wind had blown over the secret places of her soul.

"I like Mr. Thompson very well," she said stiffly.

Em gave another irritating snigger and exchanged glances with the other girls.

"That is a good thing," she said significantly.

They expected Marigold to ask why it was a good thing, but she would not. She bit a dainty little crescent out of a hop-and-go-fetch-it and chewed it remotely.

"How will you like him for a stepfather?" said Velma Church slyly.

That particular hop-and-go-fetch-it was never eaten. Marigold laid it down in her box and stared at Velma.

"Didn't you *know*?"

"Know what?" said Marigold through pale lips.

"That your mother is going to marry him?"

Marigold wondered what had happened to her--or to the world. Had somebody slapped her in the face? Had the sun been blotted out of the sky?

"I don't--believe it--" she said helplessly.

"Everybody says so," said Em triumphantly. "We thought you knew, of course. It's funny your mother hasn't told you. Why, he spends half his time at Cloud of Spruce."

This was, of course, an exaggeration. But Marigold suddenly remembered with horror that Mr. Thompson had made a great many calls lately. Of course Grandmother had had a slight attack of bronchitis; but a

dreadful conviction assailed her that Mr. Henry had never called so often, even when Salome had pneumonia. She stared miserably at Em.

"They're to be married before spring, *I* heard," said Fanny Collins. "Your mother was in Summerside the other day helping him pick paper for the manse. Aunt Lindy saw them."

"My, won't *your* nose be out of joint," said Sally McLean.

"You'll have to be Marigold Thompson after the wedding," said Lula Nelson.

"They'll send you to a boarding-school, true's you live," said Dot Church.

None of these jabs produced any sign of life in Marigold. She sat as one stunned. Oh, if she could only be alone--far, far away from these hateful girls--to face this!

"Ma says your mother isn't a bit suitable for a minister's wife," said Velma.

"Too dressy and extravagant," added Em.

"Aunt Beth says his first wife was the finest woman that ever lived," said Pet Dixon.

"It's a wonder your mother would marry a bluenose," said Janet Irving.

"I guess she has a hard enough time with the old lady," said Pet.

"Ma says Mrs. Leander has perked up amazing this fall," said Lula.

The school-bell rang and the ring of malicious faces melted away. Marigold followed them slowly into the school. Her feet were like lead and her spirit that had "flown on feathers" in the morning was heavier still. The world had all at once got so very dark. Oh, *could* it be true? It couldn't--Marigold had another awful recollection.

"Mrs. Lesley's engaged," Salome had said gently one day the preceding week, as she had shut the door in the face of a too-persistent insurance-man.

Oh, yes, it must be true.

"Salome," said Marigold that evening, "do you think God ever does things out of spite?"

"Just listen to her," said Salome. "You mustn't ask such wicked questions. That's as bad as anything Gwen Lesley could say."

"I'm sorry," said Marigold with more persistence, "but *does* He?"

"Of course not," said Salome. "It's the Old Gentleman that's spiteful. What's the matter with you? You don't look just right. Have you got a cold?"

Marigold felt that a cold had got her. She was cold and sick to the core of her soul. Everything had been torn out of her little life at once. And not a word could she say to Mother about it.

II

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Marigold had thought she was done forever with jealousy when she discovered the truth about Clementine's feet. And now she was in the grip of a jealousy tenfold worse. *That* had been merely a ghostly vexation of the soul. *This* was a burning torment of the heart. Perhaps Marigold was never more bitterly unhappy in all her life than she was during the two months following that day by the brook. Everything fed her suspicion and jealousy. She was filled with hate. She could not enjoy anything because she was hating Mr. Thompson so much. She even hated poor, innocent little Jane Thompson. Would Jane call Mother "mother?" If she did!

November came in, with its dark, dull twilights that made Marigold feel grown up and old--with its mournful winds rustling the dead leaves on its cold, desolate, moonless nights--with its wintry song of old grey fields and the sorrowful grey ghosts of the goldenrod in the fence corners. And Mr. Thompson's motor-lights burning cheerfully at the gate in so many of its chill evenings. Marigold felt that it was going to be November forever. "To-morrow" had once been a word of magic to her. Now "to-morrow" would only be more cruel than to-day.

But it was a torturing satisfaction to hate Mr. Thompson. She felt sure she had always hated him. Lucifer certainly had--and cats *knew*. You couldn't hoodwink Lucifer. Nothing about him pleased Marigold any more. She remembered what Lazarre had once said about another Frenchman who had done something that reflected on his race.

"But you surely don't want to see him hanged," protested Salome.

"No--no--oh, no, course we not lak to see heem hang," acknowledged Lazarre, "but we lak to see heem *destroyed*."

That exactly expressed Marigold's feelings towards Mr. Thompson. She would not want to see him hanged but she would cheerfully have had him "destroyed." It was a certain ephemeral satisfaction to name the big

dead Scotch thistle behind the apple-barn "Rev. Mr. Thompson" and cut it down and burn it. She looked at him drinking his tea and wished there were poison in the cup. Not enough to kill him--oh, no, just enough to make him awfully sick and disgusted with the idea of marrying any one. Once, when he grew angry over what some one in the church had done and pounded the table, Marigold had said under her breath to Mother, "See what a husband you'll have!"

She wished she could refuse to go to church but she could not do that, so she sat there scowling blackly at him. When he came to the house she was the very incarnation of disdain. And he never noticed it! To be disdainful and not have it noticed was unendurable. Half the time he couldn't even remember her name and called her Daffodil. Once he grew fatherly and tried to stroke her hair. "I'm not a cat," said Marigold rudely, jerking away. She had to beg his pardon for that. Cloud of Spruce couldn't imagine why Marigold had taken such a scunner to the minister.

"He preaches such lovely sermons," said Salome reproachfully. "He can draw tears to my eyes."

"So can onions," said Marigold savagely.

And yet when Em Stanton told her that Stanton *père* said Mr. Thompson was a shallow-pated creature Marigold flashed pale lightning at her. This would never do. If Mother were really going to marry him he must be defended.

"Oh, all right," said Em, walking off. "I didn't know you liked him. I didn't suppose any one could like a bluenose."

"He isn't a bluenose," said Marigold, who hadn't the slightest idea what a bluenose was.

"He *is*. Your Uncle Klon told me so himself the day he picked me up on the road. We met the minister in his car and your Uncle Klon said, 'Trust a bluenose to bust the speed-limit every time.' And *I* said, 'Is Mr. Thompson a bluenose?' and he said, 'The very bluest of them.' So there now!"

"But what is a bluenose?" demanded Marigold wildly. She *must* know the worst.

"Well, I'm not sure but I *think* it is a dope-fiend," said Em cautiously. "I asked Vera Church and she said she thought that's what it was. It's a terrible thing. They see hidjus faces wherever they look. There's nothing too bad for them to do. And they're that sly. Nobody would ever suspect them at first until they get so they can't hide it. Then they have to be put away."

Put away! What did "put away" mean? But Marigold would ask no more questions of Em. Every question answered seemed to make a bad matter worse. But if Mr. Thompson ever had to be "put away" she wished it might happen before he married Mother.

Things constantly happened that tortured her. Mr. Thompson came more and more often to Cloud of Spruce. He took Mother to Summerside to pick more wallpaper; he came one evening and said to Mother,

"I want to consult you about Jane's adenoids."

Mother took him into the orchard room and closed the door. Marigold haunted the hall outside like an uneasy little ghost. What was going on behind that closed door? *She* had a sore throat, but was Mother troubled over *that*? Not at all. She was wrapped up in Jane's adenoids--whatever they were.

When nothing happened to torture her she tortured herself. Would she have to leave dear Cloud of Spruce when Mother married Mr. Thompson? Or perhaps Mother would leave her all alone there with Grandmother, as Millie Graham's mother had done. And there would be no one to meet her any more when she came from school; or stand at the door in the twilight calling her in to shelter out of the dark; or sit by her bed and talk to her before she went to sleep. Though now her bedtime talks with Mother were not what they had been. Always some veil of strangerhood hung between them.

Lorraine feared her child was growing away from her--growing into the hard Blaisdell reserve perhaps. She could not ask Marigold what had changed her--that would be to admit change. When Aunt Anne wanted Mother to let Marigold go to her for a visit and Mother consented, Marigold refused almost tearfully--though she had once wanted so much

to go. Suppose Mother would get married while she was away? Suppose that was why she wanted her to go to Aunt Anne's? And they wouldn't even have the same name! How terrible it would be to hear people say, "Oh, that is Marigold Lesley--Mrs. *Thompson's* daughter, you know."

They might even call her Marigold Thompson!

Marigold felt she could not bear it. Why, she wouldn't be wanted anywhere. Oh, couldn't something--or somebody--prevent it?

"I wonder if it would do any good to pray about it," she thought wearily and concluded it wouldn't. It would be of no use to pray against a minister, of course. Gwen had said she jumped up and down and screamed until she got her own way. But Marigold could not quite see herself doing that. Just suppose she did. Why the brides in the garret would come rushing down--Clementine would at last look up from her lily--Old Grandmother would jump out of her frame in the orchard room. But still Mother would marry Mr. Thompson. Mother who was looking so pretty and blooming this fall. Before she knew this ghastly thing Marigold had been so pleased when people said, "How well Lorraine is looking." Now it was an insult.

As Christmas grew near, Cloud of Spruce was fairly haunted by Marigold's sad little face. "How thin you're getting, darling," said Mother anxiously.

"Jane Thompson's fat enough," said Marigold pettishly.

Mother smiled. She thought Marigold was a little jealous of the rose-faced Jane. Probably some Josephinian person had been praising Jane too much. Mother thought she understood--and Marigold thought *she* understood. And still the gulf of misunderstanding between them widened and deepened.

Would this be the last Christmas she would ever spend with Mother? The day before Christmas they went to the graveyard as usual. Marigold crushed the holly wreath down on Father's grave with savage intensity. *She* hadn't forgotten him, if Mother had.

"And I'll never call *him* 'Father,'" she sobbed. "Not if they kill me."

III

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The Christmas reunion was at Aunt Marcia's that year, and Grandmother could not go because her bronchitis was worse and Mother would not leave her. Marigold was glad. She was in no mood for Christmas reunions.

In the afternoon Salome got Lazarre to hitch up the buggy and drove herself over to the village to see some old friends. She took Marigold with her and Marigold prowled about the streets while Salome gossiped. It was a very mild, still day. The wind had fallen asleep in the spruce woods behind South Harmony and great beautiful flakes were floating softly down. Some impulse she could not resist drew her to the manse. Would Mother soon be living I here? Such an ugly square house, with not even a tree about it. And no real garden. Only a little kitchen-plot off to one side. With an old pig rooting in it.

Marigold perceived that the pig was in Mr. Thompson's parsnip-bed. Well, what of it? *She* wasn't going to tell Mr. Thompson. He could look after his own parsnips. She turned and walked deliberately to the main street. Then she turned as deliberately back. If Mother were living in that manse in the spring she must have parsnips. Mother was so fond of parsnips.

Marigold went firmly up the walk and up the steps and to the door. There she stood for a few minutes, apparently turned to stone. The door was open. And the door of a room off the hall was open. An unfurnished room, still littered with the mess paperhangers make but with beautiful walls blossoming in velvety flowers. And Mr. Thompson was standing in this room with Third Cousin Ellice Lesley from Summerside. Marigold knew "Aunt" Ellice very well. A comfortable woman who never counted calories and always wore her hair in smooth glossy ripples just like the wave marks on the sand. Aunt Ellice was not handsome, but as old Mr. McAllister said, she was "a useful wumman--a verra useful wumman." She

was also a well-off woman and she wore just now a very smart hat and a rich plush coat with a big red rose pinned to the collar.

And Mr. Thompson was kissing her!

Marigold turned and stole noiselessly away--but not before she had heard Mr. Thompson say,

"Sweetums," and Aunt Ellice say "Honey-boy!"

The pig was still rooting in the parsnips. Let him root--while the minister kissed women he had no business to kiss--women with complexions like tallow candles and ankles like sausages and eyes so shallow that they looked as if they were pasted on their faces. And called them "Sweetums!"

Marigold was so full of indignation for her mother's sake that she would not wait for Salome. She tore homeward through the white flakes to Cloud of Spruce, and found Mother keeping some tryst with the past before a jolly open fire in the orchard room.

"Mother," cried Marigold in breathless fury, "Mr. Thompson's kissing Aunt Ellice--in the manse--*kissing* her."

"Well, why shouldn't he kiss her?" asked Mother amusedly.

"Don't you--*care*?"

"Care? Why should I care? He is going to marry Aunt Ellice in two weeks' time."

Marigold stared. All her life seemed to have been drained out of her body and concentrated in her eyes.

"I--thought--that--*you* were going to marry him, Mother."

"Me! Why, Marigold, whatever put such a silly idea into your head, darling?"

Marigold continued to stare. Great tears slowly formed in her eyes and rolled down her cheeks.

"Marigold--Marigold!" Mother folded her arms about her and drew her to her knee. "Why are you so disappointed because I'm not going to marry Mr. Thompson?"

Disappointed!

"I'm so happy--so happy, Mother," sobbed Marigold. "I was so afraid you were."

"And that's why you've been so funny to him. Marigold, why didn't you ask me--"

"I couldn't bear to. I was so afraid you'd say it was true."

Lorraine Lesley cuddled her baby closer. She understood and did not laugh at the torture the little soul had endured.

"Darling, no one who had loved your father could ever love any one else. I've *had* love--and now I have its memory--and *you*. That is enough for me."

"Mother," whispered Marigold, "were you--disappointed because--I wasn't a boy?"

"Never. Not for one minute. I wanted you to be a girl. And so did your father. There hadn't been a little girl at Cloud of Spruce for so long, he said."

Marigold sat very still with her face against her mother's. She knew this was one of the moments that last forever.

IV

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Mr. Thompson was such a nice man. Such a nice, jolly, friendly man. She hoped that pig hadn't eaten *all* his parsnips. She was dreadfully sorry for him because he wasn't going to get Mother, but Aunt Ellice would do very well. She was so useful. A ministers wife should be useful. And Jane was a darling. How jolly it was not to hate anybody any more. Life and she were good friends again.

It had stopped snowing. A big round silvery moon was floating up over a snowy hill. The little hollow in Mr. Donkin's field that would be a pool, blue-flagged, in summer, was a round white dimple, as if some giantess had pressed her finger down. The orchard was full of fine, faint blue shadows on the snow. It was a lovely world and life was beautiful. The paper that day had said a king's son had been born in Europe and a millionaire's son in Montreal. A far more interesting event which the paper had not chronicled, was that the Witch of Endor had three lovely kittens in the apple-barn. And to-morrow she would go up the hill and tryst again with Sylvia.

Chapter XV.

One Clear Call

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I

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I am afraid that if Marigold could have defined her state of mind when her mother told her she must go to the missionary meeting in the church that evening, she would have said she was bored with the prospect. For a little girl who had three fourth cousins in the foreign-mission field it must be confessed that Marigold was shamefully indifferent to missionary work in general.

She had planned to spend the evening with Sylvia and she didn't want to exchange Sylvia's alluring company for a dull, stupid, poky, old missionary meeting. The adjectives are Marigold's, not mine, and if you blame her for them, please remember that very few lasses of eleven, outside of memoirs, have any very clear ideas of the heathen in their blindness. For Marigold, foreign missions were something that grown-ups and ministers naturally took to but which were far removed from her sphere of thought and action. So she didn't see why she should be dragged out to hear a foreign missionary speak. She had heard one the night she went with Gwennie--a queer, sun-burned spectacled man, tremendously in earnest but dreadfully dull. And Marigold considered she had had enough of it. But Grandmother could not go out after night because of her rheumatism and Salome had a sore foot; and Mother, for some strange reason, was set on going. It seemed that the speaker of the evening was a lady and an old schoolmate of hers. She wanted Marigold for company. Marigold would have done anything and gone anywhere for Mother--even to a missionary meeting. So she trotted resignedly along the pleasant, star-lit road with Mother and thought mainly about the new dress of apricot georgette that Mother, in spite of Grandmother's pursed lips, had promised her for Willa Rogers's birthday-party.

Marigold got her first shock when the missionary rose to speak. Could that wonderful creature be a missionary? Marigold had never seen any one

so entrancingly beautiful in her life. What strange, deep, dark, appealing eyes! What cheek of creamy pallor despite India's suns! What a crown of burnished, red-gold hair! What exquisite out-reaching hands that seemed to draw you magnetically whither they would! What a haunting voice, full of pathos and unnameable charm! And what a lovely, lovely white dress with a pale, seraphic-blue girdle hanging to the hem of it!

Dr. Violet Meriwether had not been speaking for ten minutes before Marigold was longing through all her soul to be a foreign missionary, with the uttermost ends of the earth for her inheritance. The only thing that surprised her was that there was no visible halo around Dr. Violet's head.

Oh, what a thrilling address! Marigold had a moment of amazed wonder at herself for ever supposing foreign missions were poky before she was swept out on that flood-tide of eloquence to a realm she had never known existed--a realm in which self-sacrifice and child-widows and India's coral strand were all blended together into something indescribably fascinating and appealing. Nay, more than appealing--demanding. Before Dr. Violet was half through her address Marigold Lesley, entranced in the old Lesley pew, was dedicating her life to foreign missions.

It was a sudden conversion but a very thorough one. Already Marigold felt that she was cut off forever from her old life--her old companions--her old dreams. *She* was not the silly, wicked little girl who had come unwillingly to the missionary meeting an hour ago, thinking of apricot dresses and fairy playmates on the hill. Not she. Consecrated. Set apart. All the rest of her life to follow that shining, upward path of service Dr. Violet Meriwether pointed out. Some day she, too, might be Dr. Marigold Lesley. Think of it. She had sometimes wondered whom she would like to resemble when she grew up. Mother? But Mother was "put upon." Everybody bossed her. But she had no longer any doubt. She wanted to be exactly like Dr. Violet Meriwether.

She hated Em Church for giggling behind her. She looked with scornful contempt at Elder MacLeod's four grown-up daughters. Why weren't *they* in the foreign-mission field? She almost died of shame when she sneezed rapidly three times in succession just when Dr. Violet was

making her most impassioned appeal to the young girls. Was there not *one* in this church to-night who would answer, "Here Am I" to the "one-clear call"? And Marigold, who longed to spring to her feet and say it, could only sneeze until the great moment was passed and Dr. Meriwether had sat down.

Mr. Thompson followed with a few words. He lacked entirely the fascination of Dr. Meriwether, but one of his sentences struck burningly across Marigold's thrilled soul. A foreign missionary, he said, must be calm, serene, patient, tactful, self-reliant, resourceful and deeply religious. Marigold remembered every one of his adjectives. It was something of a large order but Marigold in her uplift had no doubt she could fill it eventually. And she would begin at once to prepare herself for her life-work. At once. She went down the aisle as if she trod on air. Oh, how wicked and foolish she had been before this wonderful night! But now her face was--what had been Dr. Meriwether's phase--"set towards the heights"--distant, shining heights of service and sacrifice. Marigold shivered in ecstasy.

Tommy Blair was going down the opposite aisle. Marigold had hated Tommy Blair bitterly ever since the day he had written across the front page of her reader in his sprawling, inky hand,

"This book is one thing, my fist is another. If you steal the one, you'll feel the other."

But she must forgive him--a missionary must forgive everybody. She smiled at him so radiantly across the church that Tommy Blair went out and told his cronies that Marigold Lesley was "gone" on him.

II

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Marigold could not tell her mother of her great resolve. It would make poor Mother feel so badly. If Father had been alive, it would be different. But she was all Mother had. That was where part of the self-sacrifice lay. As for telling Grandmother, Marigold never dreamed of it. But she plunged at once with all her might into the preparation for her life-work. Grandmother and Mother knew there was something in the wind, though they couldn't imagine what. I do not know if they considered Marigold calm, serene, patient, tactful, etc., but I do know they thought her very funny.

"Whatever it is I suppose it will run its course," said Grandmother resignedly, out of her experience. But Mother was secretly a little bit worried. Something must be the matter when Marigold said she would rather not have a new apricot dress--her old one was quite good enough. And she didn't even want to go to Willa's party--only Grandmother insisted because the Rogerses would be offended. Marigold went under protest and condescended to the other little girls, pitying them for the dull, commonplace lives before them. Pitying Algie Rogers too. Every one knew his mother had vowed he should be a minister when he wanted furiously to be a carpenter. How different from her high, self-elected lot.

"My, but ain't Marigold Lesley getting stuck-up," Willa Rogers said.

Marigold laid aside the tiny diamond ring Aunt Marigold had given her on her last birthday. Consecrated people should not, she felt, wear diamond rings. Uncle Klou offered to get her one of the new striped silk parasols she had craved, but Marigold thanked him firmly and serenely and would he please give her a concordance instead. Uncle Klou chuckled and gave it to her. He did not know what particular magic Marigold was making now, but he knew she was getting a tremendous lot of satisfaction out of it.

She was. It was positive rapture to refuse the new ribbon hat-streamers for which her soul had once longed and wear her old hat to Cousin Nellie's wedding. Once Marigold had been interested in weddings. Who knew--when one grew up--? But that was past. She must never ever think of being married. Marigold was nothing if not thorough. Naught but counsels of perfection for her. She washed dishes and beat eggs and weeded her garden rapt as a saint.

She gave up reading everything except missionary literature. She pored over the missionary books from the Sunday-school library--especially one fascinating little fat brown volume, the biography of a missionary who had "prepared" herself from the age of six. Marigold felt she had lost many precious years. But she would do her best to catch up. She rose at five o'clock--once--to read the Bible and pray. *That* would sound well in a memoir. The said missionary had arisen at five o'clock every morning of her life from her sixth birthday. But said missionary did not have a Grandmother. That made all the difference.

The only thing that really hurt very badly was giving up Sylvia. At first Marigold felt that she could not--could not--do this. But she must. Sacrifice was not really sacrifice unless it hurt you. Dr. Violet had said so. She explained it all tearfully to Sylvia. Was it only fancy or did a mocking elfin-rill of laughter follow her down the orchard from the cloud of spruce? It almost seemed as if Sylvia didn't think she meant it.

Marigold tried to fill up the resulting gap in her life by imagining herself being carried about on the backs of elephants and rescuing child-widows from burning, at the risk of her life. To be sure, Dr. Violet had not said anything about riding on elephants--she had even mentioned a prosaic motor-car--and Mr. Thompson said widows were no longer burned. But no doubt something just as dreadful was done to them. Marigold stifled her longing for Sylvia in rescuing them by the dozen. Oh, I fancy Uncle Klondike was right.

Marigold had some moments of agonised wonder if she would ever be able to pray in public. She tried to make a small beginning by saying "Amen" under her breath whenever Mr. Thompson said anything in his

prayers that appealed to her. And it was very hard to decide where she would go as a missionary. She shuddered for days between Japanese earthquakes and Indian snakes. Until she got a book about the lepers in India. The lepers carried the day. *They* must be attended to, snakes or no snakes. She would be a missionary to the lepers. And meanwhile Grandmother was horribly cross because Marigold had forgotten to water the geraniums. She couldn't explain to Grandmother that she had forgotten because she was bringing an Indian village through a famine. But she was calm and serene under Grandmother's disapproval. Very.

III

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For two or three weeks this was all very well and satisfying. Then Marigold yearned for what Alexander the Great would have called more worlds to conquer and Dr. Violet Meriwether might have termed a wider field of service. The heroine of the memoirs was always visiting some one who was sick or in trouble and working wonders of consolation. Marigold felt she should do the same. But whom to visit? There was nobody sick or in trouble--that Marigold knew of--near Cloud of Spruce just then. Unless it might be Mrs. Delagarde. The thought of her came to Marigold like an inspiration. Mrs. Delagarde of the black robes and the sad, sad face. Who never went anywhere but wandered about in her big garden all day long in South Harmony.

Marigold had heard some one say that Mrs. Delagarde was a "little off." She did not know what that meant exactly but she felt sure any one with that sorrowful face was in need of comforting. She would go to see her and--and--what? Read the Bible to her as the Lady of the Memoirs had done? Marigold could not see herself doing that. But she would just go to see her--and perhaps the way would be opened up. In the Memoirs a way was always opened up. Marigold slipped up to her room before she went, and said a little special prayer. A very earnest, sincere little prayer, in spite of the fact that it was couched largely in the language of the Memoirs. Then she stole away through the fragrant evening.

Marigold had a moment of panic when she found herself really inside Mrs. Delagarde's gate facing a grim house that looked black against the sunset. But a missionary must be self-reliant. A missionary must not give way to panic. With a gallant smile Marigold marched down the aisle of daffodils to where Mrs. Delagarde was standing among the pale gold of lemon lilies in the shadows, with an amber sky and dark hills behind her, staring unseeingly before her with her large, strange agate-grey eyes.

Mrs. Delagarde surprised Marigold. Her whole sad face lighted up with a wonderful radiance of joy. She stepped forward and held out her hands. Marigold was to be haunted for weeks by those long pale hands held out in supplication.

"Delight--Delight--you have come back to me--" she said.

Marigold let Mrs. Delagarde take her hands--put her arms round her--press her lips to her forehead. She suddenly felt very queer--and frightened. There was something about Mrs. Delagarde--and she was being drawn into the house. What was Mrs. Delagarde saying--in that quick, strange, passionate voice of hers, that wasn't like any voice Marigold knew?

"I've often seen you walking before me--with your face turned away. You'd never wait for me. But now you have come back, Delight. So you must have forgiven me. Have you forgiven me, Delight?"

"Oh--yes--yes." Marigold would have said "yes" to any question. She did not know what she was saying. She was no brave missionary--no ambitious candidate for Memoirs--she was only a very badly frightened little girl--shut up in a strange house with a strange--a very strange woman.

Again that wonderful flash of joy crossed Mrs. Delagarde's face.

"Come up to your room, Delight. It is all ready for you. I have kept it all ready. I knew you would come back to me sometime--when I had been punished enough. So I have kept it ready for you."

Marigold was being drawn up the stairs by that insistent arm--across the hall--into a room. A large, shadowy room with four great windows. And in the midst a huge white bed with something lying on it. Marigold felt a prickling in the roots of her hair--Was it--was it--?

"There is your big doll, Delight," said Mrs. Delagarde, laughing a little wildly. "I've kept it for you, you see. Take it up and play with it. I want to see you play, Delight. It's so long since I have seen you play. And your dresses are all in the closet for you. See."

She opened the closet-door and Marigold saw them--rows of dainty dresses hanging there, awfully like Bluebeard's wives in a picture-book

she had.

Marigold found her voice--a shaky, panicky voice.

"Please may I go home now?" she gasped. "I--I think Mother will be wanting me. It's--getting late."

A look of alarm crossed Mrs. Delagarde's pale face--followed by a look of cunning.

"But you *are* home, Delight. You are my child--though you have left me so long. Oh, it was cruel to leave me so long. But I will not scold you--I will never scold you again. Now you have come back. You must never leave me again. Never. I am going to find your father and tell him you have come back. I have never spoken to him since you went away--but I will speak now. Oh, Delight, Delight!"

Marigold eluded the outstretched arms.

"Please, please let me go," she entreated desperately. "I'm not your little Delight--really I'm not--my name is Marigold Lesley. Please, dear Mrs. Delagarde, let me go home."

"You are still angry with me," said Mrs. Delagarde sorrowfully. "That is why you talk so. Of course you are Delight. Don't you think I know your golden hair? But you are angry with me because I whipped you that day before you went away. I will never do that again, Delight. You need not be afraid of me, darling. Tell me again that you forgive me, sweetest--tell me again that you forgive me."

"Oh, I do--I do." If only Mrs. Delagarde would let her out! But Mrs. Delagarde knelt down by her entreatingly.

"Oh, we will be so happy now that you have come back, Delight. Kiss me--kiss me. You have turned your face away from me so long, my golden-haired Delight."

Her voice was so appealing that Marigold, in spite of her terror, could not refuse. She bent forward and kissed Mrs. Delagarde--then found herself seized in a wild embrace and smothered with hungry kisses.

Marigold tore herself from the encircling arms and darted towards the door. But Mrs. Delagarde caught her as she reached it--pushed her aside with a strange little laugh and slipped out. Marigold heard the key turn in

the lock. She was a prisoner in the house of a crazy woman. She knew now. *That* was what people meant when they called Mrs. Delagarde "a little off."

What could she do? Nothing. Nobody knew where she was. Alone in this horrible, big, darkening room with the shrouded windows. With those dreadful dresses of dead Delight hanging in the closet. With that terrible doll lying on the bed like a dead thing. With a huge, black bearskin muff on a little stand by the bed. What wild tale had Lazarre once told her about those big, old-fashioned bearskin muffs? That they were really witches and went out on moonlit nights and danced in the snow. There was a moon tonight--already its faint radiance was stealing into the room--suppose the muff began to dance around the room before her!

Marigold stifled the scream that rose to her lips. It might bring Mrs. Delagarde back. Nothing would be so dreadful as that--not even a bewitched bearskin muff. She was afraid even to move--but she managed to tiptoe to window after window. They were all nailed down--every one of them. Anyway, all of them opened on a steep bare wall. No chance of escape there. And through one she saw the home-light at Cloud of Spruce. Had they missed her? Were they searching for her? But they would never think of coming here.

She sat down in an old cretonne-covered wing-chair by the window--as far as possible from the bed and the muff! She sat there through the whole of the chilly, incredible, everlasting night. Nobody came. At first there was only a dreadful stillness. There did not seem to be a sound in the whole earth. The wind rose and the moonlight went out and the windows rattled unceasingly. And she was sure the muff moved. And the dresses in the closet surely stirred. Twice she heard footsteps in the hall.

Morning came--a cloudy morning with a blood-red sunrise sky. The windows all looked out on green widespread fields. There was no way in which she could attract attention. No way of escape. She would die here of starvation, and Mother would never know what had become of her. Again and again she heard footsteps passing along the hall--again and again she held her breath with fear lest they pause at the door. She suffered with

thirst as the day wore on but she felt no hunger. A queer, numb resignation was stealing over her. Perhaps she would die very soon--but that no longer seemed terrible. The only terrible thing was that Mrs. Delagarde might come back.

Evening again--moonlight again--wind again--a snarling, quarrelsome wind that worried a vine at the window and sent a queer shadow flying across the room to the bearskin muff. It seemed to move--it *was* moving--Marigold suddenly went to pieces. She shrieked madly--she flew across the room--she tugged frantically at the locked door. It opened so suddenly that she nearly fell over backward. She did not pause to reflect that it could never have been locked at all, in spite of the turned key--she was past thinking or reflecting. She fled across the hall--down the stairs--out--out into freedom. She never stopped running till she stumbled into the hall at Cloud of Spruce--a hall full of wild, excited people, amid which she caught one glimpse of Mother's white anguished face before--for the first time in her life--she fainted.

"Good God," said Uncle Klon. "Here she is."

IV

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It was next day and Marigold was in bed with Mother sitting by her bedside and Grandmother coming in and out trying to look disapproving but too relieved and thankful to make a success of it. The whole story had been told--and much more. Marigold knew all about Mrs. Delagarde now--poor Mrs. Delagarde, who had lost her only little child a year ago, and had not been right in her mind ever since. Who had sat for hours by her little girl's side entreating her to speak to her once more--just one word. Who could not forget for a moment that she had whipped Delight the day before her sudden illness. Who had never forgiven her husband because he had been away when Delight took ill and there was no one to go for the doctor through the storm.

"The poor unhappy lady is greatly to be pitied," Mother said. "But, oh, darling, what a terrible time you have had."

"Some of the rest of us have had a terrible time, too," said Grandmother grimly. "Mrs. Donkin was sure she saw you at dusk in an automobile with two strange-looking men. And Toff LeClerc's boat is missing and we thought you had floated out into the channel in it. The whole country has been combed for you, miss."

"I'm afraid I'm not fit to be a missionary, Mother," sobbed Marigold when Grandmother had gone out. "I wasn't brave--or resourceful--or serene--or anything."

Mother cuddled her--compassionate, tender, understanding.

"It's a very fine, splendid thing to be a missionary, dear, and if, when you grow up, you feel called to that particular form of service nobody will try to hinder you. But the best way to prepare for it is just to learn all you can and get a good education and live as happily and pleasantly as a small girl can, meanwhile. Dr. Violet Meriwether was the jolliest little tomboy in the world when we were girls together--a perfect mischief and madcap."

Aunt Marigold made her namesake stay in bed for a week. On the day Marigold was allowed to get up Mother came in smiling.

"After all, your missionary effort seems to have done some good, Marigold. Mrs. Delagarde's doctor says she is very much better. She has ceased to talk about Delight and she has forgiven her husband. Dr. Ryan says she is quite rational in many ways and he thinks if she is taken away for a complete change of scene and association she will recover completely. He says she told him she was 'forgiven' and this conviction seems to have cured some sick spot in her soul."

"Humph," said Grandmother--rather gently, however.

"Isn't it funny she never came back to the room?" said Marigold.

"She probably forgot all about you the minute you were out of her sight."

"I was so afraid she would. I thought I heard her outside all the time. That was why I never dared go near the door. And it wasn't locked at all--though I *know* I heard the key turn."

"I suppose it didn't turn all the way. Keys sometimes stick like that."

"Wasn't it silly to think I was locked in when I might have got out right away? I guess I've been silly right through. But--"

Marigold sighed. After having been consecrated and set apart for three weeks it was somewhat flat and savourless to come back to ordinary, memoirless life.

But visions of a new apricot dress were again flickering alluringly before her eyes. And Sylvia was on the hill--a forgiving Sylvia, who made no difference at all because of her brief defection.

Chapter XVI.

One of Us

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I

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"I'm going travelling to-morrow. It makes me feel very important," Marigold told Sylvia one evening.

Hitherto Marigold had not done a great deal of visiting. Grandmother disapproved of it and Mother seldom dared to disagree with Grandmother. Besides Marigold herself had no great hankering to visit--by which she meant going away from home by herself to stay overnight. Only twice had she done it before--to Uncle Paul's and to Aunt Stasia's, and neither "visit" had been much of a success. Marigold still tingled with shame and resentment whenever she thought of "IT." She vowed she would never go to Aunt Stasia's again.

But, of course, it was different at Aunt Anne's. Marigold loved Aunt Anne best of all her aunts. So when Aunt Anne came one day to Cloud of Spruce and said:

"I want to borrow Marigold for awhile," Marigold was very glad that Grandmother raised no objections.

Grandmother thought it was time the child was seeing something of the world. She had her head stuffed too full of nonsense, like that Sylvia business. Despite Dr. Adam Clow--who came no more to Cloud of Spruce, having fared forth on an adventurous journey beyond our bourne of time and space--Grandmother thought it was hanging on too long. What might be tolerated at eight was inexcusable at eleven. Anne and Charles were sensible people--though Anne was too indulgent. Grandmother expected Marigold to come home with her digestion ruined for life.

But Marigold went to Aunt Anne's with no cloud over her golden anticipations. Aunt Anne was a twinkly-eyed lady who was always saying, "I must go and see if there is anything nice in the pantry." You couldn't help adoring an aunty like that. It may be that Grandmother's fears were not altogether unfounded.

But she had to content herself with exacting a promise from Anne that Marigold must eat porridge every morning--real oatmeal porridge. If that were done, Grandmother felt that the rest of the day might be trusted to take care of itself.

So Marigold went to Broad Acres and loved it at first sight. An old grey homestead right down by the sea--the real, wonderful sea, not merely the calm, land-locked harbour. Built on a little point of land running out into a pond, with a steep fir-clad hill behind it and slender silver birch-trees all over it. With an old thorn-hedge the slips of which had been brought out from the Old Country--that mysterious land across the ocean where the Lesley clan had its roots. Enclosing a garden even more wonderful and fascinating than the garden at home--for a garden by the sea has in it something no inland garden can ever have. An old stone dyke between the house and the hill, with gorgeous hollyhocks flaunting over it. And a dear little six-sided room in "the tower," where you could lie at night and watch the stars twinkling through the fir-boughs. All this, with an uncle who knew a joke when he saw it and an aunty who let you alone so beautifully made Broad Acres just the spot for a vacation-visit.

And at first--Mats. Mats lived on the next farm and had been christened Martha. But she had lived that down. She was a fat, jolly little soul with round grey eyes, notorious freckles, luxuriant unbobbed sugar-brown curls, a face meant for laughter, and a generous mother who made enchanting pies. For a week she and Marigold had "no end of fun" together and got into no more mischief than two normal small girls should with no grandmothers around. And the soul of Marigold was knit into the soul of Mats and all was harmony and joy--until Paula came. Came and took immediate possession of the centre of the stage, as is the way of the Paulas.

II

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It happened at Sunday-school. All the Lesleys were Presbyterians--of course--but the Presbyterian church over-the-bay was three miles away, so Marigold was sent to Sunday-school in the little white Baptist church on the other side of the pond, with the spruce-trees crowding all around it. Marigold loved it. She thought it seemed like a nice, friendly little church. She wore her pretty new green dress, with its little embroidered collar, and her smart little white hat with its green bow. *And* kid gloves--new kid gloves--*real* kid gloves. Mats, who knew no jealousy, was puffed up with pride over having for a chum a girl who wore real kid gloves. All the other little girls in Sunday-school cast envious glances at her and Marigold.

All but one. That one was sitting by herself on a bench, reading her Bible. And when Marigold and Mats sat down beside her that one got up and moved away--not contemptuously or proudly, but as some consecrated soul might remove itself automatically and unconsciously from the contamination of worldly contact.

"Well, I never," said Mats. "Aren't we good enough to sit beside you, Paula Pengelly?"

Paula turned and looked at them--or rather at Marigold. Mats she seemed entirely to ignore. Marigold looked back at her, spellbound from the start. She saw a girl, perhaps a year older than herself, slight as a reed, with large, glowing hazel eyes in a small, pale-brown face. A braid of long, straight, silky, dark-brown hair fell over each shoulder. Her cheekbones were high and her lips thin and red. She was hatless and shabbily dressed and the Bible she clasped dramatically against her breast in her very long, very slender hands seemed to have been a Bible a great many years. She was not pretty but there was Something in her face. "Int'resting" was hardly a strong enough word and Marigold had not yet picked up "fascinating." She could not help looking at this Paula. There was--

something--in her eyes that made you suddenly feel she saw things invisible to others--things you wanted ardently to see, too. A look that made Marigold think of a picture over Aunt Marigold's desk--the look of a white saint in ecstasy.

"No," said Paula, in an intense, dramatic way that made Marigold shiver deliciously, "you are *not*. You are not Christians. You are children of wrath."

"We ain't," cried Mats indignantly. But Marigold felt that they might be. Somehow one believed what Paula said. And she did not want to be a child of wrath. She wanted to be like Paula. She fairly ached with her desire for it.

"We're just as good as you," continued Mats.

"Goodness isn't enough, wretched child," answered Paula. "Hold your peace."

"What does she mean?" whispered Mats as Paula turned away. Whispered it rather fearfully. *Was* she a wretched child? She had never thought so, but Paul Pengelly *made* you believe things.

"She means hold your yap," said another girl passing. "Paulas 'got religion,' didn't you know?--like her father." Whatever it was that Paula had, Marigold felt she wanted it too. All through Sunday-school she yearned for it as she watched Paula's saintly little profile under that prim, straight hair. Grandmother and Mother were Christians, of course. But they never made her feel as Paula had done. At one time Marigold had believed Gwennie was very saintly. But Gwennie's supposed goodness only aggravated her. *This* was different. Marigold stayed for church that day because Mats was a Baptist, and Paula sat opposite them in a side seat. All through the waiting time before service Paula read her Bible. When the service began she fixed her eyes unwinkingly on the top of one of the little oriel windows. Oh, thought Marigold passionately, to be saintly and wonderful like that! She felt religious and sorrowful herself. It was a beautiful feeling. She had never felt anything quite like it before, not even when listening to Dr. Violet Meriwether. Once Paula looked from the

window and right at her--with those compelling, mystical eyes. They said "Come" and Marigold felt that she must go--to the world's end and further.

When church was out Paula came straight up to Marigold.

"Do you want to come with me on the way of the cross?" she asked solemnly and dramatically. Paula had the knack of making every scene in which she took part dramatic--which was probably a large part of her fascination. And she had a little way of saying things, as if she could have said so much more and didn't. One yearned to discover the mystery of what she didn't say.

"If you do, meet me under the lone pine-tree at the head of the pond to-morrow."

"Can Mats come too?" asked Marigold loyally.

Paula flung Mats a condescending glance.

"Do *you* want to go to Heaven?"

"Y-e-es--but not for a long time yet," stammered Mats uncomfortably.

"You see." Paula looked eloquently at Marigold. "She's not One of Us. I knew *you* were the moment I saw you."

"I am," cried Mats, who couldn't bear to be left out of anything. "And of course I want to go to heaven."

"Then you must be a saint." Paula was inexorable. "Only saints go to heaven."

"But--do you have any fun?" wailed Mats.

"*Fun!* We are saving our souls. Would you," demanded Paula hollowly, "rather have fun and go to--to--a place too dreadful to speak of?"

"No--no." Mats was quite subdued and willing--temporarily--to do and surrender everything.

"To-morrow then--at nine o'clock--under the lone pine," said Paula.

The very tone of her voice as she uttered "lone pine" gave you a thrilling sense of mystery and consecration. Marigold and Mats went home, the former expectant and excited, the latter very dubious.

"Paula's always got some bee in her bonnet," she grumbled. "Last summer she read a book called *Rob Roy*, and she made all us girls call ourselves a clan and have a chieftain and wear thistles and tartans. Of

course *she* was chieftain. But there was some fun in that. I don't believe this religious game will be as good."

"But it's not a game," Marigold was shocked.

"Maybe not. But you don't know Paula Pengelly."

Marigold felt she did--better than Mats--better than anybody. She longed for Monday and the lone pine.

"Old Pengelly's her father," said Mats. "He used to be a minister long ago--but he did something dreadful and they put him out. I think he used to get drunk. He's--" Mats tapped her forehead with a significant gesture, as she had seen her elders do. "He preaches a lot yet, though in barns and places like that. I'm scared to death of him but lots of people say he's a real good man and very badly used. They live in that little house on the other side of the pond. Paula's aunt keeps house for them. Her mother is long since dead. Some people say she has Indian blood in her. She's never decently dressed--all cobbled together with safety pins, Ma says. Are you really going to the head of the pond tomorrow?"

"Of course."

"Well," Mats sighed, "I s'pose I'll have to go too. But I guess our good times are over."

III

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Monday and the lone pine came though Marigold thought they never would. She told Aunt Anne and Uncle Charlie at the breakfast-table where she was going, and Uncle Charlie looked questioningly at Aunt Anne. As Marigold went out, he asked,

"What is that young devil in petticoats up to now?"

Marigold thought he was referring to her and wondered what on earth she had done to be called a young devil. Her conduct had really been very blameless. But she forgot all such minor problems when they reached the lone pine. Paula was awaiting them there--still rapt, still ecstatic. She had not, so she informed them, slept a wink all night.

"I couldn't--thinking of all the people in the world who are going to be--lost."

Marigold immediately felt it was dreadful of her to have slept so soundly. She and Mats sat down, as commanded, on the grass. Paula gave a harangue, mainly compounded of scraps of her father's theology. But Marigold did not know that, and she thought Paula more wonderful than ever. Mats merely felt uncomfortable. Paula hadn't even told them to sit in the shade. All very fine if you had the Lesley pink-and-white or the Pengelly brown. But when you hadn't! Right here in the boiling sun! It must be admitted, I am afraid, that Mats just then was much more concerned with her freckles than with her soul.

"And now," concluded Paula with tragic earnestness, "both of you ask yourselves this question, 'Am I a child of God or of the devil?'"

Mats thought it was horrid to be confronted with such a problem.

"Of course I'm not a child of the devil," she said indignantly.

But Marigold was all at sea. Under the spell of Paula's eloquence she did not know what her ancestry ought to be.

"What'll--we do--about it--if we are?" she asked unsteadily.

"Repent. Repent of your sins."

"Oh, I haven't any sins to repent of," said Mats, relieved.

"You can never go to heaven if you haven't committed sins, because you can't repent of them and be forgiven," said Paula inexorably.

This new kind of theology dumbfounded Mats. While she was wrestling with it, Paula's mesmeric eyes were on Marigold.

"What would--you call sins?" Marigold asked timidly.

"Have you ever read stories that weren't true?" demanded Paula.

"Ye-es--and--" Marigold was seized with the torturing delight of confession, "and--made them up--too."

"Do you mean to say you've *lied*?"

"Oh, no. Not lies. Not lies. I mean--"

"They must be lies if they weren't true."

"Well--perhaps. And I've thought of--things--when Uncle Charlie was having family prayers."

"What things?" said Paula relentlessly.

"I--I thought of a door in a picture on the wall--I thought of opening it--and going in--seeing what was inside--what people lived there--"

Paula waved her hand. After all what did it matter if Marigold did think of queer things while Charlie Marshall was praying? What did *his* prayers matter? Paula was after things that mattered.

"Have you ever eaten meat?"

"Why--yes--is that--"

"Its wicked--very wicked. To sacrifice life to your appetites. Oh, shame!"

Shame, indeed!

Marigold writhed with it. It was intolerable to have Paula looking at her in such scorn. Paula saw the shame and promptly assuaged it.

"Never mind. You didn't know. I've et meat--too--till last spring. I had an awful rash. I knew it was a judgment because I'd done something wrong. I knew it was eating meat--Father said so. He said the finger of God had touched me. So I vowed I'd never eat any more. Oh, how my conscience vexed me. It was awful how I suffered."

There was real anguish in Paula's voice. She stood, a flaming, fascinating figure under the old pine--a young priestess, inspired, devoted. Marigold felt she would follow her to the stake.

"What are we going to do about it?" said that detestable practical Mats.

"We are going to form a society for saving our souls and the world," said Paula. "I've thought it all out. We'll call ourselves the Lighted Lamps. Don't you think that's a splendid name? I'll be head of it and you must do just as I tell you. We will live such beautiful lives that everybody will admire us and want to join us. We will be just as good every day as we are on Sunday"--here Mats emitted a "marvellous grisly groan"--"but we will be very exclusive. No one can come in who is not ready to be a martyr."

"But what are we to *do*?" said Mats with a sigh. She must go where Marigold went, but her chubby personality had no heritage of martyrdom.

Paula allowed herself to sit down.

"First, we must *never* eat anything more than is absolutely necessary. No meat--no pudding--no cake--"

"Oh, I have to eat *some*," cried Marigold sorrowfully. "Aunty would think I was sick or something and send me home."

"Well, then, there must be no second helpings," said Paula inexorably. They pledged themselves--Marigold thinking guiltily of the delicious little strawberry shortcakes Aunt Anne had said she was going to make for dinner.

"We must never read or tell anything that isn't strictly true. Never *pretend* anything"--Marigold gave a gasp but recovered herself gallantly--"never wear any jewelry--and *never* play silly games."

"Can't we play at all?" implored Mats.

"Play. In a world where we must prepare for eternity? *You* can play if you like but *I* shall not."

"What will we do if we can't play?" asked Marigold humbly.

"Work. The world is full of work waiting to be done."

"I always help Aunt Anne every way I can. But when I get through what can I do?"

"Meditate. But we'll find lots to do when we get going. Now, Mats, if you're coming in on this, come with all your soul. You *must* sacrifice. You have to be miserable or you can't be good. You mustn't forget for *one* moment that you're a sinner. You can't be both religious and happy in this world of sin and woe. We must live up to our name. And every time our light goes out we must do penance."

"How?" Mats again.

"Oh, lots of ways. *I* put some burrs next my skin yesterday because I only *wanted* a second helping at dinner. And kneel on peas. And *fast*. I fast often--and do you know, girls, when I fast I hear *voices* calling me by name." Paula's face took on a strange, unearthly radiance that completed Marigold's subjugation. "And I know it is angels calling me to my life's work--singling me out--setting me apart."

Mats had a hazy idea that it was going to be pretty hard to live up to Paula. But she meant to get to the bottom of things. "You've told us what we mustn't do. Now tell us what we must do."

"We must visit sick people--"

"I hate sick people," muttered Mats rebelliously, while Marigold thought with a shudder of her experience with Mrs. Delagarde. Paula, she felt, would not have been a bit frightened of Mrs. Delagarde.

"And read the Bible every day and say our prayers night and morning--"

"I don't see any use in saying prayers in the morning. I ain't scared in daytime," protested Mats.

Paula tried to ignore her and addressed herself to Marigold--who, as she felt instinctively, was a devotee of promise. You could never make anything of Mats--always chattering like a silly little parrot--but this new girl was after her own heart.

"We must hand out tracts--Father has stacks of them--and ask people if they're Christians--you can ask your father's hired man, Mats."

"He'd leave if I did and Father'd kill me," said Mats uncomfortably.

"Well, we're organised," said Paula. "Repeat after me, 'Lighted lamps we are and lighted lamps we will be as long as grass grows and water

runs.'"

"Ow," whimpered Mats. But she repeated the vow glibly, comforted by recollections of other vows with the same implication of eternity which had proved to be of time when Paula grew tired of them.

"And now," concluded Paula, "I'll lead in prayer"--which she did, so beautifully and fervently, with her pale hands clasped and her eyes fixed on the sky, that Marigold's soul was uplifted and even Mats was impressed.

"There may be some fun in this after all," she reflected. "But I wish Paula would repent in winter. That's the best time for repenting."

IV

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As the days went on, Mats grimly concluded that there wasn't much fun in it. She was with them but not of them. As she had foreseen, it was very hard to live up to Paula. At least, for her, Marigold didn't seem to find it hard. Marigold, who went about with stars in her eyes, so unnaturally good that Aunt Anne was worried. Good on the outside, at least. Marigold knew she was full of sin inside because Paula told her so. Marigold was by now wholly in the power of this pale brown girl and thought her the most wonderful saintly creature that ever lived. She grieved constantly because she fell so far short of her. Paula fasted so much--as that wan, rapt face and those purple-ringed eyes testified eloquently. Marigold couldn't fast because of unsympathetic relatives. She could only refuse second helpings and "pieces" and writhe in bitterness when she heard Paula say loftily,

"I haven't touched a morsel of food since yesterday morning."

Neither could she hand out little time-yellowed tracts at church as Paula did every Sunday and as Mats flatly refused to do at all.

"You can amuse yourselves by being miserable if you want to," said Uncle Charlie, "but I'm not going to have you making a nuisance of yourself as Paula Pengelly does."

Paula a nuisance! That self-sacrificing little saint who was positively happy in wearing a shabby, faded dress to church and who knew whole chapters of the Bible by heart. Not the int'resting ones, either, but the--the--dull ones like those in Numbers and Leviticus. Who wouldn't play games--not even jackstones, though she was crazy about them--because it was wrong. Who cried all night about her sins, when she, Marigold, could only squeeze out a few tears and then fall ignominiously asleep. Who never laughed--there was no place in religion for laughter, not even with an Uncle Charlie forever saying things that nearly made you die. Who *never*

did anything she liked to do because if you liked a thing it was a sure sign it was wrong. Marigold was furious with Uncle Charlie.

"It's lovely here at Aunt Anne's," she sighed. "But it's so hard to be religious. I suppose it's easier at Paula's. Her father doesn't hinder her."

Marigold knew Paula's father by this time. She had been to have tea with Paula and stay all night with her--a great privilege which Aunt Anne did not properly appreciate.

Paula lived in a little grey house on the other side of the pond. A tired little house that looked as if it were on the point of lying down. Inside, the blinds were very crooked and the furniture very dusty. There was nothing for supper but nuts, apples, brown bread and some stale, sweet crackers. But that did not matter, for Marigold could not have eaten anyhow, she was in such awe of Mr. Pengelly--a tall old man with long grey hair, a wonderful grey beard, a great hawk nose and eyes that shone in his lined face like a cat's in the dark. He never spoke a word to her or any one. Paula told her it was because he had one of vows of silence on.

"Sometimes he never says a word for a whole week," said Paula proudly. "He is such a good man. Once Aunt Em made a pudding for dinner Christmas--a *little* pudding--and Father grabbed it from the pot and hurled it out of doors. But even *he* isn't as good as Great-Uncle Josiah was. *He* let his nails grow till they were as long as birds' claws, just to please God."

Marigold couldn't help wondering what particular pleasure Uncle Josiah's nails would give God, but she crushed back the thought rigidly as a sin.

They slept in a stuffy little hall-bedroom that had shabby, faded pink curtains and a broken pane, and was lighted by a lamp that seemed never to have been cleaned.

The head of the funny little old wooden bedstead was just against the rattling window.

"The snow drifts in on my pillow in winter," said Paula, the fires of martyrdom burning in her eyes as she knelt on peas to say her prayers.

The rain beat against the panes. Marigold half wished she were back in the tower room at Broad Acres. This was not one of the nights Paula lay awake to worry over her sins. She slept like a log. She *snores*. Marigold did the lying-awake.

Breakfast. No salt in the porridge. Paula had burned the toast. The tablecloth was dirty. And Marigold had a chipped cup. Then she drank avidly. This was certainly a good chance to do something for penance. Penance for certain thoughts she had been thinking. But not about Paula. Paula, in spite of the snores, still shone amid all her shabby surroundings like a star far above the soil and mist of earth--a star for worship and reverence. Marigold worshipped and revered. She was strangely happy in all her renunciations and denials. She would give up anything rather than face Paula's scornful smile. It was all the reward she wanted when Paula said graciously, as a priestess might stoop to approve the acolyte,

"I knew, as soon as I saw you, that you were One of Us."

Aunt Anne and Uncle Charlie couldn't understand it.

"That Pengelly imp seems to have a power to bewitch the other girls," grumbled Uncle Charlie. "Marigold is absolutely infatuated with her and her kididoes. But there's one thing--if this keeps on after she goes home, old Madam Lesley will make short work of it."

V

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Marigold spent a considerable part of her time doing penance in various small ways for various small misdemeanours. It was not always easy to find a penance to do--something Aunt Anne would let you do. No fasting or kneeling on peas for Aunt Anne. And even when Marigold and Paula between them--Mats bluntly declined to have anything to do with penances--hit on a workable penance, Marigold was apt to discover that she rather liked it--it was int'resting--and Paula had said,

"Just as soon as you like doing a thing it isn't penance of course."

But one "penance" was an experience that always stood out clearly in Marigold's memory. At its first conception it looked like a real penance. She had fallen from grace terribly--she and Mats, if Mats could ever have been considered in a state of grace by Paula's standards. She had been invited to supper at Mats's; and she couldn't resist that supper.

Mats's mother was a notable cook and she had four different kinds of cake. And, alas, every one was a kind of which Marigold was particularly fond. Banana cake with whipped cream--strawberry shortcake--date layer-cake--jelly-roll cake. Marigold took a piece of each and *two* pieces of the shortcake. She *knew* she was doing wrong--from Mother's point of view as well as Paula's; but with Mats gobbling industriously by her side and Mats's mother saying reproachfully,

"You haven't eaten *anything*, child,"

What was one to do?

And after supper she and Mats had got a big fashion-book and picked out the dresses they'd have when they grew up; and filled their cup of iniquity to overflowing by "boxing" the bed of the hired man in the kitchen loft. At that, he probably slept better than Marigold, who was sick all night and had horrible dreams. Which might have been thought a sufficient penance. But Paula had a different opinion.

Marigold's conscience gave her no rest until she had confessed everything to Paula.

"You are a Pharisee," said Paula sorrowfully.

"Oh, I'm *not*," wailed Marigold. "It was just--"

Then she stopped. No, she was *not* going to say,

"Mats and her mother just *made* me eat."

That wasn't altogether true. She had been very willing to eat and she must bear her own iniquities. But had she lost caste forever in Paula's eyes? Would she no longer be considered One of Us?

"You've been very wicked," said Paula. "Your lamp has almost gone out and you must do a specially hard penance to atone."

Marigold sighed with relief. So she was not to be cast off. Of course she would do a penance. But what penance--at once severe enough and practicable. Paula thought of it.

"You're afraid of being alone in the dark. Sleep out all night on the roof of the veranda. *That* will be a real penance."

It certainly would. How real, Marigold knew too well. It was true that she was afraid of being alone in the dark. She was never afraid in the dark if any one was with her, but to be alone in it was terrible. She was becoming very ashamed of this terror. Grandmother said severely that a girl of eleven should not be such a baby and Marigold was sure that Old Grandmother would have scorned her for a coward. But so far she had not been able to conquer her dread of it. And the thought of spending the night *alone* on the veranda roof appalled her. Nevertheless she agreed to do it.

It was easy enough from one point of view. There was a door in her little tower-room opening on the veranda roof and there was a little iron bedstead on it. All Marigold had to do was to slip out of bed as soon as everybody was asleep and drag her bedclothes and mattress out.

She did it--in a cold perspiration--and crept into bed trembling from head to foot.

"I *won't* be scared of you," she gasped gallantly to the night.

But she was. She felt all the primitive, unreasoning fear known to the childhood of the race. The awe of the dark and the shadowy--the shrinking

from some unseen menace lurking in the gloom. The night seemed creeping down through the spruce wood behind the house like a living--but not human--thing to pounce on her. Darkness all about her--around--above--below. And in that darkness--what?

She wanted to cover up her head but she would not. That would be shirking part of the penance. She lay there and looked up at the sky--that terrible ocean of stars which Uncle Klon had told her were suns, millions of millions of millions of miles away. There did not seem to be a sound in the whole earth. It was waiting--waiting--for *what*? Suppose every one in the world was dead! Suppose she was the only person left alive in that terrible silence!

Then--she could not have told whether it was hours or minutes later--something changed. All at once. She was no longer frightened. She sat up and looked about her. On a world of velvet and shadow and stars. The boughs of the spruces tossed in a sudden wind against the sky. The gulf waters were silver under the rising moon. The trees were whispering in the garden like old friends. The fern scents of a warm summer night drifted down from the hill.

"Why--I like the dark," Marigold whispered to herself. "It's nice--and kind--and friendly. I never thought it could be so beautiful."

She stretched out her arms to it. It seemed a Presence, hovering, loving, enfolding. She lay down again in its shadow and surrendered herself utterly to its charm, letting her thoughts run out into it far beyond the Milky Way. She did not want to sleep--but after a time she slept. And wakened in the pale, windless morning just as a new dawn came creeping across Broad Acres. The dreamy dunes along the shore were lilac and blue and gold. Above her were high and lovely clouds just touched by sunrise. Below in the garden the dewdrops were silver in the hearts of unblown roses. Uncle Charlie's sheep in the brook pasture looked amazingly white and pearly and plump in the misty morning light. The world had a look Marigold had never seen it wear before--an expectant, untouched look as if it were a morning in Eden. She sighed with delight. A mystic happiness possessed her.

Paula was over soon after breakfast to find out if Marigold really had stuck it out on the veranda all night.

"You look too happy about it," she said reproachfully.

"It *was* a penance for a little while at first and then I enjoyed it," said Marigold honestly.

"You enjoy too many things," said Paula despairingly. "A penance isn't a penance if you *enjoy* it."

"I can't help liking things and I'm glad I do," said Marigold in a sudden accession of common sense. "It makes life so much more int'resting."

VI

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Marigold was going to the post-office to mail a letter for Aunt Anne. It was a lovely afternoon. Never had the world seemed so beautiful, in spite of the hundreds of millions of sinful people living in it. When she passed Mats's gate, Mats was playing by herself at jackstones under the big apple-tree. Mats had backslidden sadly of late and had returned to her wallowing in jackstones--thereby proving conclusively that she was not One of Us. She beckoned a gay invitation to Marigold, but Marigold shook her head and walked righteously on.

A little further down there was a sharp turn in the red road and Miss Lula Jacobs's little white house was in the angle. And Miss Lula's famous delphiniums were holding up their gleaming blue torches by the white paling. Marigold stopped for a moment to admire them. She would have gone in, for she and Miss Lula were very good friends, but she knew Miss Lula was not home, being in fact at Broad Acres with Aunt Anne at that very moment.

Marigold could see the pantry-window through the delphinium-stalks. And she saw something else. A dark-brown head popped out of the window, looked around, then disappeared. The next moment Paula Pengelly slipped nimbly over the sill to the ground and marched off through the spruce-bush behind Miss Lula's house. And Paula held in her hands a cake--a whole cake--which she was devouring in rapid mouthfuls.

Marigold stood as if turned to stone, in that terrible moment of disillusion. That was the cake Miss Lula had made for the Ladies' Aid social on the morrow--a very special cake with nut and raisin filling and caramel icing. She had heard Miss Lula telling Aunt Anne all about it just before she came away.

And Paula had stolen it!

Paula the Lighted Lamp--Paula the consecrated, Paula the rigid devotee of fasts and self-immolation, Paula the hearer of unearthly voices. Paula had stolen it and was gobbling it up all by herself.

Marigold went on to the post-office, torn between the anguish of disillusionment and the anger of the disillusioned. Nothing was quite the same--never could be again, she thought gloomily. The sun was not so bright, the sky so blue, the flowers so flowery. The west wind, purring in the grass, and the mad merry dance of the aspen-leaves hurt her.

An ideal had been shattered. She had believed so in Paula. She had believed in her vigils and her denials. Marigold thought bitterly of all those untaken second helpings.

Mats was not in when Marigold returned, but Marigold went home to Broad Acres and played jackstones by herself. And let herself go in a mad orgy of pretending, after all these weeks when, swallowed up in a passion of sacrifice, she had not even allowed herself to think of her world of fancy. Also she remembered with considerable satisfaction that Aunt Anne was making an apple-cake for supper.

Paula found her there and looked at her reproachfully--with purple-ringed eyes which, Marigold reflected scornfully, certainly did not come from fasting this time. Indigestion more likely.

"Is this how you, the possessor of an immortal soul, are wasting your precious time?" she asked rebukingly.

"Never mind my soul," cried Marigold stormily. "Just you think of poor Miss Lula's cake."

Paula bounced up, her pale face for once crimson.

"What do you mean?" she cried.

"I saw you," said Marigold.

"Do you want your nose pulled?" shrieked Paula.

"Try it," said Marigold superbly.

Suddenly Paula collapsed on the grey stone and burst into tears.

"You needn't make--such a fuss--over a trifle," she sobbed.

"Trifle. You *stole* it."

"I--I was so hungry for a piece of cake. I *never* get any--Father won't let Aunt Em make any. Nothing but porridge and nuts for breakfast and dinner and supper, day in and day out. And that cake looked so scrumptious. You'd have taken it yourself. Miss Lula has heaps of them. She *loves* making cake."

Marigold looked at Paula, all the anger and contempt gone out of her eyes. Little sinning, human Paula, like herself. Marigold no longer worshipped her but she suddenly loved her.

"Never mind," she said softly. "I--guess I understand. But--I can't be a Lighted Lamp any longer, Paula."

Paula wiped away her tears briskly.

"Don't know's I care. I was getting awfully tired of being so religious, anyhow."

"I--I think we didn't go the right way about being religious," said Marigold timidly. "Aunt Marigold says religion is just loving God and people and things."

"Maybe," said Paula--going down on her knees--but not to pray. "Anyhow I got all the cake I wanted for *once*. Let's have a game of jacks before Mats shows up. She always spoils everything with her jabber. She isn't really One of Us."

Chapter XVII.

Not by Bread Alone

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I

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Salome had gone to Charlottetown for the day--rather unwillingly, for she had had a horrible dream of fourteen people coming to supper and nothing in the house for them to eat but cold boiled potatoes.

"And there's more truth than poetry in *that*, ma'am," she said, "for there isn't a thing baked except the raisin-bread. I assure you I don't dream dreams like that for nothing. And there's the Witch of Endor polishing her face out by the apple-barn."

It was an inflexible Cloud of Spruce tradition that there must always be cake in the pantry--fresh, flawless cake--lest unexpected company come to tea. No company had ever found Cloud of Spruce cakeless. Grandmother and Mother would both have died of horror on the spot if such a thing had happened. Kingdoms of Europe might rise and fall--famines might ravage India and revolutions sweep China--Liberals and Conservatives, Republicans and Democrats might crash down to defeat, but so long as cake-box and cooky-jar were filled there was balm in Gilead.

Yet this unthinkable thing had actually occurred. The evening before three car-loads of visitors had come out from Summerside and found cake in the pantry--but left none. No wonder Salome was upset.

"*I* have made cake before now," said Grandmother rather sarcastically. Every once in so long Salome had to be snubbed. "And so has Mrs. Leander."

When Grandmother called Lorraine Mrs. Leander before Salome, Salome knew she was snubbed.

"I am well aware," she said with meek stateliness, "that I am not the only cook at Cloud of Spruce. I merely thought, ma'am, that seeing it was my duty to keep the pantry well filled, I ought not to neglect it for the sake of my own pleasure. *I* am not like my sister-in-law Rose John, ma'am. *She*

hasn't any sense of shame. When unexpected company comes to tea she just runs out and borrows a cake from a neighbour. Whatever John saw in *her* enough to marry her I have never been able to imagine."

"Go and enjoy your holiday, Salome," said Lorraine kindly, knowing that if Salome once fairly embarked on the delinquencies of Rose John there was no telling when she would stop. "You deserve it. Grandmother and I will soon fill up the pantry."

Alas! Mother had got only as far as getting out her mixing-bowl when Uncle Jack's Jim arrived. ". . . bloody with spurring, fiery red with haste,"-or the modern equivalent for it. Great-Uncle William Lesley was dying at the Head of the Bay, or thought he was. And he wanted to see Grandmother and Leander's wife. They must lose no time if they were to get there before he died.

It was a tragedy.

"I have never," said Grandmother in a tone of anguish as she tied on her bonnet, "gone away from home and left absolutely *no* cake in the house."

"Surely no one will come to-day," moaned Mother, equally wretched. Really, it was a most inconvenient time for Great-Uncle to die.

"Don't forget to feed the cats," Grandmother told Marigold. "And mind you don't go wandering in Mr. Donkin's hill pasture. He's turned his ox in there."

"That's not his ox," said Marigold. "That's his old red bull."

Grandmother would have died before she would have said the word "bull" aloud. She drove away with Uncle Jack's Jim, sadly wondering what the young people of this generation were coming to. Apart from that she did not worry over leaving Marigold alone. Marigold was eleven now and tall for her age. One year she had been measured by the rose-bush--the next by the blue-bells. This year she was as tall as the phlox.

She liked being alone very well once in a while. It was quite important being in charge of Cloud of Spruce. She swept the kitchen, and got dinner for herself and Lazarre; she fed the cats and washed the dishes and wrote a letter to Paula.

Then the end of the world came. A car stopped at the gate; seven people descended therefrom and marched in past the platoons of hollyhocks with the air of people coming to stay. Marigold, staring aghast through the window, recognised them. She had met them all two weeks ago at a clan-funeral, where Grandmother had proffered them all a warm invitation to Cloud of Spruce. Second-Cousin Marcus Carter, his wife and son and daughter from Los Angeles; Second-Cousin Olivia Peake from Vancouver; *and* Third-Cousin Dr. Palmer of Knox College, Toronto, with *his* wife.

And there was no cake at Cloud of Spruce!

Marigold accepted the situation. In that moment she had decided what she would do.

As graciously as Mother herself could have done, she welcomed the guests at the door.

"Aunt Marian and Lorraine away? Then I don't suppose we'll stay," exclaimed Cousin Marcella Carter, who had a long thin face, a long thin nose, and a long thin mouth.

"You must stay for supper of course," said Marigold resolutely.

"Have you got anything good for us to eat?" asked Cousin Marcus with a chuckle. He had a square face with a spiky moustache and bristly white eyebrows. Marigold thought she did not like him and was glad she did not have to call him "uncle."

"I know the Cloud of Spruce pantry is always well supplied," said Mrs. Dr. Palmer, smiling. In her smooth grey silk dress she looked, Marigold decided, just like a nice sleek grey cat.

"Well, give us something that will stick to our ribs," said Cousin Marcus. "We've had dinner at a place--I won't say where--but there was heaps of style and precious little comfort."

"Marcus," said Cousin Marcella rebukingly.

"Fact. And now, Marigold, I'll give you a quarter for a kiss."

Cousin Marcus was quite genial. A joke was his idea of being kind and friendly. But Marigold did not know this and she resented it. Lifting her head as she had seen Varvara do, she said freezingly,

"I don't sell my kisses."

The visitors laughed. Jack Carter said,

"She's saving her kisses for *me*, Dad."

There was another laugh. Marigold shot a furious glance at Jack. She did not like boys--any boys. And she at once hated Jack. He was about thirteen with a fat moon-face, straight whitish hair parted in the middle, staring china-blue eyes and spectacles. Under ordinary circumstances Marigold could and would have annihilated him with ease and pleasure. She had not sparred with Tommy Blair four years without learning how to handle the sex. But a Cloud of Spruce hostess must not show discourtesy to any guest.

"She's got a nice mouth for kissing, anyhow," said Cousin Marcus more genially than ever.

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Marigold left her guests in the orchard room and flew to the pantry. She was breathless with excitement, but she knew exactly what was to be done. There was plenty of cold boiled chicken and ham left over from the previous day; the Cloud of Spruce jam-pots were full as always. Cream galore for whipping. But hot biscuits--there *must* be hot biscuits--and cake!

If Marigold had been asked if she could cook she might have answered like canny Great-Uncle Malcolm when asked if he could play the violin. "He couldna' say. He had never tried."

Marigold had never tried. She could boil potatoes--and fry eggs--but further than that her culinary accomplishments as yet did not go. But she was going to try now. She had the Cloud of Spruce cook-book and she had helped Salome and Mother scores of times, looking forward with delight to the time when she would be allowed to do it off her own bat.

She clasped floury hands over the cake-bowl.

"Oh, dear God, I think I can manage the biscuits but You *must* help me with the cake."

Then she proceeded to mix, measure and beat. To make matters worse, Jack appeared. Jack was not happy unless he was teasing somebody. He proceeded to tease Marigold, not having any idea that it was a dangerous pastime, even when protected by Cloud of Spruce custom.

"I'm a terrible fellow," he declared. "I throw dead cats into wells. S'pose I throw *yours*?"

"I'll get Lazarre to call the new pig after you," said Marigold scornfully, and cracked an egg with violence.

Jack stared. What kind of girl was this?

"I'm just over the measles," he said. "Black measles. Ever had measles?"

"No."

"Mumps?"

"No."

"I've had mumps and whooping cough and scarlet fever and chicken pox and pneumonia. I'm a wow to have things. You ever had any of them?"

"No."

"Did you ever have *anything*?" Jack was plainly contemptuous.

"Yes," said Marigold, suddenly recalling some of Aunt Marigold's diagnoses. "I've had urticaria."

Jack stared again--but more respectfully.

"Golly. Is it bad?"

"Incurable," said Marigold mendaciously. "You never get over it."

Jack edged away.

"Is it catching?"

"*You* couldn't catch it." There was that in Marigold's tone Jack didn't like. Did this puling girl think she had something he couldn't have?

"Look here," he said furiously, "you give yourself airs that don't belong to you. And your nose is crooked. See!"

Marigold crimsoned to the tip of the offending nose. But tradition held. She spared Jack's life.

"But if I ever meet you away from Cloud of Spruce I'll ask you who put your ears on for you," she thought as she measured the baking-powder.

"What are you thinking of?" queried Jack, resenting her silence.

"I'm imagining how you'll look in your coffin," answered Marigold deliberately.

This gave Jack to think. Was it safe to be alone with a girl who could imagine such things? But to leave her, was to confess defeat.

"In five minutes by that clock I'm going to kiss you," he said with a fiendish grin.

Marigold shuddered and shut her eyes.

"If you do I'll tell everybody at supper what a sweet-looking baby you were."

That got under Jack's skin. He wished he was well out of the pantry and the presence of this exasperating creature. He shifted to a new point of attack.

"My, but I'm sorry for the man you're going to marry."

Marigold cast tradition to the winds.

"Oh, never mind," she said. "Your wife will be able to sympathise with him."

"Don't waste your breath now," drawled Jack.

"It's *my* breath."

"Think you're smart, don't you?"

"I don't think it, I know it," retorted Marigold, beating her cake-batter terrifically.

"After all, you're only a female," said Jack insolently.

"I heard you pinned a dishcloth to a minister's coat once," said Marigold.

But the minute she said it she knew she had made a mistake. He was proud of it.

"What are you two young divvils up to?" demanded Cousin Marcus, peering in at the door. "Oh, fond of the boys I see, Marigold. Come alone, Jack. Lazarre is going to show us the apple-orchard."

Jack, as relieved to be rid of Marigold as she was to be rid of him, vanished. Marigold breathed a sigh of thanksgiving. Oh, would her cake be all right? That wretched boy had bothered her so. *Had* she put in the baking-powder?

The cake was a gorgeous success. Marigold was a Lesley, and besides there was Providence--or Luck. It was a delicious feathery concoction with whipped cream and golden orange crescents on it--*the* special company-cake of Cloud of Spruce. And Marigold had just as good fortune with her biscuits. Then she set the table with the hemstitched cloth and Grandmother's best Coalport. Every domestic rite of Cloud of Spruce was properly performed. The ham was sliced in thin pink slices, the chicken platter was parsley-fringed, the white cake-basket with the china roses round it was brought out, the water in the tumblers was ice-cold.

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Marigold sat behind the tea-cups facing the ordeal before her, a gallant and smiling hostess. She could feel her pulses beating to her fingertips. If only her hands would not tremble! She steadied her legs by twisting them around the rungs of the chair. Cousin Marcus did what in him lay to rattle her by conjuring her not to fill the cups so full of tea that there wasn't room for cream--as mean Aunt Harriet always did--and Dr. Palmer helped the chicken so lavishly that she broke out into a cold perspiration lest there shouldn't be enough to go round. Mrs. Dr. Palmer took cream and no sugar and Dr. Palmer took sugar and no cream and Cousin Marcella took neither and Cousin Marcus took both. Cousin Olivia took cambric tea. It was very difficult to remember everything, but she thoroughly enjoyed asking Jack how he took his. It seemed to put him in his place for once. Eventually everybody got something to drink and the chicken *did* go round.

Jack kept quiet for awhile, being fully occupied with gorging. But just as it had dawned on Marigold that the supper was almost over and had gone very well, Jack said,

"Say, Marigold, *you can cook*. If you'll promise to have my slippers warm for me every night when I come home, I'll come back and marry you when I grow up."

"I wouldn't marry you--"

"Oh, come, come now, my duck," said Jack, with an irritating snigger, "wait till you're asked."

"So you were courting in the pantry," chuckled Cousin Marcus.

Jack grinned like a Chessy cat.

"Marigold has such a nice little way of cuddling in your arms, Dad."

He hadn't really meant to say it, but it suddenly struck him as a very clever thing to say.

Marigold positively came out in goose-flesh.

"I haven't--I mean--*you* couldn't know it if I had."

"You're beginning young," said Cousin Marcus solemnly, pretending to shake his head over the doings of modern youth.

Marigold had a stroke of diabolical inspiration.

"*Johnsy* is telling his dreams," she said coolly.

That "*Johnsy*" was what Jack would have called "a mean wallop." He dared not open his mouth again at the table and did not recover his impudence until they were leaving.

"Isn't that a lovely moon?" said Marigold softly, more to herself than to any one, as she stood by the car.

"You should see the moons we have in Los Angeles," he boasted.

"What do you really think of him?" said Uncle Marcus in a pig's whisper, giving Marigold a poke in the ribs.

Marigold remembered that Salome had once said that Rose John had once said that if there was one thing more than another that lent spice to life, it was tormenting the men.

"I think *Johnsy* isn't really half as big a fool as he looks," she said condescendingly.

Cousin Marcus roared with laughter. "You've said a mouthful!" he exclaimed. Jack was crimson with rage. The car rolled away and Marigold stood by the gate, victress.

"I don't know how it is some girls like boys," she said.

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When Grandmother and Mother came home--slightly annoyed, though they did not know it, that Great-Uncle William Lesley had been so inconsiderate as not to have died after all the bother but had rallied surprisingly--they had already heard the news, having met Cousin Marcus's car on the road.

"Marigold, *did you make the cake?* Cousin Marcella said she wanted the recipe of our cake."

"Yes," said Marigold.

Grandmother sighed with relief.

"Thank goodness. When I heard there was cake I thought you must have borrowed it from Mrs. Donkin--like Rose John. You didn't forget to put the pickles on."

"No. I put pickles and chow both."

"And you didn't--you're sure you didn't--slop any tea over in the saucers."

"I'm sure."

Mother hugged Marigold in the blue room upstairs.

"Darling, you're a brick! Grandmother and I felt *dreadful* until we found out there was cake."

Chapter XVIII.

Red Ink or--?

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I

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Marigold thought the world a charming place at all times but especially in September, when the hills were blue and the great wheat-fields along the harbour-shore warm gold and the glens of autumn full of shimmering leaves. Marigold always felt that there was something in the fall that *belonged* to her and her alone if she could only find it, and this secret quest made of September and October months of magic.

To be sure there was generally school in September. But not this September for Marigold. She had not been quite herself through the August heat, so Mother and Grandmother and Aunt Marigold, who remembered that she was an M.D. in her own right when Uncle Klon let her remember it, advised that she be kept out of school for some weeks longer.

Then Aunt Irene Winthrop wrote to Mother and asked her to let Marigold visit her and Uncle Maurice. Aunt Irene was Mother's sister, and the Winthrops and the Lesleys were none too fond of each other. Grandmother rather grimly said she thought Marigold would be just as well at home.

"We let her visit Aunt Anne last year," said Mother. "I suppose Irene thinks it is her turn now."

Mother was too timid--or too good a diplomat--to say that she thought Marigold should visit her mother's people as well as her father's. But Grandmother understood it that way and offered no further objection. So Marigold went to Uncle Maurice and Aunt Irene at Owl's Hill. A name that fascinated Marigold. Any name with a hill in it was beautiful and Owl's Hill was magical.

Uncle Maurice and Aunt Irene were secretly a little afraid that Marigold might be lonesome and homesick. But Marigold never thought of such a thing. She liked Owl's Hill tremendously. Such a romantic spot

on a high sloping hill with a little tree-smothered village snuggling at its foot and above it woods where at night sounded laughter that was merry but not human, while other hills lay beyond like green wave after wave. Uncle Maurice's face was so red and beaming that Marigold felt he made fine weather out of the gloomiest day. And Aunt Irene was like Mother. Only she laughed more, not being a widow. And having no Grandmother living with her.

There was a long letter to be written every night to Mother, in which Marigold told her everything that happened during the day. She always went down the lane to put it in the mail-box herself every morning. And there was Amy Josephs, of the chubby, agreeable brown face, next door, to play with. Amy was the daughter of Uncle Maurice's brother, so a cousin of sorts if you like. Amy made a fairly satisfactorily playmate who really seemed to have a dim conception of what Marigold meant when she talked of the laughter of bluebells and daisies, and they had good fun together.

Amy's two village chums came up the hill to play with them. Marigold liked them fairly well also. Not one of the three was anything like as good a playmate as Sylvia but Marigold carefully concealed this thought because she was beginning to feel that it was a bit queer that she should like an imaginary playmate better than real ones. But there it was.

One of Amy's chums was a very fat little girl with a most romantic name--June Page. A fair girl with hair so flaxen that beside it Marigold's shone like spun gold. Caroline Chrysler was a missionary's daughter. Sent home from India. Caroline, apart from her insistence on the fact that she was going to be a missionary, too--had been "consecrated to it in her cradle"--was quite a nice girl. It wasn't her fault that she was dark and sallow--perhaps not her fault that she wouldn't be called Carrie. Too frivolous for a consecrated. Marigold, who had once believed herself consecrated, too, could not be too hard on Caroline's poses. So they all got on very well, each having her own private opinion of the others, and every new dawn that broke across the autumn upland, ushered in a day full of interest and delight.

Even Sundays. Marigold loved going down to church Sunday evenings with Aunt Irene and Amy. They always went down across the fields to the road. Aunt Irene always carried a little lantern because, though it was only crisp steel-blue twilight when they left, it was dark long before they reached the church. The lantern cast such fascinating shivery, giant shadows. They went along the edge of the sheep-pasture. Marigold loved the cool grass under her feet and the soft eerie sighs in the trees, the sweet wild odours of the wandering winds and the elfin laugh of the hidden brook down under the balsam-boughs. There was a smell of aftermath clover in the air and the Milky Way was overhead. All around were misty stars over the harvest-fields. One really felt too happy for Sunday.

Aunt Irene never talked much and Amy and Marigold talked in whispers.

"I wonder if Hip Price will be in church to-night," said Amy.

"Who is Hip Price?" asked Marigold.

"He's the minister's son. His real name is Howard Ingraham Price, but he never gets anything but Hip--from his initials. He's awfully clever. I never," vowed Amy, speaking out of her tremendous experience of eleven and a half years, "met any one who knew so much. And he's so brave. He saved a little girl from drowning once, at the risk of his life."

"When?"

"Oh, before he came here. They only moved to this church last spring. He says he can lick his weight in wildcats. And he took the diploma for learning the whole Shorter Catechism by heart."

Marigold felt rather bored with this prodigy.

"What does he look like?"

"He's handsome. His eyes are just like an archangel's," said Amy fervently.

"How do you know? Did you ever see an archangel's eyes?" demanded Marigold relentlessly.

II

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The choir was singing *Joy to the World*, and Marigold was thinking of "Tidal, king of nations," in the chapter the minister had just read. That phrase always fascinated her whenever she heard it. There was something so mysterious about it. Tidal, king of nations, was so much grander than just Tidal, king of one little country. Splendid. Triumphant. An entrancing figure of royalty ruling over hundreds of subject peoples. And just then Marigold saw Hip and thought no more forever of Tidal, king of nations.

He was sitting right across from her in the corner seat, staring at her. He continued to stare at her. Marigold felt that glance on her inescapably. She tried to look away--she fought against looking back--but in the end *her* eyes always returned to the corner seat to find *his* eyes still intent on her. Eyes can say so much in a second. Marigold felt very queer.

And, oh, he *was* handsome. Just like the slim princeling of fairy-tales. Brown curls shining in the lamplight. Cheeks rose-red under golden-tan. Dark-blue, romantic eyes. She felt that she would die of shame and humiliation when an old lady behind her suddenly held a peppermint out to her over the back of the seat. Marigold had to take it--and could not help looking at Hip as she did it. She could not--would not--did not eat it, but she felt as if Hip must see it all the time, moist and sticky in her warm, unwilling hand, and despise her for a baby who had to be kept good in church with peppermints. Marigold, to her dying day, never quite forgave Aunt Lucy Bates, who thought she had done a kind act to Lorraine Winthrop's little girl.

Marigold found her legs were trembling when she got up for the last hymn. Her face was burning under Hip's seemingly mesmerised eyes. She was sure every living soul in the church must notice him.

One at least had. Marigold met Caroline on the porch, going out, and it seemed to her that Caroline was a bit cool.

"Did you see Hip Price?" asked Caroline.

"Hip Price?" Marigold was not without the feminine knack of protective coloration. "Who is he?"

"That boy in the corner seat. I saw him staring at you. He always stares like that at a new girl."

"Sly thing," thought Marigold--not meaning Hip.

Amy did not go back with them. She was staying all night with June. So Marigold walked home alone with Aunt Irene. Not altogether alone.

On the other side of the road, until they reached the pasture gate, stalked a slender figure with a smart cap worn a bit rakishly on the back of its head. The figure whistled *The Long, Long Trail*. Marigold knew that it was Hip Price and she also knew that the manse was away on the other side of the church. It is terrific what damsels of eleven do know sometimes. But she was--almost--glad when they left the road and started up over the fields.

As they walked along Marigold was not thinking of the charm of starlit evening or the wind in the trees or the pixy lantern-shadows. I shall not tell you what she was thinking of. I will only state that next day she scorched a panful of cookies she had been left to watch because she was thinking of the same thing. Aunt Irene was annoyed. A Cloud of Spruce Lesley was supposed never to be careless. But Marigold with shining eyes and a dreamy smile lingering on her lips, did not worry about the cookies at all.

III

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During the following three weeks life was a thing of rainbows for our Marigold. She had a delightful secret--a secret that nobody knew. Even when she wrote "everything" to Mother she did not tell her about Hip Price. Though she put an extra row of kisses in to make up for it.

The morning after that memorable Sunday evening, when Marigold went down to the end of the lane to mail Mother's letter, she found a letter in the box addressed to herself. Marigold trembled again--a delicious trembling. She sat down among the goldenrod under a friendly little spruce-tree and read it. It was a very wonderful epistle. Ask Marigold. To be told she was beautiful! Once in awhile she had heard a hint that she was pretty. But beautiful! And what did it matter that he spelled "angel" angle? Angel really was a very tricky word. *Anybody* might spell it wrong. Besides, doesn't everybody know that it doesn't make a mite of difference how a love-letter is spelled? He signed himself "fondestly yours" with lots of flourishes and curlicues. And there was a little x for a P. S.

Marigold's cheeks were so rosy when she went back to the house that Aunt Irene thought the child was picking up wonderfully. Marigold slept that night with Hip's letter under her pillow. And found another in the mailbox the next morning! In which he asked her if she were going to June Page's party Thursday evening and would she wear the blue dress she had worn to church? Would she? She had been wondering which of her two "good" dresses became her most and had been dangerously near selecting the green. And he wrote, "When the moon rises to-night think of me and I'll think of you." Marigold hunted out the time of moonrise in the almanac. Really, the moons of Owl's Hill were wonderful. Cloud of Spruce never had such moons. And would any other boy she knew ever think of saying a thing like that? Not in a thousand years.

Hip cornered her off at the party and asked her why she hadn't answered his letters. Marigold didn't think she could without Aunt Irene knowing.

"But you don't mind my writing them?" asked Hip softly--tenderly. Looking at her as if his very life depended on her answer. Marigold, dyed in blushes, confessed she didn't. Whereupon Hip surveyed the room with the air of a conqueror. When called upon to recite he gave "Casabianca" in ringing tones, standing all beautiful and brave as the immortal hero. A horrible thought suddenly arose in Marigold's mind. Did he *know* he was all beautiful and brave. She strangled and buried the hateful intruder instantly.

Hip was certainly captivating. He said such smart up-to-date things like "attaboy" and "apple-sauce" and "I'll tell the world!"--looking at Marigold to see if she admired his smartness. And he walked home with her--not exactly from the house. He joined her on the road, having dashed across lots. And at the gate of Owl's Hill lane he took her hand and kissed it. Marigold had read of young knights doing that but that it should happen to *her*!

It was thrilling to hear of all the deeds of high emprise Hip had done. That he had once saved a little girl from being burned to death--Amy must have got it twisted--that he often climbed to the very top of telegraph-poles--that he had once stopped a team of runaway horses by his own unaided prowess--that he would, on occasion, really relish a fight with blood-maddened tigers. As for sea-serpents, take Hip's word for it, they ate out of his hand.

"I don't believe he's done all the wonderful things he's always talking about," Amy said scornfully once.

Marigold knew what *that* meant. Just sheer jealousy. And of course it was also jealousy that led Caroline to say that Hip had bitten his sister when he was four years old and left open old Mr. Simon's gate on purpose so that the pigs could get into the garden. Marigold did not believe a word of it.

She had such a funny feeling when other people pronounced his name. It was thrilling to go to church and listen to Mr. Price preaching. *His* father. Marigold hated old Tom Ainsworth for sleeping in church. And there was one almost painfully rapturous day when she and Amy were invited to the manse to tea. To eat a meal at the same table with Hip was something in the nature of a rite, with the big maple rustling outside the window on which, Hip told her, he had cut their intertwined initials. How bitterly she resented it when his mother told him to keep his elbow off the table and not talk with his mouth full!

And every morning that romantic journey to the mailbox to find a letter--a delightful letter. There were times when Marigold felt, though she would not admit it even to herself, that she really liked Hip's letters much better than Hip himself.

In one he told her she was his Little Queen. And he had written that especial sentence in red ink--or--was it?--could it be--Marigold had heard of such things. She pitied every other girl, especially the consecrated Caroline, and thought of Hip every time the moon rose or didn't rise.

"You are so different from everybody else," Hip told her. Clever Hip.

IV

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The course of true love even at eleven never runs smooth. There came a dreadful day when she and Hip almost quarrelled. Marigold had been told a certain shameful little secret by Netta Carroll about Em Dawes. Em Dawes was living with an aunt down in the village because her father and mother were divorced, true's you live. Netta had heard it over in Halifax and cross your heart you were never to tell a word of it. Marigold promised solemnly she would never tell. And then Hip, with his uncanny nose for secrets, discovered that Marigold had one and coaxed her to tell him.

Marigold wanted to tell him--yearned to tell him--felt her heart must really break if she didn't tell him. But there was her solemn promise. Lesleys did not break their solemn promises. It was a custom of their caste. Hip grew angry when he found her so unexpectedly unmalleable, and when anger gave him nothing--except perhaps the look in Marigold's face--he became sad and reproachful. She didn't like him a bit, of course, when she wouldn't tell him what she and Netta had been whispering about that time.

"If you don't tell me," said Hip earnestly, "I'll go and drown myself. When you see me lying dead you'll wish you'd told me."

Hip rather overreached himself there, because Marigold didn't believe at all that there was the slightest fear of his drowning himself. She stuck gallantly to her determination not to tell, despite his pleadings. And then the next afternoon, when it became known that Hip Price had disappeared and could not be found anywhere, though everybody in the community was madly searching for him, Marigold thought she must die. *Had* Hip actually drowned himself because he thought she did not like him? *Had* he? The dread was intolerable. How terrible to live all your life remembering that

some one had drowned himself because of you! Who could support such a prospect?

"I heard a dog howling under my window last night," sobbed Amy. "Mother says that's a sure sign of death."

"That was only old Lazy Murphy's dog. Surely you don't think *he* knows anything," protested Marigold. She was resentful of Amy's crying. What right had Amy to cry about Hip? She, Marigold, could not cry. Her dread went too deep for tears.

"His mother believes he's kidnapped," said Amy, hunting for a dry spot in her handkerchief. "She's just been going from one fainting fit to another all day. But some say he was seen going down the river in that leaky old boat of Shanty George's. Certain death, Shanty George says it was. Oh, I won't sleep a wink to-night."

Then came Caroline and June, and Caroline and June were also in tears--which did not improve the looks of either of them. Or their tempers, evidently. Caroline was shrewish.

"I don't see what *you're* crying about, June Page. He wasn't *your* minister's son. You're a Baptist."

"I guess I've as good a right to cry as you," retorted June. "Hip was my friend--my special friend. He thought more of me than of any girl in Owl's Hill. He's told me so *dozens* of times. He told me I was different from anybody he'd ever met. Cry! I will cry. Just you try to stop me."

An unbecoming red flush had risen in Caroline's pale face.

"Did Hip Price really tell you that?" she asked in a queer voice. Marigold, in the background, stood as if turned to the proverbial stone. Amy had put her handkerchief in her pocket.

"Yes, he did. And wrote it. I've had a letter from him every day for weeks."

"So have I," said Caroline.

June in her turn stopped crying and glared at Caroline.

"You haven't."

"I have. I can show them to you. And he told *me* I was different from any one he ever knew and that he couldn't help being crazy about me."

"He wrote me that, too," said June.

They looked at each other. No more tears were shed for Hip--nor would be if he were lying forty fathoms deep.

"Did he ever kiss your hand?" demanded Caroline.

June giggled--a giggle that seemed to make everything ugly. "More than that," she said significantly.

Marigold involuntarily brushed something from her hand. The power of thought had returned to her. She was very thankful now that she hadn't been able to cry. There were no stains on her face. Calmly, proudly as any Lesley of them all, she drained her cup of wormwood and gall.

June began to cry again--in self-pity this time. The Pages, Marigold reflected disdainfully, had no pride.

"He called me his Little Queen," she sobbed, "and said I had a crown of golden hair."

To call June Page's hair golden when it was just tow-coloured! And fancy a Little Queen with a nose like a dab of putty! Oh, it was to laugh.

Caroline did not cry. But she looked very limp. She had been also Little-Queened. "And he said my eyes were so sweet and provoking."

To think of those round pale eyes of Caroline's being called sweet and provoking! Oh, of course Hip had left old Simon's gate open and bit his sister--bit her frequently. Not a doubt of it.

"He's just been a regular mean two-faced deceitful little sneak," said June violently, "and I hope he *is* drowned, I do."

"I didn't think a minister's son would do that," said Caroline mournfully. There was something especially terrible about a minister's son doing a thing like that. Whom could one trust if not a minister's son?

"I believe they are the worst sometimes," said June. "Well, you can have him."

"I don't want him!" said Caroline superbly, remembering at last that she was consecrated.

They went away on that note. Amy looked guiltily at Marigold.

"I--I wasn't going to tell *them*," she said, "but I got letters from Hip, too. Lovely letters. I *can't* believe he didn't mean them. Of course he was

just fooling *them* but--"

"He was fooling everybody," said Marigold shortly. "And we needn't worry over his being drowned. He'll turn up safe and sound. I'm going home to write to Mother."

Marigold did write to Mother--not telling her *quite* everything, however. But first she burned a packet of schoolboy love-letters. She felt as if she had been mixed up in something very grimy. And she suddenly felt a great longing to be sitting on the old wharf below Cloud of Spruce, watching the boats coming in and feeling the clear, fresh sea-breeze from the dunes blowing in her face. Oh, how she hated and despised Hip Price.

But what was it Old Grandmother had said once?--That it was the hardest thing in the world to be just.

"I guess I was as much to blame as Hip," admitted Marigold candidly.

All that saved her self-respect was the fact that she had not told him The Secret.

V

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Hip turned up safe and sound next day. He had gone for a day's ride with Lazy Murphy's son-the-pedlar and Lazy Murphy's horse had taken sick eighteen miles away, in a place where there was no telephone. So Owl's Hill folks gave up searching and Mrs. Price recovered from her fainting fits and Hip came straight up to Owl's Hill to see Marigold. It was rather unfortunate that Hip should have selected that day for appearing out in kilts. He had thin legs.

"Come on for a walk down to the pasture-spring," he whispered.

"No, thank you, Howard."

Hip had never heard that an enchantment is at an end as soon as the enchanter is called by name. But he knew there was something wrong with Marigold, standing there, the very incarnation of disdain.

"What's the matter? You don't look as if you were glad to see me back. And I was thinking of you every minute I was away."

"And about June and Caroline, too?" asked Marigold sweetly, as one who knew her Hip at last.

For the first time since she had known him Hip lost face.

"So they've blabbed," he said. "Why, I was just seeing how much they'd believe. It was different with you--honest--You've got *them* skinned a mile."

"I think you'd better go home," said Marigold sarcastically. "Your mother may be anxious about you. She might even take a fainting-fit. Good-bye."

Marigold went away stiffly, regally, without a backward glance. Hip had not drowned himself in despair over her lack of confidence, but he was for her not only dead but, as the French would say, very dead.

"He was never very int'resting, anyhow--not even as much as Johnsy," she thought, suddenly clear-sighted.

It seemed years since she had left home. At the end of that long red road were Mother and Sylvia and Cloud of Spruce. She felt clean once more.

"I guess it was only red ink after all," she said.

Chapter XIX.

How It Came to Pass

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I

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When Marigold had gone to visit Aunt Anne and then Aunt Irene, something was started. Grandmother gloomily said,

"They'll all be wanting her now," and her prediction was speedily fulfilled. Aunt Marcia wanted her share of Marigold, too.

"If Anne and Irene Winthrop could have her I think I should too. She's never spent a night in my house--my favourite brother's child," she said reproachfully.

So Grandmother with a look of I-told-you-so and Mother with a look of How-can-I-do-without-Marigold again consented rather unwillingly.

"Jarvis is so--odd," said Grandmother to Mother.

Grandmother had very little use for Jarvis Pringle, even if he were her son-in-law. Nobody in the clan had much use for him. He was known to have got up once in the middle of the night to dot an "i" in a letter he had written that evening. As Uncle Klone said, that was carrying things rather too far.

Marigold did not know, as the grown-ups of the clan knew, that he had lived all his life with the shadow of madness hanging over him. She didn't know what Uncle Klone meant when he said Jarvis took the universe too seriously. But she did know she had never seen Uncle Jarvis smile. And when Uncle Jarvis once asked her if she loved God and she had said "yes," she had the oddest feeling that she was really telling a lie, because her God was certainly not the God Uncle Jarvis was inquiring about. And she did know that she didn't like Uncle Jarvis. She loved him, of course--you have to love your relations--but she didn't like him--not one little bit. She always made her small self scarce when he came to visit Cloud of Spruce. She did not know he had the face of a fanatic; but she knew he had a high, narrow, knobby forehead, deep-set, intolerant eyes, austere, merciless mouth, and a probing nose, which he had a horrible habit of pulling. Also a

fierce, immense, black beard which he would never even trim because that would have been un-Scriptural and contrary to the will of God.

Uncle Jarvis knew all about the will of God--or thought he did. Nobody could go to heaven who did not believe exactly as he did. He argued, or rather dogmatised, with every one. Marigold was so small a fish that she generally slipped through the meshes of his theological nets and he paid scant attention to her. But she wondered sometimes if Uncle Jarvis would really be contented in heaven. With nobody to frown at. And a dreadful God who hated to see you the least bit happy.

Nevertheless she was pleased at the prospect of another visit. Uncle Jarvis and Aunt Marcia also lived "over the bay," which of course had a magic sound in Marigold's ears. And she loved Aunt Marcia, who had calm, sea-blue eyes and one only doctrine--that "everybody needs a bit of spoiling now and then." Her pies praised her in the gates and she was renowned for a lovely cake called "Upside-down cake," the secret of which nobody else in the clan possessed. Marigold knew she would have a good time with Aunt Marcia. And Uncle Jarvis couldn't be 'round all the time. Grain must be cut and chores done no matter how dreadful the goings-on might be in your household during your absence.

So she went to Yarrow Lane farm, where she found a low-eaved old house under dark spruces and a garden that looked as if God smiled occasionally at least. Aunt Marcia's garden, of course. The only thing in the gardening line Uncle Jarvis concerned himself with was the row of little round, trimmed spruces along the fence of the front yard. Uncle Jarvis really enjoyed pruning them every spring, snipping off all rebellious tips as he would have liked to snip off the holder of every doctrine he didn't agree with.

Marigold had a room with a bed so big she felt lost in it and a small, square window looking out on the silver-tipped waves of the bay. She had the dearest little bowl to eat her porridge out of--it made even porridge taste good. And the Upside-down cake was all fond fancy had painted it.

Uncle Jarvis did not bother her much, though she was always secretly terrified at his gloomy prayers.

"Why," Marigold wondered, "must one groan so when one talks to God?" Her own little prayers were cheerful affairs. But perhaps they oughtn't to be.

The only unpleasant day was Sunday. Uncle Jarvis was almost as bad as the man in another of graceless Uncle Klon's stories--who hung his cat because she caught a mouse on Sunday. When he heard Marigold laugh the first Sunday she was at Yarrow Lane he told her sternly that she must never laugh on Sunday in his house.

"Whatever may be done at godless Cloud of Spruce," his manner seemed to say though his tongue didn't.

II

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Marigold was not long at Yarrow Lane before she picked up a chum. By the end of a week she and Bernice Willis had known each other all their lives. Aunt Marcia had rather expected Marigold to chum with Babe Kennedy on the next farm, who lived much nearer than Bernice. And Babe was very ready to be chummed with. But chumship, like kissing, goes by favour. Marigold simply did not like Babe--a pretty little doll, with hair of pale, shining, silky-red; pale green eyes, an inquisitive expression and an irritating little snigger that set Marigold's nerves on edge. She would have none of her. Bernice was the choice of her heart--the first real friend she had ever had--the first real rival to Sylvia. Bernice lived half a mile away, with an odd old aunt in "the house behind the young spruce wood." The very description intrigued Marigold. The *young* spruce wood--so delightful. What charming things must foregather in a *young* spruce wood. Bernice was ugly but clever. She had uncut mouse-coloured hair and big, friendly grey eyes in a thin, freckled face--a face that seemed meant for laughter, although it was generally a little sad. Her father and mother were both dead and Bernice did not seem to have any relatives in the world except the aforesaid odd old aunt. Lots of the girls in Ladore--even magical, over-the-bay places have to have post-office names--didn't like her.

But it happened that she and Marigold talked the same language--liked the same things. They could both have supped on a saucer of moonshine and felt no hunger--for a time, anyhow. They both understood the stories the wind told. They both liked silk-soft kittens and the little fir woods that ran venturesomely down to the shore and the dancing harbour ripples like songs. A bluebird singing on the point of a picket in the Yarrow Lane thrilled them and an imaginary trip to the moon was all in the evening's work. And they made every day a gay adventure for themselves.

"You'll find out she isn't as good as you think her," Babe told Marigold with sinister significance.

But that, Marigold believed, was only Babe's jealousy.

III

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Then one night Marigold and Bernice had the supreme bliss of sleeping together. And not only of sleeping together but sleeping in the granary-loft--the little white granary across the small, hollow field carpeted with sheets of green moss and full of birch-trees. Such a romantic thing.

Aunt Marcia had told Marigold to ask Bernice to stay all night with her. And soon after Bernice's arrival two loaded automobiles came out from Charlottetown. The guests must be put up somehow for the night. The little house was taxed to its limit. Marigold's room must be commandeered in the emergency. But what was the matter with sleeping in the neat little granary-loft this warm September night? Aunt Marcia would make them up a comfortable bed. If they wouldn't be afraid!

Afraid! Bernice and Marigold hooted at the idea. They were all for it at once. So after they had prowled about till nearly ten--Bernice had gone to bed at eight every night of her life and Marigold was supposed to go--they went through the moonlit birches with their nighties under their arms and a huge piece of apple-pie in their paws. Aunt Marcia actually let people eat pie at night. Perhaps that accounted for some of Uncle Jarvis's religious gloom. They took a drink from the truly delightful stoned-up spring behind the granary, which Uncle Jarvis called the barn-well, and then mounted the outside granary stairs to the loft. Its bare boards were beautifully white-washed, and Aunt Marcia had made up a bed on the floor and covered it with a charming white quilt that had red "rising suns" all over it. And she had set a lighted candle on a barrel for them, feeling that it would never do to give them a kerosene lamp in the granary.

They bolted the door--more romance--and blew out the candle to have the fun of undressing by moonlight.

It was when they were ready for bed that Marigold made her shocking discovery.

"Now, let's say our prayers and snuggle down for a good jaw," she said. "We can talk just as long as we like to-night and nobody to pound on the wall and tell us to stop."

Bernice turned from the loft window whence she had been gazing rapturously on the glimpse of moonlit bay over the birches.

"I never say any prayers," she announced calmly.

Marigold gasped.

"Why, Bernice Willis, that is wicked. Aren't you afraid God will punish you?"

"There isn't any God," said Bernice, "and I won't pray to any one I don't believe in."

Marigold stared at her. This thing had been *said*--and yet the granary still stood and Bernice still stood, a slim, white sceptic in the moonlight.

"But--but--Bernice, there *must* be a God."

"How do you know?"

"Mother told me," said Marigold, gasping at the first argument that presented itself to her dumbfounded mind.

"She told you there was a Santa Claus, too, didn't she?" asked Bernice relentlessly. "Mind you, I'd like to believe in God. But I can't."

"Why not?" wondered Marigold helplessly.

"Because--because I haven't *anybody*. Nobody but Aunt Harriet--and she's only a half-aunt and she doesn't like me a bit. Father and mother are dead--and she won't even talk to me about them. I had a kitten and it died and she won't let me have another. As for this praying-business, I used to pray. Once when I was so small I can just remember it Aunt Harriet sent me down to the store on an errand. The wind was awful cold. And I knelt right down on the road behind a little spruce-bush and asked God to make the wind warmer before I came out of the store. He *didn't*--it was colder than ever and right in my face. And when my kitten took sick I asked God to make it well. But it died. And then I knew there was no God. Because if there had been He wouldn't have let my kitten die when it was the only thing I had to love. So I never prayed any more. Of course I have to kneel

down when Aunt Harriet has family prayers. But I just kneel and make faces at God."

"You just said you didn't believe in Him," cried Marigold.

"Well--" Bernice was not going to be posed, "I just make faces at the idea of Him."

So this, Marigold reflected bitterly, was what Babe Kennedy had meant.

"Besides, look at me," continued Bernice rebelliously. "See how ugly I am. Look at the size of my mouth. Why did God make me ugly? Babe Kennedy says I've got a face like a monkey's."

"You haven't. And think how clever you are," cried Marigold.

"I want to be pretty," said Bernice stubbornly. "Then people might like me. But I don't believe in God and I'm not going to pretend I do."

Marigold got up with a long sigh of adjustment and flung her arms about Bernice.

"Never mind. *I* love you. I love you whether you believe in God or not. I only wish you did. It's--it's so much nicer."

"I won't have *you* long," said Bernice, determinedly pessimistic. "Something'll happen to take you away, too."

"Nothing can happen," Marigold challenged fate. "Oh, of course I'll have to go home when my visit's ended--but we'll write--and I'll get Mother to ask you to Cloud of Spruce. We'll be friends forever."

Bernice shook her head.

"No. Something will happen. You'll see. This is too good to last."

A new fear assailed Marigold.

"Bernice, if you don't believe in God how can you expect to go to heaven?"

"I don't. And I don't want to," Bernice answered defiantly. "Aunt Harriet read about heaven in the Bible. All shut in with walls and gates. I'd hate that."

"But wouldn't it be better than--than--"

"Hell? No. You wouldn't have to pretend you liked hell if you didn't. But I don't believe in either place."

"Bernice, don't you believe in the Bible *at all*?"

"Not one word of it. It's all about God and there isn't any God. It's just a--just a fairy-tale."

Somehow, this seemed more terrible to Marigold than not believing in God. God was far-away and invisible but the Bible was right in your hand, so to speak. She sighed again as she knelt to say her own prayers. It seemed a very lonely performance--with that little sceptic of a Bernice standing rigidly by the window, disbelieving. But Marigold prayed for her very softly. "Please, dear God, make Bernice believe in You. Oh, *please*, make Bernice believe in You."

IV

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At dinner-time next day Marigold made the mistake of her life. Aunt Marcia asked what she was worrying about. And Marigold confessed that she was--not exactly worrying about Bernice but so sorry for her.

"Because, you see, she doesn't believe in God. And it must be terrible not to believe in God."

"What's that?" Uncle Jarvis shot at her suddenly. "What's that about Bernice Willis not believing in God?"

"She says she doesn't," said Marigold mournfully.

"Poor child," said Aunt Marcia.

"Poor child? Wicked child!" thundered Uncle Jarvis. "If she doesn't believe in God you'll not play with her again, Marigold."

"Oh, Jarvis," protested Aunt Marcia.

"I've said it." Uncle Jarvis stabbed a potato with a fork as if he were spearing an infidel. "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion. We keep the Ten Commandments in *this* house."

"Oh, Jarvis, remember the poor child has no one to teach her really. That queer old--"

"Marcia, be silent. She has had plenty of opportunity in a Christian land to learn that there is a God. Doesn't she go to Sunday-school and church? And Harriet Caine is an earnest Christian woman. There is no doubt that Bernice has been taught the truth. But she is plainly not of the elect and she is too wicked for you to play with. Why, I refused to shake hands with Dr. Clarke because he said he believed there were two Isaiahs. Do you think I'll tolerate infidelity?"

Aunt Marcia knew he was inexorable and Marigold felt he was. She began to cry, though she knew tears would have no influence on Uncle Jarvis.

"Oh, Uncle Jarvis--if Bernice--if Bernice comes to believe there is a God can't I play with her then?"

"Yes, but not till then." Uncle Jarvis gave his nose a frantic tweak and left the table, his black beard fairly bristling with indignation. Uncle Jarvis had one of his headaches that day and so was more than usually theological. Aunt Marcia wanted him to take an aspirin to relieve it but he would not. It was flying in the face of God to take aspirin. If He sent you pain it was for you to endure it.

Aunt Marcia tried to comfort Marigold but could not hold out much hope that Uncle Jarvis would change his mind.

"Oh, if I'd only held my tongue," moaned Marigold.

"It would have been wiser," agreed Aunt Marcia sadly. Thirty years of living with Jarvis Pringle had taught her that.

Marigold never forgot Bernice's sad little face when she told her Uncle Jarvis wouldn't let them play together any longer.

"Didn't I tell you? I knew something would happen," she said, her lips quivering.

"Oh, Bernice, couldn't you--couldn't you--*pretend* you believe in Him?" Marigold's voice faltered. She *knew*, deep in her soul, that this wasn't right--that a friendship so purchased must be poisoned at the core. Bernice knew it, too.

"I can't, Marigold. Not even for you. It wouldn't be any use."

"Oh, Bernice, if you come to find out--sometime--that you do believe in Him after all, you'll tell me, won't you? And then we can be friends again. Promise."

Bernice promised.

"But I won't. Isn't this very thing that's happened a proof? If there was a God He'd know it would make me feel more than ever there wasn't."

The week that followed was a very lonely one for Marigold. She missed Bernice dreadfully--and that hateful Babe was always poking round, triumphing.

"Didn't I tell you. *I* knew ages ago Bernice didn't believe there was a God. I'll bet He'll punish her right smart some of these days."

"She doesn't pronounce sepulchre 'see-pulker,' anyhow," retorted Marigold, thinking of the verse Babe had read in Sunday-school the day before.

Babe reddened.

"I don't believe Miss Jackson knows how to pronounce it herself. You make me *sick*, Marigold Lesley. You're just mad because you've found out your precious Bernice isn't the piece of perfection you thought her."

"I'm not mad," said Marigold calmly. "I'm only sorry for you. It must be so terrible to be *you*."

Marigold prayed desperately every night for Bernice's conversion--prayed without a bit of faith that her prayer would be answered. She even tried to consult the minister about the matter, the night he came to Yarow Lane for supper.

"Tut, tut, everybody believes in God," he said when Marigold timidly put a suppositious case.

So *that* wasn't much help. Marigold thought wildly of refusing to eat unless Uncle Jarvis let her play with Bernice. But something told her that wouldn't move Uncle Jarvis a hair's breadth. He would only tell Aunt Marcia to send her home.

And, oh, the raspberries were thick on the hill--and there was a basketful of adorable kittens in the old tumbledown barn--Uncle Jarvis was always so busy with theology that he hadn't time to patch up his barns. And it was a shame, so it was, that Bernice must miss all this just because she couldn't believe in God.

V

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"I've found out something about Bernice Willis. I've found out something about Bernice Willis," chanted Babe Kennedy triumphantly, rocking on her heels and toes in the door of the granary-loft, grinning like a Cheshire cat.

Marigold looked scornfully over her shoulder from the corner where she was arranging her cupboard of broken dishes.

"What have you found out?"

"I'm not going to tell *you*," crowed Babe. "I'm going to tell Bernice, though. I gave her a hint of it this afternoon at the store but I wasn't going to tell her then--I just gave her something to think of. I'm going right down to her aunt's to tell her as soon as I've taken Mrs. Carter's eggs to her. Oh, it's awful--the awfulest thing you ever heard of. You'll find it out pretty soon. Everybody will. Well, bye-bye. I've got to be off. It's coming up a storm, I guess."

Marigold made one swift bound across the granary, caught Babe by the arm, pulled her with scant regard for her eggs into the loft, slammed and bolted the door and stood with her back to it.

"Now, you just tell me what you mean and no more nonsense about it."

Marigold was not a Lesley for nothing. Babe surrendered. She snapped her thin-lipped, cruel little mouth shut, then opened it.

"Very well then. Bernice Willis's father isn't dead. Never was dead. He's in the penitentiary at Dorchester, for stealing money."

"I--don't believe it."

"It's true--cross my heart. I overheard Mrs. Dr. Keyes from Charlottetown telling Ma all about it. He was in a bank--and he--em--embezzled the money. So he was sent to the pen for twelve years and his wife died of a broken heart--though Mrs. Keyes said it was her extravagance drove him to stealing. And Bernice's Aunt Harriet took her. She was just a baby--and brought her up to think her father was dead, too."

Marigold wanted to disbelieve it. But it was too hopelessly, horribly, evidently true.

"My, ain't I glad I've never played with Bernice!" gloated Babe. "The daughter of a jail-bird. Just think of her face when I tell her!"

"Oh, Babe--" Marigold stooped to plead with Babe Kennedy piteously, "oh, you're not going to tell her. Please--please don't tell her."

"I will so tell her. It'll bring that pride of hers down. Carrying her head as high as if she came of honest people."

"If you were changed into a toad this minute you'd only look like what you are," cried Marigold passionately.

Babe laughed condescendingly.

"Of course you're sore--after thinking nobody was good enough for you to play with but Bernice. Oh, my, Miss Lesley. You can pull in your horns now, I guess. I'm going to tell Bernice right off. She'd have to know it, anyhow, soon--her father'll soon be out of jail. I'm going to have the fun of telling her first. Think of her face. Now, you just open that door and let me out."

Marigold did as she was ordered. The spirit was clean gone out of her.

This was dreadful--dreadful. No hope now that Bernice would ever believe in God. Marigold felt she could hardly blame her. "Think of her face--" Marigold did think of it--that dear, freckled, sensitive, homely little face--when Babe told her the terrible truth. And of course Babe would tell. Babe did so love to tell ugly things. Hadn't she told Kitty Houseman she was going to die? Hadn't she told the teacher Sally Ford had stolen Jane McKenzie's pencil in school?

"If I could get there and tell Bernice first," said Marigold. "If she *has* to hear it she could stand it better from me. I could go by the Lower road--Mrs. Carter lives on the Upper road and I could get there before Babe. But it's dark--and going to rain--"

Marigold shuddered. She didn't mind being out after dark on a road she knew. But a road she didn't know was different.

She ran down the granary stairs and across the birch field to the Lower road. She *must* get to Bernice first. But, oh, how weird and lonely that

Lower road was in the sudden swoops of wind and the sudden gushes of wan moonlight between the clouds. Melancholy dogs were howling to each other across the dark farms. The wind whistled dolefully in the fence corners. *Something*--with red eyes--glared out at her from under a bush. And the trees!

By daylight Marigold was a little sister to all the trees in the world. But trees took on such extraordinary shapes in the dark. A huge lion prowled through John Burnham's field. An enormous, diabolical rooster strutted on the fence. A queer elfish old man leered at her over a gate. A very devil squatted at the turn of the road. The whole walk was full of terrors. Marigold was in a cold reek of perspiration when she reached the house behind the young spruce wood and stumbled into the little kitchen, where Bernice was--fortunately--alone.

"Bernice," gasped Marigold, "Babe's coming to tell you something--something dreadful. I--tried to stop her but I couldn't."

Bernice looked at Marigold with fear in her sad grey eyes.

"I knew she meant something this afternoon. She asked me where my father was buried. I said in Charlottetown. 'Go and see if his grave is there,' she said. What is it? Tell me. I'd rather hear it from you than her."

"Oh, I can't, Bernice--I can't," cried Marigold in agony. "I thought I could--but I can't."

"You *must*," said Bernice.

In the end Marigold told her--haltingly--tearfully. Then buried her face in her hands.

"Oh, I'm so happy," said Bernice.

Marigold pulled her away. Bernice was radiant. Eyes like stars.

"Happy?"

"Yes--oh, don't you see. I've got *somebody* after all. It was so dreadful to think I didn't belong to anybody. And Father'll *need* me so much when he comes out next year. There'll be so much I can do for him. Oh, Marigold--I *do* believe in God now--I'm sorry I ever said I didn't. Of course there's a God. I love Him--and I love everybody in the world. I don't mind a bit how poor and ugly I am now that I have a father to love."

In Marigold's utter confusion of thought only one idea stood out clearly.

"Oh, Bernice--if you do--believe in God--Uncle Jarvis will let us play together again."

"Well, I do declare." Babe Kennedy stood in the doorway. A vicious, disappointed Babe. "So *that* was why you didn't want me to tell--so's you could tell yourself."

"Exactly."

Marigold put her arm around Bernice and faced Babe defiantly. "And I *have* told it first. So you can just go home, Miss Meow. Nobody wants you here."

Chapter XX.

The Punishment of Billy

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I

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"I have the evil eye," said Billy ominously. "People are scared of me."

"If you are going to talk nonsense we can't be friends," said Marigold coldly. "If you're sensible we can have some fun."

Billy--nobody but Aunt Min ever called him William--looked at this sprite-like Marigold and decided to be sensible. When Aunt Min had told him that Marigold Lesley was coming to Windyside for a week Billy had two reactions.

Firstly, he was mad. He didn't want a girl poking and snooping round. Secondly, he was rather pleased. It would be good fun to tease her and teach her her place. Now came a third. Marigold, sleek of hair, blue of eye, light of foot, found favour in his eyes. As sign and seal that evening, sitting on the granary steps, he told her all his troubles. Marigold listened and sympathised with one side of her mind, and with the other carried on her own small thought-processes. As is the way of womenkind of all ages, whether men knew it or not.

Marigold could not quite understand why Billy detested staying at Aunt Min's so bitterly. For herself she rather liked it. Billy thought Aunt Min too strict to live, but in Marigold's eyes her regimen compared very favourably with Grandmother's. Though Marigold called her Aunt Min, according to the custom of the caste, she was really only a cousin of the Cloud of Spruce Lesleys. But she was a genuine aunt of Billy's, that is to say, she had once been married to a half-brother of his father's. So Marigold and Billy might call themselves cousins of a sort.

This was Marigold's first visit to Aunt Min, and was to be the final one of the autumn. Next week she must go to school again.

Marigold liked Windyside. She liked the big airy house with its rooms full of quaint old furniture. There were so many beautiful things to look at, especially the scores of strange and exquisite Indian shells, brought home

by Aunt Min's sailor-husband, and the case of stuffed parrots in the hall, with the model of a full-rigged ship atop of it.

To be sure, Aunt Min was very strict about her diet--which was why Grandmother had been so willing to let her come--and her table was something of the leanest. Aunt Min's temper was a bit uncertain also. She could say sharp things on occasion and had been known to slam doors. But there were compensations. For one thing, Aunt Min always asked her casually how she took her tea. For another, cats. Dozens of adorable animals basking on the window-sills, sunning themselves in the garden walks, and prowling about the barn. A batch of kittens was all in the days work at Windyside. For once in her life Marigold felt that she had all the cats she wanted.

Now, all the use Billy had for a cat was a target.

Marigold thought Billy very funny to look at. He had a round moon face of pink and white, large china-blue eyes, a shock of fine straight yellow hair and a mouth so wide he seemed to be perpetually grinning. But she rather liked him. He was the first boy she had ever liked.

Hip? No, she had never *liked* Hip. This was entirely different.

She listened sympathetically to his tale of woe. She thought Billy had a case.

Billy, it seemed, had not wanted to come to Aunt Min's at all. His mother was dead and he and his father lived together at a boarding-house, where life was tolerable because of Dad. But Dad had to go to South America on a prolonged business-trip and hence Billy's sojourn with Aunt Min.

"Rotten, I call it," he growled. "I wanted to go to Aunt Nora's. She's a real aunt--Mamma's own sister. Not a half-aunt like Aunt Min. I tell you Aunt Nora's great. Always cuts a pie in six pieces. Aunt Min, 'jever notice, always cuts it in eight. A feller can do as he likes at Aunt Nora's. You haven't gotter sit up on your hind-legs and act real pretty *all* the time there. *She* ain't one of your fussy old things."

"Aunt Min is pretty particular," agreed Marigold, thinking how lovely that little blue glimpse of the harbour was at the end of the orchard aisle.

"Particular! Say, I've gotter wash my face every day, and brush my teeth more times 'n you could shake a stick at. And live on health foods. Say, you ought to taste Aunt Nora's raspberry buns."

"They sound good," agreed Marigold, who herself felt certain hankerings after Salome's pantry.

"Just think how splendid it would 'a' been there. I wouldn't have to be respectable for one minute--only on Sundays and then I could 'a' stood it for a change. I could go barefoot--and slide down the pighouse roof--and eat everything that come handy. Hot dogs. There's a hot-dog stand just outside Aunt Nora's gate."

Billy groaned. It was agonising to think of the delights one might enjoy at Aunt Nora's and contrast them with the bitter reality at Aunt Min's.

"Why wouldn't your father let you go to Aunt Nora's?" asked Marigold.

"Search *me*. I think he had some fool notion Aunt Min would be offended. I was to Aunt Nora's last summer and Aunt Min thought it was her turn. Mind you, it isn't because she likes me. She's got some fool idea of doing her duty by Dad. And mind you, she thinks Aunt Nora's is an awful place because Aunt Nora is poor. She thinks I wouldn't be 'happy' there. Happy!"

Billy groaned again.

"I *never* had such a good time as I had at Aunt Nora's. Say, I had to hunt her turkeys up every evening. Roam everywhere I liked and no questions asked so long's I turned up at bedtime with the turks. Here if I go outer the gate it's, 'William, *where* have you been?' and 'William, did you scrape your boots?' Why, the cats here have to wipe their feet afore they go in."

"Now, Billy, *that's* exaggerating," said Marigold rebukingly.

"Well, 'tain't exaggerating to say I don't dast throw a single stone here," said Billy defiantly. "It's aggravating, that's what it is. Millions of cats and not a chance to throw a stone at one of 'em. I *did* throw one first day I was here--gave her old yellow Tom the thrill of his life--and she jawed at me for a week and made me read a chapter of the Bible every day. I'd rather

she'd taken it out of my hide. She thinks out so many different ways of punishing me and I never know what to expect. And then--'ja hear her?--telling Mrs. Kent what I looked like when I was a baby? She's always at it. Catch Aunt Nora telling on a feller like that. Or kissing me goodnight. Aunt Min always does. Thinks it's her 'duty,' I s'pose."

Billy thrust his hands in his pockets and scowled at the universe. But he was feeling better. Remained only one grievance to be discussed. The worst of all.

"I could worry along if it wasn't for Sundays," he said. "I hate Sunday here--hate it worse'n p'isen."

"Why?"

"'Cause I have to write a snopsis."

"What's a snopsis?"

"Why, you go to church and when you come home you gotter write out all you can remember of the sermon. And if you can't remember enough--oh, boy! She says *her* children always done it. She'll make *you* do it, too, next Sunday, I'll bet."

Marigold reflected a bit. She didn't think she would mind. It might be int'resting--a kind of game in fact. For *one* Sunday. But poor Bill had to do it every Sunday.

"Well, never mind," she said soothingly. "Sunday's a long way off yet. Let's see how much fun we can have before that."

Decidedly, thought Billy, here was a girl.

II

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Sunday might be far off--but Sunday came. After a week during which Billy forgot to hanker for Aunt Nora's. That was all very well. But Marigold was going home Tuesday. Billy would have been torn in pieces by wild horses before he would have confessed how he hated the thought.

But here was Sunday afternoon--and church. To which Billy and Marigold must go alone because Aunt Min had been summoned to Charlottetown to see an old friend who was passing through and could be seen on no other day.

"I'm sorry I can't go to church," she said, "because young Mr. Harvey Nelson is preaching for a call and I'd like to hear him. But it can't be helped. I've left your suppers in the pantry for you. Now be good children. Marigold, you'll see that Billy behaves properly, won't you? Don't forget to pay close attention to the sermon. You must both write out a synopsis of it this evening, and I want to see a better result than last Sunday, Billy."

"A-ha," gloated Billy as Aunt Min went out. "I told you you'd have to do it, too."

Marigold did not resent his gloating. He was really behaving very well, considering she had been told to look after his behaviour. That was too awful of Aunt Min. Why *couldn't* people understand certain perfectly plain, self-evident things?

"Oh, my, ain't we Sundayfied!" chanted Davy Dixon on the fence, as they went down the lane. Davy was freckled and snub-nosed, bareheaded and barefooted. With no more clothes on than decency required. But he did look so jolly and care-free. All the Dixons did. But they were a family Aunt Min detested. She never let Billy and Marigold play with them, though they lived only a cat's walk away through the bush behind Aunt Min's.

"Comin' to the picnic?" asked Davy.

"What picnic?"

"Oh, just the Dixon family picnic," grinned Davy. "This is Mom's and Pop's wedding-day. Twelve years married 'n' ain't sorry for it yit. We're going to take our new car 'n' go to the sand-hills. Got a basket of eats 'd make your eyes stick out. Yum-yum. 'N' mom said to ask youse to come along, too, 'cause she knew your Aunt Min was going away 'n' youse'd be lonesome."

Marigold found herself wishing they could go. At home she liked going to church, but she was sure she wouldn't like going to Windyside church. She didn't like the look of it; a big, bare, wind-beaten, drab-tinted church with a spire as long and sharp as a needle; somehow it was not a friendly church. And she knew nobody there. A drive in a motor-car to the sand-hills sounded very alluring. But of course it was unthinkable.

What was Billy saying?

"I'll go if you'll lend me that book at your place--*The Flying Roll*."

"Bill-ee," said Marigold.

"Oh, all right," said Dave. "It belongs to old Aunt Janey but she won't care."

"I'll go," said Billy decidedly. "Coming, Marigold?"

"Oh, please, remember what day this is," implored Marigold, with a wild wish in the back of her mind that she could go. "And what will Aunt Min say?"

"Aunt Min isn't going to know a thing about it. I've got a plan. Aw, come on. We'll have a rip-roaring time."

"Billy, you don't mean it."

"You bet I do. You can go to church if you want to and stick all the afternoon to varnishy seats."

"Gotter make up your mind quick," said Dave. "Lizzie's waiting."

Marigold reflected rapidly. She *couldn't* go alone to a strange church. And it would be so lonesome to stay home. The sand-dunes--the waves--the wind on the sea--

"I'll--go," she said helplessly.

"I knew you'd some gizzard in you. Atta girl," gloated Bill. "Let's scoot back and take off our proud rags. Jes' a minute, Dave."

A few minutes later they were running along the path through a scented field of hay on a short cut to the Dixons. Ordinarily Marigold felt she had wings on a day like this. Now she suddenly felt leaden-footed. But Billy must not suspect it. He would despise her if he found out she really did not care for all this lawlessness.

The Dixons' new car proved to be a very second-hand snub-nosed little Ford, into which they all piled and rattled and bounced down a narrow deep-rutted lane to the sand-dunes. Marigold sat on the knee of Mrs. Dixon, a big, pink, overblown lady who used what even Billy knew to be bad grammar, in a cheerful, excruciating voice. Marigold thought the bones would be shaken out of her before they got to the dunes.

It should have been a wonderful afternoon. Polly Dixon was a pretty, gentle little girl and Marigold liked her. They slid down the sand-hills and made shore pies and dug wells in the sand. They gathered clam-shells and went bathing in a little sand-cove up the shore where the water was like soft, warm, liquid turquoise. They played games with the boys. They laughed and ran and scampered. And under it all Marigold knew perfectly well that she was not having a good time. She was only trying to make herself think she was.

Even the lunch--to which she looked forward a little ashamedly after a week of Aunt Min's diet--was a disappointment. There was plenty of it--but Mrs. Dixon was not a good cook. Marigold ate stale sandwiches, and cookies that reeked of soda, and a piece of mushy lemon-pie. She always believed that she also ate two crickets that had got tangled up in the meringue of the pie. But Billy thought that feed was extra-x. "I wish to goodness I could eat some more but I can't," he sighed, bolting the last morsel of a gorgeous piece of cake whose iced surface was decorated with violent red-and-yellow candies.

III

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"Wasn't it jolly?" said Billy, drawing a long unregretful breath as they walked home together through the hayfield.

"Won't it be jolly when Aunt Min asks you to write a synopsis and you can't?" demanded Marigold rather wearily and sarcastically.

Billy grinned.

"I'll just write it. This *Flying Roll* book is full of sermons. I read some dandy ones in it one day down at Dixons' before you came. We'll just write a snopsis of one of them, and Aunt Min will never know the difference."

"We won't," cried Marigold. "You can do as you like, but I won't cheat like that."

"Then you'll go and give the whole thing away," said Billy pale with wrath and fear.

"No-o-o, I won't. I'll just tell Aunt Min I couldn't write a synopsis."

"She'll send you to bed 'thout any supper."

"I don't care," said Marigold pathetically, putting her hand on her stomach. "That lemon-pie was awful."

Billy betook himself to a little room Aunt Min called her library. His opinion was that writing a "snopsis" with the printed sermon before you was a snap. When Aunt Min came home he was ready for her. Marigold said, with a very good imitation of Grandmother Lesley's manner, that she could not write a synopsis.

Aunt Min looked at her for a moment but said nothing. She took Billy's copious sheets with a very grim smile--a smile that speedily changed to a frown.

"Surely--surely Harvey Nelson never preached such stuff as this."

"Why, what's the matter with it?" cried Billy.

"Matter. It's heresy--rank heresy. Why, the man must be a Second Adventist. I never read such doctrines. Well, he'll not get any call to

Windyside if I can prevent it. I was in favour of him because he's engaged to Dovie Sinclair and she is a distant relation of mine. But this preposterous sermon is too much."

Aunt Min rustled indignantly out of the room, leaving Billy to reflect on the snares and pitfalls of existence.

"What do you suppose was wrong with it?" he whispered miserably.

"I don't know," said Marigold agitatedly, "but I do know that if Mr. Nelson is engaged to Dovie Sinclair he's *got* to get that call. Dovie is my Sunday-school teacher at home and I won't have her disappointed through our fault."

"Don't you dare snitch on me," cried Billy. "Let things alone. Maybe she'll cool down--or find out from some one else he didn't preach it."

Marigold's face was white and tragic.

"She never will. She'll just say he doesn't preach sound doctrine and she won't explain anything about it. You know Aunt Min. She's got to be told and I'm going to tell her. But you needn't come if you're scared."

"I'm scared but I'm coming. You don't suppose I'm going to leave you to do it all alone?" said Billy staunchly. "Besides it was all my doings. I made you go. If Aunt Min has to be told, she's gotter be told that, too."

No wonder folks liked Billy.

IV

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Half an hour later Billy and Marigold were sitting on the granary steps. The fatal interview was over and it had not been a pleasant one, to state it mildly.

None the pleasanter for Marigold in that Aunt Min forgave her readily because Billy had led her astray. Perhaps Aunt Min did not want to get in wrong with the Cloud of Spruce people. But all the vials of her wrath were uncorked on Billy's devoted head. She told Billy he had disgraced his name and ordered him to go out and stay out until she had decided on his punishment.

If it had not been for Billy, Marigold would have been feeling very happy. It was so delightful to be good friends with herself again. And--if only one knew what was going to be done to Billy--it was such a perfect evening. Those little golden dells among the sunset hills--that path of moonrise glitter on the harbour over which a ship of dreams might come sailing--those gossiping poplars--the green creaminess of that field of buckwheat-blossom in the shade of the wood--those pines behind the well like big green purring pussy-cats--that sweetest imp-faced kitten purring at her from under the milk-bench--but--

"*What* do you suppose she'll do?" she whispered to Billy. The subject had such a gruesome fascination.

"Oh, likely make me wear a girl's apron for a week," groaned Billy. "She made we wear one for two days the time I put the peanut-shells in Elder Johnny's pocket at prayer-meeting. Say--" Billy began to laugh, "that *was* fun. When he pulled out his hanky in the middle of his prayer the shells flew every which way for a Sunday. One struck the minister on the nose."

Marigold *saw* the picture and laughed satisfyingly. Billy reflected gloomily that she was going home Tuesday. If only she were to be around

to help him through whatever Aunt Min would visit on him. To be sure, she had got him into the scrape but he bore her no grudge for that. She was a good little scout.

The moon had come up until she seemed to be resting on the very tip of the tall Lombardy on the hills when Aunt Min came across the yard, a rigid figure of outraged majesty. She looked scornfully at Billy and spoke in a sad, gentle way. When Aunt Min banged doors and looked or spoke sourly or sharply no one worried. But when Aunt Min smiled in that curious sweet fashion and spoke in that low, even tone, then beware. It was the calm before the levin-bolt.

"Do you realise that you have behaved very badly?" she asked.

"Yes'm," gulped Billy.

"I have decided--" Aunt Min paused.

Billy was speaking. *What* fiendish punishment had Aunt Min devised? Marigold slipped a little cold hand of backing into his.

"I don't feel equal to the responsibility of looking after you any longer," resumed Aunt Min more gently than ever, "so I have decided to send you to your Aunt Nora's to-morrow."

Chapter XXI.

Her Chrism of Womanhood

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I

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A new magic had fallen over Cloud of Spruce. Grandmother solemnly decreed that Marigold might play with Sidney Guest. Grandmother would not, of course, call him Budge as everybody else did. His mother was a Randolph from Charlottetown, so that he was a quite permissible playmate for a Lesley of Harmony. Mr. Guest had bought Mr. Donkin's farm and so Budge lived right next door to Cloud of Spruce.

He was a "nice-mannered" little boy, so Grandmother said. Rather thin and scrawny as to looks, with sandy hair but fine clear grey eyes. The only thing Grandmother was seriously afraid of was that they might poison themselves in some of their prowls and rambles. Not an ill-founded fear at all. For, in spite of all warnings, they ate or tried to eat nearly everything they came across.

Marigold had never had a real playmate in Harmony before, save for Gwen's hectic three weeks. She did not seem to care for any of the girls in Harmony, and though she wrote fat gossipy letters to Gwen and Paula and Bernice she did not see them very often. Perhaps Sylvia spoiled her for other little girls, as Mother sometimes thought rather anxiously. Mother had always defended Sylvia sympathisingly against a Grandmother who did not understand some things. But sometimes lately she wondered if she had been wise in so doing. It would not be a good thing if the wild secret charm of fairy-playmates spoiled Marigold for the necessary and valuable companionship of her kind. Marigold was twelve. Her golden hair was deepening to warm brown and she had at last learned not to pronounce interesting "int'resting." Surely it was time she was outgrowing Sylvia.

So Lorraine Lesley was glad when, just at the beginning of vacation, the Guests bought the Donkin place and Marigold and Budge took a prompt liking to each other. Marigold was amazed to find herself really liking a boy. She had never liked any of the boys in school. She had liked

Billy but she had forgotten him. She had detested Cousin Marcus's Jack. As for Hip Price, he had made her hate all boys for a time. But Budge was different from any boy she had ever known.

For weeks Marigold's existence became one of hair-raising excitement. She did things to win Budge's approval that she had never dreamed of doing. They went trouting up the brook and Marigold was such a sport in regard to worms that Budge thought in his heart--but did not say--that she was almost as good as a boy. They waded under the bridge. They climbed to the ventilator on top of the big Guest barn. They played pirate on an old green boat--the *Daisy Dean*--stranded on the harbour shore, with a black flag made out of Salome's old black silk skirt and decorated with a skull and cross-bones. In it they sailed on amazing voyages hunting for gold and glamour and adventure. They had a password and a secret sign. They fixed up a stove of stones and cooked mussels and potatoes over it.

With Budge, Marigold could explore all the pretty play-lands down the harbour where she would never have dared to go alone. They even went as far as that grey misty end of the world known as the harbour's mouth, where the silver-and-lilac sand-dunes stretched in all their wild sweet loveliness of salt-withered grasses and piping sea-winds. Nobody ever knew *that*, or that they had got caught by the tide and had to climb the banks and come home through dripping wet meadows. 'Twas a guilty triumphant secret. And another was the driftwood fire they made on the shore one twilight. They had both been told never to play with fire, but that did not spoil their enjoyment of it one bit. Rather heightened it, I am afraid. This secret forbidden thing had a charm all its own. And some days they fairly lived in the froggy marsh--where a very decent dragon also had his abode and grizzly bears grizzled.

Marigold had a deadly horror of frogs but she never let Budge know it, and she compelled herself to carry a dead snake--on a stick--to win his admiration. She also brought herself to say "Holy cats," but try as she would she could never compass a "darn," which was just as well. Because in his heart Budge did not care for girls who said "darn."

She was never able to learn to whistle on a blade of grass, as he did. But she could do one thing he couldn't do--make the dearest pudding-bags out of the fat live-forever leaves. Budge tried and tried but his thumb pressure was always too heavy, so the balance of respect was kept true. And when Budge sat down on a hot oven door one day, in trousers that needed a patch, Marigold never even asked him how his burns were getting on. By such tact is friendship preserved.

Budge patted Marigold's kitten, Pops, and Marigold loved his dog, Dix. But Sylvia she could not yet share with him. Budge had somehow got the idea that Marigold had some pet mystery connected with the hill of spruce, and sometimes teased her to tell him what it was. But Marigold always refused. Not yet--not yet. She had never, in spite of fleeting temptation, told any of her playmates about Sylvia--not even Bernice. Sylvia was so much her own. Although--Marigold owned it to herself occasionally with a sorrowful sigh--somehow Sylvia wasn't just the same. Not so vivid--so living--so *real*. The change had come about so slowly that Marigold did not yet realise how far her jolly chumship with Budge had replaced that goblin-comradeship of her lonely years. She clung to Sylvia, remembering what Aunt Marigold had said to her one evening as they sat in the orchard.

"Keep your dream, little Marigold, as long as you can. A dream is an immortal thing. Time cannot kill it or age wither it. You may tire of reality but never of dreams."

"It hurts--to wake up, though," said Marigold timidly. "When I come back through the Green Gate I always feel that it's just terrible to think there really isn't any Sylvia--that she's just something I've dreamed."

"The dreamer's joy is worth the dreamer's pain," said Aunt Marigold, knowing that since Marigold had begun to think of Sylvia as a dream the sad awakening was near.

So, almost every day, some time of it, Marigold slipped through The Magic Door and the Green Gate and summoned Sylvia. Sylvia always came--still. But there was a difference.

Marigold would have told Budge about Sylvia if she could have been sure how he would take her. Marigold knew of a side of his nature which

made her think he might understand Sylvia. Rarely, Budge gave her glimpses of this side. When they grew tired of prowling and pirating and sat on the wharf watching the ghostly sails of outgoing ships in the twilight, Budge would recite to her shyly the queer little verses of poetry he sometimes made up. Marigold thought they were wonderful. Budge understood, too, the secret thrill that came when you opened a new book. And he was a crackerjack at yarns. She liked his scarlet boy-stories better than her rose-pink and moon-blue girl-fancies. That one of the wolf-skin rug on the Guest parlour floor coming alive and prowling at night with burning eyes. Marigold couldn't sleep when she went to bed for the delicious horror of it. Was it coming across the road now--snuffing through the garden--padding up the stairs? Marigold screamed aloud and Mother came in and said she'd had a nightmare.

II

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And then. The Austins bought the old Burnaby place and moved in. Tad Austin was a boy of Budge's age. And Marigold found herself deserted.

"'Tis an old tale and often told."

Tad Austin's parents, for some inscrutable reason, had seen fit to christen him Romney, but he never got anything but Tad. He was really not a bad-looking boy, with a chubby, agreeable brown face, although Marigold, who naturally could see nothing attractive about him, thought that his round, prominent blue eyes looked absurdly like the fat blue plums on the tree by the apple-barn.

The world was suddenly a cold, lonely, empty place for our poor Marigold. Always hitherto she had taken her troubles to her mother. But she couldn't take this--she couldn't. Not even Mother could understand. Certainly Grandmother couldn't. Grandmother, who, passing Marigold sitting disconsolately on the twilight steps, had remarked humorously,

"Don't sigh but send

And if he doesn't come let him be hanged."

Send, indeed. Marigold would have died the death before she would have made the slightest effort to get Budge back. The cats could have him. She got an enormous satisfaction out of picturing to herself how haughty and implacable she would be if he *did* come back. At least this was how she felt about it at first.

"Perhaps he'll be sorry when I'm dead," thought Marigold darkly. But she would show Budge--show everybody--*she* didn't care. She went and made candy and sang like a lark.

But there was nobody to share the candy with when it was made. She gave Lazarre the most of it to take to his children.

Life was a howling wilderness for Marigold the next few weeks. It seemed to her that Budge and Tad literally flaunted their intimacy and fun in her face--though the shameful truth was that they never thought about her at all. They got up a show and all the boys of Harmony could see it for a cent, but no girls. Oh, it was *mean*!

Budge and Tad went fishing up the brooks. Budge and Tad dug for pirate gold. Budge and Tad had a smuggler's rendezvous in the cave Marigold had discovered on the harbour shore. Budge and Tad had the kitten-hunt in the Guest barn which Marigold and Budge had planned to have in the fulness of time when there should be kittens to hunt.

This was the last straw that broke Marigold's pride. She would so have loved a kitten-hunt with Budge in the great dusky hay-scented old barn.

She must get Budge back. She *must*. Existence was quite impossible without him. But how? What could she do? Marigold knew she must not show her hand too plainly. Instinct told her that. Besides she had a dim old memory of something Old Grandmother had said long, long ago.

"If you run after a man he'll run away. It's instinct. We *have* to run when anything chases us."

Wherefore she, Marigold, would *not* run after Budge. Was there any other way?

"I wonder if it would do any good to pray about it," she thought. Then she decided she couldn't try it anyway.

"I don't want him to come back because God made him come. I want him to come back because he *wants* to."

Like an inspiration came the thought of Sylvia. She would tell him about Sylvia. He had always wanted to know about Sylvia. He might come back then.

It was a fortunate coincidence that Salome asked her to go over to the Guest place on an errand that very afternoon. Budge was sitting on the side door-steps packing fish-worms in a tin can. He grinned at her cheerfully and absently. It had never occurred to Budge that he had treated Marigold shamelessly. She had simply--for the time--ceased to count.

"I have something to tell you," whispered Marigold.

"What is it?" said Budge indifferently.

Marigold sat down beside him and told him all about Sylvia at last. About The Magic Door and the Green Gate and the Land of Butterflies and The Rhyme. She had a curious unpleasant sense of loss and disloyalty as she told it. As if she were losing something that was very precious.

And she had her reward.

"Aw, that sounds awful silly," said Budge.

Marigold went away without another word. She would *never* speak to Budge Guest again. She would *never* have anything to do with *any* boy again. All tarred with the same brush, as Lazarre said. She would go back to Sylvia--darling, neglected Sylvia. Through The Magic Door--up the slope of fern--through the Green Gate. Then The Rhyme.

And no Sylvia!

Marigold stared helplessly around her with a quivering lip. No Sylvia. Sylvia would not come. Would never come again. Marigold felt this as we feel certain things irrevocably. Was it because she had told Budge about her? Or was it because she had suddenly grown too old and wise for fairyland. Were the "ivory gates and golden" of which Mother sometimes sang, closed behind her forever? Marigold flung herself down among the ferns in the bitterest tears she had ever shed--ever would shed, perhaps. Her lovely dream was gone. Who of us is there who has not lost one?

III

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It was the next day Budge came back--an indignant Budge, avid to pour out his wrongs to somebody. And that somebody was the disdained and disdainful Marigold, who had vowed afresh the night before that if Budge Guest ever spoke to her again she would treat him with such scorn and contempt that even his thick hide would feel it.

Budge and Tad had fought because their dogs had fought.

"My dog won," gulped Budge. "And Tad got mad. He said Dix was only a *mongrel cur*."

"He's jealous," said Marigold comfortingly. "And he has an awful temper. I heard that long ago from a girl who knew him *well*."

"I dared him to fight *me*, then--and he said he *wouldn't* fight me because I was such a sissy."

"He wouldn't fight you because he knew he'd get licked even worse than his dog did," said Marigold, oh, so scornfully. But the scorn was all for Tad.

"He *wouldn't* fight--but he kept on saying mean things. He said I wore a *nightcap*. Well, I did once, years ago--when I was little but--"

"Everybody wears nightcaps when they're *little*," said Marigold.

"And he said that I was a coward and that I wouldn't walk through the graveyard at night."

"Let's go through it to-night and *show* him," said Marigold eagerly.

"Not to-night," said Budge hastily. "There's a heavy dew. You'd get wet."

Happiness flowed through Marigold like a wave. Budge was thinking of *her* welfare. At least, so she believed.

"He said *his* grandfather had whiskers and mine hadn't. *Should* a grandfather have whiskers?"

"It's ever so much more *aristocratic* not to have them," said Marigold with finality.

"And he said *I* wasn't tattooed and couldn't stand tattooing. He's always been so conceited about that snake his sailor-uncle tattooed on his arm."

"What if he is tattooed?" Marigold wanted to know. She recalled what Grandmother had said about that tattooed snake. "It's a barbaric disfigurement. Didn't *you* say anything to *him*?"

Budge gulped.

"Everything *I* said he said it over again and *laughed*."

"There's something so insulting about *that*," agreed Marigold.

"And he called me a devilish pup."

"*I* wouldn't mind being called a devilish pup," said Marigold, who thought it sounded quite dashing and romantic.

But there was something yet worse to be told.

"He--said--I was *unladylike*."

This was a bit of a poser for Marigold. It would never do to imply that Budge was ladylike.

"Why didn't you tell him that he's pop-eyed and that he eats like a rhinoceros?" she inquired calmly.

Budge was at the end of his list of grievances. His anger was ebbing and he had a horrible feeling that he was going to--cry. And back of that a delicious feeling that even if he did Marigold would understand and not despise him. What a brick of a girl she was! Worth a million Tad Austins.

As a matter of fact Budge got off without crying but he never forgot that feeling.

"I'm never going to have anything to do with him again," he said darkly. "Say, do you want one of them grey kittens? If you do I'll bring it over to-morrow."

"Oh, do," said Marigold. "The Witch's are all black this summer."

They sat there for an hour eating nut-sweet apples, entirely satisfied with themselves. To Marigold the tiny roses on the bush by the steps seemed like the notes or echoes of the little song that was singing itself in

her heart. All that had once made magic made it again. And she asked Budge if he had told Tad about Sylvia.

"Of course not. That's *your* secret," said Budge, grandly. "And he doesn't know about the password and the secret sign either. That's *our* secret."

When Budge went home it was agreed that he should bring the kitten the next afternoon and that they should go on a quest for the Holy Grail up among the spruces.

"I'll *never* forget to-night," said Marigold. Some lost ecstasy had returned to life.

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But the next morning it seemed as if the night before had never been. When Marigold had sprung eagerly out of her blue-and-white bed, slipped into her clothes and run liltingly down to the front door--what did she see?

Budge and Tad walking amiably down the road with fishing-poles and worm-cans, while two dogs trotted behind in entire amity.

Marigold stood rigid. She made no response when Budge waved his pole gaily at her and shouted hello. Her heart, so full of joy a moment ago, was lead, heavy and cold.

That was a doleful forenoon. Her new dress of peach silk came home but Marigold was not interested in it. A maiden forsaken and grieved in spirit has no vanity.

But just let Budge Guest come to her again for comfort!

Budge came that afternoon but not in search of comfort. He was cheerful and grinfal and he brought an adorable clover-scented kitten with a new pattern of stripes. But Marigold was cold and distant. Very.

"What's biting you?" asked Budge.

"Nothing," said Marigold.

"Look here," expostulated Budge, "I came over to go Grailing with you. But if you don't want to go just say so. Tad wants me to go to the harbour mouth."

For a moment, pride and--something else--struggled fiercely together in Marigold's heart. Something else won.

"Of course I want to go Grail-hunting," she said.

They did not find the Grail but they found one of Grandmother's precious pink-lustre cups which had been lost for two years, ever since a certain Lesley Reunion Picnic had been held on the spruce hill. Found it safe and unharmed in a crevice of the stone dyke. And Grandmother was so pleased that she gave them a whole plateful of hop-and-go-fetch-its to

eat--which was symbolic. She would not have given them hop-and-go-fetch-its if it had really been the Grail they found.

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Budge went home. He had a tryst with Tad for the evening. Marigold sat down on the veranda steps. The little streak of yellow sky above the dark hills over the harbour was very lonely. The sound of breakers tumbling on the far away outer shore was very lonely. She was very lonely--in spite of her jolly afternoon with Budge.

Aunt Marigold coming out, noted Marigold's face and sat down beside her. Aunt Marigold, who had never had any children of her own, knew more mothercraft than many women who had. She had not only the seeing eye but the understanding heart as well. In a short time she had the whole story. If she smiled over it Marigold did not see it.

"You must not expect to have Budge wholly to yourself, dear, as you had Sylvia. Our earthly house of love has many mansions and many tenants. Budge will be always coming back to you. He finds something in your companionship Tad can't give him. He'll come for it, never fear. But you must share him with others. We--women--must always share."

Marigold sat awhile longer after Aunt Marigold had gone away. But she was no longer unhappy. A dreamy smile lingered on her lips. The new kitten purred on her lap. The twilight wrapped her round. Robber winds came down out of the cloud of spruce to rifle spices from the flower-beds in the orchard. There was gold of her namesake flowers all along the dusk of the walk. The stars twinkled through the fir-trees and right and left the harbour range-lights shone like great earth stars. Presently a moon rose and there was a sparkling trail over the harbour like a lady's silken dress.

Yes, she must share Budge. The old magic was gone forever--gone with Sylvia and the Hidden Land and all the dear, sweet fading dreams of childhood. But after all there were compensations. For one thing, she could be as big a coward as she wanted to be. No more hunting snakes and

chivying frogs. No more pretending to like horrible things that squirmed. She was no longer a boy's rival. She stood on her own ground.

"And I'll always be here for him to come back to," she thought.

A TANGLED WEB

(Aunt Becky Began It)

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To my good friends
MR AND MRS FRED W. WRIGHT
in memory of a certain week of laughter

Aunt Becky's Levee

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I

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A dozen stories have been told about the old Dark jug. This is the true one.

Several things happened in the Dark and Penhallow clan because of it. Several other things did *not* happen. As Uncle Pippin said, this may have been Providence or it may have been the devil that certainly possessed the jug. At any rate, had it not been for the jug, Peter Penhallow might to-day have been photographing lions alone in African jungles, and Big Sam Dark would, in all probability, never have learned to appreciate the beauty of the unclothed female form. As for Dandy Dark and Penny Dark, they have never ceased to congratulate themselves that they got out of the affair with whole hides.

Legally, the jug was the property of Aunt Becky Dark, *née* Rebecca Penhallow. For that matter, most of the Darks had been *née* Penhallow, and most of the Penhallows had been *née* Dark, save a goodly minority who had been Darks *née* Dark or Penhallows *née* Penhallow. In three generations sixty Darks had been married to sixty Penhallows. The resultant genealogical tangle baffled everybody except Uncle Pippin. There was really nobody for a Dark to marry except a Penhallow and nobody for a Penhallow to marry except a Dark. Once, it had been said, they wouldn't take anybody else. Now, nobody else would take them. At least, so Uncle Pippin said. But it was necessary to take Uncle Pippin's speeches with a large pinch of salt. Neither the Darks nor the Penhallows were gone to seed as far as that. They were still a proud, vigorous, and virile clan who hacked and hewed among themselves but presented an unbroken front to any alien or hostile force.

In a sense, Aunt Becky was the head of the clan. In point of seniority Crosby Penhallow, who was eighty-seven when she was eighty-five, might have contested her supremacy had he cared to do so. But at eighty-seven Crosby Penhallow cared only about one thing. As long as he could

foregather every evening with his old crony, Erasmus Dark, to play duets on their flutes and violins, Aunt Becky might hold the sceptre of the clan if she wanted to.

It must be admitted frankly that Aunt Becky was not particularly beloved by her clan. She was too fond of telling them what she called the plain truth. And, as Uncle Pippin said, while the truth was all right, *in its place*, there was no sense in pouring out great gobs of it around where it wasn't wanted. To Aunt Becky, however, tact and diplomacy and discretion, never to mention any consideration for any one's feelings, were things unknown. When she wanted to say a thing she said it. Consequently Aunt Becky's company was never dull whatever else it might be. One endured the digs and slams one got oneself for the fun of seeing other people writhing under *their* digs and slams. As Aunt Becky knew from A to Z all the sad or fantastic or terrible little histories of the clan, no one had armour which her shafts could not penetrate. Little Uncle Pippin said that he wouldn't miss one of Aunt Becky's "levees" for a dog-fight. "She's a personality," Dr Harry Penhallow had once remarked condescendingly, on one of his visits home to attend some clan funeral.

"She's a crank," growled Drowned John Penhallow, who, being a notorious crank himself, tolerated no rivals.

"It's the same thing," chuckled Uncle Pippin. "You're all afraid of her because she knows too much about you. I tell you, boys, it's only Aunt Becky and the likes of her that keeps us all from dry-rotting."

Aunt Becky had been "Aunt Becky" to everybody for twenty years. Once when a letter came to the Indian Spring post-office addressed to "Mrs Theodore Dark" the new postmaster returned it marked "Person unknown." Legally, it was Aunt Becky's name. Once she had had a husband and two children. They were all dead long ago--so long ago that even Aunt Becky herself had practically forgotten them. For years she had lived in her two rented rooms in The Pinery--otherwise the house of her old friend, Camilla Jackson, at Indian Spring. Many Dark and Penhallow homes would have been open to her, for the clan were never unmindful of their obligations, but Aunt Becky would have none of them. She had a tiny

income of her own and Camilla, being neither a Dark nor a Penhallow, was easily bossed.

"I'm going to have a levee," Aunt Becky told Uncle Pippin one afternoon when he had dropped in to see her. He had heard she was not very well. But he found her sitting up in bed, supported by pillows, her broad, griddled old face looking as keen and venomous as usual. He reflected that it was not likely there was much the matter with her. Aunt Becky had taken to her bed before now when she fancied herself neglected by her clan.

Aunt Becky had held occasional gatherings that she called "levees" ever since she had gone to live at The Pinery. It was her habit to announce in the local papers that Mrs Rebecca Dark would entertain her friends on such and such an afternoon. Everybody went who couldn't trump up a watertight excuse for not going. They spent two hours of clan gossip, punctuated by Aunt Becky's gibes and the malice of her smile, and had a cup of tea, sandwiches, and several slices of cake. Then they went home and licked their wounds.

"That's good," said Uncle Pippin. "Things are pretty dull in the clan. Nothing exciting has happened for a long time."

"This will be exciting enough," said Aunt Becky. "I'm going to tell them something--not everything--about who's to get the old Dark jug when I'm gone."

"Whew!" Uncle Pippin was intrigued at once. Still he did not forget his manners. "But why bother about that for a while? You're going to see the century out."

"No, I'm not," said Aunt Becky. "Roger told Camilla this morning that I wouldn't live this year out. He didn't tell *me*, the person most interested, but I wormed it out of Camilla."

It was a shock to Uncle Pippin and he was silent for a few moments. He had had a death-bell ringing in his ear for three days, but he had not connected it with Aunt Becky. Really, no one had ever thought of Aunt Becky dying. Death, like life, seemed to have forgotten her. He didn't know what to say.

"Doctors often make mistakes," he stammered feebly.

"Roger doesn't," said Aunt Becky grimly. "I've got to die, I suppose. Anyhow, I might as well die. Nobody cares anything about me now."

"Why do you say that, Becky?" said Camilla, betraying symptoms of tears. "I'm sure *I* do."

"No, you don't really. You're too old. We're both too old to care really for anybody or anything. You know perfectly well that in the back of your mind you're thinking, 'After she dies I'll be able to have my tea strong.' There's no use blinking the truth or trying to cover it up with sentiment. I've survived all my real friends."

"Come, come, what about me?" protested Uncle Pippin.

Aunt Becky turned her cronelike old grey head towards him.

"You!" she was almost contemptuous. "Why, you're only sixty-four. I was married before you were born. You're nothing but an acquaintance if it comes to that. Hardly even a relative. You were only an adopted Penhallow, remember. Your mother always vowed you were Ned Penhallow's son, but I can tell you some of us had our doubts. Funny things come in with the tide, Pippin."

This, reflected Uncle Pippin, was barely civil. He decided that it was not necessary to protest any more friendship for Aunt Becky.

"Camilla," snapped Aunt Becky, "I beg of you to stop trying to cry. It's painful to watch you. I had to send Ambrosine out because I couldn't put up with her mewling. Ambrosine cries over everything alike--a death or a spoiled pudding. But one excuses her. It's about the only fun she's ever got out of life. *I* am ready to die. I've felt almost everything in life there is to feel--ay, I've drained my cup. But I mean to die decently and in order. I'm going to have one last grand rally. The date will be announced in the paper. But if you want anything to eat you'll have to bring it with you. I'm not going to bother with that sort of thing on my death-bed."

Uncle Pippin was genuinely disappointed. Living alone as he did, subsisting on widower's fare, the occasional meals and lunches he got in friends' houses meant much to him. And now Aunt Becky was going to ask people to come and see her and wasn't going to give them a bite. It was

inhospitable, that's what it was. Everybody would be resentful, but everybody would be there. Uncle Pippin knew his Darks and his Penhallows. Every last one of them would be keen to know who was to get the old Dark jug. Everybody would think he or she ought to have it. The Darks had always resented the fact of Aunt Becky owning it, anyhow. She was only a Penhallow. The jug should be the property of a born Dark. But old Theodore Dark had expressly left it to his dearly beloved wife in his will, and there you were. The jug was hers to do as she liked with. And nobody in eighty-five years had ever been able to predict what Aunt Becky would do about anything.

Uncle Pippin climbed into what he called his "gig" and drove away behind his meek white horse down the narrow, leisurely red side-road that ran from Indian Spring to Bay Silver. There was a grin of enjoyment on his little, wrinkled face with its curious resemblance to a shrivelled apple, and his astonishingly young, vivid blue eyes twinkled. It would be fun to watch the antics of the clan over the jug. The thorough-going, impartial fun of one who was not vitally concerned. Uncle Pippin knew he had no chance of getting the jug. He was only a fourth cousin at best, even granting the dubious paternity about which Aunt Becky had twitted him.

"I've a hunch that the old lady is going to start something," said Uncle Pippin to his white nag.

II

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In spite of the fact that no refreshments were to be served, every Dark and every Penhallow, by birth, marriage or adoption, who could possibly get to Aunt Becky's "levee" was there. Even old rheumatic Christian Dark, who hadn't been anywhere for years, made her son-in-law draw her through the woods behind The Pinery on a milk-cart. The folding doors between Aunt Becky's two rooms were thrown open, the parlour was filled with chairs, and Aunt Becky, her eyes as bright as a cat's, was ready to receive her guests, sitting up in her big old walnut bed under its tent canopy hung with yellowed net. Aunt Becky had slept in that bed ever since she was married and intended to die in it. Several women of the tribe had their eye on it, and each had hoped she would get it, but just now nobody thought of anything but the jug.

Aunt Becky had refused to dress up for her guests. She wasn't going to be bothered, she told Camilla--they weren't really worth it. So she received them regally with a faded old red sweater pinned tightly around her shrunken throat and her grey hair twisted into a hard knot on the crown of her head. But she wore her diamond ring and she had made the scandalized Ambrosine put a little rouge on her cheeks. "It's no more than decent at your age," protested Ambrosine.

"Decency's a dull dog," retorted Aunt Becky. "I parted company with it long ago. You do as you're bid, Ambrosine Winkworth, and you'll get your reward. I'm not going to have Uncle Pippin saying, 'The old girl *used to have* good colour.' Dab it on good and thick, Ambrosine. None of them will imagine they can bully me as they probably would if they found me looking lean and washed-out. My golly, Ambrosine, but I'm looking forward to this afternoon. It's the last bit of fun I'll have this side of eternity and I'm going to lap it up, Ambrosine. Harpies all of 'em, coming

here just to see what pickings they're going to get. Ay, I'm going to make them squirm."

The Darks and Penhallows knew this perfectly well, and every new arrival approached the walnut bed with a secret harrowing conviction that Aunt Becky would certainly ask any especially atrocious question that occurred to her. Uncle Pippin had come early, provided with several wads of his favourite chewing-gum, and selected a seat near the folding doors--a point of vantage from which he could see everybody and hear everything Aunt Becky said. He had his reward.

"Ay, so you're the man who burned his wife," remarked Aunt Becky to Stanton Grundy, a long, lean man with a satiric smile who was an outsider, long ago married to Robina Dark, whom he had cremated. Her clan had never forgiven him for it, but Stanton Grundy was insensitive and only smiled hollowly at what he regarded as an attempted witticism.

"All this fuss over a jug worth no more than a few dollars at most," he said scornfully, sitting down beside Uncle Pippin.

Uncle Pippin shifted his wad of gum to the other side of his mouth and manufactured a cheerful lie instantly for the credit of the clan.

"A collector offered Aunt Becky a hundred dollars for it four years ago," he said impressively. Stanton Grundy was impressed, and to hide it remarked that *he* wouldn't give ten dollars for it.

"Then, why are you here?" demanded Uncle Pippin.

"To see the fun," returned Mr Grundy coolly. "This jug business is going to set everybody by the ears."

Uncle Pippin nearly swallowed his gum in his indignation. What right had this outsider, who was strongly suspected of being a Swedenborgian, whatever that was, to amuse himself over Dark whimsies and Penhallow peculiarities? It was quite in order for him, Pippin Penhallow, baptized Alexander, to do it. He was one of the tribe, however crookedly. But that a Grundy from God knew where should come for such a purpose made Uncle Pippin furious. Before he could administer catisgation, however, another arrival temporarily diverted his attention from the outrageous Grundy.

"Been having any more babies on the King's Highway?" Aunt Becky was saying to poor Mrs Paul Dark, who had brought her son into a censorious world in a Ford coupé on the way to the hospital. Uncle Pippin had voiced the general clan feeling on that occasion when he said gloomily,

"Sad mismanagement somewhere."

A little snicker drifted over the room, and Mrs Paul made her way to a chair with a burning face. But interest had already shifted from her to Murray Dark, a handsome middle-aged man who was shaking Aunt Becky's hand.

"Well, well, come to get a peep at Thora, hey? She's here--over there beyond Pippin and that Grundy man."

Murray Dark stalked to a chair, reflecting that when you belonged to a clan like this you really lived a dog's life. Of course he had come to see Thora. Everybody knew that, including Thora herself. Murray cared not a hoot about the Dark jug, but he did care tremendously about a chance to look at Thora. He did not have too many of them. He had been in love with Thora ever since the Sunday he had first seen her sitting in the church, the bride of Christopher Dark--drunken ne'er-do-well Chris Dark, with his insidious charm that no girl had ever been able to resist. All the clan knew it, too, but there had never been any scandal. Murray was simply waiting for Chris to pass out. Then he would marry Thora. He was a clever, well-to-do farmer and he had any amount of patience. In time he would attain his heart's desire--though sometimes he wondered a little uneasily how long that devil of a Chris *would* hang on. That family of Darks had such damn' good constitutions. They could live after a fashion that would kill any ordinary man in five years, and flourish for twenty. Chris had been dying by inches for ten years, and there was no knowing how many inches were left of him yet.

"Do get some hair tonic," Aunt Becky was advising William Y. Penhallow, who even as a baby had looked deadly serious and who had never been called Bill in his life. He had hated Aunt Becky ever since she had been the first person to tell him he was beginning to get bald.

"My dear"--to Mrs Percy Dark--"it's such a pity you haven't taken more care of your complexion. You had a fairly nice skin when you came to Indian Spring. Why, *you* here?"--this to Mrs Jim Trent, who had been Helen Dark.

"Of course I'm here," retorted Mrs Jim. "Am I so transparent that there's any doubt?"

"It's a long time since you remembered my existence," snapped Aunt Becky. "But the jug is bringing more things in than the cat."

"Oh, *I* don't want your jug, I'm sure," lied Mrs Jim. Everybody knew she was lying. Only a very foolish person would lie to Aunt Becky, to whom nobody had ever as yet told a lie successfully. But then Mrs Jim Trent lived at Three Hills, and nobody who lived at Three Hills was supposed to have much sense.

"Got your history finished yet, Miller?" asked Aunt Becky.

Old Miller Dark looked foolish. He had been talking for years of writing a history of the clan, but had never got started. It didn't do to hurry these things. The longer he waited the more history there would be. These women were always in such a confounded hurry. He thankfully made way for Palmer Dark, who was known as the man who was proud of his wife.

"Looks as young as ever, doesn't she?" he demanded beamingly of Aunt Becky.

"Yes--if it's any good to look young when you're not--" conceded Aunt Becky, adding by way of a grace note, "Got the beginnings of a dowager's cushion, I see. It's a long time since I saw you, Palmer. But you're just the same, only more so. Well, well, and here's Mrs Denzil Penhallow. Looking fine and dandy, too. I've always heard a fruit diet was healthy. I'm told you ate all the fruit folks sent in for Denzil when he was sick last winter."

"Well, what of it? *He* couldn't eat it. Was it to be wasted?" retorted Mrs Denzil. Jug or no jug, *she* wasn't going to be insulted by Aunt Becky.

Two widows came in together--Mrs Toynbee Dark, who had had her mourning all ready when her third and last husband had died, and Virginia Powell, whose husband had been dead eight years and who was young and tolerably beautiful, but who still wore her black and had vowed, it was

well known, never to marry again. Not, as Uncle Pippin remarked, that any one was known to have asked her.

Aunt Becky let Mrs Toynbee off with a coldly civil greeting. Mrs Toynbee had been known to go into hysterics when snubbed or crossed, and Aunt Becky did not intend to let any one else usurp the limelight at her last levee. But she gave poor Virginia a jab.

"Is your heart dug up yet?"

Virginia had once said sentimentally, "My heart is buried in Rose River churchyard," and Aunt Becky never let her forget it.

"Any of that jam left yet?" asked Aunt Becky slyly of Mrs Titus Dark, who had once gathered blueberries that grew in the graveyard and preserved them. Lawyer Tom Penhallow, who had been found guilty of appropriating his clients' money, was counted less of a clan disgrace. Mrs Titus always considered herself an ill-used woman. Fruit had been scarce that year--she had five men to cater for who didn't like butter--and all those big luscious blueberries going to waste in the lower corner of the Bay Silver graveyard. There were very few graves there; it was not the fashionable part of the graveyard.

"And how's your namesake?" Aunt Becky was asking Mrs Emily Frost. Kennedy Penhallow, who had been jilted by his cousin Emily, sixty-five years before, had called his old spavined mare after her to insult her. Kennedy, happily married for many years to Julia Dark, had forgotten all about it, but Emily Frost, *née* Penhallow, had never forgotten or forgiven.

"Hello, Margaret; going to write a poem about this? 'Weary and worn and sad the train rattled on.'" Aunt Becky went off into a cackle of laughter and Margaret Penhallow, her thin, sensitive face flushing pitifully and her peculiarly large, soft, grey-blue eyes filling with tears, went blindly to the first vacant chair. Once she had written rather awful little poems for a Summerside paper, but never after a conscienceless printer had deleted her punctuation marks, producing that terrible line which haunted the clan forever afterwards like an unquiet ghost which refused to be laid. Margaret could never feel safe from hearing it quoted somewhere with a snicker or a bellow. Even here at Aunt Becky's death-bed levee it must be dragged up.

Perhaps Margaret still wrote poems. A little shell-covered box in her trunk might know something about that. But the public press knew them no more, much to the clan's thankfulness.

"What's the matter with you, Penny? You're not as good-looking as you generally believe you are."

"Stung on the eye by a bee," said Pennycuik Dark sulkily. He was a fat, tubby little fellow, with a curly grey beard and none-too-plentiful curly hair. As usual, he was as well-groomed as a cat. He still considered himself a gay young wag, and felt that nothing but the jug could have lured him into a public appearance under the circumstances. Just like this devilish old woman to call the attention of the world to his eye. But he was her oldest nephew and he had a right to the jug which he would maintain, eye or no eye. He always felt that his branch of the family had been unjustly done out of it two generations back. In his annoyance and excitement he sat down on the first vacant chair he spied, and then to his dismay discovered that he was sitting beside Mrs William Y., of whom he had the liveliest terror ever since she had asked him what to do for a child who had worms. As if he, Pennycuik Dark, confirmed bachelor, knew anything about either children or worms.

"Go and sit in that far corner by the door so that I can't smell that damn' perfume. Even a poor old nonentity like myself has a right to pure air," Aunt Becky was telling poor Mrs Artemas Dark, whose taste in perfumes had always annoyed Aunt Becky. Mrs Artemas *did* use them somewhat too lavishly, but even so, the clan reflected as a unit, Aunt Becky was employing rather strong language for a woman--especially on her death-bed. The Darks and the Penhallows prided themselves on keeping up with the times, but they were not so far advanced as to condone profanity in a woman. *That* was still taboo. The joke of it was that Aunt Becky herself had always been down on swearing and was supposed to hold in special disfavour the two clansmen who habitually swore--Titus Dark because he could not help it and Drowned John Penhallow, who could help it but didn't want to.

The arrival of Mrs Alpheus Penhallow and her daughter created a sensation. Mrs Alpheus lived in St. John and happened to be visiting her old home in Rose River when Aunt Becky's levee was announced. She was an enormously fat woman, with a rather deplorable penchant for wearing bright colours and over-rich materials, who had been very slim and beautiful in a youth during which she had been no great favourite with Aunt Becky. Mrs Alpheus expected some unpleasant greeting from Aunt Becky and meant to take it with a smile, for she wanted badly to get the jug, and the walnut bed into the bargain, if the fates were propitious. But Aunt Becky, though she said to herself that Annabel Penhallow's dress was worth more than her carcass, let her off very leniently with,

"Humph! Smooth as a cat's ear, just as always," and looked past her at Nan Penhallow, about whom clan gossip had been very busy ever since her arrival in Rose River. It was whispered breathlessly that she wore pyjamas and smoked cigarettes. It was well known that she had plucked eyebrows and wore breeches when she rode or "hiked," but even Rose River was resigned to that. Aunt Becky saw a snaky hipless thing with a shingle bob and long barbaric ear-rings. A silky, sophisticated creature in a smart black satin dress who instantly made every other girl in the room seem outmoded and Victorian. But Aunt Becky took her measure on the spot.

"So this is Hannah," she remarked, hitting instinctively on Nan's sore spot. Nan would rather have been slapped than called Hannah. "Well--well--well!" Aunt Becky's "wells" were a crescendo of contempt mingled with pity. "I understand you consider yourself a modern. Well, there were girls that chased the boys in my time, too. It's only names that change. Your mouth looks as if you'd been making a meal of blood my dear. But see what time does to us. When you're forty you'll be exactly like this"--with a gesture towards Mrs Alpheus' avoirdupois.

Nan was determined she wouldn't let this frumpy old harridan put her out. Besides, she had her own hankerings after the jug.

"Oh, no, Aunt Becky darling. I take after father's people. They stay thin, you know."

Aunt Becky did not like being "darlinged."

"Go upstairs and wash that stuff off your lips and cheeks," she said. "I won't have any painted snips around here."

"You--why, you've got rouge on yourself," cried Nan, despite her mother's piteous nudge.

"And who are you to say I should not?" demanded Aunt Becky. "Now, never mind standing there switching your tail at me. Go and do as you're told or else go home."

Nan was minded to do the latter. But Mrs Alpheus was whispering agitatedly at her neck,

"Go, darling, go--do exactly as she tells you--or--or--"

"Or you'll stand no chance of getting the jug," chuckled Aunt Becky, who at eighty-five had ears that could hear the grass grow.

Nan went, sulky and contemptuous, determined that she would get even with somebody for her manhandling by this cantankerous old despot. Perhaps it was at this moment, when Gay Penhallow was entering the room in a yellow dress that seemed woven out of sunshine, that Nan made up her mind to capture Noel Gibson. It was intolerable that Gay of all people should be a witness of her discomfiture.

"Green-eyed girls for trouble," said Uncle Pippin.

"She's a man-eater I reckon," agreed Stanton Grundy.

Gay Penhallow, a slight, blossom-like girl whom only the Family Bible knew as Gabrielle Alexandrina, was shaking Aunt Becky's hand but would not bend down to kiss her as Aunt Becky expected.

"Hey, hey, what's the matter?" demanded Aunt Becky. "Some boy been kissing you? And you don't want to spoil the flavour, hey?"

Gay fled to a corner and sat down. It was true. But *how* did Aunt Becky know it? Noel *had* kissed her the evening before--Gay's first kiss in all her eighteen years--Nan would have hooted over *that*! An exquisite fleeting kiss under a golden June moon. Gay felt that she could *not* kiss any one, especially dreadful old Aunt Becky, after *that*. It would be sacrilege. Never mind if Aunt Becky wouldn't give her the jug. What difference did it make about her old jug, anyway? What difference did anything make in the whole wide beautiful world except that Noel loved her and she loved him?

But something seemed to have come into the now crowded room with the arrival of Gay--something like a sudden quick-passing breeze on a sultry day--something as indescribably sweet and elusive as the fragrance of a forest flower--something of youth and love and hope. Everybody felt inexplicably happier--more charitable--more courageous. Stanton Grundy's lantern-jaws looked less grim and Uncle Pippin momentarily felt that, after all, Grundy had undoubtedly married a Dark and so had a right to be where he was. Miller Dark thought he really would get started on his history next week--Margaret had an inspiration for a new poem--Penny Dark reflected that he was only fifty-two, after all--William Y. forgot that he had a bald spot--Curtis Dark, who had the reputation of being an incurably disagreeable husband, thought his wife's new hat became her and that he would tell her so on the way home. Even Aunt Becky grew less inhuman and, although she had several more shots in her locker and hated to miss the fun of firing them, allowed the remainder of her guests to pass to their seats without insult or innuendo, except that she asked old Cousin Skilly Penhallow how his brother Angus was. All the assembly laughed and Cousin Skilly smiled amiably. Aunt Becky couldn't put *him* out. He knew the whole clan quoted his Spoonerisms and that the one about his brother Angus, now dead for thirty years, never failed to evoke hilarity. The minister had come along that windy morning long ago, after Angus Penhallow's mill-dam had been swept away in the March flood, and had been greeted excitedly by Skilly.

"We're all upset here to-day, Mr MacPherson--ye'll kindly excuse us--my dam brother Angus burst in the night."

"Well, I think everybody is here at last," said Aunt Becky--"everybody I expected, at least, and some I didn't. I don't see Peter Penhallow or the Moon Man, but I suppose one couldn't expect either of them to behave like rational beings."

"Peter *is* here," said his sister Nancy Dark eagerly. "He's out on the veranda. You know Peter hates to be cooped up in a room. He's so accustomed to--to--"

"The great open spaces of God's outdoors," murmured Aunt Becky ironically.

"Yes, that's it--that's what I mean--that's what I meant to say. Peter is just as interested in you as any of us, dear Aunt."

"I daresay--if *that* means much. Or in the jug."

"No, Peter doesn't care a particle about the jug," said Nancy Dark, thankful to find solid ground under her feet in this at least.

"The Moon Man's here, too," said William Y. "I can see him sitting on the steps of the veranda. He's been away for weeks--just turned up to-day. Queer how he always seems to get wind of things."

"He was back yesterday evening. I heard him yelping to the moon all last night down at his shanty," boomed Drowned John. "He ought to be locked up. It's a family disgrace the way he carries on, wandering over the whole Island bareheaded and in rags, as if he hadn't a friend in the world to care for him. I don't care if he isn't mad enough for the asylum. He should be under *some* restraint."

Pounce went Aunt Becky.

"So should most of you. Leave Oswald Dark alone. He's perfectly happy on nights when there's a moon, anyhow, and who among us can say that. If we're perfectly happy for an hour or two at a time, it's as much as the gods will do for us. Oswald's in luck. Ambrosine, here's the key of my brass-bound trunk. Go up to the attic and bring down Harriet Dark's jug."

III

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While Ambrosine Winkworth has gone for the jug and a hush of excitement and suspense has fallen over the assembled clan, let us look at them a little more closely, partly through Aunt Becky's eyes and partly through our own, and get better acquainted with them, especially with those whose lives were to be more or less affected and altered by the jug. There were all kinds of people there with their family secrets and their personal secrets, their outer lives of which everything--nearly--was known, and their inner lives of which nothing was known--not even to lean, lank Mercy Penhallow, whose lankness and leanness were attributed to the chronic curiosity about every one which gave her no rest day or night. Most of them looked like the dull, sedate folks they were, but some of them had had shocking adventures. Some of them were very beautiful; some were very funny; some were clever; some were mean; some were happy; some were not; some were liked by everybody and some were liked by nobody; some had reached the stodgy plane where nothing more was to be expected from life; and some were still adventurous and expectant, cherishing secret, unsatisfied dreams.

Margaret Penhallow, for instance--dreamy, poetical Margaret Penhallow, who was the clan dressmaker and lived with her brother, Denzil Penhallow, in Bay Silver. Always overworked and snubbed and patronized. She spent her life making pretty clothes for other people and never had any for herself. Yet she took an artist's pride in her work and something in her starved soul sprang into sudden transforming bloom when a pretty girl floated into church in a gown of her making. *She* had a part in creating that beauty. That slim vision of loveliness owed something of its loveliness to *her*, "old Margaret Penhallow."

Margaret loved beauty; and there was so little of it in her life. She had no beauty herself, save in her overlarge, strangely lustrous eyes, and her

slender hands--the beautiful hands of an old portrait. Yet there was a certain attractiveness about her that had not been dependent on youth and had not left her with the years. Stanton Grundy, looking at her, was thinking that she was more ladylike than any other woman of her age in the room and that, if he were looking for a second wife--which, thank God, he wasn't--Margaret would be the one he'd pick.

Margaret would have been a little fluttered had she known he was thinking even this much. The truth was, though Margaret would have died any horrible death you could devise before she admitted it, she longed to be married. If you were married you were somebody. If not, you were nobody. In the Dark and Penhallow clan, anyhow.

She wanted a dear little homey place to call her own; and she wanted to adopt a baby. She knew the very kind of baby she wanted--a baby with golden hair and great blue eyes, dimples and creases and adorable chubby knees. And sweet sleepy little kisses. Margaret's bones seemed to melt in her body as water when she thought of it. Margaret had never cared for the pack of young demons Denzil called his family. They were saucy and unattractive youngsters who made fun of her. All her love was centred in her imaginary baby and her imaginary little house--which was not quite as imaginary as the baby, if truth were known. Yet she had no real hope of ever owning the house, while, if she could get married, she might be able to adopt a baby.

Margaret also wanted very much to get the Dark jug. She wanted it for the sake of that far-off unknown Harriet Dark, concerning whom she had always had a strange feeling, half pity, half envy. Harriet Dark had been loved; the jug was the visible and tangible proof of that, outlasting the love by a hundred years. And what if her lover had been drowned! At least, she had *had* a lover.

Besides, the jug would give her a certain importance. She had never been of any importance to any one. She was only "old Margaret Penhallow," with fifty drab, snubbed years behind her and nothing ahead of her but drab, snubbed old age. And why should she not have the jug? She was a real niece. A Penhallow, to be sure, but her mother had been a Dark.

Of course Aunt Becky didn't like her, but then whom did Aunt Becky like? Margaret felt that she ought to have the jug--must have the jug. Momentarily, she hated every other claimant in the room. She knew if she had the jug she could make Mrs Denzil give her a room to herself in return for the concession of allowing the jug to be put on the parlour mantelpiece. A room to herself! It sounded heavenly. She knew she could never have her little dream-house or her blue-eyed, golden baby, but surely she might have a room to herself--a room where Gladys Penhallow and her shrieking chums could never come--girls who thought there was no fun in having a beau unless you could tell the world all about him and what he did and what he said--girls who always made her feel old and silly and dowdy. Margaret sighed and looked at the great sheaf of mauve and yellow iris Mrs William Y. had brought up for Aunt Becky, who had never cared for flowers. If their delicate, exotic beauty was wasted on Aunt Becky, it was not lost on Margaret. While she gazed at them she was happy. There was a neglected clump of mauve iris in the garden of "her" house.

IV

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Gay Penhallow was sitting next to Margaret and was not thinking of the jug at all. She did not want the jug, though her mother was wild about it. Spring was singing in her blood and she was lost in glamorous recollections of Noel's kiss--and equally glamorous anticipations of Noel's letter, which she had got at the post-office on her way up. As she heard it crackle in its hiding-place she felt the little thrill of joy which had tingled over her when old Mrs Conroy had passed it out to her--his wonderful letter held profanely between a mailorder catalogue and a millinery advertisement. She had not dreamed of getting a letter, for she had seen him--and been kissed--only the night before. Now she had it, tucked away under her dress, next to her white satin skin, and all she wished was that this silly old levee was over and she was away somewhere by herself, reading Noel's letter. What time was it? Gay looked at Aunt Becky's solemn old grandfather clock that had ticked off the days and hours of four forgotten generations and was still ticking them relentlessly off for the fifth. Three! At half-past three she must think of Noel. They had made a compact to think of each other every afternoon at exactly half-past three. Such a dear, delightful, foolish compact--because was she not thinking of Noel all the time? And now she had his kiss to think about--that kiss which it seemed every one must see on her lips. She had thought about it all night--the first night of her life she had never slept for joy. Oh, she was so happy! So happy that she felt friendly to everybody--even to the people she had never liked before. Pompous old William Y. with his enormous opinion of himself--lean, curious, gossipy Mercy Penhallow--overtragic Virginia Powell with her tiresome poses--Drowned John, who had shouted two wives to death--Stanton Grundy, who had cremated poor Cousin Robina and who always looked at everybody as if he were secretly amused. One didn't like a person who was amused at everybody. Dapper

Penny Dark, who thought he was witty when he called eggs cackleberries-- Uncle Pippin with his old jaws always chewing something--most of all, poor piteous Aunt Becky herself. Aunt Becky was going to die soon and no one was sorry. Gay was so sorry because she wasn't sorry that the tears came into her eyes. Yet Aunt Becky had been loved once--courted once--kissed once--ridiculous and unbelievable as it seemed now. Gay looked curiously at this solitary old crone who had once been young and beautiful and the mother of little children. *Could* that old wrinkled face ever have been flower-like? Would she, Gay, ever look like that? No, of course not. Nobody whom Noel loved would ever grow old and unlovely.

She could see herself in the oval mirror that hung on the wall over Stanton Grundy's head, and she was not dissatisfied with the reflection. She had the colouring of a tea-rose, with golden-brown hair, and eyes to match it--eyes that looked like brown marigolds flecked with glints of gold. Long black lashes and eyebrows that might have been drawn in soot, so finely dark were they against her face. And there was a delicious spot here and there on her skin, like a little drop of gold--sole survivor of the freckles that had plagued her in childhood. She knew quite well that she was counted the beauty of the whole clan--"the prettiest girl that walked the aisles of the Rose River Church," Uncle Pippin averred gallantly. And she always looked the least little bit timid and frightened, so men always wanted to assure her there was nothing to be frightened of and she had more beaux than you could shake a stick at. But there had never been any one who really mattered but Noel. Every lane in Gay's thoughts to-day turned back to Noel. Fifteen minutes past three. Just fifteen more minutes and she would be *sure* that Noel was thinking of her.

There was a tiny dark fleck or two on Gay's happiness. For one, she knew all the Penhallows rather disapproved of Noel Gibson. The Darks were more tolerant--after all, Noel's mother had been a Dark, although a rather off-colour one. The Gibsons were considered a cut or two beneath the Penhallows. Gay knew very well that her clan wanted her to marry Dr Roger Penhallow. She looked across the room at him in kindly amusement. Dear old Roger, with his untidy mop of red hair, his softly luminous eyes

under straight heavy brows and his long, twisted mouth with a funny quirk in the left corner--who was thirty if he were a day. She was awfully fond of Roger. Somehow, there was a good tang to him. She could never forget what he had done for her at her first dance. She had been so shy and awkward and plain--or was sure she was. Nobody asked her to dance till Roger came and swept her out triumphantly and paid her such darling compliments that she bloomed out into beauty and confidence--and the boys woke up--and handsome Noel Gibson from town singled her out for attention. Oh, she was very very fond of Roger--and very proud of him. A fourth cousin who had been a noted ace in the war Gay so dimly remembered and had brought down fifty enemy planes. But as a husband Gay really had to laugh. Besides, why should any one suppose he wanted to marry her? *He* had never said so. It was just one of those queer ideas that floated about the clan at times--and had a trick of turning out abominably correct. Gay hoped this one wouldn't. She would hate to hurt Roger. She was so happy she couldn't bear to think of hurting any one.

The second little fleck was Nan Penhallow. Gay had never been too fond of Nan Penhallow, though they had been chums of a sort, ever since childhood, when Nan would come to the Island with her father and mother for summer vacations. Gay never forgot the first day she and Nan had met. They were both ten years old; and Nan, who was even then counted a beauty, had dragged Gay to a mirror, and mercilessly pointed out all the contrasts. Gay had never thought of her looks before, but now she saw fatally that she was ugly. Thin and sunburned and pale--freckles galore--hair bleached too light a shade by Rose River sunshine--funny, black unfaded eyebrows that looked as if they had just lighted on her face--how Nan made fun of those eyebrows! Gay was unhappy for years because she believed in her plainness. It had taken many a compliment to convince her that she had grown into beauty. As years went by she did not like Nan much better. Nan, with her subtle, mysterious face, her ashgold hair, her strange liquid emerald eyes, her thin red lips, who was not now really half as pretty as Gay but had odd exotic charms unknown to Rose River. How she patronized Gay--"You quaint child,"--"So Victorian." Gay did not want

to be quaint and Victorian. She wanted to be smart and up-to-date and sophisticated like Nan. Though not exactly like Nan. She didn't want to smoke. It always made her think of that dreadful old Mrs Fidele Blacquiere down at the harbour and old moustached Highland Janet at Three Hills, who were always smoking big black pipes like the men. And then--Noel didn't like girls who smoked. He didn't approve of them at all. Nevertheless, Gay, deep down in her heart, was glad the visit of the Alpheus Penhallows to Rose River was to be a brief one this summer. Mrs Alpheus was going to a more fashionable place.

V

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Hugh Dark and Joscelyn Dark (*née* Penhallow) were sitting on opposite sides of the room, never looking at each other, and seeing and thinking of nothing but each other. And everybody looked at Joscelyn and wondered as they had wondered for ten years, what terrible secret lay behind her locked lips.

The affair of Hugh and Joscelyn was the mystery and tragedy of the clan--a mystery that no one had ever been able to solve, though not for lack of trying. Ten years before, Hugh Dark and Joscelyn Penhallow had been married after an eminently respectable and somewhat prolonged courtship. Joscelyn had not been too easily won. It was a match which pleased everybody, except Pauline Dark, who was mad about Hugh, and Mrs Conrad Dark, his mother, who had never liked Joscelyn's branch of the Penhallows.

It had been a gay, old-fashioned evening wedding, according to the best Penhallow traditions. Everybody was there to the fourth degree of relationship, and every one agreed that they had never seen a prettier bride or a more indisputable happy and enraptured bridegroom. After the supper and the festivities were over, Hugh had taken his bride home to "Treewoofe," the farm he had bought at Three Hills. As to what had happened between the time when Joscelyn, still wearing her veil and satin in the soft coolness and brilliance of the September moonlight--a whim of Hugh's, that, who had some romantic idea of leading a veiled and shimmering bride over the threshold of his new home--had driven away from her widowed mother's house at Bay Silver and the time when, three hours later, she returned to it on foot, still in her dishevelled bridal attire, no one ever knew or could obtain the least inkling in spite of all their prying and surmising. All Joscelyn would ever say, even to her distracted relatives, was that she could never live with Hugh Dark. As for Hugh, he

said absolutely nothing and very few people ever dared say anything to him.

Failing to discover the truth, surmise and gossip ran riot. All sorts of explanations were hinted or manufactured--most of them ridiculous enough. One was that Hugh, as soon as he got his bride home, told her that he would be master. He told her certain rules she must keep. He would have no woman bossing *him*. The story grew till it ran that Hugh, by way of starting in properly, had made or tried to make Joscelyn walk around the room on all fours just to teach her he was head of the house. No girl of any spirit, especially Clifford Penhallow's daughter, would endure such a thing. Joscelyn had thrown her wedding-ring at him and flown out of the house.

Others had it that Joscelyn had left Hugh because he wouldn't promise to give up a cat she had hated. "And now," as Uncle Pippin said mournfully, "the cat is dead." Some averred they had quarrelled because Joscelyn had criticized his grammar. Some that she had found out he was an infidel. "You know, his grandfather reads those horrid Ingersoll books. And Hugh had them all on a shelf in his bedroom." Some that she had contradicted him. "His father was like that, you know. Couldn't tolerate the least contradiction. If he only said, 'It's going to rain to-morrow,' it put him in a fury if you said you thought it would be fair."

Then Hugh had told Joscelyn she was too proud--he wasn't going to put up with it any longer. He had danced to her piping for three years but, by heck, the tune was going to be changed. Well, of course Joscelyn was proud. The clan admitted that. No woman could have carried such a wonderful crown of red-gold on her head without some pride to hold it up. But was that any excuse for a bridegroom setting wide open the door of his house and politely telling his bride to take her damned superior airs back to where they belonged?

The Darks would none of these crazy yarns. It was not Hugh's fault at all. Joscelyn had confessed she was a kleptomaniac. It ran in her family. A fourth cousin of her mother's was terrible that way. Hugh had the welfare of generations unborn to think of. What else could he do?

Darker hints obtained.

After all, though these little yarns were circulated and giggled over, few really believed there was a grain of truth in them. Most of the clan felt sure that Joscelyn's soft rose-red lips were fast shut on some far more terrible secret than a silly quarrel over cats or grammar. She had discovered something undoubtedly. But what was it?

She had found a love letter some other woman had written him and gone mad with jealousy. After all, Joscelyn's great-grandmother had been a Spanish girl from the West Indies. Spanish blood, you know. All the vagaries of Joscelyn's branch of the Penhallows were attributed to the fact of that Spanish great-grandmother. Captain Alec Penhallow had married her. She died leaving only one son--luckily. But that son had a family of eight. And they were all kittle cattle to handle. So intense in everything. Whatever they were, they were ten times more so than any one else would be.

No, it was worse than a letter. Joscelyn had discovered that Hugh had another wife. Those years out west. Hugh had never talked much about them. But at the last he broke down and confessed.

Nothing of the sort. That child down at the harbour, though. It was certain *some* Dark was its father. Perhaps Hugh--

Naturally, it made a dreadful scandal and sensation. The clan nearly died of it. It had been an old clan saying that nothing ever happened in Bay Silver. Rose River had a fire. Three Hills had an elopement. Even Indian Spring years ago had an actual murder. But nothing ever happened in Bay Silver. And now something had happened with a vengeance.

That Joscelyn should behave like this! If it had been her rattle-brained sister Milly! They were always expecting Milly to do crazy things, so they were prepared to forgive her. But they had never thought of Joscelyn doing a crazy thing so they could not forgive her for amazing them. Not that it seemed to matter much to Joscelyn whether they forgave her or not. No entreaty availed to budge her an inch. "Her father was like that, you know," Mrs Clifford Penhallow wept. "He was noted for never changing his mind."

"Joscelyn evidently changed hers after she went up to Treewoofe that night," somebody replied. "*What* happened, Cynthia? Surely you, her mother, ought to know."

"How can I know when she won't tell me?" wailed Mrs Clifford. "None of you have ever had any idea how stubborn Joscelyn really is. She simply says she will never go back to Hugh and not another word will she say. She won't even wear her wedding-ring." Mrs Clifford thought this was really the worst thing in it all. "I *never* saw any one so unnaturally obstinate."

"And what in the world are we to *call* her?" wailed the clan. "She *is* Mrs Dark. Nothing can alter that."

Nothing *could* alter it in Prince Edward Island, where there had been only one divorce in sixty years. Nobody ever thought of Hugh and Joscelyn being divorced. One and all, Darks and Penhallows, would have expired of the disgrace of it.

In ten years the matter had naturally simmered down, though a few people kept wondering if the wife from the west would ever turn up. The state of affairs was accepted as something permanent and immutable. People even forgot to think about it, except when, as rarely happened, they saw Hugh and Joscelyn in the same room. Then they wondered fruitlessly again.

Hugh was a very fine-looking man--far handsomer now at thirty-five than he had been at twenty-five, when he was rather lank and weedy. He gave you a feeling that he was able to do anything--a feeling of great, calm power. He had gone on living at Treewoofe with an old aunt keeping house for him, and in agricultural circles he was regarded as a coming man. It was whispered that that Conservative party meant to bring him out as a candidate at the next election of the Provincial House. Yet his eyes with their savage bitterness were the eyes of a man who had failed, and nobody had ever heard him laugh since that mysterious wedding-night.

He had had one keen greedy look at Joscelyn when he had paused a moment in the doorway. He had not seen her for a long time. The tragic years had passed over her without dimming her beauty. Her hair massed round her head in shining defiant protest against the day of bobs, was as

wonderful as ever. She had left her roses behind her--her cheeks were pale. But the throat he had once kissed so tenderly and passionately was as exquisite and ivory-like as ever, and her great eyes, that were blue or green or grey as the mood took her, were as lustrous and appealing, as defiant and ecstatic as they had been when she had looked down at him in the hall up at Treewoofe, that night ten years before. Hugh clenched his hands and set his lips. That lean fox of a Stanton Grundy was watching him--everybody was always watching him. The bridegroom jilted on his wedding night. From whom his bride had run in supposed horror or rebellion over three miles of dark solitary road. Well, let them watch and let them guess. Only he and Joscelyn knew the truth--the tragic absurd truth that had separated them.

Joscelyn had seen Hugh when he came into the room. He looked older; that unmanageable lock of dark hair was sticking up on the crown of his head as usual. Joscelyn knew she wanted to go over and coax it down. Kate Muir was sitting beside him ogling him; she had always detested and despised Kate Muir, *née* Kate Dark, who had been an ugly swarthy little girl and was now an ugly swarthy little widow with more money than she knew what to do with. Having married for money, Joscelyn reflected contemptuously, she had a right to it. But was that any excuse for her sitting in Hugh's pocket and gazing up at him as if she thought him wonderful. She knew that Kate had once said, "I always told Hugh she wouldn't make him a suitable wife." Joscelyn shivered slightly and locked her slender hands, on which was no wedding-ring, a little more tightly on her knee. She was not--never had been--sorry for what she had done ten years ago. She *couldn't* have done anything else, not *she*, Joscelyn Penhallow, with that touch of Spanish blood in her. But she had always felt a little outside of things and the feeling had deepened with the years. She seemed to have no part or lot in the life that went on around her. She learned to smile like a queen, with lips not eyes.

She saw her face reflected in the glass beside Gay Penhallow and suddenly thought that she looked old. Gay, wearing her youth like a golden rose, was so happy, so radiant, as if lighted by some inner flame. Joscelyn

felt a queer pang of envy. She had never envied any one in all these ten years, borne up by the rapture of a certain strange, spiritual, sacrificial passion and renunciation. All at once, she felt an odd flatness, as if her wings had let her down. A chill of consternation and fright swept over her. She wished she had not come to this silly levee. She cared nothing about the old Dark jug, though her mother and Aunt Rachel both wanted it. She would not have come if she had thought Hugh would be there. Who would have expected him? Surely *he* didn't want the jug. She would have despised him if she thought he did. No doubt he had had to bring his mother and his sister, Mrs Jim Trent. They were both glowering at her. Her sisters-in-law, Mrs Penny Dark and Mrs Palmer Dark, were pretending not to see her. She knew they all hated her. Well, it didn't matter. After all, could you blame them, considering the insult she had offered to the House of Dark? No, it didn't matter--Joscelyn wondered a little dreamily if anything mattered. She looked at Lawson Dark, with the V.C. he had won at Amiens pinned on his breast, in his wheel-chair behind Stanton Grundy, for ten years a paralytic from shell-shock. At Naomi Dark beside him, with her patient, haggard face and her dark, hollow eyes in which still burned the fires of the hope that kept her alive. Joscelyn was amazed to find suddenly stirring in her heart a queer envy of Naomi Dark. Why should she envy Naomi Dark, whose husband didn't recognize her--never, had recognized her since his return from the war? His mind was normal in every other respect, but he had forgotten all about the bride he had met and married only a few weeks before his departure for the front. She knew Naomi lived by the belief that Lawson would remember her some day. Meanwhile she took care of him and worshipped him. Lawson had grown quite fond of her as a nurse, but no recollection ever came to him of his sudden love and his brief honeymoon. Yet Joscelyn envied her. She *had* had something. Life had not been an empty cup for her, whatever bitter brew was mingled in it. Even Mrs Foster Dark had something to live for. Happy Dark had run away from home years ago, leaving a note--"I'll come back some time, Mother." Mrs Foster would never lock her door at night lest Happy come, and it was well-known that she always left a supper on

the table for him. Nobody else believed Happy would ever come back--the young devil was undoubtedly dead years ago and good riddance! But the hope kept Mrs Foster going, and Joscelyn envied her!

She saw Murray Dark devouring Thora Dark with his eyes, satisfied if she gave him only one look in return. He would, Joscelyn knew, rather have one of those long, deep, remote looks of Thora's than a kiss from any other woman. Well, it was no wonder he loved Thora. She was one of those women men can't help loving--except Chris Dark, who had given up loving her six weeks after he had married her. Yet other women did not dislike Thora. Whenever she came into a room people felt happier. She lighted life like a friendly beaming candle. She had a face that was charming without being in the least beautiful. A fascinating square face with a wide space between her blue almond-shaped eyes and a sweet, crooked mouth. She was very nicely dressed. Her peculiarly dark auburn hair was parted on her forehead and coronetted on her crown. There were milky pearl drops in her ears. What a wife she would make for Murray if that detestable Chris would only be so obliging as to die. The winter before, he had had double pneumonia and everybody was sure he would die. But he hadn't--owed his life, no doubt, to Thora's faithful nursing. And Matthew Penhallow at Three Hills, whom everybody loved and who had a family that needed him, died of *his* pneumonia. Another proof of the contrariness of life.

Pauline Dark wasn't here. Was she still in love with Hugh? She had never married. What a tangled, criss-crossed thing life was, anyhow. And here they were all sitting in rows, waiting for Ambrosine Winkworth to bring down the jug about which they were all ready to tear each other in pieces. Truly a mad world. Joscelyn was unblessed with the sense of humour which was making the affair a treat to Tempest Dark, sitting behind her. Tempest had made up his mind on considered opinion to shoot himself that night. He had nearly done it the night before, but he had reflected that he might as well wait till after the levee. He wanted, as a mere matter of curiosity, to see who got the old Dark jug. Winnifred had liked that jug. He knew he had no chance of it himself. Aunt Becky had no

use for a bankrupt. He was bankrupt and the wife he had adored had died a few weeks previously. He couldn't see any sense in living on. But just at this moment he was enjoying himself.

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Donna Dark and Virginia Powell sat together as usual. They were first cousins, who were born the same day and married the same day,--Donna to her own second cousin, Barry Dark, and Virginia to Edmond Powell--two weeks before they had left for Valcartier. Edmond Powell had died of pneumonia in the training camp, but Barry Dark had his crowded hour of glorious life somewhere in France. Virginia and Donna were "war widows" and had made a solemn compact to remain widows for ever. It was Virginia's idea, but Donna was very ready to fall in with it. She knew she could never care for any man again. She had never said her heart was buried in any especial place--though rumour sometimes attributed Virginia's famous utterance to her--but she felt that way about it. For ten years they had continued to wear weeds, though Virginia was always much weedier than Donna.

Most of the clan thought Virginia, with her spiritual beauty of pale gold hair and over-large forget-me-not eyes, was the prettier of the two devoted. Donna was as dark as her name--a slight, ivory-coloured thing with very black hair which she always wore brushed straight back from her forehead, as hair should be worn only by a really pretty woman or by a woman who doesn't care whether she looks pretty or not. Donna didn't care--or thought she didn't--but it was her good luck to have been born with a widow's peak and that saved her. Her best features were her eyes, like star-sapphires, and her mouth with its corners tucked up into dimples. She had bobbed her hair at last, though her father kicked up a fearful domestic hullabaloo over it, and Virginia was horrified.

"Do you think Barry would have liked it, dear?"

"Why not?" said Donna rebelliously. "Barry wouldn't have liked a dowdy wife. He was always up-to-date."

Virginia sighed and shook her head. *She* would never cut off her hair--never. The hair Edmond had caressed and admired.

"He used to bury his face in it and say it was like perfumed sunshine," she moaned gently.

Donna had continued to live with her father, Drowned John Penhallow--so called to distinguish him from another John Penhallow who had not been drowned--and her older half-sister, Thekla, ever since Barry's death. She had wanted to go away and train for nursing, but Drowned John had put his not inconsiderable foot down on that. Donna had yielded--it saved trouble to yield to Drowned John at the outset. He simply yelled people down. His rages were notorious in the clan. When reproached with them he said,

"If I didn't go into a rage now and then, life here would be so dull my females would hang themselves."

Drowned John was twice a widower. With his first wife, Jennie Penhallow, he had quarrelled from the time they were married. When they knew their first baby was coming, they quarrelled over what college they would send him to. As the baby turned out to be Thekla, there was no question--in Drowned John's mind, at least--of college. But the rows went on and became such a scandal that the clan hinted at a separation--not divorce of course. That never entered their heads. But Drowned John did not see the sense of it. He would have to have a housekeeper.

"Might as well be quarrelling with Jennie as with any other woman," he said.

When Jennie died--"from sheer exhaustion," the clan said--Drowned John married Emmy Dark, destined to be Donna's mother. The clan thought Emmy was more than a little mad to take him, and pointed out to her what an existence she would have. But Drowned John never quarrelled with Emmy. Emmy simply would not quarrel--and Drowned John had secretly thought life with her was very flat. Yet, although he always had two sets of manners and used his second best at home, Thekla and Donna were rather fond of him. When he got his own way he was quite agreeable.

Hate what Drowned John hated--love what Drowned John loved--give him a bit of blarney now and again--and you couldn't find a nicer man.

All sorts of weird yarns were told of Drowned John's young days, culminating in his quarrel with his father, during which Drowned John, who had a tremendous voice, shouted so loud that they heard him over at Three Hills, two miles away. After which he had run away to sea on a ship that was bound for New Zealand. He had fallen overboard on the voyage and was reported drowned. The clan held a funeral service and his father had his name chiselled on the big family monument in the graveyard. After two years young John came home, unchanged save for a huge snake tattooed around his right arm, having acquired a lavish vocabulary of profanity and an abiding distaste for sea-faring. Some thought the ship which had picked him up unnecessarily meddlesome. But John settled down on the farm, told Jennie Penhallow he was going to marry her, and refused to have his name erased from the monument. It was too good a joke. Every Sunday Drowned John went into the graveyard and guffawed over it.

He was sitting now behind William Y. and wondering if William Y. really was presumptuous enough to imagine *he* should have the jug. Why, there was no manner of doubt in the world that he, John Penhallow, should have it. It would be a damned outrage if Aunt Becky gave it to any one else and he'd tell her so, by asterisk and by asterisk. His very long face crimsoned with fury at the mere thought--a crimson that covered his ugly bald forehead, running back to his crown. His bushy white moustache bristled. His pop-eyes glared. By--more asterisks and very lurid ones--if any one else got that jug they'd have to reckon with *him*.

"I wonder what Drowned John is swearing so viciously inside himself about," thought Uncle Pippin.

Donna wanted the jug, too. She was really quite crazy about it. She felt she ought to have it. Long, long ago, when Barry was just a little boy, Aunt Becky had told him she was going to leave it to him when she died. So she, Barry's widow, should have it now. It was such a lovely old thing, with its romantic history. Donna had always hankered after it. She did not swear

internally as her father did, but she thought crossly she had never seen such a bunch of old harpies.

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Outside on the railing of the veranda Peter Penhallow was sitting, swinging one of his long legs idly in the air. A rather contemptuous scowl was on his lean, bronzed, weary face. Peter's face always looked bored and weary--at least in scenes of civilization. He wasn't going in. You would not catch Peter mewed up in a room full of heirloom hunters. Indeed, to Peter any room, even a vacant one, was simply a place to get out of as soon as possible. He always averred he could not breathe with four walls around him. He had come to this confounded levee--a curse on Aunt Becky's whims!--sorely against his will, but at least he would stay outside where there was a distant view of the jewelled harbour and a glorious wind that had never known fetters, blowing right up from the gulf--Peter loved wind--and a big tree of apple blossom that was fairer to look upon than any woman's face had ever seemed to Peter. The clan wrote Peter down as a woman-hater, but he was nothing of the sort. The only woman he hated was Donna Dark; he was simply not interested in women and had never tried to be because he felt sure no woman would ever be willing to share the only life he could live. And as for giving up that life and adopting a settled existence, the idea simply could never have occurred to Peter. Women regretted this, for they found him very attractive. Not handsome but "so distinguished, you know." He had grey eagle eyes, that turned black in excitement or deep feeling. Women did not like his eyes--they made them uncomfortable--but they thought his mouth very beautiful, and even liked it for its strength and tenderness and humour. As Uncle Pippin said, the clan would likely have been very fond of Peter Penhallow if they had ever had any chance to get acquainted with him. As it was, he remained only a tantalizing hop-out-of-kin, out of whose goings-on they got several vicarious thrills and of whom they were proud because his explorations and discoveries had won him fame--"notoriety," Drowned John called it--

but whom they never pretended to understand and of whose satiric winks they were all a little afraid. Peter hated sham of any kind; and a clan like the Penhallows and the Darks were full of it. Had to be, or they couldn't have carried on as a clan at all. But Peter never made any allowances for that.

"Look at Donna Dark," he was wont to sneer. "Pretending to be devoted to Barry's memory when all the time she'd jump at a second husband if there was any chance of one."

Not that Peter ever did look at Donna. He had never seen her since she was a child of eight, sitting across from him in church on the last Sunday he had been there before he ran away on the cattle-ship. But people reported what he said to Donna and Donna had it in for him. She never expected any such good luck as a chance to get square. But one of her day-dreams was that in some mysterious and unthinkable way Peter Penhallow should fall in love with her and sue for her hand, only to be spurned with contumely. Oh, how she would spurn him! How she would show him that she was "a widow indeed." Meanwhile she had to content herself with hating him as bitterly as Drowned John himself could hate.

Peter, who was by trade a civil engineer and by taste an explorer, had been born in a blizzard and had nearly been the death of three people in the process--his mother, to begin with, and his father and the doctor, who were blocked and all but frozen to death on that night of storm. When they were eventually dug out and thawed out Peter was there. And never, so old Aunty But averred, had such an infant been born. When she had carried him out to the kitchen to dress him, he had lifted his head of his own power and stared all around the room with bright eager eyes. Aunty But had never seen anything like it. It seemed uncanny and gave her such a turn that she let Peter drop. Luckily, he landed unhurt on a cushion of the lounge, but it was the first of his many narrow shaves. Aunty But always told with awe that Peter had not cried when he came into the world, as all properly behaved babies do.

"He seemed to like the change," said Aunty But. "He's a fine, healthy child but"--and Aunt But shook her head forebodingly. The Jeff

Penhallows did not bother over her "buts." She had got her nickname from them. *But* they lived to think that her foreboding on this occasion was justified.

Peter continued to like change. He had been born with the soul of Balboa or Columbus. He felt to the full the lure of treading where no human foot had ever trod. He had a thirst for life that was never quenched--"Life," he used to say, "that grand glorious adventure we share with the gods." When he was fourteen he had earned his way around the world, starting out with ten cents and working his passage to Australia on a cattle-ship. Then he had come home--with the skin of a man-eating tiger he had killed himself for his mother's decorous parlour floor and a collection of magnificent blue African butterflies which became a clan boast--gone back to school, toiled slavishly, and eventually graduated in civil engineering. His profession took him all over the world. When he had made enough money out of a job to keep him for awhile, he stopped working and simply explored. He was always daring the unknown--the uncharted--the undiscovered. His family had resigned themselves to it. As Uncle Pippin said, Peter was "not domestic," and they knew now he would never become so. He had had many wild adventures of which his clan knew and a thousand more of which they never heard. They were always expecting him to be killed.

"He'll be clapped into a cooking-pot some day," said Drowned John, but he did not say it to Peter, for the simple reason that he never spoke to him. There was an old feud between those two Penhallow families, dating back to the day when Jeff Penhallow had killed Drowned John's dog and hung it at his gate, because Drowned John's dog had worried his sheep and Drowned John had refused to believe it or to get rid of his dog. From that day none of Drowned John's family had had any dealings, verbal or otherwise, with any of Jeff Penhallow's. Drowned John knocked down and otherwise maltreated in the square at Charlottetown a man who said that Jeff Penhallow's word was as good as his bond because neither was any good. And Peter Penhallow, meeting a fellow Islander somewhere along the Congo, slapped his face because the said Islander laughed over Thekla

Dark having once flavoured some gingerbread with mustard. But this was clan loyalty and had nothing whatever to do with personal feeling, which continued to harden and embitter through the years. When Barry Dark, Peter's cousin and well-beloved chum, told Peter he was going to marry Donna Dark, Peter was neither to hold nor bind. He refused to countenance the affair at all and kicked up such a rumpus that even the Jeff Penhallows thought he was going entirely too far. When the wedding came off, Peter was hunting wapiti in New Zealand, full of bitterness of soul, partly because Barry had married one of the accursed race and partly because he, Peter, being notoriously and incurably left-handed, had not been accepted for overseas service. Barry had been rather annoyed over Peter's behaviour and a slight coolness had arisen between them, which was never quite removed because Barry never came back from the front. This left a sore spot in Peter's soul which envenomed still further his hatred of Donna Dark. Peter had had no intention of coming to Aunt Becky's levee. He had fully meant to leave that afternoon en route for an exploring expedition in the upper reaches of the Amazon. He had packed and strapped and locked his trunk, whistling with sheer boyish delight in being off once more. He had had a month at home--a month too much. Thank God, no more of it. In a few weeks he would be thousands of miles away from the petty gossips and petty loves and petty hates of the Darks and Penhallows--away from a world where women bobbed their hair and you couldn't tell who were grandmothers and who were flappers--from behind--and in a place where nobody would ever make moan, "Oh, what will people think of you, Peter, if you do--or don't do--that?"

"And I swear by the nine gods of Clusium that this place will not see me again for the next ten years," said Peter Penhallow, running downstairs to his brother's car, waiting to take him to the station.

Just then Destiny, with an impish chuckle, tapped him on the shoulder. His half-sister Nancy was coming into the yard almost in tears. She couldn't get to the levee if he wouldn't take her. Her husband's car had broken down. And she *must* get to the levee. She would have no chance at all of getting that darling old jug if she did not go.

"Young Jeff here can take you. I'll wait for the evening train," said Peter obligingly.

Young Jeff demurred. He had to hoe his turnips. He could spare half an hour to take Peter to the station, but spend a whole afternoon down at Indian Spring he would not.

"Take her yourself," he said. "If the evening train suits you as well, you've nothing else to do this afternoon."

Peter yielded unwillingly. It was almost the first time in his life he had done anything he really didn't want to do. But Nancy had always been a sweet little dear--his favourite in his own family. She "Oh--Petered" him far less than any of the others. If she had set her heart on that confounded jug, he wasn't going to spoil her chance.

If Peter could have foreseen the trick Fate had it in mind to play him, would he really have gone to the levee, Nancy to the contrary withstanding. Well, would he now? Ask him yourself.

So Peter came to the levee, but he felt a bit grim and into the house he would not go. He did not give his real reason--for all his hatred of sham. Perhaps he did not acknowledge it even to himself. Peter, who was not afraid of any other living creature from snakes and tigers up, was at the very bottom of his heart afraid of Aunt Becky. The devil himself, Peter reflected, would be afraid of that blistering old tongue. It would not have been so bad if she had dealt him the direct thwacks she handed out to most people. But Aunt Becky had a different technique for Peter. She made little smiling speeches to him, as mean and subtle and nasty as a cut made with paper, and Peter had no defence against them. So he thankfully draped himself over the railing of the veranda. The Moon Man was standing at the other end, and Big Sam Dark and Little Sam Dark were in the two rocking-chairs. Peter didn't mind them, but he had a bad moment when Mrs Toynbee Dark dropped into the only remaining chair with her usual whines about her health, ending up with pseudo-thankfulness that she was as well as she was.

"The girls of to-day are so healthy," sighed Mrs Toynbee. "Almost vulgarly so, don't you think, Peter? When I was a girl I was extremely

delicate. Once I fainted six times in one day. I don't really think I *ought* to go into that close room."

Peter, who hadn't been so scared since the time he had mistaken an alligator for a log, decided that he had every excuse for being beastly.

"If you stay out here with four unwedded men, my dear Alicia, Aunt Becky will think you have new matrimonial designs and you'll stand no chance of the jug at all."

Mrs Toynbee turned a horrible shade of pea-green with suppressed fury, gave him a look containing things not lawful to be uttered and went in with Virginia Powell. Peter took the precaution of dropping the surplus chair over the railing into the spirea bushes.

"Excuse me if I weep," said Little Sam, winking at Peter while he wiped away large imaginary tears from his eyes.

"Vindictive. Very vindictive," said Big Sam, jerking his head at the retreating Mrs Toynbee. "And sly as Satan. You shouldn't have put her back up, Peter. She'll do you a bad turn if she can."

Peter laughed. What did Mrs Toynbee's vindictiveness matter to him, bound for the luring mysteries of untrod Amazon jungles? He drifted off into a reverie over them, while the two Sams smoked their pipes and reflected, each according to his bent.

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"Little" Sam Dark--who was six-feet-two--and "Big" Sam Dark--who was five-feet-one--were first cousins. "Big" Sam was six years the elder, and the adjective that had been appropriate in childhood stuck to him, as things stick in Rose River and Little Friday Cove, all his life. The two Sams were old sailors and longshore fishermen, and they had lived together for thirty years in Little Sam's little house that clung like a limpet to the red "cape" at Little Friday Cove. Big Sam had been born a bachelor. Little Sam was a widower. His marriage was so far in the dim past that Big Sam had almost forgiven him for it, though he occasionally cast it up to him in the frequent quarrels by which they enlivened what might otherwise have been the rather monotonous life of retired sea-folk.

They were not, and never had been, beautiful, though that fact worried them little. Big Sam had a face that was actually broader than it was long and a flaming red beard--a rare thing among the Darks, who generally lived up to their name. He had never been able to learn how to cook, but he was a good washer and mender. He could also knit socks and write poetry. Big Sam quite fancied himself as a poet. He had written an epic which he was fond of declaiming in a surprisingly great voice for his thin body. Drowned John himself could hardly bellow louder. When he was low in his mind he felt that he had missed his calling and that nobody understood him. Also that nearly everybody in the world was going to be damned.

"I should have been a poet," he would say mournfully to his orange-hued cat--whose name was Mustard. The cat always agreed with him, but Little Sam sometimes snorted contemptuously. If he had a vanity it was in the elaborate anchors tattooed on the back of his hands. He considered them far more tasty and much more in keeping with the sea than Drowned John's snake. He had always been a Liberal in politics and had Sir Wilfrid Laurier's picture hanging over his bed. Sir Wilfrid was dead and gone, but

in Big Sam's opinion no modern leader could fill his shoes. Premiers and would-be premiers, like everything else, were degenerating. He thought Little Friday Cove the most desirable spot on earth and resented any insinuation to the contrary.

"I like to have the sea, 'the blue lone sea,' at my very doorstep like this," he boomed to the "writing man" who was living in a rented summer cottage at the cove and had asked if they never found Little Friday lonesome.

"Jest part of his poetical nature," Little Sam had explained aside, so that the writing man should not think that Big Sam had rats in his garret. Little Sam lived in secret fear--and Big Sam in secret hope--that the writing man would "put them in a book."

By the side of the wizened Big Sam Little Sam looked enormous. His freckled face was literally half forehead and a network of large, purplish-red veins over nose and cheeks looked like some monstrous spider. He wore a great drooping moustache like a horse-shoe that did not seem to belong to his face at all. But he was a genial soul and enjoyed his own good cooking, especially his famous pea soups and clam chowders. His political idol was Sir John Macdonald, whose picture hung over the clock shelf, and he had been heard to say--not in Big Sam's hearing--that he admired weemen in the abstract. He had a harmless hobby of collecting skulls from the old Indian graveyard down at Big Friday Cove and ornamenting the fence of his potato plot with them. He and Big Sam quarrelled about it every time he brought a new skull home. Big Sam declared it was indecent and unnatural and unchristian. But the skulls remained on the poles.

Little Sam was not, however, always inconsiderate of Big Sam's feelings. He had once worn large, round, gold earrings in his ears, but he had given up wearing them because Big Sam was a fundamentalist and didn't think they were Presbyterian ornaments.

Both Big and Little Sam had only an academic interest in the old Dark jug. Their cousinship was too far off to give them any claim on it. But they never missed attending any clan gathering. Big Sam might get material for

a poem out of it and Little Sam might see a pretty girl or two. He was reflecting now that Gay Penhallow had got to be a regular little beauty and that Thora Dark was by way of being a fine armful. And there was *something* about Donna Dark--something confoundly seductive. William Y.'s Sara was undeniably handsome, but she was a trained nurse and Little Sam always felt that she knew too much about her own and other people's insides to be really charming. As for Mrs Alpheus Penhallow's Nan, about whom there had been so much talk, Little Sam gravely decided that she was "too jazzy."

But Joscelyn Dark, now. She had always been a looker. What the divvle could have come between her and Hugh? Little Sam thought "divvle" was far less profane than "devil"--softer like. For an old sea-dog Little Sam was fussy about his language.

Oswald Dark had been standing at the far end of the veranda, his large, agate-grey, expressionless eyes fixed on the sky and the golden edge of the world that was the valley of Bay Silver. He wore, as usual, a long black linen coat reaching to his feet and, as usual, he was bareheaded. His long brown hair, in which there was not a white thread, parted in the middle, was as wavy as a woman's. His cheeks were hollow but his face was strangely unlined. The Darks and Penhallows were as ashamed of him as they had once been proud. In his youth Oswald Dark had been a brilliant student, with the ministry in view. Nobody knew why he "went off." Some hinted at an unhappy love affair; some maintained it was simply overwork. A few shook their heads over the fact that Oswald's grandmother had been an outsider--a Moorland from down east. Who knew what sinister strain she might have brought into the pure Dark and Penhallow blood?

Whatever the reason, Oswald Dark was now considered a harmless lunatic. He wandered at will over the pleasant red roads of the Island, and on moonlight nights sang happily as he strode along, with an occasional genuflection to the moon. On moonless nights he was bitterly unhappy and wept to himself in woods and remote corners. When he grew hungry he would call in at the first house, knock thunderingly on the door as if it had no right to be shut, and demand food regally. As everybody knew him he

always got it, and no house was shut to him in the cold of a winter night. Sometimes he would disappear from human ken for weeks at a time. But, as William Y. said, he had an uncanny instinct for clan pow-wows of any sort and invariably turned up at them, though he could seldom be persuaded to enter the house where they were being held. As a rule he took no notice of people he met in his wanderings--except to scowl darkly at them when they demanded jocularly, "How's the moon?"--but he never passed Joscelyn Dark without smiling at her--a strange eerie smile--and once he had spoken to her.

"You are seeking the moon, too. I know it. And you're unhappy because you can't get it. But it's better to want the moon, even if you can't get it--the beautiful silvery remote Lady Moon--as unattainable as things of perfect beauty ever are--than to want and get anything else. Nobody knows that but you and me. It's a wonderful secret, isn't it? Nothing else matters."

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The folks in the parlour were getting a bit restless. What--the devil or the mischief--according to sex--was keeping Ambrosine Winkworth so long getting the jug? Aunt Becky lay impassive, gazing immovably at a plaster decoration on the ceiling which, Stanton Grundy reflected, looked exactly like a sore. Drowned John nearly blew the roof off with one of his famous sneezes and half the women jumped nervously. Uncle Pippin absent-mindedly began to hum *Nearer My God to Thee*, but was squelched by a glare from William Y. Oswald Dark suddenly came to the open window and looked in at these foolish and distracted people.

"Satan has just passed the door," he said in his intense dramatic fashion.

"What a blessing he didn't come in," said Uncle Pippin imperturbably. But Rachel Penhallow was disturbed. It had seemed so *real* when the Moon Man said it. She wished Uncle Pippin would not be so flippant and jocose. Every one again wondered why Ambrosine didn't come in with the jug. Had she taken a weak spell? Couldn't she find it? Had she dropped and broken it on the garret floor?

Then Ambrosine entered, like a priestess bearing a chalice. She placed the jug on the little round table between the two rooms. A sigh of relieved tension went over the assemblage, succeeded by an almost painful stillness. Ambrosine went back and sat down at Aunt Becky's right hand. Miss Jackson was sitting on the left.

"Good gosh," whispered Stanton Grundy to Uncle Pippin, "did you ever see three such ugly women living together in your life?"

That night at three o'clock Uncle Pippin woke up and thought of a marvellous retort he might have made to Stanton Grundy. But at the time he could think of absolutely nothing to say. So he turned his back on Stanton and gazed at the jug, as every one else was doing--some

covetously, a few indifferently, all with the interest natural to this exhibition of an old family heirloom they had been hearing about all their lives and had had few and far between opportunities of seeing.

Nobody thought the jug very beautiful in itself. Taste must have changed notably in a hundred years if anybody had ever thought it beautiful. Yet it was undoubtedly a delectable thing, with its history and its legend, and even Tempest Dark leaned forward to get a better view of it. A thing like that, he reflected, deserved a certain reverence because it was the symbol of a love it had outlasted on earth and so had a sacredness of its own.

It was an enormous, pot-bellied thing of a type that had been popular in pre-Victorian days. George the Fourth had been king when the old Dark jug came into being. Half its nose was gone and a violent crack extended around its middle. The decorations consisted of pink-gilt scrolls, green and brown leaves and red and blue roses. On one side was a picture of two convivial tars, backed with the British Ensign and the Union Jack, who had evidently been imbibing deeply of the cup which cheers *and* inebriates, and who were expressing the feelings of their inmost hearts in singing the verse printed above them:

Thus smiling at peril at sea or on shore
We'll box the old compass right cheerly,
Pass the grog, boys, about, with a song or two more,
Then we'll drink to the girls we love dearly.

On the opposite side the designer of the jug, whose strong point had not been spelling, had filled in the vacant place with a pathetic verse from Byron:

The man is doomed to sail
With the blast of the gale
Through billows atlantic to steer.
As he bends o'er the wave

Which may soon be his grave
He remembers his home with a tear.

Rachel Penhallow felt a tear start to her eyes and roll down her long face as she read it. It had been, she thought mournfully, so sadly prophetic.

In the middle of the jug, below its broken nose, was a name and date. Harriet Dark, Aldboro, 1826, surrounded by a wreath of pink and green tied with a true-lover's knot. The jug was full of old pot-pourri and the room was instantly filled with its faint fragrance--a delicate spicy smell, old-maidishly sweet, virginally elusive, yet with such penetrating, fleeting suggestions of warm passion and torrid emotions. Everybody in the room suddenly felt its influence. For one infinitesimal moment Joscelyn and Hugh looked at each other--Margaret Penhallow was young again--Virginia put her hand over Donna's in a convulsive grasp--Thora Dark moved restlessly--and a strange expression flickered over Lawson Dark's face. Uncle Pippin caught it as it vanished and felt his scalp crinkle. For just a second, he thought Lawson was remembering.

Even Drowned John found himself recalling how pretty and flower-like Jennie had been when he married her. What a hell of a pity one couldn't stay always young.

Every one present knew the romantic story of the old Dark jug. Harriet Dark, who had been sleeping for one hundred years in a quaint English churchyard, had been a slim fair creature with faint rose cheeks and big grey eyes, in 1826, with a gallant sea-captain for a lover. And this lover, on what proved to be his last voyage, had sailed to Amsterdam and there had caused to be made the jug of scroll and verse and true-lover's knot for a birthday gift to his Harriet, it being the fashion of the time to give the lady of your heart such a robust and capacious jug. Alas for true loves and true lovers! On the voyage home the Captain was drowned. The jug was sent to the broken-hearted Harriet. Hearts *did* break a hundred years ago, it is said. A year later Harriet, her spring of love so suddenly turned to autumn, was buried in the Aldboro churchyard and the jug passed into the keeping of her sister, Sarah Dark, who had married her cousin, Robert Penhallow.

Sarah, being perhaps of a practical and unromantic turn of mind, used the jug to hold the black currant jam for the concoction of which she was noted. Six years later, when Robert Penhallow decided to emigrate to Canada, his wife carried the jug with her, full of black currant jam. The voyage was long and stormy; the currant jam was all eaten; and the jug was broken by some mischance into three large pieces. But Sarah Penhallow was a resourceful woman. When she was finally settled in her new home, she took the jug and mended it carefully with white lead. It was done thoroughly and lastingly but not exactly artistically. Sarah smeared the white lead rather lavishly over the cracks, pressing it down with her capable thumb. And in a good light to this very day the lines of Sarah Penhallow's thumb could be clearly seen in the hardened spats of white lead.

Thereafter for years Sarah Penhallow kept the jug in her dairy, filled with cream skimmed from her broad, golden-brown, earthenware milk-pans. On her death-bed she had given it to her daughter Rachel, who had married Thomas Dark. Rachel Dark left it to her son Theodore. By this time it had been advanced to the dignity of an heirloom and was no longer degraded to menial uses. Aunt Becky kept it in her china cabinet, and it was passed around and its story told at all clan gatherings. It was said a collector had offered Aunt Becky a fabulous sum for it. But no Dark or Penhallow would ever have dreamed of selling such a household god. Absolutely it must remain in the family. To whom would Aunt Becky give it? This was the question every one in the room was silently asking; Aunt Becky alone knew the answer and she did not mean to be in any hurry to give it. This was her last levee; she had much to do and still more to say before she came to the question of the jug at all. She was going to take her time about it and enjoy it. She knew perfectly well that what she was going to do would set everybody by the ears, but all she regretted was that she would not be alive to see the sport. Look at all those female animals with their eyes popping out at the jug! Aunt Becky began to laugh and laughed until her bed shook.

"I think," she said, finally, wiping the tears of mirth from her eyes, "that a solemn assembly like this should be opened with prayer."

This was by way of being a bombshell. Who but Aunt Becky would have thought of such a thing? Everybody looked at each other and then at David Dark, who was the only man in the clan who was known to have a gift of prayer. David Dark was usually very ready to lead in prayer, but he was not prepared for this.

"David," said Aunt Becky inexorably. "I'm sorry to say this clan haven't the reputation of wearing their knees out praying. I shall have to ask you to do the proper thing."

His wife looked at him appealingly. She was very proud because her husband could make such fine prayers. She forgave him all else for it, even the fact that he made all his family go to bed early to save kerosene and had a dreadful habit of licking his fingers after eating tarts. David's prayers were her only claim to distinction, and she was afraid he was going to refuse now.

David, poor wretch, had no intention of refusing, much as he disliked the prospect. To do so would offend Aunt Becky and lose him all chance of the jug. He cleared his throat and rose to his feet. Everybody bowed. Outside the two Sams, realizing what was going on as David's sonorous voice floated out to them, took their pipes out of their mouths. David's prayer was not up to his best, as his wife admitted to herself, but it was an eloquent and appropriate petition and David felt himself badly used when after his "Amen" Aunt Becky said:

"Giving God information isn't praying, David. It's just as well to leave something to His imagination, you know. But I suppose you did your best. Thank you. By the way, do you remember the time, forty years ago, when you put Aaron Dark's old ram in the church basement?"

David looked silly and Mrs David was indignant. Aunt Becky certainly had a vile habit of referring in company to whatever incident in your life you were most anxious to forget. But she was like that. And you couldn't resent it if you wanted the jug. The David Darks managed a feeble smile.

"Noel," thought Gay, "is leaving the bank now."

"I wonder," said Aunt Becky reflectively, "who was the first man who ever prayed. And what he prayed for. And how many prayers have been uttered since then."

"And how many have been answered," said Naomi Dark, speaking bitterly and suddenly for the first time.

"Perhaps William Y. could throw some light on that," chuckled Uncle Pippin maliciously. "I understand he keeps a systematic record of all his prayers, which are answered and which ain't. How about it, William Y.?"

"It averages up about fifty-fifty," said William Y. solemnly, not understanding at all why some were giggling. "I am bound to say, though," he added, "that some of the answers were--peculiar."

As for Ambrosine Winkworth, David had made an enemy for life of her because he had referred to her as "Thine aged handmaiden." Ambrosine shot a venomous glance at David.

"Aged--aged," she muttered rebelliously. "Why, I'm only seventy-two--not so old as all that--not so old."

"Hush, Ambrosine," said Aunt Becky authoritatively. "It's a long time since you were young. Put another cushion under my head. Thanks. I'm going to have the fun of reading my own will. And I've had the fun of writing my own obituary. It's going to be printed just as I've written it, too. Camilla has sworn to see to that. Good Lord, the obituaries I've read! Listen to mine."

Aunt Becky produced a folded paper from under her pillow.

"No gloom was cast over the communities of Indian Spring, Three Hills, Rose River or Bay Silver when it became known that Mrs Theodore Dark--Aunt Becky as she was generally called, less from affection than habit--had died on'--whatever the date will be--'at the age of eighty-five.'

"You notice," said Aunt Becky, interrupting herself, "that I say *died*. I shall not pass away or pass out or pay my debt to nature or depart this life or join the great majority or be summoned to my long home. I intend simply and solely to die.

"Everybody concerned felt that it was high time the old lady did die. She had lived a long life, respectably if not brilliantly, had experienced

almost everything a decent female could experience, had outlived husband and children and anybody who had ever really cared anything for her. There was therefore neither sense, reason nor profit in pretending gloom or grief. The funeral took place on'--whatever date it does take place on--'from the home of Miss Camilla Jackson at Indian Spring. It was a cheerful funeral, in accordance with Aunt Becky's strongly expressed wish, the arrangements being made by Mr Henry Trent, undertaker, Rose River.'

"Henry will never forgive me for not calling him a mortician," said Aunt Becky. "Mortician--Humph! But Henry has a genius for arranging funerals and I've picked on him to plan mine.

"'Flowers were omitted by request'--no horrors of funeral wreaths for me, mind. No bought harps and pillows and crosses. But if anybody cares to bring a bouquet from their own garden, they may--'and the services were conducted by the Rev. Mr Trackley of Rose River. The pall-bearers were Hugh Dark, Robert Dark'--mind you don't stumble, Dandy, as you did at Selina Dark's funeral. What a jolt you must have given the poor old girl--'Palmer Dark, Homer Penhallow'--put them on opposite sides of the casket so they can't fight--'Murray Dark, Roger Penhallow, David Dark, and John Penhallow'--Drowned John, mind you, not that simpering nincompoop at Bay Silver--'who contrived to get through the performance without swearing as he did at his father's funeral.'"

"I didn't," shouted Drowned John furiously, springing to his feet. "And don't you dare publish such a thing about me in your damned obituary. You--you--"

"Sit down, John, sit down. That really isn't in the obituary. I just stuck it in this minute to get a rise out of you. Sit down."

"I didn't swear at my father's funeral," muttered Drowned John sullenly as he obeyed.

"Well, maybe it was your mother's. Don't interrupt me again please. Courtesy costs nothing as the Scotchman said. *'Aunt Becky was born a Presbyterian, lived a Presbyterian, and died a Presbyterian. She had a hard man to please in Theodore Dark, but she made him quite as good a wife as he deserved. She was a good neighbour as neighbours go and did*

not quarrel more than anybody else in the clan. She had a knack of taking the wind out of people's sails that did not make for popularity. She seldom suffered in silence. Her temper was about the average, neither worse nor better and did not sweeten as she grew older. She always behaved herself decently, although many a time it would have been a relief to be indecent. She told the truth almost always, thereby doing a great deal of good and some harm, but she could tell a lie without straining her conscience when people asked questions they had no business to ask. She occasionally used a naughty word under great stress and she could listen to a risky story without turning white around the gills, but obscenity never took the place of wit with her. She paid her debts, went to church regularly, thought gossip was very interesting, liked to be the first to hear a piece of news, and was always especially interested in things that were none of her business. She could see a baby without wanting to eat it, but she was always a very good mother to her own. She longed for freedom, as all women do, but had sense enough to understand that real freedom is impossible in this kind of a world, the lucky people being those who can choose their masters, so she never made the mistake of kicking uselessly over the traces. Sometimes she was mean, treacherous and greedy. Sometimes she was generous, faithful and unselfish. In short, she was an average person who had lived as long as anybody should live.'

"There," said Aunt Becky, tucking her obituary under the pillow, quite happy in the assurance that she had made a sensation. "You will observe that I have not called myself 'the late Mrs Dark' or 'the deceased lady' or 'relict.' And that's that."

"God bless me, did you ever hear the equal of that?" muttered Uncle Pippin blankly.

Every one else was silent in a chill of outraged horror. Surely--surely--that appalling document would never be published. It must *not* be published, if anything short of the assassination of Camilla Jackson could prevent it. Why, strangers would suppose it had been written by some surviving member of the clan.

But Aunt Becky was bringing out another document, and all the Darks and Penhallows bottled up their indignation for the time being and uncorked their ears. Who was to get the jug? Until that was settled the matter of the obituary would be left in abeyance.

Aunt Becky unfolded her will, and settled her owlsh shell-ringed glasses on her beaky nose.

"I've left my little bit of money to Camilla for her life," she said. "After her death it's to go to the hospital in Charlottetown."

Aunt Becky looked sharply over the throng. But she did not see any particular disappointment. To do the Darks and Penhallows justice, they were not money-grabbers. No one grudged Camilla Jackson her legacy. Money was a thing one could and should earn for oneself; but old family heirlooms, crusted with the sentiment of dead and gone hopes and fears for generations, were different matters. Suppose Aunt Becky left the jug to some rank outsider? Or a museum? She was quite capable of it. If she did, William Y. Penhallow mentally registered a vow that he would see his lawyer about it.

"Any debts are to be paid," continued Aunt Becky, "and my grave is to be heaped up--not left flat. I insist on that. Make a note of it, Artemas."

Artemas Dark nodded uncomfortably. He was caretaker of the Rose River graveyard, and he knew he would have trouble with the cemetery committee about that. Besides, it made it so confoundedly difficult to mow. Aunt Becky probably read his thoughts, for she said:

"I won't have a lawn-mower running over me. You can clip my grave nicely with the shears. I've left directions for my tombstone, too. I want one as big as anybody else's. And I want my lace shawl draped around me in my coffin. It's the only thing I mean to take with me. Theodore gave it to me when Ronald was born. There were times when Theodore could do as graceful a thing as anybody. It's as good as new. I've always kept it wrapped in silver paper at the bottom of my third bureau drawer. Remember, Camilla."

Camilla nodded. The first sign of disappointment appeared on Mrs Clifford Penhallow's face. She had set her heart on getting the lace shawl,

for she feared she had very little chance of getting the jug. The shawl was said to have cost Theodore Dark two hundred dollars. To think of burying two hundred dollars!

Mrs Toynbee Dark, who had been waiting all the afternoon for an opportunity to cry, thought she saw it at the mention of Aunt Becky's baby son who had been dead for sixty years, and got out her handkerchief. But Aunt Becky headed her off.

"Don't start crying yet, Alicia. By the way, while I think of it, will you tell me something? I've always wanted to know and I'll never have another chance. Which of your three husbands did you like best--Morton Dark, Edgar Penhallow, or Toynbee Dark? Come now, make a clean breast of it."

Mrs Toynbee put her handkerchief back in her bag and shut the latter with a vicious snap.

"I had a deep affection for all my partners," she said.

Aunt Becky wagged her head.

"Why didn't you say 'deceased' partners? You were thinking it, you know. You have that type of mind. Alicia, tell me honestly, don't you think you ought to have been more economical with husbands? Three! And poor Mercy and Margaret there haven't been able even to get one."

Mercy reflected bitterly that if *she* had employed the methods Alicia Dark had, she might have had husbands and to spare, too. Margaret coloured softly and looked piteous. Why, oh, why, must cruel old Aunt Becky hold her up to public ridicule like this?

"I've divided all my belongings among you," said Aunt Becky. "I hate the thought of dying and leaving all my nice things. But since it must be, I'm not going to have any quarrelling over them before I'm cold in my grave. Everything's down here in black and white. I've just left the things according to my own whims. I'll read the list. And let me say that the fact that any one of you gets something doesn't mean that you've no chance for the jug as well. I'm coming to that later."

Aunt Becky took off her spectacles, polished them, put them on again, and took a drink of water. Drowned John nearly groaned with impatience.

Heaven only knew how long it would be before she would get to the jug. He had no interest in her other paltry knick-knacks.

"Mrs Denzil Penhallow is to have my pink china candlesticks," announced Aunt Becky. "I know you'll be delighted at this, Martha dear. You've given me so many hints about candlesticks."

Mrs Denzil had wanted Aunt Becky's beautiful silver Georgian candlesticks. And now she was saddled with a pair of unspeakable china horrors, in colour a deep magenta-pink with what looked like black worms wriggling all over them. But she tried to look pleased, because if she didn't, it might spoil her chances for the jug. Denzil scowled, jug or no jug, and Aunt Becky saw it. Pompous old Denzil! She would get even with him.

"I remember when Denzil was about five years old he came down to my place with his mother, one day, and our old turkey gobbler took after him. I suppose the poor bird thought no one else had a right to be strutting around there. 'Member, Denzil? Lord, how you ran and blubbered! You certainly thought Old Nick was after you. Do you know, Denzil, I've never seen you parading up the church aisle since but I've thought of that."

Well, it had to be endured. Denzil cleared his throat and endured it.

"I haven't much jewellery," Aunt Becky was saying. "Two rings. One is an opal. I'm giving that to Virginia Powell. They say it brings bad luck, but you're too modern to believe that old superstition, Virginia. Though *I* never had any luck after I got it."

Virginia tried to look happy, though she had wanted the Chinese screen. As for luck or no luck, how could that matter? Life was over for her. Nobody grudged her the opal, but when Aunt Becky mentioned rings many ears were pricked up. Who would get her diamond ring? It was a fine one and worth several hundreds of dollars.

"Ambrosine Winkworth is to have my diamond ring," said Aunt Becky.

Half those present could not repress a gasp of disapproval and the collective effect was quite pronounced. This, thought the gaspers, was absurd. Ambrosine Winkworth had no right whatever to that ring. And

what good would it do her--an old broken-down servant? Really, Aunt Becky's brain must be softening.

"Here it is, Ambrosine," said Aunt Becky, taking it from her bony finger and handing it to the trembling Ambrosine. "I'll give it to you now, so there'll be no mistake. Put it on."

Ambrosine obeyed. Her old wrinkled face was aglow with the joy of a long-cherished dream suddenly and unexpectedly realized. Ambrosine Winkworth, through a drab life spent in other people's kitchens, had hankered all through that life for a diamond ring. She had never hoped to have it; and now here it was on her hand, a great starry wonderful thing, glittering in the June sunshine that fell through the window. Everything came true for Ambrosine in that moment. She asked no more of fate.

Perhaps Aunt Becky had divined that wistful dream of the old woman. Or perhaps she had just given Ambrosine the ring to annoy the clan. If the latter, she had certainly succeeded. Nan Penhallow was especially furious. *She* should have the diamond ring. Thekla Penhallow felt the same way. Joscelyn, who once had had a diamond ring, Donna, who still had one, and Gay, who expected she soon would have one, looked amused and indifferent. Chuckling to herself Aunt Becky picked up her will and gave Mrs Clifford Penhallow her Chinese screen.

"As if I wanted her old Chinese screen," thought Mrs Clifford, almost on the point of tears.

Margaret Penhallow was the only one whom nobody envied. She got Aunt Becky's *Pilgrim's Progress*, a very old, battered book. The covers had been sewed on; the leaves were yellow with age. One was afraid to touch it lest it might fall to pieces. It was a most disreputable old volume which Theodore Dark, for some unknown reason, had prized when alive. Since his death, Aunt Becky had kept it in an old box in the garret where it had got musty and dusty. But Margaret was not disappointed. She had expected nothing.

"My green pickle leaf is to go to Rachel Penhallow," said Aunt Becky.

Rachel's long face grew longer. She had wanted the Apostle spoons. But Gay Penhallow got the Apostle spoons--to her surprise and delight.

They were quaint and lovely, and would accord charmingly with a certain little house of dreams that was faintly taking shape in her imagination. Aunt Becky looked at Gay's sparkling face with less grimness than she usually showed and proceeded to give her dinner-set to Mrs Howard Penhallow, who wanted the Chippendale sideboard.

"It was my wedding-set," said Aunt Becky. "There's only one piece broken. Theodore brought his fist down on the cover of one of the tureens one day when he got excited in an argument at dinner. I won out in the argument, though--at least I got my own way, tureen or no tureen. Emily, you're to have the bed."

Mrs Emily Frost, *née* Dark, a gentle, faded little person, who also had yearned for the Apostle spoons, tried to look grateful for a bed which was too big for any of her tiny rooms. And Mrs Alpheus Penhallow, who wanted the bed, had to put up with the Chippendale sideboard. Donna Dark got an old egg-dish in the guise of a gaily coloured china hen sitting on a yellow china nest, and was glad because she had liked the old thing when she was a child. Joscelyn Dark got the claw-footed mahogany table Mrs Palmer Dark had hoped for, and Roger Dark got the Georgian candlesticks and Mrs Denzil's eternal hatred. The beautiful old Queen Anne bookcase went to Murray Dark, who never read books, and Hugh Dark got the old hour-glass--early eighteenth century--and wondered bitterly what use it would be to a man for whom time had stopped ten years ago. He knew, none better, how long an hour can be and what devastating things can happen in it.

"Crosby, you're to have my old cut-glass whisky decanter," Aunt Becky was saying. "There hasn't been any whisky in it for many a year, more's the pity. It'll hold the water you're always drinking in the night. I heard you admire it once."

Old Crosby Penhallow, who had been nodding, wakened up and looked pleased. He really hadn't expected anything. It was kind of Becky to remember him. They had been young together.

Aunt Becky looked at him--at his smooth, shining bald head, his sunken blue eyes, his toothless mouth. Old Crosby would never have false

teeth. Yet in spite of the bald head and faded eyes and shrunken mouth, Crosby Dark was not an ill-looking old man--quite the reverse.

"I have a mind to tell you something, Crosby," said Aunt Becky. "*You* never knew it--nobody ever knew it--but you were the only man I ever loved."

The announcement made a sensation. Everybody--so ridiculous is outworn passion--wanted to laugh but dared not. Crosby blushed painfully all over his wrinkled face. Hang it all, was old Becky making fun of him? And whether or no, how dared she make a show of him like this before everybody?

"I was quite mad about you," said Aunt Becky musingly. "Why? I don't know. You were handsomer sixty years ago than any man has a right to be, but you had no brains. Yet you were the man for me. And you never looked at me. You married Annette Dark--and I married Theodore. Nobody knows how much I hated him when I married him. But I got quite fond of him after awhile. That's life, you know--though those three romantic young geese here, Gay and Donna and Virginia, think I'm talking rank heresy. I got over caring for you in time, even though for years after I did, my heart used to beat like mad every time I saw you walk up the church aisle with your meek little Annette trotting behind you. I got a lot of thrills out of loving you, Crosby--many more I don't doubt than if I'd married you. And Theodore was really a much better husband for me than you'd have been--he had a sense of humour. And it doesn't matter now whether he was or wasn't. I don't even wish now that you had loved me, though I wished it for so many years. Lord, the nights I couldn't sleep for thinking of you--and Theodore snoring beside me. But there it is. Somehow, I've always wanted you to know it and at last I've had the courage to tell you."

Old Crosby wiped his brow with his handkerchief. Erasmus would never let him hear the last of this--never. And suppose it got into the papers! If he had dreamed anything like this was going to happen, he would never have come to the levee. He glowered at the jug. It was to blame, durn it.

"I wonder how many of us will get out of this alive," whispered Stanton Grundy to Uncle Pippin.

But Aunt Becky had switched over to Penny Dark and was giving him her bottle of Jordan water.

"What the deuce do I care for Jordan water," thought Penny. Perhaps his face was too expressive, for Aunt Becky suddenly grinned dangerously.

"Mind the time, Penny, you moved a vote of thanks to Rob Dufferin on the death of his wife?"

There was a chorus of laughs of varying timbre, among which Drowned John's boomed like an earthquake. Penny's thoughts were as profane as the others' had been. That a little mistake between thanks and condolence, made in the nervousness of public speaking, should be everlastingly coming up against a man like this. From old Aunt Becky, too, who had just confessed that most of her life she had loved a man who wasn't her husband, the scandalous old body.

Mercy Penhallow sighed. *She* would have liked the Jordan water. Rachel Penhallow had one and Mercy had always envied her for it. There must be a blessing in any household that had a bottle of Jordan water. Aunt Becky heard the sigh and looked at Mercy.

"Mercy," she said apropos of nothing, "do you remember that forgotten pie you brought out after everybody had finished eating at the Stanley Penhallow's silver-wedding dinner?"

But Mercy was not afraid of Aunt Becky. She had a spirit of her own.

"Yes, I do. And do *you* remember, Aunt Becky, that the first time *you* killed and roasted a chicken after you were married, you brought it to the table with the insides still in it?"

Nobody dared to laugh, but everybody was glad Mercy had the spunk. Aunt Becky nodded undisturbed.

"Yes, and I remember how it smelled! We had company, too. I don't think Theodore ever fully forgave me. I thought that had been forgotten years ago. *Is* anything ever forgotten? Can people *ever* live anything down? The honours are to you, Mercy, but I must get square with

somebody. Junius Penhallow, do *you* remember--since Mercy has started digging up the past--how drunk you were at your wedding?"

Junius Penhallow turned a violent crimson but couldn't deny it. Of what use was it, with Mrs Junius at his elbow, to plead that he had been in such a blue funk on his wedding-morning that he'd never have had the courage to go through with it if he hadn't got drunk? He had never been drunk since, and it was hard to have it raked up now, when he was an elder in the church and noted for his avowed temperance principles.

"I'm not the only one who ever got drunk in this clan," he dared to mutter, despite the jug.

"No, to be sure. There's Artemas over there. Do you remember, Artemas, the evening you walked up the church aisle in your nightshirt?"

Artemas, a tall, raw-boned, red-haired fellow, had been too drunk on that occasion to remember it, but he always roared when reminded of it. He thought it the best joke ever.

"You should have all been thankful I had that much on myself," he said with a chuckle.

Mrs Artemas wished she were dead. What was a joke to Artemas was a tragedy to her. She had never forgotten--never could forget--the humiliation of that unspeakable evening. She had forgiven Artemas certain violations of his marriage vow of which every one was aware. But she had never forgiven--never would forgive--the episode of the nightshirt. If it had been pyjamas, it would not have been quite so terrible. But in those days pyjamas were unknown.

Aunt Becky was at Mrs Conrad Dark.

"I'm giving you my silver saltcellars. Alec Dark's mother gave them to me for a wedding-present. Do you remember the time you and Mrs Clifford there quarrelled over Alec Dark and she slapped your face? And neither of you got Alec after all. There, there, don't crack the spectrum. It's all dead and vanished, just like my affair with Crosby."

("As if there was ever any affair," thought Crosby piteously.)

"Pippin's to have my grandfather clock. Mrs Digby Dark thinks she should have that because her father gave it to me. But no. Do you

remember, Fanny, that you once put a tract in a book you lent me? Do you know what I did with it? I used it for curl papers. I've never forgiven you for the insult. Tracts, indeed. Did I need tracts?"

"You--weren't a member of the church," said Mrs Digby, on the point of tears.

"No--nor am yet. Theodore and I could never agree which church to join. I wanted Rose River and he wanted Bay Silver. And after he died it seemed sort of disrespectful to his memory to join Rose River. Besides, I was so old then it would have seemed funny. Marrying and church-joining should be done in youth. But I was as good a Christian as any one. Naomi Dark."

Naomi, who had been fanning Lawson, looked up with a start as Aunt Becky hurled her name at her.

"You're to get my Wedgwood teapot. It's a pretty thing. Cauliflower pattern, as it's called, picked out with gold lustre. It's the only thing it really hurts me to give up. Letty gave it to me--she bought it at a sale in town with some of her first quarter's salary. Have you all forgotten Letty? It's forty years since she died. She would have been sixty if she were living now--as old as you, Fanny. Oh, I know you don't own to more than fifty, but you and Letty were born within three weeks of each other. It seems funny to think of Letty being sixty--she was always so young--she was the youngest thing I ever knew. I used to wonder how Theodore and I ever produced her. She *couldn't* have been sixty ever--that's why she had to die. After all, it was better. It hurt me to have her die--but I think it would have hurt me more to see her sixty--wrinkled--faded--grey-haired--my pretty Letty, like a rose tossing in a breeze. Have you all forgotten that gold hair of hers--such *living* hair? Be good to her teapot, Naomi. Well, that's the end of my valuable belongings--except the jug. I'm a bit tired--I want a rest before I tackle *that* business. I'm going to ask you all to sit in absolute silence for ten minutes and think about a question I'm going to ask you at the end of that time--all of you who are over forty. How many of you would like to live your lives over again if you could?"

X

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Another whim of Aunt Becky's! They resigned themselves to it with what grace they could. A silence of ten minutes seems like a century--under certain conditions. Aunt Becky lay as if tranquilly asleep. Ambrosine was gazing raptly at her diamond ring. Hugh thought about the night of his wedding. Margaret tried to compose a verse of her new poem. Drowned John became conscious that his new boots were exceedingly tight and uncomfortable and uneasily remembered his new litter of pigs. He ought to be home attending to them. Uncle Pippin wondered irritably what that fellow Grundy was looking so amused about. Uncle Pippin would have been still more scandalized had he known that Grundy was imagining himself God, rearranging all these twisted lives properly, and enjoying himself hugely. Murray Dark devoured Thora with his eyes and Thora went on placidly shining with her own light. Gay began to pick out her flower-girls. Little Jill Penhallow and little Chrissie Dark. They were such darlings. They must wear pink and yellow crêpe and carry baskets of pink and yellow flowers--roses or 'mums, according to the time of year. Palmer Dark enjoyed in imagination the pleasure of kicking Homer Penhallow. Old Crosby was asleep and old Miller was nodding. Mercy Penhallow sat stiffly still and criticized the universe. Many of them were already sore and disappointed; nerves were strained and tenuous; when Junius Penhallow cleared his throat the sound was like a blasphemy.

"Two minutes more of this and I shall throw back my head and howl," thought Donna Dark. She suddenly felt sick and tired of the whole thing--of the whole clan--of her whole tame existence. What was she living for, anyhow? She felt as out of place as the blank, unfaded space left on the wall where a picture had hung. Life had no meaning--this silly little round of gossip and venom and malicious laughter. Here was a roomful of people ready to fly at each other's throats because of an old broken-nosed jug and

a few paltry knick-knacks. She forgot that she had been as keen as anybody about the jug when she came. She wondered impatiently if anything pleasant or interesting or thrilling were ever going to happen to her again. Drowned John's early wanderlust suddenly emerged in her. She wanted to have wings--wide sweeping wings to fly into the sunset--skim over the waves--battle with the winds--soar to the stars--in short, do everything that was never done by her smug, prosperous, sensible home-keeping clan. She was in rebellion against all the facts of her life. Probably the whole secret of Donna's unrest at that moment was simply a lack of oxygen in the air. But it came pat to the psychological moment.

The sudden and lasting cessation of all the undertones and rustlings and stirrings in the room behind them at first arrested the attention and finally aroused the wonder of the outsiders on the veranda. Peter, who never knew why he should not gratify his curiosity about anything the moment he felt it, got off the railing, walked to the open window, and looked in. The first thing he saw was the discontented face of Donna Dark, who was sitting by the opposite window in the shadow of a great pine outside. Its emerald gloom threw still darker shadows on her glossy hair and deepened the lustre of her long blue eyes. She turned towards Peter's window as he laid his arms on the sill and bent inward. It was one of those moments all the rest of life can't undo. Their eyes met, Donna's richly quilled about with dark lashes, somewhat turbulent and mutinous under eyebrows flying up like little wings, Peter's grey and amazed, under a puzzled frown.

Then it happened.

Neither Donna nor Peter knew at first just what *had* happened. They only knew *something* had. Peter continued to stare at Donna as if mesmerized. Who was this creature of strange dark loveliness? She must be one of the clan or she wouldn't be here, but he couldn't place her at all. Wait--wait--what old memory flickered tantalizingly before him--now approaching--now receding? He *must* grasp it--the old church at Rose River--himself, a boy of twelve sitting in his father's pew--across the aisle a little girl of eight--blue-eyed, black-haired, wing-browed--a little girl,

sitting in Drowned John's pew! He knew he must hate her because she sat in Drowned John's pew. So he made an impudent face at her. And the little girl had laughed--*laughed*. She was amused at him. Peter, who had hated her before impersonally, hated her now personally. He had kept on hating her although he had never seen her again--never again till now. Now he was looking at her across Aunt Becky's parlour. At that moment Peter understood what had happened to him. He was no longer a free man--forevermore he must be in the power of this pale girl. He had fallen in love fathoms deep with Drowned John's daughter and Barry Dark's detested widow. Since he never did anything by halves he did not fall in love by halves either.

Peter felt a bit dizzy. It is a staggering thing to look in at a casual window and see the woman you now realize you have been subconsciously waiting for all your life. It is a still more staggering thing to have your hate suddenly dissolve into love, as though your very bones had melted to water. It rather lets you down. Peter was actually afraid to try to walk back to the veranda railing for fear his legs would give way. He knew, without stopping to argue with himself about it, that he would take no train from Three Hills that night and the lure of Amazon jungles had ceased--temporarily at least--to exist. Mystery and magic enfolded Peter as a garment. What he wanted to do was to vault over the window-sill, hurl aside those absurd men and women sitting between them, snatch up Donna Dark, strip off those ridiculous weeds she was wearing for another man, and carry her off bodily. It was quite on the cards that he would have done it--Peter had such a habit of doing everything he wanted to do--but at that moment the ten-minute silence was over and Aunt Becky opened her eyes. Everybody sighed with relief, and Peter, finding that all eyes were directed towards him, dragged himself back to the railing and sat on it, trying to collect his scattered wits and able only to see that subtle, deep-eyed face with its skin as delicate as a white night moth, under its cap of flat dark hair. Well, he had fallen in love with Donna Dark. He realized that he had been sent there by the powers that govern to fall in love with her. It was predestined in the councils of eternity that he should look through that

particular window at that particular moment. Good heavens, the years he had wasted insensately hating her! Hopeless idiot! Blind bat! Now the only thing to do was to marry her as quickly as possible. Everything else could wait, but that could not. Even finding out what Donna thought about it could wait.

Donna could hardly be said to be thinking at all. She was not quite so quick as Peter was at finding out what had happened to her. She had recognized Peter the moment she had seen him--partly from that same old memory of an impudent boy across the aisle, partly from his photographs in the papers. Though they weren't good of him--not half as fascinating. Peter hated being photographed and always glared at the camera as if it were a foe. Still, Donna knew him for her enemy--and for something else.

She was trembling with the extraordinary excitement that tingled over her at the sight of him--she, who, a few seconds before, had been so bored--so tired--so disgusted that she wished she had the courage to poison herself.

She was sure Virginia noticed it. Oh, if he would only go away and not stand there at the window staring at her. She knew he was leaving for South America that night--she had heard Nancy Penhallow telling it to Mrs Homer. Donna put her hand up to her throat, as if she were choking. What was the matter with her? Who cared if Peter Penhallow went to the Amazon or the Congo? It was not she, not Donna Dark, Barry's inconsolable widow, who cared. Certainly not. It was this queer, wild, primitive creature who had, without any warning, somehow usurped her body and only wanted to spring to the window and feel Peter's arms around her. There is no saying but that this perfectly crazy impulse might have mastered Donna if Aunt Becky had not opened her eyes and Peter had not vanished from the window.

Donna gave a gasp, which, coming after the universal sigh, escaped the notice of everybody but Virginia, who laid her hand over Donna's and squeezed it sympathetically.

"Darling, I saw it all. It must have been frightfully hard for you. You bore it splendidly."

"What--what did I bear?" stammered Donna idiotically.

"Why, seeing that dreadful Peter Penhallow staring at you like that--with his hate fairly sticking out of his eyes."

"Hate--hate--oh, do you think he hates me--really?" gasped Donna.

"Of course he does. He always has, ever since you married Barry. But you won't run the risk of meeting him again, darling. He's off to-night on some of his horrid explorations, so don't worry over it."

Donna was not worrying exactly. She only felt that she would die if Peter Penhallow did go away--like that--without a word or another glance. It was not to be borne. She would dare uncharted seas with him--she would face African cooking-pots--she would--oh, what mad things was she thinking? And *what* was Aunt Becky saying.

"Every one over forty who would be willing to live his or her life over again exactly as it has been lived, put up your hand."

Tempest Dark was the only one who put up his hand.

"Brave man! Or fortunate man--which?" inquired Aunt Becky satirically.

"Fortunate," said Tempest laconically. He *had* been fortunate. He had fifteen exquisite years with Winnifred Penhallow. He would face anything to have them again.

"Would *you* live your life over again, Donna?" whispered Virginia sentimentally.

"No--*no!!*" Donna felt that to live over again the years that Peter Penhallow had hated her would be unendurable. Virginia looked grieved and amazed. She had not expected such an answer. She felt that something had come between her and Donna--something that clouded the sweet, perfect understanding that had always existed between them. She had been wont to say that words were really unnecessary for them--they could read each other's thoughts. But Virginia could not read Donna's thoughts just now--which was perhaps quite as well. She wondered uneasily if the curse of Aunt Becky's opal was beginning to work already.

"Well, let's get down to business," Aunt Becky was saying.

"Thank the pigs," thought Drowned John fervently.

Aunt Becky looked over the room gloatingly. She had prolonged her sport as long as it was possible. She had got them just where she wanted them--all keyed up and furious--all except a few who were beyond the power of her venom and whom for that reason she did not despise. But look at the rest of them--squatting there on their ham-bones, pop-eyed, coveting the jug, ready to tear in pieces the one who got it. In a few minutes the lucky one would be known, they thought. Ah, would he? Aunt Becky chuckled. She still had a bomb to throw.

XI

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"You're all dying to know who is to get the jug," she said, "but you're not going to know yet awhile. I did intend to tell you to-day who I meant to have it, but I've thought of a better plan. I've decided to leave the jug in keeping of a trustee until a year from the last day of next October. *Then*, and not till then, you'll find out who's to get it."

There was a stunned silence--broken by a laugh from Stanton Grundy.

"Sold!" he said laconically.

"Who's the trustee?" said William Y. hoarsely. He knew who *should* be trustee.

"Dandy Dark. I've selected him because he is the only man I ever knew who could keep a secret."

Every one looked at Robert Dark, who squirmed uncomfortably, thus finding himself the centre of observation. Everybody disapproved. Dandy Dark was a nobody--his nickname told you that. It was a hangover from the days when he *had* been a dandy--something nobody would ever dream of calling the fat, shabby, old fellow now, with his double chin, his unkempt hair and his flabby, pendulous cheeks. Only his little, deep-set, beady black eyes seemed to justify Aunt Becky's opinion of his ability to keep a secret.

"Dandy is to be the sole executor of my will and the custodian of the jug until a year from the last day of next October," repeated Aunt Becky. "That's all the rest of you are to know about it. I'm not going to tell you how it will be decided then. It is possible that I may leave Dandy a sealed letter with the name of the legatee in it. In that case Dandy may know the name or he may not know it. Or it is equally possible that I may leave instructions in that same sealed letter that the ownership is to be settled by lot. And again, I may empower Dandy to choose for himself who is to have the jug, always bearing in his mind my opinions and prejudices regarding

certain people and certain things. So in case I have chosen the last alternative, it behooves you all to watch your step from now on. The jug may not be given to any one older than a certain age or to any unmarried person who, in my judgment, should be married, or to any person who has been married too much. It may not be given to any one who has habits I don't like. It may not be given to any one who quarrels or wastes his time fiddling. It may not be given to any one addicted to swearing or drinking. It may not be given to any untruthful person or any dishonest person or any extravagant person. I've always hated to see any one wasting money, even if it isn't mine. It may not be given to any one who has *no* bad habits and never did anything disgraceful"--with a glance in the direction of the impeccable William Y. "It may not be given to any one who begins things and never finishes them, or any one who writes bad poetry. On the other hand, these things may not influence in the slightest my decision or Dandy's decision. And of course if the matter is to be decided by lot, it doesn't matter what you do or don't do. And finally it may go to somebody who doesn't live on the island at all. Now, you know as much about it as you're going to know."

Aunt Becky sank back on her pillows and enjoyed their expressions. Nobody dared say anything, but how they thought! And looking at each other as if to say,

"Well, *you* won't have much chance. You heard what she said."

All the old bachelors and old maids reflected that they were practically out of it. Titus Dark and Drowned John were marked men because they swore. Chris Penhallow, a queer widower who lived by himself and played the violin when he should have been carpentering, wondered if he could live nearly a year and a half without touching it. Tom Dark, who had stolen a pot of jam from his aunt's pantry when he was a boy, wondered if Aunt Becky meant him when she spoke of dishonest people. Gosh, how hard it was to live some things down. Abel Dark, who had put a staging up to paint his house four years ago but had painted only a small patch and left the staging there, reflected that he really must get down to that job right away. Sim Dark wondered uneasily if Aunt Becky had or had not looked at

him when she spoke of untruthful persons. She always seemed able to instil such venom into what she said. As for Penny Dark, the idea struck him then and there that it was time he got married.

Homer Penhallow and Palmer Dark wondered if they hadn't better forswear their ancient grudge. They had always been bad friends, ever since the day in school when a band of boys, headed and incited by Homer Penhallow, had taken the pants off little Palmer Dark and made him walk a mile home in his shirt-tail. Still, though this rankled for years, they had not been open enemies till the affair of the kittens. Homer Penhallow's cat went down to Palmer Dark's barn and had three kittens which were not discovered until they were old enough to run around. Palmer Dark, who was out of cats just then, claimed them as his. Born in his barn and nourished on his premises. Homer wanted the kittens but Palmer, secure in possession, snapped contemptuous fingers at him. Then Homer's cat did an ungrateful thing. She went home and took the kittens with her. Homer was openly triumphant. What a joke on Palmer! Palmer bided his time in an ominous calm. One Sunday when Homer and his family were all in church, Palmer sneaked up to Homer's barn, caught the kittens and carried them home in a bag. Homer's cat came down the next day and succeeded in retrieving one. The other two Palmer kept shut securely up until she had forgotten them. So Palmer thought he had come off best. He had the two handsome striped toms while Homer had only an ugly little spotted tabby, afflicted with a cough. Palmer told the story around the clan, and after that he and Homer were at open feud. This had lasted for years, although all the cats concerned had long since gone where good cats go.

"Now you've found out all you're going to find out, so you can go," said Aunt Becky. "Be sure to think nice thoughts. I leave you all my forgiveness. I've had an amusing afternoon. Heaven will be kind of tame after this, there's no manner of doubt. Speaking of heaven, would any of you like me to do any errands there for you?"

What a question! Nobody answered, although Drowned John would have liked to send word to Toynbee Dark that he had never repaid him the three dollars he had borrowed of him before his death. But as Aunt Becky

had never spoken to Toynbee on earth, it was not likely she would do it in heaven, so it would be a waste of breath to ask her. Anyway, it was too late. Aunt Becky was saying,

"Ambrosine, shut the doors."

Ambrosine closed the sliding doors, shutting the table with the jug in with Aunt Becky. Tongues were loosed, though they still talked in undertones. They said all, or most, of the things they had been thinking. There was great dissatisfaction. The Darks felt that they had been slighted; the Penhallows thought the Darks had got everything. The idea of giving old Ambrosine Winkworth the diamond ring!

XII

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Drowned John rose and stalked out. There was one thing he could do, and he did it thoroughly. He banged the door.

"Let's leave the females to fight it out," he said. But the men, as soon as they got outside, had plenty to say.

"Would you believe it?" demanded William Y., looking around him as if appealing to the world.

"Nobody got much change out of Aunt Becky, did they?" chuckled Murray Dark.

Dandy Dark was puffing himself out. He had never in all his life been of any importance, save what little accrued from the fact that he was the only man in the countryside who kept a bulldog. And now he had, in a wink, become the most important person in the clan.

"All the weemen will be wishing I was single," he chuckled. But his face was inscrutable--purposely so. No fear of his giving away the secret.

"Too mean to give anything away, even a secret," muttered Artemas Dark.

"The heathen are raging already," said Stanton Grundy to Uncle Pippin. "If that jug doesn't set everybody by the ears in a month's time, may I fight with Irishmen to the end of my life. Keep your eyes buttoned back for sights, Pippin."

"Oh, take in the slack of your jaw," said Uncle Pippin snappishly.

"Well, a nice lot of family skeletons have had a good airing," said Palmer Dark.

"I haven't had as much fun since the dog-fight in church," said Artemas Dark.

"Aunt Becky never liked any of us, you know," said Hugh. "She's bound to get all the rises she can out of us."

"She isn't like any other woman," growled Drowned John.

"Nobody is," said Grundy.

"You don't know much about women, John," said Sim Dark.

No man can endure being told he knows nothing about women--especially if he has cofined two wives. Drowned John went into an icy rage.

"Well, I know something about *you*, Sim Dark, and if you don't stop circulating lies about me as you've been doing for years, you'll have to reckon with me."

"But surely you don't want me to tell the *truth* about you," said Sim in bland amazement.

Drowned John did not reply in words--could not--since he dared not swear so near Aunt Becky. He simply spat.

"It's an outrageous way to leave the jug," growled William Y.

"You should be thankful she didn't make it a condition that everybody should turn a somersault in the church aisle," said Artemas. "She would if she'd thought of it."

"*You* would have liked that, I don't doubt," retorted William Y.

"Grinning like a chessy cat over the very thought of it."

Oswald Dark turned around and surveyed the irritated William Y.

"Look at the moon," he said softly, waving his hand at a pale, silver bubble floating over the seaward valley. "Look at the moon," he repeated insistently, laying a long thin hand on the arm of William Y.

"Heavens, I've seen moons before--hundreds of them!" snorted William Y. peevishly.

"But can one see a thing of perfect beauty--like the moon--too often?" inquired Oswald, fixing his large agate eyes questioningly on William Y., who jerked his arm away and turned his back both on Oswald and his moon.

"That jug shouldn't be in a house where there is no responsible woman," said Denzil Penhallow sourly. Everybody knew that Mrs Dandy was as mad as a November partridge by spells.

"If any one has anything to say against my wife he'd better not let me hear him saying it," retorted Dandy ominously. "I'll smash his face for

him."

"Any time and any place," said Denzil obligingly.

"Come, come, let us preserve decorum," implored Uncle Pippin nervously.

"Pippin, go home and soak your head in turpentine for three days," boomed Drowned John.

Uncle Pippin subsided. This, he reflected, was what came of Aunt Becky's not giving them anything to eat.

"Devil take the jug," he muttered.

"I doubt if the devil will be so obliging," said the irrepressible Grundy.

The women were coming out now and the men went off to get car or horse, according to purse or age. Tempest Dark, who was walking, sauntered out of the gate, reflecting that he wanted to see this comedy played out. He would live long enough to see who got the jug.

Titus Dark on the way home was importuned by a tearful wife to give up swearing.

"Damn it, I can't," groaned Titus. "And I ain't the only one in the tribe that swears. Take Drowned John."

"Drowned John knows when and when not to swear and you don't," sobbed Mrs Titus. "It's only for a year and a quarter, Titus. You *must*. Dandy'll never give us the jug if you don't."

"I don't believe Dandy'll have a thing to say about it. Aunt Becky wouldn't let any one else decide that," said Titus. "I'd just go for months in misery and not get a da---- not get a blessed thing out of it. Besides, Mary, how is any one going to live with me if I can't swear? When I swear for ten minutes on end a child could eat out of my hand. Isn't that better than bottling it up and thinking murder? Take this horse now. I've just gotter swear at him or he'd never travel. If I talked anything else to him he wouldn't understand what I was saying."

However, Titus had to promise to try. It would, he reflected, be damned hard. These women were so damned unreasonable. But he'd have a go at it, damned if he wouldn't. The race for the jug was on and the devil take the hindmost.

Gay slipped away alone. She knew a certain little ferny corner down the side road where she meant to stop and read Noel's letter. She looked so happy that the Moon Man shook his head at her.

"Take care," he whispered warningly. "It's dangerous to be too happy--those that sit in the high places don't like it. Look how they hide my Lady from me so much of the time."

But Gay only laughed at him and ran on down the side path and out by the side gate under the apple blossoms. Gay loved apple blossoms. It always hurt her that they lasted such a little while--such milky, wonderful things with hearts of love's own hue. To be sure, the roses came afterwards. But if one could only have the apple blossoms and the roses, too. Gay felt greedy of beauty. She wanted every kind all at once, now when life itself seemed just on the point of breaking into some marvellous blossom and all the coming days were in a hurry to be born. Youth is like that. It wants everything at once, not realizing that something must be saved for autumn days. Save? Nonsense! Pour it all out now, a libation to the approaching god. Gay did not think this--she only felt it, hurrying down the road, as sweet and virginal as the apple blossoms.

"A nice little cuddler that, if you ask me," chuckled Stanton Grundy admiringly, giving Uncle Pippin a dig in the ribs.

"I'm not asking you," said Uncle Pippin irritably. *He* had a sense of the fitness of things. Poke fun at old maids and fat married women if you like, but leave young things like Gay alone. Grundy's vulgar chuckle seemed to debase everything. Hadn't that man *any* reverence for anything? And why didn't he read a few halitosis advertisements? Heaven knew the magazines were full of them.

Gay read her letter in her ferny corner and kissed it and put it back in her bosom. There was only one terrible thing in it. Noel said he could not come out till Saturday. They were going to be extra busy in the bank. Had she to live three whole days without seeing him? Could she? A little cluster of silver daisies growing by a lichened old stone nodded at her. She picked one of them--witch daisies that knew whether your sweetheart loved you or not. Too-wise daisies. Gay pulled away the tiny ivory petals

one by one--he loves me--he loves me not--he loves me. Gay took out the letter again and kissed it and put the torn daisy petals into it. She was young and pretty and very much in love. And he loved her. The daisies said so. What a world! The poor old Moon Man! As if one could be too happy! As if God didn't like to see you happy! Why, people were made for happiness. And wasn't it the most miraculous thing that out of all the world she and Noel should have met and loved! When there were so many other girls he might have fancied. She seemed to be at the very heart of some exquisite magic that had changed everything in life for her.

XIII

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Donna came out beside Virginia. She had begun to collect her wits, but she did not quite know yet exactly what had taken place. She knew Peter was sitting on the railing, and she meant to sweep past him haughtily in all her dark dignity of widowhood, with lids cast down. But as she passed him she had to look up. They had another momentary unforgettable exchange of eyes. Virginia saw it this time and was vaguely disturbed by it. It did not look like a glance of hatred. She clutched Donna's arm as they went down the steps.

"Donna, I believe that pig of a Peter is falling in love with you."

"Oh--do you think so--*do* you really think so?" said Donna. Virginia could not understand her tone at all. But it *must* be a horrified one.

"I'm afraid so. Wouldn't it be terrible for you? What a blessing he's leaving for South America to-night. Just *think* what it would be like to have him trying to make love to you."

Donna *did* think of it. A strange shiver of terror and delight went over her from head to foot. She felt thankful that Drowned John bellowed to her that instant to hurry up. She fled to his car, leaving a puzzled and somewhat alarmed Virginia on the steps. *What* had come over Donna?

Mrs Foster Dark went home and ate her supper under Happy's fiddle hanging on the wall. Murray Dark went home and thought about Thora. Artemas Dark reflected dismally that it wouldn't do for him to get drunk for over a year. Crosby Penhallow and Erasmus spent the evening with their flutes--on the whole happily, although Crosby had to put up with some sly digs from Erasmus about old Becky's being in love with him. Peter Penhallow went home and unpacked his trunk. He had searched the world over for the meaning of life's great secret and now he had found it in one look from Donna Dark's eyes. Was he a fool? Then welcome folly.

Big and Little Sam went home across windy sea-fields, and on the way home Little Sam bought a ticket from Little Mosey Gautier for the raffle Father Sullivan was getting up down at Chapel Point to raise funds for the Old Sailors' Home. Big Sam wouldn't buy a ticket. *He* wasn't going to have no truck with Catholics and their doings, and he thought Little Sam might have expended his quarter to far better advantage. They had the heathen to think of.

"No good's going to come of it," he remarked sourly.

Little Sam went home and, dismissing the old Dark jug from his mind, sat down to read his favourite volume, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, with the salt wind that even his battered and unromantic heart loved, blowing in at his window. Big Sam went down to the rocks and solaced himself by repeating the first canto of his epic to the gulf.

XIV

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Denzil Penhallow told Margaret she must walk home--he and the wife were going down to have tea with the William Y's. Margaret was secretly well pleased. It was only a mile and the month was June. Besides, it would give her a chance to stop and see Whispering Winds.

Whispering Winds was the small secret which made poor Margaret's life endurable. It wound in and out of her drab life like a ribbon of rainbows. It was the little house on the Bay Silver side road where Aunt Louisa Dark had lived. At her death, two years ago, it had become the property of her son Richard, who lived in Halifax. It was for sale but nobody had ever wanted to buy it--nobody, that is, except Margaret, who had no money to buy anything, and would have been hooted at if it were so much as suspected that she wanted to buy a house. Hadn't she a perfectly good, ungrudged home with her brother? What in the world would *she* want of a house?

Margaret did want it--terribly. She had always loved that little house of Aunt Louisa's. It was she who gave it the dear secret name of Whispering Winds, and dreamed all kinds of foolish, sweet dreams about it. As soon as she got to the Bay Silver side road, she turned down it and very soon was at the lane of her house--an old, old lane, grassy and deep-rutted, with bleached old grey "longer" fences hemming it in. There were clumps of birches all along it for a little way--then young spruces growing up thickly on either side--then just between them, at the end, the little house, once white, now as grey as the longers. There it was, basking in the late sunlight--smiling at her with its twinkling windows. Back of it was a steep hill where tossing young maples were whitening in the wind, and off to the right was a glimpse of purple valley. There was an old well in one corner, with an apple tree spilling blossoms over it. A little field off to the right was cool and inviting in the shadow of a spruce wood. The scent of its

clover drifted across to Whispering Winds. The air was like a thin golden wine and the quiet was a benediction.

Margaret caught her breath with the delight of it.

Whispering Winds was one of those houses you loved the minute you saw them, without being in the least able to tell why--perhaps because its roof-line was so lovely against the green hill. She loved it so. She walked about the old garden, that was beginning to have such a look of neglect. She longed to prune it and weed it and dress it up. That delightful big bed of striped grass was encroaching on the path, those forget-me-nots were simply running wild. They and the house were just crying out for some one to take care of them. The house and the garden belonged together some way--you couldn't have separated them. The house seemed to grow out of the garden. The shrubs and vines reached up around it to hold it and caress it. If she could just have this house--with a baby in it--she would ask nothing more. Not even Aunt Becky's jug. Margaret realized pathetically that she must give up writing poetry for awhile, or she might have no chance of the jug. And she still hankered after it. Since she could never have Whispering Winds she wanted the jug. Dandy Dark had always been friendly to her. If it should rest with him to give the jug, she stood a better chance than from Aunt Becky. Cruel old Aunt Becky who had jeered at her and her poor little poems and her old-maidenhood before all the clan. Margaret knew that perhaps she *was* silly and faded and childish and unimportant and undesired, but it hurt to have it rubbed in so. She never harmed any one. Why couldn't they leave her alone? Denzil and Mrs Denzil were always giving her digs, too, about "single blessedness," and her nieces and nephews openly laughed at her. But here, in this remote shadowy little garden, she forgot all about it. Things ceased to sting. If she could only stay here forever, where the robins called to one another at evening in the maple wood. Listen to them.

But it was soon time to go home. Mrs Denzil would expect her to get the supper for the family and help milk the cows. She bade good-bye regretfully to Whispering Winds and went on to the square bare house in a treeless yard where the Denzil Penhallows lived. She went up to her

hideous little room looking out on the hen-yard, which she had to share with Gladys Penhallow. Gladys was there with some of her friends, thinking at the tops of their voices as usual. It was always noisy. There were never any quiet moments. Margaret's head ached. She wished she had not gone to Aunt Becky's levee. It hadn't done any good. As for the old *Pilgrim's Progress*, it could lie on in The Pinery attic for all she cared.

How pretty Gay Penhallow had looked to-day! And so young. What was it like to be eighteen? Margaret had forgotten if she had ever really known. What had been the trouble between Hugh and Joscelyn? And how dared Thora Dark, who had a husband, be so attractive to other men? What would it be like to have a man look at you the way she had seen Murray looking at Thora--though of course he had no business to be looking at another man's wife like that. Poor Lawson! It was dreadful to see the hunger in Naomi's eyes. How tickled Ambrosine was over that ring! Margaret did not grudge her the ring. Perhaps Ambrosine felt about it the way *she* felt about Whispering Winds. Though of course poor old Ambrosine's hands *were* too thin and knotty to wear rings. Margaret looked with considerable satisfaction at her own slender, shapely fingers. Nobody could say she hadn't a pretty hand. Roger Dark was a nice fellow. Why didn't he get a nice girl for a wife? They said he was crazy about Gay Penhallow, who wouldn't look at him. There you were again. Love going to waste all around you and you starving for a little. The idea suddenly struck Margaret that God wasn't fair. She shuddered and dismissed it as a blasphemy. It sounded like something that dreadful Grundy man would say. Poor Cousin Robina! Peter Penhallow, they said, was off on another of his explorations. He always seemed to live life with such gusto. But Margaret did not envy him. She never wanted to go away from home. What she wanted was a place where she could put down roots and grow old quietly. Margaret thought she would not mind growing old if she could be left to do it in peace. It was hard to grow old gracefully when you were always being laughed at because you were not young. But there was only one career for women in her clan. Of course you could be a nurse or a

teacher or dressmaker, or something like that, to fill in the time before marriage, but the Darks and Penhallows did not take you seriously.

XV

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"Tell Joscelyn Dark I want to see her before she goes home, Ambrosine," ordered Aunt Becky.

Joscelyn had walked the short distance up from Bay Silver and intended to walk back. Palmer Dark had taken her mother and her Aunt Rachel home in his car. She felt that she had had about enough of Aunt Becky for one day, but she went back to the bedroom readily enough. After all, the poor old soul was not long for this world.

Aunt Becky was lying back on her pillows. She was gazing earnestly on a little old tintype hanging on the wall near her bed. The picture was not decorative. At least so Joscelyn thought. But then she did not see it with Aunt Becky's eyes. Joscelyn saw only a tubby pompous old man, with a fringe of whisker around his face, and a thin, scrawny little woman in a preposterous dress. Aunt Becky saw a big, hearty, high-coloured man whose abounding vitality brought a gust of life into every existence and a vivid-eyed girl whose wit and sly mirth had been the spice of every company she was in and whose love affairs were stimulating and piquant. Aunt Becky sighed as she turned to Joscelyn. The fire had gone out of her eyes, the sting out of her voice. She looked exactly what she was--a very old, very ill, very tired woman.

"Sit down, Joscelyn. You know, I've been lying here thinking how many people will be glad when I'm dead? And not one to be sorry. And it seems to me that I wish I'd lived a bit differently, Joscelyn. I've always taken my fun out of them--I haven't spared them--they're all afraid of me. I'm just an ogress to them. It was fun to watch them squirming. But now--I don't know. I've a devilish sort of feeling that I wish I'd been a kind, gentle, stingless creature like--well, like Annette Dark, for instance. Everybody was sorry when she died--though she never said a clever thing

in her life. But she was smart enough to die before she got too old. Women should, Joscelyn. I've sat up too late. Nobody will miss me."

Joscelyn looked levelly at Aunt Becky. She knew that what Aunt Becky said was true enough in a way. And she sensed the secret bitterness in the old woman's soul behind all her satire and bravado. She wanted to comfort her without telling a lie. Joscelyn could neither tell nor live a lie--which was what had made a clan existence hard for her.

"I think, Aunt Becky, that every one of us will miss you a great deal more than you suppose we will--a great deal more than we imagine ourselves. You're like--like mustard. Sometimes you bite--and a big dose of you *is* rather awful--"

"As to-day, for example," interjected Aunt Becky with a faint grin.

"But you *do* give a tang to things. They'd be flat without you. And you seem like--I don't know how to put it--the very essence of Dark and Penhallow. We won't be half so much a clan when you're gone. You've always made history for us somehow. If this had been an ordinary afternoon--if we'd come here and you'd been nice to us--"

"And fed you--"

"We'd have all gone away and forgotten the afternoon. There'd be nothing in it to remember. But this afternoon *will* be remembered--and talked about. When the girls are old women they'll tell their grandchildren about it--you'll live by it fifty years after you're in your grave, Aunt Becky."

"I *have* often thought it would be a frightfully dull world if everybody were perfectly good and sweet," conceded Aunt Becky. "I guess it's only because I'm tired that I'm wishing I'd been more like Annette. She was as sweet and good and unexciting as they make 'em. She never said a naughty word in her life. And I was far handsomer than she was, mind you. But Crosby loved *her*. Now, Joscelyn, here's a queer thing. You heard what I said to-day. There was a time I'd have given my soul if Crosby had loved me--I'd have given and done anything--except be like Annette. Not even for Crosby would I have been willing to be like Annette--even though now

I'm getting childish and wishing I had been. I'd rather sting people than bore them, after all. But--"

Aunt Becky paused and looked earnestly at Joscelyn. Joscelyn had held her own well. She was very good-looking. The evening light, falling through the window behind her, made a tremulous primrose nimbus around her shapely head. But her eyes--Aunt Becky wanted to solve the haunting mystery of Joscelyn's eyes.

"I didn't keep you here to talk about my own feelings. I'm going to die. And I'm not afraid of death. Isn't it strange? I was once so afraid of it. But before I die I want to ask you something. I've never asked you before--do me that justice. What went wrong between you and Hugh?"

Joscelyn started--flushed--paled--almost rose from her chair.

"No--sit down. I'm not going to try to make you tell if you don't want to. It isn't curiosity, Joscelyn. I'm done with that. I feel I'd just like to know the truth before I die. I remember your wedding. Hugh was the happiest-looking groom I ever saw. And you seemed very well pleased with yourself, too--when you came in first, at least. I remember thinking you were made for each other--the sort of people who should marry--and found a home--and have children. And I *would* like to know what wrecked it all."

Joscelyn sat silent a few minutes longer. Oddly enough, she was conscious of a strange desire to tell Aunt Becky everything. Aunt Becky would understand--she was sure Aunt Becky would understand. For ten years she had lived in an atmosphere of misunderstanding and disapproval and suspicion. She had not minded it, she thought--the inner flame which irradiated life had been her protection. But to-day she felt oddly that she *had*, after all, minded it more than she had supposed. There was a soreness in her spirit that seemed old, not new. She *would* tell Aunt Becky. No one else would ever know. It was a confidence to the grave itself. And it might help her--heal her. She bent forward and began to speak in a low, intense voice. Aunt Becky lay and listened movelessly until Joscelyn had finished.

"So that was it," she said, when the passionate voice had ceased.
"Something none of us ever thought of. I never thought of it. I thought

perhaps it was something quite small. So many of the tragedies of life come from little, silly, ridiculous things. Nobody ever knew why Roger Penhallow hanged himself forty years ago--nobody but me. He did it because he was eighteen years old and his father *spanked* him. Ah, the things I know of this clan! All the things I said to-day were things every one knows. But I didn't say a word about scores of things nobody dreams I know. But weren't you very cruel, Joscelyn?"

"What else could I have done?" said Joscelyn. "I *couldn't* have done anything else."

"Not with that Spanish blood in you, I suppose. At least we'll blame it on the Spanish blood. Everything that isn't right in your branch of the Penhallows is laid at the door of that Spanish blood. Peter Penhallow and his hurry to be born, for instance. It must be the Spanish blood that makes you all fall in love with such terrible suddenness. Most of Captain Martin's descendants have been lovers at sight or not at all. I thought you'd escaped *that* curse--Hugh took so long courting you. Have you ever felt sorry you did it, Joscelyn?"

"No--no--no," cried Joscelyn.

"Two 'no's' too many," said Aunt Becky.

"I want to tell you the exact truth," said Joscelyn slowly. "It is quite true--I've never been sorry I *did* do it. You can't be sorry you did a thing you *have* to do. But I have been sorry--not many times but all the time--that I *had* to do it. I didn't want to do it. I didn't want to hurt Hugh like that--and I *did* want to have Treewoofe. I want it yet--you don't know how much I want Treewoofe--and all the lovely life I had planned to have there. It was dreadful to have to give it up. But I couldn't do anything else, Aunt Becky--I *couldn't*."

"Well, God bless you, child. The less we say about it the better. You'll probably hate me tonight because you've told me this. You'll feel I tricked you into it by being old and pitiful."

"No, you didn't trick me. I wanted to tell you. I don't know why--but I wanted to. And I'm glad you don't blame me too much, Aunt Becky."

"I don't blame you at all. I might even believe you were right if I were young enough to believe it. God save us all, what a world it is! The things that happen to people--things without rhyme or reason! Frank has never married, has he? Do you think it happened to him, too?"

Joscelyn's face crimsoned.

"I don't know. He went away the next morning, you know. Sometimes I think it might have--because--when I looked at him--oh, Aunt Becky, you remember that absurd thing Virginia Penhallow said about the first time she met Ned Powell. The whole clan has laughed over it. 'The moment I looked into his eyes I knew he was my predestined mate.' Of course it was ridiculous. But, Aunt Becky, that was just the way I felt, too."

"Of course." Aunt Becky nodded understandingly. "We all *feel* those things. They're not ridiculous when we feel them. It's only when we put them into words that they're ridiculous. They're not meant to be put in words. Well, when *I* couldn't get the man I wanted, I just decided to want the man I could get. That was Craig Penhallow's way of looking at it, too. Ever hear the story of Craig Penhallow and the trees in Treewoofe lane, Joscelyn?"

"No."

"Well, you've noticed--haven't you--something odd about the spruce trees up and down that lane? There's a gap in them every once in so long."

Joscelyn nodded. Aunt Becky could not tell her much she didn't know about the appearance of the trees in Treewoofe lane.

"Thirty years ago old Cornelius Treverne owned Treewoofe. Craig was courting his daughter Clara. And one night Clara turned him down. Hard. Craig was furious. He flung himself out of the house and stormed down the lane. Poor old Cornelius had spent that whole day setting out a hedge of little spruce trees all along both sides of that long lane. A hard day's work, mind you. And what do you think Craig did by way of relieving his feelings? As he stalked along he would tear up a handful of old Cornelius' trees on the right hand--a few steps more--up would come a bunch on the left. He kept that up all the way down the lane. You can imagine what it looked like when he got to the end of it. And you can imagine what old

Cornelius felt when he saw it next morning. He never got time to replant the trees--Cornelius was a great hand to put things off. He was a good man--painfully good. It was a blessing he didn't have any sons, or they'd certainly have gone to the bad by way of keeping up the family average. But he was no hustler. So the trees that were left grew up as they were. As for Craig, by the time he had finished with the lane he felt a lot better. There were as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it--Maggie Penhallow was just as handsome as Clara Treverne. Or at least she managed her eyes and hands so well, she passed for handsome. You see, Craig was like me. He decided to be sensible. Perhaps your way is wiser, Joscelyn--and perhaps we're all fools together with the Moon Man's high-seated gods laughing at us. Joscelyn--and I don't know whether I should tell you this--but I think I should, for I don't think you know, and the things we don't know sometimes hurt us horribly, in spite of the old proverb. All Hugh's family are at him to go to the States and get a divorce. It's been done several times, you know. People brag that Prince Edward Island hasn't had but one divorce since Confederation. Stuff and nonsense! It's had a dozen."

"But--but--they're not really legal--here, are they?" stammered Joscelyn.

"Legal enough. They're winked at, anyhow. Mind, I don't say Hugh is going to do it. But they're at him--they're at him. Times have changed a bit these last ten years. No easy divorce for us--but in Hugh's case they'd condone it. Mrs Jim Trent is the moving spirit behind it, I understand. She lived so long in the States she got their viewpoint. And she and Pauline Dark are as friendly just now as two cats lapping from the same saucer. Pauline's as much in love with Hugh as she ever was, you know."

"It matters nothing to me," said Joscelyn stiffly, rising to go. She bade Aunt Becky good-bye rather shortly. Aunt Becky smiled cryptically after Joscelyn had gone out.

"I've made Joscelyn Dark tell one fib in her life, if she never tells another," she thought. "Poor little romantic, splendid fool. I don't know whether I feel envy or contempt. Yet I remember when I took myself

almost as seriously as that. Lord, what *does* get into girls? Old Cy Dark's son!"

XVI

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Joscelyn went home slowly through the glamour and perfume of the June evening. Slowly, because she was in no hurry to get home where her mother and her Aunt Rachel would be talking the afternoon over indignantly and expecting her to be as indignant as they were. Slowly, because some unwelcome shadow of imminent change seemed to go with her as she walked. Slowly, because she was living over again the story she had told Aunt Becky.

She had been very sure she loved Hugh when she had finally promised to marry him. She had been happy in their brief engagement. Everybody had been happy--everybody well enough pleased about it, except Hugh's mother, Mrs Conrad Dark, and his second cousin, Pauline Dark. Joscelyn did not care whether Pauline was pleased or not, but she was sorry Mrs Conrad wasn't. Mrs Conrad did not like her--never had liked her. Joscelyn had never been able to imagine why--until this very afternoon, when Aunt Becky had illuminated the mystery by her reference to Alec. Joscelyn had known Mrs Conrad detested her from their first meeting, when Mrs Conrad had told her that her petticoat was below her dress. Now, in the days of petticoats, there were three different ways you could tell a girl that her petticoat was below her dress. You could tell it as a kindly friend who felt it a duty to help get matters righted as soon as possible before any one else noticed it, but who felt a sympathy with her as the victim of an accident which might happen at any time to yourself. You could tell it as a disinterested onlooker who had no real concern with the affair but wanted to do as you would be done by. Or you could tell it with a certain suppressed venom and triumph, as if you rather delighted in catching her in such a scrape and wanted her to know you saw the fatal garment and had your own opinion of any girl who could be so careless.

The last way had been Mrs Conrad Dark's, and Joscelyn knew her for an enemy. But this did not disturb to any extent the happiness of her engagement. Joscelyn had a good deal of Peter Penhallow's power of detachment from the influence of any one else's opinion. As long as Hugh loved her it did not matter what Mrs Conrad thought; and Joscelyn knew how Hugh loved her.

Soon after their engagement Treewoofe Farm at Three Hills came into the market. Treewoofe had been so named from some old place in Cornwall whence the Trevernes had come. The house was built on a hill overlooking the valley of Bay Silver, and Hugh bought the farm because of its magnificent view. Most of the clan thought the idea of buying a farm because it was beautiful very amusing and suspected Joscelyn of putting him up to it. Luckily, they thought, the soil was good, though run down, and the house practically new. Hugh had not made such a bad purchase, if the winter winds didn't make him wish he'd picked a more sheltered home. As for the view, of course it was very fine. None of the Darks or Penhallows were so insensitive to beauty as not to admit that. There was no doubt old Cornelius had tacked another hundred on his price because of that view. But it was a lonely spot and rather out of the world, and most of them thought Hugh had made a mistake.

Hugh and Joscelyn had no qualms about it. They both loved Treewoofe. The splendour of many sunsets had flooded that hill and the shadows of great clouds rolled over it. One evening after he had bought it, he and Joscelyn walked up to see it, going to it, not by the road but by a little crooked, ferny path through the Treewoofe beech woods, full of the surprises no straight path can ever give. They had run all over the house and orchard like children and then stood together at their front door and looked down--down--down--over the hill itself--over the farmsteads and groves in the valley below--over her own home, looking like a doll's house at that distance--over the mirror-like beauty of Bay Silver--over the harbour bar--out--out--out--to the great gulf--a grey sea, this evening, with streaks of silver--Joscelyn had drawn a breath of rapture. To live every day looking at that! And to know that glorious wind every day--sweeping up

over the harbour, over the sheltered homesteads that hid from it--up--up--up--to their glorious free crest that welcomed it. And oh, what would dawn over those seaside meadows far below be like?

"We'll have three good neighbours up here," said Joscelyn. "The wind--and the rain--and the stars. They can come close to us here. All my life, Hugh, I've longed to live on a hill. I can't breathe in the valley."

Turning round she could see, past the other end of the hall that ran right through the house, the lovely old-fashioned garden behind--and behind it again the orchard in bloom. Their home, haunted by no ghosts of the past--only by wraiths of the future. Unborn eyes would look out of its windows--unborn voices sing in its rooms--unborn feet run lightly in the old orchard. Beautiful to-morrows--unknown lovely years were waiting there for them. Friends would come to them--hands of comrades would knock at their door--silken gowns would rustle through their chambers--there would be companionship and good smacking jests such as their clan loved. What a home they would make of Treewoofe! All the richness and ripeness of life would be theirs.

Joscelyn saw their faces reflected in the long mirror that was hanging over the fireplace in the corner. A mirror with an intriguing black cat a-top of it which had been brought out from Cornwall and sold with the house. Young, happy, merry faces against a background of blue sky and crystal air. Hugh put his arm about her neck and drew her cheek close to his.

"That's an old looking-glass, honey. It has reflected many a woman's face. But never, never one so beautiful as my queen's."

The wedding was in September. Milly, Joscelyn's harum-scarum younger sister, was bridesmaid. Frank Dark was best man. Joscelyn had never seen Frank Dark. He lived in Saskatchewan, where his father, Cyrus Dark, had gone when his family were small, and where Frank and Hugh had been cronies during the years Hugh had spent in the west. But he came east for the wedding, arriving there only on the afternoon of the day itself. Joscelyn saw him for the first time when her Uncle Jeff swept in with her and left her standing by the side of her waiting groom. Joscelyn raised her eyes to look at Hugh--and instead found herself looking past him straight

into Frank Dark's eyes as he gazed with open curiosity at this bride of Hugh's.

Frank Dark was "dark by name and dark by nature" as the clan said. He had black, satiny hair, a thin olive-hued face and dark liquid eyes. A very handsome fellow, Frank Dark. Beside him, Hugh looked rather overgrown and raw-boned and unfinished. And at that moment Joscelyn Penhallow knew that she had never loved Hugh Dark, save with the affection of a good comrade. She loved Frank Dark, whom she had never seen until that minute.

The ceremony was well begun before Joscelyn realized what had happened. She always believed that if she had realized it a moment sooner she could have stopped the marriage somehow--anyhow--it did not matter how, so long as it was only stopped. But Hugh was saying, "I will" when she came to her senses--and Frank's shadow was on the floor before her as she said, "I will" herself, without knowing exactly what she was saying. Another moment and she was Hugh Dark's wife--Hugh Dark's wife in the throes of a wild passionate love for another man. And Hugh at that moment was making a vow in his heart that no pain, no sorrow, no heartache should ever touch her life if he could prevent it.

Joscelyn never knew how she got through the evening. It always seemed a nightmare of remembrance. Hugh kissed her on her lips--tenderly--possessively. The husband's kiss against which Joscelyn found herself suddenly in wild rebellion. Milly gave her a tear-wet peck next, and then Frank Dark, easy, debonair Frank Dark, bent forward with a smile and good-wishes for Hugh's wife on his lips and kissed her lightly on the cheek. It was the first and last time he ever touched her; but to-day, ten years after, that kiss burned on Joscelyn's cheek as she thought of it.

There was an orgy of kissing after that. At Dark and Penhallow weddings everybody kissed the bride and everybody else who could or would be kissed. Joscelyn, bewildered and terrified, had yet one clear thought in her mind--no one--*no one* must kiss the cheek where Frank's kiss had fallen. She gave them her lips or her left cheek blindly, but she kept the right to him. On and on they came with their good wishes and

their tears or laughter--Joscelyn felt her mother's tears, she felt her bones almost crack in Drowned John's grip, she heard old Uncle Erasmus whisper one of the smutty little jokes he always got off at weddings, she saw Mrs Conrad's cold venomous face--no kiss from Mrs Conrad--she saw Pauline Dark's pale, quivering lips--Pauline's kiss was as cold as the grave--she heard jolly old Aunt Charlotte whispering, "Tell him he's wonderful at least once a week." It was all a dream--she must wake presently.

The ordeal of well-wishing over, the ordeal of supper came. Joscelyn was laughed at because she could not eat. Uncle Erasmus made another smutty jest and was punished by his wife's sharp elbow. After supper Hugh took his bride home. The rest of the young folks, Frank Dark among them, stayed at Bay Silver to dance the night away. Joscelyn went out with only a cloak over her bridal finery. Hugh had asked her to go home with him so.

The drive to Treewoofe had been very silent. Hugh sensed that somehow she did not want to talk. He was so happy he did not want to talk himself. Words might spoil it. At Treewoofe he lifted her from the buggy and led her by the hand--how cold the hand was. She was frightened, his little love--across the green before the house and over the threshold of his door. He turned to welcome her with the little verse of poetry he had composed for the occasion. Hugh had the knack of rhyme that flickered here and there in the clan, sometimes emerging in very unexpected brainpans. He had pictured himself doing this a hundred times--leading in a white-veiled, silk-clad bride--but not a bride with such white lips and such wide, horror-filled eyes. For the first time, Hugh realized that here was something most terribly wrong. This was not the pretty shrinking and confusion of the happy bride.

They stood in the entrance hall at Treewoofe and looked at each other. A fire was flickering in the fireplace--Hugh had lighted it with his own hands before he left and bade his hired boy to keep it alive--and the rosy flamelight bathed the hall and fell over his lovely golden bride--his no more.

"Joscelyn--my darling--what is wrong?"

She found her voice.

"I can't live with you, Hugh."

"Why not?"

She told him. She loved Frank Dark and loving him she could be wife to no other man. Now her eyes were no longer blue or green or grey, but a flame.

There was a terrible hour. In the end Hugh set open the door and looked at her, white anger falling over his face like a frost. One only word he said:

"Go."

Joscelyn had gone, wraithlike in her shimmer of satin and tulle, out into the cold September moonlight silvering over Treewoofe Hill. She had half walked, half run home to Bay Silver in a certain wild triumph. As she went past the graveyard, her own people buried there seemed to be reaching out after her to pluck her back. Not her father, though. He lay very quiet in his grave--quieter than he had ever lain in life. There had been Spanish blood in *him*. Mrs Clifford Penhallow could have told you that. Her clan thought--she thought herself--that she had had a hard life with Clifford's vagaries. Though when she became a widow she found there were a good many harder things he had fended from her.

Joscelyn cherished no delusion. She was Hugh's wife in law and she could marry no other man. The thought of divorce never entered her head. But she was free to be true to her love--this wonderful passion which had so suddenly filled her soul and given it wings, so that she seemed rather to fly than walk over the road. Its dark enchantment lifted her above fear and shame; nothing could touch her, not even what she knew was to be faced. And in this rapt mood she came back to her mother's door and the dismayed dancers scattered to their homes as if a ghost had walked in among them. Joscelyn, as she went upstairs with the frost of the autumn night wet on her limp wedding-veil, wondered if Frank saw her and what he would think. But Frank was not there. Ten minutes after Hugh had taken his bride away a telegram had come for Frank Dark. Cyrus Dark was dying in Saskatchewan. Frank left at once to pack his scarcely unpacked trunk

and catch the early boat-train, thereby perhaps escaping the horsewhipping a madman at Treewoofe was silently threatening to give him and which, it must be admitted, he did not in the least deserve.

Frank Dark returned to the west without ever knowing that his friend's bride had fallen in love with him. He hadn't the slightest wish that she should fall in love with him--though he thought her a dashed pretty girl. A bit of money, too. Hugh had always been a lucky beggar.

XVII

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Joscelyn paused at the gate of her home and looked at it with some distaste. The old Clifford Penhallow house was prim, old-fashioned and undecorated, but it was considered to be very quaint by the summer tourists who came to Bay Silver, and a post card had been made of it. The house was built on a little point running out into Bay Silver. On one side its roof sloped unbrokenly down to within a few feet of the ground. Its windows were high and narrow. A little green yard surrounded it, with nothing in it but green grass which Rachel Penhallow swept every day. To the right was a huddle of trees--a lombardy, a maple and three apple trees, girt by a tidy stone dyke. On the left a neat gate opened into a neat pasture--oh, everything was so neat and bare--where there were some windy willows and where Mrs Clifford kept her cow. Back of it was a straight blue line of harbour, a glimpse of pink sand-dunes and over them a hazy sunset.

For ten years this had been to Joscelyn merely a place to live her strange inner dream-life. She asked no more of it. But now she was suddenly conscious of this odd distaste for it. She had never cared very much for it. It lay too low--she wanted the wind and outlook of a hill. She did not want to go in. She could see her mother and Aunt Rachel at the living-room window. They seemed to be quarrelling as usual. Rather--bickering. They couldn't do anything as genuine and positive as quarrel. There was no Spanish blood in either of them. Joscelyn knew what was ahead of her if she went in--the whole afternoon would be threshed over and somehow they would make her feel that she was responsible for their not getting what they wanted. She could not endure that just now--so she walked around the pasture, as if she were going to the shore, and when she was out of their sight she slipped through the sweet-briar thicket, in at the

kitchen door, and upstairs to her own room. With a sigh of relief and weariness she sank into a chair by the open window.

She suddenly felt tired more than she had ever felt in her life before. Was this to be her existence forever? She had not thought about the future for years--there was *no* future to think of--nothing but the strange present where her secret love burned like an altar flame she must tend forever, a devoted priestess. But now she thought of the future. A future lived with two old women who were always bickering--an aunt who was bitter and miserly, a mother who was always complaining of "slaving" and not being appreciated. Milly, gay, irresponsible Milly, was long since married and gone. Her going had been a relief to Joscelyn because Milly thought her a fool, but now she missed Milly's laughter. How still and quiet everything was. But up at Treewoofe there would be wind. There was always a wind there. She could see every dell and slope of Treewoofe Farm from where she sat, lying in the light of a queer red smoky sunset. Dear Treewoofe which seemed in some curious way to belong to her still, when she watched the moon sinking over its snowy hill on winter nights or the autumn stars burning over its misty harvest fields. Over it a cloud was drifting--a cloud like a woman with long, blowing, wet hair. She thought of Pauline Dark--Pauline, who still loved Hugh. Could it be true that Hugh's family really wanted him to get a U.S. divorce? Would Pauline ever be mistress of Treewoofe? Pauline with her thin malicious smile. Demure as a cat, too. At the thought Joscelyn felt a wave of home-sickness engulf her. Treewoofe was *hers*--hers, though she could never enter into her heritage. Hugh would never--could never--take another woman there in her place. It would be a sacrilege. Joscelyn shivered again. She had a bitter realization that her springtime suddenly seemed far away. She was no longer young--and all she had had out of life was a certain cool indifferent kiss dropped ten years ago on a cheek that no lips had ever touched since. Yet for that kiss she had given her soul.

Aunt Rachel came in without the useless formality of a knock. She had been crying and the knobby tip of her long nose was very red. But she was not without her consolation. Mercy Penhallow hadn't got Aunt Becky's

bottle of Jordan water, thank heaven. *She*, Rachel Penhallow, was now the only woman in the clan who had one. Penny Dark didn't count. Men had no real understanding about such sacred things.

"What did you think of the afternoon, Joscelyn?"

"Think--the afternoon--oh, it was funny," said Joscelyn.

Aunt Rachel stared. She thought the afternoon had been dreadful and scandalous but it would never have occurred to her to call it funny.

"We have no real chance for the jug, of course. I told your mother that before we went. And less than ever *now*. Dandy Dark and Mrs Conrad are first cousins. If you had not been so crazy--Joscelyn--" Joscelyn winced. She always winced when Aunt Rachel gave her jabs about her behaviour. She hated Aunt Rachel. Always had hated her. It was always a comfort to reflect that if she chose she could humiliate Aunt Rachel to the dust. Aunt Rachel with her poor pitiful pride in the possession of that bottle of Jordan water, one of several which an itinerant missionary had once sold for the benefit of his cause. She and Theodore Dark had been the only ones in the clan to buy one. The bottle stood in the middle of the parlour mantelpiece. Aunt Rachel dusted it every day with reverent hands.

One day when Joscelyn had been a little girl, she had found herself alone in the parlour, and she had boldly climbed up on a chair and taken the sacred bottle in her hand. It was a pretty bottle with a faceted glass stopper, and Aunt Rachel had tied a bow of blue satin ribbon lovingly around its throat. Somehow Joscelyn had dropped it. Luckily it fell on the soft, velvety, padded roses of one of Mrs Clifford's famous hooked rugs. So it did not break. But the stopper came out and before the horrified Joscelyn could leap down and rescue it, every drop of the priceless Jordan water had been spilled. At first Joscelyn was cold with horror. Even at ten she did not think there was anything special or sacred about that water. She had understood too well her father's satirical speeches about it. But she knew what Aunt Rachel would be like. Then an impish idea entered her mind. Luckily she was alone in the house. She went out and deliberately filled up the bottle from the kitchen water-pail. It looked exactly the same. Aunt Rachel never knew the difference.

Joscelyn had never told a soul--less for her own sake than for Aunt Rachel's. That bottle of supposed Jordan water was all that gave any meaning to Aunt Rachel's life. It was the only thing she really loved--her god, in truth, though she would have been horrified if such a suggestion had ever been made to her.

As for Joscelyn, she could never have stood Aunt Rachel and her martyr airs at all had it not been for the knowledge of how securely she had her in her power.

"Where did you put that bottle of St. Jacob's oil when you housecleaned the pantry?" Aunt Rachel was asking. "I want to rub my joints. There's rain coming. I shouldn't have put off my flannels. A body should wear flannel next the skin till the end of June."

Joscelyn went silently and got the St. Jacob's oil.

XVIII

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Hugh Dark leaned over the gate at Treewoofe for a time before going in, looking at the house dead black on its hill against the dull red sky--the house where he had once thought Joscelyn Penhallow would be mistress. He thought it looked lonely--as if it expected nothing more from life. Yet it had nothing of the desolate peace of a house whose life has been lived. It had an unlived look about it; it had a defrauded defiant air; it had been robbed of its birthright.

Before his marriage, Hugh had liked to stand so and look at his house when he came home, dreaming a young man's dreams. He imagined coming home to Joscelyn; he would stand awhile before going in, looking up at all its windows whence warm golden lights would be gleaming over winter snows or summer gardens or lovely, pale, clear autumn dusks. He would think of the significance of each window--the dining-room, where his supper would be laid, the kitchen, where Joscelyn was waiting for him, perhaps a dimly-lighted window upstairs in a room where small creatures slept. "*She is the light of my house,*" he would think. Pretty? The word was too cheap and tawdry for Joscelyn. She was beautiful, with the beauty of a warm pearl or a star or a golden flower. And she was his. He would sit with her by rose-red fires on stormy winter nights and wild wet fall evenings, shut in with her for secret happy hours, while the winds howled about Treewoofe. He would walk with her in the twilit orchard on summer nights, and kiss her hair in that soft blue darkness of shadows.

For years he had not looked at his house when he came home. In a sense he hated it. But to-night he was restless and unhappy. Only after seeing Joscelyn did he realize to the full how empty his life was. Empty like his house. It was always difficult to believe that the incidents of his wedding-night had been real. We can never believe that terrible things really have happened. Years after they *have* happened we are still

incredulous. So it was with Hugh. It simply could not be so. Joscelyn *must* be in that house, waiting for him to come to her. If he stood here patiently by the gate he would see her at the door looking for him and see the garland gold of her hair shining like a crown in the light behind her.

Would he get the divorce his mother and sisters were always hinting at? No, he would not. He struck his clenched fist furiously on the gate-post. Frank would come home then and marry Joscelyn. He should never have her.

There was no light in the house. His old housekeeper must be away. Hugh went in sullenly, not by the front door, though it was nearest. He knew that it was locked. He had locked it behind Joscelyn on their wedding-night and it had never been opened since. He went in by the kitchen door and lit a lamp. He was restless. He went all over the house--the dusty ill-kept house. It was lonely and unsatisfied. The chairs wanted to be sat upon. The mirrors wanted to reflect charming faces. The rooms wanted children to go singing through them. The walls wanted to re-echo to laughter. There had been no laughter in this house since that wedding-night--no real laughter. A house without remembered laughter is a pitiful thing. He came finally to the square front hall where the ashes of the bridal fire were still in the grate. His housekeeper had her orders never to meddle with anything in the front hall. The dust lay thick over everything. The mirror was turned to the wall. He hated it because it had once reflected her face and would reflect it no more forever. The clock on the mantelpiece was not going. It had stopped that night and had never been wound again. So time had stopped for Hugh Dark when he had looked at Joscelyn and realized that she was no longer his.

On the mantelpiece, just before the clock, a wedding-ring and a small diamond ring were lying. They had been there ever since Joscelyn had stripped them from her fingers.

The moonlight was looking in through the glass of the front door like a white hopeless face. Hugh recalled an old saying he had heard or read somewhere--"God had made a fool of him."

Ah, verily God had made a fool of *him*.

He would go out and roam about in the night as he often did to drive away haunting thoughts. In the house he could think of nothing but Joscelyn. Outside he could think of his plans for making money out of his farm and the possibilities that were looming up for him in local politics. But first he must feed his cat. The poor beast was hungry, crouched on the kitchen doorstep looking at him accusingly. It was not the cat he and Joscelyn were reputed to have quarrelled over.

"At least," thought Hugh bitterly, "a cat always knows its own mind."

XIX

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So Aunt Becky's famous last "levee" was over with all its comedy and tragedy, its farce and humour, its jealousies and triumphs; and it may be concluded that very few people went home from it as happy as they went to it. The two Sams, perhaps, who were untroubled by love or ambition and had no suspicion of the dark clouds already lowering over their lives,-- Gay Penhallow--and maybe Peter, who was tearing the bowels out of his trunk. He had said to Nancy on the way home:

"Nancy--Nancy, I've fallen in love--I have--I have--and it's glorious. Why did I never fall in love before?"

Nancy caught her breath as Peter whirled around a corner on two wheels.

"What *do* you mean? And who is it?"

"Donna Dark."

"Donna Dark!" Nancy gasped again as Peter shaved old Spencer Howey's team by the merest fraction of an inch. "Why, Peter, I thought you always hated her."

"So I did. But, dearest of Nancys, have you never heard the proverb, 'Hate is only love that has missed its way'?"

Wheels within Wheels

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I

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Most of the clan who were at The Pinery went home thinking it was all nonsense to talk of Aunt Becky's dying. Anybody as full of vim and devilment as she was would last for years. Roger must be mistaken.

But Roger had, as usual, made no mistake. Less than a week after the famous levee, Aunt Becky died--very quietly and unostentatiously. And tidily. Aunt Becky insisted on dying tidily. She made Ambrosine put on a smooth and spotless spread, tuck all the edges neatly in, and fold back the fresh sheet in unwrinkled purity.

"I've lived clean and I'll die clean," said Aunt Becky, folding her hands on the sheet. "And I'm glad I'm not dying in my sleep. Roger told me I might. I want to have all my wits about me when I die."

She was done with life. As she looked back in this last hour she saw how few things had really mattered. Her hates now seemed trivial and likewise many of her loves. Things she had once thought great, seemed small and a few trifles loomed vastly. Grief and joy had alike ceased to worry her. But she was glad she had told Crosby Dark that she had loved him. Yes, that was a satisfaction. She closed her sunken old eyes and did not open them again.

Of course there was a clan funeral and everybody with one exception came, even Mrs Allan Dark, who was dying of some chronic trouble but had determined--so it was reported--to live until she knew who got the Dark jug. The exception was Tom Dark, who was in bed with a dislocated shoulder. The night before, as he was sitting on his bed, studying if there were any way to wheedle the secret out of Dandy Dark, he had absently put both feet into one pyjama leg. Then when he stood up he fell on the floor in what his terrified wife at first thought was a fit. Very few of the clan sympathized with him as to his resulting shoulder. They thought it served

him right for wearing new-fangled duds. If he had had a proper nightshirt on it couldn't have happened.

Thekla Penhallow, who always looked as if her nose were cold, appeared at the funeral in heavy mourning. Some of the other women wondered uneasily if they shouldn't have, too. To be sure, Aunt Becky had hated mourning; she called it "a relic of barbarism." But who knew what Dandy thought about it?

Everything proceeded decently and in order--until just at the last. Aunt Becky, who had never cared for flowers in her life, had her casket heaped with them. But her clan at least respected her wish as regards "made-up" flowers. There was nothing but clusters and bouquets gathered in old homestead gardens and breathing only of the things Aunt Becky had known--and perhaps loved--all her life.

Aunt Becky was sternly handsome in what some considered far too expensive a coffin, with her lace shawl draped about her and her cold white lips forever closed on all the clan secrets she knew--so handsome that her clan, who had thought of her for years only a gaunt unlovely old woman, with straggling hair and wrinkled face, were surprised. Crosby Dark, who had felt ashamed at the levee when she told him she had loved him, now felt flattered. The love of that stately old queen was a compliment. For the rest, they looked at her with interest, respect, and more grief than any of them had expected to feel. With considerable awe as well. She looked as if she might open her eyes with that terrible inquisitorial look of hers and shoot some ghastly question at them. It would be like her.

Very few tears were shed. Mrs Clifford cried; but then she shed gallons at everybody's funeral. And Grace Penhallow cried, which was so unusual that her husband whispered testily, "What are *you* crying for? You always hated her."

"That's why I'm crying," said Grace drearily. She could not explain how futile that old hate seemed to her now. And its futility made her feel sad and temporarily bereft of all things.

The Rev. Mr Trackley conducted the service very fittingly and gracefully, most people considered. Though Uncle Pippin thought, "Oh, you are drawing it rather strong" at some of the phrases used in Mr Trackley's eulogy of the departed. Aunt Becky had hardly been such a saint as *that*. And Drowned John thought shamelessly, when Mr Trackley said the Lord had taken her, "He's welcome to her." William Y. was by no means so sure of it as the minister seemed to be. Aunt Becky, he reflected, had never been a member of the church. But then she was a Penhallow. A Penhallow couldn't go anywhere but to the right place, William Y. felt comfortingly.

The funeral procession from The Pinery to the graveyard at Rose River was, so Camilla proudly remarked to Ambrosine that night, the longest that had ever been known in the clan. It was a day of heavy clouds with outbursts of sunshine between them; an occasional grey mist of rain drifted over the spruce barrens down by the harbour, much to the comfort of the superstitious. Aunt Becky was buried in the Theodore Dark plot, beside her husband and children, under a drift of blooming spirea. The old graveyard was full of the pathos of forgotten graves. Men and women of the clan lay there--men and women who had been victorious, and men and women who had been defeated. Their follies and adventures, their gallantries and mistakes, their fortunes and misfortunes, were buried and forgotten with them. And now Aunt Becky had come to take her place among them. People did not hurry away after the grave service had been concluded. A clan funeral was by way of being a bit of a social function as well as a funeral. They broke up into little groups and talked--with rather easier minds than they had brought to the funeral--for Camilla had told them that that dreadful obituary had simply been a hoax on Aunt Becky's part. She had wanted to give them one good final scare.

"Thank God," said William Y., who really hadn't slept anything to speak of since he had heard that obituary read.

Everybody looked at Dandy Dark with a new outward respect. People came up and spoke to him who did not ordinarily notice him unless they fell over him. He felt his importance, as the possessor of a dying trust, but

did not presume on it too much. Folks felt sure he knew already who was going to get the jug. If Aunt Becky hadn't told him, no doubt he had steamed the letter open the night after the levee. Artemas Dark while the burial service was going on, was speculating as to whether there were any chance of getting Dandy "lit up" and worming the secret out of him that way. He sadly concluded there wasn't. Dandy had never tasted liquor in his life. Too mean--and unadventurous, thought Artemas. Titus Dark wondered if it would be any good to try the Sams' ouija-board. It was said to do wonderful things. But--would that be tampering with the powers of darkness? He knew Mr Trackley thought so.

Palmer Dark and Homer Penhallow nodded to each other shamefacedly. Young Jimmy Dark meowed very distinctly at this, but Palmer and Homer pretended not to have heard.

"Good thing they've made it up at last," said Uncle Pippin. "Never could see the sense of keeping up a mouldy old scrap like that."

"As for the sense of it, there's no sense in heaps of things we do," said Stanton Grundy. "Life would be tedious without a vendetta or two."

Everybody was on tiptoe. Abel Dark had already begun to finish painting his house and Miller Dark had actually commenced work on his clan history and had a genealogical table neatly made out. Chris Penhallow had never touched a violin. Drowned John and Titus Dark had not sworn for a week--at least nobody had heard them do it. Titus showed the strain but there was no shadow on Drowned John's brow as he strode across the graveyard, trampling on the graves, to look at Jennie's and Emmy's and read his own epitaph. Ambrosine Winkworth wore her diamond ring--most unfitting, it was thought. Mrs Toynbee Dark went faithfully to visit each husband's grave. People said Nan Penhallow might have left the lipstick off for a funeral.

"She's a flip piece," said Rachel Penhallow. "She tries to flirt with every man--why, she even tries to flirt with Pa," said Mrs William Y.

"Little Sam saw her digging clams down at the sea-run in her bathing-suit the other night," said Mercy Penhallow.

"Yes, and I warrant you she'd just as soon dig them with nothing at all on," said Mrs Clifford bitterly. "Such an example for our girls! What did Little Sam think of it?"

"Well, you know what men are," said Mercy. "He said of course it was hardly a decorous garb but she looked all right if she'd had a bit more meat on her legs."

"Dear me!" was all Mrs Clifford could say; but she said it adequately.

Mrs William Y. looked solemnly at Nan, who was wearing a dress Mrs William Y. thought was a sheer impertinence.

"I would like," she said bitterly, "to ask that girl how she would like to meet her God with those bare knees."

"Naked and ashamed," quoted Mrs Clifford vaguely.

"Oh, I think you exaggerate," said Stanton Grundy, passing by. "Naked and *not* ashamed."

"At any rate, she has *good* knees," said Mrs William Y. majestically. Stanton Grundy was not going to be allowed to sneer unrebuked at any Penhallow.

The little perverse lock stuck up on Hugh's head when he took off his hat for prayer, and Joscelyn had the same irrational impulse to go and smooth it down. Later on she saw Pauline talking to him and looking up at Treewoofe as she talked. Joscelyn resented the latter fact more than the former. Then Sim Penhallow came up and told her he had heard Hugh was going to sell Treewoofe--looking at her to see how she took it. Joscelyn did not let him see the sick dismay which invaded her soul. She took the news impassively, and Sim revenged himself nastily.

"You made a sad mess of things there, my girl."

Joscelyn turned her back on him without a word. Sim went off, vowing Hugh was well rid of *that*, and Joscelyn stood looking at Treewoofe, dim and austere and lovely on its distant hill. Oh, surely, surely Hugh would not sell it. But hadn't Pauline once said she wouldn't live on a bleak hill like that for anything?

Exaggerated reports of the value of the jug had already got around and mythical collectors had offered Aunt Becky fabulous sums for it. Another

rumour was that it was to be left to the most truthful person in the clan. A group of men standing near the grave discussed it.

"Have we got to live for a year without telling any lies?" said Uncle Pippin sadly, but with a glint of mischief in his young blue eyes.

"There won't be many of us left in that case," said Stanton Grundy.

"Us!" grunted Uncle Pippin resentfully to himself.

Penny Dark went as always to look at what he thought the handsomest stone in the graveyard, which had been put up by Stephen Dark to the memory of a wife he hated. The gravestone was considered one of the sights of Rose River. A high pedestal of white marble surmounted by the life-size figure of an angel with outstretched wings. It had cost Stephen Dark--who never gave his wife a cent he could help giving--a thousand dollars. It was much admired by those who had never seen it on a wet day. *Then* the water ran down the angel's nose and poured off in a stream.

Penny minced past Margaret Penhallow without even noticing her. She thought his bandy legs bandier than ever and she detested his curly eyebrows.

Adam Penhallow was gloomy and would not be sociable. His wife had had twins the previous day. Not that Adam had anything against the poor twins, but--"that finishes us for the jug. Aunt Becky hated twins," he thought sadly. Murray Dark contrived to visit a few graves with Thora and went home satisfied.

The Moon Man was there, wandering about the graveyard, talking to the dead people in a gruesome way.

"Do you remember Lisa, the first time I kissed you?" he said to the grave of a woman who had been dead for fifteen years. A group of young folks, overhearing him, giggled. To them the Moon Man had always been old and crazy. They could not conceive of him as young and sane, with eager eyes and seeking lips.

"What do you suppose they're thinking of down there?" he asked eerily of William Y., who had never supposed anything about it and shivered at the very idea. Oswald was entirely too friendly with dead people. They were standing by a gravestone on which was a notorious inscription. "She

died of a broken heart." The girl whose broken heart was hidden in that neglected corner had been neither Dark nor Penhallow--for which mercy the clan were thankful. But the Moon Man looked at the old lichened stone gently. "If the truth were told, that line could be engraved on many another stone here," he said. "Your mother now--your mother, William Y.--wouldn't it be true on *her* stone, too?"

William Y. made off without a reply, and his place was filled by Gay Penhallow, who couldn't help looking pretty in a smart little hat of black velvet pulled down over her happy eyes, with tiny winglike things sticking up at the sides, as if black butterflies had alighted there. Entirely too smart a hat for a funeral, the matrons reflected. But the old Moon Man smiled at her.

"Don't stay too late at the dance to-night," he whispered. "They kept up a dance too late there once--and Satan entered."

His tone made Gay shiver a little. And how did he know she was going to the dance? She had kept it very secret, knowing many of the clan would disapprove of her going to a dance the night after a clan funeral. This queer old Moon Man knew everything.

The Moon Man turned to Amasa Tyler, who was standing near, and said:

"Have you thought out the pattern of your coffin yet? You'll be needing it soon."

Amasa, who was young and in the pink of health, smiled contemptuously. But when Amasa was killed in a motor-car accident a month later, people recalled what the Moon Man had said and shook their heads. How did he know? Say what you like, there was something in this second-sight business.

Nobody, as usual, took any notice of little Brian Dark. He had asked his uncle to take him to the funeral. Duncan Dark had at first refused. But Mr Conway interceded for him.

"Aw, take the kid," said Mr Conway--"he doesn't have much fun."

So Duncan Dark, being in one of his rare good-humoured moods, had taken him.

Brian knew nothing and cared nothing about Aunt Becky. But he wanted a chance to put a little bouquet of wild flowers on his mother's grave--he always did that when he could, because she had no headstone and nobody ever went near her grave. If she had had a stone the line about the broken heart might very well have been inscribed on it also, though Brian knew nothing about that. He only knew he had no father and that he was a disgrace and nobody loved him. Nobody spoke to him at the funeral--though this was not out of unkindness but simply because they did not think of him. If they had thought of it they would have spoken, for they had all forgotten poor Laura Dark's shame and in any case were not, with all their faults and prejudices, cruel enough to visit it on her child. Besides, Duncan Dark himself was very off colour, and the clan had little to do with him or his household. But Brian believed it was because he was a disgrace. He would have liked to join the group of boys, but he saw in it big Marshall Tracy, who had once taken his scanty lunch from him in school and trampled on it. So he drew back. Anyway, the boys wouldn't welcome him, he knew. He was a shy, delicate, dreamy little creature and the other boys at school tormented him for this. So he had no playmates and was almost always lonely. Sometimes he wished wistfully that he had just one chum. He felt tears coming into his eyes when he saw a sweet-looking woman come up to little Ted Penhallow and kiss him. Ted didn't like it, but Brian, who had never been kissed in his life that he could remember, envied him. He wished there was some one who cared enough to kiss him. There seemed to be so much love in the world and none of it for him.

"Everybody has some friends but me," he thought, his heart swelling under his shabby coat. On his way back from putting his little bouquet on his mother's grave, he passed Margaret Penhallow. Margaret would have spoken to him but Brian slipped by her before she could. He liked her looks--her eyes were kind and beautiful--but he was too shy and timid to linger. Margaret, who had once known and liked poor Laura Dark, thought it a pity her child was so sulky and unattractive. Sickly-looking, too. But likely Alethea Duncan starved him.

II

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Peter Penhallow was at the first clan funeral he had ever attended and had already been held up by indignant Mrs Lawyer Dark of Summerside, who wanted to know why he hadn't come to her dinner Tuesday night.

"Your dinner--your dinner?" repeated Peter vaguely. "Why, I wasn't hungry." He had forgotten all about her confounded dinner. He had spent Tuesday evening wondering how he could get possession of Donna Dark. If he had been quite sure of her he would have simply gone to Drowned John and demanded her. But he must be quite sure before he could do that. So now he came boldly up to her at the funeral. She and Virginia were together of course. They had been together the evening before, too, because it had rained. Virginia and Donna had always made it a part of their ritual to spend every rainy evening together. They sat in what Virginia was pleased to call her "den," perfumed by burning incense--which Virginia defined as a "subtle suggestion of exotic romance." When Donna tried it once at home Drowned John fired the burner out of the window and told her never to let him smell that damned stink in his house again.

Donna was still trying to be faithful to Barry's memory. Aided by Virginia's sentimentalities she succeeded for an hour in forgetting Peter and remembering Barry. It was like a wind blowing over an almost dead fire and for a brief space fanning one lingering ember into a fitful flame. After she went home she had got out Barry's letters and re-read them for the thousandth time. But they were suddenly lifeless--a casket rifled of its jewels--a vase with the perfume gone--a lamp with its flame blown out. The pulsing, vivid personality that was Peter Penhallow had banished the pale phantom that Barry had become.

Virginia was very suspicious. How dared Peter speak to Donna? He was actually holding out his hand.

And Donna was taking it.

"I thought you were on your way to South America," said Donna.

"I've postponed my trip there," said Peter, staring at her. "I think I'll take it as a honeymoon."

"Oh," said Donna, looking at him, too. Eyes can say a great deal in a second--especially when they are like twin deep pools with a star in them, as Peter was thinking Donna's were. And what a delicious mouth she had. He knew now that what he had been seeking for all his life was just the chance to kiss that dimpled mouth. To be sure, her nose was slightly irregular--rather too much like Drowned John's. When all was said and done he had seen hundreds of prettier women. But there was a charm about this Donna--a mighty and potent charm. And her voice was such a sweet, throaty, summery drawl. What a voice for love-making! Peter trembled before this slip--Peter who had never known fear. If he had been quite sure of her he would have put his arm around her and walked her out of the graveyard. But he was not sure, and before he knew what had happened Virginia had whisked Donna off to see the Richard Dark family plot, where Barry should have been buried, even if he wasn't, and where there was a monument to his memory. In the next plot to it Ned Powell was buried. Virginia had already knelt there in silent prayer for ten minutes, her long black veil sweeping picturesquely about her.

"I woke up last night thinking I heard him calling my name," she murmured with tears in her voice. Virginia could infuse tears into her voice at will.

Donna was conscious of a new feeling of disgust and impatience. Was Virginia really any better than old Cousin Matilda Dark, who was always whining about her dear departed husband? When did grief cease to be beautiful and become ridiculous? Donna knew. When it became a secondhand grief--a mere ghost of grief. Yet she had loved Barry very truly. When the word came of his death, her agony had been so great that she had thought it must tear her in pieces. It had seemed the most natural thing in the world to resolve on a dedication of her whole life to his

memory. *What* was Virginia reciting as she gazed mournfully at Barry's monument?

Oh, that old verse of Mrs Browning's--

Unless you can think when the song is done
No other is soft in the rhythm,
Unless you can feel when left by one
That all other men go with him,
Unless you can dream that his faith is fast
In behaving or unbehaving,
Unless you can die when the dream is past--
Oh, never call it loving.

"That's so true of us, isn't it, Donna darling?" sobbed Virginia.

Donna felt still more impatient. Time was when she had thought that verse very beautiful and affecting. Well, it was so still. But not for her. Some mysterious hour of change had struck. All the melancholies and ecstasies of her young love belonged in a volume to which "finis" was at last written. With eyes suddenly made clear by what Donna, if she had ever heard the phrase, might have defined as "the expulsive power of a new affection," she saw Virginia and herself as they were. The dramatic lovers of grief--nothing else.

"After all, you know," she said coldly, "neither of us *did* die."

"No-o," admitted Virginia reluctantly. "But for weeks after Ned--died--I was tempted to drown myself. I never told you *that*."

Donna reflected that it must be the only thing Virginia had *not* told her. It suddenly seemed to her that for ten years she had heard of nothing but Virginia's feelings when Ned died. It was an old story and a very boring one. Donna wondered if she were becoming heartless. But really poor Virginia was tiresome. Donna felt thankful she had never talked much about her feelings in Barry's case. She had no silly outpourings to blush over now and she was fortunately ignorant of how many of Virginia's absurdities were imputed to her. She walked away abruptly. After all, Barry's grave was not there. It was foolish to stand, a figure of woe, beside

a plot where only his grandfather and grandmother were buried. She didn't believe for a moment that Virginia had ever had the faintest notion of drowning herself. She had been enjoying her weeds and her romantic position as a young war widow--Donna felt herself growing more hateful and cynical every moment--far too much for that. Aunt But came wandering along--an odd little figure in her rusty black and her queer old bonnet with its rampant spray of imitation osprey. Aunt But was seventy-five, but she was, as she claimed, spry as a cricket and still busy most of her time helping babies into the clan. She looked at the headstone of Barry's grandmother and sighed.

"She was his second wife--but she was a very nice woman," she said. "And hasn't it been a lovely funeral, dears? But--don't you think--a little bit *too* cheerful?"

"Aunt Becky wanted it cheerful," reminded Donna.

Aunt But shook her head. But what Aunt But would have said was never known. For at that moment the scandal took place and everybody swarmed to the gate, where there was a great commotion among a crowd of men. *Outside* the graveyard--oh, most providentially outside of it--two men were fighting each other--Percy Dark and David Dark, two hitherto peaceful friends. Going at each other, hatless and coatless, red-faced and furious. Nobody ever knew just what had started the fight except that it was something one of them had said about the jug. From verbal warfare they resorted to fists. Percy was heard to exclaim, "I'll take some of the conceit out of you!" and assaulted first. William Y. tried to stop them and for reward got a whack on the nose that made it bleed profusely and robbed him of his pomposity for a week. Mrs David Dark fainted and Mrs Percy was never to go out anywhere the rest of the summer, so ashamed was she. Though at the time she behaved very well. She neither fainted nor had hysterics. Undismayed by William Y.'s fate she got between the two mad creatures and dared David to strike *her*. Before David could accept or refuse the challenge, both he and Percy were caught from behind and frog-marched to their respective cars. The fight was finished but the scandal was not. Before night it was all over the country that two of the Darks had

fought at their aunt's funeral over her property and had to be dragged apart by their wives. It took years for them to live it down.

"Thank heaven, the minister was away before they started," sobbed Mrs Clifford.

Uncle Pippin pretended to be horrified, but in secret he thought the fight made the funeral more interesting and felt it a pity that Aunt Becky wasn't alive to see the prayerful David and the sanctimonious Percy pumelling each other like that. Tempest Dark laughed for the first time since his wife's death.

III

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Donna and Virginia walked home together. Virginia contrived to tell Donna some weird tales about Peter--especially those yarns of his having "gone native" in the East Indies and having several dozens of dark-skinned wives. Donna didn't believe a word of them, but as yet she did not dare to defend Peter. She was not at all sure about him--especially about his attitude to her. Did she really exist for him at all? Until she was certain of that she was not going to commit herself. Let Virginia rave.

"I wonder if it's going to rain," said Virginia at Drowned John's gate.

"No--no, I'm sure it isn't--it's going to be a lovely evening. The moon will clear away the clouds," said Donna positively. She really couldn't stand any more of Virginia just then. Besides, she was dreadfully hungry and Virginia, who cared nothing for eating, always contrived to make the hearty Donna feel like a pig.

"I wish there was no moon to-night. I hate moonlight--it always reminds me of things I want to forget," said Virginia mournfully and inconsistently. For Virginia certainly did not want to forget things. But Virginia never allowed consistency to bother her when she got hold of what she thought a touching phrase. She floated off in her weeds uneasily. Certainly something had come over Donna. But it couldn't be Peter. It was absurd to suppose it could be Peter.

It was Peter. Donna knew that at last as she entered Drowned John's stodgy and comfortable home. She was in love with Peter Penhallow. And he, if eyes were to be believed, was in love with her. And what was to be done about it? Drowned John would raise the roof? Both he and Thekla were opposed to her marrying again--marrying anybody. But imagination faltered before the scenes they would make if she tried to marry Peter Penhallow. Well, Peter hadn't asked her to marry him. Perhaps he never would. Who in the world was laughing upstairs? Oh, that fool of a Thekla!

Thekla was always trying some new health fad. Just now it was laughing for ten minutes every day. It got on Donna's nerves and she was raspy enough when she went to the supper-table. Drowned John was in a bad temper, too. He had come home from the funeral to find his favourite pig sick and couldn't swear about it. Thekla tried to placate him and ordinarily this would have appeased him. He liked to feel that his women-folk felt the need of placating him. But why wasn't Donna doing it? Donna was sitting in an absent silence as if his good or bad temper were nothing to her. Drowned John took his annoyance out in abusing everybody who had been at the funeral--especially Peter Penhallow. He expressed himself forcibly regarding Peter Penhallow.

"How would you like him for a son-in-law?" asked Donna.

Drowned John thought Donna was trying to be funny. He barked out a laugh.

"I'd sooner have the devil," he said, banging the table. "Thekla, is this knife *ever* sharpened? Two women to run this house and a man can't get a decent bread-knife!"

Donna escaped after supper. She could not spend the evening in the house. She was restless and unhappy and lonely. What had Peter meant about taking a honeymoon in South America. Who was to be the bride? Oh, she was tired of everything. The world was tired of everything. Even the very moon looked forlorn--a widow of the skies.

Donna walked along the winding drive by Rose River till she reached a little point running out into it. It was covered by an old orchard with an old ruined house in the middle of it. The Courting-House Uncle Pippin had named it, because spoony couples were in the habit of sitting on its steps; but there were none there when Donna reached it. She was just in time to meet Peter Penhallow, who had tied his boat to a bough and was coming up the old mossy path. They looked at each other, knowing it was Fate.

Peter had gone home from the funeral in a mood of black depression. What particular kind of an ass was he! Donna had deliberately turned her back on him and gone to weep at Barry's grave--or at least his gravestone.

Her heart was still buried there. Peter had laughed when he had first heard Donna had said that. But he laughed no longer. It was now a tragedy.

In his despair he rushed to young Jeff's boat and began rowing down the river. He had some mad romantic notion of rowing down far enough to see Donna's light. Peter was so love-sick that there was no crazy juvenile thing he would not do. The day grew dimmer and dimmer. At first the river was of pale gold; then it was dim silver--then like a waiting woman in the darkness. Along its soft velvet shores home-lights twinkled out. He, Peter, had no home. No home except where Donna was. Where she was would always be home for him. And then he saw her coming up the winding drive.

When they came to their senses they were sitting side by side on the steps of the Courting-House between two white blooming spirea bushes. Peter had said, "Good evening," when what he had wanted to say was, "Hail, goddess." Donna could never recall what she said.

About them was night--and faint starlight--and scented winds. A dog was taking the countryside into his confidence two farms away.

Donna knew now that Peter loved her. She would share the flame and wonder that was his life--she would know the lure in the thought of treading where no white woman's foot had ever trod--they would gaze together on virgin mountain tops climbing upward into sunset skies--they would stand on peaks in Darien--they would spend nights together in the jungle--hot, scented, spicy nights--or under desert stars--didn't she hear the tinkling of camel-bells?

"I think I've been drunk ever since I saw you at Aunt Becky's levee--a week ago--a year ago--a lifetime ago," said Peter. "Drunk with the devilish magic of you, girl. And to think I've been hating you all my life! *You!*"

Donna sighed with rapture. She must keep this moment forever. Adventure--mystery--love--the three most significant words in any language--were to be hers again. She was for the time being as perfectly, youngly, fearlessly happy as if she had never learned the bitter lesson that joy could die. She couldn't think of anything to say, but words did not seem necessary. She knew she was very beautiful--she had put on beauty

like a garment. And the night was beautiful--and the sunken old rotten steps were beautiful--and the dog was beautiful. As for Peter--he was just Peter.

"Isn't that a jolly wind?" said Peter, as it blew around them from the river. "I hate an evening when there's no wind. It seems so dead. I always feel ten times more alive when there's a wind blowing."

"So do I," said Donna.

Then they spent some rapturous silent moments reflecting how wonderful it was that they should both love wind.

The moon came out from behind a cloud. Silver lights and ebon shadows played all about the old orchard. Peter had been silent so long that Donna had to ask him what he was thinking of. Just for the sake of hearing his dear voice again.

"Watch that dark cloud leaving the moon," said Peter, who had no notion of making love in the common way. "It's as good as an eclipse."

"How silvery it will be on the moon side," said Donna dreamily. "It must be wonderful."

"When I get my aeroplane we'll fly up in it when there's a cloud like that and see it from the moon side," said Peter, who had never thought of getting an aeroplane before but knew now he must have one and sweep in it with Donna through skies of dawn. "And I'll get you the Southern Cross for a brooch. Or would you prefer the belt of Orion for a girdle?"

"Oh," said Donna. She stood up and held out her arms to the moon. Perhaps she knew she had very beautiful arms, shining like warm marble through the sleeves of her filmy black dress. "I wish I could fly up there now."

"With me?" Peter had risen, too, and snatched at the dark blossom of her loveliness. He kissed her again and again. Donna returned his kisses--shamelessly, Virginia would have said. But there was no thought of Virginia or Barry or old feuds. They were alone in their exquisite night of moonlight and shadow and glamour.

"With me?" asked Peter again.

"With you," answered Donna between kisses.

Peter laughed down into her eyes triumphantly.

"I'm the only man in the world you could ever love," he said arrogantly and truthfully. "How soon can we be married?"

"Tee-hee--how very romantic" tittered Mrs Toynbee Dark, who had been standing for ten minutes at the corner of the old house watching them with sinister little black eyes.

"Ho, ho, my pet weasel, so you're there," said Peter. "Rejoice with me, widow of Toynbee, Donna has promised to marry me."

"So her heart has had a resurrection," said Mrs Toynbee. "It's an interesting idea. But what will Drowned John say about it?"

IV

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Peter and Donna were not the only pair whose troth was plighted that night. The phrase was Gay's--she thought it sounded much more wonderful than just getting engaged. Nan, who was to go to the dance with Gay and Noel, went home with her from the funeral and on the way told Gay that her mother had decided to stay on the island until the matter of the jug was settled.

"She says she won't go back to St. John till it's known who is to get it. Poor mums! She'll certainly go loco if *she* doesn't. Dad is to be in China most of the year on business, so he won't miss us. We're taking the rooms at The Pinery Aunt Becky had. To think when life is so short I must be buried here for a year. It's poisonous."

Gay felt a little dashed. She didn't know why it chilled her to hear that Nan was going to stay around, but it did. She did not talk much and was rather relieved when they reached Maywood. Maywood had been one of the show-places of the clan when Howard Penhallow was alive, but it had gone to seed since--the shingles curled up a bit--the veranda roof was sagging--it needed paint badly. The grounds had run wild. But it had beauty of a sort yet, nestled under its steep hill of dark spruces with the near shore in its sapphire of sky and wave, and Gay loved it. It hurt and angered her when Nan called it a picturesque old ruin.

But she forgot all about Nan and her prickles as she dressed for the dance. It was delightful to make herself beautiful for Noel. She would wear her dress of primrose silk and her new, high-heeled fairy slippers. She always felt she was beautiful when she put on that dress. To slip such a lovely golden gown over her head--give her bobbed hair a shake like a daffodil tossing in the wind--and then look at the miracle.

All very fine till Nan slipped in and stood beside her--purposely perhaps. Nan in a wispy dress you could crumple in your hand--a shining,

daring gown of red with a design of silver grapes all over it--hair with a filet of silver-green leaves, starred with one red bud, around her sleek, ash-gold head. Gay felt momentarily quenched.

"I look *home-made* beside her, that's the miserable truth," she thought. "Pretty, oh, yes, but home-made."

And her eyebrows looked so black and heavy beside the narrow line over Nan's subtle eyes. But Gay plucked up heart--the faint rose of her cheeks under the dark stain of her lashes was not make-up and say what you might about smartness, that curl of Nan's in front of her ear looked exactly like a side-whisker. Gay forgot Nan again as she ran down to the gate in the back of the garden whence she could see the curve in the Charlottetown road around which Noel's car must come.

She saw Mercy Penhallow and her mother in the glass porch as she ran. And she knew that quite likely they were clapper-clawing Noel--Mercy, anyhow. When Gay had first begun to go about with Noel, her whole clan lifted their noses and keened. If people only wouldn't interfere so in one's life! The idea of them insinuating that Noel wasn't good enough for her--those inbred Darks and Penhallows! Don't dare marry outside of the Royal Family! Gay tossed her head in a fine scorn of them as she flitted through the garden on her slender and golden feet.

Mercy Penhallow had not yet begun on Noel. She and Mrs Howard had been discussing the funeral in all its details. Now Mercy's pale watery eyes were fixed on Nan, who was on the front veranda smoking a cigarette to the scandal of all Rose River folks who happened to go by.

"She must think her back beautiful--she shows so much of it," said Mercy. "But then it's old-fashioned to be modest."

Mrs Howard smiled tolerantly. Mrs Howard, her clan thought, was too tolerant. That was why matters had gone so far between Gay and Noel Gibson.

"She's going to the dance at the Charlottetown Country Club with Gay and Noel. I would have preferred Gay not to have gone, the night after the funeral--but the young people of to-day don't feel as we used to do about such things."

"The whole world is dancing mad," snapped Mercy. "The young fry of to-day have neither manners nor morals. As for Nan, she's out to catch a man, they say. Boys on the brain--running after them all the time, I'm told."

"The girls of our time let the boys do the running," smiled Mrs Howard. "It was more fun. I think--one could stop when one wanted to be caught."

Mercy, who had never been "caught," whether she wanted to be or not, sniffed.

"I suppose Gay is still crazy after Noel?" she said. "Why don't you put a stop to that, Lucilla?"

Mrs Howard looked distressed.

"How can I? Gay knows I don't like him. But the child is infatuated. Why, when I said something to her about his pedigree she said, 'Mother dear, Noel isn't a horse'."

"And Roger just mad about her!" moaned Mercy.

"A splendid fellow with gobs of money. He could give her *everything*--"

"Except happiness," said Mrs Howard sadly. But she said it only in thought and Mercy prattled on. "Noel hasn't a penny beyond his salary and I doubt if he'll ever have more. Besides, what are those Gibsons? Merely mushrooms. I wonder what her poor father would have thought of it."

Mrs Howard sighed. She was not as worldly as some of her clan. She did not want Gay to marry Roger, when she did not love him, simply because he had money. And it was not one of her counts against Noel that he had none. His Gibsonness mattered more. Mrs Howard knew her Gibsons as Gay could never know them. And she had, in spite of Gay's quip about the pedigree, an old-fashioned conviction about what was bred in the bone. The first time she had seen Noel she had thought, "A boy shouldn't know how to use his eyes like that. And he has the Gibson mouth."

But she couldn't bear to quarrel with Gay. Gay was all she had. Mercy didn't understand. It wasn't so simple "putting a stop" to things. Gay had a

will of her own under all her youth and her sweetness, and Mrs Howard couldn't bear to make her child unhappy.

"Maybe he's only flirting with her," was Mercy's response to the sigh. "The Gibsons are very fickle."

Mrs Howard didn't like that either. It was unthinkable that a Gibson should be "only flirting" with a Penhallow. She resented the insinuation that Gay might be tossed aside.

"I'm afraid he's only too much in earnest and I think--I'm pretty sure--they're almost engaged already."

"Almost engaged. Lucilla dear, talk sense. Either people are engaged or they are *not*. And if Gay were *my* daughter--"

Mrs Howard hid a smile. She couldn't help thinking that if Gay had been Mercy's daughter neither Noel nor any other boy might have bothered her much. Poor Mercy! She was so very plain. With that terrible dewlap! And a face in which the features all seemed afraid of each other. Mrs Howard felt for her the complacent pity of a woman who had once been very pretty herself and was still agreeable to look upon.

Mrs Howard was by all odds the most popular woman in the clan. Wherever she was she always seemed to be in the right place without making any fuss about it. She generally got the best of any argument because she never argued--she only smiled. She did not know anything about a great many things, but she knew a great deal about loving and cooking and a woman can go far on that. She was no paw-and-claw friend, giving a dig now and a pat then, as so many were; and there was something about her that made people want to tell her their secrets--their beautiful secrets. Aunt Becky had always flattered herself that she knew all the clan secrets before anybody else, but Mrs Howard knew many things before Aunt Becky did.

Even Stanton Grundy, who seldom spoke well of a woman because he had a reputation for sardonic humour to keep up, had been heard to say of Mrs Howard that for once God knew what He was about when He made a woman.

Some of the clan thought Mrs Howard dressed too gay for a widow of her age, but Mrs Howard only laughed at this.

"I always liked bright colours and I'll wear them till I die," she told them. "You can bury me in black if you want to, but as long as breath's in me I'll wear blue."

"Talking of Roger," said Mercy, "he's looking miserable of late. Thin as a lath. Is he worrying over Gay? Or overworking?"

"A little of both, I'm afraid. Mrs Gateway died last week. No one on earth could have saved her, but Roger takes it terribly hard when he loses a patient."

"He's got more feeling than most doctors," said Mercy. "Gay's a blind little goose if she passes him over for Noel, that's all I've got to say."

It wasn't all Mercy had to say, but Mrs Howard deftly changed the unwelcome subject by switching to Aunt Becky's jug. Had Mercy heard? Two of Mrs Adam Penhallow's boarders at Indian Spring, Gerald Elmslie and Grosset Thompson, had quarrelled with each other over the jug and left. It was hard on Mrs Adam, who found it hard enough to make both ends meet.

"But what on earth made Gerald and Grosset quarrel over the jug?" asked Mercy. "*They've* nothing to do with it."

"Oh, Gerald is keeping company with Vera Dark and Grosset is engaged to Sally Penhallow," was the sufficient explanation. But that would not fill Mrs Adam's lean purse.

"It's my opinion that jug will drive somebody crazy yet," said Mercy.

Gay was watching for Noel at the gate, under an old spruce tree that was like a grim, black sorrowful priest. Evenings out of mind she had watched for him so. She could distinctly hear on the calm evening air Drowned John's Olympian laughter echoing along the shore down at Rose River and she resented it. When she came here to dream of Noel, only the loveliest of muted sounds should be heard--the faintest whisper of trees--the half-heard, half-felt moan of the surf--the airiest sigh of wind. It was the dearest half-hour of the whole day--this faint, gold, dusky one just before it got truly dark. She wanted to keep it wholly sacred to Noel--she

was young and in love and it was spring, remember. So of course Drowned John had to be bellowing and Roger had to come stepping up behind her and stand beside her, looking down at her. Tall, grim, scarred Roger! At least Gay thought him grim, contrasting his thin face and mop of dark red hair with Noel's smoothness and sleekness. Yet she liked Roger very much and would have liked him more if her clan had not wanted her to marry him.

Roger looked at her--at the trim, shining, golden-brown head of her. Her fine black brows. Her fan-lashed, velvety eyes. That dimple just below the delightful red mouth of hers. That creamy throat above her golden dress. She was as shy and sweet and wilful as April, this little Gay. Who could help loving her? Her very look said, "Come and love me." What a soft, gentle little voice she had--one of the few women's voices he had ever heard with pleasure. He was very critical as regards women's voices, and very sensitive to them. Nothing hurt him quite so much as an unlovely voice--not even unloveliness of face.

She had something in her hand for him, if she would but open her hand and give it. He had ceased to hope she ever would. He knew the dream behind her lashes was not for him. He knew perfectly well that she was waiting there for another man, compared to whom he, Roger, was a mere shadow and puppet. Suddenly he realized that he had lived thirty-two years against Gay's eighteen.

Why on earth, he wondered, had he to love Gay when there were dozens of girls who would jump at him, as he knew perfectly well? But there it was. He did love her. And he wanted her to be happy. He was glad that in such a world any one could be as happy as Gay was. If that Gibson boy didn't *keep* her happy!

"This old gate is still here. I thought your mother was going to have it taken away."

"I wouldn't let her," said Gay. "This is *my* gate. I love it."

"I like any gate," said Roger whimsically. "A gate is a luring thing--a promise. There may be something wonderful beyond and you are not shut

out. A gate is a mystery--a symbol. What would we find, you and I, Gay, if we opened that gate and went through?"

"A little green sunset hollow of white violets," laughed Gay. "But we're not going through, Roger--there's a dew on the grass and I'd spoil my new slippers."

She looked at him as she laughed--only for a moment, but that was the moment Noel's car flashed around the curve and she missed it. When she went back to the house, leaving Roger at the unopened gate, she found Noel sitting beside Nan on the steps. They had never met before but already they seemed to have known each other all their lives. And Nan was looking up at Noel with the eyes that instantly melted men but were not quite so effective with women. A strange, icy, little ripple ran all over Gay.

"I've just been asking Noel if he waves his hair with the curling-tongs," said Nan in her lazy, impudent voice.

Gay forgot her shivers and all other unpleasant things as she drifted through the dances. Noel said delicious things to her and looked things still more delicious; and when half way through it she sat out a dance with Noel in a shadowy corner of the balcony her cup brimmed full. For Noel whispered a question and Gay, smiling, blushing, yet with a queer little catch in her throat, and eyes strangely near to tears, whispered her answer. They were no longer "almost" engaged.

For the rest of the evening Gay floated--or seemed to float--in a rosy mist of something too rare and exquisite even to be called by so common a name as happiness. They left Nan at The Pinery on their way back and drove on to Maywood alone. They lingered over saying good-bye. It was such a sweet pleasure because they would meet so soon again. They stood under the big, late-blooming apple tree at the turn of the walk, among the soft, trembling shadows of the moonlit leaves. All around and beyond was a delicate, unreal moonlit world. The night was full of mystery and wonder; there never had--there never could have been--such a night before. Gay wondered as she gave her lips, red as the Rose of Love itself, to Noel, how many lovers all over the world were standing thus entranced--how many vows were being whispered thus in the starlight. The old tree

suddenly waved its boughs over them as if in blessing. So many lovers had stood beneath it--it had screened so many kisses. Many of the lips that had kissed were ashes now. But the miracle of love renewed itself every springtime.

In her room Gay undressed by moonlight. She shredded the petals of the white June roses she had worn into the little blue rose-jar on her table. Her father had given her the jar when she was a child and had told her to drop a handful of rose leaves in it for every perfectly happy day she had. The jar was almost full now. There was only room really for one more handful. Gay smiled. She would put that handful in it on her wedding-day and then seal it up forever as a symbol of her girlhood.

Of course she didn't sleep. It would be a pity to waste a moment of such a night sleeping. It was nicer to lie awake thinking of Noel. Even planning a little bit about her wedding. It was to be in the fall. Her wedding-dress--satin as creamy as her own skin--"Your skin is like the petal of a white narcissus," Noel had told her--shimmering silk stockings--laces like sea-foam--one of those slender platinum wedding-rings--"the lovely Mrs Noel Gibson"--"one of the season's most charming brides"--a little house somewhere--perhaps one of those darling new bungalows--with yellow curtains like sunshine on its windows and yellow plates like circles of sunshine on its breakfast-table. With Noel opposite.

"Little love." She could hear him as he said it under the apple tree, looking down into the pools of darkness that were her eyes. How wonderful and unbelievable it was that out of a whole world of beautiful girls, his for the asking, he should have chosen *her*.

Just once she thought of the old Moon Man's warning--"Don't be too happy." That poor old crazy Moon Man. As if one could be too happy! As if God didn't like to see you happy! Why, people were made for happiness.

"I'll always love this night," thought Gay. "The eighth of June--it will always be the dearest date of the year. I'll always celebrate it in some dear secret little way of my own."

And they would always be together--always. On rough paths and smooth. Dawns and twilights would be more beautiful because they would

be together.

"If I were dead," thought Gay, "and Noel came and looked at me I'd live again."

Next day Nan rang Gay up on the telephone.

"I think I like your Noel," Nan said, drawlingly. "I think I'll take him from you."

Gay laughed triumphantly.

"You can't," she said.

V

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Gay was not the only one of the clan who kept vigil that night. Neither Donna nor Peter slept. Mrs David Dark and Mrs Palmer Dark lay awake in their shame beside snoring spouses, wondering dumbly why life should be so hard for decent women who had always tried to do what was right. Virginia was awake worrying. Mrs Toynbee Dark was awake nursing her venom. Pauline Dark was awake wondering if Hugh would really get that divorce. Thora Dark waited anxiously for a drunken, abusive husband to come home. The Sams slept, although both, did they but know it, had cause to be wakeful. Hugh Dark and Roger Penhallow slept soundly. Even William Y. slept, with a poultice on his nose. On the whole, the men seemed to have the best of it, unless Aunt Becky, sleeping so dreamlessly in her grave in the trim Rose River churchyard, evened things up for the women.

Joscelyn was not sleeping either. She went to bed and tossed restlessly for hours. Finally she rose softly, dressed, and slipped out of the house to the shore. The hollows among the dunes were filled with moonlight. The cool wind nestled in the grasses on the red "capes," bringing whiffs of the faint, cold, sweet perfumes of night. There was a wash of gleaming ripples all along the shore and a mist mirage over the harbour. Far out she heard the heart-breaking call of the sea that had called for thousands of years.

She felt old and cold and silly and empty. Suppose Hugh really loved Pauline and wanted to be free. Very well. Why not? Did not *she* love Frank Dark? Why could she not think philosophically, "Well, if Hugh gets a divorce *I* will be free, too, and perhaps Frank will come back"--no, she could not think that. Such a thought seemed to tarnish and cheapen the high flame of love she had nursed in her heart for years.

Dawn was breaking over the dunes and little shudders were running through the sand-hill grasses when she went back to the house. She had not

dreamed of meeting any one at that early hour, but who should come trotting across Al Griscom's silent white pasture of morning dew but Aunty But, bent two-double, with her head wrapped in a grey shawl, out of which her bright little eyes peered curiously at Joscelyn. She seemed at once incredibly old and elfinly young.

"You're up early, Mrs Dark."

Joscelyn hated to be called Mrs Dark, just as she hated to take a letter out of the post-office addressed to "Mrs Hugh Dark." Once when she had had to sign some legal document "Joscelyn Dark," she had thrown down the pen and risen with lips as white as snow. Aunty But was the only one of the clan who ever addressed her as "Mrs Dark." And there was no use in snubbing Aunty But.

"And you, too, Aunty."

"Eh, but I've never been in bed at all. I've been up at Forest Myers' all night. A little girl there--a fine baby but got the Myers mouth, I'm afraid."

"And Alice?"

"Alice is fine but awful sorry for herself. Yet she didn't have a bad time at all. No caterwauling to speak of. It's a pleasure to help a woman like that to a baby. I might have done the same for you in that house up there"--Aunty But waved her hand at distant Treewoofe, taking shape in the pale grey light that was creeping over the hill--"if you hadn't behaved as you did. *I* brought babies into that house many a time--I was there when Clara Treewoofe was born. Such a time! Old Cornelius--but he was young Cornelius then--was crazy wild. You'd have thought nobody'd ever had a baby before. Finally I had to decoy him to the cellar and lock him up, or that child would never have got born. Poor Mrs Cornelius couldn't rightly give her mind to it for the racket Cornelius was making. Clara was the last baby at Treewoofe. It's high time there was some more. But there may be. I'm hearing Hugh is going to get a Yankee divorce. If that's so, Pauline won't let him slip through her fingers a second time. But she'll never have the babies you'd have had, Joscelyn. She hasn't the figger for it."

VI

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Little Brian Dark had to walk home from the funeral because his Uncle Duncan took a notion to go on to town.

"Mind ye get the stones picked off the gore-field before milking," he told him.

Brian never had a day to play--never even half a day. He was very tired, for he had picked stones all the afternoon since early morning; and he was hungry. To be sure, he was always hungry; but the hunger in his heart was worse than any physical hunger. And there was no monument to his mother. Would he ever be able, when he grew up, to earn enough money to get one?

When he reached Duncan Dark's ugly yellow house among its lean trees, he took off his shabby "best suit," put on his ragged work-garb, and went out to the gore to pick stones. He picked stones until milking-time, his back aching as well as his heart. Then he helped Mr Conway milk the cows. Mr Conway was the only hired man Brian had ever heard of who was called "Mr." Mr Conway said he wouldn't work for any one who wouldn't call him "Mr." He was as good as any master, by gosh. Brian rather liked Mr Conway, who looked more like a poet gone to seed than a hired man. He had a shock of wavy, dark auburn hair, a drooping moustache and goatee, and round, brilliant, brown eyes. He was a stranger from Nova Scotia and called himself a Bluenose. Brian often wondered why, for Mr Conway's nose was far from blue. Red in fact.

When milking was over, Aunt Alethea, a tall, fair, slatternly woman, with a general air of shrewishness about her, told him to go down to Little Friday Cove and see if he could get a codfish from one of the Sams.

"Be smart about it, too," she admonished him. "None of your dawdling, or the Moon Man will cotch you."

What the Moon Man would do when he "cotched" him she never specified, perhaps reasoning that the unknown was always more terrible than the known. Brian's private opinion was that he would boil him in oil and pick his bones. He was more afraid of the Moon Man now than of the devil. He had once been dreadfully afraid of the devil. Somebody had told him that when a boy had no father, the devil was his father and would come along some night and carry him off. He had been sick with horror many a night after that. But Mr Conway had told him there was no devil and emphasized it with so many "By goshes" that Brian believed him. He wanted to believe him. But Mr Conway by-goshed heaven away, too, and that was not so good because it meant he would never see his mother again. Mr Conway didn't go so far as to say there was no God. He even admitted there probably was. Somebody had to run things, though he was making a poor job of it.

"Likely a young God who hain't learned his business yet, by gosh," said Mr Conway.

Brian was too young himself to be scandalized by this. He rather liked the idea of a young God. He had always thought of God as a stern, bearded Old Man.

If Brian had not been so tired he would have enjoyed the walk to Little Friday Cove. He loved to watch the harbour lights blossoming out in the blue of the twilight. He loved to watch the mysterious ships sailing out beyond the dunes to who knew what enchanted shores. He picked one that was just going over the bar and went with it in fancy. When he reached Little Friday Cove he found Big Sam alone and rather low in his mind. Trouble was coming; various signs and portents had pointed to it for days. No longer could he be blind to them. Salt, the dog, had howled dismally all Monday of the preceding week. On Tuesday Little Sam had smashed the looking-glass he had shaved by for forty years. On Wednesday Big Sam had failed to pick up a pin he had seen; on Thursday he had walked under Tom Appleby's ladder at the factory--and on Friday--Friday, mind you--Big and Little Sam between them had contrived to upset the salt at supper.

Big Sam was determined not to be superstitious. What did spilled salt and broken looking-glasses matter to good Presbyterians? But he did believe in dreams--having Biblical warrant for the same. And he had had a horrible one the night after Aunt Becky died--of seeing the full moon, one moment burning black, the next livid red, coming nearer and nearer the earth. He woke, just as it seemed near enough to be touched, with a howl of agony that shattered the stillness of the spring night at Little Friday Cove for yards around. Big Sam, who had kept a careful and copious diary of his dreams for forty years, looked them all over and concluded that none of them had been as awe-inspiring as this one.

Then there was that peculiar sound the gulf had been making of late. When the Old Lady of the Gulf skirled like a witch, somebody was going to sup sorrow.

"Little Sam sneaked off somewhere's after supper," he told Brian. "I kinder thought I'd go up to the run myself and dig some clams. But I didn't--felt a bit tired. I'm beginning to feel my years. But I've got the key of the fish-house and I'll get a cod out for you. They're all most too big for you to carry, though. Stay and have a saucer of clam chowder. There's some left. That man can make chowder, I'll admit."

Brian would have liked the chowder well enough, for his supper had been of the sketchiest description, but it was getting dark. He must get home before it got very dark--he was afraid. He was ashamed of his cowardice, but there it was. Sometimes he thought if any one really loved him he would not be afraid of so many things. He looked so small and wistful that Big Sam gave the poor little shrimp a nickel to buy a chocolate bar at the Widow Terlizzick's little store on the way home. But Brian did not stop at the store. He did not like the Widow Terlizzick or the noisy crowd of loafers who were always in and around the store on summer nights. He hurried home with his heavy codfish and was told to clear off to bed--he would have to be up at four to help Mr Conway take some calves to market. Brian would have liked to sit out under the big apple tree for a little while and play his jew's-harp. He liked the old apple tree. It seemed like a friend to him--a great, kindly, fragrant, blooming

creature stretching protecting arms over him. And he loved to play on his little jew's-harp. Once he had played on his jew's-harp in the evening at a house where he was planting potatoes, and two young people--one of them a girl in a white dress--had danced to his playing in the moonlit orchard. It was one of the few memories of beauty in his life. When he played his jew's-harp now he saw them again--dancing--dancing--dancing. With the grace of wind-blown leaves--white and mystic and lovely--to his elfin tune.

But Aunt Alethea was inexorable and Brian climbed the ladder to the kitchen loft, where he always slept alone and which he hated. He was afraid of the rats that infested it. There was only one thing he liked about it--from its window he could get a glimpse of the sea and a misty blue headland beyond which were wonderful sunsets. To-night there was a lovely rose and gold afterlight and the sea was blackly-blue under it. And he could see the pink-shaded lamp in the window of the Dollar house on the other side of the road. He loved to watch it, making a great glowing spot of colour in the darkness. When it suddenly went out he felt terribly lonely. Tears came to his eyes. He was such a little creature, alone in a great, dim, hostile world. Brian looked up at the sky. How dark the night was! How fearfully bright the stars!

"Dear God," he said softly, "dear *Young* God, please don't forget me."

He lay down on his hard little mattress. He was glad there was no moonlight yet. Moonlit nights in the loft frightened him. The things hanging from the rafters took on such queer shapes. And that hole in the wall of the loft that opened into the unfloored attic of the main house--it was dreadful on moonlit nights, when it looked so black and menacing. Who knew what might pop out of a hole like that? When it was dark he could not see it. It was a long while before he fell asleep. But at last he did--just about the time that Little Sam came home to Little Friday Cove.

VII

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Little Sam had heard at the funeral that the raffle for which he had bought the ticket from Mosey Gautier, was to be held that night. So after supper he thought he might as well saunter around to Chapel Point and see if he had any luck.

He had.

Big Sam was sound asleep in his bunk, with Mustard rolled up in a golden ball on his stomach. Little Sam unwrapped something from the parcel he was carrying, looked at it rather dubiously, shook his head, and tried the effect of it on the clock shelf. Something in him liked it. Something else was uneasy.

"She's got a real fine figger," he reflected, with a speculative glance at the unconscious Big Sam. "But I dunno what he'll think of her--I really dunno. Nor the minister."

These considerations did not keep Little Sam awake. He fell asleep promptly and Aurora, goddess of the dawn, kept her vigil on the clock shelf through the hours of darkness, and was the first thing on which Big Sam's eyes rested when he opened them in the morning. There she stood, her lithe lovely form poised on tiptoe, smitten by a red-gold beam from the sun that was rising across the harbour.

"What the devil is that?" said Big Sam, thinking this was another dream. He flung himself out of his bunk, upsetting an indignant cat, and walked across the room.

"It ain't a dream," he said incredulously. "It's a statoo--a naked statoo."

Salt, who had been curled up at Little Sam's feet, bounded to the floor after Mustard. He liked Mustard well enough but he wasn't going to have her sitting there on the floor grinning at him. The resultant disturbance awoke Little Sam, who sat up drowsily and inquired what the row was about.

"Samuel Beelby Dark," said Big Sam ominously, "what's that up there?"

"Samuel Phemister Dark," returned Little Sam mockingly, "that's an alabaster statooette--genuine alabaster. I drew it for fifth prize at the Chapel lottery last night. Pretty, ain't it?"

"Pretty?" Big Sam's voice boomed out. "Pretty! It's indecent and obscene, that's what *it* is. You take it right down and fire it out in the gulf as far as you can fire it."

If Big Sam had not thus flown off the handle it is probable that Little Sam would have done exactly that, being somewhat uneasy over the look of the thing generally and what Mr Trackley might say about it. But he was not going to be bullied into it by that little runt of a Big Sam and he'd let him see it.

"Oh, I guess not," he retorted coolly. "I guess it's going to stay right there. Stop yelping now and let your hair curl."

Big Sam's scanty love-locks showed no signs of curling, but his red beard fairly crackled with indignation. He began striding about the room in a fine rage, biting his right hand and then his left. Salt fled one way and Mustard another, leaving the Sams to fight it out.

"'Tain't right to have any kind of statoos, let alone naked ones. It's agin God's law. 'Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven immidge--'"

"Good gosh, I ain't made it, and I ain't worshipping it--"

"That'll come--that'll come. And a Catholic gee-gaw at that. S'pose likely it's the Virgin Mary."

Little Sam looked doubtful. He had been bred up in a good old Presbyterian hatred of Catholics and all their ways and works, but somehow he didn't think even they would go so far as to represent the Virgin Mary entirely unclothed.

"No, 'tain't. I think her name's there at the bottom--Aurorer. Just a gal, that's all."

"Do you think the Apostle Paul ever carried anything like that around with him?" demanded Big Sam. "Or"--as an afterthought that might carry

more weight with Little Sam--"poor dear old Aunt Becky who isn't cold in her grave yet?"

"Not likely. St Paul was kind of a woman-hater like yourself. As for Aunt Becky, we ain't in the running for her jug, so why worry? Now stop chewing your fists and pretend you're grown up even if you ain't, Sammy. See if you can dress yourself like a man."

"Thank you. Thank you." Big Sam became ominously calm. "I'm entirely satisfied to be classed with the Apostle Paul. My conscience guides *my* conduct, you ribald old thing!"

"Been making a meal of the dictionary, it seems," retorted Little Sam, yanking his pants off their nail, "and it don't seem to have agreed with your stomach. Better take a dose of sody. Your conscience, as you call it, hasn't nothing to do with it--only your prejudices. Look at that writing man. Hain't he got half a dozen of them statoots in his summer shanty up the river?"

"If he's a fool--and wuss--is that any reason why you should be? Think of that and your immortal soul, Sam Dark."

"This ain't my day for thinking," retorted the imperturbable Little Sam. "Now that you've blown off your steam, just set the porridge pot on. You'll feel better when you've had your breakfast. Can't 'preciate works of art properly on an empty stomach, Sammy."

Big Sam glared at him. Then he grabbed the porridge pot, yanked open the door, and hurled the pot through it. The pot bounded and clattered and leaped down the rocks to the sandy cove below. Salt and Mustard fled out after it.

"Some day you'll drive me too far," said Little Sam darkly. "You're just a narrow-minded, small-souled old maid, that's what you are. If you hadn't a dirty mind you wouldn't be throwing a fit 'cause you see a stone woman's legs. Your own don't look so artistic, prancing around in that shirt-tail, let me tell you. You really ought to wear pyjamas, Sammy."

"I fired your old pot out to show you I'm in earnest," roared Big Sam. "I tell you I won't have no naked hussy in this house, Sam Dark. I ain't over-squeamish but I draw the line at naked weemen."

"Yell louder, can't you? It's *my* house," said Little Sam.

"Oh, it is, is it? Very well. *Very* well. I'll tell you this right here and now. It ain't big enough for me and you and your Roarer."

"You ain't the first person that idee's occurred to," said Little Sam.

"I've had too many tastes of your jaw of late."

Big Sam stopped prancing and tried to look as dignified as a man with nothing on but a shirt can look, as he laid down the ultimatum he never doubted would bring Little Sam to his senses.

"I've stood all I'm a-going to. I've stood them skulls of yours for years but I tell you right here and now, Sam Dark, I won't stand for that atrocity. If it's to remain--*I* leave."

"As for leaving or staying, suit yourself. Aurorer stays there on that clock shelf," retorted Little Sam, striding out and down the rocks to rescue his maltreated porridge pot.

Breakfast was a gloomy meal. Big Sam looked very determined, but Little Sam was not worried. They had had a worse row than this last week, when he had caught Big Sam stealing a piece of raisin pie he had put away for his own snack. But when the silent meal was over and Big Sam ostentatiously dragged an old, battered, bulging valise out from under his bunk and began packing his few chattels into it, Little Sam realized that the crisis was serious. Well, all right--all right. Big Sam needn't think he could bully *him* into giving up Aurorer. He had won her and he was going to keep her and Big Sam could go to Hades. Little Sam really thought Hades. He had picked up the word in his theological reading and thought it sounded more respectable than hell.

Little Sam watched Big Sam stealthily out of his pale woolly eyes as he washed up the dishes and fed Mustard, who came scratching at the window-pane. The morning's sunlit promise had been delusive and it was now, as Little Sam reflected testily, one of them still, dark, misty mornings calculated to dampen one's spirits. This was what came of ladders and looking-glasses.

Big Sam packed his picture of Laurier and the model of a ship, with crimson hull and white sails, that had long adorned the crater-cornered

shelf above his bunk. These were indisputably his. But when it came to their small library there was difficulty.

"Which of these books am I to take?" he demanded frostily.

"Whichever you like," said Little Sam, getting out his baking-board. There were only two books in the lot he cared a hoot about, anyhow. *Foxe's Book of Martyrs* and *The Horrible Confession and Execution of John Murdoch (one of the Emigrants who lately left this country) who was hanged at Brockville (Upper Canada) on the 3rd day of September last for the inhuman Murder of His own brother.*

When Little Sam saw Big Sam pack the latter in his valise, he had much ado to repress a grisly groan.

"I'm leaving you the Martyrs and all the dime novels," said Big Sam defensively. "What about the dog and cat?"

"You'd better take the cat," said Little Sam, measuring out flour. "It'll match your whiskers."

This suited Big Sam. Mustard was his favourite.

"And the weegee-board?"

"Take it. I don't hold no dealings with the devil."

Big Sam shut and strapped his valise, put the reluctant Mustard into a bag, and with the bag over his shoulder and his Sunday hat on his head he strode out of the house and down the road without even a glance at Little Sam, who was ostentatiously making raisin pie.

Little Sam watched him out of sight still incredulously. Then he looked at the white, beautiful cause of all the mischief exulting on the clock itself.

"Well, he didn't get you out, my beauty, and I'm jiggered if he's ever going to. No, siree. I've said it and I'll stick to it. Anyhow, my ears won't have to ache any longer, listening to that old epic of his. And I can wear my earrings again."

Little Sam really thought Big Sam would come back when he had cooled down. But he underrated the strength of Big Sam's principles or his stubbornness. The first thing he heard was that Big Sam had rented Tom Wilkins' old shanty at Big Friday Cove and was living there. But not with Mustard. If Big Sam did not come back Mustard did. Mustard was

scratching at the window three days after his ignominious departure in a bag. Little Sam let him in and fed him. It wasn't his fault if Big Sam couldn't keep his cat. He, Little Sam, wasn't going to see no dumb animal starve. Mustard stayed home until one Sunday when Big Sam, knowing Little Sam was safely in church, and remembering Homer Penhallow's tactics, came down to Little Friday Cove and got him. All to no purpose. Again Mustard came back--and yet again. After the third attempt Big Sam gave it up in bitterness of soul.

"Do I want his old yaller flannel cat?" he demanded of Stanton Grundy. "God knows I don't. What hurts my feelings is that he *knew* the critter would go back. That's why he offered him so free. The depth of that man! I hear he's going round circulating mean, false things about me and saying I'll soon be sick of living on salt codfish and glad to sneak back for a smell of good cooking. He'll see--he'll see. *I ain't* never made a god of my stomach as *he* does. You should have heard the riot he raised because I et a piece of mouldy old raisin pie he'd cached for himself the greedy pig. And saying it'll be too lonesome at Big Friday for one of my gabby propensities. Yessir, he said them words. Me, lonesome! This place just suits me down to the ground. See the scenery. I'm a lover of nature, sir, my favourite being the moon. And them contented cows up on the Point pasture--I could gaze at 'em by the hour. *They're* all the society I want, sir--present comp'ny always excepted. Not," added Big Sam feelingly, "but what Little Sam had his p'int. The plum puddings that man could make! And them clam chowders of his stuck to the ribs better'n most things. But I had my soul to think of, hadn't I? And my morals?"

Midsummer Madness

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I

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Gay did not find the first few weeks of her engagement to Noel all sunshine. One could not in a clan like hers. Among the Darks and Penhallows an engagement was tribal property, and every one claimed the right to comment and criticize, approve or disapprove, according to circumstances. In this instance disapproval was rampant, for none of the clan liked any Gibson and they did not spare Gay's feelings. It simply did not occur to them that a child of eighteen had any feelings to spare, so they dealt with her faithfully.

"Poor little fool, will she giggle as loud after she's been married to him for a couple of years?" said William Y., when he heard Gay's exquisite laugh as she and Noel whirled by in their car one night. To do him justice, William Y. would not have said it in Gay's hearing, but it was straightway carried to her. Gay only laughed again. And she laughed when Cousin Hannah from Summerside asked her if it could be true that she was going to marry "a certain young man." Cousin Hannah would not say "a Gibson." Her manner gave the impression that Gibsons did not really exist. They might imagine they did but they were mere emanations of the Evil One, to be resolutely disbelieved in by any one of good principles and proper breeding. One did not speak openly of the devil. Neither did one speak of the Gibsons. Her contempt stung Gay a bit, in spite of her laughter. But a letter from Noel, simply crammed with darlings, soon removed the sting.

"Do you *really* love him?" asked Mrs William Y. solemnly.

Gay wanted to say no because she detested Mrs William Y. But she also wanted to show her and every one just what Noel meant to her.

"He's the only man in the world for me, Aunty."

"H'm! That's a large order out of about five hundred million men," said Mrs William Y. sarcastically. "However, I remember I once felt that way, too."

This, although Mrs William Y. was unaware of it, was the most dreadful thing Gay had heard yet. Mrs William Y. couldn't have thought William Y. the only man in the world. Of course she had married him--but she *couldn't*. Gay, with the egotism of youth, couldn't believe that *any* woman had ever been in love with William Y., not realizing that when William Y. had been slender and hirsute, twenty-five years before, he had been quite a lady-killer.

"You could do better, you know," persisted Mrs William Y.

"Oh, I suppose you mean Roger," cried Gay petulantly. "You all think there's nobody like Roger."

"Neither there is," said Mrs William Y. with simple and sincere feeling. She loved Roger. Everybody loved him. If only Gay wasn't so silly and romantic. Just swept off her feet by Noel Gibson's eyes and hair.

"I suppose you think it's all fun being married," Mrs Clifford said.

Gay didn't think it was "fun" at all. That wasn't how she regarded marriage. But Aunt Rhoda Dark was just as bad.

"Do you realize what an important event marriage is in anybody's life, Gay?"

Gay was driven into a flippant answer that made Aunt Rhoda shake her head over modern youth.

Rachel Penhallow remarked in Gay's hearing that kidney trouble "ran" in the Gibsons. Mrs Clifford advised "not to let him feel too sure of you." Mrs Denzil raked Noel's father over the coals.

"The only way to get him to do anything was to coax him to do the opposite. I was there the day he threw a plate at his wife. She dodged it, but it made a dent on the mantel. You can see that dent there yet, Gay, if you don't believe me."

"What has all this got to do with me and Noel?" burst out Gay.

"These things are inherited. You can't get away from them."

But Aunt Kate Penhallow didn't think Noel was stubborn like his father. She thought Noel was the opposite--weak and easily swayed. She didn't like his chin; and Uncle Robert didn't like his eyes; and Cousin Amasa didn't like his ears--"They lie too close to his head. You never see

such ears on a successful man," said Cousin Amasa, who had outstanding ears of his own but wasn't considered much of a success for all that.

"You would think they were the only people who ever got engaged in the world," said Mrs Toynbee, who, having come through three engagements, naturally didn't think it the wonder Gay and Noel did.

"All the Gibsons are very fickle," said Mrs Artemas Dark, who had been engaged to one herself before she married Artemas. He had treated her badly, but in her secret soul she sometimes thought she preferred him to Artemas still.

"You'd better wait until you're out of the cradle before you marry," growled Drowned John, who was having troubles of his own just then and was very touchy on the subject of engagements.

All this sort of thing only amused Gay. It didn't amount to anything. What did worry her was the subtle undercurrent of disapproval among those whose opinion she really valued. *Nobody* thought well of her engagement. Her mother cried bitterly over it and at first refused to give her consent at all.

"I can't stop you from marrying him, of course," she said, with what was great bitterness for the easy-going Mrs Howard. "But I'll never say I'm willing--never. I've never approved of him, Gay."

"Why--*Why?*" cried Gay piteously. She loved her mother and hated to go against her in anything. "*Why, Mother? What can you say against him?*"

"There's nothing in him," said Mrs Howard feebly. She thought it rather a poor reason, not realizing that she was actually uttering the most serious indictment in the world.

Altogether Gay had a hard time of it for a couple of weeks. Then Cousin Mahala swept down on the clan from her retreat up west--Cousin Mahala, who looked like a handsome old man with her short, crisp, virile grey hair and strong wise face. The eyes a little sunken. The mouth with a humorous quirk. The face of a woman who has *lived*.

"Let Gay marry him if she wants to," she told the harassed Mrs Howard, "and learn the ups and downs of life for herself, the same as the rest of us did. None of us have had perfect men."

"Oh, Cousin Mahala, you're the only person in this whole clan with a heart," cried Gay.

Cousin Mahala looked at her with a twinkle in her eye.

"Oh, no, I'm not, Gay. We've all got hearts, more or less. And the rest of us want to save you from the trouble and mistakes we've had. *I* don't. Mistakes and trouble are bound to come. Better come our own way than some one else's way. You'll be a lovely little bride, Gay. So young. I *do* like a young bride."

"Aunt Mavis asked me if I thought marriage 'all fun.' Of course I don't think it's all 'fun'--"

"You bet it isn't," said Cousin Mahala--

--"But I don't think it's all vexation either--"

"You're right there, too," said Cousin Mahala--

"--And whatever it is, I want to try it with Noel and nobody else."

Mrs Howard, thus attacked from the rear, surrendered. But only on one condition. Gay and Noel must wait a year before marriage. Eighteen was too young to marry. She couldn't give Gay up so soon. And Mrs Howard had another reason. Dandy Dark hated the Gibsons. If Dandy had the bestowal of the jug and if Gay were actually married to a Gibson, Mrs Howard felt she would have no chance of it at all. This secret thought stiffened her against all the pleading of Gay and the ardent Noel, to which she would probably have succumbed otherwise. Noel resigned himself sulkily to the condition. Gay, sweetly. After all, she was glad to purchase her mother's acquiescence by a little waiting. She couldn't bear to do anything against her mother's will. And being engaged was very delightful. There was a big hope-chest to be filled. Of course she knew the clan hoped that in a year she would change her mind. As if anything could ever make her stop loving Noel. She kissed his ring in the dark that night before she went to sleep. Dear Cousin Mahala! If only she lived nearer. Gay wanted to have her about while she made ready to be married. She knew all the rest, although they had tacitly agreed to recognize the engagement and make the best of it, would rub all the bloom off her dear romance with

their horrible practicalities and go on regretting all the time in their hearts that it wasn't Roger.

Roger had been lovely. He had wished her joy--in his dear caressing voice--Roger *had* such a nice voice--and told her he wanted every happiness to be hers.

"If I'd a black cat's wish-bone I'd give it to you, Gay," he said whimsically. "They tell me as long as you have a black cat's wish-bone you can get everything you want."

"But I've got everything I want, Roger," cried Gay. "Now that mother has come round so sweetly I haven't a thing left to wish for--except--except--that *you*--" Gay went crimson--"that *everybody* could be as happy as I am."

"I'm afraid it would take more than a black cat's wish-bone to bring *that* about," said Roger. But whether his "that" referred to the "you" or to the "everybody" Gay didn't know and dared not ask. She danced back to the house, flinging a smile over her shoulder to Roger as if she had thrown him a rose. Then she forgot all about him.

Roger overtook the Moon Man on the way home and asked him to take a lift. The Moon Man refused. He would never get in a car. But he looked piercingly at Roger.

"Why don't you set your love on my Lady Moon?" he said. "I would not be jealous. All men may love her but she loves no one. It doesn't hurt to love if you do not hope to be loved in return."

"I've never hoped to be loved in return--but it hurts damnably," said Roger.

II

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The clan had its shock at Aunt Becky's levee and its sensation over the fight at the graveyard; but the affair of Peter and Donna burst upon it like a cyclone. It was, naturally, almost the death of Drowned John.

Peter and Donna would have liked to keep it a delightful secret until they had perfected their plans, but as soon as they saw Mrs Toynbee they knew there was no hope of that. Donna went home in a state of uplift that lasted until three o'clock at night. Then the terrors and doubts that stalk around at that hour swooped down on her. What--oh, what would Drowned John say? Of course, there was nothing he could *do*. She had only to walk out of the door and go with Peter. But Donna hated the thought of eloping. It was simply not done among Darks and Penhallows. And if she eloped she would have no chance of the jug. Not that the jug was to be compared to Peter. But if she could only have Peter and the jug, too! Donna thought she had a good chance of it if it rested with Dandy. She had always been a pet of Dandy's. But she had once heard Dandy's comments on an eloping couple.

Then there was Virginia. Virginia would never forgive her. Not that Virginia mattered beside Peter either. But she was fond of Virginia; she was the only chum she had ever had. And she was afraid of the reproachful things Virginia would say. In the morning she wouldn't feel like this. But at three o'clock one did have qualms.

It was all just as dreadful as Donna feared it would be. Mrs Toynbee saw Drowned John at the post-office next day, and Drowned John came home in a truly Drowned Johnian condition--aggravated by his determination not to swear. But in other respects he gave tongue.

Donna was plucky. She owned up fearlessly that she had kissed Peter at the Courting-House, just as Mrs Toynbee said. "You see, Daddy, I'm going to marry him."

"You're mad!" said Drowned John.

"I think I am," sighed Donna. "But oh, Daddy, it's such a nice madness."

Drowned John repented, as he had repented often before, that he had ever let Donna have that year at the Kingsport Ladies' College in her teens. It was there she learned to say those smart, flippant things which always knocked the wind out of him. He dared not swear but he banged the table and told Donna that she was never to speak to Peter Penhallow again. If she did--

"But I'll have to speak to him now and again, Daddy. One can't live on terms of absolute silence with one's husband, you know."

There it was again. But Donna, though flippant and seemingly fearless, was quaking inside. She knew her Drowned John. When Peter came down that afternoon Drowned John met him at the door and asked him his business.

"I've come to see Donna," Peter told him cheerfully. "I'm going to marry her, you know."

"My *dear* young man"--oh, the contempt Drowned John snorted into the phrase!--"you do yourself too much honour."

He went in and shut the door in Peter's face. Peter thought at first he would smash a window. But he knew Drowned John was quite capable of having him arrested for housebreaking. Where the devil was Donna! She might at least look out at him.

Donna, with a headache, was crying on her bed, quite ignorant of Peter's nearness. Thekla had been so nasty. Thekla had said that one husband, like one religion, should be enough for anybody. But then Thekla had always hated her for getting married at all. She had no friends--she was alone in a hostile, unfeeling clan world. But she was going to marry Peter.

It wasn't so easy. Peter, who would have made no bones of carrying off a bride from the Congo or Yucatan if he had happened to want one, found it a very different proposition to carry one off from the Darks and Penhallows. He couldn't even see Donna. Drowned John wouldn't let him

in the house or let Donna out of it. Of course this couldn't have lasted. Drowned John couldn't keep Donna mewed up forever, and eventually Peter and she would have found a way to each other. But the stars in their course, so poor Donna thought, fought against them. One night she sneezed; the next night her eyes were sore; the next night they had Roger, who told Donna she was down with measles.

It would, of course, have been more romantic if she had had consumption or brain fever or angina pectoris. But a veracious chronicler can tell only the truth. Donna Dark had measles and nearly died of them.

Once the rumour drifted to the distracted Peter that she *had* died. And he couldn't even see her. When he tore down to Rose River nobody answered his knock and the doors were locked and the lower windows shuttered. Peter thought of simply standing on the step and yelling until somebody had to come; but he was afraid any excitement might hurt Donna. Roger came along and tried to calm him down.

"Donna's not dead. She's a very sick girl yet and needs careful nursing, but I think she's out of danger. I was afraid of pneumonia. Don't be an ass, Peter. Go home and take things coolly till Donna recovers. Drowned John can't prevent your marrying her, though he'll make everything as unpleasant as he can, no doubt."

"Roger, were you ever in love with any one?" groaned Peter. "No, you couldn't have been. You wouldn't be such a cold-blooded fish if you were. Besides, you'd have fallen in love with Donna. I can't understand why every one isn't in love with Donna. Can you?"

"Easily," said Roger coolly.

"Oh, you like them buxom, I suppose," sneered Peter, "like Sally William Y.--or just out of the cradle like Gay Penhallow. Roger, you don't know what it's like to be in love. It's hellish--and heavenly--and terrible--and exquisite. Oh, Roger, why don't you fall in love?"

Roger had never been in any danger of falling in love with Donna Dark. As a matter of fact, he only half liked her and her poses, not realizing that the latter were only a pitiful device for filling an empty life. And he only half liked Peter. But he was sorry for him.

"I'll take a message to Donna for you--"

"A letter--"

"No. She couldn't read it. Her eyes are very bad--"

"Look here, Roger. I've got to see Donna--by the sacred baboon I've got to. Have a heart, Roger--smuggle me in. They'll have to open the door for you, and once I'm inside the devil himself shan't get me out till I've seen Donna--that Thekla is quite capable of murdering her--the whole pack are worrying her--that fiend of a Virginia is with her night and day, I hear, poisoning her mind against me."

"Stop gibbering, Peter. Think what effects a fracas in the house would have on Donna. It would set her back weeks if it didn't kill her. Thekla is a capital nurse whatever else she is--and Donna's mind is too full of you to be poisoned by anybody--through all her delirium she raved about you--you should have seen Drowned John's face."

"Was she delirious--my poor darling? Oh, Roger Penhallow, are you keeping anything back from me? I met the Moon Man coming down. He looked at me strangely. They say the old dud has second sight--he knows when people are going to die. Pneumonia has always been fatal to that family--Donna's mother died of it. For God's sake, tell me the truth--"

"Peter Penhallow, if you don't clear out of this at once I'll kick you twice--once for myself and once for Drowned John. Donna is going to be all right. You act as if you were the only man in the world who was ever in love before."

"I am," said Peter. "*You* don't know a thing about love, Roger. They tell me you were in love with Gay Penhallow. Well, I'd never be a cradle-snatcher, but if I were, Noel Gibson shouldn't have taken her from me--that tailor's mannequin. You're a white-livered hound, Roger, no blood in your veins."

"I've some sense in my noodle," said Roger drily.

"Which proves that you don't know anything about love," said Peter triumphantly. "Nobody's sensible if he's in love. It's a divine madness, Roger. Oh, Roger, I've never liked you over and above but I feel now as if I

couldn't part from you. To think that you'll see Donna in a few minutes--oh, tell her--tell her--"

"Heaven grant me patience!" groaned Roger. "Peter, go out and get into my car and count up to five hundred slowly. I'll tell Donna anything you like and I'll bring back her message and then I'll take you home. It's not safe for you to be out alone--you damn' fool," concluded Roger under his breath.

"Roger--have you any idea how a man--"

"Tut--tut, Peter, you're not a man at all just now--you're only a state of mind."

Donna's convalescence was a tedious affair and not a very happy one. As soon as Drowned John suspected that Roger was fetching and carrying messages between Donna and Peter, he showed him to the door and sent for another doctor. Virginia haunted her pillow night and day and various relatives of her clique--a clan within a clan--came and went and "talked things over." Donna listened because she was too weak to argue. And all the talking-over in the world couldn't alter facts.

"You never loved Barry," sobbed Virginia, "It was only his uniform you loved."

"I did love Barry. But now I love Peter," said Donna.

"'The mind has a thousand eyes'," began Virginia--and finished the quotation. The trouble was she had quoted it so often before that it was rather stale to Donna.

"Love isn't done--for me. It's beginning all over again."

"I *don't* understand," said Virginia helplessly, "how you can be so fickle, Donna. It's a complete mystery to me. But *my* feelings have always been so very deep. I wonder you still keep poor Barry's picture over your dressing-table. Doesn't he look at you reproachfully?"

"No. Barry seems like a good old pal. He seems to say, 'I'm glad you've found some one to give you the happiness I can't now.' Virginia, we've been foolish and morbid--"

"I won't have you use such a word," sobbed Virginia. "I'm not morbid--I'm *true*. And you've broken our pact. Oh, Donna, how *can* you desert me?"

We've been through so many sad--and beau-tiful--and terrible things together. How *can* you break the bond?"

"Virginia, darling, I'm not breaking the bond. We can always be friends--dear friends--"

"Peter will take you away from me," sobbed Virginia. "He'll drag you all over the world--you'll never have any settled home, Donna--or any position in society."

"There'll be some adventure in marrying Peter," conceded Donna in a tone of satisfaction.

"And he'll never allow you to have any interest outside of him. He'll tell you what you are to think. He must possess exclusively."

"I don't want any interest outside of him," said Donna.

"You to say that--you who were Barry's wife--his *wife*. Why, to hear you talk--it might just as well have been some one else who was Barry's wife."

"Well, to be honest, Virginia, that's exactly the way I do feel about it. I'm *not* the girl who was married to Barry--I'm an entirely different creature. Perhaps I've drunk from some fairy pool of change, Virginia. I can't help it--and I don't want to help it. All I want just now is to have Peter come in and kiss me."

An aggravating sentence popped into Donna's head. She uttered it to annoy Virginia, who was annoying her.

"You've no idea how divinely Peter can kiss, Virginia."

"I've no doubt he has had plenty of practice," said Virginia bitterly. "As for me--*I* have my memories of Ned's kisses."

Donna permitted herself a pale smile. Ned Powell had had a little full red mouth with a little brown moustache above it. The very thought of being kissed by such a mouth had always made Donna shudder. She couldn't understand how Virginia could ever bear it.

"You can laugh," said Virginia coldly. "I suppose you can laugh now at everything we have held sacred. But *I* happen to know that Peter Penhallow said that you were a nice little thing and he could have you for the asking."

"I don't believe he said it," retorted Donna, "but if he did--why not? It's quite true, you know."

Virginia went away crying. She told Drowned John that it was useless for her to come again; *she* had no longer any influence over Donna.

"I knew that opal would bring me bad luck."

Drowned John banged a table and glared at her. Drowned John went about those days banging tables. Drowned John was in an atrocious humour with everything and everybody, and determined to make them feel it. Had a father no rights at all? This was all it came to--all your years of sacrifice and care. They flouted you--just flouted you. They thought they could marry any fool fellow they pleased. Women were the very dickens. He had tamed his own two but the young ones were beyond him.

"She shall never marry him--never."

"She means to," said Virginia.

"She doesn't mean it--she only thinks she does," shouted Drowned John. Drowned John always thought that if he contradicted loud enough, people would come to believe him.

Bets were up in the clan about it. Some, like Stanton Grundy, thought it wouldn't last. "The hotter the fire the quicker it's over," said Stanton Grundy. Some thought Drowned John would never yield and some thought he'd likely crumple up at the last. And some thought it didn't matter a hoot whether he did or not. Peter Penhallow would take his own wherever he found it. To poor Donna, lying wearily in bed or reclining in an easy-chair, trying to endure the unfeeling way in which day followed day without Peter, they came with advice and innuendo and gossip. Peter had said, when Aunt But asked him how it was he was caught at last, "Oh, I just got tired of running." Peter, when a boy, had shot a pea at an elder in the church. Peter had flung a glass of water in his schoolmaster's face. Peter had taken a wasp's nest to prayer-meeting. Peter had set loose a trapped rat when the Sewing Circle met at his mother's house. They dragged up all the things they knew that Peter had done. And there were so many things he must have done that they knew nothing about.

"If you marry a rover like Peter what are you going to do with your family?" Mrs William Y. wanted to know.

"Oh, we're only going to have two children. A boy first and then a girl for good measure," said Donna. "We can manage to tote that many about with us."

Mrs William Y. was horrified. But Mrs Artemas, who had come with her, only remarked calmly,

"I couldn't ever get them to come in order that way."

"If *I* was a widow-woman I wouldn't be fool enough to want to marry again," said Mrs Sim Dark bitterly.

"That family of Penhallows are always doing such unexpected things and Peter is the worst of them," mourned Mrs Wilbur Dark.

"But if your husband does unexpected things at least he wouldn't bore you," said Donna. "I could endure anything but boredom."

Mrs Wilbur did not know what Donna meant by her husband's boring her. Of course men were tiresome at times. She told her especial friends that she thought the measles had gone to Donna's brain. They did that sometimes, she understood.

Dandy Dark came and asked her ominously how she thought Aunt Becky would have liked her taking a second helping after all her fine protestations.

"Aunt Becky liked consistency, that she did," said Dandy, who had a fondness for big words and used more of them than ever now that he was trustee of the jug.

This sounded like a threat. Donna pouted.

"Dandy," she coaxed, "you might tell *me* who's to get the jug--if you know. I wouldn't tell a soul."

Dandy chuckled.

"I've lost count how often that's been said to me the past month. No use, Donna. Nobody's going to know more about that jug than Aunt Becky told them until the time comes. A dying trust"--Dandy was very important and solemn--"is a sacred thing. But think twice before you marry Peter, Donna--think twice."

"Oh, Aunty Con, some days I just hate life," Donna told a relative for whom she had some love. "And then again some days I just love it."

"That's the way with us all," said plump Aunty Con placidly.

Donna stared at her in amazement. Surely Aunty Con could never either love or hate life.

"Oh, Aunty Con, I'm really miserable. I seem to get better so slowly. And Peter and I can't get a word to each other. Father is so unreasonable--he seems to smell brimstone if any one mentions Peter's name. Thekla is barely civil to me--though she was an angel when I was really ill--and Virginia is sulking. I--I get so blue and discouraged--"

"You ain't real well yet," said Aunty Con soothingly. "Don't you worry, Donna. As soon as you're real strong Peter Penhallow will find a way. Rest you with that."

Donna looked out of her open window over her right shoulder into the July night. A little wet new moon was hanging over a curve of Rose River. There were sounds as if a car were dying in the yard. Nobody had told Donna that Peter came down to Drowned John's gate every night--where his father had hung the dog--and made all the weird noises possible with his claxon, but Donna suddenly felt he was very near her. She smiled. Yes, Peter would find a way.

III

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Gay Penhallow could never quite remember when the first faint shadow fell across her happiness. It stole towards her so subtly. If you looked straight at it--it wasn't there. But turn away your eyes and out of the corners you could see it--a little nearer--still a little nearer--waiting to pounce.

Everything had been so wonderful at first. The weeks were not made up of days at all. Sunday was a flame, Monday a rainbow, Tuesday a perfume, Wednesday a bird-song, Thursday a wind-dance, Friday laughter, and Saturday--Noel always came Saturday night, whatever other night he missed--was something that was the soul of all the other six.

But now--the days were becoming just days again.

Nan and Noel were such friends. Well, why shouldn't they be? Weren't they going to be cousins! But still--there were moments when Gay felt like an outsider, as they talked to each other a patter she couldn't talk. Gay was not up-to-date in modern slang. They seemed to have so many mysterious catchwords and understandings--or perhaps Nan just made it appear so. Nan was an expert at that sort of thing--expert at catching and holding for herself the attention of any male creature, no matter what his affiliations might be. For Nan those affiliations didn't exist. She simply ignored them. Noel and Gay could not refuse to take her about with them--at least Gay couldn't and Noel didn't seem to want to. Nan continued to imply that she had no one to take her about--she was such a stranger. Gay felt it would be mean and catty to leave Nan out in the cold. But quite often--and oftener as the days went by--she felt as if it were she who was left out in the cold. And yet there was so little to take hold of--so little one could put into words or even into thoughts. She couldn't expect Noel to take no notice of any one but herself. But she thought wistfully of the old untroubled days when there had been no Nan at Indian Spring.

There was that dreadful afternoon when she had heard Nan and Noel exchanging airy persiflage over the phone. Gay hadn't meant to listen. She had taken down the receiver to see if the line were free and she had heard Noel's voice. Who was he talking to? Nan! Gay stood and listened--Gay who had been brought up to think listening on the phone the meanest form of eavesdropping. She didn't realize she was listening--all she realized was that Nan and Noel were carrying on a gay, semi-confidential conversation. Well, what of it? After all, what was really in it? They didn't say a word the whole world mightn't have heard. But it was the suggestion of intimacy in it--of something from which every one else was excluded. Why, Noel was talking to Nan as he should talk only to *her*.

When Gay hung up the receiver, after Nan had sent an impertinent kiss over the phone, she felt chilly and lost. For the first time she felt the sting of a bitter jealousy. And for the first time it occurred to her that she might not be happy all her life. But when Noel came that evening he was as dear and tender as ever and Gay went to bed laughing at herself. She was just a little fool to get worked up over nothing. It was only Nan's way. Even the kiss! Very likely Nan would have liked to make trouble between her and Noel. That was Nan's way, too. But she couldn't.

Gay was not so sure one evening two weeks later. Noel was to come that evening. Gay woke up in the morning expecting him. Her head lay in a warm pool of sunshine that spread itself over the pillow. She lay and stretched herself in it like a little lazy golden cat, sniffing delicately at the whiffs of heliotrope that blew in from the garden below. Noel would be out to-night. He had said so in his letter of the previous day. She had that to look forward to for a whole beautiful day. Perhaps they would go for a spin along the winding drive. Or perhaps they would go for a walk down to the shore? Or perhaps they would just linger at the side gate under the spruces and talk about themselves. There would be no Nan--Nan was away visiting friends in Summerside--she was sure of having Noel all to herself. She hadn't had him much to herself of late. Nan would be at Maywood or Noel would suggest that they go somewhere and pick her up--the poor kid was lonesome. Indian Spring was pretty quiet for a girl used to city life.

Gay lived the whole day in a mood of expectant happiness. A few weeks ago she had lived every day like that and she did not quite realize yet how different it had been lately. She dressed in the twilight especially for Noel. She had a new dress and she would wear it for him. Such a pretty dress. Powder-blue voile over a little slip of ivory silk. She wondered if Noel would like it and notice how the blue brought out the topaz tints of her hair and eyes and the creaminess of her slim throat. It was such a delight to make herself beautiful for Noel. It seemed like a sacrament. To brush her hair till it shone--to touch the shadowy hollow of her throat with a drop of perfume--to make her nails shine softly like pink pearls--to fasten about her neck the little string of tiny golden beads--Noel's last gift.

"Every bead on it is a kiss," he had whispered. "It's a rosary of our love, darling."

Then to look at herself and know he must find her fair and sweet. To know that she would see that little spark leap into his eyes as he looked at her.

Oh, Gay felt sorry for homely girls. How could they please their lovers? And she felt sorry for Donna Dark, who wasn't allowed to see *her* lover at all--though how could anybody care for that queer wild rover of a Peter Penhallow? And she felt sorry for Joscelyn, who had been so outrageously treated by her bridegroom--and she felt sorry for William Y.'s Sally, who was engaged to such an ugly, insignificant little man--and she felt sorry for Mercy Penhallow, who had never had a beau at all--and she felt sorry for poor Pauline Dark, who was hopelessly in love with Hugh--and for Naomi Dark, who was worse than widowed--even for poor silly Virginia Powell, who was so true and tiresome. In short, Gay felt sorry for almost every feminine creature she knew. Until late in the evening, when she was sorry only for herself.

Noel had not come. She had waited for him in the little green corner by the side gate, where Venus was shining over the dark trees, until ten o'clock and he had not come. Once she had got long-distance and called up his stepmother's house in town. But Noel was not there and his stepmother did not know where he was--or greatly care, her tone seemed to imply. Gay

went back to her vigil by the gate. What had happened? Had his car acted up? But he could telephone. Suppose there had been an accident--a bad accident--suppose Noel had been hurt--killed? Or suppose he had just changed his mind? Had his good-bye kiss, three nights before, been just a little absent? And even his letter which had told her he was coming had begun with "dear" instead of "dearest" or "darling."

Once she thought she saw him coming through the garden. By the sudden uplift of her heart and spirit she knew how terrible had been her dread that he would not come. Then she saw that it was only Roger. Roger must not see her. She knew she was going to cry and he must not see her. Blindly she plunged into the green spruce copse beyond the gate--ran through it sobbing--the boughs caught and tore her dress--it didn't matter--nothing mattered except that Noel had not come. She gained her room and locked her door and huddled herself into bed. Oh, what a long night was before her to live through. She remembered a pet phrase of Roger's--he was always saying, "Don't worry--there's always to-morrow."

"I don't want to-morrow," sobbed Gay. "I'm afraid of it."

It was the first night in her life she had cried herself chokingly to sleep.

In the morning Noel telephoned his excuses. He had a-plenty. Nan had called him on the long-distance from Summerside early in the evening and wanted him to run up and bring her home. He had thought he had plenty of time for it. But when he got to Summerside Nan's friends were having an impromptu party and she wanted to wait for it. He had tried to get Gay on long-distance but couldn't. It was late when he had brought Nan home--too late to go on to Maywood. He was frightfully sorry and he'd be up the very first evening he was free. They were confoundedly busy in the bank just now. He had to work till midnight, etc.

Gay believed him because she had to. And when her mother said to her that folks were beginning to talk about Nan and Noel, Gay was scornful and indifferent.

"They have to talk about something, Mumsy. I suppose they've got tired gossiping about poor Donna and Peter and have to begin on Noel and

me. Never mind them."

"I don't mind them. But the Gibsons--they've always had a name for being fickle--"

"I won't hear a word against Noel," flashed Gay. "Am I to keep him in my pocket? Is he never to speak to a girl but me? A nice life for him. *I* know Noel. But you always hated him--you're glad to believe anything against him--"

"Oh, Gay, child--no--no. I don't hate him--it's your happiness I'm thinking of--"

"Then don't worry me with malicious gossip," cried Gay so stormily that Mrs Howard dared not say another word on the subject. She switched to something safer.

"Have you written those chain letters yet, Gay?"

"No. And I'm not going to. Mumsy, you're really absurd."

"But, Gay--I don't know--no, I'm *not* superstitious--but you *know* it said if you broke the chain some misfortune would befall you--and it doesn't cost much--only six cents--"

"Mother, it *is* superstition. And I'm not going to be so foolish. Write the letters yourself, if you like--if it's worrying you."

"That wouldn't do any good. The letter was to you. It wouldn't take you long--"

"I'm not going to do it and that's all there is to it," said Gay, stubbornly. "You heard Roger on the subject, Mother."

"Oh, Roger--he's a good doctor but he doesn't know everything. There *are* things nobody understands--your father always laughed just as you do--but he was one of thirteen at a table just before he died. And say what you will, I knew a woman who wouldn't write the chain letters and she broke her knee-cap two weeks after she burned the one she got."

"Mrs Sim Dark broke her arm last week, but I haven't heard she burned any chain letters." Gay tried to laugh but she found it rather hard--she to whom laughter had always come so readily. There was such a strange, dreadful ache in her heart which she must hide from every one. And she would *not* be jealous and hateful and suspicious. Nan was trying to weave

her cobweb spells around Noel of course. But she had faith in Noel--oh, she must have faith in him.

Noel did come up four evenings later. And Nan came, too. The three of them sat on the veranda steps and laughed and chattered. At least Noel and Nan did. Gay was a little bit silent. Nobody noticed it. At last she got up and strolled away to the twilight garden, through the gay ranks of the hollyhocks and the old orchard full of mysterious moonlit delights--the place of places for lovers--to the side gate. She expected Noel would follow her. He had always done so--yet. She listened for his following footsteps. When she reached the side gate she turned and peeped back through the spruce boughs. Noel was still sitting on the steps beside Nan. She could not see them but she could hear them. She knew quite well that Nan was looking up at Noel with those slanting green eyes of hers--eyes that did something to men that Gay's laughing, gold-flecked ones could never do. And no doubt--Gay's lip curled in contempt--she was implying that he was the most wonderful fellow in the world. Gay had heard her do that before. Well--he *was*! But Nan had no right to think him so--or make him think she thought so. Gay clenched her hands.

She waited there for what seemed a very long time. There was a pale green sunset sky, and idle, merry laughter came from far across the fields on the crystal clear air. Somewhere there was a faint fragrance on the air, as of something hidden--unseen--sweet.

Gay remembered a great many things that she had almost forgotten. Little things that Nan had done in their childhood vacations when she had come over to the Island every summer. There was that day Gay had been quite broken-hearted at the Sunday-school picnic because she hadn't a cent to pay for the peep-show Hicksy Dark was running. And then she had found a cent on the road--and was going to see the peep-show--and Nan took the cent away from her and gave it to Hicksy and saw the show. Gay remembered how she had cried about that and how Nan had laughed.

The day when Nan had come in with a lovely big chocolate bar Uncle Pippin had given her. Chocolate bars were new things then.

"Oh, please give me a bite--just one bite," Gay had implored. She loved chocolate bars.

Nan had laughed and said,

"Maybe I'll give you the last one."

She sat down before Gay and ate the bar, slowly, deliberately, bite by bite. At last there was just one good bite left--a juicy, succulent bite, the lovely snowy filling oozing around a big Brazil-nut. And then Nan had laughed--and popped the bite into her own mouth--and laughed again at the tears that filled Gay's eyes.

"You cry so easy, Gay, that it's hardly any fun to make you cry," she said.

The day when Nan had snatched off Gay's new hair-bow, because it was bigger and crisper than her own, and slashed it to bits with the scissors. Mrs Alpheus *had* whipped Nan for it, but that didn't restore the hair-bow and Gay had to wear her old shabby one.

The time when Gay was to sing at the missionary concert in the church and Nan had broken up the song and reduced Gay to the verge of hysterics by suddenly pointing her finger at Gay's slippered feet and calling out, "Mouse!"

Oh, there were dozens of memories like that. Nan had always been the same--as sleek and self-indulgent and cruel as a little tiger. Taking whatever she had a whim for without caring who suffered. But Gay had never believed she could take Noel.

Gay was not Dark and Penhallow for nothing. She did not go back to the steps. She went into the house by the sun-porch door and up to her room, though it seemed as if at every step she trod on her own heart. In her room she looked at herself in the mirror. It was as if her young face had grown old in an hour. Her cheeks were a stormy red, but her eyes were strange to her. Surely such eyes had never looked out of her face before. She shuddered with cold--with anger--with sick longing--with incredulity. Then she blew out the lamp passionately and flung herself face downwards on her bed. The shadow had pounced at last. That other night she had cried

herself to sleep--but she had slept. This was to be the first night of her life she could not sleep at all for pain.

IV

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The quarrel and separation of the Sams had caused considerable sensation in the clan and for a time ousted Aunt Becky's jug, Gay Penhallow's engagement and Drowned John's tantrums over Peter and Donna as a topic of conversation in clan groups. Few thought it would last long. But the summer had passed without a reconciliation and folks gave up expecting it. That family of Darks had always been a stubborn gang. Neither of the Sams made any pretence of dignified reserve regarding their mutual wrongs. When they met, as they occasionally did, they glared at each other and passed on in silence. But each was forever waylaying neighbours and clansmen to tell his side of the story.

"I hear he's going about telling I kicked the dog in the abdomen," Little Sam would snort. "What's abdomen, anyhow?"

"Belly," said Stanton Grundy bluntly.

"Look at that now. I knew he was lying. I never kicked no dog in the belly. Touched his ribs with the toe of my boot once, that's all--for good and sufficient cause. Says I lured his cat back. What do I want of his old Persian Lamb cat? Always bringing dead rats in and leaving them lying around. And determined to sleep on *my* abdomen at nights. If he'd fed his cat properly she wouldn't have left him. But I ain't going to turn no broken-hearted, ill-used beast out of *my* door. I hear he's raving round about moons and contented cows. The only use that man has for moons is to predict the weather, and as for contented cows or discontented cows, it's all one to him. But I'm glad he's happy. So am I. I can sing all I want to now without having some one sarcastically saying, 'A good voice for chawing turnips,' or, 'Hark from the tombs a doleful sound,' or maddening things like that. I had to endure that for years. But did I make a fuss about it? Or about his yelping that old epic of his half the night--cackling and chortling and guffawing and gurgling and yapping and yammering. You

never heard such an ungodly caterwauling as that poor creature could make. 'Chanting,' *he* called it. Till I felt as if I'd been run through a meat-chopper. Did I mind his always conterdicting me? No; it kept life from being too tejus. Did I mind his being a fundamentalist? No; I respected his principles. Did I mind his getting up at unearthly hours Sunday mornings to pray? I did not. Some people might have said his method of praying was irrevent--talking to God same as he would to me or you. I didn't mind irreverence, but what I didn't like was his habit of swinging round right in the middle of a prayer and giving the devil a licking. Still, did I make a fuss over it? No; I overlooked all them things, and yet when I brings home a beautiful statooette like Aurorer there Big Sam up and throws three different kinds. Well, I'd rather have Aurorer than him any day and you can tell him so. She's easier to look at, for one thing, and she don't sneak into the pantry unbeknownst to me and eat up my private snacks for another. *I ain't* said much about the affair--I've let Big Sam do the talking--but some day when I git time I'm going to talk an awful lot, Grundy."

"I'm told that poor ass of a Little Sam spends most of his spare time imagining he's strewin' flowers on my grave," Big Sam told Mr Trackley. "And I hear he's been making fun of my prayers. Will you believe it, he had the impidence to tell me once I had to make my prayers shorter 'cause they interfered with his mornin' nap? Did I shorten 'em? Not by a jugful. Spun 'em out twice as long. What I put up with from that man! His dog nigh about chewed up my Victory bond, but did *I* complain? God knows I didn't. But when my cat had kittens on his sheet he tore up the turf. Talking of the cat, I hear she has kittens again. You'd think Little Sam might have sent me one. I hear there's three. And I haven't a thing except them two ducks I bought of Peter Gautier. They're company--but knowing you have to eat 'em up some day spoils things. Look a' here, Mr Trackley. Why did Jacob let out a howl and weep when he kissed Rachel?"

Mr Trackley didn't know, or if he did he kept it to himself. Some Rose Riverites thought Mr Trackley was too fond of drawing the Sams out.

"Because he found it wasn't what it was cracked up to be," chuckled Big Sam. He was happy all day because he had put one over on the

minister.

But Big Sam was soon in no mood for joking about kisses, ancient or modern. He nearly had an apoplectic fit when he heard that some of the summer boarders up the river had gone to Little Sam under the mistaken impression that *he* was the poet, and asked him to recite his epic. The awful thing was that Little Sam *did*. Went through it from start to finish and never let on he wasn't the true author.

"From worshipping imidges to stealing poetry is only what you'd expect. You can see how that man's character's degen'rating," said Big Sam passionately.

V

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Peter Penhallow was growing so lean and haggard that Nancy began to feel frightened about him. She tried to induce him to take some iron pills and got sworn at for her pains. A serious symptom, for Peter was not addicted to profanity. Nancy excused him, for she thought he was not getting a square deal, either from Drowned John or Providence. The very day Donna Dark was to be permitted to come downstairs she took tonsillitis. This meant three more weeks of seclusion. Peter sounded his horn at the enchanted portal every night or, in modern language, Drowned John's east lane gate--but that was all he could do. Drowned John, so it was reported, had sworn he would shoot Peter at sight and the clan waited daily in horrified expectancy, not knowing that Thekla had hidden Drowned John's gun under the spare-room bed. Drowned John, not being able to find it, ignored Peter and his caterwauling and took it out on poor sick Donna, who was by this time almost ready to die of misery. Sick in bed for weeks and weeks, staring at that horrible wallpaper Drowned John had selected and which she hated. Horrible greenish-blue paper with gilt stars on it, which Drowned John thought the last word in elegance.

She had lost all her good looks, she told herself. She cried and said she didn't want to get better. Peter couldn't love her any more--this pallid, washed-out skeleton she saw in her mirror when she got up after tonsillitis. The doctor said she must have her tonsils out as soon as she was strong enough for the ordeal. This was reported to Peter and drove him still further on what all his friends now believed was the road to madness. He didn't believe in operations. He wasn't going to have pieces of his darling Donna cut out. They were all trying to murder her, that was what they were doing--the whole darn tribe of them. He cursed Mrs Toynbee Dark a dozen times a day. Had it not been for her, Drowned John wouldn't have known of Donna's engagement, he wouldn't have kept such watch and ward--Peter

would have been able to snatch her away, measles and tonsilitis to the contrary notwithstanding--and then a fig for your germs. But now--

"What am I to do?" groaned Peter to Nancy. "Nancy, tell a fellow what to do. I'm dying by inches--and they're going to carve Donna up."

Nancy could only reply soothingly that lots of people had had their tonsils out and there was nothing to do but to wait patiently. Drowned John couldn't keep Donna shut up forever.

"You don't know him," said Peter darkly. "There's a plot. I believe Virginia Powell deliberately carried the tonsilitis germ to Donna. That woman would do anything to keep me and Donna apart. Next time it will be inflammatory rheumatism. They'll stick at nothing."

"Oh, Peter, don't be silly."

"Silly! Is it any wonder if I'm silly? The wonder is I'm not a blithering idiot."

"Some people think you are," said Nancy candidly.

"Nancy, it's eight weeks since I've seen Donna--eight hellish weeks."

"Well, you lived a good many years without seeing her at all."

"No--I merely existed."

"Cheer up--'It may be for years but it can't be forever'," quoted Nancy flippantly. "I did hear Donna was going to be out in Rose River Church next Sunday."

"Church! What can I do in church? Drowned John will be on one side of her and Thekla on the other. Virginia Powell will bring up the rear and Mrs Toynbee will watch everything. The only thing to do will be to sail in, hit Drowned John a wallop on the point of the jaw, snatch up Donna and rush out with her."

"Oh, Peter, don't make a scene in church--not in church," implored Nancy, wishing she hadn't told him.

She lived in misery until Sunday. Peter did make a bit of a scene, but not so bad as she feared. He was sitting in a pew under the gallery when the Drowned John's party came in--Drowned John first, Donna next, then Thekla--"I knew it would be like that," groaned Peter--then old Jonas Swan, the hired man--who had family privileges, being really a distant

relative--then two visiting cousins. Peter ate Donna up with his eyes all through the service. They had nearly killed her, his poor darling. But she was more beautiful, more alluring than ever, with those great mauve shadows under her eyes and her thick creamy lids still heavy with the langour of illness. Peter thought the service would never end. Did Trackley preach as long as this every Sunday and if so, why didn't they lynch him. Did that idiot who was yowling a solo in the choir imagine she could sing? People like that ought to be drowned young, like kittens. Would they never be done taking up the collection? There were *six* verses in the last hymn!

Peter shot up the aisle before the rest of the congregation had lifted their heads from the benediction. Drowned John had stepped out of his pew to speak to Elder MacPhee across the aisle. Thekla was talking unsuspectingly to Mrs Howard Penhallow in the pew ahead. Nobody was watching Donna just then, not dreaming that Peter would be in Rose River Church. None of his clique had ever darkened the door of Rose River Church since the sheep-fight. They went to Bay Silver.

Donna had turned and her large mournful eyes were roving listlessly over the rising assemblage. Then she saw Peter. He was in the pew behind her, having put his hands on either side of little Mrs Denby's plump waist and lifted her bodily out into the aisle to make way for him. Mrs Denby got the scare of her life. She talked about it breathlessly for years.

Peter and Donna had only a moment but it sufficed. He had planned exactly what to do and say. First he kissed Donna--kissed her before the whole churchful, under the minister's very eyes. Then he whispered:

"Be at your west lane gate at eleven o'clock tomorrow night. I'll come with a car. Can you?"

Donna hated the thought of eloping, but she knew there was nothing else to be done. If she shook her head Peter might simply vanish out of her life. Dear knows what he already thought of her for never sending him word or line. He couldn't know just how they watched her. It was now or never. So she nodded just as Drowned John turned to see what MacPhee was staring at. He saw Peter kiss Donna for a second time, vault airily over the central division of the pews and vanish through the side door by the

pulpit. Drowned John started to say "damn" but caught himself in time. Dandy Dark's pew was next to his and Dandy had taken to attending church very regularly since the affair of the jug. People knew he went to keep tabs on them. Dandy had a pew in both Rose River and Bay Silver Churches and said shamelessly that he kept them because when he wasn't in one church he would get the credit of being in the other. The attendance at both churches had gone up with a rush since Aunt Becky's levee. Mr Trackley believed his sermons were making an impression at last and took heart of grace anew.

Dandy gave Donna a little facetious poke in the ribs as he went past her and whispered:

"Don't go and do anything silly, Donna."

By which Donna understood that it really would injure her chances for the jug if she ran away with Peter. Even Uncle Pippin shook his head disapprovingly at her. As he said, when he left the church, their love-making was entirely too public.

Donna heard something from her father when she got home. It was a wonder they *did* get home, for Drowned John drove so recklessly that he almost ran over a few foolish pedestrians and just missed two collisions. Thekla had her say, too. The visiting cousins giggled, but old Jonas went out stolidly to feed the pigs. Donna listened like a woman in a trance. Drowned John wasn't sure she even heard him. Then she went to her room to think things over.

She was committed to eloping the next night. It was not exactly a nice idea to a girl who had been brought up in the true Dark tradition--darker than the very Darkest. She thought of all the things the clan would say--of all the significant nods and winks. When Frank Penhallow and Lily Dark had eloped Aunt Becky had said to them on their return, "You were in a big hurry." Donna would hate to have any one say anything like that to her. But she and Peter would not be returning. That was the beauty of it. One thrust and the Gordian knot of their difficulties would be forever cut. Then freedom--and love--and escape from dull routine and stodginess--Thekla's jealousy and Drowned John's continual hectoring--and Virginia. Donna felt

a pang of shame and self-reproach that there should be such relief in the thought of escaping from poor Virginia. But there it was. She couldn't *unfeel* it. Thirty-six hours and she must meet Peter at the west lane gate and the old scandal-mongers could go hang, jug and all. Luckily Thekla had gone back to her own room. Drowned John slept below. It would be easy to slip out. Had Peter thought she had gone off very terribly? Virginia said the tonsillitis had made her look ten years older. It was dreadful to have Peter kiss her before the whole congregation like that--dreadful but splendid. Poor Virginia's face!

Somehow or other, Sunday passed--and Monday morning--and Monday afternoon--though Donna had never spent such interminable hours in her life. She was glad that she was in such disgrace with her father and Thekla that they wouldn't speak to her. But that had begun to wear off by supper-time. Thekla looked at her curiously. Donna couldn't help an air of excitement that hung about her like an aura, and under the mauve shadows her cheeks were faintly hued with rose. A bit of amusement flickered in her sapphire eyes. She was wondering just what Thekla and Drowned John would say if they knew she was going to run away with Peter Penhallow that very night. Of course she couldn't eat--who could, under the circumstances?

"Donna," said Thekla sharply, "you haven't been putting on rouge?"

Drowned John snorted. He always had a fit of indignation when he caught a glimpse of Donna's dressing-table. Entirely too many fal-als for trying to be beautiful! Decent women didn't try to be beautiful. But if he had ever found or suspected any rouge about it, he would probably have thrown table and all out of the window.

"Of course not," said Donna.

"Well, your cheeks are red," said Thekla. "If you aren't painted you're feverish. You've got a relapse. I knew you would, going out so soon. You'll stay in bed to-morrow."

Donna grasped at the opportunity. She had been wondering if she and Peter could possibly get off the Island before Drowned John caught them. The Island was such a poor place to murder or elope. You were sure to be

caught before you could get away from it. But by dinner-time next day they would be safely off, and then a fig for Drowned John.

"I--I think I will. For the forenoon, anyway. You can call me for dinner. I'm sure I haven't any relapse--but I'm tired."

Really, Providence at last seemed to be on her side.

Everybody in Drowned John's household went to bed early. At nine the lights were out and the door locked. This did not worry Donna. She knew quite well where Thekla hid the key, sly as she thought herself about it. She was ready at half-past ten, with a small suitcase packed. She opened her door and peered out. Everything was silent. Thekla's door was shut tight. Down the hall old Jonas was snoring. Fancy any one snoring on this wonderful night. Would the stairs creak? They did, of course, but nobody seemed to hear. What would happen if she sneezed? Drowned John slept in the little cubby-hole off the dining-room and the key was in the blue vase on the clock shelf. Drowned John was snoring too. Donna shuddered. She hoped Peter didn't snore. She unlocked the door, stepped out, and closed it behind her. Really, eloping was ridiculously easy.

Donna fled through the orchard to the west lane gate. She had nearly half an hour to wait. The tall black firs about the gate came out against the starlit sky. There were dancing northern lights over the dark harbour. The white birches down the west lane seemed to shine with a silvery light of their own. The night was full of wonder and delight and a subtle beauty that was not lost even on the excited Donna, who had inherited from her silent little mother a love and understanding for such things which sometimes amused and sometimes exasperated Drowned John, who would have thought it all of a piece with Virginia's maunderings if he could have realized the happiness Donna felt over a sunlight-patterned river--a silver shimmer on the harbour--starlight over fir trees--a blue dawn on dark hills--daisies like a froth of silver on seaside meadows.

Donna waited, enjoying the night for a time. If Peter had only come when she was in that mood all would have gone well. Then she began to shiver in the cool shrewish wind of September darkness. The trees whispered eerily over her. There were strange rustlings and shadows in the

orchard. William Y.'s dog was exchanging opinions with Adam Dark's dog across the river. A roar swooped out of nothing--passed into nothing--a car had gone by. Donna shrank back into the shadow of the firs. Had they seen her? Oh, why didn't Peter come? Would she ever get warm again. She would catch her death of cold. She should have put on a heavier coat. It had been summer when she became ill. She hadn't realized that summer was gone and autumn here. Her courage and excitement ebbed with her temperature. Surely it must be eleven now. He had said eleven. If he didn't care enough for her to be on time--to avoid keeping her here in the cold half the night! Waiting--waiting. Donna knew how long time always seemed to one who was waiting. But even allowing for that, she was sure it must be nearer twelve than eleven. If he didn't come soon she would go back to bed--and then let Peter Penhallow propose eloping to *her* again!

Then she saw his lights--and everything was changed. There was his car coming up the west lane, with her destiny in it. If Thekla woke up she would see the lights from her window. God send she didn't wake up!

Peter caught her in his arms, exultantly.

"I've had the most devilish luck. Two flat tires and something wrong with the carburettor. I was afraid you'd have gone back--afraid you wouldn't be able to get out at all. But it's all right now. We've heaps of time. I allowed for delays. Listen--my plan is this: We'll motor to Borden and catch the boat. And we'll stop at the Kirtland manse and get Charlie Blackford to marry us. I've had the licence for days. Charlie's a good sort--I know him well. He'll marry us like a shot and make no bones if it is a few minutes before six. Once we're on the mainland--heigh-ho for New York in our own car--and we'll sail for South America from there. Girl of my heart, do you love me as much as ever. Lord, I could eat you. I feel famished. You're as lovely as dark moonlight. Donna--Donna--"

"Oh, Peter, don't smother me," gasped Donna. "Wait--wait--let us get away. I'm so afraid Father will come out. Oh, it seems I've been here for *years*."

"Don't worry. I'll settle him in a jiffy, now that I've got you out of the house. Donna, if you knew what I've been through--"

"Peter, stop! Let's get away."

Peter stopped, a bit sulkily. He thought Donna a trifle cool after such an agonizing separation. Surely she needn't grudge him a few kisses. He didn't realize how cold and frightened she really was or how endless had seemed her waiting.

"We can't get away for a minute or two. When I passed your Aunt Eudora's over there, young Eudora was in the yard saying good-bye to Mac Penhallow. We've got to wait till he's gone. Darling, you're shivering. Get into the car. It'll be warm there, out of this beastly wind."

"Put out your lights--if Thekla sees your lights--oh, Peter, it's rather awful running away like this. We've never done such things."

"If you are sorry it's not too late yet," said Peter in a changed, ominous voice.

"Don't be ridiculous, Peter." Donna was still cold and frightened and her nerves were bad after all she'd been through. She thought Peter might be a *little* more considerate. Instead, here he was being deliberately devilish. "Of course I'm not sorry. I'm only sorry it had to be like this. It's so--so *sneaky*."

"Well," said Peter, who had also been through something, especially with those fiendish tires, and had a good deal yet to learn about women, "what else do you propose?"

"Peter, you're horrid! Of course I know we must go through with it--"

"Go through with it. Is *that* how you look at it?"

Donna felt suddenly that Peter was a stranger.

"I don't know what you want me to say. I can't pick and choose words when I'm half frozen. And that isn't all--"

"I didn't think it would be," said Peter.

"You've been saying some funny things yourself--oh, I've heard--"

"Evidently. And listened, too."

"Well, I'm not deaf. You told Aunty But that--that--you let yourself be caught because you were tired of running."

"Good heavens, woman, I only said that to choke Aunty But off. Was I going to tell that old gossip I worshipped you?"

Donna had never really believed that he had said it at all. Now she felt as if she almost hated him for saying a thing like that in a clan like hers.

"As if I'd been *chasing* you--my friends have been telling me right along I was a fool."

If Donna had but known it, she was nearer having her ears boxed at that moment than ever in her life before. But Peter folded his arms and stared grimly ahead of him. What use was there in talking? Would that love-sick fool of a Mac ever get through making his farewells and clear out? Once they were on a clear road at fifty an hour Donna would be more reasonable.

"They'll think I was in such a hurry to run away like this--I know Dandy Dark will never give *me* the jug now--Aunt Becky always thought eloping was vulgar--"

The Spanish blood suddenly claimed right of way--or else the Penhallow temper.

"If you do get that filthy jug," said Peter between his teeth, "I'll smash it into forty thousand pieces."

That finished it. If it hadn't been for the jug this sudden tempest in a teapot might have blown off harmlessly, especially as Mac Penhallow's old Lizzie went clattering down the road at last. Donna opened the car door and sprang out, her eyes blazing in the pale starlight.

"Peter Penhallow--I deserve this--but--"

"You deserve a damn' good spanking," said Peter.

Donna had never sworn in her life before. But she was not Drowned John's daughter for nothing.

"Go to hell," she said.

Peter committed the only sin a woman cannot forgive. He took her at her word.

"All right," he said--and went.

Donna picked up the suitcase, which was lying where she had first set it down, and marched back through the orchard and into the house. She re-locked the door and put the key in the blue vase. Drowned John was still snoring--so was old Jonas. She got into her own room and into her own

bed. She was no longer cold--she was burning hot with righteous anger. What an escape! To think she had been on the point of running away with a creature who could say such beastly things to her. But of course one couldn't expect the Bay Silver Penhallows to have any manners. It served her right for forgetting she had always hated him. Virginia had been right--poor dear ill-used Virginia. But from henceforth forever-more, she, Donna, would be a widow indeed. Oh, how she hated Peter! As she hated everybody and everything. Hate, Donna reflected for her comforting, was a good lasting passion. You got over loving but you never got over hating. She thought of a score of stinging things she could have said to Peter. And now she would never have the chance to say them. The pity of it!

Peter tore across the country all night and caught the boat. So she had Drowned John's temper as well as his nose! He was well out of *that*--by the sacred baboon he was! He had no use for women who swore--not knowing how lucky he had been that Donna hadn't gone into hysterics instead of swearing. Serve him right for taking up with that family at all. Well, madness was finished and hurrah for sanity! Thank heaven, he was his own man again--free to wander the world over, with no clog of a woman tied round his neck. No more love for him--he was through with love.

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Donna was not the only woman of the clan to be out that night. Gay Penhallow was lying among the ferns in the birch grove behind Maywood, weeping her heart out at midnight.

There was a dance at the Silver Slipper that evening--the closing dance of the summer season, before the last of the guests left the big hotel down by the harbour's mouth. Noel had promised to come for Gay. Of late a little hope had sprung up in Gay's heart that everything was coming right between her and Noel again. They had had a little quarrel after that night when Gay had left Noel and Nan on the steps. Gay found herself put in the wrong. Noel was very angry over the way she had acted. A nice position she had put him in, Gay, all her little bit of pride now worn down by suffering, had apologized humbly and been grudgingly forgiven. She even felt a little happy again.

But only a little. Her pretty, dewy visions were gone never to return. There was always a little cold fear lurking deep down in her heart now. Day by day Noel seemed to drift further away from her. He wrote oftener than he came--and his letters had got so thin. When she hungered for the touch of his hand and the sound of his voice, with a hunger and longing that devoured her soul, came only one of those thin letters of excuse--from Noel, who only a few weeks ago had vowed he could *not* go on living ten miles away from her.

But she could not believe he meant to jilt her--her, Gay Penhallow of the proud Penhallows. Gay knew girls had been jilted--even Penhallow girls. But not so soon--so suddenly. Not in a few weeks after your lover had asked you to marry him. Surely the process of cooling off should take longer.

After she dressed for the dance that night she did a certain thing in secret. She hunted that old chain letter out of her desk and wrote three

neat, careful little copies of it. Enveloped and addressed and stamped them. And flung on her coat and slipped down to the post-office in the cool windy September twilight to post them. Who knew? After all--there might be something in it.

When she got back long-distance was calling. Noel couldn't come after all. He had to work in the bank that night.

Gay went out and sat down on the steps, huddled in her grey coat. Her little face with its piteous eyes, rose whitely over her soft fur collar. Roger found her there when he dropped in on his return from a sick-call.

"I thought you'd be at the Silver Slipper to-night," said Roger--who knew and was furious and helpless over certain things--more things than Gay knew. He looked down at her--this lovely, sensitive little thing who must be suffering as only such a sensitive thing could--with clenched hands. But he avoided her eyes. He could not bear the thought of looking into her eyes and seeing no laughter in them.

"Noel couldn't come," said Gay lightly. Roger was not to know--to suspect. "He has to work tonight. It's rather a shame, isn't it? Here I am 'all dressed up and nowhere to go.' Roger,"--she bent forward suddenly--"will you run me down to the Silver Slipper? It's only a mile--it won't take you long--I can come home with Sally William Y."

Roger hesitated.

"Do you really want to go, Gay?"

"Of course." Gay pouted charmingly. "A dance is a dance, isn't it--even if your best beau can't be there? Don't you think it would be a shame to waste these lovely slippers, Roger?"

She poked out a slender little golden foot in a cobweb of a stocking. Gay knew she had the daintiest ankles in the clan. But she was thinking wildly--desperately--she must be *sure*--sure that Noel had not lied to her.

Roger yielded. He did not know what Gay might find at the Silver Slipper but whatever it was she had better know it, hard as it might be. After all, it might not be Noel's car he had passed where the road turned down to the dunes.

Gay thanked Roger prettily at the door of the dance-hall and would not let him wait--or come in. She ran along the veranda with laughing greetings to the folks she knew, her eyes darting hither and thither from one canoodling pair to another in shadowy corners. Across the hall to the dance-room, with its rustic seats and its red lanterns. It was full of whirling couples, and Gay felt her head go around. She steadied herself against the door-post and looked about the room. Her head grew steadier, her lips ceased to tremble. There was no sign of Noel--or Nan. Perhaps--after all--but there was a little room off the dance-room--she must see who was in there. She slipped down the hall and stepped in. There had been laughter in it before her entrance--laughter that ceased abruptly. Several groups of young folks were in the room, but Gay saw only Noel and Nan. They were perched on the edge of a table where the punch-bowl was, eating sandwiches. To speak the strict truth, *one* sandwich, taking bites from it turn about. Nan, laughing shrilly in a daring new frock of orchid and mauve tulle--a frock that was almost backless--was holding it up to Noel's mouth when the general hush that followed Gay's entrance made her look around. A malicious, triumphant sparkle flashed into her eyes.

"Just in time for the last bite, Gay darling." She tossed it insultingly at Gay--but Gay was gone, sick and cold with agony to the depths of her being. Through the hall--over the veranda--down the steps. Out into the night where she could be alone. If she could just get away where it was dark and cool and quiet--no lights--no laughter--oh, no laughter! She thought everybody was laughing at her--at her, Gay Penhallow, who had been jilted. Unconsciously she clutched at the little gold bead necklace around her neck as she ran--Noel's gift--and broke it. The gold beads rolled like tiny stars over the dusty road in the pale autumn moonlight, but she never thought of stopping to pick them up. She knew if she ceased for a moment to run she would shriek aloud with anguish and not be able to stop. Some late-coming cars drenched the distraught little figure with their radiance and one narrowly escaped running her down. Gay wished it had. Would she never get away somewhere where no one could see her? The

road seemed endless--endless--she must keep running like this forever--if she stopped her heart would break.

Eventually she did get to Maywood. There was a light in the living-room. Her mother was there still. Gay couldn't face her. She couldn't face any one then. She was breathless and sobbing. Her pretty honey-hued gown hung about her in shreds, limp with dew, torn by the wild shrubs along the dune road. But that didn't matter. Dresses would never matter again. Nothing would matter. Gay found her tear-blinded way to a little ferny corner in the birch grove and flung herself down in it in a dreadful little huddle of misery. All the bitterness of all betrayed women was distilled in her young heart. The world had ended for her. There was nothing beyond--nothing. Nobody ever had suffered like this before--nobody ever would suffer like this again. How could she go on living? Nobody could suffer like this and live.

And it was all the fault of that horrible jug. Aunt Becky seemed to be laughing derisively at her from her grave. As all the world would soon be laughing--with the William Y. brand of laughter.

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Pennycuik Dark had decided that he must get married. Not without long and painful cogitations on the subject. For years Penny had believed he would always remain a bachelor. In his youth he had rather prided himself on being a bit of a lady-killer. He had then every intention of being married sometime. But--somehow--while he was making up his mind the lady always got engaged to somebody else. Before he realized it he had drifted into the doldrums of matrimonial prospects. The young girls began to think him one of the old folks and all the desirable maids of his own generation were wedded wives. The clan began to count Penny among its confirmed old bachelors. At first Penny had resented this. But of late years he had been well content. Marriage, he said, had no charms for him. He had enough money to live on without working, a comfortable little house at Bay Silver and a fairly good housekeeper in old Aunty Ruth Penhallow, a smart little car to coast about in, and two magnificent cats forever at his heels. First Peter and Second Peter, who slept at the foot of his bed and ate at his table. What more could matrimony offer him? He compared his lot complacently with most of the married men he knew. He wouldn't, he vowed, take any of their wives as a gift. As for a family--well, there were enough Darks and Penhallows in the world without his contributing any more. "Better let the cursed breed die out," Penny had growled irritably when Uncle Pippin rallied him about not being married. He liked to sit in church and pity Charlie Penhallow in the pew ahead, who had to buy dresses for seven foolish daughters and looked it. Penny's pity had a special flavour for him by reason of the fact that Mrs Charlie had been the only girl he had ever seriously considered marrying. But before he could make up his mind positively that he wanted her she had married Charlie. Penny told himself he didn't care, but when now, in his mellow fifties, he sat and recalled his old flames, like a dog remembering how many bones

he has buried, he did not linger on the recollection of Amy Dark. Which meant that the thought of her held a sting for him. Amy had been a pretty girl and was a pretty woman still, in spite of seven daughters and two sons, and sometimes when Penny looked at her in church he felt a vague regret that she hadn't waited until he had decided whether he wanted her or not.

But, on the whole, Penny's bachelor existence suited him very well. He was fond of saying he had "kept the boy's heart," and had no suspicion that the younger folks thought him a chronic valentine. He thought he was quite a dandy still, admired by all his clan. He could come and go as he liked; he had no responsibilities and few duties.

Nevertheless, now and then of late years, a doubt of his wisdom in remaining unmarried crept into his mind. Aunt Ruth was growing old and, with her heart, might drop off any time. What in thunder would he do for a housekeeper then? He began to feel rheumatic twinges in his legs, and remembered that his grandfather, Roland Penhallow, had been a cripple for years. If he, Penny, went like that, who would wait on him? And if the rheumatism went to his heart, as it had gone to Uncle Alec's, and he had no housekeeper, he might die in the night and nobody know of it for weeks. The gruesome thought of himself lying there alone dead for weeks was more than Penny could endure. Perhaps, after all, he had better marry before it was too late. But these fleeting fears might not have stirred him to action had it not been for Aunt Becky and her jug. Penny wanted that jug. Not because he cared a hang for the dingus itself but as a question of right. His father was Theodore Dark's oldest brother and his family ought to have it. And he felt sure he would have no chance of it if he remained unwedded. Aunt Becky had as good as said so. This tipped the balance in favour of matrimony, and Penny, with a long sigh of regret for the carefree and light-hearted existence he was giving up, made up his mind that he would marry if it killed him.

VIII

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It remained to decide on the lady. This was no easy matter. It should have been easier than it had been thirty years before. There was not such a wide range of choice, as Penny ruefully admitted to himself. He had no idea of marrying out of the clan. At twenty-five he had liked to toy with such a daring idea, but at fifty-three a sensible man does not take such a risk. But which of the old maids and widows should be Mrs Penny Dark? For old maid or widow it must be, Penny decided with another sigh. Penny was not quite a fool, in spite of his juvenile pretences, and he knew quite well no young girl would look at him. He had not, he said cynically, enough money for *that*. He balanced the abstract allurements of old maids and widows. Somehow, an old maid did not appeal to him. He hated the thought of marrying a woman no other man had ever wanted. But then--a widow! Too experienced in managing men. Better a grateful spinster who would always bear in mind what he had rescued her from.

Still, he would consider them all.

For several Sundays after he had made up his mind he went to both Rose River and Bay Silver Churches and looked all the possibilities over. It was an interesting experience. Much more fun than trying to count the beads on Mrs William Y.'s dress, which was how he had contrived for several Sundays to endure the tedium of the sermon. Penny felt quite youthful and exhilarated over it. He wondered slyly what Mr Trackley would think about it if he knew. And what excitement there would be among all the aforesaid possibilities if they dreamed what was hanging in the balance. Would Hester Penhallow in the choir look so sanctimonious and other-worldly if she knew that her chances of being Mrs Pennycuik Dark were being debated down in the pew? Not that Hester had much of a chance. Marry that terrible beak of a nose! Never! Not for forty jugs.

"I can't marry an ugly woman, you know," thought Penny plaintively. The rest of the old cats in the choir he dismissed without a second thought.

Edna Dark was ladylike but her face was too tame. Charlotte Penhallow was too dowdy and her mouth too wide. Violet Dark was handsome enough still--a high-coloured woman with small, light brown eyes and a nasal voice. Handsome but charmless. Penny felt that he could do without beauty and style but charm he must have. Besides, in the back of his mind was an unacknowledged doubt if she would take him.

Bertha Dark's face was presentable, but where did she get such thick legs? Penny did not think he could stand a pair of legs like that waddling up the church aisle after him every Sunday. Elva Penhallow had slim, dainty legs but Penny decided she was "too devout" for him. Religion was all very well--a certain amount became a woman--but Elva really had too much to make a comfortable wife. Wasn't there a story that she was so conscientious that she used to write down in her diary every night the time she had spent in idleness that day, and pray over it? Too strenuous--by far too strenuous.

Penny wondered how old Lorella Dark really was. Nobody ever seemed to know, beyond the idea that she was kind of thirtyish. She was a plump and juicy little person, and he would have picked her in a second if he had not been afraid that she was not yet old enough to have given up hope of any man except an old bachelor. Penny did not mean to run any risk of a refusal.

Jessie Dark might have done. But he had heard her say she liked cats "in their place." She would never believe their place was on the marriage-bed, of that Penny felt sure. First and Second Peter would forbid those banns.

Bessie Penhallow--no, quite out of the question. He couldn't endure the big mole with three long hairs on it she had on her chin. Besides, she was as religious in her way as Elva. She was--to quote Penny's phrase--a foreign-mission crank. The last time he had been talking with her she had told him that interest in Christian literature was increasing in China and had been peeved because he didn't get excited over it.

Mildred Dark, who was a stenographer in a law office in town and came home for the week-ends, was stylish and up-to-date. But what a terrible complexion of moth patches. It was very well to say all women were sisters under their skins--Penny wasn't quite sure whether that was in Shakespeare or in the Bible--but the skin made a difference, confound it.

As for her sister Harriet, who "went in" for spiritualism and declared she had a "spirit lover" on "the other side," let her continue to love spiritually. Penny had no intention of being her lover on *this* side. No spooky rivals for *him*.

Betty Moore would really have been his choice if she had been Dark or Penhallow. But one took too many chances in marrying a Moore. Emilia Trask had money but she had a temperish look. No, no, Dark or Penhallow it must be. Marriage was a risk at best, but better the devil you know than the devil you don't know.

There was Margaret Penhallow. She had been pretty and her eyes were still pretty. Mr Trackley said she had a beautiful soul. That was probably true--but her body was so confoundedly lean. Mrs Clarence Dark, now--ah, there was a fine armful of a woman for you! But she was a widow and there was a legend that she had once slapped her husband's face at prayer-meeting. And though Uncle Pippin had said that he would rather be slapped than kissed in public--as Andy Penhallow was--Penny could not see the necessity of either. After all, Margaret's figure was the more fashionable. All the young girls were skinny nowadays. None of the plump morsels he remembered in his youth. Where were the girls of yesteryear? Girls that *were* girls--ah! But Margaret was ladylike and gentle and would of course give up writing her silly poems when she had a husband. By the time Mr Trackley's sermon was finished Penny had decided that he would marry Margaret. He went out into the crisp sunshine of the October afternoon feeling himself already roped in and fettered. When all was said and done, he would have liked a little more--well--romance. Penny sighed. He wished he had got married years ago. He would have been used to it by now.

IX

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Big Sam was not particularly happy. Summer had passed; autumn was coming in; winter loomed ominously near. The Wilkins shanty was draughty and Big Friday Cove was a dod-gasted lonesome place. He was getting indigestion from eating his own cooking. Various clan housewives invited him frequently to meals, but he did not care to go because he felt that they were on Little Sam's side. Even the Darks and Penhallows were getting lax and modern, Big Sam reflected gloomily. They would tolerate anything.

But when Big Sam heard that Little Sam was going to see the Widow Terlizzick on Sunday nights, he was struck dumb for a time; then he turned himself loose on the subject to all who would listen.

"Wants to work another wife to death, I s'pose. I really would have thought Little Sam had more sense. But you can't trust a man who's been married once--though you'd think he'd be the very one to know better. And him the ugliest man in the clan! Not that the fair Terlizzick is any beauty, what with all them moles and her sloppy ankles. I'd say she looked like a dog-fight. And fat! If he had to buy her by the pound he'd think it over. She's been married twice already. Some folks never know when to stop. I'm sorry for Little Sam but it's certainly coming to him. I hear he waddles home from church with her. Next thing he'll be serenading her. Did I ever tell you Little Sam imagines he can sing? Once I says to him, says I, 'D'ye call that ungodly caterwauling music?' But the Terlizzicks never had any ear. Well, she'll have her troubles. I could tell a few things, if I wanted to."

None of the clan approved of the hinted courtship. To be sure, they had all long ago tacitly agreed that the Sams were in a class by themselves and not to be judged by the regular clan standards. Still, the Terlizzicks were a little *too* rank. But none of them took Little Sam's supposed matrimonial designs to heart as much as Big Sam. When he was observed standing on a

rock, waving his short arms wildly in the air, it was a safe bet that he was *not*, as heretofore, shouting his epic out to waves and stars, but abusing the Widow Terlizzick. She was, he told the world, a hooded cobra, a big fat slob, a rapacious female animal and a tigress. He professed profound pity for Little Sam. The poor fellow little dreamed what he was in for. He oughter have more sense! Taking two men's leavings! Huh! But them widows did bamboozle people so. And the Terlizzick had so much experience. Two husbands done-in.

All these compliments being duly reported to Little Sam and Mrs Terlizzick may or may not have pleased them. Little Sam kept his own counsel and brought up Mustard's three kittens ostentatiously. The white goddess of the morning still stood on the clock shelf but the dust had gathered on her shapely legs. When Father Sullivan started up another lottery at Chapel Point Little Sam said it oughter be stopped by law and what were the Protestants thinking of?

The Moving Finger

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I

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The sudden arrival "home" of Frank Dark and his sister Edna fell on the clan like a mild bombshell. Frank announced that Edna thought she had as good a right to the jug as anybody and had given him no peace until he consented to come. Dandy was his uncle and who knew? They would be in at the killing, anyhow. And he was about sick of the west. Guessed he'd sell out there and buy on the Island. Settle down for the rest of his life among his own folks.

"And marry a nice little Island girl," said Uncle Pippin.

"Sure," laughed Frank. "They're hard to beat."

But after he had left the store amused smiles were exchanged.

"Doesn't look any too prosperous," was the comment.

"He's gone to seed. They say he's been going the pace," said William Y. "Drank up everything he made a little faster than he made it."

"Too handsome to be any good when he was young. That always spoils a man," growled Sim Dark, who had certainly never been spoiled for that reason.

Joscelyn heard he was home the next evening just as she was starting for church. Aunt Rachel mentioned it casually to Mrs Clifford--"They say Frank Dark's home again"--and Joscelyn's head reeled and her universe whirled about her. For a moment she thought she was going to faint, and clutched wildly at the table to steady herself. Frank home--Frank! For a moment ten years folded themselves back like a leaf that is turned in a book and she saw herself, mist-veiled, looking into Frank Dark's handsome eyes.

"Ain't you ready yet, Joscelyn?" said Aunt Rachel fretfully. "We're going to be late. And if we are we won't get a seat. Everybody will be there to hear Joseph."

The Rev. Joseph Dark of Montreal was to preach in Bay Silver Church that night and naturally almost every Dark and every Penhallow would be there. They were very proud of Joe. He was the highest salaried minister in Canada--little Joe Dark who used to run around Bay Silver barefooted and work in the holidays for his wealthier relatives. They hadn't bothered their heads much about him then, but now his occasional visits home were events and when he preached in Bay Silver Church they had to put chairs in the aisles.

Joscelyn walked to the church with her aunt. It was on an October evening as warm as June. A frolicsome little wind was stripping all the gold from the maple trees. The western sky was like a great smoky chrysanthemum over hills that were soft violet and brown. A few early autumnal stars were burning over the misty, shorn harvest fields. A great orange moon was rising over Treewoofe Hill, bringing out a remote, austere quality in its beauty. There was a pleasant smell of damp mould from red ploughed fields. Everybody was ploughing now. Hugh had been ploughing on the big hill field up at Treewoofe all day. Joscelyn knew that he had always loved to plough that hill field. She had seen him from her window and wondered again if he were really going to sell Treewoofe. Every few weeks the rumour revived. Aunt Rachel had mentioned it again that day and it had fretted Joscelyn like a grumbling toothache. But everything was forgotten now in the shock of what she had just heard. She walked as one in a dream. She did not know whether she felt glad or sorry or exultant or--or--afraid. Ay, she *did* know. She was afraid. Suddenly and horribly afraid. Of seeing Frank.

She did not think there was any danger of seeing him that evening. He would be stopping with his brother Burton at Indian Spring and Burton never came to hear Joseph Dark preach. Joe Dark had married the girl Burt wanted and Burt always ascribed Joe's success in the ministry to the fact that he knew how to flatter the women. Besides, Burt always averred in his characteristic way that that old church at Bay Silver was lousy with fleas. As Uncle Pippin had once said, Burt Dark was a realistic sort of cuss.

But Joscelyn knew she would meet Frank somewhere and soon. And she was mortally afraid, with a sick, cold, dreadful fear.

They were late; when they reached the church the Reverend Joseph was praying and they waited in the porch that was full of other late-comers. The inner doors were tightly shut and only a sonorous murmur penetrated outwards. Joseph Dark had a beautiful voice and there was something in the faint, unworded rhythm of his prayer that soothed Joscelyn. She rather liked standing there in the porch, listening to it. One could fit one's own words, one's own needs, one's own desires to it.

She did not see Hugh at first. He was standing just behind her, gazing at her with smouldering eyes. Palmer Dark and Homer Penhallow were in the porch also. They had nodded amicably and mentioned the weather. Then they stood hating each other while Joseph prayed. The truce of the jug still held but underneath it the old dear feud rankled. Ambrosine Winkworth sailed in past them and streamed up the aisle, her head held high, her diamond ring on her ungloved hand. Ambrosine had no intention of waiting in the draughty porch until little Joe Dark, whom she had spanked in years gone by, had finished praying. He always prayed too proudly, anyway, Ambrosine thought. Ambrosine never wore gloves now, and she was the happiest woman in the church that night. Envious people said that the airs Ambrosine put on over that ring were simply ridiculous,

"Ain't she the fine lady now?" whispered Uncle Pippin, sitting on the third step of the gallery stair, beside Big Sam, who had come to find out if there were any truth in the story that Little Sam came to Bay Silver Church every Sunday night to walk home with the Widow Terlizzick.

"What a long tail our cat has," whispered Big Sam in return.

Back in the shadowy corner Stanton Grundy loomed, lean and taciturn. He had never been able to hear Joe Dark preach before. Something had always prevented. But now his chance had come to see the man his Robina had secretly loved all her life. Robina, who was now a handful of ashes in an urn in the churchyard outside--all ashes, even to the heart that had belonged to Joseph Dark instead of to its lawful owner, Stanton Grundy. Donna Dark and her father were there, although Drowned John was never

over-anxious to hear Joe preach. Not that he had anything against Joe. But he thought it might give him a swelled head if too many of his own clan went to hear him. However, Donna was set on coming and Drowned John gave in. Drowned John was by way of getting into the habit of giving in now and then to Donna. It eased things up a bit. In the month that had passed, gossip about Peter and Donna had died down. There had been a good deal of it at first and much wonderment as to why everything had stopped so suddenly. Drowned John did not vex himself wondering why. It was very simple. He had ordered Donna to discard the fellow and she had of course obeyed. Some thought Peter's behaviour that notable Sunday had disgusted Donna. Virginia thought that dear Donna's higher nature had reasserted itself. Though Virginia did not get a great deal of comfort out of that. Dear Donna was frightfully changed, there was no doubt about it. So cynical. She laughed at Virginia's sentimental memories. She said that if Barry had lived they would probably have fought like cat and dog, half the time. At home Donna's behaviour was rather like that of a ladylike tigress by times. Then Drowned John was driven to the reflection that life might have been more comfortable if he had let Peter have her. And there was no longer any fun in her. There had used to be a good bit when Virginia wasn't around. In short, she would, he confided to his pigs, neither gee nor haw.

Kate Muir was there, buxom and rosy and overdressed as usual, with the three little black curls every one made fun of lying sleekly and flatly on her forehead. Murray Dark was there, waiting impatiently for Joe to get through, that he might go in and look at Thora for an hour. Percy Dark and David Dark were there, but they glowered gloomily past each other. They had never "spoken" since their fight at the funeral and by heck, they never would speak, jug or no jug. Tempest Dark was there because he had been a crony of Joe's in boyhood and still liked the beggar in spite of his priestly ways.

All in all, it was an odd *mélange* of passions--hates and hopes and fears--that waited in the old church porch at Bay Silver for Joseph Dark to finish his seemingly interminable prayer.

Joscelyn had a love for Bay Silver Church--a tranquil old grey church among its sunken graves and mossy gravestones. She was glad the graveyard had never been ironed out and standardized like the one at Rose River.

Outside, the moon was shining calmly on the tombstones and the Moon Man was wandering about among them. Occasionally he stopped and told a dead crony something. Occasionally he bowed to the moon. Occasionally he would come to the porch door or a church window and peer in. Later on when the congregation sang he would sing, too. But he would never enter a church door.

"What's Joe so damn' long about?" thought Drowned John impatiently. He dared not swear in words but, thank God, thought was still free.

Frank Dark was in the porch, standing under the little hanging lamp, before Joscelyn saw him. He stood there, beaming rather fatuously around him. Joscelyn stared at him with eyes in which dawning horror struggled with amazement. *This* could not be Frank Dark--oh, *this* could never be the slim, gallant stripling to whom she had so suddenly lost her heart on her wedding night. *This* could not be the man she had loved in secret for ten years. *This!* Fat; half-bald; nose red; eyes puffy and bloodshot; sallow jowls; shabby. With failure written all over him. She saw him as he was; worse--as he had always been under all the charm of his vanished youth. Paltry--crude--cheap. She gazed at him in the stubborn incredulity with which we face the fact of a sudden death. It could not be! It could not be for *this* that she had torn Hugh's life in shreds and lost Treewoofe forever? Joscelyn wondered if it were she who was laughing--certainly some one was laughing. It was Hugh, behind her. A strange little laugh with nothing of mirth in it. So Hugh saw what she was seeing. Joscelyn wondered if there were any deeper depths of shame to which she could descend.

Hugh's laugh drew Frank's attention to them. He smiled broadly and came forward with outstretched hand, effusive and gushing.

"Hugh--and Joscelyn! How *do* you do! How *do* you do! My, it's good to see all you folks again. You don't look a day older, Joscelyn--handsomer

than ever. It don't seem possible it's ten years since I danced at your wedding. How time does fly!"

Joscelyn felt sure she was in a nightmare. She must wake up. This ridiculous, hideous situation couldn't be real. She saw Hugh shaking hands with Frank--Frank whom he had vowed to thrash if he ever set eyes on him again. Now he would disdain to do it. Joscelyn saw the disdain in his eyes--in his bitter mouth. Thrash this poor creature for whom his bride had thrown him over. The idea was farcical.

"And how's the family?" said Frank with a sly wink.

Something in the electric silence that followed gave Frank time to think. There was a titter from some ill-bred young cub by the door. Frank had never heard the sequel to the wedding at which he had danced. But he felt he had put his foot in it somehow. Probably they had no family and were sensitive about it. His tongue was always getting him into trouble. But hang it, if they hadn't a family they ought to have. Hugh needn't glower like that. As for Joscelyn, she had always been a high and mighty piece of goods. But she needn't be looking at him as if he were some kind of a new and fancy worm. The airs some people gave themselves made him tired.

The Reverend Joseph had concluded his prayer and with a sigh of relief the waiting group passed into the church. Joscelyn, who only wanted to run--and run--and run, had to follow Aunt Rachel in and sit quietly through a sermon of which she heard not one word. She felt as if she had been stripped naked to the gaze of a world that was laughing at her shame. It was of no avail to tell herself that no one but Hugh ever knew or suspected that she had loved Frank Dark--or something she had believed Frank Dark to be. The feeling of naked humiliation persisted. How Hugh must be mocking her! "You flouted me for this! What do you think of your bargain?"

Hugh was not thinking anything of the sort. He thought Frank Dark a pretty poor specimen of a man--not worth all the hatred he had lavished on him--but he did not know that Joscelyn saw what he did. After all, Frank was still handsome in a florid way and women's tastes were odd enough.

Hugh was another who did not hear much of Joseph Dark's sermon. All the old bitterness and anger of his wedding-night was surging up in his soul again. What a mess had been made of his life--through no fault of his own. There were a dozen girls he might have had; some of them were in the church that night. He looked at them all and decided that, after all, he'd rather have Joscelyn. Just as things were--Joscelyn with that glorious sweep of red-gold hair over her pale, proud face. If she were not his, at least she was no other man's. Nor could be. *She* could never divorce *him*. Hugh ground his teeth in savage triumph. Frank Dark should never get her--never!

Big Sam, with Little Sam sitting across from him, gazing at the buxom Widow Terlizzick like, Big Sam vowed to himself, an intoxicated dog, did not hear much of the sermon either. Which was a pity because it was a remarkably good sermon--brilliant, eloquent, scholarly. Joseph Dark's listeners sat spellbound. He played skilfully on their emotions--perhaps a shade too skilfully--and they responded as a harp responds to the wind. They felt caught away from sordid things to hill-tops of vision and splendour; life, for the time being at least, became a thing of beauty to be beautifully lived; and few there were who did not feel a throb of glad conviction when the speaker, leaning earnestly over the desk and addressing individually every member of his audience, said thrillingly:

"And never, even in your darkest and most terrible moments, forget that the world belongs to God," closing the Bible, as he spoke with a thunderclap of victory.

Of the few was Stanton Grundy. He smiled sardonically as he went out.

"The devil has a corner or two yet," he said to Uncle Pippin.

"Gosh, but that was a sermon though," said Uncle Pippin admiringly.

"He can preach," conceded Grundy grudgingly. "I wonder how much of it he believes himself."

Which was unfair to Joseph Dark, who believed every word he preached--while he was preaching it, at all events--and surely could not be justly blamed because Robina Dark had, all unasked, given him the heart that should have belonged only to her liege lord, Stanton Grundy.

"Frank Dark's got terrible fat," said Aunt Rachel as she and Joscelyn walked home. "He's following in the footsteps of his father. *He* weighed three hundred and fifty-two pounds afore he died. I mind him well."

Joscelyn writhed. Aunt Rachel had always possessed the knack of making everything she mentioned supremely ridiculous. Joscelyn's romantic love for Frank Dark was dead--dead past any possibility of a resurrection. It had died as suddenly as it had been born, there in the porch of Bay Silver Church. But she could have wished, for her own sake, to be able to look upon the corpse with some reverence--some pity--some saving wish that it could have been otherwise. It was dreadful to have to mock herself over dead love--to hear others mocking. Dreadful to think of having wasted on Frank Dark the years that should have been given to bearing Hugh's children and building a home for him and for them at Treewoofe. Dreadful to think that all the passion and devotion and high renunciation of those processional years had been squandered on a man who had simply become a person likely to "weigh three hundred and fifty-two pounds before he died." Joscelyn would have laughed at herself except for the fact that she knew if she began to laugh she would never be able to stop. All the world would laugh at her if it knew. Even the tall, wind-writhen lombardies against the moonlit clouds above William Y.'s place, seemed to be pointing derisive fingers at her. She hated the stars that twinkled at her--the chilly, foolish night-wind that whined mockingly--the round hill shoulders over the bay that were shaking with merriment. What was Aunt Rachel saying? Something about Penny Dark being more conceited than ever since he had got Aunt Becky's bottle of Jordan water.

"He needn't imagine he's got the only one in the clan."

Joscelyn felt that she wanted to do something very cruel. She wanted to make some one else feel a little of the pain and humiliation she was enduring.

"Oh, but he has, Aunt Rachel. I spilled your bottle of Jordan water long ago and filled it up with water from the barn pump. That's what you've been worshipping all these years!"

II

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One grey November evening Gay carried home a letter from Noel. When the postmaster had handed it out to her, her heart had given a suffocating bound, as it would do, she thought, if she were buried underground and Noel walked by her grave. It was a long time since she had had a letter from him. A long time since she had seen him--not since that bitter night at the Silver Slipper. She did not even hear much about him--her clan were surprisingly considerate in regard to that. Almost too considerate. Their avoidance of all reference to Noel was too pointed. Gay knew what it meant when everybody stopped talking as she entered a room. It hurt her--or her pride. For she had still some pride left in which she tried pitifully to wrap herself from what she thought was the half-pitying, half-contemptuous gaze of her little world. She felt as if every one must be watching her to see how she took it--watching her around corners--behind window-blinds--across the church.

And she had still a tormenting secret hope that all would come right yet. Noel *must* have loved her. It couldn't have been all pretence. He was just bewitched by Nan's daring and "differentness" and bold coquetry--by the way she could use her eyes. What if--Gay caught her breath as she hurried along--what if this letter were to tell her he had come to his senses--what if it were asking her to forgive him and take him back? Why else should he have written at all?

Gay flitted home like a little shadow through the melancholy moonlight of the late autumn night. The distant hills were cold and eerie in the chill radiance. The sea moaned hollowly down on the beach. A lonely wind was looking for something and moaning pitifully because it could not find it. It was a dead world--everything was dead--youth, hope and love were dead. But if Noel's letter only said what it might say there would be an immediate resurrection. Spring would come back even in grey

November and her poor, cold, dead, little heart would beat again. If Noel would only come back to her. She did not care how much he had hurt her--how rottenly he had used her--if he would only come back. Her pride was only for the world. She had no pride as far as Noel was concerned. Only a dreadful longing to have him back.

She went to her room, when she reached Maywood, and laid the letter on the table. Then sat down and looked at it. She was afraid to open it. She dared not open it yet--she would let herself hope a little longer. She thought of that evening in June when she had gone from Aunt Becky's levee to read Noel's letter among the ferns in the shadowy hollow of that little wayside nook. There had been no fear then. How could a few short months have made such a difference in anybody's life? She wondered dumbly if she could possibly ever have been the happy girl of the lovely apple-blossom-time. Then a whole universe of wonder had been hers, with the Milky Way for a lover's path. Now it had shrunk to a little room where a pale girl sat staring with piteous dilated eyes at a letter she was afraid to open.

She recalled the first time she had got a letter from Noel--all the "first times." The first time they had met--the first time she had danced with him--the first time he had called her "Gay"--the first time his smooth, flushed cheek had rested against hers--the first time she had poked her fingers through a little gold curl falling down on his forehead and saw it glistening on her hand like a ring of troth--the first time he had said, "I love you."

And then the first time she had doubted him--such a little, little doubt like a tiny stone thrown into a pool. The ripples had widened and widened until they touched the farthest shores of mistrust. And now she could not open her letter.

"I won't be such a coward any longer," said Gay passionately. She snatched it up and opened it. For a few minutes she looked at it. Then she laid it down and looked around her. The room was just the same. It seemed indecent that it should be just the same. She walked a little unsteadily to the open window and sat down on a chair.

Noel had asked her to release him from his engagement. He was "very sorry" but it would be foolish "to let a boyish mistake ruin three lives." He had "thought he loved her" but now he "realized that he had not known then what love was." There was a good deal more of this--Noel had so many apologies and excuses that Gay didn't bother to read them all. What did they matter? She knew what was in the letter now.

She sat at her window all night. She could not sleep and she did not want to sleep. It would be so terrible to awake and remember again. There was nothing in the world but cold, pale moonlight. Would she ever forget that dreadful white, unpitying moon above the waiting woods--the mournful sound of the wind rustling the dead leaves on the trees, this chilly November night? There was nothing left for her in life--nothing--nothing. It was just as the Moon Man had warned her--she had been too happy.

She thought the night would never end. Yet when the trees began to shiver in the wind of dawn she shrank from it. She could not bear this dawn--all other dawns she could bear but not this one. And it was such a wonderful dawn--a thing of crimson and gold and quivering splendour--of flames and wings and mystery--such a dawn as should break only over a happy world on a happy morning for happy people. It was an insult to her misery.

"I could live through this morning if there were to be no more mornings," thought Gay drearily. Those interminable mornings, stretching before her, year after year, year after year, till she was old and lean and faded and bitter like Mercy Penhallow. The very thought of them made Gay feel desperate. She shivered.

"Will I ever get used to pain?" she thought.

Gay told her mother quite calmly that afternoon that she had broken her engagement with Noel. Mrs Howard wisely said very little and less wisely made Gay's favourite cake with spice frosting for supper. It did not heal Gay's broken heart; it only made Gay hate spice cake for the rest of her life.

Mercy recommended fresh air and an iron tonic. William Y. said he hoped Noel Gibson would get enough of that little wasp of a Nan before she was through with him.

"Remember you're a Penhallow. They don't wear their hearts on their sleeves," cautioned Cousin Mahala kindly. Gay looked at her with sick eyes. She had gone on smiling, that day, before the clan until she could smile no more. But she did not mind Cousin Mahala seeing into her soul. Cousin Mahala *understood*.

"Cousin Mahala, *how* can I go on living? Just tell me how--that's all I want to know now. Because I *have* to live, it seems."

Cousin Mahala shook her head.

"I can't--nobody can. And you'd only think me heartless and unfeeling if I told you you'd get over this. But I will tell you something I've never told any one before. Do you see that little field over there between Drowned John's farm and the shore road? Well, I lay there among the clover all night, thirty years ago, agonizing because Dale Penhallow didn't want me. I didn't see how I was to go on living either. And now I never pass that field without thanking my lucky stars he didn't."

Gay shrank into herself. After all, Cousin Mahala didn't understand. Nobody understood.

Nobody but Roger. Roger came along that evening to find Gay huddled on the veranda steps in the twilight, feeling like some poor little cat freezing before a merciless locked door. She looked up at him with her terrible, tortured young eyes, over the fur of her collar as he sat down beside her, her face one little, white, pinched note of pain--the face that was meant for laughter.

"Gay--my poor little Gay," he cried. "What have they been doing to you?"

Gay laid her tired head down on his shoulder.

"Roger," she whispered, "will you take me for a drive in your car? A *fast* drive--I don't care how fast--a long drive--I don't care how long--right through the sunset if you like--and *don't talk to me*."

They had their long and fast drive--so fast that they nearly ran over Uncle Pippin at the turn of the Indian Spring road. He skipped nimbly out of their way and looked after them, chuckling.

"So Roger's out for the rebound," he said. "He always was a cool sort of devil. Knew how to wait."

But Uncle Pippin didn't understand either. Roger just then was feeling that it would be a delightful sensation to find Noel Gibson's throat between his fingers. And Gay wasn't feeling anything. She was numb. But that was better than suffering. She seemed to leave pain behind her as she swooped along the road, the lights flashing on dark woods and tossing trees and frosted ferns and alluring dunes--on--on--on through the night--across the world--not having to talk--not having to smile--conscious only of the sweep of free, cold wind in her face and Roger's dark strength beside her at the wheel. This big, quiet, gentle Roger, with his softly luminous eyes and his slim brown hands. It seemed the most natural thing in the world that he should be there beside her. When they went back--when they stopped--pain would run to meet her again. But this relief was blessed. If they need only never stop--if they could go on and on like this forever--over the hills--down into the valleys of night--along the windy shores of starlit rivers--past the curls of foam on long, shadowy beaches, in the beautiful darkness that was like a cool draught for a fevered soul to drink! If only they need never turn back!

III

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Pennycuik Dark was on his way to propose to Margaret Penhallow. Though he had made up his mind to do it in September, it was not done yet. Every morning Penny thought he would go up to Denzil's that evening and have done with it. But every evening he found an excuse to defer it. He might never have gone at all had it not been for the gravy stains on the table-cloth. Penny, who was as neat as one of his own cats, could not endure a mussy table-cloth. Old Aunt Ruth was getting inexcusably careless. It was high time the house had a proper mistress.

"I'll go this evening and get it over," said Penny desperately.

He dressed and shaved as for a solemn rite, wondering uneasily what it would be like to have some one there in the room, watching him shave.

"It may be all right when a fellow gets used to it," sighed poor Penny.

He walked up to Denzil's--no use wasting gas on a two-mile errand--wondering what the people he met would say if they knew what he was out for. Mrs Jim Penhallow's great flock of snowy geese in a dun, wet November field--white as snow in the autumnal twilight--hissed at him as he passed. Penny reflected that he might as well buy a goose for the wedding-supper from Mrs Jim as not. She might let him have it a bit cheaper, since they were first cousins.

At Denzil's gate he paused. It was not too late yet to back out. He might still return home a free man. But the gravy stains! And the jug! Penny lifted the gate latch firmly. The Rubicon was crossed.

"By ginger, this makes me feel queer," thought Penny. He found he was perspiring.

The amazing, the ununderstandable thing was that Margaret did not jump at him. When she had finally disentangled his meaning--for Penny went all to pieces at the crucial moment--forgot every word of the speech he had so carefully composed and rehearsed and floundered terribly--

realizing that Pennycuik Dark was actually proposing marriage to her, she asked rather primly for time to consider it. This flabbergasted Penny. He, who had not had the least doubt that he would go home an engaged man, found himself going home nothing of the sort. He was so indignant that he wished he had never mentioned the matter to her. Gracious Peter, suppose she wouldn't have him after all! Ridicule would be his portion all the rest of his life. And she had wanted a week to make up her mind--to make up her mind whether or no to marry *him*, Pennycuik Dark! Did any one ever know the like?

Margaret really passed as disagreeable a week as Penny did. One day she thought she would marry Penny; the next she thought she couldn't. In spite of her desire for marriage in the abstract she found that in the concrete, as represented by little dapper Penny Dark, it was not wholly desirable. It would have amazed Penny, who had no small opinion of his own good looks, had he known that Margaret thought his bodily presence contemptible and his chubby pimply little face positively ugly--and worse than ugly, rather ridiculous. To wake up every morning and see that face beside you. To listen to his funny vulgar stories and his great haw-haws over them! To hear him yelling to Baal if he had a hangnail. To think it a joke, as he still did, when he stuck out his foot and tripped somebody up. To be always called "Mar'gret."

Then she didn't like his fussy, lace-trimmed house. Too many jigarees on it. So different from little grey Whispering Winds, veiled in trees. Margaret felt positive anguish when she realized that marriage meant the surrender of all the mystery and music and magic that was Whispering Winds. She would be too far away from it even for occasional visits. She could never again nourish a dear, absurd little hope that it might sometime be hers.

And she must give up certain imaginary love affairs with imaginary lovers, such as she had been fond of dreaming. She felt that it would be wrong, when she was married, to dream those romantic love-affairs. She must "keep her only" to Penny then. And she knew he would never consent to her adopting a baby. He detested children.

But there were certain advantages. She would be a wedded wife with a home and social standing such as she had never possessed. Nobody would ever say to her again, "Not married yet--well--well?" She would have a car of her own to ride in--or her husband's own. Margaret reminded herself very sensibly that she could not expect to have a man made for her. She knew most of the clan would think she was in luck to get Penny. Yet, as she worked all that week at Sally Y.'s nasturtium-coloured chiffon dress, watching it grow to a thing of flame and loveliness under her fingers, she "swithered," as she expressed it. She just couldn't make up her mind to marry Penny, somehow. Finally she remembered that she would certainly have no chance of Aunt Becky's jug if she stayed an old maid. That tipped the balance. She sat down and wrote a note to Penny. Determined to infuse a little sentiment into her acceptance, she merely sent him a copy of some Bible verse--Ruth's immortal reply to Naomi. At first Penny didn't know what the deuce it meant. Then he concluded that she had accepted him. He and Second Peter looked at each other with an air of making up their minds to the inevitable.

He went up to see Margaret, trying to feel that it was the happiest day of his life. He thought it his duty to kiss her and he did. Neither enjoyed it.

"I s'pose there isn't any particular hurry about getting married," he said. "It's a cold time of year. Better wait till spring."

Margaret agreed almost too willingly. She had had her white night after she had mailed her letter to Penny. She went to Whispering Winds and walked about it until midnight to recover her serenity. But she was now resigned to being Mrs Pennycuik Dark. And she could have the winter to plan her trousseau. She would have a nice one. She had never had pretty clothes. Life, as far back as she could look, had been as dull and colourless in clothes as in everything else. She would have a wedding-dress of frost-grey silk with silvery stockings. She had never had a pair of silk stockings in her life.

Altogether Margaret was much more contented than Penny, who when he went home had to brew himself a jorum of hot, bitter tea before he

could look his position squarely in the face. Sadly he admitted that he was not as happy as he ought to be.

"Things," Penny gloomily told the two Peters, "will never be the same again."

The affair surprised the clan but was generally approved. "The jug's responsible for that," said Dandy Dark when he heard of it.

Margaret suddenly found herself of considerable importance. Penny was well-off; she was doing well for herself. She rather enjoyed this in a shy way, but Penny writhed when people congratulated him. He thought they had their tongues in their cheeks. The story went that when Stanton Grundy said to Penny, "I hear you're engaged," Penny had turned all colours and said feebly, "Well, it's not--not an engagement exactly--more like--like an experiment." But nobody knows to this day whether Penny really said it or not. The general opinion is that Stanton Grundy made it up.

The affair made less of a sensation than it might have, had it not coincided with Gresham Dark's discovery that his wife, after eighteen childless years, was going to present him with an heir. Gresham, who belonged to the excitable Spanish branch, quite lost his head over it. He rushed around, buttonholing people at church and auctions to tell them about it. The women of the clan could have killed him but the men chuckled.

"I suppose you can't blame *that* on the jug," said Uncle Pippin.

IV

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Early in December Frank Dark's engagement to Mrs Katherine Muir was announced in the local papers. It surprised nobody; all had seen in what quarter the wind was setting from the first week after Frank's arrival home. Frank, they thought, had feathered his nest well. Kate was a cut or two socially above what he had any right to expect. Her face was rather the worse for wear and she was a bit bossy. But she had the cash. That was what Frank was after. Of Kate's wisdom they had a poorer opinion. She was, it was thought, taking a risk. But Frank was not going west again. He was going to buy a farm--with Kate's money?--and settle down among his clan. He would likely go pretty straight, surrounded by such a cloud of witnesses. To be sure, on the day he married his plump widow, it was easy to see he was three sheets in the wind. But public opinion excused him. A man must have some courage, even if it were only Dutch courage, to tackle Kate.

It was reported that he was trying to get Treewoofe. Some said Hugh refused to sell and had snubbed Frank cruelly; others had it that he was considering the offer. Kate had always had a fancy for Treewoofe.

Joscelyn heard all the rumours with many others. She had not seen Frank since that night in Bay Silver Church, but gossip soon informed her that he was after Kate. Well, what did it matter? She had always despised Kate Muir. It was nothing to her whom this new Frank, red-nosed and puffy-eyed, married. But when she heard that he was going to buy Treewoofe a fresh agony possessed her. Frank at Treewoofe! Black, moustached little Kate mistress of Treewoofe! Joscelyn fled to her room to face the thought and found it could not be faced.

It had been a hard day for her. Her mother and Aunt Rachel had bickered almost continually, owing to Aunt Rachel's having upset her stomach eating something she should not. Aunt Rachel had been "on a

diet" ever since the night Joscelyn had told her about the Jordan water. She had fretted so over it that she grew ill and Roger had been called in. Joscelyn hated herself for having told Aunt Rachel--poor Aunt Rachel who had so little to make life worth living. She would have bitten her tongue out if that would have unsaid the fatal words. Nothing could unsay them; stricken Aunt Rachel took the bottle off the parlour mantel and buried it in the garden; then she proceeded to develop "stomach trouble," and Joscelyn soon had plenty of other reasons for wishing she had held her tongue. Aunt Rachel's stomach became the pivot about which all the meals revolved; they could not have this and they could not have that because "poor Rachel" could not eat it. If they had it "poor Rachel" could not resist the temptation and calamity followed. The previous evening company had come to tea and something extra had to be provided. Mrs Clifford had warned Rachel that the cheese soufflé would not agree with her stomach and Rachel had responded pettishly that she guessed it was her own stomach. To-day was the consequence and Joscelyn had to set her teeth to endure it--as a sort of penance because it was all her fault. But this news about Treewoofe was unbearable.

She looked up at it, lying in its mysterious silence of moonlit snow fields, with flying shadows from the passing clouds of the windy night sweeping over it, so that it now became almost invisible in the silver loveliness of the winter landscape, and again loomed suddenly forth at her on its white eerie hill in that cold ghostly moonlight. Was Hugh there? Was he going to sell Treewoofe? Was he going to get a divorce and marry Pauline Dark? The silence around her seemed verily to shriek these questions at her. And there was no answer.

It had been a hard autumn and winter for Joscelyn. She felt indescribably poorer. Life had tricked her--betrayed her--mocked her. And when her romantic infatuation, as she now bitterly saw it, had vanished, her old feeling for Hugh had come back. All at once he was dear--so dear. Not that she held any hope that matters could ever be put right between them. Hugh, she was sure, hated her now, if he did not actually despise her.

Besides, he was going to go to the States for a divorce and would marry Pauline. Everybody said so.

Joscelyn was racked with jealousy. She hated the very sight of Pauline. She felt that Pauline already pictured herself as Hugh's wife and mistress of Treewoofe. She remembered how she had seen Hugh and Pauline talking together at Aunt Becky's funeral and looking up at Treewoofe. But it was still more dreadful to think of Frank and Kate being there. That was desecration. As long as Hugh was at Treewoofe, even with Pauline, Joscelyn would not feel so helplessly bereft. Every day and night she looked up at Treewoofe, loving and craving it the more intensely that she dared not let herself love and crave Hugh. She saw it on stormy days, with swirls of snow blowing around it--under frosty sunsets when its light burned like jewels over the rose tints of the snowy fields--on mild afternoons when the grey rain wrapped it like a cloak--in the pale gold and misty silver of early, windless mornings. Always it was there, her home--her real and only home--luring, repellent, scornful, desirable by turns. Her home from which she must always be an exile through her own folly. Pauline would be there--or fat, giggling Kate. Joscelyn gritted her strong white teeth. A mad impulse assailed her. Suppose she went to Hugh--now--when he was sitting alone in that lonely house with the winter wind blowing around it--and flung herself at his feet--asked him to forgive her--to take her back--humiliated herself in the very dust? No, she could never do that. She might if she had any hope he still cared. But she knew he didn't. He was in love with Pauline now--everybody said so--Pauline with her slim darkness and her long velvety eyes. She, Joscelyn, was a woman without love--without a home--without roots. She must spend the rest of her life forever beating with futile hands at closed doors. An old line of poetry, read long ago and forgotten for years, flickered back into memory:

Exceeding comfortless and worn and old
For a dream's sake.

Yes, that had been written for her. "For a dream's sake." And now the dream was over.

"Joscelyn," wailed Aunt Rachel from the hall, "I wish you'd fill the hot-water bottle and bring it up and lay it acrost my stomach. If that don't help you'll have to phone for Roger. And I suppose he'll be off joy-riding with Gay Penhallow. It's off with the old love and on with the new mighty easy nowadays. People don't seem to have any deep feelings any more. Aunty But's just been in on her way to Gresham's. They've sent for her three times already on false alarms, but she guesses this is genuine. She says Gresham was yelling over the phone as if 'twas him was having the baby 'stead of his wife. She says she knows for a fact that Aunt Becky's jug is to be raffled off. Dandy got stewed at Billy Dark's silver wedding and let it out. Raffling's immoral and oughter be stopped by law."

"Dandy didn't get drunk at the wedding," said Joscelyn wearily. "He took an overdose of painkiller to cure a stomach-ache before he went and it made him act very queerly; but he kept fast hold on his secrets, Aunt Rachel."

"It's awful what stories get around," sighed Aunt Rachel. "And Aunty But says Mar'gret Penhallow's getting a lot of silly, fashionable clo'es to be married in. Mar'gret wants taking down a peg or two, and if my stomach was what is used to be"--Aunt Rachel gave a hollow groan--"I'd go and do it. But somehow I can't get up much pep nowadays--living on slops."

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Likely Gay was "joy-riding" with Roger the night Aunt Rachel's stomach was acting up. If not, it was a safe wager that Roger was talking to her in the living-room at Maywood, with a driftwood fire dreaming dreams of fairy colours in the grate and a maddeningly complacent mother painstakingly effacing herself as soon as he came. Gay, who couldn't bear to be alone with herself, did not know what she would have done through that terrible autumn and winter without Roger.

By night she was still given over to torture but by day she had achieved self-command. The clan had decided that she hadn't cared so much for Noel Gibson after all. They thought she had taken it pretty well. Gay knew they were watching her to see how she did take it and she held her head up before the world. She would not give all those heartless gossipers food for talk. She would not let them think she knew of their whispers and their curious eyes. She did not laugh very much--she who had always been a girl of the merriest silver laughter--and Stanton Grundy said to himself, as he looked at her in church, "The bloom's gone," and, old cynic though he was, thought he would enjoy "booting" Noel Gibson. Some of the clan thought Gay was "improved" since certain little airs and graces had been dropped. All in all, they did not talk or think about her nearly as much as sensitive little Gay thought they were doing. They had their own lives to live and their own loves and hates and ambitions to suffer and scheme and plan for. And, anyway, Roger could be trusted to handle the situation.

At first, when they went riding, Gay wanted to go in silence--silence in which a hurt heart could find some strength to bear its pain. But one night she said suddenly,

"Talk to me, Roger. Don't ask me to talk--I can't--but just talk to me."

Roger, to his own surprise, found that he could. He had never talked much to Gay before. He had always felt that he could talk of nothing that

would interest her. There had been such a gap between her youth and his maturity. But the gap had disappeared. Roger found himself telling her things he had never told anybody. He had never talked of his experiences overseas to any one but he found himself relating them to Gay. At first Gay only listened; then, insensibly, she began to talk, too. She took to reading the newspapers--which worried Mrs Howard, who was afraid Gay was getting "strong-minded." But Gay only wanted to learn more about the things Roger talked of, so that he would not think her an empty-headed goose. She had, without realizing it, come a long, long way from the tortured little creature who had lain under the birches, that September night, and cried her heart out. No longer an isolated, selfish unit, she had become one with her kind. She had realized what some one had called "the infinite sadness of living" and the realization had made a woman of her. Her April days were ended.

There was a sad peace in knowing nothing could ever happen to her again--that life held nothing for her but Roger's friendship. But she would always have that; and with it she could face existence. How splendid Roger was! She had never half appreciated him before. Tender--strong--unselfish. Seeing the best in everybody. He told her things about the clan she had never known before--not the petty gossip everybody knew or the secret scandals Aunt Becky and her ilk knew--but noble things and kindly things and simple, wholesome things that made Gay feel she came of a pretty decent stock, after all, and must live up to the traditions of it. It was amazing how good people really were. Even her own Darks and Penhallows whom she had laughed at or disliked. Who would have supposed that Mercy Penhallow, malicious Mercy who was afraid to be out after dark--perhaps for fear of the ghosts of reputations she had slain--could have been a perfect heroine during the terrible Spanish flu epidemic? Or that William Y., who held the mortgage on Leonard Stanley's farm, should, when Leonard died, leaving a wife and eight children, have gone to Mrs Leonard--pompously, because William Y. couldn't help being pompous--and torn the mortgage to pieces before her eyes? Or that shrinking little Mrs Artemas Dark, seeing that big bully of a Rob Griscom

at the harbour cruelly beating his dog one day, had flown through the gate, snatched the whip from the thunderstruck Griscom, and whipped him around and around his own house until he had fallen on his knees before her and begged for mercy?

And--Gay thought it suddenly one evening before the driftwood fire--what nice dimples Roger had in his thin cheeks when he smiled!

Still, Gay had her bad hours--hours when her heart ached fiercely for her lost happiness--hours when she wanted nothing but Noel. If she could only wake and find it all a dream--if she could only feel his arms about her again and hear him saying he loved her and her only! She wanted to be happy again. Not just this dull resignation with the moonlight of friendship to show the narrow path of life. She wanted love and full sunshine and--Noel. Everything was summed up in Noel. And Noel was with Nan.

Gay saw nothing of Nan now. Mrs Alpheus had found herself no longer able to endure the dullness of Indian Spring and had taken an apartment in town. She never saw Noel either. She wondered when he and Nan would be married and how she could get out of going to the wedding. Nan would invite her, she was sure of that. Nan who had told her so confidently that she was going to take Noel from her. And Gay had been so sure she couldn't. Oh, poor little fool!

"Life isn't fair," said Gay, her lips quivering. For an hour she would be nothing but little, jilted, heartbroken Gay again, only wanting Noel. If he would only come back to her! If he would only find out how selfish and vain and--and--empty Nan was! Nan couldn't love anybody--not really. Of course she loved Noel after a fashion--nobody could help loving Noel--but never, never as Gay loved him.

There came an evening at the end of a blustery March day when Mercy Penhallow told Mrs Howard that Mrs Alpheus had told her that Noel and Nan would be married in June. There was to be a clan church wedding with bridesmaids in mauve taffeta, tulle hats of mauve and pink, and corsage bouquets of pink sweet peas. Nan had everything planned out to the smallest detail. Also her house. She was even, so Mercy said, going to

have sheets in her guest-room to match her guests' hair--nile-green for red hair, orchid for brunettes, pale blue for golden hair. And all the furniture was to be extremely modern.

"I expect she's even got the nursery planned out," said Mercy sarcastically.

Mrs Howard did not tell Gay about the nile-green and orchid sheets or the mauve and pink bridesmaids but she did tell her of the wedding. Gay took it quietly, her eyes growing a little larger in her small white face. Then she went up to her room and shut the door.

Why had she kept hoping--hoping? She must have been hoping, else this would not twist her heart-strings so. She took a bundle of Noel's letters out of her desk. She had never been able to burn them before but she must do it now. Here they all were--the ones he had written her first on top--fat, bulging letters. They grew thinner and thinner. The later ones were pitifully thin. Still, they were from Noel. Something of his dear personality was in them. *Could* she burn them? An old verse came into her head--a verse from a sentimental poem in an old faded scrapbook of her mother's. There had been a time when Gay had thought it so lovely and sweet and sad. She quoted it now about Noel's letters, feeling that it was very appropriate.

"Yes--yes," said poor Gay trembling,

Yes, the flames the link shall sever
Their red tongues will never tell,
When I've crossed the mystic river
They will keep my secret well.

She laid Noel's first letter in the grate and held a lighted match to it. The little flames began to eat it greedily. Gay dropped the match and covered her face. She couldn't bear to look at it. She *couldn't* burn those dear letters. It was too much to ask of herself. She snatched up the rest of them, her body racked by painful little sobs, and hurried them back into her desk. They were all she had left. Nobody could blame her for keeping them.

She sat at her window for awhile before she went to bed. A red, red sun was sinking between two young spruces in Drowned John's hill pasture. After it disappeared there came the unearthly loveliness of a calm blue winter twilight over snow. A weird moon with a cloud-ribbed face was rising over the sad, dark harbour. Winter birches with stars in their hair were tossing all around the house. There was a strange charm about the evening. She wished Roger could see it with her. He loved evenings like this. There had been a little snow that day, following on the heels of the mad galloping March wind, and the hedge of young firs to the left of the house were white with it. Something about them made her think of the apple blossoms on the day of Aunt Becky's levee. How happy she had been then. And it had all gone with the apple blossoms.

"I feel so old," said Gay, looking particularly young and piteous.

VI

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Little Brian Dark was alone in his kitchen loft one night in late March, looking out on a landscape that was black and ugly in the ugliest time of year--when the winter whiteness has gone, leaving only the bare bones of the world exposed to view. There was a cold, yellow strip of sky in the west under a sullen, cloudy sky, hanging over frozen fields. The trees looked as if they could never live again.

Brian, as usual, was lonely and hungry and tired. As long as the light lasted he had consoled himself by looking at the gorgeous pictures of good things to eat in the advertising pages of a pile of old magazines under the eaves. What curly, delicious strips of bacon--what tempting muffins--what mouth-melting cakes with icing! Were there really people in the world--perhaps little boys--who ate such delicious things?

The lamp in the Dollar living-room was out but a light burned in the little room upstairs looking out on the kitchen roof. Brian knew that Lennie Dollar slept there; he had envied Lennie all winter because he had such a warm cosy little room to sleep in. Often during the past winter Brian had wished he could snuggle in there, too. The loft was always cold, but it had been colder this winter than ever because in the preceding autumn Brian had accidentally broken one of the window-panes and Uncle Duncan and Aunt Alethea were so angry with him because of his carelessness that they would not replace it. Brian had stuffed an old sweater in it but that did not keep all the extra cold out.

Yet Brian was not so entirely friendless as he had been. There was Cricket. One little white blossom of love had begun to bloom in the arid desert of his unwelcome existence. Cricket would soon come now. He pulled out the old sweater before he lay down on his bed, so that Cricket could get in.

He lay there expectantly, listening to the eerie sounds the spruce trees made outside in the dark. It was time Cricket came. Surely Cricket would come. Surely nothing had happened to Cricket. Brian lived in daily terror that something would happen to Cricket.

Cricket had been coming every night for three weeks. He had been there alone one night, very lonely and unhappy as usual. Aunt Alethea had been angry with him and had sent him supperless to bed. He looked out of the window. The sky was sharp and brilliant, the stars cold and bright. He was such a little fellow to be all alone in a great, lonely world. He had prayed to his dead mother in heaven for food and comfort. He was afraid that God, even a young God, might be too busy looking after more important things to bother about him, but Mother would have time. Brian knew a little about his mother now. One day he had met the old Moon Man on his ceaseless quest and the Moon Man had stopped and beckoned to him. Brian's knees knocked together as he obeyed. He did not dare disobey, although he went in such terror of the Moon Man. And then he found the Moon Man was looking down at him with gentle, kind eyes.

"Little Brian Dark, why are you so frightened of me?" asked the Moon Man. "Have they been telling you false, cruel things about me?"

Brian nodded. He could not speak but he knew now the things *were* false.

"Don't believe them any longer," said the Moon Man. "I would hurt nothing, much less a child. Laura Dark's little child. I knew your mother well. She was a sweet thing and life hurt her terribly. Life is cruel to us all but it was doubly cruel to her. She loved you so much, Brian."

Brian's heart swelled. This was wonderful. He had often wondered if his mother had loved him. He had been afraid she couldn't, when he was such a disgrace to her.

"She loved you," went on the Moon Man dreamily. "She used to kiss your little face and your little feet and your little hands when nobody saw her--nobody but the poor crazy old Moon Man. And she took such good care of you. There wasn't any baby taken such good care of, not even the rich folks' babies that came through a golden ring."

"But I hadn't any right to be born," said Brian. He had heard that so often.

The Moon Man looked at him curiously.

"Who knows? *I* don't think Edgley Dark had any right to be born when his mother hated and despised his father. But the clan thinks that is all right. It's a strange world, Brian. Good-night. I cannot stay longer. I have a tryst to keep--she's rising yonder over that dark hill, my beautiful Queen Moon. We all must have something to love. I have the best thing of all--the silver Lady of the skies. Margaret Penhallow has a little grey house down yonder--foolish Margaret who is going to marry and desert her dream. Chris Penhallow loves his violin. He's given it up just now for the sake of an old shard but he'll go back to it. Roger Dark and Murray Dark, foolisher still, loving mortal women, disdaining the wisdom of the moon. But not so foolish as if they didn't love anything. What have you to love, Brian?"

"Nothing." Brian felt the tears coming into his eyes.

The Moon Man shook his head.

"Bad--very bad. Get something to love quick--or the devil will get hold of you."

"Mr Conway says there isn't any devil," said Brian.

"Not the devil of the Darks and Penhallows--no, there's no such devil as that. You needn't be afraid of the clan devil, Brian. But get something to love, child, or else God help you. Good-night. I'm glad I've met you."

Brian was glad, too, although he didn't understand more than half the Moon Man had said. Not only because one fear, at least, had gone out of his life but because he knew that his mother had loved him--and had taken good care of him. That seemed wonderful to Brian, who could not remember any one taking care of him in his life. It must be very sweet to be taken care of.

So he had prayed to his mother, thinking that perhaps she might be able to take a little care of him yet if she knew he needed it so much. Then he had lain down on his poor bed, forgetting to stuff the sweater in the window. Presently there was a little scramble on the roof of the porch

outside the loft, a dark little body and two moon-like eyes for a moment poised on the sill against the dim starlight--then a leap to the floor--the pad of tiny paws--a soft furry thing nestling to him--a silken tongue licking his cheek--a little body purring like a small dynamo. Cricket had come.

Brian gathered the little creature in his arms in rapture. He loved cats and Aunt Alethea would not have one around the place. Now he had a kitten of his own--a dear striped grey thing after his own heart, as he discovered when the dawn came. The kitten stayed with him all night but at the first hint of daylight it was off. Brian thought sadly he would never see it again. But every night since then it had come. Brian had no idea where it came from. It did not belong to the Dollars and there was no other house near. He believed his mother had sent it. She was still taking care of him.

Brian loved the little cat passionately and knew it loved him. It purred so ecstatically when he petted it. What comfort and companionship he found in it! He was no longer afraid of the rats. They never dared come out when Cricket was there. And he was no longer lonely. He saved bits from his own scanty rations for Cricket, who was thin and evidently got none too much food, although occasionally he would bring a mouse in his own little jaws and eat it daintily on the loft floor. How Cricket enjoyed those morsels and how Brian enjoyed seeing him enjoy them, licking his small chops after them as if to salvage every ghost of flavour. Brian was desperately afraid his aunt would find out about Cricket. Suppose Cricket were to come in the day? But Cricket never came by day. Just at night he came to bring a message of love to a lonely child who had no friends.

And this night, too, Cricket came, just as Brian was beginning to feel really frightened that he was not coming.

"Darling Cricket," Brian reached under his flat chaff pillow and drew out the bit of meat he had saved from his dinner. Hungry as he was himself, he never thought of eating it. He listened with a heart full of happiness to Cricket crunching it in the darkness and fell asleep with the kitten cuddled on his breast.

VII

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It was spring again and Gay Penhallow was walking over a road she had walked with Noel a year ago--and remembering it. Calmly remembering it! Gay had reached the stage where she remembered these things calmly, as things that had happened long ago to somebody who was a quite different person. Some of the old sweetness had come back into life. One couldn't be altogether hopeless in spring. She was actually enjoying the charm of the May evening; she was conscious of the fact that she had on a very becoming new dress of young-leaf green with a little scarlet sweater. She wondered if Roger would like it.

All the familiar things that had once made life sweet were beginning to make it sweet again. Yet there was always that little heartache under it all. A year ago she and Noel had walked down this road on just such an evening. There had been a misty new moon, just as to-night; there had been the same gay little wind in the tree-tops and the same little smoky shadows under the young, white, wild cherry trees. And their steps and hearts had beaten time together and Gay had been thrilled with a rapture she would know no more.

She saw old Erasmus Dark whitewashing the trunks of his apple trees as she passed by his orchard, and envied him a little--done with all passions of life. Drowned John, Uncle Pippin and Stanton Grundy were talking at the latter's gate as she went by. Gay smiled at Uncle Pippin, whom she liked, and the radiance of it fell alike over Drowned John, whom she liked only moderately, and on Stanton Grundy, whom she did not like at all because he always seemed to be so cynically sceptical of the existence of things that were pure and lovely and of good report. She did not know that Grundy's glance followed her admiringly.

"An eyeful, eh--an eyeful," he remarked, nudging Uncle Pippin.

Drowned John nodded agreement. A thoroughbred, every inch of her. Showed her knees too much, of course. But at any rate knees that could be shown. Not like Virginia Powell's knees--knocks that affronted the daylight.

When Roger's car flashed past them and picked up Gay at the curve of the road, the three weather-beaten old farmers smiled quite sympathetically.

"Looks as if that would be a match yet," said Grundy.

"Fine--fine--except--isn't he a *little* too old for her?" asked Uncle Pippin anxiously.

"A husband older than herself would be a good thing for Gay," said Drowned John.

"If she marries Roger, will it be for love or loneliness?" queried Grundy dryly.

"Love," said Drowned John, with an air of knowing all about it. "She's in love with Roger now, whether she knows it or not."

"I reckon she *can* love," said Grundy. "Some women can love and some can't, you know--just as some can cook and some can't."

"Well, it's a good thing kissing never goes out of fashion," said Uncle Pippin.

Roger thought Gay looked like a slim green dryad as she stood against the trees at the curve in the road. In spite of the new moon and the shadows and the faint stars, she made him think of morning. There was always something of the dawn about her; her very hair seemed to laugh; the little rosy lobes of her ears looked like unfolded apple blossoms. And she was gazing at him with just the very eyes a dryad should have.

"Hop in, Gay," he ordered laconically. Gay hopped, thinking what a delightful voice Roger had, even when he spoke curtly.

"Going anywhere in particular?"

"No. I just came out for a walk to escape Mrs Toynbee. She was at Maywood for supper and I nearly died of her."

"It's only female mosquitoes that bite," said Roger cheerfully.

"Where'll we go?"

"The shore road and step on the juice," laughed Gay.

The shore road. Had Gay forgotten the last time they went along it? They whirled past the blueberry barrens and the maple clearings, past the Silver Slipper and the big empty hotel, on down to where the dunes lay, darkly soft against a silvery sea. Roger stopped his car and they sat in silence for awhile--one of those silences Gay loved. It was so easy to be silent with Roger. There had never been any silence with Noel--Noel was too much of a talker to like silence.

The moon had gone down and the world lay in the starlight. Starlight is a strange thing and not to be taken as a matter of course. Roger suddenly fell under its magic and did something he hadn't seen himself doing for a long time yet.

"Gay," he said coolly, "I always do one wild thing every spring. I'm going to do this spring's tonight. I'm going to ask you to marry me."

Gay flushed beautifully--then turned very white.

"Oh, Roger--must you?" she said.

"Yes. I must. I can't stand this any longer. Either you've got to marry me, Gay--or we must stop--all this."

"All this." All their jolly drives and talks together. All the vivid companionship that had helped her through the otherwise unbearable months behind. Gay felt desperately that she could not lose it. She was so afraid of life. It is dreadful and unnatural to be afraid of life in youth. But it had played her such a trick. She must have some one to help her face it again. She didn't want to marry any one, but if she had to, it might as well be Roger. He needed some one to take care of him--he worked so hard.

"You know I don't--love you, Roger," she whispered. "Not in *that* way."

"Yes, I know. That makes no difference," said Roger mendaciously.

"Then--" Gay drew a long sigh--"then I'll marry you, Roger,--whenever you please."

"Thank you, dear," said Roger in a strangely quiet voice. Inside he was a seething volcano of joy and exultation. She would be his--his at last. He'd soon teach her to forget that popinjay. Love him. She'd love him fast enough--he'd see to that, when the time came. Gay, darling adorable little

Gay was his, with her wind-blown curls and her marigold eyes and the slim little feet that were made for dancing. Roger could have knelt and kissed those little feet. But he did not even kiss her lips. Only her little hands when he lifted her from the car at the end of their drive. Roger was wise--the time for kisses had not come yet. Gay was glad he did not kiss her. Even yet her lips seemed to belong to Noel. She went up to her room very quietly and sat for a long time behind her white curtains. She felt a little tired but content. Only she wished she could just find herself married to Roger without any preliminaries. The clan would be so odiously pleased. Their complacency would be hard to bear. What was it Mercy had said to her one day lately--"You'll find Roger will be the best for keeps?" No doubt he would be, but Gay knew if Roger and Noel were standing there before her, hers for the taking, to which one she would turn. Yet Roger, knowing this, still wanted to marry her.

Gay did one foolish secret thing before she went to sleep. She took the little rose-bowl, where the last rose leaves had been dropped on the night she was engaged to Noel, and went down with it to the gate at the side of the garden. The field before her was Artemas Dark's and the garden behind her was her mother's. But this wee green corner was hers; she dug out a hole under the trees with a trowel and buried the little rose-jar, patting the earth on the grave tenderly. All her childhood and girlhood were in it--all the happiness she had ever known. No matter what life held for her with Roger, there would be no more rose leaves for the little Wedgewood jar. It was sacred to something that was dead.

VIII

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Penny and Margaret were not married yet. It was to have been in the spring; but when spring came Penny thought they'd better put it off to the fall. There were some alterations to make in the house; a new porch should be built and a hardwood floor laid in the dining-room. Margaret was very willing. She was no more eager for the happy day than Penny was.

In reality Penny was a rather miserable man. At times he fairly oozed dejection.

"Dash it," he informed the two Peters gloomily, "I've lost my enthusiasm."

He didn't want to break up his old habits--his comfortable ways of life. As for Aunt Ruth, certainly she had her faults. But he was used to them; it would be easier to put up with them than to get used to Margaret's new virtues. There wasn't really any danger of his dying in the night. He was good for twenty years yet.

He began to have horrible nightmares, in which he really found himself married--sewed up fast and hopelessly. It was an infernal sensation. He began to lose weight and a hunted look came into his eyes. Margaret was quite unconscious of this but the clan at large were not so blind, and bets were exchanged at the blacksmith's forge as to whether Penny's affair would ever come to a climax or not. The odds were against it, the general opinion being that Penny was simply stringing Margaret along until the matter of the jug should be decided.

"*Then* he'll squirm out of it some way, slick and clever," said Stanton Grundy. "Penny's nobody's fool."

Penny, however, felt like a fool. And when the incident of the merry-go-round occurred he felt more keenly than ever that Margaret would never do for a wife.

The merry-go-round affair did make considerable of a stir. More people than Penny were scandalized. It was certainly an odd thing for a woman of Margaret's age to do. Had she no dignity? No sense of the fitness of things? No realization that she was a Penhallow.

The merry-go-round was in the park in town. Margaret found herself looking wistfully at it one evening when Penny had taken her in for a drive and had gone to park his car before they settled down to listen to the band concert. Neither he nor Margaret cared for band concerts but hang it, a fellow had to do something to pass the time when he took his girl out.

Margaret had hankered all her life for a ride on the merry-go-round. There was something about it that fascinated her. She thought it would be delightful to mount one of those gay little horses and spin madly round and round. But she had never really thought of doing it. It was only a bright impossible dream.

Then she saw little Brian Dark looking at it longingly. Mr Conway had brought Brian in and had gone off and left him. He did not mind giving the kid a drive but he had no money to waste on him, by gosh. Brian thought it would be a wonderful thing to have a ride on the merry-go-round. His little face was so wistful that Margaret smiled at him and said,

"Would you like a ride, Brian?"

"Oh, yes," whispered Brian. "But I haven't any money."

"Here's the dime," said Margaret. "Take it and have a good ride."

For a moment Brian was radiant. Then his face clouded over.

"Thank you," he stammered, "but--I guess--I don't know--I guess I'm a little scared to go alone," he concluded desperately.

Margaret could never quite understand and explain just what did come over her. The inhibitions of years fell away.

"Come with me. I'll go with you," she said.

And that was how Penny, returning a moment later, saw a sight that paralysed him with horror. Margaret--*his* Margaret--spinning furiously about on the merry-go-round--up and down--round and round--riding for dear life and *riding astride*. Her hat had fallen off and her loosened hair blew wildly round her face. Penny gave an agonized yelp but Margaret

neither heard nor heeded. She was having the time of her life--she was--why, she was drunk or exactly like it, Penny thought in disgust. Her eyes were shining, her face was flushed. When the ride was ended Margaret wouldn't get off. She paid for herself and Brian for another ride--and then another. At the end of the third her senses returned to her and she got off dazedly. It did not need Penny's expression to make her thoroughly ashamed of herself.

"Oh, Penny--I'm sorry--I don't know what got into me," she gasped.

"You made a nice exhibition of yourself," said Penny coldly.

"I know--I know--but oh--" for a moment that graceless exultation swept over Margaret again--"Oh, Penny, it was glorious. Why don't you try it yourself?"

"No, thank you." Penny was very dignified all the rest of the evening, and he snubbed Margaret on the way home. Margaret took it meekly, recognizing his right and his just grievance. But she was not so meek when Mrs Denzil tackled her a few days later about it. They had an actual fight over it. Margaret was by no means as unassertive as she used to be. Sometimes she spoke her mind with astonishing vim. Getting engaged, Mrs Denzil told her, seemed to have gone to her head. Denzil soon settled them. He wasn't going to have any ructions among his womenfolk. He told Margaret she'd better mind her P's and Q's or she wouldn't get Penny after all. This did not alarm Margaret quite as much as Denzil expected. There were times when Margaret, in spite of her trousseau dresses and silk stockings, and the glamour of being Mrs, almost wished she had never promised to marry Penny--times when she wondered if it were not possible somehow to escape marrying him. She always concluded rather sadly that it wasn't. Nobody would believe anything but that Penny had thrown her over and Margaret couldn't face *that*. It would be too humiliating. She must go through with it.

Penny, however, had made up his mind after the merry-go-round affair that Margaret would never suit him--not with that wild strain in her. Where on earth did she get it? There was no Spanish blood in *her*. But how to get out of it? *That* was the difficulty. The whole clan would cry shame

on him if he threw Margaret over. And Dandy would never give him the jug. If he could only induce Margaret to throw *him* over. Ah, there was an idea now! But it would be no easy matter--no easy matter. Penny had what he considered a veritable inspiration. He would get drunk--ay, that was it. He would get drunk and go drunk to the church garden-party at Bay Silver. Margaret would be so disgusted that she would turn him down. He knew her strict temperance principles. Hadn't he heard her recite at a concert long ago. "Lips that touch liquor shall never touch mine"? He would shock her till she was blue round the gills, by gad he would. Of course there would be a bit of scandal but he could soon live it down. Lots of other men in the clan got stewed now and then. He did not think it would seriously impair his chances for the jug. Aunt Becky had said "addicted to drinking." You couldn't be thought an addict on the ground of one spree. It was over twenty-five years since he had been drunk before and an election had been to blame for that. He had been pretty offensive on that occasion. A prim old maid like Margaret wouldn't stand for it. Penny chuckled. He was as good as free.

Everybody was at the garden-party when Penny arrived there. Nan and Noel were there; their wedding, which was to have been in June, had been put off till September. Gay and Roger were there. You had to go to your own church garden-party, even though you would much rather be away for a long moonlit spin together. Gay achieved a careless, impudent little nod for Nan and Noel, though her heart seemed to turn over in her breast at sight of them. Joscelyn was there--and Hugh. Frank and Kate were there, though the women thought Kate would be better at home in her condition. But people had no shame nowadays. The two Sams were there, carefully avoiding each other. Big Sam came to get a square feed, but when he saw Little Sam treating the Widow Terlizzick to hot-dogs and ice-cream it spoiled the party for him.

A cog had slipped in Penny's plans. Most of the clan perceived with a tolerant smile that Penny was more or less lit up, but he was not actually drunk. He had only got as far as the sentimental stage when it was suddenly revealed to him that he was really desperately in love with

Margaret. By gad, she was a fine little woman--and he was mad about her. He would go and tell her so. Had he ever thought of jilting her? Never! He hunted out some cloves and set out for Bay Silver, the ardent lover at last.

Margaret had visited Whispering Winds before coming to the party. She went there as often as she could now, because she knew that she would never see it again once she was married to Penny. That night she had hung an old iron pot on a tree and filled it with water for the birds. The little garden was very sweet, with the perfume of young wild ferns growing along the sagging fence. The peace and dignity and beauty of it seemed to envelop her like a charm. She wanted to stay there forever, alone with the happy thoughts that came to her among its flowers and grasses. Tears came into her eyes. She loathed the sparkle of Penny's ring on her hand. It was a diamond--Penny liked to do things handsomely and he was not mean--and Margaret had once thought it would be a wonderful thing to have a diamond engagement-ring. But now it was only a fetter.

Margaret was surprised when Penny rushed to meet her on the church grounds. She had a dreadful feeling that he was going to kiss her right there before everybody; and although he did not actually do it, it was certain she had a narrow escape. Margaret was so innocent that she really never suspected Penny's condition; but she was sure something queer had come over him. He was squeezing her hand--he was gazing at her adoringly--he was--yes, he was actually calling her "Little One."

"Little One," he was saying, "I had begun to think you were never coming."

Margaret let Penny carry her off for a walk through the graveyard. He insisted on walking with his arm around her waist, which made her feel terribly self-conscious. From the bottom of the graveyard there was a very fine view of the gulf and the Rose River valley with the moon rising over it.

"What a lovely moon," said Margaret desperately, because she had to say something. What *had* got into Penny?

"Oh, damn the moon," said Penny, aggrieved because Margaret was not so responsive as he thought she ought to be.

Margaret was shocked. She knew men swore but surely not in the presence of ladies they were engaged to. Penny might at least wait until they were married.

Penny made haste to apologize.

"I never could see much sense in admiring the moon," he explained, "but I only said that because I want you to think about *me* and not about the moon. Forgive me, Little One. I won't say naughty words again before my own sweetest."

"We--we ought to get back to the grounds," said Margaret confusedly. Really, this love-making which was so attractive in fancy, was nothing more or less than dreadful in reality. "We won't get a good seat if we are late."

"I don't care where I sit as long as I sit with you, my darling," said Penny.

Penny sat with his arm around Margaret all through the programme, oblivious to the giggles of the young fry and the amused grins of the oldsters. He squeezed Margaret's hand at all the sentimental passages in the songs, and he told her she had the finest pair of legs in the clan, by gad, she had!

Margaret, who had always secretly thought her slender, well-shaped legs rather nice, nevertheless belonged to a generation that did not discuss legs. She was embarrassed and tucked her legs blushing out of sight under the plank she sat on. To turn the conversation into safer channels, she told Penny that Nigel Penhallow had called to see her on his recent visit from New York and had told her he wouldn't be surprised if that old *Pilgrim's Progress* Aunt Becky had given her, turned out to be of some value. It was a very old edition and in fair condition. He had offered to find out just what it was worth. Margaret wondered if she hadn't better let him. Penny advised against selling it.

"I've enough for our comfort, Little One, and"--Penny was on the verge of tears by now--"when I'm gone, Mar'gret, there'll be enough to keep you in decent widowhood."

Margaret had not yet accustomed herself to the thought of being Penny's wife. The idea of being his widow overcame her. She went home very unhappy. Penny had almost wept when he kissed her good-night. And, having heard some one ask her if her sore throat were better, he could not leave her until she had promised to tie a stocking round her throat when she went to bed. If he cared as much as this for her she must be faithful to him.

Blindly Wise

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I

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"That damn' jug will be the death of some of us yet," said Uncle Pippin viciously.

For it had come out that the reason Walter Dark's pig was where it should not have been that particular afternoon, was because Walter was having a spat in his yard with Palmer Penhallow about who should get the jug. They were so hot about it that Walter did not notice before it was too late that his pig had got out of his pen at the barn and was scooting down the lane to the road. When Walter did see it and started in pursuit, the pig was already out on the King's Highway and before Walter could even yell, the whole thing happened.

Young Prince Dark and Milton Granger were spinning up the road in Prince's motor-cycle. Hugh Dark was coming down the road in his car, on his way home from a political convention where it had been as good as decided that he was to be his party's candidate at the forthcoming Provincial election. It had been one of Hugh's ambitions for years but he felt no elation over its realization. He was not thinking of it at all as he drove moodily along through the amber haze of the warm July afternoon, past sunny old pastures and rose-sweet lanes, friendly gardens full of wine-hued hollyhocks, misty river shores, old stone dykes under the dark magic of the spruce woods, and windy hills where the fir trees were blowing gaily and the tang of the sea met him. All the beauty of the world around him suggested only thoughts of Joscelyn. Suppose he were going home to Treewoofe to tell *her* of the honour that had come to him. Suppose when he got out at his gate Joscelyn were meeting him with the wind of the hill ruffling her red-gold curls, eager to know what had happened at the convention--ready to console or congratulate, as the event required. It would be worth while then. But now--dust and ashes.

At this moment everything happened at once. Walter Dark's pig had reached the road. Prince Dark, tearing onward at his usual headlong rate, struck it before he could turn or slow down. Prince and Granger were both thrown out by the impact, Prince flying clean across the ditch against the fence and Granger being hurled like a stone into the ditch itself. The pig lay calmly, too dead to tell what he thought about it, and the motor-cycle shot blindly across the road. Hugh swerved sharply to avoid it. His car skidded in a circle. Everything suddenly became doubly clear. All the colours of the landscape took on an incredible vividness and brilliancy. Also the whole affair seemed to take an interminable time, during which he lived over all the emotions of his life and loved and hated and despaired for an eternity. Then the car went over the edge of the little ravine that skirted the road, just as Walter's belated yell rent the air and the group of men before the blacksmith's forge awoke to the fact that a tragedy had been enacted before their eyes.

Wild confusion followed for a space. Uncle Pippin frantically implored them to keep their heads. The conscious Prince and the unconscious Granger were picked up and carried in, the latter with an ear almost sliced off. Hugh's car was upside down in the ditch with Hugh still clutching the wheel. When he was eventually extricated he gasped Joscelyn's name twice before relapsing into complete unconsciousness. By the time the three victims had been taken to the hospital and Walter Dark had sadly dragged his dead pig home on a stone boat, uneasily speculating whether Prince Dark could sue him for damages or whether he had a case against Prince for killing a valuable pig, the news of the accident had spread to Bay Silver in a garbled fashion that left every one in doubt as to who was killed and who were maimed for life, and Joscelyn was walking up and down her room in a frenzy of suspense and dread. What really had happened? Was Hugh badly hurt or--she would not let herself even think the word. And she could not go to him. He would not want her. He had no need of her. She meant nothing to him--she who had once meant so much. She could not even telephone to find out the truth about the affair. Any one--every one else--could make inquiries but not she. Meanwhile she

would go mad; she could not endure it; she had been a fool and an idiot, but even fools and idiots can suffer. Once she paused with clenched hands and looked at Treewoofe. The day had been cloudy by times but now the sun suddenly came out and performed its usual miracle. The hill swam in loveliness and Treewoofe--her home--her *home*--shone on it like a jewel. Was Hugh there--dead--suffering? And she could not go to him! Perhaps Pauline was there!

"If I think things like this I'll lose my senses," moaned Joscelyn. "Oh, God, dear God, I know I was a fool. But haven't You any pity for fools? There are so many of us."

Joscelyn had to endure as best she could until the evening. And yet, amid all her agony, she was conscious of an exultation that she had this to be in anguish over. Anguish was not so dreadful as the emptiness that had been her life of late. Then Uncle Pippin called and told them the truth. Things were not so bad after all. Prince and Hugh were not seriously hurt. Prince was already home and Hugh was still in the hospital, suffering from slight concussion, but would be all right in a few days. Young Granger was the worst; he had nearly lost an ear and was still unconscious, but the doctors thought he would recover and meanwhile they had sewed on his ear.

"I hope it will cure Prince of that habit of reckless driving," said Uncle Pippin, shaking his head, "but I dunno's anything will do that. He was swearing dreadful when we picked him up; I rebuked him. I says, 'Any one that's been as near the pearly gates as you was two minutes ago hadn't ought to swear like that,' but he just kept on. He damned that poor pig up and down and all the universe thrown in."

"I didn't like the way the wind sobbed last night," said Aunt Rachel, shaking her head. "I knew sorrow was a-coming. This proves it."

"But sorrow hasn't come--Hugh wasn't badly hurt," cried Joscelyn involuntarily. She was so suddenly light-hearted in her release from torture that she hardly knew what she was saying.

"What about poor young Granger in the hospital, with his ear off?" said Aunt Rachel reproachfully.

"And the pig?" said Uncle Pippin. "It was sorrow enough for the pig."

II

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Joscelyn, coming home across lots from an errand to the harbour, paused for a moment at the little gate in Simon Dark's pasture that opened on the side road leading down to Bay Silver. It was a windy, dark grey night, cold for August, with more than a hint of nearing autumn in it. Between the gusts of wind the air was full of the low continuous thunder of the sea. Low in the west was a single strip of brilliant primrose against which the spire of a church stood up blackly. Above it was the dark sullen beauty of the heavy storm-clouds. Everywhere, on the hills and along the roads, trees were tossing haglike in the wind. A group of them overhanging the gate was like a weird cluster of witches weaving unholy spells.

The summer--another summer--was almost over; asters and goldenrod were blooming along the red roads; goldfinches were eating the cosmos and sunflower seeds in the gardens; and in a little over a month the matter of the jug would be decided. Clan interest was again being keenly worked up over it. Dandy had kept his mouth shut immovably and nobody knew anything more about it than at the start.

But Joscelyn cared nothing who got the jug. She was glad to be alone with the night--especially this kind of a night. It was in keeping with her own stormy mood. She liked to hear the wild night wind whistling in the reeds of the swamp in the corner of the pasture--she liked to hear its sweep in the trees above her.

She had been tempest-tossed all day. In such stress she was accustomed to think that peace was all she asked or desired. But now she faced the thought that she wanted much--much more. She wanted womanhood and wifedom--she wanted Hugh and Treewoofe--she wanted everything she had wanted before her madness came upon her.

Everything beautiful had gone out of her life. She had lived for years in a fool's paradise of consecration to a great passion. Now that she had

been rudely made wise, life was so unbelievably poor--thin--barren--so bitterly empty. If Frank had never come home she could have gone on loving him. But she could not love the tubby, middle-aged husband of Kate and the prospective father of Kate's baby. Life, with all its fineness and vulgarity, its colour and drabness, its frenzy and its peace, seemed to have passed her by utterly and to be laughing at her over its shoulder.

Nothing was talked of in the clan just now but weddings--Nan and Noel, Gay and Roger, Penny and Margaret, Little Sam and the Widow Terlizzick--even Donna and Peter. For Peter was home again, and report said he had come for Donna and would have her in Drowned John's very teeth. As Uncle Pippin said, Cupid was busy. Amid all this chatter of marrying and giving in marriage, Joscelyn felt like a nonentity--and nobody, least of all a Penhallow with Spanish blood in her, likes to feel like a nonentity.

It was not quite dark yet--not too dark to see Treewoofe. The hill had been austere all that day, under the low, flying grey clouds. Now it was withdrawn and remote. One solitary light bloomed on it through the stormy dusk. Was Hugh there--alone? Suppose he did really love Pauline and wanted to be free? The thought of Pauline was like a poison. Pauline had gone to see him when he was in the hospital. But so had every other Dark and Penhallow in the clan--except Joscelyn and her mother and aunt.

Sometimes, as now, Joscelyn felt that if she could not discover the answer to certain questions that tortured her she would go wholly mad.

She did not see Mrs Conrad Dark until they were fairly face to face over the gate. Joscelyn started a little as she recognized the tall, dark, forbidding woman before her. Then she stood very still. She had not seen Mrs Conrad for a long while. Now, even in the gloom, she could recognize that hooded look of hers as she brooded her venom.

"So?" said Mrs Conrad tragically. Stanton Grundy had once said that Mrs Conrad always spoke tragically, even if she only asked you to pass the pepper. But now she had a fitting setting for her tragic tone and a fitting object. She leaned across the gate and peered into Joscelyn's face. They were both tall women--Joscelyn a little the latter. People had once said

that the main reason Mrs Conrad didn't like Joscelyn was that she didn't want a daughter-in-law she would have to look up to.

"So it's you--Joscelyn Penhallow. H'm--very sleek--very handsome--not quite so young as you once were."

Convention fell away from Joscelyn. She felt as if she and Mrs Conrad were alone in some strange world where nothing but realities mattered.

"Mrs Dark," she said slowly, "why have you always hated me--not just since--since I married Hugh--but before it?"

"Because I knew you didn't love Hugh enough," answered Mrs Conrad fiercely. "I hated you on your wedding-night because you didn't deserve your happiness. I knew you would play fast and loose with him in some way. Do you know there hasn't been a night since your wedding that I haven't prayed for evil to come on you. And yet--if you'd go back to him and make him happy--I'd--I'd forgive you. Even you."

"Go back to him. But does he want me back? Doesn't he--doesn't he love Pauline?"

"Pauline! I wish he did. *She* wouldn't have broken his heart--she wouldn't have made him a laughing-stock. I used to pray he would love her. But she wasn't pretty enough. Men have such a cursed hankering for good looks. *You* had him fast--snared in the gold of your hair. Even yet--even yet. When he was fainting on the road down there, after the accident that might have killed him--he called for you--you who had left him and shamed him--it was you he wanted when he thought he was dying."

A fierce pang of joy stabbed through Joscelyn. But she would not let Mrs Conrad suspect it.

"Isn't he going to sell Treewoofe?"

"Sell Treewoofe! Sometimes I'm afraid he will--and go God knows where--my dearest son."

Something gave way in Mrs Conrad. Joscelyn's apparent immobility maddened her. She let loose all the suppressed hatred of years. She shouted--she cried--she raved--she leaned across the gate and tried to shake Joscelyn. In short she made such a show of herself that all the rest of her life she went meekly and humbly before Joscelyn, remembering it.

Uncle Pippin, ambling along the side road from a neighbourly call, heard her and paused in dismay. Two women fighting--two women of the clan--they must be of the clan, for nobody but Darks and Penhallows lived just around there. It must be Mrs Sim Dark and Mrs Junius Penhallow. They were always bickering, though he could not recollect that they had ever made such a violent scene as this in public before. What if Stanton Grundy should hear of it? It must be put a stop to. Little Uncle Pippin valiantly trotted up to the gate and attempted to put a stop to it.

"Now, now," he said. "This is most unseemly!"

Just then he discovered that it was Joscelyn Dark and her mother-in-law. Uncle Pippin felt that he had rushed in where both angels and fools might fear to tread.

"I--I beg your pardon," he said feebly, "I just thought it was some one fighting over Aunt Becky's jug again."

It was quite unthinkable that Joscelyn and Mrs Conrad could be rowing over the jug. Since it couldn't be the jug it must be Hugh, and Uncle Pippin, who was not lacking in sense of a kind--as he put it himself, he knew how many beans made five--understood that this was no place for a nice man.

"Pippin," said Mrs Conrad, rather breathlessly but still very tragically, "go home and thank the good Lord He made you a fool. Only fools are happy in this world."

Uncle Pippin went. And if he did not thank the Lord for being a fool he did at least thank Him devoutly that he still had the use of his legs. He paused when he got to the main road to wipe the perspiration from his brow.

"A reckless woman that--a very reckless woman," said Uncle Pippin sadly.

III

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Nan was in the room before Gay had heard any sound. She had never been to Maywood since the night of the dance at the Silver Slipper--Gay had never met her alone since then. Occasionally they met at clan affairs, where Nan had always greeted Gay affectionately and mockingly and Gay had been cool and aloof. The clan thought Gay handled the situation very well. They were proud of her.

Gay looked up in amazement and anger from her seat by the window. What was Nan doing here? How dared she walk into one's room like that, unannounced, uninvited? Nan, smiling and insolent, in a yellow frock with a string of amber beads on her neck and long dangling amber earrings, with her blood-red mouth and her perfumed hair and her sly green eyes. What business had Nan here?

"Has she come," thought Gay, "to ask me to be her bridesmaid? She would be quite capable of it."

"You don't look overjoyed to see me, honey," said Nan, coolly depositing herself on Gay's bed and proceeding to light a cigarette. Gay reflected rather absently that Nan was wearing that ring she was so fond of--a ring that Gay always hated--with a pale-pink stone cabachon, looking exactly as if a lump of flesh were sticking through the ring. The next moment Gay felt an odd sensation tingling over her. Where was Noel's diamond? And what was Nan saying?

"And yet I've come to tell you something you'll be glad to hear. I've broken my engagement with Noel. Sent him packing, in short. You can have him after all, Gay."

Long after she had spoken, the words seemed to Gay to be vibrating in the atmosphere. It seemed to Gay a long, long time before she heard herself saying coolly,

"Do you think I want him now?"

"Yes, I think you do," said Nan insolently. She could make any tone--any movement--insolent. "Yes, in spite of that big diamond of Roger's"--ah, Gay knew very well Nan had been jealous of that diamond--"and in spite of the new bungalow going up at Bay Silver, I think you want Noel as badly as you ever did. Well, you're quite welcome to him, dear. I just wanted to show you I could get him. Do you remember telling me I couldn't?"

Yes, Gay remembered. She sat very still because she was afraid if she moved an eyelash she would cry. Cry, before Nan! This girl who had flung Noel Gibson aside like a worn-out toy.

"Of course it will give the clan the tummy-ache," said Nan. "Their ideas about engagements date back to the Neolithic. Even Mother! Although in her heart she's glad, too. She wants me to marry Fred Margoldsby at home, you know. I daresay I will. The Margoldsby dollars will last longer than love. I really was a little bit in love with Noel. But he's getting fat, Gay--he really is. He's got the beginnings of a corporation. Fancy him at forty. And he had got into such a habit of telling me his troubles."

Gay suddenly realized that this was true. It struck her that Noel had always had a good many troubles to tell. And she remembered as suddenly that he had never seemed much interested in *her* troubles. But she wished Nan would stop talking and go away. She wanted to be alone.

Nan was talking airily on.

"So I'm going to Halifax for a visit. Mother, of course, won't leave till she knows who is to get that potty old jug. Do you ever think, Gay, that if Aunt Becky--God rest her soul--hadn't left that jug as she did, you'd probably have been married to Noel by now?"

Gay *had* thought of it often--thought of it bitterly, rebelliously, passionately. She was thinking it again now, but with a curious feeling of detachment, as if the Gay who might have been married to Noel were some other person altogether. If only Nan would go!

Nan was going. She got up and flung another gratuitous piece of advice insolently to Gay.

"So, Gay dear, just tell your middle-aged beau that you don't want a consolation prize after all and warm up the cold soup with Noel."

Really, Nan could be very odious when she liked. Yet somehow she didn't hate her as before. She felt very indifferent to her. She found herself looking at her with cool, appraising eyes, seeing her as she had never seen her before. An empty, selfish little creature, who had always to be amused like a child. A girl who said "hell" because she thought it would shock her poor old decent clan. A girl who thought she was doing something very clever when she publicly powdered her nose with the unconcern of a cat washing its face in the gaze of thousands. A girl who posed as a sophisticate before her country cousins but who was really more provincial than they were, knowing nothing of real life or real love or real emotion of any kind. Gay wondered, as she looked, how she could ever have hated this girl--ever been jealous of her. She was not worth hating. Gay spoke at last. She stood up and looked levelly at Nan. There was contempt in her quiet voice.

"I suppose you came here to hurt me, Nan. You haven't--you can never hurt me again. You've lost the power. I think I even feel a little sorry for you. You've always been a taker, Nan. All through your life you've taken whatever you wanted. But you've never been a giver--you couldn't be because you've nothing to give. Neither love nor truth nor understanding nor kindness nor loyalty. Just taking all the time and giving nothing--oh, it has made you very poor. So poor that nobody need envy you."

Nan shrugged her shoulders.

"Please omit flowers," she said. But her subtle air of triumph had left her. She went out with an uneasy feeling that Gay had had the best of it.

Left alone, Gay sat down by her window again. Everything seemed different--changed. She wished this hadn't happened. It had unsettled her. She had been so contented before Nan came--even happy. Thinking of the new bungalow Roger was building for their home.

"I want to build a house for *you*," he had said, his eyes looking deep into hers with a look that was like a kiss. "A house that will be a home to come to when I'm tired--on a little hill so that we'll have a view, but not a

hill like Treewoofe--too high above all the rest of the world. A house with *you* in it, Gay, to welcome me."

They had planned it together. The clan overwhelmed them with floods of advice but they took none of it. It was to have one window that faced the sea and another that looked on the dreamy, over-harbour hills. And a quaint little eyebrow window in the roof.

They would be able to look through their open dining-room door into the heart of a blooming apple tree in its season--a hill of white blossom against the blue sky--to eat supper there and see the moonrise behind it. There was a clump of cool, white birches at one corner. A spruce bush behind it where dear little brown owls lived. Gay had been so interested in everything. Her bathroom was to be mauve and pale yellow. She would have window-boxes of nasturtiums and petunias and Kenilworth ivy. She was thinking about nice linen--nice little teacups. The wedding was to be in late October. The clan had really behaved beautifully--although Gay knew what they were saying behind her back.

And now everything was tangled up again. Gay walked late that night, in the old Maywood garden that lay fragrant and velvety under the enchantment of a waning moon. The ghost of a lost happiness came and mocked her. Noel was free again. And Gay knew that what Nan had said was true. She *did* want him--with all her heart she wanted him still--and she had to marry Roger in October.

IV

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Peter Penhallow was finding out the fun of really trying to get something. After a year in Amazonian jungles, where, when his temper had cooled, he spent most of his time longing to hear Donna's exquisite laugh again, he had come home to make it up with her. Never doubting that he would find her as ready and eager to "make up" as he was. Peter knew very little about women and still less about a woman who was the daughter of Drowned John. He arrived Saturday night, much to the surprise of his family, who had supposed him still in South America, and had promptly telephoned Donna--or tried to. Old Jonas answered the phone and said all the folks were away--he didn't know where.

Peter chewed his nails in frenzy until next morning, when he saw Donna across the church. His darling--unchanged--with the mournful shadows under her eyes and her dark, cloud-like hair. What a pair of fools they had been to quarrel over nothing! How they would be laughing over it presently!

Donna got the shock of her life when she saw Peter looking at her across the church. Outwardly she took it so coolly that Virginia, who was watching her anxiously, threw her eyes up at the ceiling in relief.

Donna had hated Peter furiously for over a year and it seemed now that she hated him more than ever. After the first startled glance she would not look at him again. When church came out he strode across the green to meet her--exultantly, triumphantly, masterfully. That was where he made a fatal mistake! If he had been a little timid--a little less cocksure--if he had shown himself a repentant, ashamed Peter, creeping back humbly for pardon, Donna, in spite of her hate, might have flung herself on his neck before everybody. But to come like this--as if they had parted yesterday--as if he had not behaved outrageously to her when they *had* parted--as if he had not ignored her existence for a year, sending never a word or message-

-expressing no contrition--coming smiling towards her as if he expected her to be grateful to him for forgiving *her*--which was exactly what Peter *did* expect--no, it was really too much. Donna, after one level, contemptuous glance, turned her back on Peter and walked away.

Peter looked rather foolish. Some boys standing near giggled. Virginia swept after Donna to help her through this ordeal. And, "Don't be so--emotional," was all the thanks she got.

Drowned John wanted to swear but couldn't, realizing thankfully that in little over a month more the affair of the jug would be settled and free speech once more be possible. Finally Peter turned away and went home, lost in wonder at himself for putting up with all this just to get a woman.

Peter's next attempt was to stalk down to Drowned John's, walk into the house without knocking, and demand Donna. Drowned John raved, stamped and played the heavy parent to perfection--yet still--will it be believed?--did not swear. Peter would have cared little for Drowned John if he could have seen Donna but not a glimpse could he get of her. He went home, defeated, asking himself for the hundredth time why he endured this sort of thing. It was really an obsession. Donna wasn't worth it--no feminine creature in the world was worth it. But he meant to have her for all that. He was not going to endure another such year as he had endured among the upper reaches of the Amazon. Sooner would he knock Donna over the head and carry her off bodily. It never occurred to Peter that all he had to do was to ask forgiveness for that night at the west gate. Nor, had it occurred to him, would he have done it. It had been all Donna's fault. *He* was forgiving *her*--most magnanimously, without a word of reproach, and yet she seemed to expect him to crawl on all fours for her.

Eventually, finding it impossible to obtain speech with Donna, Peter wrote her a letter--probably the worst letter that was ever written in the world for such a purpose. Donna got it herself at the post-office and, although she had never seen Peter's large, black, untidy handwriting before, knew at once that it had come from him. She carried it home and sat down before it in her room. She thought she ought to return it to him

unopened. Virginia would advise that, she was sure. But if she did, she knew she would spend the rest of her life wondering what had been in it.

Eventually she opened it. It was a blunt epistle. There was no word of repentance--or even of love in it. Peter told her he was leaving in a week's time for South Africa, where he meant to spend four years photographing lions in their native haunts. Would she come with him or would she not?

This take-it-or-leave-it epistle infuriated Donna, when one "darling" or even an X for a kiss might have melted her into a forgiveness that hadn't been asked for. Before her rage could cool she had torn the letter four times across, put it in an envelope and directed it to Peter.

"I'll *never* forgive him," she said through set teeth. It was a comfort to articulate the words. It made her feel more sure of herself. In her heart she was afraid she *might* forgive him. She dared not leave the letter lying on her table all night, lest her resolution fail her, so she went down and gave it to old Jonas to mail on his way to town. Then, the thing being irrevocable, she went to her father and told him she was going away to train as a nurse, whether he was willing or not. Drowned John, who was thoroughly fed up with having a sulky thunderstorm at table and hearth for a year, told her she could go and be dinged to her. Whatever theological difference there may be between "damn" and "ding," there was none whatever in Drowned John's meaning or intonation.

As for Peter, when he got back his torn letter, he gave himself up to hate for a time and hated everything and everybody, living or dead. So matters stood until the night Dandy Dark's house burned down.

V

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The old Moon Man went singing softly through the quiet September night, under a silvery harvest moon. He went along by the dim ghostly shore of the Indian Spring river, past friendly old fields where the wind purred like a big cat, through woods where the trees were talking about him, along lanes where there was a strippling of moonlight on the narrow grassy path and over hills where he paused to listen to eternity. He was very happy and he pitied the poor folks asleep in the houses as he went by. They did not know what they were missing.

It was he who first saw that Dandy Dark's house, perched on the shoulder of a small wooded hill where the road turned down to Bay Silver, was on fire. The flames were already bursting out of the roof of the ell when the Moon Man thundered on the door and a drowsy hired boy shuffled down from the kitchen chamber to demand what was up. The Moon Man told him and then strode calmly off. The fire was no longer any concern of his. He was not going to lose another minute of this beautiful night for it. Behind him he left alarm and confusion. Dandy Dark was away--nobody knew where. Dandy had taken to staying out late at nights, though as yet nobody knew of it except his wife. But the clan at large knew that something had come over Dandy in the past few weeks. He was changed. Unsociable, uneasy, irritable, absent-minded. Some put it down to the fact that the date for the jug decision was drawing near and argued that the decision must be in Dandy's hands, since he was so manifestly uncomfortable about it. Either that, or something had happened to the jug. Nobody dared ask Dandy about it; he positively snapped now if any one referred to the jug. But everybody more or less was beginning to feel uneasy, too. And now Dandy's house was burning. The hired boy had yelled down the hall for Mrs Dandy, had roused a neighbour on the phone and had dashed to the barn for ladders. In an incredibly short time a crowd

had gathered, but from the first it was manifest that the house was doomed. They had got out most of the furniture and were grimly watching the spectacle when Dandy arrived home.

"Good Gosh," cried Dandy, "where is the jug?"

Incredible as it may seem, nobody had thought about the jug. Everybody stared at each other. There was no one to ask. Mrs Dandy, when the hired boy roused her, had promptly run out of the front door in her night-dress and fainted in a corner of the garden. Foolish Mrs Dandy was noted for doing things like that. She had been carried over to Penny Dark's house on the next farm and was being attended to there.

"Doesn't *any one* know anything about the jug?" howled Dandy, losing his head completely and running wildly about, clawing over the stuff that had been saved from his blazing roof-tree.

"Where was it kept?" shouted somebody.

"In the spare-room closet," moaned Dandy.

Nothing had been saved from the spare room. It was far down the upstairs hall in the ell and the hall had been too full of smoke to reach it.

Peter was standing among the crowd. He had been among the first to arrive and had worked heroically. And now they had not saved the jug. The jug Donna wanted so much--the old jug Aunt Becky had told him tales of in his childhood--the jug that had ruined his elopement and wrecked his hopes. Peter snatched a reeking coat that was hanging on the fence, flung it over his head and dashed into the house. He must save that jug for Donna.

Every one yelled after him and then went mad. The yard was filled with dancing, shouting frantic figures, among which suddenly appeared a raving maniac of a boy from Penny Dark's who gasped out a horrifying question. Where was Donna Dark? She had been staying all night with Mrs Dandy--she had been sleeping in the spare room--was she safe?

Some women fainted with a better excuse than Mrs Dandy. Some went shrieking about for Donna. The men gazed at each other and then at the burning house. They shook their heads. It was a madman's attempt to enter that house now. Peter would be burned to death, trying to save Donna--for

nobody now doubted it was Donna he had gone to save. He must have heard what the boy was saying before any one else did.

Peter had gone up the blazing staircase three steps at a time, ready to plunge into the inferno of smoke and flame that had been the hall, when he stumbled and almost fell over the unconscious form of a woman lying on the floor at the head of the stairs.

Good God, who was it? She must be rescued, jug or no jug. He picked her up and turned back with a feeling of regret. No hope of the jug now. Poor Donna would be bitterly disappointed. He stumbled down the stairs and out of the door into the seething crowd. The yells and shouts changed suddenly to hurrahs. Peter was a hero. Eager hands took his slim white burden from him. Drowned John, who had just driven in, having heard of the fire but not of Donna's danger until he arrived there--was shaking his hand and sobbing, with tears running down his face.

"God bless you, Peter--you saved her--God bless you for saving Donna--my poor little motherless girl--" Drowned John was almost maudlin--people had to lead him away and calm him down, while Peter stood very still and tried to realize that it was Donna whom he had carried out of Dandy Dark's burning house. Donna!

"She kem up to-day to help me make the baked damson preserve," sobbed Mrs Dandy on the kitchen lounge at Penny Dark's. "I never did or could seem able to bake damsons so as to please Dandy. Donna knew how--Dandy's mother taught her 'fore she died--so I asked her if she'd come up and do 'em for me. They're all burned up now. It looked like rain at supper-time and Dandy was away--he's always away now, it seems to me--so I told Donna she might as well stay all night. Oh, dearie me, to think what might have happened!"

"The jug's gone, though," said William Y. gloomily.

"The jug? *It ain't broken?*" cried Mrs Dandy shrilly.

"It's burned up with all the rest of the spare-room things."

"Oh, no, it ain't." Mrs Dandy looked very sly and cunning. "When I put Donna to sleep in the spare room I took the jug in its box outen the closet and took it down to my own room. I didn't know what Dandy might of said

to me if I'd left that jug in the same room with *anybody*. Folks say I'm silly but I'm not so silly as that. And when I heard Tyler yelling fire I grabbed holt of that box first thing along with the old teapot with the broken spout I keep my bit of money in, and run out with them and dropped them over the fence into the burdocks in the back yard. I reckon you'll find them there."

Find them there they did, much to everybody's relief. Donna had come to her senses and had been taken to the hospital, and everybody went home through the pale-yellow, windy dawn, telling tales about the fire. One of the funniest was that of Penny Dark, who, summoned to the telephone from his bed, had lost his head and torn over to Dandy's place in his pyjamas. Worse still, in trying to climb over the picket fence back of Dandy's barn, he had slipped and the waist cord of his pyjamas had caught on a picket. There poor Penny had hung, yelping piteously, until some one had heard him above all the din and rescued him. Most people thought it served him right for wearing pyjamas. It had been suspected for several years that he did but nobody ever was really sure, for old Aunt Ruth had kept his secret well.

"And Happy Dark is home," said Sim Dark. "Walked in last night after his mother had gone to bed, ate the supper she'd left, and then went to sleep in his own room. *She* didn't know it till he come down to breakfast this morning. Said he'd met an old crony in Singapore who gave him an old Charlottetown paper to read. It was the one where that fool reporter had writ up the story of the jug. Happy said he thought he might as well come home and see what his chances were for it. His mother's so uplifted she can hardly talk. Just sits and looks at him."

But among all the events of that night, the really tragic one was not talked over at the clan breakfast-tables because it was not known until several days later. Christopher Dark, drunk, as usual, had run in at the kitchen door of the burning building unseen of anybody, and had been killed by a falling beam. People supposed he must have been making a crazy effort to save the jug. The clan was properly stirred up over the dreadful end of poor Chris, but under all their horror was a calm

conviction that everything was for the best. One disgrace to the clan was ended.

Murray Dark looked at his house proudly when he came home from the funeral.

"We'll soon have a mistress for you now," he said.

Donna sent for Peter as soon as she was allowed to see anybody, and begged him to forgive her. She knew now that he really did love her, in spite of everything, or he would never have dashed into that blazing house to save her. Peter did not undeceive her. He remembered that he had once heard Stanton Grundy say that life would be unbearable if we didn't believe a few lies. The deception sat lightly on Peter's conscience, for he knew that if he had dreamed for a moment that Donna was, or even might be, in that doomed house he would have gone through it from cellar to attic for her.

"But no more eloping," said Donna. "I'll marry you in the open, in spite of Father's teeth."

Drowned John, however, showed no teeth. He told Donna that since Peter had saved her life he deserved to get her and she could go and photograph lions in Africa with his blessing. The first time Peter went to Drowned John's after Donna came home, Drowned John shook hands genially with him and took him out to see his favourite pig. Peter concluded that, after all, Drowned John was a great old boy.

"Well, here's congratulations," said Roger, meeting Peter coming beamingly out of the west gate.

"Thanks. And I hear you're to be congratulated, too."

Roger's face hardened.

"I don't know. Are congratulations in order if you are going to marry a girl who is in love with another man?"

"So? It's that way still?"

"Still."

"And you *are* going to marry her?"

"I am. Congratulate me now if you dare."

VI

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Joscelyn Dark wakened one September morning, knowing that something was going to happen that day. She had received some sign in her sleep. She sat up and looked out of her window. The sunlight of dawn was striking on Treewoofe, although the lower slopes were still in shadow. Around it golden grain fields lay in the beauty of harvesting. The air was rose and silver and crystal. The house seemed to beckon to her. All at once she knew what was to happen that day. She would go to Hugh and ask him if he could forgive her.

She had wanted to go ever since the night she had met Mrs Conrad, but she had not been able to summon up enough courage. And now, in some mysterious way, the courage had come. She would learn the truth. Whatever it might be, sweet or bitter, it would be more bearable than this intolerable suspense.

She could not go before evening. The day seemed long; it hated to go out; it lingered on the red roads, on the tops of the silver dunes, on the red ploughed summer fallow on the shoulder of Treewoofe. Not until it had really gone and the full moon was shining over the Treewoofe birches did Joscelyn dare to set out. Her mother and Aunt Rachel had gone to prayer-meeting, so that there was no one to question her. Old Miller Dark shortly overtook her in his buggy and offered her a "lift," which Joscelyn accepted because she knew it would offend poor old Miller if she refused. In her high rapt mood she did not want to see or ride with any one. Old Miller was in a great good humour; he had just about finished his history of the clan. Meant to have it published in book form, and would she subscribe for a copy? Joscelyn said she would take two; she wondered if old Miller had put anything about her and Hugh in it. He was quite capable of it.

Joscelyn got out at William Y.'s gate. Old Miller supposed she was going to see the William Y.'s and she let him think so. But as soon as he

had disappeared around the wooded curve she walked up the Three Hills road to Treewoofe. The air was keen and frosty; the waves far down on the bay quivered as if they were tipsy with moonlight; it was just such another night as her wedding-night had been, eleven years ago. What a fool she had been? Hugh could never forgive her. She was seized with a spasm of panic and was on the point of turning and running madly down the hill.

But Treewoofe was close to her--dear frustrated Treewoofe. She trembled with longing as she looked at it. She pulled herself together and walked across the yard. There was a light in the kitchen but no answer came to her repeated knocks. She felt heart-sick. She could not go back without *knowing*. With a shaking hand she lifted the latch and went in. She crossed the kitchen and opened the door into the hall. Hugh was sitting there, alone, by the ashes of his desolate fireplace. In the light that fell over his face from the kitchen she saw the stark amazement on it as he stood up.

"Hugh," cried Joscelyn desperately--she must speak first, for who knew what he might say?--"I've come back. I was a fool--a fool. Can you forgive me? Do you still want me?"

There was a silence that seemed endless to Joscelyn. She shivered. The hall was very cold. It had been so long since there had been a fire in it. The whole house was cold. There was no welcome in it for her. She had alienated it.

After what seemed an eternity Hugh came towards her. His hungry eyes burned into hers.

"Why do you want to come back? Don't you still--love *him*?"

Joscelyn shuddered.

"No--no." She could say nothing more.

Again Hugh was silent. His heart was pounding with a wild exultation in his breast. She had come back to him--his again--not Frank Dark's--his, his only. She was standing there in the moonlight where she had mocked him so long ago. Asking his forgiveness and his love. He had only to put out his hand--draw her to his breast.

Hugh Dark was his mother's son. He crushed back the mad words of passion that rushed to his lips. He spoke coldly--sternly.

"Go back to Bay Silver--and put on your wedding-dress and veil. Come back to me in it as you went away--come as a bride to her bridegroom. Then--I may listen to you."

Proud Joscelyn went humbly. She would have done anything--anything that Hugh commanded. Never had she loved him as she loved him standing there, tall and dark and stern in the moonlit hall of Treewoofe. She would have crawled to him on all fours and kissed his feet had he so commanded. She went back to Bay Silver--she went to the garret and got the box that contained her wedding-dress and veil. She put them on, like a woman in a trance obeying the compulsion of some stronger will than her own.

"Thank God, I'm still beautiful," she whispered.

Then she walked back to Treewoofe, glimmering by in the silver of moonlight and the shimmer of satin.

Uncle Pippin, who was always where nobody expected him to be, thought she was a ghost when he saw her. The excited yelp he emitted might have been heard for a mile. Uncle Pippin didn't approve of it. Well-behaved young women didn't go strolling about on moonlit nights, wearing wedding-clothes. It couldn't be the jug that made Joscelyn do this. So Uncle Pippin fell back on the Spanish blood. A bad business that. Really, nothing but queer things had happened since Aunt Becky died. He sat in his buggy and stared after her until she disappeared. Then he drove home with badly shaken nerves.

Joscelyn had not even noticed Uncle Pippin. She went on, past the graveyard where her father lay, up the Three Hills road. For a wonder, no one else saw her. Nobody ever believed Uncle Pippin had seen her. The poor old man was getting dotty. Imagining things to make himself important.

The lights of beautiful Treewoofe were twinkling through the tall slender birches when she came back. Every room was lighted up to flash a welcome to her--its mistress for whom it had waited so long. She and

Treewoofe were good friends again. The front door was open--and goblins of firelight were dancing in the hall beyond it. The mirror over the mantel was turned face outward again, and Hugh was waiting for her by the fire he had kindled. As she paused entreatingly in the doorway, he came forward and led her over the threshold by one of her cold hands. A wedding-ring was lying on the dusty mantel, where it had lain for many years. Hugh took it up and put it on her finger.

"Joscelyn," he cried suddenly. "Oh, Joscelyn--*my* Joscelyn!"

VII

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Margaret had made many wedding-dresses for other people with vicarious thrills and dreams but she made her own very prosaically. Her wedding-day was finally fixed for the first of October. That would give them time for a bridal trip to points on the mainland before the date appointed for the final disposal of Aunt Becky's jug. Neither she nor Penny felt any elation over the affair. In truth, as the fatal time drew near, Penny grew absolutely desperate. At first he thought he would ask Margaret to postpone the wedding again--until after the puzzle of the jug was solved. That would not affect his chances materially. Then Penny threw up his head. That would be dishonourable. He would break the engagement before, if break it he must. Ay, that would be nobler. Penny felt a fine glow of victorious satisfaction with himself.

He went up to Denzil's, one evening, firmly resolved. No more shilly-shallying. Jug or no jug, he would be a free man. He had known yesterday that he could not go through with it. Margaret had told him that his watch was wrong. It always infuriated Penny to be told his watch was wrong. It was not the first time Margaret had offended in a similar fashion. And he was in for marrying a woman like that. What a devilish predicament!

Margaret had evidently been crying. And Margaret was not one of those fortunate women who can cry without their noses turning red. Penny wondered testily why a woman who was engaged to *him* should be crying. Then he thought she might suspect his real feelings on the matter and be weeping over them. Penny felt his heart softening--after all--no, this would never do. He must not be hen-hearted now. This was his last chance. He mopped his brow.

"Mar'gret," he said pleadingly, "do you think we'd better go through with it after all?"

"Go through--with what?" asked Margaret.

"With--with getting married."

"Don't you want to marry me?" said Margaret, a sudden gleam coming into her eyes. It terrified Penny.

"No," he said bluntly.

Margaret stood up and drew a long breath.

"Oh, I'm so thankful--so thankful," she said softly.

Penny stared at her with a dawning sense of outrage. This was the last thing he had expected.

"Thankful--thankful? What the hell are you thankful for?"

Margaret was too uplifted to mind his profanity

"Oh, Penny, I didn't want to marry you either. I was only going through with it because I didn't want to disappoint you. You don't know how happy it makes me to find out that you don't care."

Penny looked rather dour. It was one thing to explain to a woman that you didn't see your way clear to marrying her after all. It was quite another to find her so elated about it.

"I only asked you out of pity, anyhow, Mar'gret," he said.

Margaret smiled. The Griscom showed there Penny's great-grandmother had been a Griscom.

"That isn't a sporting thing to say," she murmured gently. "And would you mind--very much--remembering that my name is Margaret--*not* Mar'gret. Here is your ring--and I've something rather important to attend to this evening."

Thus coolly dismissed, Penny went--stiffly, rigidly, neither with handshake, bow, nor backward glance.

Penny was huffed.

The important thing which Margaret had to do was to write a letter. She had not been crying because she was going to marry Penny exactly--she had been crying because suddenly, unbelievably, magically, a darling dream could have come true if she did not have to get married. And now that the marriage was off, the dream *could* come true. The letter was to Nigel Penhallow.

When it was written Margaret felt curiously young again, as if life had suddenly folded back for thirty years. She slipped away in the September moonlight to visit Whispering Winds. It would be hers--dear friendly Whispering Winds. All the lovesome things in its garden would be tended and loved. The little house should be whitewashed twice every year so that it would always be white as a pearl. She would be there in cool, exquisite mornings--in grey, sweet evenings--there to hear little winds crying to her in the night. It would be so deliciously quiet; nobody could ever open her door without knocking. She would be alone with her dreams. She could cry and laugh and--and--swear when she wanted to. And she would adopt a baby. A baby with dimples and sweet, perfumed creases and blue eyes and golden curls. There must be such a baby somewhere, just waiting to be cuddled.

She looked lovingly at the trees that were to be hers. Whispering Winds belonged to its trees and its trees to it. One little birch grew close to it in one of its angles. A willow hovered over it protectingly. A maple peeped around a corner. Little bushy spruces crouched under its windows. Dear Whispering Winds. And dear Aunt Becky who had made it all possible. Margaret prayed that night to be forgiven for the sin of ingratitude.

No one in the clan could find out just why the engagement had been broken off. It was inconceivable that Margaret could have done it, although for some reason best known to himself Penny had taken up and was nursing an aggrieved attitude.

"These mysteries will drive me distracted," groaned Uncle Pippin, "but I'll bet that fiendish jug was at the bottom of it somehow."

The clan were astounded when they heard Margaret had bought old Aunt Louisa's cottage from Richard Dark, still more astounded when they found she had sold the *Pilgrim's Progress* Aunt Becky had given her to a New York collector for a fabulous sum. Actually ten thousand dollars. It was a first edition and would have been worth thirty thousand if it had been in first-class condition. It was plain to be seen now why she had thrown Penny over so heartlessly. Penny himself chewed some bitter cud

of reflection. Who would ever have dreamed that any one would be crazy enough to pay ten thousand dollars for an old book like that? Ten thousand dollars! Ten thousand dollars! But it was too late. Neither he nor the clan ever really forgave Margaret--not for selling the book but for getting it from Aunt Becky in the first place. What right had she to it more than anybody else? Denzil was especially grouchy. He thought Margaret should have gone on living with him and used her money to help educate his family.

"Throwing it away on a house you don't need," he said bitterly. "You'd show more sense if you put what it cost you away for a rainy day."

"Umbrellas have been invented since that proverb," said Margaret blithely.

VIII

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Gay was lingering by the gate, watching a big red moon rising behind a fringe of little dark elfin spruces over Drowned John's hill pasture to the east of her. Behind her, through the trees around Maywood, was visible a great, fresh, soft, empty, windy yellow sky of sunset. A little ghost of laughter drifted to her from the hill road. There was, it seemed, still laughter in the world. She was alone and she was glad of it. Just now life was bearable only when she was alone.

For weeks Gay had been dully unhappy--restless--indifferent. The new house no longer thrilled her; everything was tarnished. She wished drearily that she could go away--or die--or at least cease to exist. Life was too perplexing. She could not help thinking of Noel all the time. What was he doing--thinking--feeling? Was he very unhappy? Or was he--wiser? If she only knew the answers to those questions! She would never know them. And in little over a month she had to marry Roger.

She was still there when Noel came. Now that she was not waiting for him--now that she was going to marry Roger--he came. When she lifted her head he was standing before her. Looking like a movie star--handsome and--and--*dapper!* Yes, dapper, just like little Penny Dark. In twenty years' time he would be just like Penny Dark. Gay's head spun around and she wondered if she were going crazy.

"Noel!" she gasped.

"Yes--it's Noel." He came close and took her hand. She looked at him. Had he grown shorter? No, it was only that she had grown used to looking up at Roger. Noel's hair was too curly--what had Nan said once about the tongs? Oh, what had got into her? Why was she thinking such absurd things--now at this wonderful moment when Noel had come back to her?

Noel was leaning over the gate, talking rapidly--telling her he had never really cared for Nan. Nan had chased him--hunted him down--he had

been bewitched temporarily--he had never really loved any one but her, Gay. Would she forgive him! And take him back?

Noel had evidently very little doubt that he would be forgiven. He had, Gay found herself thinking, quite a bit of confidence in his own powers of attraction. He put his arms about her shoulders and drew her close to him. For long months she had longed to feel his arms about her so--his lips on hers--his face pressed to her cheek. And now that it had come about, Gay found herself laughing--shaking with laughter. A bit hysterical perhaps--but Noel did not know that. He released her abruptly and stepped back a pace in amazement and chagrin.

"You're--so--so--funny!" gasped poor Gay.

"I'm sorry," said Noel stiffly. This was not at all what he had looked for.

Gay forced herself to stop laughing and looked at Noel. The old enchantment had gone. She saw him as she had never seen him before--as her clan had always seen him. A handsome fellow, who thought every girl who looked at him fell in love with him; shallow, selfish. Was this what she had supposed she loved? Love! She had known nothing about it till this very moment, when she realized that it was Roger she loved. Roger who was a *man*! This Noel was only a boy. And he would never be anything but a boy, if he lived to a hundred--with a boy's fickle heart, a boy's vanity, a boy's emptiness. She had fancied herself in love with him once--fancied herself heart-broken when he jilted her--and now--

"Why, it's all ancient history," she thought in amazement.

As soon as she could speak she told Noel to run away. Her voice still shook and Noel thought she was still laughing at him. He went off in high dudgeon. It was a new and very wholesome experience for Noel Gibson to be laughed at. It did him no end of good. He was never quite so self-assured again.

Gay stood by the gate for a long while, trying to adjust herself. The sky faded out into darkness and the moonshine bathed her. Passing breaths of autumn wind sent showers of silvery golden leaves all over her. She loved the night--she loved everything. She felt as if she had been born again.

How lucky Noel had come back. If he hadn't come back she might always have fancied she cared--might never have seen the fathomless difference between him and Roger. To come back so soon--so shamelessly. Hadn't he *any* depth? Couldn't he care really for anybody? But he had come--and his coming had set her free from phantom fetters.

"I suppose if it were not for the jug I'd still be engaged to him--perhaps married to him."

She shuddered. How dreadful that would be--how dreadful it would be to be married to any one but Roger! It was simply impossible even to *imagine* being married to any one but Roger. God bless Aunt Becky!

Still she had an odd but fleeting sense of loss and futility. All that passion and pain for nothing. It hurt her that it should seem so foolish now. It hurt her to realize that she had only been in love with love. The clan had been right--so right. That stung a little. It isn't really nice to be forced to agree with your family that you have been a little fool.

But she knew she did not care how right they had been. She was *glad* they had been right. Oh, it was good to feel vivid and interested and alive again--as she hadn't felt for so long. All the lost colour and laughter of life seemed to have returned. The time of apple-blossom love was over. Nothing could bring it back. It was the time of roses now--the deep, rich roses of the love of womanhood. Those months of suffering had made a woman of Gay. She lifted up her arms in rapture as if to caress the night--the beautiful silvery September night.

"Let me brush the moonlight off you," somebody said--a dear somebody with a dear, dear voice.

"Oh, Roger!" Gay turned and threw herself into his arms. Her face was lifted to his--her arms went about his neck of their own accord--for the first time Roger felt his kiss returned.

He held her off and looked at her--as if he could never have enough of looking at her. She was an exquisite thing in the moonlight, with her brilliant eyes and her wind-ruffled hair.

"Gay! You love me!" he said incredulously.

"It will take me a whole lifetime to tell you how much--and I never knew it till an hour ago," whispered Gay. "You won't mind how silly I've been, will you, Roger? You'll find out--in time--how wise I am at last."

Roger met the Moon Man on the way home.

"One *does* get the moon sometimes," Roger told him.

IX

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Little Brian Dark was prowling about the roads, looking for some of his Uncle Duncan's young cattle which had broken out of their pasture. His uncle had told him not to come home until he found them, and he could get no trace of them. Rain was brewing and it was a very dark and cold and melancholy October night. A fog had blotted out the end of the harbour road; a ghostly sail or two drifted down the darkening bay. Brian felt horribly alone in the world. His heart swelled as he passed happy homes and saw more fortunate children through lighted, cheery kitchen windows. Once he saw a boy about his own age standing by his mother's side. The mother put her arm about him and kissed him fondly. Brian choked back a sob.

"I wonder," he thought wistfully, "what it would be like to be loved."

Now and then through an open door he caught delicious smells of suppers cooking. He was very hungry, for he had not had his supper. And very tired, for he had been picking potatoes all day. But he dared not go home without the young cattle.

Sim Dark, of whom he inquired timidly, told him he had seen some young beasts down on the shore road leading to Little Friday Cove. Sim felt an impulse of pity for young Brian as he drove away. The child looked as if he didn't get half enough to eat. And that thin sweater was not enough for a cold fall night. The Duncan Darks ought to be ashamed of themselves. After which, Sim went home to his excellent supper and well-dressed family and forgot all about Brian.

Brian trudged down the long grassy road to Little Friday Cove. It was getting very dark, and he was frightened. Little Sam's light gleamed cheerily through the blur of rain that was beginning to fall. Brian went to the house and asked him if he had seen the calves. Little Sam had not, but he made Brian go in and have supper with him. Brian knew he ought not to

go in, with the calves yet unfound, but the smell of Little Sam's chowder was too tempting. And it was so warm and cosy in Little Sam's living-room. Besides, he liked Little Sam. Little Sam had once taken him out for a row one evening when the gulf had been like rippled satin and there was a little new moon in the west. It was one of the few beautiful memories in Brian's life.

"We're in for a rain," said Little Sam, ladling out the chowder generously. "My shin's been aching scandalously for two days." Little Sam sighed. "I'm beginning to feel my years," he said.

By the time supper was over, the rain was pouring down. Little Sam insisted that Brian stay all night with him.

"It ain't fit for you to go out a night like this. Listen to that wind getting up. Stay here where you're comfortable and have a look round in the morning for your calves. Likely you'll find 'em over in Jake Harmer's wood-lot. His fences are disgraceful."

Brian yielded. He was afraid to go home in the dark. And it was so warm and pleasant here. To be sure, he thought uneasily of Cricket. But if Cricket came he would likely just curl up on Brian's bed and be quite comfortable. No harm would come to him.

Brian spent the pleasantest evening he had known for a long time, sitting by Little Sam's blazing fire, petting Mustard--who was a very nice old cat, though not to be compared to Cricket--and listening to Little Sam's hair-raising ghost stories. It did not occur to Little Sam that he should not tell ghost stories to Brian. It was a long time since he had had anybody to listen to his tales. Little Sam had already spent many lonely evenings this fall. He dreaded another winter like the last. But he did not mention Big Sam. The Sams had at last given up talking about one another. Little Sam only pointed Aurora proudly out to Brian and asked him if he didn't think her pretty. Brian did think so. There was something in the white, poised figure that made him think of music in moonlight and coral clouds in a morning sky and all the bits of remembered beauty that sometimes--when he wasn't too tired and hungry--made a harmony in his soul.

It was a long time before Brian could sleep, curled up in the bunk that had once been Big Sam's. The wind roared at the window and the rain streamed down on the rocks outside. The wind was offshore and the waves were not high, but they made a strange, sobbing, lonely sound. Brian wondered if his aunt and uncle would be very cross with him for staying away and if Cricket would miss him.

When he finally fell asleep he had a dreadful dream. He was standing alone on a great, far-reaching plain of moonlit snow. Right before him was a huge creature--a creature like the wolf in the pictures of Red Riding Hood, but ten times bigger than any wolf could be, with snarling, slavering jaws and malignant, flaming eyes. Such hate--such hellish hate--looked out of those eyes that Brian screamed with terror and awakened.

The room was filled with a dim greyness of dawn. Little Sam was still snoring peacefully, with Mustard curled up on his stomach. The wind and rain had ceased and a peep from the window showed Brian a world wrapped in grey fog. But the horror of his dream was still on him. Somehow--he could not have told how or why--he felt sure it had something to do with Cricket. Softly he slipped out of bed and into his ragged clothes--softly slipped out of the house and latched the door behind him. An hour later he reached home. Nobody was up. There was a strange car in the garage. Brian tiptoed across the kitchen and climbed the ladder to the loft. His heart was beating painfully. He prayed desperately that he might find Cricket there, warm and furry and purring.

What Brian saw was his Uncle Duncan asleep on his bed. There was no sign of Cricket anywhere. Brian sat down on the floor, with a sick feeling coming over him. He knew what must have happened--what had happened once before. Visitors had come--more visitors than there were beds for.

His uncle had given up his own bed and come to the loft.

Had Cricket come? And if so, had he gone away safely? Brian was asking these questions of himself over and over when his uncle awoke, stretched, sat up, and looked at him.

"Find the cattle?" he said.

"No-o-o, but Little Sam says he thinks they're in Jake Harmer's wood-lot. I'll go right away and get them."

Brian's voice shook beyond control but it was not with fear about the cattle. What--oh, what was the truth about Cricket?

Duncan Dark yawned.

"You'd better. And where'd that cat come from that woke me up pawing at my face? You bin having cats here, youngster?"

"No-o-o, only one--it came sometimes at nights," gasped Brian. It seemed that his very soul grew cold within him.

"Well, it won't come again. I wrung its neck. Now, you hustle off after them cows. You've plenty of time before breakfast."

Later on, Brian found the poor dead body of his little pet among the burdocks under the window. Brian felt that his heart was breaking as he gathered Cricket up in his arms and tried to close the glazed eyes. He felt so helpless--so alone. The only thing that loved him in the world was dead--murdered. Never again would he hear the pad-pad of little feet on the porch roof--never again would a soft paw touch his face in the darkness--never again would a purring thing snuggle against him lovingly. There was no God. Not even a young careless God could have let a thing like this happen.

When night came Brian felt that he could not--*could not*--go to his bed in the loft. He could not lie there alone, waiting for Cricket, who could never come again--Cricket lying cold and stiff in the little grave Brian had dug for him under the wild cherry tree. In his despair the child rushed away from the house and along the twilit road. He hardly knew where he was going. By some blind instinct rather than design, his feet bore him to the Rose River graveyard and his mother's neglected grave. He cast himself down upon it, sobbing terribly.

"Oh, Mother--Mother. I wish I was dead--with you. Mother--Mother--take me--I can't live any longer--I can't--I can't. *Please*, Mother."

Margaret Penhallow stood looking down at him. She had been down to Artemas Dark with a dress for May Dark and had taken a short cut through the graveyard on her way back, walking slowly because she rather enjoyed

being in this dreamy spot where so many of her kindred slept and where the crisp, frosty west wind was blowing over old graves. Was this poor Laura Dark's boy? And what was his trouble?

She bent down and touched him gently.

"Brian,--what is the matter, dear?"

Brian started convulsively and got up, shrinking into himself. His painful little sobs ceased.

"Brian,--tell me, dear."

Brian had thought he could never tell anybody. But Margaret's soft grey-blue eyes were so tender and pitiful. He found himself telling her. He sobbed out the story of poor Cricket.

"It was all I had to love--and nobody but Cricket ever loved me."

Margaret stood very still for a few moments, patting Brian's head. In those few moments the dream of the golden-haired baby vanished for ever from her heart. She knew what she must do--what she *wanted* to do.

"Brian, would you like to come and live with me--down at Whispering Winds? I'm moving there next week. You will be *my* little boy--and I will love you--I loved your mother, dear, when we were girls together."

Brian stopped sobbing and looked at her incredulously.

"Oh, Miss Penhallow--do you mean it? Can I really live with you? And will--will Uncle Duncan let me?"

"Yes, I do mean it. And I don't think there's much doubt that your uncle will be glad to get--to let you come to me. Don't cry any more, dear. Run right home--it's too cold for you to be here like this. Next week we'll arrange it all. And will you call me Aunt Margaret?"

"Oh, Aunt Margaret,"--Brian caught her hand--her pretty slender hand that had so kindly touched his hair--"I--I--oh, I'm afraid you won't love me when you know all about me. I'm--I'm not good, Aunt Margaret. Aunt Alethea says so. And she's--she's right. I didn't want to go to church, Aunt Margaret, because my clothes were so shabby. I know that was wicked. And I--I had such dreadful thoughts when Uncle Duncan told me he'd killed Cricket. Oh, Aunt Margaret, I wouldn't want you to be disappointed in me when you found out I wasn't a good boy."

Margaret smiled and put her arm around him. How thin his poor little body was.

"We'll both be bad and wicked together then, Brian. Come, dear, I'll walk part of the way home with you. You're cold--you're shivering. You shouldn't be out without a jacket on a night like this."

They went over the graveyard, past Aunt Becky's grave and gleaming monument and down the road, hand in hand. They were both suddenly very happy. They knew they belonged to each other. Brian fell asleep that night with tears on his lashes for poor Cricket but with a warm feeling of being lapped round with love--such as he had never known before. Margaret lay blissfully awake. Whispering Winds was hers and a little lonely creature to love and cherish. She asked for nothing more--not even for Aunt Becky's jug.

Finally, Brethren

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I

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The clan had hardly got its second wind after the reconciliation of Hugh and Joscelyn when the last day of October loomed near--the day when it should be known who was to get Aunt Becky's jug. The earlier excitement, which had waned a little, especially in view of all the approaching weddings--"a lot of marrying this year," as Uncle Pippin said--blazed up again fiercely, coupled with anxious speculations as to what had caused the change in Dandy.

For Dandy was changed. Nobody could deny that. He had become furtive, morose, unfriendly, absent-minded. He snapped at people. He went to church regularly but he never lingered to talk with folks after the service. Assemblies at the blacksmith's forge knew him not. Town on Saturday knew him not. Some thought it was because of the fire but the majority refused that opinion. Dandy had lost practically nothing by the fire except his spare-room furniture. He was well insured and had an old house on his lower farm to move into temporarily. It must be something connected with the jug. Did Dandy really have to decide who was to get it and was afraid of the consequences?

"Looks like a man with something on his conscience," said Stanton Grundy.

"Can't be that," said Uncle Pippin. "Dandy never had any conscience, to speak of."

"Then he must have nervous prostration," said Grundy.

"I shouldn't wonder," agreed Uncle Pippin. "Having that jug for a whole year and mebbe having to settle who's to get it 'd be hard on anybody's nerves."

"Do you suppose," suggested Sim Dark horribly, "that Mrs Dandy has smashed the jug?"

The tension grew as the last of October approached. Drowned John and Titus Dark both reflected that, jug or no jug, they could let themselves go in another week. William Y. had bought a new mahogany table in Charlottetown, and gossip said he meant it as a stand for the jug. Old Miller Dark was holding the final chapter of his history open until he could include the lucky name. Chris Penhallow was looking lovingly at his dear neglected fiddle. Mrs Allan Dark, whose spirit and determination had so far kept her alive, reflected with a tired sigh that she could die in peace after the thirty-first of October.

"And here's Edith going to have a baby that very week," wailed Mrs Sim Dark.

It was just like Edith to have a baby at such an inconvenient time. Really, her mother thought vexedly, she might have planned things better than that.

The day came at last. A grey day with a grey wind. Autumn groves that had been an enchantment of gold and spruce-green were leaflessly grey now. Red-ribbed fields on the Treewoofe hill testified to many a glad day's work on Hugh's part. A great pyramid of pumpkins shone goldenly in Homer Penhallow's yard. The gulf was dark blue and the pasture fields adream.

Everybody was at Dandy's, except poor Mrs Sim--Edith had run true to form--and the Jim Trents, who were quarantined for measles and were at home bitterly wondering if they had served God for naught. Dandy's bulldog, Alphonso, sat on his haunches at the front door as if he never expected to do anything but sit.

"On the whole, you are the ugliest brute I ever saw," Peter told him--which didn't hurt the dog's feelings any. He simply made a blood-curdling sound that gave Mrs Toynbee a spasm.

"Going to give us anything to eat, Dandy?" whispered Uncle Pippin.

"The wife has prepared refreshments, I believe," said Dandy nervously. He didn't think anybody would have much appetite after they heard what he had to say.

Murray Dark sat and watched Thora as usual--with this difference: that he was wondering how soon it would be decent to begin courting her. If Chris had died a natural death Murray would have waited only three months. But as things were, he thought he'd better make it six. Margaret wore an exceedingly pretty grey silk dress--it had been intended for her wedding one--and looked so young and dainty and happy that Penny felt another dreadful qualm and Stanton Grundy wondered if it mightn't be wise to marry again after all. There must be a good bit of that ten thousand left, in spite of her foolish purchase of that tumbledown little place and all the new furniture they said she had put in it. Stanton determined to think it over. Eventually he decided not to. Which was just as well because Margaret had no longer any hankerings for marriage. She had Whispering Winds and Brian and she was perfectly happy. She no longer even cared about the jug.

Donna still cared a little, but not so greatly. After all, you could not take a jug like that to Africa. She was thinking more of the wedding-breakfast and the decorations of the church. For Peter, who was one of the born wanderers of the earth, found himself roped in for a conventional wedding with all the fuss and frills possible. Drowned John was determined on it. He loved a big colourful wedding, in keeping with the traditions of the clan. He had been cheated out of it on Donna's hurried war bridal with Barry but by--goodness, he wasn't going to be cheated out of it the second time. And thank heaven decent dresses were in again! Donna's wedding-dress, Drowned John decided, should sweep the floor. Donna didn't care. Where she was going with Peter she would wear nothing but knickerbockers. Luckily Drowned John knew nothing of this. It would have seemed more outrageous to him than the lions.

Roger sat and worshipped Gay openly and shamelessly--her shining hair, her marigold eyes, the charming gestures of her wonderful hands. He looked so happy that he made some of them feel a bit uneasy, as if it were flying in the face of Providence.

Nan was there, darting the mockery of her green eyes over everything, although she rather avoided looking at Gay. Thomas Ashley and his wife,

of Halifax, were there, though the clan thought they hadn't any business to be. They were no relations, although they were visiting the William Y.'s. Nobody, looking at Thomas' moon face, pursy old mouth and tortoise-shell glasses would have dreamed that he came there fired by a romantic memory. He wanted to see Mrs Clifford Penhallow again. He had been wildly in love with her when he was young and, as his wife knew bitterly, had never wholly got over it. Thomas was looking furtively at all the women in the room. Mrs Clifford had not come yet. He wondered who the grim, homely woman under the mantelpiece was.

Hugh and Joscelyn were there, although Joscelyn would rather have been home, painting the woodwork in the spare room at Treewoofe. Rachel Penhallow was there, as happy as it was possible for her to be. Penny Dark had heard that her bottle of Jordan water had been spilled and he promptly sent her his, glad to get the absurd thing out of the house. Rachel had gone off her milk diet at once. Kate and Frank and their baby were there. The baby cried a great deal and Stanton Grundy glared at it. Tempest Dark was there. Lawson and Naomi Dark were there. Naomi looked a little older and tired and more hopeless. David Dark was there, comfortably sure that Dandy, at any rate, would not ask him to open with prayer. Uncle Pippin was there, wondering why, in spite of all the repressed excitement, everything seemed a little flat. Not much like Aunt Becky's levees. Uncle Pippin decided it was because every one was too polite. Things weren't interesting when people were too polite. Aunt Becky had never been too polite. That was why her levees had been so interesting.

II

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The crucial moment had arrived. Dandy had come in and stood before the stove, his back to the mantelpiece. He was deathly pale and it was observed that his hands were trembling. The strain suddenly became almost unbearable. Artemas Dark tried to steady his nerves by counting the roses on the wallpaper. Rachel Penhallow immediately had a feeling that something was going to happen. Mrs Howard reflected with a gasp that the windows in that house couldn't have been opened for a hundred years. Why had Mrs Dandy put such a roaring fire in the stove, even on a chilly October day? But she was always a little mad, anyway.

Dandy had once looked forward to this moment, when, clothed with authority, he should stand up before them all and announce Aunt Becky's decision. And now he wished himself dead. He turned suddenly on Percy Dark.

"Would you mind stopping that everlasting drumming on the table?" he asked irritably.

Percy jumped and stopped. He started to say something but Drowned John nudged him fiercely.

"Dry up," said Drowned John.

Percy dried up.

"Come, come, Dandy," said William Y. impatiently. "Step on the juice. We've had enough of suspense. Tell us who's to get it and have it over."

"I--I can't," said Dandy, moistening his lips.

"Can't *what*?"

"Can't tell you who's to get the jug. I--I--don't know. Nobody ever will know--now."

"Look here, Dandy--" William Y. rose threateningly. "What does this mean?"

"It means"--the worst was out and Dandy had a little more courage--
"I've lost the letter Aunt Becky gave me--the letter with the name in it.
There *was* a name in it--she told me so much."

"Lost it! Where did you lose it?"

"I'm--not sure," hesitated the wretched Dandy. "That is--I'm almost sure it fell into the pig-pen. I always carried it round in a folder in my breast pocket. I never let it out of my possession. One day, some two months ago, I was up in the barn loft forking down straw. You know the flooring is just poles--there was gaps between them. I took off my coat when I got warm working and put it on again when I finished. When I went back to the house I--I missed the folder. I hunted everywhere--*everywhere*. It must have fallen into the pig-pen--the pig-pen is right under the loft, and the pigs must have et it altogether, letter and folder and all."

For a few minutes everybody said nothing very rapidly. Then--

"Damn it!" exploded Drowned John. All the repression of months was in his ejaculation. Everybody forgave him. Titus Dark looked envious. He had got so out of the habit of swearing he was afraid he could never get into it again. Even his horses had learned to understand a milder vocabulary. And a fat lot of good it had done!

Tom Dark remembered he had seen a black cat run across the road on his way to Dandy's. William Y. looked around on the circle of outraged faces. This was what you might call a hellish discovery. The situation demanded careful handling and he felt that he, William Y., was the man to handle it.

"Are you sure you had it in your pocket when you went up into the loft--sure it hadn't dropped out before?"

"Almost sure," stammered the miserable Dandy, who couldn't feel sure even of his own name just then. "I searched everywhere. It's been wearing me to a shadow. The wife said to pray about it. Dang it, I've prayed till I was black in the face."

"And you've no idea what name was in the envelope?"

It seemed incredible that Dandy didn't know *that*.

"I ain't got the least idea," said Dandy. "It was sealed--I never saw so much sealing-wax on the back of any letter. And Aunt Becky made me swear I wouldn't tamper with it."

Drowned John determined to take a hand. William Y. wasn't going to be let run things.

"We'll have to draw lots for it," he said.

"That isn't a Christian way to decide it," said William Y. "Anybody got any other suggestion?"

"Let's vote who's to have it--secret ballot," said Junius Penhallow.

"With everybody putting his own name in the ballot," remarked William Y., with a smile of icy contempt for such a suggestion. "No; *I'll* tell you what should be done--"

"Here's the Moon Man running across the yard," interrupted Uncle Pippin. "He seems in a mighty hurry."

Those who could look out of the window did so. They saw the Moon Man with his long black coat streaming out behind him in the wind like the mantle of a prophet of old. In a few seconds he had reached the house, crossed the hall, and was standing breathlessly in the doorway of the room. The whole clan realized that the Moon Man had one of his really crazy fits on.

"I heard the devil cackling as I came down by the barn," said the Moon Man. "He was in glee over this unholy gathering where envy and all uncharitableness prevail."

His look scorched everybody and left them feeling like cinders.

"It has been revealed to me what I should do."

The Moon Man strode to the table between the two windows--he snatched up Aunt Becky's jug--he hurled it furiously at the mantelpiece. Roger, realizing before any one else, but just too late, what the Moon Man meant to do, sprang up and caught at his arm. He could not save the jug but he deflected slightly the Moon Man's aim. The jug hurtled through the air at Lawson Dark. And Lawson Dark, who had not stood or walked for eleven years, saw it coming and sprang to his feet to avoid it. The jug struck him squarely on the head, crashed like an egg-shell, slid off against

the stove, and fell on the floor in hundreds of tiny fragments. Harriet Dark perhaps turned over in her grave. Possibly Aunt Becky did, too. But Lawson Dark, with blood trickling from a cut on his forehead, had turned dazedly to his wife.

"Naomi!" he cried, holding out his hands to her. "Oh, Naomi."

III

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"Don't it beat hell?" said Sim Dark.

"And we won't ever know who should have had the pieces," said William Y. disconsolately, as they lingered in the yard, after Roger had taken charge of Lawson and carried him and Naomi off home.

The clan were not inclined to discuss what had happened to Lawson. It savoured too strongly of something miraculous and unclan-like. The jug was a safer topic--now.

"That doesn't matter much," said David Dark. "There's thousands of 'em--they could never be stuck together."

"Anyhow, if anybody had got it I reckon he'd never have got home alive," said Stanton Grundy. Tom Dark, who had never cried in his life, was crying because he hadn't got the jug. His wife dragged him hastily off to his car to hide his shame. Joscelyn and Hugh went away together very silently, thinking only of the look on Naomi Dark's face when Lawson had turned to her with his glad cry of recognition. Mrs Alpheus was furious with both the Moon Man and Dandy. Something--she wasn't quite clear what--ought to be done to both of them. Homer Penhallow and Palmer Dark passed each other without recognition. It was very satisfying to be enemies again. Life had been so darned dull when they had to be friendly. David and Percy Dark nodded shamefacedly to each other and mentioned the weather. The graveyard fracas was forgotten.

"It's a funny world," sighed Uncle Pippin.

"Let's laugh at it then," said Stanton Grundy.

Old Thomas Ashley was not happy. Somebody had come up to him on the veranda and said archly, "Don't *dare* to say you don't know *me*." He stared at her in silence. It was the grim lady who had sat under the mantelpiece. No, he didn't know her--and yet--

"I'm Mavis Dark," she said more archly still.

"Mavis Dark! Impossible!" exclaimed Thomas Ashley.

"Oh, *have* I changed so much?" said Mrs Clifford poutingly. "Don't you remember that summer you were here?"

Thomas Ashley looked at her. The skin which had been creamy in youth was yellow now--the smooth cheeks were wrinkled--the smooth neck wattled. The sleek, black hair had turned grey--the gracious curves had vanished.

"But--but--you were beautiful then," stammered poor old Thomas.

"You've changed a little yourself," Mrs Clifford reminded him acidly.

Thomas Ashley went away, lamenting a lost dream. He wished he had never heard of the old Dark jug. But his plump, pretty little wife was not ill-pleased. The ghostly rival of thirty years was laid at last. God bless Aunt Becky's jug!

Tempest Dark, his eyes alight with good-humoured mockery, had decided that he would keep on living. He had found a job that would give him bread and discovered that existence was possible even without Winnifred.

"After all, life's worth living when a comedy like this is played out," he reflected.

"Dang it, I believe there *is* something in prayer after all," said Dandy, when the last car had driven away.

IV

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Winter was coming on apace; November wore away. At Treewoofe Hugh and Joscelyn kept glowing fires in every room and laughed at the winds that swirled up from the gulf. Peter and Donna were on their way to Africa. Roger and Gay were not yet home from their honeymoon. Margaret and Brian were nested in Whispering Winds. And one cold evening poor, lonely, hungry Big Sam set out for a walk around the shore to the lighthouse on Bay Silver Point. It was a long walk and he had various rheumatic spots about his anatomy, but there would be some cronies at the lighthouse and Big Sam thought an evening of social intercourse would be better for his nerves than playing tit-tat-o, right hand against the left, at home. These short days and long, early-falling evenings were depressing, he admitted. And the Wilkins' shanty was draughty. Perhaps Happy Dark would be at the lighthouse, with his ringing tales of life in the tropic seas. And maybe the lighthouse-keeper's wife might even give them a bite of lunch. But he would not let his thoughts dwell on Little Sam's suet puddings and chowders and hot biscuits. That way madness lay.

There had been a skim of snow that morning, melting into dampness as the sun rose for an hour or two of watery brightness before shrouding himself in clouds. The brief day had grown cold and raw as it wore on and now land and sea lay wrapped in a grey, brooding stillness. Far away Big Sam heard a train-whistle blow distinctly. The Old Lady of the Gulf moaned now and then. A storm was coming up but Big Sam was not afraid of storms. He would come home by the river road; the tide would be too high on his return to come by the Hole-in-the-Wall.

As a matter of fact, when he reached the long red headland known as the Hole-in-the-Wall, he blankly realized that the tide was already ahead of him. There was no getting around it. He could not climb its steep

rugged sides; and to go back to where a road led down to the shore meant a lot of extra walking.

A daring inspiration came to Big Sam. Since he could not get around the Hole-in-the-Wall, could he go through it? Nobody ever had gone through it. But there had to be a first time for anything. It was certainly bigger than last year. Nothing venture, nothing win.

The Hole-in-the-Wall had begun with a tiny opening through the relatively thin side of the headland. Every year it grew a little larger as the yielding sandstone crumbled under wave and frost. It was a fair size now. Big Sam was small and thin. He reckoned if he could get his head through, the rest of him could follow.

He lay down and cautiously began squirming through. It was tighter than he had thought. The sides seemed suddenly very thick. All at once Big Sam decided that he was not cut out for a pioneer. He would go back out to the road. He tried to. He could not move. Somehow his coat had got ruckled up around his shoulders and jammed him tight. Vainly he twisted and writhed and tugged. The big rock seemed to hold him as in a grip of iron. The more he struggled the tighter he seemed to get wedged in. Finally he lay still with a cold sweat of horror breaking over him. His head was through the Hole-in-the-Wall. His shoulders were tight in it. His legs--where *were* his legs? There was no sensation in them, but they were probably hanging down the rock wall on the hinder side.

What a position to be in! On a lonely shore on a fast-darkening November night with a storm coming up. He would never live through it. He would die of heart-failure before morning, like old Captain Jobby who tried to climb through a gate when he was drunk, and stuck there.

Nobody could see him and it was no use to yell. Before him, as behind him, was nothing but a curving, shadowy cove bounded by another headland. No house, no human being in sight. Nevertheless, Big Sam yelled with what little breath he had left.

"Wouldn't you just as soon sing as make that noise?" queried Little Sam, sticking his head around the huge boulder that screened him.

Big Sam stared at the familiar spidery nose and huge moustache. Of all the men in River and Cove to catch him in this predicament, that it should be Little Sam! What the devil was he doing, squatted here a mile away from home on such a night?

"I wasn't aimin' to sing, not being afflicted as some folks are," said Big Sam sarcastically. "I was just trying to fill my lungs with air."

"Why don't you come all the way through?" jeered Little Sam, coming around the boulder.

"'Cause I can't, and you know it," said Big Sam savagely. "Look here, Samuel Dark, you and I ain't friends but I'm a human being, ain't I?"

"There are times when I can see a distant resemblance to one in you," acknowledged Little Sam, sitting calmly down on a jut of the boulder.

"Well, then, in the name of humanity help me out of this."

"I dunno's I can," said Little Sam dubiously. "Seems to me the only way'd be to yank you back by the legs and I can't git round the cape to do that."

"If you can get a good grip on my shoulders or my coat you can yank me out this way. It only wants a good pull. I can't get my arms free to help myself."

"And I dunno's I will," went on Little Sam as if he had not been interrupted.

"You--dunno's--you--*will*! D'ye mean to say you'll leave me here to die a night like this? Well, Sam Dark--"

"No; I ain't aiming to do that. It'll be your own fault if you're left here. But you've got to show some signs of sense if I'm going to pull you out. Will you come home and behave yourself if I do?"

"If you want me to come home you know all you've got to do," snapped Big Sam. "Shoot out your Roarer."

"Aurorer stays," said Little Sam briefly.

"Then I stay, too." Big Sam imitated Little Sam's brevity--partly because he had very little breath to use for talking at all.

Little Sam took out his pipe and proceeded to light it.

"I'll give you a few minutes to reflect 'fore I go. I don't aim to stay long here in the damp. I dunno how a little wizened critter like you'll stand it all night. Anyhow, you'll have some feeling after this for the poor camel trying to get through the needle's eye."

"Call yourself a Christian?" sneered Big Sam.

"Don't be peevish now. This ain't a question of religion--this is a question of common sense," retorted Little Sam.

Big Sam made a terrific effort to free himself but not even a tremor of the grim red headland was produced thereby.

"You'll bust a blood-vessel in one of them spasms," warned Little Sam. "You'd orter to see yourself with your red whiskers sticking out of that hole. And I s'pose the rest of you's sticking out of the other side. Beautiful rear view if any one comes along. Not that any one likely will, this time o' night. But if you're still alive in the morning I'm going to get Prince Dark to take a snap of your hind legs. Be sensible, Sammy. I've got pea soup for supper--hot pea soup."

"Take your pea soup to hell," said Big Sam.

Followed a lot of silence. Big Sam was thinking. He knew where his extremities were now, for the cold was nipping them like a weasel. The rock around him was hard as iron. It was beginning to rain and the wind was rising. Already the showers of spray were spuming up from the beach. By morning he would be dead or gibbering.

But it was bitter to knuckle under to Little Sam and that white-limbed hussy on the clock shelf. Big Sam tried to pluck a little honour from the jaws of defeat.

"If I come back, will you promise not to marry that fat widow?"

Little Sam concealed all evidence of triumph.

"I ain't promising nothing--but I ain't marrying *any* widow, fat *or* lean."

"I s'pose that means she wouldn't have you."

"She didn't get the chance to have me or not have me. I ain't contracting any alliance with the House of Terlizzick, maid *or* widow. Well, I'm for home and pea soup. Coming, Sammy?"

Big Sam emitted a sigh, partly of exhaustion, partly of surrender. Life was too complicated. He was beaten.

"Pull me out of this damn' hole," he said sourly, "and I don't care how many naked weemen you have round."

"One's enough," said Little Sam.

He got a grip somehow of Big Sam's coat over his shoulders and tugged manfully. Big Sam howled. He was sure his legs were being torn off at the hips. Then he found that they were still attached to his body, standing on the rock beside Little Sam.

"Wring your whiskers out and hurry," said Little Sam. "I'm afraid that pea soup'll be scorched. It's sitting on the back of the stove."

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This was comfort now--with the cold rain beating down outside and the gulf beginning to bellow. The stove was purring a lyric of beech and maple, and Mustard was licking her beautiful family under it.

Big Sam drew a long breath of satisfaction. There were many things to be talked over with Little Sam--incidents they could discuss with the calm detachment of those who lived on the fringe of the clan only. What name had really been in the envelope Dandy's pig had eaten. The uncanny miracle of Lawson Dark's restoration. The fact that Joscelyn Dark had got over her long fit of the sulks. The wedding of Peter and Donna and all the expense Drowned John must have gone to. All the things that had or had not happened in the clan because of Aunt Becky's jug. And some amazing yarn of Walter Dark's black cat that had fallen into a gallon of gasoline and come out white.

Really the pea soup was sublime.

After all, them earrings rather became Little Sam. Balanced the moustache, so to speak. And Aurorer--but what was the matter with Aurorer?

"What you bin doing with that old heathen graven immidge of yours?" demanded Big Sam, setting down half drunk his cup of militant tea with a thud.

"Give her a coat of bronze paint," said Little Sam proudly. "Looks real tasty, don't it? Knew you'd be sneaking home some of these long-come-shorts and thought I'd show you I could be consid'rate of your principles."

"Then you can scrape it off again," said Big Sam firmly. "Think I'm going to have an unclothed nigger sitting up there? If I've gotter be looking at a naked woman day in and day out, I want a white one for decency's sake."

JANE OF LANTERN HILL

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To the memory of

"LUCKY"

the charming affectionate comrade of fourteen years

I

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Gay street, so Jane always thought, did not live up to its name. It was, she felt certain, the most melancholy street in Toronto . . . though, to be sure, she had not seen a great many of the Toronto streets in her circumscribed comings and goings of eleven years.

Gay Street should be a *gay* street, thought Jane, with gay, friendly houses, set amid flowers, that cried out, "How do you do?" to you as you passed them, with trees that waved hands at you and windows that winked at you in the twilights. Instead of that, Gay Street was dark and dingy, lined with forbidding, old-fashioned brick houses, grimy with age, whose tall, shuttered, blinded windows could never have thought of winking at anybody. The trees that lined Gay Street were so old and huge and stately that it was difficult to think of them as trees at all, any more than those forlorn little things in the green pails by the doors of the filling station on the opposite corner. Grandmother had been furious when the old Adams house on that corner had been torn down and the new white-and-red filling station built in its place. She would never let Frank get petrol there. But at that, Jane thought, it was the only gay place on the street.

Jane lived at 60 Gay. It was a huge, castellated structure of brick, with a pillared entrance porch, high, arched Georgian windows, and towers and turrets wherever a tower or turret could be wedged in. It was surrounded by a high iron fence with wrought-iron gates . . . those gates had been famous in the Toronto of an earlier day . . . that were always closed and locked by Frank at night, thus giving Jane a very nasty feeling that she was a prisoner being locked in.

There was more space around 60 Gay than around most of the houses on the street. It had quite a bit of lawn in front, though the grass never grew well because of the row of old trees just inside the fence . . . and quite a respectable space between the side of the house and Bloor Street;

but it was not nearly wide enough to dim the unceasing clatter and clang of Bloor, which was especially noisy and busy where Gay Street joined it. People wondered why old Mrs Robert Kennedy continued to live there when she had oodles of money and could buy one of those lovely new houses in Forest Hill or in the Kingsway. The taxes on a lot as big as 60 Gay must be ruinous and the house was hopelessly out of date. Mrs Kennedy merely smiled contemptuously when things like this were said to her, even by her son, William Anderson, the only one of her first family whom she respected, because he had been successful in business and was rich in his own right. She had never loved him, but he had compelled her to respect him.

Mrs Kennedy was perfectly satisfied with 60 Gay. She had come there as the bride of Robert Kennedy when Gay Street was the last word in streets and 60 Gay, built by Robert's father, one of the finest "mansions" in Toronto. It had never ceased to be so in her eyes. She had lived there for forty-five years and she would live there the rest of her life. Those who did not like it need not stay there. This, with a satirically amused glance at Jane, who had never said she didn't like Gay Street. But grandmother, as Jane had long ago discovered, had an uncanny knack of reading your mind.

Once, when Jane had been sitting in the Cadillac, one dark, dingy morning in a snowy world, waiting for Frank to take her to St Agatha's, as he did every day, she had heard two women, who were standing on the street-corner, talking about it.

"Did you ever see such a dead house?" said the younger. "It looks as if it had been dead for ages."

"That house died thirty years ago, when Robert Kennedy died," said the older woman. "Before that it was a lively place. Nobody in Toronto entertained more. Robert Kennedy liked social life. He was a very handsome, friendly man. People could never understand how he came to marry Mrs James Anderson . . . a widow with three children. She was Victoria Moore to begin with, you know, old Colonel Moore's daughter . . . a very aristocratic family. But she was pretty as a picture then and was she crazy about him! My dear, she worshipped him. People said she was never

willing to let him out of her sight for a moment. And they said she hadn't cared for her first husband at all. Robert Kennedy died when they had been married about fifteen years . . . died just after his first baby was born, I've heard."

"Does she live all alone in that castle?"

"Oh, no. Her two daughters live with her. One of them is a widow or something . . . and there's a granddaughter, I believe. They say old Mrs Kennedy is a terrible tyrant, but the younger daughter . . . the widow . . . is gay enough and goes to everything you see reported in *Saturday Evening*. Very pretty . . . and can she dress! She was the Kennedy one and took after her father. She must hate having all her fine friends coming to Gay Street. It's worse than dead . . . it's decayed. But I can remember when Gay Street was one of the most fashionable residential streets in town. Look at it now."

"Shabby genteel."

"Hardly even that. Why, 58 Gay is a boarding-house. But old Mrs Kennedy keeps 60 up very well, though the paint is beginning to peel off the balconies, you notice."

"Well, I'm glad I don't live on Gay Street," giggled the other, as they ran to catch the car.

"You may well be," thought Jane. Though, if she had been put to it, she could hardly have told you where she would have liked to live if not at 60 Gay. Most of the streets through which she drove to St Agatha's were mean and uninviting, for St Agatha's, that very expensive and exclusive private school to which grandmother sent Jane, now found itself in an unfashionable and outgrown locality also. But St Agatha's didn't mind that . . . St Agatha's would have been St Agatha's, you must understand, in the desert of Sahara.

Uncle William Anderson's house in Forest Hill was very handsome, with landscaped lawns and rock gardens, but she wouldn't like to live there. One was almost terrified to walk over the lawn lest one do something to Uncle William's cherished velvet. You had to keep to the flat stepping-stones path. And Jane wanted to run. You couldn't run at St

Agatha's either, except when you were playing games. And Jane was not very good at games. She always felt awkward in them. At eleven she was as tall as most girls of thirteen. She towered above the girls of her class. They did not like it and made Jane feel that she fitted in nowhere.

As for running at 60 Gay . . . had anybody ever run at 60 Gay? Jane felt as if mother must have . . . mother stepped so lightly and gaily yet that you thought her feet had wings. But once, when Jane had dared to run from the front door to the back door, straight through the long house that was almost half the length of the city block, singing at the top of her voice, grandmother, who she had thought was out, had emerged from the breakfast-room and looked at her with the smile on her dead-white face that Jane hated.

"What," she said in the silky voice that Jane hated still more, "is responsible for this outburst, Victoria?"

"I was running just for the fun of it," explained Jane. It seemed so very simple. But grandmother had just smiled and said, as only grandmother could say things:

"I wouldn't do it again if I were you, Victoria."

Jane never did it again. That was the effect grandmother had on you, though she was so tiny and wrinkled . . . so tiny that lanky, long-legged Jane was almost as tall as she was.

Jane hated to be called Victoria. Yet everybody called her that, except mother, who called her Jane Victoria. Jane knew somehow that grandmother resented that . . . knew that for some reason unknown to her, grandmother hated the name of Jane. Jane liked it . . . always had liked it . . . always thought of herself as Jane. She understood that she had been named Victoria after grandmother, but she did not know where the Jane had come from. There were no Janes in the Kennedys or Andersons. In her eleventh year she had begun to suspect that it might have come from the Stuart side. And Jane was sorry for that, because she did not want to think she owed her favourite name to her father. Jane hated her father in so far as hatred could find place in a little heart that was not made for hating anybody, even grandmother. There were times Jane was afraid she did hate

grandmother, which was dreadful, because grandmother was feeding and clothing and educating her. Jane knew she ought to love grandmother, but it seemed a very hard thing to do. Apparently mother found it easy; but, then, grandmother loved mother, which made a difference. Loved her as she loved nobody else in the world. And grandmother did not love Jane. Jane had always known that. And Jane felt, if she did not yet know, that grandmother did not like mother loving her so much.

"You fuss entirely too much about her," grandmother had once said contemptuously, when mother was worried about Jane's sore throat.

"She's all I have," said mother.

And then grandmother's old white face had flushed.

"I am nothing, I suppose," she said.

"Oh, mother, you know I didn't mean *that*," mother had said piteously, fluttering her hands in a way she had which always made Jane think of two little white butterflies. "I meant . . . I meant . . . she's my only child. . . ."

"And you love that child . . . his child . . . better than you love me!"

"Not better . . . only differently," said mother pleadingly.

"Ingrate!" said grandmother. It was only one word, but what venom she could put into a word. Then she had gone out of the room, still with that flush on her face and her pale blue eyes smouldering under her frosty hair.

II

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"Mummy," said Jane as well as her swelled tonsils would let her, "why doesn't grandmother want you to love me?"

"Darling, it isn't like that," said mother, bending over Jane, her face like a rose in the light of the rose-shaded lamp.

But Jane knew it was like that. She knew why mother seldom kissed her or petted her in grandmother's presence. It made grandmother angry with a still, cold, terrible anger that seemed to freeze the air about her. Jane was glad mother didn't often do it. She made up for it when they were alone together . . . but then they were so very seldom alone together. Even now they would not have very long together, for mother was going out to a dinner party. Mother went out almost every evening to something or other and almost every afternoon too. Jane always loved to get a glimpse of her before she went out. Mother knew this and generally contrived that Jane should. She always wore such pretty dresses and looked so lovely. Jane was sure she had the most beautiful mother in the whole world. She was beginning to wonder how any one so lovely as mother could have a daughter so plain and awkward as herself.

"You'll never be pretty . . . your mouth is too big," one of the girls at St Agatha's had told her.

Mother's mouth was like a rosebud, small and red, with dimples tucked away at the corners. Her eyes were blue . . . but not an icy blue like grandmother's. There is such a difference in blue eyes. Mother's were just the colour of the sky on a summer morning between the great masses of white clouds. Her hair was a warm, wavy gold and to-night she was wearing it brushed away from her forehead, with little bunches of curls behind her ears and a row of them at the nape of her white neck. She wore a dress of pale yellow taffeta, with a great rose of deeper yellow velvet at one of her beautiful shoulders. Jane thought she looked like a lovely

golden princess, with the slender flame of the diamond bracelet on the creamy satin of her arm. Grandmother had given her the bracelet last week for her birthday. Grandmother was always giving mother such lovely things. And she picked out all her clothes for her . . . wonderful dresses and hats and wraps. Jane did not know that people said Mrs Stuart was always rather overdressed, but she had an idea that mother really liked simpler clothes and only pretended to like better the gorgeous things grandmother bought for her for fear of hurting grandmother's feelings.

Jane was very proud of mother's beauty. She thrilled with delight when she heard people whisper, "Isn't she lovely?" She almost forgot her aching throat as she watched mother put on the rich brocaded wrap, just the colour of her eyes, with its big collar of grey fox.

"Oh, but you're sweet, mummy," she said, putting up her hand and touching mother's cheek as mother bent down and kissed her. It was like touching a rose-leaf. And mother's lashes lay on her cheeks like silken fans. Some people, Jane knew, looked better farther off; but the nearer you were to mother, the prettier she was.

"Darling, do you feel very sick? I hate to leave you but . . ."

Mother didn't finish her sentence but Jane knew she meant, "Grandmother wouldn't like it if I didn't go."

"I don't feel very sick at all," said Jane gallantly "Mary will look after me."

But after mother had gone, with a swish of taffeta, Jane felt a horrible lump in her throat that had nothing to do with her tonsils. It would be so easy to cry . . . but Jane would not let herself cry. Years ago, when she had been no more than five, she had heard mother say very proudly, "Jane never cries. She never cried even when she was a tiny baby." From that day Jane had been careful never to let herself cry, even when she was alone in bed at night. Mother had so few things to be proud of in her: she must not let her down on one of those few things.

But it was dreadfully lonely. The wind was howling along the street outside. The tall windows rattled drearily and the big house seemed full of unfriendly noises and whispers. Jane wished Jody could come in and sit

with her for a while. But Jane knew it was useless to wish for that. She could never forget the only time Jody had come to 60 Gay.

"Well, anyhow," said Jane, trying to look on the bright side of things in spite of her sore throat and aching head, "I won't have to read the Bible to them to-night."

"Them" were grandmother and Aunt Gertrude. Very seldom mother because mother was nearly always out. But every night before Jane went to bed she had to read a chapter in the Bible to grandmother and Aunt Gertrude. There was nothing in the whole twenty-four hours that Jane hated doing more than that. And she knew quite well that that was just why grandmother made her do it.

They always went into the drawing-room for the reading and Jane invariably shivered as she entered it. That huge, elaborate room, so full of things that you could hardly move about in it without knocking something over, always seemed cold even on the hottest night in summer. And on winter nights it was cold. Aunt Gertrude took the huge family Bible, with its heavy silver clasp, from the marble-topped centre table and laid it on a little table between the windows. Then she and grandmother sat, one at each end of the table, and Jane sat between them at the side, with Great-grandfather Kennedy scowling down at her from the dim old painting in its heavy, tarnished gilt frame, flanked by the dark blue velvet curtains. That woman on the street had said that Grandfather Kennedy was a nice friendly man but his father couldn't have been. Jane always thought candidly that he looked as if he would enjoy biting a nail in two.

"Turn to the fourteenth chapter of Exodus," grandmother would say. The chapter varied every night, of course, but the tone never did. It always rattled Jane so that she generally made a muddle of finding the right place. And grandmother, with the hateful little smile which seemed to say, "So you can't even do this as it should be done," would put out her lean, crapy hand, with its rich old-fashioned rings, and turn to the right place with uncanny precision. Jane would stumble through the chapter, mispronouncing words she knew perfectly well just because she was so nervous. Sometimes grandmother would say, "A little louder if you please,

Victoria. I thought when I sent you to St Agatha's they would at least teach you to open your mouth when reading even if they couldn't teach you geography and history." And Jane would raise her voice so suddenly that Aunt Gertrude would jump. But the next evening it might be, "Not quite so loud, Victoria, if you please. We are not deaf." And poor Jane's voice would die away to little more than a whisper.

When she had finished grandmother and Aunt Gertrude would bow their heads and repeat the Lord's Prayer. Jane would try to say it with them, which was a difficult thing because grandmother was generally two words ahead of Aunt Gertrude. Jane always said "Amen" thankfully. The beautiful prayer, haloed with all the loveliness of age-long worship, had become a sort of horror to Jane.

Then Aunt Gertrude would close the Bible and put it back in exactly the same place, to the fraction of a hair, on the centre table. Finally Jane had to kiss her and grandmother good night. Grandmother would always remain sitting in her chair and Jane would stoop and kiss her forehead.

"Good night, grandmother."

"Good night, Victoria."

But Aunt Gertrude would be standing by the centre table and Jane would have to reach up to her, for Aunt Gertrude was tall. Aunt Gertrude would stoop just a little and Jane would kiss her narrow grey face.

"Good night, Aunt Gertrude."

"Good night, Victoria," Aunt Gertrude would say in her thin, cold voice.

And Jane would get herself out of the room, sometimes lucky enough not to knock anything over.

"When I grow up I'll never, never read the Bible or say that prayer," she would whisper to herself as she climbed the long, magnificent staircase which had once been the talk of Toronto.

One night grandmother had smiled and said, "What do you think of the Bible, Victoria?"

"I think it is very dull," said Jane truthfully. The reading had been a chapter full of "knops" and "taches," and Jane had not the least idea what

knops or taches were.

"Ah! But do you think your opinion counts for a great deal?" said grandmother, smiling with paper-thin lips.

"Why did you ask me for it then?" said Jane, and had been icily rebuked for impertinence when she had not had the least intention of being impertinent. Was it any wonder she went up the staircase that night fairly loathing 60 Gay? And she did not want to loathe it. She wanted to love it . . . to be friends with it . . . to do things for it. But she could not love it . . . it wouldn't be friendly . . . and there was nothing it wanted done. Aunt Gertrude and Mary Price, the cook, and Frank Davis, the houseman and chauffeur, did everything for it. Aunt Gertrude would not let grandmother keep a housemaid because she preferred to attend to the house herself. Tall, shadowy, reserved Aunt Gertrude, who was so totally unlike mother that Jane found it hard to believe they were even half-sisters, was a martinet for order and system. At 60 Gay everything had to be done in a certain way on a certain day. The house was really frightfully clean. Aunt Gertrude's cold grey eyes could not tolerate a speck of dust anywhere. She was always going about the house putting things in their places and she attended to everything. Even mother never did anything except arrange the flowers for the table when they had company and light the candles for dinner. Jane would have liked the fun of doing that. And Jane would have liked to polish the silver and cook. More than anything else Jane would have liked to cook. Now and then, when grandmother was out, she hung about the kitchen and watched good-natured Mary Price cook the meals. It all seemed so easy. . . . Jane was sure she could do it perfectly if she were allowed. It must be such fun to cook a meal. The smell of it was almost as good as the eating of it.

But Mary Price never let her. She knew the old lady didn't approve of Miss Victoria talking to the servants.

"Victoria fancies herself as domestic," grandmother had once said at the midday Sunday dinner where, as usual, Uncle William Anderson and Aunt Minnie and Uncle David Coleman and Aunt Sylvia Coleman and their daughter Phyllis were present. Grandmother had such a knack of

making you feel ridiculous and silly in company. All the same, Jane wondered what grandmother would say if she knew that Mary Price, being somewhat rushed that day, had let Jane wash and arrange the lettuce for the salad. Jane knew what grandmother would do. She would refuse to touch a leaf of it.

"Well, shouldn't a girl be domestic?" said Uncle William, not because he wanted to take Jane's part but because he never lost an opportunity of announcing his belief that a woman's place was in the home. "Every girl should know how to cook."

"I don't think Victoria wants very much to learn how to cook," said grandmother. "It is just that she likes to hang about kitchens and places like that."

Grandmother's voice implied that Victoria had low tastes and that kitchens were barely respectable. Jane wondered why mother's face flushed so suddenly and why a strange, rebellious look gleamed for a moment in her eyes. But only for a moment.

"How are you getting on at St Agatha's, Victoria?" asked Uncle William. "Going to get your grade?"

Jane did not know whether she was going to get her grade or not. The fear haunted her night and day. She knew her monthly reports had not been very good . . . grandmother had been very angry over them and even mother had asked her piteously if she couldn't do a little better. Jane had done the best she could, but history and geography were so dull and drab. Arithmetic and spelling were easier. Jane was really quite brilliant in arithmetic.

"Victoria can write wonderful compositions, I hear," said grandmother sarcastically. For some reason Jane couldn't fathom at all, her ability to write good compositions had never pleased grandmother.

"Tut, tut," said Uncle William. "Victoria could get her grade easily enough if she wanted to. The thing to do is to study hard. She's getting to be a big girl now and ought to realize that. What is the capital of Canada, Victoria?"

Jane knew perfectly well what the capital of Canada was but Uncle William fired the question at her so unexpectedly and all the guests stopped eating to listen . . . and for the moment she couldn't remember for her life what the name was. She blushed . . . stammered . . . squirmed. If she had looked at mother she would have seen that mother was forming the word silently on her lips but she could not look at any one. She was ready to die of shame and mortification.

"Phyllis," said Uncle William, "tell Victoria what the capital of Canada is."

Phyllis promptly responded: "Ottawa."

"O-t-t-a-w-a," said Uncle William to Jane. Jane felt that they were all, except mother, watching her for something to find fault with and now Aunt Sylvia Coleman put on a pair of nose-glasses attached to a long black ribbon and looked at Jane through them as if wishing to be sure what a girl who didn't know the capital of her country was really like. Jane, under the paralysing influence of that stare, dropped her fork and writhed in anguish when she caught grandmother's eye. Grandmother touched her little silver bell.

"Will you bring Miss Victoria another fork, Davis?" she said in a tone implying that Jane had had several forks already.

Uncle William put the piece of white chicken meat he had just carved off on the side of the platter. Jane had been hoping he would give it to her. She did not often get white meat. When Uncle William was not there to carve, Mary carved the fowls in the kitchen and Frank passed the platter around. Jane seldom dared to help herself to white meat because she knew grandmother was watching her. On one occasion when she had helped herself to two tiny pieces of breast grandmother had said:

"Don't forget, my dear Victoria, there are other people who might like a breast slice, too."

At present Jane reflected that she was lucky to get a drumstick. Uncle William was quite capable of giving her the neck by way of rebuking her for not knowing the capital of Canada. However, Aunt Sylvia very kindly gave her a double portion of turnip. Jane loathed turnip.

"You don't seem to have much appetite, Victoria," said Aunt Sylvia reproachfully when the mound of turnip had not decreased much.

"Oh, I think Victoria's appetite is all right," said grandmother, as if it were the only thing about her that was all right. Jane always felt that there was far more in what grandmother said than in the words themselves. Jane might then and there have broken her record for never crying, she felt so utterly wretched, had she not looked at mother. And mother was looking so tender and sympathetic and understanding that Jane spunked up at once and simply made no effort to eat any more turnip.

Aunt Sylvia's daughter Phyllis, who did not go to St Agatha's but to Hillwood Hall, a much newer but even more expensive school, could have named not only the capital of Canada but the capital of every province in the Dominion. Jane did not like Phyllis. Sometimes Jane thought drearily that there must be something the matter with her when there were so many people she didn't like. But Phyllis was so condescending . . . and Jane hated to be condescended to.

"Why don't you like Phyllis?" grandmother had asked once, looking at Jane with those eyes that, Jane felt, could see through walls, doors, everything, right into your inmost soul. "She is pretty, lady-like, well behaved and clever . . . everything that you are not," Jane felt sure grandmother wanted to add.

"She patronizes me," said Jane.

"Do you really know the meaning of all the big words you use, my dear Victoria?" said grandmother. "And don't you think that . . . possibly . . . you are a little jealous of Phyllis?"

"No, I don't think so," said Jane firmly. She knew she was not jealous of Phyllis.

"Of course, I must admit she is very different from that Jody of yours," said grandmother. The sneer in her voice brought an angry sparkle into Jane's eyes. She could not bear to hear any one sneer at Jody. And yet what could she do about it?

III

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She and Jody had been pals for a year. Jody matched Jane's eleven years of life and was tall for her age, too . . . though not with Jane's sturdy tallness. Jody was thin and weedy and looked as if she had never had enough to eat in her life . . . which was very likely the case, although she lived in a boarding-house--58 Gay, which had once been a fashionable residence and was now just a dingy three-story boarding-house.

One evening in the spring of the preceding year Jane was out in the back yard of 60 Gay, sitting on a rustic bench in an old disused summer-house. Mother and grandmother were both away and Aunt Gertrude was in bed with a bad cold, or else Jane would not have been sitting in the back yard. She had crept out to have a good look at the full moon . . . Jane had her own particular reasons for liking to look at the moon . . . and the white blossoming cherry-tree over in the yard of 58. The cherry-tree, with the moon hanging over it like a great pearl, was so beautiful that Jane felt a queer lump in her throat when she looked at it . . . almost as if she wanted to cry. And then . . . somebody really was crying over in the yard of 58. The stifled, piteous sounds came clearly on the still, crystal air of the spring evening.

Jane got up and walked out of the summer-house and around the garage, past the lonely dog-house that had never had a dog in it . . . at least, in Jane's recollection . . . and so to the fence that had ceased to be iron and become a wooden paling between 60 and 58. There was a gap in it behind the dog-house where a slat had been broken off amid a tangle of creeper and Jane, squeezing through it, found herself in the untidy yard of 58. It was still quite light and Jane could see a girl huddled at the root of the cherry-tree, sobbing bitterly, her face in her hands.

"Can I help you?" said Jane.

Though Jane herself had no inkling of it, those words were the keynote of her character. Any one else would probably have said, "What is the matter?" But Jane always wanted to help: and, though she was too young to realize it, the tragedy of her little existence was that nobody ever wanted her help . . . not even mother, who had everything heart could wish.

The child under the cherry-tree stopped sobbing and got on her feet. She looked at Jane and Jane looked at her and something happened to both of them. Long afterwards Jane said, "I knew we were the same kind of folks." Jane saw a girl of about her own age, with a very white little face under a thick bang of black hair cut straight across her forehead. The hair looked as if it had not been washed for a long time but the eyes underneath it were brown and beautiful, though of quite a different brown from Jane's. Jane's were goldy-brown like a marigold, with laughter lurking in them, but this girl's were very dark and very sad . . . so sad that Jane's heart did something queer inside of her. She knew quite well that it wasn't right that anybody so young should have such sad eyes.

The girl wore a dreadful old blue dress that had certainly never been made for her. It was too long and too elaborate and it was dirty and grease-spotted. It hung on the thin little shoulders like a gaudy rag on a scarecrow. But the dress mattered nothing to Jane. All she was conscious of was those appealing eyes.

"Can I help?" she asked again.

The girl shook her head and the tears welled up in her big eyes.

"Look," she pointed.

Jane looked and saw between the cherry-tree and the fence what seemed like a rudely made flower-bed strewn over with roses that were ground into the earth.

"Dick did that," said the girl. "He did it on purpose . . . because it was my garden. Miss Summers had them roses sent her last week . . . twelve great big red ones for her birthday . . . and this morning she said they were done and told me to throw them in the garbage pail. But I couldn't . . . they were still so pretty. I come out here and made that bed and stuck the roses all over it. I knew they wouldn't last long . . . but they looked pretty and I

pretended I had a garden of my own . . . and now . . . Dick just come out and stomped all over it . . . and *laughed*."

She sobbed again. Jane didn't know who Dick was but at that moment she could cheerfully have wrung his neck with her strong, capable little hands. She put her arm about the girl.

"Never mind. Don't cry any more. See, we'll break off a lot of little cherry boughs and stick them all over your bed. They're fresher than the roses . . . and think how lovely they'll look in the moonlight."

"I'm scared to do that," said the girl. "Miss West might be mad."

Again Jane felt a thrill of understanding. So this girl was afraid of people, too.

"Well, we'll just climb up on that big bough that stretches out and sit there and admire it," said Jane. "I suppose that won't make Miss West mad, will it?"

"I guess she won't mind that. Of course she's mad at me anyhow tonight because I stumbled with a tray of tumblers when I was waiting on the supper table and broke three of them. She said if I kept on like that . . . I spilled soup on Miss Thatcher's silk dress last night . . . she'd have to send me away."

"Where would she send you?"

"I don't know. I haven't anywhere to go. But she says I'm not worth my salt and she's only keeping me out of charity."

"What is your name?" asked Jane. They had scrambled up into the cherry-tree as nimbly as pussy cats and its whiteness enclosed and enfolded them, shutting them away into a fragrant world all their own.

"Josephine Turner. But every one calls me Jody."

Jody! Jane liked that.

"Mine's Jane Stuart."

"I thought it was Victoria," said Jody. "Miss West said it was."

"It's Jane," said Jane firmly. "At least, it's Jane Victoria but *I* am Jane. And now"--briskly--"let's get acquainted."

Before Jane went back through the gap that night she knew practically all there was to be known about Jody. Jody's father and mother were dead .

. . had been dead ever since Jody was a baby. Jody's mother's cousin, who had been the cook at 58, had taken her and was permitted to keep her at 58 if she never let her out of the kitchen. Two years ago Cousin Millie had died and Jody had just "stayed on." She helped the new cook . . . peeling potatoes, washing dishes, sweeping, dusting, running errands, scouring knives . . . and lately had been promoted to waiting on the table. She slept in a little attic cubby-hole which was hot in summer and cold in winter, she wore cast-off things the boarders gave her and went to school every day there was no extra rush. Nobody ever gave her a kind word or took any notice of her . . . except Dick who was Miss West's nephew and pet and who teased and tormented her and called her "charity child." Jody hated Dick. Once when everybody was out she had slipped into the parlour and picked out a little tune on the piano but Dick had told Miss West and Jody had been sternly informed that she must never touch the piano again.

"And I'd love to be able to play," she said wistfully. "That and a garden's the only things I want. I do wish I could have a garden."

Jane wondered again why things were so criss-cross. She did not like playing on the piano but grandmother had insisted on her taking music lessons and she practised faithfully to please mother. And here was poor Jody hankering for music and with no chance at all of getting it.

"Don't you think you could have a bit of a garden?" said Jane. "There's plenty of room here and it's not too shady, like our yard. I'd help you make a bed and I'm sure mother would give us some seeds. . . ."

"It wouldn't be any use," said Jody drearily. "Dick would just stomp on it, too."

"Then I'll tell you," said Jane resolutely, "we'll get a seed catalogue . . . Frank will get me one . . . and have an *imaginary* garden."

"Ain't you the one for thinking of things?" said Jody admiringly. Jane tasted happiness. It was the first time any one had ever admired her.

IV

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Of course it was no time before grandmother knew about Jody. She made a great many sweetly sarcastic speeches about her but she never actually forbade Jane going over to play with her in the yard of 58. Jane was to be a good many years older before she understood the reason for that . . . understood that grandmother wanted to show any one who might question it that Jane had common tastes and liked low people.

"Darling, is this Jody of yours a nice little girl?" mother had asked doubtfully.

"She is a very nice little girl," said Jane emphatically.

"But she looks so uncared for . . . positively dirty. . . ."

"Her face is always clean and she never forgets to wash behind her ears, mummy. I'm going to show her how to wash her hair. Her hair would be lovely if it was clean . . . it's so fine and black and silky. And may I give her one of my jars of cold cream. . . . I've two, you know . . . for her hands? They're so red and chapped because she has to work so hard and wash so many dishes."

"But her clothes. . . ."

"She can't help her clothes. She just has to wear what's given her and she never has more than two dresses at a time . . . one to wear every day and one to go to Sunday school in. Even the Sunday school one isn't very clean . . . it was Mrs Bellew's Ethel's old pink one and she spilled coffee on it. And she has to work so hard . . . she's a regular little slave, Mary says. I like Jody very much, mummy. She's sweet."

"Well" . . . mother sighed and gave way. Mother always gave way if you were firm enough. Jane had already discovered that. She adored mother but she had unerringly laid her finger on the weak spot in her character. Mother couldn't "stand up to" people. Jane had heard Mary say

that to Frank one time when they didn't think she heard and she knew it was true.

"She'll go with the last one that talks to her," said Mary. "And that's always the old lady."

"Well, the old lady's mighty good to her," said Frank. "She's a gay little piece."

"Gay enough. But is she happy?" said Mary.

"Happy? Of course, mummy is happy," Jane had thought indignantly . . . all the more indignantly because, away back in her mind, there was lurking a queer suspicion that mother, in spite of her dances and dinners and furs and dresses and jewels and friends, wasn't happy. Jane couldn't imagine why she had this idea. Perhaps a look in mother's eyes now and then . . . like something shut up in a cage.

Jane could go over and play in the yard of 58 in the spring and summer evenings after Jody had finished washing stacks of dishes. They made their "imaginary" garden, they fed crumbs to the robins and the black and grey squirrels, they sat up in the cherry-tree and watched the evening star together. And talked! Jane, who could never find anything to say to Phyllis, found plenty to say to Jody.

There was never any question of Jody coming to play in the yard of 60. Once, early in their friendship, Jane had asked Jody to come over. She had found Jody crying under the cherry-tree again and discovered that it was because Miss West had insisted on her putting her old Teddy bear in the garbage pail. It was, Miss West said, utterly worn out. It had been patched until there was no more room for patches and even shoe buttons couldn't be sewn any more into its worn-out eye-sockets. Besides, she was too old to be playing with Teddy bears.

"But I've nothing else," sobbed Jody. "If I had a doll, I wouldn't mind. I've always wanted a doll . . . but now I'll have to sleep alone away up there . . . and it's so lonesome."

"Come over to our house and I'll give you a doll," said Jane.

Jane had never cared much for dolls because they were not alive. She had a very nice one which Aunt Sylvia had given her the Christmas she

was seven but it was so flawless and well dressed that it never needed to have anything done for it and Jane had never loved it. She would have loved better a Teddy bear that needed a new patch every day.

She took Jody, wide-eyed and enraptured, through the splendours of 60 Gay and gave her the doll which had reposed undisturbed for a long time in the lower drawer of the huge black wardrobe in Jane's room. Then she had taken her into mother's room to show her the things on mother's table . . . the silver-backed brushes, the perfume bottles with the cut-glass stoppers that made rainbows, the wonderful rings on the little gold tray. Grandmother found them there.

She stood in the doorway and looked at them. You could feel the silence spreading through the room like a cold, smothering wave.

"What does this mean, Victoria . . . if I am allowed to ask?"

"This is . . . Jody," faltered Jane. "I . . . I brought her over to give her my doll. She hasn't any."

"Indeed? And you have given her the one your Aunt Sylvia gave you?"

Jane at once realized that she had done something quite unpardonable. It had never occurred to her that she was not at liberty to give away her own doll.

"I have not," said grandmother, "forbidden you to play with this . . . this *Jody* in her own lot. What is in the blood is bound to come out sooner or later. But . . . if you don't mind . . . please don't bring your riff-raff here, my dear Victoria."

Her dear Victoria got herself and poor hurt Jody away as best she could, leaving the doll behind them. But grandmother did not get off scot-free for all that. For the first time the worm turned. Jane paused for a moment before she went out of the door and looked straight at grandmother with intent, judging brown eyes.

"You are not fair," she said. Her voice trembled a little but she felt she had to say it, no matter how impertinent grandmother thought her. Then she followed Jody down and out with a strange feeling of satisfaction in her heart.

"I ain't riff-raff," said Jody, her lips quivering. "Of course I'm not like you. . . . Miss West says you're *people* . . . but my folks were respectable. Cousin Millie told me so. She said they always paid their way while they were alive. And I work hard enough for Miss West to pay my way."

"You aren't riff-raff and I love you," said Jane. "You and mother are the only people in the whole world I love."

Even as she said it a queer little pang wrung Jane's heart. It suddenly occurred to her that two people out of all the millions in the world . . . Jane never could remember the exact number of millions but she knew it was enormous . . . were very few to love.

"And I like loving people," thought Jane. "It's nice."

"I don't love anybody but you," said Jody, who forgot her hurt feelings as soon as Jane got her interested in building a castle out of all the old tin cans in the corner of the yard. Miss West hoarded her tin cans for a country cousin who made some mysterious use of them. He had not been in all winter and there were enough cans to build a towering structure. Dick kicked it down next day, of course, but they had had the fun of building it. They never knew that Mr Torrey, one of the 58 boarders who was a budding architect, saw the castle, gleaming in the moonlight, when he was putting his car in the garage and whistled over it.

"That's rather an amazing thing for those two kids to build," he said.

Jane, who should have been asleep, was lying wide awake that very moment, going on with the story of her life in the moon which she could see through her window.

Jane's "moon secret," as she called it, was the one thing she hadn't shared with mother and Jody. She couldn't, somehow. It was her very own. To tell about it would be to destroy it. For three years now Jane had been going on dream voyages to the moon. It was a shimmering world of fancy where she lived very splendidly and sated some deep thirst in her soul at unknown, enchanted springs among its shining silver hills. Before she had found the trick of going to the moon, Jane had longed to get into the looking-glass as Alice did. She used to stand so long before her mirror

hoping for the miracle to happen that Aunt Gertrude said Victoria was the vainest child she had ever seen.

"Really?" said grandmother, as if mildly inquiring what Jane could possibly have to be vain about.

Eventually Jane had sadly concluded that she could never get into the looking-glass world, and then one night, when she was lying alone in her big unfriendly room, she saw the moon looking in at her through one of the windows . . . the calm, beautiful moon that was never in a hurry; and she began to build for herself an existence in the moon, where she ate fairy food and wandered through fairy fields, full of strange white moon-blossoms, with the companions of her fancy.

But even in the moon Jane's dreams ran true to the ruling passion. Since the moon was all silver it had to be polished every night. Jane and her moon friends had no end of fun polishing up the moon, with an elaborate system of rewards and punishments for extra good polishers and lazy ones. The lazy ones were generally banished to the other side of the moon . . . which Jane had read was very dark and very cold. When they were allowed back, chilled to the bone, they were glad to warm themselves up by rubbing as hard as they could. Those were the nights when the moon seemed brighter than usual. Oh, it was fun! Jane was never lonely in bed now except on nights when there was no moon. The clearest sight Jane knew was the thin crescent in the western sky that told her her friend was back. She was supported through many a dreary day by the hope of going on a moon spree at night.

V

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Up to the age of ten Jane had believed her father was dead. She could not recall that anybody had ever told her so, but if she had thought about it at all she would have felt quite sure of it. She just did not think about it . . . nobody ever mentioned him. All she knew about him was that his name must have been Andrew Stuart, because mother was Mrs Andrew Stuart. For anything else, he might as well never have existed as far as Jane was concerned. She did not know much about fathers. The only one she was really acquainted with was Phyllis's father, Uncle David Coleman, a handsome, oldish man with pouches under his eyes, who grunted at her occasionally when he came to Sunday dinners. Jane had an idea his grunts were meant to be friendly and she did not dislike him, but there was nothing about him that made her envy Phyllis for having a father. With a mother so sweet and adorable and loving, what did one want of a father?

Then Agnes Ripley came to St Agatha's. Jane liked Agnes well enough at first, though Agnes had stuck her tongue out at Jane rather derisively on the occasion of their first meeting. She was the daughter of somebody who was called "the great Thomas Ripley" . . . he had built "railroads and things" . . . and most of the St Agatha's girls paid court to her and plumed themselves if she noticed them. She was much given to "secrets," and it came to be thought a great honour among the St Agathians if Agnes told you a secret. Therefore Jane was conscious of a decided thrill when one afternoon on the playground Agnes came up to her and said, darkly and mysteriously, "I know a secret."

"I know a secret" is probably the most intriguing phrase in the world. Jane surrendered to its allure.

"Oh, tell me," she implored. She wanted to be admitted to that charmed inner circle of girls who had been told one of Agnes's secrets; and she

wanted to know the secret for its own sake. Secrets must always be wonderful, beautiful things.

Agnes wrinkled up her fat little nose and looked important.

"Oh, I'll tell you some other time."

"I don't want to hear it some other time. I want to hear it now," pleaded Jane, her marigold eyes full of eager radiance.

Agnes's little elfish face, framed in its straight brown hair, was alive with mischief. She winked one of her green eyes at Jane.

"All right. Don't blame me if you don't like it when you hear it. Listen."

Jane listened. The towers of St Agatha's listened. The shabby streets beyond listened. It seemed to Jane that the whole world listened. She was one of the chosen . . . Agnes was going to tell her a secret.

"Your father and mother don't live together."

Jane stared at Agnes. What she had said didn't make any sense.

"Of course they don't live together," she said. "My father is dead."

"Oh, no, he isn't," said Agnes. "He's living down in Prince Edward Island. Your mother left him when you were three years old."

Jane felt as if some big cold hand were beginning to squeeze her heart.

"That . . . isn't . . . true," she gasped.

"'Tis, too. I heard Aunt Dora telling mother all about it. She said your mother married him just after he came back from the war, one summer when your grandmother took her down to the Maritimes. Your grandmother didn't want her to. Aunt Dora said everybody knew it wouldn't last long. He was poor. But it was you that made the most trouble. You should never have been born. Neither of them wanted you, Aunt Dora said. They fought like cat and dog after that and at last your mother just up and left him. Aunt Dora said she would likely have divorced him only divorces are awful hard to get in Canada and anyhow all the Kennedys think divorce is a dreadful thing."

The hand was gripping Jane's heart so tightly now that she could hardly breathe.

"I . . . I don't believe it," she said.

"If that's how you're going to talk when I tell you a secret, I'll never tell you another one, Miss Victoria Stuart," said Agnes, reddening with rage.

"I don't want to hear any more," said Jane.

She would never forget what she had heard. It couldn't be true . . . it couldn't. Jane thought the afternoon would never end. St Agatha's was a nightmare. Frank had never driven so slowly home. The snow had never looked so grimy and dirty along the dingy streets. The wind had never been so grey. The moon, floating high in the sky, was all faded and paper-white but Jane didn't care if it was never polished again.

An afternoon tea was in progress at 60 Gay when she arrived there. The big drawing-room, decorated lavishly with pale pink snapdragons and tulips and maidenhair fern, was full of people. Mother, in orchid chiffon, with loose trailing lace sleeves, was laughing and chatting. Grandmother, with blue-white diamonds sparkling in her hair, was sitting on her favourite needle-point chair, looking, so one lady said, "Such an utterly sweet silver-haired thing, just like a Whistler mother." Aunt Gertrude and Aunt Sylvia were pouring tea at a table covered with Venetian lace, where tall pink tapers were burning.

Straight through them all Jane marched to mother. She did not care how many people were there . . . she had one question to ask and it must be answered at once. At once. Jane could not bear her suspense another moment.

"Mummy," she said, "is my father alive?"

A strange, dreadful hush suddenly fell over the room. A light like a sword flashed into grandmother's blue eyes. Aunt Sylvia gasped and Aunt Gertrude turned an unbecoming purple. But mother's face was as if snow had fallen over it.

"Is he?" said Jane.

"Yes," said mother. She said nothing more. Jane asked nothing more. She turned and went out and up the stairs blindly. In her own room she shut the door and lay down very softly on the big white bearskin rug by the

bed, her lace buried in the soft fur. Heavy black waves of pain seemed rolling over her.

So it was true. All her life she had thought her father dead while he was living . . . on that far-away dot on the map which she had been told was the province of Prince Edward Island. But he and mother did not like each other and she had not been wanted. Jane found that it was a very curious and unpleasant sensation to feel that your parents hadn't wanted you. She was sure that all the rest of her life she would hear Agnes's voice saying, "You should never have been born." She hated Agnes Ripley . . . she would always hate her. Jane wondered if she would live to be as old as grandmother and how she could bear it if she did.

Mother and grandmother found her there when everybody had gone.

"Victoria, get up."

Jane did not move.

"Victoria, I am accustomed to be obeyed when I speak."

Jane got up. She had not cried . . . hadn't somebody ages ago said that "Jane never cried" . . . but her face was stamped with an expression that might have wrung anybody's heart. Perhaps it touched even grandmother, for she said, quite gently for her:

"I have always told your mother, Victoria, that she ought to tell you the truth. I told her you were sure to hear it from someone sooner or later. Your father is living. Your mother married him against my wish and lived to repent it. I forgave her and welcomed her back gladly when she came to her senses. That is all. And in future when you feel an irresistible urge to make a scene while we are entertaining, will you be good enough to control the impulse until our guests are gone?"

"Why didn't he like me?" asked Jane dully.

When all was said and done, that seemed to be what was hurting most. Her mother might not have wanted her either, to begin with, but Jane knew that mother loved her now.

Mother suddenly gave a little laugh so sad that it nearly broke Jane's heart.

"He was jealous of you, I think," she said.

"He made your mother's life wretched," said grandmother, her voice hardening.

"Oh, I was to blame, too," cried mother chokingly.

Jane, looking from one to the other, saw the swift change that came over grandmother's face.

"You will never mention your father's name in my hearing or in your mother's hearing again," said grandmother. "As far as we are concerned . . . as far as *you* are concerned . . . he is dead."

The prohibition was unnecessary. Jane didn't want to mention her father's name again. He had made mother unhappy, and so Jane hated him and put him out of her thoughts completely. There were just some things that didn't bear thinking of and father was one of them. But the most terrible thing about it all was that there was something now that could not be talked over with mother. Jane felt it between them, indefinable but there. The old perfect confidence was gone. There was a subject that must never be mentioned and it poisoned everything.

She could never bear Agnes Ripley and her cult of "secrets" again and was glad when Agnes left the school, the great Thomas having decided that it was not quite up-to-date enough for his daughter. Agnes wanted to learn tap-dancing.

VI

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It was a year now since Jane had learned that she had a father . . . a year in which Jane had just scraped through as far as her grade was concerned. . . . Phyllis had taken the prize for general proficiency in her year and did Jane hear of it! . . . had continued to be driven to and from St Agatha's, had tried her best to like Phyllis and had not made any great headway at it, had trysted with Jody in the back yard twilights and had practised her scales as faithfully as if she liked it.

"Such a pity you are not fonder of music," said grandmother. "But of course, how could you be?"

It was not so much what grandmother said as how she said it. She made wounds that rankled and festered. And Jane was fond of music . . . she loved to listen to it. When Mr Ransome, the musical boarder at 58, played on his violin in his room in the evenings, he never dreamed of the two enraptured listeners he had in the back yard cherry-tree. Jane and Jody sat there, their hands clasped, their hearts filled with some nameless ecstasy. When winter came and the bedroom window was shut, Jane felt the loss keenly. The moon was her only escape then and she slipped away to it oftener than ever, in long visitations of silence which grandmother called "sulks."

"She has a very sulky disposition," said grandmother.

"Oh, I don't think so," faltered mother. The only times she ever dared to contradict grandmother were in defence of Jane. "She's just rather . . . sensitive."

"Sensitive!" Grandmother laughed. Grandmother did not often laugh, which Jane thought was just as well. As for Aunt Gertrude, if she had ever laughed or jested it must have been so long ago that nobody remembered it. Mother laughed when people were about . . . little tinkling laughs that Jane could never feel were real. No, there was not much real laughter at 60

Gay, though Jane, with her concealed gift for seeing the funny side of things, could have filled even that big house with laughter. But Jane had known very early that grandmother resented laughter. Even Mary and Frank had to giggle very discreetly in the kitchen.

Jane had shot up appallingly in that year. She was rather more angular and awkward. Her chin was square and cleft.

"It gets more like *his* every day," she once heard grandmother saying bitterly to Aunt Gertrude. Jane winced. In her bitter new wisdom she suspected that "his" was her father's chin and she straightway detested hers. Why couldn't it have been a pretty rounded one like mother's?

The year was very uneventful. Jane would have called it monotonous if she had not as yet been unacquainted with the word. There were only three things in it that made much impression on her . . . the incident of the kitten, the mysterious affair of Kenneth Howard's picture and the unlucky recitation.

Jane had picked the kitten up on the street. One afternoon Frank had been in a great hurry to get somewhere on time for grandmother and mother and he had let Jane walk home from the beginning of Gay Street when he was bringing her from St Agatha's. Jane walked along happily, savouring this rare moment of independence. It was very seldom she was allowed to walk anywhere alone . . . to walk anywhere at all, indeed. And Jane loved walking. She would have liked to walk to and from St Agatha's or, since that really was too far, she would have liked to go by street-car. Jane loved travelling on a streetcar. It was fascinating to look at the people in it and speculate about them. Who was that lady with the lovely shimmering hair? What was the angry old woman muttering to herself about? Did that little boy like having his mother clean his face with her handkerchief in public? Did that jolly looking little girl have trouble getting her grade? Did that man have toothache and did he ever look pleasant when he hadn't it? She would have liked to know all about them and sympathize or rejoice as occasion required. But it was very seldom any resident of 60 Gay had a chance to go on a street-car. There was always Frank with the limousine.

Jane walked slowly to prolong the pleasure. It was a cold day in late autumn. It had been miserly of its light from the beginning, with a dim ghost of sun peering through the dull grey clouds, and now it was getting dark and spitting snow. The lights gleamed out: even the grim windows of Victorian Gay were abloom. Jane did not mind the bitter wind but something else did. Jane heard the most pitiful, despairing little cry and looked down to see the kitten, huddled miserably against an iron fence. She bent and picked it up and held it against her face. The little creature, a handful of tiny bones in its fluffed-out Maltese fur, licked her cheek with an eager tongue. It was cold, starving, forsaken. Jane knew it did not belong to Gay Street. She could not leave it there to perish in the oncoming stormy night.

"Goodness sake, Miss Victoria, wherever did you get that?" exclaimed Mary, when Jane entered the kitchen. "You shouldn't have brought it in. You know your grandmother doesn't like cats. Your Aunt Gertrude got one once but it clawed all the tassels off the furniture and it had to go. Better put that kitten right out, Miss Victoria."

Jane hated to be called "Miss Victoria," but grandmother insisted on the servants addressing her so.

"I *can't* put it out in the cold, Mary. Let me give it some supper and leave it here till after dinner. I'll ask grandmother to let me keep it. Perhaps she will if I promise to keep it out here and in the yard. You wouldn't mind it round, would you, Mary?"

"I'd like it," said Mary. "I've often thought a cat would be great company . . . or a dog. Your mother had a dog once but it got poisoned and she would never have another."

Mary did not tell Jane that she firmly believed the old lady had poisoned the dog. You didn't tell children things like that and anyway she couldn't be dead sure of it. All she was sure of was that old Mrs Kennedy had been bitterly jealous of her daughter's love for the dog.

"How she used to look at it when she didn't know I saw her," thought Mary.

Grandmother and Aunt Gertrude and mother were taking in a couple of teas that day so Jane knew she could count on at least an hour yet. It was a pleasant hour. The kitten was happy and frolicsome, having drunk milk until its little sides tubbed out almost to the bursting point. The kitchen was warm and cosy. Mary let Jane chop the nuts that were to be sprinkled over the cake and cut the pears into slim segments for the salad.

"Oh, Mary, blueberry pie! Why don't we have it oftener? You can make such delicious blueberry pie."

"There's some who can make pies and some who can't," said Mary complacently. "As for having it oftener, you know your grandmother doesn't care much for any kind of pie. She says they're indigestible . . . and my father lived to be ninety and had pie for breakfast every morning of his life! I just make it occasional for your mother."

"After dinner I'll tell grandmother about the kitten and ask her if I may keep it," said Jane.

"I think you'll have your trouble for your pains, you poor child," said Mary as the door closed behind Jane. "Miss Robin ought to stand up for you more than she does . . . but there, she's always been under the thumb of her mother. Any way, I hope the dinner will go well and keep the old dame in good humour. I wisht I hadn't made the blueberry pie after all. It's lucky she won't know Miss Victoria fixed the salad . . . what folks don't know never hurts them."

The dinner did not go well. There was a tension in the air. Grandmother did not talk . . . evidently some occurrence of the afternoon had put her out. Aunt Gertrude never talked at any time. And mother seemed uneasy and never once tried to pass Jane any of the little signals they had . . . the touched lip . . . the lifted eyebrow . . . the crooked finger . . . that all meant "honey darling" or "I love you" or "consider yourself kissed."

Jane, burdened by her secret, was even more awkward than usual, and when she was eating her blueberry pie she dropped a forkful of it on the table.

"This," said grandmother, "might have been excused in a child of five. It is absolutely inexcusable in a girl of your age. Blueberry stain is almost impossible to get out and this is one of my best table-cloths. But of course that is a matter of small importance."

Jane gazed at the table in dismay. How such a little bit of pie could have spread itself over so much territory she could not understand. And of course it had to be at this inauspicious moment that a little purry furry creature escaped the pursuing Mary, skittered across the dining-room and bounded into Jane's lap. Jane's heart descended to her boots.

"Where did that cat come from?" demanded grandmother.

"I mustn't be a coward," thought Jane desperately.

"I found it on the street and brought it in," she said bravely . . . defiantly, grandmother thought. "It was so cold and hungry . . . look how thin it is, grandmother. Please may I keep it? It's such a darling. I won't let it trouble you . . . I'll . . ."

"My dear Victoria, don't be ridiculous. I really supposed you knew we do not keep cats here. Be good enough to put that creature out at once."

"Oh, not out on the street, grandmother, *please*. Listen to the sleet . . . it would die."

"I expect you to obey me without argument, Victoria. You cannot have your own way all the time. Other people's wishes must be considered occasionally. Please oblige me by making no further fuss over a trifle."

"Grandmother," began Jane passionately. But grandmother lifted a little wrinkled, sparkling hand.

"Now, now, don't work yourself into a state, Victoria. Take that thing out at once."

Jane took the kitten to the kitchen.

"Don't worry, Miss Victoria. I'll get Frank to put it in the garage with a rug to lie on. It will be quite comfy. And to-morrow I'll find a good home for it at my sister's. She's fond of cats."

Jane never cried, so she was not crying when mother slipped rather stealthily into her room for a good-night kiss. She was only tense with rebellion.

"Mummy, I wish we could get away . . . just you and I. I hate this place, mummy, I hate it."

Mother said a strange thing and said it bitterly: "There is no escape for either of us now."

VII

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Jane could never understand the affair of the picture. After her hurt and anger passed away she was just hopelessly puzzled. Why . . . *why* . . . should the picture of a perfect stranger matter to anybody at 60 Gay . . . and to mother, least of all?

She had come across it one day when she was visiting Phyllis. Every once in so long Jane had to spend an afternoon with Phyllis. This one was no more of a success than the former ones had been. Phyllis was a conscientious hostess. She had shown Jane all her new dolls, her new dresses, her new slippers, her new pearl necklace, her new china pig. Phyllis was collecting china pigs and apparently thought any one "dumb" who was not interested in china pigs. She had patronized and condescended even more than usual. Consequently Jane was stiffer than usual and both of them were in agonies of boredom. It was a relief to all concerned when Jane picked up a *Saturday Evening* and buried herself in it, though she was not in the least interested in the society pages, the photographs of brides and debutantes, the stock market or even in the article, "Peaceful Adjustment of International Difficulties," by Kenneth Howard, which was given a place of honour on the front page. Jane had a vague idea that she ought not to be reading *Saturday Evening*. For some unknown reason grandmother did not approve of it. She would not have a copy of it in her house.

But what Jane did like was the picture of Kenneth Howard on the front page. The moment she looked at it she was conscious of its fascination. She had never seen Kenneth Howard . . . she had no idea who he was or where he lived . . . but she felt as if it were the picture of someone she knew very well and liked very much. She liked everything about it . . . his odd peaked eyebrows . . . the way his thick rather unruly hair sprang back from his forehead . . . the way his firm mouth tucked in at the corners . . .

the slightly stern look in the eyes which yet had such jolly wrinkles at the corners . . . and the square, cleft chin which reminded Jane so strongly of something, she couldn't remember just what. That chin seemed like an old friend. Jane looked at the face and drew a long breath. She knew, right off, that if she had loved her father instead of hating him she would have wanted him to look like Kenneth Howard.

Jane stared at the picture so long that Phyllis became curious.

"What are you looking at, Jane?"

Jane suddenly came to life.

"May I have this picture, Phyllis . . . please?"

"Whose picture? Why . . . that? Do you know him?"

"No. I never heard of him before. But I like the picture."

"I don't." Phyllis looked at it contemptuously. "Why . . . he's old. And he isn't a bit handsome. There's a lovely picture of Norman Tait on the next page, Jane . . . let me show it to you."

Jane was not interested in Norman Tait nor any other screen star. Grandmother did not approve of children going to the movies.

"I'd like this picture if I may have it," she said firmly.

"I guess you can have it," condescended Phyllis. She thought Jane "dumber" than ever. How she did pity such a dumb girl! "I guess nobody here wants *that* picture. I don't like it a bit. He looks as if he was laughing at you behind his eyes."

Which was a bit of surprising insight on the part of Phyllis. That was just how Kenneth Howard did look. Only it was nice laughter. Jane felt she wouldn't mind a bit being laughed at like that. She cut the picture carefully out, carried it home, and hid it under the pile of handkerchiefs in her top bureau drawer. She could hardly have told why she did not want to show it to anybody. Perhaps she did not want any one to ridicule the picture as Phyllis had done. Perhaps it was just because there seemed some strange bond between her and it . . . something too beautiful to be talked about to any one, even mother. Not that there was much chance of talking to mother about anything just now. Never had mother been so brilliant, so gay, so beautifully dressed, so constantly on the go to parties and teas and bridges.

Even the goodnight kiss had become a rare thing . . . or Jane thought it had. She did not know that always when her mother came in late, she tiptoed into Jane's room and dropped a kiss on Jane's russet hair . . . lightly so as not to waken her. Sometimes she cried when she went back to her own room but not often, because it might show at breakfast and old Mrs Robert Kennedy did not like people who cried o' nights in her house.

For three weeks the picture and Jane were the best of friends. She took it out and looked at it whenever she could . . . she told it all about Jody and about her tribulations with her homework and about her love for mother. She even told it her moon secret. When she lay lonely in her bed, the thought of it was company. She kissed it good night and took a peep at it the first thing in the morning.

Then Aunt Gertrude found it.

The moment Jane came in from St Agatha's that day she knew something was wrong. The house, which always seemed to be watching her, was watching her more closely than ever, with a mocking, triumphant malice. Great-grandfather Kennedy scowled more darkly than ever at her from the drawing-room wall. And grandmother was sitting bolt-upright in her chair flanked by mother and Aunt Gertrude. Mother was twisting a lovely red rose to pieces in her little white hands but Aunt Gertrude was staring at the picture grandmother was holding.

"My picture!" cried Jane aloud.

Grandmother looked at Jane. For once her cold blue eyes were on fire.

"Where did you get this?" she said.

"It's mine," cried Jane. "Who took it out of my drawer? Nobody had any business to do that."

"I don't think I like your manner, Victoria. And we are not discussing a problem in ethics. I asked a question."

Jane looked down at the floor. She had no earthly idea why it seemed such a crime to have Kenneth Howard's picture but she knew she was not going to be allowed to have it any more. And it seemed to Jane that she just could not bear that.

"Will you be kind enough to look at me, Victoria? And to answer my question? You are not tongue-tied, by any chance, I suppose."

Jane looked up with stormy and mutinous eyes.

"I cut it out of a paper . . . out of *Saturday Evening*."

"That rag!" Grandmother's tone consigned *Saturday Evening* to unfathomable depths of contempt. "Where did you see it?"

"At Aunt Sylvia's," retorted Jane, plucking up spirit.

"Why did you cut this out?"

"Because I liked it."

"Do you know who Kenneth Howard is?"

"No."

"No, grandmother, if you please. Well, I think it is hardly necessary to keep the picture of a man you don't know in your bureau drawer. Let us have no more of such absurdity."

Grandmother lifted the picture in both hands. Jane sprang forward and caught her arm.

"Oh, grandmother, don't tear it up. You mustn't. I want it terribly."

The moment she said it, she knew she had made a mistake. There had never been much chance of getting the picture back but what little there had been was now gone.

"Have you gone completely mad, Victoria?" said grandmother . . . to whom nobody had ever said, "You mustn't," in her whole life before. "Take your hand off my arm, please. As for this . . ." grandmother tore the picture deliberately into four pieces and threw them on the fire. Jane, who felt as if her heart were being torn with it, was on the point of a rebellious outburst when she happened to glance at mother. Mother was pale as ashes, standing there with the leaves of the rose she had torn to pieces strewn the carpet around her feet. There was such a dreadful look of pain in her eyes that Jane shuddered. The look was gone in a moment but Jane could never forget that it had been there. And she knew she could not ask mother to explain the mystery of the picture. For some reason she could not guess at, Kenneth Howard meant suffering to mother. And somehow

that fact stained and spoiled all her beautiful memories of communion with the picture.

"No sulks now. Go to your room and stay there till I send for you," said grandmother, not altogether liking Jane's expression. "And remember that people who belong here do not read *Saturday Evening*."

Jane had to say it. It really said itself.

"I don't belong here," said Jane. Then she went to her room, which was huge and lonely again, with no Kenneth Howard smiling at her from under the handkerchiefs.

And this was another thing she could not talk over with mother. She felt just like one big ache as she stood at her window for a long time. It was a cruel world . . . with the very stars laughing at you . . . twinkling mockingly at you.

"I wonder," said Jane slowly, "if any one was ever happy in this house."

Then she saw the moon . . . the new moon, but not the thin silver crescent the new moon usually was. This was just on the point of sinking into a dark cloud on the horizon and it was large and dull red. If ever a moon needed polishing up this one did. In a moment Jane had slipped away from all her sorrows . . . two hundred and thirty thousand miles away. Luckily grandmother had no power over the moon.

VIII

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Then there was the affair of the recitation.

They were getting up a school programme at St Agatha's to which only the families of the girls were invited. There were to be a short play, some music and a reading or two. Jane had secretly hoped to be given a part in the play, even if it were only one of the many angels who came and went in it, with wings and trailing white robes and home-made haloes. But no such good luck. She suspected that it was because she was rather bony and awkward for an angel.

Then Miss Semple asked her if she would recite.

Jane jumped at the idea. She knew she could recite rather well. Here was a chance to make mother proud of her and show grandmother that all the money she was spending on Jane's education was not being wholly wasted.

Jane picked a poem she had long liked in spite, or perhaps because, of its *habitant* English, "The Little Baby of Mathieu," and plunged enthusiastically into learning it. She practised it in her room . . . she murmured lines of it everywhere until grandmother asked her sharply what she was muttering about all the time. Then Jane shut up like a clam. Nobody must suspect . . . it was to be a "surprise" to them all. A proud and glad surprise for mother. And perhaps even grandmother might feel a little pleased with her if she did well. Jane knew she would meet with no mercy if she didn't do well.

Grandmother took Jane down to a room in Marlborough's big department store . . . a room that had panelled walls, velvety carpets and muted voices . . . a room that Jane didn't like, somehow. She always felt smothered in it. And grandmother got her a new dress for the concert. It was a very pretty dress . . . you had to admit grandmother had a taste in dresses. A dull green silk that brought out the russet glow of Jane's hair

and the gold-brown of her eyes. Jane liked herself in it and was more anxious than ever to please grandmother with her recitation.

She was terribly worried the night before the concert. Wasn't she a little hoarse? Suppose it got worse? It did not . . . it was all gone the next day. But when Jane found herself on the concert platform facing an audience for the first time, a nasty little quiver ran down her spine. She had never supposed there would be so many people. For one dreadful moment she thought she was not going to be able to utter a word. Then she seemed to see Kenneth Howard's eyes, crinkling with laughter at her. "Never mind them. Do your stuff for *me*," he seemed to be saying. Jane got her mouth open.

The St Agatha staff were quite amazed. Who could have supposed that shy, awkward Victoria Stuart could recite any poem so well, let alone a *habitant* one? Jane herself was feeling the delight of a certain oneness with her audience . . . a realization that she had captured them . . . that she was delighting them . . . until she came to the last verse. Then she saw mother and grandmother just in front of her. Mother, in her lovely new blue fox furs, with the little wine hat Jane loved tilted on one side of her head, was looking more frightened than proud, and grandmother . . . Jane had seen that expression too often to mistake it. Grandmother was furious.

The last verse, which should have been the climax, went rather flat. Jane felt like a candle-flame blown out, though the applause was hearty and prolonged, and Miss Semple behind the scenes whispered, "Excellent, Victoria, excellent."

But there were no compliments on the road home. Not a word was said . . . that was the dreadful part of it. Mother seemed too frightened to speak and grandmother preserved a stony silence. But when they got home she said:

"Who put you up to that, Victoria?"

"Put me up to what?" said Jane in honest bewilderment.

"Please don't repeat my questions, Victoria. You know perfectly well what I mean."

"Is it my recitation? No one. Miss Semple asked me to recite, and I picked the recitation myself because I liked it," said Jane. It might even be said she retorted it. She was hurt . . . angry . . . a little "pepped up" because of her success. "I thought it would please you. But you are never pleased with anything I do."

"Don't be cheaply theatrical, please," said grandmother. "And in future if you *have* to recite," very much as she might have said, "if you have to have smallpox" . . . "please choose poems in decent English. I do not care for patois."

Jane didn't know what patois was, but it was all too evident that she had made a mess of things somehow.

"Why was grandmother so angry, mummy?" she asked piteously, when mother came in to kiss her good night, cool, slim and fragrant, in a dress of rose *crêpe* with little wisps of lace over the shoulders. Mother's blue eyes seemed to mist a little.

"Someone she . . . did not like . . . used to be . . . very good at reading *habitant* poetry. Never mind, heart's delight. You did splendidly. I was proud of you."

She bent down and took Jane's face in her hands. Mother had such a dear way of doing that.

So, in spite of everything, Jane went very happily through the gates of sleep. After all, it does not take much to make a child happy.

IX

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The letter was a bolt from the blue. It came one dull morning in early April . . . but such a bitter, peevish, unlovely April . . . more like March in its disposition than April. It was Saturday, so there would be no St Agatha's and when Jane wakened in her big black walnut bed she wondered just how she would put in the day because mother was going to a bridge and Jody was sick with a cold.

Jane lay a little while, looking through the window, where she could see only dull grey sky and old tree tops having a fight with the wind. She knew that in the yard below the window on the north there was still a lingering bank of dirty grey snow. Jane thought dirty snow must be the dreariest thing in the world. She hated this shabby end of winter. And she hated the bedroom where she had to sleep alone. She wished she and mother could sleep together. They could have such lovely times talking to each other with no one else to hear, after they went to bed or early in the morning. And how lovely it would be when you woke up in the night to hear mother's soft breathing beside you and cuddle to her just a wee bit, carefully, so as not to disturb her.

But grandmother would not let mother sleep with her.

"It is unhealthy for two people to sleep in the same bed," grandmother had said with her chill, unsmiling smile. "Surely in a house of this size everybody can have a room to herself. There are many people in the world who would be grateful for such a privilege."

Jane thought she might have liked the room better if it had been smaller. She always felt lost in it. Nothing in it seemed to be related to her. It always seemed hostile, watchful, vindictive. And yet Jane always felt that if she were allowed to do things for it . . . sweep it, dust it, put flowers in it . . . she would begin to love it, huge as it was. Everything in it was huge . . . a huge black walnut wardrobe like a prison, a huge chest of

drawers, a huge walnut bedstead, a huge mirror over the massive black marble mantelpiece . . . except a tiny cradle which was always kept in the alcove by the fireplace . . . a cradle that grandmother had been rocked in. Fancy grandmother a baby! Jane just couldn't.

Jane got out of bed and dressed herself under the stare of several old dead grands and greats hung on the walls. Below on the lawn robins were hopping about. Robins always made Jane laugh . . . they were so saucy, so sleek, so important, strutting over the grounds of 60 Gay just as if it were any common yard. Much they cared for grandmothers!

Jane slipped down the hall to mother's room at the far end. She was not supposed to do this. It was understood at 60 Gay that mother must not be disturbed in the mornings. But mother, for a wonder, had not been out the night before and Jane knew she would be awake. Not only was she awake but Mary was just bringing in her breakfast tray. Jane would have loved to do this for mother but she was never allowed.

Mother was sitting up in bed wearing the daintiest breakfast jacket of tea-rose *crêpe de Chine* edged with cobwebby beige lace. Her cheeks were just the colour of her jacket and her eyes were fresh and dewy. Mother, Jane reflected proudly, looked as lovely when she got up in the mornings as she did before she went to bed.

Mother had chilled melon balls in orange juice instead of cereal, and she shared them with Jane. She offered half of her toast, too, but Jane knew she must save some appetite for her own breakfast and refused it. They had a lovely time, laughing and talking beautiful nonsense, very quietly, so as not to be overheard. Not that either of them ever put this into words; but both knew.

"I wish it could be like this every morning," thought Jane. But she did not say so. She had learned that whenever she said anything like that mother's eyes darkened with pain and she would not hurt mother for the world. She could never forget the time she had heard mother crying in the night.

She had wakened up with toothache and had crept down to mother's room to see if mother had any toothache drops. And, as she opened the

door ever so softly, she heard mother crying in a dreadful smothered sort of way. Then grandmother had come along the hall with her candle.

"Victoria, what are you doing here?"

"I have toothache," said Jane.

"Come with me and I will get you some drops," said grandmother coldly.

Jane went . . . but she no longer minded the toothache. Why was mother crying? It couldn't be possible she was unhappy . . . pretty, laughing mother. The next morning at breakfast mother looked as if she had never shed a tear in her life. Sometimes Jane wondered if she had dreamed it.

Jane put the lemon verbena salts into the bath water for mother and got a pair of new stockings, thin as dew gossamers, out of the drawer for her. She loved to do things for mother and there was so little she could do.

She had breakfast alone with grandmother, Aunt Gertrude having had hers already. It is not pleasant to eat a meal alone with a person you do not like. And Mary had forgotten to put salt in the oatmeal.

"Your shoe-lace is untied, Victoria."

That was the only thing grandmother said during the meal. The house was dark. It was a sulky day that now and then brightened up a little and then turned sulkier than ever. The mail came at ten. Jane was not interested in it. There was never anything for her. Sometimes she thought it would be nice and exciting to get a letter from somebody. Mother always got no end of letters . . . invitations and advertisements. This morning Jane carried the mail into the library where grandmother and Aunt Gertrude and mother were sitting. Jane noticed among the letters one addressed to her mother in a black spiky handwriting which Jane was sure she had never seen before. She hadn't the least idea that that letter was going to change her whole life.

Grandmother took the letters from her and looked them over as she always did.

"Did you close the vestibule door, Victoria?"

"Yes."

"Yes what?"

"Yes, grandmother."

"You left it open yesterday. Robin, here is a letter from Mrs Kirby . . . likely about that bazaar. Remember it is my wish that you have nothing to do with it. I do not approve of Sarah Kirby. Gertrude, here is one for you from Cousin Mary in Winnipeg. If it is about that silver service she avers my mother left her, tell her I consider the matter closed. Robin, here is . . ."

Grandmother stopped abruptly. She had picked up the black-handed letter and was looking at it as if she had picked up a snake. Then she looked at her daughter.

"This is from . . . him," she said.

Mother dropped Mrs Kirby's letter and turned so white that Jane involuntarily sprang towards her but was barred by grandmother's outstretched arm.

"Do you wish me to read it for you, Robin?"

Mother trembled piteously but she said, "No . . . no . . . let me . . ."

Grandmother handed the letter over with an offended air and mother opened it with shaking hands. It did not seem as if her face could turn whiter than it was, but it did as she read it.

"Well?" said grandmother.

"He says," gasped mother, "that I must send Jane Victoria to him for the summer . . . that he has a right to her sometimes. . . ."

"Who says?" cried Jane.

"Do not interrupt, Victoria," said grandmother. "Let me see that letter, Robin."

They waited while grandmother read it. Aunt Gertrude stared unwinkingly ahead of her with her cold grey eyes in her long white face. Mother had dropped her head in her hands. It was only three minutes since Jane had brought the letters in and in those three minutes the world had turned upside down. Jane felt as if a gulf had opened between her and all humankind. She knew now without being told who had written the letter.

"So!" said grandmother. She folded the letter up, put it in its envelope, laid it on her table and carefully wiped her hands with her fine lace handkerchief.

"You won't let her go, of course, Robin."

For the first time in her life Jane felt at one with grandmother. She looked imploringly at mother with a curious feeling of seeing her for the first time . . . not as a loving mother or affectionate daughter but as a woman . . . a woman in the grip of some terrible emotion. Jane's heart was torn by another pang in seeing mother suffer so.

"If I don't," she said, "he may take her from me altogether. He could, you know. He says . . ."

"I have read what he says," said grandmother, "and I still tell you to ignore that letter. He is doing this simply to annoy you. He cares nothing for her . . . he never cared for anything but his scribbling."

"I'm afraid . . ." began mother again.

"We'd better consult William," said Aunt Gertrude suddenly. "This needs a man's advice."

"A man!" snapped grandmother. Then she seemed to pull herself up. "You may be right, Gertrude. I shall lay the matter before William when he comes to supper to-morrow. In the meantime we shall not discuss it. We shall not allow it to disturb us in the least."

Jane felt as if she were in a nightmare the rest of the day. Surely it must be a dream . . . surely her father could not have written her mother that she must spend the summer with him, a thousand miles away in that horrible Prince Edward Island which looked on the map to be a desolate little fragment in the jaws of Gaspé and Cape Breton . . . with a father who didn't love her and whom she didn't love.

She had no chance to say anything about it to mother . . . grandmother saw to that. They all went to Aunt Sylvia's luncheon . . . mother did not look as if she wanted to go anywhere . . . and Jane had lunch alone. She couldn't eat anything.

"Does your head ache, Miss Victoria?" Mary asked sympathetically.

Something was aching terribly but it did not seem to be her head. It ached all the afternoon and evening and far on into the night. It was still aching when Jane woke the next morning with a sickening rush of remembrance. Jane felt that it might help the ache a little if she could only have a talk with mother, but when she tried mother's door it was locked. Jane felt that mother didn't want to talk to her about this and that hurt worse than anything else.

They all went to church . . . an old and big and gloomy church on a downtown street where the Kennedys had always gone. Jane was rather fond of going to church for the not very commendable reason that she had some peace there. She could be silent without someone asking her accusingly what she was thinking of. Grandmother had to let her alone in church. And if you couldn't be loved, the next best thing was to be let alone.

Apart from that Jane did not care for St Barnabas's. The sermon was beyond her. She liked the music and some of the hymns. Occasionally there was a line that gave her a thrill. There was something fascinating about coral strands and icy mountains, tides that moving seemed asleep, islands that lifted their fronded palms in air, reapers that bore harvest treasures home and years like shadows on sunny hills that lie.

But nothing gave Jane any pleasure to-day. She hated the pale sunshine that sifted down between the chilly, grudging clouds. What business had the sun even to try to shine while her fate hung in the balance like this? The sermon seemed endless, the prayers dreary, there was not even a hymn line she liked. But Jane put up a desperate prayer on her own behalf.

"Please, dear God," she whispered, "make Uncle William say I needn't be sent to him."

Jane had to live in suspense as to what Uncle William would say until the Sunday supper was over. She ate little. She sat looking at Uncle William with fear in her eyes, wondering if God really could have much influence over him. They were all there . . . Uncle William and Aunt Minnie, Uncle David and Aunt Sylvia, and Phyllis; and after supper they all went to the library and sat in a stiff circle while Uncle William put on

his glasses and read the letter. Jane thought every one must hear the beating of her heart.

Uncle William read the letter . . . turned back and read a certain paragraph twice . . . pursed his lips . . . folded up the letter and fitted it into its envelope . . . took off his glasses . . . put them into their case and laid it down . . . cleared his throat and reflected. Jane felt that she was going to scream.

"I suppose," said Uncle William at last, "that you had better let her go."

There was a good deal more said, though Jane said nothing. Grandmother was very angry.

But Uncle William said, "Andrew Stuart could take her altogether if he had a mind to. And, knowing him for what he is, I think he very likely would if you angered him. I agree with you, mother, that he is only doing this to annoy us, and when he sees that it has not annoyed us and that we are taking it quite calmly he will probably never bother about her again."

Jane went up to her room and stood alone in it. She saw with eyes of despair the great, big, unfriendly place. She saw herself in the big mirror reflected in another dim unfriendly room.

"God," said Jane distinctly and deliberately, "is no good."

X

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"I think your father and mother might have got on if it hadn't been for you," said Phyllis.

Jane winced. She hadn't known that Phyllis knew about her father. But it seemed that everybody had known except her. She did not want to talk about him but Phyllis was bent on talking.

"I don't see," said Jane miserably, "why I made so much difference to them."

"Mother says your father was jealous because Aunt Robin loved you so much."

This, thought Jane, was a different yarn from the one Agnes Ripley had told. Agnes had said her mother hadn't wanted her. What was the truth? Perhaps neither Phyllis nor Agnes knew it. Anyhow, Jane liked Phyllis's version better than Agnes's. It was dreadful to think you ought never to have been born . . . that your mother wasn't glad to have you.

"Mother says," went on Phyllis, finding that Jane had nothing to say, "that if you lived in the States Aunt Robin could get a divorce easy as wink, but it's harder in Canada."

"What is a divorce?" asked Jane, remembering that Agnes Ripley had used the same word.

Phyllis laughed condescendingly.

"Victoria, don't you know anything? A divorce is when two people get unmarried."

"Can people get unmarried?" gasped Jane to whom it was an entirely new idea.

"Of course they can, silly. Mother says your mother ought to go to the States and get a divorce but father says it wouldn't be legal in Canada and anyway the Kennedys don't believe in it. Father says grandmother wouldn't

allow it either, for fear Aunt Robin would just go and marry somebody else."

"If . . . if mother got a divorce does that mean that he wouldn't be my father any more?" queried Jane hopefully.

Phyllis looked dubious.

"I shouldn't suppose it would make any difference that way. But whoever she married would be your stepfather."

Jane did not want a stepfather any more than she wanted a father. But she said nothing again and Phyllis was annoyed.

"How do you like the idea of going to P. E. Island, Victoria?"

Jane was not going to expose her soul to the patronizing Phyllis.

"I don't know anything about it," she said shortly.

"I do," said Phyllis importantly. "We spent a summer there two years ago. We lived in a big hotel on the north shore. It's quite a pretty place. I daresay you'll like it for a change."

Jane knew she would hate it. She tried to turn the conversation but Phyllis meant to thrash the subject out.

"How do you suppose you'll get along with your father?"

"I don't know."

"He likes clever people, you know, and you're not very clever, are you, Victoria?"

Jane did not like being made feel like a worm. Phyllis always made her feel like that . . . when she didn't make her feel like a shadow. And there was not a bit of use in getting mad with her. Phyllis never got mad. Phyllis, everybody said, was such a sweet child . . . had such a lovely disposition. She just went on condescending. Jane sometimes thought if they could have just one good fight she would like Phyllis better. Jane knew mother was a bit worried because she didn't make more friends among girls of her own age.

"You know," went on Phyllis, "that was one of the things. . . . Aunt Robin thought she couldn't talk clever enough for him."

The worm turned.

"I am not going to talk any more about my mother . . . or him," said Jane distinctly.

Phyllis sulked a little and the afternoon was a failure. Jane was more thankful than usual when Frank came to take her home.

Little was being said at 60 Gay about Jane's going to the Island. How quickly the days flew by! Jane wished she could hold them back. Once, when she had been very small, she had said to mother, "Isn't there any way we can stop time, mummy?"

Jane remembered that mother had sighed and said, "We can never stop time, darling."

And now time just went stonily on . . . tick tock, tick tock . . . sunrise, sunset, ever and ever nearer to the day when she would be torn away from mother. It would be early in June . . . St Agatha's closed earlier than the other schools. Grandmother took Jane to Marlborough's late in May and got some very nice clothes for her . . . much nicer than she had ever had before. Under ordinary circumstances Jane would have loved her blue coat and the smart little blue hat with its tiny scarlet bow . . . and a certain lovely frock of white, eyelet-embroidered in red, with a smart red leather belt. Phyllis had nothing nicer than that. But now she had no interest in them.

"I don't suppose she'll have much use for very fine clothes down there," mother had said.

"She shall go fitted out properly," said grandmother. "He shall not need to buy clothes for her, of that I shall make sure. And Irene Fraser shall have no chance to comment. I suppose he has some kind of a hovel to live in or he would not have sent for her. Did any one ever tell you, Victoria, that it is not proper to butter your whole slice of bread at once? And do you think it would be possible, just for a change, to get through a meal without letting your napkin slip off your knee continually?"

Jane dreaded meal-times more than ever. Her preoccupation made her awkward and grandmother pounced on everything. She wished she need never come to the table, but unluckily one cannot live without eating a little. Jane ate very little. She had no appetite and grew noticeably thinner.

She could not put any heart into her studies and she barely made the Senior Third while Phyllis passed with honours.

"As was to be expected," said grandmother.

Jody tried to comfort her.

"After all, it won't be so long. Only three months, Jane."

Three months of absence from a beloved mother and three months' presence with a detested father seemed like an eternity to Jane.

"You'll write me, Jane? And I'll write you if I can get any postage stamps. I've got ten cents now . . . that Mr Ransome gave me. That will pay for three stamps anyhow."

Then Jane told Jody a heart-breaking thing.

"I'll write you often, Jody. But I can write mother only once a month. And I'm never to mention him."

"Did your mother tell you that?"

"No, oh, no! It was grandmother. As if I'd want to mention him."

"I hunted up P. E. Island on the map," said Jody, her dark velvet-brown eyes full of sympathy. "There's such an awful lot of water round it. Ain't you afraid of falling over the edge?"

"I don't believe I'd mind if I did," said Jane dismally.

XI

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Jane was to go to the Island with Mr and Mrs Stanley who were going down to visit a married daughter. Somehow Jane lived through the last days. She was determined she would not make any fuss because that would be hard on mother. There were no more good-night confidences and caressings . . . no more little tender loving words spoken at special moments. But Jane, somehow, knew the two reasons for this. Mother could not bear it, for one thing, and, for another, grandmother was resolved not to permit it. But on Jane's last night at 60 Gay mother did slip in when grandmother was occupied by callers below.

"Mother . . . mother!"

"Darling, be brave. After all, it is only three months and the Island is a lovely spot. You may . . . if I'd known . . . once I . . . oh, it doesn't matter now. Nothing matters. Darling, there's one thing I must ask you to promise. You are never to mention me to your father."

"I won't," choked Jane. It was an easy promise. She couldn't imagine herself talking to him about mother.

"He will like you better if . . . if . . . he thinks you don't love me too much," whispered mother. Down went her white lids over her blue eyes. But Jane had seen the look. She felt as if her heart was bursting.

The sky at sunrise was blood-red but it soon darkened into sullen grey. At noon a drizzle set in. "I think the weather is sorry at your going away," said Jody. "Oh, Jane, I'll miss you so. And . . . I don't know if I'll be here when you come back. Miss West says she's going to put me in an orphanage, and I don't want to be put in an orphanage, Jane. Here's the pretty shell Miss Ames brought from the West Indies for me. It's the only pretty thing I have. I want you to have it because if I go to the orphanage I s'pose they'll take it away from me."

The train left for Montreal at eleven that night and Frank took Jane and her mother to the station. She had kissed grandmother and Aunt Gertrude good-bye dutifully.

"If you meet your Aunt Irene Fraser down on the Island remember me to her," said grandmother. There was an odd little tone of exultation in her voice. Jane felt that grandmother had got the better of Aunt Irene in some way, at some time, and wanted it rubbed in. It was as if she had said, "She will remember me." And who was Aunt Irene?

60 Gay seemed to scowl at her as they drove away. She had never liked it and it had never liked her, but she felt drearily as if some gate of life were shut behind her when the door closed. She and mother did not talk as they drove along over the elfish underground city that comes into view under the black street on a rainy night. She was determined she would not cry and she did not. Her eyes were wide with dismay but her voice was cool and quiet as she said good-bye. The last Robin Stuart saw of her was a gallant, indomitable little figure waving to her as Mrs Stanley herded her into the door of the Pullman.

They reached Montreal in the morning and left at noon on the Maritime Express. The time was to come when the very name of Maritime Express was to thrill Jane with ecstasy but now it meant exile. It rained all day. Mrs Stanley pointed out the mountains but Jane was not having any mountains just then. Mrs Stanley thought her very stiff and unresponsive and eventually left her alone . . . for which Jane would have thanked God, fasting, if she had ever heard of the phrase. Mountains! When every turn of the wheels was carrying her farther away from mother!

The next day they went down through New Brunswick, lying in the grey light of a cheerless rain. It was raining when they got to Sackville and transferred to the little branch line that ran down to Cape Tormentine.

"We take the car ferry there across to the Island," Mrs Stanley explained. Mrs Stanley had given up trying to talk to her. She thought Jane quite the dumbest child she had ever encountered. She had not the slightest inkling that Jane's silence was her only bulwark against wild, rebellious tears. And Jane *would not* cry.

It was not actually raining when they reached the Cape. As they went on board the car ferry the sun was hanging, a flat red ball, in a rift of clouds to the west. But it soon darkened down again. There was a grey choppy strait under a grey sky with dirty rags of clouds around the edges. By the time they got on the train again it was pouring harder than ever. Jane had been seasick on the way across and was now terribly tired. So this was Prince Edward Island . . . this rain-drenched land where the trees cringed before the wind and the heavy clouds seemed almost to touch the fields. Jane had no eyes for blossoming orchard or green meadow or soft-bosomed hills with scarfs of dark spruce across their shoulders. They would be in Charlottetown in a couple of hours, so Mrs Stanley said, and her father was to meet her there. Her father, who didn't love her, as mother said, and who lived in a hovel, as grandmother said. She knew nothing else about him. She wished she knew something . . . anything. What did he look like? Would he have pouchy eyes like Uncle David? A thin, sewed-up mouth like Uncle William? Would he wink at the end of every sentence like old Mr Doran when he came to call on grandmother?

She was a thousand miles away from mother and felt as if it were a million. Terrible waves of loneliness went over her. The train was pulling into the station.

"Here we are, Victoria," said Mrs Stanley in a tone of relief.

XII

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As Jane stepped from the train to the platform a lady pounced on her with a cry of "Is *this* Jane Victoria . . . can this be my *dear* little Jane Victoria?"

Jane did not like to be pounced on . . . and just then she was not feeling like anybody's Jane Victoria.

She drew herself away and took in the lady with one of her straight, deliberate glances. A very pretty lady of perhaps forty-five or fifty, with large, pale blue eyes and smooth ripples of auburn hair around her placid creamy face. Was this Aunt Irene?

"Jane, if you please," she said politely and distinctly.

"For all the world like her grandmother Kennedy, Andrew," Aunt Irene told her brother the next morning.

Aunt Irene laughed . . . an amused little gurgle.

"You dear funny child! Of course it can be Jane. It can be just whatever you like. I am your Aunt Irene. But I suppose you've never heard of me?"

"Yes, I have." Jane kissed Aunt Irene's cheek obediently. "Grandmother told me to remember her to you."

"Oh!" Something a little hard crept into Aunt Irene's sweet voice.

"That was very kind of her . . . *very* kind indeed. And now I suppose you're wondering why your father isn't here. He started . . . he lives out at Brookview, you know . . . but that dreadful old car of his broke down half-way. He phoned in to me that he couldn't possibly get in to-night but would be along early in the morning and would I meet you and keep you for the night. Oh, Mrs Stanley, you're not going before I've thanked you for bringing our dear little girl safely down to us. We're so much obliged to you."

"Not at all. It's been a pleasure," said Mrs Stanley, politely and untruthfully. She hurried away, thankful to be relieved of the odd silent

child who had looked all the way down as if she were an early Christian martyr on her path to the lions.

Jane felt herself alone in the universe. Aunt Irene did not make a bit of difference. Jane did not like Aunt Irene. And she liked herself still less. What was the matter with her? Couldn't she like anybody? Other girls liked some of their uncles and aunts at least.

She followed Aunt Irene out to the waiting taxi.

"It's a terrible night, lovey . . . but the country needs rain . . . we've been suffering for weeks . . . you must have brought it with you. But we'll soon be home. I'm so glad to have you. I've been telling your father he ought to let you stay with me anyhow. It's really foolish of him to take you out to Brookview. He only boards there, you know . . . two rooms over Jim Meade's store. Of course, he comes to town in the winter. But . . . well, perhaps you don't know, Jane darling, how very determined your father can be when he makes up his mind."

"I don't know anything about him," said Jane desperately.

"I suppose not. I suppose your mother has never talked to you about him?"

"No," Jane answered reluctantly. Somehow, Aunt Irene's question seemed charged with hidden meaning. Jane was to learn that this was characteristic of Aunt Irene's questions. Aunt Irene squeezed Jane's hand, which she had held ever since she had helped her into the taxi, sympathetically.

"You poor child! I know exactly how you feel. And I couldn't feel it was the right thing for your father to send for you. I'm sure I don't know why he did it. I couldn't fathom his motive . . . although your father and I have always been very close to each other . . . very close, lovey. I am ten years older than he is and I've always been more like a mother to him than a sister. Here we are at home, lovey."

Home! The house into which Jane was ushered was cosy and sleek, just like Aunt Irene herself, but Jane felt about as much at home as a sparrow alone on an alien house-top. In the living-room Aunt Irene took off her hat and coat, patted her hair and put her arm around Jane.

"Now let me look you over. I hadn't a chance in the station, and I haven't seen you since you were three years old."

Jane didn't want to be looked over and shrank back a little stiffly. She felt that she was being appraised and in spite of Aunt Irene's kindness of voice and manner she sensed that there was something in the appraisal not wholly friendly.

"You are not at all like your mother. She was the prettiest thing I ever saw. You are like your father, darling. And now we must have a bite of supper."

"Oh, no, please no," cried Jane impulsively. She knew she couldn't swallow a mouthful . . . it was misery to think of trying.

"Just a bite . . . just one little bite," said Aunt Irene persuasively as if coaxing a baby. "There's such a nice chocolate peppermint cake. I really made it for your father. He's just like a boy in some ways, you know . . . such a sweet tooth. And he has always thought my chocolate cakes just about perfection. Your mother did try so hard to learn to make them like mine . . . but . . . well, it's a gift. You have it or you haven't. One really couldn't expect a lovely little doll like her to be a cook . . . or a manager either for that matter and I told your father that often enough. Men don't always understand, do they? They expect everything in a woman. Sit here, Janie."

Perhaps the "Janie" was the last straw. Jane was not going to be "Janied."

"Thank you, Aunt Irene," she said very politely and very resolutely, "but I can't eat anything and it wouldn't be any use at all to try. Please may I go to bed?"

Aunt Irene patted her shoulder.

"Of course, you poor darling. You're all tired out and everything so strange. I know how hard it is for you. I'll take you right upstairs to your room."

The room was very pretty, with hangings of basket-weave rose-patterned cretonne and a silk-covered bed so smooth and sleek that it

looked as if it had never been slept in. But Aunt Irene deftly removed the silk spread and turned down the sheets.

"I hope you'll have a good sleep, lovey. You don't know what it means to me to have you sleeping under my roof . . . Andrew's little girl . . . my only niece. And I was always so fond of your mother . . . but . . . well, I don't quite think she ever really liked me. I always felt she didn't, but I never let it make any difference between us. She didn't like to see me and your father talking much together . . . I always realized that. She was so much younger than your father . . . a mere child . . . it was natural for him to turn to me for advice as he'd always been used to do. He always talked things over with me first. She was a little jealous, I think . . . she could hardly help that, being Mrs Robert Kennedy's daughter. Never let yourself be jealous, Janie. It wrecks more lives than anything else. Here's a puff, lovey, if you're chilly in the night. A wet night in P. E. Island is apt to be cool. Good night, lovey."

Jane stood alone in the room and looked about her. The bed lamp had a lamp-shade painted with roses with a bead fringe. For some reason Jane couldn't endure that lamp-shade. It was too smooth and pretty just like Aunt Irene. She went to it and put out the light. Then she went to the window. Beat, beat went the rain on the panes. Splash, splash went the rain on the roof of the veranda. Beyond it Jane could see nothing. Her heart swelled. This black, alien, starless land could never be home to her.

"If I only had mother," she whispered. But, though she felt that something had taken her life and torn it apart, she did not cry.

XIII

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Jane was so tired after the preceding sleepless nights on the train that she went to sleep almost at once. But she awakened while it was still night. The rain had ceased. A bar of shining light lay across her bed. She slipped out from between Aunt Irene's perfumed sheets and went to the window. The world had changed. The sky was cloudless and a few shining, distant stars looked down on the sleeping town. A tree not far away was all silvery bloom. Moonlight was spilling over everything from a full moon that hung like an enormous bubble over what must be a bay or harbour and there was one splendid, sparkling trail across the water. So there was a moon in Prince Edward Island, too. Jane hadn't really believed it before. And polished to the queen's taste. It was like seeing an old friend. That moon was looking down on Toronto as well as Prince Edward Island. Perhaps it was shining on Jody, asleep in her little attic room, or on mother coming home late from some gay affair. Suppose she were looking at it at this very moment! It no longer seemed a thousand miles to Toronto.

The door opened and Aunt Irene came in, in her nightdress.

"Lovey, what is the matter? I heard you moving about and was afraid you were ill."

"I just got up to look at the moon," said Jane.

"You funny chily! Haven't you seen moons before? You gave me a real fright. Now go back to bed like a darling. You want to look bright and fresh for father when he comes, you know."

Jane didn't want to look bright and fresh for anybody. Was she always to be spied upon? She got into bed silently and was tucked in for the second time. But she could not sleep again.

Morning comes at last, be the night ever so long. The day that was to be such a marvellous day for Jane began like any other. The mackerel clouds . . . only Jane didn't know then they were mackerel clouds . . . in the

eastern sky began to take fire. The sun rose without any unusual fuss. Jane was afraid to get up too early for fear of alarming Aunt Irene again but at last she rose and opened the window. Jane did not know she was looking out on the loveliest thing on earth . . . a June morning in Prince Edward Island . . . but she knew it all seemed like a different world from last night. A wave of fragrance broke in her face from the lilac hedge between Aunt Irene's house and the next one. The poplars in a corner of the lawn were shaking in green laughter. An apple-tree stretched out friendly arms. There was a far-away view of daisy-sprinkled fields across the harbour where white gulls were soaring and swooping. The air was moist and sweet after the rain. Aunt Irene's house was on the fringe of the town and a country road ran behind it . . . a road almost blood-red in its glistening wetness. Jane had never imagined a road coloured like that.

"Why . . . why, P. E. Island is a pretty place," thought Jane half grudgingly.

Breakfast was the first ordeal and Jane was no hungrier than she had been the night before.

"I don't think I can eat anything, Aunt Irene."

"But you must, lovey. I'm going to love you but I'm not going to spoil you. I expect you've always had a little too much of your own way. Your father may be along almost any minute now. Sit right down here and eat your cereal."

Jane tried. Aunt Irene had certainly prepared a lovely breakfast for her. Orange juice . . . cereal with thick golden cream . . . dainty triangles of toast . . . a perfectly poached egg . . . apple jelly between amber and crimson. There was no doubt Aunt Irene was a good cook. But Jane had never had a harder time choking down a meal.

"Don't be so excited, lovey," said Aunt Irene with a smile as to some very young child who needed soothing.

Jane did not think she was excited. She had merely a queer, dreadful, empty feeling which nothing, not even the egg, seemed able to fill up. And after breakfast there was an hour when Jane discovered that the hardest work in the world is waiting. But everything comes to an end and when

Aunt Irene said, "There's your father now," Jane felt that everything had come to an end.

Her hands were suddenly clammy but her mouth was dry. The ticking of the clock seemed unnaturally loud. There was a step on the path . . . the door opened . . . someone was standing on the threshold. Jane stood up but she could not raise her eyes . . . she could not.

"Here's your baby," said Aunt Irene. "Isn't she a little daughter to be proud of, 'Drew? A bit too tall for her age perhaps, but . . ."

"A russet-haired jade," said a voice.

Only four words . . . but they changed life for Jane. Perhaps it was the voice more than the words . . . a voice that made everything seem like a wonderful secret just you two shared. Jane came to life at last and looked up.

Peaked eyebrows . . . thick reddish-brown hair springing back from his forehead . . . a mouth tucked in at the corners . . . square cleft chin . . . stern hazel eyes with jolly looking wrinkles around them. The face was as familiar to her as her own.

"Kenneth Howard," gasped Jane. She took a quite unconscious step towards him.

The next moment she was lifted in his arms and kissed. She kissed him back. She had no sense of strangerhood. She felt at once the call of that mysterious kinship of soul which has nothing to do with the relationships of flesh and blood. In that one moment Jane forgot that she had ever hated her father. She liked him . . . she liked everything about him from the nice tobaccoey smell of his heather-mixture tweed suit to the firm grip of his arms around her. She wanted to cry but that was out of the question so she laughed instead . . . rather wildly, perhaps, for Aunt Irene said tolerantly, "Poor child, no wonder she is a little hysterical."

Father set Jane down and looked at her. All the sternness of his eyes had crinkled into laughter.

"Are you hysterical, my Jane?" he said gravely.

How she loved to be called "my Jane" like that!

"No, father," she said with equal gravity. She never spoke of him or thought of him as "he" again.

"Leave her with me a month and I'll fatten her up," smiled Aunt Irene.

Jane felt a quake of dismay. Suppose father did leave her. Evidently father had no intention of doing anything of the sort. He pulled her down on the sofa beside him and kept his arm about her. All at once everything was all right.

"I don't believe I want her fattened up. I like her bones." He looked at Jane critically. Jane knew he was looking her over and didn't mind. She only hoped madly that he would like her. Would he be disappointed because she was not pretty? Would he think her mouth too big? "Do you know you have nice little bones, Janekin?"

"She's got her Grandfather Stuart's nose," said Aunt Irene. Aunt Irene evidently approved of Jane's nose but Jane had a disagreeable feeling that she had robbed Grandfather Stuart of his nose. She liked it better when father said:

"I rather fancy the way your eyelashes are put on, Jane. By the way, do you like to be Jane? I've always called you Jane but that may be just pure cussedness. You've a right to whatever name you like. But I want to know which name is the real *you* and which the shadowy little ghost."

"Oh, I'm Jane," cried Jane. And was she glad to be Jane!

"That's settled then. And suppose you call me dad? I'm afraid I'd make a terribly awkward father but I think I could be a tolerable dad. Sorry I couldn't get in last night but my jovial, disreputable old car died right on the road. I managed to restore it to life this morning . . . at least long enough to hop into town like a toad . . . our mode of travelling added to the gaiety of P. E. Island . . . but I'm afraid it's got to go into a garage for a while. After dinner we'll drive across the Island, Jane, and get acquainted."

"We're acquainted now," said Jane simply. It was true. She felt that she had known dad for years. Yes, "dad" was nicer than "father." "Father" had unpleasant associations . . . she had hated father. But it was easy to love dad. Jane opened the most secret chamber of her heart and took him in . . .

nay, found him there. For dad was Kenneth Howard and Jane had loved Kenneth Howard for a long, long time.

"This Jane person," dad remarked to the ceiling, "knows her onions."

XIV

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Jane found that waiting for something pleasant was very different from waiting for something unpleasant. Mrs Stanley would not have known her with the laughter and sparkle in her eyes. If the forenoon seemed long it was only because she was in such a hurry to be with dad again . . . and away from Aunt Irene. Aunt Irene was trying to pump her . . . about grandmother and mother and her life at 60 Gay. Jane was not going to be pumped, much to Aunt Irene's disappointment. Questioned she never so cleverly, Jane had a disconcerting "yes" or "no" for every question and still more disconcerting silence for suggestive remarks that were disguised questions.

"So your Grandmother Kennedy is good to you, Janie?"

"Very good," said Jane unflinchingly. Well, grandmother *was* good to her. There were St Agatha's and the music lessons and the pretty clothes, the limousine and the balanced meals as evidence. Aunt Irene had looked carefully at all her clothes.

"She never had any use for your father, you know, Janie. I thought perhaps she might take her spite out on you. It was really she that made all the trouble between him and your mother."

Jane said nothing. She would not talk about that secret bitterness to Aunt Irene. Aunt Irene gave up in disgust.

Dad came back at noon without his car but with a horse and buggy.

"It's going to take all day to fix it. I'm borrowing Jed Carson's rig and he'll take it back when he brings the car and Jane's trunk out to-morrow. Did you ever have a buggy ride, my Jane?"

"You're not going without your dinners," said Aunt Irene.

Jane enjoyed that dinner, having eaten next to nothing ever since she left Toronto. She hoped dad wouldn't think her appetite terrible. For all she knew he was poor . . . that car hadn't looked like wealth . . . and another

mouth to fill might be inconvenient. But dad himself was evidently enjoying his dinner . . . especially that chocolate peppermint cake. Jane wished she knew how to make chocolate peppermint cake, but she made up her mind that she would never ask Aunt Irene how to make it.

Aunt Irene made a fuss over dad. She purred over him . . . actually purred. And dad liked her purring and her honey-sweet phrases just as well as he had liked her cake. Jane saw that clearly.

"It isn't really fair to the child to take her out to that Brookview boarding-house of yours," said Aunt Irene.

"Who knows but I'll get a house of my own for the summer?" said dad. "Do you think you could keep house for me, Jane?"

"Yes," said Jane promptly. She *could*. She knew how a house should be kept even if she had never kept one. There are people who are born knowing things.

"Can you cook?" asked Aunt Irene, winking at dad, as if over some delicious joke. Jane was pleased to see that dad did not wink back. And he saved her the ordeal of replying.

"Any descendant of my mother's can cook," he said. "Come, my Jane, put on thy beautiful garments and let's be on our way."

As Jane came downstairs in her hat and coat she could not help hearing Aunt Irene in the dining-room.

"She's got a secretive strain in her, Andrew, that I confess I don't like."

"Knows how to keep her own counsel, eh?" said dad.

"It's more than that, Andrew. She's deep . . . take my word for it, she's deep. Old Lady Kennedy will never be dead while she is alive. But she is a very dear little girl for all that, Andrew . . . we can't expect her to be faultless . . . and if there is anything I can do for her you have only to let me know. Be patient with her, Andrew. You know she's never been taught how to love you."

Jane fairly gritted her teeth. The idea of her having to be taught "how to love" dad! It was . . . why, it was funny! Jane's annoyance with Aunt Irene dissolved in a little chuckle, as low-pitched and impish as an owl's.

"Do be careful of poison ivy," Aunt Irene called after them as they drove away. "I'm told there is so much of it in Brookview. *Do* take good care of her, Andrew."

"You've got it wrong end foremost, Irene, like all women. Any one could see with half an eye that Jane is going to take care of *me*."

A blithe soul was Jane as they drove away. The glow at her heart went with her across the Island. She simply could not believe that only a few hours had elapsed since she had been the most miserable creature in the world. It was jolly to ride in a buggy, just behind a little red mare whose sleek hams Jane would have liked to bend forward and slap. She did not eat up the long red miles as a car would have done, but Jane did not want them eaten up. The road was full of lovely surprises . . . a glimpse of far-off hills that seemed made of opal dust . . . a whiff of wind that had been blowing over a clover field . . . brooks that appeared from nowhere and ran off into green shadowy woods where long branches of spicy fir hung over the laced water . . . great white cloud mountains towering up in the blue sky . . . a hollow of tipsy buttercups . . . a tidal river unbelievably blue. Everywhere she looked there was something to delight her. Everything seemed just on the point of whispering a secret of happiness. And there was something else . . . the sea tang in the air. Jane sniffed it for the first time . . . sniffed again . . . drank it in.

"Feel in my right-hand pocket," said dad.

Jane explored and found a bag of caramels. At 60 Gay she was not allowed to eat candy between meals . . . but 60 Gay was a thousand miles away.

"We're neither of us much for talking, it seems," said dad.

"No, but I think we entertain each other very well," said Jane, as distinctly as she could with her jaws stuck together with caramel.

Dad laughed. He had such a nice understanding laugh.

"I can talk a blue streak when the spirit moves me," he said. "When it doesn't I like people to let me be. You're a girl after my own heart, Jane. I'm glad I was predestined to send for you. Irene argued against it. But I'm

a stubborn dud, my Jane, when I take a notion into my noddle. It just occurred to me that I wanted to get acquainted with my daughter."

Dad did not ask about mother. Jane was thankful he did not . . . and yet she knew it was all wrong that he did not. It was all wrong that mother had asked her not to speak of her to him. Oh, there were too many things all wrong but one thing was indisputably and satisfyingly right. She was going to spend a whole summer with dad and they were here together, driving over a road which had a life of its own that seemed to be running through her veins like quicksilver. Jane knew that she had never been in any place or any company that suited her so well.

The most delightful drive must end.

"We'll soon be at Brookview," said dad. "I've been living at Brookview this past year. It is still one of the quiet places of the earth. I've a couple of rooms over Jim Meade's store. Mrs Jim Meade gives me my meals and thinks I'm a harmless lunatic because I write."

"What do you write, dad?" asked Jane, thinking of "Peaceful Adjustment of International Difficulties."

"A little of everything, Jane. Stories . . . poems . . . essays . . . articles on all subjects. I even wrote a novel once. But I couldn't find a publisher. So I went back to my pot-boilers. Behold a mute inglorious Milton in your dad. To you, Jane, I will confide my dearest dream. It is to write an epic on the life of Methuselah. What a subject! Here we are."

"Here" was a corner where two roads crossed and in the corner was a building which was a store at one end and a dwelling place at the other. The store end was open to the road but the house end was fenced off with a paling and a spruce hedge. Jane learned at once and for ever the art of getting out of a buggy and they went through a little white gate, with a black wooden decoy duck on one of its posts, and up a red walk edged with ribbon grass and big quahaug shells.

"Woof, woof," went a friendly little brown and white dog sitting on the steps. A nice gingery smell of hot cookies floated out of the door as an elderly woman came out . . . a trim body wearing a white apron edged with

six-inch-deep crochet lace and with the reddest cheeks Jane had ever seen on anybody in her life.

"Mrs Meade, this is Jane," said dad, "and you see now why I shall have to shave every morning after this."

"Dear child," said Mrs Meade and kissed her. Jane liked her kiss better than Aunt Irene's.

Mrs Meade at once gave Jane a slice of bread and butter and strawberry jam to "stay her stomach" till supper. It was wild-strawberry jam and Jane had never tasted wild-strawberry jam in her life before. The supper table was spread in a spotless kitchen where all the big windows were filled with flowering geraniums and begonias with silver-spotted leaves.

"I like kitchens," thought Jane.

Through another door that opened into a garden was a far-away view of green pastures to the south. The table in the centre of the room was covered with a gay red and white checked cloth. There was a fat, squat little bean-pot full of golden-brown beans before Mr Meade who gave Jane a liberal helping, besides a big square of fluffy cornmeal cake. Mr Meade looked very much like a cabbage in spectacles and flying jibs but Jane liked him.

Nobody found fault with Jane for things done or left undone. Nobody made her feel silly and crude and always in the wrong. When she finished her johnny-cake Mr Meade put another slice on her plate without even asking her if she wanted it.

"Eat all you like but pocket nothing," he told her solemnly.

The brown and white dog sat beside her, looking up with hungry hopeful eyes. Nobody took any notice when Jane fed him bits of johnny-cake.

Mr and Mrs Meade did most of the talking. It was all about people Jane had never heard of, but somehow she liked to listen. When Mrs Meade said in a solemn tone that poor George Baldwin was very ill with an ulster in his stomach, Jane's eyes and dad's laughed to each other though their faces remained as solemn as Mrs Meade's. Jane felt warm and

pleasant all over. It was jolly to have someone to share a joke with. Fancy laughing with your eyes at any one in 60 Gay! She and mother exchanged glimmers but they never dared laugh.

The east was paling to moonrise when Jane went to bed in Mrs Meade's spare-room. The bureau and the wash-stand were very cheap, the bed an iron one enamelled in white, the floor painted brown. But there was a gorgeous hooked rug of roses and ferns and autumn leaves on it, the prim starched lace curtains were as white as snow, the wallpaper was so pretty . . . silver daisy clusters on a creamy ground with circles of pale blue ribbon round them . . . and there was a huge scarlet geranium with scented velvety leaves on a stand before one of the windows.

There was something friendly about the room. Jane slept like a top and was up and down in the morning when Mrs Meade was lighting the kitchen fire. Mrs Meade gave Jane a big fat doughnut to stay her stomach till breakfast and sent her out into the garden to wait till dad came down. It lay in the silence of the dewy morning. The wind was full of wholesome country smells. The little flower-beds were edged with blue forget-me-nots and in one corner was a big clump of early, dark red peonies. Violets and plots of red and white daisies grew under the parlour windows. In a near field cows were cropping gold-green grass and a dozen little fluffy chicks were running about. A tiny yellow bird was tilting on a spirea spray. The brown and white dog came out and followed Jane about. A funny, two-wheeled cart, such as Jane had never seen before, went by on the road and the driver, a lank youth in overalls, waved to her as to an old friend. Jane promptly waved back with what was left of her doughnut.

How blue and high the sky was! Jane liked the country sky. "P. E. Island is a lovely place," thought Jane, not at all grudgingly. She picked a pink cabbage rose and shook the dew from it all over her face. Fancy washing your face with a rose! And then she remembered how she had prayed that she might not come here.

"I think," said Jane decidedly, "that I should apologize to God."

XV

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"We must go and buy us a house soon, duck," said dad, jumping right into the middle of the subject as Jane was to find was his habit.

Jane turned it over in her mind.

"Is 'soon' to-day?" she asked.

Dad laughed.

"Might as well be. This happens to be one of the days when I like myself reasonably well. We'll start as soon as Jed brings our car."

Jed did not bring the car till noon so they had dinner before they set out, and Mrs Meade gave Jane a bag of butter cookies to stay their stomachs till supper-time.

"I like Mrs Meade," Jane told dad, a pleasant warmth filling her soul as she realized that here was somebody she did like.

"She's the salt of the earth," agreed dad, "even if she does think the violet ray is a girl."

The violet ray might have been a girl for anything Jane knew to the contrary . . . or cared. It was enough to know that dad and she were off in a car that would have given Frank a conniption at sight, bouncing along red roads that were at once friendly and secretive, through woods that were so gay and bridal with wild cherry-trees sprinkled through them and over hills where velvet cloud-shadows rolled until they seemed to vanish in little hollows filled with blue. There were houses on every side in that pleasant land and they were going to buy one. . . . "Let's buy a house, Jane" . . . just like that, as one might have said, "Let's buy a basket." Delightful!

"As soon as I knew you were coming I began inquiring about possible houses. I've heard of several. We'll take a look at them all before we decide. What kind of a house would you like, Jane?"

"What kind of a house can you afford?" said Jane gravely.

Dad chuckled.

"She's got some of the little common sense still left in the world," he told the sky. "We can't pay a fancy price, Jane. I'm not a plutocrat. On the other hand, neither am I on relief. I sold quite a lot of stuff last winter."

"'Peaceful Adjustment of International Difficulties'," murmured Jane.

"What's that?"

Jane told him. She told him how she had liked Kenneth Howard's picture and cut it out. But she did not tell him that grandmother had torn it, nor about the look in mother's eyes.

"*Saturday Evening* is a good customer of mine. But let us return to our muttons. Subject to the fluctuations of the market, what kind of a house would you like, my Jane?"

"Not a big one," said Jane, thinking of the enormous 60 Gay. "A little house . . . with some trees around it . . . young trees."

"White birches?" said dad. "I rather fancy a white birch or two. And a few dark green spruces for contrast. And the house must be green and white to match the trees. I've always wanted a green and white house."

"Couldn't we paint it?" asked Jane.

"We could. Clever of you to think of that, Jane. I might have turned down our predestined house just because it was mud colour. And we must have at least one window where we can see the gulf."

"Will it be near the gulf?"

"It must be. We're going up to the Queen's Shore district. All the houses I've heard about are up there."

"I'd like it to be on a hill," said Jane wistfully.

"Let's sum up . . . a little house, white and green or to be made so . . . with trees, preferably birch and spruce . . . a window looking seaward . . . on a hill. That sounds very possible . . . but there is one other requirement. There must be magic about it, Jane . . . lashings of magic . . . and magic houses are scarce, even on the Island. Have you any idea at all what I mean, Jane?"

Jane reflected.

"You want to feel that the house is *yours* before you buy it," she said.

"Jane," said dad, "you are too good to be true."

He was looking at her closely as they went up a hill after crossing a river so blue that Jane had exclaimed in rapture over it . . . a river that ran into a bluer harbour. And when they reached the top of the hill, there before them lay something greater and bluer still that Jane knew must be the gulf.

"Oh!" she said. And again, "Oh!"

"This is where the sea begins. Like it, Jane?"

Jane nodded. She could not speak. She had seen Lake Ontario, pale blue and shimmering, but this . . . this? She continued to look at it as if she could never have enough of it.

"I never thought anything could be so blue," she whispered.

"You've seen it before," said dad softly. "You may not know it but it's in your blood. You were born beside it, one sweet, haunted April night . . . you lived by it for three years. Once I took you down and dipped you in it, to the horror of . . . of several people. You were properly baptized before that in the Anglican church in Charlottetown . . . but that was your real baptism. You are the sea's child and you have come home."

"But you didn't like me," said Jane, before she thought.

"Not like you! Who told you that?"

"Grandmother." She had not been forbidden to mention grandmother's name to him.

"The old . . ." dad checked himself. A mask seemed to fall over his face.

"Let us not forget we are house-hunting, Jane," he said coolly.

For a little while Jane felt no interest in house-hunting. She didn't know what to believe or whom to believe. She thought dad liked her now . . . but did he? Perhaps he was just pretending. Then she remembered how he had kissed her.

"He does like me now," she thought. "Perhaps he didn't like me when I was born but I know he does now." And she was happy again.

XVI

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House-hunting, Jane decided, was jolly. Perhaps it was really more the pleasure of the driving and talking and being silent with dad that was jolly, for most of the houses on dad's list were not interesting. The first house they looked at was too big; the second was too small.

"After all, we must have room to swing the cat," said dad.

"Have you a cat?" demanded Jane.

"No. But we can get one if you like. I hear the kitten crop is tops this year. Do you like cats?"

"Yes."

"Then we'll have a bushel of them."

"No," said Jane, "two."

"And a dog. I don't know how you feel about dogs, Jane, but if you're going to have a cat, I must have a dog. I haven't had a dog since . . ."

He stopped short again, and again Jane had the feeling that he had been just on the point of saying something she wanted very much to hear.

The third house looked attractive. It was just at the turn of a wooded road dappled with sunshine through the trees. But on inspection it proved hopeless. The floors were cut and warped and slanted in all directions. The doors didn't hang right. The windows wouldn't open. There was no pantry.

There was too much gingerbread about the fourth house, dad said, and neither of them looked twice at the fifth . . . a dingy, square, unpainted building with a litter of rusty cans, old pails, fruit baskets, rags and rubbish all over its yard.

"The next on my list is the old Jones house," said dad.

It was not so easy to find the old Jones house. The new Jones house fronted the road boldly, but you had to go past it and away down a deep-rutted, neglected lane to find the old one. You could see the gulf from the kitchen window. But it was too big and both dad and Jane felt that the view

of the back of the Jones barns and pig-sty was not inspiring. So they bounced up the lane again, feeling a little dashed.

The seventh house seemed to be all a house should be. It was a small bungalow, new and white, with a red roof and dormer windows. The yard was trim though treeless; there were a pantry and a nice cellar and good floors. And it had a wonderful view of the gulf.

Dad looked at Jane.

"Do you sense any magic about this, my Jane?"

"Do *you*?" challenged Jane.

Dad shook his head.

"Absolutely none. And, as magic is indispensable, no can do."

They drove away, leaving the man who owned the house wondering who them two lunatics were. What on earth was magic? He must see the carpenter who had built the house and find out why he hadn't put any in it.

Two more houses were impossible.

"I suppose we're a pair of fools, Jane. We've looked at all the houses I've heard of that are for sale . . . and what's to be done now? Go back and eat our words and buy the bungalow?"

"Let's ask this man who is coming along the road if he knows of any house we haven't seen," said Jane composedly.

"The Jimmy Johns have one, I hear," said the man. "Over at Lantern Hill. The house their Aunt Matilda Jollie lived in. There's some of her furniture in it, too, I hear. You'd likely git it reasonable if you jewed him down a bit. It's two miles to Lantern Hill and you go by Queen's Shore."

The Jimmy Johns and a Lantern Hill and an Aunt Matilda Jollie! Jane's thumbs pricked. Magic was in the offing.

Jane saw the house first . . . at least she saw the upstairs window in its gable end winking at her over the top of a hill. But they had to drive around the hill and up a winding lane between two dikes, with little ferns growing out of the stones and young spruces starting up along them at intervals.

And then, right before them, was the house . . . *their* house!

"Dear, don't let your eyes pop quite out of your head," warned dad.

It squatted right against a little steep hill whose toes were lost in bracken. It was small . . . you could have put half a dozen of it inside 60 Gay. It had a garden, with a stone dike at the lower end of it to keep it from sliding down the hill, a paling and a gate, with two tall white birches leaning over it, and a flat-stone walk up to the only door, which had eight small panes of glass in its upper half. The door was locked but they could see in at the windows. There was a good-sized room on one side of the door, stairs going up right in front of it, and two small rooms on the other side whose windows looked right into the side of the hill where ferns grew as high as your waist, and there were stones lying about covered with velvet green moss.

There was a bandy-legged old cook-stove in the kitchen, a table and some chairs. And a dear little glass-paned cupboard in the corner fastened with a wooden button.

On one side of the house was a clover field and on the other a maple grove, sprinkled with firs and spruces, and separated from the house lot by an old, lichen-covered board fence. There was an apple-tree in the corner of the yard, with pink petals falling softly, and a clump of old spruces outside the garden gate.

"I like the pattern of this place," said Jane.

"Do you suppose it's possible that the view goes with the house?" said dad.

Jane had been so taken up with her house that she had not looked at the view at all. Now she turned her eyes on it and lost her breath over it. Never, never had she seen . . . had she dreamed anything so wonderful.

Lantern Hill was at the apex of a triangle of land which had the gulf for its base and Queen's Harbour for one of its sides. There were silver and lilac sand-dunes between them and the sea, extending into a bar across the harbour where great, splendid, blue and white waves were racing to the long sun-washed shore. Across the channel a white lighthouse stood up against the sky and on the other side of the harbour were the shadowy crests of purple hills that dreamed with their arms around each other. And over it all the indefinable charm of a Prince Edward Island landscape.

Just below Lantern Hill, skirted by spruce barrens on the harbour side and a pasture field on the other, was a little pond . . . absolutely the bluest thing that Jane had ever seen.

"Now, that is my idea of a pond," said dad.

Jane said nothing at first. She could only look. She had never been there before but it seemed as if she had known it all her life. The song the sea-wind was singing was music native to her ears. She had always wanted to "belong" somewhere and she belonged here. At last she had a feeling of home.

"Well, what about it?" said dad.

Jane was so sure the house was listening that she shook her finger at him.

"Sh . . . sh," she said.

"Let's go down to the shore and talk it over," said dad.

It was about fifteen minutes' walk to the outside shore. They sat down on the bone-white body of an old tree that had drifted from heaven knew where. The snapping salty breeze whipped their faces; the surf creamed along the shore; the wee sand-peeps flitted fearlessly past them. "How clean salt air is!" thought Jane.

"Jane, I have a suspicion that the roof leaks."

"You can put some shingles on it."

"There's a lot of burdocks in the yard."

"We can root them out."

"The house may have once been white . . ."

"It can be white again."

"The paint on the front door is blistered."

"Paint doesn't cost very much, does it?"

"The shutters are broken."

"Let's fix them."

"The plaster is cracked."

"We can paper over it."

"Who knows if there's a pantry, Jane?"

"There are shelves in one of the little rooms on the right. I can use that for a pantry. The other little room would do you for a study. You'd have to have some place to write, wouldn't you?"

"She's got it all planned out," dad told the Atlantic. But added, "That big maple wood is a likely place for owls."

"Who's afraid of owls?"

"And what about magic, my Jane?"

Magic! Why, the place was simply jammed with magic. You were falling over magic. Dad knew that. He was only talking for the sake of talking. When they went back Jane sat down on the big red sandstone slab which served as a doorstep, while dad went through the maple wood by a little twisted path the cows had made to see Jimmy John--otherwise Mr J. J. Garland. The Garland house could be seen peeping around the corner of the maples--a snug, butter-coloured farmhouse decently dressed in trees.

Jimmy John came back with dad, a little fat man with twinkling grey eyes. He hadn't been able to find the key but they had seen the ground floor and he told them there were three rooms upstairs with a spool bed in one of them and a closet in each of them.

"And a boot-shelf under the stairs."

They stood on the stone walk and looked at the house.

"What are you going to do with me?" said the house as plainly as ever a house spoke.

"What is your price?" said dad.

"Four hundred with the furniture thrown in for good measure," said Jimmy John, winking at Jane. Jane winked rakishly back. After all, grandmother was a thousand miles away.

"Bang goes saxpence," said dad. He did not try to "jew" Jimmy John down. That he could buy all this loveliness for four hundred dollars was enough luck.

Dad handed over fifty dollars and said the rest would be paid next day.

"The house is yours," said Jimmy John with an air of making them a present of it. But Jane knew the house had always been theirs.

"The house . . . and the pond . . . and the harbour . . . and the gulf! A good buy," said dad. "And half an acre of land. All my life I've wanted to own a bit of land . . . just enough to stand on and say, 'This is mine.' And now, Jane, it's brillig."

"Four o'clock in the afternoon." Jane knew her *Alice* too well to be caught tripping on that.

Just as they were leaving, a pocket edition of Jimmy John, with a little impudent face came tearing through the maple grove with the key which had turned up in his absence. Jimmy John handed it to Jane with a bow. Jane clutched it tightly all the way back to Brookview. She loved it. Think what it would open for her!

They discovered they were hungry, having forgotten all about dinner, so they fished out Mrs Meade's butter cookies and ate them.

"You'll let me do the cooking, dad?"

"Why, you'll have to. *I* can't."

Jane glowed.

"I wish we could move in to-morrow, dad."

"Why not? I can get some bedding and some food. We can go on from there."

"I just can't bear to have this day go," said Jane. "It doesn't seem as if there could ever be another so happy."

"We've got to-morrow, Jane . . . let me see . . . we've got about ninety-five to-morrows."

"Ninety-five," gloated Jane.

"And we'll do just as we want to inside of decency. We'll be clean but not too clean. We'll be lazy but not too lazy . . . just do enough to keep three jumps ahead of the wolf. And we'll never have in our house that devilish thing known as an intermittent alarm clock."

"But we must have some kind of a clock," said Jane.

"Timothy Salt down at the harbour mouth has an old ship's clock. I'll get him to lend it to us. It only goes when it feels like it, but what matter? Can you darn my socks, Jane?"

"Yes," said Jane, who had never darned a sock in her life.

"Jane, we're sitting on the top of the world. It was a piece of amazing luck, your asking that man, Jane."

"It wasn't luck. I *knew* he'd know," said Jane. "And oh, dad, can we keep the house a secret till we've moved in?"

"Of course," agreed dad. "From every one except Aunt Irene. We'll have to tell her, of course."

Jane said nothing. She had not known till dad spoke that it was really from Aunt Irene she wished to keep it secret.

Jane didn't believe she would sleep that night. How could one go to sleep with so many wonderful things to think of? And some that were very puzzling. How could two people like mother and dad hate each other? It didn't make sense. They were both so lovely in different ways. They must have loved each other once. What had changed them? If she, Jane, only knew the whole truth, perhaps she could do something about it.

But as she drifted off into dreams of spruce-shadowed red roads that all led to dear little houses, her last conscious thought was "I wonder if we can get our milk at the Jimmy Johns'."

XVII

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They "moved in" the next afternoon. Dad and Jane went to town in the forenoon and got a load of canned stuff and some bedding. Jane also got some gingham dresses and aprons. She knew none of the clothes grandmother had bought for her would be of any use at Lantern Hill. And she slipped into a bookstore unbeknown to dad and bought a *Cookery for Beginners*. Mother had given her a dollar when she left and she was not going to take any chances.

They called to see Aunt Irene but Aunt Irene was out, and Jane had her own reasons for being pleased about this but she kept them to herself. After dinner they tied Jane's trunk and suitcase on the running-boards and bounced off to Lantern Hill. Mrs Meade gave them a box of doughnuts, three leaves of bread, a round pat of butter with a pattern of clover-leaves on it, a jar of cream, a raisin pie and three dried codfish.

"Put one in soak to-night and broil it for your breakfast in the morning," she told Jane.

The house was still there. Jane had been half afraid it would be stolen in the night. It seemed so entirely desirable to her that she couldn't imagine any one else not wanting it. She felt so sorry for Aunt Matilda Jollie who had had to die and leave it. It was hard to believe that, even in the golden mansions, Aunt Matilda Jollie wouldn't miss the house on Lantern Hill.

"Let me unlock the door, please, dad." She was trembling with delight as she stepped over the threshold.

"This . . . this is home," said Jane. Home . . . something she had never known before. She was nearer crying then than she had ever been in her life.

They ran over the house like a couple of children. There were three rooms upstairs . . . a quite large one to the north, which Jane decided at

once must be father's.

"Wouldn't you like it yourself, blithe spirit? The window looks over the gulf."

"No, I want this dear little one at the back. I want a *little* room, dad. And the other one will do nicely for a guest-room."

"Do we need a guest-room, Jane? Let me remind you that the measure of any one's freedom is what he can do without."

"Oh, but of course we need a guest-room, dad." Jane was quite tickled over the thought. "We'll have company sometimes, won't we?"

"There isn't a bed in it."

"Oh, we'll get one somewhere. Dad, the house is glad to see us . . . glad to be lived in again. The chairs just want someone to sit on them."

"Little sentimentalist!" jeered dad. But there was understanding laughter behind his eyes.

The house was surprisingly clean. Jane was to learn later that as soon as they knew Aunt Matilda Jollie's house was sold, Mrs Jimmy John and Miranda Jimmy John had come over, got in at one of the kitchen windows and given the whole place a Dutch cleaning from top to bottom. Jane was almost sorry the house was clean. She would have liked to clean it. She wanted to do everything for it.

"I am as bad as Aunt Gertrude," she thought. And a little glimmer of understanding of Aunt Gertrude came to her.

There was nothing to do just now but put the mattresses and clothes on the beds, the cans in the kitchen cupboard, and the butter and cream in the cellar. Dad hung Mrs Meade's codfish on the nails behind the kitchen stove.

"We'll have sausages for supper," Jane was saying.

"Janekin," said dad, clutching his hair in dismay, "I forgot to buy a frying-pan."

"Oh, there's an iron frying-pan in the bottom of the cupboard," said Jane serenely. "And a three-legged cooking-pot," she added in triumph.

There was nothing about the house that Jane did not know by this time. Dad had kindled a fire in the stove and fed it with some of Aunt Matilda

Jollie's wood, Jane keeping a watchful eye on him as he did it. She had never seen a fire made in a stove before but she meant to know how to do it herself next time. The stove was a bit wobbly on one of its feet but Jane found a piece of flat stone in the yard which fitted nicely under it and everything was shipshape. Dad went over to the Jimmy Johns' to borrow a pail of water--the well had to be cleaned out before they could use it--and Jane set the table with a red and white cloth like Mrs Meade's and the dishes dad had got at the five-and-ten. She went out to the neglected garden and picked a bouquet of bleeding-heart and June lilies for the centre. There was nothing to hold them but Jane found a rusty old tin can somewhere, swathed it in a green silk scarf she had dug out of her trunk--it was an expensive silk scarf Aunt Minnie had given her--and arranged her flowers in it. She cut and buttered bread, she made tea and fried the sausages. She had never done anything of the kind before but she had not watched Mary for nothing.

"It's good to get my legs under my own table again," said dad, as they sat down to supper.

"I suppose," thought Jane wickedly, "if grandmother could see me eating in the kitchen--and liking it--she would say it was just my low tastes."

Aloud all she said was . . . but she nearly burst with pride as she said it . . . "How do you take your tea, dad?"

There was a tangle of sunbeams on the bare white floor. They could see the maple wood through the east window, the gulf and the pond and the dunes through the north, the harbour through the west. Winds of the salt seas were blowing in. Swallows were swooping through the evening air. Everything she looked at belonged to dad and her. She was mistress of this house--her right there was none to dispute. She could do just as she wanted to without making excuses for anything. The memory of that first meal together with dad in Aunt Matilda Jollie's house was to be "a thing of beauty and a joy for ever." Dad was so jolly. He talked to her just as if she were grown up. Jane felt sorry for any one who didn't have her father.

Dad wanted to help her wash the dishes but Jane would none of it. Wasn't she to be the housekeeper? She knew how Mary washed dishes. She had always wanted to wash dishes . . . it must be such fun to make dirty plates clean. Dad had bought a dish-pan that day, but neither of them had thought about a dish-cloth or dish-towels. Jane got two new undervests out of her trunk and slit them open.

At sunset Jane and dad went down to the outside shore . . . as they were to do almost every night of that enchanted summer. All along the silvery curving sand ran a silvery curving wave. A dim, white-sailed vessel drifted past the bar of the shadowy dunes. The revolving light across the channel was winking at them. A great headland of gold and purple ran out behind it. At sunset that cape became a place of mystery to Jane. What lay beyond it? "Magic seas in fairylands forlorn?" Jane couldn't remember where she had heard or read that phrase but it suddenly came alive for her.

Dad smoked a pipe . . . which he called his "Old Contemptible" . . . and said nothing. Jane sat beside him in the shadow of the bones of an old vessel and said nothing. There was no need to say anything.

When they went back to the house they discovered that though dad had gotten three lamps he had forgotten to get any coal-oil for them or any petrol for his study lamp.

"Well, I suppose we can go to bed in the dark for once."

No need of that. Indefatigable Jane remembered she had seen a piece of an old tallow candle in the cupboard drawer. She cut it in two, stuck the pieces in the necks of two old glass bottles, likewise salvaged from the cupboard, and what would you ask more?

Jane looked about her tiny room, her heart swelling with satisfaction. There were as yet only the spool bed and a little table in it; the ceiling was stained with old leaks and the floor was slightly uneven. But this was the first room to be her very own, where she need never feel that someone was peeping at her through the key-hole. She undressed, blew out her candle and looked out of the window from which she could almost have touched the top of the steep little hill. The moon was up and had already worked its magic with the landscape. A mile away the lights of the little village at

Lantern Corners shone. To the right of the window a young birch-tree seemed a-tiptoe trying to peer over the hill. Soft, velvety shadows moved among the bracken.

"I am going to pretend this is a magic window," thought Jane, "and sometime when I look out of it I shall see a wonderful sight. I shall see mother coming up that road looking for the lights of Lantern Hill."

Dad had picked a good mattress, and Jane was bone-tired after her strenuous day. But how lovely it was to lie in this comfortable little spool bed--neither Jane nor the Jimmy Johns knew that Aunt Matilda Jollie had been offered fifty dollars by a collector for that bed--and watch the moonlight patterning the walls with birch-leaves and know that dad was just across the little "landing" from you, and that outside were free hills and wide, open fields where you could run wherever you liked, none daring to make you afraid, spruce barrens and shadowy sand-dunes, instead of an iron fence and locked gates. And how quiet it all was--no honking, no glaring lights. Jane had pushed the window open and the scent of fern came in. Also a strange, soft far-away sound--the moaning call of the sea. The night seemed to be filled with it. Jane heard it and something deep down in her responded to it with a thrill that was between anguish and rapture. Why was the sea calling? What was its secret sorrow?

Jane was just dropping off to sleep when a terrible remembrance tore through her mind. She had forgotten to put the codfish to soak.

Two minutes later the codfish was soaking.

XVIII

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Jane, to her horror, slept in next morning, and when she rushed downstairs she saw an extraordinary sight . . . dad coming over from the Jimmy Johns' with a rocking-chair on his head. He also had a gridiron in his hand.

"Had to borrow one to broil the codfish on, Jane. And Mrs Jimmy John made me take the chair. She said it belonged to Aunt Matilda Jollie and they had more rocking-chairs than they had time to sit in. I made the porridge and it's up to you to broil the codfish."

Jane broiled it and her face as well, and it was delicious. The porridge was a bit lumpy.

"Dad isn't a very good cook, I guess," thought Jane affectionately. But she did not say so and she heroically swallowed all the lumps. Dad didn't; he ranged them along the edge of his plate and looked at her quizzically.

"I can write, my Jane, but I can't make porridgeable porridge."

"You won't have to make it after this. I'll never sleep in again," said Jane.

There is no pleasure in life like the joy of achievement. Jane realized that in the weeks that followed, if she did not put it in just those words. Old Uncle Tombstone, the general handy man of the Queen's Shore district, whose name was really Tunstone and who hadn't a niece or nephew in the world, papered all the rooms for them, patched the roof and mended the shutters, painted the house white with green trim and taught Jane how, when and where to dig for clams. He had a nice old rosy face with a fringe of white whisker under his chin.

Jane, bubbling over with energy, worked like a beaver, cleaning up after Uncle Tombstone, arranging the bits of furniture as dad brought them home, and getting curtains up all over the house.

"That girl can be in three places at once," said dad. "I don't know how she manages it. . . . I suppose there really is such a thing as witchcraft."

Jane was very capable and could do almost anything she tried to do. It was nice to live where you could show how capable you were. This was her own world and she was a person of importance in it. There was joy in her heart the clock round. Life here was one endless adventure.

When Jane was not cleaning up she was getting the meals. She studied her *Cookery for Beginners* every spare moment and went about muttering, "All measurements are level," and things like that. Because she had watched Mary and because it was born in her to be a cook, she got on amazingly well. From the very first her biscuits were never soggy or her roast underdone. But one day she flew too high and produced for dessert something that a charitable person might have called a plum pudding. Uncle Tombstone ate some of it and had to have the doctor that night--or so he said. He brought his own dinner the next day--cold bacon and cold pancakes tied up in a red handkerchief, and told Jane he was on a diet.

"That pudding of yours yesterday, miss, it was a mite too rich. My stomach ain't used to Toronto cookery. Them there vitamins now. . . . I reckon you have to be brought up on them for them to agree with you."

To his cronies he averred that the pudding would have given the rats indigestion. But he liked Jane.

"Your daughter is a very superior person," he told dad. "Most of the girls nowadays are all tops and no taters. But she's superior--yes, sir, she's superior." How dad and Jane laughed over that. Dad called her "Superior Jane" in a tone of mock awe till the joke wore out.

Jane liked Uncle Tombstone, too. In fact, nothing in her new life amazed her more than the ease with which she liked people. It seemed as if every one she met was sealed of her tribe. She thought it must be that the P. E. Islanders were nicer, or at least more neighbourly, than the Toronto people. She did not realize that the change was in herself. She was no longer rebuffed, frightened, awkward because she was frightened. Her foot was on her native heath and her name was Jane. She felt friendly towards all the world and all the world responded. She could love all she wanted to . . . everybody she wanted to . . . without being accused of low tastes. Probably grandmother would not have recognized Uncle Tombstone

socially; but the standards of 60 Gay were not the standards of Lantern Hill.

As for the Jimmy Johns, Jane felt as if she must have known them all her life. They were so called, she discovered, because Mr James John Garland had a James Garland to the north-east of him and a John Garland to the south-west of him, and so had to be distinguished in some way. Her first forenoon at Lantern Hill all the Jimmy Johns came galloping over in a body. At least, the young fry galloped with the three dogs . . . a brindled bull-terrier, a golden collie and a long brown dog who was just a dog. Mrs Jimmy John, who was as tall and thin as her Jimmy John was short and fat, with very wise, gentle grey eyes, walked briskly, carrying in her arms a baby as fat as a sausage. Miranda Jimmy John, who was sixteen, was as tall as her mother and as fat as her father. She had had a double chin at ten and nobody would ever believe that she was secretly overflowing with romance. Polly Jimmy John was Jane's age but looked younger because she was short and thin. "Punch" Jimmy John who had brought the key was thirteen. There were the eight-year-old twins . . . the George twin and the Ella twin . . . their bare chubby legs all spotted with mosquito bites. And every one of them had a pleasant smile.

"Jane Victoria Stuart?" said Mrs Jimmy John with a questioning smile.

"Jane!" said Jane, with such an intonation of triumph that the Jimmy Johns all stared at her.

"Jane, of course," smiled Mrs Jimmy John. Jane knew she was going to like Mrs Jimmy John.

Everybody except the baby had brought a present for Jane. Mrs Jimmy John gave her a lamb skin dyed red for a bedside rug. Miranda brought her a little fat white jug with pink roses on its sides, Punch brought her some early radishes, Polly brought her a rooted geranium slip and the twins brought a toad apiece "for her garden."

"You have to have toads in your garden for luck," explained Punch.

Jane felt it would never do to let her first callers go home without something to eat, especially when they had come bearing gifts.

"Mrs Meade's pie will go round if I don't take a piece," she thought.
"The baby won't want any."

The baby *did* want some but Mrs Jimmy John shared hers with him. They sat around in the kitchen on the chairs and on the sandstone doorstep and ate the pie while Jane radiated hospitality.

"Come over whenever you can, dear," Mrs Jimmy John told her. Mrs Jimmy John thought Jane pretty young to be keeping house for anybody. "If there's any way we can help you, we'll be glad to."

"Will you teach me how to make bread?" said Jane coolly. "We can get it at the Corners of course but dad likes home-made bread. And what kind of cake flour would you recommend?"

Jane got acquainted with the Snowbeams also that week. The Solomon Snowbeams were a rather neglected rascal family who lived in a ramshackle house where the spruce barrens ran down to a curve of the harbour shore known as Hungry Cove. Nobody knew how Solomon Snowbeam contrived to feed his family . . . he fished a little and "worked out" a little and shot a little. Mrs Snowbeam was a big, pink, overblown woman and Caraway Snowbeam, "Shingle" Snowbeam, Penny Snowbeam and "Young John" Snowbeam were impudent, friendly little creatures who certainly did not look starved. Millicent Mary Snowbeam, aged six, was neither impudent nor friendly. Millicent Mary was, so Polly Garland told Jane, not all there. She had blank, velvety nut-brown eyes . . . all the Snowbeams had beautiful eyes . . . reddish golden hair and a dazzling complexion. She could sit for hours without speaking--perhaps that was why the chattering Jimmy Johns thought her not all there--with her fat arms clasped around her fat knees. She seemed to be possessed of a dumb admiration for Jane and haunted Lantern Hill all that summer, gazing at her. Jane did not mind her.

If Millicent Mary did not talk, the rest of the Snowbeams made up for it. At first they were inclined to resent Jane a bit, thinking she must know everything because she came from Toronto and would be putting on airs about it. But when they discovered she hardly knew anything . . . except the little Uncle Tombstone had taught her about clams . . . they became

very friendly. That is to say, they asked innumerable questions. There was no false delicacy about any of the Snowbeams.

"Does your pa put live people in his stories?" asked Penny.

"No," said Jane.

"Everybody round here says he does. Everybody's scared he'll put them in. He'd better not put *us* in if he doesn't want his snoot busted. I'm the toughest boy in Lantern Hill."

"Do you think you are interesting enough to put in a story?" asked Jane.

Penny was a little scared of her after that.

"We've been wanting to see what you looked like," said Shingle, who wore overalls and looked like a boy but wasn't, "because your pa and ma are divorced, ain't they?"

"No," said Jane.

"Is your pa a widow then?" persisted Shingle.

"No."

"Does your ma live in Toronto?"

"Yes."

"Why doesn't she live here with your pa?"

"If you ask me any more questions about my parents," said Jane, "I'll get dad to put you into one of his stories--every one of you."

Shingle was cowed but Caraway took up the tale.

"Do you look like your mother?"

"No. My mother is the most beautiful woman in Toronto," said Jane proudly.

"Do you live in a white marble house at home?"

"No."

"Ding-dong Bell said you did," said Caraway in disgust. "Ain't he the awful liar? And I s'pose you don't have satin bedspreads either?"

"We have silk ones," said Jane.

"Ding-dong said you had satin."

"I see the butcher bringing your dinner up the lane," said Young John. "What are you having?"

"Steak."

"My stars! We never have steak . . . nothing but bread and molasses and fried salt pork. Dad says he can't look a pig in the face 'thout grunting and mam says let him bring her home something else and she'll be mighty glad to cook it. Is that a cake you're making? Say, will you let me lick out the pan?"

"Yes, but stand back from the table. Your shirt is all over chaff," ordered Jane.

"Ain't you the bossy snip?" said Young John.

"Foxy-head," said Penny.

They all went home mad because Jane Stuart had insulted Young John. But they all came back next day and forgivingly helped her weed and clean up her garden. It was hard work and it was a hot day so that their brows were wet with honest sweat long before they had done it to Jane's taste. If anybody had made them work as hard as that they would have howled to high heaven; but when it was for fun . . . why, it *was* fun.

Jane gave them the last of Mrs Meade's cookies. She meant to try a batch of her own next day anyhow.

Jane had already decided that there was never a garden in the world like hers. She was crazy about it. An early, old-fashioned yellow rose-bush was already in bloom. Shadows of poppies danced here and there. The stone dike was smothered in wild rose-bushes starred with crimson bud-sheaths. Pale lemon lilies and creamy June lilies grew in the corners. There were ribbon-grass and mint, bleeding-heart, prince's feather, southernwood, peonies, sweet balm, sweet may, sweet-william, all with sated velvet bees humming over them. Aunt Matilda Jollie had been content with old-fashioned perennials and Jane loved them too, but she made up her mind that by hook or crook she would have some annuals next summer. Jane, at the beginning of this summer, was already planning for next.

In a very short time she was to be full of garden lore and was always trying to extract information about fertilizers from anybody who knew. Mr Jimmy John gravely advised well-rotted cow manure and Jane dragged

basketfuls of it home from his barnyard. She loved to water the flowers . . . especially when the earth was a little dry and they drooped pleadingly. The garden rewarded her . . . she was one of those people at whose touch things grow. No weed was ever allowed to show its face. Jane got up early every morning to weed. It was wonderful to wake as the sun came over the sea.

The mornings at Lantern Hill seemed different from the mornings anywhere else--more morningish. Jane's heart sang as she weeded and raked and hoed and pruned and thinned out.

"Who taught you these things, woman?" asked dad.

"I think I've always known them," said Jane dreamily.

The Snowbeams told Jane their cat had kittens and she could have one. Jane went down to choose. There were four and the poor lean old mother cat was so proud and happy. Jane picked a black one with a pansy face--a really pansy face, so dark and velvety, with round golden eyes. She named it Peter on the spot. Then the Jimmy Johns, not to be outdone, brought over a kitten also. But this kitten was already named Peter and the Ella twin wept frantically over the idea of anybody changing it. So dad suggested calling them First Peter and Second Peter--which Mrs Snowbeam thought was sacrilegious. Second Peter was a dainty thing in black and silver, with a soft white breast. Both Peters slept at the foot of Jane's bed and swarmed over dad the minute he sat down.

"What is home without a dog?" said dad, and got one from old Timothy Salt at the harbour mouth. They named him Happy. He was a slim white dog with a round brown spot at the root of his tail, a brown collar and brown ears. He kept the Peters in their place and Jane loved him so much it hurt her.

"I like living things around me, dad."

Dad brought home the ship clock with the dog. Jane found it useful to time meals by, but as far as anything else was concerned there was really no such thing as time at Lantern Hill.

By the end of a week Jane knew the geography and people of Lantern Hill and Lantern Corners perfectly. Every hill seemed to belong to somebody . . . Big Donald's hill . . . Little Donald's hill . . . Old Man

Cooper's hill. She could pick out Big Donald Martin's farm and Little Donald Martin's farm. Every household light she could see from the hill-top had its own special significance. She knew just where to look to see Min's ma's light sparkle out every night from the little white house in a misty fold of the hills. Min herself, an owl-eyed gipsy scrap, full of ginger, was already a bosom friend of Jane's. Jane knew that Min's colourless ma was entirely unimportant except as a background for Min. Min never would wear shoes or stockings in summer and her bare feet twinkled over the red roads to Lantern Hill every day. Sometimes Elmer Bell, better known as Ding-dong, came with her. Ding-dong was freckled and his ears stuck out but he was popular, though pursued through life by some scandalous tale of having sat in his porridge when he was an infant. When Young John wanted to be especially annoying he yelled at Ding-dong, "Sot in your porridge, you did--sot in your porridge!"

Elmer and Min and Polly Garland and Shingle and Jane were all children of the same year and they all liked each other and snubbed each other and offended each other and stood up for each other against the older and younger fry. Jane gave up trying to believe she hadn't always been friends with them. She remembered the woman who had called Gay Street dead. Well, Aunt Matilda Jollie's house wasn't dead. It was alive, every inch of it. Jane's friends swarmed all over it.

"You're so nice you ought to have been born in P. E. Island," Ding-dong told her.

"I was," said Jane triumphantly.

XIX

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One day a blue two-wheeled cart lumbered up the lane and left a big packing-box in the yard.

"A lot of my mother's china and silver are in that, Jane," said dad. "I thought you might like to have them. You were named after her. They've been packed up ever since . . ."

Dad suddenly stopped and the frown that Jane always wanted to smooth out came over his brow.

"They've been packed up for years."

Jane knew perfectly well that he had started to say, "ever since your mother went away," or words to that effect. She had a sudden realization of the fact that this was not the first time dad had helped fix up a home . . . not the first time he had been nicely excited over choosing wallpaper and curtains and rugs. He must have had it all before with mother. Perhaps they had had just as much fun over it as dad and she were having now . . . more. Mother must have been sweet over fixing up her own home. She never had anything to say over the arrangements at 60 Gay. Jane wondered where the house dad and mother had lived in was . . . the house where she had been born. There were so many things she would have liked to ask dad if she had dared. But he was so nice. How could mother ever have left him?

It was great fun unpacking Grandmother Stuart's box. There were lovely bits of glass and china in it . . . Grandmother Stuart's dinner-set of white and gold . . . slender-stemmed glass goblets . . . quaint pretty dishes of all kinds. And silver! A tea-set, forks, spoons--"Apostle" spoons--salt-cellars.

"That silver does need cleaning," said Jane in rapture. What fun she would have cleaning it and washing up all those dainty and delicate dishes. Polishing up the moon was nothing to this. In fact, the moon life had lost

its old charm. Jane had enough to do keeping her house spotless without going on moon sojourns. Anyhow, the Island moons never seemed to need polishing.

There were other things in the box . . . pictures and a delightful old framed motto worked in blue and crimson wool. "May the peace of God abide in this house." Jane thought this was lovely. She and dad had endless palavers as to where the pictures should go, but eventually they were all hung and made such a difference.

"As soon as you hang a picture on a wall," said dad, "the wall becomes your friend. A blank wall is hostile."

They hung the motto in Jane's room and every night when she went to bed and every morning when she got up Jane read it over like a prayer.

The beds blossomed out in wonderful patchwork quilts after that box came home. There were three of them that Grandmother Stuart had pieced . . . an Irish Chain, a Blazing Star and a Wild Goose. Jane put the Wild Goose on dad's bed, the blue Irish Chain on her own, and the scarlet Blazing Star on the boot-shelf against the day when they would have a bed for the spare-room.

They found a bronze soldier on horseback in the box and a shiny brass dog. The soldier went up on the clock-shelf but dad said the dog must go on his desk to keep his china cat in order. Dad's desk had been brought from Mr Meade's and was set up in the "study" . . . an old shining mahogany desk with sliding shelves and secret drawers and pigeonholes. The cat sat on one corner . . . a white, green-spotted cat with a long snaky neck and gleaming diamond eyes. For some reason Jane could not fathom, dad seemed to prize the thing. He had carried it all the way from Brookview to Lantern Mill in his hand so that it shouldn't get broken.

Jane's own particular booty was a blue plate with a white bird flying across it. She would eat every meal off it after this. And the old hour-glass, with its golden sands, on its walnut base was charming.

"Early eighteenth century," said dad. "My great-grandfather was a U. E. Loyalist and this hour-glass was about all he had when he came to Canada . . . that and an old copper kettle. I wonder . . . yes, here it is. More

polishing for you, Jane. And here's an old bowl of blue and white striped china. Mother mixed her salads in it."

"I'll mix mine in it," said Jane.

There was a little box at the very bottom of the big box. Jane pounced on it.

"Dad, what's this?"

Dad took it from her. There was a strange look on his face.

"That? Oh, that's nothing."

"Dad, it's a Distinguished Service Medal! Miss Colwin had one in her room at St Agatha's . . . her brother won it in the Great War. Oh, dad, you . . . you . . ."

Jane was breathless with pride over her discovery.

Dad shrugged his shoulders.

"You can never deceive your faithful Jane, says she. I won it at Passchendaele. Once I was proud of it. It seemed to mean something when . . . throw it out."

Dad's voice was oddly savage but Jane was not afraid of it . . . any more than she was afraid of his quick brief spurts of temper. Just a flash and a snap like lightning from a summer cloud, then sunshine again. He had never been angry with her but he and Uncle Tombstone had had a spat or two.

"I won't throw it out. I'm going to keep it, dad."

Dad shrugged.

"Well, don't let me see it then."

Jane put it on her bureau and gloated over it every day. But she was so excited over the contents of the box that she put icing sugar instead of salt in the Irish stew she made for dinner and her humiliation robbed her for a time of her high delight in life. Happy liked the stew, though.

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"Let's entertain, my Jane. A very old friend of mine, Dr Arnett, is in Charlottetown. I'd like to invite him out for supper and a night. Can we manage it?"

"Of course. But we must get a bed for the guestroom. We've got the chest of drawers and the looking-glass and the wash-stand, but no bed. You know we heard Little Donalds had a bed to sell."

"I'll see to all that. But about the supper, Jane? Shall we be extravagant? Shall we buy a chicken . . . two chickens . . . from Mrs Jimmy John? If we do, can you cook them?"

"Of course. Oh, let me plan it, dad! We'll have cold chicken and potato salad. I know exactly how Mary made potato salad . . . I've often helped her peel the potatoes . . . and hot biscuits . . . you must get me a can of Flewell's Baking Powder at the Corners, dad . . . Flewell's, mind . . . it's the only one you can rely on" . . . already Jane was an authority on baking powders . . . "and wild strawberries and cream. Min and I found a bed of wild strawberries down the hill yesterday. We ate a lot but we left plenty."

Unluckily Aunt Irene came the very afternoon they were expecting Dr Arnett. She passed them in her car as Jane and her father were carrying an iron bedstead up the lane. Dad had bought it from Little Donald and Little Donald had left it at the end of the lane because he was in too much of a hurry to bring it all the way. It was a windy day, and Jane had her head tied up in an old shawl of Aunt Matilda Jollie's because she had had a slight toothache the night before. Aunt Irene looked quite horrified but kissed them both as they came into the yard.

"So you've bought old Tillie Jollie's house, 'Drew? What a funny little place! Well, I think you might have spoken to me about it first."

"Jane wanted it kept a secret . . . Jane loves secrets," dad explained lightly.

"Oh, Jane's secretive enough," said Aunt Irene, shaking a finger tenderly at Jane. "I hope it's only 'secretive' . . . but I do think you're a little inclined to be sly."

Aunt Irene was smiling, but there was an edge to her voice. Jane thought she would almost prefer grandmother's venom. You didn't have to look as if you liked that.

"If I had known I would have advised against it strongly, Andrew. I hear you paid four hundred for it. Jimmy John simply cheated you. Four hundred for a little old shack like this! Three would have been enough."

"But the view, Irene . . . the view. The extra hundred was for the view."

"You're so impractical, Andrew," shaking a laughing finger at him in his turn. At least, you felt the finger laughed. "Jane, you'll have to hold the purse-strings. If you don't, your father will be penniless by the fall."

"Oh, I think we'll be able to make both ends meet, Irene. If not, we'll pull them as close together as possible. Jane's a famous little manager. She looketh well to the ways of her household and eateth not the bread of idleness."

"Oh, Jane!" Aunt Irene was kindly amused over Jane. "If you had to have a house, 'Drew, why didn't you get one near town? There's a lovely bungalow out at Keppock . . . you could have rented it for the summer. I could have been near you then to help . . . and advise. . . ."

"We like the north shore best. Jane and I are both owls of the desert and pelicans of the wilderness. But we both like onions so we hit it off together. Why, we've even hung the pictures without quarrelling. That's phenomenal, you know."

"It isn't any joking matter, Andrew." Aunt Irene was almost plaintive. "How about your food supplies?"

"Jane digs clams," said dad solemnly.

"Clams! Do you expect to live on clams?"

"Why, Aunt Irene, the fishman calls every week and the butcher from the Corners comes twice a week," said Jane indignantly.

"Darrrling!" Aunt Irene became patronizing in an instant. She patronized everything . . . the guest-room and the ruffled curtains of

yellow net Jane was so proud of . . . "a dear little closet," she called it sweetly. . . . She patronized the garden . . . "such a darling old-fashioned spot, isn't it, Jane?" . . . She patronized the boot-shelf. . . . "Really, Aunt Matilda Jollie had all the conveniences, hadn't she, lovey?"

The only thing she didn't patronize was the Apostle spoons. There was something acid in her sweetness when she spoke of them.

"I always think mother intended *I* should have them, 'Drew."

"She gave them to Robin," said 'Drew quietly.

Jane felt a tingle go over her. This was the first time she had heard dad mention mother's name.

"But when she left . . ."

"We won't discuss it, Irene, if you please."

"Of course not, dear one. I understand. Forgive me. And now, Jane lovey, I'll borrow an apron and help you get ready for Dr Arnett. Bless her little heart, trying to get ready for company all by herself."

Aunt Irene was amused at her . . . Aunt Irene was laughing at her. Jane was furious and helpless. Aunt Irene took smiling charge. The chickens were already cooked and the salad was already made but she insisted on making the biscuits and slicing the chickens and she would not hear of Jane going for wild strawberries.

"Luckily I brought a pie with me. I knew Andrew would like it. Men like something substantial, you know, lovey."

This maddened Jane. She vowed in her heart that she would learn pie-making in a week's time. Meanwhile she could only submit. When Dr Arnett came, Aunt Irene, a smiling and gracious hostess, made him welcome. Aunt Irene, still more smiling and gracious, sat at the head of the table and poured the tea and was charmed because Dr Arnett took a second helping of potato salad. Both men enjoyed the pie. Dad told Aunt Irene she was the best pie-maker in Canada.

"Eating is not such bad fun after all," said dad, with a faint air of surprise, as if he had just discovered the fact, thanks to the pie. Bitterness overflowed the heart of Jane. At that moment she could cheerfully have torn everybody in pieces.

Aunt Irene helped Jane wash the dishes before she went away. Jane thanked her stars that she and Min had walked to Lantern Corners three days before and bought towels. What would Aunt Irene have said if she had had to wipe dishes with an undervest?

"I have to go now, lovey . . . I want to get home before dark. I do wish you were nearer me . . . but I'll come out as often as I can. I don't know what your mother would have done without me many a time, poor child. 'Drew and Dr Arnett are off to the shore. . . . I daresay they'll argue and shout at each other there most of the night. Andrew shouldn't leave you here alone like this. But men are like that . . . so thoughtless."

And Jane adored being left alone. It was so lovely to have a chance to talk to yourself.

"I don't mind it, Aunt Irene. And I *love* Lantern Hill."

"You're easily pleased" . . . as if she were a dear little fool to be so easily pleased. Somehow Aunt Irene had the most extraordinary knack of making you feel that what you liked or thought or did was of small account. And how Jane did resent her airs of authority in dad's house! Had she acted that way when mother was with dad? If she had . . .

"I've brought you a cushion for your living-room, lovey. . . ."

"It's a kitchen," said Jane.

. . . "And I'll bring my old chintz chair the next time I come--for the spare-room."

Jane, remembering the "dear little closet," permitted herself one satisfaction.

"I think there'll hardly be room for it," she said.

She eyed the cushion malevolently when Aunt Irene had gone. It was so new and gorgeous it made everything look faded and countrified.

"I think I'll stow it away on the boot-shelf," said Jane with a relish.

XXI

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It was a sultry night and Jane went out and up and sat on the hill . . . "to get back into herself," as she expressed it. She had really been out of herself ever since the morning, more or less, because she had burned the toast for breakfast and walked in the humiliation of it all day. Cooking the chickens had been a bit of a strain . . . the wood-stove oven was not like that of Mary's electric range . . . and making up the guest-room bed under Aunt Irene's amused eyes--"fancy this baby having a spare-room," they seemed to say--had been worse. But now she was blessedly alone again and there was nothing to prevent her sitting on the hill in the cool velvet night as long as she wanted to. The wind was blowing from the south-west and brought with it the scent of Big Donald's clover field. All the Jimmy Johns' dogs were barking together. The great dune that they called the Watch Tower was scalloping up against the empty north sky. Beyond it sounded the long, low thunder of the surf. A silver moth of dusk flew by, almost brushing her face. Happy had gone with dad and Dr Arnett but the Peters came skittering up the hill and played about her. She held their purring silken flanks against her face and let them bite her cheeks delicately. It was all like a fairytale come true.

When she went back into the house Jane was her own woman again. Who cared for smooth, smiling Aunt Irene? She, Jane Stuart, was mistress at Lantern Hill; and she would learn to make pie-crust, that she would, by the three wise monkeys, as dad was so fond of saying.

Since dad was out, Jane sat down at his desk and wrote a page or two of her letter to mother. At first she hadn't known how she could live if she could write to mother only once a month. Then it occurred to her that though she could mail a letter only once a month, she could write a little of it every day.

"We had company for supper," wrote Jane. Being forbidden to mention dad she got around it by adopting the style royal. "Dr Arnett and Aunt Irene. Did you like Aunt Irene, mummy? Did she make you feel stupid? I cooked the chickens but Aunt Irene thought pie was better than strawberries. Don't you think wild strawberries would be more elegant than pie, mummy? I never tasted wild strawberries before. They are delicious. Min and I know where there is a bed of them. I'm going to get up early to-morrow morning and pick some for breakfast. Min's ma says if I can pick enough of them she will show me how to make them up into jam. I like Min's ma. Min likes her, too. Min only weighed three and a half pounds when she was born. Nobody thought she'd live. Min's ma has a pig she is feeding for their winter pork. She let me feed it yesterday. I like feeding things, mummy. It makes you important to feed things. Pigs have great appetities. So have I. There's something in the Island air, I guess.

"Miranda Jimmy John can't bear to be joked about being fat. Miranda milks four of the cows every night. The Jimmy Johns have fifteen cows. I haven't got acquainted with them yet. I don't know whether I'll like cows or not. I think they have an unfriendly look.

"The Jimmy Johns have big hooks in the kitchen rafters to hang hams on.

"The Jimmy John baby is so funny and solemn. It has never laughed yet although it is nine months old. They are worried about it. It has long curly black eyelashes. I didn't know babies were so sweet, mummy.

"Shingle Snowbeam and I have found a robin's nest in one of the little spruce-trees behind the house. There are four blue eggs in it. Shingle says we must keep it a secret from Penny and Young John or they would blow the eggs. Some secrets are nice things.

"I like Shingle now. Her real name is Marilyn Florence Isabel. Mrs Snowbeam says the only thing she could give her children was real fancy names.

"Shingle's hair is almost white but her eyes are just the right kind of blue, something like yours, mummy. But nobody could have quite such nice eyes as you.

"Shingle is ambishus. She is the only one of the Snowbeams that has any ambishun. She says she is going to make a lady of herself or die in the attempt. I told her if she wanted to be a lady she must never ask personal questions and she is not going to do it any more. But Caraway isn't particular whether she is a lady or not so she asks them and Shingle hears the answers. I don't like Young John Snowbeam much. He makes snoots. But he can pick up sticks with his toes.

"I like the sound of the wind here at night, mummy. I like to lie awake just to listen to it.

"I made a plum pudding one day last week. It would have been very successful if it had succeeded. Mrs Jimmy John says I should have steamed it, not boiled it. I don't mind Mrs Jimmy John knowing about my mistakes. She has such sweet eyes.

"It's such fun to boil potatoes in a three-legged iron pot, mummy.

"The Jimmy Johns have four dogs. Three who go everywhere with them and one who stays home. We have one dog. Dogs are very nice, mummy.

"Step-a-yard is the name of the Jimmy Johns' hired man. Not his real name of course. Miranda says he has been in love all his life with Miss Justina Titus and knows it's quite hopeless because Miss Justina is faithful to the memory of Alec Jacks who was killed in the Great War. She still wears her hair pompadore, Miranda says, because that is how she wore it when she said good-bye to Alec. I think that is touching, mummy.

"Mummy darling, I love to think you'll read this letter and hold it in your hands."

It did not give Jane so much pleasure to reflect that grandmother would read it, too. Jane could just see grandmother's thin-lipped smile over parts of it. "Well, like takes to like, you know, Robin. Your daughter has always had the knack of making friends with the wrong people. Snoots!"

"How nice it would be," thought Jane, as she took a flying leap into bed for the fun of it, "if mummy was down there with dad instead of Dr Arnett

and they would be coming back to me soon. It must have been that way once."

It was in the wee sma's that Andrew Stuart showed his guest to the neat guest-room where Jane had set Grandmother Stuart's blue and white bowl full of crimson peonies on the little table. Then he tiptoed into Jane's room. Jane was sound asleep. He bent over her with such love radiating from him that Jane felt it and smiled in her sleep. He touched one tumbled lock of russet-brown hair.

"It is well with the child," said Andrew Stuart.

XXII

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With the help of *Cookery for Beginners*, Mrs Jimmy John's advice and her own "gumption," Jane learned to make pie-crust surprisingly soon and surprisingly well. She did not mind asking Mrs Jimmy John for advice, whereas she would have died before she would have asked Aunt Irene. Mrs Jimmy John was a wise, serene creature, with a face full of kindness and wisdom. She had the reputation in Lantern Hill of never getting upset over anything, even church suppers. She did not laugh when Jane come over, white with despair, because a cake had fallen or a lemon filling had run all over the plate and dad had quirked a humorous eyebrow over it. In truth, Jane, for all her natural flair for cooking, would have made a good many muddles if it had not been for Mrs Jimmy John.

"I'd use a heaping tablespoon of cornstarch instead of a level one, Jane."

"It says all measurements are level," said Jane doubtfully.

"You can't always go by what the books say," said Step-a-yard, who was as much interested in Jane's progress as any one. "Just use gumption. Cooks are born, not made, I've always said, and you're a born one or I miss my guess. Them codfish balls you made the other day were the owl's whiskers."

The day Jane achieved unaided a dinner of roast lamb with dressing, creamed peas and a plum pudding that even Uncle Tombstone could have eaten was the proudest day of her life. What bliss to have dad pass his plate with "A little more of the same, Jane. What matter the planetesimal hypothesis or the quantum theory compared to such a dinner? Come, Jane, don't tell me you're ignorant of the quantum theory. A woman may get by without knowing about the planetesimal hypothesis but the quantum theory, Jane, is a necessity in any well-regulated household."

Jane didn't mind when dad ragged her. If she didn't know what the quantum theory was, she did know the plum pudding was good. She had got the recipe from Mrs Big Donald. Jane was a great forager for recipes, and counted that day lost whose low-descending sun didn't see her copying a new one on the blank leaves at the back of *Cookery for Beginners*. Even Mrs Snowbeam contributed one for rice pudding.

"Only kind we ever get," said Young John. "It's cheap."

Young John always came in for the "scrapings." He had some sixth sense whereby he always knew when Jane was going to make a cake. The Snowbeams thought it was great fun when Jane named all her cooking utensils. The tea-kettle that always danced on the stove when it was coming to a boil was Topsy, the frying-pan was Mr Muffet, the dish-pan was Polly, the stew-pan was Timothy, the double boiler was Booties, the rolling-pin was Tillie Tid.

But Jane met her Waterloo when she tried to make doughnuts. It sounded so easy . . . but even the Snowbeams couldn't eat the result. Jane, determined not to be defeated, tried again and again. Everybody took an interest in her tribulations over the doughnuts. Mrs Jimmy John suggested and Min's ma gave hints. The storekeeper at the Corners sent her a new brand of lard. Jane had begun by frying them in Timothy, then she tried Mr Muffet. No use. The perverse doughnuts soaked fat every time. Jane woke up in the lone of the night and worried about it.

"This won't do, my adored Jane," said dad. "Don't you know that worry killed the widow's cat? Besides, people are telling me that you are old for your years. Just turn yourself into a wind-song, my Jane, and think no more on doughnuts."

In fact, Jane never did learn to make really good doughnuts . . . which kept her humble and prevented her showing off when Aunt Irene came. Aunt Irene came quite often. Sometimes she stayed all night. Jane hated to put her in the beloved guest-room. Aunt Irene was always so delicately amused over Jane's having a guest-room. And Aunt Irene thought it just too funny to find Jane splitting kindlings.

"Dad mostly does it but he's been busy writing all day and I wouldn't disturb him," said Jane. "Besides, I like to split kindling."

"What a little philosopher it is!" said Aunt Irene, trying to kiss her.

Jane went crimson to the ears.

"Please, Aunt Irene, I don't like to be kissed."

"A nice thing to say to your own aunt, lovey" . . . speaking volumes by an amused lift of her fair eyebrows. Smooth, smiling Aunt Irene would never get angry. Jane thought she might have liked her better after a good fight with her. She knew dad was a little annoyed with her because she and Aunt Irene didn't click better and that he thought it must be her fault. Perhaps it was. Perhaps it was very naughty of her not to like Aunt Irene. "Trying to patronize us," Jane thought indignantly. It was not so much what she said as the way she said it . . . as if you were just playing at being a house-keeper for dad.

Sometimes they went to town and had dinner with Aunt Irene . . . gorgeous dinners certainly. At first Jane writhed over them. But as the weeks went on, she began to feel she could hold her own even with Aunt Irene when it came to getting up a meal.

"You're wonderful, lovey, but you have too much responsibility. I keep telling your father that."

"I like responsibility," said Jane huffily.

"Don't be so sensitive, lovey" . . . as if it were a crime.

If Jane couldn't learn to make doughnuts she had no trouble learning to make jam.

"I love making jam," she said, when dad asked her why she bothered. Just to go into the pantry and look at shelf after shelf of ruby and amber jams and jellies gave her the deep satisfaction of a job well done. Morning after morning she got up early to go raspberrying with Min or the Snowbeams. Later on, Lantern Hill reeked with the spicy smells of pickles. When Jennie Lister at the Corners was given a jam and pickle shower before her wedding, Jane went proudly with the others and took a basket full of jellies and pickles. She had great fun at the shower, for by this time she knew everybody and everybody knew her. A walk to the

village was a joy . . . she could stop to chat now with every one she met and every dog would pass the time of day with her. Jane thought almost everybody was nice in a way. There were so many different kinds of niceness.

She found no difficulty in talking to anybody on any subject. She liked to play with the young fry but she liked to talk to the older people. She could hold the most enthralling discussions with Step-a-yard on green feed and the price of pork and what made cows chew wood. She walked round Jimmy John's farm with him every Sunday morning and judged the crops. Uncle Tombstone taught her how to drive a horse and buggy.

"She could cramp a wheel after one showing," he told the Jimmy Johns.

Step-a-yard, not to be outdone, let her drive a load of hay into Jimmy John's big barn one day.

"Couldn't 'a' done it better myself. You've got a feeling for horses, Jane."

But Jane's favourite boy friend was old Timothy Salt who lived down near the harbour's mouth in a low-eaved house under dark spruces. He had the jolliest, shrewdest old face of wrinkled leather that Jane had ever seen, with deep-sunk eyes that were like wells of laughter. Jane would sit with him for hours while he opened quahaugs and told her tales of old disaster on the sea, fading old legends of dune and headland, old romances of the north shore that were like misty wraiths. Sometimes other old fishermen and sailors were there swapping yarns. Jane sat and listened and shooed Timothy's tame pig away when it came too near. The salt winds blew around her. The little waves on the harbour would run so fleetly from the sunset and later on the fishing boats would be bobbing to the moon. Sometimes a ghostly white fog would come creeping up from the dunes, the hills across the harbour would be phantom hills in the mist, and even ugly things would be lovely and mysterious.

"How's life with ye?" Timothy would say gravely and Jane would tell him just as gravely that life was very well with her.

Timothy gave her a glass box full of corals and sea-shells from the West and the East Indies. He helped her drag up flat stones from the shore to make paths in her garden. He taught her to saw and hammer in nails and swim. Jane swallowed most of the Atlantic Ocean learning to swim or thought she did, but she learned, and ran home, a wet delighted creature, to brag to dad. And she made a hammock out of barrel staves that was the talk of Lantern Hill.

"That child will stick at nothing," said Mrs Snowbeam.

Timothy swung it between two of the spruces for her . . . dad wasn't much good at doing things like that, though he told her he would do it if she would get him a rhyme for silver.

Timothy taught her to discern the signs of the sky. Jane had never felt acquainted with the sky before. To stand on Lantern Hill and see the whole sky around you was wonderful. Jane could sit for hours at the roots of the spruces gazing at sky and sea, or in some happy golden hollow among the dunes. She learned that a mackerel sky was a sign of fine weather and mare's tails meant wind. She learned that red sky at morning foretold rain, as did the dark firs on Little Donald's hill when they looked so near and clear. Jane welcomed rain at Lantern Hill. She had never liked rain in the city but here by the sea she loved it. She loved to listen to it coming down in the night on the ferns outside her window; she liked the sound and the scent and the freshness of it. She loved to get out in it . . . get sopping wet in it. She liked the showers that sometimes fell across the harbour, misty and purple, when it was quite fine on the Lantern Hill side. She even liked thunderstorms, when they passed out to sea beyond the bar of the shadowy dunes, and didn't come too close. But one night there was a terrible one. Blue swords of lightning stabbed the darkness . . . thunder crackled all about Lantern Hill. Jane was crouching in bed, her head buried in a pillow, when she felt dad's arm go around her. He lifted her up and held her close to him, displacing an indignant pair of Peters.

"Frightened, my Jane?"

"No-o-o," lied Jane valiantly. "Only . . . it isn't decent."

Dad shouted with laughter.

"You've got the word. Thunder like that is an insult to decency. But it will soon pass . . . it is passing now. 'The pillars of heaven tremble and are astonished at His reproof.' Do you know where that is found, Jane?"

"It sounds like the Bible," said Jane, as soon as she got her breath after a crash that must have split the hill in two. "I don't like the Bible."

"Not like the Bible? Jane, Jane, this will never do. If any one doesn't like the Bible there's something wrong either with him or with the way he was introduced to it. We must do something about it. The Bible is a wonderful book, my Jane. Full of corking good stories and the greatest poetry in the world. Full of the most amazingly human 'human nature.' Full of incredible, ageless wisdom and truth and beauty and common sense. Yes, yes, we'll see about it. I think the worst of the storm is over . . . and to-morrow morning we'll hear the little waves whispering to each other again in the sunlight and there'll be a magic of silver wings over the bar when the gulls go out. I shall begin the second canto of my epic on Methuselah's life and Jane will swither in delightful anguish trying to decide whether to have breakfast indoors or out. And all the hills will be joyful together . . . more of the Bible, Jane. You'll love it."

Perhaps so . . . though Jane thought it would really need a miracle. Anyhow, she loved dad. Mother still shone on her life, like a memory of the evening star. But dad was . . . dad!

Jane dropped asleep again and had a terrible dream that she couldn't find the onions and dad's socks with the blue toes that needed mending.

XXIII

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After all Jane found it did not require a miracle to make her like the Bible. She and dad went to the shore every Sunday afternoon and he read to her from it. Jane loved those Sunday afternoons. They took their suppers with them and ate them squatted on the sand. She had an inborn love of the sea and all pertaining to it. She loved the dunes . . . she loved the music of the winds that whistled along the silvery solitude of the sand-shore . . . she loved the far dim shores that would be jewelled with home-lights on fine blue evenings. And she loved dad's voice reading the Bible to her. He had a voice that would make anything sound beautiful. Jane thought if dad had had no other good quality at all, she must have loved him for his voice. And she loved the little comments he made as he read . . . things that made the verses come alive for her. She had never thought that there was anything like that in the Bible. But then, dad did not read about knops and taches.

"'When all the morning stars sang together' . . . the essence of creation's joy is in that, Jane. Can't you hear that immortal music of the spheres? 'Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon and thou, moon, in the vale of Ajalon.' Such sublime arrogance, Jane . . . Mussolini himself couldn't rival that. 'Here shall thy proud waves be stayed' . . . look at them rolling in there, Jane . . . 'so far and no farther' . . . the majestic law to which they yield obedience never falters or fails. 'Give me neither poverty nor riches' . . . the prayer of Agar, son of Jakeh. A sensible man was Agar, my Jane. Didn't I tell you the Bible was full of common sense? 'A fool uttereth all his mind.' Proverbs is harder on the fool than on anybody else, Jane . . . and rightly. It's the fools that make all the trouble in the world, not the wicked. 'Whither thou goest I will go; and where thou lodgest I will lodge; thy people shall be my people and thy God my God; where thou diest will I die and there will I be buried; the Lord do so to me and more also if

aught but death part thee and me.' The high-water mark of the expression of emotion in any language that I'm acquainted with, Jane . . . Ruth to Naomi . . . and all such simple words. Hardly any of more than one syllable . . . the writer of that verse knew how to marry words as no one else has ever done. And he knew enough not to use too many of them. Jane, the most awful as well as the most beautiful things in the world can be said in three words or less . . . 'I love you' . . . 'he is gone' . . . 'he is come' . . . 'she is dead' . . . 'too late' . . . and life is illumined or ruined. 'All the daughters of music shall be brought low' . . . aren't you a little sorry for them, Jane . . . those foolish, light-footed daughters of music? Do you think they quite deserved such a humiliation? 'They have taken away my lord and I know not where they have laid him' . . . that supreme cry of desolation! 'Ask for the old paths and walk therein and ye shall find rest.' Ah, Jane, the feet of some of us have strayed far from the old paths . . . we can't find our way back to them, much as we may long to. 'As cold water to a thirsty soul so is good news from a far country.' Were you ever thirsty, Jane . . . really thirsty . . . burning with fever . . . thinking of heaven in terms of cold water? I was, more than once. 'A thousand years in thy sight is but as yesterday when it is past and as a watch in the night.' Think of a Being like that, Jane, when the little moments torture you. 'Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.' The most terrible and tremendous saying in the world, Jane . . . because we are all afraid of truth and afraid of freedom . . . that's why we murdered Jesus."

Jane did not understand all dad said but she put it all away in her mind to grow up to. All her life she was to have recurring flashes of insight when she recalled something dad had said. Not only of the Bible but of all the poetry he read to her that summer. He taught her the loveliness of words . . . dad read words as if he tasted them.

"'Glimpses of the moon' . . . one of the immortal phrases of literature, Jane. There are phrases with sheer magic in them. . . ."

"I know," said Jane. "'On the road to Mandalay' . . . I read that in one of Miss Colwin's books . . . and 'horns of elfland faintly blowing.' That gives me a beautiful ache."

"You have the root of the matter in you, Jane. But, oh, my Jane, why . . . why . . . did Shakespeare leave his wife his second best bed?"

"Perhaps because she liked it best," said Jane practically.

"'Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings' . . . to be sure. I wonder if that eminently sane suggestion has ever occurred to the commentators who have agonized over it. Can you guess who the dark lady was, Jane? You know when a poet praises a woman she is immortal . . . witness Beatrice . . . Laura . . . Lucasta . . . Highland Mary. All talked about hundreds of years after they are dead because great poets loved them. The weeds are growing over Troy but we remember Helen."

"I suppose she didn't have a big mouth," said Jane wistfully.

Dad kept a straight face.

"Not too small a one, Jane. You couldn't imagine goddess Helen with a rosebud mouth, could you?"

"Is my mouth too big, dad?" implored Jane. "The girls at St Agatha's said it was."

"Not too big, Jane. A generous mouth . . . the mouth of a giver, not a taker . . . a frank, friendly mouth . . . with very well-cut corners, Jane. No weakness about them . . . you wouldn't have eloped with Paris, Jane, and made all that unholy mess. You would have been true to your vows, Jane . . . in spirit as well as in letter, even in this upside-down world."

Jane had the oddest feeling that dad was thinking of mother, not of Argive Helen. But she was comforted by what he said about her mouth.

Dad did not always read from the masters. One day he took to the shore a thin little volume of poems by Bernard Freeman Trotter.

"I knew him overseas . . . he was killed . . . listen to his song about the poplars, Jane.

"And so I sing the poplars and when I come to die
I will not look for jasper walls but cast about my eye
For a row of wind-blown poplars against an English sky.

"What will you want to see when you get to heaven,

Jane?"

"Lantern Hill," said Jane.

Dad laughed. It was so delightful to make dad laugh . . . and so easy. Though a good many times Jane didn't know exactly what he was laughing at. Jane didn't mind that a bit . . . but sometimes she wondered if mother had minded it.

One evening after dad had been spouting poetry until he was tired Jane said timidly, "Would you like to hear me recite, dad?"

She recited "The Little Baby of Mathieu." It was easy . . . dad made such a good audience.

"You can do it, Jane. That was good. I must give you a bit of training along that line, too. I used to be rather good at interpreting the *habitant* myself."

"Someone she did not like used to be rather good at reading *habitant* poetry" . . . Jane remembered who had said that. She understood another thing now.

Dad had rolled over to where he could see their house in a gap in the twilit dunes.

"I see the Jimmy Johns' light . . . and the Snowbeam light at Hungry Cove . . . but our house is dark. Let's go home and light it up, Jane. And is there any of that apple-sauce you made for supper left?"

So they went home together and dad lighted his petrol lamp and sat down at his desk to work on his epic of Methuselah . . . or something else . . . and Jane got a candle to light her to bed. She liked a candle better than a lamp. It went out so graciously . . . the thin trail of smoke . . . the smouldering wick, giving one wild little wink at you before it left you in the dark.

When dad had converted Jane to the Bible, he set about making history and geography come alive for her. She had told him she always found those subjects hard. But soon history no longer seemed a clutter of dates and names in some dim, cold antiquity but became a storied road of time when dad told her old tales of wonder and the pride of kings. When he told the simplest incident with the sound of the sea in his voice, it seemed to take on such a colouring of romance and mystery that Jane knew she could

never forget it. Thebes . . . Babylon . . . Tyre . . . Athens . . . Galilee . . . were places where real folks lived . . . folks she knew. And, knowing them, it was easy to be interested in everything pertaining to them. Geography, which had once meant merely a map of the world, was just as fascinating.

"Let's go to India," dad would say . . . and they went . . . though Jane would sew buttons on dad's shirts all the way. Min's ma was hard on buttons. Soon Jane knew all the fair lands far, far away as she knew Lantern Hill . . . or so it seemed to her after she had journeyed through them with father.

"Some day, Jane, you and I will really go and see them. The Land of the Midnight Sun . . . doesn't that phrase fascinate you, Jane? . . . far Cathay . . . Damascus . . . Samarkand . . . Japan in cherry-blossom time . . . Euphrates among its dead empires . . . moonrise over Karnak . . . lotus vales in Kashmir . . . castles on the banks of the Rhine. There's a villa in the Apennines . . . 'the cloudy Apennines' . . . I want you to see, my Jane. Meanwhile, let's draw a chart of Lost Atlantis."

"Next year I'll be beginning French," said Jane. "I think I'll like that."

"You will. You'll wake up to the fascination of languages. Think of them as doors opening into a stately palace for you. You'll even like Latin, dead and all as it is. Isn't a dead language rather a sad thing, Janet? Once it lived and burned and glowed. People said loving things in it . . . bitter things . . . wise and silly things in it. I wonder who was the very last person to utter a sentence in living Latin. Jane, how many boots would a centipede need if a centipede needed boots?"

That was dad all over. Tender . . . serious . . . dreamy . . . and then a tag of some delightful nonsense. But Jane knew just how grandmother would have liked that.

Sundays were interesting at Lantern Hill not only because of the Bible readings with dad but because she went to the Queen's Shore church with the Jimmy Johns in the mornings. Jane liked it tremendously. She put on the little green linen jumper dress grandmother had bought her and carried a hymn-book proudly. They went across the fields by a path that wound around the edge of Big Donald's woods, through a cool back pasture where

sheep grazed, down the road past Min's ma's house, where Min joined them, and finally along a grassy lane to what was called "the little south church" . . . a small white building set in a grove of beech and spruce where lovable winds seemed always purring. Anything less like St Barnabas's could hardly be imagined but Jane liked it. The windows were plain glass and you could see out of them right into the woods and past the big wild cherry-tree that grew close up to the church. Jane wished she could have seen it in blossom time. All the people had what Step-a-yard called their Sunday faces on and Elder Tommy Perkins looked so solemn and other-worldly that Jane found it almost impossible to believe that he was the same man as the jolly Tommy Perkins of weekdays. Mrs Little Donald always passed her a peppermint over the top of the pew and though Jane didn't like peppermints she seemed to like that one. There was, she reflected, something so nice and religious about its flavour.

For the first time Jane could join in the singing of the hymns and she did it lustily. Nobody at 60 Gay had ever supposed Jane could sing; but she found that she could at least follow a tune and was duly thankful therefor, as otherwise she would have felt like an outsider at the Jimmy Johns' "sing-songs" in their old orchard on Sunday evenings. In a way Jane thought the sing-songs the best part of Sunday. All the Jimmy Johns sang like linnets and everybody could have his or her favourite hymn in turn. They sang what Step-a-yard, who carried a tremendous bass, called "giddier" hymns than were sung in church, out of little dog-eared, limp-covered hymn-books. Sometimes the stay-at-home dog tried to sing, too. Beyond them was the beauty of a moonlit sea.

They always ended up with "God Save the King" and Jane went home, escorted to the door of Lantern Hill by all the Jimmy Johns and the three dogs who didn't stay at home. Once dad was sitting in the garden, on the stone seat Timothy Salt had built for her, smoking his Old Contemptible and "enjoying the beauty of the darkness," as he said. Jane sat down beside him and he put his arm around her. First Peter prowled darkly around them. It was so still they could hear the cows grazing in Jimmy John's field and so cool that Jane was glad of the warmth of father's tweed arm

across her shoulders. Still and cool and sweet . . . and in Toronto at that moment every one was gasping in a stifling heat wave, so the Charlottetown paper had said yesterday. But mother was with friends in Muskoka. It was poor Jody who would be smothering in that hot little attic room. If only Jody were here!

"Jane," dad was saying, "should I have sent for you last spring?"

"Of course," said Jane.

"But should I? Did it hurt . . . anybody?"

Jane's heart beat more quickly. It was the first time dad had ever come so near to mentioning mother.

"Not very much . . . because I would be home in September."

"Ah, yes. Yes, you will go back in September."

Jane waited for something more but it did not come.

XXIV

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"Do you ever see anything of Jody?" wrote Jane to mother. "I wonder if she is getting enough to eat. She never says she isn't in her letters . . . I've had three . . . but sometimes they sound hungry to me. I still love her best of all my friends but Shingle Snowbeam and Polly Garland and Min are very nice. Shingle is making great progress. She always washes behind her ears now and keeps her nails clean. And she never throws spit balls though she thinks it was great fun. Young John throws them. Young John is collecting bottle caps and wears them on his shirt. We are all saving bottle caps for him.

"Miranda and I decorate the church every Saturday night with flowers. We have a good many of our own and we get some from the Titus ladies. We go over on Ding-dong's brother's truck to get them. They live at a place called Brook Valley. Isn't that a nice name? Miss Justina is the oldest and Miss Violet the youngest. They are both tall and thin and very ladylike. They have a lovely garden, and if you want to stand in well with them, Miranda says you must compliment them on their garden. Then they will do anything for you. They have a cherry walk which is wonderful in spring, Miranda says. They are both pillars in the church and every one respects them highly, but Miss Justina has never forgiven Mr Snowbeam because he once called her 'Mrs' when he was absent-minded. He said he would have thought she'd be pleased.

"Miss Violet is going to teach me hemstitching. She says every lady ought to know how to sew. Her face is old but her eyes are young. I am very fond of them both.

"Sometimes they quarrel. They have had a bad time this summer over a rubber plant that was their mother's who died last year. They both think it ugly but sacred and would never dream of throwing it away, but Miss Violet thinks that now their mother is gone they could keep it in the back

hall, but Miss Justina said, no, it must stay in the parlour. Sometimes they would not speak to each other on account of it. I told them I thought they might keep it in the parlour one week and in the back hall one week, turn about. They were very much struck with the idea and adopted it and now everything is smooth at Brook Valley.

"Miranda sang 'Abide with Me' in church last Sunday night. (They have preaching at night once a month.) She says she loves to sing because she always feels thin when she sings. She is so fat she is afraid she will never have any beaus but Step-a-yard says no fear, the men like a good armful. Was that coarse, mummy? Mrs Snowbeam says it was.

"We sing every Sunday night in the Jimmy Johns' orchard--all sacred songs of course. I like the Jimmy Johns' orchard. The grass is so nice and long there and the trees grow just as they like. The Jimmy Johns have such fun together. I think a big family is splendid.

"Punch Jimmy John is teaching me how to run across a stubble-field on bare feet so it won't hurt. I go barefoot sometimes here. The Jimmy Johns and Snowbeams all do. It's so nice to run through the cool wet grass and wriggle your toes in the sand and feel wet mud squashing up between them. You don't mind, do you, mother?

"Min's ma does our washing for us. I'm sure I could do it but I am not allowed to. Min's ma does washing for all the summer boarders at the Harbour Head, too. Min's ma's pig was very sick but Uncle Tombstone doctored it up and cured it. I'm so glad it got well, for if it had died I don't know what Min and her ma would have to live on next winter. Min's ma is noted for her clam chowder. She is teaching me how to make it. Shingle and I dig the clams.

"I made a cake yesterday and ants got in the icing. I was so mortified because we had company for supper. I wish I knew how to keep ants in their place. But Uncle Tombstone says I can make soup that *is* soup. We are going to have chicken for dinner to-morrow. I've promised to save the neck for Young John and a drumstick for Shingle. And oh, mother, the pond is full of trout. We catch them and eat them. Just fancy catching fish in your own pond and frying them for supper.

"Step-a-yard has false teeth. He always takes them out and puts them in his pocket when he eats. When he is out of an evening and they give him lunch, he always says, 'Thanks, I'll call again,' but if they don't, he never goes back. He says he has to be self-respecting.

"Timothy Salt lets me look through his spy-glass. It's such fun looking at things through the wrong end. They seem so small and far away as if you were in another world.

"Polly and I found a bed of sweet grass on the sandhills yesterday. I've picked a bunch to take back for you, mother. It's nice to put among handkerchiefs, Miss Violet Titus says.

"We named the Jimmy Johns' calves to-day. We called the pretty ones after people we like and the ugly ones after people we don't like.

"Shingle and Polly and I are to sell candy at the ice-cream social in the Corners hall next week.

"We all made a fire of driftwood on the shore the other night and danced about it.

"Penny Snowbeam and Punch Jimmy John are very busy now bugging potatoes. I don't like potato bugs. When Punch Jimmy John said I was a brave girl because I wasn't afraid of mice, Penny said, 'Oh ho, put a bug on her and see how brave she'll be.' I am glad Punch did not put me to the test because I am afraid I could not have stood it.

"The front door had got sticky so I borrowed Step-a-yard's plane and fixed it. I also patched Young John's trousers. Mrs Snowbeam said she'd run out of patches and his little bottom was almost bare.

"Mrs Little Donald is going to show me how to make marmalade. She puts hers up in such dinky little stone jars her aunt left her, but I'll have to put mine in sealers.

"Uncle Tombstone got me to write a letter to his wife who is visiting in Halifax. I started it 'My dear wife' but he said he never called her that and it might give her a turn and I'd better put 'Dear Ma.' He says he can write himself but it is the spelling sticks him.

"Mummy, I love you, love you, love you."

Jane laid her head down on the letter and swallowed a lump in her throat. If only mother were here . . . with her and daddy . . . going swimming with them . . . lying on the sand with them . . . eating fresh trout out of the pond with them . . . laughing with them over the little household jokes that were always coming up . . . running with them under the moon . . . how beautiful everything would be!

XXV

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Little Aunt Em had sent word to Lantern Hill that Jane Stuart was to come and see her.

"You must go," said dad. "Little Aunt Em's invitations are like those of royalty in this neck of the woods."

"Who is little Aunt Em?"

"Blest if I know exactly. She's either Mrs Bob Barker or Mrs Jim Gregory. I never can remember which of them was her last husband. Anyway, it doesn't matter . . . everybody calls her Little Aunt Em. She's about as high as my knee and so thin she once blew over the harbour and back. But she's a wise old goblin. She lives on that little side-road you were asking about the other day and does weaving and spinning and dyeing rug rags. Dyes them in the good old-fashioned way with herbs and barks and lichens. What Little Aunt Em doesn't know about the colours you can get that way isn't worth knowing. They never fade. Better go this evening, Jane. I've got to get the third canto of my Methuselah epic done this evening. I've only got the young chap along as far as his first three hundred years."

At first Jane had believed with a touching faith in that epic of Methuselah. But now it was just a standing joke at Lantern Hill. When dad said he must knock off another canto, Jane knew he had to write some profound treatise for *Saturday Evening* and must not be disturbed. He did not mind having her around when he wrote poetry--love lyrics, idylls, golden sonnets--but poetry did not pay very well and *Saturday Evening* did.

Jane set out after supper for Little Aunt Em's. The Snowbeams, who had already missed one excitement that afternoon, wanted to go with her in a body, but Jane refused their company. Then they were all mad and--with the exception of Shingle who decided it wasn't ladylike to push

yourself in where you weren't wanted and went home to Hungry Cove-- persisted in accompanying Jane for quite a distance, walking close to the fence in exaggerated awe and calling out taunts as she marched disdainfully down the middle of the road.

"Ain't it a pity her ears stick out?" said Penny.

Jane knew her ears didn't stick out so this didn't worry her. But the next thing did.

"S'posen you meet a crocodile on the side-road?" called Caraway.

"That'd be worse than a cow."

Jane winced. How in the world did the Snowbeams know she was afraid of cows? She thought she had hidden that very cleverly.

The Snowbeams had got their tongues loosened up now and peppered Jane with a perfect barrage of insults.

"Did you ever see such a high-and-lofty, stuck-up minx?"

"Proud as a cat driving a buggy, ain't you?"

"Too grand for the likes of us."

"I always said you'd a proud mouth."

"Do you think Little Aunt Em will give you any lunch?"

"If she does I know what it will be," yelled Penny. "Raspberry vinegar and two cookies and a sliver of cheese. Yah! Who'd eat that? Yah!"

"I'll bet you're afraid of the dark."

Jane, who was not in the least afraid of the dark, still preserved a withering silence.

"You're a foreigner," said Penny.

Nothing else they had said mattered. Jane knew her Snowbeams. But this infuriated her. She--a foreigner! In her own darling Island where she had been born! She stopped short at Penny.

"Just you wait," she said with concentrated venom, "till the next time any of you want to scrape a bowl."

The Snowbeams all stopped short. They had not thought of this. Better not rile Jane Stuart any more.

"Aw, we didn't mean to hurt your feelings . . . honest," protested Caraway. They promptly started homeward but the irrepressible Young

John yelled, "Good-bye, Collarbones," as he turned.

Jane, after she had shrugged off the Snowbeams, had a good time with herself on that walk. That she could go where she liked over the countryside, unhindered, uncriticized, was one of the most delightful things about her life at Lantern Hill. She was glad of an excuse to explore the side-road where Little Aunt Em lived. She had often wondered where it went to--that timid little red road, laced with firs and spruces, that tried to hide itself by twisting and turning. The air was full of the scent of sun-warmed grasses gone to seed, the trees talked all about her in some lost sweet language of elder days, rabbits hopped out of the ferns and into them. In a little hollow she saw a faded sign by the side of the road . . . straggling black letters on a white board, put up years ago by an old man, long since dead. "Ho, every one that thirsteth come ye to the waters." Jane followed the pointing finger down a fairy path between the trees and found a deep clear spring, rimmed in by mossy stones. She stooped and drank, cupping the water in her brown palm. A squirrel was impudent to her from an old beech and Jane sassied him back. She would have liked to linger there but the western sky above the tree-tops was already filled with golden rays, and she must hasten. When she passed up out of the brook hollow, she saw Little Aunt Em's house curled up like a cat on the hillside. A long lane led up to it, edged with clumps of white and gold life-everlasting. When Jane reached the house she found Little Aunt Em spinning on a little wheel set before her kitchen door, with a fascinating pile of silvery wool rolls lying on the bench beside her. She stood up when Jane opened the gate--she was really a little higher than dad's knee but she was not so tall as Jane. She wore an old felt hat that had belonged to one of her husbands on her rough, curly grey head, and her little black eyes twinkled in a friendly fashion in spite of her blunt question.

"Who are you?"

"I'm Jane Stuart."

"I knew it," said Aunt Em in a tone of triumph. "I knew it the minute I saw you walking up the lane. You can always tell a Stuart anywhere you see him by his walk."

Jane had her own way of walking . . . quickly but not jerkily, lightly but firmly. The Snowbeams said she strutted but Jane did not strut. She felt very glad that Little Aunt Em thought she walked like the Stuarts. And she liked Little Aunt Em at first sight.

"You might come and sit down a spell if you've a mind to," said Little Aunt Em, offering a wrinkled brown hand. "I've finished this lick of work I was doing for Mrs Big Donald. Ah, I'm not up to much now but I was a smart woman in my day, Jane Stuart."

Not a floor in Aunt Em's house was level. Each one sloped in a different direction. It was not notoriously tidy but there was a certain hominess about it that Jane liked. The old chair she sat down in was a friend.

"Now we can have a talk," said Little Aunt Em. "I'm in the humour for it to-day. When I'm not, nobody can get a word out of me. Let me get my knitting. I neither tat, sew, embroider nor crochet, but the hull Maritimes can't beat me knitting. I've been wanting to see you for some time . . . everybody's talking about you. I'm hearing you're smart. Mrs Big Donald says you can cook like a blue streak. Where did you learn it?"

"Oh, I guess I've always known how," said Jane airily. Not under torture would she have revealed to Little Aunt Em that she had never done any cooking before she came to the Island. That might reflect on mother.

"I didn't know you and your dad was at Lantern Hill till Mrs Big Donald told me last week at Mary Howe's funeral. I don't get anywhere much now 'cept to funerals. I always make out to get to them. You see everybody and hear all the news. Soon as Mrs Big Donald told me I made up my mind I'd see you. What thick hair you've got! And what nice little ears! You have a mole on your neck . . . that's money by the peck. You don't look like your ma, Jane Stuart. I knew her well."

Jane's spine felt tickly.

"Oh, did you?" breathlessly.

"I did. They lived in a house at the Harbour Head, and I was living there too, on a bit of a farm, beyant the barrens. It was just after I'd married my second, worse luck. The way the men get round you! I used to

take butter and eggs to your ma and I was in the house the night you were born . . . a wonderful fine night it was. How is your ma? Pretty and silly as ever?"

Jane tried to resent mother being called silly but couldn't manage it. Somehow, you couldn't resent anything Little Aunt Em said. She twinkled at you so. Jane suddenly felt that she could talk to Little Aunt Em about mother . . . ask her things she had never been able to ask any one.

"Mother is well . . . oh, Aunt Em, can you tell me . . . I *must* find out . . . why didn't father and mother go on living together?"

"Now you're asking, Jane Stuart!" Aunt Em scratched her head with a knitting-needle. "Nobody ever knew rightly. Every one had a different guess."

"Did they . . . were they . . . did they really love each other to begin with, Aunt Em?"

"They did. Make no mistake about that, Jane Stuart. They hadn't a lick of sense between them but they were crazy about each other. Will you have an apple?"

"And why didn't it last? Was it me? They didn't want me?"

"Who said so? I know your ma was wild with joy when you was born. Wasn't I there? And I always thought your pa uncommon fond of you, though he had his own way of showing it."

"Then why . . . why . . .?"

"Lots of people thought your Grandmother Kennedy was at the bottom of it. She was dead against them marrying, you know. They were staying at the big hotel on the south shore that summer after the war. Your dad was just home. It was love at first sight with him. I dunno's I blamed him. Your ma was the prettiest thing I ever did see . . . like a little gold butterfly she was. That little head of hers sorter shone like."

Oh, didn't Jane know it! She was seeing that wonderful knot of pale luminous gold at the nape of mother's white neck.

"And her laugh . . . it was a little tinkling, sparkling, young laugh. Does she laugh like that yet, Jane Stuart?"

Jane didn't know what to say. Mother laughed a great deal . . . very tinkly . . . very sparkly . . . but was it young?

"Mother laughs a good deal," she said carefully.

"She was spoiled of course. She'd always had everything she wanted. And when she wanted your pa . . . well, she had to have him too. For the first time in her life, I'm guessing, she wanted something her mother wouldn't get for her. The old madam was dead against it. Your ma couldn't stand up to her but she ran away with your pa. Old Mrs Kennedy went back to Toronto in a towering rage. But she kept writing to your ma and sending her presents and coaxing her to go for visits. Your pa's folks weren't any more in favour of the match than your ma's. He could have had any Island girl he liked. One in particular . . . Lilian Morrow. She was yaller and spindling then but she's grown into a handsome woman. Never married. Your Aunt Irene favoured her. I've always said it was that two-faced Irene made more trouble than your grandmother. She's poison, that woman, just sweet poison. Even when she was a girl she could say the most p'isonous things in the sweetest way. But she had your pa roped and tied . . . she'd always petted and pampered him . . . men are like that, Jane Stuart, every one of them, clever or stupid. He thought Irene was perfection and he'd never believe she was a mischief-maker. Your pa and ma had their ups and downs, of course, but it was Irene put the sting into them, wagging that smooth tongue of hers . . . 'She's only a child, 'Drew' . . . when your dad was wanting to believe he'd married a woman, not a child. 'You're so young, lovey' . . . when your ma was feeling scared she'd never be old and wise enough for your pa. And patronizing her . . . she'd patronize God, that one . . . running her house for her . . . not that your ma knew much about it . . . that was one of her troubles, I guess . . . she'd never been taught how to manage or connive . . . but a woman don't like another woman sailing in putting things to rights. I'd have sent her off with a flea in her ear . . . but your ma had darn too little spunk . . . she couldn't stand up to Irene."

Of course, mother couldn't stand up to Aunt Irene . . . mother couldn't stand up to any one. Jane bit deep into a juicy apple rather savagely.

"I wonder," she said, as if more to herself than to Little Aunt Em, "if father and mother would have been happier if they had married other people."

"No, they wouldn't," said Aunt Em sharply. "They was meant for each other, whatever spoiled it. Don't you go thinking different, Jane Stuart. 'Course they fought! Who don't? The times I've had with my first and second! If they'd been let alone they'd likely have worked it out sooner or later. At the last, when you was rising three, your ma went to Toronto to visit the old madam and never come back. That's all anybody knows about it, Jane Stuart. Your pa sold the house and went for a trip round the world. Leastwise, that's what they said but I ain't believing the world is round. If it was, when it turned round all the water would fall out of the pond, wouldn't it? Now, I'm going to get you a bite to eat. I've got some cold ham and pickled beets and there's red currants in the garden."

They ate the ham and beets and then went out to the garden for the currants. The garden was an untidy little place, sloping to the south, which somehow contrived to be pleasant. There was honeysuckle over the paling . . . "to bring the humming-birds," said Little Aunt Em and white and red hollyhocks against the dark green of a fir coppice and rampant tiger-lilies along the walk. And one corner was rich in pinks.

"Nice out here, ain't it?" said Little Aunt Em. "It's a fine, marvellous world . . . oh, it's a very fine, marvellous world. Don't you like life, Jane Stuart?"

"Yes," agreed Jane heartily.

"I do. I smack my lips over life. I'd like to go on living for ever and hearing the news. Always a tang to the news. Some of these days I'm going to scrape up enough spunk to go in a car. I've never done it yet, but I will. Mrs Big Donald says it's the dream of her life to go up in an airy-plane but I draw the line at sky-hooting. What if the engine stopped going while you was up there? How are you going to get down? Well, I'm glad you come, Jane Stuart. We're both wove out of the same yarn."

Little Aunt Em gave Jane a bunch of pansies and a handful of geranium slips when she went away.

"It's the right time of the moon to plant them," she said. "Good-bye, Jane Stuart. May you never drink out of an empty cup."

Jane walked home slowly, thinking over several things. She loved being out alone at night. She liked the great white clouds that occasionally sailed over the stars. She felt, as she always felt when alone with the night, that she shared some lovely secret with the darkness.

Then the moon rose . . . a great honey-hued moon. The fields all about were touched with her light. The grove of pointed firs on an eastern hill was like a magic town of slender steeples. Jane tripped along gaily, singing to herself, while her black shadow ran before her on the moonlit road. And then, just around a turn, she saw cows before her. One of them, a big black one with a strange white face, was standing squarely in the middle of the road.

Jane came out in gooseflesh. She could not try to pass those cows . . . she could not. The only thing to do was to execute a flanking movement by climbing the fence into Big Donald's pasture and going through it until she was past the cows. Ingloriously Jane did so. But half-way along the field she suddenly stopped.

"How can I blame mother for not standing up to grandmother when I can't stand up to a few cows?" she thought.

She turned and went back. She climbed the fence into the road. The cows were still there. The white-faced one had not moved. Jane set her teeth and walked on with steady, gallant eyes. The cow did not budge. Jane went past it, head in air. When she was beyond the last cow, she turned and looked back. Not a cow of them had paid her the slightest attention.

"To think I was afraid of you," said Jane contemptuously.

And there was Lantern Hill and the silver laughter of the harbour underneath the moon. Jimmy John's little red heifer was in the yard and Jane drove it out fearlessly.

Dad was scribbling furiously when she peeped into the study. Ordinarily Jane would not have interrupted him but she remembered that there was something she ought to tell him.

"Dad, I forgot to tell you the house caught fire this afternoon."

Dad dropped his pen and stared at her.

"Caught fire?"

"Yes, from a spark that fell on the roof. But I went up with a pail of water and put it out. It only burned a little hole. Uncle Tombstone will soon fix it. The Snowbeams were awful mad they missed it."

Dad shook his head helplessly.

"What a Jane!" he said.

Jane, having discharged her conscience and being hungry again after her walk, made a meal off a cold fried trout and went to bed.

XXVI

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"I like a patch of excitement about once a week," dad would say and then they would get into the old car, taking Happy with them and leaving milk for the Peters, travelling east, west and sideways, as the road took them. Monday was generally the day for these gaddings. Every day meant something at Lantern Hill. Tuesday Jane mended, Wednesday she polished the silver, Thursday she swept and dusted downstairs, Friday upstairs, Saturday she scrubbed the floor and did extra baking for Sunday. On Monday, as dad said, they just did fool things.

They explored most of the Island that way, eating their meals by the side of the road whenever they felt hungry. "For all the world like a pair of gipsies," condescended Aunt Irene smilingly. Jane knew Aunt Irene held her responsible for the vagabondish ways dad was getting into now. But Jane was beginning to fence herself against Aunt Irene by a sturdy little philosophy of her own. Aunt Irene felt it, though she couldn't put it into words. If she could have, she would have said that Jane looked at her and then, quietly and politely, shut some door of her soul in her face.

"I can't get near to her, Andrew," she complained.

Dad laughed.

"Jane likes a clear space round her . . . as I do."

They did not often include Charlottetown in their Mondays, but one day in late August they pacified Aunt Irene by having supper with her. Another lady was there . . . a Miss Morrow to whom Jane took no great fancy . . . perhaps because when she smiled at Jane she looked too much like a toothpaste advertisement. Perhaps because dad seemed to like her. He and she laughed and chaffed a great deal. She was tall and dark and handsome, with rather prominent brown eyes. And she tried so hard to be nice to Jane that it was almost painful.

"Your father and I have always been great friends. So we should be friends, too."

"An old sweetheart of your father's, lovey," Aunt Irene whispered to Jane when Miss Morrow had gone, attended to the gate by father. "If your mother hadn't come along . . . who knows? Even yet . . . but I don't know if a United States divorce would be legal in P. E. Island."

They stayed in to see a picture and it was late when they left for home. Not that that mattered. The Peters wouldn't care.

"We'll take the Mercer road home," said dad. "It's a base-line road and not many houses along it but I'm told it's simply lousy with leprechauns. Perhaps we'll manage to see one, skipping madly out of reach of the car lights. Keep your eyes peeled, Jane."

Leprechauns or no leprechauns, the Mercer road was not a very good place to be cast away in. As they were rocking joyously down a dark narrow hill, shadowy with tall firs and spruces, the car stopped short, never to go again . . . at least, not until something decisive had been done to its innards. So dad decided after much fruitless poking and probing.

"We're ten miles from a garage and one from the nearest house where every one will be asleep, Jane. It's after twelve. What shall we do?"

"Sleep in the car," said Jane coolly.

"I know a better plan. See that old barn over there? It's Jake Mallory's back barn and full of hay. I've a yen for sleeping in a hay loft, Jane."

"I think that will be fun," agreed Jane.

The barn was in a pasture field that had "gone spruce." Tiny trees were feathering up all over it . . . at least, they looked like trees in the soft darkness. Maybe they were really leprechauns, squatting there. There was a loft filled with clover hay and they lay down on it before the open window where they could watch the stars blazing down. Happy lay cuddled up to Jane and was soon dreaming blissfully of rabbits.

Jane thought father had gone to sleep, too. Somehow, she couldn't sleep; she didn't especially want to. She was at one and the same time very happy and a little miserable. Happy because she was there with dad under the spell of the moonless night. Jane rather liked a night with no moon.

You got closer to the secret moods of the fields then; and there were such beautiful mysterious sounds on a dark night. They were too far inland to hear the haunting rhythm of the sea, but there were whispers and rustles in the poplars behind the barn . . . "there's magic in the poplars when the wind goes through," remembered Jane . . . and sounds like fairy footsteps pattering by. Who knew but that the elves were really out in the fern? And each far wooded hill with a star for its friend seemed listening . . . listening . . . couldn't you hear it, too, if you listened? Jane had never, before she came to the Island, known how beautiful night could be.

But along with all this she was thinking of what Aunt Irene had said about Miss Morrow and a United States divorce. Jane felt that she was haunted by those mysterious United States divorces. Hadn't Phyllis talked of them? Jane wished peevishly that the United States would keep their divorces at home.

Little Aunt Em had told her that father could have had lots of girls. Jane rather liked to speculate on those girls father might have had, secure in the knowledge that he could never have them now. But Miss Morrow made them seem disagreeably real. Had dad held her hand a shade too long when he said good-bye? Somehow, life was all snarled up.

Jane suppressed several sighs and then allowed one to escape her. Instantly dad turned over and a lean, strong hand touched hers.

"It seems impossible to avoid the conclusion that something is bothering my Superior Jane. Tell Happy about it and I'll listen in."

Jane lay very still and silent. Oh, if she could only tell him everything—find out everything she wanted so much to know! But she couldn't. There was a barrier between them.

"Did your mother teach you to hate me, Jane?"

Jane's heart gave a bound that almost choked her. She had promised mother that *she* wouldn't mention her name to dad and she had kept that promise. It was dad who had done the mentioning. Would it be wrong to allow him?

Jane decided then and there to take a chance on it.

"No, oh, no, dad. I didn't even know you were alive until about a year and a half ago."

"You didn't! Ah, that would be your grandmother's doings. And who told you then that I was?"

"A girl in school. And I thought you couldn't have been good to mother or she wouldn't have . . . left . . . you and I did hate you then for that. But nobody ever told me to hate you . . . only grandmother said you had sent for me just to annoy mother. You didn't . . . did you, dad?"

"No. I may be selfish, Jane, no doubt I am . . . I was told so more than once . . . but I'm not so selfish as that. I thought you were being brought up to hate me and I didn't think that fair. I thought you ought to have a chance to like me if you could. That was why I sent for you. Your mother and I made a failure of our marriage, Jane, as many other young fools have done. That is the bare bones of it."

"But why . . . why . . . mother is so sweet. . . ."

"You don't need to tell me how sweet she is, Jane. When I first saw her, I was just out of the mud and stench and obscenity of the trenches and I thought she was a creature from another star. I had never been able to understand the Trojan War before that. Then I realized that Helen of Troy might have been worth fighting for if she were like my Robin of the golden hair. And her eyes. All blue eyes are not beautiful, but hers were so lovely that they made you feel that no eyes other than blue were worth looking at. Her lashes did things to me you wouldn't believe. She wore a green dress the first time I saw her . . . well, if any other girl had worn the dress, it would have been a green dress and nothing more. On Robin it was magic . . . mystery . . . the robe of Titania. I would have kissed the hem of it."

"And did she fall in love with you, dad?"

"Something like that. Yes, she must have loved me for a while. We ran away, you know . . . her mother had no use for me. I don't think she'd have liked any man who took Robin from her . . . but I was poor and a nobody so I was quite impossible.

"I asked Robin one moonlight night to come away with me. The old moonlight enchantment did not fail. Never trust yourself in moonlight, Superior Jane. If I'd my way I'd lock everybody up on moonlight nights. We went to live at the Harbour Head and we were happy . . . why, I found a new word for sweetheart every day . . . I discovered I was a poet . . . I babbled of pools and grots, Jane . . . yes, we were happy that first year. I've always got that . . . the gods themselves can't take *that* from me."

Dad's voice was almost savage.

"And then," said Jane bitterly, "I came . . . and neither of you wanted me . . . and you were never happy again."

"Never let any one tell you that, Jane. I admit I didn't want you terribly . . . I was so happy I didn't want any third party around. But I remember when I saw your big round eyes brighten the first time you picked me out in a roomful of other men. Then I knew how much I wanted you. Perhaps your mother wanted you too much . . . at any rate she didn't seem to want any one else to love you. You wouldn't have thought I had any rights in you at all. She was so wrapped up in you that she hadn't any time or love left for me. If you sneezed she was sure you were taking pneumonia and thought me heartless because I wouldn't go off the deep end about it. She seemed afraid even to let me hold you for fear I'd drop you. Oh well, it wasn't all you. I suppose by that time she had found she had married some mythical John Doe of her imagination and that he had turned out to be no dashing hero but just a very ordinary Richard Roe. There were so many things . . . I was poor and we had to live by my budget. . . . I wasn't going to have my wife live on money her mother sent her. . . . I made her send it back. I will say she was quite willing to. But we began quarrelling over trifles . . . oh, you know I've a temper, Jane. I remember once I told her to shut her head . . . but every normal husband says that to his wife at least once in his life, Jane. I don't wonder that hurt her . . . but she was hurt by so many things I never thought would hurt her. Perhaps I don't understand women, Jane."

"No, you don't," agreed Jane.

"Eh! What!" Dad seemed a bit startled and only half pleased over Jane's candid agreement with him. "Well, upon my word . . . well, we won't argue it. But Robin didn't understand me either. She was jealous of my work . . . she thought I put it before her. . . . I know she was secretly glad when my book was rejected."

Jane remembered that mother had thought dad was jealous, too.

"Don't you think Aunt Irene had something to do with it, dad?"

"Irene? Nonsense! Irene was her best friend. And your mother was jealous of my love for Irene. Your mother couldn't help being a little jealous . . . *her* mother was the most jealous creature that ever breathed. It was a disease with her. In the end Robin went back to Toronto for a visit . . . and when she got there, she wrote me that she was not coming back."

"Oh, dad!"

"Well, I suppose her mother got round her. But she had stopped loving me. I knew that. I didn't want to see hate growing in the eyes where I had seen love. That is a terrible thing, Jane. So I didn't answer the letter."

"Oh, dad . . . if you had . . . if you had asked her . . ."

"I agree with Emerson that the highest price you can pay for a thing is to ask for it. Too high sometimes. A year later I weakened . . . I did write and ask her to come back. I knew it had been as much my fault as hers . . . I'd teased her . . . once I said you had a face like a monkey . . . well, you had, Jane, at that time. . . . I'll swear you had. I never got any answer. So I knew it was no use."

A question came into Jane's head. *Had mother ever seen that letter?*

"It's all best as it is, Jane. We weren't suited to each other. . . . I was ten years her senior and the war had made me twenty. I couldn't give her the luxuries and good times she craved. She was very . . . wise . . . to discard me. Let's not discuss it further, Jane. I merely wanted you to know the rights of it. And you must not mention anything I've said to your mother. Promise me that, Jane."

Jane promised dismally. There were so many things she wanted to say and she couldn't say them. It mightn't be fair to mother.

But she had to falter, "Perhaps . . . it isn't too late yet, dad."

"Don't get any foolish notions like that into your russet head, my Jane. It is too late. I shall never again ask Mrs Robert Kennedy's daughter to come back to me. We must make the best of things as they are. You and I love each other . . . I am to be congratulated on that."

For a moment Jane was perfectly happy. Dad loved her . . . she was sure of it at last.

"Oh, dad, can't I come back next summer . . . every summer?" she burst out eagerly.

"Do you really want to, Jane?"

"Yes," said Jane eloquently.

"Then we'll have it so. After all, if Robin has you in the winter, I should have you in the summer. She needn't grudge me that. And you're a good little egg, Jane. In fact, I think we're both rather nice."

"Dad" . . . Jane had to ask the question . . . she had to go right to the root of the matter . . . "do you . . . love . . . mother still?"

There was a moment of silence during which Jane quaked. Then she heard dad shrug his shoulders in the hay.

"The rose that once has blown for ever dies," he said.

Jane did not think that was an answer at all but she knew it was all she was going to get.

She turned things over in her mind before she went to sleep. So dad hadn't sent for her just to annoy mother. But he didn't understand mother. That habit of his . . . ragging you . . . she, Jane, liked it but perhaps mother hadn't understood. And father hadn't liked it because he thought mother neglected him for her baby. And he couldn't see through Aunt Irene. And was this what mother had cried about that night in the darkness? Jane couldn't bear to think of mother crying in the dark.

Between Little Aunt Em and dad she now knew a good deal she had not known before but . . .

"I'd like to hear mummy's side of it," was Jane's last thought as she finally fell asleep.

There was a pearl-like radiance of dawn over the eastern hills when she awoke . . . awoke knowing something she had not known when she went to

sleep. Dad still loved mother. There was no further question in Jane's mind about that.

Dad was still asleep but she and Happy slipped down the ladder and out. Surely there had never before been a day that dawned so beautifully. The old pasture around the barn was the quietest place Jane had ever seen, and on the grass between the little spruces . . . spruces by day all right whatever they were by night . . . were gossamers woven on who knew what fairy loom. Jane was washing her face in morning dew when dad appeared.

"It is the essence of adventure to see the break of a new day, Jane. What may it not be ushering in? An empire may fall to-day . . . a baby may be born who will discover a cure for cancer . . . a wonderful poem may be written. . . ."

"Our car will have to be fixed," reminded Jane.

They walked a mile to a house and telephoned a garage. Some time before noon the car was on its legs again.

"Watch our smoke," said dad.

Home . . . and the Peters welcoming them back . . . the gulf singing . . . Millicent Mary toddling adoringly in at the gate. It was a lovely August day but the Jimmy John wheat-field was tawny gold and September was waiting behind the hills . . . and September meant Toronto and grandmother and St Agatha's again where she would be on the edge of things instead of hunting with the pack as here. The ninety-five to-morrows had shrunk to only a few. Jane sighed . . . then shook herself. What was the matter with her? She loved mother . . . she longed to see her . . . but . . .

"I want to stay with dad," said Jane.

XXVII

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August slipped into September. Jimmy John began to summer fallow the big pasture field below the pond. Jane liked the look of the fresh red furrows. And she liked Mrs Jimmy John's flock of white geese swimming about the pond. There had been a time when Jane had kept a flock of white swans on a purple lake in the moon, but now she preferred the geese. Day by day the wheat-and oat-fields became more golden. Then Step-a-yard mowed the Jimmy John wheat. The Peters grew so fat catching evicted field-mice that dad told Jane she would really have to put them on a slimming diet.

Summer was ended. A big storm marked the ending, preceded by a week of curiously still weather. Step-a-yard shook his head and didn't like it. Something uncommon was brewing, he said.

The weather all summer had behaved itself well . . . days of sun and days of friendly rain. Jane had heard of the north shore storms and wanted to see one. She got her wish with a vengeance.

One day the gulf changed sulkily from blue to grey. The hills were clear and sharp, foretelling rain. The sky to the north-east was black, the clouds were dark with bitter wind.

"Lots of int'resting weather coming . . . don't hold me responsible for it," warned Step-a-yard when Jane started home from the Jimmy Johns'. She literally blew along the path and felt that if Lantern Hill hadn't stood in the way she might have emulated Little Aunt Em's reputed exploit of blowing over the harbour. There was a wild, strange, hostile look all over the world. The very trees seemed strangers in the oncoming storm.

"Shut the doors and windows tight, Jane," said dad. "Our house will just laugh at the east wind."

The storm broke presently and lasted for two days. The wind that night didn't sound like wind at all . . . it sounded like the roar of a wild beast.

For two days you could see nothing but a swirl of grey rain over a greyer sea . . . hear nothing but the tremendous music of huge breakers booming against the stubborn rocks of lower Queen's Shore. Jane liked it all after she got used to it. Something in her thrilled to it. And they were very cosy, sitting before their fire of white birchwood those wild nights, while the rain poured against the window and the wind roared and the gulf thundered.

"This is something like, Jane," said dad puffing at the Old Contemptible with a Peter on either shoulder. "Mankind must have its hearth-fire after all. It's a cold life warming yourself before other people's stoves."

And then he told Jane that he had decided to keep on living at Lantern Hill.

Jane gave a gasp of joy and relief. At first it had been vaguely understood that when Jane went dad would shut up Lantern Hill and go to town for the winter; and Jane had consequently been cumbered with certain worries.

What would become of her windowful of geraniums? The Jimmy Johns had enough of their own to look after. Dad would take Happy with him but what about the Peters? And the house itself . . . the thought of its unlighted windows was unbearable. It would be so lonely . . . so deserted.

"Oh, dad, I'm so glad . . . I couldn't bear to think of it missing us. But won't you . . . how about your meals?"

"Oh, I can get up a bite for myself, I daresay."

"I'm going to teach you to fry a steak and boil potatoes before I go," said Jane resolutely. "You can't starve then."

"Jane, you'll beat your husband . . . I know you will. It is no use trying to teach me to cook. Remember our first porridge. I daresay the Jimmy Johns won't see me starve. I'll arrange for one good meal a day there. Yes, I'm staying on here, Jane. I'll keep the heart of Lantern Hill beating for you. I'll water the geraniums and see that the Peters don't get rheumatism in their legs. But I can't imagine what the place will be like without you. . . ."

"You *will* miss me a little, won't you, dad?"

"A little! My Jane is trying to be humorous. But one consolation is that I'll likely get a little real work done on my Methuselah epic. I won't have so many interruptions. And I'll be able to growl without getting dirty looks."

"You may just have one growl a day," grinned Jane. "Oh, I'm so glad I made lots of jam. The pantry is full of it."

It was the next night dad showed her the letters. He was at his desk with Second Peter snoozing at his feet when Jane went in after washing the supper dishes. He was leaning his head on his hand and Jane thought with a sudden pang that he looked old and tired. The cat with the green spots and the diamond eyes was winking at him.

"Where did you get that cat, dad?"

"Your mother gave it to me . . . for a joke . . . before we were married. We saw it in a shop-window and were taken by the weirdness of it. And here . . . here are some letters I wrote her, Jane . . . one week she and her mother went over to Halifax. I found them to-night when I was cleaning out a drawer. I've been laughing at myself . . . the bitterest kind of laughter in the world. You'll laugh, too, Jane. Listen . . . 'To-day I tried to write a poem to you, Robin, but it is not finished because I could not find words fine enough, as a lover could not find raiment dainty enough for his bride. The old words that other men have used in singing to their loves seemed too worn and common for you. I wanted new words, crystal clear or coloured only by the iris of light. Not words that have been stamped and stained with all the hues of other men's thoughts' . . . wasn't I a sentimental fool, Jane? . . . 'I watched the new moon to-night, Robin. You told me you always watched the new moon set. It has been a bond between us ever since. . . . Oh, how dear and human and girlish and queenly you are . . . half saint and half very womanly woman. . . . It is so sweet to do something for one we love, even if it be only opening a door for her to pass through or handing her a book. . . . You are like a rose, my Robin . . . like a white tea-rose by moonlight. . . .'"

"I wonder if any one will ever compare me to a rose," thought Jane. It didn't seem likely. She couldn't think of any flower she resembled.

"She didn't care enough about those letters to take them with her, Jane. After she went away I found them in the drawer of the little desk I had given her."

"But she didn't know she wasn't coming back then, dad."

Second Peter snarled as if he had been pushed aside by a foot.

"Didn't she? I think she did."

"I'm sure she didn't." Jane was sure, though she couldn't have given any reason for her sureness. "Let me take them back to her."

"No!" Dad brought his hand down so heavily on his desk that he hurt himself and winced. "I'm going to burn them."

"Oh, no, no." Somehow Jane couldn't bear to think of those letters being burned. "Give them to me, dad. I won't take them to Toronto . . . I'll leave them in my table drawer . . . but please don't burn them."

"Well!" Dad pushed the letters over to her and picked up a pen, as if dismissing the subject of the letters and her at the same time. Jane went out slowly, looking back at him. How she loved him . . . she loved even his shadow on the wall . . . his lovely clear-cut shadow. How could mother ever have left him?

The storm spent itself that night with a wild red sunset and a still wilder north-west wind . . . the wind of fine weather. The beach was still a maelstrom of foam the next day and the shadows of wild black clouds kept tearing over the sands, but the rain had ceased and the sun shone between the clouds. The harvest fields were drenched and tangled, the ground in the Jimmy John orchard was covered with apples . . . and the summer was ended. There was an indefinable change over everything that meant autumn.

XXVIII

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Those last few days were compounded of happiness and misery for Jane. She did so many things she loved to do and would not do again until next summer . . . and next summer seemed a hundred years away. It was funny. She hadn't wanted to come and now she didn't want to go. She cleaned everything up and washed every dish in the house and polished all the silver and scoured Mr Muffet and Company till their faces shone. She felt lonely and left out when she heard the Jimmy Johns and the Snowbeams talking about the cranberrying in October, and when dad said, "I wish you could see those maples over yonder against that spruce hill in two weeks' time," and she realized that in two weeks' time there would be a thousand miles between them . . . well, it seemed to her that she just couldn't bear it.

Aunt Irene came out one day when Jane was house-cleaning furiously.

"Aren't you tired of playing at housekeeping yet, lovey?"

But that true Aunt Irenian touch could not disturb Jane.

"I'm coming back next summer," said Jane triumphantly.

Aunt Irene sighed.

"I suppose that would be nice . . . in some ways. But so many things may happen before then. It's a whim of your father's to live here now, but we don't know when he'll take another. Still, we can always hope for the best, can't we, lovey?"

The last day came. Jane packed her trunk, not forgetting a jar of very special wild-strawberry jam she was taking home to mother and two dozen russet apples Polly Snowbeam had given her for her own and Jody's consumption. Polly knew all about Jody and sent her her love.

They had a chicken dinner--the Ella twin and the George twin had brought the birds over with Miranda's compliments, and Jane wondered when she would have a slice off the breast again. In the afternoon she went down alone to say good-bye to the shore. She could hardly bear the

loneliness of the waves lapping on the beach. The sound and the tang and the sweep of the sea would not let her go. She knew the fields and the windy golden shore were a part of her. She and her Island understood each other.

"I belong here," said Jane.

"Come back soon. P. E. Island needs you," said Timothy Salt, offering her the quarter of an apple on the point of his knife. "You will," he added. "The Island's got into your blood. It does that to some folks."

Jane and dad had expected a last quiet evening together but instead there was a surprise party. All Jane's particular friends, old and young, came, even Mary Millicent who sat in a corner all the evening, staring at Jane, and never spoke a word. Step-a-yard came and Timothy Salt and Min and Min's ma and Ding-dong Bell and the Big Donalds and the Little Donalds and people from the Corners that Jane didn't know knew her.

Every one brought her a farewell gift. The Snowbeams clubbed together and brought her a white plaster of Paris plaque to hang on her bedroom wall. It cost twenty-five cents and had a picture of Moses and Aaron on it in blue turbans and red gowns . . . and Jane saw grandmother looking at it! Little Aunt Em could not come but she sent word to Jane Stuart that she would save some hollyhock seeds for her. They had a very gay evening, although all the girls cried after they had sung, "For she's a jolly good fellow." Shingle Snowbeam cried so much into the tea towel with which she was helping Polly to dry the dishes that Jane had to get a dry one out.

Jane did not cry but she was thinking, "It's the last good time I'll have for ages. And everybody has been so lovely to me."

"You don't know how much I'm feeling this, Jane, right here in my heart," said Step-a-yard patting his stomach.

Dad and Jane sat up a little while after the folks had gone.

"They love you here, Jane."

"Polly and Shingle and Min are going to write to me every week," said Jane.

"You'll get the news of the Hill and the Corners then," said dad gently. "You know I can't write to you, Jane . . . not while you're living in that house."

"And grandmother won't let me write to you," said Jane sadly.

"But as long as you know there's a dad and I know there's a Jane, it won't matter too much, will it? I'll keep a diary, Jane, and you can read it when you come next summer. It will be like getting a bundle of letters all at once. And while we'll think of each other in general quite often, let's arrange one particular time for it. Seven o'clock in the evening here is six in Toronto. At seven o'clock every Saturday night I'll think of you and at six you think of me."

It was like dad to plan something like that.

"And, dad, will you sow some flower seeds for me next spring? I won't be here in time to do it. Nasturtiums and cosmos and phlox and marigolds . . . oh, Mrs Jimmy John will tell you what to get, and I'd like a little patch of vegetables, too."

"Consider it done, Queen Jane."

"And can I have a few hens next summer, dad?"

"Those hens are hatched already," said dad.

He squeezed her hand.

"We've had a good time, haven't we, Jane?"

"We've *laughed* so much together," said Jane, thinking of 60 Gay where there was no laughter. "You won't forget to send for me next spring, will you, dad?"

"No," was all dad said. "No" is sometimes a horrible word but there are times when it is beautiful.

They had to get up early the next morning because dad was going to drive Jane to town to catch the boat train and meet a certain Mrs Wesley who was going to Toronto. Jane thought she could travel very well by herself, but for once dad was adamant.

The morning sky was red with trees growing black against it. The old moon was visible, like a new moon turned the wrong way, above the

birches on Big Donald's hill. It was still misty in the hollows. Jane bade every room farewell and just before they left dad stopped the clock.

"We'll start it again when you come back, Janekin. My watch will do me for the winter."

The purring Peters had to be said good-bye to but Happy went to town with them. Aunt Irene was at the station and so was Lilian Morrow, the latter all perfume and waved hair. Dad seemed glad to see her; he walked up and down the platform with her. She called him "'Drew." You could hear the apostrophe before it like a coo or a kiss. Jane could have done very well without Miss Morrow to see her off.

Aunt Irene kissed her twice and cried.

"Remember you always have a friend in *me*, lovey" . . . as if she thought Jane had no other.

"Don't look so woebegone, dear," smiled Lilian Morrow. "Remember you're going home."

Home! "Home is where the heart is." Jane had heard or read that. And she knew she was leaving her heart on the Island with dad, to whom she presently said goodbye with all the anguish of all the good-byes that have ever been said in her voice.

Jane watched the red shores of the Island from the boat until they were only a dim blue line against the sky. And now to be Victoria again!

When Jane went through the gates of the Toronto station, she heard a laugh she would have known anywhere. There was only one such laugh in the world. And there was mother, in a lovely new crimson velvet wrap with a white fur collar and underneath a dress of white chiffon embroidered with brilliants. Jane knew this meant that mother was going out to dinner . . . and she knew grandmother had not allowed mother to break her engagement for the sake of spending Jane's first evening home with her. But mother, smelling of violets, was holding her tight, laughing and crying.

"My dearest . . . my very own little girl. You're home again. Oh, darling, I've missed you so. . . . I've missed you so."

Jane hugged mother fiercely . . . mother as beautiful as ever, her eyes as blue as ever, though, as Jane saw instantly, a little thinner than she had been in June.

"Are you glad to be back, darling?"

"So glad to be with you again, mummy," said Jane.

"You've grown . . . why, darling, you're up to my shoulder . . . and such a lovely tan. But I can never let you go away again . . . never."

Jane kept her own counsel about that. She felt curiously changed and grown-upish as she went through the big lighted station with mother. Frank was waiting with the limousine and they went home through the busy, crowded streets to 60 Gay. 60 Gay was neither busy nor crowded. The clang of the iron gates behind her seemed a knell of doom. She was re-entering prison. The great, cold, still house struck a chill to her spirit. Mother had gone on to the dinner and grandmother and Aunt Gertrude were meeting her. She kissed Aunt Gertrude's narrow white face and grandmother's soft wrinkled one.

"You've grown, Victoria," said grandmother icily. She did not like Jane looking into her eyes on the level. And grandmother saw at a glance that Jane had somehow learned what to do with her arms and legs and was looking entirely too much mistress of herself. "Don't smile with your lips closed, if you please. I've never really been able to see the charm of 'La Gioconda.'"

They had dinner. It was six o'clock. Down home it would be seven. Dad would be . . . Jane felt she could not swallow a mouthful.

"Will you be good enough to pay attention when I am speaking to you, Victoria?"

"I beg your pardon, grandmother."

"I am asking you what you wore this summer. I have looked into your trunk and the clothes you took with you don't seem to have been worn at all."

"Only the green linen jumper suit," said Jane. "I wore it to church and the ice-cream social. I had gingham dresses to wear at home. I kept house for father, you know."

Grandmother wiped her lips daintily with her napkin. It seemed as if she were wiping some disagreeable flavour off them.

"I am not inquiring about your rural activities" . . . Jane saw grandmother looking at her hands. . . . "It will be wise for you to forget them. . . ."

"But I'm going back next summer, grandmother. . . ."

"Be kind enough not to interrupt me, Victoria. And as you must be tired after your journey, I would advise you to go to bed at once. Mary has prepared a bath for you. I suppose you will be rather glad to get into a real bath-tub once more."

When she had had the whole gulf for a bath-tub all summer!

"I must run over and see Jody first," said Jane . . . and went. She could not forget her new freedom so quickly. Grandmother watched her go with tightening lips. Perhaps she realized that never again would Jane be quite the meek, overawed Victoria of the old days. She had grown in mind as well as in body.

Jane and Jody had a rapturous reunion. Jody had grown too. She was thinner and taller and her eyes were sadder than ever.

"Oh, Jane, I'm so glad you're back. It's been so long."

"I'm so glad you're still here, Jody. I was afraid Miss West might have sent you to the orphanage."

"She's always saying she will . . . I guess she will yet. Did you really like the Island so much, Jane?"

"I just loved it," said Jane, glad that here was at least one person to whom she could talk freely about her Island and her father.

Jane was horribly homesick as she climbed the soft-carpeted stairway to bed. If she were only skipping up the bare, painted steps at Lantern Hill! Her old room had not grown any friendlier. She ran to the window, opened it and gazed out . . . but not on starry hills and the moon shining on woodland fields. The clamour of Bloor Street assailed her ears. The huge old trees about 60 Gay were sufficient unto themselves . . . they were not her friendly birches and spruces. A wind was trying to blow . . . Jane felt sorry for it . . . checked here, thwarted there. But it was blowing from the

west. Would it blow right down to the Island . . . to the velvety black night starred with harbour lights beyond Lantern Hill? Jane leaned out of the window and sent a kiss to dad on it.

"And now," remarked Jane to Victoria, "there will be only nine months to put in."

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"She will soon forget everything about Lantern Hill," said grandmother.

Mother wasn't so sure. She felt the change in Jane as did everybody. Uncle David's family thought Jane "much improved." Aunt Sylvia said Victoria had actually become able to get through a room without danger to the furniture. And Phyllis was a shade less patronizing, though with plenty of room for improvement yet.

"I heard you went barefoot down there," she said curiously.

"Of course," said Jane. "All the children do in summer."

"Victoria has gone quite P. E. Island," said grandmother with her bitter little smile, much as if she had said, "Victoria has gone quite savage." Grandmother had already learned a new way to get under Jane's skin. It was to say little biting things about the Island. Grandmother employed it quite mercilessly. She felt that Jane, in so many respects, had somehow slipped beyond her power to hurt. All the colour still went out of Jane in grandmother's presence but she was not thereby reduced to the old flabbiness. Jane had not been chatelaine of Lantern Hill and the companion of a keen, mature intellect all summer for nothing. A new spirit looked out of her hazel eyes . . . something that was free and aloof . . . something that was almost beyond grandmother's power to tame or hurt. All the venom of her stings seemed unable to touch this new Jane . . . except when she sneered at the Island.

Because in a very real sense Jane was still living on the Island. This helped to take the edge off her first two weeks of unbearable homesickness. While she was practising her scales she was listening for the thunder of the breakers on Queen's Shore; while she ate her meals she was waiting for dad to come in from one of his long hikes with Happy trotting at his heels; when she was alone in the big gloomy house she was companioned by the Peters . . . who could have imagined that a couple of

cat's a thousand miles away could be such comforts? . . . When she lay awake at night she was hearing all the sounds of her Island home. And while she was reading the Bible chapter to grandmother and Aunt Gertrude in that terrible, unchanged drawing-room, she was reading it to dad on the old Watch Tower.

"I should prefer a little more *reverence* in reading the Bible, Victoria," said grandmother. Jane had been reading an old Hebrew war tale as father would have read it, with a trumpet clang of victory in her voice. Grandmother looked at her vindictively. It was plain that reading the Bible was no longer a penance to Jane. She seemed positively to enjoy it. And what could grandmother do about it?

Jane had made a list on the back of her arithmetic notebook of the months that must pass before her return to the Island, and smiled when she ticked off September.

She had felt very reluctant to go back to St Agatha's. But in a short time she found herself saying one day in amazement, "I like going to school."

She had always felt vaguely left out . . . excluded at St Agatha's. Now, for some reason unknown to her, she no longer felt so. It was as if she had become a comrade and a leader overnight. The girls of her class looked up to her. The teachers began to wonder why they had never before suspected what a remarkable child Victoria Stuart was. Why, she was simply full of executive ability.

And her studies were no longer a tribulation. They had become a pleasure. She wanted to study as hard as she could, to catch up with dad. Dim ghosts of history . . . exquisite, unhappy queens . . . grim old tyrants . . . had become real . . . marked poems in the reader she and dad had read together were full of meaning for her . . . the ancient lands where they had roamed in fancy were places she knew and loved. It was so easy to learn about them. Jane brought home no more bad reports. Mother was delighted but grandmother did not seem overly pleased. She picked up a letter one day which Jane was writing to Polly Jimmy John, glanced over it, dropped it with disdain:

"Phlox is not spelled f-l-o-x, Victoria. But I suppose it does not matter to your haphazard friends how you spell."

Jane blushed. She knew perfectly well how to spell phlox but there was so much to tell Polly . . . to ask Polly . . . so many messages to send to the people in that far, dear Island by the sea . . . she just scribbled away furiously without thinking.

"Polly Garland is the best speller at Lantern Corners school," said Jane.

"Oh, I have no doubt . . . no doubt whatever . . . that she has all the backwoods virtues," said grandmother.

Grandmother's sneers could not poison Jane's delight in the letters she got from the Island. They came as thick as autumn leaves in Vallambroso. Somebody at Lantern Hill or Hungry Cove or the Corners was always writing to Jane. The Snowbeams sent composite letters, dreadfully spelled and blotted, written paragraph about. They possessed the knack of writing the most amusing things, illustrated along the edges with surprisingly well-done thumb-nail sketches by Shingle. Jane always wanted to shriek with laughter over the Snowbeam letters.

Elder Tommy had the mumps . . . fancy Elder Tommy with the mumps . . . Shingle had fancied it in a few sidesplitting curves. . . . The tail-board of Big Donald's cart had come out when he was going up Little Donald's hill and all his turnips had rolled out and down the hill and was he mad! The pigs had got into the Corners graveyard; Min's ma was making a silk quilt . . . Jane immediately began saving patches for Min's ma's quilt. . . . Ding-dong's dog had torn the whole seat out of Andy Pearson's second best trousers, the frost had killed all the dahlias, Step-a-yard was having boils, there had been a lovely lot of funerals this fall, old Mrs Dougald MacKay had died and people who were at the funeral said she looked perfectly gorgeous, the Jimmy Johns' baby had laughed at last, the big tree on Big Donald's hill had blown down . . . Jane was sorry for that, she had loved that tree. . . . "We miss you just awful, Jane. . . . Oh, Jane, we wish you could be here for Hallowe'en night."

Jane wished it, too. If one could but fly in the darkness over rivers and mountains and forests to the Island for just that one night! What fun they

would have running round putting turnip and pumpkin Jack-o'-lanterns on gate-posts and perhaps helping to carry off somebody's gate.

"What are you laughing at, darling?" asked mother.

"A letter from home," said Jane thoughtlessly.

"Oh, Jane Victoria, isn't this your home?" cried mother piteously.

Jane was sorry she had spoken. But she had to be honest. Home! A little house looking seaward . . . a white gull . . . ships going up and down . . . spruce woods . . . misty barrens . . . salt air cold from leagues of gulf . . . quiet . . . silence. *That* was home . . . the only home she knew. But she hated to hurt mother. Jane had begun to feel curiously protective about mother . . . as if, somehow, she must be shielded and guarded. Oh, if she could only talk things over with mother . . . tell her everything about dad . . . find out everything. What fun it would be to read those letters to mother! She did read them to Jody. Jody was as much interested in the Lantern Hill folks as Jane herself. She began sending messages to Polly and Shingle and Min.

The elms around 60 Gay turned a rusty yellow. Far away the red leaves would be falling from the maples . . . the autumn mists would be coming in from the sea. Jane opened her notebook and ticked off October.

November was a dark, dry, windy month. Jane scored a secret triumph over grandmother one week of it.

"Let me make the croquettes for lunch, Mary," she begged one day. Mary consented very sceptically, remembering that there was plenty of chicken salad in the refrigerator if the croquettes were ruined. They were not. They were everything croquettes should be. Nobody knew who had made them, but Jane had the fun of watching folks eat them. Grandmother took a second helping.

"Mary seems to have learned how to make croquettes properly at last," she said.

Jane wore a poppy on Armistice Day because dad was a D.S. She was hungry to hear about him but she would not ask her Island correspondents. They must not know she and dad did not exchange letters. But sometimes there was a bit about him in some of the letters . . . perhaps only a sentence

or two. She lived for and by them. She got up in the night to re-read the letters they were in. And every Saturday afternoon she shut herself up in her room and wrote him a letter which she sealed up and asked Mary to hide in her trunk. She would take them all to dad next summer and let him read them while she read his diary. She made a little ritual of dressing up to write to dad. It was delightful to be writing to him, while the wind howled outside, to father so far away and yet so near, telling him everything you had done that week, all the little intimate things you loved.

The first snow came one afternoon as she wrote, in flakes as large as butterflies. Would it be snowing on the Island? Jane hunted up the morning paper and looked to see what the weather report in the Maritimes was. Yes . . . cold, with showers of snow . . . clearing and cold at night. Jane shut her eyes and saw it. Great soft flakes falling over the grey landscape against the dark spruces . . . her little garden a thing of fairy beauty . . . egg flakes in the empty robin's nest she and Shingle knew of . . . the dark sea around the white land. "Clearing and cold at night." Frosty stars gleaming out in still frostier evening blue over quiet fields thinly white with snow. Would dad remember to let the Peters in?

Jane ticked off November.

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Christmas had never meant a great deal to Jane. They always did the same things in the same way. There were neither tree nor stockings at 60 Gay and no morning celebration because grandmother so decreed. She said she liked a quiet forenoon and she always went to the service in St Barnabas's, though, for some queer reason of her own, she always wanted to go alone that day. Then they all went for lunch to Uncle William's or Uncle David's and there was a big family dinner at night at 60 Gay, with the presents in display. Jane always got a good many things she didn't want especially and one or two she did. Mother always seemed even a little gayer on Christmas than on any other day . . . too gay, as if, Jane in her new wisdom felt, she were afraid of remembering something if she stopped being gay for a moment.

But the Christmas season this year had a subtle meaning for Jane it had never possessed before. There was the concert at St Agatha's for one thing, in which Jane was one of the star performers. She recited another *habitant* poem and did it capitably . . . because she was reciting to an audience of one a thousand miles away and didn't care a hoot for grandmother's scornful face and compressed lips. The last number was a tableau in which four girls represented the spirits of the four seasons kneeling around the Christmas spirit. Jane was the spirit of autumn with maple-leaves in her russet hair.

"Your granddaughter is going to be a very handsome girl," a lady told grandmother. "She doesn't resemble her lovely mother, of course, but there is something very striking about her face."

"Handsome is as handsome does," said grandmother in a tone which implied that, judged by that standard, Jane hadn't the remotest chance of good looks. But Jane didn't hear it and wouldn't have cared if she had. She knew what dad thought about her bones.

Jane could not send presents to the Island . . . she had no money to buy them. An allowance was something Jane had never had. So she wrote a special letter to all her friends instead. They sent her little gifts which gave her far more delight than the fine ones she got in Toronto.

Min's ma sent her a packet of summer savoury.

"Nobody here cares for summer savoury," said grandmother, meaning that she didn't. "We prefer sage."

"Mrs Jimmy John always uses savoury in her stuffing and so do Min's ma and Mrs Big Donald," said Jane.

"Oh, no doubt we are sadly behind the times," said grandmother, and when Jane opened the packet of spruce-gum Young John had sent her grandmother said, "Well, well, so *ladies* chew gum nowadays. Other times, other manners."

She picked up the card Ding-dong had sent Jane. It had on it the picture of a blue and gold angel under which Ding-dong had written, "This looks like you."

"I have always heard," said grandmother, "that love is blind."

Grandmother certainly had the knack of making you feel ridiculous.

But even grandmother did not disdain the bundle of driftwood old Timothy Salt expressed up. She let Jane burn it in the fireplace on Christmas eve, and mother loved the blue and green and purple flames. Jane sat before it and dreamed. It was a very cold night . . . a night of frost and stars. Would it be as cold on the Island and would her geraniums freeze? Would there be a thick white fur on the windows at Lantern Hill? What kind of a Christmas would dad have? She knew he was going to Aunt Irene's for dinner. Aunt Irene had written Jane a note to accompany her gift of a pretty knitted sweater and told her so. "With a few of his old friends," said Aunt Irene.

Would Lilian Morrow be among the old friends? Somehow Jane hoped not. There was always a queer little formless, nameless fear in her heart when she thought of Lilian Morrow and her caressing "'Drew."

Lantern Hill would be empty on Christmas. Jane resented that. Dad would take Happy with him and the poor Peters would be all alone.

Jane had one thrill on Christmas Day nobody knew anything about. They went to lunch at Uncle David's and there was a copy of *Saturday Evening* in the library. Jane pounced on it. Would there be anything of dad's in it? Yes, there was. Another front page article on "The Consequences of Confederation in Regard to the Maritime Provinces." Jane was totally out of her depth in it, but she read every word of it with pride and delight.

Then came the cat.

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They had had dinner at 60 Gay and were all in the big drawing-room, which even with a fire blazing on the hearth still seemed cold and grim. Frank came in with a basket.

"It's come, Mrs Kennedy," he said.

Grandmother took the basket from Frank and opened it. A magnificent white Persian cat was revealed, blinking pale green eyes disdainfully and distrustfully at everybody. Mary and Frank had discussed that cat in the kitchen.

"Whatever has the old dame got into her noddle now?" said Frank. "I thought she hated cats and wouldn't let Miss Victoria have one on any consideration. And here she's giving her one . . . and it costing seventy-five dollars. Seventy-five dollars for a cat!"

"Money's no object to her," said Mary. "And I'll tell you what's in her noddle. I haven't cooked for her for twenty years without learning to read her mind. Miss Victoria has a cat on that Island of hers. Her grandmother wants to cut that cat out. She isn't going to have Andrew Stuart letting Miss Victoria have cats when she isn't allowed to have them here. The old lady is at her wit's end how to wean Miss Victoria away from the Island and that's what this cat means. Thinks she--a real Persian, costing seventy-five dollars and looking like the King of All Cats, will soon put the child out of conceit with her miserable common kittens. Look at the presents she give Miss Victoria this Christmas. As if to say, 'You couldn't get anything like that from your father!' Oh, I'm knowing her. But she's met her match at last or I'm mistaken. She can't overcrow Miss Victoria any longer and she's just beginning to find it out."

"This is a Christmas present for you, Victoria," said grandmother. "It should have been here last night but there was some delay . . . somebody was ill."

Everybody looked at Jane as if they expected her to go into spasms of delight.

"Thank you, grandmother," said Jane flatly.

She didn't like Persian cats. Aunt Minnie had one . . . a pedigreed smoke-blue . . . and Jane had never liked it. Persian cats were so deceptive. They looked so fat and fluffy, and then when you picked them up, expecting to enjoy a good satisfying squeeze, there was nothing to them but bones. Anybody was welcome to their Persian cat for all of Jane.

"Its name is Snowball," said Grandmother.

So she couldn't even name her own cat. But grandmother expected her to like the cat and Jane went to work heroically in the following days trying to like it. The trouble was, the cat didn't want to be liked. No friendliness ever warmed the pale green fire of its eyes. It did not want to be petted or caressed. The Peters had been lapsters, with eyes of amber, and Jane from the first had been able to talk to them in their own language. But Snowball refused to understand a word she said.

"I thought . . . correct me if I'm wrong . . . that you professed to be fond of cats," said grandmother.

"Snowball doesn't like me," said Jane.

"Oh!" said grandmother. "Well, I suppose your taste in cats is on a par with your taste in friends. And I don't suppose there is very much that can be done about it."

"Darling, *couldn't* you like Snowball a little more?" pleaded mother, as soon as they were alone. "Just to please your grandmother. She thought you would be delighted. Can't you pretend to like it?"

Jane was not very good at pretending. She looked after Snowball faithfully, combed and brushed him every day, saw that he had the right kind of food and plenty of it, saw that he did not get out in the cold and take pneumonia . . . would not have cared in the least if he had. She liked pussies who went out boldly on their own mysterious errands and later appeared on the doorstep pleading to get in where there was a warm cushion and a drop of cream. Snowball took all her attention as a matter of

course, paraded about 60 Gay, waving a plummy tail and was rapturously adored by all callers.

"Poor Snowball," said grandmother ironically.

At this unlucky point Jane giggled. She couldn't help it. Snowball looked so little desirous of pity. Sitting on the arm of the chesterfield, he was monarch of all he surveyed and quite happy about it.

"I like a cat I can hug," said Jane. "A cat that likes to be hugged."

"You forget you are talking to me, not to Jody," said grandmother.

After three weeks Snowball disappeared. Luckily Jane was at St Agatha's or grandmother might have suspected her of conniving at his disappearance. Everybody was away and Mary had left the front door open for a few moments. Snowball went out and apparently wandered into the fourth dimension. A lost-and-found ad. had no results.

"He's been stole," said Frank. "That's what comes of having them expensive cats."

"It's not me that's sorry. He had to be more pampered than a baby," said Mary. "And I'm not of the opinion Miss Victoria will break her heart about it either. She's still hankering after her Peters . . . she's not one to change and the old lady can put that in her pipe and smoke it."

Jane couldn't pretend any great grief and grandmother was very angry. She smouldered for days over it and Jane was uncomfortable. Perhaps she had been ungrateful . . . perhaps she hadn't tried hard enough to like Snowball. Anyhow, on the night the big white Persian suddenly materialized on the street corner, as she and mother were waiting for the Bloor car amid a swirl of snow, and wrapped itself around her legs in an apparent frenzy of recognition and hoarse miaows, Jane yelped with genuine delight.

"Mummy . . . mummy . . . here's Snowball."

That she and mother should be standing alone on a street corner, waiting for a car on a blustery January night was an unprecedented thing. There had been doings at St Agatha's that night . . . the senior girls had put on a play and mother had been invited. Frank was laid up with influenza and they had to go with Mrs Austen. Before the play was half through Mrs

Austen had been summoned home because of sudden illness in her family and mother had said, "Don't think of us for a moment. Jane and I can go home perfectly well on the street-cars."

Jane always loved a ride on a street-car, and it was twice as much fun with mother. It was so seldom she and mother went anywhere alone. But when they did, mother was such a good companion. She saw the funny side of everything and her eyes laughed to Jane's when a joke popped its head up. Jane was sorry when they got off at Bloor for that meant they were comparatively near home.

"Darling, how can this be Snowball?" exclaimed mother. "It does look like him, I admit . . . but it's a mile from home. . . ."

"Frank always said he'd been stolen, mummy. It must be Snowball . . . a strange cat wouldn't make a fuss over me like this. . . ."

"I shouldn't have thought Snowball would either," laughed mother.

"I expect he's glad to see a friend," said Jane. "We don't know how he's been treated. He feels awfully thin. We must take him home."

"On the street-car. . . ."

"We can't leave him here. I'll hold him . . . he'll be quiet."

Snowball was quiet for a few moments after they entered the car. There were not many people on it. Three boys at the far end sniggered as Jane sat down with her armful of cat. A pudgy child edged away from her in terror. A man with a pimply face scowled at her as if he were personally insulted by the sight of a Persian cat.

Suddenly Snowball seemed to go quite mad. He made one wild leap out of Jane's incautiously relaxed arms and went whizzing around the car, hurtling over the seats and hurling himself against the windows. Women shrieked. The pudgy child bounced up and screamed. The pimply-faced man's hat got knocked off by a wild Snowballian leap, and he swore. The conductor opened the door.

"Don't let the cat out," shrieked breathless, pursuing Jane. "Shut the door . . . shut it quick . . . it's my lost cat and I'm taking it home."

"You'd better keep hold of it then," said the conductor gruffly.

"Enough is as good as a feast," thought Snowball . . . evidently . . . for he allowed Jane to nab him. The boys all laughed insultingly as Jane walked back to her seat, looking neither to the right nor to the left. A button had burst off her slipper and she had stumbled and skinned her nose on the handle of a seat. But she was Jane victorious . . . as well as Victoria.

"Oh, darling . . . darling," said mother, in kinks of laughter . . . real laughter. When had mother laughed like that? If grandmother saw her!

"That's a dangerous animal," said the pimply-faced man warningly.

Jane looked at the boys. They made irresistibly comic faces at her and she made faces back. She liked Snowball better than she ever had before. But she did not relax her grip on him until she heard the door of 60 Gay clang behind her.

"We've found Snowball, grandmother," cried Jane triumphantly. "We've brought him home."

She released the cat who stood looking squiffily about.

"That is not Snowball," said grandmother. "That is a female cat."

Judging from grandmother's tone it was evident that there was something very disgraceful about a female cat!

The owner of the female cat was eventually discovered through another lost-and-found and no more Persians appeared at 60 Gay. Jane had ticked off December, and January was speeding away. The Lantern Hill news was still absorbing. Everybody was skating . . . on the pond or on the little round, tree-shadowed pool beyond the Corners. . . . Shingle Snowbeam had been queen in a Christmas concert and had worn a crown of scalloped tin; the new minister's wife could play the organ; the Jimmy John baby had eaten all the blooms off Mrs Jimmy John's Christmas cactus, every last one of them; Mrs Little Donald had had her gobbler for Christmas dinner . . . Jane remembered that magnificent white gobbler with the coral-red wattles and accorded him a meed of regret; Uncle Tombstone had butchered Min's ma's pig and Min's ma had sent a roast to dad; Min's ma had got a new pig to bring up, a nice pink pig exactly like Elder Tommy; Mr Spragg's dog at the Corners had bit the eye out of Mr Loney's dog and Mr Loney was going to law about it; Mrs Angus

Scatterby, whose husband had died in October, was disappointed over the result . . . "It's not so much fun being a widow as I expected," she was reported to have said; Sherwood Morton had gone into the choir and the managers had put a few more nails in the roof . . . Jane suspected Step-a-yard of that joke; there was wonderful coasting on Big Donald's hill; her dad had got a new dog, a fat white dog named Bubbles; her geraniums were blooming beautiful . . . "and me too far away to see them," thought Jane with a pang; William MacAllister had had a fight with Thomas Crowder because Thomas told William he didn't like the whiskers William would have had if he had had whiskers; they had had a silver thaw . . . Jane could see it . . . ice jewels . . . the maple wood a thing of unearthly splendour . . . every stalk sticking up from the crusted snow of the garden a spear of crystal; Step-a-yard was mudding . . . what on earth was mudding? . . . she must find out next summer; Mr Snowbeam's pig-house roof had blown off . . . "if he'd nailed the ridge-pole firmly on last summer when I advised him to, this wouldn't have happened," thought Jane virtuously; Bob Woods had fell on his dog and sprained his back . . . was it Bob's back or the dog's that was sprained? . . . Caraway Snowbeam had to have her tonsils out and was putting on such airs about it; Jabez Gibbs had set a trap for a skunk and caught his own cat; Uncle Tombstone had given all his friends an oyster supper; some said Mrs Alec Carson at the Corners had a new baby, some said she hadn't.

What had 60 Gay to offer against the colour and flavour of news like that? Jane ticked off January.

February was stormy. Jane spent many a blustery evening, while the wind howled up and down Gay Street, poring over seed catalogues, picking out things for dad to plant in the spring. She loved to read the description of the vegetables and imagine she saw rows of them at Lantern Hill. She copied down all Mary's best recipes to make them for dad next summer . . . dad who was likely at this very moment to be sitting cosily by their own fireside with two happy dogs curled up at his feet and outside a wild white night of drifting snow. Jane ticked off February.

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When Jane ticked off March she whispered, "Just two and a half months more." Life went on outwardly the same at 60 Gay and St Agatha's. Easter came and Aunt Gertrude, who had refused sugar in her tea all through Lent, took it again. Grandmother was buying the loveliest spring clothes for mother who seemed rather indifferent to them. And Jane was beginning to hear her Island calling to her in the night.

On a wild wet morning in late April the letter came. Jane, who had been watching for it for weeks and was beginning to feel a bit worried, carried it in to mother with the face of

One to whom glad news is sent
From the far country of his home after long banishment.

Mother was pale as she took it and grandmother was suddenly flushed.

"Another letter from Andrew Stuart?" said grandmother, as if the name blistered her lips.

"Yes," said mother faintly. "He . . . he says Jane Victoria must go back to him for the summer . . . if she wants to go. She is to make her own choice."

"Then," said grandmother, "she will not go."

"Of course you won't go, darling?"

"Not go! But I must go! I promised I'd go back," cried Jane.

"Your . . . your father will not hold you to that promise. He says expressly that you can choose as you please."

"I *want* to go back," said Jane. "I'm going back."

"Darling," said mother imploringly, "don't go. You grew away from me last summer. If you go again I'll lose more of you. . . ."

Jane looked down at the carpet and her lips set in a line that had an odd resemblance to grandmother's.

Grandmother took the letter from mother, glanced at it and looked at Jane.

"Victoria," she said, quite pleasantly for her, "I think you have not given the matter sufficient thought. I say nothing for myself . . . I have never expected gratitude . . . but your mother's wishes ought to carry some weight with you. Victoria"--grandmother's voice grew sharper---"please do me the courtesy of looking at me while I am speaking to you."

Jane looked at grandmother . . . looked her straight in the eyes, unflinchingly, unyieldingly. Grandmother seemed to put a certain unusual restraint on herself. She still spoke pleasantly.

"I have not mentioned this before, Victoria, but I decided some time ago that I would take you and your mother for a trip to England this summer. We will spend July and August there. You will enjoy it, I know. I think that between a summer in England and a summer in a hut in a country settlement on P. E. Island even you could hardly hesitate."

Jane did not hesitate. "Thank you, grandmother. It is very kind of you to offer me such a lovely trip. I hope you and mother will enjoy it. But I would rather go to the Island."

Even Mrs Robert Kennedy knew when she was beaten. But she could not accept defeat gracefully.

"You get that stubborn will of yours from your father," she said, her face twisted with anger. For the moment she looked simply like a very shrewish old spitfire. "You grow more like him every day of your life . . . you've got his very chin."

Jane was thankful she had got a will from someone. She was glad she looked like dad . . . glad her chin was like his. But she wished mother were not crying.

"Don't waste your tears, Robin," said grandmother, turning scornfully from Jane. "It's the Stuart coming out in her . . . you could expect nothing else. If she prefers her trumpery friends down there to you, there is nothing you can do about it. *I* have said all I intend to say on the matter."

Mother stood up and dabbed her tears away with a cobwebby handkerchief.

"Very well, dear," she said brightly and hardly. "You have made your choice. I agree with your grandmother that there is nothing more to be said."

She went out, leaving Jane with a heart that was almost breaking. Never in her life had mother spoken to her in that hard, brittle tone. She felt as if she had been suddenly pushed far, far away from her. But she did not regret her choice. She had no choice really. She had to go back to dad. If it came to choosing between him and mother . . . Jane rushed to her room, flung herself down on the big white bearskin, and writhed in a tearless agony no child should ever have to suffer.

It was a week before Jane was herself again, although mother, after that bitter little outburst, had been as sweet and loving as ever. When she had come in to say good night she had held Jane very tightly and silently.

Jane hugged her mother closer to her.

"I have to go, mother . . . I have to go . . . but I *do* love you. . . ."

"Oh, Jane, I hope you do . . . but sometimes you seem so far away from me that you might as well be beyond Sirius. Don't . . . don't let any one ever come between us. That is all I ask."

"No one can . . . no one wants to, mother."

In one way, it occurred to Jane, that was not strictly true. She had known for a long while that grandmother would like very well to come between them if she could only bring it about. But Jane also knew that by "no one" mother meant dad, and so her answer was true.

There was a letter from Polly Garland the last day of April . . . a jubilant Polly.

"We're all so glad you're coming back this summer, Jane. Oh, Jane, I wish you could see the pussy-willows in our swamp."

Jane wished so, too. And there were other fascinating bits of news in Polly's letter. Min's ma's cow was worn out and Min's ma was going to get a new one. Polly had a hen setting on nine eggs . . . Jane could see nine real live wee baby chicks running round. Well, father had promised her some hens this summer . . . Step-a-yard had told Polly to tell her it was a great spring and even the roosters were laying; the baby had been

christened William Charles and was toddling round everywhere and getting thin; Big Donald's dog had been poisoned, had had six convulsions, but had recovered.

"Only six more weeks." It was weeks now where it had been months. Down home the robins would be strutting round Lantern Hill and the mists would be coming in from the sea. Jane ticked off April.

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It was the last week in May that Jane saw the house. Mother had gone one evening to visit a friend who had just moved into a new house in the new Lakeside development on the banks of the Humber. She took Jane with her and it was a revelation to Jane whose only goings and comings had been so circumscribed that she had never dreamed there were such lovely places in Toronto. Why, it was just like a pretty country village out here . . . hills and ravines with ferns and wild columbines growing in them and rivers and trees . . . the green fire of willows, the great clouds of oaks, the plumes of pines and, not far away, the blue mist that was Lake Ontario.

Mrs Townley lived on a street called Lakeside Gardens, and she showed them proudly over her new house. It was so big and splendid that Jane did not feel very much interested in it and after a while she slipped away in the dusk to explore the street itself, leaving mother and Mrs Townley talking cupboards and bathrooms.

Jane decided that she liked Lakeside Gardens. She liked it because it twisted and curved. It was a friendly street. The houses did not look at each other with their noses in the air. Even the big ones were not snooty. They sat among their gardens, with spireas afoam around them and tulips and daffodils all about their toes, and said, "We have lots of room . . . we don't have to push with our elbows . . . we can afford to be gracious."

Jane looked them over carefully as she went by but it was not until she was nearly at the end of the street, where it turned into a road winding down to the lake, that she saw *her* house. She had liked a great many of the houses she had passed but when she saw this house she knew at first sight that it belonged to her . . . just as Lantern Hill did.

It was a small house for Lakeside Gardens but a great deal bigger than Lantern Hill. It was built of grey stone and had casement windows . . . some of them beautifully unexpected . . . and a roof of shingles stained a

very dark brown. It was built right on the edge of the ravine overlooking the tree-tops, with five great pines just behind it.

"What a darling place!" breathed Jane.

It was a new house: it had just been built and there was a For Sale sign on the lawn. Jane went all around it and peered through every diamond-paned window. There was a living-room that would really *live* when it was furnished, a dining-room with a door that opened into a sun-room and the most delightful breakfast nook in pale yellow, with built-in china-closets. It should have chairs and table of yellow, too, and curtains at the recessed window between gold and green that would look like sunshine on the darkest day. Yes, this house belonged to her . . . she could see herself in it, hanging curtains, polishing the glass doors, making cookies in the kitchen. She hated the For Sale sign. To think that somebody would be buying that house . . . *her* house . . . was torture.

She prowled round and round it. At the back the ground was terraced right down to the floor of the ravine. There was a rock garden and a group of forsythia bushes that must have been fountains of pale gold in early spring. Three flights of stone steps went down the terraces, with the delicacy of birch shadows about them, and off to one side was a wild garden of slender young Lombardies. A robin winked at her; a nice chubby cat came over from the neighbouring rock garden. Jane tried to catch him, but . . . "Excuse me. This is my busy day," said the cat and pattered down the stone steps.

Jane finally sat down on the front steps and gave herself up to a secret joy. There was a gap in the trees on the opposite side of the street through which a far, purple-grey hill showed. There were misty, pale green woods over the river. The woods all around Lantern Hill would be misty green, too. The banners of a city of night were being flaunted in the sunset sky behind the pines farther down. The gulls soared whitely up the river.

It grew darker. Lights bloomed out in the houses. Jane always felt the fascination of lighted houses in the night. There should be a light in the house behind her. She should be turning on the lights in it. She should be living here. She could be happy here. She could be friends with the wind

and the rain here: she could love the lake even if it did not have the sparkle and boom of gulf seas; she could put out nuts for the saucy squirrels and hang up bird-houses for the feathered folk and feed the pheasants Mrs Townley said lived in the ravine.

Suddenly there was a slim, golden new moon over the oaks and the world was still . . . almost as still as Queen's Shore on a calm summer night and there was a sparkling of lights along the lake drive like a necklace of gems on some dark beauty's breast.

"Where were you all the evening, darling?" asked mother as they drove home.

"Picking out a house to buy," said Jane dreamily. "I wish we lived here instead of at 60 Gay, mummy."

Mother was silent for a moment.

"You don't like 60 Gay very well, do you, dearest?"

"No," said Jane. And then, to her own amazement, added, "Do you?"

She was still more amazed when mother said, quickly and vehemently, "I hate it!"

That night Jane ticked off May. Only ten days more. It was days now where it had been weeks. Oh, suppose she took ill and couldn't go! But no! God wouldn't . . . couldn't!

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Grandmother coldly told mother to buy what clothes . . . *if any* . . . were necessary for Jane. Jane and mother had a happy afternoon's shopping. Jane picked her own things . . . things that would suit Lantern Hill and an Island summer. Mother insisted on some smart little knitted sweaters and one pretty dress of rose-pink organdie with delicious frills. Jane didn't know where she would ever wear it . . . it was too ornate for the little south church but she let mother buy it to please her. And mother got her the niftiest little green bathing-suit.

"Just think," reflected Jane happily, "in a week I'll be on Queen's Shore. I hope the water won't be too cold for swimming. . . ."

"We may be going to the Island in August," said Phyllis. "Dad says he hasn't been down for so long he'd like to spend another vacation there. If we do, we'll be stopping at the Harbour Head Hotel and it isn't very far from there to Queen's Shore. So we'll likely see you."

Jane didn't know whether she liked this idea or not. She didn't want Phyllis there, patronizing the Island . . . looking down her nose at Lantern Hill and the boot-shelf and the Snowbeams.

Jane went to the Maritimes with the Randolphs this year and they left on the morning train instead of the night. It was a dull, cloudy day but Jane was so happy she positively radiated happiness around her like sunshine. Mrs Randolph's opinion of Jane was the very opposite of what Mrs Stanley's had been. Mrs Randolph thought she had never met a more charming child, interested in everything, finding beauty everywhere, even in those interminable stretches of pulpwood lands and lumber forests in New Brunswick. Jane studied the time-table and hailed each station as a friend, especially the ones with quaint, delightful names . . . Red Pine, Bartibog, Memramcook. And then Sackville where they left the main line

and got on the little branch train to Cape Tormentine. How sorry Jane felt for any one who was not going to the Island!

Cape Tormentine . . . the car ferry . . . watching for the red cliffs of the Island . . . there they were . . . she had really forgotten how red they were . . . and beyond them misty green hills. It was raining again, but who cared? Everything the Island did was right. If it wanted to rain . . . why, rain was Jane's choice.

Having left Toronto on the morning train, they were in Charlottetown by mid-afternoon. Jane saw dad the moment she stepped off the train . . . grinning and saying, "Excuse me, but your face seems familiar. Are you by any chance . . ." but Jane had hurled herself at him. They had never been parted . . . she had never been away at all. The world was real again. She was Jane again. Oh, dad, dad!

She had been afraid Aunt Irene would be there, too . . . possibly Miss Lilian Morrow as well. But Aunt Irene, it transpired, was away on a visit to Boston and had taken Miss Morrow with her. Jane secretly hoped that Aunt Irene would be having such a fine time in Boston that she wouldn't be able to tear herself away for a long time.

"And the car has turned temperamental again," said dad. "I had to leave it in the garage at the Corners and borrow Step-a-yard's horse and buggy. You don't mind?"

Mind? Jane was delighted. She wanted that drive to Lantern Hill to be so slow that she could drink the road in as she drove along. And she liked to be behind a horse. You could talk to a horse as you never could to a car. The fact was, if dad had said they had to walk to Lantern Hill it wouldn't have mattered to Jane.

Dad put lean strong hands under her arms and swung her up to the buggy seat.

"Let's just go on from where we left off. You've grown since last summer, my Jane."

"An inch," said Jane proudly.

It had stopped raining. The sun was coming out. Beyond, the white wave crests on the harbour were laughing at her . . . waving their hands at

her.

"Let's go uptown and buy our house some presents. Jane."

"A double boiler that won't leak, dad. Booties always did, a little. And a potato-ricer . . . can we get a potato-ricer, dad?"

Dad thought the budget would stretch to a potato-ricer.

It was delightful, all of it. But Jane sparkled when they had left town behind them, going home to all the things they loved.

"Drive slow, dad. I don't want to miss *anything* on the road."

She was feasting her eyes on everything . . . spruce-clad hills, bits of gardens full of unsung beauty tucked away here and there, glimpses of sparkling sea, blue rivers . . . had those rivers really been so blue last summer? It had been an early spring and all the blossom show was over. Jane was sorry for that. She wondered if she would ever be able to get to the Island in time to see the Titus ladies' famous cherry walk in its spring-blow.

They called for a moment to see Mrs Meade, who kissed Jane and was sorry Mr Meade couldn't come out to see her, because he was in bed with an abyss in his ear. She gave them a packet of ham sandwiches and cheese to stay their stomachs if they were hungry on the road.

They heard the ocean before they saw it. Jane loved the sound. It was as if the spirit of the sea called to her. And then the first snuff of salt in the air . . . there was one particular hill where they always got the first tang. And from that same hill they caught their first far-away glimpse of Lantern Hill. It was wonderful to be able to see your own home so far off . . . to feel that every step the horse took was bringing you nearer to it.

From there on Jane was on her own stamping ground. It was so exciting to recognize all the spots along the road . . . green wood lanes, old beloved farms that held out their arms to her. The single row of spruces was still marching up Little Donald's hill. The dunes . . . and the fishing boats sailing in . . . and the little blue pond laughing at her . . . and Lantern Hill. Home after exile!

Somebody . . . Jane discovered later that it was the Snowbeams . . . had made "Welcome" with white stones in the walk. Happy was waiting for

them in the yard and nearly ate Jane alive. Bubbles, the new fat white dog, sat apart and looked at her, but he was so cute that Jane forgave him on the spot for being Bubbles.

The first thing was to visit every room and every room welcomed her back. Nothing was changed. She looked the house over to make sure nothing was missing. The little bronze soldier was still riding on his bronze horse and the green cat kept watch and ward over dad's desk. But the silver needed polishing and the geraniums needed pruning and when had the kitchen floor been scrubbed?

She had been away from Lantern Hill for nine months, but now it seemed to her that she had never been away at all. She had really been living here all along. It was her spirit's home.

There was a bunch of little surprises . . . nice surprises. They had six hens . . . there was a small henhouse built below the garden . . . there was a peaked porch roof built over the glass-paned door . . . and dad had got the telephone in.

First Peter was sitting on the doorstone when Jane came downstairs, with a big mouse in his mouth, very proud of his prowess as a hunter. Jane pounced on him, mouse and all, and then looked around for Second Peter. Where was Second Peter?

Dad put his arm closely around Jane.

"Second Peter died last week, Jane. I don't know what happened to him . . . he got sick. I had the vet for him but he could do nothing."

Jane felt a stinging in her eyes. She would not cry but she choked.

"I . . . I . . . didn't think anything I loved could die," she whispered into dad's shoulder.

"Ah, Jane, love can't fence out death. He had a happy life if a short one . . . and we buried him in the garden. Come out and see the garden, Jane . . . it burst into bloom as soon as it heard you were coming."

A wind ran through the garden as they entered it and it looked as if every flower and shrub were nodding a head or waving a hand at them. Dad had a corner where vegetables were all up in neat little rows and there were new beds of annuals.

"Miranda got what you wanted from the seedsman . . . I think you'll find everything, even the scabious. What do you want with scabious, Jane? It's an abominable name . . . sounds like a disease."

"Oh, the flowers are pretty, dad. And there are so many nicer names for them. . . . Lady's pincushion and Mourning Bride. Aren't the pansies lovely? I'm so glad I sowed them last August."

"You look like a pansy yourself, Jane . . . that red-brown one there with the golden eyes."

Jane remembered she had wondered if any one would ever compare her to a flower. In spite of the little pile of shore stones under the lilac . . . which Young John had piled over the grave of Second Peter . . . she was happy. Everything was so lovely. Even Mrs Big Donald's washing, streaming gallantly out against the blue sky on her hill-top, was charming. And away down by the Watch Tower the surf was breaking on the sand. Jane wanted to be out in that turmoil and smother of the waves. But that must wait till morning. Just now there was supper to be gotten.

"How jolly to be in a kitchen again," thought Jane, girding on an apron.

"I'm glad my cook is back," said dad. "I've practically lived on salt codfish all winter. It was the easiest thing to cook. But I don't deny the neighbours helped the commissariat out. And they've sent in no end of things for our supper."

Jane had found the pantry full of them. A cold chicken from the Jimmy Johns, a pat of butter from Mrs Big Donald, a jug of cream from Mrs Little Donald, some cheese from Mrs Snowbeam, some rose-red early radishes from Min's ma, a pie from Mrs Bell.

"She said she knew you could make as good pies as she can but she thought it would fill in till you'd have time to make some. There's a goodish bit of jam left yet and practically all the pickles."

Jane and dad talked as they ate supper. They had a whole winter of talk to catch up with. Had he missed her? Well, had he now? What did she think? They regarded each other with great content. Jane saw the new moon, over her right shoulder, through the open door. And dad got up and started the ship's clock. Time had begun once more.

Jane's friends, having considerately let her have her first rapture over, came to see her in the evening . . . the brown, rosy Jimmy Johns and the Snowbeams and Min and Ding-dong. They were all glad to see her. Queen's Shore had kept her in its heart. It was wonderful to be *somebody* again . . . wonderful to be able to laugh all you wanted to without any one resenting it . . . wonderful to be among happy people again. All at once Jane realized that nobody was happy at 60 Gay . . . except, perhaps, Mary and Frank. Grandmother wasn't . . . Aunt Gertrude wasn't . . . mother wasn't.

Step-a-yard whispered to her that he had brought over a wheelbarrow-load of sheep manure for her garden. "You'll find it by the gate . . . nothing like well-rotted sheep manure for a garden." Ding-dong had brought her a kitten to replace Second Peter . . . a scrap about as big as its mother's paw but which was destined to be a magnificent cat in black with four white paws. Jane and dad tried out all kinds of names on it before they went to bed and finally agreed on Silver Penny because of the round white spot between its ears.

To go to her own dear room where a young birch was fairly poking an arm in through the window from the steep hill-side . . . to hear the sound of the sea in the night . . . to waken in the morning and think she would be with dad all day! Jane sang the song of the morning stars as she dressed and got breakfast.

The first thing Jane did after breakfast was to run with the wind to the shore and take a wild exultant dip in the stormy waves. She fairly flung herself into the arms of the sea.

And what a forenoon it was, polishing silver and window-panes. Nothing had changed really, though there were surface changes. Step-a-yard had grown a beard because of throat trouble . . . Big Donald had repainted his house . . . the calves of last summer had grown up . . . Little Donald was letting his hill pasture go spruce. It was good to be home.

"Timothy Salt is going to take me codfishing next Saturday, dad."

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Uncle David and Aunt Sylvia and Phyllis came in July to the Harbour Head Hotel but could stay only a week. They brought Phyllis over to Lantern Hill late one afternoon and left her there while they went to visit friends in town.

"We'll come back for her around nine," said Aunt Sylvia, looking in horror at Jane who had just got back from Queen's Creek where she had been writing a love letter for Joe Gautier to his lady friend in Boston. Evidently there was nothing Jane was afraid to tackle. She was still wearing the khaki overalls she had worn while driving loads of hay into the Jimmy John barn all the forenoon. The overalls were old and faded and were not improved by a huge splash of green paint on a certain portion of Jane's anatomy. Jane had painted the old garden seat green one day and sat down on it before it was dry.

Dad was away so there was nothing to take the edge off Phyllis who was more patronizing than ever.

"Your garden is *quite* nice," she said.

Jane made a sound remarkably like a snort. Quite nice! When everybody admitted that it was the prettiest garden in the Queen's Shore district, except the Titus ladies'. Couldn't Phyllis see the wonder of those gorgeous splashes of nasturtiums, than which there was nothing finer in the county? Didn't she realize that those tiny red beets and cunning gold carrots were two weeks ahead of anybody else's for miles around? Could she possibly be in ignorance of the fact that Jane's pink peonies, fertilized so richly by Step-a-yard's sheep manure, were the talk of the community? But Jane was a bit ruffled that day anyhow. Aunt Irene and Miss Morrow had been up the day before, having returned from Boston, and Aunt Irene as usual had been sweet and condescending and as usual had rubbed Jane the wrong way.

"I'm so glad your father put the telephone in for you . . . I hoped he would after the little hint I gave him."

"I never wanted a telephone," said Jane, rather sulkily.

"Oh, but, darling, you should have one, when you're so much alone here. If anything happened . . ."

"What could happen here, Aunt Irene?"

"The house might take fire. . . ."

"It took fire last year and I put it out."

"Or you might take cramps in swimming. I've never thought it . . ."

"But if I did I could hardly phone from there," said Jane.

"Or if tramps came . . ."

"There's been only one tramp here this summer and Happy bit a piece out of his leg. I was very sorry for the poor man. . . . I put iodine on the bite and gave him his dinner."

"Darling, you *will* have the last word, won't you? So like your Grandmother Kennedy."

Jane didn't like to be told she was like her Grandmother Kennedy. Still less did she like the fact that after supper dad and Miss Morrow had gone off by themselves for a walk to the shore. Aunt Irene looked after them speculatively.

"They have so much in common . . . it is a pity . . ."

Jane wouldn't ask what was a pity. But she lay awake for a long time that night and had not quite recovered her poise when Phyllis came, condescending to her garden. But a hostess has certain obligations and Jane was not going to let Lantern Hill down, even if she did make sundry faces at her pots and pans. The supper she got up for Phyllis made that damsel open her eyes.

"Victoria . . . you didn't cook all these things yourself!"

"Of course. It's easy as wink."

Some of the Jimmy Johns and Snowbeams turned up after supper and Phyllis, whose complacency had been somewhat jarred by that supper, was really quite decent to them. They all went to the shore for a dip but Phyllis

was scared of the tumbling waves and would only sit on the sand and let them break over her while the others frolicked like mermaids.

"I didn't know you could swim like that, Victoria."

"You ought to see me when the water is calm," said Jane.

Still, Jane was rather relieved when it was time for Uncle David and Aunt Sylvia to come for Phyllis. Then the telephone rang and Uncle David was calling from town to say they were delayed by car trouble and wouldn't likely be able to come till late, so could the Lantern Hill folks see that Phyllis got to the hotel? Oh, yes, yes, indeed, Jane assured them.

"Dad can't be back till midnight so we'll have to walk," she told Phyllis. "I'll go with you. . . ."

"But it's four miles to the Harbour Head," gasped Phyllis.

"Only two by the short cut across the fields. I know it well."

"But it's dark."

"Well, you're not afraid of the dark, are you?"

Phyllis did not say whether she was afraid of the dark or not. She looked at Jane's overalls.

"Are you going in *them*!"

"No, I only wear these around home," explained Jane patiently. "I was driving in hay all the forenoon. Mr Jimmy John was away and Punch had a sore foot. I'll change in a jiffy and we'll start."

Jane slipped into a skirt and one of her pretty sweaters and fluffed a comb through her russet hair. People were beginning to look twice at Jane's hair. Phyllis looked more than twice at it. It was really wonderful hair. What had come over Victoria anyhow . . . Victoria whom she used to think so dumb? This tall, arms-and-legs girl, who somehow had ceased to be awkward in spite of arms and legs, was certainly not dumb. Phyllis gave a small sigh; and in that sigh, though neither of them was conscious of it, their former positions were totally reversed. Phyllis, instead of looking down on Jane, looked up to her.

The cool evening air was heavy with dew when they started. The winds were folded among the shadowy glens. The spice ferns were fragrant in the corners of the upland pastures. It was so calm and still you could hear all

kinds of far-away sounds . . . a cart rattling down Old Man Cooper's hill . . . muted laughter from Hungry Cove . . . an owl on Big Donald's hill calling to an owl on Little Donald's hill. But it got darker and darker. Phyllis drew close to Jane.

"Oh, Victoria, isn't this the darkest night that ever was!"

"Not so very. I've been out when it was darker."

Jane was not in the least scared, and Phyllis was much impressed. Jane felt that she was impressed . . . Jane knew she was scared . . . Jane began to like Phyllis.

They had to climb a fence and Phyllis fell over it, tore her dress and skinned her knee. So Phyllis couldn't even climb a fence, thought Jane . . . but thought it kindly, protectively.

"Oh, what's that?" Phyllis clutched Jane.

"That? Only cows."

"Oh, Victoria, I'm so scared of cows. I can't pass them . . . I *can't* . . . suppose they think . . ."

"Who cares what a cow thinks?" said Jane superbly. She had forgotten that she had once been fussy about cows and their opinion of her.

And Phyllis was crying. From that moment Jane lost every shred of her dislike of Phyllis. Phyllis, patronizing and perfect in Toronto, was very different from a terrified Phyllis in a back pasture on an Island hill.

Jane put her arm around her. "Come on, honey. The cows won't even look at you. Little Donald's cows are all friends of mine. And then it's just a walk through that bit of woods and we'll be at the hotel."

"Will you . . . walk between me . . . and the cows?" sobbed Phyllis.

Phyllis, holding tightly to Jane, was safely convoyed past the cows. The little wood lane that followed was terribly dark but it was short, and at its end were the lights of the hotel.

"You're all right now. I won't go in," said Jane. "I must hurry home to get some supper ready for father. I always like to be there when he comes home."

"Victoria! Are you going back *alone*?"

"Of course. How else would I go?"

"If you'd wait . . . father would drive you home when he comes. . . ."

Jane laughed.

"I'll be at Lantern Hill in half an hour. And I love walking."

"Victoria, you're the very bravest girl I ever saw in my life," said Phyllis earnestly. There wasn't a trace of patronage in her tone. There was never to be again.

Jane had a good time with herself on the walk back. The dear night brooded over her. Little wings were folded in nest homes, but there was wild life astir. She heard the distant bark of a fox . . . the sound of tiny feet in the fern . . . she saw the pale glimmer of night moths and took friendly counsel with the stars. Almost they sang, as if one star called to another in infinite harmony. Jane knew them all. Dad had given her lessons in astronomy all summer, having discovered that the only constellation she knew was the Big Dipper.

"This won't do, my Jane. You must know the stars. Not that I blame you for not being well acquainted with them. Humanity in its great lighted cities is shut out from the stars. And even the country folk are too used to them to realize their wonder. Emerson says something somewhere about how marvellous a spectacle we should deem them if we saw them only once in a thousand years."

So, with dad's field-glasses, they went star hunting on moonless nights and Jane became learned in lore of far-off suns.

"What star shall we visit to-night, Janelet? Antares . . . Fomalhaut . . . Sirius?"

Jane loved it. It was so wonderful to sit out on the hills with dad in the dark and the beautiful aloneness while the great worlds swung above them in their appointed courses. Polaris, Arcturus, Vega, Capella, Altair . . . she knew them all. She knew where to look for Cassiopeia enthroned on her jewelled chair, for the Milk Dipper upside down in the clear south-west, for the great Eagle flying endlessly across the Milky Way, for the golden sickle that reaped some harvest of heaven.

"Watch the stars whenever you are worried, Jane," said dad. "They'll steady you . . . comfort you . . . balance you. I think if I had watched them .

. . years ago . . . but I learned their lesson too late."

XXXVI

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"Aunt Elmira is dying again," said Ding-dong cheerfully.

Jane was helping Ding-dong shingle his father's small barn. Doing it very well, too, and getting no end of a kick out of it. It was such fun to be away up in the air where you could see over the whole countryside under its gay and windy clouds, and keep easy tabs on what your neighbours were doing.

"Is she very bad this time?" asked Jane, hammering diligently.

Jane knew all about Aunt Elmira and her dying spells. She took one every once in so long and it had really become a nuisance. Aunt Elmira picked such inconvenient times for dying. Always when something special was in the offing Aunt Elmira decided to die and sometimes seemed so narrowly to escape doing it that the Bells held their breaths. Because Aunt Elmira did really have a heart condition that was not to be depended on, and who knew but that sometime she really would die?

"And the Bells don't want her to die," Step-a-yard had told Jane. "They need her board . . . her annuity dies with her. Besides, she's handy to look after things when the Bells want to go gadding. And I won't say but they're real fond of her, too. Elmira is a good old scout when she isn't dying."

Jane knew that. She and Aunt Elmira were excellent friends. But Jane had never seen her when she was dying. She was too weak to see people then, she averred, and the Bells were afraid to risk it. Jane, with her usual shattering insight, had her own opinion about these spells of Aunt Elmira's. She could not have expressed it in terms of psychology, but she once told dad that Aunt Elmira was just trying to get square with something and didn't know it. She felt rather than knew that Aunt Elmira liked pretty well to be in the limelight and, as she grew older, resented more and more the fact that she was gently but inexorably being elbowed out of it. Near dying was one way of regaining the centre of the stage for a

time at least. Not that Aunt Elmira was a conscious pretender. She always honestly thought she was dying, and very melancholy she was about it. Aunt Elmira was not at all willing to give up the fascinating business of living.

"Awful," said Ding-dong. "Mother says she's worse than she's ever seen her. Dr Abbott says she's lost the will to live. Do you know what that means?"

"Sort of," admitted Jane cautiously.

"We try to keep her cheered up but she's awful blue. She won't eat and she doesn't want to take her medicine and ma's at her wit's end. We had everything planned for Brenda's wedding and now we don't know what to do."

"She hasn't died so often before," comforted Jane.

"But she's stayed in bed for weeks and weeks and said every day would be her last. Aunt Elmira," said Ding-dong reflectively, "has bid me a last good-bye seven times. Now, how can folks have a big wedding if their aunt is dying? And Brenda wants a splash. She's marrying into the Keyes and she says the Keyes expect it."

Mrs Bell asked Jane to have dinner with them, and Jane stayed because dad was away for the day. She watched Brenda arrange a tray for Aunt Elmira.

"I'm afraid she won't eat a bite of it," said Mrs Bell anxiously. She was a tired looking, pleasant-faced woman with kind, faded eyes, who worried a great deal over everything. "I don't know what she lives on. And she's so low in her spirits. That goes with the attacks, of course. She says she's too tired to make any effort to get better, poor thing. It's her heart, you know. We all try to keep her cheered up and never tell her anything to worry her. Brenda, mind you don't tell her the white cow choked to death this morning. And if she asks what the doctor said last night, tell her he thinks she's going to be all right soon. My father always said we should never tell sick people anything but the truth, but we must keep Aunt Elmira cheered up."

Jane did not join Ding-dong as soon as dinner was over. She hung about mysteriously till Brenda had come downstairs, reporting that Aunt Elmira couldn't touch a mouthful, and had taken her mother out to settle some question about the amount of wool to be sent to the carding mill. Then Jane sped upstairs.

Aunt Elmira was lying in bed, a tiny, shrunken creature with elf-locks of grey hair straggling about her wrinkled face. Her tray was on the table, untouched.

"If it isn't Jane Stuart!" said Aunt Elmira in a faint voice. "I'm glad someone hasn't forgotten me. So you've come to see the last of me, Jane?"

Jane did not contradict her. She sat down on a chair and looked very sadly at Aunt Elmira, who waved a claw-like hand at her tray.

"I haven't a speck of appetite, Jane. And it's just as well . . . ah me, it's just as well. I feel they begrudge me every bite I eat."

"Well," said Jane, "you know times are hard and prices low."

Aunt Elmira hadn't quite expected this. A spark came into her queer little amber eyes.

"I'm paying my board," she said, "and I earned my keep years before I started doing that. Ah well, I'm of no consequence to them now, Jane. We're not, after we get ill."

"No, I suppose not," agreed Jane.

"Oh, I know too well I'm a burden to every one. But it won't be for long, Jane, it won't be for long. The hand of death is on me, Jane. I realize that if nobody else does."

"Oh, I think they do," said Jane. "They're in a hurry to get the barn shingled before the funeral."

The spark in Aunt Elmira's eyes deepened.

"I s'pose they've got it all planned out, have they?" she said.

"Well, I did hear Mr Bell saying something about where he would dig the grave. But maybe he meant the white cow's. I think it was the cow's. It choked to death this morning, you know. And he said he must have the south gate painted white before . . . something . . . but I didn't just catch what."

"White? The idea! That gate has always been red. Well, why should I worry? I'm done with it all. You don't worry over things when you're listening for the footfalls of death, Jane. Shingling the barn, are they? I thought I heard hammering. That barn didn't need shingling. But Silas was always extravagant when there's no one to check him up."

"It's only the shingles that cost. The work won't cost anything. Ding-dong and I are doing it."

"I s'pose that's why you've got your overalls on. Time was I couldn't abide a girl in overalls. But what does it matter now? Only you shouldn't go barefoot, Jane. You might get a rusty nail in your foot."

"It's easier getting round the roof with no shoes. And little Sid got a rusty nail in his foot yesterday although he had shoes on."

"They never told me! I daresay they'll let that child have blood-poisoning when I'm not round to look after him. He's my favourite, too. Ah well, it won't be long now . . . they know where I want to be buried . . . but they might have waited till I was dead to talk of grave-digging."

"Oh, I'm sure it was the cow," said Jane. "And I'm sure they'll give you a lovely funeral. I think dad would write a beautiful obituary for you if I asked him."

"Oh, all right, all right. That's enough about it anyway. I don't want to be buried till I *am* dead. Did they give you a decent bite of dinner? Nettie is kind-hearted but she ain't the best cook in the world. I was a good cook. Ah, the meals I've cooked in my time, Jane . . . the meals I've cooked!"

Jane missed an excellent opportunity to assure Aunt Elmira she would cook many more meals.

"The dinner was very nice, Aunt Elmira, and we had such fun at it. Ding-dong kept making speeches and we laughed and laughed."

"They can laugh and me dying!" said Aunt Elmira bitterly. "And pussy-footing round in here with faces as long as to-day and to-morrow, pretending to be sorry. What was them dragging noises I've been hearing all the forenoon?"

"Mrs Bell and Brenda were rearranging the furniture in the parlour. I expect they are getting it ready for the wedding."

"Wedding? Did you say wedding? Whose wedding?"

"Why, Brenda's. She's going to marry Jim Keyes. I thought you knew."

"Course I knew they were going to be married sometime . . . but not with me dying. Do you mean to tell me they're going ahead with it right off?"

"Well, you know it's so unlucky to put a wedding off. It needn't disturb you at all, Aunt Elmira. You're up here in the ell all by yourself and . . ."

Aunt Elmira sat up in bed.

"You hand me my teeth," she ordered. "They're over there on the bureau. I'm going to eat my dinner and then I'm going to get up if it kills me. They needn't think they're going to sneak a wedding off me. I don't care what the doctor says. I've never believed I was half as sick as he made out I was anyhow. Half the valuable stock on the place dying and children having blood-poisoning and red gates being painted white! It's time somebody showed them!"

XXXVII

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Hitherto Jane's career at Lantern Hill had been quite unspectacular. Even when she was seen barefooted, nailing shingles on a barn roof, it made only a local sensation, and nobody but Mrs Solomon Snowbeam said much about it. Mrs Snowbeam was shocked. There was nothing, she said again, that child would stick at.

And then, all at once, Jane made the headlines. The Charlottetown papers gave her the front page for two days, and even the Toronto dailies gave her a column, with a picture of Jane and the lion . . . some lion . . . thrown in. The sensation at 60 Gay must be imagined. Grandmother was very bitter . . . "just like a circus girl" . . . and said it was exactly what might have been expected. Mother thought, but did not say, that no one could really have expected to hear of Jane ambling about P. E. Island leading lions by the mane.

There had been rumours about the lion for a couple of days. A small circus had come to Charlottetown and a whisper got about that their lion had escaped. Certainly people who went to the circus saw no lion. There was a good deal of excitement. Once a monkey had escaped from a circus, but what was that to a lion? It did not seem certain that any one had actually seen the lion, but several were reported to have seen him . . . here, there and the other place, miles apart. Calves and young pigs were said to have disappeared. There was even a yarn that a short-sighted old lady in the Royalty had patted him on the head and said, "Nice dogglums." But that was never substantiated. The Royalty people indignantly denied that there were any lions at loose ends. Such yarns were bad for tourist traffic.

"I've no chance of seeing it," said Mrs Louisa Lyons mournfully.
"That's what comes of being bed-ridden. You miss everything."

Mrs Louisa had been an invalid for three years and was reputed not to have put a foot under her without assistance in all that time, but it was not

thought she missed much of what went on at the Corners and Queen's Shore and Harbour Head for all that.

"I don't believe there is any lion," said Jane, who had been shopping at the Corners and had dropped in to see Mrs Lyons. Mrs Lyons was very fond of Jane and had only one grudge against her. She could never pick anything out of her about her father and mother and Lilian Morrow. And not for any lack of trying.

"Closer than a clam, that girl is when she wants to be," complained Mrs Louisa.

"Then how did such a yarn start?" she demanded of Jane.

"Most people think the circus people never had a lion . . . or it died . . . and they want to cover it up because the people who came to see a lion would be disappointed and mad."

"But they've offered a reward for it."

"They've only offered twenty-five dollars. If they had really lost a lion, they'd offer more than that."

"But it's been *seen*."

"I think folks just imagined they saw it," said Jane.

"And I can't even imagine it," groaned Mrs Louisa. "And it's no use to *pretend* I imagined it. Every one knows a lion wouldn't come upstairs to my room. If I could see it, I'd likely have my name in the paper. Martha Tolling has had her name in the paper twice this year. Some people have all the luck."

"Martha Tolling's sister died in Summerside last week."

"What did I tell you?" said Mrs Louisa in an aggrieved tone. "Now she'll be wearing mourning. I never have a chanct to wear mourning. Nobody has died in our family for years. And black always did become me. Ah well, Jane, you have to take what you get in this world and that's what I've always said. Thank you for dropping in. I've always said to Mattie, 'There's something about Jane Stuart I like, say what you will. If her father is queer, it isn't her fault.' Mind that turn of the stairs, Jane. I haven't been down it for over a year but someone is going to break her neck there sometime."

It happened the next day . . . a golden August afternoon when Jane and Polly and Shingle and Caraway and Punch and Min and Ding-dong and Penny and Young John had gone in a body to pick blueberries in the barrens at Harbour Head and were returning by a short cut across the back pastures of the Corners farms. In a little wood glen, full of golden-rod, where Martin Robbin's old hay-barn stood, they met the lion face to face.

He was standing right before them among the golden-rod, in the shadows of the spruces. For one moment they all stood frozen in their tracks. Then, with a simultaneous yell of terror . . . Jane yelled with the best of them . . . they dropped their pails, bolted through the golden-rod and into the barn. The lion ambled after them. More yells. No time to close the ramshackle old door. They flew up a wobbly ladder which collapsed and fell as Young John scrambled to safety beside the others on the crossbeam, too much out of breath to yell again.

The lion came to the door, stood there a minute in the sunshine, slowly switching his tail back and forth. Jane, recovering her poise, noticed that he was somewhat mangy and lank, but he was imposing enough in the narrow doorway and nobody could reasonably deny that he was a lion.

"He's coming in," groaned Ding-dong.

"Can lions climb?" gasped Shingle.

"I . . . I . . . don't think so," said Polly, through her chattering teeth.

"Cats can . . . and lions are just big cats," said Punch.

"Oh, don't talk," whispered Min. "It may excite him. Perhaps if we keep perfectly quiet he will go away."

The lion did not seem to have any intention of going away. He came in, looked about him and lay down in a patch of sunshine with the air of a lion who had any amount of spare time.

"He don't seem cross," muttered Ding-dong.

"Maybe he isn't hungry," said Young John.

"Don't excite him," implored Min.

"He isn't paying any attention to us," said Jane. "We needn't have run. . . I don't believe he'd have hurt us."

"You run as fast as us," said Penny Snowbeam. "I'll bet you was as scared as any of us."

"Of course I was. It was all so sudden. Young John, stop shaking like that. You'll fall off the beam."

"I'm . . . I'm . . . scared," blubbered Young John shamelessly.

"You laughed at me last night and said I'd be scared to pass a patch of cabbages," said Caraway venomously. "Now look at yourself."

"None of your lip. A lion isn't a cabbage," whimpered Young John.

"Oh, you *will* excite him," wailed Min in despair.

The lion suddenly yawned. Why, thought Jane, he looks exactly like that jolly old lion in the movie news. Jane shut her eyes.

"Is she praying?" whispered Ding-dong.

Jane was thinking. It was absolutely necessary for her to get home soon if she were going to have dad's favourite scalloped potatoes for his supper. Young John was looking absolutely green. Suppose he got sick? She believed the lion was only a tired, harmless old animal. The circus people had said he was gentle as a lamb. Jane opened her eyes.

"I am going down to take that lion up to the Corners and shut him up in George Tanner's empty barn," she said. "That is, unless you'll all come down with me and slip out and shut him up here."

"Oh, Jane . . . you wouldn't . . . you couldn't . . ."

The lion gave a rap or two on the floor with his tail. . . . The protests died away in strangled yelps.

"I'm going," said Jane. "I tell you, he's tame as tame. But you stay here quietly till I get him well away. And don't yell, any of you."

With bulging eyes and bated breath the whole gang watched Jane slide along the beam to the wall where she climbed nimbly down to the floor. She marched up to the lion and said, "Come."

The lion came.

Five minutes later Jake MacLean looked out of the door of his blacksmith shop and saw Jane Stuart go past leading a lion by the mane . . . "within spitting distance," as he solemnly averred later. When Jane and the lion--who seemed to be getting on very well with each other--had

disappeared around the back of the shop, Jake sat down on a block and wiped the perspiration from his brow with a bandanna.

"I know I'm not quite sane by times, but I didn't think I was that far gone," he said.

Julius Evans, looking out of his store-window, didn't believe what he saw either. It couldn't be . . . it simply wasn't happening. He was dreaming . . . or drunk . . . or crazy. Aye, that was it . . . crazy. Hadn't there been a year when his father's cousin was in the asylum? Those things ran in families . . . you couldn't deny it. Anything was easier than to believe that he had seen Jane Stuart go up the side-lane by his store towing a lion.

Mattie Lyons ran up to her mother's room, uttering piteous little gasps and cries.

"What's the matter?" demanded Mrs Louisa. "Screeching like you was demented!"

"Oh, ma, ma, Jane Stuart's bringing a lion here!"

Mrs Louisa got out of bed and got to the window just in time to see the lion's tail disappear with a switch around the back porch.

"I've got to see what she's up to!" Leaving the distracted Mattie wringing her hands by the bed, Mrs Louisa got herself out of the room and down the staircase with its dangerous turn as nimbly as she had ever done in her best days. Mrs Parker Crosby, who lived next door and had a weak heart, nearly died of shock when she saw Mrs Louisa skipping across her back yard.

Mrs Louisa was just in time to see Jane and the lion ambling up Mr Tanner's pasture on their way to the hay-barn. She stood there and watched Jane open the door . . . urge the lion in . . . shut it and bolt it. Then she sat down on the rhubarb patch, and Mattie had to get the neighbours to carry her back to bed.

Jane went into the store on her way back and asked Julius Evans, who was still leaning palely over the collection of fly-spotted jugs on his counter, to call Charlottetown and let the circus people know that their lion was safe in Mr Tanner's barn. She found her dad in the kitchen at Lantern Hill looking rather strange.

"Jane, it's the wreck of a fine man that you see before you," he said hollowly.

"Dad . . . what is the matter?"

"Matter, says she, with not a quiver in her voice. You don't know . . . I hope you never will know . . . what it is like to look casually out of a kitchen window, where you are discussing the shamefully low price of eggs with Mrs Davy Gardiner, and see your daughter . . . your only daughter . . . stepping high, wide and handsome through the landscape with a lion. You think you've suddenly gone mad . . . you wonder what was in that glass of raspberry shrub Mrs Gardiner gave you to drink. Poor Mrs Davy! As she remarked pathetically to me, the sight jarred her slats. She may get over it, Jane, but I fear she will never be the same woman again."

"He was only a tame old lion," said Jane impatiently. "I don't know why people are making such a fuss over it."

"Jane, my adored Jane, for the sake of your poor father's nerves, don't go leading any more lions about the country, tame or otherwise."

"But it's not a thing that's likely to happen again, dad," said Jane reasonably.

"No, that is so," said dad, in apparent great relief. "I perceive that it is not likely to become a habit. Only, Janelet, if you some day take a notion to acquire an ichthyosaurus for a family pet, give me a little warning, Jane. I'm not as young as I used to be."

Jane couldn't understand the sensation the affair made. She hadn't the least notion she was a heroine.

"I was frightened of him at first," she told the Jimmy Johns. "But not after he yawned."

"You'll be too proud to speak to us now, I s'pose," said Caraway Snowbeam wistfully, when Jane's picture came out in the papers. Jane and the barn and the lion had all been photographed . . . separately. Everybody who had seen them became important. And Mrs Louisa Lyons was a rapturous woman. Her picture was in the paper, too, and also a picture of the rhubarb patch.

"Now I can die happy," she told Jane. "If Mrs Parker Crosby had got her picture in the paper and I hadn't, I couldn't have stood it. I'm sure I don't know what they did put her picture in for. She didn't see you and the lion . . . she only saw me. Well, there are some folks who are never contented unless they're in the limelight."

Jane was to go down in Queen's Shore history as the girl who thought nothing of roaming round the country with a lion or two for company.

"A girl absolutely without fear," said Step-a-yard, bragging everywhere of his acquaintance with her.

"I realized the first time I saw her that she was superior," said Uncle Tombstone. Mrs Snowbeam reminded everybody that she had always said that Jane Stuart was a child who would stick at nothing. When Ding-dong Bell and Punch Garland would be old men, they would be saying to each other, "Remember the time Jane Stuart and us drove that lion into the Tanner barn? Didn't we have a nerve?"

XXXVIII

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A letter from Jody, blotted with tears, gave Jane a bad night in late August. It was to the effect that she was really going to be sent to an orphanage at last.

"Miss West is going to sell her boarding-house in October and retire," wrote Jody. "I've cried and cried, Jane. I hate the idea of going into an orphanage and I'll never see you, Jane, and oh, Jane, it isn't fair. I don't mean Miss West isn't fair but something isn't."

Jane, too, felt that something wasn't being fair. And she felt that 60 Gay without her back yard confabs with Jody would be just a little more intolerable than it ever had been. But that didn't matter as much as poor Jody's unhappiness. Jane thought Jody might really have an easier time in an orphanage than she had as the little unpaid drudge at 58 Gay, but still she didn't like the idea any better than Jody did. She looked so downhearted that Step-a-yard noticed it when he came over with some fresh mackerel for her which he had brought from the harbour.

"Do for your dinner to-morrow, Jane."

"To-morrow is the day for corned beef and cabbage," said Jane in a scandalized voice. "But we'll have them the day after. That's Friday anyhow. Thank you, Step-a-yard."

"Anything troubling you, Miss Lion-tamer?"

Jane opened her heart to him.

"You just don't know what poor Jody's life's been," she concluded.

Step-a-yard nodded.

"Put upon and overworked and knocked about from pillar to post, I reckon. Poor kid."

"And nobody to love her but me. If she goes to an orphanage, I'll never see her."

"Well, now." Step-a-yard scratched his head reflectively. "We must put our heads together, Jane, and see what can be done about it. We must think hard, Jane, we must think hard."

Jane thought hard to no effect but Step-a-yard's meditations were more fruitful.

"I've been thinking," he told Jane next day, "what a pity it is the Titus ladies couldn't adopt Jody. They've been wanting to adopt a child for a year now but they can't agree on what kind of a child they want. Justina wants a girl and Violet wants a boy, though they'd both prefer twins of any sex. But suitable twins looking for parents are kind of scarce, so they've given up that idea. Violet wants a dark complected one with brown eyes and Justina wants a fair one with blue eyes. Violet wants one ten years old and Justina wants one about seven. How old is Jody?"

"Twelve, like me."

Step-a-yard looked gloomy.

"I dunno. That sounds too old for them. But it wouldn't do any harm to put it up to them. You never can tell what them two girls will do."

"I'll see them to-night right after supper," resolved Jane.

She was so excited that she salted the apple sauce and no one could eat it. As soon as the supper dishes were out of the way . . . and that night they were not proud of the way they were washed . . . Jane was off.

There was a wonderful sunset over the harbour, and Jane's cheeks were red from the stinging kisses of the wind by the time she reached the narrow perfumed Titus lane where the trees seemed trying to touch you. Beyond was the kind, old, welcoming house, mellowed in the sunshine of a hundred summers, and the Titus ladies were sitting before a beechwood fire in their kitchen. Justina was knitting and Violet was clipping creamy bits of toffee from a long, silvery twist, made from a recipe Jane had never yet been able to wheedle out of them.

"Come in, dear. We are glad to see you," said Justina, kindly and sincerely, though she looked a little apprehensively over Jane's shoulder, as if she feared a lion might be skulking in the shadows. "It was such a

cool evening we decided to have a fire. Sit down, dear. Violet, give her some toffee. She is growing very tall, isn't she?"

"And handsome," said Violet. "I like her eyes, don't you, sister?"

The Titus ladies had a curious habit of talking Jane over before her face as if she wasn't there. Jane didn't mind . . . though they were sometimes not so complimentary.

"I prefer blue eyes, as you know," said Justina, "but her hair is beautiful."

"Hardly dark enough for my taste," said Violet. "I have always admired black hair."

"The only kind of hair that is really beautiful is curling, red-gold hair," said Justina. "Her cheek-bones are rather high but her insteps are admirable."

"She is very brown," sighed Violet. "But they tell me that is fashionable now. We were very careful of our complexions when we were girls. Our mother, you remember, always made us wear sunbonnets when we went out of doors . . . pink sunbonnets."

"Pink sunbonnets! They were blue," said Justina.

"Pink," said Violet positively.

"Blue," said Justina, just as positively.

They argued for ten minutes over the colour of the sunbonnets. When Jane saw they were getting rather warm over it, she mentioned that Miranda Garland was going to be married in two weeks' time. The Titus ladies forgot the sunbonnets in their excitement.

"Two weeks? That's very sudden, isn't it? Of course, it is to Ned Mitchell. I heard they were engaged . . . even that seemed to me very precipitate when they had been keeping company only six months . . . but I had no idea they were to be married so soon," said Violet.

"She does not want to take a chance on his falling in love with a thinner girl," said Justina.

"They've hurried up the wedding so that I can be bridesmaid," explained Jane proudly.

"She is only seventeen," said Justina disapprovingly.

"Nineteen, sister," said Violet.

"Seventeen," said Justina.

"Nineteen," said Violet.

Jane cut short what seemed likely to be another ten minutes' argument over Miranda's age by saying she was eighteen.

"Oh, well, it's easy enough to get married," said Justina. "The trick nowadays seems to be to stay married."

Jane winced. She knew Justina hadn't meant to hurt her. But her father and mother hadn't stayed married.

"I think," said Violet, kindling, "that P. E. Island has a very good record in that respect. Only two divorces since Confederation . . . sixty-five years."

"Only two real ones," conceded Justina. "But quite a few . . . at least half a dozen . . . imitation ones . . . going to the States and getting a divorce there. And likely to be more from all accounts."

Violet sent Justina a warning glance which Jane, luckily for her peace of mind, did not intercept. Jane had come to the conclusion that she must mention the object of her call now if she were ever going to do it. No use waiting for a chance . . . you just had to make your chance.

"I hear you want to adopt a child," she said, with no beating round the bush.

Again the sisters interchanged glances.

"We've been talking of it off and on for a couple of years," acknowledged Justina.

"We've got along as far as both being willing for a little girl," said Violet with a sigh. "I would have liked a boy . . . but, as Justina pointed out, neither of us knows anything about dressing a boy. It would be more fun dressing a little girl."

"A little girl about seven, with blue eyes and fair curling hair and a rosebud mouth," said Justina firmly.

"A little girl of ten with sloe-black hair and eyes and a creamy skin," said Violet with equal firmness. "I have given in to you about the sex, sister. It is your turn to give in about the age and the complexion."

"The age possibly, but not the complexion."

"I know the very girl for you," said Jane brazenly. "She's my chum in Toronto, Jody Turner. I know you'll love her. Let me tell you about her."

Jane told them. She left nothing untold that might incline them in Jody's favour. When she had said what she wanted to say, she held her tongue. Jane always knew the right time to be silent.

The Titus ladies were silent also. Justina went on knitting and Violet, having finished snipping toffee, took up her crocheting. Now and then they lifted their eyes, looked at each other and dropped them again. The fire crackled companionably.

"Is she pretty?" said Justina at last. "We wouldn't want an ugly child."

"She will be very handsome when she grows up," said Jane gravely. "She has the loveliest eyes. Just now she is so thin . . . and never has any nice clothes."

"She hasn't too much bounce, has she?" said Violet. "I don't like bouncing girls."

"She doesn't bounce at all," said Jane. But this was a mistake because . . .

"I like a little bounce," said Justina.

"She wouldn't want to wear pants, would she?" said Violet. "So many girls do nowadays."

"I'm sure Jody wouldn't want to wear anything you didn't like," answered Jane.

"I wouldn't mind girls wearing pants so much if only they didn't call them pants," said Justina. "But not pyjamas . . . never, never pyjamas."

"Certainly not pyjamas," said Violet.

"Suppose we got her and couldn't love her?" said Justina.

"You couldn't help loving Jody," said Jane warmly. "She's sweet."

"I suppose," hesitated Justina, "she wouldn't . . . there wouldn't be any danger . . . of there being . . . of her having . . . unpleasant insects about her?"

"Certainly not," said Jane shocked. "Why, she lives on Gay Street." For the first time in her life Jane found herself standing up for Gay Street. But

even Gay Street must have justice. Jane felt sure there were no unpleasant insects on Gay Street.

"If . . . if she had . . . there is such a thing as a fine-tooth comb," said Violet heroically.

Justina drew her black eyebrows together.

"There has never been any necessity for such an article in our family, Violet."

Again they knitted and crocheted and interchanged glances. Finally Justina said, "No."

"No," said Violet.

"She is too dark," said Justina.

"She is too old," said Violet.

"And now that is settled perhaps Jane would like to have some of that Devonshire cream I made to-day," said Justina.

In spite of the Devonshire cream and the huge bunch of pansies Violet insisted on giving her, Jane went home with a leaden weight of disappointment on her heart. She was surprised to find that Step-a-yard was quite satisfied.

"If they'd told you they'd take her, you'd likely get word to-morrow that they'd changed their minds. Now it'll be the other way round."

Still, Jane was very much amazed to get a note from the Titus ladies the next day, telling her that they had, on second thought, decided to adopt Jody and would she come down and help them settle the necessary arrangements.

"We have concluded she is not too old," said Violet.

"Or too dark," said Justina.

"You'll love her I know," said happy Jane.

"We shall endeavour to be to her as the best and kindest of parents," said Justina. "We must give her music lessons of course. Do you know if she is musical, Jane?"

"Very," said Jane, remembering Jody and the piano at 58.

"Think of filling her stocking at Christmas," said Violet.

"We must get a cow," said Justina. "She must have a glass of warm milk every night at bedtime."

"We must furnish the little south-west room for her," said Violet. "I think I should like a carpet of pale blue, sister."

"She must not expect to find here the excitements of the mad welter of modern life," said Justina solemnly, "but we shall try to remember that youth requires companionship and wholesome pleasures."

"Won't it be lovely to knit sweaters for her?" said Violet.

"We must get out those little wooden ducks our uncle whittled for us when we were small," said Justina.

"It will be nice to have something young to love," said Violet. "I'm only sorry she isn't twins."

"On mature reflection," said Justina, "I am sure you will agree that it is wise for us to find out how we get along with one child before we embark on twins."

"Will you let her keep a cat?" asked Jane. "She loves cats."

"I don't suppose we would object to a bachelor cat," said Justina cautiously.

It was eventually arranged that when Jane went back to Toronto she was to find someone coming to the Island who might bring Jody along with her, and Justina solemnly counted out and gave into Jane's keeping enough money for Jody's travelling expenses and clothes suitable for such travelling.

"I'll write to Miss West right away and tell her, but I'll ask her not to say anything about it to Jody till I get back. I want to tell her . . . I want to see her eyes."

"We are much obliged to you, Jane," said Justina, "you have fulfilled the dream of our lives."

"Completely," said Violet.

XXXIX

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"If we could only make the summer last longer," sighed Jane.

But that was impossible. It was September now, and soon she must put off Jane and put on Victoria. But not before they got Miranda Jimmy John married off. Jane was so busy helping the Jimmy Johns get ready for the wedding that Lantern Hill hardly knew her except to get a bite for dad. And as bridesmaid she had a chance to wear the adorable dress of rose-pink organdie with its embroidered blue and white spots which mother had gotten her. But once the wedding was over, Jane had to say good-bye to Lantern Hill again . . . to the windy silver of the gulf . . . to the pond . . . to Big Donald's wood-lane . . . which, alas, was going to be cut down and ploughed up . . . to her garden which was to her a garden that never knew winter because she saw it only in summer . . . to the wind that sang in the spruces and the gulls that soared whitely over the harbour . . . to Bubbles and Happy and First Peter and Silver Penny. And dad. But though she felt sad over it, there was none of the despair that had filled her heart the year before. She would be back next summer . . . that was an understood thing now. She would be seeing mother again . . . she did not dislike the idea of going back to St Agatha's . . . there was Jody's delight to be looked forward to . . . and dad was going with her as far as Montreal.

Aunt Irene came to Lantern Hill the day before Jane left and seemed to want to say something she couldn't quite manage to say. When she went away, she held Jane's hand and looked at her very significantly.

"If you hear some news before next spring, lovey . . ."

"What news am I likely to hear?" said Jane with the terrible directness which Aunt Irene always found so trying.

"Oh . . . one can never tell . . . who knows what changes may come before then?"

Jane was uncomfortable for a few moments and then shrugged it away. Aunt Irene was always giving mysterious hints about something, throwing out wisps of insinuation that clung like cobwebs. Jane had learned not to mind Aunt Irene.

"I've never really been able to make as much of that child as I would like," mourned Aunt Irene to a friend. "She holds you at arms' length somehow. The Kennedys were all hard . . . her mother now . . . you'd think to look at her she was all rose and cream and sweetness. But underneath, my dear . . . hard as a rock. She ruined my brother's life and did everything . . . *everything*, I understand . . . to set his child against him."

"Jane seems very fond of her father now," said the friend.

"Oh, I'm sure she is . . . as fond as she can be of any one. But Andrew is a very lonely man. And I don't know if he will ever be anything else. Lately I've been wondering . . ."

"Wondering if he'll finally work himself up to getting a United States divorce and marrying Lilian Morrow," said the friend bluntly. She had had much experience in filling up Irene's blanks.

Aunt Irene looked quite shocked at such plain speaking.

"Oh, I wouldn't like to say that. . . . I don't really know . . . but of course Lilian is the girl he should have married instead of Robin Kennedy. They have so much in common. And though I don't approve of divorce ordinarily . . . I think it shocking . . . still . . . there are special circumstances. . . ."

Jane and dad had a delightful trip to Montreal.

"How nice to think we're an hour younger than we were," said dad, as he put his watch back at Campbellton. He said things like that all along the way about everything.

Jane clung to him very tightly in Montreal station.

"Dad darling . . . but I'll be back next summer, you know."

"Of course," said dad. Then he added:

"Jane, here's a spot of hard cash for you. I don't suppose you get a very huge allowance at 60 Gay."

"None at all. . . . But can you spare this, dad?" Jane was looking at the bills he had put into her hand. "Fifty dollars? That's an awful lot of money, dad."

"This has been a good year for me, Jane. Editors have been kind. And somehow . . . when you're about I write more . . . I've felt some of my old ambition stirring this past year."

Jane, who had spent all her lion-reward money on things for Lantern Hill and treats for the young fry who had been associated with her in the episode, tucked the money away in her bag, reflecting that it would come in handy at Christmas.

"Life, deal gently with her . . . love, never desert her," said Andrew Stuart, looking after the Toronto train as it steamed away.

Jane found that grandmother had had her room done over for her. When she went up to it, she discovered a wonderful splendour of rose and grey, instead of the old gloom. Silvery carpet . . . shimmering curtains . . . chintz chairs . . . cream-tinted furniture . . . pink silk bedspread. The old bearskin rug . . . the only thing she had really liked . . . was gone. So was the cradle. The big mirror had been replaced by a round rimless one.

"How do you like it?" asked grandmother watchfully.

Jane recalled her little room at Lantern Hill with its bare floor and sheepskin rug and white spool bed covered with its patchwork quilt.

"It is very beautiful, grandmother. Thank you very much."

"Fortunately," said grandmother, "I did not expect much enthusiasm."

After grandmother had gone out, Jane turned her back on the splendour and went to the window. The only things of home were the stars. She wondered if dad were looking at them . . . no, of course he wouldn't be home yet. But they would all be there in their proper places . . . the North Star over the Watch Tower, Orion sparkling over Big Donald's hill. And Jane knew that she would never be the least bit afraid of grandmother again.

"Oh, Jane," said Jody. "Oh, Jane!"

"I know you'll be happy with the Titus ladies, Jody. They're a little old-fashioned but they're so kind . . . and they have the loveliest garden. You won't have to make a garden by sticking faded flowers in a plot any more. You'll see the famous cherry walk in bloom . . . I've never seen that."

"It's like a beautiful dream," said Jody. "But oh, Jane, I hate to leave you."

"We'll be together in the summers instead of in the winters. That will be the only difference, Jody. And it will be ever so much nicer. We'll swim . . . I'll teach you the crawl. Mother says her friend, Mrs Newton, will take you as far as Sackville, and Miss Justina Titus will meet you there. And mother is going to get your clothes."

"I wonder if it will be like this when I go to heaven," said Jody breathlessly.

Jane missed Jody when she went, but life was growing full. She loved St Agatha's now. She liked Phyllis quite well and Aunt Sylvia said she had really never seen a child blossom out socially as Victoria had done. Uncle William couldn't floor her when he asked about capitals now. Uncle William was beginning to think that Victoria had something in her, and Jane was finding that she liked Uncle William reasonably well. As for grandmother . . . well, Mary told Frank it did her heart good to see Miss Victoria standing up to the old lady.

"Not that stands up is just the right word either. But the madam can't put it over her like she used to. Nothing she says seems to get under Miss Victoria's skin any more. And does that make her mad! I've seen her turn white with rage when she'd said something real venomous and Miss Victoria just answering in that respectful tone of hers that's just as good as telling her she doesn't care a hoot about what any Kennedy of them all says any more."

"I wish Miss Robin would learn that trick," said Frank.

Mary shook her head.

"It's too late for her. She's been under the old lady's thumb too long. Never went against her in her life except for one thing and lived to repent

that, so they say. And anyhow she's a cat of a different breed from Miss Victoria."

One November evening mother went again to Lakeside Gardens to see her friend and took Jane with her. Jane welcomed the chance to see her house again. Would it be sold? Unbelievably it wasn't. Jane's heart gave a bound of relief. She was so afraid it would be. She couldn't understand how it wasn't, it seemed so entirely desirable to her. She did not know that the builder had decided that he had made a mistake when he built a little house in Lakeside Gardens. People who could live in Lakeside Gardens wanted bigger houses.

Though Jane was glad to her toes that her house hadn't been sold, she was inconsistently resentful that it was unlighted and unwarmed. She hated the oncoming winter because of the house. Its heart must ache with the cold then. She sat on the steps and watched the lights blooming out along the Gardens and wished there was one in her house. How the dead brown leaves still clinging to the oaks rustled in the windy night! How the lights along the lake shore twinkled through the trees of the ravine! And how she hated, yes, positively hated, the man who would buy this house!

"It just isn't fair," said Jane. "Nobody will ever love it as I do. It really belongs to me."

The week before Christmas Jane bought the materials for a fruit-cake out of the money dad had given her and compounded it in the kitchen. Then she expressed it to dad. She did not ask any one's permission for all this . . . just went ahead and did it. Mary held her tongue and grandmother knew nothing about it. But Jane would have sent it just the same if she had.

One thing made Christmas Day memorable for Jane that year. Just after breakfast Frank came in to say that long distance was calling Miss Victoria. Jane went to the hall with a puzzled look . . . who on earth could be calling her on long distance? She lifted the receiver to her ear.

"Lantern Hill calling Superior Jane! Merry Christmas and thanks for that cake," said dad's voice as distinctly as if he were in the same room.

"Dad!" Jane gasped. "Where are you?"

"Here at Lantern Hill. This is my Christmas present to you, Janelet. Three minutes over a thousand miles."

Probably no two people ever crammed more into three minutes. When Jane went back to the dining-room, her cheeks were crimson and her eyes glowed like jewels.

"Who was calling you, Victoria?" asked grandmother.

"Dad," said Jane.

Mother gave a little choked cry. Grandmother wheeled on her furiously.

"Perhaps," she said icily, "you think he should have called you."

"He should," said Jane.

XL

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At the end of a blue and silver day in March, Jane was doing her lessons in her room and feeling reasonably happy. She had had a rapturous letter from Jody that morning . . . all Jody's letters were rapturous . . . giving her lots of interesting news from Queen's Shore . . . she had had a birthday the week before and was now in her leggy teens . . . and two bits of luck had come her way that afternoon. Aunt Sylvia had taken her and Phyllis with her on a shopping expedition, and Jane had picked up two delightful things for Lantern Hill . . . a lovely old copper bowl and a comical brass knocker for the glass-paned door. It was the head of a dog with his tongue hanging waggishly out and a real dog-laugh in his eyes.

The door opened and mother came in, ready dressed for a restaurant dinner party. She wore the most wonderful sheath dress of ivory taffeta, with a sapphire velvet bow at the back and a little blue velvet jacket over her lovely shoulders. Her slippers were blue, with slender golden heels and she had her hair done in a new way . . . a sleek flat top to her head and a row of tricky little curls around her neck.

"Oh, mums, you are perfectly lovely," said Jane, looking at her with adoring eyes. And then she added something she had never intended to say . . . something that seemed to rush to her lips and say itself:

"I do wish dad could see you now."

Jane pulled herself up in dire dismay. She had been told never to mention dad to mother . . . and yet she had done it. And mother was looking as if she had been struck in the face.

"I do not suppose," said mother bitterly, "that he would be at all interested in the sight."

Jane said nothing. There seemed to be nothing she could say. How did she know whether dad would be interested or not? And yet . . . and yet . . . she was sure he still loved mother.

Mother sat down on one of the chintz chairs and looked at Jane.

"Jane," she said, "I am going to tell you something about my marriage. I don't know what you have heard about the other side of it . . . there was another side, of course . . . but I want you to hear my side. It is better you should know. I should have told you before . . . but . . . it hurt me so."

"Don't tell it now, if it hurts you, darling," said Jane earnestly.
(Thinking--*I know more about it than you suppose already.*)

"I must. There are some things I want you to understand . . . I don't want you to blame me too much. . . ."

"I don't blame you at all, mother."

"Oh, I was to blame a great deal . . . I see that now when it is too late. I was so young and foolish . . . just a careless, happy little bride. I . . . I . . . ran away to be married to your father, Jane."

Jane nodded.

"How much do you know, Jane?"

"Just that you ran away and were very happy at first."

"Happy? Oh, Jane Victoria, I was . . . I was . . . so happy. But it really was . . . a very unfortunate marriage, dearest."

(*That sounds like something grandmother said.*)

"I shouldn't have treated mother so . . . I was all she had left after my father died. But she forgave me. . . ."

(*And set herself to work to make trouble between you and dad.*)

"But we were happy that first year, Jane Victoria. I worshipped Andrew . . . that smile of his . . . you know his smile. . . ."

(*Do I know it?*)

"We had such fun together . . . reading poetry by driftwood fires down at the harbour . . . we always made a rite of lighting those fires . . . life was wonderful. I used to welcome the days then as much as I shrink from them now. We had only one quarrel that first year . . . I forget what it was about . . . something silly . . . I kissed the frown on his forehead and all was well again. I knew there was no woman in the world so happy as I was. If it could have lasted!"

"Why didn't it last, mother?"

"I . . . I hardly know. Of course I wasn't much of a housekeeper but I don't think it was that. I couldn't cook, but our maid didn't do so badly and Little Aunt Em used to come in and help. She was a darling. And I couldn't keep accounts straight ever . . . I would add up a column eight times and get a different answer every time. But Andrew just laughed over that. Then you were born. . . ."

"And that made all the trouble," cried Jane, in whom that bitter thought had persisted in rankling.

"Not at first . . . oh, Jane Victoria darling, not at first. But Andrew never seemed the same after. . . ."

(I wonder if it wasn't you who had changed, mother.)

"He was jealous of my love for you . . . he was, Jane Victoria. . . ."

(Not jealous . . . no, not jealous. A little hurt . . . he didn't like to be second with you after he had been first . . . he thought he came second then.)

"He used to say 'your child' . . . 'your daughter,' as if you weren't his. Why, he used to make fun of you. Once he said you had a face like a monkey."

(And no Kennedy can take a joke.)

"You hadn't . . . you were the cutest little thing. Why, Jane Victoria darling, you were just a daily miracle. It was such fun to tuck you in at night . . . to watch you when you were asleep."

(And you were just a darling big baby yourself, mother.)

"Andrew was angry because I couldn't go out with him as much as before. How could I? It would have been bad for you if I'd taken you and I couldn't leave you. But he didn't care really . . . he never did except for a little while at the first. He cared far more for that book of his than for me. He would shut himself up with it for days at a time and forget all about me."

(And yet you think he was the only jealous one.)

"I suppose I simply wasn't capable of living with a genius. Of course, I knew I wasn't clever enough for him. Irene let me see that she thought that. And he cared far more for her than for me. . . ."

(Oh, no, not that . . . never that!)

"She had far more influence over him than I had. He told her things before he told me. . . ."

(Because she was always trying to pick them out of him before he was ready to tell any one.)

"He thought me such a child that if he had a plan, he consulted her before he consulted me. Irene made me feel like a shadow in my own house. She liked to humiliate me, I think. She was always sweet and smiling . . ."

(She would be!)

". . . but she always blew my candles out. She patronized me. . . ."

(Do I know it!)

"'I've noticed,' she would say. That had such a sting as if she'd been spying on me right along. Andrew said I was unreasonable . . . I wasn't . . . but he always sided with her. Irene never liked me. She had wanted Andrew to marry another girl . . . I was told she had said from the first that she knew our marriage would be a failure. . . ."

(And did her best to make it one.)

"She kept pushing us apart . . . here a little . . . there a little. I was helpless."

(Not if you had had a wee bit of backbone, mummy.)

"Andrew was annoyed because I didn't like her, and yet he hated my family. He couldn't speak of mother without insulting her . . . he didn't want me to visit her . . . get presents from her . . . money . . . oh, Jane Victoria, that last year was dreadful. Andrew never looked at me if he could help it."

(Because it hurt him too much.)

"It seemed as if I were married to a stranger. We were always saying bitter things to each other. . . ."

(That verse I read in the Bible last night, "Death and Life are in the power of the tongue" . . . it's true . . . it's true!)

"Then mother wrote and asked me to come home for a visit. Andrew said, 'Go if you want to' . . . just like that. Irene said it would give things a

chance to heal up. . . ."

(I can see her smiling when she said it.)

"I went. And . . . and . . . mother wanted me to stay with her. She could see I was so unhappy. . . ."

(And took her chance.)

"I couldn't go on living with a person who hated me, Jane Victoria . . . I couldn't . . . so I . . . I wrote him and told him I thought it would be better for both of us if I didn't go back. I . . . I don't know . . . nothing seemed real somehow . . . if he had written and asked me to go back . . . but he didn't. I never heard from him . . . till that letter came asking for you."

Jane had kept silence while mother talked, thinking things at intervals, but now she could keep silence no longer.

"He *did* write . . . he wrote and asked you to come back . . . and you never answered . . . you never answered, mother."

Mother and daughter looked at each other in the silence of the big, beautiful, unfriendly room.

After a little, mother whispered, "I never got it, Jane Victoria."

They said nothing more about it. Both of them knew quite well what had happened to the letter.

"Mother, it isn't too late yet. . . ."

"Yes, it is too late, dear. Too much has come between us. I can't break with mother again . . . she'd never forgive me again . . . and she loves me so. I'm all she has. . . ."

"Nonsense!" Jane was as brusque as any Stuart of them all. "She has got Aunt Gertrude and Uncle William and Aunt Sylvia."

"It's . . . it's not the same. She didn't love *their* father. And . . . I can't stand up to her. Besides, he doesn't want me any more. We're strangers. And oh, Jane Victoria, life's slipping away . . . like that . . . through my fingers. The harder I try to hold it, the faster it slips. I've lost you. . . ."

"Never, mother!"

"Yes, you belong more to him than to me now. I don't blame you . . . you can't help it. But you'll belong a little more to him every year . . . till there'll be nothing left for me."

Grandmother came in. She looked at them both suspiciously.

"Have you forgotten you are dining out, Robin?"

"Yes, I think I had," said mother strangely. "But never mind. . . . I've remembered now. I . . . I shan't forget again."

Grandmother lingered for a moment after mother had gone out.

"What have you been saying to upset your mother, Victoria?"

Jane looked levelly at grandmother.

"What happened to the letter father wrote mother long ago, asking her to go back to him, grandmother?"

Grandmother's cold cruel eyes suddenly blazed.

"So that's it? Do you think it any of your business exactly?"

"Yes, I think it is, since I am their child."

"I did what was right with it . . . I burned it. She had seen her mistake . . . she had come back to me, as I always knew she would . . . I was not going to have her misled again. Don't begin plotting, Victoria. I am a match for you all yet."

"No one is plotting," said Jane. "There is just one thing I want to tell you, grandmother. My father and mother love each other yet . . . I *know* it."

Grandmother's voice was ice.

"They do not. Your mother has been happy all these years till you began stirring up old memories. Leave her alone. She is my daughter . . . no outsider shall ever come between us again . . . neither Andrew Stuart nor you nor any one. And you will be good enough to remember that."

XLI

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The letters came on the afternoon of the last day of March. Jane was not at St Agatha's . . . she had had a touch of sore throat the day before and mother thought it was wiser for her to stay home. But her throat was better now and Jane was reasonably happy. It was almost April . . . if not quite spring yet, at least the hope of spring. Just a little over two months and she would keep her tryst with June at Lantern Hill. Meanwhile, she was planning some additions to her garden . . . for one thing, a row of knightly hollyhocks along the dike at the bottom. She would plant the seeds in August and they would bloom the *next* summer.

Grandmother and Aunt Gertrude and mother had all gone to Mrs Morrison's bridge and tea, so Mary brought the afternoon mail to Jane who pounced joyfully on three letters for herself. One from Polly . . . one from Shingle . . . one . . . Jane recognized Aunt Irene's copper-plate writing.

She read Polly's first . . . a good letter, full of fun and Lantern Hill jokes. There was one bit of news about dad in it . . . he was planning a trip to the States very soon . . . Boston or New York or somewhere . . . Polly seemed rather vague. And Polly wound up with a paragraph that gave Jane a good laugh . . . her last laughter for some time . . . the last laughter of her childhood, it always seemed to Jane, looking back on it from later years.

Polly wrote: "Mr Julius Evans was awful mad last week, a rat got drowned in his cask of new maple syrup and he made a terrible fuss over such a waste. But dad says he isn't sure it was wasted, so we are getting our syrup from Joe Baldwin's to be on the safe side."

Jane was still laughing over this when she opened Shingle's letter. A paragraph on the second page leaped to her eye.

"Everybody is saying your dad is going to get a Yankee divorce and marry Lilian Morrow. Will she be your mother then? How do you like the idea? I guess she'll be your stepmother . . . only that sounds so funny when

your own mother is still alive. Will your name be changed? Caraway says not . . . but they do such queer things in the States. Anyway, I hope it won't make any difference about you coming to Lantern Hill in the summer."

Jane felt literally sick and cold with agony as she dropped the letter and snatched up Aunt Irene's. She had been wondering what Aunt Irene could be writing to her about . . . she knew now.

The letter told Jane that Aunt Irene suspected that her brother Andrew intended going to the States and living there long enough to get a United States divorce.

"Of course, it may not be true, lovey. He hasn't told me. But it is all over the country, and where there is so much smoke there must be some fire, and I think you ought to be prepared, lovey. I know that several of his friends advised him long ago to get a divorce. But as he never discussed it with me, I have given no advice for or against. For some reason I am at a loss to understand, he has shut me out of his confidence these past two years. But I have felt that the state of his affairs has long been very unsatisfactory. I'm sure you won't worry over this. . . . I wouldn't have told you if I thought it would worry you. You have too much good sense . . . I've often remarked how old you are for your years. But of course, if it is true, it may make some difference to you. He might marry again."

If you have seen a candle-flame blown out, you will know what Jane looked like as she went blindly to the window. It was a dark day with occasional showers of driving rain. Jane looked at the cruel, repellent, merciless street but did not see it. She had never felt such dreadful shame . . . such dreadful misery. Yet it seemed to her she ought to have known what was coming. There had been a hint or two last summer . . . she remembered Lilian Morrow's caressing "'Drew" and dad's pleasure in her company. And now . . . if this hideous thing were true, she would never spend a summer at Lantern Hill again. Would *they* dare to live at Lantern Hill? Lilian Morrow her mother! Nonsense! Nobody could be her mother except mother. The thing was unthinkable. But Lilian Morrow would be father's wife.

This had all been going on in these past weeks when she had been so happy, looking forward to June.

"I don't suppose I'll ever feel glad again," thought Jane drearily. Everything was suddenly meaningless . . . she felt as if she were far removed from everything . . . as if she were looking at life and people and things through the big end of Timothy Salt's telescope. It seemed years since she had laughed over Polly's tale of Mr Evans's wasted--or unwasted--maple syrup.

Jane walked the floor of her room all the rest of that afternoon. She dared not sit down for a moment. It seemed that as long as she kept moving her pain marched with her and she could bear it. If she were to stop, it would crush her. But by dinner-time Jane's mind had begun to function again. She must know the truth and she knew what she must do to learn it. And it must be done at once.

She counted the money she had left from father's gift. Yes, there was just enough for a one-way ticket to the Island. Nothing left over for meals or a Pullman but that did not matter. Jane knew she would neither eat nor sleep until she knew. She went down to her dinner, which Mary had spread for her in the breakfast-room, and tried to eat something lest Mary should notice.

Mary did.

"Your throat worse, Miss Victoria?"

"No, my throat is all right," said Jane. Her voice sounded strange in her ears . . . as if it belonged to someone else. "Do you know what time mother and grandmother will be home, Mary?"

"Not till late, Miss Victoria. You know your grandmother and Aunt Gertrude are going to dinner at your Uncle William's, meeting some of your grandmother's old friends from the west, and your mother is going to a party. She won't be home till after midnight, but Frank goes for the old lady at eleven."

The International Limited left at ten. Jane had all the time she needed. She went upstairs and packed a small hand grip with some necessities and a box of gingersnaps that were on her bedroom table. The darkness outside

the window seemed to look in at her menacingly. The rain spat against the panes. The wind was very lonely in the leafless elms. Once Jane had thought the rain and the wind were friends of hers, but they seemed enemies now. Everything hurt her. Everything in her life seemed uprooted and withered. She put on her hat and coat, picked up her bag, went to mother's room and pinned a little note on a pillow, and crept down the stairs. Mary and Frank were having their dinner in the kitchen and the door was shut. Very quietly Jane telephoned for a taxi; when it came, she was waiting outside for it. She went down the steps of 60 Gay and out of the grim iron gates for the last time.

"The Union Station," she told the taxi-driver. They moved swiftly away over the wet street that looked like a black river with drowned lights in it. Jane was going to ask for the truth from the only one who could tell it to her . . . her father.

XLII

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Jane left Toronto Wednesday night. On Friday night she reached the Island. The train whirled over the sodden land. Her Island was not beautiful now. It was just like every other place in the ugliness of very early spring. The only beautiful things were the slim white birches on the dark hills. Jane had sat bolt upright all the time of her journey, night and day, subsisting on what ginger-snaps she could force herself to swallow. She hardly moved but she felt all the time as if she were running . . . running . . . trying to catch up with someone on a road . . . someone who was getting farther and farther ahead all the time.

She did not go on to Charlottetown. She got off at West Trent, a little siding where the train stopped when it was asked to. It was only five miles from there to Lantern Hill. Jane could hear plainly the roar of the distant ocean. Once she would have thrilled to it . . . that sonorous music coming through the windy, dark grey night on the old north shore. Now she did not notice it.

It had been raining but it was fine now. The road was hard and rough and dotted with pools of water. Jane walked through them unheedingly. Presently there were dark spires of fir-trees against a moonrise. The puddles on the road turned to pools of silver fire. The houses she passed seemed alien . . . remote . . . as if they had closed their doors to her. The spruces seemed to turn cold shoulders on her. Far away over the pale moonlit landscape was a wooded hill with the light of a house she knew on it. Would there be a light at Lantern Hill or would dad be gone?

A dog of her acquaintance stopped to speak to her, but Jane ignored him. Once a car bumped past her, picking her out with its lights and splashing her from head to foot with mud. It was Joe Weeks who, being a cousin of Mrs Meade, had the family trick of malapropisms and told his sceptical wife when he got home that he had met either Jane Stuart or her

operation on the road. Jane felt like an apparition. It seemed to her that she had been walking for ever . . . must go on walking for ever . . . through this ghostly world of cold moonlight.

There was Little Donald's house with a light in the parlour. The curtains were red, and when they were drawn at night, the light shone rosily through them. Then Big Donald's light . . . and at last the lane to Lantern Hill.

There was a light in the kitchen!

Jane was trembling as she went up the rutted lane and across the yard, past the forlorn and muddy garden where the poppies had once trembled in silken delight, to the window. What a sadly different home-coming from what she had planned!

She looked in. Dad was reading by the table. He wore his shabby old tweed suit and the nice grey tie with tiny red flecks in it, which Jane had picked out for him last summer. The Old Contemptible was in his mouth and his legs were cocked up on the sofa where two dogs and First Peter were sleeping. Silver Penny was stretched out against the warm base of the petrol lamp on the table. In the corner was a sinkful of dirty dishes. Even at that moment a fresh pang tore Jane's heart at the sight.

A moment later an amazed Andrew Stuart looked up to see his daughter standing before him . . . wet-footed, mud-splashed, white-faced, with her eyes so terribly full of misery that a hideous fear flashed into his mind. Was her mother . . . ?

"Good heavens, Jane!"

Literally sick from fear, Jane bluntly put the question she had come so far to ask.

"Father, are you going to get a divorce and marry Miss Morrow?"

Dad stared at her for a moment. Then, "No!" he shouted. And again, "No . . . no . . . no! Jane, who told you such a thing?"

Jane drew a deep breath, trying to realize that the long nightmare was over. She couldn't . . . not just at first.

"Aunt Irene wrote me. She said you were going to Boston. She said . . ."

"Irene! Irene is always getting silly notions in her head. She means well but . . . Jane, listen, once for all. I am the husband of one wife and I'll never be anything else."

Dad broke off and stared at Jane.

Jane, who never cried, was crying.

He swept her into his arms.

"Jane, you darling little idiot! How could you believe such stuff? I like Lilian Morrow . . . I've always liked her. And I could never love her in a thousand years. . . . Going to Boston? Of course, I'm going to Boston. I've great news for you, Jane. My book has been accepted after all. I'm going to Boston to arrange the details with my publishers. Darling, do you mean to tell me that you walked from West Trent? How lucky I hung a moon out! But you are just sopping. What you need is a brew of good hot cocoa, and I'm going to make it for you. Look pleasant, dogs. Purr, Peter. Jane has come home."

XLIII

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The next day Andrew Stuart sent for the doctor, and a few hours later the nurse came. The word went around Queen's Shore and the Corners that Jane Stuart was very ill with a dangerous type of pneumonia.

Jane could never remember anything of those first days very clearly. She was delirious almost from the beginning of her illness. Faces came and went dimly . . . dad's in anguish . . . a grave, troubled doctor . . . a white-capped nurse . . . finally another face . . . only *that* must be a dream . . . mother couldn't be there . . . not even if Jane could smell the faint perfume of her hair. Mother was in far-away Toronto.

As for her own whereabouts, Jane did not know where she was . . . she only knew that she was a lost wind seeking some lost word for ever. Not till she found that word could she stop being a wind and be Jane Stuart again. Once, it seemed to her, she heard a woman crying wildly and someone saying, "There is still hope, dearest, there is still a little hope." And again . . . long afterwards . . . "There will be a change, one way or another, to-night."

"And then," said Jane, so clearly and distinctly that she startled every one in the room, "I shall find my lost word."

Jane didn't know how long it was after that to the day when she understood that she was Jane again and no longer a lost wind.

"Am I dead?" she wondered. She lifted her arms feebly and looked at them. They had grown terribly thin, and she could hold them up only a second, but she concluded that she was alive.

She was alone . . . not in her own little room at Lantern Hill but in father's. She could see through the window the gulf sparkling and the sky so softly, so ethereally blue over the haunted dunes. Somebody . . . Jane found out later it had been Jody . . . had found the first mayflowers and put them in a vase on the table by her bed.

"I'm . . . sure . . . the house . . . is listening," thought Jane.

To what was it listening? To two people who seemed to be sitting on the stairs outside. Jane felt that she ought to know who they were, but the knowledge just escaped her. Fitful sentences came to her, though they were uttered in muted tones. At the time they meant nothing to Jane, but she remembered them . . . remembered them always.

"Darling, I didn't mean a word of those dreadful things I said. . . ." "If I had got your letter . . ." "My poor little love . . ." "Have you ever thought of me in all those years?" . . . "Have I thought of anything else, loveliest?" . . . "When your wire came . . . mother said I mustn't . . . she was terrible . . . as if anything could keep me from Jane. . . ." "We were just two very foolish people . . . is it too late to be wise, Robin?"

Jane wanted to hear the answer to that question . . . wanted to dreadfully . . . somehow she felt that it would be of tremendous importance to everybody in the world. But a wind came in from the sea and blew the door shut.

"I'll never know now," she whispered piteously to the nurse when she came in.

"Know what, dear?"

"What she said . . . the woman on the stairs . . . her voice was so like mother's. . . ."

"It was your mother, dear. Your father wired for her as soon as I came. She has been here right along . . . and if you're good and don't get excited, you can have just a peep at her this evening."

"So," said Jane feebly, "mother must have stood up to grandmother for once."

But it was several days before Jane was allowed to have her first real talk with father and mother. They came in together, hand in hand, and stood looking down at her. Jane knew that there were three tremendously happy people in the room. Never had she seen either of them looking like that. They seemed to have drunk from some deep well of life, and the draught had made them young lovers again.

"Jane," said dad, "two foolish people have learned a little wisdom."

"It was all my fault that we didn't learn it long ago," said mother. There was a sound of tears in her voice and a sound of laughter.

"Woman!" What a delightful way dad had of saying "woman"! And mother's laugh . . . was it a laugh or a chime of bells? "I will not have you casting slurs at my wife. Your fault indeed! I will not have one particle of the blame taken away from me. Look at her, Jane . . . look at my little golden love. How did you ever have the luck to pick such a mother, Jane? The moment I saw her I fell in love with her all over again. And now we will all go in search of ten lost years."

"And will we live here at Lantern Hill?" asked Jane.

"Always, when we're not living somewhere else. I'm afraid with two women on my hands I'll never get my epic on Methuselah's life finished now, Jane. But there will be compensations. I think a honeymoon is coming to us. As soon as you're on the hoof, Superior Jane, we'll all take a little run up to Boston. I have to see about that book of mine, you know. Then a summer here and in the fall . . . the truth is, Jane, I've been offered the assistant editorship of *Saturday Evening* with a healthy salary. I had meant to refuse, but I think I'll have to accept. What about it, Jane? The winters in Toronto . . . the summers at Lantern Hill?"

"And we'll never have to say good-bye again. Oh, dad! But . . ."

"But me no buts. What is troubling you, dearest dear?"

"We . . . we won't have to live at 60 Gay?"

"Not by a jugful! A house we must have, of course. How you live is much more important than where you live . . . but we must have a roof over us."

Jane thought of the little stone house in Lakeside Gardens. It had not been sold yet. They would buy it. It would live . . . they would give it life. Its cold windows would shine with welcoming lights. Grandmother, stalking about 60 Gay, like a bitter old queen, her eyes bright with venom, forgiving or unforgiving as she chose, could never make trouble for them again. There would be no more misunderstanding. She, Jane, understood them both and could interpret them to each other. And have an eye on the housekeeping as well. It all fitted in as if it had been planned ages ago.

"Oh, dad," cried this happiest of all Janes, "I know the very house."
"You would," said dad.

Short Stories

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CHRONICLES OF AVONLEA

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To the memory of
MRS. WILLIAM A. HOUSTON,
a dear friend, who has gone beyond
The unsung beauty hid
life's common things below.

— Whittier

The Hurrying of Ludovic

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Anne Shirley was curled up on the window-seat of Theodora Dix's sitting-room one Saturday evening, looking dreamily afar at some fair starland beyond the hills of sunset. Anne was visiting for a fortnight of her vacation at Echo Lodge, where Mr. and Mrs. Stephen Irving were spending the summer, and she often ran over to the old Dix homestead to chat for awhile with Theodora. They had had their chat out, on this particular evening, and Anne was giving herself over to the delight of building an air-castle. She leaned her shapely head, with its braided coronet of dark red hair, against the window-casing, and her gray eyes were like the moonlight gleam of shadowy pools.

Then she saw Ludovic Speed coming down the lane. He was yet far from the house, for the Dix lane was a long one, but Ludovic could be recognized as far as he could be seen. No one else in Middle Grafton had such a tall, gently-stooping, placidly-moving figure. In every kink and turn of it there was an individuality all Ludovic's own.

Anne roused herself from her dreams, thinking it would only be tactful to take her departure. Ludovic was courting Theodora. Everyone in Grafton knew that, or, if anyone were in ignorance of the fact, it was not because he had not had time to find out. Ludovic had been coming down that lane to see Theodora, in the same ruminating, unhastening fashion, for fifteen years!

When Anne, who was slim and girlish and romantic, rose to go, Theodora, who was plump and middle-aged and practical, said, with a twinkle in her eye:

"There isn't any hurry, child. Sit down and have your call out. You've seen Ludovic coming down the lane, and, I suppose, you think you'll be a crowd. But you won't. Ludovic rather likes a third person around, and so do I. It spurs up the conversation as it were. When a man has been coming

to see you straight along, twice a week for fifteen years, you get rather talked out by spells.”

Theodora never pretended to bashfulness where Ludovic was concerned. She was not at all shy of referring to him and his dilatory courtship. Indeed, it seemed to amuse her.

Anne sat down again and together they watched Ludovic coming down the lane, gazing calmly about him at the lush clover fields and the blue loops of the river winding in and out of the misty valley below.

Anne looked at Theodora’s placid, finely-moulded face and tried to imagine what she herself would feel like if she were sitting there, waiting for an elderly lover who had, seemingly, taken so long to make up his mind. But even Anne’s imagination failed her for this.

“Anyway,” she thought, impatiently, “if I wanted him I think I’d find some way of hurrying him up. Ludovic SPEED! Was there ever such a misfit of a name? Such a name for such a man is a delusion and a snare.”

Presently Ludovic got to the house, but stood so long on the doorstep in a brown study, gazing into the tangled green boskage of the cherry orchard, that Theodora finally went and opened the door before he knocked. As she brought him into the sitting-room she made a comical grimace at Anne over his shoulder.

Ludovic smiled pleasantly at Anne. He liked her; she was the only young girl he knew, for he generally avoided young girls — they made him feel awkward and out of place. But Anne did not affect him in this fashion. She had a way of getting on with all sorts of people, and, although they had not known her very long, both Ludovic and Theodora looked upon her as an old friend.

Ludovic was tall and somewhat ungainly, but his unhesitating placidity gave him the appearance of a dignity that did not otherwise pertain to him. He had a drooping, silky, brown moustache, and a little curly tuft of imperial, — a fashion which was regarded as eccentric in Grafton, where men had clean-shaven chins or went full-bearded. His eyes were dreamy and pleasant, with a touch of melancholy in their blue depths.

He sat down in the big bulgy old armchair that had belonged to Theodora's father. Ludovic always sat there, and Anne declared that the chair had come to look like him.

The conversation soon grew animated enough. Ludovic was a good talker when he had somebody to draw him out. He was well read, and frequently surprised Anne by his shrewd comments on men and matters out in the world, of which only the faint echoes reached Deland River. He had also a liking for religious arguments with Theodora, who did not care much for politics or the making of history, but was avid of doctrines, and read everything pertaining thereto. When the conversation drifted into an eddy of friendly wrangling between Ludovic and Theodora over Christian Science, Anne understood that her usefulness was ended for the time being, and that she would not be missed.

"It's star time and goodnight time," she said, and went away quietly.

But she had to stop to laugh when she was well out of sight of the house, in a green meadow bestarred with the white and gold of daisies. A wind, odour-freighted, blew daintily across it. Anne leaned against a white birch tree in the corner and laughed heartily, as she was apt to do whenever she thought of Ludovic and Theodora. To her eager youth, this courtship of theirs seemed a very amusing thing. She liked Ludovic, but allowed herself to be provoked with him.

"The dear, big, irritating goose!" she said aloud. "There never was such a lovable idiot before. He's just like the alligator in the old rhyme, who wouldn't go along, and wouldn't keep still, but just kept bobbing up and down."

Two evenings later, when Anne went over to the Dix place, she and Theodora drifted into a conversation about Ludovic. Theodora, who was the most industrious soul alive, and had a mania for fancy work into the bargain, was busying her smooth, plump fingers with a very elaborate Battenburg lace centrepiece. Anne was lying back in a little rocker, with her slim hands folded in her lap, watching Theodora. She realized that Theodora was very handsome, in a stately, Juno-like fashion of firm, white flesh, large, clearly-chiselled outlines, and great, cowey, brown eyes.

When Theodora was not smiling, she looked very imposing. Anne thought it likely that Ludovic held her in awe.

“Did you and Ludovic talk about Christian Science ALL Saturday evening?” she asked.

Theodora overflowed into a smile.

“Yes, and we even quarrelled over it. At least I did. Ludovic wouldn’t quarrel with anyone. You have to fight air when you spar with him. I hate to square up to a person who won’t hit back.”

“Theodora,” said Anne coaxingly, “I am going to be curious and impertinent. You can snub me if you like. Why don’t you and Ludovic get married?”

Theodora laughed comfortably.

“That’s the question Grafton folks have been asking for quite a while, I reckon, Anne. Well, I’d have no objection to marrying Ludovic. That’s frank enough for you, isn’t it? But it’s not easy to marry a man unless he asks you. And Ludovic has never asked me.”

“Is he too shy?” persisted Anne. Since Theodora was in the mood, she meant to sift this puzzling affair to the bottom.

Theodora dropped her work and looked meditatively out over the green slopes of the summer world.

“No, I don’t think it is that. Ludovic isn’t shy. It’s just his way — the Speed way. The Speeds are all dreadfully deliberate. They spend years thinking over a thing before they make up their minds to do it. Sometimes they get so much in the habit of thinking about it that they never get over it — like old Alder Speed, who was always talking of going to England to see his brother, but never went, though there was no earthly reason why he shouldn’t. They’re not lazy, you know, but they love to take their time.”

“And Ludovic is just an aggravated case of Speedism,” suggested Anne.

“Exactly. He never hurried in his life. Why, he has been thinking for the last six years of getting his house painted. He talks it over with me every little while, and picks out the colour, and there the matter stays. He’s

fond of me, and he means to ask me to have him sometime. The only question is — will the time ever come?”

“Why don’t you hurry him up?” asked Anne impatiently.

Theodora went back to her stitches with another laugh.

“If Ludovic could be hurried up, I’m not the one to do it. I’m too shy. It sounds ridiculous to hear a woman of my age and inches say that, but it is true. Of course, I know it’s the only way any Speed ever did make out to get married. For instance, there’s a cousin of mine married to Ludovic’s brother. I don’t say she proposed to him out and out, but, mind you, Anne, it wasn’t far from it. I couldn’t do anything like that. I DID try once. When I realized that I was getting sere and mellow, and all the girls of my generation were going off on either hand, I tried to give Ludovic a hint. But it stuck in my throat. And now I don’t mind. If I don’t change Dix to Speed until I take the initiative, it will be Dix to the end of life. Ludovic doesn’t realize that we are growing old, you know. He thinks we are giddy young folks yet, with plenty of time before us. That’s the Speed failing. They never find out they’re alive until they’re dead.”

“You’re fond of Ludovic, aren’t you?” asked Anne, detecting a note of real bitterness among Theodora’s paradoxes.

“Laws, yes,” said Theodora candidly. She did not think it worth while to blush over so settled a fact. “I think the world and all of Ludovic. And he certainly does need somebody to look after HIM. He’s neglected — he looks frayed. You can see that for yourself. That old aunt of his looks after his house in some fashion, but she doesn’t look after him. And he’s coming now to the age when a man needs to be looked after and coddled a bit. I’m lonesome here, and Ludovic is lonesome up there, and it does seem ridiculous, doesn’t it? I don’t wonder that we’re the standing joke of Grafton. Goodness knows, I laugh at it enough myself. I’ve sometimes thought that if Ludovic could be made jealous it might spur him along. But I never could flirt and there’s nobody to flirt with if I could. Everybody hereabouts looks upon me as Ludovic’s property and nobody would dream of interfering with him.”

“Theodora,” cried Anne, “I have a plan!”

“Now, what are you going to do?” exclaimed Theodora.

Anne told her. At first Theodora laughed and protested. In the end, she yielded somewhat doubtfully, overborne by Anne’s enthusiasm.

“Well, try it, then,” she said, resignedly. “If Ludovic gets mad and leaves me, I’ll be worse off than ever. But nothing venture, nothing win. And there is a fighting chance, I suppose. Besides, I must admit I’m tired of his dilly-dallying.”

Anne went back to Echo Lodge tingling with delight in her plot. She hunted up Arnold Sherman, and told him what was required of him. Arnold Sherman listened and laughed. He was an elderly widower, an intimate friend of Stephen Irving, and had come down to spend part of the summer with him and his wife in Prince Edward Island. He was handsome in a mature style, and he had a dash of mischief in him still, so that he entered readily enough into Anne’s plan. It amused him to think of hurrying Ludovic Speed, and he knew that Theodora Dix could be depended on to do her part. The comedy would not be dull, whatever its outcome.

The curtain rose on the first act after prayer meeting on the next Thursday night. It was bright moonlight when the people came out of church, and everybody saw it plainly. Arnold Sherman stood upon the steps close to the door, and Ludovic Speed leaned up against a corner of the graveyard fence, as he had done for years. The boys said he had worn the paint off that particular place. Ludovic knew of no reason why he should paste himself up against the church door. Theodora would come out as usual, and he would join her as she went past the corner.

This was what happened, Theodora came down the steps, her stately figure outlined in its darkness against the gush of lamplight from the porch. Arnold Sherman asked her if he might see her home. Theodora took his arm calmly, and together they swept past the stupefied Ludovic, who stood helplessly gazing after them as if unable to believe his eyes.

For a few moments he stood there limply; then he started down the road after his fickle lady and her new admirer. The boys and irresponsible young men crowded after, expecting some excitement, but they were

disappointed. Ludovic strode on until he overtook Theodora and Arnold Sherman, and then fell meekly in behind them.

Theodora hardly enjoyed her walk home, although Arnold Sherman laid himself out to be especially entertaining. Her heart yearned after Ludovic, whose shuffling footsteps she heard behind her. She feared that she had been very cruel, but she was in for it now. She steeled herself by the reflection that it was all for his own good, and she talked to Arnold Sherman as if he were the one man in the world. Poor, deserted Ludovic, following humbly behind, heard her, and if Theodora had known how bitter the cup she was holding to his lips really was, she would never have been resolute enough to present it, no matter for what ultimate good.

When she and Arnold turned in at her gate, Ludovic had to stop. Theodora looked over her shoulder and saw him standing still on the road. His forlorn figure haunted her thoughts all night. If Anne had not run over the next day and bolstered up her convictions, she might have spoiled everything by prematurely relenting.

Ludovic, meanwhile, stood still on the road, quite oblivious to the hoots and comments of the vastly amused small boy contingent, until Theodora and his rival disappeared from his view under the firs in the hollow of her lane. Then he turned about and went home, not with his usual leisurely amble, but with a perturbed stride which proclaimed his inward disquiet.

He felt bewildered. If the world had come suddenly to an end or if the lazy, meandering Grafton River had turned about and flowed up hill, Ludovic could not have been more astonished. For fifteen years he had walked home from meetings with Theodora; and now this elderly stranger, with all the glamour of “the States” hanging about him, had coolly walked off with her under Ludovic’s very nose. Worse — most unkindest cut of all — Theodora had gone with him willingly; nay, she had evidently enjoyed his company. Ludovic felt the stirring of a righteous anger in his easygoing soul.

When he reached the end of his lane, he paused at his gate, and looked at his house, set back from the lane in a crescent of birches. Even in the

moonlight, its weather-worn aspect was plainly visible. He thought of the "palatial residence" rumour ascribed to Arnold Sherman in Boston, and stroked his chin nervously with his sunburnt fingers. Then he doubled up his fist and struck it smartly on the gatepost.

"Theodora needn't think she is going to jilt me in this fashion, after keeping company with me for fifteen years," he said. "I'LL have something to say to it, Arnold Sherman or no Arnold Sherman. The impudence of the puppy!"

The next morning Ludovic drove to Carmody and engaged Joshua Pye to come and paint his house, and that evening, although he was not due till Saturday night, he went down to see Theodora.

Arnold Sherman was there before him, and was actually sitting in Ludovic's own prescriptive chair. Ludovic had to deposit himself in Theodora's new wicker rocker, where he looked and felt lamentably out of place.

If Theodora felt the situation to be awkward, she carried it off superbly. She had never looked handsomer, and Ludovic perceived that she wore her second best silk dress. He wondered miserably if she had donned it in expectation of his rival's call. She had never put on silk dresses for him. Ludovic had always been the meekest and mildest of mortals, but he felt quite murderous as he sat mutely there and listened to Arnold Sherman's polished conversation.

"You should just have been here to see him glowering," Theodora told the delighted Anne the next day. "It may be wicked of me, but I felt real glad. I was afraid he might stay away and sulk. So long as he comes here and sulks I don't worry. But he is feeling badly enough, poor soul, and I'm really eaten up by remorse. He tried to outstay Mr. Sherman last night, but he didn't manage it. You never saw a more depressed-looking creature than he was as he hurried down the lane. Yes, he actually hurried."

The following Sunday evening Arnold Sherman walked to church with Theodora, and sat with her. When they came in Ludovic Speed suddenly stood up in his pew under the gallery. He sat down again at once, but everybody in view had seen him, and that night folks in all the length and

breadth of Grafton River discussed the dramatic occurrence with keen enjoyment.

“Yes, he jumped right up as if he was pulled on his feet, while the minister was reading the chapter,” said his cousin, Lorella Speed, who had been in church, to her sister, who had not. “His face was as white as a sheet, and his eyes were just glaring out of his head. I never felt so thrilled, I declare! I almost expected him to fly at them then and there. But he just gave a sort of gasp and set down again. I don’t know whether Theodora Dix saw him or not. She looked as cool and unconcerned as you please.”

Theodora had not seen Ludovic, but if she looked cool and unconcerned, her appearance belied her, for she felt miserably flustered. She could not prevent Arnold Sherman coming to church with her, but it seemed to her like going too far. People did not go to church and sit together in Grafton unless they were the next thing to being engaged. What if this filled Ludovic with the narcotic of despair instead of wakening him up! She sat through the service in misery and heard not one word of the sermon.

But Ludovic’s spectacular performances were not yet over. The Speeds might be hard to get started, but once they were started their momentum was irresistible. When Theodora and Mr. Sherman came out, Ludovic was waiting on the steps. He stood up straight and stern, with his head thrown back and his shoulders squared. There was open defiance in the look he cast on his rival, and masterfulness in the mere touch of the hand he laid on Theodora’s arm.

“May I see you home, Miss Dix?” his words said. His tone said, “I am going to see you home whether or no.”

Theodora, with a deprecating look at Arnold Sherman, took his arm, and Ludovic marched her across the green amid a silence which the very horses tied to the storm fence seemed to share. For Ludovic ‘twas a crowded hour of glorious life.

Anne walked all the way over from Avonlea the next day to hear the news. Theodora smiled consciously.

“Yes, it is really settled at last, Anne. Coming home last night Ludovic asked me plump and plain to marry him, — Sunday and all as it was. It’s to be right away — for Ludovic won’t be put off a week longer than necessary.”

“So Ludovic Speed has been hurried up to some purpose at last,” said Mr. Sherman, when Anne called in at Echo Lodge, brimful with her news. “And you are delighted, of course, and my poor pride must be the scapegoat. I shall always be remembered in Grafton as the man from Boston who wanted Theodora Dix and couldn’t get her.”

“But that won’t be true, you know,” said Anne comfortingly.

Arnold Sherman thought of Theodora’s ripe beauty, and the mellow companionableness she had revealed in their brief intercourse.

“I’m not perfectly sure of that,” he said, with a half sigh.

Old Lady Lloyd

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I. The May Chapter

Spencervale gossip always said that “Old Lady Lloyd” was rich and mean and proud. Gossip, as usual, was one-third right and two-thirds wrong. Old Lady Lloyd was neither rich nor mean; in reality she was pitifully poor — so poor that “Crooked Jack” Spencer, who dug her garden and chopped her wood for her, was opulent by contrast, for he, at least, never lacked three meals a day, and the Old Lady could sometimes achieve no more than one. But she WAS very proud — so proud that she would have died rather than let the Spencervale people, among whom she had queened it in her youth, suspect how poor she was and to what straits was sometimes reduced. She much preferred to have them think her miserly and odd — a queer old recluse who never went anywhere, even to church, and who paid the smallest subscription to the minister’s salary of anyone in the congregation.

“And her just rolling in wealth!” they said indignantly. “Well, she didn’t get her miserly ways from her parents. THEY were real generous and neighbourly. There never was a finer gentleman than old Doctor Lloyd. He was always doing kindnesses to everybody; and he had a way of doing them that made you feel as if you was doing the favour, not him. Well, well, let Old Lady Lloyd keep herself and her money to herself if she wants to. If she doesn’t want our company, she doesn’t have to suffer it, that’s all. Reckon she isn’t none too happy for all her money and pride.”

No, the Old Lady was none too happy, that was unfortunately true. It is not easy to be happy when your life is eaten up with loneliness and emptiness on the spiritual side, and when, on the material side, all you have between you and starvation is the little money your hens bring you in.

The Old Lady lived “away back at the old Lloyd place,” as it was always called. It was a quaint, low-eaved house, with big chimneys and square windows and with spruces growing thickly all around it. The Old Lady lived there all alone and there were weeks at a time when she never saw a human being except Crooked Jack. What the Old Lady did with herself and how she put in her time was a puzzle the Spencervale people could not solve. The children believed she amused herself counting the gold in the big black box under her bed. Spencervale children held the Old Lady in mortal terror; some of them — the “Spencer Road” fry — believed she was a witch; all of them would run if, when wandering about the woods in search of berries or spruce gum, they saw at a distance the spare, upright form of the Old Lady, gathering sticks for her fire. Mary Moore was the only one who was quite sure she was not a witch.

“Witches are always ugly,” she said decisively, “and Old Lady Lloyd isn’t ugly. She’s real pretty — she’s got such a soft white hair and big black eyes and a little white face. Those Road children don’t know what they’re talking of. Mother says they’re a very ignorant crowd.”

“Well, she doesn’t ever go to church, and she mutters and talks to herself all the time she’s picking up sticks,” maintained Jimmy Kimball stoutly.

The Old Lady talked to herself because she was really very fond of company and conversation. To be sure, when you have talked to nobody but yourself for nearly twenty years, it is apt to grow somewhat monotonous; and there were times when the Old Lady would have sacrificed everything but her pride for a little human companionship. At such times she felt very bitter and resentful toward Fate for having taken everything from her. She had nothing to love, and that is about as unwholesome a condition as is possible to anyone.

It was always hardest in the spring. Once upon a time the Old Lady — when she had not been the Old Lady, but pretty, wilful, high-spirited Margaret Lloyd — had loved springs; now she hated them because they hurt her; and this particular spring of this particular May chapter hurt her more than any that had gone before. The Old Lady felt as if she could NOT

endure the ache of it. Everything hurt her — the new green tips on the firs, the fairy mists down in the little beech hollow below the house, the fresh smell of the red earth Crooked Jack spaded up in her garden. The Old Lady lay awake all one moonlit night and cried for very heartache. She even forgot her body hunger in her soul hunger; and the Old Lady had been hungry, more or less, all that week. She was living on store biscuits and water, so that she might be able to pay Crooked Jack for digging her garden. When the pale, lovely dawn-colour came stealing up the sky behind the spruces, the Old Lady buried her face in her pillow and refused to look at it.

“I hate the new day,” she said rebelliously. “It will be just like all the other hard, common days. I don’t want to get up and live it. And, oh, to think that long ago I reached out my hands joyfully to every new day, as to a friend who was bringing me good tidings! I loved the mornings then — sunny or gray, they were as delightful as an unread book — and now I hate them — hate them — hate them!”

But the Old Lady got up nevertheless, for she knew Crooked Jack would be coming early to finish the garden. She arranged her beautiful, thick, white hair very carefully, and put on her purple silk dress with the little gold spots in it. The Old Lady always wore silk from motives of economy. It was much cheaper to wear a silk dress that had belonged to her mother than to buy new print at the store. The Old Lady had plenty of silk dresses which had belonged to her mother. She wore them morning, noon, and night, and Spencervale people considered it an additional evidence of her pride. As for the fashion of them, it was, of course, just because she was too mean to have them made over. They did not dream that the Old Lady never put on one of the silk dresses without agonizing over its unfashionableness, and that even the eyes of Crooked Jack cast on her antique flounces and overskirts was almost more than her feminine vanity could endure.

In spite of the fact that the Old Lady had not welcomed the new day, its beauty charmed her when she went out for a walk after her dinner — or, rather, after her mid-day biscuit. It was so fresh, so sweet, so virgin; and

the spruce woods around the old Lloyd place were athrill with busy spring doings and all sprinkled through with young lights and shadows. Some of their delight found its way into the Old Lady's bitter heart as she wandered through them, and when she came out at the little plank bridge over the brook down under the beeches, she felt almost gentle and tender once more. There was one big beech there, in particular, which the Old Lady loved for reasons best known to herself — a great, tall beech with a trunk like the shaft of a gray marble column and a leafy spread of branches over the still, golden-brown pool made beneath it by the brook. It had been a young sapling in the days that were haloed by the vanished glory of the Old Lady's life.

The Old Lady heard childish voices and laughter afar up the lane which led to William Spencer's place just above the woods. William Spencer's front lane ran out to the main road in a different direction, but this "back lane" furnished a short cut and his children always went to school that way.

The Old Lady shrank hastily back behind a clump of young spruces. She did not like the Spencer children because they always seemed so afraid of her. Through the spruce screen she could see them coming gaily down the lane — the two older ones in front, the twins behind, clinging to the hands of a tall, slim, young girl — the new music teacher, probably. The Old Lady had heard from the egg pedlar that she was going to board at William Spencer's, but she had not heard her name.

She looked at her with some curiosity as they drew near — and then, all at once, the Old Lady's heart gave a great bound and began to beat as it had not beaten for years, while her breath came quickly and she trembled violently. Who — WHO could this girl be?

Under the new music teacher's straw hat were masses of fine chestnut hair of the very shade and wave that the Old Lady remembered on another head in vanished years; from under those waves looked large, violet-blue eyes with very black lashes and brows — and the Old Lady knew those eyes as well as she knew her own; and the new music teacher's face, with all its beauty of delicate outline and dainty colouring and glad, buoyant

youth, was a face from the Old Lady's past — a perfect resemblance in every respect save one; the face which the Old Lady remembered had been weak, with all its charm; but this girl's face possessed a fine, dominant strength compact of sweetness and womanliness. As she passed by the Old Lady's hiding place she laughed at something one of the children said; and oh, but the Old Lady knew that laughter well. She had heard it before under that very beech tree.

She watched them until they disappeared over the wooded hill beyond the bridge; and then she went back home as if she walked in a dream. Crooked Jack was delving vigorously in the garden; ordinarily the Old Lady did not talk much with Crooked Jack, for she disliked his weakness for gossip; but now she went into the garden, a stately old figure in her purple, gold-spotted silk, with the sunshine gleaming on her white hair.

Crooked Jack had seen her go out and had remarked to himself that the Old Lady was losing ground; she was pale and peaked-looking. He now concluded that he had been mistaken. The Old Lady's cheeks were pink and her eyes shining. Somewhere in her walk she had shed ten years at least. Crooked Jack leaned on his spade and decided that there weren't many finer looking women anywhere than Old Lady Lloyd. Pity she was such an old miser!

"Mr. Spencer," said the Old Lady graciously — she always spoke very graciously to her inferiors when she talked to them at all—"can you tell me the name of the new music teacher who is boarding at Mr. William Spencer's?"

"Sylvia Gray," said Crooked Jack.

The Old Lady's heart gave another great bound. But she had known it — she had known that girl with Leslie Gray's hair and eyes and laugh must be Leslie Gray's daughter.

Crooked Jack spat on his hand and resumed his work, but his tongue went faster than his spade, and the Old Lady listened greedily. For the first time she enjoyed and blessed Crooked Jack's garrulity and gossip. Every word he uttered was as an apple of gold in a picture of silver to her.

He had been working at William Spencer's the day the new music teacher had come, and what Crooked Jack couldn't find out about any person in one whole day — at least as far as outward life went — was hardly worth finding out. Next to discovering things did he love telling them, and it would be hard to say which enjoyed that ensuing half-hour more — Crooked Jack or the Old Lady.

Crooked Jack's account, boiled down, amounted to this; both Miss Gray's parents had died when she was a baby, she had been brought up by an aunt, she was very poor and very ambitious.

"Wants a moosical eddication," finished up Crooked Jack, "and, by jingo, she orter have it, for anything like the voice of her I never heerd. She sung for us that evening after supper and I thought 'twas an angel singing. It just went through me like a shaft o' light. The Spencer young ones are crazy over her already. She's got twenty pupils around here and in Grafton and Avonlea."

When the Old Lady had found out everything Crooked Jack could tell her, she went into the house and sat down by the window of her little sitting-room to think it all over. She was tingling from head to foot with excitement.

Leslie's daughter! This Old Lady had had her romance once. Long ago — forty years ago — she had been engaged to Leslie Gray, a young college student who taught in Spencervale for the summer term one year — the golden summer of Margaret Lloyd's life. Leslie had been a shy, dreamy, handsome fellow with literary ambitions, which, as he and Margaret both firmly believed, would one day bring him fame and fortune.

Then there had been a foolish, bitter quarrel at the end of that golden summer. Leslie had gone away in anger, afterwards he had written, but Margaret Lloyd, still in the grasp of her pride and resentment, had sent a harsh answer. No more letters came; Leslie Gray never returned; and one day Margaret awakened to the realization that she had put love out of her life for ever. She knew it would never be hers again; and from that moment her feet were turned from youth to walk down the valley of shadow to a lonely, eccentric age.

Many years later she heard of Leslie's marriage; then came news of his death, after a life that had not fulfilled his dreams for him. Nothing more she had heard or known — nothing to this day, when she had seen his daughter pass her by unseeing in the beech hollow.

"His daughter! And she might have been MY daughter," murmured the Old Lady. "Oh, if I could only know her and love her — and perhaps win her love in return! But I cannot. I could not have Leslie Gray's daughter know how poor I am — how low I have been brought. I could not bear that. And to think she is living so near me, the darling — just up the lane and over the hill. I can see her go by every day — I can have that dear pleasure, at least. But oh, if I could only do something for her — give her some little pleasure! It would be such a delight."

When the Old Lady happened to go into her spare room that evening, she saw from it a light shining through a gap in the trees on the hill. She knew that it shone from the Spencers' spare room. So it was Sylvia's light. The Old Lady stood in the darkness and watched it until it went out — watched it with a great sweetness breathing in her heart, such as risen from old roseleaves when they are stirred. She fancied Sylvia moving about her room, brushing and braiding her long, glistening hair — laying aside her little trinkets and girlish adornments — making her simple preparations for sleep. When the light went out the Old Lady pictured a slight white figure kneeling by the window in the soft starshine, and the Old Lady knelt down then and there and said her own prayers in fellowship. She said the simple form of words she had always used; but a new spirit seemed to inspire them; and she finished with a new petition—"Let me think of something I can do for her, dear Father — some little, little thing that I can do for her."

The Old Lady had slept in the same room all her life — the one looking north into the spruces — and loved it; but the next day she moved into the spare room without a regret. It was to be her room after this; she must be where she could see Sylvia's light, she put the bed where she could lie in it and look at that earth star which had suddenly shone across the twilight shadows of her heart. She felt very happy, she had not felt

happy for many years; but now a strange, new, dreamlike interest, remote from the harsh realities of her existence, but none the less comforting and alluring, had entered into her life. Besides, she had thought of something she could do for Sylvia—"a little, little thing" that might give her pleasure.

Spencervale people were wont to say regretfully that there were no Mayflowers in Spencervale; the Spencervale young fry, when they wanted Mayflowers, thought they had to go over to the barrens at Avonlea, six miles away, for them. Old Lady Lloyd knew better. In her many long, solitary rambles, she had discovered a little clearing far back in the woods — a southward-sloping, sandy hill on a tract of woodland belonging to a man who lived in town — which in spring was starred over with the pink and white of arbutus.

To this clearing the Old Lady betook herself that afternoon, walking through wood lanes and under dim spruce arches like a woman with a glad purpose. All at once the spring was dear and beautiful to her once more; for love had entered again into her heart, and her starved soul was feasting on its divine nourishment.

Old Lady Lloyd found a wealth of Mayflowers on the sandy hill. She filled her basket with them, gloating over the loveliness which was to give pleasure to Sylvia. When she got home she wrote on a slip of paper, "For Sylvia." It was not likely anyone in Spencervale would know her handwriting, but, to make sure, she disguised it, writing in round, big letters like a child's. She carried her Mayflowers down to the hollow and heaped them in a recess between the big roots of the old beech, with the little note thrust through a stem on top.

Then the Old Lady deliberately hid behind the spruce clump. She had put on her dark green silk on purpose for hiding. She had not long to wait. Soon Sylvia Gray came down the hill with Mattie Spencer. When she reached the bridge she saw the Mayflowers and gave an exclamation of delight. Then she saw her name and her expression changed to wonder. The Old Lady, peering through the boughs, could have laughed for very pleasure over the success of her little plot.

“For me!” said Sylvia, lifting the flowers. “CAN they really be for me, Mattie? Who could have left them here?”

Mattie giggled.

“I believe it was Chris Stewart,” she said. “I know he was over at Avonlea last night. And ma says he’s taken a notion to you — she knows by the way he looked at you when you were singing night before last. It would be just like him to do something queer like this — he’s such a shy fellow with the girls.”

Sylvia frowned a little. She did not like Mattie’s expressions, but she did like Mayflowers, and she did not dislike Chris Stewart, who had seemed to her merely a nice, modest, country boy. She lifted the flowers and buried her face in them.

“Anyway, I’m much obliged to the giver, whoever he or she is,” she said merrily. “There’s nothing I love like Mayflowers. Oh, how sweet they are!”

When they had passed the Old Lady emerged from her lurking place, flushed with triumph. It did not vex her that Sylvia should think Chris Stewart had given her the flowers; nay, it was all the better, since she would be the less likely to suspect the real donor. The main thing was that Sylvia should have the delight of them. That quite satisfied the Old Lady, who went back to her lonely house with the cockles of her heart all in a glow.

It soon was a matter of gossip in Spencervale that Chris Stewart was leaving Mayflowers at the beech hollow for the music teacher every other day. Chris himself denied it, but he was not believed. Firstly, there were no Mayflowers in Spencervale; secondly, Chris had to go to Carmody every other day to haul milk to the butter factory, and Mayflowers grew in Carmody, and, thirdly, the Stewarts always had a romantic streak in them. Was not that enough circumstantial evidence for anybody?

As for Sylvia, she did not mind if Chris had a boyish admiration for her and expressed it thus delicately. She thought it very nice of him, indeed, when he did not vex her with any other advances, and she was quite content to enjoy his Mayflowers.

Old Lady Lloyd heard all the gossip about it from the egg pedlar, and listened to him with laughter glimmering far down in her eyes. The egg pedlar went away and vowed he'd never seen the Old Lady so spry as she was this spring; she seemed real interested in the young folk's doings.

The Old Lady kept her secret and grew young in it. She walked back to the Mayflower hill as long as the Mayflowers lasted; and she always hid in the spruces to see Sylvia Gray go by. Every day she loved her more, and yearned after her more deeply. All the long repressed tenderness of her nature overflowed to this girl who was unconscious of it. She was proud of Sylvia's grace and beauty, and sweetness of voice and laughter. She began to like the Spencer children because they worshipped Sylvia; she envied Mrs. Spencer because the latter could minister to Sylvia's needs. Even the egg pedlar seemed a delightful person because he brought news of Sylvia — her social popularity, her professional success, the love and admiration she had won already.

The Old Lady never dreamed of revealing herself to Sylvia. That, in her poverty, was not to be thought of for a moment. It would have been very sweet to know her — sweet to have her come to the old house — sweet to talk to her — to enter into her life. But it might not be. The Old Lady's pride was still far stronger than her love. It was the one thing she had never sacrificed and never — so she believed — could sacrifice.

II. The June Chapter

There were no Mayflowers in June; but now the Old Lady's garden was full of blossoms and every morning Sylvia found a bouquet of them by the beech — the perfumed ivory of white narcissus, the flame of tulips, the fairy branches of bleeding-heart, the pink-and-snow of little, thorny, single, sweetbreathed early roses. The Old Lady had no fear of discovery, for the flowers that grew in her garden grew in every other Spencervale garden as well, including the Stewart garden. Chris Stewart, when he was teased about the music teacher, merely smiled and held his peace. Chris knew perfectly well who was the real giver of those flowers. He had made it his business to find out when the Mayflower gossip started. But since it was evident Old Lady Lloyd did not wish it to be known, Chris told no

one. Chris had always liked Old Lady Lloyd ever since the day, ten years before, when she had found him crying in the woods with a cut foot and had taken him into her house, and bathed and bound the wound, and given him ten cents to buy candy at the store. The Old Lady went without supper that night because of it, but Chris never knew that.

The Old Lady thought it a most beautiful June. She no longer hated the new days; on the contrary, she welcomed them.

“Every day is an uncommon day now,” she said jubilantly to herself — for did not almost every day bring her a glimpse of Sylvia? Even on rainy days the Old Lady gallantly braved rheumatism to hide behind her clump of dripping spruces and watch Sylvia pass. The only days she could not see her were Sundays; and no Sundays had ever seemed so long to Old Lady Lloyd as those June Sundays did.

One day the egg pedlar had news for her.

“The music teacher is going to sing a solo for a collection piece tomorrow,” he told her.

The Old Lady’s black eyes flashed with interest.

“I didn’t know Miss Gray was a member of the choir,” she said.

“Jined two Sundays ago. I tell you, our music is something worth listening to now. The church’ll be packed tomorrow, I reckon — her name’s gone all over the country for singing. You ought to come and hear it, Miss Lloyd.”

The pedlar said this out of bravado, merely to show he wasn’t scared of the Old Lady, for all her grand airs. The Old Lady made no answer, and he thought he had offended her. He went away, wishing he hadn’t said it. Had he but known it, the Old Lady had forgotten the existence of all and any egg pedlars. He had blotted himself and his insignificance out of her consciousness by his last sentence. All her thoughts, feelings, and wishes were submerged in a very whirlpool of desire to hear Sylvia sing that solo. She went into the house in a tumult and tried to conquer that desire. She could not do it, even though she summoned all her pride to her aid. Pride said:

“You will have to go to church to hear her. You haven’t fit clothes to go to church in. Think what a figure you will make before them all.”

But, for the first time, a more insistent voice than pride spoke to her soul — and, for the first time, the Old Lady listened to it. It was too true that she had never gone to church since the day on which she had to begin wearing her mother’s silk dresses. The Old Lady herself thought that this was very wicked; and she tried to atone by keeping Sunday very strictly, and always having a little service of her own, morning and evening. She sang three hymns in her cracked voice, prayed aloud, and read a sermon. But she could not bring herself to go to church in her out-of-date clothes — she, who had once set the fashions in Spencervale, and the longer she stayed away, the more impossible it seemed that she should ever again go. Now the impossible had become, not only possible, but insistent. She must go to church and hear Sylvia sing, no matter how ridiculous she appeared, no matter how people talked and laughed at her.

Spencervale congregation had a mild sensation the next afternoon. Just before the opening of service Old Lady Lloyd walked up the aisle and sat down in the long-unoccupied Lloyd pew, in front of the pulpit.

The Old Lady’s very soul was writhing within her. She recalled the reflection she had seen in her mirror before she left — the old black silk in the mode of thirty years ago and the queer little bonnet of shirred black satin. She thought how absurd she must look in the eyes of her world.

As a matter of fact, she did not look in the least absurd. Some women might have; but the Old Lady’s stately distinction of carriage and figure was so subtly commanding that it did away with the consideration of garmenting altogether.

The Old Lady did not know this. But she did know that Mrs. Kimball, the storekeeper’s wife, presently rustled into the next pew in the very latest fashion of fabric and mode; she and Mrs. Kimball were the same age, and there had been a time when the latter had been content to imitate Margaret Lloyd’s costumes at a humble distance. But the storekeeper had proposed, and things were changed now; and there sat poor Old Lady

Lloyd, feeling the change bitterly, and half wishing she had not come to church at all.

Then all at once the Angel of Love touched these foolish thoughts, born of vanity and morbid pride, and they melted away as if they had never been. Sylvia Gray had come into the choir, and was sitting just where the afternoon sunshine fell over her beautiful hair like a halo. The Old Lady looked at her in a rapture of satisfied longing and thenceforth the service was blessed to her, as anything is blessed which comes through the medium of unselfish love, whether human or divine. Nay, are they not one and the same, differing in degree only, not in kind?

The Old Lady had never had such a good, satisfying look at Sylvia before. All her former glimpses had been stolen and fleeting. Now she sat and gazed upon her to her hungry heart's content, lingering delightedly over every little charm and loveliness — the way Sylvia's shining hair rippled back from her forehead, the sweet little trick she had of dropping quickly her long-lashed eyelids when she encountered too bold or curious a glance, and the slender, beautifully modelled hands — so like Leslie Gray's hands — that held her hymn book. She was dressed very plainly in a black skirt and a white shirtwaist; but none of the other girls in the choir, with all their fine feathers, could hold a candle to her — as the egg pedlar said to his wife, going home from church.

The Old Lady listened to the opening hymns with keen pleasure. Sylvia's voice thrilled through and dominated them all. But when the ushers got up to take the collection, an undercurrent of subdued excitement flowed over the congregation. Sylvia rose and came forward to Janet Moore's side at the organ. The next moment her beautiful voice soared through the building like the very soul of melody — true, clear, powerful, sweet. Nobody in Spencervale had ever listened to such a voice, except Old Lady Lloyd herself, who, in her youth, had heard enough good singing to enable her to be a tolerable judge of it. She realized instantly that this girl of her heart had a great gift — a gift that would some day bring her fame and fortune, if it could be duly trained and developed.

“Oh, I'm so glad I came to church,” thought Old Lady Lloyd.

When the solo was ended, the Old Lady's conscience compelled her to drag her eyes and thoughts from Sylvia, and fasten them on the minister, who had been flattering himself all through the opening portion of the service that Old Lady Lloyd had come to church on his account. He was newly settled, having been in charge of the Spencervale congregation only a few months; he was a clever little fellow and he honestly thought it was the fame of his preaching that had brought Old Lady Lloyd out to church.

When the service was over all the Old Lady's neighbours came to speak to her, with kindly smile and handshake. They thought they ought to encourage her, now that she had made a start in the right direction; the Old Lady liked their cordiality, and liked it none the less because she detected in it the same unconscious respect and deference she had been wont to receive in the old days — a respect and deference which her personality compelled from all who approached her. The Old Lady was surprised to find that she could command it still, in defiance of unfashionable bonnet and ancient attire.

Janet Moore and Sylvia Gray walked home from church together. "Did you see Old Lady Lloyd out to-day?" asked Janet. "I was amazed when she walked in. She has never been to church in my recollection. What a quaint old figure she is! She's very rich, you know, but she wears her mother's old clothes and never gets a new thing. Some people think she is mean; but," concluded Janet charitably, "I believe it is simply eccentricity."

"I felt that was Miss Lloyd as soon as I saw her, although I had never seen her before," said Sylvia dreamily. "I have been wishing to see her — for a certain reason. She has a very striking face. I should like to meet her — to know her."

"I don't think it's likely you ever will," said Janet carelessly. "She doesn't like young people and she never goes anywhere. I don't think I'd like to know her. I'd be afraid of her — she has such stately ways and such strange, piercing eyes."

"I shouldn't be afraid of her," said Sylvia to herself, as she turned into the Spencer lane. "But I don't expect I'll ever become acquainted with her."

If she knew who I am I suppose she would dislike me. I suppose she never suspects that I am Leslie Gray's daughter."

The minister, thinking it well to strike while the iron was hot, went up to call on Old Lady Lloyd the very next afternoon. He went in fear and trembling, for he had heard things about Old Lady Lloyd; but she made herself so agreeable in her highbred fashion that he was delighted, and told his wife when he went home that Spencervale people didn't understand Miss Lloyd. This was perfectly true; but it is by no means certain that the minister understood her either.

He made only one mistake in tact, but, as the Old Lady did not snub him for it, he never knew he made it. When he was leaving he said, "I hope we shall see you at church next Sunday, Miss Lloyd."

"Indeed, you will," said the Old Lady emphatically.

III. The July Chapter

The first day of July Sylvia found a little birch bark boat full of strawberries at the beech in the hollow. They were the earliest of the season; the Old Lady had found them in one of her secret haunts. They would have been a toothsome addition to the Old Lady's own slender bill of fare; but she never thought of eating them. She got far more pleasure out of the thought of Sylvia's enjoying them for her tea. Thereafter the strawberries alternated with the flowers as long as they lasted, and then came blueberries and raspberries. The blueberries grew far away and the Old Lady had many a tramp after them. Sometimes her bones ached at night because of it; but what cared the Old Lady for that? Bone ache is easier to endure than soul ache; and the Old Lady's soul had stopped aching for the first time in many year. It was being nourished with heavenly manna.

One evening Crooked Jack came up to fix something that had gone wrong with the Old Lady's well. The Old Lady wandered affably out to him; for she knew he had been working at the Spencers' all day, and there might be crumbs of information about Sylvia to be picked up.

"I reckon the music teacher's feeling pretty blue this evening," Crooked Jack remarked, after straining the Old Lady's patience to the last

verge of human endurance by expatiating on William Spencer's new pump, and Mrs. Spencer's new washing-machine, and Amelia Spencer's new young man.

"Why?" asked the Old Lady, turning very pale. Had anything happened to Sylvia?

"Well, she's been invited to a big party at Mrs. Moore's brother's in town, and she hasn't got a dress to go in," said Crooked Jack. "They're great swells and everybody will be got up regardless. Mrs. Spencer was telling me about it. She says Miss Gray can't afford a new dress because she's helping to pay her aunt's doctor's bills. She says she's sure Miss Gray feels awful disappointed over it, though she doesn't let on. But Mrs. Spencer says she knows she was crying after she went to bed last night."

The Old Lady turned and went into the house abruptly. This was dreadful. Sylvia must go to that party — she MUST. But how was it to be managed? Through the Old Lady's brain passed wild thoughts of her mother's silk dresses. But none of them would be suitable, even if there were time to make one over. Never had the Old Lady so bitterly regretted her vanished wealth.

"I've only two dollars in the house," she said, "and I've got to live on that till the next day the egg pedlar comes round. Is there anything I can sell — ANYTHING? Yes, yes, the grape jug!"

Up to this time, the Old Lady would as soon have thought of trying to sell her head as the grape jug. The grape jug was two hundred years old and had been in the Lloyd family ever since it was a jug at all. It was a big, pot-bellied affair, festooned with pink-gilt grapes, and with a verse of poetry printed on one side, and it had been given as a wedding present to the Old Lady's great-grandmother. As long as the Old Lady could remember it had sat on the top shelf in the cupboard in the sitting-room wall, far too precious ever to be used.

Two years before, a woman who collected old china had explored Spencervale, and, getting word of the grape jug, had boldly invaded the old Lloyd place and offered to buy it. She never, to her dying day, forgot the reception the Old Lady gave her; but, being wise in her day and

generation, she left her card, saying that if Miss Lloyd ever changed her mind about selling the jug, she would find that she, the aforesaid collector, had not changed hers about buying it. People who make a hobby of heirloom china must meekly overlook snubs, and this particular person had never seen anything she coveted so much as that grape jug.

The Old Lady had torn the card to pieces; but she remembered the name and address. She went to the cupboard and took down the beloved jug.

“I never thought to part with it,” she said wistfully, “but Sylvia must have a dress, and there is no other way. And, after all, when I’m gone, who would there be to have it? Strangers would get it then — it might as well go to them now. I’ll have to go to town tomorrow morning, for there’s no time to lose if the party is Friday night. I haven’t been to town for ten years. I dread the thought of going, more than parting with the jug. But for Sylvia’s sake!”

It was all over Spencervale by the next morning that Old Lady Lloyd had gone to town, carrying a carefully guarded box. Everybody wondered why she went; most people supposed she had become too frightened to keep her money in a black box below her bed, when there had been two burglaries over at Carmody, and had taken it to the bank.

The Old Lady sought out the address of the china collector, trembling with fear that she might be dead or gone. But the collector was there, very much alive, and as keenly anxious to possess the grape jug as ever. The Old Lady, pallid with the pain of her trampled pride, sold the grape jug and went away, believing that her great-grandmother must have turned over in her grave at the moment of the transaction. Old Lady Lloyd felt like a traitor to her traditions.

But she went unflinchingly to a big store and, guided by that special Providence which looks after simple-minded old souls in their dangerous excursions into the world, found a sympathetic clerk who knew just what she wanted and got it for her. The Old Lady selected a very dainty muslin gown, with gloves and slippers in keeping; and she ordered it sent at once,

expressage prepaid, to Miss Sylvia Gray, in care of William Spencer, Spencervale.

Then she paid down the money — the whole price of the jug, minus a dollar and a half for railroad fare — with a grand, careless air and departed. As she marched erectly down the aisle of the store, she encountered a sleek, portly, prosperous man coming in. As their eyes met, the man started and his bland face flushed crimson; he lifted his hat and bowed confusedly. But the Old Lady looked through him as if he wasn't there, and passed on with not a sign of recognition about her. He took one step after her, then stopped and turned away, with a rather disagreeable smile and a shrug of his shoulders.

Nobody would have guessed, as the Old Lady swept out, how her heart was seething with abhorrence and scorn. She would not have had the courage to come to town, even for Sylvia's sake, if she had thought she would meet Andrew Cameron. The mere sight of him opened up anew a sealed fountain of bitterness in her soul; but the thought of Sylvia somehow stemmed the torrent, and presently the Old Lady was smiling rather triumphantly, thinking rightly that she had come off best in that unwelcome encounter. SHE, at any rate, had not faltered and coloured, and lost her presence of mind.

"It is little wonder HE did," thought the Old Lady vindictively. It pleased her that Andrew Cameron should lose, before her, the front of adamant he presented to the world. He was her cousin and the only living creature Old Lady Lloyd hated, and she hated and despised him with all the intensity of her intense nature. She and hers had sustained grievous wrong at his hands, and the Old Lady was convinced that she would rather die than take any notice of his existence.

Presently, she resolutely put Andrew Cameron out of her mind. It was desecration to think of him and Sylvia together. When she laid her weary head on her pillow that night she was so happy that even the thought of the vacant shelf in the room below, where the grape jug had always been, gave her only a momentary pang.

“It’s sweet to sacrifice for one we love — it’s sweet to have someone to sacrifice for,” thought the Old Lady.

Desire grows by what it feeds on. The Old Lady thought she was content; but Friday evening came and found her in a perfect fever to see Sylvia in her party dress. It was not enough to fancy her in it; nothing would do the Old Lady but seeing her.

“And I SHALL see her,” said the Old Lady resolutely, looking out from her window at Sylvia’s light gleaming through the firs. She wrapped herself in a dark shawl and crept out, slipping down to the hollow and up the wood lane. It was a misty, moonlight night, and a wind, fragrant with the aroma of clover fields, blew down the lane to meet her.

“I wish I could take your perfume — the soul of you — and pour it into her life,” said the Old Lady aloud to that wind.

Sylvia Gray was standing in her room, ready for the party. Before her stood Mrs. Spencer and Amelia Spencer and all the little Spencer girls, in an admiring semicircle. There was another spectator. Outside, under the lilac bush, Old Lady Lloyd was standing. She could see Sylvia plainly, in her dainty dress, with the pale pink roses Old Lady Lloyd had left at the beech that day for her in her hair. Pink as they were, they were not so pink as her cheeks, and her eyes shone like stars. Amelia Spencer put up her hand to push back a rose that had fallen a little out of place, and the Old Lady envied her fiercely.

“That dress couldn’t have fitted better if it had been made for you,” said Mrs. Spencer admiringly. “Ain’t she lovely, Amelia? Who COULD have sent it?”

“Oh, I feel sure that Mrs. Moore was the fairy godmother,” said Sylvia. “There is nobody else who would. It was dear of her — she knew I wished so much to go to the party with Janet. I wish Aunty could see me now.” Sylvia gave a little sigh in spite of her joy. “There’s nobody else to care very much.”

Ah, Sylvia, you were wrong! There was somebody else — somebody who cared very much — an Old Lady, with eager, devouring eyes, who was standing under the lilac bush and who presently stole away through the

moonlit orchard to the woods like a shadow, going home with a vision of you in your girlish beauty to companion her through the watches of that summer night.

IV. The August Chapter

One day the minister's wife rushed in where Spencervale people had feared to tread, went boldly to Old Lady Lloyd, and asked her if she wouldn't come to their Sewing Circle, which met fortnightly on Saturday afternoons.

"We are filling a box to send to our Trinidad missionary," said the minister's wife, "and we should be so pleased to have you come, Miss Lloyd."

The Old Lady was on the point of refusing rather haughtily. Not that she was opposed to missions — or sewing circles either — quite the contrary, but she knew that each member of the Circle was expected to pay ten cents a week for the purpose of procuring sewing materials; and the poor Old Lady really did not see how she could afford it. But a sudden thought checked her refusal before it reached her lips.

"I suppose some of the young girls go to the Circle?" she said craftily.

"Oh, they all go," said the minister's wife. "Janet Moore and Miss Gray are our most enthusiastic members. It is very lovely of Miss Gray to give her Saturday afternoons — the only ones she has free from pupils — to our work. But she really has the sweetest disposition."

"I'll join your Circle," said the Old Lady promptly. She was determined she would do it, if she had to live on two meals a day to save the necessary fee.

She went to the Sewing Circle at James Martin's the next Saturday, and did the most beautiful hand sewing for them. She was so expert at it that she didn't need to think about it at all, which was rather fortunate, for all her thoughts were taken up with Sylvia, who sat in the opposite corner with Janet Moore, her graceful hands busy with a little boy's coarse gingham shirt. Nobody thought of introducing Sylvia to Old Lady Lloyd, and the Old Lady was glad of it. She sewed finely away, and listened with all her ears to the girlish chatter which went on in the opposite corner. One

thing she found out — Sylvia's birthday was the twentieth of August. And the Old Lady was straightway fired with a consuming wish to give Sylvia a birthday present. She lay awake most of the night wondering if she could do it, and most sorrowfully concluded that it was utterly out of the question, no matter how she might pinch and contrive. Old Lady Lloyd worried quite absurdly over this, and it haunted her like a spectre until the next Sewing Circle day.

It met at Mrs. Moore's and Mrs. Moore was especially gracious to Old Lady Lloyd, and insisted on her taking the wicker rocker in the parlour. The Old Lady would rather have been in the sitting-room with the young girls, but she submitted for courtesy's sake — and she had her reward. Her chair was just behind the parlour door, and presently Janet Moore and Sylvia Gray came and sat on the stairs in the hall outside, where a cool breeze blew in through the maples before the front door.

They were talking of their favourite poets. Janet, it appeared, adored Byron and Scott. Sylvia leaned to Tennyson and Browning.

"Do you know," said Sylvia softly, "my father was a poet? He published a little volume of verse once; and, Janet, I've never seen a copy of it, and oh, how I would love to! It was published when he was at college — just a small, private edition to give his friends. He never published any more — poor father! I think life disappointed him. But I have such a longing to see that little book of his verse. I haven't a scrap of his writings. If I had it would seem as if I possessed something of him — of his heart, his soul, his inner life. He would be something more than a mere name to me."

"Didn't he have a copy of his own — didn't your mother have one?" asked Janet.

"Mother hadn't. She died when I was born, you know, but Aunty says there was no copy of father's poems among mother's books. Mother didn't care for poetry, Aunty says — Aunty doesn't either. Father went to Europe after mother died, and he died there the next year. Nothing that he had with him was ever sent home to us. He had sold most of his books before he went, but he gave a few of his favourite ones to Aunty to keep for me. HIS

book wasn't among them. I don't suppose I shall ever find a copy, but I should be so delighted if I only could."

When the Old Lady got home she took from her top bureau drawer an inlaid box of sandalwood. It held a little, slim, limp volume, wrapped in tissue paper — the Old Lady's most treasured possession. On the flyleaf was written, "To Margaret, with the author's love."

The Old Lady turned the yellow leaves with trembling fingers and, through eyes brimming with tears, read the verses, although she had known them all by heart for years. She meant to give the book to Sylvia for a birthday present — one of the most precious gifts ever given, if the value of gifts is gauged by the measure of self-sacrifice involved. In that little book was immortal love — old laughter — old tears — old beauty which had bloomed like a rose years ago, holding still its sweetness like old rose leaves. She removed the telltale flyleaf; and late on the night before Sylvia's birthday, the Old Lady crept, under cover of the darkness, through byways and across fields, as if bent on some nefarious expedition, to the little Spencervale store where the postoffice was kept. She slipped the thin parcel through the slit in the door, and then stole home again, feeling a strange sense of loss and loneliness. It was as if she had given away the last link between herself and her youth. But she did not regret it. It would give Sylvia pleasure, and that had come to be the overmastering passion of the Old Lady's heart.

The next night the light in Sylvia's room burned very late, and the Old Lady watched it triumphantly, knowing the meaning of it. Sylvia was reading her father's poems, and the Old Lady in her darkness read them too, murmuring the lines over and over to herself. After all, giving away the book had not mattered so very much. She had the soul of it still — and the flyleaf with the name, in Leslie's writing, by which nobody ever called her now.

The Old Lady was sitting on the Marshall sofa the next Sewing Circle afternoon when Sylvia Gray came and sat down beside her. The Old Lady's hands trembled a little, and one side of a handkerchief, which was

afterwards given as a Christmas present to a little olive-skinned coolie in Trinidad, was not quite so exquisitely done as the other three sides.

Sylvia at first talked of the Circle, and Mrs. Marshall's dahlias, and the Old Lady was in the seventh heaven of delight, though she took care not to show it, and was even a little more stately and finely mannered than usual. When she asked Sylvia how she liked living in Spencervale, Sylvia said,

"Very much. Everybody is so kind to me. Besides" — Sylvia lowered her voice so that nobody but the Old Lady could hear it—"I have a fairy godmother here who does the most beautiful and wonderful things for me."

Sylvia, being a girl of fine instincts, did not look at Old Lady Lloyd as she said this. But she would not have seen anything if she had looked. The Old Lady was not a Lloyd for nothing.

"How very interesting," she said, indifferently.

"Isn't it? I am so grateful to her and I have wished so much she might know how much pleasure she has given me. I have found lovely flowers and delicious berries on my path all summer; I feel sure she sent me my party dress. But the dearest gift came last week on my birthday — a little volume of my father's poems. I can't express what I felt on receiving them. But I longed to meet my fairy godmother and thank her."

"Quite a fascinating mystery, isn't it? Have you really no idea who she is?"

The Old Lady asked this dangerous question with marked success. She would not have been so successful if she had not been so sure that Sylvia had no idea of the old romance between her and Leslie Gray. As it was, she had a comfortable conviction that she herself was the very last person Sylvia would be likely to suspect.

Sylvia hesitated for an almost unnoticeable moment. Then she said, "I haven't tried to find out, because I don't think she wants me to know. At first, of course, in the matter of the flowers and dress, I did try to solve the mystery; but, since I received the book, I became convinced that it was my fairy godmother who was doing it all, and I have respected her wish for

concealment and always shall. Perhaps some day she will reveal herself to me. I hope so, at least.”

“I wouldn’t hope it,” said the Old Lady discouragingly. “Fairy godmothers — at least, in all the fairy tales I ever read — are somewhat apt to be queer, crochety people, much more agreeable when wrapped up in mystery than when met face to face.”

“I’m convinced that mine is the very opposite, and that the better I became acquainted with her, the more charming a personage I should find her,” said Sylvia gaily.

Mrs. Marshall came up at this juncture and entreated Miss Gray to sing for them. Miss Gray consenting sweetly, the Old Lady was left alone and was rather glad of it. She enjoyed her conversation with Sylvia much more in thinking it over after she got home than while it was taking place. When an Old Lady has a guilty conscience, it is apt to make her nervous and distract her thoughts from immediate pleasure. She wondered a little uneasily if Sylvia really did suspect her. Then she concluded that it was out of the question. Who would suspect a mean, unsociable Old Lady, who had no friends, and who gave only five cents to the Sewing Circle when everyone else gave ten or fifteen, to be a fairy godmother, the donor of beautiful party dresses, and the recipient of gifts from romantic, aspiring young poets?

V. The September Chapter

In September the Old Lady looked back on the summer and owned to herself that it had been a strangely happy one, with Sundays and Sewing Circle days standing out like golden punctuation marks in a poem of life. She felt like an utterly different woman; and other people thought her different also. The Sewing Circle women found her so pleasant, and even friendly, that they began to think they had misjudged her, and that perhaps it was eccentricity after all, and not meanness, which accounted for her peculiar mode of living. Sylvia Gray always came and talked to her on Circle afternoons now, and the Old Lady treasured every word she said in her heart and repeated them over and over to her lonely self in the watches of the night.

Sylvia never talked of herself or her plans, unless asked about them; and the Old Lady's self-consciousness prevented her from asking any personal questions: so their conversation kept to the surface of things, and it was not from Sylvia, but from the minister's wife that the Old Lady finally discovered what her darling's dearest ambition was.

The minister's wife had dropped in at the old Lloyd place one evening late in September, when a chilly wind was blowing up from the northeast and moaning about the eaves of the house, as if the burden of its lay were "harvest is ended and summer is gone." The Old Lady had been listening to it, as she plaited a little basket of sweet grass for Sylvia. She had walked all the way to Avonlea sandhills for it the day before, and she was very tired. And her heart was sad. This summer, which had so enriched her life, was almost over; and she knew that Sylvia Gray talked of leaving Spencervale at the end of October. The Old Lady's heart felt like very lead within her at the thought, and she almost welcomed the advent of the minister's wife as a distraction, although she was desperately afraid that the minister's wife had called to ask for a subscription for the new vestry carpet, and the Old Lady simply could not afford to give one cent.

But the minister's wife had merely dropped in on her way home from the Spencers' and she did not make any embarrassing requests. Instead, she talked about Sylvia Gray, and her words fell on the Old Lady's ears like separate pearl notes of unutterably sweet music. The minister's wife had nothing but praise for Sylvia — she was so sweet and beautiful and winning.

"And with SUCH a voice," said the minister's wife enthusiastically, adding with a sigh, "It's such a shame she can't have it properly trained. She would certainly become a great singer — competent critics have told her so. But she is so poor she doesn't think she can ever possibly manage it — unless she can get one of the Cameron scholarships, as they are called; and she has very little hope of that, although the professor of music who taught her has sent her name in."

"What are the Cameron scholarships?" asked the Old Lady.

“Well, I suppose you have heard of Andrew Cameron, the millionaire?” said the minister’s wife, serenely unconscious that she was causing the very bones of the Old Lady’s family skeleton to jangle in their closet.

Into the Old Lady’s white face came a sudden faint stain of colour, as if a rough hand had struck her cheek.

“Yes, I’ve heard of him,” she said.

“Well, it seems that he had a daughter, who was a very beautiful girl, and whom he idolized. She had a fine voice, and he was going to send her abroad to have it trained. And she died. It nearly broke his heart, I understand. But ever since, he sends one young girl away to Europe every year for a thorough musical education under the best teachers — in memory of his daughter. He has sent nine or ten already; but I fear there isn’t much chance for Sylvia Gray, and she doesn’t think there is herself.”

“Why not?” asked the Old Lady spiritedly. “I am sure that there can be few voices equal to Miss Gray’s.”

“Very true. But you see, these so-called scholarships are private affairs, dependent solely on the whim and choice of Andrew Cameron himself. Of course, when a girl has friends who use their influence with him, he will often send her on their recommendation. They say he sent a girl last year who hadn’t much of a voice at all just because her father had been an old business crony of his. But Sylvia doesn’t know anyone at all who would, to use a slang term, have any ‘pull’ with Andrew Cameron, and she is not acquainted with him herself. Well, I must be going; we’ll see you at the Manse on Saturday, I hope, Miss Lloyd. The Circle meets there, you know.”

“Yes, I know,” said the Old Lady absently. When the minister’s wife had gone, she dropped her sweetgrass basket and sat for a long, long time with her hands lying idly in her lap, and her big black eyes staring unseeingly at the wall before her.

Old Lady Lloyd, so pitifully poor that she had to eat six crackers the less a week to pay her fee to the Sewing Circle, knew that it was in her power — HERS — to send Leslie Gray’s daughter to Europe for her

musical education! If she chose to use her “pull” with Andrew Cameron — if she went to him and asked him to send Sylvia Gray abroad the next year — she had no doubt whatever that it would be done. It all lay with her — if — if — IF she could so far crush and conquer her pride as to stoop to ask a favour of the man who had wronged her and hers so bitterly.

Years ago, her father, acting under the advice and urgency of Andrew Cameron, had invested all his little fortune in an enterprise that had turned out a failure. Abraham Lloyd lost every dollar he possessed, and his family were reduced to utter poverty. Andrew Cameron might have been forgiven for a mistake; but there was a strong suspicion, amounting to almost certainty, that he had been guilty of something far worse than a mistake in regard to his uncle’s investment. Nothing could be legally proved; but it was certain that Andrew Cameron, already noted for his “sharp practices,” emerged with improved finances from an entanglement that had ruined many better men; and old Doctor Lloyd had died brokenhearted, believing that his nephew had deliberately victimized him.

Andrew Cameron had not quite done this; he had meant well enough by his uncle at first, and what he had finally done he tried to justify to himself by the doctrine that a man must look out for Number One.

Margaret Lloyd made no such excuses for him; she held him responsible, not only for her lost fortune, but for her father’s death, and never forgave him for it. When Abraham Lloyd had died, Andrew Cameron, perhaps pricked by his conscience, had come to her, sleekly and smoothly, to offer her financial aid. He would see, he told her, that she never suffered want.

Margaret Lloyd flung his offer back in his face after a fashion that left nothing to be desired in the way of plain speaking. She would die, she told him passionately, before she would accept a penny or a favour from him. He had preserved an unbroken show of good temper, expressed his heartfelt regret that she should cherish such an unjust opinion of him, and had left her with an oily assurance that he would always be her friend, and would always be delighted to render her any assistance in his power whenever she should choose to ask for it.

The Old Lady had lived for twenty years in the firm conviction that she would die in the poorhouse — as, indeed, seemed not unlikely — before she would ask a favour of Andrew Cameron. And so, in truth, she would have, had it been for herself. But for Sylvia! Could she so far humble herself for Sylvia's sake?

The question was not easily or speedily settled, as had been the case in the matters of the grape jug and the book of poems. For a whole week the Old Lady fought her pride and bitterness. Sometimes, in the hours of sleepless night, when all human resentments and rancours seemed petty and contemptible, she thought she had conquered it. But in the daytime, with the picture of her father looking down at her from the wall, and the rustle of her unfashionable dresses, worn because of Andrew Cameron's double dealing, in her ears, it got the better of her again.

But the Old Lady's love for Sylvia had grown so strong and deep and tender that no other feeling could endure finally against it. Love is a great miracle worker; and never had its power been more strongly made manifest than on the cold, dull autumn morning when the Old Lady walked to Bright River railway station and took the train to Charlottetown, bent on an errand the very thought of which turned her soul sick within her. The station master who sold her her ticket thought Old Lady Lloyd looked uncommonly white and peaked—"as if she hadn't slept a wink or eaten a bite for a week," he told his wife at dinner time. "Guess there's something wrong in her business affairs. This is the second time she's gone to town this summer."

When the Old Lady reached the town, she ate her slender little lunch and then walked out to the suburb where the Cameron factories and warehouses were. It was a long walk for her, but she could not afford to drive. She felt very tired when she was shown into the shining, luxurious office where Andrew Cameron sat at his desk.

After the first startled glance of surprise, he came forward beamingly, with outstretched hand.

"Why, Cousin Margaret! This is a pleasant surprise. Sit down — allow me, this is a much more comfortable chair. Did you come in this morning?"

And how is everybody out in Spencervale?”

The Old Lady had flushed at his first words. To hear the name by which her father and mother and lover had called her on Andrew Cameron’s lips seemed like profanation. But, she told herself, the time was past for squeamishness. If she could ask a favour of Andrew Cameron, she could bear lesser pangs. For Sylvia’s sake she shook hands with him, for Sylvia’s sake she sat down in the chair he offered. But for no living human being’s sake could this determined Old Lady infuse any cordiality into her manner or her words. She went straight to the point with Lloyd simplicity.

“I have come to ask a favour of you,” she said, looking him in the eye, not at all humbly or meekly, as became a suppliant, but challengingly and defiantly, as if she dared him to refuse.

“DElighted to hear it, Cousin Margaret.” Never was anything so bland and gracious as his tone. “Anything I can do for you I shall be only too pleased to do. I am afraid you have looked upon me as an enemy, Margaret, and I assure you I have felt your injustice keenly. I realize that some appearances were against me, but—”

The Old Lady lifted her hand and stemmed his eloquence by that one gesture.

“I did not come here to discuss that matter,” she said. “We will not refer to the past, if you please. I came to ask a favour, not for myself, but for a very dear young friend of mine — a Miss Gray, who has a remarkably fine voice which she wishes to have trained. She is poor, so I came to ask you if you would give her one of your musical scholarships. I understand her name has already been suggested to you, with a recommendation from her teacher. I do not know what he has said of her voice, but I do know he could hardly overrate it. If you send her abroad for training, you will not make any mistake.”

The Old Lady stopped talking. She felt sure Andrew Cameron would grant her request, but she did hope he would grant it rather rudely or unwillingly. She could accept the favour so much more easily if it were flung to her like a bone to a dog. But not a bit of it. Andrew Cameron was

suaver than ever. Nothing could give him greater pleasure than to grant his dear Cousin Margaret's request — he only wished it involved more trouble on his part. Her little protege should have her musical education assuredly — she should go abroad next year — and he was DELighted —

“Thank you,” said the Old Lady, cutting him short again. “I am much obliged to you — and I ask you not to let Miss Gray know anything of my interference. And I shall not take up any more of your valuable time. Good afternoon.”

“Oh, you mustn't go so soon,” he said, with some real kindness or clannishness permeating the hateful cordiality of his voice — for Andrew Cameron was not entirely without the homely virtues of the average man. He had been a good husband and father; he had once been very fond of his Cousin Margaret; and he was really very sorry that “circumstances” had “compelled” him to act as he had done in that old affair of her father's investment. “You must be my guest tonight.”

“Thank you. I must return home tonight,” said the Old Lady firmly, and there was that in her tone which told Andrew Cameron that it would be useless to urge her. But he insisted on telephoning for his carriage to drive her to the station. The Old Lady submitted to this, because she was secretly afraid her own legs would not suffice to carry her there; she even shook hands with him at parting, and thanked him a second time for granting her request.

“Not at all,” he said. “Please try to think a little more kindly of me, Cousin Margaret.”

When the Old Lady reached the station she found, to her dismay, that her train had just gone and that she would have to wait two hours for the evening one. She went into the waiting-room and sat down. She was very tired. All the excitement that had sustained her was gone, and she felt weak and old. She had nothing to eat, having expected to get home in time for tea; the waiting-room was chilly, and she shivered in her thin, old, silk mantilla. Her head ached and her heart likewise. She had won Sylvia's desire for her; but Sylvia would go out of her life, and the Old Lady did not see how she was to go on living after that. Yet she sat there

unflinchingly for two hours, an upright, indomitable old figure, silently fighting her losing battle with the forces of physical and mental pain, while happy people came and went, and laughed and talked before her.

At eight o'clock the Old Lady got off the train at Bright River station, and slipped off unnoticed into the darkness of the wet night. She had two miles to walk, and a cold rain was falling. Soon the Old Lady was wet to the skin and chilled to the marrow. She felt as if she were walking in a bad dream. Blind instinct alone guided her over the last mile and up the lane to her own house. As she fumbled at her door, she realized that a burning heat had suddenly taken the place of her chilliness. She stumbled in over her threshold and closed the door.

VI. The October Chapter

On the second morning after Old Lady Lloyd's journey to town, Sylvia Gray was walking blithely down the wood lane. It was a beautiful autumn morning, clear and crisp and sunny; the frosted ferns, drenched and battered with the rain of yesterday, gave out a delicious fragrance; here and there in the woods a maple waved a gay crimson banner, or a branch of birch showed pale golden against the dark, unchanging spruces. The air was very pure and exhilarating. Sylvia walked with a joyous lightness of step and uplift of brow.

At the beech in the hollow she paused for an expectant moment, but there was nothing among the gray old roots for her. She was just turning away when little Teddy Kimball, who lived next door to the manse, came running down the slope from the direction of the old Lloyd place. Teddy's freckled face was very pale.

"Oh, Miss Gray!" he gasped. "I guess Old Lady Lloyd has gone clean crazy at last. The minister's wife asked me to run up to the Old Lady, with a message about the Sewing Circle — and I knocked — and knocked — and nobody came — so I thought I'd just step in and leave the letter on the table. But when I opened the door, I heard an awful queer laugh in the sitting-room, and next minute, the Old Lady came to the sitting-room door. Oh, Miss Gray, she looked awful. Her face was red and her eyes

awful wild — and she was muttering and talking to herself and laughing like mad. I was so scared I just turned and run.”

Sylvia, without stopping for reflection, caught Teddy’s hand and ran up the slope. It did not occur to her to be frightened, although she thought with Teddy that the poor, lonely, eccentric Old Lady had really gone out of her mind at last.

The Old Lady was sitting on the kitchen sofa when Sylvia entered. Teddy, too frightened to go in, lurked on the step outside. The Old Lady still wore the damp black silk dress in which she had walked from the station. Her face was flushed, her eyes wild, her voice hoarse. But she knew Sylvia and cowered down.

“Don’t look at me,” she moaned. “Please go away — I can’t bear that YOU should know how poor I am. You’re to go to Europe — Andrew Cameron is going to send you — I asked him — he couldn’t refuse ME. But please go away.”

Sylvia did not go away. At a glance she had seen that this was sickness and delirium, not insanity. She sent Teddy off in hot haste for Mrs. Spencer and when Mrs. Spencer came they induced the Old Lady to go to bed, and sent for the doctor. By night everybody in Spencervale knew that Old Lady Lloyd had pneumonia.

Mrs. Spencer announced that she meant to stay and nurse the Old Lady. Several other women offered assistance. Everybody was kind and thoughtful. But the Old Lady did not know it. She did not even know Sylvia Gray, who came and sat by her every minute she could spare. Sylvia Gray now knew all that she had suspected — the Old Lady was her fairy godmother. The Old Lady babbled of Sylvia incessantly, revealing all her love for her, betraying all the sacrifices she had made. Sylvia’s heart ached with love and tenderness, and she prayed earnestly that the Old Lady might recover.

“I want her to know that I give her love for love,” she murmured.

Everybody knew now how poor the Old Lady really was. She let slip all the jealously guarded secrets of her existence, except her old love for Leslie Gray. Even in delirium something sealed her lips as to that. But all

else came out — her anguish over her unfashionable attire, her pitiful makeshifts and contrivances, her humiliation over wearing unfashionable dresses and paying only five cents where every other Sewing Circle member paid ten. The kindly women who waited on her listened to her with tear-filled eyes, and repented of their harsh judgments in the past.

“But who would have thought it?” said Mrs. Spencer to the minister’s wife. “Nobody ever dreamed that her father had lost ALL his money, though folks supposed he had lost some in that old affair of the silver mine out west. It’s shocking to think of the way she has lived all these years, often with not enough to eat — and going to bed in winter days to save fuel. Though I suppose if we had known we couldn’t have done much for her, she’s so desperate proud. But if she lives, and will let us help her, things will be different after this. Crooked Jack says he’ll never forgive himself for taking pay for the few little jobs he did for her. He says, if she’ll only let him, he’ll do everything she wants done for her after this for nothing. Ain’t it strange what a fancy she’s took to Miss Gray? Think of her doing all those things for her all summer, and selling the grape jug and all. Well, the Old Lady certainly isn’t mean, but nobody made a mistake in calling her queer. It all does seem desperate pitiful. Miss Gray’s taking it awful hard. She seems to think about as much of the Old Lady as the Old Lady thinks of her. She’s so worked up she don’t even seem to care about going to Europe next year. She’s really going — she’s had word from Andrew Cameron. I’m awful glad, for there never was a sweeter girl in the world; but she says it will cost too much if the Old Lady’s life is to pay for it.”

Andrew Cameron heard of the Old Lady’s illness and came out to Spencervale himself. He was not allowed to see the Old Lady, of course; but he told all concerned that no expense or trouble was to be spared, and the Spencervale doctor was instructed to send his bill to Andrew Cameron and hold his peace about it. Moreover, when Andrew Cameron went back home, he sent a trained nurse out to wait on the Old Lady, a capable, kindly woman who contrived to take charge of the case without offending Mrs. Spencer — than which no higher tribute could be paid to her tact!

The Old Lady did not die — the Lloyd constitution brought her through. One day, when Sylvia came in, the Old Lady smiled up at her, with a weak, faint, sensible smile, and murmured her name, and the nurse said that the crisis was past.

The Old Lady made a marvellously patient and tractable invalid. She did just as she was told, and accepted the presence of the nurse as a matter of course.

But one day, when she was strong enough to talk a little, she said to Sylvia,

“I suppose Andrew Cameron sent Miss Hayes here, did he?” “Yes,” said Sylvia, rather timidly.

The Old Lady noticed the timidity and smiled, with something of her old humour and spirit in her black eyes.

“Time has been when I’d have packed off unceremoniously any person Andrew Cameron sent here,” she said. “But, Sylvia, I have gone through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and I have left pride and resentment behind me for ever, I hope. I no longer feel as I felt towards Andrew. I can even accept a personal favour from him now. At last I can forgive him for the wrong he did me and mine. Sylvia, I find that I have been letting no ends of cats out of bags in my illness. Everybody knows now how poor I am — but I don’t seem to mind it a bit. I’m only sorry that I ever shut my neighbours out of my life because of my foolish pride. Everyone has been so kind to me, Sylvia. In the future, if my life is spared, it is going to be a very different sort of life. I’m going to open it to all the kindness and companionship I can find in young and old. I’m going to help them all I can and let them help me. I CAN help people — I’ve learned that money isn’t the only power for helping people. Anyone who has sympathy and understanding to give has a treasure that is without money and without price. And oh, Sylvia, you’ve found out what I never meant you to know. But I don’t mind that now, either.”

Sylvia took the Old Lady’s thin white hand and kissed it.

“I can never thank you enough for what you have done for me, dearest Miss Lloyd,” she said earnestly. “And I am so glad that all mystery is done

away with between us, and I can love you as much and as openly as I have longed to do. I am so glad and so thankful that you love me, dear fairy godmother.”

“Do you know WHY I love you so?” said the Old Lady wistfully. “Did I let THAT out in my raving, too?”

“No, but I think I know. It is because I am Leslie Gray’s daughter, isn’t it? I know that father loved you — his brother, Uncle Willis, told me all about it.”

“I spoiled my own life because of my wicked pride,” said the Old Lady sadly. “But you will love me in spite of it all, won’t you, Sylvia? And you will come to see me sometimes? And write me after you go away?”

“I am coming to see you every day,” said Sylvia. “I am going to stay in Spencervale for a whole year yet, just to be near you. And next year when I go to Europe — thanks to you, fairy godmother — I’ll write you every day. We are going to be the best of chums, and we are going to have a most beautiful year of comradeship!”

The Old Lady smiled contentedly. Out in the kitchen, the minister’s wife, who had brought up a dish of jelly, was talking to Mrs. Spencer about the Sewing Circle. Through the open window, where the red vines hung, came the pungent, sunwarm October air. The sunshine fell over Sylvia’s chestnut hair like a crown of glory and youth.

“I do feel so perfectly happy,” said the Old Lady, with a long, rapturous breath.

Each In His Own Tongue

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The honey-tinted autumn sunshine was falling thickly over the crimson and amber maples around old Abel Blair's door. There was only one outer door in old Abel's house, and it almost always stood wide open. A little black dog, with one ear missing and a lame forepaw, almost always slept on the worn red sandstone slab which served old Abel for a doorstep; and on the still more worn sill above it a large gray cat almost always slept. Just inside the door, on a bandy-legged chair of elder days, old Abel almost always sat.

He was sitting there this afternoon — a little old man, sadly twisted with rheumatism; his head was abnormally large, thatched with long, wiry black hair; his face was heavily lined and swarthily sunburned; his eyes were deep-set and black, with occasional peculiar golden flashes in them. A strange looking man was old Abel Blair; and as strange was he as he looked. Lower Carmody people would have told you.

Old Abel was almost always sober in these, his later years. He was sober to-day. He liked to bask in that ripe sunlight as well as his dog and cat did; and in such baskings he almost always looked out of his doorway at the far, fine blue sky over the tops of the crowding maples. But to-day he was not looking at the sky, instead, he was staring at the black, dusty rafters of his kitchen, where hung dried meats and strings of onions and bunches of herbs and fishing tackle and guns and skins.

But old Abel saw not these things; his face was the face of a man who beholds visions, compact of heavenly pleasure and hellish pain, for old Abel was seeing what he might have been — and what he was; as he always saw when Felix Moore played to him on the violin. And the awful joy of dreaming that he was young again, with unspoiled life before him, was so great and compelling that it counterbalanced the agony in the realization of a dishonoured old age, following years in which he had

squandered the wealth of his soul in ways where Wisdom lifted not her voice.

Felix Moore was standing opposite to him, before an untidy stove, where the noon fire had died down into pallid, scattered ashes. Under his chin he held old Abel's brown, battered fiddle; his eyes, too, were fixed on the ceiling; and he, too, saw things not lawful to be uttered in any language save that of music; and of all music, only that given forth by the anguished, enraptured spirit of the violin. And yet this Felix was little more than twelve years old, and his face was still the face of a child who knows nothing of either sorrow or sin or failure or remorse. Only in his large, gray-black eyes was there something not of the child — something that spoke of an inheritance from many hearts, now ashes, which had aforetime grieved and joyed, and struggled and failed, and succeeded and grovelled. The inarticulate cries of their longings had passed into this child's soul, and transmuted themselves into the expression of his music.

Felix was a beautiful child. Carmody people, who stayed at home, thought so; and old Abel Blair, who had roamed afar in many lands, thought so; and even the Rev. Stephen Leonard, who taught, and tried to believe, that favour is deceitful and beauty is vain, thought so.

He was a slight lad, with sloping shoulders, a slim brown neck, and a head set on it with stag-like grace and uplift. His hair, cut straight across his brow and falling over his ears, after some caprice of Janet Andrews, the minister's housekeeper, was a glossy blue-black. The skin of his face and hands was like ivory; his eyes were large and beautifully tinted — gray, with dilating pupils; his features had the outlines of a cameo. Carmody mothers considered him delicate, and had long foretold that the minister would never bring him up; but old Abel pulled his grizzled moustache when he heard such forebodings and smiled.

"Felix Moore will live," he said positively. "You can't kill that kind until their work is done. He's got a work to do — if the minister'll let him do it. And if the minister don't let him do it, then I wouldn't be in that minister's shoes when he comes to the judgment — no, I'd rather be in my own. It's an awful thing to cross the purposes of the Almighty, either in

your own life or anybody else's. Sometimes I think it's what's meant by the unpardonable sin — ay, that I do!"

Carmody people never asked what old Abel meant. They had long ago given up such vain questioning. When a man had lived as old Abel had lived for the greater part of his life, was it any wonder he said crazy things? And as for hinting that Mr. Leonard, a man who was really almost too good to live, was guilty of any sin, much less an unpardonable one — well, there now! what use was it to be taking any account of old Abel's queer speeches? Though, to be sure, there was no great harm in a fiddle, and maybe Mr. Leonard was a mite too strict that way with the child. But then, could you wonder at it? There was his father, you see.

Felix finally lowered the violin, and came back to old Abel's kitchen with a long sigh. Old Abel smiled drearily at him — the smile of a man who has been in the hands of the tormentors.

"It's awful the way you play — it's awful," he said with a shudder. "I never heard anything like it — and you that never had any teaching since you were nine years old, and not much practice, except what you could get here now and then on my old, battered fiddle. And to think you make it up yourself as you go along! I suppose your grandfather would never hear to your studying music — would he now?"

Felix shook his head.

"I know he wouldn't, Abel. He wants me to be a minister. Ministers are good things to be, but I'm afraid I can't be a minister."

"Not a pulpit minister. There's different kinds of ministers, and each must talk to men in his own tongue if he's going to do 'em any real good," said old Abel meditatively. "YOUR tongue is music. Strange that your grandfather can't see that for himself, and him such a broadminded man! He's the only minister I ever had much use for. He's God's own if ever a man was. And he loves you — yes, sir, he loves you like the apple of his eye."

"And I love him," said Felix warmly. "I love him so much that I'll even try to be a minister for his sake, though I don't want to be."

"What do you want to be?"

“A great violinist,” answered the child, his ivory-hued face suddenly warming into living rose. “I want to play to thousands — and see their eyes look as yours do when I play. Sometimes your eyes frighten me, but oh, it’s a splendid fright! If I had father’s violin I could do better. I remember that he once said it had a soul that was doing purgatory for its sins when it had lived on earth. I don’t know what he meant, but it did seem to me that HIS violin was alive. He taught me to play on it as soon as I was big enough to hold it.”

“Did you love your father?” asked old Abel, with a keen look.

Again Felix crimsoned; but he looked straightly and steadily into his old friend’s face.

“No,” he said, “I didn’t; but,” he added, gravely and deliberately, “I don’t think you should have asked me such a question.”

It was old Abel’s turn to blush. Carmody people would not have believed he could blush; and perhaps no living being could have called that deepening hue into his weather-beaten cheek save only this grayeyed child of the rebuking face.

“No, I guess I shouldn’t,” he said. “But I’m always making mistakes. I’ve never made anything else. That’s why I’m nothing more than ‘Old Abel’ to the Carmody people. Nobody but you and your grandfather ever calls me ‘Mr. Blair.’ Yet William Blair at the store up there, rich and respected as he is, wasn’t half as clever a man as I was when we started in life: you mayn’t believe that, but it’s true. And the worst of it is, young Felix, that most of the time I don’t care whether I’m Mr. Blair or old Abel. Only when you play I care. It makes me feel just as a look I saw in a little girl’s eyes some years ago made me feel. Her name was Anne Shirley and she lived with the Cuthberts down at Avonlea. We got into a conversation at Blair’s store. She could talk a blue streak to anyone, that girl could. I happened to say about something that it didn’t matter to a battered old hulk of sixty odd like me. She looked at me with her big, innocent eyes, a little reproachful like, as if I’d said something awful heretical. ‘Don’t you think, Mr. Blair,’ she says, ‘that the older we get the more things ought to matter to us?’ — as grave as if she’d been a hundred instead of eleven.

‘Things matter SO much to me now,’ she says, clasping her hands thisaway, ‘and I’m sure that when I’m sixty they’ll matter just five times as much to me.’ Well, the way she looked and the way she spoke made me feel downright ashamed of myself because things had stopped mattering with me. But never mind all that. My miserable old feelings don’t count for much. What come of your father’s fiddle?”

“Grandfather took it away when I came here. I think he burned it. And I long for it so often.”

“Well, you’ve always got my old brown fiddle to come to when you must.”

“Yes, I know. And I’m glad for that. But I’m hungry for a violin all the time. And I only come here when the hunger gets too much to bear. I feel as if I oughtn’t to come even then — I’m always saying I won’t do it again, because I know grandfather wouldn’t like it, if he knew.”

“He has never forbidden it, has he?”

“No, but that is because he doesn’t know I come here for that. He never thinks of such a thing. I feel sure he WOULD forbid it, if he knew. And that makes me very wretched. And yet I HAVE to come. Mr. Blair, do you know why grandfather can’t bear to have me play on the violin? He loves music, and he doesn’t mind my playing on the organ, if I don’t neglect other things. I can’t understand it, can you?”

“I have a pretty good idea, but I can’t tell you. It isn’t my secret. Maybe he’ll tell you himself some day. But, mark you, young Felix, he has got good reasons for it all. Knowing what I know, I can’t blame him over much, though I think he’s mistaken. Come now, play something more for me before you go — something that’s bright and happy this time, so as to leave me with a good taste in my mouth. That last thing you played took me straight to heaven, — but heaven’s awful near to hell, and at the last you tipped me in.”

“I don’t understand you,” said Felix, drawing his fine, narrow black brows together in a perplexed frown.

“No — and I wouldn’t want you to. You couldn’t understand unless you was an old man who had it in him once to do something and be a

MAN, and just went and made himself a devilish fool. But there must be something in you that understands things — all kinds of things — or you couldn't put it all into music the way you do. How do you do it? How in — how DO you do it, young Felix?"

"I don't know. But I play differently to different people. I don't know how that is. When I'm alone with you I have to play one way; and when Janet comes over here to listen I feel quite another way — not so thrilling, but happier and lonelier. And that day when Jessie Blair was here listening I felt as if I wanted to laugh and sing — as if the violin wanted to laugh and sing all the time."

The strange, golden gleam flashed through old Abel's sunken eyes.

"God," he muttered under his breath, "I believe the boy can get into other folk's souls somehow, and play out what HIS soul sees there."

"What's that you say?" inquired Felix, petting his fiddle.

"Nothing — never mind — go on. Something lively now, young Felix. Stop probing into my soul, where you haven't no business to be, you infant, and play me something out of your own — something sweet and happy and pure."

"I'll play the way I feel on sunshiny mornings, when the birds are singing and I forget I have to be a minister," said Felix simply.

A witching, gurgling, mirthful strain, like mingled bird and brook song, floated out on the still air, along the path where the red and golden maple leaves were falling very softly, one by one. The Reverend Stephen Leonard heard it, as he came along the way, and the Reverend Stephen Leonard smiled. Now, when Stephen Leonard smiled, children ran to him, and grown people felt as if they looked from Pisgah over to some fair land of promise beyond the fret and worry of their care-dimmed earthly lives.

Mr. Leonard loved music, as he loved all things beautiful, whether in the material or the spiritual world, though he did not realize how much he loved them for their beauty alone, or he would have been shocked and remorseful. He himself was beautiful. His figure was erect and youthful, despite seventy years. His face was as mobile and charming as a woman's, yet with all a man's tried strength and firmness in it, and his dark blue

eyes flashed with the brilliance of one and twenty; even his silken silvery hair could not make an old man of him. He was worshipped by everyone who knew him, and he was, in so far as mortal man may be, worthy of that worship.

“Old Abel is amusing himself with his violin again,” he thought. “What a delicious thing he is playing! He has quite a gift for the violin. But how can he play such a thing as that, — a battered old hulk of a man who has, at one time or another, wallowed in almost every sin to which human nature can sink? He was on one of his sprees three days ago — the first one for over a year — lying dead-drunk in the market square in Charlottetown among the dogs; and now he is playing something that only a young archangel on the hills of heaven ought to be able to play. Well, it will make my task all the easier. Abel is always repentant by the time he is able to play on his fiddle.”

Mr. Leonard was on the doorstep. The little black dog had frisked down to meet him, and the gray cat rubbed her head against his leg. Old Abel did not notice him; he was beating time with uplifted hand and smiling face to Felix’s music, and his eyes were young again, glowing with laughter and sheer happiness.

“Felix! what does this mean?”

The violin bow clattered from Felix’s hand upon the floor; he swung around and faced his grandfather. As he met the passion of grief and hurt in the old man’s eyes, his own clouded with an agony of repentance.

“Grandfather — I’m sorry,” he cried brokenly.

“Now, now!” Old Abel had risen deprecatingly. “It’s all my fault, Mr. Leonard. Don’t you blame the boy. I coaxed him to play a bit for me. I didn’t feel fit to touch the fiddle yet myself — too soon after Friday, you see. So I coaxed him on — wouldn’t give him no peace till he played. It’s all my fault.”

“No,” said Felix, throwing back his head. His face was as white as marble, yet it seemed ablaze with desperate truth and scorn of old Abel’s shielding lie. “No, grandfather, it isn’t Abel’s fault. I came over here on

purpose to play, because I thought you had gone to the harbour. I have come here often, ever since I have lived with you.”

“Ever since you have lived with me you have been deceiving me like this, Felix?”

There was no anger in Mr. Leonard’s tone — only measureless sorrow. The boy’s sensitive lips quivered.

“Forgive me, grandfather,” he whispered beseechingly.

“You never forbid him to come,” old Abel broke in angrily. “Be just, Mr. Leonard — be just.”

“I AM just. Felix knows that he has disobeyed me, in the spirit if not in the letter. Do you not know it, Felix?”

“Yes, grandfather, I have done wrong — I’ve known that I was doing wrong every time I came. Forgive me, grandfather.”

“Felix, I forgive you, but I ask you to promise me, here and now, that you will never again, as long as you live, touch a violin.” Dusky crimson rushed madly over the boy’s face. He gave a cry as if he had been lashed with a whip. Old Abel sprang to his feet.

“Don’t you ask such a promise of him, Mr. Leonard,” he cried furiously. “It’s a sin, that’s what it is. Man, man, what blinds you? You ARE blind. Can’t you see what is in the boy? His soul is full of music. It’ll torture him to death — or to worse — if you don’t let it have way.”

“There is a devil in such music,” said Mr. Leonard hotly.

“Ay, there may be, but don’t forget that there’s a Christ in it, too,” retorted old Abel in a low tense tone.

Mr. Leonard looked shocked; he considered that old Abel had uttered blasphemy. He turned away from him rebukingly.

“Felix, promise me.”

There was no relenting in his face or tone. He was merciless in the use of the power he possessed over that young, loving spirit. Felix understood that there was no escape; but his lips were very white as he said,

“I promise, grandfather.”

Mr. Leonard drew a long breath of relief. He knew that promise would be kept. So did old Abel. The latter crossed the floor and sullenly took the

violin from Felix's relaxed hand. Without a word or look he went into the little bedroom off the kitchen and shut the door with a slam of righteous indignation. But from its window he stealthily watched his visitors go away. Just as they entered on the maple path Mr. Leonard laid his hand on Felix's head and looked down at him. Instantly the boy flung his arm up over the old man's shoulder and smiled at him. In the look they exchanged there was boundless love and trust — ay, and good-fellowship. Old Abel's scornful eyes again held the golden flash.

“How those two love each other!” he muttered enviously. “And how they torture each other!”

Mr. Leonard went to his study to pray when he got home. He knew that Felix had run for comforting to Janet Andrews, the little, thin, sweet-faced, rigid-lipped woman who kept house for them. Mr. Leonard knew that Janet would disapprove of his action as deeply as old Abel had done. She would say nothing, she would only look at him with reproachful eyes over the teacups at suppertime. But Mr. Leonard believed he had done what was best and his conscience did not trouble him, though his heart did.

Thirteen years before this, his daughter Margaret had almost broken that heart by marrying a man of whom he could not approve. Martin Moore was a professional violinist. He was a popular performer, though not in any sense a great one. He met the slim, golden-haired daughter of the manse at the house of a college friend she was visiting in Toronto, and fell straightway in love with her. Margaret had loved him with all her virginal heart in return, and married him, despite her father's disapproval. It was not to Martin Moore's profession that Mr. Leonard objected, but to the man himself. He knew that the violinist's past life had not been such as became a suitor for Margaret Leonard; and his insight into character warned him that Martin Moore could never make any woman lastingly happy.

Margaret Leonard did not believe this. She married Martin Moore and lived one year in paradise. Perhaps that atoned for the three bitter years which followed — that, and her child. At all events, she died as she had lived, loyal and uncomplaining. She died alone, for her husband was away

on a concert tour, and her illness was so brief that her father had not time to reach her before the end. Her body was taken home to be buried beside her mother in the little Carmody churchyard. Mr. Leonard wished to take the child, but Martin Moore refused to give him up.

Six years later Moore, too, died, and at last Mr. Leonard had his heart's desire — the possession of Margaret's son. The grandfather awaited the child's coming with mingled feelings. His heart yearned for him, yet he dreaded to meet a second edition of Martin Moore. Suppose Margaret's son resembled his handsome vagabond of a father! Or, worse still, suppose he were cursed with his father's lack of principle, his instability, his Bohemian instincts. Thus Mr. Leonard tortured himself wretchedly before the coming of Felix.

The child did not look like either father or mother. Instead, Mr. Leonard found himself looking into a face which he had put away under the grasses thirty years before — the face of his girl bride, who had died at Margaret's birth. Here again were her lustrous gray-black eyes, her ivory outlines, her fine-traced arch of brow; and here, looking out of those eyes, seemed her very spirit again. From that moment the soul of the old man was knit to the soul of the child, and they loved each other with a love surpassing that of women.

Felix's only inheritance from his father was his love of music. But the child had genius, where his father had possessed only talent. To Martin Moore's outward mastery of the violin was added the mystery and intensity of his mother's nature, with some more subtle quality still, which had perhaps come to him from the grandmother he so strongly resembled. Moore had understood what a career was naturally before the child, and he had trained him in the technique of his art from the time the slight fingers could first grasp the bow. When nine-year-old Felix came to the Carmody manse, he had mastered as much of the science of the violin as nine out of ten musicians acquire in a lifetime; and he brought with him his father's violin; it was all Martin Moore had to leave his son — but it was an Amati, the commercial value of which nobody in Carmody suspected. Mr. Leonard had taken possession of it and Felix had never seen it since. He

cried himself to sleep many a night for the loss of it. Mr. Leonard did not know this, and if Janet Andrews suspected it she held her tongue — an art in which she excelled. She “saw no harm in a fiddle,” herself, and thought Mr. Leonard absurdly strict in the matter, though it would not have been well for the luckless outsider who might have ventured to say as much to her. She had connived at Felix’s visits to old Abel Blair, squaring the matter with her Presbyterian conscience by some peculiar process known only to herself.

When Janet heard of the promise which Mr. Leonard had exacted from Felix she seethed with indignation; and, though she “knew her place” better than to say anything to Mr. Leonard about it, she made her disapproval so plainly manifest in her bearing that the stern, gentle old man found the atmosphere of his hitherto peaceful manse unpleasantly chill and hostile for a time.

It was the wish of his heart that Felix should be a minister, as he would have wished his own son to be, had one been born to him. Mr. Leonard thought rightly that the highest work to which any man could be called was a life of service to his fellows; but he made the mistake of supposing the field of service much narrower than it is — of failing to see that a man may minister to the needs of humanity in many different but equally effective ways.

Janet hoped that Mr. Leonard might not exact the fulfilment of Felix’s promise; but Felix himself, with the instinctive understanding of perfect love, knew that it was vain to hope for any change of viewpoint in his grandfather. He addressed himself to the keeping of his promise in letter and in spirit. He never went again to old Abel’s; he did not even play on the organ, though this was not forbidden, because any music awakened in him a passion of longing and ecstasy which demanded expression with an intensity not to be borne. He flung himself grimly into his studies and conned Latin and Greek verbs with a persistency which soon placed him at the head of all competitors.

Only once in the long winter did he come near to breaking his promise. One evening, when March was melting into April, and the pulses of spring

were stirring under the lingering snow, he was walking home from school alone. As he descended into the little hollow below the manse a lively lilt of music drifted up to meet him. It was only the product of a mouth-organ, manipulated by a little black-eyed, French-Canadian hired boy, sitting on the fence by the brook; but there was music in the ragged urchin and it came out through his simple toy. It tingled over Felix from head to foot; and, when Leon held out the mouth-organ with a fraternal grin of invitation, he snatched at it as a famished creature might snatch at food.

Then, with it halfway to his lips, he paused. True, it was only the violin he had promised never to touch; but he felt that if he gave way ever so little to the desire that was in him, it would sweep everything before it. If he played on Leon Buote's mouth-organ, there in that misty spring dale, he would go to old Abel's that evening; he KNEW he would go. To Leon's amazement, Felix threw the mouth-organ back at him and ran up the hill as if he were pursued. There was something in his boyish face that frightened Leon; and it frightened Janet Andrews as Felix rushed past her in the hall of the manse.

"Child, what's the matter with you?" she cried. "Are you sick? Have you been scared?"

"No, no. Leave me alone, Janet," said Felix chokingly, dashing up the stairs to his own room.

He was quite composed when he came down to tea, an hour later, though he was unusually pale and had purple shadows under his large eyes.

Mr. Leonard scrutinized him somewhat anxiously; it suddenly occurred to the old minister that Felix was looking more delicate than his wont this spring. Well, he had studied hard all winter, and he was certainly growing very fast. When vacation came he must be sent away for a visit.

"They tell me Naomi Clark is real sick," said Janet. "She has been ailing all winter, and now she's fast to her bed. Mrs. Murphy says she believes the woman is dying, but nobody dares tell her so. She won't give in she's sick, nor take medicine. And there's nobody to wait on her except that simple creature, Maggie Peterson."

"I wonder if I ought to go and see her," said Mr. Leonard uneasily.

“What use would it be to bother yourself? You know she wouldn’t see you — she’d shut the door in your face like she did before. She’s an awful wicked woman — but it’s kind of terrible to think of her lying there sick, with no responsible person to tend her.”

“Naomi Clark is a bad woman and she lived a life of shame, but I like her, for all that,” remarked Felix, in the grave, meditative tone in which he occasionally said rather startling things.

Mr. Leonard looked somewhat reproachfully at Janet Andrews, as if to ask her why Felix should have attained to this dubious knowledge of good and evil under her care; and Janet shot a dour look back which, being interpreted, meant that if Felix went to the district school she could not and would not be held responsible if he learned more there than arithmetic and Latin.

“What do you know of Naomi Clark to like or dislike?” she asked curiously. “Did you ever see her?”

“Oh, yes,” Felix replied, addressing himself to his cherry preserve with considerable gusto. “I was down at Spruce Cove one night last summer when a big thunderstorm came up. I went to Naomi’s house for shelter. The door was open, so I walked right in, because nobody answered my knock. Naomi Clark was at the window, watching the cloud coming up over the sea. She just looked at me once, but didn’t say anything, and then went on watching the cloud. I didn’t like to sit down because she hadn’t asked me to, so I went to the window by her and watched it, too. It was a dreadful sight — the cloud was so black and the water so green, and there was such a strange light between the cloud and the water; yet there was something splendid in it, too. Part of the time I watched the storm, and the other part I watched Naomi’s face. It was dreadful to see, like the storm, and yet I liked to see it.

“After the thunder was over it rained a while longer, and Naomi sat down and talked to me. She asked me who I was, and when I told her she asked me to play something for her on her violin,” — Felix shot a deprecating glance at Mr. Leonard—”because, she said, she’d heard I was a great hand at it. She wanted something lively, and I tried just as hard as I

could to play something like that. But I couldn't. I played something that was terrible — it just played itself — it seemed as if something was lost that could never be found again. And before I got through, Naomi came at me, and tore the violin from me, and — SWORE. And she said, 'You big-eyed brat, how did you know THAT?' Then she took me by the arm — and she hurt me, too, I can tell you — and she put me right out in the rain and slammed the door."

"The rude, unmannerly creature!" said Janet indignantly.

"Oh, no, she was quite in the right," said Felix composedly. "It served me right for what I played. You see, she didn't know I couldn't help playing it. I suppose she thought I did it on purpose."

"What on earth did you play, child?"

"I don't know." Felix shivered. "It was awful — it was dreadful. It was fit to break your heart. But it HAD to be played, if I played anything at all."

"I don't understand what you mean — I declare I don't," said Janet in bewilderment.

"I think we'll change the subject of conversation," said Mr. Leonard.

It was a month later when "the simple creature, Maggie" appeared at the manse door one evening and asked for the preacher.

"Naomi wants ter see yer," she mumbled. "Naomi sent Maggie ter tell yer ter come at onct."

"I shall go, certainly," said Mr. Leonard gently. "Is she very ill?"

"Her's dying," said Maggie with a broad grin. "And her's awful skeered of hell. Her just knew ter-day her was dying. Maggie told her — her wouldn't believe the harbour women, but her believed Maggie. Her yelled awful."

Maggie chuckled to herself over the gruesome remembrance. Mr. Leonard, his heart filled with pity, called Janet and told her to give the poor creature some refreshment. But Maggie shook her head.

"No, no, preacher, Maggie must get right back to Naomi. Maggie'll tell her the preacher's coming ter save her from hell."

She uttered an eerie cry, and ran at full speed shoreward through the spruce woods.

“The Lord save us!” said Janet in an awed tone. “I knew the poor girl was simple, but I didn’t know she was like THAT. And are you going, sir?”

“Yes, of course. I pray God I may be able to help the poor soul,” said Mr. Leonard sincerely. He was a man who never shirked what he believed to be his duty; but duty had sometimes presented itself to him in pleasanter guise than this summons to Naomi Clark’s deathbed.

The woman had been the plague spot of Lower Carmody and Carmody Harbour for a generation. In the earlier days of his ministry to the congregation he had tried to reclaim her, and Naomi had mocked and flouted him to his face. Then, for the sake of those to whom she was a snare or a heartbreak, he had endeavoured to set the law in motion against her, and Naomi had laughed the law to scorn. Finally, he had been compelled to let her alone.

Yet Naomi had not always been an outcast. Her girlhood had been innocent; but she was the possessor of a dangerous beauty, and her mother was dead. Her father was a man notorious for his harshness and violence of temper. When Naomi made the fatal mistake of trusting to a false love that betrayed and deserted, he drove her from his door with taunts and curses.

Naomi took up her quarters in a little deserted house at Spruce Cove. Had her child lived it might have saved her. But it died at birth, and with its little life went her last chance of worldly redemption. From that time forth, her feet were set in the way that takes hold on hell.

For the past five years, however, Naomi had lived a tolerably respectable life. When Janet Peterson had died, her idiot daughter, Maggie, had been left with no kin in the world. Nobody knew what was to be done with her, for nobody wanted to be bothered with her. Naomi Clark went to the girl and offered her a home. People said she was no fit person to have charge of Maggie, but everybody shirked the unpleasant task of interfering in the matter, except Mr. Leonard, who went to expostulate with Naomi, and, as Janet said, for his pains got her door shut in his face.

But from the day when Maggie Peterson went to live with her, Naomi ceased to be the harbour Magdalen.

The sun had set when Mr. Leonard reached Spruce Cove, and the harbour was veiling itself in a wondrous twilight splendour. Afar out, the sea lay throbbing and purple, and the moan of the bar came through the sweet, chill spring air with its burden of hopeless, endless longing and seeking. The sky was blossoming into stars above the afterglow; out to the east the moon was rising, and the sea beneath it was a thing of radiance and silver and glamour; and a little harbour boat that went sailing across it was transmuted into an elfin shallop from the coast of fairyland.

Mr. Leonard sighed as he turned from the sinless beauty of the sea and sky to the threshold of Naomi Clark's house. It was very small — one room below, and a sleeping-loft above; but a bed had been made up for the sick woman by the downstairs window looking out on the harbour; and Naomi lay on it, with a lamp burning at her head and another at her side, although it was not yet dark. A great dread of darkness had always been one of Naomi's peculiarities.

She was tossing restlessly on her poor couch, while Maggie crouched on a box at the foot. Mr. Leonard had not seen her for five years, and he was shocked at the change in her. She was much wasted; her clear-cut, aquiline features had been of the type which becomes indescribably witchlike in old age, and, though Naomi Clark was barely sixty, she looked as if she might be a hundred. Her hair streamed over the pillow in white, uncared-for tresses, and the hands that plucked at the bedclothes were like wrinkled claws. Only her eyes were unchanged; they were as blue and brilliant as ever, but now filled with such agonized terror and appeal that Mr. Leonard's gentle heart almost stood still with the horror of them. They were the eyes of a creature driven wild with torture, hounded by furies, clutched by unutterable fear.

Naomi sat up and dragged at his arm.

"Can you help me? Can you help me?" she gasped imploringly. "Oh, I thought you'd never come! I was skeered I'd die before you got here — die and go to hell. I didn't know before today that I was dying. None of those cowards would tell me. Can you help me?"

“If I cannot, God can,” said Mr. Leonard gently. He felt himself very helpless and inefficient before this awful terror and frenzy. He had seen sad deathbeds — troubled deathbeds — ay, and despairing deathbeds, but never anything like this. “God!” Naomi’s voice shrilled terribly as she uttered the name. “I can’t go to God for help. Oh, I’m skeered of hell, but I’m skeereder still of God. I’d rather go to hell a thousand times over than face God after the life I’ve lived. I tell you, I’m sorry for living wicked — I was always sorry for it all the time. There ain’t never been a moment I wasn’t sorry, though nobody would believe it. I was driven on by fiends of hell. Oh, you don’t understand — you CAN’T understand — but I was always sorry!”

“If you repent, that is all that is necessary. God will forgive you if you ask Him.”

“No, He can’t! Sins like mine can’t be forgiven. He can’t — and He won’t.”

“He can and He will. He is a God of love, Naomi.”

“No,” said Naomi with stubborn conviction. “He isn’t a God of love at all. That’s why I’m skeered of him. No, no. He’s a God of wrath and justice and punishment. Love! There ain’t no such thing as love! I’ve never found it on earth, and I don’t believe it’s to be found in God.”

“Naomi, God loves us like a father.”

“Like MY father?” Naomi’s shrill laughter, peeling through the still room, was hideous to hear.

The old minister shuddered.

“No — no! As a kind, tender, all-wise father, Naomi — as you would have loved your little child if it had lived.”

Naomi cowered and moaned.

“Oh, I wish I could believe THAT. I wouldn’t be frightened if I could believe that. MAKE me believe it. Surely you can make me believe that there’s love and forgiveness in God if you believe it yourself.”

“Jesus Christ forgave and loved the Magdalen, Naomi.”

“Jesus Christ? Oh, I ain’t afraid of HIM. Yes, HE could understand and forgive. He was half human. I tell you, it’s God I’m skeered of.”

“They are one and the same,” said Mr. Leonard helplessly. He knew he could not make Naomi realize it. This anguished deathbed was no place for a theological exposition on the mysteries of the Trinity.

“Christ died for you, Naomi. He bore your sins in His own body on the cross.”

“We bear our own sins,” said Naomi fiercely. “I’ve borne mine all my life — and I’ll bear them for all eternity. I can’t believe anything else. I CAN’T believe God can forgive me. I’ve ruined people body and soul — I’ve broken hearts and poisoned homes — I’m worse than a murderess. No — no — no, there’s no hope for me.” Her voice rose again into that shrill, intolerable shriek. “I’ve got to go to hell. It ain’t so much the fire I’m skeered of as the outer darkness. I’ve always been so skeered of darkness — it’s so full of awful things and thoughts. Oh, there ain’t nobody to help me! Man ain’t no good and I’m too skeered of God.”

She wrung her hands. Mr. Leonard walked up and down the room in the keenest anguish of spirit he had ever known. What could he do? What could he say? There was healing and peace in his religion for this woman as for all others, but he could express it in no language which this tortured soul could understand. He looked at her writhing face; he looked at the idiot girl chuckling to herself at the foot of the bed; he looked through the open door to the remote, starlit night — and a horrible sense of utter helplessness overcame him. He could do nothing — nothing! In all his life he had never known such bitterness of soul as the realization brought home to him.

“What is the good of you if you can’t help me?” moaned the dying woman. “Pray — pray — pray!” she shrilled suddenly.

Mr. Leonard dropped on his knees by the bed. He did not know what to say. No prayer that he had ever prayed was of use here. The old, beautiful formulas, which had soothed and helped the passing of many a soul, were naught save idle, empty words to Naomi Clark. In his anguish of mind Stephen Leonard gasped out the briefest and sincerest prayer his lips had ever uttered.

“O, God, our Father! Help this woman. Speak to her in a tongue which she can understand.”

A beautiful, white face appeared for a moment in the light that streamed out of the doorway into the darkness of the night. No one noticed it, and it quickly drew back into the shadow. Suddenly, Naomi fell back on her pillow, her lips blue, her face horribly pinched, her eyes rolled up in her head. Maggie started up, pushed Mr. Leonard aside, and proceeded to administer some remedy with surprising skill and deftness. Mr. Leonard, believing Naomi to be dying, went to the door, feeling sick and bruised in soul.

Presently a figure stole out into the light.

“Felix, is that you?” said Mr. Leonard in a startled tone.

“Yes, sir.” Felix came up to the stone step. “Janet got frightened what you might fall on that rough road after dark, so she made me come after you with a lantern. I’ve been waiting behind the point, but at last I thought I’d better come and see if you would be staying much longer. If you will be, I’ll go back to Janet and leave the lantern here with you.” “Yes, that will be the best thing to do. I may not be ready to go home for some time yet,” said Mr. Leonard, thinking that the deathbed of sin behind him was no sight for Felix’s young eyes.

“Is that your grandson you’re talking to?” Naomi spoke clearly and strongly. The spasm had passed. “If it is, bring him in. I want to see him.”

Reluctantly, Mr. Leonard signed Felix to enter. The boy stood by Naomi’s bed and looked down at her with sympathetic eyes. But at first she did not look at him — she looked past him at the minister.

“I might have died in that spell,” she said, with sullen reproach in her voice, “and if I had, I’d been in hell now. You can’t help me — I’m done with you. There ain’t any hope for me, and I know it now.”

She turned to Felix.

“Take down that fiddle on the wall and play something for me,” she said imperiously. “I’m dying — and I’m going to hell — and I don’t want to think of it. Play me something to take my thoughts off it — I don’t care

what you play. I was always fond of music — there was always something in it for me I never found anywhere else.”

Felix looked at his grandfather. The old man nodded, he felt too ashamed to speak; he sat with his fine silver head in his hands, while Felix took down and tuned the old violin, on which so many godless lilt had been played in many a wild revel. Mr. Leonard felt that he had failed his religion. He could not give Naomi the help that was in it for her.

Felix drew the bow softly, perplexedly over the strings. He had no idea what he should play. Then his eyes were caught and held by Naomi’s burning, mesmeric, blue gaze as she lay on her crumpled pillow. A strange, inspired look came over the boy’s face. He began to play as if it were not he who played, but some mightier power, of which he was but the passive instrument.

Sweet and soft and wonderful was the music that stole through the room. Mr. Leonard forgot his heartbreak and listened to it in puzzled amazement. He had never heard anything like it before. How could the child play like that? He looked at Naomi and marvelled at the change in her face. The fear and frenzy were going out of it; she listened breathlessly, never taking her eyes from Felix. At the foot of the bed the idiot girl sat with tears on her cheeks.

In that strange music was the joy of the innocent, mirthful childhood, blent with the laughter of waves and the call of glad winds. Then it held the wild, wayward dreams of youth, sweet and pure in all their wildness and waywardness. They were followed by a rapture of young love — all-surrendering, all-sacrificing love. The music changed. It held the torture of unshed tears, the anguish of a heart deceived and desolate. Mr. Leonard almost put his hands over his ears to shut out its intolerable poignancy. But on the dying woman’s face was only a strange relief, as if some dumb, long-hidden pain had at last won to the healing of utterance.

The sullen indifference of despair came next, the bitterness of smouldering revolt and misery, the reckless casting away of all good. There was something indescribably evil in the music now — so evil that

Mr. Leonard's white soul shuddered away in loathing, and Maggie cowered and whined like a frightened animal.

Again the music changed. And in it now there was agony and fear — and repentance and a cry for pardon. To Mr. Leonard there was something strangely familiar in it. He struggled to recall where he had heard it before; then he suddenly knew — he had heard it before Felix came in Naomi's terrible words! He looked at his grandson with something like awe. Here was a power of which he knew nothing — a strange and dreadful power. Was it of God? Or of Satan?

For the last time the music changed. And now it was not music at all — it was a great, infinite forgiveness, an all-comprehending love. It was healing for a sick soul; it was light and hope and peace. A Bible text, seemingly incongruous, came into Mr. Leonard's mind—"This is the house of God; this is the gate of heaven."

Felix lowered the violin and dropped wearily on a chair by the bed. The inspired light faded from his face; once more he was only a tired boy. But Stephen Leonard was on his knees, sobbing like a child; and Naomi Clark was lying still, with her hands clasped over her breast.

"I understand now," she said very softly. "I couldn't see it before — and now it's so plain. I just FEEL it. God IS a God of love. He can forgive anybody — even me — even me. He knows all about it. I ain't skeered any more. He just loves me and forgives me as I'd have loved and forgiven my baby if she'd lived, no matter how bad she was, or what she did. The minister told me that but I couldn't believe it. I KNOW it now. And He sent you here tonight, boy, to tell it to me in a way that I could feel it."

Naomi Clark died just as the dawn came up over the sea. Mr. Leonard rose from his watch at her bedside and went to the door. Before him spread the harbour, gray and austere in the faint light, but afar out the sun was rending asunder the milk-white mists in which the sea was scarfed, and under it was a virgin glow of sparkling water.

The fir trees on the point moved softly and whispered together. The whole world sang of spring and resurrection and life; and behind him Naomi Clark's dead face took on the peace that passes understanding.

The old minister and his grandson walked home together in a silence that neither wished to break. Janet Andrews gave them a good scolding and an excellent breakfast. Then she ordered them both to bed; but Mr. Leonard, smiling at her, said:

“Presently, Janet, presently. But now, take this key, go up to the black chest in the garret, and bring me what you will find there.”

When Janet had gone, he turned to Felix.

“Felix, would you like to study music as your lifework?”

Felix looked up, with a transfiguring flush on his wan face.

“Oh, grandfather! Oh, grandfather!”

“You may do so, my child. After this night I dare not hinder you. Go with my blessing, and may God guide and keep you, and make you strong to do His work and tell His message to humanity in your own appointed way. It is not the way I desired for you — but I see that I was mistaken. Old Abel spoke truly when he said there was a Christ in your violin as well as a devil. I understand what he meant now.”

He turned to meet Janet, who came into the study with a violin. Felix’s heart throbbed; he recognized it. Mr. Leonard took it from Janet and held it out to the boy.

“This is your father’s violin, Felix. See to it that you never make your music the servant of the power of evil — never debase it to unworthy ends. For your responsibility is as your gift, and God will exact the accounting of it from you. Speak to the world in your own tongue through it, with truth and sincerity; and all I have hoped for you will be abundantly fulfilled.”

Little Joscelyn

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“It simply isn’t to be thought of, Auntie Nan,” said Mrs. William Morrison decisively. Mrs. William Morrison was one of those people who always speak decisively. If they merely announce that they are going to peel the potatoes for dinner their hearers realize that there is no possible escape for the potatoes. Moreover, these people are always given their full title by everybody. William Morrison was called Billy oftener than not; but, if you had asked for Mrs. Billy Morrison, nobody in Avonlea would have known what you meant at first guess.

“You must see that for yourself, Auntie,” went on Mrs. William, hulling strawberries nimbly with her large, firm, white fingers as she talked. Mrs. William always improved every shining moment. “It is ten miles to Kensington, and just think how late you would be getting back. You are not able for such a drive. You wouldn’t get over it for a month. You know you are anything but strong this summer.”

Auntie Nan sighed, and patted the tiny, furry, gray morsel of a kitten in her lap with trembling fingers. She knew, better than anyone else could know it, that she was not strong that summer. In her secret soul, Auntie Nan, sweet and frail and timid under the burden of her seventy years, felt with mysterious unmistakable prescience that it was to be her last summer at the Gull Point Farm. But that was only the more reason why she should go to hear little Joscelyn sing; she would never have another chance. And oh, to hear little Joscelyn sing just once — Joscelyn, whose voice was delighting thousands out in the big world, just as in the years gone by it had delighted Auntie Nan and the dwellers at the Gull Point Farm for a whole golden summer with carols at dawn and dusk about the old place!

“Oh, I know I’m not very strong, Maria.” said Auntie Nan pleadingly, “but I am strong enough for that. Indeed I am. I could stay at Kensington

over night with George's folks, you know, and so it wouldn't tire me much. I do so want to hear Joscelyn sing. Oh, how I love little Joscelyn."

"It passes my understanding, the way you hanker after that child," cried Mrs. William impatiently. "Why, she was a perfect stranger to you when she came here, and she was here only one summer!"

"But oh, such a summer!" said Aunt Nan softly. "We all loved little Joscelyn. She just seemed like one of our own. She was one of God's children, carrying love with them everywhere. In some ways that little Anne Shirley the Cuthberts have got up there at Green Gables reminds me of her, though in other ways they're not a bit alike. Joscelyn was a beauty."

"Well, that Shirley snippet certainly isn't that," said Mrs. William sarcastically. "And if Joscelyn's tongue was one third as long as Anne Shirley's the wonder to me is that she didn't talk you all to death out of hand."

"Little Joscelyn wasn't much of a talker," said Aunt Nan dreamily. "She was kind of a quiet child. But you remember what she did say. And I've never forgotten little Joscelyn."

Mrs. William shrugged her plump, shapely shoulders.

"Well, it was fifteen years ago, Aunt Nan, and Joscelyn can't be very 'little' now. She is a famous woman, and she has forgotten all about you, you can be sure of that."

"Joscelyn wasn't the kind that forgets," said Aunt Nan loyally. "And, anyway, the point is, I haven't forgotten HER. Oh, Maria, I've longed for years and years just to hear her sing once more. It seems as if I MUST hear my little Joscelyn sing once again before I die. I've never had the chance before and I never will have it again. Do please ask William to take me to Kensington."

"Dear me, Aunt Nan, this is really childish," said Mrs. William, whisking her bowlful of berries into the pantry. "You must let other folks be the judge of what is best for you now. You aren't strong enough to drive to Kensington, and, even if you were, you know well enough that William couldn't go to Kensington tomorrow night. He has got to attend that political meeting at Newbridge. They can't do without him."

“Jordan could take me to Kensington,” pleaded Aunty Nan, with very unusual persistence.

“Nonsense! You couldn’t go to Kensington with the hired man. Now, Aunty Nan, do be reasonable. Aren’t William and I kind to you? Don’t we do everything for your comfort?”

“Yes, oh, yes,” admitted Aunty Nan deprecatingly.

“Well, then, you ought to be guided by our opinion. And you must just give up thinking about the Kensington concert, Aunty, and not worry yourself and me about it any more. I am going down to the shore field now to call William to tea. Just keep an eye on the baby in chance he wakes up, and see that the teapot doesn’t boil over.”

Mrs. William whisked out of the kitchen, pretending not to see the tears that were falling over Aunty Nan’s withered pink cheeks. Aunty Nan was really getting very childish, Mrs. William reflected, as she marched down to the shore field. Why, she cried now about every little thing! And such a notion — to want to go to the Old Timers’ concert at Kensington and be so set on it! Really, it was hard to put up with her whims. Mrs. William sighed virtuously.

As for Aunty Nan, she sat alone in the kitchen, and cried bitterly, as only lonely old age can cry. It seemed to her that she could not bear it, that she **MUST** go to Kensington. But she knew that it was not to be, since Mrs. William had decided otherwise. Mrs. William’s word was law at Gull Point Farm.

“What’s the matter with my old Aunty Nan?” cried a hearty young voice from the doorway. Jordan Sloane stood there, his round, freckled face looking as anxious and sympathetic as it was possible for such a very round, very freckled face to look. Jordan was the Morrisons’ hired boy that summer, and he worshipped Aunty Nan.

“Oh, Jordan,” sobbed Aunty Nan, who was not above telling her troubles to the hired help, although Mrs. William thought she ought to be, “I can’t go to Kensington tomorrow night to hear little Joscelyn sing at the Old Timers’ concert. Maria says I can’t.”

“That’s too bad,” said Jordan. “Old cat,” he muttered after the retreating and serenely unconscious Mrs. William. Then he shambled in and sat down on the sofa beside Aunt Nan.

“There, there, don’t cry,” he said, patting her thin little shoulder with his big, sunburned paw. “You’ll make yourself sick if you go on crying, and we can’t get along without you at Gull Point Farm.”

Aunt Nan smiled wanly.

“I’m afraid you’ll soon have to get on without me, Jordan. I’m not going to be here very long now. No, I’m not, Jordan, I know it. Something tells me so very plainly. But I would be willing to go — glad to go, for I’m very tired, Jordan — if I could only have heard little Joscelyn sing once more.”

“Why are you so set on hearing her?” asked Jordan. “She ain’t no kin to you, is she?”

“No, but dearer to me — dearer to me than many of my own. Maria thinks that is silly, but you wouldn’t if you’d known her, Jordan. Even Maria herself wouldn’t, if she had known her. It is fifteen years since she came here one summer to board. She was a child of thirteen then, and hadn’t any relations except an old uncle who sent her to school in winter and boarded her out in summer, and didn’t care a rap about her. The child was just starving for love, Jordan, and she got it here. William and his brothers were just children then, and they hadn’t any sister. We all just worshipped her. She was so sweet, Jordan. And pretty, oh my! like a little girl in a picture, with great long curls, all black and purple and fine as spun silk, and big dark eyes, and such pink cheeks — real wild rose cheeks. And sing! My land! But couldn’t she sing! Always singing, every hour of the day that voice was ringing round the old place. I used to hold my breath to hear it. She always said that she meant to be a famous singer some day, and I never doubted it a mite. It was born in her. Sunday evening she used to sing hymns for us. Oh, Jordan, it makes my old heart young again to remember it. A sweet child she was, my little Joscelyn! She used to write me for three or four years after she went away, but I haven’t heard a word from her for long and long. I daresay she has forgotten me, as

Maria says. ‘Twouldn’t be any wonder. But I haven’t forgotten her, and oh, I want to see and hear her terrible much. She is to sing at the Old Timers’ concert tomorrow night at Kensington. The folks who are getting the concert up are friends of hers, or, of course, she’d never have come to a little country village. Only sixteen miles away — and I can’t go.”

Jordan couldn’t think of anything to say. He reflected savagely that if he had a horse of his own he would take Aunt Nan to Kensington, Mrs. William or no Mrs. William. Though, to be sure, it WAS a long drive for her; and she was looking very frail this summer.

“Ain’t going to last long,” muttered Jordan, making his escape by the porch door as Mrs. William puffed in by the other. “The sweetest old creetur that ever was created’ll go when she goes. Yah, ye old madam, I’d like to give you a piece of my mind, that I would!”

This last was for Mrs. William, but was delivered in a prudent undertone. Jordan detested Mrs. William, but she was a power to be reckoned with, all the same. Meek, easygoing Billy Morrison did just what his wife told him to.

So Aunt Nan did not get to Kensington to hear little Joscelyn sing. She said nothing more about it but after that night she seemed to fail very rapidly. Mrs. William said it was the hot weather, and that Aunt Nan gave way too easily. But Aunt Nan could not help giving way now; she was very, very tired. Even her knitting wearied her. She would sit for hours in her rocking chair with the gray kitten in her lap, looking out of the window with dreamy, unseeing eyes. She talked to herself a good deal, generally about little Joscelyn. Mrs. William told Avonlea folk that Aunt Nan had got terribly childish and always accompanied the remark with a sigh that intimated how much she, Mrs. William, had to contend with.

Justice must be done to Mrs. William, however. She was not unkind to Aunt Nan; on the contrary, she was very kind to her in the letter. Her comfort was scrupulously attended to, and Mrs. William had the grace to utter none of her complaints in the old woman’s hearing. If Aunt Nan felt the absence of the spirit she never murmured at it.

One day, when the Avonlea slopes were golden-hued with the ripened harvest, Aunty Nan did not get up. She complained of nothing but great weariness. Mrs. William remarked to her husband that if SHE lay in bed every day she felt tired, there wouldn't be much done at Gull Point Farm. But she prepared an excellent breakfast and carried it patiently up to Aunty Nan, who ate little of it.

After dinner Jordan crept up by way of the back stairs to see her. Aunty Nan was lying with her eyes fixed on the pale pink climbing roses that nodded about the window. When she saw Jordan she smiled.

"Them roses put me so much in mind of little Joscelyn," she said softly. "She loved them so. If I could only see her! Oh, Jordan, if I could only see her! Maria says it's terrible childish to be always harping on that string, and mebbe it is. But — oh, Jordan, there's such a hunger in my heart for her, such a hunger!"

Jordan felt a queer sensation in his throat, and twisted his ragged straw hat about in his big hands. Just then a vague idea which had hovered in his brain all day crystallized into decision. But all he said was:

"I hope you'll feel better soon, Aunty Nan."

"Oh, yes, Jordan dear, I'll be better soon," said Aunty Nan with her own sweet smile. "'The inhabitant shall not say I am sick,' you know. But if I could only see little Joscelyn first!"

Jordan went out and hurried downstairs. Billy Morrison was in the stable, when Jordan stuck his head over the half-door.

"Say, can I have the rest of the day off, sir? I want to go to Kensington."

"Well, I don't mind," said Billy Morrison amiably. "May's well get you jaunting done 'fore harvest comes on. And here, Jord; take this quarter and get some oranges for Aunty Nan. Needn't mention it to headquarters."

Billy Morrison's face was solemn, but Jordan winked as he pocketed the money.

"If I've any luck, I'll bring her something that'll do her more good than the oranges," he muttered, as he hurried off to the pasture. Jordan had a horse of his own now, a rather bony nag, answering to the name of Dan.

Billy Morrison had agreed to pasture the animal if Jordan used him in the farm work, an arrangement scoffed at by Mrs. William in no measured terms.

Jordan hitched Dan into the second best buggy, dressed himself in his Sunday clothes, and drove off. On the road he re-read a paragraph he had clipped from the Charlottetown Daily Enterprise of the previous day.

“Joscelyn Burnett, the famous contralto, is spending a few days in Kensington on her return from her Maritime concert tour. She is the guest of Mr. and Mrs. Bromley, of The Beeches.”

“Now if I can get there in time,” said Jordan emphatically.

Jordan got to Kensington, put Dan up in a livery stable, and inquired the way to The Beeches. He felt rather nervous when he found it, it was such a stately, imposing place, set back from the street in an emerald green seclusion of beautiful grounds.

“Fancy me stalking up to that front door and asking for Miss Joscelyn Burnett,” grinned Jordan sheepishly. “Mebbe they’ll tell me to go around to the back and inquire for the cook. But you’re going just the same, Jordan Sloane, and no skulking. March right up now. Think of Aunty Nan and don’t let style down you.”

A pert-looking maid answered Jordan’s ring, and stared at him when he asked for Miss Burnett.

“I don’t think you can see her,” she said shortly, scanning his country cut of hair and clothes rather superciliously. “What is your business with her?”

The maid’s scorn roused Jordan’s “dander,” as he would have expressed it.

“I’ll tell her that when I see her,” he retorted coolly. “Just you tell her that I’ve a message for her from Aunty Nan Morrison of Gull Point Farm, Avonlea. If she hain’t forgot, that’ll fetch her. You might as well hurry up, if you please, I’ve not overly too much time.”

The pert maid decided to be civil at least, and invited Jordan to enter. But she left him standing in the hall while she went in search of Miss Burnett. Jordan gazed about him in amazement. He had never been in any

place like this before. The hall was wonderful enough, and through the open doors on either hand stretched vistas of lovely rooms that, to Jordan's eyes, looked like those of a palace.

"Gee whiz! How do they ever move around without knocking things over?"

Then Joscelyn Burnett came, and Jordan forgot everything else. This tall, beautiful woman, in her silken draperies, with a face like nothing Jordan had ever seen, or even dreamed about, — could this be Aunt Nan's little Joscelyn? Jordan's round, freckled countenance grew crimson. He felt horribly tongue-tied and embarrassed. What could he say to her? How could he say it?

Joscelyn Burnett looked at him with her large, dark eyes, — the eyes of a woman who had suffered much, and learned much, and won through struggle to victory.

"You have come from Aunt Nan?" she said. "Oh, I am so glad to hear from her. Is she well? Come in here and tell me all about her."

She turned toward one of those fairylike rooms, but Jordan interrupted her desperately.

"Oh, not in there, ma'am. I'd never get it out. Just let me blunder through it out here someways. Yes'm, Aunt Nan, she ain't very well. She's — she's dying, I guess. And she's longing for you night and day. Seems as if she couldn't die in peace without seeing you. She wanted to get to Kensington to hear you sing, but that old cat of a Mrs. William — begging you pardon, ma'am — wouldn't let her come. She's always talking of you. If you can come out to Gull Point Farm and see her, I'll be most awful obliged to you, ma'am."

Joscelyn Burnett looked troubled. She had not forgotten Gull Point Farm, nor Aunt Nan; but for years the memory had been dim, crowded into the background of consciousness by the more exciting events of her busy life. Now it came back with a rush. She recalled it all tenderly — the peace and beauty and love of that olden summer, and sweet Aunt Nan, so very wise in the lore of all things simple and good and true. For the moment Joscelyn Burnett was a lonely, hungry-hearted little girl again,

seeking for love and finding it not, until Aunt Nan had taken her into her great mother-heart and taught her its meaning.

“Oh, I don’t know,” she said perplexedly. “If you had come sooner — I leave on the 11:30 train tonight. I MUST leave by then or I shall not reach Montreal in time to fill a very important engagement. And yet I must see Aunt Nan, too. I have been careless and neglectful. I might have gone to see her before. How can we manage it?”

“I’ll bring you back to Kensington in time to catch that train,” said Jordan eagerly. “There’s nothing I wouldn’t do for Aunt Nan — me and Dan. Yes, sir, you’ll get back in time. Just think of Aunt Nan’s face when she sees you!”

“I will come,” said the great singer, gently.

It was sunset when they reached Gull Point Farm. An arc of warm gold was over the spruces behind the house. Mrs. William was out in the barnyard, milking, and the house was deserted, save for the sleeping baby in the kitchen and the little old woman with the watchful eyes in the upstairs room.

“This way, ma’am,” said Jordan, inwardly congratulating himself that the coast was clear. “I’ll take you right up to her room.”

Upstairs, Joscelyn tapped at the half-open door and went in. Before it closed behind her, Jordan heard Aunt Nan say, “Joscelyn! Little Joscelyn!” in a tone that made him choke again. He stumbled thankfully downstairs, to be pounced upon by Mrs. William in the kitchen.

“Jordan Sloane, who was that stylish woman you drove into the yard with? And what have you done with her?”

“That was Miss Joscelyn Burnett,” said Jordan, expanding himself. This was his hour of triumph over Mrs. William. “I went to Kensington and brung her out to see Aunt Nan. She’s up with her now.”

“Dear me,” said Mrs. William helplessly. “And me in my milking rig! Jordan, for pity’s sake, hold the baby while I go and put on my black silk. You might have given a body some warning. I declare I don’t know which is the greatest idiot, you or Aunt Nan!”

As Mrs. William flounced out of the kitchen, Jordan took his satisfaction in a quiet laugh.

Upstairs in the little room was a great glory of sunset and gladness of human hearts. Joscelyn was kneeling by the bed, with her arms about Auntie Nan; and Auntie Nan, with her face all irradiated, was stroking Joscelyn's dark hair fondly.

"O, little Joscelyn," she murmured, "it seems too good to be true. It seems like a beautiful dream. I knew you the minute you opened the door, my dearie. You haven't changed a bit. And you're a famous singer now, little Joscelyn! I always knew you would be. Oh, I want you to sing a piece for me — just one, won't you, dearie? Sing that piece people like to hear you sing best. I forget the name, but I've read about it in the papers. Sing it for me, little Joscelyn."

And Joscelyn, standing by Auntie Nan's bed, in the sunset light, sang the song she had sung to many a brilliant audience on many a noted concert-platform — sang it as even she had never sung before, while Auntie Nan lay and listened beatifically, and downstairs even Mrs. William held her breath, entranced by the exquisite melody that floated through the old farmhouse.

"O, little Joscelyn!" breathed Auntie Nan in rapture, when the song ended.

Joscelyn knelt by her again and they had a long talk of old days. One by one they recalled the memories of that vanished summer. The past gave up its tears and its laughter. Heart and fancy alike went roaming through the ways of the long ago. Auntie Nan was perfectly happy. And then Joscelyn told her all the story of her struggles and triumphs since they had parted.

When the moonlight began to creep in through the low window, Auntie Nan put out her hand and touched Joscelyn's bowed head.

"Little Joscelyn," she whispered, "if it ain't asking too much, I want you to sing just one other piece. Do you remember when you were here how we sung hymns in the parlour every Sunday night, and my favourite always was 'The Sands of Time are Sinking?' I ain't never forgot how you

used to sing that, and I want to hear it just once again, dearie. Sing it for me, little Joscelyn.”

Joscelyn rose and went to the window. Lifting back the curtain, she stood in the splendour of the moonlight, and sang the grand old hymn. At first Aunty Nan beat time to it feebly on the counterpane; but when Joscelyn came to the verse, “With mercy and with judgment,” she folded her hands over her breast and smiled.

When the hymn ended, Joscelyn came over to the bed.

“I am afraid I must say goodbye now, Aunty Nan,” she said.

Then she saw that Aunty Nan had fallen asleep. She would not waken her, but she took from her breast the cluster of crimson roses she wore and slipped them gently between the toil-worn fingers.

“Goodbye, dear, sweet mother-heart,” she murmured.

Downstairs she met Mrs. William splendid in rustling black silk, her broad, rubicund face smiling, overflowing with apologies and welcomes, which Joscelyn cut short coldly.

“Thank you, Mrs. Morrison, but I cannot possibly stay longer. No, thank you, I don’t care for any refreshments. Jordan is going to take me back to Kensington at once. I came out to see Aunty Nan.” “I’m certain she’d be delighted,” said Mrs. William effusively. “She’s been talking about you for weeks.”

“Yes, it has made her very happy,” said Joscelyn gravely. “And it has made me happy, too. I love Aunty Nan, Mrs. Morrison, and I owe her much. In all my life I have never met a woman so purely, unselfishly good and noble and true.”

“Fancy now,” said Mrs. William, rather overcome at hearing this great singer pronounce such an encomium on quiet, timid old Aunty Nan.

Jordan drove Joscelyn back to Kensington; and upstairs in her room Aunty Nan slept, with that rapt smile on her face and Joscelyn’s red roses in her hands. Thus it was that Mrs. William found her, going in the next morning with her breakfast. The sunlight crept over the pillow, lighting up the sweet old face and silver hair, and stealing downward to the faded red roses on her breast. Smiling and peaceful and happy lay Aunty Nan, for

she had fallen on the sleep that knows no earthy wakening, while little Joscelyn sang.

The Winning of Lucinda

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The marriage of a Penhallow was always the signal for a gathering of the Penhallows. From the uttermost parts of the earth they would come — Penhallows by birth, and Penhallows by marriage and Penhallows by ancestry. East Grafton was the ancient habitat of the race, and Penhallow Grange, where “old” John Penhallow lived, was a Mecca to them.

As for the family itself, the exact kinship of all its various branches and ramifications was a hard thing to define. Old Uncle Julius Penhallow was looked upon as a veritable wonder because he carried it all in his head and could tell on sight just what relation any one Penhallow was to any other Penhallow. The rest made a blind guess at it, for the most part, and the younger Penhallows let it go at loose cousinship.

In this instance it was Alice Penhallow, daughter of “young” John Penhallow, who was to be married. Alice was a nice girl, but she and her wedding only pertain to this story in so far as they furnish a background for Lucinda; hence nothing more need be said of her.

On the afternoon of her wedding day — the Penhallows held to the good, old-fashioned custom of evening weddings with a rousing dance afterwards — Penhallow Grange was filled to overflowing with guests who had come there to have tea and rest themselves before going down to “young” John’s. Many of them had driven fifty miles. In the big autumnal orchard the younger fry foregathered and chatted and coquetted. Upstairs, in “old” Mrs. John’s bedroom, she and her married daughters held high conclave. “Old” John had established himself with his sons and sons-in-law in the parlour, and the three daughters-in-law were making themselves at home in the blue sitting-room, ear-deep in harmless family gossip. Lucinda and Romney Penhallow were also there.

Thin Mrs. Nathaniel Penhallow sat in a rocking chair and toasted her toes at the grate, for the brilliant autumn afternoon was slightly chilly and

Lucinda, as usual, had the window open. She and plump Mrs. Frederick Penhallow did most of the talking. Mrs. George Penhallow being rather out of it by reason of her newness. She was George Penhallow's second wife, married only a year. Hence, her contributions to the conversation were rather spasmodic, hurled in, as it were, by dead reckoning, being sometimes appropriate and sometimes savouring of a point of view not strictly Penhallowesque.

Romney Penhallow was sitting in a corner, listening to the chatter of the women, with the inscrutable smile that always vexed Mrs. Frederick. Mrs. George wondered within herself what he did there among the women. She also wondered just where he belonged on the family tree. He was not one of the uncles, yet he could not be much younger than George.

"Forty, if he is a day," was Mrs. George's mental dictum, "but a very handsome and fascinating man. I never saw such a splendid chin and dimple."

Lucinda, with bronze-colored hair and the whitest of skins, defiant of merciless sunlight and revelling in the crisp air, sat on the sill of the open window behind the crimson vine leaves, looking out into the garden, where dahlias flamed and asters broke into waves of purple and snow. The ruddy light of the autumn afternoon gave a sheen to the waves of her hair and brought out the exceeding purity of her Greek outlines.

Mrs. George knew who Lucinda was — a cousin of the second generation, and, in spite of her thirty-five years, the acknowledged beauty of the whole Penhallow connection.

She was one of those rare women who keep their loveliness unmarred by the passage of years. She had ripened and matured, but she had not grown old. The older Penhallows were still inclined, from sheer force of habit, to look upon her as a girl, and the younger Penhallows hailed her as one of themselves. Yet Lucinda never aped girlishness; good taste and a strong sense of humour preserved her amid many temptations thereto. She was simply a beautiful, fully developed woman, with whom Time had declared a truce, young with a mellow youth which had nothing to do with years.

Mrs. George liked and admired Lucinda. Now, when Mrs. George liked and admired any person, it was a matter of necessity with her to impart her opinions to the most convenient confidant. In this case it was Romney Penhallow to whom Mrs. George remarked sweetly:

“Really, don’t you think our Lucinda is looking remarkably well this fall?”

It seemed a very harmless, inane, wellmeant question. Poor Mrs. George might well be excused for feeling bewildered over the effect. Romney gathered his long legs together, stood up, and swept the unfortunate speaker a crushing Penhallow bow of state.

“Far be it from me to disagree with the opinion of a lady — especially when it concerns another lady,” he said, as he left the blue room.

Overcome by the mordant satire in his tone, Mrs. George glanced speechlessly at Lucinda. Behold, Lucinda had squarely turned her back on the party and was gazing out into the garden, with a very decided flush on the snowy curves of her neck and cheek. Then Mrs. George looked at her sisters-in-law. They were regarding her with the tolerant amusement they might bestow on a blundering child. Mrs. George experienced that subtle prescience whereby it is given us to know that we have put our foot in it. She felt herself turning an uncomfortable brick-red. What Penhallow skeleton had she unwittingly jangled? Why, oh, why, was it such an evident breach of the proprieties to praise Lucinda?

Mrs. George was devoutly thankful that a summons to the tea-table rescued her from her mire of embarrassment. The meal was spoiled for her, however; the mortifying recollection of her mysterious blunder conspired with her curiosity to banish appetite. As soon as possible after tea she decoyed Mrs. Frederick out into the garden and in the dahlia walk solemnly demanded the reason of it all.

Mrs. Frederick indulged in a laugh which put the mettle of her festal brown silk seams to the test.

“My dear Cecilia, it was SO amusing,” she said, a little patronizingly.

“But WHY!” cried Mrs. George, resenting the patronage and the mystery. “What was so dreadful in what I said? Or so funny? And WHO is

this Romney Penhallow who mustn't be spoken to?"

"Oh, Romney is one of the Charlottetown Penhallows," explained Mrs. Frederick. "He is a lawyer there. He is a first cousin of Lucinda's and a second of George's — or is he? Oh, bother! You must go to Uncle John if you want the genealogy. I'm in a chronic muddle concerning Penhallow relationship. And, as for Romney, of course you can speak to him about anything you like except Lucinda. Oh, you innocent! To ask him if he didn't think Lucinda was looking well! And right before her, too! Of course he thought you did it on purpose to tease him. That was what made him so savage and sarcastic."

"But WHY?" persisted Mrs. George, sticking tenaciously to her point.

"Hasn't George told you?"

"No," said George's wife in mild exasperation. "George has spent most of his time since we were married telling me odd things about the Penhallows, but he hasn't got to that yet, evidently."

"Why, my dear, it is our family romance. Lucinda and Romney are in love with each other. They have been in love with each other for fifteen years and in all that time they have never spoken to each other once!"

"Dear me!" murmured Mrs. George, feeling the inadequacy of mere language. Was this a Penhallow method of courtship? "But WHY?"

"They had a quarrel fifteen years ago," said Mrs. Frederick patiently. "Nobody knows how it originated or anything about it except that Lucinda herself admitted it to us afterwards. But, in the first flush of her rage, she told Romney that she would never speak to him again as long as she lived. And HE said he would never speak to her until she spoke first — because, you see, as she was in the wrong she ought to make the first advance. And they never have spoken. Everybody in the connection, I suppose, has taken turns trying to reconcile them, but nobody has succeeded. I don't believe that Romney has ever so much as THOUGHT of any other woman in his whole life, and certainly Lucinda has never thought of any other man. You will notice she still wears Romney's ring. They're practically engaged still, of course. And Romney said once that if Lucinda would just say one word, no matter what it was, even if it were something insulting, he would

speaking, too, and beg her pardon for his share in the quarrel — because then, you see, he would not be breaking his word. He hasn't referred to the matter for years, but I presume that he is of the same mind still. And they are just as much in love with each other as they ever were. He's always hanging about where she is — when other people are there, too, that is. He avoids her like a plague when she is alone. That was why he was stuck out in the blue room with us to-day. There doesn't seem to be a particle of resentment between them. If Lucinda would only speak! But that Lucinda will not do."

"Don't you think she will yet?" said Mrs. George.

Mrs. Frederick shook her crimped head sagely.

"Not now. The whole thing has hardened too long. Her pride will never let her speak. We used to hope she would be tricked into it by forgetfulness or accident — we used to lay traps for her — but all to no effect. It is such a shame, too. They were made for each other. Do you know, I get cross when I begin to thrash the whole silly affair over like this. Doesn't it sound as if we were talking of the quarrel of two schoolchildren? Of late years we have learned that it does not do to speak of Lucinda to Romney, even in the most commonplace way. He seems to resent it."

"HE ought to speak," cried Mrs. George warmly. "Even if she were in the wrong ten times over, he ought to overlook it and speak first."

"But he won't. And she won't. You never saw two such determined mortals. They get it from their grandfather on the mother's side — old Absalom Gordon. There is no such stubbornness on the Penhallow side. His obstinacy was a proverb, my dear — actually a proverb. What ever he said, he would stick to it if the skies fell. He was a terrible old man to swear, too," added Mrs. Frederick, dropping into irrelevant reminiscence. "He spent a long while in a mining camp in his younger days and he never got over it — the habit of swearing, I mean. It would have made your blood run cold, my dear, to have heard him go on at times. And yet he was a real good old man every other way. He couldn't help it somehow. He tried to, but he used to say that profanity came as natural to him as breathing. It used to mortify his family terribly. Fortunately, none of them took after

him in that respect. But he's dead — and one shouldn't speak ill of the dead. I must go and get Mattie Penhallow to do my hair. I would burst these sleeves clean out if I tried to do it myself and I don't want to dress over again. You won't be likely to talk to Romney about Lucinda again, my dear Cecilia?"

"Fifteen years!" murmured Mrs. George helplessly to the dahlias. "Engaged for fifteen years and never speaking to each other! Dear heart and soul, think of it! Oh, these Penhallows!"

Meanwhile, Lucinda, serenely unconscious that her love story was being mouthed over by Mrs. Frederick in the dahlia garden, was dressing for the wedding. Lucinda still enjoyed dressing for a festivity, since the mirror still dealt gently with her. Moreover, she had a new dress. Now, a new dress — and especially one as nice as this — was a rarity with Lucinda, who belonged to a branch of the Penhallows noted for being chronically hard up. Indeed, Lucinda and her widowed mother were positively poor, and hence a new dress was an event in Lucinda's existence. An uncle had given her this one — a beautiful, perishable thing, such as Lucinda would never have dared to choose for herself, but in which she revelled with feminine delight.

It was of pale green voile — a colour which brought out admirably the ruddy gloss of her hair and the clear brilliance of her skin. When she had finished dressing she looked at herself in the mirror with frank delight. Lucinda was not vain, but she was quite well aware of the fact of her beauty and took an impersonal pleasure in it, as if she were looking at some finely painted picture by a master hand.

The form and face reflected in the glass satisfied her. The puffs and draperies of the green voile displayed to perfection the full, but not overfull, curves of her fine figure. Lucinda lifted her arm and touched a red rose to her lips with the hand upon which shone the frosty glitter of Romney's diamond, looking at the graceful slope of her shoulder and the splendid line of chin and throat with critical approval.

She noted, too, how well the gown became her eyes, bringing out all the deeper colour in them. Lucinda had magnificent eyes. Once Romney

had written a sonnet to them in which he compared their colour to ripe blueberries. This may not sound poetical to you unless you know or remember just what the tints of ripe blueberries are — dusky purple in some lights, clear slate in others, and yet again in others the misty hue of early meadow violets.

“You really look very well,” remarked the real Lucinda to the mirrored Lucinda. “Nobody would think you were an old maid. But you are. Alice Penhallow, who is to be married tonight, was a child of five when you thought of being married fifteen years ago. That makes you an old maid, my dear. Well, it is your own fault, and it will continue to be your own fault, you stubborn offshoot of a stubborn breed!”

She flung her train out straight and pulled on her gloves.

“I do hope I won’t get any spots on this dress tonight,” she reflected. “It will have to do me for a gala dress for a year at least — and I have a creepy conviction that it is fearfully spottable. Bless Uncle Mark’s good, uncalculating heart! How I would have detested it if he had given me something sensible and useful and ugly — as Aunt Emilia would have done.”

They all went to “young” John Penhallow’s at early moonrise. Lucinda drove over the two miles of hill and dale with a youthful second cousin, by name, Carey Penhallow. The wedding was quite a brilliant affair. Lucinda seemed to pervade the social atmosphere, and everywhere she went a little ripple of admiration trailed after her like a wave. She was undeniably a belle, yet she found herself feeling faintly bored and was rather glad than otherwise when the guests began to fray off.

“I’m afraid I’m losing my capacity for enjoyment,” she thought, a little drearily. “Yes, I must be growing old. That is what it means when social functions begin to bore you.”

It was that unlucky Mrs. George who blundered again. She was standing on the veranda when Carey Penhallow dashed up.

“Tell Lucinda that I can’t take her back to the Grange. I have to drive Mark and Cissy Penhallow to Bright River to catch the two o’clock express. There will be plenty of chances for her with the others.”

At this moment George Penhallow, holding his rearing horse with difficulty, shouted for his wife. Mrs. George, all in a flurry, dashed back into the still crowded hall. Exactly to whom she gave her message was never known to any of the Penhallows. But a tall, ruddy-haired girl, dressed in pale green organdy — Anne Shirley from Avonlea — told Marilla Cuthbert and Rachel Lynde as a joke the next morning how a chubby little woman in a bright pink fascinator had clutched her by the arm, and gasped out: “Carey Penhallow can’t take you — he says you’re to look out for someone else,” and was gone before she could answer or turn around.

Thus it was that Lucinda, when she came out to the veranda step, found herself unaccountably deserted. All the Grange Penhallows were gone; Lucinda realized this after a few moments of bewildered seeking, and she understood that if she were to get to the Grange that night she must walk. Plainly there was nobody to take her.

Lucinda was angry. It is not pleasant to find yourself forgotten and neglected. It is still less pleasant to walk home alone along a country road, at one o’clock in the morning, wearing a pale green voile. Lucinda was not prepared for such a walk. She had nothing on her feet save thin-soled shoes, and her only wraps were a flimsy fascinator and a short coat.

“What a guy I shall look, stalking home alone in this rig,” she thought crossly.

There was no help for it, unless she confessed her plight to some of the stranger guests and begged a drive home. Lucinda’s pride scorned such a request and the admission of neglect it involved. No, she would walk, since that was all there was to it; but she would not go by the main road to be stared at by all and sundry who might pass her. There was a short cut by way of a lane across the fields; she knew every inch of it, although she had not traversed it for years.

She gathered up the green voile as trimly as possible, slipped around the house in the kindly shadows, picked her way across the side lawn, and found a gate which opened into a birch-bordered lane where the frosted trees shone with silvery-golden radiance in the moonlight. Lucinda flitted

down the lane, growing angrier at every step as the realization of how shamefully she seemed to have been treated came home to her. She believed that nobody had thought about her at all, which was tenfold worse than premeditated neglect.

As she came to the gate at the lower end of the lane a man who was leaning over it started, with a quick intake of his breath, which, in any other man than Romney Penhallow, or for any other woman than Lucinda Penhallow, would have been an exclamation of surprise.

Lucinda recognized him with a great deal of annoyance and a little relief. She would not have to walk home alone. But with Romney Penhallow! Would he think she had contrived it so purposely?

Romney silently opened the gate for her, silently latched it behind her, and silently fell into step beside her. Down across a velvety sweep of field they went; the air was frosty, calm and still; over the world lay a haze of moonshine and mist that converted East Grafton's prosaic hills and fields into a shimmering fairyland. At first Lucinda felt angrier than ever. What a ridiculous situation! How the Penhallows would laugh over it!

As for Romney, he, too, was angry with the trick impish chance had played him. He liked being the butt of an awkward situation as little as most men; and certainly to be obliged to walk home over moonlit fields at one o'clock in the morning with the woman he had loved and never spoken to for fifteen years was the irony of fate with a vengeance. Would she think he had schemed for it? And how the deuce did she come to be walking home from the wedding at all?

By the time they had crossed the field and reached the wild cherry lane beyond it, Lucinda's anger was mastered by her saving sense of humour. She was even smiling a little maliciously under her fascinator.

The lane was a place of enchantment — a long, moonlit colonnade adown which beguiling wood nymphs might have footed it featly. The moonshine fell through the arching boughs and made a mosaic of silver light and clear-cut shadow for the unfriendly lovers to walk in. On either side was the hovering gloom of the woods, and around them was a great silence unstirred by wind or murmur.

Midway in the lane Lucinda was attacked by a sentimental recollection. She thought of the last time Romney and she had walked home together through this very lane, from a party at “young” John’s. It had been moonlight then too, and — Lucinda checked a sigh — they had walked hand in hand. Just here, by the big gray beech, he had stopped her and kissed her. Lucinda wondered if he were thinking of it, too, and stole a look at him from under the lace border of her fascinator.

But he was striding moodily along with his hands in his pockets, and his hat pulled down over his eyes, passing the old beech without a glance at it. Lucinda checked another sigh, gathered up an escaped flutter of voile, and marched on.

Past the lane a range of three silvery harvest fields sloped down to Peter Penhallow’s brook — a wide, shallow stream bridged over in the olden days by the mossy trunk of an ancient fallen tree. When Lucinda and Romney arrived at the brook they gazed at the brawling water blankly. Lucinda remembered that she must not speak to Romney just in time to prevent an exclamation of dismay. There was no tree! There was no bridge of any kind over the brook!

Here was a predicament! But before Lucinda could do more than despairingly ask herself what was to be done now, Romney answered — not in words, but in deeds. He coolly picked Lucinda up in his arms, as if she had been a child instead of a full grown woman of no mean avoirdupois, and began to wade with her through the water.

Lucinda gasped helplessly. She could not forbid him and she was so choked with rage over his presumption that she could not have spoken in any case. Then came the catastrophe. Romney’s foot slipped on a treacherous round stone — there was a tremendous splash — and Romney and Lucinda Penhallow were sitting down in the middle of Peter Penhallow’s brook.

Lucinda was the first to regain her feet. About her clung in heartbreaking limpness the ruined voile. The remembrance of all her wrongs that night rushed over her soul, and her eyes blazed in the moonlight. Lucinda Penhallow had never been so angry in her life.

“YOU D — D IDIOT!” she said, in a voice that literally shook with rage.

Romney meekly scrambled up the bank after her.

“I’m awfully sorry, Lucinda,” he said, striving with uncertain success to keep a suspicious quiver of laughter out of his tone. “It was wretchedly clumsy of me, but that pebble turned right under my foot. Please forgive me — for that — and for other things.”

Lucinda deigned no answer. She stood on a flat stone and wrung the water from the poor green voile. Romney surveyed her apprehensively.

“Hurry, Lucinda,” he entreated. “You will catch your death of cold.”

“I never take cold,” answered Lucinda, with chattering teeth. “And it is my dress I am thinking of — was thinking of. You have more need to hurry. You are sopping wet yourself and you know you are subject to colds. There — come.”

Lucinda picked up the stringy train, which had been so brave and buoyant five minutes before, and started up the field at a brisk rate. Romney came up to her and slipped his arm through hers in the old way. For a time they walked along in silence. Then Lucinda began to shake with inward laughter. She laughed silently for the whole length of the field; and at the line fence between Peter Penhallow’s land and the Grange acres she paused, threw back the fascinator from her face, and looked at Romney defiantly.

“You are thinking of — THAT,” she cried, “and I am thinking of it. And we will go on, thinking of it at intervals for the rest of our lives. But if you ever mention it to me I’ll never forgive you, Romney Penhallow!”

“I never will,” Romney promised. There was more than a suspicion of laughter in his voice this time, but Lucinda did not choose to resent it. She did not speak again until they reached the Grange gate. Then she faced him solemnly.

“It was a case of atavism,” she said. “Old Grandfather Gordon was to blame for it.”

At the Grange almost everybody was in bed. What with the guests straggling home at intervals and hurrying sleepily off to their rooms,

nobody had missed Lucinda, each set supposing she was with some other set. Mrs. Frederick, Mrs. Nathaniel and Mrs. George alone were up. The perennially chilly Mrs. Nathaniel had kindled a fire of chips in the blue room grate to warm her feet before retiring, and the three women were discussing the wedding in subdued tones when the door opened and the stately form of Lucinda, stately even in the dragged voile, appeared, with the damp Romney behind her.

“Lucinda Penhallow!” gasped they, one and all.

“I was left to walk home,” said Lucinda coolly. “So Romney and I came across the fields. There was no bridge over the brook, and when he was carrying me over he slipped and we fell in. That is all. No, Cecilia, I never take cold, so don’t worry. Yes, my dress is ruined, but that is of no consequence. No, thank you, Cecilia, I do not care for a hot drink. Romney, do go and take off those wet clothes of yours immediately. No, Cecilia, I will NOT take a hot footbath. I am going straight to bed. Good night.”

When the door closed on the pair the three sisters-in-law stared at each other. Mrs. Frederick, feeling herself incapable of expressing her sensations originally, took refuge in a quotation:

“‘Do I sleep, do I dream, do I wonder and doubt? Is things what they seem, or is visions about?’”

“There will be another Penhallow wedding soon,” said Mrs. Nathaniel, with a long breath. “Lucinda has spoken to Romney AT LAST.”

“Oh, WHAT do you suppose she said to him?” cried Mrs. George.

“My dear Cecilia,” said Mrs. Frederick, “we shall never know.”

They never did know.

Old Man Shaw's Girl

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“Day after tomorrow — day after tomorrow,” said Old Man Shaw, rubbing his long slender hands together gleefully. “I have to keep saying it over and over, so as to really believe it. It seems far too good to be true that I’m to have Blossom again. And everything is ready. Yes, I think everything is ready, except a bit of cooking. And won’t this orchard be a surprise to her! I’m just going to bring her out here as soon as I can, never saying a word. I’ll fetch her through the spruce lane, and when we come to the end of the path I’ll step back casual-like, and let her go out from under the trees alone, never suspecting. It’ll be worth ten times the trouble to see her big, brown eyes open wide and hear her say, ‘Oh, daddy! Why, daddy!’”

He rubbed his hands again and laughed softly to himself. He was a tall, bent old man, whose hair was snow white, but whose face was fresh and rosy. His eyes were a boy’s eyes, large, blue and merry, and his mouth had never got over a youthful trick of smiling at any provocation — and, oft-times, at no provocation at all.

To be sure, White Sands people would not have given you the most favourable opinion in the world of Old Man Shaw. First and foremost, they would have told you that he was “shiftless,” and had let his bit of a farm run out while he potted with flowers and bugs, or rambled aimlessly about in the woods, or read books along the shore. Perhaps it was true; but the old farm yielded him a living, and further than that Old Man Shaw had no ambition. He was as blithe as a pilgrim on a pathway climbing to the west. He had learned the rare secret that you must take happiness when you find it — that there is no use in marking the place and coming back to it at a more convenient season, because it will not be there then. And it is very easy to be happy if you know, as Old Man Shaw most thoroughly knew, how to find pleasure in little things. He enjoyed life, he had always enjoyed life and helped others to enjoy it; consequently his life was a

success, whatever White Sands people might think of it. What if he had not “improved” his farm? There are some people to whom life will never be anything more than a kitchen garden; and there are others to whom it will always be a royal palace with domes and minarets of rainbow fancy.

The orchard of which he was so proud was as yet little more than the substance of things hoped for — a flourishing plantation of young trees which would amount to something later on. Old Man Shaw’s house was on the crest of a bare, sunny hill, with a few staunch old firs and spruces behind it — the only trees that could resist the full sweep of the winds that blew bitterly up from the sea at times. Fruit trees would never grow near it, and this had been a great grief to Sara.

“Oh, daddy, if we could just have an orchard!” she had been wont to say wistfully, when other farmhouses in White Sands were smothered whitely in apple bloom. And when she had gone away, and her father had nothing to look forward to save her return, he was determined she should find an orchard when she came back.

Over the southward hill, warmly sheltered by spruce woods and sloping to the sunshine, was a little field, so fertile that all the slack management of a lifetime had not availed to exhaust it. Here Old Man Shaw set out his orchard and saw it flourish, watching and tending it until he came to know each tree as a child and loved it. His neighbours laughed at him, and said that the fruit of an orchard so far away from the house would all be stolen. But as yet there was no fruit, and when the time came for bearing there would be enough and to spare.

“Blossom and me’ll get all we want, and the boys can have the rest, if they want ‘em worse’n they want a good conscience,” said that unworldly, unbusinesslike Old Man Shaw.

On his way back home from his darling orchard he found a rare fern in the woods and dug it up for Sara — she had loved ferns. He planted it at the shady, sheltered side of the house and then sat down on the old bench by the garden gate to read her last letter — the letter that was only a note, because she was coming home soon. He knew every word of it by heart, but that did not spoil the pleasure of rereading it every half-hour.

Old Man Shaw had not married until late in life, and had, so White Sands people said, selected a wife with his usual judgment — which, being interpreted, meant no judgment at all; otherwise, he would never have married Sara Glover, a mere slip of a girl, with big brown eyes like a frightened wood creature's, and the delicate, fleeting bloom of a spring Mayflower.

“The last woman in the world for a farmer's wife — no strength or get-up about her.”

Neither could White Sands folk understand what on earth Sara Glover had married him for.

“Well, the fool crop was the only one that never failed.”

Old Man Shaw — he was Old Man Shaw even then, although he was only forty — and his girl bride had troubled themselves not at all about White Sands opinions. They had one year of perfect happiness, which is always worth living for, even if the rest of life be a dreary pilgrimage, and then Old Man Shaw found himself alone again, except for little Blossom. She was christened Sara, after her dead mother, but she was always Blossom to her father — the precious little blossom whose plucking had cost the mother her life.

Sara Glover's people, especially a wealthy aunt in Montreal, had wanted to take the child, but Old Man Shaw grew almost fierce over the suggestion. He would give his baby to no one. A woman was hired to look after the house, but it was the father who cared for the baby in the main. He was as tender and faithful and deft as a woman. Sara never missed a mother's care, and she grew up into a creature of life and light and beauty, a constant delight to all who knew her. She had a way of embroidering life with stars. She was dowered with all the charming characteristics of both parents, with a resilient vitality and activity which had pertained to neither of them. When she was ten years old she had packed all hirelings off, and kept house for her father for six delightful years — years in which they were father and daughter, brother and sister, and “chums.” Sara never went to school, but her father saw to her education after a fashion of his own. When their work was done they lived in the woods and fields, in the little

garden they had made on the sheltered side of the house, or on the shore, where sunshine and storm were to them equally lovely and beloved. Never was comradeship more perfect or more wholly satisfactory.

“Just wrapped up in each other,” said White Sands folk, half-enviously, half-disapprovingly.

When Sara was sixteen Mrs. Adair, the wealthy aunt aforesaid, pounced down on White Sands in a glamour of fashion and culture and outer worldliness. She bombarded Old Man Shaw with such arguments that he had to succumb. It was a shame that a girl like Sara should grow up in a place like White Sands, “with no advantages and no education,” said Mrs. Adair scornfully, not understanding that wisdom and knowledge are two entirely different things.

“At least let me give my dear sister’s child what I would have given my own daughter if I had had one,” she pleaded tearfully. “Let me take her with me and send her to a good school for a few years. Then, if she wishes, she may come back to you, of course.”

Privately, Mrs. Adair did not for a moment believe that Sara would want to come back to White Sands, and her queer old father, after three years of the life she would give her.

Old Man Shaw yielded, influenced thereto not at all by Mrs. Adair’s readily flowing tears, but greatly by his conviction that justice to Sara demanded it. Sara herself did not want to go; she protested and pleaded; but her father, having become convinced that it was best for her to go, was inexorable. Everything, even her own feelings, must give way to that. But she was to come back to him without let or hindrance when her “schooling” was done. It was only on having this most clearly understood that Sara would consent to go at all. Her last words, called back to her father through her tears as she and her aunt drove down the lane, were,

“I’ll be back, daddy. In three years I’ll be back. Don’t cry, but just look forward to that.”

He had looked forward to it through the three long, lonely years that followed, in all of which he never saw his darling. Half a continent was between them and Mrs. Adair had vetoed vacation visits, under some

specious pretense. But every week brought its letter from Sara. Old Man Shaw had every one of them, tied up with one of her old blue hair ribbons, and kept in her mother's little rose-wood work-box in the parlour. He spent every Sunday afternoon rereading them, with her photograph before him. He lived alone, refusing to be pestered with kind help, but he kept the house in beautiful order.

"A better housekeeper than farmer," said White Sands people. He would have nothing altered. When Sara came back she was not to be hurt by changes. It never occurred to him that she might be changed herself.

And now those three interminable years were gone, and Sara was coming home. She wrote him nothing of her aunt's pleadings and reproaches and ready, futile tears; she wrote only that she would graduate in June and start for home a week later. Thenceforth Old Man Shaw went about in a state of beatitude, making ready for her homecoming. As he sat on the bench in the sunshine, with the blue sea sparkling and crinkling down at the foot of the green slope, he reflected with satisfaction that all was in perfect order. There was nothing left to do save count the hours until that beautiful, longed-for day after tomorrow. He gave himself over to a reverie, as sweet as a daydream in a haunted valley.

The red roses were out in bloom. Sara had always loved those red roses — they were as vivid as herself, with all her own fullness of life and joy of living. And, besides these, a miracle had happened in Old Man Shaw's garden. In one corner was a rosebush which had never bloomed, despite all the coaxing they had given it—"the sulky rosebush," Sara had been wont to call it. Lo! this summer had flung the hoarded sweetness of years into plentiful white blossoms, like shallow ivory cups with a haunting, spicy fragrance. It was in honour of Sara's homecoming — so Old Man Shaw liked to fancy. All things, even the sulky rosebush, knew she was coming back, and were making glad because of it.

He was gloating over Sara's letter when Mrs. Peter Blewett came. She told him she had run up to see how he was getting on, and if he wanted anything seen to before Sara came.

“No’m, thank you, ma’am. Everything is attended to. I couldn’t let anyone else prepare for Blossom. Only to think, ma’am, she’ll be home the day after tomorrow. I’m just filled clear through, body, soul, and spirit, with joy to think of having my little Blossom at home again.”

Mrs. Blewett smiled sourly. When Mrs. Blewett smiled it foretold trouble, and wise people had learned to have sudden business elsewhere before the smile could be translated into words. But Old Man Shaw had never learned to be wise where Mrs. Blewett was concerned, although she had been his nearest neighbour for years, and had pestered his life out with advice and “neighbourly turns.”

Mrs. Blewett was one with whom life had gone awry. The effect on her was to render happiness to other people a personal insult. She resented Old Man Shaw’s beaming delight in his daughter’s return, and she “considered it her duty” to rub the bloom off straightway.

“Do you think Sary’ll be contented in White Sands now?” she asked.

Old Man Shaw looked slightly bewildered.

“Of course she’ll be contented,” he said slowly. “Isn’t it her home? And ain’t I here?”

Mrs. Blewett smiled again, with double distilled contempt for such simplicity.

“Well, it’s a good thing you’re so sure of it, I suppose. If ‘twas my daughter that was coming back to White Sands, after three years of fashionable life among rich, stylish folks, and at a swell school, I wouldn’t have a minute’s peace of mind. I’d know perfectly well that she’d look down on everything here, and be discontented and miserable.”

“YOUR daughter might,” said Old Man Shaw, with more sarcasm than he had supposed he had possessed, “but Blossom won’t.”

Mrs. Blewett shrugged her sharp shoulders.

“Maybe not. It’s to be hoped not, for both your sakes, I’m sure. But I’d be worried if ‘twas me. Sary’s been living among fine folks, and having a gay, exciting time, and it stands to reason she’ll think White Sands fearful lonesome and dull. Look at Laretta Bradley. She was up in Boston for just

a month last winter and she's never been able to endure White Sands since."

"Lauretta Bradley and Sara Shaw are two different people," said Sara's father, trying to smile.

"And your house, too," pursued Mrs. Blewett ruthlessly. "It's such a queer, little, old place. What'll she think of it after her aunt's? I've heard tell Mrs. Adair lives in a perfect palace. I'll just warn you kindly that Sary'll probably look down on you, and you might as well be prepared for it. Of course, I suppose she kind of thinks she has to come back, seeing she promised you so solemn she would. But I'm certain she doesn't want to, and I don't blame her either."

Even Mrs. Blewett had to stop for breath, and Old Man Shaw found his opportunity. He had listened, dazed and shrinking, as if she were dealing him physical blows, but now a swift change swept over him. His blue eyes flashed ominously, straight into Mrs. Blewett's straggling, ferrety gray orbs.

"If you're said your say, Martha Blewett, you can go," he said passionately. "I'm not going to listen to another such word. Take yourself out of my sight, and your malicious tongue out of my hearing!"

Mrs. Blewett went, too dumfounded by such an unheard-of outburst in mild Old Man Shaw to say a word of defence or attack. When she had gone Old Man Shaw, the fire all faded from his eyes, sank back on his bench. His delight was dead; his heart was full of pain and bitterness. Martha Blewett was a warped and ill-natured woman, but he feared there was altogether too much truth in what she said. Why had he never thought of it before? Of course White Sands would seem dull and lonely to Blossom; of course the little gray house where she was born would seem a poor abode after the splendours of her aunt's home. Old Man Shaw walked through his garden and looked at everything with new eyes. How poor and simple everything was! How sagging and weather-beaten the old house! He went in, and upstairs to Sara's room. It was neat and clean, just as she had left it three years ago. But it was small and dark; the ceiling was discoloured, the furniture old-fashioned and shabby; she would think it a

poor, mean place. Even the orchard over the hill brought him no comfort now. Blossom would not care for orchards. She would be ashamed of her stupid old father and the barren farm. She would hate White Sands, and chafe at the dull existence, and look down on everything that went to make up his uneventful life.

Old Man Shaw was unhappy enough that night to have satisfied even Mrs. Blewett had she known. He saw himself as he thought White Sands folk must see him — a poor, shiftless, foolish old man, who had only one thing in the world worthwhile, his little girl, and had not been of enough account to keep her.

“Oh, Blossom, Blossom!” he said, and when he spoke her name it sounded as if he spoke the name of one dead.

After a little the worst sting passed away. He refused to believe long that Blossom would be ashamed of him; he knew she would not. Three years could not so alter her loyal nature — no, nor ten times three years. But she would be changed — she would have grown away from him in those three busy, brilliant years. His companionship could no longer satisfy her. How simple and childish he had been to expect it! She would be sweet and kind — Blossom could never be anything else. She would not show open discontent or dissatisfaction; she would not be like Laretta Bradley; but it would be there, and he would divine it, and it would break his heart. Mrs. Blewett was right. When he had given Blossom up he should not have made a half-hearted thing of his sacrifice — he should not have bound her to come back to him.

He walked about in his little garden until late at night, under the stars, with the sea crooning and calling to him down the slope. When he finally went to bed he did not sleep, but lay until morning with tear-wet eyes and despair in his heart. All the forenoon he went about his usual daily work absently. Frequently he fell into long reveries, standing motionless wherever he happened to be, and looking dully before him. Only once did he show any animation. When he saw Mrs. Blewett coming up the lane he darted into the house, locked the door, and listened to her knocking in grim silence. After she had gone he went out, and found a plate of fresh

doughnuts, covered with a napkin, placed on the bench at the door. Mrs. Blewett meant to indicate thus that she bore him no malice for her curt dismissal the day before; possibly her conscience gave her some twinges also. But her doughnuts could not minister to the mind she had diseased. Old Man Shaw took them up; carried them to the pig-pen, and fed them to the pigs. It was the first spiteful thing he had done in his life, and he felt a most immoral satisfaction in it.

In mid-afternoon he went out to the garden, finding the new loneliness of the little house unbearable. The old bench was warm in the sunshine. Old Man Shaw sat down with a long sigh, and dropped his white head wearily on his breast. He had decided what he must do. He would tell Blossom that she might go back to her aunt and never mind about him — he would do very well by himself and he did not blame her in the least.

He was still sitting broodingly there when a girl came up the lane. She was tall and straight, and walked with a kind of uplift in her motion, as if it would be rather easier to fly than not. She was dark, with a rich dusky sort of darkness, suggestive of the bloom on purple plums, or the glow of deep red apples among bronze leaves. Her big brown eyes lingered on everything in sight, and little gurgles of sound now and again came through her parted lips, as if inarticulate joy were thus expressing itself.

At the garden gate she saw the bent figure on the old bench, and the next minute she was flying along the rose walk.

“Daddy!” she called, “daddy!”

Old Man Shaw stood up in hasty bewilderment; then a pair of girlish arms were about his neck, and a pair of warm red lips were on his; girlish eyes, full of love, were looking up into his, and a never-forgotten voice, tingling with laughter and tears blended into one delicious chord, was crying,

“Oh, daddy, is it really you? Oh, I can’t tell you how good it is to see you again!”

Old Man Shaw held her tightly in a silence of amazement and joy too deep for wonder. Why, this was his Blossom — the very Blossom who had gone away three years ago! A little taller, a little more womanly, but his

own dear Blossom, and no stranger. There was a new heaven and a new earth for him in the realization.

“Oh, Baby Blossom!” he murmured, “Little Baby Blossom!”

Sara rubbed her cheek against the faded coat sleeve.

“Daddy darling, this moment makes up for everything, doesn’t it?”

“But — but — where did you come from?” he asked, his senses beginning to struggle out of their bewilderment of surprise. “I didn’t expect you till tomorrow. You didn’t have to walk from the station, did you? And your old daddy not there to welcome you!”

Sara laughed, swung herself back by the tips of her fingers and danced around him in the childish fashion of long ago.

“I found I could make an earlier connection with the C.P.A. yesterday and get to the Island last night. I was in such a fever to get home that I jumped at the chance. Of course I walked from the station — it’s only two miles and every step was a benediction. My trunks are over there. We’ll go after them tomorrow, daddy, but just now I want to go straight to every one of the dear old nooks and spots at once.”

“You must get something to eat first,” he urged fondly. “And there ain’t much in the house, I’m afraid. I was going to bake tomorrow morning. But I guess I can forage you out something, darling.”

He was sorely repenting having given Mrs. Blewett’s doughnuts to the pigs, but Sara brushed all such considerations aside with a wave of her hand.

“I don’t want anything to eat just now. By and by we’ll have a snack; just as we used to get up for ourselves whenever we felt hungry. Don’t you remember how scandalized White Sands folks used to be at our irregular hours? I’m hungry; but it’s soul hunger, for a glimpse of all the dear old rooms and places. Come — there are four hours yet before sunset, and I want to cram into them all I’ve missed out of these three years. Let us begin right here with the garden. Oh, daddy, by what witchcraft have you coaxed that sulky rosebush into bloom?”

“No witchcraft at all — it just bloomed because you were coming home, baby,” said her father.

They had a glorious afternoon of it, those two children. They explored the garden and then the house. Sara danced through every room, and then up to her own, holding fast to her father's hand.

"Oh, it's lovely to see my little room again, daddy. I'm sure all my old hopes and dreams are waiting here for me."

She ran to the window and threw it open, leaning out.

"Daddy, there's no view in the world so beautiful as that curve of sea between the headlands. I've looked at magnificent scenery — and then I'd shut my eyes and conjure up that picture. Oh, listen to the wind keening in the trees! How I've longed for that music!"

He took her to the orchard and followed out his crafty plan of surprise perfectly. She rewarded him by doing exactly what he had dreamed of her doing, clapping her hands and crying out:

"Oh, daddy! Why, daddy!"

They finished up with the shore, and then at sunset they came back and sat down on the old garden bench. Before them a sea of splendour, burning like a great jewel, stretched to the gateways of the west. The long headlands on either side were darkly purple, and the sun left behind him a vast, cloudless arc of fiery daffodil and elusive rose. Back over the orchard in a cool, green sky glimmered a crystal planet, and the night poured over them a clear wine of dew from her airy chalice. The spruces were rejoicing in the wind, and even the battered firs were singing of the sea. Old memories trooped into their hearts like shining spirits.

"Baby Blossom," said Old Man Shaw falteringly, "are you quite sure you'll be contented here? Out there" — with a vague sweep of his hand towards horizons that shut out a world far removed from White Sands — "there's pleasure and excitement and all that. Won't you miss it? Won't you get tired of your old father and White Sands?"

Sara patted his hand gently.

"The world out there is a good place," she said thoughtfully, "I've had three splendid years and I hope they'll enrich my whole life. There are wonderful things out there to see and learn, fine, noble people to meet,

beautiful deeds to admire; but,” she wound her arm about his neck and laid her cheek against his—”there is no daddy!”

And Old Man Shaw looked silently at the sunset — or, rather, through the sunset to still grander and more radiant splendours beyond, of which the things seen were only the pale reflections, not worthy of attention from those who had the gift of further sight.

Aunt Olivia's Beau

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Aunt Olivia told Peggy and me about him on the afternoon we went over to help her gather her late roses for potpourri. We found her strangely quiet and preoccupied. As a rule she was fond of mild fun, alert to hear East Grafton gossip, and given to sudden little trills of almost girlish laughter, which for the time being dispelled the atmosphere of gentle old-maidishness which seemed to hang about her as a garment. At such moments we did not find it hard to believe — as we did at other times — that Aunt Olivia had once been a girl herself.

This day she picked the roses absently, and shook the fairy petals into her little sweetgrass basket with the air of a woman whose thoughts were far away. We said nothing, knowing that Aunt Olivia's secrets always came our way in time. When the roseleaves were picked, we carried them in and upstairs in single file, Aunt Olivia bringing up the rear to pick up any stray roseleaf we might drop. In the southwest room, where there was no carpet to fade, we spread them on newspapers on the floor. Then we put our sweetgrass baskets back in the proper place in the proper closet in the proper room. What would have happened to us, or to the sweetgrass baskets, if this had not been done I do not know. Nothing was ever permitted to remain an instant out of place in Aunt Olivia's house.

When we went downstairs, Aunt Olivia asked us to go into the parlour. She had something to tell us, she said, and as she opened the door a delicate pink flush spread over her face. I noted it, with surprise, but no inkling of the truth came to me — for nobody ever connected the idea of possible lovers or marriage with this prim little old maid, Olivia Sterling.

Aunt Olivia's parlour was much like herself — painfully neat. Every article of furniture stood in exactly the same place it had always stood. Nothing was ever suffered to be disturbed. The tassels of the crazy cushion lay just so over the arm of the sofa, and the crochet antimacassar was

always spread at precisely the same angle over the horsehair rocking chair. No speck of dust was ever visible; no fly ever invaded that sacred apartment.

Aunt Olivia pulled up a blind, to let in what light could sift finely through the vine leaves, and sat down in a high-backed old chair that had appertained to her great-grandmother. She folded her hands in her lap, and looked at us with shy appeal in her blue-gray eyes. Plainly she found it hard to tell us her secret, yet all the time there was an air of pride and exultation about her; somewhat, also, of a new dignity. Aunt Olivia could never be self-assertive, but if it had been possible that would have been her time for it.

“Have you ever heard me speak of Mr. Malcolm MacPherson?” asked Aunt Olivia.

We had never heard her, or anybody else, speak of Mr. Malcolm MacPherson; but volumes of explanation could not have told us more about him than did Aunt Olivia’s voice when she pronounced his name. We knew, as if it had been proclaimed to us in trumpet tones, that Mr. Malcolm MacPherson must be Aunt Olivia’s beau, and the knowledge took away our breath. We even forgot to be curious, so astonished were we.

And there sat Aunt Olivia, proud and shy and exulting and shamefaced, all at once!

“He is a brother of Mrs. John Seaman’s across the bridge,” explained Aunt Olivia with a little simper. “Of course you don’t remember him. He went out to British Columbia twenty years ago. But he is coming home now — and — and — tell your father, won’t you — I — I — don’t like to tell him — Mr. Malcolm MacPherson and I are going to be married.”

“Married!” gasped Peggy. And “married!” I echoed stupidly.

Aunt Olivia bridled a little.

“There is nothing unsuitable in that, is there?” she asked, rather crisply.

“Oh, no, no,” I hastened to assure her, giving Peggy a surreptitious kick to divert her thoughts from laughter. “Only you must realize, Aunt Olivia, that this is a very great surprise to us.” “I thought it would be so,”

said Aunt Olivia complacently. “But your father will know — he will remember. I do hope he won’t think me foolish. He did not think Mr. Malcolm MacPherson was a fit person for me to marry once. But that was long ago, when Mr. Malcolm MacPherson was very poor. He is in very comfortable circumstances now.”

“Tell us about it, Aunt Olivia,” said Peggy. She did not look at me, which was my salvation. Had I caught Peggy’s eye when Aunt Olivia said “Mr. Malcolm MacPherson” in that tone I must have laughed, willy-nilly.

“When I was a girl the MacPhersons used to live across the road from here. Mr. Malcolm MacPherson was my beau then. But my family — and your father especially — dear me, I do hope he won’t be very cross — were opposed to his attentions and were very cool to him. I think that was why he never said anything to me about getting married then. And after a time he went away, as I have said, and I never heard anything from him directly for many a year. Of course, his sister sometimes gave me news of him. But last June I had a letter from him. He said he was coming home to settle down for good on the old Island, and he asked me if I would marry him. I wrote back and said I would. Perhaps I ought to have consulted your father, but I was afraid he would think I ought to refuse Mr. Malcolm MacPherson.”

“Oh, I don’t think father will mind,” said Peggy reassuringly.

“I hope not, because, of course, I would consider it my duty in any case to fulfil the promise I have given to Mr. Malcolm MacPherson. He will be in Grafton next week, the guest of his sister, Mrs. John Seaman, across the bridge.”

Aunt Olivia said that exactly as if she were reading it from the personal column of the Daily Enterprise.

“When is the wedding to be?” I asked.

“Oh!” Aunt Olivia blushed distressfully. “I do not know the exact date. Nothing can be definitely settled until Mr. Malcolm MacPherson comes. But it will not be before September, at the earliest. There will be so much to do. You will tell your father, won’t you?”

We promised that we would, and Aunt Olivia arose with an air of relief. Peggy and I hurried over home, stopping, when we were safely out of earshot, to laugh. The romances of the middle-aged may be to them as tender and sweet as those of youth, but they are apt to possess a good deal of humour for onlookers. Only youth can be sentimental without being mirth-provoking. We loved Aunt Olivia and were glad for her late, new-blossoming happiness; but we felt amused over it also. The recollection of her “Mr. Malcolm MacPherson” was too much for us every time we thought of it.

Father pooh-poohed incredulously at first, and, when we had convinced him, guffawed with laughter. Aunt Olivia need not have dreaded any more opposition from her cruel family.

“MacPherson was a good fellow enough, but horribly poor,” said father. “I hear he has done very well out west, and if he and Olivia have a notion of each other they are welcome to marry as far as I am concerned. Tell Olivia she mustn’t take a spasm if he tracks some mud into her house once in a while.”

Thus it was all arranged, and, before we realized it at all, Aunt Olivia was mid-deep in marriage preparations, in all of which Peggy and I were quite indispensable. She consulted us in regard to everything, and we almost lived at her place in those days preceding the arrival of Mr. Malcolm MacPherson.

Aunt Olivia plainly felt very happy and important. She had always wished to be married; she was not in the least strong-minded and her old-maidhood had always been a sore point with her. I think she looked upon it as somewhat of a disgrace. And yet she was a born old maid; looking at her, and taking all her primness and little set ways into consideration, it was quite impossible to picture her as the wife of Mr. Malcolm MacPherson, or anybody else.

We soon discovered that, to Aunt Olivia, Mr. Malcolm MacPherson represented a merely abstract proposition — the man who was to confer on her the long-withheld dignity of matronhood. Her romance began and

ended there, although she was quite unconscious of this herself, and believed that she was deeply in love with him.

“What will be the result, Mary, when he arrives in the flesh and she is compelled to deal with ‘Mr. Malcolm MacPherson’ as a real, live man, instead of a nebulous ‘party of the second part’ in the marriage ceremony?” queried Peggy, as she hemmed table-napkins for Aunt Olivia, sitting on her well-scoured sandstone steps, and carefully putting all thread-clippings and ravellings into the little basket which Aunt Olivia had placed there for that purpose.

“It may transform her from a self-centered old maid into a woman for whom marriage does not seem such an incongruous thing,” I said.

The day on which Mr. Malcolm MacPherson was expected Peggy and I went over. We had planned to remain away, thinking that the lovers would prefer their first meeting to be unwitnessed, but Aunt Olivia insisted on our being present. She was plainly nervous; the abstract was becoming concrete. Her little house was in spotless, speckless order from top to bottom. Aunt Olivia had herself scrubbed the garret floor and swept the cellar steps that very morning with as much painstaking care as if she expected that Mr. Malcolm MacPherson would hasten to inspect each at once and she must stand or fall by his opinion of them.

Peggy and I helped her to dress. She insisted on wearing her best black silk, in which she looked unnaturally fine. Her soft muslin became her much better, but we could not induce her to wear it. Anything more prim and bandboxy than Aunt Olivia when her toilet was finished it has never been my lot to see. Peggy and I watched her as she went downstairs, her skirt held stiffly up all around her that it might not brush the floor.

“‘Mr. Malcolm MacPherson’ will be inspired with such awe that he will only be able to sit back and gaze at her,” whispered Peggy. “I wish he would come and have it over. This is getting on my nerves.”

Aunt Olivia went into the parlour, settled herself in the old carved chair, and folded her hands. Peggy and I sat down on the stairs to await his coming in a crisping suspense. Aunt Olivia’s kitten, a fat, bewhiskered

creature, looking as if it were cut out of black velvet, shared our vigil and purred in maddening peace of mind.

We could see the garden path and gate through the hall window, and therefore supposed we should have full warning of the approach of Mr. Malcolm MacPherson. It was no wonder, therefore, that we positively jumped when a thunderous knock crashed against the front door and reechoed through the house. Had Mr. Malcolm MacPherson dropped from the skies?

We afterwards discovered that he had come across lots and around the house from the back, but just then his sudden advent was almost uncanny. I ran downstairs and opened the door. On the step stood a man about six feet two in height, and proportionately broad and sinewy. He had splendid shoulders, a great crop of curly black hair, big, twinkling blue eyes, and a tremendous crinkly black beard that fell over his breast in shining waves. In brief, Mr. Malcolm MacPherson was what one would call instinctively, if somewhat tritely, “a magnificent specimen of manhood.”

In one hand he carried a bunch of early goldenrod and smoke-blue asters.

“Good afternoon,” he said in a resonant voice which seemed to take possession of the drowsy summer afternoon. “Is Miss Olivia Sterling in? And will you please tell her that Malcolm MacPherson is here?”

I showed him into the parlour. Then Peggy and I peeped through the crack of the door. Anyone would have done it. We would have scorned to excuse ourselves. And, indeed, what we saw would have been worth several conscience spasms if we had felt any.

Aunt Olivia arose and advanced primly, with outstretched hand.

“Mr. MacPherson, I am very glad to see you,” she said formally.

“It’s yourself, Nillie!” Mr. Malcolm MacPherson gave two strides.

He dropped his flowers on the floor, knocked over a small table, and sent the ottoman spinning against the wall. Then he caught Aunt Olivia in his arms and — smack, smack, smack! Peggy sank back upon the stair-step with her handkerchief stuffed in her mouth. Aunt Olivia was being kissed!

Presently, Mr. Malcolm MacPherson held her back at arm's length in his big paws and looked her over. I saw Aunt Olivia's eyes roam over his arm to the inverted table and the litter of asters and goldenrod. Her sleek crimps were all ruffled up, and her lace fichu twisted half around her neck. She looked distressed.

"It's not a bit changed you are, Nillie," said Mr. Malcolm MacPherson admiringly. "And it's good I'm feeling to see you again. Are you glad to see me, Nillie?"

"Oh, of course," said Aunt Olivia.

She twisted herself free and went to set up the table. Then she turned to the flowers, but Mr. Malcolm MacPherson had already gathered them up, leaving a goodly sprinkling of leaves and stalks on the carpet.

"I picked these for you in the river field, Nillie," he said. "Where will I be getting something to stick them in? Here, this will do."

He grasped a frail, painted vase on the mantel, stuffed the flowers in it, and set it on the table. The look on Aunt Olivia's face was too much for me at last. I turned, caught Peggy by the shoulder and dragged her out of the house.

"He will horrify the very soul out of Aunt Olivia's body if he goes on like this," I gasped. "But he's splendid — and he thinks the world of her — and, oh, Peggy, did you EVER hear such kisses? Fancy Aunt Olivia!"

It did not take us long to get well acquainted with Mr. Malcolm MacPherson. He almost haunted Aunt Olivia's house, and Aunt Olivia insisted on our staying with her most of the time. She seemed to be very shy of finding herself alone with him. He horrified her a dozen times in an hour; nevertheless, she was very proud of him, and liked to be teased about him, too. She was delighted that we admired him.

"Though, to be sure, he is very different in his looks from what he used to be," she said. "He is so dreadfully big! And I do not like a beard, but I have not the courage to ask him to shave it off. He might be offended. He has bought the old Lynde place in Avonlea and wants to be married in a month. But, dear me, that is too soon. It — it would be hardly proper."

Peggy and I liked Mr. Malcolm MacPherson very much. So did father. We were glad that he seemed to think Aunt Olivia perfection. He was as happy as the day was long; but poor Aunt Olivia, under all her surface pride and importance, was not. Amid all the humour of the circumstances Peggy and I snuffed tragedy compounded with the humour.

Mr. Malcolm MacPherson could never be trained to old-maidishness, and even Aunt Olivia seemed to realize this. He never stopped to clear his boots when he came in, although she had an ostentatiously new scraper put at each door for his benefit. He seldom moved in the house without knocking some of Aunt Olivia's treasures over. He smoked cigars in her parlour and scattered the ashes over the floor. He brought her flowers every day and stuck them into whatever receptacle came handiest. He sat on her cushions and rolled her antimacassars up into balls. He put his feet on her chair rungs — and all with the most distracting unconsciousness of doing anything out of the way. He never noticed Aunt Olivia's fluttering nervousness at all. Peggy and I laughed more than was good for us those days. It was so funny to see Aunt Olivia hovering anxiously around, picking up flower stems, and smoothing out tidies, and generally following him about to straighten out things. Once she even got a wing and dustpan and swept the cigar ashes under his very eyes.

"Now don't be worrying yourself over that, Nillie," he protested. "Why, I don't mind a litter, bless you!"

How good and jolly he was, that Mr. Malcolm MacPherson! Such songs as he sang, such stories as he told, such a breezy, unconventional atmosphere as he brought into that prim little house, where stagnant dullness had reigned for years! He worshipped Aunt Olivia, and his worship took the concrete form of presents galore. He brought her a present almost every visit — generally some article of jewelry. Bracelets, rings, chains, eardrops, lockets, bangles, were showered upon our precise little aunt; she accepted them deprecatingly, but never wore them. This hurt him a little, but she assured him she would wear them all sometimes.

"I am not used to jewelry, Mr. MacPherson," she would tell him.

Her engagement ring she did wear — it was a rather “loud” combination of engraved gold and opals. Sometimes we caught her turning it on her finger with a very troubled face.

“I would be sorry for Mr. Malcolm MacPherson if he were not so much in love with her,” said Peggy. “But as he thinks that she is perfection he doesn’t need sympathy.”

“I am sorry for Aunt Olivia,” I said. “Yes, Peggy, I am. Mr. MacPherson is a splendid man, but Aunt Olivia is a born old maid, and it is outraging her very nature to be anything else. Don’t you see how it’s hurting her? His big, splendid man-ways are harrowing her very soul up — she can’t get out of her little, narrow groove, and it is killing her to be pulled out.”

“Nonsense!” said Peggy. Then she added with a laugh,

“Mary, did you ever see anything so funny as Aunt Olivia sitting on ‘Mr. Malcolm MacPherson’s’ knee?”

It WAS funny. Aunt Olivia thought it very unbecoming to sit there before us, but he made her do it. He would say, with his big, jolly laugh, “Don’t be minding the little girls,” and pull her down on his knee and hold her there. To my dying day I shall never forget the expression on the poor little woman’s face.

But, as the days went by and Mr. Malcolm MacPherson began to insist on a date being set for the wedding, Aunt Olivia grew to have a strangely disturbed look. She became very quiet, and never laughed except under protest. Also, she showed signs of petulance when any of us, but especially father, teased her about her beau. I pitied her, for I think I understood better than the others what her feelings really were. But even I was not prepared for what did happen. I would not have believed that Aunt Olivia could do it. I thought that her desire for marriage in the abstract would outweigh the disadvantages of the concrete. But one can never reckon with real, bred-in-the-bone old-maidism.

One morning Mr. Malcolm MacPherson told us all that he was coming up that evening to make Aunt Olivia set the day. Peggy and I laughingly approved, telling him that it was high time for him to assert his authority,

and he went off in great good humour across the river field, whistling a Highland strathspey. But Aunt Olivia looked like a martyr. She had a fierce attack of housecleaning that day, and put everything in flawless order, even to the corners.

“As if there was going to be a funeral in the house,” sniffed Peggy.

Peggy and I were up in the southwest room at dusk that evening, piecing a quilt, when we heard Mr. Malcolm MacPherson shouting out in the hall below to know if anyone was home. I ran out to the landing, but as I did so Aunt Olivia came out of her room, brushed past me, and flitted downstairs.

“Mr. MacPherson,” I heard her say with double-distilled primness, “will you please come into the parlour? I have something to say to you.”

They went in, and I returned to the southwest room.

“Peg, there’s trouble brewing,” I said. “I’m sure of it by Aunt Olivia’s face, it was GRAY. And she has gone down ALONE — and shut the door.”

“I am going to hear what she says to him,” said Peggy resolutely. “It is her own fault — she has spoiled us by always insisting that we should be present at their interviews. That poor man has had to do his courting under our very eyes. Come on, Mary.”

The southwest room was directly over the parlour and there was an open stovepipe-hole leading up therefrom. Peggy removed the hat box that was on it, and we both deliberately and shamelessly crouched down and listened with all our might.

It was easy enough to hear what Mr. Malcolm MacPherson was saying.

“I’ve come up to get the date settled, Nillie, as I told you. Come now, little woman, name the day.”

SMACK!

“Don’t, Mr. MacPherson,” said Aunt Olivia. She spoke as a woman who has keyed herself up to the doing of some very distasteful task and is anxious to have it over and done with as soon as possible. “There is something I must say to you. I cannot marry you, Mr. MacPherson.”

There was a pause. I would have given much to have seen the pair of them. When Mr. Malcolm MacPherson spoke his voice was that of blank,

uncomprehending amazement.

“Nillie, what is it you are meaning?” he said.

“I cannot marry you, Mr. MacPherson,” repeated Aunt Olivia.

“Why not?” Surprise was giving way to dismay.

“I don’t think you will understand, Mr. MacPherson,” said Aunt Olivia, faintly. “You don’t realize what it means for a woman to give up everything — her own home and friends and all her past life, so to speak, and go far away with a stranger.”

“Why, I suppose it will be rather hard. But, Nillie, Avonlea isn’t very far away — not more than twelve miles, if it will be that.”

“Twelve miles! It might as well be at the other side of the world to all intents and purposes,” said Aunt Olivia obstinately. “I don’t know a living soul there, except Rachel Lynde.”

“Why didn’t you say so before I bought the place, then? But it’s not too late. I can be selling it and buying right here in East Grafton if that will please you — though there isn’t half as nice a place to be had. But I’ll fix it up somehow!”

“No, Mr. MacPherson,” said Aunt Olivia firmly, “that doesn’t cover the difficulty. I knew you would not understand. My ways are not your ways and I cannot make them over. For — you track mud in — and — and — you don’t care whether things are tidy or not.”

Poor Aunt Olivia had to be Aunt Olivia; if she were being burned at the stake I verily believe she would have dragged some grotesqueness into the tragedy of the moment.

“The devil!” said Mr. Malcolm MacPherson — not profanely or angrily, but as in sheer bewilderment. Then he added, “Nillie, you must be joking. It’s careless enough I am — the west isn’t a good place to learn finicky ways — but you can teach me. You’re not going to throw me over because I track mud in!”

“I cannot marry you, Mr. MacPherson,” said Aunt Olivia again.

“You can’t be meaning it!” he exclaimed, because he was beginning to understand that she did mean it, although it was impossible for his man mind to understand anything else about the puzzle. “Nillie, it’s breaking

my heart you are! I'll do anything — go anywhere — be anything you want — only don't be going back on me like this."

"I cannot marry you, Mr. MacPherson," said Aunt Olivia for the fourth time.

"Nillie!" exclaimed Mr. Malcolm MacPherson. There was such real agony in his tone that Peggy and I were suddenly stricken with contrition. What were we doing? We had no right to be listening to this pitiful interview. The pain and protest in his voice had suddenly banished all the humour from it, and left naught but the bare, stark tragedy. We rose and tiptoed out of the room, wholesomely ashamed of ourselves.

When Mr. Malcolm MacPherson had gone, after an hour of useless pleading, Aunt Olivia came up to us, pale and prim and determined, and told us that there was to be no wedding. We could not pretend surprise, but Peggy ventured a faint protest.

"Oh, Aunt Olivia, do you think you have done right?"

"It was the only thing I could do," said Aunt Olivia stonily. "I could not marry Mr. Malcolm MacPherson and I told him so. Please tell your father — and kindly say nothing more to me about the matter."

Then Aunt Olivia went downstairs, got a broom, and swept up the mud Mr. Malcolm MacPherson had tracked over the steps.

Peggy and I went home and told father. We felt very flat, but there was nothing to be done or said. Father laughed at the whole thing, but I could not laugh. I was sorry for Mr. Malcolm MacPherson and, though I was angry with her, I was sorry for Aunt Olivia, too. Plainly she felt badly enough over her vanished hopes and plans, but she had developed a strange and baffling reserve which nothing could pierce.

"It's nothing but a chronic case of old-maidism," said father impatiently.

Things were very dull for a week. We saw no more of Mr. Malcolm MacPherson and we missed him dreadfully. Aunt Olivia was inscrutable, and worked with fierceness at superfluous tasks.

One evening father came home with some news. "Malcolm MacPherson is leaving on the 7:30 train for the west," he said. "He has

rented the Avonlea place and he's off. They say he is mad as a hatter at the trick Olivia played on him."

After tea Peggy and I went over to see Aunt Olivia, who had asked our advice about a wrapper. She was sewing as for dear life, and her face was primmer and colder than ever. I wondered if she knew of Mr. Malcolm MacPherson's departure. Delicacy forbade me to mention it but Peggy had no such scruples.

"Well, Aunt Olivia, your beau is off," she announced cheerfully. "You won't be bothered with him again. He is leaving on the mail train for the west."

Aunt Olivia dropped her sewing and stood up. I have never seen anything like the transformation that came over her. It was so thorough and sudden as to be almost uncanny. The old maid vanished completely, and in her place was a woman, full to the lips with primitive emotion and pain.

"What shall I do?" she cried in a terrible voice. "Mary — Peggy — what shall I do?"

It was almost a shriek. Peggy turned pale.

"Do you care?" she said stupidly.

"Care! Girls, I shall DIE if Malcolm MacPherson goes away! I have been mad — I must have been mad. I have almost died of loneliness since I sent him away. But I thought he would come back! I must see him — there is time to reach the station before the train goes if I go by the fields."

She took a wild step towards the door, but I caught her back with a sudden mind-vision of Aunt Olivia flying bareheaded and distraught across the fields.

"Wait a moment, Aunt Olivia. Peggy, run home and get father to harness Dick in the buggy as quickly as he can. We'll drive Aunt Olivia to the station. We'll get you there in time, Auntie."

Peggy flew, and Aunt Olivia dashed upstairs. I lingered behind to pick up her sewing, and when I got to her room she had her hat and cape on. Spread out on the bed were all the boxes of gifts which Mr. Malcolm MacPherson had brought her, and Aunt Olivia was stringing their contents

feverishly about her person. Rings, three brooches, a locket, three chains and a watch all went on — anyway and anyhow. A wonderful sight it was to see Aunt Olivia bedizened like that!

“I would never wear them before — but I’ll put them all on now to show him I’m sorry,” she gasped, with trembling lips.

When the three of us crowded into the buggy, Aunt Olivia grasped the whip before we could prevent her and, leaning out, gave poor Dick such a lash as he had never felt in his life before. He went tearing down the steep, stony, fast-darkening road in a fashion which made Peggy and me cry out in alarm. Aunt Olivia was usually the most timid of women, but now she didn’t seem to know what fear was. She kept whipping and urging poor Dick the whole way to the station, quite oblivious to our assurances that there was plenty of time. The people who met us that night must have thought we were quite mad. I held on the reins, Peggy gripped the swaying side of the buggy, and Aunt Olivia bent forward, hat and hair blowing back from her set face with its strangely crimson cheeks, and plied the whip. In such a guise did we whirl through the village and over the two-mile station road.

When we drove up to the station, where the train was shunting amid the shadows, Aunt Olivia made a flying leap from the buggy and ran along the platform, with her cape streaming behind her and all her brooches and chains glittering in the lights. I tossed the reins to a boy standing near and we followed. Just under the glare of the station lamp we saw Mr. Malcolm MacPherson, grip in hand. Fortunately no one else was very near, but it would have been all the same had they been the centre of a crowd. Aunt Olivia fairly flung herself against him.

“Malcolm,” she cried, “don’t go — don’t go — I’ll marry you — I’ll go anywhere — and I don’t care how much mud you bring in!”

That truly Aunt Olivia touch relieved the tension of the situation a little. Mr. MacPherson put his arm about her and drew her back into the shadows.

“There, there,” he soothed. “Of course I won’t be going. Don’t cry, Nillie-girl.”

“And you’ll come right back with me now?” implored Aunt Olivia, clinging to him as if she feared he would be whisked away from her yet if she let go for a moment.

“Of course, of course,” he said.

Peggy got a chance home with a friend, and Aunt Olivia and Mr. Malcolm MacPherson and I drove back in the buggy. Mr. MacPherson held Aunt Olivia on his knee because there was no room, but she would have sat there, I think, had there been a dozen vacant seats. She clung to him in the most barefaced fashion, and all her former primness and reserve were swept away completely. She kissed him a dozen times or more and told him she loved him — and I did not even smile, nor did I want to. Somehow, it did not seem in the least funny to me then, nor does it now, although it doubtless will to others. There was too much real intensity of feeling in it all to leave any room for the ridiculous. So wrapped up in each other were they that I did not even feel superfluous.

I set them safely down in Aunt Olivia’s yard and turned homeward, completely forgotten by the pair. But in the moonlight, which flooded the front of the house, I saw something that testified eloquently to the transformation in Aunt Olivia. It had rained that afternoon and the yard was muddy. Nevertheless, she went in at her front door and took Mr. Malcolm MacPherson in with her without even a glance at the scraper!

The Quarantine at Alexander Abraham's

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I refused to take that class in Sunday School the first time I was asked. It was not that I objected to teaching in the Sunday School. On the contrary I rather liked the idea; but it was the Rev. Mr. Allan who asked me, and it had always been a matter of principle with me never to do anything a man asked me to do if I could help it. I was noted for that. It saves a great deal of trouble and it simplifies everything beautifully. I had always disliked men. It must have been born in me, because, as far back as I can remember, an antipathy to men and dogs was one of my strongest characteristics. I was noted for that. My experiences through life only served to deepen it. The more I saw of men, the more I liked cats.

So, of course, when the Rev. Allan asked me if I would consent to take a class in Sunday School, I said no in a fashion calculated to chasten him wholesomely. If he had sent his wife the first time, as he did the second, it would have been wiser. People generally do what Mrs. Allan asks them to do because they know it saves time.

Mrs. Allan talked smoothly for half an hour before she mentioned the Sunday School, and paid me several compliments. Mrs. Allan is famous for her tact. Tact is a faculty for meandering around to a given point instead of making a bee-line. I have no tact. I am noted for that. As soon as Mrs. Allan's conversation came in sight of the Sunday School, I, who knew all along whither it was tending, said, straight out,

“What class do you want me to teach?”

Mrs. Allan was so surprised that she forgot to be tactful, and answered plainly for once in her life,

“There are two classes — one of boys and one of girls — needing a teacher. I have been teaching the girls' class, but I shall have to give it up

for a little time on account of the baby's health. You may have your choice, Miss MacPherson."

"Then I shall take the boys," I said decidedly. I am noted for my decision. "Since they have to grow up to be men it's well to train them properly betimes. Nuisances they are bound to become under any circumstances; but if they are taken in hand young enough they may not grow up to be such nuisances as they otherwise would and that will be some unfortunate woman's gain." Mrs. Allan looked dubious. I knew she had expected me to choose the girls.

"They are a very wild set of boys," she said.

"I never knew boys who weren't," I retorted.

"I — I — think perhaps you would like the girls best," said Mrs. Allan hesitatingly. If it had not been for one thing — which I would never in this world have admitted to Mrs. Allan — I might have liked the girls' class best myself. But the truth was, Anne Shirley was in that class; and Anne Shirley was the one living human being that I was afraid of. Not that I disliked her. But she had such a habit of asking weird, unexpected questions, which a Philadelphia lawyer couldn't answer. Miss Rogerson had that class once and Anne routed her, horse, foot and artillery. I wasn't going to undertake a class with a walking interrogation point in it like that. Besides, I thought Mrs. Allan required a slight snub. Ministers' wives are rather apt to think they can run everything and everybody, if they are not wholesomely corrected now and again.

"It is not what I like best that must be considered, Mrs. Allan," I said rebukingly. "It is what is best for those boys. I feel that I shall be best for THEM."

"Oh, I've no doubt of that, Miss MacPherson," said Mrs. Allan amiably. It was a fib for her, minister's wife though she was. She HAD doubt. She thought I would be a dismal failure as teacher of a boys' class.

But I was not. I am not often a dismal failure when I make up my mind to do a thing. I am noted for that.

"It is wonderful what a reformation you have worked in that class, Miss MacPherson — wonderful," said the Rev. Mr. Allan some weeks

later. He didn't mean to show how amazing a thing he thought it that an old maid noted for being a man hater should have managed it, but his face betrayed him.

"Where does Jimmy Spencer live?" I asked him crisply. "He came one Sunday three weeks ago and hasn't been back since. I mean to find out why."

Mr. Allan coughed.

"I believe he is hired as handy boy with Alexander Abraham Bennett, out on the White Sands road," he said.

"Then I am going out to Alexander Abraham Bennett's on the White Sands road to see why Jimmy Spencer doesn't come to Sunday school," I said firmly.

Mr. Allan's eyes twinkled ever so slightly. I have always insisted that if that man were not a minister he would have a sense of humour.

"Possibly Mr. Bennett will not appreciate your kind interest! He has — ah — a singular aversion to your sex, I understand. No woman has ever been known to get inside of Mr. Bennett's house since his sister died twenty years ago."

"Oh, he is the one, is he?" I said, remembering. "He is the woman hater who threatens that if a woman comes into his yard he'll chase her out with a pitchfork. Well, he will not chase ME out!"

Mr. Allan gave a chuckle — a ministerial chuckle, but still a chuckle. It irritated me slightly, because it seemed to imply that he thought Alexander Abraham Bennett would be one too many for me. But I did not show Mr. Allan that he annoyed me. It is always a great mistake to let a man see that he can vex you.

The next afternoon I harnessed my sorrel pony to the buggy and drove down to Alexander Abraham Bennett's. As usual, I took William Adolphus with me for company. William Adolphus is my favourite among my six cats. He is black, with a white dicky and beautiful white paws. He sat up on the seat beside me and looked far more like a gentleman than many a man I've seen in a similar position.

Alexander Abraham's place was about three miles along the White Sands road. I knew the house as soon as I came to it by its neglected appearance. It needed paint badly; the blinds were crooked and torn; weeds grew up to the very door. Plainly, there was no woman about THAT place. Still, it was a nice house, and the barns were splendid. My father always said that when a man's barns were bigger than his house it was a sign that his income exceeded his expenditure. So it was all right that they should be bigger; but it was all wrong that they should be trimmer and better painted. Still, thought I, what else could you expect of a woman hater?

"But Alexander Abraham evidently knows how to run a farm, even if he is a woman hater," I remarked to William Adolphus as I got out and tied the pony to the railing.

I had driven up to the house from the back way and now I was opposite a side door opening on the veranda. I thought I might as well go to it, so I tucked William Adolphus under my arm and marched up the path. Just as I was halfway up, a dog swooped around the front corner and made straight for me. He was the ugliest dog I had ever seen; and he didn't even bark — just came silently and speedily on, with a businesslike eye.

I never stop to argue matters with a dog that doesn't bark. I know when discretion is the better part of valour. Firmly clasping William Adolphus, I ran — not to the door, because the dog was between me and it, but to a big, low-branching cherry tree at the back corner of the house. I reached it in time and no more. First thrusting William Adolphus on to a limb above my head, I scrambled up into that blessed tree without stopping to think how it might look to Alexander Abraham if he happened to be watching.

My time for reflection came when I found myself perched half way up the tree with William Adolphus beside me. William Adolphus was quite calm and unruffled. I can hardly say with truthfulness what I was. On the contrary, I admit that I felt considerably upset.

The dog was sitting on his haunches on the ground below, watching us, and it was quite plain to be seen, from his leisurely manner, that it was not his busy day. He bared his teeth and growled when he caught my eye.

“You LOOK like a woman hater’s dog,” I told him. I meant it for an insult; but the beast took it for a compliment.

Then I set myself to solving the question, “How am I to get out of this predicament?”

It did not seem easy to solve it.

“Shall I scream, William Adolphus?” I demanded of that intelligent animal. William Adolphus shook his head. This is a fact. And I agreed with him.

“No, I shall not scream, William Adolphus,” I said. “There is probably no one to hear me except Alexander Abraham, and I have my painful doubts about his tender mercies. Now, it is impossible to go down. Is it, then, William Adolphus, possible to go up?”

I looked up. Just above my head was an open window with a tolerably stout branch extending right across it.

“Shall we try that way, William Adolphus?” I asked.

William Adolphus, wasting no words, began to climb the tree. I followed his example. The dog ran in circles about the tree and looked things not lawful to be uttered. It probably would have been a relief to him to bark if it hadn’t been so against his principles.

I got in by the window easily enough, and found myself in a bedroom the like of which for disorder and dust and general awfulness I had never seen in all my life. But I did not pause to take in details. With William Adolphus under my arm I marched downstairs, fervently hoping I should meet no one on the way.

I did not. The hall below was empty and dusty. I opened the first door I came to and walked boldly in. A man was sitting by the window, looking moodily out. I should have known him for Alexander Abraham anywhere. He had just the same uncared-for, ragged appearance that the house had; and yet, like the house, it seemed that he would not be bad looking if he were trimmed up a little. His hair looked as if it had never been combed, and his whiskers were wild in the extreme.

He looked at me with blank amazement in his countenance.

“Where is Jimmy Spencer?” I demanded. “I have come to see him.”

“How did he ever let you in?” asked the man, staring at me.

“He didn’t let me in,” I retorted. “He chased me all over the lawn, and I only saved myself from being torn piecemeal by scrambling up a tree. You ought to be prosecuted for keeping such a dog! Where is Jimmy?”

Instead of answering Alexander Abraham began to laugh in a most unpleasant fashion.

“Trust a woman for getting into a man’s house if she has made up her mind to,” he said disagreeably.

Seeing that it was his intention to vex me I remained cool and collected.

“Oh, I wasn’t particular about getting into your house, Mr. Bennett,” I said calmly. “I had but little choice in the matter. It was get in lest a worse fate befall me. It was not you or your house I wanted to see — although I admit that it is worth seeing if a person is anxious to find out how dirty a place CAN be. It was Jimmy. For the third and last time — where is Jimmy?”

“Jimmy is not here,” said Mr. Bennett gruffly — but not quite so assuredly. “He left last week and hired with a man over at Newbridge.”

“In that case,” I said, picking up William Adolphus, who had been exploring the room with a disdainful air, “I won’t disturb you any longer. I shall go.”

“Yes, I think it would be the wisest thing,” said Alexander Abraham — not disagreeably this time, but reflectively, as if there was some doubt about the matter. “I’ll let you out by the back door. Then the — ahem! — the dog will not interfere with you. Please go away quietly and quickly.”

I wondered if Alexander Abraham thought I would go away with a whoop. But I said nothing, thinking this the most dignified course of conduct, and I followed him out to the kitchen as quickly and quietly as he could have wished. Such a kitchen!

Alexander Abraham opened the door — which was locked — just as a buggy containing two men drove into the yard.

“Too late!” he exclaimed in a tragic tone. I understood that something dreadful must have happened, but I did not care, since, as I fondly

supposed, it did not concern me. I pushed out past Alexander Abraham — who was looking as guilty as if he had been caught burglarizing — and came face to face with the man who had sprung from the buggy. It was old Dr. Blair, from Carmody, and he was looking at me as if he had found me shoplifting.

“My dear Peter,” he said gravely, “I am VERY sorry to see you here — very sorry indeed.”

I admit that this exasperated me. Besides, no man on earth, not even my own family doctor, has any right to “My dear Peter” me!

“There is no loud call for sorrow, doctor,” I said loftily. “If a woman, forty-eight years of age, a member of the Presbyterian church in good and regular standing, cannot call upon one of her Sunday School scholars without wrecking all the proprieties, how old must she be before she can?”

The doctor did not answer my question. Instead, he looked reproachfully at Alexander Abraham.

“Is this how you keep your word, Mr. Bennett?” he said. “I thought that you promised me that you would not let anyone into the house.”

“I didn’t let her in,” growled Mr. Bennett. “Good heavens, man, she climbed in at an upstairs window, despite the presence on my grounds of a policeman and a dog! What is to be done with a woman like that?”

“I do not understand what all this means,” I said addressing myself to the doctor and ignoring Alexander Abraham entirely, “but if my presence here is so extremely inconvenient to all concerned, you can soon be relieved of it. I am going at once.”

“I am very sorry, my dear Peter,” said the doctor impressively, “but that is just what I cannot allow you to do. This house is under quarantine for smallpox. You will have to stay here.”

Smallpox! For the first and last time in my life, I openly lost my temper with a man. I wheeled furiously upon Alexander Abraham.

“Why didn’t you tell me?” I cried.

“Tell you!” he said, glaring at me. “When I first saw you it was too late to tell you. I thought the kindest thing I could do was to hold my tongue

and let you get away in happy ignorance. This will teach you to take a man's house by storm, madam!"

"Now, now, don't quarrel, my good people," interposed the doctor seriously — but I saw a twinkle in his eye. "You'll have to spend some time together under the same roof and you won't improve the situation by disagreeing. You see, Peter, it was this way. Mr. Bennett was in town yesterday — where, as you are aware, there is a bad outbreak of smallpox — and took dinner in a boardinghouse where one of the maids was ill. Last night she developed unmistakable symptoms of smallpox. The Board of Health at once got after all the people who were in the house yesterday, so far as they could locate them, and put them under quarantine. I came down here this morning and explained the matter to Mr. Bennett. I brought Jeremiah Jeffries to guard the front of the house and Mr. Bennett gave me his word of honour that he would not let anyone in by the back way while I went to get another policeman and make all the necessary arrangements. I have brought Thomas Wright and have secured the services of another man to attend to Mr. Bennett's barn work and bring provisions to the house. Jacob Green and Cleophas Lee will watch at night. I don't think there is much danger of Mr. Bennett's taking the smallpox, but until we are sure you must remain here, Peter."

While listening to the doctor I had been thinking. It was the most distressing predicament I had ever got into in my life, but there was no sense in making it worse.

"Very well, doctor," I said calmly. "Yes, I was vaccinated a month ago, when the news of the smallpox first came. When you go back through Avonlea kindly go to Sarah Pye and ask her to live in my house during my absence and look after things, especially the cats. Tell her to give them new milk twice a day and a square inch of butter apiece once a week. Get her to put my two dark print wrappers, some aprons, and some changes of underclothing in my third best valise and have it sent down to me. My pony is tied out there to the fence. Please take him home. That is all, I think."

“No, it isn’t all,” said Alexander Abraham grumpily. “Send that cat home, too. I won’t have a cat around the place — I’d rather have smallpox.”

I looked Alexander Abraham over gradually, in a way I have, beginning at his feet and traveling up to his head. I took my time over it; and then I said, very quietly.

“You may have both. Anyway, you’ll have to have William Adolphus. He is under quarantine as well as you and I. Do you suppose I am going to have my cat ranging at large through Avonlea, scattering smallpox germs among innocent people? I’ll have to put up with that dog of yours. You will have to endure William Adolphus.”

Alexander Abraham groaned, but I could see that the way I had looked him over had chastened him considerably.

The doctor drove away, and I went into the house, not choosing to linger outside and be grinned at by Thomas Wright. I hung my coat up in the hall and laid my bonnet carefully on the sitting-room table, having first dusted a clean place for it with my handkerchief. I longed to fall upon that house at once and clean it up, but I had to wait until the doctor came back with my wrapper. I could not clean house in my new suit and a silk shirtwaist.

Alexander Abraham was sitting on a chair looking at me. Presently he said,

“I am NOT curious — but will you kindly tell me why the doctor called you Peter?”

“Because that is my name, I suppose,” I answered, shaking up a cushion for William Adolphus and thereby disturbing the dust of years.

Alexander Abraham coughed gently.

“Isn’t that — ahem! — rather a peculiar name for a woman?”

“It is,” I said, wondering how much soap, if any, there was in the house.

“I am NOT curious,” said Alexander Abraham, “but would you mind telling me how you came to be called Peter?”

“If I had been a boy my parents intended to call me Peter in honour of a rich uncle. When I — fortunately — turned out to be a girl my mother insisted that I should be called Angelina. They gave me both names and called me Angelina, but as soon as I grew old enough I decided to be called Peter. It was bad enough, but not so bad as Angelina.”

“I should say it was more appropriate,” said Alexander Abraham, intending, as I perceived, to be disagreeable.

“Precisely,” I agreed calmly. “My last name is MacPherson, and I live in Avonlea. As you are NOT curious, that will be all the information you will need about me.”

“Oh!” Alexander Abraham looked as if a light had broken in on him. “I’ve heard of you. You — ah — pretend to dislike men.”

Pretend! Goodness only knows what would have happened to Alexander Abraham just then if a diversion had not taken place. But the door opened and a dog came in — THE dog. I suppose he had got tired waiting under the cherry tree for William Adolphus and me to come down. He was even uglier indoors than out.

“Oh, Mr. Riley, Mr. Riley, see what you have let me in for,” said Alexander Abraham reproachfully.

But Mr. Riley — since that was the brute’s name — paid no attention to Alexander Abraham. He had caught sight of William Adolphus curled up on the cushion, and he started across the room to investigate him. William Adolphus sat up and began to take notice.

“Call off that dog,” I said warningly to Alexander Abraham.

“Call him off yourself,” he retorted. “Since you’ve brought that cat here you can protect him.”

“Oh, it wasn’t for William Adolphus’ sake I spoke,” I said pleasantly. “William Adolphus can protect himself.”

William Adolphus could and did. He humped his back, flattened his ears, swore once, and then made a flying leap for Mr. Riley. William Adolphus landed squarely on Mr. Riley’s brindled back and promptly took fast hold, spitting and clawing and caterwauling.

You never saw a more astonished dog than Mr. Riley. With a yell of terror he bolted out to the kitchen, out of the kitchen into the hall, through the hall into the room, and so into the kitchen and round again. With each circuit he went faster and faster, until he looked like a brindled streak with a dash of black and white on top. Such a racket and commotion I never heard, and I laughed until the tears came into my eyes. Mr. Riley flew around and around, and William Adolphus held on grimly and clawed. Alexander Abraham turned purple with rage.

“Woman, call off that infernal cat before he kills my dog,” he shouted above the din of yelps and yowls.

“Oh, he won’t kill him,” I said reassuringly, “and he’s going too fast to hear me if I did call him. If you can stop the dog, Mr. Bennett, I’ll guarantee to make William Adolphus listen to reason, but there’s no use trying to argue with a lightning flash.”

Alexander Abraham made a frantic lunge at the brindled streak as it whirled past him, with the result that he overbalanced himself and went sprawling on the floor with a crash. I ran to help him up, which only seemed to enrage him further.

“Woman,” he spluttered viciously, “I wish you and your fiend of a cat were in — in—”

“In Avonlea,” I finished quickly, to save Alexander Abraham from committing profanity. “So do I, Mr. Bennett, with all my heart. But since we are not, let us make the best of it like sensible people. And in future you will kindly remember that my name is Miss MacPherson, NOT Woman!”

With this the end came and I was thankful, for the noise those two animals made was so terrific that I expected the policeman would be rushing in, smallpox or no smallpox, to see if Alexander Abraham and I were trying to murder each other. Mr. Riley suddenly veered in his mad career and bolted into a dark corner between the stove and the woodbox, William Adolphus let go just in time.

There never was any more trouble with Mr. Riley after that. A meeker, more thoroughly chastened dog you could not find. William Adolphus had

the best of it and he kept it.

Seeing that things had calmed down and that it was five o'clock I decided to get tea. I told Alexander Abraham that I would prepare it, if he would show me where the eatables were.

"You needn't mind," said Alexander Abraham. "I've been in the habit of getting my own tea for twenty years."

"I daresay. But you haven't been in the habit of getting mine," I said firmly. "I wouldn't eat anything you cooked if I starved to death. If you want some occupation, you'd better get some salve and anoint the scratches on that poor dog's back."

Alexander Abraham said something that I prudently did not hear. Seeing that he had no information to hand out I went on an exploring expedition into the pantry. The place was awful beyond description, and for the first time a vague sentiment of pity for Alexander Abraham glimmered in my breast. When a man had to live in such surroundings the wonder was, not that he hated women, but that he didn't hate the whole human race.

But I got up a supper somehow. I am noted for getting up suppers. The bread was from the Carmody bakery and I made good tea and excellent toast; besides, I found a can of peaches in the pantry which, as they were bought, I wasn't afraid to eat.

That tea and toast mellowed Alexander Abraham in spite of himself. He ate the last crust, and didn't growl when I gave William Adolphus all the cream that was left. Mr. Riley did not seem to want anything. He had no appetite.

By this time the doctor's boy had arrived with my valise. Alexander Abraham gave me quite civilly to understand that there was a spare room across the hall and that I might take possession of it. I went to it and put on a wrapper. There was a set of fine furniture in the room, and a comfortable bed. But the dust! William Adolphus had followed me in and his paws left marks everywhere he walked.

"Now," I said briskly, returning to the kitchen, "I'm going to clean up and I shall begin with this kitchen. You'd better betake yourself to the

sitting-room, Mr. Bennett, so as to be out of the way.”

Alexander Abraham glared at me.

“I’m not going to have my house meddled with,” he snapped. “It suits me. If you don’t like it you can leave it.”

“No, I can’t. That is just the trouble,” I said pleasantly. “If I could leave it I shouldn’t be here for a minute. Since I can’t, it simply has to be cleaned. I can tolerate men and dogs when I am compelled to, but I cannot and will not tolerate dirt and disorder. Go into the sitting-room.”

Alexander Abraham went. As he closed the door, I heard him say, in capitals, “WHAT AN AWFUL WOMAN!”

I cleared that kitchen and the pantry adjoining. It was ten o’clock when I got through, and Alexander Abraham had gone to bed without deigning further speech. I locked Mr. Riley in one room and William Adolphus in another and went to bed, too. I had never felt so dead tired in my life before. It had been a hard day.

But I got up bright and early the next morning and got a tiptop breakfast, which Alexander Abraham condescended to eat. When the provision man came into the yard I called to him from the window to bring me a box of soap in the afternoon, and then I tackled the sitting-room.

It took me the best part of a week to get that house in order, but I did it thoroughly. I am noted for doing things thoroughly. At the end of the time it was clean from garret to cellar. Alexander Abraham made no comments on my operations, though he groaned loud and often, and said caustic things to poor Mr. Riley, who hadn’t the spirit to answer back after his drubbing by William Adolphus. I made allowances for Alexander Abraham because his vaccination had taken and his arm was real sore; and I cooked elegant meals, not having much else to do, once I had got things scoured up. The house was full of provisions — Alexander Abraham wasn’t mean about such things, I will say that for him. Altogether, I was more comfortable than I had expected to be. When Alexander Abraham wouldn’t talk I let him alone; and when he would I just said as sarcastic things as he did, only I said them smiling and pleasant. I could see he had a wholesome awe for me. But now and then he seemed to forget his

disposition and talked like a human being. We had one or two real interesting conversations. Alexander Abraham was an intelligent man, though he had got terribly warped. I told him once I thought he must have been nice when he was a boy.

One day he astonished me by appearing at the dinner table with his hair brushed and a white collar on. We had a tiptop dinner that day, and I had made a pudding that was far too good for a woman hater. When Alexander Abraham had disposed of two large platefuls of it, he sighed and said,

“You can certainly cook. It’s a pity you are such a detestable crank in other respects.”

“It’s kind of convenient being a crank,” I said. “People are careful how they meddle with you. Haven’t you found that out in your own experience?”

“I am NOT a crank,” growled Alexander Abraham resentfully. “All I ask is to be let alone.”

“That’s the very crankiest kind of crank,” I said. “A person who wants to be let alone flies in the face of Providence, who decreed that folks for their own good were not to be let alone. But cheer up, Mr. Bennett. The quarantine will be up on Tuesday and then you’ll certainly be let alone for the rest of your natural life, as far as William Adolphus and I are concerned. You may then return to your wallowing in the mire and be as dirty and comfortable as of yore.”

Alexander Abraham growled again. The prospect didn’t seem to cheer him up as much as I should have expected. Then he did an amazing thing. He poured some cream into a saucer and set it down before William Adolphus. William Adolphus lapped it up, keeping one eye on Alexander Abraham lest the latter should change his mind. Not to be outdone, I handed Mr. Riley a bone.

Neither Alexander Abraham nor I had worried much about the smallpox. We didn’t believe he would take it, for he hadn’t even seen the girl who was sick. But the very next morning I heard him calling me from the upstairs landing.

“Miss MacPherson,” he said in a voice so uncommonly mild that it gave me an uncanny feeling, “what are the symptoms of smallpox?”

“Chills and flushes, pain in the limbs and back, nausea and vomiting,” I answered promptly, for I had been reading them up in a patent medicine almanac.

“I’ve got them all,” said Alexander Abraham hollowly.

I didn’t feel as much scared as I should have expected. After enduring a woman hater and a brindled dog and the early disorder of that house — and coming off best with all three — smallpox seemed rather insignificant. I went to the window and called to Thomas Wright to send for the doctor.

The doctor came down from Alexander Abraham’s room looking grave.

“It’s impossible to pronounce on the disease yet,” he said. “There is no certainty until the eruption appears. But, of course, there is every likelihood that it is the smallpox. It is very unfortunate. I am afraid that it will be difficult to get a nurse. All the nurses in town who will take smallpox cases are overbusy now, for the epidemic is still raging there. However, I’ll go into town tonight and do my best. Meanwhile, at present, you must not go near him, Peter.”

I wasn’t going to take orders from any man, and as soon as the doctor had gone I marched straight up to Alexander Abraham’s room with some dinner for him on a tray. There was a lemon cream I thought he could eat even if he had the smallpox.

“You shouldn’t come near me,” he growled. “You are risking your life.”

“I am not going to see a fellow creature starve to death, even if he is a man,” I retorted.

“The worst of it all,” groaned Alexander Abraham, between mouthfuls of lemon cream, “is that the doctor says I’ve got to have a nurse. I’ve got so kind of used to you being in the house that I don’t mind you, but the thought of another woman coming here is too much. Did you give my poor dog anything to eat?”

“He has had a better dinner than many a Christian,” I said severely. Alexander Abraham need not have worried about another woman coming in. The doctor came back that night with care on his brow.

“I don’t know what is to be done,” he said. “I can’t get a soul to come here.”

“I shall nurse Mr. Bennett,” I said with dignity. “It is my duty and I never shirk my duty. I am noted for that. He is a man, and he has smallpox, and he keeps a vile dog; but I am not going to see him die for lack of care for all that.”

“You’re a good soul, Peter,” said the doctor, looking relieved, manlike, as soon as he found a woman to shoulder the responsibility.

I nursed Alexander Abraham through the smallpox, and I didn’t mind it much. He was much more amiable sick than well, and he had the disease in a very mild form. Below stairs I reigned supreme and Mr. Riley and William Adolphus lay down together like the lion and the lamb. I fed Mr. Riley regularly, and once, seeing him looking lonesome, I patted him gingerly. It was nicer than I thought it would be. Mr. Riley lifted his head and looked at me with an expression in his eyes which cured me of wondering why on earth Alexander Abraham was so fond of the beast.

When Alexander Abraham was able to sit up, he began to make up for the time he’d lost being pleasant. Anything more sarcastic than that man in his convalescence you couldn’t imagine. I just laughed at him, having found out that that could be depended on to irritate him. To irritate him still further I cleaned the house all over again. But what vexed him most of all was that Mr. Riley took to following me about and wagging what he had of a tail at me.

“It wasn’t enough that you should come into my peaceful home and turn it upside down, but you have to alienate the affections of my dog,” complained Alexander Abraham.

“He’ll get fond of you again when I go home,” I said comfortingly. “Dogs aren’t very particular that way. What they want is bones. Cats now, they love disinterestedly. William Adolphus has never swerved in his

allegiance to me, although you do give him cream in the pantry on the sly.”

Alexander Abraham looked foolish. He hadn't thought I knew that.

I didn't take the smallpox and in another week the doctor came out and sent the policeman home. I was disinfected and William Adolphus was fumigated, and then we were free to go.

“Goodbye, Mr. Bennett,” I said, offering to shake hands in a forgiving spirit. “I've no doubt that you are glad to be rid of me, but you are no gladder than I am to go. I suppose this house will be dirtier than ever in a month's time, and Mr. Riley will have discarded the little polish his manners have taken on. Reformation with men and dogs never goes very deep.”

With this Parthian shaft I walked out of the house, supposing that I had seen the last of it and Alexander Abraham.

I was glad to get back home, of course; but it did seem queer and lonesome. The cats hardly knew me, and William Adolphus roamed about forlornly and appeared to feel like an exile. I didn't take as much pleasure in cooking as usual, for it seemed kind of foolish to be fussing over oneself. The sight of a bone made me think of poor Mr. Riley. The neighbours avoided me pointedly, for they couldn't get rid of the fear that I might erupt into smallpox at any moment. My Sunday School class had been given to another woman, and altogether I felt as if I didn't belong anywhere.

I had existed like this for a fortnight when Alexander Abraham suddenly appeared. He walked in one evening at dusk, but at first sight I didn't know him he was so spruced and barbered up. But William Adolphus knew him. Will you believe it, William Adolphus, my own William Adolphus, rubbed up against that man's trouser leg with an undisguised purr of satisfaction.

“I had to come, Angelina,” said Alexander Abraham. “I couldn't stand it any longer.”

“My name is Peter,” I said coldly, although I was feeling ridiculously glad about something.

“It isn’t,” said Alexander Abraham stubbornly. “It is Angelina for me, and always will be. I shall never call you Peter. Angelina just suits you exactly; and Angelina Bennett would suit you still better. You must come back, Angelina. Mr. Riley is moping for you, and I can’t get along without somebody to appreciate my sarcasms, now that you have accustomed me to the luxury.”

“What about the other five cats?” I demanded.

Alexander Abraham sighed.

“I suppose they’ll have to come too,” he sighed, “though no doubt they’ll chase poor Mr. Riley clean off the premises. But I can live without him, and I can’t without you. How soon can you be ready to marry me?”

“I haven’t said that I was going to marry you at all, have I?” I said tartly, just to be consistent. For I wasn’t feeling tart.

“No, but you will, won’t you?” said Alexander Abraham anxiously. “Because if you won’t, I wish you’d let me die of the smallpox. Do, dear Angelina.”

To think that a man should dare to call me his “dear Angelina!” And to think that I shouldn’t mind!

“Where I go, William Adolphus goes,” I said, “but I shall give away the other five cats for — for the sake of Mr. Riley.”

Pa Sloane's Purchase

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"I guess the molasses is getting low, ain't it?" said Pa Sloane insinuatingly. "S'pose I'd better drive up to Carmody this afternoon and get some more."

"There's a good half-gallon of molasses in the jug yet," said ma Sloane ruthlessly.

"That so? Well, I noticed the kerosene demijohn wasn't very hefty the last time I filled the can. Reckon it needs replenishing."

"We have kerosene enough to do for a fortnight yet." Ma continued to eat her dinner with an impassive face, but a twinkle made itself apparent in her eye. Lest Pa should see it, and feel encouraged thereby, she looked immovably at her plate.

Pa Sloane sighed. His invention was giving out.

"Didn't I hear you say day before yesterday that you were out of nutmegs?" he queried, after a few moments' severe reflection.

"I got a supply of them from the egg-pedlar yesterday," responded Ma, by a great effort preventing the twinkle from spreading over her entire face. She wondered if this third failure would squelch Pa. But Pa was not to be squelched.

"Well, anyway," he said, brightening up under the influence of a sudden saving inspiration. "I'll have to go up to get the sorrel mare shod. So, if you've any little errands you want done at the store, Ma, just make a memo of them while I hitch up."

The matter of shoeing the sorrel mare was beyond Ma's province, although she had her own suspicions about the sorrel mare's need of shoes.

"Why can't you give up beating about the bush, Pa?" she demanded, with contemptuous pity. "You might as well own up what's taking you to Carmody. I can see through your design. You want to get away to the Garland auction. That is what is troubling you, Pa Sloane."

“I dunno but what I might step over, seeing it’s so handy. But the sorrel mare really does need shoeing, Ma,” protested Pa.

“There’s always something needing to be done if it’s convenient,” retorted Ma. “Your mania for auctions will be the ruin of you yet, Pa. A man of fifty-five ought to have grown out of such a hankering. But the older you get the worse you get. Anyway, if I wanted to go to auctions, I’d select them as was something like, and not waste my time on little one-horse affairs like this of Garland’s.”

“One might pick up something real cheap at Garland’s,” said Pa defensively.

“Well, you are not going to pick up anything, cheap or otherwise, Pa Sloane, because I’m going with you to see that you don’t. I know I can’t stop you from going. I might as well try to stop the wind from blowing. But I shall go, too, out of self-defence. This house is so full now of old clutter and truck that you’ve brought home from auctions that I feel as if I was made up out of pieces and left overs.”

Pa Sloane sighed again. It was not exhilarating to attend an auction with Ma. She would never let him bid on anything. But he realized that Ma’s mind was made up beyond the power of mortal man’s persuasion to alter it, so he went out to hitch up.

Pa Sloane’s dissipation was going to auctions and buying things that nobody else would buy. Ma Sloane’s patient endeavours of over thirty years had been able to effect only a partial reform. Sometimes Pa heroically refrained from going to an auction for six months at a time; then he would break out worse than ever, go to all that took place for miles around, and come home with a wagonful of misfits. His last exploit had been to bid on an old dasher churn for five dollars — the boys “ran things up” on Pa Sloane for the fun of it — and bring it home to outraged Ma, who had made her butter for fifteen years in the very latest, most up-to-date barrel churn. To add insult to injury this was the second dasher churn Pa had bought at auction. That settled it. Ma decreed that henceforth she would chaperon Pa when he went to auctions.

But this was the day of Pa's good angel. When he drove up to the door where Ma was waiting, a breathless, hatless imp of ten flew into the yard, and hurled himself between Ma and the wagon-step.

"Oh, Mrs. Sloane, won't you come over to our house at once?" he gasped. "The baby, he's got colic, and ma's just wild, and he's all black in the face."

Ma went, feeling that the stars in their courses fought against a woman who was trying to do her duty by her husband. But first she admonished Pa.

"I shall have to let you go alone. But I charge you, Pa, not to bid on anything — on ANYTHING, do you hear?"

Pa heard and promised to heed, with every intention of keeping his promise. Then he drove away joyfully. On any other occasion Ma would have been a welcome companion. But she certainly spoiled the flavour of an auction.

When Pa arrived at the Carmody store, he saw that the little yard of the Garland place below the hill was already full of people. The auction had evidently begun; so, not to miss any more of it, Pa hurried down. The sorrel mare could wait for her shoes until afterwards.

Ma had been within bounds when she called the Garland auction a "one-horse affair." It certainly was very paltry, especially when compared to the big Donaldson auction of a month ago, which Pa still lived over in happy dreams.

Horace Garland and his wife had been poor. When they died within six weeks of each other, one of consumption and one of pneumonia, they left nothing but debts and a little furniture. The house had been a rented one.

The bidding on the various poor articles of household gear put up for sale was not brisk, but had an element of resigned determination. Carmody people knew that these things had to be sold to pay the debts, and they could not be sold unless they were bought. Still, it was a very tame affair.

A woman came out of the house carrying a baby of about eighteen months in her arms, and sat down on the bench beneath the window.

“There’s Marthy Blair with the Garland Baby,” said Robert Lawson to Pa. “I’d like to know what’s to become of that poor young one!”

“Ain’t there any of the father’s or mother’s folks to take him?” asked Pa.

“No. Horace had no relatives that anybody ever heard of. Mrs. Horace had a brother; but he went to Mantioba years ago, and nobody knows where he is now. Somebody’ll have to take the baby and nobody seems anxious to. I’ve got eight myself, or I’d think about it. He’s a fine little chap.”

Pa, with Ma’s parting admonition ringing in his ears, did not bid on anything, although it will never be known how great was the heroic self-restraint he put on himself, until just at the last, when he did bid on a collection of flower-pots, thinking he might indulge himself to that small extent. But Josiah Sloane had been commissioned by his wife to bring those flower-pots home to her; so Pa lost them.

“There, that’s all,” said the auctioneer, wiping his face, for the day was very warm for October.

“There’s nothing more unless we sell the baby.”

A laugh went through the crowd. The sale had been a dull affair, and they were ready for some fun. Someone called out, “Put him up, Jacob.” The joke found favour and the call was repeated hilariously.

Jacob Blair took little Teddy Garland out of Martha’s arms and stood him up on the table by the door, steadying the small chap with one big brown hand. The baby had a mop of yellow curls, and a pink and white face, and big blue eyes. He laughed out at the men before him and waved his hands in delight. Pa Sloane thought he had never seen so pretty a baby.

“Here’s a baby for sale,” shouted the auctioneer. “A genuine article, pretty near as good as brand-new. A real live baby, warranted to walk and talk a little. Who bids? A dollar? Did I hear anyone mean enough to bid a dollar? No, sir, babies don’t come as cheap as that, especially the curly-headed brand.”

The crowd laughed again. Pa Sloane, by way of keeping on the joke, cried, “Four dollars!”

Everybody looked at him. The impression flashed through the crowd that Pa was in earnest, and meant thus to signify his intention of giving the baby a home. He was well-to-do, and his only son was grown up and married.

“Six,” cried out John Clarke from the other side of the yard. John Clarke lived at White Sands and he and his wife were childless.

That bid of John Clarke’s was Pa’s undoing. Pa Sloane could not have an enemy; but a rival he had, and that rival was John Clarke. Everywhere at auctions John Clarke was wont to bid against Pa. At the last auction he had outbid Pa in everything, not having the fear of his wife before his eyes. Pa’s fighting blood was up in a moment; he forgot Ma Sloane; he forgot what he was bidding for; he forgot everything except a determination that John Clarke should not be victor again.

“Ten,” he called shrilly.

“Fifteen,” shouted Clarke.

“Twenty,” vociferated Pa.

“Twenty-five,” bellowed Clarke.

“Thirty,” shrieked Pa. He nearly bust a blood-vessel in his shrieking, but he had won. Clarke turned off with a laugh and a shrug, and the baby was knocked down to Pa Sloane by the auctioneer, who had meanwhile been keeping the crowd in roars of laughter by a quick fire of witticisms. There had not been such fun at an auction in Carmody for many a long day.

Pa Sloane came, or was pushed, forward. The baby was put into his arms; he realized that he was expected to keep it, and he was too dazed to refuse; besides, his heart went out to the child.

The auctioneer looked doubtfully at the money which Pa laid mutely down.

“I s’pose that part was only a joke,” he said.

“Not a bit of it,” said Robert Lawson. “All the money won’t be too much to pay the debts. There’s a doctor’s bill, and this will just about pay it.”

Pa Sloane drove back home, with the sorrel mare still unshod, the baby, and the baby’s meager bundle of clothes. The baby did not trouble him

much; it had become well used to strangers in the past two months, and promptly fell asleep on his arm; but Pa Sloane did not enjoy that drive; at the end of it; he mentally saw Ma Sloane.

Ma was there, too, waiting for him on the back doorstep as he drove into the yard at sunset. Her face, when she saw the baby, expressed the last degree of amazement.

“Pa Sloane,” she demanded, “whose is that young one, and there did you get it?”

“I — I — bought it at the auction, Ma,” said Pa feebly. Then he waited for the explosion. None came. This last exploit of Pa’s was too much for Ma.

With a gasp she snatched the baby from Pa’s arms, and ordered him to go out and put the mare in. When Pa returned to the kitchen Ma had set the baby on the sofa, fenced him around with chairs so that he couldn’t fall off and given him a molassed cooky.

“Now, Pa Sloane, you can explain,” she said.

Pa explained. Ma listened in grim silence until he had finished. Then she said sternly:

“Do you reckon we’re going to keep this baby?”

“I — I — dunno,” said Pa. And he didn’t.

“Well, we’re NOT. I brought up one boy and that’s enough. I don’t calculate to be pestered with any more. I never was much struck on children as children, anyhow. You say that Mary Garland had a brother out in Mantioba? Well, we shall just write to him and tell him he’s got to look out for his nephew.”

“But how can you do that, Ma, when nobody knows his address?” objected Pa, with a wistful look at that delicious, laughing baby.

“I’ll find out his address if I have to advertise in the papers for him,” retorted Ma. “As for you, Pa Sloane, you’re not fit to be out of a lunatic asylum. The next auction you’ll be buying a wife, I s’pose?”

Pa, quite crushed by Ma’s sarcasm, pulled his chair in to supper. Ma picked up the baby and sat down at the head of the table. Little Teddy laughed and pinched her face — Ma’s face! Ma looked very grim, but she

fed him his supper as skilfully as if it had not been thirty years since she had done such a thing. But then, the woman who once learns the mother knack never forgets it.

After tea Ma despatched Pa over to William Alexander's to borrow a high chair. When Pa returned in the twilight, the baby was fenced in on the sofa again, and Ma was stepping briskly about the garret. She was bringing down the little cot bed her own boy had once occupied, and setting it up in their room for Teddy. Then she undressed the baby and rocked him to sleep, crooning an old lullaby over him. Pa Sloane sat quietly and listened, with very sweet memories of the long ago, when he and Ma had been young and proud, and the bewhiskered William Alexander had been a curly-headed little fellow like this one.

Ma was not driven to advertising for Mrs. Garland's brother. That personage saw the notice of his sister's death in a home paper and wrote to the Carmody postmaster for full information. The letter was referred to Ma and Ma answered it.

She wrote that they had taken in the baby, pending further arrangements, but had no intention of keeping it; and she calmly demanded of its uncle what was to be done with it. Then she sealed and addressed the letter with an unfaltering hand; but, when it was done, she looked across the table at Pa Sloane, who was sitting in the armchair with the baby on his knee. They were having a royal good time together. Pa had always been dreadfully foolish about babies. He looked ten years younger. Ma's keen eyes softened a little as she watched them.

A prompt answer came to her letter. Teddy's uncle wrote that he had six children of his own, but was nevertheless willing and glad to give his little nephew a home. But he could not come after him. Josiah Spencer, of White Sands, was going out to Manitoba in the spring. If Mr. and Mrs. Sloane could only keep the baby till then he could be sent out with the Spencers. Perhaps they would see a chance sooner.

"There'll be no chance sooner," said Pa Sloane in a tone of satisfaction.

"No, worse luck!" retorted Ma crisply.

The winter passed by. Little Teddy grew and throve, and Pa Sloane worshipped him. Ma was very good to him, too, and Teddy was just as fond of her as of Pa.

Nevertheless, as the spring drew near, Pa became depressed. Sometimes he sighed heavily, especially when he heard casual references to the Josiah Spencer emigration.

One warm afternoon in early May Josiah Spencer arrived. He found Ma knitting placidly in the kitchen, while Pa nodded over his newspaper and the baby played with the cat on the floor.

“Good afternoon, Mrs. Sloane,” said Josiah with a flourish. “I just dropped in to see about this young man here. We are going to leave next Wednesday; so you’d better send him down to our place Monday or Tuesday, so that he can get used to us, and—”

“Oh, Ma,” began Pa, rising imploringly to his feet.

Ma transfixed him with her eye.

“Sit down, Pa,” she commanded.

Unhappy Pa sat.

Then Ma glared at the smiling Josiah, who instantly felt as guilty as if he had been caught stealing sheep red-handed.

“We are much obliged to you, Mr. Spencer,” said Ma icily, “but this baby is OURS. We bought him, and we paid for him. A bargain is a bargain. When I pay cash down for babies, I propose to get my money’s worth. We are going to keep this baby in spite of any number of uncles in Manitoba. Have I made this sufficiently clear to your understanding, Mr. Spencer?”

“Certainly, certainly,” stammered the unfortunate man, feeling guiltier than ever, “but I thought you didn’t want him — I thought you’d written to his uncle — I thought—”

“I really wouldn’t think quite so much if I were you,” said Ma kindly. “It must be hard on you. Won’t you stay and have tea with us?”

But, no, Josiah would not stay. He was thankful to make his escape with such rags of self-respect as remained to him.

Pa Sloane arose and came around to Ma's chair. He laid a trembling hand on her shoulder.

"Ma, you're a good woman," he said softly.

"Go 'long, Pa," said Ma.

The Courting of Prissy Strong

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I wasn't able to go to prayer meeting that evening because I had neuralgia in my face; but Thomas went, and the minute he came home I knew by the twinkle in his eye that he had some news.

"Who do you s'pose Stephen Clark went home with from meeting tonight?" he said, chuckling.

"Jane Miranda Blair," I said promptly. Stephen Clark's wife had been dead for two years and he hadn't taken much notice of anybody, so far as was known. But Carmody had Jane Miranda all ready for him, and really I don't know why she didn't suit him, except for the reason that a man never does what he is expected to do when it comes to marrying.

Thomas chuckled again.

"Wrong. He stepped up to Prissy Strong and walked off with her. Cold soup warmed over."

"Prissy Strong!" I just held up my hands. Then I laughed. "He needn't try for Prissy," I said. "Emmeline nipped that in the bud twenty years ago, and she'll do it again."

"Em'line is an old crank," growled Thomas. He detested Emmeline Strong, and always did.

"She's that, all right," I agreed, "and that is just the reason she can turn poor Prissy any way she likes. You mark my words, she'll put her foot right down on this as soon as she finds it out."

Thomas said that I was probably right. I lay awake for a long time after I went to bed that night, thinking of Prissy and Stephen. As a general rule, I don't concern my head about other people's affairs, but Prissy was such a helpless creature I couldn't get her off my mind.

Twenty years ago Stephen Clark had tried to go with Prissy Strong. That was pretty soon after Prissy's father had died. She and Emmeline were living alone together. Emmeline was thirty, ten years older than

Prissy, and if ever there were two sisters totally different from each other in every way, those two were Emmeline and Prissy Strong.

Emmeline took after her father; she was big and dark and homely, and she was the most domineering creature that ever stepped on shoe leather. She simply ruled poor Prissy with a rod of iron.

Prissy herself was a pretty girl — at least most people thought so. I can't honestly say I ever admired her style much myself. I like something with more vim and snap to it. Prissy was slim and pink, with soft, appealing blue eyes, and pale gold hair all clinging in baby rings around her face. She was just as meek and timid as she looked and there wasn't a bit of harm in her. I always liked Prissy, even if I didn't admire her looks as much as some people did.

Anyway, it was plain her style suited Stephen Clark. He began to drive her, and there wasn't a speck of doubt that Prissy liked him. Then Emmeline just put a stopper on the affair. It was pure cantankerousness in her. Stephen was a good match and nothing could be said against him. But Emmeline was just determined that Prissy shouldn't marry. She couldn't get married herself, and she was sore enough about it.

Of course, if Prissy had had a spark of spirit she wouldn't have given in. But she hadn't a mite; I believe she would have cut off her nose if Emmeline had ordered her to do it. She was just her mother over again. If ever a girl belied her name, Prissy Strong did. There wasn't anything strong about her.

One night, when prayer meeting came out, Stephen stepped up to Prissy as usual and asked if he might see her home. Thomas and I were just behind — we weren't married ourselves then — and we heard it all. Prissy gave one scared, appealing look at Emmeline and then said, "No, thank you, not tonight."

Stephen just turned on his heel and went. He was a high-spirited fellow and I knew he would never overlook a public slight like that. If he had had as much sense as he ought to have had he would have known that Emmeline was at the bottom of it; but he didn't, and he began going to see Althea Gillis, and they were married the next year. Althea was a rather

nice girl, though giddy, and I think she and Stephen were happy enough together. In real life things are often like that.

Nobody ever tried to go with Prissy again. I suppose they were afraid of Emmeline. Prissy's beauty soon faded. She was always kind of sweet looking, but her bloom went, and she got shyer and limper every year of her life. She wouldn't have dared put on her second best dress without asking Emmeline's permission. She was real fond of cats and Emmeline wouldn't let her keep one. Emmeline even cut the serial out of the religious weekly she took before she would give it to Prissy, because she didn't believe in reading novels. It used to make me furious to see it all. They were my next door neighbours after I married Thomas, and I was often in and out. Sometimes I'd feel real vexed at Prissy for giving in the way she did; but, after all, she couldn't help it — she was born that way.

And now Stephen was going to try his luck again. It certainly did seem funny.

Stephen walked home with Prissy from prayer meeting four nights before Emmeline found it out. Emmeline hadn't been going to prayer meeting all that summer because she was mad at Mr. Leonard. She had expressed her disapproval to him because he had buried old Naomi Clark at the harbour "just as if she was a Christian," and Mr. Leonard had said something to her she couldn't get over for a while. I don't know what it was, but I know that when Mr. Leonard WAS roused to rebuke anyone the person so rebuked remembered it for a spell.

All at once I knew she must have discovered about Stephen and Prissy, for Prissy stopped going to prayer meeting.

I felt real worried about it, someway, and although Thomas said for goodness' sake not to go poking my fingers into other people's pies, I felt as if I ought to do something. Stephen Clark was a good man and Prissy would have a beautiful home; and those two little boys of Althea's needed a mother if ever boys did. Besides, I knew quite well that Prissy, in her secret soul, was hankering to be married. So was Emmeline, too — but nobody wanted to help HER to a husband.

The upshot of my meditations was that I asked Stephen down to dinner with us from church one day. I had heard a rumour that he was going to see Lizzie Pye over at Avonlea, and I knew it was time to be stirring, if anything were to be done. If it had been Jane Miranda I don't know that I'd have bothered; but Lizzie Pye wouldn't have done for a stepmother for Althea's boys at all. She was too bad-tempered, and as mean as second skimmings besides.

Stephen came. He seemed dull and moody, and not much inclined to talk. After dinner I gave Thomas a hint. I said,

"You go to bed and have your nap. I want to talk to Stephen."

Thomas shrugged his shoulders and went. He probably thought I was brewing up lots of trouble for myself, but he didn't say anything. As soon as he was out of the way I casually remarked to Stephen that I understood that he was going to take one of my neighbours away and that I couldn't be sorry, though she was an excellent neighbour and I would miss her a great deal.

"You won't have to miss her much, I reckon," said Stephen grimly. "I've been told I'm not wanted there."

I was surprised to hear Stephen come out so plump and plain about it, for I hadn't expected to get at the root of the matter so easily. Stephen wasn't the confidential kind. But it really seemed to be a relief to him to talk about it; I never saw a man feeling so sore about anything. He told me the whole story.

Prissy had written him a letter — he fished it out of his pocket and gave it to me to read. It was in Prissy's prim, pretty little writing, sure enough, and it just said that his attentions were "unwelcome," and would he be "kind enough to refrain from offering them." Not much wonder the poor man went to see Lizzie Pye!

"Stephen, I'm surprised at you for thinking that Prissy Strong wrote that letter," I said.

"It's in her handwriting," he said stubbornly.

"Of course it is. 'The hand is the hand of Esau, but the voice is the voice of Jacob,'" I said, though I wasn't sure whether the quotation was

exactly appropriate. “Emmeline composed that letter and made Prissy copy it out. I know that as well as if I’d seen her do it, and you ought to have known it, too.”

“If I thought that I’d show Emmeline I could get Prissy in spite of her,” said Stephen savagely. “But if Prissy doesn’t want me I’m not going to force my attentions on her.”

Well, we talked it over a bit, and in the end I agreed to sound Prissy, and find out what she really thought about it. I didn’t think it would be hard to do; and it wasn’t. I went over the very next day because I saw Emmeline driving off to the store. I found Prissy alone, sewing carpet rags. Emmeline kept her constantly at that — because Prissy hated it I suppose. Prissy was crying when I went in, and in a few minutes I had the whole story.

Prissy wanted to get married — and she wanted to get married to Stephen — and Emmeline wouldn’t let her.

“Prissy Strong,” I said in exasperation, “you haven’t the spirit of a mouse! Why on earth did you write him such a letter?”

“Why, Emmeline made me,” said Prissy, as if there couldn’t be any appeal from that; and I knew there couldn’t — for Prissy. I also knew that if Stephen wanted to see Prissy again Emmeline must know nothing of it, and I told him so when he came down the next evening — to borrow a hoe, he said. It was a long way to come for a hoe.

“Then what am I to do?” he said. “It wouldn’t be any use to write, for it would likely fall into Emmeline’s hands. She won’t let Prissy go anywhere alone after this, and how am I to know when the old cat is away?”

“Please don’t insult cats,” I said. “I’ll tell you what we’ll do. You can see the ventilator on our barn from your place, can’t you? You’d be able to make out a flag or something tied to it, wouldn’t you, through that spyglass of yours?”

Stephen thought he could.

“Well, you take a squint at it every now and then,” I said. “Just as soon as Emmeline leaves Prissy alone I’ll hoist the signal.”

The chance didn't come for a whole fortnight. Then, one evening, I saw Emmeline striding over the field below our house. As soon as she was out of sight I ran through the birch grove to Prissy.

"Yes, Em'line's gone to sit up with Jane Lawson tonight," said Prissy, all fluttered and trembling.

"Then you put on your muslin dress and fix your hair," I said. "I'm going home to get Thomas to tie something to that ventilator."

But do you think Thomas would do it? Not he. He said he owed something to his position as elder in the church. In the end I had to do it myself, though I don't like climbing ladders. I tied Thomas' long red woollen scarf to the ventilator, and prayed that Stephen would see it. He did, for in less than an hour he drove down our lane and put his horse in our barn. He was all spruced up, and as nervous and excited as a schoolboy. He went right over to Prissy, and I began to tuft my new comfort with a clear conscience. I shall never know why it suddenly came into my head to go up to the garret and make sure that the moths hadn't got into my box of blankets; but I always believed that it was a special interposition of Providence. I went up and happened to look out of the east window; and there I saw Emmeline Strong coming home across our pond field.

I just flew down those garret stairs and out through the birches. I burst into the Strong kitchen, where Stephen and Prissy were sitting as cozy as you please.

"Stephen, come quick! Emmeline's nearly here," I cried.

Prissy looked out of the window and wrung her hands.

"Oh, she's in the lane now," she gasped. "He can't get out of the house without her seeing him. Oh, Rosanna, what shall we do?"

I really don't know what would have become of those two people if I hadn't been in existence to find ideas for them.

"Take Stephen up to the garret and hide him there, Prissy," I said firmly, "and take him quick."

Prissy took him quick, but she had barely time to get back to the kitchen before Emmeline marched in — mad as a wet hen because

somebody had been ahead of her offering to sit up with Jane Lawson, and so she lost the chance of poking and prying into things while Jane was asleep. The minute she clapped eyes on Prissy she suspected something. It wasn't any wonder, for there was Prissy, all dressed up, with flushed cheeks and shining eyes. She was all in a quiver of excitement, and looked ten years younger.

"Priscilla Strong, you've been expecting Stephen Clark here this evening!" burst out Emmeline. "You wicked, deceitful, underhanded, ungrateful creature!"

And she went on storming at Prissy, who began to cry, and looked so weak and babyish that I was frightened she would betray the whole thing.

"This is between you and Prissy, Emmeline," I struck in, "and I'm not going to interfere. But I want to get you to come over and show me how to tuft my comfort that new pattern you learned in Avonlea, and as it had better be done before dark I wish you'd come right away."

"I s'pose I'll go," said Emmeline ungraciously, "but Priscilla shall come, too, for I see that she isn't to be trusted out of my sight after this."

I hoped Stephen would see us from the garret window and make good his escape. But I didn't dare trust to chance, so when I got Emmeline safely to work on my comfort I excused myself and slipped out. Luckily my kitchen was on the off side of the house, but I was a nervous woman as I rushed across to the Strong place and dashed up Emmeline's garret stairs to Stephen. It was fortunate I had come, for he didn't know we had gone. Prissy had hidden him behind the loom and he didn't dare move for fear Emmeline would hear him on that creaky floor. He was a sight with cobwebs.

I got him down and smuggled him into our barn, and he stayed there until it was dark and the Strong girls had gone home. Emmeline began to rage at Prissy the moment they were outside my door.

Then Stephen came in and we talked things over. He and Prissy had made good use of their time, short as it had been. Prissy had promised to marry him, and all that remained was to get the ceremony performed.

“And that will be no easy matter,” I warned him. “Now that Emmeline’s suspicions are aroused she’ll never let Prissy out of her sight until you’re married to another woman, if it’s years. I know Emmeline Strong. And I know Prissy. If it was any other girl in the world she’d run away, or manage it somehow, but Prissy never will. She’s too much in the habit of obeying Emmeline. You’ll have an obedient wife, Stephen — if you ever get her.”

Stephen looked as if he thought that wouldn’t be any drawback. Gossip said that Althea had been pretty bossy. I don’t know. Maybe it was so.

“Can’t you suggest something, Rosanna?” he implored. “You’ve helped us so far, and I’ll never forget it.”

“The only thing I can think of is for you to have the license ready, and speak to Mr. Leonard, and keep an eye on our ventilator,” I said. “I’ll watch here and signal whenever there’s an opening.”

Well, I watched and Stephen watched, and Mr. Leonard was in the plot, too. Prissy was always a favourite of his, and he would have been more than human, saint as he is, if he’d had any love for Emmeline, after the way she was always trying to brew up strife in the church.

But Emmeline was a match for us all. She never let Prissy out of her sight. Everywhere she went she toted Prissy, too. When a month had gone by, I was almost in despair. Mr. Leonard had to leave for the Assembly in another week and Stephen’s neighbours were beginning to talk about him. They said that a man who spent all his time hanging around the yard with a spyglass, and trusting everything to a hired boy, couldn’t be altogether right in his mind.

I could hardly believe my eyes when I saw Emmeline driving away one day alone. As soon as she was out of sight I whisked over, and Anne Shirley and Diana Barry went with me.

They were visiting me that afternoon. Diana’s mother was my second cousin, and, as we visited back and forth frequently, I’d often seen Diana. But I’d never seen her chum, Anne Shirley, although I’d heard enough about her to drive anyone frantic with curiosity. So when she came home

from Redmond College that summer I asked Diana to take pity on me and bring her over some afternoon.

I wasn't disappointed in her. I considered her a beauty, though some people couldn't see it. She had the most magnificent red hair and the biggest, shiningest eyes I ever saw in a girl's head. As for her laugh, it made me feel young again to hear it. She and Diana both laughed enough that afternoon, for I told them, under solemn promise of secrecy, all about poor Prissy's love affair. So nothing would do them but they must go over with me.

The appearance of the house amazed me. All the shutters were closed and the door locked. I knocked and knocked, but there was no answer. Then I walked around the house to the only window that hadn't shutters — a tiny one upstairs. I knew it was the window in the closet off the room where the girls slept. I stopped under it and called Prissy. Before long Prissy came and opened it. She was so pale and woebegone looking that I pitied her with all my heart.

"Prissy, where has Emmeline gone?" I asked.

"Down to Avonlea to see the Roger Pyes. They're sick with measles, and Emmeline couldn't take me because I've never had measles."

Poor Prissy! She had never had anything a body ought to have.

"Then you just come and unfasten a shutter, and come right over to my house," I said exultantly. "We'll have Stephen and the minister here in no time."

"I can't — Em'line has locked me in here," said Prissy woefully.

I was posed. No living mortal bigger than a baby could have got in or out of that closet window.

"Well," I said finally, "I'll put the signal up for Stephen anyhow, and we'll see what can be done when he gets here."

I didn't know how I was ever to get the signal up on that ventilator, for it was one of the days I take dizzy spells; and if I took one up on the ladder there'd probably be a funeral instead of a wedding. But Anne Shirley said she'd put it up for me, and she did. I had never seen that girl before, and

I've never seen her since, but it's my opinion that there wasn't much she couldn't do if she made up her mind to do it.

Stephen wasn't long in getting there and he brought the minister with him. Then we all, including Thomas — who was beginning to get interested in the affair in spite of himself — went over and held council of war beneath the closet window.

Thomas suggested breaking in doors and carrying Prissy off boldly, but I could see that Mr. Leonard looked very dubious over that, and even Stephen said he thought it could only be done as a last resort. I agreed with him. I knew Emmeline Strong would bring an action against him for housebreaking as likely as not. She'd be so furious she'd stick at nothing if we gave her any excuse. Then Anne Shirley, who couldn't have been more excited if she was getting married herself, came to the rescue again.

"Couldn't you put a ladder up to the closet window," she said, "And Mr. Clark can go up it and they can be married there. Can't they, Mr. Leonard?"

Mr. Leonard agreed that they could. He was always the most saintly looking man, but I know I saw a twinkle in his eye.

"Thomas, go over and bring our little ladder over here," I said.

Thomas forgot he was an elder, and he brought the ladder as quick as it was possible for a fat man to do it. After all it was too short to reach the window, but there was no time to go for another. Stephen went up to the top of it, and he reached up and Prissy reached down, and they could just barely clasp hands so. I shall never forget the look of Prissy. The window was so small she could only get her head and one arm out of it. Besides, she was almost frightened to death.

Mr. Leonard stood at the foot of the ladder and married them. As a rule, he makes a very long and solemn thing of the marriage ceremony, but this time he cut out everything that wasn't absolutely necessary; and it was well that he did, for just as he pronounced them man and wife, Emmeline drove into the lane.

She knew perfectly well what had happened when she saw the minister with his blue book in his hand. Never a word said she. She marched to the

front door, unlocked it, and strode upstairs. I've always been convinced it was a mercy that closet window was so small, or I believe that she would have thrown Prissy out of it. As it was, she walked her downstairs by the arm and actually flung her at Stephen.

"There, take your wife," she said, "and I'll pack up every stitch she owns and send it after her; and I never want to see her or you again as long as I live."

Then she turned to me and Thomas.

"As for you that have aided and abetted that weakminded fool in this, take yourselves out of my yard and never darken my door again."

"Goodness, who wants to, you old spitfire?" said Thomas.

It wasn't just the thing for him to say, perhaps, but we are all human, even elders.

The girls didn't escape. Emmeline looked daggers at them.

"This will be something for you to carry back to Avonlea," she said. "You gossips down there will have enough to talk about for a spell. That's all you ever go out of Avonlea for — just to fetch and carry tales."

Finally she finished up with the minister.

"I'm going to the Baptist church in Spencervale after this," she said. Her tone and look said a hundred other things. She whirled into the house and slammed the door.

Mr. Leonard looked around on us with a pitying smile as Stephen put poor, half-fainting Prissy into the buggy.

"I am very sorry," he said in that gently, saintly way of his, "for the Baptists."

The Miracle at Carmody

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Salome looked out of the kitchen window, and a pucker of distress appeared on her smooth forehead.

“Dear, dear, what has Lionel Hezekiah been doing now?” she murmured anxiously.

Involuntarily she reached out for her crutch; but it was a little beyond her reach, having fallen on the floor, and without it Salome could not move a step.

“Well, anyway, Judith is bringing him in as fast as she can,” she reflected. “He must have been up to something terrible this time; for she looks very cross, and she never walks like that unless she is angry clear through. Dear me, I am sometimes tempted to think that Judith and I made a mistake in adopting the child. I suppose two old maids don’t know much about bringing up a boy properly. But he is NOT a bad child, and it really seems to me that there must be some way of making him behave better if we only knew what it was.”

Salome’s monologue was cut short by the entrance of her sister Judith, holding Lionel Hezekiah by his chubby wrist with a determined grip.

Judith Marsh was ten years older than Salome, and the two women were as different in appearance as night and day. Salome, in spite of her thirty-five years, looked almost girlish. She was small and pink and flowerlike, with little rings of pale golden hair clustering all over her head in a most unspinster-like fashion, and her eyes were big and blue, and mild as a dove’s. Her face was perhaps a weak one, but it was very sweet and appealing.

Judith Marsh was tall and dark, with a plain, tragic face and iron-gray hair. Her eyes were black and sombre, and every feature bespoke unyielding will and determination. Just now she looked, as Salome had said, “angry clear through,” and the baleful glances she cast on the small

mortal she held would have withered a more hardened criminal than six happy-go-lucky years had made of Lionel Hezekiah.

Lionel Hezekiah, whatever his shortcomings, did not look bad. Indeed, he was as engaging an urchin as ever beamed out on a jolly good world through a pair of big, velvet-brown eyes. He was chubby and firm-limbed, with a mop of beautiful golden curls, which were the despair of his heart and the pride and joy of Salome's; and his round face was usually a lurking-place for dimples and smiles and sunshine.

But just now Lionel Hezekiah was under a blight; he had been caught red-handed in guilt, and was feeling much ashamed of himself. He hung his head and squirmed his toes under the mournful reproach in Salome's eyes. When Salome looked at him like that, Lionel Hezekiah always felt that he was paying more for his fun than it was worth.

"What do you suppose I caught him doing this time?" demanded Judith.

"I — I don't know," faltered Salome.

"Firing — at — a — mark — on — the — henhouse — door — with — new-laid — eggs," said Judith with measured distinctness. "He has broken every egg that was laid to-day except three. And as for the state of that henhouse door—"

Judith paused, with an indignant gesture meant to convey that the state of the henhouse door must be left to Salome's imagination, since the English language was not capable of depicting it.

"O Lionel Hezekiah, why will you do such things?" said Salome miserably.

"I — didn't know it was wrong," said Lionel Hezekiah, bursting into prompt tears. "I — I thought it would be bully fun. Seems's if everything what's fun 's wrong."

Salome's heart was not proof against tears, as Lionel Hezekiah very well knew. She put her arm about the sobbing culprit, and drew him to her side.

"He didn't know it was wrong," she said defiantly to Judith.

“He’s got to be taught, then,” was Judith’s retort. “No, you needn’t try to beg him off, Salome. He shall go right to bed without supper, and stay there till tomorrow morning.”

“Oh! not without his supper,” entreated Salome. “You — you won’t improve the child’s morals by injuring his stomach, Judith.”

“Without his supper, I say,” repeated Judith inexorably. “Lionel Hezekiah, go upstairs to the south room, and go to bed at once.”

Lionel Hezekiah went upstairs, and went to bed at once. He was never sulky or disobedient. Salome listened to him as he stumped patiently upstairs with a sob at every step, and her own eyes filled with tears.

“Now don’t for pity’s sake go crying, Salome,” said Judith irritably. “I think I’ve let him off very easily. He is enough to try the patience of a saint, and I never was that,” she added with entire truth.

“But he isn’t bad,” pleaded Salome. “You know he never does anything the second time after he has been told it was wrong, never.”

“What good does that do when he is certain to do something new and twice as bad? I never saw anything like him for originating ideas of mischief. Just look at what he has done in the past fortnight — in one fortnight, Salome. He brought in a live snake, and nearly frightened you into fits; he drank up a bottle of liniment, and almost poisoned himself; he took three toads to bed with him; he climbed into the henhouse loft, and fell through on a hen and killed her; he painted his face all over with your water-colours; and now comes THIS exploit. And eggs at twenty-eight cents a dozen! I tell you, Salome, Lionel Hezekiah is an expensive luxury.”

“But we couldn’t do without him,” protested Salome.

“I could. But as you can’t, or think you can’t, we’ll have to keep him, I suppose. But the only way to secure any peace of mind for ourselves, as far as I can see, is to tether him in the yard, and hire somebody to watch him.”

“There must be some way of managing him,” said Salome desperately. She thought Judith was in earnest about the tethering. Judith was generally so terribly in earnest in all she said. “Perhaps it is because he has no other

employment that he invents so many unheard-of things. If he had anything to occupy himself with — perhaps if we sent him to school—”

“He’s too young to go to school. Father always said that no child should go to school until it was seven, and I don’t mean Lionel Hezekiah shall. Well, I’m going to take a pail of hot water and a brush, and see what I can do to that henhouse door. I’ve got my afternoon’s work cut out for me.”

Judith stood Salome’s crutch up beside her, and departed to purify the henhouse door. As soon as she was safely out of the way, Salome took her crutch, and limped slowly and painfully to the foot of the stairs. She could not go up and comfort Lionel Hezekiah as she yearned to do, which was the reason Judith had sent him upstairs. Salome had not been upstairs for fifteen years. Neither did she dare to call him out on the landing, lest Judith return. Besides, of course he must be punished; he had been very naughty.

“But I wish I could smuggle a bit of supper up to him,” she mused, sitting down on the lowest step and listening. “I don’t hear a sound. I suppose he has cried himself to sleep, poor, dear baby. He certainly is dreadfully mischievous; but it seems to me that it shows an investigating turn of mind, and if it could only be directed into the proper channels — I wish Judith would let me have a talk with Mr. Leonard about Lionel Hezekiah. I wish Judith didn’t hate ministers so. I don’t mind so much her not letting me go to church, because I’m so lame that it would be painful anyhow; but I’d like to talk with Mr. Leonard now and then about some things. I can never believe that Judith and father were right; I am sure they were not. There is a God, and I’m afraid it’s terribly wicked not to go to church. But there, nothing short of a miracle would convince Judith; so there is no use in thinking about it. Yes, Lionel Hezekiah must have gone to sleep.”

Salome pictured him so, with his long, curling lashes brushing his rosy, tearstained cheek and his chubby fists clasped tightly over his breast as was his habit; her heart grew warm and thrilling with the maternity the picture provoked.

A year previously Lionel Hezekiah's parents, Abner and Martha Smith, had died, leaving a houseful of children and very little else. The children were adopted into various Carmody families, and Salome Marsh had amazed Judith by asking to be allowed to take the five-year-old "baby." At first Judith had laughed at the idea; but, when she found that Salome was in earnest, she yielded. Judith always gave Salome her own way except on one point.

"If you want the child, I suppose you must have him," she said finally. "I wish he had a civilized name, though. Hezekiah is bad, and Lionel is worse; but the two in combination, and tacked on to Smith at that, is something that only Martha Smith could have invented. Her judgment was the same clear through, from selecting husbands to names."

So Lionel Hezekiah came into Judith's home and Salome's heart. The latter was permitted to love him all she pleased, but Judith overlooked his training with a critical eye. Possibly it was just as well, for Salome might otherwise have ruined him with indulgence. Salome, who always adopted Judith's opinions, no matter how ill they fitted her, deferred to the former's decrees meekly, and suffered far more than Lionel Hezekiah when he was punished.

She sat on the stairs until she fell asleep herself, her head pillowed on her arm. Judith found her there when she came in, severe and triumphant, from her bout with the henhouse door. Her face softened into marvelous tenderness as she looked at Salome.

"She's nothing but a child herself in spite of her age," she thought pityingly. "A child that's had her whole life thwarted and spoiled through no fault of her own. And yet folks say there is a God who is kind and good! If there is a God, he is a cruel, jealous tyrant, and I hate Him!"

Judith's eyes were bitter and vindictive. She thought she had many grievances against the great Power that rules the universe, but the most intense was Salome's helplessness — Salome, who fifteen years before had been the brightest, happiest of maidens, light of heart and foot, bubbling over with harmless, sparkling mirth and life. If Salome could

only walk like other women, Judith told herself that she would not hate the great tyrannical Power.

Lionel Hezekiah was subdued and angelic for four days after that affair of the henhouse door. Then he broke out in a new place. One afternoon he came in sobbing, with his golden curls full of burrs. Judith was not in, but Salome dropped her crochet-work and gazed at him in dismay.

“Oh, Lionel Hezekiah, what have you gone and done now?”

“I — I just stuck the burrs in ‘cause I was playing I was a heathen chief,” sobbed Lionel Hezekiah. “It was great fun while it lasted; but, when I tried to take them out, it hurt awful.”

Neither Salome nor Lionel Hezekiah ever forgot the harrowing hour that followed. With the aid of comb and scissors, Salome eventually got the burrs out of Lionel Hezekiah’s crop of curls. It would be impossible to decide which of them suffered more in the process. Salome cried as hard as Lionel Hezekiah did, and every snip of the scissors or tug at the silken floss cut into her heart. She was almost exhausted when the performance was over; but she took the tired Lionel Hezekiah on her knee, and laid her wet cheek against his shining head.

“Oh, Lionel Hezekiah, what does make you get into mischief so constantly?” she sighed.

Lionel Hezekiah frowned reflectively.

“I don’t know,” he finally announced, “unless it’s because you don’t send me to Sunday school.”

Salome started as if an electric shock had passed through her frail body.

“Why, Lionel Hezekiah,” she stammered, “what put such an idea into your head?”

“Well, all the other boys go,” said Lionel Hezekiah defiantly; “and they’re all better’n me; so I guess that must be the reason. Teddy Markham says that all little boys should go to Sunday school, and that if they don’t they’re sure to go to the bad place. I don’t see how you can ‘spect me to behave well when you won’t send me to Sunday school.

“Would you like to go?” asked Salome, almost in a whisper.

“I’d like it bully,” said Lionel Hezekiah frankly and succinctly.

“Oh, don’t use such dreadful words,” sighed Salome helplessly. “I’ll see what can be done. Perhaps you can go. I’ll ask your Aunt Judith.”

“Oh, Aunt Judith won’t let me go,” said Lionel Hezekiah despondingly. “Aunt Judith doesn’t believe there is any God or any bad place. Teddy Markham says she doesn’t. He says she’s an awful wicked woman ‘cause she never goes to church. So you must be wicked too, Aunt Salome, ‘cause you never go. Why don’t you?”

“Your — your Aunt Judith won’t let me go,” faltered Salome, more perplexed than she had ever been before in her life.

“Well, it doesn’t seem to me that you have much fun on Sundays,” remarked Lionel Hezekiah ponderingly. “I’d have more if I was you. But I s’pose you can’t ‘cause you’re ladies. I’m glad I’m a man. Look at Abel Blair, what splendid times he has on Sundays. He never goes to church, but he goes fishing, and has cock-fights, and gets drunk. When I grow up, I’m going to do that on Sundays too, since I won’t be going to church. I don’t want to go to church, but I’d like to go to Sunday school.”

Salome listened in agony. Every word of Lionel Hezekiah’s stung her conscience unbearably. So this was the result of her weak yielding to Judith; this innocent child looked upon her as a wicked woman, and, worse still, regarded old, depraved Abel Blair as a model to be imitated. Oh! was it too late to undo the evil? When Judith returned, Salome blurted out the whole story. “Lionel Hezekiah must go to Sunday school,” she concluded appealingly.

Judith’s face hardened until it was as if cut in stone.

“No, he shall not,” she said stubbornly. “No one living in my household shall ever go to church or Sunday school. I gave in to you when you wanted to teach him to say his prayers, though I knew it was only foolish superstition, but I sha’n’t yield another inch. You know exactly how I feel on this subject, Salome; I believe just as father did. You know he hated churches and churchgoing. And was there ever a better, kinder, more lovable man?”

“Mother believed in God; mother always went to church,” pleaded Salome.

“Mother was weak and superstitious, just as you are,” retorted Judith inflexibly. “I tell you, Salome, I don’t believe there is a God. But, if there is, He is cruel and unjust, and I hate Him.”

“Judith!” gasped Salome, aghast at the impiety. She half expected to see her sister struck dead at her feet.

“Don’t ‘Judith’ me!” said Judith passionately, in the strange anger that any discussion of the subject always roused in her. “I mean every word I say. Before you got lame I didn’t feel much about it one way or another; I’d just as soon have gone with mother as with father. But, when you were struck down like that, I knew father was right.”

For a moment Salome quailed. She felt that she could not, dare not, stand out against Judith. For her own sake she could not have done so, but the thought of Lionel Hezekiah nerved her to desperation. She struck her thin, bleached little hands wildly together.

“Judith, I’m going to church tomorrow,” she cried. “I tell you I am, I won’t set Lionel Hezekiah a bad example one day longer. I’ll not take him; I won’t go against you in that, for it is your bounty feeds and clothes him; but I’m going myself.”

“If you do, Salome Marsh, I’ll never forgive you,” said Judith, her harsh face dark with anger; and then, not trusting herself to discuss the subject any longer, she went out.

Salome dissolved into her ready tears, and cried most of the night. But her resolution did not fail. Go to church she would, for that dear baby’s sake.

Judith would not speak to her at breakfast, and this almost broke Salome’s heart; but she dared not yield. After breakfast, she limped painfully into her room, and still more painfully dressed herself. When she was ready, she took a little old worn Bible out of her box. It had been her mother’s, and Salome read a chapter in it every night, although she never dared to let Judith see her doing it.

When she limped out into the kitchen, Judith looked up with a hard face. A flame of sullen anger glowed in her dark eyes, and she went into the sitting-room and shut the door, as if by that act she were shutting her sister for evermore out of her heart and life. Salome, strung up to the last pitch of nervous tension, felt intuitively the significance of that closed door. For a moment she wavered — oh, she could not go against Judith! She was all but turning back to her room when Lionel Hezekiah came running in, and paused to look at her admiringly.

“You look just bully, Aunt Salome,” he said. “Where are you going?”

“Don’t use that word, Lionel Hezekiah,” pleaded Salome. “I’m going to church.”

“Take me with you,” said Lionel Hezekiah promptly. Salome shook her head.

“I can’t, dear. Your Aunt Judith wouldn’t like it. Perhaps she will let you go after a while. Now do be a good boy while I am away, won’t you? Don’t do any naughty things.” “I won’t do them if I know they’re naughty,” conceded Lionel Hezekiah. “But that’s just the trouble; I don’t know what’s naughty and what ain’t. Prob’ly if I went to Sunday school I’d find out.”

Salome limped out of the yard and down the lane bordered by its asters and goldenrod. Fortunately the church was just outside the lane, across the main road; but Salome found it hard to cover even that short distance. She felt almost exhausted when she reached the church and toiled painfully up the aisle to her mother’s old pew. She laid her crutch on the seat, and sank into the corner by the window with a sigh of relief.

She had elected to come early so that she might get there before the rest of the people. The church was as yet empty, save for a class of Sunday school children and their teacher in a remote corner, who paused midway in their lesson to stare with amazement at the astonishing sight of Salome Marsh limping into church.

The big building, shadowy from the great elms around it, was very still. A faint murmur came from the closed room behind the pulpit where the rest of the Sunday school was assembled. In front of the pulpit was a

stand bearing tall white geraniums in luxuriant blossom. The light fell through the stained-glass window in a soft tangle of hues upon the floor. Salome felt a sense of peace and happiness fill her heart. Even Judith's anger lost its importance. She leaned her head against the windowsill, and gave herself up to the flood of tender old recollections that swept over her.

Memory went back to the years of her childhood when she had sat in this pew every Sunday with her mother. Judith had come then, too, always seeming grown up to Salome by reason of her ten years' seniority. Her tall, dark, reserved father never came. Salome knew that the Carmody people called him an infidel, and looked upon him as a very wicked man. But he had not been wicked; he had been good and kind in his own odd way.

The gently little mother had died when Salome was ten years old, but so loving and tender was Judith's care that the child did not miss anything out of her life. Judith Marsh loved her little sister with an intensity that was maternal. She herself was a plain, repellent girl, liked by few, sought after by no man; but she was determined that Salome should have everything that she had missed — admiration, friendship, love. She would have a vicarious youth in Salome's.

All went according to Judith's planning until Salome was eighteen, and then trouble after trouble came. Their father, whom Judith had understood and passionately loved, died; Salome's young lover was killed in a railroad accident; and finally Salome herself developed symptoms of the hip-disease which, springing from a trifling injury, eventually left her a cripple. Everything possible was done for her. Judith, falling heir to a snug little fortune by the death of the old aunt for whom she was named, spared nothing to obtain the best medical skill, and in vain. One and all, the great doctors failed.

Judith had borne her father's death bravely enough in spite of her agony of grief; she had watched her sister pining and fading with the pain of her broken heart without growing bitter; but when she knew at last that Salome would never walk again save as she hobbled painfully about on her crutch, the smouldering revolt in her soul broke its bounds, and overflowed her nature in a passionate rebellion against the Being who had

sent, or had failed to prevent, these calamities. She did not rave or denounce wildly; that was not Judith's way; but she never went to church again, and it soon became an accepted fact in Carmody that Judith Marsh was as rank an infidel as her father had been before her; nay, worse, since she would not even allow Salome to go to church, and shut the door in the minister's face when he went to see her.

"I should have stood out against her for conscience' sake," reflected Salome in her pew self-reproachfully. "But, O dear, I'm afraid she'll never forgive me, and how can I live if she doesn't? But I must endure it for Lionel Hezekiah's sake; my weakness has perhaps done him great harm already. They say that what a child learns in the first seven years never leaves him; so Lionel Hezekiah has only another year to get set right about these things. Oh, if I've left it till too late!"

When the people began to come in, Salome felt painfully the curious glances directed at her. Look where she would, she met them, unless she looked out of the window; so out of the window she did look unswervingly, her delicate little face burning crimson with self-consciousness. She could see her home and its back yard plainly, with Lionel Hezekiah making mud-pies joyfully in the corner. Presently she saw Judith come out of the house and stride away to the pine wood behind it. Judith always betook herself to the pines in time of mental stress and strain.

Salome could see the sunlight shining on Lionel Hezekiah's bare head as he mixed his pies. In the pleasure of watching him she forgot where she was and the curious eyes turned on her.

Suddenly Lionel Hezekiah ceased concocting pies, and betook himself to the corner of the summer kitchen, where he proceeded to climb up to the top of the storm-fence and from there to mount the sloping kitchen roof. Salome clasped her hands in agony. What if the child should fall? Oh! why had Judith gone away and left him alone? What if — what if — and then, while her brain with lightning-like rapidity pictured forth a dozen possible catastrophes, something really did happen. Lionel Hezekiah slipped, sprawled wildly, slid down, and fell off the roof, in a bewildering whirl of arms and legs, plump into the big rainwater hogshead

under the spout, which was generally full to the brim with rainwater, a hogshead big and deep enough to swallow up half a dozen small boys who went climbing kitchen roofs on a Sunday.

Then something took place that is talked of in Carmody to this day, and even fiercely wrangled over, so many and conflicting are the opinions on the subject. Salome Marsh, who had not walked a step without assistance for fifteen years, suddenly sprang to her feet with a shriek, ran down the aisle, and out of the door!

Every man, woman, and child in the Carmody church followed her, even to the minister, who had just announced his text. When they got out, Salome was already halfway up her lane, running wildly. In her heart was room for but one agonized thought. Would Lionel Hezekiah be drowned before she reached him?

She opened the gate of the yard, and panted across it just as a tall, grim-faced woman came around the corner of the house and stood rooted to the ground in astonishment at the sight that met her eyes.

But Salome saw nobody. She flung herself against the hogshead and looked in, sick with terror at what she might see. What she did see was Lionel Hezekiah sitting on the bottom of the hogshead in water that came only to his waist. He was looking rather dazed and bewildered, but was apparently quite uninjured.

The yard was full of people, but nobody had as yet said a word; awe and wonder held everybody in spellbound silence. Judith was the first to speak. She pushed through the crowd to Salome. Her face was blanched to a deadly whiteness; and her eyes, as Mrs. William Blair afterwards declared, were enough to give a body the creeps.

“Salome,” she said in a high, shrill, unnatural voice, “where is your crutch?”

Salome came to herself at the question. For the first time, she realized that she had walked, nay, run, all that distance from the church alone and unaided. She turned pale, swayed, and would have fallen if Judith had not caught her.

Old Dr. Blair came forward briskly.

“Carry her in,” he said, “and don’t all of you come crowding in, either. She wants quiet and rest for a spell.”

Most of the people obediently returned to the church, their sudden loosened tongues clattering in voluble excitement. A few women assisted Judith to carry Salome in and lay her on the kitchen lounge, followed by the doctor and the dripping Lionel Hezekiah, whom the minister had lifted out of the hogshead and to whom nobody now paid the slightest attention.

Salome faltered out her story, and her hearers listened with varying emotions.

“It’s a miracle,” said Sam Lawson in an awed voice.

Dr. Blair shrugged his shoulders. “There is no miracle about it,” he said bluntly. “It’s all perfectly natural. The disease in the hip has evidently been quite well for a long time; Nature does sometimes work cures like that when she is let alone. The trouble was that the muscles were paralyzed by long disuse. That paralysis was overcome by the force of a strong and instinctive effort. Salome, get up and walk across the kitchen.”

Salome obeyed. She walked across the kitchen and back, slowly, stiffly, falteringly, now that the stimulus of frantic fear was spent; but still she walked. The doctor nodded his satisfaction.

“Keep that up every day. Walk as much as you can without tiring yourself, and you’ll soon be as spry as ever. No more need of crutches for you, but there’s no miracle in the case.”

Judith Marsh turned to him. She had not spoken a word since her question concerning Salome’s crutch. Now she said passionately:

“It WAS a miracle. God has worked it to prove His existence for me, and I accept the proof.”

The old doctor shrugged his shoulders again. Being a wise man, he knew when to hold his tongue.

“Well, put Salome to bed, and let her sleep the rest of the day. She’s worn out. And for pity’s sake let some one take that poor child and put some dry clothes on him before he catches his death of cold.”

That evening, as Salome Marsh lay in her bed in a glory of sunset light, her heart filled with unutterable gratitude and happiness, Judith

came into the room. She wore her best hat and dress, and she held Lionel Hezekiah by the hand. Lionel Hezekiah's beaming face was scrubbed clean, and his curls fell in beautiful sleekness over the lace collar of his velvet suit.

“How do you feel now, Salome?” asked Judith gently.

“Better. I've had a lovely sleep. But where are you going, Judith?”

“I am going to church,” said Judith firmly, “and I am going to take Lionel Hezekiah with me.”

The End of a Quarrel

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Nancy Rogerson sat down on Louisa Shaw's front doorstep and looked about her, drawing a long breath of delight that seemed tinged with pain. Everything was very much the same; the square garden was as charming bodge-podge of fruit and flowers, and gooseberry bushes and tiger lilies, a gnarled old apple tree sticking up here and there, and a thick cherry copse at the foot. Behind was a row of pointed firs, coming out darkly against the swimming pink sunset sky, not looking a day older than they had looked twenty years ago, when Nancy had been a young girl walking and dreaming in their shadows. The old willow to the left was as big and sweeping and, Nancy thought with a little shudder, probably as caterpillary, as ever. Nancy had learned many things in her twenty years of exile from Avonlea, but she had never learned to conquer her dread of caterpillars.

"Nothing is much changed, Louisa," she said, propping her chin on her plump white hands, and sniffing at the delectable odour of the bruised mint upon which Louisa was trampling. "I'm glad; I was afraid to come back for fear you would have improved the old garden out of existence, or else into some prim, orderly lawn, which would have been worse. It's as magnificently untidy as ever, and the fence still wobbles. It CAN'T be the same fence, but it looks exactly like it. No, nothing is much changed. Thank you, Louisa."

Louisa had not the faintest idea what Nancy was thanking her for, but then she had never been able to fathom Nancy, much as she had always liked her in the old girlhood days that now seemed much further away to Louisa than they did to Nancy. Louisa was separated from them by the fulness of wifhood and motherhood, while Nancy looked back only over the narrow gap that empty years make.

“You haven’t changed much yourself, Nancy,” she said, looking admiringly at Nancy’s trim figure, in the nurse’s uniform she had donned to show Louisa what it was like, her firm, pink-and-white face and the the glossy waves of her golden brown hair. “You’ve held your own wonderfully well.”

“Haven’t I?” said Nancy complacently. “Modern methods of massage and cold cream have kept away the crowsfeet, and fortunately I had the Rogerson complexion to start with. You wouldn’t think I was really thirty-eight, would you? Thirty-eight! Twenty years ago I thought anybody who was thirty-eight was a perfect female Methuselah. And now I feel so horribly, ridiculously young, Louisa. Every morning when I get up I have to say solemnly to myself three times, ‘You’re an old maid, Nancy Rogerson,’ to tone myself down to anything like a becoming attitude for the day.”

“I guess you don’t mind being an old maid much,” said Louisa, shrugging her shoulders. She would not have been an old maid herself for anything; yet she inconsistently envied Nancy her freedom, her wide life in the world, her unlined brow, and carefree lightness of spirit.

“Oh, but I do mind,” said Nancy frankly. “I hate being an old maid.”

“Why don’t you get married, then?” asked Louisa, paying an unconscious tribute to Nancy’s perennial chance by her use of the present tense.

Nancy shook her head.

“No, that wouldn’t suit me either. I don’t want to be married. Do you remember that story Anne Shirley used to tell long ago of the pupil who wanted to be a widow because ‘if you were married your husband bossed you and if you weren’t married people called you an old maid?’ Well, that is precisely my opinion. I’d like to be a widow. Then I’d have the freedom of the unmarried, with the kudos of the married. I could eat my cake and have it, too. Oh, to be a widow!”

“Nancy!” said Louisa in a shocked tone.

Nancy laughed, a mellow gurgle that rippled through the garden like a brook.

“Oh, Louisa, I can shock you yet. That was just how you used to say ‘Nancy’ long ago, as if I’d broken all the commandments at once.”

“You do say such queer things,” protested Louisa, “and half the time I don’t know what you mean.”

“Bless you, dear coz, half the time I don’t myself. Perhaps the joy of coming back to the old spot has slightly turned my brain, I’ve found my lost girlhood here. I’m NOT thirty-eight in this garden — it is a flat impossibility. I’m sweet eighteen, with a waist line two inches smaller. Look, the sun is just setting. I see he has still his old trick of throwing his last beams over the Wright farmhouse. By the way, Louisa, is Peter Wright still living there?”

“Yes.” Louisa threw a sudden interested glance at the apparently placid Nancy.

“Married, I suppose, with half a dozen children?” said Nancy indifferently, pulling up some more sprigs of mint and pinning them on her breast. Perhaps the exertion of leaning over to do it flushed her face. There was more than the Rogerson colour in it, anyhow, and Louisa, slow though her mental processes might be in some respects, thought she understood the meaning of a blush as well as the next one. All the instinct of the matchmaker flamed up in her.

“Indeed he isn’t,” she said promptly. “Peter Wright has never married. He has been faithful to your memory, Nancy.”

“Ugh! You make me feel as if I were buried up there in the Avonlea cemetery and had a monument over me with a weeping willow carved on it,” shivered Nancy. “When it is said that a man has been faithful to a woman’s memory it generally means that he couldn’t get anyone else to take him.”

“That isn’t the case with Peter,” protested Louisa. “He is a good match, and many a woman would have been glad to take him, and would yet. He’s only forty-three. But he’s never taken the slightest interest in anyone since you threw him over, Nancy.”

“But I didn’t. He threw me over,” said Nancy, plaintively, looking afar over the lowlying fields and a feathery young spruce valley to the white

buildings of the Wright farm, glowing rosily in the sunset light when all the rest of Avonlea was scarfing itself in shadows. There was laughter in her eyes. Louisa could not pierce beneath that laughter to find if there were anything under it.

“Fudge!” said Louisa. “What on earth did you and Peter quarrel about?” she added, curiously.

“I’ve often wondered,” parried Nancy.

“And you’ve never seen him since?” reflected Louisa.

“No. Has he changed much?”

“Well, some. He is gray and kind of tired-looking. But it isn’t to be wondered at — living the life he does. He hasn’t had a housekeeper for two years — not since his old aunt died. He just lives there alone and cooks his own meals. I’ve never been in the house, but folks say the disorder is something awful.”

“Yes, I shouldn’t think Peter was cut out for a tidy housekeeper,” said Nancy lightly, dragging up more mint. “Just think, Louisa, if it hadn’t been for that old quarrel I might be Mrs. Peter Wright at this very moment, mother to the aforesaid supposed half dozen, and vexing my soul over Peter’s meals and socks and cows.”

“I guess you are better off as you are,” said Louisa.

“Oh, I don’t know.” Nancy looked up at the white house on the hill again. “I have an awfully good time out of life, but it doesn’t seem to satisfy, somehow. To be candid — and oh, Louisa, candour is a rare thing among women when it comes to talking of the men — I believe I’d rather be cooking Peter’s meals and dusting his house. I wouldn’t mind his bad grammar now. I’ve learned one or two valuable little things out yonder, and one is that it doesn’t matter if a man’s grammar is askew, so long as he doesn’t swear at you. By the way, is Peter as ungrammatical as ever?”

“I — I don’t know,” said Louisa helplessly. “I never knew he WAS ungrammatical.”

“Does he still say, ‘I seen,’ and ‘them things’?” demanded Nancy.

“I never noticed,” confessed Louisa.

“Enviably Louisa! Would that I had been born with that blessed faculty of never noticing! It stands a woman in better stead than beauty or brains. I used to notice Peter’s mistakes. When he said ‘I seen,’ it jarred on me in my salad days. I tried, oh, so tactfully, to reform him in that respect. Peter didn’t like being reformed — the Wrights always had a fairly good opinion of themselves, you know. It was really over a question of syntax we quarrelled. Peter told me I’d have to take him as he was, grammar and all, or go without him. I went without him — and ever since I’ve been wondering if I were really sorry, or if it were merely a pleasantly sentimental regret I was hugging to my heart. I daresay it’s the latter. Now, Louisa, I see the beginning of the plot far down in those placid eyes of yours. Strangle it at birth, dear Louisa. There is no use in your trying to make up a match between Peter and me now — no, nor in slyly inviting him up here to tea some evening, as you are even this moment thinking of doing.”

“Well, I must go and milk the cows,” gasped Louisa, rather glad to make her escape. Nancy’s power of thought-reading struck her as uncanny. She felt afraid to remain with her cousin any longer, lest Nancy should drag to light all the secrets of her being.

Nancy sat long on the steps after Louisa had gone — sat until the night came down, darkly and sweetly, over the garden, and the stars twinkled out above the firs. This had been her home in girlhood. Here she had lived and kept house for her father. When he died, Curtis Shaw, newly married to her cousin Louisa, bought the farm from her and moved in. Nancy stayed on with them, expecting soon to go to a home of her own. She and Peter Wright were engaged.

Then came their mysterious quarrel, concerning the cause of which kith and kin on both sides were left in annoying ignorance. Of the results they were not ignorant. Nancy promptly packed up and left Avonlea seven hundred miles behind her. She went to a hospital in Montreal and studied nursing. In the twenty years that followed she had never even revisited Avonlea. Her sudden descent on it this summer was a whim born of a moment’s homesick longing for this same old garden. She had not thought

about Peter. In very truth, she had thought little about Peter for the last fifteen years. She supposed that she had forgotten him. But now, sitting on the old doorstep, where she had often sat in her courting days, with Peter lounging on a broad stone at her feet, something tugged at her heartstrings. She looked over the valley to the light in the kitchen of the Wright farmhouse, and pictured Peter sitting there, lonely and uncared for, with naught but the cold comfort of his own providing.

“Well, he should have got married,” she said snappishly. “I am not going to worry because he is a lonely old bachelor when all these years I have supposed him a comfy Benedict. Why doesn’t he hire him a housekeeper, at least? He can afford it; the place looks prosperous. Ugh! I’ve a fat bank account, and I’ve seen almost everything in the world worth seeing; but I’ve got several carefully hidden gray hairs and a horrible conviction that grammar isn’t one of the essential things in life after all. Well, I’m not going to moon out here in the dew any longer. I’m going in to read the smartest, frilliest, frothiest society novel in my trunk.”

In the week that followed Nancy enjoyed herself after her own fashion. She read and swung in the garden, having a hammock hung under the firs. She went far afield, in rambles to woods and lonely uplands.

“I like it much better than meeting people,” she said, when Louisa suggested going to see this one and that one, “especially the Avonlea people. All my old chums are gone, or hopelessly married and changed, and the young set who have come up know not Joseph, and make me feel uncomfortably middle-aged. It’s far worse to feel middle-aged than old, you know. Away there in the woods I feel as eternally young as Nature herself. And oh, it’s so nice not having to fuss with thermometers and temperatures and other people’s whims. Let me indulge my own whims, Louisa dear, and punish me with a cold bite when I come in late for meals. I’m not even going to church again. It was horrible there yesterday. The church is so offensively spick-and-span brand new and modern.”

“It’s thought to be the prettiest church in these parts,” protested Louisa, a little sorely.

“Churches shouldn’t be pretty — they should at least be fifty years old and mellowed into beauty. New churches are an abomination.”

“Did you see Peter Wright in church?” asked Louisa. She had been bursting to ask it.

Nancy nodded.

“Verily, yes. He sat right across from me in the corner pew. I didn’t think him painfully changed. Iron-gray hair becomes him. But I was horribly disappointed in myself. I had expected to feel at least a romantic thrill, but all I felt was a comfortable interest, such as I might have taken in any old friend. Do my utmost, Louisa, I couldn’t compass a thrill.”

“Did he come to speak to you?” asked Louisa, who hadn’t any idea what Nancy meant by her thrills.

“Alas, no. It wasn’t my fault. I stood at the door outside with the most amiable expression I could assume, but Peter merely sauntered away without a glance in my direction. It would be some comfort to my vanity if I could believe it was on account of rankling spite or pride. But the honest truth, dear Weezy, is that it looked to me exactly as if he never thought of it. He was more interested in talking about the hay crop with Oliver Sloane — who, by the way, is more Oliver Sloaneish than ever.”

“If you feel as you said you did the other night, why didn’t you go and speak to him?” Louisa wanted to know.

“But I don’t feel that way now. That was just a mood. You don’t know anything about moods, dearie. You don’t know what it is to yearn desperately one hour for something you wouldn’t take if it were offered you the next.”

“But that is foolishness,” protested Louisa.

“To be sure it is — rank foolishness. But oh, it is so delightful to be foolish after being compelled to be unbrokenly sensible for twenty years. Well, I’m going picking strawberries this afternoon, Lou. Don’t wait tea for me. I probably won’t be back till dark. I’ve only four more days to stay and I want to make the most of them.”

Nancy wandered far and wide in her rambles that afternoon. When she had filled her jug she still roamed about with delicious aimlessness. Once

she found herself in a wood lane skirting a field wherein a man was mowing hay. The man was Peter Wright. Nancy walked faster when she discovered this, with never a roving glance, and presently the green, ferny depths of the maple woods swallowed her up.

From old recollections, she knew that she was on Peter Morrison's land, and calculated that if she kept straight on she would come out where the old Morrison house used to be. Her calculations proved correct, with a trifling variation. She came out fifty yards south of the old deserted Morrison house, and found herself in the yard of the Wright farm!

Passing the house — the house where she had once dreamed of reigning as mistress — Nancy's curiosity overcame her. The place was not in view of any other near house. She deliberately went up to it intending — low be it spoken — to peep in at the kitchen window. But, seeing the door wide open, she went to it instead and halted on the step, looking about her keenly.

The kitchen was certainly pitiful in its disorder. The floor had apparently not been swept for a fortnight. On the bare deal table were the remnants of Peter's dinner, a meal that could not have been very tempting at its best.

"What a miserable place for a human being to live in!" groaned Nancy. "Look at the ashes on that stove! And that table! Is it any wonder that Peter has got gray? He'll work hard haymaking all the afternoon — and then come home to THIS!"

An idea suddenly darted into Nancy's brain. At first she looked aghast. Then she laughed and glanced at her watch.

"I'll do it — just for fun and a little pity. It's halfpast two, and Peter won't be home till four at the earliest. I'll have a good hour to do it in, and still make my escape in good time. Nobody will ever know; nobody can see me here."

Nancy went in, threw off her hat, and seized a broom. The first thing she did was to give the kitchen a thorough sweeping. Then she kindled a fire, put a kettle full of water on to heat, and attacked the dishes. From the

number of them she rightly concluded that Peter hadn't washed any for at least a week.

"I suppose he just uses the clean ones as long as they hold out, and then has a grand wash-up," she laughed. "I wonder where he keeps his dish-towels, if he has any."

Evidently Peter hadn't any. At least, Nancy couldn't find any. She marched boldly into the dusty sitting-room and explored the drawers of an old-fashioned sideboard, confiscating a towel she found there. As she worked, she hummed a song; her steps were light and her eyes bright with excitement. Nancy was enjoying herself thoroughly, there was no doubt of that. The spice of mischief in the adventure pleased her mightily.

The dishes washed, she hunted up a clean, but yellow and evidently long unused tablecloth out of the sideboard, and proceeded to set the table and get Peter's tea. She found bread and butter in the pantry, a trip to the cellar furnished a pitcher of cream, and Nancy recklessly heaped the contents of her strawberry jug on Peter's plate. The tea was made and set back to keep warm. And, as a finishing touch, Nancy ravaged the old neglected garden and set a huge bowl of crimson roses in the centre of the table.

"Now I must go," she said aloud. "Wouldn't it be fun to see Peter's face when he comes in, though? Ha-hum! I've enjoyed doing this — but why? Nancy Rogerson, don't be asking yourself conundrums. Put on your hat and proceed homeward, constructing on your way some reliable fib to account to Louisa for the absence of your strawberries."

Nancy paused a moment and looked around wistfully. She had made the place look cheery and neat and homelike. She felt that queer tugging at her heartstrings again. Suppose she belonged here, and was waiting for Peter to come home to tea. Suppose — Nancy whirled around with a sudden horrible prescience of what she was going to see! Peter Wright was standing in the doorway.

Nancy's face went crimson. For the first time in her life she had not a word to say for herself. Peter looked at her and then at the table, with its fruit and flowers.

“Thank you,” he said politely.

Nancy recovered herself. With a shamefaced laugh, she held out her hand.

“Don’t have me arrested for trespass, Peter. I came and looked in at your kitchen out of impertinent curiosity, and just for fun I thought I’d come in and get your tea. I thought you’d be so surprised — and I meant to go before you came home, of course.”

“I wouldn’t have been surprised,” said Peter, shaking hands. “I saw you go past the field and I tied the horses and followed you down through the woods. I’ve been sitting on the fence back yonder, watching your comings and goings.” “Why didn’t you come and speak to me at church yesterday, Peter?” demanded Nancy boldly.

“I was afraid I would say something ungrammatical,” answered Peter drily.

The crimson flamed over Nancy’s face again. She pulled her hand away.

“That’s cruel of you, Peter.”

Peter suddenly laughed. There was a note of boyishness in the laughter.

“So it is,” he said, “but I had to get rid of the accumulated malice and spite of twenty years somehow. It’s all gone now, and I’ll be as amiable as I know how. But since you have gone to the trouble of getting my supper for me, Nancy, you must stay and help me eat it. Them strawberries look good. I haven’t had any this summer — been too busy to pick them.”

Nancy stayed. She sat at the head of Peter’s table and poured his tea for him. She talked to him wittily of the Avonlea people and the changes in their old set. Peter followed her lead with an apparent absence of self-consciousness, eating his supper like a man whose heart and mind were alike on good terms with him. Nancy felt wretched — and, at the same time, ridiculously happy. It seemed the most grotesque thing in the world that she should be presiding there at Peter’s table, and yet the most natural. There were moments when she felt like crying — other moments when her laughter was as ready and spontaneous as a girl’s. Sentiment and humour had always waged an equal contest in Nancy’s nature.

When Peter had finished his strawberries he folded his arms on the table and looked admiringly at Nancy.

“You look well at the head of a table, Nancy,” he said critically. “How is it that you haven’t been presiding at one of your own long before this? I thought you’d meet a lots of men out in the world that you’d like — men who talked good grammar.”

“Peter, don’t!” said Nancy, wincing. “I was a goose.”

“No, you were quite right. I was a tetchy fool. If I’d had any sense, I’d have felt thankful you thought enough of me to want to improve me, and I’d have tried to kerrect my mistakes instead of getting mad. It’s too late now, I suppose.”

“Too late for what?” said Nancy, plucking up heart of grace at something in Peter’s tone and look.

“For — kerrecting mistakes.”

“Grammatical ones?”

“Not exactly. I guess them mistakes are past kerrecting in an old fellow like me. Worse mistakes, Nancy. I wonder what you would say if I asked you to forgive me, and have me after all.”

“I’d snap you up before you’d have time to change your mind,” said Nancy brazenly. She tried to look Peter in the face, but her blue eyes, where tears and mirth were blending, faltered down before his gray ones.

Peter stood up, knocking over his chair, and strode around the table to her.

“Nancy, my girl!” he said.

FURTHER CHRONICLES OF AVONLEA

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Aunt Cynthia's Persian Cat

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Max always blesses the animal when it is referred to; and I don't deny that things have worked together for good after all. But when I think of the anguish of mind which Ismay and I underwent on account of that abominable cat, it is not a blessing that arises uppermost in my thoughts.

I never was fond of cats, although I admit they are well enough in their place, and I can worry along comfortably with a nice, matronly old tabby who can take care of herself and be of some use in the world. As for Ismay, she hates cats and always did.

But Aunt Cynthia, who adored them, never could bring herself to understand that any one could possibly dislike them. She firmly believed that Ismay and I really liked cats deep down in our hearts, but that, owing to some perverse twist in our moral natures, we would not own up to it, but willfully persisted in declaring we didn't.

Of all cats I loathed that white Persian cat of Aunt Cynthia's. And, indeed, as we always suspected and finally proved, Aunt herself looked upon the creature with more pride than affection. She would have taken ten times the comfort in a good, common puss that she did in that spoiled beauty. But a Persian cat with a recorded pedigree and a market value of one hundred dollars tickled Aunt Cynthia's pride of possession to such an extent that she deluded herself into believing that the animal was really the apple of her eye.

It had been presented to her when a kitten by a missionary nephew who had brought it all the way home from Persia; and for the next three years Aunt Cynthia's household existed to wait on that cat, hand and foot. It was snow-white, with a bluish-gray spot on the tip of its tail; and it was blue-eyed and deaf and delicate. Aunt Cynthia was always worrying lest it should take cold and die. Ismay and I used to wish that it would — we were so tired of hearing about it and its whims. But we did not say so to

Aunt Cynthia. She would probably never have spoken to us again and there was no wisdom in offending Aunt Cynthia. When you have an unencumbered aunt, with a fat bank account, it is just as well to keep on good terms with her, if you can. Besides, we really liked Aunt Cynthia very much — at times. Aunt Cynthia was one of those rather exasperating people who nag at and find fault with you until you think you are justified in hating them, and who then turn round and do something so really nice and kind for you that you feel as if you were compelled to love them dutifully instead.

So we listened meekly when she discoursed on Fatima — the cat's name was Fatima — and, if it was wicked of us to wish for the latter's decease, we were well punished for it later on.

One day, in November, Aunt Cynthia came sailing out to Spencervale. She really came in a phaeton, drawn by a fat gray pony, but somehow Aunt Cynthia always gave you the impression of a full rigged ship coming gallantly on before a favorable wind.

That was a Jonah day for us all through. Everything had gone wrong. Ismay had spilled grease on her velvet coat, and the fit of the new blouse I was making was hopelessly askew, and the kitchen stove smoked and the bread was sour. Moreover, Huldah Jane Keyson, our tried and trusty old family nurse and cook and general "boss," had what she called the "realagy" in her shoulder; and, though Huldah Jane is as good an old creature as ever lived, when she has the "realagy" other people who are in the house want to get out of it and, if they can't, feel about as comfortable as St. Lawrence on his gridiron.

And on top of this came Aunt Cynthia's call and request.

"Dear me," said Aunt Cynthia, sniffing, "don't I smell smoke? You girls must manage your range very badly. Mine never smokes.

But it is no more than one might expect when two girls try to keep house without a man about the place."

“We get along very well without a man about the place,” I said loftily. Max hadn’t been in for four whole days and, though nobody wanted to see him particularly, I couldn’t help wondering why. “Men are nuisances.”

“I dare say you would like to pretend you think so,” said Aunt Cynthia, aggravatingly. “But no woman ever does really think so, you know. I imagine that pretty Anne Shirley, who is visiting Ella Kimball, doesn’t. I saw her and Dr. Irving out walking this afternoon, looking very well satisfied with themselves. If you dilly-dally much longer, Sue, you will let Max slip through your fingers yet.”

That was a tactful thing to say to ME, who had refused Max Irving so often that I had lost count. I was furious, and so I smiled most sweetly on my maddening aunt.

“Dear Aunt, how amusing of you,” I said, smoothly. “You talk as if I wanted Max.”

“So you do,” said Aunt Cynthia.

“If so, why should I have refused him time and again?” I asked, smilingly. Right well Aunt Cynthia knew I had. Max always told her.

“Goodness alone knows why,” said Aunt Cynthia, “but you may do it once too often and find yourself taken at your word. There is something very fascinating about this Anne Shirley.”

“Indeed there is,” I assented. “She has the loveliest eyes I ever saw. She would be just the wife for Max, and I hope he will marry her.”

“Humph,” said Aunt Cynthia. “Well, I won’t entice you into telling any more fibs. And I didn’t drive out here to-day in all this wind to talk sense into you concerning Max. I’m going to Halifax for two months and I want you to take charge of Fatima for me, while I am away.”

“Fatima!” I exclaimed.

“Yes. I don’t dare to trust her with the servants. Mind you always warm her milk before you give it to her, and don’t on any account let her run out of doors.”

I looked at Ismay and Ismay looked at me. We knew we were in for it. To refuse would mortally offend Aunt Cynthia. Besides, if I betrayed any unwillingness, Aunt Cynthia would be sure to put it down to grumpiness

over what she had said about Max, and rub it in for years. But I ventured to ask, "What if anything happens to her while you are away?"

"It is to prevent that, I'm leaving her with you," said Aunt Cynthia. "You simply must not let anything happen to her. It will do you good to have a little responsibility. And you will have a chance to find out what an adorable creature Fatima really is. Well, that is all settled. I'll send Fatima out tomorrow."

"You can take care of that horrid Fatima beast yourself," said Ismay, when the door closed behind Aunt Cynthia. "I won't touch her with a yardstick. You had no business to say we'd take her."

"Did I say we would take her?" I demanded, crossly. "Aunt Cynthia took our consent for granted. And you know, as well as I do, we couldn't have refused. So what is the use of being grouchy?"

"If anything happens to her Aunt Cynthia will hold us responsible," said Ismay darkly.

"Do you think Anne Shirley is really engaged to Gilbert Blythe?"

I asked curiously.

"I've heard that she was," said Ismay, absently. "Does she eat anything but milk? Will it do to give her mice?"

"Oh, I guess so. But do you think Max has really fallen in love with her?"

"I dare say. What a relief it will be for you if he has."

"Oh, of course," I said, frostily. "Anne Shirley or Anne Anybody Else, is perfectly welcome to Max if she wants him. I certainly do not. Ismay Meade, if that stove doesn't stop smoking I shall fly into bits. This is a detestable day. I hate that creature!"

"Oh, you shouldn't talk like that, when you don't even know her," protested Ismay. "Every one says Anne Shirley is lovely—"

"I was talking about Fatima," I cried in a rage.

"Oh!" said Ismay.

Ismay is stupid at times. I thought the way she said “Oh” was inexcusably stupid.

Fatima arrived the next day. Max brought her out in a covered basket, lined with padded crimson satin. Max likes cats and Aunt Cynthia. He explained how we were to treat Fatima and when Ismay had gone out of the room — Ismay always went out of the room when she knew I particularly wanted her to remain — he proposed to me again. Of course I said no, as usual, but I was rather pleased. Max had been proposing to me about every two months for two years. Sometimes, as in this case, he went three months, and then I always wondered why. I concluded that he could not be really interested in Anne Shirley, and I was relieved. I didn’t want to marry Max but it was pleasant and convenient to have him around, and we would miss him dreadfully if any other girl snapped him up. He was so useful and always willing to do anything for us — nail a shingle on the roof, drive us to town, put down carpets — in short, a very present help in all our troubles.

So I just beamed on him when I said no. Max began counting on his fingers. When he got as far as eight he shook his head and began over again.

“What is it?” I asked.

“I’m trying to count up how many times I have proposed to you,” he said. “But I can’t remember whether I asked you to marry me that day we dug up the garden or not. If I did it makes—”

“No, you didn’t,” I interrupted.

“Well, that makes it eleven,” said Max reflectively. “Pretty near the limit, isn’t it? My manly pride will not allow me to propose to the same girl more than twelve times. So the next time will be the last, Sue darling.”

“Oh,” I said, a trifle flatly. I forgot to resent his calling me darling. I wondered if things wouldn’t be rather dull when Max gave up proposing to me. It was the only excitement I had. But of course it would be best — and he couldn’t go on at it forever, so, by the way of gracefully dismissing the subject, I asked him what Miss Shirley was like.

“Very sweet girl,” said Max. “You know I always admired those grayeyed girls with that splendid Titian hair.”

I am dark, with brown eyes. Just then I detested Max. I got up and said I was going to get some milk for Fatima.

I found Ismay in a rage in the kitchen. She had been up in the garret, and a mouse had run across her foot. Mice always get on Ismay’s nerves.

“We need a cat badly enough,” she fumed, “but not a useless, pampered thing, like Fatima. That garret is literally swarming with mice. You’ll not catch me going up there again.”

Fatima did not prove such a nuisance as we had feared. Huldah Jane liked her, and Ismay, in spite of her declaration that she would have nothing to do with her, looked after her comfort scrupulously. She even used to get up in the middle of the night and go out to see if Fatima was warm. Max came in every day and, being around, gave us good advice.

Then one day, about three weeks after Aunt Cynthia’s departure, Fatima disappeared — just simply disappeared as if she had been dissolved into thin air. We left her one afternoon, curled up asleep in her basket by the fire, under Huldah Jane’s eye, while we went out to make a call. When we came home Fatima was gone.

Huldah Jane wept and was as one whom the gods had made mad. She vowed that she had never let Fatima out of her sight the whole time, save once for three minutes when she ran up to the garret for some summer savory. When she came back the kitchen door had blown open and Fatima had vanished.

Ismay and I were frantic. We ran about the garden and through the outhouses, and the woods behind the house, like wild creatures, calling Fatima, but in vain. Then Ismay sat down on the front doorsteps and cried.

“She has got out and she’ll catch her death of cold and Aunt Cynthia will never forgive us.”

“I’m going for Max,” I declared. So I did, through the spruce woods and over the field as fast as my feet could carry me, thanking my stars that there was a Max to go to in such a predicament.

Max came over and we had another search, but without result. Days passed, but we did not find Fatima. I would certainly have gone crazy had it not been for Max. He was worth his weight in gold during the awful week that followed. We did not dare advertise, lest Aunt Cynthia should see it; but we inquired far and wide for a white Persian cat with a blue spot on its tail, and offered a reward for it; but nobody had seen it, although people kept coming to the house, night and day, with every kind of a cat in baskets, wanting to know if it was the one we had lost.

“We shall never see Fatima again,” I said hopelessly to Max and Ismay one afternoon. I had just turned away an old woman with a big, yellow tommy which she insisted must be ours—”cause it kem to our place, mem, a-yowling fearful, mem, and it don’t belong to nobody not down Grafton way, mem.”

“I’m afraid you won’t,” said Max. “She must have perished from exposure long ere this.”

“Aunt Cynthia will never forgive us,” said Ismay, dismally. “I had a presentiment of trouble the moment that cat came to this house.”

We had never heard of this presentiment before, but Ismay is good at having presentiments — after things happen.

“What shall we do?” I demanded, helplessly. “Max, can’t you find some way out of this scrape for us?”

“Advertise in the Charlottetown papers for a white Persian cat,” suggested Max. “Some one may have one for sale. If so, you must buy it, and palm it off on your good Aunt as Fatima. She’s very shortsighted, so it will be quite possible.”

“But Fatima has a blue spot on her tail,” I said.

“You must advertise for a cat with a blue spot on its tail,” said Max.

“It will cost a pretty penny,” said Ismay dolefully. “Fatima was valued at one hundred dollars.”

“We must take the money we have been saving for our new furs,” I said sorrowfully. “There is no other way out of it. It will cost us a good

deal more if we lose Aunt Cynthia's favor. She is quite capable of believing that we have made away with Fatima deliberately and with malice aforethought."

So we advertised. Max went to town and had the notice inserted in the most important daily. We asked any one who had a white Persian cat, with a blue spot on the tip of its tail, to dispose of, to communicate with M. I., care of the Enterprise.

We really did not have much hope that anything would come of it, so we were surprised and delighted over the letter Max brought home from town four days later. It was a typewritten screed from Halifax stating that the writer had for sale a white Persian cat answering to our description. The price was a hundred and ten dollars, and, if M. I. cared to go to Halifax and inspect the animal, it would be found at 110 Hollis Street, by inquiring for "Persian."

"Temper your joy, my friends," said Ismay, gloomily. "The cat may not suit. The blue spot may be too big or too small or not in the right place. I consistently refuse to believe that any good thing can come out of this deplorable affair."

Just at this moment there was a knock at the door and I hurried out. The postmaster's boy was there with a telegram. I tore it open, glanced at it, and dashed back into the room.

"What is it now?" cried Ismay, beholding my face.

I held out the telegram. It was from Aunt Cynthia. She had wired us to send Fatima to Halifax by express immediately.

For the first time Max did not seem ready to rush into the breach with a suggestion. It was I who spoke first.

"Max," I said, imploringly, "you'll see us through this, won't you? Neither Ismay nor I can rush off to Halifax at once. You must go tomorrow morning. Go right to 110 Hollis Street and ask for 'Persian.' If the cat looks enough like Fatima, buy it and take it to Aunt Cynthia. If it doesn't — but it must! You'll go, won't you?"

"That depends," said Max.

I stared at him. This was so unlike Max.

“You are sending me on a nasty errand,” he said, coolly. “How do I know that Aunt Cynthia will be deceived after all, even if she be shortsighted. Buying a cat in a joke is a huge risk. And if she should see through the scheme I shall be in a pretty mess.”

“Oh, Max,” I said, on the verge of tears.

“Of course,” said Max, looking meditatively into the fire, “if I were really one of the family, or had any reasonable prospect of being so, I would not mind so much. It would be all in the day’s work then. But as it is—”

Ismay got up and went out of the room.

“Oh, Max, please,” I said.

“Will you marry me, Sue?” demanded Max sternly. “If you will agree, I’ll go to Halifax and beard the lion in his den unflinchingly. If necessary, I will take a black street cat to Aunt Cynthia, and swear that it is Fatima. I’ll get you out of the scrape, if I have to prove that you never had Fatima, that she is safe in your possession at the present time, and that there never was such an animal as Fatima anyhow. I’ll do anything, say anything — but it must be for my future wife.”

“Will nothing else content you?” I said helplessly.

“Nothing.”

I thought hard. Of course Max was acting abominably — but — but — he was really a dear fellow — and this was the twelfth time — and there was Anne Shirley! I knew in my secret soul that life would be a dreadfully dismal thing if Max were not around somewhere. Besides, I would have married him long ago had not Aunt Cynthia thrown us so pointedly at each other’s heads ever since he came to Spencervale.

“Very well,” I said crossly.

Max left for Halifax in the morning. Next day we got a wire saying it was all right. The evening of the following day he was back in Spencervale. Ismay and I put him in a chair and glared at him impatiently.

Max began to laugh and laughed until he turned blue.

“I am glad it is so amusing,” said Ismay severely. “If Sue and I could see the joke it might be more so.”

“Dear little girls, have patience with me,” implored Max. “If you knew what it cost me to keep a straight face in Halifax you would forgive me for breaking out now.”

“We forgive you — but for pity’s sake tell us all about it,” I cried.

“Well, as soon as I arrived in Halifax I hurried to 110 Hollis Street, but — see here! Didn’t you tell me your Aunt’s address was 10 Pleasant Street?”

“So it is.”

“‘T isn’t. You look at the address on a telegram next time you get one. She went a week ago to visit another friend who lives at 110 Hollis.’”

“Max!”

“It’s a fact. I rang the bell, and was just going to ask the maid for ‘Persian’ when your Aunt Cynthia herself came through the hall and pounced on me.”

“‘Max,’ she said, ‘have you brought Fatima?’

“‘No,’ I answered, trying to adjust my wits to this new development as she towed me into the library. ‘No, I — I — just came to Halifax on a little matter of business.’

“‘Dear me,’ said Aunt Cynthia, crossly, ‘I don’t know what those girls mean. I wired them to send Fatima at once. And she has not come yet and I am expecting a call every minute from some one who wants to buy her.’

“‘Oh!’ I murmured, mining deeper every minute.

“‘Yes,’ went on your aunt, ‘there is an advertisement in the Charlottetown Enterprise for a Persian cat, and I answered it. Fatima is really quite a charge, you know — and so apt to die and be a dead loss,’ — did your aunt mean a pun, girls?—’and so, although I am considerably attached to her, I have decided to part with her.’

“By this time I had got my second wind, and I promptly decided that a judicious mixture of the truth was the thing required.

“‘Well, of all the curious coincidences,’ I exclaimed. ‘Why, Miss Ridley, it was I who advertised for a Persian cat — on Sue’s

behalf. She and Ismay have decided that they want a cat like Fatima for themselves.'

"You should have seen how she beamed. She said she knew you always really liked cats, only you would never own up to it. We clinched the dicker then and there. I passed her over your hundred and ten dollars — she took the money without turning a hair — and now you are the joint owners of Fatima. Good luck to your bargain!"

"Mean old thing," sniffed Ismay. She meant Aunt Cynthia, and, remembering our shabby furs, I didn't disagree with her.

"But there is no Fatima," I said, dubiously. "How shall we account for her when Aunt Cynthia comes home?"

"Well, your aunt isn't coming home for a month yet. When she comes you will have to tell her that the cat — is lost — but you needn't say WHEN it happened. As for the rest, Fatima is your property now, so Aunt Cynthia can't grumble. But she will have a poorer opinion than ever of your fitness to run a house alone."

When Max left I went to the window to watch him down the path. He was really a handsome fellow, and I was proud of him. At the gate he turned to wave me good-by, and, as he did, he glanced upward. Even at that distance I saw the look of amazement on his face. Then he came bolting back.

"Ismay, the house is on fire!" I shrieked, as I flew to the door.

"Sue," cried Max, "I saw Fatima, or her ghost, at the garret window a moment ago!"

"Nonsense!" I cried. But Ismay was already half way up the stairs and we followed. Straight to the garret we rushed. There sat Fatima, sleek and complacent, sunning herself in the window.

Max laughed until the rafters rang.

"She can't have been up here all this time," I protested, half tearfully. "We would have heard her meowing."

"But you didn't," said Max.

"She would have died of the cold," declared Ismay.

“But she hasn’t,” said Max.

“Or starved,” I cried.

“The place is alive with mice,” said Max. “No, girls, there is no doubt the cat has been here the whole fortnight. She must have followed Huldah Jane up here, unobserved, that day. It’s a wonder you didn’t hear her crying — if she did cry. But perhaps she didn’t, and, of course, you sleep downstairs. To think you never thought of looking here for her!”

“It has cost us over a hundred dollars,” said Ismay, with a malevolent glance at the sleek Fatima.

“It has cost me more than that,” I said, as I turned to the stairway.

Max held me back for an instant, while Ismay and Fatima pattered down.

“Do you think it has cost too much, Sue?” he whispered.

I looked at him sideways. He was really a dear. Niceness fairly exhaled from him.

“No-o-o,” I said, “but when we are married you will have to take care of Fatima, I won’t.”

“Dear Fatima,” said Max gratefully.

The Materializing of Cecil

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It had never worried me in the least that I wasn't married, although everybody in Avonlea pitied old maids; but it DID worry me, and I frankly confess it, that I had never had a chance to be. Even Nancy, my old nurse and servant, knew that, and pitied me for it. Nancy is an old maid herself, but she has had two proposals. She did not accept either of them because one was a widower with seven children, and the other a very shiftless, good-for-nothing fellow; but, if anybody twitted Nancy on her single condition, she could point triumphantly to those two as evidence that "she could an she would." If I had not lived all my life in Avonlea I might have had the benefit of the doubt; but I had, and everybody knew everything about me — or thought they did.

I had really often wondered why nobody had ever fallen in love with me. I was not at all homely; indeed, years ago, George Adoniram Maybrick had written a poem addressed to me, in which he praised my beauty quite extravagantly; that didn't mean anything because George Adoniram wrote poetry to all the goodlooking girls and never went with anybody but Flora King, who was cross-eyed and redhaired, but it proves that it was not my appearance that put me out of the running. Neither was it the fact that I wrote poetry myself — although not of George Adoniram's kind — because nobody ever knew that. When I felt it coming on I shut myself up in my room and wrote it out in a little blank book I kept locked up. It is nearly full now, because I have been writing poetry all my life. It is the only thing I have ever been able to keep a secret from Nancy. Nancy, in any case, has not a very high opinion of my ability to take care of myself; but I tremble to imagine what she would think if she ever found out about that little book. I am convinced she would send for the doctor posthaste and insist on mustard plasters while waiting for him.

Nevertheless, I kept on at it, and what with my flowers and my cats and my magazines and my little book, I was really very happy and contented. But it DID sting that Adella Gilbert, across the road, who has a drunken husband, should pity “poor Charlotte” because nobody had ever wanted her. Poor Charlotte indeed! If I had thrown myself at a man’s head the way Adella Gilbert did at — but there, there, I must refrain from such thoughts. I must not be uncharitable.

The Sewing Circle met at Mary Gillespie’s on my fortieth birthday. I have given up talking about my birthdays, although that little scheme is not much good in Avonlea where everybody knows your age — or if they make a mistake it is never on the side of youth. But Nancy, who grew accustomed to celebrating my birthdays when I was a little girl, never gets over the habit, and I don’t try to cure her, because, after all, it’s nice to have some one make a fuss over you. She brought me up my breakfast before I got up out of bed — a concession to my laziness that Nancy would scorn to make on any other day of the year. She had cooked everything I like best, and had decorated the tray with roses from the garden and ferns from the woods behind the house. I enjoyed every bit of that breakfast, and then I got up and dressed, putting on my second best muslin gown. I would have put on my really best if I had not had the fear of Nancy before my eyes; but I knew she would never condone THAT, even on a birthday. I watered my flowers and fed my cats, and then I locked myself up and wrote a poem on June. I had given up writing birthday odes after I was thirty.

In the afternoon I went to the Sewing Circle. When I was ready for it I looked in my glass and wondered if I could really be forty. I was quite sure I didn’t look it. My hair was brown and wavy, my cheeks were pink, and the lines could hardly be seen at all, though possibly that was because of the dim light. I always have my mirror hung in the darkest corner of my room. Nancy cannot imagine why. I know the lines are there, of course; but when they don’t show very plain I forget that they are there.

We had a large Sewing Circle, young and old alike attending. I really cannot say I ever enjoyed the meetings — at least not up to that time —

although I went religiously because I thought it my duty to go. The married women talked so much of their husbands and children, and of course I had to be quiet on those topics; and the young girls talked in corner groups about their beaux, and stopped it when I joined them, as if they felt sure that an old maid who had never had a beau couldn't understand at all. As for the other old maids, they talked gossip about every one, and I did not like that either. I knew the minute my back was turned they would fasten into me and hint that I used hair-dye and declare it was perfectly ridiculous for a woman of FIFTY to wear a pink muslin dress with lace-trimmed frills.

There was a full attendance that day, for we were getting ready for a sale of fancy work in aid of parsonage repairs. The young girls were merrier and noisier than usual. Wilhelmina Mercer was there, and she kept them going. The Mercers were quite new to Avonlea, having come here only two months previously.

I was sitting by the window and Wilhelmina Mercer, Maggie Henderson, Susette Cross and Georgie Hall were in a little group just before me. I wasn't listening to their chatter at all, but presently Georgie exclaimed teasingly:

"Miss Charlotte is laughing at us. I suppose she thinks we are awfully silly to be talking about beaux."

The truth was that I was simply smiling over some very pretty thoughts that had come to me about the roses which were climbing over Mary Gillespie's sill. I meant to inscribe them in the little blank book when I went home. Georgie's speech brought me back to harsh realities with a jolt. It hurt me, as such speeches always did.

"Didn't you ever have a beau, Miss Holmes?" said Wilhelmina laughingly.

Just as it happened, a silence had fallen over the room for a moment, and everybody in it heard Wilhelmina's question.

I really do not know what got into me and possessed me. I have never been able to account for what I said and did, because I am naturally a truthful person and hate all deceit. It seemed to me that I simply could not

say “No” to Wilhelmina before that whole roomful of women. It was TOO humiliating. I suppose all the prickles and stings and slurs I had endured for fifteen years on account of never having had a lover had what the new doctor calls “a cumulative effect” and came to a head then and there.

“Yes, I had one once, my dear,” I said calmly.

For once in my life I made a sensation. Every woman in that room stopped sewing and stared at me. Most of them, I saw, didn’t believe me, but Wilhelmina did. Her pretty face lighted up with interest.

“Oh, won’t you tell us about him, Miss Holmes?” she coaxed, “and why didn’t you marry him?”

“That is right, Miss Mercer,” said Josephine Cameron, with a nasty little laugh. “Make her tell. We’re all interested. It’s news to us that Charlotte ever had a beau.”

If Josephine had not said that, I might not have gone on. But she did say it, and, moreover, I caught Mary Gillespie and Adella Gilbert exchanging significant smiles. That settled it, and made me quite reckless. “In for a penny, in for a pound,” thought I, and I said with a pensive smile:

“Nobody here knew anything about him, and it was all long, long ago.”

“What was his name?” asked Wilhelmina.

“Cecil Fenwick,” I answered promptly. Cecil had always been my favorite name for a man; it figured quite frequently in the blank book. As for the Fenwick part of it, I had a bit of newspaper in my hand, measuring a hem, with “Try Fenwick’s Porous Plasters” printed across it, and I simply joined the two in sudden and irrevocable matrimony.

“Where did you meet him?” asked Georgie.

I hastily reviewed my past. There was only one place to locate Cecil Fenwick. The only time I had ever been far enough away from Avonlea in my life was when I was eighteen and had gone to visit an aunt in New Brunswick.

“In Blakely, New Brunswick,” I said, almost believing that I had when I saw how they all took it in unsuspectingly. “I was just eighteen and he was twenty-three.”

“What did he look like?” Susette wanted to know.

“Oh, he was very handsome.” I proceeded glibly to sketch my ideal. To tell the dreadful truth, I was enjoying myself; I could see respect dawning in those girls’ eyes, and I knew that I had forever thrown off my reproach. Henceforth I should be a woman with a romantic past, faithful to the one love of her life — a very, very different thing from an old maid who had never had a lover.

“He was tall and dark, with lovely, curly black hair and brilliant, piercing eyes. He had a splendid chin, and a fine nose, and the most fascinating smile!”

“What was he?” asked Maggie.

“A young lawyer,” I said, my choice of profession decided by an enlarged crayon portrait of Mary Gillespie’s deceased brother on an easel before me. He had been a lawyer.

“Why didn’t you marry him?” demanded Susette.

“We quarreled,” I answered sadly. “A terribly bitter quarrel. Oh, we were both so young and so foolish. It was my fault. I vexed Cecil by flirting with another man” — wasn’t I coming on! — “and he was jealous and angry. He went out West and never came back. I have never seen him since, and I do not even know if he is alive. But — but — I could never care for any other man.”

“Oh, how interesting!” sighed Wilhelmina. “I do so love sad love stories. But perhaps he will come back some day yet, Miss Holmes.”

“Oh, no, never now,” I said, shaking my head. “He has forgotten all about me, I dare say. Or if he hasn’t, he has never forgiven me.”

Mary Gillespie’s Susan Jane announced tea at this moment, and I was thankful, for my imagination was giving out, and I didn’t know what question those girls would ask next. But I felt already a change in the mental atmosphere surrounding me, and all through supper I was thrilled with a secret exultation. Repentant? Ashamed? Not a bit of it! I’d have done the same thing over again, and all I felt sorry for was that I hadn’t done it long ago.

When I got home that night Nancy looked at me wonderingly, and said:

“You look like a girl tonight, Miss Charlotte.”

“I feel like one,” I said laughing; and I ran to my room and did what I had never done before — wrote a second poem in the same day. I had to have some outlet for my feelings. I called it “In Summer Days of Long Ago,” and I worked Mary Gillespie’s roses and Cecil Fenwick’s eyes into it, and made it so sad and reminiscent and minor-musicky that I felt perfectly happy.

For the next two months all went well and merrily. Nobody ever said anything more to me about Cecil Fenwick, but the girls all chattered freely to me of their little love affairs, and I became a sort of general confidant for them. It just warmed up the cockles of my heart, and I began to enjoy the Sewing Circle famously. I got a lot of pretty new dresses and the dearest hat, and I went everywhere I was asked and had a good time.

But there is one thing you can be perfectly sure of. If you do wrong you are going to be punished for it sometime, somehow and somewhere. My punishment was delayed for two months, and then it descended on my head and I was crushed to the very dust.

Another new family besides the Mercers had come to Avonlea in the spring — the Maxwells. There were just Mr. and Mrs. Maxwell; they were a middle-aged couple and very well off. Mr. Maxwell had bought the lumber mills, and they lived up at the old Spencer place which had always been “the” place of Avonlea. They lived quietly, and Mrs. Maxwell hardly ever went anywhere because she was delicate. She was out when I called and I was out when she returned my call, so that I had never met her.

It was the Sewing Circle day again — at Sarah Gardiner’s this time. I was late; everybody else was there when I arrived, and the minute I entered the room I knew something had happened, although I couldn’t imagine what. Everybody looked at me in the strangest way. Of course, Wilhelmina Mercer was the first to set her tongue going.

“Oh, Miss Holmes, have you seen him yet?” she exclaimed.

“Seen whom?” I said non-excitedly, getting out my thimble and patterns.

“Why, Cecil Fenwick. He’s here — in Avonlea — visiting his sister,
Mrs. Maxwell.”

I suppose I did what they expected me to do. I dropped everything I held, and Josephine Cameron said afterwards that Charlotte Holmes would never be paler when she was in her coffin.

If they had just known why I turned so pale!

“It’s impossible!” I said blankly.

“It’s really true,” said Wilhelmina, delighted at this development, as she supposed it, of my romance. “I was up to see Mrs. Maxwell last night, and I met him.”

“It — can’t be — the same — Cecil Fenwick,” I said faintly, because
I had to say something.

“Oh, yes, it is. He belongs in Blakely, New Brunswick, and he’s a lawyer, and he’s been out West twenty-two years. He’s oh! so handsome, and just as you described him, except that his hair is quite gray. He has never married — I asked Mrs. Maxwell — so you see he has never forgotten you, Miss Holmes. And, oh, I believe everything is going to come out all right.”

I couldn’t exactly share her cheerful belief. Everything seemed to me to be coming out most horribly wrong. I was so mixed up I didn’t know what to do or say. I felt as if I were in a bad dream — it **MUST** be a dream — there couldn’t really be a Cecil Fenwick! My feelings were simply indescribable. Fortunately every one put my agitation down to quite a different cause, and they very kindly left me alone to recover myself. I shall never forget that awful afternoon. Right after tea I excused myself and went home as fast as I could go. There I shut myself up in my room,

but NOT to write poetry in my blank book. No, indeed! I felt in no poetical mood.

I tried to look the facts squarely in the face. There was a Cecil Fenwick, extraordinary as the coincidence was, and he was here in Avonlea. All my friends — and foes — believed that he was the estranged lover of my youth. If he stayed long in Avonlea, one of two things was bound to happen. He would hear the story I had told about him and deny it, and I would be held up to shame and derision for the rest of my natural life; or else he would simply go away in ignorance, and everybody would suppose he had forgotten me and would pity me maddeningly. The latter possibility was bad enough, but it wasn't to be compared to the former; and oh, how I prayed — yes, I DID pray about it — that he would go right away. But Providence had other views for me.

Cecil Fenwick didn't go away. He stayed right on in Avonlea, and the Maxwells blossomed out socially in his honor and tried to give him a good time. Mrs. Maxwell gave a party for him. I got a card — but you may be very sure I didn't go, although Nancy thought I was crazy not to. Then every one else gave parties in honor of Mr. Fenwick and I was invited and never went. Wilhelmina Mercer came and pleaded and scolded and told me if I avoided Mr. Fenwick like that he would think I still cherished bitterness against him, and he wouldn't make any advances towards a reconciliation. Wilhelmina means well, but she hasn't a great deal of sense.

Cecil Fenwick seemed to be a great favorite with everybody, young and old. He was very rich, too, and Wilhelmina declared that half the girls were after him.

"If it wasn't for you, Miss Holmes, I believe I'd have a try for him myself, in spite of his gray hair and quick temper — for Mrs. Maxwell says he has a pretty quick temper, but it's all over in a minute," said Wilhelmina, half in jest and wholly in earnest.

As for me, I gave up going out at all, even to church. I fretted and pined and lost my appetite and never wrote a line in my blank book. Nancy was half frantic and insisted on dosing me with her favorite patent pills. I

took them meekly, because it is a waste of time and energy to oppose Nancy, but, of course, they didn't do me any good. My trouble was too deep-seated for pills to cure. If ever a woman was punished for telling a lie I was that woman. I stopped my subscription to the Weekly Advocate because it still carried that wretched porous plaster advertisement, and I couldn't bear to see it. If it hadn't been for that I would never have thought of Fenwick for a name, and all this trouble would have been averted.

One evening, when I was moping in my room, Nancy came up.

"There's a gentleman in the parlor asking for you, Miss Charlotte."

My heart gave just one horrible bounce.

"What — sort of a gentleman, Nancy?" I faltered.

"I think it's that Fenwick man that there's been such a time about," said Nancy, who didn't know anything about my imaginary escapades, "and he looks to be mad clean through about something, for such a scowl I never seen."

"Tell him I'll be down directly, Nancy," I said quite calmly.

As soon as Nancy had clumped downstairs again I put on my lace fichu and put two hankies in my belt, for I thought I'd probably need more than one. Then I hunted up an old Advocate for proof, and down I went to the parlor. I know exactly how a criminal feels going to execution, and I've been opposed to capital punishment ever since.

I opened the parlor door and went in, carefully closing it behind me, for Nancy has a deplorable habit of listening in the hall. Then my legs gave out completely, and I couldn't have walked another step to save my life. I just stood there, my hand on the knob, trembling like a leaf.

A man was standing by the south window looking out; he wheeled around as I went in, and, as Nancy said, he had a scowl on and looked angry clear through. He was very handsome, and his gray hair gave him such a distinguished look. I recalled this afterward, but just at the moment you may be quite sure I wasn't thinking about it at all.

Then all at once a strange thing happened. The scowl went right off his face and the anger out of his eyes. He looked astonished, and then foolish. I saw the color creeping up into his cheeks. As for me, I still stood there staring at him, not able to say a single word.

“Miss Holmes, I presume,” he said at last, in a deep, thrilling voice. “I — I — oh, confound it! I have called — I heard some foolish stories and I came here in a rage. I’ve been a fool — I know now they weren’t true. Just excuse me and I’ll go away and kick myself.”

“No,” I said, finding my voice with a gasp, “you mustn’t go until you’ve heard the truth. It’s dreadful enough, but not as dreadful as you might otherwise think. Those — those stories — I have a confession to make. I did tell them, but I didn’t know there was such a person as Cecil Fenwick in existence.”

He looked puzzled, as well he might. Then he smiled, took my hand and led me away from the door — to the knob of which I was still holding with all my might — to the sofa.

“Let’s sit down and talk it over ‘comfy,’” he said.

I just confessed the whole shameful business. It was terribly humiliating, but it served me right. I told him how people were always twitting me for never having had a beau, and how I had told them I had; and then I showed him the porous plaster advertisement.

He heard me right through without a word, and then he threw back his big, curly, gray head and laughed.

“This clears up a great many mysterious hints I’ve been receiving ever since I came to Avonlea,” he said, “and finally a Mrs. Gilbert came to my sister this afternoon with a long farrago of nonsense about the love affair I had once had with some Charlotte Holmes here. She declared you had told her about it yourself. I confess I flamed up. I’m a peppery chap, and I thought — I thought — oh, confound it, it might as well out: I thought you were some lank old maid who was amusing herself telling ridiculous stories about me. When you came into the room I knew that, whoever was to blame, you were not.”

“But I was,” I said ruefully. “It wasn’t right of me to tell such a story — and it was very silly, too. But who would ever have supposed that there could be real Cecil Fenwick who had lived in Blakely? I never heard of such a coincidence.”

“It’s more than a coincidence,” said Mr. Fenwick decidedly. “It’s predestination; that is what it is. And now let’s forget it and talk of something else.”

We talked of something else — or at least Mr. Fenwick did, for I was too ashamed to say much — so long that Nancy got restive and clumped through the hall every five minutes; but Mr. Fenwick never took the hint. When he finally went away he asked if he might come again.

“It’s time we made up that old quarrel, you know,” he said, laughing.

And I, an old maid of forty, caught myself blushing like a girl. But I felt like a girl, for it was such a relief to have that explanation all over. I couldn’t even feel angry with Adella Gilbert. She was always a mischief maker, and when a woman is born that way she is more to be pitied than blamed. I wrote a poem in the blank book before I went to sleep; I hadn’t written anything for a month, and it was lovely to be at it once more.

Mr. Fenwick did come again — the very next evening, but one.

And

he came so often after that that even Nancy got resigned to him.

One day I had to tell her something. I shrank from doing it, for I feared it would make her feel badly.

“Oh, I’ve been expecting to hear it,” she said grimly. “I felt the minute that man came into the house he brought trouble with him. Well, Miss Charlotte, I wish you happiness. I don’t know how the climate of California will agree with me, but I suppose I’ll have to put up with it.”

“But, Nancy,” I said, “I can’t expect you to go away out there with me. It’s too much to ask of you.”

“And where else would I be going?” demanded Nancy in genuine astonishment. “How under the canopy could you keep house without me?”

I'm not going to trust you to the mercies of a yellow Chinee with a pigtail. Where you go I go, Miss Charlotte, and there's an end of it."

I was very glad, for I hated to think of parting with Nancy even to go with Cecil. As for the blank book, I haven't told my husband about it yet, but I mean to some day. And I've subscribed for the Weekly Advocate again.

Her Father's Daughter

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“We must invite your Aunt Jane, of course,” said Mrs. Spencer.

Rachel made a protesting movement with her large, white, shapely hands — hands which were so different from the thin, dark, twisted ones folded on the table opposite her. The difference was not caused by hard work or the lack of it; Rachel had worked hard all her life. It was a difference inherent in temperament. The Spencers, no matter what they did, or how hard they labored, all had plump, smooth, white hands, with firm, supple fingers; the Chiswicks, even those who toiled not, neither did they spin, had hard, knotted, twisted ones. Moreover, the contrast went deeper than externals, and twined itself with the innermost fibers of life, and thought, and action.

“I don’t see why we must invite Aunt Jane,” said Rachel, with as much impatience as her soft, throaty voice could express. “Aunt Jane doesn’t like me, and I don’t like Aunt Jane.”

“I’m sure I don’t see why you don’t like her,” said Mrs. Spencer.

“It’s ungrateful of you. She has always been very kind to you.”

“She has always been very kind with one hand,” smiled Rachel. “I remember the first time I ever saw Aunt Jane. I was six years old. She held out to me a small velvet pincushion with beads on it. And then, because I did not, in my shyness, thank her quite as promptly as I should have done, she rapped my head with her bethimble finger to ‘teach me better manners.’ It hurt horribly — I’ve always had a tender head. And that has been Aunt Jane’s way ever since. When I grew too big for the thimble treatment she used her tongue instead — and that hurt worse. And you know, mother, how she used to talk about my engagement. She is able to

spoil the whole atmosphere if she happens to come in a bad humor. I don't want her."

"She must be invited. People would talk so if she wasn't."

"I don't see why they should. She's only my great-aunt by marriage. I wouldn't mind in the least if people did talk. They'll talk anyway — you know that, mother."

"Oh, we must have her," said Mrs. Spencer, with the indifferent finality that marked all her words and decisions — a finality against which it was seldom of any avail to struggle. People, who knew, rarely attempted it; strangers occasionally did, misled by the deceit of appearances.

Isabella Spencer was a wisp of a woman, with a pale, pretty face, uncertainly-colored, long-lashed grayish eyes, and great masses of dull, soft, silky brown hair. She had delicate aquiline features and a small, babyish red mouth. She looked as if a breath would sway her. The truth was that a tornado would hardly have caused her to swerve an inch from her chosen path.

For a moment Rachel looked rebellious; then she yielded, as she generally did in all differences of opinion with her mother. It was not worth while to quarrel over the comparatively unimportant matter of Aunt Jane's invitation. A quarrel might be inevitable later on; Rachel wanted to save all her resources for that. She gave her shoulders a shrug, and wrote Aunt Jane's name down on the wedding list in her large, somewhat untidy handwriting — a handwriting which always seemed to irritate her mother. Rachel never could understand this irritation. She could never guess that it was because her writing looked so much like that in a certain packet of faded letters which Mrs. Spencer kept at the bottom of an old horsehair trunk in her bedroom. They were postmarked from seaports all over the world. Mrs. Spencer never read them or looked at them; but she remembered every dash and curve of the handwriting.

Isabella Spencer had overcome many things in her life by the sheer force and persistency of her will. But she could not get the better of heredity. Rachel was her father's daughter at all points, and Isabella Spencer escaped hating her for it only by loving her the more fiercely

because of it. Even so, there were many times when she had to avert her eyes from Rachel's face because of the pang of the more subtle remembrances; and never, since her child was born, could Isabella Spencer bear to gaze on that child's face in sleep.

Rachel was to be married to Frank Bell in a fortnight's time. Mrs. Spencer was pleased with the match. She was very fond of Frank, and his farm was so near to her own that she would not lose Rachel altogether. Rachel fondly believed that her mother would not lose her at all; but Isabella Spencer, wiser by olden experience, knew what her daughter's marriage must mean to her, and steeled her heart to bear it with what fortitude she might.

They were in the sitting-room, deciding on the wedding guests and other details. The September sunshine was coming in through the waving boughs of the apple tree that grew close up to the low window. The glints wavered over Rachel's face, as white as a wood lily, with only a faint dream of rose in the cheeks. She wore her sleek, golden hair in a quaint arch around it. Her forehead was very broad and white. She was fresh and young and hopeful. The mother's heart contracted in a spasm of pain as she looked at her. How like the girl was to — to — to the Spencers! Those easy, curving outlines, those large, mirthful blue eyes, that finely molded chin! Isabella Spencer shut her lips firmly and crushed down some unbidden, unwelcome memories.

"There will be about sixty guests, all told," she said, as if she were thinking of nothing else. "We must move the furniture out of this room and set the supper-table here. The dining-room is too small. We must borrow Mrs. Bell's forks and spoons. She offered to lend them. I'd never have been willing to ask her. The damask table cloths with the ribbon pattern must be bleached tomorrow. Nobody else in Avonlea has such tablecloths. And we'll put the little dining-room table on the hall landing, upstairs, for the presents."

Rachel was not thinking about the presents, or the housewifely details of the wedding. Her breath was coming quicker, and the faint blush on her smooth cheeks had deepened to crimson. She knew that a critical moment

was approaching. With a steady hand she wrote the last name on her list and drew a line under it.

“Well, have you finished?” asked her mother impatiently. “Hand it here and let me look over it to make sure that you haven’t left anybody out that should be in.”

Rachel passed the paper across the table in silence. The room seemed to her to have grown very still. She could hear the flies buzzing on the panes, the soft purr of the wind about the low eaves and through the apple boughs, the jerky beating of her own heart. She felt frightened and nervous, but resolute.

Mrs. Spencer glanced down the list, murmuring the names aloud and nodding approval at each. But when she came to the last name, she did not utter it. She cast a black glance at Rachel, and a spark leaped up in the depths of the pale eyes. On her face were anger, amazement, incredulity, the last predominating.

The final name on the list of wedding guests was the name of David Spencer. David Spencer lived alone in a little cottage down at the Cove. He was a combination of sailor and fisherman.

He was also Isabella Spencer’s husband and Rachel’s father.

“Rachel Spencer, have you taken leave of your senses? What do you mean by such nonsense as this?”

“I simply mean that I am going to invite my father to my wedding,” answered Rachel quietly.

“Not in my house,” cried Mrs. Spencer, her lips as white as if her fiery tone had scathed them.

Rachel leaned forward, folded her large, capable hands deliberately on the table, and gazed unflinchingly into her mother’s bitter face. Her fright and nervousness were gone. Now that the conflict was actually on she found herself rather enjoying it. She wondered a little at herself, and thought that she must be wicked. She was not given to self-analysis, or she might have concluded that it was the sudden assertion of her own

personality, so long dominated by her mother's, which she was finding so agreeable.

"Then there will be no wedding, mother," she said. "Frank and I will simply go to the manse, be married, and go home. If I cannot invite my father to see me married, no one else shall be invited."

Her lips narrowed tightly. For the first time in her life Isabella Spencer saw a reflection of herself looking back at her from her daughter's face — a strange, indefinable resemblance that was more of soul and spirit than of flesh and blood. In spite of her anger her heart thrilled to it. As never before, she realized that this girl was her own and her husband's child, a living bond between them wherein their conflicting natures mingled and were reconciled. She realized too, that Rachel, so long sweetly meek and obedient, meant to have her own way in this case — and would have it.

"I must say that I can't see why you are so set on having your father see you married," she said with a bitter sneer. "HE has never remembered that he is your father. He cares nothing about you — never did care."

Rachel took no notice of this taunt. It had no power to hurt her, its venom being neutralized by a secret knowledge of her own in which her mother had no share.

"Either I shall invite my father to my wedding, or I shall not have a wedding," she repeated steadily, adopting her mother's own effective tactics of repetition undistracted by argument.

"Invite him then," snapped Mrs. Spencer, with the ungraceful anger of a woman, long accustomed to having her own way, compelled for once to yield. "It'll be like chips in porridge anyhow — neither good nor harm. He won't come."

Rachel made no response. Now that the battle was over, and the victory won, she found herself tremulously on the verge of tears. She rose quickly and went upstairs to her own room, a dim little place shadowed by the white birches growing thickly outside — a virginal room, where everything bespoke the maiden. She lay down on the blue and white patchwork quilt on her bed, and cried softly and bitterly.

Her heart, at this crisis in her life, yearned for her father, who was almost a stranger to her. She knew that her mother had probably spoken the truth when she said that he would not come. Rachel felt that her marriage vows would be lacking in some indefinable sacredness if her father were not by to hear them spoken.

Twenty-five years before this, David Spencer and Isabella Chiswick had been married. Spiteful people said there could be no doubt that Isabella had married David for love, since he had neither lands nor money to tempt her into a match of bargain and sale. David was a handsome fellow, with the blood of a seafaring race in his veins.

He had been a sailor, like his father and grandfather before him; but, when he married Isabella, she induced him to give up the sea and settle down with her on a snug farm her father had left her. Isabella liked farming, and loved her fertile acres and opulent orchards. She abhorred the sea and all that pertained to it, less from any dread of its dangers than from an inbred conviction that sailors were “low” in the social scale — a species of necessary vagabonds. In her eyes there was a taint of disgrace in such a calling. David must be transformed into a respectable, home-abiding tiller of broad lands.

For five years all went well enough. If, at times, David’s longing for the sea troubled him, he stifled it, and listened not to its luring voice. He and Isabella were very happy; the only drawback to their happiness lay in the regretted fact that they were childless.

Then, in the sixth year, came a crisis and a change. Captain Barrett, an old crony of David’s, wanted him to go with him on a voyage as mate. At the suggestion all David’s long-repressed craving for the wide blue wastes of the ocean, and the wind whistling through the spars with the salt foam in its breath, broke forth with a passion all the more intense for that very repression. He must go on that voyage with James Barrett — he **MUST**! That over, he would be contented again; but go he must. His soul struggled within him like a fettered thing.

Isabella opposed the scheme vehemently and unwisely, with mordant sarcasm and unjust reproaches. The latent obstinacy of David’s character

came to the support of his longing — a longing which Isabella, with five generations of land-loving ancestry behind her, could not understand at all.

He was determined to go, and he told Isabella so.

“I’m sick of plowing and milking cows,” he said hotly.

“You mean that you are sick of a respectable life,” sneered Isabella.

“Perhaps,” said David, with a contemptuous shrug of his shoulders.

“Anyway, I’m going.”

“If you go on this voyage, David Spencer, you need never come back here,” said Isabella resolutely.

David had gone; he did not believe that she meant it. Isabella believed that he did not care whether she meant it or not. David Spencer left behind him a woman, calm outwardly, inwardly a seething volcano of anger, wounded pride, and thwarted will.

He found precisely the same woman when he came home, tanned, joyous, tamed for a while of his wanderlust, ready, with something of real affection, to go back to the farm fields and the stock-yard.

Isabella met him at the door, smileless, cold-eyed, set-lipped.

“What do you want here?” she said, in the tone she was accustomed to use to tramps and Syrian peddlers.

“Want!” David’s surprise left him at a loss for words. “Want! Why, I — I — want my wife. I’ve come home.”

“This is not your home. I’m no wife of yours. You made your choice when you went away,” Isabella had replied. Then she had gone in, shut the door, and locked it in his face.

David had stood there for a few minutes like a man stunned. Then he had turned and walked away up the lane under the birches. He said nothing — then or at any other time. From that day no reference to his wife or her concerns ever crossed his lips.

He went directly to the harbor, and shipped with Captain Barrett for another voyage. When he came back from that in a month's time, he bought a small house and had it hauled to the "Cove," a lonely inlet from which no other human habitation was visible. Between his sea voyages he lived there the life of a recluse; fishing and playing his violin were his only employments. He went nowhere and encouraged no visitors.

Isabella Spencer also had adopted the tactics of silence. When the scandalized Chiswicks, Aunt Jane at their head, tried to patch up the matter with argument and entreaty, Isabella met them stonily, seeming not to hear what they said, and making no response. She worsted them totally. As Aunt Jane said in disgust, "What can you do with a woman who won't even TALK?"

Five months after David Spencer had been turned from his wife's door, Rachel was born. Perhaps, if David had come to them then, with due penitence and humility, Isabella's heart, softened by the pain and joy of her long and ardently desired motherhood might have cast out the rankling venom of resentment that had poisoned it and taken him back into it. But David had not come; he gave no sign of knowing or caring that his once longed-for child had been born.

When Isabella was able to be about again, her pale face was harder than ever; and, had there been about her any one discerning enough to notice it, there was a subtle change in her bearing and manner. A certain nervous expectancy, a fluttering restlessness was gone. Isabella had ceased to hope secretly that her husband would yet come back. She had in her secret soul thought he would; and she had meant to forgive him when she had humbled him sufficiently, and when he had abased himself as she considered he should. But now she knew that he did not mean to sue for her forgiveness; and the hate that sprang out of her old love was a rank and speedy and persistent growth.

Rachel, from her earliest recollection, had been vaguely conscious of a difference between her own life and the lives of her playmates. For a long time it puzzled her childish brain. Finally, she reasoned it out that the difference consisted in the fact that they had fathers and she, Rachel

Spencer, had none — not even in the graveyard, as Carrie Bell and Lilian Boulter had. Why was this? Rachel went straight to her mother, put one little dimpled hand on Isabella Spencer's knee, looked up with great searching blue eyes, and said gravely,

“Mother, why haven't I got a father like the other little girls?”

Isabella Spencer laid aside her work, took the seven year old child on her lap, and told her the whole story in a few direct and bitter words that imprinted themselves indelibly on Rachel's remembrance. She understood clearly and hopelessly that she could never have a father — that, in this respect, she must always be unlike other people.

“Your father cares nothing for you,” said Isabella Spencer in conclusion. “He never did care. You must never speak of him to anybody again.”

Rachel slipped silently from her mother's knee and ran out to the Springtime garden with a full heart. There she cried passionately over her mother's last words. It seemed to her a terrible thing that her father should not love her, and a cruel thing that she must never talk of him.

Oddly enough, Rachel's sympathies were all with her father, in as far as she could understand the old quarrel. She did not dream of disobeying her mother and she did not disobey her. Never again did the child speak of her father; but Isabella had not forbidden her to think of him, and thenceforth Rachel thought of him constantly — so constantly that, in some strange way, he seemed to become an unguessed-of part of her inner life — the unseen, ever-present companion in all her experiences.

She was an imaginative child, and in fancy she made the acquaintance of her father. She had never seen him, but he was more real to her than most of the people she had seen. He played and talked with her as her mother never did; he walked with her in the orchard and field and garden; he sat by her pillow in the twilight; to him she whispered secrets she told to none other.

Once her mother asked her impatiently why she talked so much to herself.

“I am not talking to myself. I am talking to a very dear friend of mine,” Rachel answered gravely.

“Silly child,” laughed her mother, half tolerantly, half disapprovingly.

Two years later something wonderful had happened to Rachel. One summer afternoon she had gone to the harbor with several of her little playmates. Such a jaunt was a rare treat to the child, for Isabella Spencer seldom allowed her to go from home with anybody but herself. And Isabella was not an entertaining companion. Rachel never particularly enjoyed an outing with her mother.

The children wandered far along the shore; at last they came to a place that Rachel had never seen before. It was a shallow cove where the waters purred on the yellow sands. Beyond it, the sea was laughing and flashing and preening and alluring, like a beautiful, coquettish woman. Outside, the wind was boisterous and rollicking; here, it was reverent and gentle. A white boat was hauled up on the skids, and there was a queer little house close down to the sands, like a big shell tossed up by the waves. Rachel looked on it all with secret delight; she, too, loved the lonely places of sea and shore, as her father had done. She wanted to linger awhile in this dear spot and revel in it.

“I’m tired, girls,” she announced. “I’m going to stay here and rest for a spell. I don’t want to go to Gull Point. You go on yourselves; I’ll wait for you here.”

“All alone?” asked Carrie Bell, wonderingly.

“I’m not so afraid of being alone as some people are,” said Rachel, with dignity.

The other girls went on, leaving Rachel sitting on the skids, in the shadow of the big white boat. She sat there for a time dreaming happily, with her blue eyes on the far, pearly horizon, and her golden head leaning against the boat.

Suddenly she heard a step behind her. When she turned her head a man was standing beside her, looking down at her with big, merry, blue eyes. Rachel was quite sure that she had never seen him before; yet those eyes

seemed to her to have a strangely familiar look. She liked him. She felt no shyness nor timidity, such as usually afflicted her in the presence of strangers.

He was a tall, stout man, dressed in a rough fishing suit, and wearing an oilskin cap on his head. His hair was very thick and curly and fair; his cheeks were tanned and red; his teeth, when he smiled, were very even and white. Rachel thought he must be quite old, because there was a good deal of gray mixed with his fair hair.

“Are you watching for the mermaids?” he said.

Rachel nodded gravely. From any one else she would have scrupulously hidden such a thought.

“Yes, I am,” she said. “Mother says there is no such thing as a mermaid, but I like to think there is. Have you ever seen one?”

The big man sat down on a bleached log of driftwood and smiled at her.

“No, I’m sorry to say that I haven’t. But I have seen many other very wonderful things. I might tell you about some of them, if you would come over here and sit by me.”

Rachel went unhesitatingly. When she reached him he pulled her down on his knee, and she liked it.

“What a nice little craft you are,” he said. “Do you suppose, now, that you could give me a kiss?”

As a rule, Rachel hated kissing. She could seldom be prevailed upon to kiss even her uncles — who knew it and liked to tease her for kisses until they aggravated her so terribly that she told them she couldn’t bear men. But now she promptly put her arms about this strange man’s neck and gave him a hearty smack.

“I like you,” she said frankly.

She felt his arms tighten suddenly about her. The blue eyes looking into hers grew misty and very tender. Then, all at once, Rachel knew who he was. He was her father. She did not say anything, but she laid her curly head down on his shoulder and felt a great happiness, as of one who had come into some longed-for haven.

If David Spencer realized that she understood he said nothing. Instead, he began to tell her fascinating stories of far lands he had visited, and strange things he had seen. Rachel listened entranced, as if she were hearkening to a fairy tale. Yes, he was just as she had dreamed him. She had always been sure he could tell beautiful stories.

“Come up to the house and I’ll show you some pretty things,” he said finally.

Then followed a wonderful hour. The little low-ceilinged room, with its square window, into which he took her, was filled with the flotsam and jetsam of his roving life — things beautiful and odd and strange beyond all telling. The things that pleased Rachel most were two huge shells on the chimney piece — pale pink shells with big crimson and purple spots.

“Oh, I didn’t know there could be such pretty things in the world,” she exclaimed.

“If you would like,” began the big man; then he paused for a moment. “I’ll show you something prettier still.”

Rachel felt vaguely that he meant to say something else when he began; but she forgot to wonder what it was when she saw what he brought out of a little corner cupboard. It was a teapot of some fine, glistening purple ware, coiled over by golden dragons with gilded claws and scales. The lid looked like a beautiful golden flower and the handle was a coil of a dragon’s tail. Rachel sat and looked at it rapt-eyed.

“That’s the only thing of any value I have in the world — now,” he said.

Rachel knew there was something very sad in his eyes and voice. She longed to kiss him again and comfort him. But suddenly he began to laugh, and then he rummaged out some goodies for her to eat, sweetmeats more delicious than she had ever imagined. While she nibbled them he took down an old violin and played music that made her want to dance and sing. Rachel was perfectly happy. She wished she might stay forever in that low, dim room with all its treasures.

“I see your little friends coming around the point,” he said, finally. “I suppose you must go. Put the rest of the goodies in your pocket.”

He took her up in his arms and held her tightly against his breast for a single moment. She felt him kissing her hair.

“There, run along, little girl. Good-by,” he said gently.

“Why don’t you ask me to come and see you again?” cried Rachel, half in tears. “I’m coming ANYHOW.”

“If you can come, COME,” he said. “If you don’t come, I shall know it is because you can’t — and that is much to know. I’m very, very, VERY glad, little woman, that you have come once.”

Rachel was sitting demurely on the skids when her companions came back. They had not seen her leaving the house, and she said not a word to them of her experiences. She only smiled mysteriously when they asked her if she had been lonesome.

That night, for the first time, she mentioned her father’s name in her prayers. She never forgot to do so afterwards. She always said, “bless mother — and father,” with an instinctive pause between the two names — a pause which indicated new realization of the tragedy which had sundered them. And the tone in which she said “father” was softer and more tender than the one which voiced “mother.”

Rachel never visited the Cove again. Isabella Spencer discovered that the children had been there, and, although she knew nothing of Rachel’s interview with her father, she told the child that she must never again go to that part of the shore.

Rachel shed many a bitter tear in secret over this command; but she obeyed it. Thenceforth there had been no communication between her and her father, save the unworded messages of soul to soul across whatever may divide them.

David Spencer’s invitation to his daughter’s wedding was sent with the others, and the remaining days of Rachel’s maidenhood slipped away in a whirl of preparation and excitement in which her mother reveled, but which was distasteful to the girl.

The wedding day came at last, breaking softly and fairly over the great sea in a sheen of silver and pearl and rose, a September day, as mild and beautiful as June.

The ceremony was to be performed at eight o'clock in the evening. At seven Rachel stood in her room, fully dressed and alone. She had no bridesmaid, and she had asked her cousins to leave her to herself in this last solemn hour of girlhood. She looked very fair and sweet in the sunset-light that showered through the birches. Her wedding gown was a fine, sheer organdie, simply and daintily made. In the loose waves of her bright hair she wore her bridegroom's flowers, roses as white as a virgin's dream. She was very happy; but her happiness was faintly threaded with the sorrow inseparable from all change.

Presently her mother came in, carrying a small basket.

"Here is something for you, Rachel. One of the boys from the harbor brought it up. He was bound to give it into your own hands — said that was his orders. I just took it and sent him to the right-about — told him I'd give it to you at once, and that that was all that was necessary."

She spoke coldly. She knew quite well who had sent the basket, and she resented it; but her resentment was not quite strong enough to overcome her curiosity. She stood silently by while Rachel unpacked the basket.

Rachel's hands trembled as she took off the cover. Two huge pink-spotted shells came first. How well she remembered them! Beneath them, carefully wrapped up in a square of foreign-looking, strangely scented silk, was the dragon teapot. She held it in her hands and gazed at it with tears gathering thickly in her eyes.

"Your father sent that," said Isabella Spencer with an odd sound in her voice. "I remember it well. It was among the things I packed up and sent after him. His father had brought it home from China fifty years ago, and he prized it beyond anything. They used to say it was worth a lot of money."

"Mother, please leave me alone for a little while," said Rachel, imploringly. She had caught sight of a little note at the bottom of the basket, and she felt that she could not read it under her mother's eyes.

Mrs. Spencer went out with unaccustomed acquiescence, and Rachel went quickly to the window, where she read her letter by the fading gleams

of twilight. It was very brief, and the writing was that of a man who holds a pen but seldom.

“My dear little girl,” it ran, “I’m sorry I can’t go to your wedding. It was like you to ask me — for I know it was your doing. I wish I could see you married, but I can’t go to the house I was turned out of. I hope you will be very happy. I am sending you the shells and teapot you liked so much. Do you remember that day we had such a good time? I would liked to have seen you again before you were married, but it can’t be.

”Your loving father,
”DAVID SPENCER.”

Rachel resolutely blinked away the tears that filled her eyes. A fierce desire for her father sprang up in her heart — an insistent hunger that would not be denied. She **MUST** see her father; she **MUST** have his blessing on her new life. A sudden determination took possession of her whole being — a determination to sweep aside all conventionalities and objections as if they had not been.

It was now almost dark. The guests would not be coming for half an hour yet. It was only fifteen minutes’ walk over the hill to the Cove. Hastily Rachel shrouded herself in her new raincoat, and drew a dark, protecting hood over her gay head. She opened the door and slipped noiselessly downstairs. Mrs. Spencer and her assistants were all busy in the back part of the house. In a moment Rachel was out in the dewy garden. She would go straight over the fields. Nobody would see her.

It was quite dark when she reached the Cove. In the crystal cup of the sky over her the stars were blinking. Flying flakes of foam were scurrying over the sand like elfin things. A soft little wind was crooning about the eaves of the little gray house where David Spencer was sitting, alone in the twilight, his violin on his knee. He had been trying to play, but could not. His heart yearned after his daughter — yes, and after a long-estranged bride of his youth. His love of the sea was sated forever; his love for wife and child still cried for its own under all his old anger and stubbornness.

The door opened suddenly and the very Rachel of whom he was dreaming came suddenly in, flinging off her wraps and standing forth in her young beauty and bridal adornments, a splendid creature, almost lighting up the gloom with her radiance.

“Father,” she cried, brokenly, and her father’s eager arms closed around her.

Back in the house she had left, the guests were coming to the wedding. There were jests and laughter and friendly greeting. The bridegroom came, too, a slim, dark-eyed lad who tiptoed bashfully upstairs to the spare room, from which he presently emerged to confront Mrs. Spencer on the landing.

“I want to see Rachel before we go down,” he said, blushing.

Mrs. Spencer deposited a wedding present of linen on the table which was already laden with gifts, opening the door of Rachel’s room, and called her. There was no reply; the room was dark and still. In sudden alarm, Isabella Spencer snatched the lamp from the hall table and held it up. The little white room was empty. No blushing, white-clad bride tenanted it. But David Spencer’s letter was lying on the stand. She caught it up and read it.

“Rachel is gone,” she gasped. A flash of intuition had revealed to her where and why the girl had gone.

“Gone!” echoed Frank, his face blanching. His pallid dismay recalled Mrs. Spencer to herself. She gave a bitter, ugly little laugh.

“Oh, you needn’t look so scared, Frank. She hasn’t run away from you. Hush; come in here — shut the door. Nobody must know of this. Nice gossip it would make! That little fool has gone to the Cove to see her — her father. I know she has. It’s just like what she would do. He sent her those presents — look — and this letter. Read it. She has gone to coax him to come and see her married. She was crazy about it. And the minister is here and it is halfpast seven. She’ll ruin her dress and shoes in the dust and dew. And what if some one has seen her! Was there ever such a little fool?”

Frank's presence of mind had returned to him. He knew all about Rachel and her father. She had told him everything.

"I'll go after her," he said gently. "Get me my hat and coat. I'll slip down the back stairs and over to the Cove."

"You must get out of the pantry window, then," said Mrs. Spencer firmly, mingling comedy and tragedy after her characteristic fashion. "The kitchen is full of women. I won't have this known and talked about if it can possibly be helped."

The bridegroom, wise beyond his years in the knowledge that it was well to yield to women in little things, crawled obediently out of the pantry window and darted through the birch wood. Mrs. Spencer had stood quakingly on guard until he had disappeared.

So Rachel had gone to her father! Like had broken the fetters of years and fled to like.

"It isn't much use fighting against nature, I guess," she thought grimly. "I'm beat. He must have thought something of her, after all, when he sent her that teapot and letter. And what does he mean about the 'day they had such a good time'? Well, it just means that she's been to see him before, sometime, I suppose, and kept me in ignorance of it all."

Mrs. Spencer shut down the pantry window with a vicious thud.

"If only she'll come quietly back with Frank in time to prevent gossip I'll forgive her," she said, as she turned to the kitchen.

Rachel was sitting on her father's knee, with both her white arms around his neck, when Frank came in. She sprang up, her face flushed and appealing, her eyes bright and dewy with tears. Frank thought he had never seen her look so lovely.

"Oh, Frank, is it very late? Oh, are you angry?" she exclaimed timidly.

"No, no, dear. Of course I'm not angry. But don't you think you'd better come back now? It's nearly eight and everybody is waiting."

"I've been trying to coax father to come up and see me married," said Rachel. "Help me, Frank."

“You’d better come, sir,” said Frank, heartily, “I’d like it as much as Rachel would.”

David Spencer shook his head stubbornly.

“No, I can’t go to that house. I was locked out of it. Never mind me. I’ve had my happiness in this half hour with my little girl. I’d like to see her married, but it isn’t to be.”

“Yes, it is to be — it shall be,” said Rachel resolutely. “You SHALL see me married. Frank, I’m going to be married here in my father’s house! That is the right place for a girl to be married. Go back and tell the guests so, and bring them all down.”

Frank looked rather dismayed. David Spencer said deprecatingly:

“Little girl, don’t you think it would be—”

“I’m going to have my own way in this,” said Rachel, with a sort of tender finality. “Go, Frank. I’ll obey you all my life after, but you must do this for me. Try to understand,” she added beseechingly.

“Oh, I understand,” Frank reassured her. “Besides, I think you are right. But I was thinking of your mother. She won’t come.”

“Then you tell her that if she doesn’t come I shan’t be married at all,” said Rachel. She was betraying unsuspected ability to manage people. She knew that ultimatum would urge Frank to his best endeavors.

Frank, much to Mrs. Spencer’s dismay, marched boldly in at the front door upon his return. She pounced on him and whisked him out of sight into the supper room.

“Where’s Rachel? What made you come that way? Everybody saw you!”

“It makes no difference. They will all have to know, anyway. Rachel says she is going to be married from her father’s house, or not at all. I’ve come back to tell you so.”

Isabella’s face turned crimson.

“Rachel has gone crazy. I wash my hands of this affair. Do as you please. Take the guests — the supper, too, if you can carry it.”

“We’ll all come back here for supper,” said Frank, ignoring the sarcasm. “Come, Mrs. Spencer, let’s make the best of it.”

“Do you suppose that I am going to David Spencer’s house?”
said

Isabella Spencer violently.

“Oh you MUST come, Mrs. Spencer,” cried poor Frank desperately. He began to fear that he would lose his bride past all finding in this maze of triple stubbornness. “Rachel says she won’t be married at all if you don’t go, too. Think what a talk it will make. You know she will keep her word.”

Isabella Spencer knew it. Amid all the conflict of anger and revolt in her soul was a strong desire not to make a worse scandal than must of necessity be made. The desire subdued and tamed her, as nothing else could have done.

“I will go, since I have to,” she said icily. “What can’t be cured must be endured. Go and tell them.”

Five minutes later the sixty wedding guests were all walking over the fields to the Cove, with the minister and the bridegroom in the front of the procession. They were too amazed even to talk about the strange happening. Isabella Spencer walked behind, fiercely alone.

They all crowded into the little room of the house at the Cove, and a solemn hush fell over it, broken only by the purr of the seawind around it and the croon of the waves on the shore. David Spencer gave his daughter away; but, when the ceremony was concluded, Isabella was the first to take the girl in her arms. She clasped her and kissed her, with tears streaming down her pale face, all her nature melted in a mother’s tenderness.

“Rachel! Rachel! My child, I hope and pray that you may be happy,” she said brokenly.

In the surge of the suddenly merry crowd of well-wishers around the bride and groom, Isabella was pushed back into a shadowy corner behind a heap of sails and ropes. Looking up, she found herself crushed against David Spencer. For the first time in twenty years the eyes of husband and

wife met. A strange thrill shot to Isabella's heart; she felt herself trembling.

"Isabella." It was David's voice in her ear — a voice full of tenderness and pleading — the voice of the young wooer of her girlhood—"Is it too late to ask you to forgive me? I've been a stubborn fool — but there hasn't been an hour in all these years that I haven't thought about you and our baby and longed for you."

Isabella Spencer had hated this man; yet her hate had been but a parasite growth on a nobler stem, with no abiding roots of its own. It withered under his words, and lo, there was the old love, fair and strong and beautiful as ever.

"Oh — David — I — was — all — to — blame," she murmured brokenly.

Further words were lost on her husband's lips.

When the hubbub of handshaking and congratulating had subsided, Isabella Spencer stepped out before the company. She looked almost girlish and bridal herself, with her flushed cheeks and bright eyes.

"Let's go back now and have supper, and be sensible," she said crisply. "Rachel, your father is coming, too. He is coming to STAY," — with a defiant glance around the circle. "Come, everybody."

They went back with laughter and raillery over the quiet autumn fields, faintly silvered now by the moon that was rising over the hills. The young bride and groom lagged behind; they were very happy, but they were not so happy, after all, as the old bride and groom who walked swiftly in front. Isabella's hand was in her husband's and sometimes she could not see the moonlit hills for a mist of glorified tears.

"David," she whispered, as he helped her over the fence, "how can you ever forgive me?"

"There's nothing to forgive," he said. "We're only just married. Who ever heard of a bridegroom talking of forgiveness? Everything is beginning over new for us, my girl."

Jane's Baby

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Miss Rosetta Ellis, with her front hair in curl-papers, and her back hair bound with a checked apron, was out in her breezy side yard under the firs, shaking her parlor rugs, when Mr. Nathan Patterson drove in. Miss Rosetta had seen him coming down the long red hill, but she had not supposed he would be calling at that time of the morning. So she had not run. Miss Rosetta always ran if anybody called and her front hair was in curl-papers; and, though the errand of the said caller might be life or death, he or she had to wait until Miss Rosetta had taken her hair out. Everybody in Avonlea knew this, because everybody in Avonlea knew everything about everybody else.

But Mr. Patterson had wheeled into the lane so quickly and unexpectedly that Miss Rosetta had had no time to run; so, twitching off the checked apron, she stood her ground as calmly as might be under the disagreeable consciousness of curl-papers.

“Good morning, Miss Ellis,” said Mr. Patterson, so somberly that Miss Rosetta instantly felt that he was the bearer of bad news. Usually Mr. Patterson’s face was as broad and beaming as a harvest moon. Now his expression was very melancholy and his voice positively sepulchral.

“Good morning,” returned Miss Rosetta, crisply and cheerfully. She, at any rate, would not go into eclipse until she knew the reason therefor. “It is a fine day.”

“A very fine day,” assented Mr. Patterson, solemnly. “I have just come from the Wheeler place, Miss Ellis, and I regret to say—”

“Charlotte is sick!” cried Miss Rosetta, rapidly. “Charlotte has got another spell with her heart! I knew it! I’ve been expecting to hear it! Any woman that drives about the country as much as she does is liable to heart disease at any moment. I never go outside of my gate but I meet her gadding off somewhere. Goodness knows who looks after her place. I

shouldn't like to trust as much to a hired man as she does. Well, it is very kind of you, Mr. Patterson, to put yourself out to the extent of calling to tell me that Charlotte is sick, but I don't really see why you should take so much trouble — I really don't. It doesn't matter to me whether Charlotte is sick or whether she isn't. YOU know that perfectly well, Mr. Patterson, if anybody does. When Charlotte went and got married, on the sly, to that good-for-nothing Jacob Wheeler—”

“Mrs. Wheeler is quite well,” interrupted Mr. Patterson desperately. “Quite well. Nothing at all the matter with her, in fact. I only—”

“Then what do you mean by coming here and telling me she wasn't, and frightening me half to death?” demanded Miss Rosetta, indignantly. “My own heart isn't very strong — it runs in our family — and my doctor warned me to avoid all shocks and excitement. I don't want to be excited, Mr. Patterson. I won't be excited, not even if Charlotte has another spell. It's perfectly useless for you to try to excite me, Mr. Patterson.”

“Bless the woman, I'm not trying to excite anybody!” declared Mr.

Patterson in exasperation. “I merely called to tell you—”

“To tell me WHAT?” said Miss Rosetta. “How much longer do you mean to keep me in suspense, Mr. Patterson. No doubt you have abundance of spare time, but — I — have NOT.”

“ — that your sister, Mrs. Wheeler, has had a letter from a cousin of yours, and she's in Charlottetown. Mrs. Roberts, I think her name is—”

“Jane Roberts,” broke in Miss Rosetta. “Jane Ellis she was, before she was married. What was she writing to Charlotte about? Not that I want to know, of course. I'm not interested in Charlotte's correspondence, goodness knows. But if Jane had anything in particular to write about she should have written to ME. I am the oldest. Charlotte had no business to get a letter from Jane Roberts without consulting me. It's just like her underhanded ways. She got married the same way. Never said a word to me about it, but just sneaked off with that unprincipled Jacob Wheeler—”

“Mrs. Roberts is very ill. I understand,” persisted Mr. Patterson, nobly resolved to do what he had come to do, “dying, in fact, and—”

“Jane ill! Jane dying!” exclaimed Miss Rosetta. “Why, she was the healthiest girl I ever knew! But then I’ve never seen her, nor heard from her, since she got married fifteen years ago. I dare say her husband was a brute and neglected her, and she’s pined away by slow degrees. I’ve no faith in husbands. Look at Charlotte! Everybody knows how Jacob Wheeler used her. To be sure, she deserved it, but—”

“Mrs. Roberts’ husband is dead,” said Mr. Patterson. “Died about two months ago, I understand, and she has a little baby six months old, and she thought perhaps Mrs. Wheeler would take it for old times’ sake—”

“Did Charlotte ask you to call and tell me this?” demanded Miss Rosetta eagerly.

“No; she just told me what was in the letter. She didn’t mention you; but I thought, perhaps, you ought to be told—”

“I knew it,” said Miss Rosetta in a tone of bitter assurance. “I could have told you so. Charlotte wouldn’t even let me know that Jane was ill. Charlotte would be afraid I would want to get the baby, seeing that Jane and I were such intimate friends long ago. And who has a better right to it than me, I should like to know? Ain’t I the oldest? And haven’t I had experience in bringing up babies? Charlotte needn’t think she is going to run the affairs of our family just because she happened to get married. Jacob Wheeler—”

“I must be going,” said Mr. Patterson, gathering up his reins thankfully.

“I am much obliged to you for coming to tell me about Jane,” said Miss Rosetta, “even though you have wasted a lot of precious time getting it out. If it hadn’t been for you I suppose I should never have known it at all. As it is, I shall start for town just as soon as I can get ready.”

“You’ll have to hurry if you want to get ahead of Mrs. Wheeler,” advised Mr. Patterson. “She’s packing her trunk and going on the morning train.”

“I’ll pack a valise and go on the afternoon train,” retorted Miss Rosetta triumphantly. “I’ll show Charlotte she isn’t running the Ellis affairs. She married out of them into the Wheelers. She can attend to them. Jacob Wheeler was the most—”

But Mr. Patterson had driven away. He felt that he had done his duty in the face of fearful odds, and he did not want to hear anything more about Jacob Wheeler.

Rosetta Ellis and Charlotte Wheeler had not exchanged a word for ten years. Before that time they had been devoted to each other, living together in the little Ellis cottage on the White Sands road, as they had done ever since their parents’ death. The trouble began when Jacob Wheeler had commenced to pay attention to Charlotte, the younger and prettier of two women who had both ceased to be either very young or very pretty. Rosetta had been bitterly opposed to the match from the first. She vowed she had no use for Jacob Wheeler. There were not lacking malicious people to hint that this was because the aforesaid Jacob Wheeler had selected the wrong sister upon whom to bestow his affections. Be that as it might, Miss Rosetta certainly continued to render the course of Jacob Wheeler’s true love exceedingly rough and tumultuous. The end of it was that Charlotte had gone quietly away one morning and married Jacob Wheeler without Miss Rosetta’s knowing anything about it. Miss Rosetta had never forgiven her for it, and Charlotte had never forgiven the things Rosetta had said to her when she and Jacob returned to the Ellis cottage. Since then the sisters had been avowed and open foes, the only difference being that Miss Rosetta aired her grievances publicly, in season and out of season, while Charlotte was never heard to mention Rosetta’s name. Even the death of Jacob Wheeler, five years after the marriage, had not healed the breach.

Miss Rosetta took out her curl-papers, packed her valise, and caught the late afternoon train for Charlottetown, as she had threatened. All the way there she sat rigidly upright in her seat and held imaginary dialogues with Charlotte in her mind, running something like this on her part: —

“No, Charlotte Wheeler, you are not going to have Jane’s baby, and you’re very much mistaken if you think so. Oh, all right — we’ll see! You don’t know anything about babies, even if you are married. I do. Didn’t I take William Ellis’s baby, when his wife died? Tell me that, Charlotte Wheeler! And didn’t the little thing thrive with me, and grow strong and healthy? Yes, even you have to admit that it did, Charlotte Wheeler. And yet you have the presumption to think that you ought to have Jane’s baby! Yes, it is presumption, Charlotte Wheeler. And when William Ellis got married again, and took the baby, didn’t the child cling to me and cry as if I was its real mother? You know it did, Charlotte Wheeler. I’m going to get and keep Jane’s baby in spite of you, Charlotte Wheeler, and I’d like to see you try to prevent me — you that went and got married and never so much as let your own sister know of it! If I had got married in such a fashion, Charlotte Wheeler, I’d be ashamed to look anybody in the face for the rest of my natural life!”

Miss Rosetta was so interested in thus laying down the law to Charlotte, and in planning out the future life of Jane’s baby, that she didn’t find the journey to Charlottetown so long or tedious as might have been expected, considering her haste. She soon found her way to the house where her cousin lived. There, to her dismay and real sorrow, she learned that Mrs. Roberts had died at four o’clock that afternoon.

“She seemed dreadful anxious to live until she heard from some of her folks out in Avonlea,” said the woman who gave Miss Rosetta the information. “She had written to them about her little girl. She was my sister-in-law, and she lived with me ever since her husband died. I’ve done my best for her; but I’ve a big family of my own and I can’t see how I’m to keep the child. Poor Jane looked and longed for some one to come from Avonlea, but she couldn’t hold out. A patient, suffering creature she was!”

“I’m her cousin,” said Miss Rosetta, wiping her eyes, “and I have come for the baby. I’ll take it home with me after the funeral; and, if you please, Mrs. Gordon, let me see it right away, so it can get accustomed to me. Poor Jane! I wish I could have got here in time to see her, she and I

were such friends long ago. We were far more intimate and confidential than ever her and Charlotte was. Charlotte knows that, too!”

The vim with which Miss Rosetta snapped this out rather amazed

Mrs. Gordon, who couldn’t understand it at all. But she took Miss Rosetta upstairs to the room where the baby was sleeping.

“Oh, the little darling,” cried Miss Rosetta, all her old maidishness and oddity falling away from her like a garment, and all her innate and denied motherhood shining out in her face like a transforming illumination. “Oh, the sweet, dear, pretty little thing!”

The baby was a darling — a six-months’ old beauty with little golden ringlets curling and glistening all over its tiny head. As Miss Rosetta hung over it, it opened its eyes and then held out its tiny hands to her with a gurgle of confidence.

“Oh, you sweetest!” said Miss Rosetta rapturously, gathering it up in her arms. “You belong to me, darling — never, never, to that underhanded Charlotte! What is its name, Mrs. Gordon?”

“It wasn’t named,” said Mrs. Gordon. “Guess you’ll have to name it yourself, Miss Ellis.”

“Camilla Jane,” said Miss Rosetta without a moment’s hesitation. “Jane after its mother, of course; and I have always thought Camilla the prettiest name in the world. Charlotte would be sure to give it some perfectly heathenish name. I wouldn’t put it past her calling the poor innocent Mehitable.”

Miss Rosetta decided to stay in Charlottetown until after the funeral. That night she lay with the baby on her arm, listening with joy to its soft little breathing. She did not sleep or wish to sleep. Her waking fancies were more alluring than any visions of dreamland. Moreover, she gave a spice to them by occasionally snapping some vicious sentences out loud at Charlotte.

Miss Rosetta fully expected Charlotte along on the following morning and girded herself for the fray; but no Charlotte appeared. Night came; no

Charlotte. Another morning and no Charlotte. Miss Rosetta was hopelessly puzzled. What had happened? Dear, dear, had Charlotte taken a bad heart spell, on hearing that she, Rosetta, had stolen a march on her to Charlottetown? It was quite likely. You never knew what to expect of a woman who had married Jacob Wheeler!

The truth was, that the very evening Miss Rosetta had left Avonlea Mrs. Jacob Wheeler's hired man had broken his leg and had had to be conveyed to his distant home on a feather bed in an express wagon. Mrs. Wheeler could not leave home until she had obtained another hired man. Consequently, it was the evening after the funeral when Mrs. Wheeler whisked up the steps of the Gordon house and met Miss Rosetta coming out with a big white bundle in her arms.

The eyes of the two women met defiantly. Miss Rosetta's face wore an air of triumph, chastened by a remembrance of the funeral that afternoon. Mrs. Wheeler's face, except for eyes, was as expressionless as it usually was. Unlike the tall, fair, fat Miss Rosetta, Mrs. Wheeler was small and dark and thin, with an eager, careworn face.

"How is Jane?" she said abruptly, breaking the silence of ten years in saying it.

"Jane is dead and buried, poor thing," said Miss Rosetta calmly.

"I am taking her baby, little Camilla Jane, home with me."

"The baby belongs to me," cried Mrs. Wheeler passionately. "Jane wrote to me about her. Jane meant that I should have her. I've come for her."

"You'll go back without her then," said Miss Rosetta, serene in the possession that is nine points of the law. "The child is mine, and she is going to stay mine. You can make up your mind to that, Charlotte Wheeler. A woman who eloped to get married isn't fit to be trusted with a baby, anyhow. Jacob Wheeler—"

But Mrs. Wheeler had rushed past into the house. Miss Rosetta composedly stepped into the cab and drove to the station. She fairly bridled with triumph; and underneath the triumph ran a queer undercurrent of satisfaction over the fact that Charlotte had spoken to her at last. Miss

Rosetta would not look at this satisfaction, or give it a name, but it was there.

Miss Rosetta arrived safely back in Avonlea with Camilla Jane and within ten hours everybody in the settlement knew the whole story, and every woman who could stand on her feet had been up to the Ellis cottage to see the baby. Mrs. Wheeler arrived home twenty-four hours later, and silently betook herself to her farm. When her Avonlea neighbors sympathized with her in her disappointment, she said nothing, but looked all the more darkly determined. Also, a week later, Mr. William J. Blair, the Carmody storekeeper, had an odd tale to tell. Mrs. Wheeler had come to the store and bought a lot of fine flannel and muslin and valenciennes. Now, what in the name of time, did Mrs. Wheeler want with such stuff? Mr. William J. Blair couldn't make head or tail of it, and it worried him. Mr. Blair was so accustomed to know what everybody bought anything for that such a mystery quite upset him.

Miss Rosetta had exulted in the possession of little Camilla Jane for a month, and had been so happy that she had almost given up inveighing against Charlotte. Her conversations, instead of tending always to Jacob Wheeler, now ran Camilla Janeward; and this, folks thought, was an improvement.

One afternoon, Miss Rosetta, leaving Camilla Jane snugly sleeping in her cradle in the kitchen, had slipped down to the bottom of the garden to pick her currants. The house was hidden from her sight by the copse of cherry trees, but she had left the kitchen window open, so that she could hear the baby if it awakened and cried. Miss Rosetta sang happily as she picked her currants. For the first time since Charlotte had married Jacob Wheeler Miss Rosetta felt really happy — so happy that at there was no room in her heart for bitterness. In fancy she looked forward to the coming years, and saw Camilla Jane growing up into girlhood, fair and lovable.

“She’ll be a beauty,” reflected Miss Rosetta complacently. “Jane was a handsome girl. She shall always be dressed as nice as I can manage it, and I’ll get her an organ, and have her take painting and music lessons. Parties, too! I’ll give her a real coming-out party when she’s eighteen and the very

prettiest dress that's to be had. Dear me, I can hardly wait for her to grow up, though she's sweet enough now to make one wish she could stay a baby forever."

When Miss Rosetta returned to the kitchen, her eyes fell on an empty cradle. Camilla Jane was gone!

Miss Rosetta promptly screamed. She understood at a glance what had happened. Six months' old babies do not get out of their cradles and disappear through closed doors without any assistance.

"Charlotte has been here," gasped Miss Rosetta. "Charlotte has stolen Camilla Jane! I might have expected it. I might have known when I heard that story about her buying muslin and flannel. It's just like Charlotte to do such an underhand trick. But I'll go after her! I'll show her! She'll find out she has got Rosetta Ellis to deal with and no Wheeler!"

Like a frantic creature and wholly forgetting that her hair was in curl-papers, Miss Rosetta hurried up the hill and down the shore road to the Wheeler Farm — a place she had never visited in her life before.

The wind was offshore and only broke the bay's surface into long silvery ripples, and sent sheeny shadows flying out across it from every point and headland, like transparent wings.

The little gray house, so close to the purring waves that in storms their spray splashed over its very doorstep, seemed deserted. Miss Rosetta pounded lustily on the front door. This producing no result, she marched around to the back door and knocked. No answer. Miss Rosetta tried the door. It was locked.

"Guilty conscience," sniffed Miss Rosetta. "Well, I shall stay here until I see that perfidious Charlotte, if I have to camp in the yard all night."

Miss Rosetta was quite capable of doing this, but she was spared the necessity; walking boldly up to the kitchen window, and peering through it, she felt her heart swell with anger as she beheld Charlotte sitting calmly by the table with Camilla Jane on her knee. Beside her was a befrilled and bemuslined cradle, and on a chair lay the garments in which Miss Rosetta had dressed the baby. It was clad in an entirely new outfit, and seemed

quite at home with its new possessor. It was laughing and cooing, and making little dabs at her with its dimpled hands.

“Charlotte Wheeler,” cried Miss Rosetta, rapping sharply on the windowpane. “I’ve come for that child! Bring her out to me at once — at once, I say! How dare you come to my house and steal a baby? You’re no better than a common burglar. Give me Camilla Jane, I say!”

Charlotte came over to the window with the baby in her arms and triumph glittering in her eyes.

“There is no such child as Camilla Jane here,” she said. “This is Barbara Jane. She belongs to me.”

With that Mrs. Wheeler pulled down the shade.

Miss Rosetta had to go home. There was nothing else for her to do. On her way she met Mr. Patterson and told him in full the story of her wrongs. It was all over Avonlea by night, and created quite a sensation. Avonlea had not had such a toothsome bit of gossip for a long time.

Mrs. Wheeler exulted in the possession of Barbara Jane for six weeks, during which Miss Rosetta broke her heart with loneliness and longing, and meditated futile plots for the recovery of the baby. It was hopeless to think of stealing it back or she would have tried to. The hired man at the Wheeler place reported that Mrs. Wheeler never left it night or day for a single moment. She even carried it with her when she went to milk the cows.

“But my turn will come,” said Miss Rosetta grimly. “Camilla Jane is mine, and if she was called Barbara for a century it wouldn’t alter that fact! Barbara, indeed! Why not have called her Methusaleh and have done with it?”

One afternoon in October, when Miss Rosetta was picking her apples and thinking drearily about lost Camilla Jane, a woman came running breathlessly down the hill and into the yard. Miss Rosetta gave an exclamation of amazement and dropped her basket of apples. Of all incredible things! The woman was Charlotte — Charlotte who had never set foot on the grounds of the Ellis cottage since her marriage ten years

ago, Charlotte, bareheaded, wild-eyed, distraught, wringing her hands and sobbing.

Miss Rosetta flew to meet her.

“You’ve scalded Camilla Jane to death!” she exclaimed. “I always knew you would — always expected it!”

“Oh, for heaven’s sake, come quick, Rosetta!” gasped Charlotte.

“Barbara Jane is in convulsions and I don’t know what to do. The hired man has gone for the doctor. You were the nearest, so I came to you. Jenny White was there when they came on, so I left her and ran. Oh, Rosetta, come, come, if you have a spark of humanity in you! You know what to do for convulsions — you saved the Ellis baby when it had them. Oh, come and save Barbara Jane!”

“You mean Camilla Jane, I presume?” said Miss Rosetta firmly, in spite of her agitation.

For a second Charlotte Wheeler hesitated. Then she said passionately: “Yes, yes, Camilla Jane — any name you like! Only come.”

Miss Rosetta went, and not a moment too soon, either. The doctor lived eight miles away and the baby was very bad. The two women and Jenny White worked over her for hours. It was not until dark, when the baby was sleeping soundly and the doctor had gone, after telling Miss Rosetta that she had saved the child’s life, that a realization of the situation came home to them.

“Well,” said Miss Rosetta, dropping into an armchair with a long sigh of weariness, “I guess you’ll admit now, Charlotte Wheeler, that you are hardly a fit person to have charge of a baby, even if you had to go and steal it from me. I should think your conscience would reproach you — that is, if any woman who would marry Jacob Wheeler in such an underhanded fashion has a—”

“I — I wanted the baby,” sobbed Charlotte, tremulously. “I was so lonely here. I didn’t think it was any harm to take her, because Jane gave her to me in her letter. But you have saved her life, Rosetta, and you — you can have her back, although it will break my heart to give her up. But,

oh, Rosetta, won't you let me come and see her sometimes? I love her so I can't bear to give her up entirely."

"Charlotte," said Miss Rosetta firmly, "the most sensible thing for you to do is just to come back with the baby. You are worried to death trying to run this farm with the debt Jacob Wheeler left on it for you. Sell it, and come home with me. And we'll both have the baby then."

"Oh, Rosetta, I'd love to," faltered Charlotte. "I've — I've wanted to be good friends with you again so much. But I thought you were so hard and bitter you'd never make up."

"Maybe I've talked too much," conceded Miss Rosetta, "but you ought to know me well enough to know I didn't mean a word of it. It was your never saying anything, no matter what I said, that riled me up so bad. Let bygones be bygones, and come home, Charlotte."

"I will," said Charlotte resolutely, wiping away her tears. "I'm sick of living here and putting up with hired men. I'll be real glad to go home, Rosetta, and that's the truth. I've had a hard enough time. I s'pose you'll say I deserved it; but I was fond of Jacob, and—"

"Of course, of course. Why shouldn't you be?" said Miss Rosetta briskly. "I'm sure Jacob Wheeler was a good enough soul, if he was a little slack-twisted. I'd like to hear anybody say a word against him in my presence. Look at that blessed child, Charlotte. Isn't she the sweetest thing? I'm desperate glad you are coming back home, Charlotte. I've never been able to put up a decent mess of mustard pickles since you went away, and you were always such a hand with them! We'll be real snug and cozy again — you and me and little Camilla Barbara Jane."

The Dream-Child

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A man's heart — aye, and a woman's, too — should be light in the spring. The spirit of resurrection is abroad, calling the life of the world out of its wintry grave, knocking with radiant fingers at the gates of its tomb. It stirs in human hearts, and makes them glad with the old primal gladness they felt in childhood. It quickens human souls, and brings them, if so they will, so close to God that they may clasp hands with Him. It is a time of wonder and renewed life, and a great outward and inward rapture, as of a young angel softly clapping his hands for creation's joy. At least, so it should be; and so it always had been with me until the spring when the dream-child first came into our lives.

That year I hated the spring — I, who had always loved it so. As boy I had loved it, and as man. All the happiness that had ever been mine, and it was much, had come to blossom in the springtime. It was in the spring that Josephine and I had first loved each other, or, at least, had first come into the full knowledge that we loved. I think that we must have loved each other all our lives, and that each succeeding spring was a word in the revelation of that love, not to be understood until, in the fullness of time, the whole sentence was written out in that most beautiful of all beautiful springs.

How beautiful it was! And how beautiful she was! I suppose every lover thinks that of his lass; otherwise he is a poor sort of lover. But it was not only my eyes of love that made my dear lovely. She was slim and lithe as a young, white-stemmed birch tree; her hair was like a soft, dusky cloud; and her eyes were as blue as Avonlea harbor on a fair twilight, when all the sky is abloom over it. She had dark lashes, and a little red mouth that quivered when she was very sad or very happy, or when she loved very much — quivered like a crimson rose too rudely shaken by the wind. At such times what was a man to do save kiss it?

The next spring we were married, and I brought her home to my gray old homestead on the gray old harbor shore. A lonely place for a young bride, said Avonlea people. Nay, it was not so. She was happy here, even in my absences. She loved the great, restless harbor and the vast, misty sea beyond; she loved the tides, keeping their world-old tryst with the shore, and the gulls, and the croon of the waves, and the call of the winds in the fir woods at noon and even; she loved the moonrises and the sunsets, and the clear, calm nights when the stars seemed to have fallen into the water and to be a little dizzy from such a fall. She loved these things, even as I did. No, she was never lonely here then.

The third spring came, and our boy was born. We thought we had been happy before; now we knew that we had only dreamed a pleasant dream of happiness, and had awakened to this exquisite reality. We thought we had loved each other before; now, as I looked into my wife's pale face, blanched with its baptism of pain, and met the uplifted gaze of her blue eyes, aglow with the holy passion of motherhood, I knew we had only imagined what love might be. The imagination had been sweet, as the thought of the rose is sweet before the bud is open; but as the rose to the thought, so was love to the imagination of it.

"All my thoughts are poetry since baby came," my wife said once, rapturously.

Our boy lived for twenty months. He was a sturdy, toddling rogue, so full of life and laughter and mischief that, when he died, one day, after the illness of an hour, it seemed a most absurd thing that he should be dead — a thing I could have laughed at, until belief forced itself into my soul like a burning, searing iron.

I think I grieved over my little son's death as deeply and sincerely as ever man did, or could. But the heart of the father is not as the heart of the mother. Time brought no healing to Josephine; she fretted and pined; her cheeks lost their pretty oval, and her red mouth grew pale and drooping.

I hoped that spring might work its miracle upon her. When the buds swelled, and the old earth grew green in the sun, and the gulls came back to the gray harbor, whose very grayness grew golden and mellow, I thought

I should see her smile again. But, when the spring came, came the dream-child, and the fear that was to be my companion, at bed and board, from sunsetting to sunsetting.

One night I awakened from sleep, realizing in the moment of awakening that I was alone. I listened to hear whether my wife were moving about the house. I heard nothing but the little splash of waves on the shore below and the low moan of the distant ocean.

I rose and searched the house. She was not in it. I did not know where to seek her; but, at a venture, I started along the shore.

It was pale, fainting moonlight. The harbor looked like a phantom harbor, and the night was as still and cold and calm as the face of a dead man. At last I saw my wife coming to me along the shore. When I saw her, I knew what I had feared and how great my fear had been.

As she drew near, I saw that she had been crying; her face was stained with tears, and her dark hair hung loose over her shoulders in little, glossy ringlets like a child's. She seemed to be very tired, and at intervals she wrung her small hands together.

She showed no surprise when she met me, but only held out her hands to me as if glad to see me.

"I followed him — but I could not overtake him," she said with a sob. "I did my best — I hurried so; but he was always a little way ahead. And then I lost him — and so I came back. But I did my best — indeed I did. And oh, I am so tired!"

"Josie, dearest, what do you mean, and where have you been?" I said, drawing her close to me. "Why did you go out so — alone in the night?"

She looked at me wonderingly.

"How could I help it, David? He called me. I had to go."

"WHO called you?"

"The child," she answered in a whisper. "Our child, David — our pretty boy. I awakened in the darkness and heard him calling to me down on the shore. Such a sad, little wailing cry, David, as if he were cold and lonely and wanted his mother. I hurried out to him, but I could not find him. I could only hear the call, and I followed it on and on, far down the

shore. Oh, I tried so hard to overtake it, but I could not. Once I saw a little white hand beckoning to me far ahead in the moonlight. But still I could not go fast enough. And then the cry ceased, and I was there all alone on that terrible, cold, gray shore. I was so tired and I came home. But I wish I could have found him. Perhaps he does not know that I tried to. Perhaps he thinks his mother never listened to his call. Oh, I would not have him think that.”

“You have had a bad dream, dear,” I said. I tried to say it naturally; but it is hard for a man to speak naturally when he feels a mortal dread striking into his very vitals with its deadly chill.

“It was no dream,” she answered reproachfully. “I tell you I heard him calling me — me, his mother. What could I do but go to him? You cannot understand — you are only his father. It was not you who gave him birth. It was not you who paid the price of his dear life in pain. He would not call to you — he wanted his mother.”

I got her back to the house and to her bed, whither she went obediently enough, and soon fell into the sleep of exhaustion. But there was no more sleep for me that night. I kept a grim vigil with dread.

When I had married Josephine, one of those officious relatives that are apt to buzz about a man’s marriage told me that her grandmother had been insane all the latter part of her life. She had grieved over the death of a favorite child until she lost her mind, and, as the first indication of it, she had sought by nights a white dream-child which always called her, so she said, and led her afar with a little, pale, beckoning hand.

I had smiled at the story then. What had that grim old bygone to do with springtime and love and Josephine? But it came back to me now, hand in hand with my fear. Was this fate coming on my dear wife? It was too horrible for belief. She was so young, so fair, so sweet, this girl-wife of mine. It had been only a bad dream, with a frightened, bewildered waking. So I tried to comfort myself.

When she awakened in the morning she did not speak of what had happened and I did not dare to. She seemed more cheerful that day than she had been, and went about her household duties briskly and skillfully.

My fear lifted. I was sure now that she had only dreamed. And I was confirmed in my hopeful belief when two nights had passed away uneventfully.

Then, on the third night, he dream-child called to her again. I awakened from a troubled doze to find her dressing herself with feverish haste.

“He is calling me,” she cried. “Oh, don’t you hear him? Can’t you hear him? Listen — listen — the little, lonely cry! Yes, yes, my precious, mother is coming. Wait for me. Mother is coming to her pretty boy!”

I caught her hand and let her lead me where she would. Hand in hand we followed the dream-child down the harbor shore in that ghostly, clouded moonlight. Ever, she said, the little cry sounded before her. She entreated the dream-child to wait for her; she cried and implored and uttered tender mother-talk. But, at last, she ceased to hear the cry; and then, weeping, wearied, she let me lead her home again.

What a horror brooded over that spring — that so beautiful spring! It was a time of wonder and marvel; of the soft touch of silver rain on greening fields; of the incredible delicacy of young leaves; of blossom on the land and blossom in the sunset. The whole world bloomed in a flush and tremor of maiden loveliness, instinct with all the evasive, fleeting charm of spring and girlhood and young morning. And almost every night of this wonderful time the dream-child called his mother, and we roved the gray shore in quest of him.

In the day she was herself; but, when the night fell, she was restless and uneasy until she heard the call. Then follow it she would, even through storm and darkness. It was then, she said, that the cry sounded loudest and nearest, as if her pretty boy were frightened by the tempest. What wild, terrible roving we had, she straining forward, eager to overtake the dream-child; I, sick at heart, following, guiding, protecting, as best I could; then afterwards leading her gently home, heartbroken because she could not reach the child.

I bore my burden in secret, determining that gossip should not busy itself with my wife’s condition so long as I could keep it from becoming known. We had no near relatives — none with any right to share any

trouble — and whoso accepteth human love must bind it to his soul with pain.

I thought, however, that I should have medical advice, and I took our old doctor into my confidence. He looked grave when he heard my story. I did not like his expression nor his few guarded remarks. He said he thought human aid would avail little; she might come all right in time; humor her, as far as possible, watch over her, protect her. He needed not to tell me THAT.

The spring went out and summer came in — and the horror deepened and darkened. I knew that suspicions were being whispered from lip to lip. We had been seen on our nightly quests. Men and women began to look at us pityingly when we went abroad.

One day, on a dull, drowsy afternoon, the dream-child called. I knew then that the end was near; the end had been near in the old grandmother's case sixty years before when the dream-child called in the day. The doctor looked graver than ever when I told him, and said that the time had come when I must have help in my task. I could not watch by day and night. Unless I had assistance I would break down.

I did not think that I should. Love is stronger than that. And on one thing I was determined — they should never take my wife from me. No restraint sterner than a husband's loving hand should ever be put upon her, my pretty, piteous darling.

I never spoke of the dream-child to her. The doctor advised against it. It would, he said, only serve to deepen the delusion. When he hinted at an asylum I gave him a look that would have been a fierce word for another man. He never spoke of it again.

One night in August there was a dull, murky sunset after a dead, breathless day of heat, with not a wind stirring. The sea was not blue as a sea should be, but pink — all pink — a ghastly, staring, painted pink. I lingered on the harbor shore below the house until dark. The evening bells were ringing faintly and mournfully in a church across the harbor. Behind me, in the kitchen, I heard my wife singing. Sometimes now her spirits were fitfully high, and then she would sing the old songs of her girlhood.

But even in her singing was something strange, as if a wailing, unearthly cry rang through it. Nothing about her was sadder than that strange singing.

When I went back to the house the rain was beginning to fall; but there was no wind or sound in the air — only that dismal stillness, as if the world were holding its breath in expectation of a calamity.

Josie was standing by the window, looking out and listening. I tried to induce her to go to bed, but she only shook her head.

“I might fall asleep and not hear him when he called,” she said. “I am always afraid to sleep now, for fear he should call and his mother fail to hear him.”

Knowing it was of no use to entreat, I sat down by the table and tried to read. Three hours passed on. When the clock struck midnight she started up, with the wild light in her sunken blue eyes.

“He is calling,” she cried, “calling out there in the storm.

Yes, yes, sweet, I am coming!”

She opened the door and fled down the path to the shore. I snatched a lantern from the wall, lighted it, and followed. It was the blackest night I was ever out in, dark with the very darkness of death. The rain fell thickly and heavily. I overtook Josie, caught her hand, and stumbled along in her wake, for she went with the speed and recklessness of a distraught woman. We moved in the little flitting circle of light shed by the lantern. All around us and above us was a horrible, voiceless darkness, held, as it were, at bay by the friendly light.

“If I could only overtake him once,” moaned Josie. “If I could just kiss him once, and hold him close against my aching heart. This pain, that never leaves me, would leave me then. Oh, my pretty boy, wait for mother! I am coming to you. Listen, David; he cries — he cries so pitifully; listen! Can’t you hear it?”

I DID hear it! Clear and distinct, out of the deadly still darkness before us, came a faint, wailing cry. What was it? Was I, too, going mad, or WAS there something out there — something that cried and moaned — longing

for human love, yet ever retreating from human footsteps? I am not a superstitious man; but my nerve had been shaken by my long trial, and I was weaker than I thought. Terror took possession of me — terror unnameable. I trembled in every limb; clammy perspiration oozed from my forehead; I was possessed by a wild impulse to turn and flee — anywhere, away from that unearthly cry. But Josephine's cold hand gripped mine firmly, and led me on. That strange cry still rang in my ears. But it did not recede; it sounded clearer and stronger; it was a wail; but a loud, insistent wail; it was nearer — nearer; it was in the darkness just beyond us.

Then we came to it; a little dory had been beached on the pebbles and left there by the receding tide. There was a child in it — a boy, of perhaps two years old, who crouched in the bottom of the dory in water to his waist, his big, blue eyes wild and wide with terror, his face white and tearstained. He wailed again when he saw us, and held out his little hands.

My horror fell away from me like a discarded garment. THIS child was living. How he had come there, whence and why, I did not know and, in my state of mind, did not question. It was no cry of parted spirit I had heard — that was enough for me.

“Oh, the poor darling!” cried my wife.

She stooped over the dory and lifted the baby in her arms. His long, fair curls fell on her shoulder; she laid her face against his and wrapped her shawl around him.

“Let me carry him, dear,” I said. “He is very wet, and too heavy for you.”

“No, no, I must carry him. My arms have been so empty — they are full now. Oh, David, the pain at my heart has gone. He has come to me to take the place of my own. God has sent him to me out of the sea. He is wet and cold and tired. Hush, sweet one, we will go home.”

Silently I followed her home. The wind was rising, coming in sudden, angry gusts; the storm was at hand, but we reached shelter before it broke. Just as I shut our door behind us it smote the house with the roar of a

baffled beast. I thanked God that we were not out in it, following the dream-child.

“You are very wet, Josie,” I said. “Go and put on dry clothes at once.”

“The child must be looked to first,” she said firmly. “See how chilled and exhausted he is, the pretty dear. Light a fire quickly, David, while I get dry things for him.”

I let her have her way. She brought out the clothes our own child had worn and dressed the waif in them, rubbing his chilled limbs, brushing his wet hair, laughing over him, mothering him. She seemed like her old self.

For my own part, I was bewildered. All the questions I had not asked before came crowding to my mind how. Whose child was this? Whence had he come? What was the meaning of it all?

He was a pretty baby, fair and plump and rosy. When he was dried and fed, he fell asleep in Josie’s arms. She hung over him in a passion of delight. It was with difficulty I persuaded her to leave him long enough to change her wet clothes. She never asked whose he might be or from where he might have come. He had been sent to her from the sea; the dream-child had led her to him; that was what she believed, and I dared not throw any doubt on that belief. She slept that night with the baby on her arm, and in her sleep her face was the face of a girl in her youth, untroubled and unworn.

I expected that the morrow would bring some one seeking the baby. I had come to the conclusion that he must belong to the “Cove” across the harbor, where the fishing hamlet was; and all day, while Josie laughed and played with him, I waited and listened for the footsteps of those who would come seeking him. But they did not come. Day after day passed, and still they did not come.

I was in a maze of perplexity. What should I do? I shrank from the thought of the boy being taken away from us. Since we had found him the dream-child had never called. My wife seemed to have turned back from the dark borderland, where her feet had strayed to walk again with me in our own homely paths. Day and night she was her old, bright self, happy and serene in the new motherhood that had come to her. The only thing

strange in her was her calm acceptance of the event. She never wondered who or whose the child might be — never seemed to fear that he would be taken from her; and she gave him our dream-child's name.

At last, when a full week had passed, I went, in my bewilderment, to our old doctor.

"A most extraordinary thing," he said thoughtfully. "The child, as you say, must belong to the Spruce Cove people. Yet it is an almost unbelievable thing that there has been no search or inquiry after him. Probably there is some simple explanation of the mystery, however. I advise you to go over to the Cove and inquire. When you find the parents or guardians of the child, ask them to allow you to keep it for a time. It may prove your wife's salvation. I have known such cases. Evidently on that night the crisis of her mental disorder was reached. A little thing might have sufficed to turn her feet either way — back to reason and sanity, or into deeper darkness. It is my belief that the former has occurred, and that, if she is left in undisturbed possession of this child for a time, she will recover completely."

I drove around the harbor that day with a lighter heart than I had hoped ever to possess again. When I reached Spruce Cove the first person I met was old Abel Blair. I asked him if any child were missing from the Cove or along shore. He looked at me in surprise, shook his head, and said he had not heard of any. I told him as much of the tale as was necessary, leaving him to think that my wife and I had found the dory and its small passenger during an ordinary walk along the shore.

"A green dory!" he exclaimed. "Ben Forbes' old green dory has been missing for a week, but it was so rotten and leaky he didn't bother looking for it. But this child, sir — it beats me. What might he be like?"

I described the child as closely as possible.

"That fits little Harry Martin to a hair," said old Abel, perplexedly, "but, sir, it can't be. Or, if it is, there's been foul work somewhere. James Martin's wife died last winter, sir, and he died the next month. They left a baby and not much else. There weren't nobody to take the child but Jim's half-sister, Maggie Fleming. She lived here at the Cove, and, I'm sorry to

say, sir, she hadn't too good a name. She didn't want to be bothered with the baby, and folks say she neglected him scandalous. Well, last spring she begun talking of going away to the States. She said a friend of hers had got her a good place in Boston, and she was going to go and take little Harry. We supposed it was all right. Last Saturday she went, sir. She was going to walk to the station, and the last seen of her she was trudging along the road, carrying the baby. It hasn't been thought of since. But, sir, d'ye suppose she set that innocent child adrift in that old leaky dory to send him to his death? I knew Maggie was no better than she should be, but I can't believe she was as bad as that."

"You must come over with me and see if you can identify the child," I said. "If he is Harry Martin I shall keep him. My wife has been very lonely since our baby died, and she has taken a fancy to this little chap."

When we reached my home old Abel recognized the child as
Harry
Martin.

He is with us still. His baby hands led my dear wife back to health and happiness. Other children have come to us, she loves them all dearly; but the boy who bears her dead son's name is to her — aye, and to me — as dear as if she had given him birth. He came from the sea, and at his coming the ghostly dream-child fled, nevermore to lure my wife away from me with its exciting cry. Therefore I look upon him and love him as my firstborn.

The Brother Who Failed

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The Monroe family were holding a Christmas reunion at the old Prince Edward Island homestead at White Sands. It was the first time they had all been together under one roof since the death of their mother, thirty years before. The idea of this Christmas reunion had originated with Edith Monroe the preceding spring, during her tedious convalescence from a bad attack of pneumonia among strangers in an American city, where she had not been able to fill her concert engagements, and had more spare time in which to feel the tug of old ties and the homesick longing for her own people than she had had for years. As a result, when she recovered, she wrote to her second brother, James Monroe, who lived on the homestead; and the consequence was this gathering of the Monroes under the old roof-tree. Ralph Monroe for once laid aside the cares of his railroads, and the deceitfulness of his millions, in Toronto and took the long-promised, long-deferred trip to the homeland. Malcolm Monroe journeyed from the far western university of which he was president. Edith came, flushed with the triumph of her latest and most successful concert tour. Mrs. Woodburn, who had been Margaret Monroe, came from the Nova Scotia town where she lived a busy, happy life as the wife of a rising young lawyer. James, prosperous and hearty, greeted them warmly at the old homestead whose fertile acres had well repaid his skillful management.

They were a merry party, casting aside their cares and years, and harking back to joyous boyhood and girlhood once more. James had a family of rosy lads and lasses; Margaret brought her two blue-eyed little girls; Ralph's dark, clever-looking son accompanied him, and Malcolm brought his, a young man with a resolute face, in which there was less of boyishness than in his father's, and the eyes of a keen, perhaps a hard bargainer. The two cousins were the same age to a day, and it was a family joke among the Monroes that the stork must have mixed the babies, since

Ralph's son was like Malcolm in face and brain, while Malcolm's boy was a second edition of his uncle Ralph.

To crown all, Aunt Isabel came, too — a talkative, clever, shrewd old lady, as young at eighty-five as she had been at thirty, thinking the Monroe stock the best in the world, and beamingly proud of her nephews and nieces, who had gone out from this humble, little farm to destinies of such brilliance and influence in the world beyond.

I have forgotten Robert. Robert Monroe was apt to be forgotten. Although he was the oldest of the family, White Sands people, in naming over the various members of the Monroe family, would add, "and Robert," in a tone of surprise over the remembrance of his existence.

He lived on a poor, sandy little farm down by the shore, but he had come up to James' place on the evening when the guests arrived; they had all greeted him warmly and joyously, and then did not think about him again in their laughter and conversation. Robert sat back in a corner and listened with a smile, but he never spoke. Afterwards he had slipped noiselessly away and gone home, and nobody noticed his going. They were all gayly busy recalling what had happened in the old times and telling what had happened in the new.

Edith recounted the successes of her concert tours; Malcolm expatiated proudly on his plans for developing his beloved college; Ralph described the country through which his new railroad ran, and the difficulties he had had to overcome in connection with it. James, aside, discussed his orchard and his crops with Margaret, who had not been long enough away from the farm to lose touch with its interests. Aunt Isabel knitted and smiled complacently on all, talking now with one, now with the other, secretly quite proud of herself that she, an old woman of eighty-five, who had seldom been out of White Sands in her life, could discuss high finance with Ralph, and higher education with Malcolm, and hold her own with James in an argument on drainage.

The White Sands school teacher, an arch-eyed, red-mouthed bit a girl — a Bell from Avonlea — who boarded with the James Monroes, amused herself with the boys. All were enjoying themselves hugely, so it is not to

be wondered at that they did not miss Robert, who had gone home early because his old housekeeper was nervous if left alone at night.

He came again the next afternoon. From James, in the barnyard, he learned that Malcolm and Ralph had driven to the harbor, that Margaret and Mrs. James had gone to call on friends in Avonlea, and that Edith was walking somewhere in the woods on the hill. There was nobody in the house except Aunt Isabel and the teacher.

“You’d better wait and stay the evening,” said James, indifferently. “They’ll all be back soon.”

Robert went across the yard and sat down on the rustic bench in the angle of the front porch. It was a fine December evening, as mild as autumn; there had been no snow, and the long fields, sloping down from the homestead, were brown and mellow. A weird, dreamy stillness had fallen upon the purple earth, the windless woods, the rain of the valleys, the sere meadows. Nature seemed to have folded satisfied hands to rest, knowing that her long, wintry slumber was coming upon her. Out to sea, a dull, red sunset faded out into somber clouds, and the ceaseless voice of many waters came up from the tawny shore.

Robert rested his chin on his hand and looked across the vales and hills, where the feathery gray of leafless hardwoods was mingled with the sturdy, unfailing green of the conebearers. He was a tall, bent man, with thin, gray hair, a lined face, and deeply-set, gentle brown eyes — the eyes of one who, looking through pain, sees rapture beyond.

He felt very happy. He loved his family clannishly, and he was rejoiced that they were all again near to him. He was proud of their success and fame. He was glad that James had prospered so well of late years. There was no canker of envy or discontent in his soul.

He heard absently indistinct voices at the open hall window above the porch, where Aunt Isabel was talking to Kathleen Bell. Presently Aunt Isabel moved nearer to the window, and her words came down to Robert with startling clearness.

“Yes, I can assure you, Miss Bell, that I’m real proud of my nephews and nieces. They’re a smart family. They’ve almost all done well, and they

hadn't any of them much to begin with. Ralph had absolutely nothing and to-day he is a millionaire. Their father met with so many losses, what with his ill-health and the bank failing, that he couldn't help them any. But they've all succeeded, except poor Robert — and I must admit that he's a total failure."

"Oh, no, no," said the little teacher deprecatingly.

"A total failure!" Aunt Isabel repeated her words emphatically. She was not going to be contradicted by anybody, least of all a Bell from Avonlea. "He has been a failure since the time he was born. He is the first Monroe to disgrace the old stock that way. I'm sure his brothers and sisters must be dreadfully ashamed of him. He has lived sixty years and he hasn't done a thing worth while. He can't even make his farm pay. If he's kept out of debt it's as much as he's ever managed to do."

"Some men can't even do that," murmured the little school teacher. She was really so much in awe of this imperious, clever old Aunt Isabel that it was positive heroism on her part to venture even this faint protest.

"More is expected of a Monroe," said Aunt Isabel majestically.

"Robert Monroe is a failure, and that is the only name for him."

Robert Monroe stood up below the window in a dizzy, uncertain fashion. Aunt Isabel had been speaking of him! He, Robert, was a failure, a disgrace to his blood, of whom his nearest and dearest were ashamed! Yes, it was true; he had never realized it before; he had known that he could never win power or accumulate riches, but he had not thought that mattered much. Now, through Aunt Isabel's scornful eyes, he saw himself as the world saw him — as his brothers and sisters must see him. THERE lay the sting. What the world thought of him did not matter; but that his own should think him a failure and disgrace was agony. He moaned as he started to walk across the yard, only anxious to hide his pain and shame away from all human sight, and in his eyes was the look of a gentle animal which had been stricken by a cruel and unexpected blow.

Edith Monroe, who, unaware of Robert's proximity, had been standing on the other side of the porch, saw that look, as he hurried past her,

unseeing. A moment before her dark eyes had been flashing with anger at Aunt Isabel's words; now the anger was drowned in a sudden rush of tears.

She took a quick step after Robert, but checked the impulse. Not then — and not by her alone — could that deadly hurt be healed. Nay, more, Robert must never suspect that she knew of any hurt. She stood and watched him through her tears as he went away across the lowlying shore fields to hide his broken heart under his own humble roof. She yearned to hurry after him and comfort him, but she knew that comfort was not what Robert needed now. Justice, and justice only, could pluck out the sting, which otherwise must rankle to the death.

Ralph and Malcolm were driving into the yard. Edith went over to them.

“Boys,” she said resolutely, “I want to have a talk with you.”

The Christmas dinner at the old homestead was a merry one. Mrs. James spread a feast that was fit for the halls of Lucullus. Laughter, jest, and repartee flew from lip to lip. Nobody appeared to notice that Robert ate little, said nothing, and sat with his form shrinking in his shabby “best” suit, his gray head bent even lower than usual, as if desirous of avoiding all observation. When the others spoke to him he answered deprecatingly, and shrank still further into himself.

Finally all had eaten all they could, and the remainder of the plum pudding was carried out. Robert gave a low sigh of relief. It was almost over. Soon he would be able to escape and hide himself and his shame away from the mirthful eyes of these men and women who had earned the right to laugh at the world in which their success gave them power and influence. He — he — only — was a failure.

He wondered impatiently why Mrs. James did not rise. Mrs. James merely leaned comfortably back in her chair, with the righteous expression of one who has done her duty by her fellow creatures' palates, and looked at Malcolm.

Malcolm rose in his place. Silence fell on the company; everybody looked suddenly alert and expectant, except Robert. He still sat with bowed head, wrapped in his own bitterness.

“I have been told that I must lead off,” said Malcolm, “because I am supposed to possess the gift of gab. But, if I do, I am not going to use it for any rhetorical effect to-day. Simple, earnest words must express the deepest feelings of the heart in doing justice to its own. Brothers and sisters, we meet to-day under our own roof-tree, surrounded by the benedictions of the past years. Perhaps invisible guests are here — the spirits of those who founded this home and whose work on earth has long been finished. It is not amiss to hope that this is so and our family circle made indeed complete. To each one of us who are here in visible bodily presence some measure of success has fallen; but only one of us has been supremely successful in the only things that really count — the things that count for eternity as well as time — sympathy and unselfishness and self-sacrifice.

“I shall tell you my own story for the benefit of those who have not heard it. When I was a lad of sixteen I started to work out my own education. Some of you will remember that old Mr. Blair of Avonlea offered me a place in his store for the summer, at wages which would go far towards paying my expenses at the country academy the next winter. I went to work, eager and hopeful. All summer I tried to do my faithful best for my employer. In September the blow fell. A sum of money was missing from Mr. Blair’s till. I was suspected and discharged in disgrace. All my neighbors believed me guilty; even some of my own family looked upon me with suspicion — nor could I blame them, for the circumstantial evidence was strongly against me.”

Ralph and James looked ashamed; Edith and Margaret, who had not been born at the time referred to, lifted their faces innocently. Robert did not move or glance up. He hardly seemed to be listening.

“I was crushed in an agony of shame and despair,” continued Malcolm. “I believed my career was ruined. I was bent on casting all my ambitions behind me, and going west to some place where nobody knew me or my disgrace. But there was one person who believed in my innocence, who said to me, ‘You shall not give up — you shall not behave as if you were guilty. You are innocent, and in time your innocence will be proved.

Meanwhile show yourself a man. You have nearly enough to pay your way next winter at the Academy. I have a little I can give to help you out. Don't give in — never give in when you have done no wrong.'

"I listened and took his advice. I went to the Academy. My story was there as soon as I was, and I found myself sneered at and shunned. Many a time I would have given up in despair, had it not been for the encouragement of my counselor. He furnished the backbone for me. I was determined that his belief in me should be justified. I studied hard and came out at the head of my class. Then there seemed to be no chance of my earning any more money that summer. But a farmer at Newbridge, who cared nothing about the character of his help, if he could get the work out of them, offered to hire me. The prospect was distasteful but, urged by the man who believed in me, I took the place and endured the hardships. Another winter of lonely work passed at the Academy. I won the Farrell Scholarship the last year it was offered, and that meant an Arts course for me. I went to Redmond College. My story was not openly known there, but something of it got abroad, enough to taint my life there also with its suspicion. But the year I graduated, Mr. Blair's nephew, who, as you know, was the real culprit, confessed his guilt, and I was cleared before the world. Since then my career has been what is called a brilliant one. But" — Malcolm turned and laid his hand on Robert's thin shoulder—"all of my success I owe to my brother Robert. It is his success — not mine — and here to-day, since we have agreed to say what is too often left to be said over a coffin lid, I thank him for all he did for me, and tell him that there is nothing I am more proud of and thankful for than such a brother."

Robert had looked up at last, amazed, bewildered, incredulous. His face crimsoned as Malcolm sat down. But now Ralph was getting up.

"I am no orator as Malcolm is," he quoted gayly, "but I've got a story to tell, too, which only one of you knows. Forty years ago, when I started in life as a business man, money wasn't so plentiful with me as it may be to-day. And I needed it badly. A chance came my way to make a pile of it. It wasn't a clean chance. It was a dirty chance. It looked square on the surface; but, underneath, it meant trickery and roguery. I hadn't enough

perception to see that, though — I was fool enough to think it was all right. I told Robert what I meant to do. And Robert saw clear through the outward sham to the real, hideous thing underneath. He showed me what it meant and he gave me a preachment about a few Monroe Traditions of truth and honor. I saw what I had been about to do as he saw it — as all good men and true must see it. And I vowed then and there that I'd never go into anything that I wasn't sure was fair and square and clean through and through. I've kept that vow. I am a rich man, and not a dollar of my money is 'tainted' money. But I didn't make it. Robert really made every cent of my money. If it hadn't been for him I'd have been a poor man to-day, or behind prison bars, as are the other men who went into that deal when I backed out. I've got a son here. I hope he'll be as clever as his Uncle Malcolm; but I hope, still more earnestly, that he'll be as good and honorable a man as his Uncle Robert."

By this time Robert's head was bent again, and his face buried in his hands.

"My turn next," said James. "I haven't much to say — only this. After mother died I took typhoid fever. Here I was with no one to wait on me. Robert came and nursed me. He was the most faithful, tender, gentle nurse ever a man had. The doctor said Robert saved my life. I don't suppose any of the rest of us here can say we have saved a life."

Edith wiped away her tears and sprang up impulsively.

"Years ago," she said, "there was a poor, ambitious girl who had a voice. She wanted a musical education and her only apparent chance of obtaining it was to get a teacher's certificate and earn money enough to have her voice trained. She studied hard, but her brains, in mathematics at least, weren't as good as her voice, and the time was short. She failed. She was lost in disappointment and despair, for that was the last year in which it was possible to obtain a teacher's certificate without attending Queen's Academy, and she could not afford that. Then her oldest brother came to her and told her he could spare enough money to send her to the conservatory of music in Halifax for a year. He made her take it. She never knew till long afterwards that he had sold the beautiful horse which he

loved like a human creature, to get the money. She went to the Halifax conservatory. She won a musical scholarship. She has had a happy life and a successful career. And she owes it all to her brother Robert—”

But Edith could go no further. Her voice failed her and she sat down in tears. Margaret did not try to stand up.

“I was only five when my mother died,” she sobbed. “Robert was both father and mother to me. Never had child or girl so wise and loving a guardian as he was to me. I have never forgotten the lessons he taught me. Whatever there is of good in my life or character I owe to him. I was often headstrong and willful, but he never lost patience with me. I owe everything to Robert.”

Suddenly the little teacher rose with wet eyes and crimson cheeks.

“I have something to say, too,” she said resolutely. “You have spoken for yourselves. I speak for the people of White Sands. There is a man in this settlement whom everybody loves. I shall tell you some of the things he has done.”

“Last fall, in an October storm, the harbor lighthouse flew a flag of distress. Only one man was brave enough to face the danger of sailing to the lighthouse to find out what the trouble was. That was Robert Monroe. He found the keeper alone with a broken leg; and he sailed back and made — yes, MADE the unwilling and terrified doctor go with him to the lighthouse. I saw him when he told the doctor he must go; and I tell you that no man living could have set his will against Robert Monroe’s at that moment.

“Four years ago old Sarah Cooper was to be taken to the poorhouse. She was brokenhearted. One man took the poor, bedridden, fretful old creature into his home, paid for medical attendance, and waited on her himself, when his housekeeper couldn’t endure her tantrums and temper. Sarah Cooper died two years afterwards, and her latest breath was a benediction on Robert Monroe — the best man God ever made.

“Eight years ago Jack Blewitt wanted a place. Nobody would hire him, because his father was in the penitentiary, and some people thought Jack ought to be there, too. Robert Monroe hired him — and helped him, and

kept him straight, and got him started right — and Jack Blewitt is a hardworking, respected young man to-day, with every prospect of a useful and honorable life. There is hardly a man, woman, or child in White Sands who doesn't owe something to Robert Monroe!"

As Kathleen Bell sat down, Malcolm sprang up and held out his hands.

"Every one of us stand up and sing Auld Lang Syne," he cried.

Everybody stood up and joined hands, but one did not sing. Robert Monroe stood erect, with a great radiance on his face and in his eyes. His reproach had been taken away; he was crowned among his kindred with the beauty and blessing of sacred yesterdays.

When the singing ceased Malcolm's stern-faced son reached over and shook Robert's hands.

"Uncle Rob," he said heartily, "I hope that when I'm sixty I'll be as successful a man as you."

"I guess," said Aunt Isabel, aside to the little school teacher, as she wiped the tears from her keen old eyes, "that there's a kind of failure that's the best success."

The Return of Hester

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Just at dusk, that evening, I had gone upstairs and put on my muslin gown. I had been busy all day attending to the strawberry preserving — for Mary Sloane could not be trusted with that — and I was a little tired, and thought it was hardly worth while to change my dress, especially since there was nobody to see or care, since Hester was gone. Mary Sloane did not count.

But I did it because Hester would have cared if she had been here. She always liked to see me neat and dainty. So, although I was tired and sick at heart, I put on my pale blue muslin and dressed my hair.

At first I did my hair up in a way I had always liked; but had seldom worn, because Hester had disapproved of it. It became me; but I suddenly felt as if it were disloyal to her, so I took the puffs down again and arranged my hair in the plain, old-fashioned way she had liked. My hair, though it had a good many gray threads in it, was thick and long and brown still; but that did not matter — nothing mattered since Hester was dead and I had sent Hugh Blair away for the second time.

The Newbridge people all wondered why I had not put on mourning for Hester. I did not tell them it was because Hester had asked me not to. Hester had never approved of mourning; she said that if the heart did not mourn crape would not mend matters; and if it did there was no need of the external trappings of woe. She told me calmly, the night before she died, to go on wearing my pretty dresses just as I had always worn them, and to make no difference in my outward life because of her going.

“I know there will be a difference in your inward life,” she said wistfully.

And oh, there was! But sometimes I wondered uneasily, feeling almost conscience-stricken, whether it were wholly because Hester had left me —

whether it were not partly because, for a second time, I had shut the door of my heart in the face of love at her bidding.

When I had dressed I went downstairs to the front door, and sat on the sandstone steps under the arch of the Virginia creeper. I was all alone, for Mary Sloane had gone to Avonlea.

It was a beautiful night; the full moon was just rising over the wooded hills, and her light fell through the poplars into the garden before me. Through an open corner on the western side I saw the sky all silvery blue in the afterlight. The garden was very beautiful just then, for it was the time of the roses, and ours were all out — so many of them — great pink, and red, and white, and yellow roses.

Hester had loved roses and could never have enough of them. Her favorite bush was growing by the steps, all gloried over with blossoms — white, with pale pink hearts. I gathered a cluster and pinned it loosely on my breast. But my eyes filled as I did so — I felt so very, very desolate.

I was all alone, and it was bitter. The roses, much as I loved them, could not give me sufficient companionship. I wanted the clasp of a human hand, and the love-light in human eyes. And then I fell to thinking of Hugh, though I tried not to.

I had always lived alone with Hester. I did not remember our parents, who had died in my babyhood. Hester was fifteen years older than I, and she had always seemed more like a mother than a sister. She had been very good to me and had never denied me anything I wanted, save the one thing that mattered.

I was twenty-five before I ever had a lover. This was not, I think, because I was more unattractive than other women. The Merediths had always been the “big” family of Newbridge. The rest of the people looked up to us, because we were the granddaughters of old Squire Meredith. The Newbridge young men would have thought it no use to try to woo a Meredith.

I had not a great deal of family pride, as perhaps I should be ashamed to confess. I found our exalted position very lonely, and cared more for the simple joys of friendship and companionship which other girls had. But

Hester possessed it in a double measure; she never allowed me to associate on a level of equality with the young people of Newbridge. We must be very nice and kind and affable to them — noblesse oblige, as it were — but we must never forget that we were Merediths.

When I was twenty-five, Hugh Blair came to Newbridge, having bought a farm near the village. He was a stranger, from Lower Carmody, and so was not imbued with any preconceptions of Meredith superiority. In his eyes I was just a girl like others — a girl to be wooed and won by any man of clean life and honest heart. I met him at a little Sunday-School picnic over at Avonlea, which I attended because of my class. I thought him very handsome and manly. He talked to me a great deal, and at last he drove me home. The next Sunday evening he walked up from church with me.

Hester was away, or, of course, this would never have happened. She had gone for a month's visit to distant friends.

In that month I lived a lifetime. Hugh Blair courted me as the other girls in Newbridge were courted. He took me out driving and came to see me in the evenings, which we spent for the most part in the garden. I did not like the stately gloom and formality of our old Meredith parlor, and Hugh never seemed to feel at ease there. His broad shoulders and hearty laughter were oddly out of place among our faded, old-maidish furnishings.

Mary Sloane was very much pleased at Hugh's visit. She had always resented the fact that I had never had a "beau," seeming to think it reflected some slight or disparagement upon me. She did all she could to encourage him.

But when Hester returned and found out about Hugh she was very angry — and grieved, which hurt me far more. She told me that I had forgotten myself and that Hugh's visits must cease.

I had never been afraid of Hester before, but I was afraid of her then. I yielded. Perhaps it was very weak of me, but then I was always weak. I think that was why Hugh's strength had appealed so to me. I needed love

and protection. Hester, strong and self-sufficient, had never felt such a need. She could not understand. Oh, how contemptuous she was.

I told Hugh timidly that Hester did not approve of our friendship and that it must end. He took it quietly enough, and went away. I thought he did not care much, and the thought selfishly made my own heartache worse. I was very unhappy for a long time, but I tried not to let Hester see it, and I don't think she did. She was not very discerning in some things.

After a time I got over it; that is, the heartache ceased to ache all the time. But things were never quite the same again. Life always seemed rather dreary and empty, in spite of Hester and my roses and my Sunday-School.

I supposed that Hugh Blair would find him a wife elsewhere, but he did not. The years went by and we never met, although I saw him often at church. At such times Hester always watched me very closely, but there was no need of her to do so. Hugh made no attempt to meet me, or speak with me, and I would not have permitted it if he had. But my heart always yearned after him. I was selfishly glad he had not married, because if he had I could not have thought and dreamed of him — it would have been wrong. Perhaps, as it was, it was foolish; but it seemed to me that I must have something, if only foolish dreams, to fill my life.

At first there was only pain in the thought of him, but afterwards a faint, misty little pleasure crept in, like a mirage from a land of lost delight.

Ten years slipped away thus. And then Hester died. Her illness was sudden and short; but, before she died, she asked me to promise that I would never marry Hugh Blair.

She had not mentioned his name for years. I thought she had forgotten all about him.

“Oh, dear sister, is there any need of such a promise?” I asked, weeping. “Hugh Blair does not want to marry me now. He never will again.”

“He has never married — he has not forgotten you,” she said fiercely. “I could not rest in my grave if I thought you would disgrace your family

by marrying beneath you. Promise me, Margaret.”

I promised. I would have promised anything in my power to make her dying pillow easier. Besides, what did it matter? I was sure that Hugh would never think of me again.

She smiled when she heard me, and pressed my hand.

“Good little sister — that is right. You were always a good girl, Margaret — good and obedient, though a little sentimental and foolish in some ways. You are like our mother — she was always weak and loving. I took after the Merediths.”

She did, indeed. Even in her coffin her dark, handsome features preserved their expression of pride and determination. Somehow, that last look of her dead face remained in my memory, blotting out the real affection and gentleness which her living face had almost always shown me. This distressed me, but I could not help it. I wished to think of her as kind and loving, but I could remember only the pride and coldness with which she had crushed out my newborn happiness. Yet I felt no anger or resentment towards her for what she had done. I knew she had meant it for the best — my best. It was only that she was mistaken.

And then, a month after she had died, Hugh Blair came to me and asked me to be his wife. He said he had always loved me, and could never love any other woman.

All my old love for him reawakened. I wanted to say yes — to feel his strong arms about me, and the warmth of his love enfolding and guarding me. In my weakness I yearned for his strength.

But there was my promise to Hester — that promise given by her deathbed. I could not break it, and I told him so. It was the hardest thing I had ever done.

He did not go away quietly this time. He pleaded and reasoned and reproached. Every word of his hurt me like a knife-thrust. But I could not break my promise to the dead. If Hester had been living I would have braved her wrath and her estrangement and gone to him. But she was dead and I could not do it.

Finally he went away in grief and anger. That was three weeks ago — and now I sat alone in the moonlit rose-garden and wept for him. But after a time my tears dried and a very strange feeling came over me. I felt calm and happy, as if some wonderful love and tenderness were very near me.

And now comes the strange part of my story — the part which will not, I suppose, be believed. If it were not for one thing I think I should hardly believe it myself. I should feel tempted to think I had dreamed it. But because of that one thing I know it was real. The night was very calm and still. Not a breath of wind stirred. The moonshine was the brightest I had ever seen. In the middle of the garden, where the shadow of the poplars did not fall, it was almost as bright as day. One could have read fine print. There was still a little rose glow in the west, and over the airy boughs of the tall poplars one or two large, bright stars were shining. The air was sweet with a hush of dreams, and the world was so lovely that I held my breath over its beauty.

Then, all at once, down at the far end of the garden, I saw a woman walking. I thought at first that it must be Mary Sloane; but, as she crossed a moonlit path, I saw it was not our old servant's stout, homely figure. This woman was tall and erect.

Although no suspicion of the truth came to me, something about her reminded me of Hester. Even so had Hester liked to wander about the garden in the twilight. I had seen her thus a thousand times.

I wondered who the woman could be. Some neighbor, of course. But what a strange way for her to come! She walked up the garden slowly in the poplar shade. Now and then she stooped, as if to caress a flower, but she plucked none. Half way up she out in to the moonlight and walked across the plot of grass in the center of the garden. My heart gave a great throb and I stood up. She was quite near to me now — and I saw that it was Hester.

I can hardly say just what my feelings were at this moment. I know that I was not surprised. I was frightened and yet I was not frightened. Something in me shrank back in a sickening terror; but I, the real I, was not frightened. I knew that this was my sister, and that there could be no

reason why I should be frightened of her, because she loved me still, as she had always done. Further than this I was not conscious of any coherent thought, either of wonder or attempt at reasoning.

Hester paused when she came to within a few steps of me. In the moonlight I saw her face quite plainly. It wore an expression I had never before seen on it — a humble, wistful, tender look. Often in life Hester had looked lovingly, even tenderly, upon me; but always, as it were, through a mask of pride and sternness. This was gone now, and I felt nearer to her than ever before. I knew suddenly that she understood me. And then the half-conscious awe and terror some part of me had felt vanished, and I only realized that Hester was here, and that there was no terrible gulf of change between us.

Hester beckoned to me and said,
“Come.”

I stood up and followed her out of the garden. We walked side by side down our lane, under the willows and out to the road, which lay long and still in that bright, calm moonshine. I felt as if I were in a dream, moving at the bidding of a will not my own, which I could not have disputed even if I had wished to do so. But I did not wish it; I had only the feeling of a strange, boundless content.

We went down the road between the growths of young fir that bordered it. I smelled their balsam as we passed, and noticed how clearly and darkly their pointed tops came out against the sky. I heard the tread of my own feet on little twigs and plants in our way, and the trail of my dress over the grass; but Hester moved noiselessly.

Then we went through the Avenue — that stretch of road under the apple trees that Anne Shirley, over at Avonlea, calls “The White Way of Delight.” It was almost dark here; and yet I could see Hester’s face just as plainly as if the moon were shining on it; and whenever I looked at her she was always looking at me with that strangely gentle smile on her lips.

Just as we passed out of the Avenue, James Trent overtook us, driving. It seems to me that our feelings at a given moment are seldom what we would expect them to be. I simply felt annoyed that James Trent, the most

notorious gossip in Newbridge, should have seen me walking with Hester. In a flash I anticipated all the annoyance of it; he would talk of the matter far and wide.

But James Trent merely nodded and called out,

“Howdy, Miss Margaret. Taking a moonlight stroll by yourself?
Lovely night, ain’t it?”

Just then his horse suddenly swerved, as if startled, and broke into a gallop. They whirled around the curve of the road in an instant. I felt relieved, but puzzled. JAMES TRENT HAD NOT SEEN HESTER.

Down over the hill was Hugh Blair’s place. When we came to it, Hester turned in at the gate. Then, for the first time, I understood why she had come back, and a blinding flash of joy broke over my soul. I stopped and looked at her. Her deep eyes gazed into mine, but she did not speak.

We went on. Hugh’s house lay before us in the moonlight, grown over by a tangle of vines. His garden was on our right, a quaint spot, full of old-fashioned flowers growing in a sort of disorderly sweetness. I trod on a bed of mint, and the spice of it floated up to me like the incense of some strange, sacred, solemn ceremonial. I felt unspeakably happy and blessed.

When we came to the door Hester said,

“Knock, Margaret.”

I rapped gently. In a moment, Hugh opened it. Then that happened by which, in after days, I was to know that this strange thing was no dream or fancy of mine. Hugh looked not at me, but past me.

“Hester!” he exclaimed, with human fear and horror in his voice.

He leaned against the door-post, the big, strong fellow, trembling from head to foot.

“I have learned,” said Hester, “that nothing matters in all God’s universe, except love. There is no pride where I have been, and no false ideals.”

Hugh and I looked into each other’s eyes, wondering, and then we knew that we were alone.

The Little Brown Book of Miss Emily

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The first summer Mr. Irving and Miss Lavendar — Diana and I could never call her anything else, even after she was married — were at Echo Lodge after their marriage, both Diana and I spent a great deal of time with them. We became acquainted with many of the Grafton people whom we had not known before, and among others, the family of Mr. Mack Leith. We often went up to the Leiths in the evening to play croquet. Millie and Margaret Leith were very nice girls, and the boys were nice, too. Indeed, we liked every one in the family, except poor old Miss Emily Leith. We tried hard enough to like her, because she seemed to like Diana and me very much, and always wanted to sit with us and talk to us, when we would much rather have been somewhere else. We often felt a good deal of impatience at these times, but I am very glad to think now that we never showed it.

In a way, we felt sorry for Miss Emily. She was Mr. Leith's old-maid sister and she was not of much importance in the household. But, though we felt sorry for her, we couldn't like her. She really was fussy and meddlesome; she liked to poke a finger into every one's pie, and she was not at all tactful. Then, too, she had a sarcastic tongue, and seemed to feel bitter towards all the young folks and their love affairs. Diana and I thought this was because she had never had a lover of her own.

Somehow, it seemed impossible to think of lovers in connection with Miss Emily. She was short and stout and pudgy, with a face so round and fat and red that it seemed quite featureless; and her hair was scanty and gray. She walked with a waddle, just like Mrs. Rachel Lynde, and she was always rather short of breath. It was hard to believe Miss Emily had ever been young; yet old Mr. Murray, who lived next door to the Leiths, not only expected us to believe it, but assured us that she had been very pretty.

"THAT, at least, is impossible," said Diana to me.

And then, one day, Miss Emily died. I'm afraid no one was very sorry. It seems to me a most dreadful thing to go out of the world and leave not one person behind to be sorry because you have gone. Miss Emily was dead and buried before Diana and I heard of it at all. The first I knew of it was when I came home from Orchard Slope one day and found a queer, shabby little black horsehair trunk, all studded with brass nails, on the floor of my room at Green Gables. Marilla told me that Jack Leith had brought it over, and said that it had belonged to Miss Emily and that, when she was dying, she asked them to send it to me.

"But what is in it? And what am I to do with it?" I asked in bewilderment.

"There was nothing said about what you were to do with it. Jack said they didn't know what was in it, and hadn't looked into it, seeing that it was your property. It seems a rather queer proceeding — but you're always getting mixed up in queer proceedings, Anne. As for what is in it, the easiest way to find out, I reckon, is to open it and see. The key is tied to it. Jack said Miss Emily said she wanted you to have it because she loved you and saw her lost youth in you. I guess she was a bit delirious at the last and wandered a good deal. She said she wanted you 'to understand her.'"

I ran over to Orchard Slope and asked Diana to come over and examine the trunk with me. I hadn't received any instructions about keeping its contents secret and I knew Miss Emily wouldn't mind Diana knowing about them, whatever they were.

It was a cool, gray afternoon and we got back to Green Gables just as the rain was beginning to fall. When we went up to my room the wind was rising and whistling through the boughs of the big old Snow Queen outside of my window. Diana was excited, and, I really believe, a little bit frightened.

We opened the old trunk. It was very small, and there was nothing in it but a big cardboard box. The box was tied up and the knots sealed with wax. We lifted it out and untied it. I touched Diana's fingers as we did it, and both of us exclaimed at once, "How cold your hand is!"

In the box was a quaint, pretty, old-fashioned gown, not at all faded, made of blue muslin, with a little darker blue flower in it. Under it we found a sash, a yellowed feather fan, and an envelope full of withered flowers. At the bottom of the box was a little brown book.

It was small and thin, like a girl's exercise book, with leaves that had once been blue and pink, but were now quite faded, and stained in places. On the fly leaf was written, in a very delicate hand, "Emily Margaret Leith," and the same writing covered the first few pages of the book. The rest were not written on at all. We sat there on the floor, Diana and I, and read the little book together, while the rain thudded against the window panes.

June 19, 18 —

I came to-day to spend a while with Aunt Margaret in Charlottetown. It is so pretty here, where she lives — and ever so much nicer than on the farm at home. I have no cows to milk here or pigs to feed. Aunt Margaret has given me such a lovely blue muslin dress, and I am to have it made to wear at a garden party out at Brighton next week. I never had a muslin dress before — nothing but ugly prints and dark woolens. I wish we were rich, like Aunt Margaret. Aunt Margaret laughed when I said this, and declared she would give all her wealth for my youth and beauty and lightheartedness. I am only eighteen and I know I am very merry but I wonder if I am really pretty. It seems to me that I am when I look in Aunt Margaret's beautiful mirrors. They make me look very different from the old cracked one in my room at home which always twisted my face and turned me green. But Aunt Margaret spoiled her compliment by telling me I look exactly as she did at my age. If I thought I'd ever look as Aunt Margaret does now, I don't know what I'd do. She is so fat and red.

June 29.

Last week I went to the garden party and I met a young man called Paul Osborne. He is a young artist from Montreal who is boarding over at Heppoch. He is the handsomest man I have ever seen — very tall and slender, with dreamy, dark eyes and a pale, clever face. I have not been able to keep from thinking about him ever since, and to-day he came over

here and asked if he could paint me. I felt very much flattered and so pleased when Aunt Margaret gave him permission. He says he wants to paint me as “Spring,” standing under the poplars where a fine rain of sunshine falls through. I am to wear my blue muslin gown and a wreath of flowers on my hair. He says I have such beautiful hair. He has never seen any of such a real pale gold. Somehow it seems even prettier than ever to me since he praised it.

I had a letter from home to-day. Ma says the blue hen stole her nest and came off with fourteen chickens, and that pa has sold the little spotted calf. Somehow those things don’t interest me like they once did.

July 9.

The picture is coming on very well, Mr. Osborne says. I know he is making me look far too pretty in it, although he persists in saying he can’t do me justice. He is going to send it to some great exhibition when finished, but he says he will make a little water-color copy for me.

He comes every day to paint and we talk a great deal and he reads me lovely things out of his books. I don’t understand them all, but I try to, and he explains them so nicely and is so patient with my stupidity. And he says any one with my eyes and hair and coloring does not need to be clever. He says I have the sweetest, merriest laugh in the world. But I will not write down all the compliments he has paid me. I dare say he does not mean them at all.

In the evening we stroll among the spruces or sit on the bench under the acacia tree. Sometimes we don’t talk at all, but I never find the time long. Indeed, the minutes just seem to fly — and then the moon will come up, round and red, over the harbor and Mr. Osborne will sigh and say he supposes it is time for him to go.

July 24.

I am so happy. I am frightened at my happiness. Oh, I didn’t think life could ever be so beautiful for me as it is!

Paul loves me! He told me so tonight as we walked by the harbor and watched the sunset, and he asked me to be his wife. I have cared for him ever since I met him, but I am afraid I am not clever and well-educated

enough for a wife for Paul. Because, of course, I'm only an ignorant little country girl and have lived all my life on a farm. Why, my hands are quite rough yet from the work I've done. But Paul just laughed when I said so, and took my hands and kissed them. Then he looked into my eyes and laughed again, because I couldn't hide from him how much I loved him.

We are to be married next spring and Paul says he will take me to Europe. That will be very nice, but nothing matters so long as I am with him.

Paul's people are very wealthy and his mother and sisters are very fashionable. I am frightened of them, but I did not tell Paul so because I think it would hurt him and oh, I wouldn't do that for the world.

There is nothing I wouldn't suffer if it would do him any good. I never thought any one could feel so. I used to think if I loved anybody I would want him to do everything for me and wait on me as if I were a princess. But that is not the way at all. Love makes you very humble and you want to do everything yourself for the one you love.

August 10.

Paul went home to-day. Oh, it is so terrible! I don't know how I can bear to live even for a little while without him. But this is silly of me, because I know he has to go and he will write often and come to me often. But, still, it is so lonesome. I didn't cry when he left me because I wanted him to remember me smiling in the way he liked best, but I have been crying ever since and I can't stop, no matter how hard I try. We have had such a beautiful fortnight. Every day seemed dearer and happier than the last, and now it is ended and I feel as if it could never be the same again. Oh, I am very foolish — but I love him so dearly and if I were to lose his love I know I would die.

August 17.

I think my heart is dead. But no, it can't be, for it aches too much.

Paul's mother came here to see me to-day. She was not angry or disagreeable. I wouldn't have been so frightened of her if she had been. As it was, I felt that I couldn't say a word. She is very beautiful and stately

and wonderful, with a low, cold voice and proud, dark eyes. Her face is like Paul's but without the loveableness of his.

She talked to me for a long time and she said terrible things — terrible, because I knew they were all true. I seemed to see everything through her eyes. She said that Paul was infatuated with my youth and beauty but that it would not last and what else I to give him? She said Paul must marry a woman of his own class, who could do honor to his fame and position. She said that he was very talented and had a great career before him, but that if he married me it would ruin his life.

I saw it all, just as she explained it out, and I told her at last that I would not marry Paul, and she might tell him so. But she smiled and said I must tell him myself, because he would not believe any one else. I could have begged her to spare me that, but I knew it would be of no use. I do not think she has any pity or mercy for any one. Besides, what she said was quite true.

When she thanked me for being so REASONABLE I told her I was not doing it to please her, but for Paul's sake, because I would not spoil his life, and that I would always hate her. She smiled again and went away.

Oh, how can I bear it? I did not know any one could suffer like this!
August 18.

I have done it. I wrote to Paul to-day. I knew I must tell him by letter, because I could never make him believe it face to face. I was afraid I could not even do it by letter. I suppose a clever woman easily could, but I am so stupid. I wrote a great many letters and tore them up, because I felt sure they wouldn't convince Paul. At last I got one that I thought would do. I knew I must make it seem as if I were very frivolous and heartless, or he would never believe. I spelled some words wrong and put in some mistakes of grammar on purpose. I told him I had just been flirting with him, and that I had another fellow at home I liked better. I said FELLOW because I knew it would disgust him. I said that it was only because he was rich that I was tempted to marry him.

I thought my heart would break while I was writing those dreadful falsehoods. But it was for his sake, because I must not spoil his

life. His mother told me I would be a millstone around his neck. I love Paul so much that I would do anything rather than be that. It would be easy to die for him, but I don't see how I can go on living. I think my letter will convince Paul.

I suppose it convinced Paul, because there was no further entry in the little brown book. When we had finished it the tears were running down both our faces.

"Oh, poor, dear Miss Emily," sobbed Diana. "I'm so sorry I ever thought her funny and meddlesome."

"She was good and strong and brave," I said. "I could never have been as unselfish as she was."

I thought of Whittier's lines,

"The outward, wayward life we see
The hidden springs we may not know."

At the back of the little brown book we found a faded water-color sketch of a young girl — such a slim, pretty little thing, with big blue eyes and lovely, long, rippling golden hair. Paul Osborne's name was written in faded ink across the corner.

We put everything back in the box. Then we sat for a long time by my window in silence and thought of many things, until the rainy twilight came down and blotted out the world.

Sara's Way

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The warm June sunshine was coming down through the trees, white with the virginal bloom of apple-blossoms, and through the shining panes, making a tremulous mosaic upon Mrs. Eben Andrews' spotless kitchen floor. Through the open door, a wind, fragrant from long wanderings over orchards and clover meadows, drifted in, and, from the window, Mrs. Eben and her guest could look down over a long, misty valley sloping to a sparkling sea.

Mrs. Jonas Andrews was spending the afternoon with her sister-in-law. She was a big, sonsy woman, with full-blown peony cheeks and large, dreamy, brown eyes. When she had been a slim, pink-and-white girl those eyes had been very romantic. Now they were so out of keeping with the rest of her appearance as to be ludicrous.

Mrs. Eben, sitting at the other end of the small tea-table that was drawn up against the window, was a thin little woman, with a very sharp nose and light, faded blue eyes. She looked like a woman whose opinions were always very decided and warranted to wear.

"How does Sara like teaching at Newbridge?" asked Mrs. Jonas, helping herself a second time to Mrs. Eben's matchless black fruit cake, and thereby bestowing a subtle compliment which Mrs. Eben did not fail to appreciate.

"Well, I guess she likes it pretty well — better than down at White Sands, anyway," answered Mrs. Eben. "Yes, I may say it suits her. Of course it's a long walk there and back. I think it would have been wiser for her to keep on boarding at Morrison's, as she did all winter, but Sara is bound to be home all she can. And I must say the walk seems to agree with her."

"I was down to see Jonas' aunt at Newbridge last night," said Mrs. Jonas, "and she said she'd heard that Sara had made up her mind to take

Lige Baxter at last, and that they were to be married in the fall. She asked me if it was true. I said I didn't know, but I hoped to mercy it was. Now, is it, Louisa?"

"Not a word of it," said Mrs. Eben sorrowfully. "Sara hasn't any more notion of taking Lige than ever she had. I'm sure it's not MY fault. I've talked and argued till I'm tired. I declare to you, Amelia, I am terribly disappointed. I'd set my heart on Sara's marrying Lige — and now to think she won't!"

"She is a very foolish girl," said Mrs. Jonas, judicially. "If Lige Baxter isn't good enough for her, who is?"

"And he's so well off," said Mrs. Eben, "and does such a good business, and is well spoken of by every one. And that lovely new house of his at Newbridge, with bay windows and hardwood floors! I've dreamed and dreamed of seeing Sara there as mistress."

"Maybe you'll see her there yet," said Mrs. Jonas, who always took a hopeful view of everything, even of Sara's contrariness. But she felt discouraged, too. Well, she had done her best.

If Lige Baxter's broth was spoiled it was not for lack of cooks. Every Andrews in Avonlea had been trying for two years to bring about a match between him and Sara, and Mrs. Jonas had borne her part valiantly.

Mrs. Eben's despondent reply was cut short by the appearance of Sara herself. The girl stood for a moment in the doorway and looked with a faintly amused air at her aunts. She knew quite well that they had been discussing her, for Mrs. Jonas, who carried her conscience in her face, looked guilty, and Mrs. Eben had not been able wholly to banish her aggrieved expression.

Sara put away her books, kissed Mrs. Jonas' rosy cheek, and sat down at the table. Mrs. Eben brought her some fresh tea, some hot rolls, and a little jelly-pot of the apricot preserves Sara liked, and she cut some more fruit cake for her in moist plummy slices. She might be out of patience with Sara's "contrariness," but she spoiled and petted her for all that, for the girl was the very core of her childless heart.

Sara Andrews was not, strictly speaking, pretty; but there was that about her which made people look at her twice. She was very dark, with a rich, dusky sort of darkness, her deep eyes were velvety brown, and her lips and cheeks were crimson.

She ate her rolls and preserves with a healthy appetite, sharpened by her long walk from Newbridge, and told amusing little stories of her day's work that made the two older women shake with laughter, and exchange shy glances of pride over her cleverness.

When tea was over she poured the remaining contents of the cream jug into a saucer.

"I must feed my pussy," she said as she left the room.

"That girl beats me," said Mrs. Eben with a sigh of perplexity. "You know that black cat we've had for two years? Eben and I have always made a lot of him, but Sara seemed to have a dislike to him. Never a peaceful nap under the stove could he have when Sara was home — out he must go. Well, a little spell ago he got his leg broke accidentally and we thought he'd have to be killed. But Sara wouldn't hear of it. She got splints and set his leg just as knacky, and bandaged it up, and she has tended him like a sick baby ever since. He's just about well now, and he lives in clover, that cat does. It's just her way. There's them sick chickens she's been doctoring for a week, giving them pills and things!

"And she thinks more of that wretched-looking calf that got poisoned with paris green than of all the other stock on the place."

As the summer wore away, Mrs. Eben tried to reconcile herself to the destruction of her air castles. But she scolded Sara considerably.

"Sara, why don't you like Lige? I'm sure he is a model young man."

"I don't like model young men," answered Sara impatiently. "And I really think I hate Lige Baxter. He has always been held up to me as such a paragon. I'm tired of hearing about all his perfections. I know them all off by heart. He doesn't drink, he doesn't smoke, he doesn't steal, he doesn't tell fibs, he never loses his temper, he doesn't swear, and he goes to church regularly. Such a faultless creature as that would certainly get on my

nerves. No, no, you'll have to pick out another mistress for your new house at the Bridge, Aunt Louisa."

When the apple trees, that had been pink and white in June, were russet and bronze in October, Mrs. Eben had a quilting. The quilt was of the "Rising Star" pattern, which was considered in Avonlea to be very handsome. Mrs. Eben had intended it for part of Sara's "setting out," and, while she sewed the red-and-white diamonds together, she had regaled her fancy by imagining she saw it spread out on the spare-room bed of the house at Newbridge, with herself laying her bonnet and shawl on it when she went to see Sara. Those bright visions had faded with the apple blossoms, and Mrs. Eben hardly had the heart to finish the quilt at all.

The quilting came off on Saturday afternoon, when Sara could be home from school. All Mrs. Eben's particular friends were ranged around the quilt, and tongues and fingers flew. Sara flitted about, helping her aunt with the supper preparations. She was in the room, getting the custard dishes out of the cupboard, when Mrs. George Pye arrived.

Mrs. George had a genius for being late. She was later than usual to-day, and she looked excited. Every woman around the "Rising Star" felt that Mrs. George had some news worth listening to, and there was an expectant silence while she pulled out her chair and settled herself at the quilt.

She was a tall, thin woman with a long pale face and liquid green eyes. As she looked around the circle she had the air of a cat daintily licking its chops over some titbit.

"I suppose," she said, "that you have heard the news?"

She knew perfectly well that they had not. Every other woman at the frame stopped quilting. Mrs. Eben came to the door with a pan of puffy, smoking-hot soda biscuits in her hand. Sara stopped counting the custard dishes, and turned her ripely-colored face over her shoulder. Even the black cat, at her feet, ceased preening his fur. Mrs. George felt that the undivided attention of her audience was hers.

"Baxter Brothers have failed," she said, her green eyes shooting out flashes of light. "Failed DISGRACEFULLY!"

She paused for a moment; but, since her hearers were as yet speechless from surprise, she went on.

“George came home from Newbridge, just before I left, with the news. You could have knocked me down with a feather. I should have thought that firm was as steady as the Rock of Gibraltar! But they’re ruined — absolutely ruined. Louisa, dear, can you find me a good needle?”

“Louisa, dear,” had set her biscuits down with a sharp thud, reckless of results. A sharp, metallic tinkle sounded at the closet where Sara had struck the edge of her tray against a shelf. The sound seemed to loosen the paralyzed tongues, and everybody began talking and exclaiming at once. Clear and shrill above the confusion rose Mrs. George Pye’s voice.

“Yes, indeed, you may well say so. It IS disgraceful. And to think how everybody trusted them! George will lose considerable by the crash, and so will a good many folks. Everything will have to go — Peter Baxter’s farm and Lige’s grand new house. Mrs. Peter won’t carry her head so high after this, I’ll be bound. George saw Lige at the Bridge, and he said he looked dreadful cut up and ashamed.”

“Who, or what’s to blame for the failure?” asked Mrs. Rachel Lynde sharply. She did not like Mrs. George Pye.

“There are a dozen different stories on the go,” was the reply. “As far as George could make out, Peter Baxter has been speculating with other folks’ money, and this is the result. Everybody always suspected that Peter was crooked; but you’d have thought that Lige would have kept him straight. HE had always such a reputation for saintliness.”

“I don’t suppose Lige knew anything about it,” said Mrs. Rachel indignantly.

“Well, he’d ought to, then. If he isn’t a knave he’s a fool,” said Mrs. Harmon Andrews, who had formerly been among his warmest partisans. “He should have kept watch on Peter and found out how the business was being run. Well, Sara, you were the level-headest of us all — I’ll admit that now. A nice mess it would be if you were married or engaged to Lige, and him left without a cent — even if he can clear his character!”

“There is a good deal of talk about Peter, and swindling, and a lawsuit,” said Mrs. George Pye, quilting industriously. “Most of the Newbridge folks think it’s all Peter’s fault, and that Lige isn’t to blame. But you can’t tell. I dare say Lige is as deep in the mire as Peter. He was always a little too good to be wholesome, I thought.”

There was a clink of glass at the cupboard, as Sara set the tray down. She came forward and stood behind Mrs. Rachel Lynde’s chair, resting her shapely hands on that lady’s broad shoulders. Her face was very pale, but her flashing eyes sought and faced defiantly Mrs. George Pye’s cat-like orbs. Her voice quivered with passion and contempt.

“You’ll all have a fling at Lige Baxter, now that he’s down. You couldn’t say enough in his praise, once. I’ll not stand by and hear it hinted that Lige Baxter is a swindler. You all know perfectly well that Lige is as honest as the day, if he IS so unfortunate as to have an unprincipled brother. You, Mrs. Pye, know it better than any one, yet you come here and run him down the minute he’s in trouble. If there’s another word said here against Lige Baxter I’ll leave the room and the house till you’re gone, every one of you.”

She flashed a glance around the quilt that cowed the gossips. Even Mrs. George Pye’s eyes flickered and waned and quailed. Nothing more was said until Sara had picked up her glasses and marched from the room. Even then they dared not speak above a whisper. Mrs. Pye, alone, smarting from snub, ventured to ejaculate, “Pity save us!” as Sara slammed the door.

For the next fortnight gossip and rumor held high carnival in Avonlea and Newbridge, and Mrs. Eben grew to dread the sight of a visitor.

“They’re bound to talk about the Baxter failure and criticize Lige,” she deplored to Mrs. Jonas. “And it riles Sara up so terrible. She used to declare that she hated Lige, and now she won’t listen to a word against him. Not that I say any, myself. I’m sorry for him, and I believe he’s done his best. But I can’t stop other people from talking.”

One evening Harmon Andrews came in with a fresh budget of news.

“The Baxter business is pretty near wound up at last,” he said, as he lighted his pipe. “Peter has got his lawsuits settled and has hushed up the talk about swindling, somehow. Trust him for slipping out of a scrape clean and clever. He don’t seem to worry any, but Lige looks like a walking skeleton. Some folks pity him, but I say he should have kept the run of things better and not have trusted everything to Peter. I hear he’s going out West in the Spring, to take up land in Alberta and try his hand at farming. Best thing he can do, I guess. Folks hereabouts have had enough of the Baxter breed. Newbridge will be well rid of them.”

Sara, who had been sitting in the dark corner by the stove, suddenly stood up, letting the black cat slip from her lap to the floor. Mrs. Eben glanced at her apprehensively, for she was afraid the girl was going to break out in a tirade against the complacent Harmon.

But Sara only walked fiercely out of the kitchen, with a sound as if she were struggling for breath. In the hall she snatched a scarf from the wall, flung open the front door, and rushed down the lane in the chill, pure air of the autumn twilight. Her heart was throbbing with the pity she always felt for bruised and baited creatures.

On and on she went heedlessly, intent only on walking away her pain, over gray, brooding fields and winding slopes, and along the skirts of ruinous, dusky pine woods, curtained with fine spun purple gloom. Her dress brushed against the brittle grasses and sere ferns, and the moist night wind, loosed from wild places far away, blew her hair about her face.

At last she came to a little rustic gate, leading into a shadowy wood-lane. The gate was bound with willow withes, and, as Sara fumbled vainly at them with her chilled hands, a man’s firm step came up behind her, and Lige Baxter’s hand closed over her’s.

“Oh, Lige!” she said, with something like a sob.

He opened the gate and drew her through. She left her hand in his, as they walked through the lane where lissome boughs of young saplings flicked against their heads, and the air was wildly sweet with the woodsy odors.

“It’s a long while since I’ve seen you, Lige,” Sara said at last.

Lige looked wistfully down at her through the gloom.

“Yes, it seems very long to me, Sara. But I didn’t think you’d care to see me, after what you said last spring. And you know things have been going against me. People have said hard things. I’ve been unfortunate, Sara, and may be too easygoing, but I’ve been honest. Don’t believe folks if they tell you I wasn’t.”

“Indeed, I never did — not for a minute!” fired Sara.

“I’m glad of that. I’m going away, later on. I felt bad enough when you refused to marry me, Sara; but it’s well that you didn’t. I’m man enough to be thankful my troubles don’t fall on you.”

Sara stopped and turned to him. Beyond them the lane opened into a field and a clear lake of crocus sky cast a dim light into the shadow where they stood. Above it was a new moon, like a gleaming silver scimitar. Sara saw it was over her left shoulder, and she saw Lige’s face above her, tender and troubled.

“Lige,” she said softly, “do you love me still?”

“You know I do,” said Lige sadly.

That was all Sara wanted. With a quick movement she nestled into his arms, and laid her warm, tear-wet cheek against his cold one.

When the amazing rumor that Sara was going to marry Lige Baxter, and go out West with him, circulated through the Andrews clan, hands were lifted and heads were shaken. Mrs. Jonas puffed and panted up the hill to learn if it were true. She found Mrs. Eben stitching for dear life on an “Irish Chain” quilt, while Sara was sewing the diamonds on another “Rising Star” with a martyr-like expression on her face. Sara hated patchwork above everything else, but Mrs. Eben was mistress up to a certain point.

“You’ll have to make that quilt, Sara Andrews. If you’re going to live out on those prairies, you’ll need piles of quilts, and you shall have them if I sew my fingers to the bone. But you’ll have to help make them.”

And Sara had to.

When Mrs. Jonas came, Mrs. Eben sent Sara off to the postoffice to get her out of the way.

“I suppose it’s true, this time?” said Mrs. Jonas.

“Yes, indeed,” said Mrs. Eben briskly. “Sara is set on it. There is no use trying to move her — you know that — so I’ve just concluded to make the best of it. I’m no turncoat. Lige Baxter is Lige Baxter still, neither more nor less. I’ve always said he’s a fine young man, and I say so still. After all, he and Sara won’t be any poorer than Eben and I were when we started out.”

Mrs. Jonas heaved a sigh of relief.

“I’m real glad you take that view of it, Louisa. I’m not displeased, either, although Mrs. Harmon would take my head off if she heard me say so. I always liked Lige. But I must say I’m amazed, too, after the way Sara used to rail at him.”

“Well, we might have expected it,” said Mrs. Eben sagely. “It was always Sara’s way. When any creature got sick or unfortunate she seemed to take it right into her heart. So you may say Lige Baxter’s failure was a success after all.”

The Son of His Mother

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Thyra Carewe was waiting for Chester to come home. She sat by the west window of the kitchen, looking out into the gathering of the shadows with the expectant immovability that characterized her. She never twitched or fidgeted. Into whatever she did she put the whole force of her nature. If it was sitting still, she sat still.

“A stone image would be twitchedly beside Thyra,” said Mrs. Cynthia White, her neighbor across the lane. “It gets on my nerves, the way she sits at that window sometimes, with no more motion than a statue and her great eyes burning down the lane. When I read the commandment, ‘Thou shalt have no other gods before me,’ I declare I always think of Thyra. She worships that son of hers far ahead of her Creator. She’ll be punished for it yet.”

Mrs. White was watching Thyra now, knitting furiously, as she watched, in order to lose no time. Thyra’s hands were folded idly in her lap. She had not moved a muscle since she sat down. Mrs. White complained it gave her the weeps.

“It doesn’t seem natural to see a woman sit so still,” she said. “Sometimes the thought comes to me, ‘what if she’s had a stroke, like her old Uncle Horatio, and is sitting there stone dead!’”

The evening was cold and autumnal. There was a fiery red spot out at sea, where the sun had set, and, above it, over a chill, clear, saffron sky, were reefs of purple-black clouds. The river, below the Carewe homestead, was livid. Beyond it, the sea was dark and brooding. It was an evening to make most people shiver and forebode an early winter; but Thyra loved it, as she loved all stern, harshly beautiful things. She would not light a lamp because it would blot out the savage grandeur of sea and sky. It was better to wait in the darkness until Chester came home.

He was late tonight. She thought he had been detained over-time at the harbor, but she was not anxious. He would come straight home to her as soon as his business was completed — of that she felt sure. Her thoughts went out along the bleak harbor road to meet him. She could see him plainly, coming with his free stride through the sandy hollows and over the windy hills, in the harsh, cold light of that forbidding sunset, strong and handsome in his comely youth, with her own deeply cleft chin and his father's dark gray, straightforward eyes. No other woman in Avonlea had a son like hers — her only one. In his brief absences she yearned after him with a maternal passion that had in it something of physical pain, so intense was it. She thought of Cynthia White, knitting across the road, with contemptuous pity. That woman had no son — nothing but pale-faced girls. Thyra had never wanted a daughter, but she pitied and despised all sonless women.

Chester's dog whined suddenly and piercingly on the doorstep outside. He was tired of the cold stone and wanted his warm corner behind the stove. Thyra smiled grimly when she heard him. She had no intention of letting him in. She said she had always disliked dogs, but the truth, although she would not glance at it, was that she hated the animal because Chester loved him. She could not share his love with even a dumb brute. She loved no living creature in the world but her son, and fiercely demanded a like concentrated affection from him. Hence it pleased her to hear his dog whine.

It was now quite dark; the stars had begun to shine out over the shorn harvest fields, and Chester had not come. Across the lane Cynthia White had pulled down her blind, in despair of out-watching Thyra, and had lighted a lamp. Lively shadows of little girl-shapes passed and repassed on the pale oblong of light. They made Thyra conscious of her exceeding loneliness. She had just decided that she would walk down the lane and wait for Chester on the bridge, when a thunderous knock came at the east kitchen door.

She recognized August Vorst's knock and lighted a lamp in no great haste, for she did not like him. He was a gossip and Thyra hated gossip, in

man or woman. But August was privileged.

She carried the lamp in her hand, when she went to the door, and its upward-striking light gave her face a ghastly appearance. She did not mean to ask August in, but he pushed past her cheerfully, not waiting to be invited. He was a midget of a man, lame of foot and hunched of back, with a white, boyish face, despite his middle age and deep-set, malicious black eyes.

He pulled a crumpled newspaper from his pocket and handed it to Thyra. He was the unofficial mail-carrier of Avonlea. Most of the people gave him a trifle for bringing their letters and papers from the office. He earned small sums in various other ways, and so contrived to keep the life in his stunted body. There was always venom in August's gossip. It was said that he made more mischief in Avonlea in a day than was made otherwise in a year, but people tolerated him by reason of his infirmity. To be sure, it was the tolerance they gave to inferior creatures, and August felt this. Perhaps it accounted for a good deal of his malignity. He hated most those who were kindest to him, and, of these, Thyra Carewe above all. He hated Chester, too, as he hated strong, shapely creatures. His time had come at last to wound them both, and his exultation shone through his crooked body and pinched features like an illuminating lamp. Thyra perceived it and vaguely felt something antagonistic in it. She pointed to the rocking-chair, as she might have pointed out a mat to a dog.

August crawled into it and smiled. He was going to make her writhe presently, this woman who looked down upon him as some venomous creeping thing she disdained to crush with her foot.

"Did you see anything of Chester on the road?" asked Thyra, giving August the very opening he desired. "He went to the harbor after tea to see Joe Raymond about the loan of his boat, but it's the time he should be back. I can't think what keeps the boy."

"Just what keeps most men — leaving out creatures like me — at some time or other in their lives. A girl — a pretty girl, Thyra. It pleases me to look at her. Even a hunchback can use his eyes, eh? Oh, she's a rare one!"

"What is the man talking about?" said Thyra wonderingly.

“Damaris Garland, to be sure. Chester’s down at Tom Blair’s now, talking to her — and looking more than his tongue says, too, of that you may be sure. Well, well, we were all young once, Thyra — all young once, even crooked little August Vorst. Eh, now?”

“What do you mean?” said Thyra.

She had sat down in a chair before him, with her hands folded in her lap. Her face, always pale, had not changed; but her lips were curiously white. August Vorst saw this and it pleased him. Also, her eyes were worth looking at, if you liked to hurt people — and that was the only pleasure August took in life. He would drink this delightful cup of revenge for her long years of disdainful kindness — ah, he would drink it slowly to prolong its sweetness. Sip by sip — he rubbed his long, thin, white hands together — sip by sip, tasting each mouthful.

“Eh, now? You know well enough, Thyra.”

“I know nothing of what you would be at, August Vorst. You speak of my son and Damaris — was that the name? — Damaris Garland as if they were something to each other. I ask you what you mean by it?”

“Tut, tut, Thyra, nothing very terrible. There’s no need to look like that about it. Young men will be young men to the end of time, and there’s no harm in Chester’s liking to look at a lass, eh, now? Or in talking to her either? The little baggage, with the red lips of her! She and Chester will make a pretty pair. He’s not so ill-looking for a man, Thyra.”

“I am not a very patient woman, August,” said Thyra coldly. “I have asked you what you mean, and I want a straight answer. Is Chester down at Tom Blair’s while I have been sitting here, alone, waiting for him?”

August nodded. He saw that it would not be wise to trifle longer with Thyra.

“That he is. I was there before I came here. He and Damaris were sitting in a corner by themselves, and very well-satisfied they seemed to be with each other. Tut, tut, Thyra, don’t take the news so. I thought you knew. It’s no secret that Chester has been going after Damaris ever since she came here. But what then? You can’t tie him to your apron strings forever, woman. He’ll be finding a mate for himself, as he should. Seeing

that he's straight and well-shaped, no doubt Damaris will look with favor on him. Old Martha Blair declares the girl loves him better than her eyes."

Thyra made a sound like a strangled moan in the middle of August's speech. She heard the rest of it immovably. When it came to an end she stood and looked down upon him in a way that silenced him.

"You've told the news you came to tell, and gloated over it, and now get you gone," she said slowly.

"Now, Thyra," he began, but she interrupted him threateningly.

"Get you gone, I say! And you need not bring my mail here any longer. I want no more of your misshapen body and lying tongue!"

August went, but at the door he turned for a parting stab.

"My tongue is not a lying one, Mrs. Carewe. I've told you the truth, as all Avonlea knows it. Chester is mad about Damaris Garland. It's no wonder I thought you knew what all the settlement can see. But you're such a jealous, odd body, I suppose the boy hid it from you for fear you'd go into a tantrum. As for me, I'll not forget that you've turned me from your door because I chanced to bring you news you'd no fancy for."

Thyra did not answer him. When the door closed behind him she locked it and blew out the light. Then she threw herself face downward on the sofa and burst into wild tears. Her very soul ached. She wept as tempestuously and unreasoningly as youth weeps, although she was not young. It seemed as if she was afraid to stop weeping lest she should go mad thinking. But, after a time, tears failed her, and she began bitterly to go over, word by word, what August Vorst had said.

That her son should ever cast eyes of love on any girl was something Thyra had never thought about. She would not believe it possible that he should love any one but herself, who loved him so much. And now the possibility invaded her mind as subtly and coldly and remorselessly as a sea-fog stealing landward.

Chester had been born to her at an age when most women are letting their children slip from them into the world, with some natural tears and heartaches, but content to let them go, after enjoying their sweetest years. Thyra's late-come motherhood was all the more intense and passionate

because of its very lateness. She had been very ill when her son was born, and had lain helpless for long weeks, during which other women had tended her baby for her. She had never been able to forgive them for this.

Her husband had died before Chester was a year old. She had laid their son in his dying arms and received him back again with a last benediction. To Thyra that moment had something of a sacrament in it. It was as if the child had been doubly given to her, with a right to him solely that nothing could take away or transcend.

Marrying! She had never thought of it in connection with him. He did not come of a marrying race. His father had been sixty when he had married her, Thyra Lincoln, likewise well on in life. Few of the Lincolns or Carewes had married young, many not at all. And, to her, Chester was her baby still. He belonged solely to her.

And now another woman had dared to look upon him with eyes of love. Damaris Garland! Thyra now remembered seeing her. She was a newcomer in Avonlea, having come to live with her uncle and aunt after the death of her mother. Thyra had met her on the bridge one day a month previously. Yes, a man might think she was pretty — a low-browed girl, with a wave of reddish-gold hair, and crimson lips blossoming out against the strange, milk-whiteness of her skin. Her eyes, too — Thyra recalled them — hazel in tint, deep, and laughter-brimmed.

The girl had gone past her with a smile that brought out many dimples. There was a certain insolent quality in her beauty, as if it flaunted itself somewhat too defiantly in the beholder's eye. Thyra had turned and looked after the lithe, young creature, wondering who she might be.

And tonight, while she, his mother, waited for him in darkness and loneliness, he was down at Blair's, talking to this girl! He loved her; and it was past doubt that she loved him. The thought was more bitter than death to Thyra. That she should dare! Her anger was all against the girl. She had laid a snare to get Chester and he, like a fool, was entangled in it, thinking, man-fashion, only of her great eyes and red lips. Thyra thought savagely of Damaris' beauty.

“She shall not have him,” she said, with slow emphasis. “I will never give him up to any other woman, and, least of all, to her. She would leave me no place in his heart at all — me, his mother, who almost died to give him life. He belongs to me! Let her look for the son of some other woman — some woman who has many sons. She shall not have my only one!”

She got up, wrapped a shawl about her head, and went out into the darkly golden evening. The clouds had cleared away, and the moon was shining. The air was chill, with a bell-like clearness. The alders by the river rustled eerily as she walked by them and out upon the bridge. Here she paced up and down, peering with troubled eyes along the road beyond, or leaning over the rail, looking at the sparkling silver ribbon of moonlight that garlanded the waters. Late travelers passed her, and wondered at her presence and mien. Carl White saw her, and told his wife about her when he got home.

“Striding to and fro over the bridge like mad! At first I thought it was old, crazy May Blair. What do you suppose she was doing down there at this hour of the night?”

“Watching for Ches, no doubt,” said Cynthia. “He ain’t home yet.

Likely he’s snug at Blairs’. I do wonder if Thyra suspicions that he goes after Damaris. I’ve never dared to hint it to her. She’d be as liable to fly at me, tooth and claw, as not.”

“Well, she picks out a precious queer night for moon-gazing,” said Carl, who was a jolly soul and took life as he found it. “It’s bitter cold — there’ll be a hard frost. It’s a pity she can’t get it grained into her that the boy is grown up and must have his fling like the other lads. She’ll go out of her mind yet, like her old grandmother Lincoln, if she doesn’t ease up. I’ve a notion to go down to the bridge and reason a bit with her.”

“Indeed, and you’ll do no such thing!” cried Cynthia. “Thyra Carewe is best left alone, if she is in a tantrum. She’s like no other woman in Avonlea — or out of it. I’d as soon meddle with a tiger as her, if she’s

rampaging about Chester. I don't envy Damaris Garland her life if she goes in there. Thyra'd sooner strangle her than not, I guess."

"You women are all terrible hard on Thyra," said Carl, goodnaturedly. He had been in love with Thyra, himself, long ago, and he still liked her in a friendly fashion. He always stood up for her when the Avonlea women ran her down. He felt troubled about her all night, recalling her as she paced the bridge. He wished he had gone back, in spite of Cynthia.

When Chester came home he met his mother on the bridge. In the faint, yet penetrating, moonlight they looked curiously alike, but Chester had the milder face. He was very handsome. Even in the seething of her pain and jealousy Thyra yearned over his beauty. She would have liked to put up her hands and caress his face, but her voice was very hard when she asked him where he had been so late.

"I called in at Tom Blair's on my way home from the harbor," he answered, trying to walk on. But she held him back by his arm.

"Did you go there to see Damaris?" she demanded fiercely.

Chester was uncomfortable. Much as he loved his mother, he felt, and always had felt, an awe of her and an impatient dislike of her dramatic ways of speaking and acting. He reflected, resentfully, that no other young man in Avonlea, who had been paying a friendly call, would be met by his mother at midnight and held up in such tragic fashion to account for himself. He tried vainly to loosen her hold upon his arm, but he understood quite well that he must give her an answer. Being strictly straightforward by nature and upbringing, he told the truth, albeit with more anger in his tone than he had ever shown to his mother before.

"Yes," he said shortly.

Thyra released his arm, and struck her hands together with a sharp cry. There was a savage note in it. She could have slain Damaris Garland at that moment.

"Don't go on so, mother," said Chester, impatiently. "Come in out of the cold. It isn't fit for you to be here. Who has been tampering with you? What if I did go to see Damaris?"

“Oh — oh — oh!” cried Thyra. “I was waiting for you — alone — and you were thinking only of her! Chester, answer me — do you love her?”

The blood rolled rapidly over the boy’s face. He muttered something and tried to pass on, but she caught him again. He forced himself to speak gently.

“What if I do, mother? It wouldn’t be such a dreadful thing, would it?”

“And me? And me?” cried Thyra. “What am I to you, then?”

“You are my mother. I wouldn’t love you any the less because I cared for another, too.”

“I won’t have you love another,” she cried. “I want all your love — all! What’s that baby-face to you, compared to your mother? I have the best right to you. I won’t give you up.”

Chester realized that there was no arguing with such a mood. He walked on, resolved to set the matter aside until she might be more reasonable. But Thyra would not have it so. She followed on after him, under the alders that crowded over the lane.

“Promise me that you’ll not go there again,” she entreated.

“Promise me that you’ll give her up.”

“I can’t promise such a thing,” he cried angrily.

His anger hurt her worse than a blow, but she did not flinch.

“You’re not engaged to her?” she cried out.

“Now, mother, be quiet. All the settlement will hear you. Why do you object to Damaris? You don’t know how sweet she is. When you know her —”

“I will never know her!” cried Thyra furiously. “And she shall not have you! She shall not, Chester!”

He made no answer. She suddenly broke into tears and loud sobs.

Touched with remorse, he stopped and put his arms about her.

“Mother, mother, don’t! I can’t bear to see you cry so. But, indeed, you are unreasonable. Didn’t you ever think the time would come when I would want to marry, like other men?”

“No, no! And I will not have it — I cannot bear it, Chester. You must promise not to go to see her again. I won’t go into the house this night until you do. I’ll stay out here in the bitter cold until you promise to put her out of your thoughts.”

“That’s beyond my power, mother. Oh, mother, you’re making it hard for me. Come in, come in! You’re shivering with cold now. You’ll be sick.”

“Not a step will I stir till you promise. Say you won’t go to see that girl any more, and there’s nothing I won’t do for you. But if you put her before me, I’ll not go in — I never will go in.”

With most women this would have been an empty threat; but it was not so with Thyra, and Chester knew it. He knew she would keep her word. And he feared more than that. In this frenzy of hers what might she not do? She came of a strange breed, as had been said disapprovingly when Luke Carewe married her. There was a strain of insanity in the Lincolns. A Lincoln woman had drowned herself once. Chester thought of the river, and grew sick with fright. For a moment even his passion for Damaris weakened before the older tie.

“Mother, calm yourself. Oh, surely there’s no need of all this! Let us wait until tomorrow, and talk it over then. I’ll hear all you have to say. Come in, dear.”

Thyra loosened her arms from about him, and stepped back into a moonlit space. Looking at him tragically, she extended her arms and spoke slowly and solemnly.

“Chester, choose between us. If you choose her, I shall go from you tonight, and you will never see me again!”

“Mother!”

“Choose!” she reiterated, fiercely.

He felt her long ascendancy. Its influence was not to be shaken off in a moment. In all his life he had never disobeyed her. Besides, with it all, he

loved her more deeply and understandingly than most sons love their mothers. He realized that, since she would have it so, his choice was already made — or, rather that he had no choice.

“Have your way,” he said sullenly.

She ran to him and caught him to her heart. In the reaction of her feeling she was half laughing, half crying. All was well again — all would be well; she never doubted this, for she knew he would keep his ungracious promise sacredly.

“Oh, my son, my son,” she murmured, “you’d have sent me to my death if you had chosen otherwise. But now you are mine again!”

She did not heed that he was sullen — that he resented her injustice with all her own intensity. She did not heed his silence as they went into the house together. Strangely enough, she slept well and soundly that night. Not until many days had passed did she understand that, though Chester might keep his promise in the letter, it was beyond his power to keep it in the spirit. She had taken him from Damaris Garland; but she had not won him back to herself. He could never be wholly her son again. There was a barrier between them which not all her passionate love could break down. Chester was gravely kind to her, for it was not in his nature to remain sullen long, or visit his own unhappiness upon another’s head; besides, he understood her exacting affection, even in its injustice, and it has been well-said that to understand is to forgive. But he avoided her, and she knew it. The flame of her anger burned bitterly towards Damaris.

“He thinks of her all the time,” she moaned to herself. “He’ll come to hate me yet, I fear, because it’s I who made him give her up. But I’d rather even that than share him with another woman. Oh, my son, my son!”

She knew that Damaris was suffering, too. The girl’s wan face told that when she met her. But this pleased Thyra. It eased the ache in her bitter heart to know that pain was gnawing at Damaris’ also.

Chester was absent from home very often now. He spent much of his spare time at the harbor, consorting with Joe Raymond and others of that ilk, who were but sorry associates for him, Avonlea people thought.

In late November he and Joe started for a trip down the coast in the latter's boat. Thyra protested against it, but Chester laughed at her alarm.

Thyra saw him go with a heart sick from fear. She hated the sea, and was afraid of it at any time; but, most of all, in this treacherous month, with its sudden, wild gales.

Chester had been fond of the sea from boyhood. She had always tried to stifle this fondness and break off his associations with the harbor fishermen, who liked to lure the high-spirited boy out with them on fishing expeditions. But her power over him was gone now.

After Chester's departure she was restless and miserable, wandering from window to window to scan the dour, unsmiling sky. Carl White, dropping in to pay a call, was alarmed when he heard that Chester had gone with Joe, and had not tact enough to conceal his alarm from Thyra.

"'T isn't safe this time of year," he said. "Folks expect no better from that reckless, harum-scarum Joe Raymond. He'll drown himself some day, there's nothing surer. This mad freak of starting off down the shore in November is just of a piece with his usual performances. But you shouldn't have let Chester go, Thyra."

"I couldn't prevent him. Say what I could, he would go. He laughed when I spoke of danger. Oh, he's changed from what he was! I know who has wrought the change, and I hate her for it!"

Carl shrugged his fat shoulders. He knew quite well that Thyra was at the bottom of the sudden coldness between Chester Carewe and Damaris Garland, about which Avonlea gossip was busying itself. He pitied Thyra, too. She had aged rapidly the past month.

"You're too hard on Chester, Thyra. He's out of leading-strings now, or should be. You must just let me take an old friend's privilege, and tell you that you're taking the wrong way with him. You're too jealous and exacting, Thyra."

"You don't know anything about it. You have never had a son," said Thyra, cruelly enough, for she knew that Carl's sonlessness was a rankling thorn in his mind. "You don't know what it is to pour out your love on one human being, and have it flung back in your face!"

Carl could not cope with Thyra's moods. He had never understood her, even in his youth. Now he went home, still shrugging his shoulders, and thinking that it was a good thing Thyra had not looked on him with favor in the old days. Cynthia was much easier to get along with.

More than Thyra looked anxiously to sea and sky that night in Avonlea. Damaris Garland listened to the smothered roar of the Atlantic in the murky northeast with a prescience of coming disaster. Friendly longshoremen shook their heads and said that Ches and Joe would better have kept to good, dry land.

"It's sorry work joking with a November gale," said Abel Blair. He was an old man and, in his life, had seen some sad things along the shore.

Thyra could not sleep that night. When the gale came shrieking up the river, and struck the house, she got out of bed and dressed herself. The wind screamed like a ravening beast at her window. All night she wandered to and fro in the house, going from room to room, now wringing her hands with loud outcries, now praying below her breath with white lips, now listening in dumb misery to the fury of the storm.

The wind raged all the next day; but spent itself in the following night, and the second morning was calm and fair. The eastern sky was a great arc of crystal, smitten through with auroral crimsonings. Thyra, looking from her kitchen window, saw a group of men on the bridge. They were talking to Carl White, with looks and gestures directed towards the Carewe house.

She went out and down to them. None of these who saw her white, rigid face that day ever forgot the sight.

"You have news for me," she said.

They looked at each other, each man mutely imploring his neighbor to speak.

"You need not fear to tell me," said Thyra calmly. "I know what you have come to say. My son is drowned."

"We don't know THAT, Mrs. Carewe," said Abel Blair quickly.

"We

haven't got the worst to tell you — there's hope yet. But Joe Raymond's boat was found last night, stranded bottom up, on the

Blue Point sand shore, forty miles down the coast."

"Don't look like that, Thyra," said Carl White pityingly. "They may have escaped — they may have been picked up."

Thyra looked at him with dull eyes.

"You know they have not. Not one of you has any hope. I have no son. The sea has taken him from me — my bonny baby!"

She turned and went back to her desolate home. None dared to follow her. Carl White went home and sent his wife over to her.

Cynthia found Thyra sitting in her accustomed chair. Her hands lay, palms upward, on her lap. Her eyes were dry and burning. She met Cynthia's compassionate look with a fearful smile.

"Long ago, Cynthia White," she said slowly, "you were vexed with me one day, and you told me that God would punish me yet, because I made an idol of my son, and set it up in His place. Do you remember? Your word was a true one. God saw that I loved Chester too much, and He meant to take him from me. I thwarted one way when I made him give up Damaris. But one can't fight against the Almighty. It was decreed that I must lose him — if not in one way, then in another. He has been taken from me utterly. I shall not even have his grave to tend, Cynthia."

"As near to a mad woman as anything you ever saw, with her awful eyes," Cynthia told Carl, afterwards. But she did not say so there. Although she was a shallow, commonplace soul, she had her share of womanly sympathy, and her own life had not been free from suffering. It taught her the right thing to do now. She sat down by the stricken creature and put her arms about her, while she gathered the cold hands in her own warm clasp. The tears filled her big, blue eyes and her voice trembled as she said:

"Thyra, I'm sorry for you. I — I — lost a child once — my little firstborn. And Chester was a dear, good lad."

For a moment Thyra strained her small, tense body away from Cynthia's embrace. Then she shuddered and cried out. The tears came, and she wept her agony out on the other woman's breast.

As the ill news spread, other Avonlea women kept dropping in all through the day to condole with Thyra. Many of them came in real sympathy, but some out of mere curiosity to see how she took it. Thyra knew this, but she did not resent it, as she would once have done. She listened very quietly to all the halting efforts at consolation, and the little platitudes with which they strove to cover the nakedness of bereavement.

When darkness came Cynthia said she must go home, but would send one of her girls over for the night.

"You won't feel like staying alone," she said.

Thyra looked up steadily.

"No. But I want you to send for Damaris Garland."

"Damaris Garland!" Cynthia repeated the name as if disbelieving her own ears. There was never any knowing what whim Thyra might take, but Cynthia had not expected this.

"Yes. Tell her I want her — tell her she must come. She must hate me bitterly; but I am punished enough to satisfy even her hate. Tell her to come to me for Chester's sake."

Cynthia did as she was bid, she sent her daughter, Jeanette, for Damaris. Then she waited. No matter what duties were calling for her at home she must see the interview between Thyra and Damaris. Her curiosity would be the last thing to fail Cynthia White. She had done very well all day; but it would be asking too much of her to expect that she would consider the meeting of these two women sacred from her eyes.

She half believed that Damaris would refuse to come. But Damaris came. Jeanette brought her in amid the fiery glow of a November sunset. Thyra stood up, and for a moment they looked at each other.

The insolence of Damaris' beauty was gone. Her eyes were dull and heavy with weeping, her lips were pale, and her face had lost its laughter and dimples. Only her hair, escaping from the shawl she had cast around it, gushed forth in warm splendor in the sunset light, and framed her wan face

like the aureole of a Madonna. Thyra looked upon her with a shock of remorse. This was not the radiant creature she had met on the bridge that summer afternoon. This — this — was HER work. She held out her arms.

“Oh, Damaris, forgive me. We both loved him — that must be a bond between us for life.”

Damaris came forward and threw her arms about the older woman, lifting her face. As their lips met even Cynthia White realized that she had no business there. She vented the irritation of her embarrassment on the innocent Jeanette.

“Come away,” she whispered crossly. “Can’t you see we’re not wanted here?”

She drew Jeanette out, leaving Thyra rocking Damaris in her arms, and crooning over her like a mother over her child.

When December had grown old Damaris was still with Thyra. It was understood that she was to remain there for the winter, at least. Thyra could not bear her to be out of her sight. They talked constantly about Chester; Thyra confessed all her anger and hatred. Damaris had forgiven her; but Thyra could never forgive herself. She was greatly changed, and had grown very gentle and tender. She even sent for August Vorst and begged him to pardon her for the way she had spoken to him.

Winter came late that year, and the season was a very open one. There was no snow on the ground and, a month after Joe Raymond’s boat had been cast up on the Blue Point sand shore, Thyra, wandering about in her garden, found some pansies blooming under their tangled leaves. She was picking them for Damaris when she heard a buggy rumble over the bridge and drive up the White lane, hidden from her sight by the alders and firs. A few minutes later Carl and Cynthia came hastily across their yard under the huge balm-of-gileads. Carl’s face was flushed, and his big body quivered with excitement. Cynthia ran behind him, with tears rolling down her face.

Thyra felt herself growing sick with fear. Had anything happened to Damaris? A glimpse of the girl, sewing by an upper window of the house, reassured her.

“Oh, Thyra, Thyra!” gasped Cynthia.

“Can you stand some good news, Thyra?” asked Carl, in a trembling voice. “Very, very good news!”

Thyra looked wildly from one to the other.

“There’s but one thing you would dare to call good news to me,” she cried. “Is it about — about—”

“Chester! Yes, it’s about Chester! Thyra, he is alive — he’s safe — he and Joe, both of them, thank God! Cynthia, catch her!”

“No, I am not going to faint,” said Thyra, steadying herself by Cynthia’s shoulder. “My son alive! How did you hear? How did it happen? Where has he been?”

“I heard it down at the harbor, Thyra. Mike McCready’s vessel, the Nora Lee, was just in from the Magdalens. Ches and Joe got capsized the night of the storm, but they hung on to their boat somehow, and at daybreak they were picked up by the Nora Lee, bound for Quebec. But she was damaged by the storm and blown clear out of her course. Had to put into the Magdalens for repairs, and has been there ever since. The cable to the islands was out of order, and no vessels call there this time of year for mails. If it hadn’t been an extra open season the Nora Lee wouldn’t have got away, but would have had to stay there till spring. You never saw such rejoicing as there was this morning at the harbor, when the Nora Lee came in, flying flags at the mast head.”

“And Chester — where is he?” demanded Thyra.

Carl and Cynthia looked at each other.

“Well, Thyra,” said the latter, “the fact is, he’s over there in our yard this blessed minute. Carl brought him home from the harbor, but I wouldn’t let him come over until we had prepared you for it. He’s waiting for you there.”

Thyra made a quick step in the direction of the gate. Then she turned, with a little of the glow dying out of her face.

“No, there’s one has a better right to go to him first. I can atone to him — thank God, I can atone to him!”

She went into the house and called Damaris. As the girl came down the stairs Thyra held out her hands with a wonderful light of joy and renunciation on her face.

“Damaris,” she said, “Chester has come back to us — the sea has given him back to us. He is over at Carl White’s house. Go to him, my daughter, and bring him to me!”

The Education of Betty

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When Sara Currie married Jack Churchill I was brokenhearted...or believed myself to be so, which, in a boy of twenty-two, amounts to pretty much the same thing. Not that I took the world into my confidence; that was never the Douglas way, and I held myself in honor bound to live up to the family traditions. I thought, then, that nobody but Sara knew; but I dare say, now, that Jack knew it also, for I don't think Sara could have helped telling him. If he did know, however, he did not let me see that he did, and never insulted me by any implied sympathy; on the contrary, he asked me to be his best man. Jack was always a thoroughbred.

I was best man. Jack and I had always been bosom friends, and, although I had lost my sweetheart, I did not intend to lose my friend into the bargain. Sara had made a wise choice, for Jack was twice the man I was; he had had to work for his living, which perhaps accounts for it.

So I danced at Sara's wedding as if my heart were as light as my heels; but, after she and Jack had settled down at Glenby I closed The Maples and went abroad...being, as I have hinted, one of those unfortunate mortals who need consult nothing but their own whims in the matter of time and money. I stayed away for ten years, during which The Maples was given over to moths and rust, while I enjoyed life elsewhere. I did enjoy it hugely, but always under protest, for I felt that a brokenhearted man ought not to enjoy himself as I did. It jarred on my sense of fitness, and I tried to moderate my zest, and think more of the past than I did. It was no use; the present insisted on being intrusive and pleasant; as for the future...well, there was no future.

Then Jack Churchill, poor fellow, died. A year after his death, I went home and again asked Sara to marry me, as in duty bound. Sara again declined, alleging that her heart was buried in Jack's grave, or words to that effect. I found that it did not much matter...of course, at thirty-two

one does not take these things to heart as at twenty-two. I had enough to occupy me in getting The Maples into working order, and beginning to educate Betty.

Betty was Sara's ten year-old daughter, and she had been thoroughly spoiled. That is to say, she had been allowed her own way in everything and, having inherited her father's outdoor tastes, had simply run wild. She was a thorough tomboy, a thin, scrawny little thing with a trace of Sara's beauty. Betty took after her father's dark, tall race and, on the occasion of my first introduction to her, seemed to be all legs and neck. There were points about her, though, which I considered promising. She had fine, almond-shaped, hazel eyes, the smallest and most shapely hands and feet I ever saw, and two enormous braids of thick, nut-brown hair.

For Jack's sake I decided to bring his daughter up properly. Sara couldn't do it, and didn't try. I saw that, if somebody didn't take Betty in hand, wisely and firmly, she would certainly be ruined. There seemed to be nobody except myself at all interested in the matter, so I determined to see what an old bachelor could do as regards bringing up a girl in the way she should go. I might have been her father; as it was, her father had been my best friend. Who had a better right to watch over his daughter? I determined to be a father to Betty, and do all for her that the most devoted parent could do. It was, self-evidently, my duty.

I told Sara I was going to take Betty in hand. Sara sighed one of the plaintive little sighs which I had once thought so charming, but now, to my surprise, found faintly irritating, and said that she would be very much obliged if I would.

"I feel that I am not able to cope with the problem of Betty's education, Stephen," she admitted, "Betty is a strange child...all Churchill. Her poor father indulged her in everything, and she has a will of her own, I assure you. I have really no control over her, whatever. She does as she pleases, and is ruining her complexion by running and galloping out of doors the whole time. Not that she had much complexion to start with. The Churchills never had, you know."...Sara cast a complacent glance at

her delicately tinted reflection in the mirror.... "I tried to make Betty wear a sunbonnet this summer, but I might as well have talked to the wind."

A vision of Betty in a sunbonnet presented itself to my mind, and afforded me so much amusement that I was grateful to Sara for having furnished it. I rewarded her with a compliment.

"It is to be regretted that Betty has not inherited her mother's charming color," I said, "but we must do the best we can for her under her limitations. She may have improved vastly by the time she has grown up. And, at least, we must make a lady of her; she is a most alarming tomboy at present, but there is good material to work upon...there must be, in the Churchill and Currie blend. But even the best material may be spoiled by unwise handling. I think I can promise you that I will not spoil it. I feel that Betty is my vocation; and I shall set myself up as a rival of Wordsworth's 'nature,' of whose methods I have always had a decided distrust, in spite of his insidious verses."

Sara did not understand me in the least; but, then, she did not pretend to.

"I confide Betty's education entirely to you, Stephen," she said, with another plaintive sigh. "I feel sure I could not put it into better hands. You have always been a person who could be thoroughly depended on."

Well, that was something by way of reward for a lifelong devotion. I felt that I was satisfied with my position as unofficial advisor-in-chief to Sara and self-appointed guardian of Betty. I also felt that, for the furtherance of the cause I had taken to heart, it was a good thing that Sara had again refused to marry me. I had a sixth sense which informed me that a staid old family friend might succeed with Betty where a stepfather would have signally failed. Betty's loyalty to her father's memory was passionate, and vehement; she would view his supplanter with resentment and distrust; but his old familiar comrade was a person to be taken to her heart.

Fortunately for the success of my enterprise, Betty liked me. She told me this with the same engaging candor she would have used in informing

me that she hated me, if she had happened to take a bias in that direction, saying frankly:

“You are one of the very nicest old folks I know, Stephen. Yes, you are a ripping good fellow!”

This made my task a comparatively easy one; I sometimes shudder to think what it might have been if Betty had not thought I was a “ripping good fellow.” I should have stuck to it, because that is my way; but Betty would have made my life a misery to me. She had startling capacities for tormenting people when she chose to exert them; I certainly should not have liked to be numbered among Betty’s foes.

I rode over to Glenby the next morning after my paternal interview with Sara, intending to have a frank talk with Betty and lay the foundations of a good understanding on both sides. Betty was a sharp child, with a disconcerting knack of seeing straight through grindstones; she would certainly perceive and probably resent any underhanded management. I thought it best to tell her plainly that I was going to look after her.

When, however, I encountered Betty, tearing madly down the beech avenue with a couple of dogs, her loosened hair streaming behind her like a banner of independence, and had lifted her, hatless and breathless, up before me on my mare, I found that Sara had saved me the trouble of an explanation.

“Mother says you are going to take charge of my education, Stephen,” said Betty, as soon as she could speak. “I’m glad, because I think that, for an old person, you have a good deal of sense. I suppose my education has to be seen to, some time or other, and I’d rather you’d do it than anybody else I know.”

“Thank you, Betty,” I said gravely. “I hope I shall deserve your good opinion of my sense. I shall expect you to do as I tell you, and be guided by my advice in everything.”

“Yes, I will,” said Betty, “because I’m sure you won’t tell me to do anything I’d really hate to do. You won’t shut me up in a room and make me sew, will you? Because I won’t do it.”

I assured her I would not.

“Nor send me to a boarding-school,” pursued Betty. “Mother’s always threatening to send me to one. I suppose she would have done it before this, only she knew I’d run away. You won’t send me to a boarding-school, will you, Stephen? Because I won’t go.”

“No,” I said obligingly. “I won’t. I should never dream of cooping a wild little thing, like you, up in a boarding-school. You’d fret your heart out like a caged skylark.”

“I know you and I are going to get along together splendidly, Stephen,” said Betty, rubbing her brown cheek chummily against my shoulder. “You are so good at understanding. Very few people are. Even dad darling didn’t understand. He let me do just as I wanted to, just because I wanted to, not because he really understood that I couldn’t be tame and play with dolls. I hate dolls! Real live babies are jolly; but dogs and horses are ever so much nicer than dolls.”

“But you must have lessons, Betty. I shall select your teachers and superintend your studies, and I shall expect you to do me credit along that line, as well as along all others.”

“I’ll try, honest and true, Stephen,” declared Betty. And she kept her word.

At first I looked upon Betty’s education as a duty; in a very short time it had become a pleasure...the deepest and most abiding interest of my life. As I had premised, Betty was good material, and responded to my training with gratifying plasticity. Day by day, week by week, month by month, her character and temperament unfolded naturally under my watchful eye. It was like beholding the gradual development of some rare flower in one’s garden. A little checking and pruning here, a careful training of shoot and tendril there, and, lo, the reward of grace and symmetry!

Betty grew up as I would have wished Jack Churchill’s girl to grow — spirited and proud, with the fine spirit and gracious pride of pure womanhood, loyal and loving, with the loyalty and love of a frank and unspoiled nature; true to her heart’s core, hating falsehood and sham — as

crystal-clear a mirror of maidenhood as ever man looked into and saw himself reflected back in such a halo as made him ashamed of not being more worthy of it. Betty was kind enough to say that I had taught her everything she knew. But what had she not taught me? If there were a debt between us, it was on my side.

Sara was fairly well satisfied. It was not my fault that Betty was not better looking, she said. I had certainly done everything for her mind and character that could be done. Sara's manner implied that these unimportant details did not count for much, balanced against the lack of a pink-and-white skin and dimpled elbows; but she was generous enough not to blame me.

"When Betty is twenty-five," I said patiently — I had grown used to speaking patiently to Sara—"she will be a magnificent woman — far handsomer than you ever were, Sara, in your pinkest and whitest prime. Where are your eyes, my dear lady, that you can't see the promise of loveliness in Betty?"

"Betty is seventeen, and she is as lanky and brown as ever she was," sighed Sara. "When I was seventeen I was the belle of the county and had had five proposals. I don't believe the thought of a lover has ever entered Betty's head."

"I hope not," I said shortly. Somehow, I did not like the suggestion. "Betty is a child yet. For pity's sake, Sara, don't go putting nonsensical ideas into her head."

"I'm afraid I can't," mourned Sara, as if it were something to be regretted. "You have filled it too full of books and things like that. I've every confidence in your judgment, Stephen — and really you've done wonders with Betty. But don't you think you've made her rather too clever? Men don't like women who are too clever. Her poor father, now — he always said that a woman who liked books better than beaux was an unnatural creature."

I didn't believe Jack had ever said anything so foolish. Sara imagined things. But I resented the aspersion of blue-stockings cast on Betty.

“When the time comes for Betty to be interested in beaux,” I said severely, “she will probably give them all due attention. Just at present her head is a great deal better filled with books than with silly premature fancies and sentimentalities. I’m a critical old fellow — but I’m satisfied with Betty, Sara — perfectly satisfied.”

Sara sighed.

“Oh, I dare say she is all right, Stephen. And I’m really grateful to you. I’m sure I could have done nothing at all with her. It’s not your fault, of course, — but I can’t help wishing she were a little more like other girls.”

I galloped away from Glenby in a rage. What a blessing Sara had not married me in my absurd youth! She would have driven me wild with her sighs and her obtuseness and her everlasting pink-and-whiteness. But there — there — there — gently! She was a sweet, goodhearted little woman; she had made Jack happy; and she had contrived, heaven only knew how, to bring a rare creature like Betty into the world. For that, much might be forgiven her. By the time I reached The Maples and had flung myself down in an old, kinky, comfortable chair in my library I had forgiven her and was even paying her the compliment of thinking seriously over what she had said.

Was Betty really unlike other girls? That is to say, unlike them in any respect wherein she should resemble them? I did not wish this; although I was a crusty old bachelor I approved of girls, holding them the sweetest things the good God has made. I wanted Betty to have her full complement of girlhood in all its best and highest manifestation. Was there anything lacking?

I observed Betty very closely during the next week or so, riding over to Glenby every day and riding back at night, meditating upon my observations. Eventually I concluded to do what I had never thought myself in the least likely to do. I would send Betty to a boarding-school for a year. It was necessary that she should learn how to live with other girls.

I went over to Glenby the next day and found Betty under the beeches on the lawn, just back from a canter. She was sitting on the dappled mare I

had given her on her last birthday, and was laughing at the antics of her rejoicing dogs around her. I looked at her with much pleasure; it gladdened me to see how much, nay, how totally a child she still was, despite her Churchill height. Her hair, under her velvet cap, still hung over her shoulders in the same thick plaits; her face had the firm leanness of early youth, but its curves were very fine and delicate. The brown skin, that worried Sara so, was flushed through with dusky color from her gallop; her long, dark eyes were filled with the beautiful unconsciousness of childhood. More than all, the soul in her was still the soul of a child. I found myself wishing that it could always remain so. But I knew it could not; the woman must blossom out some day; it was my duty to see that the flower fulfilled the promise of the bud.

When I told Betty that she must go away to a school for a year, she shrugged, frowned and consented. Betty had learned that she must consent to what I decreed, even when my decrees were opposed to her likings, as she had once fondly believed they never would be. But Betty had acquired confidence in me to the beautiful extent of acquiescing in everything I commanded.

“I’ll go, of course, since you wish it, Stephen,” she said. “But why do you want me to go? You must have a reason — you always have a reason for anything you do. What is it?”

“That is for you to find out, Betty,” I said. “By the time you come back you will have discovered it, I think. If not, it will not have proved itself a good reason and shall be forgotten.”

When Betty went away I bade her good-by without burdening her with any useless words of advice.

“Write to me every week, and remember that you are Betty Churchill,” I said.

Betty was standing on the steps above, among her dogs. She came down a step and put her arms about my neck.

“I’ll remember that you are my friend and that I must live up to you,” she said. “Good-by, Stephen.”

She kissed me two or three times — good, hearty smacks! did I not say she was still a child? — and stood waving her hand to me as I rode away. I looked back at the end of the avenue and saw her standing there, short-skirted and hatless, fronting the lowering sun with those fearless eyes of hers. So I looked my last on the child Betty.

That was a lonely year. My occupation was gone and I began to fear that I had outlived my usefulness. Life seemed flat, stale, and unprofitable. Betty's weekly letters were all that lent it any savor. They were spicy and piquant enough. Betty was discovered to have unsuspected talents in the epistolary line. At first she was dolefully homesick, and begged me to let her come home. When I refused — it was amazingly hard to refuse — she sulked through three letters, then cheered up and began to enjoy herself. But it was nearly the end of the year when she wrote:

“I've found out why you sent me here, Stephen — and I'm glad you did.”

I had to be away from home on unavoidable business the day Betty returned to Glenby. But the next afternoon I went over. I found Betty out and Sara in. The latter was beaming. Betty was so much improved, she declared delightedly. I would hardly know “the dear child.”

This alarmed me terribly. What on earth had they done to Betty? I found that she had gone up to the pineland for a walk, and thither I betook myself speedily. When I saw her coming down a long, golden-brown alley I stepped behind a tree to watch her — I wished to see her, myself unseen. As she drew near I gazed at her with pride, and admiration and amazement — and, under it all, a strange, dreadful, heart-sinking, which I could not understand and which I had never in all my life experienced before — no, not even when Sara had refused me.

Betty was a woman! Not by virtue of the simple white dress that clung to her tall, slender figure, revealing lines of exquisite grace and liveness; not by virtue of the glossy masses of dark brown hair heaped high on her head and held there in wonderful shining coils; not by virtue of added softness of curve and daintiness of outline; not because of all these, but

because of the dream and wonder and seeking in her eyes. She was a woman, looking, all unconscious of her quest, for love.

The understanding of the change in her came home to me with a shock that must have left me, I think, something white about the lips. I was glad. She was what I had wished her to become. But I wanted the child Betty back; this womanly Betty seemed far away from me.

I stepped out into the path and she saw me, with a brightening of her whole face. She did not rush forward and fling herself into my arms as she would have done a year ago; but she came towards me swiftly, holding out her hand. I had thought her slightly pale when I had first seen her; but now I concluded I had been mistaken, for there was a wonderful sunrise of color in her face. I took her hand — there were no kisses this time.

“Welcome home, Betty,” I said.

“Oh, Stephen, it is so good to be back,” she breathed, her eyes shining.

She did not say it was good to see me again, as I had hoped she would do. Indeed, after the first minute of greeting, she seemed a trifle cool and distant. We walked for an hour in the pine wood and talked. Betty was brilliant, witty, selfpossessed, altogether charming. I thought her perfect and yet my heart ached. What a glorious young thing she was, in that splendid youth of hers! What a prize for some lucky man — confound the obtrusive thought! No doubt we should soon be overrun at Glenby with lovers. I should stumble over some forlorn youth at every step! Well, what of it? Betty would marry, of course. It would be my duty to see that she got a good husband, worthy of her as men go. I thought I preferred the old duty of superintending her studies. But there, it was all the same thing — merely a post-graduate course in applied knowledge. When she began to learn life’s greatest lesson of love, I, the tried and true old family friend and mentor, must be on hand to see that the teacher was what I would have him be, even as I had formerly selected her instructor in French and botany. Then, and not until then, would Betty’s education be complete.

I rode home very soberly. When I reached The Maples I did what I had not done for years...looked critically at myself in the mirror. The realization that I had grown older came home to me with a new and

unpleasant force. There were marked lines on my lean face, and silver glints in the dark hair over my temples. When Betty was ten she had thought me “an old person.” Now, at eighteen, she probably thought me a veritable ancient of days. Pshaw, what did it matter? And yet...I thought of her as I had seen her, standing under the pines, and something cold and painful laid its hand on my heart.

My premonitions as to lovers proved correct. Glenby was soon infested with them. Heaven knows where they all came from. I had not supposed there was a quarter as many young men in the whole county; but there they were. Sara was in the seventh heaven of delight. Was not Betty at last a belle? As for the proposals...well, Betty never counted her scalps in public; but every once in a while a visiting youth dropped out and was seen no more at Glenby. One could guess what that meant.

Betty apparently enjoyed all this. I grieve to say that she was a bit of a coquette. I tried to cure her of this serious defect, but for once I found that I had undertaken something I could not accomplish. In vain I lectured, Betty only laughed; in vain I gravely rebuked, Betty only flirted more vivaciously than before. Men might come and men might go, but Betty went on forever. I endured this sort of thing for a year and then I decided that it was time to interfere seriously. I must find a husband for Betty...my fatherly duty would not be fulfilled until I had...nor, indeed, my duty to society. She was not a safe person to have running at large.

None of the men who haunted Glenby was good enough for her. I decided that my nephew, Frank, would do very well. He was a capital young fellow, handsome, clean-souled, and wholehearted. From a worldly point of view he was what Sara would have termed an excellent match; he had money, social standing and a rising reputation as a clever young lawyer. Yes, he should have Betty, confound him!

They had never met. I set the wheels going at once. The sooner all the fuss was over the better. I hated fuss and there was bound to be a good deal of it. But I went about the business like an accomplished matchmaker. I invited Frank to visit The Maples and, before he came, I talked much...but not too much...of him to Betty, mingling judicious praise and still more

judicious blame together. Women never like a paragon. Betty heard me with more gravity than she usually accorded to my dissertations on young men. She even condescended to ask several questions about him. This I thought a good sign.

To Frank I had said not a word about Betty; when he came to The Maples I took him over to Glenby and, coming upon Betty wandering about among the beeches in the sunset, I introduced him without any warning.

He would have been more than mortal if he had not fallen in love with her upon the spot. It was not in the heart of man to resist her...that dainty, alluring bit of womanhood. She was all in white, with flowers in her hair, and, for a moment, I could have murdered Frank or any other man who dared to commit the sacrilege of loving her.

Then I pulled myself together and left them alone. I might have gone in and talked to Sara...two old folks gently reviewing their youth while the young folks courted outside...but I did not. I prowled about the pine wood, and tried to forget how blithe and handsome that curly-headed boy, Frank, was, and what a flash had sprung into his eyes when he had seen Betty. Well, what of it? Was not that what I had brought him there for? And was I not pleased at the success of my scheme? Certainly I was! Delighted!

Next day Frank went to Glenby without even making the poor pretense of asking me to accompany him. I spent the time of his absence overseeing the construction of a new greenhouse I was having built. I was conscientious in my supervision; but I felt no interest in it. The place was intended for roses, and roses made me think of the pale yellow ones Betty had worn at her breast one evening the week before, when, all lovers being unaccountably absent, we had wandered together under the pines and talked as in the old days before her young womanhood and my gray hairs had risen up to divide us. She had dropped a rose on the brown floor, and I had sneaked back, after I had left her the house, to get it, before I went home. I had it now in my pocketbook. Confound it, mightn't a future uncle cherish a family affection for his prospective niece?

Frank's wooing seemed to prosper. The other young sparks, who had haunted Glenby, faded away after his advent. Betty treated him with most encouraging sweetness; Sara smiled on him; I stood in the background, like a benevolent god of the machine, and flattered myself that I pulled the strings.

At the end of a month something went wrong. Frank came home from Glenby one day in the dumps, and moped for two whole days. I rode down myself on the third. I had not gone much to Glenby that month; but, if there were trouble Bettyward, it was my duty to make smooth the rough places.

As usual, I found Betty in the pineland. I thought she looked rather pale and dull...fretting about Frank no doubt. She brightened up when she saw me, evidently expecting that I had come to straighten matters out; but she pretended to be haughty and indifferent.

"I am glad you haven't forgotten us altogether, Stephen," she said coolly. "You haven't been down for a week."

"I'm flattered that you noticed it," I said, sitting down on a fallen tree and looking up at her as she stood, tall and lithe, against an old pine, with her eyes averted. "I shouldn't have supposed you'd want an old foggy like myself poking about and spoiling the idyllic moments of love's young dream."

"Why do you always speak of yourself as old?" said Betty, crossly, ignoring my reference to Frank.

"Because I am old, my dear. Witness these gray hairs."

I pushed up my hat to show them the more recklessly.

Betty barely glanced at them.

"You have just enough to give you a distinguished look," she said, "and you are only forty. A man is in his prime at forty. He never has any sense until he is forty — and sometimes he doesn't seem to have any even then," she concluded impertinently.

My heart beat. Did Betty suspect? Was that last sentence meant to inform me that she was aware of my secret folly, and laughed at it?

“I came over to see what has gone wrong between you and Frank,” I said gravely.

Betty bit her lips.

“Nothing,” she said.

“Betty,” I said reproachfully, “I brought you up...or endeavored to bring you up...to speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Don’t tell me I have failed. I’ll give you another chance. Have you quarreled with Frank?”

“No,” said the maddening Betty, “HE quarreled with me. He went away in a temper and I do not care if he never comes back!”

I shook my head.

“This won’t do, Betty. As your old family friend I still claim the right to scold you until you have a husband to do the scolding. You mustn’t torment Frank. He is too fine a fellow. You must marry him, Betty.”

“Must I?” said Betty, a dusky red flaming out on her cheek. She turned her eyes on me in a most disconcerting fashion. “Do YOU wish me to marry Frank, Stephen?”

Betty had a wretched habit of emphasizing pronouns in a fashion calculated to rattle anybody.

“Yes, I do wish it, because I think it will be best for you,” I replied, without looking at her. “You must marry some time, Betty, and Frank is the only man I know to whom I could trust you. As your guardian, I have an interest in seeing you well and wisely settled for life. You have always taken my advice and obeyed my wishes; and you’ve always found my way the best, in the long run, haven’t you, Betty? You won’t prove rebellious now, I’m sure. You know quite well that I am advising you for your own good. Frank is a splendid young fellow, who loves you with all his heart. Marry him, Betty. Mind, I don’t COMMAND. I have no right to do that, and you are too old to be ordered about, if I had. But I wish and advise it. Isn’t that enough, Betty?”

I had been looking away from her all the time I was talking, gazing determinedly down a sunlit vista of pines. Every word I said seemed to

tear my heart, and come from my lips stained with life-blood. Yes, Betty should marry Frank! But, good God, what would become of me!

Betty left her station under the pine tree, and walked around me until she got right in front of my face. I couldn't help looking at her, for if I moved my eyes she moved too. There was nothing meek or submissive about her; her head was held high, her eyes were blazing, and her cheeks were crimson. But her words were meek enough.

"I will marry Frank if you wish it, Stephen," she said. "You are my friend. I have never crossed your wishes, and, as you say, I have never regretted being guided by them. I will do exactly as you wish in this case also, I promise you that. But, in so solemn a question, I must be very certain what you DO wish. There must be no doubt in my mind or heart. Look me squarely in the eyes, Stephen — as you haven't done once to-day, no, nor once since I came home from school — and, so looking, tell me that you wish me to marry Frank Douglas and I will do it! DO you, Stephen?"

I had to look her in the eyes, since nothing else would do her; and, as I did so, all the might of manhood in me rose up in hot revolt against the lie I would have told her. That unfaltering, impelling gaze of hers drew the truth from my lips in spite of myself.

"No, I don't wish you to marry Frank Douglas, a thousand times no!" I said passionately. "I don't wish you to marry any man on earth but myself. I love you — I love you, Betty. You are dearer to me than life — dearer to me than my own happiness. It was your happiness I thought of — and so I asked you to marry Frank because I believed he would make you a happy woman. That is all!"

Betty's defiance went from her like a flame blown out. She turned away and drooped her proud head.

"It could not have made me a happy woman to marry one man, loving another," she said, in a whisper.

I got up and went over to her.

"Betty, whom do you love?" I asked, also in a whisper.

"You," she murmured meekly — oh, so meekly, my proud little girl!

“Betty,” I said brokenly, “I’m old — too old for you — I’m more than twenty years your senior — I’m—”

“Oh!” Betty wheeled around on me and stamped her foot. “Don’t mention your age to me again. I don’t care if you’re as old as Methuselah. But I’m not going to coax you to marry me, sir! If you won’t, I’ll never marry anybody — I’ll live and die an old maid. You can please yourself, of course!”

She turned away, half-laughing, half-crying; but I caught her in my arms and crushed her sweet lips against mine.

“Betty, I’m the happiest man in the world — and I was the most miserable when I came here.”

“You deserved to be,” said Betty cruelly. “I’m glad you were. Any man as stupid as you deserves to be unhappy. What do you think I felt like, loving you with all my heart, and seeing you simply throwing me at another man’s head. Why, I’ve always loved you, Stephen; but I didn’t know it until I went to that detestable school. Then I found out — and I thought that was why you had sent me. But, when I came home, you almost broke my heart. That was why I flirted so with all those poor, nice boys — I wanted to hurt you but I never thought I succeeded. You just went on being FATHERLY. Then, when you brought Frank here, I almost gave up hope; and I tried to make up my mind to marry him; I should have done it if you had insisted. But I had to have one more try for happiness first. I had just one little hope to inspire me with sufficient boldness. I saw you, that night, when you came back here and picked up my rose! I had come back, myself, to be alone and unhappy.”

“It is the most wonderful thing that ever happened — that you should love me,” I said.

“It’s not — I couldn’t help it,” said Betty, nestling her brown head on my shoulder. “You taught me everything else, Stephen, so nobody but you could teach me how to love. You’ve made a thorough thing of educating me.”

“When will you marry me, Betty?” I asked.

“As soon as I can fully forgive you for trying to make me marry somebody else,” said Betty.

It was rather hard lines on Frank, when you come to think of it. But, such is the selfishness of human nature that we didn't think much about Frank. The young fellow behaved like the Douglas he was. Went a little white about the lips when I told him, wished me all happiness, and went quietly away, “gentleman unafraid.”

He has since married and is, I understand, very happy. Not as happy as I am, of course; that is impossible, because there is only one Betty in the world, and she is my wife.

In Her Selfless Mood

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The raw wind of an early May evening was puffing in and out the curtains of the room where Naomi Holland lay dying. The air was moist and chill, but the sick woman would not have the window closed.

“I can’t get my breath if you shut everything up so tight,” she said. “Whatever comes, I ain’t going to be smothered to death, Car’line Holland.”

Outside of the window grew a cherry tree, powdered with moist buds with the promise of blossoms she would not live to see. Between its boughs she saw a crystal cup of sky over hills that were growing dim and purple. The outside air was full of sweet, wholesome springtime sounds that drifted in fitfully. There were voices and whistles in the barnyard, and now and then faint laughter. A bird alighted for a moment on a cherry bough, and twittered restlessly. Naomi knew that white mists were hovering in the silent hollows, that the maple at the gate wore a misty blossom red, and that violet stars were shining bluely on the brooklands.

The room was a small, plain one. The floor was bare, save for a couple of braided rugs, the plaster discolored, the walls dingy and glaring. There had never been much beauty in Naomi Holland’s environment, and, now that she was dying, there was even less.

At the open window a boy of about ten years was leaning out over the sill and whistling. He was tall for his age, and beautiful — the hair a rich auburn with a glistening curl in it, skin very white and warm-tinted, eyes small and of a greenish blue, with dilated pupils and long lashes. He had a weak chin, and a full, sullen mouth.

The bed was in the corner farthest from the window; on it the sick woman, in spite of the pain that was her portion continually, was lying as quiet and motionless as she had done ever since she had lain down upon it for the last time. Naomi Holland never complained; when the agony was at

its worst, she shut her teeth more firmly over her bloodless lip, and her great black eyes glared at the blank wall before in a way that gave her attendants what they called “the creeps,” but no word or moan escaped her.

Between the paroxysms she kept up her keen interest in the life that went on about her. Nothing escaped her sharp, alert eyes and ears. This evening she lay spent on the crumpled pillows; she had had a bad spell in the afternoon and it had left her very weak. In the dim light her extremely long face looked corpse-like already. Her black hair lay in a heavy braid over the pillow and down the counterpane. It was all that was left of her beauty, and she took a fierce joy in it. Those long, glistening, sinuous tresses must be combed and braided every day, no matter what came.

A girl of fourteen was curled up on a chair at the head of the bed, with her head resting on the pillow. The boy at the window was her half-brother; but, between Christopher Holland and Eunice Carr, not the slightest resemblance existed.

Presently the sibilant silence was broken by a low, half-strangled sob. The sick woman, who had been watching a white evening star through the cherry boughs, turned impatiently at the sound.

“I wish you’d get over that, Eunice,” she said sharply. “I don’t want any one crying over me until I’m dead; and then you’ll have plenty else to do, most likely. If it wasn’t for Christopher I wouldn’t be anyways unwilling to die. When one has had such a life as I’ve had, there isn’t much in death to be afraid of. Only, a body would like to go right off, and not die by inches, like this. ‘Tain’t fair!”

She snapped out the last sentence as if addressing some unseen, tyrannical presence; her voice, at least, had not weakened, but was as clear and incisive as ever. The boy at the window stopped whistling, and the girl silently wiped her eyes on her faded gingham apron.

Naomi drew her own hair over her lips, and kissed it.

“You’ll never have hair like that, Eunice,” she said. “It does seem most too pretty to bury, doesn’t it? Mind you see that it is fixed nice when I’m laid out. Comb it right up on my head and braid it there.”

A sound, such as might be wrung from a suffering animal, came from the girl, but at the same moment the door opened and a woman entered.

“Chris,” she said sharply, “you get right off for the cows, you lazy little scamp! You knew right well you had to go for them, and here you’ve been idling, and me looking high and low for you. Make haste now; it’s ridiculous late.”

The boy pulled in his head and scowled at his aunt, but he dared not disobey, and went out slowly with a sulky mutter.

His aunt subdued a movement, that might have developed into a sound box on his ears, with a rather frightened glance at the bed. Naomi Holland was spent and dying, but her temper was still a thing to hold in dread, and her sister-in-law did not choose to rouse it by slapping Christopher. To her and her co-nurse the spasms of rage, which the sick woman sometimes had, seemed to partake of the nature of devil possession. The last one, only three days before, had been provoked by Christopher’s complaint of some real or fancied ill-treatment from his aunt, and the latter had no mind to bring on another. She went over to the bed, and straightened the clothes.

“Sarah and I are going out to milk, Naomi, Eunice will stay with you. She can run for us if you feel another spell coming on.”

Naomi Holland looked up at her sister-in-law with something like malicious enjoyment.

“I ain’t going to have any more spells, Car’line Anne. I’m going to die tonight. But you needn’t hurry milking for that, at all. I’ll take my time.”

She liked to see the alarm that came over the other woman’s face.

It was richly worth while to scare Caroline Holland like that.

“Are you feeling worse, Naomi?” asked the latter shakily. “If you are I’ll send for Charles to go for the doctor.”

“No, you won’t. What good can the doctor do me? I don’t want either his or Charles’ permission to die. You can go and milk at your ease. I won’t die till you’re done — I won’t deprive you of the pleasure of seeing me.”

Mrs. Holland shut her lips and went out of the room with a martyr-like expression. In some ways Naomi Holland was not an exacting patient, but she took her satisfaction out in the biting, malicious speeches she never failed to make. Even on her deathbed her hostility to her sister-in-law had to find vent.

Outside, at the steps, Sarah Spencer was waiting, with the milk pails over her arm. Sarah Spencer had no fixed abiding place, but was always to be found where there was illness. Her experience, and an utter lack of nerves, made her a good nurse. She was a tall, homely woman with iron gray hair and a lined face. Beside her, the trim little Caroline Anne, with her light step and round, apple-red face, looked almost girlish.

The two women walked to the barnyard, discussing Naomi in undertones as they went. The house they had left behind grew very still.

In Naomi Holland's room the shadows were gathering. Eunice timidly bent over her mother.

"Ma, do you want the light lit?"

"No, I'm watching that star just below the big cherry bough. I'll see it set behind the hill. I've seen it there, off and on, for twelve years, and now I'm taking a good-by look at it. I want you to keep still, too. I've got a few things to think over, and I don't want to be disturbed."

The girl lifted herself about noiselessly and locked her hands over the bedpost. Then she laid her face down on them, biting at them silently until the marks of her teeth showed white against their red roughness.

Naomi Holland did not notice her. She was looking steadfastly at the great, pearl-like sparkle in the faint-hued sky. When it finally disappeared from her vision she struck her long, thin hands together twice, and a terrible expression came over her face for a moment. But, when she spoke, her voice was quite calm.

"You can light the candle now, Eunice. Put it up on the shelf here, where it won't shine in my eyes. And then sit down on the foot of the bed where I can see you. I've got something to say to you."

Eunice obeyed her noiselessly. As the pallid light shot up, it revealed the child plainly. She was thin and ill-formed — one shoulder being

slightly higher than the other. She was dark, like her mother, but her features were irregular, and her hair fell in straggling, dim locks about her face. Her eyes were a dark brown, and over one was the slanting red scar of a birth mark.

Naomi Holland looked at her with the contempt she had never made any pretense of concealing. The girl was bone of her bone and flesh of her flesh, but she had never loved her; all the mother love in her had been lavished on her son.

When Eunice had placed the candle on the shelf and drawn down the ugly blue paper blinds, shutting out the strips of violet sky where a score of glimmering points were now visible, she sat down on the foot of the bed, facing her mother.

“The door is shut, is it, Eunice?”

Eunice nodded.

“Because I don’t want Car’line or any one else peeking and harking to what I’ve got to say. She’s out milking now, and I must make the most of the chance. Eunice, I’m going to die, and...”

“Ma!”

“There now, no taking on! You knew it had to come sometime soon. I haven’t the strength to talk much, so I want you just to be quiet and listen. I ain’t feeling any pain now, so I can think and talk pretty clear. Are you listening, Eunice?”

“Yes, ma.”

“Mind you are. It’s about Christopher. It hasn’t been out of my mind since I laid down here. I’ve fought for a year to live, on his account, and it ain’t any use. I must just die and leave him, and I don’t know what he’ll do. It’s dreadful to think of.”

She paused, and struck her shrunken hand sharply against the table.

“If he was bigger and could look out for himself it wouldn’t be so bad. But he is only a little fellow, and Car’line hates him. You’ll both have to live with her until you’re grown up. She’ll put on him and abuse him. He’s like his father in some ways; he’s got a temper and he is stubborn. He’ll never get on with Car’line. Now, Eunice, I’m going to get you to promise

to take my place with Christopher when I'm dead, as far as you can. You've got to; it's your duty. But I want you to promise."

"I will, ma," whispered the girl solemnly.

"You haven't much force — you never had. If you was smart, you could do a lot for him. But you'll have to do your best. I want you to promise me faithfully that you'll stand by him and protect him — that you won't let people impose on him; that you'll never desert him as long as he needs you, no matter what comes. Eunice, promise me this!"

In her excitement the sick woman raised herself up in the bed, and clutched the girl's thin arm. Her eyes were blazing and two scarlet spots glowed in her thin cheeks.

Eunice's face was white and tense. She clasped her hands as one in prayer.

"Mother, I promise it!"

Naomi relaxed her grip on the girl's arm and sank back exhausted on the pillow. A deathlike look came over her face as the excitement faded.

"My mind is easier now. But if I could only have lived another year or two! And I hate Car'line — hate her! Eunice, don't you ever let her abuse my boy! If she did, or if you neglected him, I'd come back from my grave to you! As for the property, things will be pretty straight. I've seen to that. There'll be no squabbling and doing Christopher out of his rights. He's to have the farm as soon as he's old enough to work it, and he's to provide for you. And, Eunice, remember what you've promised!"

Outside, in the thickly gathering dusk, Caroline Holland and Sarah Spencer were at the dairy, straining the milk into creamers, for which Christopher was sullenly pumping water. The house was far from the road, up to which a long red lane led; across the field was the old Holland homestead where Caroline lived; her unmarried sister-in-law, Electa Holland, kept house for her while she waited on Naomi.

It was her night to go home and sleep, but Naomi's words haunted her, although she believed they were born of pure "cantankerousness."

"You'd better go in and look at her, Sarah," she said, as she rinsed out the pails. "If you think I'd better stay here tonight, I will. If the woman

was like anybody else a body would know what to do; but, if she thought she could scare us by saying she was going to die, she'd say it."

When Sarah went in, the sick room was very quiet. In her opinion, Naomi was no worse than usual, and she told Caroline so; but the latter felt vaguely uneasy and concluded to stay.

Naomi was as cool and defiant as customary. She made them bring Christopher in to say goodnight and had him lifted up on the bed to kiss her. Then she held him back and looked at him admiringly — at the bright curls and rosy cheeks and round, firm limbs. The boy was uncomfortable under her gaze and squirmed hastily down. Her eyes followed him greedily, as he went out. When the door closed behind him, she groaned. Sarah Spencer was startled. She had never heard Naomi Holland groan since she had come to wait on her.

"Are you feeling any worse, Naomi? Is the pain coming back?"

"No. Go and tell Car'line to give Christopher some of that grape jelly on his bread before he goes to bed. She'll find it in the cupboard under the stairs."

Presently the house grew very still. Caroline had dropped asleep on the sitting-room lounge, across the hall. Sarah Spencer nodded over her knitting by the table in the sick room. She had told Eunice to go to bed, but the child refused. She still sat huddled up on the foot of the bed, watching her mother's face intently. Naomi appeared to sleep. The candle burned long, and the wick was crowned by a little cap of fiery red that seemed to watch Eunice like some impish goblin. The wavering light cast grotesque shadows of Sarah Spencer's head on the wall. The thin curtains at the window wavered to and fro, as if shaken by ghostly hands.

At midnight Naomi Holland opened her eyes. The child she had never loved was the only one to go with her to the brink of the Unseen.

"Eunice — remember!"

It was the faintest whisper. The soul, passing over the threshold of another life, strained back to its only earthly tie. A quiver passed over the long, pallid face.

A horrible scream rang through the silent house. Sarah Spencer sprang out of her doze in consternation, and gazed blankly at the shrieking child. Caroline came hurrying in with distended eyes. On the bed Naomi Holland lay dead.

In the room where she had died Naomi Holland lay in her coffin. It was dim and hushed; but, in the rest of the house, the preparations for the funeral were being hurried on. Through it all Eunice moved, calm and silent. Since her one wild spasm of screaming by her mother's deathbed she had shed no tear, given no sign of grief. Perhaps, as her mother had said, she had no time. There was Christopher to be looked after. The boy's grief was stormy and uncontrolled. He had cried until he was utterly exhausted. It was Eunice who soothed him, coaxed him to eat, kept him constantly by her. At night she took him to her own room and watched over him while he slept.

When the funeral was over the household furniture was packed away or sold. The house was locked up and the farm rented. There was nowhere for the children to go, save to their uncle's. Caroline Holland did not want them, but, having to take them, she grimly made up her mind to do what she considered her duty by them. She had five children of her own and between them and Christopher a standing feud had existed from the time he could walk.

She had never liked Naomi. Few people did. Benjamin Holland had not married until late in life, and his wife had declared war on his family at sight. She was a stranger in Avonlea, — a widow, with a three year-old child. She made few friends, as some people always asserted that she was not in her right mind.

Within a year of her second marriage Christopher was born, and from the hour of his birth his mother had worshiped him blindly. He was her only solace. For him she toiled and pinched and saved. Benjamin Holland had not been "forehanded" when she married him; but, when he died, six years after his marriage, he was a well-to-do man.

Naomi made no pretense of mourning for him. It was an open secret that they had quarreled like the proverbial cat and dog. Charles Holland

and his wife had naturally sided with Benjamin, and Naomi fought her battles single-handed. After her husband's death, she managed to farm alone, and made it pay. When the mysterious malady which was to end her life first seized on her she fought against it with all the strength and stubbornness of her strong and stubborn nature. Her will won for her an added year of life, and then she had to yield. She tasted all the bitterness of death the day on which she lay down on her bed, and saw her enemy come in to rule her house.

But Caroline Holland was not a bad or unkind woman. True, she did not love Naomi or her children; but the woman was dying and must be looked after for the sake of common humanity. Caroline thought she had done well by her sister-in-law.

When the red clay was heaped over Naomi's grave in the Avonlea burying ground, Caroline took Eunice and Christopher home with her. Christopher did not want to go; it was Eunice who reconciled him. He clung to her with an exacting affection born of loneliness and grief.

In the days that followed Caroline Holland was obliged to confess to herself that there would have been no doing anything with Christopher had it not been for Eunice. The boy was sullen and obstinate, but his sister had an unfailing influence over him.

In Charles Holland's household no one was allowed to eat the bread of idleness. His own children were all girls, and Christopher came in handy as a chore boy. He was made to work — perhaps too hard. But Eunice helped him, and did half his work for him when nobody knew. When he quarreled with his cousins, she took his part; whenever possible she took on herself the blame and punishment of his misdeeds.

Electa Holland was Charles' unmarried sister. She had kept house for Benjamin until he married; then Naomi had bundled her out. Electa had never forgiven her for it. Her hatred passed on to Naomi's children. In a hundred petty ways she revenged herself on them. For herself, Eunice bore it patiently; but it was a different matter when it touched Christopher.

Once Electa boxed Christopher's ears. Eunice, who was knitting by the table, stood up. A resemblance to her mother, never before visible, came

out in her face like a brand. She lifted her hand and slapped Electa's cheek deliberately twice, leaving a dull red mark where she struck.

"If you ever strike my brother again," she said, slowly and vindictively, "I will slap your face every time you do. You have no right to touch him."

"My patience, what a fury!" said Electa. "Naomi Holland'll never be dead as long as you're alive!"

She told Charles of the affair and Eunice was severely punished.
But Electa never interfered with Christopher again.

All the discordant elements in the Holland household could not prevent the children from growing up. It was a consummation which the harrassed Caroline devoutly wished. When Christopher Holland was seventeen he was a man grown — a big, strapping fellow. His childish beauty had coarsened, but he was thought handsome by many.

He took charge of his mother's farm then, and the brother and sister began their new life together in the long-unoccupied house. There were few regrets on either side when they left Charles Holland's roof. In her secret heart Eunice felt an unspeakable relief.

Christopher had been "hard to manage," as his uncle said, in the last year. He was getting into the habit of keeping late hours and doubtful company. This always provoked an explosion of wrath from Charles Holland, and the conflicts between him and his nephew were frequent and bitter.

For four years after their return home Eunice had a hard and anxious life. Christopher was idle and dissipated. Most people regarded him as a worthless fellow, and his uncle washed his hands of him utterly. Only Eunice never failed him; she never reproached or railed; she worked like a slave to keep things together. Eventually her patience prevailed.

Christopher, to a great extent, reformed and worked harder. He was never unkind to Eunice, even in his rages. It was not in him to appreciate or return her devotion; but his tolerant acceptance of it was her solace.

When Eunice was twenty-eight, Edward Bell wanted to marry her. He was a plain, middle-aged widower with four children; but, as Caroline did not fail to remind her, Eunice herself was not for every market, and the former did her best to make the match. She might have succeeded had it not been for Christopher. When he, in spite of Caroline's skillful management, got an inkling of what was going on, he flew into a true Holland rage. If Eunice married and left him — he would sell the farm and go to the Devil by way of the Klondike. He could not, and would not, do without her. No arrangement suggested by Caroline availed to pacify him, and, in the end, Eunice refused to marry Edward Bell. She could not leave Christopher, she said simply, and in this she stood rockfirm. Caroline could not budge her an inch.

"You're a fool, Eunice," she said, when she was obliged to give up in despair. "It's not likely you'll ever have another chance. As for Chris, in a year or two he'll be marrying himself, and where will you be then? You'll find your nose nicely out of joint when he brings a wife in here."

The shaft went home. Eunice's lips turned white. But she said, faintly, "The house is big enough for us both, if he does."

Caroline sniffed.

"Maybe so. You'll find out. However, there's no use talking. You're as set as your mother was, and nothing would ever budge her an inch. I only hope you won't be sorry for it."

When three more years had passed Christopher began to court Victoria Pye. The affair went on for some time before either Eunice or the Hollands go wind of it. When they did there was an explosion. Between the Hollands and the Pyes, root and branch, existed a feud that dated back for three generations. That the original cause of the quarrel was totally forgotten did not matter; it was matter of family pride that a Holland should have no dealings with a Pye.

When Christopher flew so openly in the face of this cherished hatred, there could be nothing less than consternation. Charles Holland broke through his determination to have nothing to do with Christopher, to

remonstrate. Caroline went to Eunice in as much of a splutter as if Christopher had been her own brother.

Eunice did not care a row of pins for the Holland-Pye feud. Victoria was to her what any other girl, upon whom Christopher cast eyes of love, would have been — a supplanter. For the first time in her life she was torn with passionate jealousy; existence became a nightmare to her. Urged on by Caroline, and her own pain, she ventured to remonstrate with Christopher, also. She had expected a burst of rage, but he was surprisingly goodnatured. He seemed even amused.

“What have you got against Victoria?” he asked, tolerantly.

Eunice had no answer ready. It was true that nothing could be said against the girl. She felt helpless and baffled. Christopher laughed at her silence.

“I guess you’re a little jealous,” he said. “You must have expected I would get married some time. This house is big enough for us all. You’d better look at the matter sensibly, Eunice. Don’t let Charles and Caroline put nonsense into your head. A man must marry to please himself.”

Christopher was out late that night. Eunice waited up for him, as she always did. It was a chilly spring evening, reminding her of the night her mother had died. The kitchen was in spotless order, and she sat down on a stiff-backed chair by the window to wait for her brother.

She did not want a light. The moonlight fell in with faint illumination. Outside, the wind was blowing over a bed of new-sprung mint in the garden, and was suggestively fragrant. It was a very old-fashioned garden, full of perennials Naomi Holland had planted long ago. Eunice always kept it primly neat. She had been working in it that day, and felt tired.

She was all alone in the house and the loneliness filled her with a faint dread. She had tried all that day to reconcile herself to Christopher’s marriage, and had partially succeeded. She told herself that she could still watch over him and care for his comfort. She would even try to love Victoria; after all, it might be pleasant to have another woman in the house. So, sitting there, she fed her hungry soul with these husks of comfort.

When she heard Christopher's step she moved about quickly to get a light. He frowned when he saw her; he had always resented her sitting up for him. He sat down by the stove and took off his boots, while Eunice got a lunch for him. After he had eaten it in silence he made no move to go to bed. A chill, premonitory fear crept over Eunice. It did not surprise her at all when Christopher finally said, abruptly, "Eunice, I've a notion to get married this spring."

Eunice clasped her hands together under the table. It was what she had been expecting. She said so, in a monotonous voice.

"We must make some arrangement for — for you, Eunice," Christopher went on, in a hurried, hesitant way, keeping his eyes riveted doggedly on his plate. "Victoria doesn't exactly like — well, she thinks it's better for young married folks to begin life by themselves, and I guess she's about right. You wouldn't find it comfortable, anyhow, having to step back to second place after being mistress here so long."

Eunice tried to speak, but only an indistinct murmur came from her bloodless lips. The sound made Christopher look up. Something in her face irritated him. He pushed back his chair impatiently.

"Now, Eunice, don't go taking on. It won't be any use. Look at this business in a sensible way. I'm fond of you, and all that, but a man is bound to consider his wife first. I'll provide for you comfortably."

"Do you mean to say that your wife is going to turn me out?"

Eunice gasped, rather than spoke, the words.

Christopher drew his reddish brows together.

"I just mean that Victoria says she won't marry me if she has to live with you. She's afraid of you. I told her you wouldn't interfere with her, but she wasn't satisfied. It's your own fault, Eunice. You've always been so queer and close that people think you're an awful crank. Victoria's young and lively, and you and she wouldn't get on at all. There isn't any question of turning you out. I'll build a little house for you somewhere, and you'll be a great deal better off there than you would be here. So don't make a fuss."

Eunice did not look as if she were going to make a fuss. She sat as if turned to stone, her hands lying palm upward in her lap. Christopher got up, hugely relieved that the dreaded explanation was over.

“Guess I’ll go to bed. You’d better have gone long ago. It’s all nonsense, this waiting up for me.”

When he had gone Eunice drew a long, sobbing breath and looked about her like a dazed soul. All the sorrow of her life was as nothing to the desolation that assailed her now.

She rose and, with uncertain footsteps, passed out through the hall and into the room where her mother died. She had always kept it locked and undisturbed; it was arranged just as Naomi Holland had left it. Eunice tottered to the bed and sat down on it.

She recalled the promise she had made to her mother in that very room. Was the power to keep it to be wrested from her? Was she to be driven from her home and parted from the only creature she had on earth to love? And would Christopher allow it, after all her sacrifices for him? Aye, that he would! He cared more for that black-eyed, waxen-faced girl at the old Pye place than for his own kin. Eunice put her hands over her dry, burning eyes and groaned aloud.

Caroline Holland had her hour of triumph over Eunice when she heard it all. To one of her nature there was no pleasure so sweet as that of saying, “I told you so.” Having said it, however, she offered Eunice a home. Electa Holland was dead, and Eunice might fill her place very acceptably, if she would.

“You can’t go off and live by yourself,” Caroline told her. “It’s all nonsense to talk of such a thing. We will give you a home, if Christopher is going to turn you out. You were always a fool, Eunice, to pet and pamper him as you’ve done. This is the thanks you get for it — turned out like a dog for his fine wife’s whim! I only wish your mother was alive!”

It was probably the first time Caroline had ever wished this. She had flown at Christopher like a fury about the matter, and had been rudely insulted for her pains. Christopher had told her to mind her own business.

When Caroline cooled down she made some arrangements with him, to all of which Eunice listlessly assented. She did not care what became of her. When Christopher Holland brought Victoria as mistress to the house where his mother had toiled, and suffered, and ruled with her rod of iron, Eunice was gone. In Charles Holland's household she took Electa's place — an unpaid upper servant.

Charles and Caroline were kind enough to her, and there was plenty to do. For five years her dull, colorless life went on, during which time she never crossed the threshold of the house where Victoria Holland ruled with a sway as absolute as Naomi's had been. Caroline's curiosity led her, after her first anger had cooled, to make occasional calls, the observations of which she faithfully reported to Eunice. The latter never betrayed any interest in them, save once. This was when Caroline came home full of the news that Victoria had had the room where Naomi died opened up, and showily furnished as a parlor. Then Eunice's sallow face crimsoned, and her eyes flashed, over the desecration. But no word of comment or complaint ever crossed her lips.

She knew, as every one else knew, that the glamor soon went from

Christopher Holland's married life. The marriage proved an unhappy one. Not unnaturally, although unjustly, Eunice blamed Victoria for this, and hated her more than ever for it.

Christopher seldom came to Charles' house. Possibly he felt ashamed. He had grown into a morose, silent man, at home and abroad. It was said he had gone back to his old drinking habits.

One fall Victoria Holland went to town to visit her married sister. She took their only child with her. In her absence Christopher kept house for himself.

It was a fall long remembered in Avonlea. With the dropping of the leaves, and the shortening of the dreary days, the shadow of a fear fell over the land. Charles Holland brought the fateful news home one night.

“There’s smallpox in Charlottetown — five or six cases. Came in one of the vessels. There was a concert, and a sailor from one of the ships was there, and took sick the next day.”

This was alarming enough. Charlottetown was not so very far away and considerable traffic went on between it and the north shore districts.

When Caroline recounted the concert story to Christopher the next morning his ruddy face turned quite pale. He opened his lips as if to speak, then closed them again. They were sitting in the kitchen; Caroline had run over to return some tea she had borrowed, and, incidentally, to see what she could of Victoria’s housekeeping in her absence. Her eyes had been busy while her tongue ran on, so she did not notice the man’s pallor and silence.

“How long does it take for smallpox to develop after one has been exposed to it?” he asked abruptly, when Caroline rose to go.

“Ten to fourteen days, I calc’late,” was her answer. “I must see about having the girls vaccinated right off. It’ll likely spread. When do you expect Victoria home?”

“When she’s ready to come, whenever that will be,” was the gruff response.

A week later Caroline said to Eunice, “Whatever’s got Christopher? He hasn’t been out anywhere for ages — just hangs round home the whole time. It’s something new for him. I s’pose the place is so quiet, now Madam Victoria’s away, that he can find some rest for his soul. I believe I’ll run over after milking and see how he’s getting on. You might as well come, too, Eunice.”

Eunice shook her head. She had all her mother’s obstinacy, and darken Victoria’s door she would not. She went on patiently darning socks, sitting at the west window, which was her favorite position — perhaps because she could look from it across the sloping field and past the crescent curve of maple grove to her lost home.

After milking, Caroline threw a shawl over her head and ran across the field. The house looked lonely and deserted. As she fumbled at the latch of

the gate the kitchen door opened, and Christopher Holland appeared on the threshold.

“Don’t come any farther,” he called.

Caroline fell back in blank astonishment. Was this some more of
Victoria’s work?

“I ain’t an agent for the smallpox,” she called back viciously.
Christopher did not heed her.

“Will you go home and ask uncle if he’ll go, or send for Doctor
Spencer? He’s the smallpox doctor. I’m sick.”

Caroline felt a thrill of dismay and fear. She faltered a few steps backward.

“Sick? What’s the matter with you?”

“I was in Charlottetown that night, and went to the concert. That sailor sat right beside me. I thought at the time he looked sick. It was just twelve days ago. I’ve felt bad all day yesterday and to-day. Send for the doctor. Don’t come near the house, or let any one else come near.”

He went in and shut the door. Caroline stood for a few moments in an almost ludicrous panic. Then she turned and ran, as if for her life, across the field. Eunice saw her coming and met her at the door.

“Mercy on us!” gasped Caroline. “Christopher’s sick and he thinks he’s got the smallpox. Where’s Charles?”

Eunice tottered back against the door. Her hand went up to her side in a way that had been getting very common with her of late. Even in the midst of her excitement Caroline noticed it.

“Eunice, what makes you do that every time anything startles you?” she asked sharply. “Is it anything about your heart?”

“I don’t — know. A little pain — it’s gone now. Did you say that Christopher has — the smallpox?”

“Well, he says so himself, and it’s more than likely, considering the circumstances. I declare, I never got such a turn in my life. It’s a dreadful thing. I must find Charles at once — there’ll be a hundred things to do.”

Eunice hardly heard her. Her mind was centered upon one idea. Christopher was ill — alone — she must go to him. It did not matter what his disease was. When Caroline came in from her breathless expedition to the barn, she found Eunice standing by the table, with her hat and shawl on, tying up a parcel.

“Eunice! Where on earth are you going?”

“Over home,” said Eunice. “If Christopher is going to be ill he must be nursed, and I’m the one to do it. He ought to be seen to right away.”

“Eunice Carr! Have you gone clean out of your senses? It’s the smallpox — the smallpox! If he’s got it he’ll have to be taken to the smallpox hospital in town. You shan’t stir a step to go to that house!”

“I will.” Eunice faced her excited aunt quietly. The odd resemblance to her mother, which only came out in moments of great tension, was plainly visible. “He shan’t go to the hospital — they never get proper attention there. You needn’t try to stop me. It won’t put you or your family in any danger.”

Caroline fell helplessly into a chair. She felt that it would be of no use to argue with a woman so determined. She wished Charles was there. But Charles had already gone, posthaste, for the doctor.

With a firm step, Eunice went across the field footpath she had not trodden for so long. She felt no fear — rather a sort of elation. Christopher needed her once more; the interloper who had come between them was not there. As she walked through the frosty twilight she thought of the promise made to Naomi Holland, years ago.

Christopher saw her coming and waved her back.

“Don’t come any nearer, Eunice. Didn’t Caroline tell you? I’m taking smallpox.”

Eunice did not pause. She went boldly through the yard and up the porch steps. He retreated before her and held the door.

“Eunice, you’re crazy, girl! Go home, before it’s too late.”

Eunice pushed open the door resolutely and went in.

“It’s too late now. I’m here, and I mean to stay and nurse you, if it’s the smallpox you’ve got. Maybe it’s not. Just now, when a person has a finger-ache, he thinks it’s smallpox. Anyhow, whatever it is, you ought to be in bed and looked after. You’ll catch cold. Let me get a light and have a look at you.”

Christopher had sunk into a chair. His natural selfishness reasserted itself, and he made no further effort to dissuade Eunice. She got a lamp and set it on the table by him, while she scrutinized his face closely.

“You look feverish. What do you feel like? When did you take sick?”

“Yesterday afternoon. I have chills and hot spells and pains in my back. Eunice, do you think it’s really smallpox? And will I die?”

He caught her hands, and looked imploringly up at her, as a child might have done. Eunice felt a wave of love and tenderness sweep warmly over her starved heart.

“Don’t worry. Lots of people recover from smallpox if they’re properly nursed, and you’ll be that, for I’ll see to it. Charles has gone for the doctor, and we’ll know when he comes. You must go straight to bed.”

She took off her hat and shawl, and hung them up. She felt as much at home as if she had never been away. She had got back to her kingdom, and there was none to dispute it with her. When Dr. Spencer and old Giles Blewett, who had had smallpox in his youth, came, two hours later, they found Eunice in serene charge. The house was in order and reeking of disinfectants. Victoria’s fine furniture and fixings were being bundled out of the parlor. There was no bedroom downstairs, and, if Christopher was going to be ill, he must be installed there.

The doctor looked grave.

“I don’t like it,” he said, “but I’m not quite sure yet. If it is smallpox the eruption will probably be out by morning. I must admit he has most of the symptoms. Will you have him taken to the hospital?”

“No,” said Eunice, decisively. “I’ll nurse him myself. I’m not afraid and I’m well and strong.”

“Very well. You’ve been vaccinated lately?”

“Yes.”

“Well, nothing more can be done at present. You may as well lie down for a while and save your strength.”

But Eunice could not do that. There was too much to attend to. She went out to the hall and threw up the window. Down below, at a safe distance, Charles Holland was waiting. The cold wind blew up to Eunice the odor of the disinfectants with which he had steeped himself.

“What does the doctor say?” he shouted.

“He thinks it’s the smallpox. Have you sent word to Victoria?”

“Yes, Jim Blewett drove into town and told her. She’ll stay with her sister till it is over. Of course it’s the best thing for her to do. She’s terribly frightened.”

Eunice’s lip curled contemptuously. To her, a wife who could desert her husband, no matter what disease he had, was an incomprehensible creature. But it was better so; she would have Christopher all to herself.

The night was long and wearisome, but the morning came all too soon for the dread certainty it brought. The doctor pronounced the case smallpox. Eunice had hoped against hope, but now, knowing the worst, she was very calm and resolute.

By noon the fateful yellow flag was flying over the house, and all arrangements had been made. Caroline was to do the necessary cooking, and Charles was to bring the food and leave it in the yard. Old Giles Blewett was to come every day and attend to the stock, as well as help Eunice with the sick man; and the long, hard fight with death began.

It was a hard fight, indeed. Christopher Holland, in the clutches of the loathsome disease, was an object from which his nearest and dearest might have been pardoned for shrinking. But Eunice never faltered; she never left her post. Sometimes she dozed in a chair by the bed, but she never lay down. Her endurance was something wonderful, her patience and tenderness almost superhuman. To and fro she went, in noiseless ministry, as the long, dreadful days wore away, with a quiet smile on her lips, and in her dark, sorrowful eyes the rapt look of a pictured saint in some dim

cathedral niche. For her there was no world outside the bare room where lay the repulsive object she loved.

One day the doctor looked very grave. He had grown well-hardened to pitiful scenes in his lifetime; but he shrunk from telling Eunice that her brother could not live. He had never seen such devotion as hers. It seemed brutal to tell her that it had been in vain.

But Eunice had seen it for herself. She took it very calmly, the doctor thought. And she had her reward at last — such as it was. She thought it amply sufficient.

One night Christopher Holland opened his swollen eyes as she bent over him. They were alone in the old house. It was raining outside, and the drops rattled noisily on the panes.

Christopher smiled at his sister with parched lips, and put out a feeble hand toward her.

“Eunice,” he said faintly, “you’ve been the best sister ever a man had. I haven’t treated you right; but you’ve stood by me to the last. Tell Victoria — tell her — to be good to you—”

His voice died away into an inarticulate murmur. Eunice Carr was alone with her dead.

They buried Christopher Holland in haste and privacy the next day. The doctor disinfected the house, and Eunice was to stay there alone until it might be safe to make other arrangements. She had not shed a tear; the doctor thought she was a rather odd person, but he had a great admiration for her. He told her she was the best nurse he had ever seen. To Eunice, praise or blame mattered nothing. Something in her life had snapped — some vital interest had departed. She wondered how she could live through the dreary, coming years.

Late that night she went into the room where her mother and brother had died. The window was open and the cold, pure air was grateful to her after the drug-laden atmosphere she had breathed so long. She knelt down by the stripped bed.

“Mother,” she said aloud, “I have kept my promise.”

When she tried to rise, long after, she staggered and fell across the bed, with her hand pressed on her heart. Old Giles Blewett found her there in the morning. There was a smile on her face.

The Conscience Case of David Bell

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Eben Bell came in with an armful of wood and banged it cheerfully down in the box behind the glowing Waterloo stove, which was coloring the heart of the little kitchen's gloom with tremulous, rose-red whirls of light.

“There, sis, that's the last chore on my list. Bob's milking. Nothing more for me to do but put on my white collar for meeting. Avonlea is more than lively since the evangelist came, ain't it, though!”

Mollie Bell nodded. She was curling her hair before the tiny mirror that hung on the whitewashed wall and distorted her round, pink-and-white face into a grotesque caricature.

“Wonder who'll stand up tonight,” said Eben reflectively, sitting down on the edge of the woodbox. “There ain't many sinners left in Avonlea — only a few hardened chaps like myself.”

“You shouldn't talk like that,” said Mollie rebukingly. “What if father heard you?”

“Father wouldn't hear me if I shouted it in his ear,” returned Eben. “He goes around, these days, like a man in a dream and a mighty bad dream at that. Father has always been a good man. What's the matter with him?”

“I don't know,” said Mollie, dropping her voice. “Mother is dreadfully worried over him. And everybody is talking, Eb. It just makes me squirm. Flora Jane Fletcher asked me last night why father never testified, and him one of the elders. She said the minister was perplexed about it. I felt my face getting red.”

“Why didn’t you tell her it was no business of hers?” said Eben angrily. “Old Flora Jane had better mind her own business.”

“But all the folks are talking about it, Eb. And mother is fretting her heart out over it. Father has never acted like himself since these meetings began. He just goes there night after night, and sits like a mummy, with his head down. And almost everybody else in Avonlea has testified.”

“Oh, no, there’s lots haven’t,” said Eben. “Matthew Cuthbert never has, nor Uncle Elisha, nor any of the Whites.”

“But everybody knows they don’t believe in getting up and testifying, so nobody wonders when they don’t. Besides,” Mollie laughed—“Matthew could never get a word out in public, if he did believe in it. He’d be too shy. But,” she added with a sigh, “it isn’t that way with father. He believes in testimony, so people wonder why he doesn’t get up. Why, even old Josiah Sloane gets up every night.”

“With his whiskers sticking out every which way, and his hair ditto,” interjected the graceless Eben.

“When the minister calls for testimonials and all the folks look at our pew, I feel ready to sink through the floor for shame,” sighed Mollie. “If father would get up just once!”

Miriam Bell entered the kitchen. She was ready for the meeting, to which Major Spencer was to take her. She was a tall, pale girl, with a serious face, and dark, thoughtful eyes, totally unlike Mollie. She had “come under conviction” during the meetings, and had stood up for prayer and testimony several times. The evangelist thought her very spiritual. She heard Mollie’s concluding sentence and spoke reprovingly.

“You shouldn’t criticize your father, Mollie. It isn’t for you to judge him.”

Eben had hastily slipped out. He was afraid Miriam would begin talking religion to him if he stayed. He had with difficulty escaped from an exhortation by Robert in the cowstable. There was no peace in Avonlea for the unregenerate, he reflected. Robert and Miriam had both “come out,” and Mollie was hovering on the brink.

“Dad and I are the black sheep of the family,” he said, with a laugh, for which he at once felt guilty. Eben had been brought up with a strict reverence for all religious matters. On the surface he might sometimes laugh at them, but the deeps troubled him whenever he did so.

Indoors, Miriam touched her younger sister’s shoulder and looked at her affectionately.

“Won’t you decide tonight, Mollie?” she asked, in a voice tremulous with emotion.

Mollie crimsoned and turned her face away uncomfortably. She did not know what answer to make, and was glad that a jingle of bells outside saved her the necessity of replying.

“There’s your beau, Miriam,” she said, as she darted into the sitting room.

Soon after, Eben brought the family pung and his chubby red mare to the door for Mollie. He had not as yet attained to the dignity of a cutter of his own. That was for his elder brother, Robert, who presently came out in his new fur coat and drove dashing away with bells and glitter.

“Thinks he’s the people,” remarked Eben, with a fraternal grin.

The rich winter twilight was purpling over the white world as they drove down the lane under the overarching wild cherry trees that glittered with gemmy hoar-frost. The snow creaked and crisped under the runners. A shrill wind was keening in the leafless dogwoods. Over the trees the sky was a dome of silver, with a lucent star or two on the slope of the west. Earth-stars gleamed warmly out here and there, where homesteads were tucked snugly away in their orchards or groves of birch.

“The church will be jammed tonight,” said Eben. “It’s so fine that folks will come from near and far. Guess it’ll be exciting.”

“If only father would testify!” sighed Mollie, from the bottom of the pung, where she was snuggled amid furs and straw. “Miriam can say what she likes, but I do feels as if we were all disgraced. It sends a creep all over me to hear Mr. Bentley say, ‘Now, isn’t there one more to say a word for Jesus?’ and look right over at father.”

Eben flicked his mare with his whip, and she broke into a trot. The silence was filled with a faint, fairylike melody from afar down the road where a pungful of young folks from White Sands were singing hymns on their way to meeting.

“Look here, Mollie,” said Eben awkwardly at last, “are you going to stand up for prayers tonight?”

“I — I can’t as long as father acts this way,” answered Mollie, in a choked voice. “I — I want to, Eb, and Mirry and Bob want me to, but I can’t. I do hope that the evangelist won’t come and talk to me special tonight. I always feels as if I was being pulled two different ways, when he does.”

Back in the kitchen at home Mrs. Bell was waiting for her husband to bring the horse to the door. She was a slight, dark-eyed little woman, with thin, vivid-red cheeks. From out of the swathings in which she had wrapped her bonnet, her face gleamed sad and troubled. Now and then she sighed heavily.

The cat came to her from under the stove, languidly stretching himself, and yawning until all the red cavern of his mouth and throat was revealed. At the moment he had an uncanny resemblance to Elder Joseph Blewett of White Sands — Roaring Joe, the irreverent boys called him — when he grew excited and shouted. Mrs. Bell saw it — and then reproached herself for the sacrilege.

“But it’s no wonder I’ve wicked thoughts,” she said, wearily. “I’m that worried I ain’t rightly myself. If he would only tell me what the trouble is, maybe I could help him. At any rate, I’d KNOW. It hurts me so to see him going about, day after day, with his head hanging and that look on his face, as if he had something fearful on his conscience — him that never harmed a living soul. And then the way he groans and mutters in his sleep! He has always lived a just, upright life. He hasn’t no right to go on like this, disgracing his family.”

Mrs. Bell’s angry sob was cut short by the sleigh at the door. Her husband poked in his busy, iron-gray head and said, “Now, mother.” He helped her into the sleigh, tucked the rugs warmly around her, and put a

hot brick at her feet. His solicitude hurt her. It was all for her material comfort. It did not matter to him what mental agony she might suffer over his strange attitude. For the first time in their married life Mary Bell felt resentment against her husband.

They drove along in silence, past the snow-powdered hedges of spruce, and under the arches of the forest roadways. They were late, and a great stillness was over all the land. David Bell never spoke. All his usual cheerful talkativeness had disappeared since the revival meetings had begun in Avonlea. From the first he had gone about as a man over whom some strange doom is impending, seemingly oblivious to all that might be said or thought of him in his own family or in the church. Mary Bell thought she would go out of her mind if her husband continued to act in this way. Her reflections were bitter and rebellious as they sped along through the glittering night of the winter's prime.

"I don't get one bit of good out of the meetings," she thought resentfully. "There ain't any peace or joy for me, not even in testifying myself, when David sits there like a stick or stone. If he'd been opposed to the revivalist coming here, like old Uncle Jerry, or if he didn't believe in public testimony, I wouldn't mind. I'd understand. But, as it is, I feel dreadful humiliated."

Revival meetings had never been held in Avonlea before. "Uncle" Jerry MacPherson, who was the supreme local authority in church matters, taking precedence of even the minister, had been uncompromisingly opposed to them. He was a stern, deeply religious Scotchman, with a horror of the emotional form of religion. As long as Uncle Jerry's spare, ascetic form and deeply-graved square-jawed face filled his accustomed corner by the northwest window of Avonlea church no revivalist might venture therein, although the majority of the congregation, including the minister, would have welcomed one warmly.

But now Uncle Jerry was sleeping peacefully under the tangled grasses and white snows of the burying ground, and, if dead people ever do turn in their graves, Uncle Jerry might well have turned in his when the revivalist came to Avonlea church, and there followed the emotional services, public

testimonies, and religious excitement which the old man's sturdy soul had always abhorred.

Avonlea was a good field for an evangelist. The Rev. Geoffrey Mountain, who came to assist the Avonlea minister in revivifying the dry bones thereof, knew this and reveled in the knowledge. It was not often that such a virgin parish could be found nowadays, with scores of impressionable, unspoiled souls on which fervid oratory could play skillfully, as a master on a mighty organ, until every note in them thrilled to life and utterance. The Rev. Geoffrey Mountain was a good man; of the earth, earthy, to be sure, but with an unquestionable sincerity of belief and purpose which went far to counterbalance the sensationalism of some of his methods.

He was large and handsome, with a marvelously sweet and winning voice — a voice that could melt into irresistible tenderness, or swell into sonorous appeal and condemnation, or ring like a trumpet calling to battle.

His frequent grammatical errors, and lapses into vulgarity, counted for nothing against its charm, and the most commonplace words in the world would have borrowed much of the power of real oratory from its magic. He knew its value and used it effectively — perhaps even ostentatiously.

Geoffrey Mountain's religion and methods, like the man himself, were showy, but, of their kind, sincere, and, though the good he accomplished might not be unmixed, it was a quantity to be reckoned with.

So the Rev. Geoffrey Mountain came to Avonlea, conquering and to conquer. Night after night the church was crowded with eager listeners, who hung breathlessly on his words and wept and thrilled and exulted as he willed. Into many young souls his appeals and warnings burned their way, and each night they rose for prayer in response to his invitation. Older Christians, too, took on a new lease of intensity, and even the unregenerate and the scoffers found a certain fascination in the meetings. Threading through it all, for old and young, converted and unconverted, was an unacknowledged feeling for religious dissipation. Avonlea was a quiet place, — and the revival meetings were lively.

When David and Mary Bell reached the church the services had begun, and they heard the refrain of a hallelujah hymn as they were crossing Harmon Andrews' field. David Bell left his wife at the platform and drove to the horseshed.

Mrs. Bell unwound the scarf from her bonnet and shook the frost crystals from it. In the porch Flora Jane Fletcher and her sister, Mrs. Harmon Andrews, were talking in low whispers. Presently Flora Jane put out her lank, cashmere-gloved hand and plucked Mrs. Bell's shawl.

"Mary, is the elder going to testify tonight?" she asked, in a shrill whisper.

Mrs. Bell winced. She would have given much to be able to answer

"Yes," but she had to say stiffly,

"I don't know."

Flora Jane lifted her chin.

"Well, Mrs. Bell, I only asked because every one thinks it is strange he doesn't — and an elder, of all people. It looks as if he didn't think himself a Christian, you know. Of course, we all know better, but it LOOKS that way. If I was you, I'd tell him folks was talking about it. Mr. Bentley says it is hindering the full success of the meetings."

Mrs. Bell turned on her tormentor in swift anger. She might resent her husband's strange behavior herself, but nobody else should dare to criticize him to her.

"I don't think you need to worry yourself about the elder, Flora Jane," she said biting. "Maybe 't isn't the best Christians that do the most talking about it always. I guess, as far as living up to his profession goes, the elder will compare pretty favorably with Levi Boulter, who gets up and testifies every night, and cheats the very eye-teeth out of people in the daytime."

Levi Boulter was a middle-aged widower, with a large family, who was supposed to have cast a matrimonial eye Flora Janeward. The use of his name was an effective thrust on Mrs. Bell's part, and silenced Flora Jane.

Too angry for speech she seized her sister's arm and hurried her into church.

But her victory could not remove from Mary Bell's soul the sting implanted there by Flora Jane's words. When her husband came up to the platform she put her hand on his snowy arm appealingly.

"Oh, David, won't you get up tonight? I do feel so dreadful bad — folks are talking so — I just feel humiliated."

David Bell hung his head like a shamed schoolboy.

"I can't, Mary," he said huskily. "'Tain't no use to pester me."

"You don't care for my feelings," said his wife bitterly. "And Mollie won't come out because you're acting so. You're keeping her back from salvation. And you're hindering the success of the revival — Mr. Bentley says so."

David Bell groaned. This sign of suffering wrung his wife's heart. With quick contrition she whispered,

"There, never mind, David. I oughtn't to have spoken to you so. You know your duty best. Let's go in."

"Wait." His voice was imploring.

"Mary, is it true that Mollie won't come out because of me? Am I standing in my child's light?"

"I — don't — know. I guess not. Mollie's just a foolish young girl yet. Never mind — come in."

He followed her dejectedly in, and up the aisle to their pew in the center of the church. The building was warm and crowded. The pastor was reading the Bible lesson for the evening. In the choir, behind him, David Bell saw Mollie's girlish face, tinged with a troubled seriousness. His own wind-ruddy face and bushy gray eyebrows worked convulsively with his inward throes. A sigh that was almost a groan burst from him.

"I'll have to do it," he said to himself in agony.

When several more hymns had been sung, and late arrivals began to pack the aisles, the evangelist arose. His style for the evening was the tender, the pleading, the solemn. He modulated his tones to marvelous

sweetness, and sent them thrillingly over the breathless pews, entangling the hearts and souls of his listeners in a mesh of subtle emotion. Many of the women began to cry softly. Fervent amens broke from some of the members. When the evangelist sat down, after a closing appeal which, in its way, was a masterpiece, an audible sigh of relieved tension passed like a wave over the audience.

After prayer the pastor made the usual request that, if any of those present wished to come out on the side of Christ, they would signify the wish by rising for a moment in their places. After a brief interval, a pale boy under the gallery rose, followed by an old man at the top of the church. A frightened, sweet-faced child of twelve got tremblingly upon her feet, and a dramatic thrill passed over the congregation when her mother suddenly stood up beside her. The evangelist's "Thank God" was hearty and insistent.

David Bell looked almost imploringly at Mollie; but she kept her seat, with downcast eyes. Over in the big square "stone pew" he saw Eben bending forward, with his elbows on his knees, gazing frowningly at the floor.

"I'm a stumbling block to them both," he thought bitterly.

A hymn was sung and prayer offered for those under conviction. Then testimonies were called for. The evangelist asked for them in tones which made it seem a personal request to every one in that building.

Many testimonies followed, each infused with the personality of the giver. Most of them were brief and stereotyped. Finally a pause ensued. The evangelist swept the pews with his kindling eyes and exclaimed, appealingly,

"Has EVERY Christian in this church tonight spoken a word for his Master?"

There were many who had not testified, but every eye in the building followed the pastor's accusing glance to the Bell pew. Mollie crimsoned with shame. Mrs. Bell cowered visibly.

Although everybody looked thus at David Bell, nobody now expected him to testify. When he rose to his feet, a murmur of surprise passed over

the audience, followed by a silence so complete as to be terrible. To David Bell it seemed to possess the awe of final judgment.

Twice he opened his lips, and tried vainly to speak. The third time he succeeded; but his voice sounded strangely in his own ears. He gripped the back of the pew before him with his knotty hands, and fixed his eyes unseeingly on the Christian Endeavor pledge that hung over the heads of the choir.

“Brethren and sisters,” he said hoarsely, “before I can say a word of Christian testimony here tonight I’ve got something to confess. It’s been lying hard and heavy on my conscience ever since these meetings begun. As long as I kept silence about it I couldn’t get up and bear witness for Christ. Many of you have expected me to do it. Maybe I’ve been a stumbling block to some of you. This season of revival has brought no blessing to me because of my sin, which I repented of, but tried to conceal. There has been a spiritual darkness over me.

“Friends and neighbors, I have always been held by you as an honest man. It was the shame of having you know I was not which has kept me back from open confession and testimony. Just afore these meetings commenced I come home from town one night and found that somebody had passed a counterfeit ten-dollar bill on me. Then Satan entered into me and possessed me. When Mrs. Rachel Lynde come next day, collecting for foreign missions, I give her that ten dollar bill. She never knowed the difference, and sent it away with the rest. But I knew I’d done a mean and sinful thing. I couldn’t drive it out of my thoughts. A few days afterwards I went down to Mrs. Rachel’s and give her ten good dollars for the fund. I told her I had come to the conclusion I ought to give more than ten dollars, out of my abundance, to the Lord. That was a lie. Mrs. Lynde thought I was a generous man, and I felt ashamed to look her in the face. But I’d done what I could to right the wrong, and I thought it would be all right. But it wasn’t. I’ve never known a minute’s peace of mind or conscience since. I tried to cheat the Lord, and then tried to patch it up by doing something that redounded to my worldly credit. When these meetings begun, and everybody expected me to testify, I couldn’t do it. It would

have seemed like blasphemy. And I couldn't endure the thought of telling what I'd done, either. I argued it all out a thousand times that I hadn't done any real harm after all, but it was no use. I've been so wrapped up in my own brooding and misery that I didn't realize I was inflicting suffering on those dear to me by my conduct, and, maybe, holding some of them back from the paths of salvation. But my eyes have been opened to this tonight, and the Lord has given me strength to confess my sin and glorify His holy name."

The broken tones ceased, and David Bell sat down, wiping the great drops of perspiration from his brow. To a man of his training, and cast of thought, no ordeal could be more terrible than that through which he had just passed. But underneath the turmoil of his emotion he felt a great calm and peace, threaded with the exultation of a hard-won spiritual victory.

Over the church was a solemn hush. The evangelist's "amen" was not spoken with his usual unctuous fervor, but very gently and reverently. In spite of his coarse fiber, he could appreciate the nobility behind such a confession as this, and the deeps of stern suffering it sounded.

Before the last prayer the pastor paused and looked around.

"Is there yet one," he asked gently, "who wishes to be especially remembered in our concluding prayer?"

For a moment nobody moved. Then Mollie Bell stood up in the choir seat, and, down by the stove, Eben, his flushed, boyish face held high, rose sturdily to his feet in the midst of his companions.

"Thank God," whispered Mary Bell.

"Amen," said her husband huskily.

"Let us pray," said Mr. Bentley.

Only a Common Fellow

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On my dearie's wedding morning I wakened early and went to her room. Long and long ago she had made me promise that I would be the one to wake her on the morning of her wedding day.

"You were the first to take me in your arms when I came into the world, Aunt Rachel," she had said, "and I want you to be the first to greet me on that wonderful day."

But that was long ago, and now my heart foreboded that there would be no need of wakening her. And there was not. She was lying there awake, very quiet, with her hand under her cheek, and her big blue eyes fixed on the window, through which a pale, dull light was creeping in — a joyless light it was, and enough to make a body shiver. I felt more like weeping than rejoicing, and my heart took to aching when I saw her there so white and patient, more like a girl who was waiting for a winding-sheet than for a bridal veil. But she smiled brave-like, when I sat down on her bed and took her hand.

"You look as if you haven't slept all night, dearie," I said.

"I didn't — not a great deal," she answered me. "But the night didn't seem long; no, it seemed too short. I was thinking of a great many things. What time is it, Aunt Rachel?"

"Five o'clock."

"Then in six hours more—"

She suddenly sat up in her bed, her great, thick rope of brown hair falling over her white shoulders, and flung her arms about me, and burst into tears on my old breast. I petted and soothed her, and said not a word; and, after a while, she stopped crying; but she still sat with her head so that I couldn't see her face.

"We didn't think it would be like this once, did we, Aunt Rachel?" she said, very softly.

“It shouldn’t be like this, now,” I said. I had to say it. I never could hide the thought of that marriage, and I couldn’t pretend to. It was all her stepmother’s doings — right well I knew that. My dearie would never have taken Mark Foster else.

“Don’t let us talk of that,” she said, soft and beseeching, just the same way she used to speak when she was a baby-child and wanted to coax me into something. “Let us talk about the old days — and HIM.”

“I don’t see much use in talking of HIM, when you’re going to marry Mark Foster to-day,” I said.

But she put her hand on my mouth.

“It’s for the last time, Aunt Rachel. After to-day I can never talk of him, or even think of him. It’s four years since he went away. Do you remember how he looked, Aunt Rachel?”

“I mind well enough, I reckon,” I said, kind of curt-like. And I did. Owen Blair hadn’t a face a body could forget — that long face of his with its clean color and its eyes made to look love into a woman’s. When I thought of Mark Foster’s sallow skin and lank jaws I felt sick-like. Not that Mark was ugly — he was just a common-looking fellow.

“He was so handsome, wasn’t he, Aunt Rachel?” my dearie went on, in that patient voice of hers. “So tall and strong and handsome. I wish we hadn’t parted in anger. It was so foolish of us to quarrel. But it would have been all right if he had lived to come back. I know it would have been all right. I know he didn’t carry any bitterness against me to his death. I thought once, Aunt Rachel, that I would go through life true to him, and then, over on the other side, I’d meet him just as before, all his and his only. But it isn’t to be.”

“Thanks to your stepma’s wheedling and Mark Foster’s scheming,” said I.

“No, Mark didn’t scheme,” she said patiently. “Don’t be unjust to Mark, Aunt Rachel. He has been very good and kind.”

“He’s as stupid as an owlet and as stubborn as Solomon’s mule,” I said, for I WOULD say it. “He’s just a common fellow, and yet he thinks he’s good enough for my beauty.”

“Don’t talk about Mark,” she pleaded again. “I mean to be a good, faithful wife to him. But I’m my own woman yet — YET — for just a few more sweet hours, and I want to give them to HIM. The last hours of my maidenhood — they must belong to HIM.”

So she talked of him, me sitting there and holding her, with her lovely hair hanging down over my arm, and my heart aching so for her that it hurt bitter. She didn’t feel as bad as I did, because she’d made up her mind what to do and was resigned. She was going to marry Mark Foster, but her heart was in France, in that grave nobody knew of, where the Huns had buried Owen Blair — if they had buried him at all. And she went over all they had been to each other, since they were mites of babies, going to school together and meaning, even then, to be married when they grew up; and the first words of love he’d said to her, and what she’d dreamed and hoped for. The only thing she didn’t bring up was the time he thrashed Mark Foster for bringing her apples. She never mentioned Mark’s name; it was all Owen — Owen — and how he looked, and what might have been, if he hadn’t gone off to the awful war and got shot. And there was me, holding her and listening to it all, and her stepma sleeping sound and triumphant in the next room.

When she had talked it all out she lay down on her pillow again. I got up and went downstairs to light the fire. I felt terrible old and tired. My feet seemed to drag, and the tears kept coming to my eyes, though I tried to keep them away, for well I knew it was a bad omen to be weeping on a wedding day.

Before long Isabella Clark came down; bright and pleased-looking enough, SHE was. I’d never liked Isabella, from the day Phillippa’s father brought her here; and I liked her less than ever this morning. She was one of your sly, deep women, always smiling smooth, and scheming underneath it. I’ll say it for her, though, she had been good to Phillippa; but it was her doings that my dearie was to marry Mark Foster that day.

“Up betimes, Rachel,” she said, smiling and speaking me fair, as she always did, and hating me in her heart, as I well knew. “That is right, for we’ll have plenty to do to-day. A wedding makes lots of work.”

“Not this sort of a wedding,” I said, sour-like. “I don’t call it a wedding when two people get married and sneak off as if they were ashamed of it — as well they might be in this case.”

“It was Phillippa’s own wish that all should be very quiet,” said Isabella, as smooth as cream. “You know I’d have given her a big wedding, if she’d wanted it.”

“Oh, it’s better quiet,” I said. “The fewer to see Phillippa marry a man like Mark Foster the better.”

“Mark Foster is a good man, Rachel.”

“No good man would be content to buy a girl as he’s bought Phillippa,” I said, determined to give it in to her. “He’s a common fellow, not fit for my dearie to wipe her feet on. It’s well that her mother didn’t live to see this day; but this day would never have come, if she’d lived.”

“I dare say Phillippa’s mother would have remembered that Mark

Foster is very well off, quite as readily as worse people,” said Isabella, a little spitefully.

I liked her better when she was spiteful than when she was smooth. I didn’t feel so scared of her then.

The marriage was to be at eleven o’clock, and, at nine, I went up to help Phillippa dress. She was no fussy bride, caring much what she looked like. If Owen had been the bridegroom it would have been different. Nothing would have pleased her then; but now it was only just “That will do very well, Aunt Rachel,” without even glancing at it.

Still, nothing could prevent her from looking lovely when she was dressed. My dearie would have been a beauty in a beggarmaid’s rags. In her white dress and veil she was as fair as a queen. And she was as good as she was pretty. It was the right sort of goodness, too, with just enough spice of original sin in it to keep it from spoiling by reason of over-sweetness.

Then she sent me out.

“I want to be alone my last hour,” she said. “Kiss me, Aunt Rachel — MOTHER Rachel.”

When I’d gone down, crying like the old fool I was, I heard a rap at the door. My first thought was to go out and send Isabella to it, for I supposed it was Mark Foster, come ahead of time, and small stomach I had for seeing him. I fall trembling, even yet, when I think, “What if I had sent Isabella to that door?”

But go I did, and opened it, defiant-like, kind of hoping it was Mark Foster to see the tears on my face. I opened it — and staggered back like I’d got a blow.

“Owen! Lord ha’ mercy on us! Owen!” I said, just like that, going cold all over, for it’s the truth that I thought it was his spirit come back to forbid that unholy marriage.

But he sprang right in, and caught my wrinkled old hands in a grasp that was of flesh and blood.

“Aunt Rachel, I’m not too late?” he said, savage-like. “Tell me I’m in time.”

I looked up at him, standing over me there, tall and handsome, no change in him except he was so brown and had a little white scar on his forehead; and, though I couldn’t understand at all, being all bewildered-like, I felt a great deep thankfulness.

“No, you’re not too late,” I said.

“Thank God,” said he, under his breath. And then he pulled me into the parlor and shut the door.

“They told me at the station that Phillippa was to be married to Mark Foster to-day. I couldn’t believe it, but I came here as fast as horse-flesh could bring me. Aunt Rachel, it can’t be true! She can’t care for Mark Foster, even if she had forgotten me!”

“It’s true enough that she is to marry Mark,” I said, half-laughing, half-crying, “but she doesn’t care for him. Every beat of her heart is for you. It’s all her stepma’s doings. Mark has got a mortgage on the place,

and he told Isabella Clark that, if Phillippa would marry him, he'd burn the mortgage, and, if she wouldn't, he'd foreclose. Phillippa is sacrificing herself to save her stepma for her dead father's sake. It's all your fault," I cried, getting over my bewilderment. "We thought you were dead. Why didn't you come home when you were alive? Why didn't you write?"

"I DID write, after I got out of the hospital, several times," he said, "and never a word in answer, Aunt Rachel. What was I to think when Phillippa wouldn't answer my letters?"

"She never got one," I cried. "She wept her sweet eyes out over you. SOMEBODY must have got those letters."

And I knew then, and I know now, though never a shadow of proof have I, that Isabella Clark had got them — and kept them. That woman would stick at nothing.

"Well, we'll sift that matter some other time," said Owen impatiently. "There are other things to think of now. I must see Phillippa."

"I'll manage it for you," I said eagerly; but, just as I spoke, the door opened and Isabella and Mark came in. Never shall I forget the look on Isabella's face. I almost felt sorry for her. She turned sickly yellow and her eyes went wild; they were looking at the downfall of all her schemes and hopes. I didn't look at Mark Foster, at first, and, when I did, there wasn't anything to see. His face was just as sallow and wooden as ever; he looked undersized and common beside Owen. Nobody'd ever have picked him out for a bridegroom.

Owen spoke first.

"I want to see Phillippa," he said, as if it were but yesterday that he had gone away.

All Isabella's smoothness and policy had dropped away from her, and the real woman stood there, plotting and unscrupulous, as I'd always know her.

"You can't see her," she said desperate-like. "She doesn't want to see you. You went and left her and never wrote, and she knew you weren't worth fretting over, and she has learned to care for a better man."

“I DID write and I think you know that better than most folks,” said Owen, trying hard to speak quiet. “As for the rest, I’m not going to discuss it with you. When I hear from Phillippa’s own lips that she cares for another man I’ll believe it — and not before.”

“You’ll never hear it from her lips,” said I.

Isabella gave me a venomous look.

“You’ll not see Phillippa until she is a better man’s wife,” she said stubbornly, “and I order you to leave my house, Owen Blair!”

“No!”

It was Mark Foster who spoke. He hadn’t said a word; but he came forward now, and stood before Owen. Such a difference as there was between them! But he looked Owen right in the face, quiet-like, and Owen glared back in fury.

“Will it satisfy you, Owen, if Phillippa comes down here and chooses between us?”

“Yes, it will,” said Owen.

Mark Foster turned to me.

“Go and bring her down,” said he.

Isabella, judging Phillippa by herself, gave a little moan of despair, and Owen, blinded by love and hope, thought his cause was won. But I knew my dearie too well to be glad, and Mark Foster did, too, and I hated him for it.

I went up to my dearie’s room, all pale and shaking. When I went in she came to meet me, like a girl going to meet death.

“Is — it — time?” she said, with her hands locked tight together.

I said not a word, hoping that the unlooked-for sight of Owen would break down her resolution. I just held out my hand to her, and led her downstairs. She clung to me and her hands were as cold as snow. When I opened the parlor door I stood back, and pushed her in before me.

She just cried, “Owen!” and shook so that I put my arms about her to steady her.

Owen made a step towards her, his face and eyes all aflame with his love and longing, but Mark barred his way.

“Wait till she has made her choice,” he said, and then he turned to Phillippa. I couldn’t see my dearie’s face, but I could see Mark’s, and there wasn’t a spark of feeling in it. Behind it was Isabella’s, all pinched and gray.

“Phillippa,” said Mark, “Owen Blair has come back. He says he has never forgotten you, and that he wrote to you several times. I have told him that you have promised me, but I leave you freedom of choice. Which of us will you marry, Phillippa?”

My dearie stood straight up and the trembling left her. She stepped back, and I could see her face, white as the dead, but calm and resolved.

“I have promised to marry you, Mark, and I will keep my word,” she said.

The color came back to Isabella Clark’s face; but Mark’s did not change.

“Phillippa,” said Owen, and the pain in his voice made my old heart ache bitterer than ever, “have you ceased to love me?”

My dearie would have been more than human, if she could have resisted the pleading in his tone. She said no word, but just looked at him for a moment. We all saw the look; her whole soul, full of love for Owen, showed out in it. Then she turned and stood by Mark.

Owen never said a word. He went as white as death, and started for the door. But again Mark Foster put himself in the way.

“Wait,” he said. “She has made her choice, as I knew she would; but I have yet to make mine. And I choose to marry no woman whose love belongs to another living man. Phillippa, I thought Owen Blair was dead, and I believed that, when you were my wife, I could win your love. But I love you too well to make you miserable. Go to the man you love — you are free!”

“And what is to become of me?” wailed Isabella.

“Oh, you! — I had forgotten about you,” said Mark, kind of weary-like. He took a paper from his pocket, and dropped it in the grate. “There is the mortgage. That is all you care about, I think. Good-morning.”

He went out. He was only a common fellow, but, somehow, just then he looked every inch the gentleman. I would have gone after him and said something but — the look on his face — no, it was no time for my foolish old words!

Phillippa was crying, with her head on Owen's shoulder. Isabella Clark waited to see the mortgage burned up, and then she came to me in the hall, all smooth and smiling again.

"Really, it's all very romantic, isn't it? I suppose it's better as it is, all things considered. Mark behaved splendidly, didn't he? Not many men would have done as he did."

For once in my life I agreed with Isabella. But I felt like having a good cry over it all — and I had it. I was glad for my dearie's sake and Owen's; but Mark Foster had paid the price of their joy, and I knew it had beggared him of happiness for life.

Tannis of the Flats

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Few people in Avonlea could understand why Elinor Blair had never married. She had been one of the most beautiful girls in our part of the Island and, as a woman of fifty, she was still very attractive. In her youth she had had ever so many beaux, as we of our generation well remembered; but, after her return from visiting her brother Tom in the Canadian Northwest, more than twenty-five years ago, she had seemed to withdraw within herself, keeping all men at a safe, though friendly, distance. She had been a gay, laughing girl when she went West; she came back quiet and serious, with a shadowed look in her eyes which time could not quite succeed in blotting out.

Elinor had never talked much about her visit, except to describe the scenery and the life, which in that day was rough indeed. Not even to me, who had grown up next door to her and who had always seemed more a sister than a friend, did she speak of other than the merest commonplaces. But when Tom Blair made a flying trip back home, some ten years later, there were one or two of us to whom he related the story of Jerome Carey, — a story revealing only too well the reason for Elinor's sad eyes and utter indifference to masculine attentions. I can recall almost his exact words and the inflections of his voice, and I remember, too, that it seemed to me a far cry from the tranquil, pleasant scene before us, on that lovely summer day, to the elemental life of the Flats.

The Flats was a forlorn little trading station fifteen miles up the river from Prince Albert, with a scanty population of half-breeds and three white men. When Jerome Carey was sent to take charge of the telegraph office there, he cursed his fate in the picturesque language permissible in the far Northwest.

Not that Carey was a profane man, even as men go in the West. He was an English gentleman, and he kept both his life and his vocabulary pretty

clean. But — the Flats!

Outside of the ragged cluster of log shacks, which comprised the settlement, there was always a shifting fringe of teepees where the Indians, who drifted down from the Reservation, camped with their dogs and squaws and papooses. There are standpoints from which Indians are interesting, but they cannot be said to offer congenial social attractions. For three weeks after Carey went to the Flats he was lonelier than he had ever imagined it possible to be, even in the Great Lone Land. If it had not been for teaching Paul Dumont the telegraphic code, Carey believed he would have been driven to suicide in self-defense.

The telegraphic importance of the Flats consisted in the fact that it was the starting point of three telegraph lines to remote trading posts up North. Not many messages came therefrom, but the few that did come generally amounted to something worth while. Days and even weeks would pass without a single one being clicked to the Flats. Carey was debarred from talking over the wires to the Prince Albert man for the reason that they were on officially bad terms. He blamed the latter for his transfer to the Flats.

Carey slept in a loft over the office, and got his meals as Joe Esquint's, across the "street." Joe Esquint's wife was a good cook, as cooks go among the breeds, and Carey soon became a great pet of hers. Carey had a habit of becoming a pet with women. He had the "way" that has to be born in a man and can never be acquired. Besides, he was as handsome as clean-cut features, deep-set, dark-blue eyes, fair curls and six feet of muscle could make him. Mrs. Joe Esquint thought that his mustache was the most wonderfully beautiful thing, in its line, that she had ever seen.

Fortunately, Mrs. Joe was so old and fat and ugly that even the malicious and inveterate gossip of skulking breeds and Indians, squatting over teepee fires, could not hint at anything questionable in the relations between her and Carey. But it was a different matter with Tannis Dumont.

Tannis came home from the academy at Prince Albert early in July, when Carey had been at the Flats a month and had exhausted all the few novelties of his position. Paul Dumont had already become so expert at the

code that his mistakes no longer afforded Carey any fun, and the latter was getting desperate. He had serious intentions of throwing up the business altogether, and betaking himself to an Alberta ranch, where at least one would have the excitement of roping horses. When he saw Tannis Dumont he thought he would hang on awhile longer, anyway.

Tannis was the daughter of old Auguste Dumont, who kept the one small store at the Flats, lived in the one frame house that the place boasted, and was reputed to be worth an amount of money which, in half-breed eyes, was a colossal fortune. Old Auguste was black and ugly and notoriously bad-tempered. But Tannis was a beauty.

Tannis' great-grandmother had been a Cree squaw who married a French trapper. The son of this union became in due time the father of Auguste Dumont. Auguste married a woman whose mother was a French half-breed and whose father was a pure-bred Highland Scotchman. The result of this atrocious mixture was its justification — Tannis of the Flats — who looked as if all the blood of all the Howards might be running in her veins.

But, after all, the dominant current in those same veins was from the race of plain and prairie. The practiced eye detected it in the slender stateliness of carriage, in the graceful, yet voluptuous, curves of the lithe body, in the smallness and delicacy of hand and foot, in the purple sheen on straight-falling masses of blue-black hair, and, more than all else, in the long, dark eye, full and soft, yet alight with a slumbering fire. France, too, was responsible for somewhat in Tannis. It gave her a light step in place of the stealthy half-breed shuffle, it arched her red upper lip into a more tremulous bow, it lent a note of laughter to her voice and a sprightlier wit to her tongue. As for her redheaded Scotch grandfather, he had bequeathed her a somewhat whiter skin and ruddier bloom than is usually found in the breeds.

Old Auguste was mightily proud of Tannis. He sent her to school for four years in Prince Albert, bound that his girl should have the best. A High School course and considerable mingling in the social life of the town — for old Auguste was a man to be conciliated by astute politicians,

since he controlled some two or three hundred half-breed votes — sent Tannis home to the Flats with a very thin, but very deceptive, veneer of culture and civilization overlying the primitive passions and ideas of her nature.

Carey saw only the beauty and the veneer. He made the mistake of thinking that Tannis was what she seemed to be — a fairly well-educated, up-to-date young woman with whom a friendly flirtation was just what it was with white womankind — the pleasant amusement of an hour or season. It was a mistake — a very big mistake. Tannis understood something of piano playing, something less of grammar and Latin, and something less still of social prevarications. But she understood absolutely nothing of flirtation. You can never get an Indian to see the sense of Platonics.

Carey found the Flats quite tolerable after the homecoming of Tannis. He soon fell into the habit of dropping into the Dumont house to spend the evening, talking with Tannis in the parlor — which apartment was amazingly well done for a place like the Flats — Tannis had not studied Prince Albert parlors four years for nothing — or playing violin and piano duets with her. When music and conversation palled, they went for long gallops over the prairies together. Tannis rode to perfection, and managed her bad-tempered brute of a pony with a skill and grace that made Carey applaud her. She was glorious on horseback.

Sometimes he grew tired of the prairies and then he and Tannis paddled themselves over the river in Nitchie Joe's dug-out, and landed on the old trail that struck straight into the wooded belt of the Saskatchewan valley, leading north to trading posts on the frontier of civilization. There they rambled under huge pines, hoary with the age of centuries, and Carey talked to Tannis about England and quoted poetry to her. Tannis liked poetry; she had studied it at school, and understood it fairly well. But once she told Carey that she thought it a long, round-about way of saying what you could say just as well in about a dozen plain words. Carey laughed. He liked to evoke those little speeches of hers. They sounded very clever, dropping from such arched, ripely-tinted lips.

If you had told Carey that he was playing with fire he would have laughed at you. In the first place he was not in the slightest degree in love with Tannis — he merely admired and liked her. In the second place, it never occurred to him that Tannis might be in love with him. Why, he had never attempted any lovemaking with her! And, above all, he was obsessed with that aforesaid fatal idea that Tannis was like the women he had associated with all his life, in reality as well as in appearance. He did not know enough of the racial characteristics to understand.

But, if Carey thought his relationship with Tannis was that of friendship merely, he was the only one at the Flats who did think so. All the half-breeds and quarter-breeds and any-fractional breeds there believed that he meant to marry Tannis. There would have been nothing surprising to them in that. They did not know that Carey's second cousin was a baronet, and they would not have understood that it need make any difference, if they had. They thought that rich old Auguste's heiress, who had been to school for four years in Prince Albert, was a catch for anybody.

Old Auguste himself shrugged his shoulders over it and was well-pleased enough. An Englishman was a prize by way of a husband for a half-breed girl, even if he were only a telegraph operator. Young Paul Dumont worshipped Carey, and the half-Scotch mother, who might have understood, was dead. In all the Flats there were but two people who disapproved of the match they thought an assured thing. One of these was the little priest, Father Gabriel. He liked Tannis, and he liked Carey; but he shook his head dubiously when he heard the gossip of the shacks and teepees. Religions might mingle, but the different bloods — ah, it was not the right thing! Tannis was a good girl, and a beautiful one; but she was no fit mate for the fair, thoroughbred Englishman. Father Gabriel wished fervently that Jerome Carey might soon be transferred elsewhere. He even went to Prince Albert and did a little wire-pulling on his own account, but nothing came of it. He was on the wrong side of politics.

The other malcontent was Lazarre Mérimée, a lazy, besotted French half-breed, who was, after his fashion, in love with Tannis. He could never

have got her, and he knew it — old Auguste and young Paul would have incontinently riddled him with bullets had he ventured near the house as a suitor, — but he hated Carey none the less, and watched for a chance to do him an ill-turn. There is no worse enemy in all the world than a half-breed. Your true Indian is bad enough, but his diluted descendant is ten times worse.

As for Tannis, she loved Carey with all her heart, and that was all there was about it.

If Elinor Blair had never gone to Prince Albert there is no knowing what might have happened, after all. Carey, so powerful in propinquity, might even have ended by learning to love Tannis and marrying her, to his own worldly undoing. But Elinor did go to Prince Albert, and her going ended all things for Tannis of the Flats.

Carey met her one evening in September, when he had ridden into town to attend a dance, leaving Paul Dumont in charge of the telegraph office. Elinor had just arrived in Prince Albert on a visit to Tom, to which she had been looking forward during the five years since he had married and moved out West from Avonlea. As I have already said, she was very beautiful at that time, and Carey fell in love with her at the first moment of their meeting.

During the next three weeks he went to town nine times and called at the Dumonts' only once. There were no more rides and walks with Tannis. This was not intentional neglect on his part. He had simply forgotten all about her. The breeds surmised a lover's quarrel, but Tannis understood. There was another woman back there in town.

It would be quite impossible to put on paper any adequate idea of her emotions at this stage. One night, she followed Carey when he went to Prince Albert, riding out of earshot, behind him on her plains pony, but keeping him in sight. Lazarre, in a fit of jealousy, had followed Tannis, spying on her until she started back to the Flats. After that he watched both Carey and Tannis incessantly, and months later had told Tom all he had learned through his low sneaking.

Tannis trailed Carey to the Blair house, on the bluffs above the town, and saw him tie his horse at the gate and enter. She, too, tied her pony to a poplar, lower down, and then crept stealthily through the willows at the side of the house until she was close to the windows. Through one of them she could see Carey and Elinor. The half-breed girl crouched down in the shadow and glared at her rival. She saw the pretty, fair-tinted face, the fluffy coronal of golden hair, the blue, laughing eyes of the woman whom Jerome Carey loved, and she realized very plainly that there was nothing left to hope for. She, Tannis of the Flats, could never compete with that other. It was well to know so much, at least.

After a time, she crept softly away, loosed her pony, and lashed him mercilessly with her whip through the streets of the town and out the long, dusty river trail. A man turned and looked after her as she tore past a brightly lighted store on Water Street.

“That was Tannis of the Flats,” he said to a companion. “She was in town last winter, going to school — a beauty and a bit of the devil, like all those breed girls. What in thunder is she riding like that for?”

One day, a fortnight later, Carey went over the river alone for a ramble up the northern trail, and an undisturbed dream of Elinor. When he came back Tannis was standing at the canoe landing, under a pine tree, in a rain of finely sifted sunlight. She was waiting for him and she said, with any preface:

“Mr. Carey, why do you never come to see me, now?”

Carey flushed like any girl. Her tone and look made him feel very uncomfortable. He remembered, self-reproachfully, that he must have seemed very neglectful, and he stammered something about having been busy.

“Not very busy,” said Tannis, with her terrible directness. “It is not that. It is because you are going to Prince Albert to see a white woman!”

Even in his embarrassment Carey noted that this was the first time he had ever heard Tannis use the expression, “a white woman,” or any other that would indicate her sense of a difference between herself and the dominant race. He understood, at the same moment, that this girl was not

to be trifled with — that she would have the truth out of him, first or last. But he felt indescribably foolish.

“I suppose so,” he answered lamely.

“And what about me?” asked Tannis.

When you come to think of it, this was an embarrassing question, especially for Carey, who had believed that Tannis understood the game, and played it for its own sake, as he did.

“I don’t understand you, Tannis,” he said hurriedly.

“You have made me love you,” said Tannis.

The words sound flat enough on paper. They did not sound flat to Tom, as repeated by Lazarre, and they sounded anything but flat to Carey, hurled at him as they were by a woman trembling with all the passions of her savage ancestry. Tannis had justified her criticism of poetry. She had said her half-dozen words, instinct with all the despair and pain and wild appeal that all the poetry in the world had ever expressed.

They made Carey feel like a scoundrel. All at once he realized how impossible it would be to explain matters to Tannis, and that he would make a still bigger fool of himself, if he tried.

“I am very sorry,” he stammered, like a whipped schoolboy.

“It is no matter,” interrupted Tannis violently. “What difference does it make about me — a half-breed girl? We breed girls are only born to amuse the white men. That is so — is it not? Then, when they are tired of us, they push us aside and go back to their own kind. Oh, it is very well. But I will not forget — my father and brother will not forget. They will make you sorry to some purpose!”

She turned, and stalked away to her canoe. He waited under the pines until she crossed the river; then he, too, went miserably home. What a mess he had contrived to make of things! Poor Tannis! How handsome she had looked in her fury — and how much like a squaw! The racial marks always come out plainly under the stress of emotion, as Tom noted later.

Her threat did not disturb him. If young Paul and old Auguste made things unpleasant for him, he thought himself more than a match for them. It was the thought of the suffering he had brought upon Tannis that worried

him. He had not, to be sure, been a villain; but he had been a fool, and that is almost as bad, under some circumstances.

The Dumonts, however, did not trouble him. After all, Tannis' four years in Prince Albert had not been altogether wasted. She knew that white girls did not mix their male relatives up in a vendetta when a man ceased calling on them — and she had nothing else to complain of that could be put in words. After some reflection she concluded to hold her tongue. She even laughed when old Auguste asked her what was up between her and her fellow, and said she had grown tired of him. Old Auguste shrugged his shoulders resignedly. It was just as well, maybe. Those English sons-in-law sometimes gave themselves too many airs.

So Carey rode often to town and Tannis bided her time, and plotted futile schemes of revenge, and Lazarre Mérimée scowled and got drunk — and life went on at the Flats as usual, until the last week in October, when a big wind and rainstorm swept over the northland.

It was a bad night. The wires were down between the Flats and Prince Albert and all communication with the outside world was cut off. Over at Joe Esquint's the breeds were having a carouse in honor of Joe's birthday. Paul Dumont had gone over, and Carey was alone in the office, smoking lazily and dreaming of Elinor.

Suddenly, above the splash of rain and whistle of wind, he heard outcries in the street. Running to the door he was met by Mrs. Joe Esquint, who grasped him breathlessly.

“Meestair Carey — come quick! Lazarre, he kill Paul — they fight!”

Carey, with a smothered oath, rushed across the street. He had been afraid of something of the sort, and had advised Paul not to go, for those half-breed carouses almost always ended in a free fight. He burst into the kitchen at Joe Esquint's, to find a circle of mute spectators ranged around the room and Paul and Lazarre in a clinch in the center. Carey was relieved to find it was only an affair of fists. He promptly hurled himself at the combatants and dragged Paul away, while Mrs. Joe Esquint — Joe himself being dead-drunk in a corner — flung her fat arms about Lazarre and held him back.

“Stop this,” said Carey sternly.

“Let me get at him,” foamed Paul. “He insulted my sister. He said that you — let me get at him!”

He could not wriggle free from Carey’s iron grip. Lazarre, with a snarl like a wolf, sent Mrs. Joe spinning, and rushed at Paul. Carey struck out as best he could, and Lazarre went reeling back against the table. It went over with a crash and the light went out!

Mrs. Joe’s shrieks might have brought the roof down. In the confusion that ensued, two pistol shots rang out sharply. There was a cry, a groan, a fall — then a rush for the door. When Mrs. Joe Esquint’s sister-in-law, Marie, dashed in with another lamp, Mrs. Joe was still shrieking, Paul Dumont was leaning sickly against the wall with a dangling arm, and Carey lay face downward on the floor, with blood trickling from under him.

Marie Esquint was a woman of nerve. She told Mrs. Joe to shut up, and she turned Carey over. He was conscious, but seemed dazed and could not help himself. Marie put a coat under his head, told Paul to lie down on the bench, ordered Mrs. Joe to get a bed ready, and went for the doctor. It happened that there was a doctor at the Flats that night — a Prince Albert man who had been up at the Reservation, fixing up some sick Indians, and had been stormstaid at old Auguste’s on his way back.

Marie soon returned with the doctor, old Auguste, and Tannis. Carey was carried in and laid on Mrs. Esquint’s bed. The doctor made a brief examination, while Mrs. Joe sat on the floor and howled at the top of her lungs. Then he shook his head.

“Shot in the back,” he said briefly.

“How long?” asked Carey, understanding.

“Perhaps till morning,” answered the doctor. Mrs. Joe gave a louder howl than ever at this, and Tannis came and stood by the bed. The doctor, knowing that he could do nothing for Carey, hurried into the kitchen to attend to Paul, who had a badly shattered arm, and Marie went with him.

Carey looked stupidly at Tannis.

“Send for her,” he said.

Tannis smiled cruelly.

“There is no way. The wires are down, and there is no man at the Flats who will go to town tonight,” she answered.

“My God, I MUST see her before I die,” burst out Carey pleadingly.
“Where is Father Gabriel? HE will go.”

“The priest went to town last night and has not come back,” said Tannis.

Carey groaned and shut his eyes. If Father Gabriel was away, there was indeed no one to go. Old Auguste and the doctor could not leave Paul and he knew well that no breed of them all at the Flats would turn out on such a night, even if they were not, one and all, mortally scared of being mixed up in the law and justice that would be sure to follow the affair. He must die without seeing Elinor.

Tannis looked inscrutably down on the pale face on Mrs. Joe Esquint’s dirty pillows. Her immobile features gave no sign of the conflict raging within her. After a short space she turned and went out, shutting the door softly on the wounded man and Mrs. Joe, whose howls had now simmered down to whines. In the next room, Paul was crying out with pain as the doctor worked on his arm, but Tannis did not go to him. Instead, she slipped out and hurried down the stormy street to old Auguste’s stable. Five minutes later she was galloping down the black, wind-lashed river trail, on her way to town, to bring Elinor Blair to her lover’s deathbed.

I hold that no woman ever did anything more unselfish than this deed of Tannis! For the sake of love she put under her feet the jealousy and hatred that had clamored at her heart. She held, not only revenge, but the dearer joy of watching by Carey to the last, in the hollow of her hand, and she cast both away that the man she loved might draw his dying breath somewhat easier. In a white woman the deed would have been merely commendable. In Tannis of the Flats, with her ancestry and tradition, it was lofty self-sacrifice.

It was eight o'clock when Tannis left the Flats; it was ten when she drew bridle before the house on the bluff. Elinor was regaling Tom and his wife with Avonlea gossip when the maid came to the door.

"Pleas'm, there's a breed girl out on the verandah and she's asking for Miss Blair."

Elinor went out wonderingly, followed by Tom. Tannis, whip in hand, stood by the open door, with the stormy night behind her, and the warm ruby light of the hall lamp showering over her white face and the long rope of drenched hair that fell from her bare head. She looked wild enough.

"Jerome Carey was shot in a quarrel at Joe Esquint's tonight," she said. "He is dying — he wants you — I have come for you."

Elinor gave a little cry, and steadied herself on Tom's shoulder. Tom said he knew he made some exclamation of horror. He had never approved of Carey's attentions to Elinor, but such news was enough to shock anybody. He was determined, however, that Elinor should not go out in such a night and to such a scene, and told Tannis so in no uncertain terms.

"I came through the storm," said Tannis, contemptuously. "Cannot she do as much for him as I can?"

The good, old Island blood in Elinor's veins showed to some purpose. "Yes," she answered firmly. "No, Tom, don't object — I must go. Get my horse — and your own."

Ten minutes later three riders galloped down the bluff road and took the river trail. Fortunately the wind was at their backs and the worst of the storm was over. Still, it was a wild, black ride enough. Tom rode, cursing softly under his breath. He did not like the whole thing — Carey done to death in some low half-breed shack, this handsome, sullen girl coming as his messenger, this nightmare ride, through wind and rain. It all savored too much of melodrama, even for the Northland, where people still did things in a primitive way. He heartily wished Elinor had never left Avonlea.

It was past twelve when they reached the Flats. Tannis was the only one who seemed to be able to think coherently. It was she who told Tom where to take the horses and then led Elinor to the room where Carey was

dying. The doctor was sitting by the bedside and Mrs. Joe was curled up in a corner, sniffing to herself. Tannis took her by the shoulder and turned her, none too gently, out of the room. The doctor, understanding, left at once. As Tannis shut the door she saw Elinor sink on her knees by the bed, and Carey's trembling hand go out to her head.

Tannis sat down on the floor outside of the door and wrapped herself up in a shawl Marie Esquint had dropped. In that attitude she looked exactly like a squaw, and all comers and goers, even old Auguste, who was hunting for her, thought she was one, and left her undisturbed. She watched there until dawn came whitely up over the prairies and Jerome Carey died. She knew when it happened by Elinor's cry.

Tannis sprang up and rushed in. She was too late for even a parting look.

The girl took Carey's hand in hers, and turned to the weeping Elinor with a cold dignity.

"Now go," she said. "You had him in life to the very last. He is mine now."

"There must be some arrangements made," faltered Elinor.

"My father and brother will make all arrangements, as you call them," said Tannis steadily. "He had no near relatives in the world — none at all in Canada — he told me so. You may send out a Protestant minister from town, if you like; but he will be buried here at the Flats and his grave with be mine — all mine! Go!"

And Elinor, reluctant, sorrowful, yet swayed by a will and an emotion stronger than her own, went slowly out, leaving Tannis of the Flats alone with her dead.

OTHER SHORT STORIES

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A Case of Trespass

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It was the forenoon of a hazy, breathless day, and Dan Phillips was trouting up one of the back creeks of the Carleton pond. It was somewhat cooler up the creek than out on the main body of water, for the tall birches and willows, crowding down to the brim, threw cool, green shadows across it and shut out the scorching glare, while a stray breeze now and then rippled down the wooded slopes, rustling the beech leaves with an airy, pleasant sound.

Out in the pond the glassy water creamed and shimmered in the hot sun, unrippled by the faintest breath of air. Across the soft, pearly tints of the horizon blurred the smoke of the big factory chimneys that were owned by Mr. Walters, to whom the pond and adjacent property also belonged.

Mr. Walters was a comparative stranger in Carleton, having but recently purchased the factories from the heirs of the previous owner; but he had been in charge long enough to establish a reputation for sternness and inflexibility in all his business dealings.

One or two of his employees, who had been discharged by him on what they deemed insufficient grounds, helped to deepen the impression that he was an unjust and arbitrary man, merciless to all offenders, and intolerant of the slightest infringement of his cast-iron rules.

Dan Phillips had been on the pond ever since sunrise. The trout had risen well in the early morning, but as the day wore on, growing hotter and hotter, they refused to bite, and for half an hour Dan had not caught one.

He had a goodly string of them already, however, and he surveyed them with satisfaction as he rowed his leaky little skiff to the shore of the creek.

"Pretty good catch," he soliloquized. "Best I've had this summer, so far. That big spotted one must weigh near a pound. He's a beauty. They're

a good price over at the hotels now, too. I'll go home and get my dinner and go straight over with them. That'll leave me time for another try at them about sunset. Whew, how hot it is! I must take Ella May home a bunch of them blue flags. They're real handsome!"

He tied his skiff under the crowding alders, gathered a big bunch of the purple flag lilies with their silky petals, and started homeward, whistling cheerily as he stepped briskly along the fern-carpeted wood path that wound up the hill under the beeches and firs.

He was a freckled, sunburned lad of thirteen years. His neighbours all said that Danny was "as smart as a steel trap," and immediately added that they wondered where he got his smartness from — certainly not from his father!

The elder Phillips had been denominated "shiftless and slack-twisted" by all who ever had any dealings with him in his unlucky, aimless life — one of those improvident, easygoing souls who sit contentedly down to breakfast with a very faint idea where their dinner is to come from.

When he had died, no one had missed him, unless it were his patient, sad-eyed wife, who bravely faced her hard lot, and toiled unremittingly to keep a home for her two children — Dan and a girl two years younger, who was a helpless cripple, suffering from some form of spinal disease.

Dan, who was old and steady for his years, had gone manfully to work to assist his mother. Though he had been disappointed in all his efforts to obtain steady employment, he was active and obliging, and earned many a small amount by odd jobs around the village, and by helping the Carleton farmers in planting and harvest.

For the last two years, however, his most profitable source of summer income had been the trout pond. The former owner had allowed anyone who wished to fish in his pond, and Dan made a regular business of it, selling his trout at the big hotels over at Mosquito Lake. This, in spite of its unattractive name, was a popular summer resort, and Dan always found a ready market for his catch.

When Mr. Walters purchased the property it somehow never occurred to Dan that the new owner might not be so complaisant as his predecessor

in the matter of the best trouting pond in the country.

To be sure, Dan often wondered why it was the pond was so deserted this summer. He could not recall having seen a single person on it save himself. Still, it did not cross his mind that there could be any particular reason for this.

He always fished up in the cool, dim creeks, which long experience had taught him were best for trout, and came and went by a convenient wood path; but he had no thought of concealment in so doing. He would not have cared had all Carleton seen him.

He had done very well with his fish so far, and prices for trout at the Lake went up every day. Dan was an enterprising boy, and a general favourite with the hotel owners. They knew that he could always be depended on.

Mrs. Phillips met him at the door when he reached home.

“See, Mother,” said Dan exultantly, as he held up his fish. “Just look at that fellow, will you? A pound if he’s an ounce! I ought to get a good price for these, I can tell you. Let me have my dinner now, and I’ll go right over to the Lake with them.”

“It’s a long walk for you, Danny,” replied his mother pityingly, “and it’s too hot to go so far. I’m afraid you’ll get sun-struck or something. You’d better wait till the cool of the evening. You’re looking real pale and thin this while back.”

“Oh, I’m all right, Mother,” assured Dan cheerfully. “I don’t mind the heat a bit. A fellow must put up with some inconveniences. Wait till I bring home the money for these fish. And I mean to have another catch tonight. It’s you that’s looking tired. I wish you didn’t have to work so hard, Mother. If I could only get a good place you could take it easier. Sam French says that Mr. Walters wants a boy up there at the factory, but I know I wouldn’t do. I ain’t big enough. Perhaps something will turn up soon though. When our ship comes in, Mother, we’ll have our good times.”

He picked up his flags and went into the little room where his sister lay.

“See what I’ve brought you, Ella May!” he said, as he thrust the cool, moist clusters into her thin, eager hands. “Did you ever see such beauties?”

“Oh, Dan, how lovely they are! Thank you ever so much! If you are going over to the Lake this afternoon, will you please call at Mrs. Henny’s and get those nutmeg geranium slips she promised me? Just look how nice my others are growing. The pink one is going to bloom.”

“I’ll bring you all the geranium slips at the Lake, if you like. When I get rich, Ella May, I’ll build you a big conservatory, and I’ll get every flower in the world in it for you. You shall just live and sleep among posies. Is dinner ready, Mother? Troutin’g’s hungry work, I tell you. What paper is this?”

He picked up a folded newspaper from the table.

“Oh, that’s only an old Lake Advertiser,” answered Mrs. Phillips, as she placed the potatoes on the table and wiped her moist, hot face with the corner of her gingham apron. “Letty Mills brought it in around a parcel this morning. It’s four weeks old, but I kept it to read if I ever get time. It’s so seldom we see a paper of any kind nowadays. But I haven’t looked at it yet. Why, Danny, what on earth is the matter?”

For Dan, who had opened the paper and glanced over the first page, suddenly gave a choked exclamation and turned pale, staring stupidly at the sheet before him.

“See, Mother,” he gasped, as she came up in alarm and looked over his shoulder. This is what they read:

Notice

Anyone found fishing on my pond at Carleton after date will be prosecuted according to law, without respect of persons.

June First.

H.C. Walters.

“Oh, Danny, what does it mean?”

Dan went and carefully closed the door of Ella May’s room before he replied. His face was pale and his voice shaky.

“Mean? Well, Mother, it just means that I’ve been stealing Mr. Walters’s trout all summer — stealing them. That’s what it means.”

“Oh, Danny! But you didn’t know.”

“No, but I ought to have remembered that he was the new owner, and have asked him. I never thought. Mother, what does ‘prosecuted according to law’ mean?”

“I don’t know, I’m sure, Danny. But if this is so, there’s only one thing to be done. You must go straight to Mr. Walters and tell him all about it.”

“Mother, I don’t dare to. He is a dreadfully hard man. Sam French’s father says—”

“I wouldn’t believe a word Sam French’s father says about Mr. Walters!” said Mrs. Phillips firmly. “He’s got a spite against him because he was dismissed. Besides, Danny, it’s the only right thing to do. You know that. We’re poor, but we have never done anything underhand yet.”

“Yes, Mother, I know,” said Dan, gulping his fear bravely down. “I’ll go, of course, right after dinner. I was only scared at first. I’ll tell you what I’ll do. I’ll clean these trout nicely and take them to Mr. Walters, and tell him that, if he’ll only give me time, I’ll pay him back every cent of money I got for all I sold this summer. Then maybe he’ll let me off, seeing as I didn’t know about the notice.”

“I’ll go with you, Danny.”

“No, I’ll go alone, Mother. You needn’t go with me,” said Dan heroically. To himself he said that his mother had troubles enough. He would never subject her to the added ordeal of an interview with the stern factory owner. He would beard the lion in his den himself, if it had to be done.

“Don’t tell Ella May anything about it. It would worry her. And don’t cry, Mother, I guess it’ll be all right. Let me have my dinner now and I’ll go straight off.”

Dan ate his dinner rapidly; then he carefully cleaned his trout, put them in a long basket, with rhubarb leaves over them, and started with an assumed cheerfulness very far from his real feelings.

He had barely passed the gate when another boy came shuffling along — a tall, raw-boned lad, with an insinuating smile and shifty, cunning eyes. The newcomer nodded familiarly to Dan.

“Hello, sonny. Going over to the Lake with your catch, are you? You’ll fry up before you get there. There’ll be nothing left of you but a crisp.”

“No, I’m not going to the Lake. I’m going up to the factory to see Mr. Walters.”

Sam French gave a long whistle of surprise.

“Why, Dan, what’s taking you there? You surely ain’t thinking of trying for that place, are you? Walters wouldn’t look at you. Why, he wouldn’t take me! You haven’t the ghost of a chance.”

“No, I’m not going for that. Sam, did you know that Mr. Walters had a notice in the Lake Advertiser that nobody could fish in his pond this summer?”

“Course I did — the old skinflint! He’s too mean to live, that’s what. He never goes near the pond himself. Regular dog in the manger, he is. Dad says—”

“Sam, why didn’t you tell me about that notice?”

“Gracious, didn’t you know? I s’posed everybody did, and here I’ve been taking you for the cutest chap this side of sunset — fishing away up in that creek where no one could see you, and cutting home through the woods on the sly. You don’t mean to tell me you never saw that notice?”

“No, I didn’t. Do you think I’d have gone near the pond if I had? I never saw it till today, and I’m going straight to Mr. Walters now to tell him about it.”

Sam French stopped short in the dusty road and stared at Dan in undisguised amazement.

“Dan Phillips,” he ejaculated, “have you plum gone out of your mind? Boy alive, you needn’t be afraid that I’d peach on you. I’m too blamed glad to see anyone get the better of that old Walters, smart as he thinks himself. Gee! To dream of going to him and telling him you’ve been fishing in his pond! Why, he’ll put you in jail. You don’t know what sort of a man he is. Dad says—”

“Never mind what your dad says, Sam. My mind’s made up.”

“Dan, you chump, listen to me. That notice says ‘prosecuted according to law.’ Why, Danny, he’ll put you in prison, or fine you, or something dreadful.”

“I can’t help it if he does,” said Danny stoutly. “You get out of here, Sam French, and don’t be trying to scare me. I mean to be honest, and how can I be if I don’t own up to Mr. Walters that I’ve been stealing his trout all summer?”

“Stealing, fiddlesticks! Dan, I used to think you were a chap with some sense, but I see I was mistaken. You ain’t done no harm. Walters will never miss them trout. If you’re so dreadful squeamish that you won’t fish no more, why, you needn’t. But just let the matter drop and hold your tongue about it. That’s my advice.”

“Well, it isn’t my mother’s, then. I mean to go by hers. You needn’t argue no more, Sam. I’m going.”

“Go, then!” said Sam, stopping short in disgust. “You’re a big fool, Dan, and serve you right if Walters lands you off to jail; but I don’t wish you no ill. If I can do anything for your family after you’re gone, I will, and I’ll try and give your remains Christian burial — if there are any remains. So long, Danny! Give my love to old Walters!”

Dan was not greatly encouraged by this interview. He shrank more than ever from the thought of facing the stern factory owner. His courage had almost evaporated when he entered the office at the factory and asked shakily for Mr. Walters.

“He’s in his office there,” replied the clerk, “but he’s very busy. Better leave your message with me.”

“I must see Mr. Walters himself, please,” said Dan firmly, but with inward trepidation.

The clerk swung himself impatiently from his stool and ushered Dan into Mr. Walters’s private office.

“Boy to see you, sir,” he said briefly, as he closed the ground-glass door behind him.

Dan, dizzy and trembling, stood in the dreaded presence. Mr. Walters was writing at a table covered with a businesslike litter of papers. He laid down his pen and looked up with a frown as the clerk vanished. He was a stern-looking man with deep-set grey eyes and a square, clean-shaven chin. There was not an ounce of superfluous flesh on his frame, and his voice and manner were those of the decided, resolute, masterful man of business.

He pointed to a capacious leather chair and said concisely, "What is your business with me, boy?"

Dan had carefully thought out a statement of facts beforehand, but every word had vanished from his memory. He had only a confused, desperate consciousness that he had a theft to confess and that it must be done as soon as possible. He did not sit down.

"Please, Mr. Walters," he began desperately, "I came to tell you — your notice — I never saw it before — and I've been fishing on your pond all summer — but I didn't know — honest — I've brought you all I caught today — and I'll pay back for them all — some time."

An amused, puzzled expression crossed Mr. Walters's noncommittal face. He pushed the leather chair forward.

"Sit down, my boy," he said kindly. "I don't quite understand this somewhat mixed-up statement of yours. You've been fishing on my pond, you say. Didn't you see my notice in the Advertiser?"

Dan sat down more composedly. The revelation was over and he was still alive.

"No, sir. We hardly ever see an Advertiser, and nobody told me. I'd always been used to fishing there, and I never thought but what it was all right to keep on. I know I ought to have remembered and asked you, but truly, sir, I didn't mean to steal your fish. I used to sell them over at the hotels. We saw the notice today, Mother and me, and I came right up. I've brought you the trout I caught this morning, and — if only you won't prosecute me, sir, I'll pay back every cent I got for the others — every cent, sir — if you'll give me time."

Mr. Walters passed his hand across his mouth to conceal something like a smile.

“Your name is Dan Phillips, isn’t it?” he said irrelevantly, “and you live with your mother, the Widow Phillips, down there at Carleton Corners, I understand.”

“Yes, sir,” said Dan, wondering how Mr. Walters knew so much about him, and if these were the preliminaries of prosecution.

Mr. Walters took up his pen and drew a blank sheet towards him.

“Well, Dan, I put that notice in because I found that many people who used to fish on my pond, irrespective of leave or licence, were accustomed to lunch or camp on my property, and did not a little damage. I don’t care for trouting myself; I’ve no time for it. However, I hardly think you’ll do much damage. You can keep on fishing there. I’ll give you a written permission, so that if any of my men see you they won’t interfere with you. As for these trout here, I’ll buy them from you at Mosquito Lake prices, and will say no more about the matter. How will that do?”

“Thank you, sir,” stammered Dan. He could hardly believe his ears. He took the slip of paper Mr. Walters handed to him and rose to his feet.

“Wait a minute, Dan. How was it you came to tell me this? You might have stopped your depredations, and I should not have been any the wiser.”

“That wouldn’t have been honest, sir,” said Dan, looking squarely at him.

There was a brief silence. Mr. Walters thrummed meditatively on the table. Dan waited wonderingly.

Finally the factory owner said abruptly, “There’s a vacant place for a boy down here. I want it filled as soon as possible. Will you take it?”

“Mr. Walters! Me!” Dan thought the world must be turning upside down.

“Yes, you. You are rather young, but the duties are not hard or difficult to learn. I think you’ll do. I was resolved not to fill that place until I could find a perfectly honest and trustworthy boy for it. I believe I have found him. I discharged the last boy because he lied to me about some trifling offence for which I would have forgiven him if he had told the truth. I can

bear with incompetency, but falsehood and deceit I cannot and will not tolerate,” he said, so sternly that Dan’s face paled. “I am convinced that you are incapable of either. Will you take the place, Dan?”

“I will if you think I can fill it, sir. I will do my best.”

“Yes, I believe you will. Perhaps I know more about you than you think. Businessmen must keep their eyes open. We’ll regard this matter as settled then. Come up tomorrow at eight o’clock. And one word more, Dan. You have perhaps heard that I am an unjust and hard master. I am not the former, and you will never have occasion to find me the latter if you are always as truthful and straightforward as you have been today. You might easily have deceived me in this matter. That you did not do so is the best and only recommendation I require. Take those trout up to my house and leave them. That will do. Good afternoon.”

Dan somehow got his dazed self through the glass door and out of the building. The whole interview had been such a surprise to him that he was hardly sure whether or not he had dreamed it all.

“I feel as if I were some person else,” he said to himself, as he started down the hot white road. “But Mother was right. I’ll stick to her motto. I wonder what Sam will say to this.”

A Christmas Inspiration

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“Well, I really think Santa Claus has been very good to us all,” said Jean Lawrence, pulling the pins out of her heavy coil of fair hair and letting it ripple over her shoulders.

“So do I,” said Nellie Preston as well as she could with a mouthful of chocolates. “Those blessed home folks of mine seem to have divined by instinct the very things I most wanted.”

It was the dusk of Christmas Eve and they were all in Jean Lawrence’s room at No. 16 Chestnut Terrace. No. 16 was a boardinghouse, and boardinghouses are not proverbially cheerful places in which to spend Christmas, but Jean’s room, at least, was a pleasant spot, and all the girls had brought their Christmas presents in to show each other. Christmas came on Sunday that year and the Saturday evening mail at Chestnut Terrace had been an exciting one.

Jean had lighted the pink-globed lamp on her table and the mellow light fell over merry faces as the girls chatted about their gifts. On the table was a big white box heaped with roses that betokened a bit of Christmas extravagance on somebody’s part. Jean’s brother had sent them to her from Montreal, and all the girls were enjoying them in common.

No. 16 Chestnut Terrace was overrun with girls generally. But just now only five were left; all the others had gone home for Christmas, but these five could not go and were bent on making the best of it.

Belle and Olive Reynolds, who were sitting on the bed — Jean could never keep them off it — were High School girls; they were said to be always laughing, and even the fact that they could not go home for Christmas because a young brother had measles did not dampen their spirits.

Beth Hamilton, who was hovering over the roses, and Nellie Preston, who was eating candy, were art students, and their homes were too far

away to visit. As for Jean Lawrence, she was an orphan, and had no home of her own. She worked on the staff of one of the big city newspapers and the other girls were a little in awe of her cleverness, but her nature was a “chummy” one and her room was a favourite rendezvous. Everybody liked frank, open-handed and hearted Jean.

“It was so funny to see the postman when he came this evening,” said Olive. “He just bulged with parcels. They were sticking out in every direction.”

“We all got our share of them,” said Jean with a sigh of content.

“Even the cook got six — I counted.”

“Miss Allen didn’t get a thing — not even a letter,” said Beth quickly. Beth had a trick of seeing things that other girls didn’t.

“I forgot Miss Allen. No, I don’t believe she did,” answered Jean thoughtfully as she twisted up her pretty hair. “How dismal it must be to be so forlorn as that on Christmas Eve of all times. Ugh! I’m glad I have friends.”

“I saw Miss Allen watching us as we opened our parcels and letters,” Beth went on. “I happened to look up once, and such an expression as was on her face, girls! It was pathetic and sad and envious all at once. It really made me feel bad — for five minutes,” she concluded honestly.

“Hasn’t Miss Allen any friends at all?” asked Beth.

“No, I don’t think she has,” answered Jean. “She has lived here for fourteen years, so Mrs. Pickrell says. Think of that, girls! Fourteen years at Chestnut Terrace! Is it any wonder that she is thin and dried-up and snappy?”

“Nobody ever comes to see her and she never goes anywhere,” said Beth. “Dear me! She must feel lonely now when everybody else is being remembered by their friends. I can’t forget her face tonight; it actually haunts me. Girls, how would you feel if you hadn’t anyone belonging to you, and if nobody thought about you at Christmas?”

“Ow!” said Olive, as if the mere idea made her shiver.

A little silence followed. To tell the truth, none of them liked Miss Allen. They knew that she did not like them either, but considered them

frivolous and pert, and complained when they made a racket.

“The skeleton at the feast,” Jean called her, and certainly the presence of the pale, silent, discontented-looking woman at the No. 16 table did not tend to heighten its festivity.

Presently Jean said with a dramatic flourish, “Girls, I have an inspiration — a Christmas inspiration!”

“What is it?” cried four voices.

“Just this. Let us give Miss Allen a Christmas surprise. She has not received a single present and I’m sure she feels lonely. Just think how we would feel if we were in her place.”

“That is true,” said Olive thoughtfully. “Do you know, girls, this evening I went to her room with a message from Mrs. Pickrell, and I do believe she had been crying. Her room looked dreadfully bare and cheerless, too. I think she is very poor. What are we to do, Jean?”

“Let us each give her something nice. We can put the things just outside of her door so that she will see them whenever she opens it. I’ll give her some of Fred’s roses too, and I’ll write a Christmassy letter in my very best style to go with them,” said Jean, warming up to her ideas as she talked.

The other girls caught her spirit and entered into the plan with enthusiasm.

“Splendid!” cried Beth. “Jean, it is an inspiration, sure enough. Haven’t we been horribly selfish — thinking of nothing but our own gifts and fun and pleasure? I really feel ashamed.”

“Let us do the thing up the very best way we can,” said Nellie, forgetting even her beloved chocolates in her eagerness. “The shops are open yet. Let us go up town and invest.”

Five minutes later five capped and jacketed figures were scurrying up the street in the frosty, starlit December dusk. Miss Allen in her cold little room heard their gay voices and sighed. She was crying by herself in the dark. It was Christmas for everybody but her, she thought drearily.

In an hour the girls came back with their purchases.

“Now, let’s hold a council of war,” said Jean jubilantly. “I hadn’t the faintest idea what Miss Allen would like so I just guessed wildly. I got her a lace handkerchief and a big bottle of perfume and a painted photograph frame — and I’ll stick my own photo in it for fun. That was really all I could afford. Christmas purchases have left my purse dreadfully lean.”

“I got her a glove-box and a pin tray,” said Belle, “and Olive got her a calendar and Whittier’s poems. And besides we are going to give her half of that big plummy fruit cake Mother sent us from home. I’m sure she hasn’t tasted anything so delicious for years, for fruit cakes don’t grow on Chestnut Terrace and she never goes anywhere else for a meal.”

Beth had bought a pretty cup and saucer and said she meant to give one of her pretty water-colours too. Nellie, true to her reputation, had invested in a big box of chocolate creams, a gorgeously striped candy cane, a bag of oranges, and a brilliant lampshade of rose-coloured crepe paper to top off with.

“It makes such a lot of show for the money,” she explained. “I am bankrupt, like Jean.”

“Well, we’ve got a lot of pretty things,” said Jean in a tone of satisfaction. “Now we must do them up nicely. Will you wrap them in tissue paper, girls, and tie them with baby ribbon — here’s a box of it — while I write that letter?”

While the others chatted over their parcels Jean wrote her letter, and Jean could write delightful letters. She had a decided talent in that respect, and her correspondents all declared her letters to be things of beauty and joy forever. She put her best into Miss Allen’s Christmas letter. Since then she has written many bright and clever things, but I do not believe she ever in her life wrote anything more genuinely original and delightful than that letter. Besides, it breathed the very spirit of Christmas, and all the girls declared that it was splendid.

“You must all sign it now,” said Jean, “and I’ll put it in one of those big envelopes; and, Nellie, won’t you write her name on it in fancy letters?”

Which Nellie proceeded to do, and furthermore embellished the envelope by a border of chubby cherubs, dancing hand in hand around it and a sketch of No. 16 Chestnut Terrace in the corner in lieu of a stamp. Not content with this she hunted out a huge sheet of drawing paper and drew upon it an original pen-and-ink design after her own heart. A dudish cat — Miss Allen was fond of the No. 16 cat if she could be said to be fond of anything — was portrayed seated on a rocker arrayed in smoking jacket and cap with a cigar waved airily aloft in one paw while the other held out a placard bearing the legend “Merry Christmas.” A second cat in full street costume bowed politely, hat in paw, and waved a banner inscribed with “Happy New Year,” while faintly suggested kittens gambolled around the border. The girls laughed until they cried over it and voted it to be the best thing Nellie had yet done in original work.

All this had taken time and it was past eleven o’clock. Miss Allen had cried herself to sleep long ago and everybody else in Chestnut Terrace was abed when five figures cautiously crept down the hall, headed by Jean with a dim lamp. Outside of Miss Allen’s door the procession halted and the girls silently arranged their gifts on the floor.

“That’s done,” whispered Jean in a tone of satisfaction as they tiptoed back. “And now let us go to bed or Mrs. Pickrell, bless her heart, will be down on us for burning so much midnight oil. Oil has gone up, you know, girls.”

It was in the early morning that Miss Allen opened her door. But early as it was, another door down the hall was half open too and five rosy faces were peering cautiously out. The girls had been up for an hour for fear they would miss the sight and were all in Nellie’s room, which commanded a view of Miss Allen’s door.

That lady’s face was a study. Amazement, incredulity, wonder, chased each other over it, succeeded by a glow of pleasure. On the floor before her was a snug little pyramid of parcels topped by Jean’s letter. On a chair behind it was a bowl of delicious hothouse roses and Nellie’s placard.

Miss Allen looked down the hall but saw nothing, for Jean had slammed the door just in time. Half an hour later when they were going

down to breakfast Miss Allen came along the hall with outstretched hands to meet them. She had been crying again, but I think her tears were happy ones; and she was smiling now. A cluster of Jean's roses were pinned on her breast.

"Oh, girls, girls," she said, with a little tremble in her voice, "I can never thank you enough. It was so kind and sweet of you. You don't know how much good you have done me."

Breakfast was an unusually cheerful affair at No. 16 that morning. There was no skeleton at the feast and everybody was beaming. Miss Allen laughed and talked like a girl herself.

"Oh, how surprised I was!" she said. "The roses were like a bit of summer, and those cats of Nellie's were so funny and delightful. And your letter too, Jean! I cried and laughed over it. I shall read it every day for a year."

After breakfast everyone went to Christmas service. The girls went uptown to the church they attended. The city was very beautiful in the morning sunshine. There had been a white frost in the night and the tree-lined avenues and public squares seemed like glimpses of fairyland.

"How lovely the world is," said Jean.

"This is really the very happiest Christmas morning I have ever known," declared Nellie. "I never felt so really Christmassy in my inmost soul before."

"I suppose," said Beth thoughtfully, "that it is because we have discovered for ourselves the old truth that it is more blessed to give than to receive. I've always known it, in a way, but I never realized it before."

"Blessing on Jean's Christmas inspiration," said Nellie. "But, girls, let us try to make it an all-the-year-round inspiration, I say. We can bring a little of our own sunshine into Miss Allen's life as long as we live with her."

"Amen to that!" said Jean heartily. "Oh, listen, girls — the Christmas chimes!"

And over all the beautiful city was wafted the grand old message of peace on earth and good will to all the world.

A Christmas Mistake

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“Tomorrow is Christmas,” announced Teddy Grant exultantly, as he sat on the floor struggling manfully with a refractory bootlace that was knotted and tagless and stubbornly refused to go into the eyelets of Teddy’s patched boots. “Ain’t I glad, though. Hurrah!”

His mother was washing the breakfast dishes in a dreary, listless sort of way. She looked tired and broken-spirited. Ted’s enthusiasm seemed to grate on her, for she answered sharply:

“Christmas, indeed. I can’t see that it is anything for us to rejoice over. Other people may be glad enough, but what with winter coming on I’d sooner it was spring than Christmas. Mary Alice, do lift that child out of the ashes and put its shoes and stockings on. Everything seems to be at sixes and sevens here this morning.”

Keith, the oldest boy, was coiled up on the sofa calmly working out some algebra problems, quite oblivious to the noise around him. But he looked up from his slate, with his pencil suspended above an obstinate equation, to declaim with a flourish:

“Christmas comes but once a year, And then Mother wishes it wasn’t here.”

“I don’t, then,” said Gordon, son number two, who was preparing his own noon lunch of bread and molasses at the table, and making an atrocious mess of crumbs and sugary syrup over everything. “I know one thing to be thankful for, and that is that there’ll be no school. We’ll have a whole week of holidays.”

Gordon was noted for his aversion to school and his affection for holidays.

“And we’re going to have turkey for dinner,” declared Teddy, getting up off the floor and rushing to secure his share of bread and molasses, “and cranb’ry sauce and — and — pound cake! Ain’t we, Ma?”

“No, you are not,” said Mrs. Grant desperately, dropping the dishcloth and snatching the baby on her knee to wipe the crust of cinders and molasses from the chubby pink-and-white face. “You may as well know it now, children, I’ve kept it from you so far in hopes that something would turn up, but nothing has. We can’t have any Christmas dinner tomorrow — we can’t afford it. I’ve pinched and saved every way I could for the last month, hoping that I’d be able to get a turkey for you anyhow, but you’ll have to do without it. There’s that doctor’s bill to pay and a dozen other bills coming in — and people say they can’t wait. I suppose they can’t, but it’s kind of hard, I must say.”

The little Grants stood with open mouths and horrified eyes. No turkey for Christmas! Was the world coming to an end? Wouldn’t the government interfere if anyone ventured to dispense with a Christmas celebration?

The gluttonous Teddy stuffed his fists into his eyes and lifted up his voice. Keith, who understood better than the others the look on his mother’s face, took his blubbering young brother by the collar and marched him into the porch. The twins, seeing the summary proceeding, swallowed the outcries they had intended to make, although they couldn’t keep a few big tears from running down their fat cheeks.

Mrs. Grant looked pityingly at the disappointed faces about her.

“Don’t cry, children, you make me feel worse. We are not the only ones who will have to do without a Christmas turkey. We ought to be very thankful that we have anything to eat at all. I hate to disappoint you, but it can’t be helped.”

“Never mind, Mother,” said Keith, comfortingly, relaxing his hold upon the porch door, whereupon it suddenly flew open and precipitated Teddy, who had been tugging at the handle, heels over head backwards. “We know you’ve done your best. It’s been a hard year for you. Just wait, though. I’ll soon be grown up, and then you and these greedy youngsters shall feast on turkey every day of the year. Hello, Teddy, have you got on your feet again? Mind, sir, no more blubbering!”

“When I’m a man,” announced Teddy with dignity, “I’d just like to see you put me in the porch. And I mean to have turkey all the time and I

won't give you any, either."

"All right, you greedy small boy. Only take yourself off to school now, and let us hear no more squeaks out of you. Tramp, all of you, and give Mother a chance to get her work done."

Mrs. Grant got up and fell to work at her dishes with a brighter face.

"Well, we mustn't give in; perhaps things will be better after a while. I'll make a famous bread pudding, and you can boil some molasses taffy and ask those little Smithsons next door to help you pull it. They won't whine for turkey, I'll be bound. I don't suppose they ever tasted such a thing in all their lives. If I could afford it, I'd have had them all in to dinner with us. That sermon Mr. Evans preached last Sunday kind of stirred me up. He said we ought always to try and share our Christmas joy with some poor souls who had never learned the meaning of the word. I can't do as much as I'd like to. It was different when your father was alive."

The noisy group grew silent as they always did when their father was spoken of. He had died the year before, and since his death the little family had had a hard time. Keith, to hide his feelings, began to hector the rest.

"Mary Alice, do hurry up. Here, you twin nuisances, get off to school. If you don't you'll be late and then the master will give you a whipping."

"He won't," answered the irrepressible Teddy. "He never whips us, he doesn't. He stands us on the floor sometimes, though," he added, remembering the many times his own chubby legs had been seen to better advantage on the school platform.

"That man," said Mrs. Grant, alluding to the teacher, "makes me nervous. He is the most abstracted creature I ever saw in my life. It is a wonder to me he doesn't walk straight into the river some day. You'll meet him meandering along the street, gazing into vacancy, and he'll never see you nor hear a word you say half the time."

"Yesterday," said Gordon, chuckling over the remembrance, "he came in with a big piece of paper he'd picked up on the entry floor in one hand and his hat in the other — and he stuffed his hat into the coalscuttle and hung up the paper on a nail as grave as you please. Never knew the

difference till Ned Slocum went and told him. He's always doing things like that."

Keith had collected his books and now marched his brothers and sisters off to school. Left alone with the baby, Mrs. Grant betook herself to her work with a heavy heart. But a second interruption broke the progress of her dishwashing.

"I declare," she said, with a surprised glance through the window, "if there isn't that absentminded schoolteacher coming through the yard! What can he want? Dear me, I do hope Teddy hasn't been cutting capers in school again."

For the teacher's last call had been in October and had been occasioned by the fact that the irrepressible Teddy would persist in going to school with his pockets filled with live crickets and in driving them harnessed to strings up and down the aisle when the teacher's back was turned. All mild methods of punishment having failed, the teacher had called to talk it over with Mrs. Grant, with the happy result that Teddy's behaviour had improved — in the matter of crickets at least.

But it was about time for another outbreak. Teddy had been unnaturally good for too long a time. Poor Mrs. Grant feared that it was the calm before a storm, and it was with nervous haste that she went to the door and greeted the young teacher.

He was a slight, pale, boyish-looking fellow, with an abstracted, musing look in his large dark eyes. Mrs. Grant noticed with amusement that he wore a white straw hat in spite of the season. His eyes were directed to her face with his usual unseeing gaze.

"Just as though he was looking through me at something a thousand miles away," said Mrs. Grant afterwards. "I believe he was, too. His body was right there on the step before me, but where his soul was is more than you or I or anybody can tell."

"Good morning," he said absently. "I have just called on my way to school with a message from Miss Millar. She wants you all to come up and have Christmas dinner with her tomorrow."

“For the land’s sake!” said Mrs. Grant blankly. “I don’t understand.” To herself she thought, “I wish I dared take him and shake him to find if he’s walking in his sleep or not.”

“You and all the children — every one,” went on the teacher dreamily, as if he were reciting a lesson learned beforehand. “She told me to tell you to be sure and come. Shall I say that you will?”

“Oh, yes, that is — I suppose — I don’t know,” said Mrs. Grant incoherently. “I never expected — yes, you may tell her we’ll come,” she concluded abruptly.

“Thank you,” said the abstracted messenger, gravely lifting his hat and looking squarely through Mrs. Grant into unknown regions. When he had gone Mrs. Grant went in and sat down, laughing in a sort of hysterical way.

“I wonder if it is all right. Could Cornelia really have told him? She must, I suppose, but it is enough to take one’s breath.”

Mrs. Grant and Cornelia Millar were cousins, and had once been the closest of friends, but that was years ago, before some spiteful reports and ill-natured gossip had come between them, making only a little rift at first that soon widened into a chasm of coldness and alienation. Therefore this invitation surprised Mrs. Grant greatly.

Miss Cornelia was a maiden lady of certain years, with a comfortable bank account and a handsome, old-fashioned house on the hill behind the village. She always boarded the schoolteachers and looked after them maternally; she was an active church worker and a tower of strength to struggling ministers and their families.

“If Cornelia has seen fit at last to hold out the hand of reconciliation I’m glad enough to take it. Dear knows, I’ve wanted to make up often enough, but I didn’t think she ever would. We’ve both of us got too much pride and stubbornness. It’s the Turner blood in us that does it. The Turners were all so set. But I mean to do my part now she has done hers.”

And Mrs. Grant made a final attack on the dishes with a beaming face.

When the little Grants came home and heard the news, Teddy stood on his head to express his delight, the twins kissed each other, and Mary Alice and Gordon danced around the kitchen.

Keith thought himself too big to betray any joy over a Christmas dinner, but he whistled while doing the chores until the bare welkin in the yard rang, and Teddy, in spite of unheard of misdemeanours, was not collared off into the porch once.

When the young teacher got home from school that evening he found the yellow house full of all sorts of delectable odours. Miss Cornelia herself was concocting mince pies after the famous family recipe, while her ancient and faithful handmaiden, Hannah, was straining into moulds the cranberry jelly. The open pantry door revealed a tempting array of Christmas delicacies.

“Did you call and invite the Smithsons up to dinner as I told you?” asked Miss Cornelia anxiously.

“Yes,” was the dreamy response as he glided through the kitchen and vanished into the hall.

Miss Cornelia crimped the edges of her pies delicately with a relieved air. “I made certain he’d forget it,” she said. “You just have to watch him as if he were a mere child. Didn’t I catch him yesterday starting off to school in his carpet slippers? And in spite of me he got away today in that ridiculous summer hat. You’d better set that jelly in the out-pantry to cool, Hannah; it looks good. We’ll give those poor little Smithsons a feast for once in their lives if they never get another.”

At this juncture the hall door flew open and Mr. Palmer appeared on the threshold. He seemed considerably agitated and for once his eyes had lost their look of space-searching.

“Miss Millar, I am afraid I did make a mistake this morning — it has just dawned on me. I am almost sure that I called at Mrs. Grant’s and invited her and her family instead of the Smithsons. And she said they would come.”

Miss Cornelia’s face was a study.

“Mr. Palmer,” she said, flourishing her crimping fork tragically, “do you mean to say you went and invited Linda Grant here tomorrow? Linda Grant, of all women in this world!”

“I did,” said the teacher with penitent wretchedness. “It was very careless of me — I am very sorry. What can I do? I’ll go down and tell them I made a mistake if you like.”

“You can’t do that,” groaned Miss Cornelia, sitting down and wrinkling up her forehead in dire perplexity. “It would never do in the world. For pity’s sake, let me think for a minute.”

Miss Cornelia did think — to good purpose evidently, for her forehead smoothed out as her meditations proceeded and her face brightened. Then she got up briskly. “Well, you’ve done it and no mistake. I don’t know that I’m sorry, either. Anyhow, we’ll leave it as it is. But you must go straight down now and invite the Smithsons too. And for pity’s sake, don’t make any more mistakes.”

When he had gone Miss Cornelia opened her heart to Hannah. “I never could have done it myself — never; the Turner is too strong in me. But I’m glad it is done. I’ve been wanting for years to make up with Linda. And now the chance has come, thanks to that blessed blundering boy, I mean to make the most of it. Mind, Hannah, you never whisper a word about its being a mistake. Linda must never know. Poor Linda! She’s had a hard time. Hannah, we must make some more pies, and I must go straight down to the store and get some more Santa Claus stuff; I’ve only got enough to go around the Smithsons.”

When Mrs. Grant and her family arrived at the yellow house next morning Miss Cornelia herself ran out bareheaded to meet them. The two women shook hands a little stiffly and then a rill of long-repressed affection trickled out from some secret spring in Miss Cornelia’s heart and she kissed her new-found old friend tenderly. Linda returned the kiss warmly, and both felt that the old-time friendship was theirs again.

The little Smithsons all came and they and the little Grants sat down on the long bright dining room to a dinner that made history in their small lives, and was eaten over again in happy dreams for months.

How those children did eat! And how beaming Miss Cornelia and grim-faced, softhearted Hannah and even the absentminded teacher himself enjoyed watching them!

After dinner Miss Cornelia distributed among the delighted little souls the presents she had bought for them, and then turned them loose in the big shining kitchen to have a taffy pull — and they had it to their hearts' content! And as for the shocking, taffyfied state into which they got their own rosy faces and that once immaculate domain — well, as Miss Cornelia and Hannah never said one word about it, neither will I.

The four women enjoyed the afternoon in their own way, and the schoolteacher buried himself in algebra to his own great satisfaction.

When her guests went home in the starlit December dusk, Miss Cornelia walked part of the way with them and had a long confidential talk with Mrs. Grant. When she returned it was to find Hannah groaning in and over the kitchen and the schoolteacher dreamily trying to clean some molasses off his boots with the kitchen hairbrush. Long-suffering Miss Cornelia rescued her property and despatched Mr. Palmer into the woodshed to find the shoebrush. Then she sat down and laughed.

“Hannah, what will become of that boy yet? There's no counting on what he'll do next. I don't know how he'll ever get through the world, I'm sure, but I'll look after him while he's here at least. I owe him a huge debt of gratitude for this Christmas blunder. What an awful mess this place is in! But, Hannah, did you ever in the world see anything so delightful as that little Tommy Smithson stuffing himself with plum cake, not to mention Teddy Grant? It did me good just to see them.”

A Strayed Allegiance

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“Will you go to the Cove with me this afternoon?”

It was Marian Lesley who asked the question.

Esterbrook Elliott unpinned with a masterful touch the delicate cluster of Noisette rosebuds she wore at her throat and transferred them to his buttonhole as he answered courteously: “Certainly. My time, as you know, is entirely at your disposal.”

They were standing in the garden under the creamy bloom of drooping acacia trees. One long plume of blossoms touched lightly the soft, golden-brown coils of the girl’s hair and cast a wavering shadow over the beautiful, flowerlike face beneath it.

Esterbrook Elliott, standing before her, thought proudly that he had never seen a woman who might compare with her. In every detail she satisfied his critical, fastidious taste. There was not a discordant touch about her.

Esterbrook Elliott had always loved Marian Lesley — or thought he had. They had grown up together from childhood. He was an only son and she an only daughter. It had always been an understood thing between the two families that the boy and girl should marry. But Marian’s father had decreed that no positive pledge should pass between them until Marian was twenty-one.

Esterbrook accepted his mapped-out destiny and selected bride with the conviction that he was an exceptionally lucky fellow. Out of all the women in the world Marian was the very one whom he would have chosen as mistress of his fine, old home. She had been his boyhood’s ideal. He believed that he loved her sincerely, but he was not too much in love to be blind to the worldly advantages of his marriage with his cousin.

His father had died two years previously, leaving him wealthy and independent. Marian had lost her mother in childhood; her father died

when she was eighteen. Since then she had lived alone with her aunt. Her life was quiet and lonely. Esterbrook's companionship was all that brightened it, but it was enough. Marian lavished on him all the rich, womanly love of her heart. On her twenty-first birthday they were formally betrothed. They were to be married in the following autumn.

No shadow had drifted across the heaven of her happiness. She believed herself secure in her lover's unfaltering devotion. True, at times she thought his manner lacked a lover's passionate ardour. He was always attentive and courteous. She had only to utter a wish to find that it had been anticipated; he spent every spare minute at her side.

Yet sometimes she half wished he would betray more lover-like impatience and intensity. Were all lovers as calm and undemonstrative?

She reproached herself for this incipient disloyalty as often as it vexingly intruded its unwelcome presence across her inner consciousness. Surely Esterbrook was fond and devoted enough to satisfy the most exacting demands of affection. Marian herself was somewhat undemonstrative and reserved. Passing acquaintances called her cold and proud. Only the privileged few knew the rich depths of womanly tenderness in her nature.

Esterbrook thought that he fully appreciated her. As he had walked homeward the night of their betrothal, he had reviewed with unconscious criticism his mental catalogue of Marian's graces and good qualities, admitting, with supreme satisfaction, that there was not one thing about her that he could wish changed.

This afternoon, under the acacias, they had been planning about their wedding. There was no one to consult but themselves.

They were to be married early in September and then go abroad. Esterbrook mapped out the details of their bridal tour with careful thoughtfulness. They would visit all the old-world places that Marian wished to see. Afterwards they would come back home. He discussed certain changes he wished to make in the old Elliott mansion to fit it for a young and beautiful mistress.

He did most of the planning. Marian was content to listen in happy silence. Afterwards she had proposed this walk to the Cove.

“What particular object of charity have you found at the Cove now?” asked Esterbrook, with lazy interest, as they walked along.

“Mrs. Barrett’s little Bessie is very ill with fever,” answered Marian. Then, catching his anxious look, she hastened to add, “It is nothing infectious — some kind of a slow, sapping variety. There is no danger, Esterbrook.”

“I was not afraid for myself,” he replied quietly. “My alarm was for you. You are too precious to me, Marian, for me to permit you to risk health and life, if it were dangerous. What a Lady Bountiful you are to those people at the Cove. When we are married you must take me in hand and teach me your creed of charity. I’m afraid I’ve lived a rather selfish life. You will change all that, dear. You will make a good man of me.”

“You are that now, Esterbrook,” she said softly. “If you were not, I could not love you.”

“It is a negative sort of goodness, I fear. I have never been tried or tempted severely. Perhaps I should fail under the test.”

“I am sure you would not,” answered Marian proudly.

Esterbrook laughed; her faith in him was pleasant. He had no thought but that he would prove worthy of it.

The Cove, so-called, was a little fishing hamlet situated on the low, sandy shore of a small bay. The houses, clustered in one spot, seemed like nothing so much as larger shells washed up by the sea, so grey and bleached were they from long exposure to sea winds and spray.

Dozens of ragged children were playing about them, mingled with several disreputable yellow curs that yapped noisily at the strangers.

Down on the sandy strip of beach below the houses groups of men were lounging about. The mackerel, season had not yet set in; the spring herring netting was past. It was holiday time among the sea folks. They were enjoying it to the full, a happy, ragged colony, careless of what the morrows might bring forth.

Out beyond, the boats were at anchor, floating as gracefully on the twinkling water as sea birds, their tall masts bowing landward on the swell. A lazy, dreamful calm had fallen over the distant seas; the horizon blues were pale and dim; faint purple hazes blurred the outlines of far-off headlands and cliffs; the yellow sands sparkled in the sunshine as if powdered with jewels.

A murmurous babble of life buzzed about the hamlet, pierced through by the shrill undertones of the wrangling children, most of whom had paused in their play to scan the visitors with covert curiosity.

Marian led the way to a house apart from the others at the very edge of the shelving rock. The dooryard was scrupulously clean and uncluttered; the little footpath through it was neatly bordered by white clam shells; several thrifty geraniums in bloom looked out from the muslin-curtained windows.

A weary-faced woman came forward to meet them.

"Bessie's much the same, Miss Lesley," she said, in answer to Marian's inquiry. "The doctor you sent was here today and did all he could for her. He seemed quite hopeful. She don't complain or nothing — just lies there and moans. Sometimes she gets restless. It's very kind of you to come so often, Miss Lesley. Here, Magdalen, will you put this basket the lady's brought up there on the shelf?"

A girl, who had been sitting unnoticed with her back to the visitors, at the head of the child's cot in one corner of the room, stood up and slowly turned around. Marian and Esterbrook Elliott both started with involuntary surprise. Esterbrook caught his breath like a man suddenly awakened from sleep. In the name of all that was wonderful, who or what could this girl be, so little in harmony with her surroundings?

Standing in the crepuscular light of the corner, her marvellous beauty shone out with the vivid richness of some rare painting. She was tall, and the magnificent proportions of her figure were enhanced rather than marred by the severely plain dress of dark print that she wore. The heavy masses of her hair, a shining auburn dashed with golden foam, were coiled in a rich, glossy knot at the back of the classically modelled head and

rippled back from a low brow whose waxen fairness even the breezes of the ocean had spared.

The girl's face was a full, perfect oval, with features of faultless regularity, and the large, full eyes were of tawny hazel, darkened into inscrutable gloom in the dimness of the corner.

Not even Marian Lesley's face was more delicately tinted, but not a trace of colour appeared in the smooth, marble-like cheeks; yet the waxen pallor bore no trace of disease or weakness, and the large, curving mouth was of an intense crimson.

She stood quite motionless. There was no trace of embarrassment or self-consciousness in her pose. When Mrs. Barrett said, "This is my niece, Magdalen Crawford," she merely inclined her head in grave, silent acknowledgement. As she moved forward to take Marian's basket, she seemed oddly out of place in the low, crowded room. Her presence seemed to throw a strange restraint over the group.

Marian rose and went over to the cot, laying her slender hand on the hot forehead of the little sufferer. The child opened its brown eyes questioningly.

"How are you today, Bessie?"

"Mad'len — I want Mad'len," moaned the little plaintive voice.

Magdalen came over and stood beside Marian Lesley.

"She wants me," she said in a low, thrilling voice; free from all harsh accent or intonation. "I am the only one she seems to know always. Yes, darling, Mad'len is here — right beside you. She will not leave you."

She knelt by the little cot and passed her arm under the child's neck, drawing the curly head close to her throat with a tender, soothing motion.

Esterbrook Elliott watched the two women intently — the one standing by the cot, arrayed in simple yet costly apparel, with her beautiful, highbred face, and the other, kneeling on the bare, sanded floor in her print dress, with her splendid head bent low over the child and the long fringe of burnished lashes sweeping the cold pallor of the oval cheek.

From the moment that Magdalen Crawford's haunting eyes had looked straight into his for one fleeting second, an unnamable thrill of pain and

pleasure stirred his heart, a thrill so strong and sudden and passionate that his face paled with emotion; the room seemed to swim before his eyes in a mist out of which gleamed that wonderful face with its mesmeric, darkly radiant eyes, burning their way into deeps and abysses of his soul hitherto unknown to him.

When the mist cleared away and his head grew steadier, he wondered at himself. Yet he trembled in every limb and the only clear idea that struggled out of his confused thoughts was an overmastering desire to take that cold face between his hands and kiss it until its passionless marble glowed into warm and throbbing life.

“Who is that girl?” he said abruptly, when they had left the cottage. “She is the most beautiful woman I have ever seen — present company always excepted,” he concluded, with a depreciatory laugh.

The delicate bloom on Marian’s face deepened slightly.

“You had much better to have omitted that last sentence,” she said quietly, “it was so palpably an afterthought. Yes, she is wonderfully lovely — a strange beauty, I fancied. There seemed something odd and uncanny about it to me. She must be Mrs. Barrett’s niece. I remember that when I was down here about a month ago Mrs. Barrett told me she expected a niece of hers to live with her — for a time at least. Her parents were both dead, the father having died recently. Mrs. Barrett seemed troubled about her. She said that the girl had been well brought up and used to better things than the Cove could give her, and she feared that she would be very discontented and unhappy. I had forgotten all about it until I saw the girl today. She certainly seems to be a very superior person; she will find the Cove very lonely, I am sure. It is not probable she will stay there long. I must see what I can do for her, but her manner seemed rather repellent, don’t you think?”

“Hardly,” responded Esterbrook curtly. “She seemed surprisingly dignified and selfpossessed, I fancied, for a girl in her position. A princess could not have looked and bowed more royally. There was not a shadow of embarrassment in her manner, in spite of the incongruity of her surroundings. You had much better leave her alone, Marian. In all

probability she would resent any condescension on your part. What wonderful, deep, lovely eyes she has.”

Again the sensitive colour flushed Marian’s cheek as his voice lapsed unconsciously into a dreamy, retrospective tone, and a slight restraint came over her manner, which did not depart. Esterbrook went away at sunset. Marian asked him to remain for the evening, but he pleaded some excuse.

“I shall come tomorrow afternoon,” he said, as he stooped to drop a careless goodbye kiss on her face.

Marian watched him wistfully as he rode away, with an unaccountable pain in her heart. She felt more acutely than ever that there were depths in her lover’s nature that she was powerless to stir into responsive life.

Had any other that power? She thought of the girl at the Cove, with her deep eyes and wonderful face. A chill of premonitory fear seized upon her.

“I feel exactly as if Esterbrook had gone away from me forever,” she said slowly to herself, stooping to brush her cheek against a dew-cold, milk-white acacia bloom, “and would never come back to me again. If that could happen, I wonder what there would be left to live for?”

Esterbrook Elliott meant, or honestly thought he meant, to go home when he left Marian. Nevertheless, when he reached the road branching off to the Cove he turned his horse down it with a flush on his dark cheek. He realized that the motive of the action was disloyal to Marian and he felt ashamed of his weakness.

But the desire to see Magdalen Crawford once more and to look into the depths of her eyes was stronger than all else, and overpowered every throb of duty and resistance.

He saw nothing of her when he reached the Cove. He could think of no excuse for calling at the Barrett cottage, so he rode slowly past the hamlet and along the shore.

The sun, red as a smouldering ember, was half buried in the silken violet rim of the sea; the west was a vast lake of saffron and rose and ethereal green, through which floated the curved shallop of a thin new moon, slowly deepening from lustreless white, through gleaming silver,

into burnished gold, and attended by one solitary, pearl-white star. The vast concave of sky above was of violet, infinite and flawless. Far out dusky amethystine islets clustered like gems on the shining breast of the bay. The little pools of water along the low shores glowed like mirrors of polished jacinth. The small, pine-fringed headlands ran out into the water, cutting its lustrous blue expanse like purple wedges.

As Esterbrook turned one of them he saw Magdalen standing out on the point of the next, a short distance away. Her back was towards him, and her splendid figure was outlined darkly against the vivid sky.

Esterbrook sprang from his horse and left the animal standing by itself while he walked swiftly out to her. His heart throbbed suffocatingly. He was conscious of no direct purpose save merely to see her.

She turned when he reached her with a slight start of surprise. His footsteps had made no sound on the tide-rippled sand.

For a few moments they faced each other so, eyes burning into eyes with mute soul-probing and questioning. The sun had disappeared, leaving a stain of fiery red to mark his grave; the weird, radiant light was startlingly vivid and clear. Little crisp puffs and flakes of foam scurried over the point like elfin things. The fresh wind, blowing up the bay, tossed the lustrous rings of hair about Magdalen's pale face; all the routed shadows of the hour had found refuge in her eyes.

Not a trace of colour appeared in her face under Esterbrook Elliott's burning gaze. But when he said "Magdalen!" a single, hot scorch of crimson flamed up into her cheeks protestingly. She lifted her hand with a splendid gesture, but no word passed her lips.

"Magdalen, have you nothing to say to me?" he asked, coming closer to her with an imploring passion in his face never seen by Marian Lesley's eyes. He reached out his hand, but she stepped back from his touch.

"What should I have to say to you?"

"Say that you are glad to see me."

"I am not glad to see you. You have no right to come here. But I knew you would come."

"You knew it? How?"

“Your eyes told me so today. I am not blind — I can see further than those dull fisher folks. Yes, I knew you would come. That is why I came here tonight — so that you would find me alone and I could tell you that you were not to come again.”

“Why must you tell me that, Magdalen?”

“Because, as I have told you, you have no right to come.”

“But if I will not obey you? If I will come in defiance of your prohibition?”

She turned her steady luminous eyes on his pale, set face.

“You would stamp yourself as a madman, then,” she said coldly. “I know that you are Miss Lesley’s promised husband. Therefore, you are either false to her or insulting to me. In either case the companionship of Magdalen Crawford is not what you must seek. Go!”

She turned away from him with an imperious gesture of dismissal. Esterbrook Elliott stepped forward and caught one firm, white wrist.

“I shall not obey you,” he said in a low, intense tone; his fine eyes burned into hers. “You may send me away, but I will come back, again and yet again until you have learned to welcome me. Why should you meet me like an enemy? Why can we not be friends?”

The girl faced him once more.

“Because,” she said proudly, “I am not your equal. There can be no friendship between us. There ought not to be. Magdalen Crawford, the fisherman’s niece, is no companion for you. You will be foolish, as well as disloyal, if you ever try to see me again. Go back to the beautiful, highbred woman you love and forget me. Perhaps you think I am talking strangely. Perhaps you think me bold and unwomanly to speak so plainly to you, a stranger. But there are some circumstances in life when plain-speaking is best. I do not want to see you again. Now, go back to your own world.”

Esterbrook Elliott slowly turned from her and walked in silence back to the shore. In the shadows of the point he stopped to look back at her, standing out like some inspired prophetess against the fiery background of the sunset sky and silver-blue water. The sky overhead was thick-sown with stars; the night breeze was blowing up from its lair in distant, echoing

sea caves. On his right the lights of the Cove twinkled out through the dusk.

“I feel like a coward and a traitor,” he said slowly. “Good God, what is this madness that has come over me? Is this my boasted strength of manhood?”

A moment later the hoof beats of his horse died away up the shore.

Magdalen Crawford lingered on the point until the last dull red faded out into the violet gloom of the June sea dusk, than which nothing can be rarer or diviner, and listened to the moan and murmur of the sea far out over the bay with sorrowful eyes and sternly set lips.

The next day, when the afternoon sun hung hot and heavy over the water, Esterbrook Elliott came again to the Cove. He found it deserted. A rumour of mackerel had come, and every boat had sailed out in the rose-red dawn to the fishing grounds. But down on a strip of sparkling yellow sand he saw Magdalen Crawford standing, her hand on the rope that fastened a small white dory to the fragment of a half-embedded wreck.

She was watching a huddle of gulls clustered on the tip of a narrow, sandy spit running out to the left. She turned at the sound of his hurried footfall behind her. Her face paled slightly, and into the depths of her eyes leapt a passionate, mesmeric glow that faded as quickly as it came.

“You see I have come back in spite of your command, Magdalen.”

“I do see it,” she answered in a gravely troubled voice. “You are a madman who refuses to be warned.”

“Where are you going, Magdalen?” She had loosened the rope from the wreck.

“I am going to row over to Chapel Point for salt. They think the boats will come in tonight loaded with mackerel — look at them away out there by the score — and salt will be needed.”

“Can you row so far alone?”

“Easily. I learned to row long ago — for a pastime then. Since coming here I find it of great service to me.”

She stepped lightly into the tiny shallop and picked up an oar. The brilliant sunshine streamed about her, burnishing the rich tints of her hair

into ruddy gold. She balanced herself to the swaying of the dory with the grace of a sea bird. The man looking at her felt his brain reel.

“Goodbye, Mr. Elliott.”

For answer he sprang into the dory and, snatching an oar, pushed against the old wreck with such energy that the dory shot out from the shore like a foam bell. His sudden spring had set it rocking violently. Magdalen almost lost her footing and caught blindly at his arm. As her fingers closed on his wrist a thrill as of fire shot through his every vein.

“Why have you done this, Mr. Elliott? You must go back.”

“But I will not,” he said masterfully, looking straight into her eyes with an imperiousness that sat well upon him. “I am going to row you over to Chapel Point. I have the oars — I will be master this once, at least.”

For an instant her eyes flashed defiant protest, then drooped before his. A sudden, hot blush crimsoned her pale face. His will had mastered hers; the girl trembled from head to foot, and the proud, sensitive, mouth quivered.

Into the face of the man watching her breathlessly flashed a triumphant, passionate joy. He put out his hand and gently pushed her down into the seat. Sitting opposite, he took up the oars and pulled out over the sheet of sparkling blue water, through which at first the bottom of white sand glimmered wavily but afterwards deepened to translucent, dim depths of greenness.

His heart throbbed tumultuously. Once the thought of Marian drifted across his mind like a chill breath of wind, but it was forgotten when his eyes met Magdalen’s.

“Tell me about yourself, Magdalen,” he said at last, breaking the tremulous, charmed, sparkling silence.

“There is nothing to tell,” she answered with characteristic straightforwardness. “My life has been a very uneventful one. I have never been rich, or very well educated, but — it used to be different from now. I had some chance before — before Father died.”

“You must have found it very lonely and strange when you came here first.”

“Yes. At first I thought I should die — but I do not mind it now. I have made friends with the sea; it has taught me a great deal. There is a kind of inspiration in the sea. When one listens to its never-ceasing murmur afar out there, always sounding at midnight and midday, one’s soul goes out to meet Eternity. Sometimes it gives me so much pleasure that it is almost pain.”

She stopped abruptly.

“I don’t know why I am talking to you like this.”

“You are a strange girl, Magdalen. Have you no other companion than the sea?”

“No. Why should I wish to have? I shall not be here long.”

Elliott’s face contracted with a spasm of pain.

“You are not going away, Magdalen?”

“Yes — in the fall. I have my own living to earn, you know. I am very poor. Uncle and Aunt are very kind, but I cannot consent to burden them any longer than I can help.”

A sigh that was almost a moan broke from Esterbrook Elliott’s lips.

“You must not go away, Magdalen. You must stay here — with me!”

“You forget yourself,” she said proudly. “How dare you speak to me so? Have you forgotten Miss Lesley? Or are you a traitor to us both?”

Esterbrook made no answer. He bowed his pale, miserable face before her, self-condemned.

The breast of the bay sparkled with its countless gems like the breast of a fair woman. The shores were purple and amethystine in the distance. Far out, bluish, phantom-like sails clustered against the pallid horizon. The dory danced like a feather over the ripples. They were close under the shadow of Chapel Point.

Marian Lesley waited in vain for her lover that afternoon. When he came at last in the odorous dusk of the June night she met him on the acacia-shadowed verandah with cold sweetness. Perhaps some subtle woman-instinct whispered to her where and how he had spent the afternoon, for she offered him no kiss, nor did she ask him why he had failed to come sooner.

His eyes lingered on her in the dim light, taking in every detail of her sweet womanly refinement and loveliness, and with difficulty he choked back a groan. Again he asked himself what madness had come over him, and again for an answer rose up the vision of Magdalen Crawford's face as he had seen it that day, crimsoning beneath his gaze.

It was late when he left. Marian watched him out of sight, standing under the acacias. She shivered as with a sudden chill. "I feel as I think Vashti must have felt," she murmured aloud, "when, discrowned and unqueened, she crept out of the gates of Shushan to hide her broken heart. I wonder if Esther has already usurped my sceptre. Has that girl at the Cove, with her pale, priestess-like face and mysterious eyes, stolen his heart from me? Perhaps not, for it may never have been mine. I know that Esterbrook Elliott will be true to the letter of his vows to me, no matter what it may cost him. But I want no pallid shadow of the love that belongs to another. The hour of abdication is at hand, I fear. And what will be left for throneless Vashti then?"

Esterbrook Elliott, walking home through the mocking calm of the night, fought a hard battle with himself.

He was face to face with the truth at last — the bitter knowledge that he had never loved Marian Lesley, save with a fond, brotherly affection, and that he did love Magdalen Crawford with a passion that threatened to sweep before it every vestige of his honour and loyalty.

He had seen her but three times — and his throbbing heart lay in the hollow of her cold white hand.

He shut his eyes and groaned. What madness. What unutterable folly! He was not free — he was bound to another by every cord of honour and self-respect. And, even were he free, Magdalen Crawford would be no fit wife for him — in the eyes of the world, at least. A girl from the Cove — a girl with little education and no social standing — aye! but he loved her.

He groaned again and again in his misery. Afar down the slope the bay waters lay like an inky strip and the distant, murmurous plaint of the sea came out of the stillness of the night; the lights at the Cove glimmered faintly.

In the week that followed he went to the Cove every day. Sometimes he did not see Magdalen; at other times he did. But at the end of the week he had conquered in the bitter, heart-crushing struggle with himself. If he had weakly given way to the first mad sweep of a new passion, the strength of his manhood reasserted itself at last. Faltering and wavering were over, though there was passionate pain in his voice when he said at last, "I am not coming back again, Magdalen."

They were standing in the shadow of the pine-fringed point that ran out to the left of the Cove. They had been walking together along the shore, watching the splendour of the sea sunset that flamed and glowed in the west, where there was a sea of mackerel clouds, crimson and amber tinted, with long, ribbon-like strips of apple-green sky between. They had walked in silence, hand in hand, as children might have done, yet with the stir and throb of a mighty passion seething in their hearts.

Magdalen turned as Esterbrook spoke, and looked at him in a long silence. The bay stretched out before them, tranced and shimmering; a few stars shone down through the gloom of dusk. Right across the translucent greens and roses and blues of the west hung a dark, unsightly cloud, like the blurred outline of a monstrous bat. In the dim, reflected light the girl's mournful face took on a weird, unearthly beauty. She turned her eyes from Esterbrook Elliott's set white face to the radiant gloom of the sea.

"That is best," she answered at last, slowly.

"Best — yes! Better that we had never met! I love you — you know it — words are idle between us. I never loved before — I thought I did. I made a mistake and I must pay the penalty of that mistake. You understand me?"

"I understand," she answered simply.

"I do not excuse myself — I have been weak and cowardly and disloyal. But I have conquered myself — I will be true to the woman to whom I am pledged. You and I must not meet again. I will crush this madness to death. I think I have been delirious ever since that day I saw you first, Magdalen. My brain is clearer now. I see my duty and I mean to

do it at any cost. I dare not trust myself to say more. Magdalen, I have much for which to ask your forgiveness.”

“There is nothing to forgive,” she said steadily. “I have been as much to blame as you. If I had been as resolute as I ought to have been — if I had sent you away the second time as I did the first — this would not have come to pass. I have been weak too, and I deserve to atone for my weakness by suffering. There is only one path open to us. Esterbrook, goodbye.” Her voice quivered with an uncontrollable spasm of pain, but the misty, mournful eyes did not swerve from his. The man stepped forward and caught her in his arms.

“Magdalen, goodbye, my darling. Kiss me once — only once — before I go.”

She loosened his arms and stepped back proudly.

“No! No man kisses my lips unless he is to be my husband. Goodbye, dear.”

He bowed his head silently and went away, looking back not once, else he might have seen her kneeling on the damp sand weeping noiselessly and passionately.

Marian Lesley looked at his pale, determined face the next evening and read it like an open book.

She had grown paler herself; there were purple shadows under the sweet violet eyes that might have hinted of her own sleepless nights.

She greeted him calmly, holding out a steady, white hand of welcome. She saw the traces of the struggle through which he had passed and knew that he had come off victor.

The knowledge made her task a little harder. It would have been easier to let slip the straining cable than to cast it from her when it lay unresistingly in her hand.

For an instant her heart thrilled with an unutterably sweet hope. Might he not forget in time? Need she snap in twain the weakened bond between them after all? Perhaps she might win back her lost sceptre, yet if —

Womanly pride throttled the struggling hope. No divided allegiance, no hollow semblance of queenship for her!

Her opportunity came when Esterbrook asked with grave earnestness if their marriage might not be hastened a little — could he not have his bride in August? For a fleeting second Marian closed her eyes and the slender hands, lying among the laces in her lap, clasped each other convulsively.

Then she said quietly, “Sometimes I have thought, Esterbrook, that it might be better — if we were never married at all.”

Esterbrook turned a startled face upon her.

“Not married at all! Marian, what do you mean?”

“Just what I say. I do not think we are as well suited to each other after all as we have fancied. We have loved each other as brother and sister might — that is all. I think it will be best to be brother and sister forever — nothing more.”

Esterbrook sprang to his feet.

“Marian, do you know what you are saying? You surely cannot have heard — no one could have told you—”

“I have heard nothing,” she interrupted hurriedly. “No one has told me anything. I have only said what I have been thinking of late. I am sure we have made a mistake. It is not too late to remedy it. You will not refuse my request, Esterbrook? You will set me free?”

“Good heavens, Marian!” he said hoarsely. “I cannot realize that you are in earnest. Have you ceased to care for me?” The rigidly locked hands were clasped a little tighter.

“No — I shall always care for you as my friend if you will let me. But I know we could not make each other happy — the time for that has gone by. I would never be satisfied, nor would you. Esterbrook, will you release me from a promise which has become an irksome fetter?”

He looked down on her upturned face mistily. A great joy was surging up in his heart — yet it was mingled with great regret.

He knew — none better — what was passing out of his life, what he was losing when he lost that pure, womanly nature.

“If you really mean this, Marian,” he said slowly, “if you really have come to feel that your truest love is not and never can be mine — that I

cannot make you happy — then there is nothing for me to do but to grant your request. You are free.”

“Thank you, dear,” she said gently, as she stood up.

She slipped his ring from her finger and held it out to him. He took it mechanically. He still felt dazed and unreal.

Marian held out her hand.

“Goodnight, Esterbrook,” she said, a little wearily. “I feel tired. I am glad you see it all in the same light as I do.”

“Marian,” he said earnestly, clasping the outstretched hand, “are you sure that you will be happy — are you sure that you are doing a wise thing?”

“Quite sure,” she answered, with a faint smile. “I am not acting rashly. I have thought it all over carefully. Things are much better so, dear. We will always be friends. Your joys and sorrows will be to me as my own. When another love comes to bless your life, Esterbrook, I will be glad. And now, goodnight. I want to be alone now.”

At the doorway he turned to look back at her, standing in all her sweet stateliness in the twilight duskness, and the keen realization of all he had lost made him bow his head with a quick pang of regret.

Then he went out into the darkness of the summer night.

An hour later he stood alone on the little point where he had parted with Magdalen the night before. A restless night wind was moaning through the pines that fringed the bank behind him; the moon shone down radiantly, turning the calm expanse of the bay into a milk-white sheen.

He took Marian’s ring from his pocket and kissed it reverently. Then he threw it from him far out over the water. For a second the diamond flashed in the moonlight; then, with a tiny splash, it fell among the ripples.

Esterbrook turned his face to the Cove, lying dark and silent in the curve between the crescent headlands. A solitary light glimmered from the low eaves of the Barrett cottage.

Tomorrow, was his unspoken thought, I will be free; to go back to Magdalen.

An Invitation Given on Impulse

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It was a gloomy Saturday morning. The trees in the Oaklawn grounds were tossing wildly in the gusts of wind, and sodden brown leaves were blown up against the windows of the library, where a score of girls were waiting for the principal to bring the mail in.

The big room echoed with the pleasant sound of girlish voices and low laughter, for in a fortnight school would close for the holidays, and they were all talking about their plans and anticipations.

Only Ruth Mannering was, as usual, sitting by herself near one of the windows, looking out on the misty lawn. She was a pale, slender girl, with a sad face, and was dressed in rather shabby black. She had no special friend at Oaklawn, and the other girls did not know much about her. If they had thought about it at all, they would probably have decided that they did not like her; but for the most part they simply overlooked her.

This was not altogether their fault. Ruth was poor and apparently friendless, but it was not her poverty that was against her. Lou Scott, who was “as poor as a church mouse,” to quote her own frank admission, was the most popular girl in the seminary, the boon companion of the richest girls, and in demand with everybody. But Lou was jolly and frank and offhanded, while Ruth was painfully shy and reserved, and that was the secret of the whole matter.

There was “no fun in her,” the girls said, and so it came about that she was left out of their social life, and was almost as solitary at Oaklawn as if she had been the only girl there. She was there for the special purpose of studying music, and expected to earn her own living by teaching it when she left. She believed that the girls looked down on her on this account; this was unjust, of course, but Ruth had no idea how much her own coldness and reserve had worked against her.

Across the room Carol Golden was, as usual, the centre of an animated group; Golden Carol as her particular friends sometimes called her, partly because of her beautiful voice, and partly because of her wonderful fleece of golden hair. Carol was one of the seminary pets, and seemed to Ruth Mannering to have everything that she had not.

Presently the mail was brought in, and there was a rush to the table, followed by exclamations of satisfaction or disappointment. In a few minutes the room was almost deserted. Only two girls remained: Carol Golden, who had dropped into a big chair to read her many letters; and Ruth Mannering, who had not received any and had gone silently back to her part of the window.

Presently Carol gave a little cry of delight. Her mother had written that she might invite any friend she wished home with her to spend the holidays. Carol had asked for this permission, and now that it had come was ready to dance for joy. As to whom she would ask, there could be only one answer to that. Of course it must be her particular friend, Maud Russell, who was the cleverest and prettiest girl at Oaklawn, at least so her admirers said. She was undoubtedly the richest, and was the acknowledged "leader." The girls affectionately called her "Princess," and Carol adored her with that romantic affection that is found only among school girls. She knew, too, that Maud would surely accept her invitation because she did not intend to go home. Her parents were travelling in Europe, and she expected to spend her holidays with some cousins, who were almost strangers to her.

Carol was so much pleased that she felt as if she must talk to somebody, so she turned to Ruth.

"Isn't it delightful to think that we'll all be going home in a fortnight?"

"Yes, very — for those that have homes to go to," said Ruth drearily.

Carol felt a quick pang of pity and self-reproach. "Haven't you?" she asked.

Ruth shook her head. In spite of herself, the kindness of Carol's tone brought the tears to her eyes.

“My mother died a year ago,” she said in a trembling voice, “and since then I have had no real home. We were quite alone in the world, Mother and I, and now I have nobody.”

“Oh, I’m so sorry for you,” cried Carol impulsively. She leaned forward and took Ruth’s hand in a gentle way. “And do you mean to say that you’ll have to stay here all through the holidays? Why, it will be horrid.”

“Oh, I shall not mind it much,” said Ruth quickly, “with study and practice most of the time. Only now, when everyone is talking about it, it makes me wish that I had some place to go.”

Carol dropped Ruth’s hand suddenly in the shock of a sudden idea that darted into her mind.

A stray girl passing through the hall called out, “Ruth, Miss Siviter wishes to see you about something in Room C.”

Ruth got up quickly. She was glad to get away, for it seemed to her that in another minute she would break down altogether.

Carol Golden hardly noticed her departure. She gathered up her letters and went abstractedly to her room, unheeding a gay call for “Golden Carol” from a group of girls in the corridor. Maud Russell was not in and Carol was glad. She wanted to be alone and fight down that sudden idea.

“It is ridiculous to think of it,” she said aloud, with a petulance very unusual in Golden Carol, whose disposition was as sunny as her looks. “Why, I simply cannot. I have always been longing to ask Maud to visit me, and now that the chance has come I am not going to throw it away. I am very sorry for Ruth, of course. It must be dreadful to be all alone like that. But it isn’t my fault. And she is so fearfully quiet and dowdy — what would they all think of her at home? Frank and Jack would make such fun of her. I shall ask Maud just as soon as she comes in.”

Maud did come in presently, but Carol did not give her the invitation. Instead, she was almost snappish to her idol, and the Princess soon went out again in something of a huff.

“Oh, dear,” cried Carol, “now I’ve offended her. What has got into me? What a disagreeable thing a conscience is, although I’m sure I don’t know

why mine should be prodding me so! I don't want to invite Ruth Mannering home with me for the holidays, but I feel exactly as if I should not have a minute's peace of mind all the time if I didn't. Mother would think it all right, of course. She would not mind if Ruth dressed in calico and never said anything but yes and no. But how the boys would laugh! I simply won't do it, conscience or no conscience."

In view of this decision it was rather strange that the next morning, Carol Golden went down to Ruth Mannering's lonely little room on Corridor Two and said, "Ruth, will you go home with me for the holidays? Mother wrote me to invite anyone I wished to. Don't say you can't come, dear, because you must."

Carol never, as long as she lived, forgot Ruth's face at that moment.

"It was absolutely transfigured," she said afterwards. "I never saw anyone look so happy in my life."

A fortnight later unwonted silence reigned at Oaklawn. The girls were scattered far and wide, and Ruth Mannering and Carol Golden were at the latter's home.

Carol was a very much surprised girl. Under the influence of kindness and pleasure Ruth seemed transformed into a different person. Her shyness and reserve melted away in the sunny atmosphere of the Golden home. Mrs. Golden took her into her motherly heart at once; and as for Frank and Jack, whose verdict Carol had so dreaded, they voted Ruth "splendid." She certainly got along very well with them; and if she did not make the social sensation that pretty Maud Russell might have made, the Goldenes all liked her and Carol was content.

"Just four days more," sighed Carol one afternoon, "and then we must go back to Oaklawn. Can you realize it, Ruth?"

Ruth looked up from her book with a smile. Even in appearance she had changed. There was a faint pink in her cheeks and a merry light in her eyes.

"I shall not be sorry to go back to work," she said. "I feel just like it because I have had so pleasant a time here that it has heartened me up for

next term. I think it will be very different from last. I begin to see that I kept to myself too much and brooded over fancied slights."

"And then you are to room with me since Maud is not coming back," said Carol. "What fun we shall have. Did you ever toast marshmallows over the gas? Why, I declare, there is Mr. Swift coming up the walk. Look, Ruth! He is the richest man in Westleigh."

Ruth peeped out of the window over Carol's shoulder.

"He reminds me of somebody," she said absently, "but I can't think who it is. Of course, I have never seen him before. What a good face he has!"

"He is as good as he looks," said Carol, enthusiastically. "Next to Father, Mr. Swift is the nicest man in the world. I have always been quite a pet of his. His wife is dead, and so is his only daughter. She was a lovely girl and died only two years ago. It nearly broke Mr. Swift's heart. And he has lived alone ever since in that great big house up at the head of Warner Street, the one you admired so, Ruth, the last time we were uptown. There's the bell for the second time, Mary can't have heard it. I'll go myself."

As Carol showed the caller into the room, Ruth rose to leave and thus came face to face with him. Mr. Swift started perceptibly.

"Mr. Swift, this is my school friend, Miss Mannering," said Carol.

Mr. Swift seemed strangely agitated as he took Ruth's timidly offered hand.

"My dear young lady," he said hurriedly, "I am going to ask you what may seem a very strange question. What was your mother's name?"

"Agnes Hastings," answered Ruth in surprise. And then Carol really thought that Mr. Swift had gone crazy, for he drew Ruth into his arms and kissed her.

"I knew it," he said. "I was sure you were Agnes' daughter, for you are the living image of what she was when I last saw her. Child, you don't know me, but I am your Uncle Robert. Your mother was my half-sister."

"Oh, Mr. Swift!" cried Carol, and then she ran for her mother.

Ruth turned pale and dropped into a chair, and Mr. Swift sat down beside her.

“To think that I have found you at last, child. How puzzled you look. Did your mother never speak of me? How is she? Where is she?”

“Mother died last year,” said Ruth.

“Poor Agnes! And I never knew! Don’t cry, little girl. I want you to tell me all about it. She was much younger than I was, and when our mother died my stepfather went away and took her with him. I remained with my father’s people and eventually lost all trace of my sister. I was a poor boy then, but things have looked up with me and I have often tried to find her.”

By this time Carol had returned with her father and mother, and there was a scene — laughing, crying, explaining — and I don’t really know which of the two girls was the more excited, Carol or Ruth. As for Mr. Swift, he was overjoyed to find his niece and wanted to carry her off with him then and there, but Mrs. Golden insisted on her finishing her visit. When the question of returning to Oaklawn came up, Mr. Swift would not hear of it at first, but finally yielded to Carol’s entreaties and Ruth’s own desire.

“I shall graduate next year, Uncle, and then I can come back to you for good.”

That evening when Ruth was alone in her room, trying to collect her thoughts and realize that the home and love that she had so craved were really to be hers at last, Golden Carol was with her mother in the room below, talking it all over.

“Just think, Mother, if I had not asked Ruth to come here, this would not have happened. And I didn’t want to, I wanted to ask Maud so much, and I was dreadfully disappointed when I couldn’t — for I really couldn’t. I could not help remembering the look in Ruth’s eyes when she said that she had no home to go to, and so I asked her instead of Maud. How dreadful it would have been if I hadn’t.”

Detected by the Camera

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One summer I was attacked by the craze for amateur photography. It became chronic afterwards, and I and my camera have never since been parted. We have had some odd adventures together, and one of the most novel of our experiences was that in which we played the part of chief witness against Ned Brooke.

I may say that my name is Amy Clarke, and that I believe I am considered the best amateur photographer in our part of the country. That is all I need tell you about myself.

Mr. Carroll had asked me to photograph his place for him when the apple orchards were in bloom. He has a picturesque old-fashioned country house behind a lawn of the most delightful old trees and flanked on each side by the orchards. So I went one June afternoon, with all my accoutrements, prepared to “take” the Carroll establishment in my best style.

Mr. Carroll was away but was expected home soon, so we waited for him, as all the family wished to be photographed under the big maple at the front door. I prowled around among the shrubbery at the lower end of the lawn and, after a great deal of squinting from various angles, I at last fixed upon the spot from which I thought the best view of the house might be obtained. Then Gertie and Lilian Carroll and I got into the hammocks and swung at our leisure, enjoying the cool breeze sweeping through the maples.

Ned Brooke was hanging around as usual, watching us furtively. Ned was one of the hopeful members of a family that lived in a tumbledown shanty just across the road from the Carrolls. They were wretchedly poor, and old Brooke, as he was called, and Ned were employed a good deal by Mr. Carroll — more out of charity than anything else, I fancy.

The Brookes had a rather shady reputation. They were notoriously lazy, and it was suspected that their line of distinction between their own and their neighbours' goods was not very clearly drawn. Many people censured Mr. Carroll for encouraging them at all, but he was too kindhearted to let them suffer actual want and, as a consequence, one or the other of them was always dodging about his place.

Ned was a lank, tow-headed youth of about fourteen, with shifty, twinkling eyes that could never look you straight in the face. His appearance was anything but prepossessing, and I always felt, when I looked at him, that if anyone wanted to do a piece of shady work by proxy, Ned Brooke would be the very lad for the business.

Mr. Carroll came at last, and we all went down to meet him at the gate. Ned Brooke also came shuffling along to take the horse, and Mr. Carroll tossed the reins to him and at the same time handed a pocketbook to his wife.

"Just as well to be careful where you put that," he said laughingly. "There's a sum in it not to be picked up on every gooseberry bush. Gilman Harris paid me this morning for that bit of woodland I sold him last fall — five hundred dollars. I promised that you and the girls should have it to get a new piano, so there it is for you."

"Thank you," said Mrs. Carroll delightedly. "However, you'd better put it back in your pocket till we go in. Amy is in a hurry."

Mr. Carroll took back the pocketbook and dropped it carelessly into the inside pocket of the light overcoat that he wore.

I happened to glance at Ned Brooke just then, and I could not help noticing the sudden crafty, eager expression that flashed over his face. He eyed the pocketbook in Mr. Carroll's hands furtively, after which he went off with the horse in a great hurry.

The girls were exclaiming and thanking their father, and nobody noticed Ned Brooke's behaviour but myself, and it soon passed out of my mind.

"Come to take the place, are you, Amy?" said Mr. Carroll. "Well, everything is ready, I think. I suppose we'd better proceed. Where shall we

stand? You had better group us as you think best.”

Whereupon I proceeded to arrange them in due order under the maple. Mrs. Carroll sat in a chair, while her husband stood behind her. Gertie stood on the steps with a basket of flowers in her hand, and Lilian was at one side. The two little boys, Teddy and Jack, climbed up into the maple, and little Dora, the dimpled six-year-old, stood gravely in the foreground with an enormous grey cat hugged in her chubby arms.

It was a pretty group in a pretty setting, and I thrilled with professional pride as I stepped back for a final, knowing squint at it all. Then I went to my camera, slipped in the plate, gave them due warning and took off the cap.

I took two plates to make sure and then the thing was over, but as I had another plate left I thought I might as well take a view of the house by itself, so I carried my camera to a new place and had just got everything ready to lift the cap when Mr. Carroll came down and said:

“If you girls want to see something pretty, come to the back field with me. That will wait till you come back, won’t it, Amy?”

So we all betook ourselves to the back field, a short distance away, where Mr. Carroll proudly displayed two of the prettiest little Jersey cows I had ever seen.

We returned to the house by way of the back lane and, as we came in sight of the main road, my brother Cecil drove up and said that if I were ready, I had better go home with him and save myself a hot, dusty walk.

The Carrolls all went down to the fence to speak to Cecil, but I dashed hurriedly down through the orchard, leaped over the fence into the lawn and ran to the somewhat remote corner where I had left my camera. I was in a desperate hurry, for I knew Cecil’s horse did not like to be kept waiting, so I never even glanced at the house, but snatched off the cap, counted two and replaced it.

Then I took out my plate, put it in the holder and gathered up my traps. I suppose I was about five minutes at it all and I had my back to the house the whole time, and when I laid all my things ready and emerged from my retreat, there was nobody to be seen about the place.

As I hurried up through the lawn, I noticed Ned Brooke walking at a smart pace down the lane, but the fact did not make any particular impression on me at the time, and was not recalled until afterwards.

Cecil was waiting for me, so I got in the buggy and we drove off. On arriving home I shut myself up in my dark room and proceeded to develop the first two negatives of the Carroll housestead. They were both excellent, the first one being a trifle the better, so that I decided to finish from it. I intended also to develop the third, but just as I finished the others, a half-dozen city cousins swooped down upon us and I had to put away my paraphernalia, emerge from my dark retreat and fly around to entertain them.

The next day Cecil came in and said:

“Did you hear, Amy, that Mr. Carroll has lost a pocketbook with five hundred dollars in it?”

“No!” I exclaimed. “How? When? Where?”

“Don’t overwhelm a fellow. I can answer only one question — last night. As to the ‘how,’ they don’t know, and as to the ‘where’ — well, if they knew that, there might be some hope of finding it. The girls are in a bad way. The money was to get them their longed-for piano, it seems, and now it’s gone.”

“But how did it happen, Cecil?”

“Well, Mr. Carroll says that Mrs. Carroll handed the pocketbook back to him at the gate yesterday, and he dropped it in the inside pocket of his overcoat—”

“I saw him do it,” I cried.

“Yes, and then, before he went to be photographed, he hung his coat up in the hall. It hung there until the evening, and nobody seems to have thought about the money, each supposing that someone else had put it carefully away. After tea Mr. Carroll put on the coat and went to see somebody over at Netherby. He says the thought of the pocketbook never crossed his mind; he had forgotten all about putting it in that coat pocket. He came home across the fields about eleven o’clock and found that the cows had broken into the clover hay, and he had a great chase before he got

them out. When he went in, just as he entered the door, the remembrance of the money flashed over him. He felt in his pocket, but there was no pocketbook there; he asked his wife if she had taken it out. She had not, and nobody else had. There was a hole in the pocket, but Mr. Carroll says it was too small for the pocketbook to have worked through. However, it must have done so — unless someone took it out of his pocket at Netherby, and that is not possible, because he never had his coat off, and it was in an inside pocket. It's not likely that they will ever see it again. Someone may pick it up, of course, but the chances are slim. Mr. Carroll doesn't know his exact path across the fields, and if he lost it while he was after the cows, it's a bluer show still. They've been searching all day, of course. The girls are awfully disappointed."

A sudden recollection came to me of Ned Brooke's face as I had seen it the day before at the gate, coupled with the remembrance of seeing him walking down the lane at a quick pace, so unlike his usual shambling gait, while I ran through the lawn.

"How do they know it was lost?" I said. "Perhaps it was stolen before Mr. Carroll went to Netherby."

"They think not," said Cecil. "Who would have stolen it?"

"Ned Brooke. I saw him hanging around. And you never saw such a look as came over his face when he heard Mr. Carroll say there was five hundred dollars in that pocketbook."

"Well, I did suggest to them that Ned might know something about it, for I remembered having seen him go down the lane while I was waiting for you, but they won't hear of such a thing. The Brookes are kind of protégés of theirs, you know, and they won't believe anything bad of them. If Ned did take it, however, there's not a shadow of evidence against him."

"No, I suppose not," I answered thoughtfully, "but the more I think it over, the more I'm convinced that he took it. You know, we all went to the back field to look at the Jerseys, and all that time the coat was hanging there in the hall, and not a soul in the house. And it was just after we came back that I saw Ned scuttling down the lane so fast."

I mentioned my suspicions to the Carrolls a few days afterwards, when I went down with the photographs, and found that they had discovered no trace of the lost pocketbook. But they seemed positively angry when I hinted that Ned Brooke might know more about its whereabouts than anyone else. They declared that they would as soon think of suspecting one of themselves as Ned, and altogether they seemed so offended at my suggestion that I held my peace and didn't irritate them by any more suppositions.

Afterwards, in the excitement of our cousins' visit, the matter passed out of my mind completely. They stayed two weeks, and I was so busy the whole time that I never got a chance to develop that third plate and, in fact, I had forgotten all about it.

One morning soon after they went away, I remembered the plate and decided to go and develop it. Cecil went with me, and we shut ourselves up in our den, lit our ruby lantern and began operations. I did not expect much of the plate, because it had been exposed and handled carelessly, and I thought that it might prove to be underexposed or light-struck. So I left Cecil to develop it while I prepared the fixing bath. Cecil was whistling away when suddenly he gave a tremendous "whew" of astonishment and sprang to his feet.

"Amy, Amy, look here!" he cried.

I rushed to his side and looked at the plate as he held it up in the rosy light. It was a splendid one, and the Carroll house came out clear, with the front door and the steps in full view.

And there, just in the act of stepping from the threshold, was the figure of a boy with an old straw hat on his head and — in his hand — the pocketbook!

He was standing with his head turned towards the corner of the house as if listening, with one hand holding his ragged coat open and the other poised in mid-air with the pocketbook, as if he were just going to put it in his inside pocket. The whole scene was as clear as noonday, and nobody with eyes in his head could have failed to recognize Ned Brooke.

"Goodness!" I gasped. "In with it — quick!"

And we doused the thing into the fixing bath and then sat down breathlessly and looked at each other.

“I say, Amy,” said Cecil, “what a sell this will be on the Carrolls! Ned Brooke couldn’t do such a thing — oh, no! The poor injured boy at whom everyone has such an unlawful pick! I wonder if this will convince them.”

“Do you think they can get it all back?” I asked. “It’s not likely he would have dared to use any of it yet.”

“I don’t know. We’ll have a try, anyhow. How long before this plate will be dry enough to carry down to the Carrolls as circumstantial evidence?”

“Three hours or thereabouts,” I answered, “but perhaps sooner. I’ll take two prints off when it is ready. I wonder what the Carrolls will say.”

“It’s a piece of pure luck that the plate should have turned out so well after the slap-dash way in which it was taken and used. I say, Amy, isn’t this quite an adventure?”

At last the plate was dry, and I printed two proofs. We wrapped them up carefully and marched down to Mr. Carroll’s.

You never saw people so overcome with astonishment as the Carrolls were when Cecil, with the air of a statesman unfolding the evidence of some dreadful conspiracy against the peace and welfare of the nation, produced the plate and the proofs, and held them out before them.

Mr. Carroll and Cecil took the proofs and went over to the Brooke shanty. They found only Ned and his mother at home. At first Ned, when taxed with his guilt, denied it, but when Mr. Carroll confronted him with the proofs, he broke down in a spasm of terror and confessed all. His mother produced the pocketbook and the money — they had not dared to spend a single cent of it — and Mr. Carroll went home in triumph.

Perhaps Ned Brooke ought not to have been let off so easily as he was, but his mother cried and pleaded, and Mr. Carroll was too kindhearted to resist. So he did not punish them at all, save by utterly discarding the whole family and their concerns. The place got too hot for them after the story came out, and in less than a month all moved away — much to the benefit of Mapleton.

In Spite of Myself

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My trunk was packed and I had arranged with my senior partner — I was the junior member of a law firm — for a month's vacation. Aunt Lucy had written that her husband had gone on a sea trip and she wished me to superintend the business of his farm and mills in his absence, if I could arrange to do so. She added that "Gussie" thought it was a pity to trouble me, and wanted to do the overseeing herself, but that she — Aunt Lucy — preferred to have a man at the head of affairs.

I had never seen my step-cousin, Augusta Ashley, but I knew, from Aunt Lucy's remarks concerning her, pretty much what sort of person she was — just the precise kind I disliked immeasurably. I had no idea what her age was, but doubtless she was over thirty, tall, determined, aggressive, with a "faculty" for managing, a sharp, probing nose, and a y-formation between her eyebrows. I knew the type, and I was assured that the period of sojourn with my respected aunt would be one of strife between Miss Ashley and myself.

I wrote to Aunt Lucy to expect me, made all necessary arrangements, and went to bid Nellie goodbye. I had made up my mind to marry Nellie. I had never openly avowed myself her suitor, but we were cousins, and had grown up together, so that I knew her well enough to be sure of my ground. I liked her so well that it was easy to persuade myself that I was in love with her. She more nearly fulfilled the requirements of my ideal wife than anyone I knew. She was pleasant to look upon, without being distractingly pretty; small and fair and womanly. She dressed nicely, sang and played agreeably, danced well, and had a cheerful, affectionate disposition. She was not alarmingly clever, had no "hobbies," and looked up to me as heir to all the wisdom of the ages — what man does not like to be thought clever and brilliant? I had no formidable rival, and our families were anxious for the match. I considered myself a lucky fellow. I felt that I

would be very lonely without Nellie when I was away, and she admitted frankly that she would miss me awfully. She looked so sweet that I was on the point of asking her then and there to marry me. Well, fate interfered in the guise of a small brother, so I said goodbye and left, mentally comparing her to my idea of Miss Augusta Ashley, much to the latter's disadvantage.

When I stepped from the train at a sleepy country station next day I was promptly waylaid by a black-eyed urchin who informed me that Mrs. Ashley had sent him with an express wagon for my luggage, and that "Miss Gussie" was waiting with the carriage at the store, pointing down to a small building before whose door a girl was trying to soothe her frightened horse.

As I went down the slope towards her I noticed she was tall — quite too tall for my taste. I dislike women who can look into my eyes on a level — but I had to admit that her form was remarkably symmetrical and graceful. She put out her hand — it was ungloved and large, but white and firm, with a cool, pleasant touch — and said, with a composure akin to indifference, "Mr. Carslake, I presume. Mother could not come to meet you, so she sent me. Will you be kind enough to hold my horse for a few minutes? I want to get something in the store." Whereupon she calmly transferred the reins to me and disappeared.

At the time she certainly did not impress me as pretty, yet neither could I call her plain. Taken separately, her features were good. Her nose was large and straight, the mouth also a trifle large but firm and red, the brow wide and white, shadowed by a straying dash of brown curl or two. She had a certain cool, statuesque paleness, accentuated by straight, fine, black brows, and her eyes were a bluish grey; but the pupils, as I afterward found out, had a trick of dilating into wells of blackness which, added to a long fringe of very dark lashes, made her eyes quite the most striking feature of her face. Her expression was open and frank, and her voice clear and musical without being sweet. She looked about twenty-two.

At the time I did not fancy her appearance and made a mental note to the effect that I would never like Miss Ashley. I had no use for cool,

businesslike women — women should have no concern with business. Nellie would never have troubled her dear, curly head over it.

Miss Ashley came out with her arms full of packages, stowed them away in the carriage, got in, told me which road to take, and did not again speak till we were out of the village and driving along a pretty country lane, arched over with crimson maples and golden-brown beeches. The purplish haze of a sunny autumn day mellowed over the fields, and the bunch of golden rod at my companion's belt was akin to the plumed ranks along the fences. I hazarded the remark that it was a fine day; Miss Ashley gravely admitted that it was. Then a deep smile seemed to rise somewhere in her eyes and creep over her face, discovering a dimple here and there as it proceeded.

“Don't let's talk about the weather — the subject is rather stale,” she said. “I suppose you are wondering why on earth Mother had to drag you away out here. I tried to show her how foolish it was, but I didn't succeed. Mother thinks there must be a man at the head of affairs or they'll never go right. I could have taken full charge easily enough; I haven't been Father's ‘boy’ all my life for nothing. There was no need to take you away from your business.”

I protested. I said I was going to take a vacation anyway, and business was not pressing just then. I also hinted that, while I had no doubt of her capacity, she might have found the duties of superintendent rather arduous.

“Not at all,” she said, with a serenity that made me groan inwardly. “I like it. Father always said I was a born business manager. You'll find Ashley's Mills very quiet, I'm afraid. It's a sort of charmed Sleepy Hollow. See, there's home,” as we turned a maple-blazoned corner and looked from the crest of one hill across to that of another. “Home” was a big, white, green-shuttered house buried amid a riot of autumn colour, with a big grove of dark green spruces at the back. Below them was a glimpse of a dark blue mill pond and beyond it long sweeps of golden-brown meadow land, sloping up till they dimmed in horizon mists of pearl and purple.

“How pretty,” I exclaimed admiringly.

“Isn’t it?” said Gussie proudly. “I love it.” Her pupils dilated into dark pools, and I rather unwillingly admitted that Miss Ashley was a fine-looking girl.

As we drove up Aunt Lucy was standing on the steps of the verandah, over whose white roof trailed a luxuriant creeper, its leaves tinged by October frosts into lovely wine reds and tawny yellows. Gussie sprang out, barely touching my offered hand with her fingertips.

“There’s Mother waiting to pounce on you and hear all the family news,” she said, “so go and greet her like a dutiful nephew.”

“I must take out your horse for you first,” I said politely.

“Not at all,” said Miss Ashley, taking the reins from my hands in a way not to be disputed. “I always unharness Charley myself. No one understands him half so well. Besides, I’m used to it. Didn’t I tell you I’d always been Father’s boy?”

“I well believe it,” I thought in disgust, as she led the horse over to the well and I went up to Aunt Lucy. Through the sitting-room windows I kept a watchful eye on Miss Ashley as she watered and deftly unharnessed Charley and led him into his stable with sundry pats on his nose. Then I saw no more of her till she came in to tell us tea was ready, and led the way out to the dining room.

It was evident Miss Gussie held the reins of household government, and no doubt worthily. Those firm, capable white hands of hers looked as though they might be equal to a good many emergencies. She talked little, leaving the conversation to Aunt Lucy and myself, though she occasionally dropped in an apt word. Toward the end of the meal, however, she caught hold of an unfortunate opinion I had incautiously advanced and tore it into tatters. The result was a spirited argument, in which Miss Gussie held her own with such ability that I was utterly routed and found another grievance against her. It was very humiliating to be worsted by a girl — a country girl at that, who had passed most of her life on a farm! No doubt she was strong-minded and wanted to vote. I was quite prepared to believe anything of her.

After tea Miss Ashley proposed a walk around the premises, in order to initiate me into my duties. Apart from his farm, Mr. Ashley owned large grist-and sawmills and did a flourishing business, with the details of which Miss Gussie seemed so conversant that I lost all doubt of her ability to run the whole thing as she had claimed. I felt quite ignorant in the light of her superior knowledge, and our walk was enlivened by some rather too lively discussions between us. We walked about together, however, till the shadows of the firs by the mills stretched nearly across the pond and the white moon began to put on a silvery burnish. Then we wound up by a bitter dispute, during which Gussie's eyes were very black and each cheek had a round, red stain on it. She had a little air of triumph at having defeated me.

"I have to go now and see about putting away the milk, and I dare say you're not sorry to be rid of me," she said, with a demureness I had not credited her with, "but if you come to the verandah in half an hour I'll bring you out a glass of new milk and some pound cake I made today by a recipe that's been in the family for one hundred years, and I hope it will choke you for all the snubs you've been giving me." She walked away after this amiable wish, and I stood by the pond till the salmon tints faded from its waters and stars began to mirror themselves brokenly in its ripples. The mellow air was full of sweet, mingled eventide sounds as I walked back to the house. Aunt Lucy was knitting on the verandah. Gussie brought out cake and milk and chatted to us while we ate, in an inconsequent girlish way, or fed bits of cake to a green-eyed goblin in the likeness of a black cat.

She appeared in such an amiable light that I was half inclined to reconsider my opinion of her. When I went to my room the vase full of crimson leaves on my table suggested Gussie, and I repented of my unfriendliness for a moment — and only for a moment. Gussie and her mother passed through the hall below, and Aunt Lucy's soft voice floated up through my half-open door.

"Well, how do you like your cousin, my dear?"

Whereat that decided young lady promptly answered, "I think he is the most conceited youth I've met for some time."

Pleasant, wasn't it? I thought of Nellie's meek admiration of all my words and ways, and got her photo out to soothe my vanity. For the first time it struck me that her features were somewhat insipid. The thought seemed like disloyalty, so I banished it and went to bed.

I expected to dream of that disagreeable Gussie, but I did not, and I slept so soundly that it was ten o'clock the next morning before I woke. I sprang out of bed in dismay, dressed hastily, and ran down, not a little provoked at myself. Through the window I saw Gussie in the garden digging up some geraniums. She was enveloped in a clay-stained brown apron, a big flapping straw hat half hid her face, and she wore a pair of muddy old kid gloves. Her whole appearance was disreputable, and the face she turned to me as I said "Good morning" had a diagonal streak of clay across it. I added slovenliness to my already long list of her demerits.

"Good afternoon, rather. Don't you know what time it is? The men were here three hours ago for their orders. I thought it a pity to disturb your peaceful dreams, so I gave them myself and sent them off."

I was angrier than ever. A nice beginning I had made. And was that girl laughing at me?

"I expected to be called in time, certainly," I said stiffly. "I am not accustomed to oversleep myself. I promise it will not occur again."

My dignity was quite lost on Gussie. She peeled off her gloves cheerfully and said, "I suppose you'd like some breakfast. Just wait till I wash my hands and I'll get you some. Then if you're pining to be useful you can help me take up these geraniums."

There was no help for it. After I had breakfasted I went, with many misgivings. We got on fairly well, however. Gussie was particularly lively and kept me too busy for argument. I quite enjoyed the time and we did not quarrel until nearly the last, when we fell out bitterly over some horticultural problem and went in to dinner in sulky silence. Gussie disappeared after dinner and I saw no more of her. I was glad of this, but after a time I began to find it a little dull. Even a dispute would have been

livelier. I visited the mills, looked over the farm, and then carelessly asked Aunt Lucy where Miss Ashley was. Aunt Lucy replied that she had gone to visit a friend and would not be back till the next day.

This was satisfactory, of course, highly so. What a relief it was to be rid of that girl with her self-assertiveness and independence. I said to myself that I hoped her friend would keep her for a week. I forgot to be disappointed that she had not when, next afternoon, I saw Gussie coming in at the gate with a tolerably large satchel and an armful of golden rod. I sauntered down to relieve her, and we had a sharp argument under way before we were halfway up the lane. As usual Gussie refused to give in that she was wrong.

Her walk had brought a faint, clear tint to her cheeks and her rippling dusky hair had half slipped down on her neck. She said she had to make some cookies for tea and if I had nothing better to do I might go and talk to her while she mixed them. It was not a gracious invitation but I went, rather than be left to my own company.

By the end of the week I was as much at home at Ashley Mills as if I had lived there all my life. Gussie and I were thrown together a good deal, for lack of other companions, and I saw no reason to change my opinion of her. She could be lively and entertaining when she chose, and at times she might be called beautiful. Still, I did not approve of her — at least I thought so, most of the time. Once in a while came a state of feeling which I did not quite understand.

One evening I went to prayer meeting with Aunt Lucy and Gussie. I had not seen the minister of Ashley Mills before, though Gussie and her mother seemed to know him intimately. I had an idea that he was old and silvery-haired and benevolent-looking. So I was rather surprised to find him as young as myself — a tall, pale, intellectual-looking man, with a high, white brow and dark, earnest eyes — decidedly attractive.

I was still more surprised when, after the service, he joined Gussie at the door and went down the steps with her. I felt distinctly ill-treated as I fell back with Aunt Lucy. There was no reason why I should — none; it ought to have been a relief. Rev. Carroll Martin had every right to see Miss

Ashley home if he chose. Doubtless a girl who knew all there was to be known about business, farming, and milling, to say nothing of housekeeping and gardening, could discuss theology also. It was none of my business.

I don't know what kept me awake so late that night. As a consequence I overslept myself. I had managed to redeem my reputation on this point, but here it was lost again. I felt cross and foolish and cantankerous when I went out.

There was some unusual commotion at the well. It was an old-fashioned open one, with a chain and windlass. Aunt Lucy was peering anxiously down its mouth, from which a ladder was sticking. Just as I got there Gussie emerged from its depths with a triumphant face. Her skirt was muddy and draggled, her hair had tumbled down, and she held a dripping black cat.

"Coco must have fallen into the well last night," she explained, as I helped her to the ground. "I missed him at milking-time, and when I came to the well this morning I heard the most ear-splitting yowls coming up from it. I couldn't think where he could possibly be, for the water was quite calm, until I saw he had crept into a little crevice in the stones on the side. So I got a ladder and went down after him."

"You should have called me," I said sourly. "You might have killed yourself, going down there."

"And Coco might have tumbled in and drowned while you were getting up," retorted Gussie. "Besides, what was the need? I could go down as well as you."

"No doubt," I said, more sharply than I had any business to. "I don't dream of disputing your ability to do anything you may take it into your head to do. Most young ladies are not in the habit of going down wells, however."

"Perhaps not," she rejoined, with freezing calmness. "But, as you may have discovered, I am not 'most young ladies.' I am myself, Augusta Ashley, and accountable to nobody but myself if I choose to go down the well every day for pure love of it."

She walked off in her wet dress with her muddy cat. Gussie Ashley was the only girl I ever saw who could be dignified under such circumstances.

I was in a very bad humour with myself as I went off to see about having the well cleaned out. I had offended Gussie and I knew she would not be easily appeased. Nor was she. For a week she kept me politely, studiously, at a distance, in spite of my most humble advances. Rev. Carroll was a frequent caller, ostensibly to make arrangements about a Sunday school they were organizing in a poor part of the community. Gussie and he held long conversations on this enthralling subject. Then Gussie went on another visit to her friend, and when she came back so did Rev. Carroll.

One calm, hazy afternoon I was coming slowly up from the mills. Happening to glance at the kitchen roof, I gasped. It was on fire in one place. Evidently the dry shingles had caught fire from a spark. There was not a soul about save Gussie, Aunt Lucy, and myself. I dashed wildly into the kitchen, where Gussie was peeling apples.

“The house is on fire,” I exclaimed. Gussie dropped her knife and turned pale.

“Don’t wake Mother,” was all she said, as she snatched a bucket of water from the table. The ladder was still lying by the well. In a second I had raised it to the roof and, while Gussie went up it like a squirrel and dashed the water on the flames, I had two more buckets ready for her.

Fortunately the fire had made little headway, though a few minutes more would have given it a dangerous start. The flames hissed and died out as Gussie threw on the water, and in a few seconds only a small black hole in the shingles remained. Gussie slid down the ladder. She trembled in every limb, but she put out her wet hand to me with a faint, triumphant smile. We shook hands across the ladder with a cordiality never before expressed.

For the next week, in spite of Rev. Carroll, I was happy when I thought of Gussie and miserable when I thought of Nellie. I held myself in some way bound to her and — was she not my ideal? Undoubtedly!

One day I got a letter from my sister. It was long and newsy, and the eighth page was most interesting.

"If you don't come home and look after Nellie," wrote Kate, "you'll soon not have her to look after. You remember that old lover of hers, Rod Allen? Well, he's home from the west now, immensely rich, they say, and his attentions to Nellie are the town talk. I think she likes him too. If you bury yourself any longer at Ashley Mills I won't be responsible for the consequences."

This lifted an immense weight from my mind, but the ninth page hurled it back again.

"You never say anything of Miss Ashley in your letters. What is she like — young or old, ugly or pretty, clever or dull? I met a lady recently who knows her and thinks she is charming. She also said Miss Ashley was to be married soon to Rev. Something-or-Other. Is it true?"

Aye, was it? Quite likely. Kate's letter made a very miserable man of me. Gussie found me a dull companion that day. After several vain attempts to rouse me to interest she gave it up.

"There's no use talking to you," she said impatiently. "I believe you are homesick. That letter you got this morning looked suspicious. Anyhow, I hope you'll get over it before I get back."

"Are you going away again?" I asked.

"Yes. I am going to stay a few days with Flossie." Flossie was that inseparable chum of hers.

"You seem to spend a good deal of your time with her," I remarked discontentedly.

Gussie opened her eyes at my tone.

"Why, of course," she said. "Flossie and I have always been chums. And she needs me more than ever just now, for she is awfully busy. She is to be married next month."

"Oh, I see — and you—"

"I'm to be bridesmaid, of course, and we've heaps to do. Flossie wanted to wait until Christmas, but Mr. Martin is in a—"

“Mr. Martin,” I interrupted. “Is Mr. Martin going to marry your friend?”

“Why, yes. Didn’t you know? They just suit each other. There he comes now. He’s going to drive me over, and I’m not ready. Talk to him, for pity’s sake, while I go and dress.”

I never enjoyed a conversation more. Rev. Carroll Martin was a remarkably interesting man.

Nellie married Rod Allen at Christmas and I was best man. Nellie made a charming little bride, and Rod fairly worshipped her. My own wedding did not come off until spring, as Gussie said she could not get ready before that.

Kismet

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The fifth heat in the free-for-all was just over. “Lu-Lu” had won, and the crowd on the grand stand and the hangers-on around the track were cheering themselves hoarse. Clear through the noisy clamour shrilled a woman’s cry.

“Ah — I have dropped my scorecard.”

A man in front of her turned.

“I have an extra one, madame. Will you accept it?”

Her small, modishly-gloved hand closed eagerly on it before she lifted her eyes to his face. Both started convulsively. The man turned very pale, but the woman’s ripe-tinted face coloured darkly.

“You?” she faltered.

His lips parted in the coldly-grave smile she remembered and hated.

“You are not glad to see me,” he said calmly, “but that, I suppose, was not to be expected. I did not come here to annoy you. This meeting is as unexpected to me as to you. I had no suspicion that for the last half-hour I had been standing next to my—”

She interrupted him by an imperious gesture. Still clutching the scorecard she half-turned from him. Again he smiled, this time with a tinge of scorn, and shifted his eyes to the track.

None of the people around them had noticed the little by-play. All eyes were on the track, which was being cleared for the first heat of another race. The free-for-all horses were being led away blanketed. The crowd cheered “Lu-Lu” as she went past, a shapeless oddity. The backers of “Mascot”, the rival favourite, looked gloomy.

The woman noticed nothing of all this. She was small, very pretty, still young, and gowned in a quite unmistakable way. She studied the man’s profile furtively. He looked older than when she had seen him last — there were some silver threads gleaming in his close-clipped dark hair and short,

pointed beard. Otherwise there was little change in the quiet features and somewhat stern grey eyes. She wondered if he had cared at all.

They had not met for five years. She shut her eyes and looked in on her past. It all came back very vividly. She had been eighteen when they were married — a gay, high-spirited girl and the season's beauty. He was much older and a quiet, serious student. Her friends had wondered why she married him — sometimes she wondered herself, but she had loved him, or thought so.

The marriage had been an unhappy one. She was fond of society and gaiety, he wanted quiet and seclusion. She was impulsive and impatient, he deliberate and grave. The strong wills clashed. After two years of an unbearable sort of life they had separated — quietly, and without scandal of any sort. She had wanted a divorce, but he would not agree to that, so she had taken her own independent fortune and gone back to her own way of life. In the following five years she had succeeded in burying all remembrance well out of sight. No one knew if she were satisfied or not; her world was charitable to her and she lived a gay and quite irreproachable life. She wished that she had not come to the races. It was such an irritating encounter. She opened her eyes wearily; the dusty track, the flying horses, the gay dresses of the women on the grandstand, the cloudless blue sky, the brilliant September sunshine, the purple distances all commingled in a glare that made her head ache. Before it all she saw the tall figure by her side, his face turned from her, watching the track intently.

She wondered with a vague curiosity what induced him to come to the races. Such things were not greatly in his line. Evidently their chance meeting had not disturbed him. It was a sign that he did not care. She sighed a little wearily and closed her eyes. When the heat was over he turned to her.

“May I ask how you have been since — since we met last? You are looking extremely well. Has Vanity Fair palled in any degree?”

She was angry at herself and him. Where had her careless society manner and well-bred composure gone? She felt weak and hysterical.

What if she should burst into tears before the whole crowd — before those coldly critical grey eyes? She almost hated him.

“No — why should it? I have found it very pleasant — and I have been well — very well. And you?”

He jotted down the score carefully before he replied.

“I? Oh, a book-worm and recluse always leads a placid life. I never cared for excitement, you know. I came down here to attend a sale of some rare editions, and a wellmeaning friend dragged me out to see the races. I find it rather interesting, I must confess, much more so than I should have fancied. Sorry I can’t stay until the end. I must go as soon as the free-for-all is over, if not before. I have backed ‘Mascot’; you?”

“‘Lu-Lu’” she answered quickly — it almost seemed defiantly. How horribly unreal it was — this carrying on of small talk, as if they were the merest of chance-met acquaintances! “She belongs to a friend of mine, so I am naturally interested.”

“She and ‘Mascot’ are ties now — both have won two heats. One more for either will decide it. This is a good day for the races. Excuse me.”

He leaned over and brushed a scrap of paper from her grey cloak. She shivered slightly.

“You are cold! This stand is draughty.”

“I am not at all cold, thank you. What race is this? — oh! the three-minute one.”

She bent forward with assumed interest to watch the scoring. She was breathing heavily. There were tears in her eyes — she bit her lips savagely and glared at the track until they were gone.

Presently he spoke again, in the low, even tone demanded by circumstances.

“This is a curious meeting, is it not? — quite a flavor of romance! By-the-way, do you read as many novels as ever?”

She fancied there was mockery in his tone. She remembered how very frivolous he used to consider her novel-reading. Besides, she resented the personal tinge. What right had he?

“Almost as many,” she answered carelessly.

“I was very intolerant, wasn’t I?” he said after a pause. “You thought so — you were right. You have been happier since you — left me?”

“Yes,” she said defiantly, looking straight into his eyes.

“And you do not regret it?”

He bent down a little. His sleeve brushed against her shoulder. Something in his face arrested the answer she meant to make.

“I — I — did not say that,” she murmured faintly.

There was a burst of cheering. The free-for-all horses were being brought out for the sixth heat. She turned away to watch them. The scoring began, and seemed likely to have no end. She was tired of it all. It didn’t matter a pin to her whether “Lu-Lu” or “Mascot” won. What did matter! Had Vanity Fair after all been a satisfying exchange for love? He had loved her once, and they had been happy at first. She had never before said, even in her own heart: “I am sorry,” but — suddenly, she felt his hand on her shoulder, and looked up. Their eyes met. He stooped and said almost in a whisper:

“Will you come back to me?”

“I don’t know,” she whispered breathlessly, as one half-fascinated.

“We were both to blame — but I the most. I was too hard on you — I ought to have made more allowance. We are wiser now both of us. Come back to me — my wife.”

His tone was cold and his face expressionless. It was on her lips to cry out “No,” passionately.

But the slender, scholarly hand on her shoulder was trembling with the intensity of his repressed emotion. He did care, then. A wild caprice flashed into her brain. She sprang up.

“See,” she cried, “they’re off now. This heat will probably decide the race. If ‘Lu-Lu’ wins I will not go back to you, if ‘Mascot’ does I will. That is my decision.”

He turned paler, but bowed in assent. He knew by bitter experience how unchangeable her whims were, how obstinately she clung to even the most absurd.

She leaned forward breathlessly. The crowd hung silently on the track. “Lu-Lu” and “Mascot” were neck and neck, getting in splendid work. Halfway round the course “Lu-Lu” forged half a neck ahead, and her backers went mad. But one woman dropped her head in her hands and dared look no more. One man with white face and set lips watched the track unswervingly.

Again “Mascot” crawled up, inch by inch. They were on the home stretch, they were equal, the cheering broke out, then silence, then another terrific burst, shouts, yells and clappings—”Mascot” had won the free-for-all. In the front row a woman stood up, swayed and shaken as a leaf in the wind. She straightened her scarlet hat and readjusted her veil unsteadily. There was a smile on her lips and tears in her eyes. No one noticed her. A man beside her drew her hand through his arm in a quiet proprietary fashion. They left the grand stand together.

Lilian's Business Venture

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Lilian Mitchell turned into the dry-goods store on Randall Street, just as Esther Miller and Ella Taylor came out. They responded coldly to her greeting and exchanged significant glances as they walked away.

Lilian's pale face crimsoned. She was a tall, slender girl of about seventeen, and dressed in mourning. These girls had been her close friends once. But that was before the Mitchells had lost their money. Since then Lilian had been cut by many of her old chums and she felt it keenly.

The clerks in the store were busy and Lilian sat down to wait her turn. Near to her two ladies were also waiting and chatting.

"Helen wants me to let her have a birthday party," Mrs. Saunders was saying wearily. "She has been promised it so long and I hate to disappoint the child, but our girl left last week, and I cannot possibly make all the cakes and things myself. I haven't the time or strength, so Helen must do without her party."

"Talking of girls," said Mrs. Reeves impatiently, "I am almost discouraged. It is so hard to get a good all-round one. The last one I had was so saucy I had to discharge her, and the one I have now cannot make decent bread. I never had good luck with bread myself either."

"That is Mrs. Porter's great grievance too. It is no light task to bake bread for all those boarders. Have you made your jelly yet?"

"No. Maria cannot make it, she says, and I detest messing with jelly. But I really must see to it soon."

At this point a saleswoman came up to Lilian, who made her small purchases and went out.

"There goes Lilian Mitchell," said Mrs. Reeves in an undertone. "She looks very pale. They say they are dreadfully poor since Henry Mitchell died. His affairs were in a bad condition, I am told."

“I am sorry for Mrs. Mitchell,” responded Mrs. Saunders. “She is such a sweet woman. Lilian will have to do something, I suppose, and there is so little chance for a girl here.”

Lilian, walking down the street, was wearily turning over in her mind the problems of her young existence. Her father had died the preceding spring. He had been a supposedly prosperous merchant; the Mitchells had always lived well, and Lilian was a petted and only child. Then came the shock of Henry Mitchell’s sudden death and of financial ruin. His affairs were found to be hopelessly involved; when all the debts were paid there was left only the merest pittance — barely enough for house-rent — for Lilian and her mother to live upon. They had moved into a tiny cottage in an unfashionable locality, and during the summer Lilian had tried hard to think of something to do. Mrs. Mitchell was a delicate woman, and the burden of their situation fell on Lilian’s young shoulders.

There seemed to be no place for her. She could not teach and had no particular talent in any line. There was no opening for her in Willington, which was a rather sleepy little place, and Lilian was almost in despair.

“There really doesn’t seem to be any real place in the world for me, Mother,” she said rather dolefully at the supper table. “I’ve no talent at all; it is dreadful to have been born without one. And yet I must do something, and do it soon.”

And Lilian, after she had washed up the tea dishes, went upstairs and had a good cry.

But the darkest hour, so the proverb goes, is just before the dawn, and after Lilian had had her cry out and was sitting at her window in the dusk, watching a thin new moon shining over the trees down the street, her inspiration came to her. A minute later she whirled into the tiny sitting-room where her mother was sewing.

“Mother, our fortune is made! I have an idea!”

“Don’t lose it, then,” said Mrs. Mitchell with a smile. “What is it, my dear?”

Lilian sobered herself, sat down by her mother’s side, and proceeded to recount the conversation she had heard in the store that afternoon.

“Now, Mother, this is where my brilliant idea comes in. You have often told me I am a born cook and I always have good luck. Now, tomorrow morning I shall go to Mrs. Saunders and offer to furnish all the good things for Helen’s birthday party, and then I’ll ask Mrs. Reeves and Mrs. Porter if I may make their bread for them. That will do for a beginning, I like cooking, you know, and I believe that in time I can work up a good business.”

“It seems to be a good idea,” said Mrs. Mitchell thoughtfully, “and I am willing that you should try. But have you thought it all out carefully? There will be many difficulties.”

“I know. I don’t expect smooth sailing right along, and perhaps I’ll fail altogether; but somehow I don’t believe I will.”

“A great many of your old friends will think—”

“Oh, yes; I know that too, but I am not going to mind it, Mother. I don’t think there is any disgrace in working for my living. I’m going to do my best and not care what people say.”

Early next morning Lilian started out. She had carefully thought over the details of her small venture, considered ways and means, and decided on the most advisable course. She would not attempt too much, and she felt sure of success.

To secure competent servants was one of the problems of Willington people. At Drayton, a large neighbouring town, were several factories, and into these all the working girls from Willington had crowded, leaving very few who were willing to go out to service. Many of those who did were poor cooks, and Lilian shrewdly suspected that many a harassed housekeeper in the village would be glad to avail herself of the new enterprise.

Lilian was, as she had said of herself, “a born cook.” This was her capital, and she meant to make the most of it. Mrs. Saunders listened to her businesslike details with surprise and delight.

“It is the very thing,” she said. “Helen is so eager for that party, but I could not undertake it myself. Her birthday is Friday. Can you have everything ready by then?”

“Yes, I think so,” said Lilian briskly, producing her notebook. “Please give me the list of what you want and I will do my best.”

From Mrs. Saunders she went to Mrs. Reeves and found a customer as soon as she had told the reason of her call. “I’ll furnish all the bread and rolls you need,” she said, “and they will be good, too. Now, about your jelly. I can make good jelly, and I’ll be very glad to make yours.”

When she left, Lilian had an order for two dozen glasses of apple jelly, as well as a standing one for bread and rolls. Mrs. Porter was next visited and grasped eagerly at the opportunity.

“I know your bread will be good,” she said, “and you may count on me as a regular customer.”

Lilian thought she had enough on hand for a first attempt and went home satisfied. On her way she called at the grocery store with an order that surprised Mr. Hooper. When she told him of her plan he opened his eyes.

“I must tell my wife about that. She isn’t strong and she doesn’t like cooking.”

After dinner Lilian went to work, enveloped in a big apron, and whipped eggs, stoned raisins, stirred, concocted, and baked until dark. When bedtime came she was so tired that she could hardly crawl upstairs; but she felt happy too, for the day had been a successful one.

And so also were the days and weeks and months that followed. It was hard and constant work, but it brought its reward. Lilian had not promised more than she could perform, and her customers were satisfied. In a short time she found herself with a regular and growing business on her hands, for new customers were gradually added and always came to stay.

People who gave parties found it very convenient to follow Mrs. Saunders’s example and order their supplies from Lilian. She had a very busy winter and, of course, it was not all plain sailing. She had many difficulties to contend with. Sometimes days came on which everything seemed to go wrong — when the stove smoked or the oven wouldn’t heat properly, when cakes fell flat and bread was sour and pies behaved as only

totally depraved pies can, when she burned her fingers and felt like giving up in despair.

Then, again, she found herself cut by several of her old acquaintances. But she was too sensible to worry much over this. The friends really worth having were still hers, her mother's face had lost its look of care, and her business was prospering. She was hopeful and wide awake, kept her wits about her and looked out for hints, and learned to laugh over her failures.

During the winter she and her mother had managed to do most of the work themselves, hiring little Mary Robinson next door on especially busy days, and now and then calling in the assistance of Jimmy Bowen and his hand sled to carry orders to customers. But when spring came Lilian prepared to open up her summer campaign on a much larger scale. Mary Robinson was hired for the season, and John Perkins was engaged to act as carrier with his express wagon. A summer kitchen was boarded in in the backyard, and a new range bought; Lilian began operations with a striking advertisement in the Willington News and an attractive circular sent around to all her patrons. Picnics and summer weddings were frequent. In bread and rolls her trade was brisk and constant. She also took orders for pickles, preserves, and jellies, and this became such a flourishing branch that a second assistant had to be hired.

It was a cardinal rule with Lilian never to send out any article that was not up to her standard. She bore the loss of her failures, and sometimes stayed up half of the night to fill an order on time. "Prompt and perfect" was her motto.

The long hot summer days were very trying, and sometimes she got very tired of it all. But when on the anniversary of her first venture she made up her accounts she was well pleased. To be sure, she had not made a fortune; but she had paid all their expenses, had a hundred dollars clear, and had laid the solid foundations of a profitable business.

"Mother," she said jubilantly, as she wiped a dab of flour from her nose and proceeded to concoct the icing for Blanche Remington's wedding cake, "don't you think my business venture has been a decided success?"

Mrs. Mitchell surveyed her busy daughter with a motherly smile. “Yes, I think it has,” she said.

Miriam's Lover

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I had been reading a ghost story to Mrs. Sefton, and I laid it down at the end with a little shrug of contempt.

“What utter nonsense!” I said.

Mrs. Sefton nodded abstractedly above her fancywork.

“That is. It is a very commonplace story indeed. I don't believe the spirits of the departed trouble themselves to revisit the glimpses of the moon for the purpose of frightening honest mortals — or even for the sake of hanging around the favourite haunts of their existence in the flesh. If they ever appear, it must be for a better reason than that.”

“You don't surely think that they ever do appear?” I said incredulously.

“We have no proof that they do not, my dear.”

“Surely, Mary,” I exclaimed, “you don't mean to say that you believe people ever do or can see spirits — ghosts, as the word goes?”

“I didn't say I believed it. I never saw anything of the sort. I neither believe nor disbelieve. But you know queer things do happen at times — things you can't account for. At least, people who you know wouldn't lie say so. Of course, they may be mistaken. And I don't think that everybody can see spirits either, provided they are to be seen. It requires people of a certain organization — with a spiritual eye, as it were. We haven't all got that — in fact, I think very few of us have. I dare say you think I'm talking nonsense.”

“Well, yes, I think you are. You really surprise me, Mary. I always thought you the least likely person in the world to take up with such ideas. Something must have come under your observation to develop such theories in your practical head. Tell me what it was.”

“To what purpose? You would remain as sceptical as ever.”

“Possibly not. Try me; I may be convinced.”

“No,” returned Mrs. Sefton calmly. “Nobody ever is convinced by hearsay. When a person has once seen a spirit — or thinks he has — he thenceforth believes it. And when somebody else is intimately associated with that person and knows all the circumstances — well, he admits the possibility, at least. That is my position. But by the time it gets to the third person — the outsider — it loses power. Besides, in this particular instance the story isn’t very exciting. But then — it’s true.”

“You have excited my curiosity. You must tell me the story.”

“Well, first tell me what you think of this. Suppose two people, both sensitively organized individuals, loved each other with a love stronger than life. If they were apart, do you think it might be possible for their souls to communicate with each other in some inexplicable way? And if anything happened to one, don’t you think that that one could and would let the spirit of the other know?”

“You’re getting into too deep waters for me, Mary,” I said, shaking my head. “I’m not an authority on telepathy, or whatever you call it. But I’ve no belief in such theories. In fact, I think they are all nonsense. I’m sure you must think so too in your rational moments.”

“I dare say it is all nonsense,” said Mrs. Sefton slowly, “but if you had lived a whole year in the same house with Miriam Gordon, you would have been tainted too. Not that she had ‘theories’ — at least, she never aired them if she had. But there was simply something about the girl herself that gave a person strange impressions. When I first met her I had the most uncanny feeling that she was all spirit — soul — what you will! no flesh, anyhow. That feeling wore off after a while, but she never seemed like other people to me.

“She was Mr. Sefton’s niece. Her father had died when she was a child. When Miriam was twenty her mother had married a second time and went to Europe with her husband. Miriam came to live with us while they were away. Upon their return she was herself to be married.

“I had never seen Miriam before. Her arrival was unexpected, and I was absent from home when she came. I returned in the evening, and when

I saw her first she was standing under the chandelier in the drawing room. Talk about spirits! For five seconds I thought I had seen one.

“Miriam was a beauty. I had known that before, though I think I hardly expected to see such wonderful loveliness. She was tall and extremely graceful, dark — at least her hair was dark, but her skin was wonderfully fair and clear. Her hair was gathered away from her face, and she had a high, pure, white forehead, and the straightest, finest, blackest brows. Her face was oval, with very large and dark eyes.

“I soon realized that Miriam was in some mysterious fashion different from other people. I think everyone who met her felt the same way. Yet it was a feeling hard to define. For my own part I simply felt as if she belonged to another world, and that part of the time she — her soul, you know — was back there again.

“You must not suppose that Miriam was a disagreeable person to have in the house. On the contrary, it was the very reverse. Everybody liked her. She was one of the sweetest, most winsome girls I ever knew, and I soon grew to love her dearly. As for what Dick called her ‘little queernesses’ — well, we got used to them in time.

“Miriam was engaged, as I have told you, to a young Harvard man named Sidney Claxton. I knew she loved him very deeply. When she showed me his photograph, I liked his appearance and said so. Then I made some teasing remark about her love-letters — just for a joke, you know. Miriam looked at me with an odd little smile and said quickly:

“‘Sidney and I never write to each other.’

“‘Why, Miriam!’ I exclaimed in astonishment. ‘Do you mean to tell me you never hear from him at all?’

“‘No, I did not say that. I hear from him every day — every hour. We do not need to write letters. There are better means of communication between two souls that are in perfect accord with each other.’

“‘Miriam, you uncanny creature, what do you mean?’ I asked.

“But Miriam only gave another queer smile and made no answer at all. Whatever her beliefs or theories were, she would never discuss them.

“She had a habit of dropping into abstracted reveries at any time or place. No matter where she was, this, whatever it was, would come over her. She would sit there, perhaps in the centre of a gay crowd, and gaze right out into space, not hearing or seeing a single thing that went on around her.

“I remember one day in particular; we were sewing in my room. I looked up and saw that Miriam’s work had dropped on her knee and she was leaning forward, her lips apart, her eyes gazing upward with an unearthly expression.

“‘Don’t look like that, Miriam!’ I said, with a little shiver. ‘You seem to be looking at something a thousand miles away!’

“Miriam came out of her trance or reverie and said, with a little laugh:

“‘How do you know but that I was?’

“She bent her head for a minute or two. Then she lifted it again and looked at me with a sudden contraction of her level brows that betokened vexation.

“‘I wish you hadn’t spoken to me just then,’ she said. ‘You interrupted the message I was receiving. I shall not get it at all now.’

“‘Miriam,’ I implored. ‘I so wish my dear girl, that you wouldn’t talk so. It makes people think there is something queer about you. Who in the world was sending you a message, as you call it?’

“‘Sidney,’ said Miriam simply.

“‘Nonsense!’

“‘You think it is nonsense because you don’t understand it,’ was her calm response.

“I recall another event was when some caller dropped in and we had drifted into a discussion about ghosts and the like — and I’ve no doubt we all talked some delicious nonsense. Miriam said nothing at the time, but when we were alone I asked her what she thought of it.

“‘I thought you were all merely talking against time,’ she retorted evasively.

“‘But, Miriam, do you really think it is possible for ghosts—’

“‘I detest that word!’

“Well, spirits then — to return after death, or to appear to anyone apart from the flesh?’

“I will tell you what I know. If anything were to happen to Sidney — if he were to die or be killed — he would come to me himself and tell me.’

“One day Miriam came down to lunch looking pale and worried. After Dick went out, I asked her if anything were wrong.

“‘Something has happened to Sidney,’ she replied, ‘some painful accident — I don’t know what.’

“‘How do you know?’ I cried. Then, as she looked at me strangely, I added hastily, ‘You haven’t been receiving any more unearthly messages, have you? Surely, Miriam, you are not so foolish as to really believe in that!’

“‘I know,’ she answered quickly. ‘Belief or disbelief has nothing to do with it. Yes, I have had a message. I know that some accident has happened to Sidney — painful and inconvenient but not particularly dangerous. I do not know what it is. Sidney will write me that. He writes when it is absolutely necessary.’

“‘Aerial communication isn’t perfected yet then?’ I said mischievously. But, observing how really worried she seemed, I added, ‘Don’t fret, Miriam. You may be mistaken.’

“Well, two days afterwards she got a note from her lover — the first I had ever known her to receive — in which he said he had been thrown from his horse and had broken his left arm. It had happened the very morning Miriam received her message.

“Miriam had been with us about eight months when one day she came into my room hurriedly. She was very pale.

“‘Sidney is ill — dangerously ill. What shall I do?’

“I knew she must have had another of those abominable messages — or thought she had — and really, remembering the incident of the broken arm, I couldn’t feel as sceptical as I pretended to. I tried to cheer her, but did not succeed. Two hours later she had a telegram from her lover’s college chum, saying that Mr. Claxton was dangerously ill with typhoid fever.

“I was quite alarmed about Miriam in the days that followed. She grieved and fretted continually. One of her troubles was that she received no more messages; she said it was because Sidney was too ill to send them. Anyhow, she had to content herself with the means of communication used by ordinary mortals.

“Sidney’s mother, who had gone to nurse him, wrote every day, and at last good news came. The crisis was over and the doctor in attendance thought Sidney would recover. Miriam seemed like a new creature then, and rapidly recovered her spirits.

“For a week reports continued favourable. One night we went to the opera to hear a celebrated prima donna. When we returned home Miriam and I were sitting in her room, chatting over the events of the evening.

“Suddenly she sat straight up with a sort of convulsive shudder, and at the same time — you may laugh if you like — the most horrible feeling came over me. I didn’t see anything, but I just felt that there was something or someone in the room besides ourselves.

“Miriam was gazing straight before her. She rose to her feet and held out her hands.

“‘Sidney!’ she said.

“Then she fell to the floor in a dead faint.

“I screamed for Dick, rang the bell and rushed to her.

“In a few minutes the whole household was aroused, and Dick was off posthaste for the doctor, for we could not revive Miriam from her deathlike swoon. She seemed as one dead. We worked over her for hours. She would come out of her faint for a moment, give us an unknowing stare and go shudderingly off again.

“The doctor talked of some fearful shock, but I kept my own counsel. At dawn Miriam came back to life at last. When she and I were left alone, she turned to me.

“‘Sidney is dead,’ she said quietly. ‘I saw him — just before I fainted. I looked up, and he was standing between me and you. He had come to say farewell.’

“What could I say? Almost while we were talking a telegram came. He was dead — he had died at the very hour at which Miriam had seen him.”

Mrs. Sefton paused, and the lunch bell rang.

“What do you think of it?” she queried as we rose.

“Honestly, I don’t know what I think of it,” I answered frankly.

Miss Calista's Peppermint Bottle

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Miss Calista was perplexed. Her nephew, Caleb Cramp, who had been her righthand man for years and whom she had got well broken into her ways, had gone to the Klondike, leaving her to fill his place with the next best man; but the next best man was slow to appear, and meanwhile Miss Calista was looking about her warily. She could afford to wait a while, for the crop was all in and the fall ploughing done, so that the need of a successor to Caleb was not as pressing as it might otherwise have been. There was no lack of applicants, such as they were. Miss Calista was known to be a kind and generous mistress, although she had her “ways,” and insisted calmly and immovably upon wholehearted compliance with them. She had a small, well-cultivated farm and a comfortable house, and her hired men lived in clover. Caleb Cramp had been perfection after his kind, and Miss Calista did not expect to find his equal. Nevertheless, she set up a certain standard of requirements; and although three weeks, during which Miss Calista had been obliged to put up with the immature services of a neighbour's boy, had elapsed since Caleb's departure, no one had as yet stepped into his vacant and coveted shoes.

Certainly Miss Calista was somewhat hard to please, but she was not thinking of herself as she sat by her front window in the chilly November twilight. Instead, she was musing on the degeneration of hired men, and reflecting that it was high time the wheat was thrashed, the house banked, and sundry other duties attended to.

Ches Maybin had been up that afternoon to negotiate for the vacant place, and had offered to give satisfaction for smaller wages than Miss Calista had ever paid. But he had met with a brusque refusal, scarcely as civil as Miss Calista had bestowed on drunken Jake Stinson from the Morrisvale Road.

Not that Miss Calista had any particular prejudice against Ches Maybin, or knew anything positively to his discredit. She was simply unconsciously following the example of a world that exerts itself to keep a man down when he is down and prevent all chance of his rising. Nothing succeeds like success, and the converse of this is likewise true — that nothing fails like failure. There was not a person in Cooperstown who would not have heartily endorsed Miss Calista's refusal.

Ches Maybin was only eighteen, although he looked several years older, and although no flagrant misdoing had ever been proved against him, suspicion of such was not wanting. He came of a bad stock, people said sagely, adding that what was bred in the bone was bound to come out in the flesh. His father, old Sam Maybin, had been a shiftless and tricky rascal, as everybody knew, and had ended his days in the poorhouse. Ches's mother had died when he was a baby, and he had come up somehow, in a hand-to-mouth fashion, with all the cloud of heredity hanging over him. He was always looked at askance, and when any mischief came to light in the village, it was generally fastened on him as a convenient and handy scapegoat. He was considered sulky and lazy, and the local prophets united in predicting a bad end for him sooner or later; and, moreover, diligently endeavoured by their general treatment of him to put him in a fair way to fulfil their predictions. Miss Calista, when she had shut Chester Maybin out into the chill gloom of the November dusk, dismissed him from her thoughts. There were other things of more moment to her just then than old Sam Maybin's hopeful son.

There was nobody in the house but herself, and although this was neither alarming nor unusual, it was unusual — and Miss Calista considered it alarming — that the sum of five hundred dollars should at that very moment be in the upper righthand drawer of the sideboard, which sum had been up to the previous day safe in the coffers of the Millageville bank. But certain unfavourable rumours were in course of circulation about that same institution, and Miss Calista, who was nothing if not prudent, had gone to the bank that very morning and withdrawn her deposit. She intended to go over to Kerrytown the very next day and

deposit it in the Savings Bank there. Not another day would she keep it in the house, and, indeed, it worried her to think she must keep it even for the night, as she had told Mrs. Galloway that afternoon during a neighbourly backyard chat.

“Not but what it’s safe enough,” she said, “for not a soul but you knows I’ve got it. But I’m not used to have so much by me, and there are always tramps going round. It worries me somehow. I wouldn’t give it a thought if Caleb was here. I s’pose being all alone makes me nervous.”

Miss Calista was still rather nervous when she went to bed that night, but she was a woman of sound sense and was determined not to give way to foolish fears. She locked doors and windows carefully, as was her habit, and saw that the fastenings were good and secure. The one on the dining-room window, looking out on the back yard, wasn’t; in fact, it was broken altogether; but, as Miss Calista told herself, it had been broken just so for the last six years, and nobody had ever tried to get in at it yet, and it wasn’t likely anyone would begin tonight.

Miss Calista went to bed and, despite her worry, slept soon and soundly. It was well on past midnight when she suddenly wakened and sat bolt upright in bed. She was not accustomed to waken in the night, and she had the impression of having been awakened by some noise. She listened breathlessly. Her room was directly over the dining-room, and an empty stovepipe hole opened up through the ceiling of the latter at the head of her bed.

There was no mistake about it. Something or some person was moving about stealthily in the room below. It wasn’t the cat — Miss Calista had shut him in the woodshed before she went to bed, and he couldn’t possibly get out. It must certainly be a beggar or tramp of some description.

Miss Calista might be given over to nervousness in regard to imaginary thieves, but in the presence of real danger she was cool and self-reliant. As noiselessly and swiftly as any burglar himself, Miss Calista slipped out of bed and into her clothes. Then she tiptoed out into the hall. The late moonlight, streaming in through the hall windows, was quite enough illumination for her purpose, and she got downstairs and was

fairly in the open doorway of the dining-room before a sound betrayed her presence.

Standing at the sideboard, hastily ransacking the neat contents of an open drawer, stood a man's figure, dimly visible in the moonlight gloom. As Miss Calista's grim form appeared in the doorway, the midnight marauder turned with a start and then, with an inarticulate cry, sprang, not at the courageous lady, but at the open window behind him.

Miss Calista, realizing with a flash of comprehension that he was escaping her, had a woman-like impulse to get a blow in anyhow; she grasped and hurled at her unceremonious caller the first thing that came to hand — a bottle of peppermint essence that was standing on the sideboard.

The missile hit the escaping thief squarely on the shoulder as he sprang out of the window, and the fragments of glass came clattering down on the sill. The next moment Miss Calista found herself alone, standing by the sideboard in a half-dazed fashion, for the whole thing had passed with such lightning-like rapidity that it almost seemed as if it were the dissolving end of a bad dream. But the open drawer and the window, where the bits of glass were glistening in the moonlight, were no dream. Miss Calista recovered herself speedily, closed the window, lit the lamp, gathered up the broken glass, and set up the chairs which the would-be thief had upset in his exit. An examination of the sideboard showed the precious five hundred safe and sound in an undisturbed drawer.

Miss Calista kept grim watch and ward there until morning, and thought the matter over exhaustively. In the end she resolved to keep her own counsel. She had no clue whatever to the thief's whereabouts or identity, and no good would come of making a fuss, which might only end in throwing suspicion on someone who might be quite innocent.

When the morning came Miss Calista lost no time in setting out for Kerrytown, where the money was soon safely deposited in the bank. She heaved a sigh of relief when she left the building.

I feel as if I could enjoy life once more, she said to herself. Goodness me, if I'd had to keep that money by me for a week itself, I'd have been a raving lunatic by the end of it.

Miss Calista had shopping to do and friends to visit in town, so that the dull autumn day was well nigh spent when she finally got back to Cooperstown and paused at the corner store to get a bundle of matches.

The store was full of men, smoking and chatting around the fire, and Miss Calista, whose pet abomination was tobacco smoke, was not at all minded to wait any longer than she could help. But Abiram Fell was attending to a previous customer, and Miss Calista sat grimly down by the counter to wait her turn.

The door opened, letting in a swirl of raw November evening wind and Ches Maybin. He nodded sullenly to Mr. Fell and passed down the store to mutter a message to a man at the further end.

Miss Calista lifted her head as he passed and sniffed the air as a charger who scents battle. The smell of tobacco was strong, and so was that of the open boxes of dried herring on the counter, but plainly, above all the commingled odours of a country grocery, Miss Calista caught a whiff of peppermint, so strong as to leave no doubt of its origin. There had been no hint of it before Ches Maybin's entrance.

The latter did not wait long. He was out and striding along the shadowy road when Miss Calista left the store and drove smartly after him. It never took Miss Calista long to make up her mind about anything, and she had weighed and passed judgement on Ches Maybin's case while Mr. Fell was doing up her matches.

The lad glanced up furtively as she checked her fat grey pony beside him.

"Good evening, Chester," she said with brisk kindness. "I can give you a lift, if you are going my way. Jump in, quick — Dapple is a little restless."

A wave of crimson, duskily perceptible under his sunburned skin, surged over Ches Maybin's face. It almost seemed as if he were going to blurt out a blunt refusal. But Miss Calista's face was so guileless and her tone so friendly, that he thought better of it and sprang in beside her, and Dapple broke into an impatient trot down the long hill lined with its bare, wind-writhen maples.

After a few minutes' silence Miss Calista turned to her moody companion.

"Chester," she said, as tranquilly as if about to ask him the most ordinary question in the world, "why did you climb into my house last night and try to steal my money?"

Ches Maybin started convulsively, as if he meant to spring from the buggy at once, but Miss Calista's hand was on his arm in a grasp none the less firm because of its gentleness, and there was a warning gleam in her grey eyes.

"It won't mend matters trying to get clear of me, Chester. I know it was you and I want an answer — a truthful one, mind you — to my question. I am your friend, and I am not going to harm you if you tell me the truth."

Her clear and incisive gaze met and held irresistibly the boy's wavering one. The sullen obstinacy of his face relaxed.

"Well," he muttered finally, "I was just desperate, that's why. I've never done anything real bad in my life before, but people have always been down on me. I'm blamed for everything, and nobody wants anything to do with me. I'm willing to work, but I can't get a thing to do. I'm in rags and I haven't a cent, and winter's coming on. I heard you telling Mrs. Galloway yesterday about the money. I was behind the fir hedge and you didn't see me. I went away and planned it all out. I'd get in some way — and I meant to use the money to get away out west as far from here as I could, and begin life there, where nobody knew me, and where I'd have some sort of a chance. I've never had any here. You can put me in jail now, if you like — they'll feed and clothe me there, anyhow, and I'll be on a level with the rest."

The boy had blurted it all out sullenly and half-chokingly. A world of rebellion and protest against the fate that had always dragged him down was couched in his voice.

Miss Calista drew Dapple to a standstill before her gate.

"I'm not going to send you to jail, Chester. I believe you've told me the truth. Yesterday you wanted me to give you Caleb's place and I

refused. Well, I offer it to you now. If you'll come, I'll hire you, and give you as good wages as I gave him."

Ches Maybin looked incredulous.

"Miss Calista, you can't mean it."

"I do mean it, every word. You say you have never had a chance. Well, I am going to give you one — a chance to get on the right road and make a man of yourself. Nobody shall ever know about last night's doings from me, and I'll make it my business to forget them if you deserve it. What do you say?"

Ches lifted his head and looked her squarely in the face.

"I'll come," he said huskily. "It ain't no use to try and thank you, Miss Calista. But I'll live my thanks."

And he did. The good people of Cooperstown held up their hands in horror when they heard that Miss Calista had hired Ches Maybin, and prophesied that the deluded woman would live to repent her rash step. But not all prophecies come true. Miss Calista smiled serenely and kept on her own misguided way. And Ches Maybin proved so efficient and steady that the arrangement was continued, and in due time people outlived their old suspicions and came to regard him as a thoroughly smart and trustworthy young man.

"Miss Calista has made a man of Ches Maybin," said the oracles. "He ought to be very grateful to her."

And he was. But only he and Miss Calista and the peppermint bottle ever knew the precise extent of his gratitude, and they never told.

The Jest That Failed

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“I think it is simply a disgrace to have a person like that in our class,” said Edna Hayden in an injured tone.

“And she doesn’t seem a bit ashamed of it, either,” said Agnes Walters.

“Rather proud of it, I should say,” returned her roommate, spitefully.

“It seems to me that if I were so poor that I had to ‘room’ myself and dress as dowdily as she does that I really couldn’t look anybody in the face.

What must the boys think of her? And if it wasn’t for her being in it, our class would be the smartest and dressiest in the college — even those top-lofty senior girls admit that.”

“It’s a shame,” said Agnes, conclusively. “But she needn’t expect to associate with our set. I, for one, won’t have anything to do with her.”

“Nor I. I think it is time she should be taught her place. If we could only manage to inflict some decided snub on her, she might take the hint and give up trying to poke herself in where she doesn’t belong. The idea of her consenting to be elected on the freshmen executive! But she seems impervious to snubs.”

“Edna, let’s play a joke on her. It will serve her right. Let us send an invitation in somebody’s name to the senior ‘prom.’”

“The very thing! And sign Sidney Hill’s name to it. He’s the handsomest and richest fellows at Payzant, and belongs to one of the best families in town, and he’s awfully fastidious besides. No doubt she will feel immensely flattered and, of course, she’ll accept. Just think how silly she’ll feel when she finds out he never sent it. Let’s write it now, and send it at once. There is no time to lose, for the ‘prom’ is on Thursday night.”

The freshmen co-eds at Payzant College did not like Grace Seeley — that is to say, the majority of them. They were a decidedly snobbish class that year. No one could deny that Grace was clever, but she was poor, dressed very plainly—“dowdily,” the girls said — and “roomed” herself,

that phrase meaning that she rented a little unfurnished room and cooked her own meals over an oil stove.

The “senior prom,” as it was called, was the annual reception which the senior class gave in the middle of every autumn term. It was the smartest and gayest of all the college functions, and a Payzant co-ed who received an invitation to it counted herself fortunate. The senior girls were included as a matter of course, but a junior, soph, or freshie could not go unless one of the senior boys invited her.

Grace Seeley was studying Greek in her tiny room that afternoon when the invitation was brought to her. It was scrupulously orthodox in appearance and form, and Grace never doubted that it was genuine, although she felt much surprised that Sidney Hill, the leader of his class and the foremost figure in all college sports and societies, should have asked her to go with him to the senior prom.

But she was girlishly pleased at the prospect. She was as fond of a good time as any other girl, and she had secretly wished very much that she could go to the brilliant and much talked about senior prom.

Grace was quite unaware of her own unpopularity among her class co-eds, although she thought it was very hard to get acquainted with them. Without any false pride herself, and of a frank, independent nature, it never occurred to her that the other Payzant freshies could look down on her because she was poor, or resent her presence among them because she dressed plainly.

She straightway wrote a note of acceptance to Sidney Hill, and that young man naturally felt much mystified when he opened and read it in the college library next morning.

“Grace Seeley,” he pondered. “That’s the jolly girl with the brown eyes that I met at the philomathic the other night. She thanks me for my invitation to the senior prom, and accepts with pleasure. Why, I certainly never invited her or anyone else to go with me to the senior prom. There must be some mistake.”

Grace passed him at this moment on her way to the Latin classroom. She bowed and smiled in a friendly fashion and Sidney Hill felt decidedly

uncomfortable. What was he to do? He did not like to think of putting Miss Seeley in a false position because somebody had sent her an invitation in his name.

“I suppose it is some cad who has a spite at me that has done it,” he reflected, “but if so I’ll spoil his game. I’ll take Miss Seeley to the prom as if I had never intended doing anything else. She shan’t be humiliated just because there is someone at Payzant who would stoop to that sort of thing.”

So he walked up the hall with Grace and expressed his pleasure at her acceptance, and on the evening of the prom he sent her a bouquet of white carnations, whose spicy fragrance reminded her of her own little garden at home. Grace thought it extremely nice of him, and dressed in a flutter of pleasant anticipation.

Her gown was a very simple one of sheer white organdie, and was the only evening dress she had. She knew there would be many smarter dresses at the reception, but the knowledge did not disturb her sensible head in the least.

She fingered the dainty white frills lovingly as she remembered the sunny summer days at home in the little sewing-room, where cherry boughs poked their blossoms in at the window, when her mother and sisters had helped her to make it, with laughing prophesies and speculations as to its first appearance. Into seam and puff and frill many girlish hopes and dreams had been sewn, and they all came back to Grace as she put it on, and helped to surround her with an atmosphere of happiness.

When she was ready she picked up her bouquet and looked herself over in the mirror, from the top of her curly head to the tips of her white shoes, with a little nod of satisfaction. Grace was not exactly pretty, but she had such a bright, happy face and such merry brown eyes and such a friendly smile that she was very pleasant to look upon, and a great many people thought so that night.

Grace had never in all her life before had so good a time as she had at that senior prom. The seniors were quick to discover her unaffected

originality and charm, and everywhere she went she was the centre of a merry group. In short, Grace, as much to her own surprise as anyone's, found herself a social success.

Presently Sidney brought his brother up to be introduced, and the latter said:

"Miss Seeley, will you excuse my asking if you have a brother or any relative named Max Seeley?"

Grace nodded. "Oh, yes, my brother Max. He is a doctor out west."

"I was sure of it," said Murray Hill triumphantly. "You resemble him so strongly. Please don't consider me as a stranger a minute longer, for Max and I are like brothers. Indeed, I owe my life to him. Last summer I was out there on a surveying expedition, and I took typhoid in a little out-of-the-way place where good nursing was not to be had for love or money. Your brother attended me and he managed to pull me through. He never left me day or night until I was out of danger, and he worked like a Trojan for me."

"Dear old Max," said Grace, her brown eyes shining with pride and pleasure. "That is so like him. He is such a dear brother and I haven't seen him for four years. To see somebody who knows him so well is next best thing to seeing himself."

"He is an awfully fine fellow," said Mr. Hill heartily, "and I'm delighted to have met the 'little sister' he used to talk so much about. I want you to come over and meet my mother and sister. They have heard me talk so much about Max that they think almost as much of him as I do, and they will be glad to meet his sister."

Mrs. Hill, a handsome, dignified lady who was one of the chaperones of the prom, received Grace warmly, while Beatrice Hill, an extremely pretty, smartly gowned girl, made her feel at home immediately.

"You came with Sid, didn't you?" she whispered. "Sid is so sly — he never tells us whom he is going to take anywhere. But when I saw you come in with him I knew I was going to like you, you looked so jolly. And you're really the sister of that splendid Dr. Seeley who saved Murray's life

last summer? And to think you've been at Payzant nearly a whole term and we never knew it!"

"Well, how have you enjoyed our prom, Miss Seeley?" asked Sid, as they walked home together under the arching elms of the college campus.

"Oh! it was splendid," said Grace enthusiastically. "Everybody was so nice. And then to meet someone who could tell me so much about Max! I must write them home all about it before I sleep, just to calm my head a bit. Mother and the girls will be so interested, and I must send Lou and Mab a carnation apiece for their scrapbooks."

"Give me one back, please," said Sid. And Grace with a little blush, did so.

That night, while Grace was slipping the stems of her carnations and putting them into water, three little bits of conversation were being carried on which it is necessary to report in order to round up this story neatly and properly, as all stories should be rounded up.

In the first place, Beatrice Hill was saying to Sidney, "Oh, Sid, that Miss Seeley you had at the prom is a lovely girl. I don't know when I've met anyone I liked so much. She was so jolly and friendly and she didn't put on learned airs at all, as so many of those Payzant girls do. I asked her all about herself and she told me, and all about her mother and sisters and home and the lovely times they had together, and how hard they worked to send her to college too, and how she taught school in vacations and 'roomed' herself to help along. Isn't it so brave and plucky of her! I know we are going to be great friends."

"I hope so," said Sidney briefly, "because I have an idea that she and I are going to be very good friends too."

And Sidney went upstairs and put away a single white carnation very carefully.

In the second place, Mrs. Hill was saying to her eldest son, "I liked that Miss Seeley very much. She seemed a very sweet girl."

And, finally, Agnes Walters and Edna Hayden were discussing the matter in great mystification in their room.

“I can’t understand it at all,” said Agnes slowly. “Sid Hill took her to the prom and he must have sent her those carnations too. She could never have afforded them herself. And did you see the fuss his people made over her? I heard Beatrice telling her that she was coming to call on her tomorrow, and Mrs. Hill said she must look upon ‘Beechlawn’ as her second home while she was at Payzant. If the Hills are going to take her up we’ll have to be nice to her.”

“I suppose,” said Edna conclusively, “the truth of the matter is that Sid Hill meant to ask her anyway. I dare say he asked her long ago, and she would know our invitation was a fraud. So the joke is on ourselves, after all.”

But, as you and I know, that, with the exception of the last sentence, was not the truth of the matter at all.

The Penningtons' Girl

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Winslow had been fishing — or pretending to — all the morning, and he was desperately thirsty. He boarded with the Beckwiths on the Riverside East Shore, but he was nearer Riverside West, and he knew the Penningtons well. He had often been there for bait and milk and had listened times out of mind to Mrs. Pennington's dismal tales of her tribulations with hired girls. She never could get along with them, and they left, on an average, after a fortnight's trial. She was on the lookout for one now, he knew, and would likely be cross, but he thought she would give him a drink.

He rowed his skiff into the shore and tied it to a fir that hung out from the bank. A winding little footpath led up to the Pennington farmhouse, which crested the hill about three hundred yards from the shore. Winslow made for the kitchen door and came face to face with a girl carrying a pail of water — Mrs. Pennington's latest thing in hired girls, of course.

Winslow's first bewildered thought was "What a goddess!" and he wondered, as he politely asked for a drink, where on earth Mrs. Pennington had picked her up. She handed him a shining dipper half full and stood, pail in hand, while he drank it.

She was rather tall, and wore a somewhat limp, faded print gown, and a big sunhat, beneath which a glossy knot of chestnut showed itself. Her skin was very fair, somewhat freckled, and her mouth was delicious. As for her eyes, they were grey, but beyond that simply defied description.

"Will you have some more?" she asked in a soft, drawling voice.

"No, thank you. That was delicious. Is Mrs. Pennington home?"

"No. She has gone away for the day."

"Well, I suppose I can sit down here and rest a while. You've no serious objections, have you?"

"Oh, no."

She carried her pail into the kitchen and came out again presently with a knife and a pan of apples. Sitting down on a bench under the poplars she proceeded to peel them with a disregard of his presence that piqued Winslow, who was not used to being ignored in this fashion. Besides, as a general rule, he had been quite good friends with Mrs. Pennington's hired girls. She had had three strapping damsels during his sojourn in Riverside, and he used to sit on this very doorstep and chaff them. They had all been saucy and talkative. This girl was evidently a new species.

"Do you think you'll get along with Mrs. Pennington?" he asked finally. "As a rule she fights with her help, although she is a most estimable woman."

The girl smiled quite broadly.

"I guess p'r'aps she's rather hard to suit," was the answer, "but I like her pretty well so far. I think we'll get along with each other. If we don't I can leave — like the others did."

"What is your name?"

"Nelly Ray."

"Well, Nelly, I hope you'll be able to keep your place. Let me give you a bit of friendly advice. Don't let the cats get into the pantry. That is what Mrs. Pennington has quarrelled with nearly every one of her girls about."

"It is quite a bother to keep them out, ain't it?" said Nelly calmly. "There's dozens of cats about the place. What on earth makes them keep so many?"

"Mr. Pennington has a mania for cats. He and Mrs. Pennington have a standing disagreement about it. The last girl left here because she couldn't stand the cats; they affected her nerves, she said. I hope you don't mind them."

"Oh, no; I kind of like cats. I've been tryin' to count them. Has anyone ever done that?"

"Not that I know of. I tried but I had to give up in despair — never could tell when I was counting the same cat over again. Look at that black goblin sunning himself on the woodpile. I say, Nelly, you're not going, are you?"

“I must. It’s time to get dinner. Mr. Pennington will be in from the fields soon.”

The next minute he heard her stepping briskly about the kitchen, shooing out intruding cats, and humming a darky air to herself. He went reluctantly back to the shore and rowed across the river in a brown study.

I don’t know whether Winslow was afflicted with chronic thirst or not, or whether the East side water wasn’t so good as that of the West side; but I do know that he fairly haunted the Pennington farmhouse after that. Mrs. Pennington was home the next time he went, and he asked her about her new girl. To his surprise the good lady was unusually reticent. She couldn’t really say very much about Nelly. No, she didn’t belong anywhere near Riverside. In fact, she — Mrs. Pennington — didn’t think she had any settled home at present. Her father was travelling over the country somewhere. Nelly was a good little girl, and very obliging. Beyond this Winslow could get no more information, so he went around and talked to Nelly, who was sitting on the bench under the poplars and seemed absorbed in watching the sunset.

She dropped her g’s badly and made some grammatical errors that caused Winslow’s flesh to creep on his bones. But any man could have forgiven mistakes from such dimpled lips in such a sweet voice.

He asked her to go for a row up the river in the twilight and she assented; she handled an oar very well, he found out, and the exercise became her. Winslow tried to get her to talk about herself, but failed signally and had to content himself with Mrs. Pennington’s meagre information. He told her about himself frankly enough — how he had had fever in the spring and had been ordered to spend the summer in the country and do nothing useful until his health was fully restored, and how lonesome it was in Riverside in general and at the Beckwith farm in particular. He made out quite a dismal case for himself and if Nelly wasn’t sorry for him, she should have been.

At the end of a fortnight Riverside folks began to talk about Winslow and the Penningtons’ hired girl. He was reported to be “dead gone” on her; he took her out rowing every evening, drove her to preaching up the Bend

on Sunday nights, and haunted the Pennington farmhouse. Wise folks shook their heads over it and wondered that Mrs. Pennington allowed it. Winslow was a gentleman, and that Nelly Ray, whom nobody knew anything about, not even where she came from, was only a common hired girl, and he had no business to be hanging about her. She was pretty, to be sure; but she was absurdly stuck-up and wouldn't associate with other Riverside "help" at all. Well, pride must have a fall; there must be something queer about her when she was so awful sly as to her past life.

Winslow and Nelly did not trouble themselves in the least over all this gossip; in fact, they never even heard it. Winslow was hopelessly in love, when he found this out he was aghast. He thought of his father, the ambitious railroad magnate; of his mother, the brilliant society leader; of his sisters, the beautiful and proud; he was honestly frightened. It would never do; he must not go to see Nelly again. He kept this prudent resolution for twenty-four hours and then rowed over to the West shore. He found Nelly sitting on the bank in her old faded print dress and he straightway forgot everything he ought to have remembered.

Nelly herself never seemed to be conscious of the social gulf between them. At least she never alluded to it in any way, and accepted Winslow's attentions as if she had a perfect right to them. She had broken the record by staying with Mrs. Pennington four weeks, and even the cats were in subjection.

Winslow was well enough to have gone back to the city and, in fact, his father was writing for him. But he couldn't leave Beckwiths', apparently. At any rate he stayed on and met Nelly every day and cursed himself for a cad and a cur and a weak-brained idiot.

One day he took Nelly for a row up the river. They went further than usual around the Bend. Winslow didn't want to go too far, for he knew that a party of his city friends, chaperoned by Mrs. Keyton-Wells, were having a picnic somewhere up along the river shore that day. But Nelly insisted on going on and on, and of course she had her way. When they reached a little pine-fringed headland they came upon the picnickers, within a stone's throw. Everybody recognized Winslow. "Why, there is Burton!" he heard

Mrs. Keyton-Wells exclaim, and he knew she was putting up her glasses. Will Evans, who was an especial chum of his, ran down to the water's edge. "Bless me, Win, where did you come from? Come right in. We haven't had tea yet. Bring your friend too," he added, becoming conscious that Winslow's friend was a mighty pretty girl. Winslow's face was crimson. He avoided Nelly's eye.

"Are them people friends of yours?" she asked in a low tone.

"Yes," he muttered.

"Well, let us go ashore if they want us to," she said calmly. "I don't mind."

For three seconds Winslow hesitated. Then he pulled ashore and helped Nelly to alight on a jutting rock. There was a curious, set expression about his fine mouth as he marched Nelly up to Mrs. Keyton-Wells and introduced her. Mrs. Keyton-Wells's greeting was slightly cool, but very polite. She supposed Miss Ray was some little country girl with whom Burton Winslow was carrying on a summer flirtation; respectable enough, no doubt, and must be treated civilly, but of course wouldn't expect to be made an equal of exactly. The other women took their cue from her, but the men were more cordial. Miss Ray might be shabby, but she was distinctly fetching, and Winslow looked savage.

Nelly was not a whit abashed, seemingly, by the fashionable circle in which she found herself, and she talked away to Will Evans and the others in her soft drawl as if she had known them all her life. All might have gone passably well, had not a little Riverside imp, by name of Rufus Hent, who had been picked up by the picnickers to run their errands, come up just then with a pail of water.

"Golly!" he ejaculated in very audible tones. "If there ain't Mrs. Pennington's hired girl!"

Mrs. Keyton-Wells stiffened with horror. Winslow darted a furious glance at the telltale that would have annihilated anything except a small boy. Will Evans grinned and went on talking to Nelly, who had failed to hear, or at least to heed, the exclamation.

The mischief was done, the social thermometer went down to zero in Nelly's neighbourhood. The women ignored her altogether. Winslow set his teeth together and registered a mental vow to wring Rufus Hent's sunburned neck at the first opportunity. He escorted Nelly to the table and waited on her with ostentatious deference, while Mrs. Keyton-Wells glanced at him stonily and made up her mind to tell his mother when she went home.

Nelly's social ostracism did not affect her appetite. But after lunch was over, she walked down to the skiff. Winslow followed her.

"Do you want to go home?" he asked.

"Yes, it's time I went, for the cats may be raidin' the pantry. But you must not come; your friends here want you."

"Nonsense!" said Winslow sulkily. "If you are going I am too."

But Nelly was too quick for him; she sprang into the skiff, unwound the rope, and pushed off before he guessed her intention.

"I can row myself home and I mean to," she announced, taking up the oars defiantly.

"Nelly," he implored.

Nelly looked at him wickedly.

"You'd better go back to your friends. That old woman with the eyeglasses is watchin' you."

Winslow said something strong under his breath as he went back to the others. Will Evans and his chums began to chaff him about Nelly, but he looked so dangerous that they concluded to stop. There is no denying that Winslow was in a fearful temper just then with Mrs. Keyton-Wells, Evans, himself, Nelly — in fact, with all the world.

His friends drove him home in the evening on their way to the station and dropped him at the Beckwith farm. At dusk he went moodily down to the shore. Far up the Bend was dim and shadowy and stars were shining above the wooded shores. Over the river the Pennington farmhouse lights twinkled out alluringly. Winslow watched them until he could stand it no longer. Nelly had made off with his skiff, but Perry Beckwith's dory was ready to hand. In five minutes, Winslow was grounding her on the West

shore. Nelly was sitting on a rock at the landing place. He went over and sat down silently beside her. A full moon was rising above the dark hills up the Bend and in the faint light the girl was wonderfully lovely.

"I thought you weren't comin' over at all tonight," she said, smiling up at him, "and I was sorry, because I wanted to say goodbye to you."

"Goodbye? Nelly, you're not going away?"

"Yes. The cats were in the pantry when I got home."

"Nelly!"

"Well, to be serious. I'm not goin' for that, but I really am goin'. I had a letter from Dad this evenin'. Did you have a good time after I left this afternoon? Did Mrs. Keyton-Wells thaw out?"

"Hang Mrs. Keyton-Wells! Nelly, where are you going?"

"To Dad, of course. We used to live down south together, but two months ago we broke up housekeepin' and come north. We thought we could do better up here, you know. Dad started out to look for a place to settle down and I came here while he was prospectin'. He's got a house now, he says, and wants me to go right off. I'm goin' tomorrow."

"Nelly, you mustn't go — you mustn't, I tell you," exclaimed Winslow in despair. "I love you — I love you — you must stay with me forever."

"You don't know what you're sayin', Mr. Winslow," said Nelly coldly. "Why, you can't marry me — a common servant girl."

"I can and I will, if you'll have me," answered Winslow recklessly. "I can't ever let you go. I've loved you ever since I first saw you. Nelly, won't you be my wife? Don't you love me?"

"Well, yes, I do," confessed Nelly suddenly; and then it was fully five minutes before Winslow gave her a chance to say anything else.

"Oh, what will your people say?" she contrived to ask at last. "Won't they be in a dreadful state? Oh, it will never do for you to marry me."

"Won't it?" said Winslow in a tone of satisfaction. "I rather think it will. Of course, my family will rampage a bit at first. I daresay Father'll turn me out. Don't worry over that, Nelly. I'm not afraid of work. I'm not afraid of anything except losing you."

“You’ll have to see what Dad says,” remarked Nelly, after another eloquent interlude.

“He won’t object, will he? I’ll write to him or go and see him. Where is he?”

“He is in town at the Arlington.”

“The Arlington!” Winslow was amazed. The Arlington was the most exclusive and expensive hotel in town.

“What is he doing there?”

“Transacting a real estate or railroad deal with your father, I believe, or something of that sort.”

“Nelly!”

“Well?”

“What do you mean?”

“Just what I say.”

Winslow got up and looked at her.

“Nelly, who are you?”

“Helen Ray Scott, at your service, sir.”

“Not Helen Ray Scott, the daughter of the railroad king?”

“The same. Are you sorry that you’re engaged to her? If you are, she’ll stay Nelly Ray.”

Winslow dropped back on the seat with a long breath.

“Nelly, I don’t understand. Why did you deceive me? I feel stunned.”

“Oh, do forgive me,” she said merrily. “I shouldn’t have, I suppose — but you know you took me for the hired girl the very first time you saw me, and you patronized me and called me Nelly; so I let you think so just for fun. I never thought it would come to this. When Father and I came north I took a fancy to come here and stay with Mrs. Pennington — who is an old nurse of mine — until Father decided where to take up our abode. I got here the night before we met. My trunk was delayed so I put on an old cotton dress her niece had left here — and you came and saw me. I made Mrs. Pennington keep the secret — she thought it great fun; and I really was a great hand to do little chores and keep the cats in subjection too. I made mistakes in grammar and dropped my g’s on purpose — it was such

fun to see you wince when I did it. It was cruel to tease you so, I suppose, but it was so sweet just to be loved for myself — not because I was an heiress and a belle — I couldn't bear to tell you the truth. Did you think I couldn't read your thoughts this afternoon, when I insisted on going ashore? You were a little ashamed of me — you know you were. I didn't blame you for that, but if you hadn't gone ashore and taken me as you did I would never have spoken to you again. Mrs. Keyton-Wells won't snub me next time we meet. And some way I don't think your father will turn you out, either. Have you forgiven me yet, Burton?"

"I shall never call you anything but Nelly," said Winslow irrelevantly.

The Red Room

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You would have me tell you the story, Grandchild? 'Tis a sad one and best forgotten — few remember it now. There are always sad and dark stories in old families such as ours.

Yet I have promised and must keep my word. So sit down here at my feet and rest your bright head on my lap, that I may not see in your young eyes the shadows my story will bring across their bonny blue.

I was a mere child when it all happened, yet I remember it but too well, and I can recall how pleased I was when my father's stepmother, Mrs. Montessor — she not liking to be called grandmother, seeing she was but turned of fifty and a handsome woman still — wrote to my mother that she must send little Beatrice up to Montessor Place for the Christmas holidays. So I went joyfully though my mother grieved to part with me; she had little to love save me, my father, Conrad Montessor, having been lost at sea when but three months wed.

My aunts were wont to tell me how much I resembled him, being, so they said, a Montessor to the backbone; and this I took to mean commendation, for the Montessors were a well-descended and well-thought-of family, and the women were noted for their beauty. This I could well believe, since of all my aunts there was not one but was counted a pretty woman. Therefore I took heart of grace when I thought of my dark face and spindling shape, hoping that when I should be grown up I might be counted not unworthy of my race.

The Place was an old-fashioned, mysterious house, such as I delighted in, and Mrs. Montessor was ever kind to me, albeit a little stern, for she was a proud woman and cared but little for children, having none of her own.

But there were books there to pore over without let or hindrance — for nobody questioned of my whereabouts if I but kept out of the way — and

strange, dim family portraits on the walls to gaze upon, until I knew each proud old face well, and had visioned a history for it in my own mind — for I was given to dreaming and was older and wiser than my years, having no childish companions to keep me still a child.

There were always some of my aunts at the Place to kiss and make much of me for my father's sake — for he had been their favourite brother. My aunts — there were eight of them — had all married well, so said people who knew, and lived not far away, coming home often to take tea with Mrs. Montessor, who had always gotten on well with her step-daughters, or to help prepare for some festivity or other — for they were notable housekeepers, every one.

They were all at Montessor Place for Christmas, and I got more petting than I deserved, albeit they looked after me somewhat more strictly than did Mrs. Montessor, and saw to it that I did not read too many fairy tales or sit up later at nights than became my years.

But it was not for fairy tales and sugarplums nor yet for petting that I rejoiced to be at the Place at that time. Though I spoke not of it to anyone, I had a great longing to see my Uncle Hugh's wife, concerning whom I had heard much, both good and bad.

My Uncle Hugh, albeit the oldest of the family, had never married until now, and all the countryside rang with talk of his young wife. I did not hear as much as I wished, for the gossips took heed to my presence when I drew anear and turned to other matters. Yet, being somewhat keener of comprehension than they knew, I heard and understood not a little of their talk.

And so I came to know that neither proud Mrs. Montessor nor my good aunts, nor even my gentle mother, looked with overmuch favour on what my Uncle Hugh had done. And I did hear that Mrs. Montessor had chosen a wife for her stepson, of good family and some beauty, but that my Uncle Hugh would have none of her — a thing Mrs. Montessor found hard to pardon, yet might so have done had not my uncle, on his last voyage to the Indies — for he went often in his own vessels — married and brought home a foreign bride, of whom no one knew aught save that

her beauty was a thing to dazzle the day and that she was of some strange alien blood such as ran not in the blue veins of the Montressors.

Some had much to say of her pride and insolence, and wondered if Mrs. Montessor would tamely yield her mistress-ship to the stranger. But others, who were taken with her loveliness and grace, said that the tales told were born of envy and malice, and that Alicia Montessor was well worthy of her name and station.

So I halted between two opinions and thought to judge for myself, but when I went to the Place my Uncle Hugh and his bride were gone for a time, and I had even to swallow my disappointment and bide their return with all my small patience.

But my aunts and their stepmother talked much of Alicia, and they spoke slightly of her, saying that she was but a light woman and that no good would come of my Uncle Hugh's having wed her, with other things of a like nature. Also they spoke of the company she gathered around her, thinking her to have strange and unbecoming companions for a Montessor. All this I heard and pondered much over, although my good aunts supposed that such a chit as I would take no heed to their whisperings.

When I was not with them, helping to whip eggs and stone raisins, and being watched to see that I ate not more than one out of five, I was surely to be found in the wing hall, poring over my book and grieving that I was no more allowed to go into the Red Room.

The wing hall was a narrow one and dim, connecting the main rooms of the Place with an older wing, built in a curious way. The hall was lighted by small, square-paned windows, and at its end a little flight of steps led up to the Red Room.

Whenever I had been at the Place before — and this was often — I had passed much of my time in this same Red Room. It was Mrs. Montessor's sitting-room then, where she wrote her letters and examined household accounts, and sometimes had an old gossip in to tea. The room was low-ceilinged and dim, hung with red damask, and with odd, square windows high up under the eaves and a dark wainscoting all around it. And there I

loved to sit quietly on the red sofa and read my fairy tales, or talk dreamily to the swallows fluttering crazily against the tiny panes.

When I had gone this Christmas to the Place I soon bethought myself of the Red Room — for I had a great love for it. But I had got no further than the steps when Mrs. Montessor came sweeping down the hall in haste and, catching me by the arm, pulled me back as roughly as if it had been Bluebeard's chamber itself into which I was venturing.

Then, seeing my face, which I doubt not was startled enough, she seemed to repent of her haste and patted me gently on the head.

“There, there, little Beatrice! Did I frighten you, child? Forgive an old woman's thoughtlessness. But be not too ready to go where you are not bidden, and never venture foot in the Red Room now, for it belongs to your Uncle Hugh's wife, and let me tell you she is not over fond of intruders.”

I felt sorry overmuch to hear this, nor could I see why my new aunt should care if I went in once in a while, as had been my habit, to talk to the swallows and misplace nothing. But Mrs. Montessor saw to it that I obeyed her, and I went no more to the Red Room, but busied myself with other matters.

For there were great doings at the Place and much coming and going. My aunts were never idle; there was to be much festivity Christmas week and a ball on Christmas Eve. And my aunts had promised me — though not till I had wearied them of my coaxing — that I should stay up that night and see as much of the gaiety as was good for me. So I did their errands and went early to bed every night without complaint — though I did this the more readily for that, when they thought me safely asleep, they would come in and talk around my bedroom fire, saying that of Alicia which I should not have heard.

At last came the day when my Uncle Hugh and his wife were expected home — though not until my scanty patience was well nigh wearied out — and we were all assembled to meet them in the great hall, where a ruddy firelight was gleaming.

My Aunt Frances had dressed me in my best white frock and my crimson sash, with much lamenting over my skinny neck and arms, and

bade me behave prettily, as became my bringing up. So I slipped in a corner, my hands and feet cold with excitement, for I think every drop of blood in my body had gone to my head, and my heart beat so hardly that it even pained me.

Then the door opened and Alicia — for so I was used to hearing her called, nor did I ever think of her as my aunt in my own mind — came in, and a little in the rear my tall, dark uncle.

She came proudly forward to the fire and stood there superbly while she loosened her cloak, nor did she see me at all at first, but nodded, a little disdainfully, it seemed, to Mrs. Montessor and my aunts, who were grouped about the drawing-room door, very ladylike and quiet.

But I neither saw nor heard aught at the time save her only, for her beauty, when she came forth from her crimson cloak and hood, was something so wonderful that I forgot my manners and stared at her as one fascinated — as indeed I was, for never had I seen such loveliness and hardly dreamed it.

Pretty women I had seen in plenty, for my aunts and my mother were counted fair, but my uncle's wife was as little like to them as a sunset glow to pale moonshine or a crimson rose to white day-lilies.

Nor can I paint her to you in words as I saw her then, with the long tongues of firelight licking her white neck and wavering over the rich masses of her redgold hair.

She was tall — so tall that my aunts looked but insignificant beside her, and they were of no mean height, as became their race; yet no queen could have carried herself more royally, and all the passion and fire of her foreign nature burned in her splendid eyes, that might have been dark or light for aught that I could ever tell, but which seemed always like pools of warm flame, now tender, now fierce.

Her skin was like a delicate white rose leaf, and when she spoke I told my foolish self that never had I heard music before; nor do I ever again think to hear a voice so sweet, so liquid, as that which rippled over her ripe lips.

I had often in my own mind pictured this, my first meeting with Alicia, now in one way, now in another, but never had I dreamed of her speaking to me at all, so that it came to me as a great surprise when she turned and, holding out her lovely hands, said very graciously:

“And is this the little Beatrice? I have heard much of you — come, kiss me, child.”

And I went, despite my Aunt Elizabeth’s black frown, for the glamour of her loveliness was upon me, and I no longer wondered that my Uncle Hugh should have loved her.

Very proud of her was he too; yet I felt, rather than saw — for I was sensitive and quick of perception, as old-young children ever are — that there was something other than pride and love in his face when he looked on her, and more in his manner than the fond lover — as it were, a sort of lurking mistrust.

Nor could I think, though to me the thought seemed as treason, that she loved her husband overmuch, for she seemed half condescending and half disdainful to him; yet one thought not of this in her presence, but only remembered it when she had gone.

When she went out it seemed to me that nothing was left, so I crept lonesomely away to the wing hall and sat down by a window to dream of her; and she filled my thoughts so fully that it was no surprise when I raised my eyes and saw her coming down the hall alone, her bright head shining against the dark old walls.

When she paused by me and asked me lightly of what I was dreaming, since I had such a sober face, I answered her truly that it was of her — whereat she laughed, as one not ill pleased, and said half mockingly:

“Waste not your thoughts so, little Beatrice. But come with me, child, if you will, for I have taken a strange fancy to your solemn eyes. Perchance the warmth of your young life may thaw out the ice that has frozen around my heart ever since I came among these cold Montressors.”

And, though I understood not her meaning, I went, glad to see the Red Room once more. So she made me sit down and talk to her, which I did, for shyness was no failing of mine; and she asked me many questions, and

some that I thought she should not have asked, but I could not answer them, so 'twere little harm.

After that I spent a part of every day with her in the Red Room. And my Uncle Hugh was there often, and he would kiss her and praise her loveliness, not heeding my presence — for I was but a child.

Yet it ever seemed to me that she endured rather than welcomed his caresses, and at times the ever-burning flame in her eyes glowed so luridly that a chill dread would creep over me, and I would remember what my Aunt Elizabeth had said, she being a bitter-tongued woman, though kind at heart — that this strange creature would bring on us all some evil fortune yet.

Then would I strive to banish such thoughts and chide myself for doubting one so kind to me.

When Christmas Eve drew nigh my silly head was full of the ball day and night. But a grievous disappointment befell me, for I awakened that day very ill with a most severe cold; and though I bore me bravely, my aunts discovered it soon, when, despite my piteous pleadings, I was put to bed, where I cried bitterly and would not be comforted. For I thought I should not see the fine folk and, more than all, Alicia.

But that disappointment, at least, was spared me, for at night she came into my room, knowing of my longing — she was ever indulgent to my little wishes. And when I saw her I forgot my aching limbs and burning brow, and even the ball I was not to see, for never was mortal creature so lovely as she, standing there by my bed.

Her gown was of white, and there was nothing I could liken the stuff to save moonshine falling athwart a frosted pane, and out from it swelled her gleaming breast and arms, so bare that it seemed to me a shame to look upon them. Yet it could not be denied they were of wondrous beauty, white as polished marble.

And all about her snowy throat and rounded arms, and in the masses of her splendid hair, were sparkling, gleaming stones, with hearts of pure light, which I know now to have been diamonds, but knew not then, for never had I seen aught of their like.

And I gazed at her, drinking in her beauty until my soul was filled, as she stood like some goddess before her worshipper. I think she read my thought in my face and liked it — for she was a vain woman, and to such even the admiration of a child is sweet.

Then she leaned down to me until her splendid eyes looked straight into my dazzled ones.

“Tell me, little Beatrice — for they say the word of a child is to be believed — tell me, do you think me beautiful?”

I found my voice and told her truly that I thought her beautiful beyond my dreams of angels — as indeed she was. Whereat she smiled as one well pleased.

Then my Uncle Hugh came in, and though I thought that his face darkened as he looked on the naked splendour of her breast and arms, as if he liked not that the eyes of other men should gloat on it, yet he kissed her with all a lover’s fond pride, while she looked at him half mockingly.

Then said he, “Sweet, will you grant me a favour?”

And she answered, “It may be that I will.”

And he said, “Do not dance with that man tonight, Alicia. I mistrust him much.”

His voice had more of a husband’s command than a lover’s entreaty. She looked at him with some scorn, but when she saw his face grow black — for the Montressors brooked scant disregard of their authority, as I had good reason to know — she seemed to change, and a smile came to her lips, though her eyes glowed balefully.

Then she laid her arms about his neck and — though it seemed to me that she had as soon strangled as embraced him — her voice was wondrous sweet and caressing as she murmured in his ear.

He laughed and his brow cleared, though he said still sternly, “Do not try me too far, Alicia.”

Then they went out, she a little in advance and very stately.

After that my aunts also came in, very beautifully and modestly dressed, but they seemed to me as nothing after Alicia. For I was caught in

the snare of her beauty, and the longing to see her again so grew upon me that after a time I did an undutiful and disobedient thing.

I had been straitly charged to stay in bed, which I did not, but got up and put on a gown. For it was in my mind to go quietly down, if by chance I might again see Alicia, myself unseen.

But when I reached the great hall I heard steps approaching and, having a guilty conscience, I slipped aside into the blue parlour and hid me behind the curtains lest my aunts should see me.

Then Alicia came in, and with her a man whom I had never before seen. Yet I instantly bethought myself of a lean black snake, with a glittering and evil eye, which I had seen in Mrs. Montessor's garden two summers ago, and which was like to have bitten me. John, the gardener, had killed it, and I verily thought that if it had a soul, it must have gotten into this man.

Alicia sat down and he beside her, and when he had put his arms about her, he kissed her face and lips. Nor did she shrink from his embrace, but even smiled and leaned nearer to him with a little smooth motion, as they talked to each other in some strange, foreign tongue.

I was but a child and innocent, nor knew I aught of honour and dishonour. Yet it seemed to me that no man should kiss her save only my Uncle Hugh, and from that hour I mistrusted Alicia, though I understood not then what I afterwards did.

And as I watched them — not thinking of playing the spy — I saw her face grow suddenly cold, and she straightened herself up and pushed away her lover's arms.

Then I followed her guilty eyes to the door, where stood my Uncle Hugh, and all the pride and passion of the Montessors sat on his lowering brow. Yet he came forward quietly as Alicia and the snake drew apart and stood up.

At first he looked not at his guilty wife but at her lover, and smote him heavily in the face. Whereat he, being a coward at heart, as are all villains, turned white and slunk from the room with a muttered oath, nor was he stayed.

My uncle turned to Alicia, and very calmly and terribly he said, "From this hour you are no longer wife of mine!"

And there was that in his tone which told that his forgiveness and love should be hers nevermore.

Then he motioned her out and she went, like a proud queen, with her glorious head erect and no shame on her brow.

As for me, when they were gone I crept away, dazed and bewildered enough, and went back to my bed, having seen and heard more than I had a mind for, as disobedient people and eavesdroppers ever do.

But my Uncle Hugh kept his word, and Alicia was no more wife to him, save only in name. Yet of gossip or scandal there was none, for the pride of his race kept secret his dishonour, nor did he ever seem other than a courteous and respectful husband.

Nor did Mrs. Montessor and my aunts, though they wondered much among themselves, learn aught, for they dared question neither their brother nor Alicia, who carried herself as loftily as ever, and seemed to pine for neither lover nor husband. As for me, no one dreamed I knew aught of it, and I kept my own counsel as to what I had seen in the blue parlour on the night of the Christmas ball.

After the New Year I went home, but ere long Mrs. Montessor sent for me again, saying that the house was lonely without little Beatrice. So I went again and found all unchanged, though the Place was very quiet, and Alicia went out but little from the Red Room.

Of my Uncle Hugh I saw little, save when he went and came on the business of his estate, somewhat more gravely and silently than of yore, or brought to me books and sweetmeats from town.

But every day I was with Alicia in the Red Room, where she would talk to me, oftentimes wildly and strangely, but always kindly. And though I think Mrs. Montessor liked our intimacy none too well, she said no word, and I came and went as I listed with Alicia, though never quite liking her strange ways and the restless fire in her eyes.

Nor would I ever kiss her, after I had seen her lips pressed by the snake's, though she sometimes coaxed me, and grew pettish and vexed

when I would not; but she guessed not my reason.

March came in that year like a lion, exceedingly hungry and fierce, and my Uncle Hugh had ridden away through the storm nor thought to be back for some days.

In the afternoon I was sitting in the wing hall, dreaming wondrous daydreams, when Alicia called me to the Red Room. And as I went, I marvelled anew at her loveliness, for the blood was leaping in her face and her jewels were dim before the lustre of her eyes. Her hand, when she took mine, was burning hot, and her voice had a strange ring.

“Come, little Beatrice,” she said, “come talk to me, for I know not what to do with my lone self today. Time hangs heavily in this gloomy house. I do verily think this Red Room has an evil influence over me. See if your childish prattle can drive away the ghosts that riot in these dark old corners — ghosts of a ruined and shamed life! Nay, shrink not — do I talk wildly? I mean not all I say — my brain seems on fire, little Beatrice. Come; it may be you know some grim old legend of this room — it must surely have one. Never was place fitter for a dark deed! Tush! never be so frightened, child — forget my vagaries. Tell me now and I will listen.”

Whereat she cast herself lithely on the satin couch and turned her lovely face on me. So I gathered up my small wits and told her what I was not supposed to know — how that, generations ago, a Montessor had disgraced himself and his name, and that, when he came home to his mother, she had met him in that same Red Room and flung at him taunts and reproaches, forgetting whose breast had nourished him; and that he, frantic with shame and despair, turned his sword against his own heart and so died. But his mother went mad with her remorse, and was kept a prisoner in the Red Room until her death.

So lamely told I the tale, as I had heard my Aunt Elizabeth tell it, when she knew not I listened or understood. Alicia heard me through and said nothing, save that it was a tale worthy of the Montessors. Whereat I bridled, for I too was a Montessor, and proud of it.

But she took my hand soothingly in hers and said, “Little Beatrice, if tomorrow or the next day they should tell you, those cold, proud women,

that Alicia was unworthy of your love, tell me, would you believe them?”

And I, remembering what I had seen in the blue parlour, was silent — for I could not lie. So she flung my hand away with a bitter laugh, and picked lightly from the table anear a small dagger with a jewelled handle.

It seemed to me a cruel-looking toy and I said so — whereat she smiled and drew her white fingers down the thin, shining blade in a fashion that made me cold.

“Such a little blow with this,” she said, “such a little blow — and the heart beats no longer, the weary brain rests, the lips and eyes smile never again! ‘Twere a short path out of all difficulties, my Beatrice.”

And I, understanding her not, yet shivering, begged her to cast it aside, which she did carelessly and, putting a hand under my chin, she turned up my face to hers.

“Little, grave-eyed Beatrice, tell me truly, would it grieve you much if you were never again to sit here with Alicia in this same Red Room?”

And I made answer earnestly that it would, glad that I could say so much truly. Then her face grew tender and she sighed deeply.

Presently she opened a quaint, inlaid box and took from it a shining gold chain of rare workmanship and exquisite design, and this she hung around my neck, nor would suffer me to thank her but laid her hand gently on my lips.

“Now go,” she said. “But ere you leave me, little Beatrice, grant me but the one favour — it may be that I shall never ask another of you. Your people, I know — those cold Montressors — care little for me, but with all my faults, I have ever been kind to you. So, when the morrow’s come, and they tell you that Alicia is as one worse than dead, think not of me with scorn only but grant me a little pity — for I was not always what I am now, and might never have become so had a little child like you been always anear me, to keep me pure and innocent. And I would have you but the once lay your arms about my neck and kiss me.”

And I did so, wondering much at her manner — for it had in it a strange tenderness and some sort of hopeless longing. Then she gently put me from the room, and I sat musing by the hall window until night fell

darkly — and a fearsome night it was, of storm and blackness. And I thought how well it was that my Uncle Hugh had not to return in such a tempest. Yet, ere the thought had grown cold, the door opened and he strode down the hall, his cloak drenched and wind-twisted, in one hand a whip, as though he had but then sprung from his horse, in the other what seemed like a crumpled letter.

Nor was the night blacker than his face, and he took no heed of me as I ran after him, thinking selfishly of the sweetmeats he had promised to bring me — but I thought no more of them when I got to the door of the Red Room.

Alicia stood by the table, hooded and cloaked as for a journey, but her hood had slipped back, and her face rose from it marble-white, save where her wrathful eyes burned out, with dread and guilt and hatred in their depths, while she had one arm raised as if to thrust him back.

As for my uncle, he stood before her and I saw not his face, but his voice was low and terrible, speaking words I understood not then, though long afterwards I came to know their meaning.

And he cast foul scorn at her that she should have thought to fly with her lover, and swore that naught should again thwart his vengeance, with other threats, wild and dreadful enough.

Yet she said no word until he had done, and then she spoke, but what she said I know not, save that it was full of hatred and defiance and wild accusation, such as a mad woman might have uttered.

And she defied him even then to stop her flight, though he told her to cross that threshold would mean her death; for he was a wronged and desperate man and thought of nothing save his own dishonour.

Then she made as if to pass him, but he caught her by her white wrist; she turned on him with fury, and I saw her right hand reach stealthily out over the table behind her, where lay the dagger.

“Let me go!” she hissed.

And he said, “I will not.”

Then she turned herself about and struck at him with the dagger — and never saw I such a face as was hers at the moment.

He fell heavily, yet held her even in death, so that she had to wrench herself free, with a shriek that rings yet in my ears on a night when the wind wails over the rainy moors. She rushed past me unheeding, and fled down the hall like a hunted creature, and I heard the heavy door clang hollowly behind her.

As for me, I stood there looking at the dead man, for I could neither move nor speak and was like to have died of horror. And presently I knew nothing, nor did I come to my recollection for many a day, when I lay abed, sick of a fever and more like to die than live.

So that when at last I came out from the shadow of death, my Uncle Hugh had been long cold in his grave, and the hue and cry for his guilty wife was well nigh over, since naught had been seen or heard of her since she fled the country with her foreign lover.

When I came rightly to my remembrance, they questioned me as to what I had seen and heard in the Red Room. And I told them as best I could, though much aggrieved that to my questions they would answer nothing save to bid me to stay still and think not of the matter.

Then my mother, sorely vexed over my adventures — which in truth were but sorry ones for a child — took me home. Nor would she let me keep Alicia's chain, but made away with it, how I knew not and little cared, for the sight of it was loathsome to me.

It was many years ere I went again to Montessor Place, and I never saw the Red Room more, for Mrs. Montessor had the old wing torn down, deeming its sorrowful memories dark heritage enough for the next Montessor.

So, Grandchild, the sad tale is ended, and you will not see the Red Room when you go next month to Montessor Place. The swallows still build under the eaves, though — I know not if you will understand their speech as I did.

The Settness of Theodosia

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When Theodosia Ford married Wesley Brooke after a courtship of three years, everybody concerned was satisfied. There was nothing particularly romantic in either the courtship or marriage. Wesley was a steady, wellmeaning, rather slow fellow, comfortably off. He was not at all handsome. But Theodosia was a very pretty girl with the milky colouring of an auburn blonde and large china-blue eyes. She looked mild and Madonna-like and was known to be sweet-tempered. Wesley's older brother, Irving Brooke, had married a woman who kept him in hot water all the time, so Heatherton folks said, but they thought there was no fear of that with Wesley and Theodosia. They would get along together all right.

Only old Jim Parmelee shook his head and said, "They might, and then again they mightn't"; he knew the stock they came of and it was a kind you could never predict about.

Wesley and Theodosia were third cousins; this meant that old Henry Ford had been the great-great-grandfather of them both. Jim Parmelee, who was ninety, had been a small boy when this remote ancestor was still alive.

"I mind him well," said old Jim on the morning of Theodosia's wedding day. There was a little group about the blacksmith's forge. Old Jim was in the centre. He was a fat, twinkling-eyed old man, fresh and ruddy in spite of his ninety years. "And," he went on, "he was about the settest man you'd ever see or want to see. When old Henry Ford made up his mind on any p'int a cyclone wouldn't turn him a hairsbreadth — no, nor an earthquake neither. Didn't matter a mite how much he suffered for it — he'd stick to it if it broke his heart. There was always some story or other going round about old Henry's settness. The family weren't quite so bad — only Tom. He was Dosia's great-grandfather, and a regular chip of the old block. Since then it's cropped out now and again all through the

different branches of the family. I mistrust if Dosia hasn't got a spice of it, and Wes Brooke too, but mebbe not."

Old Jim was the only croaker. Wesley and Theodosia were married, in the golden prime of the Indian summer, and settled down on their snug little farm. Dosia was a beautiful bride, and Wesley's pride in her was amusingly apparent. He thought nothing too good for her, the Heatherton people said. It was a sight to make an old heart young to see him march up the aisle of the church on Sunday in all the glossy splendour of his wedding suit, his curly black head held high and his round boyish face shining with happiness, stopping and turning proudly at his pew to show Theodosia in.

They always sat alone together in the big pew, and Alma Spencer, who sat behind them, declared that they held each other's hands all through the service. This lasted until spring; then came a sensation and scandal, such as decorous Heatherton had not known since the time Isaac Allen got drunk at Centreville Fair and came home and kicked his wife.

One evening in early April Wesley came home from the store at "the Corner," where he had lingered to talk over politics and farming methods with his cronies. This evening he was later than usual, and Theodosia had his supper kept warm for him. She met him on the porch and kissed him. He kissed her in return, and held her to him for a minute, with her bright head on his shoulder. The frogs were singing down in the south meadow swamp, and there was a splendour of silvery moonrise over the wooded Heatherton hills. Theodosia always remembered that moment.

When they went in, Wesley, full of excitement, began to talk of what he had heard at the store. Ogden Greene and Tom Cary were going to sell out and go to Manitoba. There were better chances for a man out there, he said; in Heatherton he might slave all his life and never make more than a bare living. Out west he might make a fortune.

Wesley talked on in this strain for some time, rehashing all the arguments he had heard Greene and Cary use. He had always been rather disposed to grumble at his limited chances in Heatherton, and now the great West seemed to stretch before him, full of alluring prospects and

visions. Ogden and Tom wanted him to go too, he said. He had half a notion to. Heatherton was a stickin-the-mud sort of place anyhow.

“What say, Dosia?”

He looked across the table at her, his eyes bright and questioning. Theodosia had listened in silence, as she poured his tea and passed him her hot, flaky biscuits. There was a little perpendicular wrinkle between her straight eyebrows.

“I think Ogden and Tom are fools,” she said crisply. “They have good farms here. What do they want to go west for, or you, either? Don’t get silly notions in your head, Wes.”

Wesley flushed.

“Wouldn’t you go with me, Dosia?” he said, trying to speak lightly.

“No, I wouldn’t,” said Theodosia, in her calm, sweet voice. Her face was serene, but the little wrinkle had grown deeper. Old Jim Parmelee would have known what it meant. He had seen the same expression on old Henry Ford’s face many a time.

Wesley laughed good-humouredly, as if at a child. His heart was suddenly set on going west, and he was sure he could soon bring Theodosia around. He did not say anything more about it just then. Wesley thought he knew how to manage women.

When he broached the subject again, two days later, Theodosia told him plainly that it was no use. She would never consent to leave Heatherton and all her friends and go out to the prairies. The idea was just rank foolishness, and he would soon see that himself.

All this Theodosia said calmly and sweetly, without any trace of temper or irritation. Wesley still believed that he could persuade her and he tried perseveringly for a fortnight. By the end of that time he discovered that Theodosia was not a great-great-granddaughter of old Henry Ford for nothing.

Not that Theodosia ever got angry. Neither did she laugh at him. She met his arguments and pleadings seriously enough, but she never wavered.

“If you go to Manitoba, Wes, you’ll go alone,” she said. “I’ll never go, so there is no use in any more talking.”

Wesley was a descendant of old Henry Ford too. Theodosia's unexpected opposition roused all the latent stubbornness of his nature. He went over to Centreville oftener, and kept his blood at fever heat talking to Greene and Cary, who wanted him to go with them and spared no pains at inducement.

The matter was gossiped about in Heatherton, of course. People knew that Wesley Brooke had caught "the western fever," and wanted to sell out and go to Manitoba, while Theodosia was opposed to it. They thought Dosia would have to give in in the end, but said it was a pity Wes Brooke couldn't be contented to stay where he was well off.

Theodosia's family naturally sided with her and tried to dissuade Wesley. But he was mastered by that resentful irritation, roused in a man by opposition where he thinks he should be master, which will drive him into any cause.

One day he told Theodosia that he was going. She was working her butter in her little, snowy-clean dairy under the great willows by the well. Wesley was standing in the doorway, his stout, broad-shouldered figure filling up the sunlit space. He was frowning and sullen.

"I'm going west in two weeks' time with the boys, Dosia," he said stubbornly. "You can come with me or stay here — just exactly as you please. But I'm going."

Theodosia went on spitting her balls of golden butter on the print in silence. She was looking very neat and pretty in her big white apron, her sleeves rolled up high above her plump, dimpled elbows, and her ruddy hair curling about her face and her white throat. She looked as pliable as her butter.

Her silence angered her husband. He shuffled impatiently.

"Well, what have you to say, Dosia?"

"Nothing," said Theodosia. "If you have made up your mind to go, go you will, I suppose. But I will not. There is no use in talking. We've been over the ground often enough, Wes. The matter is settled."

Up to that moment Wesley had always believed that his wife would yield at last, when she saw that he was determined. Now he realized that

she never would. Under that exterior of milky, dimpled flesh and calm blue eyes was all the iron will of old dead and forgotten Henry Ford. This mildest and meekest of girls and wives was not to be moved a hairsbreadth by all argument or entreaty, or insistence on a husband's rights.

A great, sudden anger came over the man. He lifted his hand and for one moment it seemed to Theodosia as if he meant to strike her. Then he dropped it with the first oath that had ever crossed his lips.

"You listen to me," he said thickly. "If you won't go with me I'll never come back here — never. When you want to do your duty as a wife you can come to me. But I'll never come back."

He turned on his heel and strode away. Theodosia kept on spatting her butter. The little perpendicular wrinkle had come between her brows again. At that moment an odd, almost uncanny resemblance to the old portrait of her great-great-grandfather, which hung on the parlour wall at home, came out on her girlish face.

The fortnight passed by. Wesley was silent and sullen, never speaking to his wife when he could avoid it. Theodosia was as sweet and serene as ever. She made an extra supply of shirts and socks for him, put up his lunch basket, and packed his trunk carefully. But she never spoke of his journey.

He did not sell his farm. Irving Brooke rented it. Theodosia was to live in the house. The business arrangements were simple and soon concluded.

Heatherton folks gossiped a great deal. They all condemned Theodosia. Even her own people sided against her now. They hated to be mixed up in a local scandal, and since Wes was bound to go they told Theodosia that it was her duty to go with him, no matter how much she disliked it. It would be disgraceful not to. They might as well have talked to the four winds. Theodosia was immovable. They coaxed and argued and blamed — it all came to the same thing. Even those of them who could be "set" enough themselves on occasion could not understand Theodosia, who had always been so tractable. They finally gave up, as Wesley had done, baffled. Time would bring her to her senses, they said; you just had to leave that still, stubborn kind alone.

On the morning of Wesley's departure Theodosia arose at sunrise and prepared a tempting breakfast. Irving Brooke's oldest son, Stanley, who was to drive Wesley to the station, came over early with his express wagon. Wesley's trunk, corded and labelled, stood on the back platform. The breakfast was a very silent meal. When it was over Wesley put on his hat and overcoat and went to the door, around which Theodosia's morning-glory vines were beginning to twine. The sun was not yet above the trees and the long shadows lay on the dewy grass. The wet leaves were flickering on the old maples that grew along the fence between the yard and the clover field beyond. The skies were all pearly blue, cleanswept of clouds. From the little farmhouse the green meadows sloped down to the valley, where a blue haze wound in and out like a glistening ribbon.

Theodosia went out and stood looking inscrutably on, while Wesley and Irving hoisted the trunk into the wagon and tied it. Then Wesley came up the porch steps and looked at her.

"Dosia," he said a little huskily, "I said I wouldn't ask you to go again, but I will. Will you come with me yet?"

"No," said Theodosia gently.

He held out his hand. He did not offer to kiss her.

"Goodbye, Dosia."

"Goodbye, Wes."

There was no tremor of an eyelash with her. Wesley smiled bitterly and turned away. When the wagon reached the end of the little lane he turned and looked back for the last time. Through all the years that followed he carried with him the picture of his wife as he saw her then, standing amid the airy shadows and wavering golden lights of the morning, the wind blowing the skirt of her pale blue wrapper about her feet and ruffling the locks of her bright hair into a delicate golden cloud. Then the wagon disappeared around a curve in the road, and Theodosia turned and went back into her desolate home.

For a time there was a great buzz of gossip over the affair. People wondered over it. Old Jim Parmelee understood better than the others.

When he met Theodosia he looked at her with a curious twinkle in his keen old eyes.

“Looks as if a man could bend her any way he’d a mind to, doesn’t she?” he said. “Looks is deceiving. It’ll come out in her face by and by — she’s too young yet, but it’s there. It does seem unnattural to see a woman so stubborn — you’d kinder look for it more in a man.”

Wesley wrote a brief letter to Theodosia when he reached his destination. He said he was well and was looking about for the best place to settle. He liked the country fine. He was at a place called Red Butte and guessed he’d locate there.

Two weeks later he wrote again. He had taken up a claim of three hundred acres. Greene and Cary had done the same. They were his nearest neighbours and were three miles away. He had knocked up a little shack, was learning to cook his own meals, and was very busy. He thought the country was a grand one and the prospects good.

Theodosia answered his letter and told him all the Heatherton news. She signed herself “Theodosia Brooke,” but otherwise there was nothing in the letter to indicate that it was written by a wife to her husband.

At the end of a year Wesley wrote and once more asked her to go out to him. He was getting on well, and was sure she would like the place. It was a little rough, to be sure, but time would improve that.

“Won’t you let bygones be bygones, Dosia?” he wrote, “and come out to me. Do, my dear wife.”

Theodosia wrote back, refusing to go. She never got any reply, nor did she write again.

People had given up talking about the matter and asking Theodosia when she was going out to Wes. Heatherton had grown used to the chronic scandal within its decorous borders. Theodosia never spoke of her husband to anyone, and it was known that they did not correspond. She took her youngest sister to live with her. She had her garden and hens and a cow. The farm brought her enough to live on, and she was always busy.

When fifteen years had gone by there were naturally some changes in Heatherton, sleepy and; unprogressive as it was. Most of the old people

were in the little hillside burying-ground that fronted the sunrise. Old Jim Parmelee was there with his recollections of four generations. Men and women who had been in their prime when Wesley went away were old now and the children were grown up and married.

Theodosia was thirty-five and was nothing like! the slim, dimpled girl who had stood on the porch steps and watched her husband drive away that morning fifteen years ago. She was stout and comely; the auburn hair was darker and arched away from her face in smooth, shining waves instead of the old-time curls. Her face was unlined and fresh-coloured, but no woman could live in subjection to her own unbending will for so many years and not show it. Nobody, looking at Theodosia now, would have found it hard to believe that a woman with such a determined, immovable face could stick to a course of conduct in defiance of circumstances.

Wesley Brooke was almost forgotten. People knew, through correspondents of Greene and Cary, that he had prospered and grown rich. The curious old story had crystallized into accepted history.

A life may go on without ripple or disturbance for so many years that it may seem to have settled into a lasting calm; then a sudden wind of passion may sweep over it and leave behind a wake of tempestuous waters. Such a time came at last to Theodosia.

One day in August Mrs. Emory Merritt dropped in. Emory Merritt's sister was Ogden Greene's wife, and the Merritts kept up an occasional correspondence with her. Hence, Cecilia Merritt always knew what was to be known about Wesley Brooke, and always told Theodosia because she had never been expressly forbidden to do so.

Today she looked slightly excited. Secretly she was wondering if the news she brought would have any effect whatever on Theodosia's impassive calm.

"Do you know, Dosia, Wesley's real sick? In fact, Phoebe Greene says they have very poor hopes of him. He was kind of ailing all the spring, it seems, and about a month ago he was took down with some kind of slow fever they have out there. Phoebe says they have a hired nurse from the

nearest town and a good doctor, but she reckons he won't get over it. That fever goes awful hard with a man of his years."

Cecilia Merritt, who was the fastest talker in Heatherton, had got this out before she was brought up by a queer sound, half gasp, half cry, from Theodosia. The latter looked as if someone had struck her a physical blow.

"Mercy, Dosia, you ain't going to faint! I didn't suppose you'd care. You never seemed to care."

"Did you say," asked Theodosia thickly, "that Wesley was sick — dying?"

"Well, that's what Phoebe said. She may be mistaken. Dosia Brooke, you're a queer woman. I never could make you out and I never expect to. I guess only the Lord who made you can translate you."

Theodosia stood up. The sun was getting low, and the valley beneath them, ripening to harvest, was like a river of gold. She folded up her sewing with a steady hand.

"It's five o'clock, so I'll ask you to excuse me, Cecilia. I have a good deal to attend to. You can ask Emory if he'll drive me to the station in the morning. I'm going out to Wes."

"Well, for the land's sake," said Cecilia Merritt feebly, as she tied on her gingham sunbonnet. She got up and went home in a daze.

Theodosia packed her trunk and worked all night, dry-eyed, with agony and fear tearing at her heart. The iron will had snapped at last, like a broken reed, and fierce self-condemnation seized on her. "I've been a wicked woman," she moaned.

A week from that day Theodosia climbed down from the dusty stage that had brought her from the station over the prairies to the unpretentious little house where Wesley Brooke lived. A young girl, so like what Ogden Greene's wife had been fifteen years before that Theodosia involuntarily exclaimed, "Phoebe," came to the door. Beyond her, Theodosia saw the white-capped nurse.

Her voice trembled.

"Does — does Wesley Brooke live here?" she asked.

The girl nodded.

“Yes. But he is very ill at present. Nobody is allowed to see him.”

Theodosia put up her hand and loosened her bonnet strings as if they were choking her. She had been sick with the fear that Wesley would be dead before she got to him. The relief was almost overwhelming.

“But I must see him,” she cried hysterically — she, the calm, easygoing Dosia, hysterical—”I am his wife — and oh, if he had died before I got here!”

The nurse came forward.

“In that case I suppose you must,” she conceded. “But he does not expect you. I must prepare him for the surprise.”

She turned to the door of a room opening off the kitchen, but Theodosia, who had hardly heard her, was before her. She was inside the room before the nurse could prevent her. Then she stood, afraid and trembling, her eyes searching the dim apartment hungrily.

When they fell on the occupant of the bed Theodosia started in bitter surprise. All unconsciously she had been expecting to find Wesley as he had been when they parted. Could this gaunt, haggard creature, with the unkempt beard and prematurely grey hair and the hollow, beseeching eyes, be the ruddy, boyish-faced husband of her youth? She gave a choking cry of pain and shame, and the sick man turned his head. Their eyes met.

Amazement, incredulity, hope, dread, all flashed in succession over Wesley Brooke’s lined face. He raised himself feebly up.

“Dosia,” he murmured.

Theodosia staggered across the room and fell on her knees by the bed. She clasped his head to her breast and kissed him again and again.

“Oh, Wes, Wes, can you forgive me? I’ve been a wicked, stubborn woman — and I’ve spoiled our lives. Forgive me.”

He held his thin trembling arms around her and devoured her face with his eyes.

“Dosia, when did you come? Did you know I was sick?”

“Wes, I can’t talk till you say you’ve forgiven me.”

“Oh, Dosia, you have just as much to forgive. We were both too set. I should have been more considerate.”

“Just say, I forgive you, Dosia, ’” she entreated.

“I forgive you, Dosia,” he said gently, “and oh, it’s so good to see you once more, darling. There hasn’t been an hour since I left you that I haven’t longed for your sweet face. If I had thought you really cared I’d have gone back. But I thought you didn’t. It broke my heart. You did though, didn’t you?”

“Oh, yes, yes, yes,” she said, holding him more closely, with her tears falling.

When the young doctor from Red Butte came that evening he found a great improvement in his patient. Joy and happiness, those world-old physicians, had done what drugs and medicines had failed to do.

“I’m going to get better, Doc,” said Wesley. “My wife has come and she’s going to stay. You didn’t know I was married, did you? I’ll tell you the story some day. I proposed going back east, but Dosia says she’d rather stay here. I’m the happiest man in Red Butte, Doc.”

He squeezed Theodosia’s hand as he had used to do long ago in Heatherton church, and Dosia smiled down at him. There were no dimples now, but her smile was very sweet. The ghostly finger of old Henry Ford, pointing down through the generations, had lost its power to brand with its malediction the life of these, his descendants. Wesley and Theodosia had joined hands with their long-lost happiness.

The Story of an Invitation

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Bertha Sutherland hurried home from the post office and climbed the stairs of her boardinghouse to her room on the third floor. Her roommate, Grace Maxwell, was sitting on the divan by the window, looking out into the twilight.

A year ago Bertha and Grace had come to Dartmouth to attend the Academy, and found themselves roommates. Bertha was bright, pretty and popular, the favourite of her classmates and teachers; Grace was a grave, quiet girl, dressed in mourning. She was quite alone in the world, the aunt who had brought her up having recently died. At first she had felt shy with bright and brilliant Bertha; but they soon became friends, and the year that followed was a very pleasant one. It was almost ended now, for the terminal exams had begun, and in a week's time the school would close for the holidays.

"Have some chocolates, Grace," said Bertha gaily. "I got such good news in my letter tonight that I felt I must celebrate it fittingly. So I went into Carter's and invested all my spare cash in caramels. It's really fortunate the term is almost out, for I'm nearly bankrupt. I have just enough left to furnish a 'tuck-out' for commencement night, and no more."

"What is your good news, may I ask?" said Grace.

"You know I have an Aunt Margaret — commonly called Aunt Meg — out at Riversdale, don't you? There never was such a dear, sweet, jolly aunty in the world. I had a letter from her tonight. Listen, I'll read you what she says."

I want you to spend your holidays with me, my dear. Mary Fairweather and Louise Fyshe and Lily Dennis are coming, too. So there is just room for one more, and that one must be yourself. Come to Riversdale when school closes, and I'll feed you on strawberries and cream and pound cake

and doughnuts and mince pies, and all the delicious, indigestible things that school girls love and careful mothers condemn. Mary and Lou and Lil are girls after your own heart, I know, and you shall all do just as you like, and we'll have picnics and parties and merry doings galore.

"There," said Bertha, looking up with a laugh. "Isn't that lovely?"

"How delightful it must be to have friends like that to love you and plan for you," said Grace wistfully. "I am sure you will have a pleasant vacation, Bertie. As for me, I am going into Clarkman's bookstore until school reopens. I saw Mr. Clarkman today and he agreed to take me."

Bertha looked surprised. She had not known what Grace's vacation plans were.

"I don't think you ought to do that, Grace," she said thoughtfully. "You are not strong, and you need a good rest. It will be awfully trying to work at Clarkman's all summer."

"There is nothing else for me to do," said Grace, trying to speak cheerfully. "You know I'm as poor as the proverbial church mouse, Bertie, and the simple truth is that I can't afford to pay my board all summer and get my winter outfit unless I do something to earn it. I shall be too busy to be lonesome, and I shall expect long, newsy letters from you, telling me all your fun — passing your vacation on to me at secondhand, you see. Well, I must set to work at those algebra problems. I tried them before dark, but I couldn't solve them. My head ached and I felt so stupid. How glad I shall be when exams are over."

"I suppose I must revise that senior English this evening," said Bertha absently.

But she made no move to do so. She was studying her friend's face. How very pale and thin Grace looked — surely much paler and thinner than when she had come to the Academy, and she had not by any means been plump and rosy then.

I believe she could not stand two months at Clarkman's, thought Bertha. If I were not going to Aunt Meg's, I would ask her to go home with me. Or even if Aunt Meg had room for another guest, I'd just write her all

about Grace and ask if I could bring her with me. Aunt Meg would understand — she always understands. But she hasn't, so it can't be.

Just then a thought darted into Bertha's brain.

"What nonsense!" she said aloud so suddenly and forcibly that Grace fairly jumped.

"What is?"

"Oh, nothing much," said Bertha, getting up briskly. "See here, I'm going to get to work. I've wasted enough time."

She curled herself up on the divan and tried to study her senior English. But her thoughts wandered hopelessly, and finally she gave it up in despair and went to bed. There she could not sleep; she lay awake and wrestled with herself. It was after midnight when she sat up in bed and said solemnly, "I will do it."

Next day Bertha wrote a confidential letter to Aunt Meg. She thanked her for her invitation and then told her all about Grace.

"And what I want to ask, Aunt Meg, is that you will let me transfer my invitation to Grace, and ask her to go to Riversdale this summer in my place. Don't think me ungrateful. No, I'm sure you won't, you always understand things. But you can't have us both, and I'd rather Grace should go. It will do her so much good, and I have a lovely home of my own to go to, and she has none."

Aunt Meg understood, as usual, and was perfectly willing. So she wrote to Bertha and enclosed a note of invitation for Grace.

I shall have to manage this affair very carefully, reflected Bertha. Grace must never suspect that I did it on purpose. I will tell her that circumstances have prevented me from accepting Aunt Meg's invitation. That is true enough — no need to say that the circumstances are hers, not mine. And I'll say I just asked Aunt Meg to invite her in my place and that she has done so.

When Grace came home from her history examination that day, Bertha told her story and gave her Aunt Meg's cordial note.

"You must come to me in Bertha's place," wrote the latter. "I feel as if I knew you from her letters, and I will consider you as a sort of honorary

niece, and I'll treat you as if you were Bertha herself."

"Isn't it splendid of Aunt Meg?" said Bertha diplomatically. "Of course you'll go, Gracie."

"Oh, I don't know," said Grace in bewilderment. "Are you sure you don't want to go, Bertha?"

"Indeed, I do want to go, dreadfully," said Bertha frankly. "But as I've told you, it is impossible. But if I am disappointed, Aunt Meg musn't be. You must go, Grace, and that is all there is about it."

In the end, Grace did go, a little puzzled and doubtful still, but thankful beyond words to escape the drudgery of the counter and the noise and heat of the city. Bertha went home, feeling a little bit blue in secret, it cannot be denied, but also feeling quite sure that if she had to do it all over again, she would do just the same.

The summer slipped quickly by, and finally two letters came to Bertha, one from Aunt Meg and one from Grace.

"I've had a lovely time," wrote the latter, "and, oh, Bertie, what do you think? I am to stay here always. Oh, of course I am going back to school next month, but this is to be my home after this. Aunt Meg — she makes me call her that — says I must stay with her for good."

In Aunt Meg's letter was this paragraph:

Grace is writing to you, and will have told you that I intend to keep her here. You know I have always wanted a daughter of my own, but my greedy brothers and sisters would never give me one of theirs. So I intend to adopt Grace. She is the sweetest girl in the world, and I am very grateful to you for sending her here. You will not know her when you see her. She has grown plump and rosy.

Bertha folded her letters up with a smile. "I have a vague, delightful feeling that I am the good angel in a storybook," she said.

The Touch of Fate

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Mrs. Major Hill was in her element. This did not often happen, for in the remote prairie town of the Canadian Northwest, where her husband was stationed, there were few opportunities for matchmaking. And Mrs. Hill was — or believed herself to be — a born matchmaker.

Major Hill was in command of the detachment of Northwest Mounted Police at Dufferin Bluff. Mrs. Hill was wont to declare that it was the most forsaken place to be found in Canada or out of it; but she did her very best to brighten it up, and it is only fair to say that the N.W.M.P., officers and men, seconded her efforts.

When Violet Thayer came west to pay a long-promised visit to her old schoolfellow, Mrs. Hill's cup of happiness bubbled over. In her secret soul she vowed that Violet should never go back east unless it were posthaste to prepare a wedding trousseau. There were at least half a dozen eligibles among the M.P.s, and Mrs. Hill, after some reflection, settled on Ned Madison as the flower of the flock.

"He and Violet are simply made for each other," she told Major Hill the evening before Miss Thayer's arrival. "He has enough money and he is handsome and fascinating. And Violet is a beauty and a clever woman into the bargain. They can't help falling in love, I'm sure; it's fate!"

"Perhaps Miss Thayer may be booked elsewhere already," suggested Major Hill. He had seen more than one of his wife's card castles fall into heartbreaking ruin.

"Oh, no; Violet would have told me if that were the case. It's really quite time for her to think of settling down. She is twenty-five, you know. The men all go crazy over her, but she's dreadfully hard to please. However, she can't help liking Ned. He hasn't a single fault. I firmly believe it is foreordained."

And in this belief Mrs. Hill rested securely, but nevertheless did not fail to concoct several feminine artifices for the helping on of foreordination. It was a working belief with her that it was always well to have the gods in your debt.

Violet Thayer came, saw, and conquered. Within thirty-six hours of her arrival at Dufferin Bluff she had every one of the half-dozen eligibles at her feet, not to mention a score or more ineligible. She would have been surprised indeed had it been otherwise. Miss Thayer knew her power, and was somewhat unduly fond of exercising it. But she was a very nice girl into the bargain, and so thought one and all of the young men who frequented Mrs. Hill's drawing-room and counted it richly worth while merely to look at Miss Thayer after having seen nothing for weeks except flabby half-breed girls and blue-haired squaws.

Madison was foremost in the field, of course. Madison was really a nice fellow, and quite deserved all Mrs. Hill's encomiums. He was goodlooking and well groomed — could sing and dance divinely and play the violin to perfection. The other M.P.s were all jealous of him, and more so than ever when Violet Thayer came. They did not consider that any one of them had the ghost of a chance if Madison entered the lists against them.

Violet liked Madison, and was very chummy with him after her own fashion. She thought all the M.P.s were nice boys, and they amused her, for which she was grateful. She had expected Dufferin Bluff to be very dull, and doubtless it would pall after a time, but for a change it was delightful.

The sixth evening after her arrival found Mrs. Hill's room crowded, as usual, with M.P.s. Violet was looking her best in a distracting new gown — Sergeant Fox afterwards described it to a brother officer as a “stunning sort of rig between a cream and a blue and a brown”; she flirted impartially with all the members of her circle at first, but gradually narrowed down to Ned Madison, much to the delight of Mrs. Hill, who was hovering around like a small, brilliant butterfly.

Violet was talking to Madison and watching John Spencer out of the tail of her eye. Spencer was not an M.P. He had some government post at

Dufferin Bluff, and this was his first call at Lone Poplar Villa since Miss Thayer's arrival. He did not seem to be dazzled by her at all, and after his introduction had promptly retired to a corner with Major Hill, where they talked the whole evening about the trouble on the Indian reservation at Loon Lake.

Possibly this indifference piqued Miss Thayer. Possibly she considered it refreshing after the servile adulation of the M.P.s. At any rate, when all the latter were gathered about the piano singing a chorus with gusto, she shook Madison off and went over to the corner where Spencer, deserted by the Major, whose bass was wanted, was sitting in solitary state.

He looked up indifferently as Violet shimmered down on the divan beside him. Sergeant Robinson, who was watching them jealously from the corner beyond the palms, and would have given his eyes, or at least one of them, for such a favour, mentally vowed that Spencer was the dullest fellow he had ever put those useful members on.

"Don't you sing, Mr. Spencer?" asked Violet by way of beginning a conversation, as she turned her splendid eyes full upon him. Robinson would have lost his head under them, but Spencer kept his heroically.

"No," was his calmly brief reply, given without any bluntness, but with no evident intention of saying anything more.

In spite of her social experience Violet felt disconcerted.

"If he doesn't want to talk to me I won't try to make him," she thought crossly. No man had ever snubbed her so before.

Spencer listened immovably to the music for a time. Then he turned to his companion with a palpable effort to be civilly sociable.

"How do you like the west, Miss Thayer?" he said.

Violet smiled — the smile most men found dangerous.

"Very much, so far as I have seen it. There is a flavour about the life here that I like, but I dare say it would soon pall. It must be horribly lonesome here most of the time, especially in winter."

"The M.P.s are always growling that it is," returned Spencer with a slight smile. "For my own part I never find it so."

Violet decided that his smile was very becoming to him and that she liked the way his dark hair grew over his forehead.

“I don’t think I’ve seen you at Lone Poplar Villa before?” she said.

“No. I haven’t been here for some time. I came up tonight to see the Major about the Loon Lake trouble.”

“Otherwise you wouldn’t have come,” thought Violet. “Flattering — very!” Aloud she said, “Is it serious?”

“Oh, no. A mere squabble among the Indians. Have you ever visited the Reservation, Miss Thayer? No? Well, you should get some of your M.P. friends to take you out. It would be worth while.”

“Why don’t you ask me to go yourself?” said Violet audaciously.

Spencer smiled again. “Have I failed in politeness by not doing so? I fear you would find me an insufferably dull companion.”

So he was not going to ask her after all. Violet felt piqued. She was also conscious of a sensation very near akin to disappointment. She looked across at Madison. How trim and dapper he was!

“I hate a bandbox man,” she said to herself.

Spencer meanwhile had picked up one of Mrs. Hill’s novels from the stand beside him.

“Fools of Habit,” he said, glancing at the cover. “I see it is making quite a sensation down east. I suppose you’ve read it?”

“Yes. It is very frivolous and clever — all froth but delightful froth. Did you like it?”

Spencer balanced the novel reflectively on his slender brown hand.

“Well, yes, rather. But I don’t care for novels as a rule. I don’t understand them. The hero of this book, now — do you believe that a man in love would act as he did?”

“I don’t know,” said Violet amusedly. “You ought to be a better judge than I. You are a man.”

“I have never loved anybody, so I am in no position to decide,” said Spencer.

There was as little self-consciousness in his voice as if he were telling her a fact concerning the Loon Lake trouble. Violet rose to the occasion.

“You have an interesting experience to look forward to,” she said.

Spencer turned his deep-set grey eyes squarely upon her.

“I don’t know that. When I said I had never loved, I meant more than the love of a man for some particular woman. I meant love in every sense. I do not know what it is to have an affection for any human being. My parents died before I can remember. My only living relative was a penurious old uncle who brought me up for shame’s sake and kicked me out on the world as soon as he could. I don’t make friends easily. I have a few acquaintances whom I like, but there is not a soul on earth for whom I care, or who cares for me.”

“What a revelation love will be to you when it comes,” said Violet softly. Again he looked into her eyes.

“Do you think it will come?” he asked.

Before she could reply Mrs. Hill pounced upon them. Violet was wanted to sing. Mr. Spencer would excuse her, wouldn’t he? Mr. Spencer did so obligingly. Moreover, he got up and bade his hostess good night. Violet gave him her hand.

“You will call again?” she said.

Spencer looked across at Madison — perhaps it was accidental.

“I think not,” he said. “If, as you say, love will come some time, it would be a very unpleasant revelation if it came in hopeless guise, and one never knows what may happen.”

Miss Thayer was conscious of a distinct fluttering of her heart as she went across to the piano. This was a new sensation for her, and worthy of being analyzed. After the M.P.s had gone she asked Mrs. Hill who Mr. Spencer was.

“Oh, John Spencer,” said Mrs. Hill carelessly. “He’s at the head of the Land Office here. That’s really all I know about him. Jack says he is a downright good fellow and all that, you know. But he’s no earthly good in a social way; he can’t talk or he won’t. He’s flat. So different from Mr. Madison, isn’t he?”

“Very,” said Violet emphatically.

After Mrs. Hill had gone out Violet walked to the nearest mirror and looked at herself with her forefinger in the dimple of her chin.

"It is very odd," she said. She did not mean the dimple.

Spencer had told her he was not coming back. She did not believe this, but she did not expect him for a few days. Consequently, when he appeared the very next evening she was surprised. Madison, to whom she was talking when Spencer entered, does not know to this day what she had started to say to him, for she never finished her sentence.

"I wonder if it is the Loon Lake affair again?" she thought nervously.

Mrs. Hill came up at this point and whisked Madison off for a waltz. Spencer, seeing his chance, came straight across the room to her. Sergeant Robinson, who was watching them as usual, is willing to make affidavit that Miss Thayer changed colour.

After his greeting Spencer said nothing. He sat beside her, and they watched Mrs. Hill and Madison dancing. Violet wondered why she did not feel bored. When she saw Madison coming back to her she was conscious of an unreasonable anger with him. She got up abruptly.

"Let us go out on the verandah," she said imperiously. "It is absolutely stifling in here."

They went out. It was very cool and dusky. The lights of the town twinkled out below them, and the prairie bluffs behind them were dark and sibilant.

"I am going to drive over to Loon Lake tomorrow afternoon to look into affairs there," said Spencer. "Will you go with me?"

Violet reflected a moment. "You didn't ask me as if you really wanted me to go," she said.

Spencer put his hand over the white fingers that rested on the railing. He bent forward until his breath stirred the tendrils of hair on her forehead.

"Yes, I do," he said distinctly. "I want you to go with me to Loon Lake tomorrow more than I ever wanted any thing in my life before."

Later on, when everybody had gone, Violet had her bad quarter of an hour with Mrs. Hill. That lady felt herself aggrieved.

“I think you treated poor Ned very badly tonight, Vi. He felt really blue over it. And it was awfully bad form to go out with Spencer as you did and stay there so long. And you oughtn’t to flirt with him — he doesn’t understand the game.”

“I’m not going to flirt with him,” said Miss Thayer calmly.

“Oh, I suppose it’s just your way. Only don’t turn the poor fellow’s head. By the way, Ned is coming up with his camera tomorrow afternoon to take us all.”

“I’m afraid he won’t find me at home,” said Violet sweetly. “I am going out to Loon Lake with Mr. Spencer.”

Mrs. Hill flounced off to bed in a pet. She was disgusted with everything, she declared to the Major. Things had been going so nicely, and now they were all muddled.

“Isn’t Madison coming up to time?” queried the Major sleepily.

“Madison! It’s Violet. She is behaving abominably. She treated poor Ned shamefully tonight. You saw yourself how she acted with Spencer, and she’s going to Loon Lake with him tomorrow, she says. I’m sure I don’t know what she can see in him. He’s the dullest, pokiest fellow alive — so different from her in every way.”

“Perhaps that is why she likes him,” suggested the Major. “The attraction of opposites and all that, you know.”

But Mrs. Hill crossly told him he didn’t know anything about it, so, being a wise man, he held his tongue.

During the next two weeks Mrs. Hill was the most dissatisfied woman in the four districts, and every M.P. down to the rawest recruit anathemized Spencer in secret a dozen times a day. Violet simply dropped everyone else, including Madison, in the coolest, most unmistakable way.

One night Spencer did not come to Lone Poplar Villa. Violet looked for him to the last. When she realized that he was not coming she went to the verandah to have it out with herself. As she sat huddled up in a dim corner beneath a silkily rustling western maple two M.P.s came out and, not seeing her, went on with their conversation.

“Heard about Spencer?” questioned one.

“No. What of him?”

“Well, they say Miss Thayer’s thrown him over. Yesterday I was passing here about four in the afternoon and I saw Spencer coming in. I went down to the Land Office and was chatting to Cribson when the door opened about half an hour later and Spencer burst in. He was pale as the dead, and looked wild. ‘Has Fyshe gone to Rainy River about those Crown Lands yet?’ he jerked out. Cribson said, ‘No.’ Then tell him he needn’t; I’m going myself,’ said Spencer and out he bolted. He posted off to Rainy River today, and won’t be back for a fortnight. She’ll be gone then.”

“Rather rough on Spencer after the way she encouraged him,” returned the other as they passed out of earshot.

Violet got up. All the callers were gone, and she swept in to Mrs. Hill dramatically.

“Edith,” she said in the cold, steady voice that, to those who knew her, meant breakers ahead for somebody, “Mr. Spencer was here yesterday when I was riding with the Major, was he not? What did you tell him about me?”

Mrs. Hill looked at Violet’s blazing eyes and wilted.

“I — didn’t tell him anything — much.”

“What was it?”

Mrs. Hill began to sob.

“Don’t look at me like that, Violet! He just dropped in and we were talking about you — at least I was — and I had heard that Harry St. Maur was paying you marked attention before you came west — and — and that some people thought you were engaged — and so — and so—”

“You told Mr. Spencer that I was engaged to Harry St. Maur?”

“No-o-o — I just hinted. I didn’t mean an-any harm. I never dreamed you’d really c-care. I thought you were just amusing yourself — and so did everybody — and I wanted Ned Madison—”

Violet had turned very pale.

“I love him,” she said hoarsely, “and you’ve sent him away. He’s gone to Rainy River. I shall never see him again!”

“Oh, yes, you will,” gasped Mrs. Hill faintly. “He’ll come back when he knows — you c-can write and tell him—”

“Do you suppose I am going to write and ask him to come back?” said Violet wildly. “I’ve enough pride left yet to keep me from doing that for a man at whose head I’ve thrown myself openly — yes, openly, and who has never, in words at least, told me he cared anything about me. I will never forgive you, Edith!”

Then Mrs. Hill found herself alone with her lacerated feelings. After soothing them with a good cry, she set to work thinking seriously. There was no doubt she had muddled things badly, but there was no use leaving them in a muddle when a word or two fitly spoken might set them straight.

Mrs. Hill sat down and wrote a very diplomatic letter before she went to bed, and the next morning she waylaid Sergeant Fox and asked him if he would ride down to Rainy River with a very important message for Mr. Spencer. Sergeant Fox wondered what it could be, but it was not his to reason why; it was his only to mount and ride with all due speed, for Mrs. Hill’s whims and wishes were as stringent and binding as the rules of the force.

That evening when Mrs. Hill and Violet — the latter very silent and regal — were sitting on the verandah, a horseman came galloping up the Rainy River trail. Mrs. Hill excused herself and went in. Five minutes later John Spencer, covered with the alkali dust of his twenty miles’ ride, dismounted at Violet’s side.

The M.P.s gave a concert at the barracks that night and Mrs. Hill and her Major went to it, as well as everyone else of any importance in town except Violet and Spencer. They sat on Major Hill’s verandah and watched the moon rising over the bluffs and making milk-white reflections in the prairie lakes.

“It seems a year of misery since last night,” sighed Violet happily.

“You couldn’t have been quite as miserable as I was,” said Spencer earnestly. “You were everything — absolutely everything to me. Other men have little rills and driblets of affection for sisters and cousins and aunts, but everything in me went out to you. Do you remember you told

me the first time we met that love would be a revelation to me? It has been more. It has been a new gospel. I hardly dared hope you could care for me. Even yet I don't know why you do."

"I love you," said Violet gravely, "because you are you."

Than which, of course, there could be no better reason.

The Waking of Helen

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Robert Reeves looked somewhat curiously at the girl who was waiting on him at his solitary breakfast. He had not seen her before, arriving at his summer boarding house only the preceding night.

It was a shabby farmhouse on the inland shore of a large bay that was noted for its tides, and had wonderful possibilities of light and shade for an impressionist. Reeves was an enthusiastic artist. It mattered little to him that the boarding accommodations were most primitive, the people uncultured and dull, the place itself utterly isolated, as long as he could revel in those transcendent sunsets and sunrises, those marvellous moonlights, those wonderful purple shores and sweeps of shimmering blue water.

The owner of the farm was Angus Fraser, and he and his wife seemed to be a reserved, uncouth pair, with no apparent interest in life save to scratch a bare living out of their few stony acres. He had an impression that they were childless and was at a loss to place this girl who poured his tea and brought in his toast. She did not resemble either Fraser or his wife. She was certainly not beautiful, being very tall and rather awkward, and dressed in a particularly unbecoming dark print wrapper. Her luxuriant hair was thick and black, and was coiled in a heavy knot at the nape of her neck. Her features were delicate but irregular, and her skin was very brown. Her eyes attracted Reeves's notice especially; they were large and dark and full of a half-unconscious, wistful longing, as if a prisoned soul behind them were vainly trying to reveal itself.

Reeves could find out nothing of her from herself, for she responded to his tentative questions about the place in the briefest fashion. Afterwards he interviewed Mrs. Fraser cautiously, and ascertained that the girl's name was Helen Fraser, and that she was Angus's niece.

“Her father and mother are dead and we’ve brought her up. Helen’s a good girl in most ways — a little obstinate and sulky now and then — but generally she’s steady enough, and as for work, there ain’t a girl in Bay Beach can come up to her in house or field. Angus calculates she saves him a man’s wages clear. No, I ain’t got nothing to say against Helen.”

Nevertheless, Reeves felt somehow that Mrs. Fraser did not like her husband’s niece. He often heard her scolding or nagging Helen at her work, and noticed that the latter never answered back. But once, after Mrs. Angus’s tongue had been especially bitter, he met the girl hurrying along the hall from the kitchen with her eyes full of tears. Reeves felt as if someone had struck him a blow. He went to Angus and his wife that afternoon. He wished to paint a shore picture, he said, and wanted a model. Would they allow Miss Fraser to pose for him? He would pay liberally for her time.

Angus and his wife had no objection. They would pocket the money, and Helen could be spared a spell every day as well as not. Reeves told Helen of his plan himself, meeting her in the evening as she was bringing the cows home from the low shore pastures beyond the marsh. He was surprised at the sudden illumination of her face. It almost transfigured her from a plain, sulky-looking girl into a beautiful woman.

But the glow passed quickly. She assented to his plan quietly, almost lifelessly. He walked home with her behind the cows and talked of the sunset and the mysterious beauty of the bay and the purple splendour of the distant coasts. She listened in silence. Only once, when he spoke of the distant murmur of the open sea, she lifted her head and looked at him.

“What does it say to you?” she asked.

“It speaks of eternity. And to you?”

“It calls me,” she answered simply, “and then I want to go out and meet it — and it hurts me too. I can’t tell how or why. Sometimes it makes me feel as if I were asleep and wanted to wake and didn’t know how.”

She turned and looked out over the bay. A dying gleam of sunset broke through a cloud and fell across her hair. For a moment she seemed the

spirit of the shore personified — all its mystery, all its uncertainty, all its elusive charm.

She has possibilities, thought Reeves.

Next day he began his picture. At first he had thought of painting her as the incarnation of a sea spirit, but decided that her moods were too fitful. So he began to sketch her as “Waiting” — a woman looking out across the bay with a world of hopeless longing in her eyes. The subject suited her well, and the picture grew apace.

When he was tired of work he made her walk around the shore with him, or row up the head of the bay in her own boat. He tried to draw her out, at first with indifferent success. She seemed to be frightened of him. He talked to her of many things — the far outer world whose echoes never reached her, foreign lands where he had travelled, famous men and women whom he had met, music, art and books. When he spoke of books he touched the right chord. One of those transfiguring flashes he delighted to evoke now passed over her plain face.

“That is what I’ve always wanted,” she said hungrily, “and I never get them. Aunt hates to see me reading. She says it is a waste of time. And I love it so. I read every scrap of paper I can get hold of, but I hardly ever see a book.”

The next day Reeves took his Tennyson to the shore and began to read the Idylls of the King to her.

“It is beautiful,” was her sole verbal comment, but her rapt eyes said everything.

After that he never went out with her without a book — now one of the poets, now some prose classic. He was surprised by her quick appreciation of and sympathy with the finest passages. Gradually, too, she forgot her shyness and began to talk. She knew nothing of his world, but her own world she knew and knew well. She was a mine of traditional history about the bay. She knew the rocky coast by heart, and every old legend that clung to it. They drifted into making excursions along the shore and explored its wildest retreats. The girl had an artist’s eye for scenery and colour effect.

“You should have been an artist,” Reeves told her one day when she had pointed out to him the exquisite loveliness of a shaft of light falling through a cleft in the rocks across a dark-green pool at their base.

“I would rather be a writer,” she said slowly, “if I could only write something like those books you have read to me. What a glorious destiny it must be to have something to say that the whole world is listening for, and to be able to say it in words that will live forever! It must be the noblest human lot.”

“Yet some of those men and women were neither good nor noble,” said Reeves gently, “and many of them were unhappy.”

Helen dismissed the subject as abruptly as she always did when the conversation touched too nearly on the sensitive edge of her soul dreams.

“Do you know where I am taking you today?” she said.

“No — where?”

“To what the people here call the Kelpy’s Cave. I hate to go there. I believe there is something uncanny about it, but I think you will like to see it. It is a dark little cave in the curve of a small cove, and on each side the headlands of rock run far out. At low tide we can walk right around, but when the tide comes in it fills the Kelpy’s Cave. If you were there and let the tide come past the points, you would be drowned unless you could swim, for the rocks are so steep and high it is impossible to climb them.”

Reeves was interested.

“Was anyone ever caught by the tide?”

“Yes,” returned Helen, with a shudder. “Once, long ago, before I was born, a girl went around the shore to the cave and fell asleep there — and the tide came in and she was drowned. She was young and very pretty, and was to have been married the next week. I’ve been afraid of the place ever since.”

The treacherous cave proved to be a picturesque and innocent-looking spot, with the beach of glittering sand before it and the high gloomy walls of rock on either hand.

“I must come here some day and sketch it,” said Reeves enthusiastically, “and you must be the Kelpy, Helen, and sit in the cave

with your hair wrapped about you and seaweed clinging to it.”

“Do you think a kelpy would look like that?” said the girl dreamily. “I don’t. I think it is a wild, wicked little sea imp, malicious and mocking and cruel, and it sits here and watches for victims.”

“Well, never mind your sea kelpies,” Reeves said, fishing out his Longfellow. “They are a tricky folk, if all tales be true, and it is supposed to be a very rash thing to talk about them in their own haunts. I want to read you ‘The Building of the Ship.’ You will like it, I’m sure.”

When the tide turned they went home.

“We haven’t seen the kelpy, after all,” said Reeves.

“I think I shall see him some day,” said Helen gravely. “I think he is waiting for me there in that gloomy cave of his, and some time or other he will get me.”

Reeves smiled at the gloomy fancy, and Helen smiled back at him with one of her sudden radiances. The tide was creeping swiftly up over the white sands. The sun was low and the bay was swimming in a pale blue glory. They parted at Clam Point, Helen to go for the cows and Reeves to wander on up the shore. He thought of Helen at first, and the wonderful change that had come over her of late; then he began to think of another face — a marvellously lovely one with blue eyes as tender as the waters before him. Then Helen was forgotten.

The summer waned swiftly. One afternoon Reeves took a fancy to revisit the Kelpy’s Cave. Helen could not go. It was harvest time, and she was needed in the field.

“Don’t let the kelpy catch you,” she said to him half seriously. “The tide will turn early this afternoon, and you are given to daydreaming.”

“I’ll be careful,” he promised laughingly, and he meant to be careful. But somehow when he reached the cave its unwholesome charm overcame him, and he sat down on the boulder at its mouth.

“An hour yet before tide time,” he said. “Just enough time to read that article on impressionists in my review and then stroll home by the sandshore.”

From reading he passed to daydreaming, and daydreaming drifted into sleep, with his head pillowed on the rocky walls of the cave.

How long he had slept he did not know, but he woke with a start of horror. He sprang to his feet, realizing his position instantly. The tide was in — far in past the headlands already. Above and beyond him towered the pitiless unscalable rocks. There was no way of escape.

Reeves was no coward, but life was sweet to him, and to die like that — like a drowned rat in a hole — to be able to do nothing but wait for that swift and sure oncoming death! He reeled against the damp rock wall, and for a moment sea and sky and prisoning headlands and white-lined tide whirled before his eyes.

Then his head grew clearer. He tried to think. How long had he? Not more than twenty minutes at the outside. Well, death was sure and he would meet it bravely. But to wait — to wait helplessly! He should go; mad with the horror of it before those endless minutes would have passed!

He took something from his pocket and bent his head over it, pressing his lips to it repeatedly. And then, when he raised his face again, a dory was coming around the headland on his right, and Helen Fraser was in it.

Reeves was dizzy again with the shock of joy and thankfulness. He ran down over the little stretch of sand still uncovered by the tide and around to the rocks of the headlands against which the dory was already grating. He sprang forward impulsively and caught the girl's cold hands in his as she dropped the oars and stood up.

"Helen, you have saved me! How can I ever thank you? I—"

He broke off abruptly, for she was looking up at him, breathlessly and voicelessly, with her whole soul in her eyes. He saw in them a revelation that amazed him; he dropped her hands and stepped back as if she had struck him in the face.

Helen did not notice the change in him. She clasped her hands together and her voice trembled.

"Oh, I was afraid I should be too late! When I came in from the field Aunt Hannah said you had not come back — and I knew it was tide time

— and I felt somehow that it had caught you in the cave. I ran down over the marsh and took Joe Simmon's dory. If I had not got here in time—”

She broke off shiveringly. Reeves stepped into the dory and took up the oars.

“The kelpy would have been sure of its victim then,” he said, trying to speak lightly. “It would have almost served me right for neglecting your warning. I was very careless. You must let me row back. I am afraid you have overtasked your strength trying to cheat the kelpy.”

Reeves rowed homeward in an absolute silence. Helen did not speak and he could not. When they reached the dory anchorage he helped her out.

“I think I'll go out to the Point for a walk,” he said. “I want to steady my nerves. You must go right home and rest. Don't be anxious — I won't take any more chances with sea kelpies.”

Helen went away without a word, and Reeves walked slowly out to the Point. He was grieved beyond measure at the discovery he believed he had made. He had never dreamed of such a thing. He was not a vain man, and was utterly free from all tendency to flirtation. It had never occurred to him that the waking of the girl's deep nature might be attended with disastrous consequences. He had honestly meant to help her, and what had he done?

He felt very uncomfortable; he could not conscientiously blame himself, but he saw that he had acted foolishly. And of course he must go away at once. And he must also tell her something she ought to know. He wished he had told her long ago.

The following afternoon was a perfect one. Reeves was sketching on the sandshore when Helen came. She sat down on a camp stool a little to one side and did not speak. After a few moments Reeves pushed away his paraphernalia impatiently.

“I don't feel in a mood for work,” he said. “It is too dreamy a day — one ought to do nothing to be in keeping. Besides, I'm getting lazy now that my vacation is nearly over. I must go in a few days.”

He avoided looking at her, so he did not see the sudden pallor of her face.

“So soon?” she said in a voice expressive of no particular feeling.

“Yes. I ought not to have lingered so long. My world will be forgetting me and that will not do. It has been a very pleasant summer and I shall be sorry to leave Bay Beach.”

“But you will come back next summer?” asked Helen quickly. “You said you would.”

Reeves nerved himself for his very distasteful task.

“Perhaps,” he said, with an attempt at carelessness, “but if I do so, I shall not come alone. Somebody who is very dear to me will come with me — as my wife. I have never told you about her, Helen, but you and I are such good friends that I do not mind doing so now. I am engaged to a very sweet girl, and we expect to be married next spring.”

There was a brief silence. Reeves had been vaguely afraid of a scene and was immensely relieved to find his fear unrealized. Helen sat very still. He could not see her face. Did she care, after all? Was he mistaken?

When she spoke her voice was perfectly calm.

“Thank you, it is very kind of you to tell me about her. I suppose she is very beautiful.”

“Yes, here is her picture. You can judge for yourself.”

Helen took the portrait from his hand and looked at it steadily. It was a miniature painted on ivory, and the face looking out from it was certainly lovely.

“It is no wonder you love her,” said the girl in a low tone as she handed it back. “It must be strange to be so beautiful as that.”

Reeves picked up his Tennyson.

“Shall I read you something? What will you have?”

“Read ‘Elaine,’ please. I want to hear that once more.”

Reeves felt a sudden dislike to her choice.

“Wouldn’t you prefer something else?” he asked, hurriedly turning over the leaves. “‘Elaine’ is rather sad. Shan’t I read ‘Guinevere’ instead?”

“No,” said Helen in the same lifeless tone. “I have no sympathy for Guinevere. She suffered and her love was unlawful, but she was loved in

return — she did not waste her love on someone who did not want or care for it. Elaine did, and her life went with it. Read me the story.”

Reeves obeyed. When he had finished he held the book out to her.

“Helen, will you take this Tennyson from me in remembrance of our friendship and of the Kelpy’s Cave? I shall never forget that I owe my life to you.”

“Thank you.”

She took the book and placed a little thread of crimson seaweed that had been caught in the sand between the pages of “Elaine.” Then she rose.

“I must go back now. Aunt will need me. Thank you again for the book, Mr. Reeves, and for all your kindness to me.”

Reeves was relieved when the interview was over. Her calmness had reassured him. She did not care very much, after all; it was only a passing fancy, and when he was gone she would soon forget him.

He went away a few days later, and Helen bade him an impassive goodbye. When the afternoon was far spent she stole away from the house to the shore, with her Tennyson in her hand, and took her way to the Kelpy’s Cave.

The tide was just beginning to come in. She sat down on the big boulder where Reeves had fallen asleep. Beyond stretched the gleaming blue waters, mellowing into a hundred fairy shades horizonward.

The shadows of the rocks were around her. In front was the white line of the incoming tide; it had almost reached the headlands. A few minutes more and escape would be cut off — yet she did not move.

When the dark green water reached her, and the lapping wavelets swished up over the hem of her dress, she lifted her head and a sudden strange smile flashed over her face.

Perhaps the kelpy understood it.

The Way of the Winning of Anne

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Jerome Irving had been courting Anne Stockard for fifteen years. He had begun when she was twenty and he was twenty-five, and now that Jerome was forty, and Anne, in a village where everybody knew everybody else's age, had to own to being thirty-five, the courtship did not seem any nearer a climax than it had at the beginning. But that was not Jerome's fault, poor fellow!

At the end of the first year he had asked Anne to marry him, and Anne had refused. Jerome was disappointed, but he kept his head and went on courting Anne just the same; that is he went over to Esek Stockard's house every Saturday night and spent the evening, he walked home with Anne from prayer meeting and singing school and parties when she would let him, and asked her to go to all the concerts and socials and quilting frolics that came off. Anne never would go, of course, but Jerome faithfully gave her the chance. Old Esek rather favoured Jerome's suit, for Anne was the plainest of his many daughters, and no other fellow seemed at all anxious to run Jerome off the track; but she took her own way with true Stockard firmness, and matters were allowed to drift on at the will of time or chance.

Three years later Jerome tried his luck again, with precisely the same result, and after that he had asked Anne regularly once a year to marry him, and just as regularly Anne said no a little more brusquely and a little more decidedly every year. Now, in the mellowness of a fifteen-year-old courtship, Jerome did not mind it at all. He knew that everything comes to the man who has patience to wait.

Time, of course, had not stood still with Anne and Jerome, or with the history of Deep Meadows. At the Stockard homestead the changes had been many and marked. Every year or two there had been a wedding in the big brick farmhouse, and one of old Esek's girls had been the bride each

time. Julia and Grace and Celia and Betty and Theodosia and Clementina Stockard were all married and gone. But Anne had never had another lover. There had to be an old maid in every big family she said, and she was not going to marry Jerome Irving just for the sake of having Mrs. on her tombstone.

Old Esek and his wife had been put away in the Deep Meadows burying-ground. The broad, fertile Stockard acres passed into Anne's possession. She was a good businesswoman, and the farm continued to be the best in the district. She kept two hired men and a servant girl, and the sixteen-year-old of her oldest sister lived with her. There were few visitors at the Stockard place now, but Jerome "dropped in" every Saturday night with clockwork regularity and talked to Anne about her stock and advised her regarding the rotation of her crops and the setting out of her orchards. And at ten o'clock he would take his hat and cane and tell Anne to be good to herself, and go home.

Anne had long since given up trying to discourage him; she even accepted attentions from him now that she had used to refuse. He always walked home with her from evening meetings and was her partner in the games at quilting parties. It was great fun for the young folks. "Old Jerome and Anne" were a standing joke in Deep Meadows. But the older people had ceased to expect anything to come of it.

Anne laughed at Jerome as she had always done, and would not have owned for the world that she could have missed him. Jerome was useful, she admitted, and a comfortable friend; and she would have liked him well enough if he would only omit that ridiculous yearly ceremony of proposal.

It was Jerome's fortieth birthday when Anne refused him again. He realized this as he went down the road in the moonlight, and doubt and dismay began to creep into his heart. Anne and he were both getting old — there was no disputing that fact. It was high time that he brought her to terms if he was ever going to. Jerome was an easygoing mortal and always took things placidly, but he did not mean to have all those fifteen years of patient courting go for nothing. He had thought Anne would get tired of saying no, sooner or later, and say yes, if for no other reason than to have a

change; but getting tired did not seem to run in the Stockard blood. She had said no that night just as coolly and decidedly and unsentimentally as she said it fifteen years before. Jerome had the sensation of going around in a circle and never getting any further on. He made up his mind that something must be done, and just as he got to the brook that divides Deep Meadows West from Deep Meadows Central an idea struck him; it was a good idea and amused him. He laughed aloud and slapped his thigh, much to the amusement of two boys who were sitting unnoticed on the railing of the bridge.

“There’s old Jerome going home from seeing Anne Stockard,” said one. “Wonder what on earth he’s laughing at. Seems to me if I couldn’t get a wife without hoeing a fifteen-year row, I’d give up trying.”

But, then, the speaker was a Hamilton, and the Hamiltons never had any perseverance.

Jerome, although a well-to-do man, owning a good farm, had, so to speak, no home of his own. The old Irving homestead belonged to his older brother, who had a wife and family. Jerome lived with them and was so used to it he didn’t mind.

At forty a lover must not waste time. Jerome thought out the details that night, and next day he opened the campaign. But it was not until the evening after that that Anne Stockard heard the news. It was her niece, Octavia, who told her. The latter had been having a chat up the lane with Sam Mitchell, and came in with a broad smile on her round, rosy face and a twinkle in her eyes.

“I guess you’ve lost your beau this time, Aunt Anne. It looks as if he meant to take you at your word at last.”

“What on earth do you mean?” asked Anne, a little sharply. She was in the pantry counting eggs, and Octavia’s interruption made her lose her count. “Now I can’t remember whether it was six or seven dozen I said last. I shall have to count them all over again. I wish, Octavia, that you could think of something besides beaus all the time.”

“Well, but listen,” persisted Octavia wickedly. “Jerome Irving was at the social at the Cherry Valley parsonage last night, and he had Harriet

Warren there — took her there, and drove her home again.”

“I don’t believe it,” cried Anne, before she thought. She dropped an egg into the basket so abruptly that the shell broke.

“Oh, it’s true enough. Sam Mitchell told me; he was there and saw him. Sam says he looked quite beaming, and was dressed to kill, and followed Harriet around like her shadow. I guess you won’t have any more bother with him, Aunt Anne.”

In the process of picking the broken egg out of the whole ones Anne had recovered her equanimity. She gave a careful little laugh.

“Well, it’s to be hoped so. Goodness knows it’s time he tried somebody else. Go and change your dress for milking, Octavia, and don’t spend quite so much time gossiping up the lane with Sam Mitchell. He always was a fetch-and-carry. Young girls oughtn’t to be so pert.”

When the subdued Octavia had gone, Anne tossed the broken eggshell out of the pantry window viciously enough.

“There’s no fool like an old fool. Jerome Irving always was an idiot. The idea of his going after Harriet Warren! He’s old enough to be her father. And a Warren, too! I’ve seen the time an Irving wouldn’t be seen on the same side of the road with a Warren. Well, anyhow, I don’t care, and he needn’t suppose I will. It will be a relief not to have him hanging around any longer.”

It might have been a relief, but Anne felt strangely lonely as she walked home alone from prayer meeting the next night. Jerome had not been there. The Warrens were Methodists and Anne rightly guessed that he had gone to the Methodist prayer meeting at Cherry Valley.

“Dancing attendance on Harriet,” she said to herself scornfully.

When she got home she looked at her face in the glass more critically than she had done for years. Anne Stockard at her best had never been pretty. When young she had been called “gawky.” She was very tall and her figure was lank and angular. She had a long, pale face and dusky hair. Her eyes had been good — a glimmering hazel, large and long-lashed. They were pretty yet, but the crow’s feet about them were plainly visible. There were brackets around her mouth too, and her cheeks were hollow.

Anne suddenly realized, as she had never realized before, that she had grown old — that her youth was left far behind. She was an old maid, and Harriet Warren was young, and pretty. Anne's long, thin lips suddenly quivered.

"I declare, I'm a worse fool than Jerome," she said angrily.

When Saturday night came Jerome did not. The corner of the big, old-fashioned porch where he usually sat looked bare and lonely. Anne was short with Octavia and boxed the cat's ears and raged at herself. What did she care if Jerome Irving never came again? She could have married him years ago if she had wanted to — everybody knew that!

At sunset she saw a buggy drive past her gate. Even at that distance she recognized Harriet Warren's handsome, high-coloured profile. It was Jerome's new buggy and Jerome was driving. The wheel spokes flashed in the sunlight as they crept up the hill. Perhaps they dazzled Anne's eyes a little; at least, for that or some other reason she dabbed her hand viciously over them as she turned sharply about and went upstairs. Octavia was practising her music lesson in the parlour below and singing in a sweet shrill voice. The hired men were laughing and talking in the yard. Anne slammed down her window and banged her door and then lay down on her bed; she said her head ached.

The Deep Meadows people were amused and made joking remarks to Anne, which she had to take amiably because she had no excuse for resenting them. In reality they stung her pride unendurably. When Jerome had gone she realized that she had no other intimate friend and that she was a very lonely woman whom nobody cared about. One night — it was three weeks afterward — she met Jerome and Harriet squarely. She was walking to church with Octavia, and they were driving in the opposite direction. Jerome had his new buggy and crimson lap robe. His horse's coat shone like satin and had rosettes of crimson on his bridle. Jerome was dressed extremely well and looked quite young, with his round, ruddy, clean-shaven face and clear blue eyes.

Harriet was sitting primly and consciously by his side; she was a very handsome girl with bold eyes and was somewhat overdressed. She wore a

big flowery hat and a white lace veil and looked at Anne with a supercilious smile.

Anne felt dowdy and old; she was very pale. Jerome lifted his hat and bowed pleasantly as they drove past. Suddenly Harriet laughed out. Anne did not look back, but her face crimsoned darkly. Was that girl laughing at her? She trembled with anger and a sharp, hurt feeling. When she got home that night she sat a long while by her window.

Jerome was gone — and he let Harriet Warren laugh at her and he would never come back to her. Well, it did not matter, but she had been a fool. Only it had never occurred to her that Jerome could act so.

“If I’d thought he would I mightn’t have been so sharp with him,” was as far as she would let herself go even in thought.

When four weeks had elapsed Jerome came over one Saturday night. He was fluttered and anxious, but hid it in a masterly manner.

Anne was taken by surprise. She had not thought he would ever come again, and was off her guard. He had come around the porch corner abruptly as she stood there in the dusk, and she started very perceptibly.

“Good evening, Anne,” he said, easily and unblushingly.

Anne choked up. She was very angry, or thought she was. Jerome appeared not to notice her lack of welcome. He sat coolly down in his old place. His heart was beating like a hammer, but Anne did not know that.

“I suppose,” she said cuttingly, “that you’re on your way down to the bridge. It’s almost a pity for you to waste time stopping here at all, any more than you have of late. No doubt Harriet’ll be expecting you.”

A gleam of satisfaction flashed over Jerome’s face. He looked shrewdly at Anne, who was not looking at him, but was staring uncompromisingly out over the poppy beds. A jealous woman always gives herself away. If Anne had been indifferent she would not have given him that slap in the face.

“I dunno’s she will,” he replied coolly. “I didn’t say for sure whether I’d be down tonight or not. It’s so long since I had a chat with you I thought I’d drop in for a spell. But of course if I’m not wanted I can go where I will be.”

Anne could not get back her self-control. Her nerves were “all strung up,” as she would have said. She had a feeling that she was right on the brink of a “scene,” but she could not help herself.

“I guess it doesn’t matter much what I want,” she said stonily. “At any rate, it hasn’t seemed that way lately. You don’t care, of course. Oh, no! Harriet Warren is all you care about. Well, I wish you joy of her.”

Jerome looked puzzled, or pretended to. In reality he was hugging himself with delight.

“I don’t just understand you, Anne,” he said hesitatingly “You appear to be vexed about something.”

“I? Oh, no, I’m not, Mr. Irving. Of course old friends don’t count now. Well, I’ve no doubt new ones will wear just as well.”

“If it’s about my going to see Harriet,” said Jerome easily “I don’t see as how it can matter much to you. Goodness knows, you took enough pains to show me you didn’t want me. I don’t blame you. A woman has a right to please herself, and a man ought to have sense to take his answer and go. I hadn’t, and that’s where I made my mistake. I don’t mean to pester you any more, but we can be real good friends, can’t we? I’m sure I’m as much your friend as ever I was.”

Now, I hold that this speech of Jerome’s, delivered in a cool, matter-of-fact tone, as of a man stating a case with dispassionate fairness, was a masterpiece. It was the last cleverly executed movement of the campaign. If it failed to effect a capitulation, he was a defeated man. But it did not fail.

Anne had got to that point where an excited woman must go mad or cry. Anne cried. She sat flatly down on a chair and burst into tears.

Jerome’s hat went one way and his cane another. Jerome himself sprang across the intervening space and dropped into the chair beside Anne. He caught her hand in his and threw his arm boldly around her waist.

“Goodness gracious, Anne! Do you care after all? Tell me that!”

“I don’t suppose it matters to you if I do,” sobbed Anne. “It hasn’t seemed to matter, anyhow.”

“Anne, look here! Didn’t I come after you for fifteen years? It’s you I always have wanted and want yet, if I can get you. I don’t care a rap for Harriet Warren or anyone but you. Now that’s the truth right out, Anne.”

No doubt it was, and Anne was convinced of it. But she had to have her cry out — on Jerome’s shoulder — and it soothed her nerves wonderfully. Later on Octavia, slipping noiselessly up the steps in the dusk, saw a sight that transfixed her with astonishment. When she recovered herself she turned and fled wildly around the house, running bump into Sam Mitchell, who was coming across the yard from a twilight conference with the hired men.

“Goodness, Tavy, what’s the matter? Y’ look ‘sif y’d seen a ghost.”

Octavia leaned up against the wall in spasms of mirth.

“Oh, Sam,” she gasped, “old Jerome Irving and Aunt Anne are sitting round there in the dark on the front porch and he had his arms around her, kissing her! And they never saw nor heard me, no more’n if they were deaf and blind!”

Sam gave a tremendous whistle and then went off into a shout of laughter whose echoes reached even to the gloom of the front porch and the ears of the lovers. But they did not know he was laughing at them and would not have cared if they had. They were too happy for that.

There was a wedding that fall and Anne Stockard was the bride. When she was safely his, Jerome confessed all and was graciously forgiven.

“But it was kind of mean to Harriet,” said Anne rebukingly, “to go with her and get her talked about and then drop her as you did. Don’t you think so yourself, Jerome?”

Her husband’s eyes twinkled.

“Well, hardly that. You see, Harriet’s engaged to that Johnson fellow out west. ‘Tain’t generally known, but I knew it and that’s why I picked on her. I thought it probable that she’d be willing enough to flirt with me for a little diversion, even if I was old. Harriet’s that sort of a girl. And I made up my mind that if that didn’t fetch it nothing would and I’d give up for good and all. But it did, didn’t it, Anne?”

“I should say so. It was horrid of you, Jerome — but I daresay it’s just as well you did or I’d likely never have found out that I couldn’t get along without you. I did feel dreadful. Poor Octavia could tell you I was as cross as X. How did you come to think of it, Jerome?”

“A fellow had to do something,” said Jerome oracularly, “and I’d have done most anything to get you, Anne, that’s a fact. And there it was — courting fifteen years and nothing to show for it. I dunno, though, how I did come to think of it. Guess it was a sort of inspiration. Anyhow, I’ve got you and that’s what I set out to do in the beginning.”

Young Si

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Mr. Bentley had just driven into the yard with the new summer boarder. Mrs. Bentley and Agnes were peeping at her from behind the parlour curtains with the keen interest that they — shut in by their restricted farm life — always felt in any visitor from the outside world lying beyond their boundary of purple misted hills.

Mrs. Bentley was a plump, rosy-cheeked woman with a motherly smile. Agnes was a fair, slim schoolgirl, as tall as her mother, with a sweet face and a promise of peach blossom prettiness in the years to come. The arrival of a summer boarder was a great event in her quiet life.

“Ain’t she pretty?” whispered Mrs. Bentley admiringly, as the girl came slowly up the green slope before the house. “I do hope she’s nice. You can generally calculate on men boarders, but girls are doubtful. Preserve me from a cranky boarder! I’ve had enough of them. I kinder like her looks, though.”

Ethel Lennox had paused at the front door as Mrs. Bentley and Agnes came into the hall. Agnes gazed at the stranger with shy, unenvious admiration; the latter stood on the stone step just where the big chestnut by the door cast flickering gleams and shadows over her dress and shining hair.

She was tall, and gowned in some simple white material that fell about her in graceful folds. She wore a cluster of pale pink roses at her belt, and a big, picturesque white hat shaded her face and the glossy, clinging masses of her red hair — hair that was neither auburn nor chestnut but simply red. Nor would anyone have wished it otherwise, having once seen that glorious mass, with all its wonderful possibilities of rippling luxuriance.

Her complexion was of that perfect, waxen whiteness that goes with burnished red hair and the darkest of dilated violet eyes. Her delicately

chiselled features wore what might have been a somewhat too decided impress of spirit and independence, had it not been for the sweet mouth, red and dimpled and curving, that parted in a slow, charming smile as Mrs. Bentley came forward with her kindly welcome.

“You must be real tired, Miss Lennox. It’s a long drive from the train down here. Agnes, show Miss Lennox up to her room, and tea will be ready when you come down.”

Agnes came forward with the shy grace that always won friends for her, and the two girls went slowly up the broad, old-fashioned staircase, while Mrs. Bentley bustled away to bring in the tea and put a goblet of damask roses on the table.

“She looks like a picture, doesn’t she, John?” she said to her husband. “I never saw such a face — and that hair too. Would you have believed red hair could be so handsome? She seems real friendly — none of your stuck-up fine ladies! I’ve had all I want of them, I can tell you!”

“Sh — sh — sh!” said Mr. Bentley warningly, as Ethel Lennox came in with her arm about Agnes.

She looked even more lovely without her hat, with the soft red tendrils of hair lying on her forehead. Mrs. Bentley sent a telegraphic message of admiration across the table to her husband, who was helping the cold tongue and feeling his way to a conversation.

“You’ll find it pretty quiet here, Miss Lennox. We’re plain folks and there ain’t much going and coming. Maybe you don’t mind that, though?”

“I like it. When one has been teaching school all the year in a noisy city, quiet seems the one thing to be desired. Besides, I like to fancy myself something of an artist. I paint and sketch a little when I have time, and Miss Courtland, who was here last summer, said I could not find a more suitable spot. So I came because I knew that mackerel fishing was carried on along the shore, and I would have a chance to study character among the fishermen.”

“Well, the shore ain’t far away, and it’s pretty — though maybe us folks here don’t appreciate it rightly, being as we’re so used to it. Strangers are always going crazy over its ‘picturesqueness,’ as they call it.

As for 'character,' I reckon you'll find all you want of that among the Pointers; anyway, I never seed such critters as they be. When you get tired of painting, maybe you can amuse yourself trying to get to the bottom of our mystery."

"Oh, have you a mystery? How interesting!"

"Yes, a mystery — a mystery," repeated Mr. Bentley solemnly, "that nobody hain't been able to solve so far. I've give it up — so has everyone else. Maybe you'll have better luck."

"But what is it?"

"The mystery," said Mr. Bentley dramatically, "is — Young Si. He's the mystery. Last spring, just when the herring struck in, a young chap suddenly appeared at the Point. He appeared — from what corner of the globe nobody hain't ever been able to make out. He bought a boat and a shanty down at my shore and went into a sort of mackerel partnership with Snuffy Curtis — Snuffy supplying the experience and this young fellow the cash, I reckon. Snuffy's as poor as Job's turkey; it was a windfall for him. And there he's fished all summer."

"But his name — Young Si?"

"Well, of course, that isn't it. He did give himself out as Brown, but nobody believes that's his handle — sounds unnatteral here. He bought his establishment from 'old Si,' who used to fish down there and was a mysterious old critter in a way too. So when this young fellow stepped in from goodness knows where, some of the Pointers christened him Young Si for a joke, and he never gets anything else. Doesn't seem to mind it. He's a moody, keep-to-himself sort of chap. Yet he ain't unpopular along shore, I believe. Snuffy was telling me they like him real well, considering his unsociableness. Anyways, he's as handsome a chap as I ever seed, and well eddicated too. He ain't none of your ordinary fishermen. Some of us kind of think he's a runaway — got into some scrape or another, maybe, and is skulking around here to keep out of jail. But wife here won't give in to that."

"No, I never will," said Mrs. Bentley firmly. "Young Si comes here often for milk and butter, and he's a perfect gentleman. Nobody'll ever

convince me that he has done anything to be ashamed of, whatever's his reason for wasting his life down there at that shore."

"He ain't wasting his life," chuckled Mr. Bentley. "He's making money, Young Si is, though he don't seem to care about that a mite. This has been a big year for mackerel, and he's smart. If he didn't know much when he begun, he's ahead of Snuffy now. And as for work, I never saw his beat. He seems possessed. Up afore sunrise every blessed morning and never in bed till midnight, and just slaving away all between time. I said to him t'other day, says I: 'Young Si, you'll have to let up on this sort of thing and take a rest. You can't stand it. You're not a Pointer. Pointers can stand anything, but it'll kill you.'

"He give one of them bitter laughs of his. Says he: 'It's no difference if it does. Nobody'll care,' and off he walks, sulky like. There's something about Young Si I can't understand," concluded Mr. Bentley.

Ethel Lennox was interested. A melancholy, mysterious hero in a setting of silver-rimmed sand hills and wide blue sweeps of ocean was something that ought to lend piquancy to her vacation.

"I should like to see this prince in disguise," she said. "It all sounds very romantic."

"I'll take you to the shore after tea if you'd like," said Agnes eagerly. "Si's just splendid," she continued in a confidential aside as they rose from the table. "Pa doesn't half like him because he thinks there's something queer about him. But I do. He's a gentleman, as Ma says. I don't believe he's done anything wrong."

Ethel Lennox sauntered out into the orchard to wait for Agnes. She sat down under an apple tree and began to read, but soon the book slipped from her hands and the beautiful head leaned back against the grey, lichen-trunk of the old tree. The sweet mouth drooped wistfully. There was a sad, faraway look in the violet eyes. The face was not that of a happy girl, so thought Agnes as she came down the apple tree avenue.

But how pretty she is! she thought. Won't the folks around here stare at her! They always do at our boarders, but we've never had one like her.

Ethel sprang up. "I had no idea you would be here so soon," she said brightly. "Just wait till I get my hat."

When she came out they started off, and presently found themselves walking down a grassy, deep-rutted lane that ran through mown hay fields, green with their rich aftergrowth, and sheets of pale ripening oats and golden-green wheat, until it lost itself in the rolling sand hills at the foot of the slope.

Beyond the sand hills stretched the shining expanse of the ocean, of the faint, bleached blue of hot August seas, and reaching out into a horizon laced with long trails of pinkish cloud. Numberless fishing boats dotted the shimmering reaches.

"That furthest-off boat is Young Si's," said Agnes. "He always goes to that particular spot."

"Is he really all your father says?" asked Miss Lennox curiously.

"Indeed, he is. He isn't any more like the rest of the shore men than you are. He's queer, of course. I don't believe he's happy. It seems to me he's worrying over something, but I'm sure it is nothing wrong. Here we are," she added, as they passed the sand hills and came out on the long, level beach.

To their left the shore curved around in a semicircle of dazzling whiteness; at their right stood a small grey fish-house.

"That's Young Si's place," said Agnes. "He lives there night and day. Wouldn't it make anyone melancholy? No wonder he's mysterious. I'm going to get his spyglass. He told me I might always use it."

She pushed open the door and entered, followed by Ethel. The interior was rough but clean. It was a small room, lighted by one tiny window looking out on the water. In one corner a rough ladder led up to the loft above. The bare lathed walls were hung with fishing jackets, nets, mackerel lines and other shore appurtenances. A little stove bore a kettle and a frying pan. A low board table was strewn with dishes and the cold remnants of a hasty repast; benches were placed along the walls. A fat, bewhiskered kitten, looking as if it were cut out of black velvet, was dozing on the window sill.

“This is Young Si’s cat,” explained Agnes, patting the creature, which purred joyously and opened its sleepy green eyes. “It’s the only thing he cares for, I believe. Witch! Witch! How are you, Witch? Well, here’s the spyglass. Let’s go out and have a look. Si’s catching mackerel,” announced Agnes a few minutes later, after she had scrutinized each boat in turn, “and he won’t be in for an hour yet. If you like, we have time for a walk up the shore.”

The sun slipped lower and lower in the creamy sky, leaving a trail of sparkles that ran across the water and lost itself in the west. Sea gulls soared and dipped, and tiny “sand peeps” flitted along the beach. Just as the red rim of the sun dipped in the purpling sea, the boats began to come in.

“Most of them will go around to the Point,” explained Agnes, with a contemptuous sweep of her hand towards a long headland running out before them. “They belong there and they’re a rough crowd. You don’t catch Young Si associating with the Pointers. There, he’s getting up sail. We’ll just have time to get back before he comes in.”

They hurried back across the dampening sand as the sun disappeared, leaving a fiery spot behind him. The shore was no longer quiet and deserted. The little spot where the fishing house stood had suddenly started into life. Roughly clad boys were running hither and thither, carrying fish or water. The boats were hauled up on the skids. A couple of shaggy old tars, who had strolled over from the Point to hear about Young Si’s catch, were smoking their pipes at the corner of his shanty. A mellow afterlight was shining over sea and shore. The whole scene delighted Ethel’s artist eyes.

Agnes nudged her companion.

“There! If you want to see Young Si,” she whispered, pointing to the skids, where a busy figure was discernible in a large boat, “that’s him, with his back to us, in the cream-coloured boat. He’s counting out mackerel. If you go over to that platform behind him, you’ll get a good look when he turns around. I’m going to coax a mackerel out of that stingy old Snuffy, if I can.”

She tripped off, and Ethel walked slowly over to the boats. The men stared at her in open-mouthed admiration as she passed them and walked out on the platform behind Young Si. There was no one near the two. The others were all assembled around Snuffy's boat. Young Si was throwing out the mackerel with marvellous rapidity, but at the sound of a footstep behind him he turned and straightened up his tall form. They stood face to face.

"Miles!"

"Ethel!"

Young Si staggered back against the mast, letting two silvery bloaters slip through his hands overboard. His handsome, sunburned face was very white.

Ethel Lennox turned abruptly and silently and walked swiftly across the sand. Agnes felt her arm touched, and turned to see Ethel standing, pale and erect, beside her.

"Let us go home," said the latter unsteadily. "It is very damp here — I feel chilled."

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed Agnes penitently. "I ought to have told you to bring a shawl. It is always damp on the shore after sunset. Here, Snuffy, give me my mackerel. Thank you. I'm ready now, Miss Lennox."

They reached the lane before Agnes remembered to ask the question Ethel dreaded.

"Oh, did you see Young Si? And what do you think of him?"

Ethel turned her face away and answered with studied carelessness. "He seems to be quite a superior fisherman so far as I could see in the dim light. It was very dusky there, you know. Let us walk a little faster. My shoes are quite wet."

When they reached home, Miss Lennox excused herself on the plea of weariness and went straight to her room.

Back at the shore Young Si had recovered himself and stooped again to his work. His face was set and expressionless. A dull red burned in each bronzed cheek. He threw out the mackerel mechanically, but his hands trembled.

Snuffy strolled over to the boat. “See that handsome girl, Si?” he asked lazily. “One of the Bentleys’ boarders, I hear. Looks as if she might have stepped out of a picture frame, don’t she?”

“We’ve no time to waste, Curtis,” said Young Si harshly, “with all these fish to clean before bedtime. Stop talking and get to work.”

Snuffy shrugged his shoulders and obeyed in silence. Young Si was not a person to be trifled with. The catch was large and it was late before they finished. Snuffy surveyed the full barrels complacently.

“Good day’s work,” he muttered, “but hard — I’m dead beat out. ‘Low I’ll go to bed. In the name o’ goodness, Si, whar be you a-goin’ to?”

Young Si had got into a dory and untied it. He made no answer, but rowed out from the shore. Snuffy stared at the dory blankly until it was lost in the gloom.

“Ef that don’t beat all!” he ejaculated. “I wonder if Si is in his right senses? He’s been actin’ quar right along, and now to start off, Lord knows whar, at this hour o’ night! I really don’t believe it’s safe to stay here alone with him.”

Snuffy shook his unkempt head dubiously.

Young Si rowed steadily out over the dark waves. An eastern breeze was bringing in a damp sea fog that blurred darkly over the outlines of horizon and shore. The young fisherman found himself alone in a world of water and grey mist. He stopped rowing and leaned forward on his oars.

“To see her here, of all places!” he muttered. “Not a word, scarcely a look, after all this long heartbreak! Well, perhaps it is better so. And yet to know she is so near! How beautiful she is! And I love her more than ever. That is where the sting lies. I thought that in this rough life, amid all these rude associations, where nothing could remind me of her, I might forget. And now—”

He clenched his hands. The mist was all around and about him, creeping, impalpable, phantom-like. The dory rocked gently on the swell. From afar came the low persistent murmur of the ocean.

The next day Ethel Lennox declined to visit Si’s shore. Instead she went to the Point and sketched all day. She went again the next day and the

next. The Point was the most picturesque part of the shore, she averred, and the “types” among its inhabitants most interesting. Agnes Bentley ceased to suggest another visit to Si’s shore. She had a vague perception that her companion did not care to discuss the subject.

At the end of a week Mrs. Bentley remarked: “What in the world can have happened to Young Si? It’s a whole week since he was here for milk or butter. He ain’t sick, is he?”

Mr. Bentley chuckled amusedly.

“I ‘low I can tell you the reason of that. Si’s getting his stuff at Walden’s now. I saw him going there twice this week. ‘Liza Walden’s got ahead of you at last, Mary.”

“Well, I never did!” said Mrs. Bentley. “Well, Young Si is the first that ever preferred ‘Liza Walden’s butter to mine. Everyone knows what hers is like. She never works her salt half in. Well, Young Si’s welcome to it, I’m sure; I wish him joy of his exchange.”

Mrs. Bentley rattled her dishes ominously. It was plain her faith in Young Si had received a severe shock.

Upstairs in her room, Ethel Lennox, with a few undried tears glistening on her cheeks, was writing a letter. Her lips were compressed and her hand trembled:

“I have discovered that it is no use to run away from fate,” she wrote. “No matter how hard we try to elude it, and how sure we are that we have succeeded, it will rise and meet us where we least expect it. I came down here tired and worn out, looking for peace and rest — and lo! the most disquieting element of my life is here to confront me.

“I’m going to confess, Helen. ‘Open confession is good for the soul,’ you know, and I shall treat myself to a good dose while the mood is on.

“You know, of course, that I was once engaged to Miles Lesley. You also know that that engagement was broken last autumn for unexplained reasons. Well, I will tell you all about it and then mail this letter speedily, before I change my mind.

“It is over a year now since Miles and I first became engaged. As you are aware, his family is wealthy, and noted for its exclusiveness. I was a

poor school teacher, and you may imagine with what horror his relatives received the news of Miles's attentions to one whom they considered his inferior. Now that I have thought the whole matter over calmly, I scarcely blame them. It must be hard for aristocratic parents who have lavished every care upon a son, and cherished for him the highest hopes, when he turns from the women of his own order to one considered beneath him in station. But I did not view the subject in this light then; and instead of declining his attentions, as I perhaps should have done, I encouraged them — I loved him so dearly, Nell! — and in spite of family opposition, Miles soon openly declared his attachment.

“When his parents found they could not change his purpose, their affection for him forced them into outward acquiescence, but their reluctant condescension was gall and wormwood to me. I saw things only from my own point of view, and was keenly sensitive to their politely concealed disapprobation, and my offended vanity found its victim in Miles. I belonged to the class who admit and resent slights, instead of ignoring them, as do the higher bred, and I thought he would not see those offered to me. I grew cold and formal to him. He was very patient, but his ways were not mine, and my manner puzzled and annoyed him. Our relations soon became strained, and the trifle necessary for an open quarrel was easily supplied.

“One evening I went to a large At Home given by his mother. I knew but few and, as Miles was necessarily busy with his social duties to her guests, I was, after the first hurried greeting, left unattended for a time. Not being accustomed to such functions, I resented this as a covert insult and, in a fit of jealous pique, I blush to own that I took the revenge of a peasant maid and entered into a marked flirtation with Fred Currie, who had paid me some attention before my engagement. When Miles was at liberty to seek me, he found me, to all appearances, quite absorbed in my companion and oblivious of his approach. He turned on his heel and went away, nor did he come near me the rest of the evening.

“I went home angry enough, but so miserable and repentant that if Miles had been his usual patient self when he called the following evening

I would have begged his forgiveness. But I had gone too far; his mother was shocked by my gaucherie, and he was humiliated and justly exasperated. We had a short, bitter quarrel. I said a great many foolish, unpardonable things, and finally I threw his ring at him. He gave me a startled look then, in which there was something of contempt, and went away without another word.

“After my anger had passed, I was wretchedly unhappy. I realized how unworthily I had acted, how deeply I loved Miles, and how lonely and empty my life would be without him. But he did not come back, and soon after I learned he had gone away — whither no one knew, but it was supposed abroad. Well, I buried my hopes and tears in secret and went on with my life as people have to do — a life in which I have learned to think, and which, I hope, has made me nobler and better.

“This summer I came here. I heard much about a certain mysterious stranger known as ‘Young Si’ who was fishing mackerel at this shore. I was very curious. The story sounded romantic, and one evening I went down to see him. I met him face to face and, Helen, it was Miles Lesley!

“For one minute earth, sky and sea reeled around me. The next, I remembered all, and turned and walked away. He did not follow.

“You may be sure that I now religiously avoid that part of the shore. We have never met since, and he has made no effort to see me. He clearly shows that he despises me. Well, I despise myself. I am very unhappy, Nell, and not only on my own account, for I feel that if Miles had never met me, his mother would not now be breaking her heart for her absent boy. My sorrow has taught me to understand hers, and I no longer resent her pride.

“You need hardly be told after this that I leave here in another week. I cannot fabricate a decent excuse to go sooner, or I would.”

In the cool twilight Ethel went with Agnes Bentley to mail her letter. As they stopped at the door of the little country store, a young man came around the corner. It was Young Si. He was in his rough fishing suit, with a big herring net trailing over his shoulder, but no disguise could effectually conceal his splendid figure. Agnes sprang forward eagerly.

“Si, where have you been? Why have you never I been up to see us for so long?”

Young Si made no verbal reply. He merely lifted his cap with formal politeness and turned on his heel.

“Well, I never!” exclaimed Agnes, as soon as she recovered her powers of speech. “If that is how Young Si is going to treat his friends! He must have got offended at something. I wonder what it is,” she added, her curiosity getting the better of her indignation.

When they came out they saw the solitary figure of Young Si far adown, crossing the dim, lonely shore fields. In the dusk Agnes failed to notice the pallor of her companion’s face and the unshed tears in her eyes.

“I’ve just been down to the Point,” said Agnes, coming in one sultry afternoon about a week later, “and Little Ev said as there was no fishing today he’d take us out for that sail tonight if you wanted to go.”

Ethel Lennox put her drawing away listlessly. She looked pale and tired. She was going away the next day, and this was to be her last visit to the shore.

About an hour before sunset a boat glided out from the shadow of the Point. In it were Ethel Lennox and Agnes, together with Little Ev, the sandy-haired, undersized Pointer who owned the boat.

The evening was fine, and an offshore breeze was freshening up rapidly. They did not notice the long, dark bank of livid cloud low in the northwest.

“Isn’t this glorious!” exclaimed Ethel. Her hat was straining back from her head and the red rings of her hair were blowing about her face.

Agnes looked about her more anxiously. Wiser in matters of sea and shore than her companion, there were some indications she did not like.

Young Si, who was standing with Snuffy their skids, lowered his spyglass with a start.

“It is Agnes Bentley and — and — that boarder of theirs,” he said anxiously, “and they’ve gone out with Little Ev in that wretched, leaky tub of his. Where are their eyes that they can’t see a squall coming up?”

“An’ Little Ev don’t know as much about managing a boat as a cat!” exclaimed Snuffy excitedly. “Sign ‘em to come back.”

Si shook his head. “They’re too far out. I don’t know that the squall will amount to very much. In a good boat, with someone who knew how to manage it, they’d be all right. But with Little Ev—” He began walking restlessly up and down the narrow platform.

The boat was now some distance out. The breeze had stiffened to a slow strong wind and the dull-grey level of the sea was whipped into whitecaps.

Agnes bent towards Ethel. “It’s getting too rough. I think we’d better go back. I’m afraid we’re in for a thunder squall. Look at the clouds.”

A long, sullen muttering verified her words.

“Little Ev,” she shouted, “we want to go in.”

Little Ev, thus recalled to things about him, looked around in alarm. The girls questioned each other with glances of dismay. The sky had grown very black, and the peals of thunder came louder and more continuously. A jagged bolt of lightning hurtled over the horizon. Over land and sea was “the green, malignant light of coming storm.”

Little Ev brought the boat’s head abruptly round as a few heavy drops of rain fell.

“Ev, the boat is leaking!” shrieked Agnes, above the wind. “The water’s coming in!”

“Bail her out then,” shouted Ev, struggling with the sail. “There’s two cans under the seat. I’ve got to lower this sail. Bail her out.”

“I’ll help you,” said Ethel.

She was very pale, but her manner was calm. Both girls bailed energetically.

Young Si, watching through the glass, saw them. He dropped it and ran to his boat, white and resolute.

“They’ve sprung a leak. Here, Curtis, launch the boat. We’ve got to go out or Ev will drown them.”

They shot out from the shore just as the downpour came, blotting out sea and land in one driving sheet of white rain.

“Young Si is coming off for us,” said Agnes. “We’ll be all right if he gets here in time. This boat is going to sink, sure.”

Little Ev was completely demoralized by fear. The girls bailed unceasingly, but the water gained every minute. Young Si was none too soon.

“Jump, Ev!” he shouted as his boat shot alongside. “Jump for your life!”

He dragged Ethel Lennox in as he spoke. Agnes sprang from one boat to the other like a cat, and Little Ev jumped just as a thunderous crash seemed to burst above them and air and sky were filled with blue flame.

The danger was past, for the squall had few difficulties for Si and Snuffy. When they reached the shore, Agnes, who had quite recovered from her fright, tucked her dripping skirts about her and announced her determination to go straight home with Snuffy.

“I can’t get any wetter than I am,” she said cheerfully. “I’ll send Pa down in the buggy for Miss Lennox. Light the fire in your shanty, Si, and let her get dry. I’ll be as quick as I can.”

Si picked Ethel up in his strong arms and carried her into the fish-house. He placed her on one of the low benches and hurriedly began to kindle a fire. Ethel sat up dazedly and pushed back the dripping masses of her bright hair. Young Si turned and looked down at her with a passionate light in his eyes. She put out her cold, wet hands wistfully.

“Oh, Miles!” she whispered.

Outside, the wind shook the frail building and tore the shuddering sea to pieces. The rain poured down. It was already settling in for a night of storm. But, inside, Young Si’s fire was casting cheery flames over the rude room, and Young Si himself was kneeling by Ethel Lennox with his arm about her and her head on his broad shoulder. There were happy tears in her eyes and her voice quivered as she said, “Miles, can you forgive me? If you knew how bitterly I have repented—”

“Never speak of the past again, my sweet. In my lonely days and nights down here by the sea, I have forgotten all but my love.”

“Miles, how did you come here? I thought you were in Europe.”

“I did travel at first. I came down here by chance, and resolved to cut myself utterly adrift from my old life and see if I could not forget you. I was not very successful.” He smiled down into her eyes. “And you were going away tomorrow. How perilously near we have been to not meeting! But how are we going to explain all this to our friends along shore?”

“I think we had better not explain it at all. I will go away tomorrow, as I intended, and you can quietly follow soon. Let ‘Young Si’ remain the mystery he has always been.”

“That will be best — decidedly so. They would never understand if we did tell them. And I daresay they would be very much disappointed to find I was not a murderer or a forger or something of that sort. They have always credited me with an evil past. And you and I will go back to our own world, Ethel. You will be welcome there now, sweet — my family, too, have learned a lesson, and will do anything to promote my happiness.”

Agnes drove Ethel Lennox to the station next day. The fierce wind that had swept over land and sea seemed to have blown away all the hazy vapours and oppressive heats in the air, and the morning dawned as clear and fresh as if the sad old earth with all her passionate tears had cleansed herself from sin and stain and come forth radiantly pure and sweet. Ethel bubbled over with joyousness. Agnes wondered at the change in her.

“Goodbye, Miss Lennox,” she said wistfully. “You’ll come back to see us some time again, won’t you?”

“Perhaps,” smiled Ethel, “and if not, Agnes, you must come and see me. Some day I may tell you a secret.”

About a week later Young Si suddenly vanished, and his disappearance was a nine-day’s talk along shore. His departure was as mysterious as his advent. It leaked out that he had quietly disposed of his boat and shanty to Snuffy Curtis, sent his mackerel off and, that done, slipped from the Pointers’ lives, never more to reenter them.

Little Ev was the last of the Pointers to see him tramping along the road to the station in the dusk of the autumn twilight. And the next morning Agnes Bentley, going out of doors before the others, found on the doorstep a basket containing a small, vociferous black kitten with a card

attached to its neck. On it was written: “Will Agnes please befriend Witch in memory of Young Si?”

A Patent Medicine Testimonial

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“You might as well try to move the rock of Gibraltar as attempt to change Uncle Abimelech’s mind when it is once made up,” said Murray gloomily.

Murray is like dear old Dad; he gets discouraged rather easily. Now, I’m not like that; I’m more like Mother’s folks. As Uncle Abimelech has never failed to tell me when I have annoyed him, I’m “all Foster.” Uncle Abimelech doesn’t like the Fosters. But I’m glad I take after them. If I had folded my hands and sat down meekly when Uncle Abimelech made known his good will and pleasure regarding Murray and me after Father’s death, Murray would never have got to college — nor I either, for that matter. Only I wouldn’t have minded that very much. I just wanted to go to college because Murray did. I couldn’t be separated from him. We were twins and had always been together.

As for Uncle Abimelech’s mind, I knew that he never had been known to change it. But, as he himself was fond of saying, there has to be a first time for everything, and I had determined that this was to be the first time for him. I hadn’t any idea how I was going to bring it about; but it just had to be done, and I’m not “all Foster” for nothing.

I knew I would have to depend on my own thinkers. Murray is clever at books and dissecting dead things, but he couldn’t help me out in this, even if he hadn’t settled beforehand that there was no use in opposing Uncle Abimelech.

“I’m going up to the garret to think this out, Murray,” I said solemnly. “Don’t let anybody disturb me, and if Uncle Abimelech comes over don’t tell him where I am. If I don’t come down in time to get tea, get it yourself. I shall not leave the garret until I have thought of some way to change Uncle Abimelech’s mind.”

“Then you’ll be a prisoner there for the term of your natural life, dear sis,” said Murray sceptically. “You’re a clever girl, Prue — and you’ve got

enough decision for two — but you'll never get the better of Uncle Abimelech."

"We'll see," I said resolutely, and up to the garret I went. I shut the door and bolted it good and fast to make sure. Then I piled some old cushions in the window seat — for one might as well be comfortable when one is thinking as not — and went over the whole ground from the beginning.

Outside the wind was thrashing the broad, leafy top of the maple whose tallest twigs reached to the funny grey eaves of our old house. One roly-poly little sparrow blew or flew to the sill and sat there for a minute, looking at me with knowing eyes. Down below I could see Murray in a corner of the yard, pottering over a sick duck. He had set its broken leg and was nursing it back to health. Anyone except Uncle Abimelech could see that Murray was simply born to be a doctor and that it was flying in the face of Providence to think of making him anything else.

From the garret windows I could see all over the farm, for the house is on the hill end of it. I could see all the dear old fields and the spring meadow and the beech woods in the southwest corner. And beyond the orchard were the two grey barns and down below at the righthand corner was the garden with all my sweet peas fluttering over the fences and trellises like a horde of butterflies. It was a dear old place and both Murray and I loved every stick and stone on it, but there was no reason why we should go on living there when Murray didn't like farming. And it wasn't our own, anyhow. It all belonged to Uncle Abimelech.

Father and Murray and I had always lived here together. Father's health broke down during his college course. That was one reason why Uncle Abimelech was set against Murray going to college, although Murray is as chubby and sturdy a fellow as you could wish to see. Anybody with Foster in him would be that.

To go back to Father. The doctors told him that his only chance of recovering his strength was an open-air life, so Father rented one of Uncle Abimelech's farms and there he lived for the rest of his days. He did not get strong again until it was too late for college, and he was a square peg

in a round hole all his life, as he used to tell us. Mother died before we could remember, so Murray and Dad and I were everything to each other. We were very happy too, although we were bossed by Uncle Abimelech more or less. But he meant it well and Father didn't mind.

Then Father died — oh, that was a dreadful time! I hurried over it in my thinking-out. Of course when Murray and I came to look our position squarely in the face we found that we were dependent on Uncle Abimelech for everything, even the roof over our heads. We were literally as poor as church mice and even poorer, for at least they get churches rent-free.

Murray's heart was set on going to college and studying medicine. He asked Uncle Abimelech to lend him enough money to get a start with and then he could work his own way along and pay back the loan in due time. Uncle Abimelech is rich, and Murray and I are his nearest relatives. But he simply wouldn't listen to Murray's plan.

"I put my foot firmly down on such nonsense," he said. "And you know that when I put my foot down something squashes."

It was not that Uncle Abimelech was miserly or that he grudged us assistance. Not at all. He was ready to deal generously by us, but it must be in his own way. His way was this. Murray and I were to stay on the farm, and when Murray was twenty-one Uncle Abimelech said he would deed the farm to him — make him a present of it out and out.

"It's a good farm, Murray," he said. "Your father never made more than a bare living out of it because he wasn't strong enough to work it properly — that's what he got out of a college course, by the way. But you are strong enough and ambitious enough to do well."

But Murray couldn't be a farmer, that was all there was to it. I told Uncle Abimelech so, firmly, and I talked to him for days about it, but Uncle Abimelech never wavered. He sat and listened to me with a quizzical smile on that handsome, clean-shaven, ruddy old face of his, with its cut-granite features. And in the end he said,

"You ought to be the one to go to college if either of you did, Prue. You would make a capital lawyer, if I believed in the higher education of women, but I don't. Murray can take or leave the farm as he chooses. If he

prefers the latter alternative, well and good. But he gets no help from me. You're a foolish little girl, Prue, to back him up in this nonsense of his."

It makes me angry to be called a little girl when I put up my hair a year ago, and Uncle Abimelech knows it. I gave up arguing with him. I knew it was no use anyway.

I thought it all over in the garret. But no way out of the dilemma could I see. I had eaten up all the apples I had brought with me and I felt flabby and disconsolate. The sight of Uncle Abimelech stalking up the lane, as erect and lordly as usual, served to deepen my gloom.

I picked up the paper my apples had been wrapped in and looked it over gloomily. Then I saw something, and Uncle Abimelech was delivered into my hand.

The whole plan of campaign unrolled itself before me, and I fairly laughed in glee, looking out of the garret window right down on the little bald spot on the top of Uncle Abimelech's head, as he stood laying down the law to Murray about something.

When Uncle Abimelech had gone I went down to Murray.

"Buddy," I said, "I've thought of a plan. I'm not going to tell you what it is, but you are to consent to it without knowing. I think it will quench Uncle Abimelech, but you must have perfect confidence in me. You must back me up no matter what I do and let me have my own way in it all."

"All right, sis," said Murray.

"That isn't solemn enough," I protested. "I'm serious. Promise solemnly."

"I promise solemnly, 'cross my heart,'" said Murray, looking like an owl.

"Very well. Remember that your role is to lie low and say nothing, like Brer Rabbit. Alloway's Anodyne Liniment is pretty good stuff, isn't it, Murray? It cured your sprain after you had tried everything else, didn't it?"

"Yes. But I don't see the connection."

"It isn't necessary that you should. Well, what with your sprain and my rheumatics I think I can manage it."

“Look here, Prue. Are you sure that long brooding over our troubles up in the garret hasn’t turned your brain?”

“My brain is all right. Now leave me, minion. There is that which I would do.”

Murray grinned and went. I wrote a letter, took it down to the office, and mailed it. For a week there was nothing more to do.

There is just one trait of Uncle Abimelech’s disposition more marked than his fondness for having his own way and that one thing is family pride. The Melvilles are a very old family. The name dates back to the Norman conquest when a certain Roger de Melville, who was an ancestor of ours, went over to England with William the Conqueror. I don’t think the Melvilles ever did anything worth recording in history since. To be sure, as far back as we can trace, none of them has ever done anything bad either. They have been honest, respectable folks and I think that is something worth being proud of.

But Uncle Abimelech pinned his family pride to Roger de Melville. He had the Melville coat of arms and our family tree, made out by an eminent genealogist, framed and hung up in his library, and he would not have done anything that would not have chimed in with that coat of arms and a conquering ancestor for the world.

At the end of a week I got an answer to my letter. It was what I wanted. I wrote again and sent a parcel. In three weeks’ time the storm burst.

One day I saw Uncle Abimelech striding up the lane. He had a big newspaper clutched in his hand. I turned to Murray, who was poring over a book of anatomy in the corner.

“Murray, Uncle Abimelech is coming. There is going to be a battle royal between us. Allow me to remind you of your promise.”

“To lie low and say nothing? That’s the cue, isn’t it, sis?”

“Unless Uncle Abimelech appeals to you. In that case you are to back me up.”

Then Uncle Abimelech stalked in. He was purple with rage. Old Roger de Melville himself never could have looked fiercer. I did feel a quake or

two, but I faced Uncle Abimelech undauntedly. No use in having your name on the roll of Battle Abbey if you can't stand your ground.

"Prudence, what does this mean?" thundered Uncle Abimelech, as he flung the newspaper down on the table. Murray got up and peered over. Then he whistled. He started to say something but remembered just in time and stopped. But he did give me a black look. Murray has a sneaking pride of name too, although he won't own up to it and laughs at Uncle Abimelech.

I looked at the paper and began to laugh. We did look so funny, Murray and I, in that advertisement. It took up the whole page. At the top were our photos, half life-size, and underneath our names and addresses printed out in full. Below was the letter I had written to the Alloway Anodyne Liniment folks. It was a florid testimonial to the virtues of their liniment. I said that it had cured Murray's sprain after all other remedies had failed and that, when I had been left a partial wreck from a very bad attack of rheumatic fever, the only thing that restored my joints and muscles to working order was Alloway's Anodyne Liniment, and so on.

It was all true enough, although I dare say old Aunt Sarah-from-the-Hollow's rubbing had as much to do with the cures as the liniment. But that is neither here nor there.

"What does this mean, Prudence?" said Uncle Abimelech again. He was quivering with wrath, but I was as cool as a cucumber, and Murray stood like a graven image.

"Why, that, Uncle Abimelech," I said calmly, "well, it just means one of my ways of making money. That liniment company pays for those testimonials and photos, you know. They gave me fifty dollars for the privilege of publishing them. Fifty dollars will pay for books and tuition for Murray and me at Kentville Academy next winter, and Mrs. Tredgold is kind enough to say she will board me for what help I can give her around the house, and wait for Murray's until he can earn it by teaching."

I rattled all this off glibly before Uncle Abimelech could get in a word.

"It's disgraceful!" he stormed. "Disgraceful! Think of Sir Roger de Melville — and a patent medicine advertisement! Murray Melville, what

were you about, sir, to let your sister disgrace herself and her family name by such an outrageous transaction?"

I quaked a bit. If Murray should fail me! But Murray was true-blue.

"I gave Prue a free hand, sir. It's an honest business transaction enough — and the family name alone won't send us to college, you know, sir."

Uncle Abimelech glared at us.

"This must be put an end to," he said. "This advertisement must not appear again. I won't have it!"

"But I've signed a contract that it is to run for six months," I said sturdily. "And I've others in view. You remember the Herb Cure you recommended one spring and that it did me so much good! I'm negotiating with the makers of that and—"

"The girl's mad!" said Uncle Abimelech. "Stark, staring mad!"

"Oh, no, I'm not, Uncle Abimelech. I'm merely a pretty good businesswoman. You won't help Murray to go to college, so I must. This is the only way I have, and I'm going to see it through."

After Uncle Abimelech had gone, still in a towering rage, Murray remonstrated. But I reminded him of his promise and he had to succumb.

Next day Uncle Abimelech returned — a subdued and chastened Uncle Abimelech.

"See here, Prue," he said sternly. "This thing must be stopped. I say it must. I am not going to have the name of Melville dragged all over the country in a patent medicine advertisement. You've played your game and won it — take what comfort you can out of the confession: If you will agree to cancel this notorious contract of yours I'll settle it with the company — and I'll put Murray through college — and you too if you want to go! Something will have to be done with you, that's certain. Is this satisfactory?"

"Perfectly," I said promptly. "If you will add thereto your promise that you will forget and forgive, Uncle Abimelech. There are to be no hard feelings."

Uncle Abimelech shrugged his shoulders.

“In for a penny, in for a pound,” he said. “Very well, Prue. We wipe off all scores and begin afresh. But there must be no more such doings. You’ve worked your little scheme through — trust a Foster for that! But in future you’ve got to remember that in law you’re a Melville whatever you are in fact.”

I nodded dutifully. “I’ll remember, Uncle Abimelech,” I promised.

After everything had been arranged and Uncle Abimelech had gone I looked at Murray. “Well?” I said.

Murray twinkled. “You’ve accomplished the impossible, sis. But, as Uncle Abimelech intimated — don’t you try it again.”

A Sandshore Wooing

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Fir Cottage, Plover Sands.

July Sixth.

We arrived here late last night, and all day Aunt Martha has kept her room to rest. So I had to keep mine also, although I felt as fresh as a morning lark, and just in the mood for enjoyment.

My name is Marguerite Forrester — an absurdly long name for so small a girl. Aunt Martha always calls me Marguerite, with an accent of strong disapproval. She does not like my name, but she gives me the full benefit of it. Connie Shelmardine used to call me Rita. Connie was my roommate last year at the Seminary. We correspond occasionally, but Aunt Martha frowns on it.

I have always lived with Aunt Martha — my parents died when I was a baby. Aunt Martha says I am to be her heiress if I please her — which means — but, oh, you do not know what “pleasing” Aunt Martha means.

Aunt is a determined and inveterate man-hater. She has no particular love for women, indeed, and trusts nobody but Mrs. Saxby, her maid. I rather like Mrs. Saxby. She is not quite so far gone in petrification as Aunt, although she gets a little stonier every year. I expect the process will soon begin on me, but it hasn't yet. My flesh and blood are still unreasonably warm and pulsing and rebellious.

Aunt Martha would be in danger of taking a fit if she ever saw me talking to a man. She watches me jealously, firmly determined to guard me from any possible attack of a roaring and ravening lion in the disguise of nineteenth-century masculine attire. So I have to walk demurely and assume a virtue, if I have it not, while I pine after the untested fleshpots of Egypt in secret.

We have come down to spend a few weeks at Fir Cottage. Our good landlady is a capacious, kindly-souled creature, and I think she has rather a

liking for me. I have been chattering to her all day, for there are times when I absolutely must talk to someone or go mad.

July Tenth.

This sort of life is decidedly dull. The program of every day is the same. I go to the sandshore with Aunt Martha and Mrs. Saxby in the morning, read to Aunt in the afternoons, and mope around by my disconsolate self in the evenings. Mrs. Blake has lent me, for shore use, a very fine spyglass which she owns. She says her “man” brought it home from “furrin’ parts” before he died. While Aunt and Mrs. Saxby meander up and down the shore, leaving me free to a certain extent, I amuse myself by examining distant seas and coasts through it, thus getting a few peeps into a forbidden world. We see few people, although there is a large summer hotel about a mile up the beach. Our shore haunts do not seem to be popular with its guests. They prefer the rocks. This suits Aunt Martha admirably. I may also add that it doesn’t suit her niece — but that is a matter of small importance.

The first morning I noticed a white object on the rocks, about half a mile away, and turned my glass on it. There — apparently within a stone’s throw of me — was a young man. He was lounging on a rock, looking dreamily out to sea. There was something about his face that reminded me of someone I know, but I cannot remember whom.

Every morning he has reappeared on the same spot. He seems to be a solitary individual, given to prowling by himself. I wonder what Aunt would say if she knew what I am so earnestly watching through my glass at times.

July Eleventh.

I shall have to cease looking at the Unknown, I am afraid.

This morning I turned my glass, as usual, on his pet haunt. I nearly fell over in my astonishment, for he was also looking through a spyglass straight at me, too, it seemed. How foolish I felt! And yet my curiosity was so strong that a few minutes afterward I peeped back again, just to see what he was doing. Then he coolly laid down his glass, rose, lifted his cap and bowed politely to me — or, at least, in my direction. I dropped my

glass and smiled in a mixture of dismay and amusement. Then I remembered that he was probably watching me again, and might imagine my smile was meant for him. I banished it immediately, shut my glass up and did not touch it again. Soon after we came home.

July Twelfth.

Something has happened at last. Today I went to the shore as usual, fully resolved not even to glance in the forbidden direction. But in the end I had to take a peep, and saw him on the rocks with his glass levelled at me. When he saw that I was looking he laid down the glass, held up his hands, and began to spell out something in the deaf-mute alphabet. Now, I know that same alphabet. Connie taught it to me last year, so that we might hold communication across the schoolroom. I gave one frantic glance at Aunt Martha's rigid back, and then watched him while he deftly spelled: "I am Francis Shelmardine. Are you not Miss Forrester, my sister's friend?"

Francis Shelmardine! Now I knew whom he resembled. And have I not heard endless dissertations from Connie on this wonderful brother of hers, Francis the clever, the handsome, the charming, until he has become the only hero of dreams I have ever had? It was too wonderful. I could only stare dazedly back through my glass.

"May we know each other?" he went on. "May I come over and introduce myself? Right hand, yes; left, no."

I gasped! Suppose he were to come? What would happen? I waved my left hand sorrowfully. He looked quite crestfallen and disappointed as he spelled out: "Why not? Would your friends disapprove?"

I signalled: "Yes."

"Are you displeased at my boldness?" was his next question.

Where had all Aunt Martha's precepts flown to then? I blush to record that I lifted my left hand shyly and had just time to catch his pleased expression when Aunt Martha came up and said it was time to go home. So I picked myself meekly up, shook the sand from my dress, and followed my good aunt dutifully home.

July Thirteenth.

When we went to the shore this morning I had to wait in spasms of remorse and anxiety until Aunt got tired of reading and set off along the shore with Mrs. Saxby. Then I reached for my glass.

Mr. Shelmardine and I had quite a conversation. Under the circumstances there could be no useless circumlocution in our exchange of ideas. It was religiously “boiled down,” and ran something like this:

“You are not displeased with me?”

“No — but I should be.”

“Why?”

“It is wrong to deceive Aunt.”

“I am quite respectable.”

“That is not the question.”

“Cannot her prejudices be overcome?”

“Absolutely no.”

“Mrs. Allardyce, who is staying at the hotel, knows her well. Shall I bring her over to vouch for my character?”

“It would not do a bit of good.”

“Then it is hopeless.”

“Yes.”

“Would you object to knowing me on your own account?”

“No.”

“Do you ever come to the shore alone?”

“No. Aunt would not permit me.”

“Must she know?”

“Yes. I would not come without her permission.”

“You will not refuse to chat with me thus now and then?”

“I don’t know. Perhaps not.”

I had to go home then. As we went Mrs. Saxby complimented me on my good colour. Aunt Martha looked her disapproval. If I were really ill Aunt would spend her last cent in my behalf, but she would be just as well pleased to see me properly pale and subdued at all times, and not looking as if I were too well contented in this vale of tears.

July Seventeenth.

I have “talked” a good deal with Mr. Shelmdardine these past four days. He is to be at the beach for some weeks longer. This morning he signalled across from the rocks: “I mean to see you at last. Tomorrow I will walk over and pass you.”

“You must not. Aunt will suspect.”

“No danger. Don’t be alarmed. I will do nothing rash.”

I suppose he will. He seems to be very determined. Of course, I cannot prevent him from promenading on our beach all day if he chooses. But then if he did, Aunt would speedily leave him in sole possession of it.

I wonder what I had better wear tomorrow.

July Nineteenth.

Yesterday morning Aunt Martha was serene and unsuspecting. It is dreadful of me to be deceiving her and I do feel guilty. I sat down on the sand and pretended to read the “Memoirs of a Missionary” — Aunt likes cheerful books like that — in an agony of anticipation. Presently Aunt said, majestically: “Marguerite, there is a man coming this way. We will move further down.”

And we moved. Poor Aunt!

Mr. Shelmdardine came bravely on. I felt my heart beating to my very finger tips. He halted by the fragment of an old stranded boat. Aunt had turned her back on him.

I ventured on a look. He lifted his hat with a twinkle in his eye. Just then Aunt said, icily: “We will go home, Marguerite. That creature evidently intends to persist in his intrusion.”

Home we came accordingly.

This morning he signalled across: “Letter from Connie. Message for you. I mean to deliver it personally. Do you ever go to church?”

Now, I do go regularly to church at home. But Aunt Martha and Mrs. Saxby are both such rigid church people that they would not darken the doors of the Methodist church at Plover Sands for any consideration. Needless to say, I am not allowed to go either. But it was impossible to make this long explanation, so I merely replied: “Not here.”

“Will you not go tomorrow morning?”

“Aunt will not let me.”

“Coax her.”

“Coaxing never has any effect on her.”

“Would she relent if Mrs. Allardyce were to call for you?”

Now, I have been cautiously sounding Aunt about Mrs. Allardyce, and I have discovered that she disapproves of her. So I said: “It would be useless. I will ask Aunt if I may go, but I feel almost sure that she will not consent.”

This evening, when Aunt was in an unusually genial mood, I plucked up heart of grace and asked her.

“Marguerite,” she said impressively, “you know that I do not attend church here.”

“But, Aunt,” I persisted, quakingly, “couldn’t I go alone? It is not very far — and I will be very careful.”

Aunt merely gave me a look that said about forty distinct and separate things, and I was turning away in despair when Mrs. Saxby — bless her heart — said: “I really think it would be no harm to let the child go.”

As Aunt attaches great importance to Mrs. Saxby’s opinion, she looked at me relentingly and said: “Well, I will think it over and let you know in the morning, Marguerite.”

Now, everything depends on the sort of humour Aunt is in in the morning.

July Twentieth.

This morning was perfect, and after breakfast Aunt said, condescendingly: “I think you may attend church if you wish, Marguerite. Remember that I expect you to conduct yourself with becoming prudence and modesty.”

I flew upstairs and pulled my prettiest dress out of my trunk. It is a delicate, shimmering grey stuff with pearly tints about it. Every time I get anything new, Aunt Martha and I have a battle royal over it. I verily believe that Aunt would like me to dress in the fashions in vogue in her youth. There is always a certain flavour of old-fashionedness about my gowns and hats. Connie used to say that it was delicious and gave me a

piquant uniqueness — a certain unlikeness to other people that possessed a positive charm. That is only Connie's view of it, however.

But I had had my own way about this dress and it is really very becoming. I wore a little silvery-grey chip hat, trimmed with pale pink flowers, and I pinned at my belt the sweetest cluster of old-fashioned blush rosebuds from the garden. Then I borrowed a hymn book from Mrs. Blake and ran down to undergo Aunt Martha's scrutiny.

"Dear me, child," she said discontentedly, "you have gotten yourself up very frivolously, it seems to me."

"Why, Aunty," I protested, "I'm all in grey — every bit."

Aunt Martha sniffed. You don't know how much Aunt can express in a sniff. But I tripped to church like a bird.

The first person I saw there was Mr. Shelmardine. He was sitting right across from me and a smile glimmered in his eyes. I did not look at him again. Through the service I was subdued enough to have satisfied even Aunt Martha.

When church came out, he waited for me at the entrance to his pew. I pretended not to see him until he said "Good morning," in a voice vibrating and deep, which sounded as though it might become infinitely tender if its owner chose. When we went down the steps he took my hymnal, and we walked up the long, bowery country road.

"Thank you so much for coming today," he said — as if I went to oblige him.

"I had a hard time to get Aunt Martha's consent," I declared frankly. "I wouldn't have succeeded if Mrs. Saxby hadn't taken my part."

"Heaven bless Mrs. Saxby," he remarked fervently. "But is there any known way of overcoming your aunt's scruples? If so, I am ready to risk it."

"There is none. Aunt Martha is very good and kind to me, but she will never stop trying to bring me up. The process will be going on when I am fifty. And she hates men! I don't know what she would do if she saw me now."

Mr. Shelmdine frowned and switched the unoffending daisies viciously with his cane.

“Then there is no hope of my seeing you openly and aboveboard?”

“Not at present,” I said faintly.

After a brief silence we began to talk of other things. He told me how he happened to see me first.

“I was curious to know who the people were who were always in the same place at the same time, so one day I took my telescope. I could see you plainly. You were reading and had your hat off. When I went back to the hotel I asked Mrs. Allardyce if she knew who the boarders at Fir Cottage were and she told me. I had heard Connie speak of you, and I determined to make your acquaintance.”

When we reached the lane I held out my hand for the hymnal.

“You mustn’t come any further, Mr. Shelmdine,” I said hurriedly.

“Aunt — Aunt might see you.”

He took my hand and held it, looking at me seriously.

“Suppose I were to walk up to the cottage tomorrow and ask for you?”

I gasped. He looked so capable of doing anything he took it into his head to do.

“Oh, you wouldn’t,” I said piteously. “Aunt Martha would — you are not in earnest.”

“I suppose not,” he said regretfully. “Of course I would not do anything that would cause you unpleasantness. But this must not — shall not be our last meeting.”

“Aunt will not let me come to church again,” I said.

“Does she ever take a nap in the afternoon?” he queried.

I wriggled my parasol about in the dust uneasily.

“Sometimes.”

“I shall be at the old boat tomorrow afternoon at two-thirty,” he said.

I pulled my hand away.

“I couldn’t — you know I couldn’t,” I cried — and then I blushed to my ears.

“Are you sure you couldn’t?” bending a little nearer.

“Quite sure,” I murmured.

He surrendered my hymnal at last.

“Will you give me a rose?”

I unpinned the whole cluster and handed it to him. He lifted it until it touched his lips. As for me, I scuttled up the lane in the most undignified fashion. At the turn I looked back. He was still standing there with his hat off.

July Twenty-fourth.

On Monday afternoon I slipped away to the shore while Aunt Martha and Mrs. Saxby were taking their regular nap and I was supposed to be reading sermons in my room.

Mr. Shelmardine was leaning against the old boat, but he came swiftly across the sand to meet me.

“This is very kind of you,” he said.

“I ought not to have come,” I said repentantly. “But it is so lonely there — and one can’t be interested in sermons and memoirs all the time.”

Mr. Shelmardine laughed.

“Mr. and Mrs. Allardyce are on the other side of the boat. Will you come and meet them?”

How nice of him to bring them! I knew I should like Mrs. Allardyce, just because Aunt Martha didn’t. We had a delightful stroll. I never thought of the time until Mr. Shelmardine said it was four o’clock.

“Oh, is it so late as that?” I cried. “I must go at once.”

“I’m sorry we have kept you so long,” remarked Mr. Shelmardine in a tone of concern. “If she should be awake, what will the consequences be?”

“Too terrible to think of,” I answered seriously. “I’m sorry, Mr. Shelmardine, but you mustn’t come any further.”

“We will be here tomorrow afternoon,” he said.

“Mr. Shelmardine!” I protested. “I wish you wouldn’t put such ideas into my head. They won’t come out — no, not if I read a whole volume of sermons right through.”

We looked at each other for a second. Then he began to smile, and we both went off into a peal of laughter.

“At least let me know if Miss Fiske rampages,” he called after me as I fled.

But Aunt Martha was not awake — and I have been to the shore three afternoons since then. I was there today, and I’m going tomorrow for a boat sail with Mr. Shelmardine and the Allardyses. But I am afraid the former will do something rash soon. This afternoon he said: “I don’t think I can stand this much longer.”

“Stand what?” I asked.

“You know very well,” he answered recklessly. “Meeting you in this clandestine manner, and thereby causing that poor little conscience of yours such misery. If your aunt were not so — unreasonable, I should never have stooped to it.”

“It is all my fault,” I said contritely.

“Well, I hardly meant that,” he said grimly. “But hadn’t I better go frankly to your aunt and lay the whole case before her?”

“You would never see me again if you did that,” I said hastily — and then wished I hadn’t.

“That is the worst threat you could make,” he said.

July Twenty-fifth.

It is all over, and I am the most miserable girl in the world. Of course this means that Aunt Martha has discovered everything and the deserved punishment of my sins has overtaken me.

I slipped away again this afternoon and went for that boat sail. We had a lovely time but were rather late getting in, and I hurried home with many misgivings. Aunt Martha met me at the door.

My dress was draggled, my hat had slipped back, and the kinks and curls of my obstreperous hair were something awful. I know I looked very disreputable and also, no doubt, very guilty and conscience-stricken. Aunt gave me an unutterable look and then followed me up to my room in grim silence.

“Marguerite, what does this mean?”

I have lots of faults, but untruthfulness isn’t one of them. I confessed everything — at least, almost everything. I didn’t tell about the telescopes

and deaf-mute alphabet, and Aunt was too horror-stricken to think of asking how I first made Mr. Shelmardine's acquaintance. She listened in stony silence. I had expected a terrible scolding, but I suppose my crimes simply seemed to her too enormous for words.

When I had sobbed out my last word she rose, swept me one glance of withering contempt, and left the room. Presently Mrs. Saxby came up, looking concerned.

"My dear child, what have you been doing? Your aunt says that we are to go home on the afternoon train tomorrow. She is terribly upset."

I just curled up on the bed and cried, while Mrs. Saxby packed my trunk. I will have no chance to explain matters to Mr. Shelmardine. And I will never see him again, for Aunt is quite capable of whisking me off to Africa. He will just think me a featherbrained flirt. Oh, I am so unhappy!

July Twenty-sixth.

I am the happiest girl in the world! That is quite a different strain from yesterday. We leave Fir Cottage in an hour, but that doesn't matter now.

I did not sleep a wink last night and crawled miserably down to breakfast. Aunt took not the slightest notice of me, but to my surprise she told Mrs. Saxby that she intended taking a farewell walk to the shore. I knew I would be taken, too, to be kept out of mischief, and my heart gave a great bound of hope. Perhaps I would have a chance to send word to Francis, since Aunt did not know of the part my spyglass had played in my bad behaviour.

I meekly followed my grim guardians to the shore and sat dejectedly on my rug while they paced the sand. Francis was on the rocks. As soon as Aunt Martha and Mrs. Saxby were at a safe distance, I began my message: "All discovered. Aunt is very angry. We go home today."

Then I snatched my glass. His face expressed the direst consternation and dismay. He signalled: "I must see you before you go."

"Impossible. Aunt will never forgive me. Goodbye."

I saw a look of desperate determination cross his face. If forty Aunt Marthas had swooped down upon me, I could not have torn my eyes from that glass.

“I love you. You know it. Do you care for me? I must have my answer now.”

What a situation! No time or chance for any maidenly hesitation or softening aureole of words. Aunt and Mrs. Saxby had almost reached the point where they invariably turned. I had barely time to spell out a plain, blunt “yes” and read his answer.

“I shall go home at once, get Mother and Connie, follow you, and demand possession of my property. I shall win the day. Have no fear. Till then, goodbye, my darling.”

“Marguerite,” said Mrs. Saxby at my elbow, “it is time to go.”

I got up obediently. Aunt Martha was as grim and uncompromising as ever, and Mrs. Saxby looked like a chief mourner, but do you suppose I cared? I dropped behind them just once before we left the shore. I knew he was watching me and I waved my hand.

I suppose I am really engaged to Francis Shelmardine. But was there ever such a funny wooing? And what will Aunt Martha say?

After Many Days

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The square, bare front room of the Baxter Station Hotel — so called because there was no other house in the place to dispute the title — was filled with men. Some of them were putting up at the hotel while they worked at the new branch line, and some of them had dropped in to exchange news and banter while waiting for the mail train.

Gabe Foley, the proprietor, was playing at checkers with one of the railroad men, but was not too deeply absorbed in the game to take in all that was said around him. The air was dim with tobacco smoke, and the brilliant, scarlet geraniums which Mrs. Foley kept in the bay window looked oddly out of place. Gabe knew all those present except one man — a stranger who had landed at Baxter Station from the afternoon freight. Foley's hotel did not boast of a register, and the stranger did not volunteer any information regarding his name or business. He had put in the afternoon and early evening strolling about the village and talking to the men on the branch line. Now he had come in and ensconced himself in the corner behind the stove, where he preserved a complete silence.

He had a rather rough face and was flashily dressed. Altogether, Gabe hardly liked his looks, but as long as a man paid his bill and did not stir up a row Gabe Foley did not interfere with him.

Three or four farmers from "out Greenvale way" were drawn up by the stove, discussing the cheese factory sales and various Greenvale happenings. The stranger appeared to be listening to them intently, although he took no part in their conversation.

Presently he brought his tilted chair down with a sharp thud. Gabe Foley had paused in his manipulation of a king to hurl a question at the Greenvale men.

"Is it true that old man Strong is to be turned out next week?"

“True enough,” answered William Jeffers. “Joe Moore is going to foreclose. Stephen Strong has got three years behind with the interest and Moore is out of patience. It seems hard on old Stephen, but Moore ain’t the man to hesitate for that. He’ll have his own out of it.”

“What will the Strong’s do?” asked Gabe.

“That’s the question everyone in Greenvale is asking. Lizzie Strong has always been a delicate little girl, but maybe she’ll manage to scare up a living. Old Stephen is to be the most pitied. I don’t see anything for him but the poorhouse.”

“How did Stephen Strong come to get into such a tight place?” the stranger asked suddenly. “When I was in these parts a good many years ago he was considered a well-to-do man.”

“Well, so he was,” replied William Jeffers. “But he began to get in debt when his wife took sick. He spent no end of money on doctors and medicines for her. And then he seemed to have a streak of bad luck besides — crops failed and cows died and all that sort of thing. He’s been going behind ever since. He kind of lost heart when his wife died. And now Moore is going to foreclose. It’s my opinion poor old Stephen won’t live any time if he’s turned out of his home.”

“Do you know what the mortgage comes to?”

“Near three thousand, counting overdue interest.”

“Well, I’m sorry for old Stephen,” said Gabe, returning to his game. “If anybody deserves a peaceful old age he does. He’s helped more people than you could count, and he was the best Christian in Greenvale, or out of it.”

“He was too good,” said a Greenvale man crustily. “He just let himself be imposed upon all his life. There’s dozens of people owes him and he’s never asked for a cent from them. And he’s always had some shiftless critter or other hanging round and devouring his substance.”

“D’ye mind that Ben Butler who used to be in Greenvale twenty years ago?” asked a third man. “If ever there was an imp of Satan ‘twas him — old Ezra Butler’s son from the valley. Old Stephen kept him for three or four years and was as good to him as if he’d been his own son.”

“Most people out our way do mind Ben Butler,” returned William Jeffers grimly, “even if he ain’t been heard tell of for twenty years. He wasn’t the kind you could forget in a hurry. Where’d he go? Out to the Kootenay, wasn’t it?”

“Somewhere there. He was a reg’lar young villain — up to every kind of mischief. Old Stephen caught him stealing his oats one time and ‘stead of giving him a taste of jail for it, as he ought to have done, he just took him right into his family and kept him there for three years. I used to tell him he’d be sorry for it, but he always persisted that Ben wasn’t bad at heart and would come out all right some day. No matter what the young varmint did old Stephen would make excuses for him—’his ma was dead,’ or he ‘hadn’t had no bringing-up.’ I was thankful when he did finally clear out without doing some penitentiary work.”

“If poor old Stephen hadn’t been so open-handed to every unfortunate critter he came across,” said Gabe, “he’d have had more for himself today.”

The whistle of the mail train cut short the discussion of Stephen Strong’s case. In a minute the room was vacant, except for the stranger. When left to himself he also rose and walked out. Turning away from the station, he struck briskly into the Greenvale road.

About three miles from the station he halted before a house built close to the road. It was old-fashioned, but large and comfortable-looking, with big barns in the rear and an orchard on the left slope. The house itself was in the shadow of the firs, but the yard lay out in the moonlight and the strange visitor did not elect to cross it. Instead, he turned aside into the shadow of the trees around the garden and, leaning against the old rail fence, gave himself up to contemplation of some kind.

There was a light in the kitchen. The window-blind was not down and he had a fairly good view of the room. The only visible occupant was a grey-haired old man sitting by the table, reading from a large open volume before him. The stranger whistled softly.

“That’s old Stephen — reading the Bible same as ever, by all that’s holy! He hasn’t changed much except that he’s got mighty grey. He must

be close on to seventy. It's a shame to turn an old man like him out of house and home. But Joe Moore always was a genuine skinflint."

He drew himself softly up and sat on the fence. He saw old Stephen Strong close his book, place his spectacles on it, and kneel down by his chair. The old man remained on his knees for some time and then, taking up his candle, left the kitchen. The man on the fence still sat there. Truth to tell, he was chuckling to himself as he recalled all the mischief he had done in the old days — the doubtful jokes, tricks, and escapades he had gone through with.

He could not help remembering at the same time how patient old Stephen Strong had always been with him. He recalled the time he had been caught stealing the oats. How frightened and sullen he had been! And how gently the old man had talked to him and pointed out the sin of which he had been guilty!

He had never stolen again, but in other respects he had not mended his ways much. Behind old Stephen's back he laughed at him and his "preaching." But Stephen Strong had never lost faith in him. He had always asserted mildly that "Ben would come out all right by and by." Ben Butler remembered this too, as he sat on the fence.

He had "always liked old Stephen," he told himself. He was sorry he had fallen on such evil times.

"Preaching and praying don't seem to have brought him out clear after all," he said with a chuckle that quickly died away. Somehow, even in his worst days, Ben Butler had never felt easy when he mocked old Stephen. "Three thousand dollars! I could do it but I reckon I'd be a blamed fool. I ain't a-going to do it. Three thousand ain't picked up every day, even in the Kootenay—'specially by chaps like me."

He patted his pocket knowingly. Fifteen years previously he had gone to the Kootenay district with visions of making a fortune that were quickly dispelled by reality. He had squandered his wages as soon as paid, and it was only of late years that he had "pulled up a bit," as he expressed it, and saved his three thousand dollars.

He had brought the money home with him, having some vague notion of buying a farm and “settling down to do the respectable.” But he had already given up the idea. This country was too blamed quiet for him, he said. He would go back to the Kootenay, and he knew what he would do with his money. Jake Perkins and Wade Brown, two “pals” of his, were running a flourishing grocery and saloon combined. They would be glad of another partner with some cash. It would suit him to a T.

“I’ll clear out tomorrow,” he mused as he walked back. “As long as I stay here old Stephen will haunt me, sure as fate. Wonder what he was praying for tonight. He always used to say the Lord would provide, but He don’t appear to have done it. Well, I ain’t His deputy.”

The next afternoon Ben Butler went over to Greenvale and called at Stephen Strong’s. He found only the old man at home. Old Stephen did not recognize him at first, but made him heartily welcome when he did.

“Ben, I do declare! Ben Butler! How are you? How are you? Sit down, Ben — here, take this chair. Where on earth did you come from?”

“Baxter just now — Kootenay on the large scale,” answered Ben. “Thought I’d come over and see you again. Didn’t expect you’d remember me at all.”

“Remember you! Why, of course I do. I haven’t ever forgot you, Ben. Many’s the time I’ve wondered where you was and how you was getting on. And you tell me you’ve been in the Kootenay! Well, well, you have seen a good bit more of the world than I ever have. You’ve changed a lot, Ben. You ain’t a boy no longer. D’ye mind all the pranks you used to play?”

Ben laughed sheepishly.

“I reckon I do. But it ain’t myself I come here to talk about — not much to say if I did. It’s just been up and down with me. How are you yourself, sir? They were telling me over at Baxter that you were kind of in trouble.”

The old man’s face clouded over; all the sparkle went out of his kind blue eyes.

“Yes, Ben, yes,” he said, with a heavy sigh. “I’ve kind of gone downhill, that’s a fact. The old farm has to go, Ben — I’m sorry for that — I’d have liked to have ended my days here, but it’s not to be. I don’t want to complain. The Lord does all things well. I haven’t a doubt but that it all fits into His wise purposes — not a doubt, Ben, although it may be kind of hard to see it.”

Ben was always skittish of “pious talk.” He veered around adroitly.

“I dunno as the Lord has had much to do with this, sir. Seems to me as if ‘twas the other one as was running it, with Joe Moore for deputy. The main thing, as I look at it, is to get a cinch on him. How much does the mortgage amount to, sir?”

“About three thousand dollars, interest and all.”

Old Stephen’s voice trembled. The future looked very dark to him in his old age.

Ben put his hand inside his coat and brought out a brand-new, plump pocketbook. He opened it, laid it on his knee, and counted out a number of crisp notes.

“Here, sir,” he said, pushing them along the table. “I reckon that’ll keep you out of Joe Moore’s clutches. There’s three thousand there if I ain’t made a mistake. That’ll set you clear, won’t it?”

“Ben!” Old Stephen’s voice trembled with amazement. “Ben, I can’t take it. It wouldn’t be fair — or right. I could never pay you back.”

Ben slipped the rubber band around his wallet and replaced it airily.

“I don’t want it paid back, sir. It’s a little gift, so to speak, just to let you know I ain’t ungrateful for all you did for me. If it hadn’t been for you I might have been in the penitentiary by now. As for the money, it may seem a pile to you, but we don’t think anything more of a thousand or so in the Kootenay than you Greenvale folks do of a fiver — not a bit more. We do things on a big scale out there.”

“But, Ben, are you sure you can afford it — that you won’t miss it?”

“Pop sure. Don’t you worry, I’m all right.”

“Bless you — bless you!” The tears were running down old Stephen’s face as he gathered up the money with a shaking hand. “I always knew you

would do well, Ben — always said it. I knew you'd a good heart. I just can't realize this yet — it seems too good to be true. The old place saved — I can die in peace. Of course, I'll pay you back some of it anyhow if I'm spared a while longer. Bless you, Ben."

Ben would not stay long after that. He said he had to leave on the 4:30 train. He was relieved when he got away from the old man's thanks and questions. Ben did not find it easy to answer some of the latter. When he was out of sight of the house he sat on a fence and counted up his remaining funds.

"Just enough to take me back to the Kootenay — and then begin over again, I s'pose. But 'twas worth the money to see the old fellow's face. He'd thank the Lord and me, he said. How Jake and Wade'd roar to hear them two names in partnership! But I'm going to pull up a bit after this, see if I don't, just to justify the old man's faith in me. 'Twould be too bad to disappoint him if he's believed for so long that I was going to turn out all right yet."

When the 4:30 train went out Ben Butler stood on the rear platform. Gabe Foley watched him abstractedly as he receded.

"Blamed if I know who that fellow was," he remarked to a crony. "He never told his name, but seems to me I've seen him before. He has a kind of hang-dog look, I think. But he paid up square and it is none of my business."

An Unconventional Confidence

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The Girl in Black-and-Yellow ran frantically down the grey road under the pines. There was nobody to see her, but she would have run if all Halifax had been looking on. For had she not on the loveliest new hat — a “creation” in yellow chiffon with big black choux — and a dress to match? And was there not a shower coming straight from the hills across the harbour?

Down at the end of the long resinous avenue the Girl saw the shore road, with the pavilion shutting out the view of the harbour’s mouth. Below the pavilion, clean-shaven George’s Island guarded the town like a sturdy bulldog, and beyond it were the wooded hills, already lost in a mist of rain.

“Oh, I shall be too late,” moaned the Girl. But she held her hat steady with one hand and ran on. If she could only reach the pavilion in time! It was a neck-and-neck race between the rain and the Girl, but the Girl won. Just as she flew out upon the shore road, a tall Young Man came pelting down the latter, and they both dashed up the steps of the pavilion together as the rain swooped down upon them and blotted George’s Island and the smoky town and the purple banks of the Eastern Passage from view.

The pavilion was small at the best of times, and just now the rain was beating into it on two sides, leaving only one dry corner. Into this the Girl moved. She was flushed and triumphant. The Young Man thought that in all his life he had never seen anyone so pretty.

“I’m so glad I didn’t get my hat wet,” said the Girl breathlessly, as she straightened it with a careful hand and wondered if she looked very blown and blowsy.

“It would have been a pity,” admitted the Young Man. “It is a very pretty hat.”

“Pretty!” The Girl looked the scorn her voice expressed. “Anyone can have a pretty hat. Our cook has one. This is a creation.”

“Of course,” said the Young Man humbly. “I ought to have known. But I am very stupid.”

“Well, I suppose a mere man couldn’t be expected to understand exactly,” said the Girl graciously.

She smiled at him in a friendly fashion, and he smiled back. The Girl thought that she had never seen such lovely brown eyes before. He could not be a Haligonian. She was sure she knew all the nice young men with brown eyes in Halifax.

“Please sit down,” she said plaintively. “I’m tired.”

The Young Man smiled again at the idea of his sitting down because the Girl was tired. But he sat down, and so did she, on the only dry seat to be found.

“Goodness knows how long this rain will last,” said the Girl, making herself comfortable and picturesque, “but I shall stay here until it clears up, if it rains for a week. I will not have my hat spoiled. I suppose I shouldn’t have put it on. Beatrix said it was going to rain. Beatrix is such a horribly good prophet. I detest people who are good prophets, don’t you?”

“I think that they are responsible for all the evils that they predict,” said the Young Man solemnly.

“That is just what I told Beatrix. And I was determined to put on this hat and come out to the park today. I simply had to be alone, and I knew I’d be alone out here. Everybody else would be at the football game. By the way, why aren’t you there?”

“I wasn’t even aware that there was a football game on hand,” said the Young Man, as if he knew he ought to be ashamed of his ignorance, and was.

“Dear me,” said the Girl pityingly. “Where can you have been not to have heard of it? It’s between the Dalhousie team and the Wanderers. Almost everybody here is on the Wanderers’ side, because they are Haligonians, but I am not. I like the college boys best. Beatrix says that it

is just because of my innate contrariness. Last year I simply screamed myself hoarse with enthusiasm. The Dalhousie team won the trophy.”

“If you are so interested in the game, it is a wonder you didn’t go to see it yourself,” said the Young Man boldly.

“Well, I just couldn’t,” said the Girl with a sigh. “If anybody had ever told me that there would be a football game in Halifax, and that I would elect to prowl about by myself in the park instead of going to it, I’d have laughed them to scorn. Even Beatrix would never have dared to prophesy that. But you see it has happened. I was too crumpled up in my mind to care about football today. I had to come here and have it out with myself. That is why I put on my hat. I thought, perhaps, I might get through with my mental gymnastics in time to go to the game afterwards. But I didn’t. It is just maddening, too. I got this hat and dress on purpose to wear to it. They’re black and yellow, you see — the Dalhousie colours. It was my own idea. I was sure it would make a sensation. But I couldn’t go to the game and take any interest in it, feeling as I do, could I, now?”

The Young Man said, of course, she couldn’t. It was utterly out of the question.

The Girl smiled. Without a smile, she was charming. With a smile, she was adorable.

“I like to have my opinions bolstered up. Do you know, I want to tell you something? May I?”

“You may. I’ll never tell anyone as long as I live,” said the Young Man solemnly.

“I don’t know you and you don’t know me. That is why I want to tell you about it. I must tell somebody, and if I told anybody I knew, they’d tell it all over Halifax. It is dreadful to be talking to you like this. Beatrix would have three fits, one after the other, if she saw me. But Beatrix is a slave to conventionality. I glory in discarding it at times. You don’t mind, do you?”

“Not at all,” said the Young Man sincerely.

The Girl sighed.

“I have reached that point where I must have a confidant, or go crazy. Once I could tell things to Beatrix. That was before she got engaged. Now she tells everything to him. There is no earthly way of preventing her. I’ve tried them all. So, nowadays, when I get into trouble, I tell it out loud to myself in the glass. It’s a relief, you know. But that is no good now. I want to tell it to somebody who can say things back. Will you promise to say things back?”

The Young Man assured her that he would when the proper time came.

“Very well. But please don’t look at me while I’m telling you. I’ll be sure to blush in places. When Beatrix wants to be particularly aggravating she says I have lost the art of blushing. But that is only her way of putting it, you know. Sometimes I blush dreadfully.”

The Young Man dragged his eyes from the face under the black-and-yellow hat, and fastened them on a crooked pine tree that hung out over the bank.

“Well,” began the Girl, “the root of the whole trouble is simply this. There is a young man in England. I always think of him as the Creature. He is the son of a man who was Father’s especial crony in boyhood, before Father emigrated to Canada. Worse than that, he comes of a family which has contracted a vile habit of marrying into our family. It has come down through the ages so long that it has become chronic. Father left most of his musty traditions in England, but he brought this pet one with him. He and this friend agreed that the latter’s son should marry one of Father’s daughters. It ought to have been Beatrix — she is the oldest. But Beatrix had a pug nose. So Father settled on me. From my earliest recollection I have been given to understand that just as soon as I grew up there would be a ready-made husband imported from England for me. I was doomed to it from my cradle. Now,” said the Girl, with a tragic gesture, “I ask you, could anything be more hopelessly, appallingly stupid and devoid of romance than that?”

The Young Man shook his head, but did not look at her.

“It’s pretty bad,” he admitted.

“You see,” said the Girl pathetically, “the shadow of it has been over my whole life. Of course, when I was a very little girl I didn’t mind it so much. It was such a long way off and lots of things might happen. The Creature might run away with some other girl — or I might have the smallpox — or Beatrix’s nose might be straight when she grew up. And if Beatrix’s nose were straight she’d be a great deal prettier than I am. But nothing did happen — and her nose is puggier than ever. Then when I grew up things were horrid. I never could have a single little bit of fun. And Beatrix had such a good time! She had scores of lovers in spite of her nose. To be sure, she’s engaged now — and he’s a horrid, faddy little creature. But he is her own choice. She wasn’t told that there was a man in England whom she must marry by and by, when he got sufficiently reconciled to the idea to come and ask her. Oh, it makes me furious!”

“Is — is there — anyone else?” asked the Young Man hesitatingly.

“Oh, dear, no. How could there be? Why, you know, I couldn’t have the tiniest flirtation with another man when I was as good as engaged to the Creature. That is one of my grievances. Just think how much fun I’ve missed! I used to rage to Beatrix about it, but she would tell me that I ought to be thankful to have the chance of making such a good match — the Creature is rich, you know, and clever. As if I cared how clever or rich he is! Beatrix made me so cross that I gave up saying anything and sulked by myself. So they think I’m quite reconciled to it, but I’m not.”

“He might be very nice after all,” suggested the Young Man.

“Nice! That isn’t the point. Oh, don’t you see? But no, you’re a man — you can’t understand. You must just take my word for it. The whole thing makes me furious. But I haven’t told you the worst. The Creature is on his way out to Canada now. He may arrive here at any minute. And they are all so aggravatingly delighted over it.”

“What do you suppose he feels like?” asked the Young Man reflectively.

“Well,” said the Girl frankly, “I’ve been too much taken up with my own feelings to worry about his. But I daresay they are pretty much like mine. He must loathe and detest the very thought of me.”

“Oh, I don’t think he does,” said the Young Man gravely.

“Don’t you? Well, what do you suppose he does think of it all? You ought to understand the man’s part of it better than I can.”

“There’s as much difference in men as in women,” said the Young Man in an impersonal tone. “I may be right or wrong, you see, but I imagine he would feel something like this: From boyhood he has understood that away out in Canada there is a little girl growing up who is some day to be his wife. She becomes his boyish ideal of all that is good and true. He pictures her as beautiful and winsome and sweet. She is his heart’s lady, and the thought of her abides with him as a safeguard and an inspiration. For her sake he resolves to make the most of himself, and live a clean, loyal life. When she comes to him she must find his heart fit to receive her. There is never a time in all his life when the dream of her does not gleam before him as of a star to which he may aspire with all reverence and love.”

The Young Man stopped abruptly, and looked at the Girl. She bent forward with shining eyes, and touched his hand.

“You are splendid,” she said softly. “If he thought so — but no — I am sure he doesn’t. He’s just coming out here like a martyr going to the stake. He knows he will be expected to propose to me when he gets here. And he knows that I know it too. And he knows and I know that I will be expected to say my very prettiest ‘yes.’”

“But are you going to say it?” asked the Young Man anxiously.

The Girl leaned forward. “No. That is my secret. I am going to say a most emphatic ‘no.’”

“But won’t your family make an awful row?”

“Of course. But I rather enjoy a row now and then. It stirs up one’s grey matter so nicely. I came out here this afternoon and thought the whole affair over from beginning to end. And I have determined to say ‘no.’”

“Oh, I wouldn’t make it so irreconcilable as that,” said the Young Man lightly. “I’d leave a loophole of escape. You see, if you were to like him a little better than you expect, it would be awkward to have committed yourself by a rash vow to saying ‘no,’ wouldn’t it?”

“I suppose it would,” said the Girl thoughtfully, “but then, you know, I won’t change my mind.”

“It’s just as well to be on the safe side,” said the Young Man.

The Girl got up. The rain was over and the sun was coming out through the mists.

“Perhaps you are right,” she said. “So I’ll just resolve that I will say ‘no’ if I don’t want to say ‘yes.’ That really amounts to the same thing, you know. Thank you so much for letting me tell you all about it. It must have bored you terribly, but it has done me so much good. I feel quite calm and rational now, and can go home and behave myself. Goodbye.”

“Goodbye,” said the Young Man gravely. He stood on the pavilion and watched the Girl out of sight beyond the pines.

When the Girl got home she was told that the Dalhousie team had won the game, eight to four. The Girl dragged her hat off and waved it joyously.

“What a shame I wasn’t there! They’d have gone mad over my dress.”

But the next item of information crushed her. The Creature had arrived. He had called that afternoon, and was coming to dinner that night.

“How fortunate,” said the Girl, as she went to her room, “that I relieved my mind to that Young Man out in the park today. If I had come back with all that pent-up feeling seething within me and heard this news right on top of it all, I might have flown into a thousand pieces. What lovely brown eyes he had! I do dote on brown eyes. The Creature will be sure to have fishy blue ones.”

When the Girl went down to meet the Creature she found herself confronted by the Young Man. For the first, last, and only time in her life, the Girl had not a word to say. But her family thought her confusion very natural and pretty. They really had not expected her to behave so well. As for the Young Man, his manner was flawless.

Toward the end of the dinner, when the Girl was beginning to recover herself, he turned to her.

“You know I promised never to tell,” he said.

“Be sure you don’t, then,” said the Girl meekly.

“But aren’t you glad you left the loophole?” he persisted.

The Girl smiled down into her lap.
“Perhaps,” she said.

Aunt Cyrilla's Christmas Basket

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When Lucy Rose met Aunt Cyrilla coming downstairs, somewhat flushed and breathless from her ascent to the garret, with a big, flat-covered basket hanging over her plump arm, she gave a little sigh of despair. Lucy Rose had done her brave best for some years — in fact, ever since she had put up her hair and lengthened her skirts — to break Aunt Cyrilla of the habit of carrying that basket with her every time she went to Pembroke; but Aunt Cyrilla still insisted on taking it, and only laughed at what she called Lucy Rose's "finicky notions." Lucy Rose had a horrible, haunting idea that it was extremely provincial for her aunt always to take the big basket, packed full of country good things, whenever she went to visit Edward and Geraldine. Geraldine was so stylish, and might think it queer; and then Aunt Cyrilla always would carry it on her arm and give cookies and apples and molasses taffy out of it to every child she encountered and, just as often as not, to older folks too. Lucy Rose, when she went to town with Aunt Cyrilla, felt chagrined over this — all of which goes to prove that Lucy was as yet very young and had a great deal to learn in this world.

That troublesome worry over what Geraldine would think nerved her to make a protest in this instance.

"Now, Aunt C'rilla," she pleaded, "you're surely not going to take that funny old basket to Pembroke this time — Christmas Day and all."

"Deed and 'deed I am," returned Aunt Cyrilla briskly, as she put it on the table and proceeded to dust it out. "I never went to see Edward and Geraldine since they were married that I didn't take a basket of good things along with me for them, and I'm not going to stop now. As for it's being Christmas, all the more reason. Edward is always real glad to get some of the old farmhouse goodies. He says they beat city cooking all hollow, and so they do."

"But it's so countrified," moaned Lucy Rose.

“Well, I am countrified,” said Aunt Cyrilla firmly, “and so are you. And what’s more, I don’t see that it’s anything to be ashamed of. You’ve got some real silly pride about you, Lucy Rose. You’ll grow out of it in time, but just now it is giving you a lot of trouble.”

“The basket is a lot of trouble,” said Lucy Rose crossly. “You’re always mislaying it or afraid you will. And it does look so funny to be walking through the streets with that big, bulgy basket hanging on your arm.”

“I’m not a mite worried about its looks,” returned Aunt Cyrilla calmly. “As for its being a trouble, why, maybe it is, but I have that, and other people have the pleasure of it. Edward and Geraldine don’t need it — I know that — but there may be those that will. And if it hurts your feelings to walk ‘longside of a countrified old lady with a countrified basket, why, you can just fall behind, as it were.”

Aunt Cyrilla nodded and smiled good-humouredly, and Lucy Rose, though she privately held to her own opinion, had to smile too.

“Now, let me see,” said Aunt Cyrilla reflectively, tapping the snowy kitchen table with the point of her plump, dimpled forefinger, “what shall I take? That big fruit cake for one thing — Edward does like my fruit cake; and that cold boiled tongue for another. Those three mince pies too, they’d spoil before we got back or your uncle’d make himself sick eating them — mince pie is his besetting sin. And that little stone bottle full of cream — Geraldine may carry any amount of style, but I’ve yet to see her look down on real good country cream, Lucy Rose; and another bottle of my raspberry vinegar. That plate of jelly cookies and doughnuts will please the children and fill up the chinks, and you can bring me that box of ice-cream candy out of the pantry, and that bag of striped candy sticks your uncle brought home from the corner last night. And apples, of course — three or four dozen of those good eaters — and a little pot of my greengage preserves — Edward’ll like that. And some sandwiches and pound cake for a snack for ourselves. Now, I guess that will do for eatables. The presents for the children can go in on top. There’s a doll for Daisy and the little boat your uncle made for Ray and a tatted lace

handkerchief apiece for the twins, and the crochet hood for the baby. Now, is that all?”

“There’s a cold roast chicken in the pantry,” said Lucy Rose wickedly, “and the pig Uncle Leo killed is hanging up in the porch. Couldn’t you put them in too?”

Aunt Cyrilla smiled broadly. “Well, I guess we’ll leave the pig alone; but since you have reminded me of it, the chicken may as well go in. I can make room.”

Lucy Rose, in spite of her prejudices, helped with the packing and, not having been trained under Aunt Cyrilla’s eye for nothing, did it very well too, with much clever economy of space. But when Aunt Cyrilla had put in as a finishing touch a big bouquet of pink and white everlastings, and tied the bulging covers down with a firm hand, Lucy Rose stood over the basket and whispered vindictively:

“Some day I’m going to burn this basket — when I get courage enough. Then there’ll be an end of lugging it everywhere we go like a — like an old market-woman.”

Uncle Leopold came in just then, shaking his head dubiously. He was not going to spend Christmas with Edward and Geraldine, and perhaps the prospect of having to cook and eat his Christmas dinner all alone made him pessimistic.

“I mistrust you folks won’t get to Pembroke tomorrow,” he said sagely. “It’s going to storm.”

Aunt Cyrilla did not worry over this. She believed matters of this kind were foreordained, and she slept calmly. But Lucy Rose got up three times in the night to see if it were storming, and when she did sleep had horrible nightmares of struggling through blinding snowstorms dragging Aunt Cyrilla’s Christmas basket along with her.

It was not snowing in the early morning, and Uncle Leopold drove Aunt Cyrilla and Lucy Rose and the basket to the station, four miles off. When they reached there the air was thick with flying flakes. The stationmaster sold them their tickets with a grim face.

“If there’s any more snow comes, the trains might as well keep Christmas too,” he said. “There’s been so much snow already that traffic is blocked half the time, and now there ain’t no place to shovel the snow off onto.”

Aunt Cyrilla said that if the train were to get to Pembroke in time for Christmas, it would get there; and she opened her basket and gave the stationmaster and three small boys an apple apiece.

“That’s the beginning,” groaned Lucy Rose to herself.

When their train came along Aunt Cyrilla established herself in one seat and her basket in another, and looked beamingly around her at her fellow travellers.

These were few in number — a delicate little woman at the end of the car, with a baby and four other children, a young girl across the aisle with a pale, pretty face, a sunburned lad three seats ahead in a khaki uniform, a very handsome, imposing old lady in a sealskin coat ahead of him, and a thin young man with spectacles opposite.

“A minister,” reflected Aunt Cyrilla, beginning to classify, “who takes better care of other folks’ souls than of his own body; and that woman in the sealskin is discontented and cross at something — got up too early to catch the train, maybe; and that young chap must be one of the boys not long out of the hospital. That woman’s children look as if they hadn’t enjoyed a square meal since they were born; and if that girl across from me has a mother, I’d like to know what the woman means, letting her daughter go from home in this weather in clothes like that.”

Lucy Rose merely wondered uncomfortably what the others thought of Aunt Cyrilla’s basket.

They expected to reach Pembroke that night, but as the day wore on the storm grew worse. Twice the train had to stop while the train hands dug it out. The third time it could not go on. It was dusk when the conductor came through the train, replying brusquely to the questions of the anxious passengers.

“A nice lookout for Christmas — no, impossible to go on or back — track blocked for miles — what’s that, madam? — no, no station near —

woods for miles. We're here for the night. These storms of late have played the mischief with everything."

"Oh, dear," groaned Lucy Rose.

Aunt Cyrilla looked at her basket complacently. "At any rate, we won't starve," she said.

The pale, pretty girl seemed indifferent. The sealskin lady looked crosser than ever. The khaki boy said, "Just my luck," and two of the children began to cry. Aunt Cyrilla took some apples and striped candy sticks from her basket and carried them to them. She lifted the oldest into her ample lap and soon had them all around her, laughing and contented.

The rest of the travellers straggled over to the corner and drifted into conversation. The khaki boy said it was hard lines not to get home for Christmas, after all.

"I was invalided from South Africa three months ago, and I've been in the hospital at Netley ever since. Reached Halifax three days ago and telegraphed the old folks I'd eat my Christmas dinner with them, and to have an extra-big turkey because I didn't have any last year. They'll be badly disappointed."

He looked disappointed too. One khaki sleeve hung empty by his side. Aunt Cyrilla passed him an apple.

"We were all going down to Grandpa's for Christmas," said the little mother's oldest boy dolefully. "We've never been there before, and it's just too bad."

He looked as if he wanted to cry but thought better of it and bit off a mouthful of candy.

"Will there be any Santa Claus on the train?" demanded his small sister tearfully. "Jack says there won't."

"I guess he'll find you out," said Aunt Cyrilla reassuringly.

The pale, pretty girl came up and took the baby from the tired mother. "What a dear little fellow," she said softly.

"Are you going home for Christmas too?" asked Aunt Cyrilla.

The girl shook her head. "I haven't any home. I'm just a shop girl out of work at present, and I'm going to Pembroke to look for some."

Aunt Cyrilla went to her basket and took out her box of cream candy. "I guess we might as well enjoy ourselves. Let's eat it all up and have a good time. Maybe we'll get down to Pembroke in the morning."

The little group grew cheerful as they nibbled, and even the pale girl brightened up. The little mother told Aunt Cyrilla her story aside. She had been long estranged from her family, who had disapproved of her marriage. Her husband had died the previous summer, leaving her in poor circumstances.

"Father wrote to me last week and asked me to let bygones be bygones and come home for Christmas. I was so glad. And the children's hearts were set on it. It seems too bad that we are not to get there. I have to be back at work the morning after Christmas."

The khaki boy came up again and shared the candy. He told amusing stories of campaigning in South Africa. The minister came too, and listened, and even the sealskin lady turned her head over her shoulder.

By and by the children fell asleep, one on Aunt Cyrilla's lap and one on Lucy Rose's, and two on the seat. Aunt Cyrilla and the pale girl helped the mother make up beds for them. The minister gave his overcoat and the sealskin lady came forward with a shawl.

"This will do for the baby," she said.

"We must get up some Santa Claus for these youngsters," said the khaki boy. "Let's hang their stockings on the wall and fill 'em up as best we can. I've nothing about me but some hard cash and a jack-knife. I'll give each of 'em a quarter and the boy can have the knife."

"I've nothing but money either," said the sealskin lady regretfully.

Aunt Cyrilla glanced at the little mother. She had fallen asleep with her head against the seat-back.

"I've got a basket over there," said Aunt Cyrilla firmly, "and I've some presents in it that I was taking to my nephew's children. I'm going to give 'em to these. As for the money, I think the mother is the one for it to go to. She's been telling me her story, and a pitiful one it is. Let's make up a little purse among us for a Christmas present."

The idea met with favour. The khaki boy passed his cap and everybody contributed. The sealskin lady put in a crumpled note. When Aunt Cyrilla straightened it out she saw that it was for twenty dollars.

Meanwhile, Lucy Rose had brought the basket. She smiled at Aunt Cyrilla as she lugged it down the aisle and Aunt Cyrilla smiled back. Lucy Rose had never touched that basket of her own accord before.

Ray's boat went to Jacky, and Daisy's doll to his oldest sister, the twins' lace handkerchiefs to the two smaller girls and the hood to the baby. Then the stockings were filled up with doughnuts and jelly cookies and the money was put in an envelope and pinned to the little mother's jacket.

"That baby is such a dear little fellow," said the sealskin lady gently. "He looks something like my little son. He died eighteen Christmases ago."

Aunt Cyrilla put her hand over the lady's kid glove. "So did mine," she said. Then the two women smiled tenderly at each other. Afterwards they rested from their labours and all had what Aunt Cyrilla called a "snack" of sandwiches and pound cake. The khaki boy said he hadn't tasted anything half so good since he left home.

"They didn't give us pound cake in South Africa," he said.

When morning came the storm was still raging. The children wakened and went wild with delight over their stockings. The little mother found her envelope and tried to utter thanks and broke down; and nobody knew what to say or do, when the conductor fortunately came in and made a diversion by telling them they might as well resign themselves to spending Christmas on the train.

"This is serious," said the khaki boy, "when you consider that we've no provisions. Don't mind for myself, used to half rations or no rations at all. But these kiddies will have tremendous appetites."

Then Aunt Cyrilla rose to the occasion.

"I've got some emergency rations here," she announced. "There's plenty for all and we'll have our Christmas dinner, although a cold one. Breakfast first thing. There's a sandwich apiece left and we must fill up on

what is left of the cookies and doughnuts and save the rest for a real good spread at dinner time. The only thing is, I haven't any bread."

"I've a box of soda crackers," said the little mother eagerly.

Nobody in that car will ever forget that Christmas. To begin with, after breakfast they had a concert. The khaki boy gave two recitations, sang three songs, and gave a whistling solo. Lucy Rose gave three recitations and the minister a comic reading. The pale shop girl sang two songs. It was agreed that the khaki boy's whistling solo was the best number, and Aunt Cyrilla gave him the bouquet of everlastings as a reward of merit.

Then the conductor came in with the cheerful news that the storm was almost over and he thought the track would be cleared in a few hours.

"If we can get to the next station we'll be all right," he said. "The branch joins the main line there and the tracks will be clear."

At noon they had dinner. The train hands were invited in to share it. The minister carved the chicken with the brakeman's jack-knife and the khaki boy cut up the tongue and the mince pies, while the sealskin lady mixed the raspberry vinegar with its due proportion of water. Bits of paper served as plates. The train furnished a couple of glasses, a tin pint cup was discovered and given to the children, Aunt Cyrilla and Lucy Rose and the sealskin lady drank, turn about, from the latter's graduated medicine glass, the shop girl and the little mother shared one of the empty bottles, and the khaki boy, the minister, and the train men drank out of the other bottle.

Everybody declared they had never enjoyed a meal more in their lives. Certainly it was a merry one, and Aunt Cyrilla's cooking was never more appreciated; indeed, the bones of the chicken and the pot of preserves were all that was left. They could not eat the preserves because they had no spoons, so Aunt Cyrilla gave them to the little mother.

When all was over, a hearty vote of thanks was passed to Aunt Cyrilla and her basket. The sealskin lady wanted to know how she made her pound cake, and the khaki boy asked for her receipt for jelly cookies. And when two hours later the conductor came in and said the snowploughs had got along and they'd soon be starting, they all wondered if it could really be less than twenty-four hours since they met.

“I feel as if I’d been campaigning with you all my life,” said the khaki boy.

At the next station they all parted. The little mother and the children had to take the next train back home. The minister stayed there, and the khaki boy and the sealskin lady changed trains. The sealskin lady shook Aunt Cyrilla’s hand. She no longer looked discontented or cross.

“This has been the pleasantest Christmas I have ever spent,” she said heartily. “I shall never forget that wonderful basket of yours. The little shop girl is going home with me. I’ve promised her a place in my husband’s store.”

When Aunt Cyrilla and Lucy Rose reached Pembroke there was nobody to meet them because everyone had given up expecting them. It was not far from the station to Edward’s house and Aunt Cyrilla elected to walk.

“I’ll carry the basket,” said Lucy Rose.

Aunt Cyrilla relinquished it with a smile. Lucy Rose smiled too.

“It’s a blessed old basket,” said the latter, “and I love it. Please forget all the silly things I ever said about it, Aunt C’rilla.”

Davenport's Story

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It was a rainy afternoon, and we had been passing the time by telling ghost stories. That is a very good sort of thing for a rainy afternoon, and it is a much better time than after night. If you tell ghost stories after dark they are apt to make you nervous, whether you own up to it or not, and you sneak home and dodge upstairs in mortal terror, and undress with your back to the wall, so that you can't fancy there is anything behind you.

We had each told a story, and had had the usual assortment of mysterious noises and death warnings and sheeted spectres and so on, down through the whole catalogue of horrors — enough to satisfy any reasonable ghost-taster. But Jack, as usual, was dissatisfied. He said our stories were all secondhand stuff. There wasn't a man in the crowd who had ever seen or heard a ghost; all our so-called authentic stories had been told us by persons who had the story from other persons who saw the ghosts.

"One doesn't get any information from that," said Jack. "I never expect to get so far along as to see a real ghost myself, but I would like to see and talk to one who had."

Some persons appear to have the knack of getting their wishes granted. Jack is one of that ilk. Just as he made the remark, Davenport sauntered in and, finding out what was going on, volunteered to tell a ghost story himself — something that had happened to his grandmother, or maybe it was his great-aunt; I forget which. It was a very good ghost story as ghost stories go, and Davenport told it well. Even Jack admitted that, but he said:

"It's only secondhand too. Did you ever have a ghostly experience yourself, old man?"

Davenport put his finger tips critically together.

"Would you believe me if I said I had?" he asked.

“No,” said Jack unblushingly.

“Then there would be no use in my saying it.”

“But you don’t mean that you ever really had, of course?”

“I don’t know. Something queer happened once. I’ve never been able to explain it — from a practical point of view, that is. Want to hear about it?”

Of course we did. This was exciting. Nobody would ever have suspected Davenport of seeing ghosts.

“It’s conventional enough,” he began. “Ghosts don’t seem to have much originality. But it’s firsthand, Jack, if that’s what you want. I don’t suppose any of you have ever heard me speak of my brother, Charles. He was my senior by two years, and was a quiet, reserved sort of fellow — not at all demonstrative, but with very strong and deep affections.

“When he left college he became engaged to Dorothy Chester. She was very beautiful, and my brother idolized her. She died a short time before the date set for their marriage, and Charles never recovered from the blow.

“I married Dorothy’s sister, Virginia. Virginia did not in the least resemble her sister, but our eldest daughter was strikingly like her dead aunt. We called her Dorothy, and Charles was devoted to her. Dolly, as we called her, was always ‘Uncle Charley’s girl.’

“When Dolly was twelve years old Charles went to New Orleans on business, and while there took yellow fever and died. He was buried there, and Dolly half broke her childish heart over his death.

“One day, five years later, when Dolly was seventeen, I was writing letters in my library. That very morning my wife and Dolly had gone to New York en route for Europe. Dolly was going to school in Paris for a year. Business prevented my accompanying them even as far as New York, but Gilbert Chester, my wife’s brother, was going with them. They were to sail on the Aragon the next morning.

“I had written steadily for about an hour. At last, growing tired, I threw down my pen and, leaning back in my chair, was on the point of lighting a cigar when an unaccountable impulse made me turn round. I dropped my cigar and sprang to my feet in amazement. There was only one door in the room and I had all along been facing it. I could have sworn nobody had

entered, yet there, standing between me and the bookcase, was a man — and that man was my brother Charles!

“There was no mistaking him; I saw him as plainly as I see you. He was a tall, rather stout man, with curly hair and a fair, close-clipped beard. He wore the same light-grey suit which he had worn when bidding us goodbye on the morning of his departure for New Orleans. He had no hat on, but wore spectacles, and was standing in his old favourite attitude, with his hands behind him.

“I want you to understand that at this precise moment, although I was surprised beyond measure, I was not in the least frightened, because I did not for a moment suppose that what I saw was — well, a ghost or apparition of any sort. The thought that flashed across my bewildered brain was simply that there had been some absurd mistake somewhere, and that my brother had never died at all, but was here, alive and well. I took a hasty step towards him.

“‘Good heavens, old fellow!’ I exclaimed. ‘Where on earth have you come from? Why, we all thought you were dead!’

“I was quite close to him when I stopped abruptly. Somehow I couldn’t move another step. He made no motion, but his eyes looked straight into mine.

“‘Do not let Dolly sail on the Aragon tomorrow,’ he said in slow, clear tones that I heard distinctly.

“And then he was gone — yes, Jack, I know it is a very conventional way of ending up a ghost story,| but I have to tell you just what occurred, or at least what I thought occurred. One moment he was there and the next moment he wasn’t. He did not pass me or go out of the door.

“For a few moments I felt dazed. I was wide awake and in my right and proper senses so far as I could judge, and yet the whole thing seemed incredible. Scared? No, I wasn’t conscious of being scared. I was simply bewildered.

“In my mental confusion one thought stood out sharply — Dolly was in danger of some kind, and if the warning was really from a supernatural source, it must not be disregarded. I rushed to the station and, having first

wired to my wife not to sail on the Aragon, I found that I could connect with the five-fifteen train for New York. I took it with the comfortable consciousness that my friends would certainly think I had gone out of my mind.

“I arrived in New York at eight o’clock the next morning and at once drove to the hotel where my wife, daughter and brother-in-law were staying. I found them greatly mystified by my telegram. I suppose my explanation was a very lame one. I know I felt decidedly like a fool. Gilbert laughed at me and said I had dreamed the whole thing. Virginia was perplexed, but Dolly accepted the warning unhesitatingly.

“‘Of course it was Uncle Charley,’ she said confidently. ‘We will not sail on the Aragon now.’

“Gilbert had to give in to this decision with a very bad grace, and the Aragon sailed that day minus three of her intended passengers.

“Well, you’ve all heard of the historic collision between the Aragon and the Astarte in a fog, and the fearful loss of life it involved. Gilbert didn’t laugh when the news came, I assure you. Virginia and Dolly sailed a month later on the Marseilles, and reached the other side in safety. That’s all the story, boys — the only experience of the kind I ever had,” concluded Davenport.

We had many questions to ask and several theories to advance. Jack said Davenport had dreamed it and that the collision of the Aragon and the Astarte was simply a striking coincidence. But Davenport merely smiled at all our suggestions and, as it cleared up just about three, we told no more ghost stories.

Emily's Husband

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Emily Fair got out of Hiram Jameson's waggon at the gate. She took her satchel and parasol and, in her clear, musical tones, thanked him for bringing her home. Emily had a very distinctive voice. It was very sweet always and very cold generally; sometimes it softened to tenderness with those she loved, but in it there was always an undertone of inflexibility and reserve. Nobody had ever heard Emily Fair's voice tremble.

"You are more than welcome, Mrs. Fair," said Hiram Jameson, with a glance of bold admiration. Emily met it with an unflinching indifference. She disliked Hiram Jameson. She had been furious under all her external composure because he had been at the station when she left the train.

Jameson perceived her scorn, but chose to disregard it.

"Proud as Lucifer," he thought as he drove away. "Well, she's none the worse of that. I don't like your weak women — they're always sly. If Stephen Fair don't get better she'll be free and then—"

He did not round out the thought, but he gloated over the memory of Emily, standing by the gate in the harsh, crude light of the autumn sunset, with her tawny, brown hair curling about her pale, oval face and the scornful glint in her large, dark-grey eyes.

Emily stood at the gate for some time after Jameson's waggon had disappeared. When the brief burst of sunset splendour had faded out she turned and went into the garden where late asters and chrysanthemums still bloomed. She gathered some of the more perfect ones here and there. She loved flowers, but tonight the asters seemed to hurt her, for she presently dropped those she had gathered and deliberately set her foot on them.

A sudden gust of wind came over the brown, sodden fields and the ragged maples around the garden writhed and wailed. The air was raw and

chill. The rain that had threatened all day was very near. Emily shivered and went into the house.

Amelia Phillips was bending over the fire. She came forward and took Emily's parcels and wraps with a certain gentleness that sat oddly on her grim personality.

"Are you tired? I'm glad you're back. Did you walk from the station?"

"No. Hiram Jameson was there and offered to drive me home. I'd rather have walked. It's going to be a storm, I think. Where is John?"

"He went to the village after supper," answered Amelia, lighting a lamp. "We needed some things from the store."

The light flared up as she spoke and brought out her strong, almost harsh features and deep-set black eyes. Amelia Phillips looked like an overdone sketch in charcoal.

"Has anything happened in Woodford while I've been away?" asked Emily indifferently. Plainly she did not expect an affirmative answer. Woodford life was not eventful.

Amelia glanced at her sharply. So she had not heard! Amelia had expected that Hiram Jameson would have told her. She wished that he had, for she never felt sure of Emily. The older sister knew that beneath that surface reserve was a passionate nature, brooking no restraint when once it overleaped the bounds of her Puritan self-control. Amelia Phillips, with all her naturally keen insight and her acquired knowledge of Emily's character, had never been able to fathom the latter's attitude of mind towards her husband. From the time that Emily had come back to her girlhood's home, five years before, Stephen Fair's name had never crossed her lips.

"I suppose you haven't heard that Stephen is very ill," said Amelia slowly.

Not a feature of Emily's face changed. Only in her voice when she spoke was a curious jarring, as if a false note had been struck in a silver melody.

"What is the matter with him?"

“Typhoid,” answered Amelia briefly. She felt relieved that Emily had taken it so calmly. Amelia hated Stephen Fair with all the intensity of her nature because she believed that he had treated Emily ill, but she had always been distrustful that Emily in her heart of hearts loved her husband still. That, in Amelia Phillips’ opinion, would have betrayed a weakness not to be tolerated.

Emily looked at the lamp unwinkingly.

“That wick needs trimming,” she said. Then, with a sudden recurrence of the untuneful note:

“Is he dangerously ill?”

“We haven’t heard for three days. The doctors were not anxious about him Monday, though they said it was a pretty severe case.”

A faint, wraithlike change of expression drifted over Emily’s beautiful face and was gone in a moment. What was it — relief? Regret? It would have been impossible to say. When she next spoke her vibrant voice was as perfectly melodious as usual.

“I think I will go to bed, Amelia. John will not be back until late I suppose, and I am very tired. There comes the rain. I suppose it will spoil all the flowers. They will be beaten to pieces.”

In the dark hall Emily paused for a moment and opened the front door to be cut in the face with a whip-like dash of rain. She peered out into the thickly gathering gloom. Beyond, in the garden, she saw the asters tossed about, phantom-like. The wind around the many-cornered old farmhouse was full of wails and sobs.

The clock in the sitting-room struck eight. Emily shivered and shut the door. She remembered that she had been married at eight o’clock that very morning seven years ago. She thought she could see herself coming down the stairs in her white dress with her bouquet of asters. For a moment she was glad that those mocking flowers in the garden would be all beaten to death before morning by the lash of wind and rain.

Then she recovered her mental poise and put the hateful memories away from her as she went steadily up the narrow stairs and along the hall

with its curious slant as the house had settled, to her own room under the northwestern eaves.

When she had put out her light and gone to bed she found that she could not sleep. She pretended to believe that it was the noise of the storm that kept her awake. Not even to herself would Emily confess that she was waiting and listening nervously for John's return home. That would have been to admit a weakness, and Emily Fair, like Amelia, despised weakness.

Every few minutes a gust of wind smote the house, with a roar as of a wild beast, and bombarded Emily's window with a volley of rattling drops. In the silences that came between the gusts she heard the soft, steady pouring of the rain on the garden paths below, mingled with a faint murmur that came up from the creek beyond the barns where the pine boughs were thrashing in the storm. Emily suddenly thought of a weird story she had once read years before and long forgotten — a story of a soul that went out in a night of storm and blackness and lost its way between earth and heaven. She shuddered and drew the counterpane over her face.

"Of all things I hate a fall storm most," she muttered. "It frightens me."

Somewhat to her surprise — for even her thoughts were generally well under the control of her unbending will — she could not help thinking of Stephen — thinking of him not tenderly or remorsefully, but impersonally, as of a man who counted for nothing in her life. It was so strange to think of Stephen being ill. She had never known him to have a day's sickness in his life before. She looked back over her life much as if she were glancing with a chill interest at a series of pictures which in no way concerned her. Scene after scene, face after face, flashed out on the background of the darkness.

Emily's mother had died at her birth, but Amelia Phillips, twenty years older than the baby sister, had filled the vacant place so well and with such intuitive tenderness that Emily had never been conscious of missing a mother. John Phillips, too, the grave, silent, elder brother, loved and petted

the child. Woodford people were fond of saying that John and Amelia spoiled Emily shamefully.

Emily Phillips had never been like the other Woodford girls and had no friends of her own age among them. Her uncommon beauty won her many lovers, but she had never cared for any of them until Stephen Fair, fifteen years her senior, had come a-wooing to the old, gray, willow-girdled Phillips homestead.

Amelia and John Phillips never liked him. There was an ancient feud between the families that had died out among the younger generation, but was still potent with the older.

From the first Emily had loved Stephen. Indeed, deep down in her strange, wayward heart, she had cared for him long before the memorable day when he had first looked at her with seeing eyes and realized that the quiet, unthought-of child who had been growing up at the old Phillips place had blossomed out into a woman of strange, seraph-like beauty and deep grey eyes whose expression was nevermore to go out of Stephen Fair's remembrance from then till the day of his death.

John and Amelia Phillips put their own unjustifiable dislike of Stephen aside when they found that Emily's heart was set on him. The two were married after a brief courtship and Emily went out from her girlhood's home to the Fair homestead, two miles away.

Stephen's mother lived with them. Janet Fair had never liked Emily. She had not been willing for Stephen to marry her. But, apart from this, the woman had a natural, ineradicable love of making mischief and took a keen pleasure in it. She loved her son and she had loved her husband, but nevertheless, when Thomas Fair had been alive she had fomented continual strife and discontent between him and Stephen. Now it became her pleasure to make what trouble she could between Stephen and his wife.

She had the advantage of Emily in that she was always sweet-spoken and, on the surface, sweet-tempered. Emily, hurt and galled in a score of petty ways, so subtle that they were beyond a man's courser comprehension, astonished her husband by her fierce outbursts of anger that seemed to him for the most part without reason or excuse. He tried his

best to preserve the peace between his wife and mother; and when he failed, not understanding all that Emily really endured at the elder woman's merciless hands, he grew to think her capricious and easily irritated — a spoiled child whose whims must not be taken too seriously.

To a certain extent he was right. Emily had been spoiled. The unbroken indulgence which her brother and sister had always accorded her had fitted her but poorly to cope with the trials of her new life. True, Mrs. Fair was an unpleasant woman to live with, but if Emily had chosen to be more patient under petty insults, and less resentful of her husband's wellmeant though clumsy efforts for harmony, the older woman could have effected real little mischief. But this Emily refused to be, and the breach between husband and wife widened insidiously.

The final rupture came two years after their marriage. Emily, in rebellious anger, told her husband that she would no longer live in the same house with his mother.

"You must choose between us," she said, her splendid voice vibrating with all the unleashed emotion of her being, yet with no faltering in it. "If she stays I go."

Stephen Fair, harassed and bewildered, was angry with the relentless anger of a patient man roused at last.

"Go, then," he said sternly, "I'll never turn my mother from my door for any woman's whim."

The stormy red went out of Emily's face, leaving it like a marble wash.

"You mean that!" she said calmly. "Think well. If I go I'll never return."

"I do mean it," said Stephen. "Leave my house if you will — if you hold your marriage vow so lightly. When your senses return you are welcome to come back to me. I will never ask you to."

Without another word Emily turned away. That night she went back to John and Amelia. They, on their part, welcomed her back gladly, believing her to be a wronged and illused woman. They hated Stephen Fair with a new and personal rancour. The one thing they could hardly have forgiven Emily would have been the fact of her relenting towards him.

But she did not relent. In her soul she knew that, with all her just grievances, she had been in the wrong, and for that she could not forgive him!

Two years after she had left Stephen Mrs. Fair died, and his widowed sister-in-law went to keep house for him. If he thought of Emily he made no sign. Stephen Fair never broke a word once passed.

Since their separation no greeting or look had ever passed between husband and wife. When they met, as they occasionally did, neither impassive face changed. Emily Fair had buried her love deeply. In her pride and anger she would not let herself remember even where she had dug its grave.

And now Stephen was ill. The strange woman felt a certain pride in her own inflexibility because the fact did not affect her. She told herself that she could not have felt more unconcerned had he been the merest stranger. Nevertheless she waited and watched for John Phillips' homecoming.

At ten o'clock she heard his voice in the kitchen. She leaned out of the bed and pulled open her door. She heard voices below, but could not distinguish the words, so she rose and went noiselessly out into the hall, knelt down by the stair railing and listened. The door of the kitchen was open below her and a narrow shaft of light struck on her white, intent face. She looked like a woman waiting for the decree of doom.

At first John and Amelia talked of trivial matters. Then the latter said abruptly:

"Did you hear how Stephen Fair was?"

"He's dying," was the brief response.

Emily heard Amelia's startled exclamation. She gripped the square rails with her hands until the sharp edges dented deep into her fingers. John's voice came up to her again, harsh and expressionless:

"He took a bad turn the day before yesterday and has been getting worse ever since. The doctors don't expect him to live till morning."

Amelia began to talk rapidly in low tones. Emily heard nothing further. She got up and went blindly back into her room with such agony tearing at her heartstrings that she dully wondered why she could not shriek aloud.

Stephen — her husband — dying! In the burning anguish of that moment her own soul was as an open book before her. The love she had buried rose from the depths of her being in an awful, accusing resurrection.

Out of her stupor and pain a purpose formed itself clearly. She must go to Stephen — she must beg and win his forgiveness before it was too late. She dared not go down to John and ask him to take her to her husband. He might refuse. The Phillipses had been known to do even harder things than that. At the best there would be a storm of protest and objection on her brother's and sister's part, and Emily felt that she could not encounter that in her present mood. It would drive her mad.

She lit a lamp and dressed herself noiselessly, but with feverish haste. Then she listened. The house was very still. Amelia and John had gone to bed. She wrapped herself in a heavy woollen shawl hanging in the hall and crept downstairs. With numbed fingers she fumbled at the key of the hall door, turned it and slipped out into the night.

The storm seemed to reach out and clutch her and swallow her up. She went through the garden, where the flowers already were crushed to earth; she crossed the long field beyond, where the rain cut her face like a whip and the wind almost twisted her in its grasp like a broken reed. Somehow or other, more by blind instinct than anything else, she found the path that led through commons and woods and waste valleys to her lost home.

In after years that frenzied walk through the storm and blackness seemed as an unbroken nightmare to Emily Fair's recollection. Often she fell. Once as she did so a jagged, dead limb of fir struck her forehead and cut in it a gash that marked her for life. As she struggled to her feet and found her way again the blood trickled down over her face.

"Oh God, don't let him die before I get to him — don't — don't — don't!" she prayed desperately with more of defiance than entreaty in her voice. Then, realizing this, she cried out in horror. Surely some fearsome punishment would come upon her for her wickedness — she would find her husband lying dead.

When Emily opened the kitchen door of the Fair homestead Almira Sentner cried out in her alarm, who or what was this creature with the

white face and wild eyes, with her torn and dripping garments and dishevelled, wind-writhen hair and the big drops of blood slowly trickling from her brow?

The next moment she recognized Emily and her face hardened. This woman, Stephen's sister-in-law, had always hated Emily Fair.

"What do you want here?" she said harshly.

"Where is my husband?" asked Emily.

"You can't see him," said Mrs. Sentner defiantly. "The doctors won't allow anyone in the room but those he's used to. Strangers excite him."

The insolence and cruelty of her speech fell on unheeding ears. Emily, understanding only that her husband yet lived, turned to the hall door.

"Stand back!" she said in a voice that was little more than a thrilling whisper, but which yet had in it something that cowed Almira Sentner's malice. Sullenly she stood aside and Emily went unhindered up the stairs to the room where the sick man lay.

The two doctors in attendance were there, together with the trained nurse from the city. Emily pushed them aside and fell on her knees by the bed. One of the doctors made a hasty motion as if to draw her back, but the other checked him.

"It doesn't matter now," he said significantly.

Stephen Fair turned his languid, unshorn head on the pillow. His dull, fevered eyes met Emily's. He had not recognized anyone all day, but he knew his wife.

"Emily!" he whispered.

Emily drew his head close to her face and kissed his lips passionately.

"Stephen, I've come back to you. Forgive me — forgive me — say that you forgive me."

"It's all right, my girl," he said feebly.

She buried her face in the pillow beside his with a sob.

In the wan, grey light of the autumn dawn the old doctor came to the bedside and lifted Emily to her feet. She had not stirred the whole night. Now she raised her white face with dumb pleading in her eyes. The doctor glanced at the sleeping form on the bed.

“Your husband will live, Mrs. Fair,” he said gently. “I think your coming saved him. His joy turned the ebbing tide in favour of life.”

“Thank God!” said Emily.

And for the first time in her life her beautiful voice trembled.

Min

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The morning sun hung, a red, lustreless ball, in the dull grey sky. A light snow had fallen in the night and the landscape, crossed by spider-like trails of fences, was as white and lifeless as if wrapped in a shroud.

A young man was driving down the road to Rykman's Corner; the youthful face visible above the greatcoat was thoughtful and refined, the eyes deep blue and peculiarly beautiful, the mouth firm yet sensitive. It was not a handsome face, but there was a strangely subtle charm about it.

The chill breathlessness of the air seemed prophetic of more snow. The Reverend Allan Telford looked across the bare wastes and cold white hills and shivered, as if the icy lifelessness about him were slowly and relentlessly creeping into his own heart and life.

He felt utterly discouraged. In his soul he was asking bitterly what good had come of all his prayerful labours among the people of this pinched, narrow world, as rugged and unbeautiful in form and life as the barren hills that shut them in.

He had been two years among them and he counted it two years of failure. He had been too outspoken for them; they resented sullenly his direct and incisive tirades against their pet sins. They viewed his small innovations on their traditional ways of worship with disfavour and distrust and shut him out of their lives with an ever-increasing coldness. He had meant well and worked hard and he felt his failure keenly.

His thoughts reverted to a letter received the preceding day from a former classmate, stating that the pastorate of a certain desirable town church had become vacant and hinting that a call was to be moderated for him unless he signified his unwillingness to accept.

Two years before, Allan Telford, fresh from college and full of vigorous enthusiasm and high ideas, would have said:

“No, that is not for me. My work must lie among the poor and lowly of earth as did my Master’s. Shall I shrink from it because, to worldly eyes, the way looks dreary and uninviting?”

Now, looking back on his two years’ ministry, he said wearily:

“I can remain here no longer. If I do, I fear I shall sink down into something almost as pitiful as one of these canting, gossiping people myself. I can do them no good — they do not like or trust me. I will accept this call and go back to my own world.”

Perhaps the keynote of his failure was sounded in his last words, “my own world.” He had never felt, or tried to feel, that this narrow sphere was his own world. It was some lower level to which he had come with good tidings and honest intentions but, unconsciously, he had held himself above it, and his people felt and resented this. They expressed it by saying he was “stuck-up.”

Rykman’s Corner came into view as he drove over the brow of a long hill. He hated the place, knowing it well for what it was — a festering hotbed of gossip and malice, the habitat of all the slanderous rumours and innuendoes that permeated the social tissue of the community. The newest scandal, the worst-flavoured joke, the latest details of the most recent quarrel, were always to be had at Rykman’s store.

As the minister drove down the hill, a man came out of a small house at the foot and waited on the road. Had it been possible Telford would have pretended not to see him, but it was not possible, for Isaac Galletly meant to be seen and hailed the minister cheerfully.

“Good mornin’, Mr. Telford. Ye won’t mind giving me a lift down to the Corner, I dessay?”

Telford checked his horse reluctantly and Galletly crawled into the cutter. He was that most despicable of created beings, a male gossip, and he spent most of his time travelling from house to house in the village, smoking his pipe in neighbourly kitchens and fanning into an active blaze all the smouldering feuds of the place. He had been nicknamed “The Morning Chronicle” by a sarcastic schoolteacher who had sojourned a

winter at the Corner. The name was an apt one and clung. Telford had heard it.

I suppose he is starting out on his rounds now, he thought.

Galletly plunged undauntedly into the conversational gap.

“Quite a fall of snow last night. Reckon we’ll have more ‘fore long. That was a grand sermon ye gave us last Sunday, Mr. Telford. Reckon it went home to some folks, judgin’ from all I’ve heard. It was needed and that’s a fact. ‘Live peaceably with all men’ — that’s what I lay out to do. There ain’t a house in the district but what I can drop into and welcome. ‘Tain’t everybody in Rykman’s Corner can say the same.”

Galletly squinted out of the corner of his eye to see if the minister would open on the trail of this hint. Telford’s passive face was discouraging but Galletly was not to be baffled.

“I s’pose ye haven’t heard about the row down at Palmers’ last night?”

“No.”

The monosyllable was curt. Telford was vainly seeking to nip Galletly’s gossip in the bud. The name of Palmer conveyed no especial meaning to his ear. He knew where the Palmer homestead was, and that the plaintive-faced, fair-haired woman, whose name was Mrs. Fuller and who came to church occasionally, lived there. His knowledge went no further. He had called three times and found nobody at home — at least, to all appearances. Now he was fated to have the whole budget of some vulgar quarrel forced on him by Galletly.

“No? Everyone’s talkin’ of it. The long and short of it is that Min Palmer has had a regular up-and-down row with Rose Fuller and turned her and her little gal out of doors. I believe the two women had an awful time. Min’s a Tartar when her temper’s up — and that’s pretty often. Nobody knows how Rose managed to put up with her so long. But she has had to go at last. Goodness knows what the poor critter’ll do. She hasn’t a cent nor a relation — she was just an orphan girl that Palmer brought up. She is at Rawlingses now. Maybe when Min cools off, she’ll let her go back but it’s doubtful. Min hates her like p’isen.”

To Telford this was all very unintelligible. But he understood that Mrs. Fuller was in trouble of some kind and that it was his duty to help her if possible, although he had an odd and unaccountable aversion to the woman, for which he had often reproached himself.

“Who is this woman you call Min Palmer?” he said coldly. “What are the family circumstances? I ought to know, perhaps, if I am to be of any service — but I have no wish to hear idle gossip.”

His concluding sentence was quite unheeded by Galletly.

“Min Palmer’s the worst woman in Rykman’s Corner — or out of it. She always was an odd one. I mind her when she was a girl — a saucy, black-eyed baggage she was! Handsome, some folks called her. I never c’d see it. Her people were a queer crowd and Min was never brung up right — jest let run wild all her life. Well, Rod Palmer took to dancin’ attendance on her. Rod was a worthless scamp. Old Palmer was well off and Rod was his only child, but this Rose lived there and kept house for them after Mis’ Palmer died. She was a quiet, well-behaved little creetur. Folks said the old man wanted Rod to marry her — dunno if ‘twas so or not. In the end, howsomever, he had to marry Min. Her brother got after him with a horsewhip, ye understand. Old Palmer was furious but he had to give in and Rod brought her home. She was a bit sobered down by her trouble and lived quiet and sullen-like at first. Her and Rod fought like cat and dog. Rose married Osh Fuller, a worthless, drunken fellow. He died in a year or so and left Rose and her baby without a roof over their heads. Then old Palmer went and brought her home. He set great store by Rose and he c’dn’t bear Min. Min had to be civil to Rose as long as old Palmer lived. Fin’lly Rod up and died and ‘twasn’t long before his father went too. Then the queer part came in. Everyone expected that he’d purvide well for Rose and Min’d come in second best. But no will was to be found. I don’t say but what it was all right, mind you. I may have my own secret opinion, of course. Old Palmer had a regular mania, as ye might say, for makin’ wills. He’d have a lawyer out from town every year and have a new will made and the old one burnt. Lawyer Bell was there and made one ‘bout eight months ‘fore he died. It was s’posed he’d destroyed it and then died ‘fore

he'd time to make another. He went off awful sudden. Anyway, everything went to Min's child — to Min as ye might say. She's been boss. Rose still stayed on there and Min let her, which was more than folks expected of her. But she's turned her out at last. Min's in one of her tantrums now and 'tain't safe to cross her path."

"What is Mrs. Fuller to do?" asked Telford anxiously.

"That's the question. She's sickly — can't work much — and then she has her leetle gal. Min was always jealous of that child. It's a real purty, smart leetle creetur and old Palmer made a lot of it. Min's own is an awful-looking thing — a cripple from the time 'twas born. There's no doubt 'twas a judgement on her. As for Rose, no doubt the god of the widow and fatherless will purvide for her."

In spite of his disgust, Telford could not repress a smile at the tone, half-whine, half-snuffle, with which Galletly ended up.

"I think I had better call and see this Mrs. Palmer," he said slowly.

"'Twould be no airthly use, Mr. Telford. Min'd slam the door in your face if she did nothing worse. She hates ministers and everything that's good. She hasn't darkened a church door for years. She never had any religious tendency to begin with, and when there was such a scandal about her, old Mr. Dinwoodie, our pastor then — a godly man, Mr. Telford — he didn't hold no truck with evildoers — he went right to her to reprove and rebuke her for her sins. Min, she flew at him. She vowed then she'd never go to church again, and she never has. People hereabouts has talked to her and tried to do her good, but it ain't no use. Why, I've heard that woman say there was no God. It's a fact, Mr. Telford — I have. Some of our ministers has tried to visit her. They didn't try it more than once. The last one — he was about your heft — he got a scare, I tell you. Min just caught him by the shoulder and shook him like a rat! Didn't see it myself but Mrs. Rawlings did. Ye ought to hear her describin' of it."

Galletly chuckled over the recollection, his wicked little eyes glistening with delight. Telford was thankful when they reached the store. He felt that he could not endure this man's society any longer.

Nevertheless, he felt strangely interested. This Min Palmer must at least be different from the rest of the Cornerites, if only in the greater force of her wickedness. He almost felt as if her sins on the grand scale were less blameworthy than the petty vices of her censorious neighbours.

Galletly eagerly joined the group of loungers on the dirty wet platform, and Telford passed into the store. A couple of slatternly women were talking to Mrs. Rykman about "the Palmer row." Telford made his small purchases hastily. As he turned from the counter, he came face to face with a woman who had paused in the doorway to survey the scene with an air of sullen scorn. By some subtle intuition Telford knew that this was Min Palmer.

The young man's first feeling was one of admiration for the woman before him, who, in spite of her grotesque attire and defiant, unwomanly air, was strikingly beautiful. She was tall, and not even the man's ragged overcoat which she wore could conceal the grace of her figure. Her abundant black hair was twisted into a sagging knot at her neck, and from beneath the old fur cap looked out a pair of large and brilliant black eyes, heavily lashed, and full of a smouldering fire. Her skin was tanned and coarsened, but the warm crimson blood glowed in her cheeks with a dusky richness, and her face was a perfect oval, with features chiselled in almost classic regularity of outline.

Telford had a curious experience at that moment. He seemed to see, looking out from behind this external mask of degraded beauty, the semblance of what this woman might have been under more favouring circumstance of birth and environment, wherein her rich, passionate nature, potent for either good or evil, might have been trained and swayed aright until it had developed grandly out into the glorious womanhood the Creator must have planned for her. He knew, as if by revelation, that this woman had nothing in common with the narrow, self-righteous souls of Rykman's Corner. Warped and perverted though her nature might be, she was yet far nobler than those who sat in judgement upon her.

Min made some scanty purchases and left the store quickly, brushing unheedingly past the minister as she did so. He saw her step on a rough

wood-sleigh and drive down the river road. The platform loungers had been silent during her call, but now the talk bubbled forth anew. Telford was sick at heart as he drove swiftly away. He felt for Min Palmer a pity he could not understand or analyze. The attempt to measure the gulf between what she was and what she might have been hurt him like the stab of a knife.

He made several calls at various houses along the river during the forenoon. After dinner he suddenly turned his horse towards the Palmer place. Isaac Galletly, comfortably curled up in a neighbour's chimney corner, saw him drive past.

"Ef the minister ain't goin' to Palmers' after all!" he chuckled. "He's a set one when he does take a notion. Well, I warned him what to expect. If Min claws his eyes out, he'll only have himself to blame."

Telford was not without his own misgivings as he drove into the Palmer yard. He tied his horse to the fence and looked doubtfully about him. Untrodden snowdrifts were heaped about the front door, so he turned towards the kitchen and walked slowly past the bare lilac trees along the fence. There was no sign of life about the place. It was beginning to snow again, softly and thickly, and the hills and river were hidden behind a misty white veil.

He lifted his hand to knock, but before he could do so, the door was flung open and Min herself confronted him on the threshold.

She did not now have on the man's overcoat which she had worn at the store, and her neat, close-fitting homespun dress revealed to perfection the full, magnificent curves of her figure. Her splendid hair was braided about her head in a glossy coronet, and her dark eyes were ablaze with ill-suppressed anger. Again Telford was overcome by a sense of her wonderful loveliness. Not all the years of bondage to ill-temper and misguided will had been able to blot out the beauty of that proud, dark face.

She lifted one large but shapely brown hand and pointed to the gate.

"Go!" she said threateningly.

“Mrs. Palmer,” began Telford, but she silenced him with an imperious gesture.

“I don’t want any of your kind here. I hate all you ministers. Did you come here to lecture me? I suppose some of the Corner saints set you on me. You’ll never cross my threshold.”

Telford returned her defiant gaze unflinchingly. His dark-blue eyes, magnetic in their power and sweetness, looked gravely, questioningly, into Min’s stormy orbs. Slowly the fire and anger faded out of her face and her head drooped.

“I ain’t fit for you to talk to anyway,” she said with a sort of sullen humility. “Maybe you mean well but you can’t do me any good. I’m past that now. The Corner saints say I’m possessed of the devil. Perhaps I am — if there is one.”

“I do mean well,” said Telford slowly. “I did not come here to reprove you. I came to help you if I could — if you needed help, Mrs. Palmer—”

“Don’t call me that,” she interrupted passionately. She flung out her hands as if pushing some loathly, invisible thing from her. “I hate the name — as I hated all who ever bore it. I never had anything but wrong and dog-usage from them all. Call me Min — that’s the only name that belongs to me now. Go — why don’t you go? Don’t stand there looking at me like that. I’m not going to change my mind. I don’t want any praying and whining round me. I’ve been well sickened of that. Go!”

Telford threw back his head and looked once more into her eyes. A long look passed between them. Then he silently lifted his cap and, with no word of farewell, he turned and went down to the gate. A bitter sense of defeat and disappointment filled his heart as he drove away.

Min stood in the doorway and watched the sleigh out of sight down the river road. Then she gave a long, shivering sigh that was almost a moan.

“If I had met that man long ago,” she said slowly, as if groping vaguely in some hitherto unsounded depth of consciousness, “I would never have become what I am. I felt that as I looked at him — it all came over me with an awful sickening feeling — just as if we were standing alone somewhere out of the world where there was no need of words to say

things. He doesn't despise me — he wouldn't sneer at me, bad as I am, like those creatures up there. He could have helped me if we had met in time, but it's too late now."

She locked her hands over her eyes and groaned, swaying her body to and fro as one in mortal agony. Presently she looked out again with hard, dry eyes.

"What a fool I am!" she said bitterly. "How the Corner saints would stare if they saw me! I suppose some of them do—" with a glance at the windows of a neighbouring house. "Yes, there's Mrs. Rawlings staring out and Rose peeking over her shoulder."

Her face hardened. The old sway of evil passion reasserted itself.

"She shall never come back here — never. Oh, she was a sweet-spoken cat of a thing — but she had claws. I've been blamed for all the trouble. But if ever I had a chance, I'd tell that minister how she used to twit and taunt me in that sugary way of hers — how she schemed and plotted against me as long as she could. More fool I to care what he thinks either! I wish I were dead. If 'twasn't for the child, I'd go and drown myself at that black spring-hole down there — I'd be well out of the way."

It was a dull grey afternoon a week afterwards when Allan Telford again walked up the river road to the Palmer place. The wind was bitter and he walked with bent head to avoid its fury. His face was pale and worn and he looked years older.

He paused at the rough gate and leaned over it while he scanned the house and its surroundings eagerly. As he looked, the kitchen door opened and Min, clad in the old overcoat, came out and walked swiftly across the yard.

Telford's eyes followed her with pitiful absorption. He saw her lead a horse from the stable and harness it into a wood-sleigh loaded with bags of grain. Once she paused to fling her arms about the animal's neck, laying her face against it with a caressing motion.

The pale minister groaned aloud. He longed to snatch her forever from that hard, unwomanly toil and fold her safely away from jeers and scorn in the shelter of his love. He knew it was madness — he had told himself so

every hour in which Min's dark, rebellious face had haunted him — yet none the less was he under its control.

Min led the horse across the yard and left it standing before the kitchen door; she had not seen the bowed figure at the gate. When she reappeared, he saw her dark eyes and the rose-red lustre of her face gleam out from under the old crimson shawl wrapped about her head.

As she caught the horse by the bridle, the kitchen door swung heavily to with a sharp, sudden bang. The horse, a great, powerful, nervous brute, started wildly and then reared in terror.

The ice underfoot was glib and treacherous. Min lost her foothold and fell directly under the horse's hoofs as they came heavily down. The animal, freed from her detaining hand, sprang forward, dragging the laden sleigh over the prostrate woman.

It had all passed in a moment. The moveless figure lay where it had fallen, one outstretched hand still grasping the whip. Telford sprang over the gate and rushed up the slope like a madman. He flung himself on his knees beside her.

"Min! Min!" he called wildly.

There was no answer. He lifted her in his arms and staggered into the house with his burden, his heart stilling with a horrible fear as he laid her gently down on the old lounge in one corner of the kitchen.

The room was a large one and everything was neat and clean. The fire burned brightly, and a few green plants were in blossom by the south window. Beside them sat a child of about seven years who turned a startled face at Telford's reckless entrance.

The boy had Min's dark eyes and perfectly chiselled features, refined by suffering into cameo-like delicacy, and the silken hair fell in soft, waving masses about the spiritual little face. By his side nestled a tiny dog, with satin ears and paws fringed as with ravelled silk.

Telford paid heed to nothing, not even the frightened child. He was as one distraught.

"Min," he wailed again, striving tremblingly to feel her pulse while cold drops came out on his forehead.

Min's face was as pallid as marble, save for one heavy bruise across the cheek and a cruel cut at the edge of the dark hair, from which the blood trickled down on the pillow.

She opened her eyes wonderingly at his call, looking up with a dazed, appealing expression of pain and dread. A low moan broke from her white lips. Telford sprang to his feet in a tumult of quivering joy.

"Min, dear," he said gently, "you have been hurt — not seriously, I hope. I must leave you for a minute while I run for help — I will not be long."

"Come back," said Min in a low but distinct tone.

He paused impatiently.

"It is of no use to get help," Min went on calmly. "I'm dying — I know it. Oh, my God!"

She pressed her hand to her side and writhed. Telford turned desperately to the door. Min raised her arm.

"Come here," she said resolutely.

He obeyed mutely. She looked up at him with bright, unquailing eyes.

"Don't you go one step — don't leave me here to die alone. I'm past help — and I've something to say to you. I must say it and I haven't much time."

Telford hardly heeded her in his misery.

"Min, let me go for help — let me do something," he implored. "You must not die — you must not!"

Min had fallen back, gasping, on the bloodstained pillow.

He knelt beside her and put his arm about the poor, crushed body.

"I must hurry," she said faintly. "I can't die with it on my mind. Rose — it's all hers — all. There was a will — he made it — old Gran'ther Palmer. He always hated me. I found it before he died — and read it. He left everything to her — not a cent to me nor his son's child — we were to starve — beg. I was like a madwoman. When he died — I hid the will. I meant — to burn it — but I never could. It's tortured me — night and day — I've had no peace. You'll find it in a box — in my room. Tell her — tell

Rose — how wicked I've been. And my boy — what will become of him? Rose hates him — she'll turn him out — or ill-treat him—”

Telford lifted his white, drawn face.

“I will take your child, Min. He shall be to me as my own son.”

An expression of unspeakable relief came into the dying woman's face.

“It is good — of you. I can die — in peace — now. I'm glad to die — to get clear of it all. I'm tired — of living so. Perhaps — I'll have a chance — somewhere else. I've never — had any — here.”

The dark eyes drooped — closed. Telford moaned shudderingly.

Once again Min opened her eyes and looked straight into his.

“If I had met you — long ago — you would have — loved me — and I would have been — a good woman. It is well for us — for you — that I am — dying. Your path will be clear — you will be good and successful — but you will always — remember me.”

Telford bent and pressed his lips to Min's pain-blanching mouth.

“Do you think — we will — ever meet again?” she said faintly. “Out there — it's so dark — God can never — forgive me — I've been so — wicked.”

“Min, the all-loving Father is more merciful than man. He will forgive you, if you ask Him, and you will wait for me till I come. I will stay here and do my duty — I will try hard—”

His voice broke. Min's great black eyes beamed out on him with passionate tenderness. The strong, deep, erring nature yielded at last. An exceeding bitter cry rose to her lips.

“Oh, God — forgive me — forgive me!”

And with the cry, the soul of poor suffering, sinning, sinned-against Min Palmer fled — who shall say whither? Who shall say that her remorseful cry was not heard, even at that late hour, by a Judge more merciful than her fellow creatures?

Telford still knelt on the bare floor, holding in his arms the dead form of the woman he loved — his, all his, in death, as she could never have been in life. Death had bridged the gulf between them.

The room was very silent. To Min's face had returned something of its girlhood's innocence. The hard, unlovely lines were all smoothed out. The little cripple crept timidly up to Telford, with the silky head of the dog pressed against his cheek. Telford gathered the distorted little body to his side and looked earnestly into the small face — Min's face, purified and spiritualized. He would have it near him always. He bent and reverently kissed the cold face, the closed eyelids and the bloodstained brow of the dead woman. Then he stood up.

"Come with me, dear," he said gently to the child.

The day after the funeral, Allan Telford sat in the study of his little manse among the encircling wintry hills. Close to the window sat Min's child, his small, beautiful face pressed against the panes, and the bright-eyed dog beside him.

Telford was writing in his journal.

"I shall stay here — close to her grave. I shall see it every time I look from my study window — every time I stand in my pulpit — every time I go in and out among my people. I begin to see wherein I have failed. I shall begin again patiently and humbly. I wrote today to decline the C —— church call. My heart and my work are here."

He closed the book and bowed his head on it. Outside the snow fell softly; he knew that it was wrapping that new-made grave on the cold, fir-sentinelled hillside with a stainless shroud of infinite purity and peace.

Miss Cordelia's Accommodation

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“Poor little creatures!” said Miss Cordelia compassionately.

She meant the factory children. In her car ride from the school where she taught to the bridge that spanned the river between Pottstown, the sooty little manufacturing village on one side, and Point Pleasant, which was merely a hamlet, on the other, she had seen dozens of them, playing and quarrelling on the streets or peering wistfully out of dingy tenement windows.

“Tomorrow is Saturday,” she reflected, “and they’ve no better place to play in than the back streets and yards. It’s a shame. There’s work for our philanthropists here, but they don’t seem to see it. Well, I’m so sorry for them it hurts me to look at them, but I can’t do anything.”

Miss Cordelia sighed and then brightened up, because she realized that she was turning her back upon Pottstown for two blissful days and going to Point Pleasant, which had just one straggling, elm-shaded street hedging on old-fashioned gardens and cosy little houses and trailing off into the real country in a half-hour’s walk.

Miss Cordelia lived alone in a tiny house at Point Pleasant. It was so tiny that you would have wondered how anyone could live in it.

“But it’s plenty big for a little old maid like me,” Miss Cordelia would have told you. “And it’s my own — I’m queen there. There’s solid comfort in having one spot for your own self. To be sure, if I had less land and more house it would be better.”

Miss Cordelia always laughed here. It was one of her jokes. There was a four-acre field behind the house. Both had been left to her by an uncle. The field was of no use to Miss Cordelia; she didn’t keep a cow and she hadn’t time to make a garden. But she liked her field; when people asked her why she didn’t sell it she said:

“I’m fond of it. I like to walk around in it when the grass grows long. And it may come in handy some time. Mother used to say if you kept anything seven years it would come to use. I’ve had my field a good bit longer than that, but maybe the time will come yet. Meanwhile I rejoice in the fact that I am a landed proprietor to the extent of four acres.”

Miss Cordelia had thought of converting her field into a playground for the factory children and asking detachments of them over on Saturday afternoon. But she knew that her Point Pleasant neighbours would object to this, so that project was dropped.

When Miss Cordelia pushed open her little gate, hung crookedly in a very compact and prim spruce hedge, she stopped in amazement and said, “Well, for pity’s sake!”

Cynthia Ann Flemming, who lived on the other side of the spruce hedge, now came hurrying over.

“Good evening, Cordelia. I have a letter that was left with me for you.”

“But — that — horse,” said Miss Cordelia, with a long breath between every word. “Where did he come from? Tied at my front door — and he’s eaten the tops off every one of my geraniums! Where’s his owner or rider or something?”

The horse in question was a mild-eyed, rather goodlooking quadruped, tied by a halter to the elm at Miss Cordelia’s door and contentedly munching a mouthful of geranium stalks. Cynthia Ann came through the hedge with the letter.

“Maybe this will explain,” she said. “Same boy brought it as brought the horse — a little freckly chap mostly all grin and shirtsleeves. Said he was told to take the letter and horse to Miss Cordelia Herry, Elm Street, Point Pleasant, and he couldn’t wait. So he tied the creature in there and left the letter with me. He came half an hour ago. Well, he has played havoc with your geraniums and no mistake.”

Miss Cordelia opened and read her letter. When she finished it she looked at the curious Cynthia Ann solemnly.

“Well, if that isn’t John Drew all over! I suspected he was at the bottom of it as soon as I laid my eyes on that animal. John Drew is a

cousin of mine. He's been living out at Poplar Valley and he writes me that he has gone out west, and wants me to take 'old Nap.' I suppose that is the horse. He says that Nap is getting old and not much use for work and he couldn't bear the thought of shooting him or selling him to someone who might ill-treat him, so he wants me to take him and be kind to him for old times' sake. John and I were just like brother and sister when we were children. If this isn't like him nothing ever was. He was always doing odd things and thinking they were all right. And now he's off west and here is the horse. If it were a cat or a dog — but a horse!"

"Your four-acre field will come in handy now," said Cynthia Ann jestingly.

"So it will." Miss Cordelia spoke absently. "The very thing! Yes, I'll put him in there."

"But you don't really mean that you're going to keep the horse, are you?" protested Cynthia Ann. "Why, he is no good to you — and think of the expense of feeding him!"

"I'll keep him for a while," said Miss Cordelia briskly. "As you say, there is the four-acre field. It will keep him in eating for a while. I always knew that field had a mission. Poor John Drew! I'd like to oblige him for old times' sake, as he says, although this is as crazy as anything he ever did. But I have a plan. Meanwhile, I can't feed Nap on geraniums."

Miss Cordelia always adapted herself quickly and calmly to new circumstances. "It is never any use to get in a stew about things," she was wont to say. So now she untied Nap gingerly, with many rueful glances at her geraniums, and led him away to the field behind the house, where she tied him safely to a post with such an abundance of knots that there was small fear of his getting away.

When the mystified Cynthia Ann had returned home Miss Cordelia set about getting her tea and thinking over the plan that had come to her concerning her white elephant.

"I can keep him for the summer," she said. "I'll have to dispose of him in the fall for I've no place to keep him in, and anyway I couldn't afford to feed him. I'll see if I can borrow Mr. Griggs's express wagon for Saturday

afternoons, and if I can those poor factory children in my grade shall have a weekly treat or my name is not Cordelia Herry. I'm not so sure but that John Drew has done a good thing after all. Poor John! He always did take things so for granted."

All the point pleasant people soon knew about Miss Cordelia's questionable windfall, and she was overwhelmed with advice and suggestions. She listened to all tranquilly and then placidly followed her own way. Mr. Griggs was very obliging in regard to his old express wagon, and the next Saturday Point Pleasant was treated to a mild sensation — nothing less than Miss Cordelia rattling through the village, enthroned on the high seat of Mr. Griggs's yellow express wagon, drawn by old Nap who, after a week of browsing idleness in the four-acre field, was quite frisky and went at a decided amble down Elm Street and across the bridge. The long wagon had been filled up with board seats, and when Miss Cordelia came back over the bridge the boards were crowded with factory children — pale-faced little creatures whose eyes were aglow with pleasure at this unexpected outing.

Miss Cordelia drove straight out to the big pine-clad hills of Deepdale, six miles from Pottstown. Then she tied Nap in a convenient lane and turned the children loose to revel in the woods and fields. How they did enjoy themselves! And how Miss Cordelia enjoyed seeing them enjoy themselves!

When dinner time came she gathered them all around her and went to the wagon. In it she had a basket of bread and butter.

"I can't afford anything more," she told Cynthia Ann, "but they must have something to stay their little stomachs. And I can get some water at a farmhouse."

Miss Cordelia had had her eye on a certain farmhouse all the morning. She did not know anything about the people who lived there, but she liked the looks of the place. It was a big, white, green-shuttered house, throned in widespreading orchards, with a green sweep of velvety lawn in front.

To this Miss Cordelia took her way, surrounded by her small passengers, and they all trooped into the great farmhouse yard just as a big

man stepped out of a nearby barn. As he approached, Miss Cordelia thought she had never seen anybody so much like an incarnate smile before. Smiles of all kinds seemed literally to riot over his ruddy face and in and out of his eyes and around the corners of his mouth.

“Well, well, well!” he said, when he came near enough to be heard. “Is this a runaway school, ma’am?”

“I’m the runaway schoolma’am,” responded Miss Cordelia with a twinkle. “And these are a lot of factory children I’ve brought out for a Saturday treat. I thought I might get some water from your well, and maybe you will lend us a tin dipper or two?”

“Water? Tut, tut!” said the big man, with three distinct smiles on his face. “Milk’s the thing, ma’am — milk. I’ll tell my housekeeper to bring some out. And all of you come over to the lawn and make yourselves at home. Bless you, ma’am, I’m fond of children. My name is Smiles, ma’am — Abraham Smiles.”

“It suits you,” said Miss Cordelia emphatically, before she thought, and then blushed rosy-red over her bluntness.

Mr. Smiles laughed. “Yes, I guess I always have an everlasting grin on. Had to live up to my name, you see, in spite of my naturally cantankerous disposition; But come this way, ma’am, I can see the hunger sticking out of those youngsters’ eyes. We’ll have a sort of impromptu picnic here and now, I’ll tell my housekeeper to send out some jam too.”

While the children devoured their lunch Miss Cordelia found herself telling Mr. Smiles all about old Nap and her little project.

“I’m going to bring out a load every fine Saturday all summer,” she said. “It’s all I can do. They enjoy it so, the little creatures. It’s terrible to think how cramped their lives are. They just exist in soot. Some of them here never saw green fields before today.”

Mr. Smiles listened and beamed and twinkled until Miss Cordelia felt almost as dazzled as if she were looking at the sun.

“Look here, ma’am, I like this plan of yours and I want to have a hand in helping it along. Bring your loads of children out here every Saturday, right here to Beechwood Farm, and turn them loose in my beech woods

and upland pastures. I'll put up some swings for them and have some games, and I'll provide the refreshments also. Trouble, ma'am? No, trouble and I ain't on speaking terms. It'll be a pleasure, ma'am. I'm fond of children even if I am a grumpy cross-grained old bachelor. If you can give up your own holiday to give them a good time, surely I can do something too."

When Miss Cordelia and her brood of tired, happy little lads and lasses ambled back to town in the golden dusk she felt that the expedition had been an emphatic success. Even old Nap seemed to jog along eye-deep in satisfaction. Probably he was ruminating on the glorious afternoon he had spent in Mr. Smiles's clover pasture.

Every fine Saturday that summer Miss Cordelia took some of the factory children to the country. The Point Pleasant people nicknamed her equipage "Miss Cordelia's accommodation," and it became a mild standing joke.

As for Mr. Smiles, he proved a valuable assistant. Like Miss Cordelia, he gave his Saturdays over to the children, and high weekly revel was held at Beechwood Farm.

But when the big bronze and golden leaves began to fall in the beech woods, Miss Cordelia sorrowfully realized that the summer was over and that the weekly outings which she had enjoyed as much as the children must soon be discontinued.

"I feel so sorry," she told Mr. Smiles, "but it can't be helped. It will soon be too cold for our jaunts and of course I can't keep Nap through the winter. I hate to part with him, I've grown so fond of him, but I must."

She looked regretfully at Nap, who was nibbling Mr. Smiles's clover aftermath. He was sleek and glossy. It had been the golden summer of Nap's life.

Mr. Smiles coughed in an embarrassed fashion. Miss Cordelia looked at him and was amazed to see that not a smile was on or about his face. He looked absurdly serious.

"I want to buy Nap," he said in a sepulchral tone, "but that is not the only thing I want. I want you too, ma'am. I'm tired of being a cross old

bachelor. I think I'd like to be a cross old husband, for a change. Do you think you could put up with me in that capacity, Miss Cordelia, my dear?"

Miss Cordelia gave a half gasp and then she had to laugh. "Oh, Mr. Smiles, I'll agree to anything if you'll only smile again. It seems unnatural to see you look so solemn."

The smiles at once broke loose and revelled over her wooer's face.

"Then you will come?" he said eagerly.

Half an hour later they had their plans made. At New Year's Miss Cordelia was to leave her school and sooty Pottstown and come to be mistress of Beechwood Farm.

"And look here," said Mr. Smiles. "Every fine Saturday you shall have a big, roomy sleigh and Nap, and drive into town for some children and bring them out here for their weekly treat as usual. The house is large enough to hold them, goodness knows, and if it isn't there are the barns for the overflow. This is going to be our particular pet charity all our lives, ma'am — I mean Cordelia, my dear."

"Blessings on old Nap," said Miss Cordelia with a happy light in her eyes.

"He shall live in clover for the rest of his days," added Mr. Smiles smilingly.

Ned's Stroke of Business

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“Jump in, Ned; I can give you a lift if you’re going my way.” Mr. Rogers reined up his prancing grey horse, and Ned Allen sprang lightly into the comfortable cutter. The next minute they were flying down the long, glistening road, rosy-white in the sunset splendour. The first snow of the season had come, and the sleighing was, as Ned said, “dandy.”

“Going over to Windsor, I suppose,” said Mr. Rogers, with a glance at the skates that were hanging over Ned’s shoulder.

“Yes, sir; all the Carleton boys are going over tonight. The moon is out, and the ice is good. We have to go in a body, or the Windsor fellows won’t leave us alone. There’s safety in numbers.”

“Pretty hard lines when boys have to go six miles for a skate,” commented Mr. Rogers.

“Well, it’s that or nothing,” laughed Ned. “There isn’t a saucerful of ice any nearer, except that small pond in Old Dutcher’s field, behind his barn. And you know Old Dutcher won’t allow a boy to set foot there. He says they would knock down his fences climbing over them, and like as not set fire to his barn.”

“Old Dutcher was always a crank,” said Mr. Rogers, “and doubtless will be to the end. By the way, I heard a rumour to the effect that you are soon going to take a course at the business college in Trenton. I hope it’s true.”

Ned’s frank face clouded over. “I’m afraid not, sir. The truth is, I guess Mother can’t afford it. Of course, Aunt Ella has very kindly offered to board me free for the term, but fees, books, and so on would require at least fifty dollars. I don’t expect to go.”

“That’s a pity. Can’t you earn the necessary money yourself?”

Ned shook his head. “Not much chance for that in Carleton, Mr. Rogers. I’ve cudgelled my brains for the past month trying to think of

some way, but in vain. Well, here is the crossroad, so I must get off. Thank you for the drive, sir.”

“Keep on thinking, Ned,” advised Mr. Rogers, as the lad jumped out. “Perhaps you’ll hit on some plan yet to earn that money, and if you do — well, it will prove that you have good stuff in you.”

“I think it would,” laughed Ned to himself, as he trudged away. “A quiet little farming village in winter isn’t exactly a promising field for financial operations.”

At Winterby Corners Ned found a crowd of boys waiting for him, and soon paired off with his chum, Jim Slocum. Jim, as usual, was grumbling because they had to go all the way to Windsor to skate.

“Like as not we’ll get into a free fight with the Windsorites when we get there, and be chevied off the ice,” he complained.

The rivalry which existed between the Carleton and the Windsor boys was bitter and of long standing.

“We ought to be able to hold our own tonight,” said Ned. “There’ll be thirty of us there.”

“If we could only get Old Dutcher to let us skate on his pond!” said Jim. “It wouldn’t hurt his old pond! And the ice is always splendid on it. I’d give a lot if we could only go there.”

Ned was silent. A sudden idea had come to him. He wondered if it were feasible. “Anyhow, I’ll try it,” he said to himself. “I’ll interview Old Dutcher tomorrow.”

The skating that night was not particularly successful. The small pond at Windsor was crowded, the Windsor boys being out in force and, although no positive disturbance arose, they contrived to make matters unpleasant for the Carletonites, who tramped moodily homeward in no very good humour, most of them declaring that, skating or no skating, they would not go to Windsor again.

The next day Ned Allen went down to see Mr. Dutcher, or Old Dutcher, as he was universally called in Carleton. Ned did not exactly look forward to the interview with pleasure. Old Dutcher was a crank — there was no getting around that fact. He had “good days” occasionally when, for him,

he was fairly affable, but they were few and far between, and Ned had no reason to hope that this would be one. Old Dutcher was unmarried, and his widowed sister kept house for him. This poor lady had a decidedly lonely life of it, for Old Dutcher studiously discouraged visitors. His passion for solitude was surpassed only by his eagerness to make and save money. Although he was well-to-do, he would wrangle over a cent, and was the terror of all who had ever had dealings with him.

Fortunately for Ned and his project, this did turn out to be one of Old Dutcher's good days. He had just concluded an advantageous bargain with a Windsor cattle-dealer, and hence he received Ned with what, for Old Dutcher, might be called absolute cordiality. Besides, although Old Dutcher disliked all boys on principle, he disliked Ned less than the rest because the boy had always treated him respectfully and had never played any tricks on him on Hallowe'en or April Fool's Day.

"I've come down to see you on a little matter of business, Mr. Dutcher," said Ned, boldly and promptly. It never did to beat about the bush with Old Dutcher; you had to come straight to the point. "I want to know if you will rent your pond behind the barn to me for a skating-rink."

Old Dutcher's aspect was certainly not encouraging. "No, I won't. You ought to know that. I never allow anyone to skate there. I ain't going to have a parcel of whooping, yelling youngsters tearing over my fences, disturbing my sleep at nights, and like as not setting fire to my barns. No, sir! I ain't going to rent that pond for no skating-rink."

Ned smothered a smile. "Just wait a moment, Mr. Dutcher," he said respectfully. "I want you to hear my proposition before you refuse definitely. First, I'll give you ten dollars for the rent of the pond; then I'll see that there will be no running over your fields and climbing your fences, no lighting of fire or matches about it, and no 'whooping and yelling' at nights. My rink will be open only from two to six in the afternoon and from seven to ten in the evening. During that time I shall always be at the pond to keep everything in order. The skaters will come and go by the lane leading from the barn to the road. I think that if you agree to my proposition, Mr. Dutcher, you will not regret it."

“What’s to prevent my running such a rink myself?” asked Old Dutcher gruffly.

“It wouldn’t pay you, Mr. Dutcher,” answered Ned promptly. “The Carleton boys wouldn’t patronize a rink run by you.”

Old Dutcher’s eyes twinkled. It did not displease him to know that the Carleton boys hated him. In fact, it seemed as if he rather liked it.

“Besides,” went on Ned, “you couldn’t afford the time. You couldn’t be on the pond for eight hours a day and until ten o’clock at night. I can, as I’ve nothing else to do just now. If I had, I wouldn’t have to be trying to make money by a skating-rink.”

Old Dutcher scowled. Ten dollars was ten dollars and, as Ned had said, he knew very well that he could not run a rink by himself. “Well,” he said, half reluctantly, “I suppose I’ll let you go ahead. Only remember I’ll hold you responsible if anything happens.”

Ned went home in high spirits. By the next day he had placards out in conspicuous places — on the schoolhouse, at the forge, at Mr. Rogers’s store, and at Winterby Corners — announcing that he had rented Mr. Dutcher’s pond for a skating-rink, and that tickets for the same at twenty-five cents a week for each skater could be had upon application to him.

Ned was not long left in doubt as to the success of his enterprise. It was popular from the start. There were about fifty boys in Carleton and Winterby, and they all patronized the rink freely. At first Ned had some trouble with two or three rowdies, who tried to evade his rules. He was backed up, however, by Old Dutcher’s reputation and by the public opinion of the other boys, as well as by his own undoubted muscle, and soon had everything going smoothly. The rink flourished amain, and everybody, even Old Dutcher, was highly pleased.

At the end of the season Ned paid Old Dutcher his ten dollars, and had plenty left to pay for books and tuition at the business college in Trenton. On the eve of his departure Mr. Rogers, who had kept a keen eye on Ned’s enterprise, again picked him up on the road.

“So you found a way after all, Ned,” he said genially. “I had an idea you would. My bookkeeper will be leaving me about the time you will be

through at the college. I will be wanting in his place a young man with a good nose for business, and I rather think that you will be that young man. What do you say?"

"Thank you, sir," stammered Ned, scarcely believing his ears. A position in Mr. Rogers's store meant good salary and promotion. He had never dared to hope for such good fortune. "If you — think I can give satisfaction—"

"You manipulated Old Dutcher, and you've earned enough in a very slow-going place to put you through your business-college term, so I am sure you are the man I'm looking for. I believe in helping those who have 'gumption' enough to help themselves, so we'll call it a bargain, Ned."

Our Runaway Kite

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Of course there was nobody for us to play with on the Big Half Moon, but then, as Claude says, you can't have everything. We just had to make the most of each other, and we did.

The Big Half Moon is miles from anywhere, except the Little Half Moon. But nobody lives there, so that doesn't count.

We live on the Big Half Moon. "We" are Father and Claude and I and Aunt Esther and Mimi and Dick. It used to be only Father and Claude and I. It is all on account of the kite that there are more of us. This is what I want to tell you about.

Father is the keeper of the Big Half Moon lighthouse. He has always been the keeper ever since I can remember, although that isn't very long. I am only eleven years old. Claude is twelve.

In winter, when the harbour is frozen over, there isn't any need of a light on the Big Half Moon, and we all move over to the mainland, and Claude and Mimi and Dick and I go to school. But as soon as spring comes, back we sail to our own dear island, so glad that we don't know what to do with ourselves.

The funny part used to be that people always pitied us when the time came for us to return. They said we must be so lonesome over there, with no other children near us, and not even a woman to look after us.

Why, Claude and I were never lonesome. There was always so much to do, and Claude is splendid at making believe. He makes the very best pirate chief I ever saw. Dick is pretty good, but he can never roar out his orders in the bloodcurdling tones that Claude can.

Of course Claude and I would have liked to have someone to play with us, because it is hard to run pirate caves and things like that with only two. But we used to quarrel a good deal with the mainland children in winter, so perhaps it was just as well that there were none of them on the Big Half

Moon. Claude and I never quarrelled. We used to argue sometimes and get excited, but that was as far as it ever went. When I saw Claude getting too excited I gave in to him. He is a boy, you know, and they have to be humoured; they are not like girls.

As for having a woman to look after us, I thought that just too silly, and so did Claude. What did we need with a woman when we had Father? He could cook all we wanted to eat and make molasses taffy that was just like a dream. He kept our clothes all mended, and everything about the lighthouse was neat as wax. Of course I helped him lots. I like pottering round.

He used to hear our lessons and tell us splendid stories and saw that we always said our prayers. Claude and I wouldn't have done anything to make him feel bad for the world. Father is just lovely.

To be sure, he didn't seem to have any relations except us. This used to puzzle Claude and me. Everybody on the mainland had relations; why hadn't we? Was it because we lived on an island? We thought it would be so jolly to have an uncle and aunt and some cousins. Once we asked Father about it, but he looked so sorrowful all of a sudden that we wished we hadn't. He said it was all his fault. I didn't see how that could be, but I never said anything more about it to Father. Still, I did wish we had some relations.

It is always lovely out here on the Big Half Moon in summer. When it is fine the harbour is blue and calm, with little winds and ripples purring over it, and the mainland shores look like long blue lands where fairies dwell. Away out over the bar, where the big ships go, it is always hazy and pearl-tinted, like the inside of the mussel shells. Claude says he is going to sail out there when he grows up. I would like to too, but Claude says I can't because I'm a girl. It is dreadfully inconvenient to be a girl at times.

When it storms it is grand to see the great waves come crashing up against the Big Half Moon as if they meant to swallow it right down. You can't see the Little Half Moon at all then; it is hidden by the mist and spume.

We had our pirate cave away up among the rocks, where we kept an old pistol with the lock broken, a rusty cutlass, a pair of knee boots, and Claude's jute beard and wig. Down on the shore, around one of the horns of the Half Moon, was the Mermaid's Pool, where we sailed our toy boats and watched for sea kelpies. We never saw any. Dick says there is no such thing as a kelpy. But then Dick has no imagination. It is no argument against a thing that you've never seen it. I have never seen the pyramids, either, but I know that there are pyramids.

Every summer we had some hobby. The last summer before Dick and Mimi came we were crazy about kites. A winter boy on the mainland showed Claude how to make them, and when we went back to the Big Half Moon we made kites galore. Even pirating wasn't such good fun. Claude would go around to the other side of the Big Half Moon and we would play shipwrecked mariners signalling to each other with kites. Oh, it was very exciting.

We had one kite that was a dandy. It was as big as we could make it and covered with lovely red paper; we had pasted gold tinsel stars all over it and written our names out in full on it — Claude Martin Leete and Philippa Brewster Leete, Big Half Moon Lighthouse. That kite had the most magnificent tail, too.

It used to scare the gulls nearly to death when we sent up our kites. They didn't know what to make of them. And the Big Half Moon is such a place for gulls — there are hundreds of them here.

One day there was a grand wind for kite-flying, and Claude and I were having a splendid time. We used our smaller kites for signalling, and when we got tired of that Claude sent me to the house for the big one. I'm sure I don't know how it happened, but when I was coming back over the rocks I tripped and fell, and my elbow went clear through that lovely kite. You would never have believed that one small elbow could make such a big hole. Claude said it was just like a girl to fall and stick her elbow through a kite, but I don't see why it should be any more like a girl than a boy. Do you?

We had to hurry to fix the kite if we wanted to send it up before the wind fell, so we rushed into the lighthouse to get some paper. We knew there was no more red paper, and the looks of the kite were spoiled, anyhow, so we just took the first thing that came handy — an old letter that was lying on the bookcase in the sitting-room. I suppose we shouldn't have taken it, although, as matters turned out, it was the best thing we could have done; but Father was away to the mainland to buy things, and we never thought it could make any difference about an old yellow letter. It was one Father had taken from a drawer in the bookcase which he had cleaned out the night before. We patched the kite up with the letter, a sheet on each side, and dried it by the fire. Then we started out, and up went the kite like a bird. The wind was glorious, and it soared and strained like something alive. All at once — snap! And there was Claude, standing with a bit of cord in his hand, looking as foolish as a flatfish, and our kite sailing along at a fearful rate of speed over to the mainland.

I might have said to Claude, So like a boy! but I didn't. Instead, I sympathized with him, and pointed out that it really didn't matter because I had spoiled it by jabbing my elbow through it. By this time the kite was out of sight, and we never expected to see or hear of it again.

A month later a letter came to the Big Half Moon for Father. Jake Wiggins brought it over in his sloop. Father went off by himself to read it, and such a queer-looking face as he had when he came back! His eyes looked as if he had been crying, but that couldn't be, I suppose, because Claude says men never cry. Anyhow, his face was all glad and soft and smiley.

“Do you two young pirates and freebooters want to know what has become of your kite?” he said.

Then he sat down beside us on the rocks at the Mermaid's Pool and told us the whole story, and read his letter to us. It was the most amazing thing.

It seems Father had had relations after all — a brother and a sister in particular. But when he was a young man he quarrelled with his brother, who didn't treat him very well — but he's been dead for years, so I won't

say a word against him — and had gone away from home. He never went back, and he never even let them know he was living.

Father says that this was very wrong of him, and I suppose it was, since he says so; but I don't see how Father could do anything wrong.

Anyway, he had a sister Esther whom he loved very much; but he felt bitter against her too, because he thought she took his brother's part too much. So, though a letter of hers, asking him to go back, did reach him, he never answered it, and he never heard anything more. Years afterward he felt sorry and went back, but his brother was dead and his sister had gone away, and he couldn't find out a single thing about her.

So much for that; and now about the kite. The letter Father had just received was from his sister, our Aunt Esther and the mother of Dick and Mimi. She was living at a place hundreds of miles inland. Her husband was dead and, as we found out later, although she did not say a word about it in the letter, she was very poor. One day when Dick and Mimi were out in the woods looking for botany specimens they saw something funny in the top of a tree. Dick climbed up and got it. It was a big red kite with a patch on each side and names written on it. They carried it home to their mother. Dick has since told us that she turned as pale as the dead when she saw our names on it. You see, Philippa was her mother's name and Claude was her father's. And when she read the letter that was pasted over the hole in the kite she knew who we must be, for it was the very letter she had written to her brother so long ago. So she sat right down and wrote again, and this was the letter Jake Wiggins brought to the Big Half Moon. It was a beautiful letter. I loved Aunt Esther before I ever saw her, just from that letter.

Next day Father got Jake to take his place for a few days, and he left Claude and me over on the mainland while he went to see Aunt Esther. When he came back he brought Aunt Esther and Dick and Mimi with him, and they have been here ever since.

You don't know how splendid it is! Aunt Esther is such a dear, and Dick and Mimi are too jolly for words. They love the Big Half Moon as

well as Claude and I do, and Dick makes a perfectly elegant shipwrecked mariner.

But the best of it all is that we have relations now!

The Bride Roses

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Miss Corona awoke that June morning with a sigh, the cause of which she was at first too sleepy to understand. Then it all came over her with a little sickening rush; she had fallen asleep with tear-wet lashes the night before on account of it.

This was Juliet Gordon's wedding day, and she, Miss Corona, could not go to the wedding and was not even invited, all because of the Quarrel, a generation old, and so chronic and bitter and terrible that it always presented itself to Miss Corona's mental vision as spelled with a capital. Well might Miss Corona hate it. It had shut her up into a lonely life for long years. Juliet Gordon and Juliet's father, Meredith Gordon, were the only relations Miss Corona had in the world, and the old family feud divided them by a gulf which now seemed impassable.

Miss Corona turned over on her pillows, lifted one corner of the white window-blind and peeped out. Below her a river of early sunshine was flowing through the garden, and the faraway slopes were translucent green in their splendour of young day, with gauzy, uncertain mists lingering, spiritlike, in their intervals. A bird, his sleek plumage iridescent in the sunlight, was perched on the big chestnut bough that ran squarely across the window, singing as if his heart would burst with melody and the joy of his tiny life. No bride could have wished anything fairer for her day of days, and Miss Corona dropped back on her pillows with another gentle sigh.

"I'm so glad that the dear child has a fine day to be married," she said.

Juliet Gordon was always "dear child" to Miss Corona, although the two had never spoken to each other in their lives.

Miss Corona was a brisk and early riser as a rule, with a genuine horror of lazy people who lay late abed or took overlong to get their eyes well opened, but this morning she made no hurry about rising, even though

scurrying footsteps, banging doors, and over-loud tinkling of dishes in the room below betokened that Charlotta was already up and about. And Charlotta, as poor Miss Corona knew only too well, was fatally sure to do something unfortunate if she were not under some careful, overseeing eye. To be sure, Charlotta's intentions were always good.

But Miss Corona was not thinking about Charlotta this morning, and she felt so strong a distaste for her lonely, purposeless life that she was in no haste to go forth to meet another day of it.

Miss Corona felt just the least little bit tired of living, although she feared it was very wicked of her to feel so. She lay there listlessly for half an hour longer, looking through a mist of tears at the portrait of her stern old father hanging on the wall at the foot of the bed, and thinking over the Quarrel.

It had happened thirty years ago, when Miss Corona had been a girl of twenty, living alone with her father at the old Gordon homestead on the hill, with the big black spruce grove behind it on the north and far-reaching slopes of green fields before it on the south. Down in the little northern valley below the spruce grove lived her uncle, Alexis Gordon. His son, Meredith, had seemed to Corona as her own brother. The mothers of both were dead; neither had any other brother or sister. The two children had grown up together, playmates and devoted friends. There had never been any sentiment or lovemaking between them to mar a perfect comradeship. They were only the best of friends, whatever plans the fathers might have cherished for the union of their estates and children, putting the property consideration first, as the Gordons were always prone to do.

But, if Roderick and Alexis Gordon had any such plans, all went by the board when they quarreled. Corona shivered yet over the bitterness of that time. The Gordons never did anything half-heartedly. The strife between the two brothers was determined and irreconcilable.

Corona's father forbade her to speak to her uncle and cousin or to hold any communication with them. Corona wept and obeyed him. She had always obeyed her father; it had never entered into her mind to do

anything else. Meredith had resented her attitude hotly, and from that day they had never spoken or met, while the years came and went, each making a little wider and more hopeless the gulf of coldness and anger and distrust.

Ten years later Roderick Gordon died, and in five months Alexis Gordon followed him to the grave. The two brothers who had hated each other so unyieldingly in life slept very peaceably side by side in the old Gordon plot of the country graveyard, but their rancour still served to embitter the lives of their descendants.

Corona, with a half-guilty sense of disloyalty to her father, hoped that she and Meredith might now be friends again. He was married, and had one little daughter. In her new and intolerable loneliness Corona's heart yearned after her own people. But she was too timid to make any advances, and Meredith never made any. Corona believed that he hated her, and let slip her last fluttering hope that the old breach would ever be healed.

"Oh, dear! oh, dear!" she sobbed softly into her pillows. It seemed a terrible thing to her that one of her race and kin was to be married and she could not be present at the ceremony, she who had never seen a Gordon bride.

When Miss Corona went downstairs at last, she found Charlotta sobbing in the kitchen porch. The small handmaiden was doubled up on the floor, with her face muffled in her gingham apron and her long braids of red hair hanging with limp straightness down her back. When Charlotta was in good spirits, they always hung perkily over each shoulder, tied up with enormous bows of sky-blue ribbon.

"What have you done this time?" asked Miss Corona, without the slightest intention of being humorous or sarcastic.

"I've — I've bruk your green and yaller bowl," sniffed Charlotta. "Didn't mean to, Miss C'rona. It jest slipped out so fashion 'fore I c'd grab holt on it. And it's bruk into forty millyun pieces. Ain't I the onluckiest girl?"

“You certainly are,” sighed Miss Corona. At any other time she would have been filled with dismay over the untoward fate of her green and yellow bowl, which had belonged to her great-grandmother and had stood on the hall table to hold flowers as long as she could remember. But just now her heart was so sore over the Quarrel that there was no room for other regrets. “Well, well, crying won’t mend it. I suppose it is a judgment on me for staying abed so late. Go and sweep up the pieces, and do try and be a little more careful, Charlotte.”

“Yes’m,” said Charlotta meekly. She dared not resent being called Charlotte just then. “And I’ll tell you what I’ll do, ma’am, to make up, I’ll go and weed the garden. Yes’m, I’ll do it beautiful.”

“And pull up more flowers than weeds,” Miss Corona reflected mournfully. But it did not matter; nothing mattered. She saw Charlotta sally forth into the garden with a determined, do-or-die expression surmounting her freckles, without feeling interest enough to go and make sure that she did not root out all the late asters in her tardy and wilfully postponed warfare on weeds.

This mood lasted until the afternoon. Then Miss Corona, whose heart and thoughts were still down in the festive house in the valley, roused herself enough to go out and see what Charlotta was doing. After finding out, she wandered idly about the rambling, old-fashioned place, which was full of nooks and surprises. At every turn you might stumble on some clump or tangle of sweetness, showering elusive fragrance on the air, that you would never have suspected. Nothing in the garden was planted quite where it should be, yet withal it was the most delightful spot imaginable.

Miss Corona pushed her way into the cherry-tree copse, and followed a tiny, overgrown path to a sunshiny corner beyond. She had not been there since last summer; the little path was getting almost impassable. When she emerged from the cherry trees, somewhat rumpled and pulled about in hair and attire, but attended, as if by a benediction, by the aromatic breath of the mint she had trodden on, she gave a little cry and stood quite still, gazing at the rosebush that grew in the corner. It was so large and woody

that it seemed more like a tree than a bush, and it was snowed over with a splendour of large, pure white roses.

“Dear life,” whispered Miss Corona tremulously, as she tiptoed towards it. “The bride roses have bloomed again! How very strange! Why, there has not been a rose on that tree for twenty years.”

The rosebush had been planted there by Corona’s great-grandmother, the lady of the green and yellow bowl. It was a new variety, brought out from Scotland by Mary Gordon, and it bore large white roses which three generations of Gordon brides had worn on their wedding day. It had come to be a family tradition among the Gordons that no luck would attend the bride who did not carry a white rose from Mary Gordon’s rose-tree.

Long years ago the tree had given up blooming, nor could all the pruning and care given it coax a single blossom from it. Miss Corona, tinctured with the superstition apt to wait on a lonely womanhood, believed in her heart that the rosebush had a secret sympathy with the fortunes of the Gordon women. She, the last of them on the old homestead, would never need the bride roses. Wherefore, then, should the old tree bloom? And now, after all these years, it had flung all its long-hoarded sweetness into blossom again. Miss Corona thrilled at the thought. The rosebush had bloomed again for a Gordon bride, but Miss Corona was sure there was another meaning in it too; she believed it foretokened some change in her own life, some rejuvenescence of love and beauty like to that of the ancient rose-tree. She bent over its foam of loveliness almost reverently.

“They have bloomed for Juliet’s wedding,” she murmured. “A Gordon bride must wear the bride roses, indeed she must. And this — why, it is almost a miracle.”

She ran, light-footedly as a girl, to the house for scissors and a basket. She would send Juliet Gordon the bride roses. Her cheeks were pink from excitement as she snipped them off. How lovely they were! How very large and fragrant! It was as if all the grace and perfume and beauty and glory of those twenty lost summers were found here at once in them.

When Miss Corona had them ready, she went to the door and called, "Charlotte! Charlotte!"

Now Charlotta, having atoned to her conscience for the destruction of the green and yellow bowl by faithfully weeding the garden, a task which she hated above all else, was singing a hymn among the sweet peas, and her red braids were over her shoulders. This ought to have warned Miss Corona, but Miss Corona was thinking of other things, and kept on calling patiently, while Charlotta weeded away for dear life, and seemed smitten with treble deafness.

After a time Miss Corona remembered and sighed. She did hate to call the child that foolish name with its foreign sound. Just as if plain "Charlotte" were not good enough for her, and much more suitable to "Smith" too! Ordinarily Miss Corona would not have given in. But the case was urgent; she could not stand upon her dignity just now.

"Charlotta!" she called entreatingly.

Instantly Charlotta flew to the garden gate and raced up to the door.

"Yes'm," she said meekly. "You want me, Miss C'rona?"

"Take this box down to Miss Juliet Gordon, and ask that it be given to her at once," said Miss Corona, "Don't loiter, Charlotta. Don't stop to pick gum in the grove, or eat sours in the dike, or poke sticks through the bridge, or—"

But Charlotta had gone.

Down in the valley, the other Gordon house was in a hum of excitement. Upstairs Juliet had gone to her invalid mother's room to show herself in her wedding dress to the pale little lady lying on the sofa. She was a tall, stately young girl with the dark grey Gordon eyes and the pure creaminess of colouring, flawless as a lily petal. Her face was a very sweet one, and the simple white dress she wore became her dainty, flowerlike beauty as nothing elaborate could have done.

"I'm not going to put on my veil until the last moment," she said laughingly. "I would feel married right away if I did. And oh, Mother dear, isn't it too bad? My roses haven't come. Father is back from the station, and they were not there. I am so disappointed. Romney ordered pure white

roses because I said a Gordon bride must carry nothing else. Come in” — as a knock sounded at the door.

Laura Burton, Juliet’s cousin and bridesmaid, entered with a box.

“Juliet dear, the funniest little redheaded girl with the most enormous freckles has just brought this for you. I haven’t an idea where she came from; she looked like a messenger from pixy-land.”

Juliet opened the box and gave a cry.

“Oh, Mother, look — look! What perfect roses! Who could have sent them? Oh, here’s a note from — from — why, Mother, it’s from Cousin Corona.”

“My dear child,” ran the letter in Miss Corona’s fine, old-fashioned script. “I am sending you the Gordon bride roses. The rose-tree has bloomed for the first time in twenty years, my dear, and it must surely be in honour of your wedding day. I hope you will wear them for, although I have never known you, I love you very much. I was once a dear friend of your father’s. Tell him to let you wear the roses I send for old times’ sake. I wish you every happiness, my dear.

“Your affectionate cousin,

“Corona Gordon.”

“Oh, how sweet and lovely of her!” said Juliet gently, as she laid the letter down. “And to think she was not even invited! I wanted to send her an invitation, but Father said it would be better not to — she was so hard and bitter against us that she would probably regard it as an insult.”

“He must have been mistaken about her attitude,” said Mrs. Gordon. “It certainly is a great pity she was not invited, but it is too late now. An invitation sent two hours before the ceremony would be an insult indeed.”

“Not if the bride herself took it!” exclaimed Juliet impulsively. “I’ll go myself to Cousin Corona, and ask her to come to my wedding.”

“Go yourself! Child, you can’t do such a thing! In that dress....”

“Go I must, Momsie. Why, it’s only a three minutes’ walk. I’ll go up the hill by the old field-path, and no one will see me. Oh, don’t say a word — there, I’m gone!”

“That child!” sighed the mother protestingly, as she heard Juliet’s flying feet on the stairs. “What a thing for a bride to do!”

Juliet, with her white silken skirts caught up above grasses and dust, ran light-footedly through the green lowland fields and up the hill, treading for the first time the faint old field-path between the two homes, so long disused that it was now barely visible in its fringing grasses and star-dust of buttercups. Where it ran into the spruce grove was a tiny gate which Miss Corona had always kept in good repair, albeit it was never used. Juliet pushed up the rusty hasp and ran through.

Miss Corona was sitting alone in her shadowy parlour, hanging over a few of the bride roses with falling tears, when something tall and beautiful and white, came in like a blessing and knelt by her chair.

“Cousin Corona,” said a somewhat breathless bride, “I have come to thank you for your roses and ask you to forgive us all for the old quarrel.”

“Dear child,” said Miss Corona out of her amazement, “there is nothing to forgive. I’ve loved you all and longed for you. Dear child, you have brought me great happiness.”

“And you must come to my wedding,” cried Juliet. “Oh, you must — or I shall think you have not really forgiven us. You would never refuse the request of a bride, Cousin Corona. We are queens on our wedding day, you know.”

“Oh, it’s not that, dear child — but I’m not dressed — I—”

“I’ll help you dress. And I won’t go back without you. The guests and the minister must wait if necessary — yes, even Romney must wait. Oh, I want you to meet Romney. Come, dear.”

And Miss Corona went. Charlotta and the bride got her into her grey silk and did her hair, and in a very short time she and Juliet were hurrying down the old field-path. In the hollow Meredith Gordon met them.

“Cousin Meredith,” said Miss Corona tremulously.

“Dear Corona.”

He took both her hands in his, and kissed her heartily. “Forgive me for misunderstanding you so long. I thought you hated us all.”

Turning to Juliet, he said with a fatherly smile,

“What a terrible girl it is for having its own way! Who ever heard of a Gordon bride doing such an unconventional thing? There, scamper off to the house before your guests come. Laura has made your roses up into what she calls ‘a dream of a bouquet,’ I’ll take Cousin Corona up more leisurely.”

“Oh, I knew that something beautiful was going to happen when the old rose-tree bloomed,” murmured Miss Corona happily.

The Josephs' Christmas

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The month before Christmas was always the most exciting and mysterious time in the Joseph household. Such scheming and planning, such putting of curly heads together in corners, such counting of small hoards, such hiding and smuggling of things out of sight, as went on among the little Josephs!

There were a good many of them, and very few of the pennies; hence the reason for so much contriving and consulting. From fourteen-year-old Mollie down to four-year-old Lennie there were eight small Josephs in all in the little log house on the prairie; so that when each little Joseph wanted to give a Christmas box to each of the other little Josephs, and something to Father and Mother Joseph besides, it is no wonder that they had to cudgel their small brains for ways and means thereof.

Father and Mother were always discreetly blind and silent through December. No questions were asked no matter what queer things were done. Many secret trips to the little store at the railway station two miles away were ignored, and no little Joseph was called to account because he or she looked terribly guilty when somebody suddenly came into the room. The air was simply charged with secrets.

Sister Mollie was the grand repository of these; all the little Josephs came to her for advice and assistance. It was Mollie who for troubled small brothers and sisters did such sums in division as this: How can I get a tencent present for Emmy and a fifteen-cent one for Jimmy out of eighteen cents? Or, how can seven sticks of candy be divided among eight people so that each shall have one? It was Mollie who advised regarding the purchase of ribbon and crepe paper. It was Mollie who put the finishing touches to most of the little gifts. In short, all through December Mollie was weighed down under an avalanche of responsibility. It speaks volumes for her sagacity and skill that she never got things mixed up or

made any such terrible mistake as letting one little Joseph find out what another was going to give him. “Dead” secrecy was the keystone of all plans and confidences.

During this particular December the planning and contriving had been more difficult and the results less satisfactory than usual. The Josephs were poor at any time, but this winter they were poorer than ever. The crops had failed in the summer, and as a consequence the family were, as Jimmy said, “on short commons.” But they made the brave best of their small resources, and on Christmas Eve every little Joseph went to bed with a clear conscience, for was there not on the corner table in the kitchen a small mountain of tiny — sometimes very tiny — gifts labelled with the names of recipients and givers, and worth their weight in gold if love and good wishes count for anything?

It was beginning to snow when the small small Josephs went to bed, and when the big small Josephs climbed the stairs it was snowing thickly. Mr. and Mrs. Joseph sat before the fire and listened to the wind howling about the house.

“I’m glad I’m not driving over the prairie tonight,” said Mr. Joseph. “It’s quite a storm. I hope it will be fine tomorrow, for the children’s sake. They’ve set their hearts on having a sleigh ride, and it will be too bad if they can’t have it when it’s about all the Christmas they’ll have this year. Mary, this is the first Christmas since we came west that we couldn’t afford some little extras for them, even if ‘twas only a box of nuts and candy.”

Mrs. Joseph sighed over Jimmy’s worn jacket which she was mending. Then she smiled.

“Never mind, John. Things will be better next Christmas, we’ll hope. The children will not mind, bless their hearts. Look at all the little knick-knacks they’ve made for each other. Last week when I was over at Taunton, Mr. Fisher had his store all gayified up,’ as Jim says, with Christmas presents. I did feel that I’d ask nothing better than to go in and buy all the lovely things I wanted, just for once, and give them to the children tomorrow morning. They’ve never had anything really nice for

Christmas. But there! We've all got each other and good health and spirits, and a Christmas wouldn't be much without those if we had all the presents in the world."

Mr. Joseph nodded.

"That's so. I don't want to grumble; but I tell you I did want to get Maggie a 'real live doll,' as she calls it. She never has had anything but homemade dolls, and that small heart of hers is set on a real one. There was one at Fisher's store today — a big beauty with real hair, and eyes that opened and shut. Just fancy Maggie's face if she saw such a Christmas box as that tomorrow morning."

"Don't let's fancy it," laughed Mrs. Joseph, "it is only aggravating. Talking of candy reminds me that I made a big plateful of taffy for the children today. It's all the 'Christmassy' I could give them. I'll get it out and put it on the table along with the children's presents. That can't be someone at the door!"

"It is, though," said Mr. Joseph as he strode to the door and flung it open.

Two snowed-up figures were standing on the porch. As they stepped in, the Josephs recognized one of them as Mr. Ralston, a wealthy merchant in a small town fifteen miles away.

"Late hour for callers, isn't it?" said Mr. Ralston. "The fact is, our horse has about given out, and the storm is so bad that we can't proceed. This is my wife, and we are on our way to spend Christmas with my brother's family at Lindsay. Can you take us in for the night, Mr. Joseph?"

"Certainly, and welcome!" exclaimed Mr. Joseph heartily, "if you don't mind a shakedown by the kitchen fire for the night. My, Mrs. Ralston," as his wife helped her off with her things, "but you are snowed up! I'll see to putting your horse away, Mr. Ralston. This way, if you please."

When the two men came stamping into the house again Mrs. Ralston and Mrs. Joseph were sitting at the fire, the former with a steaming hot cup of tea in her hand. Mr. Ralston put the big basket he was carrying down on a bench in the corner.

“Thought I’d better bring our Christmas flummery in,” he said. “You see, Mrs. Joseph, my brother has a big family, so we are taking them a lot of Santa Claus stuff. Mrs. Ralston packed this basket, and goodness knows what she put in it, but she half cleaned out my store. The eyes of the Lindsay youngsters will dance tomorrow — that is, if we ever get there.”

Mrs. Joseph gave a little sigh in spite of herself, and looked wistfully at the heap of gifts on the corner table. How meagre and small they did look, to be sure, beside that bulgy basket with its cover suggestively tied down.

Mrs. Ralston looked too.

“Santa Claus seems to have visited you already,” she said with a smile. The Josephs laughed.

“Our Santa Claus is somewhat out of pocket this year,” said Mr. Joseph frankly. “Those are the little things the small folks here have made for each other. They’ve been a month at it, and I’m always kind of relieved when Christmas is over and there are no more mysterious doings. We’re in such cramped quarters here that you can’t move without stepping on somebody’s secret.”

A shakedown was spread in the kitchen for the unexpected guests, and presently the Ralstons found themselves alone. Mrs. Ralston went over to the Christmas table and looked at the little gifts half tenderly and half pityingly.

“They’re not much like the contents of our basket, are they?” she said, as she touched the calendar Jimmie had made for Mollie out of cardboard and autumn leaves and grasses.

“Just what I was thinking,” returned her husband, “and I was thinking of something else, too. I’ve a notion that I’d like to see some of the things in our basket right here on this table.”

“I’d like to see them all,” said Mrs. Ralston promptly. “Let’s just leave them here, Edward. Roger’s family will have plenty of presents without them, and for that matter we can send them ours when we go back home.”

“Just as you say,” agreed Mr. Ralston. “I like the idea of giving the small folk of this household a rousing good Christmas for once. They’re

poor I know, and I dare say pretty well pinched this year like most of the farmers hereabout after the crop failure.”

Mrs. Ralston untied the cover of the big basket. Then the two of them, moving as stealthily as if engaged in a burglary, transferred the contents to the table. Mr. Ralston got out a small pencil and a note book, and by dint of comparing the names attached to the gifts on the table they managed to divide theirs up pretty evenly among the little Josephs.

When all was done Mrs. Ralston said, “Now, I’m going to spread that tablecloth carelessly over the table. We will be going before daylight, probably, and in the hurry of getting off I hope that Mr. and Mrs. Joseph will not notice the difference till we’re gone.”

It fell out as Mrs. Ralston had planned. The dawn broke fine and clear over a vast white world. Mr. and Mrs. Joseph were early astir; breakfast for the storm-stayed travellers was cooked and eaten by lamplight; then the horse and sleigh were brought to the door and Mr. Ralston carried out his empty basket.

“I expect the trail will be heavy,” he said, “but I guess we’d get to Lindsay in time for dinner, anyway. Much obliged for your kindness, Mr. Joseph. When you and Mrs. Joseph come to town we shall hope to have a chance to return it. Goodbye and a merry Christmas to you all.”

When Mrs. Joseph went back to the kitchen her eyes fell on the heaped-up table in the corner.

“Why-y!” she said, and snatched off the cover.

One look she gave, and then this funny little mother began to cry; but they were happy tears. Mr. Joseph came too, and looked and whistled.

There really seemed to be everything on that table that the hearts of children could desire — three pairs of skates, a fur cap and collar, a dainty workbasket, half a dozen gleaming new books, a writing desk, a roll of stuff that looked like a new dress, a pair of fur-topped kid gloves just Mollie’s size, and a china cup and saucer. All these were to be seen at the first glance; and in one corner of the table was a big box filled with candies and nuts and raisins, and in the other a doll with curling golden hair and brown eyes, dressed in “real” clothes and with all her wardrobe in

a trunk beside her. Pinned to her dress was a leaf from Mr. Ralston's notebook with Maggie's name written on it.

"Well, this is Christmas with a vengeance," said Mr. Joseph.

"The children will go wild with delight," said his wife happily.

They pretty nearly did when they all came scrambling down the stairs a little later. Such a Christmas had never been known in the Joseph household before. Maggie clasped her doll with shining eyes, Mollie looked at the workbasket that her housewifely little heart had always longed for, studious Jimmy beamed over the books, and Ted and Hal whooped with delight over the skates. And as for the big box of good things, why, everybody appreciated that. That Christmas was one to date from in that family.

I'm glad to be able to say, too, that even in the heyday of their delight and surprise over their wonderful presents, the little Josephs did not forget to appreciate the gifts they had prepared for each other. Mollie thought her calendar just too pretty for anything, and Jimmy was sure the new red mittens which Maggie had knitted for him with her own chubby wee fingers, were the very nicest, gayest mittens a boy had ever worn.

Mrs. Joseph's taffy was eaten too. Not a scrap of it was left. As Ted said loyally, "It was just as good as the candy in the box and had more 'chew' to it besides."

The Magical Bond of the Sea

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A late September wind from the northwest was sweeping over the waters of Racicot Harbour. It blew in, strong with the tang of the salt seas, past the grim lighthouse rock on the one hand and the sandbars on the other, up the long, narrow funnel of darkly blue water, until it whistled among the masts of the boats at anchor and among the stovepipe chimneys of the fishing village. It was a wind that sang and piped and keened of many things — but what it sang to each listener was only what was in that listener's heart. And Nora Shelley, standing at the door of her father's bleached cottage on the grey sands, heard a new strain in it. The wind had sung often to her of the outer world she longed for, but there had never been the note of fulfilment in it before.

There's a new life beyond, Nora, whistled the wind. A good life — and it's yours for the taking. You have but to put out your hand and all you've wished for will be in your grasp.

Nora leaned out from the door to meet the wind. She loved that northwest gale; it was a staunch old friend of hers. Very slim and straight was Nora, with a skin as white as the foam flakes crisping over the sands, and eyes of the tremulous, haunting blue that deepens on the water after a fair sunset. But her hair was as black as midnight, and her lips blossomed out with a ripe redness against the uncoloured purity of her face. She was far and away the most beautiful of the harbour girls, but hardly the most popular. Men and women alike thought her proud. Even her friends felt themselves called upon to make excuses for her unlikeness to themselves.

Nora had dosed the door behind her to shut in the voices. She wanted to be alone with the wind while she made her decision. Before her the sandy shingle, made firm by a straggling growth of some pale sea-ivy, sloped down to the sapphire cup of the harbour. Around her were the small, uncouth houses of the village — no smaller or more uncouth than

the one which was her home — with children playing noisily on the paths between them. The mackerel boats curtsied and nodded outside; beyond them the sharp tip of Sandy Point was curdled white with seagulls. Down at the curve of the cove a group of men were laughing and talking loudly in front of French Joe's fish-house. This was the life that she had always known.

Across the harbour, on a fir-fringed headland, stood Dalveigh. John Cameron, childless millionaire, had built a summer cottage on that point two years ago, and given it the name of the old ancestral estate in Scotland. To the Racicot fishing folk the house and grounds were as a dream of enchantment made real. Few of them had ever seen anything like it.

Nora Shelley knew Dalveigh well. She had been the Camerons' guest many times that summer, finding in the luxury and beauty of their surroundings something that entered with a strange aptness into her own nature. It was as if it were hers by right of fitness. And this was the life that might be hers, did she so choose.

In reality, her choice was already made, and she knew it. But it pleased her to pretend for a little time that it was not, and to dally tenderly with the old loves and emotions that tugged at her heart and clamoured to be remembered.

Within, in the low-ceilinged living room, with its worn, uneven floor and its blackened walls hung with fish nets and oilskins, four people were sitting. John Cameron and his wife were given the seats of honour in the middle of the room. Mrs. Cameron was a handsome, well-dressed woman, with an expression that was discontented and, at times, petulant. Yet her face had a good deal of plain common sense in it, and not even the most critical of the Racicot folks could say that she "put on airs." Her husband was a small, white-haired man, with a fresh, young-looking face. He was popular in Racicot, for he mingled freely with the sailors and fishermen. Moreover, Dalveigh was an excellent market for fresh mackerel.

Nathan Shelley, in his favourite corner behind the stove, sat lurching forward with his hands on his knees. He had laid aside his pipe out of

deference to Mrs. Cameron, and it was hard for him to think without it. He wished his wife would go to work; it seemed uncanny to see her idle. She had sat idle only once that he remembered — the day they had brought Ned Shelley in, dank and dripping, after the August storm ten years before. Mrs. Shelley sat by the crooked, small-paned window and looked out down the harbour. The coat she had been patching for her husband when the Camerons came still lay in her lap, and she had folded her hands upon it. She was a big woman, slow of speech and manner, with a placid, handsome face — a face that had not visibly stirred even when she had heard the Camerons' proposition.

They wanted Nora — these rich people who had so much in life wanted the blossom of girlhood that had never bloomed for them. John Cameron pleaded his cause well.

"We will look on her as our own," he said at last. "We have grown to love her this summer. She is beautiful and clever — she has a right to more than Racicot can give her. You have other children — we are childless. And we do not take her from you utterly. You will see her every summer when we come to Dalveigh."

"It won't be the same thing quite," said Nathan Shelley drily. "She'll belong to your life then — not ours. And no matter how many young ones folks has, they don't want to lose none of 'em. But I dunno as we ought to let our feelings stand in Nora's light. She's clever, and she's been hankering for more'n we can ever give her. I was the same way once. Lord, how I raged at Racicot! I broke away finally — went to a city and got work. But it wasn't no use. I'd left it too long. The sea had got into my blood. I toughed it out for two years, and then I had to come back. I didn't want to, mark you, but I had to come. Been here ever since. But maybe 'twill be different with the girl. She's younger than I was; if the hankering for the sea and the life of the shore hasn't got into her too deep, maybe she'll be able to cut loose for good. But you don't know how the sea calls to one of its own."

Cameron smiled. He thought that this dry old salt was a bit of a poet in his own way. Very likely Nora got her ability and originality from him.

There did not seem to be a great deal in the phlegmatic, goodlooking mother.

“What say, wife?” asked Shelley at last.

His wife had said in her slow way, “Leave it to Nora,” and to Nora it was left.

When she came in at last, her face stung to radiant beauty by the northwest wind, she found it hard to tell them after all. She looked at her mother appealingly.

“Is it go or stay, girl,” demanded her father brusquely.

“I think I’ll go,” said Nora slowly. Then, catching sight of her mother’s face, she ran to her and flung her arms about her. “But I’ll never forget you, Mother,” she cried. “I’ll love you always — you and Father.”

Her mother loosened the clinging arms and pushed her gently towards the Camerons.

“Go to them,” she said calmly. “You belong to them now.”

The news spread quickly over Racicot. Before night everyone on the harbour shore knew that the Camerons were going to adopt Nora Shelley and take her away with them. There was much surprise and more envy. The shore women tossed their heads.

“Reckon Nora is in great feather,” they said. “She always did think herself better than anyone else. Nate Shelley and his wife spoiled her ridiculous. Wonder what Rob Fletcher thinks of it?”

Nora asked her brother to tell the news to Rob Fletcher himself, but Merran Andrews was before him. She was at Rob before he had fairly landed, when the fishing boats came in at sunset.

“Have you heard the news, Rob? Nora’s going away to be a fine lady. The Camerons have been daft about her all summer, and now they are going to adopt her.”

Merran wanted Rob herself. He was a big, handsome fellow, and well-off — the pick of the harbour men in every way. He had slighted her for Nora, and it pleased her to stab him now, though she meant to be nice to him later on.

He turned white under his tan, but he did not choose to make a book of his heart for Merran's bold black eyes to read. "It's a great thing for her," he answered calmly. "She was meant for better things than can be found at Racicot."

"She was always too good for common folks, if that is what you mean," said Merran spitefully.

Nora and Rob did not meet until the next evening, when she rowed herself home from Dalveigh. He was at the shore to tie up her boat and help her out. They walked up the sands together in the heart of the autumn sunset, with the northwest wind whistling in their ears and the great star of the lighthouse gleaming wanly out against the golden sky. Nora felt uncomfortable, and resented it. Rob Fletcher was nothing to her; he never had been anything but the good friend to whom she told her strange thoughts and longings. Why should her heart ache over him? She wished he would talk, but he strode along in silence, with his fine head drooping a little.

"I suppose you have heard that I am going away, Rob?" she said at last. He nodded. "Yes, I've heard it from a hundred mouths, more or less," he answered, not looking at her.

"It's a splendid thing for me, isn't it?" dared Nora.

"Well, I don't know," he said slowly. "Looking at it from the outside, it seems so. But from the inside it mayn't look the same. Do you think you'll be able to cut twenty years of a life out of your heart without any pain?"

"Oh, I'll be homesick, if that is what you mean," said Nora petulantly. "Of course I'll be that at first. I expect it — but people get over that. And it is not as if I were going away for good. I'll be back next summer — every summer."

"It'll be different," said Rob stubbornly, thinking as old Nathan Shelley had thought. "You'll be a fine lady — oh, all the better for that perhaps — but you'll not be the same. No, no, the new life will change you; not all at once, maybe, but in the end. You'll be one of them, not one of us. But will you be happy? That's the question I'm asking."

In anyone else Nora would have resented this. But she never felt angry with Rob.

“I think I shall be,” she said thoughtfully. “And, anyway, I must go. It doesn’t seem as if I could help myself if I wanted to. Something — out beyond there — is calling me, always has been calling me ever since I was a tiny girl and found out there was a big world far away from Racicot. And it always seemed to me that I would find a way to it some day. That was why I kept going to school long after the other girls stopped. Mother thought I’d better stop home; she said too much book learning would make me discontented and too different from the people I had to live along. But Father let me go; he understood; he said I was like him when he was young. I learned everything and read everything I could. It seems to me as if I had been walking along a narrow pathway all my life. And now it seems as if a gate were opened before me and I can pass through into a wider world. It isn’t the luxury and the pleasure or the fine house and dresses that tempt me, though the people here think so — even Mother thinks so. But it is not. It’s just that something seems to be in my grasp that I’ve always longed for, and I must go — Rob, I must go.”

“Yes, if you feel like that you must go,” he answered, looking down at her troubled face gently. “And it’s best for you to go, Nora. I believe that, and I’m not so selfish as not to be able to hope that you’ll find all you long for. But it will change you all the more if it is so. Nora! Nora! Whatever am I going to do without you!”

The sudden passion bursting out in his tone frightened her.

“Don’t, Rob, don’t! And you won’t miss me long. There’s many another.”

“No, there isn’t. Don’t fling me that dry bone of comfort. There’s no other, and never has been any other — none but you, Nora, and well you know it.”

“I’m sorry,” she said faintly.

“You needn’t be,” said Rob grimly. “After all, I’d rather love you than not, hurt as it will. I never had much hope of getting you to listen to me, so there’s no great disappointment there. You’re too good for me — I’ve

always known that. A girl that is fit to mate with the Camerons is far above Rob Fletcher, fisherman.”

“I never had such a thought,” protested Nora.

“I know it,” he said, casing himself up in his quietness again. “But it’s so — and now I’ve got to lose you. But there’ll never be any other for me, Nora.”

He left her at her father’s door. She watched his stalwart figure out of sight around the point, and raged to find tears in her eyes and a bitter yearning in her heart. For a moment she repented — she would stay — she could not go. Then over the harbour flashed out the lights of Dalveigh. The life behind them glittered, allured, beckoned. Nay, she must go on — she had made her choice. There was no turning back now.

Nora Shelley went away with the Camerons, and Dalveigh was deserted. Winter came down on Racicot Harbour, and the colony of fisher folk at its head gave themselves over to the idleness of the season — a time for lounging and gossiping and long hours of lazy contentment smoking in the neighbours’ chimney corners, when tales were told of the sea and the fishing. The Harbour laid itself out to be sociable in winter. There was no time for that in summer. People had to work eighteen hours out of the twenty-four then. In the winter there was spare time to laugh and quarrel, woo and wed and — were a man so minded — dream, as did Rob Fletcher in his loneliness.

In a Racicot winter much was made of small things. The arrival of Nora Shelley’s weekly letter to her father and mother was an event in the village. The postmistress in the Cove store spread the news that it had come, and that night the Shelley kitchen would be crowded. Isobel Shelley, Nora’s younger sister, read the letter aloud by virtue of having gone to school long enough to be able to pronounce the words and tell where the places named were situated.

The Camerons had spent the autumn in New York and had then gone south for the winter. Nora wrote freely of her new life. In the beginning she admitted great homesickness, but after the first few letters she made no further mention of that. She wrote little of herself, but she described

fully the places she had visited, the people she had met, the wonderful things she had seen. She sent affectionate messages to all her old friends and asked after all her old interests. But the letters came to be more and more like those of a stranger and one apart from the Racicot life, and the father and mother felt it.

“She’s changing,” muttered old Nathan. “It had to be so — it’s well for her that it is so — but it hurts. She ain’t ours any more. We’ve lost the girl, wife, lost her forever.”

Rob Fletcher always came and listened to the letters in silence while the others buzzed and commented. Rob, so the Harbour folk said, was much changed. He had grown unsociable and preferred to stay home and read books rather than go a-visiting as did others. The Harbour folk shook their heads over this. There was something wrong with a man who read books when there was a plenty of other amusements. Jacob Radnor had read books all one winter and had drowned himself in the spring — jumped overboard from his dory at the herring nets. And that was what came of books, mark you.

The Camerons came later to Dalveigh the next summer, on account of John Cameron’s health, which was not good. It was the first of August before a host of servants came to put Dalveigh in habitable order, and a week later the family came. They brought a houseful of guests with them.

At sunset on the day of her arrival Nora Shelley looked out cross the harbour to the fishing village. She was tired after her journey, and she had not meant to go over until the morning, but now she knew she must go at once. Her mother was over there; the old life called to her; the northwest wind swept up the channel and whistled alluringly to her at the window of her luxurious room. It brought to her the tang of the salt wastes and filled her heart with a great, bitter-sweet yearning.

She was more beautiful than ever. In the year that had passed she had blossomed out to a gracious fulfilment of womanhood. Even the Camerons had wondered at her swift adaptation to her new surroundings. She seemed to have put Racicot behind her as one puts by an old garment. In everything she had held her own royally. Her adopted parents were proud

of her beauty and her nameless, untamed charm. They had lavished every indulgence upon her. In those few short months she had lived more keenly and fully than in all her life before. The Nora Shelley who went away was not, so it would seem, the Nora Shelley who came back.

But when she looked from her window to the waves and saw the star of the lighthouse and the blaze of the sunset in the window of the fishing-houses and heard the summons of the wind, something broke loose in her soul and overwhelmed her, like a wave of the sea. She must go at once — at once — at once. Not a moment could she wait.

She was dressed for dinner, but with tingling fingers she threw off her costly gown and put on her dark travelling suit again. She left her hair as it was and knotted a crimson scarf about her head. She would slip away quietly to the boathouse, get Davy to launch the little sailboat for her — and then for a fleet skim over the harbour before that glorious wind! She hoped not to be seen, but Mrs. Cameron met her in the hall.

“Nora!” she said in astonishment.

“Oh, I must go, Aunty! I must go!” the girl cried feverishly. She was afraid Mrs. Cameron would try to prevent her going, and all at once she knew that she could not bear that.

“Must go? Where? Dinner is almost ready, and—”

“Oh, I don’t want any dinner. I’m going home — I will sail over.”

“My dear child, don’t be foolish. It’s too late to go over the harbour tonight. They won’t be expecting you. Wait until the morning.”

“No — oh, you don’t understand. I must go — I must! My mother is over there.”

Something in the girl’s last sentence or the tone in which it was uttered brought a look of pain to Mrs. Cameron’s face. But she made no further attempt to dissuade her.

“Well, if you must. But you cannot go alone — no, Nora, I cannot allow it. The wind is too high and it is too late for you to go over by yourself. Clark Bryant will take you.”

Nora would have protested but she knew it would be in vain. She submitted somewhat sullenly and walked down to the shore in silence.

Clark Bryant strode beside her, humouring her mood. He was a tall, stout man, with an ugly, clever, sarcastic face. He was as clever as he looked, and was one of the younger millionaires whom John Cameron drew around him in the development of his huge financial schemes. Bryant was in love with Nora. This was why the Camerons had asked him to join their August house party at Dalveigh, and why he had accepted. It had occurred to Nora that this was the case, but as yet she had never troubled to think the situation over seriously.

She liked Clark Bryant well enough, but just at the moment he was in the way. She did not want to take him over to Racicot — just why she could not have explained. There was in her no snobbish shame of her humble home. But he did not belong there; he was an alien, and she wished to go back to it for the first time alone.

At the boathouse Davy launched the small sailboat and Nora took the tiller. She knew every inch of the harbour. As the sail filled before the wind and the boat sprang across the upcurling waves, her brief sullenness fell away from her. She no longer resented Clark Bryant's presence — she forgot it. He was no more to her than the mast by which he stood. The spell of the sea and the wind surged into her heart and filled it with wild happiness and measureless content. Over yonder, where the lights gleamed on the darkening shore under the high-sprung arch of pale golden sky, was home. How the wind whistled to welcome her back! The lash of it against her face — the flick of salt spray on her lips — the swing of the boat as it cut through the racing crests — how glorious it all was!

Clark Bryant watched her, understanding all at once that he was nothing to her, that he had no part or lot in her heart. He was as one forgotten and left behind. And how lovely, how desirable she was! He had never seen her look so beautiful. The shawl had slipped down to her shoulders and her head rose out of it like some magnificent flower out of a crimson calyx. The masses of her black hair lifted from her face in the rush of the wind and swayed back again like rich shadows. Her lips were stung scarlet with the sea's sharp caresses, and her eyes, large and splendid, looked past him unseeing to the harbour lights of Racicot.

When they swung in by the wharf Nora sprang from the boat before Bryant had time to moor it. Pausing for an instant, she called down to him, carelessly, "Don't wait for me. I shall not go back tonight."

Then she caught her shawl around her head and almost ran up the wharf and along the shore. No one was abroad, for it was supper hour in Racicot. In the Shelley kitchen the family was gathered around the table, when the door was flung open and Nora stood on the threshold. For a moment they gazed at her as at an apparition. They had not known the precise day of her coming and were not aware of the Camerons' arrival at Dalveigh.

"It's the girl herself. It's Nora," said old Nathan, rising from his bench.

"Mother!" cried Nora. She ran across the room and buried her face in her mother's breast, sobbing.

When the news spread, the Racicot people crowded in to see Nora until the house was full. They spent a noisy, merry, wholehearted evening of the old sort. The men smoked and most of the women knitted while they talked. They were pleased to find that Nora did not put on any airs. Old Jonas Myers bluntly told her that he didn't see as her year among rich folks had done her much good, after all.

"You're just the same as when you went away," he said. "They haven't made a fine lady of you. Folks here thought you'd be something wonderful."

Nora laughed. She was glad that they did not find her changed. Old Nathan chuckled in his dry way. There was a difference in the girl, and he saw it, though the neighbours did not, but it was not the difference he had feared. His daughter was not utterly taken from him yet.

Nora sat by her mother and was happy. But as the evening wore away she grew very quiet, and watched the door with something piteous in her eyes. Old Nathan noticed it and thought she was tired. He gave the curious neighbours a goodnatured hint, and they presently withdrew. When they had all gone Nora went out to the door alone.

The wind had died down and the shore, gemmed with its twinkling lights, was very still, for it was too late an hour for Racicot folk to be

abroad in the mackerel season. The moon was rising and the harbour was a tossing expanse of silver waves. The mellow light fell on a tall figure lurking at the angle of the road that led past the Shelley cottage. Nora saw and recognized it. She flew down the sandy slope with outstretched hands.

“Rob — Rob!”

“Nora!” he said huskily, holding out his hand. But she flung herself on his breast and clung to him, half laughing, half crying.

“Oh, Rob! I’ve been looking for you all the evening. Every time there was a step I said to myself, ‘That is Rob, now.’ And when the door opened to let in another, my heart died within me. I dared not even ask after you for fear of what they might tell me. Why didn’t you come?”

“I didn’t know that I’d be welcome,” he whispered, holding her closer to him. “I’ve been hanging about thinking to get a glimpse of you unbeknown. I thought maybe you wouldn’t want to see me tonight.”

“Not want to see you! Oh, Rob, this evening at Dalveigh, when I looked across to Racicot, it was you I thought of before all — even before Mother.”

She drew back and looked at him with her soul in her eyes.

“What a splendid fellow you are — how handsome you are, Rob!” she cried. All the reserve of womanhood fell away from her in the inrush of emotions. For the moment she was a child again, telling out her thoughts with all a child’s frankness. “I’ve been in a dream this past year — a lovely dream — a fair dream, but only a dream, after all. And now I’ve wakened. And you are part of the wakening — the best part! Oh, to think I never knew before!”

“Knew what, my girl?”

He had her close against his heart now; the breath of her lips mingled with his, but he would not kiss her yet.

“That I loved you,” she whispered back. “Oh, Rob, you are all the world to me. I belong to you and the sea. But I never knew it until I crossed the harbour tonight. Then I knew — it came to me all at once, like a flood of understanding. I knew I could never go away again — that I must stay here forever where I could hear that call of wind and waves. The

new life was good — good — but it could not go deep enough. And when you did not come I knew what was in my heart for you as well.”

That night Nora lay beside her sisters in the tiny room that looked out on the harbour. The younger girls slept soundly, but Nora kept awake to listen to the laughter of the wind outside, and con over what she and Rob had said to each other. There was no blot on her happiness save a sorry wonder what the Camerons would say when they knew.

“They will think me ungrateful and fickle,” she sighed. “They don’t know that I can’t help it even if I would. They will never understand.”

Nor did they. When Nora told them that she was going back to Racicot, they laughed at her kindly at first, treating it as the passing whim of a homesick girl. Later, when they came to understand that she meant it, they were grieved and angry. There were scenes of pleading and tears and reproaches. Nora cried bitterly in Mrs. Cameron’s arms, but stood rockfirm. She could never go back to them — never.

They appealed to Nathan Shelley finally, but he refused to say anything.

“It can’t be altered,” he told them. “The sea has called her and she’ll listen to naught else. I’m sorry enough for the girl’s own sake. It would have been better for her if she could have cut loose from it all and lived your life, I dare say. But you’ve made a fair trial and it’s of no use. I know what’s in her heart — it was in mine once — and I’ll say no word of rebuke to her. She’s free to go or stay as she chooses — just as free as she was last year.”

Mrs. Cameron made one more appeal to Nora. She told the girl bitterly that she was ungrateful.

“I’m not that,” said Nora with quivering lips. “I love you, and I’m grateful to you. But your life isn’t for me, after all. I thought it was — I longed so for it. And I loved it, too — I love it yet. But there’s something stronger in me that holds me here.”

“I don’t think you realize what you are doing, Nora. You have been a little homesick and you are glad to be back. But after we have gone and you must settle into the old Racicot life again, you will not be contented.

You will find that your life with us will have unfitted you for this. There will be no real place for you here — nothing for you to do. You will be as a stranger here.”

“Oh, no. I am going to marry Rob Fletcher,” said Nora proudly.

“Marry Rob Fletcher! And you might have married Clark Bryant, Nora!”

Nora shook her head. “That could never have been. I thought it might once — but I know better now. You see, I love Rob.”

There did not seem to be anything more to say after that. Mrs. Cameron did not try to say anything. She went away in sorrow.

Nora cried bitterly after she had gone. But there were no tears in her eyes that night when she walked on the shore with Rob Fletcher. The wind whistled around them, and the stars came out in the great ebony dome of the sky over the harbour. Laughter and song of the fishing folk were behind them, and the deep, solemn call of the sea before. Over the harbour gleamed the score of lights at Dalveigh. Rob looked from them to Nora.

“Do you think you’ll ever regret yon life, my girl?”

“Never, Rob. It seems to me now like a beautiful garment put on for a holiday and worn easily and pleasantly for a time. But I’ve put it off now, and put on workaday clothes again. It is only a week since I left Dalveigh, but it seems long ago. Listen to the wind, Rob! It is singing of the good days to be for you and me.”

He bent over and kissed her.

“My own dear lass!” he said softly.

The Martyrdom of Estella

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Estella was waiting under the poplars at the gate for Spencer Morgan. She was engaged to him, and he always came to see her on Saturday and Wednesday evenings. It was after sunset, and the air was mellow and warm-hued. The willow trees along the walk and the tall birches in the background stood out darkly distinct against the lemon-tinted sky. The breath of mint floated out from the garden, and the dew was falling heavily.

Estella leaned against the gate, listening for the sound of wheels and dreamily watching the light shining out from the window of Vivienne LeMar's room. The blind was up and she could see Miss LeMar writing at her table. Her profile was clear and distinct against the lamplight.

Estella reflected without the least envy that Miss LeMar was very beautiful. She had never seen anyone who was really beautiful before — beautiful with the loveliness of the heroines in the novels she sometimes read or the pictures she had seen.

Estella Bowes was not pretty. She was a nice-looking girl, with clear eyes, rosy cheeks, and a pervading air of the content and happiness her life had always known. She was an orphan and lived with her uncle and aunt. In the summer they sometimes took a boarder for a month or two, and this summer Miss LeMar had come. She had been with them about a week. She was an actress from the city and had around her all the glamour of a strange, unknown life. Nothing was known about her. The Boweses liked her well enough as a boarder. Estella admired and held her in awe. She wondered what Spencer would think of this beautiful woman. He had not yet seen her.

It was quite dark when he came. Estella opened the gate for him, but he got out of his buggy and walked up the lane beside her with his arm about her. Miss LeMar's light had removed to the parlour where she was singing,

accompanying herself on the cottage organ. Estella felt annoyed. The parlour was considered her private domain on Wednesday and Saturday night, but Miss LeMar did not know that.

“Who is singing?” asked Spencer. “What a voice she has!”

“That’s our new boarder, Miss LeMar,” answered Estella. “She’s an actress and sings and does everything. She is awfully pretty, Spencer.”

“Yes?” said the young man indifferently.

He was not in the least interested in the Boweses’ new boarder. Indeed, he considered her advent a nuisance. He pressed Estella closer to him, and when they reached the garden gate he kissed her. Estella always remembered that moment afterwards. She was so supremely happy.

Spencer went off to put up his horse, and Estella waited for him on the porch steps, wondering if any other girl in the world could be quite so happy as she was, or love anyone as much as she loved Spencer. She did not see how it could be possible, because there was only one Spencer.

When Spencer came back she took him into the parlour, half shyly, half proudly. He was a handsome fellow, with a magnificent physique. Miss LeMar stopped singing and turned around on the organ stool as they entered. The little room was flooded with a mellow light from the pink-globed lamp on the table, and in the soft, shadowy radiance she was as beautiful as a dream. She wore a dress of crepe, cut low in the neck. Estella had never seen anyone dressed so before. To her it seemed immodest.

She introduced Spencer. He bowed awkwardly and sat stiffly down by the window with his eyes riveted on Miss LeMar’s face. Estella, catching a glimpse of herself in the old-fashioned mirror above the mantel, suddenly felt a cold chill of dissatisfaction. Her figure had never seemed to her so stout and stiff, her brown hair so dull and prim, her complexion so muddy, her features so commonplace. She wished Miss LeMar would go out of the room.

Vivienne LeMar watched the two faces before her; a hard gleam, half mockery, half malice, flashed into her eyes and a smile crept about her lips. She looked straight in Spencer Morgan’s honest blue eyes and read

there the young man's dazzled admiration. There was contempt in the look she turned on Estella.

"You were singing when we came in," said Spencer. "Won't you go on, please? I am very fond of music."

Miss LeMar turned again to the organ. The gleaming curves of her neck and shoulders rose out of their filmy sheathings of lace. Spencer, sitting where he could see her face with its roseleaf bloom and the ringlets of golden hair clustering about it, gazed at her, unheeding of aught else. Estella saw his look. She suddenly began to hate the black-eyed witch at the organ — and to fear her as well. Why did Spencer look at her like that? She wished she had not brought him in at all. She felt commonplace and angry, and wanted to cry.

Vivienne LeMar went on singing, drifting from one sweet love song into another. Once she looked up at Spencer Morgan. He rose quickly and went to her side, looking down at her with a strange fire in his eyes.

Estella got up abruptly and left the room. She was angry and jealous, but she thought Spencer would follow her. When he did not, she could not believe it. She waited on the porch for him, not knowing whether she were more angry or miserable. She would not go back into the room. Vivienne LeMar had stopped singing. She could hear a low murmur of voices. When she had waited there an hour, she went in and upstairs to her room with ostentatious footsteps. She was too angry to cry or to realize what had happened, and still kept hoping all sorts of impossible things as she sat by her window.

It was ten o'clock when Spencer went away and Vivienne LeMar passed up the hall to her room. Estella clenched her hands in an access of helpless rage. She was very angry, but under her fury was a horrible ache of pain. It could not be only three hours since she had been so happy! It must be more than that! What had happened? Had she made a fool of herself? Ought she to have behaved in any other way? Perhaps Spencer had come out to look for her after she had gone upstairs and, not finding her, had gone back to Miss LeMar to show her he was angry. This poor hope was a small comfort. She wished she had not acted as she had. It looked

spiteful and jealous, and Spencer did not like people who were spiteful and jealous. She would show him she was sorry when he came back, and it would be all right.

She lay awake most of the night, thinking out plausible reasons and excuses for Spencer's behaviour, and trying to convince herself that she had exaggerated everything absurdly. Towards morning she fell asleep and awoke hardly remembering what had happened. Then it rolled back upon her crushingly.

But she rose and dressed in better spirits. It had been hardest to lie there and do nothing. Now the day was before her and something pleasant might happen. Spencer might come back in the evening. She would be doubly nice to him to make up.

Mrs. Bowes looked sharply at her niece's dull eyes and pale cheeks at the breakfast table. She had her own thoughts of things. She was a large, handsome woman with a rather harsh face.

"Did you go upstairs last night and leave Spencer Morgan with Miss LeMar?" she asked bluntly.

"Yes," muttered Estella.

"Did you have a quarrel with him?"

"No."

"What made you act so queer?"

"I couldn't help it," faltered the girl.

The food she was eating seemed to choke her. She wished she were a hundred miles away from everyone she ever knew.

Mrs. Bowes gave a grunt of dissatisfaction.

"Well, I think it is a pretty queer piece of business. But if you are satisfied, it isn't anyone else's concern, I suppose. He stayed with her till ten o'clock and when he left she did everything but kiss him — and she asked him to come back too. I heard."

"Aunt!" protested the girl.

She felt as if her aunt were striking her blow after blow on a sensitive, quivering spot. It was bad enough to know it all, but to hear it put into

such cold, brutal words was more than she could endure. It seemed to make everything so horribly sure.

“I guess I had a right to listen, hadn’t I, with such goings on in my own house? You’re a little fool, Estella Bowes! I don’t believe that LeMar girl is a bit better than she ought to be. I wish I’d never taken her to board, and if you say so, I’ll send her packing right off and not give her a chance to make mischief atween folks.”

Estella’s suffering found vent in a burst of anger.

“You needn’t do anything of the sort!” she cried.

“It’s all nonsense about Spencer — it was my fault — and anyhow, if he is so easily led away as that, I am sure I don’t want him! I wish to goodness, Aunt, you’d leave me alone!”

“Oh, very well!” returned Mrs. Bowes in an offended tone. “It was for your own good I spoke. You know best, I suppose. If you don’t care, I don’t know that anyone else need.”

Estella went about her work like one in a dream. A great hatred had sprung up in her heart against Vivienne LeMar. The simple-hearted country girl felt almost murderous. The whole day seemed like a nightmare to her. When night came she dressed herself with feverish care, for she could not quell the hope that Spencer would surely come again. But he did not; and when she went up to bed, it did not seem as if she could live through the night. She lay staring wide-eyed through the darkness until dawn. She wished that she might cry, but no tears came to her relief.

Next day she went to work with furious energy. When her usual tasks were done, she ransacked the house for other employment. She was afraid if she stopped work for a moment she would go mad. Mrs. Bowes watched her with a grim pity.

At night she walked to prayer meeting in the schoolhouse a mile away. She always went, and Spencer was generally on hand to see her home. He was not there tonight. She wished she had not come. It was dreadful to have to sit still and think. She did not hear a word the minister said.

She had to walk home with a crowd of girls and nerve herself to answer their merry sallies that no one might suspect. She was tortured by

the fear that everyone knew her shame and humiliation and was pitying her. She got hysterically gay, but underneath all she was constantly trying to assign a satisfactory reason for Spencer's nonappearance. He was often kept away, and of course he was a little cross at her yet, as was natural. If he had come before her then, she could have gone down in the very dust at his feet and implored his forgiveness.

When she reached home she went into the garden and sat down. The calm of the night soothed her. She felt happier and more hopeful. She thought over all that had passed between her and Spencer and all his loving assurances, and the recollection comforted her. She was almost happy when she went in.

Tomorrow is Sunday, she thought when she wakened in the morning. Her step was lighter and her face brighter. Mrs. Bowes seemed to be in a bad humour. Presently she said bluntly:

"Do you know that Spencer Morgan was here last night?"

Estella felt the cold tighten round her heart. Yet underneath it sprang up a wild, sweet hope.

"Spencer here! I suppose he forgot it was prayer meeting night. What did he say? Why didn't you tell him where I was?"

"I don't know that he forgot it was prayer meeting night," returned Mrs. Bowes with measured emphasis. "'Tisn't likely his memory has failed so all at once. He didn't ask where you was. He took good care to go before you got home too. Miss LeMar entertained him. I guess she was quite capable of it."

Estella bent over her dishes in silence. Her face was deadly white.

"I'll send her away," said Mrs. Bowes pityingly. "When she's gone, Spencer will soon come back to you."

"No, you won't!" said Estella fiercely. "If you do, she'll only go over to Barstows', and it would be worse than ever. I don't care — I'll show them both I don't care! As for Spencer coming back to me, do you think I want her leavings? He's welcome to go."

"He's only just fooled by her pretty face," persisted Mrs. Bowes in a clumsy effort at consolation. "She's just turning his head, the hussy, and he

isn't really in his proper senses. You'll see, he'll be ashamed of himself when he comes to them again. He knows very well in his heart that you're worth ten girls like her."

Estella faced around.

"Aunt," she said desperately, "you mean well, I know, but you're killing me! I can't stand it. For pity's sake, don't say another word to me about this, no matter what happens. And don't keep looking at me as if I were a martyr! She watches us and it would please her to think I cared. I don't — and I mean she shall see I don't. I guess I'm well rid of a fellow as fickle as he is, and I've sense enough to know it."

She went upstairs then, tearing off her turquoise engagement ring as she climbed the steps. All sorts of wild ideas flashed through her head. She would go down and confront Vivienne LeMar — she would rush off and find Spencer and throw his ring at him, no matter where he was — she would go away where no one would ever see her again. Why couldn't she die? Was it possible people could suffer like this and yet go on living?

"I don't care — I don't care!" she moaned, telling the lie aloud to herself, as if she hoped that by this means she would come to believe it.

When twilight came she went out to the front steps and leaned her aching head against the honeysuckle trellis. The sun had just set and the whole world swam in dusky golden light. The wonderful beauty frightened her. She felt like a blot on it.

While she stood there, a buggy came driving up the lane and wheeled about at the steps. In it was Spencer Morgan.

Estella saw him and, in spite of the maddening throb of hope that seemed suddenly to transfigure the world for her, her pride rose in arms. Had Spencer come the night before, he would have found her loving and humble. Even now, had she but been sure that he had come to see her, she would have unbent. But was it the other? The torturing doubt stung her to the quick.

She waited, stubbornly resolved that she would not speak first. It was not in her place. Spencer Morgan flicked his horse sharply with his whip. He dared not look at Estella, but he felt her uncompromising attitude. He

was miserably ashamed of himself, and he felt angry at Estella for his shame.

“Do you care to come for a drive?” he asked awkwardly, with a covert glance at the parlour windows.

Estella caught the glance and her jealous perception instantly divined its true significance. Her heart died within her. She did not care what she said.

“Oh,” she cried with a toss of her head, “it’s not me you want — it’s Miss LeMar, isn’t it? She’s away at the shore. You’ll find her there, I dare say.”

Still, in spite of all, she perversely hoped. If he would only make any sign, the least in the world, that he was sorry — that he still loved her — she could forgive him everything. When he drove away without another word, she could not believe it again. Surely he would not go — surely he knew she did not mean it — he would turn back before he got to the gate.

But he did not. She saw him disappear around the turn of the road. She could not see if he took the shore lane further on, but she was sure he would. She was furious at herself for acting as she had done. It was all her fault again! Oh, if he would only give her another chance!

She was in her room when she heard the buggy drive up again. She knew it was Spencer and that he had brought Vivienne LeMar home. Acting on a sudden wild impulse, the girl stepped out on the landing and confronted her rival as she came up the stairs.

The latter paused at sight of the white face and anguished eyes. There was a little mocking smile on her lovely face.

“Miss LeMar,” said Estella in a quivering voice, “what do you mean by all this? You know I’m engaged to Spencer Morgan!”

Miss LeMar laughed softly.

“Really? If you are engaged to the young man, my dear Miss Bowes, I would advise you to look after him more sharply. He seems very willing to flirt, I should say.”

She passed on to her room with a malicious smile. Estella shrank back against the wall, humiliated and baffled. When she found herself alone,

she crawled back to her room and threw herself face downward on the bed, praying that she might die.

But she had to live through the horrible month that followed — a month so full of agony that she seemed to draw every breath in pain. Spencer never sought her again; he went everywhere with Miss LeMar. His infatuation was the talk of the settlement. Estella knew that her story was in everyone's mouth, and her pride smarted; but she carried a brave front outwardly. No one should say she cared.

She believed that the actress was merely deluding Spencer for her own amusement and would never dream of marrying him. But one day the idea occurred to her that she might. Estella had always told herself that even if Spencer wanted to come back to her she would never take him back, but now, by the half-sick horror that came over her, she knew how strong the hope had really been and despised herself more than ever.

One evening she was alone in the parlour. She had lit the lamp and was listlessly arranging the little room. She looked old and worn. Her colour was gone and her eyes were dull. As she worked, the door opened and Vivienne LeMar walked or, rather, reeled into the room.

Estella dropped the book she held and gazed at her as one in a dream. The actress's face was flushed and her hair was wildly disordered. Her eyes glittered with an unearthly light. She was talking incoherently. The air was heavy with the fumes of brandy.

Estella laughed hysterically. Vivienne LeMar was grossly intoxicated. This woman whom Spencer Morgan worshipped, for whom he had forsaken her, was reeling about the room, laughing idiotically, talking wildly in a thick voice. If he could but see her now!

Estella turned white with the passion of the wild idea that had come to her. Spencer Morgan should see this woman in her true colours.

She lost no time. Swiftly she left the room and locked the door behind her on the maudlin, babbling creature inside. Then she flung a shawl over her head and ran from the house. It was not far to the Morgan homestead. She ran all the way, hardly knowing what she was doing. Mrs. Morgan answered her knock. She gazed in bewilderment at Estella's wild face.

“I want Spencer,” said the girl through her white lips.

The elder woman stepped back in dumb amazement. She knew and rued her son’s folly. What could Estella want with him?

The young man appeared in the doorway. Estella caught him by the arm and pulled him outside.

“Miss LeMar wants you at once,” she said hoarsely. “At once — you are to come at once!”

“Has anything happened to her?” cried Spencer savagely. “Is she ill — is she — what is the matter?”

“No, she is not ill. But she wants you. Come at once.”

He started off bareheaded. Estella followed him up the road breathlessly. Surely it was the strangest walk ever a girl had, she told herself with mirthless laughter. She pushed the key into his hand at the porch.

“She’s in the parlour,” she said wildly. “Go in and look at her, Spencer.”

Spencer snatched the key and fitted it into the door. He was full of fear. Had Estella gone out of her mind? Had she done anything to Vivienne? Had she —

As he entered, the actress reeled to her feet and came to meet him. He stood and gazed at her stupidly. This could not be Vivienne, this creature reeking with brandy, uttering such foolish words! What fiend was this in her likeness?

He grew sick at heart and brain; she had her arms about him. He tried to push her away, but she clung closer, and her senseless laughter echoed through the room. He flung her from him with an effort and rushed out through the hall and down the road like a madman. Estella, watching him, felt that she was avenged. She was glad with a joy more pitiful than grief.

Vivienne LeMar left the cottage the next day. Mrs. Bowes, suspecting some mystery, questioned Estella sharply, but could find out nothing. The girl kept her own counsel stubbornly. The interest and curiosity of the village centred around Spencer Morgan, and his case was well discussed.

Gossip said that the actress had jilted him and that he was breaking his heart about it. Then came the rumour that he was going West.

Estella heard it apathetically. Life seemed ended for her. There was nothing to look forward to. She could not even look back. All the past was embittered. She had never met Spencer since the night she went after him. She sometimes wondered what he must think of her for what she had done. Did he think her unwomanly and revengeful? She did not care. It was rather a relief to hear that he was going away. She would not be tortured by the fear of meeting him then. She was sure he would never come back to her. If he did, she would never forgive him.

One evening in early harvest Estella was lingering by the lane gate at twilight. She had worked slavishly all day and was very tired, but she was loath to go into the house, where her trouble always seemed to weigh on her more heavily. The dusk, sweet night seemed to soothe her as it always did.

She leaned her head against the poplar by the gate. How long Spencer Morgan had been standing by her she did not know, but when she looked up he was there. In the dim light she could see how haggard and hollow-eyed he had grown. He had changed almost as much as herself.

The girl's first proud impulse was to turn coldly away and leave him. But some strange tumult in her heart kept her still. What had he come to say?

There was a moment's fateful silence. Then Spencer spoke in a muffled voice.

"I couldn't go away without seeing you once more, Estella, to say goodbye. Perhaps you won't speak to me. You must hate me. I deserve it."

He paused, but she said no word. She could not. After a space, he went wistfully on.

"I know you can never forgive me — no girl could. I've behaved like a fool. There isn't any excuse to be made for me. I don't think I could have been in my right senses, Estella. It all seems like some bad dream now. When I saw her that night, I came to my right mind, and I've been the most miserable man alive ever since. Not for her — but because I'd lost

you. I can't bear to live here any longer, so I am going away. Will you say goodbye, Estella?"

Still she did not speak. There were a hundred things she wanted to say but she could not say them. Did he mean that he loved her still? If she were sure of that, she could forgive him anything, but her doubt rendered her mute.

The young man turned away despairingly from her rigid attitude. So be it — he had brought his fate on himself.

He had gone but a few steps when Estella suddenly found her voice with a gasp.

"Spencer!" He came swiftly back. "Oh, Spencer — do — you — do you love me still?"

He caught her hands in his.

"Love you — oh, Estella, yes, yes! I always have. That other wasn't love — it was just madness. When it passed I hated life because I'd lost you. I know you can't forgive me, but, oh—"

He broke down. Estella flung her arms around his neck and put her face up to his. She felt as if her heart must break with its great happiness. He understood her mute pardon. In their kiss the past was put aside. Estella's martyrdom was ended.

The Old Chest at Wyther Grange

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When I was a child I always thought a visit to Wyther Grange was a great treat. It was a big, quiet, old-fashioned house where Grandmother Laurance and Mrs. DeLisle, my Aunt Winnifred, lived. I was a favourite with them, yet I could never overcome a certain awe of them both. Grandmother was a tall, dignified old lady with keen black eyes that seemed veritably to bore through one. She always wore stiffly-rustling gowns of rich silk made in the fashion of her youth. I suppose she must have changed her dress occasionally, but the impression on my mind was always the same, as she went trailing about the house with a big bunch of keys at her belt — keys that opened a score of wonderful old chests and boxes and drawers. It was one of my dearest delights to attend Grandmother in her peregrinations and watch the unfolding and examining of all those old treasures and heirlooms of bygone Laurances.

Of Aunt Winnifred I was less in awe, possibly because she dressed in a modern way and so looked to my small eyes more human and natural. As Winnifred Laurance she had been the beauty of the family and was a handsome woman still, with brilliant dark eyes and cameo-like features. She always looked very sad, spoke in a low sweet voice, and was my childish ideal of all that was highbred and graceful.

I had many beloved haunts at the Grange, but I liked the garret best. It was a roomy old place, big enough to have comfortably housed a family in itself, and was filled with castoff furniture and old trunks and boxes of discarded finery. I was never tired of playing there, dressing up in the old-fashioned gowns and hats and practising old-time dance steps before the high, cracked mirror that hung at one end. That old garret was a veritable fairyland to me.

There was one old chest which I could not explore and, like all forbidden things, it possessed a great attraction for me. It stood away back

in a dusty, cobwebbed corner, a strong, high wooden box, painted blue. From some words which I had heard Grandmother let fall I was sure it had a history; it was the one thing she never explored in her periodical overhauls. When I grew tired of playing I liked to creep up on it and sit there, picturing out my own fancies concerning it — of which my favourite one was that some day I should solve the riddle and open the chest to find it full of gold and jewels with which I might restore the fortune of the Laurances and all the traditionary splendours of the old Grange.

I was sitting there one day when Aunt Winnifred and Grandmother Laurance came up the narrow dark staircase, the latter jingling her keys and peering into the dusty corners as she came along the room. When they came to the old chest, Grandmother rapped the top smartly with her keys.

“I wonder what is in this old chest,” she said. “I believe it really should be opened. The moths may have got into it through that crack in the lid.”

“Why don’t you open it, Mother?” said Mrs. DeLisle. “I am sure that key of Robert’s would fit the lock.”

“No,” said Grandmother in the tone that nobody, not even Aunt Winnifred, ever dreamed of disputing. “I will not open that chest without Eliza’s permission. She confided it to my care when she went away, and I promised that it should never be opened until she came for it.”

“Poor Eliza,” said Mrs. DeLisle thoughtfully. “I wonder what she is like now. Very much changed, like all the rest of us, I suppose. It is almost thirty years since she was here. How pretty she was!”

“I never approved of her,” said Grandmother brusquely. “She was a sentimental, fanciful creature. She might have married well but she preferred to waste her life pining over the memory of a man who was not worthy to untie the shoelace of a Laurance.”

Mrs. DeLisle sighed softly and made no reply. People said that she had had her own romance in her youth and that her mother had sternly repressed it. I had heard that her marriage with Mr. DeLisle was loveless on her part and proved very unhappy. But he had been dead many years, and Aunt Winnifred never spoke of him.

“I have made up my mind what to do,” said Grandmother decidedly. “I will write to Eliza and ask her if I may open the chest to see if the moths have got into it. If she refuses, well and good. I have no doubt that she will refuse. She will cling to her old sentimental ideas as long as the breath is in her body.”

I rather avoided the old chest after this. It took on a new significance in my eyes and seemed to me like the tomb of something — possibly some dead and buried romance of the past.

Later on a letter came to Grandmother; she passed it over the table to Mrs. DeLisle.

“That is from Eliza,” she said. “I would know her writing anywhere — none of your modern sprawly, untidy hands, but a fine ladylike script, as regular as copperplate. Read the letter, Winnifred; I haven’t my glasses and I dare say Eliza’s rhapsodies would tire me very much. You need not read them aloud — I can imagine them all. Let me know what she says about the chest.”

Aunt Winnifred opened and read the letter and laid it down with a brief sigh.

“This is all she says about the chest. ‘If it were not for one thing that is in it, I would ask you to open the chest and burn all its contents. But I cannot bear that anyone but myself should see or touch that one thing. So please leave the chest as it is, dear Aunt. It is no matter if the moths do get in.’ That is all,” continued Mrs. DeLisle, “and I must confess that I am disappointed. I have always had an almost childish curiosity about that old chest, but I seem fated not to have it gratified. That ‘one thing’ must be her wedding dress. I have always thought that she locked it away there.”

“Her answer is just what I expected of her,” said Grandmother impatiently. “Evidently the years have not made her more sensible. Well, I wash my hands of her belongings, moths or no moths.”

It was not until ten years afterwards that I heard anything more of the old chest. Grandmother Laurance had died, but Aunt Winnifred still lived at the Grange. She was very lonely, and the winter after Grandmother’s death she sent me an invitation to make her a long visit.

When I revisited the garret and saw the old blue chest in the same dusty corner, my childish curiosity revived and I begged Aunt Winnifred to tell me its history.

“I am glad you have reminded me of it,” said Mrs. DeLisle. “I have intended to open the chest ever since Mother’s death but I kept putting it off. You know, Amy, poor Eliza Laurance died five years ago, but even then Mother would not have the chest opened. There is no reason why it should not be examined now. If you like, we will go and open it at once and afterwards I will tell you the story.”

We went eagerly up the garret stairs. Aunt knelt down before the old chest and selected a key from the bunch at her belt.

“Would it not be too provoking, Amy, if this key should not fit after all? Well, I do not believe you would be any more disappointed than I.”

She turned the key and lifted the heavy lid. I bent forward eagerly. A layer of tissue paper revealed itself, with a fine tracing of sifted dust in its crinkles.

“Lift it up, child,” said my aunt gently. “There are no ghosts for you, at least, in this old chest.”

I lifted the paper up and saw that the chest was divided into two compartments. Lying on the top of one was a small, square, inlaid box. This Mrs. DeLisle took up and carried to the window. Lifting up the cover she laid it in my lap.

“There, Amy, look through it and let us see what old treasures have lain hidden there these forty years.”

The first thing I took out was a small square case covered with dark purple velvet. The tiny clasp was almost rusted away and yielded easily. I gave a little cry of admiration. Aunt Winnifred bent over my shoulder.

“That is Eliza’s portrait at the age of twenty, and that is Willis Starr’s. Was she not lovely, Amy?”

Lovely indeed was the face looking out at me from its border of tarnished gilt. It was the face of a young girl, in shape a perfect oval, with delicate features and large dark-blue eyes. Her hair, caught high on the crown and falling on her neck in the long curls of a bygone fashion, was a

warm auburn, and the curves of her bare neck and shoulders were exquisite.

“The other picture is that of the man to whom she was betrothed. Tell me, Amy, do you think him handsome?”

I looked at the other portrait critically. It was that of a young man of about twenty-five; he was undeniably handsome, but there was something I did not like in his face and I said so.

Aunt Winnifred made no reply — she was taking out the remaining contents of the box. There was a white silk fan with delicately carved ivory sticks, a packet of old letters and a folded paper containing some dried and crumpled flowers. Aunt laid the box aside and unpacked the chest in silence. First came a ball dress of pale-yellow satin brocade, made with the trained skirt, “baby” waist and full puffed sleeves of a former generation. Beneath it was a case containing a necklace of small but perfect pearls and a pair of tiny satin slippers. The rest of the compartment was filled with household linen, fine and costly but yellowed with age — damask table linen and webs of the uncut fabric.

In the second compartment lay a dress. Aunt Winnifred lifted it out reverently. It was a gown of rich silk that had once been white, but now, like the linen, it was yellow with age. It was simply made and trimmed with cobwebby old lace. Wrapped around it was a long white bridal veil, redolent with some strange, old-time perfume that had kept its sweetness all through the years.

“Well, Amy, this is all,” said Aunt Winnifred with a quiver in her voice. “And now for the story. Where shall I begin?”

“At the very beginning, Aunty. You see I know nothing at all except her name. Tell me who she was and why she put her wedding dress away here.”

“Poor Eliza!” said Aunt dreamily. “It is a sorrowful story, Amy, and it seems so long ago now. I must be an old woman. Forty years ago — and I was only twenty then. Eliza Laurance was my cousin, the only daughter of Uncle Henry Laurance. My father — your grandfather, Amy, you don’t remember him — had two brothers, each of whom had an only daughter.

Both these girls were called Eliza after your great-grandmother. I never saw Uncle George's Eliza but once. He was a rich man and his daughter was much sought after, but she was no beauty, I promise you that, and proud and vain to the last degree. Her home was in a distant city and she never came to Wyther Grange.

"The other Eliza Laurance was a poor man's daughter. She and I were of the same age and did not look unlike each other, although I was not so pretty by half. You can see by the portrait how beautiful she was, and it does her scant justice, for half her charm lay in her arch expression and her vivacious ways. She had her little faults, of course, and was rather over much given to romance and sentiment. This did not seem much of a defect to me then, Amy, for I was young and romantic too. Mother never cared much for Eliza, I think, but everyone else liked her. One winter Eliza came to Wyther Grange for a long visit. The Grange was a very lively place then, Amy. Eliza kept the old house ringing with merriment. We went out a great deal and she was always the belle of any festivity we attended. Yet she wore her honours easily; all the flattery and homage she received did not turn her head.

"That winter we first met Willis Starr. He was a newcomer, and nobody knew much about him, but one or two of the best families took him up, and his own fascinations did the rest. He became what you would call the rage. He was considered very handsome, his manners were polished and easy, and people said he was rich.

"I don't think, Amy, that I ever trusted Willis Starr. But like all the rest, I was blinded by his charm. Mother was almost the only one who did not worship at his shrine, and very often she dropped hints about penniless adventurers that made Eliza very indignant.

"From the first he had paid Eliza marked attention and seemed utterly bewitched by her. Well, his was an easy winning. Eliza loved him with her whole impulsive, girlish heart and made no attempt to hide it.

"I shall never forget the night they were first engaged. It was Eliza's birthday, and we were invited to a ball that evening. This yellow gown is the very one she wore. I suppose that is why she put it away here — the

gown she wore on the happiest night of her life. I had never seen her look more beautiful — her neck and arms were bare, and she wore this string of pearls and carried a bouquet of her favourite white roses.

“When we reached home after the dance, Eliza had her happy secret to tell us. She was engaged to Willis Starr, and they were to be married in early spring.

“Willis Starr certainly seemed to be an ideal lover, and Eliza was so perfectly happy that she seemed to grow more beautiful and radiant every day.

“Well, Amy, the wedding day was set. Eliza was to be married from the Grange, as her own mother was dead, and I was to be bridesmaid. We made her wedding dress together, she and I. Girls were not above making their own gowns then, and not a stitch was set in Eliza’s save those put there by loving fingers and blessed by loving wishes. It was I who draped the veil over her sunny curls — see how yellow and creased it is now, but it was as white as snow that day.

“A week before the wedding, Willis Starr was spending the evening at the Grange. We were all chattering gaily about the coming event, and in speaking of the invited guests Eliza said something about the other Eliza Laurance, the great heiress, looking archly at Willis over her shoulder as she spoke. It was some merry badinage about the cousin whose namesake she was but whom she so little resembled.

“We all laughed, but I shall never forget the look that came over Willis Starr’s face. It passed quickly, but the chill fear that it gave me remained. A few minutes later I left the room on some trifling errand, and as I returned through the dim hall I was met by Willis Starr. He laid his hand on my arm and bent his evil face — for it was evil then, Amy — close to mine.

“‘Tell me,’ he said in a low but rude tone, ‘is there another Eliza Laurance who is an heiress?’

“‘Certainly there is,’ I said sharply. ‘She is our cousin and the daughter of our Uncle George. Our Eliza is not an heiress. You surely did not suppose she was!’

“Willis stepped aside with a mocking smile.

“‘I did — what wonder? I had heard much about the great heiress, Eliza Laurance, and the great beauty, Eliza Laurance. I supposed they were one and the same. You have all been careful not to undeceive me.’

“‘You forget yourself, Mr. Starr, when you speak so to me,’ I retorted coldly. ‘You have deceived yourself. We have never dreamed of allowing anyone to think that Eliza was an heiress. She is sweet and lovely enough to be loved for her own sake.’

“I went back to the parlour full of dismay. Willis Starr remained gloomy and taciturn all the rest of the evening, but nobody seemed to notice it but myself.

“The next day we were all so busy that I almost forgot the incident of the previous evening. We girls were up in the sewing room putting the last touches to the wedding gown. Eliza tried it and her veil on and was standing so, in all her silken splendour, when a letter was brought in. I guessed by her blush who was the writer. I laughed and ran downstairs, leaving her to read it.

“When I returned she was still standing just where I had left her in the middle of the room, holding the letter in her hand. Her face was as white as her veil, and her wide-open eyes had a dazed, agonized look as of someone who had been stricken a mortal blow. All the soft happiness and sweetness had gone out of them. They were the eyes of an old woman, Amy.

“‘Eliza, what is the matter?’ I said. ‘Has anything happened to Willis?’

“She made no answer, but walked to the fireplace, dropped the letter in a bed of writhing blue flame and watched it burn to white ashes. Then she turned to me.

“‘Help me take off this gown, Winnie,’ she said dully. ‘I shall never wear it again. There will be no wedding. Willis is gone.’

“‘Gone!’ I echoed stupidly.

“‘Yes. I am not the heiress, Winnie. It was the fortune, not the girl, he loved. He says he is too poor for us to dream of marrying when I have nothing. Oh, such a cruel, heartless letter! Why did he not kill me? It

would have been so much more merciful! I loved him so — I trusted him so! Oh, Winnie, Winnie, what am I to do!’

“There was something terrible in the contrast between her passionate words and her calm face and lifeless voice. I wanted to call Mother, but she would not let me. She went away to her own room, trailing along the dark hall in her dress and veil, and locked herself in.

“Well, I told it all to the others in some fashion. You can imagine their anger and dismay. Your father, Amy — he was a hot-blooded, impetuous, young fellow then — went at once to seek Willis Starr. But he was gone, no one knew where, and the whole country rang with the gossip and scandal of the affair. Eliza knew nothing of this, for she was ill and unconscious for many a day. In a novel or story she would have died, I suppose, and that would have been the end of it. But this was in real life, and Eliza did not die, although many times we thought she would.

“When she did recover, how frightfully changed she was! It almost broke my heart to see her. Her very nature seemed to have changed too — all her joyousness and lightheartedness were dead. From that time she was a faded, dispirited creature, no more like the Eliza we had known than the merest stranger. And then after a while came other news — Willis Starr was married to the other Eliza Laurance, the true heiress. He had made no second mistake. We tried to keep it from Eliza but she found it out at last. That was the day she came up here alone and packed this old chest. Nobody ever knew just what she put into it. But you and I see now, Amy — her ball dress, her wedding gown, her love letters and, more than all else, her youth and happiness — this old chest was the tomb of it all. Eliza Laurance was really buried here.

“She went home soon after. Before she went she exacted a promise from Mother that the old chest should be left at the Grange unopened until she came for it herself. But she never came back, and I do not think she ever intended to, and I never saw her again.

“That is the story of the old chest. It was all over so long ago — the heartbreak and the misery — but it all seems to come back to me now. Poor Eliza!”

My own eyes were full of tears as Aunt Winnifred went down the stairs, leaving me sitting dreamily there in the sunset light, with the old yellowed bridal veil across my lap and the portrait of Eliza Laurance in my hand. Around me were the relics of her pitiful story — the old, oft-repeated story of a faithless love and a woman's broken heart — the gown she had worn, the slippers in which she had danced lightheartedly at her betrothal ball, her fan, her pearls, her gloves — and it somehow seemed to me as if I were living in those old years myself, as if the love and happiness, the betrayal and pain were part of my own life. Presently Aunt Winnifred came back through the twilight shadows.

“Let us put all these things back in their grave, Amy,” she said. “They are of no use to anyone now. The linen might be bleached and used, I dare say — but it would seem like a sacrilege. It was Mother's wedding present to Eliza. And the pearls — would you care to have them, Amy?”

“Oh, no, no,” I said with a little shiver. “I would never wear them, Aunt Winnifred. I should feel like a ghost if I did. Put everything back just as we found it — only her portrait. I would like to keep that.”

Reverently we put gowns and letters and trinkets back into the old blue chest. Aunt Winnifred closed the lid and turned the key softly. She bowed her head over it for a minute and then we went together in silence down the shadowy garret stairs of Wyther Grange.

The Osbornes' Christmas

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Cousin Myra had come to spend Christmas at “The Firs,” and all the junior Osbornes were ready to stand on their heads with delight. Darby — whose real name was Charles — did it, because he was only eight, and at eight you have no dignity to keep up. The others, being older, couldn't.

But the fact of Christmas itself awoke no great enthusiasm in the hearts of the junior Osbornes. Frank voiced their opinion of it the day after Cousin Myra had arrived. He was sitting on the table with his hands in his pockets and a cynical sneer on his face. At least, Frank flattered himself that it was cynical. He knew that Uncle Edgar was said to wear a cynical sneer, and Frank admired Uncle Edgar very much and imitated him in every possible way. But to you and me it would have looked just as it did to Cousin Myra — a very discontented and unbecoming scowl.

“I'm awfully glad to see you, Cousin Myra,” explained Frank carefully, “and your being here may make some things worth while. But Christmas is just a bore — a regular bore.”

That was what Uncle Edgar called things that didn't interest him, so that Frank felt pretty sure of his word. Nevertheless, he wondered uncomfortably what made Cousin Myra smile so queerly.

“Why, how dreadful!” she said brightly. “I thought all boys and girls looked upon Christmas as the very best time in the year.”

“We don't,” said Frank gloomily. “It's just the same old thing year in and year out. We know just exactly what is going to happen. We even know pretty well what presents we are going to get. And Christmas Day itself is always the same. We'll get up in the morning, and our stockings will be full of things, and half of them we don't want. Then there's dinner. It's always so poky. And all the uncles and aunts come to dinner — just the same old crowd, every year, and they say just the same things. Aunt Desda always says, ‘Why, Frankie, how you have grown!’ She knows I hate to be

called Frankie. And after dinner they'll sit round and talk the rest of the day, and that's all. Yes, I call Christmas a nuisance."

"There isn't a single bit of fun in it," said Ida discontentedly.

"Not a bit!" said the twins, both together, as they always said things.

"There's lots of candy," said Darby stoutly. He rather liked Christmas, although he was ashamed to say so before Frank.

Cousin Myra smothered another of those queer smiles.

"You've had too much Christmas, you Osbornes," she said seriously.

"It has palled on your taste, as all good things will if you overdo them. Did you ever try giving Christmas to somebody else?"

The Osbornes looked at Cousin Myra doubtfully. They didn't understand.

"We always send presents to all our cousins," said Frank hesitatingly.

"That's a bore, too. They've all got so many things already it's no end of bother to think of something new."

"That isn't what I mean," said Cousin Myra. "How much Christmas do you suppose those little Rolands down there in the hollow have? Or Sammy Abbott with his lame back? Or French Joe's family over the hill? If you have too much Christmas, why don't you give some to them?"

The Osbornes looked at each other. This was a new idea.

"How could we do it?" asked Ida.

Whereupon they had a consultation. Cousin Myra explained her plan, and the Osbornes grew enthusiastic over it. Even Frank forgot that he was supposed to be wearing a cynical sneer.

"I move we do it, Osbornes," said he.

"If Father and Mother are willing," said Ida.

"Won't it be jolly!" exclaimed the twins.

"Well, rather," said Darby scornfully. He did not mean to be scornful. He had heard Frank saying the same words in the same tone, and thought it signified approval.

Cousin Myra had a talk with Father and Mother Osborne that night, and found them heartily in sympathy with her plans.

For the next week the Osbornes were agog with excitement and interest. At first Cousin Myra made the suggestions, but their enthusiasm soon outstripped her, and they thought out things for themselves. Never did a week pass so quickly. And the Osbornes had never had such fun, either.

Christmas morning there was not a single present given or received at “The Firs” except those which Cousin Myra and Mr. and Mrs. Osborne gave to each other. The junior Osbornes had asked that the money which their parents had planned to spend in presents for them be given to them the previous week; and given it was, without a word.

The uncles and aunts arrived in due time, but not with them was the junior Osbornes’ concern. They were the guests of Mr. and Mrs. Osborne. The junior Osbornes were having a Christmas dinner party of their own. In the small dining room a table was spread and loaded with good things. Ida and the twins cooked that dinner all by themselves. To be sure, Cousin Myra had helped some, and Frank and Darby had stoned all the raisins and helped pull the homemade candy; and all together they had decorated the small dining room royally with Christmas greens.

Then their guests came. First, all the little Rolands from the Hollow arrived — seven in all, with very red, shining faces and not a word to say for themselves, so shy were they. Then came a troop from French Joe’s — four black-eyed lads, who never knew what shyness meant. Frank drove down to the village in the cutter and brought lame Sammy back with him, and soon after the last guest arrived — little Tillie Mather, who was Miss Rankin’s “orphan ‘sylum girl” from over the road. Everybody knew that Miss Rankin never kept Christmas. She did not believe in it, she said, but she did not prevent Tillie from going to the Osbornes’ dinner party.

Just at first the guests were a little stiff and unsocial; but they soon got acquainted, and so jolly was Cousin Myra — who had her dinner with the children in preference to the grownups — and so friendly the junior Osbornes, that all stiffness vanished. What a merry dinner it was! What peals of laughter went up, reaching to the big dining room across the hall, where the grownups sat in rather solemn state. And how those guests did

eat and frankly enjoy the good things before them! How nicely they all behaved, even to the French Joes! Myra had secretly been a little dubious about those four mischievous-looking lads, but their manners were quite flawless. Mrs. French Joe had been drilling them for three days — ever since they had been invited to “de Chrismus dinner at de beeg house.”

After the merry dinner was over, the junior Osbornes brought in a Christmas tree, loaded with presents. They had bought them with the money that Mr. and Mrs. Osborne had meant for their own presents, and a splendid assortment they were. All the French-Joe boys got a pair of skates apiece, and Sammy a set of beautiful books, and Tillie was made supremely happy with a big wax doll. Every little Roland got just what his or her small heart had been longing for. Besides, there were nuts and candies galore.

Then Frank hitched up his pony again, but this time into a great pung sleigh, and the junior Osbornes took their guests for a sleigh-drive, chaperoned by Cousin Myra. It was just dusk when they got back, having driven the Rolands and the French Joes and Sammy and Tillie to their respective homes.

“This has been the jolliest Christmas I ever spent,” said Frank, emphatically.

“I thought we were just going to give the others a good time, but it was they who gave it to us,” said Ida.

“Weren’t the French Joes jolly?” giggled the twins. “Such cute speeches as they would make!”

“Me and Teddy Roland are going to be chums after this,” announced Darby. “He’s an inch taller than me, but I’m wider.”

That night Frank and Ida and Cousin Myra had a little talk after the smaller Osbornes had been haled off to bed.

“We’re not going to stop with Christmas, Cousin Myra,” said Frank, at the end of it. “We’re just going to keep on through the year. We’ve never had such a delightful old Christmas before.”

“You’ve learned the secret of happiness,” said Cousin Myra gently. And the Osbornes understood what she meant.

The Romance of Aunt Beatrice

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Margaret always maintains that it was a direct inspiration of Providence that took her across the street to see Aunt Beatrice that night. And Aunt Beatrice believes that it was too. But the truth of the matter is that Margaret was feeling very unhappy, and went over to talk to Aunt Beatrice as the only alternative to a fit of crying. Margaret's unhappiness has nothing further to do with this story, so it may be dismissed with the remark that it did not amount to much, in spite of Margaret's tragical attitude, and was dissipated at once and forever by the arrival of a certain missent letter the next day.

Aunt Beatrice was alone. Her brother and his wife had gone to the "at home" which Mrs. Cunningham was giving that night in honour of the Honourable John Reynolds, M.P. The children were upstairs in bed, and Aunt Beatrice was darning their stockings, a big basketful of which loomed up aggressively on the table beside her. Or, to speak more correctly, she had been darning them. Just when Margaret was sliding across the icy street Aunt Beatrice was bent forward in her chair, her hands over her face, while soft, shrinking little sobs shook her from head to foot.

When Margaret's imperative knock came at the front door, Aunt Beatrice started guiltily and wished earnestly that she had waited until she went to bed before crying, if cry she must. She knew Margaret's knock, and she did not want her gay young niece, of all people in the world, to suspect the fact or the cause of her tears.

"I hope she won't notice my eyes," she thought, as she hastily plumped a big ugly dark-green shade, with an almond-eyed oriental leering from it, over the lamp, before going out to let Margaret in.

Margaret did not notice at first. She was too deeply absorbed in her own troubles to think that anyone else in the world could be miserable too. She curled up in the deep easy-chair by the fire, and clasped her hands

behind her curly head with a sigh of physical comfort and mental unhappiness, while Aunt Beatrice, warily sitting with her back to the light, took up her work again.

“You didn’t go to Mrs. Cunningham’s ‘at home,’ Auntie,” said Margaret lazily, feeling that she must make some conversation to justify her appearance. “You were invited, weren’t you?”

Aunt Beatrice nodded. The hole she was darning in the knee of Willie Hayden’s stocking must be done very carefully. Mrs. George Hayden was particular about such matters. Perhaps this was why Aunt Beatrice did not speak.

“Why didn’t you go?” asked Margaret absently, wondering why there had been no letter for her that morning — and this was the third day too! Could Gilbert be ill? Or was he flirting with some other girl and forgetting her? Margaret swallowed a big lump in her throat, and resolved that she would go home next week — no, she wouldn’t, either — if he was as hateful and fickle as that — what was Aunt Beatrice saying?

“Well, I’m — I’m not used to going to parties now, my dear. And the truth is I have no dress fit to wear. At least Bella said so, because the party was to be a very fashionable affair. She said my old grey silk wouldn’t do at all. Of course she knows. She had to have a new dress for it, and, we couldn’t both have that. George couldn’t afford it these hard times. And, as Bella said, it would be very foolish of me to get an expensive dress that would be no use to me afterward. But it doesn’t matter. And, of course, somebody had to stay with the children.”

“Of course,” assented Margaret dreamily. Mrs. Cunningham’s “at home” was of no particular interest. The guests were all middle-aged people whom the M.P. had known in his boyhood and Margaret, in her presumptuous youth, thought it would be a very prosy affair, although it had made quite a sensation in quiet little Murraybridge, where people still called an “at home” a party plain and simple.

“I saw Mr. Reynolds in church Sunday afternoon,” she went on. “He is very fine-looking, I think. Did you ever meet him?”

“I used to know him very well long ago,” answered Aunt Beatrice, bowing still lower over her work. “He used to live down in Wentworth, you know, and he visited his married sister here very often. He was only a boy at that time. Then — he went out to British Columbia and — and — we never heard much more about him.”

“He’s very rich and owns dozens of mines and railroads and things like that,” said Margaret, “and he’s a member of the Dominion Parliament, too. They say he’s one of the foremost men in the House and came very near getting a portfolio in the new cabinet. I like men like that. They are so interesting. Wouldn’t it be awfully nice and complimentary to have one of them in love with you? Is he married?”

“I — I don’t know,” said Aunt Beatrice faintly. “I have never heard that he was.”

“There, you’ve run the needle into your finger,” said Margaret sympathetically.

“It’s of no consequence,” said Aunt Beatrice hastily.

She wiped away the drop of blood and went on with her work. Margaret watched her dreamily. What lovely hair Aunt Beatrice had! It was so thick and glossy, with warm bronze tones where the lamplight fell on it under that hideous weird old shade. But Aunt Beatrice wore it in such an unbecoming way. Margaret idly wondered if she would comb her hair straight back and prim when she was thirty-five. She thought it very probable if that letter did not come tomorrow.

From Aunt Beatrice’s hair Margaret’s eyes fell to Aunt Beatrice’s face. She gave a little jump. Had Aunt Beatrice been crying? Margaret sat bolt upright.

“Aunt Beatrice, did you want to go to that party?” she demanded explosively. “Now tell me the truth.”

“I did,” said Aunt Beatrice weakly. Margaret’s sudden attack fairly startled the truth out of her. “It is very silly of me, I know, but I did want to go. I didn’t care about a new dress. I’d have been quite willing to wear my grey silk, and I could have fixed the sleeves. What difference would it

have made? Nobody would ever have noticed me, but Bella thought it wouldn't do."

She paused long enough to give a little sob which she could not repress. Margaret made use of the opportunity to exclaim violently, "It's a shame!"

"I suppose you don't understand why I wanted to go to this particular party so much," went on Aunt Beatrice shyly. "I'll tell you why — if you won't laugh at me. I wanted to see John Reynolds — not to talk to him — oh, I dare say he wouldn't remember me — but just to see him. Long ago — fifteen years ago — we were engaged. And — and — I loved him so much then, Margaret."

"You poor dear!" said Margaret sympathetically. She reached over and patted her aunt's hand. She thought that this little bit of romance, long hidden and unsuspected, blossoming out under her eyes, was charming. In her interest she quite forgot her own pet grievance.

"Yes — and then we quarrelled. It was a dreadful quarrel and it was about such a trifle. We parted in anger and he went away. He never came back. It was all my fault. Well, it is all over long ago and everybody has forgotten. I — I don't mind it now. But I just wanted to see him once more and then come quietly away."

"Aunt Beatrice, you are going to that party yet," said Margaret decisively.

"Oh, it is impossible, my dear."

"No, it isn't. Nothing is impossible when I make up my mind. You must go. I'll drag you there by main force if it comes to that. Oh, I have such a jolly plan, Auntie. You know my black and yellow dinner dress — no, you don't either, for I've never worn it here. The folks at home all said it was too severe for me — and so it is. Nothing suits me but the fluffy, chuffy things with a tilt to them. Gil — er — I mean — well, yes, Gilbert always declared that dress made me look like a cross between an unwilling nun and a ballet girl, so I took a dislike to it. But it's as lovely as a dream. Oh, when you see it your eyes will stick out. You must wear it tonight. It's

just your style, and I'm sure it will fit you, for our figures are so much alike."

"But it is too late."

"'Tisn't. It's not more than half an hour since Uncle George and Aunt Bella went. I'll have you ready in a twinkling."

"But the fire — and the children!"

"I'll stay here and look after both. I won't burn the house down, and if the twins wake up I'll give them — what is it you give them — soothing syrup? So go at once and get you ready, while I fly over for the dress. I'll fix your hair up when I get back."

Margaret was gone before Aunt Beatrice could speak again. Her niece's excitement seized hold of her too. She flung the stockings into the basket and the basket into the closet.

"I will go — and I won't do another bit of darning tonight. I hate it — I hate it — I hate it! Oh, how much good it does me to say it!"

When Margaret came flying up the stairs Aunt Beatrice was ready save for hair and dress. Margaret cast the gown on the bed, revealing all its beauty of jetted lace and soft yellow silk with a dextrous sweep of her arm. Aunt Beatrice gave a little cry of admiration.

"Isn't it lovely?" demanded Margaret. "And I've brought you my opera cape and my fascinator and my black satin slippers with the cunningest gold buckles, and some sweet pale yellow roses that Uncle Ned gave me yesterday. Oh, Aunt Beatrice! What magnificent arms and shoulders you have! They're like marble. Mine are so scrawny I'm just ashamed to have people know they belong to me."

Margaret's nimble fingers were keeping time with her tongue. Aunt Beatrice's hair went up as if by magic into soft puffs and waves and twists, and a golden rose was dropped among the bronze masses. Then the lovely dress was put on and pinned and looped and pulled until it fell into its simple, classical lines around the tall, curving figure. Margaret stepped back and clapped her hands admiringly.

"Oh, Auntie, you're beautiful! Now I'll pop down for the cloak and fascinator. I left them hanging by the fire."

When Margaret had gone Aunt Beatrice caught up the lamp and tiptoed shamefacedly across the hall to the icy-cold spare room. In the long mirror she saw herself reflected from top to toe — or was it herself! Could it be — that gracious woman with the sweet eyes and flushed cheeks, with rounded arms gleaming through their black laces and the cluster of roses nestling against the warm white flesh of the shoulder?

“I do look nice,” she said aloud, with a little curtsy to the radiant reflection. “It is all the dress, I know. I feel like a queen in it — no, like a girl again — and that’s better.”

Margaret went to Mrs. Cunningham’s door with her.

“How I wish I could go in and see the sensation you’ll make, Aunt Beatrice,” she whispered.

“You dear, silly child! It’s just the purple and fine linen,” laughed Aunt Beatrice. But she did not altogether think so, and she rang the doorbell unquailingly. In the hall Mrs. Cunningham herself came beamingly to greet her.

“My dear Beatrice! I’m so glad. Bella said you could not come because you had a headache.”

“My headache got quite better after they left, and so I thought I would get ready and come, even if it were rather late,” said Beatrice glibly, wondering if Sapphira had ever worn a black-and-yellow dress, and if so, might not her historic falsehood be traced to its influence?

When they came downstairs together, Beatrice, statuesque and erect in her trailing draperies, and Mrs. Cunningham secretly wondering where on earth Beatrice Hayden had got such a magnificent dress and what she had done to herself to make her look as she did — a man came through the hall. At the foot of the stairs they met. He put out his hand.

“Beatrice! It must be Beatrice! How little you have changed!”

Mrs. Cunningham was not particularly noted in Murraybridge for her tact, but she had a sudden visitation of the saving grace at that moment, and left the two alone.

Beatrice put her hand into the M.P.’s.

“I am glad to see you,” she said simply, looking up at him.

She could not say that he had not changed, for there was little in this tall, broad-shouldered man of the world, with grey glints in his hair, to suggest the slim, boyish young lover whose image she had carried in her heart all the long years.

But the voice, though deeper and mellower, was the same, and the thin, clever mouth that went up at one corner and down at the other in a humorous twist; and one little curl of reddish hair fell over his forehead away from its orderly fellows, just as it used to when she had loved to poke her fingers through it; and, more than all, the deep-set grey eyes looking down into her blue ones were unchanged. Beatrice felt her heart beating to her fingertips.

"I thought you were not coming," he said. "I expected to meet you here and I was horribly disappointed. I thought the bitterness of that foolish old quarrel must be strong enough to sway you yet."

"Didn't Bella tell you I had a headache?" faltered Beatrice.

"Bella? Oh, your brother's wife! I wasn't talking to her. I've been sulking in corners ever since I concluded you were not coming. How beautiful you are, Beatrice! You'll let an old friend say that much, won't you?"

Beatrice laughed softly. She had forgotten for years that she was beautiful, but the sweet old knowledge had come back to her again. She could not help knowing that he spoke the simple truth, but she said mirthfully,

"You've learned to flatter since the old days, haven't you? Don't you remember you used to tell me I was too thin to be pretty? But I suppose a bit of blarney is a necessary ingredient in the composition of an M.P."

He was still holding her hand. With a glance of dissatisfaction at the open parlour door, he drew her away to the little room at the end of the hall, which Mrs. Cunningham, for reasons known only to herself, called her library.

"Come in here with me," he said masterfully. "I want to have a long talk with you before the other people get hold of you."

When Beatrice got home from the party ten minutes before her brother and his wife, Margaret was sitting Turk fashion in the big armchair, with her eyes very wide open and owlish.

“You dear girlie, were you asleep?” asked Aunt Beatrice indulgently.

Margaret nodded. “Yes, and I’ve let the fire go out. I hope you’re not cold. I must run before Aunt Bella gets here, or she’ll scold. Had a nice time?”

“Delightful. You were a dear to lend me this dress. It was so funny to see Bella staring at it.”

When Margaret had put on her hat and jacket she went as far as the street door, and then tiptoed back to the sitting-room. Aunt Beatrice was leaning back in the armchair, with a drooping rose held softly against her lips, gazing dreamily into the dull red embers.

“Auntie,” said Margaret contritely, “I can’t go home without confessing, although I know it is a heinous offence to interrupt the kind of musing that goes with dying embers and faded roses in the small hours. But it would weigh on my conscience all night if I didn’t. I was asleep, but I wakened up just before you came in and went to the window. I didn’t mean to spy upon anyone — but that street was bright as day! And if you will let an M.P. kiss you on the doorstep in glaring moonlight, you must expect to be seen.”

“I wouldn’t have cared if there had been a dozen onlookers,” said Aunt Beatrice frankly, “and I don’t believe he would either.”

Margaret threw up her hands. “Well, my conscience is clear, at least. And remember, Aunt Beatrice, I’m to be bridesmaid — I insist upon that. And, oh, won’t you ask me to visit you when you go down to Ottawa next winter? I’m told it’s such a jolly place when the House is in session. And you’ll need somebody to help you entertain, you know. The wife of a cabinet minister has to do lots of that. But I forgot — he isn’t a cabinet minister yet. But he will be, of course. Promise that you’ll have me, Aunt Beatrice, promise quick. I hear Uncle George and Aunt Bella coming.”

Aunt Beatrice promised. Margaret flew to the door.

“You’d better keep that dress,” she called back softly, as she opened it.

The Running Away of Chester

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Chester did the chores with unusual vim that night. His lips were set and there was an air of resolution as plainly visible on his small, freckled face as if it had been stamped there. Mrs. Elwell saw him flying around, and her grim features took on a still grimmer expression.

“Ches is mighty lively tonight,” she muttered. “I s’pose he’s in a gog to be off on some foolishness with Henry Wilson. Well, he won’t, and he needn’t think it.”

Lige Barton, the hired man, also thought this was Chester’s purpose, but he took a more lenient view of it than did Mrs. Elwell.

“The little chap is going through things with a rush this evening,” he reflected. “Guess he’s laying out for a bit of fun with the Wilson boy.”

But Chester was not planning anything connected with Henry Wilson, who lived on the other side of the pond and was the only chum he possessed. After the chores were done, he lingered a little while around the barns, getting his courage keyed up to the necessary pitch.

Chester Stephens was an orphan without kith or kin in the world, unless his father’s stepsister, Mrs. Harriet Elwell, could be called so. His parents had died in his babyhood, and Mrs. Elwell had taken him to bring up. She was a harsh woman, with a violent temper, and she had scolded and worried the boy all his short life. Upton people said it was a shame, but nobody felt called upon to interfere. Mrs. Elwell was not a person one would care to make an enemy of.

She eyed Chester sourly when he went in, expecting some request to be allowed to go with Henry, and prepared to refuse it sharply.

“Aunt Harriet,” said Chester suddenly, “can I go to school this year? It begins tomorrow.”

“No,” said Mrs. Elwell, when she had recovered from her surprise at this unexpected question. “You’ve had schoolin’ in plenty — more’n I

ever had, and all you're goin' to get!"

"But, Aunt Harriet," persisted Chester, his face flushed with earnestness, "I'm nearly thirteen, and I can barely read and write a little. The other boys are ever so far ahead of me. I don't know anything."

"You know enough to be disrespectful!" exclaimed Mrs. Elwell. "I suppose you want to go to school to idle away your time, as you do at home — lazy good-for-nothing that you are!" Chester thought of the drudgery that had been his portion all his life. He resented being called lazy when he was willing enough to work, but he made one more appeal.

"If you'll let me go to school this year, I'll work twice as hard out of school to make up for it — indeed, I will. Do let me go, Aunt Harriet. I haven't been to school a day for over a year."

"Let's hear no more of this nonsense," said Mrs. Elwell, taking a bottle from the shelf above her with the air of one who closes a discussion.

"Here, run down to the Bridge and get me this bottle full of vinegar at Jacob's store. Be smart, too, d'ye hear! I ain't going to have you idling around the Bridge neither. If you ain't back in twenty minutes, it won't be well for you."

Chester did his errand at the Bridge with a heart full of bitter disappointment and anger.

"I won't stand it any longer!" he muttered. "I'll run away — I don't care where, so long as it's away from her. I wish I could get out West on the harvest excursions."

On his return home, as he crossed the yard in the dusk, he stumbled over a stick of wood and fell. The bottle of vinegar slipped from his hand and was broken on the doorstep. Mrs. Elwell saw the accident from the window. She rushed out and jerked the unlucky lad to his feet.

"Take that, you sulky little cub!" she exclaimed, cuffing his ears soundly. "I'll teach you to break and spill things you're sent for! You did it on purpose. Get off to bed with you this instant."

Chester crept off to his garret chamber with a very sullen face. He was too used to being sent to bed without any supper to care much for that,

although he was hungry. But his whole being was in a tumult of rebellion over the injustice that was meted out to him.

“I won’t stand it!” he muttered over and over again. “I’ll run away. I won’t stay here.”

To talk of running away was one thing. To do it without a cent in your pocket or a place to run to was another. But Chester had a great deal of determination in his make-up when it was fairly roused, and his hard upbringing had made him older and shrewder than his years. He lay awake late that night, thinking out ways and means, but could arrive at no satisfactory conclusion.

The next day Mrs. Elwell said, “Ches, Abner Stearns wants you to go up there for a fortnight while Tom Bixby is away, and drive the milk wagon of mornings and do the chores for Mrs. Stearns. You might as well put in the time ‘fore harvest that way as any other. So hustle off — and mind you behave yourself.”

Chester heard the news gladly. He had not yet devised any feasible plan for running away, and he always liked to work at the Stearns’ place. To be sure, Mrs. Elwell received all the money he earned, but Mrs. Stearns was kind to him, and though he had to work hard and constantly, he was well fed and well treated by all.

The following fortnight was a comparatively happy one for the lad. But he did not forget his purpose of shaking the dust of Upton from his feet as soon as possible, and he cudgelled his brains trying to find a way.

On the evening when he left the Stearns’ homestead, Mr. Stearns paid him for his fortnight’s work, much to the boy’s surprise, for Mrs. Elwell had always insisted that all such money should be paid directly to her. Chester found himself the possessor of four dollars — an amount of riches that almost took away his breath. He had never in his whole life owned more than ten cents at a time. As he tramped along the road home, he kept his hand in his pocket, holding fast to the money, as if he feared it would otherwise dissolve into thin air.

His mind was firmly made up. He would run away once and for all. This money was rightly his; he had earned every cent of it. It would surely

last him until he found employment elsewhere. At any rate, he would go; and even if he starved, he would never come back to Aunt Harriet's!

When he reached home, he found Mrs. Elwell in an unusual state of worry. Lige had given warning — and this on the verge of harvest!

“Did Stearns say anything about coming down tomorrow to pay me for your work?” she asked.

“No, ma'am. He didn't say a word about it,” said Chester boldly.

“Well, I hope he will. Take yourself off to bed, Ches. I'm sick of seeing you standing there, on one foot or t'other, like a gander.”

Chester had been shifting about uneasily. He realized that, if his project did not miscarry, he would not see his aunt again, and his heart softened to her. Harsh as she was, she was the only protector he had ever known, and the boy had a vague wish to carry away with him some kindly word or look from her. Such, however, was not forthcoming, and Chester obeyed her command and took himself off to the garret. Here he sat down and reflected on his plans.

He must go that very night. When Mr. Stearns failed to appear on the morrow, Mrs. Elwell was quite likely to march up and demand the amount of Chester's wages. It would all come out then, and he would lose his money — besides, no doubt, getting severely punished into the bargain.

His preparations did not take long. He had nothing to carry with him. The only decent suit of clothes he possessed was his well-worn Sunday one. This he put on, carefully stowing away in his pocket the precious four dollars.

He had to wait until he thought his aunt was asleep, and it was about eleven when he crept downstairs, his heart quaking within him, and got out by the porch window. When he found himself alone in the clear moonlight of the August night, a sense of elation filled his cramped little heart. He was free, and he would never come back here — never!

“Wisht I could have seen Henry to say good-by to him, though,” he muttered with a wistful glance at the big house across the pond where the unconscious Henry was sleeping soundly with never a thought of moonlight flittings for anyone in his curly head.

Chester meant to walk to Roxbury Station ten miles away. Nobody knew him there, and he could catch the morning train. Late as it was, he kept to fields and wood-roads lest he might be seen and recognized. It was three o'clock when he reached Roxbury, and he knew the train did not pass through until six. With the serenity of a philosopher who is starting out to win his way in the world and means to make the best of things, Chester curled himself up in the hollow space of a big lumber pile behind the station, and so tired was he that he fell soundly asleep in a few minutes.

Chester was awakened by the shriek of the express at the last crossing before the station. In a panic of haste he scrambled out of his lumber and dashed into the station house, where a sleepy, ill-natured agent stood behind the ticket window. He looked sharply enough at the freckled, square-jawed boy who asked for a second-class ticket to Belltown. Chester's heart quaked within him at the momentary thought that the ticket agent recognized him. He had an agonized vision of being collared without ceremony and haled straightway back to Aunt Harriet. When the ticket and his change were pushed out to him, he snatched them and fairly ran.

"Bolted as if the police were after him," reflected the agent, who did not sell many tickets and so had time to take a personal interest in the purchasers thereof. "I've seen that youngster before, though I can't recollect where. He's got a most fearful determined look."

Chester drew an audible sigh of relief when the train left the station. He was fairly off now and felt that he could defy even curious railway officials.

It was not his first train ride, for Mrs. Elwell had once taken him to Belltown to get an aching tooth extracted, but it was certainly his first under such exhilarating circumstances, and he meant to enjoy it. To be sure, he was very hungry, but that, he reflected, was only what he would probably be many times before he made his fortune, and it was just as well to get used to it. Meanwhile, it behooved him to keep his eyes open. On the road from Roxbury to Belltown there was not much to be seen that morning that Chester did not see.

The train reached Belltown about noon. He did not mean to stop long there — it was too near Upton. From the conductor on the train, he found that a boat left Belltown for Montrose at two in the afternoon. Montrose was a hundred miles from Upton, and Chester thought he would be safe there. To Montrose, accordingly, he decided to go, but the first thing was to get some dinner. He went into a grocery store and bought some crackers and a bit of cheese. He had somewhere picked up the idea that crackers and cheese were about as economical food as you could find for adventurous youths starting out on small capital.

He found his way to the only public square Belltown boasted, and munched his food hungrily on a bench under the trees. He would go to Montrose and there find something to do. Later on he would gradually work his way out West, where there was more room for an ambitious small boy to expand and grow. Chester dreamed some dazzling dreams as he sat there on the bench under the Belltown chestnuts. Passers-by, if they noticed him at all, saw merely a rather small, poorly clad boy, with a great many freckles, a square jaw and shrewd, level-gazing grey eyes. But this same lad was mapping out a very brilliant future for himself as people passed him heedlessly by. He would get out West, somehow or other, some time or other, and make a fortune. Then, perhaps, he would go back to Upton for a visit and shine in his splendour before all his old neighbours. It all seemed very easy and alluring, sitting there in the quiet little Belltown square. Chester, you see, possessed imagination. That, together with the crackers and cheese, so cheered him up that he felt ready for anything. He was aroused from a dream of passing Aunt Harriet by in lofty scorn and a glittering carriage, by the shrill whistle of the boat. Chester pocketed his remaining crackers and cheese and his visions also, and was once more his alert, wide-awake self. He had inquired the way to the wharf from the grocer, so he found no difficulty in reaching it. When the boat steamed down the muddy little river, Chester was on board of her.

He was glad to be out of Belltown, for he was anything but sure that he would not encounter some Upton people as long as he was in it. They often went to Belltown on business, but never to Montrose.

There were not many passengers on the boat, and Chester scrutinized them all so sharply in turn that he could have sworn to each and every one of them for years afterwards had it been necessary. The one he liked best was a middle-aged lady who sat just before him on the opposite side of the deck. She was plump and motherly looking, with a fresh, rosy face and beaming blue eyes.

“If I was looking for anyone to adopt me I’d pick her,” said Chester to himself. The more he looked at her, the better he liked her. He labelled her in his mind as “the nice, rosy lady.”

The nice, rosy lady noticed Chester staring at her after awhile. She smiled promptly at him — a smile that seemed fairly to irradiate her round face — and then began fumbling in an old-fashioned reticule she carried, and from which she presently extracted a chubby little paper bag.

“If you like candy, little boy,” she said to Chester, “here is some of my sugar taffy for you.”

Chester did not exactly like being called a little boy. But her voice and smile were irresistible and won his heart straightway. He took the candy with a shy, “Thank you, ma’am,” and sat holding it in his hand.

“Eat it,” commanded the rosy lady authoritatively. “That is what taffy is for, you know.”

So Chester ate it. It was the most delicious thing he had ever tasted in his life, and filled a void which even the crackers and cheese had left vacant. The rosy lady watched every mouthful he ate as if she enjoyed it more than he did. When he had finished the taffy she smiled one of her sociable smiles again and said, “Well, what do you think of it?”

“It’s the nicest taffy I ever ate,” answered Chester enthusiastically, as if he were a connoisseur in all kinds of taffies. The rosy lady nodded, well pleased.

“That is just what everyone says about my sugar taffy. Nobody up our way can match it, though goodness knows they try hard enough. My great-grandmother invented the recipe herself, and it has been in our family ever since. I’m real glad you liked it.”

She smiled at him again, as if his appreciation of her taffy was a bond of good fellowship between them. She did not know it but, nevertheless, she was filling the heart of a desperate small boy, who had run away from home, with hope and encouragement and self-reliance. If there were such kind folks as this in the world, why, he would get along all right. The rosy lady's smiles and taffy — the smiles much more than the taffy — went far to thaw out of him a certain hardness and resentfulness against people in general that Aunt Harriet's harsh treatment had instilled into him. Chester instantly made a resolve that when he grew stout and rosy and prosperous he would dispense smiles and taffy and good cheer generally to all forlorn small boys on boats and trains.

It was almost dark when they reached Montrose. Chester lost sight of the rosy lady when they left the boat, and it gave him a lonesome feeling; but he could not indulge in that for long at a time. Here he was at his destination — at dark, in a strange city a hundred miles from home.

"The first thing is to find somewhere to sleep," he said to himself, resolutely declining to feel frightened, although the temptation was very strong.

Montrose was not really a very big place. It was only a bustling little town of some twenty thousand inhabitants, but to Chester's eyes it was a vast metropolis. He had never been in any place bigger than Belltown, and in Belltown you could see one end of it, at least, no matter where you were. Montrose seemed endless to Chester as he stood at the head of Water Street and gazed in bewilderment along one of its main business avenues — a big, glittering, whirling place where one small boy could so easily be swallowed up that he would never be heard of again.

Chester, after paying his fare to Montrose and buying his cheese and crackers, had just sixty cents left. This must last him until he found work, so that the luxury of lodgings was out of the question, even if he had known where to look for them. To be sure, there were benches in a public square right in front of him; but Chester was afraid that if he curled up on one of them for the night, a policeman might question him, and he did not believe he could give a very satisfactory account of himself. In his

perplexity, he thought of his cosy lumber pile at Roxbury Station and remembered that when he had left the boat he had noticed a large vacant lot near the wharf which was filled with piles of lumber. Back to this he went and soon succeeded in finding a place to stow himself. His last waking thought was that he must be up and doing bright and early the next morning, and that it must surely be longer than twenty-four hours since he had crept downstairs and out of Aunt Harriet's porch window at Upton.

Montrose seemed less alarming by daylight, which was not so bewildering as the blinking electric lights. Chester was up betimes, ate the last of his cheese and crackers and started out at once to look for work. He determined to be thorough, and he went straight into every place of business he came to, from a blacksmith's forge to a department store, and boldly asked the first person he met if they wanted a boy there. There was, however, one class of places Chester shunned determinedly. He never went into a liquor saloon. The last winter he had been allowed to go to school in Upton, his teacher had been a pale, patient little woman who hated the liquor traffic with all her heart. She herself had suffered bitterly through it, and she instilled into her pupils a thorough aversion to it. Chester would have chosen death by starvation before he would have sought for employment in a liquor saloon. But there certainly did not seem room for him anywhere else. Nobody wanted a boy. The answer to his question was invariably "No." As the day wore on, Chester's hopes and courage went down to zero, but he still tramped doggedly about. He would be thorough, at least. Surely somewhere in this big place, where everyone seemed so busy, there must be something for him to do.

Once there seemed a chance of success. He had gone into a big provision store and asked the clerk behind the counter if they wanted a boy.

"Well, we do," said the clerk, looking him over critically, "but I hardly think you'll fill the bill. However, come in and see the boss."

He took Chester into a dark, grimy little inner office where a fat, stubby man was sitting before a desk with his feet upon it.

“Hey? What!” he said when the clerk explained. “Looking for the place? Why, sonny, you’re not half big enough.”

“Oh, I’m a great deal bigger than I look,” cried Chester breathlessly. “That is, sir — I mean I’m ever so much stronger than I look. I’ll work hard, sir, ever so hard — and I’ll grow.”

The fat, stubby man roared with laughter. What was grim earnest to poor Chester was a joke to him.

“No doubt you will, my boy,” he said genially, “but I’m afraid you’ll hardly grow fast enough to suit us. Boys aren’t like pigweed, you know. No, no, our boy must be a big, strapping fellow of eighteen or nineteen. He’ll have a deal of heavy lifting to do.”

Chester went out of the store with a queer choking in his throat. For one horrible moment he thought he was going to cry — he, Chester Stephens, who had run away from home to do splendid things! A nice ending that would be to his fine dreams! He thrust his hands into his pockets and strode along the street, biting his lips fiercely. He would not cry — no, he would not! And he would find work!

Chester did not cry, but neither, alas, did he find work. He parted with ten cents of his precious hoard for more crackers, and he spend the night again in the lumber yard.

Perhaps I’ll have better luck tomorrow, he thought hopefully.

But it really seemed as if there were to be no luck for Chester except bad luck. Day after day passed and, although he tramped resolutely from street to street and visited every place that seemed to offer any chance, he could get no employment. In spite of his pluck, his heart began to fail him.

At the end of a week Chester woke up among his lumber to a realization that he was at the end of his resources. He had just five cents left out of the four dollars that were to have been the key to his fortune. He sat gloomily on the wall of his sleeping apartment and munched the one solitary cracker he had left. It must carry him through the day unless he got work. The five cents must be kept for some dire emergency.

He started uptown rather aimlessly. In his week’s wanderings he had come to know the city very well and no longer felt confused with its size

and bustle. He envied every busy boy he saw. Back in Upton he had sometimes resented the fact that he was kept working continually and was seldom allowed an hour off. Now he was burdened with spare time. It certainly did not seem as if things were fairly divided, he thought. And then he thought no more just then, for one of the queer spells in his head came on. He had experienced them at intervals during the last three days. Something seemed to break loose in his head and spin wildly round and round, while houses and people and trees danced and wobbled all about him. Chester vaguely wondered if this could be what Aunt Harriet had been wont to call a “judgement.” But then, he had done nothing very bad — nothing that would warrant a judgement, he thought. It was surely no harm to run away from a place where you were treated so bad and where they did not seem to want you. Chester felt bitter whenever he thought of Aunt Harriet.

Presently he found himself in the market square of Montrose. It was market day, and the place was thronged with people from the surrounding country settlements. Chester had hoped that he might pick up a few cents, holding a horse or cow for somebody or carrying a market basket, but no such chance offered itself. He climbed up on some bales of pressed hay in one corner and sat there moodily; there was dejection in the very dangle of his legs over the bales. Chester, you see, was discovering what many a boy before him has discovered — that it is a good deal easier to sit down and make a fortune in dreams than it is to go out into the world and make it.

Two men were talking to each other near him. At first Chester gave no heed to their conversation, but presently a sentence made him prick up his ears.

“Yes, there’s a pretty fair crop out at Hopedale,” one man was saying, “but whether it’s going to be got in in good shape is another matter. It’s terrible hard to get any help. Every spare man-jack far and wide has gone West on them everlasting harvest excursions. Salome Whitney at the Mount Hope Farm is in a predicament. She’s got a hired man, but he can’t harvest grain all by himself. She spent the whole of yesterday driving

around, trying to get a couple of men or boys to help him, but I dunno if she got anyone or not.”

The men moved out of earshot at this juncture, but Chester got down from the bales with a determined look. If workers were wanted in Hopedale, that was the place for him. He had done a man’s work at harvest time in Upton the year before. Lige Barton had said so himself. Hope and courage returned with a rush.

He accosted the first man he met and asked if he could tell him the way to Hopedale.

“Reckon I can, sonny. I live in the next district. Want to go there? If you wait till evening, I can give you a lift part of the way. It’s five miles out.”

“Thank you, sir,” said Chester firmly, “but I must go at once if you’ll kindly direct me. It’s important.”

“Well, it’s a straight road. That’s Albemarle Street down there — follow it till it takes you out to the country, and then keep straight on till you come to a church painted yellow and white. Turn to your right, and over the hill is Hopedale. But you’d better wait for me. You don’t look fit to walk five miles.”

But Chester was off. Walk five miles! Pooh! He could walk twenty with hope to lure him on. Albemarle Street finally frayed off into a real country road. Chester was glad to find himself out in the country once more, with the great golden fields basking on either side and the wooded hills beyond, purple with haze. He had grown to hate the town with its cold, unheeding faces. It was good to breathe clear air again and feel the soft, springy soil of the ferny roadside under his tired little feet.

Long before the five miles were covered, Chester began to wonder if he would hold out to the end of them. He had to stop and rest frequently, when those queer dizzy spells came on. His feet seemed like lead. But he kept doggedly on. He would not give in now! The white and yellow church was the most welcome sight that had ever met his eyes.

Over the hill he met a man and inquired the way to Mount Hope Farm. Fortunately, it was nearby. At the gate Chester had to stop again to recover

from his dizziness.

He liked the look of the place, with its great, comfortable barns and quaint, roomy old farmhouse, all set down in a trim quadrangle of beeches and orchards. There was an appearance of peace and prosperity about it.

If only Miss Salome Whitney will hire me! thought Chester wistfully, as he crept up the slope. I'm afraid she'll say I'm too small. Wisht I could stretch three inches all at once. Wisht I wasn't so dizzy. Wisht —

What Chester's third wish was will never be known, for just as he reached the kitchen door the worst dizzy spell of all came on. Trees, barns, well-sweep, all whirled around him with the speed of wind. He reeled and fell, a limp, helpless little body, on Miss Salome Whitney's broad, spotless sandstone doorstep.

In the Mount Hope kitchen Miss Salome was at that moment deep in discussion with her "help" over the weighty question of how the damsons were to be preserved. Miss Salome wanted them boiled; Clemantiny Bosworth, the help, insisted that they ought to be baked. Clemantiny was always very positive. She had "bossed" Miss Salome for years, and both knew that in the end the damsons would be baked, but the argument had to be carried out for dignity's sake.

"They're so sour when they're baked," protested Miss Salome.

"Well, you don't want damsons sweet, do you?" retorted Clemantiny scornfully. "That's the beauty of damsons — their tartness. And they keep ever so much better baked, Salome — you know they do. My grandmother always baked hers, and they would keep for three years."

Miss Salome knew that when Clemantiny dragged her grandmother into the question, it was time to surrender. Beyond that, dignity degenerated into stubbornness. It would be useless to say that she did not want to keep her damsons for three years, and that she was content to eat them up and trust to Providence for the next year's supply.

"Well, well, bake them then," she said placidly. "I don't suppose it makes much difference one way or another. Only, I insist — what was that noise, Clemantiny? It sounded like something falling against the porch door."

“It’s that worthless dog of Martin’s, I suppose,” said Clemantiny, grasping a broom handle with a grimness that boded ill for the dog. “Mussing up my clean doorstep with his dirty paws again. I’ll fix him!”

Clemantiny swept out through the porch and jerked open the door. There was a moment’s silence. Then Miss Salome heard her say, “For the land’s sake! Salome Whitney, come here.”

What Miss Salome saw when she hurried out was a white-faced boy stretched on the doorstep at Clemantiny’s feet.

“Is he dead?” she gasped.

“Dead? No,” sniffed Clemantiny. “He’s fainted, that’s what he is. Where on earth did he come from? He ain’t a Hopedale boy.”

“He must be carried right in,” exclaimed Miss Salome in distress. “Why, he may die there. He must be very ill.”

“Looks more to me as if he had fainted from sheer starvation,” returned Clemantiny brusquely as she picked him up in her lean, muscular arms. “Why, he’s skin and bone. He ain’t hardly heavier than a baby. Well, this is a mysterious piece of work. Where’ll I put him?”

“Lay him on the sofa,” said Miss Salome as soon as she had recovered from the horror into which Clemantiny’s starvation dictum had thrown her. A child starving to death on her doorstep! “What do you do for people in a faint, Clemantiny?”

“Wet their face — and hist up their feet — and loosen their collar,” said Clemantiny in a succession of jerks, doing each thing as she mentioned it. “And hold ammonia to their nose. Run for the ammonia, Salome. Look, will you? Skin and bone!”

But Miss Salome had gone for the ammonia. There was a look on the boy’s thin, pallid face that tugged painfully at her heartstrings.

When Chester came back to consciousness with the pungency of the ammonia reeking through his head, he found himself lying on very soft pillows in a very big white sunny kitchen, where everything was scoured to a brightness that dazzled you. Bending over him was a tall, gaunt woman with a thin, determined face and snapping black eyes, and,

standing beside her with a steaming bowl in her hand, was the nice rosy lady who had given him the taffy on the boat!

When he opened his eyes, Miss Salome knew him.

“Why, it’s the little boy I saw on the boat!” she exclaimed.

“Well, you’ve come to!” said Clemantiny, eyeing Chester severely. “And now perhaps you’ll explain what you mean by fainting away on doorsteps and scaring people out of their senses.”

Chester thought that this must be the mistress of Mount Hope Farm, and hastened to propitiate her.

“I’m sorry,” he faltered feebly. “I didn’t mean to — I—”

“You’re not to do any talking until you’ve had something to eat,” snapped Clemantiny inconsistently. “Here, open your mouth and take this broth. Pretty doings, I say!”

Clemantiny spoke as sharply as Aunt Harriet had ever done, but somehow or other Chester did not feel afraid of her and her black eyes. She sat down by his side and fed him from the bowl of hot broth with a deft gentleness oddly in contrast with her grim expression.

Chester thought he had never in all his life tasted anything so good as that broth. The boy was really almost starved. He drank every drop of it. Clemantiny gave a grunt of satisfaction as she handed the empty bowl and spoon to the silent, smiling Miss Salome.

“Now, who are you and what do you want?” she said.

Chester had been expecting this question, and while coming along the Hopedale road he had thought out an answer to it. He began now, speaking the words slowly and gaspingly, as if reciting a hastily learned lesson.

“My name is Chester Benson. I belong to Upton up the country. My folks are dead and I came to Montrose to look for work, I’ve been there a week and couldn’t get anything to do. I heard a man say that you wanted men to help in the harvest, so I came out to see if you’d hire me.”

In spite of his weakness, Chester’s face turned very red before he got to the end of his speech. He was new to deception. To be sure, there was not, strictly speaking, an untrue word in it. As for his name, it was Chester Benson Stephens. But for all that, Chester could not have felt or looked

more guilty if he had been telling an out-and-out falsehood at every breath.

“Humph!” said Clemantiny in a dissatisfied tone. “What on earth do you suppose a midget like you can do in the harvest field? And we don’t want any more help, anyway. We’ve got enough.”

Chester grew sick with disappointment. But at this moment Miss Salome spoke up.

“No, we haven’t, Clemantiny. We want another hand, and I’ll hire you, Chester — that’s your name, isn’t it? I’ll give you good wages, too.”

“Now, Salome!” protested Clemantiny.

But Miss Salome only said, “I’ve made up my mind, Clemantiny.”

Clemantiny knew that when Miss Salome did make up her mind and announced it in that very quiet, very unmistakable tone, she was mistress of the situation and intended to remain so.

“Oh, very well,” she retorted. “You’ll please yourself, Salome, of course. I think it would be wiser to wait until you found out a little more about him.”

“And have him starving on people’s doorsteps in the meantime?” questioned Miss Salome severely.

“Well,” returned Clemantiny with the air of one who washes her hands of a doubtful proposition, “don’t blame me if you repent of it.”

By this time Chester had grasped the wonderful fact that his troubles were ended — for a while, at least. He raised himself up on one arm and looked gratefully at Miss Salome.

“Thank you,” he said. “I’ll work hard. I’m used to doing a lot.”

“There, there!” said Miss Salome, patting his shoulder gently. “Lie down and rest. Dinner will be ready soon, and I guess you’ll be ready for it.”

To Clemantiny she added in a low, gentle tone, “There’s a look on his face that reminded me of Johnny. It came out so strong when he sat up just now that it made me feel like crying. Don’t you notice it, Clemantiny?”

“Can’t say that I do,” replied that energetic person, who was flying about the kitchen with a speed that made Chester’s head dizzy trying to

follow her with his eyes. "All I can see is freckles and bones — but if you're satisfied, I am. For law's sake, don't fluster me, Salome. There's a hundred and one things to be done out of hand. This frolic has clean dundered the whole forenoon's work."

After dinner Chester decided that it was time to make himself useful.

"Can't I go right to work now?" he asked.

"We don't begin harvest till tomorrow," said Miss Salome. "You'd better rest this afternoon."

"Oh, I'm all right now," insisted Chester. "I feel fine. Please give me something to do."

"You can go out and cut me some wood for my afternoon's baking," said Clemantiny. "And see you cut it short enough. Any other boy that's tried always gets it about two inches too long."

When he had gone out, she said scornfully to Miss Salome, "Well, what do you expect that size to accomplish in a harvest field, Salome Whitney?"

"Not very much, perhaps," said Miss Salome mildly. "But what could I do? You wouldn't have me turn the child adrift on the world again, would you, Clemantiny?"

Clemantiny did not choose to answer this appeal. She rattled her dishes noisily into the dishpan.

"Well, where are you going to put him to sleep?" she demanded. "The hands you've got will fill the kitchen chamber. There's only the spare room left. You'll hardly put him there, I suppose? Your philanthropy will hardly lead you as far as that."

When Clemantiny employed big words and sarcasm at the same time, the effect was tremendous. But Miss Salome didn't wilt.

"What makes you so prejudiced against him?" she asked curiously.

"I'm not prejudiced against him. But that story about himself didn't ring true. I worked in Upton years ago, and there weren't any Bensons there then. There's more behind that he hasn't told. I'd find out what it was before I took him into my house, that's all. But I'm not prejudiced."

“Well, well,” said Miss Salome soothingly, “we must do the best we can for him. It’s a sort of duty. And as for a room for him — why, I’ll put him in Johnny’s.”

Clemantiny opened her mouth and shut it again. She understood that it would be a waste of breath to say anything more. If Miss Salome had made up her mind to put this freckled, determined-looking waif, dropped on her doorstep from heaven knew where, into Johnny’s room, that was an end of the matter.

“But I’ll not be surprised at anything after this,” she muttered as she carried her dishes into the pantry. “First a skinny little urchin goes and faints on her doorstep. Then she hires him and puts him in Johnny’s room. Johnny’s room! Salome Whitney, what do you mean?”

Perhaps Miss Salome hardly knew what she meant. But somehow her heart went out warmly to this boy. In spite of Clemantiny’s sniffs, she held to the opinion that he looked like Johnny. Johnny was a little nephew of hers. She had taken him to bring up when his parents died, and she had loved him very dearly. He had died four years ago, and since that time the little front room over the front porch had never been occupied. It was just as Johnny had left it. Beyond keeping it scrupulously clean, Miss Salome never allowed it to be disturbed. And now a somewhat ragged lad from nowhere was to be put into it! No wonder Clemantiny shook her head when Miss Salome went up to air it.

Even Clemantiny had to admit that Chester was willing to work. He split wood until she called him to stop. Then he carried in the woodbox full, and piled it so neatly that even the grim handmaiden was pleased. After that, she sent him to the garden to pick the early beans. In the evening he milked three cows and did all the chores, falling into the ways of the place with a deft adaptability that went far to soften Clemantiny’s heart.

“He’s been taught to work somewheres,” she admitted grudgingly, “and he’s real polite and respectful. But he looks too cute by half. And his name isn’t Benson any more than mine. When I called him ‘Chester Benson’ out

there in the cow-yard, he stared at me fer half a minute ‘sif I’d called him Nebuchadnezzar.”

When bedtime came, Miss Salome took Chester up to a room whose whiteness and daintiness quite took away the breath of a lad who had been used to sleeping in garrets or hired men’s kitchen chambers all his life. Later on Miss Salome came in to see if he was comfortable, and stood, with her candle in her hand, looking down very kindly at the thin, shrewd little face on the pillow.

“I hope you’ll sleep real well here, Chester,” she said. “I had a little boy once who used to sleep here. You — you look like him. Good night.”

She bent over him and kissed his forehead. Chester had never been kissed by anyone before, so far as he could remember. Something came up in his throat that felt about as big as a pumpkin. At the same moment he wished he could have told Miss Salome the whole truth about himself. I might tell her in the morning, he thought, as he watched her figure passing out of the little porch chamber.

But on second thought he decided that this would never do. He felt sure she would disapprove of his running away, and would probably insist upon his going straight back to Upton or, at least, informing Aunt Harriet of his whereabouts. No, he could not tell her.

Clemantiny was an early riser, but when she came into the kitchen the next morning the fire was already made and Chester was out in the yard with three of the five cows milked.

“Humph!” said Clemantiny amiably. “New brooms sweep clean.”

But she gave him cream with his porridge that morning. Generally, all Miss Salome’s hired hands got from Clemantiny was skim milk.

Miss Salome’s regular hired man lived in a little house down in the hollow. He soon turned up, and the other two men she had hired for harvest also arrived. Martin, the man, looked Chester over quizzically.

“What do you think you can do, sonny?”

“Anything,” said Chester sturdily. “I’m used to work.”

“He’s right,” whispered Clemantiny aside. “He’s smart as a steel trap. But just you keep an eye on him all the same, Martin.”

Chester soon proved his mettle in the harvest field. In the brisk three weeks that followed, even Clemantiny had to admit that he earned every cent of his wages. His active feet were untiring and his wiry arms could pitch and stock with the best. When the day's work was ended, he brought in wood and water for Clemantiny, helped milk the cows, gathered the eggs, and made on his own responsibility a round of barns and outhouses to make sure that everything was snug and tight for the night.

"Freckles-and-Bones has been well trained somewhere," said Clemantiny again.

It was hardly fair to put the bones in now, for Chester was growing plump and hearty. He had never been so happy in his life. Upton drudgery and that dreadful week in Montrose seemed like a bad dream. Here, in the golden meadows of Mount Hope Farm, he worked with a right good will. The men liked him, and he soon became a favourite with them. Even Clemantiny relented somewhat. To be sure, she continued very grim, and still threw her words at him as if they were so many missiles warranted to strike home. But Chester soon learned that Clemantiny's bark was worse than her bite. She was really very good to him and fed him lavishly. But she declared that this was only to put some flesh on him.

"It offends me to see bones sticking through anybody's skin like that. We aren't used to such objects at Mount Hope Farm, thank goodness. Yes, you may smile, Salome. I like him well enough, and I'll admit that he knows how to make himself useful, but I don't trust him any more than ever I did. He's mighty close about his past life. You can't get any more out of him than juice out of a post. I've tried, and I know."

But it was Miss Salome who had won Chester's whole heart. He had never loved anybody in his hard little life before. He loved her with an almost dog-like devotion. He forgot that he was working to earn money — and make his fortune. He worked to please Miss Salome. She was good and kind and gentle to him, and his starved heart thawed and expanded in the sunshine of her atmosphere. She went to the little porch room every night to kiss him good night. Chester would have been bitterly disappointed if she had failed to go.

She was greatly shocked to find out that he had never said his prayers before going to bed. She insisted on teaching him the simple little one she had used herself when a child. When Chester found that it would please her, he said it every night. There was nothing he would not have done for Miss Salome.

She talked a good deal to him about Johnny and she gave him the jack-knife that Johnny had owned.

"It belonged to a good, manly little boy once," she said, "and now I hope it belongs to another such."

"I ain't very good," said Chester repentantly, "but I'll try to be, Miss Salome — honest, I will."

One day he heard Miss Salome speaking of someone who had run away from home. "A wicked, ungrateful boy," she called him. Chester blushed until his freckles were drowned out in a sea of red, and Clemantiny saw it, of course. When did anything ever escape those merciless black eyes of Clemantiny's?

"Do you think it's always wrong for a fellow to run away, Miss Salome?" he faltered.

"It can't ever be right," said Miss Salome decidedly.

"But if he wasn't treated well — and was jawed at — and not let go to school?" pleaded Chester.

Clemantiny gave Miss Salome a look as of one who would say, You're bat-blind if you can't read between the lines of that; but Miss Salome was placidly unconscious. She was not really thinking of the subject at all, and did not guess that Chester meant anything more than generalities.

"Not even then," she said firmly. "Nothing can justify a boy for running away — especially as Jarvis Coleman did — never even left a word behind him to say where he'd gone. His aunt thought he'd fallen into the river."

"Don't suppose she would have grieved much if he had," said Clemantiny sarcastically, all the while watching Chester, until he felt as if she were boring into his very soul and reading all his past life.

When the harvest season drew to a close, dismay crept into the soul of our hero. Where would he go now? He hated to think of leaving Mount Hope Farm and Miss Salome. He would have been content to stay there and work as hard as he had ever worked at Upton, merely for the roof over his head and the food he ate. The making of a fortune seemed a small thing compared to the privilege of being near Miss Salome.

“But I suppose I must just up and go,” he muttered dolefully.

One day Miss Salome had a conference with Clemantiny. At the end of it the latter said, “Do as you please,” in the tone she might have used to a spoiled child. “But if you’d take my advice — which you won’t and never do — you’d write to somebody in Upton and make inquiries about him first. What he says is all very well and he sticks to it marvellous, and there’s no tripping him up. But there’s something behind, Salome Whitney — mark my words, there’s something behind.”

“He looks so like Johnny,” said Miss Salome wistfully.

“And I suppose you think that covers a multitude of sins,” said Clemantiny contemptuously.

On the day when the last load of rustling golden sheaves was carried into the big barn and stowed away in the dusty loft, Miss Salome called Chester into the kitchen. Chester’s heart sank as he obeyed the summons.

His time was up, and now he was to be paid his wages and sent away. To be sure, Martin had told him that morning that a man in East Hopedale wanted a boy for a spell, and that he, Martin, would see that he got the place if he wanted it. But that did not reconcile him to leaving Mount Hope Farm.

Miss Salome was sitting in her favourite sunny corner of the kitchen and Clemantiny was flying around with double briskness. The latter’s thin lips were tightly set and disapproval was writ large in every flutter of her calico skirts.

“Chester,” said Miss Salome kindly, “your time is up today.”

Chester nodded. For a moment he felt as he had felt when he left the provision store in Montrose. But he would not let Clemantiny see him cry. Somehow, he would not have minded Miss Salome.

“What are you thinking of doing now?” Miss Salome went on.

“There’s a man at East Hopedale wants a boy,” said Chester, “and Martin says he thinks I’ll suit.”

“That is Jonas Smallman,” said Miss Salome thoughtfully. “He has the name of being a hard master. It isn’t right of me to say so, perhaps. I really don’t know much about him. But wouldn’t you rather stay here with me for the winter, Chester?”

“Ma’am? Miss Salome?” stammered Chester. He heard Clemantiny give a snort behind him and mutter, “Clean infatuated — clean infatuated,” without in the least knowing what she meant.

“We really need a chore boy all the year round,” said Miss Salome. “Martin has all he can do with the heavy work. And there are the apples to be picked. If you care to stay, you shall have your board and clothes for doing the odd jobs, and you can go to school all winter. In the spring we will see what need be done then.”

If he would care to stay! Chester could have laughed aloud. His eyes were shining with joy as he replied, “Oh, Miss Salome, I’ll be so glad to stay! I — I — didn’t want to go away. I’ll try to do everything you want me to do. I’ll work ever so hard.”

“Humph!”

This, of course, was from Clemantiny, as she set a pan of apples on the stove with an emphatic thud. “Nobody ever doubted your willingness to work. Pity everything else about you isn’t as satisfactory.”

“Clemantiny!” said Miss Salome rebukingly. She put her arms about Chester and drew him to her. “Then it is all settled, Chester. You are my boy now, and of course I shall expect you to be a good boy.”

If ever a boy was determined to be good, that boy was Chester. That day was the beginning of a new life for him. He began to go to the Hopedale school the next week. Miss Salome gave him all Johnny’s old school books and took an eager interest in his studies.

Chester ought to have been very happy, and at first he was; but as the bright, mellow days of autumn passed by, a shadow came over his happiness. He could not help thinking that he had really deceived Miss

Salome, and was deceiving her still — Miss Salome, who had such confidence in him. He was not what he pretended to be. And as for his running away, he felt sure that Miss Salome would view that with horror. As the time passed by and he learned more and more what a high standard of honour and truth she had, he felt more and more ashamed of himself. When she looked at him with her clear, trustful, blue eyes, Chester felt as guilty as if he had systematically deceived her with intent to do harm. He began to wish that he had the courage to tell her the whole truth about himself.

Moreover, he began to think that perhaps he had not done right, after all, in running away from Aunt Harriet. In Miss Salome's code nothing could be right that was underhanded, and Chester was very swiftly coming to look at things through Miss Salome's eyes. He felt sure that Johnny would never have acted as he had, and if Chester now had one dear ambition on earth, it was to be as good and manly a fellow as Johnny must have been. But he could never be that as long as he kept the truth about himself from Miss Salome.

"That boy has got something on his mind," said the terrible Clemantiny, who, Chester felt convinced, could see through a stone wall.

"Nonsense! What could he have on his mind?" said Miss Salome. But she said it a little anxiously. She, too, had noticed Chester's absent ways and abstracted face.

"Goodness me, I don't know! I don't suppose he has robbed a bank or murdered anybody. But he is worrying over something, as plain as plain."

"He is getting on very well at school," said Miss Salome. "His teacher says so, and he is very eager to learn. I don't know what can be troubling him."

She was fated not to know for a fortnight longer. During that time Chester fought out his struggle with himself, and conquered. He must tell Miss Salome, he decided, with a long sigh. He knew that it would mean going back to Upton and Aunt Harriet and the old, hard life, but he would not sail under false colours any longer.

Chester went into the kitchen one afternoon when he came home from school, with his lips set and his jaws even squarer than usual. Miss Salome was making some of her famous taffy, and Clemantiny was spinning yarn on the big wheel.

“Miss Salome,” said Chester desperately, “if you’re not too busy, there is something I’d like to tell you.”

“What is it?” asked Miss Salome good-humouredly, turning to him with her spoon poised in midair over her granite saucepan.

“It’s about myself. I — I — oh, Miss Salome, I didn’t tell you the truth about myself. I’ve got to tell it now. My name isn’t Benson — exactly — and I ran away from home.”

“Dear me!” said Miss Salome mildly. She dropped her spoon, handle and all, into the taffy and never noticed it. “Dear me, Chester!”

“I knew it,” said Clemantiny triumphantly. “I knew it — and I always said it. Run away, did you?”

“Yes’m. My name is Chester Benson Stephens, and I lived at Upton with Aunt Harriet Elwell. But she ain’t any relation to me, really. She’s only father’s stepsister. She — she — wasn’t kind to me and she wouldn’t let me go to school — so I ran away.”

“But, dear me, Chester, didn’t you know that was very wrong?” said Miss Salome in bewilderment.

“No’m — I didn’t know it then. I’ve been thinking lately that maybe it was. I’m — I’m real sorry.”

“What did you say your real name was?” demanded Clemantiny.

“Stephens, ma’am.”

“And your mother’s name before she was married?”

“Mary Morrow,” said Chester, wondering what upon earth Clemantiny meant.

Clemantiny turned to Miss Salome with an air of surrendering a dearly cherished opinion.

“Well, ma’am, I guess you must be right about his looking like Johnny. I must say I never could see the resemblance, but it may well be there, for

he — that very fellow there — and Johnny are first cousins. Their mothers were sisters!”

“Clemantiny!” exclaimed Miss Salome.

“You may well say ‘Clemantiny.’ Such a coincidence! It doesn’t make you and him any relation, of course — the cousinship is on the mother’s side. But it’s there. Mary Morrow was born and brought up in Hopedale. She went to Upton when I did, and married Oliver Stephens there. Why, I knew his father as well as I know you.”

“This is wonderful,” said Miss Salome. Then she added sorrowfully, “But it doesn’t make your running away right, Chester.”

“Tell us all about it,” demanded Clemantiny, sitting down on the woodbox. “Sit down, boy, sit down — don’t stand there looking as if you were on trial for your life. Tell us all about it.”

Thus adjured, Chester sat down and told them all about it — his moonlight flitting and his adventures in Montrose. Miss Salome exclaimed with horror over the fact of his sleeping in a pile of lumber for seven nights, but Clemantiny listened in silence, never taking her eyes from the boy’s pale face. When Chester finished, she nodded.

“We’ve got it all now. There’s nothing more behind, Salome. It would have been better for you to have told as straight a story at first, young man.”

Chester knew that, but, having no reply to make, made none. Miss Salome looked at him wistfully.

“But, with it all, you didn’t do right to run away, Chester,” she said firmly. “I dare say your aunt was severe with you — but two wrongs never make a right, you know.”

“No’m,” said Chester.

“You must go back to your aunt,” continued Miss Salome sadly.

Chester nodded. He knew this, but he could not trust himself to speak. Then did Clemantiny arise in her righteous indignation.

“Well, I never heard of such nonsense, Salome Whitney! What on earth do you want to send him back for? I knew Harriet Elwell years ago, and if she’s still what she was then, it ain’t much wonder Chester ran away from

her. I'd say 'run,' too. Go back, indeed! You keep him right here, as you should, and let Harriet Elwell look somewhere else for somebody to scold!"

"Clemantiny!" expostulated Miss Salome.

"Oh, I must and will speak my mind, Salome. There's no one else to take Chester's part, it seems. You have as much claim on him as Harriet Elwell has. She ain't any real relation to him any more than you are."

Miss Salome looked troubled. Perhaps there was something in Clemantiny's argument. And she hated to think of seeing Chester go. He looked more like Johnny than ever, as he stood there with his flushed face and wistful eyes.

"Chester," she said gravely, "I leave it to you to decide. If you think you ought to go back to your aunt, well and good. If not, you shall stay here."

This was the hardest yet. Chester wished she had not left the decision to him. It was like cutting off his own hand. But he spoke up manfully.

"I — I think I ought to go back, Miss Salome, and I want to pay back the money, too."

"I think so, too, Chester, although I'm sorry as sorry can be. I'll go back to Upton with you. We'll start tomorrow. If, when we get there, your aunt is willing to let you stay with me, you can come back."

"There's a big chance of that!" said Clemantiny sourly. "A woman's likely to give up a boy like Chester — a good, steady worker and as respectful and obliging as there is between this and sunset — very likely, isn't she! Well, this taffy is all burnt to the saucepan and clean ruined — but what's the odds! All I hope, Salome Whitney, is that the next time you adopt a boy and let him twine himself 'round a person's heart, you'll make sure first that you are going to stick to it. I don't like having my affections torn up by the roots."

Clemantiny seized the saucepan and disappeared with it into the pantry amid a whirl of pungent smoke.

Mount Hope Farm was a strangely dismal place that night. Miss Salome sighed heavily and often as she made her preparations for the

morrow's journey.

Clemantiny stalked about with her grim face grimmer than ever. As for Chester, when he went to bed that night in the little porch chamber, he cried heartily into his pillows. He didn't care for pride any longer; he just cried and didn't even pretend he wasn't crying when Miss Salome came in to sit by him a little while and talk to him. That talk comforted Chester. He realized that, come what might, he would always have a good friend in Miss Salome — aye, and in Clemantiny, too.

Chester never knew it, but after he had fallen asleep, with the tears still glistening on his brown cheeks, Clemantiny tiptoed silently in with a candle in her hand and bent over him with an expression of almost maternal tenderness on her face. It was late and an aroma of boiling sugar hung about her. She had sat up long after Miss Salome was abed, to boil another saucepan of taffy for Chester to eat on his journey.

"Poor, dear child!" she said, softly touching one of his crisp curls. "It's a shame in Salome to insist on his going back. She doesn't know what she's sending him to, or she wouldn't. He didn't say much against his aunt, and Salome thinks she was only just a little bit cranky. But I could guess."

Early in the morning Miss Salome and Chester started. They were to drive to Montrose, leave their team there and take the boat for Belltown. Chester bade farewell to the porch chamber and the long, white kitchen and the friendly barns with a full heart. When he climbed into the wagon, Clemantiny put a big bagful of taffy into his hands.

"Good-by, Chester," she said. "And remember, you've always got a friend in me, anyhow."

Then Clemantiny went back into the kitchen and cried — good, rough-spoken, tender-hearted Clemantiny sat down and cried.

It was an ideal day for travelling — crisp, clear and sunny — but neither Chester nor Miss Salome was in a mood for enjoyment.

Back over Chester's runaway route they went, and reached Belltown on the boat that evening.

They stayed in Belltown overnight and in the morning took the train to Roxbury Station. Here Miss Salome hired a team from the storekeeper and

drove out to Upton.

Chester felt his heart sink as they drove into the Elwell yard. How well he knew it!

Miss Salome tied her hired nag to the gatepost and took Chester by the hand. They went to the door and knocked. It was opened with a jerk and Mrs. Elwell stood before them. She had probably seen them from the window, for she uttered no word of surprise at seeing Chester again. Indeed, she said nothing at all, but only stood rigidly before them.

Dear me, what a disagreeable-looking woman! thought Miss Salome. But she said courteously, "Are you Mrs. Elwell?"

"I am," said that lady forbiddingly.

"I've brought your nephew home," continued Miss Salome, laying her hand encouragingly on Chester's shrinking shoulder. "I have had him hired for some time on my farm at Hopedale, but I didn't know until yesterday that he had run away from you. When he told me about it, I thought he ought to come straight back and return your four dollars, and so did he. So I have brought him."

"You might have saved yourself the trouble then!" cried Mrs. Elwell shrilly. Her black eyes flashed with anger. "I'm done with him and don't want the money. Run away when there was work to do, and thinks he can come back now that it's all done and loaf all winter, does he? He shall never enter my house again."

"That he shall not!" cried Miss Salome, at last finding her tongue. Her gentle nature was grievously stirred by the heartlessness shown in the face and voice of Mrs. Elwell. "That he shall not!" she cried again. "But he shall not want for a home as long as I have one to give him. Come, Chester, we'll go home."

"I wish you well of him," Mrs. Elwell said sarcastically.

Miss Salome already repented her angry retort. She was afraid she had been undignified, but she wished for a moment that Clemantiny was there. Wicked as she feared it was, Miss Salome thought she could have enjoyed a tilt between her ancient handmaid and Mrs. Elwell.

“I beg your pardon, Mrs. Elwell, if I have used any intemperate expressions,” she said with great dignity. “You provoked me more than was becoming by your remarks. I wish you good morning.”

Mrs. Elwell slammed the door shut.

With her cheeks even more than usually rosy, Miss Salome led Chester down to the gate, untied her horse and drove out of the yard. Not until they reached the main road did she trust herself to speak to the dazed lad beside her.

“What a disagreeable women!” she ejaculated at last. “I don’t wonder you ran away, Chester — I don’t, indeed! Though, mind you, I don’t think it was right, for all that. But I’m gladder than words can say that she wouldn’t take you back. You are mine now, and you will stay mine. I want you to call me Aunt Salome after this. Get up, horse! If we can catch that train at Roxbury, we’ll be home by night yet.”

Chester was too happy to speak. He had never felt so glad and grateful in his life before.

They got home that night just as the sun was setting redly behind the great maples on the western hill. As they drove into the yard, Clemantiny’s face appeared, gazing at them over the high board fence of the cow-yard. Chester waved his hand at her gleefully.

“Lawful heart!” said Clemantiny. She set down her pail and came out to the lane on a run. She caught Chester as he sprang from the wagon and gave him a hearty hug.

“I’m glad clean down to my boot soles to see you back again,” she said.

“He’s back for good,” said Miss Salome. “Chester, you’d better go in and study up your lessons for tomorrow.”

The Strike at Putney

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The church at Putney was one that gladdened the hearts of all the ministers in the presbytery whenever they thought about it. It was such a satisfactory church. While other churches here and there were continually giving trouble in one way or another, the Putneyites were never guilty of brewing up internal or presbyterial strife.

The Exeter church people were always quarrelling among themselves and carrying their quarrels to the courts of the church. The very name of Exeter gave the members of presbytery the cold creeps. But the Putney church people never quarrelled.

Danbridge church was in a chronic state of ministerlessness. No minister ever stayed in Danbridge longer than he could help. The people were too critical, and they were also noted heresy hunters. Good ministers fought shy of Danbridge, and poor ones met with a chill welcome. The harassed presbytery, worn out with “supplying,” were disposed to think that the millennium would come if ever the Danbridgians got a minister whom they liked. At Putney they had had the same minister for fifteen years and hoped and expected to have him for fifteen more. They looked with horror-stricken eyes on the Danbridge theological coquetries.

Bloom Valley church was over head and heels in debt and had no visible prospect of ever getting out. The moderator said under his breath that they did overmuch praying and too little hoeing. He did not believe in faith without works. Tarrytown Road kept its head above water but never had a cent to spare for missions or the schemes of the church.

In bright and shining contradistinction to these the Putney church had always paid its way and gave liberally to all departments of church work. If other springs of supply ran dry the Putneyites enthusiastically got up a “tea” or a “social,” and so raised the money. Naturally the “heft” of this work fell on the women, but they did not mind — in very truth, they

enjoyed it. The Putney women had the reputation of being “great church workers,” and they plumed themselves on it, putting on airs at conventions among the less energetic women of the other churches.

They were especially strong on societies. There was the Church Aid Society, the Girls’ Flower Band, and the Sewing Circle. There was a Mission Band and a Helping Hand among the children. And finally there was the Women’s Foreign Mission Auxiliary, out of which the whole trouble grew which convulsed the church at Putney for a brief time and furnished a standing joke in presbyterial circles for years afterwards. To this day ministers and elders tell the story of the Putney church strike with sparkling eyes and subdued chuckles. It never grows old or stale. But the Putney elders are an exception. They never laugh at it. They never refer to it. It is not in the wicked, unregenerate heart of man to make a jest of his own bitter defeat.

It was in June that the secretary of the Putney W.F.M. Auxiliary wrote to a noted returned missionary who was touring the country, asking her to give an address on mission work before their society. Mrs. Cotterell wrote back saying that her brief time was so taken up already that she found it hard to make any further engagements, but she could not refuse the Putney people who were so well and favourably known in mission circles for their perennial interest and liberality. So, although she could not come on the date requested, she would, if acceptable, come the following Sunday.

This suited the Putney Auxiliary very well. On the Sunday referred to there was to be no evening service in the church owing to Mr. Sinclair’s absence. They therefore appointed the missionary meeting for that night, and made arrangements to hold it in the church itself, as the classroom was too small for the expected audience.

Then the thunderbolt descended on the W.F.M.A. of Putney from a clear sky. The elders of the church rose up to a man and declared that no woman should occupy the pulpit of the Putney church. It was in direct contravention to the teachings of St. Paul.

To make matters worse, Mr. Sinclair declared himself on the elders’ side. He said that he could not conscientiously give his consent to a

woman occupying his pulpit, even when that woman was Mrs. Cotterell and her subject foreign missions.

The members of the Auxiliary were aghast. They called a meeting extraordinary in the classroom and, discarding all forms and ceremonies in their wrath, talked their indignation out.

Out of doors the world basked in June sunshine and preened itself in blossom. The birds sang and chirped in the lichened maples that cupped the little church in, and peace was over all the Putney valley. Inside the classroom disgusted women buzzed like angry bees.

“What on earth are we to do?” sighed the secretary plaintively. Mary Kilburn was always plaintive. She sat on the steps of the platform, being too wrought up in her mind to sit in her chair at the desk, and her thin, faded little face was twisted with anxiety. “All the arrangements are made and Mrs. Cotterell is coming on the tenth. How can we tell her that the men won’t let her speak?”

“There was never anything like this in Putney church before,” groaned Mrs. Elder Knox. “It was Andrew McKittrick put them up to it. I always said that man would make trouble here yet, ever since he moved to Putney from Danbridge. I’ve talked and argued with Thomas until I’m dumb, but he is as set as a rock.”

“I don’t see what business the men have to interfere with us anyhow,” said her daughter Lucy, who was sitting on one of the windowsills. “We don’t meddle with them, I’m sure. As if Mrs. Cotterell would contaminate the pulpit!”

“One would think we were still in the dark ages,” said Frances Spenslow sharply. Frances was the Putney schoolteacher. Her father was one of the recalcitrant elders and Frances felt it bitterly — all the more that she had tried to argue with him and had been sat upon as a “child who couldn’t understand.”

“I’m more surprised at Mr. Sinclair than at the elders,” said Mrs. Abner Keech, fanning herself vigorously. “Elders are subject to queer spells periodically. They think they assert their authority that way. But Mr. Sinclair has always seemed so liberal and broadminded.”

“You never can tell what crotchet an old bachelor will take into his head,” said Alethea Craig bitinglly.

The others nodded agreement. Mr. Sinclair’s inveterate celibacy was a standing grievance with the Putney women.

“If he had a wife who could be our president this would never have happened, I warrant you,” said Mrs. King sagely.

“But what are we going to do, ladies?” said Mrs. Robbins briskly. Mrs. Robbins was the president. She was a big, bustling woman with clear blue eyes and crisp, incisive ways. Hitherto she had held her peace. “They must talk themselves out before they can get down to business,” she had reflected sagely. But she thought the time had now come to speak.

“You know,” she went on, “we can talk and rage against the men all day if we like. They are not trying to prevent us. But that will do no good. Here’s Mrs. Cotterell invited, and all the neighbouring auxiliaries notified — and the men won’t let us have the church. The point is, how are we going to get out of the scrape?”

A helpless silence descended upon the classroom. The eyes of every woman present turned to Myra Wilson. Everyone could talk, but when it came to action they had a fashion of turning to Myra.

She had a reputation for cleverness and originality. She never talked much. So far today she had not said a word. She was sitting on the sill of the window across from Lucy Knox. She swung her hat on her knee, and loose, moist rings of dark hair curled around her dark, alert face. There was a sparkle in her grey eyes that boded ill to the men who were peaceably pursuing their avocations, rashly indifferent to what the women might be saying in the maple-shaded classroom.

“Have you any suggestion to make, Miss Wilson?” said Mrs. Robbins, with a return to her official voice and manner.

Myra put her long, slender index finger to her chin.

“I think,” she said decidedly, “that we must strike.”

When Elder Knox went in to tea that evening he glanced somewhat apprehensively at his wife. They had had an altercation before she went to the meeting, and he supposed she had talked herself into another rage

while there. But Mrs. Knox was placid and smiling. She had made his favourite soda biscuits for him and inquired amiably after his progress in hoeing turnips in the southeast meadow.

She made, however, no reference to the Auxiliary meeting, and when the biscuits and the maple syrup and two cups of matchless tea had nerved the elder up, his curiosity got the better of his prudence — for even elders are human and curiosity knows no gender — and he asked what they had done at the meeting.

“We poor men have been shaking in our shoes,” he said facetiously.

“Were you?” Mrs. Knox’s voice was calm and faintly amused. “Well, you didn’t need to. We talked the matter over very quietly and came to the conclusion that the session knew best and that women hadn’t any right to interfere in church business at all.”

Lucy Knox turned her head away to hide a smile. The elder beamed. He was a peace-loving man and disliked “ructions” of any sort and domestic ones in particular. Since the decision of the session Mrs. Knox had made his life a burden to him. He did not understand her sudden change of base, but he accepted it very thankfully.

“That’s right — that’s right,” he said heartily. “I’m glad to hear you coming out so sensible, Maria. I was afraid you’d work yourselves up at that meeting and let Myra Wilson or Alethea Craig put you up to some foolishness or other. Well, I guess I’ll jog down to the Corner this evening and order that barrel of pastry flour you want.”

“Oh, you needn’t,” said Mrs. Knox indifferently. “We won’t be needing it now.”

“Not needing it! But I thought you said you had to have some to bake for the social week after next.”

“There isn’t going to be any social.”

“Not any social?”

Elder Knox stared perplexedly at his wife. A month previously the Putney church had been recarpeted, and they still owed fifty dollars for it. This, the women declared, they would speedily pay off by a big cake and

ice-cream social in the hall. Mrs. Knox had been one of the foremost promoters of the enterprise.

“Not any social?” repeated the elder again. “Then how is the money for the carpet to be got? And why isn’t there going to be a social?”

“The men can get the money somehow, I suppose,” said Mrs. Knox. “As for the social, why, of course, if women aren’t good enough to speak in church they are not good enough to work for it either. Lucy, dear, will you pass me the cookies?”

“Lucy dear” passed the cookies and then rose abruptly and left the table. Her father’s face was too much for her.

“What confounded nonsense is this?” demanded the elder explosively.

Mrs. Knox opened her mellow brown eyes widely, as if in amazement at her husband’s tone.

“I don’t understand you,” she said. “Our position is perfectly logical.”

She had borrowed that phrase from Myra Wilson, and it floored the elder. He got up, seized his hat, and strode from the room.

That night, at Jacob Wherrison’s store at the Corner, the Putney men talked over the new development. The social was certainly off — for a time, anyway.

“Best let ‘em alone, I say,” said Wherrison. “They’re mad at us now and doing this to pay us out. But they’ll cool down later on and we’ll have the social all right.”

“But if they don’t,” said Andrew McKittrick gloomily, “who is going to pay for that carpet?”

This was an unpleasant question. The others shirked it.

“I was always opposed to this action of the session,” said Alec Craig. “It wouldn’t have hurt to have let the woman speak. ‘Tisn’t as if it was a regular sermon.”

“The session knew best,” said Andrew sharply. “And the minister — you’re not going to set your opinion up against his, are you, Craig?”

“Didn’t know they taught such reverence for ministers in Danbridge,” retorted Craig with a laugh.

“Best let ‘em alone, as Wherrison says,” said Abner Keech.

“Don’t see what else we can do,” said John Wilson shortly.

On Sunday morning the men were conscious of a bare, deserted appearance in the church. Mr. Sinclair perceived it himself. After some inward wondering he concluded that it was because there were no flowers anywhere. The table before the pulpit was bare. On the organ a vase held a sorry, faded bouquet left over from the previous week. The floor was’ unswept. Dust lay thickly on the pulpit Bible, the choir chairs, and the pew backs.

“This church looks disgraceful,” said John Robbins in an angry undertone to his daughter Polly, who was president of the Flower Band. “What in the name of common sense is the good of your Flower Banders if you can’t keep the place looking decent?”

“There is no Flower Band now, Father,” whispered Polly in turn. “We’ve disbanded. Women haven’t any business to meddle in church matters. You know the session said so.”

It was well for Polly that she was too big to have her ears boxed. Even so, it might not have saved her if they had been anywhere else than in church.

Meanwhile the men who were sitting in the choir — three basses and two tenors — were beginning to dimly suspect that there was something amiss here too. Where were the sopranos and the altos? Myra Wilson and Alethea Craig and several other members of the choir were sitting down in their pews with perfectly unconscious faces. Myra was looking out of the window into the tangled sunlight and shadow of the great maples. Alethea Craig was reading her Bible.

Presently Frances Spenslow came in. Frances was organist, but today, instead of walking up to the platform, she slipped demurely into her father’s pew at one side of the pulpit. Eben Craig, who was the Putney singing master and felt himself responsible for the choir, fidgeted uneasily. He tried to catch Frances’s eye, but she was absorbed in reading the mission report she had found in the rack, and Eben was finally forced to tiptoe down to the Spenslow pew and whisper, “Miss Spenslow, the minister is waiting for the doxology. Aren’t you going to take the organ?”

Frances looked up calmly. Her clear, placid voice was audible not only to those in the nearby pews, but to the minister.

“No, Mr. Craig. You know if a woman isn’t fit to speak in the church she can’t be fit to sing in it either.”

Eben Craig looked exceedingly foolish. He tiptoed gingerly back to his place. The minister, with an unusual flush on his thin, ascetic face, rose suddenly and gave out the opening hymn.

Nobody who heard the singing in Putney church that day ever forgot it. Untrained basses and tenors, unrelieved by a single female voice, are not inspiring.

There were no announcements of society meetings for the forthcoming week. On the way home from church that day irate husbands and fathers scolded, argued, or pleaded, according to their several dispositions. One and all met with the same calm statement that if a noble, self-sacrificing woman like Mrs. Cotterell were not good enough to speak in the Putney church, ordinary, everyday women could not be fit to take any part whatever in its work.

Sunday School that afternoon was a harrowing failure. Out of all the corps of teachers only one was a man, and he alone was at his post. In the Christian Endeavour meeting on Tuesday night the feminine element sat dumb and unresponsive. The Putney women never did things by halves.

The men held out for two weeks. At the end of that time they “happened” to meet at the manse and talked the matter over with the harassed minister. Elder Knox said gloomily, “It’s this way. Nothing can move them women. I know, for I’ve tried. My authority has been set at naught in my own household. And I’m laughed at if I show my face in any of the other settlements.”

The Sunday School superintendent said the Sunday School was going to wrack and ruin, also the Christian Endeavour. The condition of the church for dust was something scandalous, and strangers were making a mockery of the singing. And the carpet had to be paid for. He supposed they would have to let the women have their own way.

The next Sunday evening after service Mr. Sinclair arose hesitatingly. His face was flushed, and Alethea Craig always declared that he looked “just plain everyday cross.” He announced briefly that the session after due deliberation had concluded that Mrs. Cotterell might occupy the pulpit on the evening appointed for her address.

The women all over the church smiled broadly. Frances Spenslow got up and went to the organ stool. The singing in the last hymn was good and hearty. Going down the steps after dismissal Mrs. Elder Knox caught the secretary of the Church Aid by the arm.

“I guess,” she whispered anxiously, “you’d better call a special meeting of the Aids at my house tomorrow afternoon. If we’re to get that social over before haying begins we’ve got to do some smart scurrying.”

The strike in the Putney church was over.

The Unhappiness of Miss Farquhar

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Frances Farquhar was a beauty and was sometimes called a society butterfly by people who didn't know very much about it. Her father was wealthy and her mother came of an extremely blue-blooded family. Frances had been out for three years, and was a social favourite. Consequently, it may be wondered why she was unhappy.

In plain English, Frances Farquhar had been jilted — just a commonplace, everyday jilting! She had been engaged to Paul Holcomb; he was a very handsome fellow, somewhat too evidently aware of the fact, and Frances was very deeply in love with him — or thought herself so, which at the time comes to pretty much the same thing. Everybody in her set knew of her engagement, and all her girl friends envied her, for Holcomb was a matrimonial catch.

Then the crash came. Nobody outside the family knew exactly what did happen, but everybody knew that the Holcomb-Farquhar match was off, and everybody had a different story to account for it.

The simple truth was that Holcomb was fickle and had fallen in love with another girl. There was nothing of the man about him, and it did not matter to his sublimely selfish caddishness whether he broke Frances Farquhar's heart or not. He got his freedom and he married Maud Carroll in six months' time.

The Farquhars, especially Ned, who was Frances's older brother and seldom concerned himself about her except when the family honour was involved, were furious at the whole affair. Mr. Farquhar stormed, and Ned swore, and Della lamented her vanished role of bridesmaid. As for Mrs. Farquhar, she cried and said it would ruin Frances's future prospects.

The girl herself took no part in the family indignation meetings. But she believed that her heart was broken. Her love and her pride had suffered equally, and the effect seemed disastrous.

After a while the Farquhars calmed down and devoted themselves to the task of cheering Frances up. This they did not accomplish. She got through the rest of the season somehow and showed a proud front to the world, not even flinching when Holcomb himself crossed her path. To be sure, she was pale and thin, and had about as much animation as a mask, but the same might be said of a score of other girls who were not suspected of having broken hearts.

When the summer came Frances asserted herself. The Farquhars went to Green Harbour every summer. But this time Frances said she would not go, and stuck to it. The whole family took turns coaxing her and had nothing to show for their pains.

“I’m going up to Windy Meadows to stay with Aunt Eleanor while you are at the Harbour,” she declared. “She has invited me often enough.”

Ned whistled. “Jolly time you’ll have of it, Sis. Windy Meadows is about as festive as a funeral. And Aunt Eleanor isn’t lively, to put it in the mildest possible way.”

“I don’t care if she isn’t. I want to get somewhere where people won’t look at me and talk about — that,” said Frances, looking ready to cry.

Ned went out and swore at Holcomb again, and then advised his mother to humour Frances. Accordingly, Frances went to Windy Meadows.

Windy Meadows was, as Ned had said, the reverse of lively. It was a pretty country place, with a sort of fag-end by way of a little fishing village, huddled on a wind-swept bit of beach, locally known as the “Cove.” Aunt Eleanor was one of those delightful people, so few and far between in this world, who have perfectly mastered the art of minding their own business exclusively. She left Frances in peace.

She knew that her niece had had “some love trouble or other,” and hadn’t gotten over it rightly.

“It’s always best to let those things take their course,” said this philosophical lady to her “help” and confidant, Margaret Ann Peabody. “She’ll get over it in time — though she doesn’t think so now, bless you.”

For the first fortnight Frances revelled in a luxury of unhindered sorrow. She could cry all night — and all day too, if she wished — without

having to stop because people might notice that her eyes were red. She could mope in her room all she liked. And there were no men who demanded civility.

When the fortnight was over, Aunt Eleanor took crafty counsel with herself. The letting-alone policy was all very well, but it would not do to have the girl die on her hands. Frances was getting paler and thinner every day — and she was spoiling her eyelashes by crying.

“I wish,” said Aunt Eleanor one morning at breakfast, while Frances pretended to eat, “that I could go and take Corona Sherwood out for a drive today. I promised her last week that I would, but I’ve never had time yet. And today is baking and churning day. It’s a shame. Poor Corona!”

“Who is she?” asked Frances, trying to realize that there was actually someone in the world besides herself who was to be pitied.

“She is our minister’s sister. She has been ill with rheumatic fever. She is better now, but doesn’t seem to get strong very fast. She ought to go out more, but she isn’t able to walk. I really must try and get around tomorrow. She keeps house for her brother at the manse. He isn’t married, you know.”

Frances didn’t know, nor did she in the least degree care. But even the luxury of unlimited grief palls, and Frances was beginning to feel this vaguely. She offered to go and take Miss Sherwood out driving.

“I’ve never seen her,” she said, “but I suppose that doesn’t matter. I can drive Grey Tom in the phaeton, if you like.”

It was just what Aunt Eleanor intended, and she saw Frances drive off that afternoon with a great deal of satisfaction.

“Give my love to Corona,” she told her, “and say for me that she isn’t to go messing about among those shore people until she’s perfectly well. The manse is the fourth house after you turn the third corner.”

Frances kept count of the corners and the houses and found the manse. Corona Sherwood herself came to the door. Frances had been expecting an elderly personage with spectacles and grey crimps; she was surprised to find that the minister’s sister was a girl of about her own age and possessed of a distinct worldly prettiness. Corona was dark, with a

different darkness from that of Frances, who had ivory outlines and blue-black hair, while Corona was dusky and piquant.

Her eyes brightened with delight when Frances told her errand.

“How good of you and Miss Eleanor! I am not strong enough to walk far yet — or do anything useful, in fact, and Elliott so seldom has time to take me out.”

“Where shall we go?” asked Frances when they started. “I don’t know much about this locality.”

“Can we drive to the Cove first? I want to see poor little Jacky Hart. He has been so sick—”

“Aunt Eleanor positively forbade that,” said Frances dubiously. “Will it be safe to disobey her?”

Corona laughed.

“Miss Eleanor blames my poor shore people for making me sick at first, but it was really not that at all. And I want to see Jacky Hart so much. He has been ill for some time with some disease of the spine and he is worse lately. I’m sure Miss Eleanor won’t mind my calling just to see him.”

Frances turned Grey Tom down the shore road that ran to the Cove and past it to silvery, wind-swept sands, rimming sea expanses crystal clear. Jacky Hart’s home proved to be a tiny little place overflowing with children. Mrs. Hart was a pale, tired-looking woman with the patient, farseeing eyes so often found among the women who watch sea and shore every day and night of their lives for those who sometimes never return.

She spoke of Jacky with the apathy of hopelessness. The doctor said he would not last much longer. She told all her troubles unreservedly to Corona in her monotonous voice. Her “man” was drinking again and the mackerel catch was poor.

When Mrs. Hart asked Corona to go in and see Jacky, Frances went too. The sick boy, a child with a delicate, wasted face and large, bright eyes, lay in a tiny bedroom off the kitchen. The air was hot and heavy. Mrs. Hart stood at the foot of the bed with her tragic face.

“We have to set up nights with him now,” she said. “It’s awful hard on me and my man. The neighbours are kind enough and come sometimes, but most of them have enough to do. His medicine has to be given every half hour. I’ve been up for three nights running now. Jabez was off to the tavern for two. I’m just about played out.”

She suddenly broke down and began to cry, or rather whimper, in a heartbroken way.

Corona looked troubled. “I wish I could come tonight, Mrs. Hart, but I’m afraid I’m really not strong enough yet.”

“I don’t know much about sickness,” spoke up Frances firmly, “but if to sit by the child and give him his medicine regularly is all that is necessary, I am sure I can do that. I’ll come and sit up with Jacky tonight if you care to have me.”

Afterwards, when she and Corona were driving away, she wondered a good deal at herself. But Corona was so evidently pleased with her offer, and took it all so much as a matter of course, that Frances had not the courage to display her wonder. They had their drive through the great green bowl of the country valley, brimming over with sunshine, and afterwards Corona made Frances go home with her to tea.

Rev. Elliott Sherwood had got back from his pastoral visitations, and was training his sweet peas in the way they should go against the garden fence. He was in his shirt sleeves and wore a big straw hat, and seemed in nowise disconcerted thereby. Corona introduced him, and he took Grey Tom away and put him in the barn. Then he went back to his sweet peas. He had had his tea, he said, so that Frances did not see him again until she went home. She thought he was a very indifferent young man, and not half so nice as his sister.

But she went and sat up with Jacky Hart that night, getting to the Cove at dark, when the sea was a shimmer of fairy tints and the boats were coming in from the fishing grounds. Jacky greeted her with a wonderful smile, and later on she found herself watching alone by his bed. The tiny lamp on the table burned dim, and outside, on the rocks, there was loud laughing and talking until a late hour.

Afterwards a silence fell, through which the lap of the waves on the sands and the far-off moan of the Atlantic surges came sonorously. Jacky was restless and wakeful, but did not suffer, and liked to talk. Frances listened to him with a newborn power of sympathy, which she thought she must have caught from Corona. He told her all the tragedy of his short life, and how bad he felt, about Dad's taking to drink and Mammy's having to work so hard.

The pitiful little sentences made Frances's heart ache. The maternal instinct of the true woman awoke in her. She took a sudden liking to the child. He was a spiritual little creature, and his sufferings had made him old and wise. Once in the night he told Frances that he thought the angels must look like her.

"You are so sweet pretty," he said gravely. "I never saw anyone so pretty, not even Miss C'rona. You look like a picture I once saw on Mr. Sherwood's table when I was up at the manse one day 'fore I got so bad I couldn't walk. It was a woman with a li'l baby in her arms and a kind of rim round her head. I would like something most awful much."

"What is it, dear?" said Frances gently. "If I can get or do it for you, I will."

"You could," he said wistfully, "but maybe you won't want to. But I do wish you'd come here just once every day and sit here five minutes and let me look at you — just that. Will it be too much trouble?"

Frances stooped and kissed him. "I will come every day, Jacky," she said; and a look of ineffable content came over the thin little face. He put up his hand and touched her cheek.

"I knew you were good — as good as Miss C'rona, and she is an angel. I love you."

When morning came Frances went home. It was raining, and the sea was hidden in mist. As she walked along the wet road, Elliott Sherwood came splashing along in a little two-wheeled gig and picked her up. He wore a raincoat and a small cap, and did not look at all like a minister — or, at least, like Frances's conception of one.

Not that she knew much about ministers. Her own minister at home — that is to say, the minister of the fashionable uptown church which she attended — was a portly, dignified old man with silvery hair and gold-rimmed glasses, who preached scholarly, cultured sermons and was as far removed from Frances's personal life as a star in the Milky Way.

But a minister who wore rubber coats and little caps and drove about in a two-wheeled gig, very much mud-bespattered, and who talked about the shore people as if they were household intimates of his, was absolutely new to Frances.

She could not help seeing, however, that the crisp brown hair under the edges of the unclerical-looking cap curled around a remarkably well-shaped forehead, beneath which flashed out a pair of very fine dark-grey eyes; he had likewise a good mouth, which was resolute and looked as if it might be stubborn on occasion; and, although he was not exactly handsome, Frances decided that she liked his face.

He tucked the wet, slippery rubber apron of his conveyance about her and then proceeded to ask questions. Jacky Hart's case had to be reported on, and then Mr. Sherwood took out a notebook and looked over its entries intently.

"Do you want any more work of that sort to do?" he asked her abruptly.

Frances felt faintly amused. He talked to her as he might have done to Corona, and seemed utterly oblivious of the fact that her profile was classic and her eyes delicious. His indifference piqued Frances a little in spite of her murdered heart. Well, if there was anything she could do she might as well do it, she told him briefly, and he, with equal brevity, gave her directions for finding some old lady who lived on the Elm Creek road and to whom Corona had read tracts.

"Tracts are a mild dissipation of Aunt Clorinda's," he said. "She fairly revels in them. She is half blind and has missed Corona very much."

There were other matters also — a dozen or so of factory girls who needed to be looked after and a family of ragged children to be clothed. Frances, in some dismay, found herself pledged to help in all directions, and then ways and means had to be discussed. The long, wet road,

sprinkled with houses, from whose windows people were peering to see “what girl the minister was driving,” seemed very short. Frances did not know it, but Elliott Sherwood drove a full mile out of his way that morning to take her home, and risked being late for a very important appointment — from which it may be inferred that he was not quite so blind to the beautiful as he had seemed.

Frances went through the rain that afternoon and read tracts to Aunt Clorinda. She was so dreadfully tired that night that she forgot to cry, and slept well and soundly.

In the morning she went to church for the first time since coming to Windy Meadows. It did not seem civil not to go to hear a man preach when she had gone slumming with his sister and expected to assist him with his difficulties over factory girls. She was surprised at Elliott Sherwood’s sermon, and mentally wondered why such a man had been allowed to remain for four years in a little country pulpit. Later on Aunt Eleanor told her it was for his health.

“He was not strong when he left college, so he came here. But he is as well as ever now, and I expect he will soon be gobbled up by some of your city churches. He preached in Castle Street church last winter, and I believe they were delighted with him.”

This was all of a month later. During that time Frances thought that she must have been recreated, so far was her old self left behind. She seldom had an idle moment; when she had, she spent it with Corona. The two girls had become close friends, loving each other with the intensity of exceptional and somewhat exclusive natures.

Corona grew strong slowly, and could do little for her brother’s people, but Frances was an excellent proxy, and Elliott Sherwood kept her employed. Incidentally, Frances had come to know the young minister, with his lofty ideals and earnest efforts, very well. He had got into a ridiculous habit of going to her — her, Frances Farquhar! — for advice in many perplexities.

Frances had nursed Jacky Hart and talked temperance to his father and read tracts to Aunt Clorinda and started a reading circle among the factory

girls and fitted out all the little Jarboes with dresses and coaxed the shore children to go to school and patched up a feud between two 'longshore families and done a hundred other things of a similar nature.

Aunt Eleanor said nothing, as was her wise wont, but she talked it over with Margaret Ann Peabody, and agreed with that model domestic when she said: "Work'll keep folks out of trouble and help 'em out of it when they are in. Just as long as that girl brooded over her own worries and didn't think of anyone but herself she was miserable. But as soon as she found other folks were unhappy, too, and tried to help 'em out a bit, she helped herself most of all. She's getting fat and rosy, and it is plain to be seen that the minister thinks there isn't the like of her on this planet."

One night Frances told Corona all about Holcomb. Elliott Sherwood was away, and Frances had gone up to stay all night with Corona at the manse. They were sitting in the moonlit gloom of Corona's room, and Frances felt confidential. She had expected to feel badly and cry a little while she told it. But she did not, and before she was half through, it did not seem as if it were worth telling after all. Corona was deeply sympathetic. She did not say a great deal, but what she did say put Frances on better terms with herself.

"Oh, I shall get over it," the latter declared finally. "Once I thought I never would — but the truth is, I'm getting over it now. I'm very glad — but I'm horribly ashamed, too, to find myself so fickle."

"I don't think you are fickle, Frances," said Corona gravely, "because I don't think you ever really loved that man at all. You only imagined you did. And he was not worthy of you. You are so good, dear; those shore people just worship you. Elliott says you can do anything you like with them."

Frances laughed and said she was not at all good. Yet she was pleased. Later on, when she was brushing her hair before the mirror and smiling absently at her reflection, Corona said: "Frances, what is it like to be as pretty as you are?"

"Nonsense!" said Frances by way of answer.

“It is not nonsense at all. You must know you are very lovely, Frances. Elliott says you are the most beautiful girl he has ever seen.”

For a girl who has told herself a dozen times that she would never care again for masculine admiration, Frances experienced a very odd thrill of delight on hearing that the minister of Windy Meadows thought her beautiful. She knew he admired her intellect and had immense respect for what he called her “genius for influencing people,” but she had really believed all along that, if Elliott Sherwood had been asked, he could not have told whether she was a whit better looking than Kitty Martin of the Cove, who taught a class in Sunday school and had round rosy cheeks and a snub nose.

The summer went very quickly. One day Jacky Hart died — drifted out with the ebb tide, holding Frances’s hand. She had loved the patient, sweet-souled little creature and missed him greatly.

When the time to go home came Frances felt dull. She hated to leave Windy Meadows and Corona and her dear shore people and Aunt Eleanor and — and — well, Margaret Ann Peabody.

Elliott Sherwood came up the night before she went away. When Margaret Ann showed him reverentially in, Frances was sitting in a halo of sunset light, and the pale, golden chrysanthemums in her hair shone like stars in the blue-black coils.

Elliott Sherwood had been absent from Windy Meadows for several days. There was a subdued jubilance in his manner.

“You think I have come to say goodbye, but I haven’t,” he told her. “I shall see you again very soon, I hope. I have just received a call to Castle Street church, and it is my intention to accept. So Corona and I will be in town this winter.”

Frances tried to tell him how glad she was, but only stammered. Elliott Sherwood came close up to her as she stood by the window in the fading light, and said —

But on second thoughts I shall not record what he said — or what she said either. Some things should be left to the imagination.

Why Mr. Cropper Changed His Mind

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“Well, Miss Maxwell, how did you get along today?” asked Mr. Baxter affably, when the new teacher came to the table.

She was a slight, dark girl, rather plain-looking, but with a smart, energetic way. Mr. Baxter approved of her; he “liked her style,” as he would have said.

The summer term had just opened in the Maitland district. Esther Maxwell was a stranger, but she was a capable girl, and had no doubt of her own ability to get and keep the school in good working order. She smiled brightly at Mr. Baxter.

“Very well for a beginning. The children seem bright and teachable and not hard to control.”

Mr. Baxter nodded. “There are no bad children in the school except the Cropper boys — and they can be good enough if they like. Reckon they weren’t there today?”

“No.”

“Well, Miss Maxwell, I think it only fair to tell you that you may have trouble with those boys when they do come. Forewarned is forearmed, you know. Mr. Cropper was opposed to our hiring you. Not, of course, that he had any personal objection to you, but he is set against female teachers, and when a Cropper is set there is nothing on earth can change him. He says female teachers can’t keep order. He’s started in with a spite at you on general principles, and the boys know it. They know he’ll back them up in secret, no matter what they do, just to prove his opinions. Cropper is sly and slippery, and it is hard to corner him.”

“Are the boys big?” queried Esther anxiously.

“Yes. Thirteen and fourteen and big for their age. You can’t whip ‘em — that is the trouble. A man might, but they’d twist you around their

fingers. You'll have your hands full, I'm afraid. But maybe they'll behave all right after all."

Mr. Baxter privately had no hope that they would, but Esther hoped for the best. She could not believe that Mr. Cropper would carry his prejudices into a personal application. This conviction was strengthened when he overtook her walking from school the next day and drove her home. He was a big, handsome man with a very suave, polite manner. He asked interestedly about her school and her work, hoped she was getting on well, and said he had two young rascals of his own to send soon. Esther felt relieved. She thought that Mr. Baxter had exaggerated matters a little.

"That plum tree of Mrs. Charley's is loaded with fruit again this year," remarked Mr. Baxter at the tea table that evening. "I came past it today on my way 'cross lots home from the woods. There will be bushels of plums on it."

"I don't suppose poor Mrs. Charley will get one of them any more than she ever has," said Mrs. Baxter indignantly. "It's a burning shame, that's what it is! I just wish she could catch the Croppers once."

"You haven't any proof that it is really them, Mary," objected her husband, "and you shouldn't make reckless accusations before folks."

"I know very well it is them," retorted Mrs. Baxter, "and so do you, Adoniram. And Mrs. Charley knows it too, although she can't prove it — more's the pity! I don't say Isaac Cropper steals those plums with his own hands. But he knows who does — and the plums go into Mehitable Cropper's preserving kettle; there's nothing surer."

"You see, Miss Maxwell, it's this way," explained Mr. Baxter, turning to Esther. "Mrs. Charley Cropper's husband was Isaac's brother. They never got on well together, and when Charley died there was a tremendous fuss about the property. Isaac acted mean and scandalous clear through, and public opinion has been down on him ever since. But Mrs. Charley is a pretty smart woman, and he didn't get the better of her in everything. There was a strip of disputed land between the two farms, and she secured it. There's a big plum tree growing on it close to the line fence. It's the finest one in Maitland. But Mrs. Charley never gets a plum from it."

“But what becomes of them?” asked Esther.

“They disappear,” said Mr. Baxter, with a significant nod. “When the plums are anything like ripe Mrs. Charley discovers some day that there isn’t one left on the tree. She has never been able to get a scrap of proof as to who took them, or she’d make it hot for them. But nobody in Maitland has any doubt in his own mind that Isaac Cropper knows where those plums go.”

“I don’t think Mr. Cropper would steal,” protested Esther.

“Well, he doesn’t consider it stealing, you know. He claims the land and says the plums are his. I don’t doubt that he is quite clear in his own mind that they are. And he does hate Mrs. Charley. I’d give considerable to see the old sinner fairly caught, but he is too deep.”

“I think Mr. Baxter is too hard on Mr. Cropper,” said Esther to herself later on. “He has probably some private prejudice against him.”

But a month later she had changed her opinion. During that time the Cropper boys had come to school.

At first Esther had been inclined to like them. They were handsome lads, with the same smooth way that characterized their father, and seemed bright and intelligent. For a few days all went well, and Esther felt decidedly relieved.

But before long a subtle spirit of insubordination began to make itself felt in the school. Esther found herself powerless to cope with it. The Croppers never openly defied her, but they did precisely as they pleased. The other pupils thought themselves at liberty to follow this example, and in a month’s time poor Esther had completely lost control of her little kingdom. Some complaints were heard among the ratepayers and even Mr. Baxter looked dubious. She knew that unless she could regain her authority she would be requested to hand in her resignation, but she was baffled by the elusive system of defiance which the Cropper boys had organized.

One day she resolved to go to Mr. Cropper himself and appeal to his sense of justice, if he had any. It had been an especially hard day in school. When she had been absent at the noon hour all the desks in the schoolroom

had been piled in a pyramid on the floor, books and slates interchanged, and various other pranks played. When questioned every pupil denied having done or helped to do it. Alfred and Bob Cropper looked her squarely in the eyes and declared their innocence in their usual gentlemanly fashion, yet Esther felt sure that they were the guilty ones. She also knew what exaggerated accounts of the affair would be taken home to Maitland tea tables, and she felt like sitting down to cry. But she did not. Instead she set her mouth firmly, helped the children restore the room to order, and after school went up to Isaac Cropper's house.

That gentleman himself came in from the harvest field looking as courtly as usual, even in his rough working clothes. He shook hands heartily, told her he was glad to see her, and began talking about the weather. Esther was not to be turned from her object thus, although she felt her courage ebbing away from her as it always did in the presence of the Cropper imperviousness.

"I have come up to see you about Alfred and Robert, Mr. Cropper," she said. "They are not behaving well in school."

"Indeed!" Mr. Cropper's voice expressed bland surprise. "That is strange. As a rule I do not think Alfred and Robert have been troublesome to their teachers. What have they been doing now?"

"They refuse to obey my orders," said Esther faintly.

"Ah, well, Miss Maxwell, perhaps you will pardon my saying that a teacher should be able to enforce her orders. My boys are high-spirited fellows and need a strong, firm hand to restrain them. I have always said I considered it advisable to employ a male teacher in Maitland school. We should have better order. Not that I disapprove of you personally — far from it. I should be glad to see you succeed. But I have heard many complaints regarding the order in school at present."

"I had no trouble until your boys came," retorted Esther, losing her temper a little, "and I believe that if you were willing to cooperate with me that I could govern them."

"Well, you see," said Mr. Cropper easily, "when I send my boys to school I naturally expect that the teacher will be capable of doing the work

she has been hired to do.”

“Then you refuse to help me?” said Esther in a trembling voice.

“Why, my dear young lady, what can I do? Boys soon know when they can disobey a teacher with impunity. No doubt you will be able to secure a school easier to control and will do good work. But here, as I have already said, we need a firm hand at the helm. But you are not going yet, Miss Maxwell? You need some refreshment after your long walk. Mrs. Cropper will bring you in something.”

“No, thank you,” said poor Esther. She felt that she must get away at once or she would burst into heartsick tears under those steely, bland blue eyes. When she got home she shut herself up in her room and cried. There was nothing for her to do but resign, she thought dismally.

On the following Saturday Esther went for an afternoon walk, carrying her kodak with her. It was a brilliantly fine autumn day, and woods and fields were basking in a mellow haze. Esther went across lots to Mrs. Charley Cropper’s house, intending to make a call. But the house was locked up and evidently deserted, so she rambled past it to the back fields. Passing through a grove of maples she came out among leafy young saplings on the other side. Just beyond her, with its laden boughs hanging over the line fence, was the famous plum tree. Esther looked at it for a moment. Then an odd smile gleamed over her face and she lifted her kodak.

Monday evening Esther called on Mr. Cropper again. After the preliminary remarks in which he indulged, she said, with seeming irrelevance, that Saturday had been a fine day.

“There was an excellent light for snapshots,” she went on coolly. “I went out with my kodak and was lucky enough to get a good negative. I have brought you up a proof. I thought you would be interested in it.”

She rose and placed the proof on the table before Mr. Cropper. The plum tree came out clearly. Bob and Alf Cropper were up among the boughs picking the plums. On the ground beneath them stood their father with a basket of fruit in his hand.

Mr. Cropper looked at the proof and from it to Esther. His eyes had lost their unconcerned glitter, but his voice was defiant.

“The plums are mine by right,” he said.

“Perhaps,” said Esther calmly, “but there are some who do not think so. Mrs. Charley, for instance — she would like to see this proof, I think.”

“Don’t show it to her,” cried Mr. Cropper hastily. “I tell you, Miss Maxwell, the plums are mine. But I am tired of fighting over them and I had decided before this that I’d let her have them after this. It’s only a trifle, anyhow. And about that little matter we were discussing the other night, Miss Maxwell. I have been thinking it over, and I admit I was somewhat unreasonable. I’ll talk to Alfred and Robert and see what I can do.”

“Very well,” said Esther quietly. “The matter of the plums isn’t my business and I don’t wish to be involved in your family feuds, especially as you say that you mean to allow Mrs. Charley to enjoy her own in future. As for the school, we will hope that matters will improve.”

“You’ll leave the proof with me, won’t you?” said Mr. Cropper eagerly.

“Oh, certainly,” said Esther, smiling. “I have the negative still, you know.”

From that time out the Cropper boys were models of good behaviour and the other turbulent spirits, having lost their leaders, were soon quelled. Complaint died away, and at the end of the term Esther was reengaged.

“You seem to have won old Cropper over to your side entirely,” Mr. Baxter told her that night. “He said at the meeting today that you were the best teacher we had ever had and moved to raise your salary. I never knew Isaac Cropper to change his opinions so handsomely.”

Esther smiled. She knew it had taken a powerful lever to change Mr. Cropper’s opinion, but she kept her own counsel.

A Fortunate Mistake

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“Oh, dear! oh, dear!” fretted Nan Wallace, twisting herself about uneasily on the sofa in her pretty room. “I never thought before that the days could be so long as they are now.”

“Poor you!” said her sister Maude sympathetically. Maude was moving briskly about the room, putting it into the beautiful order that Mother insisted on. It was Nan’s week to care for their room, but Nan had sprained her ankle three days ago and could do nothing but lie on the sofa ever since. And very tired of it, too, was wide-awake, active Nan.

“And the picnic this afternoon, too!” she sighed. “I’ve looked forward to it all summer. And it’s a perfect day — and I’ve got to stay here and nurse this foot.”

Nan looked vindictively at the bandaged member, while Maude leaned out of the window to pull a pink climbing rose. As she did so she nodded to someone in the village street below.

“Who is passing?” asked Nan.

“Florrie Hamilton.”

“Is she going to the picnic?” asked Nan indifferently.

“No. She wasn’t asked. Of course, I don’t suppose she expected to be. She knows she isn’t in our set. She must feel horribly out of place at school. A lot of the girls say it is ridiculous of her father to send her to Miss Braxton’s private school — a factory overseer’s daughter.”

“She ought to have been asked to the picnic all the same,” said Nan shortly. “She is in our class if she isn’t in our set. Of course I don’t suppose she would have enjoyed herself — or even gone at all, for that matter. She certainly doesn’t push herself in among us. One would think she hadn’t a tongue in her head.”

“She is the best student in the class,” admitted Maude, arranging her roses in a vase and putting them on the table at Nan’s elbow. “But Patty

Morrison and Wilhelmina Patterson had the most to say about the invitations, and they wouldn't have her. There, Nannie dear, aren't those lovely? I'll leave them here to be company for you."

"I'm going to have more company than that," said Nan, thumping her pillow energetically. "I'm not going to mope here alone all the afternoon, with you off having a jolly time at the picnic. Write a little note for me to Florrie Hastings, will you? I'll do as much for you when you sprain your foot."

"What shall I put in it?" said Maude, rummaging out her portfolio obligingly.

"Oh, just ask her if she will come down and cheer a poor invalid up this afternoon. She'll come, I know. And she is such good company. Get Dickie to run right out and mail it."

"I do wonder if Florrie Hamilton will feel hurt over not being asked to the picnic," speculated Maude absently as she slipped her note into an envelope and addressed it.

Florrie Hamilton herself could best have answered that question as she walked along the street in the fresh morning sunshine. She did feel hurt — much more keenly than she would acknowledge even to herself. It was not that she cared about the picnic itself: as Nan Wallace had said, she would not have been likely to enjoy herself if she had gone among a crowd of girls many of whom looked down on her and ignored her. But to be left out when every other girl in the school was invited! Florrie's lip quivered as she thought of it.

"I'll get Father to let me to go to the public school after vacation," she murmured. "I hate going to Miss Braxton's."

Florrie was a newcomer in Winboro. Her father had recently come to take a position in the largest factory of the small town. For this reason Florrie was slighted at school by some of the ruder girls and severely left alone by most of the others. Some, it is true, tried at the start to be friends, but Florrie, too keenly sensitive to the atmosphere around her to respond, was believed to be decidedly dull and mopy. She retreated further and

further into herself and was almost as solitary at Miss Braxton's as if she had been on a desert island.

"They don't like me because I am plainly dressed and because my father is not a wealthy man," thought Florrie bitterly. And there was enough truth in this in regard to many of Miss Braxton's girls to make a very uncomfortable state of affairs.

"Here's a letter for you, Flo," said her brother Jack at noon. "Got it at the office on my way home. Who is your swell correspondent?"

Florrie opened the dainty, perfumed note and read it with a face that, puzzled at first, suddenly grew radiant.

"Listen, Jack," she said excitedly.

"Dear Florrie:

"Nan is confined to house, room, and sofa with a sprained foot. As she will be all alone this afternoon, won't you come down and spend it with her? She very much wants you to come — she is so lonesome and thinks you will be just the one to cheer her up.

"Yours cordially,

"Maude Wallace."

"Are you going?" asked Jack.

"Yes — I don't know — I'll think about it," said Florrie absently. Then she hurried upstairs to her room.

"Shall I go?" she thought. "Yes, I will. I dare say Nan has asked me just out of pity because I was not invited to the picnic. But even so it was sweet of her. I've always thought I would like those Wallace girls if I could get really acquainted with them. They've always been nice to me, too — I don't know why I am always so tonguetied and stupid with them. But I'll go anyway."

That afternoon Mrs. Wallace came into Nan's room.

"Nan, dear, Florrie Hamilton is downstairs asking for you."

"Florrie — Hamilton?"

"Yes. She said something about a note you sent her this morning. Shall I ask her to come up?"

“Yes, of course,” said Nan lamely. When her mother had gone out she fell back on her pillows and thought rapidly.

“Florrie Hamilton! Maude must have addressed that note to her by mistake. But she mustn’t know it was a mistake — mustn’t suspect it. Oh, dear! What shall I ever find to talk to her about? She is so quiet and shy.”

Further reflections were cut short by Florrie’s entrance. Nan held out her hand with a chummy smile.

“It’s good of you to give your afternoon up to visiting a cranky invalid,” she said heartily. “You don’t know how lonesome I’ve been since Maude went away. Take off your hat and pick out the nicest chair you can find, and let’s be comfy.”

Somehow, Nan’s frank greeting did away with Florrie’s embarrassment and made her feel at home. She sat down in Maude’s rocker, then, glancing over to a vase filled with roses, her eyes kindled with pleasure. Seeing this, Nan said, “Aren’t they lovely? We Wallaces are very fond of our climbing roses. Our great-grandmother brought the roots out from England with her sixty years ago, and they grow nowhere else in this country.”

“I know,” said Florrie, with a smile. “I recognized them as soon as I came into the room. They are the same kind of roses as those which grow about Grandmother Hamilton’s house in England. I used to love them so.”

“In England! Were you ever in England?”

“Oh, yes,” laughed Florrie. “And I’ve been in pretty nearly every other country upon earth — every one that a ship could get to, at least.”

“Why, Florrie Hamilton! Are you in earnest?”

“Indeed, yes. Perhaps you don’t know that our ‘now-mother,’ as Jack says sometimes, is Father’s second wife. My own mother died when I was a baby, and my aunt, who had no children of her own, took me to bring up. Her husband was a sea-captain, and she always went on his sea-voyages with him. So I went too. I almost grew up on shipboard. We had delightful times. I never went to school. Auntie had been a teacher before her marriage, and she taught me. Two years ago, when I was fourteen, Father married again, and then he wanted me to go home to him and Jack and our

new mother. So I did, although at first I was very sorry to leave Auntie and the dear old ship and all our lovely wanderings.”

“Oh, tell me all about them,” demanded Nan. “Why, Florrie Hamilton, to think you’ve never said a word about your wonderful experiences! I love to hear about foreign countries from people who have really been there. Please just talk — and I’ll listen and ask questions.”

Florrie did talk. I’m not sure whether she or Nan was the more surprised to find that she could talk so well and describe her travels so brightly and humorously. The afternoon passed quickly, and when Florrie went away at dusk, after a dainty tea served up in Nan’s room, it was with a cordial invitation to come again soon.

“I’ve enjoyed your visit so much,” said Nan sincerely. “I’m going down to see you as soon as I can walk. But don’t wait for that. Let us be good, chummy friends without any ceremony.”

When Florrie, with a light heart and a happy smile, had gone, came Maude, sunburned and glowing from her picnic.

“Such a nice time as we had!” she exclaimed. “Wasn’t I sorry to think of you cooped up here! Did Florrie come?”

“One Florrie did. Maude, you addressed that note to Florrie Hamilton today instead of Florrie Hastings.”

“Nan, surely not! I’m sure—”

“Yes, you did. And she came here. Was I not taken aback at first, Maude!”

“I was thinking about her when I addressed it, and I must have put her name down by mistake. I’m so sorry—”

“You needn’t be. I haven’t been entertained so charmingly for a long while. Why, Maude, she has travelled almost everywhere — and is so bright and witty when she thaws out. She didn’t seem like the same girl at all. She is just perfectly lovely!”

“Well, I’m glad you had such a nice time together. Do you know, some of the girls were very much vexed because she wasn’t asked to the picnic. They said that it was sheer rudeness not to ask her, and that it reflected on us all, even if Patty and Wilhelmina were responsible for it. I’m afraid we

girls at Miss Braxton's have been getting snobbish, and some of us are beginning to find it out and be ashamed of it."

"Just wait until school opens," said Nan — vaguely enough, it would seem. But Maude understood.

However, they did not have to wait until school opened. Long before that time Winboro girlhood discovered that the Wallace girls were taking Florrie Hamilton into their lives. If the Wallace girls liked her, there must be something in the girl more than was at first thought — thus more than one of Miss Braxton's girls reasoned. And gradually the other girls found, as Nan had found, that Florrie was full of fun and an all-round good companion when drawn out of her diffidence. When Miss Braxton's school reopened Florrie was the class favourite. Between her and Nan Wallace a beautiful and helpful friendship had been formed which was to grow and deepen through their whole lives.

"And all because Maude in a fit of abstraction wrote 'Hamilton' for 'Hastings,'" said Nan to herself one day. But that is something Florrie Hamilton will never know.

An Unpremeditated Ceremony

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Selwyn Grant sauntered in upon the assembled family at the homestead as if he were returning from an hour's absence instead of a western sojourn of ten years. Guided by the sound of voices on the still, pungent autumnal air, he went around to the door of the dining room which opened directly on the poppy walk in the garden.

Nobody noticed him for a moment and he stood in the doorway looking at them with a smile, wondering what was the reason of the festal air that hung about them all as visibly as a garment. His mother sat by the table, industriously polishing the best silver spoons, which, as he remembered, were only brought forth upon some great occasion. Her eyes were as bright, her form as erect, her nose — the Carston nose — as pronounced and aristocratic as of yore.

Selwyn saw little change in her. But was it possible that the tall, handsome young lady with the sleek brown pompadour and a nose unmistakably and plebeianly Grant, who sat by the window doing something to a heap of lace and organdy in her lap, was the little curly-headed, sunburned sister of thirteen whom he remembered? The young man leaning against the sideboard must be Leo, of course; a fine-looking, broad-shouldered young fellow who made Selwyn think suddenly that he must be growing old. And there was the little, thin, grey father in the corner, peering at his newspaper with nearsighted eyes. Selwyn's heart gave a bound at the sight of him which not even his mother had caused. Dear old Dad! The years had been kind to him.

Mrs. Grant held up a glistening spoon and surveyed it complacently. "There, I think that is bright enough even to suit Margaret Graham. I shall take over the whole two dozen teas and one dozen desserts. I wish, Bertha, that you would tie a red cord around each of the handles for me. The Carmody spoons are the same pattern and I shall always be convinced that

Mrs. Carmody carried off two of ours the time that Jenny Graham was married. I don't mean to take any more risks. And, Father — —"

Something made the mother look around, and she saw her firstborn!

When the commotion was over Selwyn asked why the family spoons were being rubbed up.

"For the wedding, of course," said Mrs. Grant, polishing her gold-bowed spectacles and deciding that there was no more time for tears and sentiment just then. "And there, they're not half done — and we'll have to dress in another hour. Bertha is no earthly use — she is so taken up with her bridesmaid finery."

"Wedding? Whose wedding?" demanded Selwyn, in bewilderment.

"Why, Leo's, of course. Leo is to be married tonight. Didn't you get your invitation? Wasn't that what brought you home?"

"Hand me a chair, quick," implored Selwyn. "Leo, are you going to commit matrimony in this headlong fashion? Are you sure you're grown up?"

"Six feet is a pretty good imitation of it, isn't it?" grinned Leo. "Brace up, old fellow. It's not so bad as it might be. She's quite a respectable girl. We wrote you all about it three weeks ago and broke the news as gently as possible."

"I left for the East a month ago and have been wandering around preying on old college chums ever since. Haven't seen a letter. There, I'm better now. No, you needn't fan me, Sis. Well, no family can get through the world without its seasons of tribulations. Who is the party of the second part, little brother?"

"Alice Graham," replied Mrs. Grant, who had a habit of speaking for her children, none of whom had the Carston nose.

"Alice Graham! That child!" exclaimed Selwyn in astonishment.

Leo roared. "Come, come, Sel, perhaps we're not very progressive here in Croyden, but we don't actually stand still. Girls are apt to stretch out some between ten and twenty, you know. You old bachelors think nobody ever grows up. Why, Sel, you're grey around your temples."

“Too well I know it, but a man’s own brother shouldn’t be the first to cast such things up to him. I’ll admit, since I come to think of it, that Alice has probably grown bigger. Is she any better-looking than she used to be?”

“Alice is a charming girl,” said Mrs. Grant impressively. “She is a beauty and she is also sweet and sensible, which beauties are not always. We are all very much pleased with Leo’s choice. But we have really no more time to spare just now. The wedding is at seven o’clock and it is four already.”

“Is there anybody you can send to the station for my luggage?” asked Selwyn. “Luckily I have a new suit, otherwise I shouldn’t have the face to go.”

“Well, I must be off,” said Mrs. Grant. “Father, take Selwyn away so that I shan’t be tempted to waste time talking to him.”

In the library father and son looked at each other affectionately.

“Dad, it’s a blessing to see you just the same. I’m a little dizzy with all these changes. Bertha grown up and Leo within an inch of being married! To Alice Graham at that, whom I can’t think of yet as anything else than the long-legged, black-eyed imp of mischief she was when a kiddy. To tell you the truth, Dad, I don’t feel in a mood for going to a wedding at Wish-ton-wish tonight. I’m sure you don’t either. You’ve always hated fusses. Can’t we shirk it?”

They smiled at each other with chummy remembrance of many a family festival they had “shirked” together in the old days. But Mr. Grant shook his head. “Not this time, sonny. There are some things a decent man can’t shirk and one of them is his own boy’s wedding. It’s a nuisance, but I must go through with it. You’ll understand how it is when you’re a family man yourself. By the way, why aren’t you a family man by this time? Why haven’t I been put to the bother and inconvenience of attending your wedding before now, son?”

Selwyn laughed, with a little vibrant note of bitterness in the laughter, which the father’s quick ears detected. “I’ve been too busy with law books, Dad, to find me a wife.”

Mr. Grant shook his bushy grey head. "That's not the real reason, son. The world has a wife for every man; if he hasn't found her by the time he's thirty-five, there's some real reason for it. Well, I don't want to pry into yours, but I hope it's a sound one and not a mean, sneaking, selfish sort of reason. Perhaps you'll choose a Madam Selwyn some day yet. In case you should I'm going to give you a small bit of good advice. Your mother — now, she's a splendid woman, Selwyn, a splendid woman. She can't be matched as a housekeeper and she has improved my finances until I don't know them when I meet them. She's been a good wife and a good mother. If I were a young man I'd court her and marry her over again, that I would. But, son, when you pick a wife pick one with a nice little commonplace nose, not a family nose. Never marry a woman with a family nose, son."

A woman with a family nose came into the library at this juncture and beamed maternally upon them both. "There's a bite for you in the dining room. After you've eaten it you must dress. Mind you brush your hair well down, Father. The green room is ready for you, Selwyn. Tomorrow I'll have a good talk with you, but tonight I'll be too busy to remember you're around. How are we all going to get over to Wish-ton-wish? Leo and Bertha are going in the pony carriage. It won't hold a third passenger. You'll have to squeeze in with Father and me in the buggy, Selwyn."

"By no means," replied Selwyn briskly. "I'll walk over to Wish-ton-wish. It's only half a mile across lots. I suppose the old way is still open?"

"It ought to be," answered Mr. Grant drily; "Leo has kept it well trodden. If you've forgotten how it runs he can tell you."

"I haven't forgotten," said Selwyn, a little brusquely. He had his own reasons for remembering the wood path. Leo had not been the first Grant to go courting to Wish-ton-wish.

When he started, the moon was rising round and red and hazy in an eastern hill-gap. The autumn air was mild and spicy. Long shadows stretched across the fields on his right and silvery mosaics patterned the floor of the old beechwood lane. Selwyn walked slowly. He was thinking of Esme Graham or, rather, of the girl who had been Esme Graham, and wondering if he would see her at the wedding. It was probable, and he did

not want to see her. In spite of ten years' effort, he did not think he could yet look upon Tom St. Clair's wife with the proper calm indifference. At the best, it would taint his own memory of her; he would never again be able to think of her as Esme Graham but only as Esme St. Clair.

The Grahams had come to Wish-ton-wish eleven years before. There was a big family of girls of whom the tall, brown-haired Esme was the oldest. There was one summer during which Selwyn Grant had haunted Wish-ton-wish, the merry comrade of the younger girls, the boyishly, silently devoted lover of Esme. Tom St. Clair had always been there too, in his right as second cousin, Selwyn had supposed. One day he found out that Tom and Esme had been engaged ever since she was sixteen; one of her sisters told him. That had been all. He had gone away soon after, and some time later a letter from home made casual mention of Tom St. Clair's marriage.

He narrowly missed being late for the wedding ceremony. The bridal party entered the parlour at Wish-ton-wish at the same moment as he slipped in by another door. Selwyn almost whistled with amazement at sight of the bride. That Alice Graham, that tall, stately, blushing young woman, with her masses of dead-black hair, frosted over by the film of wedding veil! Could that be the scrawny little tomboy of ten years ago? She looked not unlike Esme, with that subtle family resemblance that is quite independent of feature and colouring.

Where was Esme? Selwyn cast his eyes furtively over the assembled guests while the minister read the marriage ceremony. He recognized several of the Graham girls but he did not see Esme, although Tom St. Clair, stout and florid and prosperous-looking, was standing on a chair in a faraway corner, peering over the heads of the women.

After the turmoil of handshakings and congratulations, Selwyn fled to the cool, still outdoors, where the rosy glow of Chinese lanterns mingled with the waves of moonshine to make fairyland. And there he met her, as she came out of the house by a side door, a tall, slender woman in some glistening, clinging garment, with white flowers shining like stars in the coils of her brown hair. In the soft glow she looked even more beautiful

than in the days of her girlhood, and Selwyn's heart throbbed dangerously at sight of her.

"Esme!" he said involuntarily.

She started, and he had an idea that she changed colour, although it was too dim to be sure. "Selwyn!" she exclaimed, putting out her hands. "Why, Selwyn Grant! Is it really you? Or are you such stuff as dreams are made of? I did not know you were here. I did not know you were home."

He caught her hands and held them tightly, drawing her a little closer to him, forgetting that she was Tom St. Clair's wife, remembering only that she was the woman to whom he had given all his love and life's devotion, to the entire beggaring of his heart.

"I reached home only four hours ago, and was haled straightway here to Leo's wedding. I'm dizzy, Esme. I can't adjust my old conceptions to this new state of affairs all at once. It seems ridiculous to think that Leo and Alice are married. I'm sure they can't be really grown up."

Esme laughed as she drew away her hands. "We are all ten years older," she said lightly.

"Not you. You are more beautiful than ever, Esme. That sunflower compliment is permissible in an old friend, isn't it?"

"This mellow glow is kinder to me than sunlight now. I am thirty, you know, Selwyn."

"And I have some grey hairs," he confessed. "I knew I had them but I had a sneaking hope that other folks didn't until Leo destroyed it today. These young brothers and sisters who won't stay children are nuisances. You'll be telling me next thing that 'Baby' is grown up."

"'Baby' is eighteen and has a beau," laughed Esme. "And I give you fair warning that she insists on being called Laura now. Do you want to come for a walk with me — down under the beeches to the old lane gate? I came out to see if the fresh air would do my bit of a headache good. I shall have to help with the supper later on."

They went slowly across the lawn and turned into a dim, moonlight lane beyond, their old favourite ramble. Selwyn felt like a man in a dream, a pleasant dream from which he dreads to awaken. The voices and laughter

echoing out from the house died away behind them and the great silence of the night fell about them as they came to the old gate, beyond which was a range of shining, moonlight-misted fields.

For a little while neither of them spoke. The woman looked out across the white spaces and the man watched the glimmering curve of her neck and the soft darkness of her rich hair. How virginal, how sacred, she looked! The thought of Tom St. Clair was a sacrilege.

“It’s nice to see you again, Selwyn,” said Esme frankly at last. “There are so few of our old set left, and so many of the babies grown up. Sometimes I don’t know my own world, it has changed so. It’s an uncomfortable feeling. You give me a pleasant sensation of really belonging here. I’d be lonesome tonight if I dared. I’m going to miss Alice so much. There will be only Mother and Baby and I left now. Our family circle has dwindled woefully.”

“Mother and Baby and you!” Selwyn felt his head whirling again. “Why, where is Tom?”

He felt that it was an idiotic question, but it slipped from his tongue before he could catch it. Esme turned her head and looked at him wonderingly. He knew that in the sunlight her eyes were as mistily blue as early meadow violets, but here they looked dark and unfathomably tender.

“Tom?” she said perplexedly. “Do you mean Tom St. Clair? He is here, of course, he and his wife. Didn’t you see her? That pretty woman in pale pink, Lil Meredith. Why, you used to know Lil, didn’t you? One of the Uxbridge Merediths?”

To the day of his death Selwyn Grant will firmly believe that if he had not clutched fast hold of the top bar of the gate he would have tumbled down on the moss under the beeches in speechless astonishment. All the surprises of that surprising evening were as nothing to this. He had a swift conviction that there were no words in the English language that could fully express his feelings and that it would be a waste of time to try to find any. Therefore he laid hold of the first baldly commonplace ones that came handy and said tamely, “I thought you were married to Tom.”

“You — thought — I — was — married — to — Tom!” repeated Esme slowly. “And have you thought that all these years, Selwyn Grant?”

“Yes, I have. Is it any wonder? You were engaged to Tom when I went away, Jenny told me you were. And a year later Bertha wrote me a letter in which she made some reference to Tom’s marriage. She didn’t say to whom, but hadn’t I the right to suppose it was to you?”

“Oh!” The word was partly a sigh and partly a little cry of long-concealed, long-denied pain. “It’s been all a funny misunderstanding. Tom and I were engaged once — a boy-and-girl affair in the beginning. Then we both found out that we had made a mistake — that what we had thought was love was merely the affection of good comrades. We broke our engagement shortly before you went away. All the older girls knew it was broken but I suppose nobody mentioned the matter to Jen. She was such a child, we never thought about her. And you’ve thought I was Tom’s wife all this time? It’s — funny.”

“Funny. You mean tragic! Look here, Esme, I’m not going to risk any more misunderstanding. There’s nothing for it but plain talk when matters get to such a state as this. I love you — and I’ve loved you ever since I met you. I went away because I could not stay here and see you married to another man. I’ve stayed away for the same reason. Esme, is it too late? Did you ever care anything for me?”

“Yes, I did,” she said slowly.

“Do you care still?” he asked.

She hid her face against his shoulder. “Yes,” she whispered.

“Then we’ll go back to the house and be married,” he said joyfully.

Esme broke away and stared at him. “Married!”

“Yes, married. We’ve wasted ten years and we’re not going to waste another minute. We’re not, I say.”

“Selwyn! It’s impossible.”

“I have expurgated that word from my dictionary. It’s the very simplest thing when you look at it in an unprejudiced way. Here is a ready-made wedding and decorations and assembled guests, a minister on the spot and a state where no licence is required. You have a very pretty new dress on

and you love me. I have a plain gold ring on my little finger that will fit you. Aren't all the conditions fulfilled? Where is the sense of waiting and having another family upheaval in a few weeks' time?"

"I understand why you have made such a success of the law," said Esme, "but—"

"There are no buts. Come with me, Esme. I'm going to hunt up your mother and mine and talk to them."

Half an hour later an astonishing whisper went circulating among the guests. Before they could grasp its significance Tom St. Clair and Jen's husband, broadly smiling, were hustling scattered folk into the parlour again and making clear a passage in the hall. The minister came in with his blue book, and then Selwyn Grant and Esme Graham walked in hand in hand.

When the second ceremony was over, Mr. Grant shook his son's hand vigorously. "There's no need to wish you happiness, son; you've got it. And you've made one fuss and bother do for both weddings, that's what I call genius. And" — this in a careful whisper, while Esme was temporarily obliterated in Mrs. Grant's capacious embrace—"she's got the right sort of a nose. But your mother is a grand woman, son, a grand woman."

At the Bay Shore Farm

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The Newburys were agog with excitement over the Governor's picnic. As they talked it over on the verandah at sunset, they felt that life could not be worth living to those unfortunate people who had not been invited to it. Not that there were many of the latter in Claymont, for it was the Governor's native village, and the Claymonters were getting up the picnic for him during his political visit to the city fifteen miles away.

Each of the Newburys had a special reason for wishing to attend the Governor's picnic. Ralph and Elliott wanted to see the Governor himself. He was a pet hero of theirs. Had he not once been a Claymont lad just like themselves? Had he not risen to the highest office in the state by dint of sheer hard work and persistency? Had he not won a national reputation by his prompt and decisive measures during the big strike at Campden? And was he not a man, personally and politically, whom any boy might be proud to imitate? Yes, to all of these questions. Hence to the Newbury boys the interest of the picnic centred in the Governor.

"I shall feel two inches taller just to get a look at him," said Ralph enthusiastically.

"He isn't much to look at," said Frances, rather patronizingly. "I saw him once at Campden — he came to the school when his daughter was graduated. He is bald and fat. Oh, of course, he is famous and all that! But I want to go to the picnic to see Sara Beaumont. She's to be there with the Chandlers from Campden, and Mary Spearman, who knows her by sight, is going to point her out to me. I suppose it would be too much to expect to be introduced to her. I shall probably have to content myself with just looking at her."

Ralph resented hearing the Governor called bald and fat. Somehow it seemed as if his hero were being reduced to the level of common clay.

“That’s like a girl,” he said loftily; “thinking more about a woman who writes books than about a man like the Governor!”

“I’d rather see Sara Beaumont than forty governors,” retorted Frances. “Why, she’s famous — and her books are perfect! If I could ever hope to write anything like them! It’s been the dream of my life just to see her ever since I read *The Story of Idlewild*. And now to think that it is to be fulfilled! It seems too good to be true that tomorrow — tomorrow, Newburys, — I shall see Sara Beaumont!”

“Well,” said Cecilia gently — Cecilia was always gentle even in her enthusiasm—“I shall like to see the Governor and Sara Beaumont too. But I’m going to the picnic more for the sake of seeing Nan Harris than anything else. It’s three years since she went away, you know, and I’ve never had another chum whom I love so dearly. I’m just looking forward to meeting her and talking over all our dear, good old times. I do wonder if she has changed much. But I am sure I shall know her.”

“By her red hair and her freckles?” questioned Elliott teasingly. “They’ll be the same as ever, I’ll be bound.”

Cecilia flushed and looked as angry as she could — which isn’t saying much, after all. She didn’t mind when Elliott teased her about her pug nose and her big mouth, but it always hurt her when he made fun of Nan.

Nan’s family had once lived across the street from the Newburys. Nan and Cecilia had been playmates all through childhood, but when both girls were fourteen the Harrises had moved out west. Cecilia had never seen Nan since. But now the latter had come east for a visit, and was with her relatives in Campden. She was to be at the picnic, and Cecilia’s cup of delight brimmed over.

Mrs. Newbury came briskly into the middle of their sunset plans. She had been down to the post office, and she carried an open letter in her hand.

“Mother,” said Frances, straightening up anxiously, “you have a pitying expression on your face. Which of us is it for — speak out — don’t keep us in suspense. Has Mary Spearman told you that Sara Beaumont isn’t going to be at the picnic?”

“Or that the Governor isn’t going to be there?”

“Or that Nan Harris isn’t coming?”

“Or that something’s happened to put off the affair altogether?” cried Ralph and Cecilia and Elliott all at once.

Mrs. Newbury laughed. “No, it’s none of those things. And I don’t know just whom I do pity, but it is one of you girls. This is a letter from Grandmother Newbury. Tomorrow is her birthday, and she wants either Frances or Cecilia to go out to Ashland on the early morning train and spend the day at the Bay Shore Farm.”

There was silence on the verandah of the Newburys for the space of ten seconds. Then Frances burst out with: “Mother, you know neither of us can go tomorrow. If it were any other day! But the day of the picnic!”

“I’m sorry, but one of you must go,” said Mrs. Newbury firmly. “Your father said so when I called at the store to show him the letter. Grandmother Newbury would be very much hurt and displeased if her invitation were disregarded — you know that. But we leave it to yourselves to decide which one shall go.”

“Don’t do that,” implored Frances miserably. “Pick one of us yourself — pull straws — anything to shorten the agony.”

“No; you must settle it for yourselves,” said Mrs. Newbury. But in spite of herself she looked at Cecilia. Cecilia was apt to be looked at, someway, when things were to be given up. Mostly it was Cecilia who gave them up. The family had come to expect it of her; they all said that Cecilia was very unselfish.

Cecilia knew that her mother looked at her, but did not turn her face. She couldn’t, just then; she looked away out over the hills and tried to swallow something that came up in her throat.

“Glad I’m not a girl,” said Ralph, when Mrs. Newbury had gone into the house. “Whew! Nothing could induce me to give up that picnic — not if a dozen Grandmother Newburys were offended. Where’s your sparkle gone now, Fran?”

“It’s too bad of Grandmother Newbury,” declared Frances angrily.

“Oh, Fran, she didn’t know about the picnic,” said Cecilia — but still without turning round.

“Well, she needn’t always be so annoyed if we don’t go when we are invited. Another day would do just as well,” said Frances shortly. Something in her voice sounded choked too. She rose and walked to the other end of the verandah, where she stood and scowled down the road; Ralph and Elliott, feeling uncomfortable, went away.

The verandah was very still for a little while. The sun had quite set, and it was growing dark when Frances came back to the steps.

“Well, what are you going to do about it?” she said shortly. “Which of us is to go to the Bay Shore?”

“I suppose I had better go,” said Cecilia slowly — very slowly indeed. Frances kicked her slippered toe against the fern jardinière.

“You may see Nan Harris somewhere else before she goes back,” she said consolingly.

“Yes, I may,” said Cecilia. She knew quite well that she would not. Nan would return to Campden on the special train, and she was going back west in three days.

It was hard to give the picnic up, but Cecilia was used to giving things up. Nobody ever expected Frances to give things up; she was so brilliant and popular that the good things of life came her way naturally. It never seemed to matter so much about quiet Cecilia.

Cecilia cried herself to sleep that night. She felt that it was horribly selfish of her to do so, but she couldn’t help it. She awoke in the morning with a confused idea that it was very late. Why hadn’t Mary called her, as she had been told to do?

Through the open door between her room and Frances’s she could see that the latter’s bed was empty. Then she saw a little note, addressed to her, pinned on the pillow.

Dear Saint Cecilia [it ran], when you read this I shall be on the train to Ashland to spend the day with Grandmother Newbury. You’ve been giving up things so often and so long that I suppose you think you have a monopoly of it; but you see you haven’t. I didn’t tell you this last night

because I hadn't quite made up my mind. But after you went upstairs, I fought it out to a finish and came to a decision. Sara Beaumont would keep, but Nan Harris wouldn't, so you must go to the picnic. I told Mary to call me instead of you this morning, and now I'm off. You needn't spoil your fun pitying me. Now that the wrench is over, I feel a most delightful glow of virtuous satisfaction!

Fran.

If by running after Frances Cecilia could have brought her back, Cecilia would have run. But a glance at her watch told her that Frances must already be halfway to Ashland. So she could only accept the situation.

"Well, anyway," she thought, "I'll get Mary to point Sara Beaumont out to me, and I'll store up a description of her in my mind to tell Fran tonight. I must remember to take notice of the colour of her eyes. Fran has always been exercised about that."

It was mid-forenoon when Frances arrived at Ashland station. Grandmother Newbury's man, Hiram, was waiting for her with the pony carriage, and Frances heartily enjoyed the three-mile drive to the Bay Shore Farm.

Grandmother Newbury came to the door to meet her granddaughter. She was a tall, handsome old lady with piercing black eyes and thick white hair. There was no savour of the traditional grandmother of caps and knitting about her. She was like a stately old princess and, much as her grandchildren admired her, they were decidedly in awe of her.

"So it is Frances," she said, bending her head graciously that Frances might kiss her still rosy cheek. "I expected it would be Cecilia. I heard after I had written you that there was to be a gubernatorial picnic in Claymont today, so I was quite sure it would be Cecilia. Why isn't it Cecilia?"

Frances flushed a little. There was a meaning tone in Grandmother Newbury's voice.

"Cecilia was very anxious to go to the picnic today to see an old friend of hers," she answered. "She was willing to come here, but you know,

Grandmother, that Cecilia is always willing to do the things somebody else ought to do, so I decided I would stand on my rights as ‘Miss Newbury’ for once and come to the Bay Shore.”

Grandmother Newbury smiled. She understood. Frances had always been her favourite granddaughter, but she had never been blind, clear-sighted old lady that she was, to the little leaven of easygoing selfishness in the girl’s nature. She was pleased to see that Frances had conquered it this time.

“I’m glad it is you who have come — principally because you are cleverer than Cecilia,” she said brusquely. “Or at least you are the better talker. And I want a clever girl and a good talker to help me entertain a guest today. She’s clever herself, and she likes young girls. She is a particular friend of your Uncle Robert’s family down south, and that is why I have asked her to spend a few days with me. You’ll like her.”

Here Grandmother Newbury led Frances into the sitting-room.

“Mrs. Kennedy, this is my granddaughter, Frances Newbury. I told you about her and her ambitions last night. You see, Frances, we have talked you over.”

Mrs. Kennedy was a much younger woman than Grandmother Newbury. She was certainly no more than fifty and, in spite of her grey hair, looked almost girlish, so bright were her dark eyes, so clear-cut and fresh her delicate face, and so smart her general appearance. Frances, although not given to sudden likings, took one for Mrs. Kennedy. She thought she had never seen so charming a face.

She found herself enjoying the day immensely. In fact, she forgot the Governor’s picnic and Sara Beaumont altogether. Mrs. Kennedy proved to be a delightful companion. She had travelled extensively and was an excellent raconteur. She had seen much of men and women and crystallized her experiences into sparkling little sentences and epigrams which made Frances feel as if she were listening to one of the witty people in clever books. But under all her sparkling wit there was a strongly felt undercurrent of true womanly sympathy and kindheartedness which won affection as speedily as her brilliance won admiration. Frances listened

and laughed and enjoyed. Once she found time to think that she would have missed a great deal if she had not come to Bay Shore Farm that day. Surely talking to a woman like Mrs. Kennedy was better than looking at Sara Beaumont from a distance.

“I’ve been ‘rewarded’ in the most approved storybook style,” she thought with amusement.

In the afternoon, Grandmother Newbury packed Mrs. Kennedy and Frances off for a walk.

“The old woman wants to have her regular nap,” she told them. “Frances, take Mrs. Kennedy to the fern walk and show her the famous ‘Newbury Bubble’ among the rocks. I want to be rid of you both until teatime.”

Frances and Mrs. Kennedy went to the fern walk and the beautiful “Bubble” — a clear, round spring of amber-hued water set down in a cup of rock overhung with ferns and beeches. It was a spot Frances had always loved. She found herself talking freely to Mrs. Kennedy of her hopes and plans. The older woman drew the girl out with tactful sympathy until she found that Frances’s dearest ambition was some day to be a writer of books like Sara Beaumont.

“Not that I expect ever to write books like hers,” she said hurriedly, “and I know it must be a long while before I can write anything worth while at all. But do you think — if I try hard and work hard — that I might do something in this line some day?”

“I think so,” said Mrs. Kennedy, smiling, “if, as you say, you are willing to work hard and study hard. There will be a great deal of both and many disappointments. Sara Beaumont herself had a hard time at first — and for a very long first too. Her family was poor, you know, and Sara earned enough money to send away her first manuscripts by making a pot of jelly for a neighbour. The manuscripts came back, and Sara made more jelly and wrote more stories. Still they came back. Once she thought she had better give up writing stories and stick to the jelly alone. There did seem some little demand for the one and none at all for the other. But she determined to keep on until she either succeeded or proved to her own

satisfaction that she could make better jelly than stories. And you see she did succeed. But it means perseverance and patience and much hard work. Prepare yourself for that, Frances, and one day you will win your place. Then you will look back to the 'Newbury Bubble,' and you will tell me what a good prophetess I was."

They talked longer — an earnest, helpful talk that went far to inspire Frances's hazy ambition with a definite purpose. She understood that she must not write merely to win fame for herself or even for the higher motive of pure pleasure in her work. She must aim, however humbly, to help her readers to higher planes of thought and endeavour. Then and only then would it be worth while.

"Mrs. Kennedy is going to drive you to the station," said Grandmother Newbury after tea. "I am much obliged to you, Frances, for giving up the picnic today and coming to the Bay Shore to gratify an old woman's inconvenient whim. But I shall not burden you with too much gratitude, for I think you have enjoyed yourself."

"Indeed, I have," said Frances heartily. Then she added with a laugh, "I think I would feel much more meritorious if it had not been so pleasant. It has robbed me of all the self-sacrificing complacency I felt this morning. You see, I wanted to go to that picnic to see Sara Beaumont, and I felt quite like a martyr at giving it up."

Grandmother Newbury's eyes twinkled. "You would have been beautifully disappointed had you gone. Sara Beaumont was not there. Mrs. Kennedy, I see you haven't told our secret. Frances, my dear, let me introduce you two over again. This lady is Mrs. Sara Beaumont Kennedy, the writer of *The Story of Idlewild* and all those other books you so much admire."

The Newburys were sitting on the verandah at dusk, too tired and too happy to talk. Ralph and Elliott had seen the Governor; more than that, they had been introduced to him, and he had shaken hands with them both and told them that their father and he had been chums when just their size. And Cecilia had spent a whole day with Nan Harris, who had not changed at all except to grow taller. But there was one little cloud on her content.

“I wanted to see Sara Beaumont to tell Frances about her, but I couldn’t get a glimpse of her. I don’t even know if she was there.”

“There comes Fran up the station road now,” said Ralph. “My eyes, hasn’t she a step!”

Frances came smiling over the lawn and up the steps.

“So you are all home safe,” she said gaily. “I hope you feasted your eyes on your beloved Governor, boys. I can tell that Cecilia forgathered with Nan by the beatific look on her face.”

“Oh, Fran, it was lovely!” cried Cecilia. “But I felt so sorry — why didn’t you let me go to Ashland? It was too bad you missed it — and Sara Beaumont.”

“Sara Beaumont was at the Bay Shore Farm,” said Frances. “I’ll tell you all about it when I get my breath — I’ve been breathless ever since Grandmother Newbury told me of it. There’s only one drawback to my supreme bliss — the remembrance of how complacently self-sacrificing I felt this morning. It humiliates me wholesomely to remember it!”

Elizabeth's Child

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The Ingelows, of Ingelow Grange, were not a marrying family. Only one of them, Elizabeth, had married, and perhaps it was her “poor match” that discouraged the others. At any rate, Ellen and Charlotte and George Ingelow at the Grange were single, and so was Paul down at Greenwood Farm.

It was seventeen years since Elizabeth had married James Sheldon in the face of the most decided opposition on the part of her family. Sheldon was a handsome, shiftless ne’er-do-well, without any violent bad habits, but also “without any backbone,” as the Ingelows declared. “There is sometimes hope of a man who is actively bad,” Charlotte Ingelow had said sententiously, “but who ever heard of reforming a jellyfish?”

Elizabeth and her husband had gone west and settled on a prairie farm in Manitoba. She had never been home since. Perhaps her pride kept her away, for she had the Ingelow share of that, and she soon discovered that her family’s estimate of James Sheldon had been the true one. There was no active resentment on either side, and once in a long while letters were exchanged. Still, ever since her marriage, Elizabeth had been practically an outsider and an alien. As the years came and went the Ingelows at home remembered only at long intervals that they had a sister on the western prairies.

One of these remembrances came to Charlotte Ingelow on a spring afternoon when the great orchards about the Grange were pink and white with apple and cherry blossoms, and over every hill and field was a delicate, flower-starred green. A soft breeze was blowing loose petals from the August Sweeting through the open door of the wide hall when Charlotte came through it. Ellen and George were standing on the steps outside.

“This kind of a day always makes me think of Elizabeth,” said Charlotte dreamily. “It was in apple-blossom time she went away.” The Ingelows always spoke of Elizabeth’s going away, never of her marrying.

“Seventeen years ago,” said Ellen. “Why, Elizabeth’s oldest child must be quite a young woman now! I — I—” a sudden idea swept over and left her a little breathless. “I would really like to see her.”

“Then why don’t you write and ask her to come east and visit us?” asked George, who did not often speak, but who always spoke to some purpose when he did.

Ellen and Charlotte looked at each other. “I would like to see Elizabeth’s child,” repeated Ellen firmly.

“Do you think she would come?” asked Charlotte. “You know when James Sheldon died five years ago, we wrote to Elizabeth and asked her to come home and live with us, and she seemed almost resentful in the letter she wrote back. I’ve never said so before, but I’ve often thought it.”

“Yes, she did,” said Ellen, who had often thought so too, but never said so.

“Elizabeth was always very independent,” remarked George. “Perhaps she thought your letter savoured of charity or pity. No Ingelow would endure that.”

“At any rate, you know she refused to come, even for a visit. She said she could not leave the farm. She may refuse to let her child come.”

“It won’t do any harm to ask her,” said George.

In the end, Charlotte wrote to Elizabeth and asked her to let her daughter visit the old homestead. The letter was written and mailed in much perplexity and distrust when once the glow of momentary enthusiasm in the new idea had passed.

“What if Elizabeth’s child is like her father?” queried Charlotte in a half-whisper.

“Let us hope she won’t be!” cried Ellen fervently. Indeed, she felt that a feminine edition of James Sheldon would be more than she could endure.

“She may not like us, or our ways,” sighed Charlotte. “We don’t know how she has been brought up. She will seem like a stranger after all. I

really long to see Elizabeth's child, but I can't help fearing we have done a rash thing, Ellen."

"Perhaps she may not come," suggested Ellen, wondering whether she hoped it or feared it.

But Worth Sheldon did come. Elizabeth wrote back a prompt acceptance, with no trace of the proud bitterness that had permeated her answer to the former invitation. The Ingelows at the Grange were thrown into a flutter when the letter came. In another week Elizabeth's child would be with them.

"If only she isn't like her father," said Charlotte with foreboding, as she aired and swept the southeast spare room for their expected guest. They had three spare rooms at the Grange, but the aunts had selected the southeast one for their niece because it was done in white, "and white seems the most appropriate for a young girl," Ellen said, as she arranged a pitcher of wild roses on the table.

"I think everything is ready," announced Charlotte. "I put the very finest sheets on the bed, they smell deliciously of lavender, and we had very good luck doing up the muslin curtains. It is pleasant to be expecting a guest, isn't it, Ellen? I have often thought, although I have never said so before, that our lives were too self-centred. We seemed to have no interests outside of ourselves. Even Elizabeth has been really nothing to us, you know. She seemed to have become a stranger. I hope her child will be the means of bringing us nearer together again."

"If she has James Sheldon's round face and big blue eyes and curly yellow hair I shall never really like her, no matter how Ingelowish she may be inside," said Ellen decidedly.

When Worth Sheldon came, each of her aunts drew a long breath of relief. Worth was not in the least like her father in appearance. Neither did she resemble her mother, who had been a sprightly, black-haired and black-eyed girl. Worth was tall and straight, with a long braid of thick, wavy brown hair, large, level-gazing grey eyes, a square jaw, and an excellent chin with a dimple in it.

“She is the very image of Mother’s sister, Aunt Alice, who died so long ago,” said Charlotte. “You don’t remember her, Ellen, but I do very well. She was the sweetest woman that ever drew breath. She was Paul’s favourite aunt, too,” Charlotte added with a sigh. Paul’s antagonistic attitude was the only drawback to the joy of this meeting. How delightful it would have been if he had not refused to be there too, to welcome Elizabeth’s child.

Worth came to hearts prepared to love her, but they must have loved her in any case. In a day Aunt Charlotte and Aunt Ellen and shy, quiet Uncle George had yielded wholly to her charm. She was girlishly bright and merry, frankly delighted with the old homestead and the quaint, old-fashioned, daintily kept rooms. Yet there was no suggestion of gush about her; she did not go into raptures, but her pleasure shone out in eyes and tones. There was so much to tell and ask and remember the first day that it was not until the second morning after her arrival that Worth asked the question her aunts had been dreading. She asked it out in the orchard, in the emerald gloom of a long arcade of stout old trees that Grandfather Ingelow had planted fifty years ago.

“Aunt Charlotte, when is Uncle Paul coming up to see me? I long to see him; Mother has talked so much to me about him. She was his favourite sister, wasn’t she?”

Charlotte and Ellen looked at each other. Ellen nodded slyly. It would be better to tell Worth the whole truth at once. She would certainly find it out soon.

“I do not think, my dear,” said Aunt Charlotte quietly, “that your Uncle Paul will be up to see you at all.”

“Why not?” asked Worth, her serious grey eyes looking straight into Aunt Charlotte’s troubled dark ones. Aunt Charlotte understood that Elizabeth had never told Worth anything about her family’s resentment of her marriage. It was not a pleasant thing to have to explain it all to Elizabeth’s child, but it must be done.

“I think, my dear,” she said gently, “that I will have to tell you a little bit of our family history that may not be very pleasant to hear or tell.

Perhaps you don't know that when your mother married we — we — did not exactly approve of her marriage. Perhaps we were mistaken; at any rate it was wrong and foolish to let it come between us and her as we have done. But that is how it was. None of us approved, as I have said, but none of us was so bitter as your Uncle Paul. Your mother was his favourite sister, and he was very deeply attached to her. She was only a year younger than he. When he bought the Greenwood farm she went and kept house for him for three years before her marriage. When she married, Paul was terribly angry. He was always a strange man, very determined and unyielding. He said he would never forgive her, and he never has. He has never married, and he has lived so long alone at Greenwood with only deaf old Mrs. Bree to keep house for him that he has grown odder than ever. One of us wanted to go and keep house for him, but he would not let us. And — I must tell you this although I hate to — he was very angry when he heard we had invited you to visit us, and he said he would not come near the Grange as long as you were here. Oh, you can't realize how bitter and obstinate he is. We pleaded with him, but I think that only made him worse. We have felt so bad over it, your Aunt Ellen and your Uncle George and I, but we can do nothing at all."

Worth had listened gravely. The story was all new to her, but she had long thought there must be a something at the root of her mother's indifferent relations with her old home and friends. When Aunt Charlotte, flushed and half-tearful, finished speaking, a little glimmer of fun came into Worth's grey eyes, and her dimple was very pronounced as she said,

"Then, if Uncle Paul will not come to see me, I must go to see him."

"My dear!" cried both her aunts together in dismay. Aunt Ellen got her breath first.

"Oh, my dear child, you must not think of such a thing," she cried nervously. "It would never do. He would — I don't know what he would do — order you off the premises, or say something dreadful. No! No! Wait. Perhaps he will come after all — we will see. You must have patience."

Worth shook her head and the smile in her eyes deepened.

“I don’t think he will come,” she said. “Mother has told me something about the Ingelow stubbornness. She says I have it in full measure, but I like to call it determination, it sounds so much better. No, the mountain will not come to Mohammed, so Mohammed will go to the mountain. I think I will walk down to Greenwood this afternoon. There, dear aunties, don’t look so troubled. Uncle Paul won’t run at me with a pitchfork, will he? He can’t do worse than order me off his premises, as you say.”

Aunt Charlotte shook her head. She understood that no argument would turn the girl from her purpose if she had the Ingelow will, so she said nothing more. In the afternoon Worth set out for Greenwood, a mile away.

“Oh, what will Paul say?” exclaimed the aunts, with dismal forebodings.

Worth met her Uncle Paul at the garden gate. He was standing there when she came up the slope of the long lane, a tall, massive figure of a man, with deep-set black eyes, a long, prematurely white beard, and a hooked nose. Handsome and stubborn enough Paul Ingelow looked. It was not without reason that his neighbours called him the oddest Ingelow of them all.

Behind him was a fine old farmhouse in beautiful grounds. Worth felt almost as much interested in Greenwood as in the Grange. It had been her mother’s home for three years, and Elizabeth Ingelow had loved it and talked much to her daughter of it.

Paul Ingelow did not move or speak, although he probably guessed who his visitor was. Worth held out her hand. “How do you do, Uncle Paul?” she said.

Paul ignored the outstretched hand. “Who are you?” he asked gruffly.

“I am Worth Sheldon, your sister Elizabeth’s daughter,” she answered. “Won’t you shake hands with me, Uncle Paul?”

“I have no sister Elizabeth,” he answered unbendingly.

Worth folded her hands on the gatepost and met his frowning gaze unshrinkingly. “Oh, yes, you have,” she said calmly. “You can’t do away with natural ties by simply ignoring them, Uncle Paul. They go on existing. I never knew until this morning that you were at enmity with my

mother. She never told me. But she has talked a great deal of you to me. She has told me often how much you and she loved each other and how good you always were to her. She sent her love to you.”

“Years ago I had a sister Elizabeth,” said Paul Ingelow harshly. “I loved her very tenderly, but she married against my will a shiftless scamp who—”

Worth lifted her hand slightly. “He was my father, Uncle Paul, and he was always kind to me; whatever his faults may have been I cannot listen to a word against him.”

“You shouldn’t have come here, then,” he said, but he said it less harshly. There was even a certain reluctant approval of this composed, independent niece in his eyes. “Didn’t they tell you at the Grange that I didn’t want to see you?”

“Yes, they told me this morning, but I wanted to see you, so I came. Why cannot we be friends, Uncle Paul, not because we are uncle and niece, but simply because you are you and I am I? Let us leave my father and mother out of the question and start fair on our own account.”

For a moment Uncle Paul looked at her. She met his gaze frankly and firmly, with a merry smile lurking in her eyes. Then he threw back his head and laughed a hearty laugh that was good to hear. “Very well,” he said. “It is a bargain.”

He put his hand over the gate and shook hers. Then he opened the gate and invited her into the house. Worth stayed to tea, and Uncle Paul showed her all over Greenwood.

“You are to come here as often as you like,” he told her. “When a young lady and I make a compact of friendship I am going to live up to it. But you are not to talk to me about your mother. Remember, we are friends because I am I and you are you, and there is no question of anybody else.”

The Grange Ingelows were amazed to see Paul bringing Worth home in his buggy that evening. When Worth had gone into the house Charlotte told him that she was glad to see that he had relented towards Elizabeth’s child.

“I have not,” he made stern answer. “I don’t know whom you mean by Elizabeth’s child. That young woman and I have taken a liking for each other which we mean to cultivate on our own account. Don’t call her Elizabeth’s child to me again.”

As the days and weeks went by Worth grew dearer and dearer to the Grange folk. The aunts often wondered to themselves how they had existed before Worth came and, oftener yet, how they could do without her when the time came for her to go home. Meanwhile, the odd friendship between her and Uncle Paul deepened and grew. They read and drove and walked together. Worth spent half her time at Greenwood. Once Uncle Paul said to her, as if speaking half to himself,

“To think that James Sheldon could have a daughter like you!”

Up went Worth’s head. Worth’s grey eyes flashed. “I thought we were not to speak of my parents?” she said. “You ought not to have been the first to break the compact, Uncle Paul.”

“I accept the rebuke and beg your pardon,” he said. He liked her all the better for those little flashes of spirit across her girlish composure.

One day in September they were together in the garden at Greenwood. Worth, looking lovingly and regretfully down the sun-flecked avenue of box, said with a sigh, “Next month I must go home. How sorry I shall be to leave the Grange and Greenwood. I have had such a delightful summer, and I have learned to love all the old nooks and corners as well as if I had lived here all my life.”

“Stay here!” said Uncle Paul abruptly. “Stay here with me. I want you, Worth. Let Greenwood be your home henceforth and adopt your crusty old bachelor uncle for a father.”

“Oh, Uncle Paul,” cried Worth, “I don’t know — I don’t think — oh, you surprise me!”

“I surprise myself, perhaps. But I mean it, Worth. I am a rich, lonely old man and I want to keep this new interest you have brought into my life. Stay with me. I will try to give you a very happy life, my child, and all I have shall be yours.”

Seeing her troubled face, he added, "There, I don't ask you to decide right here. I suppose you have other claims to adjust. Take time to think it over."

"Thank you," said Worth. She went back to the Grange as one in a dream and shut herself up in the white southeast room to think. She knew that she wanted to accept this unexpected offer of Uncle Paul's. Worth's loyal tongue had never betrayed, even to the loving aunts, any discontent in the prairie farm life that had always been hers. But it had been a hard life for the girl, narrow and poverty-bounded. She longed to put forth her hand and take this other life which opened so temptingly before her. She knew, too, that her mother, ambitious for her child, would not be likely to interpose any objections. She had only to go to Uncle Paul and all that she longed for would be given her, together with the faithful, protecting fatherly love and care that in all its strength and sweetness had never been hers.

She must decide for herself. Not even of Aunt Charlotte or Aunt Ellen could she ask advice. She knew they would entreat her to accept, and she needed no such incentive to her own wishes. Far on into the night Worth sat at the white-curtained dormer window, looking at the stars over the apple trees, and fighting her battle between inclination and duty. It was a hard and stubbornly contested battle, but with that square chin and those unfaltering grey eyes it could end in only one way. Next day Worth went down to Greenwood.

"Well, what is it to be?" said Uncle Paul without preface, as he met her in the garden.

"I cannot come, Uncle Paul," said Worth steadily. "I cannot give up my mother."

"I don't ask you to give her up," he said gruffly. "You can write to her and visit her. I don't want to come between parent and child."

"That isn't the point exactly, Uncle Paul. I hope you will not be angry with me for not accepting your offer. I wanted to — you don't know how much I wanted to — but I cannot. Mother and I are so much to each other, Uncle Paul, more, I am sure, than even most mothers and daughters. You

have never let me speak of her, but I must tell you this. Mother has often told me that when I came to her things were going very hard with her and that I was heaven's own gift to comfort and encourage her. Then, in the ten years that followed, the three other babies that came to her all died before they were two years old. And with each loss Mother said I grew dearer to her. Don't you see, Uncle Paul, I'm not merely just one child to her but I'm all those children? Six years ago the twins were born, and they are dear, bright little lads, but they are very small yet, so Mother has really nobody but me. I know she would consent to let me stay here, because she would think it best for me, but it wouldn't be really best for me; it couldn't be best for a girl to do what wasn't right. I love you, Uncle Paul, and I love Greenwood, and I want to stay so much, but I cannot. I have thought it all over and I must go back to Mother."

Uncle Paul did not say one word. He turned his back on Worth and walked the full length of the box alley twice. Worth watched him wistfully. Was he very angry? Would he forgive her?

"You are an Ingelow, Worth," he said when he came back. That was all, but Worth understood that her decision was not to cause any estrangement between them.

A month later Worth's last day at the Grange came. She was to leave for the West the next morning. They were all out in Grandfather Ingelow's arcade, Uncle George and Aunt Charlotte and Aunt Ellen and Worth, enjoying the ripe mellow sunshine of the October day, when Paul Ingelow came up the slope. Worth went to meet him with outstretched hands. He took them both in his and looked at her very gravely.

"I have not come to say goodbye, Worth. I will not say it. You are coming back to me."

Worth shook her brown head sadly. "Oh, I cannot, Uncle Paul. You know — I told you—"

"Yes, I know," he interrupted. "I have been thinking it all over every day since. You know yourself what the Ingelow determination is. It's a good thing in a good cause but a bad thing in a bad one. And it is no easy thing to conquer when you've let it rule you for years as I have done. But I

have conquered it, or you have conquered it for me. Child, here is a letter. It is to your mother — my sister Elizabeth. In it I have asked her to forgive me, and to forget our long estrangement. I have asked her to come back to me with you and her boys. I want you all — all — at Greenwood and I will do the best I can for you all.”

“Oh, Uncle Paul,” cried Worth, her face aglow and quivering with smiles and tears and sunshine.

“Do you think she will forgive me and come?”

“I know she will,” cried Worth. “I know how she has longed for you and home. Oh, I am so happy, Uncle Paul!”

He smiled at her and put his arm over her shoulder. Together they walked up the golden arcade to tell the others. That night Charlotte and Ellen cried with happiness as they talked it over in the twilight.

“How beautiful!” murmured Charlotte softly. “We shall not lose Worth after all. Ellen, I could not have borne it to see that girl go utterly out of our lives again.”

“I always hoped and believed that Elizabeth’s child would somehow bring us all together again,” said Ellen happily.

Freda's Adopted Grave

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North Point, where Freda lived, was the bleakest settlement in the world. Even its inhabitants, who loved it, had to admit that. The northeast winds swept whistling up the bay and blew rawly over the long hill that sloped down to it, blighting everything that was in their way. Only the sturdy firs and spruces could hold their own against it. So there were no orchards or groves or flower gardens in North Point.

Just over the hill, in a sheltered southwest valley, was the North Point church with the graveyard behind it, and this graveyard was the most beautiful spot in North Point or near it. The North Point folk loved flowers. They could not have them about their homes, so they had them in their graveyard. It was a matter of pride with each family to keep the separate plot neatly trimmed and weeded and adorned with beautiful blossoms.

It was one of the unwritten laws of the little community that on some selected day in May everybody would repair to the graveyard to plant, trim and clip. It was not an unpleasant duty, even to those whose sorrow was fresh. It seemed as if they were still doing something for the friends who had gone when they made their earthly resting places beautiful.

As for the children, they looked forward to "Graveyard Day" as a very delightful anniversary, and it divided its spring honours with the amount of the herring catch.

"Tomorrow is Graveyard Day," said Minnie Hutchinson at school recess, when all the little girls were sitting on the fence. "Ain't I glad! I've got the loveliest big white rosebush to plant by Grandma Hutchinson's grave. Uncle Robert sent it out from town."

"My mother has ten tuberose to set out," said Nan Gray proudly.

"We're going to plant a row of lilies right around our plot," said Katie Morris.

Every little girl had some boast to make, that is, every little girl but Freda. Freda sat in a corner all by herself and felt miserably outside of everything. She had no part or lot in Graveyard Day.

“Are you going to plant anything, Freda?” asked Nan, with a wink at the others.

Freda shook her head mutely.

“Freda can’t plant anything,” said Winnie Bell cruelly, although she did not mean to be cruel. “She hasn’t got a grave.”

Just then Freda felt as if her gravelessness were a positive disgrace and crime, as if not to have an interest in a single grave in North Point cemetery branded you as an outcast forever and ever. It very nearly did in North Point. The other little girls pitied Freda, but at the same time they rather looked down upon her for it with the complacency of those who had been born into a good heritage of family graves and had an undisputed right to celebrate Graveyard Day.

Freda felt that her cup of wretchedness was full. She sat miserably on the fence while the other girls ran off to play, and she walked home alone at night. It seemed to her that she could not bear it any longer.

Freda was ten years old. Four years ago Mrs. Wilson had taken her from the orphan asylum in town. Mrs. Wilson lived just this side of the hill from the graveyard, and everybody in North Point called her a “crank.” They pitied any child she took, they said. It would be worked to death and treated like a slave. At first they tried to pump Freda concerning Mrs. Wilson’s treatment of her, but Freda was not to be pumped. She was a quiet little mite, with big, wistful dark eyes that had a disconcerting fashion of looking the gossips out of countenance. But if Freda had been disposed to complain, the North Point people would have found out that they had been only too correct in their predictions.

“Mrs. Wilson,” Freda said timidly that night, “why haven’t we got a grave?”

Mrs. Wilson averred that such a question gave her the “creeps.”

“You ought to be very thankful that we haven’t,” she said severely. “That Graveyard Day is a heathenish custom, anyhow. They make a

regular picnic of it, and it makes me sick to hear those school girls chattering about what they mean to plant, each one trying to outblow the other. If I had a grave there, I wouldn't make a flower garden of it!"

Freda did not go to the graveyard the next day, although it was a holiday. But in the evening, when everybody had gone home, she crept over the hill and through the beech grove to see what had been done. The plots were all very neat and prettily set out with plants and bulbs. Some perennials were already in bud. The grave of Katie Morris' great-uncle, who had been dead for forty years, was covered with blossoming purple pansies. Every grave, no matter how small or old, had its share of promise — every grave except one. Freda came across it with a feeling of surprise. It was away down in the lower corner where there were no plots. It was shut off from the others by a growth of young poplars and was sunken and overgrown with blueberry shrubs. There was no headstone, and it looked dismally neglected. Freda felt a sympathy for it. She had no grave, and this grave had nobody to tend it or care for it.

When she went home she asked Mrs. Wilson whose it was.

"Humph!" said Mrs. Wilson. "If you have so much spare time lying round loose, you'd better put it into your sewing instead of prowling about graveyards. Do you expect me to work my fingers to the bone making clothes for you? I wish I'd left you in the asylum. That grave is Jordan Slade's, I suppose. He died twenty years ago, and a worthless, drunken scamp he was. He served a term in the penitentiary for breaking into Andrew Messervey's store, and after it he had the face to come back to North Point. But respectable people would have nothing to do with him, and he went to the dogs altogether — had to be buried on charity when he died. He hasn't any relations here. There was a sister, a little girl of ten, who used to live with the Cogswells over at East Point. After Jord died, some rich folks saw her and was so struck with her good looks that they took her away with them. I don't know what become of her, and I don't care. Go and bring the cows up."

When Freda went to bed that night her mind was made up. She would adopt Jordan Slade's grave.

Thereafter, Freda spent her few precious spare-time moments in the graveyard. She clipped the blueberry shrubs and long, tangled grasses from the grave with a pair of rusty old shears that blistered her little brown hands badly. She brought ferns from the woods to plant about it. She begged a root of heliotrope from Nan Gray, a clump of day lilies from Katie Morris, a rosebush slip from Nellie Bell, some pansy seed from old Mrs. Bennett, and a geranium shoot from Minnie Hutchinson's big sister. She planted, weeded and watered faithfully, and her efforts were rewarded. "Her" grave soon looked as nice as any in the graveyard.

Nobody but Freda knew about it. The poplar growth concealed the corner from sight, and everybody had quite forgotten poor, disreputable Jordan Slade's grave. At least, it seemed as if everybody had. But one evening, when Freda slipped down to the graveyard with a little can of water and rounded the corner of the poplars, she saw a lady standing by the grave — a strange lady dressed in black, with the loveliest face Freda had ever seen, and tears in her eyes.

The lady gave a little start when she saw Freda with her can of water.

"Can you tell me who has been looking after this grave?" she said.

"It — it was I," faltered Freda, wondering if the lady would be angry with her. "Pleas'm, it was I, but I didn't mean any harm. All the other little girls had a grave, and I hadn't any, so I just adopted this one."

"Did you know whose it was?" asked the lady gently.

"Yes'm — Jordan Slade's. Mrs. Wilson told me."

"Jordan Slade was my brother," said the lady. "He went sadly astray, but he was not all bad. He was weak and too easily influenced. But whatever his faults, he was good and kind — oh! so good and kind — to me when I was a child. I loved him with all my heart. It has always been my wish to come back and visit his grave, but I have never been able to come, my home has been so far away. I expected to find it neglected. I cannot tell you how pleased and touched I am to find it kept so beautifully. Thank you over and over again, my dear child!"

"Then you're not cross, ma'am?" said Freda eagerly. "And I may go on looking after it, may I? Oh, it just seems as if I couldn't bear not to!"

“You may look after it as long as you want to, my dear. I will help you, too. I am to be at East Point all summer. This will be our grave — yours and mine.”

That summer was a wonderful one for Freda. She had found a firm friend in Mrs. Halliday. The latter was a wealthy woman. Her husband had died a short time previously and she had no children. When she went away in the fall, Freda went with her “to be her own little girl for always.” Mrs. Wilson consented grudgingly to give Freda up, although she grumbled a great deal about ingratitude.

Before they went they paid a farewell visit to their grave. Mrs. Halliday had arranged with some of the North Point people to keep it well attended to, but Freda cried at leaving it.

“Don’t feel badly about it, dear,” comforted Mrs. Halliday. “We are coming back every summer to see it. It will always be our grave.”

Freda slipped her hand into Mrs. Halliday’s and smiled up at her.

“I’d never have found you, Aunty, if it hadn’t been for this grave,” she said happily. “I’m so glad I adopted it.”

How Don Was Saved

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Will Barrie went whistling down the lane of the Locksley farm, took a short cut over a field of clover aftermath and through a sloping orchard where the trees were laden with apples, and emerged into the farmhouse yard where Curtis Locksley was sitting on a pile of logs, idly whittling at a stick.

“You look as if you had a corner in time, Curt,” said Will. “I call that luck, for I want you to go chestnutting up to Grier’s Hill with me. I met old Tom Grier on the road yesterday, and he told me I might go any day. Nice old man, Tom Grier.”

“Good!” said Curtis heartily, as he sprang up. “If I haven’t exactly a corner in time, I have a day off, at least. Uncle doesn’t need me today. Wait till I whistle for Don. May as well take him with us.”

Curtis whistled accordingly, but Don, his handsome Newfoundland dog, did not appear. After calling and whistling about the yard and barns for several minutes, Curtis turned away disappointedly.

“He can’t be anywhere around. It is very strange. Don never used to go away from home without me, but lately he has been missing several times, and twice last week he wasn’t here in the morning and didn’t turn up until midday.”

“I’d keep him shut up until I broke him of the habit of playing truant, if I were you,” said Will, as they turned into the lane.

“Don hates to be shut up, howls all the time so mournfully that I can’t stand it,” responded Curtis.

“Well,” said Will, hesitatingly, “maybe that would be better after all than letting him stray away with other dogs who may teach him bad habits. I saw Don myself one evening last week ambling down the Harbour road with that big brown dog of Sam Ventnor’s. Ventnor’s dog is beginning to

have a bad reputation, you know. There have been several sheep worried lately, and—”

“Don wouldn’t touch a sheep!” interrupted Curtis hotly.

“I daresay not, not yet. But Ventnor’s dog is under suspicion, and if Don runs with him he’ll learn the trick sure as preaching. The farmers are growling a good bit already, and if they hear of Don and Ventnor’s dog going about in company, they’ll put it on them both. Better keep Don shut up awhile, let him howl as he likes.”

“I believe I will,” said Curtis soberly. “I don’t want Don to fall under suspicion of sheep-worrying, though I’m sure he would never do it. Anyhow, I don’t want him to run with Ventnor’s dog. I’ll chain him up in the barn when I go home. I couldn’t stand it if anything happened to Don. After you, he’s the only chum I’ve got — and he’s a good one.”

Will agreed. He was almost as fond of Don as Curtis was. But he did not feel so sure that the dog would not worry a sheep. Will knew that Don was suspected already, but he did not like to tell Curtis so. And of course there was as yet no positive proof — merely mutterings and suggestions among the Bayside farmers who had lost sheep and were anxious to locate their slayer. There were many other dogs in Bayside and the surrounding districts who were just as likely to be the guilty animals, and Will hoped that if Don were shut up for a time, suspicion might be averted from him, especially if the worryings still went on.

He had felt a little doubtful about hinting the truth to Curtis, who was a high-spirited lad and always resented any slur cast upon Don much more bitterly than if it were meant for himself. But he knew that Curtis would take it better from him than from the other Bayside boys, one or the other of whom would be sure soon to cast something up to Curtis about his dog. Will felt decidedly relieved to find that Curtis took his advice in the spirit in which it was offered.

“Who have lost sheep lately?” queried Curtis, as they left the main road and struck into a wood path through the ranks of beeches on Tom Grier’s land.

“Nearly everybody on the Hollow farms,” answered Will. “Until last week nobody on the Hill farms had lost any. But Tuesday night old Paul Stockton had six fine sheep killed in his upland pasture behind the fir woods. He is furious about it, I believe, and vows he’ll find out what dog did it and have him shot.”

Curtis looked grave. Paul Stockton’s farm was only about a quarter of a mile from the Locksley homestead, and he knew that Paul had an old family grudge against his Uncle Arnold, which included his nephew and all belonging to him. Moreover, Curtis remembered with a sinking heart that Wednesday morning had been one of the mornings upon which Don was missing.

“But I don’t care!” he thought miserably. “I know Don didn’t kill those sheep.”

“Talking of old Paul,” said Will, who thought it advisable to turn the conversation, “reminds me that they are getting anxious at the Harbour about George Finley’s schooner, the Amy Reade. She was due three days ago and there’s no sign of her yet. And there have been two bad gales since she left Morro. Oscar Stockton is on board of her, you know, and his father is worried about him. There are five other men on her, all from the Harbour, and their folks down there are pretty wild about the schooner.”

Nothing more was said about the sheep, and soon, in the pleasures of chestnutting, Curtis forgot his anxiety. Old Tom Grier had called to the boys as they passed his house to come back and have dinner there when the time came. This they did, and it was late in the afternoon when Curtis, with his bag of chestnuts over his shoulder, walked into the Locksley yard.

His uncle was standing before the open barn doors, talking to an elderly, grizzled man with a thin, shrewd face.

Curtis’s heart sank as he recognized old Paul Stockton. What could have brought him over?

“Curtis,” called his uncle, “come here.”

As Curtis crossed the yard, Don came bounding down the slope from the house to meet him. He put his hand on the dog’s big head and the two

of them walked slowly to the barn. Old Paul included them both in a vindictive scowl.

“Curtis,” said his uncle gravely, “here’s a bad business. Mr. Stockton tells me that your dog has been worrying his sheep.”

“It’s a—” began Curtis angrily. Then he checked himself and went on more calmly.

“That can’t be so, Mr. Stockton. My dog would not harm anything.”

“He killed or helped to kill six of the finest sheep in my flock!” retorted old Paul.

“What proof have you of it?” demanded Curtis, trying to keep his anger within bounds.

“Abner Peck saw your dog and Ventnor’s running together through my sheep pasture at sundown on Tuesday evening,” answered old Paul.

“Wednesday morning I found this in the corner of the pasture where the sheep were worried. Your uncle admits that it was tied around your dog’s neck on Tuesday.”

And old Paul held out triumphantly a faded red ribbon. Curtis recognized it at a glance. It was the ribbon his little cousin, Lena, had tied around Don’s neck Tuesday afternoon. He remembered how they had laughed at the effect of that frivolous red collar and bow on Don’s massive body.

“I’m sure Don isn’t guilty!” he cried passionately.

Mr. Locksley shook his head.

“I’m afraid he is, Curtis. The case looks very black against him, and sheep-stealing is a serious offence.”

“The dog must be shot,” said old Paul decidedly. “I leave the matter in your hands, Mr. Locksley. I’ve got enough proof to convict the dog and, if you don’t have him killed, I’ll make you pay for the sheep he worried.”

As old Paul strode away, Curtis looked beseechingly at his uncle.

“Don mustn’t be shot, Uncle!” he said desperately. “I’ll chain him up all the time.”

“And have him howling night and day as if we had a brood of banshees about the place?” said Mr. Locksley sarcastically. He was a stern man with

little sentiment in his nature and no understanding whatever of Curtis's affection for Don. The Bayside people said that Arnold Locksley had always been very severe with his nephew. "No, no, Curtis, you must look at the matter sensibly. The dog is a nuisance and must be shot. You can't keep him shut up forever, and, if he has once learned the trick of sheep-worrying, he will never forget it. You can get another dog if you must have one. I'll get Charles Pippey to come and shoot Don tomorrow. No sulking now, Curtis. You are too big a boy for that. Tie the dog up for the night and then go and put the calves in. There is a storm coming. The wind is blowing hard from the northeast now."

His uncle walked away, leaving the boy white and miserable in the yard. He looked at Don, who sat on his haunches and returned his gaze frankly and open-heartedly. He did not look like a guilty dog. Could it be possible that he had really worried those sheep?

"I'll never believe it of you, old fellow!" Curtis said, as he led the dog into a corner of the carriage house and tied him up there. Then he flung himself down on a pile of sacks beside him and buried his face in Don's curly black fur. The boy felt sullen, rebellious and wretched.

He lay there until dark, thinking his own bitter thoughts and listening to the rapidly increasing gale. Finally he got up and flung off after the calves, with Don's melancholy howls at finding himself deserted ringing in his ears.

He'll be quiet enough tomorrow night, thought Curtis wretchedly, as he went upstairs to bed after housing the calves. For a long while he lay awake, but finally dropped into a heavy slumber which lasted until his aunt called him for milking.

The wind was blowing more furiously than ever. Up over the fields came the roar and crash of the surges on the outside shore. The Harbour to the east of Bayside was rough and stormy.

They were just rising from breakfast when Will Barrie burst into the kitchen.

"The Amy Reade is ashore on Gleeson's rocks!" he shouted. "Struck there at daylight this morning! Come on, Curt!"

Curtis sprang for his cap, his uncle following suit more deliberately. As the two boys ran through the yard, Curtis heard Don howling.

“I’ll take him with me!” he muttered. “Wait a minute, Will.”

The Harbour road was thronged with people hurrying to the outside shore, for the news of the Amy Readers disaster had spread rapidly. As the boys, with the rejoicing Don at their heels, pelted along, Sam Morrow overtook them in a cart and told them to jump in. Sam had already been down to the shore and had gone back to tell his father. As they jolted along, he screamed information at them over the shriek of the gale.

“Bad business, this! She’s pounding on a reef ‘bout a quarter of a mile out. They’re sure she’s going to break up — old tub, you know — leaky — rotten. The sea’s tremenjous high, and the surfs going dean over her. There can’t be no boat launched for hours yet — they’ll all be drowned. Old Paul’s down there like a madman — offering everything he’s got to the man who’ll save Oscar, but it can’t be done.”

By this time they had reached the shore, which was black with excited people. Out on Gleeson’s Reef the illfated little schooner was visible amid the flying spray. A grizzled old Harbour fisherman, to whom Sam shouted a question, shook his head.

“No, can’t do nothin’! No boat c’d live in that surf f’r a moment. The schooner’ll go to pieces mighty soon, I’m feared. It’s turrible! turrible! to stan’ by an’ watch yer neighbours drown like this!”

Curtis and Will elbowed their way down to the water’s edge. The relatives of the crew were all there in various stages of despair, but old Paul Stockton seemed like a man demented. He ran up and down the beach, crying and praying. His only son was on the Amy Reade, and he could do nothing to save him!

“What are they doing?” asked Will of Martin Clark.

“Trying to get a line ashore by throwing out a small rope with a stick tied to it,” answered Martin. “It’s young Stockton that’s trying now. But it isn’t any use. The cross-currents on that reef are too powerful.”

“Why, Don will bring that line ashore!” exclaimed Curtis. “Here, Don! Don, I say!”

The dog bounded back along the shore with a quick bark. Curtis grasped him by the collar and pointed to the stick which young Stockton had just hurled again into the water. Don, with another bark of comprehension, dashed into the sea. The onlookers, grasping the situation, gave a cheer and then relapsed into silence. Only the shriek of the gale and the crash of the waves could be heard as they watched the magnificent dog swimming out through the breakers, his big black head now rising on the crest of a wave and now disappearing in the hollow behind it. When Don finally reached the tossing stick, grasped it in his mouth and turned shoreward, another great shout went up from the beach. A woman behind Curtis, whose husband was on the schooner, dropped on her knees on the pebbles, sobbing and thanking God. Curtis himself felt the stinging tears start to his eyes.

When Don reached the shore he dropped the stick at Curtis's feet and gave himself a tremendous shake. Curtis caught at the stick, while a dozen men and women threw themselves bodily on Don, hugging him and kissing his wet fur like distracted creatures. Old Paul Stockton was among them. Over his shoulder Don's big black head looked up, his eyes asking as plainly as speech what all this fuss was about.

Meanwhile some of the men had already pulled a big hawser ashore and made it fast. In half an hour the crew of the Amy Reade were safe on shore, chilled and dripping. Before they were hurried away to warmth and shelter, old Paul Stockton caught Curtis's hand. The tears were running freely down his hard, old face.

"Tell your uncle he is not to lay a finger on that dog!" he said. "He never killed a sheep of mine — he couldn't! And if he did I don't care! He's welcome to kill them all, if nothing but mutton'll serve his turn."

Curtis walked home with a glad heart. Mr. Locksley heard old Paul's message with a smile. He, too, had been touched by Don's splendid feat.

"Well, Curtis, I'm very glad that it has turned old Paul in his favour. But we must shut Don up for a week or so, no matter how hard he takes it. You can see that for yourself. After all, he might have worried the sheep. And, anyway, he must be broken of his intimacy with Ventnor's dog."

Curtis acknowledged the justice of this and poor Don was tied up again. His captivity was not long, however, for Ventnor's dog was soon shot. When Don was released, Curtis had an anxious time for a week or two. But no more sheep were worried, and Don's innocence was triumphantly established. As for old Paul Stockton, it seemed as if he could not do enough for Curtis and Don. His ancient grudge against the Locksleys was completely forgotten, and from that date he was a firm friend of Curtis. In regard to Don, old Paul would say:

“Why, there never was such a dog before, sir, never! He just talks with his eyes, that dog does. And if you'd just ‘a’ seen him swimming out to that schooner! Bones? Yes, sir! Every time that dog comes here he's to get the best bones we've got for him — and more'n bones, too. That dog's a hero, sir, that's what he is!”

Miss Madeline's Proposal

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“Auntie, I have something to tell you,” said Lina, with a blush that made her look more than ever like one of the climbing roses that nodded about the windows of the “old Churchill place,” as it was always called in Lower Wentworth.

Miss Madeline, sitting in the low rocker by the parlour window, seemed like the presiding genius of the place. Everything about her matched her sweet old-fashionedness, from the crown of her soft brown hair, dressed in the style of her long ago girlhood, to the toes of her daintily slippered feet. Outside of the old Churchill place, in the busy streets of the up-to-date little town, Miss Madeline might have seemed out of harmony with her surroundings. But here, in this dim room, faintly scented with whiffs from the rose garden outside, she was like a note in some sweet, perfect melody of old time.

Lina, sitting on a little stool at Miss Madeline's feet with her curly head in her aunt's lap, was as pretty as Miss Madeline herself had once been. She was also very happy, and her happiness seemed to envelop her as in an atmosphere and lend her a new radiance and charm. Miss Madeline loved her pretty niece very dearly and patted the curly head tenderly with her slender white hands.

“What is it, my dear?”

“I'm — I'm engaged,” whispered Lina, hiding her face in Miss Madeline's flowered muslin lap.

“Engaged!” Miss Madeline's tone was one of surprise and awe. She blushed as she said the word as deeply as Lina had done. Then she went on, with a little quiver of excitement in her voice, “To whom, my dear?”

“Oh, you don't know him, Auntie, but I hope you will soon. His name is Ralph Wylde. Isn't it pretty? I met him last winter, and we became very good friends. But we had a quarrel before I came down here and, oh, I have

been so unhappy over it. Three weeks ago he wrote me and begged my pardon — so nice of him, because I was really all to blame, you know. And he said he loved me and — all that, you know.”

“No, I don’t know,” said Miss Madeline gently. “But — but — I can imagine.”

“Oh, I was so happy. I wrote back and I had this letter from him today. He is coming down tomorrow. You’ll be glad to see him, won’t you, Auntie?”

“Oh, yes, my dear, and I am glad for your sake — very glad. You are sure you love him?”

“Yes, indeed,” said Lina, with a little laugh, as if wondering how anyone could doubt it.

Presently, Miss Madeline said in a shy voice, “Lina, did — did you ever receive a proposal of marriage from anybody besides Mr. Wylde?”

Lina laughed roguishly. “Why, yes, Auntie, ever so many. A dozen, at least.”

“Oh, my dear!” cried Miss Madeline in a slightly shocked tone.

“But I did, really. Sometimes it was horrid and sometimes it was funny. It all depended on the man. Dear me, how red and uncomfortable most of them looked — all but the fifth. He was so cool and business like that he almost surprised me into accepting him.”

“And — and what did you feel like, Lina?”

“Oh, frightened, mostly — but I always wanted to laugh too. You must know how it is yourself, Auntie. What did you feel like when somebody proposed to you?”

Miss Madeline flushed from chin to brow.

“Oh, Lina,” she faltered as if she were confessing something very disgraceful, yet to which she was impelled by her strict truthfulness, “I — I — never had a proposal in my life — not one.”

Lina opened her big brown eyes in amazement. “Why, Aunt Madeline! And you so pretty! What was the reason?”

“I’ve often wondered,” said Miss Madeline faintly. “I was pretty, as you say — it’s so long ago I can say that now. And I had many gentlemen

friends. But nobody ever wanted to marry me. I sometimes wish that — that I could have had just one proposal. Not that I wanted to marry, you know, I do not mean that, but just so that it wouldn't have seemed that I was different from anybody else. It is very foolish of me to wish it, I know, and even wicked — for if I had not cared for the person it would have made him very unhappy. But then, he would have forgotten and I would have remembered. It would always have been something to be a little proud of.”

“Yes,” said Lina absently; her thoughts had gone back to Ralph.

That evening a letter was left at the front door of the old Churchill place. It was addressed in a scholarly hand to Miss Madeline Churchill, and Amelia Kent took it in. Amelia had been Miss Madeline's “help” for years and had grown grey in her service. In Amelia's loyal eyes Miss Madeline was still young and beautiful; she never doubted that the letter was for her mistress. Nobody else there was ever addressed as “Miss Madeline.”

Miss Madeline was sitting by the window of her own room watching the sunset through the elms and reading her evening portion of Thomas à Kempis. She never liked to be disturbed when so employed but she read her letter after Amelia had gone out.

When she came to a certain paragraph, she turned very pale and Thomas à Kempis fell to the floor unheeded. When she had finished the letter she laid it on her lap, clasped her hands, and said, “Oh, oh, oh,” in a faint, tremulous voice. Her cheeks were very pink and her eyes very bright. She did not even pick up Thomas à Kempis but went to the door and called Lina.

“What is it, Auntie?” asked Lina curiously, noticing the signs of unusual excitement about Miss Madeline.

Miss Madeline held out her letter with a trembling hand.

“Lina, dear, this is a letter from the Rev. Cecil Thorne. It — it is — a proposal of marriage. I feel terribly upset. How very strange that it should come so soon after our talk this morning! I want you to read it! Perhaps I ought not to show it to anyone — but I would like you to see it.”

Lina took the letter and read it through. It was unmistakably a proposal of marriage and was, moreover, a very charming epistle of its kind, albeit a little stiff and old-fashioned.

“How funny!” said Lina when she came to the end.

“Funny!” exclaimed Miss Madeline, with a trace of indignation in her gentle voice.

“Oh, I didn’t mean that the letter was funny,” Lina hastened to explain, “only that, as you said, it is odd to think of it coming so soon after our talk.”

But this was a little fib on Lina’s part. She had thought that the letter or, rather, the fact that it had been written to Miss Madeline, funny. The Rev. Cecil Thorne was Miss Madeline’s pastor. He was a handsome, scholarly man of middle age, and Lina had seen a good deal of him during her summer in Lower Wentworth. She had taught the infant class in Sunday School and sometimes she had thought that the minister was in love with her. But she must have been mistaken, she reflected; it must have been her aunt after all, and the Rev. Cecil Thorne’s shyly displayed interest in her must have been purely professional.

“What a goose I was to be afraid he was in love with me!” she thought. Aloud she said, “He says he will call tomorrow evening to receive your answer.”

“And, oh, what can I say to him?” murmured Miss Madeline in dismay. She wished she had a little of Lina’s experience.

“You are going to — you will accept him, won’t you?” asked Lina curiously.

“Oh, my dear, no!” cried Miss Madeline almost vehemently. “I couldn’t think of such a thing. I am very sorry; do you think he will feel badly?”

“Judging from his letter I feel sure he will,” said Lina decidedly.

Miss Madeline sighed. “Oh, dear me! It is very unpleasant. But of course I must refuse him. What a beautiful letter he writes too. I feel very much disturbed by this.”

Miss Madeline picked up Thomas à Kempis, smoothed him out repentantly, and placed the letter between his leaves.

When the Rev. Cecil Thorne called at the old Churchill place next evening at sunset and asked for Miss Madeline Churchill, Amelia showed him into the parlour and went to call her mistress. Mr. Thorne sat down by the window that looked out on the lawn. His heart gave a bound as he caught a glimpse of an airy white muslin among the trees and a ripple of distant laughter. The next minute Lina appeared, strolling down the secluded path that curved about the birches. A young man was walking beside her with his arm around her. They crossed the green square before the house and disappeared in the rose garden.

Mr. Thorne leaned back in his chair and put his hand over his eyes. He felt that he had received his answer, and it was a very bitter moment for him. He had hardly dared hope that this bright, beautiful child could care for him, yet the realization came home to him none the less keenly. When Miss Madeline, paling and flushing by turns, came shyly in he had recovered his self-control sufficiently to be able to say “good evening” in a calm voice.

Miss Madeline sat down opposite to him. At that moment she was devoutly thankful that she had never had any other proposal to refuse. It was a dreadful ordeal. If he would only help her out! But he did not speak and every moment of silence made it worse.

“I — received your letter, Mr. Thorne,” she faltered at last, looking distressfully down at the floor.

“My letter!” Mr. Thorne turned towards her. In her agitation Miss Madeline did not notice the surprise in his face and tone.

“Yes,” she said, gaining a little courage since the ice was broken. “It — it — was a very great surprise to me. I never thought you — you cared for me as — as you said. And I am very sorry because — because I cannot return your affection. And so, of course, I cannot marry you.”

Mr. Thorne put his hand over his eyes again. He understood now that there had been some mistake and that Miss Madeline had received the letter he had written to her niece. Well, it did not matter — the appearance

of the young man in the garden had settled that. Would he tell Miss Madeline of her mistake? No, it would only humiliate her and it made no difference, since she had refused him.

“I suppose it is of no use to ask you to reconsider your decision?” he said.

“Oh, no,” cried Miss Madeline almost aghast. She was afraid he might ask it after all. “Not in the least use. I am sorry — so very sorry — but I could not answer differently. We — I hope — this will make no difference in our friendly relations, Mr. Thorne?”

“Not at all,” said Mr. Thorne gravely. “We will try to forget that it has happened.”

He bowed sadly and went out. Miss Madeline watched him guiltily as he walked across the lawn. He looked heartbroken. How dreadful it had been! And Lina had refused twelve men! How could she have lived through it?

“Perhaps one gets accustomed to doing it,” reflected Miss Madeline. “But I am sure I never could.”

“Did Mr. Thorne feel very badly?” whispered Lina that night.

“I’m afraid he did,” confessed Miss Madeline sorrowfully. “He looked so pale and sad, Lina, that my heart ached for him. I am very thankful that I have never had any other proposals to decline. It is a very unpleasant experience. But,” she added, with a little tinge of satisfaction in her sweet voice, “I am glad I had one. It — it has made me feel more like other people, you know, dear.”

Miss Sally's Company

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“How beautiful!” said Mary Seymour delightedly, as they dismounted from their wheels on the crest of the hill. “Ida, who could have supposed that such a view would be our reward for climbing that long, tedious hill with its ruts and stones? Don’t you feel repaid?”

“Yes, but I am dreadfully thirsty,” said Ida, who was always practical and never as enthusiastic over anything as Mary was. Yet she, too, felt a keen pleasure in the beauty of the scene before them. Almost at their feet lay the sea, creaming and shimmering in the mellow sunshine. Beyond, on either hand, stretched rugged brown cliffs and rocks, here running out to sea in misty purple headlands, there curving into bays and coves that seemed filled up with sunlight and glamour and pearly hazes; a beautiful shore and, seemingly, a lonely one. The only house visible from where the girls stood was a tiny grey one, with odd, low eaves and big chimneys, that stood down in the little valley on their right, where the cliffs broke away to let a brook run out to sea and formed a small cove, on whose sandy shore the waves lapped and crooned within a stone’s throw of the house. On either side of the cove a headland made out to sea, curving around to enclose the sparkling water as in a cup.

“What a picturesque spot!” said Mary.

“But what a lonely one!” protested Ida. “Why, there isn’t another house in sight. I wonder who lives in it. Anyway, I’m going down to ask them for a drink of water.”

“I’d like to ask for a square meal, too,” said Mary, laughing. “I am discovering that I am hungry. Fine scenery is very satisfying to the soul, to be sure, but it doesn’t still the cravings of the inner girl. And we’ve wheeled ten miles this afternoon. I’m getting hungrier every minute.”

They reached the little grey house by way of a sloping, grassy lane. Everything about it was very neat and trim. In front a whitewashed paling

shut in the garden which, sheltered as it was by the house, was ablaze with poppies and hollyhocks and geraniums. A path, bordered by big white clam shells, led through it to the front door, whose steps were slabs of smooth red sandstone from the beach.

“No children here, certainly,” whispered Ida. “Every one of those clam shells is placed just so. And this walk is swept every day. No, we shall never dare to ask for anything to eat here. They would be afraid of our scattering crumbs.”

Ida lifted her hand to knock, but before she could do so, the door was thrown open and a breathless little lady appeared on the threshold.

She was very small, with an eager, delicately featured face and dark eyes twinkling behind gold-rimmed glasses. She was dressed immaculately in an old-fashioned gown of grey silk with a white muslin fichu crossed over her shoulders, and her silvery hair fell on each side of her face in long, smooth curls that just touched her shoulders and bobbed and fluttered with her every motion; behind, it was caught up in a knot on her head and surmounted by a tiny lace cap.

She looks as if she had just stepped out of a bandbox of last century, thought Mary.

“Are you Cousin Abner’s girls?” demanded the little lady eagerly. There was such excitement and expectation in her face and voice that both the Seymour girls felt uncomfortably that they ought to be “Cousin Abner’s girls.”

“No,” said Mary reluctantly, “we’re not. We are only — Martin Seymour’s girls.”

All the light went out of the little lady’s face, as if some illuminating lamp had suddenly been quenched behind it. She seemed fairly to droop under her disappointment. As for the rest, the name of Martin Seymour evidently conveyed no especial meaning to her ears. How could she know that he was a multi-millionaire who was popularly supposed to breakfast on railroads and lunch on small corporations, and that his daughters were girls whom all people delighted to honour?

“No, of course you are not Cousin Abner’s girls,” she said sorrowfully. “I’d have known you couldn’t be if I had just stopped to think. Because you are dark and they would be fair, of course; Cousin Abner and his wife were both fair. But when I saw you coming down the lane — I was peeking through the hall window upstairs, you know, I and Juliana — I was sure you were Helen and Beatrice at last. And I can’t help wishing you were!”

“I wish we were, too, since you expected them,” said Mary, smiling. “But—”

“Oh, I wasn’t really expecting them,” broke in the little lady. “Only I am always hoping that they will come. They never have yet, but Trenton isn’t so very far away, and it is so lonely here. I just long for company — I and Juliana — and I thought I was going to have it today. Cousin Abner came to see me once since I moved here and he said the girls would come, too, but that was six months ago and they haven’t come yet. But perhaps they will soon. It is always something to look forward to, you know.”

She talked in a sweet, chirpy voice like a bird’s. There were pathetic notes in it, too, as the girls instinctively felt. How very quaint and sweet and unworldly she was! Mary found herself feeling indignant at Cousin Abner’s girls, whoever they were, for their neglect.

“We are out for a spin on our wheels,” said Ida, “and we are very thirsty. We thought perhaps you would be kind enough to give us a drink of water.”

“Oh, my dear, anything — anything I have is at your service,” said the little lady delightedly. “If you will come in, I will get you some lemonade.”

“I am afraid it is too much trouble,” began Mary.

“Oh, no, no,” cried the little lady. “It is a pleasure. I love doing things for people, I wish more of them would come to give me the chance. I never have any company, and I do so long for it. It’s very lonesome here at Golden Gate. Oh, if you would only stay to tea with me, it would make me so happy. I am all prepared. I prepare every Saturday morning, in particular, so that if Cousin Abner’s girls did come, I would be all ready. And when nobody comes, Juliana and I have to eat everything up

ourselves. And that is bad for us — it gives Juliana indigestion. If you would only stay!”

“We will,” agreed Ida promptly. “And we’re glad of the chance. We are both terribly hungry, and it is very good of you to ask us.”

“Oh, indeed, it isn’t! It’s just selfishness in me, that’s what it is, pure selfishness! I want company so much. Come in, my dears, and I suppose I must introduce myself because you don’t know me, do you now? I’m Miss Sally Temple, and this is Golden Gate Cottage. Dear me, this is something like living. You are special providences, that you are, indeed!”

She whisked them through a quaint little parlour, where everything was as dainty and neat and old-fashioned as herself, and into a spare bedroom beyond it, to put off their hats.

“Now, just excuse me a minute while I run out and tell Juliana that we are going to have company to tea. She will be so glad, Juliana will. Make yourselves at home, my dears.”

“Isn’t she delicious?” said Mary, when Miss Sally had tripped out. “I’d like to shake Cousin Abner’s girls. This is what Dot Halliday would call an adventure, Ida.”

“Isn’t it! Miss Sally and this quaint old spot both seem like a chapter out of the novels our grandmothers cried over. Look here, Mary, she is lonely and our visit seems like a treat to her. Let us try to make it one. Let’s just chum with her and tell her all about ourselves and our amusements and our dresses. That sounds frivolous, but you know what I mean. She’ll like it. Let’s be company in real earnest for her.”

When Miss Sally came back, she was attended by Juliana carrying a tray of lemonade glasses. Juliana proved to be a diminutive lass of about fourteen whose cheerful, freckled face wore an expansive grin of pleasure. Evidently Juliana was as fond of “company” as her mistress was. Afterwards, the girls overheard a subdued colloquy between Miss Sally and Juliana out in the hall.

“Go set the table, Juliana, and put on Grandmother Temple’s wedding china — be sure you dust it carefully — and the best tablecloth — and be

sure you get the crease straight — and put some sweet peas in the centre — and be sure they are fresh. I want everything extra nice, Juliana.”

“Yes’m, Miss Sally, I’ll see to it. Isn’t it great to have company, Miss Sally?” whispered Juliana.

The Seymour girls long remembered that tea table and the delicacies with which it was heaped. Privately, they did not wonder that Juliana had indigestion when she had to eat many such unaided. Being hungry, they did full justice to Miss Sally’s good things, much to that little lady’s delight.

She told them all about herself. She had lived at Golden Gate Cottage only a year.

“Before that, I lived away down the country at Millbridge with a cousin. My Uncle Ephraim owned Golden Gate Cottage, and when he died he left it to me and I came here to live. It is a pretty place, isn’t it? You see those two headlands out there? In the morning, when the sun rises, the water between them is just a sea of gold, and that is why Uncle Ephraim had a fancy to call his place Golden Gate. I love it here. It is so nice to have a home of my own. I would be quite content if I had more company. But I have you today, and perhaps Beatrice and Helen will come next week. So I’ve really a great deal to be thankful for.”

“What is your Cousin Abner’s other name?” asked Mary, with a vague recollection of hearing of Beatrice and Helen — somebody — in Trenton.

“Reed — Abner Abimelech Reed,” answered Miss Sally promptly. “A.A. Reed, he signs himself now. He is very well-to-do, I am told, and he carries on business in town. He was a very fine young man, my Cousin Abner. I don’t know his wife.”

Mary and Ida exchanged glances. Beatrice and Helen Reed! They knew them slightly as the daughters of a new-rich family who were hangers-on of the fashionable society in Trenton. They were regarded as decidedly vulgar, and so far their efforts to gain an entry into the exclusive circle where the Seymours and their like revolved had not been very successful.

“I’m afraid Miss Sally will wait a long while before she sees Cousin Abner’s girls,” said Mary, when they had gone back to the parlour and Miss Sally had excused herself to superintend the washing of Grandmother

Temple's wedding china. "They probably look on her as a poor relation to be ignored altogether; whereas, if they were only like her, Trenton society would have made a place for them long ago."

The Seymour girls enjoyed that visit as much as Miss Sally did. She was eager to hear all about their girlish lives and amusements. They told her of their travels, of famous men and women they had seen, of parties they had attended, the dresses they wore, the little fads and hobbies of their set — all jumbled up together and all listened to eagerly by Miss Sally and also by Juliana, who was permitted to sit on the stairs out in the hall and so gather in the crumbs of this intellectual feast.

"Oh, you've been such pleasant company," said Miss Sally when the girls went away.

Mary took the little lady's hands in hers and looked affectionately down into her face.

"Would you like it — you and Juliana — if we came out to see you often? And perhaps brought some of our friends with us?"

"Oh, if you only would!" breathed Miss Sally.

Mary laughed and, obeying a sudden impulse, bent and kissed Miss Sally's cheek.

"We'll come then," she promised. "Please look upon us as your 'steady company' henceforth."

The girls kept their word. Thereafter, nearly every Saturday of the summer found them taking tea with Miss Sally at Golden Gate. Sometimes they came alone; sometimes they brought other girls. It soon became a decided "fad" in their set to go to see Miss Sally. Everybody who met her loved her at sight. It was considered a special treat to be taken by the Seymours to Golden Gate.

As for Miss Sally, her cup of happiness was almost full. She had "company" to her heart's content and of the very kind she loved — bright, merry, fun-loving girls who devoured her dainties with a frank zest that delighted her, filled the quaint old rooms with laughter and life, and chattered to her of all their plans and frolics and hopes. There was just one little cloud on Miss Sally's fair sky.

“If only Cousin Abner’s girls would come!” she once said wistfully to Mary. “Nobody can quite take the place of one’s own, you know. My heart yearns after them.”

Mary was very silent and thoughtful as she drove back to Trenton that night. Two days afterwards, she went to Mrs. Gardiner’s lawn party. The Reed girls were there. They were tall, fair, handsome girls, somewhat too lavishly and pronouncedly dressed in expensive gowns and hats, and looking, as they felt, very much on the outside of things. They brightened and bridled, however, when Mrs. Gardiner brought Mary Seymour up and introduced her. If there was one thing on earth that the Reed girls longed for more than another it was to “get in” with the Seymour girls.

After Mary had chatted with them for a few minutes in a friendly way, she said, “I think we have a mutual friend in Miss Sally Temple of Golden Gate, haven’t we? I’m sure I’ve heard her speak of you.”

The Reed girls flushed. They did not care to have the rich Seymour girls know of their connection with that queer old cousin of their father’s who lived in that out-of-the-world spot up-country.

“She is a distant cousin of ours,” said Beatrice carelessly, “but we’ve never met her.”

“Oh, how much you have missed!” said Mary frankly. “She is the sweetest and most charming little lady I have ever met, and I am proud to number her among my friends. Golden Gate is such an idyllic little spot, too. We go there so often that I fear Miss Sally will think we mean to outwear our welcome. We hope to have her visit us in town this winter. Well, good-by for now. I’ll tell Miss Sally I’ve met you. She will be pleased to hear about you.”

When Mary had gone, the Reed girls looked at each other.

“I suppose we ought to have gone to see Cousin Sally before,” said Beatrice. “Father said we ought to.”

“How on earth did the Seymours pick her up?” said Helen. “Of course we must go and see her.”

Go they did. The very next day Miss Sally’s cup of happiness brimmed right over, for Cousin Abner’s girls came to Golden Gate at last. They

were very nice to her, too. Indeed, in spite of a good deal of snobbishness and false views of life, they were goodhearted girls under it all; and some plain common sense they had inherited from their father came to the surface and taught them to see that Miss Sally was a relative of whom anyone might be proud. They succumbed to her charm, as the others had done, and thoroughly enjoyed their visit to Golden Gate. They went away promising to come often again; and I may say right here that they kept their promise, and a real friendship grew up between Miss Sally and “Cousin Abner’s girls” that was destined to work wonders for the latter, not only socially and mentally but spiritually as well, for it taught them that sincerity and honest kindness of heart and manner are the best passports everywhere, and that pretence of any kind is a vulgarity not to be tolerated. This took time, of course. The Reed girls could not discard their snobbishness all at once. But in the end it was pretty well taken out of them.

Miss Sally never dreamed of this or the need for it. She loved Cousin Abner’s girls from the first and always admired them exceedingly.

“And then it is so good to have your own folks coming as company,” she told the Seymour girls. “Oh, I’m just in the seventh heaven of happiness. But, dearies, I think you will always be my favourites — mine and Juliana’s. I’ve plenty of company now and it’s all thanks to you.”

“Oh, no,” said Mary quickly. “Miss Sally, your company comes to you for just your own sake. You’ve made Golden Gate a veritable Mecca for us all. You don’t know and you never will know how much good you have done us. You are so good and true and sweet that we girls all feel as if we were bound to live up to you, don’t you see? And we all love you, Miss Sally.”

“I’m so glad,” breathed Miss Sally with shining eyes, “and so is Juliana.”

Mrs. March's Revenge

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"I declare, it is a real fall day," said Mrs. Stapp, dropping into a chair with a sigh of relief as Mrs. March ushered her into the cosy little sitting-room. "The wind would chill the marrow in your bones; winter'll be here before you know it."

"That's so," assented Mrs. March, bustling about to stir up the fire. "But I don't know as I mind it at all. Winter is real pleasant when it does come, but I must say, I don't fancy these betwixt-and-between days much. Sit up to the fire, Theodosia. You look real blue."

"I feel so too. Lawful heart, but this is comfort. This chimney-corner of yours, Anna, is the cosiest spot in the world."

"When did you get home from Maitland?" asked Mrs. March. "Did you have a pleasant time? And how did you leave Emily and the children?"

Mrs. Stapp took this trio of interrogations in calm detail.

"I came home Saturday," she said, as she unrolled her knitting. "Nice wet day it was too! And as for my visit, yes, I enjoyed myself pretty, well, not but what I worried over Peter's rheumatism a good deal. Emily is well, and the children ought to be, for such rampageous young ones I never saw! Emily can't do no more with them than an old hen with a brood of ducks. But, lawful heart, Anna, don't mind about my little affairs! The news Peter had for me about you when I got home fairly took my breath. He came down to the garden gate to shout it before I was out of the wagon. I couldn't believe but what he was joking at first. You should have seen Peter. He had an old red shawl tied round his rheumatic shoulder, and he was waving his arms like a crazy man. I declare, I thought the chimney was afire! Theodosia, Theodosia!' he shouted. 'Anna March has had a fortune left her by her brother in Australy, and she's bought the old Carroll place, and is going to move up there!' That was his salute when I got

home. I'd have been over before this to hear all about it, but things were at such sixes and sevens in the house that I couldn't go visiting until I'd straightened them out a bit. Peter's real neat, as men go, but, lawful heart, such a mess as he makes of housekeeping! I didn't know you had a brother living."

"No more did I, Theodosia. I thought, as everyone else did, that poor Charles was at the bottom of the sea forty years ago. It's that long since he ran away from home. He had a quarrel with Father, and he was always dreadful high-spirited. He went to sea, and we heard that he had sailed for England in the *Helen Ray*. She was never heard of after, and we all supposed that my poor brother had perished with her. And four weeks ago I got a letter from a firm of lawyers in Melbourne, Australia, saying that my brother, Charles Bennett, had died and left all his fortune to me. I couldn't believe it at first, but they sent me some things of his that he had when he left home, and there was an old picture of myself among them with my name written on it in my own hand, so then I knew there was no mistake. But whether Charles did sail in the *Helen Ray*, or if he did, how he escaped from her and got to Australia, I don't know, and it isn't likely I ever will."

"Well, of all wonderful things!" commented Mrs. Stapp.

"I was glad to hear that I was heir to so much money," said Mrs. March firmly. "At first I felt as if it were awful of me to be glad when it came to me by my brother's death. But I mourned for poor Charles forty years ago, and I can't sense that he has only just died. Not but what I'd rather have seen him come home alive than have all the money in the world, but it has come about otherwise, and as the money is lawfully mine, I may as well feel pleased about it."

"And you've bought the Carroll place," said Mrs. Stapp, with the freedom of a privileged friend. "Whatever made you do it? I'm sure you are as cosy here as need be, and nobody but yourself. Isn't this house big enough for you?"

"No, it isn't. All my life I've been hankering for a good, big, roomy house, and all my life I've had to put up with little boxes of places, not big

enough to turn round in. I've been contented, and made the best of what I had, but now that I can afford it, I mean to have a house that will suit me. The Carroll house is just what I want, for all it is a little old-fashioned. I've always had a notion of that house, although I never expected to own it any more than the moon."

"It's a real handsome place," admitted Mrs. Stapp, "but I expect it will need a lot of fixing up. Nobody has lived in it for six years. When are you going to move in?"

"In about three weeks, if all goes well. I'm having it all painted and done over inside. The outside can wait until the spring."

"It's queer how things come about," said Mrs. Stapp meditatively. "I guess old Mrs. Carroll never imagined her home was going to pass into other folks' hands as it has. When you and I were girls, and Louise Carroll was giving herself such airs over us, you didn't much expect to ever stand in her shoes, did you? Do you remember Lou?"

"Yes, I do," said Mrs. March sharply. A change came over her sonsy, smiling face. It actually looked hard and revengeful, and a cruel light flickered in her dark brown eyes. "I'll not forget Lou Carroll as long as I live. She is the only person in this world I ever hated. I suppose it is sinful to say it, but I hate her still, and always will."

"I never liked her myself," admitted Mrs. Stapp. "She thought herself above us all. Well, for that matter I suppose she was — but she needn't have rubbed it in so."

"Well, she might have been above me," said Mrs. March bitterly, "but she wasn't above twitting and snubbing me every chance she got. She always had a spite at me from the time we were children together at school. When we grew up it was worse. I couldn't begin to tell you all the times that girl insulted me. But there was once in particular — I'll never forgive her for it. I was at a party, and she was there too, and so was that young Trenham Manning, who was visiting the Ashleys. Do you remember him, Dosia? He was a handsome young fellow, and Lou had a liking for him, so all the girls said. But he never looked at her that night, and he kept by me the whole time. It made Lou furious, and at last she came up to me

with a sneer on her face, and her black eyes just snapping, and said, ‘Miss Bennett, Mother told me to tell you to tell your ma that if that plain sewing isn’t done by tomorrow night she’ll send for it and give it to somebody else; if people engage to have work done by a certain time and don’t keep their word, they needn’t expect to get it.’ Oh, how badly I felt! Mother and I were poor, and had to work hard, but we had feelings just like other people, and to be insulted like that before Trenham Manning! I just burst out crying then and there, and ran away and hid. It was very silly of me, but I couldn’t help it. That stings me yet. If I was ever to get a chance to pay Lou Carroll out for that, I’d take it without any compunction.”

“Oh, but that is unchristian!” protested Mrs. Stapp feebly.

“Perhaps so, but it’s the way I feel. Old Parson Jones used to say that people were marbled good and bad pretty even, but that in everybody there were one or two streaks just pure wicked. I guess Lou Carroll is my wicked streak. I haven’t seen or heard of her for years — ever since she married that worthless Dency Baxter and went away. She may be dead for all I know. I don’t expect ever to have a chance to pay her out. But mark what I say, Theodosia, if I ever have, I will.”

Mrs. March snipped off her thread, as if she challenged the world. Mrs. Stapp felt uncomfortable over the unusual display of feeling she had evoked, and hastened to change the subject.

In three weeks’ time Mrs. March was established in her new home, and the “old Carroll house” blossomed out into renewed splendour. Theodosia Stapp, who had dropped in to see it, was in a rapture of admiration.

“You have a lovely home now, Anna. I used to think it fine enough in the Carrolls’ time, but it wasn’t as grand as this. And that reminds me, I have something to tell you, but I don’t want you to get as excited as you did the last time I mentioned her name. You remember the last day I was to see you we were talking of Lou Carroll? Well, next day I was downtown in a store, and who should sail in but Mrs. Joel Kent, from Oriental. You know Mrs. Joel — Sarah Chapple that was? She and her man keep a little hotel up at Oriental. They’re not very well off. She is a cousin of old Mrs.

Carroll, but, lawful heart, the Carrolls didn't used to make much of the relationship! Well, Mrs. Joel and I had a chat. She told me all her troubles — she always has lots of them. Sarah was always of a grumbling turn, and she had a brand-new stock of them this time. What do you think, Anna March? Lou Carroll — or Mrs. Baxter, I suppose I should say — is up there at Joel Kent's at Oriental, dying of consumption; leastwise, Mrs. Joel says she is."

"Lou Carroll dying at Oriental!" cried Mrs. March.

"Yes. She came there from goodness knows where, about a month ago — might as well have dropped from the clouds, Mrs. Joel says, for all she expected of it. Her husband is dead, and I guess he led her a life of it when he was alive, and she's as poor as second skimmings. She was aiming to come here, Mrs. Joel says, but when she got to Oriental she wasn't fit to stir a step further, and the Kents had to keep her. I gather from what Mrs. Joel said that she's rather touched in her mind too, and has an awful hankering to get home here — to this very house. She appears to have the idea that it is hers, and all just the same as it used to be. I guess she is a sight of trouble, and Mrs. Joel ain't the woman to like that. But there! She has to work most awful hard, and I suppose a sick person doesn't come handy in a hotel. I guess you've got your revenge, Anna, without lifting a finger to get it. Think of Lou Carroll coming to that!"

The next day was cold and raw. The ragged, bare trees in the old Carroll grounds shook and writhed in the gusts of wind. Now and then a drifting scud of rain dashed across the windows. Mrs. March looked out with a shiver, and turned thankfully to her own cosy fireside again.

Presently she thought she heard a low knock at the front door, and went to see. As she opened it a savage swirl of damp wind rushed in, and the shrinking figure leaning against one of the fluted columns of the Grecian porch seemed to cower before its fury. It was a woman who stood there, a woman whose emaciated face wore a piteous expression, as she lifted it to Mrs. March.

"You don't know me, of course," she said, with a feeble attempt at dignity. "I am Mrs. Baxter. I — I used to live here long ago. I thought I'd

walk over today and see my old home.”

A fit of coughing interrupted her words, and she trembled like a leaf.

“Gracious me!” exclaimed Mrs. March blankly. “You don’t mean to tell me that you have walked over from Oriental today — and you a sick woman! For pity’s sake, come in, quick. And if you’re not wet to the skin!”

She fairly pulled her visitor into the hall, and led her to the sitting-room.

“Sit down. Take this big easy-chair right up to the fire — so. Let me take your bonnet and shawl. I must run right out to tell Hannah to get you a hot drink.”

“You are very kind,” whispered the other. “I don’t know you, but you look like a woman I used to know when I was a girl. She was a Mrs. Bennett, and she had a daughter, Anna. Do you know what became of her? I forget. I forget everything now.”

“My name is March,” said Mrs. March briefly, ignoring the question. “I don’t suppose you ever heard it before.”

She wrapped her own warm shawl about the other woman’s thin shoulders. Then she hastened to the kitchen and soon returned, carrying a tray of food and a steaming hot drink. She wheeled a small table up to her visitor’s side and said, very kindly,

“Now, take a bite, my dear, and this raspberry vinegar will warm you right up. It is a dreadful day for you to be out. Why on earth didn’t Joel Kent drive you over?”

“They didn’t know I was coming,” whispered Mrs. Baxter anxiously. “I — I ran away. Sarah wouldn’t have let me come if she had known. But I wanted to come so much. It is so nice to be home again.”

Mrs. March watched her guest as she ate and drank. It was plain enough that her mind, or rather her memory, was affected. She did not realize that this was no longer her home. At moments she seemed to fancy herself back in the past again. Once or twice she called Mrs. March “Mother.”

Presently a sharp knock was heard at the hall door. Mrs. March excused herself and went out. In the porch stood Theodosia Stapp and a woman whom Mrs. March did not at first glance recognize — a tall, aggressive-looking person, whose sharp black eyes darted in past Mrs. March and searched every corner of the hall before anyone had time to speak.

“Lawful heart!” puffed Mrs. Stapp, as she stepped in out of the biting wind. “I’m right out of breath. Mrs. March, allow me to introduce Mrs. Kent. We’re looking for Mrs. Baxter. She has run away, and we thought perhaps she came here. Did she?”

“She is in my sitting-room now,” said Mrs. March quietly.

“Didn’t I say so?” demanded Mrs. Kent, turning to Mrs. Stapp. She spoke in a sharp, high-pitched tone that grated on Mrs. March’s nerves. “Doesn’t she beat all! She slipped away this morning when I was busy in the kitchen. And to think of her walking six miles over here in this wind! I dunno how she did it. I don’t believe she’s half as sick as she pretends. Well, I’ve got my wagon out here, Mrs. March, and I’ll be much obliged if you’ll tell her I’m here to take her home. I s’pose we’ll have a fearful scene.”

“I don’t see that there is any call for a scene,” said Mrs. March firmly. “The poor woman has just got here, and she thinks she has got home. She might as well think so if it is of any comfort to her. You’d better leave her here.”

Theodosia gave a stifled gasp of amazement, but Mrs. March went serenely on.

“I’ll take care of the poor soul as long as she needs it — and that will not be very long in my opinion, for if ever I saw death in a woman’s face, it is looking out of hers. I’ve plenty of time to look after her and make her comfortable.”

Mrs. Joel Kent was voluble in her thanks. It was evident that she was delighted to get the sick woman off her hands. Mrs. March cut her short with an invitation to stay to tea, but Mrs. Kent declined.

“I’ve got to hurry home straight off and get the men’s suppers. Such a scamper to have over that woman! I’m sure I’m thankful you’re willing to let her stay, for she’d never be contented anywhere else. I’ll send over what few things she has tomorrow.”

When Mrs. Kent had gone, Mrs. March and Mrs. Stapp looked at each other.

“And so this is your revenge, Anna March?” said the latter solemnly. “Do you remember what you said to me about her?”

“Yes, I do, Theodosia, and I thought I meant every word of it. But I guess my wicked streak ran out just when I needed it to depend on. Besides, you see, I’ve thought of Lou Carroll all these years as she was when I knew her — handsome and saucy and proud. But that poor creature in there isn’t any more like the Lou Carroll I knew than you are — not a mite. The old Lou Carroll is dead already, and my spite is dead with her. Will you come in and see her?”

“Well, no, not just now. She wouldn’t know me, and Mrs. Joel says strangers kind of excite her — a pretty bad place the hotel would be for her at that rate, I should think. I must go and tell Peter about it, and I’ll send up some of my black currant jam for her.”

When Mrs. Stapp had gone, Mrs. March went back to her guest. Lou Baxter had fallen asleep with her head pillowed on the soft plush back of her chair. Mrs. March looked at the hollow, hectic cheeks and the changed, wasted features, and her bright brown eyes softened with tears.

“Poor Lou,” she said softly, as she brushed a loose lock of grey hair back from the sleeping woman’s brow.

Nan

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Nan was polishing the tumblers at the pantry window, outside of which John Osborne was leaning among the vines. His arms were folded on the sill and his straw hat was pushed back from his flushed, eager face as he watched Nan's deft movements.

Beyond them, old Abe Stewart was mowing the grass in the orchard with a scythe and casting uneasy glances at the pair. Old Abe did not approve of John Osborne as a suitor for Nan. John was poor; and old Abe, although he was the wealthiest farmer in Granville, was bent on Nan's making a good match. He looked upon John Osborne as a mere fortune-hunter, and it was a thorn in the flesh to see him talking to Nan while he, old Abe, was too far away to hear what they were saying. He had a good deal of confidence in Nan, she was a sensible, levelheaded girl. Still, there was no knowing what freak even a sensible girl might take into her head, and Nan was so determined when she did make up her mind. She was his own daughter in that.

However, old Abe need not have worried himself. It could not be said that Nan was helping John Osborne on in his wooing at all. Instead, she was teasing and snubbing him by turns.

Nan was very pretty. Moreover, Nan was well aware of the fact. She knew that the way her dark hair curled around her ears and forehead was bewitching; that her complexion was the envy of every girl in Granville; that her long lashes had a trick of drooping over very soft, dark eyes in a fashion calculated to turn masculine heads hopelessly. John Osborne knew all this too, to his cost. He had called to ask Nan to go with him to the Lone Lake picnic the next day. At this request Nan dropped her eyes and murmured that she was sorry, but he was too late — she had promised to go with somebody else. There was no need of Nan's making such a mystery about it. The somebody else was her only cousin, Ned Bennett,

who had had a quarrel with his own girl; the latter lived at Lone Lake, and Ned had coaxed Nan to go over with him and try her hand at patching matters up between him and his offended lady-love. And Nan, who was an amiable creature and tender-hearted where anybody's lover except her own was concerned, had agreed to go.

But John Osborne at once jumped to the conclusion — as Nan had very possibly meant him to do — that the mysterious somebody was Bryan Lee, and the thought was gall and wormwood to him.

“Whom are you going with?” he asked.

“That would be telling,” Nan said, with maddening indifference.

“Is it Bryan Lee?” demanded John.

“It might be,” said Nan reflectively, “and then again, you know, it mightn’t.”

John was silent; he was no match for Nan when it came to a war of words. He scowled moodily at the shining tumblers.

“Nan, I’m going out west,” he said finally.

Nan stared at him with her last tumbler poised in mid-air, very much as if he had announced his intention of going to the North Pole or Equatorial Africa.

“John Osborne, are you crazy?”

“Not quite. And I’m in earnest, I can tell you that.”

Nan set the glass down with a decided thud. John’s curtness displeased her. He needn’t suppose that it made any difference to her if he took it into his stupid head to go to Afghanistan.

“Oh!” she remarked carelessly. “Well, I suppose if you’ve got the Western fever your case is hopeless. Would it be impertinent to inquire why you are going?”

“There’s nothing else for me to do, Nan,” said John, “Bryan Lee is going to foreclose the mortgage next month and I’ll have to clear out. He says he can’t wait any longer. I’ve worked hard enough and done my best to keep the old place, but it’s been uphill work and I’m beaten at last.”

Nan sat blankly down on the stool by the window. Her face was a study which John Osborne, watching old Abe’s movements, missed.

“Well, I never!” she gasped. “John Osborne, do you mean to tell me that Bryan Lee is going to do that? How did he come to get your mortgage?”

“Bought it from old Townsend,” answered John briefly. “Oh, he’s within his rights, I’ll admit. I’ve even got behind with the interest this past year. I’ll go out west and begin over again.”

“It’s a burning shame!” said Nan violently.

John looked around in time to see two very red spots on her cheeks.

“You don’t care though, Nan.”

“I don’t like to see anyone unjustly treated,” declared Nan, “and that is what you’ve been. You’ve never had half a chance. And after the way you’ve slaved, too!”

“If Lee would wait a little I might do something yet, now that Aunt Alice is gone,” said John bitterly. “I’m not afraid of work. But he won’t; he means to take his spite out at last.”

Nan hesitated.

“Surely Bryan isn’t so mean as that,” she stammered. “Perhaps he’ll change his mind if — if—”

Osborne wheeled about with face aflame.

“Don’t you say a word to him about it, Nan!” he cried. “Don’t you go interceding with him for me. I’ve got some pride left. He can take the farm from me, and he can take you maybe, but he can’t take my self-respect. I won’t beg him for mercy. Don’t you dare to say a word to him about it.”

Nan’s eyes flashed. She was offended to find her sympathy flung back in her face.

“Don’t be alarmed,” she said tartly. “I shan’t bother myself about your concerns. I’ve no doubt you’re able to look out for them yourself.”

Osborne turned away. As he did so he saw Bryan Lee driving up the lane. Perhaps Nan saw it too. At any rate, she leaned out of the window.

“John! John!” Osborne half turned. “You’ll be up again soon, won’t you?”

His face hardened. “I’ll come to say goodbye before I go, of course,” he answered shortly.

He came face to face with Lee at the gate, where the latter was tying his sleek chestnut to a poplar. He acknowledged his rival's condescending nod with a scowl. Lee looked after him with a satisfied smile.

"Poor beggar!" he muttered. "He feels pretty cheap I reckon. I've spoiled his chances in this quarter. Old Abe doesn't want any poverty-stricken hangers-on about his place and Nan won't dream of taking him when she knows he hasn't a roof over his head."

He stopped for a chat with old Abe. Old Abe approved of Bryan Lee. He was a son-in-law after old Abe's heart.

Meanwhile, Nan had seated herself at the pantry window and was ostentatiously hemming towels in apparent oblivion of suitor No. 2. Nevertheless, when Bryan came up she greeted him with an unusually sweet smile and at once plunged into an animated conversation. Bryan had not come to ask her to go to the picnic — business prevented him from going. But he meant to find out if she were going with John Osborne. As Nan was serenely impervious to all hints, he was finally forced to ask her bluntly if she was going to the picnic.

Well, yes, she expected to.

Oh! Might he ask with whom?

Nan didn't know that it was a question of public interest at all.

"It isn't with that Osborne fellow, is it?" demanded Bryan incautiously.

Nan tossed her head. "Well, why not?" she asked.

"Look here, Nan," said Lee angrily, "if you're going to the picnic with John Osborne I'm surprised at you. What do you mean by encouraging him so? He's as poor as Job's turkey. I suppose you've heard that I've been compelled to foreclose the mortgage on his farm."

Nan kept her temper sweetly — a dangerous sign, had Bryan but known it.

"Yes; he was telling me so this morning," she answered slowly.

"Oh, was he? I suppose he gave me my character?"

"No; he didn't say very much about it at all. He said of course you were within your rights. But do you really mean to do it, Bryan?"

“Of course I do,” said Bryan promptly. “I can’t wait any longer for my money, and I’d never get it if I did. Osborne can’t even pay the interest.”

“It isn’t because he hasn’t worked hard enough, then,” said Nan. “He has just slaved on that place ever since he grew up.”

“Well, yes, he has worked hard in a way. But he’s kind of shiftless, for all that — no manager, as you might say. Some folks would have been clear by now, but Osborne is one of those men that are bound to get behind. He hasn’t got any business faculty.”

“He isn’t shiftless,” said Nan quickly, “and it isn’t his fault if he has got behind. It’s all because of his care for his aunt. He has had to spend more on her doctor’s bills than would have raised the mortgage. And now that she is dead and he might have a chance to pull up, you go and foreclose.”

“A man must look out for Number One,” said Bryan easily, admiring Nan’s downcast eyes and rosy cheeks. “I haven’t any spite against Osborne, but business is business, you know.”

Nan opened her lips to say something but, remembering Osborne’s parting injunction, she shut them again. She shot a scornful glance at Lee as he stood with his arms folded on the sill beside her.

Bryan lingered, talking small talk, until Nan announced that she must see about getting tea.

“And you won’t tell me who is going to take you to the picnic?” he coaxed.

“Oh, it’s Ned Bennett,” said Nan indifferently.

Bryan felt relieved. He unpinned the huge cluster of violets on his coat and laid them down on the sill beside her before he went. Nan flicked them off with her fingers as she watched him cross the lawn, his own self-satisfied smile upon his face.

A week later the Osborne homestead had passed into Bryan Lee’s hands and John Osborne was staying with his cousin at Thornhope, pending his departure for the west. He had never been to see Nan since that last afternoon, but Bryan Lee haunted the Stewart place. One day he suddenly stopped coming and, although Nan was discreetly silent, in due

time it came to old Abe's ears by various dribblets of gossip that Nan had refused him.

Old Abe marched straightway home to Nan in a fury and demanded if this were true. Nan curtly admitted that it was. Old Abe was so much taken aback by her coolness that he asked almost meekly what was her reason for doing such a fool trick.

"Because he turned John Osborne out of house and home," returned Nan composedly. "If he hadn't done that there is no telling what might have happened. I might even have married him, because I liked him very well and it would have pleased you. At any rate, I wouldn't have married John when you were against him. Now I mean to."

Old Abe stormed furiously at this, but Nan kept so provokingly cool that he was conscious of wasting breath. He went off in a rage, but Nan did not feel particularly anxious now that the announcement was over. He would cool down, she knew. John Osborne worried her more. She didn't see clearly how she was to marry him unless he asked her, and he had studiously avoided her since the foreclosure.

But Nan did not mean to be baffled or to let her lover slip through her fingers for want of a little courage. She was not old Abe Stewart's daughter for nothing.

One day Ned Bennett dropped in and said that John Osborne would start for the west in three days. That evening Nan went up to her room and dressed herself in the prettiest dress she owned, combed her hair around her sparkling face in bewitching curls, pinned a cluster of apple blossoms at her belt, and, thus equipped, marched down in the golden sunset light to the Mill Creek Bridge. John Osborne, on his return from Thornhope half an hour later, found her there, leaning over the rail among the willows.

Nan started in well-assumed surprise and then asked him why he had not been to see her. John blushed — stammered — didn't know — had been busy. Nan cut short his halting excuses by demanding to know if he were really going away, and what he intended to do.

"I'll go out on the prairies and take up a claim," said Osborne sturdily. "Begin life over again free of debt. It'll be hard work, but I'm not afraid of

that. I will succeed if it takes me years.”

They walked on in silence. Nan came to the conclusion that Osborne meant to hold his peace.

“John,” she said tremulously, “won’t — won’t you find it very lonely out there?”

“Of course — I expect that. I shall have to get used to it.”

Nan grew nervous. Proposing to a man was really very dreadful.

“Wouldn’t it be — nicer for you” — she faltered—“that is — it wouldn’t be so lonely for you — would it — if — if you had me out there with you?”

John Osborne stopped squarely in the dusty road and looked at her. “Nan!” he exclaimed.

“Oh, if you can’t take a hint!” said Nan in despair.

It was all of an hour later that a man drove past them as they loitered up the hill road in the twilight. It was Bryan Lee; he had taken from Osborne his house and land, but he had not been able to take Nan Stewart, after all.

Natty of Blue Point

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Natty Miller strolled down to the wharf where Bliss Ford was tying up the Cockawee. Bliss was scowling darkly at the boat, a trim new one, painted white, whose furled sails seemed unaccountably wet and whose glistening interior likewise dripped with moisture. A group of fishermen on the wharf were shaking their heads sagely as Natty drew near.

“Might as well split her up for kindlings, Bliss,” said Jake McLaren. “You’ll never get men to sail in her. It passed the first time, seeing as only young Johnson was skipper, but when a boat turns turtle with Captain Frank in command, there’s something serious wrong with her.”

“What’s up?” asked Natty.

“The Cockawee upset out in the bay again this morning,” answered Will Scott. “That’s the second time. The Grey Gull picked up the men and towed her in. It’s no use trying to sail her. Lobstermen ain’t going to risk their lives in a boat like that. How’s things over at Blue Point, Natty?”

“Pretty well,” responded Natty laconically. Natty never wasted words. He had not talked a great deal in his fourteen years of life, but he was much given to thinking. He was rather undersized and insignificant looking, but there were a few boys of his own age on the mainland who knew that Natty had muscles.

“Has Everett heard anything from Ottawa about the lighthouse business yet?” asked Will.

Natty shook his head.

“Think he’s any chance of getting the app’ntment?” queried Adam Lewis.

“Not the ghost of a chance,” said Cooper Creasy decidedly. “He’s on the wrong side of politics, that’s what. Er rather his father was. A Tory’s son ain’t going to get an app’ntment from a Lib’ral government, that’s what.”

“Mr. Barr says that Everett is too young to be trusted in such a responsible position,” quoted Natty gravely.

Cooper shrugged his shoulders.

“Mebbe — mebbe. Eighteen is kind of green, but everybody knows that Ev’s been the real lighthouse keeper for two years, since your father took sick. Irving Elliott wants that light — has wanted it for years — and he’s a pretty strong pull at headquarters, that’s what. Barr owes him something for years of hard work at elections. I ain’t saying anything against Elliott, either. He’s a good man, but your father’s son ought to have that light as sure as he won’t get it, that’s what.”

“Any of you going to take in the sports tomorrow down at Summerside?” asked Will Scott, in order to switch Cooper away from politics, which were apt to excite him.

“I’m going, for one,” said Adam. “There’s to be a yacht race atween the Summerside and Charlottetown boat clubs. Yes, I am going. Give you a chance down to the station, Natty, if you want one.”

Natty shook his head.

“Not going,” he said briefly.

“You should celebrate Victoria Day,” said Adam, patriotically.

“‘Twenty-fourth o’ May’s the Queen’s birthday, Ef we don’t get a holiday we’ll all run away,’ as we used to say at school. The good old Queen is dead, but the day’s been app’nted a national holiday in honour of her memory and you should celebrate it becoming, Natty-boy.”

“Ev and I can’t both go, and he’s going,” explained Natty. “Prue and I’ll stay home to light up. Must be getting back now. Looks squally.”

“I misdoubt if we’ll have Queen’s weather tomorrow,” said Cooper, squinting critically at the sky. “Looks like a northeast blow, that’s what. There goes Bliss, striding off and looking pretty mad. The Cockawee’s a dead loss to him, that’s what. Nat’s off — he knows how to handle a boat middling well, too. Pity he’s such a puny youngster. Not much to him, I reckon.”

Natty had cast loose in his boat, the Merry Maid, and hoisted his sail. In a few minutes he was skimming gaily down the bay. The wind was fair

and piping and the Merry Maid went like a bird. Natty, at the rudder, steered for Blue Point Island, a reflective frown on his face. He was feeling in no mood for Victoria Day sports. In a very short time he and Ev and Prue must leave Blue Point lighthouse, where they had lived all their lives. To Natty it seemed as if the end of all things would come then. Where would life be worth living away from lonely, windy Blue Point Island?

David Miller had died the preceding winter after a long illness. He had been lighthouse keeper at Blue Point for thirty years. His three children had been born and brought up there, and there, four years ago, the mother had died. But womanly little Prue had taken her place well, and the boys were devoted to their sister. When their father died, Everett had applied for the position of lighthouse keeper. The matter was not yet publicly decided, but old Cooper Creasy had sized the situation up accurately. The Millers had no real hope that Everett would be appointed.

Victoria Day, while not absolutely stormy, proved to be rather unpleasant. A choppy northeast wind blew up the bay, and the water was rough enough. The sky was overcast with clouds, and the May air was raw and chilly. At Blue Point the Millers were early astir, for if Everett wanted to sail over to the mainland in time to catch the excursion train, no morning naps were permissible. He was going alone. Since only one of the boys could go, Natty had insisted that it should be Everett, and Prue had elected to stay home with Natty. Prue had small heart for Victoria Day that year. She did not feel even a thrill of enthusiasm when Natty hoisted a flag and wreathed the Queen's picture with creeping spruce. Prue felt as badly about leaving Blue Point Island as the boys did.

The day passed slowly. In the afternoon the wind fell away to a dead calm, but there was still a heavy swell on, and shortly before sunset a fog came creeping up from the east and spread over the bay and islands, so thick and white that Prue and Natty could not even see Little Bear Island on the right.

"I'm glad Everett isn't coming back tonight," said Prue. "He could never find his way cross the harbour in that fog."

“Isn’t it thick, though,” said Natty. “The light won’t show far tonight.”

At sunset they lighted the great lamps and then settled down to an evening of reading. But it was not long before Natty looked up from his book to say, “Hello, Prue, what was that? Thought I heard a noise.”

“So did I,” said Prue. “I sounded like someone calling.”

They hurried to the door, which looked out on the harbour. The night, owing to the fog, was dark with a darkness that seemed almost tangible. From somewhere out of that darkness came a muffled shouting, like that of a person in distress.

“Prue, there’s somebody in trouble out there!” exclaimed Natty.

“Oh, it’s surely never Ev!” cried Prue.

Natty shook his head.

“Don’t think so. Ev had no intention of coming back tonight. Get that lantern, Prue. I must go and see what and who it is.”

“Oh, Natty, you mustn’t,” cried Prue in distress. “There’s a heavy swell on yet — and the fog — oh, if you get lost—”

“I’ll not get lost, and I must go, Prue. Maybe somebody is drowning out there. It’s not Ev, of course, but suppose it were! That’s a good girl.”

Prue, with set face, had brought the lantern, resolutely choking back the words of fear and protest that rushed to her lips. They hurried down to the shore and Natty sprang into the little skiff he used for rowing. He hastily lashed the lantern in the stern, cast loose the painter, and lifted the oars.

“I’ll be back as soon as possible,” he called to Prue. “Wait here for me.”

In a minute the shore was out of sight, and Natty found himself alone in the black fog, with no guide but the cries for help, which already were becoming fainter. They seemed to come from the direction of Little Bear, and thither Natty rowed. It was a tough pull, and the water was rough enough for the little dory. But Natty had been at home with the oars from babyhood, and his long training and tough sinews stood him in good stead now. Steadily and intrepidly he rowed along. The water grew rougher as he passed out from the shelter of Blue Point into the channel between the

latter and Little Bear. The cries were becoming very faint. What if he should be too late? He bent to the oars with all his energy. Presently, by the smoother water, he knew he must be in the lee of Little Bear. The cries sounded nearer. He must already have rowed nearly a mile. The next minute he shot around a small headland and right before him, dimly visible in the faint light cast by the lantern through the fog, was an upturned boat with two men clinging to it, one on each side, evidently almost exhausted. Natty rowed cautiously up to the one nearest him, knowing that he must be wary lest the grip of the drowning man overturn his own light skiff.

“Let go when I say,” he shouted, “and don’t — grab — anything, do you hear? Don’t — grab. Now, let go.”

The next minute the man lay in the dory, dragged over the stern by Netty’s grip on his collar.

“Lie still,” ordered Natty, clutching the oars. To row around the overturned boat, amid the swirl of water about her, was a task that taxed Netty’s skill and strength to the utmost. The other man was dragged in over the bow, and with a gasp of relief Natty pulled away from the sinking boat. Once clear of her he could not row for a few minutes; he was shaking from head to foot with the reaction from tremendous effort and strain.

“This’ll never do,” he muttered. “I’m not going to be a baby now. But will I ever be able to row back?”

Presently, however, he was able to grip his oars again and pull for the lighthouse, whose beacon loomed dimly through the fog like a great blur of whiter mist. The men, obedient to his orders, lay quietly where he had placed them, and before long Natty was back again at the lighthouse landing, where Prue was waiting, wild with anxiety. The men were helped out and assisted up to the lighthouse, where Natty went to hunt up dry clothes for them, and Prue flew about to prepare hot drinks.

“To think that that child saved us!” exclaimed one of the men. “Why, I didn’t think a grown man had the strength to do what he did. He is your brother, I suppose, Miss Miller. You have another brother, I think?”

“Oh, yes — Everett — but he is away,” explained Prue. “We heard your shouts and Natty insisted on going at once to your rescue.”

“Well, he came just in time. I couldn’t have held on another minute — was so done up I couldn’t have moved or spoken all the way here even if he hadn’t commanded me to keep perfectly still.”

Natty returned at this moment and exclaimed, “Why, it is Mr. Barr. I didn’t recognize you before.”

“Barr it is, young man. This gentleman is my friend, Mr. Blackmore. We have been celebrating Victoria Day by a shooting tramp over Little Bear. We hired a boat from Ford at the Harbour Head this morning — the Cockawee, he called her — and sailed over. I don’t know much about running a boat, but Blackmore here thinks he does. We were at the other side of the island when the fog came up. We hurried across it, but it was almost dark when we reached our boat. We sailed around the point and then the boat just simply upset — don’t know why—”

“But I know why,” interrupted Natty indignantly. “That Cockawee does nothing but upset. She has turned turtle twice out in the harbour in fine weather. Ford was a rascal to let her to you. He might have known what would happen. Why — why — it was almost murder to let you go!”

“I thought there must be something queer about her,” declared Mr. Blackmore. “I do know how to handle a boat despite my friend’s gibe, and there was no reason why she should have upset like that. That Ford ought to be horsewhipped.”

Thanks to Prue’s stinging hot decoctions of black currant drink, the two gentlemen were no worse for their drenching and exposure, and the next morning Natty took them to the mainland in the Merry Maid. When he parted with them, Mr. Barr shook his hand heartily and said: “Thank you, my boy. You’re a plucky youngster and a skilful one, too. Tell your brother that if I can get the Blue Point lighthouse berth for him I will, and as for yourself, you will always find a friend in me, and if I can ever do anything for you I will.”

Two weeks later Everett received an official document formally appointing him keeper of Blue Point Island light. Natty carried the news to

the mainland, where it was joyfully received among the fishermen.

“Only right and fair,” said Cooper Creasy. “Blue Point without a Miller to light up wouldn’t seem the thing at all, that’s what. And it’s nothing but Ev’s doo.”

“Guess Natty had more to do with it than Ev,” said Adam, perpetrating a very poor pun and being immensely applauded therefor. It keyed Will Scott up to rival Adam.

“You said that Irving had a pull and the Millers hadn’t,” he said jocularly. “But it looks as if ‘twas Natty’s pull did the business after all — his pull over to Bear Island and back.”

“It was about a miracle that a boy could do what he did on such a night,” said Charles Macey.

“Where’s Ford?” asked Natty uncomfortably. He hated to have his exploit talked about.

“Ford has cleared out,” said Cooper, “gone down to Summerside to go into Tobe Meekins’s factory there. Best thing he could do, that’s what. Folks here hadn’t no use for him after letting that death trap to them two men — even if they was Lib’rals. The Cockawee druv ashore on Little Bear, and there she’s going to remain, I guess. D’ye want a berth in my mackerel boat this summer, Natty?”

“I do,” said Natty, “but I thought you said you were full.”

“I guess I can make room for you,” said Cooper. “A boy with such grit and muscle ain’t to be allowed to go to seed on Blue Point, that’s what. Yesser, we’ll make room for you.”

And Natty’s cup of happiness was full.

Penelope's Party Waist

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“It’s perfectly horrid to be so poor,” grumbled Penelope. Penelope did not often grumble, but just now, as she sat tapping with one pink-tipped finger her invitation to Blanche Anderson’s party, she felt that grumbling was the only relief she had.

Penelope was seventeen, and when one is seventeen and cannot go to a party because one hasn’t a suitable dress to wear, the world is very apt to seem a howling wilderness.

“I wish I could think of some way to get you a new waist,” said Doris, with what these sisters called “the poverty pucker” coming in the centre of her pretty forehead. “If your black skirt were sponged and pressed and re-hung, it would do very well.”

Penelope saw the poverty pucker and immediately repented with all her impetuous heart having grumbled. That pucker came often enough without being brought there by extra worries.

“Well, there is no use sitting here sighing for the unattainable,” she said, jumping up briskly. “I’d better be putting my grey matter into that algebra instead of wasting it plotting for a party dress that I certainly can’t get. It’s a sad thing for a body to lack brains when she wants to be a teacher, isn’t it? If I could only absorb algebra and history as I can music, what a blessing it would be! Come now, Dorrie dear, smooth that pucker out. Next year I shall be earning a princely salary, which we can squander on party gowns at will — if people haven’t given up inviting us by that time, in sheer despair of ever being able to conquer our exclusiveness.”

Penelope went off to her detested algebra with a laugh, but the pucker did not go out of Doris’ forehead. She wanted Penelope to go to that party.

Penelope has studied so hard all winter and she hasn’t gone anywhere, thought the older sister wistfully. She is getting discouraged over those

examinations and she needs just a good, jolly time to hearten her up. If it could only be managed!

But Doris did not see how it could. It took every cent of her small salary as typewriter in an uptown office to run their tiny establishment and keep Penelope in school dresses and books. Indeed, she could not have done even that much if they had not owned their little cottage. Next year it would be easier if Penelope got through her examinations successfully, but just now there was absolutely not a spare penny.

“It is hard to be poor. We are a pair of misfits,” said Doris, with a patient little smile, thinking of Penelope’s uncultivated talent for music and her own housewifely gifts, which had small chance of flowering out in her business life.

Doris dreamed of pretty dresses all that night and thought about them all the next day. So, it must be confessed, did Penelope, though she would not have admitted it for the world.

When Doris reached home the next evening, she found Penelope hovering over a bulky parcel on the sitting-room table.

“I’m so glad you’ve come,” she said with an exaggerated gasp of relief. “I really don’t think my curiosity could have borne the strain for another five minutes. The expressman brought this parcel an hour ago, and there’s a letter for you from Aunt Adella on the clock shelf, and I think they belong to each other. Hurry up and find out. Dorrie, darling, what if it should be a — a — present of some sort or other!”

“I suppose it can’t be anything else,” smiled Doris. She knew that Penelope had started out to say “a new dress.” She cut the strings and removed the wrappings. Both girls stared.

“Is it — it isn’t — yes, it is! Doris Hunter, I believe it’s an old quilt!”

Doris unfolded the odd present with a queer feeling of disappointment. She did not know just what she had expected the package to contain, but certainly not this. She laughed a little shakily.

“Well, we can’t say after this that Aunt Adella never gave us anything,” she said, when she had opened her letter. “Listen, Penelope.”

My Dear Doris:

I have decided to give up housekeeping and go out West to live with Robert. So I am disposing of such of the family heirlooms as I do not wish to take with me. I am sending you by express your Grandmother Hunter's silk quilt. It is a handsome article still and I hope you will prize it as you should. It took your grandmother five years to make it. There is a bit of the wedding dress of every member of the family in it. Love to Penelope and yourself.

Your affectionate aunt,
Adella Hunter.

"I don't see its beauty," said Penelope with a grimace. "It may have been pretty once, but it is all faded now. It is a monument of patience, though. The pattern is what they call 'Little Thousands,' isn't it? Tell me, Dorrie, does it argue a lack of proper respect for my ancestors that I can't feel very enthusiastic over this heirloom — especially when Grandmother Hunter died years before I was born?"

"It was very kind of Aunt Adella to send it," said Doris dutifully.

"Oh, very," agreed Penelope drolly. "Only don't ever ask me to sleep under it. It would give me the nightmare. O-o-h!"

This last was a little squeal of admiration as Doris turned the quilt over and brought to view the shimmering lining.

"Why, the wrong side is ever so much prettier than the right!" exclaimed Penelope. "What lovely, old-timey stuff! And not a bit faded."

The lining was certainly very pretty. It was a soft, creamy yellow silk, with a design of brocaded pink rosebuds all over it.

"That was a dress Grandmother Hunter had when she was a girl," said Doris absently. "I remember hearing Aunt Adella speak of it. When it became old-fashioned, Grandmother used it to line her quilt. I declare, it is as good as new."

"Well, let us go and have tea," said Penelope. "I'm decidedly hungry. Besides, I see the poverty pucker coming. Put the quilt in the spare room. It is something to possess an heirloom, after all. It gives one a nice, important-family feeling."

After tea, when Penelope was patiently grinding away at her studies and thinking dolefully enough of the near-approaching examinations, which she dreaded, and of teaching, which she confidently expected to hate, Doris went up to the tiny spare room to look at the wrong side of the quilt again.

“It would make the loveliest party waist,” she said under her breath. “Creamy yellow is Penelope’s colour, and I could use that bit of old black lace and those knots of velvet ribbon that I have to trim it. I wonder if Grandmother Hunter’s reproachful spirit will forever haunt me if I do it.”

Doris knew very well that she would do it — had known it ever since she had looked at that lovely lining and a vision of Penelope’s vivid face and red-brown hair rising above a waist of the quaint old silk had flashed before her mental sight. That night, after Penelope had gone to bed, Doris ripped the lining out of Grandmother Hunter’s silk quilt.

“If Aunt Adella saw me now!” she laughed softly to herself as she worked.

In the three following evenings Doris made the waist. She thought it a wonderful bit of good luck that Penelope went out each of the evenings to study some especially difficult problems with a school chum.

“It will be such a nice surprise for her,” the sister mused jubilantly.

Penelope was surprised as much as the tender, sisterly heart could wish when Doris flashed out upon her triumphantly on the evening of the party with the black skirt nicely pressed and re-hung, and the prettiest waist imaginable — a waist that was a positive “creation” of dainty rose-besprinkled silk, with a girdle and knots of black velvet.

“Doris Hunter, you are a veritable little witch! Do you mean to tell me that you conjured that perfectly lovely thing for me out of the lining of Grandmother Hunter’s quilt?”

So Penelope went to Blanche’s party and her dress was the admiration of every girl there. Mrs. Fairweather, who was visiting Mrs. Anderson, looked closely at it also. She was a very sweet old lady, with silver hair, which she wore in delightful, old-fashioned puffs, and she had very bright, dark eyes. Penelope thought her altogether charming.

“She looks as if she had just stepped out of the frame of some lovely old picture,” she said to herself. “I wish she belonged to me. I’d just love to have a grandmother like her. And I do wonder who it is I’ve seen who looks so much like her.”

A little later on the knowledge came to her suddenly, and she thought with inward surprise: Why, it is Doris, of course. If my sister Doris lives to be seventy years old and wears her hair in pretty white puffs, she will look exactly as Mrs. Fairweather does now.

Mrs. Fairweather asked to have Penelope introduced to her, and when they found themselves alone together she said gently, “My dear, I am going to ask a very impertinent question. Will you tell me where you got the silk of which your waist is made?”

Poor Penelope’s pretty young face turned crimson. She was not troubled with false pride by any means, but she simply could not bring herself to tell Mrs. Fairweather that her waist was made out of the lining of an old heirloom quilt.

“My Aunt Adella gave me — gave us — the material,” she stammered. “And my elder sister Doris made the waist for me. I think the silk once belonged to my Grandmother Hunter.”

“What was your grandmother’s maiden name?” asked Mrs. Fairweather eagerly.

“Penelope Saverne. I am named after her.”

Mrs. Fairweather suddenly put her arm about Penelope and drew the young girl to her, her lovely old face aglow with delight and tenderness.

“Then you are my grandniece,” she said. “Your grandmother was my half-sister. When I saw your dress, I felt sure you were related to her. I should recognize that rosebud silk if I came across it in Thibet. Penelope Saverne was the daughter of my mother by her first husband. Penelope was four years older than I was, but we were devoted to each other. Oddly enough, our birthdays fell on the same day, and when Penelope was twenty and I sixteen, my father gave us each a silk dress of this very material. I have mine yet.

“Soon after this our mother died and our household was broken up. Penelope went to live with her aunt and I went West with Father. This was long ago, you know, when travelling and correspondence were not the easy, matter-of-course things they are now. After a few years I lost touch with my half-sister. I married out West and have lived there all my life. I never knew what had become of Penelope. But tonight, when I saw you come in in that waist made of the rosebud silk, the whole past rose before me and I felt like a girl again. My dear, I am a very lonely old woman, with nobody belonging to me. You don’t know how delighted I am to find that I have two grandnieces.”

Penelope had listened silently, like a girl in a dream. Now she patted Mrs. Fairweather’s soft old hand affectionately.

“It sounds like a storybook,” she said gaily. “You must come and see Doris. She is such a darling sister. I wouldn’t have had this waist if it hadn’t been for her. I will tell you the whole truth — I don’t mind it now. Doris made my party waist for me out of the lining of an old silk quilt of Grandmother Hunter’s that Aunt Adella sent us.”

Mrs. Fairweather did go to see Doris the very next day, and quite wonderful things came to pass from that interview. Doris and Penelope found their lives and plans changed in the twinkling of an eye. They were both to go and live with Aunt Esther — as Mrs. Fairweather had said they must call her. Penelope was to have, at last, her longed-for musical education and Doris was to be the home girl.

“You must take the place of my own dear little granddaughter,” said Aunt Esther. “She died six years ago, and I have been so lonely since.”

When Mrs. Fairweather had gone, Doris and Penelope looked at each other.

“Pinch me, please,” said Penelope. “I’m half afraid I’ll wake up and find I have been dreaming. Isn’t it all wonderful, Doris Hunter?”

Doris nodded radiantly.

“Oh, Penelope, think of it! Music for you — somebody to pet and fuss over for me — and such a dear, sweet aunty for us both!”

“And no more contriving party waists out of old silk linings,” laughed Penelope. “But it was very fortunate that you did it for once, sister mine. And no more poverty puckers,” she concluded.

The Girl and The Wild Race

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“If Judith would only get married,” Mrs. Theodora Whitney was wont to sigh dolorously.

Now, there was no valid reason why Judith ought to get married unless she wanted to. But Judith was twenty-seven and Mrs. Theodora thought it was a terrible disgrace to be an old maid.

“There has never been an old maid in our family so far back as we know of,” she lamented. “And to think that there should be one now! It just drags us down to the level of the McGregors. They have always been noted for their old maids.”

Judith took all her aunt’s lamentations goodnaturedly. Sometimes she argued the subject placidly.

“Why are you in such a hurry to be rid of me, Aunt Theo? I’m sure we’re very comfortable here together and you know you would miss me terribly if I went away.”

“If you took the right one you wouldn’t go so very far,” said Mrs. Theodora, darkly significant. “And, anyhow, I’d put up with any amount of lonesomeness rather than have an old maid in the family. It’s all very fine now, when you’re still young enough and good looking, with lots of beaux at your beck and call. But that won’t last much longer and if you go on with your dilly-dallying you’ll wake up some fine day to find that your time for choosing has gone by. Your mother used to be dreadful proud of your good looks when you was a baby. I told her she needn’t be. Nine times out of ten a beauty don’t marry as well as an ordinary girl.”

“I’m not much set on marrying at all,” declared Judith sharply. Any reference to the “right one” always disturbed her placidity. The real root of the trouble was that Mrs. Theodora’s “right one” and Judith’s “right one” were two different people.

The Ramble Valley young men were very fond of dancing attendance on Judith, even if she were verging on old maidenhood. Her prettiness was undeniable; the Stewarts came to maturity late and at twenty-seven Judith's dower of milky-white flesh, dimpled red lips and shining bronze hair was at its fullest splendor. Besides, she was "jolly," and jollity went a long way in Ramble Valley popularity.

Of all Judith's admirers Eben King alone found favor in Mrs. Theodora's eyes. He owned the adjoining farm, was well off and homely — so homely that Judith declared it made her eyes ache to look at him.

Bruce Marshall, Judith's "right one" was handsome, but Mrs. Theodora looked upon him with sour disapproval. He owned a stony little farm at the remote end of Ramble Valley and was reputed to be fonder of many things than of work. To be sure, Judith had enough capability and energy for two; but Mrs. Theodora detested a lazy man. She ordered Judith not to encourage him and Judith obeyed. Judith generally obeyed her aunt; but, though she renounced Bruce Marshall, she would have nothing to do with Eben King or anybody else and all Mrs. Theodora's grumblings did not mend matters.

The afternoon that Mrs. Tony Mack came in Mrs. Theodora felt more aggrieved than ever. Ellie McGregor had been married the previous week — Ellie, who was the same age as Judith and not half so good looking. Mrs. Theodora had been nagging Judith ever since.

"But I might as well talk to the trees down there in that hollow," she complained to Mrs. Tony. "That girl is so set and contrary minded. She doesn't care a bit for my feelings."

This was not said behind Judith's back. The girl herself was standing at the open door, drinking in all the delicate, evasive beauty of the spring afternoon. The Whitney house crested a bare hill that looked down on misty intervals, feathered with young firs that were golden green in the pale sunlight. The fields were bare and smoking, although the lanes and shadowy places were full of moist snow. Judith's face was aglow with the delight of mere life and she bent out to front the brisk, dancing wind that blew up from the valley, resinous with the odors of firs and damp mosses.

At her aunt's words the glow went out of her face. She listened with her eyes brooding on the hollow and a glowing flame of temper smouldering in them. Judith's long patience was giving way. She had been flicked on the raw too often of late. And now her aunt was confiding her grievances to Mrs. Tony Mack — the most notorious gossip in Ramble Valley or out of it!

"I can't sleep at nights for worrying over what will become of her when I'm gone," went on Mrs. Theodora dismally. "She'll just have to live on alone here — a lonesome, withered-up old maid. And her that might have had her pick, Mrs. Tony, though I do say it as shouldn't. You must feel real thankful to have all your girls married off — especially when none of them was extry goodlooking. Some people have all the luck. I'm tired of talking to Judith. Folks'll be saying soon that nobody ever really wanted her, for all her flirting. But she just won't marry."

"I will!"

Judith whirled about on the sun warm door step and came in. Her black eyes were flashing and her round cheeks were crimson.

"Such a temper you never saw!" reported Mrs. Tony afterwards. "Though 'tweren't to be wondered at. Theodora was most awful aggravating."

"I will," repeated Judith stormily. "I'm tired of being nagged day in and day out. I'll marry — and what is more I'll marry the very first man that asks me — that I will, if it is old Widower Delane himself! How does that suit you, Aunt Theodora?"

Mrs. Theodora's mental processes were never slow. She dropped her knitting ball and stooped for it. In that time she had decided what to do. She knew that Judith would stick to her word, Stewart-like, and she must trim her sails to catch this new wind.

"It suits me real well, Judith," she said calmly, "you can marry the first man that asks you and I'll say no word to hinder."

The color went out of Judith's face, leaving it pale as ashes. Her hasty assertion had no sooner been uttered than it was repented of, but she must stand by it now. She went out of the kitchen without another glance at her

aunt or the delighted Mrs. Tony and dashed up the stairs to her own little room which looked out over the whole of Ramble Valley. It was warm with the March sunshine and the leafless boughs of the creeper that covered the end of the house were tapping a gay tattoo on the window panes to the music of the wind.

Judith sat down in her little rocker and dropped her pointed chin in her hands. Far down the valley, over the firs on the McGregor hill and the blue mirror of the Cranston pond, Bruce Marshall's little gray house peeped out from a semicircle of white-stemmed birches. She had not seen Bruce since before Christmas. He had been angry at her then because she had refused to let him drive her home from prayer meeting. Since then she had heard a rumor that he was going to see Kitty Leigh at the Upper Valley.

Judith looked sombrely down at the Marshall homestead. She had always loved the quaint, picturesque old place, so different from all the commonplace spick and span new houses of the prosperous valley. Judith had never been able to decide whether she really cared very much for Bruce Marshall or not, but she knew that she loved that rambling, cornery house of his, with the gable festooned with the real ivy that Bruce Marshall's great-grandmother had brought with her from England. Judith thought contrastingly of Eben King's staring, primrose-colored house in all its bare, intrusive grandeur. She gave a little shrug of distaste.

"I wish Bruce knew of this," she thought, flushing even in her solitude at the idea. "Although if it is true that he is going to see Kitty Leigh I don't suppose he'd care. And Aunt Theo will be sure to send word to Eben by hook or crook. Whatever possessed me to say such a mad thing? There goes Mrs. Tony now, all agog to spread such a delectable bit of gossip."

Mrs. Tony had indeed gone, refusing Mrs. Theodora's invitation to stay to tea, so eager was she to tell her story. And Mrs. Theodora, at that very minute, was out in her kitchen yard, giving her instructions to Potter Vane, the twelve year old urchin who cut her wood and did sundry other chores for her.

"Potter," she said, excitedly, "run over to the Kings' and tell Eben to come over here immediately — no matter what he's at. Tell him I want to

see him about something of the greatest importance.”

Mrs. Theodora thought that this was a master stroke.

“That match is as good as made,” she thought triumphantly as she picked up chips to start the tea fire. “If Judith suspects that Eben is here she is quite likely to stay in her room and refuse to come down. But if she does I’ll march him upstairs to her door and make him ask her through the keyhole. You can’t stump Theodora Whitney.”

Alas! Ten minutes later Potter returned with the unwelcome news that Eben was away from home.

“He went to Wexbridge about half an hour ago, his ma said. She said she’d tell him to come right over as soon as he kem home.”

Mrs. Theodora had to content herself with this, but she felt troubled. She knew Mrs. Tony Mack’s capabilities for spreading news. What if Bruce Marshall should hear it before Eben?

That evening Jacob Plowden’s store at Wexbridge was full of men, sitting about on kegs and counters or huddling around the stove, for the March air had grown sharp as the sun lowered in the creamy sky over the Ramble Valley hills. Eben King had a keg in the corner. He was in no hurry to go home for he loved gossip dearly and the Wexbridge stores abounded with it. He had exhausted the news of Peter Stanley’s store across the bridge and now he meant to hear what was saying at Plowden’s. Bruce Marshall was there, too, buying groceries and being waited on by Nora Plowden, who was by no means averse to the service, although as a rule her father’s customers received scanty tolerance at her hands.

“What are the Valley roads like, Marshall?” asked a Wexbridge man, between two squirts of tobacco juice.

“Bad,” said Bruce briefly. “Another warm day will finish the sleighing.”

“Are they crossing at Malley’s Creek yet?” asked Plowden.

“No, Jack Carr got in there day before yesterday. Nearly lost his mare. I came round by the main road,” responded Bruce.

The door opened at this point and Tony Mack came in. As soon as he closed the door he doubled up in a fit of chuckles, which lasted until he

was purple in the face.

“Is the man crazy?” demanded Plowden, who had never seen lean little Tony visited like this before.

“Crazy nothin’,” retorted Tony. “You’ll laugh too, when you hear it. Such a joke! Hee-tee-tee-hee-e. Theodora Whitney has been badgering Judith Stewart so much about bein’ an old maid that Judith’s got mad and vowed she’ll marry the first man that asks her. Hee-tee-tee-hee-e-e-e! My old woman was there and heard her. She’ll keep her word, too. She ain’t old Joshua Stewart’s daughter for nothin’. If he said he’d do a thing he did it if it tuck the hair off. If I was a young feller now! Hee-tee-tee-hee-e-e-e!”

Bruce Marshall swung round on one foot. His face was crimson and if looks could kill, Tony Mack would have fallen dead in the middle of his sniggers.

“You needn’t mind doing up that parcel for me,” he said to Nora. “I’ll not wait for it.”

On his way to the door Eben King brushed past him. A shout of laughter from the assembled men followed them. The others streamed out in their wake, realizing that a race was afoot. Tony alone remained inside, helpless with chuckling.

Eben King’s horse was tied at the door. He had nothing to do but step in and drive off. Bruce had put his mare in at Billy Bender’s across the bridge, intending to spend the evening there. He knew that this would handicap him seriously, but he strode down the road with a determined expression on his handsome face. Fifteen minutes later he drove past the store, his gray mare going at a sharp gait. The crowd in front of Plowden’s cheered him, their sympathies were with him for King was not popular. Tony had come out and shouted, “Here’s luck to you, brother,” after which he doubled up with renewed laughter. Such a lark! And he, Tony, had set it afoot! It would be a story to tell for years.

Marshall, with his lips set and his dreamy gray eyes for once glittering with a steely light, urged Lady Jane up the Wexbridge hill. From its top it was five miles to Ramble Valley by the main road. A full mile ahead of

him he saw Eben King, getting along through mud and slush, and occasional big slumpy drifts of old snow, as fast as his clean-limbed trotter could carry him. As a rule Eben was exceedingly careful of his horses, but now he was sending Bay Billy along for all that was in him.

For a second Bruce hesitated. Then he turned his mare down the field cut to Malley's Creek. It was taking Lady Jane's life and possibly his own in his hand, but it was his only chance. He could never have overtaken Bay Billy on the main road.

"Do your best, Lady Jane," he muttered, and Lady Jane plunged down the steep hillside, through the glutinous mud of a ploughed field as if she meant to do it.

Beyond the field was a ravine full of firs, through which Malley's Creek ran. To cross it meant a four-mile cut to Ramble Valley. The ice looked black and rotten. To the left was the ragged hole where Jack Carr's mare had struggled for her life. Bruce headed Lady Jane higher up. If a crossing could be made at all it was only between Malley's spring-hole and the old ice road. Lady Jane swerved at the bank and whickered.

"On, old girl," said Bruce, in a tense voice. Unwillingly she advanced, picking her steps with cat-like sagacity. Once her foot went through, Bruce pulled her up with hands that did not tremble. The next moment she was scrambling up the opposite bank. Glancing back, Bruce saw the ice parting in her footprints and the black water gurgling up.

But the race was not yet decided. By crossing the creek he had won no more than an equal chance with Eben King. And the field road before him was much worse than the main road. There was little snow on it and some bad sloughs. But Lady Jane was good for it. For once she should not be spared.

Just as the red ball of the sun touched the wooded hills of the valley, Mrs. Theodora, looking from the cowstable door, saw two sleighs approaching, the horses of which were going at a gallop. One was trundling down the main road, headlong through old drifts and slumpy snow, where a false step might send the horse floundering to the bottom. The other was coming up from the direction of the creek, full tilt through

Tony Mack's stump land, where not a vestige of snow coated the huge roots over which the runners bumped.

For a moment Mrs. Theodora stood at a gaze. Then she recognized both drivers. She dropped her milking pail and ran to the house, thinking as she ran. She knew that Judith was alone in the kitchen. If Eben King got there first, well and good, but if Bruce Marshall won the race he must encounter her, Mrs. Theodora.

"He won't propose to Judith as long as I'm round," she panted. "I know him — he's too shy. But Eben won't mind — I'll tip him the wink."

Potter Vane was chopping wood before the door. Mrs. Theodora recognizing in him a further obstacle to Marshall's wooing, caught him unceremoniously by the arm and hauled him, axe and all, over the doorstone and into the kitchen, just as Bruce Marshall and Eben King drove into the yard with not a second to spare between them. There was a woeful cut on Bay Billy's slender foreleg and the reeking Lady Jane was trembling like a leaf. The staunch little mare had brought her master over that stretch of sticky field road in time, but she was almost exhausted.

Both men sprang from their sleighs and ran to the door. Bruce Marshall won it by foot-room and burst into the kitchen with his rival hot on his heels. Mrs. Theodora stood defiantly in the middle of the room, still grasping the dazed and dismayed Potter. In a corner Judith turned from the window whence she had been watching the finish of the race. She was pale and tense from excitement. In those few gasping moments she had looked on her heart as on an open book; she knew at last that she loved Bruce Marshall and her eyes met his fiery gray ones as he sprang over the threshold.

"Judith, will you marry me?" gasped Bruce, before Eben, who had first looked at Mrs. Theodora and the squirming Potter, had located the girl.

"Yes," said Judith. She burst into hysterical tears as she said it and sat limply down in a chair.

Mrs. Theodora loosed her grip on Potter.

"You can go back to your work," she said dully. She followed him out and Eben King followed her. On the step she reached behind him and

closed the door.

“Trust a King for being too late!” she said bitterly and unjustly.

Eben went home with Bay Billy. Potter gazed after him until Mrs. Theodora ordered him to put Marshall’s mare in the stable and rub her down.

“Anyway, Judith won’t be an old maid,” she comforted herself.

The Promise of Lucy Ellen

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Cecily Foster came down the sloping, fir-fringed road from the village at a leisurely pace. Usually she walked with a long, determined stride, but to-day the drowsy, mellowing influence of the Autumn afternoon was strong upon her and filled her with placid content. Without being actively conscious of it, she was satisfied with the existing circumstances of her life. It was half over now. The half of it yet to be lived stretched before her, tranquil, pleasant and uneventful, like the afternoon, filled with unhurried duties and calmly interesting days, Cecily liked the prospect.

When she came to her own lane she paused, folding her hands on the top of the whitewashed gate, while she basked for a moment in the warmth that seemed cupped in the little grassy hollow hedged about with young fir-trees.

Before her lay sere, brooding fields sloping down to a sandy shore, where long foamy ripples were lapping with a murmur that threaded the hushed air like a faint minor melody.

On the crest of the little hill to her right was her home — hers and Lucy Ellen's. The house was an old-fashioned, weather-gray one, low in the eaves, with gables and porches overgrown with vines that had turned to wine-reds and rich bronzes in the October frosts. On three sides it was closed in by tall old spruces, their outer sides bared and grim from long wrestling with the Atlantic winds, but their inner green and feathery. On the fourth side a trim white paling shut in the flower garden before the front door. Cecily could see the beds of purple and scarlet asters, making rich whorls of color under the parlor and sitting-room windows. Lucy Ellen's bed was gayer and larger than Cecily's. Lucy Ellen had always had better luck with flowers.

She could see old Boxer asleep on the front porch step and Lucy Ellen's white cat stretched out on the parlor windowsill. There was no

other sign of life about the place. Cecily drew a long, leisurely breath of satisfaction.

“After tea I’ll dig up those dahlia roots,” she said aloud. “They’d ought to be up. My, how blue and soft that sea is! I never saw such a lovely day. I’ve been gone longer than I expected. I wonder if Lucy Ellen’s been lonesome?”

When Cecily looked back from the misty ocean to the house, she was surprised to see a man coming with a jaunty step down the lane under the gnarled spruces. She looked at him perplexedly. He must be a stranger, for she was sure no man in Oriental walked like that.

“Some agent has been pestering Lucy Ellen, I suppose,” she muttered vexedly.

The stranger came on with an airy briskness utterly foreign to Orientalites. Cecily opened the gate and went through. They met under the amber-tinted sugar maple in the heart of the hollow. As he passed, the man lifted his hat and bowed with an ingratiating smile.

He was about forty-five, well, although somewhat loudly dressed, and with an air of self-satisfied prosperity pervading his whole personality. He had a heavy gold watch chain and a large seal ring on the hand that lifted his hat. He was bald, with a high, Shaksperian forehead and a halo of sandy curls. His face was ruddy and weak, but goodnatured: his eyes were large and blue, and he had a little straw-colored moustache, with a juvenile twist and curl in it.

Cecily did not recognize him, yet there was something vaguely familiar about him. She walked rapidly up to the house. In the sitting-room she found Lucy Ellen peering out between the muslin window curtains. When the latter turned there was an air of repressed excitement about her.

“Who was that man, Lucy Ellen?” Cecily asked.

To Cecily’s amazement, Lucy Ellen blushed — a warm, Springlike flood of color that rolled over her delicate little face like a miracle of rejuvenescence.

“Didn’t you know him? That was Cromwell Biron,” she simpered. Although Lucy Ellen was forty and, in most respects, sensible, she could not help simpering upon occasion.

“Cromwell Biron,” repeated Cecily, in an emotionless voice. She took off her bonnet mechanically, brushed the dust from its ribbons and bows and went to put it carefully away in its white box in the spare bedroom. She felt as if she had had a severe shock, and she dared not ask anything more just then. Lucy Ellen’s blush had frightened her. It seemed to open up dizzying possibilities of change.

“But she promised — she promised,” said Cecily fiercely, under her breath.

While Cecily was changing her dress, Lucy Ellen was getting the tea ready in the little kitchen. Now and then she broke out into singing, but always checked herself guiltily. Cecily heard her and set her firm mouth a little firmer.

“If a man had jilted me twenty years ago, I wouldn’t be so overwhelmingly glad to see him when he came back — especially if he had got fat and bald-headed,” she added, her face involuntarily twitching into a smile. Cecily, in spite of her serious expression and intense way of looking at life, had an irrepressible sense of humor.

Tea that evening was not the pleasant meal it usually was. The two women were wont to talk animatedly to each other, and Cecily had many things to tell Lucy Ellen. She did not tell them. Neither did Lucy Ellen ask any questions, her ill-concealed excitement hanging around her like a festal garment.

Cecily’s heart was on fire with alarm and jealousy. She smiled a little cruelly as she buttered and ate her toast.

“And so that was Cromwell Biron,” she said with studied carelessness. “I thought there was something familiar about him. When did he come home?”

“He got to Oriental yesterday,” fluttered back Lucy Ellen. “He’s going to be home for two months. We — we had such an interesting talk this afternoon. He — he’s as full of jokes as ever. I wished you’d been here.”

This was a fib. Cecily knew it.

"I don't, then," she said contemptuously. "You know I never had much use for Cromwell Biron. I think he had a face of his own to come down here to see you uninvited, after the way he treated you."

Lucy Ellen blushed scorchingly and was miserably silent.

"He's changed terrible in his looks," went on Cecily relentlessly. "How bald he's got — and fat! To think of the spruce Cromwell Biron got to be bald and fat! To be sure, he still has the same sheepish expression. Will you pass me the currant jell, Lucy Ellen?"

"I don't think he's so very fat," she said resentfully, when Cecily had left the table. "And I don't care if he is."

Twenty years before this, Biron had jilted Lucy Ellen Foster. She was the prettiest girl in Oriental then, but the new school teacher over at the Crossways was prettier, with a dash of piquancy, which Lucy Ellen lacked, into the bargain. Cromwell and the school teacher had run away and been married, and Lucy Ellen was left to pick up the tattered shreds of her poor romance as best she could.

She never had another lover. She told herself that she would always be faithful to the one love of her life. This sounded romantic, and she found a certain comfort in it.

She had been brought up by her uncle and aunt. When they died she and her cousin, Cecily Foster, found themselves, except for each other, alone in the world.

Cecily loved Lucy Ellen as a sister. But she believed that Lucy Ellen would yet marry, and her heart sank at the prospect of being left without a soul to love and care for.

It was Lucy Ellen that had first proposed their mutual promise, but Cecily had grasped at it eagerly. The two women, verging on decisive old maidenhood, solemnly promised each other that they would never marry, and would always live together. From that time Cecily's mind had been at ease. In her eyes a promise was a sacred thing.

The next evening at prayer-meeting Cromwell Biron received quite an ovation from old friends and neighbors. Cromwell had been a favorite in

his boyhood. He had now the additional glamour of novelty and reputed wealth.

He was beaming and expansive. He went into the choir to help sing. Lucy Ellen sat beside him, and they sang from the same book. Two red spots burned on her thin cheeks, and she had a cluster of lavender chrysanthemums pinned on her jacket. She looked almost girlish, and Cromwell Biron gazed at her with sidelong admiration, while Cecily watched them both fiercely from her pew. She knew that Cromwell Biron had come home, wooing his old love.

“But he sha’n’t get her,” Cecily whispered into her hymnbook. Somehow it was a comfort to articulate the words, “She promised.”

On the church steps Cromwell offered his arm to Lucy Ellen with a flourish. She took it shyly, and they started down the road in the crisp Autumn moonlight. For the first time in ten years Cecily walked home from prayer-meeting alone. She went upstairs and flung herself on her bed, reckless for once, of her second best hat and gown.

Lucy Ellen did not venture to ask Cromwell in. She was too much in awe of Cecily for that. But she loitered with him at the gate until the grandfather’s clock in the hall struck eleven. Then Cromwell went away, whistling gaily, with Lucy Ellen’s chrysanthemum in his buttonhole, and Lucy Ellen went in and cried half the night. But Cecily did not cry. She lay savagely awake until morning.

“Cromwell Biron is courting you again,” she said bluntly to Lucy Ellen at the breakfast table.

Lucy Ellen blushed nervously.

“Oh, nonsense, Cecily,” she protested with a simper.

“It isn’t nonsense,” said Cecily calmly. “He is. There is no fool like an old fool, and Cromwell Biron never had much sense. The presumption of him!”

Lucy Ellen’s hands trembled as she put her teacup down.

“He’s not so very old,” she said faintly, “and everybody but you likes him — and he’s well-to-do. I don’t see that there’s any presumption.”

“Maybe not — if you look at it so. You’re very forgiving, Lucy Ellen. You’ve forgotten how he treated you once.”

“No — o — o, I haven’t,” faltered Lucy Ellen.

“Anyway,” said Cecily coldly, “you shouldn’t encourage his attentions, Lucy Ellen; you know you couldn’t marry him even if he asked you. You promised.”

All the fitful color went out of Lucy Ellen’s face. Under Cecily’s pitiless eyes she wilted and drooped.

“I know,” she said deprecatingly, “I haven’t forgotten. You are talking nonsense, Cecily. I like to see Cromwell, and he likes to see me because I’m almost the only one of his old set that is left. He feels lonesome in Oriental now.”

Lucy Ellen lifted her fawn-colored little head more erectly at the last of her protest. She had saved her self-respect.

In the month that followed Cromwell Biron pressed his suit persistently, unintimidated by Cecily’s antagonism. October drifted into November and the chill, drear days came. To Cecily the whole outer world seemed the dismal reflex of her pain-bitten heart. Yet she constantly laughed at herself, too, and her laughter was real if bitter.

One evening she came home late from a neighbor’s. Cromwell Biron passed her in the hollow under the bare boughs of the maple that were outlined against the silvery moonlit sky.

When Cecily went into the house, Lucy Ellen opened the parlor door. She was very pale, but her eyes burned in her face and her hands were clasped before her.

“I wish you’d come in here for a few minutes, Cecily,” she said feverishly.

Cecily followed silently into the room.

“Cecily,” she said faintly, “Cromwell was here tonight. He asked me to marry him. I told him to come tomorrow night for his answer.”

She paused and looked imploringly at Cecily. Cecily did not speak. She stood tall and unrelenting by the table. The rigidity of her face and figure

smote Lucy Ellen like a blow. She threw out her bleached little hands and spoke with a sudden passion utterly foreign to her.

“Cecily, I want to marry him. I — I — love him. I always have. I never thought of this when I promised. Oh, Cecily, you’ll let me off my promise, won’t you?”

“No,” said Cecily. It was all she said. Lucy Ellen’s hands fell to her sides, and the light went out of her face.

“You won’t?” she said hopelessly.

Cecily went out. At the door she turned.

“When John Edwards asked me to marry him six years ago, I said no for your sake. To my mind a promise is a promise. But you were always weak and romantic, Lucy Ellen.”

Lucy Ellen made no response. She stood limply on the hearthrug like a faded blossom bitten by frost.

After Cromwell Biron had gone away the next evening, with all his brisk jauntiness shorn from him for the time, Lucy Ellen went up to Cecily’s room. She stood for a moment in the narrow doorway, with the lamplight striking upward with a gruesome effect on her wan face.

“I’ve sent him away,” she said lifelessly. “I’ve kept my promise, Cecily.”

There was silence for a moment. Cecily did not know what to say. Suddenly Lucy Ellen burst out bitterly.

“I wish I was dead!”

Then she turned swiftly and ran across the hall to her own room. Cecily gave a little moan of pain. This was her reward for all the love she had lavished on Lucy Ellen.

“Anyway, it is all over,” she said, looking dourly into the moonlit boughs of the firs; “Lucy Ellen’ll get over it. When Cromwell is gone she’ll forget all about him. I’m not going to fret. She promised, and she wanted the promise first.”

During the next fortnight tragedy held grim sway in the little weather-gray house among the firs — a tragedy tempered with grim comedy for

Cecily, who, amid all her agony, could not help being amused at Lucy Ellen's romantic way of sorrowing.

Lucy Ellen did her mornings' work listlessly and drooped through the afternoons. Cecily would have felt it as a relief if Lucy Ellen had upbraided her, but after her outburst on the night she sent Cromwell away, Lucy Ellen never uttered a word of reproach or complaint.

One evening Cecily made a neighborly call in the village. Cromwell Biron happened to be there and gallantly insisted upon seeing her home.

She understood from Cromwell's unaltered manner that Lucy Ellen had not told him why she had refused him. She felt a sudden admiration for her cousin.

When they reached the house Cromwell halted suddenly in the banner of light that streamed from the sitting-room window. They saw Lucy Ellen sitting alone before the fire, her arms folded on the table, and her head bowed on them. Her white cat sat unnoticed at the table beside her. Cecily gave a gasp of surrender.

"You'd better come in," she said, harshly. "Lucy Ellen looks lonesome."

Cromwell muttered sheepishly, "I'm afraid I wouldn't be company for her. Lucy Ellen doesn't like me much—"

"Oh, doesn't she!" said Cecily, bitterly. "She likes you better than she likes me for all I've — but it's no matter. It's been all my fault — she'll explain. Tell her I said she could. Come in, I say."

She caught the still reluctant Cromwell by the arm and fairly dragged him over the geranium beds and through the front door. She opened the sitting-room door and pushed him in. Lucy Ellen rose in amazement. Over Cromwell's bald head loomed Cecily's dark face, tragic and determined.

"Here's your beau, Lucy Ellen," she said, "and I give you back your promise."

She shut the door upon the sudden illumination of Lucy Ellen's face and went upstairs with the tears rolling down her cheeks.

"It's my turn to wish I was dead," she muttered. Then she laughed hysterically.

“That goose of a Cromwell! How queer he did look standing there, frightened to death of Lucy Ellen. Poor little Lucy Ellen! Well, I hope he’ll be good to her.”

The Pursuit of the Ideal

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Freda's snugger was aglow with the rose-red splendour of an open fire which was triumphantly warding off the stealthy approaches of the dull grey autumn twilight. Roger St. Clair stretched himself out luxuriously in an easy-chair with a sigh of pleasure.

"Freda, your armchairs are the most comfy in the world. How do you get them to fit into a fellow's kinks so splendidly?"

Freda smiled at him out of big, owlish eyes that were the same tint as the coppery grey sea upon which the north window of the snugger looked.

"Any armchair will fit a lazy fellow's kinks," she said.

"I'm not lazy," protested Roger. "That you should say so, Freda, when I have wheeled all the way out of town this dismal afternoon over the worst bicycle road in three kingdoms to see you, bonnie maid!"

"I like lazy people," said Freda softly, tilting her spoon on a cup of chocolate with a slender brown hand.

Roger smiled at her chummily.

"You are such a comfortable girl," he said. "I like to talk to you and tell you things."

"You have something to tell me today. It has been fairly sticking out of your eyes ever since you came. Now, 'fess."

Freda put away her cup and saucer, got up, and stood by the fireplace, with one arm outstretched along the quaintly carved old mantel. She laid her head down on its curve and looked expectantly at Roger.

"I have seen my ideal, Freda," said Roger gravely.

Freda lifted her head and then laid it down again. She did not speak. Roger was glad of it. Even at the moment he found himself thinking that Freda had a genius for silence. Any other girl he knew would have broken in at once with surprised exclamations and questions and spoiled his story.

"You have not forgotten what my ideal woman is like?" he said.

Freda shook her head. She was not likely to forget. She remembered only too keenly the afternoon he had told her. They had been sitting in the snugger, herself in the inglenook, and Roger coiled up in his big pet chair that nobody else ever sat in.

“‘What must my lady be that I must love her?’” he had quoted. “Well, I will paint my dream-love for you, Freda. She must be tall and slender, with chestnut hair of wonderful gloss, with just the suggestion of a ripple in it. She must have an oval face, colourless ivory in hue, with the expression of a Madonna; and her eyes must be ‘passionless, peaceful blue,’ deep and tender as a twilight sky.”

Freda, looking at herself along her arm in the mirror, recalled this description and smiled faintly. She was short and plump, with a piquant, irregular little face, vivid tinting, curly, unmanageable hair of ruddy brown, and big grey eyes. Certainly, she was not his ideal.

“When and where did you meet your lady of the Madonna face and twilight eyes?” she asked.

Roger frowned. Freda’s face was solemn enough but her eyes looked as if she might be laughing at him.

“I haven’t met her yet. I have only seen her. It was in the park yesterday. She was in a carriage with the Mandersons. So beautiful, Freda! Our eyes met as she drove past and I realized that I had found my long-sought ideal. I rushed back to town and hunted up Pete Manderson at the club. Pete is a donkey but he has his ways of being useful. He told me who she was. Her name is Stephanie Gardiner; she is his cousin from the south and is visiting his mother. And, Freda, I am to dine at the Mandersons’ tonight. I shall meet her.”

“Do goddesses and ideals and Madonnas eat?” said Freda in an awed whisper. Her eyes were certainly laughing now. Roger got up stiffly.

“I must confess I did not expect that you would ridicule my confidence, Freda,” he said frigidly. “It is very unlike you. But if you are not interested I will not bore you with any further details. And it is time I was getting back to town anyhow.”

When he had gone Freda ran to the west window and flung it open. She leaned out and waved both hands at him over the spruce hedge.

“Roger, Roger, I was a horrid little beast. Forget it immediately, please. And come out tomorrow and tell me all about her.”

Roger came. He bored Freda terribly with his raptures but she never betrayed it. She was all sympathy — or, at least, as much sympathy as a woman can be who must listen while the man of men sings another woman’s praises to her. She sent Roger away in perfect good humour with himself and all the world, then she curled herself up in the snugery, pulled a rug over her head, and cried.

Roger came out to Lowlands oftener than ever after that. He had to talk to somebody about Stephanie Gardiner and Freda was the safest vent. The “pursuit of the Ideal,” as she called it, went on with vim and fervour. Sometimes Roger would be on the heights of hope and elation; the next visit he would be in the depths of despair and humility. Freda had learned to tell which it was by the way he opened the snugery door.

One day when Roger came he found six feet of young man reposing at ease in his particular chair. Freda was sipping chocolate in her corner and looking over the rim of her cup at the intruder just as she had been wont to look at Roger. She had on a new dark red gown and looked vivid and rose-hued.

She introduced the stranger as Mr. Grayson and called him Tim. They seemed to be excellent friends. Roger sat bolt upright on the edge of a fragile, gilded chair which Freda kept to hide a shabby spot in the carpet, and glared at Tim until the latter said goodbye and lounged out.

“You’ll be over tomorrow?” said Freda.

“Can’t I come this evening?” he pleaded.

Freda nodded. “Yes — and we’ll make taffy. You used to make such delicious stuff, Tim.”

“Who is that fellow, Freda?” Roger inquired crossly, as soon as the door closed.

Freda began to make a fresh pot of chocolate. She smiled dreamily as if thinking of something pleasant.

“Why, that was Tim Grayson — dear old Tim. He used to live next door to us when we were children. And we were such chums — always together, making mud pies, and getting into scrapes. He is just the same old Tim, and is home from the west for a long visit. I was so glad to see him again.”

“So it would appear,” said Roger grumpily. “Well, now that ‘dear old Tim’ is gone, I suppose I can have my own chair, can I? And do give me some chocolate. I didn’t know you made taffy.”

“Oh, I don’t. It’s Tim. He can do everything. He used to make it long ago, and I washed up after him and helped him eat it. How is the pursuit of the Ideal coming on, Roger-boy?”

Roger did not feel as if he wanted to talk about the Ideal. He noticed how vivid Freda’s smile was and how lovable were the curves of her neck where the dusky curls were caught up from it. He had also an inner vision of Freda making taffy with Tim and he did not approve of it.

He refused to talk about the Ideal. On his way back to town he found himself thinking that Freda had the most charming, glad little laugh of any girl he knew. He suddenly remembered that he had never heard the Ideal laugh. She smiled placidly — he had raved to Freda about that smile — but she did not laugh. Roger began to wonder what an ideal without any sense of humour would be like when translated into the real.

He went to Lowlands the next afternoon and found Tim there — in his chair again. He detested the fellow but he could not deny that he was goodlooking and had charming manners. Freda was very nice to Tim. On his way back to town Roger decided that Tim was in love with Freda. He was furious at the idea. The presumption of the man!

He also remembered that he had not said a word to Freda about the Ideal. And he never did say much more — perhaps because he could not get the chance. Tim was always there before him and generally outstayed him.

One day when he went out he did not find Freda at home. Her aunt told him that she was out riding with Mr. Grayson. On his way back he met them. As they cantered by, Freda waved her riding whip at him. Her face

was full of warm, ripe, kissable tints, her loose lovelocks were blowing about it, and her eyes shone like grey pools mirroring stars. Roger turned and watched them out of sight behind the firs that cupped Lowlands.

That night at Mrs. Crandall's dinner table somebody began to talk about Freda. Roger strained his ears to listen. Mrs. Kitty Carr was speaking — Mrs. Kitty knew everything and everybody.

"She is simply the most charming girl in the world when you get really acquainted with her," said Mrs. Kitty, with the air of having discovered and patented Freda. "She is so vivid and unconventional and lovable — 'spirit and fire and dew,' you know. Tim Grayson is a very lucky fellow."

"Are they engaged?" someone asked.

"Not yet, I fancy. But of course it is only a question of time. Tim simply adores her. He is a good soul and has lots of money, so he'll do. But really, you know, I think a prince wouldn't be good enough for Freda."

Roger suddenly became conscious that the Ideal was asking him a question of which he had not heard a word. He apologized and was forgiven. But he went home a very miserable man.

He did not go to Lowlands for two weeks. They were the longest, most wretched two weeks he had ever lived through. One afternoon he heard that Tim Grayson had gone back west. Mrs. Kitty told it mournfully.

"Of course, this means that Freda has refused him," she said. "She is such an odd girl."

Roger went straight out to Lowlands. He found Freda in the snugery and held out his hands to her.

"Freda, will you marry me? It will take a lifetime to tell you how much I love you."

"But the Ideal?" questioned Freda.

"I have just discovered what my ideal is," said Roger. "She is a dear, loyal, companionable little girl, with the jolliest laugh and the warmest, truest heart in the world. She has starry grey eyes, two dimples, and a mouth I must and will kiss — there — there — there! Freda, tell me you love me a little bit, although I've been such a besotted idiot."

“I will not let you call my husband-that-is-to-be names,” said Freda, snuggling down into the curve of his shoulder. “But indeed, Roger-boy, you will have to make me very, very happy to square matters up. You have made me so unutterably unhappy for two months.”

“The pursuit of the Ideal is ended,” declared Roger.

The Softening of Miss Cynthia

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“I wonder if I’d better flavour this cake with lemon or vanilla. It’s the most perplexing thing I ever heard of in my life.”

Miss Cynthia put down the bottles with a vexed frown; her perplexity had nothing whatever to do with flavouring the golden mixture in her cake bowl. Mrs. John Joe knew that; the latter had dropped in in a flurry of curiosity concerning the little boy whom she had seen about Miss Cynthia’s place for the last two days. Her daughter Kitty was with her; they both sat close together on the kitchen sofa.

“It is too bad,” said Mrs. John Joe sympathetically. “I don’t wonder you are mixed up. So unexpected, too! When did he come?”

“Tuesday night,” said Miss Cynthia. She had decided on the vanilla and was whipping it briskly in. “I saw an express wagon drive into the yard with a boy and a trunk in it and I went out just as he got down. ‘Are you my Aunt Cynthia?’ he said. ‘Who in the world are you?’ I asked. And he says, ‘I’m Wilbur Merrivale, and my father was John Merrivale. He died three weeks ago and he said I was to come to you, because you were his sister.’ Well, you could just have knocked me down with a feather!”

“I’m sure,” said Mrs. John Joe. “But I didn’t know you had a brother. And his name — Merrivale?”

“Well, he wasn’t any relation really. I was about six years old when my father married his mother, the Widow Merrivale. John was just my age, and we were brought up together just like brother and sister. He was a real nice fellow, I must say. But he went out to Californy years ago, and I haven’t heard a word of him for fifteen years — didn’t know if he was alive or dead. But it seems from what I can make out from the boy, that his mother died when he was a baby, and him and John roughed it along together — pretty poor, too, I guess — till John took a fever and died. And he told some of his friends to send the boy to me, for he’d no relations

there and not a cent in the world. And the child came all the way from Californy, and here he is. I've been just distracted ever since. I've never been used to children, and to have the house kept in perpetual uproar is more than I can stand. He's about twelve and a born mischief. He'll tear through the rooms with his dirty feet, and he's smashed one of my blue vases and torn down a curtain and set Towser on the cat half a dozen times already — I never was so worried. I've got him out on the verandah shelling peas now, to keep him quiet for a little spell."

"I'm really sorry for you," said Mrs. John Joe. "But, poor child, I suppose he's never had anyone to look after him. And come all the way from Californy alone, too — he must be real smart."

"Too smart, I guess. He must take after his mother, whoever she was, for there ain't a bit of Merrivale in him. And he's been brought up pretty rough."

"Well, it'll be a great responsibility for you, Cynthia, of course. But he'll be company, too, and he'll be real handy to run errands and—"

"I'm not going to keep him," said Miss Cynthia determinedly. Her thin lips set themselves firmly and her voice had a hard ring.

"Not going to keep him?" said Mrs. John Joe blankly. "You can't send him back to Californy!"

"I don't intend to. But as for having him here to worry my life out and keep me in a perpetual stew, I just won't do it. D'ye think I'm going to trouble myself about children at my age? And all he'd cost for clothes and schooling, too! I can't afford it. I don't suppose his father expected it either. I suppose he expected me to look after him a bit — and of course I will. A boy of his age ought to be able to earn his keep, anyway. If I look out a place for him somewhere where he can do odd jobs and go to school in the winter, I think it's all anyone can expect of me, when he ain't really no blood relation."

Miss Cynthia flung the last sentence at Mrs. John Joe rather defiantly, not liking the expression on that lady's face.

"I suppose nobody could expect more, Cynthia," said Mrs. John Joe deprecatingly. "He would be an awful bother, I've no doubt, and you've

lived alone so long with no one to worry you that you wouldn't know what to do with him. Boys are always getting into mischief — my four just keep me on the dead jump. Still, it's a pity for him, poor little fellow! No mother or father — it seems hard."

Miss Cynthia's face grew grimmer than ever as she went to the door with her callers and watched them down the garden path. As soon as Mrs. John Joe saw that the door was shut, she unburdened her mind to her daughter.

"Did you ever hear tell of the like? I thought I knew Cynthia Henderson well, if anybody in Wilmot did, but this beats me. Just think, Kitty — there she is, no one knows how rich, and not a soul in the world belonging to her, and she won't even take in her brother's child. She must be a hard woman. But it's just meanness, pure and simple; she grudges him what he'd eat and wear. The poor mite doesn't look as if he'd need much. Cynthia didn't used to be like that, but it's growing on her every day. She's got hard as rocks."

That afternoon Miss Cynthia harnessed her fat grey pony into the phaeton herself — she kept neither man nor maid, but lived in her big, immaculate house in solitary state — and drove away down the dusty, buttercup-bordered road, leaving Wilbur sitting on the verandah. She returned in an hour's time and drove into the yard, shutting the gate behind her with a vigorous snap. Wilbur was not in sight and, fearful lest he should be in mischief, she hurriedly tied the pony to the railing and went in search of him. She found him sitting by the well, his chin in his hands; he was pale and his eyes were red. Miss Cynthia hardened her heart and took him into the house.

"I've been down to see Mr. Robins this afternoon, Wilbur," she said, pretending to brush some invisible dust from the bottom of her nice black cashmere skirt for an excuse to avoid looking at him, "and he's agreed to take you on trial. It's a real good chance — better than you could expect. He says he'll board and clothe you and let you go to school in the winter."

The boy seemed to shrink.

“Daddy said that I would stay with you,” he said wistfully. “He said you were so good and kind and would love me for his sake.”

For a moment Miss Cynthia softened. She had been very fond of her stepbrother; it seemed that his voice appealed to her across the grave in behalf of his child. But the crust of years was not to be so easily broken.

“Your father meant that I would look after you,” she said, “and I mean to, but I can’t afford to keep you here. You’ll have a good place at Mr. Robins’, if you behave yourself. I’m going to take you down now, before I unharness the pony, so go and wash your face while I put up your things. Don’t look so woebegone, for pity’s sake! I’m not taking you to prison.”

Wilbur turned and went silently to the kitchen. Miss Cynthia thought she heard a sob. She went with a firm step into the little bedroom off the hall and took a purse out of a drawer.

“I s’pose I ought,” she said doubtfully. “I don’t s’pose he has a cent. I daresay he’ll lose or waste it.”

She counted out seventy-five cents carefully. When she came out, Wilbur was at the door. She put the money awkwardly into his hand.

“There, see that you don’t spend it on any foolishness.”

Miss Cynthia’s Action made a good deal of talk in Wilmot. The women, headed by Mrs. John Joe — who said behind Cynthia’s back what she did not dare say to her face — condemned her. The men laughed and said that Cynthia was a shrewd one; there was no getting round her. Miss Cynthia herself was far from easy. She could not forget Wilbur’s wistful eyes, and she had heard that Robins was a hard master.

A week after the boy had gone she saw him one day at the store. He was lifting heavy bags from a cart. The work was beyond his strength, and he was flushed and panting. Miss Cynthia’s conscience gave her a hard stab. She bought a roll of peppermints and took them over to him. He thanked her timidly and drove quickly away.

“Robins hasn’t any business putting such work on a child,” she said to herself indignantly. “I’ll speak to him about it.”

And she did — and got an answer that made her ears tingle. Mr. Robins bluntly told her he guessed he knew what was what about his hands. He

weren't no nigger driver. If she wasn't satisfied, she might take the boy away as soon as she liked.

Miss Cynthia did not get much comfort out of life that summer. Almost everywhere she went she was sure to meet Wilbur, engaged in some hard task. She could not help seeing how miserably pale and thin he had become. The worry had its effect on her. The neighbours said that Cynthia was sharper than ever. Even her churchgoing was embittered. She had always enjoyed walking up the aisle with her rich silk skirt rustling over the carpet, her cashmere shawl folded correctly over her shoulders, and her lace bonnet set precisely on her thin shining crimps. But she could take no pleasure in that or in the sermon now, when Wilbur sat right across from her pew, between hard-featured Robins and his sulky-looking wife. The boy's eyes had grown too large for his thin face.

The softening of Miss Cynthia was a very gradual process, but it reached a climax one September morning, when Mrs. John Joe came into the former's kitchen with an important face. Miss Cynthia was preserving her plums.

"No, thank you, I'll not sit down — I only run in — I suppose you've heard it. That little Merrivale boy has took awful sick with fever, they say. He's been worked half to death this summer — everyone knows what Robins is with his help — and they say he has fretted a good deal for his father and been homesick, and he's run down, I s'pose. Anyway, Robins took him over to the hospital at Stanford last night — good gracious, Cynthia, are you sick?"

Miss Cynthia had staggered to a seat by the table; her face was pallid.

"No, it's only your news gave me a turn — it came so suddenly — I didn't know."

"I must hurry back and see to the men's dinners. I thought I'd come and tell you, though I didn't know as you'd care."

This parting shot was unheeded by Miss Cynthia. She laid her face in her hands. "It's a judgement on me," she moaned. "He's going to die, and I'm his murderess. This is the account I'll have to give John Merrivale of his boy. I've been a wicked, selfish woman, and I'm justly punished."

It was a humbled Miss Cynthia who met the doctor at the hospital that afternoon. He shook his head at her eager questions.

“It’s a pretty bad case. The boy seems run down every way. No, it is impossible to think of moving him again. Bringing him here last night did him a great deal of harm. Yes, you may see him, but he will not know you, I fear — he is delirious and raves of his father and California.”

Miss Cynthia followed the doctor down the long ward. When he paused by a cot, she pushed past him. Wilbur lay tossing restlessly on his pillow. He was thin to emaciation, but his cheeks were crimson and his eyes burning bright.

Miss Cynthia stooped and took the hot, dry hands in hers.

“Wilbur,” she sobbed, “don’t you know me — Aunt Cynthia?”

“You are not my Aunt Cynthia,” said Wilbur. “Daddy said Aunt Cynthia was good and kind — you are a cross, bad woman. I want Daddy. Why doesn’t he come? Why doesn’t he come to little Wilbur?”

Miss Cynthia got up and faced the doctor.

“He’s got to get better,” she said stubbornly. “Spare no expense or trouble. If he dies, I will be a murderess. He must live and give me a chance to make it up for him.”

And he did live; but for a long time it was a hard fight, and there were days when it seemed that death must win. Miss Cynthia got so thin and wan that even Mrs. John Joe pitied her.

The earth seemed to Miss Cynthia to laugh out in prodigal joyousness on the afternoon she drove home when Wilbur had been pronounced out of danger. How tranquil the hills looked, with warm October sunshine sleeping on their sides and faint blue hazes on their brows! How gallantly the maples flaunted their crimson flags! How kind and friendly was every face she met! Afterwards, Miss Cynthia said she began to live that day.

Wilbur’s recovery was slow. Every day Miss Cynthia drove over with some dainty, and her loving gentleness sat none the less gracefully on her because of its newness. Wilbur grew to look for and welcome her coming. When it was thought safe to remove him, Miss Cynthia went to the hospital with a phaeton-load of shawls and pillows.

“I have come to take you away,” she said.

Wilbur shrank back. “Not to Mr. Robins,” he said piteously. “Oh, not there, Aunt Cynthia!”

Them Notorious Pigs

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John Harrington was a woman-hater, or thought that he was, which amounts to the same thing. He was forty-five and, having been handsome in his youth, was a fine-looking man still. He had a remarkably good farm and was a remarkably good farmer. He also had a garden which was the pride and delight of his heart or, at least, it was before Mrs. Hayden's pigs got into it.

Sarah King, Harrington's aunt and housekeeper, was deaf and crabbed, and very few visitors ever came to the house. This suited Harrington. He was a good citizen and did his duty by the community, but his bump of sociability was undeveloped. He was also a contented man, looking after his farm, improving his stock, and experimenting with new bulbs in undisturbed serenity. This, however, was all too good to last. A man is bound to have some troubles in this life, and Harrington's were near their beginning when Perry Hayden bought the adjoining farm from the heirs of Shakespeare Ely, deceased, and moved in.

To be sure, Perry Hayden, poor fellow, did not bother Harrington much, for he died of pneumonia a month after he came there, but his widow carried on the farm with the assistance of a lank hired boy. Her own children, Charles and Theodore, commonly known as Bobbles and Ted, were as yet little more than babies.

The real trouble began when Mary Hayden's pigs, fourteen in number and of half-grown voracity, got into Harrington's garden. A railing, a fir grove, and an apple orchard separated the two establishments, but these failed to keep the pigs within bounds.

Harrington had just got his garden planted for the season, and to go out one morning and find a horde of enterprising porkers rooting about in it was, to put it mildly, trying. He was angry, but as it was a first offence he

drove the pigs out with tolerable calmness, mended the fence, and spent the rest of the day repairing damages.

Three days later the pigs got in again. Harrington relieved his mind by some scathing reflections on women who tried to run farms. Then he sent Mordecai, his hired man, over to the Hayden place to ask Mrs. Hayden if she would be kind enough to keep her pigs out of his garden. Mrs. Hayden sent back word that she was very sorry and would not let it occur again. Nobody, not even John Harrington, could doubt that she meant what she said. But she had reckoned without the pigs. They had not forgotten the flavour of Egyptian fleshpots as represented by the succulent young shoots in the Harrington domains. A week later Mordecai came in and told Harrington that “them notorious pigs” were in his garden again.

There is a limit to everyone’s patience. Harrington left Mordecai to drive them out, while he put on his hat and stalked over to the Haydens’ place. Ted and Bobbles were playing at marbles in the lane and ran when they saw him coming. He got close up to the little low house among the apple trees before Mordecai appeared in the yard, driving the pigs around the barn. Mrs. Hayden was sitting on her doorstep, paring her dinner potatoes, and stood up hastily when she saw her visitor.

Harrington had never seen his neighbour at close quarters before. Now he could not help seeing that she was a very pretty little woman, with wistful, dark blue eyes and an appealing expression. Mary Hayden had been next to a beauty in her girlhood, and she had a good deal of her bloom left yet, although hard work and worry were doing their best to rob her of it. But John Harrington was an angry man and did not care whether the woman in question was pretty or not. Her pigs had rooted up his garden — that fact filled his mind.

“Mrs. Hayden, those pigs of yours have been in my garden again. I simply can’t put up with this any longer. Why in the name of reason don’t you look after your animals better? If I find them in again I’ll set my dog on them, I give you fair warning.”

A faint colour had crept into Mary Hayden’s soft, milky-white cheeks during this tirade, and her voice trembled as she said, “I’m very sorry, Mr.

Harrington. I suppose Bobbles forgot to shut the gate of their pen again this morning. He is so forgetful.”

“I’d lengthen his memory, then, if I were you,” returned Harrington grimly, supposing that Bobbles was the hired man. “I’m not going to have my garden ruined just because he happens to be forgetful. I am speaking my mind plainly, madam. If you can’t keep your stock from being a nuisance to other people you ought not to try to run a farm at all.”

Then did Mrs. Hayden sit down upon the doorstep and burst into tears. Harrington felt, as Sarah King would have expressed it, “every which way at once.” Here was a nice mess! What a nuisance women were — worse than the pigs!

“Oh, don’t cry, Mrs. Hayden,” he said awkwardly. “I didn’t mean — well, I suppose I spoke too strongly. Of course I know you didn’t mean to let the pigs in. There, do stop crying! I beg your pardon if I’ve hurt your feelings.”

“Oh, it isn’t that,” sobbed Mrs. Hayden, wiping away her tears. “It’s only — I’ve tried so hard — and everything seems to go wrong. I make such mistakes. As for your garden, sir. I’ll pay for the damage my pigs have done if you’ll let me know what it comes to.”

She sobbed again and caught her breath like a grieved child. Harrington felt like a brute. He had a queer notion that if he put his arm around her and told her not to worry over things women were not created to attend to he would be expressing his feelings better than in any other way. But of course he couldn’t do that. Instead, he muttered that the damage didn’t amount to much after all, and he hoped she wouldn’t mind what he said, and then he got himself away and strode through the orchard like a man in a desperate hurry.

Mordecai had gone home and the pigs were not to be seen, but a chubby little face peeped at him from between two scrub, bloom-white cherry trees.

“G’way, you bad man!” said Bobbles vindictively. “G’way! You made my mommer cry — I saw you. I’m only Bobbles now, but when I grow up

I'll be Charles Henry Hayden and you won't dare to make my mommer cry then."

Harrington smiled grimly. "So you're the lad who forgets to shut the pigpen gate, are you? Come out here and let me see you. Who is in there with you?"

"Ted is. He's littler than me. But I won't come out. I don't like you. G'way home."

Harrington obeyed. He went home and to work in his garden. But work as hard as he would, he could not forget Mary Hayden's grieved face.

"I was a brute!" he thought. "Why couldn't I have mentioned the matter gently? I daresay she has enough to trouble her. Confound those pigs!"

After that there was a time of calm. Evidently something had been done to Bobbles' memory or perhaps Mrs. Hayden attended to the gate herself. At all events the pigs were not seen and Harrington's garden blossomed like the rose. But Harrington himself was in a bad state.

For one thing, wherever he looked he saw the mental picture of his neighbour's tired, sweet face and the tears in her blue eyes. The original he never saw, which only made matters worse. He wondered what opinion she had of him and decided that she must think him a cross old bear. This worried him. He wished the pigs would break in again so that he might have a chance to show how forbearing he could be.

One day he gathered a nice mess of tender young greens and sent them over to Mrs. Hayden by Mordecai. At first he had thought of sending her some flowers, but that seemed silly, and besides, Mordecai and flowers were incongruous. Mrs. Hayden sent back a very pretty message of thanks, whereat Harrington looked radiant and Mordecai, who could see through a stone wall as well as most people, went out to the barn and chuckled.

"Ef the little widder hain't caught him! Who'd a-thought it?"

The next day one adventurous pig found its way alone into the Harrington garden. Harrington saw it get in and at the same moment he saw Mrs. Hayden running through her orchard. She was in his yard by the time he got out.

Her sunbonnet had fallen back and some loose tendrils of her auburn hair were curling around her forehead. Her cheeks were so pink and her eyes so bright from running that she looked almost girlish.

“Oh, Mr. Harrington,” she said breathlessly, “that pet pig of Bobbles’ is in your garden again. He only got in this minute. I saw him coming and I ran right after him.”

“He’s there, all right,” said Harrington cheerfully, “but I’ll get him out in a jiffy. Don’t tire yourself. Won’t you go into the house and rest while I drive him around?”

Mrs. Hayden, however, was determined to help and they both went around to the garden, set the gate open, and tried to drive the pig out. But Harrington was not thinking about pigs, and Mrs. Hayden did not know quite so much about driving them as Mordecai did; as a consequence they did not make much headway. In her excitement Mrs. Hayden ran over beds and whatever came in her way, and Harrington, in order to keep near her, ran after her. Between them they spoiled things about as much as a whole drove of pigs would have done.

But at last the pig grew tired of the fun, bolted out of the gate, and ran across the yard to his own place. Mrs. Hayden followed slowly and Harrington walked beside her.

“Those pigs are all to be shut up tomorrow,” she said. “Hiram has been fixing up a place for them in his spare moments and it is ready at last.”

“Oh, I wouldn’t,” said Harrington hastily. “It isn’t good for pigs to be shut up so young. You’d better let them run a while yet.”

“No,” said Mrs. Hayden decidedly. “They have almost worried me to death already. In they go tomorrow.”

They were at the lane gate now, and Harrington had to open it and let her pass through. He felt quite desperate as he watched her trip up through the rows of apple trees, her blue gingham skirt brushing the lush grasses where a lacy tangle of sunbeams and shadows lay. Bobbles and Ted came running to meet her and the three, hand in hand, disappeared from sight.

Harrington went back to the house, feeling that life was flat, stale, and unprofitable. That evening at the tea table he caught himself wondering

what it would be like to see Mary Hayden sitting at his table in place of Sarah King, with Bobbles and Ted on either hand. Then he found out what was the matter with him. He was in love, fathoms deep, with the blue-eyed widow!

Presumably the pigs were shut up the next day, for Harrington's garden was invaded no more. He stood it for a week and then surrendered at discretion. He filled a basket with early strawberries and went across to the Hayden place, boldly enough to all appearance, but with his heart thumping like any schoolboy's.

The front door stood hospitably open, flanked by rows of defiant red and yellow hollyhocks. Harrington paused on the step, with his hand outstretched to knock. Somewhere inside he heard a low sobbing. Forgetting all about knocking, he stepped softly in and walked to the door of the little sitting-room. Bobbles was standing behind him in the middle of the kitchen but Harrington did not see him. He was looking at Mary Hayden, who was sitting by the table in the room with her arms flung out over it and her head bowed on them. She was crying softly in a hopeless fashion.

Harrington put down his strawberries. "Mary!" he exclaimed.

Mrs. Hayden straightened herself up with a start and looked at him, her lips quivering and her eyes full of tears.

"What is the matter?" said Harrington anxiously. "Is anything wrong?"

"Oh, nothing much," said Mrs. Hayden, trying to recover herself. "Yes, there is too. But it is very foolish of me to be going on like this. I didn't know anyone was near. And I was feeling so discouraged. The colt broke his leg in the swamp pasture today and Hiram had to shoot him. It was Ted's colt. But there, there is no use in crying over it."

And by way of proving this, the poor, tired, overburdened little woman began to cry again. She was past caring whether Harrington saw her or not.

The woman-hater was so distressed that he forgot to be nervous. He sat down and put his arm around her and spoke out what was in his mind without further parley.

“Don’t cry, Mary. Listen to me. You were never meant to run a farm and be killed with worry. You ought to be looked after and petted. I want you to marry me and then everything will be all right. I’ve loved you ever since that day I came over here and made you cry. Do you think you can like me a little, Mary?”

It may be that Mrs. Hayden was not very much surprised, because Harrington’s face had been like an open book the day they chased the pig out of the garden together. As for what she said, perhaps Bobbles, who was surreptitiously gorging himself on Harrington’s strawberries, may tell you, but I certainly shall not.

The little brown house among the apple trees is shut up now and the boundary fence belongs to ancient history. Sarah King has gone also and Mrs. John Harrington reigns royally in her place. Bobbles and Ted have a small, blue-eyed, much-spoiled sister, and there is a pig on the estate who may die of old age, but will never meet his doom otherwise. It is Bobbles’ pig and one of the famous fourteen.

Mordecai still shambles around and worships Mrs. Harrington. The garden is the same as of yore, but the house is a different place and Harrington is a different man. And Mordecai will tell you with a chuckle, “It was them notorious pigs as did it all.”

Why Not Ask Miss Price?

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Frances Allen came in from the post office and laid an open letter on the table beside her mother, who was making mincemeat. Alma Allen looked up from the cake she was frosting to ask, "What is the matter? You look as if your letter contained unwelcome news, Fan."

"So it does. It is from Aunt Clara, to say she cannot come. She has received a telegram that her sister-in-law is very ill and she must go to her at once."

Mrs. Allen looked regretful, and Alma cast her spoon away with a tragic air.

"That is too bad. I feel as if our celebration were spoiled. But I suppose it can't be helped."

"No," agreed Frances, sitting down and beginning to peel apples. "So there is no use in lamenting, or I would certainly sit down and cry, I feel so disappointed."

"Is Uncle Frank coming?"

"Yes, Aunt Clara says he will come down from Stellarton if Mrs. King does not get worse. So that will leave just one vacant place. We must invite someone to fill it up. Who shall it be?"

Both girls looked rather puzzled. Mrs. Allen smiled a quiet little smile all to herself and went on chopping suet. She had handed the Thanksgiving dinner over to Frances and Alma this year. They were to attend to all the preparations and invite all the guests. But although they had made or planned several innovations in the dinner itself, they had made no change in the usual list of guests.

"It must just be the time-honoured family affair," Frances had declared. "If we begin inviting other folks, there is no knowing when to draw the line. We can't have more than fourteen, and some of our friends would be sure to feel slighted."

So the same old list it was. But now Aunt Clara — dear, jolly Aunt Clara, whom everybody in the connection loved and admired — could not come, and her place must be filled.

“We can’t invite the new minister, because we would have to have his sister, too,” said Frances. “And there is no reason for asking any one of our girl chums more than another.”

“Mother, you will have to help us out,” said Alma. “Can’t you suggest a substitute guest?”

Mrs. Allen looked down at the two bright, girlish faces turned up to her and said slowly, “I think I can, but I am not sure my choice will please you. Why not ask Miss Price?”

Miss Price! They had never thought of her! She was the pale, timid-looking little teacher in the primary department of the Hazelwood school.

“Miss Price?” repeated Frances slowly. “Why, Mother, we hardly know her. She is dreadfully dull and quiet, I think.”

“And so shy,” said Alma. “Why, at the Wards’ party the other night she looked startled to death if anyone spoke to her. I believe she would be frightened to come here for Thanksgiving.”

“She is a very lonely little creature,” said Mrs. Allen gently, “and doesn’t seem to have anyone belonging to her. I think she would be very glad to get an invitation to spend Thanksgiving elsewhere than in that cheerless little boardinghouse where she lives.”

“Of course, if you would like to have her, Mother, we will ask her,” said Frances.

“No, girls,” said Mrs. Allen seriously. “You must not ask Miss Price on my account, if you do not feel prepared to make her welcome for her own sake. I had hoped that your own kind hearts might have prompted you to extend a little Thanksgiving cheer in a truly Thanksgiving spirit to a lonely, hardworking girl whose life I do not think is a happy one. But there, I shall not preach. This is your dinner, and you must please yourselves as to your guests.”

Frances and Alma had both flushed, and they now remained silent for a few minutes. Then Frances sprang up and threw her arms around her

mother.

“You’re right, Mother dear, as you always are, and we are very selfish girls. We will ask Miss Price and try to give her a nice time. I’ll go down this very evening and see her.”

In the grey twilight of the chilly autumn evening Bertha Price walked home to her boardinghouse, her pale little face paler, and her grey eyes sadder than ever, in the fading light. Only two days until Thanksgiving — but there would be no real Thanksgiving for her. Why, she asked herself rebelliously, when there seemed so much love in the world, was she denied her share?

Her landlady met her in the hall.

“Miss Allen is in the parlour, Miss Price. She wants to see you.”

Bertha went into the parlour somewhat reluctantly. She had met Frances Allen only once or twice and she was secretly almost afraid of the handsome, vivacious girl who was so different from herself.

“I am sorry you have had to wait, Miss Allen,” she said shyly. “I went to see a pupil of mine who is ill and I was kept later than I expected.”

“My errand won’t take very long,” said Frances brightly. “Mother wants you to spend Thanksgiving Day with us, Miss Price, if you have no other engagement. We will have a few other guests, but nobody outside our own family except Mr. Seeley, who is the law partner and intimate friend of my brother Ernest in town. You’ll come, won’t you?”

“Oh, thank you, yes,” said Bertha, in pleased surprise. “I shall be very glad to go. Why, it is so nice to think of it. I expected my Thanksgiving Day to be lonely and sad — not a bit Thanksgivingy.”

“We shall expect you then,” said Frances, with a cordial little hand-squeeze. “Come early in the morning, and we will have a real friendly, pleasant day.”

That night Frances said to her mother and sister, “You never saw such a transfigured face as Miss Price’s when I asked her up. She looked positively pretty — such a lovely pink came out on her cheeks and her eyes shone like stars. She reminded me so much of somebody I’ve seen,

but I can't think who it is. I'm so glad we've asked her here for Thanksgiving!"

Thanksgiving came, as bright and beautiful as a day could be, and the Allens' guests came with it. Bertha Price was among them, paler and shyer than ever. Ernest Allen and his friend, Maxwell Seeley, came out from town on the morning train.

After all the necessary introductions had been made, Frances flew to the kitchen.

"I've found out who it is Miss Price reminds me of," she said, as she bustled about the range. "It's Max Seeley. You needn't laugh, Al. It's a fact. I noticed it the minute I introduced them. He's plump and prosperous and she's pinched and pale, but there's a resemblance nevertheless. Look for yourself and see if it isn't so."

Back in the big, cheery parlour the Thanksgiving guests were amusing themselves in various ways. Max Seeley had given an odd little start when he was introduced to Miss Price, and as soon as possible he followed her to the corner where she had taken refuge. Ernest Allen was out in the kitchen talking to his sisters, the "uncles and cousins and aunts" were all chattering to each other, and Mr. Seeley and Miss Price were quite unnoticed.

"You will excuse me, won't you, Miss Price, if I ask you something about yourself?" he said eagerly. "The truth is, you look so strikingly like someone I used to know that I feel sure you must be related to her. I do not think I have any relatives of your name. Have you any of mine?"

Bertha flushed, hesitated for an instant, then said frankly, "No, I do not think so. But I may as well tell you that Price is not my real name and I do not know what it is, although I think it begins with S. I believe that my parents died when I was about three years old, and I was then taken to an orphan asylum. The next year I was taken from there and adopted by Mrs. Price. She was very kind to me and treated me as her own daughter. I had a happy home with her, although we were poor. Mrs. Price wished me to bear her name, and I did so. She never told me my true surname, perhaps

she did not know it. She died when I was sixteen, and since then I have been quite alone in the world. That is all I know about myself.”

Max Seeley was plainly excited.

“Why do you think your real name begins with S?” he asked.

“I have a watch which belonged to my mother, with the monogram ‘B.S.’ on the case. It was left with the matron of the asylum and she gave it to Mrs. Price for me. Here it is.”

Max Seeley almost snatched the old-fashioned little silver watch, from her hand and opened the case. An exclamation escaped him as he pointed to some scratches on the inner side. They looked like the initials M.A.S.

“Let me tell my story now,” he said. “My name is Maxwell Seeley. My father died when I was seven years old, and my mother a year later. My little sister, Bertha, then three years old, and I were left quite alone and very poor. We had no relatives. I was adopted by a well-to-do old bachelor, who had known my father. My sister was taken to an orphan asylum in a city some distance away. I was very much attached to her and grieved bitterly over our parting. My adopted father was very kind to me and gave me a good education. I did not forget my sister, and as soon as I could I went to the asylum. I found that she had been taken away long before, and I could not even discover who had adopted her, for the original building, with all its records, had been destroyed by fire two years previous to my visit. I never could find any clue to her whereabouts, and long since gave up all hope of finding her. But I have found her at last. You are Bertha Seeley, my little sister!”

“Oh — can it be possible!”

“More than possible — it is certain. You are the image of my mother, as I remember her, and as an old daguerreotype I have pictures her. And this is her watch — see, I scratched my own initials on the case one day. There is no doubt in the world. Oh, Bertha, are you half as glad as I am?”

“Glad!”

Bertha’s eyes were shining like stars. She tried to smile, but burst into tears instead and her head went down on her brother’s shoulder. By this time everybody in the room was staring at the extraordinary tableau, and

Ernest, coming through the hall, gave a whistle of astonishment that brought the two in the corner back to a sense of their surroundings.

“I haven’t suddenly gone crazy, Ernest, old fellow,” smiled Max. “Ladies and gentlemen all, this little schoolma’am was introduced to you as Miss Price, but that was a mistake. Let me introduce her again as Miss Bertha Seeley, my long-lost and newly-found sister.”

Well they had an amazing time then, of course. They laughed and questioned and explained until the dinner was in imminent danger of getting stone-cold on the dining-room table. Luckily, Alma and Frances remembered it just in the nick of time, and they all got out, somehow, and into their places. It was a splendid dinner, but I believe that Maxwell and Bertha Seeley didn’t know what they were eating, any more than if it had been sawdust. However, the rest of the guests made up for that, and did full justice to the girls’ cookery.

In the afternoon they all went to church, and at least two hearts were truly and devoutly thankful that day.

When the dusk came, Ernest and Maxwell had to catch the last train for town, and the other guests went home, with the exception of Bertha, who was to stay all night. Just as soon as her resignation could be effected, she was to join her brother.

“Meanwhile, I’ll see about getting a house to put you in,” said Max. “No more boarding out for me, Ernest. You may consider me as a family man henceforth.”

Frances and Alma talked it all over before they went to sleep that night.

“Just think,” said Frances, “if we hadn’t asked her here today she might never have found her brother! It’s all Mother’s doing, bless her! Things do happen like a storybook sometimes, don’t they, Al? And didn’t I tell you they looked alike?”

A Correspondence and A Climax

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At sunset Sidney hurried to her room to take off the soiled and faded cotton dress she had worn while milking. She had milked eight cows and pumped water for the milk-cans afterward in the fag-end of a hot summer day. She did that every night, but tonight she had hurried more than usual because she wanted to get her letter written before the early farm bedtime. She had been thinking it out while she milked the cows in the stuffy little pen behind the barn. This monthly letter was the only pleasure and stimulant in her life. Existence would have been, so Sidney thought, a dreary, unbearable blank without it. She cast aside her milking-dress with a thrill of distaste that tingled to her rosy fingertips. As she slipped into her blue-print afternoon dress her aunt called to her from below. Sidney ran out to the dark little entry and leaned over the stair railing. Below in the kitchen there was a hubbub of laughing, crying, quarrelling children, and a reek of bad tobacco smoke drifted up to the girl's disgusted nostrils.

Aunt Jane was standing at the foot of the stairs with a lamp in one hand and a year-old baby clinging to the other. She was a big shapeless woman with a round goodnatured face — cheerful and vulgar as a sunflower was Aunt Jane at all times and occasions.

“I want to run over and see how Mrs. Brixby is this evening, Sidddy, and you must take care of the baby till I get back.”

Sidney sighed and went downstairs for the baby. It never would have occurred to her to protest or be petulant about it. She had all her aunt's sweetness of disposition, if she resembled her in nothing else. She had not grumbled because she had to rise at four that morning, get breakfast, milk the cows, bake bread, prepare seven children for school, get dinner, preserve twenty quarts of strawberries, get tea, and milk the cows again. All her days were alike as far as hard work and dullness went, but she

accepted them cheerfully and uncomplainingly. But she did resent having to look after the baby when she wanted to write her letter.

She carried the baby to her room, spread a quilt on the floor for him to sit on, and gave him a box of empty spools to play with. Fortunately he was a phlegmatic infant, fond of staying in one place, and not given to roaming about in search of adventures; but Sidney knew she would have to keep an eye on him, and it would be distracting to literary effort.

She got out her box of paper and sat down by the little table at the window with a small kerosene lamp at her elbow. The room was small — a mere box above the kitchen which Sidney shared with two small cousins. Her bed and the cot where the little girls slept filled up almost all the available space. The furniture was poor, but everything was neat — it was the only neat room in the house, indeed, for tidiness was no besetting virtue of Aunt Jane's.

Opposite Sidney was a small muslined and befrilled toilet-table, above which hung an eight-by-six-inch mirror, in which Sidney saw herself reflected as she devoutly hoped other people did not see her. Just at that particular angle one eye appeared to be as large as an orange, while the other was the size of a pea, and the mouth zigzagged from ear to ear. Sidney hated that mirror as virulently as she could hate anything. It seemed to her to typify all that was unlovely in her life. The mirror of existence into which her fresh young soul had looked for twenty years gave back to her wistful gaze just such distortions of fair hopes and ideals.

Half of the little table by which she sat was piled high with books — old books, evidently well read and well-bred books, classics of fiction and verse every one of them, and all bearing on the flyleaf the name of Sidney Richmond, thereby meaning not the girl at the table, but her college-bred young father who had died the day before she was born. Her mother had died the day after, and Sidney thereupon had come into the hands of good Aunt Jane, with those books for her dowry, since nothing else was left after the expenses of the double funeral had been paid.

One of the books had Sidney Richmond's name printed on the title-page instead of written on the flyleaf. It was a thick little volume of

poems, published in his college days — musical, unsubstantial, pretty little poems, every one of which the girl Sidney loved and knew by heart.

Sidney dropped her pointed chin in her hands and looked dreamily out into the moonlit night, while she thought her letter out a little more fully before beginning to write. Her big brown eyes were full of wistfulness and romance; for Sidney was romantic, albeit a faithful and understanding acquaintance with her father's books had given to her romance refinement and reason, and the delicacy of her own nature had imparted to it a self-respecting bias.

Presently she began to write, with a flush of real excitement on her face. In the middle of things the baby choked on a small twist spool and Sidney had to catch him up by the heels and hold him head downward until the trouble was ejected. Then she had to soothe him, and finally write the rest of her letter holding him on one arm and protecting the epistle from the grabs of his sticky little fingers. It was certainly letter-writing under difficulties, but Sidney seemed to deal with them mechanically. Her soul and understanding were elsewhere.

Four years before, when Sidney was sixteen, still calling herself a schoolgirl by reason of the fact that she could be spared to attend school four months in the winter when work was slack, she had been much interested in the "Maple Leaf" department of the Montreal weekly her uncle took. It was a page given over to youthful Canadians and filled with their contributions in the way of letters, verses, and prize essays. Noms de plume were signed to these, badges were sent to those who joined the Maple Leaf Club, and a general delightful sense of mystery pervaded the department.

Often a letter concluded with a request to the club members to correspond with the writer. One such request went from Sidney under the pen-name of "Ellen Douglas." The girl was lonely in Plainfield; she had no companions or associates such as she cared for; the Maple Leaf Club represented all that her life held of outward interest, and she longed for something more.

Only one answer came to “Ellen Douglas,” and that was forwarded to her by the long-suffering editor of “The Maple Leaf.” It was from John Lincoln of the Bar N Ranch, Alberta. He wrote that, although his age debarred him from membership in the club (he was twenty, and the limit was eighteen), he read the letters of the department with much interest, and often had thought of answering some of the requests for correspondents. He never had done so, but “Ellen Douglas’s” letter was so interesting that he had decided to write to her. Would she be kind enough to correspond with him? Life on the Bar N, ten miles from the outposts of civilization, was lonely. He was two years out from the east, and had not yet forgotten to be homesick at times.

Sidney liked the letter and answered it. Since then they had written to each other regularly. There was nothing sentimental, hinted at or implied, in the correspondence. Whatever the faults of Sidney’s romantic visions were, they did not tend to precocious flirtation. The Plainfield boys, attracted by her beauty and repelled by her indifference and aloofness, could have told that. She never expected to meet John Lincoln, nor did she wish to do so. In the correspondence itself she found her pleasure.

John Lincoln wrote breezy accounts of ranch life and adventures on the far western plains, so alien and remote from snug, humdrum Plainfield life that Sidney always had the sensation of crossing a gulf when she opened a letter from the Bar N. As for Sidney’s own letter, this is the way it read as she wrote it:

“The Evergreens,” Plainfield.

Dear Mr. Lincoln:

The very best letter I can write in the half-hour before the carriage will be at the door to take me to Mrs. Braddon’s dance shall be yours tonight. I am sitting here in the library arrayed in my smartest, newest, whitest, silkiest gown, with a string of pearls which Uncle James gave me today about my throat — the dear, glistening, sheeny things! And I am looking forward to the “dances and delight” of the evening with keen anticipation.

You asked me in your last letter if I did not sometimes grow weary of my endless round of dances and dinners and social functions. No, no,

never! I enjoy every one of them, every minute of them. I love life and its bloom and brilliancy; I love meeting new people; I love the ripple of music, the hum of laughter and conversation. Every morning when I awaken the new day seems to me to be a good fairy who will bring me some beautiful gift of joy.

The gift she gave me today was my sunset gallop on my grey mare Lady. The thrill of it is in my veins yet. I distanced the others who rode with me and led the homeward canter alone, rocking along a dark, gleaming road, shadowy with tall firs and pines, whose balsam made all the air resinous around me. Before me was a long valley filled with purple dusk, and beyond it meadows of sunset and great lakes of saffron and rose where a soul might lose itself in colour. On my right was the harbour, silvered over with a rising moon. Oh, it was all glorious — the clear air with its salt-sea tang, the aroma of the pines, the laughter of my friends behind me, the spring and rhythm of Lady's grey satin body beneath me! I wanted to ride on so forever, straight into the heart of the sunset.

Then home and to dinner. We have a houseful of guests at present — one of them an old statesman with a massive silver head, and eyes that have looked into people's thoughts so long that you have an uncanny feeling that they can see right through your soul and read motives you dare not avow even to yourself. I was terribly in awe of him at first, but when I got acquainted with him I found him charming. He is not above talking delightful nonsense even to a girl. I sat by him at dinner, and he talked to me — not nonsense, either, this time. He told me of his political contests and diplomatic battles; he was wise and witty and whimsical. I felt as if I were drinking some rare, stimulating mental wine. What a privilege it is to meet such men and take a peep through their wise eyes at the fascinating game of empire-building!

I met another clever man a few evenings ago. A lot of us went for a sail on the harbour. Mrs. Braddon's house party came too. We had three big white boats that skimmed down the moonlit channel like great white sea birds. There was another boat far across the harbour, and the people in it were singing. The music drifted over the water to us, so sad and sweet

and beguiling that I could have cried for very pleasure. One of Mrs. Braddon's guests said to me:

"That is the soul of music with all its sense and earthliness refined away."

I hadn't thought about him before — I hadn't even caught his name in the general introduction. He was a tall, slight man, with a worn, sensitive face and iron-grey hair — a quiet man who hadn't laughed or talked. But he began to talk to me then, and I forgot all about the others. I never had listened to anybody in the least like him. He talked of books and music, of art and travel. He had been all over the world, and had seen everything everybody else had seen and everything they hadn't too, I think. I seemed to be looking into an enchanted mirror where all my own dreams and ideals were reflected back to me, but made, oh, so much more beautiful!

On my way home after the Braddon people had left us somebody asked me how I liked Paul Moore! The man I had been talking with was Paul Moore, the great novelist! I was almost glad I hadn't known it while he was talking to me — I should have been too awed and reverential to have really enjoyed his conversation. As it was, I had contradicted him twice, and he had laughed and liked it. But his books will always have a new meaning to me henceforth, through the insight he himself has given me.

It is such meetings as these that give life its sparkle for me. But much of its abiding sweetness comes from my friendship with Margaret Raleigh. You will be weary of my rhapsodies over her. But she is such a rare and wonderful woman; much older than I am, but so young in heart and soul and freshness of feeling! She is to me mother and sister and wise, clear-sighted friend. To her I go with all my perplexities and hopes and triumphs. She has sympathy and understanding for my every mood. I love life so much for giving me such a friendship!

This morning I wakened at dawn and stole away to the shore before anyone else was up. I had a delightful runaway. The long, lowlying meadows between "The Evergreens" and the shore were dewy and fresh in that first light, that was as fine and purely tinted as the heart of one of my white roses. On the beach the water was purring in little blue ripples, and,

oh, the sunrise out there beyond the harbour! All the eastern Heaven was abloom with it. And there was a wind that came dancing and whistling up the channel to replace the beautiful silence with a music more beautiful still.

The rest of the folks were just coming downstairs when I got back to breakfast. They were all yawny, and some were grumpy, but I had washed my being in the sunrise and felt as blithesome as the day. Oh, life is so good to live!

Tomorrow Uncle James's new vessel, the White Lady, is to be launched. We are going to make a festive occasion of it, and I am to christen her with a bottle of cobwebby old wine.

But I hear the carriage, and Aunt Jane is calling me. I had a great deal more to say — about your letter, your big "round-up" and your tribulations with your Chinese cook — but I've only time now to say goodbye. You wish me a lovely time at the dance and a full programme, don't you?

Yours sincerely,
Sidney Richmond.

Aunt Jane came home presently and carried away her sleeping baby. Sidney said her prayers, went to bed, and slept soundly and serenely.

She mailed her letter the next day, and a month later an answer came. Sidney read it as soon as she left the post office, and walked the rest of the way home as in a nightmare, staring straight ahead of her with wide-open, unseeing brown eyes.

John Lincoln's letter was short, but the pertinent paragraph of it burned itself into Sidney's brain. He wrote:

I am going east for a visit. It is six years since I was home, and it seems like three times six. I shall go by the C.P.R., which passes through Plainfield, and I mean to stop off for a day. You will let me call and see you, won't you? I shall have to take your permission for granted, as I shall be gone before a letter from you can reach the Bar N. I leave for the east in five days, and shall look forward to our meeting with all possible interest and pleasure.

Sidney did not sleep that night, but tossed restlessly about or cried in her pillow. She was so pallid and hollow-eyed the next morning that Aunt Jane noticed it, and asked her what the matter was.

“Nothing,” said Sidney sharply. Sidney had never spoken sharply to her aunt before. The good woman shook her head. She was afraid the child was “taking something.”

“Don’t do much today, Sidy,” she said kindly. “Just lie around and take it easy till you get rested up. I’ll fix you a dose of quinine.”

Sidney refused to lie around and take it easy. She swallowed the quinine meekly enough, but she worked fiercely all day, hunting out superfluous tasks to do. That night she slept the sleep of exhaustion, but her dreams were unenviable and the awakening was terrible.

Any day, any hour, might bring John Lincoln to Plainfield. What should she do? Hide from him? Refuse to see him? But he would find out the truth just the same; she would lose his friendships and respect just as surely. Sidney trod the way of the transgressor, and found that its thorns pierced to bone and marrow. Everything had come to an end — nothing was left to her! In the untried recklessness of twenty untempered years she wished she could die before John Lincoln came to Plainfield. The eyes of youth could not see how she could possibly live afterward.

Some days later a young man stepped from the C.P.R. train at Plainfield station and found his way to the one small hotel the place boasted. After getting his supper he asked the proprietor if he could direct him to “The Evergreens.”

Caleb Williams looked at his guest in bewilderment. “Never heerd o’ such a place,” he said.

“It is the name of Mr. Conway’s estate — Mr. James Conway,” explained John Lincoln.

“Oh, Jim Conway’s place!” said Caleb. “Didn’t know that was what he called it. Sartin I kin tell you whar’ to find it. You see that road out thar’? Well, just follow it straight along for a mile and a half till you come to a blacksmith’s forge. Jim Conway’s house is just this side of it on the right

— back from the road a smart piece and no other handy. You can't mistake it."

John Lincoln did not expect to mistake it, once he found it; he knew by heart what it appeared like from Sidney's description: an old stately mansion of mellowed brick, covered with ivy and set back from the highway amid fine ancestral trees, with a pine-grove behind it, a river to the left, and a harbour beyond.

He strode along the road in the warm, ruddy sunshine of early evening. It was not a bad-looking road at all; the farmsteads sprinkled along it were for the most part snug and wholesome enough; yet somehow it was different from what he had expected it to be. And there was no harbour or glimpse of distant sea visible. Had the hotel-keeper made a mistake? Perhaps he had meant some other James Conway.

Presently he found himself before the blacksmith's forge. Beside it was a rickety, unpainted gate opening into a snake-fenced lane feathered here and there with scrubby little spruces. It ran down a bare hill, crossed a little ravine full of young white-stemmed birches, and up another bare hill to an equally bare crest where a farmhouse was perched — a farmhouse painted a stark, staring yellow and the ugliest thing in farmhouses that John Lincoln had ever seen, even among the log shacks of the west. He knew now that he had been misdirected, but as there seemed to be nobody about the forge he concluded that he had better go to the yellow house and inquire within. He passed down the lane and over the little rustic bridge that spanned the brook. Just beyond was another homemade gate of poles.

Lincoln opened it, or rather he had his hand on the hasp of twisted withes which secured it, when he was suddenly arrested by the apparition of a girl, who flashed around the curve of young birch beyond and stood before him with panting breath and quivering lips.

"I beg your pardon," said John Lincoln courteously, dropping the gate and lifting his hat. "I am looking for the house of Mr. James Conway — 'The Evergreens.' Can you direct me to it?"

"That is Mr. James Conway's house," said the girl, with the tragic air and tone of one driven to desperation and an impatient gesture of her hand

toward the yellow nightmare above them.

“I don’t think he can be the one I mean,” said Lincoln perplexedly. “The man I am thinking of has a niece, Miss Richmond.”

“There is no other James Conway in Plainfield,” said the girl. “This is his place — nobody calls it ‘The Evergreens’ but myself. I am Sidney Richmond.”

For a moment they looked at each other across the gate, sheer amazement and bewilderment holding John Lincoln mute. Sidney, burning with shame, saw that this stranger was exceedingly good to look upon — tall, clean-limbed, broad-shouldered, with clear-cut bronzed features and a chin and eyes that would have done honour to any man. John Lincoln, among all his confused sensations, was aware that this slim, agitated young creature before him was the loveliest thing he ever had seen, so lithe was her figure, so glossy and dark and silken her bare, wind-ruffled hair, so big and brown and appealing her eyes, so delicately oval her flushed cheeks. He felt that she was frightened and in trouble, and he wanted to comfort and reassure her. But how could she be Sidney Richmond?

“I don’t understand,” he said perplexedly.

“Oh!” Sidney threw out her hands in a burst of passionate protest. “No, and you never will understand — I can’t make you understand.”

“I don’t understand,” said John Lincoln again. “Can you be Sidney Richmond — the Sidney Richmond who has written to me for four years?”

“I am.”

“Then, those letters—”

“Were all lies,” said Sidney bluntly and desperately. “There was nothing true in them — nothing at all. This is my home. We are poor. Everything I told you about it and my life was just imagination.”

“Then why did you write them?” he asked blankly. “Why did you deceive me?”

“Oh, I didn’t mean to deceive you! I never thought of such a thing. When you asked me to write to you I wanted to, but I didn’t know what to write about to a stranger. I just couldn’t write you about my life here, not

because it was hard, but it was so ugly and empty. So I wrote instead of the life I wanted to live — the life I did live in imagination. And when once I had begun, I had to keep it up. I found it so fascinating, too! Those letters made that other life seem real to me. I never expected to meet you. These last four days since your letter came have been dreadful to me. Oh, please go away and forgive me if you can! I know I can never make you understand how it came about.”

Sidney turned away and hid her burning face against the cool white bark of the birch tree behind her. It was worse than she had even thought it would be. He was so handsome, so manly, so earnest-eyed! Oh, what a friend to lose!

John Lincoln opened the gate and went up to her. There was a great tenderness in his face, mingled with a little kindly, friendly amusement.

“Please don’t distress yourself so, Sidney,” he said, unconsciously using her Christian name. “I think I do understand. I’m not such a dull fellow as you take me for. After all, those letters were true — or, rather, there was truth in them. You revealed yourself more faithfully in them than if you had written truly about your narrow outward life.”

Sidney turned her flushed face and wet eyes slowly toward him, a little smile struggling out amid the clouds of woe. This young man was certainly good at understanding. “You — you’ll forgive me then?” she stammered.

“Yes, if there is anything to forgive. And for my own part, I am glad you are not what I have always thought you were. If I had come here and found you what I expected, living in such a home as I expected, I never could have told you or even thought of telling you what you have come to mean to me in these lonely years during which your letters have been the things most eagerly looked forward to. I should have come this evening and spent an hour or so with you, and then have gone away on the train tomorrow morning, and that would have been all.

“But I find instead just a dreamy romantic little girl, much like my sisters at home, except that she is a great deal cleverer. And as a result I mean to stay a week at Plainfield and come to see you every day, if you

will let me. And on my way back to the Bar N I mean to stop off at Plainfield again for another week, and then I shall tell you something more — something it would be a little too bold to say now, perhaps, although I could say it just as well and truly. All this if I may. May I, Sidney?”

He bent forward and looked earnestly into her face. Sidney felt a new, curious, inexplicable thrill at her heart. “Oh, yes. — I suppose so,” she said shyly.

“Now, take me up to the house and introduce me to your Aunt Jane,” said John Lincoln in satisfied tone.

An Adventure on Island Rock

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“Who was the man I saw talking to you in the hayfield?” asked Aunt Kate, as Uncle Richard came to dinner.

“Bob Marks,” said Uncle Richard briefly. “I’ve sold Laddie to him.”

Ernest Hughes, the twelve-year-old orphan boy whom Uncle “boarded and kept” for the chores he did, suddenly stopped eating.

“Oh, Mr. Lawson, you’re not going to sell Laddie?” he cried chokily.

Uncle Richard stared at him. Never before, in the five years that Ernest had lived with him, had the quiet little fellow spoken without being spoken to, much less ventured to protest against anything Uncle Richard might do.

“Certainly I am,” answered the latter curtly. “Bob offered me twenty dollars for the dog, and he’s coming after him next week.”

“Oh, Mr. Lawson,” said Ernest, rising to his feet, his small, freckled face crimson. “Oh, don’t sell Laddie! Please, Mr. Lawson, don’t sell him!”

“What nonsense is this?” said Uncle Richard sharply. He was a man who brooked no opposition from anybody, and who never changed his mind when it was once made up.

“Don’t sell Laddie!” pleaded Ernest miserably. “He is the only friend I’ve got. I can’t live if Laddie goes away. Oh, don’t sell him, Mr. Lawson!”

“Sit down and hold your tongue,” said Uncle Richard sternly. “The dog is mine, and I shall do with him as I think fit. He is sold, and that is all there is about it. Go on with your dinner.”

But Ernest for the first time did not obey. He snatched his cap from the back of his chair, dashed it down over his eyes, and ran from the kitchen with a sob choking his breath. Uncle Richard looked angry, but Aunt Kate hastened to soothe him.

“Don’t be vexed with the boy, Richard,” she said. “You know he is very fond of Laddie. He’s had to do with him ever since he was a pup, and no

doubt he feels badly at the thought of losing him. I'm rather sorry myself that you have sold the dog."

"Well, he is sold and there's an end of it. I don't say but that the dog is a good dog. But he is of no use to us, and twenty dollars will come in mighty handy just now. He's worth that to Bob, for he is a good watch dog, so we've both made a fair bargain."

Nothing more was said about Ernest or Laddie. I had taken no part in the discussion, for I felt no great interest in the matter. Laddie was a nice dog; Ernest was a quiet, inoffensive little fellow, five years younger than myself; that was all I thought about either of them.

I was spending my vacation at Uncle Richard's farm on the Nova Scotian Bay of Fundy shore. I was a great favourite with Uncle Richard, partly because he had been much attached to my mother, his only sister, partly because of my strong resemblance to his only son, who had died several years before. Uncle Richard was a stern, undemonstrative man, but I knew that he entertained a deep and real affection for me, and I always enjoyed my vacation sojourns at his place.

"What are you going to do this afternoon, Ned?" he asked, after the disturbance caused by Ernest's outbreak had quieted down.

"I think I'll row out to Island Rock," I replied. "I want to take some views of the shore from it."

Uncle Richard nodded. He was much interested in my new camera.

"If you're on it about four o'clock, you'll get a fine view of the 'Hole in the Wall' when the sun begins to shine on the water through it," he said. "I've often thought it would make a handsome picture."

"After I've finished taking the pictures, I think I'll go down shore to Uncle Adam's and stay all night," I said. "Jim's dark room is more convenient than mine, and he has some pictures he is going to develop tonight, too."

I started for the shore about two o'clock. Ernest was sitting on the woodpile as I passed through the yard, with his arms about Laddie's neck and his face buried in Laddie's curly hair. Laddie was a handsome and intelligent black-and-white Newfoundland, with a magnificent coat. He

and Ernest were great chums. I felt sorry for the boy who was to lose his pet.

“Don’t take it so hard, Ern,” I said, trying to comfort him. “Uncle will likely get another pup.”

“I don’t want any other pup!” Ernest blurted out. “Oh, Ned, won’t you try and coax your uncle not to sell him? Perhaps he’d listen to you.”

I shook my head. I knew Uncle Richard too well to hope that.

“Not in this case, Ern,” I said. “He would say it did not concern me, and you know nothing moves him when he determines on a thing. You’ll have to reconcile yourself to losing Laddie, I’m afraid.”

Ernest’s tow-coloured head went down on Laddie’s neck again, and I, deciding that there was no use in saying anything more, proceeded towards the shore, which was about a mile from Uncle Richard’s house. The beach along his farm and for several farms along shore was a lonely, untenanted one, for the fisher-folk all lived two miles further down, at Rowley’s Cove. About three hundred yards from the shore was the peculiar formation known as Island Rock. This was a large rock that stood abruptly up out of the water. Below, about the usual water-line, it was seamed and fissured, but its summit rose up in a narrow, flat-topped peak. At low tide twenty feet of it was above water, but at high tide it was six feet and often more under water.

I pushed Uncle Richard’s small flat down the rough path and rowed out to Island Rock. Arriving there, I thrust the painter deep into a narrow cleft. This was the usual way of mooring it, and no doubt of its safety occurred to me.

I scrambled up the rock and around to the eastern end, where there was a broader space for standing and from which some capital views could be obtained. The sea about the rock was calm, but there was quite a swell on and an offshore breeze was blowing. There were no boats visible. The tide was low, leaving bare the curious caves and headlands along shore, and I secured a number of excellent snapshots. It was now three o’clock. I must wait another hour yet before I could get the best view of the “Hole in the Wall” — a huge, arch-like opening through a jutting headland to the west

of me. I went around to look at it, when I saw a sight that made me stop short in dismay. This was nothing less than the flat, drifting outward around the point. The swell and suction of the water around the rock must have pulled her loose — and I was a prisoner! At first my only feeling was one of annoyance. Then a thought flashed into my mind that made me dizzy with fear. The tide would be high that night. If I could not escape from Island Rock I would inevitably be drowned.

I sat down limply on a ledge and tried to look matters fairly in the face. I could not swim; calls for help could not reach anybody; my only hope lay in the chance of somebody passing down the shore or of some boat appearing.

I looked at my watch. It was a quarter past three. The tide would begin to turn about five, but it would be at least ten before the rock would be covered. I had, then, little more than six hours to live unless rescued.

The flat was by this time out of sight around the point. I hoped that the sight of an empty flat drifting down shore might attract someone's attention and lead to investigation. That seemed to be my only hope. No alarm would be felt at Uncle Richard's because of my nonappearance. They would suppose I had gone to Uncle Adam's.

I have heard of time seeming long to a person in my predicament, but to me it seemed fairly to fly, for every moment decreased my chance of rescue. I determined I would not give way to cowardly fear, so, with a murmured prayer for help, I set myself to the task of waiting for death as bravely as possible. At intervals I shouted as loudly as I could and, when the sun came to the proper angle for the best view of the "Hole in the Wall," I took the picture. It afterwards turned out to be a great success, but I have never been able to look at it without a shudder.

At five the tide began to come in. Very, very slowly the water rose around Island Rock. Up, up, up it came, while I watched it with fascinated eyes, feeling like a rat in a trap. The sun fell lower and lower; at eight o'clock the moon rose large and bright; at nine it was a lovely night, dear, calm, bright as day, and the water was swishing over the highest ledge of the rock. With some difficulty I climbed to the top and sat there to await

the end. I had no longer any hope of rescue but, by a great effort, I preserved self-control. If I had to die, I would at least face death staunchly. But when I thought of my mother at home, it tasked all my energies to keep from breaking down utterly.

Suddenly I heard a whistle. Never was sound so sweet. I stood up and peered eagerly shoreward. Coming around the “Hole in the Wall” headland, on top of the cliffs, I saw a boy and a dog. I sent a wild halloo ringing shoreward.

The boy started, stopped and looked out towards Island Rock. The next moment he hailed me. It was Ernest’s voice, and it was Laddie who was barking beside him.

“Ernest,” I shouted wildly, “run for help — quick! quick! The tide will be over the rock in half an hour! Hurry, or you will be too late!”

Instead of starting off at full speed, as I expected him to do, Ernest stood still for a moment, and then began to pick his steps down a narrow path over the cliff, followed by Laddie.

“Ernest,” I shouted frantically, “what are you doing? Why don’t you go for help?”

Ernest had by this time reached a narrow ledge of rock just above the water-line. I noticed that he was carrying something over his arm.

“It would take too long,” he shouted. “By the time I got to the Cove and a boat could row back here, you’d be drowned. Laddie and I will save you. Is there anything there you can tie a rope to? I’ve a coil of rope here that I think will be long enough to reach you. I’ve been down to the Cove and Alec Martin sent it up to your uncle.”

I looked about me; a smooth, round hole had been worn clean through a thin part of the apex of the rock.

“I could fasten the rope if I had it!” I called. “But how can you get it to me?”

For answer Ernest tied a bit of driftwood to the rope and put it into Laddie’s mouth. The next minute the dog was swimming out to me. As soon as he came close I caught the rope. It was just long enough to stretch from shore to rock, allowing for a couple of hitches which Ernest gave

around a small boulder on the ledge. I tied my camera case on my head by means of some string I found in my pocket, then I slipped into the water and, holding to the rope, went hand over hand to the shore with Laddie swimming beside me. Ernest held on to the shoreward end of the rope like grim death, a task that was no light one for his small arms. When I finally scrambled up beside him, his face was dripping with perspiration and he trembled like a leaf.

“Ern, you are a brick!” I exclaimed. “You’ve saved my life!”

“No, it was Laddie,” said Ernest, refusing to take any credit at all.

We hurried home and arrived at Uncle Richard’s about ten, just as they were going to bed. When Uncle Richard heard what had happened, he turned very pale, and murmured, “Thank God!” Aunt Kate got me out of my wet clothes as quickly as possible, put me away to bed in hot blankets and dosed me with ginger tea. I slept like a top and felt none the worse for my experience the next morning.

At the breakfast table Uncle Richard scarcely spoke. But, just as we finished, he said abruptly to Ernest, “I’m not going to sell Laddie. You and the dog saved Ned’s life between you, and no dog who helped do that is ever going to be sold by me. Henceforth he belongs to you. I give him to you for your very own.”

“Oh, Mr. Lawson!” said Ernest, with shining eyes.

I never saw a boy look so happy. As for Laddie, who was sitting beside him with his shaggy head on Ernest’s knee, I really believe the dog understood, too. The look in his eyes was almost human. Uncle Richard leaned over and patted him.

“Good dog!” he said. “Good dog!”

At Five O'Clock in the Morning

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Fate, in the guise of Mrs. Emory dropping a milk-can on the platform under his open window, awakened Murray that morning. Had not Mrs. Emory dropped that can, he would have slumbered peacefully until his usual hour for rising — a late one, be it admitted, for of all the boarders at Sweetbriar Cottage Murray was the most irregular in his habits.

“When a young man,” Mrs. Emory was wont to remark sagely and a trifle severely, “prowls about that pond half of the night, a-chasing of things what he calls ‘moonlight effects,’ it ain’t to be wondered at that he’s sleepy in the morning. And it ain’t the convenientest thing, nuther and noways, to keep the breakfast table set till the farm folks are thinking of dinner. But them artist men are not like other people, say what you will, and allowance has to be made for them. And I must say that I likes him real well and approves of him every other way.”

If Murray had slept late that morning — well, he shudders yet over that “if.” But aforesaid Fate saw to it that he woke when the hour of destiny and the milk-can struck, and having awakened he found he could not go to sleep again. It suddenly occurred to him that he had never seen a sunrise on the pond. Doubtless it would be very lovely down there in those dewy meadows at such a primitive hour; he decided to get up and see what the world looked like in the young daylight.

He scowled at a letter lying on his dressing table and thrust it into his pocket that it might be out of sight. He had written it the night before and the writing of it was going to cost him several things — a prospective million among others. So it is hardly to be wondered at if the sight of it did not reconcile him to the joys of early rising.

“Dear life and heart!” exclaimed Mrs. Emory, pausing in the act of scalding a milk-can when Murray emerged from a side door. “What on

earth is the matter, Mr. Murray? You ain't sick now, surely? I told you them pond fogs was p'isen after night! If you've gone and got—"

"Nothing is the matter, dear lady," interrupted Murray, "and I haven't gone and got anything except an acute attack of early rising which is not in the least likely to become chronic. But at what hour of the night do you get up, you wonderful woman? Or rather do you ever go to bed at all? Here is the sun only beginning to rise and — positively yes, you have all your cows milked."

Mrs. Emory purred with delight.

"Folks as has fourteen cows to milk has to rise betimes," she answered with proud humility. "Laws, I don't complain — I've lots of help with the milking. How Mrs. Palmer manages, I really cannot comperhend — or rather, how she has managed. I suppose she'll be all right now since her niece came last night. I saw her posting to the pond pasture not ten minutes ago. She'll have to milk all them seven cows herself. But dear life and heart! Here I be palavering away and not a bite of breakfast ready for you!"

"I don't want any breakfast until the regular time for it," assured Murray. "I'm going down to the pond to see the sun rise."

"Now don't you go and get caught in the ma'sh," anxiously called Mrs. Emory, as she never failed to do when she saw him starting for the pond. Nobody ever had got caught in the marsh, but Mrs. Emory lived in a chronic state of fear lest someone should.

"And if you once got stuck in that black mud you'd be sucked right down and never seen or heard tell of again till the day of judgment, like Adam Palmer's cow," she was wont to warn her boarders.

Murray sought his favourite spot for pond dreaming — a bloomy corner of the pasture that ran down into the blue water, with a dump of leafy maples on the left. He was very glad he had risen early. A miracle was being worked before his very eyes. The world was in a flush and tremor of maiden loveliness, instinct with all the marvellous fleeting charm of girlhood and spring and young morning. Overhead the sky was a vast high-sprung arch of unstained crystal. Down over the sand dunes,

where the pond ran out into the sea, was a great arc of primrose smitten through with auroral crimsonings. Beneath it the pond waters shimmered with a hundred fairy hues, but just before him they were clear as a flawless mirror. The fields around him glistened with dews, and a little wandering wind, blowing lightly from some bourne in the hills, strayed down over the slopes, bringing with it an unimaginable odour and freshness, and fluttered over the pond, leaving a little path of dancing silver ripples across the mirror-glory of the water. Birds were singing in the beech woods over on Orchard Knob Farm, answering to each other from shore to shore, until the very air was tremulous with the elfin music of this wonderful midsummer dawn.

“I will get up at sunrise every morning of my life hereafter,” exclaimed Murray rapturously, not meaning a syllable of it, but devoutly believing he did.

Just as the fiery disc of the sun peered over the sand dunes Murray heard music that was not of the birds. It was a girl’s voice singing beyond the maples to his left — a clear sweet voice, blithely trilling out the old-fashioned song, “Five O’Clock in the Morning.”

“Mrs. Palmer’s niece!”

Murray sprang to his feet and tiptoed cautiously through the maples. He had heard so much from Mrs. Palmer about her niece that he felt reasonably well acquainted with her. Moreover, Mrs. Palmer had assured him that Mollie was a very pretty girl. Now a pretty girl milking cows at sunrise in the meadows sounded well.

Mrs. Palmer had not overrated her niece’s beauty. Murray said so to himself with a little whistle of amazement as he leaned unseen on the pasture fence and looked at the girl who was milking a placid Jersey less than ten yards away from him. Murray’s artistic instinct responded to the whole scene with a thrill of satisfaction.

He could see only her profile, but that was perfect, and the colouring of the oval cheek and the beautiful curve of the chin were something to adore. Her hair, ruffled into lovable little ringlets by the morning wind, was coiled in glistening chestnut masses high on her bare head, and her

arms, bare to the elbow, were as white as marble. Presently she began to sing again, and this time Murray joined in. She half rose from her milking stool and cast a startled glance at the maples. Then she dropped back again and began to milk determinedly, but Murray could have sworn that he saw a demure smile hovering about her lips. That, and the revelation of her full face, decided him. He sprang over the fence and sauntered across the intervening space of lush clover blossoms.

“Good morning,” he said coolly. He had forgotten her other name, and it did not matter; at five o’clock in the morning people who met in dewy clover fields might disregard the conventionalities. “Isn’t it rather a large contract for you to be milking seven cows all alone? May I help you?”

Mollie looked up at him over her shoulder. She had glorious grey eyes. Her face was serene and undisturbed. “Can you milk?” she asked.

“Unlikely as it may seem, I can,” said Murray. “I have never confessed it to Mrs. Emory, because I was afraid she would inveigle me into milking her fourteen cows. But I don’t mind helping you. I learned to milk when I was a shaver on my vacations at a grandfatherly farm. May I have that extra pail?”

Murray captured a milking stool and rounded up another Jersey. Before sitting down he seemed struck with an idea.

“My name is Arnold Murray. I board at Sweetbriar Cottage, next farm to Orchard Knob. That makes us near neighbours.”

“I suppose it does,” said Mollie.

Murray mentally decided that her voice was the sweetest he had ever heard. He was glad he had arranged his cow at such an angle that he could study her profile. It was amazing that Mrs. Palmer’s niece should have such a profile. It looked as if centuries of fine breeding were responsible for it.

“What a morning!” he said enthusiastically. “It harks back to the days when earth was young. They must have had just such mornings as this in Eden.”

“Do you always get up so early?” asked Mollie practically.

“Always,” said Murray without a blush. Then—”But no, that is a fib, and I cannot tell fibs to you. The truth is your tribute. I never get up early. It was fate that roused me and brought me here this morning. The morning is a miracle — and you, I might suppose you were born of the sunrise, if Mrs. Palmer hadn’t told me all about you.”

“What did she tell you about me?” asked Mollie, changing cows. Murray discovered that she was tall and that the big blue print apron shrouded a singularly graceful figure.

“She said you were the best-looking girl in Bruce county. I have seen very few of the girls in Bruce county, but I know she is right.”

“That compliment is not nearly so pretty as the sunrise one,” said Mollie reflectively. “Mrs. Palmer has told me things about you,” she added.

“Curiosity knows no gender,” hinted Murray.

“She said you were goodlooking and lazy and different from other people.”

“All compliments,” said Murray in a gratified tone.

“Lazy?”

“Certainly. Laziness is a virtue in these strenuous days, I was not born with it, but I have painstakingly acquired it, and I am proud of my success. I have time to enjoy life.”

“I think that I like you,” said Mollie.

“You have the merit of being able to enter into a situation,” he assured her.

When the last Jersey was milked they carried the pails down to the spring where the creamers were sunk and strained the milk into them. Murray washed the pails and Mollie wiped them and set them in a gleaming row on the shelf under a big maple.

“Thank you,” she said.

“You are not going yet,” said Murray resolutely. “The time I saved you in milking three cows belongs to me. We will spend it in a walk along the pond shore. I will show you a path I have discovered under the beeches. It is just wide enough for two. Come.”

He took her hand and drew her through the copse into a green lane, where the ferns grew thickly on either side and the pond waters plashed dreamily below them. He kept her hand in his as they went down the path, and she did not try to withdraw it. About them was the great, pure silence of the morning, faintly threaded with caressing sounds — croon of birds, gurgle of waters, sigh of wind. The spirit of youth and love hovered over them and they spoke no word.

When they finally came out on a little green nook swimming in early sunshine and arched over by maples, with the wide shimmer of the pond before it and the gold dust of blossoms over the grass, the girl drew a long breath of delight.

“It is a morning left over from Eden, isn’t it?” said Murray.

“Yes,” said Mollie softly.

Murray bent toward her. “You are Eve,” he said. “You are the only woman in the world — for me. Adam must have told Eve just what he thought about her the first time he saw her. There were no conventionalities in Eden — and people could not have taken long to make up their minds. We are in Eden just now. One can say what he thinks in Eden without being ridiculous. You are divinely fair, Eve. Your eyes are stars of the morning — your cheek has the flush it stole from the sunrise — your lips are redder than the roses of paradise. And I love you, Eve.”

Mollie lowered her eyes and the long fringe of her lashes lay in a burnished semicircle on her cheek.

“I think,” she said slowly, “that it must have been very delightful in Eden. But we are not really there, you know — we are only playing that we are. And it is time for me to go back. I must get the breakfast — that sounds too prosaic for paradise.”

Murray bent still closer.

“Before we remember that we are only playing at paradise, will you kiss me, dear Eve?”

“You are very audacious,” said Mollie coldly.

“We are in Eden yet,” he urged. “That makes all the difference.”

“Well,” said Mollie. And Murray kissed her.

They had passed back over the fern path and were in the pasture before either spoke again. Then Murray said, "We have left Eden behind — but we can always return there when we will. And although we were only playing at paradise, I was not playing at love. I meant all I said, Mollie."

"Have you meant it often?" asked Mollie significantly.

"I never meant it — or even played at it — before," he answered. "I did — at one time — contemplate the possibility of playing at it. But that was long ago — as long ago as last night. I am glad to the core of my soul that I decided against it before I met you, dear Eve. I have the letter of decision in my coat pocket this moment. I mean to mail it this afternoon."

"Curiosity knows no gender," quoted Mollie.

"Then, to satisfy your curiosity, I must bore you with some personal history. My parents died when I was a little chap, and my uncle brought me up. He has been immensely good to me, but he is a bit of a tyrant. Recently he picked out a wife for me — the daughter of an old sweetheart of his. I have never even seen her. But she has arrived in town on a visit to some relatives there. Uncle Dick wrote to me to return home at once and pay my court to the lady; I protested. He wrote again — a letter, short and the reverse of sweet. If I refused to do my best to win Miss Mannering he would disown me — never speak to me again — cut me off with a quarter. Uncle always means what he says — that is one of our family traits, you understand. I spent some miserable, undecided days. It was not the threat of disinheritance that worried me, although when you have been brought up to regard yourself as a prospective millionaire it is rather difficult to adjust your vision to a pauper focus. But it was the thought of alienating Uncle Dick. I love the dear, determined old chap like a father. But last night my guardian angel was with me and I decided to remain my own man. So I wrote to Uncle Dick, respectfully but firmly declining to become a candidate for Miss Mannering's hand."

"But you have never seen her," said Mollie. "She may be — almost — charming."

"If she be not fair to me, what care I how fair she be?" quoted Murray. "As you say, she may be — almost charming; but she is not Eve."

She is merely one of a million other women, as far as I am concerned. Don't let's talk of her. Let us talk only of ourselves — there is nothing else that is half so interesting."

"And will your uncle really cast you off?" asked Mollie.

"Not a doubt of it."

"What will you do?"

"Work, dear Eve. My carefully acquired laziness must be thrown to the winds and I shall work. That is the rule outside of Eden. Don't worry. I've painted pictures that have actually been sold. I'll make a living for us somehow."

"Us?"

"Of course. You are engaged to me."

"I am not," said Mollie indignantly.

"Mollie! Mollie! After that kiss! Fie, fie!"

"You are very absurd," said Mollie, "But your absurdity has been amusing. I have — yes, positively — I have enjoyed your Eden comedy. But now you must not come any further with me. My aunt might not approve. Here is my path to Orchard Knob farmhouse. There, I presume, is yours to Sweetbriar Cottage. Good morning."

"I am coming over to see you this afternoon," said Murray coolly. "But you needn't be afraid. I will not tell tales out of Eden. I will be a hypocrite and pretend to Mrs. Palmer that we have never met before. But you and I will know and remember. Now, you may go. I reserve to myself the privilege of standing here and watching you out of sight."

That afternoon Murray strolled over to Orchard Knob, going into the kitchen without knocking as was the habit in that free and easy world. Mrs. Palmer was lying on the lounge with a pungent handkerchief bound about her head, but keeping a vigilant eye on a very pretty, very plump browneyed girl who was stirring a kettleful of cherry preserve on the range.

"Good afternoon, Mrs. Palmer," said Murray, wondering where Mollie was. "I'm sorry to see that you look something like an invalid."

“I’ve a raging, ramping headache,” said Mrs. Palmer solemnly. “I had it all night and I’m good for nothing. Mollie, you’d better take them cherries off. Mr. Murray, this is my niece, Mollie Booth.”

“What?” said Murray explosively.

“Miss Mollie Booth,” repeated Mrs. Palmer in a louder tone.

Murray regained outward self-control and bowed to the blushing Mollie.

“And what about Eve?” he thought helplessly. “Who — what was she? Did I dream her? Was she a phantom of delight? No, no, phantoms don’t milk cows. She was flesh and blood. No chilly nymph exhaling from the mists of the marsh could have given a kiss like that.”

“Mollie has come to stay the rest of the summer with me,” said Mrs. Palmer. “I hope to goodness my tribulations with hired girls is over at last. They have made a wreck of me.”

Murray rapidly reflected. This development, he decided, released him from his promise to tell no tales. “I met a young lady down in the pond pasture this morning,” he said deliberately. “I talked with her for a few minutes. I supposed her to be your niece. Who was she?”

“Oh, that was Miss Mannering,” said Mrs. Palmer.

“What?” said Murray again.

“Mannering — Dora Mannering,” said Mrs. Palmer loudly, wondering if Mr. Murray were losing his hearing. “She came here last night just to see me. I haven’t seen her since she was a child of twelve. I used to be her nurse before I was married. I was that proud to think she thought it worth her while to look me up. And, mind you, this morning, when she found me crippled with headache and not able to do a hand’s turn, that girl, Mr. Murray, went and milked seven cows” — “only four,” murmured Murray, but Mrs. Palmer did not hear him — “for me. Couldn’t prevent her. She said she had learned to milk for fun one summer when she was in the country, and she did it. And then she got breakfast for the men — Mollie didn’t come till the ten o’clock train. Miss Mannering is as capable as if she had been riz on a farm.”

“Where is she now?” demanded Murray.

“Oh, she’s gone.”

“What?”

“Gone,” shouted Mrs. Palmer, “gone. She left on the train Mollie come on. Gracious me, has the man gone crazy? He hasn’t seemed like himself at all this afternoon.”

Murray had bolted madly out of the house and was striding down the lane.

Blind fool — unspeakable idiot that he had been! To take her for Mrs. Palmer’s niece — that peerless creature with the calm acceptance of any situation, which marked the woman of the world, with the fine appreciation and quickness of repartee that spoke of generations of culture — to imagine that she could be Mollie Booth! He had been blind, besottedly blind. And now he had lost her! She would never forgive him; she had gone without a word or sign.

As he reached the last curve of the lane where it looped about the apple trees, a plump figure came flying down the orchard slope.

“Mr. Murray, Mr. Murray,” Mollie Booth called breathlessly. “Will you please come here just a minute?”

Murray crossed over to the paling rather grumpily. He did not want to talk with Mollie Booth just then. Confound it, what did the girl want? Why was she looking so mysterious?

Mollie produced a little square grey envelope from some feminine hiding place and handed it over the paling.

“She give me this at the station — Miss Mannering did,” she gasped, “and asked me to give it to you without letting Aunt Emily Jane see. I couldn’t get a chanst when you was in, but as soon as you went I slipped out by the porch door and followed you. You went so fast I near died trying to head you off.”

“You dear little soul,” said Murray, suddenly radiant. “It is too bad you have had to put yourself so out of breath on my account. But I am immensely obliged to you. The next time your young man wants a trusty private messenger just refer him to me.”

“Git away with you,” giggled Mollie. “I must hurry back ‘fore Aunt Emily Jane gits wind I’m gone. I hope there’s good news in your girl’s letter. My, but didn’t you look flat when Aunt said she’d went!”

Murray beamed at her idiotically. When she had vanished among the trees he opened his letter.

“Dear Mr. Murray,” it ran, “your unblushing audacity of the morning deserves some punishment. I hereby punish you by prompt departure from Orchard Knob. Yet I do not dislike audacity, at some times, in some places, in some people. It is only from a sense of duty that I punish it in this case. And it was really pleasant in Eden. If you do not mail that letter, and if you still persist in your very absurd interpretation of the meaning of Eve’s kiss, we may meet again in town. Until then I remain,

“Very sincerely yours,

“Dora Lynne Mannering.”

Murray kissed the grey letter and put it tenderly away in his pocket. Then he took his letter to his uncle and tore it into tiny fragments. Finally he looked at his watch.

“If I hurry, I can catch the afternoon train to town,” he said.

Aunt Susanna's Birthday Celebration

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Good afternoon, Nora May. I'm real glad to see you. I've been watching you coming down the hill and I hoping you'd turn in at our gate. Going to visit with me this afternoon? That's good. I'm feeling so happy and delighted and I've been hankering for someone to tell it all to.

Tell you about it? Well, I guess I might as well. It ain't any breach of confidence.

You didn't know Anne Douglas? She taught school here three years ago, afore your folks moved over from Talcott. She belonged up Montrose way and she was only eighteen when she came here to teach. She boarded with us and her and me were the greatest chums. She was just a sweet girl.

She was the prettiest teacher we ever had, and that's saying a good deal, for Springdale has always been noted for getting goodlooking schoolmarms, just as Miller's Road is noted for its humly ones.

Anne had yards of brown wavy hair and big, dark blue eyes. Her face was kind o' pale, but when she smiled you would have to smile too, if you'd been chief mourner at your own funeral. She was a well-spring of joy in the house, and we all loved her.

Gilbert Martin began to drive her the very first week she was here. Gilbert is my sister Julia's son, and a fine young fellow he is. It ain't good manners to brag of your own relations, but I'm always forgetting and doing it. Gil was a great pet of mine. He was so bright and nice-mannered everybody liked him. Him and Anne were a fine-looking couple, Nora May. Not but what they had their shortcomings. Anne's nose was a mite too long and Gil had a crooked mouth. Besides, they was both pretty proud and sperrited and highstrung.

But they thought an awful lot of each other. It made me feel young again to see 'em. Anne wasn't a mossel vain, but nights she expected Gil she'd prink for hours afore her glass, fixing her hair this way and that, and

trying on all her good clothes to see which become her most. I used to love her for it. And I used to love to see the way Gil's face would light up when she came into a room or place where he was. Amanda Perkins, she says to me once, "Anne Douglas and Gil Martin are most terrible struck on each other." And she said it in a tone that indicated that it was a dreadful disgraceful and unbecoming state of affairs. Amanda had a disappointment once and it soured her. I immediately responded, "Yes, they are most terrible struck on each other," and I said it in a tone that indicated I thought it a most beautiful and lovely thing that they should be so.

And so it was. You're rather too young to be thinking of such things, Nora May, but you'll remember my words when the time comes.

Another nephew of mine, James Ebenezer Lawson — he calls himself James E. back there in town, and I don't blame him, for I never could stand Ebenezer for a name myself; but that's neither here nor there. Well, he said their love was idyllic, I ain't very sure what that means. I looked it up in the dictionary after James Ebenezer left — I wouldn't display my ignorance afore him — but I can't say that I was much the wiser for it. Anyway, it meant something real nice; I was sure of that by the way James Ebenezer spoke and the wistful look in his eyes. James Ebenezer isn't married; he was to have been, and she died a month afore the wedding day. He was never the same man again.

Well, to get back to Gilbert and Anne. When Anne's school year ended in June she resigned and went home to get ready to be married. The wedding was to be in September, and I promised Anne faithful I'd go over to Montrose in August for two weeks and help her to get her quilts ready. Anne thought that nobody could quilt like me. I was as tickled as a girl at the thought of visiting with Anne for two weeks, but I never went; things happened before August.

I don't know rightly how the trouble began. Other folks — jealous folks — made mischief. Anne was thirty miles away and Gilbert couldn't see her every day to keep matters clear and fair. Besides, as I've said, they were both proud and high-sperrited. The upshot of it was they had a terrible quarrel and the engagement was broken.

When two people don't care overly much for each other, Nora May, a quarrel never amounts to much between them, and it's soon made up. But when they love each other better than life it cuts so deep and hurts so much that nine times out of ten they won't ever forgive each other. The more you love anybody, Nora May, the more he can hurt you. To be sure, you're too young to be thinking of such things.

It all came like a thunderclap on Gil's friends here at Greendale, because we hadn't ever suspected things were going wrong. The first thing we knew was that Anne had gone up west to teach school again at St. Mary's, eighty miles away, and Gilbert, he went out to Manitoba on a harvest excursion and stayed there. It just about broke his parents' hearts. He was their only child and they just worshipped him.

Gil and Anne both wrote to me off and on, but never a word, not so much as a name, did they say of each other. I'd 'a' writ and asked 'em the rights of the fuss if I could, in hopes of patching it up, but I can't write now — my hand is too shaky — and mebbe it was just as well, for meddling is terribly risky work in a love trouble, Nora May. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred the last state of a meddler and them she meddles with is worse than the first.

So I just set tight and said nothing, while everybody else in the clan was talking Anne and Gil sixty words to the minute.

Well, last birthday morning I was feeling terrible disperrited. I had made up my mind that my birthday was always to be a good thing for other people, and there didn't seem one blessed thing I could do to make anybody glad. Emma Matilda and George and the children were all well and happy and wanted for nothing that I could give them. I begun to be afraid I'd lived long enough, Nora May. When a woman gets to the point where she can't give a gift of joy to anyone, there ain't much use in her living. I felt real old and worn out and useless.

I was sitting here under these very trees — they was just budding out in leaf then, as young and cheerful as if they wasn't a hundred years old. And I sighed right out loud and said, "Oh, Grandpa Holland, it's time I was

put away up on the hill there with you.” And with that the gate banged and there was Nancy Jane Whitmore’s boy, Sam, with two letters for me.

One was from Anne up at St. Mary’s and the other was from Gil out in Manitoba.

I read Anne’s first. She just struck right into things in the first paragraph. She said her year at St. Mary’s was nearly up, and when it was she meant to quit teaching and go away to New York and learn to be a trained nurse. She said she was just brokenhearted about Gilbert, and would always love him to the day of her death. But she knew he didn’t care anything more about her after the way he had acted, and there was nothing left for her in life but to do something for other people, and so on and so on, for twelve mortal pages. Anne is a fine writer, and I just cried like a babe over that letter, it was so touching, although I was enjoying myself hugely all the time, I was so delighted to find out that Anne loved Gilbert still. I was getting skeered she didn’t, her letters all winter had been so kind of jokey and frivolous, all about the good times she was having, and the parties she went to, and the new dresses she got. New dresses! When I read that letter of Anne’s, I knew that all the purple and fine linen in the world was just like so much sackcloth and ashes to her as long as Gilbert was sulking out on a prairie farm.

Well, I wiped my eyes and polished up my specs, but I might have spared myself the trouble, for in five minutes, Nora May, there was I sobbing again; over Gilbert’s letter. By the most curious coincidence he had opened his heart to me too. Being a man, he wasn’t so discursive as Anne; he said his say in four pages, but I could read the heartache between the lines. He wrote that he was going to Klondike and would start in a month’s time. He was sick of living now that he’d lost Anne. He said he loved her better than his life and always would, and could never forget her, but he knew she didn’t care anything about him now after the way she’d acted, and he wanted to get as far away from her and the torturing thought of her as he could. So he was going to Klondike — going to Klondike, Nora May, when his mother was writing to him to come home every week and Anne was breaking her heart for him at St. Mary’s.

Well, I folded up them letters and, says I, “Grandpa Holland, I guess my birthday celebration is here ready to hand.” I thought real hard. I couldn’t write myself to explain to those two people that they each thought the world of each other still — my hands are too stiff; and I couldn’t get anyone else to write because I couldn’t let out what they’d told me in confidence. So I did a mean, dishonourable thing, Nora May. I sent Anne’s letter to Gilbert and Gilbert’s to Anne. I asked Emma Matilda to address them, and Emma Matilda did it and asked no questions. I brought her up that way.

Then I settled down to wait. In less than a month Gilbert’s mother had a letter from him saying that he was coming home to settle down and marry Anne. He arrived home yesterday and last night Anne came to Springdale on her way home from St. Mary’s. They came to see me this morning and said things to me I ain’t going to repeat because they would sound fearful vain. They were so happy that they made me feel as if it was a good thing to have lived eighty years in a world where folks could be so happy. They said their new joy was my birthday gift to them. The wedding is to be in September and I’m going to Montrose in August to help Anne with her quilts. I don’t think anything will happen to prevent this time — no quarrelling, anyhow. Those two young creatures have learned their lesson. You’d better take it to heart too, Nora May. It’s less trouble to learn it at second hand. Don’t you ever quarrel with your real beau — it don’t matter about the sham ones, of course. Don’t take offence at trifles or listen to what other people tell you about him — outsiders, that is, that want to make mischief. What you think about him is of more importance than what they do. To be sure, you’re too young yet to be thinking of such things at all. But just mind what old Aunt Susanna told you when your time comes.

Bertie's New Year

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He stood on the sagging doorstep and looked out on the snowy world. His hands were clasped behind him, and his thin face wore a thoughtful, puzzled look. The door behind him opened jerkingly, and a scowling woman came out with a pan of dishwater in her hand.

“Ain’t you gone yet, Bert?” she said sharply. “What in the world are you hanging round for?”

“It’s early yet,” said Bertie cheerfully. “I thought maybe George Fraser’d be along and I’d get a lift as far as the store.”

“Well, I never saw such laziness! No wonder old Sampson won’t keep you longer than the holidays if you’re no smarter than that. Goodness, if I don’t settle that boy!” — as the sound of fretful crying came from the kitchen behind her.

“What is wrong with William John?” asked Bertie.

“Why, he wants to go out coasting with those Robinson boys, but he can’t. He hasn’t got any mittens and he would catch his death of cold again.”

Her voice seemed to imply that William John had died of cold several times already.

Bertie looked soberly down at his old, well-darned mittens. It was very cold, and he would have a great many errands to run. He shivered, and looked up at his aunt’s hard face as she stood wiping her dishpan with a grim frown which boded no good to the discontented William John. Then he suddenly pulled off his mittens and held them out.

“Here — he can have mine. I’ll get on without them well enough.”

“Nonsense!” said Mrs. Ross, but less unkindly. “The fingers would freeze off you. Don’t be a goose.”

“It’s all right,” persisted Bertie. “I don’t need them — much. And William John doesn’t hardly ever get out.”

He thrust them into her hand and ran quickly down the street, as though he feared that the keen air might make him change his mind in spite of himself. He had to stop a great many times that day to breathe on his purple hands. Still, he did not regret having lent his mittens to William John — poor, pale, sickly little William John, who had so few pleasures.

It was sunset when Bertie laid an armful of parcels down on the steps of Doctor Forbes's handsome house. His back was turned towards the big bay window at one side, and he was busy trying to warm his hands, so he did not see the two small faces looking at him through the frosty panes.

"Just look at that poor little boy, Amy," said the taller of the two. "He is almost frozen, I believe. Why doesn't Caroline hurry and open the door?"

"There she goes now," said Amy. "Edie, couldn't we coax her to let him come in and get warm? He looks so cold." And she drew her sister out into the hall, where the housekeeper was taking Bertie's parcels.

"Caroline," whispered Edith timidly, "please tell that poor little fellow to come in and get warm — he looks very cold."

"He's used to the cold, I warrant you," said the housekeeper rather impatiently. "It won't hurt him."

"But it is Christmas week," said Edith gravely, "and you know, Caroline, when Mamma was here she used to say that we ought to be particularly thoughtful of others who were not so happy or well-off as we were at this time."

Perhaps Edith's reference to her mother softened Caroline, for she turned to Bertie and said cordially enough, "Come in, and warm yourself before you go. It's a cold day."

Bertie shyly followed her to the kitchen.

"Sit up to the fire," said Caroline, placing a chair for him, while Edith and Amy came round to the other side of the stove and watched him with friendly interest.

"What's your name?" asked Caroline.

"Robert Ross, ma'am."

“Oh, you’re Mrs. Ross’s nephew then,” said Caroline, breaking eggs into her cake-bowl, and whisking them deftly round. “And you’re Sampson’s errand boy just now? My goodness,” as the boy spread his blue hands over the fire, “where are your mittens, child? You’re never out without mittens a day like this!”

“I lent them to William John — he hadn’t any,” faltered Bertie. He did not know but that the lady might consider it a grave crime to be mittenless.

“No mittens!” exclaimed Amy in dismay. “Why, I have three pairs. And who is William John?”

“He is my cousin,” said Bertie. “And he’s awful sickly. He wanted to go out to play, and he hadn’t any mittens, so I lent him mine. I didn’t miss them — much.”

“What kind of a Christmas did you have?”

“We didn’t have any.”

“No Christmas!” said Amy, quite overcome. “Oh, well, I suppose you are going to have a good time on New Year’s instead.”

Bertie shook his head.

“No’m, I guess not. We never have it different from other times.”

Amy was silent from sheer amazement. Edith understood better, and she changed the subject.

“Have you any brothers or sisters, Bertie?”

“No’m,” returned Bertie cheerfully. “I guess there’s enough of us without that. I must be going now. I’m very much obliged to you.”

Edith slipped from the room as he spoke, and met him again at the door. She held out a pair of warm-looking mittens.

“These are for William John,” she said simply, “so that you can have your own. They are a pair of mine which are too big for me. I know Papa will say it is all right. Goodbye, Bertie.”

“Goodbye — and thank you,” stammered Bertie, as the door closed. Then he hastened home to William John.

That evening Doctor Forbes noticed a peculiarly thoughtful look on Edith’s face as she sat gazing into the glowing coal fire after dinner. He

laid his hand on her dark curls inquiringly.

“What are you musing over?”

“There was a little boy here today,” began Edith.

“Oh, such a dear little boy,” broke in Amy eagerly from the corner, where she was playing with her kitten. “His name was Bertie Ross. He brought up the parcels, and we asked him in to get warm. He had no mittens, and his hands were almost frozen. And, oh, Papa, just think! — he said he never had any Christmas or New Year at all.”

“Poor little fellow!” said the doctor. “I’ve heard of him; a pretty hard time he has of it, I think.”

“He was so pretty, Papa. And Edie gave him her blue mittens for William John.”

“The plot deepens. Who is William John?”

“Oh, a cousin or something, didn’t he say Edie? Anyway, he is sick, and he wanted to go coasting, and Bertie gave him his mittens. And I suppose he never had any Christmas either.”

“There are plenty who haven’t,” said the doctor, taking up his paper with a sigh. “Well, girlies, you seem interested in this little fellow so, if you like, you may invite him and his cousin to take dinner with you on New Year’s night.”

“Oh, Papa!” said Edith, her eyes shining like stars.

The doctor laughed. “Write him a nice little note of invitation — you are the lady of the house, you know — and I’ll see that he gets it tomorrow.”

And this was how it came to pass that Bertie received the next day his first invitation to dine out. He read the little note through three times in order fully to take in its contents, and then went around the rest of the day in deep abstraction as though he was trying to decide some very important question. It was with the same expression that he opened the door at home in the evening. His aunt was stirring some oatmeal mush on the stove.

“Is that you, Bert?” She spoke sharply. She always spoke sharply, even when not intending it; it had grown to be a habit.

“Yes’m,” said Bertie meekly, as he hung up his cap.

“I s’pose you’ve only got one day more at the store,” said Mrs. Ross. “Sampson didn’t say anything about keeping you longer, did he?”

“No. He said he couldn’t — I asked him.”

“Well, I didn’t expect he would. You’ll have a holiday on New Year’s anyhow; whether you’ll have anything to eat or not is a different question.”

“I’ve an invitation to dinner,” said Bertie timidly, “me and William John. It’s from Doctor Forbes’s little girls — the ones that gave me the mittens.”

He handed her the little note, and Mrs. Ross stooped down and read it by the fitful gleam of light which came from the cracked stove.

“Well, you can please yourself,” she said as she handed it back, “but William John couldn’t go if he had ten invitations. He caught cold coasting yesterday. I told him he would, but he was bound to go, and now he’s laid up for a week. Listen to him barking in the bedroom there.”

“Well, then, I won’t go either,” said Bertie with a sigh, it might be of relief, or it might be of disappointment. “I wouldn’t go there all alone.”

“You’re a goose!” said his aunt. “They wouldn’t eat you. But as I said, please yourself. Anyhow, hold your tongue about it to William John, or you’ll have him crying and bawling to go too.”

The caution came too late. William John had already heard it, and when his mother went in to rub his chest with liniment, she found him with the ragged quilt over his head crying.

“Come, William John, I want to rub you.”

“I don’t want to be rubbed — g’way,” sobbed William John. “I heard you out there — you needn’t think I didn’t. Bertie’s going to Doctor Forbes’s to dinner and I can’t go.”

“Well, you’ve only yourself to thank for it,” returned his mother. “If you hadn’t persisted in going out coasting yesterday when I wanted you to stay in, you’d have been able to go to Doctor Forbes’s. Little boys who won’t do as they’re told always get into trouble. Stop crying, now. I dare say if Bertie goes they’ll send you some candy, or something.”

But William John refused to be comforted. He cried himself to sleep that night, and when Bertie went in to see him next morning, he found him sitting up in bed with his eyes red and swollen and the faded quilt drawn up around his pinched face.

“Well, William John, how are you?”

“I ain’t any better,” replied William John mournfully. “I s’pose you’ll have a great time tomorrow night, Bertie?”

“Oh, I’m not going since you can’t,” said Bertie cheerily. He thought this would comfort William John, but it had exactly the opposite effect. William John had cried until he could cry no more, but he turned around and sobbed.

“There now!” he said in tearless despair. “That’s just what I expected. I did s’pose if I couldn’t go you would, and tell me about it. You’re mean as mean can be.”

“Come now, William John, don’t be so cross. I thought you’d rather have me home, but I’ll go, if you want me to.”

“Honest, now?”

“Yes, honest. I’ll go anywhere to please you. I must be off to the store now. Goodbye.”

Thus committed, Bertie took his courage in both hands and went. The next evening at dusk found him standing at Doctor Forbes’s door with a very violently beating heart. He was carefully dressed in his well-worn best suit and a neat white collar. The frosty air had crimsoned his cheeks and his hair was curling round his face.

Caroline opened the door and showed him into the parlour, where Edith and Amy were eagerly awaiting him.

“Happy New Year, Bertie,” cried Amy. “And — but, why, where is William John?”

“He couldn’t come,” answered Bertie anxiously — he was afraid he might not be welcome without William John. “He’s real sick. He caught cold and has to stay in bed; but he wanted to come awful bad.”

“Oh, dear me! Poor William John!” said Amy in a disappointed tone. But all further remarks were cut short by the entrance of Doctor Forbes.

“How do you do?” he said, giving Bertie’s hand a hearty shake. “But where is the other little fellow my girls were expecting?”

Bertie patiently reaccounted for William John’s nonappearance.

“It’s a bad time for colds,” said the doctor, sitting down and attacking the fire. “I dare say, though, you have to run so fast these days that a cold couldn’t catch you. I suppose you’ll soon be leaving Sampson’s. He told me he didn’t need you after the holiday season was over. What are you going at next? Have you anything in view?”

Bertie shook his head sorrowfully.

“No, sir; but,” he added more cheerfully, “I guess I’ll find something if I hunt around lively. I almost always do.”

He forgot his shyness; his face flushed hopefully, and he looked straight at the doctor with his bright, earnest eyes. The doctor poked the fire energetically and looked very wise. But just then the girls came up and carried Bertie off to display their holiday gifts. And there was a fur cap and a pair of mittens for him! He wondered whether he was dreaming.

“And here’s a picture-book for William John,” said Amy, “and there is a sled out in the kitchen for him. Oh, there’s the dinner-bell. I’m awfully hungry. Papa says that is my ‘normal condition,’ but I don’t know what that means.”

As for that dinner — Bertie might sometimes have seen such a repast in delightful dreams, but certainly never out of them. It was a feast to be dated from.

When the plum pudding came on, the doctor, who had been notably silent, leaned back in his chair, placed his fingertips together, and looked critically at Bertie.

“So Mr. Sampson can’t keep you?”

Bertie’s face sobered at once. He had almost forgotten his responsibilities.

“No, sir. He says I’m too small for the heavy work.”

“Well, you are rather small — but no doubt you will grow. Boys have a queer habit of doing that. I think you know how to make yourself useful. I need a boy here to run errands and look after my horse. If you like, I’ll try

you. You can live here, and go to school. I sometimes hear of places for boys in my rounds, and the first good one that will suit you, I'll bespeak for you. How will that do?"

"Oh, sir, you are too good," said Bertie with a choke in his voice.

"Well, that is settled," said the doctor genially. "Come on Monday then. And perhaps we can do something for that other little chap, William, or John, or whatever his name is. Will you have some more pudding, Bertie?"

"No, thank you," said Bertie. Pudding, indeed! He could not have eaten another mouthful after such wonderful and unexpected good fortune.

After dinner they played games, and cracked nuts, and roasted apples, until the clock struck nine; then Bertie got up to go.

"Off, are you?" said the doctor, looking up from his paper. "Well, I'll expect you on Monday, remember."

"Yes, sir," said Bertie happily. He was not likely to forget.

As he went out Amy came through the hall with a red sled.

"Here is William John's present. I've tied all the other things on so that they can't fall off."

Edith was at the door-with a parcel. "Here are some nuts and candies for William John," she said. "And tell him we all wish him a 'Happy New Year.'"

"Thank you," said Bertie. "I've had a splendid time. I'll tell William John. Goodnight."

He stepped out. It was frostier than ever. The snow crackled and snapped, the stars were keen and bright, but to Bertie, running down the street with William John's sled thumping merrily behind him, the world was aglow with rosy hope and promise. He was quite sure he could never forget this wonderful New Year.

Between the Hill and the Valley

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It was one of the moist, pleasantly odorous nights of early spring. There was a chill in the evening air, but the grass was growing green in sheltered spots, and Jeffrey Miller had found purple-petalled violets and pink arbutus on the hill that day. Across a valley filled with beech and fir, there was a sunset afterglow, creamy yellow and pale red, with a new moon swung above it. It was a night for a man to walk alone and dream of his love, which was perhaps why Jeffrey Miller came so loiteringly across the springy hill pasture, with his hands full of the mayflowers.

He was a tall, broad-shouldered man of forty, and looking no younger, with dark grey eyes and a tanned, clean-cut face, clean-shaven save for a drooping moustache. Jeffrey Miller was considered a handsome man, and Bayside people had periodical fits of wondering why he had never married. They pitied him for the lonely life he must lead alone there at the Valley Farm, with only a deaf old housekeeper as a companion, for it did not occur to the Bayside people in general that a couple of shaggy dogs could be called companions, and they did not know that books make very excellent comrades for people who know how to treat them.

One of Jeffrey's dogs was with him now — the oldest one, with white breast and paws and a tawny coat. He was so old that he was half-blind and rather deaf, but, with one exception, he was the dearest of living creatures to Jeffrey Miller, for Sara Stuart had given him the sprawly, chubby little pup years ago.

They came down the hill together. A group of men were standing on the bridge in the hollow, discussing Colonel Stuart's funeral of the day before. Jeffrey caught Sara's name and paused on the outskirts of the group to listen. Sometimes he thought that if he were lying dead under six feet of turf and Sara Stuart's name were pronounced above him, his heart would give a bound of life.

“Yes, the old kunnel’s gone at last,” Christopher Jackson was saying. “He took his time dyin’, that’s sartain. Must be a kind of relief for Sara — she’s had to wait on him, hand and foot, for years. But no doubt she’ll feel pretty lonesome. Wonder what she’ll do?”

“Is there any particular reason for her to do anything?” asked Alec Churchill.

“Well, she’ll have to leave Pinehurst. The estate’s entailed and goes to her cousin, Charles Stuart.”

There were exclamations of surprise from the other men on hearing this. Jeffrey drew nearer, absently patting his dog’s head. He had not known it either.

“Oh, yes,” said Christopher, enjoying all the importance of exclusive information. “I thought everybody knew that. Pinehurst goes to the oldest male heir. The old kunnel felt it keen that he hadn’t a son. Of course, there’s plenty of money and Sara’ll get that. But I guess she’ll feel pretty bad at leaving her old home. Sara ain’t as young as she used to be, neither. Let me see — she must be thirty-eight. Well, she’s left pretty lonesome.”

“Maybe she’ll stay on at Pinehurst,” said Job Crowe. “It’d only be right for her cousin to give her a home there.”

Christopher shook his head.

“No, I understand they’re not on very good terms. Sara don’t like Charles Stuart or his wife — and I don’t blame her. She won’t stay there, not likely. Probably she’ll go and live in town. Strange she never married. She was reckoned handsome, and had plenty of beaus at one time.”

Jeffrey swung out of the group and started homeward with his dog. To stand by and hear Sara Stuart discussed after this fashion was more than he could endure. The men idly watched his tall, erect figure as he went along the valley.

“Queer chap, Jeff,” said Alec Churchill reflectively.

“Jeff’s all right,” said Christopher in a patronizing way. “There ain’t a better man or neighbour alive. I’ve lived next farm to him for thirty years, so I ought to know. But he’s queer sartainly — not like other people — kind of unsociable. He don’t care for a thing ‘cept dogs and reading and

moonning round woods and fields. That ain't natural, you know. But I must say he's a good farmer. He's got the best farm in Bayside, and that's a real nice house he put up on it. Ain't it an odd thing he never married? Never seemed to have no notion of it. I can't recollect of Jeff Miller's ever courting anybody. That's another unnatural thing about him."

"I've always thought that Jeff thought himself a cut or two above the rest of us," said Tom Scovel with a sneer. "Maybe he thinks the Bayside girls ain't good enough for him."

"There ain't no such dirty pride about Jeff," pronounced Christopher conclusively. "And the Millers are the best family hereabouts, leaving the kunnel's out. And Jeff's well off — nobody knows how well, I reckon, but I can guess, being his land neighbour. Jeff ain't no fool nor loafer, if he is a bit queer."

Meanwhile, the object of these remarks was striding homeward and thinking, not of the men behind him, but of Sara Stuart. He must go to her at once. He had not intruded on her since her father's death, thinking her sorrow too great for him to meddle with. But this was different. Perhaps she needed the advice or assistance only he could give. To whom else in Bayside could she turn for it but to him, her old friend? Was it possible that she must leave Pinehurst? The thought struck cold dismay to his soul. How could he bear his life if she went away?

He had loved Sara Stuart from childhood. He remembered vividly the day he had first seen her — a spring day, much like this one had been; he, a boy of eight, had gone with his father to the big, sunshiny hill field and he had searched for birds' nests in the little fir copses along the crest while his father plowed. He had so come upon her, sitting on the fence under the pines at the back of Pinehurst — a child of six in a dress of purple cloth. Her long, light brown curls fell over her shoulders and rippled sleekly back from her calm little brow; her eyes were large and greyish blue, straight-gazing and steadfast. To the end of his life the boy was to carry in his heart the picture she made there under the pines.

"Little boy," she had said, with a friendly smile, "will you show me where the mayflowers grow?"

Shyly enough he had assented, and they set out together for the barrens beyond the field, where the arbutus trailed its stars of sweetness under the dusty dead grasses and withered leaves of the old year. The boy was thrilled with delight. She was a fairy queen who thus graciously smiled on him and chattered blithely as they searched for mayflowers in the fresh spring sunshine. He thought it a wonderful thing that it had so chanced. It overjoyed him to give the choicest dusters he found into her slim, waxen little fingers, and watch her eyes grow round with pleasure in them. When the sun began to lower over the beeches she had gone home with her arms full of arbutus, but she had turned at the edge of the pineland and waved her hand at him.

That night, when he told his mother of the little girl he had met on the hill, she had hoped anxiously that he had been “very polite,” for the little girl was a daughter of Colonel Stuart, newly come to Pinehurst. Jeffrey, reflecting, had not been certain that he had been polite; “But I am sure she liked me,” he said gravely.

A few days later a message came from Mrs. Stuart on the hill to Mrs. Miller in the valley. Would she let her little boy go up now and then to play with Sara? Sara was very lonely because she had no playmates. So Jeff, overjoyed, had gone to his divinity’s very home, where the two children played together many a day. All through their childhood they had been fast friends. Sara’s parents placed no bar to their intimacy. They had soon concluded that little Jeff Miller was a very good playmate for Sara. He was gentle, well-behaved, and manly.

Sara never went to the district school which Jeff attended; she had her governess at home. With no other boy or girl in Bayside did she form any friendship, but her loyalty to Jeff never wavered. As for Jeff, he worshipped her and would have done anything she commanded. He belonged to her from the day they had hunted arbutus on the hill.

When Sara was fifteen she had gone away to school. Jeff had missed her sorely. For four years he saw her only in the summers, and each year she had seemed taller, statelier, further from him. When she graduated her father took her abroad for two years; then she came home, a lovely,

highbred girl, dimpling on the threshold of womanhood; and Jeffrey Miller was face to face with two bitter facts. One was that he loved her — not with the boy-and-girl love of long ago, but with the love of a man for the one woman in the world; and the other was that she was as far beyond his reach as one of those sunset stars of which she had always reminded him in her pure, clear-shining loveliness.

He looked these facts unflinchingly in the face until he had grown used to them, and then he laid down his course for himself. He loved Sara — and he did not wish to conquer his love, even if it had been possible. It were better to love her, whom he could never win, than to love and be loved by any other woman. His great office in life was to be her friend, humble and unexpectant; to be at hand if she should need him for ever so trifling a service; never to presume, always to be faithful.

Sara had not forgotten her old friend. But their former comradeship was now impossible; they could be friends, but never again companions. Sara's life was full and gay; she had interests in which he had no share; her social world was utterly apart from his; she was of the hill and its traditions, he was of the valley and its people. The democracy of childhood past, there was no common ground on which they might meet. Only one thing Jeffrey had found it impossible to contemplate calmly. Some day Sara would marry — a man who was her equal, who sat at her father's table as a guest. In spite of himself, Jeffrey's heart filled with hot rebellion at the thought; it was like a desecration and a robbery.

But, as the years went by, this thing he dreaded did not happen. Sara did not marry, although gossip assigned her many suitors not unworthy of her. She and Jeffrey were always friends, although they met but seldom. Sometimes she sent him a book; it was his custom to search for the earliest mayflowers and take them to her; once in a long while they met and talked of many things. Jeffrey's calendar from year to year was red-lettered by these small happenings, of which nobody knew, or, knowing, would have cared.

So he and Sara drifted out of youth, together yet apart. Her mother had died, and Sara was the gracious, stately mistress of Pinehurst, which grew

quieter as the time went on; the lovers ceased to come, and holiday friends grew few; with the old colonel's failing health the gaieties and lavish entertaining ceased. Jeffrey thought that Sara must often be lonely, but she never said so; she remained sweet, serene, calm-eyed, like the child he had met on the hill. Only, now and then, Jeffrey fancied he saw a shadow on her face — a shadow so faint and fleeting that only the eye of an unselfish, abiding love, made clear-sighted by patient years, could have seen it. It hurt him, that shadow; he would have given anything in his power to have banished it.

And now this long friendship was to be broken. Sara was going away. At first he had thought only of her pain, but now his own filled his heart. How could he live without her? How could he dwell in the valley knowing that she had gone from the hill? Never to see her light shine down on him through the northern gap in the pines at night! Never to feel that perhaps her eyes rested on him now and then as he went about his work in the valley fields! Never to stoop with a glad thrill over the first spring flowers because it was his privilege to take them to her! Jeffrey groaned aloud. No, he could not go up to see her that night; he must wait — he must strengthen himself.

Then his heart rebuked him. This was selfishness; this was putting his own feelings before hers — a thing he had sworn never to do. Perhaps she needed him — perhaps she had wondered why he had not come to offer her such poor service as might be in his power. He turned and went down through the orchard lane, taking the old field-path across the valley and up the hill, which he had traversed so often and so joyfully in boyhood. It was dark now, and a few stars were shining in the silvery sky. The wind sighed among the pines as he walked under them. Sometimes he felt that he must turn back — that his pain was going to master him; then he forced himself to go on.

The old grey house where Sara lived seemed bleak and stricken in the dull light, with its leafless vines clinging to it. There were no lights in it. It looked like a home left soulless.

Jeffrey went around to the garden door and knocked. He had expected the maid to open it, but Sara herself came.

“Why, Jeff,” she said, with pleasure in her tones. “I am so glad to see you. I have been wondering why you had not come before.”

“I did not think you would want to see me yet,” he said hurriedly. “I have thought about you every hour — but I feared to intrude.”

“You couldn’t intrude,” she said gently. “Yes, I have wanted to see you, Jeff. Come into the library.”

He followed her into the room where they had always sat in his rare calls. Sara lighted the lamp on the table. As the light shot up she stood clearly revealed in it — a tall, slender woman in a trailing gown of grey. Even a stranger, not knowing her age, would have guessed it to be what it was, yet it would have been hard to say what gave the impression of maturity. Her face was quite unlined — a little pale, perhaps, with more finely cut outlines than those of youth. Her eyes were clear and bright; her abundant brown hair waved back from her face in the same curves that Jeffrey had noted in the purple-gowned child of six, under the pines. Perhaps it was the fine patience and serenity in her face that told her tale of years. Youth can never acquire it.

Her eyes brightened when she saw the mayflowers he carried. She came and took them from him, and her hands touched his, sending a little thrill of joy through him.

“How lovely they are! And the first I have seen this spring. You always bring me the first, don’t you, Jeff? Do you remember the first day we spent picking mayflowers together?”

Jeff smiled. Could he forget? But something held him back from speech.

Sara put the flowers in a vase on the table, but slipped one starry pink cluster into the lace on her breast. She came and sat down beside Jeffrey; he saw that her beautiful eyes had been weeping, and that there were lines of pain around her lips. Some impulse that would not be denied made him lean over and take her hand. She left it unresistingly in his clasp.

"I am very lonely now, Jeff," she said sadly. "Father has gone. I have no friends left."

"You have me," said Jeffrey quietly.

"Yes. I shouldn't have said that. You are my friend, I know, Jeff. But, but — I must leave Pinehurst, you know."

"I learned that tonight for the first time," he answered.

"Did you ever come to a place where everything seemed ended — where it seemed that there was nothing — simply nothing — left, Jeff?" she said wistfully. "But, no, it couldn't seem so to a man. Only a woman could fully understand what I mean. That is how I feel now. While I had Father to live for it wasn't so hard. But now there is nothing. And I must go away."

"Is there anything I can do?" muttered Jeffrey miserably. He knew now that he had made a mistake in coming tonight; he could not help her. His own pain had unmanned him. Presently he would say something foolish or selfish in spite of himself.

Sara turned her eyes on him.

"There is nothing anybody can do, Jeff," she said piteously. Her eyes, those clear child-eyes, filled with tears. "I shall be braver — stronger — after a while. But just now I have no strength left. I feel like a lost, helpless child. Oh, Jeff!"

She put her slender hands over her face and sobbed. Every sob cut Jeffrey to the heart.

"Don't — don't, Sara," he said huskily. "I can't bear to see you suffer so. I'd die for you if it would do you any good. I love you — I love you! I never meant to tell you so, but it is the truth. I oughtn't to tell you now. Don't think that I'm trying to take any advantage of your loneliness and sorrow. I know — I have always known — that you are far above me. But that couldn't prevent my loving you — just humbly loving you, asking nothing else. You may be angry with my presumption, but I can't help telling you that I love you. That's all. I just want you to know it."

Sara had turned away her head. Jeffrey was overcome with contrition. Ah, he had no business to speak so — he had spoiled the devotion of years.

Who was he that he should have dared to love her? Silence alone had justified his love, and now he had lost that justification. She would despise him. He had forfeited her friendship for ever.

“Are you angry, Sara?” he questioned sadly, after a silence.

“I think I am,” said Sara. She kept her stately head averted. “If — if you have loved me, Jeff, why did you never tell me so before?”

“How could I dare?” he said gravely. “I knew I could never win you — that I had no right to dream of you so. Oh, Sara, don’t be angry! My love has been reverent and humble. I have asked nothing. I ask nothing now but your friendship. Don’t take that from me, Sara. Don’t be angry with me.”

“I am angry,” repeated Sara, “and I think I have a right to be.”

“Perhaps so,” he said simply, “but not because I have loved you. Such love as mine ought to anger no woman, Sara. But you have a right to be angry with me for presuming to put it into words. I should not have done so — but I could not help it. It rushed to my lips in spite of me. Forgive me.”

“I don’t know whether I can forgive you for not telling me before,” said Sara steadily. “That is what I have to forgive — not your speaking at last, even if it was dragged from you against your will. Did you think I would make you such a very poor wife, Jeff, that you would not ask me to marry you?”

“Sara!” he said, aghast. “I — I — you were as far above me as a star in the sky — I never dreamed — I never hoped — —”

“That I could care for you?” said Sara, looking round at last. “Then you were more modest than a man ought to be, Jeff. I did not know that you loved me, or I should have found some way to make you speak out long ago. I should not have let you waste all these years. I’ve loved you — ever since we picked mayflowers on the hill, I think — ever since I came home from school, I know. I never cared for anyone else — although I tried to, when I thought you didn’t care for me. It mattered nothing to me that the world may have thought there was some social difference between us. There, Jeff, you cannot accuse me of not making my meaning plain.”

“Sara,” he whispered, wondering, bewildered, half-afraid to believe this unbelievable joy. “I’m not half worthy of you — but — but” — he bent forward and put his arm around her, looking straight into her clear, unshrinking eyes. “Sara, will you be my wife?”

“Yes.” She said the word clearly and truly. “And I will think myself a proud and happy and honoured woman to be so, Jeff. Oh, I don’t shrink from telling you the truth, you see. You mean too much to me for me to dissemble it. I’ve hidden it for eighteen years because I didn’t think you wanted to hear it, but I’ll give myself the delight of saying it frankly now.”

She lifted her delicate, highbred face, fearless love shining in every lineament, to his, and they exchanged their first kiss.

Clorinda's Gifts

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“It is a dreadful thing to be poor a fortnight before Christmas,” said Clorinda, with the mournful sigh of seventeen years.

Aunt Emmy smiled. Aunt Emmy was sixty, and spent the hours she didn't spend in a bed, on a sofa or in a wheel chair; but Aunt Emmy was never heard to sigh.

“I suppose it is worse then than at any other time,” she admitted.

That was one of the nice things about Aunt Emmy. She always sympathized and understood.

“I'm worse than poor this Christmas ... I'm stony broke,” said Clorinda dolefully. “My spell of fever in the summer and the consequent doctor's bills have cleaned out my coffers completely. Not a single Christmas present can I give. And I did so want to give some little thing to each of my dearest people. But I simply can't afford it ... that's the hateful, ugly truth.”

Clorinda sighed again.

“The gifts which money can purchase are not the only ones we can give,” said Aunt Emmy gently, “nor the best, either.”

“Oh, I know it's nicer to give something of your own work,” agreed Clorinda, “but materials for fancy work cost too. That kind of gift is just as much out of the question for me as any other.”

“That was not what I meant,” said Aunt Emmy.

“What did you mean, then?” asked Clorinda, looking puzzled.

Aunt Emmy smiled.

“Suppose you think out my meaning for yourself,” she said. “That would be better than if I explained it. Besides, I don't think I could explain it. Take the beautiful line of a beautiful poem to help you in your thinking out: ‘The gift without the giver is bare.’”

“I’d put it the other way and say, ‘The giver without the gift is bare,’” said Clorinda, with a grimace. “That is my predicament exactly. Well, I hope by next Christmas I’ll not be quite bankrupt. I’m going into Mr. Callender’s store down at Murraybridge in February. He has offered me the place, you know.”

“Won’t your aunt miss you terribly?” said Aunt Emmy gravely.

Clorinda flushed. There was a note in Aunt Emmy’s voice that disturbed her.

“Oh, yes, I suppose she will,” she answered hurriedly. “But she’ll get used to it very soon. And I will be home every Saturday night, you know. I’m dreadfully tired of being poor, Aunt Emmy, and now that I have a chance to earn something for myself I mean to take it. I can help Aunt Mary, too. I’m to get four dollars a week.”

“I think she would rather have your companionship than a part of your salary, Clorinda,” said Aunt Emmy. “But of course you must decide for yourself, dear. It is hard to be poor. I know it. I am poor.”

“You poor!” said Clorinda, kissing her. “Why, you are the richest woman I know, Aunt Emmy — rich in love and goodness and contentment.”

“And so are you, dearie ... rich in youth and health and happiness and ambition. Aren’t they all worth while?”

“Of course they are,” laughed Clorinda. “Only, unfortunately, Christmas gifts can’t be coined out of them.”

“Did you ever try?” asked Aunt Emmy. “Think out that question, too, in your thinking out, Clorinda.”

“Well, I must say bye-bye and run home. I feel cheered up — you always cheer people up, Aunt Emmy. How grey it is outdoors. I do hope we’ll have snow soon. Wouldn’t it be jolly to have a white Christmas? We always have such faded brown Decembers.”

Clorinda lived just across the road from Aunt Emmy in a tiny white house behind some huge willows. But Aunt Mary lived there too — the only relative Clorinda had, for Aunt Emmy wasn’t really her aunt at all. Clorinda had always lived with Aunt Mary ever since she could remember.

Clorinda went home and upstairs to her little room under the eaves, where the great bare willow boughs were branching athwart her windows. She was thinking over what Aunt Emmy had said about Christmas gifts and giving.

“I’m sure I don’t know what she could have meant,” pondered Clorinda. “I do wish I could find out if it would help me any. I’d love to remember a few of my friends at least. There’s Miss Mitchell ... she’s been so good to me all this year and helped me so much with my studies. And there’s Mrs. Martin out in Manitoba. If I could only send her something! She must be so lonely out there. And Aunt Emmy herself, of course; and poor old Aunt Kitty down the lane; and Aunt Mary and, yes — Florence too, although she did treat me so meanly. I shall never feel the same to her again. But she gave me a present last Christmas, and so out of mere politeness I ought to give her something.”

Clorinda stopped short suddenly. She had just remembered that she would not have liked to say that last sentence to Aunt Emmy. Therefore, there was something wrong about it. Clorinda had long ago learned that there was sure to be something wrong in anything that could not be said to Aunt Emmy. So she stopped to think it over.

Clorinda puzzled over Aunt Emmy’s meaning for four days and part of three nights. Then all at once it came to her. Or if it wasn’t Aunt Emmy’s meaning it was a very good meaning in itself, and it grew clearer and expanded in meaning during the days that followed, although at first Clorinda shrank a little from some of the conclusions to which it led her.

“I’ve solved the problem of my Christmas giving for this year,” she told Aunt Emmy. “I have some things to give after all. Some of them quite costly, too; that is, they will cost me something, but I know I’ll be better off and richer after I’ve paid the price. That is what Mr. Grierson would call a paradox, isn’t it? I’ll explain all about it to you on Christmas Day.”

On Christmas Day, Clorinda went over to Aunt Emmy’s. It was a faded brown Christmas after all, for the snow had not come. But Clorinda did not mind; there was such joy in her heart that she thought it the most delightful Christmas Day that ever dawned.

She put the queer cornery armful she carried down on the kitchen floor before she went into the sitting room. Aunt Emmy was lying on the sofa before the fire, and Clorinda sat down beside her.

“I’ve come to tell you all about it,” she said.

Aunt Emmy patted the hand that was in her own.

“From your face, dear girl, it will be pleasant hearing and telling,” she said.

Clorinda nodded.

“Aunt Emmy, I thought for days over your meaning ... thought until I was dizzy. And then one evening it just came to me, without any thinking at all, and I knew that I could give some gifts after all. I thought of something new every day for a week. At first I didn’t think I could give some of them, and then I thought how selfish I was. I would have been willing to pay any amount of money for gifts if I had had it, but I wasn’t willing to pay what I had. I got over that, though, Aunt Emmy. Now I’m going to tell you what I did give.

“First, there was my teacher, Miss Mitchell. I gave her one of father’s books. I have so many of his, you know, so that I wouldn’t miss one; but still it was one I loved very much, and so I felt that that love made it worthwhile. That is, I felt that on second thought. At first, Aunt Emmy, I thought I would be ashamed to offer Miss Mitchell a shabby old book, worn with much reading and all marked over with father’s notes and pencillings. I was afraid she would think it queer of me to give her such a present. And yet somehow it seemed to me that it was better than something brand new and unmellowed — that old book which father had loved and which I loved. So I gave it to her, and she understood. I think it pleased her so much, the real meaning in it. She said it was like being given something out of another’s heart and life.

“Then you know Mrs. Martin ... last year she was Miss Hope, my dear Sunday School teacher. She married a home missionary, and they are in a lonely part of the west. Well, I wrote her a letter. Not just an ordinary letter; dear me, no. I took a whole day to write it, and you should have seen the postmistress’s eyes stick out when I mailed it. I just told her

everything that had happened in Greenvale since she went away. I made it as newsy and cheerful and loving as I possibly could. Everything bright and funny I could think of went into it.

“The next was old Aunt Kitty. You know she was my nurse when I was a baby, and she’s very fond of me. But, well, you know, Aunt Emmy, I’m ashamed to confess it, but really I’ve never found Aunt Kitty very entertaining, to put it mildly. She is always glad when I go to see her, but I’ve never gone except when I couldn’t help it. She is very deaf, and rather dull and stupid, you know. Well, I gave her a whole day. I took my knitting yesterday, and sat with her the whole time and just talked and talked. I told her all the Greenvale news and gossip and everything else I thought she’d like to hear. She was so pleased and proud; she told me when I came away that she hadn’t had such a nice time for years.

“Then there was ... Florence. You know, Aunt Emmy, we were always intimate friends until last year. Then Florence once told Rose Watson something I had told her in confidence. I found it out and I was so hurt. I couldn’t forgive Florence, and I told her plainly I could never be a real friend to her again. Florence felt badly, because she really did love me, and she asked me to forgive her, but it seemed as if I couldn’t. Well, Aunt Emmy, that was my Christmas gift to her ... my forgiveness. I went down last night and just put my arms around her and told her that I loved her as much as ever and wanted to be real close friends again.

“I gave Aunt Mary her gift this morning. I told her I wasn’t going to Murraybridge, that I just meant to stay home with her. She was so glad — and I’m glad, too, now that I’ve decided so.”

“Your gifts have been real gifts, Clorinda,” said Aunt Emmy.
“Something of you — the best of you — went into each of them.”

Clorinda went out and brought her cornery armful in.

“I didn’t forget you, Aunt Emmy,” she said, as she unpinned the paper. There was a rosebush — Clorinda’s own pet rosebush — all snowed over with fragrant blossoms.

Aunt Emmy loved flowers. She put her finger under one of the roses and kissed it.

“It’s as sweet as yourself, dear child,” she said tenderly. “And it will be a joy to me all through the lonely winter days. You’ve found out the best meaning of Christmas giving, haven’t you, dear?”

“Yes, thanks to you, Aunt Emmy,” said Clorinda softly.

Cyrilla's Inspiration

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It was a rainy Saturday afternoon and all the boarders at Mrs. Plunkett's were feeling dull and stupid, especially the Normal School girls on the third floor, Cyrilla Blair and Carol Hart and Mary Newton, who were known as The Trio, and shared the big front room together.

They were sitting in that front room, scowling out at the weather. At least, Carol and Mary were scowling. Cyrilla never scowled; she was sitting curled up on her bed with her Greek grammar, and she smiled at the rain and her grumbling chums as cheerfully as possible.

"For pity's sake, Cyrilla, put that grammar away," moaned Mary. "There is something positively uncanny about a girl who can study Greek on Saturday afternoons — at least, this early in the term."

"I'm not really studying," said Cyrilla, tossing the book away. "I'm only pretending to. I'm really just as bored and lonesome as you are. But what else is there to do? We can't stir outside the door; we've nothing to read; we can't make candy since Mrs. Plunkett has forbidden us to use the oil stove in our room; we'll probably quarrel all round if we sit here in idleness; so I've been trying to brush up my Greek verbs by way of keeping out of mischief. Have you any better employment to offer me?"

"If it were only a mild drizzle we might go around and see the Patterson girls," sighed Carol. "But there is no venturing out in such a downpour. Cyrilla, you are supposed to be the brainiest one of us. Prove your claim to such preeminence by thinking of some brand-new amusement, especially suited to rainy afternoons. That will be putting your grey matter to better use than squandering it on Greek verbs out of study limits."

"If only I'd got a letter from home today," said Mary, who seemed determined to persist in gloom. "I wouldn't mind the weather. Letters are such cheery things: — especially the letters my sister writes. They're so

full of fun and nice little news. The reading of one cheers me up for the day. Cyrilla Blair, what is the matter? You nearly frightened me to death!" Cyrilla had bounded from her bed to the centre of the floor, waving her Greek grammar wildly in the air.

"Girls, I have an inspiration!" she exclaimed.

"Good! Let's hear it," said Carol.

"Let's write letters — rainy-day letters — to everyone in the house," said Cyrilla. "You may depend all the rest of the folks under Mrs. Plunkett's hospitable roof are feeling more or less blue and lonely too, as well as ourselves. Let's write them the jolliest, nicest letters we can compose and get Nora Jane to take them to their rooms. There's that pale little sewing girl, I don't believe she ever gets letters from anybody, and Miss Marshall, I'm sure she doesn't, and poor old Mrs. Johnson, whose only son died last month, and the new music teacher who came yesterday, a letter of welcome to her — and old Mr. Grant, yes, and Mrs. Plunkett too, thanking her for all her kindness to us. You knew she has been awfully nice to us in spite of the oil stove ukase. That's six — two apiece. Let's do it, girls."

Cyrilla's sudden enthusiasm for her plan infected the others.

"It's a nice idea," said Mary, brightening up. "But who's to write to whom? I'm willing to take anybody but Miss Marshall. I couldn't write a line to her to save my life. She'd be horrified at anything funny or jokey and our letters will have to be mainly nonsense — nonsense of the best brand, to be sure, but still nonsense."

"Better leave Miss Marshall out," suggested Carol. "You know she disapproves of us anyhow. She'd probably resent a letter of the sort, thinking we were trying to play some kind of joke on her."

"It would never do to leave her out," said Cyrilla decisively. "Of course, she's a bit queer and unamiable, but, girls, think of thirty years of boardinghouse life, even with the best of Plunketts. Wouldn't that sour anybody? You know it would. You'd be cranky and grumbly and disagreeable too, I dare say. I'm really sorry for Miss Marshall. She's had a very hard life. Mrs. Plunkett told me all about her one day. I don't think

we should mind her biting little speeches and sharp looks. And anyway, even if she is really as disagreeable as she sometimes seems to be, why, it must make it all the harder for her, don't you think? So she needs a letter most of all. I'll write to her, since it's my suggestion. We'll draw lots for the others."

Besides Miss Marshall, the new music teacher fell to Cyrilla's share. Mary drew Mrs. Plunkett and the dressmaker, and Carol drew Mrs. Johnson and old Mr. Grant. For the next two hours the girls wrote busily, forgetting all about the rainy day, and enjoying their epistolary labours to the full. It was dusk when all the letters were finished.

"Why, hasn't the afternoon gone quickly after all!" exclaimed Carol. "I just let my pen run on and jotted down any good working idea that came into my head. Cyrilla Blair, that big fat letter is never for Miss Marshall! What on earth did you find to write her?"

"It wasn't so hard when I got fairly started," said Cyrilla, smiling. "Now, let's hunt up Nora Jane and send the letters around so that everybody can read his or hers before teatime. We should have a choice assortment of smiles at the table instead of all those frowns and sighs we had at dinner." Miss Emily Marshall was at that moment sitting in her little back room, all alone in the dusk, with the rain splashing drearily against the windowpanes outside. Miss Marshall was feeling as lonely and dreary as she looked — and as she had often felt in her life of sixty years. She told herself bitterly that she hadn't a friend in the world — not even one who cared enough for her to come and see her or write her a letter now and then. She thought her boardinghouse acquaintances disliked her and she resented their dislike, without admitting to herself that her ungracious ways were responsible for it. She smiled sourly when little ripples of laughter came faintly down the hall from the front room where The Trio were writing their letters and laughing over the fun they were putting into them.

"If they were old and lonesome and friendless they wouldn't see much in life to laugh at, I guess," said Miss Marshall bitterly, drawing her shawl closer about her sharp shoulders. "They never think of anything but

themselves and if a day passes that they don't have 'some fun' they think it's a fearful thing to put up with. I'm sick and tired of their giggling and whispering."

In the midst of these amiable reflections Miss Marshall heard a knock at her door. When she opened it there stood Nora Jane, her broad red face beaming with smiles.

"Please, Miss, here's a letter for you," she said.

"A letter for me!" Miss Marshall shut her door and stared at the fat envelope in amazement. Who could have written it? The postman came only in the morning. Was it some joke, perhaps? Those giggling girls? Miss Marshall's face grew harder as she lighted her lamp and opened the letter suspiciously.

"Dear Miss Marshall," it ran in Cyrilla's pretty girlish writing, "we girls are so lonesome and dull that we have decided to write rainy-day letters to everybody in the house just to cheer ourselves up. So I'm going to write to you just a letter of friendly nonsense."

Pages of "nonsense" followed, and very delightful nonsense it was, for Cyrilla possessed the happy gift of bright and easy letter-writing. She commented wittily on all the amusing episodes of the boardinghouse life for the past month; she described a cat-fight she had witnessed from her window that morning and illustrated it by a pen-and-ink sketch of the belligerent felines; she described a lovely new dress her mother had sent her from home and told all about the class party to which she had worn it; she gave an account of her vacation camping trip to the mountains and pasted on one page a number of small snapshots taken during the outing; she copied a joke she had read in the paper that morning and discussed the serial story in the boardinghouse magazine which all the boarders were reading; she wrote out the directions for a new crocheted tidy her sister had made — Miss Marshall had a mania for crocheting; and she finally wound up with "all the good will and good wishes that Nora Jane will consent to carry from your friend, Cyrilla Blair."

Before Miss Marshall had finished reading that letter she had cried three times and laughed times past counting. More tears came at the end

— happy, tender tears such as Miss Marshall had not shed for years. Something warm and sweet and gentle seemed to thrill to life within her heart. So those girls were not such selfish, heedless young creatures as she had supposed! How kind it had been in Cyrilla Blair to think of her and write so to her. She no longer felt lonely and neglected. Her whole sombre world had been brightened to sunshine by that merry friendly letter.

Mrs. Plunkett's table was surrounded by a ring of smiling faces that night. Everybody seemed in good spirits in spite of the weather. The pale little dressmaker, who had hardly uttered a word since her arrival a week before, talked and laughed quite merrily and girlishly, thanking Cyrilla unreservedly for her "jolly letter." Old Mr. Grant did not grumble once about the rain or the food or his rheumatism and he told Carol that she might be a good letter writer in time if she looked after her grammar more carefully — which, from Mr. Grant, was high praise. All the others declared that they were delighted with their letters — all except Miss Marshall. She said nothing but later on, when Cyrilla was going upstairs, she met Miss Marshall in the shadows of the second landing.

"My dear," said Miss Marshall gently, "I want to thank you for your letter, I don't think you can realize just what it has meant to me. I was so — so lonely and tired and discouraged. It heartened me right up. I — I know you have thought me a cross and disagreeable person. I'm afraid I have been, too. But — but — I shall try to be less so in future. If I can't succeed all at once don't mind me because, under it all, I shall always be your friend. And I mean to keep your letter and read it over every time I feel myself getting bitter and hard again." "Dear Miss Marshall, I'm so glad you liked it," said Cyrilla frankly. "We're all your friends and would be glad to be chummy with you. Only we thought perhaps we bothered you with our nonsense."

"Come and see me sometimes," said Miss Marshall with a smile. "I'll try to be 'chummy' — perhaps I'm not yet too old to learn the secret of friendliness. Your letter has made me think that I have missed much in shutting all young life out from mine as I have done. I want to reform in this respect if I can."

When Cyrilla reached the front room she found Mrs. Plunkett there.

“I’ve just dropped in, Miss Blair,” said that worthy woman, “to say that I dunno as I mind your making candy once in a while if you want to. Only do be careful not to set the place on fire. Please be particularly careful not to set it on fire.”

“We’ll try,” promised Cyrilla with dancing eyes. When the door closed behind Mrs. Plunkett the three girls looked at each other.

“Cyrilla, that idea of yours was a really truly inspiration,” said Carol solemnly.

“I believe it was,” said Cyrilla, thinking of Miss Marshall.

Dorinda's Desperate Deed

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Dorinda had been home for a whole wonderful week and the little Pages were beginning to feel acquainted with her. When a girl goes away when she is ten and doesn't come back until she is fifteen, it is only to be expected that her family should regard her as somewhat of a stranger, especially when she is really a Page, and they are really all Carters except for the name. Dorinda had been only ten when her Aunt Mary — on the Carter side — had written to Mrs. Page, asking her to let Dorinda come to her for the winter.

Mrs. Page, albeit she was poor — nobody but herself knew how poor — and a widow with five children besides Dorinda, hesitated at first. She was afraid, with good reason, that the winter might stretch into other seasons; but Mary had lost her own only little girl in the summer, and Mrs. Page shuddered at the thought of what her loneliness must be. So, to comfort her, Mrs. Page had let Dorinda go, stipulating that she must come home in the spring. In the spring, when Dorinda's bed of violets was growing purple under the lilac bush, Aunt Mary wrote again. Dorinda was contented and happy, she said. Would not Emily let her stay for the summer? Mrs. Page cried bitterly over that letter and took sad counsel with herself. To let Dorinda stay with her aunt for the summer really meant, she knew, to let her stay altogether. Mrs. Page was finding it harder and harder to get along; there was so little and the children needed so much; Dorinda would have a good home with her Aunt Mary if she could only prevail on her rebellious mother heart to give her up. In the end she agreed to let Dorinda stay for the summer — and Dorinda had never been home since.

But now Dorinda had come back to the little white house on the hill at Willowdale, set back from the road in a smother of apple trees and vines. Aunt Mary had died very suddenly and her only son, Dorinda's cousin, had

gone to Japan. There was nothing for Dorinda to do save to come home, to enter again into her old unfilled place in her mother's heart, and win a new place in the hearts of the brothers and sisters who barely remembered her at all. Leicester had been nine and Jean seven when Dorinda went away; now they were respectively fourteen and twelve.

At first they were a little shy with this big, practically brand-new sister, but this soon wore off. Nobody could be shy long with Dorinda; nobody could help liking her. She was so brisk and jolly and sympathetic — a real Page, so everybody said — while the brothers and sisters were Carter to their marrow; Carters with fair hair and blue eyes, and small, fine, wistful features; but Dorinda had merry black eyes, plump, dusky-red cheeks, and a long braid of glossy dark hair, which was perpetually being twitched from one shoulder to another as Dorinda whisked about the house on domestic duties intent.

In a week Dorinda felt herself one of the family again, with all the cares and responsibilities thereof resting on her strong young shoulders. Dorinda and her mother talked matters out fully one afternoon over their sewing, in the sunny south room where the winds got lost among the vines halfway through the open window. Mrs. Page sighed and said she really did not know what to do. Dorinda did not sigh; she did not know just what to do either, but there must be something that could be done — there is always something that can be done, if one can only find it. Dorinda sewed hard and pursed up her red lips determinedly.

“Don't you worry, Mother Page,” she said briskly. “We'll be like that glorious old Roman who found a way or made it. I like overcoming difficulties. I've lots of old Admiral Page's fighting blood in me, you know. The first step is to tabulate just exactly what difficulties among our many difficulties must be unravelled out first — the capital difficulties, as it were. Most important of all comes—”

“Leicester,” said Mrs. Page.

Dorinda winked her eyes as she always did when she was doubtful.

“Well, I knew he was one of them, but I wasn't going to put him the very first. However, we will. Leicester's case stands thus. He is a pretty

smart boy — if he wasn't my brother, I'd say he was a very smart boy. He has gone as far in his studies as Willowdale School can take him, has qualified for entrance into the Blue Hill Academy, wants to go there this fall and begin the beginnings of a college course. Well, of course, Mother Page, we can't send Leicester to Blue Hill any more than we can send him to the moon."

"No," mourned Mrs. Page, "and the poor boy feels so badly over it. His heart is set on going to college and being a doctor like his father. He believes he could work his way through, if he could only get a start. But there isn't any chance. And I can't afford to keep him at school any longer. He is going into Mr. Churchill's store at Willow Centre in the fall. Mr. Churchill has very kindly offered him a place. Leicester hates the thought of it — I know he does, although he never says so."

"Next to Leicester's college course we want—"

"Music lessons for Jean."

Dorinda winked again.

"Are music lessons for Jean really a difficulty?" she said. "That is, one spelled with a capital?"

"Oh, yes, Dorinda dear. At least, I'm worried over it. Jean loves music so, and she has never had anything, poor child, not even as much school as she ought to have had. I've had to keep her home so much to help me with the work. She has been such a good, patient little girl too, and her heart is set on music lessons."

"Well, she must have them then — after we get Leicester's year at the academy for him. That's two. The third is a new—"

"The roof must be shingled this fall," said Mrs. Page anxiously. "It really must, Dorinda. It is no better than a sieve. We are nearly drowned every time it rains. But I don't know where the money to do it is going to come from."

"Shingles for the roof, three," said Dorinda, as if she were carefully jotting down something in a mental memorandum. "And fourth — now, Mother Page, I will have my say this time — fourthly, biggest capital of all, a Nice, New Dress and a Warm Fur Coat for Mother Page this winter."

Yes, yes, you must have them, dearest. It's absolutely necessary. We can wait a year or so for college courses and music lessons to grow; we can set basins under the leaks and borrow some more if we haven't enough. But a new dress and coat for you we must, shall, and will have, however it is to be brought about."

"I wouldn't mind if I never got another new stitch, if I could only manage the other things," said Mrs. Page stoutly. "If your Uncle Eugene would only help us a little, until Leicester got through! He really ought to. But of course he never will."

"Have you ever asked him?" said Dorinda.

"Oh, my dear, no; of course not," said Mrs. Page in a horrified tone, as if Dorinda had asked if she had ever stolen a neighbour's spoons.

"I don't see why you shouldn't," said Dorinda seriously.

"Oh, Dorinda, Uncle Eugene hates us all. He is terribly bitter against us. He would never, never listen to any request for help, even if I could bring myself to make it."

"Mother, what was the trouble between us and Uncle Eugene? I have never known the rights of it. I was too small to understand when I was home before. All I remember is that Uncle Eugene never came to see us or spoke to us when he met us anywhere, and we were all afraid of him somehow. I used to think of him as an ogre who would come creeping up the back stairs after dark and carry me off bodily if I wasn't good. What made him our enemy? And how did he come to get all of Grandfather Page's property when Father got nothing?"

"Well, you know, Dorinda, that your Grandfather Page was married twice. Eugene was his first wife's son, and your father the second wife's. Eugene was a great deal older than your father — he was twenty-five when your father was born. He was always an odd man, even in his youth, and he had been much displeased at his father's second marriage. But he was very fond of your father — whose mother, as you know, died at his birth — and they were good friends and comrades until just before your father went to college. They then quarrelled; the cause of the quarrel was insignificant; with anyone else than Eugene a reconciliation would soon have been

effected. But Eugene never was friendly with your father from that time. I think he was jealous of old Grandfather's affection; thought the old man loved your father best. And then, as I have said, he was very eccentric and stubborn. Well, your father went away to college and graduated, and then — we were married. Grandfather Page was very angry with him for marrying me. He wanted him to marry somebody else. He told him he would disinherit him if he married me. I did not know this until we were married. But Grandfather Page kept his word. He sent for a lawyer and had a new will made, leaving everything to Eugene. I think, nay, I am sure, that he would have relented in time, but he died the very next week; they found him dead in his bed one morning, so Eugene got everything; and that is all there is of the story, Dorinda."

"And Uncle Eugene has been our enemy ever since?"

"Yes, ever since. So you see, Dorinda dear, that I cannot ask any favours of Uncle Eugene."

"Yes, I see," said Dorinda understandingly. To herself she added, "But I don't see why I shouldn't."

Dorinda thought hard and long for the next few days about the capital difficulties. She could think of only one thing to do and, despite old Admiral Page's fighting blood, she shrank from doing it. But one night she found Leicester with his head down on his books and — no, it couldn't be tears in his eyes, because Leicester laughed scornfully at the insinuation.

"I wouldn't cry over it, Dorinda; I hope I'm more of a man than that. But I do really feel rather cut up because I've no chance of getting to college. And I hate the thought of going into a store. But I know I must for Mother's sake, and I mean to pitch in and like it in spite of myself when the time comes. Only — only—"

And then Leicester got up and whistled and went to the window and stood with his back to Dorinda.

"That settles it," said Dorinda out loud, as she brushed her hair before the glass that night. "I'll do it."

"Do what?" asked Jean from the bed.

“A desperate deed,” said Dorinda solemnly, and that was all she would say.

Next day Mrs. Page and Leicester went to town on business. In the afternoon Dorinda put on her best dress and hat and started out. Admiral Page’s fighting blood was glowing in her cheeks as she walked briskly up the hill road, but her heart beat in an odd fashion.

“I wonder if I am a little scared, ‘way down deep,” said Dorinda. “I believe I am. But I’m going to do it for all that, and the scarer I get the more I’ll do it.”

Oaklawn, where Uncle Eugene lived, was two miles away. It was a fine old place in beautiful grounds. But Dorinda did not quail before its splendours; nor did her heart fail her, even after she had rung the bell and had been shown by a maid into a very handsome parlour, but it still continued to beat in that queer fashion halfway up her throat.

Presently Uncle Eugene came in, a tall, black-eyed old man, with a fine head of silver hair that should have framed a ruddy, benevolent face, instead of Uncle Eugene’s hard-lipped, bushy-browed countenance.

Dorinda stood up, dusky and crimson, with brave, glowing eyes. Uncle Eugene looked at her sharply.

“Who are you?” he said bluntly.

“I am your niece, Dorinda Page,” said Dorinda steadily.

“And what does my niece, Dorinda Page, want with me?” demanded Uncle Eugene, motioning to her to sit down and sitting down himself. But Dorinda remained standing. It is easier to fight on your feet.

“I want you to do four things, Uncle Eugene,” she said, as calmly as if she were making the most natural and ordinary request in the world. “I want you to lend us the money to send Leicester to Blue Hill Academy; he will pay it back to you when he gets through college. I want you to lend Jean the money for music lessons; she will pay you back when she gets far enough along to give lessons herself. And I want you to lend me the money to shingle our house and get Mother a new dress and fur coat for the winter. I’ll pay you back sometime for that, because I am going to set up as a dressmaker pretty soon.”

“Anything more?” said Uncle Eugene, when Dorinda stopped.

“Nothing more just now, I think,” said Dorinda reflectively.

“Why don’t you ask for something for yourself?” said Uncle Eugene.

“I don’t want anything for myself,” said Dorinda promptly. “Or — yes, I do, too. I want your friendship, Uncle Eugene.”

“Be kind enough to sit down,” said Uncle Eugene.

Dorinda sat.

“You are a Page,” said Uncle Eugene. “I saw that as soon as I came in. I will send Leicester to college and I shall not ask or expect to be paid back. Jean shall have her music lessons, and a piano to practise them on as well. The house shall be shingled, and the money for the new dress and coat shall be forthcoming. You and I will be friends.”

“Thank you,” gasped Dorinda, wondering if, after all, it wasn’t a dream.

“I would have gladly assisted your mother before,” said Uncle Eugene, “if she had asked me. I had determined that she must ask me first. I knew that half the money should have been your father’s by rights. I was prepared to hand it over to him or his family, if I were asked for it. But I wished to humble his pride, and the Carter pride, to the point of asking for it. Not a very amiable temper, you will say? I admit it. I am not amiable and I never have been amiable. You must be prepared to find me very unamiable. I see that you are waiting for a chance to say something polite and pleasant on that score, but you may save yourself the trouble. I shall hope and expect to have you visit me often. If your mother and your brothers and sisters see fit to come with you, I shall welcome them also. I think that this is all it is necessary to say just now. Will you stay to tea with me this evening?”

Dorinda stayed to tea, since she knew that Jean was at home to attend to matters there. She and Uncle Eugene got on famously. When she left, Uncle Eugene, grim and hard-lipped as ever, saw her to the door.

“Good evening, Niece Dorinda. You are a Page and I am proud of you. Tell your mother that many things in this life are lost through not asking for them. I don’t think you are in need of the information for yourself.”

Her Own People

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The Taunton School had closed for the summer holidays. Constance Foster and Miss Channing went down the long, elm-shaded street together, as they generally did, because they happened to board on the same block downtown.

Constance was the youngest teacher on the staff, and had charge of the Primary Department. She had taught in Taunton school a year, and at its close she was as much of a stranger in the little corps of teachers as she had been at the beginning. The others thought her stiff and unapproachable; she was unpopular in a negative way with all except Miss Channing, who made it a profession to like everybody, the more so if other people disliked them. Miss Channing was the oldest teacher on the staff, and taught the fifth grade. She was short and stout and jolly; nothing, not even the iciest reserve, ever daunted Miss Channing.

“Isn’t it good to think of two whole blessed months of freedom?” she said jubilantly. “Two months to dream, to be lazy, to go where one pleases, no exercises to correct, no reports to make, no pupils to keep in order. To be sure, I love them every one, but I’ll love them all the more for a bit of a rest from them. Isn’t it good?”

A little satirical smile crossed Constance Foster’s dark, discontented face, looking just then all the more discontented in contrast to Miss Channing’s rosy, beaming countenance.

“It’s very good, if you have anywhere to go, or anybody who cares where you go,” she said bitterly. “For my own part, I’m sorry school is closed. I’d rather go on teaching all summer.”

“Heresy!” said Miss Channing. “Rank heresy! What are your vacation plans?”

“I haven’t any,” said Constance wearily. “I’ve put off thinking about vacation as long as I possibly could. You’ll call that heresy, too, Miss

Channing.”

“It’s worse than heresy,” said Miss Channing briskly. “It’s a crying necessity for blue pills, that’s what it is. Your whole mental and moral and physical and spiritual system must be out of kilter, my child. No vacation plans! You must have vacation plans. You must be going somewhere.”

“Oh, I suppose I’ll hunt up a boarding place somewhere in the country, and go there and mope until September.”

“Have you no friends, Constance?”

“No — no, I haven’t anybody in the world. That is why I hate vacation, that is why I’ve hated to hear you and the others discussing your vacation plans. You all have somebody to go to. It has just filled me up with hatred of my life.”

Miss Channing swallowed her honest horror at such a state of feeling.

“Constance, tell me about yourself. I’ve often wanted to ask you, but I was always a little afraid to. You seem so reserved and — and, as if you didn’t want to be asked about yourself.”

“I know it. I know I’m stiff and hateful, and that nobody likes me, and that it is all my own fault. No, never mind trying to smooth it over, Miss Channing. It’s the truth, and it hurts me, but I can’t help it. I’m getting more bitter and pessimistic and unwholesome every day of my life. Sometimes it seems as if I hated all the world because I’m so lonely in it. I’m nobody. My mother died when I was born — and Father — oh, I don’t know. One can’t say anything against one’s father, Miss Channing. But I had a hard childhood — or rather, I didn’t have any childhood at all. We were always moving about. We didn’t seem to have any friends at all. My mother might have had relatives somewhere, but I never heard of any. I don’t even know where her home was. Father never would talk of her. He died two years ago, and since then I’ve been absolutely alone.”

“Oh, you poor girl,” said Miss Channing softly.

“I want friends,” went on Constance, seeming to take a pleasure in open confession now that her tongue was loosed. “I’ve always just longed for somebody belonging to me to love. I don’t love anybody, Miss Channing, and when a girl is in that state, she is all wrong. She gets hard

and bitter and resentful — I have, anyway. I struggled against it at first, but it has been too much for me. It poisons everything. There is nobody to care anything about me, whether I live or die.”

“Oh, yes, there is One,” said Miss Channing gently. “God cares, Constance.”

Constance gave a disagreeable little laugh.

“That sounds like Miss Williams — she is so religious. God doesn’t mean anything to me, Miss Channing. I’ve just the same resentful feeling toward him that I have for all the world, if he exists at all. There, I’ve shocked you in good earnest now. You should have left me alone, Miss Channing.”

“God means nothing to you because you’ve never had him translated to you through human love, Constance,” said Miss Channing seriously. “No, you haven’t shocked me — at least, not in the way you mean. I’m only terribly sorry.”

“Oh, never mind me,” said Constance, freezing up into her reserve again as if she regretted her confidences. “I’ll get along all right. This is one of my off days, when everything looks black.”

Miss Channing walked on in silence. She must help Constance, but Constance was not easily helped. When school reopened, she might be able to do something worthwhile for the girl, but just now the only thing to do was to put her in the way of a pleasant vacation.

“You spoke of boarding,” she said, when Constance paused at the door of her boardinghouse. “Have you any particular place in view? No? Well, I know a place which I am sure you would like. I was there two summers ago. It is a country place about a hundred miles from here. Pine Valley is its name. It’s restful and homey, and the people are so nice. If you like, I’ll give you the address of the family I boarded with.”

“Thank you,” said Constance indifferently. “I might as well go there as anywhere else.”

“Yes, but listen to me, dear. Don’t take your morbidness with you. Open your heart to the summer, and let its sunshine in, and when you come back in the fall, come prepared to let us all be your friends. We’d like to

be, and while friendship doesn't take the place of the love of one's own people, still it is a good and beautiful thing. Besides, there are other unhappy people in the world — try to help them when you meet them, and you'll forget about yourself. Good-bye for now, and I hope you'll have a pleasant vacation in spite of yourself."

Constance went to Pine Valley, but she took her evil spirit with her. Not even the beauty of the valley, with its great balmy pines, and the cheerful friendliness of its people could exorcise it.

Nevertheless, she liked the place and found a wholesome pleasure in the long tramps she took along the piney roads.

"I saw such a pretty spot in my ramble this afternoon," she told her landlady one evening. "It is about three miles from here at the end of the valley. Such a picturesque, low-eaved little house, all covered over with honeysuckle. It was set between a big orchard and an old-fashioned flower garden with great pines at the back."

"Heartsease Farm," said Mrs. Hewitt promptly. "Bless you, there's only one place around here of that description. Mr. and Mrs. Bruce, Uncle Charles and Aunt Flora, as we all call them, live there. They are the dearest old couple alive. You ought to go and see them, they'd be delighted. Aunt Flora just loves company. They're real lonesome by times."

"Haven't they any children?" asked Constance indifferently. Her interest was in the place, not in the people.

"No. They had a niece once, though. They brought her up and they just worshipped her. She ran away with a worthless fellow — I forget his name, if I ever knew it. He was handsome and smooth-tongued, but he was a scamp. She died soon after and it just broke their hearts. They don't even know where she was buried, and they never heard anything more about her husband. I've heard that Aunt Flora's hair turned snow-white in a month. I'll take you up to see her some day when I find time."

Mrs. Hewitt did not find time, but thereafter Constance ordered her rambles that she might frequently pass Heartsease Farm. The quaint old spot had a strange attraction for her. She found herself learning to love it,

and so unused was this unfortunate girl to loving anything that she laughed at herself for her foolishness.

One evening a fortnight later Constance, with her arms full of ferns and wood-lilies, came out of the pine woods above Heartsease Farm just as heavy raindrops began to fall. She had prolonged her ramble unseasonably, and it was now nearly night, and very certainly a rainy night at that. She was three miles from home and without even an extra wrap.

She hurried down the lane, but by the time she reached the main road, the few drops had become a downpour. She must seek shelter somewhere, and Heartsease Farm was the nearest. She pushed open the gate and ran up the slope of the yard between the hedges of sweetbriar. She was spared the trouble of knocking, for as she came to a breathless halt on the big red sandstone doorstep, the door was flung open, and the white-haired, happy-faced little woman standing on the threshold had seized her hand and drawn her in bodily before she could speak a word.

“I saw you coming from upstairs,” said Aunt Flora gleefully, “and I just ran down as fast as I could. Dear, dear, you are a little wet. But we’ll soon dry you. Come right in — I’ve a bit of a fire in the grate, for the evening is chilly. They laughed at me for loving a fire so, but there’s nothing like its snap and sparkle. You’re rained in for the night, and I’m as glad as I can be. I know who you are — you are Miss Foster. I’m Aunt Flora, and this is Uncle Charles.”

Constance let herself be put into a cushiony chair and fussed over with an unaccustomed sense of pleasure. The rain was coming down in torrents, and she certainly was domiciled at Heartsease Farm for the night. Somehow, she felt glad of it. Mrs. Hewitt was right in calling Aunt Flora sweet, and Uncle Charles was a big, jolly, ruddy-faced old man with a hearty manner. He shook Constance’s hand until it ached, threw more pine knots in the fire and told her he wished it would rain every night if it rained down a nice little girl like her.

She found herself strangely attracted to the old couple. The name of their farm was in perfect keeping with their atmosphere. Constance’s

frozen soul expanded in it. She chatted merrily and girlishly, feeling as if she had known them all her life.

When bedtime came, Aunt Flora took her upstairs to a little gable room.

“My spare room is all in disorder just now, dearie, we have been painting its floor. So I’m going to put you here in Jeannie’s room. Someway you remind me of her, and you are just about the age she was when she left us. If it wasn’t for that, I don’t think I could put you in her room, not even if every other floor in the house were being painted. It is so sacred to me. I keep it just as she left it, not a thing is changed. Good night dearie, and I hope you’ll have pleasant dreams.”

When Constance found herself alone in the room, she looked about her with curiosity. It was a very dainty, old-fashioned little room. The floor was covered with braided mats; the two square, small-paned windows were draped with snowy muslin. In one corner was a little white bed with white curtains and daintily ruffled pillows, and in the other a dressing table with a gilt-framed mirror and the various knick-knacks of a girlish toilet. There was a little blue rocker and an ottoman with a workbasket on it. In the workbasket was a bit of unfinished, yellowed lace with a needle sticking in it. A small bookcase under the sloping ceiling was filled with books.

Constance picked up one and opened it at the yellowing title-page. She gave a little cry of surprise. The name written across the page in a fine, dainty script was “Jean Constance Irving,” her mother’s name!

For a moment Constance stood motionless. Then she turned impulsively and hurried downstairs again. Mr. and Mrs. Bruce were still in the sitting room talking to each other in the firelight.

“Oh,” cried Constance excitedly. “I must know, I must ask you. This is my mother’s name, Jean Constance Irving, can it be possible she was your little Jeannie?”

A fortnight later Miss Channing received a letter from Constance.

“I am so happy,” she wrote. “Oh, Miss Channing, I have found ‘mine own people,’ and Heartsease Farm is to be my own, own dear home for

always.

“It was such a strange coincidence, no, Aunt Flora says it was Providence, and I believe it was, too. I came here one rainy night, and Aunty put me in my mother’s room, think of it! My own dear mother’s room, and I found her name in a book. And now the mystery is all cleared up, and we are so happy.

“Everything is dear and beautiful, and almost the dearest and most beautiful thing is that I am getting acquainted with my mother, the mother I never knew before. She no longer seems dead to me. I feel that she lives and loves me, and I am learning to know her better every day. I have her room and her books and all her little girlish possessions. When I read her books, with their passages underlined by her hand, I feel as if she were speaking to me. She was very good and sweet, in spite of her one foolish, bitter mistake, and I want to be as much like her as I can.

“I said that this was almost the dearest and most beautiful thing. The very dearest and most beautiful is this — God means something to me now. He means so much! I remember that you said to me that he meant nothing to me because I had no human love in my heart to translate the divine. But I have now, and it has led me to Him.

“I am not going back to Taunton. I have sent in my resignation. I am going to stay home with Aunty and Uncle. It is so sweet to say home and know what it means.

“Aunty says you must come and spend all your next vacation with us. You see, I have lots of vacation plans now, even for a year ahead. After all, there is no need of the blue pills!

“I feel like a new creature, made over from the heart and soul out. I look back with shame and contrition on the old Constance. I want you to forget her and only remember your grateful friend, the new Constance.”

Ida's New Year Cake

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Mary Craig and Sara Reid and Josie Pye had all flocked into Ida Mitchell's room at their boardinghouse to condole with each other because none of them was able to go home for New Year's. Mary and Josie had been home for Christmas, so they didn't really feel so badly off. But Ida and Sara hadn't even that consolation.

Ida was a third-year student at the Clifton Academy; she had holidays, and nowhere, so she mournfully affirmed, to spend them. At home three brothers and a sister were down with the measles, and, as Ida had never had them, she could not go there; and the news had come too late for her to make any other arrangements.

Mary and Josie were clerks in a Clifton bookstore, and Sara was stenographer in a Clifton lawyer's office. And they were all jolly and thoughtless and very fond of one another.

"This will be the first New Year's I have ever spent away from home," sighed Sara, nibbling chocolate fudge. "It does make me so blue to think of it. And not even a holiday — I'll have to go to work just the same. Now Ida here, she doesn't really need sympathy. She has holidays — a whole fortnight — and nothing to do but enjoy them."

"Holidays are dismal things when you've nowhere to holiday," said Ida mournfully. "The time drags horribly. But never mind, girls, I've a plummy bit of news for you. I'd a letter from Mother today and, bless the dear woman, she is sending me a cake — a New Year's cake — a great big, spicy, mellow, delicious fruit cake. It will be along tomorrow and, girls, we'll celebrate when it comes. I've asked everybody in the house up to my room for New Year's Eve, and we'll have a royal good time."

"How splendid!" said Mary. "There's nothing I like more than a slice of real countrified homemade fruit cake, where they don't scrimp on eggs or butter or raisins. You'll give me a good big piece, won't you, Ida?"

“As much as you can eat,” promised Ida. “I can warrant Mother’s fruit cake. Yes, we’ll have a jamboree. Miss Monroe has promised to come in too. She says she has a weakness for fruit cake.”

“Oh!” breathed all the girls. Miss Monroe was their idol, whom they had to be content to worship at a distance as a general thing. She was a clever journalist, who worked on a paper, and was reputed to be writing a book. The girls felt they were highly privileged to be boarding in the same house, and counted that day lost on which they did not receive a businesslike nod or an absentminded smile from Miss Monroe. If she ever had time to speak to one of them about the weather, that fortunate one put on airs for a week. And now to think that she had actually promised to drop into Ida’s room on New Year’s Eve and eat fruit cake!

“There goes that funny little namesake of yours, Ida,” said Josie, who was sitting by the window. “She seems to be staying in town over the holidays too. Wonder why. Perhaps she doesn’t belong anywhere. She really is a most forlorn-appearing little mortal.”

There were two Ida Mitchells attending the Clifton Academy. The other Ida was a plain, quiet, pale-faced little girl of fifteen who was in the second year. Beyond that, none of the third-year Ida Mitchell’s set knew anything about her, or tried to find out.

“She must be very poor,” said Ida carelessly. “She dresses so shabbily, and she always looks so pinched and subdued. She boards in a little house out on Marlboro Road, and I pity her if she has to spend her holidays there, for a more dismal place I never saw. I was there once on the trail of a book I had lost. Going, girls? Well, don’t forget tomorrow night.”

Ida spent the next day decorating her room and watching for the arrival of her cake. It hadn’t come by teatime, and she concluded to go down to the express office and investigate. It would be dreadful if that cake didn’t turn up in time, with all the girls and Miss Monroe coming in. Ida felt that she would be mortified to death.

Inquiry at the express office discovered two things. A box had come in for Miss Ida Mitchell, Clifton; and said box had been delivered to Miss Ida Mitchell, Clifton.

“One of our clerks said he knew you personally — boarded next door to you — and he’d take it round himself,” the manager informed her.

“There must be some mistake,” said Ida in perplexity. “I don’t know any of the clerks here. Oh — why — there’s another Ida Mitchell in town! Can it be possible my cake has gone to her?”

The manager thought it very possible, and offered to send around and see. But Ida said it was on her way home and she would call herself.

At the dismal little house on Marlboro Road she was sent up three flights of stairs to the other Ida Mitchell’s small hall bedroom. The other Ida Mitchell opened the door for her. Behind her, on the table, was the cake — such a fine, big, brown cake, with raisins sticking out all over it!

“Why, how do you do, Miss Mitchell!” exclaimed the other Ida with shy pleasure. “Come in. I didn’t know you were in town. It’s real good of you to come and see me. And just see what I’ve had sent to me! Isn’t it a beauty? I was so surprised when it came — and, oh, so glad! I was feeling so blue and lonesome — as if I hadn’t a friend in the world. I — I — yes, I was crying when that cake came. It has just made the world over for me. Do sit down and I’ll cut you a piece. I’m sure you’re as fond of fruit cake as I am.”

Ida sat down in a chair, feeling bewildered and awkward. This was a nice predicament! How could she tell that other Ida that the cake didn’t belong to her? The poor thing was so delighted. And, oh, what a bare, lonely little room! The big, luxurious cake seemed to emphasize the bareness and loneliness.

“Who — who sent it to you?” she asked lamely.

“It must have been Mrs. Henderson, because there is nobody else who would,” answered the other Ida. “Two years ago I was going to school in Trenton and I boarded with her. When I left her to come to Clifton she told me she would send me a cake for Christmas. Well, I expected that cake last year — and it didn’t come. I can’t tell you how disappointed I was. You’ll think me very childish. But I was so lonely, with no home to go to like the other girls. But she sent it this year, you see. It is so nice to think that somebody has remembered me at New Year’s. It isn’t the cake itself

— it's the thought behind it. It has just made all the difference in the world. There — just sample it, Miss Mitchell."

The other Ida cut a generous slice from the cake and passed it to her guest. Her eyes were shining and her cheeks were flushed. She was really a very sweet-looking little thing — not a bit like her usual pale, timid self.

Ida ate the cake slowly. What was she to do? She couldn't tell the other Ida the truth about the cake. But the girls she had asked in to help eat it that very evening! And Miss Monroe! Oh, dear, it was too bad. But it couldn't be helped. She wouldn't blot out that light on the other Ida's face for anything! Of course, she would find out the truth in time — probably after she had written to thank Mrs. Henderson for the cake; but meanwhile she would have enjoyed the cake, and the supposed kindness back of it would tide her over her New Year loneliness.

"It's delicious," said Ida heartily, swallowing her own disappointment with the cake. "I'm — I'm glad I happened to drop in as I was passing." Ida hoped that speech didn't come under the head of a fib.

"So am I," said the other Ida brightly. "Oh, I've been so lonesome and downhearted this week. I'm so alone, you see — there isn't anybody to care. Father died three years ago, and I don't remember my mother at all. There is nobody but myself, and it is dreadfully lonely at times. When the Academy is open and I have my lessons to study, I don't mind so much. But the holidays take all the courage out of me."

"We should have fraternized more this week," smiled Ida, regretting that she hadn't thought of it before. "I couldn't go home because of the measles, and I've moped a lot. We might have spent the time together and had a real nice, jolly holiday."

The other Ida blushed with delight.

"I'd love to be friends with you," she said slowly. "I've often thought I'd like to know you. Isn't it odd that we have the same name? It was so nice of you to come and see me. I — I'd love to have you come often."

"I will," said Ida heartily.

"Perhaps you will stay the evening," suggested the other Ida. "I've asked some of the girls who board here in to have some cake, I'm so glad

to be able to give them something — they've all been so good to me. They are all clerks in stores and some of them are so tired and lonely. It's so nice to have a pleasure to share with them. Won't you stay?"

"I'd like to," laughed Ida, "but I have some guests of my own invited in for tonight. I must hurry home, for they will most surely be waiting for me."

She laughed again as she thought what else the guests would be waiting for. But her face was sober enough as she walked home.

"But I'm glad I left the cake with her," she said resolutely. "Poor little thing! It means so much to her. It meant only 'a good feed,' as Josie says, to me. I'm simply going to make it my business next term to be good friends with the other Ida Mitchell. I'm afraid we third-year girls are very self-centred and selfish. And I know what I'll do! I'll write to Abby Morton in Trenton to send me Mrs. Henderson's address, and I'll write her a letter and ask her not to let Ida know she didn't send the cake."

Ida went into a confectionery store and invested in what Josie Pye was wont to call "ready-to-wear eatables" — fancy cakes, fruit, and candies. When she reached her room she found it full of expectant girls, with Miss Monroe enthroned in the midst of them — Miss Monroe in a wonderful evening dress of black lace and yellow silk, with roses in her hair and pearls on her neck — all donned in honour of Ida's little celebration. I won't say that, just for a moment, Ida didn't regret that she had given up her cake.

"Good evening, Miss Mitchell," cried Mary Craig gaily. "Walk right in and make yourself at home in your own room, do! We all met in the hall, and knocked and knocked. Finally Miss Monroe came, so we made bold to walk right in. Where is the only and original fruit cake, Ida? My mouth has been watering all day."

"The other Ida Mitchell is probably entertaining her friends at this moment with my fruit cake," said Ida, with a little laugh.

Then she told the whole story.

"I'm so sorry to disappoint you," she concluded, "but I simply couldn't tell that poor, lonely child that the cake wasn't intended for her. I've

brought all the goodies home with me that I could buy, and we'll have to do the best we can without the fruit cake."

Their "best" proved to be a very good thing. They had a jolly New Year's Eve, and Miss Monroe sparkled and entertained most brilliantly. They kept their celebration up until twelve to welcome the new year in, and then they bade Ida good night. But Miss Monroe lingered for a moment behind the others to say softly:

"I want to tell you how good and sweet I think it was of you to give up your cake to the other Ida. That little bit of unselfishness was a good guerdon for your new year."

And Ida, radiant-faced at this praise from her idol, answered heartily:

"I'm afraid I'm anything but unselfish, Miss Monroe. But I mean to try to be more this coming year and think a little about the girls outside of my own little set who may be lonely or discouraged. The other Ida Mitchell isn't going to have to depend on that fruit cake alone for comfort and encouragement for the next twelve months."

In the Old Valley

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The man halted on the crest of the hill and looked sombrely down into the long valley below. It was evening, and although the hills around him were still in the light the valley was already filled with kindly, placid shadows. A wind that blew across it from the misty blue sea beyond was making wild music in the rugged firs above his head as he stood in an angle of the weather-grey longer fence, knee-deep in bracken. It had been by these firs he had halted twenty years ago, turning for one last glance at the valley below, the home valley which he had never seen since. But then the firs had been little more than vigorous young saplings; they were tall, gnarled trees now, with lichened trunks, and their lower boughs were dead. But high up their tops were green and caught the saffron light of the west. He remembered that when a boy he had thought there was nothing more beautiful than the evening sunshine falling athwart the dark green fir boughs on the hills.

As he listened to the swish and murmur of the wind, the earth-old tune with the power to carry the soul back to the dawn of time, the years fell away from him and he forgot much, remembering more. He knew now that there had always been a longing in his heart to hear the wind-chant in the firs. He had called that longing by other names, but he knew it now for what it was when, hearing, he was satisfied.

He was a tall man with iron-grey hair and the face of a conqueror — strong, pitiless, unswerving. Eagle eyes, quick to discern and unfaltering to pursue; jaw square and intrepid; mouth formed to keep secrets and cajole men to his will — a face that hid much and revealed little. It told of power and intellect, but the soul of the man was a hidden thing. Not in the arena where he had fought and triumphed, giving fierce blow for blow, was it to be shown; but here, looking down on the homeland, with the strength of the hills about him, it rose dominantly and claimed its own. The old

bond held. Yonder below him was home — the old house that had sheltered him, the graves of his kin, the wide fields where his boyhood dreams had been dreamed.

Should he go down to it? This was the question he asked himself. He had come back to it, heartsick of his idols of the marketplace. For years they had satisfied him, the buying and selling and getting gain, the pitting of strength and craft against strength and craft, the tireless struggle, the exultation of victory. Then, suddenly, they had failed their worshipper; they ceased to satisfy; the sacrifices he had heaped on their altars availed him nothing in this new need and hunger of his being. His gods mocked him and he wearied of their service. Were there not better things than these, things he had once known and loved and forgotten? Where were the ideals of his youth, the lofty aspirations that had upborne him then? Where was the eagerness and zest of new dawns, the earnestness of well-filled, purposeful hours of labour, the satisfaction of a good day worthily lived, at eventide the unbroken rest of long, starry nights? Where might he find them again? Were they yet to be had for the seeking in the old valley? With the thought came a great yearning for home. He had had many habitations, but he realized now that he had never thought of any of these places as home. That name had all unconsciously been kept sacred to the long, green, seaward-looking glen where he had been born.

So he had come back to it, drawn by a longing not to be resisted. But at the last he felt afraid. There had been many changes, of that he felt sure. Would it still be home? And if not, would not the loss be most irreparable and bitter? Would it not be better to go away, having looked at it from the hill and having heard the saga of the firs, keeping his memory of it unblurred, than risk the probable disillusion of a return to the places that had forgotten him and friends whom the varying years must certainly have changed as he had changed himself? No, he would not go down. It had been a foolish whim to come at all — foolish, because the object of his quest was not to be found there or elsewhere. He could not enter again into the heritage of boyhood and the heart of youth. He could not find there the old dreams and hopes that had made life sweet. He understood that he

could not bring back to the old valley what he had taken from it. He had lost that intangible, all-real wealth of faith and idealism and zest; he had bartered it away for the hard, yellow gold of the marketplace, and he realized at last how much poorer he was than when he had left that home valley. His was a name that stood for millions, but he was beggared of hope and purpose.

No, he would not go down. There was no one left there, unchanged and unchanging, to welcome him. He would be a stranger there, even among his kin. He would stay awhile on the hill, until the night came down over it, and then he would go back to his own place.

Down below him, on the crest of a little upland, he saw his old home, a weather-grey house, almost hidden among white birch and apple trees, with a thick fir grove to the north of it. He had been born in that old house; his earliest memory was of standing on its threshold and looking afar up to the long green hills.

“What is over the hills?” he had asked of his mother. With a smile she had made answer,

“Many things, laddie. Wonderful things, beautiful things, heartbreaking things.”

“Some day I shall go over the hills and find them all, Mother,” he had said stoutly.

She had laughed and sighed and caught him to her heart. He had no recollection of his father, who had died soon after his son’s birth, but how well he remembered his mother, his little, browneyed, girlish-faced mother!

He had lived on the homestead until he was twenty. He had tilled the broad fields and gone in and out among the people, and their life had been his life. But his heart was not in his work. He wanted to go beyond the hills and seek what he knew must be there. The valley was too narrow, too placid. He longed for conflict and accomplishment. He felt power and desire and the lust of endeavour stirring in him. Oh, to go over the hills to a world where men lived! Such had been the goal of all his dreams.

When his mother died he sold the farm to his cousin, Stephen Marshall. He supposed it still belonged to him. Stephen had been a good sort of a fellow, a bit slow and plodding, perhaps, bovinely content to dwell within the hills, never hearkening or responding to the lure of the beyond. Yet it might be he had chosen the better part, to dwell thus on the land of his fathers, with a wife won in youth, and children to grow up around him. The childless, wifeless man looking down from the hill wondered if it might have been so with him had he been content to stay in the valley. Perhaps so. There had been Joyce.

He wondered where Joyce was now and whom she had married, for of course she had married. Did she too live somewhere down there in the valley, the matronly, contented mother of lads and lassies? He could see her old home also, not so far from his own, just across a green meadow by way of a footpath and stile and through the firs beyond it. How often he had traversed that path in the old days, knowing that Joyce would be waiting at the end of it among the firs — Joyce, the playmate of childhood, the sweet confidante and companion of youth! They had never been avowed lovers, but he had loved her then, as a boy loves, although he had never said a word of love to her. Joyce alone knew of his longings and his ambitions and his dreams; he had told them all to her freely, sure of the understanding and sympathy no other soul in the valley could give him. How true and strong and womanly and gentle she had always been!

When he left home he had meant to go back to her some day. They had parted without pledge or kiss, yet he knew she loved him and that he loved her. At first they corresponded, then the letters began to grow fewer. It was his fault; he had gradually forgotten. The new, fierce, burning interests that came into his life crowded the old ones out. Boyhood's love was scorched up in that hot flame of ambition and contest. He had not heard from or of Joyce for many years. Now, again, he remembered as he looked down on the homeland fields.

The old places had changed little, whatever he might fear of the people who lived in them. There was the school he had attended, a small, low-eaved, whitewashed building set back from the main road among green

spruces. Beyond it, amid tall elms, was the old church with its square tower hung with ivy. He felt glad to see it; he had expected to see a new church, offensively spick-and-span and modern, for this church had been old when he was a boy. He recalled the many times he had walked to it on the peaceful Sunday afternoons, sometimes with his mother, sometimes with Joyce.

The sun set far out to sea and sucked down with it all the light out of the winnowed dome of sky. The stars came out singly and crystal clear over the far purple curves of the hills. Suddenly, glancing over his shoulder, he saw through an arch of black fir boughs a young moon swung low in a lake of palely tinted saffron sky. He smiled a little, remembering that in boyhood it had been held a good omen to see the new moon over the right shoulder.

Down in the valley the lights began to twinkle out here and there like earth-stars. He would wait until he saw the kitchen light from the window of his old home. Then he would go. He waited until the whole valley was zoned with a glittering girdle, but no light glimmered out through his native trees. Why was it lacking, that light he had so often hailed at dark, coming home from boyish rambles on the hills? He felt anxious and dissatisfied, as if he could not go away until he had seen it.

When it was quite dark he descended the hill resolutely. He must know why the homelight had failed him. When he found himself in the old garden his heart grew sick and sore with disappointment and a bitter homesickness. It needed but a glance, even in the dimness of the summer night, to see that the old house was deserted and falling to decay. The kitchen door swung open on rusty hinges; the windows were broken and lifeless; weeds grew thickly over the yard and crowded wantonly up to the very threshold through the chinks of the rotten platform.

Cuthbert Marshall sat down on the old red sandstone step of the door and bowed his head in his hands. This was what he had come back to — this ghost and wreck of his past! Oh, bitterness!

From where he sat he saw the new house that Stephen had built beyond the fir grove, with a cheerful light shining from its window. After a long

time he went over to it and knocked at the door. Stephen came to it, a stout grizzled farmer, with a chubby boy on his shoulder. He was not much changed; Cuthbert easily recognized him, but to Stephen Marshall no recognition came of this man with whom he had played and worked for years. Cuthbert was obliged to tell who he was. He was made instantly and warmly welcome. Stephen was unfeignedly glad to see him, and Stephen's comely wife, whom he remembered as a slim, fresh-cheeked valley girl, extended a kind and graceful hospitality. The boys and girls, too, soon made friends with him. Yet he felt himself the stranger and the alien, whom the long, swift-passing years had shut forever from his old place.

He and Stephen talked late that night, and in the morning he yielded to their entreaties to stay another day with them. He spent it wandering about the farm and the old haunts of wood and stream. Yet he could not find himself. This valley had his past in its keeping, but it could not give it back to him; he had lost the master word that might have compelled it.

He asked Stephen fully about all his old friends and neighbours with one exception. He could not ask him what had become of Joyce Cameron. The question was on his lips a dozen times, but he shrank from uttering it. He had a vague, secret dread that the answer, whatever it might be, would hurt him.

In the evening he yielded to a whim and went across to the Cameron homestead, by the old footpath which was still kept open. He walked slowly and dreamily, with his eyes on the far hills scarfed in the splendour of sunset. So he had walked in the old days, but he had no dreams now of what lay beyond the hills, and Joyce would not be waiting among the firs.

The stile he remembered was gone, replaced by a little rustic gate. As he passed through it he lifted his eyes and there before him he saw her, standing tall and gracious among the grey trees, with the light from the west falling over her face. So she had stood, so she had looked many an evening of the long-ago. She had not changed; he realized that in the first amazed, incredulous glance. Perhaps there were lines on her face, a thread or two of silver in the soft brown hair, but those splendid steady blue eyes

were the same, and the soul of her looked out through them, true to itself, the staunch, brave, sweet soul of the maiden ripened to womanhood.

“Joyce!” he said, stupidly, unbelievably.

She smiled and put out her hand. “I am glad to see you, Cuthbert,” she said simply. “Stephen’s Mary told me you had come. And I thought you would be over to see us this evening.”

She had offered him only one hand but he took both and held her so, looking hungrily down at her as a man looks at something he knows must be his salvation if salvation exists for him.

“Is it possible you are here still, Joyce?” he said slowly. “And you have not changed at all.”

She coloured slightly and pulled away her hands, laughing. “Oh, indeed I have. I have grown old. The twilight is so kind it hides that, but it is true. Come into the house, Cuthbert. Father and Mother will be glad to see you.”

“After a little,” he said imploringly. “Let us stay here awhile first, Joyce. I want to make sure that this is no dream. Last night I stood on those hills yonder and looked down, but I meant to go away because I thought there would be no one left to welcome me. If I had known you were here! You have lived here in the old valley all these years?”

“All these years,” she said gently, “I suppose you think it must have been a very meagre life?”

“No. I am much wiser now than I was once, Joyce. I have learned wisdom beyond the hills. One learns there — in time — but sometimes the lesson is learned too late. Shall I tell you what I have learned, Joyce? The gist of the lesson is that I left happiness behind me in the old valley, when I went away from it, happiness and peace and the joy of living. I did not miss these things for a long while; I did not even know I had lost them. But I have discovered my loss.”

“Yet you have been a very successful man,” she said wonderingly.

“As the world calls success,” he answered bitterly. “I have place and wealth and power. But that is not success, Joyce. I am tired of these things; they are the toys of grownup children; they do not satisfy the man’s soul. I

have come back to the old valley seeking for what might satisfy, but I have little hope of finding it, unless — unless—”

He was silent, remembering that he had forfeited all right to her help in the quest. Yet he realized clearly that only she could help him, only she could guide him back to the path he had missed. It seemed to him that she held in her keeping all the good of his life, all the beauty of his past, all the possibilities of his future. Hers was the master word, but how should he dare ask her to utter it?

They walked among the firs until the stars came out, and they talked of many things. She had kept her freshness of soul and her ideals untarnished. In the peace of the old valley she had lived a life, narrow outwardly, wondrously deep and wide in thought and aspiration. Her native hills bounded the vision of her eyes, but the outlook of the soul was far and unhindered. In the quiet places and the green ways she had found what he had failed to find — the secret of happiness and content. He knew that if this woman had walked hand in hand with him through the years, life, even in the glare and tumult of that world beyond the hills, would never have lost its meaning for him. Oh, fool and blind that he had been! While he had sought and toiled afar, the best that God had meant for him had been here in the home of youth. When darkness came down through the firs he told her all this, haltingly, blunderingly, yearningly.

“Joyce, is it too late? Can you forgive my mistake, my long blindness? Can you care for me again — a little?”

She turned her face upward to the sky between the swaying fir tops and he saw the reflection of a star in her eyes. “I have never ceased to care,” she said in a low tone. “I never really wanted to cease. It would have left life too empty. If my love means so much to you it is yours, Cuthbert — it always has been yours.”

He drew her close into his arms, and as he felt her heart beating against his he understood that he had found the way back to simple happiness and true wisdom, the wisdom of loving and the happiness of being loved.

Jane Lavinia

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Jane Lavinia put her precious portfolio down on the table in her room, carefully, as if its contents were fine gold, and proceeded to unpin and take off her second-best hat. When she had gone over to the Whittaker place that afternoon, she had wanted to wear her best hat, but Aunt Rebecca had vetoed that uncompromisingly.

“Next thing you’ll be wanting to wear your best muslin to go for the cows,” said Aunt Rebecca sarcastically. “You go right back upstairs and take off that chiffon hat. If I was fool enough to be coaxed into buying it for you, I ain’t going to have you spoil it by traipsing hither and yon with it in the dust and sun. Your last summer’s sailor is plenty good enough to go to the Whittakers’ in, Jane Lavinia.”

“But Mr. Stephens and his wife are from New York,” pleaded Jane Lavinia, “and she’s so stylish.”

“Well, it’s likely they’re used to seeing chiffon hats,” Aunt Rebecca responded, more sarcastically than ever. “It isn’t probable that yours would make much of a sensation. Mr. Stephens didn’t send for you to show him your chiffon hat, did he? If he did, I don’t see what you’re lugging that big portfolio along with you for. Go and put on your sailor hat, Jane Lavinia.”

Jane Lavinia obeyed. She always obeyed Aunt Rebecca. But she took off the chiffon hat and pinned on the sailor with bitterness of heart. She had always hated that sailor. Anything ugly hurt Jane Lavinia with an intensity that Aunt Rebecca could never understand; and the sailor hat was ugly, with its stiff little black bows and impossible blue roses. It jarred on Jane Lavinia’s artistic instincts. Besides, it was very unbecoming.

I look horrid in it, Jane Lavinia had thought sorrowfully; and then she had gone out and down the velvet-green springtime valley and over the sunny birch hill beyond with a lagging step and a rebellious heart.

But Jane Lavinia came home walking as if on the clear air of the crystal afternoon, her small, delicate face aglow and every fibre of her body and spirit thrilling with excitement and delight. She forgot to fling the sailor hat into its box with her usual energy of dislike. Just then Jane Lavinia had a soul above hats. She looked at herself in the glass and nodded with friendliness.

“You’ll do something yet,” she said. “Mr. Stephens said you would. Oh, I like you, Jane Lavinia, you dear thing! Sometimes I haven’t liked you because you’re nothing to look at, and I didn’t suppose you could really do anything worthwhile. But I do like you now after what Mr. Stephens said about your drawings.”

Jane Lavinia smiled radiantly into the little cracked glass. Just then she was pretty, with the glow on her cheeks and the sparkle in her eyes. Her uncertainly tinted hair and an all-too-certain little tilt of her nose no longer troubled her. Such things did not matter; nobody would mind them in a successful artist. And Mr. Stephens had said that she had talent enough to win success.

Jane Lavinia sat down by her window, which looked west into a grove of firs. They grew thickly, close up to the house, and she could touch their wide, fan-like branches with her hand. Jane Lavinia loved those fir trees, with their whispers and sighs and beckonings, and she also loved her little shadowy, low-ceilinged room, despite its plainness, because it was gorgeous for her with visions and peopled with rainbow fancies.

The stained walls were covered with Jane Lavinia’s pictures — most of them pen-and-ink sketches, with a few flights into water colour. Aunt Rebecca sniffed at them and deplored the driving of tacks into the plaster. Aunt Rebecca thought Jane Lavinia’s artistic labours a flat waste of time, which would have been much better put into rugs and crochet tidies and afghans. All the other girls in Chestercothe made rugs and tidies and afghans. Why must Jane Lavinia keep messing with ink and crayons and water colours?

Jane Lavinia only knew that she must — she could not help it. There was something in her that demanded expression thus.

When Mr. Stephens, who was a well-known artist and magazine illustrator, came to Chestercote because his wife's father, Nathan Whittaker, was ill, Jane Lavinia's heart had bounded with a shy hope. She indulged in some harmless manoeuvring which, with the aid of goodnatured Mrs. Whittaker, was crowned with success. One day, when Mr. Whittaker was getting better, Mr. Stephens had asked her to show him some of her work. Jane Lavinia, wearing the despised sailor hat, had gone over to the Whittaker place with some of her best sketches. She came home again feeling as if all the world and herself were transfigured.

She looked out from the window of her little room with great dreamy brown eyes, seeing through the fir boughs the golden western sky beyond, serving as a canvas whereon her fancy painted glittering visions of her future. She would go to New York — and study — and work, oh, so hard — and go abroad — and work harder — and win success — and be great and admired and famous — if only Aunt Rebecca — ah! if only Aunt Rebecca! Jane Lavinia sighed. There was spring in the world and spring in Jane Lavinia's heart; but a chill came with the thought of Aunt Rebecca, who considered tidies and afghans nicer than her pictures.

"But I'm going, anyway," said Jane Lavinia decidedly. "If Aunt Rebecca won't give me the money, I'll find some other way. I'm not afraid of any amount of work. After what Mr. Stephens said, I believe I could work twenty hours out of the twenty-four. I'd be content to live on a crust and sleep in a garret — yes, and wear sailor hats with stiff bows and blue roses the year round."

Jane Lavinia sighed in luxurious renunciation. Oh, it was good to be alive — to be a girl of seventeen, with wonderful ambitions and all the world before her! The years of the future sparkled and gleamed alluringly. Jane Lavinia, with her head on the window sill, looked out into the sunset splendour and dreamed.

Athwart her dreams, rending in twain their frail, rose-tinted fabric, came Aunt Rebecca's voice from the kitchen below, "Jane Lavinia! Jane Lavinia! Ain't you going for the cows tonight?"

Jane Lavinia started up guiltily; she had forgotten all about the cows. She slipped off her muslin dress and hurried into her print; but with all her haste it took time, and Aunt Rebecca was grimmer than ever when Jane Lavinia ran downstairs.

“It’ll be dark before we get the cows milked. I s’pose you’ve been daydreaming again up there. I do wish, Jane Lavinia, that you had more sense.”

Jane Lavinia made no response. At any other time she would have gone out with a lump in her throat; but now, after what Mr. Stephens had said, Aunt Rebecca’s words had no power to hurt her.

“After milking I’ll ask her about it,” she said to herself, as she went blithely down the sloping yard, across the little mossy bridge over the brook, and up the lane on the hill beyond, where the ferns grew thickly and the grass was beset with tiny blue-eyes like purple stars. The air was moist and sweet. At the top of the lane a wild plum tree hung out its branches of feathery bloom against the crimson sky. Jane Lavinia lingered, in spite of Aunt Rebecca’s hurry, to look at it. It satisfied her artistic instinct and made her glad to be alive in the world where wild plums blossomed against springtime skies. The pleasure of it went with her through the pasture and back to the milking yard; and stayed with her while she helped Aunt Rebecca milk the cows.

When the milk was strained into the creamers down at the spring, and the pails washed and set in a shining row on their bench, Jane Lavinia tried to summon up her courage to speak to Aunt Rebecca. They were out on the back verandah; the spring twilight was purpling down over the woods and fields; down in the swamp the frogs were singing a silvery, haunting chorus; a little baby moon was floating in the clear sky above the white-blossoming orchard on the slope.

Jane Lavinia tried to speak and couldn’t. For a wonder, Aunt Rebecca spared her the trouble.

“Well, what did Mr. Stephens think of your pictures?” she asked shortly.

“Oh!” Everything that Jane Lavinia wanted to say came rushing at once and together to her tongue’s end. “Oh, Aunt Rebecca, he was delighted with them! And he said I had remarkable talent, and he wants me to go to New York and study in an art school there. He says Mrs. Stephens finds it hard to get good help, and if I’d be willing to work for her in the mornings, I could live with them and have my afternoons off. So it won’t cost much. And he said he would help me — and, oh, Aunt Rebecca, can’t I go?”

Jane Lavinia’s breath gave out with a gasp of suspense.

Aunt Rebecca was silent for so long a space that Jane Lavinia had time to pass through the phases of hope and fear and despair and resignation before she said, more grimly than ever, “If your mind is set on going, go you will, I suppose. It doesn’t seem to me that I have anything to say in the matter, Jane Lavinia.”

“But, oh, Aunt Rebecca,” said Jane Lavinia tremulously. “I can’t go unless you’ll help me. I’ll have to pay for my lessons at the art school, you know.”

“So that’s it, is it? And do you expect me to give you the money to pay for them, Jane Lavinia?”

“Not give — exactly,” stammered Jane Lavinia. “I’ll pay it back some time, Aunt Rebecca. Oh, indeed, I will — when I’m able to earn money by my pictures!”

“The security is hardly satisfactory,” said Aunt Rebecca immovably. “You know well enough I haven’t much money, Jane Lavinia. I thought when I was coaxed into giving you two quarters’ lessons with Miss Claxton that it was as much as you could expect me to do for you. I didn’t suppose the next thing would be that you’d be for betaking yourself to New York and expecting me to pay your bills there.”

Aunt Rebecca turned and went into the house. Jane Lavinia, feeling sore and bruised in spirit; fled to her own room and cried herself to sleep.

Her eyes were swollen the next morning, but she was not sulky. Jane Lavinia never sulked. She did her morning’s work faithfully, although there was no spring in her step. That afternoon, when she was out in the

orchard trying to patch up her tattered dreams, Aunt Rebecca came down the blossomy avenue, a tall, gaunt figure, with an uncompromising face.

“You’d better go down to the store and get ten yards of white cotton, Jane Lavinia,” she said. “If you’re going to New York, you’ll have to get a supply of underclothing made.”

Jane Lavinia opened her eyes.

“Oh, Aunt Rebecca, am I going?”

“You can go if you want to. I’ll give you all the money I can spare. It ain’t much, but perhaps it’ll be enough for a start.”

“Oh, Aunt Rebecca, thank you!” exclaimed Jane Lavinia, crimson with conflicting feelings. “But perhaps I oughtn’t to take it — perhaps I oughtn’t to leave you alone—”

If Aunt Rebecca had shown any regret at the thought of Jane Lavinia’s departure, Jane Lavinia would have foregone New York on the spot. But Aunt Rebecca only said coldly, “I guess you needn’t worry over that. I can get along well enough.”

And with that it was settled. Jane Lavinia lived in a whirl of delight for the next week. She felt few regrets at leaving Chestercothe. Aunt Rebecca would not miss her; Jane Lavinia thought that Aunt Rebecca regarded her as a nuisance — a foolish girl who wasted her time making pictures instead of doing something useful. Jane Lavinia had never thought that Aunt Rebecca had any affection for her. She had been a very little girl when her parents had died, and Aunt Rebecca had taken her to bring up. Accordingly she had been “brought up,” and she was grateful to Aunt Rebecca, but there was no closer bond between them. Jane Lavinia would have given love for love unstintedly, but she never supposed that Aunt Rebecca loved her.

On the morning of departure Jane Lavinia was up and ready early. Her trunk had been taken over to Mr. Whittaker’s the night before, and she was to walk over in the morning and go with Mr. and Mrs. Stephens to the station. She put on her chiffon hat to travel in, and Aunt Rebecca did not say a word of protest. Jane Lavinia cried when she said good-by, but Aunt

Rebecca did not cry. She shook hands and said stiffly, "Write when you get to New York. You needn't let Mrs. Stephens work you to death either."

Jane Lavinia went slowly over the bridge and up the lane. If only Aunt Rebecca had been a little sorry! But the morning was perfect and the air clear as crystal, and she was going to New York, and fame and fortune were to be hers for the working. Jane Lavinia's spirits rose and bubbled over in a little trill of song. Then she stopped in dismay. She had forgotten her watch — her mother's little gold watch; she had left it on her dressing table.

Jane Lavinia hurried down the lane and back to the house. In the open kitchen doorway she paused, standing on a mosaic of gold and shadow where the sunshine fell through the morning-glory vines. Nobody was in the kitchen, but Aunt Rebecca was in the little bedroom that opened off it, crying bitterly and talking aloud between her sobs, "Oh, she's gone and left me all alone — my girl has gone! Oh, what shall I do? And she didn't care — she was glad to go — glad to get away. Well, it ain't any wonder. I've always been too cranky with her. But I loved her so much all the time, and I was so proud of her! I liked her picture-making real well, even if I did complain of her wasting her time. Oh, I don't know how I'm ever going to keep on living now she's gone!"

Jane Lavinia listened with a face from which all the sparkle and excitement had gone. Yet amid all the wreck and ruin of her tumbling castles in air, a glad little thrill made itself felt. Aunt Rebecca was sorry — Aunt Rebecca did love her after all!

Jane Lavinia turned and walked noiselessly away. As she went swiftly up the wild plum lane, some tears brimmed up in her eyes, but there was a smile on her lips and a song in her heart. After all, it was nicer to be loved than to be rich and admired and famous.

When she reached Mr. Whittaker's, everybody was out in the yard ready to start.

"Hurry up, Jane Lavinia," said Mr. Whittaker. "Blest if we hadn't begun to think you weren't coming at all. Lively now."

"I am not going," said Jane Lavinia calmly.

“Not going?” they all exclaimed.

“No. I’m very sorry, and very grateful to you, Mr. Stephens, but I can’t leave Aunt Rebecca. She’d miss me too much.”

“Well, you little goose!” said Mrs. Whittaker.

Mrs. Stephens said nothing, but frowned coldly. Perhaps her thoughts were less of the loss to the world of art than of the difficulty of hunting up another housemaid. Mr. Stephens looked honestly regretful.

“I’m sorry, very sorry, Miss Slade,” he said. “You have exceptional talent, and I think you ought to cultivate it.”

“I am going to cultivate Aunt Rebecca,” said Jane Lavinia.

Nobody knew just what she meant, but they all understood the firmness of her tone. Her trunk was taken down out of the express wagon, and Mr. and Mrs. Stephens drove away. Then Jane Lavinia went home. She found Aunt Rebecca washing the breakfast dishes, with the big tears rolling down her face.

“Goodness me!” she cried, when Jane Lavinia walked in. “What’s the matter? You ain’t gone and been too late!”

“No, I’ve just changed my mind, Aunt Rebecca. They’ve gone without me. I am not going to New York — I don’t want to go. I’d rather stay at home with you.”

For a moment Aunt Rebecca stared at her. Then she stepped forward and flung her arms about the girl.

“Oh, Jane Lavinia,” she said with a sob, “I’m so glad! I couldn’t see how I was going to get along without you, but I thought you didn’t care. You can wear that chiffon hat everywhere you want to, and I’ll get you a pink organdy dress for Sundays.”

SHE EYED CHESTER SOURLY.

Mackereling Out in the Gulf

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The mackerel boats were all at anchor on the fishing grounds; the sea was glassy calm — a pallid blue, save for a chance streak of deeper azure where some stray sea breeze ruffled it.

It was about the middle of the afternoon, and intensely warm and breathless. The headlands and coves were blurred by a purple heat haze. The long sweep of the sandshore was so glaringly brilliant that the pained eye sought relief among the rough rocks, where shadows were cast by the big red sandstone boulders. The little cluster of fishing houses nearby were bleached to a silvery grey by long exposure to wind and rain. Far off were several “Yankee” fishing schooners, their sails dimly visible against the white horizon.

Two boats were hauled upon the “skids” that ran from the rocks out into the water. A couple of dories floated below them. Now and then a white gull, flashing silver where its plumage caught the sun, soared landward.

A young man was standing by the skids, watching the fishing boats through a spyglass. He was tall, with a straight, muscular figure clad in a rough fishing suit. His face was deeply browned by the gulf breezes and was attractive rather than handsome, while his eyes, as blue and clear as the gulf waters, were peculiarly honest and frank.

Two wiry, dark-faced French-Canadian boys were perched on one of the boats, watching the fishing fleet with lazy interest in their inky-black eyes, and wondering if the “Yanks” had seined many mackerel that day.

Presently three people came down the steep path from the fish-houses. One of them, a girl, ran lightly forward and touched Benjamin Selby’s arm. He lowered his glass with a start and looked around. A flash of undisguised delight transfigured his face.

“Why, Mary Stella! I didn’t expect you’d be down this hot day. You haven’t been much at the shore lately,” he added reproachfully.

“I really haven’t had time, Benjamin,” she answered carelessly, as she took the glass from his hand and tried to focus it on the fishing fleet. Benjamin steadied it for her; the flush of pleasure was still glowing on his bronzed cheek, “Are the mackerel biting now?”

“Not just now. Who is that stranger with your father, Mary Stella?”

“That is a cousin of ours — a Mr. Braithwaite. Are you very busy, Benjamin?”

“Not busy at all — idle as you see me. Why?”

“Will you take me out for a little row in the dory? I haven’t been out for so long.”

“Of course. Come — here’s the dory — your namesake, you know. I had her fresh painted last week. She’s as clean as an eggshell.”

The girl stepped daintily off the rocks into the little cream-coloured skiff, and Benjamin untied the rope and pushed off.

“Where would you like to go, Mary Stella?”

“Oh, just upshore a little way — not far. And don’t go out into very deep water, please, it makes me feel frightened and dizzy.”

Benjamin smiled and promised. He was rowing along with the easy grace of one used to the oar. He had been born and brought up in sound of the gulf’s waves; its never-ceasing murmur had been his first lullaby. He knew it and loved it in every mood, in every varying tint and smile, in every change of wind and tide. There was no better skipper alongshore than Benjamin Selby.

Mary Stella waved her hand gaily to the two men on the rocks. Benjamin looked back darkly.

“Who is that young fellow?” he asked again. “Where does he belong?”

“He is the son of Father’s sister — his favourite sister, although he has never seen her since she married an American years ago and went to live in the States. She made Frank come down here this summer and hunt us up. He is splendid, I think. He is a New York lawyer and very clever.”

Benjamin made no response. He pulled in his oars and let the dory float amid the ripples. The bottom of white sand, patterned over with coloured pebbles, was clear and distinct through the dark-green water. Mary Stella leaned over to watch the distorted reflection of her face by the dory's side.

"Have you had pretty good luck this week, Benjamin? Father couldn't go out much — he has been so busy with his hay, and Leon is such a poor fisherman."

"We've had some of the best hauls of the summer this week. Some of the Rustler boats caught six hundred to a line yesterday. We had four hundred to the line in our boat."

Mary Stella began absently to dabble her slender brown hand in the water. A silence fell between them, with which Benjamin was well content, since it gave him a chance to feast his eyes on the beautiful face before him.

He could not recall the time when he had not loved Mary Stella. It seemed to him that she had always been a part of his inmost life. He loved her with the whole strength and fidelity of a naturally intense nature. He hoped that she loved him, and he had no rival that he feared. In secret he exalted and deified her as something almost too holy for him to aspire to. She was his ideal of all that was beautiful and good; he was jealously careful over all his words and thoughts and actions that not one might make him more unworthy of her. In all the hardship and toil of his life his love was as his guardian angel, turning his feet from every dim and crooked byway; he trod in no path where he would not have the girl he loved to follow. The roughest labour was glorified if it lifted him a step nearer the altar of his worship.

But today he felt faintly disturbed. In some strange, indefinable way it seemed to him that Mary Stella was different from her usual self. The impression was vague and evanescent — gone before he could decide wherein the difference lay. He told himself that he was foolish, yet the vexing, transient feeling continued to come and go.

Presently Mary Stella said it was time to go back. Benjamin was in no hurry, but he never disputed her lightest inclination. He turned the dory about and rowed shoreward.

Back on the rocks, Mosey Louis and Xavier, the French Canadians, were looking through the spyglass by turns and making characteristic comments on the fleet. Mr. Murray and Braithwaite were standing by the skids, watching the dory.

“Who is that young fellow?” asked the latter. “What a splendid physique he has! It’s a pleasure to watch him rowing.”

“That,” said the older man, with a certain proprietary pride in his tone, “is Benjamin Selby — the best mackerel fisherman on the island. He’s been high line all along the gulf shore for years. I don’t know a finer man every way you take him. Maybe you’ll think I’m partial,” he continued with a smile. “You see, he and Mary Stella think a good deal of each other. I expect to have Benjamin for a son-in-law some day if all goes well.”

Braithwaite’s expression changed slightly. He walked over to the dory and helped Mary Stella out of it while Benjamin made the painter fast. When the latter turned, Mary Stella was walking across the rocks with her cousin. Benjamin’s blue eyes darkened, and he strode moodily over to the boats.

“You weren’t out this morning, Mr. Murray?”

“No, that hay had to be took in. Reckon I missed it — pretty good catch, they tell me. Are they getting any now?”

“No. It’s not likely the fish will begin to bite again for another hour.”

“I see someone standing up in that off boat, don’t I?” said Mr. Murray, reaching for the spyglass.

“No, that’s only Rob Leslie’s crew trying to fool us. They’ve tried it before this afternoon. They think it would be a joke to coax us out there to broil like themselves.”

“Frank,” shouted Mr. Murray, “come here, I want you.”

Aside to Benjamin he said, “He’s my nephew — a fine young chap. You’ll like him, I know.”

Braithwaite came over, and Mr. Murray put one hand on his shoulder and one on Benjamin's.

"Boys, I want you to know each other. Benjamin, this is Frank Braithwaite. Frank, this is Benjamin Selby, the high line of the gulf shore, as I told you."

While Mr. Murray was speaking, the two men looked steadily at each other. The few seconds seemed very long; when they had passed, Benjamin knew that the other man was his rival.

Braithwaite was the first to speak. He put out his hand with easy cordiality.

"I am glad to meet you, Mr. Selby," he said heartily, "although I am afraid I should feel very green in the presence of such a veteran fisherman as yourself."

His frank courtesy compelled some return. Benjamin took the proffered hand with restraint.

"I'm sorry there's no mackerel going this afternoon," continued the American. "I wanted to have a chance at them. I never saw mackerel caught before. I suppose I'll be very awkward at first."

"It's not a very hard thing to do," said Benjamin stiffly, speaking for the first time since their meeting. "Most anybody could catch mackerel for a while — it's the sticking to it that counts."

He turned abruptly and went back to his boat. He could not force himself to talk civilly to the stranger, with that newly born demon of distrust gnawing at his heart.

"I think I'll go out," he said. "It's freshening up. I shouldn't wonder if the mackerel schooled soon."

"I'll go, too, then," said Mr. Murray. "Hi, up there! Leon and Pete! Hi, I say!"

Two more French Canadians came running down from the Murray fish-house, where they had been enjoying a siesta. They fished in the Murray boat. A good deal of friendly rivalry as to catch went on between the two boats, while Leon and Mosey Louis were bitter enemies on their own personal account.

“Think you’ll try it, Frank?” shouted Mr. Murray.

“Well, not this afternoon,” was the answer. “It’s rather hot. I’ll see what it is like tomorrow.”

The boats were quickly launched and glided out from the shadow of the cliffs. Benjamin stood at his mast. Mary Stella came down to the water’s edge and waved her hand gaily.

“Good luck to you and the best catch of the season,” she called out.

Benjamin waved his hat in response. His jealousy was forgotten for the moment and he felt that he had been churlish to Braithwaite.

“You’ll wish you’d come,” he shouted to him. “It’s going to be a great evening for fish.”

When the boats reached the fishing grounds, they came to and anchored, their masts coming out in slender silhouette against the sky. A row of dark figures was standing up in every boat; the gulfs shining expanse was darkened by odd black streaks — the mackerel had begun to school.

Frank Braithwaite went out fishing the next day and caught 30 mackerel. He was boyishly proud of it. He visited the shore daily after that and soon became very popular. He developed into quite an expert fisherman; nor, when the boats came in, did he shirk work, but manfully rolled up his trousers and helped carry water and “gib” mackerel as if he enjoyed it. He never put on any “airs,” and he stoutly took Leon’s part against the aggressive Mosey Louis. Even the French Canadians, those merciless critics, admitted that the “Yankee” was a good fellow. Benjamin Selby alone held stubbornly aloof.

One evening the loaded boats came in at sunset. Benjamin sprang from his as it bumped against the skids, and ran up the path. At the corner of his fish-house he stopped and stood quite still, looking at Braithwaite and Mary Stella, who were standing by the rough picket fence of the pasture land. Braithwaite’s back was to Benjamin; he held the girl’s hand in his and was talking earnestly. Mary Stella was looking up at him, her delicate face thrown back a little. There was a look in her eyes that Benjamin had never seen there before — but he knew what it meant.

His face grew pale and rigid; he clenched his hands and a whirlpool of agony and bitterness surged up in his heart. All the great blossoms of the hope that had shed beauty and fragrance over his rough life seemed suddenly to shrivel up into black unsightliness.

He turned and went swiftly and noiselessly down the road to his boat. The murmur of the sea sounded very far off. Mosey Louis was busy counting out the mackerel, Xavier was dipping up buckets of water and pouring it over the silvery fish. The sun was setting in a bank of purple cloud, and the long black headland to the west cut the golden seas like a wedge of ebony. It was all real and yet unreal. Benjamin went to work mechanically.

Presently Mary Stella came down to her father's boat. Braithwaite followed slowly, pausing a moment to exchange some banter with saucy Mosey Louis. Benjamin bent lower over his table; now and then he caught the dear tones of Mary Stella's voice or her laughter at some sally of Pete or Leon. He knew when she went up the road with Braithwaite; he caught the last glimpse of her light dress as she passed out of sight on the cliffs above, but he worked steadily on and gave no sign.

It was late when they finished. The tired French Canadians went quickly off to their beds in the fish-house loft. Benjamin stood by the skids until all was quiet, then he walked down the cove to a rocky point that jutted out into the water. He leaned against a huge boulder and laid his head on his arm, looking up into the dark sky. The stars shone calmly down on his misery; the throbbing sea stretched out before him; its low, murmuring moan seemed to be the inarticulate voice of his pain.

The air was close and oppressive; fitful flashes of heat lightning shimmered here and there over the heavy banks of cloud on the horizon; little wavelets sobbed at the base of the rocks.

When Benjamin lifted his head he saw Frank Braithwaite standing between him and the luminous water. He took a step forward, and they came face to face as Braithwaite turned with a start.

Benjamin clenched his hands and fought down a hideous temptation to thrust his rival off the rock.

“I saw you today,” he said in a low, intense tone. “What do you think of yourself, coming down here to steal the girl I loved from me? Weren’t there enough girls where you came from to choose among? I hate you. I’d kill you—”

“Selby, stop! You don’t know what you are saying. If I have wronged you, I swear I did it unintentionally. I loved Stella from the first — who could help it? But I thought she was virtually bound to you, and I did not try to win her away. You don’t know what it cost me to remain passive. I know that you have always distrusted me, but hitherto you have had no reason to. But today I found that she was free — that she did not care for you! And I found — or thought I found — that there was a chance for me. I took it. I forgot everything else then.”

“So she loves you?” said Benjamin dully.

“Yes,” said Braithwaite softly.

Benjamin turned on him with sudden passion.

“I hate you — and I am the most miserable wretch alive, but if she is happy, it is no matter about me. You’ve won easily what I’ve slaved and toiled all my life for. You won’t value it as I’d have done — but if you make her happy, nothing else matters. I’ve only one favour to ask of you. Don’t let her come to the shore after this. I can’t stand it.”

August throbbed and burned itself out. Affairs along shore continued as usual. Benjamin shut his sorrow up in himself and gave no outward sign of suffering. As if to mock him, the season was one of phenomenal prosperity; it was a “mackerel year” to be dated from. He worked hard and unceasingly, sparing himself in no way.

Braithwaite seldom came to the shore now. Mary Stella never. Mr. Murray had tried to speak of the matter, but Benjamin would not let him.

“It’s best that nothing be said,” he told him with simple dignity. He was so calm that Mr. Murray thought he did not care greatly, and was glad of it. The older man regretted the turn of affairs. Braithwaite would take his daughter far away from him, as his sister had been taken, and he loved Benjamin as his own son.

One afternoon Benjamin stood by his boat and looked anxiously at sea and sky. The French Canadians were eager to go out, for the other boats were catching.

“I don’t know about it,” said Benjamin doubtfully. “I don’t half like the look of things. I believe we’re in for a squall before long. It was just such a day three years ago when that terrible squall came up that Joe Otway got drowned in.”

The sky was dun and smoky, the glassy water was copper-hued, the air was heavy and breathless. The sea purred upon the shore, lapping it caressingly like some huge feline creature biding its time to seize and crunch its victim.

“I reckon I’ll try it,” said Benjamin after a final scrutiny. “If a squall does come up, we’ll have to run for the shore mighty quick, that’s all.”

They launched the boat speedily; as there was no wind, they had to row. As they pulled out, Braithwaite and Leon came down the road and began to launch the Murray boat.

“If dem two gits caught in a squall dey’ll hav a tam,” grinned Mosey Louis. “Dat Leon, he don’t know de fust ting ‘bout a boat, no more dan a cat!”

Benjamin came to anchor close in, but Braithwaite and Leon kept on until they were further out than any other boat.

“Reckon dey’s after cod,” suggested Xavier.

The mackerel bit well, but Benjamin kept a close watch on the sky. Suddenly he saw a dark streak advancing over the water from the northwest. He wheeled around.

“Boys, the squall’s coming! Up with the anchor — quick!”

“Dere’s plenty tam,” grumbled Mosey Louis, who hated to leave the fish. “None of de oder boats is goin’ in yit.”

The squall struck the boat as he spoke. She lurched and staggered. The water was tossing choppily. There was a sudden commotion all through the fleet and sails went rapidly up. Mosey Louis turned pale and scrambled about without delay. Benjamin was halfway to the shore before the sail went up in the Murray boat.

“Don’ know what dey’re tinkin’ of,” growled Mosey Louis. “Dey’ll be drown fust ting!”

Benjamin looked back anxiously. Every boat was making for the shore. The gale was steadily increasing. He had his doubts about making a landing himself, and Braithwaite would be twenty minutes later.

“But it isn’t my lookout,” he muttered.

Benjamin had landed and was hauling up his boat when Mr. Murray came running down the road.

“Frank?” he gasped. “Him and Leon went out, the foolish boys! They neither of them know anything about a time like this.”

“I guess they’ll be all right,” said Benjamin reassuringly. “They were late starting. They may find it rather hard to land.”

The other boats had all got in with more or less difficulty. The Murray boat alone was out. Men came scurrying along the shore in frightened groups of two and three.

The boat came swiftly in before the wind. Mr. Murray was half beside himself.

“It’ll be all right, sir,” said one of the men. “If they can’t land here, they can beach her on the sandshore.”

“If they only knew enough to do that,” wailed the old man. “But they don’t — they’ll come right on to the rocks.”

“Why don’t they lower their sail?” said another. “They will upset if they don’t.”

“They’re lowering it now,” said Benjamin.

The boat was now about 300 yards from the shore. The sail did not go all the way down — it seemed to be stuck.

“Good God, what’s wrong?” exclaimed Mr. Murray.

As he spoke, the boat capsized. A yell of horror rose I from the beach. Mr. Murray sprang toward Benjamin’s boat, but one of the men held him back.

“You can’t do it, sir. I don’t know that anybody can.”

Braithwaite and Leon were clinging to the boat. Benjamin Selby, standing in the background, his lips set, his hands clenched, was fighting

the hardest battle of his life. He knew that he alone, out of all the men there, possessed the necessary skill and nerve to reach the boat if she could be reached at all. There was a bare chance and a great risk. This man whom he hated was drowning before his eyes. Let him drown, then! Why should he risk — ay, and perchance lose — his life for his enemy? No one could blame him for refusing — and if Braithwaite were out of the way, Mary Stella might yet be his!

The temptation and victory passed in a few brief seconds. He stepped forward, cool and selfpossessed.

“I’m going out. I want one man with me. No one with child or wife. Who’ll go?”

“I will,” shouted Mosey Louis. “I haf some spat wid dat Leon, but I not lak to see him drown for all dat!”

Benjamin offered no objection. The French Canadian’s arm was strong and he possessed skill and experience. Mr. Murray caught Benjamin’s arm.

“No, no, Benjamin — not you — I can’t see both my boys drowned.”

Benjamin gently loosed the old man’s hold.

“It’s for Mary Stella’s sake,” he said hoarsely. “If I don’t come back, tell her that.”

They launched the large dory with difficulty and pulled out into the surf. Benjamin did not lose his nerve. His quick arm, his steady eye did not fail. A dozen times the wild-eyed watchers thought the boat was doomed, but as often she righted triumphantly.

At last the drowning men were reached and somehow or other hauled on board Benjamin’s craft. It was easier to come back, for they beached the boat on the sand. With a wild cheer the men on the shore rushed into the surf and helped to carry the half-unconscious Braithwaite and Leon ashore and up to the Murray fish-house. Benjamin went home before anyone knew he had gone. Mosey Louis was left behind to reap the honours; he sat in a circle of admiring lads and gave all the details of the rescue.

“Dat Leon, he not tink he know so much now!” he said.

Braithwaite came to the shore next day somewhat pale and shaky. He went straight to Benjamin and held out his hand.

“Thank you,” he said simply.

Benjamin bent lower over his work.

“You needn’t thank me,” he said gruffly. “I wanted to let you drown. But I went out for Mary Stella’s sake. Tell me one thing — I couldn’t bring myself to ask it of anyone else. When are you to be — married?”

“The 12th of September.”

Benjamin did not wince. He turned away and looked out across the sea for a few moments. The last agony of his great renunciation was upon him. Then he turned and held out his hand.

“For her sake,” he said earnestly.

Frank Braithwaite put his slender white hand into the fisherman’s hard brown palm. There were tears in both men’s eyes. They parted in silence.

On the morning of the 12th of September Benjamin Selby went out to the fishing grounds as usual. The catch was good, although the season was almost over. In the afternoon the French Canadians went to sleep. Benjamin intended to row down the shore for salt. He stood by his dory, ready to start, but he seemed to be waiting for something. At last it came: a faint train whistle blew, a puff of white smoke floated across a distant gap in the sandhills.

Mary Stella was gone at last — gone forever from his life. The honest blue eyes looking out over the sea did not falter; bravely he faced his desolate future.

The white gulls soared over the water, little swishing ripples lapped on the sand, and through all the gentle, dreamy noises of the shore came the soft, unceasing murmur of the gulf.

Millicent's Double

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“‘Nonsense,’ said Millicent, pointing to their reflected faces”

When Millicent Moore and Worth Gordon met each other on the first day of the term in the entrance hall of the Kinglake High School, both girls stopped short, startled. Millicent Moore had never seen Worth Gordon before, but Worth Gordon's face she had seen every day of her life, looking at her out of her own mirror!

They were total strangers, but when two girls look enough alike to be twins, it is not necessary to stand on ceremony. After the first blank stare of amazement, both laughed outright. Millicent held out her hand.

“We ought to know each other right away,” she said frankly. “My name is Millicent Moore, and yours is — ?”

“Worth Gordon,” responded Worth, taking the proffered hand with dancing eyes. “You actually frightened me when you came around that corner. For a moment I had an uncanny feeling that I was a disembodied spirit looking at my own outward shape. I know now what it feels like to have a twin.”

“Isn't it odd that we should look so much alike?” said Millicent. “Do you suppose we can be any relation? I never heard of any relations named Gordon.”

Worth shook her head. “I'm quite sure we're not,” she said. “I haven't any relatives except my father's stepsister with whom I've lived ever since the death of my parents when I was a baby.”

“Well, you'll really have to count me as a relative after this,” laughed Millicent. “I'm sure a girl who looks as much like you as I do must be at least as much relation as a stepaunt.”

From that moment they were firm friends, and their friendship was still further cemented by the fact that Worth found it necessary to change her boardinghouse and became Millicent's roommate. Their odd likeness

was the wonder of the school and occasioned no end of amusing mistakes, for all the students found it hard to distinguish between them. Seen apart it was impossible to tell which was which except by their clothes and style of hairdressing. Seen together there were, of course, many minor differences which served to distinguish them. Both girls were slight, with dark-brown hair, blue eyes and fair complexions. But Millicent had more colour than Worth. Even in repose, Millicent's face expressed mirth and fun; when Worth was not laughing or talking, her face was rather serious. Worth's eyes were darker, and her nose in profile slightly more aquiline. But still, the resemblance between them was very striking. In disposition they were also very similar. Both were merry, fun-loving girls, fond of larks and jokes. Millicent was the more heedless, but both were impulsive and too apt to do or say anything that came into their heads without counting the cost. One late October evening Millicent came in, her cheeks crimson after her walk in the keen autumn air, and tossed two letters on the study table. "It's a perfect evening, Worth. We had the jolliest tramp. You should have come with us instead of staying in moping over your books."

Worth smiled ruefully. "I simply had to prepare those problems for tomorrow," she said. "You see, Millie dear, there is a big difference between us in some things at least. I'm poor. I simply have to pass my exams and get a teacher's licence. So I can't afford to take any chances. You're just attending high school for the sake of education alone, so you don't really have to grind as I do."

"I'd like to do pretty well in the exams, though, for Dad's sake," answered Millicent, throwing aside her wraps. "But I don't mean to kill myself studying, just the same. Time enough for that when exams draw nigh. They're comfortably far off yet. But I'm in a bit of a predicament, Worth, and I don't know what to do. Here are two invitations for Saturday afternoon and I simply must accept them both. Now, how can I do it? You're a marvel at mathematics — so work out that problem for me."

"See, here's a note from Mrs. Kirby inviting me to tea at Beechwood. She called on me soon after the term opened and invited me to tea the next

week. But I had another engagement for that afternoon, so couldn't go. Mr. Kirby is a business friend of Dad's, and they are very nice people. The other invitation is to the annual autumn picnic of the Alpha Gammas. Now, Worth Gordon, I simply must go to that. I wouldn't miss it for anything. But I don't want to offend Mrs. Kirby, and I'm afraid I shall if I plead another engagement a second time. Mother will be fearfully annoyed at me in that case. Dear me, I wish there were two of me, one to go to the Alpha Gammas and one to Beechwood — Worth Gordon!"

"What's the matter?"

"There are two of me! What's the use of a double if not for a quandary like this! Worth, you must go to tea at Beechwood Saturday afternoon in my place. They'll think you are my very self. They'll never know the difference. Go and keep my place warm for me, there's a dear."

"Impossible," cried Worth. "I'd never dare! They'd know there was something wrong."

"They wouldn't — they couldn't. None of the Kirbys have ever seen me except Mrs. Kirby, and she only for a few minutes one evening at dusk. They don't know I have a double and they can't possibly suspect. Do go, Worth. Why, it'll be a regular lark, the best little joke ever! And you'll oblige me immensely besides. Worthie, please."

Worth did not consent all at once; but the idea rather appealed to her for its daring and excitement. It would be a lark — just at that time Worth did not see it in any other light. Besides, she wanted to oblige Millicent, who coaxed vehemently. Finally, Worth yielded and promised Millicent that she would go to Beechwood in her place.

"You darling!" said Millicent emphatically, flying to her table to write acceptances of both invitations.

Saturday afternoon Worth got ready to keep Millicent's engagement. "Suppose I am found out and expelled from Beechwood in disgrace," she suggested laughingly, as she arranged her lace bertha before the glass.

"Nonsense," said Millicent, pointing to their reflected faces. "The Kirbys can never suspect. Why, if it weren't for the hair and the dresses, I'd hardly know myself which of those reflections belonged to which."

“What if they begin asking me about the welfare of the various members of your family?”

“They won’t ask any but the most superficial questions. We’re not intimate enough for anything else. I’ve coached you pretty thoroughly, and I think you’ll get on all right.”

Worth’s courage carried her successfully through the ordeal of arriving at Beechwood and meeting Mrs. Kirby. She was unsuspectingly accepted as Millicent Moore, and found her impersonation of that young lady not at all difficult. No dangerous subject of conversation was introduced and nothing personal was said until Mr. Kirby came in. He looked so scrutinizingly at Worth as he shook hands with her that the latter felt her heart beating very fast. Did he suspect?

“Upon my word, Miss Moore,” he said genially, “you gave me quite a start at first. You are very like what a half-sister of mine used to be when a girl long ago. Of course the resemblance must be quite accidental.”

“Of course,” said Worth, without any very clear sense of what she was saying. Her face was uncomfortably flushed and she was glad when tea was announced.

As nothing more of an embarrassing nature was said, Worth soon recovered her selfpossession and was able to enter into the conversation. She liked the Kirbys; still, under her enjoyment, she was conscious of a strange, disagreeable feeling that deepened as the evening wore on. It was not fear — she was not at all afraid of betraying herself now. It had even been easier than she had expected. Then what was it? Suddenly Worth flushed again. She knew now — it was shame. She was a guest in that house as an impostor! What she had done seemed no longer a mere joke. What would her host and hostess say if they knew? That they would never know made no difference. She herself could not forget it, and her realization of the baseness of the deception grew stronger under Mrs. Kirby’s cordial kindness.

Worth never forgot that evening. She compelled herself to chat as brightly as possible, but under it all was that miserable consciousness of falsehood, deepening every instant. She was thankful when the time came

to leave. "You must come up often, Miss Moore," said Mrs. Kirby kindly. "Look upon Beechwood as a second home while you are in Kinglake. We have no daughter of our own, so we make a hobby of cultivating other people's."

When Millicent returned home from the Alpha Gamma outing, she found Worth in their room, looking soberly at the mirror. Something in her chum's expression alarmed her. "Worth, what is it? Did they suspect?"

"No," said Worth slowly. "They never suspected. They think I am what I pretended to be — Millicent Moore. But, but, I wish I'd never gone to Beechwood, Millie. It wasn't right. It was mean and wrong. It was acting a lie. I can't tell you how ashamed I felt when I realized that."

"Nonsense," said Millicent, looking rather sober, nevertheless. "No harm was done. It's only a good joke, Worth."

"Yes, harm has been done. I've done harm to myself, for one thing. I've lost my self-respect. I don't blame you, Millie. It's all my own fault. I've done a dishonourable thing, dishonourable."

Millicent sighed. "The Alpha Gamma picnic was horribly slow," she said. "I didn't enjoy myself a bit. I wish I had gone to Beechwood. I didn't think about it's being a practical falsehood before. I suppose it was. And I've always prided myself on my strict truthfulness! It wasn't your fault, Worth! It was mine. But it can't be undone now."

"No, it can't be undone," said Worth slowly, "but it might be confessed. We might tell Mrs. Kirby the truth and ask her to forgive us."

"I couldn't do such a thing," cried Millicent. "It isn't to be thought of!"

Nevertheless, Millicent did think of it several times that night and all through the following Sunday. She couldn't help thinking of it. A dishonourable trick! That thought stung Millicent. Monday evening Millicent flung down the book from which she was vainly trying to study.

"Worthie, it's no use. You were right. There's nothing to do but go and 'fess up to Mrs. Kirby. I can't respect Millicent Moore again until I do. I'm going right up now."

“I’ll go with you,” said Worth quietly. “I was equally to blame and I must take my share of the humiliation.”

When the girls reached Beechwood, they were shown into the library where the family were sitting. Mrs. Kirby came smilingly forward to greet Millicent when her eyes fell upon Worth. “Why! why!” she said. “I didn’t know you had a twin sister, Miss Moore.”

“Neither I have,” said Millicent, laughing nervously. “This is my chum, Worth Gordon, but she is no relation whatever.”

At the mention of Worth’s name, Mr. Kirby started slightly, but nobody noticed it. Millicent went on in a trembling voice. “We’ve come up to confess something, Mrs. Kirby. I’m sure you’ll think it dreadful, but we didn’t mean any harm. We just didn’t realize, until afterwards.”

Then Millicent, with burning cheeks, told the whole story and asked to be forgiven. “I, too, must apologize,” said Worth, when Millicent had finished. “Can you pardon me, Mrs. Kirby?”

Mrs. Kirby had listened in amazed silence, but now she laughed. “Certainly,” she said kindly. “I don’t suppose it was altogether right for you girls to play such a trick on anybody. But I can make allowances for schoolgirl pranks. I was a school girl once myself, and far from a model one. You have atoned for your mistake by coming so frankly and confessing, and now we’ll forget all about it. I think you have learned your lesson. Both of you must just sit down and spend the evening with us. Dear me, but you are bewilderingly alike!”

“I’ve something I want to say,” interposed Mr. Kirby suddenly. “You say your name is Worth Gordon,” he added, turning to Worth. “May I ask what your mother’s name was?”

“Worth Mowbray,” answered Worth wonderingly.

“I was sure of it,” said Mr. Kirby triumphantly, “when I heard Miss Moore mention your name. Your mother was my half-sister, and you are my niece.”

Everybody exclaimed and for a few moments they all talked and questioned together. Then Mr. Kirby explained fully. “I was born on a farm up-country. My mother was a widow when she married my father, and she

had one daughter, Worth Mowbray, five years older than myself. When I was three years old, my mother died. Worth went to live with our mother's only living relative, an aunt. My father and I removed to another section of the country. He, too, died soon after, and I was brought up with an uncle's family. My sister came to see me once when she was a girl of seventeen and, as I remember her, very like you are now. I never saw her again and eventually lost trace of her. Many years later I endeavoured to find out her whereabouts. Our aunt was dead, and the people in the village where she had lived informed me that my sister was also dead. She had married a man named Gordon and had gone away, both she and her husband had died, and I was informed that they left no children, so I made no further inquiries. There is no doubt that you are her daughter. Well, well, this is a pleasant surprise, to find a little niece in this fashion!"

It was a pleasant surprise to Worth, too, who had thought herself all alone in the world and had felt her loneliness keenly. They had a wonderful evening, talking and questioning and explaining. Mr. Kirby declared that Worth must come and live with them. "We have no daughter," he said. "You must come to us in the place of one, Worth."

Mrs. Kirby seconded this with a cordiality that won Worth's affection at once. The girl felt almost bewildered by her happiness.

"I feel as if I were in a dream," she said to Millicent as they walked to their boardinghouse. "It's really all too wonderful to grasp at once. You don't know, Millie, how lonely I've felt often under all my nonsense and fun. Aunt Delia was kind to me, but she was really no relation, she had a large family of her own, and I have always felt that she looked upon me as a rather inconvenient duty. But now I'm so happy!"

"I'm so glad for you, Worth," said Millicent warmly, "although your gain will certainly be my loss, for I shall miss my roommate terribly when she goes to live at Beechwood. Hasn't it all turned out strangely? If you had never gone to Beechwood in my place, this would never have happened."

"Say rather that if we hadn't gone to confess our fault, it would never have happened," said Worth gently. "I'm very, very glad that I have found

Uncle George and such a loving welcome to his home. But I'm gladder still that I've got my self-respect back. I feel that I can look Worth Gordon in the face again."

"I've learned a wholesome lesson, too," admitted Millicent.

The Blue North Room

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“This,” said Sara, laying Aunt Josephina’s letter down on the kitchen table with such energy that in anybody but Sara it must have been said she threw it down, “this is positively the last straw! I have endured all the rest. I have given up my chance of a musical education, when Aunt Nan offered it, that I might stay home and help Willard pay the mortgage off — if it doesn’t pay us off first — and I have, which was much harder, accepted the fact that we can’t possibly afford to send Ray to the Valley Academy, even if I wore the same hat and coat for four winters. I did not grumble when Uncle Joel came here to live because he wanted to be ‘near his dear nephew’s children.’ I felt it my Christian duty to look pleasant when we had to give Cousin Caroline a home to save her from the poorhouse. But my endurance and philosophy, and worst of all, my furniture, has reached a limit. I cannot have Aunt Josephina come here to spend the winter, because I have no room to put her in.”

“Hello, Sally, what’s the matter?” asked Ray, coming in with a book. It would have been hard to catch Ray without a book; he generally took one even to bed with him. Ray had a headful of brains, and Sara thought it was a burning shame that there seemed to be no chance for his going to college. “You look all rumped up in your conscience, beloved sis,” the boy went on, chaffingly.

“My conscience is all right,” said Sara severely. “It’s worse than that. If you please, here’s a letter from Aunt Josephina! She writes that she is very lonesome. Her son has gone to South America, and won’t be back until spring, and she wants to come and spend the winter with us.”

“Well, why not?” asked Ray serenely. Nothing ever bothered Ray. “The more the merrier.”

“Ray Sheldon! Where are we to put her? We have no spare room, as you well know.”

“Can’t she room with Cousin Caroline?”

“Cousin Caroline’s room is too small for two. It’s full to overflowing with her belongings now, and Aunt Josephina will bring two trunks at least. Try again, bright boy.”

“What’s the matter with the blue north room?”

“There is nothing the matter with it — oh, nothing at all! We could put Aunt Josephina there, but where will she sleep? Where will she wash her face? Will it not seem slightly inhospitable to invite her to sit on a bare floor? Have you forgotten that there isn’t a stick of furniture in the blue north room and, worse still, that we haven’t a spare cent to buy any, not even the cheapest kind?”

“I’ll give it up,” said Ray. “I might have a try at squaring the circle if you asked me, but the solution of the Aunt Josephina problem is beyond me.”

“The solution is simply that we must write to Aunt Josephina, politely but firmly, that we can’t have her come, owing to lack of accommodation. You must write the letter, Ray. Make it as polite as you can, but above all make it firm.”

“Oh, but Sally, dear,” protested Ray, who didn’t relish having to write such a letter, “isn’t this rather hasty, rather inhospitable? Poor Aunt Josephina must really be rather lonely, and it’s only natural she should want to visit her relations.”

“We’re not her relations,” cried Sara. “We’re not a speck of relation really. She’s only the half-sister of Mother’s half-brother. That sounds nice and relationy, doesn’t it? And she’s fussy and interfering, and she will fight with Cousin Caroline, everybody fights with Cousin Caroline—”

“Except Sara,” interrupted Ray, but Sara went on with a rush, “And we won’t have a minute’s peace all winter. Anyhow, where could we put her even if we wanted her to come? No, we can’t have her!”

“Mother was always very fond of Aunt Josephina,” said Ray reflectively. Sara had her lips open, all ready to answer whatever Ray might say, but she shut them suddenly and the boy went on. “Aunt Josephina thought a lot of Mother, too. She used to say she knew there was

always a welcome for her at Maple Hollow. It does seem a pity, Sally dear, for your mother's daughter to send word to Aunt Josephina, per my mother's son, that there isn't room for her any longer at Maple Hollow."

"I shall leave it to Willard," said Sara abruptly. "If he says to let her come, come she shall, even if Dorothy and I have to camp in the barn."

"I'm going to have a prow around the garret," said Ray, apropos of nothing.

"And I shall get the tea ready," answered Sara briskly. "Dorothy will be home from school very soon, and I hear Uncle Joel stirring. Willard won't be back till dark, so there is no use waiting for him."

At twilight Sara decided to walk up the lane and meet Willard. She always liked to meet him thus when he had been away for a whole day. Sara thought there was nobody in the world as good and dear as Willard.

It was a dull grey November twilight; the maples in the hollow were all leafless, and the hawthorn hedge along the lane was sere and frosted; a little snow had fallen in the afternoon, and lay in broad patches on the brown fields. The world looked very dull and dispirited, and Sara sighed. She could not help thinking of the dark side of things just then.

"Everything is wrong," said poor Sara dolefully. "Willard has to work like a slave, and yet with all his efforts he can barely pay the interest on the mortgage. And Ray ought to go to college. But I don't see how we can ever manage. To be sure, he won't be ready until next fall, but we won't have the money then any more than now. It would take every bit of a hundred and fifty dollars to fit him out with books and clothes, and pay for board and tuition at the academy. If he could just have a year there he could teach and earn his own way through college. But we might as well hope for the moon as one hundred and fifty dollars."

Sara sighed again. She was only eighteen, but she felt very old. Willard was nineteen, and Willard had never had a chance to be young. His father had died when he was twelve, and he had run the farm since then, he and Sara together indeed, for Sara was a capital planner and manager and worker. The little mother had died two years ago, and the household cares had all fallen on Sara's shoulders since. Sometimes, as now, they pressed

very heavily, but a talk with Willard always heartened her up. Willard had his blue spells too, but Sara thought it a special Providence that their blue turns never came together. When one got downhearted the other was always ready to do the cheering up.

Sara was glad to hear Willard whistling when he drove into the lane; it was a sign he was in good spirits. He pulled up, and Sara climbed into the wagon.

“Things go all right today, Sally?” he asked cheerfully.

“There was a letter from Aunt Josephina,” answered Sara, anxious to get the worst over, “and she wants to come to Maple Hollow for the winter. I thought at first we just couldn’t have her, but I decided to leave it to you.”

“Well, we’ve got a pretty good houseful already,” said Willard thoughtfully. “But I suppose if Aunt Josephina wants to come we’d better have her. I always liked Aunt Josephina, and so did Mother, you know.”

“I don’t know where we can put her. We haven’t any spare room, Will.”

“Ray and I can sleep in the kitchen loft. You and Dolly take our room, and let Aunt Josephina take yours.”

“The kitchen loft isn’t really fit to sleep in,” said Sara pessimistically. “It’s awfully cold, and there’re mice and rats — ugh! You and Ray will get nibbled in spots. But it’s the only thing to do if we must have Aunt Josephina. I’ll get Ray to write to her tomorrow. I couldn’t put enough cordiality into the letter if I wrote it myself.”

Ray came in while Willard was at supper. There were cobwebs all over him from his head to his heels. “I’ve solved the Aunt J. problem,” he announced cheerfully. “We will furnish the blue north room.”

“With what?” asked Sara disbelievingly.

“I’ve been poking about in the garret and in the carriage house loft,” said Ray, “and I’ve found furniture galore. It’s very old and cobwebby — witness my appearance — and very much in want of scrubbing and a few nails. But it will do.”

“I’d forgotten about those old things,” said Sara slowly. “They’ve never been used since I can remember, and long before. They were discarded before Mother came here. But I thought they were all broken and quite useless.”

“Not at all. I believe we can furbish them up sufficiently to make the room habitable. It will be rather old-fashioned, but then it’s Hobson’s choice. There are the pieces of an old bed out in the loft, and they can be put together. There’s an old corner cupboard out there too, with leaded glass doors, two old solid wooden armchairs, and a funny old chest of drawers with a writing desk in place of the top drawer, all full of yellow old letters and trash. I found it under a pile of old carpet. Then there’s a washstand, and also a towel rack up in the garret, and the funniest old table with three claw legs, and a tippy top. One leg is broken off, but I hunted around and found it, and I guess we can fix it on. And there are two more old chairs and a queer little oval table with a cracked swing mirror on it.”

“I have it,” exclaimed Sara, with a burst of inspiration, “let us fix up a real old-fashioned room for Aunt Josephina. It won’t do to put anything modern with those old things. One would kill the other. I’ll put Mother’s rag carpet down in it, and the four braided mats Grandma Sheldon gave me, and the old brass candlestick and the Irish chain coverlet. Oh, I believe it will be lots of fun.”

It was. For a week the Sheldons hammered and glued and washed and consulted. The north room was already papered with a blue paper of an old-fashioned stripe-and-diamond pattern. The rag carpet was put down, and the braided rugs laid on it. The old bedstead was set up in one corner and, having been well cleaned and polished with beeswax and turpentine, was really a handsome piece of furniture. On the washstand Sara placed a quaint old basin and ewer which had been Grandma Sheldon’s. Ray had fixed up the table as good as new; Sara had polished the brass claws, and on the table she put the brass tray, two candlesticks, and snuffers which had been long stowed away in the kitchen loft. The dressing table and swing mirror, with its scroll frame of tarnished gilt, was in the window corner, and opposite it was the old chest of drawers. The cupboard was set

up in a corner, and beside it stood the spinning-wheel from the kitchen loft. The big grandfather clock, which had always stood in the hall below was carried up, and two platters of blue willowware were set up over the mantel. Above them was hung the faded sampler that Grandma Sheldon had worked ninety years ago when she was a little girl.

“Do you know,” said Sara, when they stood in the middle of the room and surveyed the result, “I expected to have a good laugh over this, but it doesn’t look funny after all. The things all seem to suit each other, some way, and they look good, don’t they? I mean they look real, clear through. I believe that table and those drawers are solid mahogany. And look at the carving on those bedposts. Cleaning them has made such a difference. I do hope Aunt Josephina won’t mind their being so old.”

Aunt Josephina didn’t. She was very philosophical about it when Sara explained that Cousin Caroline had the spare room, and the blue north room was all they had left. “Oh, it will be all right,” she said, plainly determined to make the best of things. “Those old things are thought a lot of now, anyhow. I can’t say I fancy them much myself — I like something a little brighter. But the rich folks have gone cracked over them. I know a woman in Boston that’s got her whole house furnished with old truck, and as soon as she hears of any old furniture anywhere she’s not contented till she’s got it. She says it’s her hobby, and she spends a heap on it. She’d be in raptures if she saw this old room of yours, Sary.”

“Do you mean,” said Sara slowly, “that there are people who would buy old things like these?”

“Yes, and pay more for them than would buy a real nice set with a marble-topped burey. You may well say there’s lots of fools in the world, Sary.” Sara was not saying or thinking any such thing. It was a new idea to her that any value was attached to old furniture, for Sara lived very much out of the world of fads and collectors. But she did not forget what Aunt Josephina had said.

The winter passed away. Aunt Josephina plainly enjoyed her visit, whatever the Sheldons felt about it. In March her son returned, and Aunt Josephina went home to him. Before she left, Sara asked her for the

address of the woman whose hobby was old furniture, and the very afternoon after Aunt Josephina had gone Sara wrote and mailed a letter. For a week she looked so mysterious that Willard and Ray could not guess what she was plotting. At the end of that time Mrs. Stanton came.

Mrs. Stanton always declared afterwards that the mere sight of that blue north room gave her raptures. Such a find! Such a discovery! A bedstead with carved posts, a claw-footed table, real old willowware plates with the birds' bills meeting! Here was luck, if you like!

When Willard and Ray came home to tea Sara was sitting on the stairs counting her wealth.

"Sally, where did you discover all that long-lost treasure?" demanded Ray.

"Mrs. Stanton of Boston was here today," said Sara, enjoying the moment of revelation hugely. "She makes a hobby of collecting old furniture. I sold her every blessed thing in the blue north room except Mother's carpet and Grandma's mats and sampler. She wanted those too, but I couldn't part with them. She bought everything else and," Sara lifted her hands, full of bills, dramatically, "here are two hundred and fifty dollars to take you to the Valley Academy next fall, Ray."

"It wouldn't be fair to take it for that," said Ray, flushing. "You and Will—" "Will and I say you must take it," said Sara. "Don't we, Will? There is nothing we want so much as to give you a college start. It is an enormous burden off my mind to think it is so nicely provided for. Besides, most of those old things were yours by the right of rediscovery, and you voted first of all to have Aunt Josephina come."

"You must take it, of course, Ray," said Willard. "Nothing else would give Sara and me so much pleasure. A blessing on Aunt Josephina."

"Amen," said Sara and Ray.

The Christmas Surprise at Enderly Road

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“Phil, I’m getting fearfully hungry. When are we going to strike civilization?”

The speaker was my chum, Frank Ward. We were home from our academy for the Christmas holidays and had been amusing ourselves on this sunshiny December afternoon by a tramp through the “back lands,” as the barrens that swept away south behind the village were called. They were grown over with scrub maple and spruce, and were quite pathless save for meandering sheep tracks that crossed and recrossed, but led apparently nowhere.

Frank and I did not know exactly where we were, but the back lands were not so extensive but that we would come out somewhere if we kept on. It was getting late and we wished to go home.

“I have an idea that we ought to strike civilization somewhere up the Enderly Road pretty soon,” I answered.

“Do you call that civilization?” said Frank, with a laugh.

No Blackburn Hill boy was ever known to miss an opportunity of flinging a slur at Enderly Road, even if no Enderly Roader were by to feel the sting.

Enderly Road was a miserable little settlement straggling back from Blackburn Hill. It was a forsaken looking place, and the people, as a rule, were poor and shiftless. Between Blackburn Hill and Enderly Road very little social intercourse existed and, as the Road people resented what they called the pride of Blackburn Hill, there was a good deal of bad feeling between the two districts.

Presently Frank and I came out on the Enderly Road. We sat on the fence a few minutes to rest and discuss our route home. “If we go by the road it’s three miles,” said Frank. “Isn’t there a short cut?”

“There ought to be one by the wood-lane that comes out by Jacob Hart’s,” I answered, “but I don’t know where to strike it.”

“Here is someone coming now; we’ll inquire,” said Frank, looking up the curve of the hard-frozen road. The “someone” was a little girl of about ten years old, who was trotting along with a basketful of school books on her arm. She was a pale, pinched little thing, and her jacket and red hood seemed very old and thin.

“Hello, missy,” I said, as she came up, and then I stopped, for I saw she had been crying.

“What is the matter?” asked Frank, who was much more at ease with children than I was, and had always a warm spot in his heart for their small troubles. “Has your teacher kept you in for being naughty?”

The mite dashed her little red knuckles across her eyes and answered indignantly, “No, indeed. I stayed after school with Minnie Lawler to sweep the floor.”

“And did you and Minnie quarrel, and is that why you are crying?” asked Frank solemnly.

“Minnie and I never quarrel. I am crying because we can’t have the school decorated on Monday for the examination, after all. The Dickeys have gone back on us ... after promising, too,” and the tears began to swell up in the blue eyes again.

“Very bad behaviour on the part of the Dickeys,” commented Frank. “But can’t you decorate the school without them?”

“Why, of course not. They are the only big boys in the school. They said they would cut the boughs, and bring a ladder tomorrow and help us nail the wreaths up, and now they won’t ... and everything is spoiled ... and Miss Davis will be so disappointed.”

By dint of questioning Frank soon found out the whole story. The semi-annual public examination was to be held on Monday afternoon, the day before Christmas. Miss Davis had been drilling her little flock for the occasion; and a program of recitations, speeches, and dialogues had been prepared. Our small informant, whose name was Maggie Bates, together with Minnie Lawler and several other little girls, had conceived the idea

that it would be a fine thing to decorate the schoolroom with greens. For this it was necessary to ask the help of the boys. Boys were scarce at Enderly school, but the Dickeys, three in number, had promised to see that the thing was done.

“And now they won’t,” sobbed Maggie. “Matt Dickey is mad at Miss Davis ‘cause she stood him on the floor today for not learning his lesson, and he says he won’t do a thing nor let any of the other boys help us. Matt just makes all the boys do as he says. I feel dreadful bad, and so does Minnie.”

“Well, I wouldn’t cry any more about it,” said Frank consolingly. “Crying won’t do any good, you know. Can you tell us where to find the wood-lane that cuts across to Blackburn Hill?” Maggie could, and gave us minute directions. So, having thanked her, we left her to pursue her disconsolate way and betook ourselves homeward.

“I would like to spoil Matt Dickey’s little game,” said Frank. “He is evidently trying to run things at Enderly Road school and revenge himself on the teacher. Let us put a spoke in his wheel and do Maggie a good turn as well.”

“Agreed. But how?”

Frank had a plan ready to hand and, when we reached home, we took his sisters, Carrie and Mabel, into our confidence; and the four of us worked to such good purpose all the next day, which was Saturday, that by night everything was in readiness.

At dusk Frank and I set out for the Enderly Road, carrying a basket, a small step-ladder, an unlit lantern, a hammer, and a box of tacks. It was dark when we reached the Enderly Road schoolhouse. Fortunately, it was quite out of sight of any inhabited spot, being surrounded by woods. Hence, mysterious lights in it at strange hours would not be likely to attract attention.

The door was locked, but we easily got in by a window, lighted our lantern, and went to work. The schoolroom was small, and the old-fashioned furniture bore marks of hard usage; but everything was very

snug, and the carefully swept floor and dusted desks bore testimony to the neatness of our small friend Maggie and her chum Minnie.

Our basket was full of mottoes made from letters cut out of cardboard and covered with lissome sprays of fir. They were, moreover, adorned with gorgeous pink and red tissue roses, which Carrie and Mabel had contributed. We had considerable trouble in getting them tacked up properly, but when we had succeeded, and had furthermore surmounted doors, windows, and blackboard with wreaths of green, the little Enderly Road schoolroom was quite transformed.

“It looks nice,” said Frank in a tone of satisfaction. “Hope Maggie will like it.”

We swept up the litter we had made, and then scrambled out of the window.

“I’d like to see Matt Dickey’s face when he comes Monday morning,” I laughed, as we struck into the back lands.

“I’d like to see that midget of a Maggie’s,” said Frank. “See here, Phil, let’s attend the examination Monday afternoon. I’d like to see our decorations in daylight.”

We decided to do so, and also thought of something else. Snow fell all day Sunday, so that, on Monday morning, sleighs had to be brought out. Frank and I drove down to the store and invested a considerable share of our spare cash in a varied assortment of knick-knacks. After dinner we drove through to the Enderly Road schoolhouse, tied our horse in a quiet spot, and went in. Our arrival created quite a sensation for, as a rule, Blackburn Hillites did not patronize Enderly Road functions. Miss Davis, the pale, tired-looking little teacher, was evidently pleased, and we were given seats of honour next to the minister on the platform.

Our decorations really looked very well, and were further enhanced by two large red geraniums in full bloom which, it appeared, Maggie had brought from home to adorn the teacher’s desk. The side benches were lined with Enderly Road parents, and all the pupils were in their best attire. Our friend Maggie was there, of course, and she smiled and nodded towards the wreaths when she caught our eyes.

The examination was a decided success, and the program which followed was very creditable indeed. Maggie and Minnie, in particular, covered themselves with glory, both in class and on the platform. At its close, while the minister was making his speech, Frank slipped out; when the minister sat down the door opened and Santa Claus himself, with big fur coat, ruddy mask, and long white beard, strode into the room with a huge basket on his arm, amid a chorus of surprised “Ohs” from old and young.

Wonderful things came out of that basket. There was some little present for every child there — tops, knives, and whistles for the boys, dolls and ribbons for the girls, and a “prize” box of candy for everybody, all of which Santa Claus presented with appropriate remarks. It was an exciting time, and it would have been hard to decide which were the most pleased, parents, pupils, or teacher.

In the confusion Santa Claus discreetly disappeared, and school was dismissed. Frank, having tucked his toggery away in the sleigh, was waiting for us outside, and we were promptly pounced upon by Maggie and Minnie, whose long braids were already adorned with the pink silk ribbons which had been their gifts.

“You decorated the school,” cried Maggie excitedly. “I know you did. I told Minnie it was you the minute I saw it.”

“You’re dreaming, child,” said Frank.

“Oh, no, I’m not,” retorted Maggie shrewdly, “and wasn’t Matt Dickey mad this morning! Oh, it was such fun. I think you are two real nice boys and so does Minnie — don’t you Minnie?”

Minnie nodded gravely. Evidently Maggie did the talking in their partnership.

“This has been a splendid examination,” said Maggie, drawing a long breath. “Real Christmassy, you know. We never had such a good time before.”

“Well, it has paid, don’t you think?” asked Frank, as we drove home.

“Rather,” I answered.

It did “pay” in other ways than the mere pleasure of it. There was always a better feeling between the Roaders and the Hillites thereafter. The big brothers of the little girls, to whom our Christmas surprise had been such a treat, thought it worthwhile to bury the hatchet, and quarrels between the two villages became things of the past.

The Dissipation of Miss Ponsonby

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We hadn't been very long in Glenboro before we managed to get acquainted with Miss Ponsonby. It did not come about in the ordinary course of receiving and returning calls, for Miss Ponsonby never called on anybody; neither did we meet her at any of the Glenboro social functions, for Miss Ponsonby never went anywhere except to church, and very seldom there. Her father wouldn't let her. No, it simply happened because her window was right across the alleyway from ours. The Ponsonby house was next to us, on the right, and between us were only a fence, a hedge of box, and a sprawly acacia tree that shaded Miss Ponsonby's window, where she always sat sewing — patchwork, as I'm alive — when she wasn't working around the house. Patchwork seemed to be Miss Ponsonby's sole and only dissipation of any kind.

We guessed her age to be forty-five at least, but we found out afterward that we were mistaken. She was only thirty-five. She was tall and thin and pale, one of those drab-tinted persons who look as if they had never felt a rosy emotion in their lives. She had any amount of silky, fawn-coloured hair, always combed straight back from her face, and pinned in a big, tight bun just above her neck — the last style in the world for any woman with Miss Ponsonby's nose to adopt. But then I doubt if Miss Ponsonby had any idea what her nose was really like. I don't believe she ever looked at herself critically in a mirror in her life. Her features were rather nice, and her expression tamely sweet; her eyes were big, timid, china-blue orbs that looked as if she had been badly scared when she was little and had never got over it; she never wore anything but black, and, to crown all, her first name was Alicia.

Miss Ponsonby sat and sewed at her window for hours at a time, but she never looked our way, partly, I suppose, from habit induced by modesty, since the former occupants of our room had been two gay young

bachelors, whose names Jerry and I found out all over our windowpanes with a diamond.

Jerry and I sat a great deal at ours, laughing and talking, but Miss Ponsonby never lifted her head or eyes. Jerry couldn't stand it long; she declared it got on her nerves; besides, she felt sorry to see a fellow creature wasting so many precious moments of a fleeting lifetime at patchwork. So one afternoon she hailed Miss Ponsonby with a cheerful "hello," and Miss Ponsonby actually looked over and said "good afternoon," as prim as an eighteen-hundred-and-forty fashion plate.

Then Jerry, whose name is Geraldine only in the family Bible, talked to her about the weather. Jerry can talk interestingly about anything. In five minutes she had performed a miracle — she had made Miss Ponsonby laugh. In five minutes more she was leaning half out of the window showing Miss Ponsonby a new, white, fluffy, frivolous, chiffrony waist of hers, and Miss Ponsonby was leaning halfway out of hers looking at it eagerly. At the end of a quarter of an hour they were exchanging confidences about their favourite books. Jerry was a confirmed Kiplingomaniac, but Miss Ponsonby adored Laura Jean Libbey. She said sorrowfully she supposed she ought not to read novels at all since her father disapproved. We found out later on that Mr. Ponsonby's way of expressing disapproval was to burn any he got hold of, and storm at his daughter about them like the confirmed old crank he was. Poor Miss Ponsonby had to keep her Laura Jeans locked up in her trunk, and it wasn't often she got a new one.

From that day dated our friendship with Miss Ponsonby, a curious friendship, only carried on from window to window. We never saw Miss Ponsonby anywhere else; we asked her to come over but she said her father didn't allow her to visit anybody. Miss Ponsonby was one of those meek women who are ruled by whomsoever happens to be nearest them, and woe be unto them if that nearest happen to be a tyrant. Her meekness fairly infuriated Jerry.

But we liked Miss Ponsonby and we pitied her. She confided to us that she was very lonely and that she wrote poetry. We never asked to see the

poetry, although I think she would have liked to show it. But, as Jerry says, there are limits.

We told Miss Ponsonby all about our dances and picnics and beaus and pretty dresses; she was never tired of hearing of them; we smuggled new library novels — Jerry got our cook to buy them — and boxes of chocolates, from our window to hers; we sat there on moonlit nights and communed with her while other girls down the street were entertaining callers on their verandahs; we did everything we could for her except to call her Alicia, although she begged us to do so. But it never came easily to our tongues; we thought she must have been born and christened Miss Ponsonby; “Alicia” was something her mother could only have dreamed about her.

We thought we knew all about Miss Ponsonby’s past; but even pale, drab, china-blue women can have their secrets and keep them. It was a full half year before we discovered Miss Ponsonby’s.

In October, Stephen Shaw came home from the west to visit his father and mother after an absence of fifteen years. Jerry and I met him at a party at his brother-in-law’s. We knew he was a bachelor of forty-five or so and had made heaps of money in the lumber business, so we expected to find him short and round and bald, with bulgy blue eyes and a double chin. On the contrary, he was a tall, handsome man with clear-cut features, laughing black eyes like a boy’s, and iron-grey hair. That iron-grey hair nearly finished Jerry; she thinks there is nothing so distinguished and she had the escape of her life from falling in love with Stephen Shaw.

He was as gay as the youngest, danced splendidly, went everywhere, and took all the Glenboro girls about impartially. It was rumoured that he had come east to look for a wife but he didn’t seem to be in any particular hurry to find her.

One evening he called on Jerry; that is to say, he did ask for both of us, but within ten minutes Jerry had him mewed up in the cosy corner to the exclusion of all the rest of the world. I felt that I was a huge crowd, so I obligingly decamped upstairs and sat down by my window to “muse,” as Miss Ponsonby would have said.

It was a glorious moonlight night, with just a hint of October frost in the air — enough to give sparkle and tang. After a few moments I became aware that Miss Ponsonby was also “musing” at her window in the shadow of the acacia tree. In that dim light she looked quite pretty. It was suddenly borne in upon me for the first time that, when Miss Ponsonby was young, she must have been very pretty, with that delicate elusive fashion of beauty which fades so early if the life is not kept in it by love and tenderness. It seemed odd, somehow, to think of Miss Ponsonby as young and pretty. She seemed so essentially middle-aged and faded.

“Lovely night, Miss Ponsonby,” I said brilliantly.

“A very beautiful night, dear Elizabeth,” answered Miss Ponsonby in that tired little voice of hers that always seemed as drab-coloured as the rest of her.

“I’m mopy,” I said frankly. “Jerry has concentrated herself on Stephen Shaw for the evening and I’m left on the fringe of things.”

Miss Ponsonby didn’t say anything for a few moments. When she spoke some strange and curious note had come into her voice, as if a chord, long unswept and silent, had been suddenly thrilled by a passing hand.

“Did I understand you to say that Geraldine was — entertaining Stephen Shaw?”

“Yes. He’s home from the west and he’s delightful,” I replied. “All the Glenboro girls are quite crazy over him. Jerry and I are as bad as the rest. He isn’t at all young but he’s very fascinating.”

“Stephen Shaw!” repeated Miss Ponsonby faintly. “So Stephen Shaw is home again!”

“Why, I suppose you would know him long ago,” I said, remembering that Stephen Shaw’s youth must have been contemporaneous with Miss Ponsonby’s.

“Yes, I used to know him,” said Miss Ponsonby very slowly.

She did not say anything more, which I thought a little odd, for she was generally full of mild curiosity about all strangers and sojourners in

Glenboro. Presently she got up and went away from her window. Deserted even by Miss Ponsonby, I went grumpily to bed.

Then Mrs. George Hubbard gave a big dance. Jerry and I were pleasantly excited. The Hubbards were the smartest of the Glenboro smart set and their entertainments were always quite brilliant affairs for a small country village like ours. This party was professedly given in honour of Stephen Shaw, who was to leave for the west again in a week's time.

On the evening of the party Jerry and I went to our room to dress. And there, across at her window in the twilight, sat Miss Ponsonby, crying. I had never seen Miss Ponsonby cry before.

"What is the matter?" I called out softly and anxiously.

"Oh, nothing," sobbed Miss Ponsonby, "only — only — I'm invited to the party tonight — Susan Hubbard is my cousin, you know — and I would like so much to go."

"Then why don't you?" said Jerry briskly.

"My father won't let me," said Miss Ponsonby, swallowing a sob as if she were a little girl of ten years old. Jerry had to dodge behind the curtain to hide a smile.

"It's too bad," I said sympathetically, but wondering a little why Miss Ponsonby seemed so worked up about it. I knew she had sometimes been invited out before and had not been allowed to go, but she had never cared apparently.

"Well, what is to be done?" I whispered to Jerry.

"Take Miss Ponsonby to the party with us, of course," said Jerry, popping out from behind the curtain.

I didn't ask her if she expected to fly through the air with Miss Ponsonby, although short of that I couldn't see how the latter was to be got out of the house without her father knowing. The old gentleman had a den off the hall where he always sat in the evening and smoked fiercely, after having locked all the doors to keep the servants in. He was a delightful sort of person, that old Mr. Ponsonby.

Jerry poked her head as far as she could out of the window. "Miss Ponsonby, you are going to the dance," she said in a cautious undertone,

“so don’t cry any more or your eyes will be dreadfully red.”

“It is impossible,” said Miss Ponsonby resignedly.

“Nothing is impossible when I make up my mind,” said Jerry firmly. “You must get dressed, climb down that acacia tree, and join us in our yard. It will be pitch dark in a few minutes and your father will never know.”

I had a frantic vision of Miss Ponsonby scrambling down that acacia tree like an eloping damsel. But Jerry was in dead earnest, and really it was quite possible if Miss Ponsonby only thought so. I did not believe she would think so, but I was mistaken. Her thorough course in Libbey heroines and their marvellous escapades had quite prepared her to contemplate such an adventure calmly — in the abstract at least. But another obstacle presented itself.

“It’s impossible,” she said again, after her first flash hope. “I haven’t a fit dress to wear — I’ve nothing at all but my black cashmere and it is three years old.”

But the more hindrances in Jerry’s way when she sets out to accomplish something the more determined and enthusiastic she becomes. I listened to her with amazement.

“I have a dress I’ll lend you,” she said resolutely. “And I’ll go over and fix you up as soon as it’s a little darker. Go now and bathe your eyes and just trust to me.”

Miss Ponsonby’s long habit of obedience to whatever she was told stood her in good stead now. She obeyed Jerry without another word. Jerry seized me by the waist and waltzed me around the room in an ecstasy.

“Jerry Elliott, how are you going to carry this thing through?” I demanded sternly.

“Easily enough,” responded Jerry. “You know that black lace dress of mine — the one with the apricot slip. I’ve never worn it since I came to Glenboro, so nobody will know it’s mine, and I never mean to wear it again for it’s got too tight. It’s a trifle old-fashioned, but that won’t matter for Glenboro, and it will fit Miss Ponsonby all right. She’s about my height and figure. I’m determined that poor soul shall have a dissipation

for once in her life since she hankers for it. Come on now, Elizabeth. It will be a lark.”

I caught Jerry’s enthusiasm, and while she hunted out the box containing the black lace dress, I hastily gathered together some other odds and ends I thought might be useful — a black aigrette, a pair of black silk gloves, a spangled gauze fan, and a pair of slippers. They wouldn’t have stood daylight, but they looked all right after night. As we left the room I caught up some pale pink roses on my table.

We pushed through a little gap in the privet hedge and found ourselves under the acacia tree with Miss Ponsonby peering anxiously at us from above. I wanted to shriek with laughter, the whole thing seemed so funny and unreal. Jerry, although she hasn’t climbed trees since she was twelve, went up that acacia as nimbly as a pussy-cat, took the box and things from me, passed them to Miss Ponsonby, and got in at the window while I went back to my own room to dress, hoping old Mr. Ponsonby wouldn’t be running out to ring the fire alarm.

In a very short time I heard Miss Ponsonby and Jerry at the opposite window, and I rushed to mine to see the sight. But Miss Ponsonby, with a red fascinator over her head and a big cape wrapped round her, slipped out of the window and down that blessed acacia tree as neatly and nimbly as if she had been accustomed to doing it for exercise every day of her life. There were possibilities in Miss Ponsonby. In two more minutes they were both safe in our room.

Then Jerry threw off Miss Ponsonby’s wraps and stepped back. I know I stared until my eyes stuck out of my head. Was that Miss Ponsonby — that!

The black lace dress, with the pinkish sheen of its slip beneath, suited her slim shape to perfection and clung around her in lovely, filmy curves that made her look willowy and girlish. It was high-necked, just cut away slightly at the throat, and had great, loose, hanging frilly sleeves of lace. Jerry had shaken out her hair and piled it high on her head in satiny twists and loops, with a pompadour such as Miss Ponsonby could never have thought about. It suited her tremendously and seemed to alter the whole

character of her face, giving verve and piquancy to her delicate little features. The excitement had flushed her cheeks into positive pinkness and her eyes were starry. The roses were pinned on her shoulder. Miss Ponsonby, as she stood there, was a pretty woman, with fifteen apparent birthdays the less.

“Oh, Alicia, you look just lovely!” I gasped. The name slipped out quite naturally. I never thought about it at all.

“My dear Elizabeth,” she said, “it’s like a dream of lost youth.”

We got Jerry ready and then we started for the Hubbards’, out by our back door and through our neighbour-on-the-left’s lane to avoid all observation. Miss Ponsonby was breathless with terror. She was sure every footstep she heard behind her was her father’s in pursuit. She almost fainted on the spot when a belated man came tearing along the street. Jerry and I breathed a sigh of devout thanksgiving when we found ourselves safely in the Hubbard parlour.

We were early, but Stephen Shaw was there before us. He came up to us at once, and just then Miss Ponsonby turned around.

“Alicia!” he said.

“How do you do, Stephen?” she said tremulously.

And there he was looking down at her with an expression on his face that none of the Glenboro girls he had been calling on had ever seen. Jerry and I just simply melted away. We can see through grindstones when there are holes in them!

We went out and sat down on the stairs.

“There’s a mystery here,” said Jerry, “but Miss Ponsonby shall explain it to us before we let her climb up that acacia tree tonight. Now that I come to think of it, the first night he called he asked me about her. Wanted to know if her father were the same old blustering tyrant he always was, and if we knew her at all. I’m afraid I made a little mild fun of her, and he didn’t say anything more. Well, I’m awfully glad now that I didn’t fall in love with him. I could have, but I wouldn’t.”

Miss Ponsonby’s appearance at the Hubbards’ party was the biggest sensation Glenboro had had for years. And in her way, she was a positive

belle. She didn't dance, but all the middle-aged men, widowers, wedded, and bachelors, who had known her in her girlhood crowded around her, and she laughed and chatted as I hadn't even imagined Miss Ponsonby could laugh and chat. Jerry and I revelled in her triumph, for did we not feel that it was due to us? At last Miss Ponsonby disappeared; shortly after Jerry and I blundered into the library to fix some obstreperous hairpins, and there we found her and Stephen Shaw in the cosy corner.

There were no explanations on the road home, for Miss Ponsonby walked behind us with Stephen Shaw in the pale, late-risen October moonshine. But when we had sneaked through the neighbour-to-the-left's lane and reached our side verandah we waited for her, and as soon as Stephen Shaw had gone we laid violent hands on Miss Ponsonby and made her 'fess up there on the dark, chilly verandah, at one o'clock in the morning.

"Miss Ponsonby," said Jerry, "before we assist you in returning to those ancestral halls of yours you've simply got to tell us what all this means."

Miss Ponsonby gave a little, shy, nervous laugh.

"Stephen Shaw and I were engaged to be married long ago," she said simply. "But Father disapproved. Stephen was poor then. And so — and so — I sent him away. What else could I do?" — for Jerry had snorted — "Father had to be obeyed. But it broke my heart. Stephen went away — he was very angry — and I have never seen him since. When Susan Hubbard invited me to the party I felt as if I must go — I must see Stephen once more. I never thought for a minute that he remembered me — or cared still...."

"But he does?" said Jerry breathlessly. Jerry never scruples to ask anything right out that she wants to know.

"Yes," said Miss Ponsonby softly. "Isn't it wonderful? I could hardly believe it — I am so changed. But he said tonight he had never thought of any other woman. He — he came home to see me. But when I never went anywhere, even when I must know he was home, he thought I didn't want

to see him. If I hadn't gone tonight — oh, I owe it all to you two dear girls!"

"When are you to be married?" demanded that terrible Jerry.

"As soon as possible," said Miss Ponsonby. "Stephen was going away next week, but he says he will wait until I can get ready."

"Do you think your father will object this time?" I queried.

"No, I don't think so. Stephen is a rich man now, you know. That wouldn't make any difference with me — but Father is very — practical. Stephen is going to see him tomorrow."

"But what if he does object?" I persisted anxiously.

"The acacia tree will still be there," said Miss Ponsonby firmly.

The Falsoms' Christmas Dinner

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“Well, so it’s all settled,” said Stephen Falsom.

“Yes,” assented Alexina. “Yes, it is,” she repeated, as if somebody had questioned it.

Then Alexina sighed. Whatever “it” was, the fact of its being settled did not seem to bring Alexina any great peace of mind — nor Stephen either, judging from his face, which wore a sort of “suffer and be strong” expression just then. “When do you go?” said Alexina, after a pause, during which she had frowned out of the window and across the Tracy yard. Josephine Tracy and her brother Duncan were strolling about the yard in the pleasant December sunshine, arm in arm, laughing and talking. They appeared to be a nice, harmless pair of people, but the sight of them did not seem to please Alexina.

“Just as soon as we can sell the furniture and move away,” said Stephen moodily. “Heigh-ho! So this is what all our fine ambitions have come to, Lexy, your music and my M.D. A place in a department store for you, and one in a lumber mill for me.”

“I don’t dare to complain,” said Alexina slowly. “We ought to be so thankful to get the positions. I am thankful. And I don’t mind so very much about my music. But I do wish you could have gone to college, Stephen.”

“Never mind me,” said Stephen, brightening up determinedly. “I’m going to go into the lumber business enthusiastically. You don’t know what unsuspected talents I may develop along that line. The worst of it is that we can’t be together. But I’ll keep my eyes open, and perhaps I’ll find a place for you in Lessing.”

Alexina said nothing. Her separation from Stephen was the one point in their fortunes she could not bear to discuss. There were times when Alexina did not see how she was going to exist without Stephen. But she

never said so to him. She thought he had enough to worry him without her making matters worse. "Well," said Stephen, getting up, "I'll run down to the office. And see here, Lexy. Day after tomorrow is Christmas. Are we going to celebrate it at all? If so I'd better order the turkey."

Alexina looked thoughtful. "I don't know, Stephen. We're short of money, you know, and the fund is dwindling every day. Don't you think it's a little extravagant to have a turkey for two people? And somehow I don't feel a bit Christmassy. I think I'd rather spend it just like any other day and try to forget that it is Christmas. Everything would be so different."

"That's true, Lexy. And we must look after the bawbees closely, I'll admit." When Stephen had gone out Alexina cried a little, not very much, because she didn't want her eyes to be red against Stephen's return. But she had to cry a little. As she had said, everything was so different from what it had been a year ago. Their father had been alive then and they had been very cosy and happy in the little house at the end of the street. There had been no mother there since Alexina's birth sixteen years ago. Alexina had kept house for her father and Stephen since she was ten. Stephen was a clever boy and intended to study medicine. Alexina had a good voice, and something was to be done about training it. The Tracys lived next door to them. Duncan Tracy was Stephen's particular chum, and Josephine Tracy was Alexina's dearest friend. Alexina was never lonely when Josie was near by to laugh and chat and plan with.

Then, all at once, troubles came. In June the firm of which Mr. Falsom was a member failed. There was some stigma attached to the failure, too, although the blame did not rest upon Mr. Falsom, but with his partner. Worry and anxiety aggravated the heart trouble from which he had suffered for some time, and a month later he died. Alexina and Stephen were left alone to face the knowledge that they were penniless, and must look about for some way of supporting themselves. At first they hoped to be able to get something to do in Thorndale, so that they might keep their home. This proved impossible. After much discouragement and disappointment Stephen had secured a position in the lumber mill at

Lessing, and Alexina was promised a place in a departmental store in the city.

To make matters worse, Duncan Tracy and Stephen had quarrelled in October. It was only a boyish disagreement over some trifle, but bitter words had passed. Duncan, who was a quick-tempered lad, had twitted Stephen with his father's failure, and Stephen had resented it hotly. Duncan was sorry for and ashamed of his words as soon as they were uttered, but he would not humble himself to say so. Alexina had taken Stephen's part and her manner to Josie assumed a tinge of coldness. Josie quickly noticed and resented it, and the breach between the two girls widened almost insensibly, until they barely spoke when they met. Each blamed the other and cherished bitterness in her heart.

When Stephen came home from the post office he looked excited.

"Were there any letters?" asked Alexina.

"Well, rather! One from Uncle James!"

"Uncle James," exclaimed Alexina, incredulously.

"Yes, beloved sis. Oh, you needn't try to look as surprised as I did. And I ordered the turkey after all. Uncle James has invited himself here to dinner on Christmas Day. You'll have a chance to show your culinary skill, for you know we've always been told that Uncle James was a gourmand."

Alexina read the letter in a maze. It was a brief epistle, stating that the writer wished to make the acquaintance of his niece and nephew, and would visit them on Christmas Day. That was all. But Alexina instantly saw a future of rosy possibilities. For Uncle James, who lived in the city and was really a great-uncle, had never taken the slightest notice of their family since his quarrel with their father twenty years ago; but this looked as if Uncle James were disposed to hold out the olive branch.

"Oh, Stephen, if he likes you, and if he offers to educate you!" breathed Alexina. "Perhaps he will if he is favourably impressed. But we'll have to be so careful, he is so whimsical and odd, at least everybody has always said so. A little thing may turn the scale either way. Anyway, we must have a good dinner for him. I'll have plum pudding and mince pie."

For the next thirty-six hours Alexina lived in a whirl. There was so much to do. The little house was put in apple pie order from top to bottom, and Stephen was set to stoning raisins and chopping meat and beating eggs. Alexina was perfectly reckless; no matter how big a hole it made in their finances Uncle James must have a proper Christmas dinner. A favourable impression must be made. Stephen's whole future — Alexina did not think about her own at all just then — might depend on it.

Christmas morning came, fine and bright and warm. It was more like a morning in early spring than in December, for there was no snow or frost, and the air was moist and balmy. Alexina was up at daybreak, cleaning and decorating at a furious rate. By eleven o'clock everything was finished or going forward briskly. The plum pudding was bubbling in the pot, the turkey — Burton's plumpest — was sizzling in the oven. The shelf in the pantry bore two mince pies upon which Alexina was willing to stake her culinary reputation. And Stephen had gone to the train to meet Uncle James.

From her kitchen window Alexina could see brisk preparations going on in the Tracy kitchen. She knew Josie and Duncan were all alone; their parents had gone to spend Christmas with friends in Lessing. In spite of her hurry and excitement Alexina found time to sigh. Last Christmas Josie and Duncan had come over and eaten their dinner with them. But now last Christmas seemed very far away. And Josie had behaved horridly. Alexina was quite clear on that point.

Then Stephen came with Uncle James. Uncle James was a rather pompous, fussy old man with red cheeks and bushy eyebrows. "H'm! Smells nice in here," was his salutation to Alexina. "I hope it will taste as good as it smells. I'm hungry."

Alexina soon left Uncle James and Stephen talking in the parlour and betook herself anxiously to the kitchen. She set the table in the little dining room, now and then pausing to listen with a delighted nod to the murmur of voices and laughter in the parlour. She felt sure that Stephen was making a favourable impression. She lifted the plum pudding and put it on a plate on the kitchen table; then she took out the turkey, beautifully

done, and put it on a platter; finally, she popped the two mince pies into the oven. Just at this moment Stephen stuck his head in at the hall door.

“Lexy, do you know where that letter of Governor Howland’s to Father is? Uncle James wants to see it.”

Alexina, not waiting to shut the oven door — for delay might impress Uncle James unfavourably — rushed upstairs to get the letter. She was ten minutes finding it. Then, remembering her pies, she flew back to the kitchen. In the middle of the floor she stopped as if transfixed, staring at the table. The turkey was gone. And the plum pudding was gone! And the mince pies were gone! Nothing was left but the platters! For a moment Alexina refused to believe her eyes. Then she saw a trail of greasy drops on the floor to the open door, out over the doorstep, and along the boards of the walk to the back fence.

Alexina did not make a fuss. Even at that horrible moment she remembered the importance of making a favourable impression. But she could not quite keep the alarm and excitement out of her voice as she called Stephen, and Stephen knew that something had gone wrong as he came quickly through the hall. “Is the turkey burned, Lexy?” he cried.

“Burned! No, it’s ten times worse,” gasped Alexina. “It’s gone — gone, Stephen. And the pudding and the mince pies, too. Oh, what shall we do? Who can have taken them?”

It may be stated right here and now that the Falsoms never really knew anything more about the disappearance of their Christmas dinner than they did at that moment. But the only reasonable explanation of the mystery was that a tramp had entered the kitchen and made off with the good things. The Falsom house was right at the end of the street. The narrow backyard opened on a lonely road. Across the road was a stretch of pine woods. There was no house very near except the Tracy one.

Stephen reached this conclusion with a bound. He ran out to the yard gate followed by the distracted Alexina. The only person visible was a man some distance down the road. Stephen leaped over the gate and tore down the road in pursuit of him. Alexina went back to the doorstep, sat

down upon it, and began to cry. She couldn't help it. Her hopes were all in ruins around her. There was no dinner for Uncle James.

Josephine Tracy saw her crying. Now, Josie honestly thought that she had a grievance against Alexina. But an Alexina walking unconcernedly by with a cool little nod and her head held high was a very different person from an Alexina sitting on a back doorstep, on Christmas morning, crying. For a moment Josie hesitated. Then she slowly went out and across the yard to the fence. "What is the trouble?" she asked.

Alexina forgot that there was such a thing as dignity to be kept up; or, if she remembered it, she was past caring for such a trifle. "Our dinner is gone," she sobbed. "And there is nothing to give Uncle James to eat except vegetables — and I do so want to make a favourable impression!"

This was not particularly lucid, but Josie, with a flying mental leap, arrived at the conclusion that it was very important that Uncle James, whoever he was, should have a dinner, and she knew where one was to be had. But before she could speak Stephen returned, looking rueful. "No use, Lexy. That man was only old Mr. Byers, and he had seen no signs of a tramp. There is a trail of grease right across the road. The tramp must have taken directly to the woods. We'll simply have to do without our Christmas dinner."

"By no means," said Josie quickly, with a little red spot on either cheek. "Our dinner is all ready — turkey, pudding and all. Let us lend it to you. Don't say a word to your uncle about the accident."

Alexina flushed and hesitated. "It's very kind of you," she stammered, "but I'm afraid — it would be too much—"

"Not a bit of it," Josie interrupted warmly. "Didn't Duncan and I have Christmas dinner at your house last year? Just come and help us carry it over."

"If you lend us your dinner you and Duncan must come and help us eat it," said Alexina, resolutely.

"I'll come of course," said Josie, "and I think that Duncan will too if — if—" She looked at Stephen, the scarlet spots deepening. Stephen coloured too.

“Duncan must come,” he said quietly. “I’ll go and ask him.”

Two minutes later a peculiar procession marched out of the Tracy kitchen door, across the two yards, and into the Falsom house. Josie headed it, carrying a turkey on a platter. Alexina came next with a plum pudding. Stephen and Duncan followed with a hot mince pie apiece. And in a few more minutes Alexina gravely announced to Uncle James that dinner was ready.

The dinner was a pronounced success, marked by much suppressed hilarity among the younger members of the party. Uncle James ate very heartily and seemed to enjoy everything, especially the mince pie.

“This is the best mince pie I have ever sampled,” he told Alexina. “I am glad to know that I have a niece who can make such a mince pie.” Alexina cast an agonized look at Josie, and was on the point of explaining that she wasn’t the maker of the pie. But Josie frowned her into silence.

“I felt so guilty to sit there and take the credit — your credit,” she told Josie afterwards, as they washed up the dishes.

“Nonsense,” said Josie. “It wasn’t as if you couldn’t make mince pies. Your mince pies are better than mine, if it comes to that. It might have spoiled everything if you’d said a word. I must go home now. Won’t you and Stephen come over after your uncle goes, and spend the evening with us? We’ll have a candy pull.”

When Josie and Duncan had gone, Uncle James called his nephew and niece into the parlour, and sat down before them with approving eyes. “I want to have a little talk with you two. I’m sorry I’ve let so many years go by without making your acquaintance, because you seem worth getting acquainted with. Now, what are your plans for the future?”

“I’m going into a lumber mill at Lessing and Alexina is going into the T. Morson store,” said Stephen quietly.

“Tut, tut, no, you’re not. And she’s not. You’re coming to live with me, both of you. If you have a fancy for cutting and carving people up, young man, you must be trained to cut and carve them scientifically, anyhow. As for you, Alexina, Stephen tells me you can sing. Well, there’s a good

Conservatory of Music in town. Wouldn't you rather go there instead of behind a counter?"

"Oh, Uncle James!" exclaimed Alexina with shining eyes. She jumped up, put her arms about Uncle James' neck and kissed him.

Uncle James said, "Tut, tut," again, but he liked it.

When Stephen had seen his uncle off on the six o'clock train he returned home and looked at the radiant Alexina.

"Well, you made your favourable impression, all right, didn't you?" he said gaily. "But we owe it to Josie Tracy. Isn't she a brick? I suppose you're going over this evening?"

"Yes, I am. I'm so tired that I feel as if I couldn't crawl across the yard, but if I can't you'll have to carry me. Go I will. I can't begin to tell you how glad I am about everything, but really the fact that you and Duncan and Josie and I are good friends again seems the best of all. I'm glad that tramp stole the dinner and I hope he enjoyed it. I don't grudge him one single bite!"

The Fraser Scholarship

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Elliot Campbell came down the main staircase of Marwood College and found himself caught up with a whoop into a crowd of Sophs who were struggling around the bulletin board. He was thumped on the back and shaken hands with amid a hurricane of shouts and congratulations.

“Good for you, Campbell! You’ve won the Fraser. See your little name tacked up there at the top of the list, bracketed off all by itself for the winner? ‘Elliott H. Campbell, ninety-two per cent.’ A class yell for Campbell, boys!”

While the yell was being given with a heartiness that might have endangered the roof, Elliott, with flushed face and sparkling eyes, pushed nearer to the important typewritten announcement on the bulletin board. Yes, he had won the Fraser Scholarship. His name headed the list of seven competitors.

Roger Brooks, who was at his side, read over the list aloud:

“‘Elliott H. Campbell, ninety-two.’ I said you’d do it, my boy. ‘Edward Stone, ninety-one’ — old Ned ran you close, didn’t he? But of course with that name he’d no show. ‘Kay Milton, eighty-eight.’ Who’d have thought slow-going old Kay would have pulled up so well? ‘Seddon Brown, eighty-seven; Oliver Field, eighty-four; Arthur McIntyre, eighty-two’ — a very respectable little trio. And ‘Carl McLean, seventy.’ Whew! what a drop! Just saved his distance. It was only his name took him in, of course. He knew you weren’t supposed to be strong in mathematics.”

Before Elliott could say anything, a professor emerged from the president’s private room, bearing the report of a Freshman examination, which he proceeded to post on the Freshman bulletin board, and the rush of the students in that direction left Elliott and Roger free of the crowd. They seized the opportunity to escape.

Elliott drew a long breath as they crossed the campus in the fresh April sunshine, where the buds were swelling on the fine old chestnuts and elms that surrounded Marwood's red brick walls.

"That has lifted a great weight off my mind," he said frankly. "A good deal depended on my winning the Fraser. I couldn't have come back next year if I hadn't got it. That four hundred will put me through the rest of my course."

"That's good," said Roger Brooks heartily.

He liked Elliott Campbell, and so did all the Sophomores. Yet none of them was at all intimate with him. He had no chums, as the other boys had. He boarded alone, "dug" persistently, and took no part in the social life of the college. Roger Brooks came nearest to being his friend of any, yet even Roger knew very little about him. Elliott had never before said so much about his personal affairs as in the speech just recorded.

"I'm poor — woefully poor," went on Elliott gaily. His success seemed to have thawed his reserve for the time being. "I had just enough money to bring me through the Fresh and Soph years by dint of careful management. Now I'm stone broke, and the hope of the Fraser was all that stood between me and the dismal certainty of having to teach next year, dropping out of my class and coming back in two or three years' time, a complete, rusty stranger again. Whew! I made faces over the prospect."

"No wonder," commented Roger. "The class would have been sorry if you had had to drop out, Campbell. We want to keep all our stars with us to make a shining coruscation at the finish. Besides, you know we all like you for yourself. It would have been an everlasting shame if that little cad of a McLean had won out. Nobody likes him."

"Oh, I had no fear of him," answered Elliott. "I don't see what induced him to go in, anyhow. He must have known he'd no chance. But I was afraid of Stone — he's a born dabster at mathematics, you know, and I only hold my own in them by hard digging."

"Why, Stone couldn't have taken the Fraser over you in any case, if you made over seventy," said Roger with a puzzled look. "You must have known that. McLean was the only competitor you had to fear."

“I don’t understand you,” said Elliott blankly.

“You must know the conditions of the Fraser!” exclaimed Roger.

“Certainly,” responded Elliott. “The Fraser scholarship, amounting to four hundred dollars, will be offered annually in the Sophomore class. The competitors will be expected to take a special examination in mathematics, and the winner will be awarded two hundred dollars for two years, payable in four annual instalments, the payment of any instalment to be conditional on the winner’s attending the required classes for undergraduates and making satisfactory progress therein.’ Isn’t that correct?”

“So far as it goes, old man. You forget the most important part of all. ‘Preference is to be given to competitors of the name Fraser, Campbell or McLean, provided that such competitor makes at least seventy per cent in his examination.’ You don’t mean to tell me that you didn’t know that!”

“Are you joking?” demanded Elliott with a pale face.

“Not a joke. Why, man, it’s in the calendar.”

“I didn’t know it,” said Elliott slowly. “I read the calendar announcement only once, and I certainly didn’t notice that condition.”

“Well, that’s curious. But how on earth did you escape hearing it talked about? It’s always discussed extensively among the boys, especially when there are two competitors of the favoured names, which doesn’t often happen.”

“I’m not a very sociable fellow,” said Elliott with a faint smile. “You know they call me ‘the hermit.’ As it happened, I never talked the matter over with anyone or heard it referred to. I — I wish I had known this before.”

“Why, what difference does it make? It’s all right, anyway. But it is odd to think that if your name hadn’t been Campbell, the Fraser would have gone to McLean over the heads of Stone and all the rest. Their only hope was that you would both fall below seventy. It’s an absurd condition, but there it is in old Professor Fraser’s will. He was rich and had no family. So he left a number of bequests to the college on ordinary conditions. I suppose he thought he might humour his whim in one. His

widow is a dear old soul, and always makes a special pet of the boy who wins the Fraser. Well, here's my street. So long, Campbell."

Elliott responded almost curtly and walked onward to his boardinghouse with a face from which all the light had gone. When he reached his room he took down the Marwood calendar and whirled over the leaves until he came to the announcement of bursaries and scholarships. The Fraser announcement, as far as he had read it, ended at the foot of the page. He turned the leaf and, sure enough, at the top of the next page, in a paragraph by itself, was the condition: "Preference shall be given to candidates of the name Fraser, Campbell or McLean, provided that said competitor makes at least seventy per cent in his examination."

Elliott flung himself into a chair by his table and bowed his head on his hands. He had no right to the Fraser Scholarship. His name was not Campbell, although perhaps nobody in the world knew it save himself, and he remembered it only by an effort of memory.

He had been born in a rough mining camp in British Columbia, and when he was a month old his father, John Hanselpakker, had been killed in a mine explosion, leaving his wife and child quite penniless and almost friendless. One of the miners, an honest, kindly Scotchman named Alexander Campbell, had befriended Mrs. Hanselpakker and her little son in many ways, and two years later she had married him. They returned to their native province of Nova Scotia and settled in a small country village. Here Elliott had grown up, bearing the name of the man who was a kind and loving father to him, and whom he loved as a father. His mother had died when he was ten years old and his stepfather when he was fifteen. On his deathbed he asked Elliott to retain his name.

"I've cared for you and loved you since the time you were born, lad," he said. "You seem like my own son, and I've a fancy to leave you my name. It's all I can leave you, for I'm a poor man, but it's an honest name, lad, and I've kept it free from stain. See that you do likewise, and you'll have your mother's blessing and mine."

Elliott fought a hard battle that spring evening.

“Hold your tongue and keep the Fraser,” whispered the tempter. “Campbell is your name. You’ve borne it all your life. And the condition itself is a ridiculous one — no fairness about it. You made the highest marks and you ought to be the winner. It isn’t as if you were wronging Stone or any of the others who worked hard and made good marks. If you throw away what you’ve won by your own hard labour, the Fraser goes to McLean, who made only seventy. Besides, you need the money and he doesn’t. His father is a rich man.”

“But I’ll be a cheat and a cad if I keep it,” Elliott muttered miserably. “Campbell isn’t my legal name, and I’d never again feel as if I had even the right of love to it if I stained it by a dishonest act. For it would be stained, even though nobody but myself knew it. Father said it was a clean name when he left it, and I cannot soil it.”

The tempter was not silenced so easily as that. Elliott passed a sleepless night of indecision. But next day he went to Marwood and asked for a private interview with the president. As a result, an official announcement was posted that afternoon on the bulletin board to the effect that, owing to a misunderstanding, the Fraser Scholarship had been wrongly awarded. Carl McLean was posted as winner.

The story soon got around the campus, and Elliott found himself rather overwhelmed with sympathy, but he did not feel as if he were very much in need of it after all. It was good to have done the right thing and be able to look your conscience in the face. He was young and strong and could work his own way through Marwood in time.

“No condolences, please,” he said to Roger Brooks with a smile. “I’m sorry I lost the Fraser, of course, but I’ve my hands and brains left. I’m going straight to my boardinghouse to dig with double vim, for I’ve got to take an examination next week for a provincial school certificate. Next winter I’ll be a flourishing pedagogue in some up-country district.”

He was not, however. The next afternoon he received a summons to the president’s office. The president was there, and with him was a plump, motherly-looking woman of about sixty.

“Mrs. Fraser, this is Elliott Hanselpakker, or Campbell, as I understand he prefers to be called. Elliott, I told your story to Mrs. Fraser last evening, and she was greatly interested when she heard your rather peculiar name. She will tell you why herself.”

“I had a young half-sister once,” said Mrs. Fraser eagerly. “She married a man named John Hanselpakker and went West, and somehow I lost all trace of her. There was, I regret to say, a coolness between us over her marriage. I disapproved of it because she married a very poor man. When I heard your name, it struck me that you might be her son, or at least know something about her. Her name was Mary Helen Rodney, and I loved her very dearly in spite of our foolish quarrel.”

There was a tremour in Mrs. Fraser’s voice and an answering one in Elliott’s as he replied: “Mary Helen Rodney was my dear mother’s name, and my father was John Hanselpakker.”

“Then you are my nephew,” exclaimed Mrs. Fraser. “I am your Aunt Alice. My boy, you don’t know how much it means to a lonely old woman to have found you. I’m the happiest person in the world!”

She slipped her arm through Elliott’s and turned to the sympathetic president with shining eyes.

“He is my boy forever, if he will be. Blessings on the Fraser Scholarship!”

“Blessings rather on the manly boy who wouldn’t keep it under false colours,” said the president with a smile. “I think you are fortunate in your nephew, Mrs. Fraser.”

So Elliott Hanselpakker Campbell came back to Marwood the next year after all.

The Girl at the Gate

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Something very strange happened the night old Mr. Lawrence died. I have never been able to explain it and I have never spoken of it except to one person and she said that I dreamed it. I did not dream it ... I saw and heard, waking.

We had not expected Mr. Lawrence to die then. He did not seem very ill ... not nearly so ill as he had been during his previous attack. When we heard of his illness I went over to Woodlands to see him, for I had always been a great favourite with him. The big house was quiet, the servants going about their work as usual, without any appearance of excitement. I was told that I could not see Mr. Lawrence for a little while, as the doctor was with him. Mrs. Yeats, the housekeeper, said the attack was not serious and asked me to wait in the blue parlour, but I preferred to sit down on the steps of the big, arched front door. It was an evening in June. Woodlands was very lovely; to my right was the garden, and before me was a little valley abrim with the sunset. In places under the big trees it was quite dark even then.

There was something unusually still in the evening ... a stillness as of waiting. It set me thinking of the last time Mr. Lawrence had been ill ... nearly a year ago in August. One night during his convalescence I had watched by him to relieve the nurse. He had been sleepless and talkative, telling me many things about his life. Finally he told me of Margaret.

I knew a little about her ... that she had been his sweetheart and had died very young. Mr. Lawrence had remained true to her memory ever since, but I had never heard him speak of her before.

“She was very beautiful,” he said dreamily, “and she was only eighteen when she died, Jeanette. She had wonderful pale-golden hair and dark-brown eyes. I have a little ivory miniature of her. When I die it is to be

given to you, Jeanette. I have waited a long while for her. You know she promised she would come.”

I did not understand his meaning and kept silence, thinking that he might be wandering a little in his mind.

“She promised she would come and she will keep her word,” he went on. “I was with her when she died. I held her in my arms. She said to me, ‘Herbert, I promise that I will be true to you forever, through as many years of lonely heaven as I must know before you come. And when your time is at hand I will come to make your deathbed easy as you have made mine. I will come, Herbert.’ She solemnly promised, Jeanette. We made a death-tryst of it. And I know she will come.”

He had fallen asleep then and after his recovery he had not alluded to the matter again. I had forgotten it, but I recalled it now as I sat on the steps among the geraniums that June evening. I liked to think of Margaret ... the lovely girl who had died so long ago, taking her lover’s heart with her to the grave. She had been a sister of my grandfather, and people told me that I resembled her slightly. Perhaps that was why old Mr. Lawrence had always made such a pet of me.

Presently the doctor came out and nodded to me cheerily. I asked him how Mr. Lawrence was.

“Better ... better,” he said briskly. “He will be all right tomorrow. The attack was very slight. Yes, of course you may go in. Don’t stay longer than half an hour.”

Mrs. Stewart, Mr. Lawrence’s sister, was in the sickroom when I went in. She took advantage of my presence to lie down on the sofa a little while, for she had been up all the preceding night. Mr. Lawrence turned his fine old silver head on the pillow and smiled a greeting. He was a very handsome old man; neither age nor illness had marred his finely modelled face or impaired the flash of his keen, steel-blue eyes. He seemed quite well and talked naturally and easily of many commonplace things.

At the end of the doctor’s half-hour I rose to go. Mrs. Stewart had fallen asleep and he would not let me wake her, saying he needed nothing

and felt like sleeping himself. I promised to come up again on the morrow and went out.

It was dark in the hall, where no lamp had been lighted, but outside on the lawn the moonlight was bright as day. It was the clearest, whitest night I ever saw. I turned aside into the garden, meaning to cross it, and take the short way over the west meadow home. There was a long walk of rose bushes leading across the garden to a little gate on the further side ... the way Mr. Lawrence had been wont to take long ago when he went over the fields to woo Margaret. I went along it, enjoying the night. The bushes were white with roses, and the ground under my feet was all snowed over with their petals. The air was still and breezeless; again I felt that sensation of waiting ... of expectancy. As I came up to the little gate I saw a young girl standing on the other side of it. She stood in the full moonlight and I saw her distinctly.

She was tall and slight and her head was bare. I saw that her hair was a pale gold, shining somewhat strangely about her head as if catching the moonbeams. Her face was very lovely and her eyes large and dark. She was dressed in something white and softly shimmering, and in her hand she held a white rose ... a very large and perfect one. Even at the time I found myself wondering where she could have picked it. It was not a Woodlands rose. All the Woodlands roses were smaller and less double.

She was a stranger to me, yet I felt that I had seen her or someone very like her before. Possibly she was one of Mr. Lawrence's many nieces who might have come up to Woodlands upon hearing of his illness.

As I opened the gate I felt an odd chill of positive fear. Then she smiled as if I had spoken my thought.

"Do not be frightened," she said. "There is no reason you should be frightened. I have only come to keep a tryst."

The words reminded me of something, but I could not recall what it was. The strange fear that was on me deepened. I could not speak.

She came through the gateway and stood for a moment at my side.

"It is strange that you should have seen me," she said, "but now behold how strong and beautiful a thing is faithful love — strong enough to

conquer death. We who have loved truly love always — and this makes our heaven.”

She walked on after she had spoken, down the long rose path. I watched her until she reached the house and went up the steps. In truth I thought the girl was someone not quite in her right mind. When I reached home I did not speak of the matter to anyone, not even to inquire who the girl might possibly be. There seemed to be something in that strange meeting that demanded my silence.

The next morning word came that old Mr. Lawrence was dead. When I hurried down to Woodlands I found all in confusion, but Mrs. Yeats took me into the blue parlour and told me what little there was to tell.

“He must have died soon after you left him, Miss Jeanette,” she sobbed, “for Mrs. Stewart wakened at ten o’clock and he was gone. He lay there, smiling, with such a strange look on his face as if he had just seen something that made him wonderfully happy. I never saw such a look on a dead face before.”

“Who is here besides Mrs. Stewart?” I asked.

“Nobody,” said Mrs. Yeats. “We have sent word to all his friends but they have not had time to arrive here yet.”

“I met a young girl in the garden last night,” I said slowly. “She came into the house. I did not know her but I thought she must be a relative of Mr. Lawrence’s.”

Mrs. Yeats shook her head.

“No. It must have been somebody from the village, although I didn’t know of anyone calling after you went away.”

I said nothing more to her about it.

After the funeral Mrs. Stewart gave me Margaret’s miniature. I had never seen it or any picture of Margaret before. The face was very lovely — also strangely like my own, although I am not beautiful. It was the face of the young girl I had met at the gate!

The Light on the Big Dipper

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“Don’t let Nellie run out of doors, Mary Margaret, and be careful of the fire, Mary Margaret. I expect we’ll be back pretty soon after dark, so don’t be lonesome, Mary Margaret.”

Mary Margaret laughed and switched her long, thick braid of black hair from one shoulder to the other.

“No fear of my being lonesome, Mother Campbell. I’ll be just as careful as can be and there are so many things to be done that I’ll be as busy and happy as a bee all day long. Nellie and I will have just the nicest kind of a time. I won’t get lonesome, but if I should feel just tempted to, I’ll think, Father is on his way home. He will soon be here.’ And that would drive the lonesomeness away before it dared to show its face. Don’t you worry, Mother Campbell.”

Mother Campbell smiled. She knew she could trust Mary Margaret — careful, steady, prudent little Mary Margaret. Little! Ah, that was just the trouble. Careful and steady and prudent as Mary Margaret might be, she was only twelve years old, after all, and there would not be another soul besides her and Nellie on the Little Dipper that whole day. Mrs. Campbell felt that she hardly dared to go away under such circumstances. And yet she must dare it. Oscar Bryan had sailed over from the mainland the evening before with word that her sister Nan — her only sister, who lived in Cartonville — was ill and about to undergo a serious operation. She must go to see her, and Uncle Martin was waiting with his boat to take her over to the mainland to catch the morning train for Cartonville.

If five-year-old Nellie had been quite well Mrs. Campbell would have taken both her and Mary Margaret and locked up the house. But Nellie had a very bad cold and was quite unfit to go sailing across the harbour on a raw, chilly November day. So there was nothing to do but leave Mary Margaret in charge, and Mary Margaret was quite pleased at the prospect.

“You know, Mother Campbell, I’m not afraid of anything except tramps. And no tramps ever come to the Dippers. You see what an advantage it is to live on an island! There, Uncle Martin is waving. Run along, little mother.”

Mary Margaret watched the boat out of sight from the window and then betook herself to the doing of her tasks, singing blithely all the while. It was rather nice to be left in sole charge like this — it made you feel so important and grownup. She would do everything very nicely and Mother would see when she came back what a good housekeeper her daughter was.

Mary Margaret and Nellie and Mrs. Campbell had been living on the Little Dipper ever since the preceding April. Before that they had always lived in their own cosy home at the Harbour Head. But in April Captain Campbell had sailed in the Two Sisters for a long voyage and, before he went, Mrs. Campbell’s brother, Martin Clowe, had come to them with a proposition. He ran a lobster cannery on the Little Dipper, and he wanted his sister to go and keep house for him while her husband was away. After some discussion it was so arranged, and Mrs. Campbell and her two girls moved to the Little Dipper. It was not a lonesome place then, for the lobstermen and their families lived on it, and boats were constantly sailing to and fro between it and the mainland. Mary Margaret enjoyed her summer greatly; she bathed and sailed and roamed over the rocks, and on fine days her Uncle George, who kept the lighthouse on the Big Dipper, and lived there all alone, often came over and took her across to the Big Dipper. Mary Margaret thought the lighthouse was a wonderful place. Uncle George taught her how to light the lamps and manage the light.

When the lobster season dosed, the men took up codfishing and carried this on till October, when they all moved back to the mainland. But Uncle Martin was building a house for himself at Harbour Head and did not wish to move until the ice formed over the bay because it would then be so much easier to transport his goods and chattels; so the Campbells stayed with him until the Captain should return.

Mary Margaret found plenty to do that day and wasn’t a bit lonesome. But when evening came she didn’t feel quite so cheerful. Nellie had fallen

asleep, and there wasn't another living creature except the cat on the Little Dipper. Besides, it looked like a storm. The harbour was glassy calm, but the sky was very black and dour in the northeast — like snow, thought weather-wise Mary Margaret. She hoped her mother would get home before it began, and she wished the lighthouse star would gleam out on the Big Dipper. It would seem like the bright eye of a steady old friend. Mary Margaret always watched for it every night; just as soon as the sun went down the big lighthouse star would flash goldenly out in the northeastern sky.

"I'll sit down by the window and watch for it," said Mary Margaret to herself. "Then, when it is lighted, I'll get up a nice warm supper for Mother and Uncle Martin."

Mary Margaret sat down by the kitchen window to watch. Minute after minute passed, but no light flashed out on the Big Dipper. What was the matter? Mary Margaret began to feel uneasy. It was too cloudy to tell just when the sun had set, but she was sure it must be down, for it was quite dark in the house. She lighted a lamp, got the almanac, and hunted out the exact time of sunsetting. The sun had been down fifteen minutes!

And there was no light on the Big Dipper!

Mary Margaret felt alarmed and anxious. What was wrong at the Big Dipper? Was Uncle George away? Or had something happened to him? Mary Margaret was sure he had never forgotten!

Fifteen minutes longer did Mary Margaret watch restlessly at the window. Then she concluded that something was desperately wrong somewhere. It was half an hour after sunset and the Big Dipper light, the most important one along the whole coast, was not lighted. What would she do? What could she do?

The answer came swift and dear into Mary Margaret's steady, sensible little mind. She must go to the Big Dipper and light the lamps!

But could she? Difficulties came crowding thick and fast into her thoughts. It was going to snow; the soft broad flakes were falling already. Could she row the two miles to the Big Dipper in the darkness and the snow? If she could, dare she leave Nellie all alone in the house? Oh, she

couldn't! Somebody at the Harbour Head would surely notice that the Big Dipper light was unlighted and would go over to investigate the cause. But suppose they shouldn't? If the snow came thicker they might never notice the absence of the light. And suppose there was a ship away out there, as there nearly always was, with the dangerous rocks and shoals of the outer harbour to pass, with precious lives on board and no guiding beacon on the Big Dipper.

Mary Margaret hesitated no longer. She must go.

Bravely, briskly and thoughtfully she made her preparations. First, the fire was banked and the draughts dosed; then she wrote a little note for her mother and laid it on the table. Finally she wakened Nellie.

"Nellie," said Mary Margaret, speaking very kindly and determinedly, "there is no light on the Big Dipper and I've got to row over and see about it. I'll be back as quickly as I can, and Mother and Uncle Martin will soon be here. You won't be afraid to stay alone, will you, dearie? You mustn't be afraid, because I have to go. And, Nellie, I'm going to tie you in your chair; it's necessary, because I can't lock the door, so you mustn't cry; nothing will hurt you, and I want you to be a brave little girl and help sister all you can."

Nellie, too sleepy and dazed to understand very clearly what Mary Margaret was about, submitted to be wrapped up in quilts and bound securely in her chair. Then Mary Margaret tied the chair fast to the wall so that Nellie couldn't upset it. That's safe, she thought. Nellie can't run out now or fall on the stove or set herself afire.

Mary Margaret put on her jacket, hood and mittens, and took Uncle Martin's lantern. As she went out and closed the door, a little wail from Nellie sounded on her ear. For a moment she hesitated, then the blackness of the Big Dipper confirmed her resolution. She must go. Nellie was really quite safe and comfortable. It would not hurt her to cry a little, and it might hurt somebody a great deal if the Big Dipper light failed. Setting her lips firmly, Mary Margaret ran down to the shore.

Like all the Harbour girls, Mary Margaret could row a boat from the time she was nine years old. Nevertheless, her heart almost failed her as

she got into the little dory and rowed out. The snow was getting thick. Could she pull across those black two miles between the Dippers before it got so much thicker that she would lose her way? Well, she must risk it. She had set the light in the kitchen window; she must keep it fair behind her and then she would land on the lighthouse beach. With a murmured prayer for help and guidance she pulled staunchly away.

It was a long, hard row for the little twelve-year-old arms. Fortunately there was no wind. But thicker and thicker came the snow; finally the kitchen light was hidden in it. For a moment Mary Margaret's heart sank in despair; the next it gave a joyful bound, for, turning, she saw the dark tower of the lighthouse directly behind her. By the aid of her lantern she rowed to the landing, sprang out and made her boat fast. A minute later she was in the lighthouse kitchen.

The door leading to the tower stairs was open and at the foot of the stairs lay Uncle George, limp and white.

"Oh, Uncle George," gasped Mary Margaret, "what is the matter? What has happened?"

"Mary Margaret! Thank God! I was just praying to Him to send somebody to 'tend the light. Who's with you?"

"Nobody.... I got frightened because there was no light and I rowed over. Mother and Uncle Martin are away."

"You don't mean to say you rowed yourself over here alone in the dark and snow! Well, you are the pluckiest little girl about this harbour! It's a mercy I've showed you how to manage the light. Run up and start it at once. Don't mind about me. I tumbled down those pesky stairs like the awkward old fool I am and I've broke my leg and hurt my back so bad I can't crawl an inch. I've been lying here for three mortal hours and they've seemed like three years. Hurry with the light, Mary Margaret."

Mary Margaret hurried. Soon the Big Dipper light was once more gleaming cheerfully athwart the stormy harbour. Then she ran back to her uncle. There was not much she could do for him beyond covering him warmly with quilts, placing a pillow under his head, and brewing him a hot drink of tea.

“I left a note for Mother telling her where I’d gone, Uncle George, so I’m sure Uncle Martin will come right over as soon as they get home.”

“He’ll have to hurry. It’s blowing up now ... hear it ... and snowing thick. If your mother and Martin haven’t left the Harbour Head before this, they won’t leave it tonight. But, anyhow, the light is lit. I don’t mind my getting smashed up compared to that. I thought I’d go crazy lying here picturing to myself a vessel out on the reefs.”

That night was a very long and anxious one. The storm grew rapidly worse, and snow and wind howled around the lighthouse. Uncle George soon grew feverish and delirious, and Mary Margaret, between her anxiety for him and her dismal thoughts of poor Nellie tied in her chair over at the Little Dipper, and the dark possibility of her mother and Uncle Martin being out in the storm, felt almost distracted. But the morning came at last, as mornings blessedly will, be the nights never so long and anxious, and it dawned fine and clear over a white world. Mary Margaret ran to the shore and gazed eagerly across at the Little Dipper. No smoke was visible from Uncle Martin’s house!

She could not leave Uncle George, who was raving wildly, and yet it was necessary to obtain assistance somehow. Suddenly she remembered the distress signal. She must hoist it. How fortunate that Uncle George had once shown her how!

Ten minutes later there was a commotion over at Harbour Head where the signal was promptly observed, and very soon — although it seemed long enough to Mary Margaret — a boat came sailing over to the Big Dipper. When the men landed they were met by a very white-faced little girl who gasped out a rather disjointed story of a light that hadn’t been lighted and an uncle with a broken leg and a sister tied in her chair, and would they please see to Uncle George at once, for she must go straight over to the other Dipper?

One of the men rowed her over, but before they were halfway there another boat went sailing across the harbour, and Mary Margaret saw a woman and two men land from it and hurry up to the house.

That is Mother and Uncle Martin, but who can the other man be? wondered Mary Margaret.

When she reached the cottage her mother and Uncle Martin were reading her note, and Nellie, just untied from the chair where she had been found fast asleep, was in the arms of a great, big, brown, bewhiskered man. Mary Margaret just gave one look at the man. Then she flew across the room with a cry of delight.

“Father!”

For ten minutes not one intelligible word was said, what with laughing and crying and kissing. Mary Margaret was the first to recover herself and say briskly, “Now, do explain, somebody. Tell me how it all happened.”

“Martin and I got back to Harbour Head too late last night to cross over,” said her mother. “It would have been madness to try to cross in the storm, although I was nearly wild thinking of you two children. It’s well I didn’t know the whole truth or I’d have been simply frantic. We stayed at the Head all night, and first thing this morning came your father.”

“We came in last night,” said Captain Campbell, “and it was pitch dark, not a light to be seen and beginning to snow. We didn’t know where we were and I was terribly worried, when all at once the Big Dipper light I’d been looking for so vainly flashed out, and everything was all right in a moment. But, Mary Margaret, if that light hadn’t appeared, we’d never have got in past the reefs. You’ve saved your father’s ship and all the lives in her, my brave little girl.”

“Oh!” Mary Margaret drew a long breath and her eyes were starry with tears of happiness. “Oh, I’m so thankful I went over. And I had to tie Nellie in her chair, Mother, there was no other way. Uncle George broke his leg and is very sick this morning, and there’s no breakfast ready for anyone and the fire black out ... but that doesn’t matter when Father is safe ... and oh, I’m so tired!”

And then Mary Margaret sat down just for a moment, intending to get right up and help her mother light the fire, laid her head on her father’s shoulder, and fell sound asleep before she ever suspected it.

The Prodigal Brother

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Miss Hannah was cutting asters in her garden. It was a very small garden, for nothing would grow beyond the shelter of the little, grey, low-eaved house which alone kept the northeast winds from blighting everything with salt spray; but small as it was, it was a miracle of blossoms and a marvel of neatness. The trim brown paths were swept clean of every leaf or fallen petal, each of the little square beds had its border of big white quahog clamshells, and not even a sweetpea vine would have dared to straggle from its appointed course under Miss Hannah's eye.

Miss Hannah had always lived in the little grey house down by the shore, so far away from all the other houses in Prospect and so shut away from them by a circle of hills that it had a seeming isolation. Not another house could Miss Hannah see from her own doorstep; she often declared she could not have borne it if it had not been for the lighthouse beacon at night flaming over the northwest hill behind the house like a great unwinking, friendly star that never failed even on the darkest night. Behind the house a little tongue of the St. Lawrence gulf ran up between the headlands until the wavelets of its tip almost lapped against Miss Hannah's kitchen doorstep. Beyond, to the north, was the great crescent of the gulf, whose murmur had been Miss Hannah's lullaby all her life. When people wondered to her how she could endure living in such a lonely place, she retorted that the loneliness was what she loved it for, and that the lighthouse star and the faraway call of the gulf had always been company enough for her and always would be ... until Ralph came back. When Ralph came home, of course, he might like a livelier place and they might move to town or up-country as he wished.

"Of course," said Miss Hannah with a proud smile, "a rich man mightn't fancy living away down here in a little grey house by the shore.

He'll be for building me a mansion, I expect, and I'd like it fine. But until he comes I must be contented with things as they are."

People always smiled to each other when Miss Hannah talked like this. But they took care not to let her see the smile.

Miss Hannah snipped her white and purple asters off ungrudgingly and sang, as she snipped, an old-fashioned song she had learned long ago in her youth. The day was one of October's rarest, and Miss Hannah loved fine days. The air was clear as golden-hued crystal, and all the slopes around her were mellow and hazy in the autumn sunshine. She knew that beyond those sunny slopes were woods glorying in crimson and gold, and she would have the delight of a walk through them later on when she went to carry the asters to sick Millie Starr at the Bridge. Flowers were all Miss Hannah had to give, for she was very poor, but she gave them with a great wealth of friendliness and goodwill.

Presently a wagon drove down her lane and pulled up outside of her white garden paling. Jacob Delancey was in it, with a pretty young niece of his who was a visitor from the city, and Miss Hannah, her sheaf of asters in her arms, went over to the paling with a sparkle of interest in her faded blue eyes. She had heard a great deal of the beauty of this strange girl. Prospect people had been talking of nothing else for a week, and Miss Hannah was filled with a harmless curiosity concerning her. She always liked to look at pretty people, she said; they did her as much good as her flowers.

"Good afternoon, Miss Hannah," said Jacob Delancey. "Busy with your flowers, as usual, I see."

"Oh, yes," said Miss Hannah, managing to stare with unobtrusive delight at the girl while she talked. "The frost will soon be coming now, you know; so I want to live among them as much as I can while they're here."

"That's right," assented Jacob, who made a profession of cordial agreement with everybody and would have said the same words in the same tone had Miss Hannah announced a predilection for living in the cellar. "Well, Miss Hannah, it's flowers I'm after myself just now. We're

having a bit of a party at our house tonight, for the young folks, and my wife told me to call and ask you if you could let us have a few for decoration.”

“Of course,” said Miss Hannah, “you can have these. I meant them for Millie, but I can cut the west bed for her.”

She opened the gate and carried the asters over to the buggy. Miss Delancey took them with a smile that made Miss Hannah remember the date forever.

“Lovely day,” commented Jacob genially.

“Yes,” said Miss Hannah dreamily. “It reminds me of the day Ralph went away twenty years ago. It doesn’t seem so long. Don’t you think he’ll be coming back soon, Jacob?”

“Oh, sure,” said Jacob, who thought the very opposite.

“I have a feeling that he’s coming very soon,” said Miss Hannah brightly. “It will be a great day for me, won’t it, Jacob? I’ve been poor all my life, but when Ralph comes back everything will be so different. He will be a rich man and he will give me everything I’ve always wanted. He said he would. A fine house and a carriage and a silk dress. Oh, and we will travel and see the world. You don’t know how I look forward to it all. I’ve got it all planned out, all I’m going to do and have. And I believe he will be here very soon. A man ought to be able to make a fortune in twenty years, don’t you think, Jacob?”

“Oh, sure,” said Jacob. But he said it a little uncomfortably. He did not like the job of throwing cold water, but it seemed to him that he ought not to encourage Miss Hannah’s hopes. “Of course, you shouldn’t think too much about it, Miss Hannah. He mightn’t ever come back, or he might be poor.”

“How can you say such things, Jacob?” interrupted Miss Hannah indignantly, with a little crimson spot flaming out in each of her pale cheeks. “You know quite well he will come back. I’m as sure of it as that I’m standing here. And he will be rich, too. People are always trying to hint just as you’ve done to me, but I don’t mind them. I know.”

She turned and went back into her garden with her head held high. But her sudden anger floated away in a whiff of sweetpea perfume that struck her in the face; she waved her hand in farewell to her callers and watched the buggy down the lane with a smile.

“Of course, Jacob doesn’t know, and I shouldn’t have snapped him up so quick. It’ll be my turn to crow when Ralph does come. My, but isn’t that girl pretty. I feel as if I’d been looking at some lovely picture. It just makes a good day of this. Something pleasant happens to me most every day and that girl is today’s pleasant thing. I just feel real happy and thankful that there are such beautiful creatures in the world and that we can look at them.”

“Well, of all the queer delusions!” Jacob Delancey was ejaculating as he and his niece drove down the lane.

“What is it all about?” asked Miss Delancey curiously.

“Well, it’s this way, Dorothy. Long ago Miss Hannah had a brother who ran away from home. It was before their father and mother died. Ralph Walworth was as wild a young scamp as ever was in Prospect and a spendthrift in the bargain. Nobody but Hannah had any use for him, and she just worshipped him. I must admit he was real fond of her too, but he and his father couldn’t get on at all. So finally he ups and runs away; it was generally supposed he went to the mining country. He left a note for Hannah bidding her goodbye and telling her that he was going to make his fortune and would come back to her a rich man. There’s never been a word heard tell of him since, and in my opinion it’s doubtful if he’s still alive. But Miss Hannah, as you saw, is sure and certain he’ll come back yet with gold dropping out of his pockets. She’s as sane as anyone everyway else, but there is no doubt she’s a little cracked on that p’int. If he never turns up she’ll go on hoping quite happy to her death. But if he should turn up and be poor, as is ten times likelier than anything else, I believe it’d most kill Miss Hannah. She’s terrible proud for all she’s so sweet, and you saw yourself how mad she got when I kind of hinted he mightn’t be rich. If he came back poor, after all her boasting about him, I don’t fancy he’d get much of a welcome from her. And she’d never hold up her head again,

that's certain. So it's to be hoped, say I, that Ralph Walworth never will turn up, unless he comes in a carriage and four, which is about as likely, in my opinion, as that he'll come in a pumpkin drawn by mice."

When October had passed and the grey November days came, the glory of Miss Hannah's garden was over. She was very lonely without her flowers. She missed them more this year than ever. On fine days she paced up and down the walks and looked sadly at the drooping, unsightly stalks and vines. She was there one afternoon when the northeast wind was up and doing, whipping the gulf waters into whitecaps and whistling up the inlet and around the grey eaves. Miss Hannah was mournfully patting a frosted chrysanthemum under its golden chin when she saw a man limping slowly down the lane.

"Now, who can that be?" she murmured. "It isn't any Prospect man, for there's nobody lame around here."

She went to the garden gate to meet him. He came haltingly up the slope and paused before her, gazing at her wistfully. He looked old and bent and broken, and his clothes were poor and worn. Who was he? Miss Hannah felt that she ought to know him, and her memory went groping back amongst all her recollections. Yet she could think of nobody but her father, who had died fifteen years before.

"Don't ye know me, Hannah?" said the man wistfully. "Have I changed so much as all that?"

"Ralph!"

It was between a cry and a laugh. Miss Hannah flew through the gate and caught him in her arms. "Ralph, my own dear brother! Oh, I always knew you'd come back. If you knew how I've looked forward to this day!" She was both laughing and crying now. Her face shone with a soft gladness. Ralph Walworth shook his head sadly.

"It's a poor wreck of a man I am come back to you, Hannah," he said. "I've never accomplished anything and my health's broken and I'm a cripple as ye see. For a time I thought I'd never show my face back here, such a failure as I be, but the longing to see you got too strong. It's naught but a wreck I am, Hannah."

“You’re my own dear brother,” cried Miss Hannah. “Do you think I care how poor you are? And if your health is poor I’m the one to nurse you up, who else than your only sister, I’d like to know! Come right in. You’re shivering in this wind. I’ll mix you a good hot currant drink. I knew them black currants didn’t bear so plentiful for nothing last summer. Oh, this is a good day and no mistake!”

In twenty-four hours’ time everybody in Prospect knew that Ralph Walworth had come home, crippled and poor. Jacob Delancey shook his head as he drove away from the station with Ralph’s shabby little trunk standing on end in his buggy. The station master had asked him to take it down to Miss Hannah’s, and Jacob did not fancy the errand. He was afraid Miss Hannah would be in a bad way and he did not know what to say to her.

She was in her garden, covering her pansies with seaweed, when he drove up, and she came to the garden gate to meet him, all smiles.

“So you’ve brought Ralph’s trunk, Mr. Delancey. Now, that was real good of you. He was going over to the station to see about it himself, but he had such a cold I persuaded him to wait till tomorrow. He’s lying down asleep now. He’s just real tired. He brought this seaweed up from the shore for me this morning and it played him out. He ain’t strong. But didn’t I tell you he was coming back soon? You only laughed at me, but I knew.”

“He isn’t very rich, though,” said Jacob jokingly. He was relieved to find that Miss Hannah did not seem to be worrying over this.

“That doesn’t matter,” cried Miss Hannah. “Why, he’s my brother! Isn’t that enough? I’m rich if he isn’t, rich in love and happiness. And I’m better pleased in a way than if he had come back rich. He might have wanted to take me away or build a fine house, and I’m too old to be making changes. And then he wouldn’t have needed me. I’d have been of no use to him. As it is, it’s just me he needs to look after him and coddle him. Oh, it’s fine to have somebody to do things for, somebody that belongs to you. I was just dreading the loneliness of the winter, and now it’s going to be such a happy winter. I declare last night Ralph and I sat up till morning talking over everything. He’s had a hard life of it. Bad luck

and illness right along. And last winter in the lumber woods he got his leg broke. But now he's come home and we're never going to be parted again as long as we live. I could sing for joy, Jacob."

"Oh, sure," assented Jacob cordially. He felt a little dazed. Miss Hannah's nimble change of base was hard for him to follow, and he had an injured sense of having wasted a great deal of commiseration on her when she didn't need it at all. "Only I kind of thought, we all thought, you had such plans."

"Well, they served their turn," interrupted Miss Hannah briskly. "They amused me and kept me interested till something real would come in their place. If I'd had to carry them out I dare say they'd have bothered me a lot. Things are more comfortable as they are. I'm happy as a bird, Jacob."

"Oh, sure," said Jacob. He pondered the business deeply all the way back home, but could make nothing of it.

"But I ain't obliged to," he concluded sensibly. "Miss Hannah's satisfied and happy and it's nobody else's concern. However, I call it a curious thing."

The Redemption of John Churchill

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John Churchill walked slowly, not as a man walks who is tired, or content to saunter for the pleasure of it, but as one in no haste to reach his destination through dread of it. The day was well on to late afternoon in mid-spring, and the world was abloom. Before him and behind him wound a road that ran like a red ribbon through fields of lush clovery green. The orchards scattered along it were white and fragrant, giving of their incense to a merry southwest wind; fence-corner nooks were purple with patches of violets or golden-green with the curly heads of young ferns. The roadside was sprinkled over with the gold dust of dandelions and the pale stars of wild strawberry blossoms. It seemed a day through which a man should walk lightly and blithely, looking the world and his fellows frankly in the face, and opening his heart to let the springtime in.

But John Churchill walked laggingly, with bent head. When he met other wayfarers or was passed by them, he did not lift his face, but only glanced up under his eyebrows with a furtive look that was replaced by a sort of shamed relief when they had passed on without recognizing him. Some of them he knew for friends of the old time. Ten years had not changed them as he had been changed. They had spent those ten years in freedom and good repute, under God's blue sky, in His glad air and sunshine. He, John Churchill, had spent them behind the walls of a prison.

His close-clipped hair was grey; his figure, encased in an ill-fitting suit of coarse cloth, was stooped and shrunken; his face was deeply lined; yet he was not an old man in years. He was only forty; he was thirty when he had been convicted of embezzling the bank funds for purposes of speculation and had been sent to prison, leaving behind a wife and father who were brokenhearted and a sister whose pride had suffered more than her heart.

He had never seen them since, but he knew what had happened in his absence. His wife had died two months later, leaving behind her a baby boy; his father had died within the year. He had killed them; he, John Churchill, who loved them, had killed them as surely as though his hand had struck them down in cold blood. His sister had taken the baby, his little son whom he had never seen, but for whom he had prepared such a birthright of dishonour. She had never forgiven her brother and she never wrote to him. He knew that she would have brought the boy up either in ignorance of his father's crime or in utter detestation of it. When he came back to the world after his imprisonment, there was not a single friendly hand to clasp his and help him struggle up again. The best his friends had been able to do for him was to forget him.

He was filled with bitterness and despair and a gnawing hatred of the world of brightness around him. He had no place in it; he was an ugly blot on it. He was a friendless, wifeless, homeless man who could not so much as look his fellow men in the face, who must henceforth consort with outcasts. In his extremity he hated God and man, burning with futile resentment against both.

Only one feeling of tenderness yet remained in his heart; it centred around the thought of his little son.

When he left the prison he had made up his mind what to do. He had a little money which his father had left him, enough to take him west. He would go there, under a new name. There would be novelty and adventure to blot out the memories of the old years. He did not care what became of him, since there was no one else to care. He knew in his heart that his future career would probably lead him still further and further downward, but that did not matter. If there had been anybody to care, he might have thought it worthwhile to struggle back to respectability and trample his shame under feet that should henceforth walk only in the ways of honour and honesty. But there was nobody to care. So he would go to his own place.

But first he must see little Joey, who must be quite a big boy now, nearly ten years old. He would go home and see him just once, even

although he dreaded meeting aversion in the child's eyes. Then, when he had bade him goodbye, and, with him, goodbye to all that remained to make for good in his desolated existence, he would go out of his life forever.

"I'll go straight to the devil then," he said sullenly. "That's where I belong, a jail-bird at whom everybody except other jail-birds looks askance. To think what I was once, and what I am now! It's enough to drive a man mad! As for repenting, bah! Who'd believe that I really repented, who'd give me a second chance on the faith of it? Not a soul. Repentance won't blot out the past. It won't give me back my wife whom I loved above everything on earth and whose heart I broke. It won't restore me my unstained name and my right to a place among honourable men. There's no chance for a man who has fallen as low as I have. If Emily were living, I could struggle for her sake. But who'd be fool enough to attempt such a fight with no motive and not one chance of success in a hundred. Not I. I'm down and I'll stay down. There's no climbing up again."

He celebrated his first day of freedom by getting drunk, although he had never before been an intemperate man. Then, when the effects of the debauch wore off, he took the train for Alliston; he would go home and see little Joey once.

Nobody at the station where he alighted recognized him or paid any attention to him. He was as a dead man who had come back to life to find himself effaced from recollection and his place knowing him no more. It was three miles from the station to where his sister lived, and he resolved to walk the distance. Now that the critical moment drew near, he shrank from it and wished to put it off as long as he could.

When he reached his sister's home he halted on the road and surveyed the place over its snug respectability of iron fence. His courage failed him at the thought of walking over that trim lawn and knocking at that closed front door. He would slip around by the back way; perhaps, who knew, he might come upon Joey without running the gauntlet of his sister's cold, offended eyes. If he might only find the boy and talk to him for a little

while without betraying his identity, meet his son's clear gaze without the danger of finding scorn or fear in it — his heart beat high at the thought.

He walked furtively up the back way between high, screening hedges of spruce. When he came to the gate of the yard, he paused. He heard voices just beyond the thick hedge, children's voices, and he crept as near as he could to the sound and peered through the hedge, with a choking sensation in his throat and a smart in his eyes. Was that Joey, could that be his little son? Yes, it was; he would have known him anywhere by his likeness to Emily. Their boy had her curly brown hair, her sensitive mouth, above all, her clear-gazing, truthful grey eyes, eyes in which there was never a shadow of falsehood or faltering.

Joey Churchill was sitting on a stone bench in his aunt's kitchen yard, holding one of his black-stockinged knees between his small, brown hands. Jimmy Morris was standing opposite to him, his back braced against the trunk of a big, pink-blossomed apple tree, his hands in his pockets, and a scowl on his freckled face. Jimmy lived next door to Joey and as a rule they were very good friends, but this afternoon they had quarrelled over the right and proper way to construct an Indian ambush in the fir grove behind the pighouse. The argument was long and warm and finally culminated in personalities. Just as John Churchill dropped on one knee behind the hedge, the better to see Joey's face, Jimmy Morris said scornfully:

"I don't care what you say. Nobody believes you. Your father is in the penitentiary."

The taunt struck home as it always did. It was not the first time that Joey had been twitted with his father by his boyish companions. But never before by Jimmy! It always hurt him, and he had never before made any response to it. His face would flush crimson, his lips would quiver, and his big grey eyes darken miserably with the shadow that was on his life; he would turn away in silence. But that Jimmy, his best beloved chum, should say such a thing to him; oh, it hurt terribly.

There is nothing so merciless as a small boy. Jimmy saw his advantage and vindictively pursued it.

“Your father stole money, that’s what he did! You know he did. I’m pretty glad my father isn’t a thief. Your father is. And when he gets out of prison, he’ll go on stealing again. My father says he will. Nobody’ll have anything to do with him, my father says. His own sister won’t have anything to do with him. So there, Joey Churchill!”

“There will somebody have something to do with him!” cried Joey hotly. He slid off the bench and faced Jimmy proudly and confidently. The unseen watcher on the other side of the hedge saw his face grow white and intense and set-lipped, as if it had been the face of a man. The grey eyes were alight with a steady, fearless glow.

“I’ll have something to do with him. He is my father and I love him. I don’t care what he did, I love him just as well as if he was the best man in the world. I love him better than if he was as good as your father, because he needs it more. I’ve always loved him ever since I found out about him. I’d write to him and tell him so, if Aunt Beatrice would tell me where to send the letter. Aunt Beatrice won’t ever talk about him or let me talk about him, but I think about him all the time. And he’s going to be a good man yet, yes, he is, just as good as your father, Jimmy Morris. I’m going to make him good. I made up my mind years ago what I would do and I’m going to do it, so there, Jimmy.”

“I don’t see what you can do,” muttered Jimmy, already ashamed of what he had said and wishing he had let Joey’s father alone.

“I’ll tell you what I can do!” Joey was confronting all the world now, with his head thrown back and his face flushed with his earnestness. “I can love him and stand by him, and I will. When he gets out of — of prison, he’ll come to see me, I know he will. And I’m just going to hug him and kiss him and say, ‘Never mind, Father. I know you’re sorry for what you’ve done, and you’re never going to do it any more. You’re going to be a good man and I’m going to stand by you.’ Yes, sir, that’s just what I’m going to say to him. I’m all the children he has and there’s nobody else to love him, because I know Aunt Beatrice doesn’t. And I’m going with him wherever he goes.”

“You can’t,” said Jimmy in a scared tone. “Your Aunt Beatrice won’t let you.”

“Yes, she will. She’ll have to. I belong to my father. And I think he’ll be coming pretty soon some way. I’m pretty sure the time must be ‘most up. I wish he would come. I want to see him as much as can be, ‘cause I know he’ll need me. And I’ll be proud of him yet, Jimmy Morris, yes, I’ll be just as proud as you are of your father. When I get bigger, nobody will call my father names, I can tell you. I’ll fight them if they do, yes, sir, I will. My father and I are going to stand by each other like bricks. Aunt Beatrice has lots of children of her own and I don’t believe she’ll be a bit sorry when I go away. She’s ashamed of my father ‘cause he did a bad thing. But I’m not, no, sir. I’m going to love him so much that I’ll make up to him for everything else. And you can just go home, Jimmy Morris, so there!”

Jimmy Morris went home, and when he had gone, Joey flung himself face downward in the grass and fallen apple blossoms and lay very still.

On the other side of the spruce hedge knelt John Churchill with bowed head. The tears were running freely down his face, but there was a new, tender light in his eyes. The bitterness and despair had fallen out of his heart, leaving a great peace and a dawning hope in their place. Bless that loyal little soul! There was something to live for after all — there was a motive to make the struggle worthwhile. He must justify his son’s faith in him; he must strive to make himself worthy of this sweet, pure, unselfish love that was offered to him, as a divine draught is offered to the parched lips of a man perishing from thirst. Aye, and, God helping him, he would. He would redeem the past. He would go west, but under his own name. His little son should go with him; he would work hard; he would pay back the money he had embezzled, as much of it as he could, if it took the rest of his life to do so. For his boy’s sake he must cleanse his name from the dishonour he had brought on it. Oh, thank God, there was somebody to care, somebody to love him, somebody to believe him when he said humbly, “I repent.” Under his breath he said, looking heavenward:

“God be merciful to me, a sinner.”

Then he stood up erectly, went through the gate and over the grass to the motionless little figure with its face buried in its arms.

“Joey boy,” he said huskily. “Joey boy.”

Joey sprang to his feet with tears still glistening in his eyes. He saw before him a bent, grey-headed man looking at him lovingly and wistfully. Joey knew who it was — the father he had never seen. With a glad cry of welcome he sprang into the outstretched arms of the man whom his love had already won back to God.

The Schoolmaster's Letters

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At sunset the schoolmaster went up to his room to write a letter to her. He always wrote to her at the same time — when the red wave of the sunset, flaming over the sea, surged in at the little curtainless window and flowed over the pages he wrote on. The light was rose-red and imperial and spiritual, like his love for her, and seemed almost to dye the words of the letters in its own splendid hues — the letters to her which she never was to see, whose words her eyes never were to read, and whose love and golden fancy and rainbow dreams never were to be so much as known by her. And it was because she never was to see them that he dared to write them, straight out of his full heart, taking the exquisite pleasure of telling her what he never could permit himself to tell her face to face. Every evening he wrote thus to her, and the hour so spent glorified the entire day. The rest of the hours — all the other hours of the commonplace day — he was merely a poor schoolmaster with a long struggle before him, one who might not lift his eyes to gaze on a star. But at this hour he was her equal, meeting her soul to soul, telling out as a man might all his great love for her, and wearing the jewel of it on his brow. What wonder indeed that the precious hour which made him a king, crowned with a mighty and unselfish passion, was above all things sacred to him? And doubly sacred when, as tonight, it followed upon an hour spent with her? Its mingled delight and pain were almost more than he could bear.

He went through the kitchen and the hall and up the narrow staircase with a glory in his eyes that thus were held from seeing his sordid surroundings. Link Houseman, sprawled out on the platform before the kitchen door, saw him pass with that rapt face, and chuckled. Link was ill enough to look at any time, with his sharp, freckled features and foxy eyes. When he chuckled his face was that of an unholy imp.

But the schoolmaster took no heed of him. Neither did he heed the girl whom he met in the hall. Her handsome, sullen face flushed crimson under the sting of his utter disregard, and her black eyes followed him up the stairs with a look that was not good to see.

“Sis,” whispered Link piercingly, “come out here! I’ve got a joke to tell you, something about the master and his girl. You ain’t to let on to him you know, though. I found it out last night when he was off to the shore. That old key of Uncle Jim’s was just the thing. He’s a softy, and no mistake.”

Upstairs in his little room, the schoolmaster was writing his letter. The room was as bare and graceless as all the other rooms of the farmhouse where he had boarded during his term of teaching; but it looked out on the sea, and was hung with such priceless tapestry of his iris dreams and visions that it was to him an apartment in a royal palace. From it he gazed afar on bays that were like great cups of sapphire brimming over with ruby wine for gods to drain, on headlands that were like amethyst, on wide sweeps of sea that were blue and far and mysterious; and ever the moan and call of the ocean’s heart came up to his heart as of one great, hopeless love and longing crying out to another love and longing, as great and hopeless. And here, in the rose-radiance of the sunset, with the sea-music in the dim air, he wrote his letter to her.

My Lady: How beautiful it is to think that there is nothing to prevent my loving you! There is much — everything — to prevent me from telling you that I love you. But nothing has any right to come between my heart and its own; it is permitted to love you forever and ever and serve and reverence you in secret and silence. For so much, dear, I thank life, even though the price of the permission must always be the secret and the silence.

I have just come from you, my lady. Your voice is still in my ears; your eyes are still looking into mine, gravely yet half smilingly, sweetly yet half provokingly. Oh, how dear and human and girlish and queenly you are — half saint and half very womanly woman! And how I love you with all there is of me to love — heart and soul and brain, every fibre of body and

spirit thrilling to the wonder and marvel and miracle of it! You do not know it, my sweet, and you must never know it. You would not even wish to know it, for I am nothing to you but one of many friends, coming into your life briefly and passing out of it, of no more account to you than a sunshiny hour, a bird's song, a bursting bud in your garden. But the hour and the bird and the flower gave you a little delight in their turn, and when you remembered them once before forgetting, that was their reward and blessing. That is all I ask, dear lady, and I ask that only in my own heart. I am content to love you and be forgotten. It is sweeter to love you and be forgotten than it would be to love any other woman and live in her lifelong remembrance: so humble has love made me, sweet, so great is my sense of my own unworthiness.

Yet love must find expression in some fashion, dear, else it is only pain, and hence these letters to you which you will never read. I put all my heart into them; they are the best and highest of me, the buds of a love that can never bloom openly in the sunshine of your life. I weave a chaplet of them, dear, and crown you with it. They will never fade, for such love is eternal.

It is a whole summer since I first met you. I had been waiting for you all my life before and did not know it. But I knew it when you came and brought with you a sense of completion and fulfilment. This has been the precious year of my life, the turning-point to which all things past tended and all things future must look back. Oh, my dear, I thank you for this year! It has been your royal gift to me, and I shall be rich and great forever because of it. Nothing can ever take it from me, nothing can mar it. It were well to have lived a lifetime of loneliness for such a boon — the price would not be too high. I would not give my one perfect summer for a generation of other men's happiness.

There are those in the world who would laugh at me, who would pity me, Una. They would say that the love I have poured out in secret at your feet has been wasted, that I am a poor weak fool to squander all my treasure of affection on a woman who does not care for me and who is as far above me as that great white star that is shining over the sea. Oh, my

dear, they do not know, they cannot understand. The love I have given you has not left me poorer. It has enriched my life unspeakably; it has opened my eyes and given me the gift of clear vision for those things that matter; it has been a lamp held before my stumbling feet whereby I have avoided snares and pitfalls of baser passions and unworthy dreams. For all this I thank you, dear, and for all this surely the utmost that I can give of love and reverence and service is not too much.

I could not have helped loving you. But if I could have helped it, knowing with just what measure of pain and joy it would brim my cup, I would have chosen to love you, Una. There are those who strive to forget a hopeless love. To me, the greatest misfortune that life could bring would be that I should forget you. I want to remember you always and love you and long for you. That would be unspeakably better than any happiness that could come to me through forgetting.

Dear lady, good night. The sun has set; there is now but one fiery dimple on the horizon, as if a golden finger had dented it — now it is gone; the mists are coming up over the sea.

A kiss on each of your white hands, dear. Tonight I am too humble to lift my thoughts to your lips.

The schoolmaster folded up his letter and held it against his cheek for a little space while he gazed out on the silver-shining sea with his dark eyes full of dreams. Then he took from his shabby trunk a little inlaid box and unlocked it with a twisted silver key. It was full of letters — his letters to Una. The first had been written months ago, in the early promise of a northern spring. They linked together the golden weeks of the summer. Now, in the purple autumn, the box was full, and the schoolmaster's term was nearly ended.

He took out the letters reverently and looked over them, now and then murmuring below his breath some passages scattered through the written pages. He had laid bare his heart in those letters, writing out what he never could have told her, even if his love had been known and returned, for dead and gone generations of stern and repressed forefathers laid their

unyielding fingers of reserve on his lips, and the shyness of dreamy, book-bred youth stemmed the language of eye and tone.

I will love you forever and ever. And even though you know it not, surely such love will hover around you all your life. Like an invisible benediction, not understood but dimly felt, guarding you from ill and keeping far from you all things and thoughts of harm and evil!

Sometimes I let myself dream. And in those dreams you love me, and we go out to meet life together. I have dreamed that you kissed me — dreamed it so reverently that the dream did your womanhood no wrong. I have dreamed that you put your hands in mine and said, “I love you.” Oh, the rapture of it!

We may give all we will if we do not ask for a return. There should be no barter in love. If, by reason of the greatness of my love for you, I were to ask your love in return, I should be a base creature. It is only because I am content to love and serve for the sake of loving and serving that I have the right to love you.

I have a memory of a blush of yours — a rose of the years that will bloom forever in my garden of remembrance. Tonight you blushed when I came upon you suddenly among the flowers. You were startled — perhaps I had broken too rudely on some girlish musing; and straightway your round, pale curve of cheek and your white arch of brow were made rosy as with the dawn of beautiful sunrise. I shall see you forever as you looked at that time. In my mad moments I shall dream, knowing all the while that it is only a dream, that you blushed with delight at my coming. I shall be able to picture forevermore how you would look at one you loved.

Tonight the moon was low in the west. It hung over the sea like a shallop of ruddy gold moored to a star in the harbour of the night. I lingered long and watched it, for I knew that you, too, were watching it from your window that looks on the sea. You told me once that you always watched the moon set. It has been a bond between us ever since.

This morning I rose at dawn and walked on the shore to think of you, because it seemed the most fitting time. It was before sunrise, and the world was virgin. All the east was a shimmer of silver and the morning

star floated in it like a dissolving pearl. The sea was a great miracle. I walked up and down by it and said your name over and over again. The hour was sacred to you. It was as pure and unspoiled as your own soul. Una, who will bring into your life the sunrise splendour and colour of love?

Do you know how beautiful you are, Una? Let me tell you, dear. You are tall, yet you have to lift your eyes a little to meet mine. Such dear eyes, Una! They are dark blue, and when you smile they are like wet violets in sunshine. But when you are pensive they are more lovely still — the spirit and enchantment of the sea at twilight passes into them then. Your hair has the gloss and brownness of ripe nuts, and your face is always pale. Your lips have a trick of falling apart in a half-smile when you listen. They told me before I knew you that you were pretty. Pretty! The word is cheap and tawdry. You are beautiful, with the beauty of a pearl or a star or a white flower.

Do you remember our first meeting? It was one evening last spring. You were in your garden. The snow had not all gone, but your hands were full of pale, early flowers. You wore a white shawl over your shoulders and head. Your face was turned upward a little, listening to a robin's call in the leafless trees above you. I thought God had never made anything so lovely and love-deserving. I loved you from that moment, Una.

This is your birthday. The world has been glad of you for twenty years. It is fitting that there have been bird songs and sunshine and blossom today, a great light and fragrance over land and sea. This morning I went far afield to a long, lonely valley lying to the west, girt round about with dim old pines, where feet of men seldom tread, and there I searched until I found some rare flowers meet to offer you. I sent them to you with a little book, an old book. A new book, savouring of the shop and marketplace, however beautiful it might be, would not do for you. So I sent the book that was my mother's. She read it and loved it — the faded roseleaves she placed in it are there still. At first, dear, I almost feared to send it. Would you miss its meaning? Would you laugh a little at the shabby volume with

its pencil marks and its roseleaves? But I knew you would not; I knew you would understand.

Today I saw you with the child of your sister in your arms. I felt as the old painters must have felt when they painted their Madonnas. You bent over his shining golden head, and on your face was the mother passion and tenderness that is God's finishing touch to the beauty of womanhood. The next moment you were laughing with him — two children playing together. But I had looked upon you in that brief space. Oh, the pain and joy of it!

It is so sweet, dear, to serve you a little, though it be only in opening a door for you to pass through, or handing you a book or a sheet of music! Love wishes to do so much for the beloved! I can do so little for you, but that little is sweet.

This evening I read to you the poem which you had asked me to read. You sat before me with your brown head leaning on your hands and your eyes cast down. I stole dear glances at you between the lines. When I finished I put a red, red rose from your garden between the pages and crushed the book close on it. That poem will always be dear to me, stained with the life-blood of a rose-like hour.

I do not know which is the sweeter, your laughter or your sadness. When you laugh you make me glad, but when you are sad I want to share in your sadness and soothe it. I think I am nearer to you in your sorrowful moods.

Today I met you by accident at the turn of the lane. Nothing told me that you were coming — not even the wind, that should have known. I was sad, and then all at once I saw you, and wondered how I could have been sad. You walked past me with a smile, as if you had tossed me a rose. I stood and watched you out of sight. That meeting was the purple gift the day gave me.

Today I tried to write a poem to you, Una, but I could not find words fine enough, as a lover could find no raiment dainty enough for his bride. The old words other men have used in singing to their loves seemed too worn and common for you. I wanted only new words, crystal clear or

coloured only by the iris of the light, not words that have been steeped and stained with all the hues of other men's thoughts. So I burned the verses that were so unworthy of you.

Una, some day you will love. You will watch for him; you will blush at his coming, be sad at his going. Oh, I cannot think of it!

Today I saw you when you did not see me. I was walking on the shore, and as I came around a rock you were sitting on the other side. I drew back a little and looked at you. Your hands were clasped over your knees; your hat had fallen back, and the sea wind was ruffling your hair. Your face was lifted to the sky, your lips were parted, your eyes were full of light. You seemed to be listening to something that made you happy. I crept gently away, that I might not mar your dream. Of what were you thinking, Una?

I must leave you soon. Sometimes I think I cannot bear it. Oh, Una, how selfish it is of me to wish that you might love me! Yet I do wish it, although I have nothing to offer you but a great love and all my willing work of hand and brain. If you loved me, I fear I should be weak enough to do you the wrong of wooing you. I want you so much, dear!

The schoolmaster added the last letter to the others and locked the box. When he unlocked it again, two days later, the letters were gone.

He gazed at the empty box with dilated eyes. At first he could not realize what had happened. The letters could not be gone! He must have made a mistake, have put them in some other place! With trembling fingers he ransacked his trunk. There was no trace of the letters. With a groan he dropped his face in his hands and tried to think.

His letters were gone — those precious letters, held almost too sacred for his own eyes to read after they were written — had been stolen from him! The inmost secrets of his soul had been betrayed. Who had done this hideous thing?

He rose and went downstairs. In the farmyard he found Link tormenting his dog. Link was happy only when he was tormenting something. He never had been afraid of anything in his life before, but now absolute terror took possession of him at sight of the schoolmaster's face. Physical strength and force had no power to frighten the sullen lad,

but all the irresistible might of a fine soul roused to frenzy looked out in the young man's blazing eyes, dilated nostrils, and tense white mouth. It cowed the boy, because it was something he could not understand. He only realized that he was in the presence of a force that was not to be trifled with.

"Link, where are my letters?" said the schoolmaster.

"I didn't take 'em, Master!" cried Link, crumpling up visibly in his sheer terror. "I didn't. I never teched 'em! It was Sis. I told her not to — I told her you'd be awful mad, but she wouldn't tend to me. It was Sis took 'em. Ask her, if you don't believe me."

The schoolmaster believed him. Nothing was too horrible to believe just then. "What has she done with them?" he said hoarsely.

"She — she sent 'em to Una Clifford," whimpered Link. "I told her not to. She's mad at you, cause you went to see Una and wouldn't go with her. She thought Una would be mad at you for writing 'em, cause the Cliffords are so proud and think themselves above everybody else. So she sent 'em. I — I told her not to."

The schoolmaster said not another word. He turned his back on the whining boy and went to his room. He felt sick with shame. The indecency of the whole thing revolted him. It was as if his naked heart had been torn from his breast and held up to the jeers of a vulgar world by the merciless hand of a scorned and jealous woman. He felt stunned as if by a physical blow.

After a time his fierce anger and shame died into a calm desperation. The deed was done beyond recall. It only remained for him to go to Una, tell her the truth, and implore her pardon. Then he must go from her sight and presence forever.

It was dusk when he went to her home. They told him that she was in the garden, and he found her there, standing at the curve of the box walk, among the last late-blooming flowers of the summer.

Have you thought from his letters that she was a wonderful woman of marvellous beauty? Not so. She was a sweet and slender slip of girlhood,

with girlhood's own charm and freshness. There were thousands like her in the world — thank God for it! — but only one like her in one man's eyes.

He stood before her mute with shame, his boyish face white and haggard. She had blushed crimson all over her dainty paleness at sight of him, and laid her hand quickly on the breast of her white gown. Her eyes were downcast and her breath came shortly.

He thought her silence the silence of anger and scorn. He wished that he might fling himself in the dust at her feet.

"Una — Miss Clifford — forgive me!" he stammered miserably. "I — I did not send them. I never meant that you should see them. A shameful trick has been played upon me. Forgive me!"

"For what am I to forgive you?" she asked gravely. She did not look up, but her lips parted in the little half-smile he loved. The blush was still on her face.

"For my presumption," he whispered. "I — I could not help loving you, Una. If you have read the letters you know all the rest."

"I have read the letters, every word," she answered, pressing her hand a little more closely to her breast. "Perhaps I should not have done so, for I soon discovered that they were not meant for me to read. I thought at first you had sent them, although the writing of the address on the packet did not look like yours; but even when I knew you did not I could not help reading them all. I do not know who sent them, but I am very grateful to the sender."

"Grateful?" he said wonderingly.

"Yes. I have something to forgive you, but not — not your presumption. It is your blindness, I think — and — and your cruel resolution to go away and never tell me of your — your love for me. If it had not been for the sending of these letters I might never have known. How can I forgive you for that?"

"Una!" he said. He had been very blind, but he was beginning to see. He took a step nearer and took her hands. She threw up her head and gazed, blushing, steadfastly, into his eyes. From the folds of her gown she drew forth the little packet of letters and kissed it.

“Your dear letters!” she said bravely. “They have given me the right to speak out. I will speak out! I love you, dear! I will be content to wait through long years until you can claim me. I — I have been so happy since your letters came!”

He put his arms around her and drew her head close to his. Their lips met.

The Story of Uncle Dick

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I had two schools offered me that summer, one at Rocky Valley and one at Bayside. At first I inclined to Rocky Valley; it possessed a railway station and was nearer the centres of business and educational activity. But eventually I chose Bayside, thinking that its country quietude would be a good thing for a student who was making schoolteaching the stepping-stone to a college course.

I had reason to be glad of my choice, for in Bayside I met Uncle Dick. Ever since it has seemed to me that not to have known Uncle Dick would have been to miss a great sweetness and inspiration from my life. He was one of those rare souls whose friendship is at once a pleasure and a benediction, showering light from their own crystal clearness into all the dark corners in the souls of others until, for the time being at least, they reflected his own simplicity and purity. Uncle Dick could no more help bringing delight into the lives of his associates than could the sunshine or the west wind or any other of the best boons of nature.

I had been in Bayside three weeks before I met him, although his farm adjoined the one where I boarded and I passed at a little distance from his house every day in my short cut across the fields to school. I even passed his garden unsuspectingly for a week, never dreaming that behind that rank of leafy, rustling poplars lay a veritable "God's acre" of loveliness and fragrance. But one day as I went by, a whiff of something sweeter than the odours of Araby brushed my face and, following the wind that had blown it through the poplars, I went up to the white paling and found there a trellis of honeysuckle, and beyond it Uncle Dick's garden. Thereafter I daily passed close by the fence that I might have the privilege of looking over it.

It would be hard to define the charm of that garden. It did not consist in order or system, for there was no trace of either, except, perhaps, in that

prim row of poplars growing about the whole domain and shutting it away from all idle and curious eyes. For the rest, I think the real charm must have been in its unexpectedness. At every turn and in every nook you stumbled on some miracle of which you had never dreamed. Or perhaps the charm was simply that the whole garden was an expression of Uncle Dick's personality.

In one corner a little green dory, filled with earth, overflowed in a wave of gay annuals. In the centre of the garden an old birchbark canoe seemed sailing through a sea of blossoms, with a many-coloured freight of geraniums. Paths twisted and turned among flowering shrubs, and clumps of old-fashioned perennials were mingled with the latest fads of the floral catalogues. The mid-garden was a pool of sunshine, with finely sifted winds purring over it, but under the poplars there were shadows and growing things that loved the shadows, crowding about the old stone benches at each side. Somehow, my daily glimpse of Uncle Dick's garden soon came to symbolize for me a meaning easier to translate into life and soul than into words. It was a power for good within me, making its influence felt in many ways.

Finally I caught Uncle Dick in his garden. On my way home one evening I found him on his knees among the rosebushes, and as soon as he saw me he sprang up and came forward with outstretched hand. He was a tall man of about fifty, with grizzled hair, but not a thread of silver yet showed itself in the ripples of his long brown beard. Later I discovered that his splendid beard was Uncle Dick's only vanity. So fine and silky was it that it did not hide the candid, sensitive curves of his mouth, around which a mellow smile, tinged with kindly, quizzical humour, always lingered. His face was tanned even more deeply than is usual among farmers, for he had an inveterate habit of going about hatless in the most merciless sunshine; but the line of forehead under his hair was white as milk, and his eyes were darkly blue and as tender as a woman's.

"How do you do, Master?" he said heartily. (The Bayside pedagogue was invariably addressed as "Master" by young and old.) "I'm glad to see

you. Here I am, trying to save my rosebushes. There are green bugs on 'em, Master — green bugs, and they're worrying the life out of me."

I smiled, for Uncle Dick looked very unlike a worrying man, even over such a serious accident as green bugs.

"Your roses don't seem to mind, Mr. Oliver," I said. "They are the finest I have ever seen."

The compliment to his roses, well-deserved as it was, did not at first engage his attention. He pretended to frown at me.

"Don't get into any bad habit of mistering me, Master," he said. "You'd better begin by calling me Uncle Dick from the start and then you won't have the trouble of changing. Because it would come to that — it always does. But come in, come in! There's a gate round here. I want to get acquainted with you. I have a taste for schoolmasters. I didn't possess it when I was a boy" (a glint of fun appeared in his blue eyes). "It's an acquired taste."

I accepted his invitation and went, not only into his garden but, as was proved later, into his confidence and affection. He linked his arm with mine and piloted me about to show me his pets.

"I potter about this garden considerable," he said. "It pleases the women folks to have lots of posies."

I laughed, for Uncle Dick was a bachelor and considered to be a hopeless one.

"Don't laugh, Master," he said, pressing my arm. "I've no woman folk of my own about me now, 'tis true. But all the girls in the district come to Uncle Dick when they want flowers for their little diversions. Besides — perhaps — sometimes—"

Uncle Dick broke off and stood in a brown study, looking at an old stump aflame with nasturtiums for fully three minutes. Later on I was to learn the significance of that pause and reverie.

I spent the whole evening with Uncle Dick. After we had explored the garden he took me into his house and into his "den." The house was a small white one and wonderfully neat inside, considering the fact that Uncle Dick was his own housekeeper. His "den" was a comfortable place,

its one window so shadowed by a huge poplar that the room had a grotto-like effect of emerald gloom. I came to know it well, for, at Uncle Dick's invitation, I did my studying there and browsed at will among his classics. We soon became close friends. Uncle Dick had always "chummed with the masters," as he said, but our friendship went deeper. For my own part, I preferred his company to that of any young man I knew. There was a perennial spring of youth in Uncle Dick's soul that yet had all the fascinating flavour of ripe experience. He was clever, kindly, humorous and, withal, so crystal clear of mind and heart that an atmosphere partaking of childhood hung around him.

I knew Uncle Dick's outward history as the Bayside people knew it. It was not a very eventful one. He had lost his father in boyhood; before that there had been some idea of Dick's going to college. After his father's death he seemed quietly to have put all such hopes away and settled down to look after the farm and take care of his invalid stepmother. This woman, as I learned from others, but never from Uncle Dick, had been a peevish, fretful, exacting creature, and for nearly thirty years Uncle Dick had been a very slave to her whims and caprices.

"Nobody knows what he had to put up with, for he never complained," Mrs. Lindsay, my landlady, told me. "She was out of her mind once and she was liable to go out of it again if she was crossed in anything. He was that good and patient with her. She was dreadful fond of him too, for all she did almost worry his life out. No doubt she was the reason he never married. He couldn't leave her and he knew no woman would go in there. Uncle Dick never courted anyone, unless it was Rose Lawrence. She was a cousin of my man's. I've heard he had a kindness for her; it was years ago, before I came to Bayside. But anyway, nothing came of it. Her father's health failed and he had to go out to California. Rose had to go with him, her mother being dead, and that was the end of Uncle Dick's love affair."

But that was not the end of it, as I discovered when Uncle Dick gave me his confidence. One evening I went over and, piloted by the sound of shrieks and laughter, found Uncle Dick careering about the garden, pursued by half a dozen schoolgirls who were pelting him with overblown

roses. At sight of the master my pupils instantly became prim and demure and, gathering up their flowery spoil, they beat a hasty retreat down the lane.

“Those little girls are very sweet,” said Uncle Dick abruptly. “Little blossoms of life! Have you ever wondered, Master, why I haven’t some of my own blooming about the old place instead of just looking over the fence of other men’s gardens, coveting their human roses?”

“Yes, I have,” I answered frankly. “It has been a puzzle to me why you, Uncle Dick, who seem to me fitted above all men I have ever known for love and husbandhood and fatherhood, should have elected to live your life alone.”

“It has not been a matter of choice,” said Uncle Dick gently. “We can’t always order our lives as we would, Master. I loved a woman once and she loved me. And we love each other still. Do you think I could bear life else? I’ve an interest in it that the Bayside folk know nothing of. It has kept youth in my heart and joy in my soul through long, lonely years. And it’s not ended yet, Master — it’s not ended yet! Some day I hope to bring a wife here to my old house — my wife, my rose of joy!”

He was silent for a space, gazing at the stars. I too kept silence, fearing to intrude into the holy places of his thought, although I was tingling with interest in this unsuspected outflowering of romance in Uncle Dick’s life.

After a time he said gently,

“Shall I tell you about it, Master? I mean, do you care to know?”

“Yes,” I answered, “I do care to know. And I shall respect your confidence, Uncle Dick.”

“I know that. I couldn’t tell you, otherwise,” he said. “I don’t want the Bayside folk to know — it would be a kind of desecration. They would laugh and joke me about it, as they tease other people, and I couldn’t bear that. Nobody in Bayside knows or suspects, unless it’s old Joe Hammond at the post office. And he has kept my secret, or what he knows of it, well. But somehow I feel that I’d like to tell you, Master.

“Twenty-five years ago I loved Rose Lawrence. The Lawrences lived where you are boarding now. There was just the father, a sickly man, and

Rose, my “Rose of joy,” as I called her, for I knew my Emerson pretty well even then. She was sweet and fair, like a white rose with just a hint of pink in its cup. We loved each other, but we couldn’t marry then. My mother was an invalid, and one time, before I had learned to care for Rose, she, the mother, had asked me to promise her that I’d never marry as long as she lived. She didn’t think then that she would live long, but she lived for twenty years, Master, and she held me to my promise all the time. Yes, it was hard” — for I had given an indignant exclamation—”but you see, Master, I had promised and I had to keep my word. Rose said I was right in doing it. She said she was willing to wait for me, but she didn’t know, poor girl, how long the waiting was to be. Then her father’s health failed completely, and the doctor ordered him to another climate. They went to California. That was a hard parting, Master. But we promised each other that we would be true, and we have been. I’ve never seen my Rose of joy since then, but I’ve had a letter from her every week. When the mother died, five years ago, I wanted to move to California and marry Rose. But she wrote that her father was so poorly she couldn’t marry me yet. She has to wait on him every minute, and he’s restless, and they move here and there — a hard life for my poor girl. So I had to take a new lease of patience, Master. One learns how to wait in twenty years. But I shall have her some day, God willing. Our love will be crowned yet. So I wait, Master, and try to keep my life and soul clean and wholesome and young for her.

“That’s my story, Master, and we’ll not say anything more about it just now, for I dare say you don’t exactly know what to say. But at times I’ll talk of her to you and that will be a rare pleasure to me; I think that was why I wanted you to know about her.”

He did talk often to me of her, and I soon came to realize what this faraway woman meant in his life. She was for him the centre of everything. His love was strong, pure, and idyllic — the ideal love of which the loftiest poets sing. It glorified his whole inner life with a strange, unflinching radiance. I found that everything he did was done with

an eye single to what she would think of it when she came. Especially did he put his love into his garden.

“Every flower in it stands for a thought of her, Master,” he said. “It is a great joy to think that she will walk in this garden with me some day. It will be complete then — my Rose of joy will be here to crown it.”

That summer and winter passed away, and when spring came again, lettering her footsteps with violets in the meadows and waking all the sleeping loveliness of old homestead gardens, Uncle Dick’s long deferred happiness came with her. One evening when I was in our “den,” mid-deep in study of old things that seemed musty and unattractive enough in contrast with the vivid, newborn, out-of-doors, Uncle Dick came home from the post office with an open letter in his hand. His big voice trembled as he said,

“Master, she’s coming home. Her father is dead and she has nobody in the world now but me. In a month she will be here. Don’t talk to me of it yet — I want to taste the joy of it in silence for a while.”

He hastened away to his garden and walked there until darkness fell, with his face uplifted to the sky, and the love rapture of countless generations shining in his eyes. Later on, we sat on one of the old stone benches and Uncle Dick tried to talk practically.

Bayside people soon found out that Rose Lawrence was coming home to marry Uncle Dick. Uncle Dick was much teased, and suffered under it; it seemed, as he had said, desecration. But the real goodwill and kindly feeling in the banter redeemed it.

He went to the station to meet Rose Lawrence the day she came. When I went home from school Mrs. Lindsay told me she was in the parlour and took me in to be introduced. I was bitterly disappointed. Somehow, I had expected to meet, not indeed a young girl palpitating with youthful bloom, but a woman of ripe maturity, dowered with the beauty of harmonious middle-age — the feminine counterpart of Uncle Dick. Instead, I found in Rose Lawrence a small, faded woman of forty-five, gowned in shabby black. She had evidently been very pretty once, but bloom and grace were gone. Her face had a sweet and gentle expression, but was tired and worn,

and her fair hair was plentifully streaked with grey. Alas, I thought compassionately, for Uncle Dick's dreams! What a shock the change to her must have given him! Could this be the woman on whom he had lavished such a life-wealth of love and reverence? I tried to talk to her, but I found her shy and timid. She seemed to me uninteresting and commonplace. And this was Uncle Dick's Rose of joy!

I was so sorry for Uncle Dick that I shrank from meeting him. Nevertheless, I went over after tea, fearing that he might misunderstand, nay, rather, understand, my absence. He was in the garden, and he came down the path where the buds were just showing. There was a smile on his face and the glory in his eyes was quite undimmed.

"Master, she's come. And she's not a bit changed. I feared she would be, but she is just the same — my sweet little Rose of joy!"

I looked at Uncle Dick in some amazement. He was thoroughly sincere, there was no doubt of that, and I felt a great throb of relief. He had found no disillusioning change. I saw Rose Lawrence merely with the cold eyes of the stranger. He saw her through the transfiguring medium of a love that made her truly his Rose of joy. And all was well.

They were married the next morning and walked together over the clover meadow to their home. In the evening I went over, as I had promised Uncle Dick to do. They were in the garden, with a great saffron sky over them and a glory of sunset behind the poplars. I paused unseen at the gate. Uncle Dick was big and splendid in his fine new wedding suit, and his faded little bride was hanging on his arm. Her face was upturned to him; it was a glorified face, so transformed by the tender radiance of love shining through it that I saw her then as Uncle Dick must always see her, and no longer found it hard to understand how she could be his Rose of joy. Happiness clothed them as a garment; they were crowned king and queen in the bridal realm of the springtime.

The Understanding of Sister Sara

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June First.

I began this journal last New Year's — wrote two entries in it and then forgot all about it. I came across it today in a rummage — Sara insists on my cleaning things out thoroughly every once in so long — and I'm going to keep it up. I feel the need of a confidant of some kind, even if it is only an inanimate journal. I have no other. And I cannot talk my thoughts over with Sara — she is so unsympathetic.

Sara is a dear good soul and I love her as much as she will let me. I am also very grateful to her. She brought me up when our mother died. No doubt she had a hard time of it, poor dear, for I never was easily brought up, perversely preferring to come up in my own way. But Sara did her duty unflinchingly and — well, it's not for me to say that the result does her credit. But it really does, considering the material she had to work with. I'm a bundle of faults as it is, but I tremble to think what I would have been if there had been no Sara.

Yes, I love Sara, and I'm grateful to her. But she doesn't understand me in the least. Perhaps it is because she is so much older than I am, but it doesn't seem to me that Sara could really ever have been young. She laughs at things I consider the most sacred and calls me a romantic girl, in a tone of humorous toleration. I am chilled and thrown back on myself, and the dreams and confidences I am bubbling over with have no outlet. Sara couldn't understand — she is so practical. When I go to her with some beautiful thought I have found in a book or poem she is quite likely to say, "Yes, yes, but I noticed this morning that the braid was loose on your skirt, Beatrice. Better go and sew it on before you forget again. 'A stitch in time saves nine.'"

When I come home from a concert or lecture, yearning to talk over the divine music or the wonderful new ideas with her, she will say, "Yes, yes,

but are you sure you didn't get your feet damp? Better go and change your stockings, my dear. 'An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.'"

So I have given up trying to talk things over with Sara. This old journal will be better.

Last night Sara and I went to Mrs. Trent's musicale. I had to sing and I had the loveliest new gown for the occasion. At first Sara thought my old blue dress would do. She said we must economize this summer and told me I was entirely too extravagant in the matter of clothes. I cried about it after I went to bed. Sara looked at me very sharply the next morning without saying anything. In the afternoon she went uptown and bought some lovely pale yellow silk organdie. She made it up herself — Sara is a genius at dressmaking — and it was the prettiest gown at the musicale. Sara wore her old grey silk made over. Sara doesn't care anything about dress, but then she is forty.

Walter Shirley was at the Trents'. The Shirleys are a new family here; they moved to Atwater two months ago. Walter is the oldest son and has been at college in Marlboro all winter so that nobody here knew him until he came home a fortnight ago. He is very handsome and distinguished-looking and everybody says he is so clever. He plays the violin just beautifully and has such a melting, sympathetic voice and the loveliest deep, dark, inscrutable eyes. I asked Sara when we came home if she didn't think he was splendid.

"He'd be a nice boy if he wasn't rather conceited," said Sara.

After that it was impossible to say anything more about Mr. Shirley.

I am glad he is going to be in Atwater all summer. We have so few really nice young men here; they go away just as soon as they grow up and those who stay are just the muffs. I wonder if I shall see Mr. Shirley soon again.

June Thirtieth.

It does not seem possible that it is only a month since my last entry. It seems more like a year — a delightful year. I can't believe that I am the same Beatrice Mason who wrote then. And I am not, either. She was just a simple little girl, knowing nothing but romantic dreams. I feel that I am

very much changed. Life seems so grand and high and beautiful. I want to be a true noble woman. Only such a woman could be worthy of — of — a fine, noble man. But when I tried to say something like this to Sara she replied calmly:

“My dear child, the average woman is quite good enough for the average man. If she can cook his meals decently and keep his buttons sewed on and doesn’t nag him he will think that life is a pretty comfortable affair. And that reminds me, I saw holes in your black lace stockings yesterday. Better go and darn them at once. ‘Procrastination is the thief of time.’”

Sara cannot understand.

Blanche Lawrence was married yesterday to Ted Martin. I thought it the most solemn and sacred thing I had ever listened to — the marriage ceremony, I mean. I had never thought much about it before. I don’t see how Blanche could care anything for Ted — he is so stout and dumpy; with shallow blue eyes and a little pale moustache. I must say I do not like fair men. But there is no doubt that he and Blanche love each other devotedly and that fact sufficed to make the service very beautiful to me — those two people pledging each other to go through life together, meeting its storm and sunshine hand in hand, thinking joy the sweeter because they shared it, finding sorrow sacred because it came to them both.

When Sara and I walked home from the church Sara said, “Well, considering the chances she has had, Blanche Lawrence hasn’t done so well after all.”

“Oh, Sara,” I cried, “she has married the man she loves and who loves her. What better is there to do? I thought it beautiful.”

“They should have waited another year at least,” said Sara severely. “Ted Martin has only been practising law for a year, and he had nothing to begin with. He can’t have made enough in one year in Atwater to justify him in setting up housekeeping. I think a man ought to be ashamed of himself to take a girl from a good home to an uncertainty like that.”

“Not if she loved him and was willing to share the uncertainty,” I said softly.

“Love won’t pay the butcher’s bill,” said Sara with a sniff, “and landlords have an unfeeling preference for money over affection. Besides, Blanche is a mere child, far too young to be burdened with the responsibilities of life.”

Blanche is twenty — two years older than I am. But Sara talks as if I were a mere infant.

July Thirtieth.

Oh, I am so happy! I wonder if there is another girl in the world as happy as I am tonight. No, of course there cannot be, because there is only one Walter!

Walter and I are engaged. It happened last night when we were sitting out in the moonlight under the silver maple on the lawn. I cannot write down what he said — the words are too sacred and beautiful to be kept anywhere but in my own heart forever and ever as long as I live. And I don’t remember just what I said. But we understood each other perfectly at last.

Of course Sara had to do her best to spoil things. Just as Walter had taken my hand in his and bent forward with his splendid earnest eyes just burning into mine, and my heart was beating so furiously, Sara came to the front door and called out, “Beatrice! Beatrice! Have you your rubbers on? And don’t you think it is too damp out there for you in that heavy dew? Better come into the house, both of you. Walter has a cold now.”

“Oh, we’ll be in soon, Sara,” I said impatiently. But we didn’t go in for an hour, and when we did Sara was cross, and after Walter had gone she told me I was a very silly girl to be so reckless of my health and risk getting pneumonia loitering out in the dew with a sentimental boy.

I had had some vague thoughts of telling Sara all about my new happiness, for it was so great I wanted to talk it over with somebody, but I couldn’t after that. Oh, I wish I had a mother! She could understand. But Sara cannot.

Walter and I have decided to keep our engagement a secret for a month — just our own beautiful secret unshared by anyone. Then before he goes back to college he is going to tell Sara and ask her consent. I don't think Sara will refuse it exactly. She really likes Walter very well. But I know she will be horrid and I just dread it. She will say I am too young and that a boy like Walter has no business to get engaged until he is through college and that we haven't known each other long enough to know anything about each other and that we are only a pair of romantic children. And after she has said all this and given a disapproving consent she will begin to train me up in the way a good housekeeper should go, and talk to me about table linen and the best way to manage a range and how to tell if a chicken is really a chicken or only an old hen. Oh, I know Sara! She will set the teeth of my spirit on edge a dozen times a day and rub all the bloom off my dear, only, little romance with her horrible practicalities. I know one must learn about those things of course and I do want to make Walter's home the best and dearest and most comfortable spot on earth for him and be the very best little wife and housekeeper I can be when the time comes. But I want to dream my dreams first and Sara will wake me up so early to realities.

This is why we determined to keep one month sacred to ourselves. Walter will graduate next spring — he is to be a doctor — and then he intends to settle down in Atwater and work up a practice. I am sure he will succeed for everyone likes him so much. But we are to be married as soon as he is through college because he has a little money of his own — enough to set up housekeeping in a modest way with care and economy. I know Sara will talk about risk and waiting and all that just as she did in Ted Martin's case. But then Sara does not understand.

Oh, I am so happy! It almost frightens me — I don't see how anything so wonderful can last. But it will last, for nothing can ever separate Walter and me, and as long as we are together and love each other this great happiness will be mine. Oh, I want to be so good and noble for his sake. I want to make life "one grand sweet song." I have gone about the house today feeling like a woman consecrated and set apart from other women

by Walter's love. Nothing could spoil it, not even when Sara scolded me for letting the preserves burn in the kettle because I forgot to stir them while I was planning out our life together. Sara said she really did not know what would happen to me some day if I was so careless and forgetful. But then, Sara does not understand.

August Twentieth.

It is all over. Life is ended for me and I do not know how I can face the desolate future. Walter and I have quarrelled and our engagement is broken. He is gone and my heart is breaking.

I hardly know how it began. I'm sure I never meant to flirt with Jack Ray. I never did flirt with him either, in spite of Walter's unmanly accusations. But Walter has been jealous of Jack all summer, although he knew perfectly well he needn't be, and two nights ago at the Morley dance poor Jack seemed so dull and unhappy that I tried to cheer him up a little and be kind to him. I danced with him three times and sat out another dance just to talk with him in a real sisterly fashion. But Walter was furious and last night when he came up he said horrid things — things no girl of any spirit could endure, and things he could never have said to me if he had really cared one bit for me. We had a frightful quarrel and when I saw plainly that Walter no longer loved me I told him that he was free and that I never wanted to see him again and that I hated him. He glared at me and said that I should have my wish — I never should see him again and he hoped he would never again meet such a faithless, fickle girl. Then he went away and slammed the front door.

I cried all night, but today I went about the house singing. I would not for the world let other people know how Walter has treated me. I will hide my broken heart under a smiling face bravely. But, oh, I am so miserable! Just as soon as I am old enough I mean to go away and be a trained nurse. There is nothing else left in life for me. Sara does not suspect that anything is wrong and I am so thankful she does not. She would not understand.

September Sixth.

Today I read this journal over and thought I would burn it, it is so silly. But on second thought I concluded to keep it as a reminder of how blind and selfish I was and how good Sara is. For I am happy again and everything is all right, thanks to Sara. The very day after our quarrel Walter left Atwater. He did not have to return to college for three weeks, but he went to visit some friends down in Charlottesville and I heard — Mollie Roach told me — Mollie Roach was always wild about Walter herself — that he was not coming back again, but would go right on to Marlboro from Charlottesville. I smiled squarely at Mollie as if I didn't care a particle, but I can't describe how I felt. I knew then that I had really been hoping that something would happen in three weeks to make our quarrel up. In a small place like Atwater people in the same set can't help meeting. But Walter had gone and I should never see him again, and what was worse I knew he didn't care or he wouldn't have gone.

I bore it in silence for three weeks, but I will shudder to the end of my life when I remember those three weeks. Night before last Sara came up to my room where I was lying on my bed with my face in the pillow. I wasn't crying — I couldn't cry. There was just a dreadful dull ache in everything. Sara sat down on the rocker in front of the window and the sunset light came in behind her and made a sort of nimbus round her head, like a motherly saint's in a cathedral.

"Beatrice," she said gently, "I want to know what the trouble is. You can't hide it from me that something is wrong. I've noticed it for some time. You don't eat anything and you cry all night — oh, yes, I know you do. What is it, dear?"

"Oh, Sara!"

I just gave a little cry, slipped from the bed to the floor, laid my head in her lap, and told her everything. It was such a relief, and such a relief to feel those good motherly arms around me and to realize that here was a love that would never fail me no matter what I did or how foolish I was. Sara heard me out and then she said, without a word of reproach or contempt, "It will all come out right yet, dear. Write to Walter and tell him you are sorry."

“Sara, I never could! He doesn’t love me any longer — he said he hoped he’d never see me again.”

“Didn’t you say the same to him, child? He meant it as little as you did. Don’t let your foolish pride keep you miserable.”

“If Walter won’t come back to me without my asking him he’ll never come, Sara,” I said stubbornly.

Sara didn’t scold or coax any more. She patted my head and kissed me and made me bathe my face and go to bed. Then she tucked me in just as she used to do when I was a little girl.

“Now, don’t cry, dear,” she said, “it will come right yet.”

Somehow, I began to hope it would when Sara thought so, and anyhow it was such a comfort to have talked it all over with her. I slept better than I had for a long time, and it was seven o’clock yesterday morning when I woke to find that it was a dull grey day outside and that Sara was standing by my bed with her hat and jacket on.

“I’m going down to Junction Falls on the 7:30 train to see Mr. Conway about coming to fix the back kitchen floor,” she said, “and I have some other business that may keep me for some time, so don’t be anxious if I’m not back till late. Give the bread a good kneading in an hour’s time and be careful not to bake it too much.”

That was a dismal day. It began to rain soon after Sara left and it just poured. I never saw a soul all day except the milkman, and I was really frantic by night. I never was so glad of anything as when I heard Sara’s step on the verandah. I flew to the front door to let her in — and there was Walter all dripping wet — and his arms were about me and I was crying on the shoulder of his mackintosh.

I only guessed then what I knew later on. Sara had heard from Mrs. Shirley that Walter was going to Marlboro that day without coming back to Atwater. Sara knew that he must change trains at Junction Falls and she went there to meet him. She didn’t know what train he would come on so she went to meet the earliest and had to wait till the last, hanging around the dirty little station at the Falls all day while it poured rain, and she hadn’t a thing to eat except some fancy biscuits she had bought on the

train. But Walter came at last on the 7:50 train and there was Sara to pounce on him. He told me afterwards that no angel could have been so beautiful a vision to him as Sara was, standing there on the wet platform with her tweed skirt held up and a streaming umbrella over her head, telling him he must come back to Atwater because Beatrice wanted him to.

But just at the moment of his coming I didn't care how he had come or who had brought him. I just realized that he was there and that was enough. Sara came in behind him. Walter's wet arms were about me and I was standing there with my thin-slippered feet in a little pool of water that dripped from his umbrella. But Sara never said a word about colds and dampness. She just smiled, went on into the sitting-room, and shut the door. Sara understood.

The Unforgotten One

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It was Christmas Eve, but there was no frost, or snow, or sparkle. It was a green Christmas, and the night was mild and dim, with hazy starlight. A little wind was laughing freakishly among the firs around Ingleside and rustling among the sere grasses along the garden walks. It was more like a night in early spring or late fall than in December; but it was Christmas Eve, and there was a light in every window of Ingleside, the glow breaking out through the whispering darkness like a flame-red blossom swung against the background of the evergreens; for the children were coming home for the Christmas reunion, as they always came — Fritz and Margaret and Laddie and Nora, and Robert's two boys in the place of Robert, who had died fourteen years ago — and the old house must put forth its best of light and good cheer to welcome them.

Doctor Fritz and his brood were the last to arrive, driving up to the hall door amid a chorus of welcoming barks from the old dogs and a hail of merry calls from the group in the open doorway.

"We're all here now," said the little mother, as she put her arms about the neck of her stalwart firstborn and kissed his bearded face. There were handshakings and greetings and laughter. Only Nanny, far back in the shadows of the firelit hall, swallowed a resentful sob, and wiped two bitter tears from her eyes with her little red hand.

"We're not all here," she murmured under her breath. "Miss Avis isn't here. Oh, how can they be so glad? How can they have forgotten?"

But nobody heard or heeded Nanny — she was only the little orphan "help" girl at Ingleside. They were all very good to her, and they were all very fond of her, but at the times of family reunion Nanny was unconsciously counted out. There was no bond of blood to unite her to them, and she was left on the fringe of things. Nanny never resented this

— it was all a matter of course to her; but on this Christmas Eve her heart was broken because she thought that nobody remembered Miss Avis.

After supper they all gathered around the open fireplace of the hall, hung with its berries and evergreens in honour of the morrow. It was their unwritten law to form a fireside circle on Christmas Eve and tell each other what the year had brought them of good and ill, sorrow and joy. The circle was smaller by one than it had been the year before, but none spoke of that. There was a smile on every face and happiness in every voice.

The father and mother sat in the centre, grey-haired and placid, their fine old faces written over with the history of gracious lives. Beside the mother, Doctor Fritz sat like a boy, on the floor, with his massive head, grey as his father's, on her lap, and one of his smooth, muscular hands, that were as tender as a woman's at the operating table, clasped in hers. Next to him sat sweet Nora, the twenty-year-old "baby," who taught in a city school; the rosy firelight gleamed lovingly over her girlish beauty of burnished brown hair, dreamy blue eyes, and soft, virginal curves of cheek and throat. Doctor Fritz's spare arm was about her, but Nora's own hands were clasped over her knee, and on one of them sparkled a diamond that had not been there at the last Christmas reunion. Laddie, who figured as Archibald only in the family Bible, sat close to the inglenook — a handsome young fellow with a daring brow and rollicking eyes. On the other side sat Margaret, hand in hand with her father, a woman whose gracious sweetness of nature enveloped her as a garment; and Robert's two laughing boys filled up the circle, looking so much alike that it was hard to say which was Cecil and which was Sid.

Margaret's husband and Fritz's wife were playing games with the children in the parlour, whence shrieks of merriment drifted out into the hall. Nanny might have been with them had she chosen, but she preferred to sit alone in the darkest corner of the hall and gaze with jealous, unhappy eyes at the mirthful group about the fire, listening to their story and jest and laughter with unavailing protest in her heart. Oh, how could they have forgotten so soon? It was not yet a full year since Miss Avis had gone. Last Christmas Eve she had sat there, a sweet and saintly presence, in the

inglenook, more, so it had almost seemed, the centre of the home circle than the father and mother; and now the December stars were shining over her grave, and not one of that heedless group remembered her; not once was her name spoken; even her old dog had forgotten her — he sat with his nose in Margaret's lap, blinking with drowsy, aged contentment at the fire.

"Oh, I can't bear it!" whispered Nanny, under cover of the hearty laughter which greeted a story Doctor Fritz had been telling. She slipped out into the kitchen, put on her hood and cloak, and took from a box under the table a little wreath of holly. She had made it out of the bits left over from the decorations. Miss Avis had loved holly; Miss Avis had loved every green, growing thing.

As Nanny opened the kitchen door something cold touched her hand, and there stood the old dog, wagging his tail and looking up at her with wistful eyes, mutely pleading to be taken, too.

"So you do remember her, Gyppy," said Nanny, patting his head. "Come along then. We'll go together."

They slipped out into the night. It was quite dark, but it was not far to the graveyard — just out through the evergreens and along a field by-path and across the road. The old church was there, with its square tower, and the white stones gleaming all around it. Nanny went straight to a shadowy corner and knelt on the sere grasses while she placed her holly wreath on Miss Avis's grave. The tears in her eyes brimmed over.

"Oh, Miss Avis! Miss Avis!" she sobbed. "I miss you so — I miss you so! It can't ever seem like Christmas to me without you. You were always so sweet and kind to me. There ain't a day passes but I think of you and all the things you used to say to me, and I try to be good like you'd want me to be. But I hate them for forgetting you — yes, I do! I'll never forget you, darling Miss Avis! I'd rather be here alone with you in the dark than back there with them."

Nanny sat down by the grave. The old dog lay down by her side with his forepaws on the turf and his eyes fixed on the tall white marble shaft. It was too dark for Nanny to read the inscription but she knew every word

of it: "In loving remembrance of Avis Maywood, died January 20, 1902, aged 45." And underneath the lines of her own choosing:

"Say not good night, but in some brighter clime Bid me good morning."

But they had forgotten her — oh, they had forgotten her already!

When half an hour had passed, Nanny was startled by approaching footsteps. Not wishing to be seen, she crept softly behind the headstones into the shadow of the willow on the farther side, and the old dog followed. Doctor Fritz, coming to the grave, thought himself alone with the dead. He knelt down by the headstone and pressed his face against it.

"Avis," he said gently, "dear Avis, I have come to visit your grave tonight because you seem nearer to me here than elsewhere. And I want to talk to you, Avis, as I have always talked to you every Christmastide since we were children together. I have missed you so tonight, dear friend and sympathizer — no words can tell how I have missed you — your welcoming handclasp and your sweet face in the firelight shadows. I could not bear to speak your name, the aching sense of loss was so bitter. Amid all the Christmas mirth and good fellowship I felt the sorrow of your vacant chair. Avis, I wanted to tell you what the year had brought to me. My theory has been proved; it has made me a famous man. Last Christmas, Avis, I told you of it, and you listened and understood and believed in it. Dear Avis, once again I thank you for all you have been to me — all you are yet. I have brought you your roses; they are as white and pure and fragrant as your life."

Other footsteps came so quickly on Doctor Fritz' retreating ones that Nanny could not rise. It was Laddie this time — gay, careless, thoughtless Laddie.

"Roses? So Fritz has been here! I have brought you lilies, Avis. Oh, Avis, I miss you so! You were so jolly and good — you understood a fellow so well. I had to come here tonight to tell you how much I miss you. It doesn't seem half home without you. Avis, I'm trying to be a better chap — more the sort of man you'd have me be. I've given the old set the go-by — I'm trying to live up to your standard. It would be easier if you

were here to help me. When I was a kid it was always easier to be good for awhile after I'd talked things over with you. I've got the best mother a fellow ever had, but you and I were such chums, weren't we, Avis? I thought I'd just break down in there tonight and put a damper on everything by crying like a baby. If anybody had spoken about you, I should have. Hello!"

Laddie wheeled around with a start, but it was only Robert's two boys, who came shyly up to the grave, half hanging back to find anyone else there.

"Hello, boys," said Laddie huskily. "So you've come to see her grave too?"

"Yes," said Cecil solemnly. "We — we just had to. We couldn't go to bed without coming. Oh, isn't it lonesome without Cousin Avis?"

"She was always so good to us," said Sid.

"She used to talk to us so nice," said Cecil chokily. "But she liked fun, too."

"Boys," said Laddie gravely, "never forget what Cousin Avis used to say to you. Never forget that you have got to grow up into men she'd be proud of."

They went away then, the boys and their boyish uncle; and when they had gone Nora came, stealing timidly through the shadows, starting at the rustle of the wind in the trees.

"Oh, Avis," she whispered. "I want to see you so much! I want to tell you all about it — about him. You would understand so well. He is the best and dearest lover ever a girl had. You would think so too. Oh, Avis, I miss you so much! There's a little shadow even on my happiness because I can't talk it over with you in the old way. Oh, Avis, it was dreadful to sit around the fire tonight and not see you. Perhaps you were there in spirit. I love to think you were, but I wanted to see you. You were always there to come home to before, Avis, dear."

Sobbing, she went away; and then came Margaret, the grave, strong Margaret.

“Dear cousin, dear to me as a sister, it seemed to me that I must come to you here tonight. I cannot tell you how much I miss your wise, clear-sighted advice and judgment, your wholesome companionship. A little son was born to me this past year, Avis. How glad you would have been, for you knew, as none other did, the bitterness of my childless heart. How we would have delighted to talk over my baby together, and teach him wisely between us! Avis, Avis, your going made a blank that can never be filled for me!”

Margaret was still standing there when the old people came.

“Father! Mother! Isn’t it too late and chilly for you to be here?”

“No, Margaret, no,” said the mother. “I couldn’t go to my bed without coming to see Avis’s grave. I brought her up from a baby — her dying mother gave her to me. She was as much my own child as any of you. And oh! I miss her so. You only miss her when you come home, but I miss her all the time — every day!”

“We all miss her, Mother,” said the old father, tremulously. “She was a good girl — Avis was a good girl. Good night, Avis!”

“Say not good night, but in some brighter clime bid her good morning,” quoted Margaret softly. “That was her own wish, you know. Let us go back now. It is getting late.”

When they had gone Nanny crept out from the shadows. It had not occurred to her that perhaps she should not have listened — she had been too shy to make her presence known to those who came to Avis’s grave. But her heart was full of joy.

“Oh, Miss Avis, I’m so glad, I’m so glad! They haven’t forgotten you after all, Miss Avis, dear, not one of them. I’m sorry I was so cross at them; and I’m so glad they haven’t forgotten you. I love them for it.”

Then the old dog and Nanny went home together.

The Wooing of Bessy

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When Lawrence Eastman began going to see Bessy Houghton the Lynnfield people shrugged their shoulders and said he might have picked out somebody a little younger and prettier — but then, of course, Bessy was well off. A two-hundred-acre farm and a substantial bank account were worth going in for. Trust an Eastman for knowing upon which side his bread was buttered.

Lawrence was only twenty, and looked even younger, owing to his smooth, boyish face, curly hair, and half-girlish bloom. Bessy Houghton was in reality no more than twenty-five, but Lynnfield people had the impression that she was past thirty. She had always been older than her years — a quiet, reserved girl who dressed plainly and never went about with other young people. Her mother had died when Bessy was very young, and she had always kept house for her father. The responsibility made her grave and mature. When she was twenty her father died and Bessy was his sole heir. She kept the farm and took the reins of government in her own capable hands. She made a success of it too, which was more than many a man in Lynnfield had done.

Bessy had never had a lover. She had never seemed like other girls, and passed for an old maid when her contemporaries were in the flush of social success and bloom.

Mrs. Eastman, Lawrence's mother, was a widow with two sons. George, the older, was the mother's favourite, and the property had been willed to him by his father. To Lawrence had been left the few hundreds in the bank. He stayed at home and hired himself to George, thereby adding slowly to his small hoard. He had his eye on a farm in Lynnfield, but he was as yet a mere boy, and his plans for the future were very vague until he fell in love with Bessy Houghton.

In reality nobody was more surprised over this than Lawrence himself. It had certainly been the last thing in his thoughts on the dark, damp night when he had overtaken Bessy walking home alone from prayer meeting and had offered to drive her the rest of the way.

Bessy assented and got into his buggy. At first she was very silent, and Lawrence, who was a bashful lad at the best of times, felt tongue-tied and uncomfortable. But presently Bessy, pitying his evident embarrassment, began to talk to him. She could talk well, and Lawrence found himself entering easily into the spirit of her piquant speeches. He had an odd feeling that he had never known Bessy Houghton before; he had certainly never guessed that she could be such good company. She was very different from the other girls he knew, but he decided that he liked the difference.

“Are you going to the party at Baileys’ tomorrow night?” he asked, as he helped her to alight at her door.

“I don’t know,” she answered. “I’m invited — but I’m all alone — and parties have never been very much in my line.”

There was a wistful note in her voice, and Lawrence detecting it, said hurriedly, not giving himself time to get frightened: “Oh, you’d better go to this one. And if you like, I’ll call around and take you.”

He wondered if she would think him very presumptuous. He thought her voice sounded colder as she said: “I am afraid that it would be too much trouble for you.”

“It wouldn’t be any trouble at all,” he stammered. “I’ll be very pleased to take you.”

In the end Bessy had consented to go, and the next evening Lawrence called for her in the rose-red autumn dusk.

Bessy was ready and waiting. She was dressed in what was for her unusual elegance, and Lawrence wondered why people called Bessy Houghton so plain. Her figure was strikingly symmetrical and softly curved. Her abundant, dark-brown hair, instead of being parted plainly and drawn back into a prim coil as usual, was dressed high on her head, and a creamy rose nestled amid the becoming puffs and waves. She wore black,

as she usually did, but it was a lustrous black silk, simply and fashionably made, with frost-like frills of lace at her firm round throat and dainty wrists. Her cheeks were delicately flushed, and her woodbrown eyes were sparkling under her long lashes.

She offered him a half-opened bud for his coat and pinned it on for him. As he looked down at her he noticed what a sweet mouth she had — full and red, with a half childlike curve.

The fact that Lawrence Eastman took Bessy Houghton to the Baileys' party made quite a sensation at that festal scene. People nodded and winked and wondered. "An old maid and her money," said Milly Fiske spitefully. Milly, as was well known, had a liking for Lawrence herself.

Lawrence began to "go with" Bessy Houghton regularly after that. In his single-mindedness he never feared that Bessy would misjudge his motives or imagine him to be prompted by mercenary designs. He never thought of her riches himself, and it never occurred to him that she would suppose he did.

He soon realized that he loved her, and he ventured to hope timidly that she loved him in return. She was always rather reserved, but the few favours that meant nothing from other girls meant a great deal from Bessy. The evenings he spent with her in her pretty sitting-room, their moonlight drives over long, satin-smooth stretches of snowy roads, and their walks home from church and prayer meeting under the winter stars, were all so many moments of supreme happiness to Lawrence.

Matters had gone thus far before Mrs. Eastman got her eyes opened. At Mrs. Tom Bailey's quilting party an officious gossip took care to inform her that Lawrence was supposed to be crazy over Bessy Houghton, who was, of course, encouraging him simply for the sake of having someone to beau her round, and who would certainly throw him over in the end since she knew perfectly well that it was her money he was after.

Mrs. Eastman was a proud woman and a determined one. She had always disliked Bessy Houghton, and she went home from the quilting resolved to put an instant stop to "all such nonsense" on her son's part.

“Where is Lawrie?” she asked abruptly; as she entered the small kitchen where George Eastman was lounging by the fire.

“Out in the stable grooming up Lady Grey,” responded her older son sulkily. “I suppose he’s gadding off to see Bessy Houghton again, the young fool that he is! Why don’t you put a stop to it?”

“I am going to put a stop to it,” said Mrs. Eastman grimly. “I’d have done it before if I’d known. You should have told me of it if you knew. I’m going out to see Lawrence right now.”

George Eastman muttered something inaudible as the door closed behind her. He was a short, thickset man, not in the least like Lawrence, who was ten years his junior. Two years previously he had made a furtive attempt to pay court to Bessy Houghton for the sake of her wealth, and her decided repulse of his advances was a remembrance that made him grit his teeth yet. He had hated her bitterly ever since.

Lawrence was brushing his pet mare’s coat until it shone like satin, and whistling “Annie Laurie” until the rafters rang. Bessy had sung it for him the night before. He could see her plainly still as she had looked then, in her gown of vivid red — a colour peculiarly becoming to her — with her favourite laces at wrist and throat and a white rose in her hair, which was dressed in the high, becoming knot she had always worn since the night he had shyly told her he liked it so.

She had played and sung many of the sweet old Scotch ballads for him, and when she had gone to the door with him he had taken both her hands in his and, emboldened by the look in her brown eyes, he had stooped and kissed her. Then he had stepped back, filled with dismay at his own audacity. But Bessy had said no word of rebuke, and only blushed hotly crimson. She must care for him, he thought happily, or else she would have been angry.

When his mother came in at the stable door her face was hard and uncompromising.

“Lawrie,” she said sharply, “where are you going again tonight? You were out last night.”

“Well, Mother, I promise you I wasn’t in any bad company. Come now, don’t quiz a fellow too close.”

“You are going to dangle after Bessy Houghton again. It’s time you were told what a fool you were making of yourself. She’s old enough to be your mother. The whole settlement is laughing at you.”

Lawrence looked as if his mother had struck him a blow in the face. A dull, purplish flush crept over his brow.

“This is some of George’s work,” he broke out fiercely. “He’s been setting you on me, has he? Yes, he’s jealous — he wanted Bessy himself, but she would not look at him. He thinks nobody knows it, but I do. Bessy marry him? It’s very likely!”

“Lawrie Eastman, you are daft. George hasn’t said anything to me. You surely don’t imagine Bessy Houghton would marry you. And if she would, she is too old for you. Now, don’t you hang around her any longer.”

“I will,” said Lawrence flatly. “I don’t care what anybody says. You needn’t worry over me. I can take care of myself.”

Mrs. Eastman looked blankly at her son. He had never defied or disobeyed her in his life before. She had supposed her word would be law. Rebellion was something she had not dreamed of. Her lips tightened ominously and her eyes narrowed.

“You’re a bigger fool than I took you for,” she said in a voice that trembled with anger. “Bessy Houghton laughs at you everywhere. She knows you’re just after her money, and she makes fun—”

“Prove it,” interrupted Lawrence undauntedly, “I’m not going to put any faith in Lynnfield gossip. Prove it if you can.”

“I can prove it. Maggie Hatfield told me what Bessy Houghton said to her about you. She said you were a lovesick fool, and she only went with you for a little amusement, and that if you thought you had nothing to do but marry her and hang up your hat there you’d find yourself vastly mistaken.”

Possibly in her calmer moments Mrs. Eastman might have shrunk from such a deliberate falsehood, although it was said of her in Lynnfield that she was not one to stick at a lie when the truth would not serve her

purpose. Moreover, she felt quite sure that Lawrence would never ask Maggie Hatfield anything about it.

Lawrence turned white to the lips, "Is that true, Mother?" he asked huskily.

"I've warned you," replied his mother, not choosing to repeat her statement. "If you go after Bessy any more you can take the consequences."

She drew her shawl about her pale, malicious face and left him with a parting glance of contempt.

"I guess that'll settle him," she thought grimly. "Bessy Houghton turned up her nose at George, but she shan't make a fool of Lawrence too."

Alone in the stable Lawrence stood staring out at the dull red ball of the winter sun with unseeing eyes. He had implicit faith in his mother, and the stab had gone straight to his heart. Bessy Houghton listened in vain that night for his well-known footfall on the verandah.

The next night Lawrence went home with Milly Fiske from prayer meeting, taking her out from a crowd of other girls under Bessy Houghton's very eyes as she came down the steps of the little church.

Bessy walked home alone. The light burned low in her sitting-room, and in the mirror over the mantel she saw her own pale face, with its tragic, pain-stricken eyes. Annie Hillis, her "help," was out. She was alone in the big house with her misery and despair.

She went dizzily upstairs to her own room and flung herself on the bed in the chill moonlight.

"It is all over," she said dully. All night she lay there, fighting with her pain. In the wan, grey morning she looked at her mirrored self with pitying scorn — at the pallid face, the lifeless features, the dispirited eyes with their bluish circles.

"What a fool I have been to imagine he could care for me!" she said bitterly. "He has only been amusing himself with my folly. And to think that I let him kiss me the other night!"

She thought of that kiss with a pitiful shame. She hated herself for the weakness that could not check her tears. Her lonely life had been

brightened by the companionship of her young lover. The youth and girlhood of which fate had cheated her had come to her with love; the future had looked rosy with promise; now it had darkened with dourness and greyness.

Maggie Hatfield came that day to sew. Bessy had intended to have a dark-blue silk made up and an evening waist of pale pink cashmere. She had expected to wear the latter at a party which was to come off a fortnight later, and she had got it to please Lawrence, because he had told her that pink was his favourite colour. She would have neither it nor the silk made up now. She put them both away and instead brought out an ugly pattern of snuff-brown stuff, bought years before and never used.

“But where is your lovely pink, Bessy?” asked the dressmaker. “Aren’t you going to have it for the party?”

“No, I’m not going to have it made up at all,” said Bessy listlessly. “It’s too gay for me. I was foolish to think it would ever suit me. This brown will do for a spring suit. It doesn’t make much difference what I wear.”

Maggie Hatfield, who had not been at prayer meeting the night beforehand knew nothing of what had occurred, looked at her curiously, wondering what Lawrence Eastman could see in her to be as crazy about her as some people said he was. Bessy was looking her oldest and plainest just then, with her hair combed severely back from her pale, dispirited face.

“It must be her money he is after,” thought the dressmaker. “She looks over thirty, and she can’t pretend to be pretty. I believe she thinks a lot of him, though.”

For the most part, Lynnfield people believed that Bessy had thrown Lawrence over. This opinion was borne out by his woebegone appearance. He was thin and pale; his face had lost its youthful curves and looked hard and mature. He was moody and taciturn and his speech and manner were marked by a new cynicism.

In April a well-to-do storekeeper from an adjacent village began to court Bessy Houghton. He was over fifty, and had never been a handsome

man in his best days, but Lynnfield oracles opined that Bessy would take him. She couldn't expect to do any better, they said, and she was looking terribly old and dowdy all at once.

In June Maggie Hatfield went to the Eastmans' to sew. The first bit of news she imparted to Mrs. Eastman was that Bessy Houghton had refused Jabez Lea — at least, he didn't come to see her any more.

Mrs. Eastman twitched her thread viciously. "Bessy Houghton was born an old maid," she said sharply. "She thinks nobody is good enough for her, that is what's the matter. Lawrence got some silly boy-notion into his head last winter, but I soon put a stop to that."

"I always had an idea that Bessy thought a good deal of Lawrence," said Maggie. "She has never been the same since he left off going with her. I was up there the morning after that prayer-meeting night people talked so much of, and she looked positively dreadful, as if she hadn't slept a wink the whole night."

"Nonsense!" said Mrs. Eastman decisively. "She would never think of taking a boy like him when she'd turned up her nose at better men. And I didn't want her for a daughter-in-law anyhow. I can't bear her. So I put my foot down in time. Lawrence sulked for a spell, of course — boy-fashion — and he's been as fractious as a spoiled baby ever since."

"Well, I dare say you're right," assented the dressmaker. "But I must say I had always imagined that Bessy had a great notion of Lawrence. Of course, she's so quiet it is hard to tell. She never says a word about herself."

There was an unsuspected listener to this conversation. Lawrence had come in from the field for a drink, and was standing in the open kitchen doorway, within easy earshot of the women's shrill tones.

He had never doubted his mother's word at any time in his life, but now he knew beyond doubt that there had been crooked work somewhere. He shrank from believing his mother untrue, yet where else could the crookedness come in?

When Mrs. Eastman had gone to the kitchen to prepare dinner, Maggie Hatfield was startled by the appearance of Lawrence at the low open

window of the sitting-room.

“Mercy me, how you scared me!” she exclaimed nervously.

“Maggie,” said Lawrence seriously, “I want to ask you a question. Did Bessy Houghton ever say anything to you about me or did you ever say that she did? Give me a straight answer.”

The dressmaker peered at him curiously.

“No. Bessy never so much as mentioned your name to me,” she said, “and I never heard that she did to anyone else. Why?”

“Thank you. That was all I wanted to know,” said Lawrence, ignoring her question, and disappearing as suddenly as he had come.

That evening at moonrise he passed through the kitchen dressed in his Sunday best. His mother met him at the door.

“Where are you going?” she asked querulously.

Lawrence looked her squarely in the face with accusing eyes, before which her own quailed.

“I’m going to see Bessy Houghton, Mother,” he said sternly, “and to ask her pardon for believing the lie that has kept us apart so long.”

Mrs. Eastman flushed crimson and opened her lips to speak. But something in Lawrence’s grave, white face silenced her. She turned away without a word, knowing in her secret soul that her youngest-born was lost to her forever.

Lawrence found Bessy in the orchard under apple trees that were pyramids of pearly bloom. She looked at him through the twilight with reproach and aloofness in her eyes. But he put out his hands and caught her reluctant ones in a masterful grasp.

“Listen to me, Bessy. Don’t condemn me before you’ve heard me. I’ve been to blame for believing falsehoods about you, but I believe them no longer, and I’ve come to ask you to forgive me.”

He told his story simply and straightforwardly. In strict justice he could not keep his mother’s name out of it, but he merely said she had been mistaken. Perhaps Bessy understood none the less. She knew what Mrs. Eastman’s reputation in Lynnfield was.

“You might have had a little more faith in me,” she cried reproachfully.

“I know — I know. But I was beside myself with pain and wretchedness. Oh, Bessy, won’t you forgive me? I love you so! If you send me away I’ll go to the dogs. Forgive me, Bessy.”

And she, being a woman, did forgive him.

“I’ve loved you from the first, Lawrence,” she said, yielding to his kiss.

Their Girl Josie

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When Paul Morgan, a rising young lawyer with justifiable political aspirations, married Elinor Ashton, leading woman at the Green Square Theatre, his old schoolmates and neighbours back in Spring Valley held up their hands in horror, and his father and mother up in the weather-grey Morgan homestead were crushed in the depths of humiliation. They had been too proud of Paul ... their only son and such a clever fellow ... and this was their punishment! He had married an actress! To Cyrus and Deborah Morgan, brought up and nourished all their lives on the strictest and straightest of old-fashioned beliefs both as regards this world and that which is to come, this was a tragedy.

They could not be brought to see it in any other light. As their neighbours said, "Cy Morgan never hilt up his head again after Paul married the play-acting woman." But perhaps it was less his humiliation than his sorrow which bowed down his erect form and sprinkled grey in his thick black hair that fifty years had hitherto spared. For Paul, forgetting the sacrifices his mother and father had made for him, had bitterly resented the letter of protest his father had written concerning his marriage. He wrote one angry, unfilial letter back and then came silence. Between grief and shame Cyrus and Deborah Morgan grew old rapidly in the year that followed.

At the end of that time Elinor Morgan, the mother of an hour, died; three months later Paul Morgan was killed in a railroad collision. After the funeral Cyrus Morgan brought home to his wife their son's little daughter, Joscelyn Morgan.

Her aunt, Annice Ashton, had wanted the baby. Cyrus Morgan had been almost rude in his refusal. His son's daughter should never be brought up by an actress; it was bad enough that her mother had been one and had

doubtless transmitted the taint to her child. But in Spring Valley, if anywhere, it might be eradicated.

At first neither Cyrus nor Deborah cared much for Joscelyn. They resented her parentage, her strange, un-Morgan-like name, and the pronounced resemblance she bore to the dark-haired, dark-eyed mother they had never seen. All the Morgans had been fair. If Joscelyn had had Paul's blue eyes and golden curls her grandfather and grandmother would have loved her sooner.

But the love came ... it had to. No living mortal could have resisted Joscelyn. She was the most winsome and lovable little mite of babyhood that ever toddled. Her big dark eyes overflowed with laughter before she could speak, her puckered red mouth broke constantly into dimples and cooing sounds. She had ways that no orthodox Spring Valley baby ever thought of having. Every smile was a caress, every gurgle of attempted speech a song. Her grandparents came to worship her and were stricter than ever with her by reason of their love. Because she was so dear to them she must be saved from her mother's blood.

Joscelyn shot up through a roly-poly childhood into slim, bewitching girlhood in a chill repressive atmosphere. Cyrus and Deborah were nothing if not thorough. The name of Joscelyn's mother was never mentioned to her; she was never called anything but Josie, which sounded more "Christian-like" than Joscelyn; and all the flowering out of her alien beauty was repressed as far as might be in the plainest and dullest of dresses and the primmest arrangement possible to riotous ripe-brown curls.

The girl was never allowed to visit her Aunt Annice, although frequently invited. Miss Ashton, however, wrote to her occasionally, and every Christmas sent a box of presents which even Cyrus and Deborah Morgan could not forbid her to accept, although they looked with disapproving eyes and ominously set lips at the dainty, frivolous trifles the actress woman sent. They would have liked to cast those painted fans and lace frills and beflounced lingerie into the fire as if they had been infected rags from a pest-house.

The path thus set for Joscelyn's dancing feet to walk in was indeed sedate and narrow. She was seldom allowed to mingle with the young people of even quiet, harmless Spring Valley; she was never allowed to attend local concerts, much less take part in them; she was forbidden to read novels, and Cyrus Morgan burned an old copy of Shakespeare which Paul had given him years ago and which he had himself read and treasured, lest its perusal should awaken unlawful instincts in Joscelyn's heart. The girl's passion for reading was so marked that her grandparents felt that it was their duty to repress it as far as lay in their power.

But Joscelyn's vitality was such that all her bonds and bands served but little to check or retard the growth of her rich nature. Do what they might they could not make a Morgan of her. Her every step was a dance, her every word and gesture full of a grace and virility that filled the old folks with uneasy wonder. She seemed to them charged with dangerous tendencies all the more potent from repression. She was sweet-tempered and sunny, truthful and modest, but she was as little like the trim, simple Spring Valley girls as a crimson rose is like a field daisy, and her unlikeness bore heavily on her grandparents.

Yet they loved her and were proud of her. "Our girl Josie," as they called her, was more to them than they would have admitted even to themselves, and in the main they were satisfied with her, although the grandmother grumbled because Josie did not take kindly to patchwork and rug-making and the grandfather would fain have toned down that exuberance of beauty and vivacity into the meeker pattern of maidenhood he had been accustomed to.

When Joscelyn was seventeen Deborah Morgan noticed a change in her. The girl became quieter and more brooding, falling at times into strange, idle reveries, with her hands clasped over her knee and her big eyes fixed unseeingly on space; or she would creep away for solitary rambles in the beech wood, going away drooping and returning with dusky glowing cheeks and a nameless radiance, as of some newly discovered power, shining through every muscle and motion. Mrs. Morgan thought the child needed a tonic and gave her sulphur and molasses.

One day the revelation came. Cyrus and Deborah had driven across the valley to visit their married daughter. Not finding her at home they returned. Mrs. Morgan went into the house while her husband went to the stable. Joscelyn was not in the kitchen, but the grandmother heard the sound of voices and laughter in the sitting room across the hall.

“What company has Josie got?” she wondered, as she opened the hall door and paused for a moment on the threshold to listen. As she listened her old face grew grey and pinched; she turned noiselessly and left the house, and flew to her husband as one distracted.

“Cyrus, Josie is play-acting in the room ... laughing and reciting and going on. I heard her. Oh, I’ve always feared it would break out in her and it has! Come you and listen to her.”

The old couple crept through the kitchen and across the hall to the open parlour door as if they were stalking a thief. Joscelyn’s laugh rang out as they did so ... a mocking, triumphant peal. Cyrus and Deborah shivered as if they had heard sacrilege.

Joscelyn had put on a trailing, clinging black skirt which her aunt had sent her a year ago and which she had never been permitted to wear. It transformed her into a woman. She had cast aside her waist of dark plum-coloured homespun and wrapped a silken shawl about herself until only her beautiful arms and shoulders were left bare. Her hair, glossy and brown, with burnished red lights where the rays of the dull autumn sun struck on it through the window, was heaped high on her head and held in place by a fillet of pearl beads. Her cheeks were crimson, her whole body from head to foot instinct and alive with a beauty that to Cyrus and Deborah, as they stood mute with horror in the open doorway, seemed akin to some devilish enchantment.

Joscelyn, rapt away from her surroundings, did not perceive her grandparents. Her face was turned from them and she was addressing an unseen auditor in passionate denunciation. She spoke, moved, posed, gesticulated, with an inborn genius shining through every motion and tone like an illuminating lamp.

“Josie, what are you doing?”

It was Cyrus who spoke, advancing into the room like a stern, hard impersonation of judgment. Joscelyn's outstretched arm fell to her side and she turned sharply around; fear came into her face and the light went out of it. A moment before she had been a woman, splendid, unafraid; now she was again the schoolgirl, too confused and shamed to speak.

"What are you doing, Josie?" asked her grandfather again, "dressed up in that indecent manner and talking and twisting to yourself?"

Joscelyn's face, that had grown pale, flamed scarlet again. She lifted her head proudly.

"I was trying Aunt Annice's part in her new play," she answered. "I have not been doing anything wrong, Grandfather."

"Wrong! It's your mother's blood coming out in you, girl, in spite of all our care! Where did you get that play?"

"Aunt Annice sent it to me," answered Joscelyn, casting a quick glance at the book on the table. Then, when her grandfather picked it up gingerly, as if he feared contamination, she added quickly, "Oh, give it to me, please, Grandfather. Don't take it away."

"I am going to burn it," said Cyrus Morgan sternly.

"Oh, don't, Grandfather," cried Joscelyn, with a sob in her voice. "Don't burn it, please. I ... I ... won't practise out of it any more. I'm sorry I've displeased you. Please give me my book."

"No," was the stern reply. "Go to your room, girl, and take off that rig. There is to be no more play-acting in my house, remember that."

He flung the book into the fire that was burning in the grate. For the first time in her life Joscelyn flamed out into passionate defiance.

"You are cruel and unjust, Grandfather. I have done no wrong ... it is not doing wrong to develop the one gift I have. It's the only thing I can do ... and I am going to do it. My mother was an actress and a good woman. So is Aunt Annice. So I mean to be."

"Oh, Josie, Josie," said her grandmother in a scared voice. Her grandfather only repeated sternly, "Go, take that rig off, girl, and let us hear no more of this."

Joscelyn went but she left consternation behind her. Cyrus and Deborah could not have been more shocked if they had discovered the girl robbing her grandfather's desk. They talked the matter over bitterly at the kitchen hearth that night.

"We haven't been strict enough with the girl, Mother," said Cyrus angrily. "We'll have to be stricter if we don't want to have her disgracing us. Did you hear how she defied me? 'So I mean to be,' she says. Mother, we'll have trouble with that girl yet."

"Don't be too harsh with her, Pa ... it'll maybe only drive her to worse," sobbed Deborah.

"I ain't going to be harsh. What I do is for her own good, you know that, Mother. Josie is as dear to me as she is to you, but we've got to be stricter with her."

They were. From that day Josie was watched and distrusted. She was never permitted to be alone. There were no more solitary walks. She felt herself under the surveillance of cold, unsympathetic eyes every moment and her very soul writhed. Joscelyn Morgan, the high-spirited daughter of high-spirited parents, could not long submit to such treatment. It might have passed with a child; to a woman, thrilling with life and conscious power to her very fingertips, it was galling beyond measure. Joscelyn rebelled, but she did nothing secretly ... that was not her nature. She wrote to her Aunt Annice, and when she received her reply she went straight and fearlessly to her grandparents with it.

"Grandfather, this letter is from my aunt. She wishes me to go and live with her and prepare for the stage. I told her I wished to do so. I am going."

Cyrus and Deborah looked at her in mute dismay.

"I know you despise the profession of an actress," the girl went on with heightened colour. "I am sorry you think so about it because it is the only one open to me. I must go ... I must."

"Yes, you must," said Cyrus cruelly. "It's in your blood ... your bad blood, girl."

“My blood isn’t bad,” cried Joscelyn proudly. “My mother was a sweet, true, good woman. You are unjust, Grandfather. But I don’t want you to be angry with me. I love you both and I am very grateful indeed for all your kindness to me. I wish that you could understand what....”

“We understand enough,” interrupted Cyrus harshly. “This is all I have to say. Go to your play-acting aunt if you want to. Your grandmother and me won’t hinder you. But you’ll come back here no more. We’ll have nothing further to do with you. You can choose your own way and walk in it.”

With this dictum Joscelyn went from Spring Valley. She clung to Deborah and wept at parting, but Cyrus did not even say goodbye to her. On the morning of her departure he went away on business and did not return until evening.

Joscelyn went on the stage. Her aunt’s influence and her mother’s fame helped her much. She missed the hard experiences that come to the unassisted beginner. But her own genius must have won in any case. She had all her mother’s gifts, deepened by her inheritance of Morgan intensity and sincerity ... much, too, of the Morgan firmness of will. When Joscelyn Morgan was twenty-two she was famous over two continents.

When Cyrus Morgan returned home on the evening after his granddaughter’s departure he told his wife that she was never to mention the girl’s name in his hearing again. Deborah obeyed. She thought her husband was right, albeit she might in her own heart deplore the necessity of such a decree. Joscelyn had disgraced them; could that be forgiven?

Nevertheless both the old people missed her terribly. The house seemed to have lost its soul with that vivid, ripely tinted young life. They got their married daughter’s oldest girl, Pauline, to come and stay with them. Pauline was a quiet, docile maiden, industrious and commonplace — just such a girl as they had vainly striven to make of Joscelyn, to whom Pauline had always been held up as a model. Yet neither Cyrus nor Deborah took to her, and they let her go unregretfully when they found that she wished to return home.

“She hasn’t any of Josie’s gimp,” was old Cyrus’s unspoken fault. Deborah spoke, but all she said was, “Polly’s a good girl, Father, only she hasn’t any snap.”

Joscelyn wrote to Deborah occasionally, telling her freely of her plans and doings. If it hurt the girl that no notice was ever taken of her letters she still wrote them. Deborah read the letters grimly and then left them in Cyrus’s way. Cyrus would not read them at first; later on he read them stealthily when Deborah was out of the house.

When Joscelyn began to succeed she sent to the old farmhouse papers and magazines containing her photographs and criticisms of her plays and acting. Deborah cut them out and kept them in her upper bureau drawer with Joscelyn’s letters. Once she overlooked one and Cyrus found it when he was kindling the fire. He got the scissors and cut it out carefully. A month later Deborah discovered it between the leaves of the family Bible.

But Joscelyn’s name was never mentioned between them, and when other people asked them concerning her their replies were cold and ungracious. In a way they had relented towards her, but their shame of her remained. They could never forget that she was an actress.

Once, six years after Joscelyn had left Spring Valley, Cyrus, who was reading a paper by the table, got up with an angry exclamation and stuffed it into the stove, thumping the lid on over it with grim malignity.

“That fool dunno what he’s talking about,” was all he would say. Deborah had her share of curiosity. The paper was the National Gazette and she knew that their next-door neighbour, James Pennan, took it. She went over that evening and borrowed it, saying that their own had been burned before she had had time to read the serial in it. With one exception she read all its columns carefully without finding anything to explain her husband’s anger. Then she doubtfully plunged into the exception ... a column of “Stage Notes.” Halfway down she came upon an adverse criticism of Joscelyn Morgan and her new play. It was malicious and vituperative. Deborah Morgan’s old eyes sparkled dangerously as she read it.

“I guess somebody is pretty jealous of Josie,” she muttered. “I don’t wonder Pa was riled up. But I guess she can hold her own. She’s a Morgan.”

No long time after this Cyrus took a notion he’d like a trip to the city. He’d like to see the Horse Fair and look up Cousin Hiram Morgan’s folks.

“Hiram and me used to be great chums, Mother. And we’re getting kind of mossy, I guess, never stirring out of Spring Valley. Let’s go and dissipate for a week — what say?”

Deborah agreed readily, albeit of late years she had been much averse to going far from home and had never at any time been very fond of Cousin Hiram’s wife. Cyrus was as pleased as a child over their trip. On the second day of their sojourn in the city he slipped away when Deborah had gone shopping with Mrs. Hiram and hurried through the streets to the Green Square Theatre with a hang-dog look. He bought a ticket apologetically and sneaked in to his seat. It was a matinee performance, and Joscelyn Morgan was starring in her famous new play.

Cyrus waited for the curtain to rise, feeling as if every one of his Spring Valley neighbours must know where he was and revile him for it. If Deborah were ever to find out ... but Deborah must never find out! For the first time in their married life the old man deliberately plotted to deceive his old wife. He must see his girl Josie just once; it was a terrible thing that she was an actress, but she was a successful one, nobody could deny that, except fools who yapped in the National Gazette.

The curtain went up and Cyrus rubbed his eyes. He had certainly braced his nerves to behold some mystery of iniquity; instead he saw an old kitchen so like his own at home that it bewildered him; and there, sitting by the cheery wood stove, in homespun gown, with primly braided hair, was Joscelyn — his girl Josie, as he had seen her a thousand times by his own ingleside. The building rang with applause; one old man pulled out a red bandanna and wiped tears of joy and pride from his eyes. She hadn’t changed — Josie hadn’t changed. Play-acting hadn’t spoiled her — couldn’t spoil her. Wasn’t she Paul’s daughter! And all this applause was for her — for Josie.

Joscelyn's new play was a homely, pleasant production with rollicking comedy and heart-moving pathos skilfully commingled. Joscelyn pervaded it all with a convincing simplicity that was really the triumph of art. Cyrus Morgan listened and exulted in her; at every burst of applause his eyes gleamed with pride. He wanted to go on the stage and box the ears of the villain who plotted against her; he wanted to shake hands with the good woman who stood by her; he wanted to pay off the mortgage and make Josie happy. He wiped tears from his eyes in the third act when Josie was turned out of doors and, when the fourth left her a happy, blushing bride, hand in hand with her farmer lover, he could have wept again for joy.

Cyrus Morgan went out into the daylight feeling as if he had awakened from a dream. At the outer door he came upon Mrs. Hiram and Deborah. Deborah's face was stained with tears, and she caught at his hand.

"Oh, Pa, wasn't it splendid — wasn't our girl Josie splendid! I'm so proud of her. Oh, I was bound to hear her. I was afraid you'd be mad, so I didn't let on and when I saw you in the seat down there I couldn't believe my eyes. Oh, I've just been crying the whole time. Wasn't it splendid! Wasn't our girl Josie splendid?"

The crowd around looked at the old pair with amused, indulgent curiosity, but they were quite oblivious to their surroundings, even to Mrs. Hiram's anxiety to decoy them away. Cyrus Morgan cleared his throat and said, "It was great, Mother, great. She took the shine off the other play-actors all right. I knew that National Gazette man didn't know what he was talking about. Mother, let us go and see Josie right off. She's stopping with her aunt at the Maberly Hotel — I saw it in the paper this morning. I'm going to tell her she was right and we were wrong. Josie's beat them all, and I'm going to tell her so!"

When Jack and Jill Took a Hand

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Jack's Side of It

Jill says I have to begin this story because it was me — I mean it was I — who made all the trouble in the first place. That is so like Jill. She is such a good hand at forgetting. Why, it was she who suggested the plot to me. I should never have thought of it myself — not that Jill is any smarter than I am, either, but girls are such creatures for planning up mischief and leading other folks into it and then laying the blame on them when things go wrong. How could I tell Dick would act so like a mule? I thought grownup folks had more sense. Aunt Tommy was down on me for weeks, while she thought Jill a regular heroine. But there! Girls don't know anything about being fair, and I am determined I will never have anything more to do with them and their love affairs as long as I live. Jill says I will change my mind when I grow up, but I won't.

Still, Jill is a pretty good sort of girl. I have to scold her sometimes, but if any other chap tried to I would punch his head for him.

I suppose it is time I explained who Dick and Aunt Tommy are. Dick is our minister. He hasn't been it very long. He only came a year ago. I shall never forget how surprised Jill and I were that first Sunday we went to church and saw him. We had always thought that ministers had to be old. All the ministers we knew were. Mr. Grinnell, the one before Dick came, must have been as old as Methuselah. But Dick was young — and goodlooking. Jill said she thought it a positive sin for a minister to be so goodlooking, it didn't seem Christian; but that was just because all the ministers we knew happened to be homely so that it didn't appear natural.

Dick was tall and pale and looked as if he had heaps of brains. He had thick curly brown hair and big dark blue eyes — Jill said his eyes were like an archangel's, but how could she tell? She never saw an archangel. I liked his nose. It was so straight and finished-looking. Mr. Grinnell had

the worst-looking nose you ever saw. Jill and I used to make poetry about it in church to keep from falling asleep when he preached such awful long sermons.

Dick preached great sermons. They were so nice and short. It was such fun to hear him thump the pulpit when he got excited; and when he got more excited still he would lean over the pulpit, his face all white, and talk so low and solemn that it would just send the most gorgeous thrills through you.

Dick came to Owlwood — that's our place; I hate these explanations — quite a lot, even before Aunt Tommy came. He and Father were chums; they had been in college together and Father said Dick was the best football player he ever knew. Jill and I soon got acquainted with him and this was another uncanny thing. We had never thought it possible to get acquainted with a minister. Jill said she didn't think it proper for a real live minister to be so chummy. But then Jill was a little jealous because Dick and I, being both men; were better friends than he and she could be. He taught me to skate that winter and fence with canes and do long division. I could never understand long division before Dick came, although I was away on in fractions.

Jill has just been in and says I ought to explain that Dick's name wasn't Dick. I do wish Jill would mind her own business. Of course it wasn't. His real name was the Reverend Stephen Richmond, but Jill and I always called him Dick behind his back; it seemed so jolly and venturesome, somehow, to speak of a minister like that. Only we had to be careful not to let Father and Mother hear us. Mother wouldn't even let Father call Dick "Stephen"; she said it would set a bad example of familiarity to the children. Mother is an old darling. She won't believe we're half as bad as we are.

Well, early in May comes Aunt Tommy. I must explain who Aunt Tommy is or Jill will be at me again. She is Father's youngest sister and her real name is Bertha Gordon, but Father has always called her Tommy and she likes it.

Jill and I had never seen Aunt Tommy before, but we took to her from the start because she was so pretty and because she talked to us just as if we were grown up. She called Jill Elizabeth, and Jill would adore a Hottentot who called her Elizabeth.

Aunt Tommy is the prettiest girl I ever saw. If Jill is half as goodlooking when she gets to be twenty — she's only ten now, same age as I am, we're twins — I shall be proud of her for a sister.

Aunt Tommy is all white and dimpled. She has curly red hair and big jolly brown eyes and scrumptious freckles. I do like freckles in a girl, although Jill goes wild if she thinks she has one on her nose. When we talked of writing this story Jill said I wasn't to say that Aunt Tommy had freckles because it wouldn't sound romantic. But I don't care. She has freckles and I think they are all right.

We went to church with Aunt Tommy the first Sunday after she came, one on each side of her. Aunt Tommy is the only girl in the world I'd walk hand in hand with before people. She looked fine that day. She had on a gorgeous dress, all frills and ruffles, and a big white floppy hat. I was proud of her for an aunt, I can tell you, and I was anxious for Dick to see her. When he came up to speak to me and Jill after church came out I said, "Aunt Tommy, this is Mr. Richmond," just like the grownup people say. Aunt Tommy and Dick shook hands and Dick got as red as anything. It was funny to see him.

The very next evening he came down to Owlwood. We hadn't expected him until Tuesday, for he never came Monday night before. That is Father's night for going to a lodge meeting. Mother was away this time too. I met Dick on the porch and took him into the parlour, thinking what a bully talk we could have all alone together, without Jill bothering around. But in a minute Aunt Tommy came in and she and Dick began to talk, and I just couldn't get a word in edgewise. I got so disgusted I started out, but I don't believe they ever noticed I was gone. I liked Aunt Tommy very well, but I didn't think she had any business to monopolize Dick like that when he and I were such old chums.

Outside I came across Jill. She was sitting all alone in the dark, curled up on the edge of the verandah just where she could see into the parlour through the big glass door. I sat down beside her, for I wanted sympathy.

“Dick’s in there talking to Aunt Tommy,” I said. “I don’t see what makes him want to talk to her.”

“What a goose you are!” said Jill in that aggravatingly patronizing way of hers. “Why, Dick has fallen in love with Aunt Tommy!”

Honest, I jumped. I never was so surprised.

“How do you know?” I asked.

“Because I do,” said Jill. “I knew it yesterday at church and I think it is so romantic.”

“I don’t see how you can tell,” I said — and I didn’t.

“You’ll understand better when you get older,” said Jill. Sometimes Jill talks as if she were a hundred years older than I am, instead of being a twin. And really, sometimes I think she is older.

“I didn’t think ministers ever fell in love,” I protested.

“Some do,” said Jill sagely. “Mr. Grinnell wouldn’t ever, I suppose. But Dick is different. I’d like him for a husband myself. But he’d be too old for me by the time I grew up, so I suppose I’ll have to let Aunt Tommy have him. It will be all in the family anyhow — that is one comfort. I think Aunt Tommy ought to have me for a flower girl and I’ll wear pink silk clouded over with white chiffon and carry a big bouquet of roses.”

“Jill, you take my breath away,” I said, and she did. My imagination couldn’t travel as fast as that. But after I had thought the idea over a bit I liked it. It was a good deal like a book; and, besides, a minister is a respectable thing to have in a family.

“We must help them all we can,” said Jill.

“What can we do?” I asked.

“We must praise Dick to Aunt Tommy and Aunt Tommy to Dick and we must keep out of the way — we mustn’t ever hang around when they want to be alone,” said Jill.

“I don’t want to give up being chums with Dick,” I grumbled.

“We must be self-sacrificing,” said Jill. And that sounded so fine it reconciled me to the attempt.

We sat there and watched Dick and Aunt Tommy for an hour. I thought they were awfully prim and stiff. If I’d been Dick I’d have gone over and hugged her. I said so to Jill and Jill was shocked. She said it wouldn’t be proper when they weren’t even engaged.

When Dick went away Aunt Tommy came out to the verandah and discovered us. She sat down between us and put her arms about us. Aunt Tommy has such cute ways.

“I like your minister very much,” she said.

“He’s bully,” I said.

“He’s as handsome as a prince,” Jill said.

“He preaches splendid sermons — he makes people sit up in church, I can tell you,” I said.

“He has a heavenly tenor voice,” Jill said.

“He’s got a magnificent muscle,” I said.

“He has the most poetical eyes,” Jill said.

“He swims like a duck,” I said.

“He looks just like a Greek god,” Jill said.

I’m sure Jill couldn’t have known what a Greek god looked like, but I suppose she got the comparison out of some novel. Jill is always reading novels. She borrows them from the cook.

Aunt Tommy laughed and said, “You darlings.”

For the next three months Jill and I were wild. It was just like reading a serial story to watch Dick and Aunt Tommy. One day when Dick came Aunt Tommy wasn’t quite ready to come down, so Jill and I went in to the parlour to help things along. We knew we hadn’t much time, so we began right off.

“Aunt Tommy is the jolliest girl I know,” I said.

“She is as beautiful as a dream,” Jill said.

“She can play games as good as a boy,” I said.

“She does the most elegant fancy work,” Jill said.

“She never gets mad,” I said.

“She plays and sings divinely,” Jill said.

“She can cook awfully good things,” I said, for I was beginning to run short of compliments. Jill was horrified; she said afterwards that it wasn’t a bit romantic. But I don’t care — I believe Dick liked it, for he smiled with his eyes I just as he always does when he’s pleased. Girls don’t understand everything.

But at the end of three months we began to get anxious. Things were going so slow. Dick and Aunt Tommy didn’t seem a bit further ahead than at first. Jill said it was because Aunt Tommy didn’t encourage Dick enough.

“I do wish we could hurry them up a little,” she said. “At this rate they will never be married this year and by next I’ll be too big to be a flower girl. I’m stretching out horribly as it is. Mother has had to let down my frocks again.”

“I wish they would get engaged and have done with it,” I said. “My mind would be at rest then. It’s all Dick’s fault. Why doesn’t he ask Aunt Tommy to marry him? What’s making him so slow about it? If I wanted a girl to marry me — but I wouldn’t ever — I’d tell her so right spang off.”

“I suppose ministers have to be more dignified,” said Jill, “but three months ought to be enough time for anyone. And Aunt Tommy is only going to be here another month. If Dick could be made a little jealous it would hurry him up. And he could be made jealous if you had any spunk about you.”

“I guess I’ve got more spunk than you have,” I said.

“The trouble with Dick is this,” said Jill. “There is nobody else coming to see Aunt Tommy and he thinks he is sure of her. If you could tell him something different it would stir him up.”

“Are you sure it would?” I asked.

“It always does in novels,” said Jill. And that settled it, of course.

Jill and I fixed up what I was to say and Jill made me say it over and over again to be sure I had it right. I told her — sarcastically — that she’d better say it herself and then it would be done properly. Jill said she would

if it were Aunt Tommy, but when it was Dick it was better for a man to do it. So of course I agreed.

I didn't know when I would have a chance to stir Dick up, but Providence — so Jill said — favoured us. Aunt Tommy didn't expect Dick down the next night, so she and Father and Mother all went away somewhere. Dick came after all, and Jill sent me into the parlour to tell him. He was standing before the mantel looking at Aunt Tommy's picture. There was such an adoring look in his eyes. I could see it quite plain in the mirror before him. I practised that look a lot before my own glass after that — because I thought it might come in handy some time, you know — but I guess I couldn't have got it just right because when I tried it on Jill she asked me if I had a pain.

“Well, Jack, old man,” said Dick, sitting down on the sofa. I sat down before him.

“Aunt Tommy is out,” I said, to get the worst over. “I guess you like Aunt Tommy pretty well, don't you, Mr. Richmond?”

“Yes,” said Dick softly.

“So do other men,” I said — mysterious, as Jill had ordered me.

Dick thumped one of the sofa pillows.

“Yes, I suppose so,” he said.

“There's a man in New York who just worships Aunt Tommy,” I said. “He writes her most every day and sends her books and music and elegant presents. I guess she's pretty fond of him too. She keeps his photograph on her bedroom table and I've seen her kissing it.”

I stopped there, not because I had said all I had to say, but because Dick's face scared me — honest, it did. It had all gone white, like it does in the pulpit sometimes when he is tremendously in earnest, only ten times worse. But all he said was,

“Is your Aunt Bertha engaged to this — this man?”

“Not exactly engaged,” I said, “but I guess anybody else who wants to marry her will have to reckon with him.”

Dick got up.

“I think I won't wait this evening,” he said.

“I wish you’d stay and have a talk with me,” I said. “I haven’t had a talk with you for ages and I have a million things to tell you.”

Dick smiled as if it hurt him to smile.

“I can’t tonight, Jacky. Some other time we’ll have a good powwow, old chap.”

He took his hat and went out. Then Jill came flying in to hear all about it. I told her as well as I could, but she wasn’t satisfied. If Dick took it so quietly, she declared, I couldn’t have made it strong enough.

“If you had seen Dick’s face,” I said, “you would have thought I made it plenty strong. And I’d like to know what Aunt Tommy will say to all this when she finds out.”

“Well, you didn’t tell a thing but what was true,” said Jill.

The next evening was Dick’s regular night for coming, but he didn’t come, although Jill and I went down the lane a dozen times to watch for him. The night after that was prayer-meeting night. Dick had always walked home with Aunt Tommy and us, but that night he didn’t. He only just bowed and smiled as he passed us in the porch. Aunt Tommy hardly spoke all the way home, only just held tight to Jill’s and my hands. But after we got home she seemed in great spirits and laughed and chatted with Father and Mother.

“What does this mean?” asked Jill, grabbing me in the hall on our way to bed.

“You’d better get another novel from the cook and find out,” I said grouchily. I was disgusted with things in general and Dick in particular.

The three weeks that followed were awful. Dick never came near Owlwood. Jill and I fought every day, we were so cross and disappointed. Nothing had come out right, and Jill blamed it all on me. She said I must have made it too strong. There was no fun in anything, not even in going to church. Dick hardly thumped the pulpit at all and when he did it was only a measly little thump. But Aunt Tommy didn’t seem to worry any. She sang and laughed and joked from morning to night.

“She doesn’t mind Dick’s making an ass of himself, anyway, that’s one consolation,” I said to Jill.

“She is breaking her heart about it,” said Jill, “and that’s your consolation!”

“I don’t believe it,” I said. “What makes you think so?”

“She cries every night,” said Jill. “I can tell by the look of her eyes in the morning.”

“She doesn’t look half as woebegone over it as you do,” I said.

“If I had her reason for looking woebegone I wouldn’t look it either,” said Jill.

I asked her to explain her meaning, but she only said that little boys couldn’t understand those things.

Things went on like this for another week. Then they reached — so Jill says — a climax. If Jill knows what that means I don’t. But Pinky Carewe was the climax. Pinky’s name is James, but Jill and I always called him Pinky because we couldn’t bear him. He took to calling at Owlwood and one evening he took Aunt Tommy out driving. Then Jill came to me.

“Something has got to be done,” she said resolutely. “I am not going to have Pinky Carewe for an Uncle Tommy and that is all there is about it. You must go straight to Dick and tell him the truth about the New York man.”

I looked at Jill to see if she were in earnest. When I saw that she was I said, “I wouldn’t take all the gems of Golconda and go and tell Dick that I’d been hoaxing him. You can do it yourself, Jill Gordon.”

“You didn’t tell him anything that wasn’t true,” said Jill.

“I don’t know how a minister might look upon it,” I said. “Anyway, I won’t go.”

“Then I suppose I’ve got to,” said Jill very dolefully.

“Yes, you’ll have to,” I said.

And this finishes my part of the story, and Jill is going to tell the rest. But you needn’t believe everything she says about me in it.

Jill’s Side of It

Jacky has made a fearful muddle of his part, but I suppose I shall just have to let it go. You couldn’t expect much better of a boy. But I am determined to re-describe Aunt Tommy, for the way Jacky has done it is

just disgraceful. I know exactly how to do it, the way it is always done in stories.

Aunt Tommy is divinely beautiful. Her magnificent wealth of burnished auburn hair flows back in amethystine waves from her sun-kissed brow. Her eyes are gloriously dark and deep, like midnight lakes mirroring the stars of heaven; her features are like sculptured marble and her mouth is like a trembling, curving Cupid's bow (this is a classical allusion) luscious and glowing as a dewy rose. Her creamy skin is as fair and flawless as the inner petals of a white lily. (She may have a weeny teeny freckle or two in summer, but you'd never notice.) Her slender form is matchless in its symmetry and her voice is like the ripple of a woodland brook.

There, I'm sure that's ever so much better than Jacky's description, and now I can proceed with a clear conscience.

Well, I didn't like the idea of going and explaining to Dick very much, but it had to be done unless I wanted to run the risk of having Pinky Carewe in the family. So I went the next morning.

I put on my very prettiest pink organdie dress and did my hair the new way, which is very becoming to me. When you are going to have an important interview with a man it is always well to look your very best. I put on my big hat with the wreath of pink roses that Aunt Tommy had brought me from New York and took my spandy ruffled parasol.

"With your shield or upon it, Jill," said Jacky when I started. (This is another classical allusion.)

I went straight up the hill and down the road to the manse where Dick lived with his old housekeeper, Mrs. Dodge. She came to the door when I knocked and I said, very politely, "Can I see the Reverend Stephen Richmond, if you please?"

Mrs. Dodge went upstairs and came right back saying would I please go up to the study. Up I went, my heart in my mouth, I can tell you, and there was Dick among his books, looking so pale and sorrowful and interesting, for all the world like Lord Algernon Francis in the splendid

serial in the paper cook took. There was a Madonna on his desk that looked just like Aunt Tommy.

“Good evening, Miss Elizabeth,” said Dick, just as if I were grown up, you know. “Won’t you sit down? Try that green velvet chair. I am sure it was created for a pink dress and unfortunately neither Mrs. Dodge nor I possess one. How are all your people?”

“We are all pretty well; thank you,” I said, “except Aunt Tommy. She —” I was going to say, “She cries every night after she goes to bed,” but I remembered just in time that if I were in Aunt Tommy’s place I wouldn’t want a man to know I cried about him even if I did. So I said instead “ — she has got a cold.”

“Ah, indeed, I am sorry to hear it,” said Dick, politely but coldly, as if it were part of his duty as a minister to be sorry for anybody who had a cold, but as if, apart from that, it was not a concern of his if Aunt Tommy had galloping consumption.

“And Jack and I are terribly harrowed up in our minds,” I went on. “That is what I’ve come up to see you about.”

“Well, tell me all about it,” said Dick.

“I’m afraid to,” I said. “I know you’ll be cross even if you are a minister. It’s about what Jack told you about that man in New York and Aunt Tommy.”

Dick turned as red as fire.

“I’d rather not discuss your Aunt Bertha’s affairs,” he said stiffly.

“You must hear this,” I cried, feeling thankful that Jacky hadn’t come after all, for he’d never have got any further ahead after that snub. “It’s all a mistake. There is a man in New York and he just worships Aunt Tommy and she just adores him. But he’s seventy years old and he’s her Uncle Matthew who brought her up ever since her father died and you’ve heard her talking about him a hundred times. That’s all, cross my heart solemn and true.”

You never saw anything like Dick’s face when I stopped. It looked just like a sunrise. But he said slowly, “Why did Jacky tell me such a — tell me it in such a way?”

“We wanted to make you jealous,” I said. “I put Jacky up to it.”

“I didn’t think it was in either of you to do such a thing,” said Dick reproachfully.

“Oh, Dick,” I cried — fancy my calling him Dick right to his face! Jacky will never believe I really did it. He says I would never have dared. But it wasn’t daring at all, it was just forgetting. “Oh, Dick, we didn’t mean any harm. We thought you weren’t getting on fast enough and we wanted to stir you up like they do in books. We thought if we made you jealous it would work all right. We didn’t mean any harm. Oh, please forgive us!”

I was just ready to cry. But that dear Dick leaned over the table and patted my hand.

“There, there, it’s all right. I understand and of course I forgive you. Don’t cry, sweetheart.”

The way Dick said “sweetheart” was perfectly lovely. I envied Aunt Tommy, and I wanted to keep on crying so that he would go on comforting me.

“And you’ll come back to see Aunt Tommy again?” I said.

Dick’s face clouded over; he got up and walked around the room several times before he said a word. Then he came and sat down beside me and explained it all to me, just as if I were grown up.

“Sweetheart, we’ll talk this all out. You see, it is this way. Your Aunt Bertha is the sweetest woman in the world. But I’m only a poor minister and I have no right to ask her to share my life of hard work and self-denial. And even if I dared I know she wouldn’t do it. She doesn’t care anything for me except as a friend. I never meant to tell her I cared for her but I couldn’t help going to Owlwood, even though I knew it was a weakness on my part. So now that I’m out of the habit of going I think it would be wisest to stay out. It hurts dreadfully, but it would hurt worse after a while. Don’t you agree with me, Miss Elizabeth?”

I thought hard and fast. If I were in Aunt Tommy’s place I mightn’t want a man to know I cried about him, but I was quite sure I’d rather have

him know than have him stay away because he didn't know. So I spoke right up.

"No, I don't, Mr. Richmond; Aunt Tommy does care — you just ask her. She cries every blessed night because you never come to Owlwood."

"Oh, Elizabeth!" said Dick.

He got up and stalked about the room again.

"You'll come back?" I said.

"Yes," he answered.

I drew a long breath. It was such a responsibility off my mind.

"Then you'd better come down with me right off," I said, "for Pinky Carewe had her out driving last night and I want a stop put to that as soon as possible. Even if he is rich he's a perfect pig."

Dick got his hat and came. We walked up the road in lovely creamy yellow twilight and I was, oh, so happy.

"Isn't it just like a novel?" I said.

"I am afraid, Elizabeth," said Dick preachily, "that you read too many novels, and not the right kind, either. Some of these days I am going to ask you to promise me that you will read no more books except those your mother and I pick out for you."

You don't know how squelched I felt. And I knew I would have to promise, too, for Dick can make me do anything he likes.

When we got to Owlwood I left Dick in the parlour and flew up to Aunt Tommy's room. I found her all scrunched up on her bed in the dark with her face in the pillows.

"Aunt Tommy, Dick is down in the parlour and he wants to see you," I said.

Didn't Aunt Tommy fly up, though!

"Oh, Jill — but I'm not fit to be seen — tell him I'll be down in a few minutes."

I knew Aunt Tommy wanted to fix her hair and dab rose-water on her eyes, so I trotted meekly down and told Dick. Then I flew out to Jacky and dragged him around to the glass door. It was all hung over with vines and a wee bit ajar so that we could see and hear everything that went on.

Jacky said it was only sneaks that listened — but he didn't say it until next day. At the time he listened just as hard as I did. I didn't care if it was mean. I just had to listen. I was perfectly wild to hear how a man would propose and how a girl would accept and it was too good a chance to lose.

Presently in sweeps Aunt Tommy, in an elegant dress, not a hair out of place. She looked perfectly sweet, only her nose was a little red. Dick looked at her for just a moment, then he stepped forward and took her right into his arms.

Aunt Tommy drew back her head for just a second as if she were going to crush him in the dust, and then she just all kind of crumpled up and her face went down on his shoulder.

“Oh — Bertha — I — love — you — I — love you,” he said, just like that, all quick and jerky.

“You — you have taken a queer way of showing it,” said Aunt Tommy, all muffled.

“I — I — was led to believe that there was another man — whom you cared for — and I thought you were only trifling with me. So I sulked like a jealous fool. Bertha, darling, you do love me a little, don't you?”

Aunt Tommy lifted her head and stuck up her mouth and he kissed her. And there it was, all over, and they were engaged as quick as that, mind you. He didn't even go down on his knees. There was nothing romantic about it and I was never so disgusted in my life. When I grow up and anybody proposes to me he will have to be a good deal more flowery and eloquent than that, I can tell you, if he wants me to listen to him.

I left Jacky peeking still and I went to bed. After a long time Aunt Tommy came up to my room and sat down on my bed in the moonlight.

“You dear blessed Elizabeth!” she said.

“It's all right then, is it?” I asked.

“Yes, it is all right, thanks to you, dearie. We are to be married in October and somebody must be my little flower girl.”

“I think Dick will make a splendid husband,” I said. “But Aunt Tommy, you mustn't be too hard on Jacky. He only wanted to help things along, and it was I who put him up to it in the first place.”

“You have atoned by going and confessing,” said Aunt Tommy with a hug, “Jacky had no business to put that off on you. I’ll forgive him, of course, but I’ll punish him by not letting him know that I will for a little while. Then I’ll ask him to be a page at my wedding.”

Well, the wedding came off last week. It was a perfectly gorgeous affair. Aunt Tommy’s dress was a dream — and so was mine, all pink silk and chiffon and carnations. Jacky made a magnificent page too, in a suit of white velvet. The wedding cake was four stories high, and Dick looked perfectly handsome. He kissed me too, right after he kissed Aunt Tommy.

So everything turned out all right, and I believe Dick would never have dared to speak up if we hadn’t helped things along. But Jacky and I have decided that we will never meddle in an affair of the kind again. It is too hard on the nerves.

A Millionaire's Proposal

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Thrush Hill, Oct. 5, 18 — .

It is all settled at last, and in another week I shall have left Thrush Hill. I am a little bit sorry and a great bit glad. I am going to Montreal to spend the winter with Alicia.

Alicia — it used to be plain Alice when she lived at Thrush Hill and made her own dresses and trimmed her own hats — is my half-sister. She is eight years older than I am. We are both orphans, and Aunt Elizabeth brought us up here at Thrush Hill, the most delightful old country place in the world, half smothered in big willows and poplars, every one of which I have climbed in the early tomboy days of gingham pinafores and sunbonnets.

When Alicia was eighteen she married Roger Gresham, a man of forty. The world said that she married him for his money. I dare say she did. Alicia was tired of poverty.

I don't blame her. Very likely I shall do the same thing one of these days, if I get the chance — for I too am tired of poverty.

When Alicia went to Montreal she wanted to take me with her, but I wanted to be outdoors, romping in the hay or running wild in the woods with Jack.

Jack Willoughby — Dr. John H. Willoughby, it reads on his office door — was the son of our nearest neighbour. We were chums always, and when he went away to college I was heartbroken.

The vacations were the only joy of my life then.

I don't know just when I began to notice a change in Jack, but when he came home two years ago, a full-fledged M.D. — a great, tall, broad-shouldered fellow, with the sweetest moustache, and lovely thick black hair, just made for poking one's fingers through — I realized it to the full.

Jack was grown up. The dear old days of bird-nesting and nutting and coasting and fishing and general delightful goings-on were over forever.

I was sorry at first. I wanted “Jack.” “Dr. Willoughby” seemed too distinguished and far away.

I suppose he found a change in me, too. I had put on long skirts and wore my hair up. I had also found out that I had a complexion, and that sunburn was not becoming. I honestly thought I looked pretty, but Jack surveyed me with decided disapprobation.

“What have you done to yourself? You don’t look like the same girl. I’d never know you in that rig-out, with all those flippery-trippery curls all over your head. Why don’t you comb your hair straight back, and let it hang in a braided tail, like you used to?”

This didn’t suit me at all. When I expect a compliment and get something quite different I always get snippy. So I said, with what I intended to be crushing dignity, “that I supposed I wasn’t the same girl; I had grown up, and if he didn’t like my curls he needn’t look at them. For my part, I thought them infinitely preferable to that horrid, conceited-looking moustache he had grown.”

“I’ll shave it off if it doesn’t suit you,” said Jack amiably.

Jack is always so provokingly good-humoured. When you’ve taken pains and put yourself out — even to the extent of fibbing about a moustache — to exasperate a person, there is nothing more annoying than to have him keep perfectly angelic.

But after a while Jack and I adjusted ourselves to the change in each other and became very good friends again. It was quite a different friendship from the old, but it was very pleasant. Yes, it was; I will admit that much.

I was provoked at Jack’s determination to settle down for life in Valleyfield, a horrible, humdrum, little country village.

“You’ll never make your fortune there, Jack,” I said spitefully. “You’ll just be a poor, struggling country doctor all your life, and you’ll be grey at forty.”

“I don’t expect to make a fortune, Kitty,” said Jack quietly. “Do you think that is the one desirable thing? I shall never be a rich man. But riches are not the only thing that makes life pleasant.”

“Well, I think they have a good deal to do with it, anyhow,” I retorted. “It’s all very well to pretend to despise wealth, but it’s generally a case of sour grapes. I will own up honestly that I’d love to be rich.”

It always seems to make Jack blue and grumpy when I talk like that. I suppose that is one reason why he never asked me to settle down in life as a country doctor’s wife. Another was, no doubt, that I always nipped his sentimental sproutings religiously in the bud.

Three weeks ago Alicia wrote to me, asking me to spend the winter with her. Her letters always make me just gasp with longing for the life they describe.

Jack’s face, when I told him about it, was so woebegone that I felt a stab of remorse, even in the heyday of my delight.

“Do you really mean it, Kitty? Are you going away to leave me?”

“You won’t miss me much,” I said flippantly — I had a creepy, crawly presentiment that a scene of some kind was threatening—”and I’m awfully tired of Thrush Hill and country life, Jack. I suppose it is horribly ungrateful of me to say so, but it is the truth.”

“I shall miss you,” he said soberly.

Somehow he had my hands in his. How did he ever get them? I was sure I had them safely tucked out of harm’s way behind me. “You know, Kitty, that I love you. I am a poor man — perhaps I may never be anything else — and this may seem to you very presumptuous. But I cannot let you go like this. Will you be my wife, dear?”

Wasn’t it horribly straightforward and direct? So like Jack! I tried to pull my hands away, but he held them fast. There was nothing to do but answer him. That “no” I had determined to say must be said, but, oh! how woefully it did stick in my throat!

And I honestly believe that by the time I got it out it would have been transformed into a “yes,” in spite of me, had it not been for a certain paragraph in Alicia’s letter which came providentially to my mind:

Not to flatter you, Katherine, you are a beauty, my dear — if your photo is to be trusted. If you have not discovered that fact before — how should you, indeed, in a place like Thrush Hill? — you soon will in Montreal. With your face and figure you will make a sensation.

There is to be a nephew of the Sinclairs here this winter. He is an American, immensely wealthy, and will be the catch of the season. A word to the wise, *etc.* Don't get into any foolish entanglement down there. I have heard some gossip of you and our old playfellow, Jack Willoughby. I hope it is nothing but gossip. You can do better than that, Katherine.

That settled Jack's fate, if there ever had been any doubt.

"Don't talk like that, Jack," I said hurriedly. "It is all nonsense. I think a great deal of you as a friend and — and — all that, you know. But I can never marry you."

"Are you sure, Kitty?" said Jack earnestly. "Don't you care for me at all?"

It was horrid of Jack to ask that question!

"No," I said miserably, "not — not in that way, Jack. Oh, don't ever say anything like this to me again."

He let go of my hands then, white to the lips.

"Oh, don't look like that, Jack," I entreated.

"I can't help it," he said in a low voice. "But I won't bother you again, dear. It was foolish of me to expect — to hope for anything of the sort. You are a thousand times too good for me, I know."

"Oh, indeed I'm not, Jack," I protested. "If you knew how horrid I am, really, you'd be glad and thankful for your escape. Oh, Jack, I wish people never grew up."

Jack smiled sadly.

"Don't feel badly over this, Kitty. It isn't your fault. Good night, dear."

He turned my face up and kissed me squarely on the mouth. He had never kissed me since the summer before he went away to college. Somehow it didn't seem a bit the same as it used to; it was — nicer now.

After he went away I came upstairs and had a good, comfortable howl. Then I buried the whole affair decently. I am not going to think of it any

more.

I shall always have the highest esteem for Jack, and I hope he will soon find some nice girl who will make him happy. Mary Carter would jump at him, I know. To be sure, she is as homely as she can be and live. But, then, Jack is always telling me how little he cares for beauty, so I have no doubt she will suit him admirably.

As for myself — well, I am ambitious. I don't suppose my ambition is a very lofty one, but such as it is I mean to hunt it down. Come. Let me put it down in black and white, once for all, and see how it looks:

I mean to marry the rich nephew of the Sinclairs.

There! It is out, and I feel better. How mercenary and awful it looks written out in cold blood like that. I wouldn't have Jack or Aunt Elizabeth — dear, unworldly old soul — see it for the world. But I wouldn't mind Alicia.

Poor dear Jack!

Montreal, Dec. 16, 18 — .

This is a nice way to keep a journal. But the days when I could write regularly are gone by. That was when I was at Thrush Hill.

I am having a simply divine time. How in the world did I ever contrive to live at Thrush Hill?

To be sure, I felt badly enough that day in October when I left it. When the train left Valleyfield I just cried like a baby.

Alicia and Roger welcomed me very heartily, and after the first week of homesickness — I shiver yet when I think of it — was over, I settled down to my new life as if I had been born to it.

Alicia has a magnificent home and everything heart could wish for — jewels, carriages, servants, opera boxes, and social position. Roger is a model husband apparently. I must also admit that he is a model brother-in-law.

I could feel Alicia looking me over critically the moment we met. I trembled with suspense, but I was soon relieved.

“Do you know, Katherine, I am glad to see that your photograph didn't flatter you. Photographs so often do, I am positively surprised at the way

you have developed, my dear; you used to be such a scrawny little brown thing. By the way, I hope there is nothing between you and Jack Willoughby?"

"No, of course not," I answered hurriedly. I had intended to tell Alicia all about Jack, but when it came to the point I couldn't.

"I am glad of that," said Alicia, with a relieved air. "Of course, I've no doubt Jack is a good fellow enough. He was a nice boy. But he would not be a suitable husband for you, Katherine."

I knew that very well. That was just why I had refused him. But it made me wince to hear Alicia say it. I instantly froze up — Alicia says dignity is becoming to me — and Jack's name has never been mentioned between us since.

I made my bow to society at an "At Home" which Alicia gave for that purpose. She drilled me well beforehand, and I think I acquitted myself decently. Charlie Vankleek, whose verdict makes or mars every debutante in his set, has approved of me. He called me a beauty, and everybody now believes that I am one, and greets me accordingly.

I met Gus Sinclair at Mrs. Brompton's dinner. Alicia declares it was a case of love at first sight. If so, I must confess that it was all on one side.

Mr. Sinclair is undeniably ugly — even Alicia has to admit that — and can't hold a candle to Jack in point of looks, for Jack, poor boy, was handsome, if he were nothing else. But, as Alicia does not fail to remind me, Mr. Sinclair's homeliness is well gilded.

Apart from his appearance, I really liked him very much. He is a gentlemanly little fellow — his head reaches about to my shoulder — cultured and travelled, and can talk splendidly, which Jack never could.

He took me into dinner at Mrs. Brompton's, and was very attentive. You may imagine how many angelic glances I received from the other candidates for his favour.

Since then I have been having the gayest time imaginable. Dances, dinners, luncheons, afternoon teas, "functions" to no end, and all delightful.

Aunt Elizabeth writes to me, but I have never heard a word from Jack. He seems to have forgotten my existence completely. No doubt he has consoled himself with Mary Carter.

Well, that is all for the best, but I must say I did not think Jack could have forgotten me so soon or so absolutely. Of course it does not make the least difference to me.

The Sinclairs and the Bromptons and the Curries are to dine here tonight. I can see myself reflected in the long mirror before me, and I really think my appearance will satisfy even Gus Sinclair's critical eye. I am pale, as usual, I never have any colour. That used to be one of Jack's grievances. He likes pink and white milkmaidish girls. My "magnificent pallor" didn't suit him at all.

But, what is more to the purpose, it suits Gus Sinclair. He admires the statuesque style.

Montreal, Jan. 20, 18 — .

Here it is a whole month since my last entry. I am sitting here decked out in "gloss of satin and glimmer of pearls" for Mrs. Currie's dance. These few minutes, after I emerge from the hands of my maid and before the carriage is announced, are almost the only ones I ever have to myself.

I am having a good time still. Somehow, though, it isn't as exciting as it used to be. I'm afraid I'm very changeable. I believe I must be homesick.

I'd love to get a glimpse of dear old Thrush Hill and Aunt Elizabeth, and J — but, no! I will not write that.

Mr. Sinclair has not spoken yet, but there is no doubt that he soon will. Of course, I shall accept him when he does, and I coolly told Alicia so when she just as coolly asked me what I meant to do.

"Certainly, I shall marry him," I said crossly, for the subject always irritates me. "Haven't I been laying myself out all winter to catch him? That is the bold, naked truth, and ugly enough it is. My dearly beloved sister, I mean to accept Mr. Sinclair, without any hesitation, whenever I get the chance."

“I give you credit for more sense than to dream of doing anything else,” said Alicia in relieved tones. “Katherine, you are a very lucky girl.”

“Because I am going to marry a rich man for his money?” I said coldly. Sometimes I get snippy with Alicia these days.

“No,” said my half-sister in an exasperated way. “Why will you persist in speaking in that way? You are very provoking. It is not likely I would wish to see you throw yourself away on a poor man, and I’m sure you must like Gus.”

“Oh, yes, I like him well enough,” I said listlessly. “To be sure, I did think once, in my salad days, that liking wasn’t quite all in an affair of this kind. I was absurd enough to imagine that love had something to do with it.”

“Don’t talk so nonsensically,” said Alicia sharply. “Love! Well, of course, you ought to love your husband, and you will. He loves you enough, at all events.”

“Alicia,” I said earnestly, looking her straight in the face and speaking bluntly enough to have satisfied even Jack’s love of straightforwardness, “you married for money and position, so people say. Are you happy?”

For the first time that I remembered, Alicia blushed. She was very angry.

“Yes, I did marry for money,” she said sharply, “and I don’t regret it. Thank heaven, I never was a fool.”

“Don’t be vexed, Alicia,” I entreated. “I only asked because — well, it is no matter.”

Montreal, Jan. 25, 18 — .

It is bedtime, but I am too excited and happy and miserable to sleep. Jack has been here — dear old Jack! How glad I was to see him.

His coming was so unexpected. I was sitting alone in my room this afternoon — I believe I was moping — when Bessie brought up his card. I gave it one rapturous look and tore downstairs, passing Alicia in the hall like a whirlwind, and burst into the drawing-room in a most undignified way.

“Jack!” I cried, holding out both hands to him in welcome.

There he was, just the same old Jack, with his splendid big shoulders and his lovely brown eyes. And his necktie was crooked, too; as soon as I could get my hands free I put them up and straightened it out for him. How nice and old-timey that was!

“So you are glad to see me, Kitty?” he said as he squeezed my hands in his big strong paws.

“‘Deed and ‘deed I am, Jack. I thought you had forgotten me altogether. And I’ve been so homesick and so — so everything,” I said incoherently. “And, oh, Jack, I’ve so many questions to ask I don’t know where to begin. Tell me all the Thrush Hill and Valleyfield news, tell me everything that has happened since I left. How many people have you killed off? And, oh, why didn’t you come to see me before?”

“I didn’t think I should be wanted, Kitty,” Jack answered quietly. “You seemed to be so absorbed in your new life that old friends and interests were crowded out.”

“So I was at first,” I answered penitently. “I was dazzled, you know. The glare was too much for my Thrush Hill brown. But it’s different now. How did you happen to come, Jack?”

“I had to come to Montreal on business, and I thought it would be too bad if I went back without coming to see what they had been doing in Vanity Fair to my little playmate.”

“Well, what do you think they have been doing?” I asked saucily.

I had on a particularly fetching gown and knew I was looking my best. Jack, however, looked me over with his head on one side.

“Well, I don’t know, Kitty,” he said slowly. “That is a stunning sort of dress you have on — not so pretty, though, as that old blue muslin you used to wear last summer — and your hair is pretty good. But you look rather disdainful and, after all, I believe I prefer Thrush Hill Kitty.”

How like Jack that was. He never thought me really pretty, and he is too honest to pretend he does.

But I didn’t care. I just laughed, and we sat down together and had a long, delightful, chummy talk.

Jack told me all the Valleyfield gossip, not forgetting to mention that Mary Carter was going to be married to a minister in June. Jack didn't seem to mind it a bit, so I guess he couldn't have been particularly interested in Mary.

In due time Alicia sailed in. I suppose she had found out from Bessie who my caller was, and felt rather worried over the length of our tête-à-tête.

She greeted Jack very graciously, but with a certain polite condescension of which she is past mistress. I am sure Jack felt it, for, as soon as he decently could, he got up to go. Alicia asked him to remain to dinner.

"We are having a few friends to dine with us, but it is quite an informal affair," she said sweetly.

I felt that Jack glanced at me for the fraction of a second. But I remembered that Gus Sinclair was coming too, and I did not look at him.

Then he declined quietly. He had a business engagement, he said.

I suppose Alicia had noticed that look at me, for she showed her claws.

"Don't forget to call any time you are in Montreal," she said more sweetly than ever. "I am sure Katherine will always be glad to see any of her old friends, although some of her new ones are proving very absorbing — one, in especial. Don't blush, Katherine, I am sure Mr. Willoughby won't tell any tales out of school to your old Valleyfield friends."

I was not blushing, and I was furious. It was really too bad of Alicia, although I don't see why I need have cared.

Alicia kept her eye on us both until Jack was fairly gone. Then she remarked in the patronizing tone which I detest:

"Really, Katherine, Jack Willoughby has developed into quite a passable-looking fellow, although he is rather shabby. But I suppose he is poor."

"Yes," I answered curtly, "he is poor, in everything except youth and manhood and goodness and truth! But I suppose those don't count for anything."

Whereupon Alicia lifted her eyebrows and looked me over.

Just at dusk a box arrived with Jack's compliments. It was full of lovely white carnations, and must have cost the extravagant fellow more than he has any business to waste on flowers. I was beast enough to put them on when I went down to listen to another man's lovemaking.

This evening I sparkled and scintillated with unusual brilliancy, for Jack's visit and my consequent crossing of swords with Alicia had produced a certain elation of spirits. When Gus Sinclair was leaving he asked if he might see me alone tomorrow afternoon.

I knew what that meant, and a cold shiver went up and down my backbone. But I looked down at him — spick-and-span and glossy — his neckties are never crooked — and said, yes, he might come at three o'clock.

Alicia had noticed our aside — when did anything ever escape her? — and when he was gone she asked, significantly, what secret he had been telling me.

"He wants to see me alone tomorrow afternoon. I suppose you know what that means, Alicia?"

"Ah," purred Alicia, "I congratulate you, my dear."

"Aren't your congratulations a little premature?" I asked coldly. "I haven't accepted him yet."

"But you will?"

"Oh, certainly. Isn't it what we've schemed and angled for? I'm very well satisfied."

And so I am. But I wish it hadn't come so soon after Jack's visit, because I feel rather upset yet. Of course I like Gus Sinclair very much, and I am sure I shall be very fond of him.

Well, I must go to bed now and get my beauty sleep. I don't want to be haggard and hollow-eyed at that important interview tomorrow — an interview that will decide my destiny.

Thrush Hill, May 6, 18 — .

Well, it did decide it, but not exactly in the way I anticipated. I can look back on the whole affair quite calmly now, but I wouldn't live it over again for all the wealth of Ind.

That day when Gus Sinclair came I was all ready for him. I had put on my very prettiest new gown to do honour to the occasion, and Alicia smilingly assured me I was looking very well.

“And so cool and composed. Will you be able to keep that up? Don’t you really feel a little nervous, Katherine?”

“Not in the least,” I said. “I suppose I ought to be, according to traditions, but I never felt less flustered in my life.”

When Bessie brought up Gus Sinclair’s card Alicia dropped a pecky little kiss on my cheek, and pushed me toward the door. I went down calmly, although I’ll admit that my heart was beating wildly. Gus Sinclair was plainly nervous, but I was composed enough for both. You would really have thought that I was in the habit of being proposed to by a millionaire every day.

“I suppose you know what I have come to say,” he said, standing before me, as I leaned gracefully back in a big chair, having taken care that the folds of my dress fell just as they should.

And then he proceeded to say it in a rather jumbled-up fashion, but very sincerely.

I remember thinking at the time that he must have composed the speech in his head the night before, and rehearsed it several times, but was forgetting it in spots.

When he ended with the selfsame question that Jack had asked me three months before at Thrush Hill he stopped and took my hands.

I looked up at him. His good, homely face was close to mine, and in his eyes was an unmistakable look of love and tenderness.

I opened my mouth to say yes.

And then there came over me in one rush the most awful realization of the sacrilege I was going to commit.

I forgot everything except that I loved Jack Willoughby, and that I could never, never marry anybody in the world except him.

Then I pulled my hands away and burst into hysterical, undignified tears.

“I beg your pardon,” said Mr. Sinclair. “I did not mean to startle you. Have I been too abrupt? Surely you must have known — you must have expected—”

“Yes — yes — I knew,” I cried miserably, “and I intended right up to this very minute to marry you. I’m so sorry — but I can’t — I can’t.”

“I don’t understand,” he said in a bewildered tone. “If you expected it, then why — why — don’t you care for me?”

“No, that’s just it,” I sobbed. “I don’t love you at all — and I do love somebody else. But he is poor, and I hate poverty. So I refused him, and I meant to marry you just because you are rich.”

Such a pained look came over his face. “I did not think this of you,” he said in a low tone.

“Oh, I know I have acted shamefully,” I said. “You can’t think any worse of me than I do of myself. How you must despise me!”

“No,” he said, with a grim smile, “if I did it would be easier for me. I might not love you then. Don’t distress yourself, Katherine. I do not deny that I feel greatly hurt and disappointed, but I am glad you have been true to yourself at last. Don’t cry, dear.”

“You’re very good,” I answered disconsolately, “but all the same the fact remains that I have behaved disgracefully to you, and I know you think so. Oh, Mr. Sinclair, please, please, go away. I feel so miserably ashamed of myself that I cannot look you in the face.”

“I am going, dear,” he said gently. “I know all this must be very painful to you, but it is not easy for me, either.”

“Can you forgive me?” I said wistfully.

“Yes, my dear, completely. Do not let yourself be unhappy over this. Remember that I will always be your friend. Goodbye.”

He held out his hand and gave mine an earnest clasp. Then he went away.

I remained in the drawing-room, partly because I wanted to finish out my cry, and partly because, miserable coward that I was, I didn’t dare face Alicia. Finally she came in, her face wreathed with anticipatory smiles. But when her eyes fell on my forlorn, crumpled self she fairly jumped.

“Katherine, what is the matter?” she asked sharply. “Didn’t Mr. Sinclair—”

“Yes, he did,” I said desperately. “And I’ve refused him. There now, Alicia!”

Then I waited for the storm to burst. It didn’t all at once. The shock was too great, and at first quite paralyzed my half-sister.

“Katherine,” she gasped, “are you crazy? Have you lost your senses?”

“No, I’ve just come to them. It’s true enough, Alicia. You can scold all you like. I know I deserve it, and I won’t flinch. I did really intend to take him, but when it came to the point I couldn’t. I didn’t love him.”

Then, indeed, the storm burst. I never saw Alicia so angry before, and I never got so roundly abused. But even Alicia has her limits, and at last she grew calmer.

“You have behaved disgracefully,” she concluded. “I am disgusted with you. You have encouraged Gus Sinclair markedly right along, and now you throw him over like this. I never dreamed that you were capable of such unwomanly behaviour.”

“That’s a hard word, Alicia,” I protested feebly.

She dealt me a withering glance. “It does not begin to be as hard as your shameful conduct merits. To think of losing a fortune like that for the sake of sentimental folly! I didn’t think you were such a consummate fool.”

“I suppose you absorbed all the sense of our family,” I said drearily. “There now, Alicia, do leave me alone. I’m down in the very depths already.”

“What do you mean to do now?” said Alicia scornfully. “Go back to Valleyfield and marry that starving country doctor of yours, I suppose?”

I flared up then; Alicia might abuse me all she liked, but I wasn’t going to hear a word against Jack.

“Yes, I will, if he’ll have me,” I said, and I marched out of the room and upstairs, with my head very high.

Of course I decided to leave Montreal as soon as I could. But I couldn’t get away within a week, and it was a very unpleasant one. Alicia treated

me with icy indifference, and I knew I should never be reinstated in her good graces.

To my surprise, Roger took my part. "Let the girl alone," he told Alicia. "If she doesn't love Sinclair, she was right in refusing him. I, for one, am glad that she has got enough truth and womanliness in her to keep her from selling herself."

Then he came to the library where I was moping, and laid his hand on my head.

"Little girl," he said earnestly, "no matter what anyone says to you, never marry a man for his money or for any other reason on earth except because you love him."

This comforted me greatly, and I did not cry myself to sleep that night as usual.

At last I got away. I had telegraphed to Jack: "Am coming home Wednesday; meet me at train," and I knew he would be there. How I longed to see him again — dear, old, badly treated Jack.

I got to Valleyfield just at dusk. It was a rainy evening, and everything was slush and fog and gloom. But away up I saw the home light at Thrush Hill, and Jack was waiting for me on the platform.

"Oh, Jack!" I said, clinging to him, regardless of appearances. "Oh, I'm so glad to be back."

"That's right, Kitty. I knew you wouldn't forget us. How well you are looking!"

"I suppose I ought to be looking wretched," I said penitently. "I've been behaving very badly, Jack. Wait till we get away from the crowd and I'll tell you all about it."

And I did.

I didn't gloss over anything, but just confessed the whole truth. Jack heard me through in silence, and then he kissed me.

"Can you forgive me, Jack, and take me back?" I whispered, cuddling up to him.

And he said — but, on second thought, I will not write down what he said.

We are to be married in June.

A Substitute Journalist

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Clifford Baxter came into the sitting-room where Patty was darning stockings and reading a book at the same time. Patty could do things like that. The stockings were well darned too, and Patty understood and remembered what she read.

Clifford flung himself into a chair with a sigh of weariness. “Tired?” queried Patty sympathetically.

“Yes, rather. I’ve been tramping about the wharves all day gathering longshore items. But, Patty, I’ve got a chance at last. Tonight as I was leaving the office Mr. Harmer gave me a real assignment for tomorrow — two of them in fact, but only one of importance. I’m to go and interview Mr. Keefe on this new railroad bill that’s up before the legislature. He’s in town, visiting his old college friend, Mr. Reid, and he’s quite big game. I wouldn’t have had the assignment, of course, if there’d been anyone else to send, but most of the staff will be away all day tomorrow to see about that mine explosion at Midbury or the teamsters’ strike at Bainsville, and I’m the only one available. Harmer gave me a pretty broad hint that it was my chance to win my spurs, and that if I worked up a good article out of it I’d stand a fair show of being taken on permanently next month when Alsop leaves. There’ll be a shuffle all round then, you know. Everybody on the staff will be pushed up a peg, and that will leave a vacant space at the foot.”

Patty threw down her darning needle and clapped her hands with delight. Clifford gazed at her admiringly, thinking that he had the prettiest sister in the world — she was so bright, so eager, so rosy.

“Oh, Clifford, how splendid!” she exclaimed. “Just as we’d begun to give up hope too. Oh, you must get the position! You must hand in a good write-up. Think what it means to us.”

“Yes, I know.” Clifford dropped his head on his hand and stared rather moodily at the lamp. “But my joy is chastened, Patty. Of course I want to get the permanency, since it seems to be the only possible thing, but you know my heart isn’t really in newspaper work. The plain truth is I don’t like it, although I do my best. You know Father always said I was a born mechanic. If I only could get a position somewhere among machinery — that would be my choice. There’s one vacant in the Steel and Iron Works at Bancroft — but of course I’ve no chance of getting it.”

“I know. It’s too bad,” said Patty, returning to her stockings with a sigh. “I wish I were a boy with a foothold on the Chronicle. I firmly believe that I’d make a good newspaper woman, if such a thing had ever been heard of in Aylmer.”

“That you would. You’ve twice as much knack in that line as I have. You seem to know by instinct just what to leave out and put in. I never do, and Harmer has to blue-pencil my copy mercilessly. Well, I’ll do my best with this, as it’s very necessary I should get the permanency, for I fear our family purse is growing very slim. Mother’s face has a new wrinkle of worry every day. It hurts me to see it.”

“And me,” sighed Patty. “I do wish I could find something to do too. If only we both could get positions, everything would be all right. Mother wouldn’t have to worry so. Don’t say anything about this chance to her until you see what comes of it. She’d only be doubly disappointed if nothing did. What is your other assignment?”

“Oh, I’ve got to go out to Bancroft on the morning train and write up old Mr. Moreland’s birthday celebration. He is a hundred years old, and there’s going to be a presentation and speeches and that sort of thing. Nothing very exciting about it. I’ll have to come back on the three o’clock train and hurry out to catch my politician before he leaves at five. Take a stroll down to meet my train, Patty. We can go out as far as Mr. Reid’s house together, and the walk will do you good.”

The Baxters lived in Aylmer, a lively little town with two newspapers, the Chronicle and the Ledger. Between these two was a sharp journalistic rivalry in the matter of “beats” and “scoops.” In the preceding spring

Clifford had been taken on the Chronicle on trial, as a sort of general handyman. There was no pay attached to the position, but he was getting training and there was the possibility of a permanency in September if he proved his mettle. Mr. Baxter had died two years before, and the failure of the company in which Mrs. Baxter's money was invested had left the little family dependent on their own resources. Clifford, who had cherished dreams of a course in mechanical engineering, knew that he must give them up and go to the first work that offered itself, which he did staunchly and uncomplainingly. Patty, who hitherto had had no designs on a "career," but had been sunnily content to be a home girl and Mother's right hand, also realized that it would be well to look about her for something to do. She was not really needed so far as the work of the little house went, and the whole burden must not be allowed to fall on Clifford's eighteen-year-old shoulders. Patty was his senior by a year, and ready to do her part unflinchingly.

The next afternoon Patty went down to meet Clifford's train. When it came, no Clifford appeared. Patty stared about her at the hurrying throngs in bewilderment. Where was Clifford? Hadn't he come on the train? Surely he must have, for there was no other until seven o'clock. She must have missed him somehow. Patty waited until everybody had left the station, then she walked slowly homeward. As the Chronicle office was on her way, she dropped in to see if Clifford had reported there.

She found nobody in the editorial offices except the office boy, Larry Brown, who promptly informed her that not only had Clifford not arrived, but that there was a telegram from him saying that he had missed his train. Patty gasped in dismay. It was dreadful!

"Where is Mr. Harmer?" she asked.

"He went home as soon as the afternoon edition came out. He left before the telegram came. He'll be furious when he finds out that nobody has gone to interview that foxy old politician," said Larry, who knew all about Clifford's assignment and its importance.

"Isn't there anyone else here to go?" queried Patty desperately.

Larry shook his head. "No, there isn't a soul in. We're mighty short-handed just now on account of the explosion and the strike."

Patty went downstairs and stood for a moment in the hall, rapt in reflection. If she had been at home, she verily believed she would have sat down and cried. Oh, it was too bad, too disappointing! Clifford would certainly lose all chance of the permanency, even if the irate news editor did not discharge him at once. What could she do? Could she do anything? She must do something.

"If I only could go in his place," moaned Patty softly to herself.

Then she started. Why not? Why not go and interview the big man herself? To be sure, she did not know a great deal about interviewing, still less about railroad bills, and nothing at all about politics. But if she did her best it might be better than nothing, and might at least save Clifford his present hold.

With Patty, to decide was to act. She flew back to the reporters' room, pounced on a pencil and tablet, and hurried off, her breath coming quickly, and her eyes shining with excitement. It was quite a long walk out to Mr. Reid's place and Patty was tired when she got there, but her courage was not a whit abated. She mounted the steps and rang the bell undauntedly.

"Can I see Mr. — Mr. — Mr.—" Patty paused for a moment in dismay. She had forgotten the name. The maid who had come to the door looked her over so superciliously that Patty flushed with indignation. "The gentleman who is visiting Mr. Reid," she said crisply. "I can't remember his name, but I've come to interview him on behalf of the Chronicle. Is he in?"

"If you mean Mr. Reefer, he is," said the maid quite respectfully. Evidently the Chronicle's name carried weight in the Reid establishment. "Please come into the library. I'll go and tell him."

Patty had just time to seat herself at the table, spread out her paper imposingly, and assume a businesslike air when Mr. Reefer came in. He was a tall, handsome old man with white hair, jet-black eyes, and a mouth that made Patty hope she wouldn't stumble on any questions he wouldn't

want to answer. Patty knew she would waste her breath if she did. A man with a mouth like that would never tell anything he didn't want to tell.

"Good afternoon. What can I do for you, madam?" inquired Mr. Reefer with the air and tone of a man who means to be courteous, but has no time or information to waste.

Patty was almost overcome by the "Madam." For a moment, she quailed. She couldn't ask that masculine sphinx questions! Then the thought of her mother's pale, careworn face flashed across her mind, and all her courage came back with an inspiring rush. She bent forward to look eagerly into Mr. Reefer's carved, granite face, and said with a frank smile:

"I have come to interview you on behalf of the Chronicle about the railroad bill. It was my brother who had the assignment, but he has missed his train and I have come in his place because, you see, it is so important to us. So much depends on this assignment. Perhaps Mr. Harmer will give Clifford a permanent place on the staff if he turns in a good article about you. He is only handyman now. I just couldn't let him miss the chance — he might never have another. And it means so much to us and Mother."

"Are you a member of the Chronicle staff yourself?" inquired Mr. Reefer with a shade more geniality in his tone.

"Oh, no! I've nothing to do with it, so you won't mind my being inexperienced, will you? I don't know just what I should ask you, so won't you please just tell me everything about the bill, and Mr. Harmer can cut out what doesn't matter?"

Mr. Reefer looked at Patty for a few moments with a face about as expressive as a graven image. Perhaps he was thinking about the bill, and perhaps he was thinking what a bright, vivid, plucky little girl this was with her waiting pencil and her air that strove to be businesslike, and only succeeded in being eager and hopeful and anxious.

"I'm not used to being interviewed myself," he said slowly, "so I don't know very much about it. We're both green hands together, I imagine. But I'd like to help you out, so I don't mind telling you what I think about this bill, and its bearing on certain important interests."

Mr. Reefer proceeded to tell her, and Patty's pencil flew as she scribbled down his terse, pithy sentences. She found herself asking questions too, and enjoying it. For the first time, Patty thought she might rather like politics if she understood them — and they did not seem so hard to understand when a man like Mr. Reefer explained them. For half an hour he talked to her, and at the end of that time Patty was in full possession of his opinion on the famous railroad bill in all its aspects.

"There now, I'm talked out," said Mr. Reefer. "You can tell your news editor that you know as much about the railroad bill as Andrew Reefer knows. I hope you'll succeed in pleasing him, and that your brother will get the position he wants. But he shouldn't have missed that train. You tell him that. Boys with important things to do mustn't miss trains. Perhaps it's just as well he did in this case though, but tell him not to let it happen again."

Patty went straight home, wrote up her interview in shipshape form, and took it down to the Chronicle office. There she found Mr. Harmer, scowling blackly. The little news editor looked to be in a rather bad temper, but he nodded not unkindly to Patty. Mr. Harmer knew the Baxters well and liked them, although he would have sacrificed them all without a qualm for a "scoop."

"Good evening, Patty. Take a chair. That brother of yours hasn't turned up yet. The next time I give him an assignment, he'll manage to be on hand in time to do it."

"Oh," cried Patty breathlessly, "please, Mr. Harmer, I have the interview here. I thought perhaps I could do it in Clifford's place, and I went out to Mr. Reid's and saw Mr. Reefer. He was very kind and—"

"Mr. who?" fairly shouted Mr. Harmer.

"Mr. Reefer — Mr. Andrew Reefer. He told me to tell you that this article contained all he knew or thought about the railroad bill and—"

But Mr. Harmer was no longer listening. He had snatched the neatly written sheets of Patty's report and was skimming over them with a practised eye. Then Patty thought he must have gone crazy. He danced

around the office, waving the sheets in the air, and then he dashed frantically up the stairs to the composing room.

Ten minutes later, he returned and shook the mystified Patty by the hand.

“Patty, it’s the biggest beat we’ve ever had! We’ve scooped not only the Ledger, but every other newspaper in the country. How did you do it? How did you ever beguile or bewitch Andrew Reefer into giving you an interview?”

“Why,” said Patty in utter bewilderment, “I just went out to Mr. Reid’s and asked for the gentleman who was visiting there — I’d forgotten his name — and Mr. Reefer came down and I told him my brother had been detailed to interview him on behalf of the Chronicle about the bill, and that Clifford had missed his train, and wouldn’t he let me interview him in his place and excuse my inexperience — and he did.”

“It wasn’t Andrew Reefer I told Clifford to interview,” laughed Mr. Harmer. “It was John C. Keefe. I didn’t know Reefer was in town, but even if I had I wouldn’t have thought it a particle of use to send a man to him. He has never consented to be interviewed before on any known subject, and he’s been especially close-mouthed about this bill, although men from all the big papers in the country have been after him. He is notorious on that score. Why, Patty, it’s the biggest journalistic fish that has ever been landed in this office. Andrew Reefer’s opinion on the bill will have a tremendous influence. We’ll run the interview as a leader in a special edition that is under way already. Of course, he must have been ready to give the information to the public or nothing would have induced him to open his mouth. But to think that we should be the first to get it! Patty, you’re a brick!”

Clifford came home on the seven o’clock train, and Patty was there to meet him, brimful of her story. But Clifford also had a story to tell and got his word in first.

“Now, Patty, don’t scold until you hear why I missed the train. I met Mr. Peabody of the Steel and Iron Company at Mr. Moreland’s and got into conversation with him. When he found out who I was, he was greatly

interested and said Father had been one of his best friends when they were at college together. I told him about wanting to get the position in the company, and he had me go right out to the works and see about it. And, Patty, I have the place. Goodbye to the grind of newspaper items and fillers. I tried to get back to the station at Bancroft in time to catch the train but I couldn't, and it was just as well, for Mr. Keefe was suddenly summoned home this afternoon, and when the three-thirty train from town stopped at Bancroft he was on it. I found that out and I got on, going to the next station with him and getting my interview after all. It's here in my notebook, and I must hurry up to the office and hand it in. I suppose Mr. Harmer will be very much vexed until he finds that I have it."

"Oh, no. Mr. Harmer is in a very good humour," said Patty with dancing eyes. Then she told her story.

The interview with Mr. Reefer came out with glaring headlines, and the Chronicle had its hour of fame and glory. The next day Mr. Harmer sent word to Patty that he wanted to see her.

"So Clifford is leaving," he said abruptly when she entered the office. "Well, do you want his place?"

"Mr. Harmer, are you joking?" demanded Patty in amazement.

"Not I. That stuff you handed in was splendidly written — I didn't have to use the pencil more than once or twice. You have the proper journalist instinct all right. We need a lady on the staff anyhow, and if you'll take the place it's yours for saying so, and the permanency next month."

"I'll take it," said Patty promptly and joyfully.

"Good. Go down to the Symphony Club rehearsal this afternoon and report it. You've just ten minutes to get there," and Patty joyfully and promptly departed.

Anna's Love Letters

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“Are you going to answer Gilbert’s letter tonight, Anna?” asked Alma Williams, standing in the pantry doorway, tall, fair, and grey-eyed, with the sunset light coming down over the dark firs, through the window behind her, and making a primrose nimbus around her shapely head.

Anna, dark, vivid, and slender, was perched on the edge of the table, idly swinging her slippered foot at the cat’s head. She smiled wickedly at Alma before replying.

“I am not going to answer it tonight or any other night,” she said, twisting her full, red lips in a way that Alma had learned to dread. Mischievous was ripening in Anna’s brain when that twist was out.

“What do you mean?” asked Alma anxiously.

“Just what I say, dear,” responded Anna, with deceptive meekness. “Poor Gilbert is gone, and I don’t intend to bother my head about him any longer. He was amusing while he lasted, but of what use is a beau two thousand miles away, Alma?”

Alma was patient — outwardly. It was never of any avail to show impatience with Anna.

“Anna, you are talking foolishly. Of course you are going to answer his letter. You are as good as engaged to him. Wasn’t that practically understood when he left?”

“No, no, dear,” and Anna shook her sleek black head with the air of explaining matters to an obtuse child. “I was the only one who understood. Gil misunderstood. He thought that I would really wait for him until he should have made enough money to come home and pay off the mortgage. I let him think so, because I hated to hurt his little feelings. But now it’s off with the old love and on with a new one for me.”

“Anna, you cannot be in earnest!” exclaimed Alma.

But she was afraid that Anna was in earnest. Anna had a wretched habit of being in earnest when she said flippant things.

“You don’t mean that you are not going to write to Gilbert at all — after all you promised?”

Anna placed her elbows daintily on the top of the rocking chair, dropped her pointed chin in her hands, and looked at Alma with black demure eyes.

“I — do — mean — just — that,” she said slowly. “I never mean to marry Gilbert Murray. This is final, Alma, and you need not scold or coax, because it would be a waste of breath. Gilbert is safely out of the way, and now I am going to have a good time with a few other delightful men creatures in Exeter.”

Anna nodded decisively, flashed a smile at Alma, picked up her cat, and went out. At the door she turned and looked back, with the big black cat snuggled under her chin.

“If you think Gilbert will feel very badly over his letter not being answered, you might answer it yourself, Alma,” she said teasingly. “There it is” — she took the letter from the pocket of her ruffled apron and threw it on a chair. “You may read it if you want to; it isn’t really a love letter. I told Gilbert he wasn’t to write silly letters. Come, pussy, I’m going to get ready for prayer meeting. We’ve got a nice, new, young, goodlooking minister in Exeter, pussy, and that makes prayer meeting very interesting.”

Anna shut the door, her departing laugh rippling mockingly through the dusk. Alma picked up Gilbert Murray’s letter and went to her room. She wanted to cry, since she could not shake Anna. Even if she could have shook her, it would only have made her more perverse. Anna was in earnest; Alma knew that, even while she hoped and believed that it was but the earnestness of a freak that would pass in time. Anna had had one like it a year ago, when she had cast Gilbert off for three months, driving him distracted by flirting with Charlie Moore. Then she had suddenly repented and taken him back. Alma thought that this whim would run its course likewise and leave a repentant Anna. But meanwhile everything might be spoiled. Gilbert might not prove forgiving a second time.

Alma would have given much if she could only have induced Anna to answer Gilbert's letter, but coaxing Anna to do anything was a very sure and effective way of preventing her from doing it.

Alma and Anna had lived alone at the old Williams homestead ever since their mother's death four years before. Exeter matrons thought this hardly proper, since Alma, in spite of her grave ways, was only twenty-four. The farm was rented, so that Alma's only responsibilities were the post office which she kept, and that harum-scarum beauty of an Anna.

The Murray homestead adjoined theirs. Gilbert Murray had grown up with Alma; they had been friends ever since she could remember. Alma loved Gilbert with a love which she herself believed to be purely sisterly, and which nobody else doubted could be, since she had been at pains to make a match — Exeter matrons' phrasing — between Gil and Anna, and was manifestly delighted when Gilbert obligingly fell in love with the latter.

There was a small mortgage on the Murray place which Mr. Murray senior had not been able to pay off. Gilbert determined to get rid of it, and his thoughts turned to the west. His father was an active, hale old man, quite capable of managing the farm in Gilbert's absence. Alexander MacNair had gone to the west two years previously and got work on a new railroad. He wrote to Gilbert to come too, promising him plenty of work and good pay. Gilbert went, but before going he had asked Anna to marry him.

It was the first proposal Anna had ever had, and she managed it quite cleverly, from her standpoint. She told Gilbert that he must wait until he came home again before settling that, meanwhile, they would be very good friends — emphasized with a blush — and that he might write to her. She kissed him goodbye, and Gilbert, honest fellow, was quite satisfied. When an Exeter girl had allowed so much to be inferred, it was understood to be equivalent to an engagement. Gilbert had never discerned that Anna was not like the other Exeter girls, but was a law unto herself.

Alma sat down by her window and looked out over the lane where the slim wild cherry trees were bronzing under the autumn frosts. Her lips

were very firmly set. Something must be done. But what?

Alma's heart was set on this marriage for two reasons. Firstly, if Anna married Gilbert she would be near her all her life. She could not bear the thought that some day Anna might leave her and go far away to live. In the second and largest place, she desired the marriage because Gilbert did. She had always been desirous, even in the old, childish playdays, that Gilbert should get just exactly what he wanted. She had always taken a keen, strange delight in furthering his wishes.

Anna's falseness would surely break his heart, and Alma winced at the thought of his pain.

There was one thing she could do. Anna's tormenting suggestion had fallen on fertile soil. Alma balanced pros and cons, admitting the risk. But she would have taken a tenfold larger risk in the hope of holding secure Anna's place in Gilbert's affections until Anna herself should come to her senses.

When it grew quite dark and Anna had gone lirting down the lane on her way to prayer meeting, Alma lighted her lamp, read Gilbert's letter — and answered it. Her handwriting was much like Anna's. She signed the letter "A. Williams," and there was nothing in it that might not have been written by her to Gilbert; but she knew that Gilbert would believe Anna had written it, and she intended him so to believe. Alma never did a thing halfway when she did it at all. At first she wrote rather constrainedly but, reflecting that in any case Anna would have written a merely friendly letter, she allowed her thoughts to run freely, and the resulting epistle was an excellent one of its kind. Alma had the gift of expression and more brains than Exeter people had ever imagined she possessed. When Gilbert read that letter a fortnight later he was surprised to find that Anna was so clever. He had always, with a secret regret, thought her much inferior to Alma in this respect, but that delightful letter, witty, wise, fanciful, was the letter of a clever woman.

When a year had passed Alma was still writing to Gilbert the letters signed "A. Williams." She had ceased to fear being found out, and she took a strange pleasure in the correspondence for its own sake. At first she

had been quakingly afraid of discovery. When she smuggled the letters addressed in Gilbert's handwriting to Miss Anna Williams out of the letter packet and hid them from Anna's eyes, she felt as guilty as if she were breaking all the laws of the land at once. To be sure, she knew that she would have to confess to Anna some day, when the latter repented and began to wish she had written to Gilbert, but that was a very different thing from premature disclosure.

But Anna had as yet given no sign of such repentance, although Alma looked for it anxiously. Anna was having the time of her life. She was the acknowledged beauty of five settlements, and she went forward on her career of conquest quite undisturbed by the jealousies and heart-burnings she provoked on every side.

One moonlight night she went for a sleigh-drive with Charlie Moore of East Exeter — and returned to tell Alma that they were married!

"I knew you would make a fuss, Alma, because you don't like Charlie, so we just took matters into our own hands. It was so much more romantic, too. I'd always said I'd never be married in any of your dull, commonplace ways. You might as well forgive me and be nice right off, Alma, because you'd have to do it anyway, in time. Well, you do look surprised!"

Alma accepted the situation with an apathy that amazed Anna. The truth was that Alma was stunned by a thought that had come to her even while Anna was speaking.

"Gilbert will find out about the letters now, and despise me."

Nothing else, not even the fact that Anna had married shiftless Charlie Moore, seemed worth while considering beside this. The fear and shame of it haunted her like a nightmare; she shrank every morning from the thought of all the mail that was coming that day, fearing that there would be an angry, puzzled letter from Gilbert. He must certainly soon hear of Anna's marriage; he would see it in the home paper, other correspondents in Exeter would write him of it. Alma grew sick at heart thinking of the complications in front of her.

When Gilbert's letter came she left it for a whole day before she could summon courage to open it. But it was a harmless epistle after all; he had not yet heard of Anna's marriage. Alma had at first no thought of answering it, yet her fingers ached to do so. Now that Anna was gone, her loneliness was unbearable. She realized how much Gilbert's letters had meant to her, even when written to another woman. She could bear her life well enough, she thought, if she only had his letters to look forward to.

No more letters came from Gilbert for six weeks. Then came one, alarmed at Anna's silence, anxiously asking the reason for it; Gilbert had heard no word of the marriage. He was working in a remote district where newspapers seldom penetrated. He had no other correspondent in Exeter now; except his mother, and she, not knowing that he supposed himself engaged to Anna had forgotten to mention it.

Alma answered that letter. She told herself recklessly that she would keep on writing to him until he found out. She would lose his friendship anyhow, when that occurred, but meanwhile she would have the letters a little longer. She could not learn to live without them until she had to.

The correspondence slipped back into its old groove. The harassed look which Alma's face had worn, and which Exeter people had attributed to worry over Anna, disappeared. She did not even feel lonely, and reproached herself for lack of proper feeling in missing Anna so little. Besides, to her horror and dismay, she detected in herself a strange undercurrent of relief at the thought that Gilbert could never marry Anna now! She could not understand it. Had not that marriage been her dearest wish for years? Why then should she feel this strange gladness at the impossibility of its fulfilment? Altogether, Alma feared that her condition of mind and morals must be sadly askew. Perhaps, she thought mournfully, this perversion of proper feeling was her punishment for the deception she had practised. She had deliberately done evil that good might come, and now the very imaginations of her heart were stained by that evil. Alma cried herself to sleep many a night in her repentance, but she kept on writing to Gilbert, for all that.

The winter passed, and the spring and summer waned, and Alma's outward life flowed as smoothly as the currents of the seasons, broken only by vivid eruptions from Anna, who came over often from East Exeter, glorying in her young matronhood, "to cheer Alma up." Alma, so said Exeter people, was becoming unsociable and old maidish. She lost her liking for company, and seldom went anywhere among her neighbours. Her once frequent visits across the yard to chat with old Mrs. Murray became few and far between. She could not bear to hear the old lady talking about Gilbert, and she was afraid that some day she would be told that he was coming home. Gilbert's homecoming was the nightmare dread that darkened poor Alma's whole horizon.

One October day, two years after Gilbert's departure, Alma, standing at her window in the reflected glow of a red maple outside, looked down the lane and saw him striding up it! She had had no warning of his coming. His last letter, dated three weeks back, had not hinted at it. Yet there he was — and with him Alma's Nemesis.

She was very calm. Now that the worst had come, she felt quite strong to meet it. She would tell Gilbert the truth, and he would go away in anger and never forgive her, but she deserved it. As she went downstairs, the only thing that really worried her was the thought of the pain Gilbert would suffer when she told him of Anna's faithlessness. She had seen his face as he passed under her window, and it was the face of a blithe man who had not heard any evil tidings. It was left to her to tell him; surely, she thought apathetically, that was punishment enough for what she had done.

With her hand on the doorknob, she paused to wonder what she should say when he asked her why she had not told him of Anna's marriage when it occurred — why she had still continued the deception when it had no longer an end to serve. Well, she would tell him the truth — that it was because she could not bear the thought of giving up writing to him. It was a humiliating thing to confess, but that did not matter — nothing mattered now. She opened the door.

Gilbert was standing on the big round doorstep under the red maple — a tall, handsome young fellow with a bronzed face and laughing eyes.

His exile had improved him. Alma found time and ability to reflect that she had never known Gilbert was so fine-looking.

He put his arm around her and kissed her cheek in his frank delight at seeing her again. Alma coldly asked him in. Her face was still as pale as when she came downstairs, but a curious little spot of fiery red blossomed out where Gilbert's lips had touched it.

Gilbert followed her into the sitting-room and looked about eagerly.

"When did you come home?" she said slowly. "I did not know you were expected."

"Got homesick, and just came! I wanted to surprise you all," he answered, laughing. "I arrived only a few minutes ago. Just took time to hug my mother, and here I am. Where's Anna?"

The pent-up retribution of two years descended on Alma's head in the last question of Gilbert's. But she did not flinch. She stood straight before him, tall and fair and pale, with the red maple light streaming in through the open door behind her, staining her light house-dress and mellowing the golden sheen of her hair. Gilbert reflected that Alma Williams was really a very handsome girl. These two years had improved her. What splendid big grey eyes she had! He had always wished that Anna's eyes had not been quite so black.

"Anna is not here," said Alma. "She is married."

"Married!"

Gilbert sat down suddenly on a chair and looked at Alma in bewilderment.

"She has been married for a year," said Alma steadily. "She married Charlie Moore of East Exeter, and has been living there ever since."

"Then," said Gilbert, laying hold of the one solid fact that loomed out of the mist of his confused understanding, "why did she keep on writing letters to me after she was married?"

"She never wrote to you at all. It was I that wrote the letters."

Gilbert looked at Alma doubtfully. Was she crazy? There was something odd about her, now that he noticed, as she stood rigidly there,

with that queer red spot on her face, a strange fire in her eyes, and that weird reflection from the maple enveloping her like an immaterial flame.

“I don’t understand,” he said helplessly.

Still standing there, Alma told the whole story, giving full explanations, but no excuses. She told it clearly and simply, for she had often pictured this scene to herself and thought out what she must say. Her memory worked automatically, and her tongue obeyed it promptly. To herself she seemed like a machine, talking mechanically, while her soul stood on one side and listened.

When she had finished there was a silence lasting perhaps ten seconds. To Alma it seemed like hours. Would Gilbert overwhelm her with angry reproaches, or would he simply rise up and leave her in unutterable contempt? It was the most tragic moment of her life, and her whole personality was strung up to meet it and withstand it.

“Well, they were good letters, anyhow,” said Gilbert finally; “interesting letters,” he added, as if by way of a meditative afterthought.

It was so anti-climactic that Alma broke into an hysterical giggle, cut short by a sob. She dropped into a chair by the table and flung her hands over her face, laughing and sobbing softly to herself. Gilbert rose and walked to the door, where he stood with his back to her until she regained her self-control. Then he turned and looked down at her quizzically.

Alma’s hands lay limply in her lap, and her eyes were cast down, with tears glistening on the long fair lashes. She felt his gaze on her.

“Can you ever forgive me, Gilbert?” she said humbly.

“I don’t know that there is much to forgive,” he answered. “I have some explanations to make too and, since we’re at it, we might as well get them all over and have done with them. Two years ago I did honestly think I was in love with Anna — at least when I was round where she was. She had a taking way with her. But, somehow, even then, when I wasn’t with her she seemed to kind of grow dim and not count for so awful much after all. I used to wish she was more like you — quieter, you know, and not so sparkling. When I parted from her that last night before I went west, I did feel very bad, and she seemed very dear to me, but it was six weeks from

that before her — your — letter came, and in that time she seemed to have faded out of my thoughts. Honestly, I wasn't thinking much about her at all. Then came the letter — and it was a splendid one, too. I had never thought that Anna could write a letter like that, and I was as pleased as Punch about it. The letters kept coming, and I kept on looking for them more and more all the time. I fell in love all over again — with the writer of those letters. I thought it was Anna, but since you wrote the letters, it must have been with you, Alma. I thought it was because she was growing more womanly that she could write such letters. That was why I came home. I wanted to get acquainted all over again, before she grew beyond me altogether — I wanted to find the real Anna the letters showed me. I — I — didn't expect this. But I don't care if Anna is married, so long as the girl who wrote those letters isn't. It's you I love, Alma.”

He bent down and put his arm about her, laying his cheek against hers. The little red spot where his kiss had fallen was now quite drowned out in the colour that rushed over her face.

“If you'll marry me, Alma, I'll forgive you,” he said.

A little smile escaped from the duress of Alma's lips and twitched her dimples.

“I'm willing to do anything that will win your forgiveness, Gilbert,” she said meekly.

Aunt Caroline's Silk Dress

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Patty came in from her walk to the post office with cheeks finely reddened by the crisp air. Carry surveyed her with pleasure. Of late Patty's cheeks had been entirely too pale to please Carry, and Patty had not had a very good appetite. Once or twice she had even complained of a headache. So Carry had sent her to the office for a walk that night, although the post office trip was usually Carry's own special constitutional, always very welcome to her after a weary day of sewing on other people's pretty dresses.

Carry never sewed on pretty dresses for herself, for the simple reason that she never had any pretty dresses. Carry was twenty-two — and feeling forty, her last pretty dress had been when she was a girl of twelve, before her father had died. To be sure, there was the silk organdie Aunt Kathleen had sent her, but that was fit only for parties, and Carry never went to any parties.

"Did you get any mail, Patty?" she asked unexpectedly. There was never much mail for the Lea girls.

"Yes'm," said Patty briskly. "Here's the Weekly Advocate, and a patent medicine almanac with all your dreams expounded, and a letter for Miss Carry M. Lea. It's postmarked Enfield, and has a suspiciously matrimonial look. I'm sure it's an invitation to Chris Fairley's wedding. Hurry up and see, Caddy."

Carry, with a little flush of excitement on her face, opened her letter. Sure enough, it contained an invitation "to be present at the marriage of Christine Fairley."

"How jolly!" exclaimed Patty. "Of course you'll go, Caddy. You'll have a chance to wear that lovely organdie of yours at last."

"It was sweet of Chris to invite me," said Carry. "I really didn't expect it."

“Well, I did. Wasn’t she your most intimate friend when she lived in Enderby?”

“Oh, yes, but it is four years since she left, and some people might forget in four years. But I might have known Chris wouldn’t. Of course I’ll go.”

“And you’ll make up your organdie?”

“I shall have to,” laughed Carry, forgetting all her troubles for a moment, and feeling young and joyous over the prospect of a festivity. “I haven’t another thing that would do to wear to a wedding. If I hadn’t that blessed organdie I couldn’t go, that’s all.”

“But you have it, and it will look lovely made up with a tucked skirt. Tucks are so fashionable now. And there’s that lace of mine you can have for a bertha. I want you to look just right, you see. Enfield is a big place, and there will be lots of grandees at the wedding. Let’s get the last fashion sheet and pick out a design right away. Here’s one on the very first page that would be nice. You could wear it to perfection, Caddy you’re so tall and slender. It wouldn’t suit a plump and podgy person like myself at all.”

Carry liked the pattern, and they had an animated discussion over it. But, in the end, Carry sighed, and pushed the sheet away from her, with all the brightness gone out of face.

“It’s no use, Patty. I’d forgotten for a few minutes, but it’s all come back now. I can’t think of weddings and new dresses, when the thought of that interest crowds everything else out. It’s due next month — fifty dollars — and I’ve only ten saved up. I can’t make forty dollars in a month, even if I had any amount of sewing, and you know hardly anyone wants sewing done just now. I don’t know what we shall do. Oh, I suppose we can rent a couple of rooms in the village and exist in them. But it breaks my heart to think of leaving our old home.”

“Perhaps Mr. Kerr will let us have more time,” suggested Patty, not very hopefully. The sparkle had gone out of her face too. Patty loved their little home as much as Carry did.

“You know he won’t. He has been only too anxious for an excuse to foreclose, this long time. He wants the land the house is on. Oh, if I only

hadn't been sick so long in the summer — just when everybody had sewing to do. I've tried so hard to catch up, but I couldn't." Carry's voice broke in a sob.

Patty leaned over the table and patted her sister's glossy dark hair gently.

"You've worked too hard, dearie. You've just gone to skin and bone. Oh, I know how hard it is! I can't bear to think of leaving this dear old spot either. If we could only induce Mr. Kerr to give us a year's grace! I'd be teaching then, and we could easily pay the interest and some of the principal too. Perhaps he will if we both go to him and coax very hard. Anyway, don't worry over it till after the wedding. I want you to go and have a good time. You never have good times, Carry."

"Neither do you," said Carry rebelliously. "You never have anything that other girls have, Patty — not even pretty clothes."

"Deed, and I've lots of things to be thankful for," said Patty cheerily. "Don't you fret about me. I'm vain enough to think I've got some brains anyway, and I'm a-meaning to do something with them too. Now I think I'll go upstairs and study this evening. It will be warm enough there tonight, and the noise of the machine rather bothers me."

Patty whisked out, and Carry knew she should go to her sewing. But she sat a long while at the table in dismal thought. She was so tired, and so hopeless. It had been such a hard struggle, and it seemed now as if it would all come to naught. For five years, ever since her mother's death, Carry had supported herself and Patty by dressmaking. They had been a hard five years of pinching and economizing and going without, for Enderby was only a small place, and there were two other dressmakers. Then there was always the mortgage to devour everything. Carry had kept it at bay till now, but at last she was conquered. She had had typhoid fever in the spring and had not been able to work for a long time. Indeed, she had gone to work before she should. The doctor's bill was yet unpaid, but Dr. Hamilton had told her to take her time. Carry knew she would not be pressed for that, and next year Patty would be able to help her. But next year would be too late. The dear little home would be lost then.

When Carry roused herself from her sad reflections, she saw a crumpled note lying on the floor. She picked it up and absently smoothed it out. Seeing Patty's name at the top she was about to lay it aside without reading it, but the lines were few, and the sense of them flashed into Carry's brain. The note was an invitation to Clare Forbes's party! The Lea girls had known that the Forbes girls were going to give a party, but they had not expected that Patty would be invited. Of course, Clare Forbes was in Patty's class at school and was always very nice and friendly with her. But then the Forbes set was not the Lea set.

Carry ran upstairs to Patty's room. "Patty, you dropped this on the floor. I couldn't help seeing what it was. Why didn't you tell me Clare had invited you?"

"Because I knew I couldn't go, and I thought you would feel badly over that. Caddy, I wish you hadn't seen it."

"Oh, Patty, I do wish you could go to the party. It was so sweet of Clare to invite you, and perhaps she will be offended if you don't go — she won't understand. Clare Forbes isn't a girl whose friendship is to be lightly thrown away when it is offered."

"I know that. But, Caddy dear, it is impossible. I don't think that I have any foolish pride about clothes, but you know it is out of the question to think of going to Clare Forbes's party in my last winter's plaid dress, which is a good two inches too short and skimpy in proportion. Putting my own feelings aside, it would be an insult to Clare. There, don't think any more about it."

But Carry did think about it. She lay awake half the night wondering if there might not be some way for Patty to go to that party. She knew it was impossible, unless Patty had a new dress, and how could a new dress be had? Yet she did so want Patty to go. Patty never had any good times, and she was studying so hard. Then, all at once, Carry thought of a way by which Patty might have a new dress. She had been tossing restlessly, but now she lay very still, staring with wide-open eyes at the moonlit window, with the big willow boughs branching darkly across it. Yes, it was a way, but could she? Could she? Yes, she could, and she would. Carry buried her

face in her pillow with a sob and a gulp. But she had decided what must be done, and how it must be done.

“Are you going to begin on your organdie today?” asked Patty in the morning, before she started for school.

“I must finish Mrs. Pidgeon’s suit first,” Carry answered. “Next week will be time enough to think about my wedding garments.”

She tried to laugh and failed. Patty thought with a pang that Carry looked horribly pale and tired — probably she had worried most of the night over the interest. “I’m so glad she’s going to Chris’s wedding,” thought Patty, as she hurried down the street. “It will take her out of herself and give her something nice to think of for ever so long.”

Nothing more was said that week about the organdie, or the wedding, or the Forbes’s party. Carry sewed fiercely, and sat at her machine for hours after Patty had gone to bed. The night before the party she said to Patty, “Braid your hair tonight, Patty. You’ll want it nice and wavy to go to the Forbes’s tomorrow night.”

Patty thought that Carry was actually trying to perpetrate a weak joke, and endeavoured to laugh. But it was a rather dreary laugh. Patty, after a hard evening’s study, felt tired and discouraged, and she was really dreadfully disappointed about the party, although she wouldn’t have let Carry suspect it for the world.

“You’re going, you know,” said Carry, as serious as a judge, although there was a little twinkle in her eyes.

“In a faded plaid two inches too short?” Patty smiled as brightly as possible.

“Oh, no. I have a dress all ready for you.” Carry opened the wardrobe door and took out — the loveliest girlish dress of creamy organdie, with pale pink roses scattered over it, made with the daintiest of ruffles and tucks, with a bertha of soft creamy lace, and a girdle of white silk. “This is for you,” said Carry.

Patty gazed at the dress with horror-stricken eyes. “Caroline Lea, that is your organdie! And you’ve gone and made it up for me! Carry Lea, what are you going to wear to the wedding?”

“Nothing. I’m not going.”

“You are — you must — you shall. I won’t take the organdie.”

“You’ll have to now, because it’s made to fit you. Come, Patty dear, I’ve set my heart on your going to that party. You mustn’t disappoint me — you can’t, for what good would it do? I can never wear the dress now.”

Patty realized that. She knew she might as well go to the party, but she did not feel much pleasure in the prospect. Nevertheless, when she was ready for it the next evening, she couldn’t help a little thrill of delight. The dress was so pretty, and dainty, and becoming.

“You look sweet,” exclaimed Carry admiringly. “There, I hear the Browns’ carriage. Patty, I want you to promise me this — that you’ll not let any thought of me, or my not going to the wedding, spoil your enjoyment this evening. I gave you the dress that you might have a good time, so don’t make my gift of no effect.”

“I’ll try,” promised Patty, flying downstairs, where her next-door neighbours were waiting for her.

At two o’clock that night Carry was awakened to see Patty bending over her, flushed and radiant. Carry sat sleepily up. “I hope you had a good time,” she said.

“I had — oh, I had — but I didn’t waken you out of your hard-earned slumbers at this wee sma’ hour to tell you that. Carry, I’ve thought of a way for you to go to the wedding. It just came to me at supper. Mrs. Forbes was sitting opposite to me, and her dress suggested it. You must make over Aunt Caroline’s silk dress.”

“Nonsense,” said Carry, a little crossly; even sweet-tempered people are sometimes cross when they are wakened up for — as it seemed — nothing.

“It’s good plain sense. Of course, you must make it over and—”

“Patty Lea, you’re crazy. I wouldn’t dream of wearing that hideous thing. Bright green silk, with huge yellow brocade flowers as big as cabbages all over it! I think I see myself in it.”

“Caddy, listen to me. You know there’s enough of that black lace of mother’s for the waist, and the big black lace shawl of Grandmother Lea’s

will do for the skirt. Make it over—”

“A plain slip of the silk,” gasped Carry, her quick brain seizing on all the possibilities of the plan. “Why didn’t I think of it before? It will be just the thing, the greens and yellow will be toned down to a nice shimmer under the black lace. And I’ll make cuffs of black velvet with double puffs above — and just cut out a wee bit at the throat with a frill of lace and a band of black velvet ribbon around my neck. Patty Lea, it’s an inspiration.”

Carry was out of bed by daylight the next morning and, while Patty still slumbered, she mounted to the garret, and took Aunt Caroline’s silk dress from the chest where it had lain forgotten for three years. Carry held it up at arm’s length, and looked at it with amusement.

“It is certainly ugly, but with the lace over it it will look very different. There’s enough of it, anyway, and that skirt is stiff enough to stand alone. Poor Aunt Caroline, I’m afraid I wasn’t particularly grateful for her gift at the time, but I really am now.”

Aunt Caroline, who had given the dress to Carry three years before, was, an old lady of eighty, the aunt of Carry’s father. She had once possessed a snug farm but in an evil hour she had been persuaded to deed it to her nephew, Edward Curry, whom she had brought up. Poor Aunt Caroline had lived to regret this step, for everyone in Enderby knew that Edward Curry and his wife had repaid her with ingratitude and greed.

Carry, who was named for her, was her favourite grandniece and often went to see her, though such visits were coldly received by the Currys, who always took especial care never to leave Aunt Caroline alone with any of her relatives. On one occasion, when Carry was there, Aunt Caroline had brought out this silk dress.

“I’m going to give this to you, Carry,” she said timidly. “It’s a good silk, and not so very old. Mr. Greenley gave it to me for a birthday present fifteen years ago. Maybe you can make it over for yourself.”

Mrs. Edward, who was on duty at the time, sniffed disagreeably, but she said nothing. The dress was of no value in her eyes, for the pattern was so ugly and old-fashioned that none of her smart daughters would have

worn it. Had it been otherwise, Aunt Caroline would probably not have been allowed to give it away.

Carry had thanked Aunt Caroline sincerely. If she did not care much for the silk, she at least prized the kindly motive behind the gift. Perhaps she and Patty laughed a little over it as they packed it away in the garret. It was so very ugly, but Carry thought it was sweet of Aunt Caroline to have given her something. Poor old Aunt Caroline had died soon after, and Carry had not thought about the silk dress again. She had too many other things to think of, this poor worried Carry.

After breakfast Carry began to rip the skirt breadths apart. Snip, snip, went her scissors, while her thoughts roamed far afield — now looking forward with renewed pleasure to Christine's wedding, now dwelling dolefully on the mortgage. Patty, who was washing the dishes, knew just what her thoughts were by the light and shadow on her expressive face.

"Why! — what?" exclaimed Carry suddenly. Patty wheeled about to see Carry staring at the silk dress like one bewitched. Between the silk and the lining which she had just ripped apart was a twenty-dollar bill, and beside it a sheet of letter paper covered with writing in a cramped angular hand, both secured very carefully to the silk.

"Carry Lea!" gasped Patty.

With trembling fingers Carry snipped away the stitches that held the letter, and read it aloud.

"My dear Caroline," it ran, "I do not know when you will find this letter and this money, but when you do it belongs to you. I have a hundred dollars which I always meant to give you because you were named for me. But Edward and his wife do not know I have it, and I don't want them to find out. They would not let me give it to you if they knew, so I have thought of this way of getting it to you. I have sewed five twenty-dollar bills under the lining of this skirt, and they are all yours, with your Aunt Caroline's best love. You were always a good girl, Carry, and you've worked hard, and I've given Edward enough. Just take this money and use it as you like.

"Aunt Caroline Greenley."

“Carry Lea, are we both dreaming?” gasped Patty.

With crimson cheeks Carry ripped the other breadths apart, and there were the other four bills. Then she slipped down in a little heap on the sofa cushions and began to cry — happy tears of relief and gladness.

“We can pay the interest,” said Patty, dancing around the room, “and get yourself a nice new dress for the wedding.”

“Indeed I won’t,” said Carry, sitting up and laughing through her tears. “I’ll make over this dress and wear it out of gratitude to the memory of dear Aunt Caroline.”

Aunt Susanna's Thanksgiving Dinner.

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“Here’s Aunt Susanna, girls,” said Laura who was sitting by the north window — nothing but north light does for Laura who is the artist of our talented family.

Each of us has a little pet new-fledged talent which we are faithfully cultivating in the hope that it will amount to something and soar highly some day. But it is difficult to cultivate four talents on our tiny income. If Laura wasn’t such a good manager we never could do it.

Laura’s words were a signal for Kate to hang up her violin and for me to push my pen and portfolio out of sight. Laura had hidden her brushes and water colors as she spoke. Only Margaret continued to bend serenely over her Latin grammar. Aunt Susanna frowns on musical and literary and artistic ambitions but she accords a faint approval to Margaret’s desire for an education. A college course, with a tangible diploma at the end, and a sensible pedagogic aspiration is something Aunt Susanna can understand when she tries hard. But she cannot understand messing with paints, fiddling, or scribbling, and she has only unmeasured contempt for messers, fiddlers, and scribblers. Time was when we had paid no attention to Aunt Susanna’s views on these points; but ever since she had, on one incautious day when she was in high good humor, dropped a pale, anemic little hint that she might send Margaret to college if she were a good girl we had been bending all our energies towards securing Aunt Susanna’s approval. It was not enough that Aunt Susanna should approve of Margaret; she must approve of the whole four of us or she would not help Margaret. That is Aunt Susanna’s way. Of late we had been growing a little discouraged. Aunt Susanna had recently read a magazine article which stated that the higher education of women was ruining our country and that a woman who was a B.A. couldn’t, in the very nature of things, ever be a housewifely, cookly creature. Consequently, Margaret’s chances looked a

little foggy; but we hadn't quite given up hope. A very little thing might sway Aunt Susanna one way or the other, so that we walked very softly and tried to mingle serpents' wisdom and doves' harmlessness in practical portions.

When Aunt Susanna came in Laura was crocheting, Kate was sewing, and I was poring over a recipe book. That was not deception at all, since we did all these things frequently — much more frequently, in fact, than we painted or fiddled or wrote. But Aunt Susanna would never believe it. Nor did she believe it now.

She threw back her lovely new sealskin cape, looked around the sitting-room and then smiled — a truly Aunt Susannian smile.

“What a pity you forgot to wipe that smudge of paint off your nose, Laura,” she said sarcastically. “You don't seem to get on very fast with your lace. How long is it since you began it? Over three months, isn't it?”

“This is the third piece of the same pattern I've done in three months, Aunt Susanna,” said Laura presently. Laura is an old duck. She never gets cross and snaps back. I do; and it's so hard not to with Aunt Susanna sometimes. But I generally manage it for I'd do anything for Margaret. Laura did not tell Aunt Susanna that she sold her lace at the Women's Exchange in town and made enough to buy her new hats. She makes enough out of her water colors to dress herself.

Aunt Susanna took a second breath and started in again.

“I notice your violin hasn't quite as much dust on it as the rest of the things in this room, Kate. It's a pity you stopped playing just as I came in. I don't enjoy fiddling much but I'd prefer it to seeing anyone using a needle who isn't accustomed to it.”

Kate is really a most dainty needlewoman and does all the fine sewing in our family. She colored and said nothing — that being the highest pitch of virtue to which our Katie, like myself, can attain.

“And there's Margaret ruining her eyes over books,” went on Aunt Susanna severely. “Will you kindly tell me, Margaret Thorne, what good you ever expect Latin to do you?”

“Well, you see, Aunt Susanna,” said Margaret gently — Magsie and Laura are birds of a feather—”I want to be a teacher if I can manage to get through, and I shall need Latin for that.”

All the girls except me had now got their accustomed rap, but I knew better than to hope I should escape.

“So you’re reading a recipe book, Agnes? Well, that’s better than poring over a novel. I’m afraid you haven’t been at it very long though. People generally don’t read recipes upside down — and besides, you didn’t quite cover up your portfolio. I see a corner of it sticking out. Was genius burning before I came in? It’s too bad if I quenched the flame.”

“A cookery book isn’t such a novelty to me as you seem to think, Aunt Susanna,” I said, as meekly as it was possible for me. “Why I’m a real good cook—’if I do say it as hadn’t order.”

I am, too.

“Well, I’m glad to hear it,” said Aunt Susanna skeptically, “because that has to do with my errand her to-day. I’m in a peck of troubles. Firstly, Miranda Mary’s mother has had to go and get sick and Miranda Mary must go home to wait on her. Secondly, I’ve just had a telegram from my sister-in-law who has been ordered west for her health, and I’ll have to leave on tonight’s train to see her before she goes. I can’t get back until the noon train Thursday, and that is Thanksgiving, and I’ve invited Mr. and Mrs. Gilbert to dinner that day. They’ll come on the same train. I’m dreadfully worried. There doesn’t seem to be anything I can do except get on of you girls to go up to the Pinery Thursday morning and cook the dinner for us. Do you think you can manage it?”

We all felt rather dismayed, and nobody volunteered with a rush. But as I had just boasted that I could cook it was plainly my duty to step into the breach, and I did it with fear and trembling.

“I’ll go, Aunt Susanna,” I said.

“And I’ll help you,” said Kate.

“Well, I suppose I’ll have to try you,” said Aunt Susanna with the air of a woman determined to make the best of a bad business. “Here is the key of the kitchen door. You’ll find everything in the pantry, turkey and

all. The mince pies are all ready made so you'll only have to warm them up. I want dinner sharp at twelve for the train is due at 11:50. Mr. and Mrs. Gilbert are very particular and I do hope you will have things right. Oh, if I could only be home myself! Why will people get sick at such inconvenient times?"

"Don't worry, Aunt Susanna," I said comfortingly. "Kate and I will have your Thanksgiving dinner ready for you in tiptop style."

"Well I'm sure I hope so. Don't get to mooning over a story, Agnes. I'll lock the library up and fortunately there are no fiddles at the Pinery. Above all, don't let any of the McGinnises in. They'll be sure to be prowling around when I'm not home. Don't give that dog of theirs any scraps either. That is Miranda Mary's one fault. She will feed that dog in spite of all I can do and I can't walk out of my own back door without falling over him."

We promise to eschew the McGinnises and all their works, including the dog, and when Aunt Susanna had gone we looked at each other with mingled hope and fear.

"Girls, this is the chance of your lives," said Laura. "If you can only please Aunt Susanna with this dinner it will convince her that you are good cooks in spite of your nefarious bent for music and literature. I consider the illness of Miranda Mary's mother a Providential interposition — that is, if she isn't too sick."

"It's all very well for you to be pleased, Lolla," I said dolefully. "But I don't feel jubilant over the prospect at all. Something will probably go wrong. And then there's our own nice little Thanksgiving celebration we've planned, and pinched and economized for weeks to provide. That is half spoiled now."

"Oh, what is that compared to Margaret's chance of going to college?" exclaimed Kate. "Cheer up, Aggie. You know we can cook. I feel that it is now or never with Aunt Susanna."

I cheered up accordingly. We are not given to pessimism which is fortunate. Ever since father died four years ago we have struggled on here, content to give up a good deal just to keep our home and be together. This

little gray house — oh, how we do love it and its apple trees — is ours and we have, as aforesaid, a tiny income and our ambitions; not very big ambitions but big enough to give zest to our lives and hope to the future. We've been very happy as a rule. Aunt Susanna has a big house and lots of money but she isn't as happy as we are. She nags us a good deal — just as she used to nag father — but we don't mind it very much after all. Indeed, I sometimes suspect that we really like Aunt Susanna tremendously if she'd only leave us alone long enough to find it out.

Thursday morning was an ideal Thanksgiving morning — bright, crisp and sparkling. There had been a white frost in the night, and the orchard and the white birch wood behind it looked like fairyland. We were all up early. None of us had slept well, and both Kate and I had had the most fearful dreams of spoiling Aunt Susanna's Thanksgiving dinner.

"Never mind, dreams always go by contraries, you know," said Laura cheerfully. "You'd better go up to the Pinery early and get the fires on, for the house will be cold. Remember the McGinnises and the dog. Weigh the turkey so that you'll know exactly how long to cook it. Put the pies in the oven in time to get piping hot — lukewarm mince pies are an abomination. Be sure—"

"Laura, don't confuse us with any more cautions," I groaned, "or we shall get hopelessly fuddled. Come on, Kate, before she has time to."

It wasn't very far up to the Pinery — just ten minutes' walk, and such a delightful walk on that delightful morning. We went through the orchard and then through the white birch wood where the loveliness of the frosted boughs awed us. Beyond that there was a lane between ranks of young, balsamy, white-misted firs and then an open pasture field, sere and crispy. Just across it was the Pinery, a lovely old house with dormer windows in the roof, surrounded by pines that were dark and glorious against the silvery morning sky.

The McGinnis dog was sitting on the backdoor steps when we arrived. He wagged his tail ingratiatingly, but we ruthlessly pushed him off, went in and shut the door in his face. All the little McGinnises were sitting in a row on their fence, and they whooped derisively. The McGinnis manners

are not those which appertain to the caste of Vere de Vere; but we rather like the urchins — there are eight of them — and we would probably have gone over to talk to them if we had not had the fear of Aunt Susanna before our eyes.

We kindled the fires, weighed the turkey, put it in the oven and prepared the vegetables. Then we set the dining-room table and decorated it with Aunt Susanna's potted ferns and dishes of lovely red apples. Everything went so smoothly that we soon forgot to be nervous. When the turkey was done, we took it out, set it on the back of the range to keep warm and put the mince pies in. The potatoes, cabbage and turnips were bubbling away cheerfully, and everything was going as merrily as a marriage bell. Then, all at once, things happened.

In an evil hour we went to the yard window and looked out. We saw a quiet scene. The McGinnis dog was still sitting on his haunches by the steps, just as he had been sitting all the morning. Down in the McGinnis yard everything wore an unusually peaceful aspect. Only one McGinnis was in sight — Tony, aged eight, who was perched up on the edge of the well box, swinging his legs and singing at the top of his melodious Irish voice. All at once, just as we were looking at him, Tony went over backward and apparently tumbled head foremost down his father's well.

Kate and I screamed simultaneously. We tore across the kitchen, flung open the door, plunged down over Aunt Susanna's yard, scrambled over the fence and flew to the well. Just as we reached it, Tony's red head appeared as he climbed serenely out over the box. I don't know whether I felt more relieved or furious. He had merely fallen on the blank guard inside the box: and there are times when I am tempted to think he fell on purpose because he saw Kate and me looking out at the window. At least he didn't seem at all frightened, and grinned most impishly at us.

Kate and I turned on our heels and marched back in as dignified a manner as was possible under the circumstances. Half way up Aunt Susanna's yard we forgot dignity and broke into a run. We had left the door open and the McGinnis dog had disappeared.

Never shall I forget the sight we saw or the smell we smelled when we burst into that kitchen. There on the floor was the McGinnis dog and what was left of Aunt Susanna's Thanksgiving turkey. As for the smell, imagine a commingled odor of scorching turnips and burning mince pies, and you have it.

The dog fled out with a guilty yelp. I groaned and snatched the turnips off. Kate threw open the oven door and dragged out the pies. Pies and turnips were ruined as irretrievably as the turkey.

"Oh, what shall we do?" I cried miserably. I knew Margaret's chance of college was gone forever.

"Do!" Kate was superb. She didn't lose her wits for a second. "We'll go home and borrow the girls' dinner. Quick — there's just ten minutes before train time. Throw those pies and turnips into this basket — the turkey too — we'll carry them with us to hide them."

I might not be able to evolve an idea like that on the spur of the moment, but I can at least act up to it when it is presented. Without a moment's delay we shut the door and ran. As we went I saw the McGinnis dog licking his chops over in their yard. I have been ashamed ever since of my feelings toward that dog. They were murderous. Fortunately I had no time to indulge them.

It is ten minutes walk from the Pinery to our house, but you can run it in five. Kate and I burst into the kitchen just as Laura and Margaret were sitting down to dinner. We had neither time nor breath for explanations. Without a word I grasped the turkey platter and the turnip tureen. Kate caught one hot mince pie from the oven and whisked a cold one out of the pantry.

"We've — got — to have — them," was all she said.

I've always said that Laura and Magsie would rise to any occasion. They saw us carry their Thanksgiving dinner off under their very eyes and they never interfered by word or motion. They didn't even worry us with questions. They realized that something desperate had happened and that the emergency called for deed not words.

“Aggie,” gasped Kate behind me as we tore through the birch wood, “the border — of these pies — is crimped — differently — from Aunt Susanna’s.”

“She — won’t know — the difference,” I panted. “Miranda — Mary — crimps them.”

We got back to the Pinery just as the train whistle blew. We had ten minutes to transfer turkey and turnips to Aunt Susanna’s dishes, hide our own, air the kitchen, and get back our breath. We accomplished it. When Aunt Susanna and her guests came we were prepared for them: we were calm — outwardly — and the second mince pie was getting hot in the oven. It was ready by the time it was needed. Fortunately our turkey was the same size as Aunt Susanna’s, and Laura had cooked a double supply of turnips, intending to warm them up the next day. Still, all things considered, Kate and I didn’t enjoy that dinner much. We kept thinking of poor Laura and Magsie at home, dining off potatoes on Thanksgiving!

But at least Aunt Susanna was satisfied. When Kate and I were washing the dishes she came out quite beamingly.

“Well, my dears, I must admit that you made a very good job of the dinner, indeed. The turkey was done to perfection. As for the mince pies — well, of course Miranda Mary made them, but she must have had extra good luck with them, for they were excellent and heated to just the right degree. You didn’t give anything to the McGinnis dog, I hope?”

“No, we didn’t give him anything,” said Kate.

Aunt Susanna did not notice the emphasis.

When we had finished the dishes we smuggled our platter and tureen out of the house and went home. Laura and Margaret were busy painting and studying and were just as sweet-tempered as if we hadn’t robbed them of their dinner. But we had to tell them the whole story before we even took off our hats.

“There is a special Providence for children and idiots,” said Laura gently. We didn’t ask her whether she meant us or Tony McGinnis or both. There are some things better left in obscurity. I’d have probably said

something much sharper than that if anybody had made off with my Thanksgiving turkey so unceremoniously.

Aunt Susanna came down the next day and told Margaret that she would send her to college. Also she commissioned Laura to paint her a water-color for her dining-room and said she'd pay her five dollars for it.

Kate and I were rather left out in the cold in this distribution of favors, but when you come to reflect that Laura and Magsie had really cooked that dinner, it was only just.

Anyway, Aunt Susanna has never since insinuated that we can't cook, and that is as much as we deserve.

By Grace of Julius Caesar

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Melissa sent word on Monday evening that she thought we had better go round with the subscription list for cushioning the church pews on Tuesday. I sent back word that I thought we had better go on Thursday. I had no particular objection to Tuesday, but Melissa is rather fond of settling things without consulting anyone else, and I don't believe in always letting her have her own way. Melissa is my cousin and we have always been good friends, and I am really very fond of her; but there's no sense in lying down and letting yourself be walked over. We finally compromised on Wednesday.

I always have a feeling of dread when I hear of any new church-project for which money will be needed, because I know perfectly well that Melissa and I will be sent round to collect for it. People say we seem to be able to get more than anybody else; and they appear to think that because Melissa is an unencumbered old maid, and I am an unencumbered widow, we can spare the time without any inconvenience to ourselves. Well, we have been canvassing for building funds, and socials, and suppers for years, but it is needed now; at least, I have had enough of it, and I should think Melissa has, too.

We started out bright and early on Wednesday morning, for Jersey Cove is a big place and we knew we should need the whole day. We had to walk because neither of us owned a horse, and anyway it's more nuisance getting out to open and shut gates than it is worth while. It was a lovely day then, though promising to be hot, and our hearts were as light as could be expected, considering the disagreeable expedition we were on.

I was waiting at my gate for Melissa when she came, and she looked me over with wonder and disapproval. I could see she thought I was a fool to dress up in my second best flowered muslin and my very best hat with the pale pink roses in it to walk about in the heat and dust; but I wasn't.

All my experience in canvassing goes to show that the better dressed and better looking you are the more money you'll get — that is, when it's the men you have to tackle, as in this case. If it had been the women, however, I would have put on the oldest and ugliest things, consistent with decency, I had. This was what Melissa had done, as it was, and she did look fearfully prim and dowdy, except for her front hair, which was as soft and fluffy and elaborate as usual. I never could understand how Melissa always got it arranged so beautifully.

Nothing particular happened the first part of the day. Some few growled and wouldn't subscribe anything, but on the whole we did pretty well. If it had been a missionary subscription we should have fared worse; but when it was something touching their own comfort, like cushioning the pews, they came down handsomely. We reached Daniel Wilson's by noon, and had to have dinner there. We didn't eat much, although we were hungry enough — Mary Wilson's cooking is a by-word in Jersey Cove. No wonder Daniel is dyspeptic; but dyspeptic or not, he gave us a big subscription for our cushions and told us we looked younger than ever. Daniel is always very complimentary, and they say Mary is jealous.

When we left the Wilson's Melissa said, with an air of a woman nerving herself to a disagreeable duty:

"I suppose we might as well go to Isaac Appleby's now and get it over."

I agreed with her. I had been dreading that call all day. It isn't a very pleasant thing to go to a man you have recently refused to marry and ask him for money; and Melissa and I were both in that predicament.

Isaac was a well-to-do old bachelor who had never had any notion of getting married until his sister died in the winter. And then, as soon as the spring planting was over, he began to look round for a wife. He came to me first and I said "No" good and hard. I liked Isaac well enough; but I was snug and comfortable, and didn't feel like pulling up my roots and moving into another lot; besides, Isaac's courting seemed to me a shade too businesslike. I can't get along without a little romance; it's my nature.

Isaac was disappointed and said so, but intimated that it wasn't crushing and that the next best would do very well. The next best was Melissa, and he proposed to her after the decent interval of a fortnight. Melissa also refused him. I admit I was surprised at this, for I knew Melissa was rather anxious to marry; but she has always been down on Isaac Appleby, from principle, because of a family feud on her mother's side; besides, an old beau of hers, a widower at Kingsbridge, was just beginning to take notice again, and I suspected Melissa had hopes concerning him. Finally, I imagine Melissa did not fancy being second choice.

Whatever her reasons were, she refused poor Isaac, and that finished his matrimonial prospects as far as Jersey Cove was concerned, for there wasn't another eligible woman in it — that is, for a man of Isaac's age. I was the only widow, and the other old maids besides Melissa were all hopelessly old-maiden.

This was all three months ago, and Isaac had been keeping house for himself ever since. Nobody knew much about how he got along, for the Appleby house is half a mile from anywhere, down near the shore at the end of a long lane — the loneliest place, as I did not fail to remember when I was considering Isaac's offer.

"I heard Jarvis Aldrich say Isaac had got a dog lately," said Melissa, when we finally came in sight of the house — a handsome new one, by the way, put up only ten years ago. "Jarvis said it was an imported breed. I do hope it isn't cross."

I have a mortal horror of dogs, and I followed Melissa into the big farmyard with fear and trembling. We were halfway across the yard when Melissa shrieked:

"Anne, there's the dog!"

There was the dog; and the trouble was that he didn't stay there, but came right down the slope at a steady, businesslike trot. He was a bulldog and big enough to bite a body clean in two, and he was the ugliest thing in dogs I had ever seen.

Melissa and I both lost our heads. We screamed, dropped our parasols, and ran instinctively to the only refuge that was in sight — a ladder leaning against the old Appleby house. I am forty-five and something more than plump, so that climbing ladders is not my favorite form of exercise. But I went up that one with the agility and grace of sixteen. Melissa followed me, and we found ourselves on the roof — fortunately it was a flat one — panting and gasping, but safe, unless that diabolical dog could climb a ladder.

I crept cautiously to the edge and peered over. The beast was sitting on his haunches at the foot of the ladder, and it was quite evident he was not short on time. The gleam in his eye seemed to say:

“I’ve got you two unprincipled subscription hunters beautifully treed and it’s treed you’re going to stay. That is what I call satisfying.”

I reported the state of the case to Melissa.

“What shall we do?” I asked.

“Do?” said Melissa, snappishly. “Why, stay here till Isaac Appleby comes out and takes that brute away? What else can we do?”

“What if he isn’t at home?” I suggested.

“We’ll stay here till he comes home. Oh, this is a nice predicament. This is what comes of cushioning churches!”

“It might be worse,” I said comfortingly. “Suppose the roof hadn’t been flat?”

“Call Isaac,” said Melissa shortly.

I didn’t fancy calling Isaac, but call him I did, and when that failed to bring him Melissa condescended to call, too; but scream as we might, no Isaac appeared, and that dog sat there and smiled internally.

“It’s no use,” said Melissa sulkily at last. “Isaac Appleby is dead or away.”

Half an hour passed; it seemed as long as a day. The sun just boiled down on that roof and we were nearly melted. We were dreadfully thirsty, and the heat made our heads ache, and I could see my muslin dress fading before my very eyes. As for the roses on my best hat — but that was too harrowing to think about.

Then we saw a welcome sight — Isaac Appleby coming through the yard with a hoe over his shoulder. He had probably been working in his field at the back of the house. I never thought I should have been so glad to see him.

“Isaac, oh, Isaac!” I called joyfully, leaning over as far as I dared.

Isaac looked up in amazement at me and Melissa craning our necks over the edge of the roof. Then he saw the dog and took in the situation. The creature actually grinned.

“Won’t you call off your dog and let us get down, Isaac?” I said pleadingly.

Isaac stood and reflected for a moment or two. Then he came slowly forward and, before we realized what he was going to do, he took that ladder down and laid it on the ground.

“Isaac Appleby, what do you mean?” demanded Melissa wrathfully.

Isaac folded his arms and looked up. It would be hard to say which face was the more determined, his or the dog’s. But Isaac had the advantage in point of looks, I will say that for him.

“I mean that you two women will stay up on that roof until one of you agrees to marry me,” said Isaac solemnly.

I gasped.

“Isaac Appleby, you can’t be in earnest?” I cried incredulously. “You couldn’t be so mean?”

“I am in earnest. I want a wife, and I am going to have one. You two will stay up there, and Julius Caesar here will watch you until one of you makes up her mind to take me. You can settle it between yourselves, and let me know when you have come to a decision.”

And with that Isaac walked jauntily into his new house.

“The man can’t mean it!” said Melissa. “He is trying to play a joke on us.”

“He does mean it,” I said gloomily. “An Appleby never says anything he doesn’t mean. He will keep us here until one of us consents to marry him.”

“It won’t be me, then,” said Melissa in a calm sort of rage. “I won’t marry him if I have to sit on this roof for the rest of my life. You can take him. It’s really you he wants, anyway; he asked you first.”

I always knew that rankled with Melissa.

I thought the situation over before I said anything more. We certainly couldn’t get off that roof, and if we could, there was Julius Caesar. The place was out of sight of every other house in Jersey Cove, and nobody might come near it for a week. To be sure, when Melissa and I didn’t turn up the Covites might get out and search for us; but that wouldn’t be for two or three days anyhow.

Melissa had turned her back on me and was sitting with her elbows propped up on her knees, looking gloomily out to sea. I was afraid I couldn’t coax her into marrying Isaac. As for me, I hadn’t any real objection to marrying him, after all, for if he was short of romance he was goodnatured and has a fat bank account; but I hated to be driven into it that way.

“You’d better take him, Melissa,” I said entreatingly. “I’ve had one husband and that is enough.”

“More than enough for me, thank you,” said Melissa sarcastically.

“Isaac is a fine man and has a lovely house; and you aren’t sure the Kingsbridge man really means anything,” I went on.

“I would rather,” said Melissa, with the same awful calmness, “jump down from this roof and break my neck, or be devoured piecemeal by that fiend down there than marry Isaac Appleby.”

It didn’t seem worth while to say anything more after that. We sat there in stony silence and the time dragged by. I was hot, hungry, thirsty, cross; and besides, I felt that I was in a ridiculous position, which was worse than all the rest. We could see Isaac sitting in the shade of one of his apple trees in the front orchard comfortably reading a newspaper. I think if he hadn’t aggravated me by doing that I’d have given in sooner. But as it was, I was determined to be as stubborn as everybody else. We were four obstinate creatures — Isaac and Melissa and Julius Caesar and I.

At four o'clock Isaac got up and went into the house; in a few minutes he came out again with a basket in one hand and a ball of cord in the other.

"I don't intend to starve you, of course, ladies," he said politely, "I will throw this ball up to you and you can then draw up the basket."

I caught the ball, for Melissa never turned her head. I would have preferred to be scornful, too, and reject the food altogether; but I was so dreadfully thirsty that I put my pride in my pocket and hauled the basket up. Besides, I thought it might enable us to hold out until some loophole of escape presented itself.

Isaac went back into the house and I unpacked the basket. There was a bottle of milk, some bread and butter, and a pie. Melissa wouldn't take a morsel of the food, but she was so thirsty she had to take a drink of milk.

She tried to lift her veil — and something caught; Melissa gave it a savage twitch, and off came veil and hat — and all her front hair!

You never saw such a sight. I'd always suspected Melissa wore a false front, but I'd never had any proof before.

Melissa pinned on her hair again and put on her hat and drank the milk, all without a word; but she was purple. I felt sorry for her.

And I felt sorry for Isaac when I tried to eat that bread. It was sour and dreadful. As for the pie, it was hopeless. I tasted it, and then threw it down to Julius Caesar. Julius Caesar, not being over particular, ate it up. I thought perhaps it would kill him, for anything might come of eating such a concoction. That pie was a strong argument for Isaac. I thought a man who had to live on such cookery did indeed need a wife and might be pardoned for taking desperate measures to get one. I was dreadfully tired of broiling on the roof anyhow.

But it was the thunderstorm that decided me. When I saw it coming up, black and quick, from the northwest, I gave in at once. I had endured a good deal and was prepared to endure more; but I had paid ten dollars for my hat and I was not going to have it ruined by a thunderstorm. I called to Isaac and out he came.

"If you will let us down and promise to dispose of that dog before I come here I will marry you, Isaac," I said, "but I'll make you sorry for it

afterwards, though.”

“I’ll take the risk of that, Anne,” he said; “and, of course, I’ll sell the dog. I won’t need him when I have you.”

Isaac meant to be complimentary, though you mightn’t have thought so if you had seen the face of that dog.

Isaac ordered Julius Caesar away and put up the ladder, and turned his back, real considerately, while we climbed down. We had to go in his house and stay till the shower was over. I didn’t forget the object of our call and I produced our subscription list at once.

“How much have you got?” asked Isaac.

“Seventy dollars and we want a hundred and fifty,” I said.

“You may put me down for the remaining eighty, then,” said Isaac calmly.

The Applebys are never mean where money is concerned, I must say.

Isaac offered to drive us home when it cleared up, but I said “No.” I wanted to settle Melissa before she got a chance to talk.

On the way home I said to her:

“I hope you won’t mention this to anyone, Melissa. I don’t mind marrying Isaac, but I don’t want people to know how it came about.”

“Oh, I won’t say anything about it,” said Melissa, laughing a little disagreeably.

“Because,” I said, to clinch the matter, looking significantly at her front hair as I said it, “I have something to tell, too.”

Melissa will hold her tongue.

By the Rule of Contrary

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“Look here, Burton,” said old John Ellis in an ominous tone of voice, “I want to know if what that old busybody of a Mary Keane came here today gossiping about is true. If it is — well, I’ve something to say about the matter! Have you been courting that niece of Susan Oliver’s all summer on the sly?”

Burton Ellis’s handsome, boyish face flushed darkly crimson to the roots of his curly black hair. Something in the father’s tone roused anger and rebellion in the son. He straightened himself up from the turnip row he was hoeing, looked his father squarely in the face, and said quietly,

“Not on the sly, sir, I never do things that way. But I have been going to see Madge Oliver for some time, and we are engaged. We are thinking of being married this fall, and we hope you will not object.”

Burton’s frankness nearly took away his father’s breath. Old John fairly choked with rage.

“You young fool,” he spluttered, bringing down his hoe with such energy that he sliced off half a dozen of his finest young turnip plants, “have you gone clean crazy? No, sir, I’ll never consent to your marrying an Oliver, and you needn’t have any idea that I will.”

“Then I’ll marry her without your consent,” retorted Burton angrily, losing the temper he had been trying to keep.

“Oh, will you indeed! Well, if you do, out you go, and not a cent of my money or a rod of my land do you ever get.”

“What have you got against Madge?” asked Burton, forcing himself to speak calmly, for he knew his father too well to doubt for a minute that he meant and would do just what he said.

“She’s an Oliver,” said old John crustily, “and that’s enough.” And considering that he had settled the matter, John Ellis threw down his hoe and left the field in a towering rage.

Burton hoed away savagely until his anger had spent itself on the weeds. Give up Madge — dear, sweet little Madge? Not he! Yet if his father remained of the same mind, their marriage was out of the question at present. And Burton knew quite well that his father would remain of the same mind. Old John Ellis had the reputation of being the most contrary man in Greenwood.

When Burton had finished his row he left the turnip field and went straight across lots to see Madge and tell her his dismal story. An hour later Miss Susan Oliver went up the stairs of her little brown house to Madge's room and found her niece lying on the bed, her pretty curls tumbled, her soft cheeks flushed crimson, crying as if her heart would break.

Miss Susan was a tall, grim, angular spinster who looked like the last person in the world to whom a love affair might be confided. But never were appearances more deceptive than in this case. Behind her unprepossessing exterior Miss Susan had a warm, sympathetic heart filled to the brim with kindly affection for her pretty niece. She had seen Burton Ellis going moodily across the fields homeward and guessed that something had gone wrong.

"Now, dearie, what is the matter?" she said, tenderly patting the brown head.

Madge sobbed out the whole story disconsolately. Burton's father would not let him marry her because she was an Oliver. And, oh, what would she do?

"Don't worry, Madge," said Miss Susan comfortingly. "I'll soon settle old John Ellis."

"Why, what can you do?" asked Madge forlornly.

Miss Susan squared her shoulders and looked amused.

"You'll see. I know old John Ellis better than he knows himself. He is the most contrary man the Lord ever made. I went to school with him. I learned how to manage him then, and I haven't forgotten how. I'm going straight up to interview him."

“Are you sure that will do any good?” said Madge doubtfully. “If you go to him and take Burton’s and my part, won’t it only make him worse?”

“Madge, dear,” said Miss Susan, busily twisting her scanty, iron-grey hair up into a hard little knob at the back of her head before Madge’s glass, “you just wait. I’m not young, and I’m not pretty, and I’m not in love, but I’ve more gumption than you and Burton have or ever will have. You keep your eyes open and see if you can learn something. You’ll need it if you go up to live with old John Ellis.”

Burton had returned to the turnip field, but old John Ellis was taking his ease with a rampant political newspaper on the cool verandah of his house. Looking up from a bitter editorial to chuckle over a cutting sarcasm contained therein, he saw a tall, angular figure coming up the lane with aggressiveness written large in every fold and flutter of shawl and skirt.

“Old Susan Oliver, as sure as a gun,” said old John with another chuckle. “She looks mad clean through. I suppose she’s coming here to blow me up for refusing to let Burton take that girl of hers. She’s been angling and scheming for it for years, but she will find who she has to deal with. Come on, Miss Susan.”

John Ellis laid down his paper and stood up with a sarcastic smile.

Miss Susan reached the steps and skimmed undauntedly up them. She did indeed look angry and disturbed. Without any preliminary greeting she burst out into a tirade that simply took away her complacent foe’s breath.

“Look here, John Ellis, I want to know what this means. I’ve discovered that that young upstart of a son of yours, who ought to be in short trousers yet, has been courting my niece, Madge Oliver, all summer. He has had the impudence to tell me that he wants to marry her. I won’t have it, I tell you, and you can tell your son so. Marry my niece indeed! A pretty pass the world is coming to! I’ll never consent to it.”

Perhaps if you had searched Greenwood and all the adjacent districts thoroughly you might have found a man who was more astonished and taken aback than old John Ellis was at that moment, but I doubt it. The wind was completely taken out of his sails and every bit of the Ellis contrariness was roused.

“What have you got to say against my son?” he fairly shouted in his rage. “Isn’t he good enough for your girl, Susan Oliver, I’d like to know?”

“No, he isn’t,” retorted Miss Susan deliberately and unflinchingly. “He’s well enough in his place, but you’ll please to remember, John Ellis, that my niece is an Oliver, and the Olivers don’t marry beneath them.”

Old John was furious. “Beneath them indeed! Why, woman, it is condescension in my son to so much as look at your niece — condescension, that is what it is. You are as poor as church mice.”

“We come of good family, though,” retorted Miss Susan. “You Ellises are nobodies. Your grandfather was a hired man! And yet you have the presumption to think you’re fit to marry into an old, respectable family like the Olivers. But talking doesn’t signify. I simply won’t allow this nonsense to go on. I came here today to tell you so plump and plain. It’s your duty to stop it; if you don’t I will, that’s all.”

“Oh, will you?” John Ellis was at a white heat of rage and stubbornness now. “We’ll see, Miss Susan, we’ll see. My son shall marry whatever girl he pleases, and I’ll back him up in it — do you hear that? Come here and tell me my son isn’t good enough for your niece indeed! I’ll show you he can get her anyway.”

“You’ve heard what I’ve said,” was the answer, “and you’d better go by it, that’s all. I shan’t stay to bandy words with you, John Ellis. I’m going home to talk to my niece and tell her her duty plain, and what I want her to do, and she’ll do it, I haven’t a fear.”

Miss Susan was halfway down the steps, but John Ellis ran to the railing of the verandah to get the last word.

“I’ll send Burton down this evening to talk to her and tell her what he wants her to do, and we’ll see whether she’ll sooner listen to you than to him,” he shouted.

Miss Susan deigned no reply. Old John strode out to the turnip field. Burton saw him coming and looked for another outburst of wrath, but his father’s first words almost took away his breath.

“See here, Burt, I take back all I said this afternoon. I want you to marry Madge Oliver now, and the sooner, the better. That old cat of a

Susan had the face to come up and tell me you weren't good enough for her niece. I told her a few plain truths. Don't you mind the old crosspatch. I'll back you up."

By this time Burton had begun hoeing vigorously, to hide the amused twinkle of comprehension in his eyes. He admired Miss Susan's tactics, but he did not say so.

"All right, Father," he answered dutifully.

When Miss Susan reached home she told Madge to bathe her eyes and put on her new pink muslin, because she guessed Burton would be down that evening.

"Oh, Auntie, how did you manage it?" cried Madge.

"Madge," said Miss Susan solemnly, but with dancing eyes, "do you know how to drive a pig? Just try to make it go in the opposite direction and it will bolt the way you want it. Remember that, my dear."

Fair Exchange and No Robbery

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Katherine Rangely was packing up. Her chum and roommate, Edith Wilmer, was sitting on the bed watching her in that calm disinterested fashion peculiarly maddening to a bewildered packer.

“It does seem too provoking,” said Katherine, as she tugged at an obstinate shawl strap, “that Ned should be transferred here now, just when I’m going away. The powers that be might have waited until vacation was over. Ned won’t know a soul here and he’ll be horribly lonesome.”

“I’ll do my best to befriend him, with your permission,” said Edith consolingly.

“Oh, I know. You’re a special Providence, Ede. Ned will be up tonight first thing, of course, and I’ll introduce him. Try to keep the poor fellow amused until I get back. Two months! Just fancy! And Aunt Elizabeth won’t abate one jot or tittle of the time I promised to stay with her. Harbour Hill is so frightfully dull, too.”

Then the talk drifted around to Edith’s affairs. She was engaged to a certain Sidney Keith, who was a professor in some college.

“I don’t expect to see much of Sidney this summer,” said Edith. “He’s writing another book. He is so terribly addicted to literature.”

“How lovely,” sighed Katherine, who had aspirations in that line herself. “If only Ned were like him I should be perfectly happy. But Ned is so prosaic. He doesn’t care a rap for poetry, and he laughs when I enthuse. It makes him quite furious when I talk of taking up writing seriously. He says women writers are an abomination on the face of the earth. Did you ever hear anything so ridiculous?”

“He is very handsome, though,” said Edith, with a glance at his photograph on Katherine’s dressing table. “And that is what Sid is not. He is rather distinguished looking, but as plain as he can possibly be.”

Edith sighed. She had a weakness for handsome men and thought it rather hard that fate should have allotted her so plain a lover.

“He has lovely eyes,” said Katherine comfortingly, “and handsome men are always vain. Even Ned is. I have to snub him regularly. But I think you’ll like him.”

Edith thought so too when Ned Ellison appeared that night. He was a handsome offhanded young fellow, who seemed to admire Katherine immensely, and be a little afraid of her into the bargain.

“Edith will try to make Riverton pleasant for you while I am away,” she told him in their goodbye chat. “She is a dear girl — you’ll like her, I know. It’s really too bad I have to go away now, but it can’t be helped.”

“I shall be awfully lonesome,” grumbled Ned. “Don’t you forget to write regularly, Kitty.”

“Of course I’ll write, but for pity’s sake, Ned, don’t call me Kitty. It sounds so childish. Well, bye-bye, dear boy. I’ll be back in two months and then we’ll have a lovely time.”

When Katherine had been at Harbour Hill for a week she wondered how upon earth she was going to put in the remaining seven. Harbour Hill was noted for its beauty, but not every woman can live by scenery alone.

“Aunt Elizabeth,” said Katherine one day, “does anybody ever die in Harbour Hill? Because it doesn’t seem to me it would be any change for them if they did.”

Aunt Elizabeth’s only reply to this was a shocked look.

To pass the time Katherine took to collecting seaweeds, and this involved long tramps along the shore. On one of these occasions she met with an adventure. The place was a remote spot far up the shore. Katherine had taken off her shoes and stockings, tucked up her skirt, rolled her sleeves high above her dimpled elbows, and was deep in the absorbing process of fishing up seaweeds off a craggy headland. She looked anything but dignified while so employed, but under the circumstances dignity did not matter.

Presently she heard a shout from the shore and, turning around in dismay, she beheld a man on the rocks behind her. He was evidently

shouting at her. What on earth could the creature want?

“Come in,” he called, gesticulating wildly. “You’ll be in the bottomless pit in another moment if you don’t look out.”

“He certainly must be a lunatic,” said Katherine to herself, “or else he’s drunk. What am I to do?”

“Come in, I tell you,” insisted the stranger. “What in the world do you mean by wading out to such a place? Why, it’s madness.”

Katherine’s indignation got the better of her fear.

“I do not think I am trespassing,” she called back as icily as possible.

The stranger did not seem to be snubbed at all. He came down to the very edge of the rocks where Katherine could see him plainly. He was dressed in a somewhat well-worn grey suit and wore spectacles. He did not look like a lunatic, and he did not seem to be drunk.

“I implore you to come in,” he said earnestly. “You must be standing on the very brink of the bottomless pit.”

He is certainly off his balance, thought Katherine. He must be some revivalist who has gone insane on one point. I suppose I’d better go in. He looks quite capable of wading out here after me if I don’t.

She picked her steps carefully back with her precious specimens. The stranger eyed her severely as she stepped on the rocks.

“I should think you would have more sense than to risk your life in that fashion for a handful of seaweeds,” he said.

“I haven’t the faintest idea what you mean,” said Miss Rangely. “You don’t look crazy, but you talk as if you were.”

“Do you mean to say you don’t know that what the people hereabouts call the Bottomless Pit is situated right off that point — the most dangerous spot along the whole coast?”

“No, I didn’t,” said Katherine, horrified. She remembered now that Aunt Elizabeth had warned her to be careful of some bad hole along shore, but she had not been paying much attention and had supposed it to be in quite another direction. “I am a stranger here.”

“Well, I hardly thought you’d be foolish enough to be out there if you knew,” said the other in mollified accents. “The place ought not to be left

without warning, anyhow. It is the most careless thing I ever heard of. There is a big hole right off that point and nobody has ever been able to find the bottom of it. A person who got into it would never be heard of again. The rocks there form an eddy that sucks everything right down.”

“I am very grateful to you for calling me in,” said Katherine humbly. “I had no idea I was in such danger.”

“You have a very fine bunch of seaweeds, I see,” said the unknown.

But Katherine was in no mood to converse on seaweeds. She suddenly realized what she must look like — bare feet, draggled skirts, dripping arms. And this creature whom she had taken for a lunatic was undoubtedly a gentleman. Oh, if he would only go and give her a chance to put on her shoes and stockings!

Nothing seemed further from his intentions. When Katherine had picked up the aforesaid articles and turned homeward, he walked beside her, still discoursing on seaweeds as eloquently as if he were commonly accustomed to walking with barefooted young women. In spite of herself, Katherine couldn’t help listening to him, for he managed to invest seaweeds with an absorbing interest. She finally decided that as he didn’t seem to mind her bare feet, she wouldn’t either.

He knew so much about seaweeds that Katherine felt decidedly amateurish beside him. He looked over her specimens and pointed out the valuable ones. He explained the best method of preserving and mounting them, and told her of other and less dangerous places along the shore where she might get some new varieties.

When they came in sight of Harbour Hill, Katherine began to wonder what on earth she would do with him. It wasn’t exactly permissible to snub a man who had practically saved your life, but, on the other hand, the prospect of walking through the principal street of Harbour Hill barefooted and escorted by a scholarly looking gentleman discoursing on seaweeds was not to be calmly contemplated.

The unknown cut the Gordian knot himself. He said that he must really go back or he would be late for dinner, lifted his hat politely, and departed.

Katherine waited until he was out of sight, then sat down on the sand and put on her shoes and stockings.

“Who on earth can he be?” she said to herself. “And where have I seen him before? There was certainly something familiar about his appearance. He is very nice, but he must have thought me crazy. I wonder if he belongs to Harbour Hill.”

The mystery was solved when she got home and found a letter from Edith awaiting her.

“I see Ned quite often,” wrote the latter, “and I think he is perfectly splendid. You are a lucky girl, Kate. But oh, do you know that Sidney is actually at Harbour Hill, too, or at least quite near it? I had a letter from him yesterday. He has gone down there to spend his vacation, because it is so quiet, and to finish up some horrid scientific book he is working at. He’s boarding at some little farmhouse up the shore. I’ve written to him today to hunt you up and consider himself introduced to you. I think you’ll like him, for he’s just your style.”

Katherine smiled when Sidney Keith’s card was brought up to her that evening and went down to meet him. Her companion of the morning rose to meet her.

“You!” he said.

“Yes, me,” said Miss Rangely cheerfully and ungrammatically. “You didn’t expect it, did you? I was sure I had seen you before — only it wasn’t you but your photograph.”

When Professor Keith went away it was with a cordial invitation to call again. He did not fail to avail himself of it — in fact, he became a constant visitor at Sycamore Villa. Katherine wrote all about it to Edith and cultivated Professor Keith with a dear conscience.

They got on capitally together. They went on long expeditions up shore after seaweeds, and when seaweeds were exhausted they began to make a collection of the Harbour Hill flora. This involved more long, companionable expeditions. Katherine sometimes wondered when Professor Keith found time to work on his book, but as he made no reference to the subject, neither did she.

Once in a while, when she had time to think of them, she wondered how Ned and Edith were getting on. At first Edith's letters had been full of Ned, but in her last two or three she had said little about him. Katherine wrote and jokingly asked Edith if she and Ned had quarreled. Edith wrote back and said, "What nonsense." She and Ned were as good friends as ever, but he was getting acquainted in Riverton now and wasn't so dependent on her society, *etc.*

Katherine sighed and went on a fern hunt with Professor Keith. It was getting near the end of her vacation and she had only two weeks more. They were sitting down to rest on the side of the road when she mentioned this fact inconsequently. The professor prodded the harmless dust with his cane. Well, he supposed she would find a return to work pleasant and would doubtless be glad to see her Riverton friends again.

"I'm dying to see Edith," said Katherine.

"And Ned?" suggested Professor Keith.

"Oh yes. Ned, of course," assented Katherine without enthusiasm. There didn't seem to be anything more to say. One cannot talk everlastingly about ferns, so they got up and went home.

Katherine wrote a particularly affectionate letter to Ned that night. Then she went to bed and cried.

When Professor Keith came up to bid Miss Rangely goodbye on the eve of her departure from Harbour Hill, he looked like a man who was being led to execution without benefit of clergy. But he kept himself well in hand and talked calmly on impersonal subjects. After all, it was Katherine who made the first break when she got up to say goodbye. She was in the middle of some conventional sentence when she suddenly stopped short, and her voice trailed off in a babyish quiver.

The professor put out his arm and drew her close to him. His hat dropped under their feet and was trampled on, but I doubt if Professor Keith knows the difference to this day, for he was fully absorbed in kissing Katherine's hair. When she became cognizant of this fact, she drew herself away.

"Oh, Sidney, don't! — think of Edith! I feel like a traitor."

“Do you think she would care very much if I — if you — if we—” hesitated the professor.

“Oh, it would break her heart,” cried Katherine with convincing earnestness. “I know it would — and Ned’s too. They must never know.”

The professor stooped and began hunting for his maltreated hat. He was a long time finding it, and when he did he went softly to the door. With his hand on the knob, he paused and looked back.

“Goodbye, Miss Rangely,” he said softly.

But Katherine, whose face was buried in the cushions of the lounge, did not hear him and when she looked up he was gone.

Katharine felt that life was stale, flat and unprofitable when she alighted at Riverton station in the dusk of the next evening. She was not expected until a later train and there was no one to meet her. She walked drearily through the streets to her boarding house and entered her room unannounced. Edith, who was lying on the bed, sprang up with a surprised greeting. It was too dark to be sure, but Katherine had an uncomfortable suspicion that her friend had been crying, and her heart quaked guiltily. Could Edith have suspected anything?

“Why, we didn’t think you’d be up till the 8:30 train, and Ned and I were going to meet you.”

“I found I could catch an earlier train, so I took it,” said Katherine, as she dropped listlessly into a chair. “I am tired to death and I have such a headache. I can’t see anyone tonight, not even Ned.”

“You poor dear,” said Edith sympathetically, beginning a search for the cologne. “Lie down on the bed and I’ll bathe your poor head. Did you have a good time at Harbour Hill? And how did you leave Sid? Did he say anything about coming up?”

“Oh, he was quite well,” said Katherine wearily. “I didn’t hear him say if he intended to come up or not. There, thanks — that will do nicely.”

After Edith had gone down, Katherine tossed about restlessly. She knew Ned had come and she did not want to see him. But, after all, it was only putting off the evil day, and it was treating him rather shabbily. She would go down for a minute.

There were two doors to the parlour, and Katherine went by way of the library one, over which a portiere was hanging. Her hand was lifted to draw it back when she heard something that arrested the movement.

A woman was crying in the room beyond. It was Edith — and what was she saying?

“Oh, Ned, it is all perfectly dreadful! I couldn’t look Catherine in the face when she came home. I’m so ashamed of myself and I never meant to be so false. We must never let her suspect for a minute.”

“It’s pretty rough on a fellow,” said another voice — Ned’s voice — in a choked sort of a way. “Upon my word, Edith, I don’t see how I’m going to keep it up.”

“You must,” sobbed Edith. “It would break her heart — and Sidney’s too. We must just make up our minds to forget each other, Ned, and you must marry Katherine.”

Just at this point Katherine became aware that she was eavesdropping and she went away noiselessly. She did not look in the least like a person who has received a mortal blow, and she had forgotten her headache altogether.

When Edith came up half an hour later, she found the worn-out invalid sitting up and reading a novel.

“How is your headache, dear?” she asked, carefully keeping her face turned away from Katherine.

“Oh, it’s all gone,” said Miss Rangely cheerfully.

“Why didn’t you come down then? Ned was here.”

“Well, Ede, I did go down, but I thought I wasn’t particularly wanted, so I came back.”

Edith faced her friend in dismay, forgetful of swollen lids and tearstained cheeks.

“Katherine!”

“Don’t look so conscience stricken, my dear child. There is no harm done.”

“You heard—”

“Some surprising speeches. So you and Ned have gone and fallen in love with one another?”

“Oh, Katherine,” sobbed Edith, “we — we — couldn’t help it — but it’s all over. Oh, don’t be angry with me!”

“Angry? My dear, I’m delighted.”

“Delighted?”

“Yes, you dear goose. Can’t you guess, or must I tell you? Sidney and I did the very same, and had just such a melancholy parting last night as I suspect you and Ned had tonight.”

“Katherine!”

“Yes, it’s quite true. And of course we made up our minds to sacrifice ourselves on the altar of duty and all that. But now, thank goodness, there is no need of such wholesale immolation. So just let’s forgive each other.”

“Oh,” sighed Edith happily, “it is almost too good to be true.”

“It is really providentially ordered, isn’t it?” said Katherine. “Ned and I would never have got on together in the world, and you and Sidney would have bored each other to death. As it is, there will be four perfectly happy people instead of four miserable ones. I’ll tell Ned so tomorrow.”

Four Winds

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Alan Douglas threw down his pen with an impatient exclamation. It was high time his next Sunday's sermon was written, but he could not concentrate his thoughts on his chosen text. For one thing he did not like it and had selected it only because Elder Trewin, in his call of the evening before, had hinted that it was time for a good stiff doctrinal discourse, such as his predecessor in Rexton, the Rev. Jabez Strong, had delighted in. Alan hated doctrines—"the soul's staylaces," he called them — but Elder Trewin was a man to be reckoned with and Alan preached an occasional sermon to please him.

"It's no use," he said wearily. "I could have written a sermon in keeping with that text in November or midwinter, but now, when the whole world is reawakening in a miracle of beauty and love, I can't do it. If a northeast rainstorm doesn't set in before next Sunday, Mr. Trewin will not have his sermon. I shall take as my text instead, 'The flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds has come.'"

He rose and went to his study window, outside of which a young vine was glowing in soft tender green tints, its small dainty leaves casting quivering shadows on the opposite wall where the portrait of Alan's mother hung. She had a fine, strong, sweet face; the same face, cast in a masculine mould, was repeated in her son, and the resemblance was striking as he stood in the searching evening sunshine. The black hair grew around his forehead in the same way; his eyes were steel blue, like hers, with a similar expression, half brooding, half tender, in their depths. He had the mobile, smiling mouth of the picture, but his chin was deeper and squarer, dented with a dimple which, combined with a certain occasional whimsicality of opinion and glance, had caused Elder Trewin some qualms of doubt regarding the fitness of this young man for his high and holy vocation. The Rev. Jabez Strong had never indulged in dimples or jokes;

but then, as Elder Trewin, being a just man, had to admit, the Rev. Jabez Strong had preached many a time and oft to more empty pews than full ones, while now the church was crowded to its utmost capacity on Sundays and people came to hear Mr. Douglas who had not darkened a church door for years. All things considered, Elder Trewin decided to overlook the dimple. There was sure to be some drawback in every minister.

Alan from his study looked down on all the length of the Rexton valley, at the head of which the manse was situated, and thought that Eden might have looked so in its innocence, for all the orchards were abloom and the distant hills were tremulous and aerial in springtime gauzes of pale purple and pearl. But in any garden, despite its beauty, is an element of tameness and domesticity, and Alan's eyes, after a moment's delighted gazing, strayed wistfully off to the north where the hills broke away into a long sloping lowland of pine and fir. Beyond it stretched the wide expanse of the lake, flashing in the molten gold and crimson of evening. Its lure was irresistible. Alan had been born and bred beside a faraway sea and the love of it was strong in his heart — so strong that he knew he must go back to it sometime. Meanwhile, the great lake, mimicking the sea in its vast expanse and the storms that often swept over it, was his comfort and solace. As often as he could he stole away to its wild and lonely shore, leaving the snug bounds of cultivated home lands behind him with something like a sense of relief. Down there by the lake was a primitive wilderness where man was as naught and man-made doctrines had no place. There one might walk hand in hand with nature and so come very close to God. Many of Alan's best sermons were written after he had come home, rapt-eyed, from some long shore tramp where the wilderness had opened its heart to him and the pines had called to him in their soft, sibilant speech.

With a half guilty glance at the futile sermon, he took his hat and went out. The sun of the cool spring evening was swinging low over the lake as he turned into the unfrequented, deep-rutted road leading to the shore. It was two miles to the lake, but half way there Alan came to where another road branched off and struck down through the pines in a northeasterly

direction. He had sometimes wondered where it led but he had never explored it. Now he had a sudden whim to do so and turned into it. It was even rougher and lonelier than the other; between the ruts the grasses grew long and thickly; sometimes the pine boughs met overhead; again, the trees broke away to reveal wonderful glimpses of gleaming water, purple islets, dark feathery coasts. Still, the road seemed to lead nowhere and Alan was half repenting the impulse which had led him to choose it when he suddenly came out from the shadow of the pines and found himself gazing on a sight which amazed him.

Before him was a small peninsula running out into the lake and terminating in a long sandy point. Beyond it was a glorious sweep of sunset water. The peninsula itself seemed barren and sandy, covered for the most part with scrub firs and spruces, through which the narrow road wound on to what was the astonishing; feature in the landscape — a grey and weather-beaten house built almost at the extremity of the point and shadowed from the western light by a thick plantation of tall pines behind it.

It was the house which puzzled Alan. He had never known there was any house near the lake shore — had never heard mention made of any; yet here was one, and one which was evidently occupied, for a slender spiral of smoke was curling upward from it on the chilly spring air. It could not be a fisherman's dwelling, for it was large and built after a quaint tasteful design. The longer Alan looked at it the more his wonder grew. The people living here were in the bounds of his congregation. How then was it that he had never seen or heard of them?

He sauntered slowly down the road until he saw that it led directly to the house and ended in the yard. Then he turned off in a narrow path to the shore. He was not far from the house now and he scanned it observantly as he went past. The barrens swept almost up to its door in front but at the side, sheltered from the lake winds by the pines, was a garden where there was a fine show of gay tulips and golden daffodils. No living creature was visible and, in spite of the blossoming geraniums and muslin curtains at

the windows and the homely spiral of smoke, the place had a lonely, almost untenanted, look.

When Alan reached the shore he found that it was of a much more open and less rocky nature than the part which he had been used to frequent. The beach was of sand and the scrub barrens dwindled down to it almost insensibly. To right and left fir-fringed points ran out into the lake, shaping a little cove with the house in its curve.

Alan walked slowly towards the left headland, intending to follow the shore around to the other road. As he passed the point he stopped short in astonishment. The second surprise and mystery of the evening confronted him.

A little distance away a girl was standing — a girl who turned a startled face at his unexpected appearance. Alan Douglas had thought he knew all the girls in Rexton, but this lithe, glorious creature was a stranger to him. She stood with her hand on the head of a huge, tawny collie dog; another dog was sitting on his haunches beside her.

She was tall, with a great braid of shining chestnut hair, showing ruddy burnished tints where the sunlight struck it, hanging over her shoulder. The plain dark dress she wore emphasized the grace and strength of her supple form. Her face was oval and pale, with straight black brows and a finely cut crimson mouth — a face whose beauty bore the indefinable stamp of race and breeding mingled with a wild sweetness, as of a flower growing in some lonely and inaccessible place. None of the Rexton girls looked like that. Who, in the name of all that was amazing, could she be?

As the thought crossed Alan's mind the girl turned, with an air of indifference that might have seemed slightly overdone to a calmer observer than was the young minister at that moment and, with a gesture of command to her dogs, walked quickly away into the scrub spruces. She was so tall that her uncovered head was visible over them as she followed some winding footpath, and Alan stood like a man rooted to the ground until he saw her enter the grey house. Then he went homeward in a maze, all thought of sermons, doctrinal or otherwise, for the moment knocked out of his head.

She is the most beautiful woman I ever saw, he thought. How is it possible that I have lived in Rexton for six months and never heard of her or of that house? Well, I daresay there's some simple explanation of it all. The place may have been unoccupied until lately — probably it is the summer residence of people who have only recently come to it. I'll ask Mrs. Danby. She'll know if anybody will. That good woman knows everything about everybody in Rexton for three generations back.

Alan found Isabel King with his housekeeper when he got home. His greeting was tinged with a slight constraint. He was not a vain man, but he could not help knowing that Isabel looked upon him with a favour that had in it much more than professional interest. Isabel herself showed it with sufficient distinctness. Moreover, he felt a certain personal dislike of her and of her hard, insistent beauty, which seemed harder and more insistent than ever contrasted with his recollection of the girl of the lake shore.

Isabel had a trick of coming to the manse on plausible errands to Mrs. Danby and lingering until it was so dark that Alan was in courtesy bound to see her home. The ruse was a little too patent and amused Alan, although he carefully hid his amusement and treated Isabel with the fine unvarying deference which his mother had engrained into him for womanhood — a deference that flattered Isabel even while it annoyed her with the sense of a barrier which she could not break down or pass. She was the daughter of the richest man in Rexton and inclined to give herself airs on that account, but Alan's gentle indifference always brought home to her an unwelcome feeling of inferiority.

"You've been tiring yourself out again tramping that lake shore, I suppose," said Mrs. Danby, who had kept house for three bachelor ministers and consequently felt entitled to hector them in a somewhat maternal fashion.

"Not tiring myself — resting and refreshing myself rather," smiled Alan. "I was tired when I went out but now I feel like a strong man rejoicing to run a race. By the way, Mrs. Danby, who lives in that quaint old house away down at the very shore? I never knew of its existence before."

Alan's "by the way" was not quite so indifferent as he tried to make it. Isabel King, leaning back posingly among the cushions of the lounge, sat quickly up as he asked his question.

"Dear me, you don't mean to say you've never heard of Captain Anthony — Captain Anthony Oliver?" said Mrs. Danby. "He lives down there at Four Winds, as they call it — he and his daughter and an old cousin."

Isabel King bent forward, her brown eyes on Alan's face.

"Did you see Lynde Oliver?" she asked with suppressed eagerness.

Alan ignored the question — perhaps he did not hear it.

"Have they lived there long?" he asked.

"For eighteen years," said Mrs. Danby placidly. "It's funny you haven't heard them mentioned. But people don't talk much about the Captain now — he's an old story — and of course they never go anywhere, not even to church. The Captain is a rank infidel and they say his daughter is just as bad. To be sure, nobody knows much about her, but it stands to reason that a girl who's had her bringing up must be odd, to say no worse of her. It's not really her fault, I suppose — her wicked old scalawag of a father is to blame for it. She's never darkened a church or school door in her life and they say she's always been a regular tomboy — running wild outdoors with dogs, and fishing and shooting like a man. Nobody ever goes there — the Captain doesn't want visitors. He must have done something dreadful in his time, if it was only known, when he's so set on living like a hermit away down on that jumping-off place. Did you see any of them?"

"I saw Miss Oliver, I suppose," said Alan briefly. "At least I met a young lady on the shore. But where did these people come from? Surely more is known of them than this."

"Precious little. The truth is, Mr. Douglas, folks don't think the Olivers respectable and don't want to have anything to do with them. Eighteen years ago Captain Anthony came from goodness knows where, bought the Four Winds point, and built that house. He said he'd been a sailor all his life and couldn't live away from the water. He brought his wife and child and an old cousin of his with him. This Lynde wasn't more than two years

old then. People went to call but they never saw any of the women and the Captain let them see they weren't wanted. Some of the men who'd been working round the place saw his wife and said she was sickly but real handsome and like a lady, but she never seemed to want to see anyone or be seen herself. There was a story that the Captain had been a smuggler and that if he was caught he'd be sent to prison. Oh, there were all sorts of yarns, mostly coming from the men who worked there, for nobody else ever got inside the house. Well, four years ago his wife disappeared — it wasn't known how or when. She just wasn't ever seen again, that's all. Whether she died or was murdered or went away nobody ever knew. There was some talk of an investigation but nothing came of it. As for the girl, she's always lived there with her father. She must be a perfect heathen. He never goes anywhere, but there used to be talk of strangers visiting him — queer sort of characters who came up the lake in vessels from the American side. I haven't heard any reports of such these past few years, though — not since his wife disappeared. He keeps a yacht and goes sailing in it — sometimes he cruises about for weeks — that's about all he ever does. And now you know as much about the Olivers as I do, Mr. Douglas."

Alan had listened to this gossip narrative with an interest that did not escape Isabel King's observant eyes. Much of it he mentally dismissed as improbable surmise, but the basic facts were probably as Mrs. Danby had reported them. He had known that the girl of the shore could be no commonplace, primly nurtured young woman.

"Has no effort ever been made to bring these people into touch with the church?" he asked absently.

"Bless you, yes. Every minister that's ever been in Rexton has had a try at it. The old cousin met every one of them at the door and told him nobody was at home. Mr. Strong was the most persistent — he didn't like being beaten. He went again and again and finally the Captain sent him word that when he wanted parsons or pill-dosers he'd send for them, and till he did he'd thank them to mind their own business. They say Mr. Strong met Lynde once along shore and wanted to know if she wouldn't

come to church, and she laughed in his face and told him she knew more about God now than he did or ever would. Perhaps the story isn't true. Or if it was maybe he provoked her into saying it. Mr. Strong wasn't overly tactful. I believe in judging the poor girl as charitably as possible and making allowances for her, seeing how she's been brought up. You couldn't expect her to know how to behave."

Somehow, Alan resented Mrs. Danby's charity. Then, his sense of humour being strongly developed, he smiled to think of this commonplace old lady "making allowances" for the splendid bit of femininity he had seen on the shore. A plump barnyard fowl might as well have talked of making allowances for a seagull!

Alan walked home with Isabel King but he was very silent as they went together down the long, dark, sweet-smelling country road bordered by its white orchards. Isabel put her own construction on his absent replies to her remarks and presently she asked him, "Did you think Lynde Oliver handsome?"

The question gave Alan an annoyance out of all proportion to its significance. He felt an instinctive reluctance to discuss Lynde Oliver with Isabel King.

"I saw her only for a moment," he said coldly, "but she impressed me as being a beautiful woman."

"They tell queer stories about her — but maybe they're not all true," said Isabel, unable to keep the sneer of malice out of her voice. At that moment Alan's secret contempt for her crystallized into pronounced aversion. He made no reply and they went the rest of the way in silence. At her gate Isabel said, "You haven't been over to see us very lately, Mr. Douglas."

"My congregation is a large one and I cannot visit all my people as often as I might wish," Alan answered, all the more coldly for the personal note in her tone. "A minister's time is not his own, you know."

"Shall you be going to see the Olivers?" asked Isabel bluntly.

"I have not considered that question. Goodnight, Miss King."

On his way back to the manse Alan did consider the question. Should he make any attempt to establish friendly relations with the residents of Four Winds? It surprised him to find how much he wanted to, but he finally concluded that he would not. They were not adherents of his church and he did not believe that even a minister had any right to force himself upon people who plainly wished to be let alone.

When he got home, although it was late, he went to his study and began work on a new text — for Elder Trewin's seemed utterly out of the question. Even with the new one he did not get on very well. At last in exasperation he leaned back in his chair.

Why can't I stop thinking of those Four Winds people? Here, let me put these haunting thoughts into words and see if that will lay them. That girl had a beautiful face but a cold one. Would I like to see it lighted up with the warmth of her soul set free? Yes, frankly, I would. She looked upon me with indifference. Would I like to see her welcome me as a friend? I have a conviction that I would, although no doubt everybody in my congregation would look upon her as a most unsuitable friend for me. Do I believe that she is wild, unwomanly, heathenish, as Mrs. Danby says? No, I do not, most emphatically. I believe she is a lady in the truest sense of that much abused word, though she is doubtless unconventional. Having said all this, I do not see what more there is to be said. And — I — am — going — to — write — this — sermon.

Alan wrote it, putting all thought of Lynde Oliver sternly out of his mind for the time being. He had no notion of falling in love with her. He knew nothing of love and imagined that it counted for nothing in his life. He admitted that his curiosity was aflame about the girl, but it never occurred to him that she meant or could mean anything to him but an attractive enigma which once solved would lose its attraction. The young women he knew in Rexton, whose simple, pleasant friendship he valued, had the placid, domestic charm of their own sweetbreathed, windless orchards. Lynde Oliver had the fascination of the lake shore — wild, remote, untamed — the lure of the wilderness and the primitive. There

was nothing more personal in his thought of her, and yet when he recalled Isabel King's sneer he felt an almost personal resentment.

During the following fortnight Alan made many trips to the shore — and he always went by the branch road to the Four Winds point. He did not attempt to conceal from himself that he hoped to meet Lynde Oliver again. In this he was unsuccessful. Sometimes he saw her at a distance along the shore but she always disappeared as soon as seen. Occasionally as he crossed the point he saw her working in her garden but he never went very near the house, feeling that he had no right to spy on it or her in any way. He soon became convinced that she avoided him purposely and the conviction piqued him. He felt an odd masterful desire to meet her face to face and make her look at him. Sometimes he called himself a fool and vowed he would go no more to the Four Winds shore. Yet he inevitably went. He did not find in the shore the comfort and inspiration he had formerly found. Something had come between his soul and the soul of the wilderness — something he did not recognize or formulate — a nameless, haunting longing that shaped itself about the memory of a cold sweet face and starry, indifferent eyes, grey as the lake at dawn.

Of Captain Anthony he never got even a glimpse, but he saw the old cousin several times, going and coming about the yard and its environs. Finally one day he met her, coming up a path which led to a spring down in a firry hollow. She was carrying two heavy pails of water and Alan asked permission to help her.

He half expected a repulse, for the tall, grim old woman had a rather stern and forbidding look, but after gazing at him a moment in a somewhat scrutinizing manner she said briefly, "You may, if you like."

Alan took the pails and followed her, the path not being wide enough for two. She strode on before him at a rapid, vigorous pace until they came out into the yard by the house. Alan felt his heart beating foolishly. Would he see Lynde Oliver? Would —

"You may carry the water there," the old woman said, pointing to a little outhouse near the pines. "I'm washing — the spring water is softer than the well water. Thank you" — as Alan set the pails down on a bench

—“I’m not so young as I was and bringing the water so far tires me. Lynde always brings it for me when she’s home.”

She stood before him in the narrow doorway, blocking his exit, and looked at him with keen, deep-set dark eyes. In spite of her withered aspect and wrinkled face, she was not an uncomely old woman and there was about her a dignity of carriage and manner that pleased Alan. It did not occur to him to wonder why it should please him. If he had hunted that feeling down he might have been surprised to discover that it had its origin in a curious gratification over the thought that the woman who lived with Lynde had a certain refinement about her. He preferred her unsmiling dourness to vulgar garrulity.

“Are you the young minister up at Rexton?” she asked bluntly.

“Yes.”

“I thought so. Lynde said she had seen you on the shore once. Well” — she cast an uncertain glance over her shoulder at the house—“I’m much obliged to you.”

Alan had an idea that that was not what she had thought of saying, but as she had turned aside and was busying herself with the pails, there seemed nothing for him to do but to go.

“Wait a moment.” She faced him again, and if Alan had been a vain man he might have thought that admiration looked from her piercing eyes. “What do you think of us? I suppose they’ve told you tales of us up there?” — with a scornful gesture of her hand in the direction of Rexton. “Do you believe them?”

“I believe no ill of anyone until I have absolute proof of it,” said Alan, smiling — he was quite unconscious what a winning smile he had, which was the best of it—“and I never put faith in gossip. Of course you are gossiped about — you know that.”

“Yes, I know it” — grimly—“and I don’t care what they say about the Captain and me. We are a queer pair — just as queer as they make us out. You can believe what you like about us, but don’t you believe a word they say against Lynde. She’s sweet and good and beautiful. It’s not her fault

that she never went to church — it's her father's. Don't you hold that against her."

The fierce yet repressed energy of her tone prevented Alan from feeling any amusement over her simple defence of Lynde. Moreover, it sounded unreasonably sweet in his ears.

"I won't," he promised, "but I don't suppose it would matter much to Miss Oliver if I did. She did not strike me as a young lady who would worry very much about other people's opinions."

If his object were to prolong the conversation about Lynde, he was disappointed, for the old woman had turned abruptly to her work again and, though Alan lingered for a few moments longer, she took no further notice of him. But when he had gone she peered stealthily after him from the door until he was lost to sight among the pines.

"A well-looking man," she muttered. "I wish Lynde had been home. I didn't dare ask him to the house for I knew Anthony was in one of his moods. But it's time something was done. She's woman grown and this is no life for her. And there's nobody to do anything but me and I'm not able, even if I knew what to do. I wonder why she hates men so. Perhaps it's because she never knew any that were real gentlemen. This man is — but then he's a minister and that makes a wide gulf between them in another way. I've seen the love of man and woman bridge some wider gulfs though. But it can't with Lynde, I'm fearing. She's so bitter at the mere speaking of love and marriage. I can't think why. I'm sure her mother and Anthony were happy together, and that was all she's ever seen of marriage. But I thought when she told me of meeting this young man on the shore there was something in her look I'd never noticed before — as if she'd found something in herself she'd never known was there. But she'll never make friends with him and I can't. If the Captain wasn't so queer—"

She stopped abruptly, for a tall lithe figure was coming up from the shore. Lynde waved her hand as she drew near.

"Oh, Emily, I've had such a splendid sail. It was glorious. Bad Emily, you've been carrying water. Didn't I tell you never to do that when I was away?"

“I didn’t have to do it. That young minister up at Rexton met me and brought it up. He’s nice, Lynde.”

Lynde’s brow darkened. She turned and walked away to the house without a word.

On his way home that night Alan met Isabel King on the main shore road. She carried an armful of pine boughs and said she wanted the needles for a cushion. Yet the thought came into Alan’s mind that she was spying on him and, although he tried to dismiss it as unworthy, it continued to lurk there.

For a week he avoided the shore, but there came a day when its inexplicable lure drew him to it again irresistibly. It was a warm, windy evening and the air was sweet and resinous, the lake misty and blue. There was no sign of life about Four Winds and the shore seemed as lonely and virgin as if human foot had never trodden it. The Captain’s yacht was gone from the little harbour where it was generally anchored and, though every flutter of wind in the scrub firs made Alan’s heart beat expectantly, he saw nothing of Lynde Oliver. He was on the point of turning homeward, with an unreasoning sense of disappointment, when one of Lynde’s dogs broke down through the hedge of spruces, barking loudly.

Alan looked for Lynde to follow, but she did not, and he speedily saw that there was something unusual about the dog’s behaviour. The animal circled around him, still barking excitedly, then ran off for a short distance, stopped, barked again, and returned, repeating the manoeuvre. It was plain that he wanted Alan to follow him, and it occurred to the young minister that the dog’s mistress must be in danger of some kind. Instantly he set off after him; and the dog, with a final sharp bark of satisfaction, sprang up the low bank into the spruces.

Alan followed him across the peninsula and then along the further shore, which rapidly grew steep and high. Half a mile down the cliffs were rocky and precipitous, while the beach beneath them was heaped with huge boulders. Alan followed the dog along one of the narrow paths with which the barrens abounded until nearly a mile from Four Winds. Then the animal halted, ran to the edge of the cliff and barked.

It was an ugly-looking place where a portion of the soil had evidently broken away recently, and Alan stepped cautiously out to the brink and looked down. He could not repress an exclamation of dismay and alarm.

A few feet below him Lynde Oliver was lying on a mass of mossy soil which was apparently on the verge of slipping over a sloping shelf of rock, below which was a sheer drop of thirty feet to the cruel boulders below. The extreme danger of her position was manifest at a glance; the soil on which she lay was stationary, yet it seemed as if the slightest motion on her part would send it over the brink.

Lynde lay movelessly; her face was white, and both fear and appeal were visible in her large dilated eyes. Yet she was quite calm and a faint smile crossed her pale lips as she saw the man and the dog.

“Good faithful Pat, so you did bring help,” she said.

“But how can I help you, Miss Oliver?” said Alan hoarsely. “I cannot reach you — and it looks as if the slightest touch or jar would send that broken earth over the brink.”

“I fear it would. You must go back to Four Winds and get a rope.”

“And leave you here alone — in such danger?”

“Pat will stay with me. Besides, there is nothing else to do. You will find a rope in that little house where you put the water for Emily. Father and Emily are away. I think I am quite safe here if I don’t move at all.”

Alan’s own common sense told him that, as she said, there was nothing else to do and, much as he hated to leave her alone thus, he realized that he must lose no time in doing it.

“I’ll be back as quickly as possible,” he said hurriedly.

Alan had been a noted runner at college and his muscles had not forgotten their old training. Yet it seemed to him an age ere he reached Four Winds, secured the rope, and returned. At every flying step he was haunted by the thought of the girl lying on the brink of the precipice and the fear that she might slip over it before he could rescue her. When he reached the scene of the accident he dreaded to look over the broken edge, but she was lying there safely and she smiled when she saw him — a brave

smile that softened her tense white face into the likeness of a frightened child's.

"If I drop the rope down to you, are you strong enough to hold to it while the earth goes and then draw yourself up the slope hand over hand?" asked Alan anxiously.

"Yes," she answered fearlessly.

Alan passed down one end of the rope and then braced himself firmly to hold it, for there was no tree near enough to be of any assistance. The next moment the full weight of her body swung from it, for at her first movement the soil beneath her slipped away. Alan's heart sickened; what if she went with it? Could she cling to the rope while he drew her up?

Then he saw she was still safe on the sloping shelf. Carefully and painfully she drew herself to her knees and, dinging to the rope, crept up the rock hand over hand. When she came within his reach he grasped her arms and lifted her up into safety beside him.

"Thank God," he said, with whiter lips than her own.

For a few moments Lynde sat silent on the sod, exhausted with fright and exertion, while her dog fawned on her in an ecstasy of joy. Finally she looked up into Alan's anxious face and their eyes met. It was something more than the physical reaction that suddenly flushed the girl's cheeks. She sprang lithely to her feet.

"Can you walk back home?" Alan asked.

"Oh, yes, I am all right now. It was very foolish of me to get into such a predicament. Father and Emily went down the lake in the yacht this afternoon and I started out for a ramble. When I came here I saw some junebells growing right out on the ledge and I crept out to gather them. I should have known better. It broke away under me and the more I tried to scramble back the faster it slid down, carrying me with it. I thought it would go right over the brink" — she gave a little involuntary shudder — "but just at the very edge it stopped. I knew I must lie very still or it would go right over. It seemed like days. Pat was with me and I told him to go for help, but I knew there was no one at home — and I was horribly

afraid," she concluded with another shiver. "I never was afraid in my life before — at least not with that kind of fear."

"You have had a terrible experience and a narrow escape," said Alan lamely. He could think of nothing more to say; his usual readiness of utterance seemed to have failed him.

"You saved my life," she said, "you and Pat — for doggie must have his share of credit."

"A much larger share than mine," said Alan, smiling. "If Pat had not come for me, I would not have known of your danger. What a magnificent fellow he is!"

"Isn't he?" she agreed proudly. "And so is Laddie, my other dog. He went with Father today. I love my dogs more than people." She looked at him with a little defiance in her eyes. "I suppose you think that terrible."

"I think many dogs are much more lovable — and worthy of love — than many people," said Alan, laughing.

How childlike she was in some ways! That trace of defiance — it was so like a child who expected to be scolded for some wrong attitude of mind. And yet there were moments when she looked the tall proud queen. Sometimes, when the path grew narrow, she walked before him, her hand on the dog's head. Alan liked this, since it left him free to watch admiringly the swinging grace of her step and the white curves of her neck beneath the thick braid of hair, which today was wound about her head. When she dropped back beside him in the wider spaces, he could only have stolen glances at her profile, delicately, strongly cut, virginal in its soft curves, childlike in its purity. Once she looked around and caught his glance; again she flushed, and something strange and exultant stirred in Alan's heart. It was as if that maiden blush were the involuntary, unconscious admission of some power he had over her — a power which her hitherto unfettered spirit had never before felt. The cold indifference he had seen in her face at their first meeting was gone, and something told him it was gone forever.

When they came in sight of Four Winds they saw two people walking up the road from the harbour and a few further steps brought them face to

face with Captain Anthony Oliver and his old housekeeper.

The Captain's appearance was a fresh surprise to Alan. He had expected to meet a rough, burly sailor, loud of voice and forbidding of manner. Instead, Captain Anthony was a tall, well-built man of perhaps fifty. His face, beneath its shock of iron-grey hair, was handsome but wore a somewhat forbidding expression, and there was something in it, apart from line or feature, which did not please Alan. He had no time to analyze this impression, for Lynde said hurriedly, "Father, this is Mr. Douglas. He has just done me a great service."

She briefly explained her accident; when she had finished, the Captain turned to Alan and held out his hand, a frank smile replacing the rather suspicious and contemptuous scowl which had previously overshadowed it.

"I am much obliged to you, Mr. Douglas," he said cordially. "You must come up to the house and let me thank you at leisure. As a rule I'm not very partial to the cloth, as you may have heard. In this case it is the man, not the minister, I invite."

The front door of Four Winds opened directly into a wide, low-ceilinged living room, furnished with simplicity and good taste. Leaving the two men there, Lynde and the old cousin vanished, and Alan found himself talking freely with the Captain who could, as it appeared, talk well on many subjects far removed from Four Winds. He was evidently a clever, self-educated man, somewhat opinionated and given to sarcasm; he never made any references to his own past life or experiences, but Alan discovered him to be surprisingly well read in politics and science. Sometimes in the pauses of the conversation Alan found the older man looking at him in a furtive way he did not like, but the Captain was such an improvement on what he had been led to expect that he was not inclined to be over critical. At least, this was what he honestly thought. He did not suspect that it was because this man was Lynde's father that he wished to think as well as possible of him.

Presently Lynde came in. She had changed her outdoor dress, stained with moss and soil in her fall, for a soft clinging garment of some pale

yellow material, and her long, thick braid of hair hung over her shoulder. She sat mutely down in a dim corner and took no part in the conversation except to answer briefly the remarks which Alan addressed to her. Emily came in and lighted the lamp on the table. She was as grim and unsmiling as ever, yet she cast a look of satisfaction on Alan as she passed out. One dog lay down at Lynde's feet, the other sat on his haunches by her side and laid his head on her lap. Rexton and its quiet round of parish duties seemed thousands of miles away from Alan, and he wondered a little if this were not all a dream.

When he went away the Captain invited him back.

"If you like to come, that is," he said brusquely, "and always as the man, not the priest, remember. I don't want you by and by to be slyly slipping in the thin end of any professional wedges. You'll waste your time if you do. Come as man to man and you'll be welcome, for I like you — and it's few men I like. But don't try to talk religion to me."

"I never talk religion," said Alan emphatically. "I try to live it. I'll not come to your house as a self-appointed missionary, sir, but I shall certainly act and speak at all times as my conscience and my reverence for my vocation demands. If I respect your beliefs, whatever they may be, I shall expect you to respect mine, Captain Oliver."

"Oh, I won't insult your God," said the Captain with a faint sneer.

Alan went home in a tumult of contending feelings. He did not altogether like Captain Anthony — that was very clear to him, and yet there was something about the man that attracted him. Intellectually he was a worthy foeman, and Alan had often longed for such since coming to Rexton. He missed the keen, stimulating debates of his college days and, now there seemed a chance of renewing them, he was eager to grasp it. And Lynde — how beautiful she was! What though she shared — as was not unlikely — in her father's lack of belief? She could not be essentially irreligious — that were impossible in a true woman. Might not this be his opportunity to help her — to lead her into dearer light? Alan Douglas was a sincere man, with himself as well as with others, yet there are some motives that lie, in their first inception, too deep even for the probe of

self-analysis. He had not as yet the faintest suspicion as to the real source of his interest in Lynde Oliver — in his sudden forceful desire to be of use and service to her — to rescue her from spiritual peril as he had that day rescued her from bodily danger.

She must have a lonely, unsatisfying life, he thought. It is my duty to help her if I can.

It did not then occur to him that duty in this instance wore a much more pleasing aspect than it had sometimes worn in his experience.

Alan did not mean to be oversoon in going back to Four Winds, but three days later a book came to him which Captain Anthony had expressed a wish to see. It furnished an excuse for an earlier call. After that he went often. He always found the Captain courteous and affable, old Emily grimly cordial, Lynde sometimes remote and demure, sometimes frankly friendly. Occasionally, when the Captain was away in his yacht, he went for a walk with her and her dogs along the shore or through the sweet-smelling pinelands up the lake. He found that she loved books and was avid for more of them than she could obtain; he was glad to take her several and discuss them with her. She liked history and travels best. With novels she had no patience, she said disdainfully. She seldom spoke of herself or her past life and Alan fancied she avoided any personal reference. But once she said abruptly, “Why do you never ask me to go to church? I’ve always been afraid you would.”

“Because I do not think it would do you any good to go if you didn’t want to,” said Alan gravely. “Souls should not be rudely handled any more than bodies.”

She looked at him reflectively, her finger denting her chin in a meditative fashion she had.

“You are not at all like Mr. Strong. He always scolded me, when he got a chance, for not going to church. I would have hated him if it had been worthwhile. I told him one day that I was nearer to God under these pines than I could be in any building fashioned by human hands. He was very much shocked. But I don’t want you to misunderstand me. Father does not go to church because he does not believe there is a God. But I know there

is. Mother taught me so. I have never gone to church because Father would not allow me, and I could not go now in Rexton where the people talk about me so. Oh, I know they do — you know it, too — but I do not care for them. I know I'm not like other girls. I would like to be but I can't be — I never can be — now."

There was some strange passion in her voice that Alan did not quite understand — a bitterness and a revolt which he took to be against the circumstances that hedged her in.

"Is not some other life possible for you if your present life does not content you?" he said gently.

"But it does content me," said Lynde imperiously. "I want no other — I wish this life to go on forever — forever, do you understand? If I were sure that it would — if I were sure that no change would ever come to me, I would be perfectly content. It is the fear that a change will come that makes me wretched. Oh!" She shuddered and put her hands over her eyes.

Alan thought she must mean that when her father died she would be alone in the world. He wanted to comfort her — reassure her — but he did not know how.

One evening when he went to Four Winds he found the door open and, seeing the Captain in the living room, he stepped in unannounced. Captain Anthony was sitting by the table, his head in his hands; at Alan's entrance he turned upon him a haggard face, blackened by a furious scowl beneath which blazed eyes full of malevolence.

"What do you want here?" he said, following up the demand with a string of vile oaths.

Before Alan could summon his scattered wits, Lynde glided in with a white, appealing face. Wordlessly she grasped Alan's arm, drew him out, and shut the door.

"Oh, I've been watching for you," she said breathlessly. "I was afraid you might come tonight — but I missed you."

"But your father?" said Alan in amazement. "How have I angered him?"

"Hush. Come into the garden. I will explain there."

He followed her into the little enclosure where the red and white roses were now in full blow.

“Father isn’t angry with you,” said Lynde in a low shamed voice. “It’s just — he takes strange moods sometimes. Then he seems to hate us all — even me — and he is like that for days. He seems to suspect and dread everybody as if they were plotting against him. You — perhaps you think he has been drinking? No, that is not the trouble. These terrible moods come on without any cause that we know of. Even Mother could not do anything with him when he was like that. You must go away now — and do not come back until his dark mood has passed. He will be just as glad to see you as ever then, and this will not make any difference with him. Don’t come back for a week at least.”

“I do not like to leave you in such trouble, Miss Oliver.”

“Oh, it doesn’t matter about me — I have Emily. And there is nothing you could do. Please go at once. Father knows I am talking to you and that will vex him still more.”

Alan, realizing that he could not help her and that his presence only made matters worse, went away perplexedly. The following week was a miserable one for him. His duties were distasteful to him and meeting his people a positive torture. Sometimes Mrs. Danby looked dubiously at him and seemed on the point of saying something — but never said it. Isabel King watched him when they met, with bold probing eyes. In his abstraction he did not notice this any more than he noticed a certain subtle change which had come over the members of his congregation — as if a breath of suspicion had blown across them and troubled their confidence and trust. Once Alan would have been keenly and instantly conscious of this slight chill; now he was not even aware of it.

When he ventured to go back to Four Winds he found the Captain on the point of starting off for a cruise in his yacht. He was urbane and friendly, utterly ignoring the incident of Alan’s last visit and regretting that business compelled him to go down the lake. Alan saw him off with small regret and turned joyfully to Lynde, who was walking under the pines with her dogs. She looked pale and tired and her eyes were still

troubled, but she smiled proudly and made no reference to what had happened.

“I’m going to put these flowers on Mother’s grave,” she said, lifting her slender hands filled with late white roses. “Mother loved flowers and I always keep them near her when I can. You may come with me if you like.”

Alan had known Lynde’s mother was buried under the pines but he had never visited the spot before. The grave was at the westernmost end of the pine wood, where it gave out on the lake, a beautiful spot, given over to silence and shadow.

“Mother wished to be buried here,” Lynde said, kneeling to arrange her flowers. “Father would have taken her anywhere but she said she wanted to be near us and near the lake she had loved so well. Father buried her himself. He wouldn’t have anyone else do anything for her. I am so glad she is here. It would have been terrible to have seen her taken far away — my sweet little mother.”

“A mother is the best thing in the world — I realized that when I lost mine,” said Alan gently. “How long is it since your mother died?”

“Three years. Oh, I thought I should die too when she did. She was very ill — she was never strong, you know — but I never thought she could die. There was a year then — part of the time I didn’t believe in God at all and the rest I hated Him. I was very wicked but I was so unhappy. Father had so many dreadful moods and — there was something else. I used to wish to die.”

She bowed her head on her hands and gazed moodily on the ground. Alan, leaning against a pine tree, looked down at her. The sunlight fell through the swaying boughs on her glory of burnished hair and lighted up the curve of cheek and chin against the dark background of wood brown. All the defiance and wildness had gone from her for the time and she seemed like a helpless, weary child. He wanted to take her in his arms and comfort her.

“You must resemble your mother,” he said absently, as if thinking aloud. “You don’t look at all like your father.”

Lynde shook her head.

“No, I don’t look like Mother either. She was tiny and dark — she had a sweet little face and velvet-brown eyes and soft curly dark hair. Oh, I remember her look so well. I wish I did resemble her. I loved her so — I would have done anything to save her suffering and trouble. At least, she died in peace.”

There was a curious note of fierce self-gratulation in the girl’s voice as she spoke the last sentence. Again Alan felt the unpleasant impression that there was much in her that he did not understand — might never understand — although such understanding was necessary to perfect friendship. She had never spoken so freely of her past life to him before, yet he felt somehow that something was being kept back in jealous repression. It must be something connected with her father, Alan thought. Doubtless, Captain Anthony’s past would not bear inspection, and his daughter knew it and dwelt in the shadow of her knowledge. His heart filled with aching pity for her; he raged secretly because he was so powerless to help her. Her girlhood had been blighted, robbed of its meed of happiness and joy. Was she likewise to miss her womanhood? Alan’s hands clenched involuntarily at the unuttered question.

On his way home that evening he again met Isabel King. She turned and walked back with him but she made no reference to Four Winds or its inhabitants. If Alan had troubled himself to look, he would have seen a malicious glow in her baleful brown eyes. But the only eyes which had any meaning for him just then were the grey ones of Lynde Oliver.

During Alan’s next three visits to Four Winds he saw nothing of Lynde, either in the house or out of it. This surprised and worried him. There was no apparent difference in Captain Anthony, who continued to be suave and friendly. Alan always enjoyed his conversations with the Captain, who was witty, incisive, and pungent; yet he disliked the man himself more at every visit. If he had been compelled to define his impression, he would have said the Captain was a charming scoundrel.

But it occurred to him that Emily was disturbed about something. Sometimes he caught her glance, full of perplexity and — it almost

seemed — distrust. She looked as if she felt hostile towards him. But Alan dismissed the idea as absurd. She had been friendly from the first and he had done nothing to excite her disapproval. Lynde's mysterious absence was a far more perplexing problem. She had not gone away, for when Alan asked the Captain concerning her, he responded indifferently that she was out walking. Alan caught a glint of amusement in the older man's eyes as he spoke. He could have sworn it was malicious amusement.

One evening he went to Four Winds around the shore. As he turned the headland of the cove, he saw Lynde and her dogs not a hundred feet away. The moment she saw him she darted up the bank and disappeared among the firs.

Alan was thunderstruck. There was no room for doubt that she meant to avoid him. He walked up to the house in a tumult of mingled feelings which he did not even then understand. He only realized that he felt bitterly hurt and grieved — puzzled as well. What did it all mean?

He met Emily in the yard of Four Winds on her way to the spring and stopped her resolutely.

"Miss Oliver," he said bluntly, "is Miss Lynde angry with me? And why?"

Emily looked at him piercingly.

"Have you no idea why?" she asked shortly.

"None in the world."

She looked at him through and through a moment longer. Then, seeming satisfied with her scrutiny, she picked up her pail.

"Come down to the spring with me," she said.

As soon as they were out of sight of the house, Emily began abruptly.

"If you don't know why Lynde is acting so, I can't tell you, for I don't know either. I don't even know if she is angry. I only thought perhaps she was — that you had done or said something to vex her — plaguing her to go to church maybe. But if you didn't, it may not be anger at all. I don't understand that girl. She's been different ever since her mother died. She used to tell me everything before that. You must go and ask her right out

yourself what is wrong. But maybe I can tell you something. Did you write her a letter a fortnight ago?"

"A letter? No."

"Well, she got one then. I thought it came from you — I didn't know who else would be writing to her. A boy brought it and gave it to her at the door. She's been acting strange ever since. She cries at night — something Lynde never did before except when her mother died. And in daytime she roams the shore and woods like one possessed. You must find out what was in that letter, Mr. Douglas."

"Have you any idea who the boy was?" Alan asked, feeling somewhat relieved. The mystery was clearing up, he thought. No doubt it was the old story of some cowardly anonymous letter. His thoughts flew involuntarily to Isabel King.

Emily shook her head.

"No. He was just a half-grown fellow with reddish hair and he limped a little."

"Oh, that is the postmaster's son," said Alan disappointedly. "That puts us further off the scent than ever. The letter was probably dropped in the box at the office and there will consequently be no way of tracing the writer."

"Well, I can't tell you anything more," said Emily. "You'll have to ask Lynde for the truth."

This Alan was determined to do whenever he should meet her. He did not go to the house with Emily but wandered about the shore, watching for Lynde and not seeing her. At length he went home, a prey to stormy emotions. He realized at last that he loved Lynde Oliver. He wondered how he could have been so long blind to it. He knew that he must have loved her ever since he had first seen her. The discovery amazed but did not shock him. There was no reason why he should not love her — should not woo and win her for his wife if she cared for him. She was good and sweet and true. Anything of doubt in her antecedents could not touch her. Probably the world would look upon Captain Anthony as a somewhat undesirable father-in-law for a minister, but that aspect of the question did

not disturb Alan. As for the trouble of the letter, he felt sure he would easily be able to clear it away. Probably some malicious busybody had become aware of his frequent calls at Four Winds and chose to interfere in his private affairs thus. For the first time it occurred to him that there had been a certain lack of cordiality among his people of late. If it were really so, doubtless this was the reason. At any other time this would have been of moment to him. But now his thoughts were too wholly taken up with Lynde and the estrangement on her part to attach much importance to anything else. What she thought mattered incalculably more to Alan than what all the people in Rexton put together thought. He had the right, like any other man, to woo the woman of his choice and he would certainly brook no outside interference in the matter.

After a sleepless night he went back to Four Winds in the morning. Lynde would not expect him at that time and he would have more chance of finding her. The result justified his idea, for he met her by the spring.

Alan felt shocked at the change in her appearance. She looked as if years of suffering had passed over her. Her lips were pallid, and hollow circles under her eyes made them appear unnaturally large. He had last left the girl in the bloom of her youth; he found her again a woman on whom life had laid its heavy hand.

A burning flood of colour swept over her face as they met, then receded as quickly, leaving her whiter than before. Without any waste of words, Alan plunged abruptly into the subject.

"Miss Oliver, why have you avoided me so of late? Have I done anything to offend you?"

"No." She spoke as if the word hurt her, her eyes persistently cast down.

"Then what is the trouble?"

There was no answer. She gave an involuntary glance around as if seeking some way of escape. There was none, for the spring was set about with thick young firs and Alan blocked the only path.

He leaned forward and took her hands in his.

"Miss Oliver, you must tell me what the trouble is," he said firmly.

She pulled her hands away and flung them up to her face, her form shaken by stormy sobs. In distress he put his arm about her and drew her closer.

“Tell me, Lynde,” he whispered tenderly.

She broke away from him, saying passionately, “You must not come to Four Winds any more. You must not have anything more to do with us — any of us. We have done you enough harm already. But I never thought it could hurt you — oh, I am sorry, sorry!”

“Miss Oliver, I want to see that letter you received the other evening. Oh” — as she started with surprise—”I know about it — Emily told me. Who wrote it?”

“There was no name signed to it,” she faltered.

“Just as I thought. Well, you must let me see it.”

“I cannot — I burned it.”

“Then tell me what was in it. You must. This matter must be cleared up — I am not going to have our beautiful friendship spoiled by the malice of some coward. What did that letter say?”

“It said that everybody in your congregation was talking about your frequent visits here — that it had made a great scandal — that it was doing you a great deal of injury and would probably end in your having to leave Rexton.”

“That would be a catastrophe indeed,” said Alan drily. “Well, what else?”

“Nothing more — at least, nothing about you. The rest was about myself — I did not mind it — much. But I was so sorry to think that I had done you harm. It is not too late to undo it. You must not come here any more. Then they will forget.”

“Perhaps — but I should not forget. It’s a little too late for me. Lynde, you must not let this venomous letter come between us. I love you, dear — I’ve loved you ever since I met you and I want you for my wife.”

Alan had not intended to say that just then, but the words came to his lips in spite of himself. She looked so sad and appealing and weary that he wanted to have the right to comfort and protect her.

She turned her eyes full upon him with no hint of maidenly shyness or shrinking in them. Instead, they were full of a blank, incredulous horror that swallowed up every other feeling. There was no mistaking their expression and it struck an icy chill to Alan's heart. He had certainly not expected a too ready response on her part — he knew that even if she cared for him he might find it a matter of time to win her avowal of it — but he certainly had not expected to see such evident abject dismay as her blanched face betrayed. She put up her hand as if warding a blow.

“Don't — don't,” she gasped. “You must not say that — you must never say it. Oh, I never dreamed of this. If I had thought it possible you could — love me, I would never have been friends with you. Oh, I've made a terrible mistake.”

She wrung her hands piteously together, looking like a soul in torment. Alan could not bear to see her pain.

“Don't feel such distress,” he implored. “I suppose I've spoken too abruptly — but I'll be so patient, dear, if you'll only try to care for me a little. Can't you, dear?”

“I can't marry you,” said Lynde desperately. She leaned against a slim white bole of a young birch behind her and looked at him wretchedly. “Won't you please go away and forget me?”

“I can't forget you,” Alan said, smiling a little in spite of his suffering. “You are the only woman I can ever love — and I can't give you up unless I have to. Won't you be frank with me, dear? Do you honestly think you can never learn to love me?”

“It is not that,” said Lynde in a hard, unnatural voice. “I am married already.”

Alan stared at her, not in the least comprehending the meaning of her words. Everything — pain, hope, fear, passion — had slipped away from him for a moment, as if he had been stunned by a physical blow. He could not have heard aright.

“Married?” he said dully. “Lynde, you cannot mean it?”

“Yes, I do. I was married three years ago.”

“Why was I not told this?” Alan’s voice was stern, although he did not mean it to be so, and she shrank and shivered. Then she began in a low monotonous tone from which all feeling of any sort seemed to have utterly faded.

“Three years ago Mother was very ill — so ill that any shock would kill her, so the doctor Father brought from the lake told us. A man — a young sea captain — came here to see Father. His name was Frank Harmon and he had known Father well in the past. They had sailed together. Father seemed to be afraid of him — I had never seen him afraid of anybody before. I could not think much about anybody except Mother then, but I knew I did not quite like Captain Harmon, although he was very polite to me and I suppose might have been called handsome. One day Father came to me and told me I must marry Captain Harmon. I laughed at the idea at first but when I looked at Father’s face I did not laugh. It was all white and drawn. He implored me to marry Captain Harmon. He said if I did not it would mean shame and disgrace for us all — that Captain Harmon had some hold on him and would tell what he knew if I did not marry him. I don’t know what it was but it must have been something dreadful. And he said it would kill Mother. I knew it would, and that was what drove me to consent at last. Oh, I can’t tell you what I suffered. I was only seventeen and there was nobody to advise me. One day Father and Captain Harmon and I went down the lake to Crosse Harbour and we were married there. As soon as the ceremony was over, Captain Harmon had to sail in his vessel. He was going to China. Father and I came back home. Nobody knew — not even Emily. He said we must not tell Mother until she was better. But she was never better. She only lived three months more — she lived them happily and at rest. When I think of that, I am not sorry for what I did. Captain Harmon said he would be back in the fall to claim me. I waited, sick at heart. But he did not come — he has never come. We have never heard a word of or about him since. Sometimes I feel sure he cannot be still living. But never a day dawns that I don’t say to myself, ‘Perhaps he will come today’ — and, oh—”

She broke down again, sobbing bitterly. Amid all the daze of his own pain Alan realized that, at any cost, he must not make it harder for her by showing his suffering. He tried to speak calmly, wisely, as a disinterested friend.

“Could it not be discovered whether your — this man — is or is not living? Surely your father could find out.”

Lynde shook her head.

“No, he says he has no way of doing so. We do not know if Captain Harmon had any relatives or even where his home was, and it was his own ship in which he sailed. Father would be glad to think that Frank Harmon was dead, but he does not think he is. He says he was always a fickle-minded fellow, one fancy driving another out of his mind. Oh, I can bear my own misery — but to think what I have brought on you! I never dreamed that you could care for me. I was so lonely and your friendship was so pleasant — can you ever forgive me?”

“There is nothing to forgive, as far as you are concerned, Lynde,” said Alan steadily. “You have done me no wrong. I have loved you sincerely and such love can be nothing but a blessing to me. I only wish that I could help you. It wrings my heart to think of your position. But I can do nothing — nothing. I must not even come here any more. You understand that?”

“Yes.”

There was an unconscious revelation in the girl’s mournful eyes as she turned them on Alan. It thrilled him to the core of his being. She loved him. If it were not for that empty marriage form, he could win her, but the knowledge was only an added mocking torment. Alan had not known a man could endure such misery and live. A score of wild questions rushed to his lips but he crushed them back for Lynde’s sake and held out his hand.

“Goodbye, dear,” he said almost steadily, daring to say no more lest he should say too much.

“Goodbye,” Lynde answered faintly.

When he had gone she flung herself down on the moss by the spring and lay there in an utter abandonment of misery and desolation.

Pain and indignation struggled for mastery in Alan's stormy soul as he walked homeward. So this was Captain Anthony's doings! He had sacrificed his daughter to some crime of his dubious past. Alan never dreamed of blaming Lynde for having kept her marriage a secret; he put the blame where it belonged — on the Captain's shoulders. Captain Anthony had never warned him by so much as a hint that Lynde was not free to be won. It had all probably seemed a good joke to him. Alan thought the furtive amusement he had so often detected in the Captain's eyes was explained now.

He found Elder Trewin in his study when he got home. The good Elder's face was stern and anxious; he had called on a distasteful errand — to tell the young minister of the scandal his intimacy with the Four Winds people was making in the congregation and remonstrate with him concerning it. Alan listened absently, with none of the resentment he would have felt at the interference a day previously. A man does not mind a pin-prick when a limb is being wrenched away.

"I can promise you that my objectionable calls at Four Winds will cease," he said sarcastically, when the Elder had finished. Elder Trewin got himself away, feeling snubbed but relieved.

"Took it purty quiet," he reflected. "Don't believe there was much in the yarns after all. Isabel King started them and probably she exaggerated a lot. I suppose he's had some notion like as not of bringing the Captain over to the church. But that's foolish, for he'd never manage it, and meanwhile was giving occasion for gossip. It's just as well to stop it. He's a good pastor and he works hard — too hard, mebbe. He looked real careworn and worried today."

The Rexton gossip soon ceased with the cessation of the young minister's visits to Four Winds. A month later it suffered a brief revival when a tall grim-faced old woman, whom a few recognized as Captain Anthony's housekeeper, was seen to walk down the Rexton road and enter the manse. She did not stay there long — watchers from a dozen different windows were agreed upon that — and nobody, not even Mrs. Danby, who did her best to find out, ever knew why she had called.

Emily looked at Alan with grim reproach when she was shown into his study, and as soon as they were alone she began with her usual abruptness, "Mr. Douglas, why have you given up coming to Four Winds?"

Alan flinched.

"You must ask Lynde that, Miss Oliver," he said quietly.

"I have asked her — and she says nothing."

"Then I cannot tell you."

Anger glowed in Emily's eyes.

"I thought you were a gentleman," she said bitterly. "You are not. You are breaking Lynde's heart. She's gone to a shadow of herself and she's fretting night and day. You went there and made her like you — oh, I've eyes — and then you left her."

Alan bent over his desk and looked the old woman in the face unflinchingly.

"You are mistaken, Miss Oliver," he said earnestly. "I love Lynde and would be only too happy if it were possible that I could marry her. I am not to blame for what has come about — she will tell you that herself if you ask her."

His look and tone convinced Emily.

"Who is to blame then? Lynde herself?"

"No, no."

"The Captain then?"

"Not in the sense you mean. I can tell you nothing more."

A baffled expression crossed the old woman's face. "There's a mystery here — there always has been — and I'm shut out of it. Lynde won't confide in me — in me who'd give my life's blood to help her. Perhaps I can help her — I could tell you something. Have you stopped coming to Four Winds — has she made you stop coming — because she's got such a wicked old scamp for a father? Is that the reason?"

Alan shook his head.

"No, that has nothing to do with it."

"And you won't come back?"

"It is not a question of will. I cannot — must not go."

“Lynde will break her heart then,” said Emily in a tone of despair.

“I think not. She is too strong and fine for that. Help her all you can with sympathy but don’t torment her with any questions. You may tell her if you like that I advise her to confide the whole story to you, but if she cannot don’t tease her to. Be very gentle with her.”

“You don’t need to tell me that. I’d rather die than hurt her. I came here full of anger against you — but I see now you are not to blame. You are suffering too — your face tells that. All the same, I wish you’d never set foot in Four Winds. She wasn’t happy before but she wasn’t so miserable as she is now. Oh, I know Anthony is at the bottom of it all in some way but I won’t ask you any more questions since you don’t feel free to answer them. But are you sure that nothing can be done to clear up the trouble?”

“Too sure,” said Alan’s white lips.

The autumn dragged away. Alan found out how much a man may suffer and yet go on living and working. As for that, his work was all that made life possible for him now and he flung himself into it with feverish energy, growing so thin and hollow-eyed over it that even Elder Trewin remonstrated and suggested a vacation — a suggestion at which Alan merely smiled. A vacation which would take him away from Lynde’s neighbourhood — the thought was not to be entertained.

He never saw Lynde, for he never went to any part of the shore now; yet he hungered constantly for the sight of her, the sound of her voice, the glance of her luminous eyes. When he pictured her eating her heart out in the solitude of Four Winds, he clenched his hands in despair. As for the possibility of Harmon’s return, Alan could never face it for a moment. When it thrust its ugly presence into his thoughts, he put it away desperately. The man was dead — or his fickle fancy had veered elsewhere. Nothing else could explain his absence. But they could never know, and the uncertainty would forever stand between him and Lynde like a spectre. But he thought more of Lynde’s pain than his own. He would have elected to bear any suffering if by so doing he could have freed her from the nightmare dread of Harmon’s returning to claim her. That dread had always hung over her and now it must be intensified to agony by her

love for another man. And he could do nothing — nothing. He groaned aloud in his helplessness.

One evening in late November Alan flung aside his pen and yielded to the impulse that urged him to the lake shore. He did not mean to seek Lynde — he would go to a part of the shore where there would be no likelihood of meeting her. But get away by himself he must. A November storm was raging and there would be a certain satisfaction in breasting its buffets and fighting his way through it. Besides, he knew that Isabel King was in the house and he dreaded meeting her. Since his conviction that she had written that letter to Lynde, he could not tolerate the girl and it tasked his self-control to keep from showing his contempt openly. Perhaps Isabel felt it beneath all his outward courtesy. At least she did not seek his society as she had formerly done.

It was the second day of the storm; a wild northeast gale was blowing and cold rain and freezing sleet fell in frequent showers. Alan shivered as he came out into its full fury on the lake shore. At first he could not see the water through the driving mist. Then it cleared away for a moment and he stopped short, aghast at the sight which met his eyes.

Opposite him was a long low island known as Philip's Point, dwindling down at its northeastern side to two long narrow bars of quicksand. Alan's horrified eyes saw a small schooner sunk between the bars; her hull was entirely under water and in the rigging clung one solitary figure. So much he saw before the Point was blotted out in a renewed downpour of sleet.

Without a moment's hesitation Alan turned and ran for Four Winds, which was only about a quarter of a mile away around a headland. With the Captain's assistance, something might be done. Other help could not be obtained before darkness would fall and then it would be impossible to do anything. He dashed up the steps of Four Winds and met Emily, who had flung the door open. Behind her was Lynde's pale face with its alarmed questioning eyes.

"Where is the Captain?" gasped Alan. "There's a vessel on Philip's Point and one man at least on her."

“The Captain’s away on a cruise,” said Emily blankly. “He went three days ago.”

“Then nothing can be done,” said Alan despairingly. “It will be dark long before I can get to the village.”

Lynde stepped out, tying a shawl around her head.

“Let us go around to the Point,” she said. “Have you matches? No? Emily, get some. We must light a bonfire at least. And bring Father’s glass.”

“It is not a fit night for you to be out,” said Alan anxiously. “You are sheltered here — you don’t feel it — but it’s a fearful storm down there.”

“I am not afraid of the storm. It will not hurt me. Let us hurry. It is growing dark already.”

In silence they breasted their way to the shore and around the headland. Arriving opposite Philip’s Point, a lull in the sleet permitted them to see the sunken schooner and the clinging figure. Lynde waved her hand to him and they saw him wave back.

“It won’t be necessary to light a fire now that he has seen us,” said Lynde. “Nothing can be done with village help till morning and that man can never cling there so long. He will freeze to death, for it is growing colder every minute. His only chance is to swim ashore if he can swim. The danger will be when he comes near shore; the undertow of the backwater on the quicksand will sweep him away and in his probably exhausted condition he may not be able to make head against it.”

“He knows that, doubtless, and that is why he hasn’t attempted to swim ashore before this,” said Alan. “But I’ll meet him in the backwater and drag him in.”

“You — you’ll risk your own life,” cried Lynde.

“There is a little risk certainly, but I don’t think there is a great one. Anyhow, the attempt must be made,” said Alan quietly.

Suddenly Lynde’s composure forsook her. She wrung her hands.

“I can’t let you do it,” she cried wildly. “You might be drowned — there’s every risk. You don’t know the force of that backwater. Alan, Alan, don’t think of it.”

She caught his arm in her white wet hands and looked into his face with passionate pleading.

Emily, who had said nothing, now spoke harshly.

“Lynde is right, Mr. Douglas. You have no right to risk your life for a stranger. My advice is to go to the village for help, and Lynde and I will make a fire and watch here. That is all that can be expected of you or us.”

Alan paid no heed to Emily. Very tenderly he loosened Lynde’s hold on his arm and looked into her quivering face.

“You know it is my duty, Lynde,” he said gently. “If anything can be done for that poor man, I am the only one who can do it. I will come back safe, please God. Be brave, dear.”

Lynde, with a little moan of resignation, turned away. Old Emily looked on with a face of grim disapproval as Alan waded out into the surf that boiled and swirled around him in a mad whirl of foam. The shower of sleet had again slackened, and the wreck half a mile away, with its solitary figure, was dearly visible. Alan beckoned to the man to jump overboard and swim ashore, enforcing his appeal by gestures that commanded haste before the next shower should come. For a few moments it seemed as if the seaman did not understand or lacked the courage or power to obey. The next minute he had dropped from the rigging on the crest of a mighty wave and was being borne onward to the shore.

Speedily the backwater was reached and the man, sucked down by the swirl of the wave, threw up his arms and disappeared. Alan dashed in, groping, swimming; it seemed an eternity before his hand clutched the drowning man and wrenched him from the undertow. And, with the seaman in his arms, he staggered back through the foam and dropped his burden on the sand at Lynde’s feet. Alan was reeling from exhaustion and chilled to the marrow, but he thought only of the man he had rescued. The latter was unconscious and, as Alan bent over him, he heard Lynde give a choking little cry.

“He is living still,” said Alan. “We must get him up to the house as soon as possible. How shall we manage it?”

“Lynde and I can go and bring the Captain’s mattress down,” said Emily. Now that Alan was safe she was eager to do all she could. “Then you and I can carry him up to the house.”

“That will be best,” said Alan. “Go quickly.”

He did not look at Lynde or he would have been shocked by the agony on her face. She cast one glance at the prostrate man and followed Emily. In a short time they returned with the mattress, and Alan and Emily carried the sailor on it to Four Winds. Lynde walked behind them, seemingly unconscious of both. She watched the stranger’s face as one fascinated.

At Four Winds they carried the man to a room where Emily and Alan worked over him, while Lynde heated water and hunted out stimulants in a mechanical fashion. When Alan came down she asked no questions but looked at him with the same strained horror on her face which it had borne ever since Alan had dropped his burden at her feet.

“Is he — conscious?” asked Lynde, as if she forced herself to ask the question.

“Yes, he has come back to life. But he is delirious and doesn’t realize his surroundings at all. He thinks he is still on board the vessel. He’ll probably come round all right. Emily is going to watch him and I’ll go up to Rexton and send Dr. Ames down.”

“Do you know who that man you have saved is?” asked Lynde.

“No. I asked him his name but could not get any sensible answer.”

“I can tell you who he is — he is Frank Harmon.”

Alan stared at her. “Frank Harmon. Your — your — the man you married? Impossible!”

“It is he. Do you think I could be mistaken?”

Dr. Ames came to Four Winds that night and again the next day. He found Harmon delirious in a high fever.

“It will be several days before he comes to his senses,” he said. “Shall I send you help to nurse him?”

“It isn’t necessary,” said Emily stiffly. “I can look after him — and the Captain ought to be back tomorrow.”

“You’ve no idea who he is, I suppose?” asked the doctor.

“No.” Emily was quite sincere. Lynde had not told her, and Emily did not recognize him.

“Well, Mr. Douglas did a brave thing in rescuing him,” said Dr. Ames. “I’ll be back tomorrow.”

Harmon remained delirious for a week. Alan went every day to Four Winds, his interest in a man he had rescued explaining his visits to the Rexton people. The Captain had returned and, though not absolutely uncivil, was taciturn and moody. Alan reflected grimly that Captain Anthony probably owed him a grudge for saving Harmon’s life. He never saw Lynde alone, but her strained, tortured face made his heart ache. Old Emily only seemed her natural self. She waited on Harmon and Dr. Ames considered her a paragon of a nurse. Alan thought it was well that Emily knew nothing more of Harmon than that he was an old friend of Captain Anthony’s. He felt sure that she would have walked out of the sick room and never reentered it had she guessed that the patient was the man whom, above all others, Lynde dreaded and feared.

One afternoon when Alan went to Four Winds Emily met him at the door.

“He’s better,” she announced. “He had a good sleep this afternoon and when he woke he was quite himself. You’d better go up and see him. I told him all I could but he wants to see you. Anthony and Lynde are away to Crosse Harbour. Go up and talk to him.”

Harmon turned his head as the minister approached and held out his hand with a smile.

“You’re the preacher, I reckon. They tell me you were the man who pulled me out of that hurly-burly. I wasn’t hardly worth saving but I’m as grateful to you as if I was.”

“I only — did — what any man would have done,” said Alan, taking the offered hand.

“I don’t know about that. Anyhow, it’s not every man could have done it. I’d been hanging in that rigging all day and most of the night before. There were five more of us but they dropped off. I knew it was no use to

try to swim ashore alone — the backwater would be too much for me. I must have been a lot of trouble. That old woman says I've been raving for a week. And, by the way I feel, I fancy I'll be stretched out here another week before I'll be able to use my pins. Who are these Olivers anyhow? The old woman wouldn't talk about the family."

"Don't you know them?" asked Alan in astonishment. "Isn't your name Harmon?"

"That's right — Harmon — Alfred Harmon, first mate of the schooner, Annie M."

"Alfred! I thought your name was Frank!"

"Frank was my twin brother. We were so much alike our own mammy couldn't tell us apart. Did you know Frank?"

"No. This family did. Miss Oliver thought you were Frank when she saw you."

"I don't feel much like myself but I'm not Frank anyway. He's dead, poor chap — got shot in a spat with Chinese pirates three years ago."

"Dead! Man, are you speaking the truth? Are you certain?"

"Pop sure. His mate told me the whole story. Say, preacher, what's the matter? You look as if you were going to keel over."

Alan hastily drank a glass of water.

"I — I am all right now. I haven't been feeling well of late."

"Guess you didn't do yourself any good going out into that freezing water and dragging me in."

"I shall thank God every day of my life that I did do it," said Alan gravely, new light in his eyes, as Emily entered the room. "Miss Oliver, when will the Captain and Lynde be back?"

"They said they would be home by four."

She looked at Alan curiously.

"I will go and meet her," he said quickly.

He came upon Lynde, sitting on a grey boulder under the shadow of an overhanging fir coppice, with her dogs beside her.

She turned her head indifferently as Alan's footsteps sounded on the pebbles, and then stood slowly up.

“Are you looking for me?” she asked.

“I have some news for you, Lynde,” Alan said.

“Has he — has he come to himself?” she whispered.

“Yes, he has come to himself. Lynde, he is not Frank Harmon — he is his twin brother. He says Frank Harmon was killed three years ago in the China seas.”

For a moment Lynde’s great grey eyes stared into Alan’s, questioning. Then, as the truth seized on her comprehension, she sat down on the boulder and put her hands over her face without a word. Alan walked down to the water’s edge to give her time to recover herself. When he came back he took her hands and said quietly, “Lynde, do you realize what this means for us — for us? You are free — free to love me — to be my wife.”

Lynde shook her head.

“Oh, that can’t be. I am not fit to be your wife.”

“Don’t talk nonsense, dear,” he smiled.

“It isn’t nonsense. You are a minister and it would ruin you to marry a girl like me. Think what the Rexton people would say of it.”

“Rexton isn’t the world, dearest. Last week I had a letter from home asking me to go to a church there. I did not think of accepting then — now I will go — we will both go — and a new life will begin for you, clear of the shadows of the old.”

“That isn’t possible. No, Alan, listen — I love you too well to do you the wrong of marrying you. It would injure you. There is Father. I love him and he has always been very kind to me. But — but — there’s something wrong — you know it — some crime in his past—”

“The only man who knew that is dead.”

“We do not know that he was the only man. I am the daughter of a criminal and I am no fit wife for Alan Douglas. No, Alan, don’t plead, please. I won’t think differently — I never can.”

There was a ring of finality in her tone that struck dismay to Alan’s heart. He prepared to entreat and argue, but before he could utter a word, the boughs behind them parted and Captain Anthony stepped down from the bank.

“I’ve been listening,” he announced coolly, “and I think it high time I took a share in the conversation. You seem to have run up against a snag, Mr. Douglas. You say Frank Harmon is dead. That’s good riddance if it’s true. Is it true?”

“His brother declares it is.”

“Well, then, I’ll help you all I can. I like you, Mr. Douglas, and I happen to be fond of Lynde, too — though you mayn’t believe it. I’m fond of her for her mother’s sake and I’d like to see her happy. I didn’t want to give her to Harmon that time three years ago but I couldn’t help myself. He had the upper hand, curse him. It wasn’t for my own sake, though — it was for my wife’s. However, that’s all over and done with and I’ll do the best I can to atone for it. So you won’t marry your minister because your father was not a good man, Lynde? Well, I don’t suppose he was a very good man — a man who makes his wife’s life a hell, even in a refined way, isn’t exactly a saint, to my way of thinking. But that’s the worst that could be said of him and it doesn’t entail any indelible disgrace on his family, I suppose. I am not your father, Lynde.”

“Not my father?” Lynde echoed the words blankly.

“No. Your father was your mother’s first husband. She never told you of him. When I said he made her life a hell, I said the truth, no more, no less. I had loved your mother ever since I was a boy, Lynde. But she was far above me in station and I never dreamed it was possible to win her love. She married James Ashley. He was a gentleman, so called — and he didn’t kick or beat her. Oh no, he just tormented her refined womanhood to the verge of frenzy, that was all. He died when you were a baby. And a year later I found out your mother could love me, rough sailor and all as I was. I married her and brought her here. We had fifteen years of happiness together. I’m not a good man — but I made your mother happy in spite of her wrecked health and her dark memories. It was her wish that you should be known as my daughter, but under the present circumstances I know she would wish that you should be told the truth. Marry your man, Lynde, and go away with him. Emily will go with you if you like. I’m going back to the sea. I’ve been hankering for it ever since your mother died. I’ll go out

of your life. There, don't cry — I hate to see a woman cry. Mr. Douglas, I'll leave you to dry her tears and I'll go up to the house and have a talk with Harmon."

When Captain Anthony had disappeared behind the Point, Alan turned to Lynde. She was sobbing softly and her face was wet with tears. Alan drew her head down on his shoulder.

"Sweetheart, the dark past is all put by. Our future begins with promise. All is well with us, dear Lynde."

Like a child, she put her arms about his neck and their lips met.

Marcella's Reward

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Dr. Clark shook his head gravely. "She is not improving as fast as I should like to see," he said. "In fact — er — she seems to have gone backward the past week. You must send her to the country, Miss Langley. The heat here is too trying for her."

Dr. Clark might as well have said, "You must send her to the moon" — or so Marcella thought bitterly. Despair filled her heart as she looked at Patty's white face and transparent hands and listened to the doctor's coolly professional advice. Patty's illness had already swept away the scant savings of three years. Marcella had nothing left with which to do anything more for her.

She did not make any answer to the doctor — she could not. Besides, what could she say, with Patty's big blue eyes, bigger and bluer than ever in her thin face, looking at her so wistfully? She dared not say it was impossible. But Aunt Emma had no such scruples. With a great clatter and racket, that lady fell upon the dishes that held Patty's almost untasted dinner and whisked them away while her tongue kept time to her jerky movements.

"Goodness me, doctor, do you think you're talking to millionaires? Where do you suppose the money is to come from to send Patty to the country? I can't afford it, that is certain. I think I do pretty well to give Marcella and Patty their board free, and I have to work my fingers to the bone to do that. It's all nonsense about Patty, anyhow. What she ought to do is to make an effort to get better. She doesn't — she just mopes and pines. She won't eat a thing I cook for her. How can anyone expect to get better if she doesn't eat?"

Aunt Emma glared at the doctor as if she were triumphantly sure that she had propounded an unanswerable question. A dull red flush rose to Marcella's face.

“Oh, Aunt Emma, I can’t eat!” said Patty wearily. “It isn’t because I won’t — indeed, I can’t.”

“Humph! I suppose my cooking isn’t fancy enough for you — that’s the trouble. Well, I haven’t the time to put any frills on it. I think I do pretty well to wait on you at all with all that work piling up before me. But some people imagine that they were born to be waited on.”

Aunt Emma whirled the last dish from the table and left the room, slamming the door behind her.

The doctor shrugged his shoulders. He had become used to Miss Gibson’s tirades during Patty’s illness. But Marcella had never got used to them — never, in all the three years she had lived with her aunt. They flicked on the raw as keenly as ever. This morning it seemed unbearable. It took every atom of Marcella’s self-control to keep her from voicing her resentful thoughts. It was only for Patty’s sake that she was able to restrain herself. It was only for Patty’s sake, too, that she did not, as soon as the doctor had gone, give way to tears. Instead, she smiled bravely into the little sister’s eyes.

“Let me brush your hair now, dear, and bathe your face.”

“Have you time?” said Patty anxiously.

“Yes, I think so.”

Patty gave a sigh of content.

“I’m so glad! Aunt Emma always hurts me when she brushes my hair — she is in such a hurry. You’re so gentle, Marcella, you don’t make my head ache at all. But oh! I’m so tired of being sick. I wish I could get well faster. Marcy, do you think I can be sent to the country?”

“I — I don’t know, dear. I’ll see if I can think of any way to manage it,” said Marcella, striving to speak hopefully.

Patty drew a long breath.

“Oh, Marcy, it would be lovely to see the green fields again, and the woods and brooks, as we did that summer we spent in the country before Father died. I wish we could live in the country always. I’m sure I would soon get better if I could go — if it was only for a little while. It’s so hot

here — and the factory makes such a noise — my head seems to go round and round all the time. And Aunt Emma scolds so.”

“You mustn’t mind Aunt Emma, dear,” said Marcella. “You know she doesn’t really mean it — it is just a habit she has got into. She was really very good to you when you were so sick. She sat up night after night with you, and made me go to bed. There now, dearie, you’re fresh and sweet, and I must hurry to the store, or I’ll be late. Try and have a little nap, and I’ll bring you home some oranges tonight.”

Marcella dropped a kiss on Patty’s cheek, put on her hat and went out. As soon as she left the house, she quickened her steps almost to a run. She feared she would be late, and that meant a tencent fine. Ten cents loomed as large as ten dollars now to Marcella’s eyes when every dime meant so much. But fast as she went, her distracted thoughts went faster. She could not send Patty to the country. There was no way, think, plan, worry as she might. And if she could not! Marcella remembered Patty’s face and the doctor’s look, and her heart sank like lead. Patty was growing weaker every day instead of stronger, and the weather was getting hotter. Oh, if Patty were to — to — but Marcella could not complete the sentence even in thought.

If they were not so desperately poor! Marcella’s bitterness overflowed her soul at the thought. Everywhere around her were evidences of wealth — wealth often lavishly and foolishly spent — and she could not get money enough anywhere to save her sister’s life! She almost felt that she hated all those smiling, well-dressed people who thronged the streets. By the time she reached the store, poor Marcella’s heart was seething with misery and resentment.

Three years before, when Marcella had been sixteen and Patty nine, their parents had died, leaving them absolutely alone in the world except for their father’s half-sister, Miss Gibson, who lived in Canning and earned her livelihood washing and mending for the hands employed in the big factory nearby. She had grudgingly offered the girls a home, which Marcella had accepted because she must. She obtained a position in one of the Canning stores at three dollars a week, out of which she contrived to

dress herself and Patty and send the latter to school. Her life for three years was one of absolute drudgery, yet until now she had never lost courage, but had struggled bravely on, hoping for better times in the future when she should get promotion and Patty would be old enough to teach school.

But now Marcella's courage and hopefulness had gone out like a spent candle. She was late at the store, and that meant a fine; her head ached, and her feet felt like lead as she climbed the stairs to her department — a hot, dark, stuffy corner behind the shirtwaist counter. It was warm and close at any time, but today it was stifling, and there was already a crowd of customers, for it was the day of a bargain sale. The heat and noise and chatter got on Marcella's tortured nerves. She felt that she wanted to scream, but instead she turned calmly to a waiting customer — a big, handsome, richly dressed woman. Marcella noted with an ever-increasing bitterness that the woman wore a lace collar the price of which would have kept Patty in the country for a year.

She was Mrs. Liddell — Marcella knew her by sight — and she was in a very bad temper because she had been kept waiting. For the next half hour she badgered and worried Marcella to the point of distraction. Nothing suited her. Pile after pile, box after box, of shirtwaists did Marcella take down for her, only to have them flung aside with sarcastic remarks. Mrs. Liddell seemed to hold Marcella responsible for the lack of waists that suited her; her tongue grew sharper and sharper and her comments more trying. Then she mislaid her purse, and was disagreeable about that until it turned up.

Marcella shut her lips so tightly that they turned white to keep back the impatient retort that rose momentarily to her lips. The insolence of some customers was always trying to the sensitive, high-spirited girl, but today it seemed unbearable. Her head throbbed fiercely with the pain of the ever-increasing ache, and — what was the lady on her right saying to a friend?

“Yes, she had typhoid, you know — a very bad form. She rallied from it, but she was so exhausted that she couldn't really recover, and the doctor said—”

“Really,” interrupted Mrs. Liddell’s sharp voice, “may I ask you to attend to me, if you please? No doubt gossip may be very interesting to you, but I am accustomed to having a clerk pay some small attention to my requirements. If you cannot attend to your business, I shall go to the floor walker and ask him to direct me to somebody who can. The laziness and disobligingness of the girls in this store is really getting beyond endurance.”

A passionate answer was on the point of Marcella’s tongue. All her bitterness and suffering and resentment flashed into her face and eyes. For one moment she was determined to speak out, to repay Mrs. Liddell’s insolence in kind. A retort was ready to her hand. Everyone knew that Mrs. Liddell, before her marriage to a wealthy man, had been a working girl. What could be easier than to say contemptuously: “You should be a judge of a clerk’s courtesy and ability, madam. You were a shop girl yourself once?”

But if she said it, what would follow? Prompt and instant dismissal. And Patty? The thought of the little sister quelled the storm in Marcella’s soul. For Patty’s sake she must control her temper — and she did. With an effort that left her white and tremulous she crushed back the hot words and said quietly: “I beg your pardon, Mrs. Liddell. I did not mean to be inattentive. Let me show you some of our new lingerie waists, I think you will like them.”

But Mrs. Liddell did not like the new lingerie waists which Marcella brought to her in her trembling hands. For another half hour she examined and found fault and sneered. Then she swept away with the scornful remark that she didn’t see a thing there that was fit to wear, and she would go to Markwell Bros. and see if they had anything worth looking at.

When she had gone, Marcella leaned against the counter, pale and exhausted. She must have a breathing spell. Oh, how her head ached! How hot and stifling and horrible everything was! She longed for the country herself. Oh, if she and Patty could only go away to some place where there were green clover meadows and cool breezes and great hills where the air was sweet and pure!

During all this time a middle-aged woman had been sitting on a stool beside the bargain counter. When a clerk asked her if she wished to be waited on, she said, "No, I'm just waiting here for a friend who promised to meet me."

She was tall and gaunt and grey haired. She had square jaws and cold grey eyes and an aggressive nose, but there was something attractive in her plain face, a mingling of common sense and kindness. She watched Marcella and Mrs. Liddell closely and lost nothing of all that was said and done on both sides. Now and then she smiled grimly and nodded.

When Mrs. Liddell had gone, she rose and leaned over the counter. Marcella opened her burning eyes and pulled herself wearily together.

"What can I do for you?" she said.

"Nothing. I ain't looking for to have anything done for me. You need to have something done for you, I guess, by the looks of you. You seem dead beat out. Aren't you awful tired? I've been listening to that woman jawing you till I felt like rising up and giving her a large and wholesome piece of my mind. I don't know how you kept your patience with her, but I can tell you I admired you for it, and I made up my mind I'd tell you so."

The kindness and sympathy in her tone broke Marcella down. Tears rushed to her eyes. She bowed her head on her hands and said sobbingly, "Oh, I am tired! But it's not that. I'm — I'm in such trouble."

"I knew you were," said the other, with a nod of her head. "I could tell that right off by your face. Do you know what I said to myself? I said, 'That girl has got somebody at home awful sick.' That's what I said. Was I right?"

"Yes, indeed you were," said Marcella.

"I knew it" — another triumphant nod. "Now, you just tell me all about it. It'll do you good to talk it over with somebody. Here, I'll pretend I'm looking at shirtwaists, so that floor walker won't be coming down on you, and I'll be as hard to please as that other woman was, so's you can take your time. Who's sick — and what's the matter?"

Marcella told the whole story, choking back her sobs and forcing herself to speak calmly, having the fear of the floor walker before her eyes.

“And I can’t afford to send Patty to the country — I can’t — and I know she won’t get better if she doesn’t go,” she concluded.

“Dear, dear, but that’s too bad! Something must be done. Let me see — let me put on my thinking cap. What is your name?”

“Marcella Langley.”

The older woman dropped the lingerie waist she was pretending to examine and stared at Marcella.

“You don’t say! Look here, what was your mother’s name before she was married?”

“Mary Carvell.”

“Well, I have heard of coincidences, but this beats all! Mary Carvell! Well, did you ever hear your mother speak of a girl friend of hers called Josephine Draper?”

“I should think I did! You don’t mean—”

“I do mean it. I’m Josephine Draper. Your mother and I went to school together, and we were as much as sisters to each other until she got married. Then she went away, and after a few years I lost trace of her. I didn’t even know she was dead. Poor Mary! Well, my duty is plain — that’s one comfort — my duty and my pleasure, too. Your sister is coming out to Dalesboro to stay with me. Yes, and you are too, for the whole summer. You needn’t say you’re not, because you are. I’ve said so. There’s room at Fir Cottage for you both. Yes, Fir Cottage — I guess you’ve heard your mother speak of that. There’s her old room out there that we always slept in when she came to stay all night with me. It’s all ready for you. What’s that? You can’t afford to lose your place here? Bless your heart, child, you won’t lose it! The owner of this store is my nephew, and he’ll do considerable to oblige me, as well he might, seeing as I brought him up. To think that Mary Carvell’s daughter has been in his store for three years, and me never suspecting it! And I might never have found you out at all if you hadn’t been so patient with that woman. If you’d sassed her back, I’d have thought she deserved it and wouldn’t have blamed you a mite, but I wouldn’t have bothered coming to talk to you either. Well, well well! Poor child, don’t cry. You just pick up and go home. I’ll make it all right with

Tom. You're pretty near played out yourself, I can see that. But a summer in Fir Cottage, with plenty of cream and eggs and my cookery, will soon make another girl of you. Don't you dare to thank me. It's a privilege to be able to do something for Mary Carvell's girls. I just loved Mary."

The upshot of the whole matter was that Marcella and Patty went, two days later, to Dalesboro, where Miss Draper gave them a hearty welcome to Fir Cottage — a quaint, delightful little house circled by big Scotch firs and overgrown with vines. Never were such delightful weeks as those that followed. Patty came rapidly back to health and strength. As for Marcella, Miss Draper's prophecy was also fulfilled; she soon looked and felt like another girl. The dismal years of drudgery behind her were forgotten like a dream, and she lived wholly in the beautiful present, in the walks and drives, the flowers and grass slopes, and in the pleasant household duties which she shared with Miss Draper.

"I love housework," she exclaimed one September day. "I don't like the thought of going back to the store a bit."

"Well, you're not going back," calmly said Miss Draper, who had a habit of arranging other people's business for them that might have been disconcerting had it not been for her keen insight and hearty good sense. "You're going to stay here with me — you and Patty. I don't propose to die of lonesomeness losing you, and I need somebody to help me about the house. I've thought it all out. You are to call me Aunt Josephine, and Patty is to go to school. I had this scheme in mind from the first, but I thought I'd wait to see how we got along living in the same house, and how you liked it here, before I spoke out. No, you needn't thank me this time either. I'm doing this every bit as much for my sake as yours. Well, that's all settled. Patty won't object, bless her rosy cheeks!"

"Oh!" said Marcella, with eyes shining through her tears. "I'm so happy, dear Miss Draper — I mean Aunt Josephine. I'll love to stay here — and I will thank you."

"Fudge!" remarked Miss Draper, who felt uncomfortably near crying herself. "You might go out and pick a basket of Golden Gems. I want to make some jelly for Patty."

Margaret's Patient

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“DID DR. FORBES THINK SHE OUGHT TO GIVE UP HER TRIP?”

Margaret paused a moment at the gate and looked back at the quaint old house under its snowy firs with a thrill of proprietary affection. It was her home; for the first time in her life she had a real home, and the long, weary years of poorly paid drudgery were all behind her. Before her was a prospect of independence and many of the delights she had always craved; in the immediate future was a trip to Vancouver with Mrs. Boyd.

For I shall go, of course, thought Margaret, as she walked briskly down the snowy road. I've always wanted to see the Rockies, and to go there with Mrs. Boyd will double the pleasure. She is such a delightful companion.

Margaret Campbell had been an orphan ever since she could remember. She had been brought up by a distant relative of her father's — that is, she had been given board, lodging, some schooling and indifferent clothes for the privilege of working like a little drudge in the house of the grim cousin who sheltered her. The death of this cousin flung Margaret on her own resources. A friend had procured her employment as the “companion” of a rich, eccentric old lady, infirm of health and temper. Margaret lived with her for five years, and to the young girl they seemed treble the time. Her employer was fault-finding, peevish, unreasonable, and many a time Margaret's patience almost failed her — almost, but not quite. In the end it brought her a more tangible reward than sometimes falls to the lot of the toiler. Mrs. Constance died, and in her will she left to Margaret her little up-country cottage and enough money to provide her an income for the rest of her life.

Margaret took immediate possession of her little house and, with the aid of a capable old servant, soon found herself very comfortable. She realized that her days of drudgery were over, and that henceforth life

would be a very different thing from what it had been. Margaret meant to have “a good time.” She had never had any pleasure and now she was resolved to garner in all she could of the joys of existence.

“I’m not going to do a single useful thing for a year,” she had told Mrs. Boyd gaily. “Just think of it — a whole delightful year of vacation, to go and come at will, to read, travel, dream, rest. After that, I mean to see if I can find something to do for other folks, but I’m going to have this one golden year. And the first thing in it is our trip to Vancouver. I’m so glad I have the chance to go with you. It’s a wee bit short notice, but I’ll be ready when you want to start.”

Altogether, Margaret felt pretty well satisfied with life as she tripped blithely down the country road between the ranks of snow-laden spruces, with the blue sky above and the crisp, exhilarating air all about. There was only one drawback, but it was a pretty serious one.

It’s so lonely by spells, Margaret sometimes thought wistfully. All the joys my good fortune has brought me can’t quite fill my heart. There’s always one little empty, aching spot. Oh, if I had somebody of my very own to love and care for, a mother, a sister, even a cousin. But there’s nobody. I haven’t a relative in the world, and there are times when I’d give almost anything to have one. Well, I must try to be satisfied with friendship, instead.

Margaret’s meditations were interrupted by a brisk footstep behind her, and presently Dr. Forbes came up.

“Good afternoon, Miss Campbell. Taking a constitutional?”

“Yes. Isn’t it a lovely day? I suppose you are on your professional rounds. How are all your patients?”

“Most of them are doing well. But I’m sorry to say I have a new one and am very much worried about her. Do you know Freda Martin?”

“The little teacher in the Primary Department who boards with the Wayes? Yes, I’ve met her once or twice. Is she ill?”

“Yes, seriously. It’s typhoid, and she has been going about longer than she should. I don’t know what is to be done with her. It seems she is like yourself in one respect, Miss Campbell; she is utterly alone in the world.

Mrs. Waye is crippled with rheumatism and can't nurse her, and I fear it will be impossible to get a nurse in Blythefield. She ought to be taken from the Wayes'. The house is overrun with children, is right next door to that noisy factory, and in other respects is a poor place for a sick girl."

"It is too bad, I am very sorry," said Margaret sympathetically.

Dr. Forbes shot a keen look at her from his deep-set eyes. "Are you willing to show your sympathy in a practical form, Miss Campbell?" he said bluntly. "You told me the other day you meant to begin work for others next year. Why not begin now? Here's a splendid chance to befriend a friendless girl. Will you take Freda Martin into your home during her illness?"

"Oh, I couldn't," cried Margaret blankly. "Why, I'm going away next week. I'm going with Mrs. Boyd to Vancouver, and my house will be shut up."

"Oh, I did not know. That settles it, I suppose," said the doctor with a sigh of regret. "Well, I must see what else I can do for poor Freda. If I had a home of my own, the problem would be easily solved, but as I'm only a boarder myself, I'm helpless in that respect. I'm very much afraid she will have a hard time to pull through, but I'll do the best I can for her. Well, I must run in here and have a look at Tommy Griggs' eyes. Good morning, Miss Campbell."

Margaret responded rather absently and walked on with her eyes fixed on the road. Somehow all the joy had gone out of the day for her, and out of her prospective trip. She stopped on the little bridge and gazed unseeingly at the ice-bound creek. Did Dr. Forbes really think she ought to give up her trip in order to take Freda Martin into her home and probably nurse her as well, since skilled nursing of any kind was almost unobtainable in Blythefield? No, of course, Dr. Forbes did not mean anything of the sort. He had not known she intended to go away. Margaret tried to put the thought out of her mind, but it came insistently back.

She knew — none better — what it was to be alone and friendless. Once she had been ill, too, and left to the ministration of careless servants.

Margaret shuddered whenever she thought of that time. She was very, very sorry for Freda Martin, but she certainly couldn't give up her plans for her.

"Why, I'd never have the chance to go with Mrs. Boyd again," she argued with her troublesome inward promptings.

Altogether, Margaret's walk was spoiled. But when she went to bed that night, she was firmly resolved to dismiss all thought of Freda Martin. In the middle of the night she woke up. It was calm and moonlight and frosty. The world was very still, and Margaret's heart and conscience spoke to her out of that silence, where all worldly motives were hushed and shamed. She listened, and knew that in the morning she must send for Dr. Forbes and tell him to bring his patient to Fir Cottage.

The evening of the next day found Freda in Margaret's spare room and Margaret herself installed as nurse, for as Dr. Forbes had feared, he had found it impossible to obtain anyone else. Margaret had a natural gift for nursing, and she had had a good deal of experience in sick rooms. She was skilful, gentle and composed, and Dr. Forbes nodded his head with satisfaction as he watched her.

A week later Mrs. Boyd left for Vancouver, and Margaret, bending over her delirious patient, could not even go to the station to see her off. But she thought little about it. All her hopes were centred on pulling Freda Martin through; and when, after a long, doubtful fortnight, Dr. Forbes pronounced her on the way to recovery, Margaret felt as if she had given the gift of life to a fellow creature. "Oh, I am so glad I stayed," she whispered to herself.

During Freda's convalescence Margaret learned to love her dearly. She was such a sweet, brave little creature, full of a fine courage to face the loneliness and trials of her lot.

"I can never repay you for your kindness, Miss Campbell," she said wistfully.

"I am more than repaid already," said Margaret sincerely. "Haven't I found a dear little friend?"

One day Freda asked Margaret to write a note for her to a certain school chum.

“She will like to know I am getting better. You will find her address in my writing desk.”

Freda’s modest trunk had been brought to Fir Cottage, and Margaret went to it for the desk. As she turned over the loose papers in search of the address, her eye was caught by a name signed to a faded and yellowed letter — Worth Spencer. Her mother’s name!

Margaret gave a little exclamation of astonishment. Could her mother have written that letter? It was not likely another woman would have that uncommon name. Margaret caught up the letter and ran to Freda’s room.

“Freda, I couldn’t help seeing the name signed to this letter, it is my mother’s. To whom was it written?”

“That is one of my mother’s old letters,” said Freda. “She had a sister, my Aunt Worth. She was a great deal older than Mother. Their parents died when Mother was a baby. Aunt Worth went to her father’s people, while Mother’s grandmother took her. There was not very good feeling between the two families, I think. Mother said she lost trace of her sister after her sister married, and then, long after, she saw Aunt Worth’s death in the papers.”

“Can you tell me where your mother and her sister lived before they were separated?” asked Margaret excitedly.

“Ridgetown.”

“Then my mother must have been your mother’s sister, and, oh, Freda, Freda, you are my cousin.”

Eventually this was proved to be the fact. Margaret investigated the matter and discovered beyond a doubt that she and Freda were cousins. It would be hard to say which of the two girls was the more delighted.

“Anyhow, we’ll never be parted again,” said Margaret happily. “Fir Cottage is your home henceforth, Freda. Oh, how rich I am. I have got somebody who really belongs to me. And I owe it all to Dr. Forbes. If he hadn’t suggested you coming here, I should never have found out that we were cousins.”

“And I don’t think I should ever have got better at all,” whispered Freda, slipping her hand into Margaret’s.

“I think we are going to be the two happiest girls in the world,” said Margaret. “And Freda, do you know what we are going to do when your summer vacation comes? We are going to have a trip through the Rockies, yes, indeedy. It would have been nice going with Mrs. Boyd, but it will be ten times nicer to go with you.”

Matthew Insists on Puffed Sleeves

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Matthew was having a bad ten minutes of it. He had come into the kitchen, in the twilight of a cold, grey December evening, and had sat down in the woodbox corner to take off his heavy boots, unconscious of the fact that Anne and a bevy of her schoolmates were having a practice of “The Fairy Queen” in the sitting-room. Presently they came trooping through the hall and out into the kitchen, laughing and chattering gaily. They did not see Matthew, who shrank bashfully back into the shadows beyond the woodbox with a boot in one hand and a bootjack in the other, and he watched them shyly for the aforesaid ten minutes as they put on caps and jackets and talked about the dialogue and the concert. Anne stood among them, bright eyed and animated as they; but Matthew suddenly became conscious that there was something about her different from her mates. And what worried Matthew was that the difference impressed him as being something that should not exist. Anne had a brighter face, and bigger, starrier eyes, and more delicate features than the others; even shy, unobservant Matthew had learned to take note of these things; but the difference that disturbed him did not consist in any of these respects. Then in what did it consist?

Matthew was haunted by this question long after the girls had gone, arm in arm, down the long, hard-frozen lane and Anne had betaken herself to her books. He could not refer it to Marilla, who, he felt, would be quite sure to sniff scornfully and remark that the only difference she saw between Anne and the other girls was that they sometimes kept their tongues quiet while Anne never did. This, Matthew felt, would be no great help.

He had recourse to his pipe that evening to help him study it out, much to Marilla’s disgust. After two hours of smoking and hard reflection

Matthew arrived at a solution of his problem. Anne was not dressed like the other girls!

The more Matthew thought about the matter the more he was convinced that Anne never had been dressed like the other girls — never since she had come to Green Gables. Marilla kept her clothed in plain, dark dresses, all made after the same unvarying pattern. If Matthew knew there was such a thing as fashion in dress it is as much as he did; but he was quite sure that Anne's sleeves did not look at all like the sleeves the other girls wore. He recalled the cluster of little girls he had seen around her that evening — all gay in waists of red and blue and pink and white — and he wondered why Marilla always kept her so plainly and soberly gowned.

Of course, it must be all right. Marilla knew best and Marilla was bringing her up. Probably some wise, inscrutable motive was to be served thereby. But surely it would do no harm to let the child have one pretty dress — something like Diana Barry always wore. Matthew decided that he would give her one; that surely could not be objected to as an unwarranted putting in of his oar. Christmas was only a fortnight off. A nice new dress would be the very thing for a present. Matthew, with a sigh of satisfaction, put away his pipe and went to bed, while Marilla opened all the doors and aired the house.

The very next evening Matthew betook himself to Carmody to buy the dress, determined to get the worst over and have done with it. It would be, he felt assured, no trifling ordeal. There were some things Matthew could buy and prove himself no mean bargainer; but he knew he would be at the mercy of shopkeepers when it came to buying a girl's dress.

After much cogitation Matthew resolved to go to Samuel Lawson's store instead of William Blair's. To be sure, the Cuthberts always had gone to William Blair's; it was almost as much a matter of conscience with them as to attend the Presbyterian church and vote Conservative. But William Blair's two daughters frequently waited on customers there and Matthew held them in absolute dread. He could contrive to deal with them when he knew exactly what he wanted and could point it out; but in such a

matter as this, requiring explanation and consultation, Matthew felt that he must be sure of a man behind the counter. So he would go to Lawson's, where Samuel or his son would wait on him.

Alas! Matthew did not know that Samuel, in the recent expansion of his business, had set up a lady clerk also; she was a niece of his wife's and a very dashing young person indeed, with a huge, drooping pompadour, big, rolling brown eyes, and a most extensive and bewildering smile. She was dressed with exceeding smartness and wore several bangle bracelets that glittered and rattled and tinkled with every movement of her hands. Matthew was covered with confusion at finding her there at all; and those bangles completely wrecked his wits at one fell swoop.

"What can I do for you this evening. Mr. Cuthbert?" Miss Lucilla Harris inquired, briskly and ingratiatingly, tapping the counter with both hands.

"Have you any — any — any — well now, say any garden rakes?" stammered Matthew.

Miss Harris looked somewhat surprised, as well she might, to hear a man inquiring for garden rakes in the middle of December.

"I believe we have one or two left over," she said, "but they're upstairs in the lumber-room. I'll go and see."

During her absence Matthew collected his scattered senses for another effort.

When Miss Harris returned with the rake and cheerfully inquired: "Anything else tonight, Mr. Cuthbert?" Matthew took his courage in both hands and replied: "Well now, since you suggest it, I might as well — take — that is — look at — buy some — some hayseed."

Miss Harris had heard Matthew Cuthbert called odd. She now concluded that he was entirely crazy.

"We only keep hayseed in the spring," she explained loftily. "We've none on hand just now."

"Oh, certainly — certainly — just as you say," stammered unhappy Matthew, seizing the rake and making for the door. At the threshold he recollected that he had not paid for it and he turned miserably back. While

Miss Harris was counting out his change he rallied his powers for a final desperate attempt.

“Well now — if it isn’t too much trouble — I might as well — that is — I’d like to look at — at — some sugar.”

“White or brown?” queried Miss Harris patiently.

“Oh — well now — brown,” said Matthew feebly.

“There’s a barrel of it over there,” said Miss Harris, shaking her bangles at it. “It’s the only kind we have.”

“I’ll — I’ll take twenty pounds of it,” said Matthew, with beads of perspiration standing on his forehead.

Matthew had driven halfway home before he was his own man again. It had been a gruesome experience, but it served him right, he thought, for committing the heresy of going to a strange store. When he reached home he hid the rake in the toolhouse, but the sugar he carried in to Marilla.

“Brown sugar!” exclaimed Marilla. “Whatever possessed you to get so much? You know I never use it except for the hired man’s porridge or black fruitcake. Jerry’s gone and I’ve made my cake long ago. It’s not good sugar, either — it’s coarse and dark — William Blair doesn’t usually keep sugar like that.”

“I — I thought it might come in handy sometime,” said Matthew, making good his escape.

When Matthew came to think the matter over he decided that a woman was required to cope with the situation. Marilla was out of the question. Matthew felt sure she would throw cold water on his project at once. Remained only Mrs. Lynde; for of no other woman in Avonlea would Matthew have dared to ask advice. To Mrs. Lynde he went accordingly, and that good lady promptly took the matter out of the harassed man’s hands.

“Pick out a dress for you to give Anne? To be sure I will. I’m going to Carmody tomorrow and I’ll attend to it. Have you something particular in mind? No? Well, I’ll just go by my own judgment then. I believe a nice rich brown would just suit Anne, and William Blair has some new gloria in that’s real pretty. Perhaps you’d like me to make it up for her, too, seeing

that if Marilla was to make it Anne would probably get wind of it before the time and spoil the surprise? Well, I'll do it. No, it isn't a mite of trouble. I like sewing. I'll make it to fit my niece, Jenny Gillis, for she and Anne are as like as two peas as far as figure goes."

"Well now, I'm much obliged," said Matthew, "and — and — I dunno — but I'd like — I think they make the sleeves different nowadays to what they used to be. If it wouldn't be asking too much I — I'd like them made in the new way."

"Puffs? Of course. You needn't worry a speck more about it, Matthew. I'll make it up in the very latest fashion," said Mrs. Lynde. To herself she added when Matthew had gone:

"It'll be a real satisfaction to see that poor child wearing something decent for once. The way Marilla dresses her is positively ridiculous, that's what, and I've ached to tell her so plainly a dozen times. I've held my tongue though, for I can see Marilla doesn't want advice and she thinks she knows more about bringing children up than I do for all she's an old maid. But that's always the way. Folks that has brought up children know that there's no hard and fast method in the world that'll suit every child. But them as never have think it's all as plain and easy as Rule of Three — just set your three terms down so fashion, and the sum'll work out correct. But flesh and blood don't come under the head of arithmetic and that's where Marilla Cuthbert makes her mistake. I suppose she's trying to cultivate a spirit of humility in Anne by dressing her as she does: but it's more likely to cultivate envy and discontent. I'm sure the child must feel the difference between her clothes and the other girls'. But to think of Matthew taking notice of it! That man is waking up after being asleep for over sixty years."

Marilla knew all the following fortnight that Matthew had something on his mind, but what it was she could not guess, until Christmas Eve, when Mrs. Lynde brought up the new dress. Marilla behaved pretty well on the whole, although it is very likely she distrusted Mrs. Lynde's diplomatic explanation that she had made the dress because Matthew was afraid Anne would find out about it too soon if Marilla made it.

“So this is what Matthew has been looking so mysterious over and grinning about to himself for two weeks, is it?” she said a little stiffly but tolerantly. “I knew he was up to some foolishness. Well, I must say I don’t think Anne needed any more dresses. I made her three good, warm, serviceable ones this fall, and anything more is sheer extravagance. There’s enough material in those sleeves alone to make a waist, I declare there is. You’ll just pamper Anne’s vanity, Matthew, and she’s as vain as a peacock now. Well, I hope she’ll be satisfied at last, for I know she’s been hankering after those silly sleeves ever since they came in, although she never said a word after the first. The puffs have been getting bigger and more ridiculous right along; they’re as big as balloons now. Next year anybody who wears them will have to go through a door sideways.”

Christmas morning broke on a beautiful white world. It had been a very mild December and people had looked forward to a green Christmas; but just enough snow fell softly in the night to transfigure Avonlea. Anne peeped out from her frosted gable window with delighted eyes. The firs in the Haunted Wood were all feathery and wonderful; the birches and wild cherry trees were outlined in pearl; the ploughed fields were stretches of snowy dimples; and there was a crisp tang in the air that was glorious. Anne ran downstairs singing until her voice reechoed through Green Gables.

“Merry Christmas, Marilla! Merry Christmas, Matthew! Isn’t it a lovely Christmas? I’m so glad it’s white. Any other kind of Christmas doesn’t seem real, does it? I don’t like green Christmases. They’re not green — they’re just nasty faded browns and greys. What makes people call them green? Why — why — Matthew, is that for me? Oh, Matthew!”

Matthew had sheepishly unfolded the dress from its paper swathings and held it out with a deprecatory glance at Marilla, who feigned to be contemptuously filling the teapot, but nevertheless watched the scene out of the corner of her eye with a rather interested air.

Anne took the dress and looked at it in reverent silence. Oh, how pretty it was — a lovely soft brown gloria with all the gloss of silk; a skirt with dainty frills and shirrings; a waist elaborately pintucked in the most

fashionable way, with a little ruffle of filmy lace at the neck. But the sleeves — they were the crowning glory! Long elbow cuffs, and above them two beautiful puffs divided by rows of shirring and bows of brown silk ribbon.

“That’s a Christmas present for you, Anne,” said Matthew shyly. “Why — why — Anne, don’t you like it? Well now — well now.”

For Anne’s eyes had suddenly filled with tears.

“Like it! Oh, Matthew!” Anne laid the dress over a chair and clasped her hands. “Matthew, it’s perfectly exquisite. Oh, I can never thank you enough. Look at those sleeves! Oh, it seems to me this must be a happy dream.”

“Well, well, let us have breakfast,” interrupted Marilla. “I must say, Anne, I don’t think you needed the dress; but since Matthew has got it for you, see that you take good care of it. There’s a hair ribbon Mrs. Lynde left for you. It’s brown, to match the dress. Come now, sit in.”

“I don’t see how I’m going to eat breakfast,” said Anne rapturously. “Breakfast seems so commonplace at such an exciting moment. I’d rather feast my eyes on that dress. I’m so glad that puffed sleeves are still fashionable. It did seem to me that I’d never get over it if they went out before I had a dress with them. I’d never have felt quite satisfied, you see. It was lovely of Mrs. Lynde to give me the ribbon, too. I feel that I ought to be a very good girl indeed. It’s at times like this I’m sorry I’m not a model little girl; and I always resolve that I will be in future. But somehow it’s hard to carry out your resolutions when irresistible temptations come. Still, I really will make an extra effort after this.”

When the commonplace breakfast was over Diana appeared, crossing the white log bridge in the hollow, a gay little figure in her crimson ulster. Anne flew down the slope to meet her.

“Merry Christmas, Diana! And oh, it’s a wonderful Christmas. I’ve something splendid to show you. Matthew has given me the loveliest dress, with such sleeves. I couldn’t even imagine any nicer.”

“I’ve got something more for you,” said Diana breathlessly. “Here — this box. Aunt Josephine sent us out a big box with ever so many things in

it — and this is for you. I'd have brought it over last night, but it didn't come until after dark, and I never feel very comfortable coming through the Haunted Wood in the dark now."

Anne opened the box and peeped in. First a card with "For the Anne-girl and Merry Christmas," written on it; and then, a pair of the daintiest little kid slippers, with beaded toes and satin bows and glistening buckles.

"Oh," said Anne, "Diana, this is too much, I must be dreaming."

"I call it providential," said Diana. "You won't have to borrow Ruby's slippers now, and that's a blessing, for they're two sizes too big for you, and it would be awful to hear a fairy shuffling. Josie Pye would be delighted. Mind you, Rob Wright went home with Gertie Pye from the practice night before last. Did you ever hear anything equal to that?"

All the Avonlea scholars were in a fever of excitement that day, for the hall had to be decorated and a last grand rehearsal held.

The concert came off in the evening and was a pronounced success. The little hall was crowded; all the performers did excellently well, but Anne was the bright particular star of the occasion, as even envy, in the shape of Josie Pye, dared not deny.

"Oh, hasn't it been a brilliant evening?" sighed Anne, when it was all over and she and Diana were walking home together under a dark, starry sky.

"Everything went off very well," said Diana practically. "I guess we must have made as much as ten dollars. Mind you, Mr. Allan is going to send an account of it to the Charlottetown papers."

"Oh, Diana, will we really see our names in print? It makes me thrill to think of it. Your solo was perfectly elegant, Diana. I felt prouder than you did when it was encored. I just said to myself, 'It is my dear bosom friend who is so honoured.'"

"Well, your recitations just brought down the house, Anne. That sad one was simply splendid."

"Oh, I was so nervous, Diana. When Mr. Allan called out my name I really cannot tell how I ever got up on that platform. I felt as if a million eyes were looking at me and through me, and for one dreadful moment I

was sure I couldn't begin at all. Then I thought of my lovely puffed sleeves and took courage. I knew that I must live up to those sleeves, Diana. So I started in, and my voice seemed to be coming from ever so far away. I just felt like a parrot. It's providential that I practised those recitations so often up in the garret, or I'd never have been able to get through. Did I groan all right?"

"Yes, indeed, you groaned lovely," assured Diana.

"I saw old Mrs. Sloane wiping away tears when I sat down. It was splendid to think I had touched somebody's heart. It's so romantic to take part in a concert isn't it? Oh, it's been a very memorable occasion indeed."

"Wasn't the boys' dialogue fine?" said Diana. "Gilbert Blythe was just splendid. Anne, I do think it's awful mean the way you treat Gil. Wait till I tell you. When you ran off the platform after the fairy dialogue one of your roses fell out of your hair. I saw Gil pick it up and put it in his breast pocket. There now. You're so romantic that I'm sure you ought to be pleased at that."

"It's nothing to me what that person does," said Anne loftily. "I simply never waste a thought on him, Diana."

That night Marilla and Matthew, who had been out to a concert for the first time in twenty years, sat for awhile by the kitchen fire after Anne had gone to bed.

"Well now, I guess our Anne did as well as any of them," said Matthew proudly.

"Yes, she did," admitted Marilla. "She's a bright child, Matthew. And she looked real nice, too. I've been kind of opposed to this concert scheme, but I suppose there's no real harm in it after all. Anyhow, I was proud of Anne tonight, although I'm not going to tell her so."

"Well now, I was proud of her and I did tell her so 'fore she went upstairs," said Matthew. "We must see what we can do for her some of these days, Marilla. I guess she'll need something more than Avonlea school by and by."

"There's time enough to think of that," said Marilla. "She's only thirteen in March. Though tonight it struck me she was growing quite a big

girl. Mrs. Lynde made that dress a mite too long, and it makes Anne look so tall. She's quick to learn and I guess the best thing we can do for her will be to send her to Queen's after a spell. But nothing need be said about that for a year or two yet."

"Well now, it'll do no harm to be thinking it over off and on," said Matthew. "Things like that are all the better for lots of thinking over."

Missy's Room

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Mrs. Falconer and Miss Bailey walked home together through the fine blue summer afternoon from the Ladies' Aid meeting at Mrs. Robinson's. They were talking earnestly; that is to say, Miss Bailey was talking earnestly and volubly, and Mrs. Falconer was listening. Mrs. Falconer had reduced the practice of listening to a fine art. She was a thin, wistful-faced mite of a woman, with sad brown eyes, and with snow-white hair that was a libel on her fifty-five years and girlish step. Nobody in Lindsay ever felt very well acquainted with Mrs. Falconer, in spite of the fact that she had lived among them forty years. She kept between her and her world a fine, baffling reserve which no one had ever been able to penetrate. It was known that she had had a bitter sorrow in her life, but she never made any reference to it, and most people in Lindsay had forgotten it. Some foolish ones even supposed that Mrs. Falconer had forgotten it.

"Well, I do not know what on earth is to be done with Camilla Clark," said Miss Bailey, with a prodigious sigh. "I suppose that we will simply have to trust the whole matter to Providence."

Miss Bailey's tone and sigh really seemed to intimate to the world at large that Providence was a last resort and a very dubious one. Not that Miss Bailey meant anything of the sort; her faith was as substantial as her works, which were many and praiseworthy and seasonable.

The case of Camilla Clark was agitating the Ladies' Aid of one of the Lindsay churches. They had talked about it through the whole of that afternoon session while they sewed for their missionary box — talked about it, and come to no conclusion.

In the preceding spring James Clark, one of the hands in the lumber mill at Lindsay, had been killed in an accident. The shock had proved nearly fatal to his young wife. The next day Camilla Clark's baby was born dead, and the poor mother hovered for weeks between life and death.

Slowly, very slowly, life won the battle, and Camilla came back from the valley of the shadow. But she was still an invalid, and would be so for a long time.

The Clarks had come to Lindsay only a short time before the accident. They were boarding at Mrs. Barry's when it happened, and Mrs. Barry had shown every kindness and consideration to the unhappy young widow. But now the Barrys were very soon to leave Lindsay for the West, and the question was, what was to be done with Camilla Clark? She could not go west; she could not even do work of any sort yet in Lindsay; she had no relatives or friends in the world; and she was absolutely penniless. As she and her husband had joined the church to which the aforesaid Ladies' Aid belonged, the members thereof felt themselves bound to take up her case and see what could be done for her.

The obvious solution was for some of them to offer her a home until such time as she would be able to go to work. But there did not seem to be anyone who could offer to do this — unless it was Mrs. Falconer. The church was small, and the Ladies' Aid smaller. There were only twelve members in it; four of these were unmarried ladies who boarded, and so were helpless in the matter; of the remaining eight seven had large families, or sick husbands, or something else that prevented them from offering Camilla Clark an asylum. Their excuses were all valid; they were good, sincere women who would have taken her in if they could, but they could not see their way clear to do so. However, it was probable they would eventually manage it in some way if Mrs. Falconer did not rise to the occasion.

Nobody liked to ask Mrs. Falconer outright to take Camilla Clark in, yet everyone thought she might offer. She was comfortably off, and though her house was small, there was nobody to live in it except herself and her husband. But Mrs. Falconer sat silent through all the discussion of the Ladies' Aid, and never opened her lips on the subject of Camilla Clark despite the numerous hints which she received.

Miss Bailey made one more effort as aforesaid. When her despairing reference to Providence brought forth no results, she wished she dared ask

Mrs. Falconer openly to take Camilla Clark, but somehow she did not dare. There were not many things that could daunt Miss Bailey, but Mrs. Falconer's reserve and gentle aloofness always could.

When Miss Bailey had gone on down the village street, Mrs. Falconer paused for a few moments at her gate, apparently lost in deep thought. She was perfectly well aware of all the hints that had been thrown out for her benefit that afternoon. She knew that the Aids, one and all, thought that she ought to take Camilla Clark. But she had no room to give her — for it was out of the question to think of putting her in Missy's room.

"I couldn't do such a thing," she said to herself piteously. "They don't understand — they can't understand — but I couldn't give her Missy's room. I'm sorry for poor Camilla, and I wish I could help her. But I can't give her Missy's room, and I have no other."

The little Falconer cottage, set back from the road in the green seclusion of an apple orchard and thick, leafy maples, was a very tiny one. There were just two rooms downstairs and two upstairs. When Mrs. Falconer entered the kitchen an old-looking man with long white hair and mild blue eyes looked up with a smile from the bright-coloured blocks before him.

"Have you been lonely, Father?" said Mrs. Falconer tenderly.

He shook his head, still smiling.

"No, not lonely. These" — pointing to the blocks — "are so pretty. See my house, Mother."

This man was Mrs. Falconer's husband. Once he had been one of the smartest, most intelligent men in Lindsay, and one of the most trusted employees of the railroad company. Then there had been a train collision. Malcolm Falconer was taken out of the wreck fearfully injured. He eventually recovered physical health, but he was from that time forth merely a child in intellect — a harmless, kindly creature, docile and easily amused.

Mrs. Falconer tried to dismiss the thought of Camilla Clark from her mind, but it would not be dismissed. Her conscience reproached her continually. She tried to compromise with it by saying that she would go

down and see Camilla that evening and take her some nice fresh Irish moss jelly. It was so good for delicate people.

She found Camilla alone in the Barry sitting-room, and noticed with a feeling that was almost like self-reproach how thin and frail and white the poor young creature looked. Why, she seemed little more than a child! Her great dark eyes were far too big for her wasted face, and her hands were almost transparent.

“I’m not much better yet,” said Camilla tremulously, in response to Mrs. Falconer’s inquiries. “Oh, I’m so slow getting well! And I know — I feel that I’m a burden to everybody.”

“But you mustn’t think that, dear,” said Mrs. Falconer, feeling more uncomfortable than ever. “We are all glad to do all we can for you.”

Mrs. Falconer paused suddenly. She was a very truthful woman and she instantly realized that that last sentence was not true. She was not doing all she could for Camilla — she would not be glad, she feared, to do all she could.

“If I were only well enough to go to work,” sighed Camilla. “Mr. Marks says I can have a place in the shoe factory whenever I’m able to. But it will be so long yet. Oh, I’m so tired and discouraged!”

She put her hands over her face and sobbed. Mrs. Falconer caught her breath. What if Missy were somewhere alone in the world — ill, friendless, with never a soul to offer her a refuge or a shelter? It was so very, very probable. Before she could check herself Mrs. Falconer spoke. “My dear, don’t cry! I want you to come and stay with me until you get perfectly well. You won’t be a speck of trouble, and I’ll be glad to have you for company.”

Mrs. Falconer’s Rubicon was crossed. She could not draw back now if she wanted to. But she was not at all sure that she did want to. By the time she reached home she was sure she didn’t want to. And yet — to give Missy’s room to Camilla! It seemed a great sacrifice to Mrs. Falconer.

She went up to it the next morning with firmly set lips to air and dust it. It was just the same as when Missy had left it long ago. Nothing had ever been moved or changed, but everything had always been kept

beautifully neat and clean. Snow-white muslin curtains hung before the small square window. In one corner was a little white bed. Missy's pictures hung on the walls; Missy's books and workbasket were lying on the square stand; there was a bit of half-finished fancy work, yellow from age, lying in the basket. On a small bureau before the gilt-framed mirror were several little girlish knick-knacks and boxes whose contents had never been disturbed since Missy went away. One of Missy's gay pink ribbons — Missy had been so fond of pink ribbons — hung over the top of the mirror. On a chair lay Missy's hat, bright with ribbons and roses, just as Missy had laid it there on the night before she left her home.

Mrs. Falconer's lips quivered as she looked about the room, and tears came to her eyes. Oh, how could she put these things away and bring a stranger here — here, where no one save herself had entered for fifteen years, here in this room, sacred to Missy's memory, waiting for her return when she should be weary of wandering? It almost seemed to the mother's vague fancy, distorted by long, silent brooding, that her daughter's innocent girlhood had been kept here for her and would be lost forever if the room were given to another.

"I suppose it's dreadful foolishness," said Mrs. Falconer, wiping her eyes. "I know it is, but I can't help it. It just goes to my heart to think of putting these things away. But I must do it. Camilla is coming here today, and this room must be got ready for her. Oh, Missy, my poor lost child, it's for your sake I'm doing this — because you may be suffering somewhere as Camilla is now, and I'd wish the same kindness to be shown to you."

She opened the window and put fresh linen on the bed. One by one Missy's little belongings were removed and packed carefully away. On the gay, foolish little hat with its faded wreath of roses the mother's tears fell as she put it in a box. She remembered so plainly the first time Missy had worn it. She could see the pretty, delicately tinted face, the big shining brown eyes, and the riotous golden curls under the drooping, lace-edged brim. Oh, where was Missy now? What roof sheltered her? Did she ever think of her mother and the little white cottage under the maples, and the

low-ceilinged, dim room where she had knelt to say her childhood's prayer?

Camilla Clark came that afternoon.

"Oh, it is lovely here," she said gratefully, looking out into the rustling shade of the maples. "I'm sure I shall soon get well here. Mrs. Barry was so kind to me — I shall never forget her kindness — but the house is so close to the factory, and there was such a whirring of wheels all the time, it seemed to get into my head and make me wild with nervousness. I'm so weak that sounds like that worry me. But it is so still and green and peaceful here. It just rests me."

When bedtime came, Mrs. Falconer took Camilla up to Missy's room. It was not as hard as she had expected it to be after all. The wrench was over with the putting away of Missy's things, and it did not hurt the mother to see the frail, girlish Camilla in her daughter's place.

"What a dear little room!" said Camilla, glancing around. "It is so white and sweet. Oh, I know I am going to sleep well here, and dream sweet dreams."

"It was my daughter's room," said Mrs. Falconer, sitting down on the chintz-covered seat by the open window.

Camilla looked surprised.

"I did not know you had a daughter," she said.

"Yes — I had just the one child," said Mrs. Falconer dreamily.

For fifteen years she had never spoken of Missy to a living soul except her husband. But now she felt a sudden impulse to tell Camilla about her, and about the room.

"Her name was Isabella, after her father's mother, but we never called her anything but Missy. That was the little name she gave herself when she began to talk. Oh, I've missed her so!"

"When did she die?" asked Camilla softly, sympathy shining, starlike, in her dark eyes.

"She — she didn't die," said Mrs. Falconer. "She went away. She was a pretty girl and gay and fond of fun — but such a good girl. Oh, Missy was always a good girl! Her father and I were so proud of her — too proud, I

suppose. She had her little faults — she was too fond of dress and gaiety, but then she was so young, and we indulged her. Then Bert Williams came to Lindsay to work in the factory. He was a handsome fellow, with taking ways about him, but he was drunken and profane, and nobody knew anything about his past life. He fascinated Missy. He kept coming to see her until her father forbade him the house. Then our poor, foolish child used to meet him elsewhere. We found this out afterwards. And at last she ran away with him, and they were married over at Peterboro and went there to live, for Bert had got work there. We — we were too hard on Missy. But her father was so dreadful hurt about it. He'd been so fond and proud of her, and he felt that she had disgraced him. He disowned her, and sent her word never to show her face here again, for he'd never forgive her. And I was angry too. I didn't send her any word at all. Oh, how I've wept over that! If I had just sent her one little word of forgiveness, everything might have been different. But Father forbade me to.

“Then in a little while there was a dreadful trouble. A woman came to Peterboro and claimed to be Bert Williams's wife — and she was — she proved it. Bert cleared out and was never seen again in these parts. As soon as we heard about it Father relented, and I went right down to Peterboro to see Missy and bring her home. But she wasn't there — she had gone, nobody knew where. I got a letter from her the next week. She said her heart was broken, and she knew we would never forgive her, and she couldn't face the disgrace, so she was going away where nobody would ever find her. We did everything we could to trace her, but we never could. We've never heard from her since, and it is fifteen years ago. Sometimes I am afraid she is dead, but then again I feel sure she isn't. Oh, Camilla, if I could only find my poor child and bring her home!

“This was her room. And when she went away I made up my mind I would keep it for her just as she left it, and I have up to now. Nobody has ever been inside the door but myself. I've always hoped that Missy would come home, and I would lead her up here and say, ‘Missy, here is your room just as you left it, and here is your place in your mother's heart just as you left it,’ But she never came. I'm afraid she never will.”

Mrs. Falconer dropped her face in her hands and sobbed softly. Camilla came over to her and put her arms about her.

"I think she will," she said. "I think — I am sure your love and prayers will bring Missy home yet. And I understand how good you have been in giving me her room — oh, I know what it must have cost you! I will pray tonight that God will bring Missy back to you."

When Mrs. Falconer returned to the kitchen to close the house for the night, her husband being already sound asleep; she heard a low, timid knock at the door. Wondering who it could be so late, she opened it. The light fell on a shrinking, shabby figure on the step, and on a pale, pinched face in which only a mother could have recognized the features of her child. Mrs. Falconer gave a cry.

"Missy! Missy! Missy!"

She caught the poor wanderer to her heart and drew her in.

"Oh, Missy, Missy, have you come back at last? Thank God! Oh, thank God!"

"I had to come back. I was starving for a glimpse of your face and of the old home, Mother," sobbed Missy. "But I didn't mean you should know — I never meant to show myself to you. I've been sick, and just as soon as I got better I came here. I meant to creep home after dark and look at the dear old house, and perhaps get a glimpse of you and Father through the window if you were still here. I didn't know if you were. And then I meant to go right away on the night train. I was under the window and I heard you telling my story to someone. Oh, Mother, when I knew that you had forgiven me, that you loved me still and had always kept my room for me, I made up my mind that I'd show myself to you."

The mother had got her child into a rocking-chair and removed the shabby hat and cloak. How ill and worn and faded Missy looked! Yet her face was pure and fine, and there was in it something sweeter than had ever been there in her beautiful girlhood.

"I'm terribly changed, am I not, Mother?" said Missy, with a faint smile. "I've had a hard life — but an honest one, Mother. When I went away I was almost mad with the disgrace my wilfulness had brought on

you and Father and myself. I went as far as I could get away from you, and I got work in a factory. I've worked there ever since, just making enough to keep body and soul together. Oh, I've starved for a word from you — the sight of your face! But I thought Father would spurn me from his door if I should ever dare to come back."

"Oh, Missy!" sobbed the mother. "Your poor father is just like a child. He got a terrible hurt ten years ago, and never got over it. I don't suppose he'll even know you — he's clean forgot everything. But he forgave you before it happened. You poor child, you're done right out. You're too weak to be travelling. But never mind, you're home now, and I'll soon nurse you up. I'll put on the kettle and get you a good cup of tea first thing. And you're not to do any more talking till the morning. But, oh, Missy, I can't take you to your own room after all. Camilla Clark has it, and she'll be asleep by now; we mustn't disturb her, for she's been real sick. I'll fix up a bed for you on the sofa, though. Missy, Missy, let us kneel down here and thank God for His mercy!"

Late that night, when Missy had fallen asleep in her improvised bed, the wakeful mother crept in to gloat over her.

"Just to think," she whispered, "if I hadn't taken Camilla Clark in, Missy wouldn't have heard me telling about the room, and she'd have gone away again and never have known. Oh, I don't deserve such a blessing when I was so unwilling to take Camilla! But I know one thing: this is going to be Camilla's home. There'll be no leaving it even when she does get well. She shall be my daughter, and I'll love her next to Missy."

Ted's Afternoon Off

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Ted was up at five that morning, as usual. He always had to rise early to kindle the fire and go for the cows, but on this particular morning there was no “had to” about it. He had awakened at four o'clock and had sprung eagerly to the little garret window facing the east, to see what sort of a day was being born. Thrilling with excitement, he saw that it was going to be a glorious day. The sky was all rosy and golden and clear beyond the sharp-pointed, dark firs on Lee's Hill. Out to the north the sea was shimmering and sparkling gaily, with little foam crests here and there ruffled up by the cool morning breeze. Oh, it would be a splendid day!

And he, Ted Melvin, was to have a half holiday for the first time since he had come to live in Brookdale four years ago — a whole afternoon off to go to the Sunday School picnic at the beach beyond the big hotel. It almost seemed too good to be true!

The Jacksons, with whom he had lived ever since his mother had died, did not think holidays were necessities for boys. Hard work and castoff clothes, and three grudgingly allowed months of school in the winter, made up Ted's life year in and year out — his outer life at least. He had an inner life of dreams, but nobody knew or suspected anything about that. To everybody in Brookdale he was simply Ted Melvin, a shy, odd-looking little fellow with big dreamy black eyes and a head of thick tangled curls which could never be made to look tidy and always annoyed Mrs. Jackson exceedingly.

It was as yet too early to light the fire or go for the cows. Ted crept softly to a corner in the garret and took from the wall an old brown fiddle. It had been his father's. He loved to play on it, and his few rare spare moments were always spent in the garret corner or the hayloft, with his precious fiddle. It was his one link with the old life he had lived in a little

cottage far away, with a mother who had loved him and a merry young father who had made wonderful music on the old brown violin.

Ted pushed open his garret window and, seating himself on the sill, began to play, with his eyes fixed on the glowing eastern sky. He played very softly, since Mrs. Jackson had a pronounced dislike to being wakened by “fiddling at all unearthly hours.”

The music he made was beautiful and would have astonished anybody who knew enough to know how wonderful it really was. But there was nobody to hear this little neglected urchin of all work, and he fiddled away happily, the music floating out of the garret window, over the treetops and the dew-wet clover fields, until it mingled with the winds and was lost in the silver skies of the morning.

Ted worked doubly hard all that forenoon, since there was a double share of work to do if, as Mrs. Jackson said, he was to be gadding to picnics in the afternoon. But he did it all cheerily and whistled for joy as he worked.

After dinner Mrs. Ross came in. Mrs. Ross lived down on the shore road and made a living for herself and her two children by washing and doing days’ work out. She was not a very cheerful person and generally spoke as if on the point of bursting into tears. She looked more doleful than ever today, and lost no time in explaining why.

“I’ve just got word that my sister over at White Sands is sick with pendikis” — this was the nearest Mrs. Ross could get to appendicitis — “and has to go to the hospital. I’ve got to go right over and see her, Mrs. Jackson, and I’ve run in to ask if Ted can go and stay with Jimmy till I get back. There’s no one else I can get, and Amelia is away. I’ll be back this evening. I don’t like leaving Jimmy alone.”

“Ted’s been promised that he could go to the picnic this afternoon,” said Mrs. Jackson shortly. “Mr. Jackson said he could go, so he’ll have to please himself. If he’s willing to stay with Jimmy instead, he can. I don’t care.”

“Oh, I’ve got to go to the picnic,” cried Ted impulsively. “I’m awful sorry for Jimmy — but I must go to the picnic.”

“I s’pose you feel so,” said Mrs. Ross, sighing heavily. “I dunno’s I blame you. Picnics is more cheerful than staying with a poor little lame boy, I don’t doubt. Well, I s’pose I can put Jimmy’s supper on the table clost to him, and shut the cat in with him, and mebbe he’ll worry through. He was counting on having you to fiddle for him, though. Jimmy’s crazy about music, and he don’t never hear much of it. Speaking of fiddling, there’s a great fiddler stopping at the hotel now. His name is Blair Milford, and he makes his living fiddling at concerts. I knew him well when he was a child — I was nurse in his father’s family. He was a taking little chap, and I was real fond of him. Well, I must be getting. Jimmy’ll feel bad at staying alone, but I’ll tell him he’ll just have to put up with it.”

Mrs. Ross sighed herself away, and Ted flew up to his garret corner with a choking in his throat. He couldn’t go to stay with Jimmy — he couldn’t give up the picnic! Why, he had never been at a picnic; and they were going to drive to the hotel beach in wagons, and have swings, and games, and ice cream, and a boat sail to Curtain Island! He had been looking forward to it, waking and dreaming, for a fortnight. He must go. But poor little Jimmy! It was too bad for him to be left all alone.

“I wouldn’t like it myself,” said Ted miserably, trying to swallow a lump that persisted in coming up in his throat. “It must be dreadful to have to lie on the sofa all the time and never be able to run, climb trees or play, or do a single thing. And Jimmy doesn’t like reading much. He’ll be dreadful lonesome. I’ll be thinking of him all the time at the picnic — I know I will. I suppose I could go and stay with him, if I just made up my mind to it.”

Making up his mind to it was a slow and difficult process. But when Ted was finally dressed in his shabby, “skimpy” Sunday best, he tucked his precious fiddle under his arm and slipped downstairs. “Please, I think I’ll go and stay with Jimmy,” he said to Mrs. Jackson timidly, as he always spoke to her.

“Well, if you’re to waste the afternoon, I s’pose it’s better to waste it that way than in going to a picnic and eating yourself sick,” was Mrs. Jackson’s ungracious response.

Ted reached Mrs. Ross's little house just as that good lady was locking the door on Jimmy and the cat. "Well, I'm real glad," she said, when Ted told her he had come to stay. "I'd have worried most awful if I'd had to leave Jimmy all alone. He's crying in there this minute. Come now, Jimmy, dry up. Here's Ted come to stop with you after all, and he's brought his fiddle, too."

Jimmy's tears were soon dried, and he welcomed Ted joyfully. "I've been thinking awful long to hear you fiddling," said Jimmy, with a sigh of content. "Seems like the ache ain't never half so bad when I'm listening to music — and when it's your music, I forget there's any ache at all."

Ted took his violin and began to play. After all, it was almost as good as a picnic to have a whole afternoon for his music. The stuffy little room, with its dingy plaster and shabby furniture, was filled with wonderful harmonies. Once he began, Ted could play for hours at a stretch and never be conscious of fatigue. Jimmy lay and listened in rapturous content while Ted's violin sang and laughed and dreamed and rippled.

There was another listener besides Jimmy. Outside, on the red sandstone doorstep, a man was sitting — a tall, well-dressed man with a pale, beautiful face and long, supple white hands. Motionless, he sat there and listened to the music until at last it stopped. Then he rose and knocked at the door. Ted, violin in hand, opened it.

An expression of amazement flashed into the stranger's face, but he only said, "Is Mrs. Ross at home?"

"No, sir," said Ted shyly. "She went over to White Sands and she won't be back till night. But Jimmy is here — Jimmy is her little boy. Will you come in?"

"I'm sorry Mrs. Ross is away," said the stranger, entering. "She was an old nurse of mine. I must confess I've been sitting on the step out there for some time, listening to your music. Who taught you to play, my boy?"

"Nobody," said Ted simply. "I've always been able to play."

"He makes it up himself out of his own head, sir," said Jimmy eagerly.

"No, I don't make it — it makes itself — it just comes," said Ted, a dreamy gaze coming into his big black eyes.

The caller looked at him closely. "I know a little about music myself," he said. "My name is Blair Milford and I am a professional violinist. Your playing is wonderful. What is your name?"

"Ted Melvin."

"Well, Ted, I think that you have a great talent, and it ought to be cultivated. You should have competent instruction. Come, you must tell me all about yourself."

Ted told what little he thought there was to tell. Blair Milford listened and nodded, guessing much that Ted didn't tell and, indeed, didn't know himself. Then he made Ted play for him again. "Amazing!" he said softly, under his breath.

Finally he took the violin and played himself. Ted and Jimmy listened breathlessly. "Oh, if I could only play like that!" said Ted wistfully.

Blair Milford smiled. "You will play much better some day if you get the proper training," he said. "You have a wonderful talent, my boy, and you should have it cultivated. It will never in the world do to waste such genius. Yes, that is the right word," he went on musingly, as if talking to himself, "'genius.' Nature is always taking us by surprise. This child has what I have never had and would make any sacrifice for. And yet in him it may come to naught for lack of opportunity. But it must not, Ted. You must have a musical training."

"I can't take lessons, if that is what you mean, sir," said Ted wonderingly. "Mr. Jackson wouldn't pay for them."

"I think we needn't worry about the question of payment if you can find time to practise," said Blair Milford. "I am to be at the beach for two months yet. For once I'll take a music pupil. But will you have time to practise?"

"Yes, sir, I'll make time," said Ted, as soon as he could speak at all for the wonder of it. "I'll get up at four in the morning and have an hour's practising before the time for the cows. But I'm afraid it'll be too much trouble for you, sir, I'm afraid—"

Blair Milford laughed and put his slim white hand on Ted's curly head. "It isn't much trouble to train an artist. It is a privilege. Ah, Ted, you have

what I once hoped I had, what I know now I never can have. You don't understand me. You will some day."

"Ain't he an awful nice man?" said Jimmy, when Blair Milford had gone. "But what did he mean by all that talk?"

"I don't know exactly," said Ted dreamily. "That is, I seem to feel what he meant but I can't quite put it into words. But, oh, Jimmy, I'm so happy. I'm to have lessons — I have always longed to have them."

"I guess you're glad you didn't go to the picnic?" said Jimmy.

"Yes, but I was glad before, Jimmy, honest I was."

Blair Milford kept his promise. He interviewed Mr. and Mrs. Jackson and, by means best known to himself, induced them to consent that Ted should take music lessons every Saturday afternoon. He was a pupil to delight a teacher's heart and, after every lesson, Blair Milford looked at him with kindly eyes and murmured, "Amazing," under his breath. Finally he went again to the Jacksons, and the next day he said to Ted, "Ted, would you like to come away with me — live with me — be my boy and have your gift for music thoroughly cultivated?"

"What do you mean, sir?" said Ted tremblingly.

"I mean that I want you — that I must have you, Ted. I've talked to Mr. Jackson, and he has consented to let you come. You shall be educated, you shall have the best masters in your art that the world affords, you shall have the career I once dreamed of. Will you come, Ted?"

Ted drew a long breath. "Yes, sir," he said. "But it isn't so much because of the music — it's because I love you, Mr. Milford, and I'm so glad I'm to be always with you."

The Girl Who Drove the Cows

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“I wonder who that pleasant-looking girl who drives cows down the beech lane every morning and evening is,” said Pauline Palmer, at the tea table of the country farmhouse where she and her aunt were spending the summer. Mrs. Wallace had wanted to go to some fashionable watering place, but her husband had bluntly told her he couldn’t afford it. Stay in the city when all her set were out she would not, and the aforesaid farmhouse had been the compromise.

“I shouldn’t suppose it could make any difference to you who she is,” said Mrs. Wallace impatiently. “I do wish, Pauline, that you were more careful in your choice of associates. You hobnob with everyone, even that old man who comes around buying eggs. It is very bad form.”

Pauline hid a rather undutiful smile behind her napkin. Aunt Olivia’s snobbish opinions always amused her.

“You’ve no idea what an interesting old man he is,” she said. “He can talk more entertainingly than any other man I know. What is the use of being so exclusive, Aunt Olivia? You miss so much fun. You wouldn’t be so horribly bored as you are if you fraternized a little with the ‘natives,’ as you call them.”

“No, thank you,” said Mrs. Wallace disdainfully.

“Well, I am going to try to get acquainted with that girl,” said Pauline resolutely. “She looks nice and jolly.”

“I don’t know where you get your low tastes from,” groaned Mrs. Wallace. “I’m sure it wasn’t from your poor mother. What do you suppose the Morgan Knowles would think if they saw you taking up with some tomboy girl on a farm?”

“I don’t see why it should make a great deal of difference what they would think, since they don’t seem to be aware of my existence, or even of yours, Auntie,” said Pauline, with twinkling eyes. She knew it was her

aunt's dearest desire to get in with the Morgan Knowles' "set" — a desire that seemed as far from being realized as ever. Mrs. Wallace could never understand why the Morgan Knowles shut her from their charmed circle. They certainly associated with people much poorer and of more doubtful worldly station than hers — the Markhams, for instance, who lived on an unfashionable street and wore quite shabby clothes. Just before she had left Colchester, Mrs. Wallace had seen Mrs. Knowles and Mrs. Markham together in the former's automobile. James Wallace and Morgan Knowles were associated in business dealings; but in spite of Mrs. Wallace's schemings and aspirations and heart burnings, the association remained a purely business one and never advanced an inch in the direction of friendship.

As for Pauline, she was hopelessly devoid of social ambitions and she did not in the least mind the Morgan Knowles' remote attitude.

"Besides," continued Pauline, "she isn't a tomboy at all. She looks like a very womanly, well-bred sort of girl. Why should you think her a tomboy because she drives cows? Cows are placid, useful animals — witness this delicious cream which I am pouring over my blueberries. And they have to be driven. It's an honest occupation."

"I daresay she is someone's servant," said Mrs. Wallace contemptuously. "But I suppose even that wouldn't matter to you, Pauline?"

"Not a mite," said Pauline cheerfully. "One of the very nicest girls I ever knew was a maid Mother had the last year of her dear life. I loved that girl, Aunt Olivia, and I correspond with her. She writes letters that are ten times more clever and entertaining than those stupid epistles Clarisse Gray sends me — and Clarisse Gray is a rich man's daughter and is being educated in Paris."

"You are incorrigible, Pauline," said Mrs. Wallace hopelessly.

"Mrs. Boyd," said Pauline to their landlady, who now made her appearance, "who is that girl who drives the cows along the beech lane mornings and evenings?"

“Ada Cameron, I guess,” was Mrs. Boyd’s response. “She lives with the Embrees down on the old Embree place just below here. They’re pasturing their cows on the upper farm this summer. Mrs. Embree is her father’s half-sister.”

“Is she as nice as she looks?”

“Yes, Ada’s a real nice sensible girl,” said Mrs. Boyd. “There is no nonsense about her.”

“That doesn’t sound very encouraging,” murmured Pauline, as Mrs. Boyd went out. “I like people with a little nonsense about them. But I hope better things of Ada, Mrs. Boyd to the contrary notwithstanding. She has a pair of grey eyes that can’t possibly always look sensible. I think they must mellow occasionally into fun and jollity and wholesome nonsense. Well, I’m off to the shore. I want to get that photograph of the Cove this evening, if possible. I’ve set my heart on taking first prize at the Amateur Photographers’ Exhibition this fall, and if I can only get that Cove with all its beautiful lights and shadows, it will be the gem of my collection.”

Pauline, on her return from the shore, reached the beech lane just as the Embree cows were swinging down it. Behind them came a tall, brown-haired, brown-faced girl in a neat print dress. Her hat was hung over her arm, and the low evening sunlight shone redly over her smooth glossy head. She carried herself with a pretty dignity, but when her eyes met Pauline’s, she looked as if she would smile on the slightest provocation.

Pauline promptly gave her the provocation.

“Good evening, Miss Cameron,” she called blithely. “Won’t you please stop a few moments and look me over? I want to see if you think me a likely person for a summer chum.”

Ada Cameron did more than smile. She laughed outright and went over to the fence where Pauline was sitting on a stump. She looked down into the merry black eyes of the town girl she had been half envying for a week and said humorously: “Yes, I think you very likely, indeed. But it takes two to make a friendship — like a bargain. If I’m one, you’ll have to be the other.”

“I’m the other. Shake,” said Pauline, holding out her hand.

That was the beginning of a friendship that made poor Mrs. Wallace groan outwardly as well as inwardly. Pauline and Ada found that they liked each other even more than they had expected to. They walked, rowed, berried and picnicked together. Ada did not go to Mrs. Boyd's a great deal, for some instinct told her that Mrs. Wallace did not look favourably on her, but Pauline spent half her time at the little, brown, orchard-embowered house at the end of the beech lane where the Embrees lived. She had never met any girl she thought so nice as Ada.

"She is nice every way," she told the unconvinced Aunt Olivia. "She's clever and well read. She is sensible and frank. She has a sense of humour and a great deal of insight into character — witness her liking for your niece! She can talk interestingly and she can also be silent when silence is becoming. And she has the finest profile I ever saw. Aunt Olivia, may I ask her to visit me next winter?"

"No, indeed," said Mrs. Wallace, with crushing emphasis. "You surely don't expect to continue this absurd intimacy past the summer, Pauline?"

"I expect to be Ada's friend all my life," said Pauline laughingly, but with a little ring of purpose in her voice. "Oh, Aunt, dear, can't you see that Ada is just the same girl in cotton print that she would be in silk attire? She is really far more distinguished looking than any girl in the Knowles' set."

"Pauline!" said Aunt Olivia, looking as shocked as if Pauline had committed blasphemy.

Pauline laughed again, but she sighed as she went to her room. Aunt Olivia has the kindest heart in the world, she thought. What a pity she isn't able to see things as they really are! My friendship with Ada can't be perfect if I can't invite her to my home. And she is such a dear girl — the first real friend after my own heart that I've ever had.

The summer waned, and August burned itself out.

"I suppose you will be going back to town next week? I shall miss you dreadfully," said Ada.

The two girls were in the Embree garden, where Pauline was preparing to take a photograph of Ada standing among the asters, with a great sheaf

of them in her arms. Pauline wished she could have said: But you must come and visit me in the winter. Since she could not, she had to content herself with saying: “You won’t miss me any more than I shall miss you. But we’ll correspond, and I hope Aunt Olivia will come to Marwood again next summer.”

“I don’t think I shall be here then,” said Ada with a sigh. “You see, it is time I was doing something for myself, Pauline. Aunt Jane and Uncle Robert have always been very kind to me, but they have a large family and are not very well off. So I think I’ll try for a situation in one of the Remington stores this fall.”

“It’s such a pity you couldn’t have gone to the Academy and studied for a teacher’s licence,” said Pauline, who knew what Ada’s ambitions were.

“I should have liked that better, of course,” said Ada quietly. “But it is not possible, so I must do my best at the next best thing. Don’t let’s talk of it. It might make me feel blueish and I want to look especially pleasant if I’m going to have my photo taken.”

“You couldn’t look anything else,” laughed Pauline. “Don’t smile too broadly — I want you to be looking over the asters with a bit of a dream on your face and in your eyes. If the picture turns out as beautiful as I fondly expect, I mean to put it in my exhibition collection under the title ‘A September Dream.’ There, that’s the very expression. When you look like that, you remind me of somebody I have seen, but I can’t remember who it is. All ready now — don’t move — there, dearie, it is all over.”

When Pauline went back to Colchester, she was busy for a month preparing her photographs for the exhibition, while Aunt Olivia renewed her spinning of all the little social webs in which she fondly hoped to entangle the Morgan Knowles and other desirable flies.

When the exhibition was opened, Pauline Palmer’s collection won first prize, and the prettiest picture in it was one called “A September Dream” — a tall girl with a wistful face, standing in an old-fashioned garden with her arms full of asters.

The very day after the exhibition was opened the Morgan Knowles' automobile stopped at the Wallace door. Mrs. Wallace was out, but it was Pauline whom stately Mrs. Morgan Knowles asked for. Pauline was at that moment buried in her darkroom developing photographs, and she ran down just as she was — a fact which would have mortified Mrs. Wallace exceedingly if she had ever known it. But Mrs. Morgan Knowles did not seem to mind at all. She liked Pauline's simplicity of manner. It was more than she had expected from the aunt's rather vulgar affectations.

"I have called to ask you who the original of the photograph 'A September Dream' in your exhibit was, Miss Palmer," she said graciously. "The resemblance to a very dear childhood friend of mine is so startling that I am sure it cannot be accidental."

"That is a photograph of Ada Cameron, a friend whom I met this summer up in Marwood," said Pauline.

"Ada Cameron! She must be Ada Frame's daughter, then," exclaimed Mrs. Knowles in excitement. Then, seeing Pauline's puzzled face, she explained: "Years ago, when I was a child, I always spent my summers on the farm of my uncle, John Frame. My cousin, Ada Frame, was the dearest friend I ever had, but after we grew up we saw nothing of each other, for I went with my parents to Europe for several years, and Ada married a neighbour's son, Alec Cameron, and went out west. Her father, who was my only living relative other than my parents, died, and I never heard anything more of Ada until about eight years ago, when somebody told me she was dead and had left no family. That part of the report cannot have been true if this girl is her daughter."

"I believe she is," said Pauline quickly. "Ada was born out west and lived there until she was eight years old, when her parents died and she was sent east to her father's half-sister. And Ada looks like you — she always reminded me of somebody I had seen, but I never could decide who it was before. Oh, I hope it is true, for Ada is such a sweet girl, Mrs. Knowles."

"She couldn't be anything else if she is Ada Frame's daughter," said Mrs. Knowles. "My husband will investigate the matter at once, and if this

girl is Ada's child we shall hope to find a daughter in her, as we have none of our own."

"What will Aunt Olivia say!" said Pauline with wickedly dancing eyes when Mrs. Knowles had gone.

Aunt Olivia was too much overcome to say anything. That good lady felt rather foolish when it was proved that the girl she had so despised was Mrs. Morgan Knowles' cousin and was going to be adopted by her. But to hear Aunt Olivia talk now, you would suppose that she and not Pauline had discovered Ada.

The latter sought Pauline out as soon as she came to Colchester, and the summer friendship proved a lifelong one and was, for the Wallaces, the open sesame to the enchanted ground of the Knowles' "set."

"So everybody concerned is happy," said Pauline. "Ada is going to college and so am I, and Aunt Olivia is on the same committee as Mrs. Knowles for the big church bazaar. What about my 'low tastes' now, Aunt Olivia?"

"Well, who would ever have supposed that a girl who drove cows to pasture was connected with the Morgan Knowles?" said poor Aunt Olivia piteously.

The Doctor's Sweetheart

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Just because I am an old woman outwardly it doesn't follow that I am one inwardly. Hearts don't grow old — or shouldn't. Mine hasn't, I am thankful to say. It bounded like a girl's with delight when I saw Doctor John and Marcella Barry drive past this afternoon. If the doctor had been my own son I couldn't have felt more real pleasure in his happiness. I'm only an old lady who can do little but sit by her window and knit, but eyes were made for seeing, and I use mine for that purpose. When I see the good and beautiful things — and a body need never look for the other kind, you know — the things God planned from the beginning and brought about in spite of the counter plans and schemes of men, I feel such a deep joy that I'm glad, even at seventy-five, to be alive in a world where such things come to pass. And if ever God meant and made two people for each other, those people were Doctor John and Marcella Barry; and that is what I always tell folk who come here commenting on the difference in their ages. "Old enough to be her father," sniffed Mrs. Riddell to me the other day. I didn't say anything to Mrs. Riddell. I just looked at her. I presume my face expressed what I felt pretty clearly. How any woman can live for sixty years in the world, as Mrs. Riddell has, a wife and mother at that, and not get some realization of the beauty and general satisfactoriness of a real and abiding love, is something I cannot understand and never shall be able to.

Nobody in Bridgeport believed that Marcella would ever come back, except Doctor John and me — not even her Aunt Sara. I've heard people laugh at me when I said I knew she would; but nobody minds being laughed at when she is sure of a thing and I was sure that Marcella Barry would come back as that the sun rose and set. I hadn't lived beside her for eight years to know so little about her as to doubt her. Neither had Doctor John.

Marcella was only eight years old when she came to live in Bridgeport. Her father, Chester Barry, had just died. Her mother, who was a sister of Miss Sara Bryant, my next door neighbor, had been dead for four years. Marcella's father left her to the guardianship of his brother, Richard Barry; but Miss Sara pleaded so hard to have the little girl that the Barrys consented to let Marcella live with her aunt until she was sixteen. Then, they said, she would have to go back to them, to be properly educated and take the place of her father's daughter in his world. For, of course, it is a fact that Miss Sara Bryant's world was and is a very different one from Chester Barry's world. As to which side the difference favors, that isn't for me to say. It all depends on your standard of what is really worth while, you know.

So Marcella came to live with us in Bridgeport. I say "us" advisedly. She slept and ate in her aunt's house, but every house in the village was a home to her; for, with all our little disagreements and diverse opinions, we are really all one big family, and everybody feels an interest in and a good working affection for everybody else. Besides, Marcella was one of those children whom everybody loves at sight, and keeps on loving. One long, steady gaze from those big grayish-blue black-lashed eyes of hers went right into your heart and stayed there.

She was a pretty child and as good as she was pretty. It was the right sort of goodness, too, with just enough spice of original sin in it to keep it from spoiling by reason of over-sweetness. She was a frank, loyal, brave little thing, even at eight, and wouldn't have said or done a mean or false thing to save her life.

She and I were right good friends from the beginning. She loved me and she loved her Aunt Sara; but from the very first her best and deepest affection went out to Doctor John Haven, who lived in the big brick house on the other side of Miss Sara's.

Doctor John was a Bridgeport boy, and when he got through college he came right home and settled down here, with his widowed mother. The Bridgeport girls were fluttered, for eligible young men were scarce in our village; there was considerable setting of caps, I must say that, although I

despise ill-natured gossip; but neither the caps nor the wearers thereof seemed to make any impression on Doctor John. Mrs. Riddell said that he was a born old bachelor; I suppose she based her opinion on the fact that Doctor John was always a quiet, bookish fellow, who didn't care a button for society, and had never been guilty of a flirtation in his life. I knew Doctor John's heart far better than Martha Riddell could know anybody's; and I knew there was nothing of the old bachelor in his nature. He just had to wait for the right woman, that was all, not being able to content himself with less as some men can and do. If she never came Doctor John would never marry; but he wouldn't be an old bachelor for all that.

He was thirty when Marcella came to Bridgeport — a tall, broad-shouldered man with a mane of thick brown curls and level, dark hazel eyes. He walked with a little stoop, his hands clasped behind him; and he had the sweetest, deepest voice. Spoken music, if ever a voice was. He was kind and brave and gentle, but a little distant and reserved with most people. Everybody in Bridgeport liked him, but only a very few ever passed the inner gates of his confidence or were admitted to any share in his real life. I am proud to say I was one; I think it is something for an old woman to boast of.

Doctor John was always fond of children, and they of him. It was natural that he and little Marcella should take to each other. He had the most to do with bringing her up, for Miss Sara consulted him in everything. Marcella was not hard to manage for the most part; but she had a will of her own, and when she did set it up in opposition to the powers that were, nobody but the doctor could influence her at all; she never resisted him or disobeyed his wishes.

Marcella was one of those girls who develop early. I suppose her constant association with us elderly folks had something to do with it, too. But, at fifteen, she was a woman, loving, beautiful, and spirited.

And Doctor John loved her — loved the woman, not the child. I knew it before he did — but not, as I think, before Marcella did, for those young, straight-gazing eyes of hers were wonderfully quick to read into other people's hearts. I watched them together and saw the love growing

between them, like a strong, fair, perfect flower, whose fragrance was to endure for eternity. Miss Sara saw it, too, and was half-pleased and half-worried; even Miss Sara thought the Doctor too old for Marcella; and besides, there were the Barrys to be reckoned with. Those Barrys were the nightmare dread of poor Miss Sara's life.

The time came when Doctor John's eyes were opened. He looked into his own heart and read there what life had written for him. As he told me long afterwards, it came to him with a shock that left him white-lipped. But he was a brave, sensible fellow and he looked the matter squarely in the face. First of all, he put away to one side all that the world might say; the thing concerned solely him and Marcella, and the world had nothing to do with it. That disposed of, he asked himself soberly if he had a right to try to win Marcella's love. He decided that he had not; it would be taking an unfair advantage of her youth and inexperience. He knew that she must soon go to her father's people — she must not go bound by any ties of his making. Doctor John, for Marcella's sake, gave the decision against his own heart.

So much did Doctor John tell me, his old friend and confidant. I said nothing and gave no advice, not having lived seventy-five years for nothing. I knew that Doctor John's decision was manly and right and fair; but I also knew it was all nullified by the fact that Marcella already loved him.

So much I knew; the rest I was left to suppose. The Doctor and Marcella told me much, but there were some things too sacred to be told, even to me. So that to this day I don't know how the doctor found out that Marcella loved him. All I know is that one day, just a month before her sixteenth birthday, the two came hand in hand to Miss Sara and me, as we sat on Miss Sara's veranda in the twilight, and told us simply that they had plighted their troth to each other.

I looked at them standing there with that wonderful sunrise of life and love on their faces — the doctor, tall and serious, with a sprinkle of silver in his brown hair and the smile of a happy man on his lips — Marcella, such a slip of a girl, with her black hair in a long braid and her lovely face

all dewed over with tears and sunned over with smiles — I, an old woman, looked at them and thanked the good God for them and their delight.

Miss Sara laughed and cried and kissed — and forboded what the Barrys would do. Her forebodings proved only too true. When the doctor wrote to Richard Barry, Marcella's guardian, asking his consent to their engagement, Richard Barry promptly made trouble — the very worst kind of trouble. He descended on Bridgeport and completely overwhelmed poor Miss Sara in his wrath. He laughed at the idea of countenancing an engagement between a child like Marcella and an obscure country doctor. And he carried Marcella off with him!

She had to go, of course. He was her legal guardian and he would listen to no pleadings. He didn't know anything about Marcella's character, and he thought that a new life out in the great world would soon blot out her fancy.

After the first outburst of tears and prayers Marcella took it very calmly, as far as outward eye could see. She was as cool and dignified and stately as a young queen. On the night before she went away she came over to say goodbye to me. She did not even shed any tears, but the look in her eyes told of bitter hurt. "It is goodbye for five years, Miss Tranquil," she said steadily. "When I am twenty-one I will come back. That is the only promise I can make. They will not let me write to John or Aunt Sara and I will do nothing underhanded. But I will not forget and I will come back."

Richard Barry would not even let her see Doctor John alone again. She had to bid him goodbye beneath the cold, contemptuous eyes of the man of the world. So there was just a handclasp and one long deep look between them that was tenderer than any kiss and more eloquent than any words.

"I will come back when I am twenty-one," said Marcella. And I saw Richard Barry smile.

So Marcella went away and in all Bridgeport there were only two people who believed she would ever return. There is no keeping a secret in Bridgeport, and everybody knew all about the love affair between Marcella and the doctor and about the promise she had made. Everybody

sympathized with the doctor because everybody believed he had lost his sweetheart.

“For of course she’ll never come back,” said Mrs. Riddell to me. “She’s only a child and she’ll soon forget him. She’s to be sent to school and taken abroad and between times she’ll live with the Richard Barrys; and they move, as everyone knows, in the very highest and gayest circles. I’m sorry for the doctor, though. A man of his age doesn’t get over a thing like that in a hurry and he was perfectly silly over Marcella. But it really serves him right for falling in love with a child.”

There are times when Martha Riddell gets on my nerves. She’s a goodhearted woman, and she means well; but she rasps — rasps terribly.

Even Miss Sara exasperated me. But then she had her excuse. The child she loved as her own had been torn from her and it almost broke her heart. But even so, I thought she ought to have had a little more faith in Marcella.

“Oh, no, she’ll never come back,” sobbed Miss Sara. “Yes, I know she promised. But they’ll wean her away from me. She’ll have such a gay, splendid life she’ll not want to come back. Five years is a lifetime at her age. No, don’t try to comfort me, Miss Tranquil, because I won’t be comforted!”

When a person has made up her mind to be miserable you just have to let her be miserable.

I almost dreaded to see Doctor John for fear he would be in despair, too, without any confidence in Marcella. But when he came I saw I needn’t have worried. The light had all gone out of his eyes, but there was a calm, steady patience in them.

“She will come back to me, Miss Tranquil,” he said. “I know what people are saying, but that does not trouble me. They do not know Marcella as I do. She promised and she will keep her word — keep it joyously and gladly, too. If I did not know that I would not wish its fulfilment. When she is free she will turn her back on that brilliant world and all it offers her and come back to me. My part is to wait and believe.”

So Doctor John waited and believed. After a little while the excitement died away and people forgot Marcella. We never heard from or about her, except a paragraph now and then in the society columns of the city paper the doctor took. We knew she was sent to school for three years; then the Barrys took her abroad. She was presented at court. When the doctor read this — he was with me at the time — he put his hand over his eyes and sat very silent for a long time. I wondered if at last some momentary doubt had crept into his mind — if he did not fear that Marcella must have forgotten him. The paper told of her triumph and her beauty and hinted at a titled match. Was it probable or even possible that she would be faithful to him after all this?

The doctor must have guessed my thoughts, for at last he looked up with a smile.

“She will come back,” was all he said. But I saw that the doubt, if doubt it were, had gone. I watched him as he went away, that tall, gentle, kindly-eyed man, and I prayed that his trust might not be misplaced; for if it should be it would break his heart.

Five years seems a long time in looking forward. But they pass quickly. One day I remembered that it was Marcella’s twenty-first birthday. Only one other person thought of it. Even Miss Sara did not. Miss Sara remembered Marcella only as a child that had been loved and lost. Nobody else in Bridgeport thought about her at all. The doctor came in that evening. He had a rose in his buttonhole and he walked with a step as light as a boy’s.

“She is free to-day,” he said. “We shall soon have her again, Miss Tranquil.”

“Do you think she will be the same?” I said.

I don’t know what made me say it. I hate to be one of those people who throw cold water on other peoples’ hopes. But it slipped out before I thought. I suppose the doubt had been vaguely troubling me always, under all my faith in Marcella, and now made itself felt in spite of me.

But the doctor only laughed.

“How could she be changed?” he said. “Some women might be — most women would be — but not Marcella. Dear Miss Tranquil, don’t spoil your beautiful record of confidence by doubting her now. We shall have her again soon — how soon I don’t know, for I don’t even know where she is, whether in the old world or the new — but just as soon as she can come to us.”

We said nothing more — neither of us. But every day the light in the doctor’s eyes grew brighter and deeper and tenderer. He never spoke of Marcella, but I knew she was in his thoughts every moment. He was much calmer than I was. I trembled when the postman knocked, jumped when the gate latch clicked, and fairly had a cold chill if I saw a telegraph boy running down the street.

One evening, a fortnight later, I went over to see Miss Sara. She was out somewhere, so I sat down in her little sitting room to wait for her. Presently the doctor came in and we sat in the soft twilight, talking a little now and then, but silent when we wanted to be, as becomes real friendship. It was such a beautiful evening. Outside in Miss Sara’s garden the roses were white and red, and sweet with dew; the honeysuckle at the window sent in delicious breaths now and again; a few sleepy birds were twittering; between the trees the sky was all pink and silvery blue and there was an evening star over the elm in my front yard. We heard somebody come through the door and down the hall. I turned, expecting to see Miss Sara — and I saw Marcella! She was standing in the doorway, tall and beautiful, with a ray of sunset light falling athwart her black hair under her travelling hat. She was looking past me at Doctor John and in her splendid eyes was the look of the exile who had come home to her own.

“Marcella!” said the doctor.

I went out by the dining-room door and shut it behind me, leaving them alone together.

The wedding is to be next month. Miss Sara is beside herself with delight. The excitement has been really terrible, and the way people have talked and wondered and exclaimed has almost worn my patience clean

out. I've snubbed more persons in the last ten days than I ever did in all my life before.

Nothing of this worries Doctor John or Marcella. They are too happy to care for gossip or outside curiosity. The Barrys are not coming to the wedding, I understand. They refuse to forgive Marcella or countenance her folly, as they call it, in any way. Folly! When I see those two together and realize what they mean to each other I have some humble, reverent idea of what true wisdom is.

The End of the Young Family Feud

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A week before Christmas, Aunt Jean wrote to Elizabeth, inviting her and Alberta and me to eat our Christmas dinner at Monkshead. We accepted with delight. Aunt Jean and Uncle Norman were delightful people, and we knew we should have a jolly time at their house. Besides, we wanted to see Monkshead, where Father had lived in his boyhood, and the old Young homestead where he had been born and brought up and where Uncle William still lived. Father never said much about it, but we knew he loved it very dearly, and we had always greatly desired to get at least a glimpse of what Alberta liked to call “our ancestral halls.”

Since Monkshead was only sixty miles away, and Uncle William lived there as aforesaid, it may be pertinently asked what there was to prevent us from visiting it and the homestead as often as we wished. We answer promptly: the family feud.

Father and Uncle William were on bad terms, or rather on no terms at all, and had been ever since we could remember. After Grandfather Young's death there had been a wretched quarrel over the property. Father always said that he had been as much to blame as Uncle William, but Great-aunt Emily told us that Uncle William had been by far the most to blame, and that he had behaved scandalously to Father. Moreover, she said that Father had gone to him when cooling-down time came, apologized for what he had said, and asked Uncle William to be friends again; and that William, simply turned his back on Father and walked into the house without saying a word, but, as Great-aunt Emily said, with the Young temper sticking out of every kink and curve of his figure. Great-aunt Emily is our aunt on Mother's side, and she does not like any of the Youngs except Father and Uncle Norman.

This was why we had never visited Monkshead. We had never seen Uncle William, and we always thought of him as a sort of ogre when we

thought of him at all. When we were children, our old nurse, Margaret Hannah, used to frighten us into good behaviour by saying ominously, “If you ‘uns aint good your Uncle William’ll cotch you.”

What he would do to us when he “cotched” us she never specified, probably reasoning that the unknown was always more terrible than the known. My private opinion in those days was that he would boil us in oil and pick our bones.

Uncle Norman and Aunt Jean had been living out west for years. Three months before this Christmas they had come east, bought a house in Monkshead, and settled there. They had been down to see us, and Father and Mother and the boys had been up to see them, but we three girls had not; so we were pleasantly excited at the thought of spending Christmas there.

Christmas morning was fine, white as a pearl and clear as a diamond. We had to go by the seven o’clock train, since there was no other before eleven, and we reached Monkshead at eight-thirty.

When we stepped from the train the stationmaster asked us if we were the three Miss Youngs. Alberta pleaded guilty, and he said, “Well, here’s a letter for you then.”

We took the letter and went into the waiting room with sundry misgivings. What had happened? Were Uncle Norman and Aunt Jean quarantined for scarlet fever, or had burglars raided the pantry and carried off the Christmas supplies? Elizabeth opened and read the letter aloud. It was from Aunt Jean to the following effect:

Dear Girls: I am so sorry to disappoint you, but I cannot help it. Word has come from Streatham that my sister has met with a serious accident and is in a very critical condition. Your uncle and I must go to Streatham immediately and are leaving on the eight o’clock express. I know you have started before this, so there is no use in telegraphing. We want you to go right to the house and make yourself at home. You will find the key under the kitchen doorstep, and the dinner in the pantry all ready to cook. There are two mince pies on the third shelf, and the plum pudding only needs to be warmed up. You will find a little Christmas remembrance for each of

you on the dining-room table. I hope you will make as merry as you possibly can and we will have you down again as soon as we come back.

Your hurried and affectionate,
Aunt Jean

We looked at each other somewhat dolefully. But, as Alberta pointed out, we might as well make the best of it, since there was no way of getting home before the five o'clock train. So we trailed out to the stationmaster, and asked him limply if he could direct us to Mr. Norman Young's house.

He was a rather grumpy individual, very busy with pencil and notebook over some freight; but he favoured us with his attention long enough to point with his pencil and say jerkily, "Young's? See that red house on the hill? That's it."

The red house was about a quarter of a mile from the station, and we saw it plainly. Accordingly, to the red house we betook ourselves. On nearer view it proved to be a trim, handsome place, with nice grounds and very fine old trees.

We found the key under the kitchen doorstep and went in. The fire was black out, and somehow things wore a more cheerless look than I had expected to find. I may as well admit that we marched into the dining room first of all, to find our presents.

There were three parcels, two very small and one pretty big, lying on the table, but when we came to look for names there were none.

"Evidently Aunt Jean, in her hurry and excitement, forgot to label them," said Elizabeth. "Let us open them. We may be able to guess from the contents which belongs to whom."

I must say we were surprised when we opened those parcels. "We had known that Aunt Jean's gifts would be nice, but we had not expected anything like this. There was a magnificent stone marten collar, a dear little gold watch and pearl chatelaine, and a gold chain bracelet set with turquoises.

"The collar must be for you, Elizabeth, because Mary and I have one already, and Aunt Jean knows it," said Alberta; "the watch must be for

you, Mary, because I have one; and by the process of exhaustion the bracelet must be for me. Well, they are all perfectly sweet.”

Elizabeth put on her collar and paraded in front of the sideboard mirror. It was so dusty she had to take her handkerchief and wipe it before she could see herself properly. Everything in the room was equally dusty. As for the lace curtains, they looked as if they hadn’t been washed for years, and one of them had a long ragged hole in it. I couldn’t help feeling secretly surprised, for Aunt Jean had the reputation of being a perfect housekeeper. However, I didn’t say anything, and neither did the other girls. Mother had always impressed upon us that it was the height of bad manners to criticize anything we might not like in a house where we were guests.

“Well, let’s see about dinner,” said Alberta, practically, snapping her bracelet on her wrist and admiring the effect.

We went to the kitchen, where Elizabeth proceeded to light the fire, that being one of her specialties, while Alberta and I explored the pantry. We found the dinner supplies laid out as Aunt Jean had explained. There was a nice fat turkey all stuffed, and vegetables galore. The mince pies were in their place, but they were almost the only things about which that could be truthfully said, for the disorder of that pantry was enough to give a tidy person nightmares for a month. “I never in all my life saw—” began Alberta, and then stopped short, evidently remembering Mother’s teaching.

“Where is the plum pudding?” said I, to turn the conversation into safer channels.

It was nowhere to be seen, so we concluded it must be in the cellar. But we found the cellar door padlocked good and fast.

“Never mind,” said Elizabeth. “You know none of us really likes plum pudding. We only eat it because it is the proper traditional dessert. The mince pies will suit us better.”

We hurried the turkey into the oven, and soon everything was going merrily. We had lots of fun getting up that dinner, and we made ourselves perfectly at home, as Aunt Jean had commanded. We kindled a fire in the

dining room and dusted everything in sight. We couldn't find anything remotely resembling a duster, so we used our handkerchiefs. When we got through, the room looked like something, for the furnishings were really very handsome, but our handkerchiefs — well!

Then we set the table with all the nice dishes we could find. There was only one long tablecloth in the sideboard drawer, and there were three holes in it, but we covered them with dishes and put a little potted palm in the middle for a centrepiece. At one o'clock dinner was ready for us and we for it. Very nice that table looked, too, as we sat down to it.

Just as Alberta was about to spear the turkey with a fork and begin carving, that being one of her specialties, the kitchen door opened and somebody walked in. Before we could move, a big, handsome, bewhiskered man in a fur coat appeared in the dining-room doorway.

I wasn't frightened. He seemed quite respectable, I thought, and I supposed he was some intimate friend of Uncle Norman's. I rose politely and said, "Good day."

You never saw such an expression of amazement as was on that poor man's face. He looked from me to Alberta and from Alberta to Elizabeth and from Elizabeth to me again as if he doubted the evidence of his eyes.

"Mr. and Mrs. Norman Young are not at home," I explained, pitying him. "They went to Streatham this morning because Mrs. Young's sister is very ill."

"What does all this mean?" said the big man gruffly. "This isn't Norman Young's house ... it is mine. I'm William Young. Who are you? And what are you doing here?"

I fell back into my chair, speechless. My very first impulse was to put up my hand and cover the gold watch. Alberta had dropped the carving knife and was trying desperately to get the gold bracelet off under the table. In a flash we had realized our mistake and its awfulness. As for me, I felt positively frightened; Margaret Hannah's warnings of old had left an ineffaceable impression.

Elizabeth rose to the occasion. Rising to the occasion is another of Elizabeth's specialties. Besides, she was not hampered by the tingling

consciousness that she was wearing a gift that had not been intended for her.

“We have made a mistake, I fear,” she said, with a dignity which I appreciated even in my panic, “and we are very sorry for it. We were invited to spend Christmas with Mr. and Mrs. Norman Young. When we got off the train we were given a letter from them stating that they were summoned away but telling us to go to their house and make ourselves at home. The stationmaster told us that this was the house, so we came here. We have never been in Monkshead, so we did not know the difference. Please pardon us.”

I had got off the watch by this time and laid it on the table, unobserved, as I thought. Alberta, not having the key of the bracelet, had not been able to get it off, and she sat there crimson with shame. As for Uncle William, there was positively a twinkle in his eye. He did not look in the least ogreish.

“Well, it has been quite a fortunate mistake for me,” he said. “I came home expecting to find a cold house and a raw dinner, and I find this instead. I’m very much obliged to you.”

Alberta rose, went to the mantel piece, took the key of the bracelet therefrom, and unlocked it. Then she faced Uncle William. “Mrs. Young told us in her letter that we would find our Christmas gifts on the table, so we took it for granted that these things belonged to us,” she said desperately. “And now, if you will kindly tell us where Mr. Norman Young does live, we won’t intrude on you any longer. Come, girls.”

Elizabeth and I rose with a sigh. There was nothing else to be done, of course, but we were fearfully hungry, and we did not feel enthusiastic over the prospect of going to another empty house and cooking another dinner.

“Wait a bit,” said Uncle William. “I think since you have gone to all the trouble of cooking the dinner it’s only fair you should stay and help to eat it. Accidents seem to be rather fashionable just now. My housekeeper’s son broke his leg down at Weston, and I had to take her there early this morning. Come, introduce yourselves. To whom am I indebted for this pleasant surprise?”

“We are Elizabeth, Alberta, and Mary Young of Green Village,” I said; and then I looked to see the ogre creep out if it were ever going to.

But Uncle William merely looked amazed for the first moment, foolish for the second, and the third he was himself again.

“Robert’s daughters?” he said, as if it were the most natural thing in the world that Robert’s daughters should be there in his house. “So you are my nieces? Well, I’m very glad to make your acquaintance. Sit down and we’ll have dinner as soon as I can get my coat off. I want to see if you are as good cooks as your mother used to be long ago.”

We sat down, and so did Uncle William. Alberta had her chance to show what she could do at carving, for Uncle William said it was something he never did; he kept a housekeeper just for that. At first we felt a bit stiff and awkward; but that soon wore off, for Uncle William was genial, witty, and entertaining. Soon, to our surprise, we found that we were enjoying ourselves. Uncle William seemed to be, too. When we had finished he leaned back and looked at us.

“I suppose you’ve been brought up to abhor me and all my works?” he said abruptly.

“Not by Father and Mother,” I said frankly. “They never said anything against you. Margaret Hannah did, though. She brought us up in the way we should go through fear of you.”

Uncle William laughed.

“Margaret Hannah was a faithful old enemy of mine,” he said. “Well, I acted like a fool — and worse. I’ve been sorry for it ever since. I was in the wrong. I couldn’t have said this to your father, but I don’t mind saying it to you, and you can tell him if you like.”

“He’ll be delighted to hear that you are no longer angry with him,” said Alberta. “He has always longed to be friends with you again, Uncle William. But he thought you were still bitter against him.”

“No — no — nothing but stubborn pride,” said Uncle William. “Now, girls, since you are my guests I must try to give you a good time. We’ll take the double sleigh and have a jolly drive this afternoon. And about those trinkets there — they are yours. I did get them for some young

friends of mine here, but I'll give them something else. I want you to have these. That watch looked very nice on your blouse, Mary, and the bracelet became Alberta's pretty wrist very well. Come and give your cranky old uncle a hug for them."

Uncle William got his hugs heartily; then we washed up the dishes and went for our drive. We got back just in time to catch the evening train home. Uncle William saw us off at the station, under promise to come back and stay a week with him when his housekeeper came home.

"One of you will have to come and stay with me altogether, pretty soon," he said. "Tell your father he must be prepared to hand over one of his girls to me as a token of his forgiveness. I'll be down to talk it over with him shortly."

When we got home and told our story, Father said, "Thank God!" very softly. There were tears in his eyes. He did not wait for Uncle William to come down, but went to Monkshead himself the next day.

In the spring Alberta is to go and live with Uncle William. She is making a supply of dusters now. And next Christmas we are going to have a grand family reunion at the old homestead. Mistakes are not always bad.

The Genesis of the Doughnut Club

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When John Henry died there seemed to be nothing for me to do but pack up and go back east. I didn't want to do it, but forty-five years of sojourning in this world have taught me that a body has to do a good many things she doesn't want to do, and that most of them turn out to be for the best in the long run. But I knew perfectly well that it wasn't best for me or anybody else that I should go back to live with William and Susanna, and I couldn't think what Providence was about when things seemed to point that way.

I wanted to stay in Carleton. I loved the big, straggling, bustling little town that always reminded me of a lanky, overgrown schoolboy, all arms and legs, but full to the brim with enthusiasm and splendid ideas. I knew Carleton was bound to grow into a magnificent city, and I wanted to be there and see it grow and watch it develop; and I loved the whole big, breezy golden west, with the rush and tingle of its young life. And, more than all, I loved my boys, and what I was going to do without them or they without me was more than I knew, though I tried to think Providence might know.

But there was no place in Carleton for me; the only thing to do was to go back east, and I knew that all the time, even when I was desperately praying that I might find a way to remain. There's not much comfort, or help either, praying one way and believing another.

I'd lived down east in Northfield all my life — until five years ago — lived with my brother William and his wife. Northfield was a little pinched-up village where everybody knew more about you than you did about yourself, and you couldn't turn around without being commented upon. William and Susanna were kind to me, but I was just the old maid sister, of no importance to anybody, and I never felt as if I were really living. I was simply vegetating on, and wouldn't be missed by a single

soul if I died. It is a horrible feeling, but I didn't expect it would ever be any different, and I had made up my mind that when I died I would have the word "Wasted" carved on my tombstone. It wouldn't be conventional at all, but I'd been conventional all my life, and I was determined I'd have something done out of the common even if I had to wait until I was dead to have it.

Then all at once the letter came from John Henry, my brother out west. He wrote that his wife had died and he wanted me to go out and keep house for him. I sat right down and wrote him I'd go and in a week's time I started.

It made quite a commotion; I had that much satisfaction out of it to begin with. Susanna wasn't any too well pleased. I was only the old maid sister, but I was a good cook, and help was scarce in Northfield. All the neighbours shook their heads, and warned me I wouldn't like it. I was too old to change my ways, and I'd be dreadfully homesick, and I'd find the west too rough and boisterous. I just smiled and said nothing.

Well, I came out here to Carleton, and from the time I got here I was perfectly happy. John Henry had a little rented house, and he was as poor as a church mouse, being the ne'er-do-well of our family, and the best loved, as ne'er-do-wells are so apt to be. He'd nearly died of lonesomeness since his wife's death, and he was so glad to see me. That was delightful in itself, and I was just in my element getting that little house fixed up cosy and homelike, and cooking the most elegant meals. There wasn't much work to do, just for me and him, and I got a squaw in to wash and scrub. I never thought about Northfield except to thank goodness I'd escaped from it, and John Henry and I were as happy as a king and queen.

Then after awhile my activities began to sprout and branch out, and the direction they took was boys. Carleton was full of boys, like all the western towns, overflowing with them as you might say, young fellows just let loose from home and mother, some of them dying of homesickness and some of them beginning to run wild and get into risky ways, some of them smart and some of them lazy, some ugly and some handsome; but all of them boys, lovable, rollicking boys, with the makings of good men in

them if there was anybody to take hold of them and cut the pattern right, but liable to be spoiled just because there wasn't anybody.

Well, I did what I could. It began with John Henry bringing home some of them that worked in his office to spend the evening now and again, and they told other fellows and asked leave to bring them in too. And before long it got to be that there never was an evening there wasn't some of them there, "Aunt-Pattying" me. I told them from the start I would not be called Miss. When a woman has been Miss for forty-five years she gets tired of it.

So Aunt Patty it was, and Aunt Patty it remained, and I loved all those dear boys as if they'd been my own. They told me all their troubles, and I mothered them and cheered them up and scolded them, and finally topped off with a jolly good supper; for, talk as you like, you can't preach much good into a boy if he's got an aching void in his stomach. Fill that up with tasty victuals, and then you can do something with his spiritual nature. If a boy is well stuffed with good things and then won't listen to advice, you might as well stop wasting your breath on him, because there is something radically wrong with him. Probably his grandfather had dyspepsia. And a dyspeptic ancestor is worse for a boy than predestination, in my opinion.

Anyway, most of my boys took to going to church and Bible class of their own accord, after I'd been their aunt for awhile. The young minister thought it was all his doings, and I let him think so to keep him cheered up. He was a nice boy himself, and often dropped in of an evening too; but I never would let him talk theology until after supper. His views always seemed so much mellower then, and didn't puzzle the other boys more than was wholesome for them.

This went on for five glorious years, the only years of my life I'd ever lived, and then came, as I thought, the end of everything. John Henry took typhoid and died. At first that was all I could think of; and when I got so that I could think of other things, there was, as I have said, nothing for me to do but go back east.

The boys, who had been as good as gold to me all through my trouble, felt dreadfully bad over this, and coaxed me hard to stay. They said if I'd

start a boarding house I'd have all the boarders I could accommodate; but I knew it was no use to think of that, because I wasn't strong enough, and help was so hard to get. No, there was nothing for it but Northfield and stagnation again, with not a stray boy anywhere to mother. I looked the dismal prospect square in the face and made up my mind to it.

But I was determined to give my boys one good celebration before I went, anyway. It was near Thanksgiving, and I resolved they should have a dinner that would keep my memory green for awhile, a real old-fashioned Thanksgiving dinner such as they used to have at home. I knew it would cost more than I could really afford, but I shut my eyes to that aspect of the question. I was going back to strict eastern economy for the rest of my days, and I meant to indulge in one wild, blissful riot of extravagance before I was cooped up again.

I counted up the boys I must have, and there were fifteen, including the minister. I invited them a fortnight ahead to make sure of getting them, though I needn't have worried, for they all said they would have broken an engagement to dine with the king for one of my dinners. The minister said he had been feeling so homesick he was afraid he wouldn't be able to preach a real thankful sermon, but now he was comfortably sure that his sermon would be overflowing with gratitude.

I just threw myself heart and soul into the preparations for that dinner. I had three turkeys and two sucking pigs, and mince pies and pumpkin pies and apple pies, and doughnuts and fruit cake and cranberry sauce and brown bread, and ever so many other things to fill up the chinks. The night before Thanksgiving everything was ready, and I was so tired I could hardly talk to Jimmy Nelson when he dropped in.

Jimmy had something on his mind, I saw that. So I said, "Fess up, Jimmy, and then you'll be able to enjoy your call."

"I want to ask a favour of you, Aunt Patty," said Jimmy.

I knew I should have to grant it; nobody could refuse Jimmy anything, he looked so much like a nice, clean, pink-and-white little schoolboy whose mother had just scrubbed his face and told him to be good. At the same time he was one of the wildest young scamps in Carleton, or had

been until a year ago. I'd got him well set on the road to reformation, and I felt worse about leaving him than any of the rest of them. I knew he was just at the critical point. With somebody to tide him over the next half year he'd probably go straight for the rest of his life, but if he were left to himself he'd likely just slip back to his old set and ways.

"I want you to let me bring my Uncle Joe to dinner tomorrow," said Jimmy. "The poor old fellow is stranded here for Thanksgiving, and he hates hotels. May I?"

"Of course," I said heartily, wondering why Jimmy seemed to think I mightn't want his Uncle Joe. "Bring him right along."

"Thanks," said Jimmy. "He'll be more than pleased. Your sublime cookery will delight him. He adores the west, but he can't endure its cooking. He's always harping on his mother's pantry and the good old down-east dinners. He's dyspeptic and pessimistic most of the time, and he's got half a dozen cronies just like himself. All they think of is railroads and bills of fare."

"Railroads!" I cried. And then an awful thought assailed me. "Jimmy Nelson, your uncle isn't — isn't — he can't be Joseph P. Nelson, the rich Joseph P. Nelson!"

"Oh, he's rich enough," said Jimmy; getting up and reaching for his hat. "In dollars, that is. Some ways he's poor enough. Well, I must be going. Thanks ever so much for letting me bring Uncle Joe."

And that rascal was gone, leaving me crushed. Joseph Nelson was coming to my house to dinner — Joseph P. Nelson, the millionaire railroad king, who kept his own chef and was accustomed to dining with the great ones of the earth!

I was afraid I should never be able to forgive Jimmy. I couldn't sleep a wink that night, and I cooked that dinner next day in a terrible state of mind. Every ring that came at the door made my heart jump, — but in the end Jimmy didn't ring at all, but just walked in with his uncle in tow. The minute I saw Joseph P. I knew I needn't be scared of him; he just looked real common. He was little and thin and kind of bored-looking, with grey hair and whiskers, and his clothes were next door to downright shabbiness.

If it hadn't been for the thought of that chef, I wouldn't have felt a bit ashamed of my old-fashioned Thanksgiving spread.

When Joseph P. sat down to that table he stopped looking bored. All the time the minister was saying grace that man simply stared at a big plate of doughnuts near my end of the table, as if he'd never seen anything like them before.

All the boys talked and laughed while they were eating, but Joseph P. just ate, tucking away turkey and vegetables and keeping an anxious eye on those doughnuts, as if he was afraid somebody else would get hold of them before his turn came. I wished I was sure it was etiquette to tell him not to worry because there were plenty more in the pantry. By the time he'd been helped three times to mince pie I gave up feeling bad about the chef. He finished off with the doughnuts, and I shan't tell how many of them he devoured, because I would not be believed.

Most of the boys had to go away soon after dinner. Joseph P. shook hands with me absently and merely said, "Good afternoon, Miss Porter." I didn't think he seemed at all grateful for his dinner, but that didn't worry me because it was for my boys I'd got it up, and not for dyspeptic millionaires whose digestion had been spoiled by private chefs. And my boys had appreciated it, there wasn't any doubt about that. Peter Crockett and Tommy Gray stayed to help me wash the dishes, and we had the jolliest time ever. Afterward we picked the turkey bones.

But that night I realized that I was once more a useless, lonely old woman. I cried myself to sleep, and next morning I hadn't spunk enough to cook myself a dinner. I dined off some crackers and the remnants of the apple pies, and I was sitting staring at the crumbs when the bell rang. I wiped away my tears and went to the door. Joseph P. Nelson was standing there, and he said, without wasting any words — it was easy to see how that man managed to get railroads built where nobody else could manage it — that he had called to see me on a little matter of business.

He took just ten minutes to make it clear to me, and when I saw the whole project I was the happiest woman in Carleton or out of it. He said he had never eaten such a Thanksgiving dinner as mine, and that I was the

woman he'd been looking for for years. He said that he had a few business friends who had been brought up on a down-east farm like himself, and never got over their hankering for old-fashioned cookery.

"That is something we can't get here, with all our money," he said. "Now, Miss Porter, my nephew tells me that you wish to remain in Carleton, if you can find some way of supporting yourself. I have a proposition to make to you. These aforesaid friends of mine and I expect to spend most of our time in Carleton for the next few years. In fact we shall probably make it our home eventually. It's going to be the city of the west after awhile, and the centre of a dozen railroads. Well, we mean to equip a small private restaurant for ourselves and we want you to take charge of it. You won't have to do much except oversee the business and arrange the bills of fare. We want plain, substantial old-time meals and cookery. When we have a hankering for doughnuts and apple pies and cranberry tarts, we want to know just where to get them and have them the right kind. We're all horribly tired of hotel fare and fancy fol-de-rols with French names. A place where we could get a dinner such as you served yesterday would be a boon to us. We'd have started the restaurant long ago if we could have got a suitable person to take charge of it."

He named the salary the club would pay and the very sound of it made me feel rich. You may be sure I didn't take long to decide. That was a year ago, and today the Doughnut Club, as they call themselves, is a huge success, and the fame of it has gone abroad in the land, although they are pretty exclusive and keep all their good things close enough to themselves. Joseph P. took a Scotch peer there to dinner one day last week. Jimmy Nelson told me afterward that the man said it was the only satisfying meal he'd had since he left the old country.

As for me, I have my little house, my very own and no rented one, and all my dear boys, and I'm a happy old busybody. You see, Providence did answer my prayers in spite of my lack of faith; but of course He used means, and that Thanksgiving dinner of mine was the earthly instrument of it all.

The Growing Up of Cornelia

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January First.

Aunt Jemima gave me this diary for a Christmas present. It's just the sort of gift a person named Jemima would be likely to make.

I can't imagine why Aunt Jemima thought I should like a diary. Probably she didn't think about it at all. I suppose it happened to be the first thing she saw when she started out to do her Christmas duty by me, and so she bought it. I'm sure I'm the last girl in the world to keep a diary. I'm not a bit sentimental and I never have time for soul outpourings. It's jollier to be out skating or snowshoeing or just tramping around. And besides, nothing ever happens to me worth writing in a diary.

Still, since Aunt Jemima gave it to me, I'm going to get the good out of it. I don't believe in wasting even a diary. Father ... it would be easier to write "Dad," but Dad sounds disrespectful in a diary ... says I have a streak of old Grandmother Marshall's economical nature in me. So I'm going to write in this book whenever I have anything that might, by any stretch of imagination, be supposed worth while.

Jen and Alice and Sue would have plenty to write about, I dare say. They certainly seem to have jolly times ... and as for the men ... but there! People say men are interesting. They may be. But I shall never get well enough acquainted with any of them to find out.

Mother says it is high time I gave up my tomboy ways and came "out" too, because I am eighteen. I coaxed off this winter. It wasn't very hard, because no mother with three older unmarried girls on her hands would be very anxious to bring out a fourth. The girls took my part and advised Mother to let me be a child as long as possible. Mother yielded for this time, but said I must be brought out next winter or people would talk. Oh, I hate the thought of it! People might talk about my not being brought out, but they will talk far more about the blunders I shall make.

The doleful fact is, I'm too wretchedly shy and awkward to live. It fills my soul with terror to think of donning long dresses and putting my hair up and going into society. I can't talk and men frighten me to death. I fall over things as it is, and what will it be with long dresses? As far back as I can remember it has been my one aim and object in life to escape company. Oh, if only one need never grow up! If I could only go back four years and stay there!

Mother laments over it muchly. She says she doesn't know what she has done to have such a shy, unpresentable daughter. I know. She married Grandmother Marshall's son, and Grandmother Marshall was as shy as she was economical. Mother triumphed over heredity with Jen and Sue and Alice, but it came off best with me. The other girls are noted for their grace and tact. But I'm the black sheep and always will be. It wouldn't worry me so much if they'd leave me alone and stop nagging me. "Oh, for a lodge in some vast wilderness," where there were no men, no parties, no dinners ... just quantities of dogs and horses and skating ponds and woods! I need never put on long dresses then, but just be a jolly little girl forever.

However, I've got one beautiful year before me yet, and I mean to make the most of it.

January Tenth.

It is rather good to have a diary to pour out your woes in when you feel awfully bad and have no one to sympathize with you. I've been used to shutting them all up in my soul and then they sometimes fermented and made trouble.

We had a lot of people here to dinner tonight, and that made me miserable to begin with. I had to dress up in a stiff white dress with a sash, and Jen tied two big white fly-away bows on my hair that kept rasping my neck and tickling my ears in a most exasperating way. Then an old lady whom I detest tried to make me talk before everybody, and all I could do was to turn as red as a beet and stammer: "Yes, ma'am," "no, ma'am." It made Mother furious, because it is so old-fashioned to say "ma'am." Our old nurse taught me to say it when I was small, and though it has been

pretty well governessed out of me since then, it's sure to pop up when I get confused and nervous.

Sue ... may it be accounted unto her for righteousness ... contrived that I should go out to dinner with old Mr. Grant, because she knew he goes to dinners for the sake of eating and never talks or wants anybody else to. But when we were crossing the hall I stepped on Mrs. Burnett's train and something tore. Mrs. Burnett gave me a furious look and glowered all through dinner. The meal was completely spoiled for me and I could find no comfort, even in the Nesselrode pudding, which is my favourite dessert.

It was just when the pudding came on that I got the most unkindest cut of all. Mrs. Allardyce remarked that Sidney Elliot was coming home to Stillwater.

Everybody exclaimed and questioned and seemed delighted. I saw Mother give one quick, involuntary look at Jen, and then gaze steadfastly at Mr. Grant to atone for it. Jen is twenty-six, and Stillwater is next door to our place!

As for me, I was so vexed that I might as well have been eating chips for all the good that Nesselrode pudding was to me. If Sidney Elliot were coming home everything would be spoiled. There would be no more ramblings in the Stillwater woods, no more delightful skating on the Stillwater lake. Stillwater has been the only place in the world where I could find the full joy of solitude, and now this, too, was to be taken from me. We had no woods, no lake. I hated Sidney Elliot.

It is ten years since Sidney Elliot closed Stillwater and went abroad. He has stayed abroad ever since and nobody has missed him, I'm sure. I remember him dimly as a tall dark man who used to lounge about alone in his garden and was always reading books. Sometimes he came into our garden and teased us children. He is said to be a cynic and to detest society. If this latter item be a fact I almost feel a grim pity for him. He may detest it, but he will be dragged into it. Rich bachelors are few and far between in Riverton, and the mammas will hunt him down.

I feel like crying. If Sidney Elliot comes home I shall be debarred from Stillwater. I have roamed its demesnes for ten beautiful years, and I'm sure I love them a hundredfold better than he does, or can. It is flagrantly unfair. Oh, I hate him!

January Twentieth.

No, I don't. I believe I like him. Yet it's almost unbelievable. I've always thought men so detestable.

I'm tingling all over with the surprise and pleasure of a little unexpected adventure. For the first time I have something really worth writing in a diary ... and I'm glad I have a diary to write it in. Blessings on Aunt Jemima! May her shadow never grow less.

This evening I started out for a last long lingering ramble in my beloved Stillwater woods. The last, I thought, because I knew Sidney Elliot was expected home next week, and after that I'd have to be cooped up on our lawn. I dressed myself comfortably for climbing fences and skimming over snowy wastes. That is, I put on the shortest old tweed skirt I have and a red jacket with sleeves three years behind the fashion, but jolly pockets to put your hands in, and a still redder tam. Thus accoutred, I sallied forth.

It was such a lovely evening that I couldn't help enjoying myself in spite of my sorrows. The sun was low and creamy, and the snow was so white and the shadows so slender and blue. All through the lovely Stillwater woods was a fine frosty stillness. It was splendid to skim down those long wonderful avenues of crusted snow, with the mossy grey boles on either hand, and overhead the lacing, leafless boughs, I just drank in the air and the beauty until my very soul was thrilling, and I went on and on and on until I was most delightfully lost. That is, I didn't know just where I was, but the woods weren't so big but that I'd be sure to come out safely somewhere; and, oh, it was so glorious to be there all alone and never a creature to worry me.

At last I turned into a long aisle that seemed to lead right out into the very heart of a deep-red overflowing winter sunset. At its end I found a

fence, and I climbed up on that fence and sat there, so comfortably, with my back against a big beech and my feet dangling.

Then I saw him!

I knew it was Sidney Elliot in a moment. He was just as tall and just as black-eyed; he was still given to lounging evidently, for he was leaning against the fence a panel away from me and looking at me with an amused smile. After my first mad impulse to rush away and bury myself in the wilderness that smile put me at ease. If he had looked grave or polite I would have been as miserably shy as I've always been in a man's presence. But it was the smile of a grandfather for a child, and I just grinned cheerfully back at him.

He ploughed along through the thick drift that was soft and spongy by the fence and came close up to me.

"You must be little Cornelia," he said with another aged smile. "Or rather, you were little Cornelia. I suppose you are big Cornelia now and want to be treated like a young lady?"

"Indeed, I don't," I protested. "I'm not grown up and I don't want to be. You are Mr. Elliot, I suppose. Nobody expected you till next week. What made you come so soon?"

"A whim of mine," he said. "I'm full of whims and crotchets. Old bachelors always are. But why did you ask that question in a tone which seemed to imply that you resented my coming so soon, Miss Cornelia?"

"Oh, don't tack the Miss on," I implored. "Call me Cornelia ... or better still, Nic, as Dad does. I do resent your coming so soon. I resent your coming at all. And, oh, it is such a satisfaction to tell you so."

He smiled with his eyes ... a deep, black, velvety smile. But he shook his head sorrowfully.

"I must be getting very old," he said. "It's a sign of age when a person finds himself unwelcome and superfluous."

"Your age has nothing to do with it," I retorted. "It is because Stillwater is the only place I have to run wild in ... and running wild is all I'm fit for. It's so lovely and roomy I can lose myself in it. I shall die or go mad if I'm cooped up on our little pocket handkerchief of a lawn."

“But why should you be?” he inquired gravely.

I reflected ... and was surprised.

“After all, I don’t know ... now ... why I should be,” I admitted. “I thought you wouldn’t want me prowling about your domains. Besides, I was afraid I’d meet you ... and I don’t like meeting men. I hate to have them around ... I’m so shy and awkward.”

“Do you find me very dreadful?” he asked.

I reflected again ... and was again surprised.

“No, I don’t. I don’t mind you a bit ... any more than if you were Dad.”

“Then you mustn’t consider yourself an exile from Stillwater. The woods are yours to roam in at will, and if you want to roam them alone you may, and if you’d like a companion once in a while command me. Let’s be good friends, little lass. Shake hands on it.”

I slipped down from the fence and shook hands with him. I did like him very much ... he was so nice and unaffected and brotherly ... just as if I’d known him all my life. We walked down the long white avenue, where everything was growing dusky, and I had told him all my troubles before we got to the end of it. He was so sympathetic and agreed with me that it was a pity people had to grow up. He promised to come over tomorrow and look at Don’s leg. Don is one of my dogs, and he has got a bad leg. I’ve been doctoring it myself, but it doesn’t get any better. Sidney thinks he can cure it. He says I must call him Sidney if I want him to call me Nic.

When we got to the lake, there it lay all gleaming and smooth as glass ... the most tempting thing.

“What a glorious possible slide,” he said. “Let us have it, little lass.”

He took my hand and we ran down the slope and went skimming over the ice. It was glorious. The house came in sight as we reached the other side. It was big and dark and silent.

“So the old place is still standing,” said Sidney, looking up at it. In the dusk I thought his face had a tender, reverent look instead of the rather mocking expression it had worn all along.

“Haven’t you been there yet?” I asked quickly.

“No. I’m stopping at the hotel over in Croyden. The house will need some fixing up before it’s fit to live in. I just came down tonight to look at it and took a short cut through the woods. I’m glad I did. It was worth while to see you come tramping down that long white avenue when you thought yourself alone with the silence. I thought I had never seen a child so full of the pure joy of existence. Hold fast to that, little lass, as long as you can. You’ll never find anything to take its place after it goes. You jolly little child!”

“I’m eighteen,” I said suddenly. I don’t know what made me say it.

He laughed and pulled his coat collar up around his ears.

“Never,” he mocked. “You’re about twelve ... stay twelve, and always wear red caps and jackets, you vivid thing: Good night.”

He was off across the lake, and I came home. Yes, I do like him, even if he is a man.

February Twentieth.

I’ve found out what diaries are for ... to work off blue moods in, moods that come on without any reason whatever and therefore can’t be confided to any fellow creature. You scribble away for a while ... and then it’s all gone ... and your soul feels clear as crystal once more.

I always go to Sidney now in a blue mood that has a real cause. He can cheer me up in five minutes. But in such a one as this, which is quite unaccountable, there’s nothing for it but a diary.

Sidney has been living at Stillwater for a month. It seems as if he must have lived there always.

He came to our place the next day after I met him in the woods. Everybody made a fuss over him, but he shook them off with an ease I envied and whisked me out to see Don’s leg. He has fixed it up so that it is as good as new now, and the dogs like him almost better than they like me.

We have had splendid times since then. We are just the jolliest chums and we tramp about everywhere together and go skating and snowshoeing and riding. We read a lot of books together too, and Sidney always explains everything I don’t understand. I’m not a bit shy and I can always find plenty to say to him. He isn’t at all like any other man I know.

Everybody likes him, but the women seem to be a little afraid of him. They say he is so terribly cynical and satirical. He goes into society a good bit, although he says it bores him. He says he only goes because it would bore him worse to stay home alone.

There's only one thing about Sidney that I hardly like. I think he rather overdoes it in the matter of treating me as if I were a little girl. Of course, I don't want him to look upon me as grown up. But there is a medium in all things, and he really needn't talk as if he thought I was a child of ten and had no earthly interest in anything but sports and dogs. These are the best things ... I suppose ... but I understand lots of other things too, only I can't convince Sidney that I do. I know he is laughing at me when I try to show him I'm not so childish as he thinks me. He's indulgent and whimsical, just as he would be with a little girl who was making believe to be grown up. Perhaps next winter, when I put on long dresses and come out, he'll stop regarding me as a child. But next winter is so horribly far off.

The day we were fussing with Don's leg I told Sidney that Mother said I'd have to be grown up next winter and how I hated it, and I made him promise that when the time came he would use all his influence to beg me off for another year. He said he would, because it was a shame to worry children about society. But somehow I've concluded not to bother making a fuss. I have to come out some time, and I might as well take the plunge and get it over.

Mrs. Burnett was here this evening fixing up some arrangements for a charity bazaar she and Jen are interested in, and she talked most of the time about Sidney ... for Jen's benefit, I suppose, although Jen and Sid don't get on at all. They fight every time they meet, so I don't see why Mrs. Burnett should think things.

"I wonder what he'll do when Mrs. Rennie comes to the Glasgows' next month," said Mrs. Burnett.

"Why should he do anything?" asked Jen.

"Oh, well, you know there was something between them ... an understanding if not an engagement ... before she married Rennie. They

met abroad ... my sister told me all about it ... and Mr. Elliot was quite infatuated with her. She was a very handsome and fascinating girl. Then she threw him over and married old Jacob Rennie ... for his millions, of course, for he certainly had nothing else to recommend him. Amy says Mr. Elliot was never the same man again. But Jacob died obligingly two years ago and Mrs. Rennie is free now; so I dare say they'll make it up. No doubt that is why she is coming to Riverton. Well, it would be a very suitable match."

I'm so glad I never liked Mrs. Burnett.

I wonder if it is true that Sidney did care for that horrid woman ... of course she is horrid! Didn't she marry an old man for his money?... and cares for her still. It is no business of mine, of course, and it doesn't matter to me at all. But I rather hope he doesn't ... because it would spoil everything if he got married. He wouldn't have time to be chums with me then.

I don't know why I feel so dull tonight. Writing in this diary doesn't seem to have helped me as much as I thought it would, either. I dare say it's the weather. It must be the weather. It is a wet, windy night and the rain is thudding against the window. I hate rainy nights.

I wonder if Mrs. Rennie is really as handsome as Mrs. Burnett says. I wonder how old she is. I wonder if she ever cared for Sidney ... no, she didn't. No woman who cared for Sidney could ever have thrown him over for an old moneybag. I wonder if I shall like her. No, I won't. I'm sure I shan't like her.

My head is aching and I'm going to bed.

March Tenth.

Mrs. Rennie was here to dinner tonight. My head was aching again, and Mother said I needn't go down to dinner if I'd rather not; but a dozen headaches could not have kept me back, or a dozen men either, even supposing I'd have to talk to them all. I wanted to see Mrs. Rennie. Nothing has been talked of in Riverton for the last fortnight but Mrs. Rennie. I've heard of her beauty and charm and costumes until I'm sick of

the subject. Today I spoke to Sidney about her. Before I thought I said right out, "Mrs. Rennie is to dine with us tonight."

"Yes?" he said in a quiet voice.

"I'm dying to see her," I went on recklessly. "I've heard so much about her. They say she's so beautiful and fascinating. Is she? You ought to know."

Sidney swung the sled around and put it in position for another coast.

"Yes, I know her," he admitted tranquilly. "She is a very handsome woman, and I suppose most people would consider her fascinating. Come, Nic, get on the sled. We have just time for one more coast, and then you must go in."

"You were once a good friend ... a very good friend ... of Mrs. Rennie's, weren't you, Sid?" I said.

A little mocking gleam crept into his eyes, and I instantly realized that he was looking upon me as a rather impertinent child.

"You've been listening to gossip, Nic," he said. "It's a bad habit, child. Don't let it grow on you. Come."

I went, feeling crushed and furious and ashamed.

I knew her at once when I went down to the drawing-room. There were three other strange women there, but I knew she was the only one who could be Mrs. Rennie. I felt such a horrible queer sinking feeling at my heart when I saw her. Oh, she was beautiful ... I had never seen anyone so beautiful. And Sidney was standing beside her, talking to her, with a smile on his face, but none in his eyes ... I noticed that at a glance.

She was so tall and slender and willowy. Her dress was wonderful, and her bare throat and shoulders were like pearls. Her hair was pale, pale gold, and her eyes long-lashed and sweet, and her mouth like a scarlet blossom against her creamy face. I thought of how I must look beside her ... an awkward little girl in a short skirt with my hair in a braid and too many hands and feet, and I would have given anything then to be tall and grownup and graceful.

I watched her all the evening and the queer feeling in me somewhere grew worse and worse. I couldn't eat anything. Sidney took Mrs. Rennie

in; they sat opposite to me and talked all the time.

I was so glad when the dinner was over and everybody gone. The first thing I did when I escaped to my room was to go to the glass and look myself over just as critically and carefully as if I were somebody else. I saw a great rope of dark brown hair ... a brown skin with red cheeks ... a big red mouth ... a pair of grey eyes. That was all. And when I thought of that shimmering witch woman with her white skin and shining hair I wanted to put out the light and cry in the dark. Only I've never cried since I was a child and broke my last doll, and I've got so out of the habit that I don't know how to go about it.

April Fifth.

Aunt Jemima would not think I was getting the good out of my diary. A whole month and not a word! But there was nothing to write, and I've felt too miserable to write if there had been. I don't know what is the matter with me. I'm just cross and horrid to everyone, even to poor Sidney.

Mrs. Rennie has been queening it in Riverton society for the past month. People rave over her and I admire her horribly, although I don't like her. Mrs. Burnett says that a match between her and Sidney Elliot is a foregone conclusion.

It's plain to be seen that Mrs. Rennie loves Sidney. Even I can see that, and I don't know much about such things. But it puzzles me to know how Sidney regards her. I have never thought he showed any sign of really caring for her. But then, he isn't the kind that would.

"Nic, I wonder if you will ever grow up," he said to me today, laughing, when he caught me racing over the lawn with the dogs.

"I'm grown up now," I said crossly. "Why, I'm eighteen and a half and I'm two inches taller than any of the other girls."

Sidney laughed, as if he were heartily amused at something.

"You're a blessed baby," he said, "and the dearest, truest, jolliest little chum ever a fellow had. I don't know what I'd do without you, Nic. You keep me sane and wholesome. I'm a tenfold better man for knowing you, little girl."

I was rather pleased. It was nice to think I was some good to Sidney.

“Are you going to the Trents’ dinner tonight?” I asked.

“Yes,” he said briefly.

“Mrs. Rennie will be there,” I said.

Sidney nodded.

“Do you think her so very handsome, Sidney?” I said. I had never mentioned Mrs. Rennie to him since the day we were coasting, and I didn’t mean to now. The question just asked itself.

“Yes, very; but not as handsome as you will be ten years from now, Nic,” said Sidney lightly.

“Do you think I’m handsome, Sidney?” I cried.

“You will be when you’re grown up,” he answered, looking at me critically.

“Will you be going to Mrs. Greaves’ reception after the dinner?” I asked.

“Yes, I suppose so,” said Sidney absently. I could see he wasn’t thinking of me at all. I wondered if he were thinking of Mrs. Rennie.

April Sixth.

Oh, something so wonderful has happened. I can hardly believe it. There are moments when I quake with the fear that it is all a dream. I wonder if I can really be the same Cornelia Marshall I was yesterday. No, I’m not the same ... and the difference is so blessed.

Oh, I’m so happy! My heart bubbles over with happiness and song. It’s so wonderful and lovely to be a woman and know it and know that other people know it.

You dear diary, you were made for this moment ... I shall write all about it in you and so fulfil your destiny. And then I shall put you away and never write anything more in you, because I shall not need you ... I shall have Sidney.

Last night I was all alone in the house ... and I was so lonely and miserable. I put my chin on my hands and I thought ... and thought ... and thought. I imagined Sidney at the Greaves’, talking to Mrs. Rennie with that velvety smile in his eyes. I could see her, graceful and white, in her trailing, clinging gown, with diamonds about her smooth neck and in her

hair. I suddenly wondered what I would look like in evening dress with my hair up. I wondered if Sidney would like me in it.

All at once I got up and rushed to Sue's room. I lighted the gas, rummaged, and went to work. I piled my hair on top of my head, pinned it there, and thrust a long silver dagger through it to hold a couple of pale white roses she had left on her table. Then I put on her last winter's party dress. It was such a pretty pale yellow thing, with touches of black lace, and it didn't matter about its being a little old-fashioned, since it fitted me like a glove. Finally I stepped back and looked at myself.

I saw a woman in that glass ... a tall, straight creature with crimson cheeks and glowing eyes ... and the thought in my mind was so insistent that it said itself aloud: "Oh, I wish Sidney could see me now!"

At that very moment the maid knocked at the door to tell me that Mr. Elliot was downstairs asking for me. I did not hesitate a second. With my heart beating wildly I trailed downstairs to Sidney.

He was standing by the fireplace when I went in, and looked very tired. When he heard me he turned his head and our eyes met.

All at once a terrible thing happened ... at least, I thought it a terrible thing then. I knew why I had wanted Sidney to realize that I was no longer a child. It was because I loved him! I knew it the moment I saw that strange, new expression leap into his eyes.

"Cornelia," he said in a stunned sort of voice. "Why ... Nic ... why, little girl ... you're a woman! How blind I've been! And now I've lost my little chum."

"Oh, no, no," I said wildly. I was so miserable and confused I didn't know what I said. "Never, Sidney. I'd rather be a little girl and have you for a friend ... I'll always be a little girl! It's all this hateful dress. I'll go and take it off ... I'll...."

And then I just put my hands up to my burning face and the tears that would never come before came in a flood.

All at once I felt Sidney's arms about me and felt my head drawn to his shoulder.

“Don’t cry, dearest,” I heard him say softly. “You can never be a little girl to me again ... my eyes are opened ... but I didn’t want you to be. I want you to be my big girl ... mine, all mine, forever.”

What happened after that isn’t to be written in a diary. I won’t even write down the things he said about how I looked, because it would seem so terribly vain, but I can’t help thinking of them, for I am so happy.

The Old Fellow's Letter

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Ruggles and I were down on the Old Fellow. It doesn't matter why and, since in a story of this kind we must tell the truth no matter what happens — or else where is the use of writing a story at all? — I'll have to confess that we had deserved all we got and that the Old Fellow did no more than his duty by us. Both Ruggles and I see that now, since we have had time to cool off, but at the moment we were in a fearful wax at the Old Fellow and were bound to hatch up something to get even with him.

Of course, the Old Fellow had another name, just as Ruggles has another name. He is principal of the Frampton Academy — the Old Fellow, not Ruggles — and his name is George Osborne. We have to call him Mr. Osborne to his face, but he is the Old Fellow everywhere else. He is quite old — thirty-six if he's a day, and whatever possessed Sylvia Grant — but there, I'm getting ahead of my story.

Most of the Cads like the Old Fellow. Even Ruggles and I like him on the average. The girls are always a little provoked at him because he is so shy and absentminded, but when it comes to the point, they like him too. I heard Emma White say once that he was "so handsome"; I nearly whooped. Ruggles was mad because he's gone on Em. For the idea of calling a thin, pale, dark, dreamy-looking chap like the Old Fellow "handsome" was more than I could stand without guffawing. Em probably said it to provoke Ruggles; she couldn't really have thought it. "Micky," the English professor, now — if she had called him handsome there would have been some sense in it. He is splendid: big six-footer with magnificent muscles, red cheeks, and curly yellow hair. I can't see how he can be contented to sit down and teach mushy English literature and poetry and that sort of thing. It would have been more in keeping with the Old Fellow. There was a rumour running at large in the Academy that the Old Fellow

wrote poetry, but he ran the mathematics and didn't make such a foozle of it as you might suppose, either.

Ruggles and I meant to get square with the Old Fellow, if it took all the term; at least, we said so. But if Providence hadn't sent Sylvia Grant walking down the street past our boarding house that afternoon, we should probably have cooled off before we thought of any working plan of revenge.

Sylvia Grant did go down the street, however. Ruggles, hanging halfway out of the window as usual, saw her, and called me to go and look. Of course I went. Sylvia Grant was always worth looking at. There was no girl in Frampton who could hold a candle to her when it came to beauty. As for brains, that is another thing altogether. My private opinion is that Sylvia hadn't any, or she would never have preferred — but there, I'm getting on too fast again. Ruggles should have written this story; he can concentrate better.

Sylvia was the Latin professor's daughter; she wasn't a Cad girl, of course. She was over twenty and had graduated from it two years ago, but she was in all the social things that went on in the Academy; and all the unmarried professors, except the Old Fellow, were in love with her. Micky had it the worst, and we had all made up our minds that Sylvia would marry Micky. He was so handsome, we didn't see how she could help it. I tell you, they made a dandy-looking couple when they were together.

Well, as I said before, I toddled to the window to have a look at the fair Sylvia. She was all toggled out in some new fall duds, and I guess she'd come out to show them off. They were brownish, kind of, and she'd a spanking hat on with feathers and things in it. Her hair was shining under it, all purply-black, and she looked sweet enough to eat. Then she saw Ruggles and me and she waved her hand and laughed, and her big blackish-blue eyes sparkled; but she hadn't been laughing before, or sparkling either.

I'd thought she looked kind of glum, and I wondered if she and Micky had had a falling out. I rather suspected it, for at the Senior Prom, three nights before, she had hardly looked at Micky, but had sat in a corner and

talked to the Old Fellow. He didn't do much talking; he was too shy, and he looked mighty uncomfortable. I thought it kind of mean of Sylvia to torment him so, when she knew he hated to have to talk to girls, but when I saw Micky scowling at the corner, I knew she was doing it to make him jealous. Girls won't stick at anything when they want to provoke a chap; I know it to my cost, for Jennie Price — but that has nothing to do with this story.

Just across the square Sylvia met the Old Fellow and bowed. He lifted his hat and passed on, but after a few steps he turned and looked back; he caught Sylvia doing the same thing, so he wheeled and came on, looking mighty foolish. As he passed beneath our window Ruggles chuckled fiendishly.

"I've thought of something, Polly," he said — my name is Paul. "Bet you it will make the Old Fellow squirm. Let's write a letter to Sylvia Grant — a love letter — and sign the Old Fellow's name to it. She'll give him a fearful snubbing, and we'll be revenged."

"But who'll write it?" I said doubtfully. "I can't. You'll have to, Ruggles. You've had more practice."

Ruggles turned red. I know he writes to Em White in vacations.

"I'll do my best," he said, quite meekly. "That is, I'll compose it. But you'll have to copy it. You can imitate the Old Fellow's handwriting so well."

"But look here," I said, an uncomfortable idea striking me, "what about Sylvia? Won't she feel kind of flattish when she finds out he didn't write it? For of course he'll tell her. We haven't anything against her, you know."

"Oh, Sylvia won't care," said Ruggles serenely. "She's the sort of girl who can take a joke. I've seen her eyes shine over tricks we've played on the professors before now. She'll just laugh. Besides, she doesn't like the Old Fellow a bit. I know from the way she acts with him. She's always so cool and stiff when he's about, not a bit like she is with the other professors."

Well, Ruggles wrote the letter. At first he tried to pass it off on me as his own composition. But I know a few little things, and one of them is that Ruggles couldn't have made up that letter any more than he could have written a sonnet. I told him so, and made him own up. He had a copy of an old letter that had been written to his sister by her young man. I suppose Ruggles had stolen it, but there is no use inquiring too closely into these things. Anyhow, that letter just filled the bill. It was beautifully expressed. Ruggles's sister's young man must have possessed lots of ability. He was an English professor, something like Micky, so I suppose he was extra good at it. He started in by telling her how much he loved her, and what an angel of beauty and goodness he had always thought her; how unworthy he felt himself of her and how little hope he had that she could ever care for him; and he wound up by imploring her to tell him if she could possibly love him a little bit and all that sort of thing.

I copied the letter out on heliotrope paper in my best imitation of the Old Fellow's handwriting and signed it, "Yours devotedly and imploringly, George Osborne." Then we mailed it that very evening.

The next evening the Cad girls gave a big reception in the Assembly Hall to an Academy alumna who was visiting the Greek professor's wife. It was the smartest event of the term and everybody was there — students and faculty and, of course, Sylvia Grant. Sylvia looked stunning. She was all in white, with a string of pearls about her pretty round throat and a couple of little pink roses in her black hair. I never saw her so smiling and bright; but she seemed quieter than usual, and avoided poor Micky so skilfully that it was really a pleasure to watch her. The Old Fellow came in late, with his tie all crooked, as it always was; I saw Sylvia blush and nudged Ruggles to look.

"She's thinking of the letter," he said.

Ruggles and I never meant to listen, upon my word we didn't. It was pure accident. We were in behind the flags and palms in the Modern Languages Room, fixing up a plan how to get Em and Jennie off for a moonlit stroll in the grounds — these things require diplomacy I can tell you, for there are always so many other fellows hanging about — when in

came Sylvia Grant and the Old Fellow arm in arm. The room was quite empty, or they thought it was, and they sat down just on the other side of the flags. They couldn't see us, but we could see them quite plainly. Sylvia still looked smiling and happy, not a bit mad as we had expected, but just kind of shy and radiant. As for the Old Fellow, he looked, as Em White would say, as Sphinx-like as ever. I'd defy any man alive to tell from the Old Fellow's expression what he was thinking about or what he felt like at any time.

Then all at once Sylvia said softly, with her eyes cast down, "I received your letter, Mr. Osborne."

Any other man in the world would have jumped, or said, "My letter!!!" or shown surprise in some way. But the Old Fellow has a nerve. He looked sideways at Sylvia for a moment and then he said kind of drily, "Ah, did you?"

"Yes," said Sylvia, not much above a whisper. "It — it surprised me very much. I never supposed that you — you cared for me in that way."

"Can you tell me how I could help caring?" said the Old Fellow in the strangest way. His voice actually trembled.

"I — I don't think I would tell you if I knew," said Sylvia, turning her head away. "You see — I don't want you to help caring."

"Sylvia!"

You never saw such a transformation as came over the Old Fellow. His eyes just blazed, but his face went white. He bent forward and took her hand.

"Sylvia, do you mean that you — you actually care a little for me, dearest? Oh, Sylvia, do you mean that?"

"Of course I do," said Sylvia right out. "I've always cared — ever since I was a little girl coming here to school and breaking my heart over mathematics, although I hated them, just to be in your class. Why — why — I've treasured up old geometry exercises you wrote out for me just because you wrote them. But I thought I could never make you care for me. I was the happiest girl in the world when your letter came today."

“Sylvia,” said the Old Fellow, “I’ve loved you for years. But I never dreamed that you could care for me. I thought it quite useless to tell you of my love — before. Will you — can you be my wife, darling?”

At this point Ruggles and I differ as to what came next. He asserts that Sylvia turned square around and kissed the Old Fellow. But I’m sure she just turned her face and gave him a look and then he kissed her.

Anyhow, there they both were, going on at the silliest rate about how much they loved each other and how the Old Fellow thought she loved Micky and all that sort of thing. It was awful. I never thought the Old Fellow or Sylvia either could be so spooney. Ruggles and I would have given anything on earth to be out of that. We knew we’d no business to be there and we felt as foolish as flatfish. It was a tremendous relief when the Old Fellow and Sylvia got up at last and trailed away, both of them looking idiotically happy.

“Well, did you ever?” said Ruggles.

It was a girl’s exclamation, but nothing else would have expressed his feelings.

“No, I never,” I said. “To think that Sylvia Grant should be sweet on the Old Fellow when she could have Micky! It passes comprehension. Did she — did she really promise to marry him, Ruggles?”

“She did,” said Ruggles gloomily. “But, I say, isn’t that Old Fellow game? Tumbled to the trick in a jiff; never let on but what he wrote the letter, never will let on, I bet. Where does the joke come in, Polly, my boy?”

“It’s on us,” I said, “but nobody will know of it if we hold our tongues. We’ll have to hold them anyhow, for Sylvia’s sake, since she’s been goose enough to go and fall in love with the Old Fellow. She’d go wild if she ever found out the letter was a hoax. We have made that match, Ruggles. He’d never have got up enough spunk to tell her he wanted her, and she’d probably have married Micky out of spite.”

“Well, you know the Old Fellow isn’t a bad sort after all,” said Ruggles, “and he’s really awfully gone on her. So it’s all right. Let’s go and find the girls.”

The Parting of The Ways

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Mrs. Longworth crossed the hotel piazza, descended the steps, and walked out of sight down the shore road with all the grace of motion that lent distinction to her slightest movement. Her eyes were very bright, and an unusual flush stained the pallor of her cheek. Two men who were lounging in one corner of the hotel piazza looked admiringly after her.

“She is a beautiful woman,” said one.

“Wasn’t there some talk about Mrs. Longworth and Cunningham last winter?” asked the other.

“Yes. They were much together. Still, there may have been nothing wrong. She was old Judge Carmody’s daughter, you know. Longworth got Carmody under his thumb in money matters and put the screws on. They say he made Carmody’s daughter the price of the old man’s redemption. The girl herself was a mere child, I shall never forget her face on her wedding day. But she’s been plucky since then, I must say. If she has suffered, she hasn’t shown it. I don’t suppose Longworth ever ill-treats her. He isn’t that sort. He’s simply a grovelling cad — that’s all. Nobody would sympathise much with the poor devil if his wife did run off with Cunningham.”

Meanwhile, Beatrice Longworth walked quickly down the shore road, her white skirt brushing over the crisp golden grasses by the way. In a sunny hollow among the sandhills she came upon Stephen Gordon, sprawled out luxuriously in the warm, sea-smelling grasses. The youth sprang to his feet at sight of her, and his big brown eyes kindled to a glow.

Mrs. Longworth smiled to him. They had been great friends all summer. He was a lanky, overgrown lad of fifteen or sixteen, odd and shy and dreamy, scarcely possessing a speaking acquaintance with others at the hotel. But he and Mrs. Longworth had been congenial from their first

meeting. In many ways, he was far older than his years, but there was a certain inerradicable boyishness about him to which her heart warmed.

“You are the very person I was just going in search of. I’ve news to tell. Sit down.”

He spoke eagerly, patting the big gray boulder beside him with his slim, brown hand. For a moment Beatrice hesitated. She wanted to be alone just then. But his clever, homely face was so appealing that she yielded and sat down.

Stephen flung himself down again contentedly in the grasses at her feet, pillowing his chin in his palms and looking up at her, adoringly.

“You are so beautiful, dear lady. I love to look at you. Will you tilt that hat a little more over the left eyebrow? Yes — so — some day I shall paint you.”

His tone and manner were all simplicity.

“When you are a great artist,” said Beatrice, indulgently.

He nodded.

“Yes, I mean to be that. I’ve told you all my dreams, you know. Now for my news. I’m going away tomorrow. I had a telegram from father to-day.”

He drew the message from his pocket and flourished it up at her.

“I’m to join him in Europe at once. He is in Rome. Think of it — in Rome! I’m to go on with my art studies there. And I leave tomorrow.”

“I’m glad — and I’m sorry — and you know which is which,” said Beatrice, patting the shaggy brown head. “I shall miss you dreadfully, Stephen.”

“We have been splendid chums, haven’t we?” he said, eagerly.

Suddenly his face changed. He crept nearer to her, and bowed his head until his lips almost touched the hem of her dress.

“I’m glad you came down to-day,” he went on in a low, diffident voice. “I want to tell you something, and I can tell it better here. I couldn’t go away without thanking you. I’ll make a mess of it — I can never explain things. But you’ve been so much to me — you mean so much to me. You’ve made me believe in things I never believed in before. You — you

— I know now that there is such a thing as a good woman, a woman who could make a man better, just because he breathed the same air with her.”

He paused for a moment; then went on in a still lower tone:

“It’s hard when a fellow can’t speak of his mother because he can’t say anything good of her, isn’t it? My mother wasn’t a good woman. When I was eight years old she went away with a scoundrel. It broke father’s heart. Nobody thought I understood, I was such a little fellow. But I did. I heard them talking. I knew she had brought shame and disgrace on herself and us. And I had loved her so! Then, somehow, as I grew up, it was my misfortune that all the women I had to do with were mean and base. They were hirelings, and I hated and feared them. There was an aunt of mine — she tried to be good to me in her way. But she told me a lie, and I never cared for her after I found it out. And then, father — we loved each other and were good chums. But he didn’t believe in much either. He was bitter, you know. He said all women were alike. I grew up with that notion. I didn’t care much for anything — nothing seemed worth while. Then I came here and met you.”

He paused again. Beatrice had listened with a gray look on her face. It would have startled him had he glanced up, but he did not, and after a moment’s silence the halting boyish voice went on:

“You have changed everything for me. I was nothing but a clod before. You are not the mother of my body, but you are of my soul. It was born of you. I shall always love and reverence you for it. You will always be my ideal. If I ever do anything worth while it will be because of you. In everything I shall ever attempt I shall try to do it as if you were to pass judgment upon it. You will be a lifelong inspiration to me. Oh, I am bungling this! I can’t tell you what I feel — you are so pure, so good, so noble! I shall reverence all women for your sake henceforth.”

“And if,” said Beatrice, in a very low voice, “if I were false to your ideal of me — if I were to do anything that would destroy your faith in me — something weak or wicked—”

“But you couldn’t,” he interrupted, flinging up his head and looking at her with his great dog-like eyes, “you couldn’t!”

“But if I could?” she persisted, gently, “and if I did — what then?”

“I should hate you,” he said, passionately. “You would be worse than a murderess. You would kill every good impulse and belief in me. I would never trust anything or anybody again — but there,” he added, his voice once more growing tender, “you will never fail me, I feel sure of that.”

“Thank you,” said Beatrice, almost in a whisper. “Thank you,” she repeated, after a moment. She stood up and held out her hand. “I think I must go now. Goodbye, dear laddie. Write to me from Rome. I shall always be glad to hear from you wherever you are. And — and — I shall always try to live up to your ideal of me, Stephen.”

He sprang to his feet and took her hand, lifting it to his lips with boyish reverence. “I know that,” he said, slowly. “Goodbye, my sweet lady.”

When Mrs. Longworth found herself in her room again, she unlocked her desk and took out a letter. It was addressed to Mr. Maurice Cunningham. She slowly tore it twice across, laid the fragments on a tray, and touched them with a lighted match. As they blazed up one line came out in writhing redness across the page: “I will go away with you as you ask.” Then it crumbled into gray ashes.

She drew a long breath and hid her face in her hands.

The Promissory Note

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Ernest Duncan swung himself off the platform of David White's store and walked whistling up the street. Life seemed good to Ernest just then. Mr. White had given him a rise in salary that day, and had told him that he was satisfied with him. Mr. White was not easy to please in the matter of clerks, and it had been with fear and trembling that Ernest had gone into his store six months before. He had thought himself fortunate to secure such a chance. His father had died the preceding year, leaving nothing in the way of worldly goods except the house he had lived in. For several years before his death he had been unable to do much work, and the finances of the little family had dwindled steadily. After his father's death Ernest, who had been going to school and expecting to go to college, found that he must go to work at once instead to support himself and his mother.

If George Duncan had not left much of worldly wealth behind him, he at least bequeathed to his son the interest of a fine, upright character and a reputation for honesty and integrity. None knew this better than David White, and it was on this account that he took Ernest as his clerk, over the heads of several other applicants who seemed to have a stronger "pull."

"I don't know anything about you, Ernest," he said bluntly. "You're only sixteen, and you may not have an ounce of real grit or worth in you. But it will be a queer thing if your father's son hasn't. I knew him all his life. A better man never lived nor, before his accident, a smarter one. I'll give his son a chance, anyhow. If you take after your dad you'll get on all right."

Ernest had not been in the store very long before Mr. White concluded, with a gratified chuckle, that he did take after his father. He was hardworking, conscientious, and obliging. Customers of all sorts, from the rough fishermen who came up from the harbour to the old Irishwomen from the back country roads, liked him. Mr. White was satisfied. He was

beginning to grow old. This lad had the makings of a good partner in him by and by. No hurry; he must serve long apprenticeship first and prove his mettle; no use spoiling him by hinting at future partnerships before need was. That would all come in due time. David White was a shrewd man.

Ernest was unconscious of his employer's plans regarding him; but he knew that he stood well with him and, much to his surprise, he found that he liked the work, and was beginning to take a personal interest and pleasure in the store. Hence, he went home to tea on this particular afternoon with buoyant step and smiling eyes. It was a good world, and he was glad to be alive in it, glad to have work to do and a dear little mother to work for. Most of the folks who met him smiled in friendly fashion at the bright-eyed, frank-faced lad. Only old Jacob Patterson scowled grimly as he passed him, emitting merely a surly grunt in response to Ernest's greeting. But then, old Jacob Patterson was noted as much for his surliness as for his miserliness. Nobody had ever heard him speak pleasantly to anyone; therefore his unfriendliness did not at all dash Ernest's high spirits.

"I'm sorry for him," the lad thought. "He has no interest in life save accumulating money. He has no other pleasure or affection or ambition. When he dies I don't suppose a single regret will follow him. Father died a poor man, but what love and respect went with him to his grave — aye, and beyond it. Jacob Patterson, I'm sorry for you. You have chosen the poorer part, and you are a poor man in spite of your thousands."

Ernest and his mother lived up on the hill, at the end of the straggling village street. The house was a small, old-fashioned one, painted white, set in the middle of a small but beautiful lawn. George Duncan, during the last rather helpless years of his life, had devoted himself to the cultivation of flowers, shrubs, and trees and, as a result, his lawn was the prettiest in Conway. Ernest worked hard in his spare moments to keep it looking as well as in his father's lifetime, for he loved his little home dearly, and was proud of its beauty.

He ran gaily into the sitting-room.

“Tea ready, lady mother? I’m hungry as a wolf. Good news gives one an appetite. Mr. White has raised my salary a couple of dollars per week. We must celebrate the event somehow this evening. What do you say to a sail on the river and an ice cream at Taylor’s afterwards? When a little woman can’t outlive her schoolgirl hankering for ice cream — why, Mother, what’s the matter? Mother, dear!”

Mrs. Duncan had been standing before the window with her back to the room when Ernest entered. When she turned he saw that she had been crying.

“Oh, Ernest,” she said brokenly, “Jacob Patterson has just been here — and he says — he says—”

“What has that old miser been saying to trouble you?” demanded Ernest angrily, taking her hands in his.

“He says he holds your father’s promissory note for nine hundred dollars, overdue for several years,” answered Mrs. Duncan. “Yes — and he showed me the note, Ernest.”

“Father’s promissory note for nine hundred!” exclaimed Ernest in bewilderment. “But Father paid that note to James Patterson five years ago, Mother — just before his accident. Didn’t you tell me he did?”

“Yes, he did,” said Mrs. Duncan, “but—”

“Then where is it?” interrupted Ernest. “Father would keep the receipted note, of course. We must look among his papers.”

“You won’t find it there, Ernest. We — we don’t know where the note is. It — it was lost.”

“Lost! That is unfortunate. But you say that Jacob Patterson showed you a promissory note of Father’s still in existence? How can that be? It can’t possibly be the note he paid. And there couldn’t have been another note we knew nothing of?”

“I understand how this note came to be in Jacob Patterson’s possession,” said Mrs. Duncan more firmly, “but he laughed in my face when I told him. I must tell you the whole story, Ernest. But sit down and get your tea first.”

“I haven’t any appetite for tea now, Mother,” said Ernest soberly. “Let me hear the whole truth about the matter.”

“Seven years ago your father gave his note to old James Patterson, Jacob’s brother,” said Mrs. Duncan. “It was for nine hundred dollars. Two years afterwards the note fell due and he paid James Patterson the full amount with interest. I remember the day well. I have only too good reason to. He went up to the Patterson place in the afternoon with the money. It was a very hot day. James Patterson receipted the note and gave it to your father. Your father always remembered that much; he was also sure that he had the note with him when he left the house. He then went over to see Paul Sinclair. A thunderstorm came up while he was on the road. Then, as you know, Ernest, just as he turned in at Paul Sinclair’s gate the lightning flash struck and stunned him. It was weeks before he came to himself at all. He never did come completely to himself again. When, weeks afterwards, I thought of the note and asked him about it, we could not find it; and, search as we did, we never found it. Your father could never remember what he did with it when he left James Patterson’s. Neither Mr. Sinclair nor his wife could recollect seeing anything of it at the time of the accident. James Patterson had left for California the very morning after, and he never came back. We did not worry much about the loss of the note then; it did not seem of much moment, and your father was not in a condition to be troubled about the matter.”

“But, Mother, this note that Jacob Patterson holds — I don’t understand about this.”

“I’m coming to that. I remember distinctly that on the evening when your father came home after signing the note he said that James Patterson drew up a note and he signed it, but just as he did so the old man’s pet cat, which was sitting on the table, upset an ink bottle and the ink ran all over the table and stained one end of the note. Old James Patterson was the fussiest man who ever lived, and a stickler for neatness. ‘Tut, tut,’ he said, ‘this won’t do. Here, I’ll draw up another note and tear this blotted one up.’ He did so and your father signed it. He always supposed James Patterson destroyed the first one, and certainly he must have intended to,

for there never was an honest man. But he must have neglected to do so for, Ernest, it was that blotted note Jacob Patterson showed me today. He said he found it among his brother's papers. I suppose it has been in the desk up at the Patterson place ever since James went to California. He died last winter and Jacob is his sole heir. Ernest, that note with the compound interest on it for seven years amounts to over eleven hundred dollars. How can we pay it?"

"I'm afraid that this is a very serious business, Mother," said Ernest, rising and pacing the floor with agitated strides. "We shall have to pay the note if we cannot find the other — and even if we could, perhaps. Your story of the drawing up of the second note would not be worth anything as evidence in a court of law — and we have nothing to hope from Jacob Patterson's clemency. No doubt he believes that he really holds Father's unpaid note. He is not a dishonest man; in fact, he rather prides himself on having made all his money honestly. He will exact every penny of the debt. The first thing to do is to have another thorough search for the lost note — although I am afraid that it is a forlorn hope."

A forlorn hope it proved to be. The note did not turn up. Old Jacob Patterson proved obdurate. He laughed to scorn the tale of the blotted note and, indeed, Ernest sadly admitted to himself that it was not a story anybody would be in a hurry to believe.

"There's nothing for it but to sell our house and pay the debt, Mother," he said at last. Ernest had grown old in the days that had followed Jacob Patterson's demand. His boyish face was pale and haggard. "Jacob Patterson will take the case into the law courts if we don't settle at once. Mr. White offered to lend me the money on a mortgage on the place, but I could never pay the interest out of my salary when we have nothing else to live on. I would only get further and further behind. I'm not afraid of hard work, but I dare not borrow money with so little prospect of ever being able to repay it. We must sell the place and rent that little four-roomed cottage of Mr. Percy's down by the river to live in. Oh, Mother, it half kills me to think of your being turned out of your home like this!"

It was a bitter thing for Mrs. Duncan also, but for Ernest's sake she concealed her feelings and affected cheerfulness. The house and lot were sold, Mr. White being the purchaser thereof; and Ernest and his mother removed to the little riverside cottage with such of their household belongings as had not also to be sold to make up the required sum. Even then, Ernest had to borrow two hundred dollars from Mr. White, and he foresaw that the repaying of this sum would cost him much self-denial and privation. It would be necessary to cut their modest expenses down severely. For himself Ernest did not mind, but it hurt him keenly that his mother should lack the little luxuries and comforts to which she had been accustomed. He saw too, in spite of her efforts to hide it, that leaving her old home was a terrible blow to her. Altogether, Ernest felt bitter and disheartened; his step lacked spring and his face its smile. He did his work with dogged faithfulness, but he no longer found pleasure in it. He knew that his mother secretly pined after her lost home where she had gone as a bride, and the knowledge rendered him very unhappy.

Paul Sinclair, his father's friend and cousin, died that winter, leaving two small children. His wife had died the previous year. When his business affairs came to be settled they were found to be sadly involved. There were debts on all sides, and it was soon only too evident that nothing was left for the little boys. They were homeless and penniless.

"What will become of them, poor little fellows?" said Mrs. Duncan pityingly. "We are their only relatives, Ernest. We must give them a home at least."

"Mother, how can we!" exclaimed Ernest. "We are so poor. It's as much as we can do to get along now, and there is that two hundred to pay Mr. White. I'm sorry for Danny and Frank, but I don't see how we can possibly do anything for them."

Mrs. Duncan sighed.

"I know it isn't right to ask you to add to your burden," she said wistfully.

"It is of you I am thinking, Mother," said Ernest tenderly. "I can't have your burden added to. You deny yourself too much and work too hard now.

What would it be if you took the care of those children upon yourself?"

"Don't think of me, Ernest," said Mrs. Duncan eagerly. "I wouldn't mind. I'd be glad to do anything I could for them, poor little souls. Their father was your father's best friend, and I feel as if it were our duty to do all we can for them. They're such little fellows. Who knows how they would be treated if they were taken by strangers? And they'd most likely be separated, and that would be a shame. But I leave it for you to decide, Ernest. It is your right, for the heaviest part will fall on you."

Ernest did not decide at once. For a week he thought the matter over, weighing pros and cons carefully. To take the two Sinclair boys meant a double portion of toil and self-denial. Had he not enough to bear now? But, on the other side, was it not his duty, nay, his privilege, to help the children if he could? In the end he said to his mother:

"We'll take the little fellows, Mother. I'll do the best I can for them. We'll manage a corner and a crust for them."

So Danny and Frank Sinclair came to the little cottage. Frank was eight and Danny six, and they were small and lively and mischievous. They worshipped Mrs. Duncan, and thought Ernest the finest fellow in the world. When his birthday came around in March, the two little chaps put their heads together in a grave consultation as to what they could give him.

"You know he gave us presents on our birthdays," said Frank. "So we must give him something."

"I'll div him my pottet-knife," said Danny, taking the somewhat battered and loose-jointed affair from his pocket, and gazing at it affectionately.

"I'll give him one of Papa's books," said Frank. "That pretty one with the red covers and the gold letters."

A few of Mr. Sinclair's books had been saved for the boys, and were stored in a little box in their room. The book Frank referred to was an old History of the Turks, and its gay cover was probably the best of it, since its contents were of no particular merit.

On Ernest's birthday both boys gave him their offerings after breakfast.

“Here’s a pottet-knife for you,” said Danny graciously. “It’s a bully pottet-knife. It’ll cut real well if you hold it dust the wight way. I’ll show you.”

“And here’s a book for you,” said Frank. “It’s a real pretty book, and I guess it’s pretty interesting reading too. It’s all about the Turks.”

Ernest accepted both gifts gravely, and after the children had gone out he and his mother had a hearty laugh.

“The dear, kindhearted little lads!” said Mrs. Duncan. “It must have been a real sacrifice on Danny’s part to give you his beloved ‘pottet-knife.’ I was afraid you were going to refuse it at first, and that would have hurt his little feelings terribly. I don’t think the History of the Turks will keep you up burning the midnight oil. I remember that book of old — I could never forget that gorgeous cover. Mr. Sinclair lent it to your father once, and he said it was absolute trash. Why, Ernest, what’s the matter?”

Ernest had been turning the book’s leaves over carelessly. Suddenly he sprang to his feet with an exclamation, his face turning white as marble.

“Mother!” he gasped, holding out a yellowed slip of paper. “Look! It’s the lost promissory note.”

Mother and son looked at each other for a moment. Then Mrs. Duncan began to laugh and cry together.

“Your father took that book with him when he went to pay the note,” she said. “He intended to return it to Mr. Sinclair. I remember seeing the gleam of the red binding in his hand as he went out of the gate. He must have slipped the note into it and I suppose the book has never been opened since. Oh, Ernest — do you think — will Jacob Patterson—”

“I don’t know, Mother. I must see Mr. White about this. Don’t be too sanguine. This doesn’t prove that the note Jacob Patterson found wasn’t a genuine note also, you know — that is, I don’t think it would serve as proof in law. We’ll have to leave it to his sense of justice. If he refuses to refund the money I’m afraid we can’t compel him to do so.”

But Jacob Patterson did not any longer refuse belief to Mrs. Patterson’s story of the blotted note. He was a harsh, miserly man, but he prided himself on his strict honesty; he had been fairly well acquainted with his

brother's business transactions, and knew that George Duncan had given only one promissory note.

"I'll admit, ma'am, since the receipted note has turned up, that your story about the blotted one must be true," he said surlily. "I'll pay your money back. Nobody can ever say Jacob Patterson cheated. I took what I believed to be my due. Since I'm convinced it wasn't I'll hand every penny over. Though, mind you, you couldn't make me do it by law. It's my honesty, ma'am, it's my honesty."

Since Jacob Patterson was so well satisfied with the fibre of his honesty, neither Mrs. Duncan nor Ernest was disposed to quarrel with it. Mr. White readily agreed to sell the old Duncan place back to them, and by spring they were settled again in their beloved little home. Danny and Frank were with them, of course.

"We can't be too good to them, Mother," said Ernest. "We really owe all our happiness to them."

"Yes, but, Ernest, if you had not consented to take the homeless little lads in their time of need this wouldn't have come about."

"I've been well rewarded, Mother," said Ernest quietly, "but, even if nothing of the sort had happened, I would be glad that I did the best I could for Frank and Danny. I'm ashamed to think that I was unwilling to do it at first. If it hadn't been for what you said, I wouldn't have. So it is your unselfishness we have to thank for it all, Mother dear."

The Revolt of Mary Isabel

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“For a woman of forty, Mary Isabel, you have the least sense of any person I have ever known,” said Louisa Irving.

Louisa had said something similar in spirit to Mary Isabel almost every day of her life. Mary Isabel had never resented it, even when it hurt her bitterly. Everybody in Latimer knew that Louisa Irving ruled her meek little sister with a rod of iron and wondered why Mary Isabel never rebelled. It simply never occurred to Mary Isabel to do so; all her life she had given in to Louisa and the thought of refusing obedience to her sister’s Mede-and-Persian decrees never crossed her mind. Mary Isabel had only one secret from Louisa and she lived in daily dread that Louisa would discover it. It was a very harmless little secret, but Mary Isabel felt rightly sure that Louisa would not tolerate it for a moment.

They were sitting together in the dim living room of their quaint old cottage down by the shore. The window was open and the sea-breeze blew in, stirring the prim white curtains fitfully, and ruffling the little rings of dark hair on Mary Isabel’s forehead — rings which always annoyed Louisa. She thought Mary Isabel ought to brush them straight back, and Mary Isabel did so faithfully a dozen times a day; and in ten minutes they crept down again, kinking defiance to Louisa, who might make Mary Isabel submit to her in all things but had no power over naturally curly hair. Louisa had never had any trouble with her own hair; it was straight and sleek and mouse-coloured — what there was of it.

Mary Isabel’s face was flushed and her woodbrown eyes looked grieved and pleading. Mary Isabel was still pretty, and vanity is the last thing to desert a properly constructed woman.

“I can’t wear a bonnet yet, Louisa,” she protested. “Bonnets have gone out for everybody except really old ladies. I want a hat: one of those pretty, floppy ones with pale blue forget-me-nots.”

Then it was that Louisa made the remark quoted above.

“I wore a bonnet before I was forty,” she went on ruthlessly, “and so should every decent woman. It is absurd to be thinking so much of dress at your age, Mary Isabel. I don’t know what sort of a way you’d bedizen yourself out if I’d let you, I’m sure. It’s fortunate you have somebody to keep you from making a fool of yourself. I’m going to town tomorrow and I’ll pick you out a suitable black bonnet. You’d look nice starring round in leghorn and forget-me-nots, now, wouldn’t you?”

Mary Isabel privately thought she would, but she gave in, of course, although she did hate bitterly that unbought, unescapable bonnet.

“Well, do as you think best, Louisa,” she said with a sigh. “I suppose it doesn’t matter much. Nobody cares how I look anyhow. But can’t I go to town with you? I want to pick out my new silk.”

“I’m as good a judge of black silk as you,” said Louisa shortly. “It isn’t safe to leave the house alone.”

“But I don’t want a black silk,” cried Mary Isabel. “I’ve worn black so long; both my silk dresses have been black. I want a pretty silver-grey, something like Mrs. Chester Ford’s.”

“Did anyone ever hear such nonsense?” Louisa wanted to know, in genuine amazement. “Silver-grey silk is the most unserviceable thing in the world. There’s nothing like black for wear and real elegance. No, no, Mary Isabel, don’t be foolish. You must let me choose for you; you know you never had any judgment. Mother told you so often enough. Now, get your sunbonnet and take a walk to the shore. You look tired. I’ll get the tea.”

Louisa’s tone was kind though firm. She Was really good to Mary Isabel as long as Mary Isabel gave her her own way peaceably. But if she had known Mary Isabel’s secret she would never have permitted those walks to the shore.

Mary Isabel sighed again, yielded, and went out. Across a green field from the Irving cottage Dr. Donald Hamilton’s big house was hooding itself in the shadows of the thick fir grove that enabled the doctor to have a garden. There was no shelter at the cottage, so the Irving “girls” never

tried to have a garden. Soon after Dr. Hamilton had come there to live he had sent a bouquet of early daffodils over by his housekeeper. Louisa had taken them gingerly in her extreme fingertips, carried them across the field to the lawn fence, and cast them over it, under the amused grey eyes of portly Dr. Hamilton, who was looking out of his office window. Then Louisa had come back to the porch door and ostentatiously washed her hands.

“I guess that will settle Donald Hamilton,” she told the secretly sorry Mary Isabel triumphantly, and it did settle him — at least as far as any farther social advances were concerned.

Dr. Hamilton was an excellent physician and an equally excellent man. Louisa Irving could not have picked a flaw in his history or character. Indeed, against Dr. Hamilton himself she had no grudge, but he was the brother of a man she hated and whose relatives were consequently taboo in Louisa’s eyes. Not that the brother was a bad man either; he had simply taken the opposite side to the Irvings in a notable church feud of a dozen years ago, and Louisa had never since held any intercourse with him or his fellow sinners.

Mary Isabel did not look at the Hamilton house. She kept her head resolutely turned away as she went down the shore lane with its wild sweet loneliness of salt-withered grasses and piping seawinds. Only when she turned the corner of the firwood, which shut her out from view of the houses, did she look timidly over the line-fence. Dr. Hamilton was standing there, where the fence ran out to the sandy shingle, smoking his little black pipe, which he took out and put away when Mary Isabel came around the firs. Men did things like that instinctively in Mary Isabel’s company. There was something so delicately virginal about her, in spite of her forty years, that they gave her the reverence they would have paid to a very young, pure girl.

Dr. Hamilton smiled at the little troubled face under the big sunbonnet. Mary Isabel had to wear a sunbonnet. She would never have done it from choice.

“What is the matter?” asked the doctor, in his big, breezy, old-bachelor voice. He had another voice for sick-beds and rooms of bereavement, but this one suited best with the purring of the waves and winds.

“How do you know that anything is the matter?” Mary Isabel parried demurely.

“By your face. Come now, tell me what it is.”

“It is really nothing. I have just been foolish, that is all. I wanted a hat with forget-me-nots and a grey silk, and Louisa says I must have black and a bonnet.”

The doctor looked indignant but held his peace. He and Mary Isabel had tacitly agreed never to discuss Louisa, because such discussion would not make for harmony. Mary Isabel’s conscience would not let the doctor say anything uncomplimentary of Louisa, and the doctor’s conscience would not let him say anything complimentary. So they left her out of the question and talked about the sea and the boats and poetry and flowers and similar non-combustible subjects.

These clandestine meetings had been going on for two months, ever since the day they had just happened to meet below the firs. It never occurred to Mary Isabel that the doctor meant anything but friendship; and if it had occurred to the doctor, he did not think there would be much use in saying so. Mary Isabel was too hopelessly under Louisa’s thumb. She might keep tryst below the firs occasionally — so long as Louisa didn’t know — but to no farther lengths would she dare go. Besides, the doctor wasn’t quite sure that he really wanted anything more. Mary Isabel was a sweet little woman, but Dr. Hamilton had been a bachelor so long that it would be very difficult for him to get out of the habit; so difficult that it was hardly worth while trying when such an obstacle as Louisa Irving’s tyranny loomed in the way. So he never tried to make love to Mary Isabel, though he probably would have if he had thought it of any use. This does not sound very romantic, of course, but when a man is fifty, romance, while it may be present in the fruit, is assuredly absent in blossom.

“I suppose you won’t be going to the induction of my nephew Thursday week?” said the doctor in the course of the conversation.

“No. Louisa will not permit it. I had hoped,” said Mary Isabel with a sigh, as she braided some silvery shore-grasses nervously together, “that when old Mr. Moody went away she would go back to the church here. And I think she would if — if—”

“If Jim hadn’t come in Mr. Moody’s place,” finished the doctor with his jolly laugh.

Mary Isabel coloured prettily. “It is not because he is your nephew, doctor. It is because — because—”

“Because he is the nephew of my brother who was on the other side in that ancient church fracas? Bless you, I understand. What a good hater your sister is! Such a tenacity in holding bitterness from one generation to another commands admiration of a certain sort. As for Jim, he’s a nice little chap, and he is coming to live with me until the manse is repaired.”

“I am sure you will find that pleasant,” said Mary Isabel primly.

She wondered if the young minister’s advent would make any difference in regard to these shore-meetings; then decided quickly that it would not; then more quickly still that it wouldn’t matter if it did.

“He will be company,” admitted the doctor, who liked company and found the shore road rather lonesome. “I had a letter from him today saying that he’d come home with me from the induction. By the way, they’re tearing down the old post office today. And that reminds me — by Jove, I’d all but forgotten. I promised to go up and see Mollie Marr this evening; Mollie’s nerves are on the rampage again. I must rush.”

With a wave of his hand the doctor hurried off. Mary Isabel lingered for some time longer, leaning against the fence, looking dreamily out to sea. The doctor was a very pleasant companion. If only Louisa would allow neighbourliness! Mary Isabel felt a faint, impotent resentment. She had never had anything other girls had: friends, dresses, beaux, and it was all Louisa’s fault — Louisa who was going to make her wear a bonnet for the rest of her life. The more Mary Isabel thought of that bonnet the more she hated it.

That evening Warren Marr rode down to the shore cottage on horseback and handed Mary Isabel a letter; a strange, scrumpled, soiled,

yellow letter. When Mary Isabel saw the handwriting on the envelope she trembled and turned as deadly pale as if she had seen a ghost:

“Here’s a letter for you,” said Warren, grinning. “It’s been a long time on the way — nigh fifteen years. Guess the news’ll be rather stale. We found it behind the old partition when we tore it down today.”

“It is my brother Tom’s writing,” said Mary Isabel faintly. She went into the room trembling, holding the letter tightly in her clasped hands. Louisa had gone up to the village on an errand; Mary Isabel almost wished she were home; she hardly felt equal to the task of opening Tom’s letter alone. Tom had been dead for ten years and this letter gave her an uncanny sensation; as of a message from the spirit-land.

Fifteen years, ago Thomas Irving had gone to California and five years later he had died there. Mary Isabel, who had idolized her brother, almost grieved herself to death at the time.

Finally she opened the letter with ice-cold fingers. It had been written soon after Tom reached California. The first two pages were filled with descriptions of the country and his “job.”

On the third Tom began abruptly:

Look here, Mary Isabel, you are not to let Louisa boss you about as she was doing when I was at home. I was going to speak to you about it before I came away, but I forgot. Lou is a fine girl, but she is too domineering, and the more you give in to her the worse it makes her. You’re far too easygoing for your own welfare, Mary Isabel, and for your own sake I Wish you had more spunk. Don’t let Louisa live your life for you; just you live it yourself. Never mind if there is some friction at first; Lou will give in when she finds she has to, and you’ll both be the better for it, I want you to be real happy, Mary Isabel, but you won’t be if you don’t assert your independence. Giving in the way you do is bad for both you and Louisa. It will make her a tyrant and you a poor-spirited creature of no account in the world. Just brace up and stand firm.

When she had read the letter through Mary Isabel took it to her own room and locked it in her bureau drawer. Then she sat by her window, looking out into a sea-sunset, and thought it over. Coming in the strange

way it had, the letter seemed a message from the dead, and Mary Isabel had a superstitious conviction that she must obey it. She had always had a great respect for Tom's opinion. He was right — oh, she felt that he was right. What a pity she had not received the letter long ago, before the shackles of habit had become so firmly riveted. But it was not too late yet. She would rebel at last and — how had Tom phrased it — oh, yes, assert her independence. She owed it to Tom; It had been his wish — and he was dead — and she would do her best to fulfil it.

“I shan't get a bonnet,” thought Mary Isabel determinedly. “Tom wouldn't have liked me in a bonnet. From this out I'm just going to do exactly as Tom would have liked me to do, no matter how afraid I am of Louisa. And, oh, I am horribly afraid of her.”

Mary Isabel was every whit as much afraid the next morning after breakfast but she did not look it, by reason of the flush on her cheeks and the glint in her brown eyes. She had put Tom's letter in the bosom of her dress and she pressed her fingertips on it that the crackle might give her courage.

“Louisa,” she said firmly, “I am going to town with you.”

“Nonsense,” said Louisa shortly.

“You may call it nonsense if you like, but I am going,” said Mary Isabel unquaveringly. “I have made up my mind on that point, Louisa, and nothing you can say will alter it.”

Louisa looked amazed. Never before had Mary Isabel set her decrees at naught.

“Are you crazy, Mary Isabel?” she demanded.

“No, I am not crazy. But I am going to town and I am going to get a silver-grey silk for myself and a new hat. I will not wear a bonnet and you need never mention it to me again, Louisa.”

“If you are going to town I shall stay home,” said Louisa in a cold, ominous tone that almost made Mary Isabel quake. If it had not been for that reassuring crackle of Tom's letter I fear Mary Isabel would have given in. “This house can't be left alone. If you go, I'll stay.”

Louisa honestly thought that would bring the rebel to terms. Mary Isabel had never gone to town alone in her life. Louisa did not believe she would dare to go. But Mary Isabel did not quail. Defiance was not so hard after all, once you had begun.

Mary Isabel went to town and she went alone. She spent the whole delightful day in the shops, unhampered by Louisa's scorn and criticism in her examination of all the pretty things displayed. She selected a hat she felt sure Tom would like — a pretty crumpled grey straw with forget-me-nots and ribbons. Then she bought a grey silk of a lovely silvery shade.

When she got back home she unwrapped her packages and showed her purchases to Louisa. But Louisa neither looked at them nor spoke to Mary Isabel. Mary Isabel tossed her head and went to her own room. Her draught of freedom had stimulated her, and she did not mind Louisa's attitude half as much as she would have expected. She read Tom's letter over again to fortify herself and then she dressed her hair in a fashion she had seen that day in town and pulled out all the little curls on her forehead.

The next day she took the silver-grey silk to the Latimer dressmaker and picked out a fashionable design for it. When the silk dress came home, Louisa, who had thawed out somewhat in the meantime, unbent sufficiently to remark that it fitted very well.

"I am going to wear it to the induction tomorrow," Mary Isabel said, boldly to all appearances, quakingly in reality. She knew that she was throwing down the gauntlet for good and all. If she could assert and maintain her independence in this matter Louisa's power would be broken forever.

Twelve years before this, the previously mentioned schism had broken out in the Latimer church. The minister had sided with the faction which Louisa Irving opposed. She had promptly ceased going to his church and withdrew all financial support. She paid to the Marwood church, fifteen miles away, and occasionally she hired a team and drove over there to service. But she never entered the Latimer church again nor allowed Mary Isabel to do so. For that matter, Mary Isabel did not wish to go. She had resented the minister's attitude almost as bitterly as Louisa. But when Mr.

Moody accepted a call elsewhere Mary Isabel hoped that she and Louisa might return to their old church home. Possibly they might have done so had not the congregation called the young, newly fledged James Anderson. Mary Isabel would not have cared for this, but Louisa sternly said that neither she nor any of hers should ever darken the doors of a church where the nephew of Martin Hamilton preached. Mary Isabel had regretfully acquiesced at the time, but now she had made up her mind to go to church and she meant to begin with the induction service.

Louisa stared at her sister incredulously.

“Have you taken complete leave of your senses, Mary Isabel?”

“No. I’ve just come to them,” retorted Mary Isabel recklessly, gripping a chair-back desperately so that Louisa should not see how she was trembling. “It is all foolishness to keep away from church just because of an old grudge. I’m tired of staying home Sundays or driving fifteen miles to Marwood to hear poor old Mr. Grattan. Everybody says Mr. Anderson is a splendid young man and an excellent preacher, and I’m going to attend his services regularly.”

Louisa had taken Mary Isabel’s first defiance in icy disdain. Now she lost her temper and raged. The storm of angry words beat on Mary Isabel like hail, but she fronted it staunchly. She seemed to hear Tom’s voice saying, “Live your own life, Mary Isabel; don’t let Louisa live it for you,” and she meant to obey him.

“If you go to that man’s induction I’ll never forgive you,” Louisa concluded.

Mary Isabel said nothing. She just primmed up her lips very determinedly, picked up the silk dress, and carried it to her room.

The next day was fine and warm. Louisa said no word all the morning. She worked fiercely and slammed things around noisily. After dinner Mary Isabel went to her room and came down presently, fine and dainty in her grey silk, with the forget-me-not hat resting on the soft loose waves of her hair. Louisa was blacking the kitchen stove.

She shot one angry glance at Mary Isabel, then gave a short, contemptuous laugh, the laugh of an angry woman who finds herself

robbed of all weapons except ridicule.

Mary Isabel flushed and walked with an unfaltering step out of the house and up the lane. She resented Louisa's laughter. She was sure there was nothing so very ridiculous about her appearance. Women far older than she, even in Latimer, wore light dresses and fashionable hats. Really, Louisa was very disagreeable.

"I have put up with her ways too long," thought Mary Isabel, with a quick, unwonted rush of anger. "But I never shall again — no, never, let her be as vexed and scornful as she pleases."

The induction services were interesting, and Mary Isabel enjoyed them. Doctor Hamilton was sitting across from her and once or twice she caught him looking at her admiringly. The doctor noticed the hat and the grey silk and wondered how Mary Isabel had managed to get her own way concerning them. What a pretty woman she was! Really, he had never realized before how very pretty she was. But then, he had never seen her except in a sunbonnet or with her hair combed primly back.

But when the service was over Mary Isabel was dismayed to see that the sky had clouded over and looked very much like rain. Everybody hurried home, and Mary Isabel tripped along the shore road filled with anxious thoughts about her dress. That kind of silk always spotted, and her hat would be ruined if it got wet. How foolish she had been not to bring an umbrella!

She reached her own doorstep panting just as the first drop of rain fell.

"Thank goodness," she breathed.

Then she tried to open the door. It would not open.

She could see Louisa sitting by the kitchen window, calmly reading.

"Louisa, open the door quick," she called impatiently.

Louisa never moved a muscle, although Mary Isabel knew she must have heard.

"Louisa, do you hear what I say?" she cried, reaching over and tapping on the pane imperiously. "Open the door at once. It is going to rain — it is raining now. Be quick."

Louisa might as well have been a graven image for all the response she gave. Then did Mary Isabel realize her position. Louisa had locked her out purposely, knowing the rain was coming. Louisa had no intention of letting her in; she meant to keep her out until the dress and hat of her rebellion were spoiled. This was Louisa's revenge.

Mary Isabel turned with a gasp. What should she do? The padlocked doors of henhouse and well-house and wood-house: revealed the thoroughness of Louisa's vindictive design. Where should she go? She would go somewhere. She would not have her lovely new dress and hat spoiled!

She caught her ruffled skirts up in her hand and ran across the yard. She climbed the fence into the field and ran across that. Another drop of rain struck her cheek. She never glanced back or she would have seen a horrified face peering from the cottage kitchen window. Louisa had never dreamed that Mary Isabel would seek refuge over at Dr. Hamilton's.

Dr. Hamilton, who had driven home from church with the young minister, saw her coming and ran to open the door for her. Mary Isabel dashed up the verandah steps, breathless, crimson-cheeked, trembling with pent-up indignation and sense of outrage.

"Louisa locked me out, Dr. Hamilton," she cried almost hysterically. "She locked me out on purpose to spoil my dress. I'll never forgive her, I'll never go back to her, never, never, unless she asks me to. I had to come here. I was not going to have my dress ruined to please Louisa."

"Of course not — of course not," said Dr. Hamilton soothingly, drawing her into his big cosy living room. "You did perfectly right to come here, and you are just in time. There is the rain now in good earnest."

Mary Isabel sank into a chair and looked at Dr. Hamilton with tears in her eyes.

"Wasn't it an unkind, unsisterly thing to do?" she asked piteously. "Oh, I shall never feel the same towards Louisa again. Tom was right — I didn't tell you about Tom's letter but I will by and by. I shall not go back to Louisa after her locking me out. When it stops raining I'll go straight up to

my cousin Ella's and stay with her until I arrange my plans. But one thing is certain, I shall not go back to Louisa."

"I wouldn't," said the doctor recklessly. "Now, don't cry and don't worry. Take off your hat — you can go to the spare room across the hall, if you like. Jim has gone upstairs to lie down; he has a bad headache and says he doesn't want any tea. So I was going to get up a bachelor's snack for myself. My housekeeper is away. She heard, at church that her mother was ill and went over to Marwood."

When Mary Isabel came back from the spare room, a little calmer but with traces of tears on her pink cheeks, the doctor had as good a tea-table spread as any woman could have had. Mary Isabel thought it was fortunate that the little errand boy, Tommy Brewster, was there, or she certainly would have been dreadfully embarrassed, now that the flame of her anger had blown out. But later on, when tea was over and she and the doctor were left alone, she did not feel embarrassed after all. Instead, she felt delightfully happy and at home. Dr. Hamilton put one so at ease.

She told him all about Tom's letter and her subsequent revolt. Dr. Hamilton never once made the mistake of smiling. He listened and approved and sympathized.

"So I'm determined I won't go back," concluded Mary Isabel, "unless she asks me to — and Louisa will never do that. Ella will be glad enough to have me for a while; she has five children and can't get any help."

The doctor shrugged his shoulders. He thought of Mary Isabel as unofficial drudge to Ella Kemble and her family. Then he looked at the little silvery figure by the window.

"I think I can suggest a better plan," he said gently and tenderly. "Suppose you stay here — as my wife. I've always wanted to ask you that but I feared it was no use because I knew Louisa would oppose it and I did not think you would consent if she did not. I think," the doctor leaned forward and took Mary Isabel's fluttering hand in his, "I think we can be very happy here, dear."

Mary Isabel flushed crimson and her heart beat wildly. She knew now that she loved Dr. Hamilton — and Tom would have liked it — yes, Tom

would. She remembered how Tom hated the thought of his sisters being old maids.

“I — think — so — too,” she faltered shyly.

“Then,” said the doctor briskly, “what is the matter with our being married right here and now?”

“Married!”

“Yes, of course. Here we are in a state where no licence is required, a minister in the house, and you all dressed in the most beautiful wedding silk imaginable. You must see, if you just look at it calmly, how much better it will be than going up to Mrs. Kemble’s and thereby publishing your difference with Louisa to all the village. I’ll give you fifteen minutes to get used to the idea and then I’ll call Jim down.”

Mary Isabel put her hands to her face.

“You — you’re like a whirlwind,” she gasped. “You take away my breath.”

“Think it over,” said the doctor in a businesslike voice.

Mary Isabel thought — thought very hard for a few moments.

What would Tom have said?

Was it probable that Tom would have approved of such marrying in haste?

Mary Isabel came to the decision that he would have preferred it to having family jars bruited abroad. Moreover, Mary Isabel had never liked Ella Kemble very much. Going to her was only one degree better than going back to Louisa.

At last Mary Isabel took her hands down from her face. “Well?” said the doctor persuasively as she did so.

“I will consent on one condition,” said Mary Isabel firmly. “And that is, that you will let me send word over to Louisa that I am going to be married and that she may come and see the ceremony if she will. Louisa has behaved very unkindly in this matter, but after all she is my sister — and she has been good to me in some ways — and I am not going to give her a chance to say that I got married in this — this headlong-fashion and never let her know.”

“Tommy can take the word over,” said the doctor.

Mary Isabel went to the doctor’s desk and wrote a very brief note.

Dear Louisa:

I am going to be married to Dr. Hamilton right away. I’ve seen him often at the shore this summer. I would like you to be present at the ceremony if you choose.

Mary Isabel.

Tommy ran across the field with the note.

It had now ceased raining and the clouds were breaking. Mary Isabel thought that a good omen. She and the doctor watched Tommy from the window. They saw Louisa come to the door, take the note, and shut the door in Tommy’s face. Ten minutes later she reappeared, habited in her mackintosh, with her second-best bonnet on.

“She’s — coming,” said Mary Isabel, trembling.

The doctor put his arm protectingly about the little lady.

Mary Isabel tossed her head. “Oh, I’m not — I’m only excited. I shall never be afraid of Louisa again.”

Louisa came grimly over the field, up the verandah steps, and into the room without knocking.

“Mary Isabel,” she said, glaring at her sister and ignoring the doctor entirely, “did you mean what you said in that letter?”

“Yes, I did,” said Mary Isabel firmly.

“You are going to be married to that man in this shameless, indecent haste?”

“Yes.”

“And nothing I can say will have the least effect on you?”

“Not the slightest.”

“Then,” said Louisa, more grimly than ever, “all I ask of you is to come home and be married from under your father’s roof. Do have that much respect for your parents’ memory, at least.”

“Of course I will,” cried Mary Isabel impulsively, softening at once.

“Of course we will — won’t we?” she asked, turning prettily to the doctor.

“Just as you say,” he answered gallantly.

Louisa snorted. “I’ll go home and air the parlour,” she said. “It’s lucky I baked that fruitcake Monday. You can come when you’re ready.”

She stalked home across the field. In a few minutes the doctor and Mary Isabel followed, and behind them came the young minister, carrying his blue book under his arm, and trying hard and not altogether successfully to look grave.

The Twins and a Wedding

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Sometimes Johnny and I wonder what would really have happened if we had never started for Cousin Pamela's wedding. I think that Ted would have come back some time; but Johnny says he doesn't believe he ever would, and Johnny ought to know, because Johnny's a boy. Anyhow, he couldn't have come back for four years. However, we did start for the wedding and so things came out all right, and Ted said we were a pair of twin special Providences.

Johnny and I fully expected to go to Cousin Pamela's wedding because we had always been such chums with her. And she did write to Mother to be sure and bring us, but Father and Mother didn't want to be bothered with us. That is the plain truth of the matter. They are good parents, as parents go in this world; I don't think we could have picked out much better, all things considered; but Johnny and I have always known that they never want to take us with them anywhere if they can get out of it. Uncle Fred says that it is no wonder, since we are a pair of holy terrors for getting into mischief and keeping everybody in hot water. But I think we are pretty good, considering all the temptations we have to be otherwise. And, of course, twins have just twice as many as ordinary children.

Anyway, Father and Mother said we would have to stay home with Hannah Jane. This decision came upon us, as Johnny says, like a bolt from the blue. At first we couldn't believe they were not joking. Why, we felt that we simply had to go to Pamela's wedding. We had never been to a wedding in our lives and we were just aching to see what it would be like. Besides, we had written a marriage ode to Pamela and we wanted to present it to her. Johnny was to recite it, and he had been practising it out behind the carriage house for a week. I wrote the most of it. I can write poetry as slick as anything. Johnny helped me hunt out the rhymes. That is

the hardest thing about writing poetry, it is so difficult to find rhymes. Johnny would find me a rhyme and then I would write a line to suit it, and we got on swimmingly.

When we realized that Father and Mother meant what they said we were just too miserable to live. When I went to bed that night I simply pulled the clothes over my face and howled quietly. I couldn't help it when I thought of Pamela's white silk dress and tulle veil and flower girls and all the rest. Johnny said it was the wedding dinner he thought about. Boys are like that, you know.

Father and Mother went away on the early morning train, telling us to be good twins and not bother Hannah Jane. It would have been more to the point if they had told Hannah Jane not to bother us. She worries more about our bringing up than Mother does.

I was sitting on the front doorstep after they had gone when Johnny came around the corner, looking so mysterious and determined that I knew he had thought of something splendid.

"Sue," said Johnny impressively, "if you have any real sporting blood in you now is the time to show it. If you've enough grit we'll get to Pamela's wedding after all."

"How?" I said as soon as I was able to say anything.

"We'll just go. We'll take the ten o'clock train. It will get to Marsden by eleven-thirty and that'll be in plenty of time. The wedding isn't until twelve."

"But we've never been on the train alone, and we've never been to Marsden at all!" I gasped.

"Oh, of course, if you're going to hatch up all sorts of difficulties!" said Johnny scornfully. "I thought you had more spunk!"

"Oh, I have, Johnny," I said eagerly. "I'm all spunk. And I'll do anything you'll do. But won't Father and Mother be perfectly savage?"

"Of course. But we'll be there and they can't send us home again, so we'll see the wedding. We'll be punished afterwards all right, but we'll have had the fun, don't you see?"

I saw. I went right upstairs to dress, trusting everything blindly to Johnny. I put on my best pale blue shirred silk hat and my blue organdie dress and my high-heeled slippers. Johnny whistled when he saw me, but he never said a word; there are times when Johnny is a duck.

We slipped away when Hannah Jane was feeding the hens.

"I'll buy the tickets," explained Johnny. "I've got enough money left out of my last month's allowance because I didn't waste it all on candy as you did. You'll have to pay me back when you get your next month's jink, remember. I'll ask the conductor to tell us when we get to Marsden. Uncle Fred's house isn't far from the station, and we'll be sure to know it by all the cherry trees round it."

It sounded easy, and it was easy. We had a jolly ride, and finally the conductor came along and said, "Here's your jumping-off place, kiddies."

Johnny didn't like being called a kiddy, but I saw the conductor's eye resting admiringly on my blue silk hat and I forgave him.

Marsden was a pretty little village, and away up the road we saw Uncle Fred's place, for it was fairly smothered in cherry trees all white with lovely bloom. We started for it as fast as we could go, for we knew we had no time to lose. It is perfectly dreadful trying to hurry when you have on high-heeled shoes, but I said nothing and just tore along, for I knew Johnny would have no sympathy for me. We finally reached the house and turned in at the open gate of the lawn. I thought everything looked very peaceful and quiet for a wedding to be under way and I had a sickening idea that it was too late and it was all over.

"Nonsense!" said Johnny, cross as a bear, because he was really afraid of it too. "I suppose everybody is inside the house. No, there are two people over there by that bench. Let us go and ask them if this is the right place, because if it isn't we have no time to lose."

We ran across the lawn to the two people. One of them was a young lady, the very prettiest young lady I had ever seen. She was tall and stately, just like the heroine in a book, and she had lovely curly brown hair and big blue eyes and the most dazzling complexion. But she looked very cross and disdainful and I knew the minute I saw her that she had been

quarrelling with the young man. He was standing in front of her and he was as handsome as a prince. But he looked angry too. Altogether, you never saw a crosser-looking couple. Just as we came up we heard the young lady say, "What you ask is ridiculous and impossible, Ted. I can't get married at two days' notice and I don't mean to be."

And he said, "Very well, Una, I am sorry you think so. You would not think so if you really cared anything for me. It is just as well I have found out you don't. I am going away in two days' time and I shall not return in a hurry, Una."

"I do not care if you never return," she said.

That was a fib and well I knew it. But the young man didn't — men are so stupid at times. He swung around on one foot without replying and he would have gone in another second if he had not nearly fallen over Johnny and me.

"Please, sir," said Johnny respectfully, but hurriedly. "We're looking for Mr. Frederick Murray's place. Is this it?"

"No," said the young man a little gruffly. "This is Mrs. Franklin's place. Frederick Murray lives at Marsden, ten miles away."

My heart gave a jump and then stopped beating. I know it did, although Johnny says it is impossible.

"Isn't this Marsden?" cried Johnny chokily.

"No, this is Harrowsdeane," said the young man, a little more mildly.

I couldn't help it. I was tired and warm and so disappointed. I sat right down on the rustic seat behind me and burst into tears, as the storybooks say.

"Oh, don't cry, dearie," said the young lady in a very different voice from the one she had used before. She sat down beside me and put her arms around me. "We'll take you over to Marsden if you've got off at the wrong station."

"But it will be too late," I sobbed wildly. "The wedding is to be at twelve — and it's nearly that now — and oh, Johnny, I do think you might try to comfort me!"

For Johnny had stuck his hands in his pockets and turned his back squarely on me. I thought it so unkind of him. I didn't know then that it was because he was afraid he was going to cry right there before everybody, and I felt deserted by all the world.

"Tell me all about it," said the young lady.

So I told her as well as I could all about the wedding and how wild we were to see it and why we were running away to it.

"And now it's all no use," I wailed. "And we'll be punished when they find out just the same. I wouldn't mind being punished if we hadn't missed the wedding. We've never seen a wedding — and Pamela was to wear a white silk dress — and have flower girls — and oh, my heart is just broken. I shall never get over this — never — if I live to be as old as Methuselah."

"What can we do for them?" said the young lady, looking up at the young man and smiling a little. She seemed to have forgotten that they had just quarrelled. "I can't bear to see children disappointed. I remember my own childhood too well."

"I really don't know what we can do," said the young man, smiling back, "unless we get married right here and now for their sakes. If it is a wedding they want to see and nothing else will do them, that is the only idea I can suggest."

"Nonsense!" said the young lady. But she said it as if she would rather like to be persuaded it wasn't nonsense.

I looked up at her. "Oh, if you have any notion of being married I wish you would right off," I said eagerly. "Any wedding would do just as well as Pamela's. Please do."

The young lady laughed.

"One might just as well be married at two hours' notice as two days'," she said.

"Una," said the young man, bending towards her, "will you marry me here and now? Don't send me away alone to the other side of the world, Una."

"What on earth would Auntie say?" said Una helplessly.

“Mrs. Franklin wouldn’t object if you told her you were going to be married in a balloon.”

“I don’t see how we could arrange — oh, Ted, it’s absurd.”

“‘Tisn’t. It’s highly sensible. I’ll go straight to town on my wheel for the licence and ring and I’ll be back in an hour. You can be ready by that time.”

For a moment Una hesitated. Then she said suddenly to me, “What is your name, dearie?”

“Sue Murray,” I said, “and this is my brother, Johnny. We’re twins. We’ve been twins for ten years.”

“Well, Sue, I’m going to let you decide for me. This gentleman here, whose name is Theodore Prentice, has to start for Japan in two days and will have to remain there for four years. He received his orders only yesterday. He wants me to marry him and go with him. Now, I shall leave it to you to consent or refuse for me. Shall I marry him or shall I not?”

“Marry him, of course,” said I promptly. Johnny says she knew I would say that when she left it to me.

“Very well,” said Una calmly. “Ted, you may go for the necessaries. Sue, you must be my bridesmaid and Johnny shall be best man. Come, we’ll go into the house and break the news to Auntie.”

I never felt so interested and excited in my life. It seemed too good to be true. Una and I went into the house and there we found the sweetest, pinkest, plumpest old lady asleep in an easy-chair. Una wakened her and said, “Auntie, I’m going to be married to Mr. Prentice in an hour’s time.”

That was a most wonderful old lady! All she said was, “Dear me!” You’d have thought Una had simply told her she was going out for a walk.

“Ted has gone for licence and ring and minister,” Una went on. “We shall be married out under the cherry trees and I’ll wear my new white organdie. We shall leave for Japan in two days. These children are Sue and Johnny Murray who have come out to see a wedding — any wedding. Ted and I are getting married just to please them.”

“Dear me!” said the old lady again. “This is rather sudden. Still — if you must. Well, I’ll go and see what there is in the house to eat.”

She toddled away, smiling, and Una turned to me. She was laughing, but there were tears in her eyes.

“You blessed accidents!” she said, with a little tremble in her voice. “If you hadn’t happened just then Ted would have gone away in a rage and I might never have seen him again. Come now, Sue, and help me dress.”

Johnny stayed in the hall and I went upstairs with Una. We had such an exciting time getting her dressed. She had the sweetest white organdie you ever saw, all frills and laces. I’m sure Pamela’s silk couldn’t have been half so pretty. But she had no veil, and I felt rather disappointed about that. Then there was a knock at the door and Mrs. Franklin came in, with her arms full of something all fine and misty like a lacy cobweb.

“I’ve brought you my wedding veil, dearie,” she said. “I wore it forty years ago. And God bless you, dearie. I can’t stop a minute. The boy is killing the chickens and Bridget is getting ready to broil them. Mrs. Jenner’s son across the road has just gone down to the bakery for a wedding cake.”

With that she toddled off again. She was certainly a wonderful old lady. I just thought of Mother in her place. Well, Mother would simply have gone wild entirely.

When Una was dressed she looked as beautiful as a dream. The boy had finished killing the chickens, and Mrs. Franklin had sent him up with a basket of roses for us, and we had each the loveliest bouquet. Before long Ted came back with the minister, and the next thing we knew we were all standing out on the lawn under the cherry trees and Una and Ted were being married.

I was too happy to speak. I had never thought of being a bridesmaid in my wildest dreams and here I was one. How thankful I was that I had put on my blue organdie and my shirred hat! I wasn’t a bit nervous and I don’t believe Una was either. Mrs. Franklin stood at one side with a smudge of flour on her nose, and she had forgotten to take off her apron. Bridget and the boy watched us from the kitchen garden. It was all like a beautiful, bewildering dream. But the ceremony was horribly solemn. I am sure I

shall never have the courage to go through with anything of the sort, but Johnny says I will change my mind when I grow up.

When it was all over I nudged Johnny and said “Ode” in a fierce whisper. Johnny immediately stepped out before Una and recited it. Pamela’s name was mentioned three times and of course he should have put Una in place of it, but he forgot. You can’t remember everything.

“You dear funny darlings!” said Una, kissing us both. Johnny didn’t like that, but he said he didn’t mind it in a bride.

Then we had dinner, and I thought Mrs. Franklin more wonderful than ever. I couldn’t have believed any woman could have got up such a spread at two hours’ notice. Of course, some credit must be given to Bridget and the boy. Johnny and I were hungry enough by this time and we enjoyed that repast to the full.

We went home on the evening train. Ted and Una came to the station with us, and Una said she would write me when she got to Japan, and Ted said he would be obliged to us forever and ever.

When we got home we found Hannah Jane and Father and Mother — who had arrived there an hour before us — simply distracted. They were so glad to see us safe and sound that they didn’t even scold us, and when Father heard our story he laughed until the tears came into his eyes.

“Some are born to luck, some achieve luck, and some have luck thrust upon them,” he said.

A Golden Wedding

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The land dropped abruptly down from the gate, and a thick, shrubby growth of young apple orchard almost hid the little weather-grey house from the road. This was why the young man who opened the sagging gate could not see that it was boarded up, and did not cease his cheerful whistling until he had pressed through the crowding trees and found himself almost on the sunken stone doorstep over which in olden days honeysuckle had been wont to arch. Now only a few straggling, uncared-for vines clung forlornly to the shingles, and the windows were, as has been said, all boarded up.

The whistle died on the young man's lips and an expression of blank astonishment and dismay settled down on his face — a good, kindly, honest face it was, although perhaps it did not betoken any pronounced mental gifts on the part of its owner.

“What can have happened?” he said to himself. “Uncle Tom and Aunt Sally can't be dead — I'd have seen their deaths in the paper if they was. And I'd a-thought if they'd moved away it'd been printed too. They can't have been gone long — that flower-bed must have been made up last spring. Well, this is a kind of setback for a fellow. Here I've been tramping all the way from the station, a-thinking how good it would be to see Aunt Sally's sweet old face again, and hear Uncle Tom's laugh, and all I find is a boarded-up house going to seed. S'pose I might as well toddle over to Stetsons' and inquire if they haven't disappeared, too.”

He went through the old firs back of the lot and across the field to a rather shabby house beyond. A cheery-faced woman answered his knock and looked at him in a puzzled fashion. “Have you forgot me, Mrs. Stetson? Don't you remember Lovell Stevens and how you used to give him plum tarts when he'd bring your turkeys home?”

Mrs. Stetson caught both his hands in a hearty clasp.

“I guess I haven’t forgotten!” she declared. “Well, well, and you’re Lovell! I think I ought to know your face, though you’ve changed a lot. Fifteen years have made a big difference in you. Come right in. Pa, this is Lovell — you mind Lovell, the boy Aunt Sally and Uncle Tom had for years?”

“Reckon I do,” drawled Jonah Stetson with a friendly grin. “Ain’t likely to forget some of the capers you used to be cutting up. You’ve filled out considerable. Where have you been for the last ten years? Aunt Sally fretted a lot over you, thinking you was dead or gone to the bad.”

Lovell’s face clouded.

“I know I ought to have written,” he said repentantly, “but you know I’m a terrible poor scholar, and I’d do most anything than try to write a letter. But where’s Uncle Tom and Aunt Sally gone? Surely they ain’t dead?”

“No,” said Jonah Stetson slowly, “no — but I guess they’d rather be. They’re in the poorhouse.”

“The poorhouse! Aunt Sally in the poorhouse!” exclaimed Lovell.

“Yes, and it’s a burning shame,” declared Mrs. Stetson. “Aunt Sally’s just breaking her heart from the disgrace of it. But it didn’t seem as if it could be helped. Uncle Tom got so crippled with rheumatism he couldn’t work and Aunt Sally was too frail to do anything. They hadn’t any relations and there was a mortgage on the house.”

“There wasn’t any when I went away.”

“No; they had to borrow money six years ago when Uncle Tom had his first spell of rheumatic fever. This spring it was clear that there was nothing for them but the poorhouse. They went three months ago and terrible hard they took it, especially Aunt Sally, I felt awful about it myself. Jonah and I would have took them if we could, but we just couldn’t — we’ve nothing but Jonah’s wages and we have eight children and not a bit of spare room. I go over to see Aunt Sally as often as I can and take her some little thing, but I dunno’s she wouldn’t rather not see anybody than see them in the poorhouse.”

Lovell weighed his hat in his hands and frowned over it reflectively.

“Who owns the house now?”

“Peter Townley. He held the mortgage. And all the old furniture was sold too, and that most killed Aunt Sally. But do you know what she’s fretting over most of all? She and Uncle Tom will have been married fifty years in a fortnight’s time and Aunt Sally thinks it’s awful to have to spend their golden wedding anniversary in the poorhouse. She talks about it all the time. You’re not going, Lovell” — for Lovell had risen—”you must stop with us, since your old home is closed up. We’ll scare you up a shakedown to sleep on and you’re welcome as welcome. I haven’t forgot the time you caught Mary Ellen just as she was tumbling into the well.”

“Thank you, I’ll stay to tea,” said Lovell, sitting down again, “but I guess I’ll make my headquarters up at the station hotel as long as I stay round here. It’s kind of more central.”

“Got on pretty well out west, hey?” queried Jonah.

“Pretty well for a fellow who had nothing but his two hands to depend on when he went out,” said Lovell cautiously. “I’ve only been a labouring man, of course, but I’ve saved up enough to start a little store when I go back. That’s why I came east for a trip now — before I’d be tied down to business. I was hankering to see Aunt Sally and Uncle Tom once more. I’ll never forget how kind and good they was to me. There I was, when Dad died, a little sinner of eleven, just heading for destruction. They give me a home and all the schooling I ever had and all the love I ever got. It was Aunt Sally’s teachings made as much a man of me as I am. I never forgot ‘em and I’ve tried to live up to ‘em.”

After tea Lovell said he thought he’d stroll up the road and pay Peter Townley a call. Jonah Stetson and his wife looked at each other when he had gone.

“Got something in his eye,” nodded Jonah. “Him and Peter weren’t never much of friends.”

“Maybe Aunt Sally’s bread is coming back to her after all,” said his wife. “People used to be hard on Lovell. But I always liked him and I’m real glad he’s turned out so well.”

Lovell came back to the Stetsons' the next evening. In the interval he had seen Aunt Sally and Uncle Tom. The meeting had been both glad and sad. Lovell had also seen other people.

"I've bought Uncle Tom's old house from Peter Townley," he said quietly, "and I want you folks to help me out with my plans. Uncle Tom and Aunt Sally ain't going to spend their golden wedding in the poorhouse — no, sir. They'll spend it in their own home with their old friends about them. But they're not to know anything about it till the very night. Do you s'pose any of the old furniture could be got back?"

"I believe every stick of it could," said Mrs. Stetson excitedly. "Most of it was bought by folks living handy and I don't believe one of them would refuse to sell it back. Uncle Tom's old chair is here to begin with — Aunt Sally give me that herself. She said she couldn't bear to have it sold. Mrs. Isaac Appleby at the station bought the set of pink-sprigged china and James Parker bought the grandfather's clock and the whatnot is at the Stanton Grays'."

For the next fortnight Lovell and Mrs. Stetson did so much travelling round together that Jonah said genially he might as well be a bachelor as far as meals and buttons went. They visited every house where a bit of Aunt Sally's belongings could be found. Very successful they were too, and at the end of their jaunting the interior of the little house behind the apple trees looked very much as it had looked when Aunt Sally and Uncle Tom lived there.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Stetson had been revolving a design in her mind, and one afternoon she did some canvassing on her own account. The next time she saw Lovell she said:

"We ain't going to let you do it all. The women folks around here are going to furnish the refreshments for the golden wedding and the girls are going to decorate the house with golden rod."

The evening of the wedding anniversary came. Everybody in Blair was in the plot, including the matron of the poorhouse. That night Aunt Sally watched the sunset over the hills through bitter tears.

“I never thought I’d be celebrating my golden wedding in the poorhouse,” she sobbed. Uncle Tom put his twisted hand on her shaking old shoulder, but before he could utter any words of comfort Lovell Stevens stood before them.

“Just get your bonnet on, Aunt Sally,” he cried jovially, “and both of you come along with me. I’ve got a buggy here for you ... and you might as well say goodbye to this place, for you’re not coming back to it any more.”

“Lovell, oh, what do you mean?” said Aunt Sally tremulously.

“I’ll explain what I mean as we drive along. Hurry up — the folks are waiting.”

When they reached the little old house, it was all aglow with light. Aunt Sally gave a cry as she entered it. All her old household goods were back in their places. There were some new ones too, for Lovell had supplied all that was lacking. The house was full of their old friends and neighbours. Mrs. Stetson welcomed them home again.

“Oh, Tom,” whispered Aunt Sally, tears of happiness streaming down her old face, “oh, Tom, isn’t God good?”

They had a right royal celebration, and a supper such as the Blair housewives could produce. There were speeches and songs and tales. Lovell kept himself in the background and helped Mrs. Stetson cut cake in the pantry all the evening. But when the guests had gone, he went to Aunt Sally and Uncle Tom, who were sitting by the fire.

“Here’s a little golden wedding present for you,” he said awkwardly, putting a purse into Aunt Sally’s hand. “I reckon there’s enough there to keep you from ever having to go to the poorhouse again and if not, there’ll be more where that comes from when it’s done.”

There were twenty-five bright twenty-dollar gold pieces in the purse.

“We can’t take it, Lovell,” protested Aunt Sally. “You can’t afford it.”

“Don’t you worry about that,” laughed Lovell. “Out west men don’t think much of a little wad like that. I owe you far more than can be paid in cash, Aunt Sally. You must take it — I want to know there’s a little home here for me and two kind hearts in it, no matter where I roam.”

“God bless you, Lovell,” said Uncle Tom huskily. “You don’t know what you’ve done for Sally and me.”

That night, when Lovell went to the little bedroom off the parlour — for Aunt Sally, rejoicing in the fact that she was again mistress of a spare room, would not hear of his going to the station hotel — he gazed at his reflection in the gilt-framed mirror soberly.

“You’ve just got enough left to pay your passage back west, old fellow,” he said, “and then it’s begin all over again just where you begun before. But Aunt Sally’s face was worth it all — yes, sir. And you’ve got your two hands still and an old couple’s prayers and blessings. Not such a bad capital, Lovell, not such a bad capital.”

A Redeeming Sacrifice

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The dance at Byron Lyall's was in full swing. Toff Leclerc, the best fiddler in three counties, was enthroned on the kitchen table and from the glossy brown violin, which his grandfather brought from Grand Pré, was conjuring music which made even stiff old Aunt Phemy want to show her steps. Around the kitchen sat a row of young men and women, and the open sitting-room doorway was crowded with the faces of non-dancing guests who wanted to watch the sets.

An eight-hand reel had just been danced and the girls, giddy from the much swinging of the final figure, had been led back to their seats. Mattie Lyall came out with a dipper of water and sprinkled the floor, from which a fine dust was rising. Toff's violin purred under his hands as he waited for the next set to form. The dancers were slow about it. There was not the rush for the floor that there had been earlier in the evening, for the supper table was now spread in the dining-room and most of the guests were hungry.

"Fill up dere, boys," shouted the fiddler impatiently. "Bring out your gals for de nex' set."

After a moment Paul King led out Joan Shelley from the shadowy corner where they had been sitting. They had already danced several sets together; Joan had not danced with anybody else that evening. As they stood together under the light from the lamp on the shelf above them, many curious and disapproving eyes watched them. Connor Mitchell, who had been standing in the open outer doorway with the moonlight behind him, turned abruptly on his heel and went out.

Paul King leaned his head against the wall and watched the watchers with a smiling, defiant face as they waited for the set to form. He was a handsome fellow, with the easy, winning ways that women love. His hair curled in bronze masses about his head; his dark eyes were long and

drowsy and laughing; there was a swarthy bloom on his round cheeks; and his lips were as red and beguiling as a girl's. A bad egg was Paul King, with a bad past and a bad future. He was shiftless and drunken; ugly tales were told of him. Not a man in Lyall's house that night but grudged him the privilege of standing up with Joan Shelley.

Joan was a slight, blossom-like girl in white, looking much like the pale, sweet-scented house rose she wore in her dark hair. Her face was colourless and young, very pure and softly curved. She had wonderfully sweet, dark blue eyes, generally dropped down, with notably long black lashes. There were many showier girls in the groups around her, but none half so lovely. She made all the rosy-cheeked beauties seem coarse and overblown.

She left in Paul's clasp the hand by which he had led her out on the floor. Now and then he shifted his gaze from the faces before him to hers. When he did, she always looked up and they exchanged glances as if they had been utterly alone. Three other couples gradually took the floor and the reel began. Joan drifted through the figures with the grace of a windblown leaf. Paul danced with rollicking abandon, seldom taking his eyes from Joan's face. When the last mad whirl was over, Joan's brother came up and told her in an angry tone to go into the next room and dance no more, since she would dance with only one man. Joan looked at Paul. That look meant that she would do as he, and none other, told her. Paul nodded easily — he did not want any fuss just then — and the girl went obediently into the room. As she turned from him, Paul coolly reached out his hand and took the rose from her hair; then, with a triumphant glance around the room, he went out.

The autumn night was very clear and chill, with a faint, moaning wind blowing up from the northwest over the sea that lay shimmering before the door. Out beyond the cove the boats were nodding and curtsying on the swell, and over the shore fields the great red star of the lighthouse flared out against the silvery sky. Paul, with a whistle, sauntered down the sandy lane, thinking of Joan. How mightily he loved her — he, Paul King, who had made a mock of so many women and had never loved before! Ah, and

she loved him. She had never said so in words, but eyes and tones had said it — she, Joan Shelley, the pick and pride of the Harbour girls, whom so many men had wooed, winning their trouble for their pains. He had won her; she was his and his only, for the asking. His heart was seething with pride and triumph and passion as he strode down to the shore and flung himself on the cold sand in the black shadow of Michael Brown's beached boat.

Byron Lyall, a grizzled, elderly man, half farmer, half fisherman, and Maxwell Holmes, the Prospect schoolteacher, came up to the boat presently. Paul lay softly and listened to what they were saying. He was not troubled by any sense of dishonour. Honour was something Paul King could not lose since it was something he had never possessed. They were talking of him and Joan.

"What a shame that a girl like Joan Shelley should throw herself away on a man like that," Holmes said.

Byron Lyall removed the pipe he was smoking and spat reflectively at his shadow.

"Darned shame," he agreed. "That girl's life will be ruined if she marries him, plum' ruined, and marry him she will. He's bewitched her — darned if I can understand it. A dozen better men have wanted her — Connor Mitchell for one. And he's a honest, steady fellow with a good home to offer her. If King had left her alone, she'd have taken Connor. She used to like him well enough. But that's all over. She's infatuated with King, the worthless scamp. She'll marry him and be sorry for it to her last day. He's bad clear through and always will be. Why, look you, Teacher, most men pull up a bit when they're courting a girl, no matter how wild they've been and will be again. Paul hasn't. It hasn't made any difference. He was dead drunk night afore last at the Harbour head, and he hasn't done a stroke of work for a month. And yet Joan Shelley'll take him."

"What are her people thinking of to let her go with him?" asked Holmes.

"She hasn't any but her brother. He's against Paul, of course, but it won't matter. The girl's fancy's caught and she'll go her own gait to ruin.

Ruin, I tell ye. If she marries that handsome ne'er-do-well, she'll be a wretched woman all her days and none to pity her."

The two moved away then, and Paul lay motionless, face downward on the sand, his lips pressed against Joan's sweet, crushed rose. He felt no anger over Byron Lyall's unsparing condemnation. He knew it was true, every word of it. He was a worthless scamp and always would be. He knew that perfectly well. It was in his blood. None of his race had ever been respectable and he was worse than them all. He had no intention of trying to reform because he could not and because he did not even want to. He was not fit to touch Joan's hand. Yet he had meant to marry her!

But to spoil her life! Would it do that? Yes, it surely would. And if he were out of the way, taking his baleful charm out of her life, Connor Mitchell might and doubtless would win her yet and give her all he could not.

The man suddenly felt his eyes wet with tears. He had never shed a tear in his daredevil life before, but they came hot and stinging now. Something he had never known or thought of before entered into his passion and purified it. He loved Joan. Did he love her well enough to stand aside and let another take the sweetness and grace that was now his own? Did he love her well enough to save her from the poverty-stricken, shamed life she must lead with him? Did he love her better than himself?

"I ain't fit to think of her," he groaned. "I never did a decent thing in my life, as they say. But how can I give her up — God, how can I?"

He lay still a long time after that, until the moonlight crept around the boat and drove away the shadow. Then he got up and went slowly down to the water's edge with Joan's rose, all wet with his unaccustomed tears, in his hands. Slowly and reverently he plucked off the petals and scattered them on the ripples, where they drifted lightly off like fairy shallops on moonshine. When the last one had fluttered from his fingers, he went back to the house and hunted up Captain Alec Matheson, who was smoking his pipe in a corner of the verandah and watching the young folks dancing through the open door. The two men talked together for some time.

When the dance broke up and the guests straggled homeward, Paul sought Joan. Rob Shelley had his own girl to see home and relinquished the guardianship of his sister with a scowl. Paul strode out of the kitchen and down the steps at the side of Joan, smiling with his usual daredeviltry. He whistled noisily all the way up the lane.

“Great little dance,” he said. “My last in Prospect for a spell, I guess.”

“Why?” asked Joan wonderingly.

“Oh, I’m going to take a run down to South America in Matheson’s schooner. Lord knows when I’ll come back. This old place has got too deadly dull to suit me. I’m going to look for something livelier.”

Joan’s lips turned ashen under the fringes of her white fascinator. She trembled violently and put one of her small brown hands up to her throat. “You — you are not coming back?” she said faintly.

“Not likely. I’m pretty well tired of Prospect and I haven’t got anything to hold me here. Things’ll be livelier down south.”

Joan said nothing more. They walked along the spruce-fringed roads where the moonbeams laughed down through the thick, softly swaying boughs. Paul whistled one rollicking tune after another. The girl bit her lips and clenched her hands. He cared nothing for her — he had been making a mock of her as of others. Hurt pride and wounded love fought each other in her soul. Pride conquered. She would not let him, or anyone, see that she cared. She would not care!

At her gate Paul held out his hand.

“Well, goodbye, Joan. I’m sailing tomorrow so I won’t see you again — not for years likely. You will be some sober old married woman when I come back to Prospect, if I ever do.”

“Goodbye,” said Joan steadily. She gave him her cold hand and looked calmly into his face without quailing. She had loved him with all her heart, but now a fatal scorn of him was already mingling with her love. He was what they said he was, a scamp without principle or honour.

Paul whistled himself out of the Shelley lane and over the hill. Then he flung himself down under the spruces, crushed his face into the spicy frosted ferns, and had his black hour alone.

But when Captain Alec's schooner sailed out of the harbour the next day, Paul King was on board of her, the wildest and most hilarious of a wild and hilarious crew. Prospect people nodded their satisfaction.

"Good riddance," they said. "Paul King is black to the core. He never did a decent thing in his life."

A Soul That Was Not at Home

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There was a very fine sunset on the night Paul and Miss Trevor first met, and she had lingered on the headland beyond Noel's Cove to delight in it. The west was splendid in daffodil and rose; away to the north there was a mackerel sky of little fiery golden clouds; and across the water straight from Miss Trevor's feet ran a sparkling path of light to the sun, whose rim had just touched the throbbing edge of the purple sea. Off to the left were softly swelling violet hills and beyond the sandshore, where little waves were crisping and silvering, there was a harbour where scores of slender masts were nodding against the gracious horizon.

Miss Trevor sighed with sheer happiness in all the wonderful, fleeting, elusive loveliness of sky and sea. Then she turned to look back at Noel's Cove, dim and shadowy in the gloom of the tall headlands, and she saw Paul.

It did not occur to her that he could be a shore boy — she knew the shore type too well. She thought his coming mysterious, for she was sure he had not come along the sand, and the tide was too high for him to have come past the other headland. Yet there he was, sitting on a red sandstone boulder, with his bare, bronzed, shapely little legs crossed in front of him and his hands clasped around his knee. He was not looking at Miss Trevor but at the sunset — or, rather, it seemed as if he were looking through the sunset to still grander and more radiant splendours beyond, of which the things seen were only the pale reflections, not worthy of attention from those who had the gift of further sight.

Miss Trevor looked him over carefully with eyes that had seen a good many people in many parts of the world for more years than she found it altogether pleasant to acknowledge, and she concluded that he was quite the handsomest lad she had ever seen. He had a lithe, supple body, with sloping shoulders and a brown, satin throat. His hair was thick and wavy,

of a fine reddish chestnut; his brows were very straight and much darker than his hair; and his eyes were large and grey and meditative. The modelling of chin and jaw was perfect and his mouth was delicious, being full without pouting, the crimson lips just softly touching, and curving into finely finished little corners that narrowly escaped being dimpled.

His attire was a blue cotton shirt and a pair of scanty corduroy knickerbockers, but he wore it with such an unconscious air of purple and fine linen that Miss Trevor was tricked into believing him much better dressed than he really was.

Presently he smiled dreamily, and the smile completed her subjugation. It was not merely an affair of lip and eye, as are most smiles; it seemed an illumination of his whole body, as if some lamp had suddenly burst into flame inside of him, irradiating him from his chestnut crown to the tips of his unspoiled toes. Best of all, it was involuntary, born of no external effort or motive, but simply the outflashing of some wild, delicious thought that was as untrammelled and freakish as the wind of the sea.

Miss Trevor made up her mind that she must find out all about him, and she stepped out from the shadows of the rocks into the vivid, eerie light that was glowing all along the shore. The boy turned his head and looked at her, first with surprise, then with inquiry, then with admiration. Miss Trevor, in a white dress with a lace scarf on her dark, stately head, was well worth admiring. She smiled at him and Paul smiled back. It was not quite up to his first smile, having more of the effect of being put on from the outside, but at least it conveyed the subtly flattering impression that it had been put on solely for her, and they were as good friends from that moment as if they had known each other for a hundred years. Miss Trevor had enough discrimination to realize this and know that she need not waste time in becoming acquainted.

“I want to know your name and where you live and what you were looking at beyond the sunset,” she said.

“My name is Paul Hubert. I live over there. And I can’t tell just what I saw in the sunset, but when I go home I’m going to write it all in my

foolscap book.”

In her surprise over the second clause of his answer, Miss Trevor forgot, at first, to appreciate the last. “Over there,” according to his gesture, was up at the head of Noel’s Cove, where there was a little grey house perched on the rocks and looking like a large seashell cast up by the tide. The house had a stovepipe coming out of its roof in lieu of a chimney, and two of its window panes were replaced by shingles. Could this boy, who looked as young princes should — and seldom do — live there? Then he was a shore boy after all.

“Who lives there with you?” she asked. “You see” — plaintively—”I must ask questions about you. I know we like each other, and that is all that really matters. But there are some tiresome items which it would be convenient to know. For example, have you a father — a mother? Are there any more of you? How long have you been yourself?”

Paul did not reply immediately. He clasped his hands behind him and looked at her affectionately.

“I like the way you talk,” he said. “I never knew anybody did talk like that except folks in books and my rock people.”

“Your rock people?”

“I’m eleven years old. I haven’t any father or mother, they’re dead. I live over there with Stephen Kane. Stephen is splendid. He plays the violin and takes me fishing in his boat. When I get bigger he’s going shares with me. I love him, and I love my rock people too.”

“What do you mean by your rock people?” asked Miss Trevor, enjoying herself hugely. This was the only child she had ever met who talked as she wanted children to talk and who understood her remarks without having to have them translated.

“Nora is one of them,” said Paul, “the best one of them. I love her better than all the others because she came first. She lives around that point and she has black eyes and black hair and she knows all about the mermaids and water kelpies. You ought to hear the stories she can tell. Then there are the Twin Sailors. They don’t live anywhere — they sail all the time, but they often come ashore to talk to me. They are a pair of jolly

tars and they have seen everything in the world — and more than what's in the world, if you only knew it. Do you know what happened to the Youngest Twin Sailor once? He was sailing and he sailed right into a moonglade. A moonglade is the track the full moon makes on the water when it is rising from the sea, you know. Well, the Youngest Twin Sailor sailed along the moonglade till he came right up to the moon, and there was a little golden door in the moon and he opened it and sailed right through. He had some wonderful adventures inside the moon — I've got them all written down in my foolscap book. Then there is the Golden Lady of the Cave. One day I found a big cave down the shore and I went in and in and in — and after a while I found the Golden Lady. She has golden hair right down to her feet, and her dress is all glittering and glistening like gold that is alive. And she has a golden harp and she plays all day long on it — you might hear the music if you'd listen carefully, but prob'ly you'd think it was only the wind among the rocks. I've never told Nora about the Golden Lady, because I think it would hurt her feelings. It even hurts her feelings when I talk too long with the Twin Sailors. And I hate to hurt Nora's feelings, because I do love her best of all my rock people.”

“Paul! How much of this is true?” gasped Miss Trevor.

“Why, none of it!” said Paul, opening his eyes widely and reproachfully. “I thought you would know that. If I'd s'posed you wouldn't I'd have warned you there wasn't any of it true. I thought you were one of the kind that would know.”

“I am. Oh, I am!” said Miss Trevor eagerly. “I really would have known if I had stopped to think. Well, it's getting late now. I must go back, although I don't want to. But I'm coming to see you again. Will you be here tomorrow afternoon?”

Paul nodded.

“Yes. I promised to meet the Youngest Twin Sailor down at the striped rocks tomorrow afternoon, but the day after will do just as well. That is the beauty of the rock people, you know. You can always depend on them to be there just when you want them. The Youngest Twin Sailor won't mind — he's very good-tempered. If it was the Oldest Twin I dare say he'd be

cross. I have my suspicions about that Oldest Twin sometimes. I b'lieve he'd be a pirate if he dared. You don't know how fierce he can look at times. There's really something very mysterious about him."

On her way back to the hotel Miss Trevor remembered the foolscap book.

"I must get him to show it to me," she mused, smiling. "Why, the boy is a born genius — and to think he should be a shore boy! I can't understand it. And here I am loving him already. Well, a woman has to love something — and you don't have to know people for years before you can love them."

Paul was waiting on the Noel's Cove rocks for Miss Trevor the next afternoon. He was not alone; a tall man, with a lined, strong-featured face and a grey beard, was with him. The man was clad in a rough suit and looked what he was, a 'longshore fisherman. But he had deep-set, kindly eyes, and Miss Trevor liked his face. He moved off to one side when she came and stood there for a little, apparently gazing out to sea, while Paul and Miss Trevor talked. Then he walked away up the cove and disappeared in his little grey house.

"Stephen came down to see if you were a suitable person for me to talk to," said Paul gravely.

"I hope he thinks I am," said Miss Trevor, amused.

"Oh, he does! He wouldn't have gone away and left us alone if he didn't. Stephen is very particular who he lets me 'sociate with. Why, even the rock people now — I had to promise I'd never let the Twin Sailors swear before he'd allow me to be friends with them. Sometimes I know by the look of the Oldest Twin that he's just dying to swear, but I never let him, because I promised Stephen. I'd do anything for Stephen. He's awful good to me. Stephen's bringing me up, you know, and he's bound to do it well. We're just perfectly happy here, only I wish I'd more books to read. We go fishing, and when we come home at night I help Stephen clean the fish and then we sit outside the door and he plays the violin for me. We sit there for hours sometimes. We never talk much — Stephen isn't much of a

hand for talking — but we just sit and think. There's not many men like Stephen, I can tell you."

Miss Trevor did not get a glimpse of the foolscap book that day, nor for many days after. Paul blushed all over his beautiful face whenever she mentioned it.

"Oh, I couldn't show you that," he said uncomfortably. "Why, I've never even showed it to Stephen — or Nora. Let me tell you something else instead, something that happened to me once long ago. You'll find it more interesting than the foolscap book, only you must remember it isn't true! You won't forget that, will you?"

"I'll try to remember," Miss Trevor agreed.

"Well, I was sitting here one evening just like I was last night, and the sun was setting. And an enchanted boat came sailing over the sea and I got into her. The boat was all pearly like the inside of the mussel shells, and her sail was like moonshine. Well, I sailed right across to the sunset. Think of that — I've been in the sunset! And what do you suppose it is? The sunset is a land all flowers, like a great garden, and the clouds are beds of flowers. We sailed into a great big harbour, a thousand times bigger than the harbour over there at your hotel, and I stepped out of the boat on a 'normous meadow all roses. I stayed there for ever so long. It seemed almost a year, but the Youngest Twin Sailor says I was only away a few hours or so. You see, in Sunset Land the time is ever so much longer than it is here. But I was glad to come back too. I'm always glad to come back to the cove and Stephen. Now, you know this never really happened."

Miss Trevor would not give up the foolscap book so easily, but for a long time Paul refused to show it to her. She came to the cove every day, and every day Paul seemed more delightful to her. He was so quaint, so clever, so spontaneous. Yet there was nothing premature or unnatural about him. He was wholly boy, fond of fun and frolic, not too good for little spurts of quick temper now and again, though, as he was careful to explain to Miss Trevor, he never showed them to a lady.

"I get real mad with the Twin Sailors sometimes, and even with Stephen, for all he's so good to me. But I couldn't be mad with you or

Nora or the Golden Lady. It would never do.”

Every day he had some new story to tell of a wonderful adventure on rock or sea, always taking the precaution of assuring her beforehand that it wasn’t true. The boy’s fancy was like a prism, separating every ray that fell upon it into rainbows. He was passionately fond of the shore and water. The only world for him beyond Noel’s Cove was the world of his imagination. He had no companions except Stephen and the “rock people.”

“And now you,” he told Miss Trevor. “I love you too, but I know you’ll be going away before long, so I don’t let myself love you as much — quite — as Stephen and the rock people.”

“But you could, couldn’t you?” pleaded Miss Trevor. “If you and I were to go on being together every day, you could love me just as well as you love them, couldn’t you?”

Paul considered in a charming way he had.

“Of course I could love you better than the Twin Sailors and the Golden Lady,” he announced finally. “And I think perhaps I could love you as much as I love Stephen. But not as much as Nora — oh, no, I wouldn’t love you quite as much as Nora. She was first, you see; she’s always been there. I feel sure I couldn’t ever love anybody as much as Nora.”

One day when Stephen was out to the mackerel grounds, Paul took Miss Trevor into the little grey house and showed her his treasures. They climbed the ladder in one corner to the loft where Paul slept. The window of it, small and square-paned, looked seaward, and the moan of the sea and the pipe of the wind sounded there night and day. Paul had many rare shells and seaweeds, curious flotsam and jetsam of shore storms, and he had a small shelf full of books.

“They’re splendid,” he said enthusiastically. “Stephen brought me them all. Every time Stephen goes to town to ship his mackerel he brings me home a new book.”

“Were you ever in town yourself?” asked Miss Trevor.

“Oh, yes, twice. Stephen took me. It was a wonderful place. I tell you, when I next met the Twin Sailors it was me did the talking then. I had to tell them about all I saw and all that had happened. And Nora was ever so

interested too. The Golden Lady wasn't, though — she didn't hardly listen. Golden people are like that."

"Would you like," said Miss Trevor, watching him closely, "to live always in a town and have all the books you wanted and play with real girls and boys — and visit those strange lands your twin sailors tell you of?"

Paul looked startled.

"I — don't — know," he said doubtfully. "I don't think I'd like it very well if Stephen and Nora weren't there too."

But the new thought remained in his mind. It came back to him at intervals, seeming less new and startling every time.

"And why not?" Miss Trevor asked herself. "The boy should have a chance. I shall never have a son of my own — he shall be to me in the place of one."

The day came when Paul at last showed her the foolscap book. He brought it to her as she sat on the rocks of the headland.

"I'm going to run around and talk to Nora while you read it," he said. "I'm afraid I've been neglecting her lately — and I think she feels it."

Miss Trevor took the foolscap book. It was made of several sheets of paper sewed together and encased in an oilcloth cover. It was nearly filled with writing in a round childish hand and it was very neat, although the orthography was rather wild and the punctuation capricious. Miss Trevor read it through in no very long time. It was a curious medley of quaint thoughts and fancies. Conversations with the Twin Sailors filled many of the pages; accounts of Paul's "adventures" occupied others. Sometimes it seemed impossible that a child of eleven should have written them, then would come an expression so boyish and naive that Miss Trevor laughed delightedly over it. When she finished the book and closed it she found Stephen Kane at her elbow. He removed his pipe and nodded at the foolscap book.

"What do you think of it?" he said.

"I think it is wonderful. Paul is a very clever child."

“I’ve often thought so,” said Stephen laconically. He thrust his hands into his pockets and gazed moodily out to sea. Miss Trevor had never before had an opportunity to talk to him in Paul’s absence and she determined to make the most of it.

“I want to know something about Paul,” she said, “all about him. Is he any relation to you?”

“No. I expected to marry his mother once, though,” said Stephen unemotionally. His hand in his pocket was clutching his pipe fiercely, but Miss Trevor could not know that. “She was a shore girl and very pretty. Well, she fell in love with a young fellow that came teaching up t’ the harbour school and he with her. They got married and she went away with him. He was a good enough sort of chap. I know that now, though once I wasn’t disposed to think much good of him. But ‘twas a mistake all the same; Rachel couldn’t live away from the shore. She fretted and pined and broke her heart for it away there in his world. Finally her husband died and she came back — but it was too late for her. She only lived a month — and there was Paul, a baby of two. I took him. There was nobody else. Rachel had no relatives nor her husband either. I’ve done what I could for him — not that it’s been much, perhaps.”

“I am sure you have done a great deal for him,” said Miss Trevor rather patronizingly. “But I think he should have more than you can give him now. He should be sent to school.”

Stephen nodded.

“Maybe. He never went to school. The harbour school was too far away. I taught him to read and write and bought him all the books I could afford. But I can’t do any more for him.”

“But I can,” said Miss Trevor, “and I want to. Will you give Paul to me, Mr. Kane? I love him dearly and he shall have every advantage. I’m rich — I can do a great deal for him.”

Stephen continued to gaze out to sea with an expressionless face. Finally he said: “I’ve been expecting to hear you say something of the sort. I don’t know. If you took Paul away, he’d grow to be a cleverer man and a richer man maybe, but would he be any better — or happier? He’s

his mother's son — he loves the sea and its ways. There's nothing of his father in him except his hankering after books. But I won't choose for him — he can go if he likes — he can go if he likes."

In the end Paul "liked," since Stephen refused to influence him by so much as a word. Paul thought Stephen didn't seem to care much whether he went or stayed, and he was dazzled by Miss Trevor's charm and the lure of books and knowledge she held out to him.

"I'll go, I guess," he said, with a long sigh.

Miss Trevor clasped him close to her and kissed him maternally. Paul kissed her cheek shyly in return. He thought it very wonderful that he was to live with her always. He felt happy and excited — so happy and excited that the parting when it came slipped over him lightly. Miss Trevor even thought he took it too easily and had a vague wish that he had shown more sorrow. Stephen said farewell to the boy he loved better than life with no visible emotion.

"Goodbye, Paul. Be a good boy and learn all you can." He hesitated a moment and then said slowly, "If you don't like it, come back."

"Did you bid goodbye to your rock people?" Miss Trevor asked him with a smile as they drove away.

"No. I — couldn't — I — I — didn't even tell them I was going away. Nora would break her heart. I'd rather not talk of them anymore, if you please. Maybe I won't want them when I've plenty of books and lots of other boys and girls — real ones — to play with."

They drove the ten miles to the town where they were to take the train the next day. Paul enjoyed the drive and the sights of the busy streets at its end. He was all excitement and animation. After they had had tea at the house of the friend where Miss Trevor meant to spend the night, they went for a walk in the park. Paul was tired and very quiet when they came back. He was put away to sleep in a bedroom whose splendours frightened him, and left alone.

At first Paul lay very still on his luxurious perfumed pillows. It was the first night he had ever spent away from the little seaward-looking loft where he could touch the rafters with his hands. He thought of it now and a

lump came into his throat and a strange, new, bitter longing came into his heart. He missed the sea plashing on the rocks below him — he could not sleep without that old lullaby. He turned his face into the pillow, and the longing and loneliness grew worse and hurt him until he moaned. Oh, he wanted to be back home! Surely he had not left it — he could never have meant to leave it. Out there the stars would be shining over the harbour. Stephen would be sitting at the door, all alone, with his violin. But he would not be playing it — all at once Paul knew he would not be playing it. He would be sitting there with his head bowed and the loneliness in his heart calling to the loneliness in Paul's heart over all the miles between them. Oh, he could never have really meant to leave Stephen.

And Nora? Nora would be down on the rocks waiting for him — for him, Paul, who would never come to her more. He could see her elfin little face peering around the point, watching for him wistfully.

Paul sat up in bed, choking with tears. Oh, what were books and strange countries? — what was even Miss Trevor, the friend of a month? — to the call of the sea and Stephen's kind, deep eyes and his dear rock people? He could not stay away from them — never — never.

He slipped out of bed very softly and dressed in the dark. Then he lighted the lamp timidly and opened the little brown chest Stephen had given him. It held his books and his treasures, but he took out only a pencil, a bit of paper and the foolscap book. With a hand shaking in his eagerness, he wrote:

dear miss Trever

Im going back home, dont be fritened about me because I know the way. Ive got to go. something is calling me. dont be cross. I love you, but I cant stay. Im leaving my foolscap book for you, you can keep it always but I must go back to Stephen and nora

Paul

He put the note on the foolscap book and laid them on the table. Then he blew out the light, took his cap and went softly out. The house was very still. Holding his breath, he tiptoed downstairs and opened the front door. Before it ran the street which went, he knew, straight out to the country

road that led home. Paul closed the door and stole down the steps, his heart beating painfully, but when he reached the sidewalk he broke into a frantic run under the limes. It was late and no one was out on that quiet street. He ran until his breath gave out, then walked miserably until he recovered it, and then ran again. He dared not stop running until he was out of that horrible town, which seemed like a prison closing around him, where the houses shut out the stars and the wind could only creep in a narrow space like a fettered, cringing thing, instead of sweeping grandly over great salt wastes of sea.

At last the houses grew few and scattered, and finally he left them behind. He drew a long breath; this was better — rather smothering yet, of course, with nothing but hills and fields and dark woods all about him, but at least his own sky was above him, looking just the same as it looked out home at Noel's Cove. He recognized the stars as friends; how often Stephen had pointed them out to him as they sat at night by the door of the little house.

He was not at all frightened now. He knew the way home and the kind night was before him. Every step was bringing him nearer to Stephen and Nora and the Twin Sailors. He whistled as he walked sturdily along.

The dawn was just breaking when he reached Noel's Cove. The eastern sky was all pale rose and silver, and the sea was mottled over with dear grey ripples. In the west over the harbour the sky was a very fine ethereal blue and the wind blew from there, salt and bracing. Paul was tired, but he ran lightly down the shelving rocks to the cove. Stephen was getting ready to launch his boat. When he saw Paul he started and a strange, vivid, exultant expression flashed across his face.

Paul felt a sudden chill — the upspringing fountain of his gladness was checked in mid-leap. He had known no doubt on the way home — all that long, weary walk he had known no doubt — but now?

"Stephen," he cried. "I've come back! I had to! Stephen, are you glad — are you glad?"

Stephen's face was as emotionless as ever. The burst of feeling which had frightened Paul by its unaccustomedness had passed like a fleeting

outbreak of sunshine between dull clouds.

“I reckon I am,” he said. “Yes, I reckon I am. I kind of — hoped — you would come back. You’d better go in and get some breakfast.”

Paul’s eyes were as radiant as the deepening dawn. He knew Stephen was glad and he knew there was nothing more to be said about it. They were back just where they were before Miss Trevor came — back in their perfect, unmarred, sufficient comradeship.

“I must just run around and see Nora first,” said Paul.

Abel and His Great Adventure

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“Come out of doors, master — come out of doors. I can’t talk or think right with walls around me — never could. Let’s go out to the garden.” These were almost the first words I ever heard Abel Armstrong say. He was a member of the board of school trustees in Stillwater, and I had not met him before this late May evening, when I had gone down to confer with him upon some small matter of business. For I was “the new schoolmaster” in Stillwater, having taken the school for the summer term.

It was a rather lonely country district — a fact of which I was glad, for life had been going somewhat awry with me and my heart was sore and rebellious over many things that have nothing to do with this narration. Stillwater offered time and opportunity for healing and counsel. Yet, looking back, I doubt if I should have found either had it not been for Abel and his beloved garden.

Abel Armstrong (he was always called “Old Abel”, though he was barely sixty) lived in a quaint, gray house close by the harbour shore. I heard a good deal about him before I saw him. He was called “queer”, but Stillwater folks seemed to be very fond of him. He and his sister, Tamzine, lived together; she, so my garrulous landlady informed me, had not been sound of mind at times for many years; but she was all right now, only odd and quiet. Abel had gone to college for a year when he was young, but had given it up when Tamzine “went crazy”. There was no one else to look after her. Abel had settled down to it with apparent content: at least he had never complained.

“Always took things easy, Abel did,” said Mrs. Campbell. “Never seemed to worry over disappointments and trials as most folks do. Seems to me that as long as Abel Armstrong can stride up and down in that garden of his, reciting poetry and speeches, or talking to that yaller cat of his as if it was a human, he doesn’t care much how the world wags on. He

never had much git-up-and-git. His father was a hustler, but the family didn't take after him. They all favoured the mother's people — sorter shiftless and dreamy. 'Taint the way to git on in this world.'

No, good and worthy Mrs. Campbell. It was not the way to get on in your world; but there are other worlds where getting on is estimated by different standards, and Abel Armstrong lived in one of these — a world far beyond the ken of the thrifty Stillwater farmers and fishers. Something of this I had sensed, even before I saw him; and that night in his garden, under a sky of smoky red, blossoming into stars above the harbour, I found a friend whose personality and philosophy were to calm and harmonize and enrich my whole existence. This sketch is my grateful tribute to one of the rarest and finest souls God ever clothed with clay.

He was a tall man, somewhat ungainly of figure and homely of face. But his large, deep eyes of velvety nut-brown were very beautiful and marvellously bright and clear for a man of his age. He wore a little pointed, well-cared-for beard, innocent of gray; but his hair was grizzled, and altogether he had the appearance of a man who had passed through many sorrows which had marked his body as well as his soul. Looking at him, I doubted Mrs. Campbell's conclusion that he had not "minded" giving up college. This man had given up much and felt it deeply; but he had outlived the pain and the blessing of sacrifice had come to him. His voice was very melodious and beautiful, and the brown hand he held out to me was peculiarly long and shapely and flexible.

We went out to the garden in the scented moist air of a maritime spring evening. Behind the garden was a cloudy pine wood; the house closed it in on the left, while in front and on the right a row of tall Lombardy poplars stood out in stately purple silhouette against the sunset sky.

"Always liked Lombardies," said Abel, waving a long arm at them. "They are the trees of princesses. When I was a boy they were fashionable. Anyone who had any pretensions to gentility had a row of Lombardies at the foot of his lawn or up his lane, or at any rate one on either side of his front door. They're out of fashion now. Folks complain they die at the top and get ragged-looking. So they do — so they do, if you don't risk your

neck every spring climbing up a light ladder to trim them out as I do. My neck isn't worth much to anyone, which, I suppose, is why I've never broken it; and my Lombardies never look out-at-elbows. My mother was especially fond of them. She liked their dignity and their stand-offishness. They don't hobnob with every Tom, Dick and Harry. If it's pines for company, master, it's Lombardies for society."

We stepped from the front doorstone into the garden. There was another entrance — a sagging gate flanked by two branching white lilacs. From it a little dappled path led to a huge apple-tree in the centre, a great swelling cone of rosy blossom with a mossy circular seat around its trunk. But Abel's favourite seat, so he told me, was lower down the slope, under a little trellis overhung with the delicate emerald of young hop-vines. He led me to it and pointed proudly to the fine view of the harbour visible from it. The early sunset glow of rose and flame had faded out of the sky; the water was silvery and mirrorlike; dim sails drifted along by the darkening shore. A bell was ringing in a small Catholic chapel across the harbour. Mellowly and dreamily sweet the chime floated through the dusk, blent with the moan of the sea. The great revolving light at the channel trembled and flashed against the opal sky, and far out, beyond the golden sand-dunes of the bar, was the crinkled gray ribbon of a passing steamer's smoke.

"There, isn't that view worth looking at?" said old Abel, with a loving, proprietary pride. "You don't have to pay anything for it, either. All that sea and sky free—'without money and without price'. Let's sit down here in the hop-vine arbour, master. There'll be a moonrise presently. I'm never tired of finding out what a moonrise sheen can be like over that sea. There's a surprise in it every time. Now, master, you're getting your mouth in the proper shape to talk business — but don't you do it. Nobody should talk business when he's expecting a moonrise. Not that I like talking business at any time."

"Unfortunately it has to be talked of sometimes, Mr. Armstrong," I said.

“Yes, it seems to be a necessary evil, master,” he acknowledged. “But I know what business you’ve come upon, and we can settle it in five minutes after the moon’s well up. I’ll just agree to everything you and the other two trustees want. Lord knows why they ever put me on the school board. Maybe it’s because I’m so ornamental. They wanted one goodlooking man, I reckon.”

His low chuckle, so full of mirth and so free from malice, was infectious. I laughed also, as I sat down in the hop-vine arbour.

“Now, you needn’t talk if you don’t want to,” he said. “And I won’t. We’ll just sit here, sociable like, and if we think of anything worth while to say we’ll say it. Otherwise, not. If you can sit in silence with a person for half an hour and feel comfortable, you and that person can be friends. If you can’t, friends you’ll never be, and you needn’t waste time in trying.”

Abel and I passed successfully the test of silence that evening in the hop-vine arbour. I was strangely content to sit and think — something I had not cared to do lately. A peace, long unknown to my stormy soul, seemed hovering near it. The garden was steeped in it; old Abel’s personality radiated it. I looked about me and wondered whence came the charm of that tangled, unworldly spot.

“Nice and far from the marketplace isn’t it?” asked Abel suddenly, as if he had heard my unasked question. “No buying and selling and getting gain here. Nothing was ever sold out of this garden. Tamzine has her vegetable plot over yonder, but what we don’t eat we give away. Geordie Marr down the harbour has a big garden like this and he sells heaps of flowers and fruit and vegetables to the hotel folks. He thinks I’m an awful fool because I won’t do the same. Well, he gets money out of his garden and I get happiness out of mine. That’s the difference. S’posing I could make more money — what then? I’d only be taking it from people that needed it more. There’s enough for Tamzine and me. As for Geordie Marr, there isn’t a more unhappy creature on God’s earth — he’s always stewing in a broth of trouble, poor man. O’ course, he brews up most of it for

himself, but I reckon that doesn't make it any easier to bear. Ever sit in a hop-vine arbour before, master?"

I was to grow used to Abel's abrupt change of subject. I answered that I never had.

"Great place for dreaming," said Abel complacently. "Being young, no doubt, you dream aplenty."

I answered hotly and bitterly that I had done with dreams.

"No, you haven't," said Abel meditatively. "You may think you have. What then? First thing you know you'll be dreaming again — thank the Lord for it. I ain't going to ask you what's soured you on dreaming just now. After awhile you'll begin again, especially if you come to this garden as much as I hope you will. It's chockful of dreams — any kind of dreams. You take your choice. Now, I favour dreams of adventures, if you'll believe it. I'm sixty-one and I never do anything rasher than go out codfishing on a fine day, but I still lust after adventures. Then I dream I'm an awful fellow — bloodthirsty."

I burst out laughing. Perhaps laughter was somewhat rare in that old garden. Tamzine, who was weeding at the far end, lifted her head in a startled fashion and walked past us into the house. She did not look at us or speak to us. She was reputed to be abnormally shy. She was very stout and wore a dress of bright red-and-white striped material. Her face was round and blank, but her reddish hair was abundant and beautiful. A huge, orange-coloured cat was at her heels; as she passed us he bounded over to the arbour and sprang up on Abel's knee. He was a gorgeous brute, with vivid green eyes, and immense white double paws.

"Captain Kidd, Mr. Woodley." He introduced us as seriously as if the cat had been a human being. Neither Captain Kidd nor I responded very enthusiastically.

"You don't like cats, I reckon, master," said Abel, stroking the Captain's velvet back. "I don't blame you. I was never fond of them myself until I found the Captain. I saved his life and when you've saved a creature's life you're bound to love it. It's next thing to giving it life. There are some terrible thoughtless people in the world, master. Some of

those city folks who have summer homes down the harbour are so thoughtless that they're cruel. It's the worst kind of cruelty, I think — the thoughtless kind. You can't cope with it. They keep cats there in the summer and feed them and pet them and doll them up with ribbons and collars; and then in the fall they go off and leave them to starve or freeze. It makes my blood boil, master."

"One day last winter I found a poor old mother cat dead on the shore, lying against the skin and bone bodies of her three little kittens. She had died trying to shelter them. She had her poor stiff claws around them. Master, I cried. Then I swore. Then I carried those poor little kittens home and fed 'hem up and found good homes for them. I know the woman who left the cat. When she comes back this summer I'm going to go down and tell her my opinion of her. It'll be rank meddling, but, lord, how I love meddling in a good cause."

"Was Captain Kidd one of the forsaken?" I asked.

"Yes. I found him one bitter cold day in winter caught in the branches of a tree by his darn-fool ribbon collar. He was almost starving. Lord, if you could have seen his eyes! He was nothing but a kitten, and he'd got his living somehow since he'd been left till he got hung up. When I loosed him he gave my hand a pitiful swipe with his little red tongue. He wasn't the prosperous freebooter you behold now. He was meek as Moses. That was nine years ago. His life has been long in the land for a cat. He's a good old pal, the Captain is."

"I should have expected you to have a dog," I said.

Abel shook his head.

"I had a dog once. I cared so much for him that when he died I couldn't bear the thought of ever getting another in his place. He was a friend — you understand? The Captain's only a pal. I'm fond of the Captain — all the fonder because of the spice of deviltry there is in all cats. But I loved my dog. There isn't any devil in a good dog. That's why they're more lovable than cats — but I'm darned if they're as interesting."

I laughed as I rose regretfully.

“Must you go, master? And we haven’t talked any business after all. I reckon it’s that stove matter you’ve come about. It’s like those two fool trustees to start up a stove sputter in spring. It’s a wonder they didn’t leave it till dog-days and begin then.”

“They merely wished me to ask you if you approved of putting in a new stove.”

“Tell them to put in a new stove — any kind of a new stove — and be hanged to them,” rejoined Abel. “As for you, master, you’re welcome to this garden any time. If you’re tired or lonely, or too ambitious or angry, come here and sit awhile, master. Do you think any man could keep mad if he sat and looked into the heart of a pansy for ten minutes? When you feel like talking, I’ll talk, and when you feel like thinking, I’ll let you. I’m a great hand to leave folks alone.”

“I think I’ll come often,” I said, “perhaps too often.”

“Not likely, master — not likely — not after we’ve watched a moonrise contentedly together. It’s as good a test of compatibility as any I know. You’re young and I’m old, but our souls are about the same age, I reckon, and we’ll find lots to say to each other. Are you going straight home from here?”

“Yes.”

“Then I’m going to bother you to stop for a moment at Mary Bascom’s and give her a bouquet of my white lilacs. She loves ‘em and I’m not going to wait till she’s dead to send her flowers.”

“She’s very ill just now, isn’t she?”

“She’s got the Bascom consumption. That means she may die in a month, like her brother, or linger on for twenty years, like her father. But long or short, white lilac in spring is sweet, and I’m sending her a fresh bunch every day while it lasts. It’s a rare night, master. I envy you your walk home in the moonlight along that shore.”

“Better come part of the way with me,” I suggested.

“No.” Abel glanced at the house. “Tamzine never likes to be alone o’ nights. So I take my moonlight walks in the garden. The moon’s a great friend of mine, master. I’ve loved her ever since I can remember. When I

was a little lad of eight I fell asleep in the garden one evening and wasn't missed. I woke up alone in the night and I was most scared to death, master. Lord, what shadows and queer noises there were! I darsn't move. I just sat there quaking, poor small mite. Then all at once I saw the moon looking down at me through the pine boughs, just like an old friend. I was comforted right off. Got up and walked to the house as brave as a lion, looking at her. Goodnight, master. Tell Mary the lilacs'll last another week yet."

From that night Abel and I were cronies. We walked and talked and kept silence and fished cod together. Stillwater people thought it very strange that I should prefer his society to that of the young fellows of my own age. Mrs. Campbell was quite worried over it, and opined that there had always been something queer about me. "Birds of a feather."

I loved that old garden by the harbour shore. Even Abel himself, I think, could hardly have felt a deeper affection for it. When its gate closed behind me it shut out the world and my corroding memories and discontents. In its peace my soul emptied itself of the bitterness which had been filling and spoiling it, and grew normal and healthy again, aided thereto by Abel's wise words. He never preached, but he radiated courage and endurance and a frank acceptance of the hard things of life, as well as a cordial welcome of its pleasant things. He was the sanest soul I ever met. He neither minimized ill nor exaggerated good, but he held that we should never be controlled by either. Pain should not depress us unduly, nor pleasure lure us into forgetfulness and sloth. All unknowingly he made me realize that I had been a bit of a coward and a shirker. I began to understand that my personal woes were not the most important things in the universe, even to myself. In short, Abel taught me to laugh again; and when a man can laugh wholesomely things are not going too badly with him.

That old garden was always such a cheery place. Even when the east wind sang in minor and the waves on the gray shore were sad, hints of sunshine seemed to be lurking all about it. Perhaps this was because there were so many yellow flowers in it. Tamzine liked yellow flowers. Captain

Kidd, too, always paraded it in panoply of gold. He was so large and effulgent that one hardly missed the sun. Considering his presence I wondered that the garden was always so full of singing birds. But the Captain never meddled with them. Probably he understood that his master would not have tolerated it for a moment. So there was always a song or a chirp somewhere. Overhead flew the gulls and the cranes. The wind in the pines always made a glad salutation. Abel and I paced the walks, in high converse on matters beyond the ken of cat or king.

“I liked to ponder on all problems, though I can never solve them,” Abel used to say. “My father held that we should never talk of things we couldn’t understand. But, lord, master, if we didn’t the subjects for conversation would be mighty few. I reckon the gods laugh many a time to hear us, but what matter? So long as we remember that we’re only men, and don’t take to fancying ourselves gods, really knowing good and evil, I reckon our discussions won’t do us or anyone much harm. So we’ll have another whack at the origin of evil this evening, master.”

Tamzine forgot to be shy with me at last, and gave me a broad smile of welcome every time I came. But she rarely spoke to me. She spent all her spare time weeding the garden, which she loved as well as Abel did. She was addicted to bright colours and always wore wrappers of very gorgeous print. She worshipped Abel and his word was a law unto her.

“I am very thankful Tamzine is so well,” said Abel one evening as we watched the sunset. The day had begun sombrely in gray cloud and mist, but it ended in a pomp of scarlet and gold. “There was a time when she wasn’t, master — you’ve heard? But for years now she has been quite able to look after herself. And so, if I fare forth on the last great adventure some of these days Tamzine will not be left helpless.”

“She is ten years older than you. It is likely she will go before you,” I said.

Abel shook his head and stroked his smart beard. I always suspected that beard of being Abel’s last surviving vanity. It was always so carefully groomed, while I had no evidence that he ever combed his grizzled mop of hair.

“No, Tamzine will outlive me. She’s got the Armstrong heart. I have the Marwood heart — my mother was a Marwood. We don’t live to be old, and we go quick and easy. I’m glad of it. I don’t think I’m a coward, master, but the thought of a lingering death gives me a queer sick feeling of horror. There, I’m not going to say any more about it. I just mentioned it so that some day when you hear that old Abel Armstrong has been found dead, you won’t feel sorry. You’ll remember I wanted it that way. Not that I’m tired of life either. It’s very pleasant, what with my garden and Captain Kidd and the harbour out there. But it’s a trifle monotonous at times and death will be something of a change, master. I’m real curious about it.”

“I hate the thought of death,” I said gloomily.

“Oh, you’re young. The young always do. Death grows friendlier as we grow older. Not that one of us really wants to die, though, master. Tennyson spoke truth when he said that. There’s old Mrs. Warner at the Channel Head. She’s had heaps of trouble all her life, poor soul, and she’s lost almost everyone she cared about. She’s always saying that she’ll be glad when her time comes, and she doesn’t want to live any longer in this vale of tears. But when she takes a sick spell, lord, what a fuss she makes, master! Doctors from town and a trained nurse and enough medicine to kill a dog! Life may be a vale of tears, all right, master, but there are some folks who enjoy weeping, I reckon.”

Summer passed through the garden with her procession of roses and lilies and hollyhocks and golden glow. The golden glow was particularly fine that year. There was a great bank of it at the lower end of the garden, like a huge billow of sunshine. Tamzine revelled in it, but Abel liked more subtly-tinted flowers. There was a certain dark wine-hued hollyhock which was a favourite with him. He would sit for hours looking steadfastly into one of its shallow satin cups. I found him so one afternoon in the hop-vine arbour.

“This colour always has a soothing effect on me,” he explained.

“Yellow excites me too much — makes me restless — makes me want to sail ‘beyond the bourne of sunset’. I looked at that surge of golden glow

down there today till I got all worked up and thought my life had been an awful failure. I found a dead butterfly and had a little funeral — buried it in the fern corner. And I thought I hadn't been any more use in the world than that poor little butterfly. Oh, I was woeful, master. Then I got me this hollyhock and sat down here to look at it alone. When a man's alone, master, he's most with God — or with the devil. The devil rampaged around me all the time I was looking at that golden glow; but God spoke to me through the hollyhock. And it seemed to me that a man who's as happy as I am and has got such a garden has made a real success of living."

"I hope I'll be able to make as much of a success," I said sincerely.

"I want you to make a different kind of success, though, master," said Abel, shaking his head. "I want you to do things — the things I'd have tried to do if I'd had the chance. It's in you to do them — if you set your teeth and go ahead."

"I believe I can set my teeth and go ahead now, thanks to you, Mr. Armstrong," I said. "I was heading straight for failure when I came here last spring; but you've changed my course."

"Given you a sort of compass to steer by, haven't I?" queried Abel with a smile. "I ain't too modest to take some credit for it. I saw I could do you some good. But my garden has done more than I did, if you'll believe it. It's wonderful what a garden can do for a man when he lets it have its way. Come, sit down here and bask, master. The sunshine may be gone tomorrow. Let's just sit and think."

We sat and thought for a long while. Presently Abel said abruptly:

"You don't see the folks I see in this garden, master. You don't see anybody but me and old Tamzine and Captain Kidd. I see all who used to be here long ago. It was a lively place then. There were plenty of us and we were as gay a set of youngsters as you'd find anywhere. We tossed laughter backwards and forwards here like a ball. And now old Tamzine and older Abel are all that are left."

He was silent a moment, looking at the phantoms of memory that paced invisibly to me the dappled walks and peeped merrily through the swinging boughs. Then he went on:

“Of all the folks I see here there are two that are more vivid and real than all the rest, master. One is my sister Alice. She died thirty years ago. She was very beautiful. You’d hardly believe that to look at Tamzine and me, would you? But it is true. We always called her Queen Alice — she was so stately and handsome. She had brown eyes and red gold hair, just the colour of that nasturtium there. She was father’s favourite. The night she was born they didn’t think my mother would live. Father walked this garden all night. And just under that old apple-tree he knelt at sunrise and thanked God when they came to tell him that all was well.

“Alice was always a creature of joy. This old garden rang with her laughter in those years. She seldom walked — she ran or danced. She only lived twenty years, but nineteen of them were so happy I’ve never pitied her over much. She had everything that makes life worth living — laughter and love, and at the last sorrow. James Milburn was her lover. It’s thirty-one years since his ship sailed out of that harbour and Alice waved him goodbye from this garden. He never came back. His ship was never heard of again.

“When Alice gave up hope that it would be, she died of a broken heart. They say there’s no such thing; but nothing else ailed Alice. She stood at yonder gate day after day and watched the harbour; and when at last she gave up hope life went with it. I remember the day: she had watched until sunset. Then she turned away from the gate. All the unrest and despair had gone out of her eyes. There was a terrible peace in them — the peace of the dead. ‘He will never come back now, Abel,’ she said to me.

“In less than a week she was dead. The others mourned her, but I didn’t, master. She had sounded the deeps of living and there was nothing else to linger through the years for. My grief had spent itself earlier, when I walked this garden in agony because I could not help her. But often, on these long warm summer afternoons, I seem to hear Alice’s laughter all over this garden; though she’s been dead so long.”

He lapsed into a reverie which I did not disturb, and it was not until another day that I learned of the other memory that he cherished. He

reverted to it suddenly as we sat again in the hop-vine arbour, looking at the glimmering radiance of the September sea.

“Master, how many of us are sitting here?”

“Two in the flesh. How many in the spirit I know not,” I answered, humouring his mood.

“There is one — the other of the two I spoke of the day I told you about Alice. It’s harder for me to speak of this one.”

“Don’t speak of it if it hurts you,” I said.

“But I want to. It’s a whim of mine. Do you know why I told you of Alice and why I’m going to tell you of Mercedes? It’s because I want someone to remember them and think of them sometimes after I’m gone. I can’t bear that their names should be utterly forgotten by all living souls.

“My older brother, Alec, was a sailor, and on his last voyage to the West Indies he married and brought home a Spanish girl. My father and mother didn’t like the match. Mercedes was a foreigner and a Catholic, and differed from us in every way. But I never blamed Alec after I saw her. It wasn’t that she was so very pretty. She was slight and dark and ivory-coloured. But she was very graceful, and there was a charm about her, master — a mighty and potent charm. The women couldn’t understand it. They wondered at Alec’s infatuation for her. I never did. I — I loved her, too, master, before I had known her a day. Nobody ever knew it. Mercedes never dreamed of it. But it’s lasted me all my life. I never wanted to think of any other woman. She spoiled a man for any other kind of woman — that little pale, dark-eyed Spanish girl. To love her was like drinking some rare sparkling wine. You’d never again have any taste for a commoner draught.

“I think she was very happy the year she spent here. Our thrifty womenfolk in Stillwater jeered at her because she wasn’t what they called capable. They said she couldn’t do anything. But she could do one thing well — she could love. She worshipped Alec. I used to hate him for it. Oh, my heart has been very full of black thoughts in its time, master. But neither Alec nor Mercedes ever knew. And I’m thankful now that they

were so happy. Alec made this arbour for Mercedes — at least he made the trellis, and she planted the vines.

“She used to sit here most of the time in summer. I suppose that’s why I like to sit here. Her eyes would be dreamy and faraway until Alec would flash his welcome. How that used to torture me! But now I like to remember it. And her pretty soft foreign voice and little white hands. She died after she had lived here a year. They buried her and her baby in the graveyard of that little chapel over the harbour where the bell rings every evening. She used to like sitting here and listening to it. Alec lived a long while after, but he never married again. He’s gone now, and nobody remembers Mercedes but me.”

Abel lapsed into a reverie — a tryst with the past which I would not disturb. I thought he did not notice my departure, but as I opened the gate he stood up and waved his hand.

Three days later I went again to the old garden by the harbour shore. There was a red light on a distant sail. In the far west a sunset city was built around a great deep harbour of twilight. Palaces were there and bannered towers of crimson and gold. The air was full of music; there was one music of the wind and another of the waves, and still another of the distant bell from the chapel near which Mercedes slept. The garden was full of ripe odours and warm colours. The Lombardies around it were tall and sombre like the priestly forms of some mystic band. Abel was sitting in the hop-vine arbour; beside him Captain Kidd slept. I thought Abel was asleep, too; his head leaned against the trellis and his eyes were shut.

But when I reached the arbour I saw that he was not asleep. There was a strange, wise little smile on his lips as if he had attained to the ultimate wisdom and were laughing in no unkindly fashion at our old blind suppositions and perplexities.

Abel had gone on his Great Adventure.

Akin To Love

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David Hartley had dropped in to pay a neighbourly call on Josephine Elliott. It was well along in the afternoon, and outside, in the clear crispness of a Canadian winter, the long blue shadows from the tall firs behind the house were falling over the snow.

It was a frosty day, and all the windows of every room where there was no fire were covered with silver palms. But the big, bright kitchen was warm and cosy, and somehow seemed to David more tempting than ever before, and that is saying a good deal. He had an uneasy feeling that he had stayed long enough and ought to go. Josephine was knitting at a long gray sock with doubly aggressive energy, and that was a sign that she was talked out. As long as Josephine had plenty to say, her plump white fingers, where her mother's wedding ring was lost in dimples, moved slowly among her needles. When conversation flagged she fell to her work as furiously as if a husband and half a dozen sons were waiting for its completion. David often wondered in his secret soul what Josephine did with all the interminable gray socks she knitted. Sometimes he concluded that she put them in the home missionary barrels; again, that she sold them to her hired man. At any rate, they were very warm and comfortable looking, and David sighed as he thought of the deplorable state his own socks were generally in.

When David sighed Josephine took alarm. She was afraid David was going to have one of his attacks of foolishness. She must head him off somehow, so she rolled up the gray sock, stabbed the big pudgy ball with her needles, and said she guessed she'd get the tea.

David got up.

"Now, you're not going before tea?" said Josephine hospitably. "I'll have it all ready in no time."

“I ought to go home, I s’pose,” said David, with the air and tone of a man dallying with a great temptation. “Zillah’ll be waiting tea for me; and there’s the stock to tend to.”

“I guess Zillah won’t wait long,” said Josephine. She did not intend it at all, but there was a certain scornful ring in her voice. “You must stay. I’ve a fancy for company to tea.”

David sat down again. He looked so pleased that Josephine went down on her knees behind the stove, ostensibly to get a stick of firewood, but really to hide her smile.

“I suppose he’s tickled to death to think of getting a good square meal, after the starvation rations Zillah puts him on,” she thought.

But Josephine misjudged David just as much as he misjudged her. She had really asked him to stay to tea out of pity, but David thought it was because she was lonesome, and he hailed that as an encouraging sign. And he was not thinking about getting a good meal either, although his dinner had been such a one as only Zillah Hartley could get up. As he leaned back in his cushioned chair and watched Josephine bustling about the kitchen, he was glorying in the fact that he could spend another hour with her, and sit opposite to her at the table while she poured his tea for him and passed him the biscuits, just as if — just as if —

Here Josephine looked straight at him with such intent and stern brown eyes that David felt she must have read his thoughts, and he colored guiltily. But Josephine did not even notice that he was blushing. She had only paused to wonder whether she would bring out cherry or strawberry preserve; and, having decided on the cherry, took her piercing gaze from David without having seen him at all. But he allowed his thoughts no more vagaries.

Josephine set the table with her mother’s wedding china. She used it because it was the anniversary of her mother’s wedding day, but David thought it was out of compliment to him. And, as he knew quite well that Josephine prized that china beyond all her other earthly possessions, he stroked his smooth-shaven, dimpled chin with the air of a man to whom is offered a very subtly sweet homage.

Josephine whisked in and out of the pantry, and up and down cellar, and with every whisk a new dainty was added to the table. Josephine, as everybody in Meadowby admitted, was past mistress in the noble art of cookery. Once upon a time rash matrons and ambitious young wives had aspired to rival her, but they had long ago realised the vanity of such efforts and dropped comfortably back to second place.

Josephine felt an artist's pride in her table when she set the teapot on its stand and invited David to sit in. There were pink slices of cold tongue, and crisp green pickles and spiced gooseberry, the recipe for which Josephine had invented herself, and which had taken first prize at the Provincial Exhibition for six successive years; there was a lemon pie which was a symphony in gold and silver, biscuits as light and white as snow, and moist, plummy cubes of fruit cake. There was the ruby-tinted cherry preserve, a mound of amber jelly, and, to crown all, steaming cups of tea, in flavour and fragrance unequalled.

And Josephine, too, sitting at the head of the table, with her smooth, glossy crimps of black hair and cheeks as rosy clear as they had been twenty years ago, when she had been a slender slip of girlhood and bashful young David Hartley had looked at her over his hymnbook in prayer-meeting and tramped all the way home a few feet behind her, because he was too shy to go boldly up and ask if he might see her home.

All taken together, what wonder if David lost his head over that tea-table and determined to ask Josephine the same old question once more? It was eighteen years since he had asked it for the first time, and two years since the last. He would try his luck again; Josephine was certainly more gracious than he remembered her to ever have been before.

When the meal was over Josephine cleared the table and washed the dishes. When she had taken a dry towel and sat down by the window to polish her china David understood that his opportunity had come. He moved over and sat down beside her on the sofa by the window.

Outside the sun was setting in a magnificent arch of light and colour over the snow-clad hills and deep blue St. Lawrence gulf. David grasped at the sunset as an introductory factor.

“Isn’t that fine, Josephine?” he said admiringly. “It makes me think of that piece of poetry that used to be in the old Fifth Reader when we went to school. D’ye mind how the teacher used to drill us up in it on Friday afternoons? It begun

‘Slow sinks more lovely ere his race is run Along Morea’s hills the setting sun.’”

Then David declaimed the whole passage in a sing-song tone, accompanied by a few crude gestures recalled from long-ago schoolboy elocution. Josephine knew what was coming. Every time David proposed to her he had begun by reciting poetry. She twirled her towel around the last plate resignedly. If it had to come, the sooner it was over the better. Josephine knew by experience that there was no heading David off, despite his shyness, when he had once got along as far as the poetry.

“But it’s going to be for the last time,” she said determinedly. “I’m going to settle this question so decidedly tonight that there’ll never be a repetition.”

When David had finished his quotation he laid his hand on Josephine’s plump arm.

“Josephine,” he said huskily, “I s’pose you couldn’t — could you now? — make up your mind to have me. I wish you would, Josephine — I wish you would. Don’t you think you could, Josephine?”

Josephine folded up her towel, crossed her hands on it, and looked her wooer squarely in the eyes.

“David Hartley,” she said deliberately, “what makes you go on asking me to marry you every once in a while when I’ve told you times out of mind that I can’t and won’t?”

“Because I can’t help hoping that you’ll change your mind through time,” David replied meekly.

“Well, you just listen to me. I will not marry you. That is in the first place. And in the second, this is to be final. It has to be. You are never to ask me this again under any circumstances. If you do I will not answer you — I will not let on I hear you at all; but (and Josephine spoke very slowly and impressively) I will never speak to you again — never. We are good

friends now, and I like you real well, and like to have you drop in for a neighbourly chat as often as you wish to, but there'll be an end, short and sudden, to that, if you don't mind what I say."

"Oh, Josephine, ain't that rather hard?" protested David feebly. It seemed terrible to be cut off from all hope with such finality as this.

"I mean every word of it," returned Josephine calmly. "You'd better go home now, David. I always feel as if I'd like to be alone for a spell after a disagreeable experience."

David obeyed sadly and put on his cap and overcoat. Josephine kindly warned him not to slip and break his legs on the porch, because the floor was as icy as anything; and she even lighted a candle and held it up at the kitchen door to guide him safely out. David, as he trudged sorrowfully homeward across the fields, carried with him the mental picture of a plump, sonsy woman, in a trim dress of plum-coloured homespun and ruffled blue-check apron, haloed by candlelight. It was not a very romantic vision, perhaps, but to David it was more beautiful than anything else in the world.

When David was gone Josephine shut the door with a little shiver. She blew out the candle, for it was not yet dark enough to justify artificial light to her thrifty mind. She thought the big, empty house, in which she was the only living thing, was very lonely. It was so still, except for the slow tick of the "grandfather's clock" and the soft purr and crackle of the wood in the stove. Josephine sat down by the window.

"I wish some of the Sentners would run down," she said aloud. "If David hadn't been so ridiculous I'd have got him to stay the evening. He can be good company when he likes — he's real well-read and intelligent. And he must have dismal times at home there with nobody but Zillah."

She looked across the yard to the little house at the other side of it, where her French-Canadian hired man lived, and watched the purple spiral of smoke from its chimney curling up against the crocus sky. Would she run over and see Mrs. Leon Poirier and her little black-eyed, brown-skinned baby? No, they never knew what to say to each other.

“If ‘twasn’t so cold I’d go up and see Ida,” she said. “As it is, I guess I’d better fall back on my knitting, for I saw Jimmy Sentner’s toes sticking through his socks the other day. How setback poor David did look, to be sure! But I think I’ve settled that marrying notion of his once for all and I’m glad of it.”

She said the same thing next day to Mrs. Tom Sentner, who had come down to help her pick her geese. They were at work in the kitchen with a big tubful of feathers between them, and on the table a row of dead birds, which Leon had killed and brought in. Josephine was enveloped in a shapeless print wrapper, and had an apron tied tightly around her head to keep the down out of her beautiful hair, of which she was rather proud.

“What do you think, Ida?” she said, with a hearty laugh at the recollection. “David Hartley was here to tea last night, and asked me to marry him again. There’s a persistent man for you. I can’t brag of ever having had many beaux, but I’ve certainly had my fair share of proposals.”

Mrs. Tom did not laugh. Her thin little face, with its faded prettiness, looked as if she never laughed.

“Why won’t you marry him?” she said fretfully.

“Why should I?” retorted Josephine. “Tell me that, Ida Sentner.”

“Because it is high time you were married,” said Mrs. Tom decisively. “I don’t believe in women living single. And I don’t see what better you can do than take David Hartley.”

Josephine looked at her sister with the interested expression of a person who is trying to understand some mental attitude in another which is a standing puzzle to her. Ida’s evident wish to see her married always amused Josephine. Ida had married very young and for fifteen years her life had been one of drudgery and ill-health. Tom Sentner was a lazy, shiftless fellow. He neglected his family and was drunk half his time. Meadowby people said that he beat his wife when “on the spree,” but Josephine did not believe that, because she did not think that Ida could keep from telling her if it were so. Ida Sentner was not given to bearing her trials in silence.

Had it not been for Josephine's assistance, Tom Sentner's family would have stood an excellent chance of starvation. Josephine practically kept them, and her generosity never failed or stinted. She fed and clothed her nephews and nieces, and all the gray socks whose destination puzzled David so much went to the Sentners.

As for Josephine herself, she had a good farm, a comfortable house, a plump bank account, and was an independent, unworried woman. And yet, in the face of all this, Mrs. Tom Sentner could bewail the fact that Josephine had no husband to look out for her. Josephine shrugged her shoulders and gave up the conundrum, merely saying ironically, in reply to her sister's remark:

"And go to live with Zillah Hartley?"

"You know very well you wouldn't have to do that. Ever since John Hartley's wife at the Creek died he's been wanting Zillah to go and keep house for him, and if David got married Zillah'd go quick. Catch her staying there if you were mistress! And David has such a beautiful house! It's ten times finer than yours, though I don't deny yours is comfortable. And his farm is the best in Meadowby and joins yours. Think what a beautiful property they'd make together. You're all right now, Josephine, but what will you do when you get old and have nobody to take care of you? I declare the thought worries me at night till I can't sleep."

"I should have thought you had enough worries of your own to keep you awake at nights without taking over any of mine," said Josephine drily. "As for old age, it's a good ways off for me yet. When your Jack gets old enough to have some sense he can come here and live with me. But I'm not going to marry David Hartley, you can depend on that, Ida, my dear. I wish you could have heard him rhyming off that poetry last night. It doesn't seem to matter much what piece he recites — first thing that comes into his head, I reckon. I remember one time he went clean through that hymn beginning, 'Hark from the tombs a doleful sound,' and two years ago it was 'To Mary in Heaven,' as lackadaisical as you please. I never had such a time to keep from laughing, but I managed it, for I wouldn't hurt his feelings for the world. No, I haven't any intention of

marrying anybody, but if I had it wouldn't be dear old sentimental, easygoing David."

Mrs. Tom thumped a plucked goose down on the bench with an expression which said that she, for one, wasn't going to waste any more words on an idiot. Easygoing, indeed! Did Josephine consider that a drawback? Mrs. Tom sighed. If Josephine, she thought, had put up with Tom Sentner's tempers for fifteen years she would know how to appreciate a goodnatured man at his real value.

The cold snap which had set in on the day of David's call lasted and deepened for a week. On Saturday evening, when Mrs. Tom came down for a jug of cream, the mercury of the little thermometer thumping against Josephine's porch was below zero. The gulf was no longer blue, but white with ice. Everything outdoors was crackling and snapping. Inside Josephine had kept roaring fires all through the house but the only place really warm was the kitchen.

"Wrap your head up well, Ida," she said anxiously, when Mrs. Tom rose to go. "You've got a bad cold."

"There's a cold going," said Mrs. Tom. "Everyone has it. David Hartley was up at our place to-day barking terrible — a real churchyard cough, as I told him. He never takes any care of himself. He said Zillah had a bad cold, too. Won't she be cranky while it lasts?"

Josephine sat up late that night to keep fires on. She finally went to bed in the little room opposite the big hall stove, and she slept at once, and dreamed that the thumps of the thermometer flapping in the wind against the wall outside grew louder and more insistent until they woke her up. Some one was pounding on the porch door.

Josephine sprang out of bed and hurried on her wrapper and felt shoes. She had no doubt that some of the Sentners were sick. They had a habit of getting sick about that time of night. She hurried out and opened the door, expecting to see hulking Tom Sentner, or perhaps Ida herself, big-eyed and hysterical.

But David Hartley stood there, panting for breath. The clear moonlight showed that he had no overcoat on, and he was coughing hard. Josephine,

before she spoke a word, clutched him by the arm and pulled him in out of the wind.

“For pity’s sake, David Hartley, what is the matter?”

“Zillah’s awful sick,” he gasped. “I came here because ‘twas nearest. Oh, won’t you come over, Josephine? I’ve got to go for the doctor and I can’t leave her alone. She’s suffering dreadful. I know you and her ain’t on good terms, but you’ll come, won’t you?”

“Of course I will,” said Josephine sharply. “I’m not a barbarian, I hope, to refuse to go to the help of a sick person, if ‘twas my worst enemy. I’ll go in and get ready and you go straight to the hall stove and warm yourself. There’s a good fire in it yet. What on earth do you mean, starting out on a bitter night like this without an overcoat or even mittens, and you with a cold like that?”

“I never thought of them, I was so frightened,” said David apologetically. “I just lit up a fire in the kitchen stove as quick’s I could and run. It rattled me to hear Zillah moaning so’s you could hear her all over the house.”

“You need someone to look after you as bad as Zillah does,” said Josephine severely.

In a very few minutes she was ready, with a basket packed full of homely remedies, “for like as not there’ll be no putting one’s hand on anything there,” she muttered. She insisted on wrapping her big plaid shawl around David’s head and neck, and made him put on a pair of mittens she had knitted for Jack Sentner. Then she locked the door and they started across the gleaming, crusted field. It was so slippery that Josephine had to cling to David’s arm to keep her feet. In the rapture of supporting her David almost forgot everything else.

In a few minutes they had passed under the bare, glistening boughs of the poplars on David’s lawn, and for the first time Josephine crossed the threshold of David Hartley’s house.

Years ago, in her girlhood, when the Hartley’s lived in the old house and there were half a dozen girls at home, Josephine had frequently visited there. All the Hartley girls liked her except Zillah. She and Zillah never

“got on” together. When the other girls had married and gone, Josephine gave up visiting there. She had never been inside the new house, and she and Zillah had not spoken to each other for years.

Zillah was a sick woman — too sick to be anything but civil to Josephine. David started at once for the doctor at the Creek, and Josephine saw that he was well wrapped up before she let him go. Then she mixed up a mustard plaster for Zillah and sat down by the bedside to wait.

When Mrs. Tom Sentner came down the next day she found Josephine busy making flaxseed poultices, with her lips set in a line that betokened she had made up her mind to some disagreeable course of duty.

“Zillah has got pneumonia bad,” she said, in reply to Mrs. Tom’s inquiries. “The Doctor is here and Mary Bell from the Creek. She’ll wait on Zillah, but there’ll have to be another woman here to see to the work. I reckon I’ll stay. I suppose it’s my duty and I don’t see who else could be got. You can send Mamie and Jack down to stay at my house until I can go back. I’ll run over every day and keep an eye on things.”

At the end of a week Zillah was out of danger. Saturday afternoon Josephine went over home to see how Mamie and Jack were getting on. She found Mrs. Tom there, and the latter promptly despatched Jack and Mamie to the postoffice that she might have an opportunity to hear Josephine’s news.

“I’ve had an awful week of it, Ida,” said Josephine solemnly, as she sat down by the stove and put her feet up on the glowing hearth.

“I suppose Zillah is pretty cranky to wait on,” said Mrs. Tom sympathetically.

“Oh, it isn’t Zillah. Mary Bell looks after her. No, it’s the house. I never lived in such a place of dust and disorder in my born days. I’m sorrier for David Hartley than I ever was for anyone before.”

“I suppose he’s used to it,” said Mrs. Tom with a shrug.

“I don’t see how anyone could ever get used to it,” groaned Josephine. “And David used to be so particular when he was a boy. The minute I went there the other night I took in that kitchen with a look. I don’t believe the paint has even been washed since the house was built. I honestly don’t.

And I wouldn't like to be called upon to swear when the floor was scrubbed either. The corners were just full of rolls of dust — you could have shovelled it out. I swept it out next day and I thought I'd be choked. As for the pantry — well, the less said about that the better. And it's the same all through the house. You could write your name on everything. I couldn't so much as clean up. Zillah was so sick there couldn't be a bit of noise made. I did manage to sweep and dust, and I cleaned out the pantry. And, of course, I saw that the meals were nice and well cooked. You should have seen David's face. He looked as if he couldn't get used to having things clean and tasty. I darned his socks — he hadn't a whole pair to his name — and I've done everything I could to give him a little comfort. Not that I could do much. If Zillah heard me moving round she'd send Mary Bell out to ask what the matter was. When I wanted to go upstairs I'd have to take off my shoes and tiptoe up on my stocking feet, so's she wouldn't know it. And I'll have to stay there another fortnight yet. Zillah won't be able to sit up till then. I don't really know if I can stand it without falling to and scrubbing the house from garret to cellar in spite of her."

Mrs. Tom Sentner did not say much to Josephine. To herself she said complacently:

"She's sorry for David. Well, I've always heard that pity was akin to love. We'll see what comes of this."

Josephine did manage to live through that fortnight. One morning she remarked to David at the breakfast table:

"Well, I think that Mary Bell will be able to attend to the work after today, David. I guess I'll go home tonight."

David's face clouded over.

"Well, I s'pose we oughtn't to keep you any longer, Josephine. I'm sure it's been awful good of you to stay this long. I don't know what we'd have done without you."

"You're welcome," said Josephine shortly.

"Don't go for to walk home," said David; "the snow is too deep. I'll drive you over when you want to go."

“I’ll not go before the evening,” said Josephine slowly.

David went out to his work gloomily. For three weeks he had been living in comfort. His wants were carefully attended to; his meals were well cooked and served, and everything was bright and clean. And more than all, Josephine had been there, with her cheerful smile and companionable ways. Well, it was all ended now.

Josephine sat at the breakfast table long after David had gone out. She scowled at the sugar-bowl and shook her head savagely at the tea-pot.

“I’ll have to do it,” she said at last.

“I’m so sorry for him that I can’t do anything else.”

She got up and went to the window, looking across the snowy field to her own home, nestled between the grove of firs and the orchard.

“It’s awful snug and comfortable,” she said regretfully, “and I’ve always felt set on being free and independent. But it’s no use. I’d never have a minute’s peace of mind again, thinking of David living here in dirt and disorder, and him so particular and tidy by nature. No, it’s my duty, plain and clear, to come here and make things pleasant for him — the pointing of Providence, as you might say. The worst of it is, I’ll have to tell him so myself. He’ll never dare to mention the subject again, after what I said to him that night he proposed last. I wish I hadn’t been so dreadful emphatic. Now I’ve got to say it myself if it is ever said. But I’ll not begin by quoting poetry, that’s one thing sure!”

Josephine threw back her head, crowned with its shining braids of jet-black hair, and laughed heartily. She bustled back to the stove and poked up the fire.

“I’ll have a bit of corned beef and cabbage for dinner,” she said, “and I’ll make David that pudding he’s so fond of. After all, it’s kind of nice to have someone to plan and think for. It always did seem like a waste of energy to fuss over cooking things when there was nobody but myself to eat them.”

Josephine sang over her work all day, and David went about his with the face of a man who is going to the gallows without benefit of clergy. When he came in to supper at sunset his expression was so woebegone that

Josephine had to dodge into the pantry to keep from laughing outright. She relieved her feelings by pounding the dresser with the potato masher, and then went primly out and took her place at the table.

The meal was not a success from a social point of view. Josephine was nervous and David glum. Mary Bell gobbled down her food with her usual haste, and then went away to carry Zillah hers. Then David said reluctantly:

“If you want to go home now, Josephine, I’ll hitch up Red Rob and drive you over.”

Josephine began to plait the tablecloth. She wished again that she had not been so emphatic on the occasion of his last proposal. Without replying to David’s suggestion she said crossly (Josephine always spoke crossly when she was especially in earnest):

“I want to tell you what I think about Zillah. She’s getting better, but she’s had a terrible shaking up, and it’s my opinion that she won’t be good for much all winter. She won’t be able to do any hard work, that’s certain. If you want my advice, I tell you fair and square that I think she’d better go off for a visit as soon as she’s fit. She thinks so herself. Clementine wants her to go and stay a spell with her in town. ‘Twould be just the thing for her.”

“She can go if she wants to, of course,” said David dully. “I can get along by myself for a spell.”

“There’s no need of your getting along by yourself,” said Josephine, more crossly than ever. “I’ll — I’ll come here and keep house for you if you like.”

David looked at her uncomprehendingly.

“Wouldn’t people kind of gossip?” he asked hesitatingly. “Not but what—”

“I don’t see what they’d have to gossip about,” broke in Josephine, “if we were — married.”

David sprang to his feet with such haste that he almost upset the table.

“Josephine, do you mean that?” he exclaimed.

“Of course I mean it,” she said, in a perfectly savage tone. “Now, for pity’s sake, don’t say another word about it just now. I can’t discuss it for a spell. Go out to your work. I want to be alone for awhile.”

For the first and last time David disobeyed her. Instead of going out, he strode around the table, caught Josephine masterfully in his arms, and kissed her. And Josephine, after a second’s hesitation, kissed him in return.

Aunt Philippa and the Men

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I knew quite well why Father sent me to Prince Edward Island to visit Aunt Philippa that summer. He told me he was sending me there “to learn some sense”; and my stepmother, of whom I was very fond, told me she was sure the sea air would do me a world of good. I did not want to learn sense or be done a world of good; I wanted to stay in Montreal and go on being foolish — and make up my quarrel with Mark Fenwick. Father and Mother did not know anything about this quarrel; they thought I was still on good terms with him — and that is why they sent me to Prince Edward Island.

I was very miserable. I did not want to go to Aunt Philippa’s. It was not because I feared it would be dull — for without Mark, Montreal was just as much of a howling wilderness as any other place. But it was so horribly far away. When the time came for Mark to want to make up — as come I knew it would — how could he do it if I were seven hundred miles away?

Nevertheless, I went to Prince Edward Island. In all my eighteen years I had never once disobeyed Father. He is a very hard man to disobey. I knew I should have to make a beginning some time if I wanted to marry Mark, so I saved all my little courage up for that and didn’t waste any of it opposing the visit to Aunt Philippa.

I couldn’t understand Father’s point of view. Of course, he hated old John Fenwick, who had once sued him for libel and won the case. Father had written an indiscreet editorial in the excitement of a red-hot political contest — and was made to understand that there are some things you can’t say of another man even at election time. But then, he need not have hated Mark because of that; Mark was not even born when it happened.

Old John Fenwick was not much better pleased about Mark and me than Father was, though he didn’t go to the length of forbidding it; he just

acted grumpily and disagreeably. Things were unpleasant enough all round without a quarrel between Mark and me; yet quarrel we did — and over next to nothing, too, you understand. And now I had to set out for Prince Edward Island without even seeing him, for he was away in Toronto on business.

When my train reached Copely the next afternoon, Aunt Philippa was waiting for me. There was nobody else in sight, but I would have known her had there been a thousand. Nobody but Aunt Philippa could have that determined mouth, those piercing grey eyes, and that pronounced, unmistakable Goodwin nose. And certainly nobody but Aunt Philippa would have come to meet me arrayed in a wrapper of chocolate print with huge yellow roses scattered over it, and a striped blue-and-white apron!

She welcomed me kindly but absentmindedly, her thoughts evidently being concentrated on the problem of getting my trunk home. I had only the one, and in Montreal it had seemed to be of moderate size; but on the platform of Copely station, sized up by Aunt Philippa's merciless eye, it certainly looked huge.

"I thought we could a-took it along tied on the back of the buggy," she said disapprovingly, "but I guess we'll have to leave it, and I'll send the hired boy over for it tonight. You can get along without it till then, I s'pose?"

There was a fine irony in her tone. I hastened to assure her meekly that I could, and that it did not matter if my trunk could not be taken up till next day.

"Oh, Jerry can come for it tonight as well as not," said Aunt Philippa, as we climbed into her buggy. "I'd a good notion to send him to meet you, for he isn't doing much today, and I wanted to go to Mrs. Roderick MacAllister's funeral. But my head was aching me so bad I thought I wouldn't enjoy the funeral if I did go. My head is better now, so I kind of wish I had gone. She was a hundred and four years old and I'd always promised myself that I'd go to her funeral."

Aunt Philippa's tone was melancholy. She did not recover her good spirits until we were out on the pretty, grassy, elm-shaded country road,

garlanded with its ribbon of buttercups. Then she suddenly turned around and looked me over scrutinizingly.

“You’re not as goodlooking as I expected from your picture, but them photographs always flatter. That’s the reason I never had any took. You’re rather thin and brown. But you’ve good eyes and you look clever. Your father writ me you hadn’t much sense, though. He wants me to teach you some, but it’s a thankless business. People would rather be fools.”

Aunt Philippa struck her steed smartly with the whip and controlled his resultant friskiness with admirable skill.

“Well, you know it’s pleasanter,” I said, wickedly. “Just think what a doleful world it would be if everybody were sensible.”

Aunt Philippa looked at me out of the corner of her eye and disdained any skirmish of flippant epigram.

“So you want to get married?” she said. “You’d better wait till you’re grown up.”

“How old must a person be before she is grown up?” I asked gravely.

“Humph! That depends. Some are grown up when they’re born, and others ain’t grown up when they’re eighty. That same Mrs. Roderick I was speaking of never grew up. She was as foolish when she was a hundred as when she was ten.”

“Perhaps that’s why she lived so long,” I suggested. All thought of seeking sympathy in Aunt Philippa had vanished. I resolved I would not even mention Mark’s name.

“Mebbe ‘twas,” admitted Aunt Philippa with a grim smile. “I’d rather live fifty sensible years than a hundred foolish ones.”

Much to my relief, she made no further reference to my affairs. As we rounded a curve in the road where two great overarching elms met, a buggy wheeled by us, occupied by a young man in clerical costume. He had a pleasant boyish face, and he touched his hat courteously. Aunt Philippa nodded very frostily and gave her horse a quite undeserved cut.

“There’s a man you don’t want to have much to do with,” she said portentously. “He’s a Methodist minister.”

“Why, Auntie, the Methodists are a very nice denomination,” I protested. “My stepmother is a Methodist, you know.”

“No, I didn’t know, but I’d believe anything of a stepmother. I’ve no use for Methodists or their ministers. This fellow just came last spring, and it’s my opinion he smokes. And he thinks every girl who looks at him falls in love with him — as if a Methodist minister was any prize! Don’t you take much notice of him, Ursula.”

“I’ll not be likely to have the chance,” I said, with an amused smile.

“Oh, you’ll see enough of him. He boards at Mrs. John Callman’s, just across the road from us, and he’s always out sunning himself on her verandah. Never studies, of course. Last Sunday they say he preached on the iron that floated. If he’d confine himself to the Bible and leave sensational subjects alone it would be better for him and his poor congregation, and so I told Mrs. John Callman to her face. I should think she would have had enough of his sex by this time. She married John Callman against her father’s will, and he had delirious trembles for years. That’s the men for you.”

“They’re not all like that, Aunt Philippa,” I protested.

“Most of ‘em are. See that house over there? Mrs. Jane Harrison lives there. Her husband took tantrums every few days or so and wouldn’t get out of bed. She had to do all the barn work till he’d got over his spell. That’s men for you. When he died, people writ her letters of condolence but I just sot down and writ her one of congratulation. There’s the Presbyterian manse in the hollow. Mr. Bentwell’s our minister. He’s a good man and he’d be a rather nice one if he didn’t think it was his duty to be a little miserable all the time. He won’t let his wife wear a fashionable hat, and his daughter can’t fix her hair the way she wants to. Even being a minister can’t prevent a man from being a crank. Here’s Ebenezer Milgrave coming. You take a good look at him. He used to be insane for years. He believed he was dead and used to rage at his wife because she wouldn’t bury him. I’d a-done it.”

Aunt Philippa looked so determinedly grim that I could almost see her with a spade in her hand. I laughed aloud at the picture summoned up.

“Yes, it’s funny, but I guess his poor wife didn’t find it very humorous. He’s been pretty sane for some years now, but you never can tell when he’ll break out again. He’s got a brother, Albert Milgrave, who’s been married twice. They say he was courting his second wife while his first was dying. Let that be as it may, he used his first wife’s wedding ring to marry the second. That’s the men for you.”

“Don’t you know any good husbands, Aunt Philippa?” I asked desperately.

“Oh, yes, lots of ‘em — over there,” said Aunt Philippa sardonically, waving her whip in the direction of a little country graveyard on a distant hill.

“Yes, but living — walking about in the flesh?”

“Precious few. Now and again you’ll come across a man whose wife won’t put up with any nonsense and he has to be respectable. But the most of ‘em are poor bargains — poor bargains.”

“And are all the wives saints?” I persisted.

“Laws, no, but they’re too good for the men,” retorted Aunt Philippa, as she turned in at her own gate. Her house was close to the road and was painted such a vivid green that the landscape looked faded by contrast. Across the gable end of it was the legend, “Philippa’s Farm,” emblazoned in huge black letters two feet long. All its surroundings were very neat. On the kitchen doorstep a patchwork cat was making a grave toilet. The groundwork of the cat was white, and its spots were black, yellow, grey, and brown.

“There’s Joseph,” said Aunt Philippa. “I call him that because his coat is of many colours. But I ain’t no lover of cats. They’re too much like the men to suit me.”

“Cats have always been supposed to be peculiarly feminine,” I said, descending.

“‘Twas a man that supposed it, then,” retorted Aunt Philippa, beckoning to her hired boy. “Here, Jerry, put Prince away. Jerry’s a good sort of boy,” she confided to me as we went into the house. “I had Jim Spencer last summer and the only good thing about him was his appetite. I

put up with him till harvest was in, and then one day my patience give out. He upsot a churnful of cream in the back yard — and was just as cool as a cucumber over it — laughed and said it was good for the land. I told him I wasn't in the habit of fertilizing my back yard with cream. But that's the men for you. Come in. I'll have tea ready in no time. I sot the table before I left. There's lemon pie. Mrs. John Cantwell sent it over. I never make lemon pie myself. Ten years ago I took the prize for lemon pies at the county fair, and I've never made any since for fear I'd lose my reputation for them."

The first month of my stay passed not unpleasantly. The summer weather was delightful, and the sea air was certainly splendid. Aunt Philippa's little farm ran right down to the shore, and I spent much of my time there. There were also several families of cousins to be visited in the farmhouses that dotted the pretty, seaward-sloping valley, and they came back to see me at "Philippa's Farm." I picked spruce gum and berries and ferns, and Aunt Philippa taught me to make butter. It was all very idyllic — or would have been if Mark had written. But Mark did not write. I supposed he must be very angry because I had run off to Prince Edward Island without so much as a note of goodbye. But I had been so sure he would understand!

Aunt Philippa never made any further reference to the reason Father had sent me to her, but she allowed no day to pass without holding up to me some horrible example of matrimonial infelicity. The number of unhappy wives who walked or drove past "Philippa's Farm" every afternoon, as we sat on the verandah, was truly pitiable.

We always sat on the verandah in the afternoon, when we were not visiting or being visited. I made a pretence of fancy work, and Aunt Philippa spun diligently on a little old-fashioned spinning-wheel that had been her grandmother's. She always sat before the wood stand which held her flowers, and the gorgeous blots of geranium blossom and big green leaves furnished a pretty background. She always wore her shapeless but clean print wrappers, and her iron-grey hair was always combed neatly down over her ears. Joseph sat between us, sleeping or purring. She spun

so expertly that she could keep a close watch on the road as well, and I got the biography of every individual who went by. As for the poor young Methodist minister, who liked to read or walk on the verandah of our neighbour's house, Aunt Philippa never had a good word for him. I had met him once or twice socially and had liked him. I wanted to ask him to call but dared not — Aunt Philippa had vowed he should never enter her house.

"If I was dead and he came to my funeral I'd rise up and order him out," she said.

"I thought he made a very nice prayer at Mrs. Seaman's funeral the other day," I said.

"Oh, I've no doubt he can pray. I never heard anyone make more beautiful prayers than old Simon Kennedy down at the harbour, who was always drunk or hoping to be — and the drunker he was the better he prayed. It ain't no matter how well a man prays if his preaching isn't right. That Methodist man preaches a lot of things that ain't true, and what's worse they ain't sound doctrine. At least, that's what I've heard. I never was in a Methodist church, thank goodness."

"Don't you think Methodists go to heaven as well as Presbyterians, Aunt Philippa?" I asked gravely.

"That ain't for us to decide," said Aunt Philippa solemnly. "It's in higher hands than ours. But I ain't going to associate with them on earth, whatever I may have to do in heaven. The folks round here mostly don't make much difference and go to the Methodist church quite often. But I say if you are a Presbyterian, be a Presbyterian. Of course, if you ain't, it don't matter much what you do. As for that minister man, he has a grand-uncle who was sent to the penitentiary for embezzlement. I found out that much."

And evidently Aunt Philippa had taken an unholy joy in finding it out.

"I dare say some of our own ancestors deserved to go to the penitentiary, even if they never did," I remarked. "Who is that woman driving past, Aunt Philippa? She must have been very pretty once."

“She was — and that was all the good it did her. ‘Favour is deceitful and beauty is vain,’ Ursula. She was Sarah Pyatt and she married Fred Proctor. He was one of your wicked, fascinating men. After she married him he give up being fascinating but he kept on being wicked. That’s the men for you. Her sister Flora weren’t much luckier. Her man was that domineering she couldn’t call her soul her own. Finally he couldn’t get his own way over something and he just suicided by jumping into the well. A good riddance — but of course the well was spoiled. Flora could never abide the thought of using it again, poor thing. That’s men for you.

“And there’s that old Enoch Allan on his way to the station. He’s ninety if he’s a day. You can’t kill some folks with a meat axe. His wife died twenty years ago. He’d been married when he was twenty so they’d lived together for fifty years. She was a faithful, hardworking creature and kept him out of the poorhouse, for he was a shiftless soul, not lazy, exactly, but just too fond of sitting. But he weren’t grateful. She had a kind of bitter tongue and they did use to fight scandalous. O’ course it was all his fault. Well, she died, and old Enoch and my father drove together to the graveyard. Old Enoch was awful quiet all the way there and back, but just afore they got home, he says solemnly to Father: ‘You mayn’t believe it, Henry, but this is the happiest day of my life.’ That’s men for you. His brother, Scotty Allan, was the meanest man ever lived in these parts. When his wife died she was buried with a little gold brooch in her collar unbeknownst to him. When he found it out he went one night to the graveyard and opened up the grave and the casket to get that brooch.”

“Oh, Aunt Philippa, that is a horrible story,” I cried, recoiling with a shiver over the gruesomeness of it.

“‘Course it is, but what would you expect of a man?” retorted Aunt Philippa.

Somehow, her stories began to affect me in spite of myself. There were times when I felt very dreary. Perhaps Aunt Philippa was right. Perhaps men possessed neither truth nor constancy. Certainly Mark had forgotten me. I was ashamed of myself because this hurt me so much, but I could

not help it. I grew pale and listless. Aunt Philippa sometimes peered at me sharply, but she held her peace. I was grateful for this.

But one day a letter did come from Mark. I dared not read it until I was safely in my own room. Then I opened it with trembling fingers.

The letter was a little stiff. Evidently Mark was feeling sore enough over things. He made no reference to our quarrel or to my sojourn in Prince Edward Island. He wrote that his firm was sending him to South Africa to take charge of their interests there. He would leave in three weeks' time and could not return for five years. If I still cared anything for him, would I meet him in Halifax, marry him, and go to South Africa with him? If I would not, he would understand that I had ceased to love him and that all was over between us.

That, boiled down, was the gist of Mark's letter. When I had read it I cast myself on the bed and wept out all the tears I had refused to let myself shed during my weeks of exile.

For I could not do what Mark asked — I could not. I couldn't run away to be married in that desolate, unbefriended fashion. It would be a disgrace. I would feel ashamed of it all my life and be unhappy over it. I thought that Mark was rather unreasonable. He knew what my feelings about runaway marriages were. And was it absolutely necessary for him to go to South Africa? Of course his father was behind it somewhere, but surely he could have got out of it if he had really tried.

Well, if he went to South Africa he must go alone. But my heart would break.

I cried the whole afternoon, cowering among my pillows. I never wanted to go out of that room again. I never wanted to see anybody again. I hated the thought of facing Aunt Philippa with her cold eyes and her miserable stories that seemed to strip life of all beauty and love of all reality. I could hear her scornful, "That's the men for you," if she heard what was in Mark's letter.

"What is the matter, Ursula?"

Aunt Philippa was standing by my bed. I was too abject to resent her coming in without knocking.

“Nothing,” I said spiritlessly.

“If you’ve been crying for three mortal hours over nothing you want a good spanking and you’ll get it,” observed Aunt Philippa placidly, sitting down on my trunk. “Get right up off that bed this minute and tell me what the trouble is. I’m bound to know, for I’m in your father’s place at present.”

“There, then!” I flung her Mark’s letter. There wasn’t anything in it that it was sacrilege to let another person see. That was one reason why I had been crying.

Aunt Philippa read it over twice. Then she folded it up deliberately and put it back in the envelope.

“What are you going to do?” she asked in a matter-of-fact tone.

“I’m not going to run away to be married,” I answered sullenly.

“Well, no, I wouldn’t advise you to,” said Aunt Philippa reflectively. “It’s a kind of low-down thing to do, though there’s been a terrible lot of romantic nonsense talked and writ about eloping. It may be a painful necessity sometimes, but it ain’t in this case. You write to your young man and tell him to come here and be married respectable under my roof, same as a Goodwin ought to.”

I sat up and stared at Aunt Philippa. I was so amazed that it is useless to try to express my amazement.

“Aunt — Philippa,” I gasped. “I thought — I thought—”

“You thought I was a hard old customer, and so I am,” said Aunt Philippa. “But I don’t take my opinions from your father nor anybody else. It didn’t prejudice me any against your young man that your father didn’t like him. I knew your father of old. I have some other friends in Montreal and I writ to them and asked them what he was like. From what they said I judged he was decent enough as men go. You’re too young to be married, but if you let him go off to South Africa he’ll slip through your fingers for sure, and I s’pose you’re like some of the rest of us — nobody’ll do you but the one. So tell him to come here and be married.”

“I don’t see how I can,” I gasped. “I can’t get ready to be married in three weeks. I can’t—”

“I should think you have enough clothes in that trunk to do you for a spell,” said Aunt Philippa sarcastically. “You’ve more than my mother ever had in all her life. We’ll get you a wedding dress of some kind. You can get it made in Charlottetown, if country dressmakers aren’t good enough for you, and I’ll bake you a wedding cake that’ll taste as good as anything you could get in Montreal, even if it won’t look so stylish.”

“What will Father say?” I questioned.

“Lots o’ things,” conceded Aunt Philippa grimly. “But I don’t see as it matters when neither you nor me’ll be there to have our feelings hurt. I’ll write a few things to your father. He hasn’t got much sense. He ought to be thankful to get a decent young man for his son-in-law in a world where most every man is a wolf in sheep’s clothing. But that’s the men for you.”

And that was Aunt Philippa for you. For the next three weeks she was a blissfully excited, busy woman. I was allowed to choose the material and fashion of my wedding suit and hat myself, but almost everything else was settled by Aunt Philippa. I didn’t mind; it was a relief to be rid of all responsibility; I did protest when she declared her intention of having a big wedding and asking all the cousins and semi-cousins on the island, but Aunt Philippa swept my objections lightly aside.

“I’m bound to have one good wedding in this house,” she said. “Not likely I’ll ever have another chance.”

She found time amid all the baking and concocting to warn me frequently not to take it too much to heart if Mark failed to come after all.

“I know a man who jilted a girl on her wedding day. That’s the men for you. It’s best to be prepared.”

But Mark did come, getting there the evening before our wedding day. And then a severe blow fell on Aunt Philippa. Word came from the manse that Mr. Bentwell had been suddenly summoned to Nova Scotia to his mother’s deathbed; he had started that night.

“That’s the men for you,” said Aunt Philippa bitterly. “Never can depend on one of them, not even on a minister. What’s to be done now?”

“Get another minister,” said Mark easily.

“Where’ll you get him?” demanded Aunt Philippa. “The minister at Cliftonville is away on his vacation, and Mercer is vacant, and that leaves none nearer than town. It won’t do to depend on a town minister being able to come. No, there’s no help for it. You’ll have to have that Methodist man.”

Aunt Philippa’s tone was tragic. Plainly she thought the ceremony would scarcely be legal if that Methodist man married us. But neither Mark nor I cared. We were too happy to be disturbed by any such trifles.

The young Methodist minister married us the next day in the presence of many beaming guests. Aunt Philippa, splendid in black silk and point-lace collar, neither of which lost a whit of dignity or lustre by being made ten years before, was composure itself while the ceremony was going on. But no sooner had the minister pronounced us man and wife than she spoke up.

“Now that’s over I want someone to go right out and put out the fire on the kitchen roof. It’s been on fire for the last ten minutes.”

Minister and bridegroom headed the emergency brigade, and Aunt Philippa pumped the water for them. In a short time the fire was out, all was safe, and we were receiving our deferred congratulations.

“Now, young man,” said Aunt Philippa solemnly as she shook hands with Mark, “don’t you ever try to get out of this, even if a Methodist minister did marry you.”

She insisted on driving us to the train and said goodbye to us as we stood on the car steps. She had caught more of the shower of rice than I had, and as the day was hot and sunny she had tied over her head, atop of that festal silk dress, a huge, homemade, untrimmed straw hat. But she did not look ridiculous. There was a certain dignity about Aunt Philippa in any costume and under any circumstance.

“Aunt Philippa,” I said, “tell me this: why have you helped me to be married?”

The train began to move.

“I refused once to run away myself, and I’ve repented it ever since.” Then, as the train gathered speed and the distance between us widened, she

shouted after us, “But I s’pose if I had run away I’d have repented of that too.”

Bessie's Doll

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Tommy Puffer, sauntering up the street, stopped to look at Miss Octavia's geraniums. Tommy never could help stopping to look at Miss Octavia's flowers, much as he hated Miss Octavia. Today they were certainly worth looking at. Miss Octavia had set them all out on her verandah — rows upon rows of them, overflowing down the steps in waves of blossom and colour. Miss Octavia's geraniums were famous in Arundel, and she was very proud of them. But it was her garden which was really the delight of her heart. Miss Octavia always had the prettiest garden in Arundel, especially as far as annuals were concerned. Just now it was like faith — the substance of things hoped for. The poppies and nasturtiums and balsams and morning glories and sweet peas had been sown in the brown beds on the lawn, but they had not yet begun to come up.

Tommy was still feasting his eyes on the geraniums when Miss Octavia herself came around the corner of the house. Her face darkened the minute she saw Tommy. Most people's did. Tommy had the reputation of being a very bad, mischievous boy; he was certainly very poor and ragged, and Miss Octavia disapproved of poverty and rags on principle. Nobody, she argued, not even a boy of twelve, need be poor and ragged if he is willing to work.

"Here, you, get away out of this," she said sharply. "I'm not going to have you hanging over my palings."

"I ain't hurting your old palings," retorted Tommy sullenly. "I was jist a-looking at the flowers."

"Yes, and picking out the next one to throw a stone at," said Miss Octavia sarcastically. "It was you who threw that stone and broke my big scarlet geranium clear off the other day."

"It wasn't — I never chucked a stone at your flowers," said Tommy.

“Don’t tell me any falsehoods, Tommy Puffer. It was you. Didn’t I catch you firing stones at my cat a dozen times?”

“I might have fired ‘em at an old cat, but I wouldn’t tech a flower,” avowed Tommy boldly — brazenly, Miss Octavia thought.

“You clear out of this or I’ll make you,” she said warningly.

Tommy had had his ears boxed by Miss Octavia more than once. He had no desire to have the performance repeated, so he stuck his tongue out at Miss Octavia and then marched up the street with his hands in his pockets, whistling jauntily.

“He’s the most impudent brat I ever saw in my life,” muttered Miss Octavia wrathfully. There was a standing feud between her and all the Arundel small boys, but Tommy was her special object of dislike.

Tommy’s heart was full of wrath and bitterness as he marched away. He hated Miss Octavia; he wished something would happen to every one of her flowers; he knew it was Ned Williams who had thrown that stone, and he hoped Ned would throw some more and smash all the flowers. So Tommy raged along the street until he came to Mr. Blacklock’s store, and in the window of it he saw something that put Miss Octavia and her disagreeable remarks quite out of his tow-coloured head.

This was nothing more or less than a doll. Now, Tommy was not a judge of dolls and did not take much interest in them, but he felt quite sure that this was a very fine one. It was so big; it was beautifully dressed in blue silk, with a ruffled blue silk hat; it had lovely long golden hair and big brown eyes and pink cheeks; and it stood right up in the showcase and held out its hands winningly.

“Gee, ain’t it a beauty!” said Tommy admiringly. “It looks ‘sif it was alive, and it’s as big as a baby. I must go an’ bring Bessie to see it.”

Tommy at once hurried away to the shabby little street where what he called “home” was. Tommy’s home was a very homeless-looking sort of place. It was the smallest, dingiest, most slatternly house on a street noted for its dingy and slatternly houses. It was occupied by a slatternly mother and a drunken father, as well as by Tommy; and neither the father nor the mother took much notice of Tommy except to scold or nag him. So it is

hardly to be wondered at if Tommy was the sort of boy who was frowned upon by respectable citizens.

But one little white blossom of pure affection bloomed in the arid desert of Tommy's existence for all that. In the preceding fall a new family had come to Arundel and moved into the tiny house next to the Puffers'. It was a small, dingy house, just like the others, but before long a great change took place in it. The new family were thrifty, industrious folks, although they were very poor. The little house was whitewashed, the paling neatly mended, the bit of a yard cleaned of all its rubbish. Muslin curtains appeared in the windows, and rows of cans, with blossoming plants, adorned the sills.

There were just three people in the Knox family — a thin little mother, who went out scrubbing and took in washing, a boy of ten, who sold newspapers and ran errands — and Bessie.

Bessie was eight years old and walked with a crutch, but she was a smart little lassie and kept the house wonderfully neat and tidy while her mother was away. The very first time she had seen Tommy she had smiled at him sweetly and said, "Good morning." From that moment Tommy was her devoted slave. Nobody had ever spoken like that to him before; nobody had ever smiled so at him. Tommy would have given his useless little life for Bessie, and thenceforth the time he was not devising mischief he spent in bringing little pleasures into her life. It was Tommy's delight to bring that smile to her pale little face and a look of pleasure into her big, patient blue eyes. The other boys on the street tried to tease Bessie at first and shouted "Cripple!" after her when she limped out. But they soon stopped it. Tommy thrashed them all one after another for it, and Bessie was left in peace. She would have had a very lonely life if it had not been for Tommy, for she could not play with the other children. But Tommy was as good as a dozen playmates, and Bessie thought him the best boy in the world. Tommy, whatever he might be with others, was very careful to be good when he was with Bessie. He never said a rude word in her hearing, and he treated her as if she were a little princess. Miss Octavia would have been amazed beyond measure if she had seen how tender and thoughtful and

kind and chivalrous that neglected urchin of a Tommy could be when he tried.

Tommy found Bessie sitting by the kitchen window, looking dreamily out of it. For just a moment Tommy thought uneasily that Bessie was looking very pale and thin this spring.

“Bessie, come for a walk up to Mr. Blacklock’s store,” he said eagerly. “There is something there I want to show you.”

“What is it?” Bessie wanted to know. But Tommy only winked mysteriously.

“Ah, I ain’t going to tell you. But it’s something awful pretty. Just you wait.”

Bessie reached for her crutch and the two went up to the store, Tommy carefully suiting his steps to Bessie’s slow ones. Just before they reached the store he made her shut her eyes and led her to the window.

“Now — look!” he commanded dramatically.

Bessie looked and Tommy was rewarded. She flushed pinkly with delight and clasped her hands in ecstasy.

“Oh, Tommy, isn’t she perfectly beautiful?” she breathed. “Oh, she’s the very loveliest dolly I ever saw. Oh, Tommy!”

“I thought you’d like her,” said Tommy exultantly. “Don’t you wish you had a doll like that of your very own, Bessie?”

Bessie looked almost rebuking, as if Tommy had asked her if she wouldn’t like a golden crown or a queen’s palace.

“Of course I could never have a dolly like that,” she said. “She must cost an awful lot. But it’s enough just to look at her. Tommy, will you bring me up here every day just to look at her?”

“‘Course,” said Tommy.

Bessie talked about the blue-silk doll all the way home and dreamed of her every night. “I’m going to call her Roselle Geraldine,” she said. After that she went up to see Roselle Geraldine every day, gazing at her for long moments in silent rapture. Tommy almost grew jealous of her; he thought Bessie liked the doll better than she did him.

“But it don’t matter a bit if she does,” he thought loyally, crushing down the jealousy. “If she likes to like it better than me, it’s all right.”

Sometimes, though, Tommy felt uneasy. It was plain to be seen that Bessie had set her heart on that doll. And what would she do when the doll was sold, as would probably happen soon? Tommy thought Bessie would feel awful sad, and he would be responsible for it.

What Tommy feared came to pass. One afternoon, when they went up to Mr. Blacklock’s store, the doll was not in the window.

“Oh,” cried Bessie, bursting into tears, “she’s gone — Roselle Geraldine is gone.”

“Perhaps she isn’t sold,” said Tommy comfortingly. “Maybe they only took her out of the window ‘cause the blue silk would fade. I’ll go in and ask.”

A minute later Tommy came out looking sober.

“Yes, she’s sold, Bessie,” he said. “Mr. Blacklock sold her to a lady yesterday. Don’t cry, Bessie — maybe they’ll put another in the window ‘fore long.”

“It won’t be mine,” sobbed Bessie. “It won’t be Roselle Geraldine. It won’t have a blue silk hat and such cunning brown eyes.”

Bessie cried quietly all the way home, and Tommy could not comfort her. He wished he had never shown her the doll in the window.

From that day Bessie drooped, and Tommy watched her in agony. She grew paler and thinner. She was too tired to go out walking, and too tired to do the little household tasks she had delighted in. She never spoke about Roselle Geraldine, but Tommy knew she was fretting about her. Mrs. Knox could not think what ailed the child.

“She don’t take a bit of interest in nothing,” she complained to Mrs. Puffer. “She don’t eat enough for a bird. The doctor, he says there ain’t nothing the matter with her as he can find out, but she’s just pining away.”

Tommy heard this, and a queer, big lump came up in his throat. He had a horrible fear that he, Tommy Puffer, was going to cry. To prevent it he began to whistle loudly. But the whistle was a failure, very unlike the real Tommy-whistle. Bessie was sick — and it was all his fault, Tommy

believed. If he had never taken her to see that hateful, blue-silk doll, she would never have got so fond of it as to be breaking her heart because it was sold.

“If I was only rich,” said Tommy miserably, “I’d buy her a cartload of dolls, all dressed in blue silk and all with brown eyes. But I can’t do nothing.”

By this time Tommy had reached the paling in front of Miss Octavia’s lawn, and from force of habit he stopped to look over it. But there was not much to see this time, only the little green rows and circles in the brown, well-weeded beds, and the long curves of dahlia plants, which Miss Octavia had set out a few days before. All the geraniums were carried in, and the blinds were down. Tommy knew Miss Octavia was away. He had seen her depart on the train that morning, and heard her tell a friend that she was going down to Chelton to visit her brother’s folks and wouldn’t be back until the next day.

Tommy was still leaning moodily against the paling when Mrs. Jenkins and Mrs. Reid came by, and they too paused to look at the garden.

“Dear me, how cold it is!” shivered Mrs. Reid. “There’s going to be a hard frost tonight. Octavia’s flowers will be nipped as sure as anything. It’s a wonder she’d stay away from them overnight when her heart’s so set on them.”

“Her brother’s wife is sick,” said Mrs. Jenkins. “We haven’t had any frost this spring, and I suppose Octavia never thought of such a thing. She’ll feel awful bad if her flowers get frosted, especially them dahlias. Octavia sets such store by her dahlias.”

Mrs. Jenkins and Mrs. Reid moved away, leaving Tommy by the paling. It was cold — there was going to be a hard frost — and Miss Octavia’s plants and flowers would certainly be spoiled. Tommy thought he ought to be glad, but he wasn’t. He was sorry — not for Miss Octavia, but for her flowers. Tommy had a queer, passionate love for flowers in his twisted little soul. It was a shame that they should be nipped — that all the glory of crimson and purple and gold hidden away in those little green rows and circles should never have a chance to blossom out royally.

Tommy could never have put this thought into words, but it was there in his heart. He wished he could save the flowers. And couldn't he?

Newspapers spread over the beds and tied around the dahlias would save them, Tommy knew. He had seen Miss Octavia doing it other springs. And he knew there was a big box of newspapers in a little shed in her backyard. Ned Williams had told him there was, and that the shed was never locked.

Tommy hurried home as quickly as he could and got a ball of twine out of his few treasures. Then he went back to Miss Octavia's garden.

The next forenoon Miss Octavia got off the train at the Arundel station with a very grim face. There had been an unusually severe frost for the time of year. All along the road Miss Octavia had seen gardens frosted and spoiled. She knew what she should see when she got to her own — the dahlia stalks drooping and black and limp, the nasturtiums and balsams and poppies and pansies all withered and ruined.

But she didn't. Instead she saw every dahlia carefully tied up in a newspaper, and over all the beds newspapers spread out and held neatly in place with pebbles. Miss Octavia flew into her garden with a radiant face. Everything was safe — nothing was spoiled.

But who could have done it? Miss Octavia was puzzled. On one side of her lived Mrs. Kennedy, who had just moved in and, being a total stranger, would not be likely to think of Miss Octavia's flowers. On the other lived Miss Matheson, who was a "shut-in" and spent all her time on the sofa. But to Miss Matheson Miss Octavia went.

"Rachel, do you know who covered my plants up last night?"

Miss Matheson nodded. "Yes, it was Tommy Puffer. I saw him working away there with papers and twine. I thought you'd told him to do it."

"For the land's sake!" ejaculated Miss Octavia. "Tommy Puffer! Well, wonders will never cease."

Miss Octavia went back to her house feeling rather ashamed of herself when she remembered how she had always treated Tommy Puffer.

"But there must be some good in the child, or he wouldn't have done this," she said to herself. "I've been real mean, but I'll make it up to him."

Miss Octavia did not see Tommy that day, but when he passed the next morning she ran to the door and called him.

“Tommy, Tommy Puffer, come in here!”

Tommy came reluctantly. He didn’t like Miss Octavia any better than he had, and he didn’t know what she wanted of him. But Miss Octavia soon informed him without loss of words.

“Tommy, Miss Matheson tells me that it was you who saved my flowers from the frost the other night. I’m very much obliged to you indeed. Whatever made you think of doing it?”

“I hated to see the flowers spoiled,” muttered Tommy, who was feeling more uncomfortable than he had ever felt in his life.

“Well, it was real thoughtful of you. I’m sorry I’ve been so hard on you, Tommy, and I believe now you didn’t break my scarlet geranium. Is there anything I can do for you — anything you’d like to have? If it’s in reason I’ll get it for you, just to pay my debt.”

Tommy stared at Miss Octavia with a sudden hopeful inspiration. “Oh, Miss Octavia,” he cried eagerly, “will you buy a doll and give it to me?”

“Well, for the land’s sake!” ejaculated Miss Octavia, unable to believe her ears. “A doll! What on earth do you want of a doll?”

“It’s for Bessie,” said Tommy eagerly. “You see, it’s this way.”

Then Tommy told Miss Octavia the whole story. Miss Octavia listened silently, sometimes nodding her head. When he had finished she went out of the room and soon returned, bringing with her the very identical doll that had been in Mr. Blacklock’s window.

“I guess this is the doll,” she said. “I bought it to give to a small niece of mine, but I can get another for her. You may take this to Bessie.”

It would be of no use to try to describe Bessie’s joy when Tommy rushed in and put Roselle Geraldine in her arms with a breathless account of the wonderful story. But from that moment Bessie began to pick up again, and soon she was better than she had ever been and the happiest little lassie in Arundel.

When a week had passed, Miss Octavia again called Tommy in; Tommy went more willingly this time. He had begun to like Miss Octavia.

That lady looked him over sharply and somewhat dubiously. He was certainly very ragged and unkempt. But Miss Octavia saw what she had never noticed before — that Tommy's eyes were bright and frank, that Tommy's chin was a good chin, and that Tommy's smile had something very pleasant about it.

"You're fond of flowers, aren't you, Tommy?" she asked.

"You bet," was Tommy's inelegant but heartfelt answer.

"Well," said Miss Octavia slowly, "I have a brother down at Chelton who is a florist. He wants a boy of your age to do handy jobs and run errands about his establishment, and he wants one who is fond of flowers and would like to learn the business. He asked me to recommend him one, and I promised to look out for a suitable boy. Would you like the place, Tommy? And will you promise to be a very good boy and learn to be respectable if I ask my brother to give you a trial and a chance to make something of yourself?"

"Oh, Miss Octavia!" gasped Tommy. He wondered if he were simply having a beautiful dream.

But it was no dream. And it was all arranged later on. No one rejoiced more heartily in Tommy's success than Bessie.

"But I'll miss you dreadfully, Tommy," she said wistfully.

"Oh, I'll be home every Saturday night, and we'll have Sunday together, except when I've got to go to Sunday school. 'Cause Miss Octavia says I must," said Tommy comfortingly. "And the rest of the time you'll have Roselle Geraldine."

"Yes, I know," said Bessie, giving the blue-silk doll a fond kiss, "and she's just lovely. But she ain't as nice as you, Tommy, for all."

Then was Tommy's cup of happiness full.

Charlotte's Ladies

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Just as soon as dinner was over at the asylum, Charlotte sped away to the gap in the fence — the northwest corner gap. There was a gap in the southeast corner, too — the asylum fence was in a rather poor condition — but the southeast gap was interesting only after tea, and it was never at any time quite as interesting as the northwest gap.

Charlotte ran as fast as her legs could carry her, for she did not want any of the other orphans to see her. As a rule, Charlotte liked the company of the other orphans and was a favourite with them. But, somehow, she did not want them to know about the gaps. She was sure they would not understand.

Charlotte had discovered the gaps only a week before. They had not been there in the autumn, but the snowdrifts had lain heavily against the fence all winter, and one spring day when Charlotte was creeping through the shrubbery in the northwest corner in search of the little yellow daffodils that always grew there in spring, she found a delightful space where a board had fallen off, whence she could look out on a bit of woodsy road with a little footpath winding along by the fence under the widespreading boughs of the asylum trees. Charlotte felt a wild impulse to slip out and run fast and far down that lovely, sunny, tempting, fenceless road. But that would have been wrong, for it was against the asylum rules, and Charlotte, though she hated most of the asylum rules with all her heart, never disobeyed or broke them. So she subdued the vagrant longing with a sigh and sat down among the daffodils to peer wistfully out of the gap and feast her eyes on this glimpse of a world where there were no brick walls and prim walks and never-varying rules.

Then, as Charlotte watched, the Pretty Lady with the Blue Eyes came along the footpath. Charlotte had never seen her before and hadn't the slightest idea in the world who she was, but that was what she called her as

soon as she saw her. The lady was so pretty, with lovely blue eyes that were very sad, although somehow as you looked at them you felt that they ought to be laughing, merry eyes instead. At least Charlotte thought so and wished at once that she knew how to make them laugh. Besides, the Lady had lovely golden hair and the most beautiful pink cheeks, and Charlotte, who had mouse-coloured hair and any number of freckles, had an unbounded admiration for golden locks and roseleaf complexions. The Lady was dressed in black, which Charlotte didn't like, principally because the matron of the asylum wore black and Charlotte didn't — exactly — like the matron.

When the Pretty Lady with the Blue Eyes had gone by, Charlotte drew a long breath.

“If I could pick out a mother I'd pick out one that looked just like her,” she said.

Nice things sometimes happen close together, even in an orphan asylum, and that very evening Charlotte discovered the southeast gap and found herself peering into the most beautiful garden you could imagine, a garden where daffodils and tulips grew in great ribbon-like beds, and there were hedges of white and purple lilacs, and winding paths under blossoming trees. It was such a garden as Charlotte had pictured in happy dreams and never expected to see in real life. And yet here it had been all the time, divided from her only by a high board fence.

“I wouldn't have s'posed there could be such a lovely place so near an orphan asylum,” mused Charlotte. “It's the very loveliest place I ever saw. Oh, I do wish I could go and walk in it. Well, I do declare! If there isn't a lady in it, too!”

Sure enough, there was a lady, helping an unruly young vine to run in the way it should go over a little arbour. Charlotte instantly named her the Tall Lady with the Black Eyes. She was not nearly so young or so pretty as the Lady with the Blue Eyes, but she looked very kind and jolly.

I'd like her for an aunt, reflected Charlotte. Not for a mother — oh, no, not for a mother, but for an aunt. I know she'd make a splendid aunt. And, oh, just look at her cat!

Charlotte looked at the cat with all her might and main. She loved cats, but cats were not allowed in an orphan asylum, although Charlotte sometimes wondered if there were no orphan kittens in the world which would be appropriate for such an institution.

The Tall Lady's cat was so big and furry, with a splendid tail and elegant stripes. A Very Handsome Cat, Charlotte called him mentally, seeing the capitals as plainly as if they had been printed out. Charlotte's fingers tingled to stroke his glossy coat, but she folded them sternly together.

"You know you can't," she said to herself reproachfully, "so what is the use of wanting to, Charlotte Turner? You ought to be thankful just to see the garden and the Very Handsome Cat."

Charlotte watched the Tall Lady and the Cat until they went away into a fine, big house further up the garden, then she sighed and went back through the cherry trees to the asylum playground, where the other orphans were playing games. But, somehow, games had lost their flavour compared with those fascinating gaps.

It did not take Charlotte long to discover that the Pretty Lady always walked past the northwest gap about one o'clock every day and never at any other time — at least at no other time when Charlotte was free to watch her; and that the Tall Lady was almost always in her garden at five in the afternoon, accompanied by the Very Handsome Cat, pruning and trimming some of her flowers. Charlotte never missed being at the gaps at the proper times, if she could possibly manage it, and her heart was full of dreams about her two Ladies. But the other orphans thought all the fun had gone out of her, and the matron noticed her absentmindedness and dosed her with sulphur and molasses for it. Charlotte took the dose meekly, as she took everything else. It was all part and parcel with being an orphan in an asylum.

"But if the Pretty Lady with the Blue Eyes was my mother, she wouldn't make me swallow such dreadful stuff," sighed Charlotte. "I don't believe even the Tall Lady with the Black Eyes would — though perhaps she might, aunts not being quite as good as mothers."

“Do you know,” said Maggie Brunt, coming up to Charlotte at this moment, “that Lizzie Parker is going to be adopted? A lady is going to adopt her.”

“Oh!” cried Charlotte breathlessly. An adoption was always a wonderful event in the asylum, as well as a somewhat rare one. “Oh, how splendid!”

“Yes, isn’t it?” said Maggie enviously. “She picked out Lizzie because she was pretty and had curls. I don’t think it is fair.”

Charlotte sighed. “Nobody will ever want to adopt me, because I’ve mousy hair and freckles,” she said. “But somebody may want you some day, Maggie. You have such lovely black hair.”

“But it isn’t curly,” said Maggie forlornly. “And the matron won’t let me put it up in curl papers at night. I just wish I was Lizzie.”

Charlotte shook her head. “I don’t. I’d love to be adopted, but I wouldn’t really like to be anybody but myself, even if I am homely. It’s better to be yourself with mousy hair and freckles than somebody else who is ever so beautiful. But I do envy Lizzie, though the matron says it is wicked to envy anyone.”

Envy of the fortunate Lizzie did not long possess Charlotte’s mind, however, for that very day a wonderful thing happened at noon hour by the northwest gap. Charlotte had always been very careful not to let the Pretty Lady see her, but today, after the Pretty Lady had gone past, Charlotte leaned out of the gap to watch her as far as she could. And just at that very moment the Pretty Lady looked back; and there, peering at her from the asylum fence, was a little scrap of a girl, with mouse-coloured hair and big freckles, and the sweetest, brightest, most winsome little face the Pretty Lady had ever seen. The Pretty Lady smiled right down at Charlotte and for just a moment her eyes looked as Charlotte had always known they ought to look. Charlotte was feeling rather frightened down in her heart but she smiled bravely back.

“Are you thinking of running away?” said the Pretty Lady, and, oh, what a sweet voice she had — sweet and tender, just like a mother’s voice ought to be!

“No,” said Charlotte, shaking her head gravely. “I should like to run away but it would be of no use, because there is no place to run to.”

“Why would you like to run away?” asked the Pretty Lady, still smiling. “Don’t you like living here?”

Charlotte opened her big eyes very widely. “Why, it’s an orphan asylum!” she exclaimed. “Nobody could like living in an orphan asylum. But, of course, orphans should be very thankful to have any place to live in and I am thankful. I’d be thankfuller still if the matron wouldn’t make me take sulphur and molasses. If you had a little girl, would you make her take sulphur and molasses?”

“I didn’t when I had a little girl,” said the Pretty Lady wistfully, and her eyes were sad again.

“Oh, did you really have a little girl once?” asked Charlotte softly.

“Yes, and she died,” said the Pretty Lady in a trembling voice.

“Oh, I am sorry,” said Charlotte, more softly still. “Did she — did she have lovely golden hair and pink cheeks like yours?”

“No,” the Pretty Lady smiled again, though it was a very sad smile.

“No, she had mouse-coloured hair and freckles.”

“Oh! And weren’t you sorry?”

“No, I was glad of it, because it made her look like her father. I’ve always loved little girls with mouse-coloured hair and freckles ever since. Well, I must hurry along. I’m late now, and schools have a dreadful habit of going in sharp on time. If you should happen to be here tomorrow, I’m going to stop and ask your name.”

Of course Charlotte was at the gap the next day and they had a lovely talk. In a week they were the best of friends. Charlotte soon found out that she could make the Pretty Lady’s eyes look as they ought to for a little while at least, and she spent all her spare time and lay awake at nights devising speeches to make the Pretty Lady laugh.

Then another wonderful thing happened. One evening when Charlotte went to the southeast gap, the Tall Lady with the Black Eyes was not in the garden — at least, Charlotte thought she wasn’t. But the Very Handsome

Cat was, sitting gravely under a syringa bush and looking quite proud of himself for being a cat.

“You Very Handsome Cat,” said Charlotte, “won’t you come here and let me stroke you?”

The Very Handsome Cat did come, just as if he understood English, and he purred with delight when Charlotte took him in her arms and buried her face in his fur. Then — Charlotte thought she would really sink into the ground, for the Tall Lady herself came around a lilac bush and stood before the gap.

“Please, ma’am,” stammered Charlotte in an agony of embarrassment, “I wasn’t meaning to do any harm to your Very Handsome Cat. I just wanted to pat him. I — I am very fond of cats and they are not allowed in orphan asylums.”

“I’ve always thought asylums weren’t run on proper principles,” said the Tall Lady briskly. “Bless your heart, child, don’t look so scared. You’re welcome to pat the cat all you like. Come in and I’ll give you some flowers.”

“Thank you, but I am not allowed to go off the grounds,” said Charlotte firmly, “and I think I’d rather not have any flowers because the matron might want to know where I got them, and then she would have this gap closed up. I live in mortal dread for fear it will be closed anyhow. It’s very uncomfortable — living in mortal dread.”

The Tall Lady laughed a very jolly laugh. “Yes, I should think it would be,” she agreed. “I haven’t had that experience.”

Then they had a jolly talk, and every evening after that Charlotte went to the gap and stroked the Very Handsome Cat and chatted to the Tall Lady.

“Do you live all alone in that big house?” she asked wonderingly one day.

“All alone,” said the Tall Lady.

“Did you always live alone?”

“No. I had a sister living with me once. But I don’t want to talk about her. You’ll oblige me, Charlotte, by not talking about her.”

“I won’t then,” agreed Charlotte. “I can understand why people don’t like to have their sisters talked about sometimes. Lily Mitchell has a big sister who was sent to jail for stealing. Of course Lily doesn’t like to talk about her.”

The Tall Lady laughed a little bitterly. “My sister didn’t steal. She married a man I detested, that’s all.”

“Did he drink?” asked Charlotte gravely. “The matron’s husband drank and that was why she left him and took to running an orphan asylum. I think I’d rather put up with a drunken husband than live in an orphan asylum.”

“My sister’s husband didn’t drink,” said the Tall Lady grimly. “He was beneath her, that was all. I told her I’d never forgive her and I never shall. He’s dead now — he died a year after she married him — and she’s working for her living. I dare say she doesn’t find it very pleasant. She wasn’t brought up to that. Here, Charlotte, is a turnover for you. I made it on purpose for you. Eat it and tell me if you don’t think I’m a good cook. I’m dying for a compliment. I never get any now that I’ve got old. It’s a dismal thing to get old and have nobody to love you except a cat, Charlotte.”

“I think it is just as bad to be young and have nobody to love you, not even a cat,” sighed Charlotte, enjoying the turnover, nevertheless.

“I dare say it is,” agreed the Tall Lady, looking as if she had been struck by a new and rather startling idea.

I like the tall lady with the Black Eyes ever so much, thought Charlotte that night as she lay in bed, but I love the Pretty Lady. I have more fun with the Tall Lady and the Very Handsome Cat, but I always feel nicer with the Pretty Lady. Oh, I’m so glad her little girl had mouse-coloured hair.

Then the most wonderful thing of all happened. One day a week later the Pretty Lady said, “Would you like to come and live with me, Charlotte?”

Charlotte looked at her. “Are you in earnest?” she asked in a whisper.

“Indeed I am. I want you for my little girl, and if you’d like to come, you shall. I’m poor, Charlotte, really, I’m dreadfully poor, but I can make my salary stretch far enough for two, and we’ll love each other enough to cover the thin spots. Will you come?”

“Well, I should just think I will!” said Charlotte emphatically. “Oh, I wish I was sure I’m not dreaming. I do love you so much, and it will be so delightful to be your little girl.”

“Very well, sweetheart. I’ll come tomorrow afternoon — it is Saturday, so I’ll have the whole blessed day off — and see the matron about it. Oh, we’ll have lovely times together, dearest. I only wish I’d discovered you long ago.”

Charlotte may have eaten and studied and played and kept rules the rest of that day and part of the next, but, if so, she has no recollection of it. She went about like a girl in a dream, and the matron concluded that something more than sulphur and molasses was needed and decided to speak to the doctor about her. But she never did, because a lady came that afternoon and told her she wanted to adopt Charlotte.

Charlotte obeyed the summons to the matron’s room in a tingle of excitement. But when she went in, she saw only the matron and the Tall Lady with the Black Eyes. Before Charlotte could look around for the Pretty Lady the matron said, “Charlotte, this lady, Miss Herbert, wishes to adopt you. It is a splendid thing for you, and you ought to be a very thankful little girl.”

Charlotte’s head fairly whirled. She clasped her hands and the tears brimmed up in her eyes.

“Oh, I like the Tall Lady,” she gasped, “but I love the Pretty Lady and I promised her I’d be her little girl. I can’t break my promise.”

“What on earth is the child talking about?” said the mystified matron.

And just then the maid showed in the Pretty Lady. Charlotte flew to her and flung her arms about her.

“Oh, tell them I am your little girl!” she begged. “Tell them I promised you first. I don’t want to hurt the Tall Lady’s feelings because I truly do like her so very much. But I want to be your little girl.”

The Pretty Lady had given one glance at the Tall Lady and flushed red. The Tall Lady, on the contrary, had grown very pale. The matron felt uncomfortable. Everybody knew that Miss Herbert and Mrs. Bond hadn't spoken to each other for years, even if they were sisters and alone in the world except for each other.

Mrs. Bond turned to the matron. "I have come to ask permission to adopt this little girl," she said.

"Oh, I'm very sorry," stammered the matron, "but Miss Herbert has just asked for her, and I have consented."

Charlotte gave a great gulp of disappointment, but the Pretty Lady suddenly wheeled around to face the Tall Lady, with quivering lips and tearful eyes.

"Don't take her from me, Alma," she pleaded humbly. "She — she is so like my own baby and I'm so lonely. Any other child will suit you as well."

"Not at all," said the Tall Lady brusquely. "Not at all, Anna. No other child will suit me at all. And may I ask what you intend to keep her on? I know your salary is barely enough for yourself."

"That is my concern," said the Pretty Lady a little proudly.

"Humph!" The Tall Lady shrugged her shoulders. "Just as independent as ever, Anna, I see. Well, child, what do you say? Which of us will you come with? Remember, I have the cat on my side, and Anna can't make half as good turnovers as I can. Remember all this, Charlotte."

"Oh, I — I like you so much," stammered Charlotte, "and I wish I could live with you both. But since I can't, I must go with the Pretty Lady, because I promised, and because I loved her first."

"And best?" queried the Tall Lady.

"And best," admitted Charlotte, bound to be truthful, even at the risk of hurting the Tall Lady's feelings. "But I do like you, too — next best. And you really don't need me as much as she does, for you have your Very Handsome Cat and she hasn't anything."

"A cat no longer satisfies the aching void in my soul," said the Tall Lady stubbornly. "Nothing will satisfy it but a little girl with mouse-

coloured hair and freckles. No, Anna, I've got to have Charlotte. But I think that with her usual astuteness, she has already solved the problem for us by saying she'd like to live with us both. Why can't she? You just come back home and we'll let bygones be bygones. We both have something to forgive, but I was an obstinate old fool and I've known it for years, though I never confessed it to anybody but the cat."

The Pretty Lady softened, trembled, smiled. She went right up to the Tall Lady and put her arms about her neck.

"Oh, I've wanted so much to be friends with you again," she sobbed. "But I thought you would never relent — and — and — I've been so lonely—"

"There, there," whispered the Tall Lady, "don't cry under the matron's eye. Wait till we get home. I may have some crying to do myself then. Charlotte, go and get your hat and come right over with us. We can sign the necessary papers later on, but we must have you right off. The cat is waiting for you on the back porch, and there is a turnover cooling on the pantry window that is just your size."

"I am so happy," remarked Charlotte, "that I feel like crying myself."

Christmas at Red Butte

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“Of course Santa Claus will come,” said Jimmy Martin confidently. Jimmy was ten, and at ten it is easy to be confident. “Why, he’s got to come because it is Christmas Eve, and he always has come. You know that, twins.”

Yes, the twins knew it and, cheered by Jimmy’s superior wisdom, their doubts passed away. There had been one terrible moment when Theodora had sighed and told them they mustn’t be too much disappointed if Santa Claus did not come this year because the crops had been poor, and he mightn’t have had enough presents to go around.

“That doesn’t make any difference to Santa Claus,” scoffed Jimmy. “You know as well as I do, Theodora Prentice, that Santa Claus is rich whether the crops fail or not. They failed three years ago, before Father died, but Santa Claus came all the same. Prob’bly you don’t remember it, twins, ‘cause you were too little, but I do. Of course he’ll come, so don’t you worry a mite. And he’ll bring my skates and your dolls. He knows we’re expecting them, Theodora, ‘cause we wrote him a letter last week, and threw it up the chimney. And there’ll be candy and nuts, of course, and Mother’s gone to town to buy a turkey. I tell you we’re going to have a ripping Christmas.”

“Well, don’t use such slangy words about it, Jimmy-boy,” sighed Theodora. She couldn’t bear to dampen their hopes any further, and perhaps Aunt Elizabeth might manage it if the colt sold well. But Theodora had her painful doubts, and she sighed again as she looked out of the window far down the trail that wound across the prairie, red-lighted by the declining sun of the short wintry afternoon.

“Do people always sigh like that when they get to be sixteen?” asked Jimmy curiously. “You didn’t sigh like that when you were only fifteen,

Theodora. I wish you wouldn't. It makes me feel funny — and it's not a nice kind of funniness either."

"It's a bad habit I've got into lately," said Theodora, trying to laugh. "Old folks are dull sometimes, you know, Jimmy-boy."

"Sixteen is awful old, isn't it?" said Jimmy reflectively. "I'll tell you what I'm going to do when I'm sixteen, Theodora. I'm going to pay off the mortgage, and buy mother a silk dress, and a piano for the twins. Won't that be elegant? I'll be able to do that 'cause I'm a man. Of course if I was only a girl I couldn't."

"I hope you'll be a good kind brave man and a real help to your mother," said Theodora softly, sitting down before the cosy fire and lifting the fat little twins into her lap.

"Oh, I'll be good to her, never you fear," assured Jimmy, squatting comfortably down on the little fur rug before the stove — the skin of the coyote his father had killed four years ago. "I believe in being good to your mother when you've only got the one. Now tell us a story, Theodora — a real jolly story, you know, with lots of fighting in it. Only please don't kill anybody. I like to hear about fighting, but I like to have all the people come out alive."

Theodora laughed, and began a story about the Riel Rebellion of '85 — a story which had the double merit of being true and exciting at the same time. It was quite dark when she finished, and the twins were nodding, but Jimmy's eyes were wide open and sparkling.

"That was great," he said, drawing a long breath. "Tell us another."

"No, it's bedtime for you all," said Theodora firmly. "One story at a time is my rule, you know."

"But I want to sit up till Mother comes home," objected Jimmy.

"You can't. She may be very late, for she would have to wait to see Mr. Porter. Besides, you don't know what time Santa Claus might come — if he comes at all. If he were to drive along and see you children up instead of being sound asleep in bed, he might go right on and never call at all."

This argument was too much for Jimmy.

“All right, we’ll go. But we have to hang up our stockings first. Twins, get yours.”

The twins toddled off in great excitement, and brought back their Sunday stockings, which Jimmy proceeded to hang along the edge of the mantel shelf. This done, they all trooped obediently off to bed. Theodora gave another sigh, and seated herself at the window, where she could watch the moonlit prairie for Mrs. Martin’s homecoming and knit at the same time.

I am afraid that you will think from all the sighing Theodora was doing that she was a very melancholy and despondent young lady. You couldn’t think anything more unlike the real Theodora. She was the jolliest, bravest girl of sixteen in all Saskatchewan, as her shining brown eyes and rosy, dimpled cheeks would have told you; and her sighs were not on her own account, but simply for fear the children were going to be disappointed. She knew that they would be almost heartbroken if Santa Claus did not come, and that this would hurt the patient hardworking little mother more than all else.

Five years before this, Theodora had come to live with Uncle George and Aunt Elizabeth in the little log house at Red Butte. Her own mother had just died, and Theodora had only her big brother Donald left, and Donald had Klondike fever. The Martins were poor, but they had gladly made room for their little niece, and Theodora had lived there ever since, her aunt’s righthand girl and the beloved playmate of the children. They had been very happy until Uncle George’s death two years before this Christmas Eve; but since then there had been hard times in the little log house, and though Mrs. Martin and Theodora did their best, it was a woefully hard task to make both ends meet, especially this year when their crops had been poor. Theodora and her aunt had made every sacrifice possible for the children’s sake, and at least Jimmy and the twins had not felt the pinch very severely yet.

At seven Mrs. Martin’s bells jingled at the door and Theodora flew out. “Go right in and get warm, Auntie,” she said briskly. “I’ll take Ned away and unharness him.”

“It’s a bitterly cold night,” said Mrs. Martin wearily. There was a note of discouragement in her voice that struck dismay to Theodora’s heart.

“I’m afraid it means no Christmas for the children tomorrow,” she thought sadly, as she led Ned away to the stable. When she returned to the kitchen Mrs. Martin was sitting by the fire, her face in her chilled hand, sobbing convulsively.

“Auntie — oh, Auntie, don’t!” exclaimed Theodora impulsively. It was such a rare thing to see her plucky, resolute little aunt in tears. “You’re cold and tired — I’ll have a nice cup of tea for you in a trice.”

“No, it isn’t that,” said Mrs. Martin brokenly “It was seeing those stockings hanging there. Theodora, I couldn’t get a thing for the children — not a single thing. Mr. Porter would only give forty dollars for the colt, and when all the bills were paid there was barely enough left for such necessities as we must have. I suppose I ought to feel thankful I could get those. But the thought of the children’s disappointment tomorrow is more than I can bear. It would have been better to have told them long ago, but I kept building on getting more for the colt. Well, it’s weak and foolish to give way like this. We’d better both take a cup of tea and go to bed. It will save fuel.”

When Theodora went up to her little room her face was very thoughtful. She took a small box from her table and carried it to the window. In it was a very pretty little gold locket hung on a narrow blue ribbon. Theodora held it tenderly in her fingers, and looked out over the moonlit prairie with a very sober face. Could she give up her dear locket — the locket Donald had given her just before he started for the Klondike? She had never thought she could do such a thing. It was almost the only thing she had to remind her of Donald — handsome, merry, impulsive, warmhearted Donald, who had gone away four years ago with a smile on his bonny face and splendid hope in his heart.

“Here’s a locket for you, Gift o’ God,” he had said gaily — he had such a dear loving habit of calling her by the beautiful meaning of her name. A lump came into Theodora’s throat as she remembered it. “I couldn’t afford

a chain too, but when I come back I'll bring you a rope of Klondike nuggets for it."

Then he had gone away. For two years letters had come from him regularly. Then he wrote that he had joined a prospecting party to a remote wilderness. After that was silence, deepening into anguish of suspense that finally ended in hopelessness. A rumour came that Donald Prentice was dead. None had returned from the expedition he had joined. Theodora had long ago given up all hope of ever seeing Donald again. Hence her locket was doubly dear to her.

But Aunt Elizabeth had always been so good and loving and kind to her. Could she not make the sacrifice for her sake? Yes, she could and would. Theodora flung up her head with a gesture that meant decision. She took out of the locket the bits of hair — her mother's and Donald's — which it contained (perhaps a tear or two fell as she did so) and then hastily donned her warmest cap and wraps. It was only three miles to Spencer; she could easily walk it in an hour and, as it was Christmas Eve, the shops would be open late. She must walk, for Ned could not be taken out again, and the mare's foot was sore. Besides, Aunt Elizabeth must not know until it was done.

As stealthily as if she were bound on some nefarious errand, Theodora slipped downstairs and out of the house. The next minute she was hurrying along the trail in the moonlight. The great dazzling prairie was around her, the mystery and splendour of the northern night all about her. It was very calm and cold, but Theodora walked so briskly that she kept warm. The trail from Red Butte to Spencer was a lonely one. Mr. Lurgan's house, halfway to town, was the only dwelling on it.

When Theodora reached Spencer she made her way at once to the only jewellery store the little town contained. Mr. Benson, its owner, had been a friend of her uncle's, and Theodora felt sure that he would buy her locket. Nevertheless her heart beat quickly, and her breath came and went uncomfortably fast as she went in. Suppose he wouldn't buy it. Then there would be no Christmas for the children at Red Butte.

“Good evening, Miss Theodora,” said Mr. Benson briskly. “What can I do for you?”

“I’m afraid I’m not a very welcome sort of customer, Mr. Benson,” said Theodora, with an uncertain smile. “I want to sell, not buy. Could you — will you buy this locket?”

Mr. Benson pursed up his lips, took up the locket, and examined it. “Well, I don’t often buy secondhand stuff,” he said, after some reflection, “but I don’t mind obliging you, Miss Theodora. I’ll give you four dollars for this trinket.”

Theodora knew the locket had cost a great deal more than that, but four dollars would get what she wanted, and she dared not ask for more. In a few minutes the locket was in Mr. Benson’s possession, and Theodora, with four crisp new bills in her purse, was hurrying to the toy store. Half an hour later she was on her way back to Red Butte, with as many parcels as she could carry — Jimmy’s skates, two lovely dolls for the twins, packages of nuts and candy, and a nice plump turkey. Theodora beguiled her lonely tramp by picturing the children’s joy in the morning.

About a quarter of a mile past Mr. Lurgan’s house the trail curved suddenly about a bluff of poplars. As Theodora rounded the turn she halted in amazement. Almost at her feet the body of a man was lying across the road. He was clad in a big fur coat, and had a fur cap pulled well down over his forehead and ears. Almost all of him that could be seen was a full bushy beard. Theodora had no idea who he was, or where he had come from. But she realized that he was unconscious, and that he would speedily freeze to death if help were not brought. The footprints of a horse galloping across the prairie suggested a fall and a runaway, but Theodora did not waste time in speculation. She ran back at full speed to Mr. Lurgan’s, and roused the household. In a few minutes Mr. Lurgan and his son had hitched a horse to a wood-sleigh, and hurried down the trail to the unfortunate man.

Theodora, knowing that her assistance was not needed, and that she ought to get home as quickly as possible, went on her way as soon as she had seen the stranger in safe keeping. When she reached the little log

house she crept in, cautiously put the children's gifts in their stockings, placed the turkey on the table where Aunt Elizabeth would see it the first thing in the morning, and then slipped off to bed, a very weary but very happy girl.

The joy that reigned in the little log house the next day more than repaid Theodora for her sacrifice.

"Whoopee, didn't I tell you that Santa Claus would come all right!" shouted the delighted Jimmy. "Oh, what splendid skates!"

The twins hugged their dolls in silent rapture, but Aunt Elizabeth's face was the best of all.

Then the dinner had to be prepared, and everybody had a hand in that. Just as Theodora, after a grave peep into the oven, had announced that the turkey was done, a sleigh dashed around the house. Theodora flew to answer the knock at the door, and there stood Mr. Lurgan and a big, bewhiskered, fur-coated fellow whom Theodora recognized as the stranger she had found on the trail. But — was he a stranger? There was something oddly familiar in those merry brown eyes. Theodora felt herself growing dizzy.

"Donald!" she gasped. "Oh, Donald!"

And then she was in the big fellow's arms, laughing and crying at the same time.

Donald it was indeed. And then followed half an hour during which everybody talked at once, and the turkey would have been burned to a crisp had it not been for the presence of mind of Mr. Lurgan who, being the least excited of them all, took it out of the oven, and set it on the back of the stove.

"To think that it was you last night, and that I never dreamed it," exclaimed Theodora. "Oh, Donald, if I hadn't gone to town!"

"I'd have frozen to death, I'm afraid," said Donald soberly. "I got into Spencer on the last train last night. I felt that I must come right out — I couldn't wait till morning. But there wasn't a team to be got for love or money — it was Christmas Eve and all the livery rigs were out. So I came on horseback. Just by that bluff something frightened my horse, and he

shied violently. I was half asleep and thinking of my little sister, and I went off like a shot. I suppose I struck my head against a tree. Anyway, I knew nothing more until I came to in Mr. Lurgan's kitchen. I wasn't much hurt — feel none the worse of it except for a sore head and shoulder. But, oh, Gift o' God, how you have grown! I can't realize that you are the little sister I left four years ago. I suppose you have been thinking I was dead?"

"Yes, and, oh, Donald, where have you been?"

"Well, I went way up north with a prospecting party. We had a tough time the first year, I can tell you, and some of us never came back. We weren't in a country where post offices were lying round loose either, you see. Then at last, just as we were about giving up in despair, we struck it rich. I've brought a snug little pile home with me, and things are going to look up in this log house, Gift o' God. There'll be no more worrying for you dear people over mortgages."

"I'm so glad — for Auntie's sake," said Theodora, with shining eyes. "But, oh, Donald, it's best of all just to have you back. I'm so perfectly happy that I don't know what to do or say."

"Well, I think you might have dinner," said Jimmy in an injured tone. "The turkey's getting stone cold, and I'm most starving. I just can't stand it another minute."

So, with a laugh, they all sat down to the table and ate the merriest Christmas dinner the little log house had ever known.

How We Went to the Wedding

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“If it were to clear up I wouldn’t know how to behave, it would seem so unnatural,” said Kate. “Do you, by any chance, remember what the sun looks like, Phil?”

“Does the sun ever shine in Saskatchewan anyhow?” I asked with assumed sarcasm, just to make Kate’s big, bonny black eyes flash.

They did flash; but Kate laughed immediately after, as she sat down on a chair in front of me and cradled her long, thin, spirited dark face in her palms.

“We have more sunny weather in Saskatchewan than in all the rest of Canada put together, in an average year,” she said, clicking her strong, white teeth and snapping her eyes at me. “But I can’t blame you for feeling sceptical about it, Phil. If I went to a new country and it rained every day — all day — all night — after I got there for three whole weeks I’d think things not lawful to be uttered about the climate too. So, little cousin, I forgive you. Remember that ‘into each life some rain must fall, some days must be dark and dreary.’ Oh, if you’d only come to visit me last fall. We had such a bee-yew-tiful September last year. We were drowned in sunshine. This fall we’re drowned in water. Old settlers tell of a similar visitation in ‘72, though they claim even that wasn’t quite as bad as this.”

I was sitting rather disconsolately by an upper window of Uncle Kenneth Morrison’s log house at Arrow Creek. Below was what in dry weather — so, at least, I was told — was merely a pretty, grassy little valley, but which was now a considerable creek of muddy yellow water, rising daily. Beyond was a cheerless prospect of sodden prairie and dripping “bluff.”

“It would be a golden, mellow land, with purple hazes over the bluffs, in a normal fall,” assured Kate. “Even now if the sun were just to shine out

for a day and a good ‘chinook’ blow you’d see a surprising change. I feel like chanting continually that old rhyme I learned in the first primer,

‘Rain, rain, go away, Come again some other day: — some other day next summer — Phil and Katie want to play.’

Philippa, dear girl, don’t look so dismal. It’s bound to clear up sometime.”

“I wish the ‘sometime’ would come soon, then,” I said, rather grumpily.

“You know it hasn’t really rained for three days,” protested Kate. “It’s been damp and horrid and threatening, but it hasn’t rained. I defy you to say that it has actually rained.”

“When it’s so wet underfoot that you can’t stir out without rubber boots it might as well be wet overhead too,” I said, still grumpily.

“I believe you’re homesick, girl,” said Kate anxiously.

“No, I’m not,” I answered, laughing, and feeling ashamed of my ungraciousness. “Nobody could be homesick with such a jolly good fellow as you around, Kate. It’s only that this weather is getting on my nerves a bit. I’m fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils. If your chinook doesn’t come soon, Kitty, I’ll do something quite desperate.”

“I feel that way myself,” admitted Kate. “Real reckless, Phil. Anyhow, let’s put on our despised rubber boots and sally out for a wade.”

“Here’s Jim Nash coming on horseback down the trail,” I said. “Let’s wait and see if he’s got the mail.”

We hurried down, Kate humming, “Somewhere the sun is shining,” solely, I believe, because she knew it aggravated me. At any other time I should probably have thrown a pillow at her, but just now I was too eager to see if Jim Nash had brought any mail.

I had come from Ontario, the first of September, to visit Uncle Kenneth Morrison’s family. I had been looking forward to the trip for several years. My cousin Kate and I had always corresponded since they had “gone west” ten years before; and Kate, who revelled in the western life, had sung the praises of her adopted land rapturously and constantly. It was quite a joke on her that, when I did finally come to visit her, I should

have struck the wettest autumn ever recorded in the history of the west. A wet September in Saskatchewan is no joke, however. The country was almost “flooded out.” The trails soon became nearly impassable. All our plans for drives and picnics and inter-neighbour visiting — at that time a neighbour meant a man who lived at least six miles away — had to be given up. Yet I was not lonesome, and I enjoyed my visit in spite of everything. Kate was a host in herself. She was twenty-eight years old — eight years my senior — but the difference in our ages had never been any barrier to our friendship. She was a jolly, companionable, philosophical soul, with a jest for every situation, and a merry solution for every perplexity. The only fault I had to find with her was her tendency to make parodies. Kate’s parodies were perfectly awful and always got on my nerves.

She was dreadfully ashamed of the way the Saskatchewan weather was behaving after all her boasting. She was thin at the best of times, but now she grew positively scraggy with the worry of it. I am afraid I took an unholy delight in teasing her, and abused the western weather even more than was necessary.

Jim Nash — the lank youth who was hired to look after the place during Uncle Kenneth’s absence on a prolonged threshing expedition — had brought some mail. Kate’s share was a letter, postmarked Bothwell, a rising little town about one hundred and twenty miles from Arrow Creek. Kate had several friends there, and one of our plans had been to visit Bothwell and spend a week with them. We had meant to drive, of course, since there was no other way of getting there, and equally of course the plan had been abandoned because of the wet weather.

“Mother,” exclaimed Kate, “Mary Taylor is going to be married in a fortnight’s time! She wants Phil and me to go up to Bothwell for the wedding.”

“What a pity you can’t go,” remarked Aunt Jennie placidly. Aunt Jennie was always a placid little soul, with a most enviable knack of taking everything easy. Nothing ever worried her greatly, and when she had decided that a thing was inevitable it did not worry her at all.

“But I am going,” cried Kate. “I will go — I must go. I positively cannot let Mary Taylor — my own beloved Molly — go and perpetrate matrimony without my being on hand to see it. Yes, I’m going — and if Phil has a spark of the old Blair pioneer spirit in her, she’ll go too.”

“Of course I’ll go if you go,” I said.

Aunt Jennie did not think we were in earnest, so she merely laughed at first, and said, “How do you propose to go? Fly — or swim?”

“We’ll drive, as usual,” said Kate calmly. “I’d feel more at home in that way of locomotion. We’ll borrow Jim Nash’s father’s democrat, and take the ponies. We’ll put on old clothes, raincoats, rubber caps and boots, and we’ll start tomorrow. In an ordinary time we could easily do it in six days or less, but this fall we’ll probably need ten or twelve.”

“You don’t really mean to go, Kate!” said Aunt Jennie, beginning to perceive that Kate did mean it.

“I do,” said Kate, in a convincing tone.

Aunt Jennie felt a little worried — as much as she could feel worried over anything — and she tried her best to dissuade Kate, although she plainly did not have much hope of doing so, having had enough experience with her determined daughter to realize that when Kate said she was going to do a thing she did it. It was rather funny to listen to the ensuing dialogue.

“Kate, you can’t do it. It’s a crazy idea! The road is one hundred and twenty miles long.”

“I’ve driven it twice, Mother.”

“Yes, but not in such a wet year. The trail is impassable in places.”

“Oh, there are always plenty of dry spots to be found if you only look hard for them.”

“But you don’t know where to look for them, and goodness knows what you’ll get into while you are looking.”

“We’ll call at the M.P. barracks and get an Indian to guide us. Indians always know the dry spots.”

“The stage driver has decided not to make another trip till the October frosts set in.”

“But he always has such a heavy load. It will be quite different with us, you must remember. We’ll travel light — just our provisions and a valise containing our wedding garments.”

“What will you do if you get mired twenty miles from a human being?”

“But we won’t. I’m a good driver and I haven’t nerves — but I have nerve. Besides, you forget that we’ll have an Indian guide with us.”

“There was a company of Hudson Bay freighters ambushed and killed along that very trail by Blackfoot Indians in 1839,” said Aunt Jennie dolefully.

“Fifty years ago! Their ghosts must have ceased to haunt it by this time,” said Kate flippantly.

“Well, you’ll get wet through and catch your deaths of cold,” protested Aunt Jennie.

“No fear of it. We’ll be cased in rubber. And we’ll borrow a good tight tent from the M.P.s. Besides, I’m sure it’s not going to rain much more. I know the signs.”

“At least wait for a day or two until you’re sure that it has cleared up,” implored Aunt Jennie.

“Which being interpreted means, ‘Wait for a day or two, because then your father may be home and he’ll squelch your mad expedition,’” said Kate, with a sly glance at me. “No, no, my mother, your wiles are in vain. We’ll hit the trail tomorrow at sunrise. So just be good, darling, and help us pack up some provisions. I’ll send Jim for his father’s democrat.”

Aunt Jennie resigned herself to the inevitable and betook herself to the pantry with the air of a woman who washes her hands of the consequences. I flew upstairs to pack some finery. I was wild with delight over the proposed outing. I did not realize what it actually meant, and I had perfect confidence in Kate, who was an expert driver, an experienced camper out, and an excellent manager. If I could have seen what was ahead of us I would certainly not have been quite so jubilant and reckless, but I would have gone all the same. I would not miss the laughter-provoking memories of that trip out of my life for anything. I have always been glad I went.

We left at sunrise the next morning; there was a sunrise that morning, for a wonder. The sun came up in a pinky-saffron sky and promised us a fine day. Aunt Jennie bade us goodbye and, estimable woman that she was, did not trouble us with advice or forebodings.

Mr. Nash had sent over his “democrat,” a light wagon with springs; and Kate’s “shaganappies,” Tom and Jerry — native ponies, the toughest horse flesh to be found in the world — were hitched to it. Kate and I were properly accoutred for our trip and looked — but I try to forget how we looked! The memory is not flattering.

We drove off in the gayest of spirits. Our difficulties began at the start, for we had to drive a mile before we could find a place to ford the creek. Beyond that, however, we had a passable trail for three miles to the little outpost of the Mounted Police, where five or six men were stationed on detachment duty.

“Sergeant Baker is a friend of mine,” said Kate. “He’ll be only too glad to lend me all we require.”

The sergeant was a friend of Kate’s, but he looked at her as if he thought she was crazy when she told him where we were going.

“You’d better take a canoe instead of a team,” he said sarcastically. “I’ve a good notion to arrest you both as horse thieves and prevent you from going on such a mad expedition.”

“You know nothing short of arrest would stop me,” said Kate, nodding at him with laughing eyes, “and you really won’t go to such an extreme, I know. So please be nice, even if it comes hard, and lend us some things. I’ve come a-borrying.”

“I won’t lend you a thing,” declared the sergeant. “I won’t aid and abet you in any such freak as this. Go home now, like a good girl.”

“I’m not going home,” said Kate. “I’m not a ‘good girl’ — I’m a wicked old maid, and I’m going to Bothwell. If you won’t lend us a tent we’ll go without — and sleep in the open — and our deaths will lie forever at your door. I’ll come back and haunt you, if you don’t lend me a tent. I’ll camp on your very threshold and you won’t be able to go out of your door without falling over my spook.”

“I’ve more fear of being accountable for your death if I do let you go,” said Sergeant Baker dubiously. “However, I see that nothing but physical force will prevent you. What do you want?”

“I want,” said Kate, “a cavalry tent, a sheet-iron camp stove, and a good Indian guide — old Peter Crow for choice. He’s such a respectable-looking old fellow, and his wife often works for us.”

The sergeant gave us the tent and stove, and sent a man down to the Reserve for Peter Crow. Moreover, he vindicated his title of friend by making us take a dozen prairie chickens and a large ham — besides any quantity of advice. We didn’t want the advice but we hugely welcomed the ham. Presently our guide appeared — quite a spruce old Indian, as Indians go. I had never been able to shake off my childhood conviction that an Indian was a fearsome creature, hopelessly addicted to scalping knives and tomahawks, and I secretly felt quite horrified at the idea of two defenceless females starting out on a lonely prairie trail with an Indian for guide. Even old Peter Crow’s meek appearance did not quite reassure me; but I kept my qualms to myself, for I knew Kate would only laugh at me.

It was ten when we finally got away from the M.P. outpost. Sergeant Baker bade us goodbye in a tone which seemed to intimate that he never expected to see either of us again. What with his dismal predictions and my secret horror of Indians, I was beginning to feel anything but jubilant over our expedition. Kate, however, was as blithe and buoyant as usual. She knew no fear, being one of those enviable folk who can because they think they can. One hundred and twenty miles of half-flooded prairie trail — camping out at night in the solitude of the Great Lone Land — rain — muskegs — Indian guides — nothing had any terror for my dauntless cousin.

For the next three hours, however, we got on beautifully. The trail was fair, though somewhat greasy; the sun shone, though with a somewhat watery gleam, through the mists; and Peter Crow, coiled up on the folded tent behind the seat, slept soundly and snored mellifluously. That snore reassured me greatly. I had never thought of Indians as snoring. Surely one who did couldn’t be dreaded greatly.

We stopped at one o'clock and had a cold lunch, sitting in our wagon, while Peter Crow wakened up and watered the ponies. We did not get on so well in the afternoon. The trail descended into lowlying ground where travelling was very difficult. I had to admit old Peter Crow was quite invaluable. He knew, as Kate had foretold, "all the dry spots" — that is to say, spots less wet than others. But, even so, we had to make so many detours that by sunset we were little more than six miles distant from our noon halting place.

"We'd better set camp now, before it gets any darker," said Kate. "There's a capital spot over there, by that bluff of dead poplar. The ground seems pretty dry too. Peter, cut us a set of tent poles and kindle a fire."

"Want my dollar first," said old Peter stolidly.

We had agreed to pay him a dollar a day for the trip, but none of the money was to be paid until we got to Bothwell. Kate told him this. But all the reply she got was a stolid, "Want dollar. No make fire without dollar."

We were getting cold and it was getting dark, so finally Kate, under the law of necessity, paid him his dollar. Then he carried out our orders at his own sweet leisure. In course of time he got a fire lighted, and while we cooked supper he set up the tent and prepared our beds, by cutting piles of brush and covering them with rugs.

Kate and I had a hilarious time cooking that supper. It was my first experience of camping out and, as I had become pretty well convinced that Peter Crow was not the typical Indian of old romance, I enjoyed it all hugely. But we were both very tired, and as soon as we had finished eating we betook ourselves to our tent and found our brush beds much more comfortable than I had expected. Old Peter coiled up on his blanket outside by the fire, and the great silence of a windless prairie enwrapped us. In a few minutes we were sound asleep and never wakened until seven o'clock.

When we arose and lifted the flap of the tent we saw a peculiar sight. The little elevation on which we had pitched our camp seemed to be an island in a vast sea of white mist, dotted here and there with other islands. On every hand to the far horizon stretched that strange, phantasmal ocean,

and a hazy sun looked over the shifting billows. I had never seen a western mist before and I thought it extremely beautiful; but Kate, to whom it was no novelty, was more cumbered with breakfast cares.

“I’m ravenous,” she said, as she bustled about among our stores. “Camping out always does give one such an appetite. Aren’t you hungry, Phil?”

“Comfortably so,” I admitted. “But where are our ponies? And where is Peter Crow?”

“Probably the ponies have strayed away looking for pea vines. They love and adore pea vines,” said Kate, stirring up the fire from under its blanket of grey ashes. “And Peter Crow has gone to look for them, good old fellow. When you do get a conscientious Indian there is no better guide in the world, but they are rare. Now, Philippa-girl, just pry out the sergeant’s ham and shave a few slices off it for our breakfast. Some savoury fried ham always goes well on the prairie.”

I went for the ham but could not find it. A thorough search among our effects revealed it not.

“Kate, I can’t find the ham,” I called out. “It must have fallen out somewhere on the trail.”

Kate ceased wrestling with the fire and came to help in the search for the missing delicacy.

“It couldn’t have fallen out,” she said incredulously. “That is impossible. The tent was fastened securely over everything. Nothing could have jolted out.”

“Well, then, where is the ham?” I said.

That question was unanswerable, as Kate discovered after another thorough search. The ham was gone — that much was certain.

“I believe Peter Crow has levanted with the ham,” I said decidedly.

“I don’t believe Peter Crow could be so dishonest,” said Kate rather shortly. “His wife has worked for us for years, and she’s as honest as the sunlight.”

“Honesty isn’t catching,” I remarked, but I said nothing more just then, for Kate’s black eyes were snapping.

“Anyway, we can’t have ham for breakfast,” she said, twitching out the frying pan rather viciously. “We’ll have to put up with canned chicken — if the cans haven’t disappeared too.”

They hadn’t, and we soon produced a very tolerable breakfast. But neither of us had much appetite.

“Do you suppose Peter Crow has taken the horses as well as the ham?” I asked.

“No,” gloomily responded Kate, who had evidently been compelled by the logic of hard facts to believe in Peter’s guilt, “he would hardly dare to do that, because he couldn’t dispose of them without being found out. They’ve probably strayed away on their own account when Peter decamped. As soon as this mist lifts I’ll have a look for them. They can’t have gone far.”

We were spared this trouble, however, for when we were washing up the dishes the ponies returned of their own accord. Kate caught them and harnessed them.

“Are we going on?” I asked mildly.

“Of course we’re going on,” said Kate, her good humour entirely restored. “Do you suppose I’m going to be turned from my purpose by the defection of a miserable old Indian? Oh, wait till he comes round in the winter, begging.”

“Will he come?” I asked.

“Will he? Yes, my dear, he will — with a smooth, plausible story to account for his desertion and a bland denial of ever having seen our ham. I shall know how to deal with him then, the old scamp.”

“When you do get a conscientious Indian there’s no better guide in the world, but they are rare,” I remarked with a faraway look.

Kate laughed.

“Don’t rub it in, Phil. Come, help me to break camp. We’ll have to work harder and hustle for ourselves, that’s all.”

“But is it safe to go on without a guide?” I inquired dubiously. I hadn’t felt very safe with Peter Crow, but I felt still more unsafe without him.

“Safe! Of course, it’s safe — perfectly safe. I know the trail, and we’ll just have to drive around the wet places. It would have been easier with Peter, and we’d have had less work to do, but we’ll get along well enough without him. I don’t think I’d have bothered with him at all, only I wanted to set Mother’s mind at rest. She’ll never know he isn’t with us till the trip is over, so that is all right. We’re going to have a glorious day. But, oh, for our lost ham! ‘The Ham That Was Never Eaten.’ There’s a subject for a poem, Phil. You write one when we get back to civilization. Methinks I can sniff the savoury odour of that lost ham on all the prairie breezes.”

“Of all sad words of tongue or pen, The saddest are these — it might have been,”

I quoted, beginning to wash the dishes.

“Saw ye my wee ham, saw ye my ain ham, Saw ye my pork ham down on yon lea? Crossed it the prairie last night in the darkness Borne by an old and unprincipled Cree?”

sang Kate, loosening the tent ropes. Altogether, we got a great deal more fun out of that ham than if we had eaten it.

As Kate had predicted, the day was glorious. The mists rolled away and the sun shone brightly. We drove all day without stopping, save for dinner — when the lost ham figured largely in our conversation — of course. We said so many witty things about it — at least, we thought them witty — that we laughed continuously through the whole meal, which we ate with prodigious appetite.

But with all our driving we were not getting on very fast. The country was exceedingly swampy and we had to make innumerable detours.

“‘The longest way round is the shortest way to Bothwell,’” said Kate, when we drove five miles out of our way to avoid a muskeg. By evening we had driven fully twenty-five miles, but we were only ten miles nearer Bothwell than when we had broken camp in the morning.

“We’ll have to camp soon,” sighed Kate. “I believe around this bluff will be a good place. Oh, Phil, I’m tired — dead tired! My very thoughts are tired. I can’t even think anything funny about the ham. And yet we’ve

got to set up the tent ourselves, and attend to the horses; and we'll have to scrape some of the mud off this beautiful vehicle."

"We can leave that till the morning," I suggested.

"No, it will be too hard and dry then. Here we are — and here are two tepees of Indians also!"

There they were, right around the bluff. The inmates were standing in a group before them, looking at us as composedly as if we were not at all an unusual sight.

"I'm going to stay here anyhow," said Kate doggedly.

"Oh, don't," I said in alarm. "They're such a villainous-looking lot — so dirty — and they've got so little clothing on. I wouldn't sleep a wink near them. Look at that awful old squaw with only one eye. They'd steal everything we've got left, Kate. Remember the ham — oh, pray remember the fate of our beautiful ham."

"I shall never forget that ham," said Kate wearily, "but, Phil, we can't drive far enough to be out of their reach if they really want to steal our provisions. But I don't believe they will. I believe they have plenty of food — Indians in tepees mostly have. The men hunt, you know. Their looks are probably the worst of them. Anyhow, you can't judge Indians by appearances. Peter Crow looked respectable — and he was a whited sepulchre. Now, these Indians look as bad as Indians can look — so they may turn out to be angels in disguise."

"Very much disguised, certainly," I acquiesced satirically. "They seem to me to belong to the class of a neighbour of ours down east. Her family is always in rags, because she says, 'a hole is an accident, a patch is a disgrace,' Set camp here if you like, Kate. But I'll not sleep a wink with such neighbours."

I cheerfully ate my words later on. Never were appearances more deceptive than in the case of those Stoneys. There is an old saying that many a kind heart beats behind a ragged coat. The Indians had no coats for their hearts to beat behind — nothing but shirts — some of them hadn't even shirts! But the shirts were certainly ragged enough, and their hearts were kind.

Those Indians were gentlemen. They came forward and unhitched our horses, fed, and watered them; they pitched our tent, and built us a fire, and cut brush for our beds. Kate and I had simply nothing to do except sit on our rugs and tell them what we wanted done. They would have cooked our supper for us if we had allowed it. But, tired as we were, we drew the line at that. Their hearts were pure gold, but their hands! No, Kate and I dragged ourselves up and cooked our own suppers. And while we ate it, those Indians fell to and cleaned all the mud off our democrat for us. To crown all — it is almost unbelievable but it is true, I solemnly avow — they wouldn't take a cent of payment for it all, urge them as we might and did.

“Well,” said Kate, as we curled up on our brush beds that night, “there certainly is a special Providence for unprotected females. I'd forgive Peter Crow for deserting us for the sake of those Indians, if he hadn't stolen our lovely ham into the bargain. That was altogether unpardonable.”

In the morning the Indians broke camp for us and harnessed our shaganappies. We drove off, waving our hands to them, the delightful creatures. We never saw any of them again. I fear their kind is scarce, but as long as I live I shall remember those Stoneys with gratitude.

We got on fairly well that third day, and made about fifteen miles before dinner time. We ate three of the sergeant's prairie chickens for dinner, and enjoyed them.

“But only think how delicious the ham would have been,” said Kate.

Our real troubles began that afternoon. We had not been driving long when the trail swooped down suddenly into a broad depression — a swamp, so full of mud-holes that there didn't seem to be anything but mud-holes. We pulled through six of them — but in the seventh we stuck, hard and fast. Pull as our ponies could and did, they could not pull us out.

“What are we to do?” I said, becoming horribly frightened all at once. It seemed to me that our predicament was a dreadful one.

“Keep cool,” said Kate. She calmly took off her shoes and stockings, tucked up her skirt, and waded to the horses' heads.

“Can't I do anything?” I implored.

“Yes, take the whip and spare it not,” said Kate. “I’ll encourage them here with sundry tugs and inspiriting words. You urge them behind with a good lambasting.”

Accordingly we encouraged and urged, tugged and lambasted, with a right good will, but all to no effect. Our ponies did their best, but they could not pull the democrat out of that slough.

“Oh, what—” I began, and then I stopped. I resolved that I would not ask that question again in that tone in that scrape. I would be cheerful and courageous like Kate — splendid Kate!

“I shall have to unhitch them, tie one of them to that stump, and ride off on the other for help,” said Kate.

“Where to?” I asked.

“Till I find it,” grinned Kate, who seemed to think the whole disaster a capital joke. “I may have to go clean back to the tepees — and further. For that matter, I don’t believe there were any tepees. Those Indians were too good to be true — they were phantoms of delight — such stuff as dreams are made of. But even if they were real they won’t be there now — they’ll have folded their tents like the Arabs and as silently stolen away. But I’ll find help somewhere.”

“I can’t stay here alone. You may be gone for hours,” I cried, forgetting all my resolutions of courage and cheerfulness in an access of panic.

“Then ride the other pony and come with me,” suggested Kate.

“I can’t ride bareback,” I moaned.

“Then you’ll have to stay here,” said Kate decidedly. “There’s nothing to hurt you, Phil. Sit in the wagon and keep dry. Eat something if you get hungry. I may not be very long.”

I realized that there was nothing else to do; and, rather ashamed of my panic, I resigned myself to the inevitable and saw Kate off with a smile of encouragement. Then I waited. I was tired and frightened — horribly frightened. I sat there and imagined scores of gruesome possibilities. It was no use telling myself to be brave. I couldn’t be brave. I never was in such a blue funk before or since. Suppose Kate got lost — suppose she couldn’t find me again — suppose something happened to her — suppose

she couldn't get help — suppose it came on night and I there all alone — suppose Indians — not gentlemanly Stoneys or even Peter Crows, but genuine, old-fashioned Indians — should come along — suppose it began to pour rain!

It did begin to rain, the only one of my suppositions which came true. I hoisted an umbrella and sat there grimly, in that horseless wagon in the mud-hole.

Many a time since have I laughed over the memory of the appearance I must have presented sitting in that mud-hole, but there was nothing in the least funny about it at the time. The worst feature of it all was the uncertainty. I could have waited patiently enough and conquered my fears if I had known that Kate would find help and return within a reasonable time — at least before dark. But everything was doubtful. I was not composed of the stuff out of which heroines are fashioned and I devoutly wished we had never left Arrow Creek.

Shouts — calls — laughter — Kate's dear voice in an encouraging cry from the hill behind me!

“Halloo, honey! Hold the fort a few minutes longer. Here we are. Bless her, hasn't she been a brick to stay here all alone like this — and a tenderfoot at that?”

I could have cried with joy. But I saw that there were men with Kate — two men — white men — and I laughed instead. I had not been brave — I had been an arrant little coward, but I vowed that nobody, not even Kate, should suspect it. Later on Kate told me how she had fared in her search for assistance.

“When I left you, Phil, I felt much more anxious than I wanted to let you see. I had no idea where to go. I knew there were no houses along our trail and I might have to go clean back to the tepees — fifteen miles bareback. I didn't dare try any other trail, for I knew nothing of them and wasn't sure that there were even tepees on them. But when I had gone about six miles I saw a welcome sight — nothing less than a spiral of blue, homely-looking smoke curling up from the prairie far off to my right. I decided to turn off and investigate. I rode two miles and finally I came to a

little log shack. There was a bee-yew-tiful big horse in a corral close by. My heart jumped with joy. But suppose the inmates of the shack were half-breeds! You can't realize how relieved I felt when the door opened and two white men came out. In a few minutes everything was explained. They knew who I was and what I wanted, and I knew that they were Mr. Lonsdale and Mr. Hopkins, owners of a big ranch over by Deer Run. They were 'shacking out' to put up some hay and Mrs. Hopkins was keeping house for them. She wanted me to stop and have a cup of tea right off, but I thought of you, Phil, and declined. As soon as they heard of our predicament those lovely men got their two biggest horses and came right with me."

It was not long before our democrat was on solid ground once more, and then our rescuers insisted that we go back to the shack with them for the night. Accordingly we drove back to the shack, attended by our two gallant deliverers on white horses. Mrs. Hopkins was waiting for us, a trim, dark-haired little lady in a very pretty gown, which she had donned in our honour. Kate and I felt like perfect tramps beside her in our muddy old raiment, with our hair dressed by dead reckoning — for we had not included a mirror in our baggage. There was a mirror in the shack, however — small but good — and we quickly made ourselves tidy at least, and Kate even went to the length of curling her bangs — bangs were in style then and Kate had long, thick ones — using the stem of a broken pipe of Mr. Hopkins's for a curler. I was so tired that my vanity was completely crushed out — for the time being — and I simply pinned my bangs back. Later on, when I discovered that Mr. Lonsdale was really the younger son of an English earl, I wished I had curled them, but it was too late then.

He didn't look in the least like a scion of aristocracy. He wore a cowboy rig and had a scrubby beard of a week's growth. But he was very jolly and played the violin beautifully. After tea — and a lovely tea it was, although, as Kate remarked to me later, there was no ham — we had an impromptu concert. Mr. Lonsdale played the violin; Mrs. Hopkins, who sang, was a graduate of a musical conservatory; Mr. Hopkins gave a comic recitation and did a Cree wardance; Kate gave a spirited account of our

adventures since leaving home and mother; and I described — with trimmings — how I felt sitting alone in the democrat in a mud-hole, in a pouring rain on a vast prairie.

Mrs. Hopkins, Kate, and I slept in the one bed the shack boasted, screened off from public view by a calico curtain. Mr. Lonsdale reposed in his accustomed bunk by the stove, but poor Mr. Hopkins had to sleep on the floor. He must have been glad Kate and I stayed only one night.

The fourth morning found us blithely hitting the trail in renewed confidence and spirits. We parted from our kind friends in the shack with mutual regret. Mr. Hopkins gave us a haunch of jumping deer and Mrs. Hopkins gave us a box of homemade cookies. Mr. Lonsdale at first thought he couldn't give us anything, for he said all he had with him was his pipe and his fiddle; but later on he said he felt so badly to see us go without any token of his good will that he felt constrained to ask us to accept a piece of rope that he had tied his outfit together with.

The fourth day we got on so nicely that it was quite monotonous. The sun shone, the chinook blew, our ponies trotted over the trail gallantly. Kate and I sang, told stories, and laughed immoderately over everything. Even a poor joke seems to have a subtle flavour on the prairie. For the first time I began to think Saskatchewan beautiful, with those far-reaching parklike meadows dotted with the white-stemmed poplars, the distant bluffs bannered with the airiest of purple hazes, and the little blue lakes that sparkled and shimmered in the sunlight on every hand.

The only thing approaching an adventure that day happened in the afternoon when we reached a creek which had to be crossed.

"We must investigate," said Kate decidedly. "It would never do to risk getting mired here, for this country is unsettled and we must be twenty miles from another human being."

Kate again removed her shoes and stockings and puddled about that creek until she found a safe fording place. I am afraid I must admit that I laughed most heartlessly at the spectacle she presented while so employed.

"Oh, for a camera, Kate!" I said, between spasms.

Kate grinned. "I don't care what I look like," she said, "but I feel wretchedly unpleasant. This water is simply swarming with wigglers."

"Goodness, what are they?" I exclaimed.

"Oh, they're tiny little things like leeches," responded Kate. "I believe they develop into mosquitoes later on, bad 'cess to them. What Mr. Nash would call my pedal extremities are simply being devoured by the brutes. Ugh! I believe the bottom of this creek is all soft mud. We may have to drive — no, as I'm a living, wiggler-haunted human being, here's firm bottom. Hurrah, Phil, we're all right!"

In a few minutes we were past the creek and bowling merrily on our way. We had a beautiful camping ground that night — a fairylike little slope of white poplars with a blue lake at its foot. When the sun went down a milk-white mist hung over the prairie, with a young moon kissing it. We boiled some slices of our jumping deer and ate them in the open around a cheery camp-fire. Then we sought our humble couches, where we slept the sleep of just people who had been driving over the prairie all day. Once in the night I awakened. It was very dark. The unearthly stillness of a great prairie was all around me. In that vast silence Kate's soft breathing at my side seemed an intrusion of sound where no sound should be.

"Philippa Blair, can you believe it's yourself?" I said mentally. "Here you are, lying on a brush bed on a western prairie in the middle of the night, at least twenty miles from any human being except another frail creature of your own sex. Yet you're not even frightened. You are very comfy and composed, and you're going right to sleep again."

And right to sleep again I went.

Our fifth day began ominously. We had made an early start and had driven about six miles when the calamity occurred. Kate turned a corner too sharply, to avoid a big boulder; there was a heartbreaking sound.

"The tongue of the wagon is broken," cried Kate in dismay. All too surely it was. We looked at each other blankly.

"What can we do?" I said.

"I'm sure I don't know," said Kate helplessly. When Kate felt helpless I thought things must be desperate indeed. We got out and investigated the

damage.

“It’s not a clean break,” said Kate. “It’s a long, slanting break. If we had a piece of rope I believe I could fix it.”

“Mr. Lonsdale’s piece of rope!” I cried.

“The very thing,” said Kate, brightening up.

The rope was found and we set to work. With the aid of some willow withes and that providential rope we contrived to splice the tongue together in some shape.

Although the trail was good we made only twelve miles the rest of the day, so slowly did we have to drive. Besides, we were continually expecting that tongue to give way again, and the strain was bad for our nerves. When we came at sunset to the junction of the Black River trail with ours, Kate resolutely turned the shaganappies down it.

“We’ll go and spend the night with the Brewsters,” she said. “They live only ten miles down this trail. I went to school in Regina with Hannah Brewster, and though I haven’t seen her for ten years I know she’ll be glad to see us. She’s a lovely person, and her husband is a very nice man. I visited them once after they were married.”

We soon arrived at the Brewster place. It was a trim, whitewashed little log house in a grove of poplars. But all the blinds were down and we discovered the door was locked. Evidently the Brewsters were not at home.

“Never mind,” said Kate cheerfully, “we’ll light a fire outside and cook our supper and then we’ll spend the night in the barn. A bed of prairie hay will be just the thing.”

But the barn was locked too. It was now dark and our plight was rather desperate.

“I’m going to get into the house if I have to break a window,” said Kate resolutely. “Hannah would want us to do that. She’d never get over it, if she heard we came to her house and couldn’t get in.”

Fortunately we did not have to go to the length of breaking into Hannah’s house. The kitchen window went up quite easily. We turned the shaganappies loose to forage for themselves, grass and water being abundant. Then we climbed in at the window, lighted our lantern, and

found ourselves in a very snug little kitchen. Opening off it on one side was a trim, nicely furnished parlour and on the other a well-stocked pantry.

“We’ll light the fire in the stove in a jiffy and have a real good supper,” said Kate exultantly. “Here’s cold roast beef — and preserves and cookies and cheese and butter.”

Before long we had supper ready and we did full justice to the absent Hannah’s excellent cheer. After all, it was quite nice to sit down once more to a well-appointed table and eat in civilized fashion.

Then we washed up all the dishes and made everything snug and tidy. I shall never be sufficiently thankful that we did so.

Kate piloted me upstairs to the spare room.

“This is fixed up much nicer than it was when I was here before,” she said, looking around. “Of course, Hannah and Ted were just starting out then and they had to be economical. They must have prospered, to be able to afford such furniture as this. Well, turn in, Phil. Won’t it be rather jolly to sleep between sheets once more?”

We slept long and soundly until halfpast eight the next morning; and dear knows if we would have wakened then of our own accord. But I heard somebody saying in a very harsh, gruff voice, “Here, you two, wake up! I want to know what this means.”

We two did wake up, promptly and effectually. I never wakened up so thoroughly in my life before. Standing in our room were three people, one of them a man. He was a big, grey-haired man with a bushy black beard and an angry scowl. Beside him was a woman — a tall, thin, angular personage with red hair and an indescribable bonnet. She looked even crosser and more amazed than the man, if that were possible. In the background was another woman — a tiny old lady who must have been at least eighty. She was, in spite of her tininess, a very striking-looking personage; she was dressed all in black, and had snow-white hair, a dead-white face, and snapping, vivid, coal-black eyes. She looked as amazed as the other two, but she didn’t look cross.

I knew something must be wrong — fearfully wrong — but I didn’t know what. Even in my confusion, I found time to think that if that

disagreeable-looking redhaired woman was Hannah Brewster, Kate must have had a queer taste in school friends. Then the man said, more gruffly than ever, "Come now. Who are you and what business have you here?"

Kate raised herself on one elbow. She looked very wild. I heard the old black-and-white lady in the background chuckle to herself.

"Isn't this Theodore Brewster's place?" gasped Kate.

"No," said the big woman, speaking for the first time. "This place belongs to us. We bought it from the Brewsters in the spring. They moved over to Black River Forks. Our name is Chapman."

Poor Kate fell back on the pillow, quite overcome. "I — I beg your pardon," she said. "I — I thought the Brewsters lived here. Mrs. Brewster is a friend of mine. My cousin and I are on our way to Bothwell and we called here to spend the night with Hannah. When we found everyone away we just came in and made ourselves at home."

"A likely story," said the red woman.

"We weren't born yesterday," said the man.

Madam Black-and-White didn't say anything, but when the other two had made their pretty speeches she doubled up in a silent convulsion of mirth, shaking her head from side to side and beating the air with her hands.

If they had been nice to us, Kate would probably have gone on feeling confused and ashamed. But when they were so disagreeable she quickly regained her selfpossession. She sat up again and said in her haughtiest voice, "I do not know when you were born, or where, but it must have been somewhere where very peculiar manners were taught. If you will have the decency to leave our room — this room — until we can get up and dress we will not transgress upon your hospitality" (Kate put a most satirical emphasis on that word) "any longer. And we shall pay you amply for the food we have eaten and the night's lodging we have taken."

The black-and-white apparition went through the motion of clapping her hands, but not a sound did she make. Whether he was cowed by Kate's tone, or appeased by the prospect of payment, I know not, but Mr.

Chapman spoke more civilly. "Well, that's fair. If you pay up it's all right."

"They shall do no such thing as pay you," said Madam Black-and-White in a surprisingly clear, resolute, authoritative voice. "If you haven't any shame for yourself, Robert Chapman, you've got a mother-in-law who can be ashamed for you. No strangers shall be charged for food or lodging in any house where Mrs. Matilda Pitman lives. Remember that I've come down in the world, but I haven't forgot all decency for all that. I knew you was a skinflint when Amelia married you and you've made her as bad as yourself. But I'm boss here yet. Here, you, Robert Chapman, take yourself out of here and let those girls get dressed. And you, Amelia, go downstairs and cook a breakfast for them."

I never, in all my life, saw anything like the abject meekness with which those two big people obeyed that mite. They went, and stood not upon the order of their going. As the door closed behind them, Mrs. Matilda Pitman laughed silently, and rocked from side to side in her merriment.

"Ain't it funny?" she said. "I mostly lets them run the length of their tether but sometimes I has to pull them up, and then I does it with a jerk. Now, you can take your time about dressing, my dears, and I'll go down and keep them in order, the mean scalawags."

When we descended the stairs we found a smoking-hot breakfast on the table. Mr. Chapman was nowhere to be seen, and Mrs. Chapman was cutting bread with a sulky air. Mrs. Matilda Pitman was sitting in an armchair, knitting. She still wore her bonnet and her triumphant expression. "Set right in, dears, and make a good breakfast," she said.

"We are not hungry," said Kate, almost pleadingly. "I don't think we can eat anything. And it's time we were on the trail. Please excuse us and let us go on."

Mrs. Matilda Pitman shook a knitting needle playfully at Kate. "Sit down and take your breakfast," she commanded. "Mrs. Matilda Pitman commands you. Everybody obeys Mrs. Matilda Pitman — even Robert and Amelia. You must obey her too."

We did obey her. We sat down and, such was the influence of her mesmeric eyes, we ate a tolerable breakfast. The obedient Amelia never spoke; Mrs. Matilda Pitman did not speak either, but she knitted furiously and chuckled. When we had finished Mrs. Matilda Pitman rolled up her knitting. “Now, you can go if you want to,” she said, “but you don’t have to go. You can stay here as long as you like, and I’ll make them cook your meals for you.”

I never saw Kate so thoroughly cowed.

“Thank you,” she said faintly. “You are very kind, but we must go.”

“Well, then,” said Mrs. Matilda Pitman, throwing open the door, “your team is ready for you. I made Robert catch your ponies and harness them. And I made him fix that broken tongue properly. I enjoy making Robert do things. It’s almost the only sport I have left. I’m eighty and most things have lost their flavour, except bossing Robert.”

Our democrat and ponies were outside the door, but Robert was nowhere to be seen; in fact, we never saw him again.

“I do wish,” said Kate, plucking up what little spirit she had left, “that you would let us — ah — uh” — Kate quailed before Mrs. Matilda Pitman’s eye—”recompense you for our entertainment.”

“Mrs. Matilda Pitman said before — and meant it — that she doesn’t take pay for entertaining strangers, nor let other people where she lives do it, much as their meanness would like to do it.”

We got away. The sulky Amelia had vanished, and there was nobody to see us off except Mrs. Matilda Pitman.

“Don’t forget to call the next time you come this way,” she said cheerfully, waving her knitting at us. “I hope you’ll get safe to Bothwell. If I was ten years younger I vow I’d pack a grip and go along with you. I like your spunk. Most of the girls nowadays is such timid, skeery critters. When I was a girl I wasn’t afraid of nothing or nobody.”

We said and did nothing until we had driven out of sight and earshot. Then Kate laid down the reins and laughed until the tears came.

“Oh, Phil, Phil, will you ever forget this adventure?” she gasped.

“I shall never forget Mrs. Matilda Pitman,” I said emphatically.

We had no further adventures that day. Robert Chapman had fixed the tongue so well — probably under Mrs. Matilda Pitman's watchful eyes — that we could drive as fast as we liked; and we made good progress. But when we pitched camp that night Kate scanned the sky with an anxious expression. "I don't like the look of it," she said. "I'm afraid we're going to have a bad day tomorrow."

We had. When we awakened in the morning rain was pouring down. This in itself might not have prevented us from travelling, but the state of the trail did. It had been raining the greater part of the night and the trail was little more than a ditch of slimy, greasy, sticky mud.

If we could have stayed in the tent the whole time it would not have been quite so bad. But we had to go out twice to take the ponies to the nearest pond and water them; moreover, we had to collect pea vines for them, which was not an agreeable occupation in a pouring rain. The day was very cold too, but fortunately there was plenty of dead poplar right by our camp. We kept a good fire on in the camp stove and were quite dry and comfortable as long as we stayed inside. Even when we had to go out we did not get very wet, as we were well protected. But it was a long dreary day. Finally when the dark came down and supper was over Kate grew quite desperate. "Let's have a game of checkers," she suggested.

"Where is your checkerboard?" I asked.

"Oh, I'll soon furnish that," said Kate.

She cut out a square of brown paper, in which a biscuit box had been wrapped, and marked squares off on it with a pencil. Then she produced some red and white high-bush cranberries for men. A cranberry split in two was a king.

We played nine games of checkers by the light of our smoky lantern. Our enjoyment of the game was heightened by the fact that it had ceased raining. Nevertheless, when morning came the trail was so drenched that it was impossible to travel on it.

"We must wait till noon," said Kate.

"That trail won't be dry enough to travel on for a week," I said disconsolately.

“My dear; the chinook is blowing up,” said Kate. “You don’t know how quickly a trail dries in a chinook. It’s like magic.”

I did not believe a chinook or anything else could dry up that trail by noon sufficiently for us to travel on. But it did. As Kate said, it seemed like magic. By one o’clock we were on our way again, the chinook blowing merrily against our faces. It was a wind that blew straight from the heart of the wilderness and had in it all the potent lure of the wild. The yellow prairie laughed and glistened in the sun.

We made twenty-five miles that afternoon and, as we were again fortunate enough to find a bluff of dead poplar near which to camp, we built a royal camp-fire which sent its flaming light far and wide over the dark prairie.

We were in jubilant spirits. If the next day were fine and nothing dreadful happened to us, we would reach Bothwell before night.

But our ill luck was not yet at an end. The next morning was beautiful. The sun shone warm and bright; the chinook blew balmily and alluringly; the trail stretched before us dry and level. But we sat moodily before our tent, not even having sufficient heart to play checkers. Tom had gone lame — so lame that there was no use in thinking of trying to travel with him. Kate could not tell what was the matter.

“There is no injury that I can see,” she said. “He must have sprained his foot somehow.”

Wait we did, with all the patience we could command. But the day was long and wearisome, and at night Tom’s foot did not seem a bit better.

We went to bed gloomily, but joy came with the morning. Tom’s foot was so much improved that Kate decided we could go on, though we would have to drive slowly.

“There’s no chance of making Bothwell today,” she said, “but at least we shall be getting a little nearer to it.”

“I don’t believe there is such a place as Bothwell, or any other town,” I said pessimistically. “There’s nothing in the world but prairie, and we’ll go on driving over it forever, like a couple of female Wandering Jews. It seems years since we left Arrow Creek.”

“Well, we’ve had lots of fun out of it all, you know,” said Kate. “Mrs. Matilda Pitman alone was worth it. She will be an amusing memory all our lives. Are you sorry you came?”

“No, I’m not,” I concluded, after honest, soul-searching reflection. “No, I’m glad, Kate. But I think we were crazy to attempt it, as Sergeant Baker said. Think of all the might-have-beens.”

“Nothing else will happen,” said Kate. “I feel in my bones that our troubles are over.”

Kate’s bones proved true prophets. Nevertheless, that day was a weary one. There was no scenery. We had got into a barren, lakeless, treeless district where the world was one monotonous expanse of grey-brown prairie. We just crawled along. Kate had her hands full driving those ponies. Jerry was in capital fettle and couldn’t understand why he mightn’t tear ahead at full speed. He was so much disgusted over being compelled to walk that he was very fractious. Poor Tom limped patiently along. But by night his lameness had quite disappeared, and although we were still a good twenty-five miles from Bothwell we could see it quite distinctly far ahead on the level prairie.

“‘Tis a sight for sore eyes, isn’t it?” said Kate, as we pitched camp.

There is little more to be told. Next day at noon we rattled through the main and only street of Bothwell. Curious sights are frequent in prairie towns, so we did not attract much attention. When we drew up before Mr. Taylor’s house Mary Taylor flew out and embraced Kate publicly.

“You darling! I knew you’d get here if anyone could. They telegraphed us you were on the way. You’re a brick — two bricks.”

“No, I’m not a brick at all, Miss Taylor,” I confessed frankly. “I’ve been an arrant coward and a doubting Thomas and a wet blanket all through the expedition. But Kate is a brick and a genius and an all-round, jolly good fellow.”

“Mary,” said Kate in a tragic whisper, “have — you — any — ham — in — the — house?”

Jessamine

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When the vegetable-man knocked, Jessamine went to the door wearily. She felt quite well acquainted with him. He had been coming all the spring, and his cheery greeting always left a pleasant afterglow behind him. But it was not the vegetable-man after all — at least, not the right one. This one was considerably younger. He was tall and sunburned, with a ruddy, smiling face, and keen, pleasant blue eyes; and he had a spray of honeysuckle pinned on his coat.

“Want any garden stuff this morning?”

Jessamine shook her head. “We always get ours from Mr. Bell. This is his day to come.”

“Well, I guess you won’t see Mr. Bell for a spell. He fell off a loft out at his place yesterday and broke his leg. I’m his nephew, and I’m going to fill his place till he gets ‘round again.”

“Oh, I’m so sorry — for Mr. Bell, I mean. Have you any green peas?”

“Yes, heaps of them. I’ll bring them in. Anything else?”

“Not today,” said Jessamine, with a wistful glance at the honeysuckle.

Mr. Bell, junior, saw it. In an instant the honeysuckle was unpinned and handed to her. “If you like posies, you’re welcome to this. I guess you’re fond of flowers,” he added, as he noted the flash of delight that passed over her pale face.

“Yes, indeed; they put me so in mind of home — of the country. Oh, how sweet this is!”

“You’re country-bred, then? Been in the city long?”

“Since last fall. I was born and brought up in the country. I wish I was back. I can’t get over being homesick. This honeysuckle seems to bring it right back. We had honeysuckles around our porch at home.”

“You don’t like the city, then?”

“Oh, no. I sometimes feel as if I should smother here. I shall never feel at home, I am afraid.”

“Where did you live before you came here?”

“Up at Middleton. It was an old-fashioned place, but pretty — our house was covered with vines, and there were trees all about it, and great green fields beyond. But I don’t know what makes me tell you this. I forgot I was talking to a stranger.”

“Pretty little woman,” soliloquized Andrew Bell, as he drove away. “She doesn’t look happy, though. I suppose she’s married some city chap and has to live in town. I guess it don’t agree with her. Her eyes had a real hungry look in them over that honeysuckle. She seemed near about crying when she talked of the country.”

Jessamine felt more like crying than ever when she went back to her work. Her head ached and she was very tired. The tiny kitchen was hot and stifling. How she longed for the great, roomy kitchen in her old home, with its spotless floors and floods of sunshine streaming in through the maples outside. There was room to live and breathe there, and from the door one looked out over green windrippled meadows, under a glorious arch of pure blue sky, away to the purple hills in the distance.

Jessamine Stacy had always lived in the country. When her sister died and the old home had to go, Jessamine could only accept the shelter offered by her brother, John Stacy, who did business in the city.

Of her stylish sister-in-law Jessamine was absolutely in awe. At first Mrs. John was by no means pleased at the necessity of taking a country sister into her family circle. But one day, when the servant girl took a tantrum and left, Mrs. John found it very convenient to have in the house a person who could step into Eliza’s place as promptly and efficiently as Jessamine could.

Indeed, she found it so convenient that Eliza never had a successor. Jessamine found herself in the position of maid-of-all-work and kitchen drudge for board and clothes.

She never complained, but she grew thinner and paler as the winter went by. She had worked as hard on the farm, but it was the close

confinement and weary routine that told on her. Mrs. John was exacting and querulous. John was absorbed in his business worries and had no time to waste on his sister. Now, when the summer had come, her homesickness was almost unbearable.

The next day Mr. Bell came he handed her a big bunch of sweetbrier roses.

“Here you are,” he said heartily. “I took the liberty to bring you these today, seeing you’re so fond of posies. The country roads are pink with them now. Why don’t you get your husband to bring you out for a drive some day? You’d be as welcome as a lark at my farm.”

“I will when he comes along, but I haven’t seen him yet.”

Mr. Bell gave a prolonged whistle. “Excuse me. I thought you were Mrs. Something-or-other for sure. Aren’t you mistress here?”

“Oh, no. My brother’s wife is the mistress here. I’m only Jessamine.”

She laughed again. She was holding the roses against her face, and her eyes sparkled over them roguishly. The vegetable-man looked at her admiringly.

“You’re a country rose yourself, miss, and you ought to be blooming out in the fields, instead of wilting in here.”

“I wish I was. Thank you so much for the roses, Mr. —— Mr. — —”

“Bell — Andrew Bell, that’s my name. I live out at Pine Pastures. We’re all Bells out there — can’t throw a stone without hitting one. Glad you like the roses.”

After that the vegetable-man brought Jessamine a bouquet every trip. Now it was a big bunch of field-daisies or golden buttercups, now a green glory of spicy ferns, now a cluster of old-fashioned garden flowers.

“They keep life in me,” Jessamine told him.

They were great friends by this time. True, she knew little about him but she felt instinctively that he was manly and kindhearted.

One day when he came Jessamine met him almost gleefully. “No, nothing today. There is no dinner to cook.”

“You don’t say. Where are the folks?”

“Gone on an excursion. They won’t be back until tonight.”

“They won’t? Well, I’ll tell you what to do. You get ready, and when I’m through my rounds we’ll go for a drive up the country.”

“Oh, Mr. Bell! But won’t it be too much bother for you?”

“Well, I reckon not! You want an excursion as well as other folks, and you shall have it.”

“Oh, thank you so much. Yes, I’ll be ready. You don’t know how much it means to me.”

“Poor little creature,” said Mr. Bell, as he drove away. “It’s downright cruelty, that’s what it is, to keep her penned up like that. You might as well coop up a lark in a henhouse and expect it to thrive and sing. I’d like to give that brother of hers a piece of my mind.”

When he lifted her up to the high seat of his express wagon that afternoon he said, “Now, I want you to do something. Just shut your eyes and don’t open them again until I tell you to.”

Jessamine laughed and obeyed. Finally she heard him say, “Look.”

Jessamine opened her eyes with a little cry. They were on a remote country road, cool and dim and quiet, in the very heart of the beech woods. Long banners of light fell athwart the grey boles. Along the roadsides grew sheets of feathery ferns. Above the sky was gloriously blue. The air was sweet with the wild woodsy smell of the forest.

Jessamine lifted and clasped her hands in rapture. “Oh, how lovely!”

“Do you know where we’re going?” said Mr. Bell delightedly. “Out to my farm at Pine Pastures. My aunt keeps house for me, and she’ll be real glad to see you. You’re just going to have a real good time this afternoon.”

They had a delightful drive to begin with, and presently Mr. Bell turned into a wide lane.

“This is Cloverside Farm. I’m proud of it, I’ll admit. There isn’t a finer place in the county. What do you think of it?”

“Oh, it is lovely — it is like home. Look at those great fields. I’d like to go and lie down in that clover.”

Mr. Bell lifted her from the wagon and marched her up a flowery garden path. “You shall do it, and everything else you want to. Here, Aunt,

this is the young lady I spoke of. Make her at home while I tend to the horses.”

Miss Bell was a pleasant-faced woman with silver hair and kind blue eyes. She took Jessamine’s hand in a friendly fashion.

“Come in, dear. You’re welcome as a June rose.”

When Mr. Bell returned, he found Jessamine standing on the porch with her hands full of honeysuckle and her cheeks pink with excitement.

“I declare, you’ve got roses already,” he exclaimed. “If they’d only stay now, and not bleach out again. What’s first now?”

“Oh, I don’t know. There are so many things I want to do. Those flowers in the garden are calling me — and I want to go down to that hollow and pick buttercups — and I want to stay right here and look at things.”

Mr. Bell laughed. “Come with me to the pasture and see my Jersey calves. They’re something worth seeing. Come, Aunt. This way, Miss Stacy.”

He led the way down the lane, the two women following together. Jessamine thought she must be in a pleasant dream. The whole afternoon was a feast of delight to her starved heart. When sunset came she sat down, tired out, but radiant, on the porch steps. Her hat had slipped back and her hair was curling around her face. Her dark eyes were aglow; the roses still bloomed in her cheeks.

Mr. Bell looked at her admiringly. “If a man could see that pretty sight every night!” he thought. “And, Great Scott, why can’t he? What’s to prevent, I’d like to know?”

When the moon rose, Mr. Bell brought his team around and they drove back through the clear night, past the wonderful stillness of the great beech woods and the wide fields. The farmer looked sideways at his companion.

“The little thing wants to be petted and looked after,” he thought. “She’s just pining away for home and love. And why can’t she have it? She’s dying by inches in that hole back in town.”

Jessamine, quite unsuspecting the farmer's meditations, was living over again in fancy the joys of the afternoon: the ramble in the pasture, the drink of water from the spring under the hillside pines, the bountiful, old-fashioned country supper in the vineshaded dining-room, the cup of new milk in the dairy at sunset, and all the glory of skies and meadows and trees. How could she go back to her cage again?

The next week Mr. Bell, senior, resumed his visits, and the young farmer came no more to the side door of No. 49. Jessamine missed him greatly. Mr. Bell, senior, never brought her clover or honeysuckle.

But one day his nephew suddenly reappeared. Jessamine opened the door for him, and her face lighted up, but Mr. Bell saw that she had been crying.

"Did you think I had forgotten you?" he asked. "Not a bit of it. Harvest was on and I couldn't get clear before. I've come to ask you when you intend to take another drive to Cloverside Farm. What have you been up to? You look as if you'd been working too hard."

"I — I — haven't felt very well. I'm glad you came today, Mr. Bell. Perhaps I shall not see you again, and I wanted to say goodbye and thank you for all your kindness."

"Goodbye? Why, where are you going?"

"My brother went west a week ago," faltered Jessamine. She could not bring herself to tell the clear-eyed farmer that John Stacy had failed and had been obliged to start for the west without saying goodbye to his creditors. "His wife and I — are going too — next week."

"Oh, Jessamine," exclaimed Mr. Bell in despair, "don't go — you mustn't. I want you at Cloverside Farm. I came today on purpose to ask you. I love you and I'll make you happy if you'll marry me. What do you say, Jessamine?"

Jessamine, by way of answer, sat down on the nearest chair and began to cry.

"Oh, don't," said the wooer in distress. "I didn't want to make you feel bad. If you don't like the idea, I won't mention it again."

“Oh, it isn’t that — but I — I thought nobody cared what became of me. You are so kind — I’m afraid I’d only be a bother to you....”

“I’ll risk that. You shall have a happy home, little girl. Will you come to it?”

“Ye-e-e-s.” It was very indistinct and faltering, but Mr. Bell heard it and considered it a most eloquent answer.

Mrs. John fumed and sulked and chose to consider herself hoodwinked and injured. But Mr. Bell was a resolute man, and a few days later he came for the last time to No. 49 and took his bride away with him.

As they drove through the beech woods he put his arm tenderly around the shy, smiling little woman beside him and said, “You’ll never be sorry for this, my dear.”

And she never was.

Miss Sally's Letter

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Miss Sally peered sharply at Willard Stanley, first through her gold-rimmed glasses and then over them. Willard continued to look very innocent. Joyce got up abruptly and went out of the room.

“So you have bought that queer little house with the absurd name?” said Miss Sally.

“You surely don’t call Eden an absurd name,” protested Willard.

“I do — for a house. Particularly such a house as that. Eden! There are no Edens on earth. And what are you going to do with it?”

“Live in it.”

“Alone?”

Miss Sally looked at him suspiciously.

“No. The truth is, Miss Sally, I am hoping to be married in the fall and I want to fix up Eden for my bride.”

“Oh!” Miss Sally drew a long breath, partly it seemed of relief and partly of triumph, and looked at Joyce, who had returned, with an expression that said, “I told you so”; but Joyce, whose eyes were cast down, did not see it.

“And,” went on Willard calmly, “I want you to help me fix it up, Miss Sally. I don’t know much about such things and you know everything. You will be able to tell me just what to do to make Eden habitable.”

Miss Sally looked as pleased as she ever allowed herself to look over anything a man suggested. It was the delight of her heart to plan and decorate and contrive. Her own house was a model of comfort and good taste, and Miss Sally was quite ready for new worlds to conquer. Instantly Eden assumed importance in her eyes. She might be sorry for the misguided bride who was rashly going to trust her life’s keeping to a man, but she would see, at least, that the poor thing should have a decent place to begin her martyrdom in.

“I’ll be pleased to help you all I can,” she said graciously.

Miss Sally could speak very graciously when she chose, even to men. You would not have thought she hated them, but she did. In all sincerity, too. Also, she had brought her niece up to hate and distrust them. Or, she had tried to do so. But at times Miss Sally was troubled with an uncomfortable suspicion that Joyce did not hate and distrust men quite as thoroughly as she ought. The suspicion had recurred several times this summer since Willard Stanley had come to take charge of the biological station at the harbour. Miss Sally did not distrust Willard on his own account. She merely distrusted him on principle and on Joyce’s account. Nevertheless, she was rather nice to him. Miss Sally, dear, trim, dainty Miss Sally, with her snow-white curls and her big girlish black eyes, couldn’t help being nice, even to a man.

Willard had come a great deal to Miss Sally’s. If it were Joyce he were after Miss Sally blocked his schemes with much enjoyment. He never saw Joyce alone — that Miss Sally knew of, at least — and he did not make much apparent headway. But now all danger was removed, Miss Sally thought. He was going to be married to somebody else, and Joyce was safe.

“Thank you,” said Willard. “I’ll come up tomorrow afternoon, and you and I will take a prow about Eden and see what must be done. I’m ever so much obliged, Miss Sally.”

“I wonder who he is going to marry,” said Miss Sally, careless of grammar, after he had gone. “Poor, poor girl!”

“I don’t see why you should pity her,” said Joyce, not looking up from her embroidery. There was just the merest tremor in her voice. Miss Sally looked at her sharply.

“I pity any woman who is foolish enough to marry,” she said solemnly. “No man is to be trusted, Joyce — no man. They are all ready to break a trusting woman’s heart for the sport of it. Never you allow any man the chance to break yours, Joyce. I shall never consent to your marrying anybody, so mind you don’t take any such notion into your head. There oughtn’t to be any danger, for I have instilled correct ideas on this subject

into you from childhood. But girls are such fools. I know, because I was one myself once.”

“Of course, I would never marry without your consent, Aunt Sally,” said Joyce, smiling faintly but affectionately at her aunt. Joyce loved Miss Sally with her whole heart. Everybody did who knew her. There never was a more lovable creature than this pretty little old maid who hated the men so bitterly.

“That’s a good girl,” said Miss Sally approvingly. “I own that I have been a little afraid that this Willard Stanley was coming here to see you. But my mind is set at rest on that point now, and I shall help him fix up his doll house with a clear conscience. Eden, indeed!”

Miss Sally sniffed and tripped out of the room to hunt up a furniture catalogue. Joyce sighed and let her embroidery slip to the floor.

“Oh, I’m afraid Willard’s plan won’t succeed,” she murmured. “I’m afraid Aunt Sally will never consent to our marriage. And I can’t and won’t marry him unless she does, for she would never forgive me and I couldn’t bear that. I wonder what makes her so bitter against men. She is so sweet and loving, it seems simply unnatural that she should have such a feeling so deeply rooted in her. Oh, what will she say when she finds out — dear little Aunt Sally? I couldn’t bear to have her angry with me.”

The next day Willard came up from the harbour and took Miss Sally down to see Eden. Eden was a tiny, cornery, gabled grey house just across the road and down a long, twisted windy lane, skirting the edge of a beech wood. Nobody had lived in it for four years, and it had a neglected, out-at-elbow appearance.

“It’s rather a box of a place, isn’t it?” said Willard slowly. “I’m afraid she will think so. But it is all I can afford just now. I dream of giving her a palace some day, of course. But we’ll have to begin humbly. Do you think anything can be made of it?”

Miss Sally was busily engaged in sizing up the possibilities of the place.

“It is pretty small,” she said meditatively. “And the yard is small too — and there are far too many trees and shrubs all messed up together.

They must be thinned out — and that paling taken down. I think a good deal can be done with it. As for the house — well, let us see the inside.”

Willard unlocked the door and showed Miss Sally over the place. Miss Sally poked and pried and sniffed and wrinkled her forehead, and finally stood on the stairs and delivered her ultimatum.

“This house can be done up very nicely. Paint and paper will work wonders. But I wouldn’t paint it outside. Leave it that pretty silver weather-grey and plant vines to run over it. Oh, we’ll see what we can do. Of course it is small — a kitchen, a dining room, a living room, and two bedrooms. You won’t want anything stuffy. You can do the painting yourself, and I’ll help you hang the paper. How much money can you spend on it?”

Willard named the sum. It was not a large one.

“But I think it will do,” mused Miss Sally. “We’ll make it do. There’s such satisfaction getting as much as you possibly can out of a dollar, and twice as much as anybody else would get. I enjoy that sort of thing. This will be a game, and we’ll play it with a right good will. But I do wish you would give the place a sensible name.”

“I think Eden is the most appropriate name in the world,” laughed Willard. “It will be Eden for me when she comes.”

“I suppose you tell her all that and she believes it,” said Miss Sally sarcastically. “You’ll both find out that there is a good deal more prose than poetry in life.”

“But we’ll find it out together,” said Willard tenderly. “Won’t that be worth something, Miss Sally? Prose, rightly written and read, is sometimes as beautiful as poetry.”

Miss Sally deigned no reply. She carefully gathered up her grey silken skirts from the dusty floor and walked out. “Get Christina Bowes to come up tomorrow and scrub this place out,” she said practically. “We can go to town and select paint and paper. I should like the dining room done in pale green and the living room in creamy tones, ranging from white to almost golden brown. But perhaps my taste won’t be hers.”

“Oh, yes, it will,” said Willard with assurance. “I am quite certain she will like everything you like. I can never thank you enough for helping me. If you hadn’t consented I should have had to put it into the hands of some outsider whom I couldn’t have helped at all. And I wanted to help. I wanted to have a finger in everything, because it is for her, you see, Miss Sally. It will be such a delight to fix up this little house, knowing that she is coming to live in it.”

“I wonder if you really mean it,” said Miss Sally bitterly. “Oh, I dare say you think you do. But do you? Perhaps you do. Perhaps you are the exception that proves the rule.”

This was a great admission for Miss Sally to make.

For the next two months Miss Sally was happy. Even Willard himself was not more keenly interested in Eden and its development. Miss Sally did wonders with his money. She was an expert at bargain hunting, and her taste was excellent. A score of times she mercilessly nipped Willard’s suggestions in the bud. “Lace curtains for the living room — never! They would be horribly out of place in such a house. You don’t want curtains at all — just a frill is all that quaint window needs, with a shelf above it for a few bits of pottery. I picked up a lot of a brass platter in town yesterday — got it for next to nothing from that old Jew who would really rather give you a thing than suffer you to escape without taking something. Oh, I know how to manage them.”

“You certainly do,” laughed Willard. “It amazes me to see how far you can stretch a dollar.”

Willard did the painting under Miss Sally’s watchful eye, and they hung the paper together. Together they made trips to town or junketed over the country in search of furniture and dishes of which Miss Sally had heard. Day by day the little house blossomed into a home, and day by day Miss Sally’s interest in it grew. She began to have a personal affection for its quaint rooms and their adornments. Moreover, in spite of herself, she felt a growing interest in Willard’s bride. He never told her the name of the girl he hoped to bring to Eden, and Miss Sally never asked it. But he talked of her a great deal, in a shy, reverent, tender way.

“He certainly seems to be very much in love with her,” Miss Sally told Joyce one evening when she returned from Eden. “I would believe in him if it were possible for me to believe in a man. Anyway, she will have a dear little home. I’ve almost come to love that Eden house. Why don’t you come down and see it, Joyce?”

“Oh, I’ll come some day — I hope,” said Joyce lightly. “I think I’d rather not see it until it is finished.”

“Willard is a nice boy,” said Miss Sally suddenly. “I don’t think I ever did him justice before. The finer qualities of his character come out in these simple, homely little doings and tasks. He is certainly very thoughtful and kind. Oh, I suppose he’ll make a good husband, as husbands go. But he doesn’t know the first thing about managing. If his wife isn’t a good manager, I don’t know what they’ll do. And perhaps she won’t like the way we’ve done up Eden. Willard says she will, of course, because he thinks her perfection. But she may have dreadful taste and want the lace curtains and that nightmare of a pink rug Willard admired, and I dare say she’d rather have a new flaunting set of china with rosebuds on it than that dear old dull blue I picked up for a mere song down at the Aldenbury auction. I stood in the rain for two mortal hours to make sure of it, and it was really worth all that Willard has spent on the dining room put together. It will break my heart if she sets to work altering Eden. It’s simply perfect as it is — though I suppose I shouldn’t say it.”

In another week Eden was finished. Miss Sally stood in the tiny hall and looked about her.

“Well, it is done,” she said with a sigh. “I’m sorry. I have enjoyed fixing it up tremendously, and now I feel that my occupation is gone. I hope you are satisfied, Willard.”

“Satisfied is too mild a word, Miss Sally. I am delighted. I knew you could accomplish wonders, but I never hoped for this. Eden is a dream — the dearest, quaintest, sweetest little home that ever waited for a bride. When I bring her here — oh, Miss Sally, do you know what that thought means to me?”

Miss Sally looked curiously at the young man. His face was flushed and his voice trembled a little. There was a faraway shining look in his eyes as if he saw a vision.

“I hope you and she will be happy,” said Miss Sally slowly. “When will she be coming, Willard?”

The flush went out of Willard’s face, leaving it pale and determined.

“That is for her — and you — to say,” he answered steadily.

“Me!” exclaimed Miss Sally. “What have I to do with it?”

“A great deal — for unless you consent she will never come here at all.”

“Willard Stanley,” said Miss Sally, with ominous calm, “who is the girl you mean to marry?”

“The girl I hope to marry is Joyce, Miss Sally. Wait — don’t say anything till you hear me out.” He came close to her and caught her hands in a boyish grip. “Joyce and I have loved each other ever since we met. But we despaired of winning your consent, and Joyce will not marry me without it. I thought if I could get you to help me fix up my little home that you might get so interested in it — and so well acquainted with me — that you would trust me with Joyce. Please do, Miss Sally. I love her so truly and I know I can make her happy. If you don’t, Eden shall never have a mistress. I’ll shut it up, just as it is, and leave it sacred to the dead hope of a bride that will never come to it.”

“Oh, you wouldn’t,” protested Miss Sally. “It would be a shame — such a dear little house — and after all the trouble I’ve taken. But you have tricked me — oh, you men couldn’t be straightforward in anything —”

“Wasn’t it a fair device for a desperate lover, Miss Sally?” interrupted Willard. “Oh, you mustn’t hold spite because of it, dear; And you will give me Joyce, won’t you? Because if you don’t, I really will shut up Eden forever.”

Miss Sally looked wistfully around her. Through the open door on her left she saw the little living room with its quaint, comfortable furniture, its dainty pictures and adornments. Through the front door she saw the trim,

velvet-swarded little lawn. Upstairs were two white rooms that only wanted a woman's living presence to make them jewels. And the kitchen on which she had expended so much thought and ingenuity — the kitchen furnished to the last detail, even to the kindling in the range and the match Willard had laid ready to light it! It gave Miss Sally a pang to think of that altar fire never being lighted. It was really the thought of the kitchen that finished Miss Sally.

"You've tricked me," she said again reproachfully. "You've tricked me into loving this house so much that I cannot bear the thought of it never living. You'll have to have Joyce, I suppose. And I believe I'm glad that it isn't a stranger who is to be the mistress of Eden. Joyce won't hanker after pink rugs and lace curtains. And her taste in china is the same as mine. In one way it's a great relief to my mind. But it's a fearful risk — a fearful risk. To think that you may make my dear child miserable!"

"You know you don't think that I will, Miss Sally. I'm not really such a bad fellow, now, am I?"

"You are a man — and I have no confidence whatever in men," declared Miss Sally, wiping some very real tears from her eyes with a very unreal sort of handkerchief — one of the cobwebby affairs of lace her daintiness demanded.

"Miss Sally, why have you such a rooted distrust of men?" demanded Willard curiously. "Somehow, it seems so foreign to your character."

"I suppose you think I am a perfect crank," said Miss Sally, sighing. "Well, I'll tell you why I don't trust men. I have a very good reason for it. A man broke my heart and embittered my life. I've never spoken about it to a living soul, but if you want to hear about it, you shall."

Miss Sally sat down on the second step of the stairs and tucked her wet handkerchief away. She clasped her slender white hands over her knee. In spite of her silvery hair and the little lines on her face she looked girlish and youthful. There was a pink flush on her cheeks, and her big black eyes sparkled with the anger her memories aroused in her.

"I was a young girl of twenty when I met him," she said, "and I was just as foolish as all young girls are — foolish and romantic and

sentimental. He was very handsome and I thought him — but there, I won't go into that. It vexes me to recall my folly. But I loved him — yes, I did, with all my heart — with all there was of me to love. He made me love him. He deliberately set himself to win my love. For a whole summer he flirted with me. I didn't know he was flirting — I thought him in earnest. Oh, I was such a little fool — and so happy. Then — he went away. Went away suddenly without even a word of goodbye. But he had been summoned home by his father's serious illness, and I thought he would write — I waited — I hoped. I never heard from him — never saw him again. He had tired of his plaything and flung it aside. That is all," concluded Miss Sally passionately. "I never trusted any man again. When my sister died and gave me her baby, I determined to bring the dear child up safely, training her to avoid the danger I had fallen into. Well, I've failed. But perhaps it will be all right — perhaps there are some men who are true, though Stephen Merritt was false."

"Stephen — who?" demanded Willard abruptly. Miss Sally coloured.

"I didn't mean to tell you his name," she said, getting up. "It was a slip of the tongue. Never mind — forget it and him. He was not worthy of remembrance — and yet I do remember him. I can't forget him — and I hate him all the more for it — for having entered so deeply into my life that I could not cast him out when I knew him unworthy. It is humiliating. There — let us lock up Eden and go home. I suppose you are dying to see Joyce and tell her your precious plot has succeeded."

Willard did not appear to be at all impatient. He had relapsed into a brown study, during which he let Miss Sally lock up the house. Then he walked silently home with her. Miss Sally was silent too. Perhaps she was repenting her confidence — or perhaps she was thinking of her false lover. There was a pathetic droop to her lips, and her black eyes were sad and dreamy.

"Miss Sally," said Willard at last, as they neared her house, "had Stephen Merritt any sisters?"

Miss Sally threw him a puzzled glance.

“He had one — Jean Merritt — whom I disliked and who disliked me,” she said crisply. “I don’t want to talk of her — she was the only woman I ever hated. I never met any of the other members of his family — his home was in a distant part of the state.”

Willard stayed with Joyce so brief a time that Miss Sally viewed his departure with suspicion. This was not very lover-like conduct.

“I dare say he’s like all the rest — when his aim is attained the prize loses its value,” reflected Miss Sally pessimistically. “Poor Joyce — poor child! But there — there isn’t a single inharmonious thing in his house — that is one comfort. I’m so thankful I didn’t let Willard buy those brocade chairs he wanted. They would have given Joyce the nightmare.”

Meanwhile, Willard rushed down to the biological station and from there drove furiously to the station to catch the evening express. He did not return until three days later, when he appeared at Miss Sally’s, dusty and triumphant.

“Joyce is out,” said Miss Sally.

“I’m glad of it,” said Willard recklessly. “It’s you I want to see, Miss Sally. I have something to show you. I’ve been all the way home to get it.”

From his pocketbook Willard drew something folded and creased and yellow that looked like a letter. He opened it carefully and, holding it in his fingers, looked over it at Miss Sally.

“My grandmother’s maiden name was Jean Merritt,” he said deliberately, “and Stephen Merritt was my great-uncle. I never saw him — he died when I was a child — but I’ve heard my father speak of him often.”

Miss Sally turned very pale. She passed her cobwebby handkerchief across her lips and her hand trembled. Willard went on.

“My uncle never married. He and his sister Jean lived together until her late marriage. I was not very fond of my grandmother. She was a selfish, domineering woman — very unlike the grandmother of tradition. When she died everything she possessed came to me, as my father, her only child, was then dead. In looking over a box of old papers I found a letter — an old love letter. I read it with some interest, wondering whose it

could be and how it came among Grandmother's private letters. It was signed 'Stephen,' so that I guessed my great-uncle had been the writer, but I had no idea who the Sally was to whom it was written, until the other day. Then I knew it was you — and I went home to bring you your letter — the letter you should have received long ago. Why you did not receive it I cannot explain. I fear that my grandmother must have been to blame for that — she must have intercepted and kept the letter in order to part her brother and you. In so far as I can I wish to repair the wrong she has done you. I know it can never be repaired — but at least I think this letter will take the bitterness out of the memory of your lover."

He dropped the letter in Miss Sally's lap and went away.

Pale, Miss Sally picked it up and read it. It was from Stephen Merritt to "dearest Sally," and contained a frank, manly avowal of love. Would she be his wife? If she would, let her write and tell him so. But if she did not and could not love him, let her silence reveal the bitter fact; he would wish to spare her the pain of putting her refusal into words, and if she did not write he would understand that she was not for him.

When Willard and Joyce came back into the twilight room they found Miss Sally still sitting by the table, her head leaning pensively on her hand. She had been crying — the cobwebby handkerchief lay beside her, wrecked and ruined forever — but she looked very happy.

"I wonder if you know what you have done for me," she said to Willard. "But no — you can't know — you can't realize it fully. It means everything to me. You have taken away my humiliation and restored to me my pride of womanhood. He really loved me — he was not false — he was what I believed him to be. Nothing else matters to me at all now. Oh, I am very happy — but it would never have been if I had not consented to give you Joyce."

She rose and took their hands in hers, joining them.

"God bless you, dears," she said softly. "I believe you will be happy and that your love for each other will always be true and faithful and tender. Willard, I give you my dear child in perfect trust and confidence."

With her yellowed love letter clasped to her heart, and a raptured shining in her eyes, Miss Sally went out of the room.

My Lady Jane

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The boat got into Broughton half an hour after the train had gone. We had been delayed by some small accident to the machinery; hence that lost half-hour, which meant a night's sojourn for me in Broughton. I am ashamed of the things I thought and said. When I think that fate might have taken me at my word and raised up a special train, or some such miracle, by which I might have got away from Broughton that night, I experience a cold chill. Out of gratitude I have never sworn over missing connections since.

At the time, however, I felt thoroughly exasperated. I was in a hurry to get on. Important business engagements would be unhinged by the delay. I was a stranger in Broughton. It looked like a stupid, stuffy little town. I went to a hotel in an atrocious humor. After I had fumed until I wanted a change, it occurred to me that I might as well hunt up Clark Oliver by way of passing the time. I had never been overly fond of Clark Oliver, although he was my cousin. He was a bit of a cad, and stupider than anyone belonging to our family had a right to be. Moreover, he was in politics, and I detest politics. But I rather wanted to see if he looked as much like me as he used to. I hadn't seen him for three years and I hoped that the time might have differentiated us to a saving degree. It was over a year since I had last been blown up by some unknown, excited individual on the ground that I was that scoundrel Oliver — politically speaking. I thought that was a good omen.

I went to Clark's office, found he had left, and followed him to his rooms. The minute I saw him I experienced the same nasty feeling of lost or bewildered individuality which always overcame me in his presence. He was so absurdly like me. I felt as if I were looking into a mirror where my reflection persisted in doing things I didn't do, thereby producing a most uncanny sensation.

Clark pretended he was glad to see me. He really couldn't have been, because his Great Idea hadn't struck him then, and we had always disliked each other.

"Hello, Elliott," he said, shaking me by the hand with a twist he had learned in election campaigns, whereby something like heartiness was simulated. "Glad to see you, old fellow. Gad, you're as like me as ever. Where did you drop from?"

I explained my predicament and we talked amiably and harmlessly for awhile about family gossip. I abhor family gossip, but it is a shade better than politics, and those two subjects are the only ones on which Clark can converse at all. I described Mary Alice's wedding, and Florence's new young man, and Tom-and-Kate's twins. Clark tried to be interested but I saw he had something on what serves him for a mind. After awhile it came out. He looked at his watch with a frown.

"I'm in a bit of a puzzle," he said. "The Mark Kennedys are giving a dinner tonight. You don't know them, of course. They're the big people of Broughton. Kennedy runs the politics of the place, and Mrs. K. makes or mars people socially. It's my first invitation there and it's necessary I should accept it — necessary every way. Mrs. K. would never forgive me if I disappointed her at the last moment. Not that I, personally, am of much account — yet — to her. But it would leave a vacant place. Mrs. K. would never notice me again and, as she bosses Kennedy, I can't afford to offend her. Besides, there's a girl who'll be there. I've met her once. I want to meet her again. She's a beauty and no mistake. Toplofty as they make 'em, though. However, I think I've made an impression on her. It was at the Harvey's dance last week. She was the handsomest woman there, and she never took her eyes off me. I've given Mrs. Kennedy a pretty broad hint that I want to take her in to dinner. If I don't go I'll miss all round."

"Well, what is there to prevent you from going?" I asked, squiffily. I never could endure the way Clark talked about girls and hinted at his conquests.

"Just this. Herbert Bronson came to town this afternoon and is leaving on the 10.30 train tonight. He's sent me word to meet him at his hotel this

evening and talk over a mining deal I've been trying to pull off. I simply must go. It's my one chance to corral Bronson. If I lose him it'll be all up, and I'll be thousands out of pocket."

"Well, you are in rather a predicament," I agreed, with the philosophical acceptance of the situation that marks the outsider. I wasn't hampered by the multiplicity of my business and social engagements that evening, so I could afford to pity Clark. It is always rather nice to be able to pity a person you dislike.

"I should say so. I can't make up my mind what to do. Hang it. I'll have to see Bronson. There's no question about that. A man ought to keep an understood substitute on hand to send to dinners when he can't go. By Jove! Elliott!"

Clark's Great Idea had arrived. He bounced up eagerly.

"Elliott, will you go to the Kennedys' in my place? They'll never know the difference. Do, now — there's a good fellow!"

"Nonsense!" I said.

"It isn't nonsense. The resemblance between us was foreordained for this hour. I'll lend you my dress suit — it'll fit you — your figure is as much like mine as your face. You've nothing to do with yourself this evening. I offer you a good dinner and an agreeable partner. Come now, to oblige me. You know you owe me a good turn for that Mulhenen business."

The Mulhenen business clinched the matter. Until he mentioned it I had no notion whatever of masquerading as Clark Oliver at the Kennedys' dinner. But, as Clark so delicately put it, he had done me a good turn in that affair and the obligation had rankled ever since. It is beastly to be indebted for a favor to a man you detest. Now was my chance to pay it off and I took it without more ado.

"But," I said doubtfully, "I don't know the Kennedys — nor any of the social stunts that are doing in Broughton; I won't dare to talk about anything, and I'll seem so stupid, even if I don't actually make some irremediable blunder, that the Kennedys will be disgusted with you. It will probably do your prospects more harm than your absence would."

“Not at all. Keep your mouth shut when you can and talk generalities when you can’t, and you’ll pass. If you take that girl in she’s a stranger in Broughton and won’t suspect your ignorance of what’s going on. Nobody will suspect you. Nobody here knows I have a cousin so like me. Our own mothers haven’t always been able to tell us apart. Our very voices are alike. Come now, get into my dinner togs. You haven’t much time and Mrs. K. doesn’t like late comers.”

There seemed to be a number of things that Mrs. Kennedy did not like. I thought my chance of pleasing that critical lady extremely small, especially when I had to live up to Clark Oliver’s personality. However, I dressed as expeditiously as possible. The novelty of the adventure rather pleased me. I always liked doing unusual things. Anything was better than lounging away the evening at my hotel. It couldn’t do any harm. I owed Clark Oliver a good turn and I would save Mrs. Kennedy the annoyance of a vacant chair.

There was no disputing the fact that I looked most disgustingly like Clark when I got into his clothes. I actually felt a grudge against them for their excellent fit.

“You’ll do,” said Clark. “Remember you’re a Conservative tonight and don’t let your rank Liberal views crop out, or you’ll queer me for all time with the great and only Mark. He doesn’t talk politics at his dinners, though, so you’re not likely to have trouble on that score. Mrs. Kennedy has a weakness for beer mugs. Her collection is considered very fine. Scandal whispers that Miss Harvey has a budding interest in settlement work—”

“Miss who?” I said sharply.

“Harvey. Christian name unknown. That’s the girl I mentioned. You’ll probably take her in. Be nice to her even if you have to make an effort. She’s the one I’ve picked out as your future cousin, you know, so I don’t want you to spoil her good opinion of me in any way.”

The name had given me a jump. Once, in another world, I had known a Jane Harvey. But Clark’s Miss Harvey couldn’t be Jane. A month before I had read a newspaper item to the effect that Jane was on the Pacific coast.

Moreover, Jane, when I knew her, had certainly no manifest vocation for settlement work. I didn't think two years could have worked such a transformation. Two years! Was it only two years? It seemed more like two centuries.

I went to the Kennedys' in a pleasantly excited frame of mind and a cab. I just missed being late by a hairbreadth. The house was a big one, and everybody pertaining to it was big, except the host. Mark Kennedy was a little, thin man with a bald head. He didn't look like a political power, but that was all the more reason for his being one in a world where things are not what they seem.

Mrs. Kennedy greeted me cordially and told me significantly that she had granted my request. This meant, as my card had already informed me, that I was to take Miss Harvey out. Of course there would be no introduction since Clark Oliver was already acquainted with the lady. I was wondering how I was to locate her when I got a shock that made me dizzy. Jane was over in a corner looking at me.

There was no time to collect my wits. The guests were moving out to the dining-room. I took my nerve in my hand, crossed the room, bowed, and the next moment was walking through the hall with Jane's hand on my arm. The hall was a good long one; I blessed the architect who had planned it. It gave me time to sort out my ideas.

Jane here! Jane going out to dinner with me, believing me to be Clark Oliver! Jane — but it was incredible! The whole thing was a dream — or I had gone crazy!

I looked at her sideways when we had got into our places at the table. She was more beautiful than ever, that tall, brown-haired, disdainful Jane. The settlement work story I was inclined to dismiss as a myth. Settlement work in a beautiful woman generally means crowsfeet or a broken heart. Jane, according to my sight and belief, possessed neither.

Once upon a time I had been engaged to Jane. I had been idiotically in love with her in those days and still more idiotically believed that she loved me. The trouble was that, although I had been cured of the latter phase of my idiocy, the former had become chronic. I had never been able

to get over loving Jane. All through those two years I had hugged the fond hope that sometime I might stumble across her in a mild mood and make matters up. There was no such thing as seeking her out or writing to her, since she had icily forbidden me to do so, and Jane had a most detestable habit — in a woman — of meaning what she said. But the deity I had invoked was the god of chance — and this was how he had answered my prayers. I was eating my dinner beside Jane, who supposed me to be Clark Oliver!

What should I do? Confess the truth and plead my cause while she had to sit beside me? That would never do. Someone might overhear us. And, in any case, it would be no passport to Jane's favor that I was a guest in the house under false pretences. She would be certain to disapprove strongly. It was a maddening situation.

Jane, who was calmly eating soup — she was the only woman I had ever seen who could eat soup and look like a goddess at the same time — glanced around and caught me studying her profile. I thought she blushed slightly and I raged inwardly to think that blush was meant for Clark Oliver — Clark Oliver who had told me he thought Jane was smitten on him! Jane! On him!

"Do you know, Mr. Oliver," said Jane slowly, "that you are startlingly like a — a person I used to know? When I first saw you the other night I took you for him."

A person you used to know! Oh, Jane, that was the most unkindest cut of all.

"My cousin, Elliott Cameron, I suppose?" I answered as indifferently as I could. "We resemble each other very closely. You were acquainted with Cameron, Miss Harvey?"

"Slightly," said Jane.

"A fine fellow," I said unblushingly.

"A-h," said Jane.

"My favorite relative," I went on brazenly. "He's a thoroughly good sort — rather dull now to what he used to be, though. He had an unfortunate love affair two years ago and has never got over it."

“Indeed?” said Jane coldly, crumbling a bit of bread between her fingers. Her face was expressionless and her voice ditto; but I had heard her criticize nervous people who did things like that at table.

“I fear poor Elliott’s life has been completely spoiled,” I said, with a sigh. “It’s a shame.”

“Did he confide the affair to you?” asked Jane, a little scornfully.

“Well, after a fashion. He said enough for me to guess the rest. He never told me the lady’s name. She was very beautiful, I understand, and very heartless. Oh, she used him very badly.”

“Did he tell you that, too?” asked Jane.

“Not he. He won’t listen to a word against her. But a chap can draw his own conclusions, you know.”

“What went wrong between them?” asked Jane. She smiled at a lady across the table, as if she were merely asking questions to make conversation, but she went on crumbling bread.

“Simply a very stiff quarrel, I believe. Elliott never went into details. The lady was flirting with somebody else, I fancy.”

“People have such different ideas about flirting,” said Jane, languidly. “What one would call mere simple friendliness another construes into flirting. Possibly your friend — or is it your cousin? — is one of those men who become insanely jealous over every trifle and attempt to exert authority before they have any to exert. A woman of spirit would hardly fail to resent that.”

“Of course Elliott was jealous,” I admitted. “But then, you know, Miss Harvey, that jealousy is said to be the measure of a man’s love. If he went beyond his rights I am sure he is bitterly sorry for it.”

“Does he really care about her still?” asked Jane, eating most industriously, although somehow the contents of her plate did not grow noticeably less. As for me, I didn’t pretend to eat. I simply pecked.

“He loves her with all his heart,” I answered fervently. “There never has been and never will be any other woman for Elliott Cameron.”

“Why doesn’t he go and tell her so?” inquired Jane, as if she felt rather bored over the whole subject.

“He doesn’t dare to. She forbade him ever to cross her path again. Told him she hated him and always would hate him as long as she lived.”

“She must have been an unpleasantly emphatic young woman,” commented Jane.

“I’d like to hear anyone say so to Elliott,” I responded. “He considers her perfection. I’m sorry for Elliott. His life is wrecked.”

“Do you know,” said Jane slowly, as if poking about in the recesses of her memory for something half forgotten. “I believe I know the — the girl in question.”

“Really?” I said.

“Yes, she is a friend of mine. She — she never told me his name, but putting two and two together, I believe it must have been your cousin. But she — she thinks she was the one to blame.”

“Does she?” It was my turn to ask questions now, but my heart thumped so that I could hardly speak.

“Yes, she says she was too hasty and unreasonable. She didn’t mean to flirt at all — and she never cared for anyone but — him. But his jealousy irritated her. I suppose she said things to him she didn’t really mean. She — she never supposed he was going to take her at her word.”

“Do you think she cares for him still?” Considering what was at stake, I think I asked the question very well.

“I think she must,” said Jane languidly. “She has never looked at any other man. She devotes most of her time to charitable work, but I feel sure she isn’t really happy.”

So the settlement story was true. Oh, Jane!

“What would you advise my cousin to do?” I asked. “Do you think he should go boldly to her? Would she listen to him — forgive him?”

“She might,” said Jane.

“Have I your permission to tell Elliott Cameron this?” I demanded.

Jane selected and ate an olive with maddening deliberation.

“I suppose you may — if you are really convinced that he wants to hear it,” she said at last, as if barely recollecting that I had asked the question two minutes previously.

“I’ll tell him as soon as I go home,” I said.

I had the satisfaction of startling Jane at last. She turned her head and looked at me. I got a good, square, satisfying gaze into her big, blackish-blue eyes.

“Yes,” I said, compelling myself to look away. “He came in on the boat this afternoon too late for his train. Has to stay over till tomorrow night. I left him in my rooms when I came away. Doubtless tomorrow will see him speeding recklessly to his dear divinity. I wonder if he knows where she is at present.”

“If he doesn’t,” said Jane, with the air of dismissing the subject once and forever from her mind, “I can give him the information. You may tell him I’m staying with the Duncan Moores, and shall be leaving day after tomorrow. By the way, have you seen Mrs. Kennedy’s collection of steins? It is a remarkably fine one.”

Clark Oliver couldn’t come to our wedding — or wouldn’t. Jane has never met him since, but she cannot understand why I have such an aversion to him, especially when he has such a good opinion of me. She says she thought him charming, and one of the most interesting conversationalists she ever went out to dinner with.

Robert Turner's Revenge

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When Robert Turner came to the green, ferny triangle where the station road forked to the right and left under the birches, he hesitated as to which direction he would take. The left led out to the old Turner homestead, where he had spent his boyhood and where his cousin still lived; the right led down to the Cove shore where the Jameson property was situated. Since he had stopped off at Chiswick for the purpose of looking this property over before foreclosing the mortgage on it he concluded that he might as well take the Cove road; he could go around by the shore afterward — he had not forgotten the way even in forty years — and so on up through the old spruce wood in Alec Martin's field — if the spruces were there still and the field still Alec Martin's — to his cousin's place. He would just about have time to make the round before the early country supper hour. Then a brief visit with Tom — Tom had always been a good sort of a fellow although woefully dull and slow-going — and the evening express for Montreal. He swung with a businesslike stride into the Cove road.

As he went on, however, the stride insensibly slackened into an unaccustomed saunter. How well he remembered that old road, although it was forty years since he had last traversed it, a set-lipped boy of fifteen, cast on the world by the indifference of an uncle. The years had made surprisingly little difference in it or in the surrounding scenery. True, the hills and fields and lanes seemed lower and smaller and narrower than he remembered them; there were some new houses along the road, and the belt of woods along the back of the farms had become thinner in most places. But that was all. He had no difficulty in picking out the old familiar spots. There was the big cherry orchard on the Milligan place which had been so famous in his boyhood. It was snow-white with blossoms, as if the trees were possessed of eternal youth; they had been in

blossom the last time he had seen them. Well, time had not stood still with him as it had with Luke Milligan's cherry orchard, he reflected grimly. His springtime had long gone by.

The few people he met on the road looked at him curiously, for strangers were not commonplace in Chiswick. He recognized some of the older among them but none of them knew him. He had been an awkward, long-limbed lad with fresh boyish colour and crisp black curls when he had left Chiswick. He returned to it a somewhat portly figure of a man, with close-cropped, grizzled hair, and a face that looked as if it might be carved out of granite, so immobile and unyielding it was — the face of a man who never faltered or wavered, who stuck at nothing that might advance his plans and purposes, a face known and dreaded in the business world where he reigned master. It was a cold, hard, selfish face, but the face of the boy of forty years ago had been neither cold nor hard nor selfish.

Presently the homesteads and orchard lands grew fewer and then ceased altogether. The fields were long and lowlying, sloping down to the misty blue rim of sea. A turn of the road brought him in sudden sight of the Cove, and there below him was the old Jameson homestead, built almost within wave-lap of the pebbly shore and shut away into a lonely grey world of its own by the sea and sands and those long slopes of tenantless fields.

He paused at the sagging gate that opened into the long, deep-rutted lane and, folding his arms on it, looked earnestly and scrutinizingly over the buildings. They were grey and faded, lacking the prosperous appearance that had characterized them once. There was an air of failure about the whole place as if the very land had become disheartened and discouraged.

Long ago, Neil Jameson, senior, had been a well-to-do man. The big Cove farm had been one of the best in Chiswick then. As for Neil Jameson, Junior, Robert Turner's face always grew something grimmer when he recalled him — the one person, boy and man, whom he had really hated in the world. They had been enemies from childhood, and once in a bout of

wrestling at the Chiswick school Neil had thrown him by an unfair trick and taunted him continually thereafter on his defeat. Robert had made a compact with himself that some day he would pay Neil Jameson back. He had not forgotten it — he never forgot such things — but he had never seen or heard of Neil Jameson after leaving Chiswick. He might have been dead for anything Robert Turner knew. Then, when John Kesley failed and his effects turned over to his creditors, of whom Robert Turner was the chief, a mortgage on the Cove farm at Chiswick, owned by Neil Jameson, had been found among his assets. Inquiry revealed the fact that Neil Jameson was dead and that the farm was run by his widow. Turner felt a pang of disappointment. What satisfaction was there in wreaking revenge on a dead man? But at least his wife and children should suffer. That debt of his to Jameson for an ill-won victory and many a sneer must be paid in full, if not to him, why, then to his heirs.

His lawyers reported that Mrs. Jameson was two years behind with her interest. Turner instructed them to foreclose the mortgage promptly. Then he took it into his head to revisit Chiswick and have a good look at the Cove farm and other places he knew so well. He had a notion that it might be a decent place to spend a summer month or two in. His wife went to seaside and mountain resorts, but he liked something quieter. There was good fishing at the Cove and in Chiswick pond, as he remembered. If he liked the farm as well as his memory promised him he would do, he would bid it in himself. It would make Neil Jameson turn in his grave if the penniless lad he had jeered at came into the possession of his old ancestral property that had been owned by a Jameson for over one hundred years. There was a flavour in such a revenge that pleased Robert Turner. He smiled one of his occasional grim smiles over it. When Robert Turner smiled, weather prophets of the business sky foretold squalls.

Presently he opened the gate and went through. Halfway down the lane forked, one branch going over to the house, the other slanting across the field to the cove. Turner took the latter and soon found himself on the grey shore where the waves were tumbling in creamy foam just as he remembered them long ago. Nothing about the old cove had changed; he

walked around a knobby headland, weather-worn with the wind and spray of years, which cut him off from sight of the Jameson house, and sat down on a rock. He thought himself alone and was annoyed to find a boy sitting on the opposite ledge with a book on his knee.

The lad lifted his eyes and looked Turner over with a clear, direct gaze. He was about twelve years old, tall for his age, slight, with a delicate, clear-cut face — a face that was oddly familiar to Turner, although he was sure he had never seen it before. The boy had oval cheeks, finely tinted with colour, big, shy blue eyes quilled about with long black lashes, and silvery-golden hair lying over his head in soft ringlets like a girl's. What girl's? Something far back in Robert Turner's dreamlike boyhood seemed to call to him like a note of a forgotten melody, sweet yet stirring like a pain. The more he looked at the boy the stronger the impression of a resemblance grew in every feature but the mouth. That was alien to his recollection of the face, yet there was something about it, when taken by itself, that seemed oddly familiar also — yes, and unpleasantly familiar, although the mouth was a good one — finely cut and possessing more firmness than was found in all the other features put together.

"It's a good place for reading, sonny, isn't it?" he inquired, more genially than he had spoken to a child for years. In fact, having no children of his own, he so seldom spoke to a child that his voice and manner when he did so were generally awkward and rusty.

The boy nodded a quick little nod. Somehow, Turner had expected that nod and the glimmer of a smile that accompanied it.

"What book are you reading?" he asked.

The boy held it out; it was an old Robinson Crusoe, that classic of boyhood.

"It's splendid," he said. "Billy Martin lent it to me and I have to finish it today because Ned Josephs is to have it next and he's in a hurry for it."

"It's a good while since I read Robinson Crusoe," said Turner reflectively. "But when I did it was on this very shore a little further along below the Miller place. There was a Martin and a Josephs in the

partnership then too — the fathers, I dare say, of Billy and Ned. What is your name, my boy?”

“Paul Jameson, sir.”

The name was a shock to Turner. This boy a Jameson — Neil Jameson’s son? Why, yes, he had Neil’s mouth. Strange he had nothing else in common with the black-browed, black-haired Jamesons. What business had a Jameson with those blue eyes and silvery-golden curls? It was flagrant forgery on Nature’s part to fashion such things and label them Jameson by a mouth.

Hated Neil Jameson’s son! Robert Turner’s face grew so grey and hard that the boy involuntarily glanced upward to see if a cloud had crossed the sun.

“Your father was Neil Jameson, I suppose?” Turner said abruptly.

Paul nodded. “Yes, but he is dead. He has been dead for eight years. I don’t remember him.”

“Have you any brothers or sisters?”

“I have a little sister a year younger than I am. The other four are dead. They died long ago. I’m the only boy Mother had. Oh, I do so wish I was bigger and older! If I was I could do something to save the place — I’m sure I could. It is breaking Mother’s heart to have to leave it.”

“So she has to leave it, has she?” said Turner grimly, with the old hatred stirring in his heart.

“Yes. There is a mortgage on it and we’re to be sold out very soon — so the lawyers told us. Mother has tried so hard to make the farm pay but she couldn’t. I could if I was bigger — I know I could. If they would only wait a few years! But there is no use hoping for that. Mother cries all the time about it. She has lived at the Cove farm for over thirty years and she says she can’t live away from it now. Elsie — that’s my sister — and I do all we can to cheer her up, but we can’t do much. Oh, if I was only a man!”

The lad shut his lips together — how much his mouth was like his father’s — and looked out seaward with troubled blue eyes. Turner smiled another grim smile. Oh, Neil Jameson, your old score was being paid now!

Yet something embittered the sweetness of revenge. That boy's face — he could not hate it as he had accustomed himself to hate the memory of Neil Jameson and all connected with him.

“What was your mother's name before she married your father?” he demanded abruptly.

“Lisbeth Miller,” answered the boy, still frowning seaward over his secret thoughts.

Turner started again. Lisbeth Miller! He might have known it. What woman in all the world save Lisbeth Miller could have given her son those eyes and curls? So Lisbeth had married Neil Jameson — little Lisbeth Miller, his schoolboy sweetheart. He had forgotten her — or thought he had; certainly he had not thought of her for years. But the memory of her came back now with a rush.

Little Lisbeth — pretty little Lisbeth — merry little Lisbeth! How clearly he remembered her! The old Miller place had adjoined his uncle's farm. Lisbeth and he had played together from babyhood. How he had worshipped her! When they were six years old they had solemnly promised to marry each other when they grew up, and Lisbeth had let him kiss her as earnest of their compact, made under a bloom-white apple tree in the Miller orchard. Yet she would always blush furiously and deny it ever afterwards; it made her angry to be reminded of it.

He saw himself going to school, carrying her books for her, the envied of all the boys. He remembered how he had fought Tony Josephs because Tony had the presumption to bring her spice apples: he had thrashed him too, so soundly that from that time forth none of the schoolboys presumed to rival him in Lisbeth's affections — roguish little Lisbeth! who grew prettier and saucier every year.

He recalled the keen competition of the old days when to be “head of the class” seemed the highest honour within mortal reach, and was striven after with might and main. He had seldom attained to it because he would never “go up past” Lisbeth. If she missed a word, he, Robert, missed it too, no matter how well he knew it. It was sweet to be thought a dunce for her dear sake. It was all the reward he asked to see her holding her place at the

head of the class, her cheeks flushed pink and her eyes starry with her pride of position. And how sweetly she would lecture him on the way home from school about learning his spellings better, and wind up her sermon with the frank avowal, uttered with deliciously downcast lids, that she liked him better than any of the other boys after all, even if he couldn't spell as well as they could. Nothing of success that he had won since had ever thrilled him as that admission of little Lisbeth's!

She had been such a sympathetic little sweetheart too, never weary of listening to his dreams and ambitions, his plans for the future. She had always assured him that she knew he would succeed. Well, he had succeeded — and now one of the uses he was going to make of his success was to turn Lisbeth and her children out of their home by way of squaring matters with a dead man!

Lisbeth had been away from home on a long visit to an aunt when he had left Chiswick. She was growing up and the childish intimacy was fading. Perhaps, under other circumstances, it might have ripened into fruit, but he had gone away and forgotten her; the world had claimed him; he had lost all active remembrance of Lisbeth and, before this late return to Chiswick, he had not even known if she were living. And she was Neil Jameson's widow!

He was silent for a long time, while the waves purred about the base of the big red sandstone rock and the boy returned to his Crusoe. Finally Robert Turner roused himself from his reverie.

"I used to know your mother long ago when she was a little girl," he said. "I wonder if she remembers me. Ask her when you go home if she remembers Bobby Turner."

"Won't you come up to the house and see her, sir?" asked Paul politely. "Mother is always glad to see her old friends."

"No, I haven't time today." Robert Turner was not going to tell Neil Jameson's son that he did not care to look for the little Lisbeth of long ago in Neil Jameson's widow. The name spoiled her for him, just as the Jameson mouth spoiled her son for him. "But you may tell her something else. The mortgage will not be foreclosed. I was the power behind the

lawyers, but I did not know that the present owner of the Cove farm was my little playmate, Lisbeth Miller. You and she shall have all the time you want. Tell her Bobby Turner does this in return for what she gave him under the big sweeting apple tree on her sixth birthday. I think she will remember and understand. As for you, Paul, be a good boy and good to your mother. I hope you'll succeed in your ambition of making the farm pay when you are old enough to take it in hand. At any rate, you'll not be disturbed in your possession of it."

"Oh, sir! oh, sir!" stammered Paul in an agony of embarrassed gratitude and delight. "Oh, it seems too good to be true. Do you really mean that we're not to be sold out? Oh, won't you come and tell Mother yourself? She'll be so happy — so grateful. Do come and let her thank you."

"Not today. I haven't time. Give her my message, that's all. There, run; the sooner she gets the news the better."

Turner watched the boy as he bounded away, until the headland hid him from sight.

"There goes my revenge — and a fine bit of property eminently suited for a summer residence — all for a bit of old, rusty sentiment," he said with a shrug. "I didn't suppose I was capable of such a mood. But then — little Lisbeth. There never was a sweeter girl. I'm glad I didn't go with the boy to see her. She's an old woman now — and Neil Jameson's widow. I prefer to keep my old memories of her undisturbed — little Lisbeth of the silvery-golden curls and the roguish blue eyes. Little Lisbeth of the old time! I'm glad to be able to have done you the small service of securing your home to you. It is my thanks to you for the friendship and affection you gave my lonely boyhood — my tribute to the memory of my first sweetheart."

He walked away with a smile, whose amusement presently softened to an expression that would have amazed his business cronies. Later on he hummed the air of an old love song as he climbed the steep spruce road to Tom's.

The Fillmore Elderberries

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“I expected as much,” said Timothy Robinson. His tone brought the blood into Ellis Duncan’s face. The lad opened his lips quickly, as if for an angry retort, but as quickly closed them again with a set firmness oddly like Timothy Robinson’s own.

“When I heard that lazy, worthless father of yours was dead, I expected you and your mother would be looking to me for help,” Timothy Robinson went on harshly. “But you’re mistaken if you think I’ll give it. You’ve no claim on me, even if your father was my half-brother — no claim at all. And I’m not noted for charity.”

Timothy Robinson smiled grimly. It was very true that he was far from being noted for charity. His neighbours called him “close” and “near.” Some even went so far as to call him “a miserly skinflint.” But this was not true. It was, however, undeniable that Timothy Robinson kept a tight clutch on his purse-strings, and although he sometimes gave liberally enough to any cause which really appealed to him, such causes were few and far between.

“I am not asking for charity, Uncle Timothy,” said Ellis quietly. He passed over the slur at his father in silence, deeply as he felt it, for, alas, he knew that it was only too true. “I expect to support my mother by hard and honest work. And I am not asking you for work on the ground of our relationship. I heard you wanted a hired man, and I have come to you, as I should have gone to any other man about whom I had heard it, to ask you to hire me.”

“Yes, I do want a man,” said Uncle Timothy drily. “A man — not a half-grown boy of fourteen, not worth his salt. I want somebody able and willing to work.”

Again Ellis flushed deeply and again he controlled himself. “I am willing to work, Uncle Timothy, and I think you would find me able also if

you would try me. I'd work for less than a man's wages at first, of course."

"You won't work for any sort of wages from me," interrupted Timothy Robinson decidedly. "I tell you plainly that I won't hire you. You're the wrong man's son for that. Your father was lazy and incompetent and, worst of all, untrustworthy. I did try to help him once, and all I got was loss and ingratitude. I want none of his kind around my place. I don't believe in you, so you may as well take yourself off, Ellis. I've no more time to waste."

Ellis took himself off, his ears tingling. As he walked homeward his thoughts were very bitter. All Uncle Timothy had said about his father was true, and Ellis realized what a count it was against him in his efforts to obtain employment. Nobody wanted to be bothered with "Old Sam Duncan's son," though nobody had been so brutally outspoken as his Uncle Timothy.

Sam Duncan and Timothy Robinson had been half-brothers. Sam, the older, had been the son of Mrs. Robinson's former marriage. Never were two lads more dissimilar. Sam was a lazy, shiftless fellow, deserving all the hard things that came to be said of him. He would not work and nobody could depend on him, but he was a handsome lad with rather taking ways in his youth, and at first people had liked him better than the close, blunt, industrious Timothy. Their mother had died in their childhood, but Mr. Robinson had been fond of Sam and the boy had a good home. When he was twenty-two and Timothy eighteen, Mr. Robinson had died very suddenly, leaving no will. Everything he possessed went to Timothy. Sam immediately left. He said he would not stay there to be "bossed" by Timothy.

He rented a little house in the village, married a girl "far too good for him," and started in to support himself and his wife by days' work. He had lounged, borrowed, and shirked through life. Once Timothy Robinson, perhaps moved by pity for Sam's wife and baby, had hired him for a year at better wages than most hired men received in Dalrymple. Sam idled through a month of it, then got offended and left in the middle of haying. Timothy Robinson washed his hands of him after that.

When Ellis was fourteen Sam Duncan died, after a lingering illness of a year. During this time the family were kept by the charity of pitying neighbours, for Ellis could not be spared from attendance on his father to make any attempt at earning money. Mrs. Duncan was a fragile little woman, worn out with her hard life, and not strong enough to wait on her husband alone.

When Sam Duncan was dead and buried, Ellis straightened his shoulders and took counsel with himself. He must earn a livelihood for his mother and himself, and he must begin at once. He was tall and strong for his age, and had a fairly good education, his mother having determinedly kept him at school when he had pleaded to be allowed to go to work. He had always been a quiet fellow, and nobody in Dalrymple knew much about him. But they knew all about his father, and nobody would hire Ellis unless he were willing to work for a pittance that would barely clothe him.

Ellis had not gone to his Uncle Timothy until he had lost all hope of getting a place elsewhere. Now this hope too had gone. It was nearly the end of June and everybody who wanted help had secured it. Look where he would, Ellis could see no prospect of employment.

“If I could only get a chance!” he thought miserably. “I know I am not idle or lazy — I know I can work — if I could get a chance to prove it.”

He was sitting on the fence of the Fillmore elderberry pasture as he said it, having taken a short cut across the fields. This pasture was rather noted in Dalrymple. Originally a mellow and fertile field, it had been almost ruined by a persistent, luxuriant growth of elderberry bushes. Old Thomas Fillmore had at first tried to conquer them by mowing them down “in the dark of the moon.” But the elderberries did not seem to mind either moon or mowing, and flourished alike in all the quarters. For the past two years Old Thomas had given up the contest, and the elderberries had it all their own sweet way.

Thomas Fillmore, a bent old man with a shrewd, nutcracker face, came through the bushes while Ellis was sitting on the fence.

“Howdy, Ellis. Seen anything of my spotted calves? I’ve been looking for ‘em for over an hour.”

“No, I haven’t seen any calves — but a good many might be in this pasture without being visible to the naked eye,” said Ellis, with a smile.

Old Thomas shook his head ruefully. “Them elders have been too many for me,” he said. “Did you ever see a worse-looking place? You’d hardly believe that twenty years ago there wasn’t a better piece of land in Dalrymple than this lot, would ye? Such grass as grew here!”

“The soil must be as good as ever if anything had a chance to grow on it,” said Ellis. “Couldn’t those elders be rooted out?”

“It’d be a back-breaking job, but I reckon it could be done if anyone had the muscle and patience and time to tackle it. I haven’t the first at my age, and my hired man hasn’t the last. And nobody would do it for what I could afford to pay.”

“What will you give me if I undertake to clean the elders out of this field for you, Mr. Fillmore?” asked Ellis quietly.

Old Thomas looked at him with a surprised face, which gradually reverted to its original shrewdness when he saw that Ellis was in earnest. “You must be hard up for a job,” he said.

“I am,” was Ellis’s laconic answer.

“Well, lemme see.” Old Thomas calculated carefully. He never paid a cent more for anything than he could help, and was noted for hard bargaining. “I’ll give ye sixteen dollars if you clean out the whole field,” he said at length.

Ellis looked at the pasture. He knew something about cleaning out elderberry brush, and he also knew that sixteen dollars would be very poor pay for it. Most of the elders were higher than a man’s head, with big roots, thicker than his wrist, running deep into the ground.

“It’s worth more, Mr. Fillmore,” he said.

“Not to me,” responded Old Thomas drily. “I’ve plenty more land and I’m an old fellow without any sons. I ain’t going to pay out money for the benefit of some stranger who’ll come after me. You can take it or leave it at sixteen dollars.”

Ellis shrugged his shoulders. He had no prospect of anything else, and sixteen dollars were better than nothing. “Very well, I’ll take it,” he said.

“Well, now, look here,” said Old Thomas shrewdly, “I’ll expect you to do the work thoroughly, young man. Them roots ain’t to be cut off, remember; they’ll have to be dug out. And I’ll expect you to finish the job if you undertake it too, and not drop it halfway through if you get a chance for a better one.”

“I’ll finish with your elderberries before I leave them,” promised Ellis.

Ellis went to work the next day. His first move was to chop down all the brush and cart it into heaps for burning. This took two days and was comparatively easy work. The third day Ellis tackled the roots. By the end of the forenoon he had discovered just what cleaning out an elderberry pasture meant, but he set his teeth and resolutely persevered. During the afternoon Timothy Robinson, whose farm adjoined the Fillmore place, wandered by and halted with a look of astonishment at the sight of Ellis, busily engaged in digging and tearing out huge, tough, stubborn elder roots. The boy did not see his uncle, but worked away with a vim and vigour that were not lost on the latter.

“He never got that muscle from Sam,” reflected Timothy. “Sam would have fainted at the mere thought of stumping elders. Perhaps I’ve been mistaken in the boy. Well, well, we’ll see if he holds out.”

Ellis did hold out. The elderberries tried to hold out too, but they were no match for the lad’s perseverance. It was a hard piece of work, however, and Ellis never forgot it. Week after week he toiled in the hot summer sun, digging, cutting, and dragging out roots. The job seemed endless, and his progress each day was discouragingly slow. He had expected to get through in a month, but he soon found it would take two. Frequently Timothy Robinson wandered by and looked at the increasing pile of roots and the slowly extending stretch of cleared land. But he never spoke to Ellis and made no comment on the matter to anybody.

One evening, when the field was about half done, Ellis went home more than usually tired. It had been a very hot day. Every bone and muscle in him ached. He wondered dismally if he would ever get to the end of that wretched elderberry field. When he reached home Jacob Green from Westdale was there. Jacob lost no time in announcing his errand.

“My hired boy’s broke his leg, and I must fill his place right off. Somebody referred me to you. Guess I’ll try you. Twelve dollars a month, board, and lodging. What say?”

For a moment Ellis’s face flushed with delight. Twelve dollars a month and permanent employment! Then he remembered his promise to Mr. Fillmore. For a moment he struggled with the temptation. Then he mastered it. Perhaps the discipline of his many encounters with those elderberry roots helped him to do so.

“I’m sorry, Mr. Green,” he said reluctantly. “I’d like to go, but I can’t. I promised Mr. Fillmore that I’d finish cleaning up his elderberry pasture when I’d once begun it, and I shan’t be through for a month yet.”

“Well, I’d see myself turning down a good offer for Old Tom Fillmore,” said Jacob Green.

“It isn’t for Mr. Fillmore — it’s for myself,” said Ellis steadily. “I promised and I must keep my word.”

Jacob drove away grumblingly. On the road he met Timothy Robinson and stopped to relate his grievances.

It must be admitted that there were times during the next month when Ellis was tempted to repent having refused Jacob Green’s offer. But at the end of the month the work was done and the Fillmore elderberry pasture was an elderberry pasture no longer. All that remained of the elders, root and branch, was piled into a huge heap ready for burning.

“And I’ll come up and set fire to it when it’s dry enough,” Ellis told Mr. Fillmore. “I claim the satisfaction of that.”

“You’ve done the job thoroughly,” said Old Thomas. “There’s your sixteen dollars, and every cent of it was earned, if ever money was, I’ll say that much for you. There ain’t a lazy bone in your body. If you ever want a recommendation just you come to me.”

As Ellis passed Timothy Robinson’s place on the way home that worthy himself appeared, strolling down his lane. “Ah, Ellis,” he said, speaking to his nephew for the first time since their interview two months before, “so you’ve finished with your job?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Got your sixteen dollars, I suppose? It was worth four times that. Old Tom cheated you. You were foolish not to have gone to Green when you had the chance.”

“I’d promised Mr. Fillmore to finish with his pasture, sir!”

“Humph! Well, what are you going to do now?”

“I don’t know. Harvest will be on next week. I may get in somewhere as an extra hand for a spell.”

“Ellis,” said his uncle abruptly, after a moment’s silence, “I’m going to discharge my man. He’s no earthly good. Will you take his place? I’ll give you fifteen dollars a month and found.”

Ellis stared at Timothy Robinson. “I thought you told me that you had no place for my father’s son,” he said slowly.

“I’ve changed my mind. I’ve seen how you went at that elderberry job. Great snakes, there couldn’t be a better test for anybody than rooting out them things. I know you can work. When Jacob Green told me why you’d refused his offer I knew you could be depended on. You come to me and I’ll do well by you. I’ve no kith or kin of my own except you. And look here, Ellis. I’m tired of hired housekeepers. Will your mother come up and live with us and look after things a bit? I’ve a good girl, and she won’t have to work hard, but there must be somebody at the head of a household. She must have a good headpiece — for you have inherited good qualities from someone, and goodness knows it wasn’t from your father.”

“Uncle Timothy,” said Ellis respectfully but firmly, “I’ll accept your offer gratefully, and I am sure Mother will too. But there is one thing I must say. Perhaps my father deserves all you say of him — but he is dead — and if I come to you it must be with the understanding that nothing more is ever to be said against him.”

Timothy Robinson smiled — a queer, twisted smile that yet had a hint of affection and comprehension in it. “Very well,” he said. “I’ll never cast his shortcomings up to you again. Come to me — and if I find you always as industrious and reliable as you’ve proved yourself to be negotiating them elders, I’ll most likely forget that you ain’t my own son some of these days.”

The Finished Story

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She always sat in a corner of the west veranda at the hotel, knitting something white and fluffy, or pink and fluffy, or pale blue and fluffy — always fluffy, at least, and always dainty. Shawls and scarfs and hoods the things were, I believe. When she finished one she gave it to some girl and began another. Every girl at Harbour Light that summer wore some distracting thing that had been fashioned by Miss Sylvia's slim, tireless, white fingers.

She was old, with that beautiful, serene old age which is as beautiful in its way as youth. Her girlhood and womanhood must have been very lovely to have ripened into such a beauty of sixty years. It was a surprise to everyone who heard her called Miss Sylvia. She looked so like a woman who ought to have stalwart, grown sons and dimpled little grandchildren.

For the first two days after the arrival at the hotel she sat in her corner alone. There was always a circle of young people around her; old folks and middle-aged people would have liked to join it, but Miss Sylvia, while she was gracious to all, let it be distinctly understood that her sympathies were with youth. She sat among the boys and girls, young men and maidens, like a fine white queen. Her dress was always the same and somewhat old-fashioned, but nothing else would have suited her half so well; she wore a lace cap on her snowy hair and a heliotrope shawl over her black silk shoulders. She knitted continually and talked a good deal, but listened more. We sat around her at all hours of the day and told her everything.

When you were first introduced to her you called her Miss Stanleyman. Her endurance of that was limited to twenty-four hours. Then she begged you to call her Miss Sylvia, and as Miss Sylvia you spoke and thought of her forevermore.

Miss Sylvia liked us all, but I was her favourite. She told us so frankly and let it be understood that when I was talking to her and her heliotrope

shawl was allowed to slip under one arm it was a sign that we were not to be interrupted. I was as vain of her favour as any lovelorn suitor whose lady had honoured him, not knowing, as I came to know later, the reason for it.

Although Miss Sylvia had an unlimited capacity for receiving confidences, she never gave any. We were all sure that there must be some romance in her life, but our efforts to discover it were unsuccessful. Miss Sylvia parried tentative questions so skilfully that we knew she had something to defend. But one evening, when I had known her a month, as time is reckoned, and long years as affection and understanding are computed, she told me her story — at least, what there was to tell of it. The last chapter was missing.

We were sitting together on the veranda at sunset. Most of the hotel people had gone for a harbour sail; a few forlorn mortals prowled about the grounds and eyed our corner wistfully, but by the sign of the heliotrope shawl knew it was not for them.

I was reading one of my stories to Miss Sylvia. In my own excuse I must allege that she tempted me to do it. I did not go around with manuscripts under my arm, inflicting them on defenceless females. But Miss Sylvia had discovered that I was a magazine scribbler, and moreover, that I had shut myself up in my room that very morning and perpetrated a short story. Nothing would do but that I read it to her.

It was a rather sad little story. The hero loved the heroine, and she loved him. There was no reason why he should not love her, but there was a reason why he could not marry her. When he found that he loved her he knew that he must go away. But might he not, at least, tell her his love? Might he not, at least, find out for his consolation if she cared for him? There was a struggle; he won, and went away without a word, believing it to be the more manly course. When I began to read Miss Sylvia was knitting, a pale green something this time, of the tender hue of young leaves in May. But after a little her knitting slipped unheeded to her lap and her hands folded idly above it. It was the most subtle compliment I had ever received.

When I turned the last page of the manuscript and looked up, Miss Sylvia's soft brown eyes were full of tears. She lifted her hands, clasped them together and said in an agitated voice:

"Oh, no, no; don't let him go away without telling her — just telling her. Don't let him do it!"

"But, you see, Miss Sylvia," I explained, flattered beyond measure that my characters had seemed so real to her, "that would spoil the story. It would have no reason for existence then. Its motif is simply his mastery over self. He believes it to be the nobler course."

"No, no, it wasn't — if he loved her he should have told her. Think of her shame and humiliation — she loved him, and he went without a word and she could never know he cared for her. Oh, you must change it — you must, indeed! I cannot bear to think of her suffering what I have suffered."

Miss Sylvia broke down and sobbed. To appease her, I promised that I would remodel the story, although I knew that the doing so would leave it absolutely pointless.

"Oh, I'm so glad," said Miss Sylvia, her eyes shining through her tears. "You see, I know it would make her happier — I know it. I'm going to tell you my poor little story to convince you. But you — you must not tell it to any of the others."

"I am sorry you think the admonition necessary," I said reproachfully.

"Oh, I do not, indeed I do not," she hastened to assure me. "I know I can trust you. But it's such a poor little story. You mustn't laugh at it — it is all the romance I had. Years ago — forty years ago — when I was a young girl of twenty, I — learned to care very much for somebody. I met him at a summer resort like this. I was there with my aunt and he was there with his mother, who was delicate. We saw a great deal of each other for a little while. He was — oh, he was like no other man I had ever seen. You remind me of him somehow. That is partly why I like you so much. I noticed the resemblance the first time I saw you. I don't know in just what it consists — in your expression and the way you carry your head, I think. He was not strong — he coughed a good deal. Then one day he went away — suddenly. I had thought he cared for me, but he never said so — just

went away. Oh, the shame of it! After a time I heard that he had been ordered to California for his health. And he died out there the next spring. My heart broke then, I never cared for anybody again — I couldn't. I have always loved him. But it would have been so much easier to bear if I had only known that he loved me — oh, it would have made all the difference in the world. And the sting of it has been there all these years. I can't even permit myself the joy of dwelling on his memory because of the thought that perhaps he did not care."

"He must have cared," I said warmly. "He couldn't have helped it, Miss Sylvia."

Miss Sylvia shook her head with a sad smile.

"I cannot be sure. Sometimes I think he did. But then the doubt creeps back again. I would give almost anything to know that he did — to know that I have not lavished all the love of my life on a man who did not want it. And I never can know, never — I can hope and almost believe, but I can never know. Oh, you don't understand — a man couldn't fully understand what my pain has been over it. You see now why I want you to change the story. I am sorry for that poor girl, but if you only let her know that he really loves her she will not mind all the rest so very much; she will be able to bear the pain of even lifelong separation if she only knows."

Miss Sylvia picked up her knitting and went away. As for me, I thought savagely of the dead man she loved and called him a cad, or at best, a fool.

Next day Miss Sylvia was her serene, smiling self once more, and she did not again make any reference to what she had told me. A fortnight later she returned home and I went my way back to the world. During the following winter I wrote several letters to Miss Sylvia and received replies from her. Her letters were very like herself. When I sent her the third-rate magazine containing my story — nothing but a third-rate magazine would take it in its rewritten form — she wrote to say that she was so glad that I had let the poor girl know.

Early in April I received a letter from an aunt of mine in the country, saying that she intended to sell her place and come to the city to live. She asked me to go out to Sweetwater for a few weeks and assist her in the

business of settling up the estate and disposing of such things as she did not wish to take with her.

When I arrived at Sweetwater I found it moist and chill with the sunny moisture and teasing chill of our Canadian springs. They are long and fickle and reluctant, these springs of ours, but, oh, the unnamable charm of them! There was something even in the red buds of the maples at Sweetwater and in the long, smoking stretches of hillside fields that sent a thrill through my veins, finer and subtler than any given by old wine.

A week after my arrival, when we had got the larger affairs pretty well straightened out, Aunt Mary suggested that I had better overhaul Uncle Alan's room.

"The things there have never been meddled with since he died," she said. "In particular, there's an old trunk full of his letters and his papers. It was brought home from California after his death. I've never examined them. I don't suppose there is anything of any importance among them. But I'm not going to carry all that old rubbish to town. So I wish you would look over them and see if there is anything that should be kept. The rest may be burned."

I felt no particular interest in the task. My Uncle Alan Blair was a mere name to me. He was my mother's eldest brother and had died years before I was born. I had heard that he had been very clever and that great things had been expected of him. But I anticipated no pleasure from exploring musty old letters and papers of forty neglected years.

I went up to Uncle Alan's room at dusk that night. We had been having a day of warm spring rain, but it had cleared away and the bare maple boughs outside the window were strung with glistening drops. The room looked to the north and was always dim by reason of the close-growing Sweetwater pines. A gap had been cut through them to the northwest, and in it I had a glimpse of the sea Uncle Alan had loved, and above it a wondrous sunset sky fleeced over with little clouds, pale and pink and golden and green, that suddenly reminded me of Miss Sylvia and her fluffy knitting. It was with the thought of her in my mind that I lighted a lamp and began the task of grubbing into Uncle Alan's trunkful of papers. Most

of these were bundles of yellowed letters, of no present interest, from his family and college friends. There were several college theses and essays, and a lot of loose miscellanea pertaining to boyish school days. I went through the collection rapidly, until at the bottom of the trunk, I came to a small book bound in dark-green leather. It proved to be a sort of journal, and I began to glance over it with a languid interest.

It had been begun in the spring after he had graduated from college. Although suspected only by himself, the disease which was to end his life had already fastened upon him. The entries were those of a doomed man, who, feeling the curse fall on him like a frost, blighting all the fair hopes and promises of life, seeks some help and consolation in the outward self-communing of a journal. There was nothing morbid, nothing unmanly in the record. As I read, I found myself liking Uncle Alan, wishing that he might have lived and been my friend.

His mother had not been well that summer and the doctor ordered her to the seashore. Alan accompanied her. Here occurred a hiatus in the journal. No leaves had been torn out, but a quire or so of them had apparently become loosened from the threads that held them in place. I found them later on in the trunk, but at the time I passed to the next page. It began abruptly:

This girl is the sweetest thing that God ever made. I had not known a woman could be so fair and sweet. Her beauty awes me, the purity of her soul shines so clearly through it like an illuminating lamp. I love her with all my power of loving and I am thankful that it is so. It would have been hard to die without having known love. I am glad that it has come to me, even if its price is unspeakable bitterness. A man has not lived for nothing who has known and loved Sylvia Stanleyman.

I must not seek her love — that is denied me. If I were well and strong I should win it; yes, I believe I could win it, and nothing in the world would prevent me from trying, but, as things are, it would be the part of a coward to try. Yet I cannot resist the delight of being with her, of talking to her, of watching her wonderful face. She is in my thoughts day and night, she dwells in my dreams. O, Sylvia, I love you, my sweet!

A week later there was another entry:

July Seventeenth.

I am afraid. To-day I met Sylvia's eyes. In them was a look which at first stirred my heart to its depths with tumultuous delight, and then I remembered. I must spare her that suffering, at whatever cost to myself. I must not let myself dwell on the dangerous sweetness of the thought that her heart is turning to me. What would be the crowning joy to another man could be only added sorrow to me.

Then:

July Eighteenth.

This morning I took the train to the city. I was determined to know the worst once for all. The time had come when I must. My doctor at home had put me off with vague hopes and perhapses. So I went to a noted physician in the city. I told him I wanted the whole truth — I made him tell it. Stripped of all softening verbiage it is this: I have perhaps eight months or a year to live — no more!

I had expected it, although not quite so soon. Yet the certainty was none the less bitter. But this is no time for selfpity. It is of Sylvia I must think now. I shall go away at once, before the sweet fancy which is possibly budding in her virgin heart shall have bloomed into a flower that might poison some of her fair years.

July Nineteenth.

It is over. I said goodbye to her to-day before others, for I dared not trust myself to see her alone. She looked hurt and startled, as if someone had struck her. But she will soon forget, even if I have not been mistaken in the reading of her eyes. As for me, the bitterness of death is already over in that parting. All that now remains is to play the man to the end.

From further entries in the journal I learned that Alan Blair had returned to Sweetwater and later on had been ordered to California. The entries during his sojourn there were few and far between. In all of them he spoke of Sylvia. Finally, after a long silence, he had written:

I think the end is not far off now. I am not sorry for my suffering has been great of late. Last night I was easier. I slept and dreamed that I saw

Sylvia. Once or twice I thought that I would arrange to have this book sent to her after my death. But I have decided that it would be unwise. It would only pain her, so I shall destroy it when I feel the time has come.

It is sunset in this wonderful summer land. At home in Sweetwater it is only early spring as yet, with snow lingering along the edges of the woods. The sunsets there will be creamy-yellow and pale red now. If I could but see them once more! And Sylvia —

There was a little blot where the pen had fallen. Evidently the end had been nearer than Alan Blair had thought. At least, there were no more entries, and the little green book had not been destroyed. I was glad that it had not been; and I felt glad that it was thus put in my power to write the last chapter of Miss Sylvia's story for her.

As soon as I could leave Sweetwater I went to the city, three hundred miles away, where Miss Sylvia lived. I found her in her library, in her black silk dress and heliotrope shawl, knitting up cream wool, for all the world as if she had just been transplanted from the veranda corner of Harbour Light.

"My dear boy!" she said.

"Do you know why I have come?" I asked.

"I am vain enough to think it was because you wanted to see me," she smiled.

"I did want to see you; but I would have waited until summer if it had not been that I wished to bring you the missing chapter of your story, dear lady."

"I — I — don't understand," said Miss Sylvia, starting slightly.

"I had an uncle, Alan Blair, who died forty years ago in California," I said quietly. "Recently I have had occasion to examine some of his papers. I found a journal among them and I have brought it to you because I think that you have the best right to it."

I dropped the parcel in her lap. She was silent with surprise and bewilderment.

"And now," I added, "I am going away. You won't want to see me or anyone for a while after you have read this book. But I will come up to see

you tomorrow.”

When I went the next day Miss Sylvia herself met me at the door. She caught my hand and drew me into the hall. Her eyes were softly radiant.

“Oh, you have made me so happy!” she said tremulously. “Oh, you can never know how happy! Nothing hurts now — nothing ever can hurt, because I know he did care.”

She laid her face down on my shoulder, as a girl might have nestled to her lover, and I bent and kissed her for Uncle Alan.

The Garden of Spices

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Jims tried the door of the blue room. Yes, it was locked. He had hoped Aunt Augusta might have forgotten to lock it; but when did Aunt Augusta forget anything? Except, perhaps, that little boys were not born grownups — and that was something she never remembered. To be sure, she was only a half-aunt. Whole aunts probably had more convenient memories.

Jims turned and stood with his back against the door. It was better that way; he could not imagine things behind him then. And the blue room was so big and dim that a dreadful number of things could be imagined in it. All the windows were shuttered but one, and that one was so darkened by a big pine tree branching right across it that it did not let in much light.

Jims looked very small and lost and lonely as he shrank back against the door — so small and lonely that one might have thought that even the sternest of half-aunts should have thought twice before shutting him up in that room and telling him he must stay there the whole afternoon instead of going out for a promised ride. Jims hated being shut up alone — especially in the blue room. Its bigness and dimness and silence filled his sensitive little soul with vague horror. Sometimes he became almost sick with fear in it. To do Aunt Augusta justice, she never suspected this. If she had she would not have decreed this particular punishment, because she knew Jims was delicate and must not be subjected to any great physical or mental strain. That was why she shut him up instead of whipping him. But how was she to know it? Aunt Augusta was one of those people who never know anything unless it is told them in plain language and then hammered into their heads. There was no one to tell her but Jims, and Jims would have died the death before he would have told Aunt Augusta, with her cold, spectacled eyes and thin, smileless mouth, that he was desperately frightened when he was shut in the blue room. So he was always shut in it for punishment; and the punishments came very often, for Jims was

always doing things that Aunt Augusta considered naughty. At first, this time, Jims did not feel quite so frightened as usual because he was very angry. As he put it, he was very mad at Aunt Augusta. He hadn't meant to spill his pudding over the floor and the tablecloth and his clothes; and how such a little bit of pudding — Aunt Augusta was mean with desserts — could ever have spread itself over so much territory Jims could not understand. But he had made a terrible mess and Aunt Augusta had been very angry and had said he must be cured of such carelessness. She said he must spend the afternoon in the blue room instead of going for a ride with Mrs. Loring in her new car.

Jims was bitterly disappointed. If Uncle Walter had been home Jims would have appealed to him — for when Uncle Walter could be really wakened up to a realization of his small nephew's presence in his home, he was very kind and indulgent. But it was so hard to waken him up that Jims seldom attempted it. He liked Uncle Walter, but as far as being acquainted with him went he might as well have been the inhabitant of a star in the Milky Way. Jims was just a lonely, solitary little creature, and sometimes he felt so friendless that his eyes smarted, and several sobs had to be swallowed.

There were no sobs just now, though — Jims was still too angry. It wasn't fair. It was so seldom he got a car ride. Uncle Walter was always too busy, attending to sick children all over the town, to take him. It was only once in a blue moon Mrs. Loring asked him to go out with her. But she always ended up with ice cream or a movie, and to-day Jims had had strong hopes that both were on the programme.

"I hate Aunt Augusta," he said aloud; and then the sound of his voice in that huge, still room scared him so that he only thought the rest. "I won't have any fun — and she won't feed my gobbler, either."

Jims had shrieked "Feed my gobbler," to the old servant as he had been hauled upstairs. But he didn't think Nancy Jane had heard him, and nobody, not even Jims, could imagine Aunt Augusta feeding the gobbler. It was always a wonder to him that she ate, herself. It seemed really too human a thing for her to do.

“I wish I had spilled that pudding on purpose,” Jims said vindictively, and with the saying his anger evaporated — Jims never could stay angry long — and left him merely a scared little fellow, with velvety, nut-brown eyes full of fear that should have no place in a child’s eyes. He looked so small and helpless as he crouched against the door that one might have wondered if even Aunt Augusta would not have relented had she seen him.

How that window at the far end of the room rattled! It sounded terribly as if somebody — or something — were trying to get in. Jims looked desperately at the unshuttered window. He must get to it; once there, he could curl up in the window seat, his back to the wall, and forget the shadows by looking out into the sunshine and loveliness of the garden over the wall. Jims would have likely have been found dead of fright in that blue room some time had it not been for the garden over the wall.

But to get to the window Jims must cross the room and pass by the bed. Jims held that bed in special dread. It was the oldest fashioned thing in the old-fashioned, old-furnished house. It was high and rigid, and hung with gloomy blue curtains. Anything might jump out of such a bed.

Jims gave a gasp and ran madly across the room. He reached the window and flung himself upon the seat. With a sigh of relief he curled down in the corner. Outside, over the high brick wall, was a world where his imagination could roam, though his slender little body was pent a prisoner in the blue room.

Jims had loved that garden from his first sight of it. He called it the Garden of Spices and wove all sorts of yarns in fancy — yarns gay and tragic — about it. He had only known it for a few weeks. Before that, they had lived in a much smaller house away at the other side of the town. Then Uncle Walter’s uncle — who had brought him up just as he was bringing up Jims — had died, and they had all come to live in Uncle Walter’s old home. Somehow, Jims had an idea that Uncle Walter wasn’t very glad to come back there. But he had to, according to great-uncle’s will. Jims himself didn’t mind much. He liked the smaller rooms in their former home better, but the Garden of Spices made up for all.

It was such a beautiful spot. Just inside the wall was a row of aspen poplars that always talked in silvery whispers and shook their dainty, heart-shaped leaves at him. Beyond them, under scattered pines, was a rockery where ferns and wild things grew. It was almost as good as a bit of woods — and Jims loved the woods, though he scarcely ever saw them. Then, past the pines, were roses just breaking into June bloom — roses in such profusion as Jims hadn't known existed, with dear little paths twisting about among the bushes. It seemed to be a garden where no frost could blight or rough wind blow. When rain fell it must fall very gently. Past the roses one saw a green lawn, sprinkled over now with the white ghosts of dandelions, and dotted with ornamental trees. The trees grew so thickly that they almost hid the house to which the garden pertained. It was a large one of grey-black stone, with stacks of huge chimneys. Jims had no idea who lived there. He had asked Aunt Augusta and Aunt Augusta had frowned and told him it did not matter who lived there and that he must never, on any account, mention the next house or its occupant to Uncle Walter. Jims would never have thought of mentioning them to Uncle Walter. But the prohibition filled him with an unholy and unsubduable curiosity. He was devoured by the desire to find out who the folks in that tabooed house were.

And he longed to have the freedom of that garden. Jims loved gardens. There had been a garden at the little house but there was none here — nothing but an old lawn that had been fine once but was now badly run to seed. Jims had heard Uncle Walter say that he was going to have it attended to but nothing had been done yet. And meanwhile here was a beautiful garden over the wall which looked as if it should be full of children. But no children were ever in it — or anybody else apparently. And so, in spite of its beauty, it had a lonely look that hurt Jims. He wanted his Garden of Spices to be full of laughter. He pictured himself running in it with imaginary playmates — and there was a mother in it — or a big sister — or, at the least, a whole aunt who would let you hug her and would never dream of shutting you up in chilly, shadowy, horrible blue rooms.

“It seems to me,” said Jims, flattening his nose against the pane, “that I must get into that garden or bust.”

Aunt Augusta would have said icily, “We do not use such expressions, James,” but Aunt Augusta was not there to hear.

“I’m afraid the Very Handsome Cat isn’t coming to-day,” sighed Jims. Then he brightened up; the Very Handsome Cat was coming across the lawn. He was the only living thing, barring birds and butterflies, that Jims ever saw in the garden. Jims worshipped that cat. He was jet black, with white paws and dickey, and he had as much dignity as ten cats. Jims’ fingers tingled to stroke him. Jims had never been allowed to have even a kitten because Aunt Augusta had a horror of cats. And you cannot stroke gobblers!

The Very Handsome Cat came through the rose garden paths on his beautiful paws, ambled daintily around the rockery, and sat down in a shady spot under a pine tree, right where Jims could see him, through a gap in the little poplars. He looked straight up at Jims and winked. At least, Jims always believed and declared he did. And that wink said, or seemed to say, plainly:

“Be a sport. Come down here and play with me. A fig for your Aunt Augusta!”

A wild, daring, absurd idea flashed into Jims’ brain. Could he? He could! He would! He knew it would be easy. He had thought it all out many times, although until now he had never dreamed of really doing it. To unhook the window and swing it open, to step out on the pine bough and from it to another that hung over the wall and dropped nearly to the ground, to spring from it to the velvet sward under the poplars — why, it was all the work of a minute. With a careful, repressed whoop Jims ran towards the Very Handsome Cat.

The cat rose and retreated in deliberate haste; Jims ran after him. The cat dodged through the rose paths and eluded Jims’ eager hands, just keeping tantalizingly out of reach. Jims had forgotten everything except that he must catch the cat. He was full of a fearful joy, with an elfin delight running through it. He had escaped from the blue room and its ghosts; he

was in his Garden of Spices; he had got the better of mean old Aunt Augusta. But he must catch the cat.

The cat ran over the lawn and Jims pursued it through the green gloom of the thickly clustering trees. Beyond them came a pool of sunshine in which the old stone house basked like a huge grey cat itself. More garden was before it and beyond it, wonderful with blossom. Under a huge spreading beech tree in the centre of it was a little tea table; sitting by the table reading was a lady in a black dress.

The cat, having lured Jims to where he wanted him, sat down and began to lick his paws. He was quite willing to be caught now; but Jims had no longer any idea of catching him. He stood very still, looking at the lady. She did not see him then and Jims could only see her profile, which he thought very beautiful. She had wonderful ropes of blue-black hair wound around her head. She looked so sweet that Jims' heart beat. Then she lifted her head and turned her face and saw him. Jims felt something of a shock. She was not pretty after all. One side of her face was marked by a dreadful red scar. It quite spoilt her good looks, which Jims thought a great pity; but nothing could spoil the sweetness of her face or the loveliness of her peculiar soft, grey-blue eyes. Jims couldn't remember his mother and had no idea what she looked like, but the thought came into his head that he would have liked her to have eyes like that. After the first moment Jims did not mind the scar at all.

But perhaps that first moment had revealed itself in his face, for a look of pain came into the lady's eyes and, almost involuntarily it seemed, she put her hand up to hide the scar. Then she pulled it away again and sat looking at Jims half defiantly, half piteously. Jims thought she must be angry because he had chased her cat.

"I beg your pardon," he said gravely, "I didn't mean to hurt your cat. I just wanted to play with him. He is such a very handsome cat."

"But where did you come from?" said the lady. "It is so long since I saw a child in this garden," she added, as if to herself. Her voice was as sweet as her face. Jims thought he was mistaken in thinking her angry and plucked up heart of grace. Shyness was no fault of Jims.

“I came from the house over the wall,” he said. “My name is James Brander Churchill. Aunt Augusta shut me up in the blue room because I spilled my pudding at dinner. I hate to be shut up. And I was to have had a ride this afternoon — and ice cream — and maybe a movie. So I was mad. And when your Very Handsome Cat came and looked at me I just got out and climbed down.”

He looked straight at her and smiled. Jims had a very dear little smile. It seemed a pity there was no mother alive to revel in it. The lady smiled back.

“I think you did right,” she said.

“You wouldn’t shut a little boy up if you had one, would you?” said Jims.

“No — no, dear heart, I wouldn’t,” said the lady. She said it as if something hurt her horribly. She smiled again gallantly.

“Will you come here and sit down?” she added, pulling a chair out from the table.

“Thank you. I’d rather sit here,” said Jims, plumping down on the grass at her feet. “Then maybe your cat will come to me.”

The cat came over promptly and rubbed his head against Jims’ knee. Jims stroked him delightedly; how lovely his soft fur felt and his round velvety head.

“I like cats,” explained Jims, “and I have nothing but a gobbler. This is such a Very Handsome Cat. What is his name, please?”

“Black Prince. He loves me,” said the lady. “He always comes to my bed in the morning and wakes me by patting my face with his paw. He doesn’t mind my being ugly.”

She spoke with a bitterness Jims couldn’t understand.

“But you are not ugly,” he said.

“Oh, I am ugly — I am ugly,” she cried. “Just look at me — right at me. Doesn’t it hurt you to look at me?”

Jims looked at her gravely and dispassionately.

“No, it doesn’t,” he said. “Not a bit,” he added, after some further exploration of his consciousness.

Suddenly the lady laughed beautifully. A faint rosy flush came into her unscarred cheek.

“James, I believe you mean it.”

“Of course I mean it. And, if you don’t mind, please call me Jims. Nobody calls me James but Aunt Augusta. She isn’t my whole aunt. She is just Uncle Walter’s half-sister. He is my whole uncle.”

“What does he call you?” asked the lady. She looked away as she asked it.

“Oh, Jims, when he thinks about me. He doesn’t often think about me. He has too many sick children to think about. Sick children are all Uncle Walter cares about. He’s the greatest children’s doctor in the Dominion, Mr. Burroughs says. But he is a woman-hater.”

“How do you know that?”

“Oh, I heard Mr. Burroughs say it. Mr. Burroughs is my tutor, you know. I study with him from nine till one. I’m not allowed to go to the public school. I’d like to, but Uncle Walter thinks I’m not strong enough yet. I’m going next year, though, when I’m ten. I have holidays now. Mr. Burroughs always goes away the first of June.”

“How came he to tell you your uncle was a woman-hater?” persisted the lady.

“Oh, he didn’t tell me. He was talking to a friend of his. He thought I was reading my book. So I was — but I heard it all. It was more interesting than my book. Uncle Walter was engaged to a lady, long, long ago, when he was a young man. She was devilishly pretty.”

“Oh, Jims!”

“Mr. Burroughs said so. I’m only quoting,” said Jims easily. “And Uncle Walter just worshipped her. And all at once she just jilted him without a word of explanation, Mr. Burroughs said. So that is why he hates women. It isn’t any wonder, is it?”

“I suppose not,” said the lady with a sigh. “Jims, are you hungry?”

“Yes, I am. You see, the pudding was spilled. But how did you know?”

“Oh, boys always used to be hungry when I knew them long ago. I thought they hadn’t changed. I shall tell Martha to bring out something to

eat and we'll have it here under this tree. You sit here — I'll sit there. Jims, it's so long since I talked to a little boy that I'm not sure that I know how."

"You know how, all right," Jims assured her. "But what am I to call you, please?"

"My name is Miss Garland," said the lady a little hesitatingly. But she saw the name meant nothing to Jims. "I would like you to call me Miss Avery. Avery is my first name and I never hear it nowadays. Now for a jamboree! I can't offer you a movie — and I'm afraid there isn't any ice cream either. I could have had some if I'd known you were coming. But I think Martha will be able to find something good."

A very old woman, who looked at Jims with great amazement, came out to set the table. Jims thought she must be as old as Methusaleh. But he did not mind her. He ran races with Black Prince while tea was being prepared, and rolled the delighted cat over and over in the grass. And he discovered a fragrant herb-garden in a far corner and was delighted. Now it was truly a garden of spices.

"Oh, it is so beautiful here," he told Miss Avery, who sat and looked at his revels with a hungry expression in her lovely eyes. "I wish I could come often."

"Why can't you?" said Miss Avery.

The two looked at each other with sly intelligence.

"I could come whenever Aunt Augusta shuts me up in the blue room," said Jims.

"Yes," said Miss Avery. Then she laughed and held out her arms. Jims flew into them. He put his arms about her neck and kissed her scarred face.

"Oh, I wish you were my aunt," he said.

Miss Avery suddenly pushed him away. Jims was horribly afraid he had offended her. But she took his hand.

"We'll just be chums, Jims," she said. "That's really better than being relations, after all. Come and have tea."

Over that glorious tea-table they became lifelong friends. They had always known each other and always would. The Black Prince sat between

them and was fed titbits. There was such a lot of good things on the table and nobody to say "You have had enough, James." James ate until he thought he had enough. Aunt Augusta would have thought he was doomed, could she have seen him.

"I suppose I must go back," said Jims with a sigh. "It will be our supper time in half an hour and Aunt Augusta will come to take me out."

"But you'll come again?"

"Yes, the first time she shuts me up. And if she doesn't shut me up pretty soon I'll be so bad she'll have to shut me up."

"I'll always set a place for you at the tea-table after this, Jims. And when you're not here I'll pretend you are. And when you can't come here write me a letter and bring it when you do come."

"Goodbye," said Jims. He took her hand and kissed it. He had read of a young knight doing that and had always thought he would like to try it if he ever got a chance. But who could dream of kissing Aunt Augusta's hands?

"You dear, funny thing," said Miss Avery. "Have you thought of how you are to get back? Can you reach that pine bough from the ground?"

"Maybe I can jump," said Jims dubiously.

"I'm afraid not. I'll give you a stool and you can stand on it. Just leave it there for future use. Goodbye, Jims. Jims, two hours ago I didn't know there was such a person in the world as you — and now I love you — I love you."

Jims' heart filled with a great warm gush of gladness. He had always wanted to be loved. And no living creature, he felt sure, loved him, except his gobbler — and a gobbler's love is not very satisfying, though it is better than nothing. He was blissfully happy as he carried his stool across the lawn. He climbed his pine and went in at the window and curled up on the seat in a maze of delight. The blue room was more shadowy than ever but that did not matter. Over in the Garden of Spices was friendship and laughter and romance galore. The whole world was transformed for Jims.

From that time Jims lived a shamelessly double life. Whenever he was shut in the blue room he escaped to the Garden of Spices — and he was

shut in very often, for, Mr. Burroughs being away, he got into a good deal of what Aunt Augusta called mischief. Besides, it is a sad truth that Jims didn't try very hard to be good now. He thought it paid better to be bad and be shut up. To be sure there was always a fly in the ointment. He was haunted by a vague fear that Aunt Augusta might relent and come to the blue room before supper time to let him out.

"And then the fat would be in the fire," said Jims.

But he had a glorious summer and thrived so well on his new diet of love and companionship that one day Uncle Walter, with fewer sick children to think about than usual, looked at him curiously and said:

"Augusta, that boy seems to be growing much stronger. He has a good color and his eyes are getting to look more like a boy's eyes should. We'll make a man of you yet, Jims."

"He may be getting stronger but he's getting naughtier, too," said Aunt Augusta, grimly. "I am sorry to say, Walter, that he behaves very badly."

"We were all young once," said Uncle Walter indulgently.

"Were you?" asked Jims in blank amazement.

Uncle Walter laughed.

"Do you think me an antediluvian, Jims?"

"I don't know what that is. But your hair is gray and your eyes are tired," said Jims uncompromisingly.

Uncle Walter laughed again, tossed Jims a quarter, and went out.

"Your uncle is only forty-five and in his prime," said Aunt Augusta dourly.

Jims deliberately ran across the room to the window and, under pretence of looking out, knocked down a flower pot. So he was exiled to the blue room and got into his beloved Garden of Spices where Miss Avery's beautiful eyes looked love into his and the Black Prince was a jolly playmate and old Martha petted and spoiled him to her heart's content.

Jims never asked questions but he was a wide-awake chap, and, taking one thing with another, he found out a good deal about the occupants of the old stone house. Miss Avery never went anywhere and no one ever went

there. She lived all alone with two old servants, man and maid. Except these two and Jims nobody had ever seen her for twenty years. Jims didn't know why, but he thought it must be because of the scar on her face.

He never referred to it, but one day Miss Avery told him what caused it.

"I dropped a lamp and my dress caught fire and burned my face, Jims. It made me hideous. I was beautiful before that — very beautiful. Everybody said so. Come in and I will show you my picture."

She took him into her big parlor and showed him the picture hanging on the wall between the two high windows. It was of a young girl in white. She certainly was very lovely, with her roseleaf skin and laughing eyes. Jims looked at the pictured face gravely, with his hands in his pockets and his head on one side. Then he looked at Miss Avery.

"You were prettier then — yes," he said, judicially, "but I like your face ever so much better now."

"Oh, Jims, you can't," she protested.

"Yes, I do," persisted Jims. "You look kinder and — nicer now."

It was the nearest Jims could get to expressing what he felt as he looked at the picture. The young girl was beautiful, but her face was a little hard. There was pride and vanity and something of the insolence of great beauty in it. There was nothing of that in Miss Avery's face now — nothing but sweetness and tenderness, and a motherly yearning to which every fibre of Jims' small being responded. How they loved each other, those two! And how they understood each other! To love is easy, and therefore common; but to understand — how rare that is! And oh! such good times as they had! They made taffy. Jims had always longed to make taffy, but Aunt Augusta's immaculate kitchen and saucepans might not be so desecrated. They read fairy tales together. Mr. Burroughs had disapproved of fairy tales. They blew soap-bubbles out on the lawn and let them float away over the garden and the orchard like fairy balloons. They had glorious afternoon teas under the beech tree. They made ice cream themselves. Jims even slid down the bannisters when he wanted to. And he

could try out a slang word or two occasionally without anybody dying of horror. Miss Avery did not seem to mind it a bit.

At first Miss Avery always wore dark sombre dresses. But one day Jims found her in a pretty gown of pale primrose silk. It was very old and old-fashioned, but Jims did not know that. He capered round her in delight.

“You like me better in this?” she asked, wistfully.

“I like you just as well, no matter what you wear,” said Jims, “but that dress is awfully pretty.”

“Would you like me to wear bright colors, Jims?”

“You bet I would,” said Jims emphatically.

After that she always wore them — pink and primrose and blue and white; and she let Jims wreath flowers in her splendid hair. He had quite a knack of it. She never wore any jewelry except, always, a little gold ring with a design of two clasped hands.

“A friend gave that to me long ago when we were boy and girl together at school,” she told Jims once. “I never take it off, night or day. When I die it is to be buried with me.”

“You mustn’t die till I do,” said Jims in dismay.

“Oh, Jims, if we could only live together nothing else would matter,” she said hungrily. “Jims — Jims — I see so little of you really — and some day soon you’ll be going to school — and I’ll lose you.”

“I’ve got to think of some way to prevent it,” cried Jims. “I won’t have it. I won’t — I won’t.”

But his heart sank notwithstanding.

One day Jims slipped from the blue room, down the pine and across the lawn with a tearstained face.

“Aunt Augusta is going to kill my gobbler,” he sobbed in Miss Avery’s arms. “She says she isn’t going to bother with him any longer — and he’s getting old — and he’s to be killed. And that gobbler is the only friend I have in the world except you. Oh, I can’t stand it, Miss Avery.”

Next day Aunt Augusta told him the gobbler had been sold and taken away. And Jims flew into a passion of tears and protest about it and was promptly incarcerated in the blue room. A few minutes later a sobbing boy

plunged through the trees — and stopped abruptly. Miss Avery was reading under the beech and the Black Prince was snoozing on her knee — and a big, magnificent, bronze turkey was parading about on the lawn, twisting his huge fan of a tail this way and that.

“My gobbler!” cried Jims.

“Yes. Martha went to your uncle’s house and bought him. Oh, she didn’t betray you. She told Nancy Jane she wanted a gobbler and, having seen one over there, thought perhaps she could get him. See, here’s your pet, Jims, and here he shall live till he dies of old age. And I have something else for you — Edward and Martha went across the river yesterday to the Murray Kennels and got it for you.”

“Not a dog?” exclaimed Jims.

“Yes — a dear little bull pup. He shall be your very own, Jims, and I only stipulate that you reconcile the Black Prince to him.”

It was something of a task but Jims succeeded. Then followed a month of perfect happiness. At least three afternoons a week they contrived to be together. It was all too good to be true, Jims felt. Something would happen soon to spoil it. Just suppose Aunt Augusta grew tender-hearted and ceased to punish! Or suppose she suddenly discovered that he was growing too big to be shut up! Jims began to stint himself in eating lest he grew too fast. And then Aunt Augusta worried about his loss of appetite and suggested to Uncle Walter that he should be sent to the country till the hot weather was over. Jims didn’t want to go to the country now because his heart was elsewhere. He must eat again, if he grew like a weed. It was all very harassing.

Uncle Walter looked at him keenly.

“It seems to me you’re looking pretty fit, Jims. Do you want to go to the country?”

“No, please.”

“Are you happy, Jims?”

“Sometimes.”

“A boy should be happy all the time, Jims.”

“If I had a mother and someone to play with I would be.”

“I have tried to be a mother to you, Jims,” said Aunt Augusta, in an offended tone. Then she addressed Uncle Walter. “A younger woman would probably understand him better. And I feel that the care of this big place is too much for me. I would prefer to go to my own old home. If you had married long ago, as you should, Walter, James would have had a mother and some cousins to play with. I have always been of this opinion.”

Uncle Walter frowned and got up.

“Just because one woman played you false is no good reason for spoiling your life,” went on Aunt Augusta severely. “I have kept silence all these years but now I am going to speak — and speak plainly. You should marry, Walter. You are young enough yet and you owe it to your name.”

“Listen, Augusta,” said Uncle Walter sternly. “I loved a woman once. I believed she loved me. She sent me back my ring one day and with it a message saying she had ceased to care for me and bidding me never to try to look upon her face again. Well, I have obeyed her, that is all.”

“There was something strange about all that, Walter. The life she has since led proves that. So you should not let it embitter you against all women.”

“I haven’t. It’s nonsense to say I’m a woman-hater, Augusta. But that experience has robbed me of the power to care for another woman.”

“Well, this isn’t a proper conversation for a child to hear,” said Aunt Augusta, recollecting herself. “Jims, go out.”

Jims would have given one of his ears to stay and listen with the other. But he went obediently.

And then, the very next day, the dreaded something happened.

It was the first of August and very, very hot. Jims was late coming to dinner and Aunt Augusta reproved him and Jims, deliberately, and with malice aforethought, told her he thought she was a nasty old woman. He had never been saucy to Aunt Augusta before. But it was three days since he had seen Miss Avery and the Black Prince and Nip and he was desperate. Aunt Augusta crimsoned with anger and doomed Jims to an afternoon in the blue room for impertinence.

“And I shall tell your uncle when he comes home,” she added.

That rankled, for Jims didn't want Uncle Walter to think him impertinent. But he forgot all his worries as he scampered through the Garden of Spices to the beech tree. And there Jims stopped as if he had been shot. Prone on the grass under the beech tree, white and cold and still, lay his Miss Avery — dead, stone dead!

At least Jims thought she was dead. He flew into the house like a mad thing, shrieking for Martha. Nobody answered. Jims recollected, with a rush of sickening dread, that Miss Avery had told him Martha and Edward were going away that day to visit a sister. He rushed blindly across the lawn again, through the little side gate he had never passed before and down the street home. Uncle Walter was just opening the door of his car.

"Uncle Walter — come — come," sobbed Jims, clutching frantically at his hand. "Miss Avery's dead — dead — oh, come quick."

"Who is dead?"

"Miss Avery — Miss Avery Garland. She's lying on the grass over there in her garden. And I love her so — and I'll die, too — oh, Uncle Walter, come."

Uncle Walter looked as if he wanted to ask some questions, but he said nothing. With a strange face he hurried after Jims. Miss Avery was still lying there. As Uncle Walter bent over her he saw the broad red scar and started back with an exclamation.

"She is dead?" gasped Jims.

"No," said Uncle Walter, bending down again—"no, she has only fainted, Jims — overcome by the heat, I suppose. I want help. Go and call somebody."

"There's no one home here to-day," said Jims, in a spasm of joy so great that it shook him like a leaf.

"Then go home and telephone over to Mr. Loring's. Tell them I want the nurse who is there to come here for a few minutes."

Jims did his errand. Uncle Walter and the nurse carried Miss Avery into the house and then Jims went back to the blue room. He was so unhappy he didn't care where he went. He wished something would jump at him out of the bed and put an end to him. Everything was discovered

now and he would never see Miss Avery again. Jims lay very still on the window seat. He did not even cry. He had come to one of the griefs that lie too deep for tears.

“I think I must have been put under a curse at birth,” thought poor Jims.

Over at the stone house Miss Avery was lying on the couch in her room. The nurse had gone away and Dr. Walter was sitting looking at her. He leaned forward and pulled away the hand with which she was hiding the scar on her face. He looked first at the little gold ring on the hand and then at the scar.

“Don’t,” she said piteously.

“Avery — why did you do it? — why did you do it?”

“Oh, you know — you must know now, Walter.”

“Avery, did you break my heart and spoil my life — and your own — simply because your face was scarred?”

“I couldn’t bear to have you see me hideous,” she moaned. “You had been so proud of my beauty. I — I — thought you couldn’t love me any more — I couldn’t bear the thought of looking in your eyes and seeing aversion there.”

Walter Grant leaned forward.

“Look in my eyes, Avery. Do you see any aversion?”

Avery forced herself to look. What she saw covered her face with a hot blush.

“Did you think my love such a poor and superficial thing, Avery,” he said sternly, “that it must vanish because a blemish came on your fairness? Do you think that would change me? Was your own love for me so slight?”

“No — no,” she sobbed. “I have loved you every moment of my life, Walter. Oh, don’t look at me so sternly.”

“If you had even told me,” he said. “You said I was never to try to look on your face again — and they told me you had gone away. You sent me back my ring.”

“I kept the old one,” she interrupted, holding out her hand, “the first one you ever gave me — do you remember, Walter? When we were boy

and girl.”

“You robbed me of all that made life worth while, Avery. Do you wonder that I’ve been a bitter man?”

“I was wrong — I was wrong,” she sobbed. “I should have believed in you. But don’t you think I’ve paid, too? Forgive me, Walter — it’s too late to atone — but forgive me.”

“Is it too late?” he asked gravely.

She pointed to the scar.

“Could you endure seeing this opposite to you every day at your table?” she asked bitterly.

“Yes — if I could see your sweet eyes and your beloved smile with it, Avery,” he answered passionately. “Oh, Avery, it was you I loved — not your outward favor. Oh, how foolish you were — foolish and morbid! You always put too high a value on beauty, Avery. If I had dreamed of the true state of the case — if I had known you were here all these years — why I heard a rumor long ago that you had married, Avery — but if I had known I would have come to you and made you be — sensible.”

She gave a little laugh at his lame conclusion. That was so like the old Walter. Then her eyes filled with tears as he took her in his arms.

The door of the blue room opened. Jims did not look up. It was Aunt Augusta, of course — and she had heard the whole story.

“Jims, boy.”

Jims lifted his miserable eyes. It was Uncle Walter — but a different Uncle Walter — an Uncle Walter with laughing eyes and a strange radiance of youth about him.

“Poor, lonely little fellow,” said Uncle Walter unexpectedly. “Jims, would you like Miss Avery to come here — and live with us always — and be your real aunt?”

“Great snakes!” said Jims, transformed in a second. “Is there any chance of that?”

“There is a certainty, thanks to you,” said Uncle Walter. “You can go over to see her for a little while. Don’t talk her to death — she’s weak yet

— and attend to that menagerie of yours over there — she’s worrying because the bull dog and gobbler weren’t fed — and Jims—”

But Jims had swung down through the pine and was tearing across the Garden of Spices.

The Girl and the Photograph

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When I heard that Peter Austin was in Vancouver I hunted him up. I had met Peter ten years before when I had gone east to visit my father's people and had spent a few weeks with an uncle in Croyden. The Austins lived across the street from Uncle Tom, and Peter and I had struck up a friendship, although he was a hobbledehoy of awkward sixteen and I, at twenty-two, was older and wiser and more dignified than I've ever been since or ever expect to be again. Peter was a jolly little round freckled chap. He was all right when no girls were around; when they were he retired within himself like a misanthropic oyster, and was about as interesting. This was the one point upon which we always disagreed. Peter couldn't endure girls; I was devoted to them by the wholesale. The Croyden girls were pretty and vivacious. I had a score of flirtations during my brief sojourn among them.

But when I went away the face I carried in my memory was not that of any girl with whom I had walked and driven and played the game of hearts.

It was ten years ago, but I had never been quite able to forget that girl's face. Yet I had seen it but once and then only for a moment. I had gone for a solitary ramble in the woods over the river and, in a lonely little valley dim with pines, where I thought myself alone, I had come suddenly upon her, standing ankle-deep in fern on the bank of a brook, the late evening sunshine falling yellowly on her uncovered dark hair. She was very young — no more than sixteen; yet the face and eyes were already those of a woman. Such a face! Beautiful? Yes, but I thought of that afterward, when I was alone. With that face before my eyes I thought only of its purity and sweetness, of the lovely soul and rich mind looking out of the great, greyish-blue eyes which, in the dimness of the pine shadows, looked almost black. There was something in the face of that child-woman I had

never seen before and was destined never to see again in any other face. Careless boy though I was, it stirred me to the deeps. I felt that she must have been waiting forever in that pine valley for me and that, in finding her, I had found all of good that life could offer me.

I would have spoken to her, but before I could shape my greeting into words that should not seem rude or presumptuous, she had turned and gone, stepping lightly across the brook and vanishing in the maple copse beyond. For no more than ten seconds had I gazed into her face, and the soul of her, the real woman behind the fair outwardness, had looked back into my eyes; but I had never been able to forget it.

When I returned home I questioned my cousins diplomatically as to who she might be. I felt strangely reluctant to do so — it seemed in some way sacrilege; yet only by so doing could I hope to discover her. They could tell me nothing; nor did I meet her again during the remainder of my stay in Croyden, although I never went anywhere without looking for her, and haunted the pine valley daily, in the hope of seeing her again. My disappointment was so bitter that I laughed at myself.

I thought I was a fool to feel thus about a girl I had met for a moment in a chance ramble — a mere child at that, with her hair still hanging in its long glossy schoolgirl braid. But when I remembered her eyes, my wisdom forgave me.

Well, that was ten years ago; in those ten years the memory had, I must confess, grown dimmer. In our busy western life a man had not much time for sentimental recollections. Yet I had never been able to care for another woman. I wanted to; I wanted to marry and settle down. I had come to the time of life when a man wearies of drifting and begins to hanker for a calm anchorage in some snug haven of his own. But, somehow, I shirked the matter. It seemed rather easier to let things slide.

At this stage Peter came west. He was something in a bank, and was as round and jolly as ever; but he had evidently changed his attitude towards girls, for his rooms were full of their photos. They were stuck around everywhere and they were all pretty. Either Peter had excellent taste, or the Croyden photographers knew how to flatter. But there was one on the

mantel which attracted my attention especially. If the photo were to be trusted the girl was quite the prettiest I had ever seen.

“Peter, what pretty girl’s picture is this on your mantel?” I called out to Peter, who was in his bedroom, donning evening dress for some function.

“That’s my cousin, Marian Lindsay,” he answered. “She is rather nice looking, isn’t she. Lives in Croyden now — used to live up the river at Chiselhurst. Didn’t you ever chance across her when you were in Croyden?”

“No,” I said. “If I had I wouldn’t have forgotten her face.”

“Well, she’d be only a kid then, of course. She’s twenty-six now. Marian is a mighty nice girl, but she’s bound to be an old maid. She’s got notions — ideals, she calls ‘em. All the Croyden fellows have been in love with her at one time or another but they might as well have made up to a statue. Marian really hasn’t a spark of feeling or sentiment in her. Her looks are the best part of her, although she’s confoundedly clever.”

Peter spoke rather squiffily. I suspected that he had been one of the smitten swains himself. I looked at the photo for a few minutes longer, admiring it more every minute and, when I heard Peter coming out, I did an unjustifiable thing — I took that photo and put it in my pocket.

I expected Peter would make a fuss when he missed it, but that very night the house in which he lived was burned to the ground. Peter escaped with the most important of his goods and chattels, but all the counterfeit presentments of his dear divinities went up in smoke. If he ever thought particularly of Marian Lindsay’s photograph he must have supposed that it shared the fate of the others.

As for me, I propped my ill-gotten treasure up on my mantel and worshipped it for a fortnight. At the end of that time I went boldly to Peter and told him I wanted him to introduce me by letter to his dear cousin and ask her to agree to a friendly correspondence with me.

Oddly enough, I did not do this without some reluctance, in spite of the fact that I was as much in love with Marian Lindsay as it was possible to be through the medium of a picture. I thought of the girl I had seen in the pine wood and felt an inward shrinking from a step that might divide me

from her forever. But I rated myself for this nonsense. It was in the highest degree unlikely that I should ever meet the girl of the pines again. If she were still living she was probably some other man's wife. I would think no more about it.

Peter whistled when he heard what I had to say.

"Of course I'll do it, old man," he said obligingly. "But I warn you I don't think it will be much use. Marian isn't the sort of girl to open up a correspondence in such a fashion. However, I'll do the best I can for you."

"Do. Tell her I'm a respectable fellow with no violent bad habits and all that. I'm in earnest, Peter. I want to make that girl's acquaintance, and this seems the only way at present. I can't get off just now for a trip east. Explain all this, and use your cousinly influence in my behalf if you possess any."

Peter grinned.

"It's not the most graceful job in the world you are putting on me, Curtis," he said. "I don't mind owning up now that I was pretty far gone on Marian myself two years ago. It's all over now, but it was bad while it lasted. Perhaps Marian will consider your request more favourably if I put it in the light of a favour to myself. She must feel that she owes me something for wrecking my life."

Peter grinned again and looked at the one photo he had contrived to rescue from the fire. It was a pretty, snub-nosed little girl. She would never have consoled me for the loss of Marian Lindsay, but every man to his taste.

In due time Peter sought me out to give me his cousin's answer.

"Congratulations, Curtis. You've out-Caesared Caesar. You've conquered without even going and seeing. Marian agrees to a friendly correspondence with you. I am amazed, I admit — even though I did paint you up as a sort of Sir Galahad and Lancelot combined. I'm not used to seeing proud Marian do stunts like that, and it rather takes my breath."

I wrote to Marian Lindsay after one farewell dream of the girl under the pines. When Marian's letters began to come regularly I forgot the other one altogether.

Such letters — such witty, sparkling, clever, womanly, delightful letters! They completed the conquest her picture had begun. Before we had corresponded six months I was besottedly in love with this woman whom I had never seen. Finally, I wrote and told her so, and I asked her to be my wife.

A fortnight later her answer came. She said frankly that she believed she had learned to care for me during our correspondence, but that she thought we should meet in person, before coming to any definite understanding. Could I not arrange to visit Croyden in the summer? Until then we would better continue on our present footing.

I agreed to this, but I considered myself practically engaged, with the personal meeting merely to be regarded as a sop to the Cerberus of conventionality. I permitted myself to use a decidedly lover-like tone in my letters henceforth, and I hailed it as a favourable omen that I was not rebuked for this, although Marian's own letters still retained their pleasant, simple friendliness.

Peter had at first tormented me mercilessly about the affair, but when he saw I did not like his chaff he stopped it. Peter was always a good fellow. He realized that I regarded the matter seriously, and he saw me off when I left for the east with a grin tempered by honest sympathy and understanding.

"Good luck to you," he said. "If you win Marian Lindsay you'll win a pearl among women. I haven't been able to grasp her taking to you in this fashion, though. It's so unlike Marian. But, since she undoubtedly has, you are a lucky man."

I arrived in Croyden at dusk and went to Uncle Tom's. There I found them busy with preparations for a party to be given that night in honour of a girl friend who was visiting my cousin Edna. I was secretly annoyed, for I wanted to hasten at once to Marian. But I couldn't decently get away, and on second thoughts I was consoled by the reflection that she would probably come to the party. I knew she belonged to the same social set as Uncle Tom's girls. I should, however, have preferred our meeting to have been under different circumstances.

From my stand behind the palms in a corner I eagerly scanned the guests as they arrived. Suddenly my heart gave a bound. Marian Lindsay had just come in.

I recognized her at once from her photograph. It had not flattered her in the least; indeed, it had not done her justice, for her exquisite colouring of hair and complexion were quite lost in it. She was, moreover, gowned with a taste and smartness eminently admirable in the future Mrs. Eric Curtis. I felt a thrill of proprietary pride as I stepped out from behind the palms. She was talking to Aunt Grace; but her eyes fell on me. I expected a little start of recognition, for I had sent her an excellent photograph of myself; but her gaze was one of blankest unconsciousness.

I felt something like disappointment at her non-recognition, but I consoled myself by the reflection that people often fail to recognize other people whom they have seen only in photographs, no matter how good the likeness may be. I waylaid Edna, who was passing at that time, and said, "Edna I want you to introduce me to the girl who is talking to your mother."

Edna laughed.

"So you have succumbed at first sight to our Croyden beauty? Of course I'll introduce you, but I warn you beforehand that she is the most incorrigible flirt in Croyden or out of it. So take care."

It jarred on me to hear Marian called a flirt. It seemed so out of keeping with her letters and the womanly delicacy and fineness revealed in them. But I reflected that women sometimes find it hard to forgive another woman who absorbs more than her share of lovers, and generally take their revenge by dubbing her a flirt, whether she deserves the name or not.

We had crossed the room during this reflection. Marian turned and stood before us, smiling at Edna, but evincing no recognition whatever of myself. It is a piquant experience to find yourself awaiting an introduction to a girl to whom you are virtually engaged.

"Dorothy dear," said Edna, "this is my cousin, Mr. Curtis, from Vancouver. Eric, this is Miss Armstrong."

I suppose I bowed. Habit carries us mechanically through many impossible situations. I don't know what I looked like or what I said, if I said anything. I don't suppose I betrayed my dire confusion, for Edna went off unconcernedly without another glance at me.

Dorothy Armstrong! Gracious powers — who — where — why? If this girl was Dorothy Armstrong who was Marian Lindsay? To whom was I engaged? There was some awful mistake somewhere, for it could not be possible that there were two girls in Croyden who looked exactly like the photograph reposing in my valise at that very moment. I stammered like a schoolboy.

"I — oh — I — your face seems familiar to me, Miss Armstrong. I — I — think I must have seen your photograph somewhere."

"Probably in Peter Austin's collection," smiled Miss Armstrong. "He had one of mine before he was burned out. How is he?"

"Peter? Oh, he's well," I replied vaguely. I was thinking a hundred words to the second, but my thoughts arrived nowhere. I was staring at Miss Armstrong like a man bewitched. She must have thought me a veritable booby. "Oh, by the way — can you tell me — do you know a Miss Lindsay in Croyden?"

Miss Armstrong looked surprised and a little bored. Evidently she was not used to having newly introduced young men inquiring about another girl.

"Marian Lindsay? Oh, yes."

"Is she here tonight?" I said.

"No, Marian is not going to parties just now, owing to the recent death of her aunt, who lived with them."

"Does she — oh — does she look like you at all?" I inquired idiotically.

Amusement glimmered but over Miss Armstrong's boredom. She probably concluded that I was some harmless lunatic.

"Like me? Not at all. There couldn't be two people more dissimilar. Marian is quite dark. I am fair. And our features are altogether unlike. Why, good evening, Jack. Yes, I believe I did promise you this dance."

She bowed to me and skimmed away with Jack. I saw Aunt Grace bearing down upon me and fled incontinently. In my own room I flung myself on a chair and tried to think the matter out. Where did the mistake come in? How had it happened? I shut my eyes and conjured up the vision of Peter's room that day. I remembered vaguely that, when I had picked up Dorothy Armstrong's picture, I had noticed another photograph that had fallen face downward beside it. That must have been Marian Lindsay's, and Peter had thought I meant it.

And now what a position I was in! I was conscious of bitter disappointment. I had fallen in love with Dorothy Armstrong's photograph. As far as external semblance goes it was she whom I loved. I was practically engaged to another woman — a woman who, in spite of our correspondence, seemed to me now, in the shock of this discovery, a stranger. It was useless to tell myself that it was the mind and soul revealed in those letters that I loved, and that that mind and soul were Marian Lindsay's. It was useless to remember that Peter had said she was pretty. Exteriorly, she was a stranger to me; hers was not the face which had risen before me for nearly a year as the face of the woman I loved. Was ever unlucky wretch in such a predicament before?

Well, there was only one thing to do. I must stand by my word. Marian Lindsay was the woman I had asked to marry me, whose answer I must shortly go to receive. If that answer were "yes" I must accept the situation and banish all thought of Dorothy Armstrong's pretty face.

Next evening at sunset I went to "Glenwood," the Lindsay place. Doubtless, an eager lover might have gone earlier, but an eager lover I certainly was not. Probably Marian was expecting me and had given orders concerning me, for the maid who came to the door conveyed me to a little room behind the stairs — a room which, as I felt as soon as I entered it, was a woman's pet domain. In its books and pictures and flowers it spoke eloquently of dainty femininity. Somehow, it suited the letters. I did not feel quite so much the stranger as I had felt. Nevertheless, when I heard a light footfall on the stairs my heart beat painfully. I stood up and turned to the door, but I could not look up. The footsteps came nearer; I knew that a

white hand swept aside the portière at the entrance; I knew that she had entered the room and was standing before me.

With an effort I raised my eyes and looked at her. She stood, tall and gracious, in a ruby splendour of sunset falling through the window beside her. The light quivered like living radiance over a dark proud head, a white throat, and a face before whose perfect loveliness the memory of Dorothy Armstrong's laughing prettiness faded like a star in the sunrise, nevermore in the fullness of the day to be remembered. Yet it was not of her beauty I thought as I stood spellbound before her. I seemed to see a dim little valley full of whispering pines, and a girl standing under their shadows, looking at me with the same great, greyish-blue eyes which gazed upon me now from Marian Lindsay's face — the same face, matured into gracious womanhood, that I had seen ten years ago; and loved — aye, loved — ever since. I took an unsteady step forward.

"Marian?" I said.

When I got home that night I burned Dorothy Armstrong's photograph. The next day I went to my cousin Tom, who owns the fashionable studio of Croyden and, binding him over to secrecy, sought one of Marian's latest photographs from him. It is the only secret I have ever kept from my wife.

Before we were married Marian told me something.

"I always remembered you as you looked that day under the pines," she said. "I was only a child, but I think I loved you then and ever afterwards. When I dreamed my girl's dream of love your face rose up before me. I had the advantage of you that I knew your name — I had heard of you. When Peter wrote about you I knew who you were. That was why I agreed to correspond with you. I was afraid it was a forward — an unwomanly thing to do. But it seemed my chance for happiness and I took it. I am glad I did."

I did not answer in words, but lovers will know how I did answer.

The Gossip of Valley View

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It was the first of April, and Julius Barrett, aged fourteen, perched on his father's gatepost, watched ruefully the low descending sun, and counted that day lost. He had not succeeded in "fooling" a single person, although he had tried repeatedly. One and all, old and young, of his intended victims had been too wary for Julius. Hence, Julius was disgusted and ready for anything in the way of a stratagem or a spoil.

The Barrett gatepost topped the highest hill in Valley View. Julius could see the entire settlement, from "Young" Thomas Everett's farm, a mile to the west, to Adelia Williams's weather-grey little house on a moonrise slope to the east. He was gazing moodily down the muddy road when Dan Chester, homeward bound from the post office, came riding sloppily along on his grey mare and pulled up by the Barrett gate to hand a paper to Julius.

Dan was a young man who took life and himself very seriously. He seldom smiled, never joked, and had a Washingtonian reputation for veracity. Dan had never told a conscious falsehood in his life; he never even exaggerated.

Julius, beholding Dan's solemn face, was seized with a perfectly irresistible desire to "fool" him. At the same moment his eye caught the dazzling reflection of the setting sun on the windows of Adelia Williams's house, and he had an inspiration little short of diabolical. "Have you heard the news, Dan?" he asked.

"No, what is it?" asked Dan.

"I dunno's I ought to tell it," said Julius reflectively. "It's kind of a family affair, but then Adelia didn't say not to, and anyway it'll be all over the place soon. So I'll tell you, Dan, if you'll promise never to tell who told you. Adelia Williams and Young Thomas Everett are going to be married."

Julius delivered himself of this tremendous lie with a transparently earnest countenance. Yet Dan, credulous as he was, could not believe it all at once.

“Git out,” he said.

“It’s true, ‘pon my word,” protested Julius. “Adelia was up last night and told Ma all about it. Ma’s her cousin, you know. The wedding is to be in June, and Adelia asked Ma to help her get her quilts and things ready.”

Julius reeled all this off so glibly that Dan finally believed the story, despite the fact that the people thus coupled together in prospective matrimony were the very last people in Valley View who could have been expected to marry each other. Young Thomas was a confirmed bachelor of fifty, and Adelia Williams was forty; they were not supposed to be even well acquainted, as the Everetts and the Williamses had never been very friendly, although no open feud existed between them.

Nevertheless, in view of Julius’s circumstantial statements, the amazing news must be true, and Dan was instantly agog to carry it further. Julius watched Dan and the grey mare out of sight, fairly writhing with ecstasy. Oh, but Dan had been easy! The story would be all over Valley View in twenty-four hours. Julius laughed until he came near to falling off the gatepost.

At this point Julius and Danny drop out of our story, and Young Thomas enters.

It was two days later when Young Thomas heard that he was to be married to Adelia Williams in June. Eben Clark, the blacksmith, told him when he went to the forge to get his horse shod. Young Thomas laughed his big jolly laugh. Valley View gossip had been marrying him off for the last thirty years, although never before to Adelia Williams.

“It’s news to me,” he said tolerantly.

Eben grinned broadly. “Ah, you can’t bluff it off like that, Tom,” he said. “The news came too straight this time. Well, I was glad to hear it, although I was mighty surprised. I never thought of you and Adelia. But she’s a fine little woman and will make you a capital wife.”

Young Thomas grunted and drove away. He had a good deal of business to do that day, involving calls at various places — the store for molasses, the mill for flour, Jim Bentley's for seed grain, the doctor's for toothache drops for his housekeeper, the post office for mail — and at each and every place he was joked about his approaching marriage. In the end it rather annoyed Young Thomas, He drove home at last in what was for him something of a temper. How on earth had that fool story started? With such detailed circumstantiality of rugs and quilts, too? Adelia Williams must be going to marry somebody, and the Valley View gossips, unable to locate the man, had guessed Young Thomas.

When he reached home, tired, mud-bespattered, and hungry, his housekeeper, who was also his hired man's wife, asked him if it was true that he was going to be married. Young Thomas, taking in at a glance the ill-prepared, half-cold supper on the table, felt more annoyed than ever, and said it wasn't, with a strong expression — not quite an oath — for Young Thomas never swore, unless swearing be as much a matter of intonation as of words.

Mrs. Dunn sighed, patted her swelled face, and said she was sorry; she had hoped it was true, for her man had decided to go west. They were to go in a month's time. Young Thomas sat down to his supper with the prospect of having to look up another housekeeper and hired man before planting to destroy his appetite.

Next day, three people who came to see Young Thomas on business congratulated him on his approaching marriage. Young Thomas, who had recovered his usual good humour, merely laughed. There was no use in being too earnest in denial, he thought. He knew that his unusual fit of petulance with his housekeeper had only convinced her that the story was true. It would die away in time, as other similar stories had died, he thought. Valley View gossip was imaginative.

Young Thomas looked rather serious, however, when the minister and his wife called that evening and referred to the report. Young Thomas gravely said that it was unfounded. The minister looked graver still and said he was sorry — he had hoped it was true. His wife glanced

significantly about Young Thomas's big, untidy sitting-room, where there were cobwebs on the ceiling and fluff in the corners and dust on the mop-board, and said nothing, but looked volumes.

"Dang it all," said Young Thomas, as they drove away, "they'll marry me yet in spite of myself."

The gossip made him think about Adelia Williams. He had never thought about her before; he was barely acquainted with her. Now he remembered that she was a plump, jolly-looking little woman, noted for being a good housekeeper. Then Young Thomas groaned, remembering that he must start out looking for a housekeeper soon; and housekeepers were not easily found, as Young Thomas had discovered several times since his mother's death ten years before.

Next Sunday in church Young Thomas looked at Adelia Williams. He caught Adelia looking at him. Adelia blushed and looked guiltily away.

"Dang it all," reflected Young Thomas, forgetting that he was in church. "I suppose she has heard that fool story too. I'd like to know the person who started it; man or woman, I'd punch their head."

Nevertheless, Young Thomas went on looking at Adelia by fits and starts, although he did not again catch Adelia looking at him. He noticed that she had round rosy cheeks and twinkling brown eyes. She did not look like an old maid, and Young Thomas wondered that she had been allowed to become one. Sarah Barnett, now, to whom report had married him a year ago, looked like a dried sour apple.

For the next four weeks the story haunted Young Thomas like a spectre. Down it would not. Everywhere he went he was joked about it. It gathered fresh detail every week. Adelia was getting her clothes ready; she was to be married in seal-brown cashmere; Vinnie Lawrence at Valley Centre was making it for her; she had got a new hat with a long ostrich plume; some said white, some said grey.

Young Thomas kept wondering who the man could be, for he was convinced that Adelia was going to marry somebody. More than that, once he caught himself wondering enviously. Adelia was a nice-looking woman, and he had not so far heard of any probable housekeeper.

“Dang it all,” said Young Thomas to himself in desperation. “I wouldn’t care if it was true.”

His married sister from Carlisle heard the story and came over to investigate. Young Thomas denied it shortly, and his sister scolded. She had devoutly hoped it was true, she said, and it would have been a great weight off her mind.

“This house is in a disgraceful condition, Thomas,” she said severely. “It would break Mother’s heart if she could rise out of her grave to see it. And Adelia Williams is a perfect housekeeper.”

“You didn’t use to think so much of the Williams crowd,” said Young Thomas drily.

“Oh, some of them don’t amount to much,” admitted Maria, “but Adelia is all right.”

Catching sight of an odd look on Young Thomas’s face, she added hastily, “Thomas Everett, I believe it’s true after all. Now, is it? For mercy’s sake don’t be so sly. You might tell me, your own and only sister, if it is.”

“Oh, shut up,” was Young Thomas’s unfeeling reply to his own and only sister.

Young Thomas told himself that night that Valley View gossip would drive him into an asylum yet if it didn’t let up. He also wondered if Adelia was as much persecuted as himself. No doubt she was. He never could catch her eye in church now, but he would have been surprised had he realized how many times he tried to.

The climax came the third week in May, when Young Thomas, who had been keeping house for himself for three weeks, received a letter and an express box from his cousin, Charles Everett, out in Manitoba. Charles and he had been chums in their boyhood. They corresponded occasionally still, although it was twenty years since Charles had gone west.

The letter was to congratulate Young Thomas on his approaching marriage. Charles had heard of it through some Valley View correspondents of his wife. He was much pleased; he had always liked Adelia, he said — had been an old beau of hers, in fact. Thomas might

give her a kiss for him if he liked. He forwarded a wedding present by express and hoped they would be very happy, *etc.*

The present was an elaborate hatrack of polished buffalo horns, mounted on red plush, with an inset mirror. Young Thomas set it up on the kitchen table and scowled moodily at his reflection in the mirror. If wedding presents were beginning to come, it was high time something was done. The matter was past being a joke. This affair of the present would certainly get out — things always got out in Valley View, dang it all — and he would never hear the last of it.

“I’ll marry,” said Young Thomas decisively. “If Adelia Williams won’t have me, I’ll marry the first woman who will, if it’s Sarah Barnett herself.”

Young Thomas shaved and put on his Sunday suit. As soon as it was safely dark, he hied him away to Adelia Williams. He felt very doubtful about his reception, but the remembrance of the twinkle in Adelia’s brown eyes comforted him. She looked like a woman who had a sense of humour; she might not take him, but she would not feel offended or insulted because he asked her.

“Dang it all, though, I hope she will take me,” said Young Thomas. “I’m in for getting married now and no mistake. And I can’t get Adelia out of my head. I’ve been thinking of her steady ever since that confounded gossip began.”

When he knocked at Adelia’s door he discovered that his face was wet with perspiration. Adelia opened the door and started when she saw him; then she turned very red and stiffly asked him in. Young Thomas went in and sat down, wondering if all men felt so horribly uncomfortable when they went courting.

Adelia stooped low over the woodbox to put a stick of wood in the stove, for the May evening was chilly. Her shoulders were shaking; the shaking grew worse; suddenly Adelia laughed hysterically and, sitting down on the woodbox, continued to laugh. Young Thomas eyed her with a friendly grin.

“Oh, do excuse me,” gasped poor Adelia, wiping tears from her eyes. “This is — dreadful — I didn’t mean to laugh — I don’t know why I’m laughing — but — I — can’t help it.”

She laughed helplessly again. Young Thomas laughed too. His embarrassment vanished in the mellowness of that laughter. Presently Adelia composed herself and removed from the woodbox to a chair, but there was still a suspicious twitching about the corners of her mouth.

“I suppose,” said Young Thomas, determined to have it over with before the ice could form again, “I suppose, Adelia, you’ve heard the story that’s been going about you and me of late?”

Adelia nodded. “I’ve been persecuted to the verge of insanity with it,” she said. “Every soul I’ve seen has tormented me about it, and people have written me about it. I’ve denied it till I was black in the face, but nobody believed me. I can’t find out how it started. I hope you believe, Mr. Everett, that it couldn’t possibly have arisen from anything I said. I’ve felt dreadfully worried for fear you might think it did. I heard that my cousin, Lucilla Barrett, said I told her, but Lucilla vowed to me that she never said such a thing or even dreamed of it. I’ve felt dreadful bad over the whole affair. I even gave up the idea of making a quilt after a lovely new pattern I’ve got because they made such a talk about my brown dress.”

“I’ve been kind of supposing that you must be going to marry somebody, and folks just guessed it was me,” said Young Thomas — he said it anxiously.

“No, I’m not going to be married to anybody,” said Adelia with a laugh, taking up her knitting.

“I’m glad of that,” said Young Thomas gravely. “I mean,” he hastened to add, seeing the look of astonishment on Adelia’s face, “that I’m glad there isn’t any other man because — because I want you myself, Adelia.”

Adelia laid down her knitting and blushed crimson. But she looked at Young Thomas squarely and reproachfully.

“You needn’t think you are bound to say that because of the gossip, Mr. Everett,” she said quietly.

“Oh, I don’t,” said Young Thomas earnestly. “But the truth is, the story set me to thinking about you, and from that I got to wishing it was true — honest, I did — I couldn’t get you out of my head, and at last I didn’t want to. It just seemed to me that you were the very woman for me if you’d only take me. Will you, Adelia? I’ve got a good farm and house, and I’ll try to make you happy.”

It was not a very romantic wooing, perhaps. But Adelia was forty and had never been a romantic little body even in the heyday of youth. She was a practical woman, and Young Thomas was a fine looking man of his age with abundance of worldly goods. Besides, she liked him, and the gossip had made her think a good deal about him of late. Indeed, in a moment of candour she had owned to herself the very last Sunday in church that she wouldn’t mind if the story were true.

“I’ll — I’ll think of it,” she said.

This was practically an acceptance, and Young Thomas so understood it. Without loss of time he crossed the kitchen, sat down beside Adelia, and put his arms about her plump waist.

“Here’s a kiss Charlie sent me to give you,” he said, giving it.

The Letters

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Just before the letter was brought to me that evening I was watching the red November sunset from the library window. It was a stormy, unrestful sunset, gleaming angrily through the dark fir boughs that were now and again tossed suddenly and distressfully in a fitful gust of wind. Below, in the garden, it was quite dark, and I could only see dimly the dead leaves that were whirling and dancing uncannily over the roseless paths. The poor dead leaves — yet not quite dead! There was still enough unquiet life left in them to make them restless and forlorn. They hearkened yet to every call of the wind, who cared for them no longer but only played freakishly with them and broke their rest. I felt sorry for the leaves as I watched them in that dull, weird twilight, and angry — in a petulant fashion that almost made me laugh — with the wind that would not leave them in peace. Why should they — and I — be vexed with these transient breaths of desire for a life that had passed us by?

I was in the grip of a bitter loneliness that evening — so bitter and so insistent that I felt I could not face the future at all, even with such poor fragments of courage as I had gathered about me after Father's death, hoping that they would, at least, suffice for my endurance, if not for my content. But now they fell away from me at sight of the emptiness of life.

The emptiness! Ah, it was from that I shrank. I could have faced pain and anxiety and heartbreak undauntedly, but I could not face that terrible, yawning, barren emptiness. I put my hands over my eyes to shut it out, but it pressed in upon my consciousness insistently, and would not be ignored longer.

The moment when a woman realizes that she has nothing to live for — neither love nor purpose nor duty — holds for her the bitterness of death. She is a brave woman indeed who can look upon such a prospect

unquailingly, and I was not brave. I was weak and timid. Had not Father often laughed mockingly at me because of it?

It was three weeks since Father had died — my proud, handsome, unrelenting old father, whom I had loved so intensely and who had never loved me. I had always accepted this fact unresentfully and unquestioningly, but it had steeped my whole life in its tincture of bitterness. Father had never forgiven me for two things. I had cost my mother's life and I was not a son to perpetuate the old name and carry on the family feud with the Frasers.

I was a very lonely child, with no playmates or companions of any sort, and my girlhood was lonelier still. The only passion in my life was my love for my father. I would have done and suffered anything to win his affection in return. But all I ever did win was an amused tolerance — and I was grateful for that — almost content. It was much to have something to love and be permitted to love it.

If I had been a beautiful and spirited girl I think Father might have loved me, but I was neither. At first I did not think or care about my lack of beauty; then one day I was alone in the beech wood; I was trying to disentangle my skirt which had caught on some thorny underbrush. A young man came around the curve of the path and, seeing my predicament, bent with murmured apology to help me. He had to kneel to do it, and I saw a ray of sunshine falling through the beeches above us strike like a lance of light athwart the thick brown hair that pushed out from under his cap. Before I thought I put out my hand and touched it softly, then I blushed crimson with shame over what I had done. But he did not know — he never knew.

When he had released my dress he rose and our eyes met for a moment as I timidly thanked him. I saw that he was good to look upon — tall and straight, with broad, stalwart shoulders and a dark, clean-cut face. He had a firm, sensitive mouth and kindly, pleasant, dark blue eyes. I never quite forgot the look in those eyes. It made my heart beat strangely, but it was only for a moment, and the next he had lifted his cap and passed on.

As I went homeward I wondered who he might be. He must be a stranger, I thought — probably a visitor in some of our few neighbouring families. I wondered too if I should meet him again, and found the thought very pleasant.

I knew few men and they were all old, like Father, or at least elderly. They were the only people who ever came to our house, and they either teased me or overlooked me. None of them was at all like this young man I had met in the beech wood, nor ever could have been, I thought.

When I reached home I stopped before the big mirror that hung in the hall and did what I had never done before in my life — looked at myself very scrutinizingly and wondered if I had any beauty. I could only sorrowfully conclude that I had not — I was so slight and pale, and the thick black hair and dark eyes that might have been pretty in another woman seemed only to accentuate the lack of spirit and regularity in my features. I was still standing there, gazing wistfully at my mirrored face with a strange sinking of spirit, when Father came through the hall, his riding whip in his hand. Seeing me, he laughed.

“Don’t waste your time gazing into mirrors, Isobel,” he said carelessly. “That might have been excusable in former ladies of Shirley whose beauty might pardon and even adorn vanity, but with you it is only absurd. The needle and the cookbook are all that you need concern yourself with.”

I was accustomed to such speeches from him, but they had never hurt me so cruelly before. At that moment I would have given all the world only to be beautiful.

The next Sunday I looked across the church, and in the Fraser pew I saw the young man I had met in the wood. He was looking at me with his arms folded over his breast and on his brow a little frown that seemed somehow indicative of pain and surprise. I felt a miserable sense of disappointment. If he were the Frasers’ guest I could not expect to meet him again. Father hated the Frasers, all the Shirleys hated them; it was an old feud, bitter and lasting, that had been as much our inheritance for generations as land and money. The only thing Father had ever taken pains to teach me was detestation of the Frasers and all their works. I accepted

this as I accepted all the other traditions of my race. I thought it did not matter much. The Frasers were not likely to come my way, and hatred was a good satisfying passion in the lack of all else. I think I rather took a pride in hating them as became my blood.

I did not look at the Fraser pew again, but outside, under the elms, we met him, standing in the dappling light and shadow. He looked very handsome and a little sad. I could not help glancing back over my shoulder as Father and I walked to the gate, and I saw him looking after us with that little frown which again made me think something had hurt him. I liked better the smile he had worn in the beech wood, but I had an odd liking for the frown too, and I think I had a foolish longing to go back to him, put up my fingers and smooth it away.

“So Alan Fraser has come home,” said my father.

“Alan Fraser?” I repeated, with a strange, horrible feeling of coldness and chill coming over me like a shadow on a bright day. Alan Fraser, the son of old Malcolm Fraser of Glenellyn! The son of our enemy! He had been living since childhood with his dead mother’s people, so much I knew. And this was he! Something stung and smarted in my eyes. I think the sting and smart might have turned to tears if Father had not been looking down at me.

“Yes. Didn’t you see him in his father’s pew? But I forgot. You are too demure to be looking at the young men in preaching — or out of it, Isobel. You are a model young woman. Odd that the men never like the model young women! Curse old Malcolm Fraser! What right has he to have a son like that when I have nothing but a puling girl? Remember, Isobel, that if you ever meet that young man you are not to speak to or look at him, or even intimate that you are aware of his existence. He is your enemy and the enemy of your race. You will show him that you realize this.”

Of course that ended it all — though just what there had been to end would have been hard to say. Not long afterwards I met Alan Fraser again, when I was out for a canter on my mare. He was strolling through the beech wood with a couple of big collies, and he stopped short as I drew near. I had to do it — Father had decreed — my Shirley pride demanded

— that I should do it. I looked him unseeingly in the face, struck my mare a blow with my whip, and dashed past him. I even felt angry, I think, that a Fraser should have the power to make me feel so badly in doing my duty.

After that I had forgotten. There was nothing to make me remember, for I never met Alan Fraser again. The years slipped by, one by one, so like each other in their colourlessness that I forgot to take account of them. I only knew that I grew older and that it did not matter since there was nobody to care. One day they brought Father in, white-lipped and groaning. His mare had thrown him, and he was never to walk again, although he lived for five years. Those five years had been the happiest of my life. For the first time I was necessary to someone — there was something for me to do which nobody else could do so well. I was Father's nurse and companion; and I found my pleasure in tending him and amusing him, soothing his hours of pain and brightening his hours of ease. People said I "did my duty" toward him. I had never liked that word "duty," since the day I had ridden past Alan Fraser in the beech wood. I could not connect it with what I did for Father. It was my delight because I loved him. I did not mind the moods and the irritable outbursts that drove others from him.

But now he was dead, and I sat in the sullen dusk, wishing that I need not go on with life either. The loneliness of the big echoing house weighed on my spirit. I was solitary, without companionship. I looked out on the outside world where the only sign of human habitation visible to my eyes was the light twinkling out from the library window of Glenellyn on the dark fir hill two miles away. By that light I knew Alan Fraser must have returned from his long sojourn abroad, for it only shone when he was at Glenellyn. He still lived there, something of a hermit, people said; he had never married, and he cared nothing for society. His companions were books and dogs and horses; he was given to scientific researches and wrote much for the reviews; he travelled a great deal. So much I knew in a vague way. I even saw him occasionally in church, and never thought the years had changed him much, save that his face was sadder and sterner than of old and his hair had become iron-grey. People said that he had inherited

and cherished the old hatred of the Shirleys — that he was very bitter against us. I believed it. He had the face of a good hater — or lover — a man who could play with no emotion but must take it in all earnestness and intensity.

When it was quite dark the housekeeper brought in the lights and handed me a letter which, she said, a man had just brought up from the village post office. I looked at it curiously before I opened it, wondering from whom it was. It was postmarked from a city several miles away, and the firm, decided, rather peculiar handwriting was strange to me. I had no correspondents. After Father's death I had received a few perfunctory notes of condolence from distant relatives and family friends. They had hurt me cruelly, for they seemed to exhale a subtle spirit of congratulation on my being released from a long and unpleasant martyrdom of attendance on an invalid, that quite overrode the decorous phrases of conventional sympathy in which they were expressed. I hated those letters for their implied injustice. I was not thankful for my "release." I missed Father miserably and longed passionately for the very tasks and vigils that had evoked their pity.

This letter did not seem like one of those. I opened it and took out some stiff, blackly written sheets. They were undated and, turning to the last, I saw that they were unsigned. With a not unpleasant tingling of interest I sat down by my desk to read. The letter began abruptly:

You will not know by whom this is written. Do not seek to know — now or ever. It is only from behind the veil of your ignorance of my identity that I can ever write to you fully and freely as I wish to write — can say what I wish to say in words denied to a formal and conventional expression of sympathy. Dear lady, let me say to you thus what is in my heart.

I know what your sorrow is, and I think I know what your loneliness must be — the sorrow of a broken tie, the loneliness of a life thrown emptily back on itself. I know how you loved your father — how you must have loved him if those eyes and brow and mouth speak truth, for they tell of a nature divinely rich and deep, giving of its wealth and tenderness

ungrudgingly to those who are so happy as to be the objects of its affection. To such a nature bereavement must bring a depth and an agony of grief unknown to shallower souls.

I know what your father's helplessness and need of you meant to you. I know that now life must seem to you a broken and embittered thing and, knowing this, I venture to send this greeting across the gulf of strangerhood between us, telling you that my understanding sympathy is fully and freely yours, and bidding you take heart for the future, which now, it may be, looks so heartless and hopeless to you.

Believe me, dear lady, it will be neither. Courage will come to you with the kind days. You will find noble tasks to do, beautiful and gracious duties waiting along your path. The pain and suffering of the world never dies, and while it lives there will be work for such as you to do, and in the doing of it you will find comfort and strength and the highest joy of living. I believe in you. I believe you will make of your life a beautiful and worthy thing. I give you Godspeed for the years to come. Out of my own loneliness I, an unknown friend, who has never clasped your hand, send this message to you. I understand — I have always understood — and I say to you: "Be of good cheer."

To say that this strange letter was a mystery to me seems an inadequate way of stating the matter. I was completely bewildered, nor could I even guess who the writer might be, think and ponder as I might.

The letter itself implied that the writer was a stranger. The handwriting was evidently that of a man, and I knew no man who could or would have sent such a letter to me.

The very mystery stung me to interest. As for the letter itself, it brought me an uplift of hope and inspiration such as I would not have believed possible an hour earlier. It rang so truly and sincerely, and the mere thought that somewhere I had a friend who cared enough to write it, even in such odd fashion, was so sweet that I was half ashamed of the difference it made in my outlook. Sitting there, I took courage and made a compact with myself that I would justify the writer's faith in me — that I would take up my life as something to be worthily lived for all good, to

the disregard of my own selfish sorrow and shrinking. I would seek for something to do — for interests which would bind me to my fellow-creatures — for tasks which would lessen the pains and perils of humankind. An hour before, this would not have seemed to me possible; now it seemed the right and natural thing to do.

A week later another letter came. I welcomed it with an eagerness which I feared was almost childish. It was a much longer letter than the first and was written in quite a different strain. There was no apology for or explanation of the motive for writing. It was as if the letter were merely one of a permitted and established correspondence between old friends. It began with a witty, sparkling review of a new book the writer had just read, and passed from this to crisp comments on the great events, political, scientific, artistic, of the day. The whole letter was pungent, interesting, delightful — an impersonal essay on a dozen vital topics of life and thought. Only at the end was a personal note struck.

“Are you interested in these things?” ran the last paragraph. “In what is being done and suffered and attained in the great busy world? I think you must be — for I have seen you and read what is written in your face. I believe you care for these things as I do — that your being thrills to the ‘still, sad music of humanity’ — that the songs of the poets I love find an echo in your spirit and the aspirations of all struggling souls a sympathy in your heart. Believing this, I have written freely to you, taking a keen pleasure in thus revealing my thoughts and visions to one who will understand. For I too am friendless, in the sense of one standing alone, shut out from the sweet, intimate communion of feeling and opinion that may be held with the heart’s friends. Shall you have read this as a friend, I wonder — a candid, uncritical, understanding friend? Let me hope it, dear lady.”

I was expecting the third letter when it came — but not until it did come did I realize what my disappointment would have been if it had not. After that every week brought me a letter; soon those letters were the greatest interest in my life. I had given up all attempts to solve the mystery of their coming and was content to enjoy them for themselves

alone. From week to week I looked forward to them with an eagerness that I would hardly confess, even to myself.

And such letters as they were, growing longer and fuller and freer as time went on — such wise, witty, brilliant, pungent letters, stimulating all my torpid life into tingling zest! I had begun to look abroad in my small world for worthy work and found plenty to do. My unknown friend evidently kept track of my expanding efforts, for he commented and criticized, encouraged and advised freely. There was a humour in his letters that I liked; it leavened them with its sanity and reacted on me most wholesomely, counteracting many of the morbid tendencies and influences of my life. I found myself striving to live up to the writer's ideal of philosophy and ambition, as pictured, often unconsciously, in his letters.

They were an intellectual stimulant as well. To understand them fully I found it necessary to acquaint myself thoroughly with the literature and art, the science and the politics they touched upon. After every letter there was something new for me to hunt out and learn and assimilate, until my old narrow mental attitude had so broadened and deepened, sweeping out into circles of thought I had never known or imagined, that I hardly knew myself.

They had been coming for a year before I began to reply to them. I had often wished to do so — there were so many things I wanted to say and discuss, but it seemed foolish to write letters that could not be sent. One day a letter came that kindled my imagination and stirred my heart and soul so deeply that they insistently demanded answering expression. I sat down at my desk and wrote a full reply to it. Safe in the belief that the mysterious friend to whom it was written would never see it, I wrote with a perfect freedom and a total lack of self-consciousness that I could never have attained otherwise. The writing of that letter gave me a pleasure second only to that which the reading of his brought. For the first time I discovered the delight of revealing my thought unhindered by the conventions. Also, I understood better why the writer of those letters had written them. Doubtless he had enjoyed doing so and was not impelled thereto simply by a purely philanthropic wish to help me.

When my letter was finished I sealed it up and locked it away in my desk with a smile at my middle-aged folly. What, I wondered, would all my sedate, serious friends, my associates of mission and hospital committees think if they knew. Well, everybody has, or should have, a pet nonsense in her life. I did not think mine was any sillier than some others I knew, and to myself I admitted that it was very sweet. I knew if those letters ceased to come all savour would go out of my life.

After that I wrote a reply to every letter I received and kept them all locked up together. It was delightful. I wrote out all my doings and perplexities and hopes and plans and wishes — yes, and my dreams. The secret romance of it all made me look on existence with joyous, contented eyes.

Gradually a change crept over the letters I received. Without ever affording the slightest clue to the identity of their writer they grew more intimate and personal. A subtle, caressing note of tenderness breathed from them and thrilled my heart curiously. I felt as if I were being drawn into the writer's life, admitted into the most sacred recesses of his thoughts and feelings. Yet it was all done so subtly, so delicately, that I was unconscious of the change until I discovered it in reading over the older letters and comparing them with the later ones.

Finally a letter came — my first love letter, and surely never was a love letter received under stranger circumstances. It began abruptly as all the letters had begun, plunging into the middle of the writer's strain of thought without any preface. The first words drove the blood to my heart and then sent it flying hotly all over my face.

I love you. I must say it at last. Have you not guessed it before? It has trembled on my pen in every line I have written to you — yet I have never dared to shape it into words before. I know not how I dare now. I only know that I must. What a delight to write it out and know that you will read it. Tonight the mood is on me to tell it to you recklessly and lavishly, never pausing to stint or weigh words. Sweetheart, I love you — love you — love you — dear true, faithful woman soul, I love you with all the heart of a man.

Ever since I first saw you I have loved you. I can never come to tell you so in spoken words; I can only love you from afar and tell my love under the guise of impersonal friendship. It matters not to you, but it matters more than all else in life to me. I am glad that I love you, dear — glad, glad, glad.

There was much more, for it was a long letter. When I had read it I buried my burning face in my hands, trembling with happiness. This strange confession of love meant so much to me; my heart leaped forth to meet it with answering love. What mattered it that we could never meet — that I could not even guess who my lover was? Somewhere in the world was a love that was mine alone and mine wholly and mine forever. What mattered his name or his station, or the mysterious barrier between us? Spirit leaped to spirit unhindered over the fettering bounds of matter and time. I loved and was beloved. Nothing else mattered.

I wrote my answer to his letter. I wrote it fearlessly and unstintedly. Perhaps I could not have written so freely if the letter were to have been read by him; as it was, I poured out the riches of my love as fully as he had done. I kept nothing back, and across the gulf between us I vowed a faithful and enduring love in response to his.

The next day I went to town on business with my lawyers. Neither of the members of the firm was in when I called, but I was an old client, and one of the clerks showed me into the private office to wait. As I sat down my eyes fell on a folded letter lying on the table beside me. With a shock of surprise I recognized the writing. I could not be mistaken — I should have recognized it anywhere.

The letter was lying by its envelope, so folded that only the middle third of the page was visible. An irresistible impulse swept over me. Before I could reflect that I had no business to touch the letter, that perhaps it was unfair to my unknown friend to seek to discover his identity when he wished to hide it, I had turned the letter over and seen the signature.

I laid it down again and stood up, dizzy, breathless, unseeing. Like a woman in a dream I walked through the outer office and into the street. I

must have walked on for blocks before I became conscious of my surroundings. The name I had seen signed to that letter was Alan Fraser!

No doubt the reader has long ago guessed it — has wondered why I had not. The fact remains that I had not. Out of the whole world Alan Fraser was the last man whom I should have suspected to be the writer of those letters — Alan Fraser, my hereditary enemy, who, I had been told, cherished the old feud so faithfully and bitterly, and hated our very name.

And yet I now wondered at my long blindness. No one else could have written those letters — no one but him. I read them over one by one when I reached home and, now that I possessed the key, he revealed himself in every line, expression, thought. And he loved me!

I thought of the old feud and hatred; I thought of my pride and traditions. They seemed like the dust and ashes of outworn things — things to be smiled at and cast aside. I took out all the letters I had written — all except the last one — sealed them up in a parcel and directed it to Alan Fraser. Then, summoning my groom, I bade him ride to Glenellyn with it. His look of amazement almost made me laugh, but after he was gone I felt dizzy and frightened at my own daring.

When the autumn darkness came down I went to my room and dressed as the woman dresses who awaits the one man of all the world. I hardly knew what I hoped or expected, but I was all athrill with a nameless, inexplicable happiness. I admit I looked very eagerly into the mirror when I was done, and I thought that the result was not unpleasing. Beauty had never been mine, but a faint reflection of it came over me in the tremulous flush and excitement of the moment. Then the maid came up to tell me that Alan Fraser was in the library.

I went down with my cold hands tightly clasped behind me. He was standing by the library table, a tall, broad-shouldered man, with the light striking upward on his dark, sensitive face and iron-grey hair. When he saw me he came quickly forward.

“So you know — and you are not angry — your letters told me so much. I have loved you since that day in the beech wood, Isobel — Isobel.”

His eyes were kindling into mine. He held my hands in a close, impetuous clasp. His voice was infinitely caressing as he pronounced my name. I had never heard it since Father died — I had never heard it at all so musically and tenderly uttered. My ancestors might have turned in their graves just then — but it mattered not. Living love had driven out dead hatred.

“Isobel,” he went on, “there was one letter unanswered — the last.”

I went to my desk, took out the last letter I had written and gave it to him in silence. While he read it I stood in a shadowy corner and watched him, wondering if life could always be as sweet as this. When he had finished he turned to me and held out his arms. I went to them as a bird to her nest, and with his lips against mine the old feud was blotted out forever.

The Life-Book of Uncle Jesse

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Uncle Jesse! The name calls up the vision of him as I saw him so often in those two enchanted summers at Golden Gate; as I saw him the first time, when he stood in the open doorway of the little low-eaved cottage on the harbour shore, welcoming us to our new domicile with the gentle, unconscious courtesy that became him so well. A tall, ungainly figure, somewhat stooped, yet suggestive of great strength and endurance; a clean-shaven old face deeply lined and bronzed; a thick mane of iron-grey hair falling quite to his shoulders; and a pair of remarkably blue, deep-set eyes, which sometimes twinkled and sometimes dreamed, but oftener looked out seaward with a wistful question in them, as of one seeking something precious and lost. I was to learn one day what it was for which Uncle Jesse looked.

It cannot be denied that Uncle Jesse was a homely man. His spare jaws, rugged mouth, and square brow were not fashioned on the lines of beauty, but though at first sight you thought him plain you never thought anything more about it — the spirit shining through that rugged tenement beautified it so wholly.

Uncle Jesse was quite keenly aware of his lack of outward comeliness and lamented it, for he was a passionate worshipper of beauty in everything. He told Mother once that he'd rather like to be made over again and made handsome.

"Folks say I'm good," he remarked whimsically, "but I sometimes wish the Lord had made me only half as good and put the rest of it into looks. But I reckon He knew what He was about, as a good Captain should. Some of us have to be homely or the purty ones — like Miss Mary there — wouldn't show up so well."

I was not in the least pretty but Uncle Jesse was always telling me I was — and I loved him for it. He told the fib so prettily and sincerely that

he almost made me believe it for the time being, and I really think he believed it himself. All women were lovely and of good report in his eyes, because of one he had loved. The only time I ever saw Uncle Jesse really angered was when someone in his hearing cast an aspersion on the character of a shore girl. The wretched man who did it fairly cringed when Uncle Jesse turned on him with lightning of eye and thundercloud of brow. At that moment I no longer found it hard to reconcile Uncle Jesse's simple, kindly personality with the wild, adventurous life he had lived.

We went to Golden Gate in the spring. Mother's health had not been good and her doctor recommended sea air and quiet. Uncle James, when he heard it, proposed that we take possession of a small cottage at Golden Gate, to which he had recently fallen heir by the death of an old aunt who had lived in it.

"I haven't been up to see it," he said, "but it is just as Aunt Elizabeth left it and she was the pink of neatness. The key is in the possession of an old sailor living nearby — Jesse Boyd is the name, I think. I imagine you can be very comfortable in it. It is built right on the harbour shore, inside the bar, and it is within five minutes' walk of the outside shore."

Uncle James's offer fitted in very opportunely with our limp family purse, and we straightway betook ourselves to Golden Gate. We telegraphed to Jesse Boyd to have the house opened for us and, one crisp spring day, when a rollicking wind was scudding over the harbour and the dunes, whipping the water into white caps and washing the sandshore with long lines of silvery breakers, we alighted at the little station and walked the half mile to our new home, leaving our goods and chattels to be carted over in the evening by an obliging station agent's boy.

Our first glimpse of Aunt Elizabeth's cottage was a delight to soul and sense; it looked so like a big grey seashell stranded on the shore. Between it and the harbour was only a narrow strip of shingle, and behind it was a gnarled and battered fir wood where the winds were in the habit of harping all sorts of weird and haunting music. Inside, it was to prove even yet more quaint and delightful, with its low, dark-beamed ceilings and square, deep-set windows by which, whether open or shut, sea breezes entered at

their own sweet will. The view from our door was magnificent, taking in the big harbour and sweeps of purple hills beyond. The entrance of the harbour gave it its name — a deep, narrow channel between the bar of sand dunes on the one side and a steep, high, frowning red sandstone cliff on the other. We appreciated its significance the first time we saw a splendid golden sunrise flooding it, coming out of the wonderful sea and sky beyond and billowing through that narrow passage in waves of light. Truly, it was a golden gate through which one might sail to “faerie lands forlorn.”

As we went along the path to our little house we were agreeably surprised to see a blue spiral of smoke curling up from its big, square chimney, and the next moment Uncle Jesse (we were calling him Uncle Jesse half an hour after we met him, so it seems scarcely worthwhile to begin with anything else) came to the door.

“Welcome, ladies,” he said, holding out a big, hard, but scrupulously clean hand. “I thought you’d be feeling a bit tired and hungry, maybe, so when I came over to open up I put on a fire and brewed you up a cup of tea. I just delight in being neighbourly and ‘tain’t often I have the chance.”

We found that Uncle Jesse’s “cup of tea” meant a veritable spread. He had aired the little dining room, set out the table daintily with Aunt Elizabeth’s china and linen—”knowed jest where to put my hands on ‘em — often and often helped old Miss Kennedy wash ‘em. We were cronies, her and me. I miss her terrible” — and adorned it with mayflowers which, as we afterwards discovered, he had tramped several miles to gather. There was good bread and butter, “store” biscuits, a dish of tea fit for the gods on high Olympus, and a platter of the most delicious sea trout, done to a turn.

“Thought they’d be tasty after travelling,” said Uncle Jesse. “They’re fresh as trout can be, ma’am. Two hours ago they was swimming in Johnson’s pond yander. I caught ‘em — yes, ma’am. It’s about all I’m good for now, catching trout and cod occasional. But ‘tweren’t always so — not by no manner of means. I used to do other things, as you’d admit if you saw my life-book.”

I was so hungry and tired that I did not then “rise to the bait” of Uncle Jesse’s “life-book.” I simply wanted to begin on those trout. Mother insisted that Uncle Jesse sit down and help us eat the repast he had prepared, and he assented without undue coaxing.

“Thank ye kindly. ‘Twill be a real treat. I mostly has to eat my meals alone, with the reflection of my ugly old phiz in a looking glass opposite for company. ‘Tisn’t often I have the chance to sit down with two such sweet purty ladies.”

Uncle Jesse’s compliments look bald enough on paper, but he paid them with such gracious, gentle deference of tone and look that the woman who received them felt that she was being offered a queen’s gift in kingly fashion.

He broke bread with us and from that moment we were all friends together and forever. After we had eaten all we could, we sat at our table for an hour and listened to Uncle Jesse telling us stories of his life.

“If I talk too much you must jest check me,” he said seriously, but with a twinkle in his eyes. “When I do get a chance to talk to anyone I’m apt to run on terrible.”

He had been a sailor from the time he was ten years old, and some of his adventures had such a marvellous edge that I secretly wondered if Uncle Jesse were not drawing a rather long bow at our credulous expense. But in this, as I found later, I did him injustice. His tales were all literally true, and Uncle Jesse had the gift of the born storyteller, whereby “unhappy, far-off things” can be brought vividly before the hearer and made to live again in all their pristine poignancy.

Mother and I laughed and shivered over Uncle Jesse’s tales, and once we found ourselves crying. Uncle Jesse surveyed our tears with pleasure shining out through his face like an illuminating lamp.

“I like to make folks cry that way,” he remarked. “It’s a compliment. But I can’t do justice to the things I’ve seen and helped do. I’ve got ‘em all jotted down in my life-book but I haven’t got the knack of writing them out properly. If I had, I could make a great book, if I had the knack of hitting on just the right words and stringing everything together proper on

paper. But I can't. It's in this poor human critter," Uncle Jesse patted his breast sorrowfully, "but he can't get it out."

When Uncle Jesse went home that evening Mother asked him to come often to see us.

"I wonder if you'd give that invitation if you knew how likely I'd be to accept it," he remarked whimsically.

"Which is another way of saying you wonder if I meant it," smiled Mother. "I do, most heartily and sincerely."

"Then I'll come. You'll likely be pestered with me at any hour. And I'd be proud to have you drop over to visit me now and then too. I live on that point yander. Neither me nor my house is worth coming to see. It's only got one room and a loft and a stovepipe sticking out of the roof for a chimney. But I've got a few little things lying around that I picked up in the queer corners I used to be poking my nose into. Mebbe they'd interest you."

Uncle Jesse's "few little things" turned out to be the most interesting collection of curios I had ever seen. His one neat little living room was full of them — beautiful, hideous or quaint as the case might be, and almost all having some weird or exciting story attached.

Mother and I had a beautiful summer at Golden Gate. We lived the life of two children with Uncle Jesse as a playmate. Our housekeeping was of the simplest description and we spent our hours rambling along the shores, reading on the rocks or sailing over the harbour in Uncle Jesse's trim little boat. Every day we loved the simple-souled, true, manly old sailor more and more. He was as refreshing as a sea breeze, as interesting as some ancient chronicle. We never tired of listening to his stories, and his quaint remarks and comments were a continual delight to us. Uncle Jesse was one of those interesting and rare people who, in the picturesque phraseology of the shore folks, "never speak but they say something." The milk of human kindness and the wisdom of the serpent were mingled in Uncle Jesse's composition in delightful proportions.

One day he was absent all day and returned at nightfall.

“Took a tramp back yander.” “Back yander” with Uncle Jesse might mean the station hamlet or the city a hundred miles away or any place between—to carry Mr. Kimball a mess of trout. He likes one occasional and it’s all I can do for a kindness he did me once. I stayed all day to talk to him. He likes to talk to me, though he’s an eddicated man, because he’s one of the folks that’s got to talk or they’re miserable, and he finds listeners scarce ‘round here. The folks fight shy of him because they think he’s an infidel. He ain’t that far gone exactly — few men is, I reckon — but he’s what you might call a heretic. Heretics are wicked but they’re mighty interesting. It’s just that they’ve got sorter lost looking for God, being under the impression that He’s hard to find — which He ain’t, never. Most of ‘em blunder to Him after a while I guess. I don’t think listening to Mr. Kimball’s arguments is likely to do me much harm. Mind you, I believe what I was brought up to believe. It saves a vast of trouble — and back of it all, God is good. The trouble with Mr. Kimball is, he’s a leetle too clever. He thinks he’s bound to live up to his cleverness and that it’s smarter to thrash out some new way of getting to heaven than to go by the old track the common, ignorant folks is travelling. But he’ll get there sometime all right and then he’ll laugh at himself.”

Nothing ever seemed to put Uncle Jesse out or depress him in any way.

“I’ve kind of contracted a habit of enjoying things,” he remarked once, when Mother had commented on his invariable cheerfulness. “It’s got so chronic that I believe I even enjoy the disagreeable things. It’s great fun thinking they can’t last. ‘Old rheumatiz,’ I says, when it grips me hard, ‘you’ve got to stop aching sometime. The worse you are the sooner you’ll stop, perhaps. I’m bound to get the better of you in the long run, whether in the body or out of the body.’”

Uncle Jesse seldom came to our house without bringing us something, even if it were only a bunch of sweet grass.

“I favour the smell of sweet grass,” he said. “It always makes me think of my mother.”

“She was fond of it?”

“Not that I knows on. Dunno’s she ever saw any sweet grass. No, it’s because it has a kind of motherly perfume — not too young, you understand — something kind of seasoned and wholesome and dependable — just like a mother.”

Uncle Jesse was a very early riser. He seldom missed a sunrise.

“I’ve seen all kinds of sunrises come in through that there Gate,” he said dreamily one morning when I myself had made a heroic effort at early rising and joined him on the rocks halfway between his house and ours. “I’ve been all over the world and, take it all in all, I’ve never seen a finer sight than a summer sunrise out there beyant the Gate. A man can’t pick his time for dying, Mary — jest got to go when the Captain gives his sailing orders. But if I could I’d go out when the morning comes in there at the Gate. I’ve watched it a many times and thought what a thing it would be to pass out through that great white glory to whatever was waiting beyant, on a sea that ain’t mapped out on any airthly chart. I think, Mary, I’d find lost Margaret there.”

He had already told me the story of “lost Margaret,” as he always called her. He rarely spoke of her, but when he did his love for her trembled in every tone — a love that had never grown faint or forgetful. Uncle Jesse was seventy; it was fifty years since lost Margaret had fallen asleep one day in her father’s dory and drifted — as was supposed, for nothing was ever known certainly of her fate — across the harbour and out of the Gate, to perish in the black thunder squall that had come up suddenly that long-ago afternoon. But to Uncle Jesse those fifty years were but as yesterday when it is past.

“I walked the shore for months after that,” he said sadly, “looking to find her dear, sweet little body, but the sea never gave her back to me. But I’ll find her sometime. I wisht I could tell you just how she looked but I can’t. I’ve seen a fine silvery mist hanging over the Gate at sunrise that seemed like her — and then again I’ve seen a white birch in the woods back yander that made me think of her. She had pale brown hair and a little white face, and long slender fingers like yours, Mary, only browner, for she was a shore girl. Sometimes I wake up in the night and hear the sea

calling to me in the old way and it seems as if lost Margaret called in it. And when there's a storm and the waves are sobbing and moaning I hear her lamenting among them. And when they laugh on a gay day it's her laugh — lost Margaret's sweet little laugh. The sea took her from me but some day I'll find her, Mary. It can't keep us apart forever."

I had not been long at Golden Gate before I saw Uncle Jesse's "life-book," as he quaintly called it. He needed no coaxing to show it and he proudly gave it to me to read. It was an old leather-bound book filled with the record of his voyages and adventures. I thought what a veritable treasure trove it would be to a writer. Every sentence was a nugget. In itself the book had no literary merit; Uncle Jesse's charm of storytelling failed him when he came to pen and ink; he could only jot down roughly the outlines of his famous tales, and both spelling and grammar were sadly askew. But I felt that if anyone possessing the gift could take that simple record of a brave, adventurous life, reading between the bald lines the tale of dangers staunchly faced and duties manfully done, a wonderful story might be made from it. Pure comedy and thrilling tragedy were both lying hidden in Uncle Jesse's "life-book," waiting for the touch of the magician's hand to waken the laughter and grief and horror of thousands. I thought of my cousin, Robert Kennedy, who juggled with words in a masterly fashion, but complained that he found it hard to create incidents or characters. Here were both ready to his hand, but Robert was in Japan in the interests of his paper.

In the fall, when the harbour lay black and sullen under November skies, Mother and I went back to town, parting with Uncle Jesse regretfully. We wanted him to visit us in town during the winter but he shook his head.

"It's too far away, Mary. If lost Margaret called me I mightn't hear her there. I must be here when my time comes. It can't be very far off now."

I wrote often to Uncle Jesse through the winter and sent him books and magazines. He enjoyed them but he thought — and truly enough — that none of them came up to his life-book for real interest.

“If my life-book could be took and writ by someone that knowed how, it would beat them holler,” he wrote in one of his few letters to me.

In the spring we returned joyfully to Golden Gate. It was as golden as ever and the harbour as blue; the winds still rollicked as gaily and sweetly and the breakers boomed outside the bar as of yore. All was unchanged save Uncle Jesse. He had aged greatly and seemed frail and bent. After he had gone home from his first call on us, Mother cried.

“Uncle Jesse will soon be going to seek lost Margaret,” she said.

In June Robert came. I took him promptly over to see Uncle Jesse, who was very much excited when he found that Robert was a “real writing man.”

“Robert wants to hear some of your stories, Uncle Jesse,” I said. “Tell him the one about the captain who went crazy and imagined he was the Flying Dutchman.”

This was Uncle Jesse’s best story. It was a compound of humour and horror, and though I had heard it several times, I laughed as heartily and shivered as fearsomely over it as Robert did. Other tales followed; Uncle Jesse told how his vessel had been run down by a steamer, how he had been boarded by Malay pirates, how his ship had caught fire, how he had helped a political prisoner escape from a South American republic. He never said a boastful word, but it was impossible to help seeing what a hero the man had been — brave, true, resourceful, unselfish, skilful. He sat there in his poor little room and made those things live again for us. By a lift of the eyebrow, a twist of the lip, a gesture, a word, he painted some whole scene or character so that we saw it as it was.

Finally, he lent Robert his life-book. Robert sat up all night reading it and came to the breakfast table in great excitement.

“Mary, this is a wonderful book. If I could take it and garb it properly — work it up into a systematic whole and string it on the thread of Uncle Jesse’s romance of lost Margaret, it would be the novel of the year. Do you suppose he would let me do it?”

“Let you! I think he would be delighted,” I answered.

And he was. He was as excited as a schoolboy over it. At last his cherished dream was to be realized and his life-book given to the world.

“We’ll collaborate,” said Robert. “You will give the soul and I the body. Oh, we’ll write a famous book between us, Uncle Jesse. And we’ll get right to work.”

Uncle Jesse was a happy man that summer. He looked upon the little back room we gave up to Robert for a study as a sacred shrine. Robert talked everything over with Uncle Jesse but would not let him see the manuscript. “You must wait till it is published,” he said. “Then you’ll get it all at once in its best shape.”

Robert delved into the treasures of the life-book and used them freely. He dreamed and brooded over lost Margaret until she became a vivid reality to him and lived in his pages. As the book progressed it took possession of him and he worked at it with feverish eagerness. He let me read the manuscript and criticize it; and the concluding chapter of the book, which the critics later on were pleased to call idyllic, was modelled after my suggestions, so that I felt as if I had a share in it too.

It was autumn when the book was finished. Robert went back to town, but Mother and I decided to stay at Golden Gate all winter. We loved the spot and, besides, I wished to remain for Uncle Jesse’s sake. He was failing all the time, and after Robert went and the excitement of the book-making was past, he failed still more rapidly. His tramping expeditions were over and he seldom went out in his boat. Neither did he talk a great deal. He liked to come over and sit silently for hours at our seaward window, looking out wistfully toward the Gate with his swiftly whitening head leaning on his hand. The only keen interest he still had was in Robert’s book. He waited and watched impatiently for its publication.

“I want to live till I see it,” he said, “just that long — then I’ll be ready to go. He said it would be out in the spring — I must hang on till it comes, Mary.”

There were times when I doubted sadly if he would “hang on.” As the winter wore away he grew frailer and frailer. But ever he looked forward

to the coming of spring and “the book,” his book, transformed and glorified.

One day in young April the book came at last. Uncle Jesse had gone to the post office faithfully every day for a month, expecting it, but this day he was too feeble to go and I went for him. The book was there. It was called simply, *The Life-Book of Jesse Boyd*, and on the title page the names of Robert Kennedy and Jesse Boyd were printed as collaborators.

I shall never forget Uncle Jesse’s face as I handed it to him. I came away and left him reading it, oblivious to all else. All night the light burned in his window, and I looked out across the sands to it and pictured the delight of the old man poring over the printed pages whereon his own life was portrayed. I wondered how he would like the ending — the ending I had suggested. I was never to know.

After breakfast I went over to Uncle Jesse’s house, taking some little delicacy Mother had cooked for him. It was an exquisite morning, full of delicate spring tints and sounds. The harbour was sparkling and dimpling like a girl, the winds were playing hide and seek roguishly among the stunted firs, and the silver-flashing gulls were soaring over the bar. Beyond the Gate was a shining, wonderful sea.

When I reached the little house on the point I saw the lamp still burning wanly in the window. A quick alarm struck at my heart. Without waiting to knock, I lifted the latch, and entered.

Uncle Jesse was lying on the old sofa by the window, with the book clasped to his heart. His eyes were closed and on his face was a look of the most perfect peace and happiness — the look of one who has long sought and found at last.

We could not know at what hour he had died, but somehow I think he had his wish and went out when the morning came in through the Golden Gate. Out on that shining tide his spirit drifted, over the sunrise sea of pearl and silver, to the haven where lost Margaret waited beyond the storms and calms.

The Little Black Doll

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Everybody in the Marshall household was excited on the evening of the concert at the Harbour Light Hotel — everybody, even to Little Joyce, who couldn't go to the concert because there wasn't anybody else to stay with Denise. Perhaps Denise was the most excited of them all — Denise, who was slowly dying of consumption in the Marshall kitchen chamber because there was no other place in the world for her to die in, or anybody to trouble about her. Mrs. Roderick Marshall thought it very good of herself to do so much for Denise. To be sure, Denise was not much bother, and Little Joyce did most of the waiting on her.

At the tea table nothing was talked of but the concert; for was not Madame Laurin, the great French Canadian prima donna, at the hotel, and was she not going to sing? It was the opportunity of a lifetime — the Marshalls would not have missed it for anything. Stately, handsome old Grandmother Marshall was going, and Uncle Roderick and Aunt Isabella, and of course Chrissie, who was always taken everywhere because she was pretty and graceful, and everything that Little Joyce was not.

Little Joyce would have liked to go to the concert, for she was very fond of music; and, besides, she wanted to be able to tell Denise all about it. But when you are shy and homely and thin and awkward, your grandmother never takes you anywhere. At least, such was Little Joyce's belief.

Little Joyce knew quite well that Grandmother Marshall did not like her. She thought it was because she was so plain and awkward — and in part it was. Grandmother Marshall cared very little for granddaughters who did not do her credit. But Little Joyce's mother had married a poor man in the face of her family's disapproval, and then both she and her husband had been inconsiderate enough to die and leave a small orphan without a penny to support her. Grandmother Marshall fed and clothed the

child, but who could make anything of such a shy creature with no gifts or graces whatever? Grandmother Marshall had no intention of trying. Chrissie, the golden-haired and pink-cheeked, was Grandmother Marshall's pet.

Little Joyce knew this. She did not envy Chrissie but, oh, how she wished Grandmother Marshall would love her a little, too! Nobody loved her but Denise and the little black doll. And Little Joyce was beginning to understand that Denise would not be in the kitchen chamber very much longer, and the little black doll couldn't tell you she loved you — although she did, of course. Little Joyce had no doubt at all on this point.

Little Joyce sighed so deeply over this thought that Uncle Roderick smiled at her. Uncle Roderick did smile at her sometimes.

"What is the matter, Little Joyce?" he asked.

"I was thinking about my black doll," said Little Joyce timidly.

"Ah, your black doll. If Madame Laurin were to see it, she'd likely want it. She makes a hobby of collecting dolls all over the world, but I doubt if she has in her collection a doll that served to amuse a little girl four thousand years ago in the court of the Pharaohs."

"I think Joyce's black doll is very ugly," said Chrissie. "My wax doll with the yellow hair is ever so much prettier."

"My black doll isn't ugly," cried Little Joyce indignantly. She could endure to be called ugly herself, but she could not bear to have her darling black doll called ugly. In her excitement she upset her cup of tea over the tablecloth. Aunt Isabella looked angry, and Grandmother Marshall said sharply: "Joyce, leave the table. You grow more awkward and careless every day."

Little Joyce, on the verge of tears, crept away and went up the kitchen stairs to Denise to be comforted. But Denise herself had been crying. She lay on her little bed by the low window, where the glow of the sunset was coming in; her hollow cheeks were scarlet with fever.

"Oh! I want so much to hear Madame Laurin sing," she sobbed. "I feel lak I could die easier if I hear her sing just one leetle song. She is

Frenchwoman, too, and she sing all de ole French songs — de ole songs my mudder sing long ‘go. Oh! I so want to hear Madame Laurin sing.”

“But you can’t, dear Denise,” said Little Joyce very softly, stroking Denise’s hot forehead with her cool, slender hand. Little Joyce had very pretty hands, only nobody had ever noticed them. “You are not strong enough to go to the concert. I’ll sing for you, if you like. Of course, I can’t sing very well, but I’ll do my best.”

“You sing lak a sweet bird, but you are not Madame Laurin,” said Denise restlessly. “It is de great Madame I want to hear. I haf not long to live. Oh, I know, Leetle Joyce — I know what de doctor look lak — and I want to hear Madame Laurin sing ‘fore I die. I know it is impossible — but I long for it so — just one leetle song.”

Denise put her thin hands over her face and sobbed again. Little Joyce went and sat down by the window, looking out into the white birches. Her heart ached bitterly. Dear Denise was going to die soon — oh, very soon! Little Joyce, wise and knowing beyond her years, saw that. And Denise wanted to hear Madame Laurin sing. It seemed a foolish thing to think of, but Little Joyce thought hard about it; and when she had finished thinking, she got her little black doll and took it to bed with her, and there she cried herself to sleep.

At the breakfast table next morning the Marshalls talked about the concert and the wonderful Madame Laurin. Little Joyce listened in her usual silence; her crying the night before had not improved her looks any. Never, thought handsome Grandmother Marshall, had she appeared so sallow and homely. Really, Grandmother Marshall could not have the patience to look at her. She decided that she would not take Joyce driving with her and Chrissie that afternoon, as she had thought of, after all.

In the forenoon it was discovered that Denise was much worse, and the doctor was sent for. He came, and shook his head, that being really all he could do under the circumstances. When he went away, he was waylaid at the back door by a small gypsy with big, black, serious eyes and long black hair.

“Is Denise going to die?” Little Joyce asked in the blunt, straightforward fashion Grandmother Marshall found so trying.

The doctor looked at her from under his shaggy brows and decided that here was one of the people to whom you might as well tell the truth first as last, because they are bound to have it.

“Yes,” he said.

“Soon?”

“Very soon, I’m afraid. In a few days at most.”

“Thank you,” said Little Joyce gravely.

She went to her room and did something with the black doll. She did not cry, but if you could have seen her face you would have wished she would cry.

After dinner Grandmother Marshall and Chrissie drove away, and Uncle Roderick and Aunt Isabella went away, too. Little Joyce crept up to the kitchen chamber. Denise was lying in an uneasy sleep, with tear stains on her face. Then Little Joyce tiptoed down and sped away to the hotel.

She did not know just what she would say or do when she got there, but she thought hard all the way to the end of the shore road. When she came out to the shore, a lady was sitting alone on a big rock — a lady with a dark, beautiful face and wonderful eyes. Little Joyce stopped before her and looked at her meditatively. Perhaps it would be well to ask advice of this lady.

“If you please,” said Little Joyce, who was never shy with strangers, for whose opinion she didn’t care at all, “I want to see Madame Laurin at the hotel and ask her to do me a very great favour. Will you tell me the best way to go about seeing her? I shall be much obliged to you.”

“What is the favour you want to ask of Madame Laurin?” inquired the lady, smiling.

“I want to ask her if she will come and sing for Denise before she dies — before Denise dies, I mean. Denise is our French girl, and the doctor says she cannot live very long, and she wishes with all her heart to hear Madame Laurin sing. It is very bitter, you know, to be dying and want something very much and not be able to get it.”

“Do you think Madame Laurin will go?” asked the lady.

“I don’t know. I am going to offer her my little black doll. If she will not come for that, there is nothing else I can do.”

A flash of interest lighted up the lady’s brown eyes. She bent forward.

“Is it your doll you have in that box? Will you let me see it?”

Little Joyce nodded. Mutely she opened the box and took out the black doll. The lady gave an exclamation of amazed delight and almost snatched it from Little Joyce. It was a very peculiar little doll indeed, carved out of some black polished wood.

“Child, where in the world did you get this?” she cried.

“Father got it out of a grave in Egypt,” said Little Joyce. “It was buried with the mummy of a little girl who lived four thousand years ago, Uncle Roderick says. She must have loved her doll very much to have had it buried with her, mustn’t she? But she could not have loved it any more than I do.”

“And yet you are going to give it away?” said the lady, looking at her keenly.

“For Denise’s sake,” explained Little Joyce. “I would do anything for Denise because I love her and she loves me. When the only person in the world who loves you is going to die, there is nothing you would not do for her if you could. Denise was so good to me before she took sick. She used to kiss me and play with me and make little cakes for me and tell me beautiful stories.”

The lady put the little black doll back in the box. Then she stood up and held out her hand.

“Come,” she said. “I am Madame Laurin, and I shall go and sing for Denise.”

Little Joyce piloted Madame Laurin home and into the kitchen and up the back stairs to the kitchen chamber — a proceeding which would have filled Aunt Isabella with horror if she had known. But Madame Laurin did not seem to mind, and Little Joyce never thought about it at all. It was Little Joyce’s awkward, unMarshall-like fashion to go to a place by the shortest way there, even if it was up the kitchen stairs.

Madame Laurin stood in the bare little room and looked pityingly at the wasted, wistful face on the pillow.

“This is Madame Laurin, and she is going to sing for you, Denise,” whispered Little Joyce.

Denise’s face lighted up, and she clasped her hands.

“If you please,” she said faintly. “A French song, Madame — de ole French song dey sing long ‘go.’”

Then did Madame Laurin sing. Never had that kitchen chamber been so filled with glorious melody. Song after song she sang — the old folklore songs of the habitant, the songs perhaps that Evangeline listened to in her childhood.

Little Joyce knelt by the bed, her eyes on the singer like one entranced. Denise lay with her face full of joy and rapture — such joy and rapture! Little Joyce did not regret the sacrifice of her black doll — never could regret it, as long as she remembered Denise’s look.

“T’ank you, Madame,” said Denise brokenly, when Madame ceased. “Dat was so beautiful — de angel, dey cannot sing more sweet. I love music so much, Madame. Leetle Joyce, she sing to me often and often — she sing sweet, but not lak you — oh, not lak you.”

“Little Joyce must sing for me,” said Madame, smiling, as she sat down by the window. “I always like to hear fresh, childish voices. Will you, Little Joyce?”

“Oh, yes.” Little Joyce was quite unembarrassed and perfectly willing to do anything she could for this wonderful woman who had brought that look to Denise’s face. “I will sing as well as I can for you. Of course, I can’t sing very well and I don’t know anything but hymns. I always sing hymns for Denise, although she is a Catholic and the hymns are Protestant. But her priest told her it was all right, because all music was of God. Denise’s priest is a very nice man, and I like him. He thought my little black doll — your little black doll — was splendid. I’ll sing ‘Lead, Kindly Light.’ That is Denise’s favourite hymn.”

Then Little Joyce, slipping her hand into Denise’s, began to sing. At the first note Madame Laurin, who had been gazing out of the window

with a rather listless smile, turned quickly and looked at Little Joyce with amazed eyes. Delight followed amazement, and when Little Joyce had finished, the great Madame rose impulsively, her face and eyes glowing, stepped swiftly to Little Joyce and took the thin dark face between her gemmed hands.

“Child, do you know what a wonderful voice you have — what a marvellous voice? It is — it is — I never heard such a voice in a child of your age. Mine was nothing to it — nothing at all. You will be a great singer some day — far greater than I — yes. But you must have the training. Where are your parents? I must see them.”

“I have no parents,” said the bewildered Little Joyce. “I belong to Grandmother Marshall, and she is out driving.”

“Then I shall wait until your Grandmother Marshall comes home from her drive,” said Madame Laurin decidedly.

Half an hour later a very much surprised old lady was listening to Madame Laurin’s enthusiastic statements.

“How is it I have never heard you sing, if you can sing so well?” asked Grandmother Marshall, looking at Little Joyce with something in her eyes that had never been in them before — as Little Joyce instantly felt to the core of her sensitive soul. But Little Joyce hung her head. It had never occurred to her to sing in Grandmother Marshall’s presence.

“This child must be trained by-and-by,” said Madame Laurin. “If you cannot afford it, Mrs. Marshall, I will see to it. Such a voice must not be wasted.”

“Thank you, Madame Laurin,” said Grandmother Marshall with a gracious dignity, “but I am quite able to give my granddaughter all the necessary advantages for the development of her gift. And I thank you very much for telling me of it.”

Madame Laurin bent and kissed Little Joyce’s brown cheek.

“Little gypsy, good-by. But come every day to this hotel to see me. And next summer I shall be back. I like you — because some day you will be a great singer and because today you are a loving, unselfish baby.”

“You have forgotten the little black doll, Madame,” said Little Joyce gravely.

Madame threw up her hands, laughing. “No, no, I shall not take your little black doll of the four thousand years. Keep it for a mascot. A great singer always needs a mascot. But do not, I command you, take it out of the box till I am gone, for if I were to see it again, I might not be able to resist the temptation. Some day I shall show you my dolls, but there is not such a gem among them.”

When Madame Laurin had gone, Grandmother Marshall looked at Little Joyce.

“Come to my room, Joyce. I want to see if we cannot find a more becoming way of arranging your hair. It has grown so thick and long. I had no idea how thick and long. Yes, we must certainly find a better way than that stiff braid. Come!”

Little Joyce, taking Grandmother Marshall’s extended hand, felt very happy. She realized that this strange, stately old lady, who never liked little girls unless they were pretty or graceful or clever, was beginning to love her at last.

The Man on the Train

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When the telegram came from William George, Grandma Sheldon was all alone with Cyrus and Louise. And Cyrus and Louise, aged respectively twelve and eleven, were not very much good, Grandma thought, when it came to advising what was to be done. Grandma was “all in a flutter, dear, oh dear,” as she said.

The telegram said that Delia, William George’s wife, was seriously ill down at Green Village, and William George wanted Samuel to bring Grandma down immediately. Delia had always thought there was nobody like Grandma when it came to nursing sick folks.

But Samuel and his wife were both away — had been away for two days and intended to be away for five more. They had driven to Sinclair, twenty miles away, to visit with Mrs. Samuel’s folks for a week.

“Dear, oh dear, what shall I do?” said Grandma.

“Go right to Green Village on the evening train,” said Cyrus briskly.

“Dear, oh dear, and leave you two alone!” cried Grandma.

“Louise and I will do very well until tomorrow,” said Cyrus sturdily. “We will send word to Sinclair by today’s mail, and Father and Mother will be home by tomorrow night.”

“But I never was on the cars in my life,” protested Grandma nervously. “I’m — I’m so frightened to start alone. And you never know what kind of people you may meet on the train.”

“You’ll be all right, Grandma. I’ll drive you to the station, get you your ticket, and put you on the train. Then you’ll have nothing to do until the train gets to Green Village. I’ll send a telegram to Uncle William George to meet you.”

“I shall fall and break my neck getting off the train,” said Grandma pessimistically. But she was wondering at the same time whether she had

better take the black valise or the yellow, and whether William George would be likely to have plenty of flaxseed in the house.

It was six miles to the station, and Cyrus drove Grandma over in time to catch a train that reached Green Village at nine o'clock.

"Dear, oh dear," said Grandma, "what if William George's folks ain't there to meet me? It's all very well, Cyrus, to say that they will be there, but you don't know. And it's all very well to say not to be nervous because everything will be all right. If you were seventy-five years old and had never set foot on the cars in your life you'd be nervous too, and you can't be sure that everything will be all right. You never know what sort of people you'll meet on the train. I may get on the wrong train or lose my ticket or get carried past Green Village or get my pocket picked. Well, no, I won't do that, for not one cent will I carry with me. You shall take back home all the money you don't need to get my ticket. Then I shall be easier in my mind. Dear, oh dear, if it wasn't that Delia is so seriously ill I wouldn't go one step."

"Oh, you'll be all right, Grandma," assured Cyrus.

He got Grandma's ticket for her and Grandma tied it up in the corner of her handkerchief. Then the train came in and Grandma, clinging closely to Cyrus, was put on it. Cyrus found a comfortable seat for her and shook hands cheerily.

"Goodbye, Grandma. Don't be frightened. Here's the Weekly Argus. I got it at the store. You may like to look over it."

Then Cyrus was gone, and in a minute the station house and platform began to glide away.

Dear, oh dear, what has happened to it? thought Grandma in dismay. The next moment she exclaimed aloud, "Why, it's us that's moving, not it!"

Some of the passengers smiled pleasantly at Grandma. She was the variety of old lady at which people do smile pleasantly; a grandma with round, pink cheeks, soft, brown eyes, and lovely snow-white curls is a nice person to look at wherever she is found.

After a while Grandma, to her amazement, discovered that she liked riding on the cars. It was not at all the disagreeable experience she had expected it to be. Why, she was just as comfortable as if she were in her own rocking chair at home! And there was such a lot of people to look at, and many of the ladies had such beautiful dresses and hats. After all, the people you met on a train, thought Grandma, are surprisingly like the people you meet off it. If it had not been for wondering how she would get off at Green Village, Grandma would have enjoyed herself thoroughly.

Four or five stations farther on the train halted at a lonely-looking place consisting of the station house and a barn, surrounded by scrub woods and blueberry barrens. One passenger got on and, finding only one vacant seat in the crowded car, sat right down beside Grandma Sheldon.

Grandma Sheldon held her breath while she looked him over. Was he a pickpocket? He didn't appear like one, but you can never be sure of the people you meet on the train. Grandma remembered with a sigh of thankfulness that she had no money.

Besides, he seemed really very respectable and harmless. He was quietly dressed in a suit of dark-blue serge with a black overcoat. He wore his hat well down on his forehead and was clean shaven. His hair was very black, but his eyes were blue — nice eyes, Grandma thought. She always felt great confidence in a man who had bright, open, blue eyes. Grandpa Sheldon, who had died so long ago, four years after their marriage, had had bright blue eyes.

To be sure, he had fair hair, reflected Grandma. It's real odd to see such black hair with such light blue eyes. Well, he's real nice looking, and I don't believe there's a mite of harm in him.

The early autumn night had now fallen and Grandma could not amuse herself by watching the scenery. She bethought herself of the paper Cyrus had given her and took it out of her basket. It was an old weekly a fortnight back. On the first page was a long account of a murder case with scare heads, and into this Grandma plunged eagerly. Sweet old Grandma Sheldon, who would not have harmed a fly and hated to see even a mousetrap set, simply revelled in the newspaper accounts of murders. And

the more shocking and coldblooded they were, the more eagerly did Grandma read of them.

This murder story was particularly good from Grandma's point of view; it was full of "thrills." A man had been shot down, apparently in cold blood, and his supposed murderer was still at large and had eluded all the efforts of justice to capture him. His name was Mark Hartwell, and he was described as a tall, fair man, with full auburn beard and curly, light hair.

"What a shocking thing!" said Grandma aloud.

Her companion looked at her with a kindly, amused smile.

"What is it?" he asked.

"Why, this murder at Charlotteville," answered Grandma, forgetting, in her excitement, that it was not safe to talk to people you meet on the train. "It just makes my blood run cold to read about it. And to think that the man who did it is still around the country somewhere — plotting other murders, I haven't a doubt. What is the good of the police?"

"They're dull fellows," agreed the dark man.

"But I don't envy that man his conscience," said Grandma solemnly — and somewhat inconsistently, in view of her statement about the other murders that were being plotted. "What must a man feel like who has the blood of a fellow creature on his hands? Depend upon it, his punishment has begun already, caught or not."

"That is true," said the dark man quietly.

"Such a goodlooking man too," said Grandma, looking wistfully at the murderer's picture. "It doesn't seem possible that he can have killed anybody. But the paper says there isn't a doubt."

"He is probably guilty," said the dark man, "but nothing is known of his provocation. The affair may not have been so coldblooded as the accounts state. Those newspaper fellows never err on the side of undercolouring."

"I really think," said Grandma slowly, "that I would like to see a murderer — just one. Whenever I say anything like that, Adelaide — Adelaide is Samuel's wife — looks at me as if she thought there was

something wrong about me. And perhaps there is, but I do, all the same. When I was a little girl, there was a man in our settlement who was suspected of poisoning his wife. She died very suddenly. I used to look at him with such interest. But it wasn't satisfactory, because you could never be sure whether he was really guilty or not. I never could believe that he was, because he was such a nice man in some ways and so good and kind to children. I don't believe a man who was bad enough to poison his wife could have any good in him."

"Perhaps not," agreed the dark man. He had absentmindedly folded up Grandma's old copy of the Argus and put it in his pocket. Grandma did not like to ask him for it, although she would have liked to see if there were any more murder stories in it. Besides, just at that moment the conductor came around for tickets.

Grandma looked in the basket for her handkerchief. It was not there. She looked on the floor and on the seat and under the seat. It was not there. She stood up and shook herself — still no handkerchief.

"Dear, oh dear," exclaimed Grandma wildly, "I've lost my ticket — I always knew I would — I told Cyrus I would! Oh, where can it be?"

The conductor scowled unsympathetically. The dark man got up and helped Grandma search, but no ticket was to be found.

"You'll have to pay the money then, and something extra," said the conductor gruffly.

"I can't — I haven't a cent of money," wailed Grandma. "I gave it all to Cyrus because I was afraid my pocket would be picked. Oh, what shall I do?"

"Don't worry. I'll make it all right," said the dark man. He took out his pocketbook and handed the conductor a bill. That functionary grumblingly made the change and marched onward, while Grandma, pale with excitement and relief, sank back into her seat.

"I can't tell you how much I am obliged to you, sir," she said tremulously. "I don't know what I should have done. Would he have put me off right here in the snow?"

“I hardly think he would have gone to such lengths,” said the dark man with a smile. “But he’s a cranky, disobliging fellow enough — I know him of old. And you must not feel overly grateful to me. I am glad of the opportunity to help you. I had an old grandmother myself once,” he added with a sigh.

“You must give me your name and address, of course,” said Grandma, “and my son — Samuel Sheldon of Midverne — will see that the money is returned to you. Well, this is a lesson to me! I’ll never trust myself on a train again, and all I wish is that I was safely off this one. This fuss has worked my nerves all up again.”

“Don’t worry, Grandma. I’ll see you safely off the train when we get to Green Village.”

“Will you, though? Will you, now?” said Grandma eagerly. “I’ll be real easy in my mind, then,” she added with a returning smile. “I feel as if I could trust you for anything — and I’m a real suspicious person too.”

They had a long talk after that — or, rather, Grandma talked and the dark man listened and smiled. She told him all about William George and Delia and their baby and about Samuel and Adelaide and Cyrus and Louise and the three cats and the parrot. He seemed to enjoy her accounts of them too.

When they reached Green Village station he gathered up Grandma’s parcels and helped her tenderly off the train.

“Anybody here to meet Mrs. Sheldon?” he asked of the station master.

The latter shook his head. “Don’t think so. Haven’t seen anybody here to meet anybody tonight.”

“Dear, oh dear,” said poor Grandma. “This is just what I expected. They’ve never got Cyrus’s telegram. Well, I might have known it. What shall I do?”

“How far is it to your son’s?” asked the dark man.

“Only half a mile — just over the hill there. But I’ll never get there alone this dark night.”

“Of course not. But I’ll go with you. The road is good — we’ll do finely.”

“But that train won’t wait for you,” gasped Grandma, half in protest.

“It doesn’t matter. The Starmont freight passes here in half an hour and I’ll go on her. Come along, Grandma.”

“Oh, but you’re good,” said Grandma. “Some woman is proud to have you for a son.”

The man did not answer. He had not answered any of the personal remarks Grandma had made to him in her conversation.

They were not long in reaching William George Sheldon’s house, for the village road was good and Grandma was smart on her feet. She was welcomed with eagerness and surprise.

“To think that there was no one to meet you!” exclaimed William George. “But I never dreamed of your coming by train, knowing how you were set against it. Telegram? No, I got no telegram. S’pose Cyrus forgot to send it. I’m most heartily obliged to you, sir, for looking after my mother so kindly.”

“It was a pleasure,” said the dark man courteously. He had taken off his hat, and they saw a curious scar, shaped like a large, red butterfly, high up on his forehead under his hair. “I am delighted to have been of any assistance to her.”

He would not wait for supper — the next train would be in and he must not miss it.

“There are people looking for me,” he said with his curious smile. “They will be much disappointed if they do not find me.”

He had gone, and the whistle of the Starmont freight had blown before Grandma remembered that he had not given her his name and address.

“Dear, oh dear, how are we ever going to send that money to him?” she exclaimed. “And he so nice and goodhearted!”

Grandma worried over this for a week in the intervals of looking after Delia. One day William George came in with a large city daily in his hands. He looked curiously at Grandma and then showed her the front-page picture of a man, clean-shaven, with an oddly shaped scar high up on his forehead.

“Did you ever see that man, Mother?” he asked.

“Of course I did,” said Grandma excitedly. “Why, it’s the man I met on the train. Who is he? What is his name? Now, we’ll know where to send —”

“That is Mark Hartwell, who shot Amos Gray at Charlottesville three weeks ago,” said William George quietly.

Grandma looked at him blankly for a moment.

“It couldn’t be,” she gasped at last. “That man a murderer! I’ll never believe it!”

“It’s true enough, Mother. The whole story is here. He had shaved his beard and dyed his hair and came near getting clear out of the country. They were on his trail the day he came down in the train with you and lost it because of his getting off to bring you here. His disguise was so perfect that there was little fear of his being recognized so long as he hid that scar. But it was seen in Montreal and he was run to earth there. He has made a full confession.”

“I don’t care,” cried Grandma valiantly. “I’ll never believe he was all bad — a man who would do what he did for a poor old woman like me, when he was flying for his life too. No, no, there was good in him even if he did kill that man. And I’m sure he must feel terrible over it.”

In this view Grandma persisted. She never would say or listen to a word against Mark Hartwell, and she had only pity for him whom everyone else condemned. With her own trembling hands she wrote him a letter to accompany the money Samuel sent before Hartwell was taken to the penitentiary for life. She thanked him again for his kindness to her and assured him that she knew he was sorry for what he had done and that she would pray for him every night of her life. Mark Hartwell had been hard and defiant enough, but the prison officials told that he cried like a child over Grandma Sheldon’s little letter.

“There’s nobody all bad,” says Grandma when she relates the story. “I used to believe a murderer must be, but I know better now. I think of that poor man often and often. He was so kind and gentle to me — he must have been a good boy once. I write him a letter every Christmas and I send him tracts and papers. He’s my own little charity. But I’ve never been on

the cars since and I never will be again. You never can tell what will happen to you or what sort of people you'll meet if you trust yourself on a train."

The Romance of Jedediah

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Jedediah was not a name that savoured of romance. His last name was Crane, which is little better. And it would be no use to call this story “Mattie Adams’s Romance” because Mattie Adams is not a romantic name either. But names have really nothing to do with romance. The most exciting and tragic affair I ever knew was between a man named Silas Putdammer and a woman named Kezia Cullen — which has nothing to do with the present story.

Jedediah, to all outward seeming, did not appear to be any more romantic than his name. He looked distinctly commonplace as he rode comfortably along the winding country road that was dreaming in the haze and sunshine of a midsummer afternoon. He was perched on the seat of a bright red pedlar’s wagon, above and behind a dusty, ambling, red pony of that peculiar gait and appearance pertaining to the ponies of country pedlars — a certain placid, unhasting leanness, as of a nag that has encountered troubles of his own and has lived them down by sheer patience and staying power. From the bright red wagon proceeded a certain metallic rumbling and clinking as it bowled along, and two or three nests of tin pans on its flat rope-encircled top flashed back the light so dazzlingly that Jedediah seemed the beaming sun of a little planetary system all his own. A new broom sticking up aggressively at each of the four corners gave the wagon a resemblance to a triumphal chariot.

Jedediah himself had not been in the tin-peddling business long enough to acquire the apologetic, out-at-elbows appearance which distinguishes a tin pedlar from other kinds of pedlars. In fact, this was his maiden venture in this line; hence he still looked plump and self-respecting. He had a round red face under his plug hat, twinkling blue eyes, and a little pursed-up mouth, the shape of which was partly due to nature and partly to much whistling. Jedediah’s pudgy body was clothed in

a suit of large, light checks, and he wore a bright pink necktie and an amethyst pin. Will I still be believed when I assert that, in spite of all this, Jedediah was full of, and bubbling over with, romance?

Romance cares not for appearances and apparently delights in contradictions. The homely shambling man you pass unnoticed on the street may have, tucked away in his past, a story more exciting and thrilling than anything you have ever read in fiction. So it was, in a measure, with Jedediah; poor, unknown to fame, afflicted with a double chin and bald spot, reduced to driving a tin-wagon for a living, he yet had his romance and he was still romantic.

As Jedediah rode through Amberley he looked about him with interest. He knew it well, although it was fifteen years since he had seen it. He had been born and brought up in Amberley; he had left it at the age of twenty-five to make his fortune. But Amberley was Amberley still. Jedediah found it hard to believe that it or himself was fifteen years older.

“There’s the Stanton place,” he said. “Charlie has painted the house yellow — it used to be white; and Bob Hollman has cut the trees down behind the blacksmith forge. Bob never had any poetry in his soul — no romance, as you might say. He was what you might call a plodder — you might call him that. Get up, my nag, get up. There’s the old Harkness place — seems to be spruced up considerable. Folks used to say if ye wanted to see how the world looked the morning after the flood just go into George Harkness’s barnyard on a rainy day. The pond and the old hills ain’t changed any. Get up, my nag, get up. There’s the Adams homestead. Do I really behold it again?”

Jedediah thought the moment deliciously romantic. He revelled in it and, to match his exhilarated mood, he touched the pony with his whip and went clinking and glittering down the hill under the poplars at a dashing rate. He had not intended to offer his wares in Amberley that day. He meant to break the ice in Occidental, the village beyond. But he could not pass the Adams place. When he came to the open gate he turned in under the willows and drove down the wide, shady lane, girt on both sides with a

trim white paling smothered in lavish sweetbriar bushes that were gay with bloom. Jedediah's heart was beating furiously under his checks.

"What a fool you are, Jed Crane," he told himself. "You used to be a young fool, and now you're an old one. Sad, that! Get up, my nag, get up. It's a poor lookout for a man of your years, Jed. Don't get excited. It ain't the least likely that Mattie Adams is here yet. She's married and gone years ago, no doubt. It's probable there's no Adamses here at all now. But it's romantic, yes, it's romantic. It's splendid. Get up, my nag, get up."

The Adams place itself was not unromantic. The house was a large, old-fashioned white one, with green shutters and a front porch with Grecian columns. These were thought very elegant in Amberley. Mrs. Carmody said they gave a house such a classical air. In this instance the classical effect was somewhat smothered in honeysuckle, which rioted over the whole porch and hung in pale yellow, fragrant festoons over the rows of potted scarlet geraniums that flanked the green steps. Beyond the house a low-boughed orchard covered the slope between it and the main road, and behind it there was a revel of colour betokening a flower garden.

Jedediah climbed down from his lofty seat and walked dubiously to a side door that looked more friendly, despite its prim screen, than the classical front porch. As he drew near he saw a woman sitting behind the screen — a woman who rose as he approached and opened the door. Jedediah's heart had been beating a wild tattoo as he crossed the yard. It now stopped altogether — at least he declared in later years it did.

The woman was Mattie Adams — Mattie Adams fifteen years older than when he had seen her last, plumper, rosier, somewhat broader-faced, but still unmistakably Mattie Adams. Jedediah felt that the situation was delicious.

"Mattie," he said, holding out his hand.

"Why, Jed, how are you?" said Mattie, as if they had parted the week before. It had always taken a great deal to disturb Mattie. Whatever happened she was calm. Even an old lover, and the only one she had ever possessed at that, dropping, so to speak, from the skies, after fifteen years' disappearance, did not ruffle her placidity.

“I didn’t suppose you’d know me, Mattie,” said Jedediah, still holding her hand foolishly.

“I knew you the minute I set eyes on you,” returned Mattie. “You’re some fatter and older — like myself — but you’re Jed still. Where have you been all these years?”

“Pretty near everywhere, Mattie — pretty near everywhere. And ye see what it’s come to — here I be driving a tin-wagon for Boone Brothers. Business is business — don’t you want to buy some new tinware?”

To himself, Jed thought it was romantic, asking a woman whom he had loved all his life to buy tins on the occasion of their first meeting after fifteen years’ separation.

“I don’t know but I do want a quart measure,” said Mattie, in her sweet, unchanged voice, “but all in good time. You must stay and have tea with me, Jed. I’m all alone now — Mother and Father have gone. Unhitch your horse and put him in the third stall in the stable.”

Jed hesitated.

“I ought to be getting on, I s’pose,” he said wistfully. “I hain’t done much today—”

“You must stay to tea,” interrupted Mattie. “Why, Jed, there’s ever so much to tell and ask. And we can’t stand here in the yard and talk. Look at Selena. There she is, watching us from the kitchen window. She’ll watch as long as we stand here.”

Jed swung himself around. Over the little valley below the Adams homestead was a steep, treeless hill, and on its crest was perched a bare farmhouse with windows stuck lavishly all over it. At one of them a long, pale face was visible.

“Has Selena been pasted up at that window ever since the last time we stood here and talked, Mattie?” asked Jed, half resentfully, half amusedly. It was characteristic of Mattie to laugh first at the question, and then blush over the memory it revived.

“Most of the time, I guess,” she said shortly. “But come — come in. I never could talk under Selena’s eyes, even if they were four hundred yards away.”

Jed went in and stayed to tea. The old Adams pantry had not failed, nor apparently the Adams skill in cooking. After tea Jed hung around till sunset and drove away with a warm invitation from Mattie to call every time his rounds took him through Amberley. As he went, Selena's face appeared at the window of the house over the valley.

When he had gone Mattie went around to the classical porch and sat herself down under the honeysuckle festoons that dangled above her smooth braids of fawn-coloured hair. She knew Selena would be down posthaste presently, agog with curiosity to find out who the pedlar was whom Mattie had delighted to honour with an invitation to tea. Mattie preferred to meet Selena out of doors. It was easier to thrust and parry there. Meanwhile, she wanted to think over things.

Fifteen years before Jedediah Crane had been Mattie Adams's beau. Jedediah was romantic even then, but, as he was a slim young fellow at the time, with an abundance of fair, curly hair and innocent blue eyes, his romance was rather an attraction than not. At least the then young and pretty Mattie had found it so.

The Adamses looked with no favour on the match. They were a thrifty, well-to-do folk. As for the Cranes — well, they were lazy and shiftless, for the most part. It would be a *mésalliance* for an Adams to marry a Crane. Still, it would doubtless have happened — for Mattie, though a meek-looking damsel, had a mind of her own — had it not been for Selena Ford, Mattie's older sister.

Selena, people said, had married James Ford for no other reason than that his house commanded a view of nearly every dooryard in Amberley. This may or may not have been sheer malice. Certainly nothing that went on in the Adams yard escaped Selena.

She watched Mattie and Jed in the moonlight one night. She saw Jed kiss Mattie. It was the first time he had ever done so — and the last, poor fellow. For Selena swooped down on her parents the next day. Such a storm did she brew up that Mattie was forbidden to speak to Jed again. Selena herself gave Jed a piece of her mind. Jed usually was not afflicted with undue sensitiveness. But he had some slumbering pride at the basis of

his character and it was very stubborn when roused. Selena roused it. Jed vowed he would never creep and crawl at the feet of the Adamses, and he went west forthwith, determined, as aforesaid, to make his fortune and hurl Selena's scorn back in her face.

And now he had come home, driving a tin-wagon. Mattie smiled to think of it. She bore Jed no ill will for his failure. She felt sorry for him and inclined to think that fate had used him hardly — fate and Selena together. Mattie had never had another beau. People thought she was engaged to Jed Crane until her time for beaus went by. Mattie did not mind; she had never liked anybody so well as Jed. To be sure, she had not thought of him for years. It was strange he should come back like this — "romantic," as he said himself.

Mattie's reverie was interrupted by Selena. Angular, pale-eyed Mrs. Ford was as unlike the plump, rosy Mattie as a sister could be. Perhaps her chronic curiosity, which would not let her rest, was accountable for her excessive leanness.

"Who was that pedlar that was here this afternoon, Mattie?" she demanded as soon as she arrived.

Mattie smiled. "Jed Crane," she said. "He's home from the West and driving a tin-wagon for the Boones."

Selena gave a little gasp. She sat down on the lowest step and untied her bonnet strings.

"Mattie Adams! And you kept him hanging about the whole afternoon."

"Why not?" said Mattie wickedly. She liked to alarm Selena. "Jed and I were always beaus, you know."

"Mattie Adams! You don't mean to say you're going to make a fool of yourself over Jed Crane again? A woman of your age!"

"Don't get excited, Selena," implored Mattie. In the old days Selena could cow her, but that time was past. "I never saw the like of you for getting stirred up over nothing."

"I'm not excited. I'm perfectly calm. But I might well be excited over your folly, Mattie Adams. The idea of your taking up again with old Jed

Crane!”

“He’s fifteen years younger than Jim,” said Mattie, giving thrust for thrust.

When Selena had come over Mattie had not the slightest idea of resuming her former relationship with the romantic Jedediah. She had merely shown him kindness for old friendship’s sake. But so well did the unconscious Selena work in Jed’s behalf that when she flounced off home in a pet Mattie was resolved that she would take Jed back if he wanted to come. She wasn’t going to put up with Selena’s everlasting interference. She would show her that she was independent.

When a week had passed Jed came again. He sold Mattie a stewpan and he would not go in to tea this time, but they stood and talked in the yard for the best part of an hour, while Selena glared at them from her kitchen window. Their conversation was most innocent and harmless, being mainly gossip about what had come and gone during Jed’s exile. But Mattie knew that Selena thought that she and Jed were making love to each other in this shameless, public fashion. When Jed went, Mattie, more for Selena’s benefit than his, broke off some sprays of honeysuckle and pinned them on his coat. The fragrance went with Jedediah as he drove through Amberley, and pleasant thoughts were born of it.

“It’s romantic,” he told the pony. “Blessed if it ain’t romantic! Not that Mattie cares anything about me now. I know she don’t. But it’s just her kind way. She wants to cheer me up and let me know I’ve a friend still. Get up, my nag, get up. I ain’t one to persoom on her kindness neither; I know my place. But still, say what you will, it’s romantic — this sitooation. This is it. Here I be, loving the ground she walks on, as I’ve always done, and I can’t let on that I do because I’m a poor ne’er-do-well as ain’t fit to look at her, an independent woman with property. And she’s a-showing kindness to me for old times’ sake, and piercing my heart all the time, not knowing. Why, it’s romance with a vengeance, that’s what it is. Get up, my nag, get up.”

Thereafter Jed called at the Adams place every week. Generally he stayed to tea. Mattie always bought something of him to colour an excuse.

Her kitchen fairly glittered with new tinware. She gave Selena the overflow by way of heaping coals of fire.

After every visit Jedediah held stern counsel with himself and decided that he must not call to see Mattie again — at least, not for a long time; then he must not stay to tea. He would struggle with himself all the way down the poplar hill — not without a comforting sense of the romance of the struggle — but it always ended the same way. He turned in under the willows and clinked musically into Mattie's yard. At least, the rattle of the tin-wagon sounded musically to Mattie.

Meanwhile, Selena watched from her window and raged.

Amberley people shrugged their shoulders when gossip noised the matter abroad. But, being good-humoured in the main, they forebore to do more than say that Mattie Adams was free to make a goose of herself if it pleased her, and that Jed Crane wasn't such a fool as he looked. The Adams farm was one of the best in Amberley, and it had not grown any poorer under Mattie's management.

"If Jed walks in there and hangs up his hat he'll have done well for himself after all."

This was Selena's view of it also, barring the good nature. She was furious at the whole affair, and she did her best to make Mattie's life a burden to her with slurs and thrusts. But they all misjudged Jed. He had no intention of "walking in and hanging up his hat" — or trying to. Romantic as he was, it never occurred to him that Mattie might be as romantic as himself. She did not care for him, and anyhow he, Jed, had a little too much pride to ask her, a rich woman, to marry him, a poor man who had lost all caste he ever possessed by taking up tin-peddling. Jed was determined not to "persoom." And, oh, how deliciously romantic it all was! He hugged himself with sorrowful delight over it.

As the summer waned and the long yellow leaves began to fall thickly from the willows in the Adams lane Jed began to talk of going out west again. Tin-peddling was not possible in winter, and he didn't think he would try it another summer. Mattie listened with dismay in her heart. All summer she had made much of Jed, by way of tormenting Selena. But now

she realized what he really meant to her. The old love had wakened to life in her heart; she could not let Jed go out of her life again, leaving her to the old loneliness. If Jed went away everything would be flat, stale, and unprofitable.

She knew him to be at heart the kindest, most gentle of human beings, and the mere fact of his having been unsuccessful, even what some of his old neighbours might call stupid, did not change her feelings toward him in the least. He was Jed — that was sufficient for her, and she had business capability enough for both, when it came to that.

Mattie began to drop hints. But Jed would not take them. True, once or twice he thought that perhaps Mattie did care a little for him yet. But it would not do for him to take advantage of that.

“No, I just couldn’t do that,” he told the pony. “I worship the ground that woman treads on, but it ain’t for the likes of me to tell her so, not now. Get up, my nag, get up. This has been a mighty pleasant summer with that visit to look forward to every week. But it’s about over now and you must tramp, Jed.”

Jed sighed. He remembered that it was more romantic than ever, but all at once this failed to comfort him. Romance up to a certain point was food; beyond that it palled, so to speak. Jed’s romance failed him just when he needed it most.

Mattie, meanwhile, was forced to the dismal conclusion that her hints were thrown away. Jed was plainly determined not to speak. Mattie felt half angry with him. She did not choose to make a martyr of herself to romance, and surely the man didn’t expect her to ask him to marry her.

“I’m sure and certain he’s as fond of me as ever he was,” she mused. “I suppose he’s got some ridiculous notion about being too poor to aspire to me. Jed always had more pride than a Crane could carry. Well, I’ve done all I can — all I’m going to do. If Jed’s determined to go, he must go, I s’pose.”

Mattie would not let herself cry, although she felt like it. She went out and picked apples instead.

Mattie might have remained so and Jedediah's romance might never have reached a better ending, if it had not been for Selena, who came over just then to help Mattie pick the golden russets. Fate had evidently destined her as Jed's best helper. All summer she had been fairly goading Mattie into love with Jedediah and now she was moved to add the last spur.

"Jed Crane's going away, I hear," she said maliciously. "Seems to me you're bound to be jilted again, Mattie."

Mattie had no answer ready. Selena went on undauntedly.

"You've made a nice fool of yourself all summer, I vow. Throwing yourself at Jed's head — and he doesn't want you, even with all your property."

"He does want me," said Mattie calmly. Her lips were very firm and her cheeks scarlet. "He is not going away. We are to be married about Christmas, and Jed will take charge of the farm for me."

"Matilda Adams!" said Selena. It was all she was capable of saying.

The rest of the golden russets were picked in a dead silence, Mattie working with an unusually high colour in her cheeks, while Selena's thin lips were pressed so closely together as to be little else than a hair line.

After Selena had gone home, sulking, Mattie picked on with a very determined face. The die was cast; she could not bear Selena's slurs and she would not. And she had not told a lie either. Her words were true; she would make them true. All the Adams determination — and that was not a little — was roused in her.

"If Jed jilts me, he'll do it to my face, clean and clever," she said viciously.

When Jed came again he was very solemn. He thought it would be his last visit, but Mattie felt differently. She had dressed herself with unusual care and crimped her hair. Her cheeks were scarlet and her eyes bright. Jed thought she looked younger and prettier than ever. The thought that this was the last time he would see her for many a long day to come grew more and more unbearable, yet he firmly determined he would let no presuming word pass his lips. Mattie had been so kind to him. It was only honourable

of him in return not to let her throw herself away on a poor failure like himself.

“I suppose this is your last round with the wagon,” she said. She had taken him out into the garden to say it. The garden was out of view from the Ford place. Propose she must, but she drew the line at proposing under Selena’s eyes.

Jed nodded dully. “Yes, and then I must toddle off and look for something else to do. You see, I haven’t much of a gift so to speak for business, Mattie, and it takes me so long to get worked into an understanding of a business or trade that I’m generally asked to quit before you might say I’ve really commenced. It’s been a mighty happy summer for me, though I can’t say I’ve done much in the selling line except to you, Mattie. What with your kindness and these little visits you’ve been good enough to let me make every week, I feel I may say it’s been the happiest summer of my life, and I’m never going to forget it, but as I said, it’s time for me to be moving on elsewhere and finding something else to do.”

“There is something for you to do right here — if you will do it,” said Mattie faintly. For a moment she felt as if she could not go on; Jed and the garden and the scarf of late asters whirled around her dizzily. She held by the sweetpea trellis to steady herself.

“I — I said a terrible thing to Selena the other day. I — I don’t know what I’ll do about it if — if — you don’t help me out, Jed.”

“I’ll do anything I can,” said Jed, with hearty sympathy. “You know that, Mattie. What is the trouble?”

His kindly voice and the good will and affection beaming in his honest blue eyes gave Mattie renewed courage to go on with her self-imposed and most embarrassing task, although before she ended her voice shook and dwindled away to such a low whisper that Jed had to bend his head close to hers to hear what she was saying.

“I — I said — she goaded me into saying it, Jed — slighting and slurring — jeering at me because you were going away. I just got mad, Jed

— and I told her you weren't going — that you and I — that we were to be — married.”

“Mattie, did you mean that?” he cried. “If you did, I'm the happiest man alive. I didn't dare persoom — I didn't s'pose you thought anything of me. But if you do — and if you want me — here's all there is of me, heart and soul and body, forever and ever, as I've been all my life.”

Thinking over this speech afterwards Jed was dissatisfied with it. He thought he might have made it much more eloquent and romantic than it was. But it served the purpose very well. It was convincing — it came straight from his honest, stupid heart, and Mattie knew it. She held out her hands and Jed gathered her into his arms.

It was certainly a most fortunate circumstance that the garden was well out of the range of Selena's vision, or the sight of her sister and the remaining member of the despised Crane family repeating their foolish performance, which many years previous had resulted in Jed's long banishment, might have caused her to commit almost any unheard-of act of spite as an outlet for her jealous anger. But only the few remaining garden flowers were witness to the lovers' indiscretion, and they kept their own counsel after the manner of flowers, so Selena's feelings were mercifully spared this further outrage.

That evening Jed drove slowly away through the twilight, mounted for the last time on the tin-wagon. He was so happy that he bore no grudge against even Selena Ford. As the pony climbed the poplar hill Jed drew a long breath and freed his mind to the surrounding landscape and to his faithful and slow-plodding steed that had been one of the main factors in this love affair, having patiently carried him to and from the abode of his lady-love throughout the summer just passed. Jedediah was as brimful of happiness as mortal man could be, and his rosy thoughts flowed forth in a kind of triumphant chant which would have driven Selena stark distracted had she been within hearing distance. What he said too was but a poor expression of what he thought, but to the trees and fields and pony he chanted,

“Well, this is romance. What else would you call it now? Me, poor, scared to speak — and Mattie ups and does it for me, bless her. Yes, I’ve been longing for romance all my life, and I’ve got it at last. None of your commonplace courtships for me, I always said. Them was my very words. And I guess this has been a little uncommon — I guess it has. Anyhow, I’m uncommon happy. I never felt so romantic before. Get up, my nag, get up.”

The Tryst of the White Lady

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“I wisht ye’d git married, Roger,” said Catherine Ames. “I’m gitting too old to work — seventy last April — and who’s going to look after ye when I’m gone. Git married, b’y — git married.”

Roger Temple winced. His aunt’s harsh, disagreeable voice always jarred horribly on his sensitive nerves. He was fond of her after a fashion, but always that voice made him wonder if there could be anything harder to endure.

Then he gave a bitter little laugh.

“Who’d have me, Aunt Catherine?” he asked.

Catherine Ames looked at him critically across the supper table. She loved him in her way, with all her heart, but she was not in the least blind to his defects. She did not mince matters with herself or with other people. Roger was a sallow, plain-featured fellow, small and insignificant looking. And, as if this were not bad enough, he walked with a slight limp and had one thin shoulder a little higher than the other—”Jarback” Temple he had been called in school, and the name still clung to him. To be sure, he had very fine grey eyes, but their dreamy brilliance gave his dull face an uncanny look which girls did not like, and so made matters rather worse than better. Of course looks didn’t matter so much in the case of a man; Steve Millar was homely enough, and all marked up with smallpox to boot, yet he had got for wife the prettiest and smartest girl in South Bay. But Steve was rich. Roger was poor and always would be. He worked his stony little farm, from which his father and grandfather had wrested a fair living, after a fashion, but Nature had not cut him out for a successful farmer. He hadn’t the strength for it and his heart wasn’t in it. He’d rather be hanging over a book. Catherine secretly thought Roger’s matrimonial chances very poor, but it would not do to discourage the b’y. What he needed was spurring on.

“Ye’ll git someone if ye don’t fly too high,” she announced loudly and cheerfully. “Thar’s always a gal or two here and thar that’s glad to marry for a home. ‘Tain’t no use for you to be settin’ your thoughts on anyone young and pretty. Ye wouldn’t git her and ye’d be worse off if ye did. Your grandfather married for looks, and a nice useless wife he got — sick half her time. Git a good strong girl that ain’t afraid of work, that’ll hold things together when ye’re reading po’try — that’s as much as you kin expect. And the sooner the better. I’m done — last winter’s rheumatiz has about finished me. An’ we can’t afford hired help.”

Roger felt as if his raw, quivering soul were being seared. He looked at his aunt curiously — at her broad, flat face with the mole on the end of her dumpy nose, the bristling hairs on her chin, the wrinkled yellow neck, the pale, protruding eyes, the coarse, good-humoured mouth. She was so extremely ugly — and he had seen her across the table all his life. For twenty-five years he had looked at her so. Must he continue to go on looking at ugliness in the shape of a wife all the rest of his life — he, who worshipped beauty in everything?

“Did my mother look like you, Aunt Catherine?” he asked abruptly.

His aunt stared — and snorted. Her snort was meant to express kindly amusement, but it sounded like derision and contempt.

“Yer ma wasn’t so humly as me,” she said cheerfully, “but she wan’t no beauty either. None of the Temples was ever better lookin’ than was necessary. We was workers. Yer pa wa’n’t bad looking. You’re humlier than either of ‘em. Some ways ye take after yer grandma — though she was counted pretty at one time. She was yaller and spindlin’ like you, and you’ve got her eyes. What yer so int’rested in yer ma’s looks all at once fer?”

“I was wondering,” said Roger coolly, “if Father ever looked at her across the table and wished she were prettier.”

Catherine giggled. Her giggle was ugly and disagreeable like everything else about her — everything except a certain odd, loving, loyal old heart buried deep in her bosom, for the sake of which Roger endured the giggle and all the rest.

“Dessay he did — dessay he did. Men al’ays has a hankerin’ for good looks. But ye’ve got to cut yer coat ‘cording to yer cloth. As for yer poor ma, she didn’t live long enough to git as ugly as me. When I come here to keep house for yer pa, folks said as it wouldn’t be long ‘fore he married me. I wouldn’t a-minded. But yer pa never hinted it. S’pose he’d had enough of ugly women likely.”

Catherine snorted amiably again. Roger got up — he couldn’t endure any more just then. He must escape.

“Now you think over what I’ve said,” his aunt called after him. “Ye’ve gotter git a wife soon, however ye manage it. ‘Twon’t be so hard if ye’re reasonable. Don’t stay out as late as ye did last night. Ye coughed all night. Where was ye — down at the shore?”

“No,” said Roger, who always answered her questions even when he hated to. “I was down at Aunt Isabel’s grave.”

“Till eleven o’clock! Ye ain’t wise! I dunno what hankering ye have after that unchancy place. I ain’t been near it for twenty year. I wonder ye ain’t scairt. What’d ye think ye’d do if ye saw her ghost?”

Catherine looked curiously at Roger. She was very superstitious and she believed firmly in ghosts, and saw no absurdity in her question.

“I wish I could see it,” said Roger, his great eyes flashing. He believed in ghosts too, at least in Isabel Temple’s ghost. His uncle had seen it; his grandfather had seen it; he believed he would see it — the beautiful, bewitching, mocking, luring ghost of lovely Isabel Temple.

“Don’t wish such stuff,” said Catherine. “Nobody ain’t never the same after they’ve seen her.”

“Was Uncle different?” Roger had come back into the kitchen and was looking curiously at his aunt.

“Diff’rent? He was another man. He didn’t even look the same. Sich eyes! Al’ays looking past ye at something behind ye. They’d give anyone creeps. He never had any notion of flesh-and-blood women after that — said a man wouldn’t, after seeing Isabel. His life was plumb ruined. Lucky he died young. I hated to be in the same room with him — he wa’n’t canny, that was all there was to it. You keep away from that grave — you

don't want to look odder than ye are by nature. And when ye git married, ye'll have to give up roamin' about half the night in graveyards. A wife wouldn't put up with it, as I've done."

"I'll never get as good a wife as you, Aunt Catherine," said Roger with a little whimsical smile that gave him the look of an amused gnome.

"Dessay you won't. But someone ye have to have. Why'n't ye try 'Liza Adams. She might have ye — she's gittin' on."

"'Liza ... Adams!"

"That's what I said. Ye needn't repeat it—'Liza ... Adams—'s if I'd mentioned a hippopotamus. I git out of patience with ye. I b'lieve in my heart ye think ye ought to git a wife that'd look like a picter."

"I do, Aunt Catherine. That's just the kind of wife I want — grace and beauty and charm. Nothing less than that will ever content me."

Roger laughed bitterly again and went out. It was sunset. There was no work to do that night except to milk the cows, and his little home boy could do that. He felt a glad freedom. He put his hand in his pocket to see if his beloved Wordsworth was there and then he took his way across the fields, under a sky of purple and amber, walking quickly despite his limp. He wanted to get to some solitary place where he could forget Aunt Catherine and her abominable suggestions and escape into the world of dreams where he habitually lived and where he found the loveliness he had not found nor could hope to find in his real world.

Roger's mother had died when he was three and his father when he was eight. His little, old, bedridden grandmother had lived until he was twelve. He had loved her passionately. She had not been pretty in his remembrance — a tiny, shrunk, wrinkled thing — but she had beautiful grey eyes that never grew old and a soft, gentle voice — the only woman's voice he had ever heard with pleasure. He was very critical as regards women's voices and very sensitive to them. Nothing hurt him quite so much as an unlovely voice — not even unloveliness of face. Her death had left him desolate. She was the only human being who had ever understood him. He could never, he thought, have got through his tortured school days without her. After she died he would not go to school. He was not in any sense

educated. His father and grandfather had been illiterate men and he had inherited their underdeveloped brain cells. But he loved poetry and read all he could get of it. It overlaid his primitive nature with a curious iridescence of fancy and furnished him with ideals and hungers his environment could never satisfy. He loved beauty in everything. Moonrises hurt him with their loveliness and he could sit for hours gazing at a white narcissus — much to his aunt's exasperation. He was solitary by nature. He felt horribly alone in a crowded building but never in the woods or in the wild places along the shore. It was because of this that his aunt could not get him to go to church — which was a horror to her orthodox soul. He told her he would like to go to church if it were empty but he could not bear it when it was full — full of smug, ugly people. Most people, he thought, were ugly — though not so ugly as he was — and ugliness made him sick with repulsion. Now and then he saw a pretty girl at whom he liked to look but he never saw one that wholly pleased him. To him, the homely, crippled, poverty-stricken Roger Temple whom they all would have scorned, there was always a certain subtle something wanting, and the lack of it kept him heartwhole. He knew that this probably saved him from much suffering, but for all that he regretted it. He wanted to love, even vainly; he wanted to experience this passion of which the poets sang so much. Without it he felt he lacked the key to a world of wonder. He even tried to fall in love; he went to church for several Sundays and sat where he could see beautiful Elsa Carey. She was lovely — it gave him pleasure to look at her; the gold of her hair was so bright and living; the pink of her cheek so pure, the curve of her neck so flawless, the lashes of her eyes so dark and silken. But he looked at her as at a picture. When he tried to think and dream of her, it bored him. Besides, he knew she had a rather nasal voice. He used to laugh sarcastically to himself over Elsa's feelings if she had known how desperately he was trying to fall in love with her and failing — Elsa the queen of hearts, who believed she had only to look to reign. He gave up trying at last, but he still longed to love. He knew he would never marry; he could not marry plainness, and beauty would have longed to love. He knew he would never marry; he could not

marry plainness, and beauty would have none of him; but he did not want to miss everything and he had moments when he was very bitter and rebellious because he felt he must miss it forever.

He went straight to Isabel Temple's grave in the remote shore field of his farm. Isabel Temple had lived and died eighty years ago. She had been very lovely, very wilful, very fond of playing with the hearts of men. She had married William Temple, the brother of his great-grandfather, and as she stood in her white dress beside her bridegroom, at the conclusion of the wedding ceremony, a jilted lover, crazed by despair, had entered the house and shot her dead. She had been buried in the shore field, where a square space had been dyked off in the centre for a burial lot because the church was then so far away. With the passage of years the lot had grown up so thickly with fir and birch and wild cherry that it looked like a compact grove. A winding path led through it to its heart where Isabel Temple's grave was, thickly overgrown with long, silken, pale green grass. Roger hurried along the path and sat down on the big grey boulder by the grave, looking about him with a long breath of delight. How lovely — and witching — and unearthly it was here. Little ferns were growing in the hollows and cracks of the big boulder where clay had lodged. Over Isabel Temple's crooked, lichened gravestone hung a young wild cherry in its delicate bloom. Above it, in a little space of sky left by the slender tree tops, was a young moon. It was too dark here after all to read Wordsworth, but that did not matter. The place, with its moist air, its tang of fir balsam, was like a perfumed room where a man might dream dreams and see visions. There was a soft murmur of wind in the boughs over him, and the faraway moan of the sea on the bar crept in. Roger surrendered himself utterly to the charm of the place. When he entered that grove, he had left behind the realm of daylight and things known and come into the realm of shadow and mystery and enchantment. Anything might happen — anything might be true.

Eighty long years had come and gone, but Isabel Temple, thus cruelly torn from life at the moment when it had promised her most, did not even yet rest calmly in her grave; such at least was the story, and Roger

believed it. It was in his blood to believe it. The Temples were a superstitious family, and there was nothing in Roger's upbringing to correct the tendency. His was not a sceptical or scientific mind. He was ignorant and poetical and credulous. He had always accepted unquestioningly the tale that Isabel Temple had been seen on earth long after the red clay was heaped over her murdered body. Her bridegroom had seen her, when he went to visit her on the eve of his second and unhappy marriage; his grandfather had seen her. His grandmother, who had told him Isabel's story, had told him this too, and believed it. She had added, with a bitterness foreign to his idea of her, that her husband had never been the same to her afterwards; his uncle had seen her — and had lived and died a haunted man. It was only to men the lovely, restless ghost appeared, and her appearance boded no good to him who saw. Roger knew this, but he had a curious longing to see her. He had never avoided her grave as others of his tribe did. He loved the spot, and he believed that some time he would see Isabel Temple there. She came, so the story went, to one in each generation of the family.

He gazed down at her sunken grave; a little wind, that came stealing along the floor of the grove, raised and swayed the long, hair-like grass on it, giving the curious suggestion of something prisoned under it trying to draw a long breath and float upward.

Then, when he lifted his eyes again, he saw her!

She was standing behind the gravestone, under the cherry tree, whose long white branches touched her head; standing there, with her head drooping a little, but looking steadily at him. It was just between dusk and dark now, but he saw her very plainly. She was dressed in white, with some filmy scarf over her head, and her hair hung in a dark heavy braid over her shoulder. Her face was small and ivory-white, and her eyes were very large and dark. Roger looked straight into them and they did something to him — drew something out of him that was never to be his again — his heart? his soul? He did not know. He only knew that lovely Isabel Temple had now come to him and that he was hers forever.

For a few moments that seemed years he looked at her — looked till the lure of her eyes drew him to his feet as a man rises in sleep-walking. As he slowly stood up, the low-hanging bough of a fir tree pushed his cap down over his face and blinded him. When he snatched it off, she was gone.

Roger Temple did not go home that night till the spring dawn was in the sky. Catherine was sleepless with anxiety about him. When she heard him come up the stairs, she opened her door and peeped out. Roger went along the hall without seeing her. His brilliant eyes stared straight before him, and there was something in his face that made Catherine steal back to her bed with a little shiver of fear. He looked like his uncle. She did not ask him, when they met at breakfast, where or how he had spent the night. He had been dreading the question and was relieved beyond measure when it was not asked. But, apart from that, he was hardly conscious of her presence. He ate and drank mechanically and voicelessly. When he had gone out, Catherine wagged her uncomely grey head ominously.

“He’s bewitched,” she muttered. “I know the signs. He’s seen her — drat her! It’s time she gave up that kind of work. Well, I dunno what to do — thar ain’t anything I can do, I reckon. He’ll never marry now — I’m as sure of that as of any mortal thing. He’s in love with a ghost.”

It had not yet occurred to Roger that he was in love. He thought of nothing but Isabel Temple — her lovely, lovely face, sweeter than any picture he had ever seen or any ideal he had dreamed, her long dark hair, her slim form and, more than all, her compelling eyes. He saw them wherever he looked — they drew him — he would have followed them to the end of the world, heedless of all else.

He longed for night, that he might again steal to the grave in the haunted grove. She might come again — who knew? He felt no fear, nothing but a terrible hunger to see her again. But she did not come that night — nor the next — nor the next. Two weeks went by and he had not seen her. Perhaps he would never see her again — the thought filled him with anguish not to be borne. He knew now that he loved her — Isabel Temple, dead for eighty years. This was love — this searing, torturing,

intolerably sweet thing — this possession of body and soul and spirit. The poets had sung but weakly of it. He could tell them better if he could find words. Could other men have loved at all — could any man love those blowzy, common girls of earth? It seemed impossible — absurd. There was only one thing that could be loved — that white spirit. No wonder his uncle had died. He, Roger Temple, would soon die too. That would be well. Only the dead could woo Isabel. Meanwhile he revelled in his torment and his happiness — so madly commingled that he never knew whether he was in heaven or hell. It was beautiful — and dreadful — and wonderful — and exquisite — oh, so exquisite. Mortal love could never be so exquisite. He had never lived before — now he lived in every fibre of his being.

He was glad Aunt Catherine did not worry him with questions. He had feared she would. But she never asked any questions now and she was afraid of Roger, as she had been afraid of his uncle. She dared not ask questions. It was a thing that must not be tampered with. Who knew what she might hear if she asked him questions? She was very unhappy. Something dreadful had happened to her poor boy — he had been bewitched by that hussy — he would die as his uncle had died.

“Mebbe it’s best,” she muttered. “He’s the last of the Temples, so mebbe she’ll rest in her grave when she’s killed ‘em all. I dunno what she’s sich a spite at them for — there’d be more sense if she’d haunt the Mortons, seein’ as a Morton killed her. Well, I’m mighty old and tired and worn out. It don’t seem that it’s been much use, the way I’ve slaved and fussed to bring that b’y up and keep things together for him — and now the ghost’s got him. I might as well have let him die when he was a sickly baby.”

If this had been said to Roger he would have retorted that it was worthwhile to have lived long enough to feel what he was feeling now. He would not have missed it for a score of other men’s lives. He had drunk of some immortal wine and was as a god. Even if she never came again, he had seen her once, and she had taught him life’s great secret in that one unforgettable exchange of eyes. She was his — his in spite of his ugliness and his crooked shoulder. No man could ever take her from him.

But she did come again. One evening, when the darkening grove was full of magic in the light of the rising yellow moon shining across the level field, Roger sat on the big boulder by the grave. The evening was very still; there was no sound save the echoes of noisy laughter that seemed to come up from the bay shore — drunken fishermen, likely as not. Roger resented the intrusion of such a sound in such a place — it was a sacrilege. When he came here to dream of her, only the loveliest of muted sounds should be heard — the faintest whisper of trees, the half-heard, half-felt moan of surf, the airiest sigh of wind. He never read Wordsworth now or any other book. He only sat there and thought of her, his great eyes alight, his pale face flushed with the wonder of his love.

She slipped through the dark boughs like a moonbeam and stood by the stone. Again he saw her quite plainly — saw and drank her in with his eyes. He did not feel surprise — something in him had known she would come again. He would not move a muscle lest he lose her as he had lost her before. They looked at each other — for how long? He did not know; and then — a horrible thing happened. Into that place of wonder and revelation and mystery reeled a hiccoughing, laughing creature, a drunken sailor from a harbour ship, with a leering face and desecrating breath.

“Oh, you’re here, my dear — I thought I’d catch you yet,” he said.

He caught hold of her. She screamed. Roger sprang forward and struck him in the face. In his fury of sudden rage the strength of ten seemed to animate his slender body and pass into his blow. The sailor reeled back and put up his hands. He was a coward — and even a brave man might have been daunted by that terrible white face and those blazing eyes. He backed down the path.

“Shorry — shorry,” he muttered. “Didn’t know she was your girl — shorry I butted in. Shentlemans never butt in — shorry — shir — shorry.”

He kept repeating his ridiculous “shorry” until he was out of the grove. Then he turned and ran stumblingly across the field. Roger did not follow; he went back to Isabel Temple’s grave. The girl was lying across it; he thought she was unconscious. He stooped and picked her up — she was light and small, but she was warm flesh and blood; she clung uncertainly

to him for a moment and he felt her breath on his face. He did not speak — he was too sick at heart. She did not speak either. He did not think this strange until afterwards. He was incapable of thinking just then; he was dazed, wretched, lost. Presently he became aware that she was timidly pulling his arm. It seemed that she wanted him to go with her — she was evidently frightened of that brute — he must take her to safety. And then —

She moved on down the little path and he followed. Out in the moonlit field he saw her clearly. With her drooping head, her flowing dark hair, her great brown eyes, she looked like the nymph of a wood-brook, a haunter of shadows, a creature sprung from the wild. But she was mortal maid, and he — what a fool he had been! Presently he would laugh at himself, when this dazed agony should clear away from his brain. He followed her down the long field to the bay shore. Now and then she paused and looked back to see if he were coming, but she never spoke. When she reached the shore road she turned and went along it until they came to an old grey house fronting the calm grey harbour. At its gate she paused. Roger knew now who she was. Catherine had told him about her a month ago.

She was Lilith Barr, a girl of eighteen, who had come to live with her uncle and aunt. Her father had died some months before. She was absolutely deaf as the result of some accident in childhood, and she was, as his own eyes told him, exquisitely lovely in her white, haunting style. But she was not Isabel Temple; he had tricked himself — he had lived in a fool's paradise — oh, he must get away and laugh at himself. He left her at her gate, disregarding the little hand she put timidly out — but he did not laugh at himself. He went back to Isabel Temple's grave and flung himself down on it and cried like a boy. He wept his stormy, anguished soul out on it; and when he rose and went away, he believed it was forever. He thought he could never, never go there again.

Catherine looked at him curiously the next morning. He looked wretched — haggard and hollow-eyed. She knew he had not come in till the summer dawn. But he had lost the rapt, uncanny look she hated;

suddenly she no longer felt afraid of him. With this, she began to ask questions again.

“What kept ye out so late again last night, b’y?” she said reproachfully.

Roger looked at her in her morning ugliness. He had not really seen her for weeks. Now she smote on his tortured senses, so long drugged with beauty, like a physical blow. He suddenly burst into a laughter that frightened her.

“Preserve’s, b’y, have ye gone mad? Or,” she added, “have ye seen Isabel Temple’s ghost?”

“No,” said Roger loudly and explosively. “Don’t talk any more about that damned ghost. Nobody ever saw it. The whole story is balderdash.”

He got up and went violently out, leaving Catherine aghast. Was it possible Roger had sworn? What on earth had come over the b’y? But come what had or come what would, he no longer looked fey — there was that much to be thankful for. Even an occasional oath was better than that. Catherine went stiffly about her dishwashing, resolving to have ‘Liza Adams to supper some night.

For a week Roger lived in agony — an agony of shame and humiliation and self-contempt. Then, when the edge of his bitter disappointment wore away, he made another dreadful discovery. He still loved her and longed for her just as keenly as before. He wanted madly to see her — her flowerlike face, her great, asking eyes, the sleek, braided flow of her hair. Ghost or woman — spirit or flesh — it mattered not. He could not live without her. At last his hunger for her drew him to the old grey house on the bay shore. He knew he was a fool — she would never look at him; he was only feeding the flame that must consume him. But go he must and did, seeking for his lost paradise.

He did not see her when he went in, but Mrs. Barr received him kindly and talked about her in a pleasant garrulous fashion which jarred on Roger, yet he listened greedily. Lilith, her aunt told him, had been made deaf by the accidental explosion of a gun when she was eight years old. She could not hear a sound but she could talk.

“A little, that is — not much, but enough to get along with. But she don’t like talking somehow — dunno why. She’s shy — and we think maybe she don’t like to talk much because she can’t hear her own voice. She don’t ever speak except just when she has to. But she’s been trained to lip-reading something wonderful — she can understand anything that’s said when she can see the person that’s talking. Still, it’s a terrible drawback for the poor child — she’s never had any real girl-life and she’s dreadful sensitive and retiring. We can’t get her to go out anywhere, only for lonely walks along shore by herself. We’re much obliged for what you did the other night. It ain’t safe for her to wander about alone as she does, but it ain’t often anybody from the harbour gets up this far. She was dreadful upset about it — hasn’t got over her scare yet.”

When Lilith came in, her ivory-white face went scarlet all over at the sight of Roger. She sat down in a shadowy corner. Mrs. Barr got up and went out. Roger was mute; he could find nothing to say. He could have talked glibly enough to Isabel Temple’s ghost in some unearthly tryst by her grave, but he could not find a word to say to this slip of flesh and blood. He felt very foolish and absurd, and very conscious of his twisted shoulder. What a fool he had been to come!

Then Lilith looked up at him — and smiled. A little shy, friendly smile. Roger suddenly saw her not as the tantalizing, unreal, mystic thing of the twilit grove, but as a little human creature, exquisitely pretty in her young-moon beauty, longing for companionship. He got up, forgetting his ugliness, and went across the room to her.

“Will you come for a walk,” he said eagerly. He held out his hand like a child; as a child she stood up and took it; like two children they went out and down the sunset shore. Roger was again incredibly happy. It was not the same happiness as had been his in that vanished fortnight; it was a homelier happiness with its feet on the earth. The amazing thing was that he felt she was happy too — happy because she was walking with him, “Jarback” Temple, whom no girl had even thought about. A certain secret well-spring of fancy that had seemed dry welled up in him sparkingly again.

Through the summer weeks the odd courtship went on. Roger talked to her as he had never talked to anyone. He did not find it in the least hard to talk to her, though her necessity of watching his face so closely while he talked bothered him occasionally. He felt that her intent gaze was reading his soul as well as his lips. She never talked much herself; what she did say she spoke so low that it was hardly above a whisper, but she had a voice as lovely as her face — sweet, cadenced, haunting. Roger was quite mad about her, and he was horribly afraid that he could never get up enough courage to ask her to marry him. And he was afraid that if he did, she would never consent. In spite of her shy, eager welcomes he could not believe she could care for him — for him. She liked him, she was sorry for him, but it was unthinkable that she, white, exquisite Lilith, could marry him and sit at his table and his hearth. He was a fool to dream of it.

To the existence of romance and glamour in which he lived, no gossip of the countryside penetrated. Yet much gossip there was, and at last it came blundering in on Roger to destroy his fairy world a second time. He came downstairs one night in the twilight, ready to go to Lilith. His aunt and an old crony were talking in the kitchen; the crony was old, and Catherine, supposing Roger was out of the house, was talking loudly in that horrible voice of hers with still more horrible zest and satisfaction.

“Yes, I’m guessing it’ll be a match as ye say. Oh the b’y’s doing well. He ain’t for every market, as I’m bound to admit. Ef she wan’t deaf she wouldn’t look at him, no doubt. But she has scads of money — they won’t need to do a tap of work unless they like — and she’s a good housekeeper too her aunt tells me. She’s pretty enough to suit him — he’s as particular as never was — and he wan’t crooked and she wan’t deaf when they was born, so it’s likely their children will be all right. I’m that proud when I think of the match.”

Roger fled out of the house, white of face and sick of heart. He went, not to the bay shore, but to Isabel Temple’s grave. He had never been there since the night when he had rescued Lilith, but now he rushed to it in his new agony. His aunt’s horrible practicalities had filled him with disgust — they dragged his love in the dust of sordid things. And Lilith was rich; he

had never known that — never suspected it. He could never ask her to marry him now; he must never see her again. For the second time he had lost her, and this second losing could not be borne.

He sat down on the big boulder by the grave and dropped his poor grey face in his hands, moaning in anguish. Nothing was left him, not even dreams. He hoped he could soon die.

He did not know how long he sat there — he did not know when she came. But when he lifted his miserable eyes, he saw her, sitting just a little way from him on the big stone and looking at him with something in her face that made his heart beat madly. He forgot Aunt Catherine's sacrilege — he forgot that he was a presumptuous fool. He bent forward and kissed her lips for the first time. The wonder of it loosed his bound tongue.

"Lilith," he gasped, "I love you."

She put her hand into his and nestled closer to him.

"I thought you would have told me that long ago," she said.

Uncle Richard's New Year's Dinner

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Prissy Baker was in Oscar Miller's store New Year's morning, buying matches — for New Year's was not kept as a business holiday in Quincy — when her uncle, Richard Baker, came in. He did not look at Prissy, nor did she wish him a happy New Year; she would not have dared. Uncle Richard had not been on speaking terms with her or her father, his only brother, for eight years.

He was a big, ruddy, prosperous-looking man — an uncle to be proud of, Prissy thought wistfully, if only he were like other people's uncles, or, indeed, like what he used to be himself. He was the only uncle Prissy had, and when she had been a little girl they had been great friends; but that was before the quarrel, in which Prissy had had no share, to be sure, although Uncle Richard seemed to include her in his rancour.

Richard Baker, so he informed Mr. Miller, was on his way to Navarre with a load of pork.

"I didn't intend going over until the afternoon," he said, "but Joe Hemming sent word yesterday he wouldn't be buying pork after twelve today. So I have to tote my hogs over at once. I don't care about doing business New Year's morning."

"Should think New Year's would be pretty much the same as any other day to you," said Mr. Miller, for Richard Baker was a bachelor, with only old Mrs. Janeway to keep house for him.

"Well, I always like a good dinner on New Year's," said Richard Baker. "It's about the only way I can celebrate. Mrs. Janeway wanted to spend the day with her son's family over at Oriental, so I was laying out to cook my own dinner. I got everything ready in the pantry last night, 'fore I got word about the pork. I won't get back from Navarre before one o'clock, so I reckon I'll have to put up with a cold bite."

After her Uncle Richard had driven away, Prissy walked thoughtfully home. She had planned to spend a nice, lazy holiday with the new book her father had given her at Christmas and a box of candy. She did not even mean to cook a dinner, for her father had had to go to town that morning to meet a friend and would be gone the whole day. There was nobody else to cook dinner for. Prissy's mother had died when Prissy was a baby. She was her father's housekeeper, and they had jolly times together.

But as she walked home, she could not help thinking about Uncle Richard. He would certainly have cold New Year cheer, enough to chill the whole coming year. She felt sorry for him, picturing him returning from Navarre, cold and hungry, to find a fireless house and an uncooked dinner in the pantry.

Suddenly an idea popped into Prissy's head. Dared she? Oh, she never could! But he would never know — there would be plenty of time — she would!

Prissy hurried home, put her matches away, took a regretful peep at her unopened book, then locked the door and started up the road to Uncle Richard's house half a mile away. She meant to go and cook Uncle Richard's dinner for him, get it all beautifully ready, then slip away before he came home. He would never suspect her of it. Prissy would not have him suspect for the world; she thought he would be more likely to throw a dinner of her cooking out of doors than to eat it.

Eight years before this, when Prissy had been nine years old, Richard and Irving Baker had quarrelled over the division of a piece of property. The fault had been mainly on Richard's side, and that very fact made him all the more unrelenting and stubborn. He had never spoken to his brother since, and he declared he never would. Prissy and her father felt very badly over it, but Uncle Richard did not seem to feel badly at all. To all appearance he had completely forgotten that there were such people in the world as his brother Irving and his niece Prissy.

Prissy had no trouble in breaking into Uncle Richard's house, for the woodshed door was unfastened. She tripped into the hostile kitchen with rosy cheeks and mischief sparkling in her eyes. This was an adventure —

this was fun! She would tell her father all about it when he came home at night and what a laugh they would have!

There was still a good fire in the stove, and in the pantry Prissy found the dinner in its raw state — a fine roast of fresh pork, potatoes, cabbage, turnips and the ingredients of a raisin pudding, for Richard Baker was fond of raisin puddings, and could make them as well as Mrs. Janeway could, if that was anything to boast of.

In a short time the kitchen was full of bubbling and hissings and appetizing odours. Prissy enjoyed herself hugely, and the raisin pudding, which she rather doubtfully mixed up, behaved itself beautifully.

“Uncle Richard said he’d be home by one,” said Prissy to herself, as the clock struck twelve, “so I’ll set the table now, dish up the dinner, and leave it where it will keep warm until he gets here. Then I’ll slip away home. I’d like to see his face when he steps in. I suppose he’ll think one of the Jenner girls across the street has cooked his dinner.”

Prissy soon had the table set, and she was just peppering the turnips when a gruff voice behind her said:

“Well, well, what does this mean?”

Prissy whirled around as if she had been shot, and there stood Uncle Richard in the woodshed door!

Poor Prissy! She could not have looked or felt more guilty if Uncle Richard had caught her robbing his desk. She did not drop the turnips for a wonder; but she was too confused to set them down, so she stood there holding them, her face crimson, her heart thumping, and a horrible choking in her throat.

“I — I — came up to cook your dinner for you, Uncle Richard,” she stammered. “I heard you say — in the store — that Mrs. Janeway had gone home and that you had nobody to cook your New Year’s dinner for you. So I thought I’d come and do it, but I meant to slip away before you came home.”

Poor Prissy felt that she would never get to the end of her explanation. Would Uncle Richard be angry? Would he order her from the house?

“It was very kind of you,” said Uncle Richard drily. “It’s a wonder your father let you come.”

“Father was not home, but I am sure he would not have prevented me if he had been. Father has no hard feelings against you, Uncle Richard.”

“Humph!” said Uncle Richard. “Well, since you’ve cooked the dinner you must stop and help me eat it. It smells good, I must say. Mrs. Janeway always burns pork when she roasts it. Sit down, Prissy. I’m hungry.”

They sat down. Prissy felt quite giddy and breathless, and could hardly eat for excitement; but Uncle Richard had evidently brought home a good appetite from Navarre, and he did full justice to his New Year’s dinner. He talked to Prissy too, quite kindly and politely, and when the meal was over he said slowly:

“I’m much obliged to you, Prissy, and I don’t mind owning to you that I’m sorry for my share in the quarrel, and have wanted for a long time to be friends with your father again, but I was too ashamed and proud to make the first advance. You can tell him so for me, if you like. And if he’s willing to let bygones be bygones, tell him I’d like him to come up here with you tonight when he gets home and spend the evening with me.”

“Oh, he will come, I know!” cried Prissy joyfully. “He has felt so badly about not being friendly with you, Uncle Richard. I’m as glad as can be.”

Prissy ran impulsively around the table and kissed Uncle Richard. He looked up at his tall, girlish niece with a smile of pleasure.

“You’re a good girl, Prissy, and a kindhearted one too, or you’d never have come up here to cook a dinner for a crabbed old uncle who deserved to eat cold dinners for his stubbornness. It made me cross today when folks wished me a happy New Year. It seemed like mockery when I hadn’t a soul belonging to me to make it happy. But it has brought me happiness already, and I believe it will be a happy year all the way through.”

“Indeed it will!” laughed Prissy. “I’m so happy now I could sing. I believe it was an inspiration — my idea of coming up here to cook your dinner for you.”

“You must promise to come and cook my New Year’s dinner for me every New Year we live near enough together,” said Uncle Richard.

And Prissy promised.

White Magic

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One September afternoon in the year of grace 1840 Avery and Janet Sparhallow were picking apples in their Uncle Daniel Sparhallow's big orchard. It was an afternoon of mellow sunshine; about them, beyond the orchard, were old harvest fields, mellowly bright and serene, and beyond the fields the sapphire curve of the St. Lawrence Gulf was visible through the groves of spruce and birch. There was a soft whisper of wind in the trees, and the pale purple asters that feathered the orchard grass swayed gently towards each other. Janet Sparhallow, who loved the outdoor world and its beauty, was, for the time being at least, very happy, as her little brown face, with its fine, satiny skin, plainly showed. Avery Sparhallow did not seem so happy. She worked rather abstractedly and frowned oftener than she smiled.

Avery Sparhallow was conceded to be a beauty, and had no rival in Burnley Beach. She was very pretty, with the obvious, indisputable prettiness of rich black hair, vivid, certain colour, and laughing, brilliant eyes. Nobody ever called Janet a beauty, or even thought her pretty. She was only seventeen — five years younger than Avery — and was rather lanky and weedy, with a rope of straight dark-brown hair, long, narrow, shining brown eyes and very black lashes, and a crooked, clever little mouth. She had visitations of beauty when excited, because then she flushed deeply, and colour made all the difference in the world to her; but she had never happened to look in the glass when excited, so that she had never seen herself beautiful; and hardly anybody else had ever seen her so, because she was always too shy and awkward and tonguetied in company to feel excited over anything. Yet very little could bring that transforming flush to her face: a wind off the gulf, a sudden glimpse of blue upland, a flame-red poppy, a baby's laugh, a certain footstep. As for Avery Sparhallow, she never got excited over anything — not even her wedding

dress, which had come from Charlottetown that day, and was incomparably beyond anything that had ever been seen in Burnley Beach before. For it was made of an apple-green silk, sprayed over with tiny rosebuds, which had been specially sent for to England, where Aunt Matilda Sparhallow had a brother in the silk trade. Avery Sparhallow's wedding dress was making far more of a sensation in Burnley Beach than her wedding itself was making. For Randall Burnley had been dangling after her for three years, and everybody knew that there was nobody for a Sparhallow to marry except a Burnley and nobody for a Burnley to marry except a Sparhallow.

"Only one silk dress — and I want a dozen," Avery had said scornfully.

"What would you do with a dozen silk dresses on a farm?" Janet asked wonderingly.

"Oh — what indeed?" agreed Avery, with an impatient laugh.

"Randall will think just as much of you in drugget as in silk," said Janet, meaning to comfort.

Again Avery laughed.

"That is true. Randall never notices what a woman has on. I like a man who does notice — and tells me about it. I like a man who likes me better in silk than in drugget. I will wear this rosebud silk when I'm married, and it will be supposed to last me the rest of my life and be worn on all state occasions, and in time become an heirloom like Aunt Matilda's hideous blue satin. I want a new silk dress every month."

Janet paid little attention to this kind of raving. Avery had always been more or less discontented. She would be contented enough after she was married. Nobody could be discontented who was Randall Burnley's wife. Janet was sure of that.

Janet liked picking apples; Avery did not like it; but Aunt Matilda had decreed that the red apples should be picked that afternoon, and Aunt Matilda's word was law at the Sparhallow farm, even for wilful Avery. So they worked and talked as they worked — of Avery's wedding, which was to be as soon as Bruce Gordon should arrive from Scotland.

“I wonder what Bruce will be like,” said Avery. “It is eight years since he went home to Scotland. He was sixteen then — he will be twenty-four now. He went away a boy — he will come back a man.”

“I don’t remember much about him,” said Janet. “I was only nine when he went away. He used to tease me — I do remember that.” There was a little resentment in her voice. Janet had never liked being teased. Avery laughed.

“You were so touchy, Janet. Touchy people always get teased. Bruce was very handsome — and as nice as he was handsome. Those two years he was here were the nicest, gayest time I ever had. I wish he had stayed in Canada. But of course he wouldn’t do that. His father was a rich man and Bruce was ambitious. Oh, Janet, I wish I could live in the old land. That would be life.”

Janet had heard all this before and could not understand it. She had no hankering for either Scotland or England. She loved the new land and its wild, virgin beauty. She yearned to the future, never to the past.

“I’m tired of Burnley Beach,” Avery went on passionately, shaking apples wildly off a laden bough by way of emphasis. “I know all the people — what they are — what they can be. It’s like reading a book for the twentieth time. I know where I was born and who I’ll marry — and where I’ll be buried. That’s knowing too much. All my days will be alike when I marry Randall. There will never be anything unexpected or surprising about them. I tell you Janet,” Avery seized another bough and shook it with a vengeance, “I hate the very thought of it.”

“The thought of — what?” said Janet in bewilderment.

“Of marrying Randall Burnley — or marrying anybody down here — and settling down on a farm for life.”

Then Avery sat down on the rung of her ladder and laughed at Janet’s face.

“You look stunned, Janet. Did you really think I wanted to marry Randall?”

Janet was stunned, and she did think that. How could any girl not want to marry Randall Burnley if she had the chance?

“Don’t you love him?” she asked stupidly.

Avery bit into a nut-sweet apple.

“No,” she said frankly. “Oh, I don’t hate him, of course. I like him well enough. I like him very well. But we’ll quarrel all our lives.”

“Then what are you marrying him for?” asked Janet.

“Why, I’m getting on — twenty-two — all the girls of my age are married already. I won’t be an old maid, and there’s nobody but Randall. Nobody good enough for a Sparhallow, that is. You wouldn’t want me to marry Ned Adams or John Buchanan, would you?”

“No,” said Janet, who had her full share of the Sparhallow pride.

“Well, then, of course I must marry Randall. That’s settled and there’s no use making faces over the notion. I’m not making faces, but I’m tired of hearing you talk as if you thought I adored him and must be in the seventh heaven because I was going to marry him, you romantic child.”

“Does Randall know you feel like this?” asked Janet in a low tone.

“No. Randall is like all men — vain and self-satisfied — and believes I’m crazy about him. It’s just as well to let him think so, until we’re safely married anyhow. Randall has some romantic notions too, and I’m not sure that he’d marry me if he knew, in spite of his three years’ devotion. And I have no intention of being jilted three weeks before my wedding day.”

Avery laughed again, and tossed away the core of her apple.

Janet, who had been very pale, went crimson and lovely. She could not endure hearing Randall criticized. “Vain and self-satisfied” — when there was never a man less so! She was horrified to feel that she almost hated Avery — Avery who did not love Randall.

“What a pity Randall didn’t take a fancy to you instead of me, Janet,” said Avery teasingly. “Wouldn’t you like to marry him, Janet? Wouldn’t you now?”

“No,” cried Janet angrily. “I just like Randall, I’ve liked him ever since that day when I was a little thing and he came here and saved me from being shut up all day in that dreadful dark closet because I broke Aunt Matilda’s blue cup — when I hadn’t meant to break it. He wouldn’t let her

shut me up! He is like that — he understands! I want you to marry him because he wants you, and it isn't fair that you — that you—”

“Nothing is fair in this world, child. Is it fair that I, who am so pretty — you know I am pretty, Janet — and who love life and excitement, should have to be buried on a P.E. Island farm all my days? Or else be an old maid because a Sparhallow mustn't marry beneath her? Come, Janet, don't look so woebegone. I wouldn't have told you if I'd thought you'd take it so much to heart. I'll be a good wife to Randall, never fear, and I'll keep him up to the notch of prosperity much better than if I thought him a little lower than the angels. It doesn't do to think a man perfection, Janet, because he thinks so too, and when he finds someone who agrees with him he is inclined to rest on his oars.”

“At any rate, you don't care for anyone else,” said Janet hopefully.

“Not I. I like Randall as well as I like anybody.”

“Randall won't be satisfied with that,” muttered Janet. But Avery did not hear her, having picked up her basket of apples and gone. Janet sat down on the lower rung of the ladder and gave herself up to an unpleasant reverie. Oh, how the world had changed in half an hour! She had never been so worried in her life. She was so fond of Randall — she had always been fond of him — why, he was just like a brother to her! She couldn't possibly love a brother more. And Avery was going to hurt him; it would hurt him horribly when he found out she did not love him. Janet could not bear the thought of Randall being hurt; it made her fairly savage. He must not be hurt — Avery must love him. Janet could not understand why she did not.

Surely everyone must love Randall. It had never occurred to Janet to ask herself, as Avery had asked, if she would like to marry Randall. Randall could never fancy her — a little plain, brown thing, only half grown. Nobody could think of her beside beautiful, rose-faced Avery. Janet accepted this fact unquestioningly. She had never been jealous. She only felt that she wanted Randall to have everything he wanted — to be perfectly happy. Why, it would be dreadful if he did not marry Avery — if he went and married some other girl. She would never see him then, never

have any more delightful talks with him about all the things they both loved so much — winds and delicate dawns, mysterious woods in moonlight and starry midnights, silver-white sails going out of the harbour in the magic of morning, and the grey of gulf storms. There would be nothing in life; it would just be one great, unbearable emptiness; for she, herself, would never marry. There was nobody for her to marry — and she didn't care. If she could have Randall for a real brother, she would not mind a bit being an old maid. And there was that beautiful new frame house Randall had built for his bride, which she, Janet, had helped him build, because Avery would not condescend to details of pantry and linen closet and cupboards. Janet and Randall had had such fun over the cupboards. No stranger must ever come to be mistress of that house. Randall must marry Avery, and she must love him. Could anything be done to make her love him?

“I believe I'll go and see Granny Thomas,” said Janet desperately.

She thought this was a silly idea, but it still haunted her and would not be shaken off. Granny Thomas was a very old woman who lived at Burnley Cove and was reputed to be something of a witch. That is, people who were not Sparhallows or Burnleys gave her that name. Sparhallows or Burnleys, of course, were above believing in such nonsense. Janet was above believing it; but still — the sailors along shore were careful to “keep on the good side” of Granny Thomas, lest she brew an unfavourable wind for them, and there was much talk of love potions. Janet knew that people said Peggy Buchanan would never have got Jack McLeod if Granny had not given her a love potion. Jack had never looked at Peggy, though she was after him for years; and then, all at once, he was quite mad about her — and married her — and wore her life out with jealousy. And Peggy, the homeliest of all the Buchanan girls! There must be something in it. Janet made a sudden desperate resolve. She would go to Granny and ask her for a love potion to make Avery love Randall. If Granny couldn't do any good, she couldn't do any harm. Janet was a little afraid of her, and had never been near her house, but what wouldn't she do for Randall?

Janet never lost much time in carrying out any resolution she made. The next afternoon she slipped away to visit Granny Thomas. She put on her longest dress and did her hair up for the first time. Granny must not think her a child. She rowed herself down the long pond to the row of golden-brown sand dunes that parted it from the gulf. It was a wonderful autumn day. There were wild growths and colours and scents in sweet procession all around the pond. Every curve in it revealed some little whim of loveliness. On the left bank, in a grove of birch, was Randall's new house, waiting to be sanctified by love and joy and birth. Janet loved to be alone thus with the delightful day. She was sorry when she had walked over the stretch of windy weedy sea fields and reached Granny's little tumbledown house at the Cove — sorry and a little frightened as well. But only a little; there was good stuff in Janet; she lifted the latch boldly and walked in when Granny bade. Granny was curled up on a stool by her fireplace, and if ever anybody did look like a witch, she did. She waved her pipe at another stool, and Janet sat down, gazing a little curiously at Granny, whom she had never seen at such close quarters before.

Will I look like that when I am very old? she thought, beholding Granny's wizened, marvellously wrinkled face. I wonder if anybody will be sorry when you die.

"Staring wasn't thought good manners in my time," said Granny. Then, as Janet blushed crimson under the rebuke, she added, "Keep red like that instead o' white, and you won't need no love ointment."

Janet felt a little cold thrill. How did Granny know what she had come for? Was she a real witch after all? For a moment she wished she hadn't come. Perhaps it was not right to tamper with the powers of darkness. Peggy Buchanan was notoriously unhappy. If Janet had known how to get herself away, she would have gone without asking for anything.

Then a sound came from the lean-to behind the house.

"S-s-h. I hear the devil grunting like a pig," muttered Granny, looking very impish.

But Janet smiled a little contemptuously. She knew it was a pig and no devil. Granny Thomas was only an old fraud. Her awe passed away and left her cool Sparhallow.

“Can you,” she said with her own directness, “make a — a person care for another person — care — very much?”

Granny removed her pipe and chuckled.

“What you want is toad ointment,” she said.

Toad ointment! Janet shuddered. That did not sound very nice. Granny noticed the shudder.

“Nothing like it,” she said, nodding her cronelike old grey head.

“There’s other things, but noan so sure. Put a li’l bit — oh, such a li’l bit — on his eyelids, and he’s yourn for life. You need something powerful — you’re noan so pretty — only when you’re blushing.”

Janet was blushing again. So Granny thought she wanted the charm for herself! Well, what did it matter? Randall was the only one to be considered.

“Is it very — expensive?” she faltered. She had not much money. Money was no plentiful thing on a P.E.I. farm in 1840.

“Oh, noa — oh, noa,” Granny leered. “I don’t sell it. I gives it. I like to see young folks happy. You don’t need much, as I’ve said — just a li’l smootch and you’ll have your man, and send old Granny a bite o’ the wedding cake and fig o’ baccy for luck, and a bid to the fir-r-st christening! Doan’t forget that, dearie.”

Janet was cold again with anger. She hated old Granny Thomas. She would never come near her again.

“I’d rather pay you its worth,” she said coldly.

“You couldn’t, dearie. What money could be eno’ for such a treasure? But that’s the Sparhallow pride. Well, go, see if the Sparhallow pride and the Sparhallow money will buy you your lad’s love.”

Granny looked so angry that Janet hastened to appease her.

“Oh, please forgive me — I meant no offence. Only — it must have cost you much trouble to make it.”

Granny chuckled again. She was vastly pleased to see a Sparhallow suing to her — a Sparhallow!

“Toads am cheap,” she said. “It’s all in the knowing how and the time o’ the moon. Here, take this li’l pill box — there’s eno’ in it — and put a li’l bit on his eyelids when you’ve gotten the chance — and when he looks at you, he’ll love you. Mind you, though, that he looks at no other first — it’s the first one he sees that he’ll love. That’s the way it works.”

“Thank you.” Janet took the little box. She wished she dared to go at once. But perhaps this would anger Granny. Granny looked at her with a twinkle in her little, incredibly old eyes.

“Be off,” she said. “You’re in a hurry to go — you’re as proud as any of the proud Sparhallows. But I bear you no grudge. I likes proud people — when they have to come to me to get help.”

Janet found herself outside with a relieved heart in her bosom and her little box in her hand. For a moment she was tempted to throw it away. But no — Randall would be so unhappy if he found out Avery didn’t love him! She would try the ointment at least — she would try to forget about the toads and not let herself think how it was made — something might come of it.

Janet hurried home along the shore, where a silvery wave broke in a little lovely silvery curve on the sand. She was so happy that her cheeks burned, and Randall Burnley, who was sitting on the edge of her flat when she reached the pond, looked at her with admiration. Janet dropped her box into her pocket stealthily when she saw him. What with her guilty secret, she hardly knew whether she was glad or not when he said he was going to row her up the pond.

“I saw you go down an hour ago and I’ve been waiting ever since,” he said. “Where have you been?”

“Oh — I just — wanted a walk — this lovely day,” said Janet miserably. She felt that she was telling an untruth and this hurt her horribly — especially when it was to Randall. This was what came of truck with witches — you were led into falsehood and deception straightaway. Again Janet was tempted to drop Granny’s pill box into the

depths of Burnley Pond — and again she decided not to because she saw Randall Burnley's deep-set, blue-grey eyes, that could look tender or sorrowful or passionate or whimsical as he willed, and thought how they would look when he found Avery did not love him.

So Janet drowned the voice of conscience and was brazenly happy — happy because Randall Burnley rowed her up the pond — happy because he walked halfway home with her over the autumnal fields — happy because he talked of the day and the sea and the golden weather, as only Randall could talk. But she thought she was happy because she had in her pocket what might make Avery love him.

Randall went as far as the stile in the birch wood between the Burnley and the Sparhallow land — and he kept her there talking for another half-hour — and though he talked only of a book he had read and a new puppy he was training, Janet listened with her soul in her ears. She talked too — quite freely; she was never in the least shy or tonguetied or awkward in Randall's company. There she was always at her best, with a delightful feeling of being understood. She wondered if he noticed she had her hair done up. Her eyes shone and her brown face was full of rosy, kissable hues. When he finally turned away homeward, life went flat. Janet decided she was very tired after her long walk and her trying interview. But it did not matter, since she had her love potion. That was so much nicer a name than toad ointment.

That night Janet rubbed mutton tallow on her hands. She had never done that before — she had thought it vain and foolish — though Avery did it every night. But that afternoon on the pond Randall had said something about the beautiful shape of her pretty slender hands. He had never paid her a compliment before. Her hands were brown and a little hard — not soft and white like Avery's. So Janet resorted to the mutton tallow. If one had a scrap of beauty, if only in one's hands, one might as well take care of it.

Having got her ointment, the next thing was to make use of it. This was not so easy — because, in the first place, it must not be done when there was any danger of Avery's seeing some other than Randall first — and it

must be done without Avery's knowing it. The two problems combined were almost too much for Janet. She bided her chance like a watchful cat — but it did not come. Two weeks went by and it had not come. Janet was getting very desperate. The wedding day was only a week away. The bride's cake was made and the turkeys fattened. The invitations were sent out. Janet's own bridesmaid dress was ready. And still the little pill box in the till of Janet's blue chest was unopened. She had never even opened it, lest virtue escape.

Then her chance came at last, unexpectedly. One evening at dusk, when Janet was crossing the little dark upstairs hall, Aunt Matilda called up to her.

"Janet, send Avery down. There is a young man wanting to see her."

Aunt Matilda was laughing a little — as she always did when Randall came. It was a habit with her, hanging over from the early days of Randall's courtship. Janet went on into their room to tell Avery. And lo, Avery was lying asleep on her bed, tired out from her busy day. Janet, after one glance, flew to her chest. She took out her pill box and opened it, a little fearfully. The toad ointment was there, dark and unpleasant enough to view. Janet tiptoed breathlessly to the bed and gingerly scraped the tip of her finger in the ointment.

She said so little would be enough — oh, I hope I'm not doing wrong.

Trembling with excitement, she brushed lightly the white lids of Avery's eyes. Avery stirred and opened them. Janet guiltily thrust her pill box behind her.

"Randall is downstairs asking for you, Avery."

Avery sat up, looking annoyed. She had not expected Randall that evening and would greatly have preferred a continuance of her nap. She went down crossly enough, but looking very lovely, flushed from sleep. Janet stood in their room, clasping her cold hands nervously over her breast. Would the charm work? Oh, she must know — she must know. She could not wait. After a few moments that seemed like years she crept down the stairs and out into the dusk of the June-warm September night. Like a shadow she slipped up to the open parlour window and looked

cautiously in between the white muslin curtains. The next minute she had fallen on her knees in the mint bed. She wished she could die then and there.

The young man in the parlour was not Randall Burnley. He was dark and smart and handsome; he was sitting on the sofa by Avery's side, holding her hands in his, smiling into her rosy, delighted, excited face. And he was Bruce Gordon — no doubt of that. Bruce Gordon, the expected cousin from Scotland!

"Oh, what have I done? What have I done?" moaned poor Janet, wringing her hands. She had seen Avery's face quite plainly — had seen the look in her eyes. Avery had never looked at Randall Burnley like that. Granny Thomas' abominable ointment had worked all right — and Avery had fallen in love with the wrong man.

Janet, cold with horror and remorse, dragged herself up to the window again and listened. She must know — she must be sure. She could hear only a word here and there, but that word was enough.

"I thought you promised to wait for me, Avery," Bruce said reproachfully.

"You were so long in coming back — I thought you had forgotten me," cried Avery.

"I think I did forget a little, Avery. I was such a boy. But now — well, thank Heaven, I haven't come too late."

There was a silence, and shameless Janet, peering above the window sill, saw what she saw. It was enough. She crept away upstairs to her room. She was lying there across the bed when Avery swept in — a splendid, transfigured Avery, flushed triumphant. Janet sat up, pallid, tearstained, and looked at her.

"Janet," said Avery, "I am going to marry Bruce Gordon next Wednesday night instead of Randall Burnley."

Janet sprang forward and caught Avery's hand.

"You must not," she cried wildly. "It's all my fault — oh, if I could only die — I got the love ointment from Granny Thomas to rub on your

eyes to make you love the first man you would see. I meant it to be Randall — I thought it was Randall — oh, Avery!”

Avery had been listening, between amazement and anger. Now anger mastered amazement.

“Janet Sparhallow,” she cried, “are you crazy? Or do you mean that you went to Granny Thomas — you, a Sparhallow! — and asked her for a love philtre to make me love Randall Burnley?”

“I didn’t tell her it was for you — she thought I wanted it for myself,” moaned Janet. “Oh, we must undo it — I’ll go to her again — no doubt she knows of some way to undo the spell—”

Avery, whose rages never lasted long, threw back her dark head and laughed ringingly.

“Janet Sparhallow, you talk as if you lived in the dark ages! The idea of supposing that horrid old woman could give you love philtres! Why, girl, I’ve always loved Bruce — always. But I thought he’d forgotten me. And tonight when he came I found he hadn’t. There’s the whole thing in a nutshell. I’m going to marry him and go home with him to Scotland.”

“And what about Randall?” said Janet, corpse-white.

“Oh, Randall — pooh! Do you suppose I’m worrying about Randall? But you must go to him tomorrow and tell him for me, Janet.”

“I will not — I will not.”

“Then I’ll tell him myself — and I’ll tell him about you going to Granny,” said Avery cruelly. “Janet, don’t stand there looking like that. I’ve no patience with you. I shall be perfectly happy with Bruce — I would have been miserable with Randall. I know I shan’t sleep a wink tonight — I’m so excited. Why, Janet, I’ll be Mrs. Gordon of Gordon Brae — and I’ll have everything heart can desire and the man of my heart to boot. What has lanky Randall Burnley with his little six-roomed house to set against that?”

If Avery did not sleep, neither did Janet. She lay awake till dawn, suffering such misery as she had never endured in her life before. She knew she must go to Randall Burnley tomorrow and break his heart. If she

did not, Avery would tell him — tell him what Janet had done. And he must not know that — he must not. Janet could not bear that thought.

It was a pallid, dull-eyed Janet who went through the birch wood to the Burnley farm next afternoon, leaving behind her an excited household where the sudden change of bridegrooms, as announced by Avery, had rather upset everybody. Janet found Randall working in the garden of his new house — setting out rosebushes for Avery — Avery, who was to jilt him at the very altar, so to speak. He came over to open the gate for Janet, smiling his dear smile. It was a dear smile — Janet caught her breath over the dearness of it — and she was going to blot it off his face.

She spoke out, with plainness and directness. When you had to deal a mortal blow, why try to lighten it?

“Avery sent me to tell you that she is going to marry Bruce Gordon instead of you. He came last night — and she says that she has always liked him best.”

A very curious change came over Randall’s face — but not the change Janet had expected to see. Instead of turning pale Randall flushed; and instead of a sharp cry of pain and incredulity, Randall said in no uncertain tones, “Thank God!”

Janet wondered if she were dreaming. Granny Thomas’ love potion seemed to have turned the world upside down. For Randall’s arms were about her and Randall was pressing his lean bronzed cheek to hers and Randall was saying:

“Now I can tell you, Janet, how much I love you.”

“Me? Me!” choked Janet.

“You. Why, you’re in the very core of my heart, girl. Don’t tell me you can’t love me — you can — you must — why, Janet,” for his eyes had caught and locked with hers for a minute, “you do!”

There were five minutes about which nobody can tell anything, for even Randall and Janet never knew clearly just what happened in those five minutes. Then Janet, feeling somehow as if she had died and then come back to life, found her tongue.

“Three years ago you came courting Avery,” she said reproachfully.

“Three years ago you were a child. I did not think about you. I wanted a wife — and Avery was pretty. I thought I was in love with her. Then you grew up all at once — and we were such good friends — I never could talk to Avery — she wasn’t interested in anything I said — and you have eyes that catch a man — I’ve always thought of your eyes. But I was honour-bound to Avery — I didn’t dream you cared. You must marry me next Wednesday, Janet — we’ll have a double wedding. You won’t mind — being married — so soon?”

“Oh, no — I won’t — mind,” said Janet dazedly. “Only — oh, Randall — I must tell you — I didn’t mean to tell you — I’d have rather died — but now — I must tell you about it now — because I can’t bear anything hidden between us. I went to old Granny Thomas — and got a love ointment from her — to make Avery love you, because I knew she didn’t — and I wanted you to be happy — Randall, don’t — I can’t talk when you do that! Do you think Granny’s ointment could have made her care for Bruce?”

Randall laughed — the little, low laugh of the triumphant lover.

“If it did, I’m glad of it. But I need no such ointment on my eyes to make me love you — you carry your philtre in that elfin little face of yours, Janet.”

A Dinner of Herbs

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“But—but,” said Robin Lyle blankly, “that is impossible, Myra.”

In the bright lexicon of Mrs. George Lyle there was no such word as impossible.

“Not at all,” she said briskly. “In fact, it’s necessary. The twins must have a room to themselves now. The boys will have Grandma’s room. So of course Gladys must room with you. That big west room is large enough for a dozen, I’m sure.”

There was a note of dissatisfaction in Myra Lyle’s voice. She had always been secretly resentful that Robin should have that big sunny room—the only room with a fireplace. Myra wanted it for a guest-room. But as long as Grandma Lyle lived one could do nothing about it. And in some matters George was stubborn, though generally his wife led him round by the ear.

Robin continued to look blank. Yet she said nothing more. She had not lived sixteen years under the same roof with Myra Lyle without learning the futility of saying anything—even when her mother was alive. And now that her mother was dead, there would be no check on Myra. George simply did not count—George who had always thought, thought still, and would continue to think, that Robin must be “brought up.”

Her silence and her blankness worried Myra a bit. Myra could not understand silence—could not understand anyone who did not think at the top of her voice and empty her feelings out to the dregs. Of course, Robin had always been a sly, secretive thing.

“Why should you mind sharing your room with Gladys?” she demanded, answering Robin’s silence. “I’d think you’d *like* to have a young life so near you to keep you from growing old.”

“I don’t mind growing old if I can be left to do it in peace,” said Robin. “I’m sure I won’t like rooming with a young girl.”

“Well, it won’t be for long. I think Irving Keyes will see to that.”

There was a smirk on Myra’s face which had the same effect on Robin that a dig in the ribs with Myra’s fat elbow would have had. In fact, she could not endure it. She turned and went out of the room, in silence. Myra sighed—she had “put up” with that for sixteen years. Then Myra smiled. Irving Keyes! And a widower always meant business. Myra went back to her sewing. Things were working out very nicely. Grandma was out of the way at last, and Robin would soon be off their hands. A good match too—one the clan would approve of! George had been foolish to think Robin had a notion of Michael Stanislaws—Michael, who was poor and hadn’t even the decency to be ashamed of it. Shell-shocked in the war, with a lean brown face scarred by shrapnel, and a leg that wasn’t much use, he was just baching it over at Owl’s Roost and pottering round his show dahlias, with two black cats forever at his heels. No, no, Robin was no fool. But she must be told not to dilly-dally with her good fortune. Before her mother’s death there had been some talk of Irving Keyes’s interest in Blanche Foster, a handsome girl much younger than Robin. Myra found it hard to believe that anyone could prefer pale, old-maidish Robin to her. Yet, as Irving Keyes seemed to be blessedly inclined that way, Robin must be made to understand that she must not let him slip through her fingers—again. She would never have such another chance. A well-to-do merchant with the most expensive car in the village and a house with more ornamentation on it than any house in the country! Myra sighed and wondered why fate had given her only a farmer. She felt she would have shone as a general merchant’s wife.

“As soon as Robin is married,” she decided, “I’ll give Gladys the guest-room and have the west room done over.”

* * *

Robin went to her room—the only spot on earth she had ever been able to call her own. And, as always when she went into it, the peace and dignity and beauty of it seemed to envelop her like a charm. She was in a different

world—a world where George and Myra could not quarrel or the hired girl be impertinent to her; and the everlasting noise and racket of the household died away at its threshold like the spent wave of a troubled sea. For years all that had supported her through the drudgery of days spent waiting on a querulous invalid was the certainty of finding herself alone in her dear room at night where dreams gave some mysterious strength for another day.

The north window looked down on leagues of rippled sea and distant, misty, fairy-like coasts. Between it and the sand-dunes was only a dwindling grove of ragged old spruces.

The west window looked out on Owl's Roost, with its orchard and garden, where First and Second Peter prowled darkly, and Michael himself played his violin at hours when all decent people should be in bed. Sometimes, too, he ate his slender meals in the orchard, under an enormous apple tree, never dreaming that Robin Lyle was watching him from her window and wishing shamelessly that she might play "Thou" to his crust of bread and jug of milk. Nor was the book of verse wanting. Michael read as he ate, propping his book up against the jug.

And now all this would be taken from her. She knew exactly what rooming with Gladys and her shrieking chums would mean. No more dreaming; no more shadowy hours of listening to Michael's stormy music in the orchard; no more early dawns watching the silent mysterious ships drift by the dunes to the harbour; never again alone with the night.

No, she could not endure it. Even sleek, prosperous Irving Keyes would be better than that.

"Life isn't fair," said Robin drearily, as if there was any use in saying it.

She went to the glass and looked at herself. She looked at her straight, black, bobbed hair, dark blue eyes and white, heart-shaped face; at her wide mouth quirked up at the corners so that she always seemed to be laughing even when very sad. And she thought of Blanche Foster's red-gold hair and flashing black eyes and brilliant complexion. Blanche Foster,

who had always made Robin feel old and dowdy and silly. It was amazing that Irving Keyes didn't prefer her, but since he didn't . . .

Robin shivered a little and sat down by the west window in the moonlight. The window was open, and the faint, cold, sweet perfumes of night drifted in—blent with the whiff of Michael Stanislaw's pipe, neither faint nor sweet, but very alluring. Once, when she was eighteen, she had had a fleeting fancy for Irving Keyes—and he knew it. Even yet he was attractive—until he spoke. But his funny vulgar stories and his great haw-haws! And his love for practical jokes! He still thought it a joke to stick out his foot and trip somebody up. And he still thought it wit to call eggs cackleberries.

Irving Keyes had been heard to boast that he had got everything he wanted in life. And now he wanted Robin Lyle. Robin thought he would get that too, despite his roars of laughter and the jigarees on his house.

What else was there for her? Arnold Clive? No! She shivered again. Austere, religious Arnold with the face of a fanatic: high, narrow brow, deep-set intolerant eyes, merciless mouth—quite out of the question! And, after all, she liked Irving very well.

She looked over at Owl's Roost. What a nice, gentle little old house it was; a nice lazy old house—a house that had folded its hands and said, "I will rest." It had none of the Lyle efficiency and up-to-dateness about it, with a sly little eyebrow window above the porch roof and the magic of trees around it. She loved the trees around Owl's Roost. There were no trees around George's house. Myra thought shade unsanitary.

Michael was smoking his pipe at the fence with an orchard full of mysterious moonlit delights behind him. Robin wished she could go down and talk with him. She had sometimes talked with him over the fence. Not often, and yet she felt curiously well acquainted with him. They had laughed together the first time they had talked, and when two people have laughed—really laughed—together they are good friends for life.

Though Michael did not laugh much. If anything, he was bitter. But there was something stimulating and pungent about his bitterness—like

choke-cherries. They puckered your mouth horribly, but still you hankered for them.

“I wonder what he is thinking of,” thought Robin.

She *knew* she only thought it. Yet a voice drifted up to her from the orchard.

“I’m thinking how very silvery that dark cloud must be on the moon side,” said the voice. “Come down here and help me watch it leaving the moon. It’s as good as an eclipse.”

Robin flew downstairs, out of the side door and along the brick walk, worn by many feet. Michael was hanging over the fence. First Peter sat hunched up beside him, and Second Peter smoothed about his shoulder. First Peter always let Robin stroke him, but Second Peter swore at her. Second Peter was not to be hoodwinked.

Robin stood beside Michael on the other side of the fence, where the moonlight would lie white as snow on the flagged walk when the cloud passed. She had never been through the fence. There was no gate between the Lyle yard and the old orchard, lying fragrant and velvety under the enchantment of night.

They stood there together in a wonderful silence until the cloud had passed.

“ ‘He who has seen the full moon break forth from behind a dark cloud at night, has been present like an archangel at the creation of light and of the world,’ ” quoted Michael, whacking his pipe on the fence and putting it in his pocket. “Wasn’t it worth watching, Miss Lyle?”

If there was one thing she hated more than another, it was having Michael call her “Miss Lyle.” She hated it so much that she answered “Yes,” stiffly and unenthusiastically.

“It’s impossible to avoid the conclusion that something is bothering you,” said Michael. “Tell First Peter about it and I’ll listen in.”

A perfectly crazy impulse mastered Robin. She *would* tell him. She had to tell somebody.

“I can’t make up my mind which of two men to marry,” she said bluntly.

Michael was silent for an appreciable space. All the sounds audible were First Peter purring and a dog taking the countryside into his confidence two farms away. His silence got on Robin's nerves.

"That wasn't quite true," she said crossly. "There *are* two—but there's only one I could really consider possible. And the trouble is I *don't* want to marry him—or anyone," she added hastily, telling a second tarradiddle.

"Then why marry him?" said Michael. "Why marry at all if you don't want to, in this day of woman's emancipation?"

"The trouble is—I'm not emancipated," sighed Robin, wishing that First Peter would stop purring. It was outrageous that a cat should be so blatantly happy. Though why shouldn't he be happy? Couldn't he sit on Michael's shoulder and snuggle his nose against Michael's face? Wasn't he doing it now, darn him! Yet she was still talking on. "I'm twenty years behind the times. I'm thirty-three and I'm not trained to do anything. I've no special gift. I can't sew or teach or pound a typewriter. All I can do, or want to do, is keep house. And I *must* marry—or room with Gladys."

"Do you think Irving Keyes would be a more agreeable room-mate?" said Michael sarcastically—though she had not said anything about Irving Keyes.

"Well, he won't plaster my dressing table with powder—or raise Cain when he can't find his hairpins—or yell to Baal if he has chilblains—or look in the mirror the same time I do—*purposely*," said Robin defiantly.

"I think I see what you're up against," said Michael, beginning to fill his pipe again.

"You don't—not fully—a *man* couldn't," snapped Robin. "Gladys will talk me to death about her beaus. Gladys thinks there's no fun in having a beau unless you can tell everybody about him and what he said and what he did. She'll laugh at my funny old pictures with big sleeves and hats high on the head. She'll come in and wake me up in the wee sma's. She'll insist on having the most awful silver pig with a blue velvet pincushion on his back on my table. She'll bring her rampageous school chums in and chitter-chatter for hours. And everything will be either wonderful or priceless. I'll never be alone any more," concluded Robin pathetically.

"*That* gets me," said Michael. "And the alternative is Irving Keyes. A handsome fellow with gobs of money. Why don't you like him?"

"I do. But I don't feel like marrying him, for several reasons."

"For instance . . ."

"He likes bread thick, and I like it thin," said Robin flippantly. She felt she had been absurd in telling Michael as much as she had.

"Every proper man likes bread thick. I've no sympathy with you there."

"Our taste in jokes is entirely different."

"Ah, *that's* serious," said Michael, not sounding serious.

"And . . ." Robin looked at another cloud that was creeping over the moon. "I—I want someone else."

"Oh!" Second Peter snarled, as if he had been pushed aside with a foot.

"He's the only man in the world for me," said Robin, looking straight at Michael.

"That's a large order out of approximately five hundred million men," said Michael drily.

He began to smoke insolently. The cloud was over the moon, and the world was dark. Robin felt cold and old and silly and empty.

"I must go in," she said.

"Wait a sec." Michael was rummaging in his pocket. "Here's something for your rose-jar."

He handed her over a paper bag full of dried rose-leaves.

"All I can give any woman now—withered rose-leaves," he said lightly. "Irving's a good fellow. Perhaps you can teach him to laugh in the right place. I'd have a try."

* * *

Robin went away for two weeks to visit a school chum two years older than herself whose daughter was engaged. She had not been away for a visit for ten years. When she came back, Michael asked her (still over the fence) if good wishes were in order.

“Not yet,” said Robin airily. She thought Michael looked tired and a bit old.

“I’ve promised to give him his answer today. *Write* it to him. I couldn’t say ‘yes’ face to face.”

“But I’m quite sure ‘yes’ is the best thing to say,” said Michael, stooping to tickle Second Peter’s ear. Second Peter snarled. You *couldn’t* hoodwink Second Peter.

“Of course it is,” said Robin piteously. “But the trouble is—I don’t *want* to say it—Michael.”

Somehow their eyes met. Eyes can say so much in just a second. At least Robin’s could. Michael’s didn’t say anything. She realized that he had looked into her heart, but that she had not even had a peep into his.

“I’m horribly poor,” said Michael slowly.

“But laughter would always be a guest in our house,” said Robin.

“I always have First Peter sleeping on the foot of the bed.”

“Why not Second Peter too?”

“Everything in my house is chipped or mended or torn.”

“We wouldn’t be afraid to use it, then.”

“I’ve got a temper, and shell-shock didn’t improve it. We’d fight often.”

“Husbands and wives have a right to fight now and then, haven’t they?”

“Getting up before breakfast and working between meals isn’t supposed to be to my liking.”

“After thirty-three years of George’s efficiency, a lazy man would be nice for a change.”

“I’m inclined to be a vegetarian.”

“ ‘Better a dinner of herbs,’ ” quoted Robin.

“All the ready cash I have in the world just at present is ten dollars.”

“Enough for a licence and a wedding ring,” said Robin brazenly.

“Let’s take a chance at it then,” said Michael, looking at First Peter.

Robin laughed under her breath. She sobbed the next minute. She flung out her hands as if to push Michael and Peter and the fence a thousand

miles away.

“Oh, my dear—my dear, how funny you are,” she said. “Why, I wouldn’t marry you if you were the last one of the five hundred million left alive in the world.”

Michael’s face was expressionless. He looked past her at Second Peter on an apple-tree bough, still refusing to be hoodwinked.

“Sorry,” he said. “I thought you would like the idea. My mistake.”

George Lyle scowled at Robin when she went in.

“Don’t make a fool of yourself over Michael Stanislaws,” he said bluntly.

“But isn’t that just what I’ve done?” said Robin.

“What do you mean?”

“I’ve just refused to marry him.”

“Thank heaven you’d enough sense for that,” said relieved George.

There were five doors on the way to her room and Robin banged them all. Oh, so he pitied her! She had badgered him into asking her to marry him out of pity. Oh, she’d show him. She flew to her table—she would write Irving Keyes his answer on the spot.

“Cat, are you laughing?” Michael was saying furiously to Second Peter.

Robin went down to the mailbox ostentatiously after dinner to mail her letter. Michael was tying up his dahlias as she passed and waved his hand airily at her. Robin had to wave back because she hadn’t been able to make up her mind as yet whether to hate or ignore him. She waved with the hand that held Irving Keyes’s letter.

Michael had gone from the garden when she came back. He was sitting on his shaky verandah talking to a man who had presumably come in the smart green car parked in the lane. There was a pile of shabby old books on the chair between them. She could hear Michael laughing. She went up to her room—hers for one day more only—and sat down by the west window. The mailbox was hidden from her view by the wild cherry at the gate, but presently the postman’s motor wheeled by. Robin shivered. Her

letter was gone—irrevocably. At once a panic horror of her future seized her. Why had she? Oh, why had she?

At sunset Michael came to the fence and called her. Robin, deciding that you should at least be civil to a rejected suitor, asked him from her window what he wanted.

“I’ve a sin on my conscience. Perhaps worse—a mistake,” Michael called back. “Come down and let me confess.”

Robin told herself she was not interested in Michael’s sins, but she went down. He was leaning on the fence and his cap was pulled down so far that she couldn’t see his eyes.

“Do you think Irving Keyes has your letter by now?” he said impertinently.

“He should have.”

“Well, he hasn’t. That letter is in ashes in my kitchen stove. I went down and took it out of the mailbox before the postman came. You can put me in the pen for that, I believe.”

Robin looked at Second Peter, who had the air of making up his mind to the inevitable.

“Why did you do that?”

“I found it was simply impossible to let you marry another man. Why did you refuse my heart and hand and my few insignificant worldly goods this morning?”

“I wasn’t going to be married out of pity.”

“Pity! Do you suppose I’ve committed a felony—or is it only a misdemeanour—out of pity? I’ve loved you ever since that first day we talked over the fence. But I’m so poor—and lame—and ugly.”

“You’re not ugly and not very lame and I don’t care how poor you are,” said Robin so shamelessly that Second Peter blushed for her.

Michael leaned over the fence and took her hand.

“I found out this afternoon that my old edition of *The Pilgrim’s Progress* is worth a thousand dollars. Shall we put the money in the bank for a rainy day or run over to Europe for our honeymoon in places I know

over there? There's a village in the Apennines—'the cloudy Apennines' . . .

"Let us go to Europe," said Robin recklessly. "Umbrellas have been invented since that proverb was."

Second Peter was so disgusted at what followed that he stalked away bristling. But he had always known it—always expected it. You couldn't hoodwink Second Peter.

"Did you read that letter?" Robin asked, before she went in to have it out with George and Myra.

"Of course not," said Michael indignantly. "I may be a thief, but I'm not a sneak."

"It's a pity you didn't," said Robin coolly, "because if you had you'd have seen that I refused him."

A House Divided Against Itself

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All the omens had pointed to it for days. Big George . . . who was five foot one . . . wondered how he could have been blind to them. Salt had howled dismally all Monday. On Tuesday Little George . . . who was six foot two . . . had smashed the mirror he had shaved by for forty years. On Wednesday Big George had failed to pick up a pin he had seen. On Thursday Little George had walked under Tom Appleby's ladder at the lobster cannery. And on Friday . . . Friday mind you . . . Big and Little George between them had contrived to spill the salt at supper. Was it any wonder disaster followed? Directly after that fatal meal Little George had sneaked off to the lottery at the Point and brought the thing home.

Big George was not superstitious. What did spilled salt and broken mirrors matter to a good Presbyterian? But he did believe in dreams . . . having Biblical warrant for the same. And he had had a horrible one two weeks previously of seeing the full moon, one moment burning black, the next livid red, coming nearer and nearer to the earth . . . waking, just as it seemed near enough to be touched, with a howl of agony that shattered the stillness of the spring night at Little Spruce for yards around. Big George, who had kept a careful and copious diary of his dreams for forty years, looked them all over and concluded that none of them had been as awe-inspiring as this one.

Then there was that peculiar sound the gulf had been making of late. When the Old Lady of the Gulf moaned like that, somebody was going to sup sorrow. But Little George did not connect it with his winning the fifth prize in the lottery Captain Leon Buote had been getting up down at Chapel Point in aid of the Old Sailors' Home. Little George had bought a ticket off Young Mosey Gautier, just to please the kid, and on the night when the numbers were drawn he thought he might as well saunter round to Chapel Point and see if he had any luck.

He had!

“Little” George Beelby and “Big” George Beelby were cousins. Big George was six years the older, and the adjective that had been appropriate in childhood stuck to him, as things stick in Rose River and Little Spruce Cove, all his life. The two Georges were old sailors and ’longshore fishermen and they had lived together in Little George’s little house at Spruce Cove for thirty years. Big George had been born a bachelor but Little George was a widower. His marriage was so far in the dim past that Big George had almost forgiven him for it, though he occasionally cast it up to him in the frequent quarrels by which they enlivened what might otherwise have been the rather monotonous life of retired sea-folk.

They were not and never had been beautiful, though that fact worried them little. Big George had a face that was actually broader than it was long and a flaming red beard. He could not cook but he was a good washer and mender. He could also knit socks and write poetry. Big George quite fancied himself as a poet. He had written an epic which he was fond of declaiming in a surprisingly great voice for his thin body. When he was low in his mind he felt that he had missed his calling. Also, that nearly everybody in the world was going to be damned.

“I should’a been a poet,” he would say mournfully to his orange-hued cat. The cat always agreed with him but Little George sometimes snorted contemptuously.

If he had a vanity it was in the elaborate anchors tattooed on the backs of his hands. He was a Liberal in politics and had Laurier’s picture hanging over his bed. He thought Little Spruce Cove the most desirable spot on earth and resented any insinuation to the contrary.

“I like to have the sea, the blue lone sea, at my very doorstep like this,” he boomed to the “writing man,” who had asked if they never found Little Spruce lonesome.

“Just part of his poetical nature,” Little George had explained aside, so that the writing man should not think Big George feeble-minded. Little George lived in secret terror and Big George in secret hope that the writing man would put them in a book.

By the side of Big George, Little George looked enormous. His freckled face was literally half forehead, and a network of large purplish-red veins over nose and cheeks looked like some monstrous spider. He wore a great drooping grey moustache, like a horseshoe, that did not seem to belong to his face at all. But he was a genial soul and enjoyed his own good cooking, especially his famous pea soups and clam chowders. His political idol was Sir John Macdonald, whose picture hung over the clock shelf, and he had been heard to say . . . not in Big George's hearing . . . that he admired women in the abstract. He had a harmless hobby of collecting skulls from the old Indian graveyard down at Big Spruce and ornamenting the fence of his potato plot with them. He and Big George quarreled about it every time he brought a new skull home. Big George declared that it was indecent and unnatural and un-Presbyterian. But the skulls remained on the poles.

* * *

It was late at night when Little George returned from the raffle, so the explosion was deferred till morning. Little George unwrapped something from the parcel he was carrying, looked at it dubiously, shook his head, and tried the effect of it on the clock shelf. Something in him liked it. Something else was uneasy.

"She's got a real fine figger," he muttered, with a doubtful glance at Big George sleeping soundly in his bunk with a yellow cat rolled up in a golden ball on his stomach. "But I don't know what he'll think of her . . . I really don't. Nor the minister."

These considerations did not keep Little George awake. He fell promptly asleep and Aurora, goddess of the dawn, kept her vigil on the clock shelf through the hours of darkness and was the first thing Big George's eyes rested on when he opened them in the morning. There she stood, her lithe, lovely form poised on tiptoe, smitten by a red-gold beam from the sun that was rising across the harbour.

“What the devil is that?” said Big George, thinking this was another dream. He flung himself out of his bunk, upsetting an indignant cat, and walked across the room.

“It ain’t a dream,” he said incredulously. “It’s a statoo . . . a naked statoo!”

The dog . . . whose name was Salt . . . that had been curled up at Little George’s feet, bounded to the floor after the cat . . . whose name was Mustard. He liked the cat well enough but he wasn’t going to have her sitting there on the floor grinning at him. The resultant disturbance awoke Little George, who sat up drowsily and inquired what the row was about.

“George Beelby,” said Big George ominously, “what is that up there?”

“Oh, that. That’s an alabaster statooette. I drew it for fifth prize at Captain Buote’s lottery last night. Rather pretty, ain’t it?”

Big George’s voice boomed out.

“Pretty! It’s indecent and obscene, that’s what it is. You take it right down and fire it out in the gulf as far as you can fire it.”

If Big George had not thus flown off the handle, it is probable that Little George would have done exactly that, being somewhat uneasy regarding the minister and the look of the thing generally. But he was not going to be bullied into doing it by that little runt of a Big George and he’d let him see it.

“Oh, I guess not,” he retorted coolly. “I guess it’s going to stay right there. Stop yelping now and let your hair curl.”

Big George’s scanty love-locks showed no sign of curling but his red beard fairly crackled with indignation. He began striding about the room in a fine rage, biting first his right hand and then his left. Salt fled one way and Mustard another, leaving the Georges to fight it out.

“ ’Tain’t right to have any kind of statoos, let alone naked ones. It’s agin God’s law. ‘Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven immidge . . . ’ ”

“Good gosh! I ain’t made it and I ain’t worshipping it . . . ”

“That’ll come . . . that’ll come. And a French gew-gaw at that.”

“No, ’tain’t . . . it’s made in Germany and her name’s there at the bottom . . . Aurorer. Jest a gal, that’s all.”

“Do you think the Apostle Paul ever carried a thing like that around with him?” demanded Big George. “Or” . . . as an afterthought that might influence Little George . . . “Sir John A. Macdonald?”

“Not likely. St. Paul was kind of a woman-hater like yourself. As for Sir John, he was too busy defeating the Grits at every election to have time for the fine arts. Sir Wilfrid would have more probably. Now stop chewing your fists and pretend you’re grown up even if you ain’t, Georgie. See if you can dress yourself like a man.”

“Thank you . . . thank you.” Big George became ominously calm. “As for Sir Wilfrid, *he’s* dressed. And I am entirely satisfied to be classed with the Apostle Paul. Entirely! My conscience guides my conduct, you ribald old thing.”

“Been making a meal of the dictionary, it seems,” retorted Little George, yanking his pants off their nail, “and it don’t seem to have agreed with your stomach. Better take a dose of sody. Your conscience, as you call it, hain’t nothing to do with it . . . only your prejudices. Look at that writing man. Hain’t he got half a dozen of them statoos in his summer cottage up the river?”

“If he’s a fool . . . and wuss . . . is that any reason why you should be? Think of that and your immortal soul, George Beelby.”

“This ain’t my day for thinking,” retorted the imperturbable Little George. “Now that you’ve blown off your steam, just set the porridge pot on. You’ll feel better when you’ve had your breakfast. Can’t ’preciate works of art properly on a empty stomach, Georgie.”

Big George glared at him. Then he grabbed the porridge pot, yanked open the door and hurled the pot through it. The pot bounded and leaped and clattered down the rocks to the sandy cove below. Salt and Mustard fled out after it.

“Some day you’ll drive me too far,” said Little George darkly. “You’re just a narrow-minded, small-souled old maid, that’s what *you* are. If you hadn’t a dirty mind you wouldn’t be throwing a fit ’cause you see a stone woman’s legs. Your own don’t look so artistic, prancing around in that shirt-tail, let me tell you that. You really ought to wear pajamas, Georgie.”

“I fired your old pot out to show you I’m in earnest,” roared Big George. “I tell you I won’t have no naked hussy in this house, George Beelby.”

“Yell louder, can’t you?” said Little George. “This happens to be *my* house.”

“Oh, it is, is it? Very well. Very well. I’ll tell you this right here and now. It ain’t big enough for me and you and your Roarer.”

“You ain’t the first person that idee’s occurred to,” said Little George. “I’ve had too many tastes of your jaw of late.”

Big George stopped prancing and tried to look as dignified as a man with nothing on but a shirt can look as he laid down the ultimatum he never doubted would bring Little George to his senses.

“I’ve stood all I’m a-going to. I’ve stood them skulls of yours for years but I tell you right here and now, George Beelby, I won’t stand for that atrocity. If it’s to remain . . . *I* leave.”

“As for leaving or staying, suit yourself. Aurorer stays there on that clock shelf,” retorted Little George, striding out and down the rocks to rescue his maltreated porridge pot.

* * *

Breakfast was a gloomy meal. Big George looked very determined, but Little George was not worried. They had had a worse row than this last week when he had caught Big George stealing a piece of raisin pie he had put away for his own snack. But when the silent meal was over and Big George ostentatiously dragged an old, battered, bulging valise out from under the bunk and began packing his few chattels into it, Little George realized that the crisis was serious. Well, all right . . . all right. Big George needn’t think he could bully him into giving up Aurorer. He had won her and he was going to keep her, and Big George could go to Hades.

Little George really thought Hades. He had picked up the word from the minister and thought it sounded more respectable than hell.

Little George watched Big George stealthily out of his pale woolly eyes as he washed up the dishes and fed Mustard, who came scratching at the window pane. The morning's sunlit promise had been delusive and it was now, as Little George reflected testily, one of them still dark misty days calc'lated to dampen one's spirits. This was what came of ladders and looking-glasses!

Big George packed his picture of Laurier and the model of a ship with crimson hull and white sails that had long adorned the catcornered shelf above his bunk. These were indisputably his. But when it came to their small library there was a difficulty.

"Which of these books am I to take?" he demanded frostily.

"Whichever you like," said Little George, getting out his baking board. There were only two books in the lot he cared a hoot about anyhow. Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* and *The Horrible Confession and Execution of John Murdock (one of the Emigrants who lately left this Country) who was hanged at Brockville, Upper Canada, on the third day of September last for the inhuman murder of his own brother.*

When Little George saw Big George pack the latter in his valise, he had much ado to suppress a grisly groan.

"I'm leaving you the Martyrs and all the dime novels," said Big George defensively. "What about the dog and cat?"

"You'd better take the cat," said Little George, measuring out flour. "It'll match your whiskers."

This suited Big George. Mustard was his favourite.

"And the weegee board?"

"Take it. I don't hold no dealings with the devil."

Big George shut and strapped his valise, put the reluctant Mustard into a bag and, with the bag over his shoulder and his Sunday hat on his head, he strode out of the house and down the rocks without even a glance at Little George, who was ostentatiously making raisin pie.

Little George watched him out of sight, still incredulously. Then he looked at the white, beautiful cause of all the mischief exulting on the clock shelf.

“Well, he didn’t get you out, my beauty, and I’m jiggered if he’s ever going to. No, siree! I’ve said it and I’ll stick to it. Anyhow, my ears won’t have to ache any longer listening to that old epic of his. And now I can wear my earrings again.”

* * *

Little George really thought Big George would come back when he had cooled down. But he underrated the strength of Big George’s principles or stubbornness.

The first thing he heard was that Big George had rented Tom Wilkins’ old shanty at Upper Spruce and was living there. But not with Mustard. If Big George did not come back, Mustard did. Mustard was scratching at the window three days after her ignominious departure in a bag. Little George let her in and fed her. It wasn’t his fault if Big George couldn’t keep his cat. He, Little George, wasn’t going to see no dumb animal starve. Mustard stayed home until Sunday when Big George, knowing Little George was safely in church, came down to Little Spruce and got her. All to no purpose. Again Mustard came back . . . and yet again. After the third attempt Big George gave it up in bitterness of soul.

“Do I want his old yellor flannel cat?” he demanded of the writing man. “God knows I don’t. What hurts my feelings is that he knew the critter would go back. That’s why he offered her so free. The depth of that man! I hear he’s going round circulating mean false things about me and saying I’ll soon be sick of living on salt codfish and glad to sneak back for a smell of good cooking. He’ll see . . . he’ll see. I ain’t never made a god of my stomach as he does. You should ’a’ heard the riot he raised one day last month ’cause I et a piece of mouldy old raisin pie he’d cached for himself, the greedy pig. And saying it’ll be too lonesome here for one of my gabby propensities. Yessir, he said them words! Me, lonesome! This place just suits me down to the ground. See the scenery. I’m a lover of nature, sir, my favourite being the moon. And them contented cows up on the Point pasture. I could gaze at ’em by the hour. They’re all the society I

want, sir . . . present company always excepted. Not,” added Big George feelingly, “but what Little George had his p’int. The blueberry puddings that man could make! And them clam chowders of his stuck to the ribs better’n most things. But I had my soul to think of, hadn’t I? And my morals?”

* * *

The quarrel and separation of the Georges caused quite a sensation in Rose River and along the coves. Few thought it would last. But the spring and summer passed without a reconciliation and people gave up expecting it. The Beelbys had always been a stubborn gang. Neither of the old men preserved any dignified reserve regarding their mutual wrongs. When they met, as they occasionally did, they glared at each other and passed on in silence. But each was forever waylaying neighbours and passers-by to tell his side of the story.

“I hear he’s going about telling I kicked the dog in the abdomen,” Little George would snort. “What’s abdomen, mister?”

“Belly,” said his victim bluntly.

“Look at that now. I knew he was lying. I never kicked no dog in the belly. Touched his ribs with the toe of my boot once, that’s all . . . for good and sufficient cause. Says I lured his cat back. What do I want of his cat? Always bringing dead rats in and leaving them around. And determined to sleep on *my* abdomen at night. If he’d fed his cat right she wouldn’t ’a’ left him. But I ain’t going to turn no broken-hearted, ill-used beast out of my door. I hear he’s raving round about moons and contented cows. The only use that man has for moons is to predict the weather and as for contented cows or discontented cows, it’s all one to him. But I’m glad he’s happy. So am I. I can sing all I want to now without having someone sarcastically saying, ‘A good voice for chawing turnips,’ or ‘Hark from the tombs a doleful sound,’ or maddening things like that. I had to endure that for years. But did I make a fuss about it? Or about his yelping that old epic of his half the night . . . cackling and chortling and guffawing and gurgling

and yapping and yarring till I felt as if I'd been run through a meat chopper? Did I mind his always conterdicting me? No, it kept life from being too tejus. Did I mind his being a fundamentalist? No, I respected his principles and I give up wearing these earrings because he didn't think they was Presbyterian ornaments. Did I mind his getting up at unearthly hours Sunday mornings to pray? Very devowt! I did not. Some people might 'a' said his method of praying was irreverent . . . talking to God same as he would to me or you. I didn't mind the irreverence but what I didn't like was his habit of swinging right round in the middle of a prayer and giving the devil a licking. Still, did I make a fuss over it? No, I overlooked all them things and yet when I bring home a beautiful statooette like Aurorer there, Big George up and throws three different kinds. Well, I'd rather have Aurorer than him any day and you can tell him so. She's easier to look at for one thing and for another she don't sneak into the pantry unbeknownst to me and eat up my private snacks. I ain't said much about this affair . . . I've let Big George do the talking . . . but some day when I get time I'm going to talk an awful lot, mister."

"I'm told that poor ass of a Little George spends most of his spare time imagining he's strewing flowers on my grave," Big George told the minister. "And I hear he's been making fun of my prayers. Will you believe it, he had the impidence to tell me once that I had to make my prayers shorter 'cause they interfered with his morning nap? Did I shorten them? Not by a jugful. Spun 'em out twice as long. What I put up with from that man! His dog nigh about chewed up my Victory bond but did I complain? God knows I didn't. But when my cat had kittens on his shirt he tore up the turf. Talking of cats, I hear my cat has kittens again. You'd think Little George might 'a' sent me one. I hear there's three. And I haven't got a thing except a couple of ducks. They're company . . . but knowing you have to eat 'em up some day spoils things. Look a'here, minister. Why did Jacob let out a howl and weep when he kissed Rachel?"

The minister didn't know, or if he did he kept it to himself. Some Rose Riverites thought the minister was too fond of drawing the Georges out.

“Because he found out it wasn’t what it was cracked up to be,” chuckled Big George. He was happy all day because he had put one over on the minister.

But Big George was soon in no mood for joking about kisses ancient or modern. He nearly had an apoplectic fit when he heard that some of the summer boarders up the river had gone to Little George, under the impression that *he* was the poet, and asked him to recite his epic. The awful thing was that Little George did. Went through it from start to finish and never let on he wasn’t the true author.

“From worshipping immidges to stealing poetry is only what you’d expect. You can see how that man’s character’s degen’rating.”

“Mebbe the Widow Terlizzick’ll reform him,” chuckled his auditor.

“What’s that?”

“Didn’t you know Little George is going to see her Sunday nights? Folks think it will be a match.”

Big George was literally struck dumb for a time, but after that he turned himself loose on the subject to the delighted Riverites and Covites.

“Wants to work another wife to death, I s’pose. I really thought Little George had more sense. But you can’t trust a man who’s been married once . . . though you’d think he’d be the very one to know better. And him the ugliest man on the north shore! Not that the fair Terlizzick is any beauty with that big hairy mole on her chin and her sloppy ankles. I’d say she looked like a dog fight. And fat! It’s well he’s not buying her by the pound. She’s been married twice already. Some folks never seem to know when to stop. Her father got drunk once and walked up the church aisle in his nightshirt. Nice thing to have in the family. I’m sorry for Little George but it’s certainly coming to him. I hear he sits in church and looks at her like an intoxicated dog. Next thing he’ll be serenading her. Did I ever tell you Little George thinks he can sing? Once I says to him, ‘D’ye call that yowling music?’ But the Terlizzicks never had any ear. Well, she’ll have her troubles. I could tell a few things if I wanted to.”

Big George took Little George’s matrimonial designs very much to heart. When he was observed standing on a rock waving his short arms

wildly in the air, it was a safe bet that he was not, as heretofore, shouting his epic out to waves and stars, but abusing the Widow Terlizzick. She was, he told the world, a hooded cobra, a big fat slob, a rapacious female animal and a tigress. He professed profound pity for Little George. The poor fellow little dreamed what he was in for. Taking two men's leavings! But them widders did bamboozle people so. And the Terlizzick had so much experience. Two husbands done in. A lady really orter be more economical with husbands.

All these compliments, being duly reported to Little George and Mrs. Terlizzick, may or may not have pleased them. Little George kept his own counsel and brought up Mustard's three kittens ostentatiously.

The white goddess of the morning still stood tiptoe on the clock shelf but the dust had gathered on her shapely legs. When Captain Leon started up another lottery at Chapel Point, Little George said it orter be stopped by law and Mosey Gautier had to run for his life when he tried to sell a ticket to him.

* * *

Spring and summer passed; autumn wore away. The Rose River folks banked their houses with seaweed and the summer boarders departed . . . all but the writing man, who always hung on to his shanty till the gulf froze over.

One evening Big George set out to walk around the shore to Lighthouse Point. It was a long walk and he had various rheumatic spots about his anatomy, but there would be some cronies at the lighthouse and Big George thought an evening of social intercourse would be better for his nerves than playing tit-tat-x, right hand against left, at home. These short days and long, early-falling evenings were depressing, he admitted. And the Wilkins' shanty was draughty. The lighthouse keeper's wife might even give them a bite of lunch. Big George's cooking had not improved much. He had an uneasy suspicion that he was too old to learn. But he

would not let his thoughts dwell on Little George's suet puddings and clam chowders and hot biscuits. That way madness lay.

There had been a skim of snow that morning, melting into dampness as the sun rose for an hour or two of watery brightness before shrouding himself in clouds. The brief day had grown cold and raw as it wore on, and now land and sea lay wrapped in a grey brooding stillness. Far away Big George heard a train whistle blow distinctly. The Old Lady of the Gulf moaned now and then. A storm was coming up but Big George was not afraid of storms. He would come home by the river road; the tide would be too high on his return to come by the Hole in the Wall.

As a matter of fact, when he reached the long red headland known as the Hole in the Wall, he blankly realized that the tide was already ahead of him. There was no getting around it. He could not climb its steep rugged sides, and to go back to where a road led down to the shore meant a lot of extra walking.

A daring inspiration came to Big George. Since he could not get around the Hole in the Wall, could he go through it? Nobody ever had gone through it. But there had to be a first time for anything. It was certainly bigger than last year. Nothing venture, nothing win.

The Hole in the Wall had begun with a tiny opening through the relatively thin side of the headland. Every year it grew a little larger as the yielding sandstone crumbled under wave and frost. It was a fair size now. Big George was small and thin. He reckoned if he could get his head through, the rest of him could follow.

He lay down and cautiously began squirming through. It was tighter than he had thought. The sides seemed suddenly very thick. All at once Big George decided that he was not cut out for a pioneer. He would go back to the road. He tried to. He could not move. Somehow his coat had got ruckled up around his shoulders and jammed him tight. Vainly he twisted and writhed and tugged. The big rock seemed to hold him as in a grip of iron. The more he struggled the tighter he seemed to get wedged in. Finally he lay still with a cold sweat of horror breaking out over him. His head was through the Hole in the Wall. His shoulders were tight in it. His

legs . . . where were his legs? There was no sensation in them but they were probably hanging down the rock wall on the hinder side.

What a position to be in! On a lonely shore on a fast-darkening November night with a storm coming up! He would never live through it. He would die of heart failure before morning, like old Captain Jobby, who tried to climb through a gate when he was drunk and stuck there.

Nobody could see him and it was no use to yell. Before him as behind him was nothing but a curving shadowy cove bounded by another headland. No house, no human being in sight. Nevertheless, Big George yelled with what little breath he had at command.

“Wouldn’t you just as soon sing as make that noise?” queried Little George, sticking his head around the huge boulder that screened him.

Big George stared at the familiar spidery nose and huge moustache. Of all the men in River and Cove to catch him in this predicament, that it should be Little George! What the devil was he doing squatted here a mile away from home on such a night?

“I wasn’t aiming to sing, not being afflicted as some folks are,” said Big George sarcastically. “I was just trying to fill my lungs with air.”

“Why don’t you come all the way through?” jeered Little George, coming around the boulder.

“ ’Cause I can’t and you know it,” said Big George savagely. “Look here, George Beelby, you and I ain’t friends but I’m a human being, ain’t I?”

“There are times when I can see a distant resemblance to one in you,” acknowledged Little George, sitting calmly down on a jut of the boulder.

“Well then, in the name of humanity, help me out of this.”

“I dunno’s I can,” said Little George dubiously. “Seems to me the only way would be to yank you back by the legs and I can’t get around the Point to do that.”

“If you can get a good grip on my shoulder or on my coat, you can yank me out this way. It only wants a good pull. I can’t get my arms free to help myself.”

“And I dunno’s I will,” went on Little George, as if he had not been interrupted.

“You . . . dunno’s . . . you *will*! D’ye mean to say you’ll leave me here to die a night like this? Well, George Beelby . . .”

“No, I ain’t aiming to do that. It’ll be your own fault if you’re left here. You’ve got to show you’ve some sense if I’m going to pull you out. Will you come home and behave yourself if I do?”

“If you want me to come home you know all you’ve got to do,” snapped Big George. “Shoot out your Roarer.”

“Aurorer stays,” said Little George briefly.

“Then I stay too.” Big George imitated Little George’s brevity . . . partly because he had very little breath to use for talking at all. Little George took out his pipe and proceeded to light it.

“I’ll give you a few minutes to reflect ’fore I go. I don’t aim to stay long here in the damp. I dunno how a little wizened creature like you will stand it here all night. Anyhow, you’ll have some feeling after this for the poor camel trying to get through the needle’s eye.”

“Call yourself a Christian!” sneered Big George.

“Don’t be peevish now. This ain’t a question of religion . . . this is a question of common sense,” retorted Little George.

Big George made a terrific effort to free himself, but not even a tremor of the grim headland was produced thereby.

Little George jeered, “You’d orter see yourself with your red whiskers sticking out of that hole. And I s’pose the rest of you is sticking out on the other side. Beautiful rear view if anyone comes along. Not that anyone likely will this time of night. But if you’re still alive in the morning I’m going to get the writing man to take a snap of your hind legs. Be sensible, Georgie. I’ve got pea soup for supper . . . hot pea soup.”

“Take your pea soup to hell,” said Big George.

Followed a lot of silence. Big George was thinking hard. He knew where his extremities were now, for the cold was nipping them like a weasel. The rock around him was hard as iron. It was beginning to rain and the wind was rising. Already the showers of spray were spuming up from

the rocks when the waves struck them. By morning he would be dead or gibbering.

But it was bitter to knuckle under to Little George and that white-limbed hussy on the clock shelf. Big George tried to pluck a little honour from the jaws of defeat.

“If I do come back, will you promise not to marry that fat widow?”

“I ain’t promising nothing . . . but I never had any intention of marrying any widow, fat or lean.”

Big George could not repress a jeer.

“I s’pose that means she wouldn’t have you.”

“She didn’t get the chance to have me or not have me. I ain’t contracting any alliance with the house of Terlizzick. Well, I’m for home and pea soup. Coming, Georgie?”

Big George emitted a sigh, partly of exhaustion, partly of surrender. Life was too complicated. He was beaten.

“Pull me out of this damn hole,” he said sourly, “and I don’t care how many naked women you have round.”

“One’s enough,” said Little George.

He got a grip somehow of Big George’s coat over his shoulders and tugged manfully. Big George howled. He was sure his legs were being torn off at the hips. Then he found they were still attached to his body, standing on the rock beside Little George.

“Wring your whiskers out and hurry,” said Little George. “I’m afraid that pea soup’ll be scorched. It’s sitting on the back of the stove.”

* * *

This was comfort now . . . with the cold rain beating down outside and the gulf beginning to bellow. The stove was purring a lyric of beech and maple and Mustard was licking her beautiful family under it. The pea soup was sublime. After all, them earrings rather became Little George . . . balanced the moustache, so to speak.

And Aurore . . . but what was the matter with Aurore?

“What you been doing with that old heathen graven immidge of yours?” demanded Big George, setting down half drunk his cup of militant tea with a thud.

“Give her a coat of bronze paint,” said Little George proudly. “Looks real tasty, don’t it? Knew you’d be sneaking home some of these long-come-shorts and thought I’d show you I could be considerate of your principles.”

“Then you can scrape it off again,” said Big George firmly. “Think I’m going to have an unclothed nigger sitting up there? If I’ve gotter be looking at a naked woman day in and day out, I want a white one for decency’s sake!”

The Man Who Forgot

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I knew them all well . . . I had been minister in Claremont for ten years when it happened. In fact, it was I who preached the fatal sermon that shut the door of the past behind Gordon Mitchell. Not that I so much as thought of Gordon Mitchell when I preached it.

If a minister preaches a sermon that hits home to some particular individual, people always suppose he meant it for that very person. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred he never thought of him. A hand-me-down cap is bound to fit somebody's head, but it doesn't follow that it was made for him.

Dr. Stirling—"Old Doc" as he was affectionately called by everybody in Claremont—and his daughter, Gertrude, were particular friends of mine. They were not the kind of people to whom a minister dare not say anything until he has said it over to himself first to make sure it is a safe thing to say. Old Doc was one of my elders and we fought continually over church problems, but that did not interfere with our friendship. By a tacit agreement we never spoke of church affairs when I went to his house. We left that for the session room.

The Stirling house was at the extreme west of Claremont. It was an old house—the doctor's father, who had been a lawyer, and his grandfather, who had been a merchant, had lived their long lives out in it before him. Moreover, it was the ugliest house, not only in Claremont, but in the whole world—there is no doubt about that. It was more like a huge red brick box than anything else, too high for its breadth, and made still higher by a bulbous glass cupola on top.

But the doctor would never have it altered; he loved it as it was. The fine old trees around it veiled its ugliness somewhat, and inside—oh, there was nothing the matter with it there.

Internally it was a house of delightful personality. And the living room was the most delightful room in it. There the doctor and Gertrude always entertained their guests. It was a spacious, beautiful, dignified, friendly old room. The chairs clamoured to be sat upon; the mirrors had so often reflected beautiful women that they lent a certain charm to every face. In that room, it seemed to me, there were always in winter warm fires, old books, comfort, safety from storm, odours of pine; and in summer, coolness and shadows and wine-hues of flowers.

And Jigglesqueak! Jigglesqueak was always there winter and summer. It seemed to me he must always have been there, though Old Doc said he was a mere pup of fourteen. He was as ugly as the house and, like the house, had a beautiful soul.

Everybody loved Jigglesqueak. The sole point Old Doc and Anthony Fairweather had in common was their love of Jigglesqueak. They both agreed that Jigglesqueak was the only dog on earth that deserved to be a dog.

Old Doc was a character in his way. Claremont people believed that he could raise the dead to life if he wanted to and only refrained because it would be crossing the purposes of the Almighty.

He had done it once, they said. I have been solemnly assured by many sane people that Dan Hewlett was dead when Old Doc brought him to. You can believe that or not as you like.

But when living people saw Old Doc's long, lean face, with its big bushy white moustache and twinkling brown eyes, at their bedside and heard him growling, "There's nothing the matter with you" . . . why, they believed it until it was true.

He was a brusque old fellow and, older and all as he was, it didn't prevent him from rapping out a good round "d——n" when occasion offered, even before the cloth. Outside of Gertrude, his work, and Jigglesqueak, the only thing he cared for was golf. Our Claremont links are good in their way, and Old Doc was the best golfer in the burg—unless it was Anthony Fairweather. Nothing made Old Doc so furious as a hint

that Anthony Fairweather could rival him in golf. But then, Old Doc did not like Anthony.

And Gertrude did!

Gertrude was about twenty at this time, a tall girl so stately that at school she had always been nicknamed “The Princess.” As a child she had been rather plain, but now she was beautiful—with a beauty you never tired of. Hair as black as the proverbial raven’s wing, eyes as blue as eyes could be, lips as softly red as the queen of roses. She was restrained and subtle, with exquisite taste, a wonderful laugh, and a personality that shone through her beautiful flesh like a lamp through alabaster.

Naturally she had some faults. She was a shade too fond of jewels and wore too many—it was the sole flaw in her taste. Some people said she overdressed, but I never thought it. Rich as her clothes were they were always subordinate to her. Her father liked to see her beautifully gowned.

And she was impatient. It could not be said that she suffered fools gladly. Also, she was stubborn, and I think if she had lived with other women those women would have had to play second fiddle in most things. But there was no other woman except a little maid in the house—never had been, since Gertrude’s mother had died at her birth. That was one time Old Doc could not bring back the dead.

He had brought Gertrude up by himself without assistance from any woman and was a little over-proud of it—and of her. Yet she justified his pride—beautiful, gracious, humorous, companionable, tolerant, loyal. If I had been a young man instead of an old bachelor minister I would have been mad about her.

All the Claremont young men were, but the only two who mattered were Anthony Fairweather and Gordon Mitchell. Only one of them mattered to Gertrude—Anthony Fairweather.

But Old Doc, who would rather have liked her to marry Gordon if marry she must, was determined she shouldn’t marry Anthony.

“Because of his Italian blood,” he said.

But in my heart I always believed that it was because he wouldn’t have a son-in-law who could rival him in golf.

To be sure, Old Doc had always detested Anthony. Everybody else in Claremont liked him and distrusted him, with the exception of Gordon Mitchell and myself. Gordon didn't like him and I didn't distrust him.

* * *

Captain Fairweather some twenty-two years before had married an Italian girl and brought her home to Claremont. It was before my time, but I gathered that Claremont had not taken Mrs. Fairweather to its bosom. She died when Anthony was four years old. Captain Fairweather broke his heart and followed her three years later, leaving Anthony to the care of a grim old aunt who brought him up rigorously and always believed he was just watching for a chance to do something dreadful.

If he had inherited his father's plump, rosy face and big blue eyes he would have stood a better chance. But Anthony had his handsome mother's dark eyes, smooth olive skin, and glossy, night-black hair. He "looked foreign"—old Margaret Grimes asserted it when she bathed him in the first hour of his life.

Certainly he always had a grace and fire and charm that no other Claremont boy possessed. And, from the day of his christening when he had pummelled the nose of the officiating minister, Anthony was always in the limelight by reason of some graceless exploit or other. He stole apples, he put up a placard of measles where there were none, he dropped a lump of ice down the Reverend John Arnold's neck at a church supper, he stuck pins in the other boys in Sunday School, he took an alarm clock to church, he wrote a false but truthful obituary of a prominent citizen and sent it to the Croyden papers, he put a plateful of soap instead of cheese on the table at my induction festivities, and he was accused of shutting the skunk up in the classroom.

In any other boy all this would just have been considered natural boy-devilment, but in poor Anthony it was, of course, "that Italian blood."

Everything that was a mystery was pinned to him. But nobody except Old Doc really believed that Anthony started the fire that burned half the

village down when he was about fifteen—the fire in which he almost lost his life saving the horses in Alex Peasley’s stable.

That act won him approval in Claremont eyes, and public opinion was beginning to veer in his favour when a silly anonymous “poem” was published in the *Claremont Weekly*, making fun of all our prominent folks. Anthony was put down for the author, in spite of all his denials, and was never forgiven for it, since nobody ever forgives ridicule.

I knew he never wrote it. If he had, it wouldn’t have been such insane trash—it would have cut to the bone. For Anthony had brains, though people were loath to admit it. They couldn’t see how it was possible when he was “so fond of fiddling.”

There was one thing they couldn’t blame on his Italian blood—his gift for swimming. Captain Fairweather had been a star swimmer. Anthony swam across the Claremont river when he was eight years old and people bragged of the exploit to strangers for years in spite of Anthony’s disrepute. Swimming, golfing, and fiddling were Anthony’s hobbies, and he rode them so devotedly that he had no time to get into any serious scrapes. But people expected he would some day, and Old Doc both expected and hoped it.

Anthony and Gertrude had been playfellows in childhood, his home being across the street from hers. Once Anthony inveigled Gertrude away to the shore and they got caught in the quicksand and nearly swallowed up. That gave Old Doc his first scunner of Anthony. And when Gertrude fell off the stilts on which Anthony was teaching her to walk and hurt her back so that she was laid up for weeks, Old Doc was his enemy for life, although Gertrude always insisted that it wasn’t Anthony’s fault at all.

Her father forbade her ever playing with Anthony again, and she had nothing more to do with him until they met one night at a dance nine years later and loved each other—loved deeply, passionately, incurably. Naturally I was not at the dance, but I soon heard all about it. Old Doc himself told me.

He was furious—had forbidden Anthony the house, and had told Gertrude she was a fool. Gertrude had merely smiled and settled down to

wait. She worshipped her father and wouldn't have disobeyed or hurt him, even for Anthony. But she knew time was on her side; she knew her father would come round in due course.

She and Anthony couldn't be married for a few years anyway. He had to get through college—he was attending the university in Croyden and coming home for weekends. Gertrude took it all with a fair degree of philosophy, except that she was horribly annoyed with Gordon Mitchell, who lived next door to the Stirlings and had long ago made up his mind to marry Gertrude. It did not discourage him at all to know that she had an understanding with Anthony Fairweather. Gordon knew that Old Doc was on his side and he had, besides, quite a bit of confidence in his own powers of attraction.

I ought to have liked Gordon: he was the most faithful member of my adult Bible class. He had always been what is called “religiously inclined,” which shouldn't have been a count against him in a minister's eyes. Anthony once called him a “smug little hypocrite,” but he was nothing of the sort. He was sincere and always impressed me as being morbidly conscientious. His mother told me that once, when a boy, he had stolen a jar of marmalade from the pantry and after a week of torment had confessed to her and done penance by crawling on bare hands and knees across the thistly meadow behind their lot. She seemed rather proud of this and of some similar things.

Gordon was likable enough in a superficial way and was popular in Claremont society. He was quite good-looking, with regular features, thick fair hair parted in the middle, and small, well-kept hands of which he was said to be very vain. In boyhood he was reputed to be a “sissy” owing to the fact or belief that at seven years of age he had pieced a quilt. His mother was foolish enough to mention it with pride. But he had lived this down.

He sang fairly well—though Gertrude said his voice was “muddy,” whatever she meant by that—and was a member of the choir. His reputation was immaculate, and he took care people should know it. Besides being, as I have said, morbidly conscientious, he was abnormally

sensitive to the opinions of other people. He was intelligent but had no sense of humour whatever—even Old Doc admitted that. But in every other respect Old Doc thought him a model and was exasperated because Gertrude didn't fancy him.

Gertrude admitted that he had an immense number of points.

"But he doesn't add up right," she said.

"What fault can you find in him?" challenged Old Doc angrily.

"None. But he tastes flat. He has all the virtues, but the pinch of salt was left out," said Gertrude, with her nose in the air.

Old Doc snorted and kicked a chair across the room.

"I can't see why you don't like him."

"But I do like him," asseverated Gertrude. "I like fully half the young men in Claremont. What then? I can't marry half the young men in Claremont, can I?"

"What can you do with a girl like that?" he demanded.

"Nothing," I said, "but let her marry Anthony."

"Never," said Old Doc, punishing his left hand with his right. "If you back Anthony up, Crandall, I swear I'll leave your church and go over to the Baptists."

I kept silence thereafter, not because I was afraid of Old Doc going over to the Baptists—who wouldn't have taken him as a gift—but because I knew I would only do Anthony harm by sticking up for him.

Gordon had a good position in his uncle's store and would eventually be head man and his uncle's heir. He was kind and obliging, but I always thought he was selfish. Certainly his mother spoiled him. His father was dead and she doted on Gordon. She was not in the least like him—she was a tall, austere, reserved woman who, for some reason I never could fathom, was a tremendous favourite with Old Doc.

Anthony and Gordon had always hated each other, even long before they set their fancy on the same woman. They were enemies when they were boys. Gordon aggravated Anthony by sneering at his Italian mother one day, and Anthony took off Gordon's trousers and made him go home

through Claremont in his poor little shirt-tail. Then Gordon poisoned Anthony's dog.

To be sure, he always asserted that he meant the poison for a mongrel from over the river that was always snooping around, stealing. I believed him, for I knew Gordon would never have flouted public opinion by poisoning respectable village dogs. But Anthony didn't. From that day he hated Gordon with an indescribable intensity—the Italian blood did come out there. Yet I thought Gordon's hatred the deadlier thing of the two.

* * *

I think Gordon was quite sure he would win Gertrude. He couldn't believe that any girl would remain persistently indifferent to him. Anthony had cast some bewitchment over her, but that would pass—especially when Anthony, having got through college, suddenly shot off to Montreal to attend the School of Mines. He had sold his old Strad for nine hundred dollars to get board money. Nobody in Claremont but myself—not even Gertrude, I believe—realized what selling it meant to him. He walked the floor o' nights for a week afterwards. He told me he felt as if he had sold his own flesh and blood.

I went down to the Stirlings the night after Anthony had gone away and found Old Doc nearly speechless with rage. Anthony, it seemed, had come boldly there the previous evening to say goodbye to Gertrude, and Gertrude had insisted on seeing him and seeing him alone. But this wasn't what had maddened Old Doc.

It was the fact that Anthony had deliberately and wantonly—and apparently with Gertrude's toleration—adorned with horns and a tail a photograph of Gordon Mitchell that was standing on the piano. If Anthony had actually transmogrified Gordon into a devil Old Doc couldn't have been more worked up about it. He called Anthony all the names he could lay his tongue to—Old Doc's vocabulary of abuse was peculiarly rich—and prophesied a violent end for him.

“I hope not,” I said mildly. “I shouldn’t like to see your son-in-law hanged.”

“Son-in-law! He’ll never be a son-in-law of mine. No, thank God, I’ve fixed that. Gertrude has solemnly promised me that she’ll never marry Anthony Fairweather without my consent. You know how likely she is to get that.”

Yes, I knew. I knew quite well that after Old Doc had fumed for a year or two, while Gertrude sat tight, he would suddenly give in and tell her to marry the Old Boy if she wanted to. I suppose Old Doc sensed something of this in my face, for he roared,

“What are you chuckling inside about, Crandall? Do you think she won’t keep her promise? I tell you she will.”

I knew that too. Old Doc had brought Gertrude up to keep a promise. It was one of the few things he had put immense insistence upon. There was a sore spot somewhere in Old Doc—he had suffered horribly once because of someone’s broken promise—I never heard the rights of the story—and he was determined that Gertrude should have it grained into her never to break a promise once given.

I knew she never would but I wasn’t much worried over it. In spite of that promise I knew that Gordon Mitchell, hanging around more persistently than ever now that Anthony was gone, had just about as good a chance of marrying Gertrude Stirling as I had. Gertrude smiled and went to dances and flirted a wee bit with nice boys and wore delightful clothes and petted her father and thoroughly enjoyed herself.

And Old Doc left that bedizened photograph of Gordon on his desk and swore unholy oaths over it every day. Sometimes he raged at Gertrude because she wouldn’t look on Gordon with favour.

“You forget that I’ve promised Anthony that I will never marry any man but him,” she would say sweetly. “I have to keep that promise as well as the other. You’ve always told me I must never break a promise.”

Old Doc would glare.

“Anthony . . . Anthony . . . the man who said he had only to ask you to get you!”

“He never said it,” Gertrude would smile maddeningly. “But if he did . . . it would have been true.”

This rendered Old Doc speechless.

Gordon really had very little sense about his courting. He had, of course, no chance with Gertrude, no matter what he did or didn’t do, but with some women he might have had a chance if he had kept away for a time and left them alone. Instead, he exasperated her by haunting the place and forcing his attentions upon her everywhere. She grew to hate the sight of him. Old Doc had less sense also in the matter than I should have expected of him. He had become quite chummy with Gordon and even tried to teach him to play golf. He would never have tried it if he had thought Gordon would make a golfer, but there was no danger. Gordon couldn’t see anything in it.

Two years went by like this. Anthony hadn’t been home. He went out with survey parties on his vacations. I don’t know whether he ever wrote Gertrude. She never talked of him, and Old Doc thought she had forgotten him. I knew better.

Then a medical powwow came off in Croyden. Old Doc went to it, and Gordon Mitchell went down on the same train. It was in early spring—the frost was coming out—the rails had spread in one place—the engine jumped the track. Only one person was killed . . . Old Doc.

Gordon got to him just before he died. He hadn’t been able to speak. Just smiled . . . pressed Gordon’s hand . . . tried to say something . . . shut his eyes. That was all. Gertrude hadn’t even a farewell word of love for her comforting.

She was heartbroken over it all. She and her father had been such chums.

“Father and I liked each other as well as loved each other,” she had said to me once.

But a healthy grief heals in due time, no matter what its intensity. The day came when I heard her laugh again, though with something gained and something lost in her laughter.

I thought all would be plain sailing for her and Anthony now. She was her own mistress—a rich woman too, as Claremont standards went. But one autumn evening a year later Anthony came to me white to the lips with despair.

He told me the whole story, rushing up and down my study like a madman. Gertrude had told him she could never marry him; she had promised her father she would never marry Anthony “without his consent” and that consent could never now be obtained. Anthony had found her quite immovable. So he came to beg me to go to Gertrude and use my influence on his behalf.

I went . . . though I had a feeling that it wouldn’t be any use. It was a cold, windy, autumnal evening, and I found Gertrude by the open fire in the living room, with Jigglesqueak snoring beside her. She sat in the old wing chair and looked so beautiful that I did not wonder at Anthony’s madness. She was not in black. Old Doc had decreed in his will that she should not follow “the barbarous survival” of mourning. She wore a gown of golden-brown velvet, a little too old and rich for a girl, I thought, but vastly becoming. She had a rope of dull beads about her slim white neck, and her black hair was pinned close to her head with rich pins. On the middle finger of her rather large firm white hand she wore a ring her father had always worn—a ring with some odd, flat, pale green stone in it. His wife, I believe, had given it to him on their honeymoon. It had been taken off Old Doc’s dead hand.

“It’s a fine evening,” said Gertrude brilliantly.

“I haven’t come to discuss the weather,” I said.

“No,” said Gertrude. “I know exactly what you have come to say. So say it and ease your conscience. But it won’t make any difference.”

I said it . . . and it made no difference.

“You know,” I said, for a final shot, “that your father would have given in if he had lived.”

Yes, she knew that.

“Then why the . . . the . . . the . . .”

“The devil,” said Gertrude calmly. “That’s what you want to say, you know. Your cloth wouldn’t let you say it so I say it for you. Go on from there.”

“The mischief,” I said, because I wasn’t going to let a chit like Gertrude put a thing like that over on me. If she had no respect for my cloth she should have had some for my grey hairs. “Why the mischief can’t you be sensible?”

“It isn’t a matter of sense at all,” said Gertrude. “I promised. I shall keep that promise to my father dead as I would have kept it to him living. Don’t worry me with arguments, Mr. Crandall. Do you think you can move me when Anthony couldn’t?”

“No. I’m not so conceited as that,” I said. “But are you going to ruin Anthony’s life and your own by such Quixotic nonsense?”

“Oh, it won’t ruin our lives . . . Anthony’s anyway. He’ll get over it in time and marry somebody else. I may get over it myself . . . but I can never marry anyone else because I promised Anthony I wouldn’t.”

“Likely he will release you from that promise,” I said drily.

“I shall never ask him to,” she said. “Now, have a cup of tea with me, Mr. Crandall, and promise me that you’ll help me to become a delightful old maid. There’s nothing else for me, you see.”

She poured my tea beautifully. She made an art of pouring tea. Then she sat and looked into the fire while I sipped it, the lovely line of her chin and neck melting into the red-gold glow of the flames behind it. And this was the woman who talked of being an old maid!

I told Anthony I had done my best and failed. I told him he must bear it like a man.

“How can you bear unbearable things?” he flung back at me as he rushed out, leaving all the doors open. I did not see him again for ten years.

* * *

Gertrude made short work of Gordon. She told me that since her father's death she simply detested him.

"I don't know why. I used to like him well enough before. Now I can't bear the sight of him. I've told him that I will never, under any circumstances, marry him and that he must stop plaguing my life out about it."

Gordon stopped. That winter he flung himself into business and church work with feverish activity. In the latter I saw a great deal of him and I thought him much changed in some indefinable way. He acted like a person desperately anxious to forget something . . . drug something . . . which was understandable enough in a man who had been refused by Gertrude Stirling.

He did not go as much into society as he had formerly done, and when he did people said he was subject to spells of moodiness, when he seemed to be brooding over something that worried him desperately. I felt that I ought to be very sorry for him.

One Sunday in early spring I preached a certain sermon. I did mean it for somebody. A certain clique of people in the church, entirely unconnected with the Mitchells or the Stirlings, had been doing their best to worry my life out that winter with their spats and squabbles . . . all springing, as I knew perfectly well, from old Madam Ridgwood's deceit and mischief-making. I meant that sermon for her; it wasn't a hand-me-down, it was cut to fit. And everybody pinned it on to Gordon, a man whom nobody ever thought of as lying before that sermon. But I must say that they would not probably have done so if it had not been for his own behaviour.

My text was, "Deliver my soul, oh Lord, from lying lips and a deceitful tongue," and I made my sermon pretty strong, for I was considerably annoyed over the trouble I had encountered. Gordon was not in the choir that day. He was hoarse from a bad cold and he sat with his mother in the centre of the church.

Near the end of my discourse I happened to glance at Gordon and was struck by the expression on his face. I never saw such agony on a human

countenance. I was sure he must be ill. Suddenly he stood up, turned round, looked foolishly about him, and sat down again . . . or was pulled down by his mother. I finished my sermon, leaving some few things I had intended to say unsaid, and the concluding hymn was sung. I did not see Gordon or his mother again.

But that evening Mrs. Mitchell sent for me. She met me at the door and told me that Gordon had gone out of his mind. She was in a distracted state, poor woman. But after I had seen Gordon and talked to him I knew that he was as sane as I was. He had simply forgotten everything—everything. He didn't even remember his own name. If he had just been born he couldn't have known less about his past.

Nowadays newspaper reports and popular books on neurasthenia have made us tolerably familiar with cases of this sort. But at that time, in Claremont, nobody had ever known anything like it. Most people persisted in believing that Gordon had gone insane—his grandfather, they said, had been “queer.” His mother had every great alienist she could get, and they all agreed that he was perfectly sane and rational. They were quite helpless, but they said that his memory might return just as suddenly as it had gone. Meanwhile there was nothing to do but wait. His friends and his mother persisted in believing and asserting that my sermon was responsible for it all. When anyone said this to me I retorted, testily,

“Do you mean to say that Gordon was of lying lips and a deceitful tongue?”

That always posed everyone but Mrs. Mitchell. She said,

“Gordon was so conscientious. Some little evasion that nobody else would have thought a lie would worry him . . . and then your terrible sermon . . .”

She never forgave me.

A new doctor had come to town—a young fellow who knew a good bit, though people were loath to admit that anyone knew anything but Old Doc. I used to talk Gordon's case over with him. He had some ideas about it that were so new-fangled then that I couldn't accept them at all, though I believe they are pretty well established now.

“Mitchell has forgotten because he wanted to forget,” he said.

“Nonsense,” I said. “Who would want to forget his whole past life?”

“Oh, not his whole life . . . no, just one particular, unbearable thing. And when his torture reached a certain point . . . perhaps your sermon was the last turn of the rack . . . perhaps it had nothing to do with it . . . he found relief from his agony by forgetting what was torturing him. Only,” added Dr. Mills, who was fresh enough from college to have a weakness for classical allusions, “he who drinks of Lethe must forget his good as well as his evil.”

“I don’t believe my sermon had anything to do with it,” I said.

And I couldn’t see how it had. It was quite possible that Gordon’s suffering over Gertrude’s decision was unbearable and that he wanted to forget it—but there could be no earthly connection between it and my sermon. I believed he hadn’t been listening to it at all. He had been sitting there, thinking wretchedly of Gertrude who sat just across from him, looking unbelievably lovely, and he couldn’t endure it any longer. Something gave way; in the pithy old vernacular, a screw got loose.

For a few weeks nothing was talked of but Gordon. Then Mary Curtis eloped and gossip switched to her. By the autumn everybody had accepted the new Gordon. He had accepted himself. After all, it was not correct to say that he had forgotten everything. He had not forgotten how to talk, read, write, behave in society, run his business. Of course he had forgotten everything and everybody connected with the business and had to get acquainted with it all over from the ground up. But he wasn’t long in doing that. By spring he was going ahead full blast again, and a stranger would never have suspected that there was anything wrong with him. Only those who knew him well realized certain changes in him.

For one thing, he had forgotten all his loves and hates. In that respect his emotional life was a clean slate. He didn’t love his mother . . . he, who had been so devoted to her. He didn’t even like her; she knew it and it broke her heart, especially as the time went by and she realized that he never would like her. He cared nothing for any of his old friends. In a few cases he built up new friendships with some of them; to others he always

remained indifferent. He had no interest in church work and wouldn't, I believe, have attended church at all if it hadn't been for public opinion which, in Claremont, was very hard on a man who flouted the church.

The greatest change in him, or what seemed so to me, was in regard to Gertrude. She had gone into limbo with everything else. I even thought he seemed rather ill at ease in her presence, but that may only have been my imagination. Anyhow, he cared nothing for her. He even tried to go with other Claremont girls, but nobody would have anything to do with him because he was "queer" and he soon gave up trying. There was a barrier between him and his kind.

I noticed one thing about him . . . I don't know whether anyone else did or not. Sometimes he would suddenly glance over his shoulder in a way I didn't like. And it made him uncomfortable to shake hands with anyone. That could be plainly seen, but I never saw him absolutely refuse to shake hands save once.

That was when Gertrude came home from a long visit in Croyden, met him at a garden party and offered him her hand. He looked . . . not at her . . . not at her hand . . . but at the big ring with the pale green stone. He turned death-white and put his hands behind him. Gertrude thought it odd, but then, one must expect poor Gordon to be odd.

This was years after the fatal sermon. Time had gone on. Everybody had given up expecting Gordon Mitchell's memory to come back . . . everybody but his mother, who nursed a feverish hope and lived on it. Plenty of newcomers didn't know he had forgotten. He was our most successful businessman and was piling up a fortune. But he was nothing like as rich as Anthony Fairweather.

Anthony had got through his School of Mines and had gone surveying up in Cobalt at a dollar and a half a day. There he found the famous Lucia silver mine—named after his mother—and became, as you might say, a millionaire overnight. Even that didn't spoil him. He kept on working hard and soon was at the top of his profession, and a recognized expert on all questions of engineering. He had a hobby for collecting violins—his collection, headed by his old Strad, which he had hunted up and bought

back, was the finest in America. He had all the good luck in the world . . . except the one bit he really wanted.

Claremont people referred to him with pride as the “most distinguished of all our boys,” and served up the tales of his youthful pranks with an entirely different sauce. One would have supposed, from the way they talked, that there was some vital connection between offering soap for cheese and discovering silver mines and that they’d always known it. If Anthony had ever come home he would have been met at the station with a brass band and a torchlight procession.

But he never did come home. He never wrote to Gertrude, but now and then he sent her something rare and beautiful in the way of curios. It was always something that belonged to her—something which must have made Anthony say, the moment his eyes lighted on it, “That is Gertrude’s . . . it couldn’t be anybody else’s.” And on every one of her birthdays came a great sheaf of crimson roses from the Croyden florist. Anthony never forgot a birthday.

Gertrude seemed to be enjoying her life. She had a good time. Travelled a bit . . . entertained a bit . . . organized and ran some good clubs and societies . . . was a Regent of the Claremont Chapter of the I.O.D.E. and President of the Women’s Canadian Club and the backbone of the Hypatia Circle. Her home was a thing of beauty and the talks she and I had by her fireside, in the days of her maturity, were sometimes all that kept me sane amid the distracting problems of a minister’s daily life.

“Drop in whenever you like,” Gertrude had said to me. “You’ll always find a chair by the fire and a cat on the rug.”

Cats! I should say so. When Jigglesqueak had finally gone where good dogs go, lamented by all who had the privilege of knowing him, Gertrude went in for cats, being bound, so she said, to have all the prescriptive rights of old maidenhood. She wasn’t really particularly fond of cats but she admired their general effect.

“Cats give atmosphere . . . charm . . . suggestion,” she averred.

She had a big blue Persian that Anthony had sent her and four inky black toms. The Persian had some high-falutin name I’ve forgotten, but

Gertrude called all the toms “Soot”—Soot I, II, III, and IV. They used to sit about looking so uncannily knowing, with their insolent green eyes, that their very expression would have sent Gertrude to the stake three hundred years ago. I am reasonably fond of cats, but those four black demons of Gertrude’s always gave me a slightly weird sensation.

Well, there she was. I groaned inwardly when I looked at her—beautiful, desirable, a king’s daughter, glorious without and within, but—I was certain of it in spite of her jokes and her philosophy—a lonely, empty-hearted, starved woman.

* * *

Ten years after Old Doc’s death Anthony came home. He was home for a week, staying with his old aunt, before anyone else—unless it was Gertrude—knew of it. He said he had come to Claremont for a good rest and meant to stay a month. Most people believed and said that he had come back to warm up the cold soup with Gertrude Stirling. Myself, I thought he had too. I wished he could and I knew he couldn’t.

He was a splendid-looking fellow, fit as a fiddle, strong, distinguished, and graceful. There was an air of immortal, unquenchable youth about him. Beside him Gordon Mitchell looked tubby and middle-aged. Gordon had forgotten his hate of Anthony along with everything else and was prepared to be quite cordial to him. But Anthony had forgotten nothing. He believed that Gordon had poisoned Old Doc’s mind in regard to him at the very beginning and he hated him with as much intensity as ever.

“Sneaking cad!” he said bitterly to me. “If it hadn’t been for him . . . but it maddens me to think of it!”

“Isn’t there any chance, Anthony?” I asked, although I knew there wasn’t. “Have you said anything to Gertrude?”

“Said anything! Said anything! Is there anything I haven’t said? I’ve prayed and stormed and raged and threatened and grovelled . . . man, I’ve even cried! I came back . . . I had to come back . . . I thought perhaps she’d have changed her mind in those ten infernal years. She hasn’t . . . she never

will. Unless Old Doc comes back out of his grave to set her free she'll never marry me . . . never!"

Anthony groaned, and then said, in his old whimsical way, as if he wanted to camouflage the intensity of his feelings,

"And we would make such a darn good-looking couple, wouldn't we, Mr. Crandall?"

"I'm a bit out of patience with Gertrude," I said. "I think the whole thing is absolute nonsense."

"I won't have Gertrude abused," said Anthony. "Thank God there's one woman in the world anyhow that will keep her word. I don't blame her. It's all Gordon's doings. He told Old Doc lies about me years ago . . . I know he did. Hound! I tell you that if Gordon Mitchell were in deadly danger of his life and I could save him by lifting a finger I wouldn't lift it!"

It was rather funny that the very next day Gordon Mitchell should fall out of his canoe in the middle of the Claremont river and that Anthony Fairweather should rescue him!

Gordon was a member of the Canoe Club, but the only wonder was he hadn't drowned himself long before. His Maker had never meant him for canoes. On this day he was right out on the middle of the river when he upset. Only three people saw it: Anthony and myself and little Stan Baird.

In Anthony went, clothes and all, as quick as a flash.

There wasn't another man in Claremont—or out of it, as I believe—who could have swum that distance to Gordon Mitchell in time. As it was he was almost too late. Gordon had gone down for the last time, but Anthony dived, got him and brought him back to the wharf. Old Captain Fairweather had taught Anthony to swim when he was a lad of five, and if his soul were hovering anywhere around that day he must have been proud of his pupil. It was a splendid piece of work, as even I, dancing around on the wharf in a senile frenzy of horror and suspense, fully understood.

Anthony sent Stan Baird for Dr. Mills and fell to work with Gordon after the most scientific fashion. I helped as best I could, and by the time the doctor got there, with a crowd of folks pelting after him, Gordon had

come back to life. They got him into a cab and took him home before he could speak coherently.

“So that’s that,” said Anthony. “Well, I’d better go home myself and get something dry. And I think I’ll start back to Montreal tomorrow. There’s no chance of me getting what I came for . . . and they’ll heroize me for this stunt in the usual sickening way. I can’t stand it . . . especially as I’m good and sorry I didn’t let the brute drown!”

That evening Mrs. Mitchell sent for me again. She met me at the door with such a transfigured face that I hardly knew her.

“Oh, Mr. Crandall, Gordon has come back!” she exclaimed. “He remembers everything. And he knows me . . . he knows I’m his mother.”

She was weeping with joy as she took me up to Gordon’s room. He was in bed, shouldered up on the pillows. He greeted me kindly but he looked past me.

“Haven’t they come yet?” he said.

“They’ll be here soon,” said Mrs. Mitchell soothingly.

“They” came almost on her words—“they” were Gertrude and Anthony, both looking puzzled. Evidently neither of them understood just why they had been thus summoned to take part in Gordon Mitchell’s resurrection.

“Sit down. I have something to tell you,” said Gordon. “I have Mr. Crandall here for a witness. Mother, please go out.”

She went, too thankful for the old affection in his eyes and voice to resent being thus shut out. Anthony and Gertrude did not sit down. They continued standing just inside the door, where the pale lilac light of sunset fell on them through the window.

Gertrude was dressed in some rich, cream-hued stuff, with gold touches here and there and a heavy gold girdle. She looked like a brocaded moth. The years had not dimmed her beauty. Anthony as usual looked dark and royal.

They were, as Anthony had said a . . . ahem . . . an exceedingly good-looking pair of people.

Gordon began:

“I did not tell you the truth about your father’s death, Gertrude. He lived a few minutes after I reached him. He said, ‘I’m dying, Gordon. Give Gertrude my love and tell her she can marry whom she darn well pleases.’ ”

What odd thoughts come into one’s mind at times. I looked at Gertrude and saw the miracle of her face, but all I really thought just then was, “Gordon has softened down Old Doc’s expression a bit. Gordon wouldn’t say even a second-hand damn.”

“Your father,” went on Gordon, “made me promise I would tell you. ‘Shake hands on it,’ he said, holding out his right hand with that big green stone on it. I shook . . . although even then I knew I wasn’t going to tell you. Then he said, ‘She’s had the best golfer in town for a father; now she’ll have to put up with the second-best as a husband. But when I’m dead Anthony will be the best, confound him.’ Those were his last words . . . then he died.

“I didn’t tell you,” continued Gordon. “I couldn’t. It would have been like cutting my heart out. But I lived in hell for that year . . . a hell I made for myself. I knew I ought to tell. I used to think, when at times it seemed I couldn’t bear it any longer, ‘Oh, if I could only forget what Old Doc said!’ Then you preached that sermon”—Gordon flung me a glance—“and I knew I couldn’t bear it any longer. I stood up . . . I don’t know what I meant to say . . . and everything went from me. You know all about that. But today, just as I was drowning, I remembered everything . . . everything! It was like the judgment day.”

Gordon shuddered.

“You’d better not talk any more just now, Gordon,” I said soothingly.

“There’s something else I want to confess,” said Gordon pathetically. “It was I told Old Doc that Anthony said he could have Gertrude for the asking. That was a lie. And I shut the skunk up in the classroom. I did it for a joke . . . and people made such a fuss about it I was ashamed to confess. That’s all.”

He didn’t ask to be forgiven, but Gertrude took his hand and pressed it before she went out with Anthony. They had the decency to hide their

rapture until they got out of Gordon's sight. Gordon's eyes followed Gertrude starvingly. Yes, everything had come back, even his love for her. He groaned as she went out, hidden from him by Anthony's broad shoulders.

But his mother slipped in past them, and he turned to her and held out his hands like a child seeking for comfort. I got up and went out. Neither of them heard me go.

I thought it all over as I walked up the street. I could not be as hard on Gordon as he deserved.

Charlotte's Quest

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Charlotte had made up her mind to see the Witch Penny about it. Perhaps God didn't think she ought to be unhappy, in a home of jolly, noisy, rollicking cousins (Charlotte hated noise and rollicking with all the power of her being); where she was continually being pounced on and petted and kissed (Charlotte detested pouncing and petting and kissing); where Aunt Florence or Cousin Edith or Mrs. Barrett, the grandmother of the gang, was always trying to dress her up like a doll (Charlotte hated to be dressed up); and where she was never alone or lonely for a moment (Charlotte loved and longed to be alone—well, not exactly lonely, because Charlotte was never lonely when she was alone). Yes, it was quite likely, Charlotte told herself, on considered reflection, that God couldn't believe that she was unhappy. So there remained only Witch Penny. Charlotte had an idea that witches were kittle cattle to have dealings with and that the thing was not altogether lawful. But she wanted a mother so desperately that she would have gone to any lengths to get one.

It was Jim who had told her about the Witch Penny very soon after she had come to live with Aunt Florence.

“The Witch Penny is going to fly to a witches' meeting tonight with her old black cat perched behind her,” he told her one windy autumn evening. And then he went on with a fascinating rigmarole about riding on a broomstick over houses and hills. Jim did not mean to be fascinating. He was merely trying to frighten Charlotte “out of her skin.” But Charlotte was not easily frightened and remained in her skin. She found his yarns thrilling, especially the part about flying on a broomstick, although she would have preferred to fly on a swallow's back. Why couldn't you, if you were a witch? If you could turn yourself into a grey cat, as Jim said Witch Penny could, why couldn't you turn yourself into something small enough

to ride a swallow? Just think of swooping through the air. Charlotte quivered with ecstasy.

Charlotte wanted a mother terribly. She knew that the thing was quite possible. Before father had gone away and just before she had come to Aunt Florence's, Nita Gresham had got a new mother. Charlotte heard about it in school. If Nita, why not she? A mother who would take you in her arms and tell you stories. To whom you would belong. It seemed a terrible thing to Charlotte that she didn't belong anywhere or to anybody. Not even to Father. How could you belong to a father who looked upon you merely as a hindrance to mountain climbing? Charlotte knew perfectly well that was how her father regarded her, although neither he nor anyone else had ever told her so. You couldn't fool Charlotte in all things. She might fall for a silly story about witches and broomsticks, but in some respects she had a terrible wisdom.

Next to a mother she wanted a quiet place where she could be alone when she wanted to be; to listen to the wind telling strange tales, or hold the big spotted shell that murmured of the sea to her ear, or talk to the roses in the garden. Or just sit still and think and say nothing. If you were quiet at Aunt Florence's, someone was sure to ask what was the matter with you. And if your visitation of silence was prolonged they said you were sulky. It had not been quite so bad when she had lived at home, a kind of home, with Father and old Mrs. Beckwith. At least they left her alone. If you couldn't be loved, the next best thing was to be let alone. At Aunt Florence's she was never let alone and she knew quite well they didn't love her. They kissed and petted and teased her just because it was one of their customs. Jim thought her a ninny. Edith and Susette thought her a dumb-bell. Mrs. Barrett thought she was "queer," and Aunt Florence couldn't make her pretty.

"Goodness, child, are you all corners?" she would exclaim impatiently when Charlotte's dress wouldn't hang right. Aunt Florence hadn't any use for anyone with too many corners. And nothing else about Charlotte pleased her. She was too dark in a fair clan, her eyes were too big and grey,

her eyebrows too bushy and her skin too sallow. "I don't know where she gets such a complexion," Aunt Florence mourned.

"Don't you? I do," said Mrs. Barrett very significantly. "She's the living image of You-Know-Who."

"I never saw her," said Aunt Florence, "but if Charlotte looks like her, I don't wonder Edward isn't fond of her."

So her father wasn't fond of her. Charlotte sighed. She had always suspected it, but it was a little bitter to be sure of it. She had always thought it was because he couldn't be fond of anything but mountain climbing. Now it seemed there was a mysterious You-Know-Who in the business.

Charlotte knew she didn't look like her mother. There was no picture of her mother that Charlotte had even seen, but she knew she had been small and fair and golden. Charlotte wished she looked like her mother. She couldn't remember her mother, that is, not exactly. She could only remember a dream she had had about her, a beautiful dream in which she was in such a beautiful place. And Mother was there with her. Charlotte had never forgotten it—she was always looking for it. An old house fronting seaward, ships going up and down. Spruce woods and misty hills, cold salt air from the water, rest, quiet, silence. And the most beautiful china lady, with blue shoes and a gilt sash and a red rose in her golden china hair, sitting on a shelf.

Mother had been there with her. Charlotte was quite sure of that, though everything else was a little dim, as dreams are. Charlotte always had a queer feeling that if she could find that place she would find Mother again. But it was not likely that even Witch Penny could help her to a place in a dream.

Charlotte determined to slip away on the afternoon they were getting ready for the party. They were always having parties. "Let us eat, drink and be merry," was the motto of the Laurences. Charlotte hated parties and she knew she would hate this more than most because they were going to have tableaux and Charlotte was to take part in one and wear a silly tinsel crown. Somehow, she hated the thought of that tinsel crown venomously.

In the customary scurry and bustle she hoped to get away unseen, but Mrs. Barrett spied her and asked her where she was going.

"I am going hunting for happiness," said Charlotte gravely and simply. The truth had to be told.

Mrs. Barrett stared at her.

"I don't know who you get your peculiar notions from. Any child but you would be keen to help get ready for a party. Look at your cousins—what a delightful time they're having."

Probably they were. Everybody was rushing wildly around, moving and dragging furniture about. But they were always doing that. Nothing ever remained in the same place longer than a week. Just as you got used to a thing being in a certain place, Aunt Florence or Susette took a notion it would look better somewhere else; and after much noisy, good-natured argument, there it went. And a party always gave such a grand excuse for moving everything.

Charlotte did not reply to Mrs. Barrett, which was another of her unsatisfactory habits. She simply opened the door, went out and shut it softly behind her. It was hard to shut it softly because, like every other door in the house, it seemed determined to bang shut. But Charlotte managed it.

She stood for a moment in the front porch, drawing a breath of relief. Behind her was noise and commotion. Edith and Susette were wrangling in the hall. The radio was going full blare in the library, Jim was banging on the piano to make the fat dog howl—and the dog was howling. Charlotte put her fingers in her ears and ran down the walk. Over her was a grey, quiet autumn sky, and before her a grey, quiet road. Charlotte suddenly felt as light of being as if she really had been turned into a swallow. She was out, she was alone and she was going to find a mother.

* * *

The Witch Penny's house was a little grey one nestling against the steep hill that rose from the pond about half a mile west of the small town. The

gate hung slackly on its hinges. The house itself was shabby and old, with sunken window sills and a much-patched roof. Charlotte reflected that being a witch didn't seem to be a very profitable business.

For a moment Charlotte hesitated. She was not a timid child, but she did feel a little frightened. Then she thought of Mrs. Barrett rocking fiercely in her rocker and forever talking in her high, cheerful voice. "Mother is always so bright," Aunt Florence always said. Charlotte shuddered. No witch could be worse. She knocked resolutely on the door.

A thumping sound inside ceased. Had she interrupted Witch Penny in the weaving of a spell? . . . and footsteps seemed to be coming down a stair. Then the door opened and Witch Penny appeared. Charlotte took her all in with one of her straight, deliberate looks.

She was grey as an owl, with a broad rosy face and tiny black eyes surrounded by cushions of fat. Charlotte thought she looked too jolly for a witch. But no doubt there were all kinds. Certainly the big black cat with fiery golden eyes that sat behind her on the lower step of the stair looked his reputed part.

"Now who may ye be and what may ye be wanting with me?" said Witch Penny a bit gruffly.

Charlotte never wasted breath, words or time. "I am Charlotte Laurence and I have come to ask you to find me a mother—that is, if you really are a witch. Are you?"

Witch Penny's look suddenly changed. It grew secretive and mysterious.

"Whist, child," she whispered. "Don't be talking of witches in the open daylight like this. Little ye know what might happen."

"But are you?" persisted Charlotte. If Witch Penny wasn't a witch, she wasn't going to bother with her.

"To be sure, I am. But come in, come in. Finding a mother ain't something to be done on the durestep. Better come right upstairs. I'm weaving a tablecloth for the fairies up there. All the witches in the countryside promised to do one apiece for them. The poor liddle shiftless craturs left all their tablecloths out in the frost last Tuesday night, and

‘twas their ruination. But I’ve got far behind me comrades and mustn’t be losing any more time. Ye’ll excuse me if I kape on with me work while ye’re telling me your troubles. It’s the quane’s own cloth I’m weaving, and it’s looking sour enough her majesty will be if it’s not finished on time.”

Charlotte thought that Witch Penny’s old loom looked very big and clumsy for the weaving of fairy tablecloths, and the web in it seemed strangely like rather coarse grey flannel. But no doubt witches had their own way of blinding the eyes of ordinary mortals. When Witch Penny finished it, she would weave a spell over it and it would become a thing of gossamer light and loveliness.

Witch Penny resumed her work and Charlotte sat down on a stool beside her. They were on a little landing above the stairs, with one low, cobwebby window and a stained ceiling with bunches of dried tansy and yarrow hanging from it. The cat had followed them up and sat on the top step, staring at Charlotte. Its eyes shone uncannily through the dusk of the staircase.

“Now, out with your story,” said Witch Penny. “Ye’re wanting a mother, ye tell me, and ye’re Charlotte Laurence. Ye’ll be having Edward Laurence for your father, I’m thinking?”

“Yes. But he’s gone west to climb mountains,” explained Charlotte. “He’s always wanted to, but Mother died when I was three, and as long as I was small he couldn’t. I’m eight now, so he’s gone.”

“And left ye with your Uncle Tom and your Aunt Florence. Oh, I’ve heard all about it. Your Aunt Florence’s cat was after telling mine the whole story at the last dance we had. Your Aunt Florence do be too grand for the likes of us, but it’s little she thinks where her cat do be going. Ye don’t look like the Laurences—ye haven’t got your father’s laughing mouth—ye’ve got a proud mouth like your old Grandmother Jasper. Did ye ever see her?”

Charlotte shook her head. She knew nothing of her Grandmother Jasper beyond the fact of her existence, but all at once she knew who You-Know-Who was.

“No, it ain’t likely ye would. She was real mad at your mother for marrying Ned Laurence. I’ve heard she never would forgive her, never would set foot in her house. But ye have her mouth. And what black hair ye’ve got. And what big eyes. And what little ears. And ye have a mole on your neck. ‘Tis the witch’s mark. Come now, child dear, wouldn’t ye like to be made a witch? ‘Tis a far easier job than the one ye’ve set me. Think av the fun av riding on the broomstick.”

Charlotte thought of it. Flying over the steeples and dark spruces at night. “I think I’m too young to be a witch,” she said.

Witch Penny’s eyes twinkled.

“Sure, child dear, ‘tis the young witches that do be having the most power. Mind ye, everybody can’t be a witch. We’re that exclusive ye’d never belave. But I’ll not press ye. And ye want me to find you a mother?”

“If you please. Nita Gresham got a new mother. So why can’t I?”

“Well, the real mothers are hard to come by. All the same, mebbe it can be managed. It’s lucky ye’ve come in the right time of the moon. I couldn’t have done a thing for ye next wake. And mind ye, child dear, I’m not after promising anything for sartin. But there’s a chanct, there’s a chanct . . . seeing as ye’ve got your grandmother’s mouth. If ye’d looked like your father, it wouldn’t be Witch Penny as’d help ye to a mother. I’d no use for him.”

Witch Penny chuckled. “What kind of a mother do ye be wanting?”

“A quiet mother who doesn’t laugh too much or ask too many questions.”

Witch Penny shook her head.

“A rare kind. It’ll take some conniving. Here . . .” Witch Penny dropped her shuttle, leaned forward and extracted from a box beside the loom a handful of raisins . . . “stow these away in your liddle inside while I do a bit av thinking.”

Charlotte ate her raisins with a relish while Witch Penny wove slowly and thoughtfully. She did not speak until Charlotte had finished the last raisin.

“It come into me mind,” said Witch Penny, “that if ye go up the long hill . . . and down it . . . then turn yourself about three times, nather more nor less, ye’ll find a road that goes west. Folly your nose along it till ye come to a gate with a liddle lane that leads down to the harbour shore. Turn yourself about three times more . . . if ye forget that part of it, ye may look till your eyes fall out of your head, but niver a mother ye’ll see. Then go down the lane to a stone house with a red door in it like a cat’s tongue. Knock three times on the door. If there’s a mother in the world for ye, ye’ll find her there. That’s all I can be doing for ye.”

Charlotte got up briskly.

“Thank you very much. It sounds like a good long walk, so I ought to start. What am I to pay you for this?”

Witch Penny chuckled again. Something seemed to amuse her greatly.

“How much have ye got?” she asked.

“A dollar.”

“How’d ye come by it?”

Charlotte thought witches were rather impertinent. However, if you dealt with them . . .

“Mrs. Beckwith gave it to me before she went away.”

“And how come ye didn’t spend it for swaties and ice cream?”

“I like to feel I’ve something to fall back on,” said Charlotte gravely.

Witch Penny chuckled for the third time.

“Says your grandmother. Oh, ye’re Laurence be name but it goes no daper. Kape your liddle bit av a dollar. Ye’ve got a mole on your neck. We can’t charge folks as have moles anything. It’s clane against our rules. Now run along or it’ll be getting too late.”

“I’m very much obliged to you,” said Charlotte, putting her money back in her pocket and offering her thin brown hand.

“Ye do be a mannerly child at that,” said Witch Penny.

Witch Penny stood on her sunken doorstep and watched the little, erect figure out of sight.

“Sure, and I do be wondering if I’ve done right. But she’d never fit in up at the Laurences with their clatter. And once the old leddy lays eyes on

her!”

Charlotte had disappeared around the bend in the road. Then Witch Penny said a queer thing for a witch. She said: “God bless the liddle cratur.”

* * *

Charlotte tramped sturdily on, adventurous and expectant. The sky grew greyer and the wind colder as she climbed the long hill. From the top she caught an unexpected, breath-taking view of a great grey harbour with white-capped racing waves. And beyond its sandy bar something greater and greyer still which she knew must be the sea. Charlotte stood for a few minutes in an ecstasy. She had never seen the harbour before, although she had known it was not far away. And yet, had she not? Charlotte felt bewildered. Her dream came back to her. She had seen this harbour in her dream, with the big waves racing to the shore and the black crows sitting on the fences of the fields and a white bird flying against the dark sky.

Charlotte went down the hill and gravely turned herself about three times. A wind that smelt of the sea came blowing down a road to the left. This must be what Witch Penny meant by following her nose. And sure enough, after Charlotte had walked along the road for a little while, there was the gate and a grassy, deep-rutted lane leading along the side of a gentle hill that sloped to the harbour.

Again Charlotte turned herself around. If there were no mother at the end of this quest, it should not be for any failure to perform Witch Penny’s ritual scrupulously.

Hallway along the hill she came to the house, the grey stone house with the door like a cat’s tongue, a house so grey and old that it seemed a part of the hill. It had a dignified, reposeful look as if it feared not what wind or rain could do to it.

Charlotte found her legs trembling under her. She had come to journey’s end; and was there a mother in that house for her? Witch Penny hadn’t seemed at all sure, she had only said there was a chance. It was

beginning to rain, the harbour was dim and misty, it would soon be dark. Charlotte shivered, took her courage in both hands and knocked at the red door.

There was no answer. Charlotte waited awhile and then went around the house to the kitchen door—it was red, too—and knocked again.

The door opened. Charlotte felt a quick pang of disappointment. This was no mother: she was far too old for a mother, this tall, thin woman with a fine old face that might have been a man's and clear grey eyes with black bushy brows under frosty hair. Charlotte had never seen her before yet she had a queer feeling that the face was quite familiar to her.

"Who are you?" said the old woman, neither kindly nor unkindly . . . just in a simple, direct fashion to which Charlotte found it quite easy to respond.

"I am Charlotte Laurence. I went to Witch Penny to see if she could find me a mother and she told me to come here."

The old woman stood still for what seemed to Charlotte a very long moment. Then she stepped back and said, "Come in."

Charlotte looked around the little, white-washed kitchen. There was, to her further disappointment, no one in it, but she liked it. On the floor there was a big, dark-red, hooked rug, with three black cats in it. The cats had yellow wool eyes that were quite bright and catty in spite of the fact that they had evidently been walked over a good many years. There was a great stove with front doors that slid so far back that it was as good as a fireplace. There was a low wide window looking out on the harbour. There was a table with a red-and-white checkered cloth on it and a platterful of something that smelt very good to Charlotte after her long walk.

"I was just sitting down to supper," said the old woman. "I had a feeling that I was going to have company so I cooked a bit extra. Take off your cap and coat and sit in."

Charlotte silently did as she was told. The old woman sat down, said grace . . . Charlotte liked that . . . and gave Charlotte a plentiful helping of crisp bacon and pancakes with maple syrup poured over them. Charlotte devoted herself to the business of eating. She had never been so hungry in

her life before and she had never eaten anything that tasted so good as the bacon and pancakes. It was now raining and blowing quite wildly but the stove was glowing clear red in the dusk and the peace and cosiness of the old kitchen was in delightful contrast to the storm outside. And just to eat supper in silence, not having to talk or laugh unless you really wanted to, was so heavenly. Charlotte thought of the noisy meals at Aunt Florence's where everybody talked and laughed incessantly . . . Aunt Florence liked "cheerful meals."

* * *

Of course, as yet there was no mother. But one must have patience. It was easy to be patient here. Charlotte found herself liking the house . . . feeling at home in it. It was not strange to her . . . and the old woman was not strange. Charlotte wondered where she had seen eyes like that before, many times before. And she loved the house. She wanted to see the hidden things in it—not its furniture or its carpets, but the letters in old boxes upstairs, and faded photos and clothes in old trunks. It seemed as if they belonged to her. She sighed in pure happiness. The old woman did not ask her why she sighed. That, too, was heavenly.

When the meal was over, the old woman—after all Charlotte was beginning to think she wasn't so very old, it was just her white hair made you think so—put Charlotte in a chair by the stove where she could toast her feet on the warm hearth, and washed the dishes. Her shadow darted in all directions over the kitchen walls and ceiling and sometimes looked more like a witch than Witch Penny. But this woman was not a witch. Somehow, Charlotte felt no qualms on that score.

When the old woman had put her dishes away in a little corner cupboard with glass doors and shelves trimmed with white, scalloped lace paper, she lighted a lamp, got out her knitting and sat down by the table.

"You're Charlotte Laurence. And your father, I suppose, was Edward Laurence."

Charlotte nodded.

“Where is he?”

“He has gone to climb mountains in British Columbia and he sent me to stay with Aunt Florence while he was away.”

“How long is he going to be away?”

“Years,” said Charlotte indifferently.

The old woman knitted two rounds of her stocking before she said anything else.

“Do you like it at your Aunt Florence’s?”

“No. It’s too noisy and affectionate,” said Charlotte gravely.

The old woman laid down her knitting and stared at her. There was a queer expression on her face, she might almost have been going to laugh. Her thick black eyebrows twitched.

“Does your aunt know where you are?”

Charlotte shook her head.

“And don’t you think she’ll be worried? I don’t think you can get back tonight in this storm.”

“She’s always worried over something,” said Charlotte, as if it didn’t matter a great deal. Nobody had ever worried much about her. And she was very well satisfied with where she was. She had never been in a place or in such company that suited her so well. Only, as yet, no mother. But it was quiet and peaceful and warm. The wood snapped and crackled in the stove. The rain spattered on the window panes. The wind growled and snarled because it could not get into the sturdy house.

“We’re neither of us much for talking, it seems,” said the old woman.

“No, but I think we are entertaining each other very well,” said Charlotte.

This time the old woman did really laugh.

“I’ve had some such thought myself,” she said.

It was quite a long while, a long, delightful while, after that Charlotte found herself nodding. And the downtrodden black cats had begun to trot around the rug.

“You’re half asleep. You’d be better in bed. Are you afraid to sleep alone?”

Afraid? Charlotte loved to sleep alone. And she never could at Aunt Florence's. She did not even have a steady room, always being passed about from one to the other. Now Mrs. Barrett who snored, now Jenny who kicked, now Edith or Susette who fussed over her.

"I like sleeping alone," said Charlotte.

The old woman filled a little blue rubber bag with hot water from the puffing kettle and lighted a candle in a little blue china candlestick. She took Charlotte through a large room, with only a little plain furniture in it. You could move around in it without knocking something over. It was not cluttered up with over-stuffed divans or gilt fandangos, but full of dancing, inviting shadows from the candle. Charlotte felt sure that this room was never in a hurry. Then they went up a staircase of shining black steps and into a bedroom where there was a bed with a pink flounced spread. The old woman set the candle on the bureau, turned back the bedclothes and put the blue bottle in the bed.

"I hope you'll be warm and have a good night," she said. There was something in her face that was very kind. Charlotte felt emboldened to ask a question.

"Would you mind telling me if I'm likely to find a mother here?"

"We'll see about that in the morning," said the old woman as she went out and shut the brown door with the big brass latch.

Charlotte looked about the room. She loved it: and it was a room that was used to being loved. Charlotte was quite sure of that. It had a hooked rug on the floor with great soft plushy roses and ferns in it, flowered chintz curtains at the window, and a blue-and-white pitcher and wash basin. And everything in it felt related to her.

On the wall over the table was the picture of a little girl in an old-fashioned dress . . . a little girl not much older than Charlotte. She looked very sweet and young and innocent with the little puffs at her shoulders and the big bow of ribbon in her hair. Charlotte felt acquainted with her.

And then she saw it, the china lady with the blue shoes and the gilt sash and the unfaded red rose in her golden hair, sitting on the little frilled shelf in the corner . . . the china lady of her dream. There could be no

mistake about it. Sometime she had been here before . . . not in a dream but really. And her mother had been with her.

Charlotte got into bed, feeling perfectly at home. When she wakened in the morning to see sunshine raining all over her bed, the old woman was bending over her.

“Is that Mother’s picture?” were the first words Charlotte said.

“Yes. This used to be her room. This is not the first time you have been in it. Have you any recollection of it, child?”

“Yes. I thought it was a dream until last night. And Mother was here with me, wasn’t she?”

“Yes. I am your grandmother, Elizabeth Jasper. Your mother married a man I’d no use for. People will tell you I never forgave her. That was nonsense. It’s true I never went to see her. I wouldn’t cross the threshold of Ned Laurence’s house. But she came here to see me and brought you. We made up for all our coolness. She died soon afterwards. I couldn’t bring myself to have anything to do with your father. I see I was wrong. I shouldn’t have left him to bring you up to hate me.”

“But he didn’t. He just never said anything about you,” said Charlotte, sitting up in bed. She knew now that no new mother was to be found, but somehow she did not feel disappointed. She seemed so close to her own mother. The room, the house, was full of her.

“Judith Penny sent you here to find a mother. She isn’t called a witch for nothing, that one. I’m sorry I haven’t got a mother for you. Do you think a grandmother would do?”

Charlotte knew all at once where she had seen Grandmother Jasper’s eyes so often. In her looking glass. She was suddenly so happy that it seemed to her she must burst with her happiness.

“Can I live here with you?” she whispered. Grandmother Jasper nodded.

“I telephoned your aunt last night after you went to bed and told her where you were. I told her you might stay here quite likely. She didn’t seem to mind.”

“Oh, she wouldn’t. Grandmother, it’s so quiet here!”

Grandmother nodded.

“We’re alike in more than our looks, child. What a turn you gave me when I opened the door last night. I thought I was seeing the ghost of the child I was fifty years ago.”

“Grandmother,” said Charlotte curiously, “is Witch Penny really a witch?”

“If she isn’t, she ought to be,” said Grandmother Jasper.

The Closed Door

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Before Rachel had been at Briarwold a month there was a saying that whenever she went around a corner, she went into something. Hazel was a sweet thing with dove's eyes, whom everybody loved, but Rachel was a green-eyed bantling who had been touched with faery from birth. She had an elfin face and slim brown hands that talked as eloquently as her lips, especially when she was telling Cecil and Chris tales of man-eating tigers and Hindoo superstitions she had no business to know. Her devoted missionary parents would have died of horror if they had suspected she did know them. They thought they had protected her so carefully, but Rachel was one of those predestined creatures to whom strange knowledge comes and strange things happen. Very soon after she came to Briarwold she was telling the other children fading old stories of their ancestors . . . ivory-white women and gallant men . . . which they had never heard before . . . mystic wraiths of tales which came alive when Rachel touched them. Everything seemed to come alive when Rachel touched it. When she told the simplest incident it took on a colouring of romance and mystery. She was somehow like a window through which they peeped into an unknown world.

The things she knew! For instance, she knew that if she could only open a door . . . any door . . . quickly enough, she would see strange things . . . perhaps the people who had once lived in it. But she could never open it quite quickly enough. After she told them this every room with a closed door was full of magic for Cecil and Chris. What was going on inside? Even Jane Alicut tiptoed past it, and Jane was impervious to most subtleties. She was the daughter of the new housekeeper at Briarwold . . . a pudgy, blunt-spoken lass of twelve . . . the same age as Rachel. Cecil Latham was twelve too, and lived with his mother next door at faded, shabby Pinecroft. Chris, who matched Hazel with ten years of life, lived at

Briarwold with Mr. Digby, whom she called Uncle Egerton, although he was only a second cousin of her dead mother. But though it was said they lived at these places this meant that they slept and ate there. They really did their living in the gardens and the pinewoods and the fields. Especially when Rachel and Hazel came. After India's burning suns Rachel could not get enough of the crystal homeland air and the long, green, rolling fields and the shadowy woods and the moonlight among the beeches. And of course the minute Rachel looked at the landscape she saw things none of the rest of them could.

Cecil and Chris had been good friends and had played together before Rachel came, but Chris was shy and timid and Cecil was shy and timid and they did not just hit it off. Rachel seemed to fuse everybody in an atmosphere of pixy laughter and companionship, and Hazel was like a soft strain of music in the background. So Cecil was having the happiest summer he had ever known, and even the creeping shadow ceased to haunt him.

Rachel had not been at Briarwold two weeks before she found out what the shadow at Pinecroft was. She had been curled up in the wing chair in one corner of the porch when Egerton Digby was talking with his sister-in-law in the other. The chair's back was towards them and it did not occur to Rachel that they did not know she was there. It is by no means certain that she would have gone away if it had occurred to her.

She heard only snatches. Yet enough to know that Mrs. Latham was very poor and had recently become still poorer by reason of the failure of some company . . . that it was becoming doubtful if she could keep Cecil . . . certainly she could not educate him.

"It will come to this," said Enid Latham in a terrible voice, "I shall have to give him up to his father's people at last. They've always been determined to have him."

Rachel knew quite well, with that uncanny prescience of hers, that Cecil's mother did not like his father's people. To give Cecil to them meant giving him up forever.

"I wish I could help you," Egerton Digby said. "If I were not so wretchedly hard up myself . . . and Chris must be provided for . . ."

"You have done far more than you should already," said Mrs. Latham. "We have no claim on you."

"If you had the Peacock Pearl, as you should have had, there would have been no such problems for you," said Mr. Digby.

He spoke so bitterly that even a less acute child than Rachel might have known that he was touching on something unspeakably painful.

"I am sure that Nora never gave Arthur Nesbitt the pearl," said Mrs. Latham with a gentle firmness. "She was gay and heedless . . . my poor, beautiful Nora . . . but she wasn't wicked. I don't believe he was her lover, Egerton. I have never believed it and I never can."

"I have never believed it either," said Egerton harshly. "But I can't be sure . . . and my doubt has eaten into my soul all these years like a corroding rust. I suppose I loved her too much. And that quarrel we had the last night of her life . . . the last time I ever saw her. If I could undo it, Enid! But nothing can be undone. Life has beaten me."

I should like to see life beat me, thought Rachel.

"If she did not give Arthur Nesbitt the pearl, what became of it?" Egerton Digby went on.

"I think if Ralph had lived he could have told us something about that," said Mrs. Latham. "He was furious because Uncle Michael left the pearl to me."

Why does she hate to mention the name of Ralph, wondered Rachel. It sounds as if it blistered her lips.

"The pearl was an exquisite thing," said Egerton dreamily. "There is some especial charm and mystery about the jewels of the sea. And its colour . . . a moonlight blend of blue and green . . . I never saw anything so lovely. Your Uncle Michael paid fifty thousand for it . . . and loved it more than he should. Perhaps that was why it brought misfortune."

"It will kill me if I have to give Cecil up," said Mrs. Latham.

"I would welcome death," said Egerton Digby. "Perhaps on the other side of the grave I might find Nora . . . and know . . . and kiss our quarrel

away.”

They talked longer but they dropped their voices, and Rachel heard nothing further. She thought a great deal over what she had heard. There was a mystery. She felt that she was standing before a closed door and that if she could open it quickly enough she would see things . . . Nora and the Peacock Pearl among them. The name and idea of the pearl captivated Rachel. She had heard stories of such things in India . . . rare mysterious old gems of beauty and desire.

I must find out all about it, decided Rachel.

* * *

She did not say a word to anybody of what she had heard. Rachel loved secrets. Besides, she was not going to worry Cecil any more than he was worried. But when Jane Alicut began to tell her things one night, when they were alone together in the twilight, Rachel let her talk. Rachel had already discovered how much could be found out just by letting people talk. Everybody was away from Briarwold, and Cecil was staying home because his mother had a headache, so it was an excellent chance for Jane to talk and she took it. Jane, on a lower plane, was as good as Rachel at finding out things. The crudity of her telling hurt Rachel, who loved to soften and beautify as she went along. Jane never suggested mystery. To her a spade was a spade, never a golden trowel which might turn up who knew what of treasure trove.

“I heard Ma talking to Mrs. Agar down in the village about it. Mrs. Agar told Ma everything. Mr. Digby’s wife was Mrs. Latham’s sister and they were dreadful fond of each other . . . Mrs. Latham and Mrs. Digby, I mean. I dunno if Mrs. Digby was as fond of her husband. Mrs. Agar said there were queer tales. She was a great beauty with a rope of black hair that fell to her feet. But she was a gay piece and Mr. Digby was jealous as jealous.

“She had a brother called Ralph who was as bad as they make ’em, but Mrs. Digby always stuck up for him and took his part. She seemed to love

him more'n she loved anybody else. Then old Michael Foster . . . he was their uncle . . . up and died. He hadn't much money but he had a big pearl that was worth a king's ransom, Mrs. Agar said. He'd ruined himself to buy it. And he willed it to Mrs. Latham. Ralph was furious because he thought he should have got it. He said his uncle had promised it to him. He seemed to be sorter a favourite with the old man in spite of his goings-on. They had an awful quarrel over it, Mrs. Agar says. And then one night Mrs. Digby went home . . . her old home where Ralph and her father lived . . . to stay all night, and it was burned down and they were all burned to death in it . . . all three of 'em . . . yes, wasn't it awful! And Mr. Digby nearly went mad. He's never been the same man since, Mrs. Agar says. His hair turned white in a month. And there was a big to-do because the pearl had disappeared. It never was found either.

"Mrs. Agar says everybody thought Mrs. Digby was going to run away with Arthur Nesbitt and had given him the pearl. He was up to his eyes in debt. He went away after that and word came back that he had lots of money. A nice kettle of fish, wasn't it? Mrs. Agar says the rich society folks are all like that."

"But Mr. Digby isn't rich," said Rachel.

"No . . . he's got poor since his wife was burned to death. He just let everything slide. And of course Mrs. Latham is as poor as a church mouse . . . everyone knows that. Mrs. Agar says his father's people want Cecil. They've always hated her . . . they didn't want Cecil's father to marry her."

"You are not to tell Cecil that," said Rachel.

"Of course I won't. I like the kid and I'm sorry for him. So's Ma. I don't want to hurt his feelings," protested Jane.

"And I think you'd better not talk about that story to anyone," continued Rachel austerely. "You've talked too much about it now."

Jane stared. She had certainly felt that Rachel wanted to hear her talk. It wasn't fair that she should be snubbed like that.

"I can hold my tongue as well as the next one," she said sulkily. "You are good at listening, Miss Rachel."

Rachel smiled . . . remotely . . . mysteriously.

“You would be surprised, Jane, if you knew what I can hear sometimes,” she said dreamily.

Rachel felt now that she knew all about the mystery . . . except the one thing worth knowing. The door was still closed. And she did not know how it was to be opened. She did not have the key. In this impasse Rachel betook herself to prayer. For the daughter of a missionary, Rachel did not pray overmuch. Hazel prayed sweetly and innocently every night and morning, but Rachel made a special, mystic, alluring rite of prayer. She would not make it common. Neither did she kneel down. She stood in the garden by the sundial and lifted her face to the sky with upraised hands, facing God fearlessly.

“Please open the door,” she said, less as a request than as a statement of right. “Because,” she added, “you know that things can’t be right until the door is opened.”

* * *

Perhaps what followed on a certain afternoon, which none of the children ever forgot, was an answer to this prayer. You will not get any of those children to discuss it with you. Nobody will talk of it, not even Jane Alicut, who is now a stout matron with a bevy of her own children round her. She tells them many tales of her old playmates at Briarwold, but she never tells the story of that haunted afternoon. She would like to think she dreamed it. When she cannot believe that, she blames it on Rachel. Very likely with justice. I think if Rachel had not been with the other children that day, they would never have stepped through the closed door.

They were to go to tea with old Great-aunt Lucy down at Mount Joy. And they were to go by a short cut through fields and woods which none of them had ever traversed before, but which Uncle Egerton described so clearly that they were quite sure they could follow it. At first they went along the wood path back of Briarwold. They had never gone quite so far into those woods before. But they felt quite at home and very happy. The woods had a friendly mood on that day. They did not always have it.

Sometimes they frowned. Sometimes they were wrapped up in their own concerns. But this day they welcomed the children. There were beautiful shadows everywhere. The mosses along the path were emerald and gold. They passed through a little glen full of creamy toadstools. They found a lovely green pool with ferns around it that nobody ever seemed to have found before. Rachel was quite sure that if they waited quietly a faun would come through the trees to peep at himself in it. But they had no time to waste for Great-aunt Lucy was fussy about punctuality.

Jane was with them. Great-aunt Lucy made a point of inviting Jane because she liked her. And Jane's dog, who had no name because Jane could not find one which would suit everybody, was along too . . . a gay, light-hearted little mongrel who tore about in the woods and outran them, then sat on his haunches waiting for them to come up with him, laughing at them with his red tongue lolling from his jaws.

After the woods there was a meadow path that enticed them with daisies and was jewelled with the red of wild strawberry leaves. Then came another stretch of woodland . . . a more shadowy place. The path ran along by a mysterious, fir-darkened brook. The children were never quite sure just when the feeling of something strange came over them. All at once they found themselves drawing closer together. Their light chatter failed them. Even Jane became very quiet. Rachel had been quiet all along that day, now that they came to think of it. She had walked a little apart . . . listening. She would never talk of it afterwards, so nobody knows what she was listening for or what she expected. Jane's dog was the only one of the party who kept his spirits up.

"Are you sure this is the right road?" whispered Jane nervously at last. She didn't know why she must whisper.

"It's the only road there is," said Rachel.

A little further on Cecil suddenly said, "If this is the right road, there's something wrong with it."

They stared at each other, beginning to be pale. Cecil had put their secret feeling into words.

“There is something wrong with it,” said Rachel. “I’ve known that for some time. And I’m going to find out what it is.”

They went on. It was just as well to go on as to go back, for the chill and fear were all around them now. They dared not stand still. They could not even whisper. Jane’s dog had given up chasing imaginary rabbits but he trotted along sturdily, his tail curled saucily over his back.

All at once they were through the woods and out in the open. A lovely landscape of hill and meadow and homesteads spread below the hill on which they stood. They scrambled over the rotten fence and found themselves in an old, deep-rutted, grass-grown lane which ran down to join a road that went on until it reached the lake. But just beside them was a garden oddly shaped like a triangle, basking in the sunshine, full of flowers and bees and sleepy shadows. And at the tip of this garden triangle was a house.

None of them could recall having seen it before. It was a large, old-fashioned house, overgrown with vines, and the door was open. On the sun-warm sandstone step a cat was basking . . . a huge, black cat with pale-green eyes.

An odd hush lay over the windless place. Cecil remembered an old poem he had heard Uncle Egerton reading . . . a poem that spoke of a land “where the wind never blew.” Had they come to it? What was this lost garden, so full of inescapable mystery? What was wrong with it?

He looked appealingly at Rachel.

“Where are we? I don’t see Aunt Lucy’s anywhere.”

“I’m going to that house to ask,” said Rachel resolutely.

Cecil did not know why he felt such a horror of doing this. He was ashamed to betray his cowardice before a girl, so he went along. They walked up the central path of the garden, past tulips and daffodils and bleeding-heart. Cecil knew what was wrong with the garden now. Tulips and daffodils and bleeding-heart had no right to be there . . . it was long past the time for them. He felt Chris’s cold little hand steal into his. At the very step Jane’s dog suddenly gave a low whine, turned and fled.

“I suppose he doesn’t like that cat,” said Jane, as if she felt called upon to explain his behaviour.

“Hush,” said Cecil . . . he didn’t know why.

Rachel knocked . . . but nobody came. The cat stared at them unblinkingly. The scent of lilacs came on the air, although this was late summer and lilacs are in spring. Never again, as long as he lived, could Cecil endure the scent of lilacs. Beyond they saw a large, square hall and on one side of it was a closed door.

Rachel went in and across the hall to the door. The others followed because following was a little less terrible than staying behind. They were all very cold now. Rachel’s thin shoulders were shivering. But she did a strange thing. She did not knock at the door . . . she simply set her teeth, turned the knob and went in.

* * *

For once she had done it quickly and silently enough.

They were in a beautiful, old-fashioned room. Two other people were also in it. A lady sat by a tea-table whereon were ivory candles in tall silver candlesticks and a bowl of violets. She was very beautiful. Her masses of black hair were held to her head by a golden band. She had a very fine, pale, creamy skin, and she wore a dress of black velvet with long, flowing sleeves of black lace. A great rose of dark-golden velvet was fastened to her shoulder, and the melting, pansy-hued eyes that looked at them were full of allurements and soft fire under the heavy fringing lashes.

A young man was standing by the window, playing with the tassel of the shade. He was handsome too, in a dark and splendid way, but the white hands that pulled at the tassel had terribly long, thin fingers. Cecil knew that he was in the presence of something very evil.

The young man left the window, took a cup from the table and came to the children. Cecil felt as if a dark chill night were coming towards him. But it was Rachel to whom the young man held out the cup. All the children saw the ring on his hand . . . or, rather, the three rings, fastened to

each other by tiny gold chains, so that all three must be taken off or put on together. A diamond in one ring, a ruby in another, an emerald in the third, each stone held in a dragon's mouth.

Rachel shook her head and turned away. Then the lady smiled.

"You are quite right not to take it," she said. "It would not have hurt you, but you would never have been quite the same again. And you are too different already for your own good. Besides, you would have forgotten us as soon as you went out."

She rose and came towards them also. Cecil was afraid that she was going to touch him, and he knew that if she did he could not endure it. But it was by Rachel she paused. A little quivering ruby of light fell for a moment on her white neck from the stained-glass window at the far end of the room. The young man stood apart with the window for a background. There was a sneer on his face. He looked like some beautiful fallen angel . . . dark, impotent and rebellious.

The lady bent her head and said something to Rachel in a very low tone. But they all heard it.

"Tell Egerton I loved him only . . . Arthur Nesbitt was nothing to me. As for that foolish quarrel of ours . . . one forgets such things here . . . only love is remembered. But I did take the pearl . . . for Ralph. He persuaded me that Uncle Michael meant him to have it . . . that he was childish and doted when he made the will giving it to Enid. But I had not given it to him. Tell Egerton he will find the pearl among the folds of my wedding gown in the locked box in the attic. I am glad you came and opened the door. So few people would have had the courage to open it. There will be rest now. But go . . . go quickly."

They went quickly. Once outside that terrible house, they ran blindly through the garden and down the lane. At the entrance to the wood-path they stopped and looked back.

There was no house. There was only a tangled enclosure with a growth of young trees in the centre among which were the ruins of burned walls.

"Let us go home," said Jane. "I don't care what Aunt Lucy thinks. I'm . . . I'm sick."

They got home somehow, running, stumbling, clinging together. When they got home nobody would say anything . . . could say anything . . . but Rachel. She had something to tell her Uncle Egerton and she told it, closeted with him in the library. Then she went out and flung herself down on the grass by the sundial, shaken with dreadful sobs.

“What did he say?” whispered Cecil.

“He wouldn’t believe me at first, until I happened to mention the three rings the . . . the man wore. Then he said, ‘The Rajah’s rings . . . Ralph always wore them.’ And he went to the attic.”

“Was . . . was it there?”

“Yes. And he looked like . . . like a man who had got out of hell,” said Rachel.

Nobody was shocked. They had learned that afternoon, looking into Ralph Kilbourne’s eyes, more about hell than they had ever known before. They were too young to have learned so much . . . which was perhaps why they could never be got to say anything of it. Such things are not good for anybody to know.

“I will never open a closed door again,” shuddered Rachel.

For a Dream's Sake

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“I think I’ve been a little off my head ever since last night,” said Gilroy Gray.

He had hurried up from college as soon as his classes were over to make sure that last night had not been a dream . . . that Vere had really promised to marry him at last . . . after all these years of devotion when he had so little hope of winning her.

And it was true. She had met him in the rose garden and held up her lips to be kissed. Then she had turned again quietly to her occupation of cutting roses for pot-pourri. Vere still made pot-pourri every summer. It was a rule with her. None of the younger generation bothered with it. They gathered their roses while they might and flung them aside when faded.

There was a basket at Vere’s feet, half tipped, spilling its contents in a little pool of pink and white and crimson sweetness on the grass. She wore some kind of a pale blue dress, quite long. Gilroy was glad that long dresses were coming in again. They suited Vere as short ones had never done. In the shadow of her garden hat the distinction of her slightly lined, slightly sad face impressed him anew. She had a kind of pale, luminous beauty . . . the beauty of the first evening star in the sky or a white mountain peak smitten with dawn. She was not young, but when she came into a room every other woman in it suddenly became common and undistinguished. She was usually calm and fine and a little chill. She did not have many close friends, but those she did have were always unchangeably loyal to her. She had a strange holding power under all her aloofness.

Gilroy did not know just why he loved her or why she was so full of enchantment for him. But it had been so ever since he had first seen her. And now, at last, she was his . . . with reservations.

He had accepted those reservations. He knew—she had told him—that she had only second-hand love to give. He must be content with that. He had known something of it before, but she had told him the whole story the previous evening.

When she was a girl of seventeen she had loved Maurice Tisdale. She did not say a great deal about him, but Gilroy got the impression that Maurice had been a slim, romantic, starry-eyed youth, fonder of reading poetry than of work, although Vere most certainly did not say that. And her father, the irascible old entomologist, had sent him away.

“Father never liked him. He—he—the Maybee pride, you know. And Maurice was poor. I would have gone with him . . . what did I care for the Maybee pride or the Tisdale poverty? But I couldn’t leave Mother then. She was so ill. Maurice went west. We corresponded until . . . until the word of his death came. He had gone with a prospecting company into the mountains . . . he got lost . . . he was never found. Life seemed over for me . . . that kind of life anyway. I’ve never cared since . . . like that . . . and I never can. I do care for you, Gilroy, and if having me will give you happiness, why, take me. Only . . . you know I have to be frank, Gilroy . . . the real me will always belong to Maurice. I can’t forsake my dream. It has been a part of my life so long. He—he didn’t deserve that I should ever be unfaithful to him. He died loving me.”

Gilroy accepted it all and put it behind him. He would rather have half of her heart than the whole one of any other woman.

“All day I’ve been wondering if I only imagined last night,” he said. “Come, darling, never mind the roses . . . I’ve only an hour and I want you to give me every minute.”

“But I can give you only half an hour,” said Vere, smiling. “Then I’ve got to help Father classify some lovely new bugs he’s got. He’s so excited over them, poor dear. Myself, I can get a little tired of them. I think . . . I really think I’d prefer you.”

When the half hour was over and Vere had gone in to help Professor Maybee with his bugs, Gilroy went away, taking the short cut through the little park below the block where the old Maybee place was. He sat down

on one of the benches to dream of Vere for a few minutes. He wondered if he would ever win her wholly . . . if there would ever come a time when he would not feel that his wife was the thrall of a dream whose core was another man . . . a dead man, dead in his youth . . . always young, romantic, alluring, in contrast to his—Gilroy's—greying middle age. Gilroy sighed in spite of his happiness. But he had lived long enough to learn that there are very few unspoiled things in this world.

"Hot, ain't it?" sympathetically agreed the man who was sitting on the other end of the bench.

Gilroy started slightly. He had not noticed his coming. He was a stout, rather commonplace man, rather flashily dressed, with a very weird and terrible necktie. He had taken off his hat to mop his forehead, and Gilroy saw that he was bald. His face was red, his eyes bleared and puffy. "I've been looking round this little old burg trying to locate someone I know," said the stranger. "I was born and bred here and it's sixteen years since I left. There doesn't seem to be any of my old pals in the place."

"That is . . . sad," said Gilroy idiotically. He did not want to talk to this man.

"It would have been a bit of a shock to them if I had found them," said the man, with a grin. He paused to light a cigarette, a huge diamond shining like a small sun on his little finger . . . the nail of which was not impeccable. "You see, everybody in this town thinks I'm dead."

"Indeed?"

"Yes. After I'd been west awhile I went out with a prospecting party and got lost. Had a dickens of a time finding my way back to civilization. Found everybody thought I was a goner, so I let 'em think so. I had my reasons. There was a skirt . . . well, you know. Lit out for another town and went into the real estate business. I've done well . . . you bet I ain't the poverty-stricken kid I was when I left here. It used to be a saying that all the Tisdales had holes in their pockets. But you bet I sewed up mine."

Gilroy sat as if stunned. He could not have spoken if his life had depended on it. This was Maurice Tisdale . . . this!

“I’m taking the wife and kids east to visit her people. She wanted to stop off in Trentville to see an old chum, so I thought I’d come on here and she could pick me up on the 6:15 train. But I’m blessed if I don’t wish I hadn’t bothered. Can’t find anyone who ever knew me and there isn’t even a place where a fellow could wet his whistle.”

Still Gilroy said nothing. What was there to say?

Maurice Tisdale mopped his face again.

“Say, when I used to live here there was an old bug-hunter on that street up there . . . old Professor Maybee. Maybee, he was some guy. Went off his chump watching bugs. He had a daughter, though. There was some class to her . . . a bit skinny . . . no more figger than an umbrella. We were quite sweet on each other in those days. Not that I meant anything much, but her face was easy to look at and a fellow had to kill time. We read miles of poetry together . . . say, she used to write some herself, ’pon my word, and read it to me. Then the bug-man got his dander up . . . the Maybees had a rotten pride. He packed me off . . . if you could have seen him”—Maurice paused to give an imitation of Professor Maybee in the act of dismissal. It was so well done that even the frozen Gilroy almost smiled. The creature could mimic.

“I pretended to be a bit cut up—just to let Vere down easy—but I was glad enough to snap out of it. We wrote for a while after I went west, but when I found I was so conveniently dead . . . well, that suited me too. D’ye happen to know what became of Vere? I suppose she’s been married for years and put on weight like myself.”

“No, she is not married,” Gilroy found himself able to say.

“Whew! I’m surprised . . . and yet I’m not. ’Taint everybody that would interest her. Well, she’s no chicken now. Must be pretty definitely on the shelf. Do they still live up there?”

“Yes.”

“Then I believe I’ll toddle up and see her. It’ll help to put the time in. I suppose since I’m safely married old Maybee won’t be scared of my running off with his lady daughter.”

For a moment Gilroy wavered. Should he let him go? If Vere saw him, just as he was . . . well, he, Gilroy, would be under no necessity of sharing her with a ghost all their life together. When she saw Maurice Tisdale of today her dream would be scorched out of existence in the humiliation of the moment. He would be left without a rival.

But . . . what would it do to her? If her dream went would it not take with it something that was part of her charm? She would be nothing but a shamed, broken woman, all the fine aloofness and evasive frost of her smirched and draggled. Could he do this thing to her?

“I’m afraid it’s no use your going up there,” he said quietly. “The Maybees aren’t home just now . . . off for a visit somewhere, I understand.”

Maurice Tisdale shrugged his fat shoulders.

“Just my luck. However, maybe it’s as well. Vere was the type that would make an awful skinny old maid. But she was one of the kind that sort of hang on to an idea. Just as well to let sleeping dogs lie. Guess I’ll toddle down to the hotel and wait for my train. It’s too darned hot to prowl about any longer.”

Gilroy watched him out of sight . . . the fatuous sordid creature who still held sway in the deepest recesses of Vere Maybee’s heart. He laughed . . . a little bitterly but unregretfully.

“I have saved her dream for her,” he thought.

The House Party at Smoky Island

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When Madeline Stanwyck asked me to join her house party at Smoky Island I was not at first disposed to do so. It was too early in the season, and there would be mosquitoes. One mosquito can keep me more awake than a bad conscience: and there are millions of mosquitoes in Muskoka.

"No, no, the season for them is over," Madeline assured me. Madeline would say anything to get her way.

"The mosquito season is never over in Muskoka," I said, as grumpily as anyone could speak to Madeline. "They thrive up there at zero. And even if by some miracle there are no mosquitoes, I've no hankering to be chewed to pieces by black flies."

Even Madeline did not dare to say there would be no black flies, so she wisely fell back on her Madelinity.

"Please come, for my sake," she said wistfully. "It wouldn't be a real party for me if you weren't there, Jim darling."

I am Madeline's favorite cousin, twenty years her senior, and she calls everybody darling when she wants to get something out of him. Not but that Madeline ... but this story is not about Madeline. It is about an occurrence which took place at Smoky Island. None of us pretends to understand it, except the Judge, who pretends to understand everything. But he really understands it no better than the rest of us. His latest explanation is that we were all hypnotized and in the state of hypnosis saw and remembered things we couldn't otherwise have seen or remembered. But even he cannot explain who or what hypnotized us.

I decided to yield, but not all at once.

"Has your Smoky Island housekeeper still got that detestable white parrot?" I asked.

"Yes, but it is much better-mannered than it used to be," assured Madeline. "And you know you have always liked her cat."

"Who'll be in your party? I'm rather finicky as to the company I keep."
Madeline grinned.

"You know I never invite anyone but interesting people to my parties"—I bowed to the implied compliment—"with a dull one or two to show off the sparkle of the rest of us"—I did not bow this time—"Consuelo Anderson ... Aunt Alma ... Professor Tennant and his wife ... Dick Lane ... Tod Newman ... Senator Malcolm and Mrs. Senator ... Old Nosey ... Min Ingram ... Judge Warden ... Mary Harland ... and a few Bright Young Things to amuse *me*."

I ran over the list in my mind, not disapprovingly. Consuelo was a very fat girl with a B. A. degree. I liked her because she could sit still for a longer time than any woman I know. Tennant was professor of something he called the New Pathology—an insignificant little man with a gigantic intellect. Dick Lane was one of those coming men who never seem to arrive, but a frank, friendly, charming fellow enough. Mary Harland was a comfortable spinster, Tod an amusing little fop, Aunt Alma a sweet, silvery-haired thing like a Whistler mother. Old Nosey—whose real name was Miss Alexander and who never let anyone forget that she had nearly sailed on the *Lusitania*—and the Malcolms had no terrors for me, although the Senator always called his wife "Kittens." And Judge Warden was an old crony of mine. I did not like Min Ingram, who had a rapier-like tongue, but she could be ignored, along with the Bright Young Things.

"Is that all?" I asked cautiously.

"Well ... Doctor Armstrong and Brenda, of course," said Madeline, eyeing me as if it were not at all of course.

"Is that—wise?" I said slowly.

Madeline crumpled.

"Of course not," she said miserably. "It will likely spoil everything. But John insists on it ... you know he and Anthony Armstrong have been pals all their lives. And Brenda and I have always been chummy. It would look so funny if we didn't have them. I don't know what has got into her. We all *know* Anthony never poisoned Susette."

"Brenda doesn't know it, apparently," I said.

"Well, she ought to!" snapped Madeline. "As if Anthony could have poisoned anyone! But that's one of the reasons I particularly want you to come."

"Ah, now we're getting at it. But why *me*?"

"Because you've more influence over Brenda than anyone else ... oh, yes, you have. If you could get her to open up ... talk to her ... you might help her. Because ... if something doesn't help her soon she'll be beyond help. You know that."

I knew it well enough. The case of the Anthony Armstrongs was worrying us all. We saw a tragedy being enacted before our eyes and we could not lift a finger to help. For Brenda would not talk and Anthony had never talked.

The story, now five years old, was known to all of us, of course. Anthony's first wife had been Susette Wilder. Of the dead nothing but good; so I will say of Susette only that she was very beautiful and very rich. Luckily her fortune had come to her unexpectedly by the death of an aunt and cousin after she had married Anthony, so that he could not be accused of fortune-hunting. He had been wildly in love with Susette at first, but after they had been married a few years I don't think he had much affection left for her. None of the rest of us had ever had any to begin with. When word came back from California—where Anthony had taken her one winter for her nerves—that she was dead I don't suppose anyone felt any regret, nor any suspicion when we heard that she had died from an overdose of chloral; rather mysteriously, to be sure, for Susette was neither careless nor suicidally inclined. There were some ugly rumors, especially when it became known that Anthony had inherited her entire fortune under her will; but nobody ever dared say much openly. We, who knew and loved Anthony, never paid any heed to the hints. And when, two years later, he married Brenda Young, we were all glad. Anthony, we said, would have some real happiness now.

For a time he did have it. Nobody could doubt that he and Brenda were ecstatically happy. Brenda was a sincere, spiritual creature, lovely after a fashion totally different from Susette. Susette had had golden hair and

eyes as cool and green as fluorspar. Brenda had slim, dark distinction, hair that blended with the dusk, and eyes so full of twilight that it was hard to say whether they were blue or gray. She loved Anthony so terribly that sometimes I thought she was tempting the gods.

Then—slowly, subtly, remorselessly—the change set in. We began to feel that there was something wrong—very wrong—between the Armstrongs. They were no longer quite so happy ... they were not happy at all ... they were wretched. Brenda's old delightful laugh was never heard, and Anthony went about his work with an air of abstraction that didn't please his patients. His practise had fallen off awhile before Susette's death, but it had picked up and grown wonderfully. Now it began dropping again. And the worst of it was that Anthony didn't seem to care. Of course he didn't need it from a financial point of view, but he had always been so keenly interested in his work.

I don't know whether it was merely surmise or whether Brenda had let a word slip, but we all knew or felt that a horrible suspicion possessed her. There was some whisper of an anonymous letter, full of vile innuendoes, that had started the trouble. I never knew the rights of that, but I did know that Brenda had become a haunted woman.

Had Anthony given Susette that overdose of chloral—given it purposely?

If she had been the kind of woman who talks things out, some of us might have saved her. But she wasn't. It's my belief that she never said one word to Anthony of the cold horror of distrust that was poisoning her life. But he must have felt she suspected him, and between them was the chill and shadow of a thing that must not be spoken of.

At the time of Madeline's house party the state of affairs between the Armstrongs was such that Brenda had almost reached the breaking-point. Anthony's nerves were tense, too, and his eyes were almost as tragic as hers. We were all ready to hear that Brenda had left him or done something more desperate still. And nobody could do a thing to help, not even I, in spite of Madeline's foolish hopes. I couldn't go to Brenda and say, "Look here, you know, Anthony never thought of such a thing as poisoning

Susette." After all, in spite of our surmises, the trouble might be something else altogether. And if she did suspect him, what proof could I offer her that would root the obsession out of her mind?

I hardly thought the Armstrongs would go to Smoky Island, but they did. When Anthony turned on the wharf and held out his hand to assist Brenda from the motor-boat, she ignored it, stepping swiftly off without any assistance and running up through the rock garden and the pointed firs. I saw Anthony go very white. I felt a little sick myself. If matters had come to such a pass that she shrank from his mere touch, disaster was near.

Smoky Island was in a little blue Muskoka lake and the house was called the Wigwam ... probably because nothing on earth could be less like a wigwam. The Stanwyck money had made a wonderful place of it, but even the Stanwyck money could not buy fine weather. Madeline's party was a flop. It rained every day more or less for the week, and though we all tried heroically to make the best of things I don't think I ever spent a more unpleasant time. The parrot's manners were no better, in spite of Madeline's assurances. Min Ingram had brought an aloof, disdainful dog with her that everyone hated because he despised us all. Min herself kept passing out needle-like insults when she saw anyone in danger of being comfortable. I thought the Bright Young Things seemed to hold *me* responsible for the weather. All our nerves got edgy except Aunt Alma's. Nothing ever upset Aunt Alma. She prided herself a bit on that.

On Saturday the weather wound up with a regular downpour and a wind that rushed out of the black-green pines to lash the Wigwam and then rushed back like a maddened animal. The air was as full of torn, flying leaves as of rain, and the lake was a splutter of tossing waves. This charming day ended in a dank, streaming night.

And yet things had seemed a bit better than any day yet. Anthony was away. He had got some mysterious telegram just after breakfast, had taken the small motor-boat, and gone to the mainland. I was thankful, for I felt I could no longer endure seeing a man's soul tortured as his was. Brenda had kept her room all day on the good old plea of a headache. I won't say it

wasn't a relief. We all felt the strain between her and Anthony like a tangible thing.

"Something—*something*—is going to happen," Madeline kept saying to me. She was really worse than the parrot.

After dinner we all gathered around the fireplace in the hall, where a cheerful fire of white birchwood was glowing; for although it was June the evening was cold. I settled back with a sigh of relief. After all, nothing lasted for ever, and this infernal house party would be over on Monday. Besides, it was really quite comfortable and cheerful here, despite rattling windows and wailing winds and rain-swept panes. Madeline turned out the electric lights, and the firelight was kind to the women, who all looked quite charming. Some of the Bright Young Things sat cross-legged on the floor with arms around one another quite indiscriminately as far as sex was concerned ... except one languid, sophisticated creature in orange velvet and long amber ear-rings, who sat on a low stool with a lapful of silken housekeeper's cat, giving everyone an excellent view of the bones in her spine. Min's dog posed haughtily on the rug, and the parrot in his cage was quiet—for him—only telling us once in a while that he or someone else was devilish clever. Mrs. Howey, the housekeeper, insisted on keeping him in the hall, and Madeline had to wink at it because it was hard to get a housekeeper in Muskoka even for a Wigwam.

The Judge was looking like a chuckle because he had solved a jigsaw puzzle that had baffled everyone, and the Professor and Senator, who had been arguing stormily all day, were basking in each other's regard for a foeman worthy of his steel. Consuelo was sitting still, as usual. Mrs. Tennant and Aunt Alma were knitting pullovers. Kittens, her fat hands folded across her satin stomach, was surveying her Senator adoringly, and Miss Nosey was taking everything in. We were, for the time being, a contented, congenial bunch of people and I did not see why Madeline should have suddenly proposed that each of us tell a ghost story, but she did. It was an ideal night for ghost stories, she averred. She hadn't heard any for ages and she understood that everybody had had at least one supernatural occurrence in his or her life.

"I haven't," growled the Judge contemptuously.

"I suppose," said Professor Tennant a little belligerently, "that you would call anyone an ass who believed in ghosts?"

The Judge carefully fitted his fingertips together before he replied.

"Oh, dear, no. I would not so insult asses."

"Of course if you don't *believe* in ghosts they can't happen," said Consuelo.

"Some people are able to see ghosts and some are not," announced Dick Lane. "It's simply a gift."

"A gift I was not dowered with," said Kittens complacently.

Mary Harland shuddered. "What a dreadful thing it would be if the dead really came back!"

"From ghoulies and ghaisties and lang-legged beasties
And things that go bump in the night

Good Lord, deliver us," quoted Ted flippantly.

But Madeline was not to be side-tracked. Her little elfish face, under its crown of russet hair, was alive with determination.

"We're going to spook a bit," she said resolutely. "This is just the sort of night for ghosts to walk. Only of course they can't walk here because the Wigwam isn't haunted, I'm sorry to say. Wouldn't it be heavenly to live in a haunted house? Come now, everyone must tell a ghost story. Professor Tennant, you lead off. Something nice and creepy, please."

To my surprise, the Professor did lead off, although Mrs. Tennant's expression plainly informed us that she didn't approve of juggling with ghosts. He told a very good story, too—punctuated with snorts from the Judge—about a house he knew which had been haunted by the voice of a dead child who joined in every conversation bitterly and vindictively. The child had, of course, been ill-treated and murdered, and its body was eventually found under the hearthstone of the library. Then Dick told a tale about a dead dog that avenged its master, and Consuelo amazed me by spinning a really gruesome yarn of a ghost who came to the wedding of her lover with her rival ... Consuelo said she knew the people. Ted knew a

house in which you heard voices and footfalls where no voices or footfalls could be, and even Aunt Alma told of "a white lady with a cold hand" who asked you to dance with her. If you were reckless enough to accept the invitation you never lost the feeling of her cold hand in yours. This chilly apparition was always garbed in the costume of the Seventies.

"Fancy a ghost in a crinoline," giggled a Bright Young Thing.

Min Ingram, of all people, had seen a ghost and took it quite seriously.

"Well, show me a ghost and I'll believe in it," said the Judge, with another snort.

"Isn't he devilish clever?" croaked the parrot.

Just at this point Brenda drifted downstairs and sat down behind us all, her tragic eyes burning out of her white face. I had a feeling that there, in that calm, untroubled scene, full of good-humored, tolerably amused, commonplace people, a human heart was burning at the stake in agony.

Something fell over us with Brenda's coming. Min Ingram's dog suddenly whined and flattened himself out on the rug. It occurred to me that it was the first time I had ever seen him looking like a real dog. I wondered idly what had frightened him. The housekeeper's cat sat up, its back bristling, slid from the orange velvet lap and slunk out of the hall. I had a queer sensation in the roots of what hair I had left, so I turned hastily to the slim, dark girl on the oak settle at my right.

"You haven't told us a ghost story yet, Christine. It's your turn."

Christine smiled. I saw the Judge looking admiringly at her ankles, sheathed in chiffon hose. The Judge always had an eye for a pretty ankle. As for me, I was wondering why I couldn't recall Christine's last name and why I felt as if I had been impelled in some odd way to make that commonplace remark to her.

"Do you remember how firmly Aunt Elizabeth believed in ghosts?" said Christine. "And how angry it used to make her when I laughed at the idea? I am ... wiser now."

"I remember," said the Senator in a dreamy way.

"It was your Aunt Elizabeth's money that went to the first Mrs. Armstrong, wasn't it?" said one of the Bright Young Things, nicknamed

Tweezers. It was an abominable thing for anyone to say, right there before Brenda. But nobody seemed horrified. I had another odd feeling that it *had* to be said and who but Tweezers would say it? I had another feeling ... that ever since Brenda's entrance every trifle was important, every tone was of profound significance, every word had a hidden meaning. Was I developing nerves?

"Yes," said Christine evenly.

"Do you suppose Susette Armstrong really took that overdose of chloral on purpose?" went on Tweezers unbelievably.

Not being near enough to Tweezers to assassinate her, I looked at Brenda. But Brenda gave no sign of having heard. She was staring fixedly at Christine.

"No," said Christine. I wondered how she knew, but there was no question whatsoever in my mind that she did know it. She spoke as one having authority. "Susette had no intention of dying. And yet she was doomed, although she never suspected it. She had an incurable disease which would have killed her in a few months. Nobody knew that except Anthony and me. And she had come to hate Anthony so. She was going to change her will the very next day—leave everything away from him. She told me so. I was furious. Anthony, who had spent his life doing good to suffering creatures, was to be left poor and struggling again, after his practise had been all shot to pieces by Susette's goings-on. I had loved Anthony ever since I had known him. He didn't know it—but Susette did. Trust her for that. She used to twit me with it. Not that it mattered ... I knew he would never care for me. But I saw my chance to do something for him and I took it. *I* gave Susette that overdose of chloral. I loved him enough for that ... and for *this*."

Somebody screamed. I have never known whether it was Brenda or not. Aunt Alma—who was never upset over anything—was huddled in her chair in hysterics. Kittens, her fat figure shaking, was clinging to her Senator, whose foolish, amiable face was gray—absolutely gray. Min Ingram was on her knees and the Judge was trying to keep his hands from shaking by clenching them together. His lips were moving and I know I

caught the word, "God." As for Tweezers and all the rest of her gang, they were no longer Bright Young Things but simply shivering, terrified children.

I felt sick—very, very sick. *Because there was no one on the oak settle and none of us had ever known or heard of the girl I had called Christine.*

At that moment the hall door opened and a dripping Anthony entered. Brenda flung herself hungrily against him, wet as he was.

"Anthony ... Anthony, forgive me," she sobbed.

Something good to see came into Anthony's worn face.

"Have you been frightened, darling?" he said tenderly. "I'm sorry I was so late. There was really no danger. I waited to get an answer to my wire to Los Angeles. You see I got word this morning that Christine Latham had been killed in a motor accident yesterday evening. She was Susette's second cousin and nurse ... a dear, loyal little thing. I was very fond of her. I'm sorry you've had such an anxious evening, sweetheart."

What Aunt Marcella Would Have Called It

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If Aunt Marcella had allowed Glen to bob her hair this story would never have been told because there would have been no story to tell. But Aunt Marcella did not approve of bobbed hair at all. It was flying in the face of Providence for a girl to bob her hair, and . . . so Aunt Marcella said . . . she would be bald in her old age for her sins.

“You will thank me when you are sixty,” she told Glen.

“That is a long time to wait for gratitude,” said Glen darkly.

But Aunt Marcella was adamant, and Glen continued to wear her lovely golden-brown braid hanging down her back like a twelve-year-old schoolgirl of the century’s teens, when she would be eighteen in another month and every bit as modern as Aunt Marcella would let her be.

Aunt Marcella would not even allow her to put it up. It was intolerable. If she could even put her hair up in a lovely soft knot at the back of her neck . . . well, it might dawn on Dudley Wyatt’s perception that she was really grown-up and not the schoolgirl, devoted to dolls, that he considered her and, as seemed likely, would go on considering her until she was that mythical sixty of Aunt Marcella’s warnings.

It seemed to Glen that she had always been in love with Dudley Wyatt, although she had know him only from the age of twelve, when he had come to live next door to them at Nokomis Lodge. Glen always avowed that her legs trembled the first time she saw him, by which token she knew that she had fallen in love. But Dudley took no notice of her. He was all for Isabel. Not that he was in love with Isabel at all. To him, sixteen-year-old Isabel was just one of the two children of the Lindens. But she was a very clever child and he liked to talk to her. Nobody thought Glen had any brains because she hardly ever talked. And at twelve she had been

anything but pretty . . . a gaunt, scrawny creature with two sunburned pigtails. Glen would go hatless, to Aunt Marcella's mid-Victorian horror.

"What kind of complexion will you have when you are sixty?" she asked. "Besides, I call it 'Brazen' to go about without a hat."

Aunt Marcella never pronounced an adjective without making you see it spelled with a capital.

But even at sixteen Isabel was a beauty . . . a tall, willowy thing with golden-brown hair and big owlsh eyes that were the tint of a copper-grey sea. And, although Dudley Wyatt did not seem to have any kind of eyes for women at all, Glen believed in her secret soul that, if Isabel hadn't been so pretty, Dudley would not have detected her cleverness so quickly. As it was, he thought her a wonder. Aunt Marcella didn't. Aunt Marcella did not believe in a woman having brains.

"I call it 'Unwomanly' to be so clever," she told Isabel severely. "Aping the men!"

"But most men are really very stupid," said Isabel.

"I call that 'Flippant,' " said Aunt Marcella, "and I dislike flippancy above all things."

"Besides, if you are not clever you bore the men after your novelty wears off," persisted Isabel.

"I have never been a man," said Aunt Marcella superfluously, "but I think it takes some time for them to tire of beauty. And 'bore' was not considered a nice word when I was a girl."

And then Uncle Maurice's daughter had died and Uncle Maurice had come home and taken Isabel out west with him. That was five years ago and she had never been back since. But she was still tremendously clever and had graduated with the highest honours. Aunt Marcella called that very "Unfeminine," but Dudley exulted.

He wrote to Isabel occasionally and took the keenest interest in her career. He also made quite a bit of Glen, but still only as a child who was a dear little thing, rather dumb. Glen knew she was dumb when Dudley was about. She wasn't going to talk to him as a child and when she tried to talk to him as a grown-up her tongue clave to the roof of her mouth. She had a

horrible feeling that if she did talk to him like a grown-up Dudley would smile kindly, as at a precocious child, and tell her to run away and tuck up her doll-babies.

Oh . . . Glen clenched her hands . . . life wasn't fair to women! Why . . . why . . . were men so blind? Couldn't he see she wasn't a child any longer? Couldn't he see the love she had to give him? It was bitter to have such a gift to give and nobody wanting to take it. Glen wouldn't have minded so much if Dudley had hated her . . . if only he hated her as a woman. She couldn't go on being regarded as a child.

"I love him, and he doesn't even know that I exist," she sighed. "He thinks me somebody who doesn't exist . . . the twelve-year-old arms-and-legs I was when he came here first. Why can't I make him see? He won't see! He looks at me with the condescending kindness one shows a child . . . and then I feel exactly like a caterpillar someone has stepped on."

That night he strolled past as she sat on the porch and called out teasingly, "Tell me what you are thinking of, Glennie?"

Good heavens, suppose she did tell him! Suppose she called back, "I'm thinking of you and how heavenly it would be if you came in here and sat down beside me and said, 'I love you, Glen,' and . . . and . . . kissed me."

Just what would happen? Well, she knew one thing that would. Aunt Marcella, by the living-room window, would die of frustration because she would not be able to find an adjective strong enough to describe such behaviour. But even then Dudley would probably only say something like, "You've mistaken me for Clark Adams."

Clark Adams! That immature creature of twenty!

"I don't care for boys . . . I get on better with men," Glen heard herself calling back.

But of course she had really said nothing when he asked her that question. He hadn't expected her to say anything. If only she could have thought of something quite daring to say! Something that a child couldn't think of saying. Isabel, now, could have said a dozen provocative things. Even she herself could have said them to Clark Adams. But she had said nothing . . . had only given a foolish little giggle . . . and Dudley had gone

on, his dog slouching at his heels, on one of those long hikes of his that she longed to share. But Dudley had asked her only once and Aunt Marcella disapproved, tilting her hawk nose.

“I call it ‘Unladylike’ to go striding over the country like a man, or like one of those dreadful girls in knickerbockers,” said Aunt Marcella. “I suppose you hardly class yourself among them, Glen.”

The joke was that Glen was dying to wear knickers, or do anything else that might make Dudley realize that she was grown-up and beautiful . . . hair just as glossy and golden-brown as Isabel’s, eyes just the same coppery grey, shoulders just as smooth and delicious. But of what use was it? Dudley never saw her shoulders.

When Isabel’s letter came, saying that she was coming east for a visit, Glen had two reactions. The first was of delight in the thought of seeing Isabel again. The second was a horrible little fear. Dudley had always admired Isabel so much. And now Isabel was coming back, a brilliant M.A., no doubt more beautiful than ever . . . and what would happen to Dudley? Glen cried herself to sleep that night and hated herself for being so unsisterly.

Isabel stopped off in a mid-western town to see a college friend, but two of her trunks came on ahead of her. Isabel sent Glen the keys and would she please take out the dresses and hang them up? Glen did so, divided between delight in the lovely things and envious pangs over the effect they would likely have on Dudley. There was one in especial . . . the orchid chiffon with the black velvet girdle and a sort of pale blue perfume hanging about it. Glen tried to think what she would look like in it. But she did not try it on. Aunt Marcella would have called it ‘Rude’ to try on other people’s clothes.

* * *

On the afternoon of the day Isabel was expected a wire came saying that her friend had persuaded her to stay over for the weekend. Aunt Marcella thereupon decided to spend the weekend with her sister and departed so

hurriedly to catch the only train that she had not time to give Glen half as many warnings as usual. Not that it mattered. Glen knew them all by heart.

“You’d better telephone Dudley that Isabel won’t be here tonight. He was coming over to see her,” said Aunt Marcella from the taxi.

Glen went in and tried to telephone. But Dudley’s housekeeper said that he was out and wouldn’t be home till dinner time. He was lecturing before some club on the Peaceful Adjustment of International Difficulties.

Glen ran up to her room with the intention of having a good cry. But when she got there she changed her mind.

“Crying won’t do any good. The girls of Aunt Marcella’s generation cried. I’ve got to do better than that. Now, what can I do to wake Dudley up before Isabel comes?”

Glen sat up on her bed suddenly. An idea had flashed into her mind, a breath-taking idea. Could she . . . dared she? But why not? She looked so much like Isabel when Isabel had been seventeen.

After dinner, when she had eaten nothing to speak of, Glen fled up to her room again. She brought the shimmering orchid dress from the guest-room closet and breathlessly slipped into it. It fitted her to perfection . . . and it was so beautifully long. How lucky Isabel had the new long dresses! Then she twisted her gold-brown hair into a knot at the nape of her neck . . . too big a knot to be fashionable, but Dudley wouldn’t notice that. Isabel’s earrings and necklace went on . . . sparkling amber beads that hung about her neck and over her dress like drops of golden dew . . . earrings long enough to reach her shoulders, sophisticated earrings which Aunt Marcella would have called “Theatrical.” But Glen gave a gasp of delight when she looked in the glass. Oh, she was beautiful! And nobody would ever dream of taking her for a child. What a difference a long dress and a knot of hair made!

She met Dudley in the porch where there was only one dim shaded lamp. He took the hands . . . very cold hands . . . which she held out to him.

“And this is Isabel. I had forgotten how beautiful you were.”

For once in her life Glen was frightened into being clever . . . and “Bold,” as Aunt Marcella would have called it.

“I was afraid you had forgotten,” she murmured. “That is why I came back . . . to make you remember.”

Could she really have said such a thing . . . she, shy, tongue-tied Glen? But she wasn’t Glen; she was Isabel. In putting on Isabel’s dress she seemed to have put on Isabel’s personality. She felt gay, daring, brilliant. And Dudley was so easily deceived. Glen felt a pang of anger because he was so easily deceived . . . because he knew her so little as to mistake her for Isabel. Her anger sent a naughty sparkle into her eyes and a rose-red flush into her cheeks. She would punish him.

“Let us sit down here . . . it’s so much cooler and pleasanter than indoors . . . and just talk. We have five years to catch up with. Dudley, have they seemed as long to you as to me?”

“Longer,” said Dudley briefly but eloquently. He seemed to find it impossible to take his eyes off her.

“I think I’ve been homesick every moment of the time I was away,” murmured Glen. She made a place for Dudley on the cushions beside her and began to pat his dog, who was nuzzling her knee.

“You’ve been doing wonderful things,” said Dudley, a little absently, looking at the dog. “We’ve followed your career with pride, as the *Weekly Journal* puts it. I always knew you had it in you to win success.”

“Oh . . . success!” Glen sighed and looked sidewise at him. “A girl wants more than that kind of success, Dudley. I’ve really been wretchedly lonely these past five years. But don’t let’s talk of me. I want to hear all about you, Dudley. What have you been doing . . . thinking . . . feeling?”

“Shall I tell you what I’m feeling just at present?” said Dudley, bending nearer. “I’m feeling drunk . . . just with looking at you, Isabel. There hasn’t been any five years . . . time has gone back . . . we’ll begin just where we left off.”

“Do you really think we can?” said Glen in a low voice. She was quite furious to hear him making love so beautifully . . . to Isabel.

“I do. I realize some things now that it has taken me five years to realize. Isabel, there’s going to be a moonrise in a few minutes . . . let us

go out and watch it together. How long is it since we've seen a moonrise together?"

"Just two nights," cried Glen, springing up. "We watched the moon rise Thursday night. Dudley, I can't go on with this . . . I don't know what got into me. I'm not Isabel . . . I'm Glen!"

"Well, I know that," said Dudley, getting up too. "Just at first you tricked me, with that long dress and that hair. Then when Wags began nosing you . . . my suspicious Wags who wouldn't have a word to say to a stranger like Isabel--he's never seen her . . . I knew you for what you were."

"A horrid, shameless little imposter," said Glen piteously.

"The loveliest, sweetest woman I've ever seen . . . the woman I've been waiting for all my life," said Dudley. He had his arms around her now. "The woman I've never seen until my blind eyes were opened tonight. Thank heaven you're not Isabel. If you were I'd have to have some consideration for your five years' absence and not say everything I want to say tonight. As it is, we're old pals and I can say just what I like and as soon as I like. Because we're going to be new, new lovers, aren't we, Glen darling?"

"Oh!" said Glen. It was a very eloquent speech. Much more eloquent than the cleverest woman could have made. And evidently much more satisfying to Dudley.

"I'm going to tell your Aunt Marcella as soon as she comes back," he said. "She'll say you're too young to be married but don't you let her make you believe it. I've wasted enough time. And now let's go out and see that the moon rises properly."

When Glen went to her room that night she took off the orchid dress and held it to her lips.

"I'm going to ask Isabel to give me this. Oh, I think I've been quite crazy. I do wonder what Aunt Marcella would call my conduct."

Aunt Marcella would have called it entirely "Shameless" if she had ever known of it. But then she didn't.

Poetry

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SONGS OF THE SEA

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Rain Along Shore

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Wan white mists upon the sea,
East wind harping mournfully
All the sunken reefs along,
Wail and heartbreak in its song,
But adown the placid bay
Fisher-folk keep holiday.

All the deeps beyond the bar
Call and murmur from afar,
'Plaining of a mighty woe
Where the great ships come and go,
But adown the harbor gray
Fisher-folk keep holiday.

When the cloudy heavens frown,
And the sweeping rain comes down,
Boats at anchorage must bide
In despite of time or tide;
Making merry as they may
Fisher-folk keep holiday.

Now is time for jest and song
All the idle shore along,
Now is time for wooing dear,
Maidens cannot choose but hear;
Daffing toil and care away
Fisher-folk keep holiday.

Oh, the fretted reefs may wail,
Every man has furled his sail!
Oh, the wind may moan in fear,

Every lad is with his dear!
Mirth and laughter have their way,
Fisher-folk keep holiday.

Sea Sunset

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A gallant city has been builded far
In the pied heaven,
Bannered with crimson, sentinelled by star
Of crystal even;
Around a harbor of the twilight glowing,
With jubilant waves about its gateways flowing.

A city of the Land of Lost Delight
On seas enchanted,
Presently to be lost in mist moon-white
And music-haunted;
Given but briefly to our raptured vision,
With all its opal towers and shrines elysian.

Had we some mystic boat with pearly oar
And wizard pilot,
To guide us safely by the siren shore
And cloudy islet,
We might embark and reach that shining portal
Beyond which linger dreams and joys immortal.

But we may only gaze with longing eyes
On those far, sparkling
Palaces in the fairy-peopled skies,
O'er waters darkling,
Until the winds of night come shoreward roaming,
And the dim west has only gray and gloaming.

When the Dark Comes Down

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When the dark comes down, oh, the wind is on the sea
With lisping laugh and whimper to the red reef's threnody,
The boats are sailing homeward now across the harbor bar
With many a jest and many a shout from fishing grounds afar.
So furl your sails and take your rest, ye fisher folk so brown,
For task and quest are ended when the dark comes down.

When the dark comes down, oh, the landward valleys fill
Like brimming cups of purple, and on every landward hill
There shines a star of twilight that is watching evermore
The low, dim lighted meadows by the long, dim-lighted shore,
For there, where vagrant daisies weave the grass a silver crown,
The lads and lassies wander when the dark comes down.

When the dark comes down, oh, the children fall asleep,
And mothers in the fisher huts their happy vigils keep;
There's music in the song they sing and music on the sea,
The loving, lingering echoes of the twilight's litany,
For toil has folded hands to dream, and care has ceased to frown,
And every wave's a lyric when the dark comes down.

Harbor Moonrise

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There is never a wind to sing o'er the sea
On its dimpled bosom that holdeth in fee
Wealth of silver and magicry;
And the harbor is like to an ebon cup
With mother-o'-pearl to the lips lined up,
And brimmed with the wine of entranced delight,
Purple and rare, from the flagon of night.

Lo, in the east is a glamor and gleam,
Like waves that lap on the shores of dream,
Or voice their lure in a poet's theme!
And behind the curtseying fisher boats
The barge of the rising moon upfloats,
The pilot ship over unknown seas
Of treasure-laden cloud argosies.

Ere ever she drifts from the ocean's rim,
Out from the background of shadows dim,
Stealeth a boat o'er her golden rim;
Noiselessly, swiftly, it swayeth by
Into the bourne of enchanted sky,
Like a fairy shallop that seeks the strand
Of a far and uncharted fairyland.

Now, ere the sleeping winds may stir,
Send, O, my heart, a wish with her,
Like to a venturesome mariner;
For who knoweth but that on an elfin sea
She may meet the bark that is sailing to thee,
And, winging thy message across the foam,
May hasten the hour when thy ship comes home?

Before Storm

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There's a grayness over the harbor like fear on the face of a woman,
The sob of the waves has a sound akin to a woman's cry,
And the deeps beyond the bar are moaning with evil presage
Of a storm that will leap from its lair in that dour northeastern sky.

Slowly the pale mists rise, like ghosts of the sea, in the offing,
Creeping all wan and chilly by headland and sunken reef,
And a wind is wailing and keening like a lost thing 'mid the islands,
Boding of wreck and tempest, plaining of dolor and grief.

Swiftly the boats come homeward, over the grim bar crowding,
Like birds that flee to their shelter in hurry and affright,
Only the wild grey gulls that love the cloud and the clamor
Will dare to tempt the ways of the ravining sea tonight.

But the ship that sailed at the dawning, manned by the lads who love us —
God help and pity her when the storm is loosed on her track!
O women, we pray tonight and keep a vigil of sorrow
For those we speed at the dawning and may never welcome back!

On the Bay

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When the salt wave laps on the long, dim shore,
And frets the reef with its windy sallies,
And the dawn's white light is threading once more
The purple firs in the landward valleys,
While yet the arms of the wide gray sea
Are cradling the sunrise that is to be,
The fisherman's boat, through the mist afar,
Has sailed in the wake of the morning star.

The wind in his cordage and canvas sings
Its old glad song of strength and endeavor,
And up from the heart of the ocean rings
A call of courage and cheer forever;
Toil and danger and stress may wait
Beyond the arch of the morning's gate,
But he knows that behind him, upon the shore,
A true heart prays for him evermore.

When a young moon floats in the hollow sky,
Like a fairy shallop, all pale and golden,
And over the rocks that are grim and high,
The lamp of the lighthouse aloft is holden;
When the bay is like to a lucent cup
With glamor and glory and glow filled up,
In the track of the sunset, across the foam,
The fisherman's boat comes sailing home.

The wind is singing a low, sweet song
Of a rest well won and a toil well over,
And there on the shore shines clear and strong
The star of the homelight to guide the rover:

And deep unto deep may call and wail
But the fisherman laughs as he furls his sail,
For the bar is passed and the reef is dim
And a true heart is waiting to welcome him!

Shore Twilight

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Lo, find we here when the ripe day is o'er,
A kingdom of enchantment by the shore!

Behold the sky with early stars ashine,
A jewelled flagon brimmed with purple wine.

Like a dumb poet's soul the troubled sea
Moans of its joy and sorrow wordlessly;

But the glad winds that utter naught of grief
Make silver speech by headland and by reef.

Saving for such there is no voice or call
To mar the gracious silence over all —

Silence so tender 'tis a sweet caress,
A most beguiling and dear loneliness.

Lo, here we find a beckoning solitude,
A winsome presence to be mutely wooed,

Which, being won, will teach us fabled lore,
The old, old, gramarye of the sibyl shore!

Oh, what a poignant rapture thus to be
Lingering at twilight by the ancient sea!

Song of the Sea-Wind

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When the sun sets over the long blue wave
I spring from my couch of rest,
And I hurtle and boom over leagues of foam
That toss in the weltering west,
I pipe a hymn to the headlands high,
My comrades forevermore,
And I chase the tricky curls of foam
O'er the glimmering sandy shore.

The moon is my friend on clear, white nights
When I ripple her silver way,
And whistle blithely about the rocks
Like an elfin thing at play;
But anon I ravin with cloud and mist
And wail 'neath a curdled sky,
When the reef snarls yon like a questing beast,
And the frightened ships go by.

I scatter the dawn across the sea
Like wine of amber flung
From a crystal goblet all far and fine
Where the morning star is hung;
I blow from east and I blow from west
Wherever my longing be —
The wind of the land is a hindered thing
But the ocean wind is free!

Morning Along Shore

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Hark, oh hark the elfin laughter
All the little waves along,
As if echoes speeding after
Mocked a merry merman's song!

All the gulls are out, delighting
In a wild, uncharted quest —
See the first red sunshine smiting
Silver sheen of wing and breast!

Ho, the sunrise rainbow-hearted
Steals athwart the misty brine,
And the sky where clouds have parted
Is a bowl of amber wine!

Sweet, its cradle-lilt partaking,
Dreams that hover o'er the sea,
But the lyric of its waking
Is a sweeter thing to me!

Who would drowse in dull devotion
To his ease when dark is done,
And upon its breast the ocean
Like a jewel wears the sun?

“Up, forsake a lazy pillow!”
Calls the sea from cleft and cave,
Ho, for antic wind and billow
When the morn is on the wave!

Off to the Fishing Ground

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There's a piping wind from a sunrise shore
Blowing over a silver sea,
There's a joyous voice in the lapsing tide
That calls enticingly;
The mist of dawn has taken flight
To the dim horizon's bound,
And with wide sails set and eager hearts
We're off to the fishing ground.

Ho, comrades mine, how that brave wind sings
Like a great sea-harp afar!
We whistle its wild notes back to it
As we cross the harbor bar.
Behind us there are the homes we love
And hearts that are fond and true,
And before us beckons a strong young day
On leagues of glorious blue.

Comrades, a song as the fleet goes out,
A song of the orient sea!
We are the heirs of its tingling strife,
Its courage and liberty.
Sing as the white sails cream and fill,
And the foam in our wake is long,
Sing till the headlands black and grim
Echo us back our song!

Oh, 'tis a glad and heartsome thing
To wake ere the night be done
And steer the course that our fathers steered
In the path of the rising sun.

The wind and welkin and wave are ours
Wherever our bourne is found,
And we envy no landsman his dream and sleep
When we're off to the fishing ground.

In Port

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Out of the fires of the sunset come we again to our own —
We have girdled the world in our sailing under many an orient star;
Still to our battered canvas the scents of the spice gales cling,
And our hearts are swelling within us as we cross the harbor bar.

Beyond are the dusky hills where the twilight hangs in the pine trees,
Below are the lights of home where are watching the tender eyes
We have dreamed of on fretted seas in the hours of long night-watches,
Ever a beacon to us as we looked to the stranger skies.

Hark! how the wind comes out of the haven's arms to greet us,
Bringing with it the song that is sung on the ancient shore!
Shipmates, furl we our sails — we have left the seas behind us,
Gladly finding at last our homes and our loves once more.

The Gulls

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I

Soft is the sky in the mist-kirtled east,
Light is abroad on the sea,
All of the heaven with silver is fleeced,
Holding the sunrise in fee.
Lo! with a flash and uplifting of wings
Down where the long ripples break,
Cometh a bevy of glad-hearted things,
'Tis morn, for the gulls are awake.

II

Slumberous calm on the ocean and shore
Comes with the turn of the tide;
Never a strong-sweeping pinion may soar,
Where the tame fishing-boats ride!
Far and beyond in blue deserts of sea,
Where the wild winds are at play,
There may the spirits of sea-birds be free —
'Tis noon, for the gulls are away.

III

Over the rim of the sunset is blown
Sea-dusk of purple and gold,
Speed now the wanderers back to their own,
Wings the most tireless must fold.
Homeward together at twilight they flock,
Sated with joys of the deep,

Drowsily huddled on headland and rock —
Tis night, for the gulls are asleep.

Sunrise Along Shore

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Athwart the harbor lingers yet
The ashen gleam of breaking day,
And where the guardian cliffs are set
The noiseless shadows steal away;
But all the winnowed eastern sky
Is flushed with many a tender hue,
And spears of light are smiting through
The ranks where huddled sea-mists fly.

Across the ocean, wan and gray,
Gay fleets of golden ripples come,
For at the birth-hour of the day
The roistering, wayward winds are dumb.
The rocks that stretch to meet the tide
Are smitten with a ruddy glow,
And faint reflections come and go
Where fishing boats at anchor ride.

All life leaps out to greet the light —
The shining seagulls dive and soar,
The swallows whirl in dizzy flight,
And sandpeeps flit along the shore.
From every purple landward hill
The banners of the morning fly,
But on the headlands, dim and high,
The fishing hamlets slumber still.

One boat alone beyond the bar
Is sailing outward blithe and free,
To carry sturdy hearts afar
Across those wastes of sparkling sea;

Staunchly to seek what may be won
From out the treasures of the deep,
To toil for those at home who sleep
And be the first to greet the sun.

The Sea Spirit

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I smile o'er the wrinkled blue —
Lo! the sea is fair,
Smooth as the flow of a maiden's hair;
And the welkin's light shines through
Into mid-sea caverns of beryl hue,
And the little waves laugh and the mermaids sing,
And the sea is a beautiful, sinuous thing!

I scowl in sullen guise —
The sea grows dark and dun,
The swift clouds hide the sun
But not the bale-light in my eyes,
And the frightened wind as it flies
Ruffles the billows with stormy wing,
And the sea is a terrible, treacherous thing!

When moonlight glimmers dim
I pass in the path of the mist,
Like a pale spirit by spirits kissed.
At dawn I chant my own weird hymn,
And I dabble my hair in the sunset's rim,
And I call to the dwellers along the shore
With a voice of gramarye evermore.

And if one for love of me
Gives to my call an ear,
I will woo him and hold him dear,
And teach him the way of the sea,
And my glamor shall ever over him be;
Though he wander afar in the cities of men
He will come at last to my arms again.

Harbor Dawn

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There's a hush and stillness calm and deep,
For the waves have wooed all the winds to sleep
In the shadow of headlands bold and steep;
But some gracious spirit has taken the cup
Of the crystal sky and filled it up
With rosy wine, and in it afar
Has dissolved the pearl of the morning star.

The girdling hills with the night-mist cold
In purple raiment are hooded and stoled
And smit on the brows with fire and gold;
And in the distance the wide, white sea
Is a thing of glamor and wizardry,
With its wild heart lulled to a passing rest,
And the sunrise cradled upon its breast.

With the first red sunlight on mast and spar
A ship is sailing beyond the bar,
Bound to a land that is fair and far;
And those who wait and those who go
Are brave and hopeful, for well they know
Fortune and favor the ship shall win
That crosses the bar when the dawn comes in.

My Longshore Lass

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Far in the mellow western sky,
Above the restless harbor bar,
A beacon on the coast of night,
Shines out a calm, white evening star;
But your deep eyes, my 'longshore lass,
Are brighter, clearer far.

The glory of the sunset past
Still gleams upon the water there,
But all its splendor cannot match
The windblown brightness of your hair;
Not any sea-maid's floating locks
Of gold are half so fair.

The waves are whispering to the sands
With murmurs as of elfin glee;
But your low laughter, 'longshore lass,
Is like a sea-harp's melody,
And the vibrant tones of your tender voice
Are sweeter far to me.

When the Fishing Boats Go Out

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When the lucent skies of morning flush with dawning rose once more,
And waves of golden glory break adown the sunrise shore,
And o'er the arch of heaven pied films of vapor float.
There's joyance and there's freedom when the fishing boats go out.

The wind is blowing freshly up from far, uncharted caves,
And sending sparkling kisses o'er the brows of virgin waves,
While routed dawn-mists shiver — oh, far and fast they flee,
Pierced by the shafts of sunrise athwart the merry sea!

Behind us, fair, light-smitten hills in dappled splendor lie,
Before us the wide ocean runs to meet the limpid sky —
Our hearts are full of poignant life, and care has fled afar
As sweeps the white-winged fishing fleet across the harbor bar.

The sea is calling to us in a blithesome voice and free,
There's keenest rapture on its breast and boundless liberty!
Each man is master of his craft, its gleaming sails out-blown,
And far behind him on the shore a home he calls his own.

Salt is the breath of ocean slopes and fresher blows the breeze,
And swifter still each bounding keel cuts through the combing seas,
Athwart our masts the shadows of the dipping seagulls float,
And all the water-world's alive when the fishing boats go out.

The Bridal

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Last night a pale young Moon was wed
Unto the amorous, eager Sea;
Her maiden veil of mist she wore
His kingly purple vesture, he.

With her a bridal train of stars
Walked sisterly through shadows dim,
And, master minstrel of the world,
The great Wind sang the marriage hymn.

Thus came she down the silent sky
Unto the Sea her faith to plight,
And the grave priest who wedded them
Was ancient, sombre-mantled Night.

The Sea to the Shore

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Lo, I have loved thee long, long have I yearned and entreated!
Tell me how I may win thee, tell me how I must woo.
Shall I creep to thy white feet, in guise of a humble lover?
Shall I croon in mild petition, murmuring vows anew?

Shall I stretch my arms unto thee, biding thy maiden coyness,
Under the silver of morning, under the purple of night?
Taming my ancient rudeness, checking my heady clamor —
Thus, is it thus I must woo thee, oh, my delight?

Nay, 'tis no way of the sea thus to be meekly suitor —
I shall storm thee away with laughter wrapped in my beard of snow,
With the wildest of billows for chords I shall harp thee a song for thy bridal,
A mighty lyric of love that feared not nor would forego!

With a redgold wedding ring, mined from the caves of sunset,
Fast shall I bind thy faith to my faith evermore,
And the stars will wait on our pleasure, the great north wind will trumpet
A thunderous marriage march for the nuptials of sea and shore.

The Voyagers

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We shall launch our shallop on waters blue from some dim primrose shore,
We shall sail with the magic of dusk behind and enchanted coasts before,
Over oceans that stretch to the sunset land where lost Atlantis lies,
And our pilot shall be the vesper star that shines in the amber skies.

The sirens will call to us again, all sweet and demon-fair,
And a pale mermaiden will beckon us, with mist on her night-black hair;
We shall see the flash of her ivory arms, her mocking and luring face,
And her guiling laughter will echo through the great, wind-winnowed space.

But we shall not linger for woven spell, or sea-nymph's sorceries,
It is ours to seek for the fount of youth, and the gold of Hesperides,
Till the harp of the waves in its rhythmic beat keeps time to our pulses' swing,
And the orient welkin is smit to flame with auroral crimsoning.

And at last, on some white and wondrous dawn, we shall reach the fairy isle
Where our hope and our dream are waiting us, and the tomorrows smile;
With song on our lips and faith in our hearts we sail on our ancient quest,
And each man shall find, at the end of the voyage, the thing he loves the best.

SONGS OF THE HILLS AND WOODS

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Twilight

The Call of the Winds

A Winter Dawn

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Twilight and I Went Hand in Hand

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Twilight and I went hand in hand,
As lovers walk in shining Mays,
O'er musky, memory-haunted ways,
Across a lonely harvest-land,
Where west winds chanted in the wheat
An old, old vesper wondrous sweet.

Oh, Twilight was a comrade rare
For gypsy heath or templed grove,
In her gray vesture, shadow-wove;
I saw the darkness of her hair
Faint-mirrored in a field-pool dim,
As we stood tip-toe on its rim.

We went as lightly as on wings
Through many a scented chamber fair,
Among the pines and balsams, where
I could have dreamed of darling things,
And ever as we went I knew
The peeping fairy folk went too.

I could have lingered now and then
By gates of moonrise that might lead
To some forgotten, spiceried mead,
Or in some mossy, cloistered glen,
Where silence, very still and deep,
Seemed fallen in enchanted sleep.

But Twilight ever led me on,
As lovers walk, until we came
To hills where sunset's shaken flame

Had paled to ashes dead and wan;
And there, with footsteps stolen-light
She left me to the lure of night.

Come, Rest Awhile

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Come, rest awhile, and let us idly stray
In glimmering valleys, cool and far away.

Come from the greedy mart, the troubled street,
And listen to the music, faint and sweet,

That echoes ever to a listening ear,
Unheard by those who will not pause to hear —

The wayward chimes of memory's pensive bells,
Windblown o'er misty hills and curtained dells.

One step aside and dewy buds uncloset
The sweetness of the violet and the rose;

Song and romance still linger in the green,
Emblossomed ways by you so seldom seen,

And near at hand, would you but see them, lie
All lovely things beloved in days gone by.

You have forgotten what it is to smile
In your too busy life — come, rest awhile.

An April Night

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The moon comes up o'er the deeps of the woods,
And the long, low dingles that hide in the hills,
Where the ancient beeches are moist with buds
Over the pools and the whimpering rills;

And with her the mists, like dryads that creep
From their oaks, or the spirits of pine-hid springs,
Who hold, while the eyes of the world are asleep,
With the wind on the hills their gay revellings.

Down on the marshlands with flicker and glow
Wanders Will-o'-the-Wisp through the night,
Seeking for witch-gold lost long ago
By the glimmer of goblin lantern-light.

The night is a sorceress, dusk-eyed and dear,
Akin to all eerie and elfin things,
Who weaves about us in meadow and mere
The spell of a hundred vanished Springs.

Rain on the Hill

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Now on the hill
The fitful wind is so still
That never a wimpling mist uplifts,
Nor a trembling leaf drop-laden stirs;
From the ancient firs
Aroma of balsam drifts,
And the silent places are filled
With elusive odors distilled
By the rain from asters empearled and frilled,
And a wild wet savor that dwells
Far adown in tawny fallows and bracken dells.

Then with a rush,
Breaking the beautiful hush
Where the only sound was the lispings, low
Converse of raindrops, or the dear sound
Close to the ground,
That grasses make when they grow,
Comes the wind in a gay,
Rollicking, turbulent way,
To winnow each bough and toss each spray,
Piping and whistling in glee
With the vibrant notes of a merry minstrelsy.

The friendly rain
Sings many a haunting strain,
Now of gladness and now of dole,
Anon of the glamor and the dream
That ever seem
To wait on a pilgrim soul;
Yea, we can hear

The grief of an elder year,
And laughter half-forgotten and dear;
In the wind and the rain we find
Fellowship meet for each change of mood or mind.

For Little Things

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Last night I looked across the hills
And through an arch of darkling pine
Low-swung against a limpid west
I saw a young moon shine.

And as I gazed there blew a wind,
Loosed where the sylvan shadows stir,
Bringing delight to soul and sense
The breath of dying fir.

This morn I saw a dancing host
Of poppies in a garden way,
And straight my heart was mirth-possessed
And I was glad as they.

I heard a song across the sea
As sweet and faint as echoes are,
And glimpsed a poignant happiness
No care of earth might mar.

Dear God, our life is beautiful
In every splendid gift it brings,
But most I thank Thee humbly for
The joy of little things.

Spring Song

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Hark, I hear a robin calling!
List, the wind is from the south!
And the orchard-bloom is falling
Sweet as kisses on the mouth.

In the dreamy vale of beeches
Fair and faint is woven mist,
And the river's orient reaches
Are the palest amethyst.

Every limpid brook is singing
Of the lure of April days;
Every piney glen is ringing
With the maddest roundelays.

Come and let us seek together
Springtime lore of daffodils,
Giving to the golden weather
Greeting on the sunwarm hills.

Ours shall be the moonrise stealing
Through the birches ivory-white;
Ours shall be the mystic healing
Of the velvet-footed night.

Ours shall be the gypsy winding
Of the path with violets blue,
Ours at last the wizard finding
Of the land where dreams come true.

A Day Off

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Let us put awhile away
All the cares of work-a-day,
For a golden time forget,
Task and worry, toil and fret,
Let us take a day to dream
In the meadow by the stream.

We may lie in grasses cool
Fringing a pellucid pool,
We may learn the gay brook-runes
Sung on amber afternoons,
And the keen wind-rhyme that fills
Mossy hollows of the hills.

Where the wildwood whisper stirs
We may talk with lisping firs,
We may gather honeyed blooms
In the dappled forest glooms,
We may eat of berries red
O'er the emerald upland spread.

We may linger as we will
In the sunset valleys still,
Till the gypsy shadows creep
From the starlit land of sleep,
And the mist of evening gray
Girdles round our pilgrim way.

We may bring to work again
Courage from the tasselled glen,
Bring a strength unfailing won

From the paths of cloud and sun,
And the wholesome zest that springs
From all happy, growing things.

The Wind

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O, wind! what saw you in the South,
In lilled meadows fair and far?
I saw a lover kiss his lass
New-won beneath the evening star.

O, wind! what saw you in the West
Of passing sweet that wooed your stay?
I saw a mother kneeling by
The cradle where her firstborn lay.

O, wind! what saw you in the North
That you shall dream of evermore?
I saw a maiden keeping tryst
Upon a gray and haunted shore.

O, wind! what saw you in the East
That still of ancient dole you croon?
I saw a wan wreck on the waves
And a dead face beneath the moon.

The Wood Pool

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Here is a voice that soundeth low and far
And lyric — voice of wind among the pines,
Where the untroubled, glimmering waters are,
And sunlight seldom shines.

Elusive shadows linger shyly here,
And wood-flowers blow, like pale, sweet spirit-bloom,
And white, slim birches whisper, mirrored clear
In the pool's lucent gloom.

Here Pan might pipe, or wandering dryad kneel
To view her loveliness beside the brim,
Or laughing woodnymphs from the byways steal
To dance around its rim.

'Tis such a witching spot as might beseem
A seeker for young friendship's trysting place,
Or lover yielding to the immortal dream
Of one beloved face.

Down Stream

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Comrades, up! Let us row down stream in this first rare dawnlight,
While far in the clear northwest the late moon whitens and wanes;
Before us the sun will rise, deep-purpling headland and islet,
It is well to meet him thus, with the life astir in our veins!

The wakening birds will sing for us in the woods wind-shaken,
And the solitude of the hills will be broken by hymns to the light,
As we sweep past drowsing hamlets, still feathered by dreams of slumber,
And leave behind us the shadows that fell with the falling of night.

The young day's strength is ours in sinew and thew and muscle,
We are filled and thrilled with the spirit that dwells in the waste and wold,
Glamor of wind and water, charm of the wildernesses —
Oh, the dear joy of it, greater than human hearts can hold!

While the world's tired children sleep we bend to our oars with faces
Set in our eager gladness towards the morning's gate;
Lo, 'tis the sweet of the day! On, comrades mine, for beyond us
All its dower of beauty, its glory and wonder, wait.

Echo Dell

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In a lone valley fair and far,
Where many sweet beguilements are,
I know a spot to lag and dream
Through damask morns and noons a gleam;
For feet fall lightly on the fern
And twilight is a wondrous thing,
When the winds blow from some far bourne
Beyond the hill rims westering;
There echoes ring as if a throng
Of fairies hid from mortal eyes
Sent laughter back in spirit guise
And song as the pure soul of song;
Oh, 'tis a spot to love right well,
This lonely, witching Echo Dell!

Even the winds an echo know,
Elusive, faint, such as might blow
From wandering elfland bugles far,
Beneath an occidental star;
And I have thought the blue bells lent
A subtle music to my ear,
And that the pale wild roses bent
To harken sounds I might not hear.
The tasselled fir trees softly croon
The fabled lore of elder days.
And through the shimmering eastern haze
Floats slowly up the mellow moon;
Come, heart o' mine, for love must dwell
In whispering, witching Echo Dell.

The Rovers

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Over the fields we go, through the sweets of the purple clover,
That letters a message for us as for every vagrant rover;
Before us the dells are abloom, and a leaping brook calls after,
Feeling its kinship with us in lore of dreams and laughter.

Out of the valleys of moonlight elfin voices are calling;
Down from the misty hills faint, far greetings are falling;
Whisper the grasses to us, murmuring gleeful and airy,
Knowing us pixy-led, seeking the haunts of faery.

The wind is our joyful comrade wherever our free feet wander,
Over the tawny wolds to the meres and meadows yonder;
The mild-eyed stars go with us, or the rain so swiftly flying,
Racing us over the wastes where the hemlocks and pines are sighing.

Across the upland dim, down through the beckoning hollow —
Oh, we go too far and fast for the feet of care to follow!
The gypsy fire in our hearts for the wilderness wide and luring;
Other loves may fail but this is great and enduring.

Other delights may pall, but the joy of the open never;
The charm of the silent places must win and hold us forever;
Bondage of walls we leave with never a glance behind us.
Under the lucent sky the delights of the rover shall find us.

Among the Pines

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Here let us linger at will and delightsomely hearken
Music aeolian of wind in the boughs of pine,
Timbrel of falling waters, sounds all soft and sonorous,
Worshipful litanies sung at a bannered shrine.

Deep let us breathe the ripeness and savor of balsam,
Tears that the pines have wept in sorrow sweet,
With its aroma comes beguilement of things forgotten,
Long-past hopes of the years on tiptoeing feet.

Far in the boskiest glen of this wood is a dream and a silence —
Come, we shall claim them ours ere look we long;
A dream that we dreamed and lost, a silence richly hearted,
Deep at its lyric core with the soul of a song.

If there be storm, it will thunder a march in the branches,
So that our feet may keep true time as we go;
If there be rain, it will laugh, it will glisten, and beckon,
Calling to us as a friend all lightly and low.

If it be night, the moonlight will wander winsomely with us,
If it be hour of dawn, all heaven will bloom,
If it be sunset, its glow will enfold and pursue us.
To the remotest valley of purple gloom.

Lo! the pine wood is a temple where the days meet to worship,
Laying their cark and care for the nonce aside,
God, who made it, keeps it as a witness to Him forever,
Walking in it, as a garden, at eventide.

A Day in the Open

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Ho, a day
Whereon we may up and away,
With a fetterless wind that is out on the downs,
And there piping a call to the fallow and shore,
Where the sea evermore
Surgeth over the gray reef, and drowns
The fierce rocks with white foam;
It is ours with untired feet to roam
Where the pines in green gloom of wide vales make their murmuring home,
Or the pools that the sunlight hath kissed
Mirror back a blue sky that is winnowed of cloud and of mist!

Ho, a day
Whereon we may up and away
Through the orient distances hazy and pied,
Hand in hand with the gypsying breezes that blow
Here and there, to and fro,
O'er the meadows all rosy and wide,
Where a lyric of flowers
Is sweet-sung to the frolicking hours,
And the merry buds letter the footsteps of tiptoeing showers;
We may climb where the steep is beset
With a turbulent waterfall, loving to clamor and fret!

Ho, a day
Whereon we may up and away
To the year that is holding her cup of wild wine;
If we drink we shall be as the gods of the wold
In the blithe days of old
Elate with a laughter divine;
Yea, and then we shall know

The rare magic of solitude so
We shall nevermore wish its delight and its dreams to forego,
And our blood will upstir and upleap
With a fellowship splendid, a gladness impassioned and deep!

Midnight in Camp

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Night in the unslumbering forest! From the free,
Vast pinelands by the foot of man untrod,
Blows the wild wind, roaming rejoicingly
This wilderness of God;
And the tall firs that all day long have flung
Balsamic odors where the sunshine burned,
Chant to its harping primal epics learned
When this old world was young.

Beyond the lake, white, girdling peaks uplift
Untroubled brows to virgin skies afar,
And o'er the uncertain water glimmers drift
Of fitful cloud and star.
Sure never day such mystic beauty held
As sylvan midnight here in this surcease
Of toil, when the kind darkness gives us peace
Garnered from years of eld.

Lo! Harken to the mountain waterfall
Laughing adown its pathway to the glen
And nearer, in the cedars, the low call
Of brook to brook again;
Voices that garish daytime may not know
Wander at will along the bosky steeps,
And silent, silver-footed moonlight creeps
Through the dim glades below.

Oh, it is well to waken with the woods
And feel, as those who wait with God alone,
The forest's heart in these rare solitudes
Beating against our own.

Close-shut behind us are the gates of care,
Divinity enfolds us, prone to bless,
And our souls kneel. Night in the wilderness
Is one great prayer.

The Hill Maples

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Here on a hill of the occident stand we shoulder to shoulder,
Comrades tried and true through a mighty swath of the years!
Spring harps glad laughter through us, and ministrant rains of the autumn
Sing us again the songs of ancient dolor and tears.

The glory of sunrise smites on our fair, free brows uplifted
When the silver-kirtled day steps over the twilight's bars;
At evening we look adown into valleys hearted with sunset,
And we whisper old lore together under the smouldering stars.

Crescent moons of the summer gleam through our swaying branches,
Knee-deep in fern we stand while the days of the sun-time go;
And the winds of winter love us — the keen, gay winds of the winter,
Coming to our gray arms from over the plains of snow.

Down in the valleys beneath us is wooing and winning and wedding,
Down in the long, dim valleys earth-children wail and weep;
But here on these free hills we grow and are strong and flourish,
Comrades shoulder to shoulder our watch of the years to keep.

A Summer Day

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I

The dawn laughs out on orient hills
And dances with the diamond rills;
The ambrosial wind but faintly stirs
The silken, beaded gossamers;
In the wide valleys, lone and fair,
Lyrics are piped from limpid air,
And, far above, the pine trees free
Voice ancient lore of sky and sea.
Come, let us fill our hearts straightway
With hope and courage of the day.

II

Noon, hiving sweets of sun and flower,
Has fallen on dreams in wayside bower,
Where bees hold honeyed fellowship
With the ripe blossom of her lip;
All silent are her poppied vales
And all her long Arcadian dales,
Where idleness is gathered up
A magic draught in summer's cup.
Come, let us give ourselves to dreams
By lisping margins of her streams.

III

Adown the golden sunset way
The evening comes in wimple gray;
By burnished shore and silver lake

Cool winds of ministration wake;
O'er occidental meadows far
There shines the light of moon and star,
And sweet, low-tinkling music rings
About the lips of haunted springs.
In quietude of earth and air
'Tis meet we yield our souls to prayer.

September

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Lo! a ripe sheaf of many golden days
Gleaned by the year in autumn's harvest ways,
With here and there, blood-tinted as an ember,
Some crimson poppy of a late delight
Atoning in its splendor for the flight
Of summer blooms and joys —
This is September.

In Lovers' Lane

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I know a place for loitering feet
Deep in the valley where the breeze
Makes melody in lichenéd boughs,
And murmurs low love-litanies.

There slender harebells nod and dream,
And pale wild roses offer up
The fragrance of their golden hearts,
As from some incense-brimméd cup.

It holds the sunshine sifted down
Softly through many a beechen screen,
Save where, by deeper woods embraced,
Cool shadows linger, dim and green.

And there my love and I may walk
And harken to the lapsing fall
Of unseen brooks and tender winds,
And wooing birds that sweetly call.

And every voice to her will say
What I repeat in dear refrain,
And eyes will meet with seeking eyes,
And hands will clasp in Lovers' Lane.

Come, sweetheart, then, and we will stray
Adown that valley, lingering long,
Until the rose is wet with dew,
And robins come to evensong,

And woo each other, borrowing speech

Of love from winds and brooks and birds,
Until our sundered thoughts are one
And hearts have no more need of words.

On the Hills

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Through the pungent hours of the afternoon,
On the autumn slopes we have lightly wandered
Where the sunshine lay in a golden swoon
And the lingering year all its sweetness squandered.
Oh, it was blithesome to roam at will
Over the crest of each westering hill,
Over those dreamy, enchanted lands
Where the trees held to us their friendly hands!

Winds in the pine boughs softly crooned,
Or in the grasses complained most sweetly,
With all the music of earth attuned
In this dear ripe time that must pass so fleetly:
Golden rod as we idled by
Held its torches of flame on high,
And the asters beckoned along our way
Like fair fine ladies in silk array.

We passed by woods where the day aside
Knelt like a pensive nun and tender,
We looked on valleys of purple pride
Where she reigned a queen in her misty splendor;
But out on the hills she was wild and free,
A comrade to wander right gipsily,
Luring us on over waste and wold
With the charm of a message half sung, half told.

And now, when far in the shining west
She has dropped her flowers on the sunset meadow,
We turn away from our witching quest
To the kindly starshine and gathering shadow;

Filled to the lips of our souls are we
With the beauty given so lavishly,
And hand in hand with the night we come
Back to the light and the hearth of home.

An Autumn Evening

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Dark hills against a hollow crocus sky
Scarfed with its crimson pennons, and below
The dome of sunset long, hushed valleys lie
Cradling the twilight, where the lone winds blow
And wake among the harps of leafless trees
Fantastic runes and mournful melodies.

The chilly purple air is threaded through
With silver from the rising moon afar,
And from a gulf of clear, unfathomed blue
In the southwest glimmers a great gold star
Above the darkening druid glens of fir
Where beckoning boughs and elfin voices stir.

And so I wander through the shadows still,
And look and listen with a rapt delight,
Pausing again and yet again at will
To drink the elusive beauty of the night,
Until my soul is filled, as some deep cup,
That with divine enchantment is brimmed up.

November Evening

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Come, for the dusk is our own; let us fare forth together,
With a quiet delight in our hearts for the ripe, still, autumn weather,
Through the rustling valley and wood and over the crisping meadow,
Under a high-sprung sky, winnowed of mist and shadow.

Sharp is the frosty air, and through the far hill-gaps showing
Lucent sunset lakes of crocus and green are glowing;
'Tis the hour to walk at will in a wayward, unfettered roaming,
Caring for naught save the charm, elusive and swift, of the gloaming.

Watchful and stirless the fields as if not unkindly holding
Harvested joys in their clasp, and to their broad bosoms folding
Baby hopes of a Spring, trusted to motherly keeping,
Thus to be cherished and happed through the long months of their sleeping.

Silent the woods are and gray; but the firs than ever are greener,
Nipped by the frost till the tang of their loosened balsam is keener;
And one little wind in their boughs, eerily swaying and swinging,
Very soft and low, like a wandering minstrel is singing.

Beautiful is the year, but not as the springlike maiden
Garlanded with her hopes — rather the woman laden
With wealth of joy and grief, worthily won through living,
Wearing her sorrow now like a garment of praise and thanksgiving.

Gently the dark comes down over the wild, fair places,
The whispering glens in the hills, the open, starry spaces;
Rich with the gifts of the night, sated with questing and dreaming,
We turn to the dearest of paths where the star of the homelight is gleaming.

Out O' Doors

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There's a gypsy wind across the harvest land,
Let us fare forth with it lightly hand in hand;
Where cloud shadows blow across the sunwarm waste,
And the first red leaves are falling let us haste,
For the waning days are lavish of their stores,
And the joy of life is with us out o' doors!

Let us roam along the ways of golden rod
Over uplands where the spicy bracken nod,
Through the wildwood where the hemlock branches croon
Their rune-chant of elder days across the noon.
For the mellow air its pungency outpours,
And the glory of the year is out o' doors!

There's a great gray sea beyond us calling far,
There's a blue tide curling o'er the harbor bar;
Ho, the breeze that smites us saltly on the lips
Whistles gaily in the sails of outbound ships;
Let us send our thoughts with them to fabled shores,
For the pilgrim mood is on us out o' doors!

Lo! the world's rejoicing in each spirit thrills,
Strength and gladness are to us upon the hills;
We are one with crimson bough and ancient sea,
Holding all the joy of autumn hours in fee,
Hope within us like a questing bird upsoars,
And there's room for song and laughter out o' doors.

In the Days of the Golden Rod

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Across the meadow in brooding shadow
I walk to drink of the autumn's wine —
The charm of story, the artist's glory,
To-day on these silvering hills is mine;
On height, in hollow, where'er I follow,
By mellow hillside and searing sod,
Its plumes uplifting, in light winds drifting,
I see the glimmer of goldenrod.

In this latest comer the vanished summer
Has left its sunshine the world to cheer,
And bids us remember in late September
What beauty mates with the passing year.
The days that are fleetest are still the sweetest,
And life is near to the heart of God,
And the peace of heaven to earth is given
In this wonderful time of the goldenrod.

A Winter Day

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I

The air is silent save where stirs
A bugling breeze among the firs;
The virgin world in white array
Waits for the bridegroom kiss of day;
All heaven blooms rarely in the east
Where skies are silvery and fleeced,
And o'er the orient hills made glad
The morning comes in wonder clad;
Oh, 'tis a time most fit to see
How beautiful the dawn can be!

II

Wide, sparkling fields snow-vestured lie
Beneath a blue, unshadowed sky;
A glistening splendor crowns the woods
And bosky, whistling solitudes;
In hemlock glen and reedy mere
The tang of frost is sharp and clear;
Life hath a jollity and zest,
A poignancy made manifest;
Laughter and courage have their way
At noontide of a winter's day.

III

Faint music rings in wold and dell,
The tinkling of a distant bell,
Where homestead lights with friendly glow

Glimmer across the drifted snow;
Beyond a valley dim and far
Lit by an occidental star,
Tall pines the marge of day beset
Like many a slender minaret,
Whence priest-like winds on crystal air
Summon the reverent world to prayer.

Twilight

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From vales of dawn hath Day pursued the Night
Who mocking fled, swift-sandalled, to the west,
Nor ever lingered in her wayward flight
With dusk-eyed glance to recompense his quest,
But over crocus hills and meadows gray
Sped fleetly on her way.

Now when the Day, shorn of his failing strength,
Hath fallen spent before the sunset bars,
The fair, wild Night, with pity touched at length,
Crowned with her chaplet of outblossoming stars,
Creeps back repentantly upon her way
To kiss the dying Day.

The Call of the Winds

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Ho, come out with the wind of spring,
And step it blithely in woodlands waking;
Friend am I of each growing thing
From the gray sod into sunshine breaking;
Mine is the magic of twilights dim,
Of violets blue on the still pool's rim,
Mine is the breath of the blossoms young
Sweetest of fragrances storied or sung —
Come, ye earth-children, weary and worn,
I will lead you over the hills of morn.

Ho, come out with the summer wind,
And loiter in meadows of ripening clover,
Where the purple noons are long and kind,
And the great white clouds drift fleecily over.
Mine is immortal minstrelsy,
The fellowship of the rose and bee,
Beguiling laughter of willowed rills,
The rejoicing of pines on inland hills,
Come, ye earth-children, by dale and stream,
I will lead you into the ways of dream.

Ho, when the wind of autumn rings
Through jubilant mornings crisp and golden,
Come where the yellow woodland flings
Its hoarded wealth over by-ways olden.
Mine are the grasses frosted and sere,
That lisp and rustle around the mere,
Mine are the flying racks that dim
The lingering sunset's reddening rim,
Earth-children, come, in the waning year,

I will harp you to laughter and buoyant cheer.

Ho, when the wind of winter blows
Over the uplands and moonlit spaces,
Come ye out to the waste of snows,
To the glimmering fields and the silent places.
I whistle gaily on starry nights
Through the arch of the elfin northern lights,
But in long white valleys I pause to hark
Where the ring of the homelights gems the dark.
Come, ye earth-children, whose hearts are sad,
I will make you valiant and strong and glad!

A Winter Dawn

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Above the marge of night a star still shines,
And on the frosty hills the sombre pines
Harbor an eerie wind that crooneth low
Over the glimmering wastes of virgin snow.

Through the pale arch of orient the morn
Comes in a milk-white splendor newly-born,
A sword of crimson cuts in twain the gray
Banners of shadow hosts, and lo, the day!

The Forest Path

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Oh, the charm of idle dreaming
Where the dappled shadows dance,
All the leafy aisles are teeming
With the lure of old romance!

Down into the forest dipping,
Deep and deeper as we go,
One might fancy dryads slipping
Where the white-stemmed birches grow.

Lurking gnome and freakish fairy
In the fern may peep and hide ...
Sure their whispers low and airy
Ring us in on every side!

Saw you where the pines are rocking
Nymph's white shoulder as she ran?
Lo, that music faint and mocking,
Is it not a pipe of Pan?

Hear you that elusive laughter
Of the hidden waterfall?
Nay, a satyr speeding after
Ivy-crowned bacchanal.

Far and farther as we wander
Sweeter shall our roaming be,
Come, for dim and winsome yonder
Lies the path to Arcady!

At Nightfall

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The dark is coming o'er the world, my playmate,
And the fields where poplars stand are very still,
All our groves of green delight have been invaded,
There are voices quite unknown upon the hill;

The wind has grown too weary for a comrade,
It is keening in the rushes spent and low,
Let us join our hands and hasten very softly
To the little, olden, friendly path we know.

The stars are laughing at us, O, my playmate,
Very, very far away in lonely skies,
The trees that were our friends are strangers to us,
And the fern is full of whispers and of sighs.

The sounds we hear are not what we may share in,
We may not linger where the white moths roam,
We must hasten yet more swiftly, little playmate,
To the house among the pines that is our home.

The dark is creeping closer yet, my playmate,
And the woods seem crowding nearer as we go,
Oh, how very, very bold have grown the shadows,
They may touch us as they flutter to and fro!

The silence is too dreadful for our laughter,
The night is very full of strange alarms,
But it cannot hurt us now, O, little playmate,
One more step and we are safe in mother's arms!

The Truce O' Night

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Lo, it is dark,
Save for the crystal spark
Of a virgin star o'er the purpling lea,
Or the fine, keen, silvery grace of a young
Moon that is hung
O'er the priest-like firs by the sea;
Lo, it is still,
Save for the wind of the hill,
And the luring, primeval sounds that fill
The moist and scented air —
'Tis the truce o' night, away with unrest and care!

Now we may forget
Love's fever and hate's fret,
Forget tomorrow and yesterday;
And the hopes we buried in musky gloom
Will come out of their tomb,
Warm and poignant and gay;
We may wander wide,
With only a wish for a guide,
By heath and pool where the Little Folk bide,
We may share in fairy mirth,
And partake once more in the happy thoughts of earth.

Lo, we may rest
Here on her cradling breast
In the wonderful time of the truce o' night,
And sweet things that happened long ago,
Softly and slow,
Will creep back to us in delight;
And our dreams may be

Compact of young melody,
Just such as under the Eden Tree,
'Mid the seraphim's lullabies,
Eve's might have been ere banished from Paradise.

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The Watchman

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“And for fear of Him the keepers did
shake and become as dead men.”

— Matthew 23 and 4.

My Claudia, it is long since we have met,
So kissed, so held each other heart to heart!
I thought to greet thee as a conqueror comes,
Bearing the trophies of his prowess home,
But Jove hath willed it should be otherwise —
Jove, say I? Nay, some mightier stranger-god
Who thus hath laid his heavy hand on me,
No victor, Claudia, but a broken man
Who seeks to hide his weakness in thy love.

How beautiful thou art! The years have brought
An added splendor to thy loveliness,
With passion of dark eye and lip rose-red
Struggling between its dimple and its pride.
And yet there is somewhat that glooms between
Thy love and mine; come, girdle me about
With thy true arms, and pillow on thy breast
This aching and bewildered head of mine;
Here, where the fountain glitters in the sun
Among the saffron lilies, I will tell —
If so that words will answer my desire —
The shameful fate that hath befallen me.

Down in Jerusalem they slew a man,
Or god — it may be that he was a god —
Those mad, wild Jews whom Pontius Pilate rules.
Thou knowest Pilate, Claudia — a vain man,

Too weak to govern such a howling horde
As those same Jews. This man they crucified.
I knew nought of him — had not heard his name
Until the day they dragged him to his death;
Then all tongues wagged about him and his deeds;
Some said that he had claimed to be their King,
Some that he had blasphemed their deity;
‘Twas certain he was poor and meanly born,
No warrior he, nor hero; and he taught
Doctrines that surely would upset the world;
And so they killed him to be rid of him —
Wise, very wise, if he were only man,
Not quite so wise if he were half a god!

I know that strange things happened when he died —
There was a darkness and an agony,
And some were vastly frightened — not so I!
What cared I if that mob of reeking Jews
Had brought a nameless curse upon their heads?
I had no part in that blood-guiltiness.
At least he died; and some few friends of his —
I think he had not very many friends —
Took him and laid him in a garden tomb.
A watch was set about the sepulchre,
Lest these, his friends, should hide him and proclaim
That he had risen as he had foretold.
Laugh not, my Claudia. I laughed when I heard
The prophecy. I would I had not laughed!

I, Maximus, was chosen for the guard
With all my trusty fellows. Pilate knew
I was a man who had no foolish heart
Of softness all unworthy of a man!
My eyes had looked upon a tortured slave
As on a beetle crushed beneath my tread;
I gloried in the splendid strife of war,

Lusting for conquest; I had won the praise
Of our stern general on a scarlet field;
Red in my veins the warrior passion ran,
For I had sprung from heroes, Roman born!

That second night we watched before the tomb;
My men were merry; on the velvet turf,
Bestarred with early blossoms of the Spring,
They dined with jest and laughter; all around
The moonlight washed us like a silver lake,
Save where that silent, sealed sepulchre
Was hung with shadow as a purple pall.
A faint wind stirred among the olive boughs —
Methinks I hear the sighing of that wind
In all sounds since, it was so dumbly sad;
But as the night wore on it died away
And all was deadly stillness; Claudia,
That stillness was most awful, as if some
Great heart had broken and so ceased to beat!
I thought of many things, but found no joy
In any thought, even the thought of thee;
The moon waned in the west and sickly grew
Her light sucked from her in the breaking dawn —
Never was dawn so welcome as that pale,
Faint glimmer in the cloudless, brooding sky!

Claudia, how may I tell what came to pass?
I have been mocked at when I told the tale
For a crazed dreamer punished by the gods
Because he slept on guard; but mock not *thou*!
I could not bear it if *thy* lips should mock
The vision dread of that Judean morn.

Sudden the pallid east was all aflame
With radiance that beat upon our eyes
As from noonday sun; and then we saw

Two shapes that were as the immortal gods
Standing before the tomb; around me fell
My men as dead; but I, though through my veins
Ran a cold tremor never known before,
Withstood the shock and saw one shining shape
Roll back the stone; the whole world seemed ablaze,
And through the garden came a rushing wind
Thundering a paeon as of victory.

Then that dead man came forth! Oh, Claudia,
If thou could'st but have seen the face of him!
Never was such a conqueror! Yet no pride
Was in it — nought but love and tenderness,
Such as we Romans scoff at; and his eyes
Bespake him royal. Oh, my Claudia,
Surely he was no Jew but very god!

Then he looked full upon me. I had borne
Much staunchly, but that look I could not bear!
What man may front a god and live? I fell
Prone, as if stricken by a thunderbolt;
And, though I died not, somewhat of me died
That made me man. When my long stupor passed
I was no longer Maximus — I was
A weakling with a piteous woman-soul,
All strength and pride, joy and ambition gone —
My Claudia, dare I tell thee what foul curse
Is mine because I looked upon a god?

I care no more for glory; all desire
For conquest and for strife is gone from me,
All eagerness for war; I only care
To help and heal bruised beings, and to give
Some comfort to the weak and suffering.
I cannot even hate those Jews; my lips
Speak harshly of them, but within my heart

I feel a strange compassion; and I love
All creatures, to the vilest of the slaves
Who seem to me as brothers! Claudia,
Scorn me not for this weakness; it will pass —
Surely 'twill pass in time and I shall be
Maximus strong and valiant once again,
Forgetting that slain god! and yet — and yet —
He looked as one who could not be forgot!

If I Were Home

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If I were home on those dear green hills,
In those wide and dewy meadows,
Where the cattle pastured by lake and stream
‘Mid the ever-hurrying shadows;
Could I see once more the farmhouse old
And the drowsy sunlight shining
Through door and casement where, pink with bloom,
The roses are thickly twining,
I know full well that this weary pain
Would leave me and I should be free again
From the fever’s cruel fetter —
If only once more my longing eyes
Might look on the blue of the homeland skies,
I know I should soon grow better.

If but once more I might drink the air
Of the meadows brimmed with clover
And roam at will through the pastures wide
Where rhythmic winds blow over;
Could I but hear in the still of the night
The patter of raindrops falling,
The old-time croon of the poplar trees
Or the cricket’s harvest calling;
Could I see the dawn on those shadowy hills
Flame into the day while across the sills
Its golden light came creeping
Then I know that my weary eyes would close
In the perfect rest of a calm repose
A happy and painless sleeping.
Could I lie once more’neath the orchard boughs
Where I know my bees are humming,

And the whiffs of sweet old-fashioned flowers
Are ever going and coming;
Could I stand at dusk in the darkling lane
And hear the cowbells tinkle,
When the cows come home in the twilight dim
And the stars are all a-twinkle;
Could I wander once more in my woodland nooks
And hear the call of my full-voiced brooks,
How hope in my heart would flutter!
Oh, if I were home in the old-time calm
Of those quiet valleys their breathing balm
Would yield me from suffering a glad release
And fill my heart with a raptured peace
Too deep for tongue to utter.

To My Enemy

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Let those who will of friendship sing,
And to its guerdon grateful be,
But I a lyric garland bring
To crown thee, O, mine enemy!

Thanks, endless thanks, to thee I owe
For that my lifelong journey through
Thine honest hate has done for me
What love perchance had failed to do.

I had not scaled such weary heights
But that I held thy scorn in fear,
And never keenest lure might match
The subtle goading of thy sneer.

Thine anger struck from me a fire
That purged all dull content away,
Our mortal strife to me has been
Unflagging spur from day to day.

And thus, while all the world may laud
The gifts of love and loyalty,
I lay my meed of gratitude
Before thy feet, mine enemy!

As the Heart Hopes

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It is a year dear one, since you afar
Went out beyond my yearning mortal sight —
A wondrous year! perchance in many a star
You have sojourned, or basked within the light
Of mightier suns; it may be you have trod
The glittering pathways of the Pleiades,
And through the Milky Way's white mysteries
Have walked at will, fire-shod.

You may have gazed in the immortal eyes
Of prophets and of martyrs; talked with seers
Learned in all the lore of Paradise,
The infinite wisdom of eternal years;
To you the Sons of Morning may have sung,
The impassioned strophes of their matin hymn,
For you the choirs of the seraphim
Their harpings wild out-flung.

But still I think at eve you come to me
For old, delightsome speech of eye and lip,
Deeming our mutual converse thus to be
Fairer than archangelic comradeship;
Dearer our close communings fondly given
Than all the rainbow dreams a spirit knows,
Sweeter my gathered violets than the rose
Upon the hills of heaven.

Can any exquisite, unearthly morn,
Silverly breaking o'er a starry plain,
Give to your soul the poignant pleasure born
Of virgin moon and sunset's lustrous stain

When we together watch them? Oh, apart
A hundred universes you may roam,
But still I know — I know — your only home
Is here within my heart!

Two Loves

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One said; "Lo, I would walk handclasped with thee
Adown the ways of joy and sunlit slopes
Of earthly song in happiest vagrancy
To pluck the blossom of a thousand hopes.
Let us together drain the wide world's cup
With gladness brimméd up!"

And one said, "I would pray to go with thee
When sorrow claims thee; I would fence thy heart
With mine against all anguish; I would be
The comforter and healer of thy smart;
And I would count it all the wide world's gain
To spare or share thy pain!"

The Christmas Night

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Wrapped was the world in slumber deep,
By seaward valley and cedarn steep,
And bright and blest were the dreams of its sleep;
All the hours of that wonderful night-tide through
The stars outblossomed in fields of blue,
A heavenly chaplet, to diadem
The King in the manger of Bethlehem.

Out on the hills the shepherds lay,
Wakeful, that never a lamb might stray,
Humble and clean of heart were they;
Thus it was given them to hear
Marvellous harpings strange and clear,
Thus it was given them to see
The heralds of the nativity.

In the dim-lit stable the mother mild
Looked with holy eyes on her child,
Cradled him close to her heart and smiled;
Kingly purple nor crown had he,
Never a trapping of royalty;
But Mary saw that the baby's head
With a slender nimbus was garlanded.

Speechless her joy as she watched him there,
Forgetful of pain and grief and care,
And every thought in her soul was a prayer;
While under the dome of the desert sky
The Kings of the East from afar drew nigh,
And the great white star that was guide to them
Kept ward o'er the manger of Bethlehem.

In an Old Farmhouse

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Outside the afterlight's lucent rose
Is smiting the hills and brimming the valleys,
And shadows are stealing across the snows;
From the mystic gloom of the pineland alleys.
Glamour of mingled night and day
Over the wide, white world has sway,
And through their prisoning azure bars,
Gaze the calm, cold eyes of the early stars.

But here, in this long, low-raftered room,
Where the blood-red light is crouching and leaping,
The fire that colors the heart of the gloom
The lost sunshine of old summers is keeping —
The wealth of forests that held in fee
Many a season's rare alchemy,
And the glow and gladness without a name
That dwells in the deeps of unstinted flame.

Gather we now round the opulent blaze
With the face that loves and the heart that rejoices,
Dream we once more of the old-time days,
Listen once more to the old-time voices!
From the clutch of the cities and paths of the sea
We have come again to our own roof-tree,
And forgetting the loves of the stranger lands
We yearn for the clasp of our kindred's hands.

There are tales to tell, there are tears to shed,
There are children's flower-faces and women's sweet laughter;
There's a chair left vacant for one who is dead
Where the firelight crimsons the ancient rafter;

What reck we of the world that waits
With care and clamor beyond our gates,
We, with our own, in this witching light,
Who keep our tryst with the past tonight?

Ho! how the elf-flames laugh in glee!
Closer yet let us draw together,
Holding our revel of memory
In the guiling twilight of winter weather;
Out on the waste the wind is chill,
And the moon swings low o'er the western hill,
But old hates die and old loves burn higher
With the wane and flash of the farmhouse fire.

A Request

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When I am dead
I would that ye make my bed
On that lowlying, windy waste by the sea,
Where the silvery grasses rustle and lisp;
There, where the crisp
Foam-flakes shall fly over me,
And murmurs creep
From the ancient heart of the deep,
Lulling me ever, I shall most sweetly sleep.
While the eerie sea-folk croon
On the long dim shore by the light of a waning moon.

I shall not hear
Clamor of young life anear,
Voices of gladness to stir an unrest;
Only the wandering mists of the sea
Shall companion me;
Only the wind in its quest
Shall come where I lie,
Or the rain from the brooding sky
With furtive footstep shall pass me by,
And never a dream of the earth
Shall break on my slumber with lure of an outlived mirth.

Memory Pictures

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I

A widespring meadow in a rosy dawn
Bedropt with virgin buds; an orient sky
Fleeced with a dappled cloud but half withdrawn;
A mad wind blowing by,
O'er slopes of rippling grass and glens apart;
A brackened path to a wild-woodland place
A limpid pool with a fair, laughing face
Mirrored within its heart.

II

An ancient garden brimmed with summer sun
Upon a still and slumberous afternoon;
Old walks and pleasancess with shadows spun
Where honeyed odors swoon;
A velvet turf with blossoms garlanded;
A hedge of Mary-lilies white and tall;
And, shining out against a lichen wall,
A stately-golden head.

III

An autumn hilltop in the sunset hue,
Pine boughs uptossed against the crystal west,
And, girdled with the twilight dim and blue,
A valley peace-possessed;
A high-sprung heaven stained with colors rare,
A sheen of moonrise on the sea afar,

And, bright and soft as any glimmering star,
Eyes holy as a prayer.

Down Home

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Down home tonight the moonshine falls
Across a hill with daisies pied,
The pear tree by the garden gate
Beckons with white arms like a bride.

A savor as of trampled fern
Along the whispering meadow stirs,
And, beacon of immortal love,
A light is shining through the firs.

To my old gable window creeps
The night wind with a sigh and song,
And, weaving ancient sorceries,
Thereto the gleeful moonbeams throng.

Beside the open kitchen door
My mother stands all lovingly,
And o'er the pathways of the dark
She sends a yearning thought to me.

It seeks and finds my answering heart
Which shall no more be peace-possession
Until I reach her empty arms
And lay my head upon her breast.

The Choice

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Life, come to me in no pale guise and ashen,
I care not for thee in such placid fashion!
I would share widely, Life,
In all thy joy and strife,
Would sound thy deeps and reach thy highest passion,
With thy delight and with thy suffering rife.

Whether I bide with thee in cot or palace,
I would drink deeply, Life, of thy great chalice,
Even to its bitter lees —
Yea, shrinking not from these,
Since out of bitterness come strength and solace
And wisdom is not won in slumberous ease.

Wan peace, uncolored days, were a poor favor;
To lack great pain and love were to lack savor.
Life, take the heart of me
And fill it brimmingly,
No matter with what poignant brew or flavor,
So that it may not shrunk and empty be.

Yea, Life, thus would I live, nor play at living,
The best of me for thy best gladly giving,
With an unfaltering cheer,
Greeting thee year by year,
Even in thy dourest mood some good achieving,
Until I read thy deep-hid meaning clear.

Twilight in the Garden

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The scent of the earth is moist and good
In the dewy shade
Of the tall, dark poplars whose slender tops
Against the sunset bloom are laid,
And a robin is whistling in the copse
By the dim spruce wood.

The west wind blowing o'er branch and flower
Out of the wold,
Steals through the honeysuckle bower
And bears away on its airy wings
Odors that breath of paradise;
Dim are the poppies' splendid dyes,
But many a pallid primrose swings
Its lamp of gold.

A white moth flits from tree to tree
Like a wandering soul;
Deep in the lily a muffled boom
Tells of a honey-drunken bee
Wildered with sweets in that ivory bowl;
Many a subtle melody,
Many a rare sound all unknown
To the lusty daylight's fuller tone
Threads with its magic this hush and gloom.

Many a dear thought deep in the heart,
Many a memory, dulcet and fine,
Wakes as we walk in the garden tonight,
In this soft kissing of dark and light,

When the world has drawn itself apart
From our spirit's shrine.

My Legacy

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My friend has gone away from me
From shadow into perfect light,
But leaving a sweet legacy.

My heart shall hold it long in fee —
A grand ideal, calm and bright,
A song of hope for ministry,

A faith of unstained purity,
A thought of beauty for delight —
These did my friend bequeath to me;

And, more than even these can be,
The worthy pattern of a white,
Unmarred life lived most graciously.

Dear comrade, loyal thanks to thee
Who now hath fared beyond my sight,
My friend has gone away from me,
But leaving a sweet legacy.

Gratitude

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I thank thee, friend, for the beautiful thought
That in words well chosen thou gavest to me.
Deep in the life of my soul it has wrought
With its own rare essence to ever imbue me,
To gleam like a star over devious ways,
To bloom like a flower on the drearest days —
Better such gift from thee to me
Than gold of the hills or pearls of the sea.

For the luster of jewels and gold may depart,
And they have in them no life of the giver,
But this gracious gift from thy heart to my heart
Shall witness to me of thy love forever;
Yea, it shall always abide with me
As a part of my immortality;
For a beautiful thought is a thing divine,
So I thank thee, oh, friend, for this gift of thine.

Fancies

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Surely the flowers of a hundred springs
Are simply the souls of beautiful things!

The poppies aflame with gold and red
Were the kisses of lovers in days that are fled.

The purple pansies with dewdrops pearled
Were the rainbow dreams of a youngling world.

The lily, white as a star apart,
Was the first pure prayer of a virgin heart.

The daisies that dance and twinkle so
Were the laughter of children in long ago.

The sweetness of all true friendship yet
Lives in the breath of the mignonette.

To the white narcissus there must belong
The very delight of a maiden's song.

And the rose, all flowers of the earth above,
Was a perfect, rapturous thought of love.

Oh! surely the blossoms of all the springs
Must be the souls of beautiful things.

One of the Shepherds

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We were out on the hills that night
To watch our sheep;
Drowsily by the fire we lay
Where the waning flame did flicker and leap,
And some were weary and half asleep,
And some talked low of their flocks and the fright
Of a lion that day.

But I had drawn from the others apart;
I was only a lad,
And the night's great silence so filled my heart
That I dared not talk and I dared not jest;
The moon had gone down behind the hill
And even the wind of the desert was still;
As the touch of death the air was cold,
And the world seemed all outworn and old;
Yet a poignant delight in my soul was guest,
And I could not be sad.

Still were my thoughts the thoughts of youth
Under the skies:
I dreamed of the holy and tender truth
That shone for me in my mother's eyes;
Of my little sister's innocent grace,
And the mirthful lure in the olive face
Of a maid I had seen at the well that day,
Singing low as I passed that way,
And so sweet and wild were the notes of her song,
That I listened long.

Was it the dawn that silvered and broke

Over the hill?
Each at the other looked in amaze,
And never a breathless word we spoke.
Fast into rose and daffodil
Deepened that splendor; athwart its blaze
That pierced like a sword the gulf of night
We saw a form that was shaped of the light,
And we veiled our faces in awe and dread
To hearken the tidings the Bright One told —
Oh! wonderful were the words he said —
Of a Child in Bethlehem's manger old.

The stars were drowned in that orient glow;
The sky was abloom like a meadow in spring;
But each blossom there was a radiant face
And each flash of glory a shining wing;
They harped of peace and great good will,
And such was their music that well I know
There can never again in my soul be space
For a sound of ill.

The light died out as the sunset dies
In the western skies;
Swift went we to the Bethlehem khan,
Many our questions laughed to scorn,
But one, a gray and wrinkled man,
With strange, deep eyes that searched the heart,
Led us down to the child newborn
In a dim-lighted cave apart.

There on the straw the mother lay
Wan and white,
But her look was so holy and rapt and mild
That it seemed to shed a marvellous light,
Faint as the first rare gleam of day,
Around the child.

It was as other children are
Saving for something in the eyes,
Starlike and clear and strangely wise —
Then came a sudden thought to me
Of a lamb I had found on the waste afar;
Lost and sick with hunger and cold,
I had brought it back in my arms to the fold
For tender ministry.

Dawn had flooded the east as a wave
When we left the cave;
All the world suddenly seemed to be
Young and pure and joyous again;
The others lingered to talk with the men,
Full of wonder and rapture still;
But I hastened back to the fold on the hill
To tend the lamb that had need of me.

If Mary Had Known

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If Mary had known
When she held her Babe's hands in her own —
Little hands that were tender and white as a rose,
All dented with dimples from finger to wrist,
Such as mothers have kissed —
That one day they must feel the fierce blows
Of a hatred insane.
Must redden with holiest stain,
And grasp as their guerdon the boon of the bitterest pain,
Oh, I think that her sweet, brooding face
Must have blanched with its anguish of knowledge above her embrace.

But — if Mary had known,
As she held her Babe's hands in her own,
What a treasure of gifts to the world they would bring;
What healing and hope to the hearts that must ache,
And without him must break;
Had she known they would pluck forth death's sting
And set open the door
Of the close, jealous grave evermore,
Making free who were captives in sorrow and darkness before,
Oh, I think that a gracious sunrise
Of rapture had broken across the despair of her eyes!

If Mary had known
As she sat with her baby alone,
And guided so gently his bare little feet
To take their first steps from the throne of her knee,
How weary must be
The path that for them should be meet;
And how it must lead

To the cross of humanity's need,
Giving hissing and shame, giving blame and reproach for its meed,
Oh, I think that her tears would have dewed
Those dear feet that must walk such a hard, starless way to the Rood!

But — if Mary had known,
As she sat with her Baby alone,
On what errands of mercy and peace they would go,
How those footsteps would ring through the years of all time
With an echo sublime,
Making holy the land of their woe,
That the pathway they trod
Would guide the world back to its God,
And lead ever upward away from the grasp of the clod,
She had surely forgot to be sad
And only remembered to be most immortally glad!

If Mary had known,
As she held him so closely, her own,
Cradling his shining, fair head on her breast,
Sunned over with ringlets as bright as the morn,
That a garland of thorn
On that tender brow would be pressed
Till the red drops would fall
Into eyes that looked out upon all,
Abrim with a pity divine over clamor and brawl,
Oh, I think that her lullaby song
Would have died on her lips into wailing impassioned and long!

But — if Mary had known,
As she held him so closely, her own,
That over the darkness and pain he would be
The Conqueror hailed in all oncoming days,
The world's hope and praise,
And the garland of thorn,
The symbol of mocking and scorn

Would be a victorious diadem royally worn,

Oh, I think that ineffable joy

Must have flooded her soul as she bent o'er her wonderful Boy!

At the Long Sault

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(“Searching the pile of corpses the victors found four
Frenchmen still breathing. Three had scarcely a spark of life
... the fourth seemed likely to survive and they reserved him for future torments.”

Parkman’s History.)

A prisoner under the stars I lie,
With no friend near;
Tomorrow they lead me forth to die,
The stake is ready, the torments set,
They will pay in full their deadly debt;
But I fear them not! Oh, none could fear
Of those who stood by Daulac’s side —
While he prayed and laughed and sang and fought
In the very reek of death — and caught
The martyr passion that flamed from his face
As he died!

Where he led us we followed glad,
For we loved him well;
Some there were that held him mad,
But we knew that a heavenly rage had place
In that dauntless soul; the good God spake
To us through him; we had naught to do
Save only obey; and when his eyes
Flashed and kindled like storm-swept skies,
And his voice like a trumpet thrilled us through,
We would have marched with delight for his sake
To the jaws of hell.

The mists hung blue and still on the stream

At the marge of dawn;
The rapids laughed till we saw their teeth
Like a snarling wolf's fangs glisten and gleam;
Sweetly the pine trees underneath
The shadows slept in the moonlight wan;
Sweetly beneath the steps of the spring
The great, grim forest was blossoming;
And we fought, that springs for other men
Might blossom again.

Faint, thirst-maddened we prayed and fought
By night and by day;
Eyes glared at us with serpent hate —
Yet sometimes a hush fell, and then we heard naught
Save the wind's shrill harping far away,
The piping of birds, and the softened calls
Of the merry, distant waterfalls;
Then of other scenes we thought —
Of valleys beloved in sunny France,
Purple vineyards of song and dance,
Hopes and visions roseate;
Of many a holy festal morn,
And many a dream at vesper bell —
But anon the shuddering air was torn
By noises such as the fiends of hell
Might make in holding high holiday!
Once, so bitter the death-storm hailed,
We shrank and quailed.

Daulac sprang out before us then,
Shamed in our fears;
Glorious was his face to see,
The face of one who listens and hears
Voices unearthly, summonings high —
Rang his tone like a clarion, "Men,
See yonder star in the golden sky,

Such a man's duty is to him,
A beacon that will not flicker nor dim,
Shining through darkness and despair.
Almost the martyr's crown is yours!
Thinking the price too high to be paid,
Will you leave the sacrifice half made?
I tell you God will answer the prayer
Of the soul that endures!

"Comrades, far in the future I see
A mighty land;
Throned among the nations of earth,
Noble and happy, calm and free;
As a veil were lifted I see her stand,
And out of that future a voice to me
Promises that our names shall shine
On the page of her story with lustre divine
Impelling to visions and deeds of worth.

"Ever thus since the world was begun,
When a man hath given up his life,
Safety and freedom have been won
By the holy power of self-sacrifice;
For the memory of your mother's kiss
Valiantly stand to the breach again.
Comrades, blench not now from the strife,
Quit you like men!"

Oh, we rushed to meet at our captain's side
Death as a bride!
All our brave striplings bravely fell.
I, less fortunate, slowly came
Back from that din of shot and yell
Slowly and gaspingly, to know
A harder fate reserved for me
Than that brief, splendid agony.

Through many a bitter pang and throe
My spirit must tomorrow go
To seek my comrades; but I bear
The tidings that our desperate stand
By the Long Sault has saved our land,
And God has answered Daulac's prayer.

The Exile

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We told her that her far off shore was bleak and dour to view,
And that her sky was dull and mirk while ours was smiling blue.
She only sighed in answer, "It is even as ye say,
But oh, the ragged splendor when the sun bursts through the gray!"

We brought her dew-wet roses from our fairest summer bowers,
We bade her drink their fragrance, we heaped her lap with flowers;
She only said, with eyes that yearned, "Oh, if ye might have brought
The pale, unscented blossoms by my father's lowly cot!"

We bade her listen to the birds that sang so madly sweet,
The lyric of the laughing stream that dimpled at our feet;
"But, O," she cried, "I weary for the music wild that stirs
When keens the mournful western wind among my native firs!"

We told her she had faithful friends and loyal hearts anear,
We prayed her take the fresher loves, we prayed her be of cheer;
"Oh, ye are kind and true," she wept, "but woe's me for the grace
Of tenderness that shines upon my mother's wrinkled face!"

The Three Songs

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The poet sang of a battlefield
Where doughty deeds were done,
Where stout blows rang on helm and shield
And a kingdom's fate was spun
With the scarlet thread of victory,
And honor from death's grim revelry
Like a flame-red flower was won!
So bravely he sang that all who heard
With the sting of the fight and the triumph were stirred,
And they cried, "Let us blazon his name on high,
He has sung a song that will never die!"

Again, full throated, he sang of fame
And ambition's honeyed lure,
Of the chaplet that garlands a mighty name,
Till his listeners fired with the godlike flame
To do, to dare, to endure!
The thirsty lips of the world were fain
The cup of glamor he vaunted to drain,
And the people murmured as he went by,
"He has sung a song that will never die!"

And once more he sang, all low and apart,
A song of the love that was born in his heart,
Thinking to voice in unfettered strain
Its sweet delight and its sweeter pain;
Nothing he cared what the throngs might say
Who passed him unheeding from day to day,
For he only longed with his melodies
The soul of the one beloved to please.

The song of war that he sang is as naught,
For the field and its heroes are long forgot,
And the song he sang of fame and power
Was never remembered beyond its hour!
Only to-day his name is known
By the song he sang apart and alone,
And the great world pauses with joy to hear
The notes that were strung for a lover's ear.

In an Old Town Garden

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Shut from the clamor of the street
By an old wall with lichen grown,
It holds apart from jar and fret
A peace and beauty all its own.

The freshness of the springtime rains
And dews of morning linger here;
It holds the glow of summer noons
And ripest twilights of the year.

Above its bloom the evening stars
Look down at closing of the day,
And in its sweet and shady walks
Winds spent with roaming love to stray,

Upgathering to themselves the breath
Of wide-blown roses white and red,
The spice of musk and lavender
Along its winding alleys shed.

Outside are shadeless, troubled streets
And souls that quest for gold and gain,
Lips that have long forgot to smile
And hearts that burn and ache with pain.

But here is all the sweet of dreams,
The grace of prayer, the boon of rest,
The spirit of old songs and loves
Dwells in this garden blossom-blest.

Here would I linger for a space,

And walk herein with memory;
The world will pass me as it may
And hope will minister to me.

The Seeker

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I sought for my happiness over the world,
Oh, eager and far was my quest;
I sought it on mountain and desert and sea,
I asked it of east and of west.
I sought it in beautiful cities of men,
On shores that were sunny and blue,
And laughter and lyric and pleasure were mine
In palaces wondrous to view;
Oh, the world gave me much to my plea and my prayer
But never I found aught of happiness there!

Then I took my way back to a valley of old
And a little brown house by a rill,
Where the winds piped all day in the sentinel firs
That guarded the crest of the hill;
I went by the path that my childhood had known
Through the bracken and up by the glen,
And I paused at the gate of the garden to drink
The scent of sweetbriar again;
The homelight shone out through the dusk as of yore
And happiness waited for me at the door!

The Poet's Thought

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It came to him in rainbow dreams,
Blent with the wisdom of the sages,
Of spirit and of passion born;
In words as lucent as the morn
He prisoned it, and now it gleams
A jewel shining through the ages.

The Call

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Mother of her who is close to my heart
Cease to chide!
For no small thing must I wander afar
From the tender arms and lips of my bride —
My love with eyes like the glowing star
In the twilight sky apart.

Could'st thou have seen Him standing there
Ere the day was born,
With the mild high look that was like a prayer,
Thou would'st not marvel that I must leave all
I hold most dear to answer the call
Of that wonderful morn.

We were casting our nets in the sea,
Andrew and I;
Over the mountains a young wind came
To kiss the waters of Galilee,
And in the calm blue northern sky
The gleaming crest of old Hermon rose
Girt with its diadem of snows,
And the east was smit with flame.

All our thoughts were simple and glad
As toilers' should be;
Andrew, that careless, dark-eyed lad
Sang a song right merrily,
Joyous of melody and word,
As he worked with oar and net and sail,
But I dreamed of the face that would blush and pale
When my step should be heard!

Then, as we lifted heedless eyes,
We saw Him there,
Where the silver waters curled on the shore;
Behind Him the radiance of the skies
Shining over His long, fair hair
Wreathed it as with a crown of light;
And oh, the grandeur and the grace
Of that pale and kingly face —
We were weary and hungered with toil of the night
But we thought not of it more!

He looked upon us with eyes that must see
Far in our hearts past mortal ken;
All the delights of the world grew dim —
Sweeter is seemed to suffer pain
And wander, outcast of men with Him,
Than share in another's joy and gain;
Spake He thus royally, "Come with me;
I will make you fishers of men."

Mother of her who weeps at my side
Cease to chide!
Thou knowest not how that one word rings
Ever by day and by night in my ear,
I cannot hearken to olden things
I cannot listen to hope or fear;
Mother of her who is dearest of all,
I must follow the Nazarene's call!

The Old Home Calls

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Come back to me, little dancing feet that roam the wide world o'er,
I long for the lilt of your flying steps in my silent rooms once more;
Come back to me, little voices gay with laughter and with song,
Come back, little hearts beating high with hopes, I have missed and mourned you long.

My roses bloom in my garden walks all sweet and wet with the dew,
My lights shine down on the long hill road the waning twilights through,
The swallows flutter about my eaves as in the years of old,
And close about me their steadfast arms the lipping pine trees fold.

But I weary for you at morn and eve, O, children of my love,
Come back to me from your pilgrim ways, from the seas and plains ye rove,
Come over the meadows and up the lane to my door set open wide,
And sit ye down where the red light shines from my welcoming fireside.

I keep for you all your childhood dreams, your gladness and delights,
The joy of days in the sun and rain, the sleep of carefree nights,
All the sweet faiths ye have lost and sought again shall be your own,
Darlings, come to my empty heart — I am old and still and alone!

Genius

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A hundred generations have gone into its making,
With all their love and tenderness, with all their dreams and tears;
Their vanished joy and pleasure, their pain and their heartbreaking,
Have colored this rare blossom of the long-unfruitful years.

Their victory and their laughter for this have strong men given,
For this have sweet, dead women paid in patience which survives —
That a great soul might bring the world, as from the gate of heaven,
All that was rich and beautiful in those forgotten lives.

Love's Prayer

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Beloved, this the heart I offer thee
Is purified from old idolatry,
From outworn hopes, and from the lingering stain
Of passion's dregs, by penitential pain.

Take thou it, then, and fill it up for me
With thine unstinted love, and it shall be
An earthy chalice that is made divine
By its red draught of sacramental wine.

The Prisoner

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I lash and writhe against my prison bars,
And watch with sullen eyes the gaping crowd ...
Give me my freedom and the burning stars,
The hollow sky, and crags of moonlit cloud!

Once I might range across the trackless plain,
And roar with joy, until the desert air
And wide horizons echoed it amain:
I feared no foe, for I was monarch there!

I saw my shadow on the parching sand,
When the hot sun had kissed the mountain's rim;
And when the moon rose o'er long wastes of land,
I sought my prey by some still river's brim;

And with me my fierce love, my tawny mate,
Meet mother of strong cubs, meet lion's bride ...
We made our lair in regions desolate,
The solitude of wildernesses wide.

They slew her ... and I watched the life-blood flow
From her torn flank, and her proud eyes grow dim:
I howled her dirge above her while the low,
Red moon clomb up the black horizon's rim.

Me, they entrapped ... cowards! They did not dare
To fight, as brave men do, without disguise,
And face my unleashed rage! The hidden snare
Was their device to win an untamed prize.

I am a captive ... not for me the vast,

White dome of sky above the blinding sand,
The sweeping rapture of the desert blast
Across long ranges of untrodden land!

Yet still they fetter not my thought! In dreams
I, desert-born, tread the hot wastes once more,
Quench my deep thirst in cool, untainted streams,
And shake the darkness with my kingly roar!

Companioned

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I walked to-day, but not alone,
Adown a windy, sea-girt lea,
For memory, spendthrift of her charm,
Peopled the silent lands for me.

The faces of old comradeship
In golden youth were round my way,
And in the keening wind I heard
The songs of many an orient day.

And to me called, from out the pines
And woven grasses, voices dear,
As if from elfin lips should fall
The mimicked tones of yesteryear.

Old laughter echoed o'er the leas
And love-lipped dreams the past had kept,
From wayside blooms like honeyed bees
To company my wanderings crept.

And so I walked, but not alone,
Right glad companionship had I,
On that gray meadow waste between
Dim-litten sea and winnowed sky.

You

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Only a long, lowlying lane
That follows to the misty sea,
Across a bare and russet plain
Where wild winds whistle vagrantly;
I know that many a fairer path
With lure of song and bloom may woo,
But oh! I love this lonely strath
Because it is so full of *you*.

Here we have walked in elder years,
And here your truest memories wait,
This spot is sacred to your tears,
That to your laughter dedicate;
Here, by this turn, you gave to me
A gem of thought that glitters yet,
This tawny slope is graciously
By a remembered smile beset.

Here once you lingered on an hour
When stars were shining in the west,
To gather one pale, scented flower
And place it smiling on your breast;
And since that eve its fragrance blows
For me across the grasses sere,
Far sweeter than the latest rose,
That faded bloom of yesteryear.

For me the sky, the sea, the wold,
Have beckoning visions wild and fair,
The mystery of a tale untold,
The grace of an unuttered prayer.

Let others choose the fairer path
That winds the dimpling valley through,
I gladly seek this lonely strath
Companioned by my dreams of you.

Unrecorded

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I like to think of the many words
The Master in his early days
Must have spoken to them of Nazareth —
Words not freighted with life and death,
Piercing through soul and heart like swords.
But gracious greeting and grateful phrase,
The simple speech
That plain folk utter each to each.

Ere over him too darkly lay
The prophet shadow of Calvary,
I think he talked in very truth
With the innocent gayety of youth,
Laughing upon some festal day,
Gently, with sinless boyhood's glee.

I think if he had ever said
To a mother apart,
Cradling her baby's shining head,
"Thy man-child is strong of limb and heart,"
She must have been from that gladsome day
Thrilled with enduring pride alway,
Fearless of any future dread,
Knowing the son upon her knee
Worthy her pain and love would be.

Or if by the dusty wayside well,
From the glare and heat
Of the burning noon a wayfarer sought
A moment's rest where the palm shade fell,
And he said to him, "The day is hot,

And your road is rough for wandering feet,”
Then I think on his way the pilgrim went
As one who has shared in a sacrament,
Feeling no longer on him press
The burden of his weariness.

If he said to a maid, “The sunset lies
Redly on Nazareth hills tonight,”
Each sunset of her life would bring
A benedictive memory
Of his haunting face and holy eyes;
Or if to a bridegroom thus in spring,
“The wife of thy youth is fair and wise,”
So would she ever have seemed to be
In her husband’s sight.

If he but bade a passing guest
His meal to share,
Would not the one so honored deem
Himself of all most highly blessed,
The food he ate heaven’s manna rare?
Or when he to a friend addressed
A word of thanks for service done,
Or homely, familiar favor, none
Of richer recompense could dream.

No evangelist’s golden pen
Wrote them for us —
The words of the Master to those he might meet
By the carpenter’s bench or in Nazareth street —
But in them I think there well might be —
It is surely sweet to fancy thus —
All of the benediction for men
All of the tender humanity,
That leaven the words of his later age
On the holy page.

With Tears They Buried You To-Day

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With tears they buried you to-day,
But well I knew no turf could hold
Your gladness long beneath the mould,
Or cramp your laughter in the clay;
I smiled while others wept for you
Because I *knew*.

And now you sit with me tonight
Here in our old, accustomed place;
Tender and mirthful is your face,
Your eyes with starry joy are bright —
Oh, you are merry as a song
For love is strong!

They think of you as lying there
Down in the churchyard grim and old;
They think of you as mute and cold,
A wan, white thing that once was fair,
With dim, sealed eyes that never may
Look on the day.

But love cannot be confined so
In clod and darkness; it must rise
And seek its own in radiant guise,
With immortality aglow,
Making of death's triumphant sting
A little thing.

Ay, we shall laugh at those who deem
Our hearts are sundered! Listen, sweet,
The tripping of the wind's swift feet

Along the by-ways of our dream,
And hark the whisper of the rose
Wilding that blows.

Oh, still you love those simple things,
And still you love them more with me;
The grave has won no victory;
It could not clasp your shining wings,
It could not keep you from my side,
Dear and my bride!

In Memory of Maggie

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A pussy-cat who was the household pet for seventeen years.

Naught but a little cat, you say;
Yet we remember her,
A creature loving, loyal, kind,
With merry, mellow purr;
The faithful friend of many years,
Shall we not give her meed of tears?

Sleek-suited in her velvet coat,
White-breasted and bright-eyed,
Feeling when she was praised and stroked
A very human pride;
A quiet nook was sure to please
Where she might take her cushioned ease.

Little gray friend, we shall not feel
Ashamed to grieve for you;
Many we know of humankind
Are not so fond and true;
Dear puss, in all the years to be
We'll keep your memory loyally.

Realization

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I smiled with skeptic mocking where they told me you were dead,
You of the airy laughter and lightly twinkling feet;
“They tell a dream that haunted a chill gray dawn,” I said,
“Death could not touch or claim a thing so vivid and so sweet!”

I looked upon you coffined amid your virgin flowers,
But even that white silence could bring me no belief:
“She lies in maiden sleep,” I said, “and in the youngling hours
Her sealed dark eyes will open to scorn our foolish grief.”

But when I went at moonrise to our ancient trysting place ...
And, oh, the wind was keening in the fir-boughs overhead!...
And you came never to me with your little gypsy face,
Your lips and hands of welcome, I knew that you were dead!

The Garden in Winter

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Frosty-white and cold it lies
Underneath the fretful skies;
Snowflakes flutter where the red
Banners of the poppies spread,
And the drifts are wide and deep
Where the lilies fell asleep.

But the sunsets o'er it throw
Flame-like splendor, lucent glow,
And the moonshine makes it gleam
Like a wonderland of dream,
And the sharp winds all the day
Pipe and whistle shrilly gay.

Safe beneath the snowdrifts lie
Rainbow buds of by-and-by;
In the long, sweet days of spring
Music of bluebells shall ring,
And its faintly golden cup
Many a primrose will hold up.

Though the winds are keen and chill
Roses' hearts are beating still,
And the garden tranquilly
Dreams of happy hours to be —
In the summer days of blue
All its dreamings will come true.

The Difference

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When we were together, heart of my heart, on that unforgotten quest,
With your tender arm about me thrown and your head upon my breast,
There came a grief that was bitter and deep and straitly dwell with me,
And I shunned it not, so sweet it was to suffer and be with thee.

And now when no more against mine own is beating thine eager heart,
When thine eyes are turned from the glance of mine and our ways are far apart,
A dear and long-sought joy has come my constant guest to be,
And I love it not, so bitter it is, unfelt, unshared, by thee.

The Poet

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There was strength in him and the weak won freely from it,
There was an infinite pity, and hard hearts grew soft thereby,
There was truth so unshrinking and starry-shining,
Men read clear by its light and learned to scorn a lie.

His were songs so full of a wholesome laughter
Those whose courage was ashen found it once more aflame,
His was a childlike faith and wandering feet were guided,
His was a hope so joyous despair was put to shame.

His was the delicate insight and his the poignant vision
Whereby the world might learn what wine-lipped roses know,
What a drift of rain might lisp on a gray sea-dawning,
Or a pale spring of the woodland babble low.

He builded a castle of dream and a palace of rainbow fancy,
And the starved souls of his fellows lived in them and grew glad; —
And yet — there were those who mocked the gifts of his generous giving,
And some — but he smiled and forgave them — who deemed him wholly mad!

The Mother

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Here I lean over you, small son, sleeping
Warm in my arms,
And I con to my heart all your dew-fresh charms,
As you lie close, close in my hungry hold ...
Your hair like a miser's dream of gold,
And the white rose of your face far fairer,
Finer, and rarer
Than all the flowers in the young year's keeping;
Over lips half parted your low breath creeping
Is sweeter than violets in April grasses;
Though your eyes are fast shut I can see their blue,
Splendid and soft as starshine in heaven,
With all the joyance and wisdom given
From the many souls who have stanchly striven
Through the dead years to be strong and true.

Those fine little feet in my worn hands holden ...
Where will they tread?
Valleys of shadow or heights dawn-red?
And those silken fingers, O, wee, white son,
What valorous deeds shall by them be done
In the future that yet so distant is seeming
To my fond dreaming?
What words all so musical and golden
With starry truth and poesy olden
Shall those lips speak in the years oncoming?
O, child of mine, with waxen brow,
Surely your words of that dim tomorrow
Rapture and power and grace must borrow
From the poignant love and holy sorrow
Of the heart that shrines and cradles you now!

Some bitter day you will love another,
To her will bear
Love-gifts and woo her ... then must I share
You and your tenderness! Now you are mine
From your feet to your hair so golden and fine,
And your crumpled fingertips ... mine completely,
Wholly and sweetly;
Mine with kisses deep to smother,
No one so near to you now as your mother!
Others may hear your words of beauty,
But your precious silence is mine alone;
Here in my arms I have enrolled you,
Away from the grasping world I fold you,
Flesh of my flesh and bone of my bone!

To One Hated

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“Hate is only Love that has missed its way.”

Had it been when I came to the valley where the paths parted asunder,
Chance had led my feet to the way of love, not hate,
I might have cherished you well, have been to you fond and faithful,
Great as my hatred is, so might my love have been great.

Each cold word of mine might have been a kiss impassioned,
Warm with the throb of my heart, thrilled with my pulse's leap,
And every glance of scorn, lashing, pursuing, and stinging,
As a look of tenderness would have been wondrous and deep.

Bitter our hatred is, old and strong and unchanging,
Twined with the fibres of life, blent with body and soul,
But as its bitterness, so might have been our love's sweetness
Had it not missed the way — strange missing and sad! — to its goal.

While the Fates Sleep

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Come, let us to the sunways of the west,
Hasten, while crystal dewes the rose-cups fill,
Let us dream dreams again in our blithe quest
O'er whispering wold and hill.
Castles of air yon wimpling valleys keep
Where milk-white mist steals from the purpling sea,
They shall be ours in the moon's wizardry,
While the fates, wearied, sleep.

The viewless spirit of the wind will sing
In the soft starshine by the reedy mere,
The elfin harps of hemlock boughs will ring
Fitfully far and near;
The fields will yield their trove of spice and musk,
And balsam from the glens of pine will fall,
Till twilight weaves its tangled shadows all
In one dim web of dusk.

Let us put tears and memories away,
While the fates sleep time stops for revelry;
Let us look, speak, and kiss as if no day
Has been or yet will be;
Let us make friends with laughter 'neath the moon,
With music on the immemorial shore,
Yea, let us dance as lovers danced of yore —
The fates will waken soon!

The Farewell

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He rides away with sword and spur,
Garbed in his warlike blazonry,
With gallant glance and smile for her
Upon the dim-lit balcony.
Her kiss upon his lips is warm,
Upon his breast he wears her rose,
From her fond arms to stress and storm
Of many a bannered field he goes.

He dreams of danger, glory, strife,
His voice is blithe, his hand is strong,
He rides perchance to death from life
And leaves his lady with a song;
But her blue-brimmed eyes are dim
With her deep anguish standing there,
Sending across the world with him
The dear, white guerdon of her prayer.

For her the lonely vigil waits
When ashen dawnlights come and go,
Each bringing through the future's gates
Its presages of fear and woe;
For her the watch with soul and heart
Grown sick with dread, as women may,
Yet keeping still her pain apart
From the wan duties of the day.

'Tis hers to walk when sunsets yield
Their painted splendors to the skies,
And dream on some far battlefield
Perchance alone, unwatched, he dies;

'Tis hers to kneel in patient prayer
When midnight stars keep sentinel,
Lest the chill death-dews damp the hair
Upon the brow she loves so well.

So stands she, white and sad and sweet,
Upon the latticed balcony,
From golden hair to slender feet
No lady is so fair as she;
He loves her true, he holds her dear,
But he must ride on dangerous quest,
With gallant glance and smile of cheer,
And her red rose upon his breast.

The Old Man's Grave

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Make it where the winds may sweep
Through the pine boughs soft and deep,
And the murmur of the sea
Come across the orient lea,
And the falling raindrops sing
Gently to his slumbering.

Make it where the meadows wide
Greenly lie on every side,
Harvest fields he reaped and trod,
Westering slopes of clover sod,
Orchard lands where bloom and blow
Trees he planted long ago.

Make it where the starshine dim
May be always close to him,
And the sunrise glory spread
Lavishly around his bed.
And the dewy grasses creep
Tenderly above his sleep.

Since these things to him were dear
Through full many a well-spent year,
It is surely meet their grace
Should be on his resting-place,
And the murmur of the sea
Be his dirge eternally.

Forever

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I

With you I shall ever be;
Over land and sea
My thoughts will companion you;
With yours shall my laughter chime,
And my step keep time
In the dusk and dew
With yours in blithesome rhyme;
In all of your joy shall I rejoice,
On my lips your sorrow shall find a voice,
And when your tears in bitterness fall
Mine shall mingle with them all;
With you in waking and dream I shall be,
In the place of shadow and memory,
Under young springtime moons,
And on harvest noons,
And when the stars are withdrawn
From the white pathway of the dawn.

II

O, my friend, nothing shall ever part
My soul from yours, yours from my heart!
I am yours and you mine, in silence and in speech,
Death will only seal us each to each.
Through the darkness we shall fare with fearless jest,
Starward we shall go on a joyous new quest;
There be many worlds, as we shall prove,
Many suns and systems, but only one love!

By an Autumn Fire

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Now at our casement the wind is shrilling,
Poignant and keen
And all the great boughs of the pines between
It is harping a lone and hungering strain
To the eldritch weeping of the rain;
And then to the wild, wet valley flying
It is seeking, sighing,
Something lost in the summer olden.
When night was silver and day was golden;
But out on the shore the waves are moaning
With ancient and never fulfilled desire,
And the spirits of all the empty spaces,
Of all the dark and haunted places,
With the rain and the wind on their death-white faces,
Come to the lure of our leaping fire.

But we bar them out with this rose-red splendor
From our blithe domain,
And drown the whimper of wind and rain
With undaunted laughter, echoing long,
Cheery old tale and gay old song;
Ours is the joyance of ripe fruition,
Attained ambition.
Ours is the treasure of tested loving,
Friendship that needs no further proving;
No more of springtime hopes, sweet and uncertain,
Here we have largess of summer in fee —
Pile high the logs till the flame be leaping,
At bay the chill of the autumn keeping,
While pilgrim-wise, we may go a-reaping
In the fairest meadow of memory!

The Mayflower's Message

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Here on the gray old hillside where minstrel breezes blow,
And fir-trees dim and ancient with mossy branches grow,
'Mid grasses brown and broken where scarce our faces show,
All bravely and undaunted we bloom above the snow.

The winds are chill and bitter that o'er the valleys ring,
And not a vagrant bluebird as yet is here to sing;
But all the world is waiting to greet the news we bring,
And all our blossoms letter a message from the spring.

We are the blithe forerunners of sunshine and of May,
And many a woodbird's rondel and many a merry day.
Therefore, sad earth, we bid you all joyous be and gay,
For we are sent to tell you that springtime comes this way.

Apple Blossoms

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White as the snows on sunless peaks,
Pink as the earliest blush of morn,
Pure as the thought of a stainless soul,
Perfect and sweet as a joy newborn:
Always they bloom in these long rare days,
When Maytime drifts into balmy June,
When the winds purr lightly among the leaves,
And meadow and woodland are all atune;
Ever and always there they blow —
Apple-blossoms of rose and snow!

Purple twilights and rose-red dawns,
Dimmest of hazes on far green hills,
Wonderful midnights and clear blue days,
Rapturous music of wild-bird trills:
Lightness of heart and dreams of joy,
Subtlest visions and fancies fair,
Tenderest hopes for the hours to come,
Freedom from worry and grief and care:
Come where the apple-blossoms blow —
Perfumed driftings of rose and snow.

In Lilac Time

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When the hills in the distance are misty
With hazes of shimmering blue,
When the birds sing with rapture at dawning
And the pastures are silver with dew,
When the skies are of sapphire radiance
And the apple tree boughs are ablaze,
Then the lilacs hang out in the garden
Their clusters of purple and snow.

When a new moon shines after the sunset
In the heart of the mellow southwest,
And the winds astray in the meadows
Are bent on their summertime quest,
When the cherry trees down in the orchard
Are white as the robe of a bride.
The lilac trees here at my window
Are decked in their splendor and pride.

In the odorous hush of the twilight
The evening breeze steals their perfume,
Till the rain-freshened nooks of the garden
Are sweet with the breath of their bloom,
And at morning a bluebird a-tilting
On the tip of a tremulous spray
Pipes out in their thicket of sweetness
A madrigal buoyant and gay.

Oh! our hearts are atune with the music
Of summer and blossom and bird!
It is worth our while just to be living
When the pulses of nature are stirred.

There's nothing so sweet as the joyance
That comes when the June breezes blow
And the lilac trees out in the garden
Are crowned with their purple and snow.

In Haying Time

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Wide meadows under lucent skies
Lie open, free to sun and breeze,
Where bird and bee and rustling leaf
Blend all their air-born melodies
In one sweet symphony of sound.
The lush green grasses bend and sway,
And fleet winds steal from new-mown slopes
The fragrance of the clover hay.

The fields at dawn are silver-white,
And wet with their baptismal dew;
They ripen in the long rare noons
Beneath a dome of cloudless blue;
And in the twilight's purple dusk,
How solemn, hushed, and dim they lie!
At night a mellow moon looks down
From silent, star-sown, depths of sky.

Each passing hour of night and day
Some new and rare enchantment brings,
In flowers that bloom and winds that blow,
And joy of shy, blithe, living things
That hide within the meadows green,
Or murmur in the drowsy fields;
And all the golden air is sweet
With incense rose-red clover yields.

Faint whispers wander to and fro,
On idle winds, from east to west.
The dainty blossoms lift their cups
Of perfume o'er the bluebird's nest;

The meadowlarks their raptures trill
To drown the brooklet's murmuring chime,
When ripened summer ushers in
The witcheries of the haying time.

An Autumn Shower

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Upon the russet fringes of the hill
The shadow of a cloud falls dark and still;
Then with a sweep and rush of wind the rain
Comes down the valley and across the plain,
Where many a spicy cup
Of asters pale and sweet is lifted up.

The pattering feet of raindrops are astir
In pineland aisles and resinous glens of fir,
And dance across the harbor till afar,
Beyond the restless moaning of the bar,
They croon in harmony
With all the harp-like voices of the sea.

The cloud is swift in passing — in an hour
The sun is shining on the parting shower
Athwart the flaming maples; and the cup
Of the long glistening valley is brimmed up
With wine of airy mist,
Purple and silver and faint amethyst.

The wind from many a wild untrodden bourne
Comes sweet with breath of drenched and tangled fern
To croon in minstrel grasses; where it stirs
The goldenrod its kingly vesture wears;
Meadow and wood and plain
Have caught the benediction of the rain!

When Autumn Comes

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The city is around us, and the clamor of the mart:
Its grip is on our pulses, and its clutch upon our heart.
We cannot hear the music of the olden dreams and days:
We have no time to tread in thought the sweet forgotten ways.

But when the tang of autumn air sweeps up the breathless street,
With sudden hint of reddening leaves and garnered fields of wheat,
Of golden lights on pastures wide and shadows in the glen,
Our souls thrill with the yearning wish to be at home again.

Out there the misty sea laps glad on crisp and windy sands;
Out there the smoke-blue asters blow on breezy meadow lands;
Out there the joyous marigolds in marsh and swamp are bright —
Despite the breath of chilly morn and nip of frosty night.

The air is ripe and pungent, and the sky is free from stain;
The fallen leaves are whispering in many a woodland lane;
And O to roam upon the hills when all the west is red,
When the moon rises from the sea and stars shine overhead!

And O to see the homelight from the farmhouse window glow,
Athwart the purple-falling dusk as in the long ago;
To hail it with our eager eyes when pilgrimage is o'er,
And dream one dream of boyhood 'neath our father's roof once more!

The Last Bluebird

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The grasses are sere and the meadows are brown,
The last clinging red leaf has fluttered adown;
The swallows and thrushes have long ago flown,
The woods are all voiceless, the valleys all lone,
And soon I must flee
Far over the sea
Where warm sunny southlands are waiting for me.

The sunsets are crimson, and all through the days
The tired earth is napping in magical haze;
But the mornings are frosty, the twilights are cold,
The woodways are lost in their driftings of gold,
And well do I know
That full soon comes the snow,
And in spite of the sunshine it's high time to go.

For the breath of the north wind is bitter and chill
And my nest-tree is bare on the slope of the hill:
Earth's music has fled, and the winter is long,
And over the sea I must follow my song;
So I twitter good-by
Once again ere I fly
To a far away land and a sunnier sky.

But the winter will pass, and once more in the spring
The violets will bloom and the robins will sing;
The orchards grow white, and the gay brooklets chime
Their welcome again to the fair summer time,
And over the sea
With a song glad and free,
I'll come back to my nest in the old apple tree.

The Lullaby

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Today I walked on the uplands
Where the vagrant breezes blow,
And I heard the autumn singing
A lullaby soft and low,
As she tucked the flowers and grasses
In a cradle warm and deep,
Like a loving nurse and tender,
Crooning them all to sleep.

“The swallows are southward flying,”
So ran the song I heard,
“And last night in the russet valley
The breath of the frost-king stirred;
So you must sleep my darlings,
While the drear days come and go,
Dreaming of springtide waking
Deep down under the snow.

“Goldenrod, you must slumber
Here on the brown hill’s crest;
Wood flowers all, you must nestle
Close to the forest’s breast;
Asters, clovers, and daisies,
Warmly I fold you away —
In the wide kind arms of the meadows
Sleep till the call of May.

Sleep till the swallows northward
Come from across the sea,
And all the summer sunshine
Laughs out o’er the windy lea.

Sleep, my dear little blossoms,
While your slumber song I sing
Sleep, little leaves and grasses
And waken up in the spring.

November Dusk

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A weird and dreamy stillness falls upon
The purple breathless earth, the windless woods,
The wimpling rims of valley solitudes,
The wide gray stubble-fields, and fallows wan —
A quiet hush, as if, her heyday gone,
Tired Nature folded weary hands for rest
Across the faded vesture of her breast,
Knowing her wintry slumbers hasten on.
Far and away beyond the ocean's rim
The dull-red sunset fades into the gray
Of sombre windrent clouds, that marshal grim
Around the closing portals of the day,
While from the margin of the tawny shore
Comes up the voice of waters evermore.

The First Snowfall

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A bitter chill has fallen o'er the land
In this dull breathlessness of afternoon:
Voiceless and motionless the maples stand,
Heartbroken, with each other to commune
In silent hopelessness. The cold gray sky
Has blotted out the mountain's misty blue,
The nearer hills are palled in sombre guise
Where shivering gleams of fitful light fall through.

Then comes the snowfall, as pale Autumn folds
A misty bridal veil about her hair,
And lingers waiting in the yellowed wolds
Until her wintry bridegroom greet her there.
The hills are hidden and we see the woods
Like hosts of phantoms in the waning light.
The grassless fields, the leaf-strewn solitudes,
Grow dim before the fast oncoming night.

The lonely meadows pale and whiten swift,
The trees their tracery of ermine weave,
Like larger flakes dim flocks of snowbirds drift
Across the fading landscape of the eve.
Darkness comes early and beneath its wings
We see a wraithlike world with spectres filled —
Naught but cold semblances of real things
As though Earth's breathing were forever stilled.

Buttercups

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Like showers of gold dust on the marsh,
Or an inverted sky,
The buttercups are dancing now
Where silver brooks run by.
Bright, bright,
As fallen flakes of light,
They nod
In time to every breeze
That chases shadows swiftly lost
Amid those grassy seas.

See, what a golden frenzy flies
Through the lighthearted flowers!
In mimic fear they flutter now;
Each fairy blossom cowers.
Then up, then up,
Each shakes its yellow cup
And nods
In careless grace once more —
A very flood of sunshine seems
Across the marsh to pour.

Echo

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Here in my bosky glen, beneath dim pines I hide,
Unseen by the curious eyes of men, alone in the hills I bide,
Where the sunrise is born and the cataract leaps down the mountain side.

Ever I wrap me round in my leafy solitude
With my gleaming wreath of myrtle crowned, in the depth of waste and wood,
To laugh at the world from the heart of the hills and mimic its every mood.

Dark are my eyes and hair, and my breast is white as snow,
But never a mortal may see how fair... I am fleeter than the roe,
And the silver notes of my mocking voice are all that the world may know.

You may hear me call at night, from the springs of haunted rills;
You may hear my laughter floating light, when the starry dew distils.
I am the nymph of the airy voice and my home is in the hills.

Whenever you call to me I will answer to you again;
But my form and face you will never see, you of the race of men,
I flee afar when you follow me to the heart of my purple glen!

The Pond Pasture

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It is purely fair and fragrant in its wide unbroken green,
Where the water laps and murmurs on the margin thick with fern;
All the slope is sweet and tangled with the clover's rose red screen,
And the comers are a-flutter where the orange lilies bum.

There are countless shadows flying where the white-stemmed birches bend
Over lispig wave and ripple on its hushed and dreamy shore.
There are minstrel breezes blowing where the swaying grasses blend,
And the buttercups are rhyming all their golden fairy lore.

Here is always balm and healing for a world-worn, weary heart,
Nature's hieroglyphic message that the centuries have conned;
Not a hint is here of striving or the turmoil of the mart —
Just a world of rest and beauty in the pasture by the pond!

Drought

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So long it is since kindly rain
Fell on the thirsty meadow lands;
The birds forget their old refrain;
The trees uplift their pleading hands
To hard bright skies that do not heed,
But arch above the valley dim,
And touch the far hill's burning rim,
And care not for our mighty need.

Athwart the dusty highway's glare
The wan white daisies, drooping, lean;
The roses faint in their despair
On pasture slopes no longer green;
The plaintive brooks have ceased to pray,
Unfed by springs whose lips are dry,
And the dull evening in the sky
Shuts out the brazen edge of day.

Great Father, listen to our prayer,
And send on us Thy gracious rain
To hush the moan of our despair
And drown the memory of our pain;
Then all the hills to Thee will raise
A psalm of utter thankfulness;
Thy name each thirsty blossom bless,
And every meadow hymn Thy praise.

After Drought

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Last night all through the darkling hours we heard
The voices of the rain,
And every languid pulse in nature stirred
Responsive to the strain;
The morning brought a breath of strong sweet air
From shadowy pinelands blown,
And over field and upland everywhere
A newborn greenness shone.

The saintly meadow lilies offer up
Their white hearts to the sun,
And every wildwood blossom lifts its cup
With incense overrun;
The brook whose voice was silent yestereve
Now sings its old refrain,
And all the world is grateful to receive
The blessing of the rain.

Rain in the Country

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Here in the country the cool sweet rain
Falls on the daisies and growing grain,
Shadows the pond with widening rings,
Kisses the lips of the lowland springs,
Plays with the pines on the hilltop dim
And fills the valley with mist abrim.

It splashes in shadowy forest nooks,
Dimples the faces of woodland brooks,
Whispers with leaves in untrodden ways,
Wraps the distance in sober grays,
Dances o'er meadows of lushest green
And scatters the petals where roses lean.

The Tree Lovers

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They grew in the fringe of woodland at the foot of the homestead hill,
Where ran like a silver ribbon a dimpling summer rill —
A spruce and a leafy maple — so close together they grew
That hardly a lance of sunlight might pierce their greenness through.

Their mingled branches swaying cast ever a cooling shade
O'er the strip of emerald grassland where the happy children played,
And a slender lad and thoughtful, with dreamy eyes of blue,
Said the tree was a maple maiden and the spruce her lover true.

The fancy pleased the children, as fancies children will,
For it gave them a sense of friendship with the trees below the hill:
As if the spruce and the maple had a life to their own akin,
And beneath their bark imprisoned beat human hearts within.

They saw how the maple nestled to the spruce's sheltering side,
As his rugged green arms clasped her with fond protecting pride.
He was the taller and stronger; she the more graceful tree,
And never could human lovers more kind and faithful be.

When the winter snows were silver, and the winter winds were keen,
The gray-cloaked bride was leafless but the sturdy spruce was green;
And when the springtime rapture thrilled all the woodlands through,
The tender tints of maple were blent with his somber hue.
All through the days of summer they talked and whispered low,
While the gentle west-winds wavered their branches to and fro;
And in autumn the little maple, in her splendor of crimson gay,
Stood proudly close to her lover in his rugged and dark array.

The children have grown and wandered from the ken of the homestead hill,
But the trees through seasons many are green and faithful still.

Still nestles the little maple to her knightly lover's side,
And still the spruce-tree shelters with his mighty arms his bride,

Though the winter winds are biting, but the closer drawn are they,
As fond as when summer sunbeams among their branches play:
Time passes o'er them as lightly as it does o'er the ribbon rill,
There, as each season passes, at the foot of the homestead hill.

In Untrod Woods

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Lonely, think you, this deep unbroken hush,
Unstirred save by leaf-murmurs or the rush
Of fitful winds on-sweeping?
Nay, nay, not so! You have not learned the store
Of deep enchantment that forever more
These untrod woods are keeping.

They are not voiceless — in the night and day
Wood-whispers creep around and wood-winds stray
In mossy beechen alleys,
And dusking pines are crooning evermore
Their mysteries of half-forgotten lore
In sunlight-threaded valleys.

Slim birches lean o'er many a clear spring's heart,
As maidens viewing by themselves apart
Their lissome charms reflected —
Now steals the chime of water murmurings,
And now some unseen woodbird's rondel sings,
As sweet as unexpected.

The woods are never lonely, as I stray
Adown rain-freshened slopes I hear today
All shy blithe forest voices,
Calling around me till the great wood's calm
Falls on my spirit with a wondrous balm,
And my vexed heart rejoices.

The Wild Places

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Oh, here is joy that cannot be
In any market bought or sold,
Where forests beckon fold on fold
In a pale silver ecstasy,
And every hemlock is a spire
Of faint moon-fire.

For music we shall have the chill
Wild bugle of a vagrant wind
Seeking for what it cannot find,
A lonely trumpet on the hill,
Or keening in the dear dim white
Chambers of night.

And there are colours in the wild:
The royal purple of old kings;
Rose-fire of secret dawn; clear springs
Of emerald in valleys aisled
With red pine stems; and tawny stir
Of dying fir.

And we shall know as lovers do
The wooing rain, the eternal lure
Of tricky brook and beckoning moor,
The hidden laughs that pursue,
As if the gods of elder day
Were here at play.

For these wild places hold their own
Boon myths of faun and goblin still,
And have a lingering goodwill

For folk in green if truth were known;
Oh, what an old delightful fear —
Hush, listen, hear!

A Perfect Day

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A day came up this morning o'er the sea —
Dawn-eyed and virgin from an orient shore —
And dear were the delights it brought to me,
Dearer than any day had given before:
'Tis with sweet sorrow at the sunset bell
I bid my day farewell.

For never, as I think, was light so fair
On the green waves, and never rang so clear
The haunting elfin music of the air,
And never fell so subtly on the ear
The antic pipes of freakish winds astir
In bosky glens of fir.

The roses bloomed as if they only had
One day of all the year on which to bloom,
And, bent on making wild and garden glad,
Flung forth their long upgathering of perfume;
It seemed to me that every dappled hour
Burst into lavish flower.

Then when the sunset came the rainbow west
Was splendid, as if all days fair and good
Were at its portal to receive as guest
My day into their purple sisterhood,
Crowning it on the ancient hills afar
With an immortal star.

Forever shall it be a lyric page
Of verse ambrosial, to be often conned,
Holding its treasure safe from touch of age

Forever kept in a remembrance fond:
For this my day that came across the sea
Brought heart's desire to me!

Requiem

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Tonight, when the twilight fell,
Died the beautiful Day!
On the far dim hills she lay,
With her garland of asphodel —
Ring, wild winds, her knell.

Gems in her long dark hair
Scattered the kindly Night;
Over her bier the white
Clear stars are watching there —
Oh, the dead Day is fair!

Fair was she when she stood
Poised on the hills of dawn,
While their radiance over her shone
In the blithesome laughing mood
Of her mirthful maidenhood.

Fair was she then. Ah fair!
But fairer is she now
With the awful peace on her brow,
That only the dead may wear,
And the starlight on her hair.

Let us take our last farewell
Of the beautiful calm-lipped Day,
Ere the Night will hide her away
With a star for sentinel —
Ring, wild winds, her knell.

In Twilight Fields

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O'er dewy meadows, dim and gray,
There comes a breath of balm,
And wilding slopes of far away
Are wrapped in pensive calm;
Afar the lustrous skies are deep,
And crystal planets shine,
Where roaming winds have dropped asleep
Among the hills of pine.

The daisies float above the grass,
Like spirits of the dew,
And low sweet voices faintly pass
The lush green thickets through.
Slow fades the mellow sunset light;
The dusker shadows creep;
Beneath the soothing touch of night
The world has found its sleep.

No echoes of the troubled day
Can stir this wondrous hour;
Noon's feverish breath is far away,
And care has lost its power.
Lulled on her broad maternal breast,
Our kind earth mother yields
A deep untainted peace and rest
In tranquil twilight fields.

Twilight in Abegweit

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A filmy western sky of smoky red,
Blossoming into stars above a sea
Of soft mysterious dim silver spread
Beyond the long gray dunes' serenity:
Where the salt grasses and sea poppies press
Together in a wild sweet loneliness.

Seven slim poplars on the windy hill
Talk some lost language of an elder day,
Taught by the green folk that inhabit still
The daisied field and secret friendly way —
Forever keeping in their solitudes
The magic ritual of our northern woods.

The darkness woos us like a perfumed flower
To reedy meadow pool and wise old trees,
To beds of spices in a garden bower,
And the spruce valley's dear austerities;
I know their lure of dusk, but evermore
I turn to the enchantment of the shore.

The idle ships dreamlike at anchor ride,
Beside the pier where wavelets lap and croon;
One ghostly ship sails outward with the tide
That swells to meet the pale imperial moon,
O — fading ship, between the dark and light,
I send my heart and hope with you tonight.

Night in the Pastures

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The night wind steals from the tranquil hills,
And its noiseless footsteps pass
O'er the dim hushed breadths of the pasture fields,
And the dew-wet trampled grass.
The stars are thick in the velvet sky,
Where a white young moon shines clear
Through the airy boughs of the poplars tall,
And the peace of the night is here.

The brook's soft gurgle is sweet and low,
And the sorrowful whip-poor-wills
Are grieving afar in the purple gloom
Of the dark encircling hills;
And the faint weird murmurs of elfin things
Through the shadowy pine-trees creep,
But the air is sweet with the hush of dreams,
And the fields have gone to sleep.

The placid cattle have laid them down
At the roots of the mystic firs,
And the sheep in the lowland are dimly white
Where the wind in the bracken stirs.
The hills are chanting a solemn hymn
At the altar of star and sky;
In a rapturous silence, a dim-lit calm,
The dewy pastures lie.

Here, in these meadows of starry rest,
In these mysteries of the night,
The manifold voices of Nature breathe
With a meaning of strange delight.

The passionless calm of the dreaming fields
Has the power of a holy prayer,
And the infinite love of the far dim hills
Shuts out every thought of care.

Night

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A pale enchanted moon is sinking low
Behind the dunes that fringe the shadowy lea,
And there is haunted starlight on the flow
Of immemorial sea.

I am alone and need no more pretend
Laughter or smile to hide a hungry heart;
I walk with solitude as with a friend
Enfolded and apart.

We tread an eerie road across the moor
Where shadows weave upon their ghostly looms,
And winds sing an old lyric that might lure
Sad queens from ancient tombs.

I am a sister to the loveliness
Of cool far hill and long-remembered shore,
Finding in it a sweet forgetfulness
Of all that hurt before.

The world of day, its bitterness and cark,
No longer have the power to make me weep;
I welcome this communion of the dark
As toilers welcome sleep.

Oh, it is well to waken with the woods
And feel, as those who wait with God alone,
The forest's heart in these rare solitudes
Beating against our own.
Close-shut behind us are the gates of care,
Divinity enfolds us, prone to bless,

And our souls kneel. Night in the wilderness
Is one great prayer.

On the Gulf Shore

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Lap softly on the curving shore
Where sandpeeps leave their footprints small;
Lap softly, purple waves, where o'er
The gleaming sand the ripples fall.
Aloft the sky is blue; the clouds
Are soft and white above the sea;
The seagulls fly in snowy crowds;
The boats are floating lazily.

Then lap, lap softly, purple waves!
No tempests toss your crests today —
Your azure dimples are the graves
Where millions buried sunbeams play.
The curving dunes are golden brown;
The shore-grass nods its slender head;
The hot white sand sifts slowly down,
Or slips beneath our hasty tread

Far runs the shore, a silver strand,
And skies meet seas in clouds of pearl;
The ocean's arms embrace the land,
And far aloft the swallows whirl.
Then lap, lap softly, on the shore,
Blue waters, lap! I rest and dream
Of ships that sail your surface o'er
And watch the shifting sunshine gleam.

Sail onward, ships! White wings, sail on,
Till past the horizon's purple bar
You drift from sight! In flush of dawn
Sail on, and, 'neath the evening star,

Fair skies be o'er you! Fair winds fill
Your swelling sails, till half the world
Be circled, and, in havens still,
Your weary wings be calmly furled.

Swoop, seagulls, swoop above the blue,
Nor fold till eve your pinions' snow!
Where sleep you, seagulls, when the dew
Dampens the sand and moons outglow?
Lap softly, purple waves! I dream,
And dreams are sweet. I'll wake no more,
But ever watch the white sails gleam,
And plovers flit along the shore!

When the Tide Goes Out

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The boats sail out over murmurous seas,
O'er reaches of dazzling blue,
Past islands like purple Hesperides
Whence at dawn the seagulls flew;
Their white sails glisten in galaxies,
When the tide goes out.

Afar, where the sky bends down to meet
The ocean's pallid rim,
Drift fishing schooners — a shadowy fleet —
Like phantom vessels dim
That never a shore or a landing greet,
When the tide goes out.

The white sands glisten and bum and glow,
And the rocky reefs are bare;
The great cloud argosies come and go
In tranquil deeps of air;
The sea's own witchery we may know,
When the tide goes out.

A calm has fallen o'er wave and shore —
The calm of a coast of dreams —
And silver-pinioned seagulls soar
Where the water pales and creams;
E'en the sorrowful ocean has hushed its roar,
When the tide goes out.

Before Storm

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There's a grayness over the harbor like fear on the face of a woman,
The sob of the waves has a sound akin to a woman's cry,
And the deeps beyond the bar are moaning with evil presage
Of a storm that will leap from its lair in that dour northeastern sky.

Slowly the pale mists rise, like ghosts of the sea, in the offing,
Creeping all wan and chilly by headland and sunken reef,
And a wind is wailing and keening like a lost thing 'mid the islands,
Boding of wreck and tempest, plaining of dolor and grief.

Swiftly the boats come homeward, over the grim bar crowding,
Like birds that flee to their shelter in hurry and affright,
Only the wild gray gulls that love the cloud and the clamor
Will dare to tempt the ways of the ravening sea tonight.

But the ship that sailed at the dawning, manned by the lads that love us
God help and pity her when the storm is loosed on her track!
Oh women, we pray tonight and keep a vigil of sorrow
For those we sped at the dawning and may never welcome back!

The Sandshore in September

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Dim dusk on the sea where a star shines over —
The night steals across the sand,
Purply-brooding the shadows hover,
And by the headland a white-sail rover
Skims on to the darkening land.

Far in the west still the hue is glowing
Of a sunset's crimson death;
The troubled tide o'er the bar is flowing
And vibrant winds are coming and going
With the salt foam in their breath.

Slow from the eastward a fog is creeping,
Spectral and chill and white;
Soon it will wrap the wide sea sleeping,
And the sandshore, given o'er to its keeping,
Will dream and gleam through the night.

Why need we linger when o'er the meadows
The glow of our homelight shines?
Dear, let us leave the sandshore to its shadows
And hand in hand go across the meadows
To that love-star in the pines.

Home From Town

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There, I can draw a free breath!
I'm clear of the town once more, —
Clear of its dust and smoke, and deafening rattle and roar,
How anyone can live all his life in that place beats me!
One day's enough for my liking — and now I'm out and free.
Out in the country road where the air is sweet and dim,
And somewhere across the fields the frogs are singing a hymn;
And the moon is getting bright — she was pale'fore the sun went down —

And in an hour wife'll say," Your father's home from town,"
Hurry'long smart now, Doll. Jack's waiting at the gate.
Listening for wheels, and wondering what's keeping me so late.
I've brought him a brand-new knife, with a corkscrew in it and all;
He's been coaxing for one ever since he broke his old one last fall.
How his eyes will shine! And then, there's the doll for May,
And the little work-box for Kate, and a couple of books for Ray,
—— Always a-reading he is, cut out for a scholar, I guess.
Well, the boy shall have a chance. And here is the wife's new dress.

I got it for a surprise; she said her old one would do.
But I want to see her look nice — and this is a navy blue.
She's as pretty a woman still as I saw in town to-day.
And not one of the girls back there can hold a candle to May.
With her little golden curls, and pink on her dimpled face,
The prettiest flower that grows anywhere about the old place.
Jog along smarter, Doll — I can see the kitchen light
Ashining out through the trees — a particular pleasant sight;
And Jack's whistling at the gate; I can smell the clover hay,
—— The boy must be tired if he mowed the big south meadow today,

And that little white thing there, a-standing close by his side?

It's my own little Mayflower, bless her! and of course she wants a ride.
And Kate and Ray are coming as fast as they can down the lane,
And wife's at the kitchen door — I can see her just as plain!
What a look she'll give when I show her the brand-new merino gown!
Down Rover, old dog — be careful. Well, I'm glad to be home from town.

Interlude

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To-day a wind of dream
Blew down the raucous street...
I heard a hidden stream
Laugh somewhere at my feet.

I felt a mist of rain
Trembling against my face...
I knew that wind had lain
In many a haunted place.

I saw a sea-beach dim
By many a silver dune,
Where sandy hollows brim
With magic of the moon.

I saw a shadowy ship
Upon her seaward way,
And felt upon my lip
A kiss of yesterday.

I walked again beside
The dark enchantress Night
Until the dawn's white pride
Brought back a lost delight.

O — wind of dream, blow still,
For I would have it stay...
That ghostly pressure sweet and chill,
The kiss of yesterday.

Last Night in Dreams

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Last night in dreams I went once more
To my old home beside the sea;
I saw the sunrise on the shore,
The harbor whitening mistily;
Oh, sweet it was to meet again
The morning coming up the glen!

I saw the uplands green and wide,
The pines about the meadow spring,
The orchard with its shadows pied
Where early robins waked to sing.
Oh, sweet once more to hear the trill
Of glad winds piping on the hill.

I saw my garden wet with dew,
Where bloomed the flowers of long ago,
There red and white the roses grew
And lilies lifted buds of snow;
Oh, sweet it was again to tread
Those ways with blossoms garlanded!

And when the happy day had gone
Beyond the meadows far away,
I saw the twilight creeping on
In vesper-hush of gold and gray;
Oh, sweet above the dim hill's crest
The first star sparkle in the west!

And when across the fragrant gloom
A silver summer moonshine crept
I saw once more the gable room

Where weary little children slept;
Oh, sweet beside its window there
To kneel again in childhood's prayer!
Oh, sweet my dream of morning seas,
And sweet my dream of twilight star,
Sweet all those olden memories,
But of them all the sweetest far
Was that once more I dropped to rest
With head upon a mother's breast.

Southernwood,

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What is it you have in the heart of your posy, stranger?
Well, well, if it isn't a sprig of southernwood!
From the country, I reckon? They call it out of the fashion,
But a whiff of its fragrance always does me good,
And to see a bit of it here in this grimy city street
'Minds me of home and mother and all things good and sweet.

It grew by the old front door in the homestead garden
Where we sat in the dusk at the time of stars and dew,
Just under the lilac-bush by the parlor window,
Where the breath of honeysuckle and clover meadows blew through,
With the orchards on either side in their fruitful solitude —
Oh, it all comes back to me now with the scent of southernwood!

Mother would have a sprig pinned always about her somewhere,
Or a bit to hold in her hand as she rested there at one side,
The roses and pinks were sweet, but she loved it better,
For she'd planted the roots herself when she came to the farm a bride.
And we tired boys and girls who sat at her feet
Felt only the time was dear and mother's face was sweet.

Now we're scattered far and away the wide world over —
When father and mother are gone the children are swift to roam!
The hillside farm has passed to the hands of others,
And strangers dwell in the spot we called our home,
But the garden old, and the house where the poplars stood,
Are mine again by the spell of the scent of southernwood.

The Apple-Picking Time

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When September's purple asters stay to wreath October's crown,
And the misty wooded hillslopes are red and golden brown,
When moms are hazy purple and wild geese eastward fly,
And fiery crimsons linger late along the evening sky,
When swallows on the bam roofs perch, to chatter of their flight,
When hints of frost are in the air, and crickets chirp at night,
Then come the pleasant days we love in autumn's mellow prime,
The jolliest days of all the year... the apple-picking time.

For the laden boughs are bending low o'er all the orchard ways,
The apples' cheeks are burning red, and father smiles and says,
Some sparkling morn, "I think to-day we might as well begin;
Be smart now boys! You'll need a week to get those apples in."

There are fresh young voices'mong the trees and peals of laughter gay,
And the ruddy pile on the granary floor grows bigger every day,
While the tired old Earth anapping lies in mellow magic light.
And there are tired hands and happy hearts in the old farmhouse at night:
For we pick from dawn till the autumn moon shines over the poplar hill,
And the stars peep down through the orchard boughs and the world is hushed and still.

And when the market apples have been carefully gathered in,
And every nook and comer's filled in granary, house and bin,
The best fun's still to come when in the orchard on the hill
We pick the cider apples and cart them to the mill.
What frolic and what shouting! Those apples need no care;
Just climb the trees and shake them down in pattering hundreds there.

It's fine down Winter's gleaming hills with arrow's speed to fly,
Or wade in some dusk woodland pool when Spring comes wandering by,

It's pleasant to listen in Summer hours to the breeze's wordless rhyme,
But it's jollier far just to be alive in the apple-picking time.

Coiling Up the Hay

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There's many a thing we like to do, we boys upon the farm,
And every little duty has its own peculiar charm,
But I think we're most delighted when we hear our father say,
"A shower is coming up, I fear. Come, boys, and coil the hay."

The green and sweeping meadows lie wide open to the sun,
Where crickets chirp, and breezes blow, and frisky shadows run,
And the long, tangled, new-mown swaths are sweet with the perfume
That only comes from ripened grass and faded clover bloom.

Sometimes it's in the morning when the air is cool and sweet,
And sometimes in the afternoon beneath the sultry heat,
But oftener it's at twilight when the west is rosy red,
And big white stars are blinking out in tranquil deeps o'erhead.

With sturdy arms we toss the hay and shape the coils with care,
And merry voices echo through the golden evening air,
Till the last field is dotted o'er with haycocks neat and trim,
And the last lingering light has died across the uplands dim.

What care we now if summer showers fall in the coming night?
We've done our work with earnest care, and all is snug and tight.
We may be tired, but welcome rest will follow on the day,
And it's the jolliest sort of fun, this coiling up the hay.

The Gable Window

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It opened on a world of wonder,
When summer days were sweet and long,
A world of light, a world of splendor,
A world of song.

‘Twas there I passed my hours of dreaming,
‘Twas there I knelt at night to pray;
And, when the rose-lit dawn was streaming
Across the day,

I bent from it to catch the glory
Of all those radiant silver skies —
A resurrection allegory
For human eyes!

The summer raindrops on it beating,
The swallows clinging’ neath the eaves,
The wayward shadows by it fleeting,
The whispering leaves;

The birds that passed in joyous vagrance,
The echoes of the golden moon,
The drifting in of subtle fragrance,
The wind’s low croon;

Held each a message and a token
In every hour of day and night;
A meaning wordless and unspoken,
Yet read aright.

I looked from it o’er bloomy meadows,

Where idle breezes lost their way,
To solemn hills, whose purple shadows
About them lay.

I saw the sunshine stream in splendor
O'er heaven's utmost azure bars,
At eve the radiance, pure and tender,
Of white-browed stars.

I carried there my childish sorrows,
I wept my little griefs away;
I pictured there my glad tomorrows
In bright array.

The airy dreams of child and maiden
Hang round that gable window still,
As cling the vines, green and leaf-laden,
About the sill.

And though I lean no longer from it,
To gaze with loving reverent eyes,
On clouds and amethystine summit,
And star-sown skies.

The lessons at its casement taught me,
My life with rich fruition fill;
The rapture and the peace they brought me
Are with me still!

Grandmother's Garden

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'Twas the dearest spot that my childhood knew,
That garden old where the roses grew
All pink and dewy with twinkling gems;
And lilies bent on their slender stems
To waft on the air their rich perfume
Blent with the breath of sweet clover bloom,
And the lilacs down by the sagging gate
In springtime days kept their purple state.

The light came down through the apple trees
That were pink with blossoms and gay with bees,
And lay in patches of golden sheen
The cool dim arches and aisles between;
While the cherry trees on the slope below
Were white as banks of December snow,
And along its border the poplars tall
Seemed like faithful guardians over all.

How we loved to loiter away the hours
In that fairy realm of light and flowers,
To chase each other among the trees
Where the fitful winds rang their symphonies,
Or dabble our feet where a shy brook stole
Across the corner below the knoll,
With a muffled call and a silvern gleam
That flashes still on my waking dream.

How we loved the scent of the southernwood
Where it grew in an emerald solitude
Beneath the lilacs, and dearer still
The honeysuckle around the sill

Of the old low windows and wide front door
It all comes back to my sight once more;
And I seem to stand in the dear home place
Where the apple blossoms caress my face.

I — hear the call of the hidden brook
And the robin's flute in each orchard nook,
I — see the blue of the summer skies
And the dappled wings of the butterflies,
The silken poppies, the trim rose walks,
And the lilies a-nod on their slender stalks.
Once more the sweets of their breath I drain,
And a calm steals over my weary brain.

And grandmother comes to our resting place
With a loving smile on her dear old face,
As she did of old when the light grew dim
And the west was with sunset rose a-brim,
To call us away to our early rest
In the brown old cottage we loved the best;
And there we sink to a blessed sleep,
While over the garden the shadows creep.

The Light in Mother's Eyes

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Dear beacon of my childhood's day,
The lodestar of my youth,
A mingled glow of tenderest love,
And firm unswerving truth,
I've wandered far o'er East and West,
'Neath many stranger skies,
But ne'er I've seen a fairer light
Than that in mother's eyes.

In childhood, when I crept to lay
My tired head on her knee,
How gently shone the mother-love
In those dear eyes on me,
And when in youth my eager feet
Roamed from her side afar,
Where'er I went, that light divine
Was aye my guiding star.

In hours when all life's sweetest buds
Burst into dewy bloom;
In hours when cherished hopes lay dead,
In sorrow and in gloom;
In evening's hush, or morning's glow,
Or in the solemn night,
Those mother eyes still shed on me
Their calm unchanging light.

Long since the patient hands I loved
Were folded in the clay,
And long have seemed the lonely years,
Since mother went away,

But still, I know she waits for me
In fields of Paradise,
And I shall reach them yet, led by
The light in mother's eyes.

An Old Face

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Calm as a reaped harvest height
Lying in the dim moonlight,
Yet with wrinkles round the eyes,
Jolly, tolerant and wise;
Beauty gone but in its place
Such a savor, such a grace
Won from the fantastic strife
Of this odd business we call life.

Many a wild adventurous year
Wrote its splendid record here;
Stars of many an old romance
Shine in that ironic glance;
Many a hideous vital day
Came and smote and passed away;
Now this face is ripe and glad,
Patient, sane — a little sad.

Friend to life yet with no fear
Of the darkness drawing near;
These so gallant eyes must see
Dawnlight of eternity,
See the Secret Vision still
High on some supernal hill;
'Tis a daring hope I hold —
To look like this when I am old.

At the Dance

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Rhythmic beating of dainty feet,
Faces outvying the costly blooms,
Perfumes subtle, and strange and sweet;
Music pulsing through brilliant rooms,
Sheen of satin, and foam of lace,
Jewels a-glitter on arms of snow;
Girlish joy on each fair young face,
Voices a-quiver and eyes aglow.

Tonight, with the fairest girl I dance,
Rumor has coupled our names, they say,
Eyes down-drooping beneath my glance;
If I speak will she answer “Nay”?
Now in the waltz we smoothly whirl;
Never was step than hers more light,
Why should the thought of another girl
Come from a dance of the past tonight?

A harvest home of my boyhood’s day,
Little like this yet the fiddle’s strain
Was witching — Old Amby knew how to play,
To thrill with passion or stab with pain,
I danced with the belle; her eyes dropped down
Rumor had coupled our names, you see, —
Shy and sweet in her muslin gown;
Fair and true as a girl need be.

Not a little like this one here —
Hair very much the same bright hue —
Not so tall — pink of cheek as clear —
Eyes, perchance, of a darker blue.

How we danced, with youth's own zest,
Till the stars paled in the eastern sky,
And we two, with our love confessed,
Walked home together, she and I.

Pardon, fair partner, of waltz and whirl,
My errant dreams of a love untrue,
Was it treason to think of that other girl
When my thoughts should only have been of you?
Come, I promise to dream no more,
Look not up with reproachful glance,
Lightly drift we across the floor.
I am yours, tonight at the dance.

Comparisons

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Far in the gracious western sky
Above the restless harbor bar,
A beacon on the coast of night,
Shines out a calm, white evening star;
But your deep eyes, my 'longshore lass,
Are brighter, clearer far.

The glory of the sunset past
Still rests upon the water there;
But all its splendor cannot match
The wind blown brightness of your hair;
Not any sea maid's floating locks
Of gold are half as fair.

The waves are whispering to the sands
With murmurs as of elfin glee;
But your low laughter, 'longshore lass,
Is like a sea harp's melody,
And the vibrant tones of your tender voice
Are sweeter far to me!

If Love Should Come

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If love should come,
I wonder if my restless troubled heart,
Unkind, would bid its visitor depart,
With chill averted look and pulse unthrilled,
Because its sanctum was already filled
By cold ambition — would it still be dumb
If love should come?

If love should come,
Would all his pleading fall upon my ear
Unrecked of, as by one who will not hear?
Would my lips say, “I do not know thy name;
I — seek the far cold heights where dwelleth fame.
In all my life for thee there is no room.”
If love should come?

If love should come,
Against him would I dare to bar the door,
And, unregretful, bid him come no more?
Would stern ambition whisper to my heart,
“Love is a weakness — bid him hence depart,
For he and I can have no common home,”
If love should come?

If love should come,
And I should shut him out and turn away,
Would what contents me now content me aye?
Would all success the lonely years might bring
Suffice to recompense for that one thing?
Ah, *could* my heart be silent, my lips dumb,
If love should come?

The Bride Dreams

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I

Love, is it dawn that creeps in so gray,
Like the timid ghost,
All shrinking and pale, of the sweet dead night
Lived and enjoyed to the uttermost
Of its swift delight?
Love, hold me close, for I am a-cold
With the grave's own chill,
And my cheek must yet have the smear of the mould —
I have dreamed a dream as here I lay
Next to your heart — in my dream I died
And was buried deep, deep in the yard beside
The old church on the hill.
(Oh, the dream was bitter!)

II

By my gravestone a rose was blowing red,
Red as my love,
The world was full of the laughter of spring —
I heard it down there in my clammy bed —
The little birds sang in the trees above,
The wind was glad with the clouds that fled
All white and pearly across the sky,
And the pretty shadows went winking by
Like tricky madcap thoughts a-wing.
You had buried me in my wedding gown
Of silk and lace —
My hair curled blackly my neck adown,
But my lips, I knew, were white in my face,

And the flower I held in my stiff hand yet
Was slimy and wet.
(Keep me from death, oh, my lover!)

III

Still, though the clay was heaped over me,
I could see — I could see
The folk going by to the old church door;
Wives and mothers and maids went by
All fine and silken, rosy and sweet;
Some came with a tear their graves to greet,
But to mine only old mad Margaret came,
And she laughed to herself as she read my name
With an eerie laughter, evil and sly,
That pierced like a dart to my cold heart's core.

I saw the old maid go bitterly in
Who had known no love —
Two brothers who hated each other well —
Miser Jock with his yellow skin —
A girl with the innocent eyes of a dove —
A young wife with a bonny child —
And Lawrence, the man who never smiled
With his lips, but always mocked with his eyes —
O — love, the grave makes far too wise,
(I knew why he mocked!)

IV

Then I felt a thrill the dank earth through
And I knew — Oh, I knew
That it came from your step on our path from the dale;
Almost my heart began to beat!
Proud of her golden ring, at your side —
That slim white girl who lives at the mill,

Who has loved you always and loves you still,
With her hair the color of harvest wheat
And her lips as red as mine were pale.
How I hated her, so tall and fair
And shining of hair —
Love, I am so little and dark!
My heart, that had once soared up like a lark
At your glance, was as a stone in my breast;
Never once did you look my way,
Only at *her* you looked and kissed
With your eyes her eyes of amethyst —
My eyes were sunk in cruel decay
And the worms crawled in the silk of my vest —
(Keep me from death, Oh, my lover!)

V

Love, hold me close for I am a-cold!
It was only a dream — as a dream it fled,
Kiss me warm from its lingering chill,
Bum from my face the taint of the dead,
Kiss my hair that is black not gold —
Am I not sweet as the girl at the mill?
(Oh, the dream was bitter!)

The Parting Soul

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Open the casement and set wide the door
For one outgoing
Into the night that slips along the shore
Like a dark river flowing;
The rhythmic anguish of our sad hearts' beating
Must hinder not a soul that would be fleeting.

Hark, how the voices of the ghostly wind
Cry for her coming!
What wild adventurous playmates will she find
When she goes roaming
Over the starry moor and misty hollow?
Loosen the clasp and set her free to follow.

Open the casement and set wide the door —
The call is clearer!
Than we whom she has loved so well before
There is a dearer —
When her fond lover death for her is sighing
We must not hold her with our tears from dying.

I Asked of God

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Humbly I asked of God to give me joy,
To crown my life with blossoms of delight;
I pled for happiness without alloy,
Desiring that my pathway should be bright;
Prayerful I sought these blessings to attain, —
And now I thank him that he gave me pain.

I asked of God that he should give success
To the high task I sought for him to do;
I asked that all the hindrances grow less,
And that my hours of weakness might be few;
I asked that far and lofty heights be scaled, —
And now I meekly thank him that I failed.

For with the pain and sorrow came to me
A dower of tenderness in act and thought;
And with the failure came a sympathy,
An insight that success had never bought.
Father, I had been foolish and unblest
If thou had granted me my blind request!

A Thanksgiving

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Father, I thank Thee that I saw tonight
The moonrise on the sea;
I thank Thee for the blossoms frosty-white
Outflowering on the lea;
I thank Thee for the silence consecrate
In vast cathedral woods;
I thank Thee for the winds that soon and late
Pipe in far solitudes.

I thank Thee for a word that came to me
A friend's heart to express;
I thank Thee for an old grief grown to be
A thing of helpfulness;
I thank Thee for the task that I must do
Lacking in lavish ease,
For a dear hope, for an ideal true —
Father, all thanks for these!

We Have Seen His Star

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Across the yellow, pathless desert sands,
And over mountains in the East afar,
We come with royal tribute in our hands,
For we have seen his star;
We seek the Newborn, we the ancient kings,
Hoary in lore of Persian and Chaldee,
Because immortal life, rich, full and free,
This Baby with Him brings.

Old, very old, are we, and we have sought
The Greater Knowledge, lo! these many years;
Yearned for the truth and ever found it not,
For all our toil and tears.
But He is truth incarnate; at His feet
When we shall kneel in homage reverently,
The wisdom we have quested for shall be
Ours grandly and complete.

Long have we blindly groped our stumbling road,
Seeking the light, though wandering oft astray,
But now the path shall be made plain to God —
He comes to show the way;
Long hath our journey been from lands afar,
Costly and splendid are the gifts we bring,
Tell us, we pray thee now, where lies the King,
For we have seen His star.

Could We but Know

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Could we but know how often worn and weary
Are those we meet;
Would we condemn because they call life bitter,
Which we think sweet?
Would not our thought and judgment be more tender
To friend and foe,
Our greeting warmed with more of love's own kindness,
Could we but know?

Could we but know how pain may lurk'neath laughter
Too keen to bear —
And how the hearts we deem so hard and reckless
Are dark with care,
Would not our idle tongues be slow to utter
Our words of blame?
Would we not call what we had reckoned folly
Some gentler name?

Would we not think'twere wise to be forgiving
Of doubtful mood,
Of all mistakes and seeming slights and errors
Not understood?
Would not our feet be swifter in the going
Help to bestow?
Our own lives better, nobler for the knowing,
Could we but know?

I Wish You

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Friend o' mine, in the year oncoming
I wish you a little time for play,
And an hour to dream in the eerie gloaming
After the clamorous day.
(And the moon like a pearl from an Indian shore
To hang for a lantern above your door.)

A little house with friendly rafters,
And some one in it to need you there,
Wine of romance and wholesome laughs
With a comrade or two to share.
(And some secret spot of your very own
Whenever you want to cry alone.)

I wish you a garden on fire with roses,
Columbines planted for your delight,
Scent of mint in its shadowy closes,
Clean, gay winds at night.
(Some nights for sleeping and some to ride
With the broomstick witches far and wide.)

A goodly crop of figs to gather,
With a thistle or two to prick and sting;
Since a harvesting too harmless is rather
An unadventurous thing.
(And now and then, spite of reason or rule,
The chance to be a bit of a fool.)

I wish you a thirst that can never be sated
For all the loveliness earth can yield,
Slim, cool birches whitely mated,

Dawn on an April field.
(And never too big a bill to pay
When the Fiddler finds he must up and away.)

The Land of Some Day

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Across the river of By-and-By,
That is bridged by Dreams, they say,
Is a wonderful, beautiful, mystic land
And this realm is named Some Day.

And everything fair in that country is,
And pleasant to ear and eye.
And it doesn't really seem hard to cross
The river of By-and-By.

The fame that we mean to win is there,
The success for which we yearn,
There the friends await us, we hope to make,
And the fortunes we hope to earn.

The books we'll write or the songs we'll sing,
Or the power we intend to sway;
All the wonderful things that we mean to do
Are found in this fair Some Day.

And everyone sometimes intends to reach
That land that looks so near,
But somehow it seems to drift farther off
With every succeeding year.

Some never contrive to make a start,
In spite of all they've planned;
And others have striven but never reached
That misty alluring strand.

Some fell through Dreams into By-and-By,

And others lost their way
And wandered many a weary step,
But never reached Some Day.

Oh, then beware of that treacherous shore,
Though it seems so fair to view,
For I've heard it whispered that pleasant land
Is but a mirage untrue.

And that no matter how long we search,
It will seem just as far away,
For nobody ever yet was known
Who really reached Some Day.

The Only Way

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To chisel a statue unerringly
From the formless marble to symmetry,
How firm must the hand of the sculptor be!
Deep in his brain must he shape the thought
Ere in loveliness of stone it be wrought,
Hard must he toil at his great design,
Ere the work be perfect in curve and line.

To paint a picture that holds in fee
The treasure of beauty's alchemy,
How skilful the hand of the artist must be!
Ere the vast conception that burst to bloom
In his soul on the canvas fair finds room,
Many and long are the patient days
He must give to his task to win its praise.

To shape a life into harmony
With God's plans for it, gracious and free,
How true must the hand of the workman be!
Not in a day may the task be done,
Not with ease may success be won.
Hard must we work and aspire and pray —
Earnest toil is the only way!

The Revelation

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Once to my side a veiled figure came
To bear me company.
Deeming that Sorrow was her bitter name,
I strove from her to flee.
She clasped my hand in hers and led me on
Beneath a clouded sky;
Till many dour and dreary days had gone,
Right sullenly went I.

But as time passed I grew to love my guide,
No more escape I sought;
At last contented by her gentle side
To learn the lessons taught.
Then lifted she her veil and showed to me
Her calm eternal youth.
“Lo! Mortal, who has known my ministry,
Behold me — I am Truth.”

A Smile

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What is a smile? A sudden gleam
Of sunshine welling in the eyes,
That quickly comes and quickly flies,
The outlet of some radiant dream?
Well, then a smile's a blithesome thing
Whose pure delight and painless birth
Might bear to every soul on earth
The gladness of its hidden spring.

What is a smile? A glint of scorn
At some poor soul's mistake or fear,
The keen refinement of a sneer
From secret hate or malice born?
Nay, then a smile's a hateful thing
And bears a sharp unpitying dart
To many a wearied aching heart,
To linger there and wound and sting.

What is a smile? The gentle glow
Upon the edges of a tear,
To chastened grief and sorrow near,
Yet with a blessing to bestow?
Ah, then a smile's a holy thing
From a tired spirit's victory sent
To whisper hope and courage blent
To all the weak and suffering.

What is a smile? A treacherous screen
To lure unwary, heedless feet,
And mask the workings of deceit
Behind its beauty all unseen?

Nay, then a smile's a loathsome thing
That carries in its gleam a blight
To murder joy and kill delight,
And over life a shadow fling.

What is a smile? A shy glad burst
Of love in true and timid eyes,
Bewildered with the sweet surprise
Of tenderness in secret nurst?
Ah, then a smile's a glorious thing,
Love's own inspired oracle
To say what words can never tell,
And thrill each heart's responsive string.

Success

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Come, drain the cup held to our lips at last,
Though it may yield the briny taste of tears,
For this we have forgone our joy of youth,
For this we have lived bitter, patient years...
What tang does brew of fig and thistle keep?
Let us drink deep!

Oh, shudder not... the goblet is of gold!
For this we bent our knee at a grim shrine
While others danced to kind and merry gods,
For this we put aside life's choicest wine...
To slake our still unsated thirst lift up
This sacramental cup.

Surely'twill pay for all that we have missed...
Laughter unlaughed, sweet hours of love and sleep,
Hungers unsatisfied and barren dreams...
How the sly years are mocking us! Drink deep
And vaunt... for who can guess it is a lie?...
The price was not too high.

Was it for such a devil's jorum we
Bartered our precious things and turned from ease,
Winning by dint of many a gallant day
Splendid defeats and abject victories?
But see you now how bright the diamonds wink?
Be brave... once more... and drink!

The Test

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All the great house sat hushed and listening
There'neath the music's spell,
Laughter and tears in bright eyes were glistening
When the painted curtain fell;
Thunderous applause uprose to greet,
I was their darling then.
Incense and homage at my feet
They poured, those women and men!

Think you then that my heart was flattered,
Dream I was satisfied?
Praise or censure, it nothing mattered
When I had glanced aside;
There in the shadows across my right
Sat the Artist, old and grey,
Never a motion made he that night
To approve or applaud my play!

Silent he sat when the house was cheering
— Bitter that hour to me!
What cared I for the fickle veering
Of fancy's wind? It was he,
He, the master, I strove to please.
Naught had my hope availed,
That grim old veteran of victories
Was silent... I had failed.

The Two Guests

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Came on a time two guests to me
Named of the angels Joy and Sorrow
Said, "We seek to sojourn with thee,
One to-day and one tomorrow.
Wisdom both in our hands we hold
That cannot be bought by toil or gold.
Choose then which shall be first to stay,"
"Joy," I cried, "be my guest to-day."

Joy came in and abode with me,
Taught me much of the hearts around me,
The meaning of all glad things that be,
Left me wiser than she had found me,
Passed from my door at set of sun,
Saying, "With thee my work is done."
Thought I, grieving to lose my guest,
Joy of all teachers is wisest and best.

Then took Sorrow my empty heart,
Filled it up with her brewage bitter,
Deep I drank to my pain and smart,
Face to face with that gloomy sitter
Lo! From my eyes there fell away
Mists that had dimmed them till that day.
Rightly read I then human strife,
Saw far down to the deeps of life.

Saw, and knew that Joy had not
To me such clearness of vision given,
For the barriers between thought and thought
By Sorrow's hand might alone be riven.

Costly the price that my soul must pay
But the boon so purchased was mine for aye!
Thought I, loving at last my guest,
“Sorrow of teachers is wisest and best.”

Which Has More Patience — Man or Woman?

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As my letter must be brief,
I'll at once state my belief,
And this it is — that, since the world began,
And Adam first did say,
“‘Twas Eve led me astray,”
A woman hath more patience than a man.

If a man's obliged to wait
For some one who's rather late,
No mortal ever got in such a stew,
And if something can't be found
That he's sure should be around,
The listening air sometimes grows fairly blue.

Just watch a man who tries
To soothe a baby's cries,
Or put a stove pipe up in weather cold,
Into what a state he'll get;
How he'll fuss and fume and fret
And stamp and bluster round and storm and scold!

Some point to Job with pride,
As an argument for their side!
Why, it was so rare a patient man to see,
That when one was really found,
His discoverers were bound
To preserve for him a place in history!

And while I admit it's true

That man has some patience too,
And that woman isn't always sweetly calm,
Still I think all must agree
On this central fact — that she
For general all-round patience bears the palm.

All a Board for Dreamland

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The stars are a-wink in the drowsy skies.
The shadows are softly creeping down
Alas and alack for the sleepy eyes!
It's time for the ferry to Dreamland Town.

Here are the passengers one and all
The fare is a kiss and away we go
Never an accident may befall
For mother is captain and crew you know.

Away and away from the daytime shore
To a lullaby song we are drifting down
With a sail of moonshine and silver oar
In a poppy shallop to Dreamland Town.

Past the realms of elf and fay
And the caves of giants on either hand
Never a moment may we stay
In even the wonderful Brownie Land.

Captain, sing but a minute more
For the eyes of blue and the eyes of brown
Then the fare is paid and the trip is o'er
And here we are safely in Dreamland Town.

The Grumble Family

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There's a family nobody likes to meet,
They live, it is said, on Complaining Street,
In the city of Never-are-Satisfied,
The river of Discontent beside.
They growl at that and they growl at this.
Whatever comes there is something amiss:
And whether their station be high or humble
They all are known by the name of Grumble.

The weather is always too hot or cold,
Summer and winter alike they scold;
Nothing goes right with the folks you meet
Down on that gloomy Complaining Street.
They growl at the rain and they growl at the sun,
In fact their growling is never done.
And if everything pleased them, there isn't a doubt
They'd growl that they'd nothing to grumble about.

But the queerest thing is that not one of the same
Can be brought to acknowledge his family name,
For never a Grumbler will own that he
Is connected with it at all, you see.
And the worst thing is that if any one stays
Among them too long he will learn their ways,
And before he dreams of the terrible jumble
He's adopted into the family of Grumble.
So it were wisest to keep our feet
From wandering into Complaining Street;
And never to growl whatever we do
Lest we be mistaken for Grumblers too.
Let us learn to walk with a smile and song,

No matter if things do sometimes go wrong,
And then, be our station high or humble,
We'll never belong to the family of Grumble.

In Twilight Land

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In twilight land there are beautiful things —
The soft low songs that a mother sings,
Goodnight kisses so fond and sweet,
Patters and twinkles of dimpled feet,
And the brightness of dreams that come sliding down
On a starry stairway from Slumbertown.

In twilight land where the shadows creep
Dear little eyes fall fast asleep,
Birds and blossoms have gone to rest
And babies are cuddled to mother's breast,
And always are tenderly whispered there
The sacred words of the children's prayer.

The Quest of Lazy-Lad

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Have you heard the tale of Lazy-Lad
Who dearly loved to shirk,
For he “hated” his lessons and “hated” his tasks,
And he “hated” to have to work?
So he sailed away on a summer day
Over the ocean blue;
Said Lazy-Lad, “I will seek till I find
The Land of Nothing-to-do.

For that is a jolly land I know,
With never a lesson to learn,
And never an errand to bother a fellow
Till he doesn’t know where to turn.
And I’m told the folks in that splendid place
May frolic the whole year through,
So everybody good-by — I’m off
For the Land of Nothing-to-do!”

So Lazy-Lad he sailed to the west
And then to the east sailed he,
And he sailed north and he sailed south
Over many a league of sea,
And many a country fair and bright
And busy came into view;
But never, alas, could he find the coast
Of the Land of Nothing-to-do.

Then Lazy-Lad sailed back again,
And a wiser lad was he,
For he said, “I’ve wandered to every land
That is in the geography,

And in each and all I've found that folks
Are busy the whole year through,
And everybody in every place
Seemed to have something to do.

So it must be the best way after all
And I mean to stay on shore
And learn my lessons and do my tasks
And be Lazy-Lad no more.
The busiest folks are the happiest,
And what mother said was true,
For I've found out there is no such place
As the Land of Nothing-to-do."

Up in the Poplars

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Up in the poplars all together
Five of us swung in the blithesome weather,
Long ago in the garden old,
When the sunshine fell in showers of gold
Through a leafy riot of dancing shadows.
And over and up from the clover meadows
Winds blew dreamily, odor-freighted,
From hills that ever in calmness waited.
There in the poplars we were sitting,
Golden visions around us flitting.
Three of us lads with the fire of youth,
And two were girls with eyes of truth.
All of us dreamers all together,
There in the mellow summer weather.

Nell, with her dark eyes' flashing splendor,
Lil, with her sweet voice, low and tender,
Dick and Tom, with their laughter gay —
All of us light at heart that day.
There we talked of the years oncoming,
Heart and fancy alike went roaming,
Nell was a singer laurel-crowned,
Known and praised all the world around;
Lil, a nurse on the field of battle,
Angel-faced'mid the roar and rattle;

Dick was a sailor to far-off seas
And islands as fair as Hesperides.
Tom was an artist with brush inspired,
I was a writer with pen untired —
All of us famous there together

Up in the poplars in summer weather.
Up in the poplars we swung and chattered —
What were our dreamings little mattered.
Wealth and fame we were sure of winning,
There in the joyance of life's beginning —
Never a thought of the world's sure sorrow,
Never a fear of the dim tomorrow.
Alas, for the dreams we dreamed together
There in the heartsome summer weather!

Dark-eyed Nellie is soundly sleeping
Where far-off mountains their watch are keeping.
Lil in a humble home is queen.
Tom is a merchant, hard and keen.
And Dick, the careless and debonair,
Is a gouty, unhappy millionaire,
While I am a penniless, unknown rover
Hither and thither, the wide world over.
Alas for the dreams we dreamed together
Up in the poplars in summer weather.

What Children Know

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Many things the children know —
Where the ripest berries grow,
Where the first pale violets peep
Shyly from their winter's sleep,
And how many blue eggs rest
In the robin's woven nest.

Children know where echoes hide
Over on the brown hillside,
How to tell a fortune bright
By the daisy petals white,
How the honey you may sup
From the meadow clover's cup.

Something else the children know —
Oh, they learned it long ago!
Mother's shoulder is the best
Place in all the world to rest.
And the sweetest dreams belong
To a mother's twilight song!

The New Year's Book

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The book of the New Year lies open to you,
Dear lassies and lads, to be all written through.
Its pages have never a spot or a stain:
See to it that unspoiled and unmarred they remain,
Taking all care,
With effort and prayer,
To make of this volume a thing pure and fair.

Write in it no record of wrong and of ill
But kindness and courage and deeds of good will.
Let nothing of evil creep stealthily in
To darken the pages with shadows of sin,
But write every day,
As the year goes its way,
Shining thoughts of high worth that will sparkle for aye.

Put in it the splendor and hope of your youth,
Lines of honor and glory and beauty and truth,
Temptations o'er-mastered and weakness made strong,
The sunshine of smiles and the blessing of song,
Striving always that not
A mistake or a blot
This beautiful book of the year may bespot.

For this record once written is written for aye,
No time can erase, no repentance gainsay,
With its evil or good, with its joy and its tears,
It is signed and sealed fast by the angel of years.
Then let us take heed,
Since God hath decreed
In eternity's halls what we've written we'll read.

Farewell

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Sunset: and all the distant hills are shrouded
In dusky golden light!
Day burns herself to death in funeral splendor
Before the birth of night.

I stand beside the softly flowing river
Its deeps another sky,
Far up the winding curves are lost in glory
Far down the shadows lie.

Across the prairie misty glooms are creeping
And clustering by the stream;
The evening breezes rustle mid the branches
And all things lonely seem.

Half-sad, I gaze upon the noble river
In its remorseless flow;
Onward and onward ever — all regardless
Of human joy or woe.

A dewy hush; I hear the softened chiming
Of some faint, far-off bell;
And here beneath the golden skies of sunset,
I come to say — farewell!

Proud river, rolling past the floods of ages;
Fair isles with beauty crowned!
Dark forests tossing weirdly 'gainst the golden
Dim misty hills beyond.

'Tis time to bid farewell to these and hasten

To a far distant land,
Back where the ocean moans in ceaseless sorrow
On the Atlantic's strand.

Farewell! blue tide of mighty waters
A living friend you seem;
How oft in rapture gazing on your beauty,
I've wandered by your stream.

Your spirit speaks to mine in nature's music
Beneath the darkening light;
'Tis with a saddened heart — that now I bid thee
A long farewell tonight.

Farewell, ye prairies, bright in sunlit beauty
Where buds of sweetness bloom,
Where breezes float across the dimpled lakelets
In breaths of rich perfume.

Bright pleasant memories round your hillsides cluster
And through the coming years
Your fairy slopes my thoughts will oft revisit
Farewell, with many tears.

Farewell dark forests with your lonely vistas,
Your secrets of the past,
The mystic whisper of your sighing branches
Your purple shadows cast!

Your myriad voices answer through the stillness
In one long shivering sigh:
Farewell, farewell, they seem to whisper softly
And then in silence die.

Farewell, dear friends, your kindness I will cherish
Among all memories sweet

Long years may pass ere once again I'll greet you,
Yet oft in thought we'll meet.

Farewell, Prince Albert, pride of western prairies!
Bright may thy future be;
Rise to a noble and a wealthy city,
Farewell, farewell to thee.

Fainter and fainter grow the distant outlines
And phantom shadows glide
Where'neath the thickets of o'erhanging branches
Plashes the rippling tide.

In the far blue some early stars are shining,
The west has lost its light
All sounds are mingled in one gentle murmur
Beneath the touch of night.

I turn to go "my eyes with tears are misty."
Still rings that distant bell
Hills, prairies, forests, river, all — I bid you
One last, one long farewell.

On Cape Le Force

(A legend of the early days of Prince Edward Island)

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One evening, when the sun was low,
I stood upon the wave-kissed strand,
And watched the white-sailed boats glide by,
Their sails by evening breezes fanned.

In dimpling azure lay the sea,
The rippling wavelets tinged with gold,
While to the rosy-clouded west
A sparkling path of glory rolled.

I climbed the rocky cliffs and gained
A rugged cape, around whose sides
The wavelets crept with moaning sigh,
Or surges dashed their mighty tides.

Behind the lovely village lay
The fertile fields of waving green,
Fair sloping hills and quiet dales,
With spruce and maple groves between.

Before me slept that peerless sea,
Its beauty tranquil and serene:
Search all our lovely Island o'er
Thou wilt not find a fairer scene.

I stood upon that lovely cliff
And called to mind the legend dread
Which made it an accursed spot —
One shunned by superstitious tread.

'Twas years ago — ere yet the flag
Of Britain claimed our loyalty,
And fair Prince Edward Island owned
Allegiance to the fleur-de-lis.
When war's dark cloud hung threatening low
Above our fair Canadian land,
And echoes of the troubled strife
Reached e'en our Island's quiet strand;

And o'er our blue Saint Lawrence Gulf
Sailed many a plundering privateer,
Defying law and right and force
In their piratical career.

But, when the strife of war had passed
And gentle Peace resumed her reign,
They met the fate they well deserved —
Captured or wrecked upon the main.

And one — a treasure-laden ship —
Was stranded here one autumn day,
And off this headland, lone and bleak,
With all her precious freight she lay;

And, loth to lose his ill-won wealth,
The captain planned how he might save
The treasure that his vessel held
From English foes or ocean wave.

"The shore," he said, "is bleak and wild,
The rocks no human footsteps bear;
And death will seal the lips of those
Who know I hide the treasure there."

So all that sunny autumn day,
The captain and his pirate band

Bore untold wealth from ship to shore
And hid it on the rocky strand.

But, when the western sky had pealed
And darkness veiled the forests wide,
They tented on the lonely cape
To wait the dawn of morning tide.

Then rose the bursts of laughter wild,
Mingled with curses deep and strong,
The taunting sneer, the fierce reply,
The vulgar joke, and drunken song.

Wild was the scene; but when the moon
Rose slowly up the eastern blue,
Tipping the dark fir trees with light,
Unconscious lay the drunken crew.

And all were wrapped in heavy sleep
Save two — the captain and the mate —
Who sat together in a tent,
Their faces drawn with rage and hate.

And, as they sat, above them poised
The friends of hatred and despair,
Of malice, envy, murder, scorn,
Revenge and avarice — all were there.

There, to divide their ill-won gains
And plan the murder of the crew,
Had met those different types of crime,
And quarrelled — as all such will do.

Facing each other, there they sat —
The captain, tall and dark and stem,
With sneering lip and glittering eye,

Where all dark passions seemed to burn.

The mate, with vicious brutal face,
Growled, like some snarling beast at bay
Defiant threats and savage oaths
Of vengeance on the coming day.

“Well, be it so,” the captain cried,
“Tomorrow, when the sun shall rise,
Our pistols will decide our claims
And one shall lose or win the prize.

Good night, my friend, and pleasant dreams,
I leave you now till dawn of day.”
He bowed with air of mocking scorn
And sought the moonlight’s silver ray.

The night was calm; all sounds were hushed,
Save for some lonely night-bird’s cry,
Or wavelets splashing on the shore,
Or cool night-breezes rustling by.

All night, upon the sullen verge,
With restless tread the captain walked,
While o’er the sea the moonbeams played
And shadows past the headland stalked.

Did some presentiment of ill,
Upon the morrow, cross his brain?
Felt he repentance for the past?
Or schemed he but fresh crimes again?

At length, when morning flushed the east,
The rivals met. The half-drunk crew
Stood huddled in a powerless group,
Not knowing what to say or do.

A look of craven fear was stamped
Upon the mate's low, brutal face,
Mingled with sinister cunning, as
Before the tent he took his place.

The captain, calm, composed and firm,
Betrayed no trace of doubt or fear;
His face still wore its cool contempt,
His lips, their cold sardonic sneer.

"Twelve paces off, I'll stand," he said,
And, with his pistol in his hand,
He lightly turned upon his heel
And calmly walked toward his stand.

Sudden the mate his pistol raised —
What need is there the rest to tell?
A sharp report and, in his blood,
Shot through the heart, the captain fell.

Then 'ere the fear-struck crew could stir,
Flinging his weapon from his hand,
The guilty wretch sprang down the cliff
And fled along the rocky strand.

No hand was raised to stay his flight;
Few knew the crime, nor cared who did,
And 'ere the sun had left the wave,
The murderer was in safety hid.

And ne'er was he to justice brought,
For, in those days of blood and strife,
Murder was deemed a light offence
And lightly held was one man's life.

And, on this lonely wind-swept cape
Right where the murdered captain fell,
A hasty grave the sailors made,
And winds and surges rang his knell.

Forgotten in his lonely grave
He slept, while years unnumbered fled,
And dark traditions of the spot
Enwrapped it with unfading dread.

Long since, all vestige of the grave
Has vanished — but the legend lives,
And to this headland's rocky steeps
A weird and awful interest gives.

And, to this day, this lonely cape,
Which stems the billows stormy course,
Still bears the name of him who fell
Upon its summit — Cape Le Force.

June!

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“Wake up,” the robins warble,
“The summer time” is here,
The month of blushing roses,
The darling of the year.

Wake up, you lazy dreamers!
The summer’s waiting you,
The days are long and golden;
The skies are tender blue.

The earth is full of gladness,
Of light and song and bloom,
Join in the summer brightness,
Nor ever think of gloom.

Make haste, June-days to welcome,
For summertime will fleet
As swift as flying shadows
Across the ripened wheat.

And, when the autumn breezes
Sigh through September’s leaves,
And all the sloping hillsides
Wave rows to tasselled sheaves.

The birds that follow summer
Will seek a southern sky,
The sweetness of her blossoms
Will, all forgotten, die.

And summer to her lover

Will yield her weary charms,
Sink peacefully to slumber,
And die in autumn's arms.

Come, then, ye lazy dreamers,
Come forth to light and love,
The earth is wreathed with garlands,
The skies are blue above.

The birds their love songs carol
'Mid golden summer blooms;
The breezes whisper softly
In twilight's opal glooms;

All glad things bid you welcome
While last the summer hours.
Who wishes more than June-time,
With song and light and flowers.

I Feel (Vers Libre)

I — feel
Very much
Like taking
Its unholy perpetrators
By the hair
Of their heads
(If they have any hair)
And dragging them around
A few times,
And then cutting them
Into small, irregular pieces
And burying them
In the depths of the blue sea.
They are without form
And void,/ Or at least
The stuff they/ produce
Is./ They are too lazy

To hunt up rhymes;
And that
Is all
That is the matter with them.

The Words I Did Not Say

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Many a word my tongue has uttered
Has brought me sorrow at eventide,
And I have grieved with a grieving bitter
Over speech of anger and scorn and pride,
But never a word in my heart remembered
As I sit with myself at the close of day,
Has pierced with repentance more unavailing
Than have the words I did not say.

The word of cheer that I might have whispered
To a heart that was breaking with weight of woe,
The word of hope that I might have given
To one whose courage was ebbing low,
The word of warning I should have spoken
In the ear of one who walked astray.
Oh, how they come with a sad rebuking
Those helpful words that I did not say;

So many and sweet: If I had but said them
How glad my heart then would have been;
What a dew of blessing would fall upon it
As the day's remembrances gather in;
But I said them not and the chance forever
Is gone with the moments of yesterday,
And I sit alone with a spirit burdened
By all the words that I did not say.

The morrow will come with its new beginning,
Glad and grand, through the morning's gates —
Shall I not then with this thought beside me
Go bravely forth to the work that waits?

Giving a message of cheer and kindness
To all I meet on the world's highway,
So that I never will grieve at twilight
Over the words that I did not say.

Collected Letters

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Cavendish, P.E.I.,
Tuesday,
March 7, 1905.

My dear Mr. Weber:—

I picked up a paper today and read therein that sowing had begun in Alberta! Then I looked out of the window and saw drifts 20 ft. high!!!

We have had a perfectly awful winter here. The like has never been known even by that mythical personage the oldest inhabitant. We thought last winter terrible but it was not so bad as this. We have had nothing but storm after storm, train blockages, and irregular mails. In short, our accumulation of ills reminds me of the story about an old Scotch settler who came home one night to find his house burned down and his wife and children murdered by Indians. He sat down amid the ashes of his home and said, “Well, this is perfectly ridiculous!”

Surely, however, the worst is over now. They used to teach us in school that March is a spring month!

I went away from home for a visit early in February, just after your letter came and did not get back until a week ago. I’ve been trying to “catch up” ever since.

I, too, received a postal from Miriam at Xmas, saying that she would write me “*immediately* after the New Year.” However, no letter has yet come to hand; her definition of “immediately” seems elastic. I envy her her Florida winter when I grow restless with my prison of drifts.

My principal amusement these days is prowling around up to my ears in snow with my camera. I have secured a lot of snow scenes, some of the big drifts, especially those in the woods are curious and beautiful in the extreme.

Oh, why don’t you make “copy” of your adventures while looking for the mine? I’m sure there is material for a whole “shilling shocking” in that deserted shack with the fur coat! So you eat “Grape Nuts”? So do I and have ’em every morning for breakfast! Another taste in common!!

Am sure you must have felt badly over the loss of your mare. I can fully understand how anyone can grow strongly attached to a pet. I love horses, dogs and cats. As I'm situated now I can only keep a cat but I'd love to have *lots* of them all. The first *real* sorrow that ever came into my life was connected with the death of a pet. I was nine years old. I had a little grey kitten, a pretty playful little creature which I loved with the passionate intensity of a lonely child possessing no other companionship. My kitten died one day of poison. I shall *never* forget the agony I endured. I really almost went mad. I shrieked, writhed, wept, until the good people of the household verily believed me possessed. They could do nothing with me. It was my baptism of sorrow and I was submerged beneath those waters of Marah. I have never laughed, in maturer days, over that tragic bereavement. It was too real—and symbolical. I had learned what pain was—a lesson we can never forget. It was the Alpha of life's suffering. Before that I had been a happy, unconscious little animal. From that time I began to have a soul!

You asked me in your letter a question rather hard to answer. It was "Where do you feel most yourself, in the woods or up in Charlottetown?"

Well, I feel most like myself in both places—if you understand the contradiction. There are two distinct sides to my nature. When I go to the woods the dreamy, solitary side comes uppermost and I love the woods best. But when I mingle with other people quite another aspect rules me. I am very fond of society, sparkling conversation, the good *human* times of life. These tastes find indulgence in my city experiences and I feel just as much at home there as in the wilds. I can slip from one to the other as easily as I can slip from one garment into another.

But as to being only "*two* of me" as you ask—bless the man, there's a hundred of me. (Association of ideas! Have you ever read *Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde* by Stevenson. It is well worth reading and enforces a strong lesson. If it ever comes your way read it.) *Revenons aux moutons!* Some of the "me's" are good, some *not*. It's better than being just two or three, I think—more exciting, more interesting. There are some people who are only *one*. They must find life as insufferable a bore as other people find them.

By the way, have you ever read any scientific articles on the curious mental phenomena of “double personalities” or “double consciousness”? If you have, you will agree with me that they are very interesting and curious. But if you have not don’t ask me to explain about it for I could not do so. I mean, it would require more of a technical vocabulary than I have at command as well as a clearer grasp of the manifestations of this strange thing.

I’ve been re-reading *Trilby* today. It is a favourite of mine. Have you ever read it? If so please tell me what you think of it. Such a storm of controversy raged about it when it came out first, about seven years ago. I talked about it with two ministers in the same day. Both were men whose critical opinions were worthy of respect. One said he thought it one of the most charming little stories he had ever read, so touching and pathetic, and said he had given it to his daughter to read. The other condemned it utterly saying it was “the canonization of the scarlet letter.” For my own part I think it is a dear, delightful book, wherein some of my most beloved book-friends live. It ends up with some verses that I copied into my portfolio and read them every day. Here they are for you, if you don’t already know them.

“A little work—a little play
To keep us going—and so good day.

“A little warmth, a little light
Of love’s bestowing—and so good-night.

“A little fun to match the sorrow
Of each day’s growing and so good-morrow.

“A little trust that when we die
We reap our sowing and so good-bye.”

Don’t dare to say you don’t like them!!!

Tonight, coming home from a tramp over snowy hills I halted a moment to look over the orchard fence at my flower bed. Not that I could see much of it—it is heaped over with a snowdrift fifteen feet deep, gleaming in the twilight like a mausoleum of marble built over buried dreams. What are my tulips and daffodils and peonies doing down under it, I wonder—the dear things. My only consolation on some of those terribly stormy days this winter was to get out a flower catalogue and plan my next summer's garden!!

By the way, what do you think I got in the mail today, sent me by a friend in Scotland? No less than a sprig of mountain tansy picked on the grave of the celebrated "Black Dwarf." Wasn't I proud? A whole Scottish "loch" wouldn't have delighted me more.

I suppose you will wonder if I'm doing any writing at all just now. Oh yes, I peg away a couple hours every day, and have had the usual run of moderate successes. But I've made a discovery! Nothing less than a really truly Canadian affair that opens its eyes and says "papa" and "mamma."

In January I had a letter from the editor of the "Sunday School Publications," Confederation Life Bldg., Toronto, Can., saying that they published three papers for young people of varying ages and asking me for stories. I sent a short girls' story—about 2500 words—and got five dollars for it. They pay regular rates and are especially anxious for Canadian contributions. They publish sketches and essays also. Write them for samples of the papers and try your luck with them. They are very good papers, much the type of *Forward*. I really didn't think we had anything so up-to-date in Canada.

I got into another new mag, *The National* of Boston, lately, with a short story. It is to pay on publication. It is a good second-classer. Don't know what its rates are.

The Sunday School Times, your pet, sent me \$6 for a poem "The Choice" recently. Let me know if you see it when it comes out. If not I'll send you a copy.

The C.E. *World* also took a poem and sent \$4 for it. This is the first time I've got into it with poetry.

I made *nearly* \$600 last year—\$591.85 to be exact. Shan't be content till I reach the thousand mark though.

I got a *Lippincott* today—the March no. Don't know why they sent it. Thought at first it must be because my verses were in it but they weren't. Do you see it regularly? If so please keep a lookout for them as I want to know when they appear. I have just started this sheet to say bi-bi on, because I'm out of "nerve." So will just say it and stop.

Yours sincerely,
L. M. Montgomery.

P.S. I believe you asked me to go skating with you. Sorry, but I can't skate. Never had a chance to learn somehow. Ta-ta all the same.

L.M.M.

P.S. No. 2. I received the *Outlook* you sent and enjoyed it very much. Thanks! Do you want it back? If so, I'll return it. If you have the March *Lippincott* read "The Second Nocturne of St. Patrick" if you want a good laugh. I think I've discovered why the mag. was sent to me. There is a "Walnut" in it by a friend of mine—Lucy Lincoln Montgomery—and she probably sent it to me. Did I ever tell you about her?

L.M.M.

Cavendish, P.E.I.
Monday Evening,
May 8, 1905.

My dear Mr. W.:—

I've been painting and housecleaning all day and have expended so much grey matter in the process that I'm afraid I haven't very much left for a letter. Nevertheless, I'll "do my best" and, as used to be stated in the copybooks of childhood "angels can do no more." Isn't it rather nice to know that there is at least one particular in which we can all be angelic. By the way, what is your conception of an angel?

(Perhaps it is taking an unfair advantage of a fellow-creature to fire off such a question at you on the second page of a letter when in the nature of things you'd still be looking for introductory platitudes.)

I hope that some day the man or men who are responsible for *my* conception will be given over to my hands, if so be that they still live. I refer to the people who drew and published the pictures of angels which used to adorn the Sunday-school papers of my childhood. When I think of an angel I can't help seeing one of those pictures—a creature wearing a sort of nightgown with big goosy(?)—looking wings branching out from their shoulders and a mop of untidy hair streaming over their backs. I should like to think of angels as Marie Corelli does—creatures shaped of rainbow light, but I can't. Those impressions of susceptible childhood are too strong.

At the present moment I'd rather be a girl than an angel if angels can't have mayflowers. I'm surrounded with them—mayflowers, I mean. A vaseful on each side of me and a big jugful on the shelf over my head. Oh, they are divine! A lot of us went up to the barrens Saturday and picked great basketfuls. Today I read that Henry Ward Beecher said once "Flowers are the sweetest things God ever made and forgot to put souls into." But I don't believe He forgot! I believe they *have* souls. I've known roses that I expect to meet in heaven.

Oh yes, yes, spring *has* come. You can't imagine how glad I was to see it. We had such a *terrible* winter. It was like being born again to see the drifts go and the catkins bud on the willows. I know exactly what I shall feel like on the resurrection morning! And I'm gardening, too. Three weeks ago I went out amid slush and took the spruce boughs off my tulip and daffodil bed. I didn't expect any of them would be up so soon—but when I lifted the boughs there were the dear green spikes up two inches. I felt just like a prayer when I saw them! There are big buds on them now and they will be out in full bloom in a week. It's lovely to be out poking into the moist earth again. In regard to your thoughts on the ministry of pain; yes, I agree with you in regard to one kind of pain. There are two kinds, don't you think! The pain God sends to us and the pain we bring on ourselves; the former is the fire of heaven, the latter the flame of hell. God's pain is indeed one of his ministering spirits. Great mysteries of soul-birth and soul growth are bound up in it and if we have the courage and the endurance to make a friend of it it will bring great gifts to us. But the pain we bring on ourselves through folly or wilfulness or even simple blindness! Ah, it is horrible; it is degrading; there is no fine, high ministry in it; it burns and scars and defaces for our punishment. The child whose father punishes it justly will be the better for that punishment; but if it picks up a red-hot coal in its hand its suffering will *not* better it—only make it a little wiser perhaps with the sorry wisdom of experience.

Perhaps you are one of the fortunate ones who never picks up red-hot coals—whose only knowledge of pain is taught by the suffering God sends. If so, you won't feel the truth of some of these remarks. I'm not; I'm always picking up the coals because they sparkle and look pretty. And then come the blisters!

* * *

I agree with you that all literature should be read in its own tongue. Much *must* be lost in translation—all the subtle shades of meaning which go back to the very root-words of the language. Its body may be translated

but, as you say, its soul is lost in the transition. The coarser meaning may be expressed; the finer cannot be.

As for the Bible, the same limitations must apply to it. You know to be frank, I do *not* look upon the Bible as a book inspired *by* God. I look upon it as a book much of which is inspired *with* God—a collection of the myths, history, poetry, ethics and philosophy of a singularly spiritual (taking into account the period in which they lived) people whose superior conception of the Great Intelligence fitted them to be the mouthpieces of that Intelligence. The Jews made a specialty of religion as the Egyptians of architecture, the Greeks of literature or the Romans of war. As a result they were pre-eminent in it. Their conception of God was naturally marred by the errors of all human conceptions of the Inconceivable. But still it remains as great and wonderful and striking as the rock-temple of Ipsambul. There have been finer, nobler, more truthful conceptions since. But that does not affect the grandeur of it, in contrast to the reeking idolatry of the nations which surrounded them.

I read a very fine book recently by Newman Smith, *Through Science to Faith*. He leaves revelation entirely out of the question and essays to prove a Directing Intelligence working towards a certain goal, and resulting immortality by the conclusions of science alone. The book pleased me much. It is so sane, so guarded, so logical. If it were mine I would send it to you but it is only a borrowed book. Keep the title in mind and read it if you ever get a chance.

While I have drifted into this subject I'm going to ask you a very old question. Will you answer it frankly: "What think ye of Christ?" Don't be afraid to say what you think. I'll respond as frankly. Do you believe he was God incarnate? Do you believe he rose from the dead literally?

* * *

My mountain tansy was from the grave of the Black Dwarf. Don't you recall Scott's famous novel of that name? It was founded on fact. The

Dwarf really existed and this tansy grew on his grave. I bought the novel recently to be able to paste the tansy on the title page!

* * *

I've been on a debauch of books for a fortnight. A long-delayed grist of books for our library arrived and I've simply read myself stupid and soggy over them. The best was Jack London's *Sea Wolf*—a powerful thing but revolting in some respects. He can write, that fellow.

Recently, gardening, housecleaning, etc. has pushed literary work to the wall. I must sober up from book-saturation, get work done and take up my pen again. Had a lot of acceptances lately, nothing worthy particular mention except the taking of a story by the Associated Sunday Magazines. This concern seems to be flourishing. At first they sent me only \$25 for a story but this time they sent \$40. The story was "The Schoolmaster's Love Letters" and is something of a new departure in style for me. For this reason will try and send you a copy of it when published if possible.

McClure's can hold on to a thing, can't they? Fortunately one hasn't to wait until publication for their checks.

I got into a new mag. lately, *The Pilgrim*, of Battle Creek, Michigan. It is a good affair and has good names in it. They took a short story to be paid for on publication.

No, don't give up writing; it's the best method of soul cultivation there is; even if you never published another thing the writing of it would bring you a beatitude.

I haven't heard from Miriam. Nor do I really wish to, now. Don't misunderstand me. I enjoyed my correspondence with her and was sorry it lapsed. But it has lapsed so long now that the old interest has died out and it seems to me rather impossible to get up a new interest should she re-open it—like rekindling an outburnt fire. The gap has grown too wide.

I must go now for some friends have called. Wish I could send you the scent of the mayflowers in this letter. Or of a pale pink tea rose that is nodding over my shoulder.

Yours sincerely,
L. M. Montgomery.

Cavendish, P.E.I.,
Wednesday Evening,
June 28, 1905.

Dear Mr. W.:—

I think your Alberta snowstorm in which you got caught has arrived here. Not that it is exactly snowing but it is almost cold enough to. We have had a dismal two days' northeast storm of wind and rain and my religion is at present Calvinistic to the back bone. I feel exactly as the old lady did who said, "The Universalists think all the world is going to be saved but *we Presbyterians hope* for better things!"

I'm down here by the kitchen fire because my den is really too cold to be comfy. I can't even get out to see my garden the orchard grass is so dripping wet.

The tulips are gone. I cut the last one yesterday. They were lovely while they lasted. There is nothing out just now; it's a sort of betwixt and between time; but there are lots of buds of roses, lilies and peonies. You ask what is my favourite flower. The carnation; and of carnations the pink carnation. I was in town last week and bought a couple of dozen cut carnations to bring home with me. I've just been revelling in them ever since. They combine perfect beauty of form and colour with perfection of perfume, to a degree that only the rose, and not always the rose, can rival. You say you don't like a bouquet which has no white in it. Well, I don't like *bouquets* at all in the sense of several varieties of flowers being bound together. I never mix flowers and very seldom colours. In a tall glass vase or low bowl, as suits the flower, I put a few blossoms of one kind with a bit of foliage or fern and then sit back and adore them. At the most I never put more than *two* kinds together. More would swear at each other, seems to me. You like the red rose best? I don't quarrel with your taste. I can quite understand a person liking red roses best. I don't, simply because I don't fancy red as a colour in anything except nasturtiums. The pink roses are my favourites—deep pink at heart, shading to almost white on the

outer petals like a blush dying away. We have an old-fashioned hardy June rose in our garden here, a pink one, which for purity of colour surpasses anything I ever saw. It is only semi-double and loses its beauty when fully expanded but its half open buds are things to thank God for.

* * *

Glad you liked “The Choice.” No, I didn’t invent the metre. Saw it somewhere and fancied it. It is effective but hard to handle on account of the triple rhyme and the accent falling on the first syllable of the rhyme. Don’t ask me to label the metre! I couldn’t if I tried. I don’t know a *solitary thing* about the names of metres. When I begin to write a poem the words seem to fall naturally into the rhythm best suited to the idea and I just *let* them fall and devote my energies to hunting out rhymes which I do in a very mechanical and cold-blooded way, using a little rhyming dictionary I made myself. (Tennyson used a rhyming dictionary you know. How nice to be like him in something!!) Sometimes I write a whole poem without a single rhyme in it. Then, when I’ve caged my ideas I substitute end words that rhyme and there you are!

What do you think! I got a letter from Miriam today. Everything comes to those who will but wait. I was glad to hear from her. The letter was very Miriamesque. I must answer her soon although I feel rather out of touch with her as a correspondent. She wrote quite frankly upon the subject of her marriage but, unless she has also written so to you, I shall not discuss it as she probably meant it to be regarded as confidential although not explicitly saying so. She seems to be happy with a decent, non-rapturous workaday happiness that isn’t such a bad thing as the world goes.

* * *

Thank you for your frank answer to my question of the Christ. I share your views. I’d like to discuss the matter but it’s too big a subject to be handled by letter. I never say much about it to anybody. Like you, I *cannot* accept

the *divinity* of Christ. I regard him as immeasurably the greatest of all great teachers and as the son of God in the same sense that any man inspired of God is a son of God. Further than this I cannot, as yet at least, go. I believe that He was truly sent from and of God, as are all great teachers. And possibly he may also stand as an emblem of man in his highest and yet-to-be-attained development—the perfect flower of the tree of life blooming before its time as an earnest of what may be.

It seems to me that the discovery of the processes of evolution dealt the death blow to the old theology of Christ dying for Adam's sin. If man rose up from a lower form, as all scientists now agree, there was no "fall" and consequently no need of any "sacrifice" to square God and man.

The idea that Christ must have been a wilful imposter if he were not divine does not disturb me. Even if the gospels, written 30, 50, 60 or 80 years after his death, give us his words and meaning correctly—a very doubtful thing in my opinion—it does not disturb me to believe that he, in common with most great teachers and reformers, had an element of fanaticism—for want of a better word—in his character. It seems to me that it is a necessary ingredient in a highly-organized, sensitive character to enable it to make headway against a brutal world and all its sins and follies. Without it, it could not stand against its foes.

But, as I have said, the subject is too big for a letter. I'll meddle with it no further—in bulk, at least. Now and then, I may jot down a detail or so, as it occurs to me.

I received your second letter the very day I got a couple of extra *Sunday* mags, that I had sent for, one of which I meant for you but didn't send it since you already had it. No, I don't remember where or how the idea came to me. When I come across an idea for story or poem—or rather when an idea for such comes across me, which seems the better way to put it—I at once jot it down in my notebook. Weeks, months, often *years* after, when I want an idea to work up I go to the notebook and select one that suits my mood or magazine. I found the germ of the "Letters" in an old Halifax note book, inscribed as follows "Man writes love letters to girl,

not intending to send them. Jealous woman sends them. Girl loves him.”
That’s all I know about it now.

I’ve been very busy all June, writing. Got a good deal done. *Gunters* Magazine, New York, a new concern, sent me \$25 for a short story. I was surprised to get such a good price as I did not think the Magazine was any great shakes, judging by its contents.

The *National* sent \$10 for story accepted last winter which is to be published in July. Will try to send you copy. The *Designer* sent \$20 for a story and *Modern Women* \$15. Their prices seem to be rising. What with a number of smaller checks here & there I picked up over \$100 since June came in. Wish I could do as well every month but there’s generally a famine after a feast.

This sheet is started just to say good-bye in a decent space. I shall not try to spread any ideas over it. Good luck and good cheer, comrade.

Fraternally yours,
L. M. Montgomery.

Cavendish, P.E.I.,
Sunday Evening,
April 8, 1906.

My dear Mr. W.:—

I've just roused up from a long twilight visit to my castle in Spain. For the past hour I have been lying on a couch in my den beside a dying fire—that is, my *body* was lying there but my soul was far away in a dreamland of imagination, where everything lost or missed in my present existence is mine. What a blessing it is that we can so *dream into* life the things we desire! Are you too an owner of a Spanish castle? And how often do you let yourself visit your estate? I go there in the twilight, being too busy at other times to remember my duties as Chatelaine. Outside, it is a cold, blustery April rain, the air all mist the ground all mud. But in fancy I've been far away beyond the mud and mist to “cloudless realms and starry skies.”

Now for your letter.

Yes, our Literary Society paper—the *Cavendish Literary Annual*—came off on schedule time and was fairly good, though we—the editors—“say it as oughtn't.” We had a number of contributions from various writers, one all the way from Scotland so our table of contents was quite cosmopolitan.

I was concerned at what you said about your inability to write. Surely you've let yourself drift into dangerous shallows. Perhaps you are spending *too much* time in your castles in Spain! If so, adopt my plan—seek them only at twilight or midnight and accept your exile at other times. There is no power that so speedily rusts as that of expression. So *to work at once, stick to it*, write something *every day*, even if you burn it up after writing it. Otherwise you'll atrophy to a certainty. There! I hate giving advice as cordially as I hate taking it. I'm glad that's over!!!!

My flowers are all done—the daffodils and hyacinths at least. But I've some house roses coming out and a big Easter lily. I've been coaxing the

latter along with an eye to next Sunday and I think it is going to be out in time. I'm expecting great things of it for it was a big bulb and has grown thriftily.

Oh, yes, it *is* fascinating to suppose that we go from one existence to another, with the restful sleep of so-called death between! To me, the idea is a thousand fold more attractive than that of the Christian's heaven with its unending *spiritual* joys. I'd rather *life as it is in this world*, accepting all its ups and downs, its sorrows and pains for its joys and delights, than such. Besides, even the ideas of people who call themselves devout Christians about heaven are almost ludicrously vague and shapeless—and they don't seem to find the prospect especially inviting either. At least, they never seem in any hurry to go there—far from it. And how illogical they are. For example: I was recently talking to a middle-aged woman who had lost a young sister from death. She said “it was so sad to see a young person die, *without having lived their life.*”

Now, if that woman had believed that there was no future life her remark would have been just and logical. But she believes—or would tell you she believed—that her sister had gone straight to heaven and that she was much better off and that heaven was a much happier place than this world. Now, if this were a sincere vital belief with her why should she or anyone regret—on behalf of the dead person, I mean—that the life had not been fully lived here! It *does* seem to me that the instinct of humanity thus gives the lie to the conceptions of the theologians. I have not made my meaning particularly plain in all this. I hope you will be able to grasp the idea in spite of its clumsy presentation. These subjects, however, cannot be well discussed by letter. They demand personal contact where objections etc. can be stated and discussed at once.

I agree with you that sunflowers seem masculine, and I would add another. To me the common red clover of our hay fields always seems masculine. The fine white or faintly tinged pink clover is a little lady but the big chubby red clovers are sturdy country lads.

No, I've never heard from Miriam. She did not even acknowledge the little booklet of verse I sent at Xmas but she may not have received it. By

“faring passably well” do you refer to her health or her circumstances. She was suffering much from rheumatism when I last heard from her.

No, I don’t think I can define what it is that Ruskin lacks, although I feel it acutely. I admit all his good qualities. But then

If (s)he be not fair to me
What care I how fair (s)he be,

to mis-apply an old couplet very illustrative of human nature. Perhaps, as you suggest, it is a sense of humour. He does take himself so terribly in earnest over things that are only of secondary importance after all. In one of his books, *Beauty and Nature*, he says some exquisite things about the sky for which I could almost find it to give him a place in my heart.

Thank you for the *Cosmopolitan* and Markham’s poem. I enjoyed it with qualifications. It possesses great beauty—but it is the secondary beauty of complexity not the primary beauty of simplicity. I don’t altogether understand your question marks. Do you mean that you disagree with the ideas expressed or disapprove of the method of their expression?

I don’t like his calling her *Virgilia*—which is a Roman name—when the whole spirit of the poem seems to throw it back to a primal time of earth’s childhood before Rome or even Egypt had a name. His ideas don’t seem to be especially well connected—I think he sometimes sacrifices sense to rhyme. Then in his fourth verse

One afternoon the stars were slipping
Pearl after pearl to the bowl of night

rather pointedly suggests Omar’s lines

Morning in the bowl of night,
Has flung the stone that puts the stars to flight.

The line

To turn from love is the world's one treason,

is good and true when taken in the widest sense. On the whole, I liked the poem, got pleasure from its perusal and thank you for sending it.

By the way, a literary correspondent of mine in New York writes me that he has a personal acquaintance with Markham and that the latter is suffering from "swelled head."

I've been scribbling away. Had a story in April *Gunters*. Will send you a copy by and by if possible. I haven't been paid for it yet but I got \$25 for a former one there.

I enclose a copy of my verses in a recent number of *Lippincotts*.

The *American Home* recently sent me \$18 for a short 3,000 word story. This is surprisingly good pay for such a concern. Their price is *ten cents a year*. You remember I sold them a serial once. Last week I got a letter from them urging me to write them an 18,000 word serial. So I'm trying to do it and have almost got it done. It's a sensational tale about a lost ruby and I shall be ashamed of it but shall expect a liberal check.

Over a year ago I wrote an article, "The Old South Orchard." It wasn't a story but just a sort of essay relating fictional incidents about an old homestead garden. I sent it to the *N.Y. Xian Advocate* which acknowledged. As time went on I flattered myself it was accepted—as that is their method usually—and as good as credited myself with the usual \$5 check. Just a *year* from date of sending it came back without a word of explanation or apology. I was furious and meditated sending a sarcastic note to the editor suggesting that he expurgate the word *Christian* from his paper's name. However, I calmed down and sent the MS to *Outing*, New York. Yesterday I got a letter offering a cent a word (about \$40) for the article and asking for more like it. The editor said he admired its "fine simplicity" and wanted to know if I had any intentions of working material up into a book, as the Outing Co. published books etc. *Outing* is a fine magazine and I'm tickled over the outcome and quite ready to bless the *Xian Advocate* man for his unintentional good turn.

The Churchman, New York, is paying good rates now. Sent me \$9 apiece for a couple of 2000 word kid's stories.

Recently I've been dipping into history and am reading Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*. Last night I read his two famous chapters on Christianity. He impressed me as having attained perfection in the art of saying one thing and meaning the very opposite. He defends and praises the Xian religion and every word is a subtle sneer. Have you ever read it? It's a massive work and makes me dizzy thinking of the amount of research and drudgery it must have entailed.

It's time to say goodnight. So consider it said.

Ever your sincere friend,
L. M. Montgomery.

Cavendish, P.E.I.,
Thursday Evening,
June 21, 1906.

My dear Mr. W.:—

Your letter has been lying in my portfolio for over a fortnight waiting a chance to be answered. From this you would infer I was a very busy person, wouldn't you? Well, in truth I am. Not that I'm doing much worth while but I really seem rushed to death with a lot of little wretched duties that have to be done for peace' sake and eat up all the spare time. However, I've a breathing space tonight and I'm going to make the most of it. But it will be merely a scribble—not a letter.

I'm all played out! We had a Sunday School Convention in C. yesterday—a species of religious dissipation which beats a midnight dance all hollow for taking the stamina out of one. I feel tired down to my toes. For about eight consecutive hours yesterday I listened to reports, discussed methods, heard addresses, played in the choir, or sat up stiffly, dressed in my best and looked attentive. Some of the features were interesting—others bored me. All in all, I don't believe I shall be a whit the better Sunday School Teacher for it—and I'm sure I'm the worse Christian today! I feel positively impish and quite ready to persecute anyone who doesn't agree with me in creed!

Was sorry to hear of your accident but if it had as good an aftermath as you say perhaps it was well it happened and you ought to be congratulated rather than condoled with. Isn't it odd how often things like that turn out to be blessings in disguise, while on the other hand things seemingly desirable and which please us most mightily at first draw after them a train of most unrighteous consequences. Is it all a chance medley—or is it Providence?

Yes, my N.Y. correspondent is a literary man—Gerald Carlton, who has written a lot of novels. They are *not* literature—very sensational etc. But his letters are all right. He is an elderly man and a retired British army

officer but an Irishman by birth. He is the personal friend of a personal friend of mine in Halifax and it was thus I became acquainted with him. He seems to have had a wide acquaintance among writers—knew R. L. Stevenson, Wilkie Collins and that set intimately.

I finished my serial and sent it to the *American Home*. I haven't heard from it officially yet but in a note from the editor about another matter he said he would report on the story soon and he thought the report would be favourable—a cryptic utterance that inspires me with hope.

Gunters sent me \$35 for the "Education of Sally." I sent you a copy recently. They accepted another story last week and it is to be published in September. I've been doing a lot of work for juveniles and scooping in several checks of \$8 and \$10. In April the *Youth's Companion* took a poem and sent \$12. They have four of mine on hand now, two of them for over two years. *Outing* sent \$38 for my orchard article. Last week the *National* accepted a ghost story to be published in September, price \$10. The *Housekeeper*, Minneapolis, accepted a story yesterday and sent a check for \$25. This is a new place as I never landed them before. I've had a lot of my MSS. go astray this winter—never had such a time. I always keep a copy of course but the loss of time—and possible checks—is very annoying.

I had a letter from Miss C. last week. She, too, concocted a serial for *Am. Home* but hadn't heard from it.

I have invested in a new type writer. My old one, only a second-hand to begin with, was about worn out so I traded it off for a practically new one—an "Empire." It does fine work. But it has a different keyboard and so I have to learn all over again and I'm very slow. But this is a universal keyboard so when I do get expert at it I'll be able to write on any of the high-priced machines.

No, I had no MS in San Francisco. That 'quake was terrible. I suppose in a few weeks we will be inundated with stories of it and next year a whole flood of novels. Well, it would make a great subject—and require a great pen to do it justice.

Some callers have just come in. I must go down and as I will not have time to write any more tonight I'll finish this up although it is the merest apology for a letter. Next time I'll try to redeem my reputation.

Very sincerely yours,
L. M. Montgomery.

Monday Evening,
Seven O'clock,
October 8, 1906.

My dear Mr. W.:—

This is perfectly dreadful! But I *won't* apologize. I haven't had time, that is the simple fact. It seems almost uncanny that I have a spare hour tonight. Your letter has been haunting me like a reproachful spectre in the background of consciousness for weeks. Never mind, the long autumn and winter evenings are at hand and I shall behave ever so much better.

It has been awfully cold today and I've gone about with my teeth chattering. But we have had the loveliest fall, ever since the first of September—all purple and gold and mellowness in earth, air and sky.

Well, today I laughed until I cried. I only wish you had been handy to laugh too. You certainly would have laughed—or wept! Perhaps the latter would have been more fitting. It was certainly enough to make angels weep.

I received back a rejected MS. from *Lippincotts' Magazine*. This was not what I laughed over—or wept over either, being too well accustomed to that. But I thought it seemed much bulkier than it should so before putting it away in my desk I examined it and found that another MS had been returned with it—not mine, but, as the rejection slip showed, some Miss Richardson's of Philadelphia. I read it—and good heavens!

Anything like it I never heard of nor imagined. If I had not seen it “with my own eyes” I could not have believed that such stuff could ever be offered for publication in all seriousness—and to such a magazine as *Lippincotts* at that. Oh, I *wish* you could see it! Look here—you *shall* see it—you *must* see it! I'll send it to you in a separate parcel and you'll bless me forever for it. You can return it to me as soon as you've read it and I'll send it to the author. When you read it you will understand that delay is of no moment and you will also realize that my action in sending it to you justifies itself. If it doesn't kill you you'll enjoy it I think. I did, at least.

Great masterpieces of humour have amused me less! Remember that this MS was offered in all seriousness to a first-rate American Magazine. I shall never growl at an Editor again. No matter what Editors do, they should not be blamed when they have to read such AWFUL stuff. It's a wonder they don't all have nervous prostration. Perhaps they *don't* read it though. Probably they never went beyond the first page of this. And yet the rejection slip was typewritten—said to be a mark of special favour!!!—while I got merely a printed slip. Probably the editor felt grateful to the author for a good laugh.

The American Home cashed up Saturday Oct. 6, after holding up my serial ever since last April. They sent me *eighty dollars* for it. It was fully all—and more—that it was worth for it was sensational trash. The last serial they bought from me, though of the same length, only brought in \$40. It was about 20,000 words long and I wrote it in two weeks.

I have been home all summer. Last week I went to town for three days and had an enjoyable little outing. You say you wonder why I don't travel. It is simply because I cannot leave home. Grandma is 82 and I cannot leave her, for even a week's cruise. We live all alone and there is no one I can get to stay with her. I am very much tied down but it cannot be helped. Some day I hope to be able to see a bit of the world.

I've been writing busily all summer, mostly it must be admitted, juvenile and S. School work. I picked up enough ten and fifteen dollar checks to make it worth while. *Holland's Magazine*, Texas, and *The Pilgrim*, Detroit, were two new places I got into. The former paid \$3 for a short 2000 word sketch and the latter promises ten on publication for a 3000 word story. I have done a good deal for *East and West* of Toronto. They only pay \$5 per story so I just send them second-rates. Often they send me pictures and ask me to write stories to suit. I *loathe* doing this—but still I do it! The other day I had a letter from the *American Messenger* asking me for my photograph to be published among their contributors in their December announcement number! The *Boy's World* asked me for four stories for 1907. *East and West* also asked me to write a 6 chapter serial for them but I declined. They would only pay \$5 per chapter and in the

same time I could write six short stories for American papers that would net \$10 apiece.

Yes, I teach a Sunday School class—but I don't like it much. I have a class of half grown girls but they seem stupid and commonplace. They never dream of asking a question, much as I have tried to induce them to, and all their idea of "studying" a lesson seems to be to learn the printed questions in the quarterlies off by heart. I never can get them to give an answer in their own words and I don't believe they ever get one scrap of real good out of the lesson. I have to follow the old traditional paths of thought & expression or I would get into hot water immediately.

Cavendish is wholesomely (?) old-fashioned and orthodox.

By the way, do you notice how that word "orthodox" is degenerating? With the preceding generation it was a term of honour and commendation. With ours, it is tinged with contempt. With the next generation it will be a term of reproach. Even words have to follow the inevitable natural law of rise, perihelion and decline.

My N.Y. correspondent is, to speak frankly, not much account. I don't care for his letters very much. He is the personal friend of a personal friend of mine and that is how I "met" him. If he were any good I would try to arrange a correspondence between you and him but I assure you it would not be worth while. I think that, personally, he is a fine, upright, clean-minded man, but intellectually he is only a cipher and our correspondence is *not interesting*, that's all. He has known quite a lot of famous writers though and seems to make his living out of journalism, etc. No, *Outing* hasn't published my sketch yet—won't till next summer. I had a story in September *Gunters* but I haven't been paid for it yet. They are always slow. I'm always expecting them to smash up, they publish such trash.

I like my Empire typewriter very much. Yes, it's a visible machine and does excellent work. A "universal keyboard" means a keyboard common to all the standard machines—that is, the arrangement of letters, etc. is the same and if you learn to write on one you can write on them all. My

former machine did not have this keyboard so that I had to learn all over again when I got my Empire. But I'm getting pretty "slick" at it now.

A caller has just come in and I must close though I had a few more things to comment on. What do you think of the spelling reform agitation and Roosevelt's action thereon? Have you read Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*? If not, *don't*—if you ever want to eat sausages or canned goods again!! It is *hideous*, morally as well as physically!

Ever your friend,
L. M. Montgomery.

Cavendish, P.E.I.,
Sunday Evening,
December 16, 1906.

My dear Mr. W.:—

This is good weather for writing letters! As for sending them, that is a horse of another colour. We have a mail now just when the mailman can get along—every third day as a rule. Between times we have storms.

This is the evening of a very dull sleepy Sunday. We had no service near and couldn't have gone to it if there had been owing to last night's storm. I did start out after tea, grimly determined to do a constitutional; but had to give up and come back, the drifts proving too much for me. So I'll write letters tonight for my Presbyterian ancestors are so thickly snowed over that I don't think they'll be able to turn in their graves because of it.

I thought you'd have a smile or two over that MS I sent. I re-read it before sending it to its owner and I laughed until I nearly cried. Your definition of "incoherent grasshopperishness" expressed all that criticism could say of it. Had I been the editor of *Lippincotts* I think I'd have bought the story and published it in the Walnuts and Wine department. Certainly nothing could be funnier.

No, I haven't any flowers outside *now*. But I have some indoors. I have a lovely 'mum out—seven or eight great fluffy pale pink flowers out on it. The 'mum is a society lady, all frills and chiffons and languid grace. My bulbs are beginning to bloom too and I expect a continuance of them right through the winter. My Roman Narcissus and white hyacinths are out now. The latter are the sweetest things God ever made. They seem more like the souls of flowers than like flowers themselves. Yes, I like tall flowers too—and glowing deep-tinted riotous ones—and *every kind*. But I love best the flowers I coax into bloom myself, be they tall or small, white or rosy. It seems as if I were taking a hand in creation—giving life to those unsightly bulbs that hide such rainbow possibilities in their cores. Isn't it strange

how such ugly things can give birth to such beauty—the old mystery of good, like a white lily, springing out of the muck and mire of evil. It is possible that evil is necessary to the blossoming of good, just as the dirty clay and foul-smelling fertilizers are necessary to the unfolding of those blossoms! There's a theological problem for you!

I smiled over one question in your letter. Do I do any housework? Well, rather—about all that is done here. I like it, too, except the rougher parts, and I'm very fond of cooking, etc., etc.

Well, I must tell you my *great news* right off. I think I've mortified the flesh sufficiently by holding it back till the fifth page. Two weeks ago *Everybody's* accepted a short story of mine and sent me *one hundred dollars* for it! It was about 5000 words long and humorous. It had also been rejected twice, once by a magazine that pays \$30 per story and once by a magazine that pays *ten*. Next? Of course I felt pleasantly tickled.

After this other successes seem small but I've got into several new places. The *Blue Book*, published by the Red Book Co. of Chicago, took a story for ten dollars. The *Housekeeper* (but I'd got into this before) paid \$20 for an oft-rejected story. The *Rural Magazine*, Chicago, accepted a rural story to be paid for on publication. *Watson's Magazine* New York sent \$10 for a poem lately. I never got more than \$5 or four from them for a poem before, but this was a long Christmas one. So far this year I've made over seven hundred dollars.

Did you ever read a children's fairy tale *Through the Looking Glass*? It's quite a classic in its way and the most delicious nonsense. One of the characters has by long practice become able "to believe seven impossible things every morning before breakfast." But this faculty is not confined to the "Red Queen," I imagine, judging from the beliefs some people entertain!

I haven't got hold of many new books of late. One of the few was *The Future Life* by a noted French writer. It was interesting but not at all conclusive and left me with the conviction that the author, great scientist and all as he is, doesn't really know a thing more about the future life than I myself know—or than anybody else knows for that matter. Argument or

evidence can't prove it—only the soul speaking in us can assure us of its own immortality. But in what shape is that immortality to be! Will *I* be *I*? Isn't it strange—the horror with which we shrink from the thought of losing our individuality? Total annihilation would be preferable to becoming anybody else, even though that anybody else might be a hundred-fold better and nobler than ourselves.

Lately I've been thrashing out a new conception of life after death but so far I haven't got to the stage where I can express it clearly in words. I don't mean that it's a *belief*—no, no, merely a theory. I don't think I have really any *belief* in any particular kind of a future life. I believe that there *is* life after death, that's all.

I have nothing more to say. Since the first of November I've hardly been out of our own yard—never once more than a mile from home. The weather last month was all rain—this month it's all snow. So I'm going to cut this letter right off here and now. Thanks for your last picture postal. Best wishes for the Xmas season.

Yours sincerely,
L. M. Montgomery.

Cavendish, P.E.I.,
Thursday,
May 2, 1907.

My dear Mr. W.:—

We are just in the middle of housecleaning! I fear that statement will be more or less wasted on a mere *man*. If it were made to a woman she would appreciate the compliment of my sitting down to write her after a day of it. For the past four days I've been scrubbing and whitewashing and digging out old corners and I feel as if all the dust I've stirred up and swept out and washed off has got into my soul and settled there and will remain there forever, making it hopelessly black and grimy and unwholesome. Of course I *know* it won't but knowing is such a different thing from *believing*.

Well, I must simply tell you my *great news* right off! To pretend indifference and try to answer your letter first would be an affectation of which I shall not be guilty. I am blatantly pleased and proud and happy and I shan't make any pretence of not being so.

Well, last fall and winter I went to work and wrote a *book*. I didn't squeak a word to anyone about it because I feared desperately I wouldn't find a publisher for it. When I got it finished and typewritten I sent it to the L. C. Page Co. of Boston and a fortnight ago, after two months of suspense I got a letter from them accepting my book and offering to publish it on the 10-per cent royalty basis!

Don't stick up your ears now, imagining that the great Canadian novel has been written at last. Nothing of the sort. It is merely a juvenilish story, ostensibly for girls; but as I found the MS. rather interesting while reading it over lately I am not without hope that grown-ups may like it a little. Its title is *Anne of Green Gables* and the publishers seem to think it will succeed as they want me to go right to work on a sequel to it. I don't know whether I can do that and make it worth while however.

The Page Co. is a good company. Not one of the top-notchers, of course, such as Harpers or Macmillans: but it has published several successful books by well-known authors, including Charles G. D. Roberts and Bliss Carman.

I signed the contract today; it is a fearsomely legal looking document all red seals and “saids” and “whereases.” There is only one clause in it I don’t altogether like. I have to bind myself to give them the refusal of all the books I may write for the next five years. The insertion of such a clause is rather complimentary, I suppose, but I’d rather not have to agree to it. However, I’ve done so and the rest is on the knees of the gods. I don’t suppose the book will be out before the fall.

While I’m on the “trade” subject I might as well finish with it. I’ve had several successes lately; formerly I would have been delighted over them but now they are quite cast in the shade by my big fish.

The Housekeeper, Minneapolis, have accepted 20,000 word serial. I am to be paid the tenth of May. Don’t know what I will get but they pay well for short stories. I want you to see this story but it won’t be out till next year and they want my photo to publish in their prospectus! Ha-hum!

The Home Magazine, Indianapolis, published by the Reader Co., recently accepted a short story to be paid for on publication. This is a new place for me.

The Blue Book, Chicago, paid \$20 for a short story. The editor also asked me to write a 12,000 word serial of mystery and adventure but I told him I couldn’t. I haven’t the knack of such stories so it’s no use my wasting time over them.

I got my check—for \$35—from *Gunters* at last. They have another of my stories in their April number and I presume I shall have a hard time to get my cash also. I don’t intend to send them any more.

There, that’s enough about *me* and *my doings*. Now for your letter.

I nearly had a fit over the wanderings of my last letter. Guess I’d better typewrite the address on this if the western mail clerks are so badly afflicted with myopia.

You ask if I am ever troubled with friends I like not liking each other. Yes and yes *and* yes! I should think I know all about it. It is terrible, isn't it? Sometimes my spirit fairly cringes within me at the horror of it. I have two friends in especial whom I love and who hate each other and we are all three constantly being thrown together and my friendship with each is more or less spoiled and embittered by their antagonism.

Have you heard from Miss C. lately? I had a letter from her saying she was ill and answered at once. This was some time ago and I have not had a line from her since so I fear she is no better and perhaps worse. I am so sorry for I liked her personality very much. If I were sure her address was still the same I would write again but I do not know if it is. I suppose you never hear from Mrs. Watrous? Or do you?

Yes, I've read Trench's *Study of Words*—studied it at college in fact. I liked the book tremendously—although as you say I was amused at some of his orthodox biases. Words and languages are the most fascinating things in the world. It's marvellous how a language grows and develops along natural and unvarying lines. The development of its grammatical structure seems like a miracle to me. I read the other day in a magazine whose assertions carry weight that some of the most degraded and savage tribes possess languages which have a complicated and involved syntax. *How* did they get it? Well, I suppose it *grew* just as grew their bodily structure which is likewise as wonderful as that of more civilized peoples.

I congratulate you on discovering the—Bible! I did it a year ago, though and have been reading it—really, *reading* it—ever since; but as my rate of progression is slower than yours you will soon outstrip me. I can't get over much more than seven chapters a Sunday—I'm just beginning the Psalms now. It is a wonderful book—the crystallized wisdom and philosophy and experience of the most deeply religious people who ever existed. Could anything be more vital and truer to our own experience than this: "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick"? Could anything express a more majestic conception of God than, "Thou who inhabitest the *halls* of Eternity"? What more beautiful than the sentence about the rainbow, "the hands of the Most High have bended it"—what more pathetic than "the

heart knoweth its own bitterness and a stranger intermeddleth not with its joy”? *Job* is a magnificent thing. Fancy the stinging irony of “Ye are the people and wisdom will die with you”!! When I was a child a school teacher gave me a *whipping* because I used the expression “by the skin of my teeth.” He said it was slang. If I had but known then what I know now!!! It is in *Job*—those very words. *Ruth* is a delightful thing: “Where thou goest I will go: thy people shall be my people and thy God my God: the Lord judge between us if aught but death part thee and me.” Was ever the loving self-sacrifice and self-effacement of womanhood better or more exquisitely expressed?

I received your “buffalo” postal. I forget whether I sent one in return. If I did not it was because I was—and am—out of them. I can’t get any nearer than Ch’Town twenty-five miles away, so I can’t always return one promptly.

Fourteen pages isn’t bad for a girl who has been housecleaning all day! I wonder if it’s absolutely necessary to houseclean? I wonder if nine-tenths of the things we think so necessary really are so! But I shall go on housecleaning and wondering! I may have given up belief in foreordination and election and the Virgin Birth; *but* I have not and never shall be guilty of the heresy of asserting that it is not vital to existence that the house should be torn up once a year and scrubbed! Perish the thought.

Yours sincerely,
L. M. Montgomery.

Cavendish, P.E.I.,
Sunday Afternoon,
Nov. 10, 1907.

My dear Mr. W.:—

I did not dream when I received your letter that I should be this long in answering it—but time has slipped away so fast. October is my busiest month—full of bulb planting (delicious), housecleaning (ugh-urr-gru-u), sewing (non-excitably nice), etc., etc., etc. This rainy Sunday afternoon I am going to write some letters.

Though raining now it was fine this forenoon—oh! so fine—sunny and mild as a day in June. I hied me away to the woods—away back into sun-washed alleys carpeted with fallen gold and glades where the moss is green and vivid yet. The woods are *getting ready* to sleep—they are not *yet* asleep but they are disrobing and are having all sorts of little bed-time conferences and whisperings and good-nights. I can more nearly expect to come face to face with a dryad at this time of the year than any other. They are lurking behind every tree trunk—a dozen times I wheeled sharply around convinced that if I could only turn quick enough I should catch one peeping after me. Oh, keep your great vast prairies where never a wood-nymph could hide. I am content with my bosky lanes and the purple peopled shadows under my firs.

Three evenings ago I went to the shore. We had a wild storm of wind and rain the day before but this evening was clear, cold, with an air of marvellous purity. The sunset was lovely beyond words. I drank its beauty in as I walked down the old shore lane and my soul was filled with a nameless exhilaration. I seemed borne on the wings of a rapturous ecstasy into the seventh heaven. I had left the world and the cares of the world so far behind me that they seemed like a forgotten dream.

The shore was clean-washed after the storm and not a wind stirred but there was a silver surf on, dashing on the sands in a splendid white turmoil. Oh, the glory of that far gaze across the tossing waters, which

were the only restless thing in all that vast stillness and peace. It was a moment worth living through weeks of storm and stress for.

There is a great *solitude* about such a shore. The *woods* are never solitary—they are full of whispering, beckoning friendly life. But the sea is a mighty soul forever moaning of some great unshareable sorrow that shuts it up into itself for all eternity. You can never pierce into its great mystery—you can only wander, awed and spellbound on the outer fringe of it. The woods call to you with a hundred voices but the sea has only one—a mighty voice that drowns your soul in its majestic music. The woods are human but the sea is of the company of the archangels.

I thought of Emerson's lines as I stood there that wonderful night.

The gods talk in the breath of the wold
They talk in the shaken pine
And they fill the long reach of the old seashore
With a dialogue divine.
And the poet who overhears
Some random word they say
Is the fated man of men
Whom the ages must obey.

I shall never hear that random word—my ear is not attuned to its lofty thunder. But I can always *listen* and haply by times I shall catch the faint far-off echo of it and even that will flood my soul with its supernal joy.

You spoke of death in your letter. When I said my friend had had a hard time I did not mean the actual dying—which came to her suddenly and easily—but the long weeks of horrible suffering preceding it. *That* is the real tragedy of death. I, too, hope that death will come to me *suddenly*. I don't want to *know* it is coming. I envy those who die in their sleep. You speak of chloroform. I *love* taking ether—have taken it several times for having teeth extracted. I love the sensation of going under its influence and when I come out of it I never feel one unpleasant after effect. My dentist tells me he never knew anybody like me in this respect. Just at the moment when I return to consciousness I have a fleeting *sensation* of

having had the most beautiful time somewhere. Did I ever tell you of my last experience in this line? If I did pardon the repetition and skip it.

Just as I was “coming out” I heard myself saying—I put it this way because it was not *I* who said it—at least not the consciousness that is dictating these words. *This* consciousness heard *something* else speaking through my lips:

“Oh doctor, heaven is so interesting I’m sorry you called me back. I could write—a—a—a—”

I heard myself halt for a suitable word. I heard the dentist laughingly suggest “a book?”

“A book!” I heard myself scornfully casting this aside. “I could write a *lifetime* on the experiences I’ve been having.”

And with this *I* came into my own, wide-awake and conscious, with no recollection of any such “experiences.”

Wasn’t it odd? I’ve often thought about it. It did more than anything I ever heard or read to convince me of the separate existence of the soul. And yet it raised other difficulties. For that soul was *not* I—not, as aforesaid, the consciousness that is writing to you now. But all this is more or less awkward to define. Such things can’t be expressed in the symbols of earth—no words have been invented suitable for the conveyance of just exactly what I felt and how I felt it in that experience. Quite likely you will receive a wrong or at the best an utterly inadequate conception of it.

Ah, I agree with all you say of “soul moods”—states that can’t be expressed or communicated because words are too clumsy!

So “if I die before you do, you’ll write my life”? No, you won’t! Nobody shall. I’d haunt you if you did. Biography is a *screaming farce*. No man or woman was *ever* truly depicted. Biographies, even the best, are one—or at the most two-sided—and every human being has half a dozen different sides. It must always be that way until some medium of communication is found for “soul moods.” And I know I wouldn’t want some of *my* soul moods depicted—no, nor any of them—for the evil ones would shame me and the good ones would be desecrated by revelation.

I am pegging away at my new book. Can't say definitely when my first one will be out. There is some hitch at present with the illustrating—artist sick or overworked or something of the sort. My "sequel" is moving on fairly well. I have everything *blocked out*—the complete skeleton, down to the last chapter. All the characters are living in my mind, all the incidents have happened, all the "talk" has been talked. I have only to write about them now.

I'm not doing much hack work. Sold a S.S. serial of seven chapters to the Toronto *East and West*. Got \$40 only. It was far too cheap but Miss Fraser had been pestering me so long for a serial that I sent her one for patriotism's sweet sake. If my book succeeds I'll certainly cut out Sunday School stuff, though of course I'll keep on with adult magazines.

I'm going to tell you something. I hope it won't prove too much of a shock! The *Canadian Magazine* pays for poetry now. I sent it an old poem to get rid of it—the poem. It had been peddled to every American magazine and I gave it up in despair. The C.M. sent me two whole dollars for it—and asked for more! Certainly, Canada is forging ahead.

The *Westminster*, Toronto, also pays small sums for prose. I got \$3 for a sketch. Your western sketches ought to take with them.

I enclose a *Youth's Companion* poem. Do you know I haven't written a single line of verse since July. I'm going to try to write a poem tomorrow though.

Do you know I was nearly run over by an *automobile* last night! Automobiles in Cavendish! There is no such thing as solitude left on earth!

Glad you told me about your horses. I'm sure you must love them. I only have a cat—"Daffy." But he's a *peach*! Really, he's everything a cat should be, except that he hasn't one spark of affection in his soul. But then somebody has said, "The highest joy a human being can experience is to *love disinterestedly*." *Daffy*, therefore, gives this joy to me, since I cannot hope for any return of the affection I bestow on him. The only things *he* loves are his stomach and a certain cushion in a sunny corner. He is enormous in size, with a very fine coat of grey striped fur, black points and

a magnificent plummy tail. He is a mighty hunter and catches and devours *squirrels* every day. As I love squirrels also I am torn between two affections.

Well, it is nearly dark and time I was getting ready for church, since I'm organist and must sit up on the choir platform and face the audience during the service. So I dare not slur my toilette but must appear point device. At our last choir practice we practised up "Behold, the Bridegroom Cometh" for a collection anthem. Yesterday I had to summon an extra session of the choir to learn a new piece since the "supply" who preaches for us tonight really *is* a bridegroom, having been married only last week! It would have been a good joke to let the thing go on but I thought the poor man might feel insulted and ministers are so scarce that we dare not play any tricks with our chances of getting one.

Bi-bi,

Yours fraternally,
L. M. Montgomery.

Cavendish, P.E.I.,
Monday Evening,
March 2, 1908.

My dear Mr. Weber:—

No, we are not snowed in! On the contrary, we have no snow at all. We have had very little snow at any time this winter and three weeks ago a thaw took away what little there was. Since then we have been bumping about in wagons or staying at home anathematizing the weather clerk. We have had a phenomenally mild and fine winter—not one storm and very few cold days. Last Saturday morning I started out, walked five miles, spent the day with a friend, and walked home again in the evening—not bad for the dead of winter.

I have been trying to get time to answer your letter for several weeks but never could get enough to do it all at once and I cannot bear to write a letter in sections if I can possibly help it. For the past month I have been extra busy with the somewhat tedious but after all most delightful task of reading and correcting the proofs of my book. I sent the last batch back Friday, and the book is to be out about the fifteenth. I'll send you a copy and you can flesh your maiden sword of book criticism in it, always remembering that it is a story written more especially for girls and not pretending to be of any intrinsic interest to adults.

In regard to literature I've been jogging on as usual at the same old grind—an hour in the morning at magazine work, an hour in the afternoon at the typewriter, an hour in the evening at the sequel to my book. I have the latter about half done but I can't get it to suit me as well as the first. There seems to be more of a "made to order" flavour about it and less of spontaneity.

I sold the *Youth's Companion* a poem in December, "The Exile," and got ten dollars for it. I enclose a copy. *Christian Endeavour World* sent \$15 for a story. I notice the journals are raising their prices. They have risen fifty per cent these last two years. I had an article entitled "The Old South

Orchard” in the January *Outing*. Soon after I received a letter from an American gentleman asking me where that orchard was “because he was determined to visit it if such a thing were possible.” I wrote back and told him that I was sorry to have to state that the location of the orchard was on the estates of my *chateau en Espagne*.

Last week the *Blue Book*, Chicago, sent \$20 for a short story and *Forward* sent \$6 for an insignificant June poem that had been declined so often by little magazines that pay from one to two dollars for a poem that I was very nearly putting it in the stove. “The Wind Bloweth Where It Listeth”—and so do editors. To all appearances, you can’t account for one any more than the other!

No, we don’t feel the “stringency” here at all. We suffer some disadvantages from our detached position but we have the compensating advantages. We are sufficient unto ourselves and seldom feel the worse of financial panics—at least, not unless they extend over several years. The partial failure of the western crops has blown us good as the Gov’t is buying seed grain from us at high prices. I hope you will succeed in escaping from the trouble incident on the “squeeze” and I shall be glad to hear that you have done so.

I am amused and interested in the “ower true tale” you told of the “Mr. A+Miss B., etc.” entanglement. But I fear it is too complicated for my pen. Kipling would glory in such a plot. Real life puts fiction to shame in the queer situations it evolves. Things *won’t* go by rule. Your story reminds me of the old nursery tale of my childhood where the pig wouldn’t go, the stick wouldn’t beat the pig, the fire wouldn’t burn the stick, etc. But in the end it wound up happily by everything beginning to do what was wanted of it. I fear few of the “real” stories develop so satisfactorily. Generally folks go on wanting something all their life or—far greater tragedy still—get it after they have outgrown the wish for it and find nothing but the outward husk of their desire left. Have you ever read *The Story of an African Farm*? There is a little incident in it of a child who longed for a box of beautifully coloured spools her mother had. One day her mother gave her the box and, wild with joy, she rushed away to open it. Alas, the spools were there—but

all the beautiful coloured threads were gone. I fear life gives us many boxes of spools.

Thank you for your tract on the sympathy of religions. I enjoyed it much and agreed with it. Am returning it as requested under separate wrapper. Hope I haven't inconvenienced you by my delay. I was keeping it to show a friend who did not come until very recently. Sometimes I wonder whether religion has been a curse or blessing to the world. It has much that is beautiful in it but it seems also to have caused hideous suffering. Jesus spoke no truer word than "I have not come to send peace but a sword." Most religions have set men at variance with each other. Nothing is so bitter and relentless as the "theologicum odium." There are queer contradictions in these matters. I know an old lady who is one of the sweetest kindest creatures alive. She would not harm a fly and I have seen her weep bitterly over the sufferings of a wounded cat. But it puts her into a simple fury to even hint that a merciful and loving God will hardly burn for all eternity the great majority of his creatures. I cannot understand this attitude on the part of so many. Nothing seems to enrage some people so much as any attempt to take away or mitigate their dearly beloved hell.

I've been re-reading a very fascinating book lately,—*The Law of Psychic Phenomena*. Probably I've mentioned it before. I do wish you could read it. If it were mine I would send it to you but it is not. I'd love to try some of the experiments in it with some mutually interested friend. I *have* tried one or two, such as I could try alone, and have had success too. For example, I told a friend of mine that I meant to try to make her dream of me some night. She was to mark it down in the morning if she did but she was not to know the night I was to make the attempt. One night before I went to sleep I began repeating in thought "I'll make So-and-So dream of me tonight" and kept it up, thinking of nothing else until I went to sleep. She *did* dream of me that night. It may have only been a coincidence. Let us try it. When you receive this try to make me dream of you some night and if I do I'll carefully observe the date and let you know the result. Also, I'll try to make you dream of me after I think this letter has had time to reach you. It would be better to will that the dream should be horrible as

we would be more likely to remember it. It is claimed that we only remember the dreams that we dream just before awakening. An unpleasant dream would probably awake us. If we can succeed it will be very interesting as establishing the possibility of mind acting upon mind, independent of matter and in defiance of time and space. Of course it will be well to remember the difference in the time between here and Alberta. It's about two or three hours, isn't it? Midnight out there would be between two and three here. So if you command your "subjective mind" to make mine dream of you during those hours it would probably contribute to the success of the experiment. I have also been trying some little experiments in "mental healing" on myself, by impressing ideas on my "subjective mind" before going to sleep, and there is certainly something in it. The book explains it all by purely natural laws and discards all "supernatural" explanations. It explains "Christian Science" along the same lines, also all manifestations of so-called spiritualism. I have found one thing anyway beyond dispute—it is a cure for insomnia. If I keep saying a thing over to myself persistently before I go to sleep one night, the next night I can put myself *at once* to sleep again by beginning to say it. The book mentions this as self-hypnotism. I believe fully that a person's "subjective mind" has great power over that person's body and objective mind but I am not at all convinced that it can influence another person. If you can make me dream of you or vice versa it will go far to convince me. Well, good-night. Laugh at my experiments if you will. They cost nothing.

Yours sincerely,
L. M. Montgomery.

Cavendish, P.E.I.,
Sunday morning,
April 5, 1908.

My dear Mr. W.:—

I am going to answer your letter over the heads of several others having the prior claim of previous receipt because there are some parts of it I want to discuss before they grow cold with keeping.

I am very sorry to learn that you are still “on the rocks” of trouble. But as I can do nothing save express sincere sympathy and hope that you will find a way out of your difficulties, I will simply say that I do so sympathize and hope and leave it so.

I have not tried to make you “dream” yet but shall some of these times. I *did* dream of you one night—March 14th—but as you say you did not try to make me there was nothing in that. It was a foolish dream. I was visiting at an uncle’s and my aunt asked me to “go to the granary and get some wheat for the hens.” I went and when I opened the door you were sitting on a keg inside. I don’t know how I knew it was you but I did and I was not at all surprised to see you there. You at once began telling me that you had been all through the Boer War and were giving me an account of your South African campaign when I woke up!

Dreams are usually very unaccountable. I had such a silly one one night last week. I dreamed I was *haunted by the ghost of a hat!* Everywhere I went I was attended by a black hat floating in the air beside my head. When I tried to grasp it my hand went through it in the most approved ghostly fashion. I was not frightened only annoyed because of the comment it provoked—since the hat seemed to be visible to all!

My book hasn’t come yet but I am expecting it every day now. The clipping I enclose was taken from a New York paper—a publisher’s foreword, of course, so counting for nothing as far as honest criticism is concerned. Of course, I don’t expect there will be much criticism of any sort, good or bad. The reviews don’t often take account of such small fry

as juvenile books. I wonder what Miriam would have to say about my book if she knew. I'd love, just out of sheer curiosity, to hear her frank opinion of it. She has never written me since I sent her *my* frank criticism on what she sent for review—but perhaps that had nothing to do with her not writing. Do you ever hear from her now? I often think of her—she was a unique character in many ways, as expressed in her letters. Well, well, you know what the old Quaker lady said, “Everybody’s queer but thee and me—and thee’s a little queer!”

As for photograph, well, I have none of mine on hand just now and don’t know when I will have any. I can’t get to town for more than a day at a time twice a year and there I’m always too tired and worried to bother with photos. But whenever I do I’ll remember you, and shall hope to have one of yours in exchange.

Yes, I only do three hours’ literary work a day—two hours’ writing and one typewriting. I write fast, having “thought out” plot and dialogue while I go about my household work. I think the magazines really are raising their pay. Everything has gone up so I suppose they have to fall in line too. Yesterday I got \$35 for an old serial from the *Housewife*. It was five or six chapters long and was much peddled,—name, “Four Winds.”

Your experience with Mr. Tyner amused me very much. I have met so many men of his type. I remember one time, when I was teaching school up west I went home to dinner one day and found a “preacher” there who evidently modelled his religion after “Pansy’s” fairy tales. As I sat down at the table, his very first words to me, after the formal “How do you do?” of introduction, were “*Do you live by faith?*” Although tolerably familiar with the jargon of his type I honestly didn’t know what he meant, and seeing my puzzled expression he translated “Are you a Christian?” I admit I was furious at his impertinence and bad taste. I coldly said, “I might answer that question, sir, if I were not afraid that you would thereby feel encouraged to ask me if I expected to be married soon and how much money I have in the bank—since they are certainly less sacred subjects.”

I don’t think the creature had brains enough to understand my snub. He answered that he would not think of asking questions upon *personal*

subjects!!!

I call myself a Christian, in that I believe in Christ's teachings and do my poor best to live up to them. I am a member of the church believing that with all its mistakes and weakness it is the greatest power for good in the world and I shall always do what I can to help its cause. But oh, this hideous cant of "being washed in the blood." To me that phrase always summons up a disgusting physical picture that revolts me.

By the way, just for the sake of curiosity I read *Bob Ingersoll's* lectures recently. I expected to be horribly shocked for when I was a child it was "aut Ingersoll aut diabolus." Well, I was amazed. With the exception of his disbelief in a personal God, Christ's divinity and eternal punishment—and as you know, the last two would not be exceptions with all ministers—everything he states would be admitted openly or tacitly by any minister under 40 years of age today. He was howled down because he believed in evolution and denied that the garden of Eden was a historical fact, because he denied predestination, and stated that the God of the old testament was not a deity worthy of undiluted love and admiration and denied the verbal inspiration of the Bible. These were his principal "heresies." However, the lectures were rather blatant and vulgar and his views were stated in an offensive fashion. If they were clothed in more considerate language they might be—and are—preached from the majority of pulpits today. He minces up poor old Talmage without mercy and I was with him there for I abhor Talmage and all his works—or rather sermons, for I don't think he ever *did* anything but preach vapid sensational sermons. Grandma adores Talmage's sermons—reads them every Sunday and cries over them! Well, I don't object—but I must be excused from sharing in her enthusiasm.

I don't think Kipling is "written out." I think he is just in a transition period and that he will emerge from it with something better than he has yet done. Still, of course he may not. I don't think our writers of today have the "staying power" of the older novelists. They are more of sky-rockets than of calm planetary continuance. When a man begins "playing to the gallery" he is done for.

No, *McClure's* have never printed my story yet. Of course they paid for it at acceptance. It is probably lying forgotten in the dusty corner of some editorial safe. *Everybody's* published my story last April. I thought you'd seen it. I mailed you an old copy of it yesterday. I don't think it was worth a hundred dollars—but I didn't send the check back and ask them to make it fifty, for all that!! I understand that a lady elocutionist in New York has made quite a hit with it on the platform. This letter is a fearful scrawl. I have such bad ink that I have to write large or it will blot everything. I'm written out—like Kipling—and must close. I'm going to read the Bible now—I've got as far along as Isaiah. He is splendid, isn't he? But what calamity howlers those old prophets were. And they never did any good with their scolding.

Yours sincerely,
L. M. Montgomery.

Cavendish, P.E.I.,
Thursday Evening,
Sept. 10, 1908.

My dear Mr. Weber:—

I know my correspondents all think I'm dead. I'm not—but I'm so tired and worn out, after a summer of steady grind, that I might almost as well be, as far as real *living* is concerned. To tell the truth, I feel horribly “played out.”

You see, Anne seems to have hit the public taste. She has gone through four editions in three months. As a result, the publishers have been urging me to have the second volume ready for them by October—in fact insisting upon it. I have been writing “like mad” all through the hottest summer we have ever had. I finished the book last week and am now typewriting it, which means from three to four hours' pounding every day—excessively wearisome work; I expect it will take me a month to get it done—if I last so long.

Thank you for your kind remarks on Anne. I suppose she's all right but I'm so horribly tired of her that I can't see a single merit in her or the book and can't really convince myself that people are sincere when they praise her. You did not make the criticism I expected you to make and which a couple of the reviews did make—that the ending was too conventional. It was; and if I had known I was to be asked to write a second Anne book I wouldn't have “ended” it at all but just “stopped.” However, I didn't know and so finished it up as best I could.

There has been some spice in my life so far this summer reading the reviews. So far I have received sixty, two were harsh, one contemptuous, two mixed praise and blame and the remaining fifty-five were kind and flattering beyond my highest expectations. So I feel satisfied as far as that goes. I wish you could see the reviews; but as you can't I'll copy the main points herewith. Don't think me extremely *vain* for doing so. I know you

are interested in your fellow-writer's adventures. I enclose the Toronto *Globe* review of which I have a spare copy and you may keep it.

Phila. *Inquirer*. "A wholesome and stimulating book."

Montreal *Herald*. "A book which will appeal to the whole English speaking world—one of the most attractive figures Canadian fiction has produced."

Boston *Transcript*. "Anne is one of the most delightful girls that has appeared for many a day. She is positively irresistible."

St. John *Globe*. "A truly delightful little girl."

Pittsburg *Chronicle*. "Those who enjoy originality, quaintness, and character portrayal of a high order will make a grievous mistake if they ignore *Anne of Green Gables*! The heroine is one of the cleverest creations in recent fiction."

Boston *Herald*. "It could only have been written by a woman of deep and wide sympathy with child nature. A delightful story."

Detroit *Saturday Night*. "Here's to your good fortune, Anne. You will brighten many a career and darken nary a one."

Montreal *Star*. "The most fascinating book of the season."

Record Herald, Chicago. "Here is a literary bouquet full of life and naturalness and quiet humour and pathos."

Milwaukee, *Free Press*. "Anne has the elusive charm of personality. Every word she utters partakes of it and every one of her quaint expressive ways. She is full of flavour. A better book for girls there could hardly be for it possesses a freshness and vivacity very rare indeed among books for girls, or indeed among any books for children."

N.Y. *American*. "An idyllic story, one of the most delightful books we have read for many a day."

Phila. *North American*. "One of the most delightful characters in juvenile fiction—with graceful touches of fancy and in an original and captivating vein of humour."

Brooklyn *Times*. "Anne is very funny but she is not convincing."

N.Y. *Times*. "A mawkish, tiresome impossible heroine, combining the sentimentality of an Alfred Austin with the vocabulary of a Bernard Shaw."

Anne is a bore.”

N.Y. *World*. “The people in this book are delightfully studied and it is a pleasure to know them.”

The Outlook. “One of the best books for girls we have seen this long time, with plenty of character and originality.”

Buffalo *News*. “A story after the true lover’s heart—full of absorbing interest from first to last.”

Boston *Budget*. “A very engaging miss. She is too precocious a youngster for real life but very diverting as a book heroine. The story is fresh and entertaining and the author is to be congratulated on her maiden effort.”

Chicago *Inter-Ocean*. “The most notable thing about the book is the accurate and sympathetic observation of nature.”

Well, I fancy you’re tired of this—so I’ll let you off. One intended criticism in an otherwise favourable review tickled me immensely. “This is a very charming story but the author has missed an opportunity in her setting. Although this is Prince Edward Island which is virgin ground for a story writer, there is *nothing in the book distinctive of the place*. The scene might as well be laid in any New England village.”

The italics are mine. I suppose the critic imagines that I am some American who laid the scene of her story in P.E. Island by way of getting something new in geography but who has no real knowledge of the weird and uncanny lives led by the inhabitants thereof! Another review said, “What most impresses an American is how these people of Canada *resemble ourselves*.”

What did that poor man suppose we were like down here???

Now, I’ll take your letter and answer your questions just as they come. You say you warrant I had to do a “great deal of inventing.” Verily, yes. And not only inventing but combining and harmonizing and shading, etc., etc., etc. You *can’t* describe people *exactly* as they are. The *details* would be true, the *tout ensemble* utterly false. I have been told my characters are marvellously “true to life”—nay, Cavendish readers have got them all

fitted to real Cavendish people. Yet there isn't a portrait in the book. They are all "composites."

Yes, Anne's success at school *is* too good for literary art. But the book was written for *girls* and must please them to be a *financial* success. They would insist on some such development and I can't afford—yet, at least—to defy too openly the standards of my public. Some day I shall try to write a book that satisfies me wholly. In a book for the young it wouldn't do to have the hero "fail tremendously," as you say. They couldn't understand or sympathize with that. It would take older people. I do not think I'll ever be able to write stories for mature people. My gift such as it is seems to lie along literature for the young.

Yes, I took a great deal of pains with my style. I revised and re-wrote and altered words until I nearly bewildered myself.

In regard to the illustration. I thought the *second* one the best in the book—the one where she arrives at Green Gables. In it she looks almost exactly as I imagined her looking. However, I suppose the illustrations, lacking as they are in many respects, are about as good as most of those in present day fiction. The one I resented most is the bridge scene. Although in the chapter Anne is distinctly described as having "short rings of hair" she is depicted with streaming tresses!

I don't know the number of copies in an edition. That will come in the financial settling up at the end of the year. The first one would probably be small, the others larger. The publishers write me that orders have been held up for weeks waiting for the fourth edition, so that it would probably be quite a large one.

Yes, the publishers seem to be pushing the advertising well. They turn everything to account. In July a big party of Orangemen were going on a picnic. At the Boston North St. station, they saw a copy of *Anne of Green Gables* bound in green on a newsstand. They took, or pretended to take—they were likely half drunk—the title as a personal insult, marched across to the Page building, the band playing horrible dirges, and nearly mobbed the place. One of the editors came out and told them that although the title might be offensive "the heroine, Anne, had hair of a distinct orange hue."

Thereupon they “adopted” Anne as their mascot, gave her three cheers and went on their way rejoicing.

The Page Co. published an account of this incident in a dozen different papers from Boston to California. They have also set out posters and booklets galore. I am well satisfied with my publishers as far as everything has gone so far.

I pay \$5 for 100 clippings to the bureau, and have found them very satisfactory.

I don’t like my new Anne book as well as the first but that may be, as you say, because I’m so soaked and sated with her. I can see no freshness or interest in it. But, I suppose if I took the greatest masterpiece in fiction and read it over, say, a hundred times, one after the other with no interval between, I wouldn’t find much of either in it also. I felt the same, though not so strongly, when I finished *Anne*. But I am really convinced that it is not so good from an *artistic* standpoint, though it may prove popular and interesting enough. I had to write it too hurriedly—and the *freshness* of the *idea* was gone. It didn’t *grow* as the first book did. I simply *built* it. Anne, grown-up, couldn’t be made as quaint and unexpected as the child Anne. The book deals with her experiences while teaching for two years in Avonlea school. The publishers wanted this—and I’m awfully afraid if the thing takes, they’ll want me to write her through college. The idea makes me sick. I feel like the magician in the Eastern story who became the slave of the “jinn” he had conjured out of a bottle. If I’m to be dragged at Anne’s chariot wheels the rest of my life I’ll bitterly repent having “created” her.

As for Miriam—no, don’t mention my book to her—unless she asks you what I’m doing. In which case you may tell her the simple facts. If she ever refers to it let me know, for curiosity’s sake, what she says.

I have received a lot of nice letters from people about Anne. The editor of the Montreal *Herald* wrote me such a kind and encouraging letter, as did also the *Globe* (Toronto) Editor. I’ve been pestered with letters from “tourists” who “want to meet me.” I’ve snubbed all these latter politely, because I don’t want to be met. I had a letter from a lunatic in New York

yesterday. You may remember a *very* minor character in Anne is called *Priscilla Grant*. Well, it seems his great-great-grandmother was called Priscilla Grant and he wants me to write a book about the girl in my story and call it “Priscilla Grant.” And if I do, he’ll “do all he can to push it.” (He’s a book seller.)

Well, there has been a great deal of pleasure in all this! But it has its seamy side as well. I won’t say much of it as I don’t want to think of it. I’ll only say this. If you want to find out just how much *envy* and *petty spite* and *meanness* exists in people, even people who call themselves your friends, just write a successful book or do something they can’t do, and you’ll find out! Sometimes I feel sick at heart. But not all are such, thank God. I have many true friends who rejoice at my success, such as it is. But *most* of them are outside my clan connections.

But I’m not well. It was no joke, what I said at the start about feeling played out. I feel so utterly. I’m tired—deadly tired—all the time—just as tired when I wake in the morning as when I go to bed at night—tired body, soul and spirit. I have constant head-aches and no appetite. It’s not all due to literary work, although I suppose that helped it on. We had a houseful of guests all summer, the weather was fearfully hot and I was very much worried in one way or another almost constantly. When I get the book done (by the way, I can’t settle on a name for it and think I’ll leave it to the publishers to christen) I’m going to take a good rest and not write a word for two months. I wish I could get away for a trip and change but that is impossible as I can’t leave grandma.

I’ve been feeling rather worse since a shock I got three weeks ago. One very hot windy day our kitchen roof took fire. There was nobody here but grandma and myself. I dragged a ladder from the barn, hoisted it against the roof (at an ordinary time I couldn’t have lifted it from the ground) went up with a pail of water and succeeded in putting the fire out. Then I collapsed and had to go to bed. My nerves have been in rags ever since and I can’t hear a door slam without jumping and screaming. Nice state to be in! Well, I’m taking a “tonic” and hope it will do half it claims on the label.

I'm through. This is the most appallingly egotistical letter I ever wrote. It's all about myself and my wretched book. But if I hadn't written about that I'd have *simply nothing else* to write about except social gossip that would be Greek to you.

Perhaps some day I'll be rested and leisurely and able to "imagine" something worth writing you a letter about. Oh, that reminds me. I wish I'd never written about "kindred spirits" in my book. Every freak who has written to me about it, claims to be a "kindred spirit." I'm going to dedicate my new book to "kindred spirits." *You*, therefore, will have a share in it. But many folks will *think* they have who *haven't*.

Yours tiredly, headachely, listlessly, don't careishly—but *not* hopelessly,

L. M. Montgomery.

Cavendish, P.E.I.,
Tuesday Evening,
December 22, 1908.

Thermometer 5 below zero. A raging snowstorm to boot. Frost on window panes. Wind wailing in chimney. A box of white Roman hyacinths sending out alien whiffs of old summers.

* * *

My dear Mr. Weber:—

When I received your last letter on October 29th, I said to myself, “For once I’m going to be decent and I’ll answer this letter next week.” What is more, I really meant it. Yet here it is December 22nd. Well, I couldn’t help it, that is all there is to it. I’ve been so busy—and so tired. I’m still the latter. I’d love to go to bed and stay there for a whole month, doing nothing, seeing nothing and *thinking* nothing. I really don’t feel at all well—and yet there is nothing the matter with me. I’ve simply “gone stale.” If you’ve ever experienced the feeling I’m sure of your sympathy. If you haven’t it’s quite indescribable and I won’t try to describe it. Instead I’ll just pick up my notebook, turn back to the entry of my last letter to you and discuss the jottings of any possibly interesting happenings since. I daresay the most of the letter will be about that detestable *Anne*. There doesn’t seem to be anything but her in my life just now and I’m so horribly tired of her that I could wish in all truth and candour that I’d never written her, if it were not for just two things. One of these things is a letter I received last month from a poor little cripple in Ohio who wrote to thank me for writing *Anne* because she said it had taught her how to endure her long lonely days of imprisonment by just “imagining things.” And the other is that *Anne* has gone through six editions and that must mean a decent check when pay day comes!

Well, it was September when I last wrote. We had the most exquisite autumn here this year. October was more beautiful than any June I ever remember. I couldn't help enjoying it, tired and rushed as I was. Every morning before sitting down to my typewriter I'd take a walk over the hill and feel almost like I should feel for a little while. November was also a decent month as Novembers go, but December has been very cold. Today as aforesaid has been a big storm. We are drifted up, have had no mail, and were it not for my hyacinths I should feel inclined to stop being an optimist.

Well, I've done my duty by the weather, haven't I? Of course, one had to mention it. 'Twouldn't be lucky not to.

* * *

I beg leave to call your attention to a new and original thought which you have not probably heard before. It is this—"every rose has its thorn." This refers to a brief and cryptic entry in my notebook for September 12th, which entry I am not going to disclose but which I shall take as a concealed text to hang a few comments on.

I've written a successful book, which will probably bring me in some hard cash. This fact has many results. One of the results is this. An old schoolgirl chum, on whom I have always been on friendly terms, suddenly becomes cool, says spiteful things of me and my book, displays incivility and rudeness to me whenever we meet and finally withdraws herself into lofty disregard of my existence. I have not "put on airs" about my book at all. Why then should she behave so? Some people say she is jealous. I hate to think so but am forced to do so. Whatever be the cause I have lost an old friend. You will say such "friendship" is not real and is better lost. I agree with you. Nevertheless, old affections rooted in childhood are lasting things and I have felt a good deal of pain over my friend's attitude.

Again, if you have lived all your life in a little village where everybody is every whit as good and clever and successful as everybody else, and if you are foolish enough to do something which the others in the

village cannot do, especially if that something brings you in a small modicum of fame and fortune a certain class of people will take it as a personal insult to themselves, will belittle you and your accomplishment in every way and will go out of their way to make sure that you are informed of their opinions. I could not begin to tell you all the petty flings of malice and spite of which I have been the target of late, even among some of my own relations.

Well, I mustn't growl about this. I tell it to you merely that you need not be afraid I ought to sacrifice something dear to the gods to avert their envy. My sunshine is not so unclouded as to be a "weather breeder."

* * *

I've been doing very little "free lance work" since I wrote. After I finished my book MS I took a six weeks' rest from all literary work. It did not do me the good I had hoped. Indeed, I think I would have been better at work. I had only more time for morbid brooding over certain worries and troubles that have been ever present in my life for the past six years. They are caused by people and circumstances over which I have no control, so I am quite helpless in regard to them and when I get run-down I take a too morbid view of them. Last week I began work again by blocking out a short serial for girls.

In September the *Youth's Companion* took a poem and sent ten dollars for it, and the *Red Book* sent \$25 for a story. In October the *Pictorial Review* of New York published a short story I had sent them in June and never heard from since. It was a much peddled tale, brazen from many rejections. They sent me fifty dollars for it. It was not worth ten. It *must* have been on *Anne's* merits this tale sold. Well, I'll soon be done peddling off my old MSS. I'm almost completely sold out of them now. In future I'm going to cut out all "hack work" and write up only ideas which appeal to me. Thanks to *Anne's* success I expect to be able to afford this, even should it prove a losing venture. But I don't think it will. I believe if I write solely to please myself it will "take" better than writing to please

somebody else. I wrote *Anne* that way and I believe it's the only way to appeal to a large audience. But of course a writer who is struggling up can seldom afford to do this at first. I've served a long and hard apprenticeship—how hard no one knows but myself. The world only hears of my successes. It *doesn't* hear of all my early buffets and repulses.

* * *

Letters! Don't mention them. I have often read of the way authors were pestered with letters but now I realize it acutely. It *has* become a pest. At first I was delighted when once or twice a week I got a nice kind letter saying nice things of *Anne*; but now they come, four or five a day, all waiting an answer. I'm tired of writing them—I can't attend properly to my personal correspondence because of them. Of course they are all nice and some of them are from people I am very proud to think like my book. I think I wrote you about Mark Twain's letter. Bliss Carman and Sir Louis Davies also wrote me very kind and flattering epistles. No, I see by my notebook Mark Twain's letter came after I wrote you. He wrote me that in *Anne* I had created "the dearest, and most lovable child in fiction since the immortal Alice." Do you think I wasn't *proud* of Mark's encomium? Oh, perhaps not!

Anne went into her sixth edition on December first. Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, London, has brought out an English Edition. I had a letter from William Briggs Toronto today asking to be permitted to publish my next book. I could not do this if I wished since I signed an agreement with Page's to give them the refusal of all my books for five years. But even if I were free I wouldn't give the MS. to a Canadian firm. It is much better financially to have it published in the States.

The reviews keep coming in as usual. Success seems, as usual, to have succeeded—that is they are almost all favourable now. Since I last wrote I have had only two unfavourable ones. One said nobody over 14 years of age would find the book of interest. In reference to that I might quote what T. H. Leavitt, Inspector of Public Libraries for Ontario, wrote me, "It is

usually a sign of dotage when an old man falls in love with a young girl; but there are exceptions, such as in my case. I am not ashamed to say that I am the old man and *Anne of Green Gables* is the young girl.”

He must be over 14!

The other review wasn’t very bad—just rather contemptuous. It wound up by quoting a speech of Anne’s and then said, “Further than this the present reviewer did not follow the adventures of this infant prodigy so he cannot tell of what further marvels Anne was capable.”

Will you believe that “this” was just to the end of the *fifth* chapter?

But I don’t think some of the favourable reviewers could have read the book very carefully either. A very flattering review started off as follows: “The scene of this charming story is laid in Victoria Island near Nova Scotia. So far away, we may doubt the existence of Victoria Island but the geographies assure us of the reality of Nova Scotia. But it does not matter whether there is a Victoria Island or not; all that matters is that this is the most delightful book, etc.”

What do you make of that?

The Bookman has Anne listed as one of the six “best sellers” in ten different cities. This seems to me rather like something I’ve dreamed. I can’t really believe it.

I finished typewriting my new book the first of November and sent it to Boston the middle of the month. Haven’t heard from their readers yet but don’t suppose they’ll reject it exactly. It’s not as good as *Anne* but not so much worse as to be turned down I think.

Typewriting it almost finished me. I’d have hired it done but I knew nobody could ever make the MS. out, with its innumerable alterations, interlineations and complex notes to be inserted in scores of places. But you don’t know how wretchedly tired I was when I finished. I’ll never consent to be so hurried again. “What shall it profit a woman if she gain a big royalty and lose her own soul!”—getting in place of it a horrible sort of “aching void” that doesn’t care enough about anything to take the trouble of it?

I suppose your threshing experiences of which you wrote so graphically are over now. (I've dropped the notebook and taken up your letter.) It must be very hard work—but at least it seems to give you a good appetite—which is what writing stories at high pressure *doesn't*. I haven't tasted anything that tasted *good* for two months. I eat by way of disagreeable duty. However, in the morning, judging by appearances now I'll have to go out and shovel snow and that honest toil will probably make me honestly hungry. "We've all got troubles of our own." *David Harum* says "a reasonable amount of fleas is good for a dog—keeps him from brooding on being a dog." The trouble is, we all think we have an *unreasonable* amount of fleas—and who is to judge?

I'm so deathly tired I'm going to stop writing for tonight though it isn't very late yet. I'll finish tomorrow night if possible.

* * *

Wednesday, Dec. 23.

I hope *this* isn't going to last all winter—more storm and bitter frost. I *did* shovel snow as predicted—there's no one we can get to do this for us—but it's all drifted back again. No mail still—and I'm ready to tear out my hair in handfuls!

Really, this has been a hard day. I haven't felt very well and am "tired" than ever tonight. But I shall try to finish this letter—nay, I *will* finish it, even if I just have to "stop short."

Yes, I want to see you settle down to some congenial work as soon as possible. Shake off as many of your metaphorical fleas as possible, resolve to "grin and bear" the unshakeable ones, and "hoe in." Nothing but steady, persistent labour will win in literature. "Dogged does it." Why not try your hand on some essays on prairie life—the inwardness and outwardness of it, treating the subject delicately, analytically, *intimately*, exhaustively, and try your luck with William Briggs. Ten or twelve would make a book. Write on the prairie in all its aspects—by day, by night, in winter and

summer, etc., etc., etc. Make each essay about three or four thousand words long and put all the airy fancy and thought into it that you can. Call the whole book *The Northern Silence* and write a title essay on that subject. Don't be in a hurry—write just when you feel in the mood for it.

* * *

Eight O'clock.

Here it is two hours later. A Christmas caller came in bringing a *duck* and a box of candy. (Write an essay on "Christmas on the Prairie" for your book!) It's really very hard to give good advice under such circumstances. But I was about through anyhow. Really, I'm in earnest. I think you could do it all right. There are many sentences and ideas in your various letters which could be worked admirably into such a series and if you decide to try it I'll copy them out and send them to you.

I must close now, for another caller has come and I do not expect to have any more spare time till after Xmas. I am enclosing the proof of the review that appeared in *National*. You may keep it. Also, as soon as I can get an envelope to fit it I'll send you a souvenir copy of my "Island Hymn," with music.

The best wishes of the season to you,

Yours very cordially,
L. M. Montgomery.

P.S. Have you heard lately from Miriam? L.M.M.

Cavendish, P.E.I.,
Sunday Evening,
March 28, 1909.

My dear Mr. Weber:

Three weeks ago I took your letter out of the box where I keep unanswered epistles and said, "I'll write Mr. W. tonight." Yet here it is three weeks later. Somehow, I never could get sufficient time all at once and I can't write a decent letter in shreds and patches. I'm writing all this not as an apology. But merely as a statement of fact.

I can't find the entry in my notebook where I wrote you last so I'll begin at "this" end of it and work backward crab fashion till I come to it. This will probably result in a rather heterogeneous epistle but "needs must, etc."

Beginning with today then, it has really been doleful in the extreme. It has been pouring rain all day and this coming on a lot of recent March snow has made fearful slush, slump and mud. The world hereabouts is so ugly that it hurts me to look on it. One can hardly believe that in a few weeks it will be all bridling and smiling in wedding finery of pink and green. God hasten the time, say I, for I long for dry ground for woodland rambles and shore reveries.

I've just stumbled by accident on the entry I couldn't find, so will just begin where I left off last time.

The New Year opened sadly for me with the sudden and unexpected death of my favourite aunt. Aunt Mary was a sort of second mother to me—a sweet, fine, brave, plucky little woman who had lived a more truly heroic life than many of the heroes and heroines of history. She had a very dissipated husband and all the care of providing for and educating her family of six fell on her. She did it so triumphantly that every one of them is today occupying an honourable social station and a prosperous financial condition. Then, her work done and tired out, she died—"after life's fitful

fever she sleeps well.” If she could have but lived ten years to enjoy the ease and pleasure her children were so eager to give her!

I felt her death bitterly; but these things can’t be written about!

I have not been especially well this winter. Yet I hate to complain when there is so much worse suffering everywhere. I’ve been very nervous and at times somewhat morbid. The doctor says my nervous system is run down and requires a course of raw eggs and cod liver oil. I find I’m improving under such regimen and this last month I’ve been much better, though I still get very tired far too easily and quickly.

Signed the agreement for my new book the other day, on the same terms as before. It is to be called *Anne of Avonlea*—the publishers’ christening. I wanted it *The Later Adventures of Anne*. It is not to be out before next fall. They write me that *Anne* is still selling as well as ever and they do not wish to give her a rival as long as that continues.

I had *such* a funny letter from a man the other day who had read my book. He seems rather an illiterate person but his letter was passable till it came to the postscript. “I am a married man so you will understand that my motive in writing to you is only friendship.” There’s a thoughtful man for you! *He* is not going to arouse any vain hopes in the bosom of a poor literary spinster!

The flood of letters continues. Some of them are very nice. A great many English people have written to me. I enclose a few criticisms from English papers.

In February I got my first royalty cheque for the amount due me up to the close of the year. It was for seventeen hundred and thirty dollars. Not bad for the first six months of a new book by an unknown author, I think. I get nine cents out of the wholesale price of 90c. It seems rather disproportionate to the publisher’s share; but I suppose when you consider that they’ve got to run their business out of the profits as well as make up for what they lose on books that don’t succeed it is not likely they clear much more than the author after all.

If you can get hold of a book by Bliss Carman called *The Making of Personality*, read it. I know you’ll find it both delightful and helpful. I did.

A friend lent it to me lately and I thought so much of it I'm going to send for it for my own library. It embodies a fine and excellent philosophy of life and has the charm of beautiful literary finish besides.

Now for your letter:—

So you have removed to Vancouver. You don't exactly say you like it, or the reverse. I've heard much in its praise but I don't fancy I'd like to live there. I have a lawyer uncle there, my mother's brother, Chester B. Macneill. So you are—or were—rooming at a Christian Scientist's. Well, I hope her "science" will guard her unlocked doors! It is laughable to see the extremes to which the human mind will go. I believe there is a good deal in mental healing, where no organic disease is present, but I fear 'twould prove a poor defence against a sneak thief were he "so disposed." Are you following the Emmanuel Movement in Boston? I am and feel considerable interest in it. It is practically Christian Science purged of its absurdities. Last fall I was reading some of its articles and decided to try to cure myself of sick headaches, from which I had suffered every few weeks for eight years. I've been to several doctors and tried all sorts of medicines—got eyeglasses but though there was a very slight improvement it was not a cure and did not last. Well, I began last November. Every night when I found myself dropping off to sleep I would repeat to myself "Remove the cause of my headaches." I really hadn't the least faith in it. But it is a simple fact that I have never had a headache since I began! I discontinued the "treatment" after a month but there has been no return of the headaches. I am not *altogether* convinced—it is possibly only a coincidence and they might have stopped anyhow. But I am "almost persuaded" that it was the mental suggestion which did it. Anyhow "faith" had nothing to do with it, for I had none.

I have been trying to cure my nervous trouble but can't see that it did any good—although perhaps my present improvement is the result of it instead of my tonics!

Did you get the copy of my Island Hymn? I sent it to Didsbury before I knew of your change of location. I believe it was sung and presented as a stage picture at a concert in the Opera House in town the other night. The

author and composer were called before the curtain and cheered. But only the composer could respond. The author couldn't go. She had to stay home and wish she could.

In regard to photos—I intend to have some new ones taken in the spring and *if* they are decent I will send you one. My pictures seldom resemble me. I am a petite person with very delicate features; my photos, at least the “head and bust” ones represent me usually as a strapping personage with quite a large pronounced face. The last one I had taken—the one that has been so generously scattered over the continent in magazines and advertisements, was considered good of me. I sat for one the other day as the Page Co. insisted on a new one for the *Book News Monthly*. They wanted a head and shoulders picture and the result is not like me, though passable as a picture. I am not having any finished from it. I shall be very much pleased to have one of yours in return any time you may be ready to send it.

You have my sympathy in regard to your father's death. I have had a double experience of those brutal telegrams announcing the death of a dear one. They are like a blow in the face. A letter softens it a little but a telegram cannot. I think a sudden death is hard on the survivors; but I agree with you fully that is the most desirable of deaths for the one most vitally concerned. I pray I may die so. I don't want to *know* I'm going to die. And yet I have a horrible fear that I'll die by inches, as you say. When I read of someone having died in his sleep I always envy him. What a strange thing this death is. We all know we are going to die sometime but the knowledge never worries us or clouds our happiness here, as a general thing. Theologians have done much to surround death with horror and dread. If we listened to Nature's teachings we should be happier, truly believing (I hold) that death is simply a falling asleep, probably with awakening to some happy and useful existence, at the worst an endless and dreamless repose. Isn't the Christian (?) doctrine of eternal torment as *hellish* as the idea it teaches? How could men ever have so libelled God? They must have judged Him from their own evil hearts. *They* would have tortured their enemies eternally if they could. God had power, therefore He

would. Such seems to have been their argument. I admit that a consciousness of sin and remorse is a hell in itself. But I believe that “as long as a human soul lives it can turn to God and goodness if it so will.” Nobody *wilfully* chooses evil. We choose it because we deceive ourselves into thinking it good and pleasant. When we find that it isn’t we turn from it. Sometimes, in the case of bad habits, we cannot turn from it. But I believe that only lasts while the physical body on which the habit is impressed lasts. When it is destroyed the habit will also be destroyed and the liberated soul will get “another chance,” with the warning of its bitter experiences.

Well, we believe and believe. Some day we’ll know—or else there will be no curiosity.

I find I’m getting tired. I can’t write as long at a stretch without growing weary as I could formerly. So I’ll say good-night. I’m going to address this to Didsbury as I’m not certain where you may be. They will probably forward it.

Yours faithfully,
L. M. Montgomery.

P.S. Please do not mention to anyone how much my royalty was.

Cavendish, P.E.I.,
Thursday Evening,
Sept. 2, 1909.

My dear Mr. Weber:—

I have been waiting for weeks in the vain hope of getting enough time to write you a decent letter “at one fell swoop,” and not simply by fits and starts—five minutes now and ten minutes later on, as most of my letters have been written this summer. We have had a houseful of company and I’ve been so busy!

This is a good evening for letter writing, insomuch as it is pouring rain, and therefore I am not likely to be interrupted by callers. But I have a cold and headache and so am not exactly in the mood for writing. But I must not delay any longer, for I want to acknowledge your photo which came a few days ago and I was vastly pleased to get. I cannot, of course, judge if it is “true to life” but it looks as if it ought to be. Thank you very much for it. I have one to send you in return, but I shall not forward it until I am sure your present address will “stay put” long enough for you to get it, or it may go astray. When you receive this letter drop me a postal with your permanent address and I’ll forward the photo “immediately and to onct.” My friends like it. They say it is very like me in the face but my figure looks much too stout in it. I’m really very slight.

Well, I’ve been very busy all summer and yet I’ve accomplished *nothing*. A satisfactory epitome of a summer, is it not? Our guests left last week, however, and now I mean to settle down, if possible, to a good autumn’s work. I’ve begun work at a new book, with a new heroine. It’s to be called *The Story Girl* and I have the *first sentence* and the last paragraph written!

The new Anne book is out—I got my copies day before yesterday. We soon get used to things. I was quite wild with excitement last year on the day my first book came. But I took this one very coolly and it caused merely a momentary ripple on the day’s surface. Its “get-up” is very

similar to the first. You're to get a copy. I ordered it sent to you direct from the publishers to "Calgary, Alberta," so be on the look-out for it if you move on. I enclose an autograph card which you can paste on fly-leaf if you wish.

I am glad they did not illustrate this book, except for the frontispiece. I did not like the illustrations in the first one. The painting of Anne Shirley will do. It isn't "my" Anne, but doesn't glaringly violate what she might be.

Now for your letter:—

So you attended a meeting of the World's Congress of Women! Do you know, I was actually asked to read a paper before that august assemblage in Toronto. I had no difficulty in refusing to do that; but I should have liked to attend the congress, if I could have got away. It would be a very broadening experience, I fancy.

As for the woman suffrage question, I feel very little interest in it. But I *do* believe that a woman with property of her own should have a voice in making the laws. Am I not as intelligent and capable of voting for my country's good as the Frenchman who chops my wood for me, and who may be able to tell his right hand from his left, but cannot read or write?

So you wish "married women everywhere were real companions to their husbands." So do I—as heartily as I wish that married men everywhere were real companions for their wives. You can't, as Emerson says, cut this matter off with only one side. It has to have two. As for "spheres," I believe anyone's sphere—whether man or woman—is where they can be happiest and do the best work. The majority of women are happiest and best placed at home, just as the majority of men are in the world. But there are exceptions to *both*. Some women are born for a public career, just as some men are *born to cook in a restaurant*. Yes, they are! And each has a right to fulfil the purpose of their birth. Sex seems to me to enter very little into the question. There is no sex in mind, I do believe, and—"let each one find his own," and her own, in business as well as matrimony.

Have you heard from Miriam lately? Does she ever mention me? Does she know about my books? Poor Miriam, I was reading over some of her hectic epistles the other day and enjoyed them as curious character studies. What sort of a husband has she got if he can't keep her decently.

Yes, I advise you to specialize on English and languages as soon as you can. This is the age of specialization and I believe you could do excellent work along that line (I see the *Bookman* has tabooed the expression "along that line"—consigned it to its "inferno," but it's too too convenient to give up), and would probably enjoy teaching it. I do not think you need give up "following the gleam" because you are going back to teaching again. Thank God, we can always follow the gleam, no matter what we do. I've tried to follow it for many a weary year—*how* weary, no one knows but myself, for I've always tried to keep my personal worries and crosses to myself, not allowing their bitterness to overflow into others' lives. But I've reached a bit of upland now and, looking back over the ascent, some things are made clear to me that have long puzzled me. But there's lots of climbing to do yet. I must take a long breath and start anew. If I can only write my new book up to my conception of it, it will be away ahead of *Anne* from a literary point of view. But I know I shan't be able to—

Did ever on painter's canvas live
The power of his fancy's dream?

Still, I'll do my best and it will surely be a step in advance. Do you likewise take heart of grace and "follow knowledge like a sinking star" to the utmost bound of your endeavour. You know what Keats says—

He ne'er is crowned
With immortality who fears to follow
Where airy voices lead.

Follow your "airy voices" fearlessly and they'll lead you to the heights.

The only thing I've written since May is a series of four articles on the words in the four seasons. I put a good deal of blood into them but don't

know whether they're worth while after all. I don't know either just what magazine they'll do for. I enjoyed writing them so perhaps people will enjoy reading them. It's a fairly good test.

I've done a lot of "gadding" this summer, and it was really a horrible waste of time because there was no pleasure in it. Had there been, I'd have considered it a very wise use of time. I had to go out to tea and attend garden parties galore and I was generally bored to death, especially when people thought themselves bound to say something about my book. They all say practically the same thing and I say the same thing in reply and I'm tired of it. Then I talked gossip and made poor jokes and altogether wished I were home in my den with a book or a pen. Not that I don't enjoy *real* conversation. There is nothing I enjoy more. But it's not once in a thousand times I get it and anything else is like brown sugar in the god's nectar. "For every idle word ye speak ye shall give account in the day of judgment." May the Lord have mercy on my soul! I have talked idle words by the *million* this summer.

By the way, what a vital thought that is—like so many other thoughts in that wonderful old Bible. "*Idle* words." Not bad words, or bitter words, or wicked words! They have some strength and purpose and vitality in them that *almost* justifies them. But *idle* words,—words that desecrate the sacredness of language meant to convey heart and soul's deepest meaning to heart and soul, debased coin of speech that discredits the image and superscription of the godhead inscribed on it; weak words, silly words, *empty* words, "sounding brass and tinkling cymbals"—yea, verily, 'tis of these we must give account, and who of us have not so sinned?

By the way, I had a good laugh today over a card that came to me addressed to "Miss Anne Shirley, care of Miss Marilla Cuthbert, Avonlea, Prince Edward Island, Canada, *Ontario*." In the correspondence space was written "Dear Anne, I am sending you a picture of the floral clock in our park at Detroit, Michigan, from a friend." No name was signed to it. The writing was very unformed so I presume it is from some kiddy who fondly imagines that all the people in books live "really and truly" somewhere. A

p.o. clerk in town had written across it, “Try Miss Montgomery, Cavendish,” so it reached me.

I think it was since I wrote you that I received a copy of the London *Spectator* reviewing Anne. It honoured me with a two column review and was exceedingly kind and flattering. I *did* feel flattered. The *Spectator* is supposed to be “the” review of England and praise or blame from it makes or mars. It wound up by solemnly warning me *not* to make a sequel so when it sees I’ve disregarded its advice I expect it will justify my warning by “slating” my new book. But I’d rather be *abused* by the *Spectator* than ignored,—or even *praised* by many inferior sheets. I can’t really believe that my little yarn, written with an eye single to Sunday School scholars, should really have been taken notice of by the *Spectator*.

What are you doing in Calgary? Teaching? A cousin of mine, Laura McIntyre, has just gone to Calgary as a bride—Mrs. Ralph Aylesworth. If you come across her tell her to be good to you for my sake!

This new sheet is simply to say good-bye on. Write when the spirit moves. I’m always glad to hear from you, even if I am slow in answering. That isn’t my fault but my misfortune.

Yours faithfully,
L. M. Montgomery.

Autobiography

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THE ALPINE PATH: THE STORY OF MY CAREER

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I

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When the Editor of *Everywoman's World* asked me to write "The Story of My Career," I smiled with a little touch of incredulous amusement. My career? *Had* I a career? Was not—should not—a "career" be something splendid, wonderful, spectacular at the very least, something varied and exciting? Could my long, uphill struggle, through many quiet, uneventful years, be termed a "career"? It had never occurred to me to call it so; and, on first thought, it did not seem to me that there was much to be said about that same long, monotonous struggle. But it appeared to be a whim of the aforesaid editor that I should say what little there was to be said; and in those same long years I acquired the habit of accommodating myself to the whims of editors to such an inveterate degree that I have not yet been able to shake it off. So I shall cheerfully tell my tame story. If it does nothing else, it may serve to encourage some other toiler who is struggling along in the weary pathway I once followed to success.

Many years ago, when I was still a child, I clipped from a current magazine a bit of verse, entitled "To the Fringed Gentian," and pasted it on the corner of the little portfolio on which I wrote my letters and school essays. Every time I opened the portfolio I read one of those verses over; it was the key-note of my every aim and ambition:

"Then whisper, blossom, in thy sleep
How I may upward climb
The Alpine path, so hard, so steep,
That leads to heights sublime;
How I may reach that far-off goal
Of true and honoured fame,
And write upon its shining scroll
A woman's humble name."

It is indeed a “hard and steep” path; and if any word I can write will assist or encourage another pilgrim along that path, that word I gladly and willingly write.

I was born in the little village of Clifton, Prince Edward Island. “Old Prince Edward Island” is a good place in which to be born—a good place in which to spend a childhood. I can think of none better. We Prince Edward Islanders are a loyal race. In our secret soul we believe that there is no place like the little Province that gave us birth. We may suspect that it isn’t *quite* perfect, any more than any other spot on this planet, but you will not catch us admitting it. And how furiously we hate any one who does say it! The only way to inveigle a Prince Edward Islander into saying anything in dispraise of his beloved Province is to praise it extravagantly to him. Then, in order to deprecate the wrath of the gods and veil decently his own bursting pride, he will, perhaps, be induced to state that it has one or two drawbacks—mere spots on the sun. But his hearer must not commit the unpardonable sin of agreeing with him!

Prince Edward Island, however, is really a beautiful Province—the most beautiful place in America, I believe. Elsewhere are more lavish landscapes and grander scenery; but for chaste, restful loveliness it is unsurpassed. “Compassed by the inviolate sea,” it floats on the waves of the blue gulf, a green seclusion and “haunt of ancient peace.”

Much of the beauty of the Island is due to the vivid colour contrasts—the rich red of the winding roads, the brilliant emerald of the uplands and meadows, the glowing sapphire of the encircling sea. It is the sea which makes Prince Edward Island in more senses than the geographical. You cannot get away from the sea down there. Save for a few places in the interior, it is ever visible somewhere, if only in a tiny blue gap between distant hills, or a turquoise gleam through the dark boughs of spruce fringing an estuary. Great is our love for it; its tang gets into our blood: its siren call rings ever in our ears; and no matter where we wander in lands afar, the murmur of its waves ever summons us back in our dreams to the homeland. For few things am I more thankful than for the fact that I was born and bred beside that blue St. Lawrence Gulf.

And yet we cannot define the charm of Prince Edward Island in terms of land or sea. It is too elusive—too subtle. Sometimes I have thought it was the touch of austerity in an Island landscape that gives it its peculiar charm. And whence comes that austerity? Is it in the dark dappling of spruce and fir? Is it in the glimpses of sea and river? Is it in the bracing tang of the salt air? Or does it go deeper still, down to the very soul of the land? For lands have personalities just as well as human beings; and to know that personality you must live in the land and companion it, and draw sustenance of body and spirit from it; so only can you really know a land and be known of it.

My father was Hugh John Montgomery; my mother was Clara Woolner Macneill. So I come of Scotch ancestry, with a dash of English from several “grands” and “greats.” There were many traditions and tales on both sides of the family, to which, as a child, I listened with delight while my elders talked them over around winter firesides. The romance of them was in my blood; I thrilled to the lure of adventure which had led my forefathers westward from the Old Land—a land which I always heard referred to as “Home,” by men and women whose parents were Canadian born and bred.

* * *

Hugh Montgomery came to Canada from Scotland. He sailed on a vessel bound for Quebec; but the fates and a woman’s will took a hand in the thing. His wife was desperately seasick all the way across the Atlantic—and a voyage over the Atlantic was no five days’ run then. Off the north shore of Prince Edward Island, then a wild, wooded land, with settlements few and far between, the Captain hove-to in order to replenish his supply of water. He sent a boat ashore, and he told poor Mrs. Montgomery that she might go in it for a little change. Mrs. Montgomery did go in it; and when she felt that blessed dry land under her feet once more, she told her husband that she meant to stay there. Never again would she set foot in any vessel. Expostulation, entreaty, argument, all availed nothing. There

the poor lady was resolved to stay, and there, perforce, her husband had to stay with her. So the Montgomerys came to Prince Edward Island.

Their son Donald, my great-grandfather, was the hero of another romance of those early days. I have used this tale in my book, *The Story Girl*. The Nancy and Betty Sherman of the story told there were Nancy and Betsy Penman, daughters of a United Empire Loyalist who came from the States at the close of the war of Independence. George Penman had been a paymaster in the British Army; having forfeited all his property, he was very poor, but the beauty of the Penman girls, especially Nancy, was so great that they had no lack of suitors from far and near. The Donald Fraser of *The Story Girl* was Donald Montgomery, and Neil Campbell was David Murray, of Bedeque. The only embroidery I permitted myself in the telling of the tale was to give Donald a horse and cutter. In reality, what he had was a half-broken steer, hitched to a rude, old wood-sled, and it was with this romantic equipage that he hied him over to Richmond Bay to propose to Nancy!

My grandfather, Senator Montgomery, was the son of Donald and Nancy, and inherited his stately presence and handsome face from his mother. He married his first cousin, Annie Murray, of Bedeque, the daughter of David and Betsy. So that Nancy and Betsy were both my great-grandmothers. If Betsy were alive today, I have no doubt, she would be an ardent suffragette. The most advanced feminist could hardly spurn old conventions more effectually than she did when she proposed to David. I may add that I was always told that she and David were the happiest couple in the world.

* * *

It was from my mother's family—the Macneills—that I inherited my knack of writing and my literary tastes. John Macneill had come to Prince Edward Island in 1775; his family belonged to Argyleshire and had been adherents of the unfortunate Stuarts. Consequently, young Macneill found that a change of climate would probably be beneficial. Hector Macneill, a

minor Scottish poet, was a cousin of his. He was the author of several beautiful and well-known lyrics, among them “Saw ye my wee thing, saw ye my ain thing,” “I lo’e ne’er a laddie but one,” and “Come under my plaidie”—the latter often and erroneously attributed to Burns.

John Macneill settled on a north-shore farm in Cavendish and had a family of twelve children, the oldest being William Macneill, my great-grandfather, commonly known as “Old Speaker Macneill.” He was a very clever man, well educated for those times, and exercised a wide influence in provincial politics. He married Eliza Townsend, whose father was Captain John Townsend of the British Navy. His father, James Townsend, had received a grant of Prince Edward Island land from George III, which he called Park Corner, after the old family estate in England. Thither he came, bringing his wife. Bitterly homesick she was—rebelliously so. For weeks after her arrival she would not take off her bonnet, but walked the floor in it, imperiously demanding to be taken home. We children who heard the tale never wearied of speculating as to whether she took off her bonnet at night and put it on again in the morning, or whether she slept in it. But back home she could not go, so eventually she took off her bonnet and resigned herself to her fate. Very peacefully she sleeps in the little, old, family graveyard on the banks of the “Lake of Shining Waters”—in other words, Campbell’s Pond at Park Corner. An old, red sandstone slab marks the spot where she and her husband lie, and on it is carved this moss-grown epitaph—one of the diffuse epitaphs of a generation that had time to carve such epitaphs and time to read them.

“To the memory of James Townsend, of Park Corner, Prince Edward Island. Also of Elizabeth, his wife. They emigrated from England to this Island, A.D. 1775, with two sons and three daughters, viz., John, James, Eliza, Rachel, and Mary. Their son John died in Antigua in the lifetime of his parents. His afflicted mother followed him into Eternity with patient resignation on the seventeenth day of April, 1795, in the 69th year of her age. And her disconsolate husband departed this life on the 25th day of December, 1806, in the 87th year of his age.”

I wonder if any homesick dreams haunt Elizabeth Townsend's slumber of over a hundred years!

William and Eliza Macneill had a large family of which all the members possessed marked intellectual power. Their education consisted only in the scanty, occasional terms of the district school of those rude, early days; but, had circumstances been kinder, some of them would have climbed high. My grandfather, Alexander Macneill, was a man of strong and pure literary tastes, with a considerable knack of prose composition. My great-uncle, William Macneill, could write excellent satirical verse. But his older brother, James Macneill, was a born poet. He composed hundreds of poems, which he would sometimes recite to favoured persons. They were never written down, and not a line of them, so far as I know, is now extant. But I heard my grandfather repeat many of them, and they were real poetry, most of them being satirical or mock-heroic. They were witty, pointed, and dramatic. Uncle James was something of a "mute, inglorious" Burns. Circumstances compelled him to spend his life on a remote Prince Edward Island farm; had he had the advantages of education that are within reach of any schoolboy to-day, I am convinced he would have been neither mute nor inglorious.

The "Aunt Mary Lawson," to whom I dedicated *The Story Girl*, was another daughter of William and Eliza Macneill. No story of my "career" would be complete without a tribute to her, for she was one of the formative influences of my childhood. She was really quite the most wonderful woman in many respects that I have ever known. She had never had any educational advantages. But she had a naturally powerful mind, a keen intelligence, and a most remarkable memory which retained to the day of her death all that she had ever heard or read or seen. She was a brilliant conversationalist, and it was a treat to get Aunt Mary started on tales and recollections of her youth, and all the vivid doings and sayings, of the folk in those young years of the Province. We were "chums," she and I, when she was in the seventies and I was in my teens. I cannot, in any words at my command, pay the debt I owe to Aunt Mary Lawson.

When I was twenty-one months old my mother died, in the old home at Cavendish, after a lingering illness. I distinctly remember seeing her in her coffin—it is my earliest memory. My father was standing by the casket holding me in his arms. I wore a little white dress of embroidered muslin, and Father was crying. Women were seated around the room, and I recall two in front of me on the sofa who were whispering to each other and looking pityingly at Father and me. Behind them the window was open, and green vines were trailing across it, while their shadows danced over the floor in a square of sunshine.

I looked down at Mother's dead face. It was a sweet face, albeit worn and wasted by months of suffering. My mother had been beautiful, and Death, so cruel in all else, had spared the delicate outline of feature, the long silken lashes brushing the hollow cheek, and the smooth masses of golden-brown hair.

I did not feel any sorrow, for I knew nothing of what it all meant. I was only vaguely troubled. Why was Mother so still? And why was Father crying? I reached down and laid my baby hand against Mother's cheek. Even yet I can feel the coldness of that touch. Somebody in the room sobbed and said, "Poor child." The chill of Mother's face had frightened me; I turned and put my arms appealingly about Father's neck and he kissed me. Comforted, I looked down again at the sweet, placid face as he carried me away. That one precious memory is all I have of the girlish mother who sleeps in the old burying-ground of Cavendish, lulled forever by the murmur of the sea.

II

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I was brought up by my grandparents in the old Macneill Homestead in Cavendish. Cavendish is a farming settlement on the north shore of Prince Edward Island. It was eleven miles from a railway and twenty-four miles from the nearest town. It was settled in 1700 by three Scotch families—the Macneills, Simpsons, and Clarks. These families had inter-married to such an extent that it was necessary to be born or bred in Cavendish in order to know whom it was safe to criticize. I heard Aunt Mary Lawson once naively admit that “the Macneills and Simpsons always considered themselves a little better than the common run;” and there was a certain rather ill-natured local saying which was always being cast up to us of the clans by outsiders, “From the conceit of the Simpsons, the pride of the Macneills, and the vain-glory of the Clarks, good Lord deliver us.” Whatever were their faults, they were loyal, clannish, upright, God-fearing folk, inheriting traditions of faith and simplicity and aspiration.

I spent my childhood and girlhood in an old-fashioned Cavendish farmhouse, surrounded by apple orchards. The first six years of my life are hazy in recollection. Here and there, a memory picture stands out in vivid colours. One of these was the wonderful moment when, I fondly supposed, I discovered the exact locality of Heaven.

* * *

One Sunday, when I could not have been more than four years old, I was in the old Clifton Church with Aunt Emily. I heard the minister say something about Heaven—that strange, mysterious place about which my only definite idea was that it was “where Mother had gone.”

“Where is Heaven?” I whispered to Aunt Emily, although I knew well that whispering in church was an unpardonable sin. Aunt Emily did not

commit it. Silently, gravely, she pointed upward. With the literal and implicit belief of childhood, I took it for granted that this meant that portion of Clifton Church which was above the ceiling. There was a little square hole in the ceiling. Why could we not go up through it and see Mother? This was a great puzzle to me. I resolved that when I grew bigger I would go to Clifton and find some means of getting up into Heaven and finding Mother. This belief and hope was a great, though secret, comfort to me for several years. Heaven was no remote, unattainable place—"some brilliant but distant shore." No, no! It was only ten miles away, in the attic of Clifton Church! Very, very sadly and slowly I surrendered that belief.

Hood wrote, in his charming *I Remember* that he was farther off from Heaven than when he was a boy. To me, too, the world seemed a colder, lonelier place when age and experience at length forced upon my reluctant seven-year-old consciousness the despairing conviction that Heaven was not so near me as I had dreamed. Mayhap, 'twas even nearer, "nearer than breathing, closer than hands or feet" but the ideas of childhood are, necessarily, very concrete; and when I once accepted the fact that the gates of pearl and streets of gold were not in the attic of Clifton Church, I felt as though they might as well be beyond the farthest star.

Many of those early memories are connected with visits to Grandfather Montgomery's farm at Park Corner. He and his family lived in the "old house" then, a most quaint and delightful old place as I remember it, full of cupboards and nooks, and little, unexpected flights of stairs. It was there, when I was about five years old, that I had the only serious illness of my life—an attack of typhoid fever.

* * *

The night before I took ill I was out in the kitchen with the servants, feeling as well as usual, "wide-awake and full of ginger," as the old cook used to declare. I was sitting before the stove, and cook was "riddling" the fire with a long, straight bar of iron used for that purpose. She laid it down on the hearth and I promptly caught it up, intending to do some "riddling"

myself, an occupation I much liked, loving to see the glowing red embers fall down on the black ashes.

Alas, I picked the poker up by the wrong end! As a result, my hand was terribly burned. It was my first initiation into physical pain, at least, the first one of which I have any recollection.

I suffered horribly and cried bitterly; yet I took considerable satisfaction out of the commotion I had caused. For the time being I was splendidly, satisfyingly important. Grandfather scolded the poor, distracted cook. Father entreated that something be done for me, frenzied folk ran about suggesting and applying a score of different remedies. Finally I cried myself to sleep, holding my hand and arm to the elbow in a pail of ice-cold water, the only thing that gave me any relief.

I awoke next morning with a violent headache that grew worse as the day advanced. In a few days the doctor pronounced my illness to be typhoid fever. I do not know how long I was ill, but several times I was very low and nobody thought I could possibly recover.

Grandmother Macneill was sent for at the beginning of my illness. I was so delighted to see her that the excitement increased my fever to an alarming pitch, and after she had gone out, Father, thinking to calm me, told me that she had gone home. He meant well, but it was an unfortunate statement. I believed it implicitly—too implicitly. When Grandmother came in again I could not be convinced that it was she. No! She *had* gone home. Consequently, this woman must be Mrs. Murphy, a woman who worked at Grandfather's frequently, and who was tall and thin, like Grandmother.

I did not like Mrs. Murphy and I flatly refused to have her near me at all. Nothing could convince me that it was Grandmother. This was put down to delirium, but I do not think it was. I was quite conscious at the time. It was rather the fixed impression made on my mind in its weak state by what Father had told me. Grandmother *had* gone home, I reasoned, hence, she could *not* be there. *Therefore*, the woman who looked like her must be some one else.

It was not until I was able to sit up that I got over this delusion. One evening it simply dawned on me that it really was Grandmother. I was so happy, and could not bear to be out of her arms. I kept stroking her face constantly and saying in amazement and delight, “Why, you’re *not* Mrs. Murphy, after all; you *are* Grandma.”

Typhoid fever patients were not dieted so strictly during convalescence in those days as they are now. I remember one day, long before I was able to sit up, and only a short time after the fever had left me, that my dinner consisted of fried sausages—rich, pungent, savoury, home made sausages, such as are never found in these degenerate days. It was the first day that I had felt hungry, and I ate ravenously. Of course, by all the rules of the game, those sausages should have killed me, and so cut short that “career” of which I am writing. But they did not. These things are fated. I am sure that nothing short of pre-destination saved me from the consequences of those sausages.

Two incidents of the following summer stand out in my memory, probably because they were so keenly and so understandably bitter. One day I heard Grandmother reading from a newspaper an item to the effect that the end of the world was to come the following Sunday. At that time I had a most absolute and piteous belief in everything that was “printed.” Whatever was in a newspaper must be true. I have lost this touching faith, I regret to say, and life is the poorer by the absence of many thrills of delight and horror.

* * *

From the time I heard that awesome prediction until Sunday was over I lived in an agony of terror and dread. The grown-up folk laughed at me, and refused to take my questions seriously. Now, I was almost as much afraid of being laughed at as of the Judgment Day. But all through the Saturday before that fateful Sunday I vexed Aunt Emily to distraction by repeatedly asking her if we should go to Sunday-school the next afternoon. Her assurance that of course we should go was a considerable comfort to

me. If she really expected that there would be Sunday-school she could not believe that the next day would see the end of the world.

But then—it had been *printed*. That night was a time of intense wretchedness for me. Sleep was entirely out of the question. Might I not hear “the last trump” at any moment? I can laugh at it now—any one would laugh. But it was real torture to a credulous child, just as real as any mental agony in after life.

Sunday was even more interminable than Sundays usually were, then. But it came to an end at last, and as its “dark, descending sun” dimpled the purple sky-line of the Gulf, I drew a long breath of relief. The beautiful green world of blossom and sunshine had not been burned up; it was going to last for a while longer. But I never forgot the suffering of that Sunday.

Many years later I used the incident as the foundation of the chapter “The Judgment Sunday” in *The Story Girl*. But the children of King Orchard had the sustaining companionship of each other. I had trodden the wine-press alone.

The other incident was much more trifling. The “Martin Forbes” of *The Story Girl* had his prototype in an old man who visited at my grandfather’s for a week. Forbes was not his name, of course. He was, I believe, an amiable, respectable, and respected, old gentleman. But he won my undying hatred by calling me “Johnny” every time he spoke to me.

How I raged at him! It seemed to me a most deadly and unforgivable insult. My anger amused him hugely and incited him to persist in using the objectionable name. I could have torn that man in pieces had I had the power! When he went away I refused to shake hands with him, whereupon he laughed uproariously and said, “Oh, well, I won’t call you ‘Johnny’ any more. After this I’ll call you ‘Sammy,’ ” which was, of course, adding fuel to the fire.

For years I couldn’t hear that man’s name without a sense of hot anger. Fully five years afterward, when I was ten, I remember writing this in my diary: “Mr. James Forbes is dead. He is the brother of a horrid man in Summerside who called me ‘Johnny’.”

I never saw poor old Mr. Forbes again, so I never had to endure the indignity of being called “Sammy.” He is now dead himself, and I daresay the fact that he called me “Johnny” was not brought up in judgment against him. Yet he may have committed what might be considered far greater sins that yet would not inflict on any one a tithe of the humiliation which his teasing inflicted on a child’s sensitive mind.

That experience taught me one lesson, at least. I never tease a child. If I had any tendency to do so, I should certainly be prevented by the still keen recollection of what I suffered at Mr. Forbes’ hands. To him, it was merely the “fun” of teasing a “touchy” child. To me, it was the poison of asps.

III

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The next summer, when I was six, I began to go to school. The Cavendish school-house was a white-washed, low-eaved building on the side of the road just outside our gate. To the west and south was a spruce grove, covering a sloping hill. That old spruce grove, with its sprinkling of maple, was a fairy realm of beauty and romance to my childish imagination. I shall always be thankful that my school was near a grove—a place with winding paths and treasure-trove of ferns and mosses and wood-flowers. It was a stronger and better educative influence in my life than the lessons learned at the desk in the school-house.

And there was a brook in it, too—a delightful brook, with a big, deep, clear spring—where we went for buckets of water, and no end of pools and nooks where the pupils put their bottles of milk to keep sweet and cold until dinner hour. Each pupil had his or her own particular place, and woe betide a lad or lass who usurped another's prescriptive spot. I, alas, had no rights in the brook. Not for me was the pleasure of “scooting” down the winding path before school-time to put my bottle against a mossy log, where the sunlit water might dance and ripple against its creamy whiteness.

I had to go home to my dinner every day, and I was scandalously ungrateful for the privilege. Of course, I realize now that I was very fortunate in being able to go home every day for a good, warm dinner. But I could not see it in that light then. It was not half so interesting as taking lunch to school and eating it in sociable rings on the playground, or in groups under the trees. Great was my delight on those few stormy winter days when I had to take my dinner, too. I was “one of the crowd” then, not set apart in any lonely distinction of superior advantages.

Another thing that worried me with a sense of unlikeness was the fact that I was never allowed to go to school barefooted. All the other children

went so, and I felt that this was a humiliating difference. At home I could run barefoot, but in school I must wear “buttoned boots.” Not long ago, a girl who went to school with me confessed that she had always envied me those “lovely buttoned boots.” Human nature always desirous of what it has not got! There was I, aching to go barefoot like my mates; there were they, resentfully thinking it was bliss to wear buttoned boots!

I do not think that the majority of grown-ups have any real conception of the tortures sensitive children suffer over any marked difference between themselves and the other denizens of their small world. I remember one winter I was sent to school wearing a new style of apron. I think still that it was rather ugly. *Then* I thought it was hideous. It was a long, sack-like garment, with *sleeves*. Those sleeves were the crowning indignity. Nobody in school had ever worn aprons with sleeves before. When I went to school one of the girls sneeringly remarked that they were *baby aprons*. This capped all! I could not bear to wear them, but wear them I had to. The humiliation never grew less. To the end of their existence, and they *did* wear horribly well, those “baby” aprons marked for me the extreme limit of human endurance.

I have no especial remembrance of my first day in school. Aunt Emily took me down to the school-house and gave me into the charge of some of the “big girls,” with whom I sat that day. But my second day—ah! I shall not forget it while life lasts. I was late and had to go in alone. Very shyly I slipped in and sat down beside a “big girl.” At once a wave of laughter rippled over the room. *I had come in with my hat on.*

As I write, the fearful shame and humiliation I endured at that moment rushes over me again. I felt that I was a target for the ridicule of the universe. Never, I felt certain, could I live down such a dreadful mistake. I crept out to take off my hat, a crushed morsel of humanity.

My novelty with the “big girls”—they were ten years old and seemed all but grown-up to me—soon grew stale, and I gravitated down to the girls of my own age. We “did” sums, and learned the multiplication table, and wrote “copies,” and read lessons, and repeated spellings. I could read and write when I went to school. There must have been a time when I

learned, as a first step into an enchanted world, that A was A; but for all the recollection I have of the process I might as well have been born with a capacity for reading, as we are for breathing and eating.

I was in the second book of the old Royal Reader series. I had gone through the primer at home with all its cat and rat formulae, and then had gone into the Second Reader, thus skipping the First Reader. When I went to school and found that there was a First Reader I felt greatly aggrieved to think that I had never gone through it. I seemed to have missed something, to suffer, in my own estimation, at least, a certain loss of standing because I had never had it. To this day there is a queer, absurd regret in my soul over missing that First Reader.

Life, from my seventh year, becomes more distinct in remembrance. In the winter following my seventh birthday, Aunt Emily married and went away. I remember her wedding as a most exciting event, as well as the weeks of mysterious preparation before; all the baking and frosting and decorating of cakes which went on! Aunt Emily was only a young girl then, but in my eyes she was as ancient as all the other grown-ups. I had no conception of age at that time. Either you were grown-up or you were not, that was all there was about it.

The wedding was one of the good, old-fashioned kind that is not known nowadays. All the big “connection” on both sides were present, the ceremony at seven o’clock, supper immediately afterward, then dancing and games, with another big supper at one o’clock.

For once I was permitted to stay up, probably because there was no place where I could be put to bed, every room being used for some gala purpose, and between excitement and unwatched indulgence in good things I was done up for a week. But it was worth it! Also, I regret to say, I pounded my new uncle with my fists and told him I hated him because he was taking Aunt Emily away.

The next summer two little boys came to board at my grandfather’s and attend school, Wellington and David Nelson, better known as “Well” and “Dave.” Well was just my age, Dave a year younger. They were my playmates for three happy years; we *did* have fun in abundance, simple,

wholesome, delightful fun, with our playhouses and our games in the beautiful summer twilights, when we ranged happily through fields and orchards, or in the long winter evenings by the fire.

The first summer they came we built a playhouse in the spruce grove to the west of our front orchard. It was in a little circle of young spruces. We built our house by driving stakes into the ground between the trees, and lacing fir boughs in and out. I was especially expert at this, and always won the boys' admiration by my knack of filling up obstreperous holes in our verdant castle. We also manufactured a door for it, a very rickety affair, consisting of three rough boards nailed uncertainly across two others, and hung to a long-suffering birch tree by ragged leather hinges cut from old boots. But that door was as beautiful and precious in our eyes as the Gate Beautiful of the Temple was to the Jews of old. You see, we had made it ourselves!

* * *

Then we had a little garden, our pride and delight, albeit it rewarded all our labour very meagrely. We planted live-forevers around all our beds, and they grew as only live-forevers *can* grow. They were almost the only things that *did* grow. Our carrots and parsnips, our lettuces and beets, our phlox and sweet-peas—either failed to come up at all, or dragged a pallid, spindling existence to an ignoble end, in spite of all our patient digging, manuring, weeding, and watering, or, perhaps, because of it, for I fear we were more zealous than wise. But we worked persistently, and took our consolation out of a few hardy sunflowers which, sown in an uncared-for spot, thrive better than all our petted darlings, and lighted up a corner of the spruce grove with their cheery golden lamps. I remember we were in great tribulation because our beans persisted in coming up with their skins over their heads. We promptly picked them off, generally with disastrous consequences to the beans.

Readers of *Anne of Green Gables* will remember the Haunted Wood. It was a gruesome fact to us three young imps. Well and Dave had a firm and

rooted belief in ghosts. I used to argue with them over it with the depressing result that I became infected myself. Not that I really believed in ghosts, pure and simple; but I was inclined to agree with Hamlet that there might be more things in heaven and earth than were commonly dreamed of—in the philosophy of Cavendish authorities, anyhow.

The Haunted Wood was a harmless, pretty spruce grove in the field below the orchard. We considered that all our haunts were too commonplace, so we invented this for our own amusement. None of us really believed at first, that the grove was haunted, or that the mysterious “white things” which we pretended to see flitting through it at dismal hours were aught but the creations of our own fancy. But our minds were weak and our imaginations strong; we soon came to believe implicitly in our myths, and not one of us would have gone near that grove after sunset on pain of death. Death! What was death compared to the unearthly possibility of falling into the clutches of a “white thing”?

In the evenings, when, as usual, we were perched on the back porch steps in the mellow summer dusk, Well would tell me blood-curdling tales galore, until my hair fairly stood on end, and I would not have been surprised had a whole army of “white things” swooped suddenly on us from round the corner. One tale was that his grandmother having gone out one evening to milk the cows, saw his grandfather, as she supposed, come out of the house, drive the cows into the yard and then go down the lane.

The “creep” of this story consisted in the fact that she went straightway into the house and found him lying on the sofa where she had left him, he having never been out of the house at all. Next day something happened to the poor old gentleman. I forget what, but doubtless it was some suitable punishment for sending his wraith out to drive cows!

Another story was that a certain dissipated youth of the community, going home one Saturday night, or rather Sunday morning, from some unhallowed orgy, was pursued by a lamb of fire, with its head cut off and hanging by a strip of skin or flame. For weeks afterward I could not go anywhere after dark without walking with my head over my shoulder, watching apprehensively for that fiery apparition.



One evening Dave came down to me in the apple orchard at dusk, with his eyes nearly starting out of his head, and whispered that he had heard a bell ringing in the then deserted house. To be sure, the marvellous edge was soon taken off this by the discovery that the noise was simply a newly-cleaned clock striking the hours, which it had never done before. This furnished the foundation of the “Ghostly Bell” chapter in *The Story Girl*.

But, one night we had a real ghost scare—the “real” qualifying “scare,” not “ghost.” We were playing at twilight in the hayfield south of the house, chasing each other around the fragrant coils of new-cut hay. Suddenly I happened to glance up in the direction of the orchard dyke. A chill began galloping up and down my spine, for there, under the juniper tree, was really a “white thing,” shapelessly white in the gathering gloom. We all stopped and stared as though turned to stone.

“It’s Mag Laird,” whispered Dave in terrified tones.

Mag Laird, I may remark, was a harmless creature who wandered begging over the country side, and was the bug-bear of children in general and Dave in particular. As poor Mag’s usual apparel was dirty, cast-off clothes of other persons, it did not seem to me likely that this white visitant were she. Well and I would have been glad to think it was, for Mag was at least flesh and blood while this—!

“Nonsense!” I said, trying desperately to be practical. “It must be the white calf.”

Well agreed with me with suspicious alacrity, but the shapeless, grovelling thing did not look in the least like a calf.

“It’s coming here!” he suddenly exclaimed in terror.

I gave one agonized glance. Yes! It was creeping down over the dyke, as no calf ever did or could creep. With a simultaneous shriek we started for the house, Dave gasping at every step, “It’s Mag Laird,” while all that Well and I could realize was that it was a “white thing” after us at last!

We reached the house and tore into Grandmother’s bedroom, where we had left her sewing. She was not there. We swung round and stampeded for

a neighbour's, where we arrived trembling in every limb. We gasped out our awful tale and were laughed at, of course. But no persuasion could induce us to go back, so the French-Canadian servants, Peter and Charlotte, set off to explore, one carrying a pail of oats, the other armed with a pitchfork.

They came back and announced that there was nothing to be seen. This did not surprise us. Of course, a "white thing" would vanish, when it had fulfilled its mission of scaring three wicked children out of their senses. But go home we would not until Grandfather appeared and marched us back in disgrace. For what do you think it was?

A white tablecloth had been bleaching on the grass under the juniper tree, and, just at dusk, Grandmother, knitting in hand, went out to get it. She flung the cloth over her shoulder and then her ball fell and rolled over the dyke. She knelt down and was reaching over to pick it up when she was arrested by our sudden stampede and shrieks of terror. Before she could move or call out we had disappeared.

So collapsed our last "ghost," and spectral terrors languished after that, for we were laughed at for many a long day.

But we played house and gardened and swung and picnicked and climbed trees. How we did love trees! I am grateful that my childhood was spent in a spot where there were many trees, trees of personality, planted and tended by hands long dead, bound up with everything of joy or sorrow that visited our lives. When I have "lived with" a tree for many years it seems to me like a beloved human companion.

* * *

Behind the barn grew a pair of trees I always called "The Lovers," a spruce and a maple, and so closely intertwined that the boughs of the spruce were literally woven into the boughs of the maple. I remember that I wrote a poem about them and called it "The Tree Lovers." They lived in happy union for many years. The maple died first; the spruce held her dead form in his green, faithful arms for two more years. But his heart was broken

and he died too. They were beautiful in their lives and in death not long divided; and they nourished a child's heart with a grace-giving fancy.

In a corner of the front orchard grew a beautiful young birch tree. I named it "The White Lady," and had a fancy about it to the effect that it was the beloved of all the dark spruces near, and that they were rivals for her love. It was the whitest straightest thing ever seen, young and fair and maiden-like.

On the southern edge of the Haunted Wood grew a most magnificent old birch. This was the tree of trees to me. I worshipped it, and called it "The Monarch of The Forest." One of my earliest "poems"—the third I wrote—was written on it, when I was nine. Here is all I remember of it:

"Around the poplar and the spruce
The fir and maple stood;
But the old tree that I loved the best
Grew in the Haunted Wood.

It was a stately, tall old birch,
With spreading branches green;
It kept off heat and sun and glare—
'Twas a goodly tree, I ween.

'Twas the Monarch of the Forest,
A splendid kingly name,
Oh, it was a beautiful birch tree,
A tree that was known to fame."

The last line was certainly a poetic fiction. Oliver Wendell Holmes says:

"There's nothing that keeps its youth,
So far as I know, but a tree and truth."

But even a tree does not live forever. The Haunted Wood was cut down. The big birch was left standing. But, deprived of the shelter of the thick-

growing spruces, it gradually died before the bitter northern blasts from the Gulf. Every spring more of its boughs failed to leaf out. The poor tree stood like a discrowned, forsaken king in a ragged cloak. I was not sorry when it was finally cut down. “The land of dreams among,” it resumed its sceptre and reigns in fadeless beauty.

Every apple tree in the two orchards had its own individuality and name—“Aunt Emily’s tree,” “Uncle Leander’s tree,” the “Little Syrup tree,” the “Spotty tree,” the “Spider tree,” the “Gavin tree,” and many others. The “Gavin” tree bore small, whitish-green apples, and was so called because a certain small boy named Gavin, hired on a neighbouring farm, had once been caught stealing them. Why the said Gavin should have imperiled his soul and lost his reputation by electing to steal apples from that especial tree I could never understand, for they were hard, bitter, flavourless things, good neither for eating or cooking.

* * *

Dear old trees! I hope they all had souls and will grow again for me on the hills of Heaven. I want, in some future life, to meet the old “Monarch” and the “White Lady,” and even poor, dishonest little “Gavin’s tree” again.

IV

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When I was eight years old Cavendish had a very exciting summer, perhaps the most exciting summer it ever had, and of course we children revelled in the excitement. The *Marcopolo* was wrecked on the sandshore.

The *Marcopolo* was a very famous old ship and the fastest sailing vessel of her class ever built. She had a strange, romantic history, and was the nucleus of many traditions and sailors' yarns. She had finally been condemned in England under the Plimsoll Bill. Her owners evaded the Bill by selling her to a Norwegian firm, and then chartering her to bring a cargo of deal plank from Quebec. On her return she was caught in a furious storm out in the Gulf, sprung a leak, and became so water-logged that the captain determined to run her on shore to save crew and cargo.

That day we had a terrible windstorm in Cavendish. Suddenly the news was spread that a vessel was coming ashore. Every one who could rushed to the sandshore and saw a magnificent sight!—a large vessel coming straight on before the northern gale with every stitch of canvas set. She grounded about three hundred yards from the shore and as she struck the crew cut the rigging, and the huge masts went over with a crash that was heard for a mile, above the roaring of the storm.

The next day the crew of twenty men got ashore and found boarding places about Cavendish. Being typical tars, they painted our quiet settlement a glowing scarlet for the remainder of the summer. It was their especial delight to crowd into a truck-wagon, and go galloping along the roads yelling at the top of their voices. They were of many nationalities, Irishmen, Englishmen, Scotchmen, Spaniards, Norwegians, Swedes, Dutchmen, Germans, and—most curious of all—two Tahitians, whose woolly heads, thick lips, and gold earrings were a never-failing joy to Well and Dave and me.

There was an immense amount of red tape in connection with the affair, and the *Marcopolo* men were in Cavendish for weeks. The captain boarded with us. He was a Norwegian, a delightful, gentlemanly old fellow who was idolized by his crew. He spoke English well, but was apt to get rather mixed up in his prepositions.

“Thank you for your kindness *against* me, little Miss Maud,” he would say with a grand bow.

Owing to the presence of the captain, the crew haunted our domain also. I remember the night they were all paid off: they all sat out on the grass under the parlour windows, feeding our old dog Gyp with biscuits. Well and Dave and I saw, with eyes as big as owls’, the parlour table literally covered with gold sovereigns, which the captain paid out to the men. Never had we imagined there was so much wealth in the world.

Naturally the shore was a part of my life from my earliest consciousness. I learned to know it and love it in every mood. The Cavendish shore is a very beautiful one; part of it is rock shore, where the rugged red cliffs rise steeply from the boulder-strewn coves. Part is a long, gleaming sandshore, divided from the fields and ponds behind by a row of rounded sand-dunes, covered by coarse sand-hill grass. This sandshore is a peerless spot for bathing.

* * *

All through my childhood I spent much of my time on the shore. It was not so quiet and solitary then as it is to-day. Those were the days when the mackerel fishing was good, and the shore was dotted with fishing houses. Many of the farmers had a fishing house on the shore field of their farms, with a boat drawn up on the skids below. Grandfather always fished mackerel in the summer, his boat manned by two or three French Canadians, fishing on the shores. Just where the rocks left off and the sandshore began was quite a little colony of fishing houses. The place was called Cawnpore, owing to the fact that on the day and hour when the last

nail was being driven into the last house news arrived of the massacre of Cawnpore in the Indian Mutiny. There is not a house left there now.

The men would get up at three or four in the morning and go out fishing. Then we children had to take their breakfast down at eight, later on their dinner, and, if the fish “schooled” all day, their supper also. In vacations we would spend most of the day there, and I soon came to know every cove, headland, and rock on that shore. We would watch the boats through the sky-glass, paddle in the water, gather shells and pebbles and mussels, and sit on the rocks and eat dulse, literally, by the yard. The rocks at low tide were covered by millions of snails, as we called them. I think the correct name is periwinkle. We often found great, white, empty “snail” shells, as big as our fists, that had been washed ashore from some distant strand or deep sea haunt. I early learned by heart, Holmes’ beautiful lines on “The Chambered Nautilus,” and I rather fancied myself sitting dreamily on a big boulder with my bare, wet feet tucked up under my print skirt, holding a huge “snail” shell in my sunburned paw and appealing to my soul to “build thee more stately mansions.”

There were many “outgrown shells” by that “unresting sea,” and we carried them home to add to our collection, or to encircle our flower beds. Up by the sea run, where the ponds empty into the Gulf, we always found beautiful, white, quahog-clam shells galore.

The waves constantly dashing against the soft sandstone cliffs wore them away into many beautiful arches and caves. Somewhat to the east of our fishing house was a bold headland against which the water lapped at lowest tide. Through the neck of this headland a hole became worn—a hole so small that we could scarcely thrust a hand through it. Every season it grew a little larger. One summer an adventurous school chum and I crawled through it. It was a tight squeeze, and we used to exult with a fearful joy over having dared it, and speculate as to what would have happened if one of us had got stuck half-way through!

In a few more years we could walk upright through the opening. Then a horse and carriage could have been driven through it. Finally, in about fifteen years from the beginning the thin bridge of rock at the top gave

way, and the headland became an island, as though a gateway had been cleft through its wall.

There were many stories and legends connected with the shore, of which I heard older persons talk. Grandfather liked a dramatic story, had a good memory for its fine points, and could tell it well. He had many tales to relate of the terrible American gale—or “Yankee storm,” as it was called—when hundreds of American fishing vessels out in the Gulf were wrecked upon the north shore.

The story of the *Franklin Dexter* and the four brothers who sailed in her, which is related in *The Golden Road*, is literally true. Grandfather was among those who found the bodies, helped to bury them in Cavendish churchyard, helped to take them up when the broken-hearted old father came, and helped to put them on the ill-fated *Seth Hall*.

* * *

Then there was the story of Cape Leforce, a bit of tragic, unwritten history harking back to the days when the “Island of St. John” belonged to France. It was some time in the 1760’s. I can never remember dates. The only two dates which remain in my memory out of all those so painstakingly learned in schooldays are that Julius Caesar landed in England 55 B.C. and the Battle of Waterloo was fought in 1815. France and England were at war. French privateers infested the Gulf sallying therefrom to plunder the commerce of the New England Colonies. One of these was commanded by a captain named Leforce.

One night they anchored off the Cavendish shore, at that time an unnamed, wooded solitude. For some reason the crew came ashore and camped for the night on the headland now known as Cape Leforce. The captain and his mate shared a tent, and endeavoured to come to a division of their booty. They quarrelled, and it was arranged that they should fight a duel at sunrise. But in the morning, as the ground was being paced off, the mate suddenly raised his pistol and shot Captain Leforce dead.

I do not know if the mate was ever punished for this deed. Probably not. It was a mere brief sentence in a long page of bloodshed. But the captain was buried by his crew on the spot where he fell, and I have often heard Grandfather say that *his* father had seen the grave in his boyhood. It had long ago crumbled off into the waves, but the name still clings to the red headland.

Away to the westward, six or seven miles the view was bounded by New London Cape, a long, sharp point, running far out to sea. In my childhood I never wearied of speculating what was on the other side of that point, a very realm of enchantment, surely, I thought. Even when I gradually drew into the understanding that beyond it was merely another reach of shore like my own it still held a mystery and a fascination for me. I longed to stand out on that lonely, remote, purple point, beyond which was the land of lost sunsets.

I have seen few more beautiful sights than sea-sunset off that point. In later years a new charm was added, a revolving light that flashed like a magnificent star through the dusk of summer nights, like a beacon on an outpost of fairyland.

I did not often fare far afield. An occasional trip to town—Charlottetown—and another to Uncle John Campbell's at Park Corner, were my only excursions beyond my horizon line, and both were looked on as great pleasures. A trip to Park Corner was of comparatively frequent occurrence, once a year at least, and perhaps twice. A trip to town was a very rare treat, once in three years, and loomed up in about the same proportions of novelty, excitement, and delight as a trip to Europe would now—or before the war. It meant a brief sojourn in a wonderful and fascinating place, where every one was dressed up and could have all the nuts, candies, and oranges they wanted, to say nothing of the exquisite pleasure of looking at all the beautiful things in the shop windows.

I remember distinctly my first trip to town at the age of five. I had a glorious day, but the most delightful part was a tiny adventure I had just before leaving for home. Grandfather and Grandmother had met some friends at a street corner and stopped to talk. Finding that I wasn't being

looked after, I promptly shot down a near-by side street, agog for adventures. It was so jolly and independent to be walking down a street all alone. It was a wonderful street, I've never seen it since—not with the same eyes, anyway. No other street has ever had the charm that one had. The most amazing sight I saw was a woman shaking rugs on *the top of a house*. I felt dizzy with astonishment over such a topsy-turvy sight. We shook rugs in the yard. Who ever heard of shaking them on the top of a house!

* * *

Arriving at the bottom of the street I coolly ran down the steps of an open door I found there, and discovered myself to be in a charming dim spot, full of barrels, with a floor ankle-deep with beautiful curly shavings. But, seeing some one moving in a distant corner I was overcome, not by fear but by shyness, and beat a hasty retreat. On my way back I met a little girl with a pitcher in her hand. We both stopped, and with the instinctive, unconventional *camaraderie* of childhood plunged into an intimate, confidential conversation. She was a jolly little soul, with black eyes and two long braids of black hair. We told each other how old we were, and how many dolls we had, and almost everything else there was to tell except our names which neither of us thought about. When we parted, I felt as though I were leaving a life long friend. We never met again.

When I rejoined my grown-ups they had not missed me at all, and knew nothing of my rapturous voyage into Wonderland.

The Park Corner jaunts were always delightful. To begin with, it was such a pretty drive, those winding thirteen miles through hill and wood, and by river and shore. There were many bridges to cross, two of them, with drawbridges. I was always horribly frightened of drawbridges, and am to this day. Do what I will, I cringe secretly from the time the horse steps on the bridge until I am safely over the draw.

Uncle John Campbell's house was a big white one, smothered in orchards. Here, in other days, there was a trio of merry cousins to rush out

and drag me in with greeting and laughter. The very walls of that house must have been permeated by the essence of good times. And there was a famous old pantry, always stored with goodies, into which it was our habit to crowd at bedtime and devour unholy snacks with sounds of riot and mirth.

There is a certain old screw sticking out from the wall on the stair landing which always makes me realize clearly that I am really grown-up. When I used to visit at Park Corner in the dawn of memory that screw was just on a level with my nose! *Now*, it comes to my knees. I used to measure myself by it every time I went over.

I was very fond of trouting and berry picking. We fished the brooks up in the woods, using the immemorial hook and line, with “w’ums” for bait. Generally I managed to put my worm on myself, but I expended a fearful amount of nervous energy in doing it. However, I managed to catch fish. I remember the thrill of pride I felt one day when I caught quite a large trout, as large as some of the grown-ups had caught in the pond. Well and Dave were with me, and I felt that I went up five per cent, in their estimation. A girl who could catch a trout like that was not to be altogether despised.

We picked berries in the wild lands and fields back of the woods, going to them through wooded lanes fragrant with June bells, threaded with sunshine and shadow, carpeted with mosses, where we saw foxes and rabbits in their native haunts. I have never heard anything sweeter than the whistling of the robins at sunset in the maple woods around those fields.

To go through woods with company was very pleasant; to go through them alone was a very different thing. A mile in along the road lived a family who kept a small shop where they sold tea and sugar, etc. I was frequently sent in to buy some household supplies, and I shall never forget the agony of terror I used to endure going through those woods. The distance through the woods was not more than a quarter of a mile, but it seemed endless to me.

I cannot tell just what I was afraid of. I *knew* there was nothing in the wood worse than rabbits or as the all-wise grown-ups told me “worse than

yourself.” It was just the old, primitive fear handed down to me from ancestors who, in the dawn of time, were afraid of the woods with good reason. With me, it was a blind, unreasoning terror. And this was in daylight; to go through those woods *after dark* was something simply unthinkable. There were persons who did it. A young schoolmaster who boarded with us thought nothing apparently of walking through them at night. In my eyes he was the greatest hero the world had ever seen!

V

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I have spoken of the time I realized physical pain. My first realization of the mental pain of sorrow came when I was nine years old.

I had two pet kittens, Catkin and Pussy-willow. Catkin was a little too meek and pink-nosed to suit me, but Pussy-willow was the prettiest, “cutest” little scrap of gray-striped fur ever seen and I loved her passionately.

One morning I found her dying of poison. I shall never forget my agony of grief as I watched my little pet’s bright eyes glazing, and her tiny paws growing stiff and cold. And I have never laughed with grown-up wisdom at my passionate sorrow over the little death. It was too real, too symbolical! It was the first time I *realized* death, the first time, since I had become conscious of loving, that anything I loved had left me forever. At that moment the curse of the race came upon me, “death entered into my world” and I turned my back on the Eden of childhood where everything had seemed everlasting. I was barred out of it forevermore by the fiery sword of that keen and unforgettable pain.

We were Presbyterians, and went every Sunday to the old Cavendish Presbyterian Church on the bleak hill. It was never a handsome church, inside or out, but it was beautified in its worshippers’ eyes by years of memories and sacred associations. Our pew was by a window and we looked out over the slope of the long western hill and the blue pond down to the curving rim of the sandhills and the fine sweep of the blue Gulf.

There was a big gallery at the back of the church. I always hankered to sit there, principally because I wasn’t allowed to, no doubt, another instance of forbidden fruit! Once a year, on Sacrament Sunday, I was permitted to go up there with the other girls, and I considered it a great treat. We could look down over the whole congregation, which always flowered out that day in full bloom of new hats and dresses. Sacrament

Sunday, then, was to us what Easter is to the dwellers in cities. We all had new hats or dresses, sometimes, oh, bliss, we had both! And I very much fear that we thought more about them than we did about the service and what it commemorated. It was rather a long service in those days, and we small fry used to get very tired and rather inclined to envy certain irresponsible folk who went out while the congregation sang “ ’Twas on that night when doomed to know.” We liked the Sunday School much better than the church services. Some of my sweetest memories are of the hours spent in that old church with my little mates, with our testaments and lesson sheets held in our cotton-gloved hands. Saturday night we had been made learn our catechism and our Golden texts and our paraphrases. I always enjoyed reciting those paraphrases, particularly any that had dramatic lines.

The *London Spectator*, in a very kind review of *Anne of Green Gables* said that possibly Anne’s precocity was slightly overdrawn in the statement that a child of eleven could appreciate the dramatic effect of the lines,

“Quick as the slaughtered squadrons fell
In Midian’s evil day.”

But I was only nine when those lines thrilled my very soul as I recited them in Sunday School. All through the sermon following I kept repeating them to myself. To this day they give me a mysterious pleasure and a pleasure quite independent of their meaning.

So ran the current of my life in childhood, very quiet and simple, you perceive. Nothing at all exciting about it, nothing that savours of a “career.” Some might think it dull. But life never held for me a dull moment. I had, in my vivid imagination, a passport to the geography of Fairyland. In a twinkling I could—and did—whisk myself into regions of wonderful adventures, unhampered by any restrictions of time or place.

Everything was invested with a kind of fairy grace and charm, emanating from my own fancy, the trees that whispered nightly around the old house where I slept, the woodsy nooks I explored, the homestead

fields, each individualized by some oddity of fence or shape, the sea whose murmur was never out of my ears—all were radiant with “the glory and the dream.”

I had always a deep love of nature. A little fern growing in the woods, a shallow sheet of June-bells under the firs, moonlight falling on the ivory column of a tall birch, an evening star over the old tamarack on the dyke, shadow-waves rolling over a field of ripe wheat—all gave me “thoughts that lay too deep for tears” and feelings which I had then no vocabulary to express.

It has always seemed to me, ever since early childhood, that, amid all the commonplaces of life, I was very near to a kingdom of ideal beauty. Between it and me hung only a thin veil. I could never draw it quite aside, but sometimes a wind fluttered it and I caught a glimpse of the enchanting realm beyond—only a glimpse—but those glimpses have always made life worth while.

It goes without saying that I was passionately fond of reading. We did not have a great many books in the house, but there were generally plenty of papers and a magazine or two. Grandmother took *Godey's Lady's Book*. I do not know if I would think much of that magazine now, but then I thought it wonderful, and its monthly advents were epochs to me. The opening pages were full of fashion plates and were a perpetual joy; I hung over them with delight, and whiled away many an hour choosing what frocks I would have if I could. Those were the days of bangs, bristles, and high-crowned hats, all of which I considered extremely beautiful and meant to have as soon as I was old enough. Beyond the fashion pages came the literary pabulum, short stories and serials, which I devoured ravenously, crying my eyes out in delicious woe over the agonies of the heroines who were all superlatively beautiful and good. Every one in fiction was either black or white in those days. There were no grays. The villains and villainesses were all neatly labelled and you were sure of your ground. The old method had its merits. Nowadays it is quite hard to tell which is the villain and which the hero. But there was never any doubt in *Godey's Lady's Book*. What books we had were well and often read. I had

my especial favourites. There were two red-covered volumes of *A History of the World*, with crudely-coloured pictures, which were a never-failing delight. I fear that, as history, they were rather poor stuff, but as story books they were very interesting. They began with Adam and Eve in Eden, went through “the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome,” down to Victoria’s reign.

* * *

Then there was a missionary book dealing with the Pacific Islands, in which I revelled because it was full of pictures of cannibal chiefs with the most extraordinary hair arrangements. Hans Andersen’s Tales were a perennial joy. I always loved fairy tales and delighted in ghost stories. Indeed, to this day I like nothing better than a well-told ghost story, warranted to send a cold creep down your spine. But it must be a real ghost story, mark you. The spook must not turn out a delusion and a snare.

* * *

I did not have access to many novels. Those were the days when novels were frowned on as reading for children. The only novels in the house were *Rob Roy*, *Pickwick Papers*, and Bulwer Lytton’s *Zanoni*; and I pored over them until I knew whole chapters by heart.

Fortunately poetry did not share the ban of novels. I could revel at will in Longfellow, Tennyson, Whittier, Scott, Byron, Milton, Burns. Poetry pored over in childhood becomes part of one’s nature more thoroughly than that which if first read in mature years can ever do. Its music was woven into my growing soul and has echoed through it, consciously and subconsciously, ever since: “the music of the immortals, of those great, beautiful souls whose passing tread has made of earth holy ground.”

But even poetry was barred on Sundays. Then our faithful standbys were *Pilgrim’s Progress* and Talmage’s *Sermons*. *Pilgrim’s Progress* was read and re-read with never-failing delight. I am proud of this; but I am

not quite so proud of the fact that I found just as much delight in reading Talmage's *Sermons*. That was Talmage's palmy day. All the travelling colporteurs carried his books, and a new volume of Talmage's meant then to us pretty much what a "best-seller" does now. I cannot claim that it was the religion that attracted me, though at that age I liked the Talmage brand much; it was the anecdotes and the vivid, dramatic word-pictures. His sermons were as interesting as fiction. I am sure I couldn't read them with any patience now; but I owe Talmage a very real debt of thanks for pleasure given to a child craving the vividness of life.

My favourite Sunday book, however, was a thin little volume entitled *The Memoir of Anzonetta Peters*. I shall never forget that book. It belonged to a type now vanished from the earth—fortunately—but much in vogue at that time. It was the biography of a child who at five years became converted, grew very ill soon afterward, lived a marvellously patient and saintly life for several years, and died, after great sufferings, at the age of ten.

I must have read that book a hundred times if I did once. I don't think it had a good effect on me. For one thing it discouraged me horribly. Anzonetta was so hopelessly perfect that I felt it was no use to try to imitate her. Yet I did try. She never seemed by any chance to use the ordinary language of childhood at all. She invariably responded to any remark, if it were only "How are you to-day, Anzonetta?" by quoting a verse of scripture or a hymn stanza. Anzonetta was a perfect hymnal. She died to a hymn, her last, faintly-whispered utterance being

"Hark, they whisper, angels say,
Sister spirit, come away."

I dared not attempt to use verses and hymns in current conversation. I had a wholesome conviction that I should be laughed at, and moreover, I doubted being understood. But I did my best; I wrote hymn after hymn in my little diary, and patterned the style of my entries after Anzonetta's remarks. For example, I remember writing gravely "I wish I were in

Heaven now, with Mother and George Whitefield and Anzonetta B. Peters.”

But I didn’t really wish it. I only thought I *ought* to. I was, in reality, very well contented with my own world, and my own little life full of cabbages and kings.

VI

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I have written at length about the incidents and environment of my childhood because they had a marked influence on the development of my literary gift. A different environment would have given it a different bias. Were it not for those Cavendish years, I do not think *Anne of Green Gables* would ever have been written.

When I am asked “When did you begin to write?” I say, “I wish I could remember.” I cannot remember the time when I was not writing, or when I did not mean to be an author. To write has always been my central purpose around which every effort and hope and ambition of my life has grouped itself. I was an indefatigable little scribbler, and stacks of manuscripts, long ago reduced to ashes, alas, bore testimony to the same. I wrote about all the little incidents of my existence. I wrote descriptions of my favourite haunts, biographies of my many cats, histories of visits, and school affairs, and even critical reviews of the books I had read.

One wonderful day, when I was nine years old, I discovered that I could write poetry. I had been reading Thomson’s *Seasons*, of which a little black, curly-covered atrociously printed copy had fallen into my hands. So I composed a “poem” called “Autumn” in blank verse in imitation thereof. I wrote it, I remember, on the back of one of the long red “letter bills” then used in the postal service. It was seldom easy for me to get all the paper I wanted, and those blessed old letter bills were positive boons. Grandfather kept the post office, and three times a week a discarded “letter bill” came my grateful way. The Government was not so economical then as now, at least in the matter of letter bills; they were then half a yard long.

As for “Autumn,” I remember only the opening lines:

“Now autumn comes, laden with peach and pear;
The sportsman’s horn is heard throughout the land,

And the poor partridge, fluttering, falls dead.”

True, peaches and pears were not abundant in Prince Edward Island at any season, and I am sure nobody ever heard a “sportsman’s horn” in that Province, though there really was some partridge shooting. But in those glorious days my imagination refused to be hampered by facts. Thomson had sportsman’s horns and so forth; therefore I must have them too.

Father came to see me the very day I wrote it, and I proudly read it to him. He remarked unenthusiastically that “it didn’t sound much like poetry.” This squelched me for a time; but if the love of writing is bred in your bones, you will be practically non-squelchable. Once I had found out that I could write poetry I overflowed into verse over everything. I wrote in rhyme after that, though, having concluded that it was because “Autumn” did not rhyme that Father thought it wasn’t poetry. I wrote yards of verses about flowers and months and trees and stars and sunsets, and I addressed “Lives” to my friends.

A school chum of mine, Alma M——, had also a knack of writing rhyme. She and I had a habit, no doubt, a reprehensible one, of getting out together on the old side bench at school, and writing “po’try” on our slates, when the master fondly supposed we were sharpening our intellects on fractions.

* * *

We began by first writing acrostics on our names; then we wrote poems addressed to each other in which we praised each other fulsomely; finally, one day, we agreed to write up in stirring rhyme all our teachers, including the master himself. We filled our slates; two verses were devoted to each teacher, and the two concerning the reigning pedagogue were very sarcastic effusions dealing with some of his flirtations with the Cavendish belles. Alma and I were gleefully comparing our productions when the master himself, who had been standing before us but with his back toward us, hearing a class, suddenly wheeled about and took my slate out of my

paralyzed hand. Horrors! I stood up, firmly believing that the end of all things was at hand. Why he did not read it I do not know, it may be he had a dim suspicion what it was and wanted to save his dignity. Whatever his reason, he handed the slate back to me in silence, and I sat down with a gasp, sweeping off the accusing words as I did so lest he might change his mind. Alma and I were so badly scared that we gave up at once and forever the stolen delight of writing poetry in company on the side bench!

I remember—who could ever forget it?—the first commendation my writing received. I was about twelve and I had a stack of poems written out and hidden jealously from all eyes, for I was very sensitive in regard to my scribblings and could not bear the thought of having them seen and laughed at. Nevertheless, I wanted to know what others would think of them, not from vanity, but from a strong desire to find out if an impartial judge would see any merit in them. So I employed a little ruse to find out. It all seems very funny to me now, and a little pitiful; but then it seemed to me that I was at the bar of judgment for all time. It would be too much to say that, had the verdict been unfavourable, I would have forever surrendered my dreams, but they would certainly have been frosted for a time.

A lady was visiting us who was something of a singer. One evening I timidly asked her if she had ever heard a song called “Evening Dreams.”

She certainly had not, for the said “Evening Dreams” was a poem of my own composition, which I then considered my masterpiece. It is not now extant, and I can remember the first two verses only. I suppose that they were indelibly impressed on my memory by the fact that the visitor asked me if I knew any of the words of the “song.” Whereupon I, in a trembling voice, recited the two opening verses:

“When the evening sun is setting
Quietly in the west,
In a halo of rainbow glory,
I sit me down to rest.

I forget the present and future,
I live over the past once more,
As I see before me crowding
The beautiful days of yore.”

Strikingly original! Also, a child of twelve would have a long “past” to live over!

I finished up with a positive gasp, but the visitor was busy with her fancy work, and did not notice my pallor and general shakiness. For I *was* pale, it was a moment of awful import to me. She placidly said that she had never heard the song, but “the words were very pretty.”

The fact that she was sincere must certainly detract from her reputation for literary discrimination. But to me it was the sweetest morsel of commendation that had ever fallen to my lot, or that ever has fallen since, for that matter. Nothing has ever surpassed that delicious moment. I ran out of the house—it wasn’t big enough to contain my joy, I must have all outdoors for that—and danced down the lane under the birches in a frenzy of delight, hugging to my heart the remembrance of those words.

Perhaps it was this that encouraged me sometime during the following winter to write out my “Evening Dreams” very painstakingly—on both sides of the paper, alas!—and to send them to the editor of *The Household*, an American magazine we took. The idea of being paid for them never entered my head. Indeed, I am not at all sure that I knew at that time that people were ever paid for writing. At least, my early dreams of literary fame were untainted by any mercenary speculations.

Alack! the editor of *The Household* was less complimentary than our visitor. He sent the verses back, although I had *not* “enclosed a stamp” for the purpose, being in blissful ignorance of any such requirement.

My aspirations were nipped in the bud for a time. It was a year before I recovered from the blow. Then I essayed a more modest flight. I copied out my “Evening Dreams” again and sent them to the Charlottetown *Examiner*. I felt quite sure it would print them, for it often printed verses which I thought, and, for that matter, still think, were no better than mine.

For a week I dreamed delicious dreams of seeing my verses in the Poet's Corner, with my name appended thereto. When the *Examiner* came, I opened it with tremulous eagerness. There was not a sign of an evening dream about it!

I drained the cup of failure to the very dregs. It seems very amusing to me now, but it was horribly real and tragic to me then. I was crushed in the very dust of humiliation and I had no hope of rising again. I burned my "Evening Dreams," and, although I continued to write because I couldn't help it, I sent no more poems to the editors.

Poems, however, were not all I wrote. Very soon after I began to write verses I also began to write stories. The "Story Club" in *Anne of Green Gables* was suggested by a little incident of schooldays when Janie S—, Amanda M— and I all wrote a story with the same plot. I remember only that it was a very tragic plot, and the heroines were all drowned while bathing on Cavendish sandshore! Oh, it was very sad! It was the first, and probably the last, time that Janie and Amanda attempted fiction, but I had already quite a library of stories in which almost everyone died. A certain lugubrious yarn, "My Graves," was my masterpiece. It was a long tale of the peregrinations of a Methodist minister's wife, who buried a child in every circuit to which she went. The oldest was buried in Newfoundland, the last in Vancouver, and all Canada between was dotted with those graves. I wrote the story in the first person, described the children, pictured out their death beds, and detailed their tombstones and epitaphs.

Then there was "This History of Flossy Brighteyes," the biography of a doll. I couldn't kill a doll, but I dragged her through every other tribulation. However, I allowed her to have a happy old age with a good little girl who loved her for the dangers she had passed and overlooked her consequent lack of beauty.

Nowadays, my reviewers say that my forte is humour. Well, there was not much humour in those early tales, at least, it was not intended there should be. Perhaps I worked all the tragedy out of my system in them, and left an unimpeded current of humour. I think it was my love of the dramatic that urged me to so much infanticide. In real life I couldn't have

hurt a fly, and the thought that superfluous kittens had to be drowned was torture to me. But in my stories battle, murder and sudden death were the order of the day.

When I was fifteen I had my first ride on a railway train, and it was a long one. I went with Grandfather Montgomery to Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, where Father had married again and was then living. I spent a year in Prince Albert and attended the High School there.

It was now three years since I had suffered so much mortification over “Evening Dreams.” By this time my long-paralyzed ambition was beginning to recover and lift its head again. I wrote up the old Cape Leforce legend in rhyme and sent it down home to the *Patriot*, no more of the *Examiner* for me!

* * *

Four weeks passed. One afternoon Father came in with a copy of the *Patriot*. My verses were in it! It was the first sweet bubble on the cup of success and of course it intoxicated me. There were some fearful printers’ errors in the poem which fairly made the flesh creep on my bones, but it was my poem, and in a real newspaper! The moment we see our first darling brain-child arrayed in black type is never to be forgotten. It has in it some of the wonderful awe and delight that comes to a mother when she looks for the first time on the face of her first born.

During that winter I had other verses and articles printed. A story I had written in a prize competition was published in the Montreal *Witness*, and a descriptive article on Saskatchewan was printed in the Prince Albert *Times*, and copied and commented on favourably by several Winnipeg papers. After several effusions on “June” and kindred subjects appeared in that long-suffering *Patriot*, I was beginning to plume myself on being quite a literary person.

But the demon of filthy lucre was creeping into my heart. I wrote a story and sent it to the New York *Sun*, because I had been told that it paid for articles; and the New York *Sun* sent it back to me. I flinched, as from a

slap in the face, but went on writing. You see I had learned the first, last, and middle lesson—"Never give up!"

The next summer I returned to Prince Edward Island and spent the following winter in Park Corner, giving music lessons and writing verses for the *Patriot*. Then I attended the Cavendish school for another year, studying for the Entrance Examination into Prince of Wales College. In the fall of 1893 I went to Charlottetown, and attended the Prince of Wales College that winter studying for a teacher's license.

I was still sending away things and getting them back. But one day I went into the Charlottetown post office and got a thin letter with the address of an American magazine in the corner. In it was a brief note accepting a poem, "Only a Violet." The editor offered me two subscriptions to the magazine in payment. I kept one myself and gave the other to a friend, and those magazines, with their vapid little stories, were the first tangible recompense my pen brought me.

"It is a start, and I mean to keep on," I find written in my old journal of that year. "Oh, I wonder if I shall ever be able to do anything worth while in the way of writing. It is my dearest ambition."

After leaving Prince of Wales College I taught school for a year in Bideford, Prince Edward Island. I wrote a good deal and learned a good deal, but still my stuff came back, except from two periodicals the editors of which evidently thought that literature was its own reward, and quite independent of monetary considerations. I often wonder that I did not give up in utter discouragement. At first I used to feel dreadfully hurt when a story or poem over which I had laboured and agonized came back, with one of those icy little rejection slips. Tears of disappointment *would* come in spite of myself, as I crept away to hide the poor, crimped manuscript in the depths of my trunk. But after a while I got hardened to it and did not mind. I only set my teeth and said "I will succeed." I believed in myself and I struggled on alone, in secrecy and silence. I never told my ambitions and efforts and failures to any one. Down, deep down, under all discouragement and rebuff, I knew I would "arrive" some day.

In the autumn of 1895 I went to Halifax and spent the winter taking a selected course in English literature at Dalhousie College. Through the winter came a “Big Week” for me. On Monday I received a letter from *Golden Days*, a Philadelphia juvenile, accepting a short story I had sent there and enclosing a cheque for five dollars. It was the first money my pen had ever earned; I did not squander it in riotous living, neither did I invest it in necessary boots and gloves. I went up town and bought five volumes of poetry with it—Tennyson, Byron, Milton, Longfellow, Whittier. I wanted something I could keep for ever in memory of having “arrived.”

* * *

On Wednesday of the same week I won the prize of five dollars offered by the Halifax *Evening Mail* for the best letter on the subject, “Which has the greater patience—man or woman?”

My letter was in the form of some verses, which I had composed during a sleepless night and got up at three o’clock in the wee sma’ hours to write down. On Saturday the *Youth’s Companion* sent me a cheque for twelve dollars for a poem. I really felt quite bloated with so much wealth. Never in my life, before or since have I been so rich!

After my Dalhousie winter I taught school for two more years. In those two years I wrote scores of stories, generally for Sunday School publications and juvenile periodicals. The following entry from my journal refers to this period:

I have grubbed away industriously all this summer and ground out stories and verses on days so hot that I feared my very marrow would melt and my gray matter be hopelessly sizzled up. But oh, I love my work! I love spinning stories, and I love to sit by the window of my room and shape some ‘airy fairy’ fancy into verse. I have got on well this summer and added several new journals to my list. They are a varied assortment, and their

separate tastes all have to be catered to. I write a great many juvenile stories. I like doing these, but I should like it better if I didn't have to drag a 'moral' into most of them. They won't sell without it, as a rule. So in the moral must go, broad or subtle, as suits the fibre of the particular editor I have in view. The kind of juvenile story I like best to write—and read, too, for the matter of that—is a good, jolly one, “art for art's sake,” or rather “fun for fun's sake,” with no insidious moral hidden away in it like a pill in a spoonful of jam!

It was not always hot weather when I was writing. During one of those winters of school teaching I boarded in a very cold farmhouse. In the evenings, after a day of strenuous school work, I would be too tired to write. So I religiously arose an hour earlier in the mornings for that purpose. For five months I got up at six o'clock and dressed by lamplight. The fires would not yet be on, of course, and the house would be very cold. But I would put on a heavy coat, sit on my feet to keep them from freezing and with fingers so cramped that I could scarcely hold the pen, I would write my “stunt” for the day. Sometimes it would be a poem in which I would carol blithely of blue skies and rippling brooks and flowery meads! Then I would thaw out my hands, eat breakfast and go to school.

When people say to me, as they occasionally do, “Oh, how I envy you your gift, how I wish I could write as you do,” I am inclined to wonder, with some inward amusement, how much they would have envied me on those dark, cold, winter mornings of my apprenticeship.

VII

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Grandfather died in 1898 and Grandmother was left alone in the old homestead. So I gave up teaching and stayed home with her. By 1901 I was beginning to make a “livable” income for myself by my pen, though that did not mean everything I wrote was accepted on its first journey. Far from it. Nine out of ten manuscripts came back to me. But I sent them out over and over again, and eventually they found resting places. Another extract from my journal may serve as a sort of milestone to show how far I had travelled.

March 21, 1901

Munsey's came to-day with my poem “Comparisons” in it, illustrated. It really *looked* nice. I've been quite in luck of late, for several new and good magazines have opened their portals to this poor wandering sheepkin of thorny literary ways. I feel that I am improving and developing in regard to my verses. I suppose it would be strange if I did not, considering how hard I study and work. Every now and then I write a poem which serves as a sort of landmark to emphasize my progress. I know, by looking back, that I could not have written it six months, or a year, or four years ago, any more than I could have made a garment the material of which was still unwoven. I wrote two poems this week. A year ago, I could not have written them, but now they come easily and naturally. This encourages me to hope that in the future I may achieve something worth while. I never expect to be famous. I merely want to have a recognized place among good workers in my chosen profession. That, I honestly believe, is happiness, and the harder to win the sweeter and more lasting when won.

In the fall of 1901 I went again to Halifax and worked for the winter on the staff of the *Daily Echo*, the evening edition of the *Chronicle*. A series of extracts from my journal will tell the tale of that experience with sufficient fulness.

11 November, 1901

I am here alone in the office of the *Daily Echo*. The paper is gone to press and the extra proofs have not yet begun to come down. Overhead, in the composing room, they are rolling machines and making a diabolical noise. Outside of the window the engine exhaust is puffing furiously. In the inner office two reporters are having a wrangle. And here sit I—the *Echo* proof-reader and general handy-man. Quite a ‘presto change’ from last entry!

I’m a newspaper woman!

Sounds nice? Yes, and the reality is very nice, too. Being of the earth, it is earthy, and has its drawbacks. Life in a newspaper office isn’t all ‘beer and skittles’ any more than anywhere else. But on the whole it is not a bad life at all! I rather like proof-reading, although it is tedious. The headlines and editorials are my worst thorns in the flesh. Headlines have a natural tendency to depravity, and the editor-in-chief has a ghastly habit of making puns over which I am apt to come to grief. In spite of all my care ‘errors will creep in’ and then there is the mischief to pay. When I have nightmares now they are of headlines wildly askew and editorials hopelessly hocused, which an infuriated chief is flourishing in my face.

The paper goes to press at 2.30, but I have to stay till six to answer the ‘phone, sign for wires, and read extra proofs.

On Saturdays the *Echo* has a lot of extra stuff, a page of ‘society letters’ among the rest. It usually falls to my lot to edit these. Can’t say I fancy the job much, but the only thing I positively abhor is ‘faking’ a society letter. This is one of the tricks of newspaperdom. When a society letter fails to turn up from a certain place—say from Windsor—in due time, the news editor slaps a Windsor Weekly down before me and says blandly, ‘fake up a society letter from that, Miss Montgomery.’

So poor Miss Montgomery goes meekly to work, and concocts an introductory paragraph or so about ‘autumn leaves’ and ‘mellow days’ and ‘October frosts,’ or any old stuff like that to suit the season. Then I go carefully over the columns of the weekly, clip out all the available personals and news items, about weddings, and engagements, and teas, etc., hash them up in epistolary style, forge the Windsor correspondent’s nom de plume—and there’s your society letter! I used to include funerals, too, but I found the news editor blue-pencilled them. Evidently funerals have no place in society.

Then I write a column or so of giddy paragraphs for Monday’s *Echo*. I call it “Around the Tea-Table,” and sign it “Cynthia.”

My office is a back room looking out on a back yard in the middle of the block. I don’t know that all the Haligonian washerwomen live around it, but certainly a good percentage of them must, for the yard is a network of lines from which sundry and divers garments are always streaming gaily to the breezes. On the ground and over the roof cats are prowling continually, and when they fight, the walls resound with their howls. Most of them are lank, starved-looking beasties enough, but there is one lovely gray fellow who basks on a window sill opposite me and looks so much like ‘Daffy’ that, when I look at him, I could squeeze out a homesick tear if I were not afraid that would wash

a clean spot on my grimy face. This office is really the worst place for getting dirty I ever was in.

November 18, 1901

Have had a difficult time trying to arrange for enough spare minutes to do some writing. I could not write in the evenings, I was always too tired. Besides, I had to keep my buttons sewed on and my stockings darned. Then I reverted to my old practice, and tried getting up at six in the morning. But it did not work, as of yore. I could never get to bed as early as I could when I was a country 'schoolma'am' and I found it impossible to do without a certain amount of sleep.

There was only one alternative.

Hitherto, I had thought that undisturbed solitude was necessary that the fire of genius might burn and even the fire for pot-boiling. I must be alone, and the room must be quiet. I could never have even imagined that I could possibly write anything in a newspaper office, with rolls of proof shooting down every ten minutes, people coming and conversing, telephones ringing, and machines being thumped and dragged overhead. I would have laughed at the idea, yea, I would have laughed it to scorn. But the impossible has happened. I am of one mind with the Irishman who said you could get used to anything, even to being hanged!

All my spare time here I write, and not such bad stuff either, since the *Delineator*, the *Smart Set* and *Ainslies'* have taken some of it. I have grown accustomed to stopping in the middle of a paragraph to interview a prowling caller, and to pausing in full career after an elusive rhyme, to read a lot of proof, and snarled-up copy.

Saturday, December 8, 1901

Of late I've been Busy with a capital B. 'Tending to office work, writing pot-boilers, making Christmas presents, etc., mostly etc.

One of the "etc's." is a job I heartily detest. It makes my soul cringe. It is bad enough to have your flesh cringe, but when it strikes into your soul it gets on your spiritual nerves terribly. We are giving all the firms who advertise with us a free "write-up" of their holiday goods, and I have to visit all the stores, interview the proprietors, and crystallize my information into two "sticks" of copy. From three to five every afternoon I potter around the business blocks until my nose is purple with the cold and my fingers numb from much scribbling of notes.

Wednesday, December 12, 1901

It is an ill wind that blows no good and my disagreeable assignment has blown me some. The other evening I went in to write up the Bon Marche, which sets up to be the millinery establishment of Halifax, and I found the proprietor very genial. He said he was delighted that the *Echo* had sent a lady, and by way of encouraging it not to weary in well doing he would send me up one of the new walking hats if I gave the Bon Marche a good write-up. I rather thought he was only joking, but sure enough, when the write-up came out yesterday, up came the hat, and a very pretty one it is too.

Thursday, December 20, 1901

All the odd jobs that go a-begging in this office are handed over to the present scribe. The very queerest one up to date came yesterday.

The compositors were setting up, for the weekly edition, a story called 'A Royal Betrothal,' taken from an English paper, and when about half through they lost the copy. Whereupon the news-editor requested me to go and write an 'end' for the story. At first I did not think I could. What was set up of the story was not enough to give me any insight into the solution of the plot. Moreover, my knowledge of royal love affairs is limited, and I have not been accustomed to write with flippant levity of kings and queens.

However, I fell to work and somehow got it done. Today it came out, and as yet nobody has guessed where the 'seam' comes in. If the original author ever beholds it, I wonder what he will think.

I may remark, in passing, that more than ten years afterward I came across a copy of the original story in an old scrapbook, and was much amused to discover that the author's development of the plot was about as different from mine as anything could possibly be.

Thursday, December 27th, 1901

Christmas is over. I had been rather dreading it, for I had been expecting to feel very much the stranger in a strange land. But, as usual, anticipation was discounted by realization. I had a very pleasant time although not, of course, so wildly exhilarating as to endanger life, limb or nerves, which was, no doubt, just as well.

I had a holiday, the first since coming here, and so was haunted all day by the impression that it was Sunday. I had dinner at the *Halifax* with B. and spent the afternoon with her. In the evening we went to the opera to see *The Little Minister*. It was good but not nearly so good as the book. I don't care for dramatized

novels. They always jar on my preconceptions of the characters. Also, I had to write a criticism of the play and cast for the *Chronicle* and I dislike that very much.

Saturday, March 29, 1902

This week has been a miserable one of rain and fog and neuralgia. But I've lived through it. I've read proofs and dissected headlines and fought with compositors and bandied jokes with the marine editor. I have ground out various blameless rhymes for a consideration of filthy lucre, and I've written one real poem out of my heart.

I hate my "pot-boiling" stuff. But it gives me the keenest pleasure to write something that is good, a fit and proper incarnation of the art I worship. The news-editor has just been in to give me an assignment for to-morrow, bad 'cess to him. It is Easter Sunday, and I have to write up the 'parade' down Pleasant Street after church, for Monday's *Echo*.

Palmday, May 3, 1902

I spent the afternoon "expurgating" a novel for the news-editor's use and behoof. When he was away on his vacation his substitute began to run a serial in the *Echo* called "Under the Shadow." Instead of getting some A.P.A. stuff as he should have done, he simply bought a sensational novel and used it. It was very long and was only about half done when the news-editor returned. So, as it would run all summer, in its present form, I was bidden to take it and cut mercilessly out all unnecessary stuff. I have followed instructions, cutting out most of the kisses and embraces, two-thirds of the love-making, and all the descriptions, with the happy result that I have reduced it to about a third of its normal length, and all I can say 'Lord, have

mercy on the soul of the compositor who has set it up in its present mutilated condition.'

Saturday, May 31, 1901

I had a good internal laugh to-night. I was in a street car and two ladies beside me were discussing the serial that had just ended in the *Echo*. 'You know,' said one, 'it was the strangest story I ever read. It wandered on, chapter after chapter, for weeks, and never seemed to get anywhere; and then it just finished up in eight chapters, *licketty-split*. I can't understand it!'

I could have solved the mystery, but I didn't.

VIII

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In June, 1902, I returned to Cavendish, where I remained unbrokenly for the next nine years. For the first two years after my return I wrote only short stories and serials as before. But I was beginning to think of writing a book. It had always been my hope and ambition to write one. But I never seemed able to make a beginning.

I have always hated beginning a story. When I get the first paragraph written I feel as though it were half done. The rest comes easily. To begin a book, therefore, seemed quite a stupendous task. Besides, I did not see just how I could get time for it. I could not afford to take the time from my regular writing hours. And, in the end, I never deliberately sat down and said “Go to! Here are pens, paper, ink and plot. Let me write a book.” It really all just “happened.”

I had always kept a notebook in which I jotted down, as they occurred to me, ideas for plots, incidents, characters, and descriptions. In the spring of 1904 I was looking over this notebook in search of some idea for a short serial I wanted to write for a certain Sunday School paper. I found a faded entry, written many years before: “Elderly couple apply to orphan asylum for a boy. By mistake a girl is sent them.” I thought this would do. I began to block out the chapters, devise, and select incidents and “brood up” my heroine. Anne—she was not so named of malice aforethought, but flashed into my fancy already christened, even to the all important “e”—began to expand in such a fashion that she soon seemed very real to me and took possession of me to an unusual extent. She appealed to me, and I thought it rather a shame to waste her on an ephemeral little serial. Then the thought came, “Write a book. You have the central idea. All you need do is to spread it out over enough chapters to amount to a book.”

The result was *Anne of Green Gables*. I wrote it in the evenings after my regular day’s work was done, wrote most of it at the window of the

little gable room which had been mine for many years. I began it, as I have said, in the spring of 1904. I finished it in the October of 1905.

Ever since my first book was published I have been persecuted by the question "Was so-and-so the original of such-and-such in your book?" And behind my back they don't put it in the interrogative form, but in the affirmative. I know many people who have asserted that they are well acquainted with the "originals" of my characters. Now, for my own part, I have never, during all the years I have studied human nature, met one human being who could, as a whole, be put into a book without injuring it. Any artist knows that to paint *exactly* from life is to give a false impression of the subject. *Study* from life he must, copying suitable heads or arms, appropriating bits of character, personal or mental idiosyncracies, "making use of the real to perfect the ideal."

But the ideal, his ideal, must be behind and beyond it all. The writer must *create* his characters, or they will not be life-like.

With but one exception I have never drawn any of my book people from life. That exception was "Peg Bowen" in *The Story Girl*. And even then I painted the lily very freely. I have used real places in my books and many real incidents. But hitherto I have depended wholly on the creative power of my own imagination for my characters.

Cavendish was "Avonlea" to a certain extent. "Lover's Lane" was a very beautiful lane through the woods on a neighbour's farm. It was a beloved haunt of mine from my earliest days. The "Shore Road" has a real existence, between Cavendish and Rustico. But the "White Way of Delight," "Wiltonmere," and "Violet Vale" were transplanted from the estates of my castles in Spain. "The Lake of Shining Waters" is generally supposed to be Cavendish Pond. This is not so. The pond I had in mind is the one at Park Corner, below Uncle John Campbell's house. But I suppose that a good many of the effects of light and shadow I had seen on the Cavendish pond figured unconsciously in my descriptions. Anne's habit of naming places was an old one of my own. I named all the pretty nooks and corners about the old farm. I had, I remember, a "Fairyland," a "Dreamland," a "Pussy-Willow Palace," a "No-Man's-Land," a "Queen's

Bower,” and many others. The “Dryads Bubble” was purely imaginary, but the “Old Log Bridge” was a real thing. It was formed by a single large tree that had blown down and lay across the brook. It had served as a bridge to the generation before my time, and was hollowed out like a shell by the tread of hundreds of passing feet. Earth had blown into the crevices, and ferns and grasses had found root and fringed it luxuriantly. Velvet moss covered its sides and below was a deep, clear, sun-flecked stream.

Anne’s Katie Maurice was mine. In our sitting-room there had always stood a big book-case used as a china cabinet. In each door was a large oval glass, dimly reflecting the room. When I was very small each of my reflections in these glass doors were “real folk” to my imagination. The one in the left-hand door was Katie Maurice, the one in the right, Lucy Gray. Why I named them thus I cannot say. Wordsworth’s ballad had no connection with the latter, for I had never read it at that time. Indeed, I have no recollection of deliberately naming them at all. As far back as consciousness runs, Katie Maurice and Lucy Gray lived in the fairy room behind the bookcase. Katie Maurice was a little girl like myself, and I loved her dearly. I would stand before that door and prattle to Katie for hours, giving and receiving confidences. In especial, I liked to do this at twilight, when the fire had been lit and the room and its reflections were a glamour of light and shadow.

Lucy Gray was grown-up and a widow! I did not like her as well as Katie. She was always sad, and always had dismal stories of her troubles to relate to me; nevertheless, I visited her scrupulously in turn, lest her feelings should be hurt, because she was jealous of Katie, who also disliked her. All this sounds like the veriest nonsense, but I cannot describe how real it was to me. I never passed through the room without a wave of my hand to Katie in the glass door at the other end.

The notable incident of the liniment cake happened when I was teaching school in Bideford and boarding at the Methodist parsonage there. Its charming mistress flavoured a layer cake with anodyne liniment one day. Never shall I forget the taste of that cake and the fun we had over it, for the mistake was not discovered until tea-time. A strange minister

was there to tea that night. He ate every crumb of his piece of cake. What he thought of it we never discovered. Possibly he imagined it was simply some new-fangled flavouring.

Many people have told me that they regretted Matthew's death in *Green Gables*. I regret it myself. If I had the book to write over again I would spare Matthew for several years. But when I wrote it I thought he must die, that there might be a necessity for self-sacrifice on Anne's part, so poor Matthew joined the long procession of ghosts that haunt my literary past.

Well, my book was finally written. The next thing was to find a publisher. I typewrote it myself, on my old second-hand typewriter that never made the capitals plain and wouldn't print "w" at all, and I sent it to a new American firm that had recently come to the front with several "best sellers." I thought I might stand a better chance with a new firm than with an old established one that had already a preferred list of writers. But the new firm very promptly sent it back. Next I sent it to one of the "old, established firms," and the old established firm sent it back. Then I sent it, in turn, to three "Betwixt-and-between firms", and they all sent it back. Four of them returned it with a cold, printed note of rejection; one of them "damned with faint praise." They wrote that "Our readers report that they find some merit in your story, but not enough to warrant its acceptance."

That finished me. I put *Anne* away in an old hat-box in the clothes room, resolving that some day when I had time I would take her and reduce her to the original seven chapters of her first incarnation. In that case I was tolerably sure of getting thirty-five dollars for her at least, and perhaps even forty.

The manuscript lay in the hatbox until I came across it one winter day while rummaging. I began turning over the leaves, reading a bit here and there. It didn't seem so very bad. "I'll try once more," I thought. The result was that a couple of months later an entry appeared in my journal to the effect that my book had been accepted. After some natural jubilation I wrote: "The book may or may not succeed. I wrote it for love, not money, but very often such books are the most successful, just as everything in the

world that is born of true love has life in it, as nothing constructed for mercenary ends can ever have.

“Well, I’ve written my book! The dream dreamed years ago at that old brown desk in school has come true at last after years of toil and struggle. And the realization is sweet, almost as sweet as the dream.”

When I wrote of the book succeeding or not succeeding, I had in mind only a very moderate success indeed, compared to that which it did attain. I never dreamed that it would appeal to young and old. I thought girls in their teens might like to read it, that was the only audience I hoped to reach. But men and women who are grandparents have written to tell me how they loved *Anne*, and boys at college have done the same. The very day on which these words are written has come a letter to me from an English lad of nineteen, totally unknown to me, who writes that he is leaving for “the front” and wants to tell me “before he goes” how much my books and especially *Anne* have meant to him. It is in such letters that a writer finds meet reward for all sacrifice and labor.

Well, *Anne* was accepted; but I had to wait yet another year before the book was published. Then on June 20th, 1908, I wrote in my journal:

“To-day has been, as Anne herself would say, ‘an epoch in my life.’ My book came to-day, ‘spleet-new’ from the publishers. I candidly confess that it was to me a proud and wonderful and thrilling moment. There, in my hand, lay the material realization of all the dreams and hopes and ambitions and struggles of my whole conscious existence—my first book. Not a great book, but mine, mine, mine, something which I had created.”

I have received hundreds of letters from all over the world about *Anne*. Some odd dozen of them were addressed, not to me, but to “Miss Anne Shirley, Green Gables, Avonlea, Prince Edward Island.” They were written by little girls who had such a touching faith in the real flesh and blood existence of Anne that I always hated to destroy it. Some of my letters were decidedly amusing. One began impressingly, “My dear long-lost uncle,” and the writer went on to claim me as Uncle Lionel, who seemed to have disappeared years ago. She wound up by entreating me to write to my “affectionate niece” and explain the reason of my long silence. Several

people wrote me that their lives would make very interesting stories, and if I would write them and give them half the proceeds they would give me “the facts!” I answered only one of these letters, that of a young man who had enclosed stamps for a reply. In order to let him down as gently as possible, I told him that I was not in any need of material, as I had books already planned out which would require at least ten years to write. He wrote back that he had a great deal of patience and would cheerfully wait until ten years had expired; then he would write again. So, if my own invention gives out, I can always fall back on what that young man assured me was “a thrilling life-history!”

Green Gables has been translated into Swedish and Dutch. My copy of the Swedish edition always gives me the inestimable boon of a laugh. The cover design is a full length figure of Anne, wearing a sunbonnet, carrying the famous carpet-bag, and with hair that is literally of an intense scarlet!

With the publication of *Green Gables* my struggle was over. I have published six novels since then. *Anne of Avonlea* came out in 1909, followed in 1910 by *Kilmeny of the Orchard*. This latter story was really written several years before *Green Gables*, and ran as a serial in an American magazine, under another title. Therefore some sage reviewers amused me not a little by saying that the book showed “the insidious influence of popularity and success” in its style and plot!

The Story Girl was written in 1910 and published in 1911. It was the last book I wrote in my old home by the gable window where I had spent so many happy hours of creation. It is my own favourite among my books, the one that gave me the greatest pleasure to write, the one whose characters and landscape seem to me most real. All the children in the book are purely imaginary. The old “King Orchard” was a compound of our old orchard in Cavendish and the orchard at Park Corner. “Peg Bowen” was suggested by a half-witted, gypsy-like personage who roamed at large for many years over the Island and was the terror of my childhood. We children were always being threatened that if we were not good Peg would catch us. The threat did not make us good, it only made us miserable.

Poor Peg was really very harmless, when she was not teased or annoyed. If she were, she could be vicious and revengeful enough. In winter she lived in a little hut in the woods, but as soon as the spring came the lure of the open road proved too much for her, and she started on a tramp which lasted until the return of winter snows. She was known over most of the Island. She went bareheaded and barefooted, smoked a pipe, and told extraordinary tales of her adventures in various places. Occasionally she would come to church, stalking unconcernedly up the aisle to a prominent seat. She never put on hat or shoes on such occasions, but when she wanted to be especially grand she powdered face, arms and legs with *flour*!

As I have already said, the story of Nancy and Betty Sherman was founded on fact. The story of the captain of the *Fanny* is also literally true. The heroine is still living, or was a few years ago, and still retains much of the beauty which won the Captain's heart. "The Blue Chest of Rachel Ward" was another "over-true tale." Rachel Ward was Eliza Montgomery, a cousin of my father's, who died in Toronto a few years ago. The blue chest was in the kitchen of Uncle John Campbell's house at Park Corner from 1849 until her death. We children heard its story many a time and speculated and dreamed over its contents, as we sat on it to study our lessons or eat our bed-time snacks.

IX

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In the winter of 1911, Grandmother Macneill died at the age of eighty-seven, and the old home was broken up. I stayed at Park Corner until July; and on July 5th was married. Two days later my husband and I sailed from Montreal on the *Megantic* for a trip through the British Isles, another “dream come true,” for I had always wished to visit the old land of my forefathers. A few extracts from the journal of my trip, may be of interest.

Glasgow, July 20, 1912

Thursday afternoon we left for an excursion to Oban, Staffa, and Iona. We went by rail to Oban and the scenery was very beautiful, especially along Loch Awe, with its ruined castle. Beautiful, yes! And yet neither there nor elsewhere in England or Scotland, did I behold a scene more beautiful than can be seen any evening at home, standing on the “old church hill” and looking afar over New London Harbor. But then—we have no ruined castles there, nor the centuries of romance they stand for!

Oban is a picturesque little town, a fringe of houses built along the shore of a land-locked harbour, with wooded mountains rising steeply behind them. Next morning we took the boat to Iona. It was a typical, Scottish day, bright and sunny one hour, showery or misty the next. For a few hours I enjoyed the sail very much. The wild, rugged scenery of cape and bay and island and bleak mountain—the whole of course, peppered with ruined, ivy-hung castles—was an ever changing panorama of interest, peopled with the shades of the past.

Then, too, we had a Cook’s party of French tourists on board. They jabbered incessantly. There was one nice old fellow in

particular, with a pleasant, bronzed face and twinkling black eyes, who seemed to be the expounder-in-chief of the party. They got into repeated discussions, and when the arguments reached a certain pitch of intensity, he would spring to his feet, confront the party, wave his arms, umbrella, and guide book wildly in the air, and lay down the law in a most authoritative tone and fashion.

As the forenoon wore away I began to lose interest in everything. Ruined castle, towering mountain, white torrent, ghosts, and French tourists lost their charm. In the morning I had been much worried because I heard that it might be too rough to stop at Staffa, and I wanted so badly to see Fingal's Cave. But now I did not care in the least for Fingal's Cave, or for any other earthly thing. For the first time in my life I was horribly seasick.

The steamer did stop at Staffa, however, and two boatloads went ashore. I let them go. What cared I? The waves would not have daunted me, the pouring rain would not have appalled me, but seasickness!

However, the steamer was now still and I began to feel better. By the time the boats came back for the second load I was quite well and once more it seemed a thing of first importance to see Fingal's Cave. I joyfully scrambled down into the boat and was rowed ashore with the others to the Clamshell cave. From there we had to scramble over what seemed an interminably long distance—but really I suppose it was not more than a quarter of a mile—over the wet, slippery, basalt columns that fringe the shore, hanging in the worst places to a rope strung along the cliff. Owing to my much scrambling over the rocks of Cavendish shore in early life, I got on very well and even extorted a compliment from the dour guide; but some of the

tourists slipped to an alarming degree. Never shall I forget the yelps and sprawls of the old Frenchman aforesaid.

Nobody fell off, however, and eventually we found ourselves in Fingal's Cave, and felt repaid for all our exertions.

'Tis a most wonderful and majestic place, like an immense Gothic cathedral. It is hard to believe that it could have been fashioned merely by a freak of nature. I think every one there felt awed; even those irrepressible French tourists were silent for a little time. As I stood there and listened to the deep, solemn echo of the waves the memory of a verse of Scripture came to me "He inhabiteth the halls of eternity." And it seemed to me that I stood in very truth in a temple of the Almighty that had not been builded by hands.

We went on to Iona and landed there for a brief, hurried, scrambling exploration. Iona is interesting as the scene of St. Columba's ministry. His ancient cathedral is still there. Of greater interest to me was the burial place of the earliest Scottish kings, about sixty of them, it is said, finishing with that Duncan who was murdered by Macbeth. They were buried very simply, those warriors of ancient days. There they lie, in their island cemetery, beneath the gray sky. Neither "storied urn nor animated bust" mark their resting place. Each grave is covered simply by a slab of worn, carved stone. But they sleep none the less soundly for that, lulled by the eternal murmur of the waves around them.

I would have liked to have spent several days in Iona, prowling by myself around its haunted ruins and getting acquainted with its quaint inhabitants. There is really little pleasure in a hurried scramble around such places in the midst of a chattering, exclaiming mob of tourists. For me, at least, solitude is necessary to real enjoyment of such places. I must be alone, or

with a few 'kindred souls' before I can dream and muse, and bring back to life the men and women who once dwelt there and made the places famous.

We returned to Glasgow yesterday by water and were gluttoned with scenery. I was very tired when we reached our hotel. But weariness fell away from me when I found letters from home. How good they tasted in a foreign land! They bridged the gulf of ocean, and I saw the Cavendish hills and the green gloom of the maple wood at Park Corner. Ah! beautiful as the old world is, the homeland is the best.

July 30, 1912.
Royal Hotel,
Prince's St.,
Edinburgh.

Monday we went out to Ayr with a Cook guide. As a rule we dislike the Cook parties and go alone wherever we can. But this expedition was pleasant, as there were only two besides ourselves and they were Canadians, Mr. and Mrs. T. from Ontario. We had also a very nice guide. Two things subtracted from the pleasure of the day, it poured rain most of the time and I had a grumbling facial neuralgia. But in spite of both drawbacks I enjoyed myself 'where'er we trod 'twas haunted, holy ground.' We saw the room—the low-ceilinged, humble little room where once a cotter's son was 'royal born by right divine,' and we explored the ruins of the old Alloway Kirk made classic forever by Tam O'Shanter's adventures.

Then we went to the Burns monument just because it was on the list of 'sights' and the guide was bound to do his duty by us. I have no interest whatever in monuments. They bore me horribly. But two things in the monument did interest me, a lock

of Highland Mary's fair hair and the Bible upon which she and Burns swore their troth in their parting tryst. Poor, sweet Highland Mary! I don't suppose she was anything more than a winsome little country lass, no sweeter or prettier than thousands of other maidens who have lived and died, if not unwept, at least unhonoured and unsung. But a great genius flung over her the halo of his love and lo! she is one of the immortals, one of the fair ladies of old romance who will be forever remembered because of the man who loved her. She is of the company of Laura and Beatrice, and Stella, of Lucasta and Julia, and of the unknown lady of Arvers' sonnet.

Wednesday we went to the Trossachs. This is one of the expeditions I have looked forward to all my life, ever since I read "The Lady of the Lake" in schooldays. Sitting behind my old desk at school I dreamed out the panorama of hill and lake and pass, where Ellen lived and Fitz-James wandered and Roderick Dhu brooded like a storm cloud over a Highland hill. And I made a covenant with myself that when my ship came in I should go and see it.

We sailed up Loch Lomond to Inversnaid and there took coaches for a five-mile drive across to Loch Katrine. Of all the ways of locomotion I have ever tried I like coaching best. It beats motoring 'hollow.' We soon reached Stronachlachar, which in spite of its dreadful name, is an exquisite spot, and took the boat down Loch Katrine to the Trossachs pier.

I cannot decide whether Loch Katrine disappointed me or not. I think it did, a little. It was as beautiful as I had dreamed it, but it was not *my* Loch Katrine, not quite the Loch Katrine of my "Chateau en Espagne." And I resented the difference, as one might resent a change made in his childhood's home on going back to it after long years.

The lower portion of the lake is certainly much smaller than my idea of it as given by the poem. And the famous ‘Silver Strand’ is a poor affair now. Since the instalment of the Glasgow waterworks the lake has risen several feet and covered ‘the beach of pebbles white as snow.’ I brought a handful of them home with me as souvenirs. But I think I shall keep the Loch Katrine of my dream in my geography of the “Lady of the Lake.” I like it better than the real one.

We coached through the Trossachs to the Trossachs hotel. The Trossachs is beautiful and grand and perhaps before the carriage road was made it was wild enough, especially for some benighted wanderer who had all too good reason to fear “Highland plunderers.” But it is far from being the wild, riven, precipitous dell of my fancy. No, it is not the Trossachs where I have so often wandered with Fitz-James.

The hotel is in a lovely spot, on the shore of Loch Achray.

“Where shall we find in foreign land
So lone a lake, so sweet a strand?”

Yet Loch Achray, too, was on a smaller scale than I had expected. We walked along it that night as far as the “Brig of Turk,” gathering bell-heather and bluebells as we went. Scottish bluebells are certainly the sweetest things! They seem the very incarnation of old Scotia’s romance.

Next morning we walked through the Trossachs to Loch Katrine in a pouring rain and hired one of the boatmen to row us to and around “Ellen’s Isle.” I don’t think I liked it because it, too, was not the islet of my dream, and I was conscious of a foolish disappointment.

Ben Venue, however, did not disappoint me. It dominates the landscape. Everywhere we went, there was old Ben Venue,

rugged and massive, with a cloud-wreath resting on his 'summit hoar.' I was very sorry that the night we spent there was wet. I should have loved to have seen a sunset effect on Ben Venue.

August 6, 1912

Last Monday morning we went by train to Melrose and coached over six miles of most beautiful road to Abbotsford. Although we went on our own account we could not help falling in with a Cook excursion and this somewhat spoiled the day for us. But the scenery along the road is exquisite and we saw the Eildon Hills, cleft in three by the spells of wizardry. Abbotsford is most interesting, crowded with relics I should have loved to have dreamed over in solitude. But that might not be. The rooms were filled by a chattering crowd, harangued by a glib guide. I wondered if Scott would have liked to think of his home being so over-run by a horde of curious sight-seers.

We drove from Abbotsford to Dryburgh where Scott is buried. As we were able to escape from the "Cookies" here we enjoyed the magnificent ruin doubly. Then we returned to Melrose and explored the ruins of the Abbey there. We could not follow Scott's advice, which I never believed he failed, as is asserted, to take himself, and view it by moonlight. But in that mellow, golden-gray evening light it was beautiful enough, beautiful and sad, with the little bluebells growing in its ruined courts and over its old graves. Michael Scott is reputed to be buried there, and there the heart of Robert Bruce was buried, and doubtless, rests as quietly as though it had, according to his wish, been laid in the soil of the Holy Land.

There is some wonderful hand-carving still left in Melrose, and the little hand high up on one of the arches is as suggestive as it is beautiful. What fair lady's hand was chiselled there in lasting

stone? One cannot but think it was wrought by a lover. On Wednesday we left for Inverness, but stopped off *en route* to visit Kirriemuir, the “Thrums” of Barrie’s stories. In particular, I wanted to see the ‘Den’ where Sentimental Tommy and his cronies held their delightful revels. It is a lovely spot. One thing about it made me feel at home, its paths, which Barrie calls ‘pink,’ are the very red of our own island roads. I could have fancied that I was prowling in the woods around Lovers’ Lane.

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Of all the places we have visited in Scotland thus far I like Inverness best. In itself it is only a small gray town but the surrounding scenery is magnificent.

We drove out to Culloden the evening of our arrival and it is one of the drives that, for sheer pleasure, will always stand out in my memory. The road was exceedingly lovely and we were fortunate enough to have a nice old driver who knew all the history and legend of everything, and was very willing to tell it in delightful broad Scotch.

The next day we visited Tomnahurich, the famous cemetery of Inverness. It deserves its fame; I am sure it must be the most beautiful cemetery in the world. It is a large hill outside the city, rising in a perfect cone, and thickly covered with trees. The name is a Gaelic word meaning 'the hill of the fairies,' and surely it must once have been a spot meet for a fairy kingdom and the revels of Titania. Seen at eventide, against a sunset sky, it seems a veritable outpost of the Land of Old Romance.

We returned by way of the Caledonian Canal to Fort William, and thence by train. The sunset effects on the mountains along our way were wonderful. If I were to live near mountains for any length of time I should learn to love them *almost* as much as I love the sea.

August 13, 1912

Last Monday we visited Roslin Chapel, a wonderful specimen of Gothic work in perfect preservation. This is the chapel of Scott's ballad, "Fair Rosabelle":

"Seemed all on fire that chapel proud
Where Roslin's chiefs uncoffined lie."

Wednesday we left Edinburgh and went to Alloa to visit friends. Thursday we 'did' Dollar Glen. I had never heard of this place until Mr. M. of Alloa told us of it, yet it is one of the wildest, grandest spots we have seen in all Scotland. If Scott had touched it with his genius it would be as widely known as the Trossachs. Indeed, it is much what I had imagined the Trossachs to be. Dollar Glen is like a deep gash cleft down through the heart of the mountain.

Stirling and Abbey Craig on Friday, places steeped with romance. Yesterday we came to Berwick to spend a week in the Marmion country. Mr. M. and Miss A. came with us. Berwick is a most quaint, antiquated old town. As we live on the Spittal side, when we want to go anywhere we have to be rowed over the river mouth by one of the half-dozen quaint old ferrymen who have boats for hire. Last night we all went for a walk along the Spittal shore by moonlight. It was beautiful but so like the Cavendish shore that it made me bitterly homesick.

Carlisle, August 20

We are spending Sunday in Carlisle perforce, since we could not get any farther last night, owing to the big railway strike which has been paralysing Britain this past week. At Berwick we did not suffer from it, nor heed it. We let the outer world go by and lived in realms of romance where ferry boats and shank's mare were the only desired means of locomotion.

Last Monday we went to Holy Island and explored the ruins of the old Abbey which was the scene of Constance de Beverley's death in *Marmion*. We had an enjoyable sail down to Holy Island but the return home was sadly different. It was quite rough and how that wretched little steamer pitched and rolled! Both our gentlemen became so overcome that they had to retire

temporarily from the scene, while Miss A. and I fought off surrender only by a tremendous effort of will and would have suffered less I think if we had just allowed ourselves to go!

Luckily seasickness is never fatal and next day we were all ready for an excursion to Norham Castle, a very ruinous ruin.

Growing all over the grounds was a little blue flower which I never saw anywhere else save in the front orchard of the old home in Cavendish. Great-grandmother Woolner had brought it out from England with her. It gave me an odd feeling of pain and pleasure mingled, to find it growing there around that old ruined Scottish castle which seemed to belong so utterly to another time and another order of things. We walked from Norham to Ladykirk and then back by the Tweed. When we grew tired we sat down on its bank and dreamed dreams. What meeter place could there be for dreaming than the twilit banks of Tweed?

Next day we went to Flodden Field. It disappointed me unreasonably, it was all so peaceful, and harvest-hued, and agricultural. I felt as aggrieved as though I had had any right to expect to see a mediaeval battle being fought under my eyes.

Thursday afternoon we had a delightful little expedition to Homecliffe Glen and its deserted old mill. It might serve as a scene for a ghost story. In the midst of the ravine we came upon a clump of spruce trees literally loaded with gum, the first I had seen since leaving home. Spruce gum and the delights of picking it seem quite unknown in Scotland. We spent a half-hour picking it. To me and my husband the gum tasted delicious, but neither Mr. M. nor Miss A. liked its flavor declaring it was 'bitter'.

York, England
August 27, 1912

Last Monday we went to Keswick and stayed there until Thursday. It is impossible to exaggerate the beauty of the Lake District:

“The haughtiest heart its wish might bound
Through life to dwell delighted here.”

And then it is so interwoven with much of the best in English literature. The very spirit of Wordsworth seems to haunt those enchanted valleys, those wild passes, those fairy-like lakes.

Monday afternoon we took a coach-drive around Lake Derwentwater. All was beautiful. An interesting sight was the Castle Rock, which figures as the magic castle of St. John in Scott’s “Bridal of Triermain.” There is only one point where the resemblance to a castle—said to be very striking—can be seen, and we were not fortunate enough to see it from that particular point.

Tuesday we went to Buttermere Lake; Wednesday we motored for eighty miles around Lake Windermere. Some of the huge rocks on the mountain tops are of very peculiar shape. One of them is named, ‘The Lady Playing on the Organ.’ It is on the very top of a majestic mountain and certainly does, from one point of view, look exactly like a woman seated at a huge organ. Somehow, it captivated my imagination and I wove a hundred fancies around it. Who was the player, sitting forever at her mighty instrument? And what wonderful melodies did she play on it when the winds of heaven blew about her and the mountain tempest thundered and the great stars stayed to listen?

That evening we walked out to the ‘Druid Circle’, a ring of large stones on a hill-top, supposed to have been in old time a temple of the sun.

Nothing I have seen thus far made such a vivid impression on me as this. The situation is magnificent. The hill is completely encircled by a ring of the most famous mountains in the Lake District, Helvellyn and Skiddaw among them, and the sense of majesty produced was

overwhelming. Certainly those old sun-worshippers knew how to choose their sites. To stand there, at sunset, in the temple of a departed creed, surrounded by that assembly of everlasting hills and picture the rites, perchance dark and bloody, which must once have been celebrated there, was an experience never to be forgotten.

Friday we came to York, mainly to see the magnificent cathedral. It is magnificent, a dream of beauty made lasting in stone.

Yesterday afternoon I became the proud and happy possessor of a pair of china dogs!

I have been pursuing china dogs all over England and Scotland. When I was a little girl, visiting at Grandfather Montgomery's I think the thing that most enthralled me was a pair of china dogs which always sat on the sitting room mantel. They were white with green spots all over them; and Father told me that whenever they heard the clock strike twelve at midnight they bounded down on the hearth-rug and barked. It was, therefore, the desire of my heart to stay up until twelve some night and witness this performance, and hard indeed did I think the hearts of my elders when this was denied me. Eventually I found out, I forget how, that the dogs did nothing of the sort. I was much disappointed over this but more grieved still over the discovery that Father had told me something that wasn't true. However, he restored my faith in him by pointing out that he had only said the dogs would jump down when they *heard* the clock strike. China dogs, of course, could not hear.

I have always hankered to possess a pair of similar dogs, and, as those had been purchased in London, I hoped when I came over here, I would find something like them. Accordingly I have haunted the antique shops in every place I have been but, until yesterday, without success. Dogs, to be sure, there were in plenty but not the dogs of my quest. There was an abundance of dogs with black spots and dogs with red spots; but nowhere the aristocratic dogs with green spots.

Yesterday in a little antique shop near the great Minster I found a pair of lovely dogs and snapped them up on the spot. To be sure they had no green spots. The race of dogs with green spots seems to have become

extinct. But my pair have lovely gold spots and are much larger than the old Park Corner dogs. They are over a hundred years old and hope they will preside over my Lares and Penates with due dignity and aplomb.

Russell Hotel, London
September 18, 1912

So much has been crammed into this past fortnight that I have a rather overfed feeling mentally. But when time is limited and sights unlimited what are harassed travellers to do? The British Museum, the Tower, Westminster Abbey, Crystal Palace, Kenilworth Castle, the Shakespeare Land, Hampton Court, Salisbury and Stonehenge, Windsor and Parks and Gardens galore!

Our hotel is in Russell Square, the haunt of so many of the characters in *Vanity Fair*. One expects to see Amelia peering out of a window looking for George, or perhaps Becky watching for Jos.

Our afternoon at Kenilworth Castle was a delight. Of course, we had to be pestered with a guide; but I succeeded in forgetting him, and roamed the byways of romance alone. I saw Kenilworth in its pride, when aspiring Leicester entertained haughty Elizabeth. I pictured poor Amy Robsart creeping humbly into the halls where she should have reigned as Mistress. Back they thronged from the past, those gay figures of olden days, living, loving, hating, plotting as of yore.

Last Thursday we went to see the Temple Church, in the grounds of which Oliver Goldsmith is buried. The church is a quaint old place, set in a leafy square which, despite the fact that Fleet Street is roaring just outside it, is as peaceful and silent as a Cavendish road. But when I recall that square it is not of the quaint old church and Poor Noll's grave that I shall think. No, it will be of a most charming and gentlemanly pussy cat, of exquisite manners, who came out of one of the houses and walked across the square to meet us. He was large and handsome and dignified, and any one could see with half an eye that he belonged to the caste of Vere de Vere. He purred most mellifluously as I patted him, and rubbed himself

against my boots as though we were old acquaintances, as perchance we were in some other incarnation. Nine out of ten cats would have insisted on accompanying us over to Oliver's grave, and perhaps been too hard to get rid of. Not so this Marquis of Carabas. He sat gravely down and waited until we had gone on, seen the grave and returned to where he sat. Then he stood up, received our farewell pats, waved his tail amiably, and walked gravely back to the door from which he had emerged, having done the honor of his demesne in most irreproachable fashion. Truly he did give the world assurance of a cat!

We sail for home next Thursday on the *Adriatic*. I am glad, for I am replete with sight-seeing. I want now to get back to Canada and gather my scattered household gods around me for a new consecration.

As my husband was pastor of an Ontario congregation, I had now to leave Prince Edward Island and move to Ontario. Since my marriage I have published four books, *Chronicles of Avonlea*, *The Golden Road*, *Anne of The Island*, and *The Watchman*, the latter being a volume of collected verse.

The "Alpine Path" has been climbed, after many years of toil and endeavor. It was not an easy ascent, but even in the struggle at its hardest there was a delight and a zest known only to those who aspire to the heights.

"He ne'er is crowned
With immortality, who fears to follow
Where airy voices lead."

True, most true! We must follow our "airy voices," follow them through bitter suffering and discouragement and darkness, through doubt and disbelief, through valleys of humiliation and over delectable hills where sweet things would lure us from our quest, ever and always must we follow, if we would reach the "far-off divine event" and look out thence to the aerial spires of our City of Fulfilment.